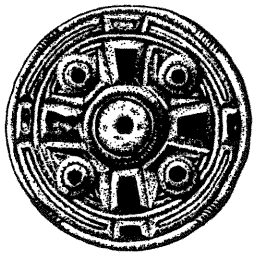

Archaeological Field Unit

Cloverfield Drive, Soham
An Archaeological Desktop Study

Stephen Macaulay

September 1999

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A149

Commissioned by Wilcon Homes Anglia Ltd

Cloverfield Drive, Soham
An Archaeological Desktop Study

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1999

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Report No. A149

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Summary

A proposed development, covering an area of c.12.5ha, located immediately to the northeast of Soham village, lies within an area of potentially rich archaeological remains. There are significant remains of all periods in the vicinity, although these are not known from the site itself, probably as a result of it being in part covered by alluvium. The density of past activity expected in such a fen-edge position implies however, that this site has high potential, despite the lack of SMR records. The majority of the site lies on the Gault Clays which might reduce the potential for pre-Roman activity, however medieval ridge and furrow and a relict field pattern have survived on land not enclosed in the 19th century.

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Cloverfield Drive, Soham
An Archaeological Desktop Study

1 Introduction

1.1 This study was commissioned by Wilcon Homes Anglia Ltd in advance of a proposed residential development. This desktop study aims to define the archaeological potential of the land likely to be affected by the development. It has been carried out in accordance with a specification drawn up by Stephen Macaulay in response to a design brief by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council County Archaeology Office.

1.2 The site is located immediately to the north of the modern village of Soham, off Cloverfield Drive and comprises about 12.5 hectares of land. The proposed development area is an irregular parcel of land which lies to the east of the railway (and Soham Mere), to the west of Thorn Street and south of Longmere Lane (Fig. 1). The site is centred on TL 5870/7420.

2 Topographical and Geological background

2.1 Soham is situated on a peninsular of slightly higher land (Bedfordshire Lower Chalk and 3rd Terrace Gravels) which projects northwest into the fens (10m+ OD) from Fordham. The site lies on the boundary of the 3rd Terrace Gravels and the Gault Clay which lies to the northwest of Soham at the 5m contour. The development area is covered, in part, by alluvium, which in turn seals the 3rd Terrace gravels.

2.2 Test Pits

The client Wilcon Homes Anglia Limited has commissioned and provided the results of 23 structural survey test pits on the site. These confirm that the site lies, in the main, on the Gault Clay, which lies on the edge of the Soham peninsular. The test pit results suggest that there is some alluvium overlying the Gault clay to a depth of 500mm. These results also confirm that the majority of the site lies on the Gault Clay, off the gravel terrace which appears to occur only in the far southeastern corner of the site (Test Pit 1). Towards the east of the site, adjacent to Soham village areas of made ground have been identified up to 600mm in depth.

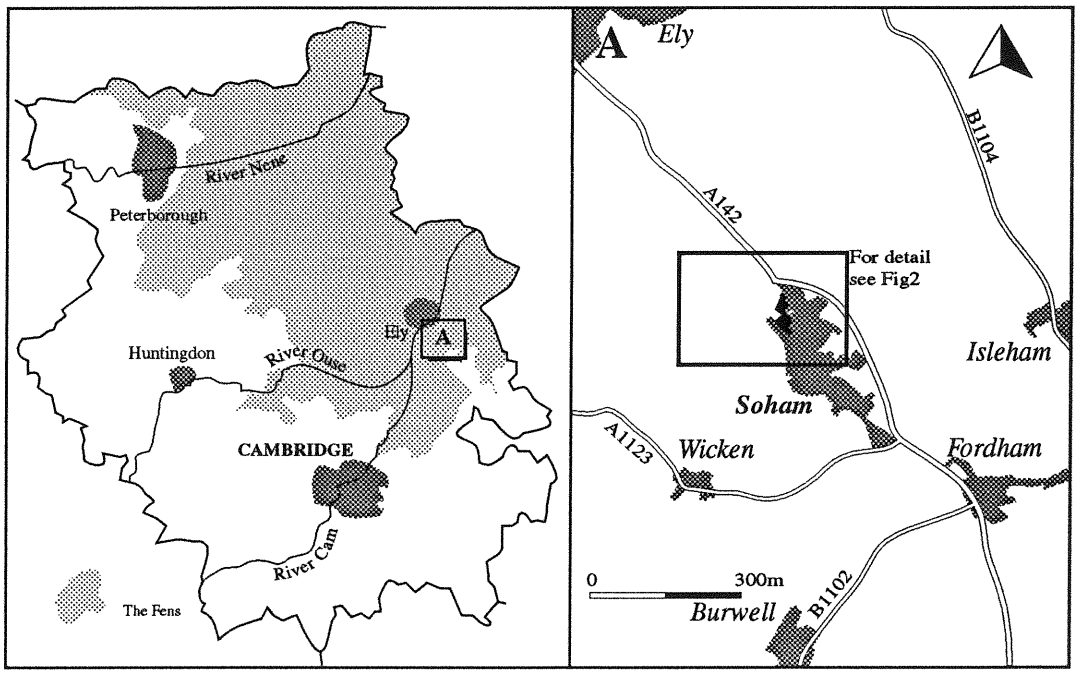

Figure 1 *Site Location Plan*

3 Methodology

In order to map the potential for archaeology at Cloverfield Drive, Soham the investigation centred on the accessible archaeological and historical resources held by Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record and the Fenland Project.

3.1 Aerial Photographic Assessment (R. Palmer - Appendix B)

Following discussions with specialists aerial photographic survey work was undertaken to meet the requirements of the Design Brief (CAO 11/05/99 Sec 2.4). Earthwork ridge and furrow visible in pasture in 1946 and 1949 were mapped. Traces were still visible on the 1975 photograph (Hall 1996, Plate VII). In 1946 and 1949 a small ditch was visible, but is not thought to be of any antiquity. No other archaeological features were identified in, or close to, the assessment area. Pasture and the ridge and furrow may have masked any pre-medieval features. The later arable land use has not revealed any soil- or crop-marked features. The levelled ridge and furrow may have created a thick topsoil layer which has masked any sub-surface features, alternatively, these may not be present in the area.

3.2 Documentary & Historical Records

The known archaeological resource was investigated through the County's Sites and Monuments Record held at Cambridgeshire County Council. Additional published resources such as the Victoria County Histories, Fenland Research, Fenland Survey covering the Parishes of Soham and Wicken (Hall 1996), and the Royal Commission inventories were all consulted. Finally, published reports and archives on excavations carried out in and around Soham by the AFU were consulted (Bray 1991, Robinson 1995, Hatton & Last 1997, Heawood 1997, Hatton 1998)

The historical records held at the County Council's Record Office in Cambridge were investigated. It holds copies of the 1845 Tithe Map (surveyed 1841). This work was supplemented by the use of the subsequent detailed Ordnance Survey maps of the area (the 1 inch map published in 1886 and first OS maps from 1888 [XXX12 & XXX16]). Interestingly no enclosure map exist for Soham. Unique amongst the south-eastern Cambridgeshire parishes Soham has a Midland pattern of fields, based on a surviving medieval field layout. It is unique in the county, outside the Wisbech region, by never being enclosed (Hall 1996:80). The modern landscape is that of the Middle Ages, the main boundaries of modern holdings lie between long lines of furlong boundaries.

4 Archaeological and Historical background

The SMR maps and records show no archaeological remains within and immediately adjacent to the proposed development area. Indeed there is no recorded find within 500m of the development area (Zone 1 - Appendix A). Those that do exist (Fig. 2) lie mostly to the southeast, within Soham Village itself and further to the south and east (Zone 2 500-1000m see Appendix A). Further remains lie to the north, with the complex of Prehistoric sites associated with Broad Hill (Hall 1996) and to the west on the Wicken side of Soham Mere (Zone 3 see Appendix A). Close to Wicken a number of Prehistoric and Roman sites have been recorded on the sands. The closest archaeology is the remains of medieval ridge and furrow which was recorded on the site in the 1940's.

Prehistoric

The Fen-edge around Soham, and the nearby Snail valley, had a long history of human activity (Hall 1996: 72-81). Prehistoric finds in the vicinity include Mesolithic tranchet axes (Cambs SMR 07077, 07098), Neolithic flint and polished axes (SMR 11019) as well as Bronze Age artefacts (SMR 07101, 11019a) and potential ring-ditches (SMR 07102). The Fenland Survey (Hall 1996) records most Prehistoric remains have been recovered from the Greensands to the north and west of Soham, extending from Fordham/Isleham and drift sands to the east. To the north of the site Hall records the Board Hill

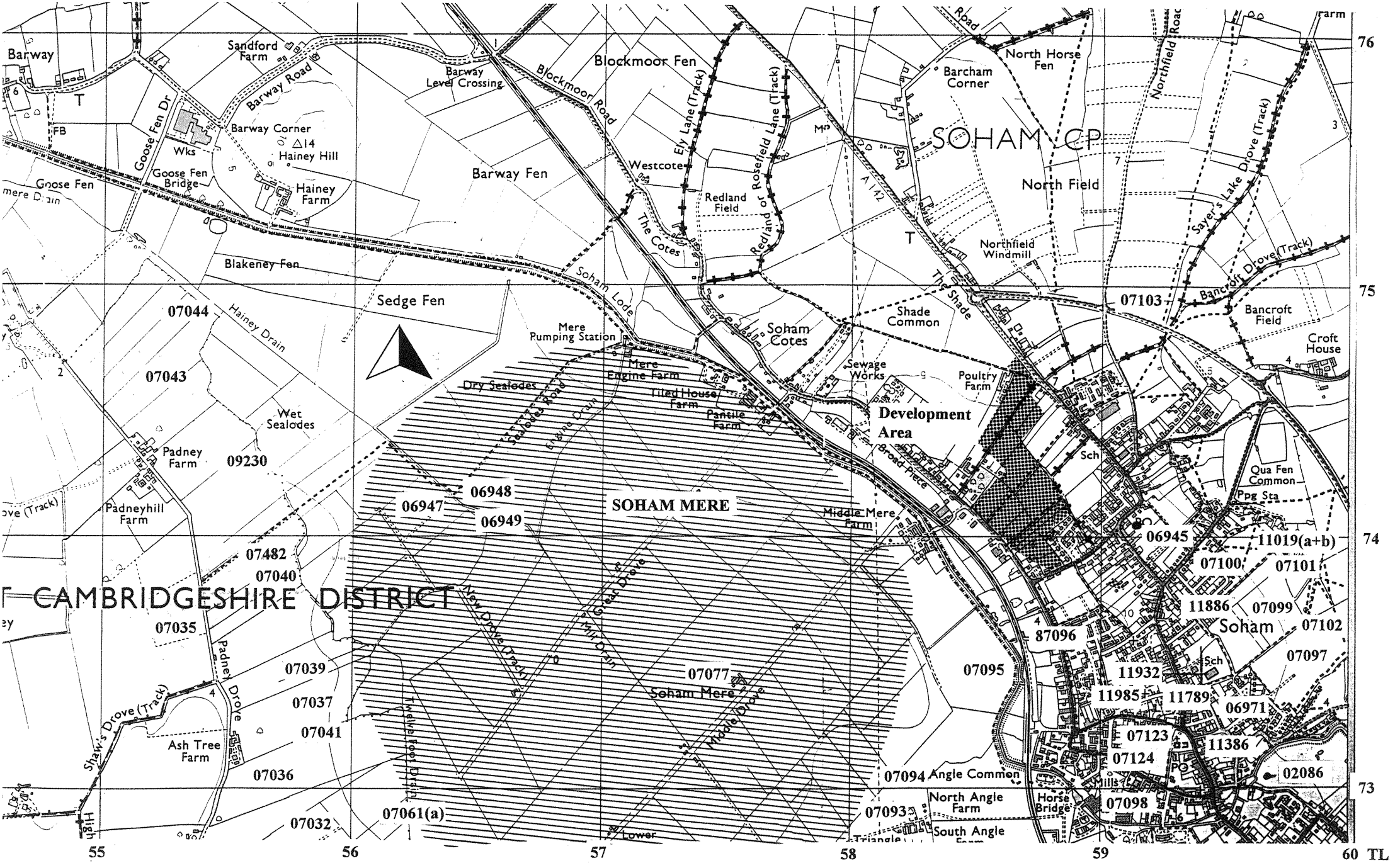

Fig. 2 Map showing site and SMR records

complex, which contains Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman remains on the fen edge. To the west of Soham Mere (Zone 3 - Appendix A), close to Wicken and Padney, a number of Neolithic and Bronze Age sites and artefact scatters have been identified on the lighter sandy soils (SMR 07037, 07039, 07040, 07041, 07044, 07061, 07061a, 07482, 09230).

Roman

The area around Soham (and Wicken) contains a number of Roman sites which the Fenland Survey (Hall 1996) suggest indicate intensive fen-edge activity, perhaps attracted by the proximity of the River Cam and nearby crossing point at Fordey. Roman burials are known within Soham (SMR 07086, 07100), although the majority of Roman sites are located to the south and south-east of the village, towards a possible Villa site. These Roman features are located on the lighter soils at Soham, Wicken and Padney, dating generally to the 2nd-4th century; the accepted date for increased Romanisation in the fens. Cropmarks on the sands have indicated enclosures and trackways.

Medieval

There is a striking concentration of early Anglo-Saxon activity which includes a number of cemetery sites in and around the core of Soham. One of these appears to have lain in the vicinity of St Andrew's Church (SMR 07123a). Other burial sites have been discovered southeast of the village (SMR 07027) and along Fordham Road, which might have been the remains of a ploughed-out barrow (Lethbridge 1933). Pagan Anglo-Saxon barrows are rare in Cambridgeshire, although one was excavated last century in Bottisham (Taylor 1981:113). From Angle Common, to the west of the village, Anglo-Saxon spearheads have been recovered (SMR 07093, 07094). These, however date to the Late Saxon period (10th century) and may not be associated with a burial site.

The early historical significance of Soham is attested mainly by the foundation of a monastery in the 7th century AD by St Felix, first bishop of the East Angles, who was buried here (VCH II, 141). Although the site of this is not known, it is generally believed to have lain where the medieval church now stands.

Soham appears to have been at the centre of the See for a short while until it was relocated to Dunnwich (SMR 7124). In the area around White Hart Lane the remains of human burials have been recorded, potentially part of a major burial ground belonging to the abbey during the 7th to 9th centuries (Robinson 1995). The monastery was subsequently destroyed, along with the many other religious foundations in the area, during the late 9th century Danish invasions of East Anglia. Unlike nearby Ely, it was not re-established during the 10th century round of local refoundations (VCH II, 142). The manor of Soham, in fact, was among those given to the abbey at Ely, shortly after the latter's refoundation, by the earldorman Brithnoth (Conybeare 1897, 71). By the time of Domesday, the Abbot of Ely held 1/2 hide of land in Soham (VCH I, 364)

but the manor was largely a royal estate, held by William I as it had been by Edward the Confessor.

The Fenland Survey states that there is no settlement activity away from village cores of Soham and Wicken (Hall 1996:79). This appears to be confirmed at Soham by results of an archaeological evaluation in the grounds of Soham County Primary School (Bray 1991), immediately east of the later excavation at Pratt Street (Hatton & Last 1997). Both sites, located close to the medieval church, identified pits, postholes and ditches containing animal bone, fired clay (remains of wattle walling) and pottery, dating to the 10th-13th centuries.

Post-medieval

As mentioned above, the fields around Soham were not enclosed and persist today as a remnant of the medieval field pattern. In North Field a few single-acre strips still survive today. There a number of windmills (SMR 06945, 07095) and pumps for the drainage channels recorded (SMR 06947, 06948, 06949). Soham Mere was not drained until the 19th century.

Soham Mere

Finally, Soham Mere must be considered. Marine flooding, which deposited 'fen clay' occurred mainly in the 3rd millennium BC. This marine phase was followed by extensive peat growth, with a whitish shell marl forming possibly in the Roman period. The Mere survived as an expanse of water until drained in the 19th century, David Hall (Fenland Survey 1996) suggests that the marls will be of medieval or later date (Hall 1996:72) and may be encountered in the land around the 19th century extent of the mere.

5 Archaeological potential

From the study of known archaeological and historical records and remains, it is clear that the land around Cloverfield Drive, Soham is *potentially* rich in archaeological deposits. The sites location, on the edge 3rd Terrace gravels, makes the recovery of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age material a possibility. The alluvial cover, particularly to the north of the development site, is likely to have masked and protected buried deposits which are commonly found on the fen edge. In addition as suggested in the aerial photographic survey (see Appendix B), the destruction of the medieval ridge and furrow and resultant soil layer formation, may also have contributed to the masking of archaeological features. Both these factors would also limit the value of geo-prospection surveys (soil survey pits confirm greater depth of overburden).

In order to fully assess the impact of the development on the archaeology, it is worth placing its wider archaeological landscape. The Soham area is exceptionally rich in archaeological remains of all periods. From the Mesolithic through to the medieval period find scatters, features and settlements are

closely linked to the Soham peninsula and fen-edge. Development has revealed extensive Anglo-Saxon and medieval remains within Soham village itself, while Prehistoric and Roman archaeology has been identified and recorded to the east, south and further west, towards Wicken and also to the north at the Broad Hill complex. There have been few recorded finds on the clays immediately north of Soham, which do cover most of the site, however the fen-edge location and alluvial cover both suggest a potential for archaeological activity and a reason as to why this has not been recorded to date.

It is clear that, despite the lack of recorded finds in the SMR, the site's location, its geology, topography) and the presence of alluvial cover, it is likely that archaeology may be present on the site. Its proximity to extensive Prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and medieval remains would make the discovery of these probable. Romano-British remains, although locally found on the lighter soils to the east and west, are commonly found on the gravel terraces which occur in the southeastern corner of the site. Indeed this location on the edge of the Soham island/peninsula, might be predicted as the most likely area of the site for the discovery of archaeological deposits. The proximity of Soham Mere and the potential depth of surviving deposits makes the survival of good paeoloenvironmental data likely.

6 Impact of proposed development

Given the requirements of a residential development and the depths of ground works, the proposed development will impact on all but the deepest buried archaeology it encounters. Some deposits my survive *beneath* peat or alluvial deposits, which might not be directly affected by the proposed ground works, however the impact of de-watering must be considered, where waterlogging persists. The development is planned in an archaeologically sensitive area.

The local topography and geology (and soil test pit results) suggest that archaeology may be encountered at only 300mm on the gravel terrace, however it may be that some deposits may lie beneath the alluvial or make-up layers in excess of 600mm.

Although proposals for mitigation strategies are considered to be beyond the scope of this report, a few salient points are worthy of note. The site has a *high* archaeological potential, but the nature of the proposed development may allow for 'preservation in situ', where deeper deposits might be preserved through architectural/engineering measures. Given the nature of the site, investigation may uncover extensive remains or demonstrate that no archaeology exists, however without physical investigation this cannot be predicted. The site is located, mainly on Gault Clay, which does not generally reveal archaeology by non-intrusive means, but this location, at the Fenland interface on the edge of the peninsula, might be the area most likely to produce archaeological remains.

7 Conclusions

In summary, the archaeological potential of the development at Cloverfield Drive, Soham can be described thus:

• Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age finds scatter	moderate/unknown
• Romano-British settlement	low/unknown
• Anglo-Saxon remains	moderate/unknown
• Medieval ridge & furrow, field systems	high
• Medieval settlement	low/unknown

This study has demonstrated that the subject site lies within a broader rich archaeological landscape, with important sites of all periods around the site, however not immediately adjacent to it. Whilst no archaeological sites or finds are known from the subject site itself, its archaeological potential may be considered moderate to high. The site is located on what was once an area of dry land, close to the fen edge and the known settlements beneath Soham itself. If archaeology is encountered on the site the conditions for preservation (in places) are likely to range from good to very good, where deposits on the gravels (and clays) may be buried beneath a thick alluvial cover.

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APPENDIX A:- Sites and Monuments Record GAZETTEER

Zone 1 0-500m (No SMR data)
Zone 2 500-1000m
Zone 3 1000m+ (inc. Wicken side of Soham Mere)

Zone	SMR No.	Nat. Grid Ref.	Description
2	02086	TL 5975/7320	Anglo-Saxon spearhead
2	06945	TL 5918/7395	Windmill
2	06971	TL 5944/7328	Roman Skeletons
2	07077	TL 575-/735-	Mesolithic Tranchet axe (in Soham Mere)
2	07093	TL 5827/7296	Anglo-Saxon spearhead
2	07094	TL 5835/7299	Anglo-Saxon spearhead
2	07095	TL 5862/7343	Windmill
2	07097	TL 5981/7351	Roman coins
2	07098	TL 5900/7300	Mesolithic Tranchet axes
2	07099	TL 5940/7354	Medieval ditched enclosures
2	07100	TL 5937/7375	Roman pottery and skull
2	07101	TL 5977/7374	Bronze Age (Beaker) flints
2	07102	TL 5981/7351	Ring-ditch (cropmark date uncertain)
2	07103	TL 5911/7492	Medieval pottery
2	07123	TL 5939/7320	6th C Anglo-Saxon cemetery (St Andrews Church)
2	07124	TL 59277308	Anglo-Saxon cemetery
2	11019	TL 5980/7396	Neolithic flint axe
2	11019a	TL 5980/7396	Late Bronze Age or Iron Age razor
2	11019b	TL 5980/7396	Anglo-Saxon Brooch 6th C
2	11386	TL 5935/7315	Anglo-Saxon pottery (Excavation St Andrews Church 1994)
2	11789	TL 5943/7325	Anglo-Saxon Grave (White Hart Lane)
2	11886	TL 5945/7345	Medieval Site (Excavation 9-13 Pratt Street 1997)
2	11932	TL 5927/7346	Medieval Site (Excavation 9-13 Pratt Street 1997)
2	11985	TL 5924/7340	Medieval Site (Excavation 38 Station Road 1997)
2	87096	TL 5881/7340	Post-Medieval Brick Kiln
3	06947	TL 5634/7418	Post-Medieval Wind Pump
3	06948	TL 5648/7414	Post-Medieval Wind Pump
3	06949	TL 5651/7409	Post-Medieval Wind Pump
3	07032	TL 55-/72-	Medieval pottery
3	07035	TL 55-/73-	Roman cropmark site
3	07036	TL 5561/7310	Roman pottery
3	07037	TL 5570/7355	Neolithic axes
3	07039	TL 5573/7360	Neolithic axe
3	07040	TL 5565/7380	Neolithic lithics
3	07041	TL 5577/7337	Neolithic lithics
3	07043	TL 5522/7461	Roman settlement
3	07044	TL 5543/7489	Bronze Age flint arrowhead
	07061	TL 5620/7280	Neolithic axe
3	07061a	TL 5622/7282	Bronze Age flint (Beaker) dagger
3	07482	TL 5575/7380	Neolithic axe
3	09230	TL 556-/741-	Bronze Age barrows and cropmarks

APPENDIX B - Aerial Photographic Appraisal by Rog Palmer

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LAND NORTH-WEST OF SOHAM, CENTRED TL586742, CAMBRIDGESHIRE:

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC APPRAISAL

REPORT No: 1999/11

AUGUST 1999

COMMISSIONED BY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD UNIT
CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
FULBOURN COMMUNITY CENTRE
HAGGIS GAP
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ASSOCIATES: ROG PALMER MA MIFA CHRIS COX MA MIFA

Archaeological consultants for aerial photographic interpretation, accurate mapping and oblique aerial photography

LAND NORTH-WEST OF SOHAM, CENTRED TL586742, CAMBRIDGESHIRE: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC APPRAISAL

Rog Palmer MA MIFA

INTRODUCTION

This appraisal of aerial photographs was commissioned to examine an area of some 11 hectares (centred TL586742) in order to identify archaeological features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation. Mapping was to be at 1:2500 if relevant.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL FEATURES FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In suitable cultivated soils, sub-surface archaeological features – including ditches, banks, pits, walls or foundations – may be recorded from the air in different ways in different seasons. In spring and summer these may show through their effect on crops growing above them. Such indications tend to be at their most visible in ripe cereal crops, in June or July in this part of Britain, although their appearance cannot accurately be predicted and their absence cannot be taken to imply evidence of archaeological absence. In winter months, when the soil is bare or crop cover is thin (when viewed from above), features may show by virtue of their different soils. Upstanding remains are also best recorded in winter months when vegetation is sparse and the low angle of the sun helps pick out slight differences of height and slope.

Grass rarely shows such marks but instead may reveal sub-surface features through the withering of the plants above them. This may occur towards the end of very dry summers and usually indicates the presence of buried walls or foundations. Such dry summers occurred in Britain in 1949, 1959, 1975, 1976, 1984, 1989 and 1990 (Bewley 1994, 25) and more recently in 1995 and 1996. This does not imply that every grass field will reveal its buried remains on these dates as local variations in weather and field management will affect parching. However, it does provide a list of years in which photographs taken from, say, mid July to the end of August may prove informative.

The most informative aerial photographs of archaeological subjects tend to be those resulting from specialist reconnaissance. This activity is usually undertaken by an experienced archaeological observer who will fly at seasons and times of day when optimum results are expected. Oblique photographs, taken using a hand-held camera, are the usual product of such investigation. Although oblique photographs are able to provide a very detailed view, they are biased in providing a record that is mainly of features noticed by the observer, understood, and thought to be of archaeological relevance. In the collections searched, no obliques were held of the assessment area.

Vertical photographs cover the whole of Britain and can provide scenes on a series of dates between (usually) 1946-7 and the present. Unfortunately these vertical surveys are not necessarily flown at times of year that are best to record the crop and soil responses that may be seen above sub-surface features. Vertical photographs are taken by a camera fixed inside an aircraft and adjusted to take a series of overlapping views that can be examined stereoscopically. They are often of relatively small scale and their interpretation requires higher perceptive powers and a more cautious approach than that necessary for examination of obliques. Use of these small-scale images can also lead to errors of location and size when they are rectified or re-scaled to match a larger map scale.

PHOTO EXAMINATION AND MAPPING

Photographs examined

Cover searches were made at the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP) and the Cambridgeshire Record Office (CRO). All photographs had been taken during routine vertical surveys although those taken in July 1985 by CUCAP were specifically for archaeological targets.

Source: Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs

Vertical photographs

RC8-EA 261-262	23 March 1982	1:10000
RC8-HW 94-96	10 July 1985	1:10000
RC8-Kn BP 20, 90	30 August 1988	1:10000

Source: Cambridgeshire Record Office

Vertical photographs

106G/UK/1589: 4072-4073	21 June 1946	1:10000
Fairey Surveys 202229-231	late summer 1949	1:6000
Fairey Surveys 202303-305	late summer 1949	1:6000

Base maps

A base map at a scale of 1:10560 was available and used for this rapid appraisal.

Photo interpretation and mapping

All vertical photographs were examined using a 1.5x magnification stereoscope. Features identified were added to the 1:10560 map either schematically (for ridge and furrow) or by sketching. This is reproduced here as Figure 1.

COMMENTARY

Soils

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983) shows the area to be chalky till (series 411c) which Hall maps as high ground in prehistoric to medieval times (Hall 1996, Figs 37-38).

Archaeological features (Figure 1)

Earthwork ridge and furrow has been mapped. This was visible in pasture in 1946 and 1949. Traces of this are visible on the 1975 photograph published by Hall (1996, Plate VII).

In 1946 and 1949 a small right angled ditch was visible. This had a fresh appearance and is unlikely to be of any great antiquity.

No other archaeological features were identified in, or close to, the assessment area.

Non-archaeological features (Figure 1)

A probable pipeline crosses the area, turning at a modern boundary, and has been sketched on to the 1:10560 map. The pipeline was laid before 1982, but was not visible on earlier dates.

Land use

Before and during 1949 most fields in the assessment area were pasture or (possibly) small holdings. Allotments were as mapped by the Ordnance Survey. By 1982 most had been converted to arable use, sometimes rotated with grass.

The early mixture of pasture and ridge and furrow is likely to mask any pre-medieval features. Later arable use has revealed no soil- or crop-marked features. This could mean that the levelled ridge and furrow produced a thick topsoil layer which continues to mask any sub-surface features. Alternatively, these may not be present in the area.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that no further examination of aerial photographs is undertaken for this assessment.

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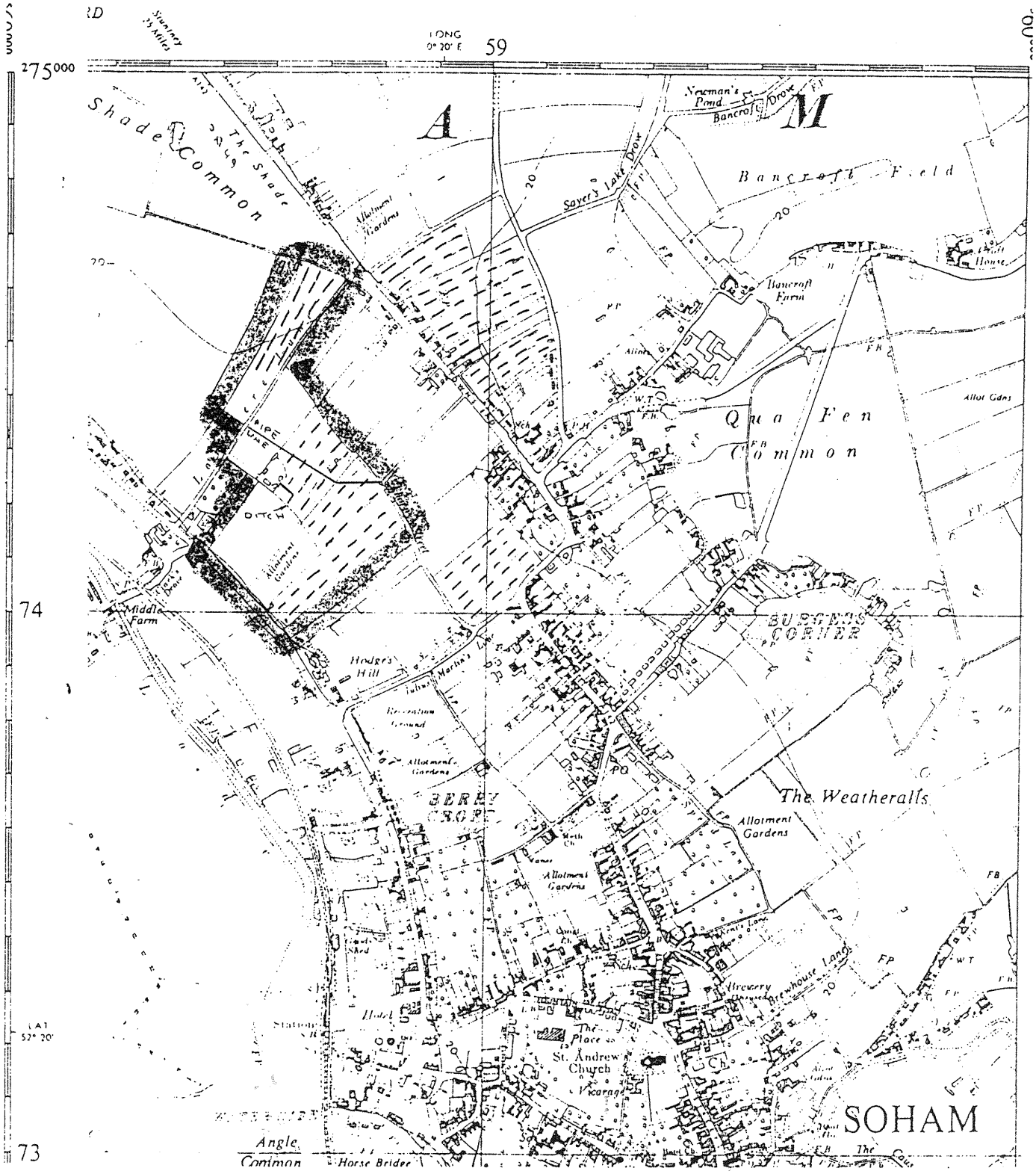

Figure 1. Schematic mapping of ridge and furrow visible as earthworks in 1946 and 1949. Note also the small angled ditch at TL586742, and the recent pipeline.
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Downing Street
Cambridge
CB2 3DZ

☐ **Local Studies Librarian** **Date sent**
Huntingdon Library
Princess Street
Huntingdon
PE1 1RX

☐ **Local Studies Librarian** **Date sent**
Wisbech Library
1 Ely Place
Wisbech
PE13 1 EU

☐ **RCHME** **Date sent**
24 Brooklands Avenue
Cambridge CB2 2BB

☐ **Nicola Fairweather** **Date sent**
County Stock Manager
Rodger Ascham
Ascham Road
Cambridge CB4 2BD

For English Heritage Projects send to:

☐ **P. Walker** **Date sent**
Inspector of Ancient Monuments
English Heritage
Fortress House
23 Savile Row
London W1X 1AB
and/or as appropriate
☐ **Chris Scull** (address as above) **Date sent**

Have You Put A Summary & Full Report On To Floppy Disc For Jon To Archive? ☐

Please tick the relevant boxes

Cambridgeshire
County Council

Archaeology

The Archaeological Field Unit
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis gap
Fulbourn
Cambridge CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946