

Land East of 2 Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk

Record of a Programme of Informative Trial-Trenching



for:
Simon Folwell (Longhurst Group)

on behalf of:
Freebridge Community Housing

CA Project: SU0498
CA Report: SU0498_1
OASIS ID: cotswold2- 511306
HER Ref: ENF 153134
HES Ref: CNF 49742
Accession No: NWHCM:2023.22

February 2023



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SUMMARY

Project name:	Land East of 2 Thieves Bridge Road,
Location:	Watlington, Norfolk
NGR:	650190 314500
Type:	Informative Trial-Trenching
Date:	9th-10th January 2023
Planning reference:	21/02421/FM
OASIS ID:	cotswold2-511306
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) and the Archaeological Data Service (ADS)
Accession Code:	NWHCM:2023.22
Site Code:	ENF 153134

In January 2023, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a program of informative Trial-Trenching on land east of 2 Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk. Sixteen trenches were excavated within an area of proposed residential development.

One undated ditch was recorded in Trench 4 in the western part of the site, its orientation perpendicular to the road suggesting a former field boundary. Elsewhere, the shallow trenches were devoid of features or pre-modern finds.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Over the 9th and 10th January 2023, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a programme of informative trial-trenching on land east of 2 Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk (centred at NGR: 650190 314500; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Simon Folwell (Longhurst Group) on behalf of Freebridge Community Housing.
- 1.2 A planning application (21/02421/FM) for the construction of forty new dwellings was determined by Norfolk County Council Environment Service (NCCES), the Archaeological Advisors to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), to require a Programme of Archaeological Mitigatory Work (POAMW). The initial scope of this work, Informative Trial-Trenching, was detailed in a Brief, prepared by NCCES archaeologist Steve Hickling, dated 23rd May 2022 (Hickling 2022). The trenching was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and Method Statement prepared by CA (2022) and approved by Steve Hickling.
- 1.3 The trial-trenching also complied with *Standards for Development-led Archaeological Projects in Norfolk* (Robertson et al 2018), *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2020a), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Planning Note 3* (Historic England 2015a), *the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (Heritage England 2015b)

The site

- 1.4 The overall 1.73ha site currently forms the northern end of a larger arable field bounded by Thieves Bridge Road to the north, residential plots to the west, open arable fields to the south, with further residential properties to the east. The site slopes gently away to the south and east from a high of approximately 9m AOD on its northern edge.
- 1.5 The bedrock geology is mapped as Kimmeridge Clay Formation – Mudstone, a sedimentary rock formed between 157.3 and 152.1 million years ago during the Jurassic period. Superficial deposits are mapped as Tottenhill Gravel Member – Gravel, a sedimentary deposit formed between c.2.59 million and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period (BGS 2023).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Brief states that ‘The proposed development site lies within an area rich in cropmarks, perhaps dating to the prehistoric and/or Roman periods, including a highly significant Iron Age and Roman settlement and religious site excavated prior to quarrying 500m to the east. In addition, there are records of a medieval moated site (perhaps a manorial centre) a short distance to the north and medieval settlement a short distance to the south-west’, plus various spot finds from metal detecting activity.
- 2.2 A full HER search was undertaken for the site, the results of which are shown on Figure 1 and summarised in Appendix A.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The NCCES Brief states that the overall POAMW will include:
- 1) Full adherence to the Standards for Development-led Archaeological Projects in Norfolk (Robertson et al 2018, to be introduced on 1 May 2018) and all relevant national legislation, standards and guidance.
 - 2) The production of an approved WSI for the full POAMW.
 - 3) The provision for sampling, dating and recording of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts and ecofacts.
 - 4) The production of a final grey literature archive report including specialist post-fieldwork analyses.
 - 5) Provision for publication, where results warrant it.
 - 6) Provision for archive deposition with a recognised archive depository.
- 3.2 The general objectives of the initial phase of the POAMW, the programme of informative trial-trenching, were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. In accordance with *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2020a), the evaluation has been designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable NCCES to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed

development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2021).

- 3.3 In addition, any archaeological remains that may be identified would be put into their local and regional context with reference to the East Anglian Regional Research Agenda (Medlycott 2011) and the more recent updated version (<https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation fieldwork involved the excavation of sixteen c.30m long trenches (all 1.8m wide), equating to a 5% sample of the proposed development area (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 The trenches were set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS and scanned for live services using CAT and Genny equipment. Overburden was stripped using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machining was conducted under archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate. The base of the trench and all upcast spoil was scanned for artefactual evidence and subject to a metal detector survey.
- 4.3 Archaeological features/deposits were investigated, planned and recorded in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.4 CA will make arrangements with Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) for the deposition of the project archive under accession No. NWHCM:2023.22. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The archives will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Standards and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (ClfA 2020b).
- 4.5 A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix E, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain (code cotswold2-511306).

5. RESULTS

5.1 A full context list can be found as Appendix B, while the finds are reported as Appendix C and the Palaeoenvironmental evidence as Appendix D.

5.2 All sixteen trenches were excavated through a uniform dark brown silty sand cultivated topsoil, immediately below which was the natural undisturbed subsoil. This comprised a coarse orange sand and gravel with frequent pockets of dark blackish brown mineralised gravel. A number of modern plough scars and field drains were noted cutting the natural subsoil in the base of the trenches. The dimensions of the trenches are summarised in the table below.

Trench	Orientation	Length	Width	Depth
1	NNW-SSE	28.9m	1.8m	0.4m
2	WSW-ENE	28.9m	1.8m	0.4m
3	NNW-SSE	29.3m	1.8m	0.4m
4	WSW-ENE	29.2m	1.8m	0.4m
5	NNW-SSE	28.9m	1.8m	0.4m
6	WSW-ENE	28.7m	1.8m	0.4m
7	NNW-SSE	28.8m	1.8m	0.4m
8	WSW-ENE	29.3m	1.8m	0.4m
9	NNW-SSE	29.6m	1.8m	0.4m
10	WSW-ENE	29.6m	1.8m	0.4m
11	NNW-SSE	28.8m	1.8m	0.4m
12	WSW-ENE	29.4m	1.8m	0.4m
13	NNW-SSE	29.5m	1.8m	0.4m
14	WSW-ENE	29.4m	1.8m	0.4m
15	NE-SW	29.5m	1.8m	0.4m
16	NNW-SSE	29.8m	1.8m	0.4m

Table 1. Trench summaries

5.2 The upcast spoil from each trench was carefully scanned for artefactual evidence and subject to a metal detector survey. The only finds recovered were of modern origin, none of which were retained.

5.3 The only archaeological feature, ditch 402, was recorded in the eastern end of Trench

4. It was N-S orientated, measuring 0.88m wide and 0.28m deep with a rounded profile. Two fills were observed in the excavated section; the main fill, 403, was a mid-dark orangey brown friable gravelly sand from which a single fragment of post-medieval pan tile (33g) was recovered. It was sealed by 404, a thin layer of similar but notably darker material from which no finds were recovered. An environmental sample was collected from 403 but preservation was poor and no informative material was recovered.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Only one feature, a ditch was identified within the trenches, its orientation approximately perpendicular to Thieves Bridge Road suggesting a former field boundary. Sub-divisions of this field are shown on the 1839 parish tithe map and include an approximately N-S boundary close to the location of the excavated ditch. No other features were observed, nor was any pre-modern artefactual evidence recovered from the upcast spoil which might suggest the presence of past occupation or significant activity since ploughed out. The negative results do not preclude the possibility of scattered archaeological features within the proposed development area, but they do suggest that the area was not heavily utilised in the past.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

7.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Linzi Everett, Chris Alund, Edward Aylott and Jandre Wolmarans. This report was written by Linzi Everett with contributions by Ciar Boyle Gifford (Finds) and Charlotte Molloy (Paleoenvironmental). The report illustrations were prepared by Ryan Wilson. The project archive has been prepared for deposition by Zoe Emery. The project was managed for CA by Stuart Boulter, who also edited the report.

8. REFERENCES

British Geological Survey *Geology of Britain Viewer*

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- Medlycott, M., 2011, *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24
- MHCLG, 2021, *National Planning Policy Framework*

APPENDIX A: HER SUMMARY

HER ref.	Period	Summary	Location
31009	Med	Findspot of medieval metal finds	350m N
2283	Med	Medieval moated site	300m NW
11724	Multi	Aerial photo evidence of cropmarks relating to a multi-period cropmark complex, including possible Neolithic and/or later prehistoric ditches and post-medieval field boundaries	350m NE
14986	PMed	Site of post medieval windmill	Immediately NW
52553	Preh	An evaluation carried out in November 2008 adjacent to Thieves' Bridges Road recorded prehistoric and iron age ditches and prehistoric and post-medieval finds.	350m E
50940	Preh/Rom	Cropmarks of undated fragmentary ditches and field boundaries, probably representing more than one phase of features visible on aerial photographs to the south of Thieves' Bridge Road.	150m E
50963	Rom/Med	Cropmarks of undated ditches, possibly relating to a rectilinear enclosure of Roman or medieval in date, are visible on aerial photographs to the east of Downham Road	200m S
36706	Un	Cropmarks of a possible pit alignment of uncertain archaeological origin are visible on aerial photographs to the east of Downham Road	250m S
40438	Med	Findspot of medieval metal finds	150m S
29718	Multi	Findspot of Roman, Early Saxon and Late Saxon to post-medieval finds. The Roman finds are suggestive of possible settlement evidence	400m S
18879	Neo/PMed	Findspot of Neolithic flint scraper and a post-medieval buckle	350m SSW
41167	Med/PMed	Findspot of medieval to post medieval metal finds	400m SW
31072	Multi	Findspot of Roman, medieval and post medieval finds	350m SW
31435	Med/PMed	Possible medieval to post medieval settlement identified from metal and ceramic finds	150m SSW
50933	Med/PMed	The earthworks of a possible trackway and a series of small enclosures are visible on aerial photographs to the south of the Watlington Park. These features are likely to relate to medieval settlement and stock management	400m N
66623	-	A geophysical survey of this site in 2016 identified no anomalies of obvious archaeological significance. The only responses of interest were a number of widely spaced parallel linear anomalies that may represent the traces of medieval or early post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.	200m N

APPENDIX B: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context Number	Trench	Feature Type	Category	Feature Number	Description	Width	Depth
0100	01	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0200	02	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0300	03	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0400	04	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0402	04	Ditch	Cut	0402	A north/south orientated ditch cut, with moderately sloping, even sides at roughly 40°, with a moderate break of slope into a generally flattish base.	0.88	0.29
0403	04	Ditch	Fill	0402	Dark reddish brown friable-loose gravelly sand. Good horizons with 0400 and 0401, and fair with (0404).	0.88	0.29
0404	04	Ditch	Fill	0402	Dark yellowish brown friable-loose gravelly sand. Good horizons with 0400 and 0401, and fair with (0404).	0.72	0.11
0500	05	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0600	06	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0700	07	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0800	08	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
0900	09	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
1000	10	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
1100	11	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
1200	12	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
1300	13	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
1400	14	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
1500	15	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4
1600	16	Layer	Layer		Dark grey brown silty sandy topsoil		0.4

APPENDIX C: FINDS

Introduction

Artefactual material recovered from the trial-trenching at Thieves Bridge is limited to a single fragment of ceramic building material (CBM).

The sherd has been catalogued directly onto an MS Access database and recorded in accordance with guidelines set out in the ClfA Toolkit for Specialist Recording (ClfA 2021). It has been visually examined with low powered magnification, and a detailed summary is provided in Table 1 below.

The Finds

The single sherd (33g) of CBM was recovered from fill 403 of ditch 402. The fabric is relatively fine and hard-fired, and the fragment's wide cylindrical curve suggests it is most likely part of a pantile type roof tile of post-medieval date.

Summary

The single fragment of tile recovered may support a post-medieval date for the lowest fill of ditch 402. The sherd is otherwise of little historical significance, and given its relatively modern date, is recommended for discard.

References

ClfA 2021 Toolkit for Specialist Reporting <https://www.archaeologists.net/reporting-toolkit> T. (accessed January 2023)

Trench	Feature	Context	Material	Description	Count	Weight (g)	Spot Date
4	Ditch 402	403	CBM	Tile fragment with slight cylindrical curve, probably part of a pantile. Fine, sandy fabric, hard fired. Orange surfaces and grey core.	1	33	Post-medieval

Table 1: Summary of artefactual evidence from ENF153134.

APPENDIX D: PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

1. A bulk sample (20 litres of soil) was taken from fill 403 in ditch 402, Trench 4 with the aim of evaluating the preservation of paleoenvironmental remains and with the intention of recovering environmental evidence of industrial or domestic activity if present on the site. It was also hoped that these samples might assist with dating this activity.
2. The sample was processed by standard flotation procedures (using a 0.25mm mesh for the flot and a 0.5mm mesh for the residue). The dried flots were scanned using a binocular microscope and the presence of any charred plant remains or ecofacts are noted in Table 1.
3. The flot was very small in size and contained a lot of degraded fibrous root material and ticker root material. This may indicate a high degree of post deposition movement. The charred plant remain present was very poorly preserved. The seed was too poorly preserved to be identified. The charcoal was very poorly preserved and no pieces greater than 2mm were present. This material most likely represents windblown/dispersed settlement waste. It does not contribute to understanding any potential settlement activity in the vicinity of this trench.

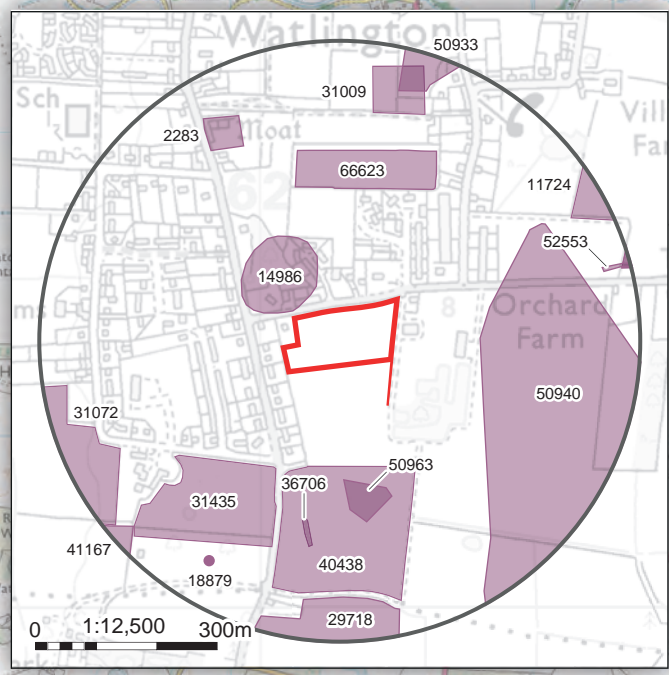
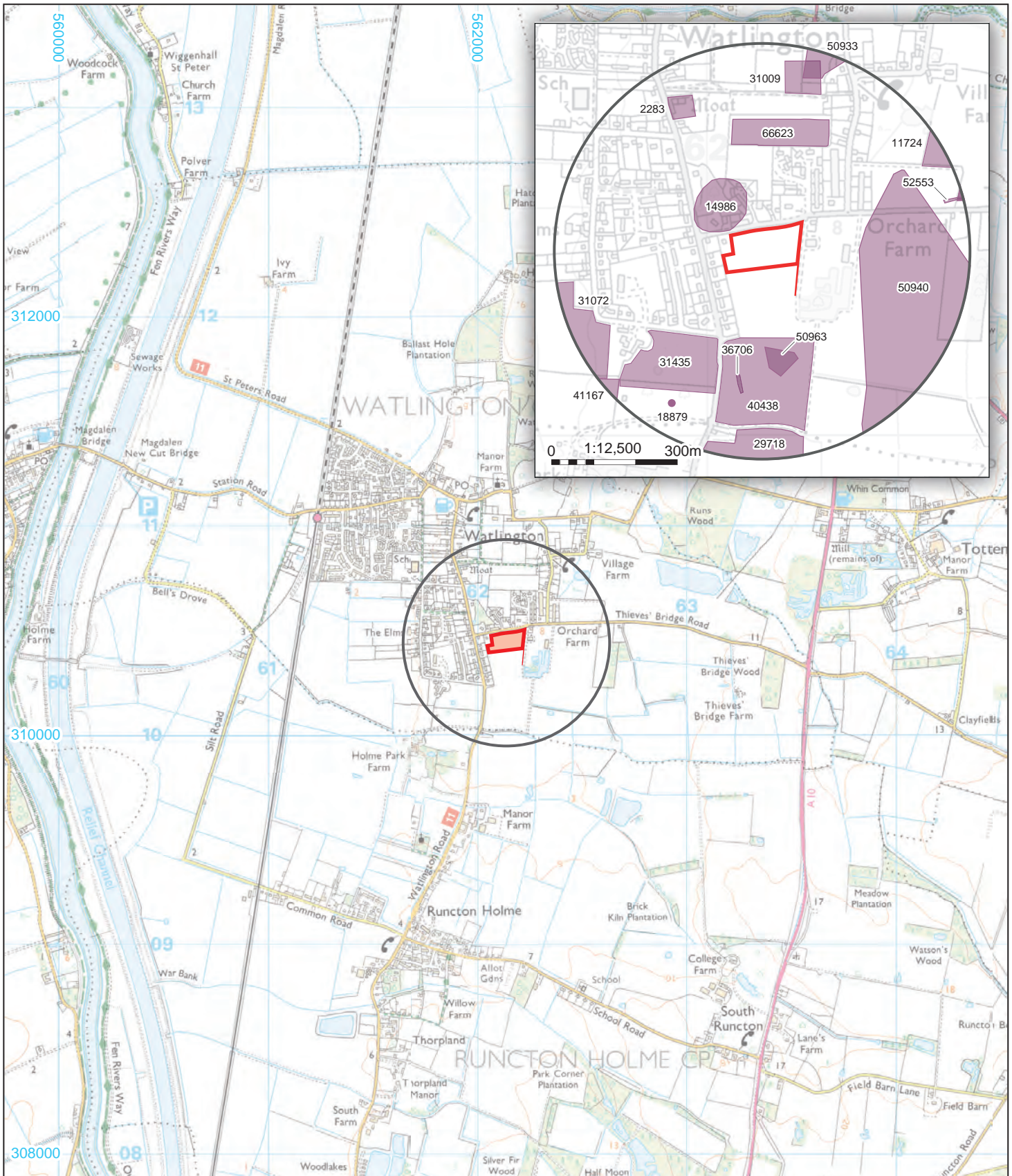
Table 1. Assessment of the paleoenvironmental remains

Cut	Context	Sample	Vol (L)	Flot size (ml)	Roots %	Grain	Chaff	Charred Other	Charred Other Notes	Charcoal > 4/2mm	Other
Trench 4 ditch											
402	403	1	20	2	90	-	-	*	Indet seed	-/-	-

Key: * = 1–4 items; ** = 5–19 items; *** = 20–49 items; **** = 50–99 items; ***** = >100 items

APPENDIX E: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Land E of Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk	
Short description	In January 2023, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a program of Evaluation by Trial Trench on land east of Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk. Sixteen trenches were excavated within an area of proposed residential development. One undated ditch was recorded in Trench 4 in the western part of the site, its orientation perpendicular to the road suggesting a former field boundary. Elsewhere, the shallow trenches were devoid of features or pre-modern finds.	
Project dates	09-01-23 – 10-01-23	
Project type	Sample Trenches	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Not known	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Land east of Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk	
Study area (m ² /ha)	1.73ha	
Site co-ordinates	650190 314500	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator	NCCES	
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Stuart Boulter	
Project Supervisor	Linzi Everett	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	NCCES NWHCM:2023.22	Ceramic
Paper	NCCES NWHCM:2023.22	Report
Digital	ADS	Database, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2023 <i>Land E of Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk: Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching</i> CA report SU0498_1		



N

Site boundary
 Study area
 HER entry within 500m of site

0 1km

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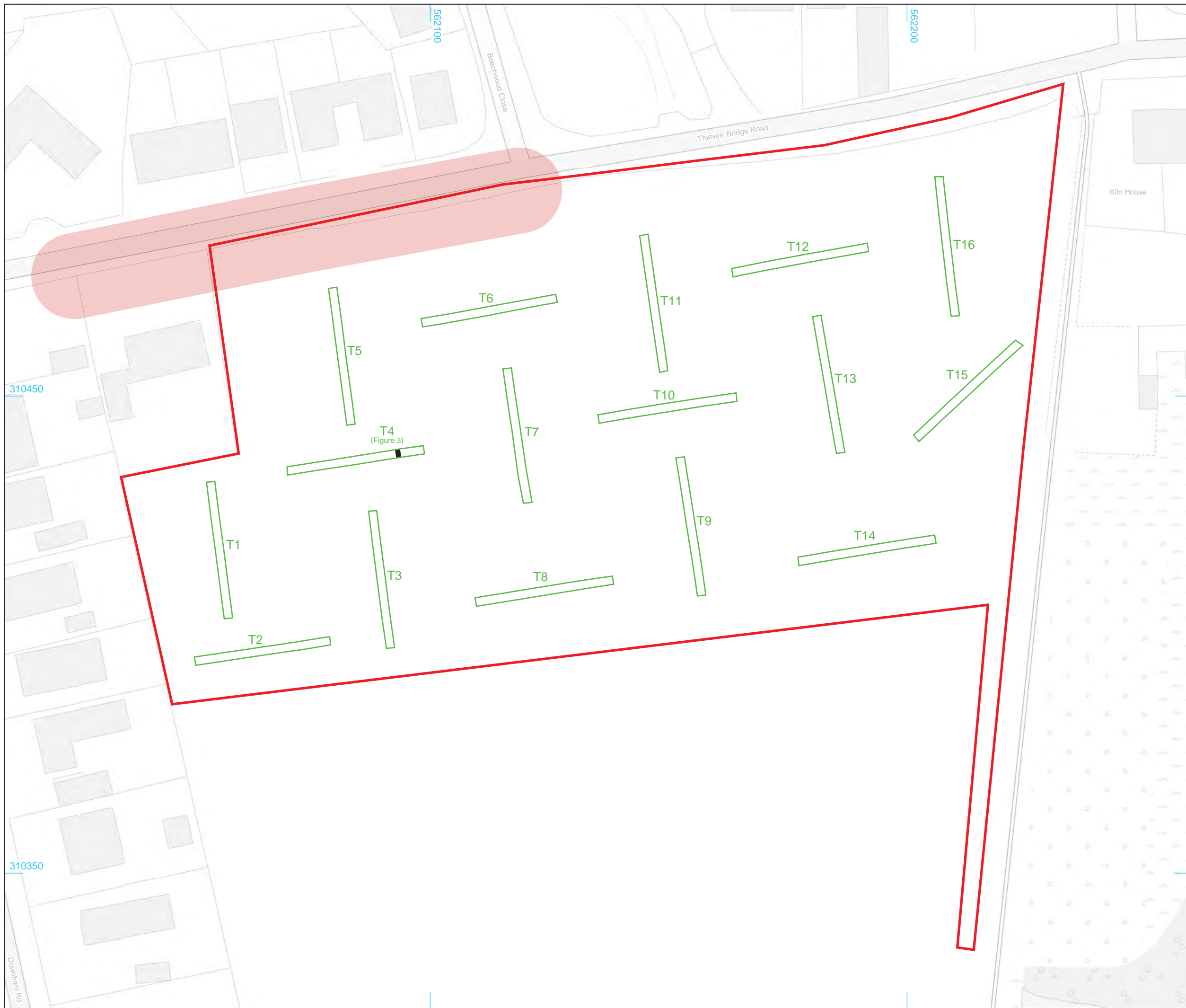
PROJECT TITLE

Land East of Thieves Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk

FIGURE TITLE

Site location with HER entries

DRAWN BY	RW	PROJECT NO.	SU0498	<i>FIGURE NO.</i>
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	18/01/2023	
APPROVED BY	LE	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	1



- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature
- Service buffer



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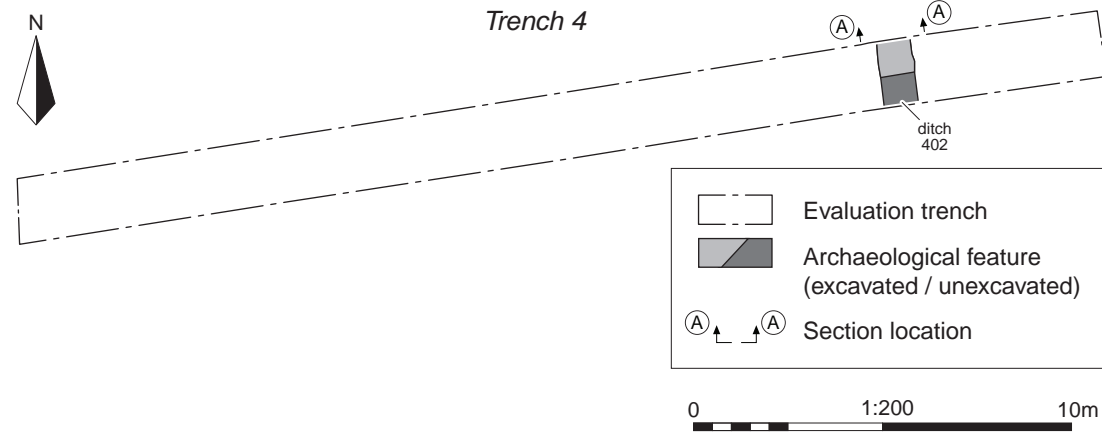
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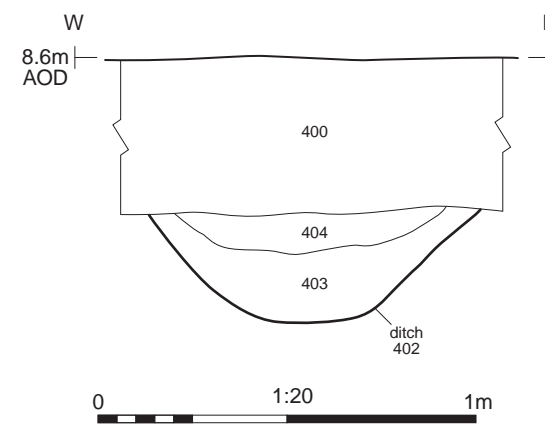
PROJECT TITLE
 Land East of Thieves Bridge Road,
 Watlington, Norfolk

FIGURE TITLE
 Overall site plan

<small>DRAWN BY</small> RW	<small>PROJECT NO.</small> SU0498	<small>FIGURE NO.</small>
<small>CHECKED BY</small> DJB	<small>DATE</small> 18/01/2023	2
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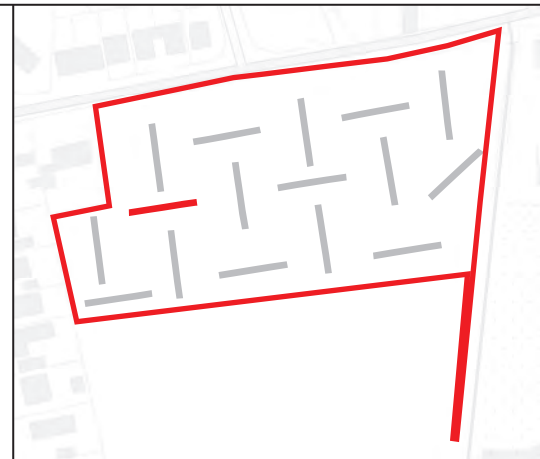
Section AA



Trench 4, looking west (1m scale)



Ditch 402, looking north (1m scale)



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PROJECT TITLE
 Land East of Thieves Bridge Road,
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FIGURE TITLE
 Trench 4: plan, section and
 photographs

DRAWN BY	RW	PROJECT NO.	SU0498	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	18/01/2023	3
APPROVED BY	LE	SCALE@A3	1:200, 1:20	



Trench 1 representative section, looking west (1m scale)



Trench 1, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 2, looking west (1m scale)



Trench 2 representative section, looking north (1m scale)


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FIGURE TITLE
 Trenches 1 and 2: photographs

DRAWN BY	RW	PROJECT NO.	SU0498	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	18/01/2023	4
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Trench 3 representative section, looking west (1m scale)



Trench 3, looking south (1m scale)



Trench 5, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 5 representative section, looking east (1m scale)


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FIGURE TITLE
 Trenches 3 and 5: photographs

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	18/01/2023	5
APPROVED BY	LE	SCALE	@A3 NA	



Trench 6 representative section, looking south (1m scale)



Trench 6, looking east (1m scale)



Trench 7, looking south (1m scale)



Trench 5 representative section, looking east (1m scale)


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FIGURE TITLE
 Trenches 6 and 7: photographs

DRAWN BY	RW	PROJECT NO.	SU0498	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	18/01/2023	6
APPROVED BY	LE	SCALE	@A3 NA	



Trench 8 representative section, looking south (1m scale)



Trench 8, looking west (1m scale)



Trench 9, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 9 representative section, looking east (1m scale)


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PROJECT TITLE
 Land East of Thieves Bridge Road,
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FIGURE TITLE
 Trenches 8 and 9: photographs

DRAWN BY	RW	PROJECT NO.	SU0498	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	18/01/2023	7
APPROVED BY	LE	SCALE	@A3 NA	



Trench 10 representative section, looking south (1m scale)



Trench 10, looking west (1m scale)



Trench 11, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 11 representative section, looking east (1m scale)


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FIGURE TITLE
 Trenches 10 and 11: photographs

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	18/01/2023	8
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Trench 12 representative section, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 12, looking east (1m scale)



Trench 13, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 13 representative section, looking east (1m scale)



Trench 14 representative section, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 14, looking east (1m scale)



Trench 15, looking east (1m scale)



Trench 15 representative section, looking north (1m scale)


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FIGURE TITLE
 Trenches 14 and 15: photographs

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Trench 16, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 16 representative section, looking west (1m scale)


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PROJECT TITLE
 Land East of Thieves Bridge Road,
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FIGURE TITLE
Trench 16: photographs

<small>DRAWN BY</small> RW	<small>PROJECT NO.</small> SU0498	<small>FIGURE NO.</small>
<small>CHECKED BY</small> DJB	<small>DATE</small> 18/01/2023	11
<small>APPROVED BY</small> LE	<small>SCALE</small> @A3 NA	

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