

A Post-Medieval Ditch at Manor Court Road, Witchford, Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



March 2012

Client: DCH Construction

OA East Report No: 1337

OASIS No: oxfordar3 119802

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A post-medieval ditch at Manor Court Road, Witchford, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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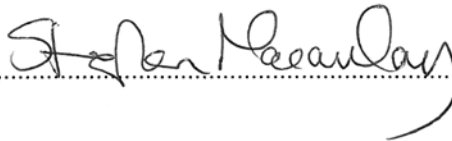
Report Date: March 2012

Report Number: 1337
Site Name: Manor Court Road, Witchford
HER Event No: ECB 3719
Date of Works: February 2012
Client Name: DCH Construction
Client Ref: Text
Planning Ref: 08/01045/FUL
Grid Ref: TL 5041 7893
Site Code: WFDMCR12
Finance Code: WFDMCR12
Receiving Body: CCC Stores, Landbeach

Accession No:

Prepared by: Tom Phillips
Position: Project Officer
Date: March 2012

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Position: Project Manager
Date: March 2012
Signed:



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Summary.....5

1 Introduction.....7

 1.1 Location and scope of work.....7

 1.2 Geology and topography.....7

 1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....7

 1.4 Acknowledgements.....8

2 Aims and Methodology.....9

 2.1 Aims.....9

 2.2 Methodology.....9

3 Results.....10

 3.1 Introduction10

 3.2 Trench 1.....10

 3.3 Trench 2.....10

 3.4 Trench 3.....10

4 Discussion and Conclusions.....11

 4.1 Discussion.....11

 4.2 Significance.....11

 4.3 Recommendations.....11

Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory.....12

Appendix B. Bibliography13

Appendix C. OASIS Report Form14

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Site location map and trench layout
Fig. 2 Ditch 6 in trench 3

List of Figures

- Plate 1 Trench 1 looking west with land drain visible
Plate 2 Trench 3 looking south-west

Summary

On the 20th February 2012 Oxford Archaeology East conducted an evaluation on land to the north of 7 Manor Court Road, Witchford, Ely, Cambridgeshire. The site is located within the historic core of Witchford village, close to the 13th century church of St. Andrew.

Three trenches, each measuring 10m in length, were machine excavated within an area measuring approximately 35m x 25m. The only significant archaeological feature encountered was a post-medieval ditch in Trench 3, orientated north-north-east to south-south-west. The ditch represents a small boundary which can be seen on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map, where it encloses a small building, adjacent to a track which is now Manor Court Road.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted on land to the north of 7 Manor Court Road, Witchford, approximately 3 miles west of Ely, Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1). The proposed development includes the construction of 5 houses and associated external works on land formerly occupied by garages.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application 08/01045/FUL), 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 on Boulder Clay, which overlies Kimmeridge Clay (British Geological Society 1980). The site was relatively flat, measuring approximately 9m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The development site is located within the historic core of the village of Witchford. The parish church of St. Andrew, a Grade II Listed Building, is situated 125m to the south. The oldest parts of the present church date to the 13th century (VCH 1967, 177), although it is believed the original church was Norman. Directly to the east of the church and opposite the entrance to Manor Court Road is Ivy House, which dates to the 17th century.
- 1.3.2 The area marked by Manor Court Road to the east and Common Road/Manor Road to the west, is based on older field boundaries. This area forms a large sub-square enclosure with the height of the land dropping off in all directions. The presence of the church at the southern edge of this area suggests this may be the oldest part of the village with the street names hinting at the location of the manor in the vicinity. The current site sits within this area.
- 1.3.3 The village itself was of great importance in the medieval period; Domesday Book refers to the two hundreds of Ely meeting at 'Wiceford', and the name 'Witchford Hundred' is mentioned from 1128 (VCH 1967, 176).
- 1.3.4 Archaeological investigations at Witchford Airfield, approximately 1.2km to the east, revealed Iron Age and Early Roman enclosures and settlement (Holmes 2008). Further evaluation uncovered additional settlement activity to the north, including a series of ditches, gullies and pits, dating from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age to Late Iron Age (Simmonds and Mason 2008). Investigations during the construction of a water

pipeline revealed Roman settlement in the same vicinity (Hancock 2006). Larger scale excavations in advance of the new Witchford Recycling Centre, to the north of the airfield, revealed two Early Bronze Age beaker pits, a Late Iron Age boundary ditch and a possible Early Roman mortuary enclosure, which contained a cremation and two inhumations with unusual grave goods (Atkins 2011).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The site was excavated by Tom Phillips, managed by Stephen Macaulay and monitored by Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council. Site survey was carried out by Taleyna Fletcher. The report is illustrated by Dave Brown.

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 programme of linear trial trenching be carried out to adequately sample the threatened area. Three trenches, each measuring 10m x 1.6m (Fig. 1), were machine excavated to the horizon of the natural geology.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by Taleyna Fletcher using a Leica GPS 1200 system to locate the position of the trenches and record their heights.
- 2.2.4 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.
- 2.2.5 The water table was relatively high with standing water visible in the base of the trenches at approximately 8.6m OD. Otherwise, site conditions were favourable.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Results are described in order of trench, starting with the earliest deposit or feature in each. Full details by trench/context appear in Appendix A.

3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 Trench 1 was located in the south of the development area, orientated west-north-west to east-south-east. It measured 10m in length. The only feature present was a large ceramic land drain extending east to west from the eastern end of the trench (Plate 1). It was visible for approximately 6m before disappearing beyond the trench edge. The geology was sealed by a layer of mid brown silty clay subsoil (3), measuring 0.3m thick. The subsoil was sealed by a layer of topsoil (2), which measured 0.3m thick and contained small fragments of brick. Sealing the topsoil was a layer of hardcore/made ground (1), measuring 0.1m thick.

3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 Trench 2 was located in the west of the development area, orientated north-north-east to south-south-west. It measured 10m in length. No archaeological features were present. The geology was sealed by mid brown silty clay subsoil layer (3), measuring 0.15m thick. The subsoil was sealed by a layer of topsoil (2), which measured 0.2m thick and contained small fragments of brick. Sealing the topsoil in the southern end of the trench was a layer of hardcore/made ground (1), measuring 0.3m thick. The made ground did not appear in the northern end of the trench as this area had been covered in grass.

3.4 Trench 3

3.4.1 Trench 3 was located between trenches 1 and 2, orientated north-east to south-west and measuring 10m in length. The geology was sealed by mid brown silty clay subsoil layer (3), measuring 0.2m thick. The subsoil was truncated by the only archaeological feature of any significance on the site, a linear ditch (6) in the middle of the trench, orientated north-east to south-west (Fig. 2 and Plate 2). Ditch 6 measured 1.82m wide and at least 0.6m deep. Due to the high water table it was not possible to fully excavate the ditch although the angles of the sides suggest it would not have been more than another 0.3m deep. Ditch 6 contained two fills, the lower of which (5) was a light greyish brown silty clay, containing no finds. The upper fill (4) was a mid greyish brown silty clay, which contained two sherds of post-medieval glazed redware pottery (13g), 150g of animal bone and a broken bottle, no older than Victorian in date. The upper fill of the ditch was sealed by a layer of topsoil (2), which measured 0.3m thick.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 The single feature discovered, ditch **6**, correlates with a boundary marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885. At that time, the site was located within the south-east corner of a large field which is today occupied by Manor Court Road, Meadow Close and Manor Close, and all the associated house plots. Within the south-east corner of this large field a small building is marked with an enclosing boundary. This boundary matches the position of ditch **6**. Manor Court Road itself only extends a short distance from Main Street; the majority of the modern day road, including directly east of the site, is marked as a track. Ditch **6** should also have appeared in the north end of Trench 1 but was not present. Either the boundary was not ditched at that point or it diverted slightly.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 The findings of the evaluation are of low archaeological significance. It has revealed the presence of a post-medieval boundary ditch visible on historic maps and has confirmed that the remainder of the site is devoid of archaeological features.

4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 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	WNW-ESE	
Trench 1 contained a single land drain.				Avg. depth (m)	0.6	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Length (m)	10	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.1	Made ground	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	Brick fragments	-
3	Layer	-	0.3	Subsoil	-	-
Trench 2						
General description				Orientation	NNE-SSW	
Trench 2 was devoid of archaeological features.				Avg. depth (m)	0.5	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Length (m)	10	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.3	Made ground	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
Trench 3						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench 3 contained a single linear ditch (6) of post-medieval date.				Avg. depth (m)	0.5	
				Width (m)	1.6	
				Length (m)	10	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.3	Made ground	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
4	Fill	-	0.34	Upper ditch fill	Pot, animal bone, part of glass bottle	Post-medieval
5	Fill	-	>0.26	Lower ditch fill	-	-
6	Cut	1.82	>0.6	Linear boundary ditch	-	Post-medieval

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atkins, R., 2011, 'Beaker Pits and a probable mortuary enclosure on land off Stirling Way, near Witchford, Ely'. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, Volume C

British Geological Society, 1980, *Ely. England and Wales Sheet 173. Solid and Drift Edition 1:50000 Series*.

Hancock, A., 2006, *Archaeological Evaluation: Ely WT to Haddenham WT, Cambridgeshire*. Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd: Milton Keynes

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Simmonds, C. and Mason, P., 2008, *Archaeological trial excavation of land south-east of Lancaster Way Business Park (Unit D), Ely, Cambridgeshire*. Northamptonshire Archaeology

VCH, 1967, *The Victoria County History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 4: City of Ely; Ely, N. and S. Witchford and Wisbech Hundreds* (edited by R.B. Pugh)

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3 119802		
Project Name	Evaluation at Manor Court Road, Witchford, Cambridgeshire		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	20-02-2012	Finish	20-02-2012
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	WFDMRC12	Planning App. No.	08/01045/FUL
HER No.	ECB 3719	Related HER/OASIS No.	n/a

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS 5
Development Type	Rural Residential

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 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 checked="" 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
Ditch	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901	Pottery	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
Drain	Modern 1901 to Present	Animal bone	Uncertain
	None		Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	East Cambs	7 Manor Court Road, Witchford, Ely, CB6 2JW	
Parish	Witchford		
HER	Cambridgeshire		
Study Area	950 sq. m	National Grid Reference	TL 5041 7893

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Kasia Gdaniec
Project Design Originator	Stephen Macaulay
Project Manager	Stephen Macaulay
Supervisor	Tom Phillips

Project Archives

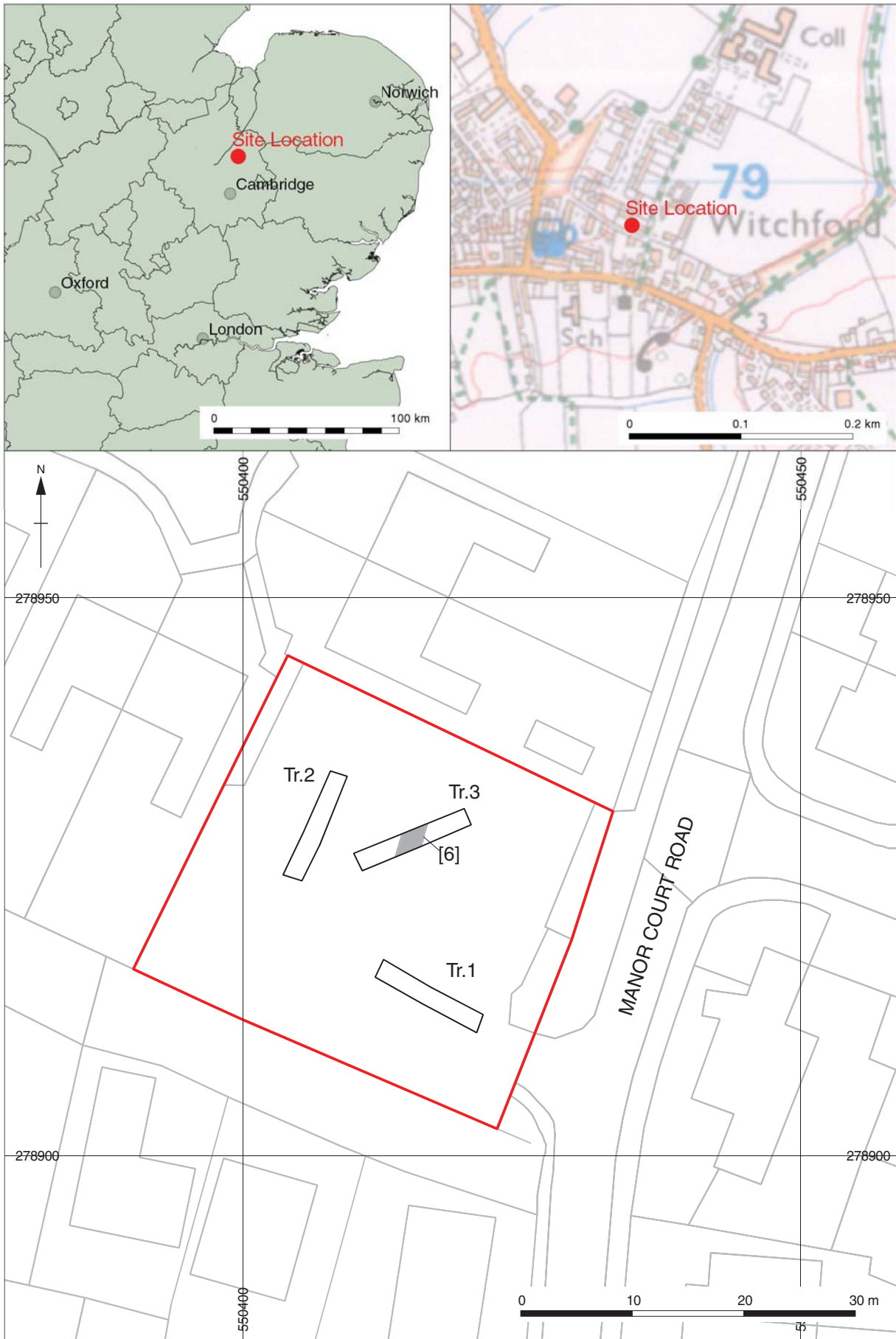
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CCC County Stores	OA East	CCC County Stores
WFDMCR12	WFDMCR12	WFDMCR12

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"/>
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Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
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<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing
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<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
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<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:



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Figure 1: Location map and trench layout. Development area outlined (red)

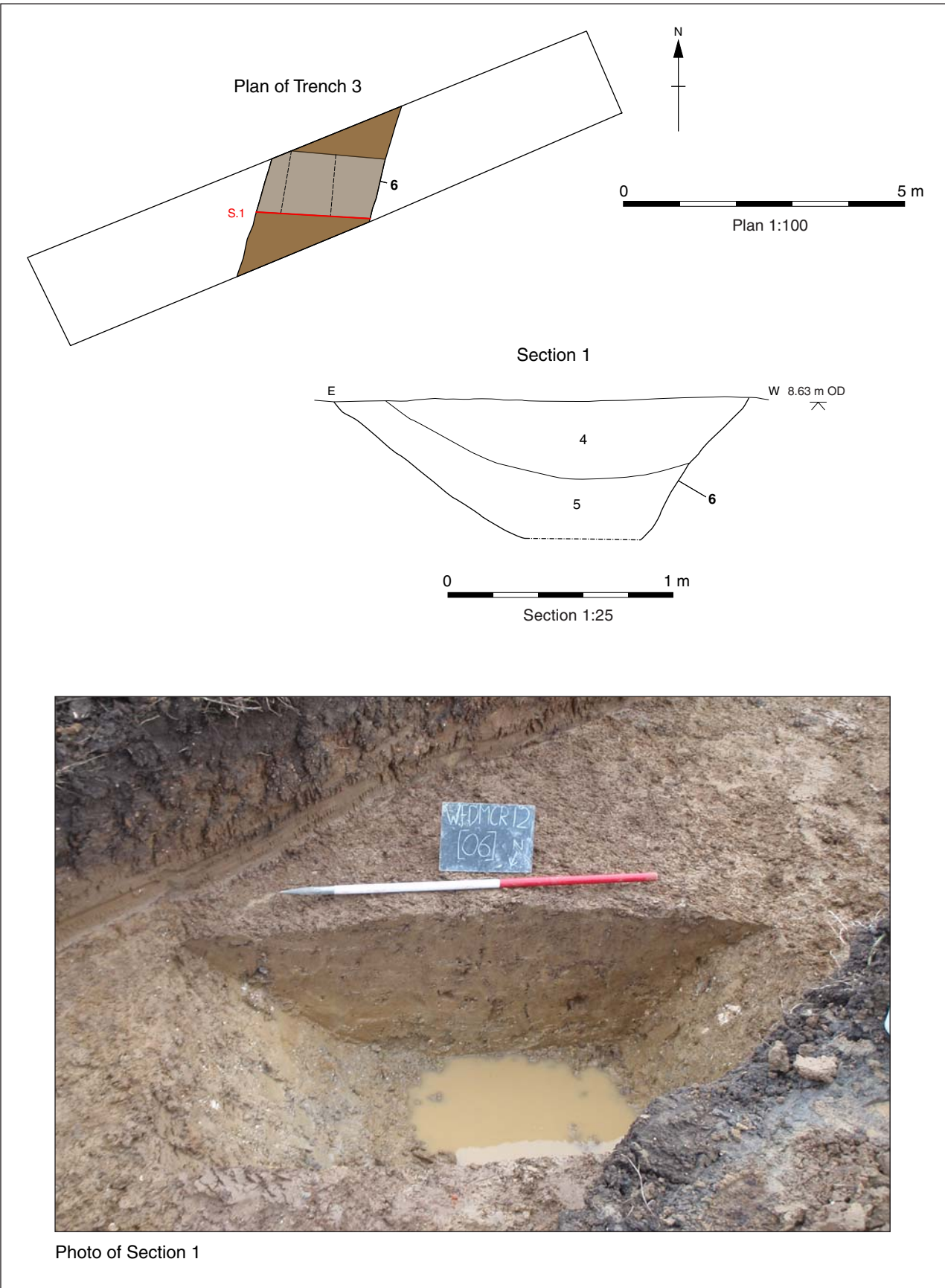


Figure 2: Plan of Trench 3 and detail of Section 1



Plate 1: View of Trench 1 looking West



Plate 2: View of Trench 3 looking South West



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