# rchaeological **Evaluation Repor**

# Land West of Mill Drove, Blackborough End, Norfolk



Archaeological Evaluation Report



February 2014

**Client: Middleton Aggregates** 

OA East Report No: 1587 OASIS No: oxfordar3-171309

NGR: TF 6710 1510



# Land West of Mill Drove, Blackborough End, Norfolk

Archaeological Evaluation

By Pat Moan BA

With contributions by Rachel Fosberry HNC AEA & Natasha Dodwell MA

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Illustrator: David Brown BA

Report Date: February 2014

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Report Number: 1587

Site Name: Land West of Mill Drove, Blackborough End, Norfolk

HER Event No: ENF132539

Date of Works: February 2014

Client Name: Middleton Aggregates

Client Ref: -

Planning Ref: C/2/2012/2011

Grid Ref: TF 6710 1510

Site Code: ENF132539

Finance Code: XNFBBE13

Receiving Body: Norfolk Museum and Archaeology Services

Accession No:

Prepared by: Pat Moan

Position: Fieldwork Supervisor

Date: 11/02/14

Checked by: Richard Mortimer

Position: Senior Project Manager

Date: 03/03/14

Disclaimer

Signed:

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### **Summary**

Between 11/02/14 and 12/02/14 Oxford Archaeology East carried out an archaeological evaluation of 7 hectares on land west of Mill Drove, Blackborough End, Norfolk (TF 6710 1510). A total of fourteen trenches with a length of 50m each, and one trench with a length of 26m were excavated. Two unurned cremation pits were excavated and a number of undated tree throws were recorded throughout the other trenches. Nothing else of archaeological significance was recorded.

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### 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at land west of Mill Drove, Blackborough End, Norfolk (TF 6710 1510) prior to the extension of Milton Aggregates carstone quarry.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk County Council (NCC; Planning Application C/2/2012/2011), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by NCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies within Middleton parish, on the west side of Mill Drove, some 4km to the south-east of Kings Lynn. The site area itself is level, dipping very slightly to the south and west. To the west of the working area (but within the larger Application Area) the land slopes quite steeply down to the west. The site occupies a ridge above the Nar valley to the south and a former river, now canalised (the Middleton Stop Drain) to the north.
- 1.2.2 The area lies directly on the Sedimentary Carstone Formation (Sandstone). (British Geological Survey; Geology of Britain Viewer at a scale of 1:50000 (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html)).

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The background below is taken from Land West of Mill Drove, Blackborough End, Norfolk: Scope of Works for Evaluation on behalf of Middleton Aggregates Limited (Josephs 2013).
- 1.3.2 In 1997, the Norfolk Archaeology Unit undertook an evaluation of approximately 0.9ha in the south-east corner of the site, which comprised the southern end of Phase 1. The evaluation comprised field-walking, metal detecting and a 2% trench sample. The fieldwalking recovered 6 prehistoric flints and 6 medieval artefacts (brick and tile). No finds of Iron Age or Roman date were recovered, and subsequently no archaeological features were identified in the trenches.

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### **Prehistoric**

- 1.3.3 The Nar Valley has been exploited over a considerable period of time. Palaeolithic tools, such as hand axes (Norfolk HER3434, HER15299), have been found in the vicinity. Mesolithic activity is attested to by flint scatters found further down the valley (Silvester 1988, 169). This indicates a background potential for archaeology of this date to be present within the site. Research priorities for these periods include a better understanding of the Pleistocene deposits of the region in the Palaeolithic period (Medlycott 2011, 7) and of landscapes, occupation sites and human behaviour for the earlier prehistoric (Austin 2000, 6-7).
- 1.3.4 Finds of Neolithic date have been found to the vicinity. These comprise lithic artefacts such as axes, arrowheads, scrapers and other tools (e.g. HER17311, HER32859, HER12279, HER30811). No cut features or other evidence to confirm a settlement location have been identified. The Neolithic evidence from Norfolk is considered to be distinctly different to that from other parts of the country (Medlycott 2011, 13).
- 1.3.5 There appears to be limited evidence for Bronze Age activity in the vicinity. Lithics were retrieved during the evaluation and stray finds have been found in the general area.
- 1.3.6 The main evidence for Iron Age activity in the vicinity of the site comes from an excavation c. 500m to the east (HER 12559), which revealed an ironworking complex with a furnace and associated pits. The large finds assemblage included pottery, briquetage and a torc, in addition to extensive environmental evidence. An Iron Age and Roman slag scatter has been identified extending over a wider area to the north of the Lynn Road, 1km north of the site (HER 37638). Middle Iron Age activity has also been identified 1.5km to the east during excavation in advance of quarrying at Fosters End Drove (Lally et al 2008). The evidence points to this being an important Iron Age industrial landscape. Iron extraction and working is still poorly understood within the eastern counties (Medlycott 2011, 31) and further archaeological work could help extend our knowledge base.
- 1.3.7 Social organisation and settlement form/function are identified as important research subjects for this period in the eastern region (Bryant 2000, 17; Medlycott 2011, 31); identification of settlement activity associated with the known industrial activity has the potential to address both of these research issues.

### Romano-British

1.3.8 Several military forts and a network of military and civilian roads were constructed in the area following the Roman conquest and particularly after the Boudiccan rebellion of AD 60. The Fenland Survey Project revealed only one domestic site in the Nar Valley, located at Setchy, near the mouth of the river. However, it also demonstrated that this area of Norfolk had been the focus of industrial activity (Silvester 1988). Evidence for this comes from the excavation of a kiln at Blackborough End, 500m west of the site, (Gurney 1990) forming part of a small regional group from the early to mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century

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onwards that comprised Brampton, Shouldham, Pentney, Witton and Hevingham (Swan 1984, 121).

- 1.3.9 Excavations undertaken at Fosters End Drove (Lally 2008) have revealed a Roman pottery manufacturing and iron smelting site displaying several kilns and associated buildings, including a masonry structure with an apse and a hypocaust.
- 1.3.10 To the west of Blackborough End (1.5km south-west of the site), excavations have revealed extensive features related to late 3<sup>rd</sup>- and early 4<sup>th</sup>-century salt production (Crowson 2001). Together with the remains of Roman iron smelting at nearby Ashwicken (Tylecote and Owles 1961) and across the valley on Wormegay Island (Silvester 1988, 172), it appears that the local natural resources of Gault clay, iron ore, salt, and possibly peat, were being exploited (Crowson 2001). Given the character of the archaeological evidence recorded in the vicinity it must be considered that the site has the potential to contain further evidence of Roman industrial activity.
- 1.3.11 Medlycott (2011, 48) identifies manufacturing and industry as an important research subject for the region. The identification of further Roman industrial activity would add to what is already known regarding the industrial character of this part of Norfolk and contribute to a greater understanding of the economic, social organisation and infrastructure of industry. The identification of associated activity, such as attendant domestic sites may provide information to contribute to the study of the development and origins of settlements and towns, also identified as important research subjects for the period (Going and Plouviez 2000, 21; Medlycott 2011, 47-48).

### Post-Roman

1.3.12 Rural medieval settlements are identified as an important research subject for the eastern region (Wade 2000, 25; Medlycott 2011, 70) but there is no evidence within the site that it was anything other than fields during the medieval/post-medieval periods. There is therefore the potential to contribute to inform research subjects such as land use and agricultural production (Wade 2000, 25). Numerous medieval small finds have been recorded in the area, due in part to metal detecting rallies.

### 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Middleton Aggregates Ltd who funded the archaeological works and provided a machine for excavating. The Site was monitored by Ken Hamilton, Planning Archaeologist for Norfolk County Council and managed by Richard Mortimer. Andrew Josephs Associates were the archaeological consultants for the project.
- 1.4.2 Site excavation was undertaken by the author, who also undertook site survey, and by Toby Knight and Kathryn Nicholls.
- 1.4.3 Figures and Plates were produced by David Brown.

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### 2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The 1996 Brief required that a 2% sample of the field would be opened by trial trenching. Fieldwalking of the area is also required. This was substituted by a bucket sampling survey of the topsoil removed from the trenches.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision by a tracked 360-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out using a Leica 1200 Smartnet GPS.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metaldetected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.6 Any features thought to have potential for the survival of environmental remains were sampled.
- 2.2.7 Ground conditions were relatively dry. Weather conditions were overcast, with occasional heavy rain.

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### 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 All trenches excavated were found to have a sand geology, overlain by a dark brown topsoil with a depth varying between 0.22m to 0.34m. Of the 15 trenches only one two contained features and these are discussed below. All trench details can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.1.2 Only a small number of post-medieval tile and modern ceramics were recovered from bucket sampling of the top soil from the trenches. Because of the modern date of the finds they were discarded. No metal finds were recovered from metal detection of the spoil.

### 3.2 Trench 7

3.2.1 The trench contained one tree bole (6), that was 0.55m in diameter and 0.14m deep. The feature was irregular in plan and profile, with gently sloping sides and irregular base. Fill 7 was a dark brownish grey silty sand with charcoal inclusions.

### 3.3 Trench 10

3.3.1 A single unurned cremation (4) was recorded in the western end of trench 10, cutting the natural sand geology. The feature was sub-circular in plan, 0.4m in diameter, and 0.2m deep with a U-shaped profile. The sides of the feature had a gentle slope, and the base was concave. Fill 5 was a dark brownish grey silty sand with occasional burnt stone and cremated bone inclusions and common charcoal.

### 3.4 Topsoil Strip

3.4.1 On 13/02/14 the site was visited for a monitoring meeting. An area approximately 200m long and 4.5m wide had been stripped of topsoil along the eastern boundary of the field, in order to create a bund. Upon investigation, a single unurned cremation (8) was located within the stripped area. The feature was sub-circular in plan, 0.5m in diameter and 0.05m deep with a U-shaped profile. Fill 9 was a dark brownish grey silty sand with occasion burnt stone and cremated bone inclusions. No other features were recorded within the stripped area.

### 3.5 Environmental Summary (Appendix B)

3.5.1 A total of two samples were taken from the site. Cremation 4 was 100% sampled and a large amount of charcoal and some cremated bone was recovered. Similarly, cremation 8 was 100% sampled and charcoal and cremated bone were also recovered.

### 3.6 Human Skeletal Remains

3.6.1 A total of 50g of calcined human bone was recovered from fill 5 and 9 of cremations 4 and 8. The condition was relatively poor and only certain pieces were identifiable.

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### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Only two archaelogical features were recorded within the development area, two heavily truncated and undated cremations (4 & 8). Carbon dating the bone recovered from the pits would be possible and would give a clearer picture of activity within the landscape.
- 4.1.2 The burnt tree bole (6) could indicate tree clearance or possibly charcoal production within the vicinity.
- 4.1.3 The area has been heavily plough-truncated and no subsoil remains. Whilst it is possible that shallow archaeological features and surface spreads etc. have been removed by ploughing, no archaeological finds earlier than the 19th century were found within the topsoil, despite an intensive search. This, and the scarcity of subsurface features, suggests that the area was never intensively settled.

### 4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

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# APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1		
General description	Orientation	N-S
	Avg. depth (m)	0.3
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
by dark brown topooli.	Length (m)	50
Trench 2		
General description	Orientation	E-W
	Avg. depth (m)	0.25
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
by dark brown topooli.	Length (m)	50
Trench 3		
General description	Orientation	N-S
	Avg. depth (m)	0.32
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
by dark brown topooli.	Length (m)	50
Trench 4		
General description	Orientation	E-W
	Avg. depth (m)	0.34
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
zy dank ziemi tepeem	Length (m)	50
Trench 5		
General description	Orientation	N-S
	Avg. depth (m)	0.3
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
by dain brown topooli.	Length (m)	26
Trench 6		
General description	Orientation	N-S
	Avg. depth (m)	0.3
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
ay dan storm topoon	Length (m)	50

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Trench 7							
General de	scription				Orientation	ı	E-W
					Avg. depth (m)		0.25
One burnt of geology over				rench consists of a sand	Width (m)		2
geology ove	enani by u	iaik biowi	i topsoii.		Length (m)		50
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds date		
6	Cut	0.55	0.14	Tree Bole	- Uncertain		
7	Fill	0.55	0.14	Tree Bole	- Uncertain		
Trench 8							
General de	scription				Orientation	l	N-S
					Avg. depth	(m)	0.27
Trench develop dark bro		٠.	Consists	of a sand geology overlain	Width (m)		2
by ualk bio	wii topsoli	ı <b>.</b>			Length (m)		50
Trench 9							
General de	scription				Orientation	ı	E-W
					Avg. depth (m)		0.3
			Consists	of a sand geology overlain	Width (m)		2
by dark bro	wn topsoii	l <b>.</b>			Length (m)		50
Trench 10					,		
General de	scription				Orientation	<u> </u>	E-W
					Avg. depth	(m)	0.26
-				d. Trench consists of a sand	Width (m)		2
geology ove	enam by d	ark browi	i topsoii.		Length (m)		50
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	da	ate
4	Cut	0.4	0.12	Cremation	-	Unc	ertain
5	Fill	0.4	0.12	Cremation	Bone	Unc	ertain
Trench 11							
General de	scription				Orientation	l	N-S
					Avg. depth (m) 0.		0.28
Trench develop dark bro			Consists	of a sand geology overlain	Width (m) 2		2
by dark bro	wii topsoii	I <b>-</b>	Length (m) 50		50		
Trench 12					,		
General de	scription				Orientation	 	N-S
	<u> </u>		Consists	of a sand geology overlain		+	
Tranch day					0.28		

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	Length (m)	50
Trench 13		
General description	Orientation	E-W
	Avg. depth (m)	0.22
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
by dark brown topoon.	Length (m)	50
Trench 14		
General description	Orientation	E-W
	Avg. depth (m)	0.32
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
by dark brown topoon.	Length (m)	50
Trench 15		
General description	Orientation	N-S
	Avg. depth (m)	0.25
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a sand geology overlain by dark brown topsoil.	Width (m)	2
by dark brown topooli.	Length (m)	50

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### APPENDIX B. HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

### By Natasha Dodwell

B.1.1 Small quantities of cremated human bone mixed with charcoal stained silt and small burnt flints were recovered from two truncated circular pits; 4 and 8 (c.0.4m x d.0.12m). The bone was processed and analysed in accordance to the guidelines outlined by McKinley (2004). The bone from both features was very fragmented with the majority being recovered from the 2-5mm sieved fraction. Given the small quantities recovered and the degree of truncation it is unclear whether the bone has been deliberately fragmented or not. All of the bone was white and well calcined indicative of complete oxidisation at high temperatures. Very few fragments were identifiable but most were limb shafts, 2 or 3 skull fragments were identified and no articular or joint surfaces survived. The bone from context 5 derived from a sub-adult or an adult.

			Bone weight (g)			
Context no.	Sample no.	Largest fragment	>10mm	5-10mm	<5mm	total
5	1	24.63mm	4	17	26	47
9	2	14.25mm	0	1	2	3

*Table 1: HSR reults* 

### APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

By Rachel Fosberry

### Introduction

C.1.1 Two bulk samples were taken from possible cremation deposits during the evaluation phase of Land West of Mill Drive, Blackborough End, Norfolk to enable complete recovery of all bone elements and any other artefacts or ecofacts present.

### Methodology

C.1.1 The total volume (up to ten litres) of each of the samples was processed by tank flotation using modified Siraff-type equipment. The floating component (flot) of the samples was collected in a 0.3mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through 10mm, 5mm, 2mm and a 0.5mm sieve. Both flot and residues were allowed to air dry. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The dried flots were subsequently sorted using a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 60. and a complete list of the recorded remains are presented in Table xxx.

### Quantification

C.1.2 For the purpose of this initial assessment, items such as charcoal and calcined bone fragments have been recorded qualitatively according to the following categories

+ = rare, ++ = moderate, +++ = abundant

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### Results

Sample Number	1	2
Context Number	5	9
Feature Number	4	8
Flot contents	Charcoal (50ml) ++	Nothing preserved
Residue contents	Calcined bone ++	Calcined bone +

*Table 2: Environmental bulk samples* 

- C.1.3 Both samples contain calcined bone, most commonly in Sample 1, fill 5 of pit 4. The flot from Sample 1 was totally comprised of charcoal with occasional bone fragments possibly identifiable to species. Sample 2 fill 9 of pit 8 contains only a few fragments of calcined bone with no charcoal at all.
- C.1.4 The majority of the cremated bone is fully calcined (completely white in colour). It is preferable to select fully calcined bone rather than charcoal for radiocarbon dating as charcoal from long-lived trees (eg. Yew and Oak) may provide dates that are several hundred years too old (Rebecca Nicholson *pers. comm.*).

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APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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# APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project D	etails								
OASIS Number oxford		oxfordar3-171309	9						
Project Name Evaluation at lar		Evaluation at land	d west of Mill Dr	ove, Blackbord	ough End, Norfo	lk			
Project Dat	tes (field	dwork) Start	10-02-2014		Finish	11-02-20	014		
Previous W	ork (by	OA East)	No		Future Work Unit		nknown		
Project Ref	erence	Codes							
Site Code	ENF132	2539		Planning A	ng App. No.		2012/2011		
HER No.				Related H	ER/OASIS N	lo.			
Type of Pro	ject/Te	chniques Use	ed	`					
Prompt		Direction from	n Local Planning	Authority - PF	PS 5				
Developme	nt Type	Mineral Extra	ction						
Please se	lect all	l techniques	used:						
Aerial Pho	tography	- interpretation	Grab-Sa	mpling		Ren	note Operated Vehicle Survey		
Aerial Pho	tography	- new	Gravity-Core						
Annotaated	Sketch		Laser Scanning			Sur	Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure		
Augering			Measured Survey			Tar	geted Trenches		
Dendrochr	onologica	l Survey	Metal Detectors			Test Pits			
Documenta	ary Searc	h	Phosphate Survey			☐ Topographic Survey			
Environme	ntal Sam	pling	☐ Photogrammetric Survey			☐ Vibro-core			
Fieldwalkir	ng		Photographic Survey			Visu	☐ Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)		
Geophysic	al Survey	,	Rectified Photography						
List feature ty	pes using	/Significant F the NMR Mor	nument Type	e Thesauru			sing the MDA Object type		
Monument		Period		Ob	ject		Period		
Cremation		Uncertai	Bone		Bone		Uncertain		
		Select pe	eriod				Select period		
		Select pe	eriod				Select period		

Project Location



County	Norfolk			Site A	ddress (inc	luding po	ostcode if possible)			
District Kings Lynn & West No		est Norfolk	est Norfolk			Mill Drove, Blackborough End,				
Parish Middleton		Middleton Norfolk								
HER	Norfolk HER				<u> </u>					
Study Area	7 hectares				Nation	nal Grid Ref	ference	TF 6710 1510		
Project Or	iginators									
Organisation		OA EAST	-							
Project Brief	Originator									
Project Design	-	Richard N	/lortimer							
Project Mana	ager	Richard N	Nortimer							
Supervisor		Patrick M	oan							
Project Ar	chives									
Physical Arch	nive		Digital A	Archive			Paper A	archive		
Norfolk Museum	ns & Archaeolog	y Services	OA East			Norfolk Museum & Archaeology Services				
			]							
ENF132539			XNFBBE13			ENF132539				
Archive Con	tents/Media									
	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents			Digital Me	dia	Paper Media		
Animal Bones						Database		Aerial Photos		
Ceramics						⊠ GIS		X Context Sheet		
Environmental	X					Geophysic	cs	Correspondence		
Glass								Diary		
Human Bones	$\boxtimes$						ns	☐ Drawing		
Industrial						☐ Moving Im	nage	Manuscript		
Leather						Spreadsh	eets			
Metal						Survey		Matrices		
Stratigraphic					▼ Text		Microfilm			
Survey					☐ Virtual Re	ality	Misc.			
Textiles							Research/Notes			
Wood							Photos			
Worked Bone										
Worked Stone/L	ithic									
None										
Other								 ☐ Survey		



Notes:		

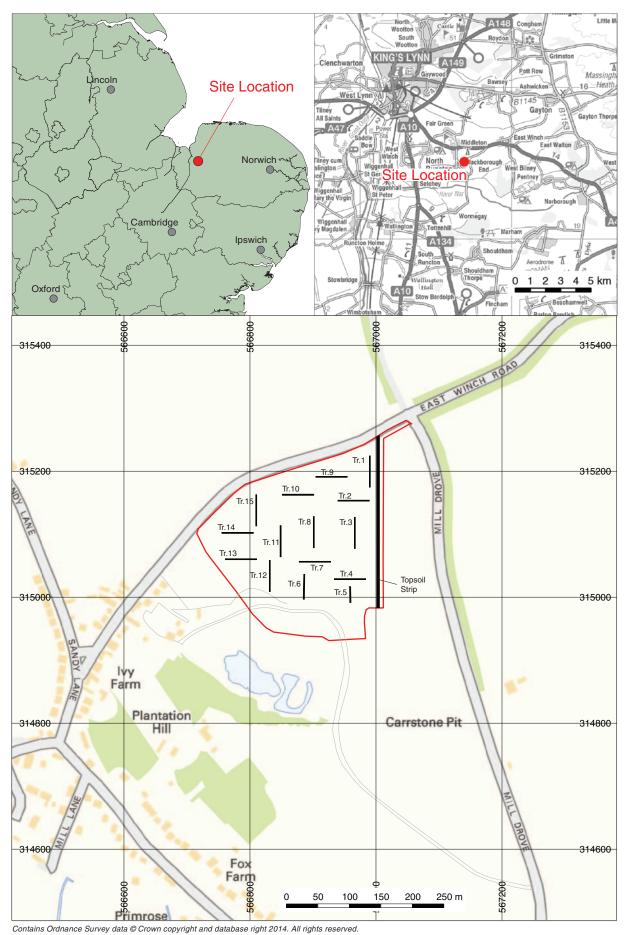


Figure 1: Site location showing archaeological trenches (black) in development area (red)

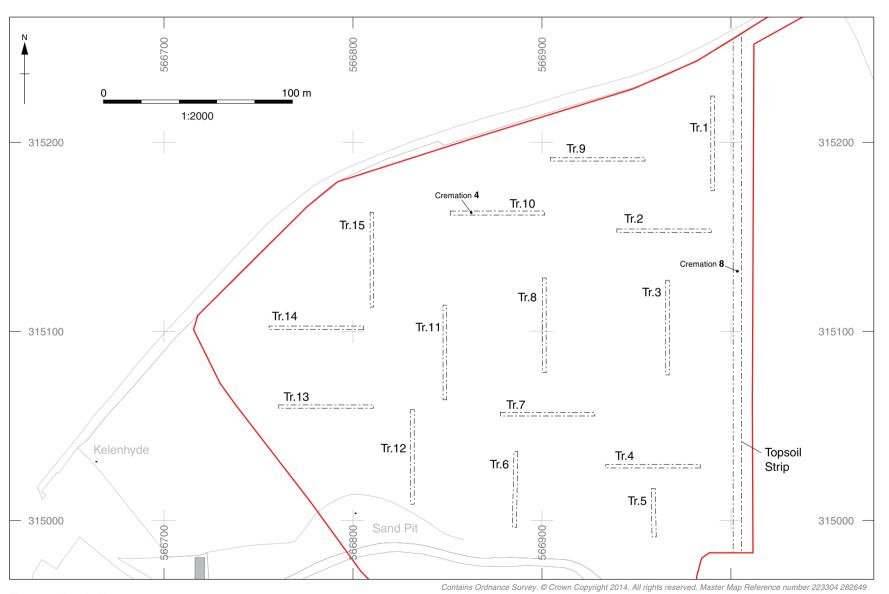


Figure 2: Trench Plan





Plate 1: Trench 10, looking west



Plate 2: Cremation 4, looking west







Plate 4: Trench 15, looking west







Plate 5: Cremation 8, looking north-west

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