# 44 The Butts, Soham, Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



December 2008

Client: Construct Reason Ltd

OA East Report No: 1046 OASIS No: 45877

NGR: TL 5969 7245



# 44 The Butts, Soham, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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Report Date: December 2008

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Report Number:

1046

Site Name:

44 The Butts, Soham

**HER Event No:** 

e.g. CHER 12345

**Date of Works:** 

July 2008

**Client Name:** 

Construct Reason Ltd

**Planning Ref:** 

07/01333/FUM

**Grid Ref:** 

TL 5969 7245

Site Code:

SOHBUT08

**Finance Code:** 

SOHBUT08

**Receiving Body:** 

CCC Stores, Landbeach

Prepared by:

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Position:

Supervisor Date 19-12-08

Date:

Date 19-12-08

Checked by:

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Position:

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Date:

Date 19-12-08

Signed:

Date 19-12-06

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# **Summary**

Between 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008, eight trenches were excavated on land behind 44 The Butts, Soham in advance of a small housing development. No significant archaeological features were identified. However, a small assemblage of struck and burnt flint was recovered from the subsoil.

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#### 1 Introduction

# 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted on the site of 44 The Butts, as well as land behind Nos 46, 40, 38, 36 and 34 The Butts, Soham.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application 07/01333/FUM), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC).
- 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 and Policy Guidance 16 Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CAPCA, 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 on an area of 2<sup>nd</sup> Terrace Gravel Deposits overlying the Lower Chalk at c. 6m OD on a slight southwest-facing slope, at the crest of which runs the Fordham-Soham road.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Lying above the fen edge on the south side of Soham, the area is known, chiefly from find spot evidence, to contain prehistoric to Romano-British activity. Occasional early prehistoric finds have been made in the area, e.g. unlocated Neolithic finds (HER 07087), unlocated Mesolithic axes (HER07098) and later prehistoric features were uncovered during work at St Andrews House in the centre of the town (ECB15776 Atkins 2004).
- 1.3.2 Excavations in the vicinity of the development site have demonstrated something of the intensity of occupation in the discovery of Bronze Age and Iron Age field systems connected to settlement (postholes of buildings and associated pits) (CHER Numbers CB14631, CB14632, ECB455). This occupation continued into the Roman period with the expansion of the field systems and an increase in domestic activity and population. The Fordham to Soham road runs approximately 150m to the east of the development area and is possibly the line of the Roman road that connects these villages to Ely in the northwest. The road was partially excavated at the Fordham Bypass excavations to the southeast (Mortimer 2005).
- 1.3.3 The closest archaeological intervention to the development area was a trench evaluation carried out by CAM ARC at the former allotments on Fordham Road (TL 6025 7250) some 400m due east of the subject site. This revealed extensive prehistoric

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and Romano-British remains, uncovering evidence of possible Bronze Age field systems and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age settlement. The southern part of the site, closest to the Fordham Road, showed extensive evidence for Romano-British settlement with rectangular ditched enclosures on two different alignments. The settlement may have been bounded to the north by a metalled surface, possibly a track or hollow way (or the line of the Roman Rd?). To the south of the track, feature density increased dramatically with ditches and pits of both prehistoric and Roman date.

- 1.3.4 Relatively close to The Butts (250m to the east) an Early Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery was found when laying out the current cemetery in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century (HER 07027). Seven bodies with datable grave goods where found. The location of the Saxon settlement associated with this cemetery is currently unknown. However, Early Saxon cemeteries often occupied higher ground immediately above settlement sites.
- 1.3.5 There is potential for archaeological remains on the site from all periods but perhaps with the emphasis on the later prehistoric and Romano-British.

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 The author would like to thank David Wyatt of Construct Reason Ltd. who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Richard Mortimer. Ross Lilley and Nick Gilmour carried out the excavation and Louise Bush surveyed the trenches. The evaluation was monitored for CAPCA by Kasia Gdaniec.

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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.
- 2.1.2 In the event that archaeological remains are present the evaluation will seek to consider appropriate methodologies and suitable resourcing levels for excavation.

# 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that at least 5 % of the total development area should be subject to trial trenching.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked 360 excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 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.
- 2.2.4 Subsoil was inspected for artefact retrieval, including the excavation of 1m square test pits prior to re-machining of trenches.
- 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 Conditions on site were generally good, with occasional light showers.

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## 3 Results

#### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 A total of 7 trenches were excavated across the site. The trenches were machined slowly and finds were collected from the subsoil as it was taken down in layers. In places one meter square test pits were hand dug through part of the subsoil prior to machining to the geological horizon. Only Trench 1 contained any sub-surface archaeological features
- 3.1.2 The topsoil and subsoil remained similar across the site. The topsoil was a dark brownish grey silty organic sand with occasional gravel and the subsoil was a mid-pale greyish brown silty sand with occasional gravel. Sections were drawn of the soil profile in every trench and two representative sections are shown here (sections 11 and 16, fig.2).

#### 3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 Three small pits and two stake holes were excavated, each of which contained finds of post-medieval date, or a fill indicative of a similar date. They were all circular or subcircular in plan, with diameters between 0.40m and 0.12m and depths between 0.36m and 0.04m. They were all filled with a dark brownish grey silty organic sand with occasional gravel, that was similar to the topsoil.

# 3.3 The Test pits

3.3.1 A total of six test pits, each one meter square, were excavated through areas of subsoil. This was to enable analysis of the density of artefacts and to recover samples of the artefacts from the subsoil. The finds from the test pits are listed in the table below, they do not include test pits 26, 28 and 29, from which no finds were recovered.

Context	Finds
17	Oyster shell
23	Burnt flint
24	Post medieval pot, 3 struck flints

# 3.4 Finds Summary

- 3.4.1 The majority of the finds from the site came from the subsoil. Although there was post-medieval building material, and occasional oyster shells found throughout this subsoil.
- 3.4.2 The small number of worked and burnt flints recovered from the subsoil is indicative of background prehistoric activity.
- 3.4.3 The only piece of pottery that was not post-medieval was recovered from subsoil in Trench 2. This was an abraded Roman-British body sherd in a hard gritty grey fabric.

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## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

## 4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 There was a, perhaps surprising, lack of pre-modern archaeological features revealed on the site, although it is possible that any shallow features present had been removed by medieval ploughing. The sparse finds assemblage recovered from the subsoil would seem to suggest a general lack of activity in the area in all periods. However, the small number of struck and burnt flints recovered from the subsoil, do show limited prehistoric activity in the area (Appendix D).
- 4.1.2 The depth of subsoil suggests that it represents a medieval plough soil, although there was no evidence of ridge and furrow. The paucity of medieval finds from this suggest that it was not heavily manured, perhaps due to the distance of the site from settlement.

# 4.2 Significance

4.2.1 This evaluation has shown that this site was outside of any area of Roman or Medieval settlement around Soham. However, it has confirmed prehistoric activity in the area. As well as this, Medieval ploughing has been shown to have taken place here.

#### 4.3 Recommendations

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

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# APPENDIX A. HEALTH AND SAFETY STATEMENT

- A.1.1 OA East will ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with relevant Health and Safety Policies, to standards defined in *The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act, 1974* and *The Management of Health and Safety Regulations, 1992,* and in accordance with the manual *Health and Safety in Fieldwork Archaeology* (SCAUM 1997).
- A.1.2 Risk assessments prepared for the OA East office will be adhered to.
- A.1.3 OA East has Public Liability Insurance. Separate professional insurance is covered by a Public Liability Policy.
- A.1.4 Full details of the relevant Health and Safety Policies and the unit's insurance cover can be provided on request.

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# APPENDIX B. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
General d	lescription	1			Orientation		E-W
					Avg. depth	(m)	0.86
	ntained six erlying a na			ures. Consists of soil and	Width (m)		2.10
3003011 01	criyirig a ric	aturar or 3	nty Saria.		Length (m)	37.70	
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	d	ate
1	Layer	-	0.38	Topsoil	-		-
2	Layer	-	0.28	Subsoil	-		-
3	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	Burnt flint, flint, lava quern		-
4	Layer	-	0.38	Modern rubble layer		Мо	dern
5	Fill	0.25	0.06	Possible pit 6	Pottery	Post-N	/ledieval
6	Cut	0.25	0.06	Possible pit	-	Post-Medieval	
7	Fill	0.10	0.04	Possible pit 8	-	Post Medieval?	
8	Cut	0.10	0.04	Possible pit	-	Post-Medieval?	
9	Fill	0.40	0.09	Possible pit 10	Oyster shell	Post-Medieval?	
10	Cut	0.40	0.09	Possible pit		Post-Medieval?	
11	Fill	0.30	0.36	Pit 12	Brick, oyster shell	Post-Medieval	
12	Cut	0.30	0.36	Pit	-	Post-N	/ledieval
13	Fill	0.12	0.22	Possible post hole 14	-	Post-M	ledieval?
14	Cut	0.12	0.22	Possible post hole	-	Post-m	edieval?
15	Fill	0.18	0.17	Possible post hole 16	-	Post-M	ledieval?
16	Cut	0.18	0.17	Possible post hole	-	Post-Medieval?	
24	Test pit	1	0.10	Subsoil	Struck flint, Post-med pot	-	
Trench 2							
General d	lescription	1			Orientation	east-wes	
	_		_		Avg. depth	(m)	0.76
	rface archa erlying a na			Consists of topsoil and	Width (m)		1.8
Caboon OV	onymig a ne		y Jana.		Length (m)		20
Contexts							•

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context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
1	Layer	-	0.34	Topsoil	-	-	
2	Layer	-	0.18	Subsoil	-	-	
17	Test pit	1	0.10	Subsoil	Oyster shell	-	
19	Layer	-	0.24	Subsoil	Burnt flint, Roman Pot	-	
Trench 3							
General d	escription				Orientation	East-west	
				<b>.</b>	Avg. depth	<b>(m)</b> 0.80	
No sub-sui subsoil ove				Consists of topsoil and	Width (m)	1.8	
Caboon ove	onying a ne	itarar or o	nty daria.		Length (m)	15	
Contexts						,	
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
1	Layer	-	0.38	Topsoil	-	-	
2	Layer	-	0.22	Subsoil	-	-	
20	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	Struck flint, Burnt flint, Post-Med. Pot	-	
29	Test pit	1	0.1	Subsoil	-	-	
Trench 4							
General de	escription				Orientation	east-west	
					Avg. depth	<b>(m)</b> 0.70	
No sub-sui subsoil ove				Consists of topsoil and	Width (m)	1.8	
Subsoil Ove	enying a na	iturai 0i S	iity Sariu.		Length (m)	8.5	
Contexts						1	
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
1	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil	-	<u> </u>	
2	Layer	-	0.24	Subsoil	-	-	
21	Layer	-	0.18	Subsoil	Struck flint	-	
30	Test pit	1	0.10	Subsoil	-	-	
Trench 5							
General d	escription				Orientation	north- south	
					Avg. depth	(m) 0.76	
				Consists of topsoil and	Width (m)	1.8	
subsoil ove	anying a na	แนเสเ 01 S	iity sand.		Length (m)	7.4	

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Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	da	te
1	Layer	-	0.40	Topsoil	-	-	
2	Layer	-	0.20	Subsiol	-	-	
23	Test Pit	1	0.15	Subsoil	Burnt flint	-	
27	Layer	-	0.16	Subsoil	-	-	
Trench 6							
General de	escription				Orientation	1	north- south
	_		_		Avg. depth	(m)	0.55
No sub-sur subsoil ove				Consists of topsoil and	Width (m)		1.8
3003011 0 00	inying a ne	iturai oi s	iity Saria.		Length (m)		15
Contexts					'		
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	da	te
1	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil	-	-	•
2	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-	•
Trench 7							
General de	escription				Orientation	1	east-west
					Avg. depth	(m)	0.62
No sub-sur subsoil ove				Consists of topsoil and	Width (m)		1.8
oubcon ove	onymig a ne	itarar or o	nty carrai		Length (m)		15
Contexts					·		
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds date		te
1	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-	•
2	Layer	-	0.12	Subsoil	-	-	•
22	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	Flint	-	•
28	Test Pit	1		Subsoil	-	-	
Trench 8							
General de	escription				Orientation	1	east-west
					Avg. depth	(m)	0.52
No sub-sur subsoil ove				Consists of topsoil and	Width (m)		1.8
Subsoli Ove	anying a ne	iturai oi s	iity Sariu.		Length (m)		25.5
Contexts					'		
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	da	te
1	Layer	-	0.22	Topsoil	-	-	
2	Layer	-	0.10	Subsoil	-	-	
		1		1		1	

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25	Layer	_	0.18	Subsoil	Bone, flint	-
26	Test pit	1	0.18	Subsoil	-	-

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# APPENDIX C. FINDS REPORTS

#### C.1 Flint

#### Introduction

- C.1.1 The archaeological investigations at the site recovered eleven struck flints and just under 0.4kg of burnt stone fragments (Table 1). This report quantifies and describes the material, assesses its significance and recommends any further work required to enable the material to achieve its full research potential.
- C.1.2 All of the lithic material was recovered from sub-soil horizons and presumably represents material incorporated from an original surface scatter or from disturbed shallow features

# Quantification

Quantin	- Catton							
Context	Decortication Flake	Flake	Core	Retouched	Condition	Suggested date	Burnt Stone (no.)	Burnt Stone (wt:g)
01		1			SA	MBA+		
01	1				SA	UD		
01		1			SA	UD		
03							1	17
03		1			A	BA		
19							3	107
20			1		SA	MBA+	3	130
21			1		SA	MBA+		
22		1			SA	BA	2	119
23		·					1	3
24	1	1			SA	?BA	·	
25		·		1	A	BA	·	
25		1			A	UD		

*Table 1: Quantification of Lithic Material by Context* (NB SA = slightly abraded, A = Abraded, SH = sharp: BA = Bronze Age, MBA+ = Middle Bronze Age to Iron Age, UD = undateable)

#### **Burnt Flint**

C.1.3 Burnt stone weighing a total of 376g was recovered from five separate contexts. Where identifiable, it consisted of fragmented nodular flint similar to that used for the struck assemblage (see below). It had been variably but mostly fairly intensively burnt to the degree that it all had become 'fire crazed' but the fragments varied in colour from dark brown/grey to white. It was consistent with having been heated to a high temperature such as from having been in a hearth or oven. Once removed from the ground, burnt flint is undateable but its presence does confirm the use of fire at the site.

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#### Struck Flint

#### Raw Materials

C.1.4 All of the struck pieces were made from a translucent black/dark brown fine-grained flint, which had a variably weathered, but often thick and rough, cortex. It would have potentially been of good knapping quality but contained frequent thermal flaws which had hampered flake production on several occasions. The raw materials would have been obtained from glacio-fluvial deposits, easily available in the locality, with comparable types being commonly used in the area from the Mesolithic through to Late Bronze Age (eg Edmonds et al. 1995; Mortimer and Connor forthcoming)

#### Condition

C.1.5 All of the material showed some evidence of post-depositional chipping and abrasion (edge rounding) and in some cases this was quite heavy. It would be consistent with the material having spent some time within an active burial matrix and supports the suggestion that the material was originally deposited as a surface scatter.

# **Technology/Typology**

- C.1.6 The assemblage principally consisted of flakes with two cores and one retouched implement also present. The flakes were variable but tended to be thick and short and with unmodified, wide and obtuse striking platforms. Hard hammer percussion was used throughout and dorsal surfaces often retained substantial proportions of cortex or exhibited multi-directional flake scars. They were comparable to Martingell's (1990) 'squat' flakes and typical of later prehistoric industries.
- C.1.7 The only certain retouched piece was the flake from context [25]. This was thick, partially cortical and had been struck from a keeled striking platform. It had rather crudely executed steep, straight but slightly denticulated, scalar retouch along both lateral margins and its distal end. It was not a 'formal' type but was probably used in a similar manner to a denticulated scraper. The flake from context [03] may also have been lightly retouched along one edge but its generally chipped condition precluded positive identification of deliberate modification.
- C.1.8 The core from context [20] consisted of a thermally fractured angular chunk weighing 57g that had been hit, seemingly randomly, leaving two conchoidal flake scars and a series of incipient cones of percussion (Hertzian cones). The core from context [21] was similar to that from context [20] but weighed 72g and had been more convincingly worked. They both represented raw materials that had been opportunistically struck with the intent of producing irregularly shaped thick flakes and, although not refitting, complemented the flakes that were recovered.

#### **Discussion of the Struck Flint**

C.1.9 The flakes, cores and the retouched implement form a relatively technologically homogeneous assemblage typical of later second or first millennium BC industries. Despite the wealth of flintwork from all periods having been found in the vicinity, nothing that could confidently be attributed to earlier periods was identified, although the presence of some earlier pieces cannot be explicitly ruled out. The assemblage would be typical of later prehistoric flintworking, which is usually considered to be opportunistically undertaken, and, consequently, struck flint from these periods is usually found in small quantities scattered amongst the settlements and field-systems. Although no sub-surface features were identified, both the struck flint and the burnt



stone would indicate that the site was part of an extensive later prehistoric settlement system.

# Significance

C.1.10 The struck flint, and to a lesser extent the burnt flint, indicate prehistoric activity at the site, although the assemblages were too small to indicate the precise chronology or nature of that occupation. They do have the potential to contribute to a wider appreciation of prehistoric landscape use in the area, and comparable burnt stone and struck flints have been recovered in the vicinity, at Eye Hill and Cloverfield Drive in Soham and, to the south, at the Landwade Road and Fordham by-pass sites, for example (Edmonds et al. 1999; Mortimer forthcoming; Mortimer and Connor forthcoming). Taken together, sites such as these indicate a persistent, if so far unquantified, later prehistoric occupation along the Fen margins in this part of Cambridgeshire.

#### Recommendations

C.1.11 Due to the size of the burnt and struck flint assemblages, no further analytical work is recommended. They do have potential to contribute to a wider appreciation of landscape use in the area and therefore they should therefore be recorded in the Historic Environment Record and a brief description included in any published account of the fieldwork.

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# APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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# APPENDIX E. OASIS REPORT FORM

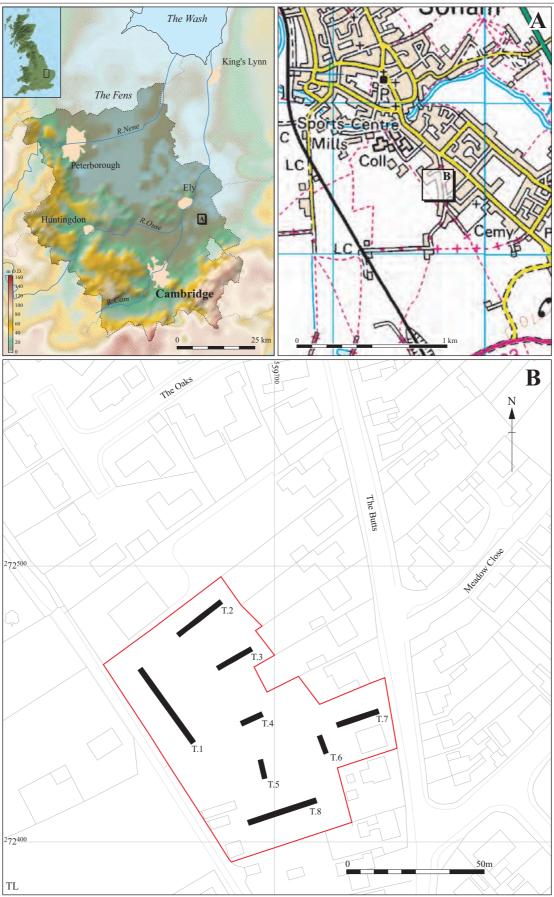
OASIS NUMBER: oxfordar3-	45877	
PROJECT DETAILS		
Project dates (fieldwork)	Start: 15-07-08	End: 10-07-08
Previous work (by us)	no	Future work no
PROJECT LOCATION		
County: Cambridgeshire	District: East Cambridgeshire	Parish: Soham
HER: Cambridgeshire		
HER Event Number: ECB 2945		
Site area (sq.m or ha): 5100 sq. n	n	
PROJECT ORIGINATORS		
Organisation:	OA East	
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and	countryside advice team
Project design originator	Richard Mortimer	,
Director/supervisor	Nick Gilmour	
Project manager	Richard Mortimer	
Name AND type of sponsor or	Construct Reason Ltd.	
funding body	Housing development	
PROJECT ARCHIVE	Trousing development	
Notes on completing this section:		
	completely carefully and accurately to detail w	hat is in your archive.
Location: Cambridge County Sto		ID: SOHBUT08
Physical Archive		
Contents (Please 'Y' all that appl	v):	
Animal Bones	Ceramics Y Environmental	Glass Human Bone
Industrial	Leather Metal	Textiles Wood
l — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —	Worked Stone/Lithics Y Other	Textiles
Digital Archive	Worked Storie/Elitrics 1 Strict	
U	trations/specialist reports/other digital informa	tion relating to these categories (Please 'Y' all
that apply).	adono, oposianot roporto, ouror digitar imorma	aon rolating to those outogenes (r loude 'r an
	eramics Environmental	Glass Human Bone
· —	Leather Metal	Stratigraphic Survey Y
Textiles	Textiles Worked Bone	Worked Stone/Lithics Y
None	Other Training Balls Line	Worked Glorio, Elance
	th any of the above information is present. Ra	ster Images are digital photographs. Vector
Images are those produced by CA	AD/illustrator (Please 'Y' all that apply).	otor images are aigital priotographic, vector
Databases Databases	GIS Geophysics	Raster Images Y
	Moving Image Spreadsheets	Survey Y
	Virtual Reality	
Paper Archive	Virtual (Cality	
	ical illustrations/specialist reports/any other in	formation relating to these categories (Please
'Y' all that apply).		
Animal Bones	Ceramics Environmental	Glass Human Bone
Industrial	Leather Metal	Textiles Wood
Textiles	Textiles Worked Bone	Worked Stone/Lithics Y
None	Other Worked Borie	
	n any of the above information is present (Ple	ase 'V' all that anniv):
Aerial Photo	Context Sheet Y Corresponden	
Manuscript	Map Matric	
Notebook/Research	· 🛏	
· —	ÿ ' <b> </b>	an Y Report Section Y
Survey   Archive Notes: The erchive in our	Other     rently held at OA East, 15 Trafalgar Way, Bar	Hill Combridge CD22 9CO and will be
	rently held at OA East, 15 Tratalgar Way, Bar re County Museum in due course, under the fo	
deposited with the Cambridgeshir	e County Museum in due Course, under the it	Dilowing accession number301 ID0 100



Drawing Conventions  Plans
Plans
Limit of Excavation —————
Deposit - Conjectured
Natural Features —
Sondages/Machine Strip
Intrusion/Truncation
Illustrated Section S.14
Archaeological Deposit
Excavated Slot
Modern Deposit
Cut Number 118
Sections
Limit of Excavation
Cut —
Cut-Conjectured
Deposit Horizon
Deposit Horizon - Conjectured
Intrusion/Truncation
Top Surface/Top of Natural
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing
Cut Number 118
Deposit Number 117
Ordnance Datum 18.45m OD   ⊼
Inclusions

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Figure 1: Location of trenches with the development area outlined (red)



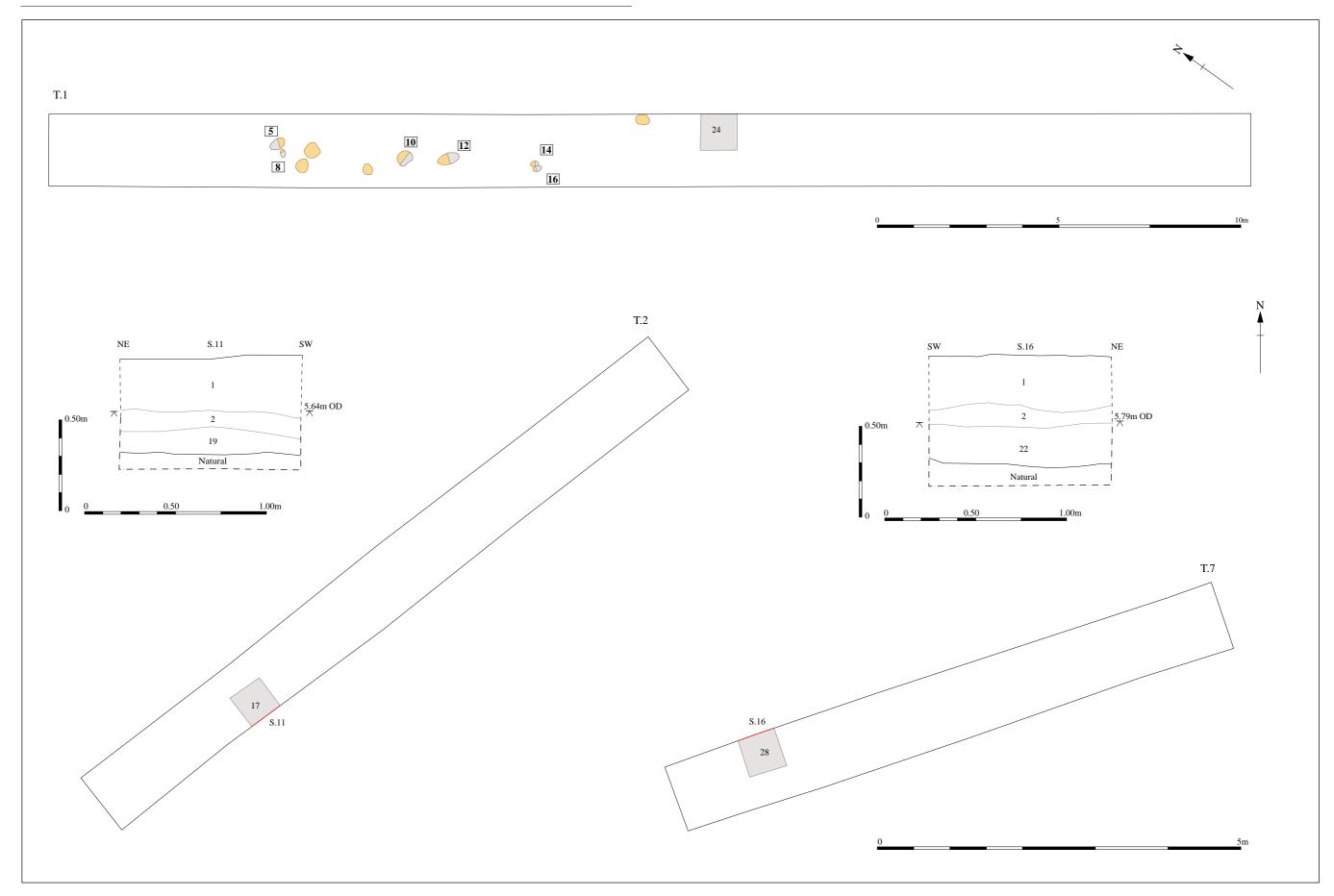


Figure 2: Trench plans and sections

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