



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



FORMER LOW FIELD SCHOOL, ACOMB EVALUATION REPORT

By George Loffman & Craig Brown

EVALUATION REPORT

Report Number 2017/83 September 2017



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



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York Archaeological Trust, Cuthbert Morrell House, 47 Aldwark, York YO1 7BX

Phone: +44 (0)1904 663000 Fax: +44 (0)1904 663024

Email: archaeology@yorkat.co.uk Website: <http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk>

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Between the 29th and 30th of August 2017 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological evaluation on the grounds of the former Low Fields School, Acomb. A total of seven trenches were excavated. The works did not uncover any significant archaeological remains. The only features identified through excavation were two boundary ditches and modern drainage features, which were previously detected through geophysics.

KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	Former Low Field School
YAT Project No.	5983
Document Number	2017/82
Type of Project	Evaluation
Client	City of York Council
Planning Application No.	17/01288/PREAP
NGR	SE 5746 5094
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1 INTRODUCTION

Between the 29th of August and 30th August York Archaeological Trust carried out an Evaluation on the grounds of the Former Low Field School. This consisted of trial trenches that targeted anomalies identified by geophysical investigation, as well as testing blank areas. During the course of the evaluation no significant archaeological remains were uncovered. The only features encountered were two field boundaries and modern field drains.

2 METHODOLOGY

A Written Scheme of Investigation produced by the City of York Council (Appendix 3) specified a total of seven trenches to target geophysical anomalies and to test blank areas. These trenches measured 2.0m x 20m and were excavated by a 3CX excavator equipped with a 1.5m toothless bucket. Prior to excavations commencing the area of each trench was scanned for services, using a CAT & Signal Generator operated by a trained member of staff.

The position of each trench and any archaeological features were recorded using a Leica GPS unit. A 1:50 measured sketch plan was made of the trench including any archaeological features.

A representative 1.0m section was drawn at a scale of 1:10 for each trench. Any archaeological features within the trench were half-sectioned initially and sections drawn at a 1:10 scale.

For each trench individual context numbers were assigned to Topsoil, Subsoil (if present) and Natural; as well as for archaeological features if present. These were then described on proforma context cards as per YAT recording system.

For each trench photographs were taken of the trench, representative 1.0m section, any sections through archaeological features, and of all archaeological contexts. These were taken with a digital camera and framed with an appropriate scale.

No finds were retained during the evaluation, as only modern material was present.

3 LOCATION, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

The site consists of an open space formally the site of Low Fields School located within Acomb at SE 5746 5094. The site is currently grassland outside of the former school footprint.

The site is bounded by residential housing on all sides and is accessed via Dijon Avenue. The topography of the site is predominately flat. The playing fields on the south western end are beyond a small bank and are at a lower level.

The underlying bedrock is sandstone of the Sherwood Sandstone Group formed approximately 229 to 271 million years ago in the Triassic and Permian periods. Overlying this are superficial deposits of Alne Glaciolacustrine formation –clays and silts formed under glacial conditions (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> - accessed 05/09/17).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in 2007 during the excavation of pits for the siting of portacabins (FAS 2007). During the watching brief no archaeological remains were observed. The only features exposed related to modern drainage of the land.

The site is likely to have been agricultural land until the construction of Low Fields School in the 20th Century. The area is shown on historic maps as an area of agricultural fields from the 1853 OS map.

In 2017 a geophysical survey was undertaken over a c.3.4ha area of land at the school site. 0.6ha could not be surveyed due to overgrown vegetation (Swinback 2017).

The survey detected a range of different types of responses, including agricultural and modern activity, as well as anomalies of undetermined origin.

Anomalies have been classified as “Undetermined” where a specific origin of the response is ambiguous through the geophysical results. These are considered more likely to represent natural changes or modern

5 RESULTS

All contexts recorded during the evaluation are listed in Appendix 2.

The earliest deposits uncovered during the evaluation were natural clays and sands. There was some variation in the character of these natural deposits within the evaluation trenches. In trenches 2,3,4,6 and 7 the natural was a friable, light yellowish brown, clayey sand. Within trenches 1 and 7 the natural varied to a deposit of firm, dark grey, sandy clay. Within the natural exposed in all the trenches there were patches of more sandy material. Natural was found at a depth of 12.60 to 13.68m at its highest.

Above the natural, subsoil was present over much of the site, approximately 0.10m to 0.20m in thickness.

Two boundary ditches were found cutting into the subsoil and below the topsoil. These were found within trenches 2, 5 and 6. This correlated with the position of two linear anomalies running north-west/south-east through the site detected during geophysical survey carried out prior to excavation (Swinback 2017). The ditches contained modern Ceramic Building Material (CBM), pottery and salt glazed ceramic pipe segments. The eastern-most ditch was picked up in both trenches 2 and 6, ditches 2004 and 6004 (Plate 8 and 10). The western-most boundary ditch 5004 was uncovered within trench 5 (Plate 9)

In all trenches modern field drains were present.

6 DISCUSSION

During the course of the evaluation at the Former Low Fields School, Acomb no significant archaeological remains were uncovered. The only features present were two boundary ditches running north-west/south-east through the site. These appear to correlate with the position of field boundaries visible on historic mapping, on the 1853 OS map onwards (<http://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#> -accessed 05/09/17).

The only other activity detected on site was modern land management in the form of drainage features.

LIST OF SOURCES

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> - British Geological Survey

<http://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#> - National Library of Scotland

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

York Archaeological Trust would like to thank City of York Council for their assistance during this evaluation.

APPENDIX 1 – INDEX TO ARCHIVE

Item	Number of items
Context sheets	25
Levels register	0
Photographic register	0
Sample register	0
Drawing register	1
Original drawings	7
B/W photographs (films/contact sheets)	0
Colour slides (films)	0
Digital photographs	45
Written Scheme of Investigation	1
Report	1

Table 1 Index to archive

APPENDIX 2 – CONTEXT LIST

Trench	Context no.	Description
1	1000	Topsoil – friable, mid brown, clayey silt
	1001	Subsoil – soft, orangey brown, slightly clayey sand. Possibly a variation in natural.
	1002	Natural – firm, dark grey, clay with pockets of light yellow sand. Occasional small stones. Possibly alluvium.
2	2001	Topsoil – friable, mid brown, sandy silt
	2002	Subsoil – friable, mid brown, slightly clayey sand. Occasional small stones.
	2003	Fill of ditch – friable, dark grey, silty clay. Occasional small round stones. Contains modern brick fragments, glass and salt glazed pipe. Probably boundary ditch. Fill of 2003.
	2004	Cut of ditch – linear shape in plan, aligned NW-SE. Excavated length is 2m, width 2.45m and depth 0.79m. V shaped in profile, sharp break of slope at top, slight convex slope to steep slope on SW edge, shallow slope on NE edge, round base. Post Medieval boundary ditch. Contains 2003. Same as 6004.
	2005	Natural – loose, orange, sand. Occasional charcoal flecks.
3	3000	Topsoil – friable, mid brown, clayey silt.
	3001	Natural – friable, brownish orange, clayey sand. Occasional small stones. More clayey patch in the middle of the trench.
4	4000	Topsoil – friable, mid brown, sandy silt. Occasional small stone.
	4001	Natural – friable, brownish orange, slightly clayey sand. Occasional small stones. Dark grey variation in natural present at west side of trench.
5	5000	Topsoil – friable, mid brown grey, sandy silt. Occasional small stones.
	5001	Subsoil – friable, mid brownish orange, clayey sand.
	5002	Natural – friable, mid brownish yellow, clayey sand. Occasional small stones.
	5003	Fill of ditch – friable, dark grey, silty clay. Occasional small stones. Post medieval glass and brick fragments. Fill of 5004.
	5004	Cut of ditch – linear shape in plan, aligned NW-SE. Excavated length 2m, width 1.33m and depth 0.29m. U shaped in profile. Sharp break of slope at top, concave on NE side, convex on SW side, rounded base. Contains 5003.
6	6000	Topsoil – loose, light grey, sandy soil. Occasional small stones, charcoal flecks, crushed CBM flecks.
	6001	Subsoil – friable, mid, greyish brown, sandy clay. Occasional small stones.
	6002	Natural – friable to firm, mid brownish yellow with patches of orange mottled clayey sand, with pockets of more clayey material. Occasional small stones.
	6003	Fill of ditch – friable, dark grey, clayey silt. Occasional charcoal flecks, CBM flecks, mortar flecks, small round stones. Contains fragments of salt glazed pipe and modern glass. Fill of 6004.
	6004	Cut of ditch – linear shape in plan, aligned NW-SE. Expose length 5m, width 1m and depth 200mm. Sharp break of slope at top, gentle sloping sides, flat base. Contains 6003. Same as 2004.
7	7000	Topsoil – loose to friable, mid brownish grey, sandy silt. Occasional small stones.
	7001	Subsoil – soft, mid orange brown, slightly clayey sand. Occasional small stones.

	7002	Natural – friable to firm. Western part of the trench is mid brown orange, clayey sand. West end of the trench is dark grey, sandy clay. Occasional small rounded stones.
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Table 2 Context list

APPENDIX 3 – WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

**LOWFIELDS SCHOOL, ACOMB
ARCHEOLOGICAL SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION:
EVALUATION**

CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Site Description
- 3 Summary Archaeological Description and Summary of Previous work
- 4 The Deposit Model
- 5 Evaluation Programme
- 6 Reinstatement
- 7 Health and Safety
- 8 Public Engagement
- 9 Summary

Directorate of Economy and Place
Design Conservation and Sustainable Development
West Offices
Station Rise
York
Y0106GA

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CYCHER Consultation ref: (CYO964)

Planning Ref: 17/01288/PREAP

Grid Ref: SE 5746 5094

July 2017

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the details of the archaeological evaluation that will be required on this site ahead of the submission of a planning application for 135 dwellings. There is good reason to believe that there are heritage assets of archaeological interest preserved on this site. The information this evaluation will provide is necessary to allow a reasoned decision to be made on the impact this scheme will have on the significance of these assets.
- 1.2 The results of this archaeological evaluation will be used to determine the nature of any mitigation measures that might be necessary and the scale of archaeological work that it might include.
- 1.3 The archaeological policy of the planning authority is to seek to preserve at least 95% of archaeological deposits underneath a new development. City of York Council will advise an applicant on how this preservation target can be achieved.
- 1.4 Where planning, listed building or scheduled monument consent is required for development, a final report on the results of this evaluation will be required as part of the information submitted to validate an application. No application will be determined until this information has been provided and mitigation measures agreed. This follows the archaeology policy adopted by City of York Council and the contained in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.5 Where this document is used for securing competitive estimates, it is expected that appropriate professional procedures will be followed. In this respect, the attention of all parties is drawn to the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct and Code of Practice for those involved in Competitive Tendering.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site consists of an open space formally the site of Lowfields School located within Acomb at SE 5746 5094.
 - 2.2 The site is currently grassland outside of the former school footprint.
-



Site outline

3.0 SUMMARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION AND SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS WORK

- 3.1 An archaeological [watching brief](#) was undertaken in 2007 during the digging of pits for the siting of portacabins. No archaeological remains were observed within these pits.
- 3.2 It is likely that the site was used for agricultural purposes up until the development of the school in the mid 20th century. It is possible that earlier deposits possibly relating to late prehistoric - Romano-British activity may survive beneath the former medieval ridge and furrow (since levelled).
- 3.3 In 2017 a geophysical survey was undertaken over a c.3.4ha area of land at the school site. 0.6ha could not be surveyed due to overgrown vegetation.
- 3.4 The survey detected a range of different types of responses, including agricultural and modern activity, as well as anomalies of undetermined origin.

Anomalies have been classified as “Undetermined” where a specific origin of the response is ambiguous through the geophysical results. These are considered more likely to represent natural changes or modern processes; however, an archaeological origin cannot be ruled out.

The archaeological contractor **must** read the geophysical survey report available from the client or the Design, Conservation and Sustainability Team at York City Council.

4.0 THE DEPOSIT MODEL

- 4.1 Not available at present.

5.0 THE EVALUATION PROGRAMME

5.1 The following details set out the approach that a field evaluation should adopt. The site allows an opportunity to address the following questions:

5.2 The following details need to be established :

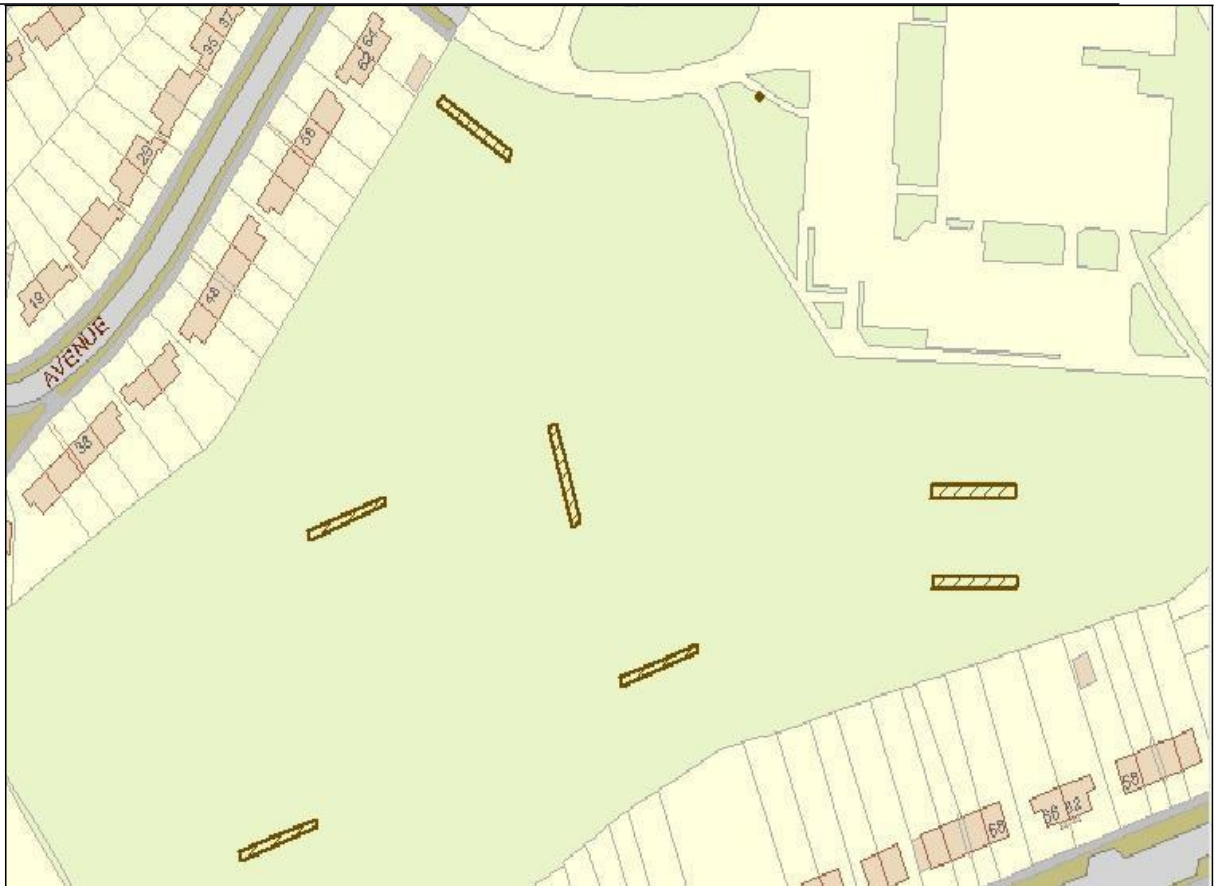
5.2.1 are there any archaeological deposits on this site which will be impacted upon by the proposed development?

5.3 The on-site evaluation should consist of the following approach (this may be subject to alteration following detailed discussion with the client and the archaeological contractor):

5.3.1 the excavation of 7 trenches measuring 20m x 2m. The trenches should be located to investigate areas of anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey (including some of the ferrous areas) and test blank areas see trench plan below.



Geophysical survey results



Proposed trenches

5.4 The following methodologies must be used:

5.4.1 All operations should limit destruction to that which is necessary to implement this specification. Where the examination of trenches is specified:

5.4.2 All overburden will be removed by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision, down to either the top of undisturbed natural sub-soil or the top of archaeological deposits whichever is the higher. Areas of intensive modern disturbance will be given a low priority in excavation. Where practicable, the fills of these features will be removed by mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket.

5.4.3 all appropriate records must be made and kept;

5.4.4 all archaeological contexts must be sampled in accordance with a sampling strategy which must be agreed in advance with the Science Advisor, Historic England, 37 Tanner Row York and approved in writing by York City Council. All sampling must be in accordance with the recommendations contained in English Heritage 2011, [Environmental Archaeology](#).

In addition, the advice of the Regional Science Advisor must be sought with regard to all other aspects of archaeological science, including dating, that might arise on this site. His recommendations must be followed and confirmation of the adoption of his recommendations supplied in writing to *Assistant Director (City Development and Sustainability), City of York Council, West Offices, Station Rise York YO1 6GA*

- 5.4.5 all records must be indexed, ordered, quantified, and checked for consistency;
- 5.4.6 all artefacts and ecofacts recovered and retained from the evaluation must be packed and stored in the appropriate materials and conditions to ensure that minimal deterioration takes place and that all their associated records are complete;
- 5.4.7 in addition to this basic work to complete the records to Level 2, the environmental samples must be processed and assessed;
- 5.4.8 the rest of the material archive must be assessed for its potential to contribute to artefactual research;
- 5.4.9 and the stratigraphic sequence assessed.
- 5.4.10 Trenches must avoid known services.

Trenches must stay a safe distance away from pylons and overhead power lines.

The commissioning client will advise of any ecological or biodiversity issues which need to be taken into consideration.

The commissioning client will advise of any protected trees which must be avoided by the evaluation. Damage to trees covered by a Tree Protection Order carries a substantial fine.

Trenches must avoid any **Japanese Knotweed** (it is the commissioning client's responsibility to advise their archaeologist if Japanese Knotweed is present on the site).

- 5.5 The details and processes outlined in 5.1—5.4 will produce the following output as a concise report:
 - 5.5.1 plan of site showing position of trenches;
 - 5.5.2 portfolio of drawn sections, trench plans, and, where appropriate, drawings of artefacts; a matrix of all contexts
 - 5.5.3 an interpretation of the structural sequence;
 - 5.5.4 an interpretation of the archaeological and research potential of the remainder of the site
 - 5.5.5 The City of York Council HER(CYCHER) supports the *Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) project. The overall aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of the advent of large-scale developer funded fieldwork. **The archaeological contractor must therefore complete the online OASIS form at. City of York Council will only accept reports as digital files. The report must be submitted as a PDF file(s).** If in doubt about formats please contact John Oxley on 01904 551346 or e-mail to john.oxley@york.gov.uk.
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- 5.5.6 The production of Site Archives and Finds Analysis will be undertaken according to Historic England's guidance - Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) 2006. The long term care of the archive must be provided for. All the original material and paper archive must be prepared for deposition with an approved archaeological depository such as the Yorkshire Museum. These Institutions will normally make a charge to cover the long-term curation of the archaeological archive. The requirements of the receiving Institution must be identified at the time of producing an estimate for this scheme of investigation. It is assumed that normally all archives relating to archaeological work in the City of York area will be deposited with the Yorkshire Museum. A copy of the report on this evaluation must be deposited with the City of York Historic Environment Record (CYCHER). **CYCHER will only accept reports in pdf format.** If in doubt about format please contact John Oxley on 01904 551346 or e-mail to john.oxley@york.gov.uk. Once a report has become a public document by forming part of a planning application, City of York Council will place the information on its website. Please ensure that you and your client agree to this procedure in writing as part of the process of submitting the report to the CYCHER.
- 5.6 A synopsis of the narrative report, material archive and research potential of the site must be prepared and submitted with the report so that this can be published in an annual summary of archaeological work in the City of York.
- 5.7 The Contractor will be required to demonstrate by providing CV's that the staff appointed to direct, supervise, and work on this project have relevant experience of working both on complex urban sites and the complex archives which they produce.
- 5.8 All work must be done using the Yorkshire Museum accession and numbering systems.
- 5.9 The Contractor must use a computer-based recording and retrieval system and report publishing system. The recording system must be based on single context recording and planning. The publishing system should be able to produce text and illustrations in the formats detailed in para 5.5.5 above. The Contractor must have the written approval of City of York Council for the recording system that it wishes to use on this site.
- 5.10 The Contractor must submit a full project design and/or a schedule of works which it develops from this scheme of investigation to the City of York for written approval prior to work commencing on-site.
- 5.11 The Contractor must give at least seven days notice in writing of the start of works on site to *Assistant Director (City Development and Sustainability), City of York Council, West Offices, Station Rise York YO1 6GA*
- 5.12 The Contractor will be subject to regular monitoring visits by the City of York. Reasonable access must be given at all times to the Principal Archaeologist, City of York Council or his agent to the site and to premises used for the purposes of post-excavation work to allow this monitoring to proceed. This will ensure that the scheme of
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investigation is being followed and that high professional standards are being maintained. It can be anticipated that the City of York Council will want to inspect a 10% sample of all archaeological records generated by the project. Reasonable access must also be given at all times to the English Heritage Regional Science Advisor or his agent to the site and to premises used for the purposes of post-excavation work to allow him to monitor the archaeological science elements of this scheme of investigation.

6.0 REINSTATEMENT

- 6.1 Ground reinstatement standards are not specified in this document.
- 6.2 Contractors must ensure that the question of backfilling and surface reinstatement is discussed with the client/landowner prior to any works commencing on-site.

7.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 7.1 Health and Safety regulations and requirements cannot be ignored no matter how imperative the need to record archaeological information; hence Health and Safety will take priority over archaeological matters. All archaeologists undertaking fieldwork must do so under a defined Health and Safety Policy. Archaeologists undertaking fieldwork must observe safe working practices; the Health and Safety arrangements must be agreed and understood by all relevant parties before work commences. Risk assessments must be carried out and documented in accordance with Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992. The Contractor should determine whether this projects is covered by Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994, and ensure that all requirements under the regulations are met.

8.0 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- 8.1.1 The general public has a strong interest in archaeological issues. Excavations, both large and small, often attract a great deal of public interest. They also represent an opportunity for people to experience at first hand the excitement of archaeological work. This is recognised in the NPPF and by the City of York Council in its emerging policy framework.
- 8.1.2 The archaeological contractor should discuss with the Client the level and range of approaches which can be used to present archaeology to the general public.

9.0 SUMMARY

- 9.1 This document sets out the background to and outlines a programme for an archaeological evaluation on this site. There is good reason to believe that there may be heritage assets of archaeological interest preserved on this site.
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The archaeological evaluation will provide information that will allow the City of York Council to put in place appropriate mitigation measures.

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PLATES



Plate 1 Trench 1 facing north-east 1.0m scale



Plate 2 Trench 2 facing north-east 1.0m scale



Plate 3 Trench 3 facing east 1.0m scale



Plate 4 Trench 4 facing east 1.0m scale



Plate 5 Trench 5 facing west 1.0m scale



Plate 6 Trench 6 facing south east 1.0m scale



Plate 7 Trench 7 facing west 1.m scale



Plate 8 Boundary ditch 2004 facing north scale 0.5m



Plate 9 Boundary ditch 5004 facing south west scale 0.5m



Plate 10 Boundary ditch 6004 facing north west scale 0.5m

FIGURES

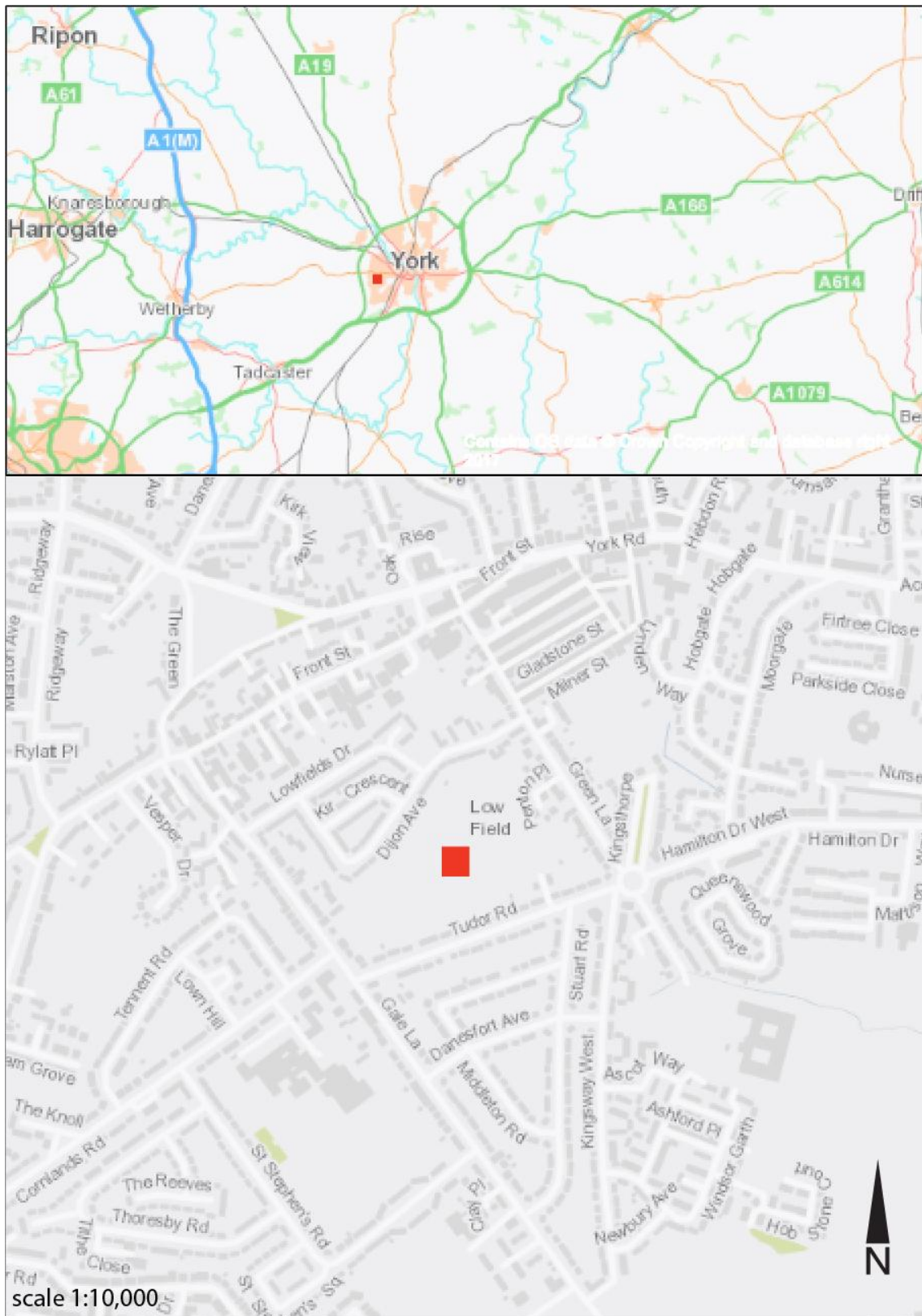
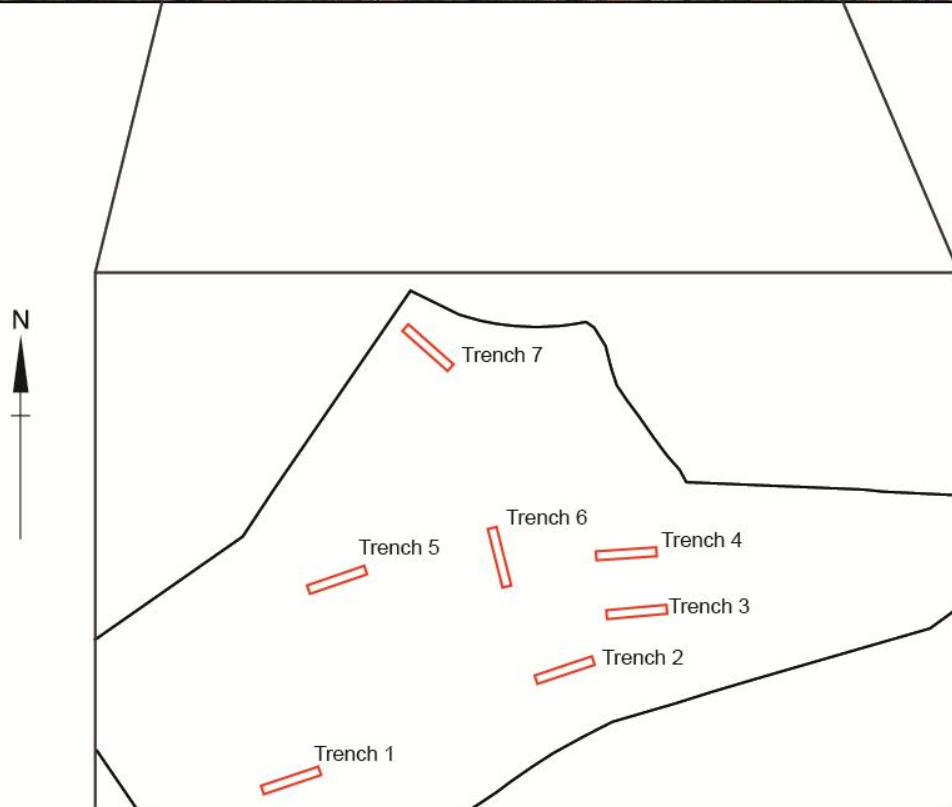
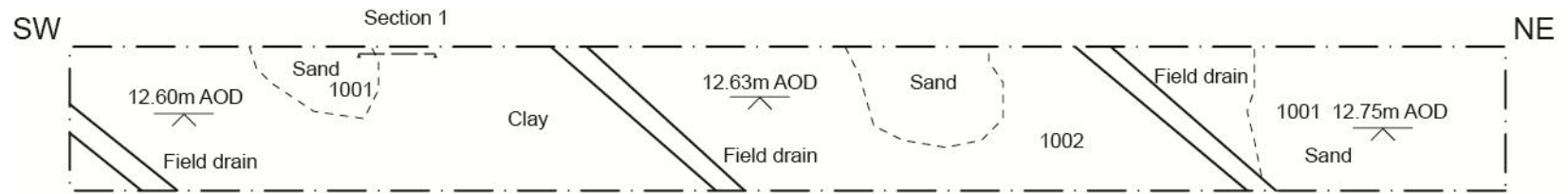


Figure 1 Site location

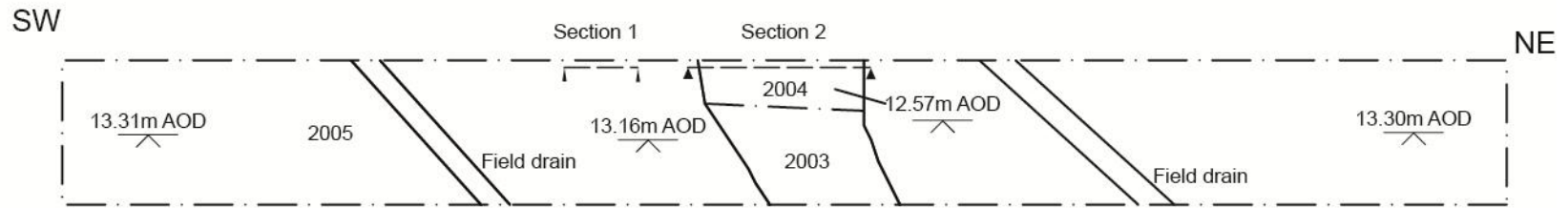


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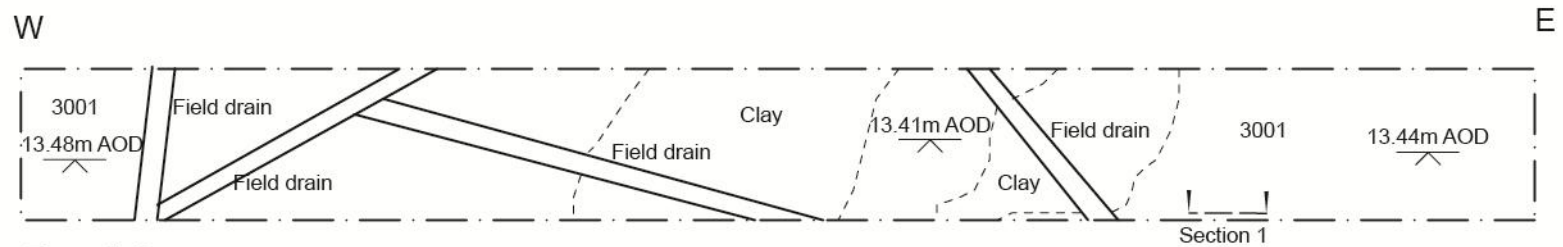
Figure 2 Site works location



Trench 1



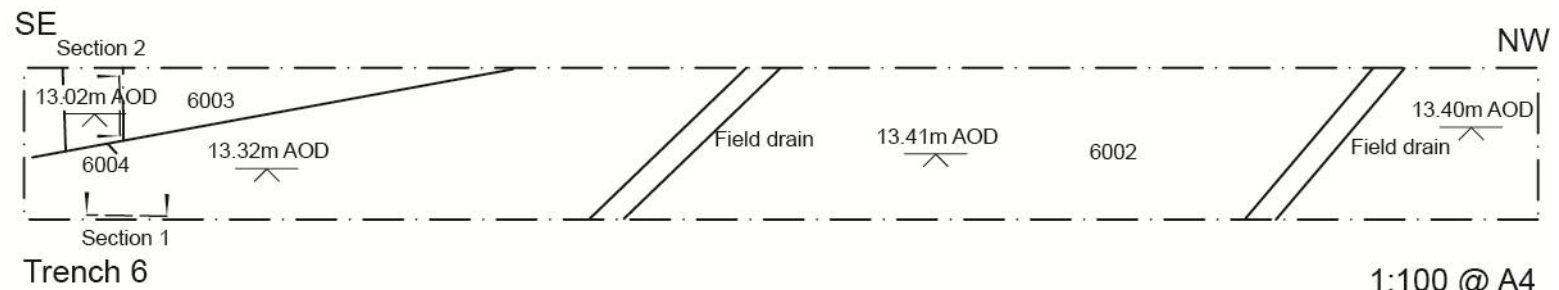
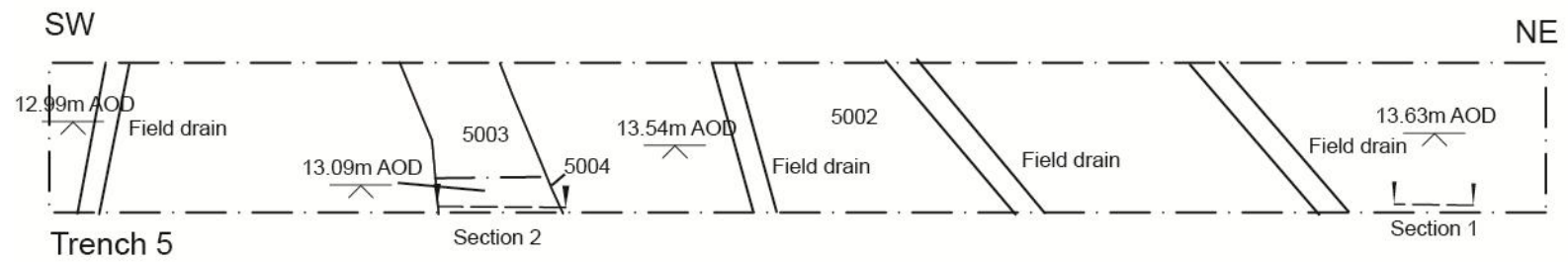
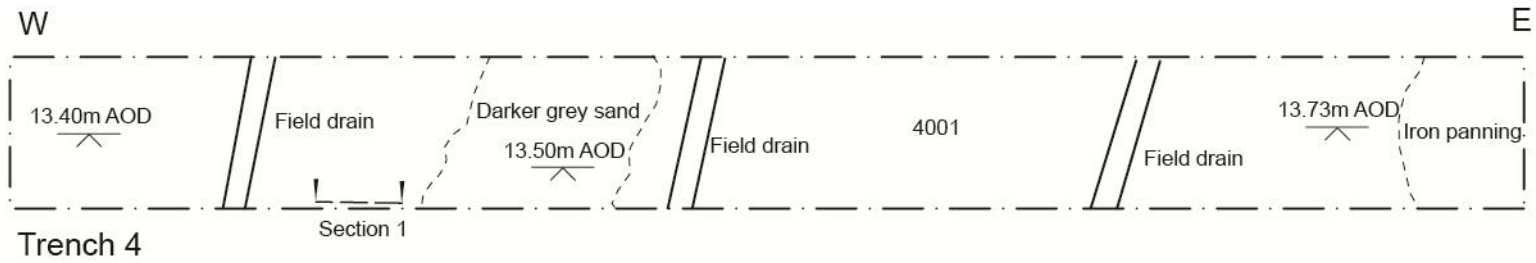
Trench 2



Trench 3

1:100 @ A4

Figure 3 Trench plans 1,2 & 3



1:100 @ A4

Figure 4 Trench plans 4, 5 & 6

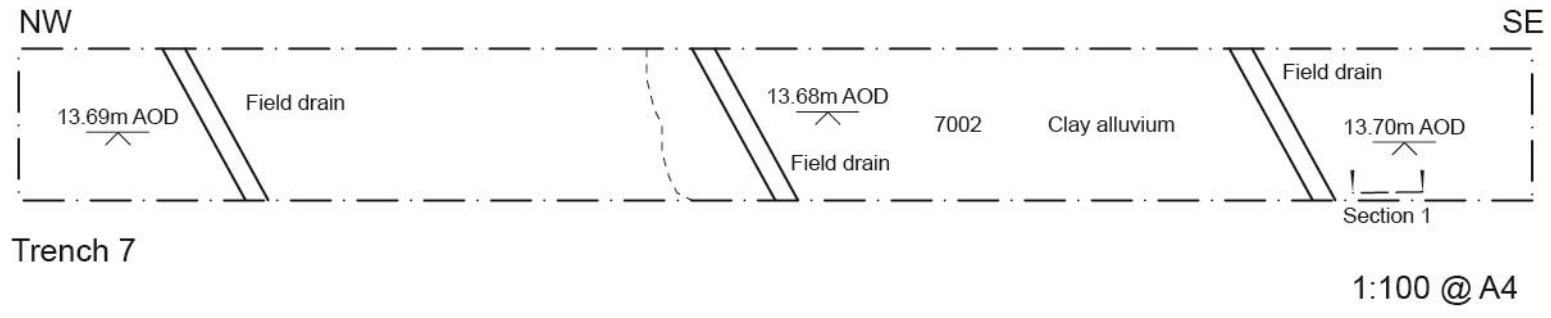


Figure 5 trench plan 7

