

Archaeological Evaluation at Millfield Primary School, Littleport



Archaeological Evaluation Report



June 2014

**Client: Cambridgeshire
County Council**

OA East Report No: 1625
OASIS No: oxfordar3-181142
NGR: TL 5608 8608

Archaeological Evaluation at Millfield Primary School Littleport

Archaeological Evaluation

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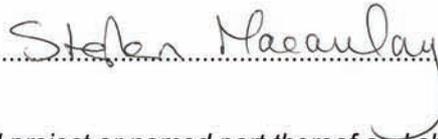
Report Date: June 2014

Report Number: 1625
Site Name: Millfield Primary School, Littleport
HER Event No: CHER 4184
Date of Works: May 2014
Client Name: Cambridgeshire County Council
Client Ref: 16847
Planning Ref: tbc
Grid Ref: TL 5608 8608
Site Code: LITMIL14
Finance Code: LITMIL14
Receiving Body: Cambridgeshire County Council

Accession No:

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Signed:



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Summary

On the 27th May 2014 an archaeological evaluation was carried out at Millfield Primary School, Littleport in advance of a planned development on the site.

Works entailed the excavation of a 15m length of trenching covering a 27m² area of the site. The evaluation identified only two features both of which were found to be post-medieval field drains indicating agricultural land use during this period.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at Millfield Primary School, Littleport
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council, 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 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 As described by the British Geological Survey data the site lies on a geological boundary between superficial deposits of Oadby Member Anglian diamicton (boulder clay till) to the north and Glaciofluvial Deposits of Mid Pleistocene Sand And Gravel to the south. Both of these superficial deposits overly Jurassic Period Kimmeridge Clay Formations. On site the geology recorded as context **001** comprised a mix of blueish grey clay and reddish yellow sands and gravels.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Important prehistoric remains have been found on the north and north-west side of Littleport island more than 5km away including a Bronze settlement sites at Plantation Farm. Neolithic and Bronze Age activity have been found approximately 1km to the south-west of Victoria Street (HER CB141). Two Bronze Age sparse lithic scatters have also been recorded approximately 1km and 2km to the south-west of the subject site (Hall 1996 fig.11 sites 17 and 18). The Iron Age is very poorly represented with only two sites recorded in the whole parish, both located to the north-west of Littleport island on higher ground at Butchers Hill approximately 3km to the north-west.
- 1.3.2 Roman remains from Camel Road saltern adjacent to the south side of the Old Croft River (CHER CB 139 and 140) 200m to the north of the subject site. Here, there was evidence of industrial activity involving the processing of salt (Macaulay 2002). There are potentially as much as 30 saltern sites along the Old Croft River (Macaulay 2002). The Roman road of Akeman Street is thought to run through Littleport, no trace of the road, however, has yet been found north of Ely. A Roman-British settlement was found to the west of Millfield, north of the school in 1999 (CHER ECB141), however subsequent evaluation within the school, conducted by OA East (formerly CAMARC/CCC AFU) did not record this archaeology extending into the school from the Northwest (CHER ECB2404). This excavation recorded a Roman pit and small undated gully.
- 1.3.3 Saxon settlement at Littleport was probably based around the *hithe* where the Old Croft ran close to the island. A Saxon cemetery was identified in 1999 at 'The Barns', with 97 graves were excavated to the south of the new road.

- 1.3.4 The Domesday Book (1086) records a *vill* and it is assumed that the present town cover part (if not all) of the medieval centre.
- 1.3.5 The site lies on an area of land still known as Littleport fields which prior to large scale drainage of the late 19th and 20th centuries represented the majority of the decent arable land in the area. Parts of this land were unlawfully enclosed as early as the mid 16th century and the process continued gradually through to complete enclosure in the mid 19th century (Pugh 2002).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The Author would like to thank Cambridge County Council for commissioning the works, Their Agents Coulson Building Group and David Watson of Coulson and Sons Ltd who acted as their on site representative.

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 The evaluation should include a programme of linear trial trenching to adequately sample the threatened available area, while the topsoil and any lower soil horizons be checked for artefact content.

2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a rubber tracked 360° excavator using a 1.8M wide toothless ditching bucket.

2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by John Diffey

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 Site Conditions were reasonable with dry weather although recent rainfall had saturated the ground and this combined with a high water table meant there was a lot of water ingress at the base of the trenches.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The results are subdivided below by trench number

3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 Trench 1 measured 10×1.8m and was aligned NNE-SSW. The natural geology **001** was reached at a depth of 1m (18.69mOD) at the SSW end of the trench and 0.6m (19.26mOD) at the NNE end of the trench.

3.2.2 Two features were identified cutting the natural geology the first **006** comprised a brick and tile field drain measuring 3m in length and aligned NNW-SSE from the NE corner of the trench. The construction used mould formed bricks of yellow clay oxidised to red on the outer surface containing chalk and flint temper, these measured 65mm×110mm×220mm with an arched hollow in the base. The arched hollow was then set on a flat yellow tile measuring 12mm×110mm×220mm. This construction dates from the late 18th / early 19th century (Arnott 1974).

3.2.3 The second feature cutting the natural geology was another field drain **007** which ran for 7m from the SSW end of the trench aligned N-S and running out of the western edge of the trench 3m SSW of its NNE end. This drain was of a later tile pipe construction with the pipe set into a cut 0.2m wide and 0.2m deep this type of field drain construction dates to the mid to late 19th century (Arnott 1974).

3.2.4 The natural geology and features cutting it were overlain by a layer of buried subsoil **002** comprising a dark soft greyish blue sandy silt containing small sub rounded flint stones. Overlaying this buried subsoil was a buried topsoil **003** comprising a dark soft greyish brown sandy silt containing small sub-rounded flint stones. **003** was in turn overlain by a layer of modern construction debris **004** comprised mainly of brick tile mortar and concrete, this layer was thickest at the SSW end of the trench thinning toward the NNE before petering out 3m from the NNE end of the trench. The material in **004** derives from the recent construction of the school building immediately south of the site. This layer of construction debris was overlain by a layer of imported topsoil **005** comprised of a mid brown sandy silt and formed a turfed area adjacent to the school playing fields.

3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 Trench 2 measured 5×1.8m was aligned ESE-WNW and ran from the SSE end of trench 1 which it adjoined. Trench 2 was devoid of archaeology and had the same stratigraphic make up as is described in trench 1 above.

3.4 Finds Summary

3.4.1 No finds were recovered.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 The evaluation found no evidence of prehistoric activity on the site indicating that the dense bronze age and Roman activity found north of the site did not extend this far. It is possible that the sites importance as arable and pasture land in the pre-drained fenland environment prevented its development for settlement or industry. The only archaeological evidence found were the post-medieval field drains which likely represent early drainage schemes to improve productivity after the land was enclosed in the 18th or 19th centuries. The only other archaeological contexts recorded relate to the modern period and represent previous development of the school.

4.1.2 Although very little archaeological evidence was found on the site and the evidence that was found was of relatively recent date the lack of prehistoric evidence for settlement or industry and the dominance of agriculture as an activity of the site in the more recent past may have some significance in understanding the wider landscape of Littleport and its uses.

4.2 Recommendations

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

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description				Orientation	NNE-SSW	
Trench contained two post medieval field drains cut into the clay and gravel geology 001 . this layer was overlain by a buried subsoil and topsoil 002 and 003 respectively which in turn were overlain by a layer of modern construction debris 004 which in turn was overlain by a layer of imported topsoil 005 which formed the schools playing fields.				Avg. depth (m)	0.8	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	10	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
001	Layer	-	-	Natural Geology	-	-
002	Layer	-	0.22-0.34	Buried Subsoil	-	-
003	Layer	-	0.12-0.22	Buried Topsoil	-	-
004	Layer	-	0.24-0.00	Modern Construction Debris	-	modern
005	Layer	-	0.12-0.28	Imported Topsoil	-	modern
006	Brick and Tile Field drain	0.1	0.075		Brick and tile	Post-medieval
007	Field Drain	0.2	0.2		-	Post-medieval
Trench						
General description				Orientation	WNW-ESE	
Trench was devoid of archaeology stratigraphy consisted of clay and gravel geology 001 , overlain by a buried subsoil and topsoil 002 and 003 respectively, overlain by a layer of modern construction debris 004 , overlain by a layer of imported topsoil 005 .				Avg. depth (m)	0.95	
				Width (m)	1.8	
				Length (m)	5	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
001	Layer	-	-	Natural Geology	-	-
002	Layer	-	0.28-0.34	Buried Subsoil	-	-
003	Layer	-	0.10-0.12	Buried Topsoil	-	-
004	Layer	-	0.2-0.24	Modern Construction Debris	-	modern
005	Layer	-	0.28-0.3	Imported Topsoil	-	modern

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnott, C. 1974 History of Field Drainage
Available: <http://newsletters.hadas.org.uk/newsletter-index/newsletter-037-march-1974>
Accessed: 5 June 2014
- Gdaniec, K. 2014 Brief for an archaeological evaluation at Millfield Primary School Littleport.
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- Macaulay, S.P. 2014 Specification for archaeological evaluation at Millfield Primary School Littleport.
- Pugh, R. (Ed.) 2002 A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 4: City of Ely; Ely, N. and S. Witchford and Wisbech Hundreds

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	<input type="text" value="oxfordar3-181142"/>			
Project Name	<input type="text" value="Evaluation at Millfield School Littleport"/>			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	<input type="text" value="27-05-2014"/>	Finish	<input type="text" value="27-05-2014"/>
Previous Work (by OA East)	<input type="text" value="Yes"/>	Future Work	<input type="text" value="Unknown"/>	

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	<input type="text" value="LITMIL14"/>	Planning App. No.	<input type="text"/>
HER No.	<input type="text" value="4184"/>	Related HER/OASIS No.	<input type="text"/>

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	<input type="text" value="Direction from Local Planning Authority - Direction 4"/>
Development Type	<input type="text" value="Large/Medium Scale Extensions to Existing Structure"/>

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input checked="" 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
<input type="text" value="Field Drain"/>	<input type="text" value="Post Medieval 1540 to 1901"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Select period..."/>

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	East Cambridgeshire	Grange Lane Littleport, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 1HW	
Parish	Littleport		
HER			
Study Area	500m2	National Grid Reference	TL 5608 8608

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Kasia Gdaniec
Project Design Originator	Stephen Macaulay
Project Manager	Stephen Macauley
Supervisor	John Diffey

Project Archives

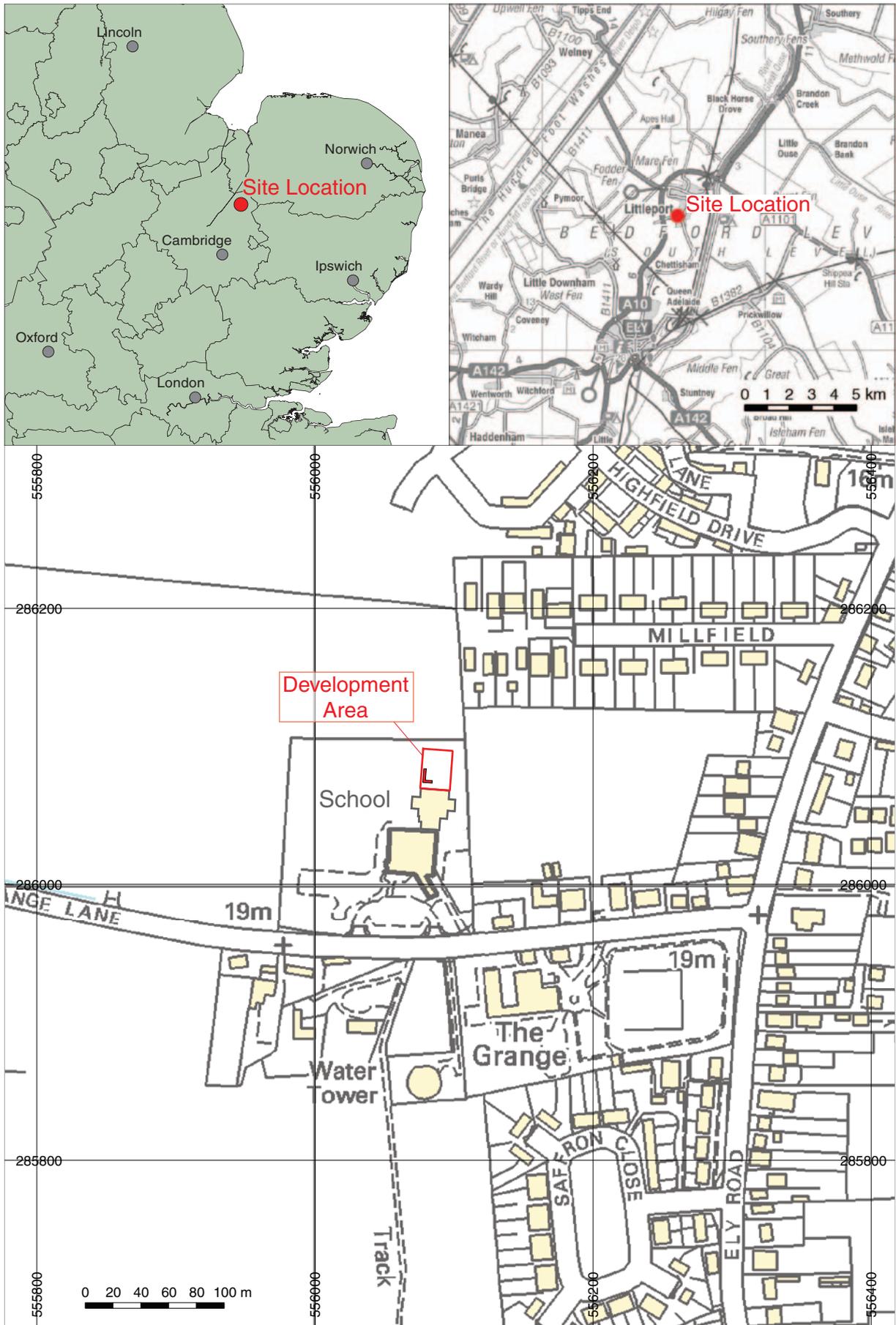
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Location ...	Location ...	Location ...
Accession ID ...	Accession ID ...	Accession ID ...

Archive Contents/Media

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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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 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 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 type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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

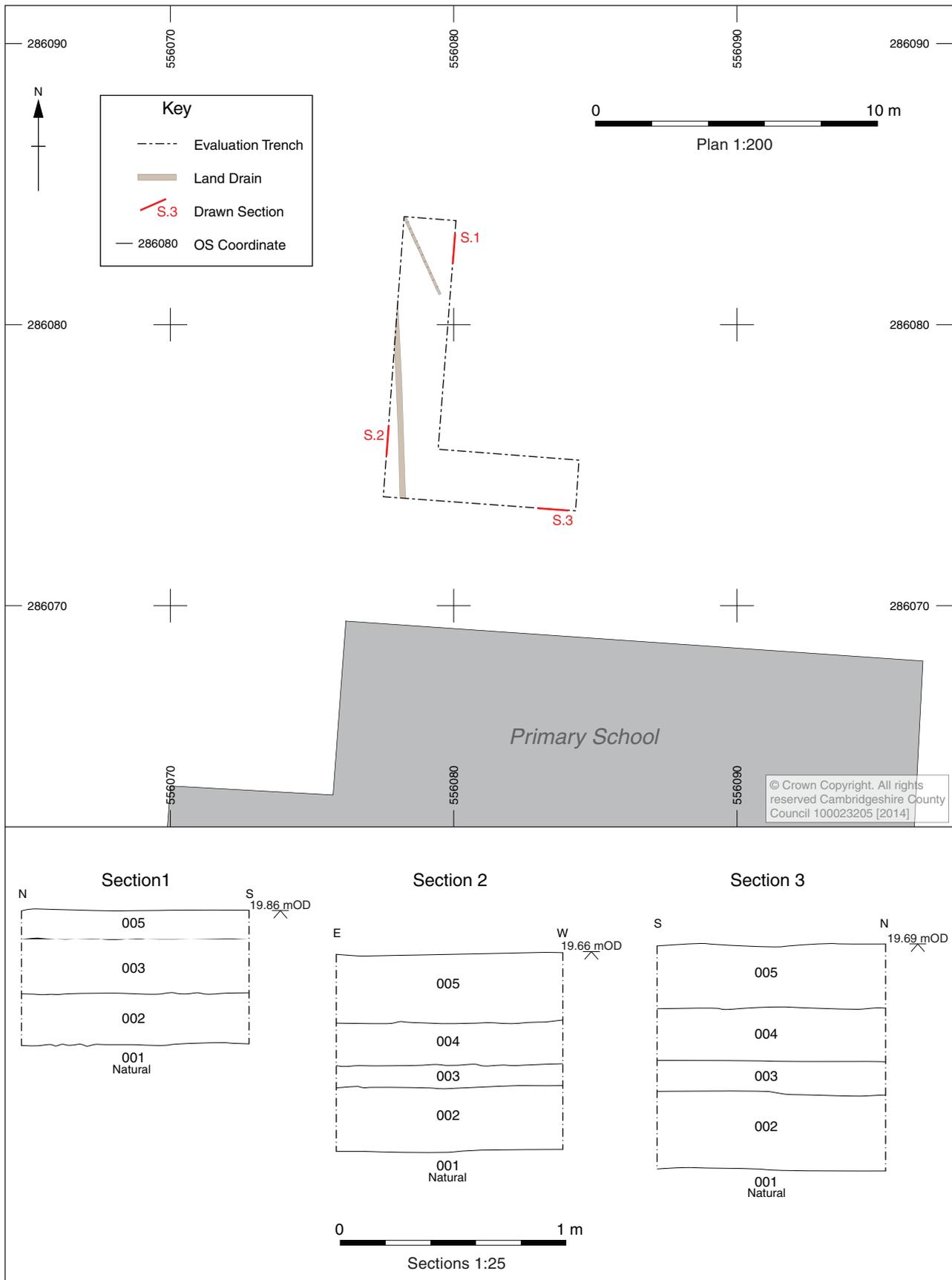


Figure 2: Trench plan and drawn sections



Plate 1: Site Overview from South-east (trench 2 in foreground).



Plate 2: Trench 1 Overview from North-north-east.



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