

St John's Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge



Archaeological Evaluation Report



December 2016

Client: St John's College

OA East Report No: 2020

OASIS No: oxfordar3-270529

NGR: TL 4702 6169

St John's Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge

Archaeological Evaluation

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Report Date: December 2016

Report Number: 2020
Site Name: St John's Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge
HER Event No: ECB 4808
Date of Works: December 2016
Client Name: St John's College
Client Ref: NA
Planning Ref: 16/0215/FUL and S/0343/16/FL
Grid Ref: TL 4702 6169
Site Code: CAMSJI16
Finance Code: CAMSJI16
Receiving Body: Cambridgeshire County Council Stores
Accession No: ECB 4808
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Date: 14/12/2016
Signed:

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Summary

Between the 2nd and the 6th of December 2016, Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) conducted a trial trench evaluation at the car park of the Platinum building, on St John's Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge (centred TL 4702 6169). Three linear evaluation trenches were opened. A single undated ditch sealed by the sub-soil was recorded crossing Trench 2 along with two natural hollows. No other archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) at St John's Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge (centred TL 4702 6169; Fig. 1) in advance of proposed development work at the site. The development is for a new office and research building with associated structures, including a new substation and bin stores, ancillary plant, cycle stores and hard and soft landscaping.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission, in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas (2016) of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CHET; Planning Application 16/0215/FUL and S/0343/16/FL), supplemented by an approved Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by OA East (Brudenell 2016).
- 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 CHET, 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 Cambridgeshire Archive in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the northern fringe of Cambridge city, c.3km north of the city centre (centred TL 4702 6169; Fig. 1). It lies within the southernmost corner of St John's Innovation Park, south the Platinum and Jeffreys buildings between the junctions of Milton Road (A1309) and Cowley Road. The redevelopment area is c.1.3ha in extent, and includes existing paved car parking, hedging and a grassland area in the south-east (0.5ha).
- 1.2.2 The site is situated on Second Terrace river gravel deposit overlying a Gault formation mudstone bedrock (BGS Geology of Britain Viewer, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). Deposits of chalk marl were also observed at lower levels in the east of the site (Ladd 2014). The site is broadly flat and lies between c.11-12m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 There is extensive evidence for prehistoric activity in the area. Most significant, in the context of this investigation, are cropmarks of a potential Bronze Age ring-ditch previously identified on aerial photographs of the site (CHER 08326). These may be the remnants of a ploughed-out Bronze Age barrow.
- 1.3.2 In the wider landscape, Palaeolithic find spots are recorded to the south, with a small ovate handaxe found in the garden of 377 Milton Road (CHER MCB19188) and a number of hand axes and flakes recovered from the Milton Road gravel pits (CHER 05224). Worked stone objects dated as 'prehistoric' were also recovered from the vicinity in 1949 (CHER 05219).
- 1.3.3 Additional evidence of prehistoric activity close to the site includes Bronze Age Beaker fragments from Milton (CHER 05532), two Late Bronze Age hoards from gravel pits 900m to the south-west of the development site (CHER 05452), and a number of

Bronze Age features 800m to the north (CHER CB14682), including a further potential ring-ditch (CHER 08329). Further prehistoric evidence was seen in archaeological evaluations carried out at both the Cambridge Science Park (MCB17525) 700m to the north-west and Nuffield Road (CHER MCB15907) 800m to the south.

- 1.3.4 Iron Age remains have also been found near to the site, including an extensive settlement at the Milton Landfill Site, c.1km to the north-west (CHER 11669A), which included roundhouses, field boundaries, pits and a possible mortuary enclosure. A group of Iron Age pits (CHER 05452a) has also been recorded c.900m to the south-west of site, whilst prehistoric pottery with no exact date or provenance was also found to the south on Green End Road (CHER 05218).
- 1.3.5 There is widespread evidence from the surrounding area for Roman settlement activity, particularly at the site of the sewage works, 1km to the east (CHER 05281), and the Milton Landfill site, c.1km to the north-west (CHER 11669). The former lies on the north terrace of the river Cam, where a Romano-British settlement, including human remains, was excavated prior to 1903. At the Milton Landfill, excavations in the 1990s revealed the remains of a Roman-British villa estate, with structures, enclosure, and burials.
- 1.3.6 Further Roman activity was recorded to the north of the sewage works in the form of Roman pottery (CHER 05536) and ditches (CHER 05308). To the south south-west of the site a Roman coin was recovered from Green End Road in 1954 (CHER 05541), a Roman ring was also recovered to the west (CHER 05217).
- 1.3.7 Medieval and post-medieval agricultural features, including ditches and furrows relating to ridge and furrow field systems, have been widely recorded in the area surrounding the site. Most notably, medieval furrows and an undated ditch were revealed in a 2014 trial trench evaluation on the grassland area of the site (CHER MCB20106; Ladd 2014; Fig. 1). The putative site of a medieval cross, depicted on a map circa 1838-1840 (CHER 05229), also lies directly to the south of the development area.
- 1.3.8 Post-medieval ditches were also revealed in investigations at the north end of St John's Innovation Park (MCB15916; 8330), whilst similar features and furrows have been found at Cambridge Science Park (MCB17526; MCB20484), and to the south at Cowley Park (MCB15918)
- 1.3.9 There are extensive records of modern archaeology close to the site. These include a Second World War Pillbox to the north-west (MCB16399), the crash site of a Dornier bomber near the Milton Road Allotments (MCB19267) and records relating to the disused/dismantled railway line (MCB19611, CHER10117, MCB19625).
- 1.3.10 The Ordnance Survey maps of 1897 and 1904 (nls/national Library of Scotland <http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore>) locate the site in open fields adjacent to Rectory Farm (later changed to Trinity Farm by 1961). The 1944 Ordnance Survey Land Utilisation Map listed the site as being on arable land including fallow, rotation grass and market gardens.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA East would like to thank St John's College for funding the work, and Savills for commissioning the project, particularly Chris Goldsmith, Garth Hanlon, Claire Mills and Raka Vavrincz. The archaeological work was managed by Dr Matthew Brudenell. The fieldwork was carried out by Steve Graham and Malgorzata Kwiatkawska. The site was surveyed by Malgorzata Kwiatkawska. The brief was written by Andy Thomas of HET, who also monitored the work. Thanks are also extended to the illustrator and the editor.

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 with the north-west corner of the site, in the potential location of a Bronze Age ring-ditch previously recorded from aerial photography. (CHER 08326).

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required the excavation of three trenches at the site, totalling 40m of linear trenching. These comprised of one 12m long trench, one 13m long trench, and a 15m long trench (Fig. 2). The trenches were laid out to avoid live services at the site, and were positioned in the approximate location of a previously recorded Bronze Age ring-ditch.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a small tracked excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 2.2.3 The site survey was carried out using a Leica GS08 with Smartnet live data feed.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned visually and 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 The depth, nature and potential artefact content of the plough soil, lower soil horizons, colluvial or other masking deposits were investigated and recorded across the site.
- 2.2.6 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.
- 2.2.7 Because of the paucity of archaeological features, no environmental sampling was carried out at the site.
- 2.2.8 Site conditions were good, being dry throughout with a combination of bright and overcast spells.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Three trenches were excavated in the north-west corner of the site (Fig. 2). Trench 2 contained a single ditch, whilst two natural hollows were recorded in Trenches 1 and 2. No features were recorded in Trench 3. The pit and hollows were sealed by a clay silt subsoil which was in turn sealed by layers of modern clay, hardcore, and in Trenches 1 and 3, concrete. The trenches are described below in numerical order, supplemented by further trench/context information in Appendix A.

3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 2, Plate 1) was parallel to the western edge of the development area on a north-east to south-west alignment. The trench was located in a parking bay and was 15m long with a width of 1.80m. Undisturbed geology was reached between 0.94m and 1.04m below the top of the trench.

3.2.2 Located 6.75m from the northern end of the trench was a hollow emerging from the eastern side of the trench and running under the western side. The hollow (7) was broadly sub-circular in plan and measured 4.10m in diameter and 0.28m depth. It displayed steep sides and a U-shaped profile, and was filled with a mid brown sand silt with small stones (6). No finds were recovered from the hollow.

3.2.3 The hollow was sealed by the subsoil (4), the thickness of which ranged from 0.20m to 0.34m along the trench. Above this was a layer of redeposited dark blue grey clay containing fragment of modern concrete (3). The thickness of this ranged from 0.08m to 0.10m. Above, in the southern half of the trench on the eastern side, was a layer of modern concrete 0.10m thick. This was sealed by a modern layer of hardcore (2), a purple grey mixture of clay, sand and stones, 0.18m thick. This was sealed by a lens of building sand 0.07m thick, modern concrete (1) 0.18m thick, and modern brick laid in a herringbone pattern which formed the surface of the car park.

3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 Trench 2 (Fig. 2, Plate 2) was located in a parking bay to the east of Trench 1. It was aligned north-east to south-west and was 11m long with a width of 1.80m. Undisturbed geology was reached between 0.76m and 0.80m below the top of the trench.

3.3.2 Located at the northern end of the trench was a ditch (9) (Fig 2, Section 2; Plate 4), aligned north-west to south-east. The ditch was steep sided with a U shaped profile, 0.40m wide and 0.22m deep. The ditch contained a single fill (8) of mid brown sand silt. No finds were recovered from the ditch.

3.3.3 Adjacent to ditch 9 in the north-west corner of the trench was hollow 11. This feature was broadly sub-circular in plan with a steep sided U-shaped profile and a diameter of 1.05m and a depth of 0.09m. Its single fill was a light grey brown sand silt (10) containing no finds.

3.3.4 Both features in the trench were sealed by the subsoil (4), the thickness of which was 0.20m along the trench. Above this was a layer of redeposited dark blue grey clay with fragments of modern concrete (3). The thickness of this layer was 0.07m to 0.10m. This was sealed by a modern layer of hardcore (2), a purple grey mixture of clay, sand and stones, 0.31m thick. This was sealed by a lens of building sand 0.06m thick, modern concrete (1) 0.17m thick, and modern brick laid in a herringbone pattern which formed the surface of the car park.

3.4 Trench 3

3.4.1 Trench 3 (Fig. 2, Plate 3) was located to the north of Trench 2 on a north-west to south-east orientation parallel to the Platinum Building. The trench was 11m long with a width of 1.80m. Undisturbed geology was reached between 0.74m and 0.92m below the top of the trench.

3.4.2 No features were found in the trench. The geology was sealed by the subsoil (4), the thickness of which was 0.18m along the trench. At the eastern end of the trench this was overlain by a layer of redeposited sand and gravel 0.22m thick. This was sealed over by the dark blue grey clay with fragments of modern concrete (3), the thickness of which ranged from 0.10m to 0.18m. In the centre of the trench this was sealed by a layer of modern concrete 0.20m thick and 3.60m wide. A modern layer of hardcore (2) was recorded overlying the concrete that comprised a purple grey mixture of clay, sand and stones whose thickness ranged from 0.12m to 0.16m. This was sealed by a lens of building sand 0.07m thick, modern concrete (1) 0.20m thick, and modern brick laid in herringbone pattern which formed the surface of the car park.

3.5 Finds Summary

3.5.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered from any of the trenches or features.

3.6 Environmental Summary

3.6.1 No environmental samples were taken.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 With the exception of a single ditch in Trench 2, no archaeological features were recorded within the area evaluated. Although there had undoubtedly been some truncation as a result of the modern development, this had not significantly impacted on the subsoil, which survived to a depth of 0.18-0.34m across the trenches.
- 4.1.2 Ditch **9** in Trench 2 is likely to represent part of a field boundary or land division. Whilst undated, it is sealed by the subsoil, and shares characteristics with a similar linear feature recorded in the 2014 trial trench evaluation to the south-east (Ladd 2014; ditch **3/12/14**). This was a small, undated ditch sealed by a medieval/post-medieval subsoil. Ditch **9** may belong to the same pre-medieval boundary system, but is on a slightly different alignment.
- 4.1.3 The evaluation revealed no indication of the potential Bronze Age ring-ditch and “suspect marks” (possibly frost cracks) originally recorded in 1984 (CHER 08326). If surviving, the location of the ring-ditch and any associated funerary activity is likely to be to the north-east, beneath footprint of the Platinum Building.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 The subsoil survives at least partially intact beneath the car park area, which suggests that the paucity of dated archaeological features and the absence of finds from the subsoil is a result of this area lying beyond any immediate focus of pre-modern settlement or settlement-related activity. The results of the evaluation suggest that the potential for any further substantive archaeological remains or deposits within the development area is therefore low.

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	NE-SW	
Trench contains a single hollow (7). the trench profile consists of levelling layers and subsoil overlying a natural of clay sand.				Avg. depth (m)	0.80	
				Width (m)	1.80	
				Length (m)	15	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.40	Concrete and brick	-	Modern
2	Layer	-	0.18	Hardcore	-	Modern
3	Layer	-	0.08	Levelling Layer	-	Modern
4	Layer	-	0.30	Subsoil	-	-
5	-	-		Natural	-	-
6	Fill	-	0.28	Fill of 7	-	-
7	Cut?	4.10	0.28	Hollow	-	-
Trench 2						
General description				Orientation	NE-SW	
Trench contains a ditch (9). and hollow pit (11), the trench profile consists of levelling layers and subsoil overlying a natural of clay sand				Avg. depth (m)	0.80	
				Width (m)	1.80	
				Length (m)	11	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.36	Concrete and brick	-	Modern
2	Layer	-	0.31	Hardcore	-	Modern
3	Layer	-	0.07	Levelling Layer	-	Modern
4	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
5	-	-		Natural	-	-
8	Fill		0.22	Fill of 9	-	Unknown
9	Cut	0.40	0.22	Ditch Cut	-	Unknown
10	Fill		0.09	Fill of Hollow 11	-	Unknown
11	Cut	1.05	0.09	Hollow	-	Unknown

Trench 3						
General description				Orientation	NW-SE	
Trench devoid of archaeology, the trench profile consists of levelling layers and subsoil overlying a natural of clay sand.				Avg. depth (m)	0.80	
				Width (m)	1.80	
				Length (m)	11	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
1	Layer	-	0.45	Concrete and brick	-	Modern
2	Layer	-	0.16	Hardcore	-	Modern
3	Layer	-	0.18	Levelling Layer	-	Modern
4	Layer	-	0.18	Subsoil	-	-
5	-	-		Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey. 1981. *Cambridge: Sheet 188*. Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS)

Brudenell, M.,. 2016 *St Johns Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge. Written Scheme of Investigation*. O A East.

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Thomas, A.,. 2016 *St Johns Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge. Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*. Cambridgeshire County Council.

Electronic Sources

<http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15&lat=52.2333&lon=0.1534&layers=10&b=1>
(accessed 29/11/16)

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (accessed 29/11/16)

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-270529			
Project Name	St Johns Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	02-12-2016	Finish	06-12-2016
Previous Work (by OA East)	Yes		Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	CAMSJ16	Planning App. No.	16/0215/FUL
HER No.	ECB 4808	Related HER/OASIS No.	n/a

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - Direction 4
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 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 checked="" 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 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	Uncertain	none	Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	Cambridge	St Johns Innovation Park, Cowley Road, Cambridge,
Parish	Cambridge City	
HER	Cambridgeshire	
Study Area	0.04ha	National Grid Reference
		TL 4702 6169

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	Matthew Brudenell
Project Manager	Matthew Brudenell
Supervisor	Steve Graham

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC Stores	O A East	CCC Stores
CAMSJI16	CAMSJI16	CAMSJI16

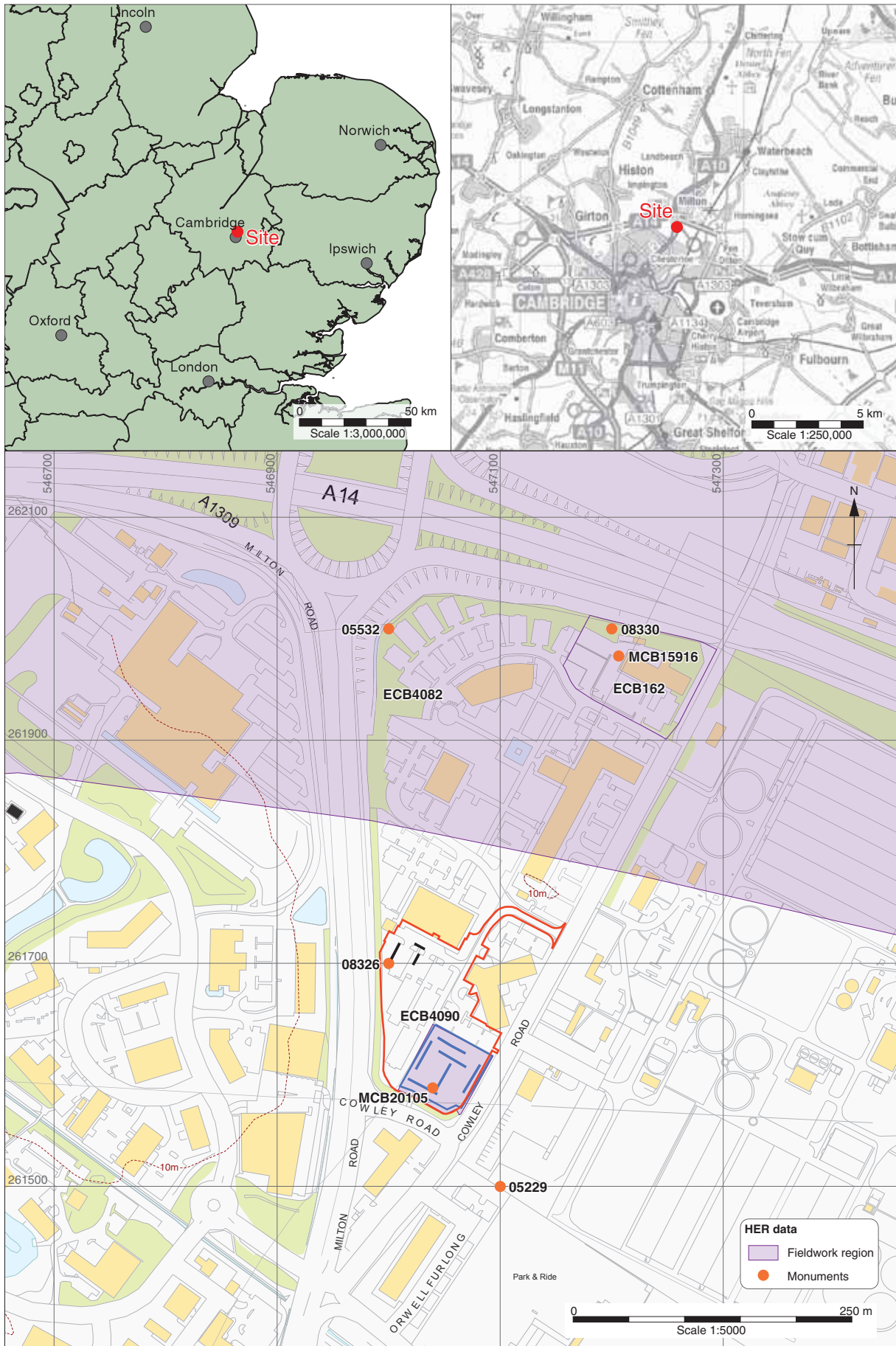
Archive Contents/Media

	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input checked="" 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:

Site previously excavated in 2014, OA East report 1577.



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Figure 1: Site location map with the trenches (black), the development area outlined (red) and the 2014 evaluation (blue)

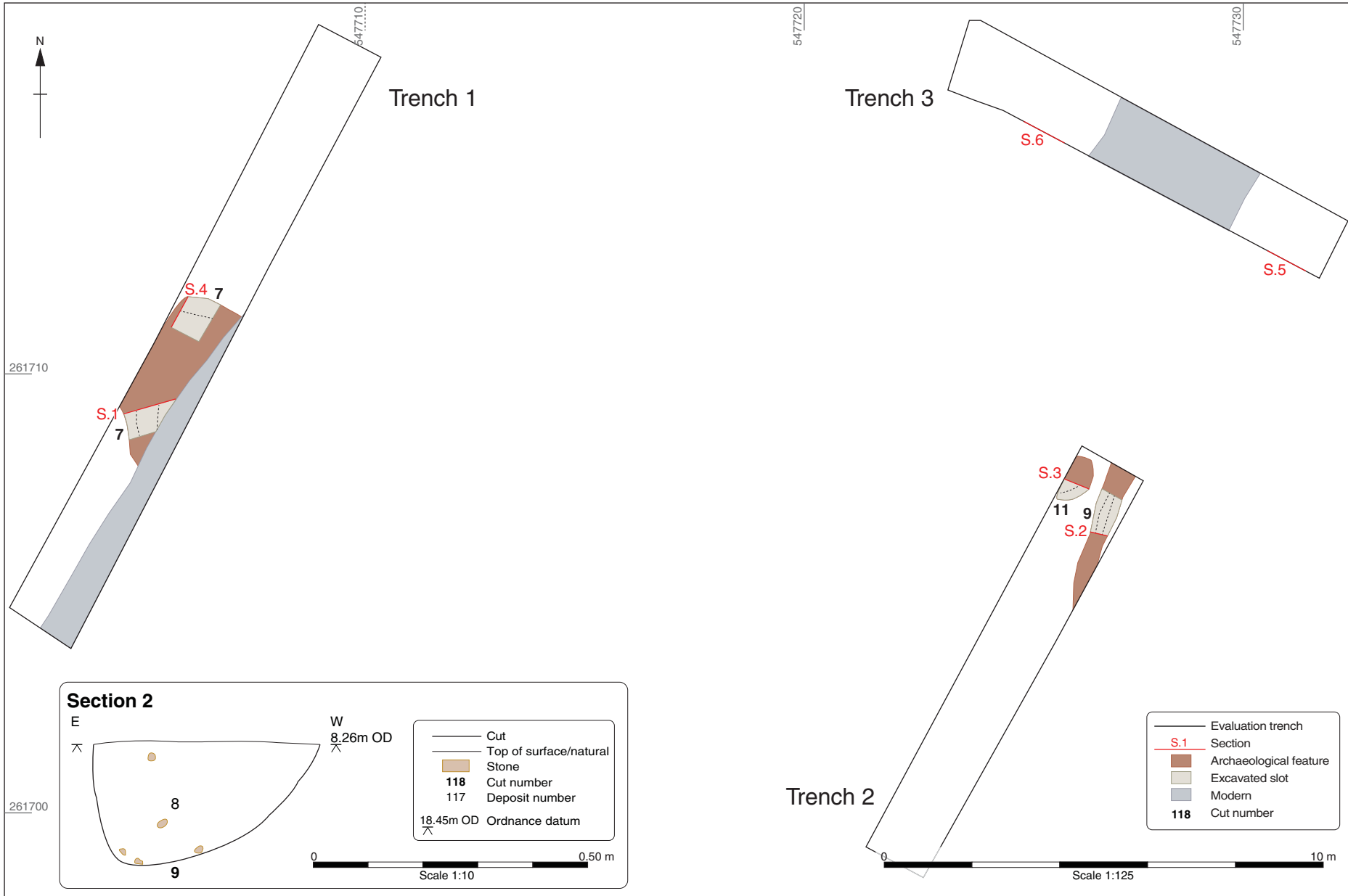


Figure 2: Plan of trenches and selected section



Plate 1: Trench 1 from the north-east



Plate 2: Trench 2 from the south-west



Plate 3: Trench 3 from the north-west



Plate 4: Ditch 9 from the south



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