

Princes Foods, Lynn Rd, Wisbech



Archaeological Evaluation Report



March 2013

Client: Princes Foods

OA East Report No: 1358

OASIS No: oxfordar-124290

NGR: TF 46420 10380

Princes Foods, Lynn Rd, Wisbech

Archaeological Evaluation

By Jonathan House BA

Editor: Rachel Clarke BA AlfA

Illustrator: Dave Brown BA

Report Date: March 2013

Report Number: 1358
Site Name: Princes Foods, Lynn Rd, Wisbech
HER Event No: ECB3756
Date of Works: April 2012
Client Name: Princes Foods
Client Ref: N/A
Planning Ref: F/YR12/0080/F
Grid Ref: TF 46420 10380
Site Code: WISLYN12
Finance Code: WISLYN12
Receiving Body: CCC Stores
Accession No: WISLYN12

Prepared by: Jonathan House
Position: Supervisor
Date: April 2012

Checked by: Aileen Connor
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: May 2012
Signed: 

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Oxford Archaeology East,

15 Trafalgar Way,
Bar Hill,
Cambridge,
CB23 8SQ

t: 01223 850500
f: 01223 850599
e: oeast@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net/oeast>

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on the 4/4/12 concurrently with ground works associated with a development taking place within the grounds of the Princes Foods site, Lynn Road, Wisbech. The work was carried out on behalf of Princes Foods, ahead of the construction of additional factory facilities. The proposed area for development is centred on grid reference TF 46420 10380. The Roman Bank sea defence runs along the line of Mount Pleasant Road, which forms the northern boundary of the site.

One 8m by 1.6m trench was excavated to a depth of 1.5m, a sondage was dug into one end of the trench using a narrow bucket to reveal a total depth of 2.1m of deposits below the modern tarmac level (3.81m AOD). Three layers were encountered within the trench, a topsoil measuring 0.29m in thickness, and two indistinct layers comprising a light brown clayey silt deposit 0.4m thick, overlying a mid brown clayey silt. The later was excavated a further 1.41m without any visible change in material. Anecdotal conversations with site workers confirmed the same material had been seen to a depth of 2.5m however this was not observed during the archaeological investigation due to the rapid inflow of ground water at 2.1m below ground level. A small amount of post-medieval material was observed within the first 0.5m below the modern surface, no other finds or archaeological features were present within the trench. The lower layers are likely to represent flood deposits as encountered elsewhere in Wisbech, however, in this location they do not appear to be sealing any evidence of settlement or other archaeological activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted on the Princes Foods site, Lynn Rd, Wisbech, TF 46420 10380.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Dan McConnell of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application F/YR12/0080/F), 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 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, 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 is located to the north of the historic core of Wisbech, with the current course of the river Nene, slightly less than 0.5km to the west of the site. The ground rises to the south towards the historic core of the town however the surrounding area is generally flat, with very little change in the general topography.
- 1.2.2 The site sits on flood deposits referred to as tidal flat deposits of clay and silt. These deposits overlay superficial deposits formed in the Quaternary Period. (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Date Accessed 24/4/12)

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The following section, draws heavily upon information sourced from Specification for Archaeological Evaluation: Premier Foods, Lynn Road (Connor 2012)
- 1.3.2 This site lies to the north of the early medieval core of Wisbech, which was surrounded on its north and east side by the Well Stream (the former outfall of the Great Ouse until diverted in 1300) and by the canalised route of the River Nene to the west. The core area contains the castle of Wisbech, later re-used as a prison, around which the medieval town developed (McConnell 2012). Immediately to the north of the site is the 'Roman Embankment' or 'Mount Pleasant Bank' running east-west on the alignment of Mount Pleasant Road.
- 1.3.3 Periodic overbank floods from the pre-drainage river systems had catastrophic effects on the town at times throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, which led to significant and greatly contested river engineering works taking place with the dual aim of ensuring continued port traffic and trade with towns upstream (Ely and Cambridge), and a more secure environment for Wisbech's inhabitants. The water engineering works have dominated the town's history, in the attempt to keep viable the port and trading status of the town (McConnell 2012).
- 1.3.4 Archaeological investigations within the town of Wisbech have hitherto largely focused on the central core (e.g. Hinman and Popescu 2012, Fletcher 2009, Mortimer

forthcoming). Excavations within the core of the town have shown that Wisbech has a history of alternate occupation and flooding over hundreds of years, similar to deposits found in other regional port towns but “without parallel in terms of its completeness, depth and state of preservation” (Hinman and Popescu 2012.)

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank Princes Foods who commissioned and funded the archaeological works. The author would also like to thank the site staff, John Diffey, and Dave Brown for the report illustrations. Thanks are also extended to Aileen Connor who managed the project and Dan McConnell who monitored the project.

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 Brief required that a 5% sample of the 288 square meters area to be within the building footprint should be subject to trial trenching (Fig. 2).
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The trench was excavated concurrently to the site groundworks.
- 2.2.3 The site was surveyed by tapes using off-sets and triangulation.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected 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 No suitable deposits were found for environmental sampling.
- 2.2.7 The evaluation took place under very poor weather conditions (heavy rain, see Plate 3).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Trench 1

- 3.1.1 One 8m by 1.6m trench was excavated to a depth of 1.5m (Fig. 2; Plates 1-4), a sondage was dug into one end of the trench using a narrow bucket to reveal a total depth of 2.1m below the modern tarmac level (3.81m AOD). Three layers were encountered within the trench, two indistinct layers comprising a light brown clayey silt deposit 0.4m thick, overlying a mid brown clayey silt, and a topsoil overriding these layers measured 0.29m in thickness. The later of the indistinct layers was excavated a further 1.41m, without any visible change in material. Anecdotal conversations with site workers confirmed the same material had been seen to a depth of 2.5m however this was not observed during the archaeological investigation due to the rapid inflow of ground water at 2.1m below ground level. Small amounts of post medieval material was encountered within the first 0.5m of deposits below the modern surface, no other finds or archaeological features were present within the trench.

3.2 Finds Summary

- 3.2.1 Other than a few fragments of post medieval clay pipe (tobacco) and tile in the top 0.5m of the trench, no finds were present.

3.3 Environmental Summary

- 3.3.1 No environmental remains were found and no suitable deposits were found for sampling.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 The lower layers are likely to represent flood deposits as encountered elsewhere in Wisbech, however, in this location they do not appear to be sealing any evidence of settlement or other archaeological activity. The build up of flood deposits is likely to have been heavily influenced by the construction of the 'Roman Bank' and the establishment of the shoreline. It is likely the site constitutes reclaimed land which was not suitable for settlement until modern times. It is likely the site may have been used for archaeologically less visible activities, such as animal grazing, and later arable farming as the ground became viable.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 This trench has shown that settlement activity is unlikely to have spread into this part of Wisbech; due to the liability of the immediate area to flood, as has been found elsewhere in the surrounding lands of the historic town.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and alluvial subsoils, depth to natural was not achieved.					Avg. depth (m)	0.92
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	8
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.29	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.4	Subsoil/flood deposit	Yes	Post-Med.
3	Layer	-	>1.41	Subsoil/flood deposit	-	-

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|---|
| Connor, A. | 2012 | <i>Specification for Archaeological Evaluation: Premier Foods, Lynn Road, Wisbech.</i> OA East. |
| McConnell, D. | 2012 | <i>Brief for Trail Trench at Premier Foods, Lynn Road, Wisbech.</i> Cambridgeshire County Council. |
| Fletcher, T. | 2009 | <i>Wisbech castle Defences and Georgian Cellars: Archaeological Investigations at Wisbech Library.</i> OA East Rep. No. 1091. |
| Hinman, M. and Popescu, E. | 2012 | <i>Extraordinary Inundations of the Sea: Excavations at Market Mews, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.</i> East Anglian Archaeology Report No.142. |
| Mortimer, R. | Forthcoming. | <i>New Inn Yard, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.</i> OA East Rep. No. 992. |

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-124290			
Project Name	Princes Foods, Lynn Rd, Wisbech			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	04-04-2012	Finish	04-04-2012
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown	

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	WISLYN12	Planning App. No.	F/YR12/0080/F
HER No.	ECB3756	Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS 5
Development Type	Urban Commercial

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
None	Select period...	Clay Pipe (tobacco)	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	Fenland	Princes Foods, Lynn Road, Wisbech. PE13 3DG	
Parish	Wisbech Town		
HER	Cambs. County Council		
Study Area	288m2	National Grid Reference	TF 46420 10380

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Dan McConnell
Project Design Originator	Aileen Connor
Project Manager	Aileen Connor
Supervisor	Jonathan House

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Cambs. County Council Stores	Bar Hill	Cambs. County Council Stores
WISLYN12	WISLYN12	WISLYN12

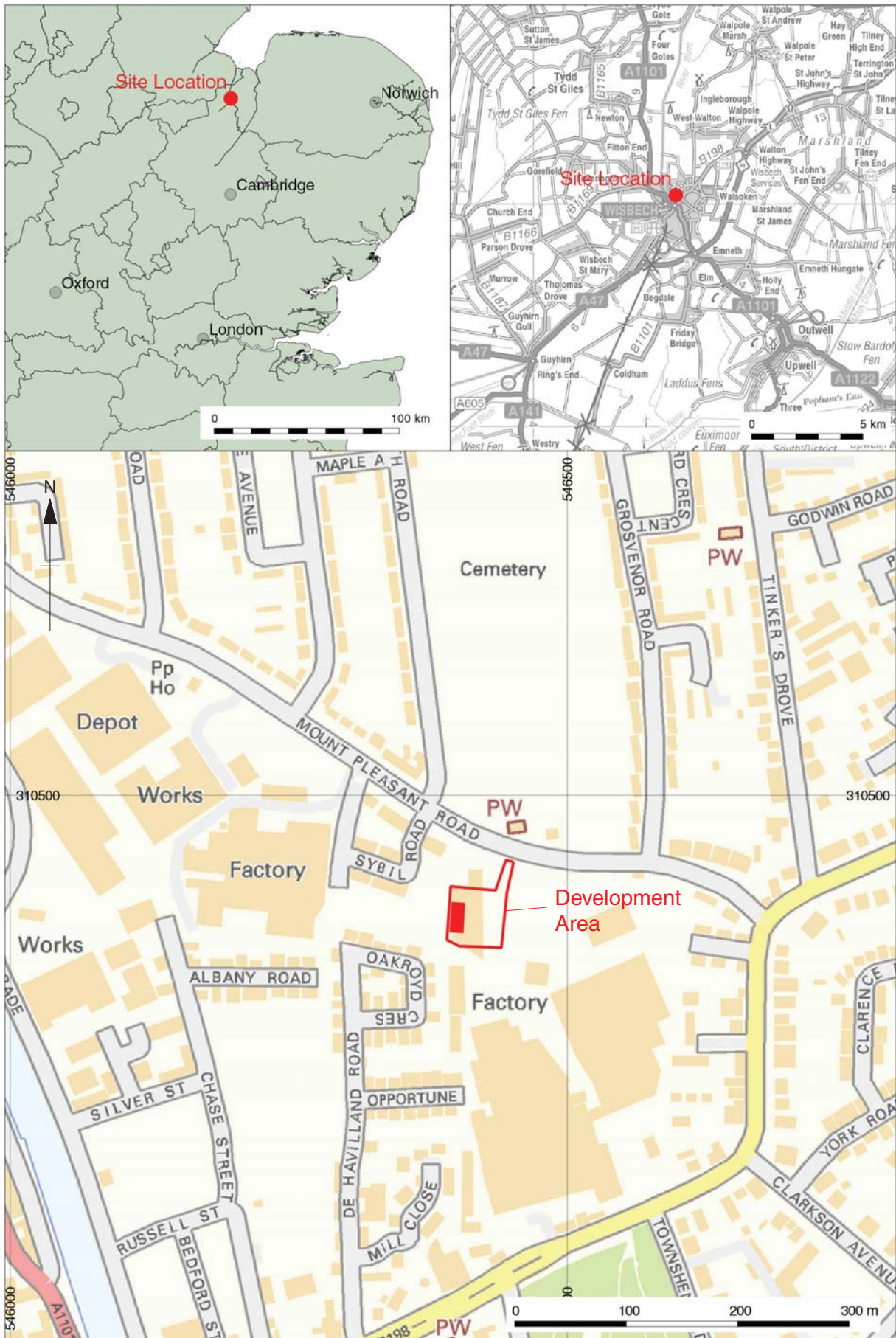
Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:

A small amount of post medieval material was encountered within the first 0.5m below the modern surface, no other finds or archaeological features were encountered within the trench. The deposits encountered are likely to represent flood deposits as encountered elsewhere in Wisbech, however, in this location they do not appear to be sealing any evidence of settlement or other archaeological activity.



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Figure 1: Site location

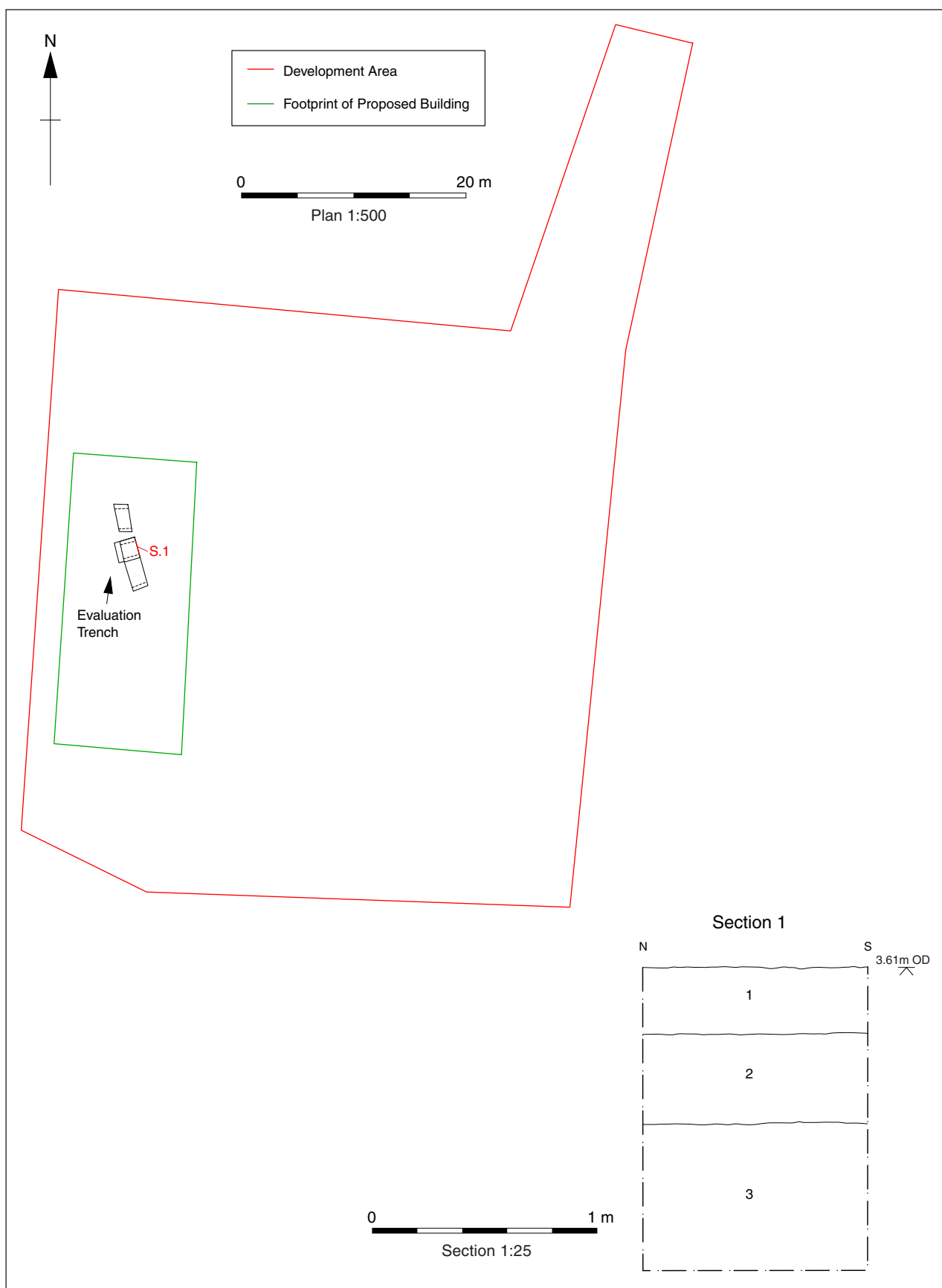


Figure 2: Location of evaluation trench and Section 1



Plate 1: Photo of Section 1, west facing section, 2m scale



Plate 2: Working shot, taken from north west



Plate 3: Working shot, taken from south



Plate 4: Photo of test slot, excavated with narrow bucket, 2m scale



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599
e: [oaeast@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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