



72 West Street, Isleham

Archaeological Evaluation Report

May 2019

Client: Mick Bartlett

Issue No: 1

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72 West Street, Isleham

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Toby Knight BA

With illustrations by David Brown BA

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Summary

Between the 28th and 29th of May 2019, an archaeological evaluation was carried out at 72 West Street, Isleham. Four 15m trenches were excavated within the proposed development area. A single feature was recorded in Trench 1, in the form of an undated sub-rectangular pit. The only other area of interest was in Trench 4, where a layer of modern brick rubble and flint had been laid down to act as a “courtyard” for the surrounding three outbuildings.

The lack of archaeological evidence suggests that the site lies outside of the known areas of settlement and activity recorded in the Historic Environment Record.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology East would like to thank Mick Bartlett for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Gemma Stewart who monitored the work on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Nick Gilmour. The fieldwork was directed by Toby Knight, who was supported by Anna Lound. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Sarita Louzolo and Thomas Houghton.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology East (OAE) was commissioned by Mick Bartlett to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of 72 West Street, Isleham in Cambridgeshire.
- 1.1.2 The trial trenching was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 19/00366/FUL.). A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by OAE on behalf of the client in response to an Archaeological Brief for Investigation issued by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (Gilmour 2019).
- 1.1.3 This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located at around 8m OD, on the higher ground of the 'island/peninsula' of Isleham (Fig. 1). Approximately 2km to the north-west lies the artificially drained land of the fens, at 0m OD. The location of the pre-drainage fen-edge around Isleham is likely to be c.1km to the north of the current site. The river Cam is located c.10km to the west of the site.
- 1.2.2 The bedrock of the site is Zig Zag Chalk Formation, which is not recorded as being overlain by superficial deposits (British Geological Survey 2014, (British Geological Survey [online map viewer](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html))).
- 1.2.3 The site is currently occupied by a bungalow, and associated outbuildings. The eastern boundary of the site is lined with large sycamore trees, which are protected and so their root zones could not be disturbed during the works.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The site is situated in an area of high archaeological potential. Below is a brief summary of some of the known heritage assets within the area around the site. Where information is from the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER), the CHER number is provided and selected HER entries are plotted on Fig. 1.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.2 The area around Isleham is rich in evidence for prehistoric activity. Much of this evidence relates to Bronze Age activity, although Neolithic and Mesolithic remains have also been recorded.
- 1.3.3 The remains of a probable long barrow, visible as a crop mark and low mound, is recorded c. 950m to the north of the site (CHER 10957). This is likely to date to the Early Neolithic period (c.4000-3000 BC).
- 1.3.4 There are several ring ditches, recorded as cropmarks, known in this area (CHER 09020, CHER 11213, MCB17114). These are likely to be the remains of barrows constructed

as burial monuments in the Early Bronze Age, between c.2500 and 1500BC. They appear to follow a slight ridge of higher ground to the south-west of the current site.

- 1.3.5 A Bronze Age settlement site was excavated c.1km to the north of the present site (CHER 11896). This site included both Middle Bronze Age and Early Bronze Age finds, including the remains of a house.
- 1.3.6 A Bronze rapier was found c.950m to the west of the current site (CHER 07533). This form of object is most likely to be Middle Bronze Age in date and attests to activity in this area during this period.
- 1.3.7 Occasional finds of other prehistoric material, including sherds of Beaker pottery and struck flints (e.g. CHER 07537, CHER07557, CHER07588) further show activity within this area during the prehistoric period. Of particular interest are two Mesolithic antler axes, recovered from Isleham (CHER 07622). Although the exact location of this find is unknown, such Mesolithic finds are quite rare and significant.

Roman

- 1.3.8 Substantial amounts of Roman building material, including decorated wall plaster and tesserae, have been found at 'the temple' (CHER 05704), a site situated c.700m west of the current site. This location is believed to have been a Roman chalk extraction site, into which the building materials were dumped. Just to the west of 'the temple' a Roman pewter hoard was also found (CHER 01592). A potential Roman villa is also recorded c.500m to the west of the study site (CHER 11661).

Anglo-Saxon and Early Medieval

- 1.3.9 The Isleham Priory was located c.450m to the north-east of the current development site. The small Priory at Isleham was a Benedictine alien priory. It was founded in the 11th century and the monks moved to a sister cell in Linton in 1284. The remains of this priory consist of the church of St Margaret of Antioch (CHER 07529) and earthworks from former fish ponds and building platforms (CHER 07528).
- 1.3.10 The parish church of St Andrew stands c.600m to the east of the proposed development site. This church was constructed c.1330 AD, on the site of an earlier church (CHER 07591).

Later medieval

- 1.3.11 Approximately 700m to the west of the site is the location of a moated site, known as the 'Temple'. This was probably constructed in the 14th century (CHER 05704a).
- 1.3.12 Directly to the east of the current site is part of the gardens for Isleham Hall (CHER MCB19362). Isleham Hall was constructed in the 16th century. The hall originally had a walled kitchen garden, orchard, paddocks and 420 acres of pasture and arable land. It is approached from West Street by a private road, lined with pollarded sycamore trees (directly to the east of the current site). The small orchard still remains.

Modern

- 1.3.13 Four lime kilns (CHER 07489), constructed in c.1860 and used until the 1930s, are located c.550m to the east of the current site. The chalk used in these kilns was quarried from the surrounding area.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 This evaluation sought to establish the character, date and state of preservation of archaeological remains within the proposed development area. The scheme of works detailed below aimed to:
- 2.1.2 Establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains on the site, characterise where they are found (location, depth and extent), and establish the quality of preservation of any archaeology and environmental remains
- 2.1.3 Provide sufficient coverage to establish the character, condition, date and purpose of any archaeological deposits
- 2.1.4 Provide sufficient coverage to evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking deposits
- 2.1.5 Set the results in the local, regional, and national archaeological context – and, in particular, its wider cultural landscape and past environmental conditions
- 2.1.6 Provide – in the event that archaeological remains are found – sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables, and orders of cost.

2.2 Methodology

Trial Trenching

Excavation standards

- 2.2.1 The archaeological evaluation and analysis were conducted in accordance with current best archaeological practice and the appropriate national and regional standards and guidelines.
- 2.2.2 All work was conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.
- 2.2.3 All fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the OA Field Manual (ed. D Wilkinson 1992), and the revised OA fieldwork manual (publication forthcoming). Further guidance is provided to all excavators in the form of the OA Fieldwork Crib Sheets – a companion guide to the Fieldwork Manual. These have been issued ahead of formal publication of the revised Fieldwork Manual.

Excavation methods

- 2.2.4 A total of four trenches measuring 15m by 1.8m were excavated. This is equivalent to 5% of the development area (Fig. 2).

Bucket sampling

- 2.2.5 Bucket samples of 90 litres of excavated soil were taken from each trench, in order to characterise artefactual remains in the topsoil and other soil horizons above the archaeological level.
- 2.2.6 Each sample was hand-sorted in order to retrieve artefacts.

Survey

- 2.2.7 Surveying was carried out using a survey-grade differential GPS (Leica CS10/GS08 or Leica 1200) fitted with "smartnet" technology with an accuracy of 5mm horizontal and 10mm vertical.
- 2.2.8 The site grid is accurately tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and located on the 1:1250 map of the area. Elevations are levelled to the Ordnance Datum.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The only archaeological feature present was in Trench 1, and consisted of a sub-rectangular pit, aligned approximately north-east to south-west. No finds were recovered and it is undated. The only other feature of interest was in Trench 4. This consisted of a layer of relatively modern brick rubble and flint, laid down as some form of courtyard for the surrounding outbuildings.

3.1.2 The results of the trial trenching are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches which contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits are provided in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The natural geology across all four trenches comprised of light yellowish grey chalk (clunch). In Trenches 1,2 and 3 the natural geology was overlain by a mid-brownish grey subsoil, which in turn was overlain by a loamy topsoil. In Trench 4 the only difference was the inclusion of the brick rubble courtyard layer (8) below the topsoil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present only in Trench 1 (a single undated pit), and deposits relating to a modern courtyard deposit were recorded in Trench 4.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 was located at the south-eastern end of the development area, laid out on a north-east to south-west alignment (Plate 1). The trench was machine excavated to a depth of 0.45m at the north-eastern end, removing 0.25m of subsoil and 0.20m of topsoil. At the south-western end it was machined to a depth of 0.55m, with 0.35m of subsoil and 0.20m of topsoil.

3.4.2 A single sub-rectangular pit was present in the trench (6), partly exposed on the north-western edge of the trench (Fig. 2; Fig. 3, Section 2; Plate 2). The pit measured approximately 2.30m wide and 0.56m deep, although as most of the feature lay beyond the trench edge its full size is unknown. The pit had steeply sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill of light greyish brown chalky silt (7). No finds were recovered from the pit.

3.5 Trench 2

3.5.1 Trench 2 was located to the north-west of trench 1, orientated north-west to south-east. No archaeological features were present. Natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.40m

3.6 Trench 3

3.6.1 Trench 3 was located in the centre of the development area, on the south-eastern side of the largest, north-east to south-west aligned outbuilding. One possible feature was dug (4), but was determined to be natural, probably resulting from bioturbation. The natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.60m.

3.7 Trench 4

3.7.1 Trench 4 was located in the north-western end of the development area, centrally located between three outbuildings and aligned north-west to south-east. The only notable feature of the trench was a modern layer (8) of brick rubble and flints below the topsoil, forming some kind of courtyard surface for the surrounding outbuildings (Fig. 3, Section 3; Plate 3). This layer overlay the subsoil and the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.80m

3.8 Finds summary

3.8.1 No finds were recovered from the trial trenching. No finds were retrieved from bucket sampling or the metal detecting of the trenches.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The results of the trial trenching are considered reliable, with archaeological features and deposits being clearly visible in contrast to the lighter, chalk geology. Similarly, any truncation of the underlying geology was also clear.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The results of the evaluation at 72 West Street, Isleham have identified a lack of archaeological remains within the proposed development area, apart from one undated pit in the southern part of the site. These results can aid in the decision-making process by the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team on whether further mitigation is required before the planning condition is satisfied.

4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work, based on 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 contained one possible sub-rectangular pit, running in an approximately north east-south west direction on the north-western edge of the trench. The feature is overlain by subsoil and topsoil and cuts into the chalk geology.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.50
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.30	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
6	Cut	0.50	0.45	Pit	-	-
7	Fill	-	0.45	Light greyish brown chalky silt, firm compaction.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of subsoil and topsoil overlying natural geology of chalk.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.35
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Trench devoid of archaeology. The one possible feature identified and dug was a tree throw. This was overlain by subsoil and topsoil and cut into the chalk geology.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.60
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
4	Cut	0.60	0.22	Tree Throw	-	-
5	Fill	-	0.22	Mid greyish brown chalky silt, friable compaction.	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Below the topsoil was a layer of modern brick rubble used as a courtyard for the surrounding outhouses. Below this, subsoil overlaid the chalk geology.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.80
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1	Layer	-	0.30	Topsoil	-	-
2	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil	-	-
3	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
4	Layer	-	0.45	Modern surface	-	-

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gilmour, N. 2019. *72 West Street, Isleham. Written Scheme of Investigation. ECB5889*. Oxford Archaeology East.

APPENDIX C

SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM

Site name: 72 West Street, Isleham
Site code: ISLWST19
Grid Reference: TL 6381 7412
Type: Evaluation
Date and duration: 28-05-19 to 29-05-19
Area of Site: 2,500m²
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, 15 Trafalgar Way, bar Hill, Cambridge, and will be deposited with the Cambridgeshire County Store, accession number TBC.
Summary of Results: ***

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-357332		
Project Name	72 West Street, Isleham		
Start of Fieldwork	28-05-19	End of Fieldwork	29-05-19
Previous Work	no	Future Work	

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ISLWST19	Planning App. No.	19/00366/FUL
HER Number	ECB5889	Related Numbers	

Prompt	
Development Type	Residential
Place in Planning Process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering | <input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits |
| <input 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	Period
Pit	Uncertain
	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.

Object	Period
	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.

Insert more lines as appropriate.

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Address (including Postcode) 72 West Street, Isleham Cambridgeshire CB7 5SE
District	East Cambridgeshire	
Parish	Isleham	
HER office	Cambridgeshire	
Size of Study Area	2,500m ²	
National Grid Ref	TL 63815 74128	

Project Originators

Organisation	Oxford Archaeology East
Project Brief Originator	Gemma Stewart
Project Design Originator	Nick Gilmour
Project Manager	Nick Gilmour
Project Supervisor	Toby Knight

Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	Cambridgeshire County Store	ECB5889
Digital Archive	Oxford Archaeology	ISLWST19
Paper Archive	Cambridgeshire County Store	ECB5889

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
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 Remains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Digital Media

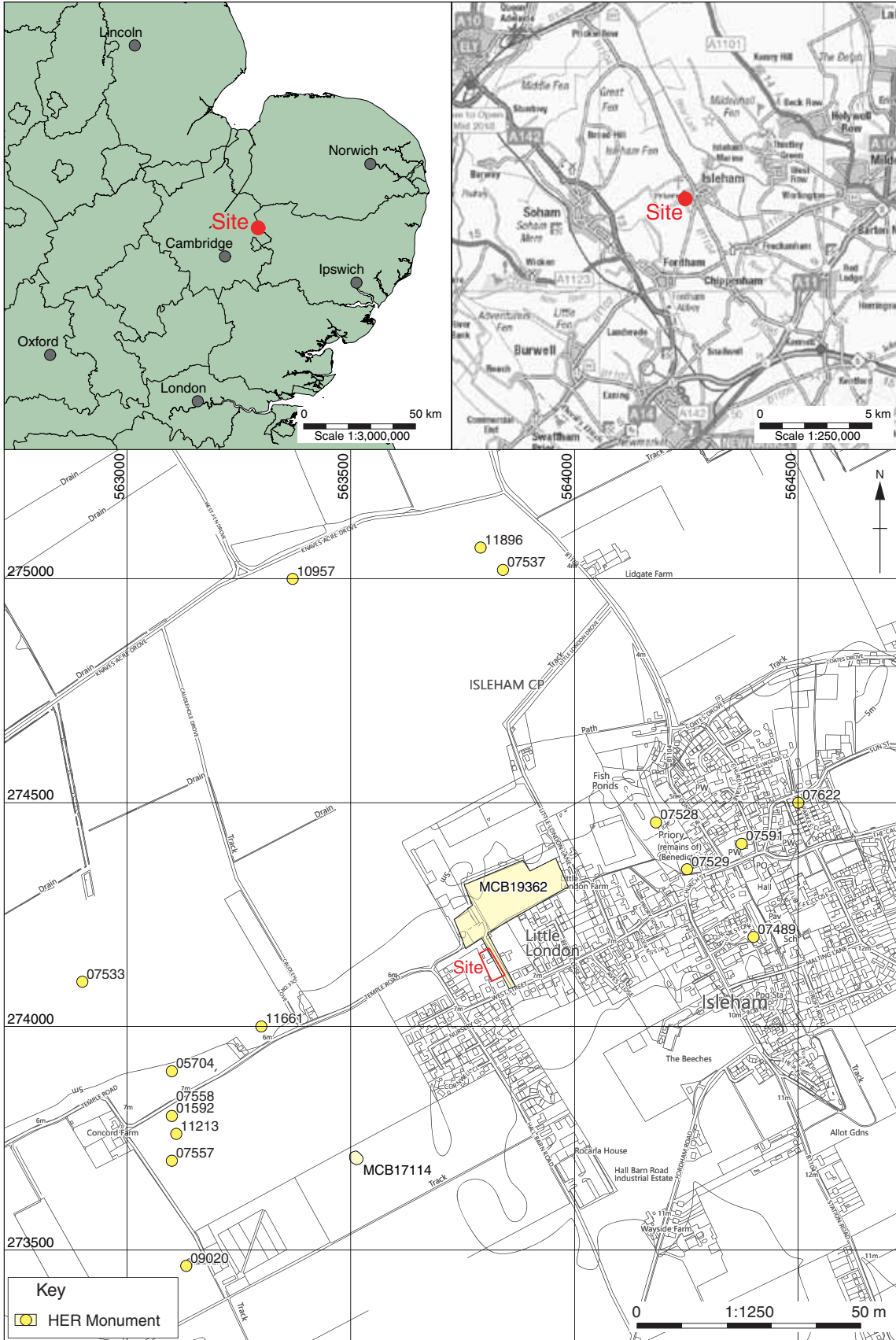
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GIS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>

Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>	Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Sections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further Comments



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Figure 1: Site location, showing selected Historic Environment record entries

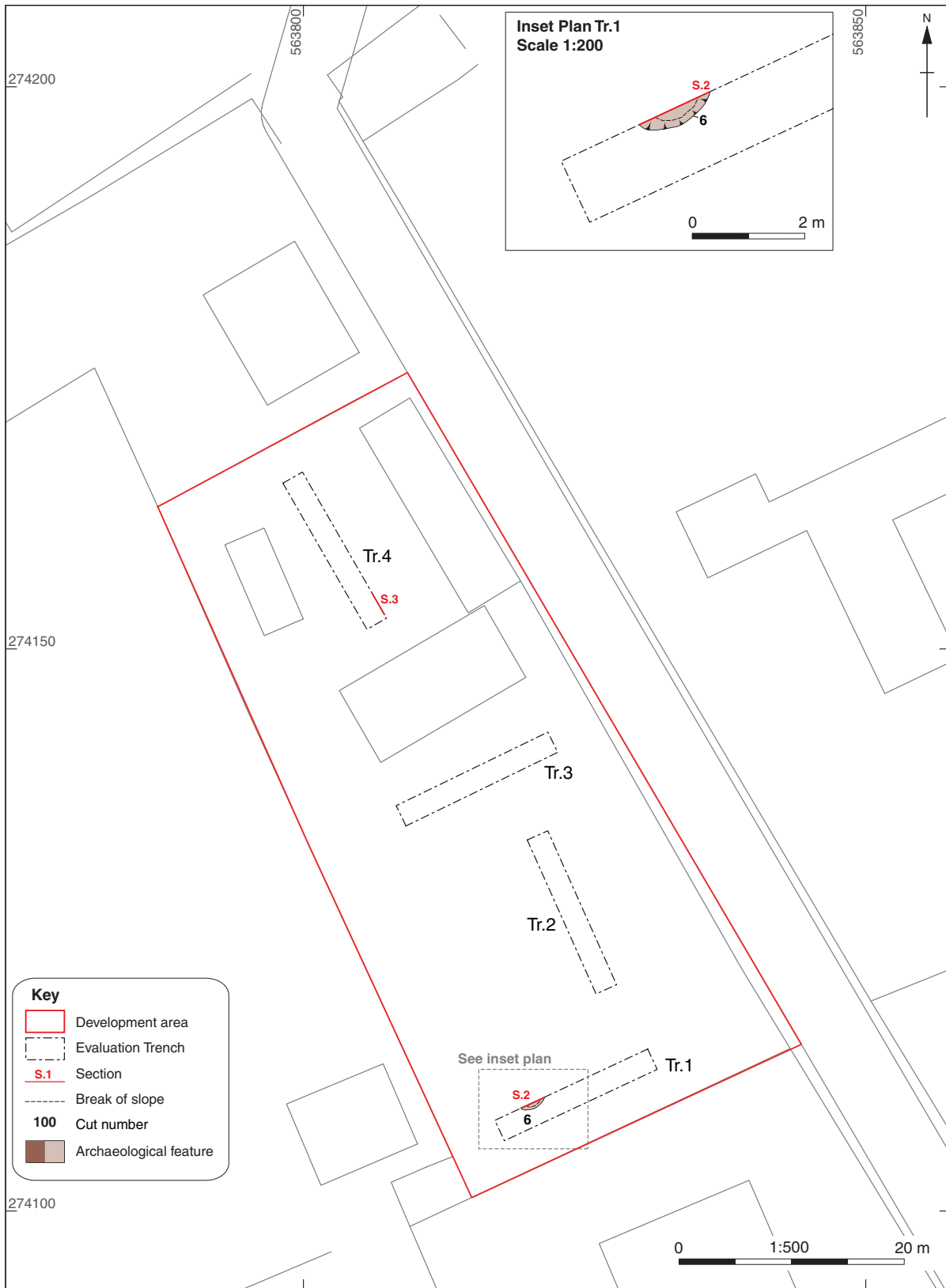


Figure 2: Trench plan

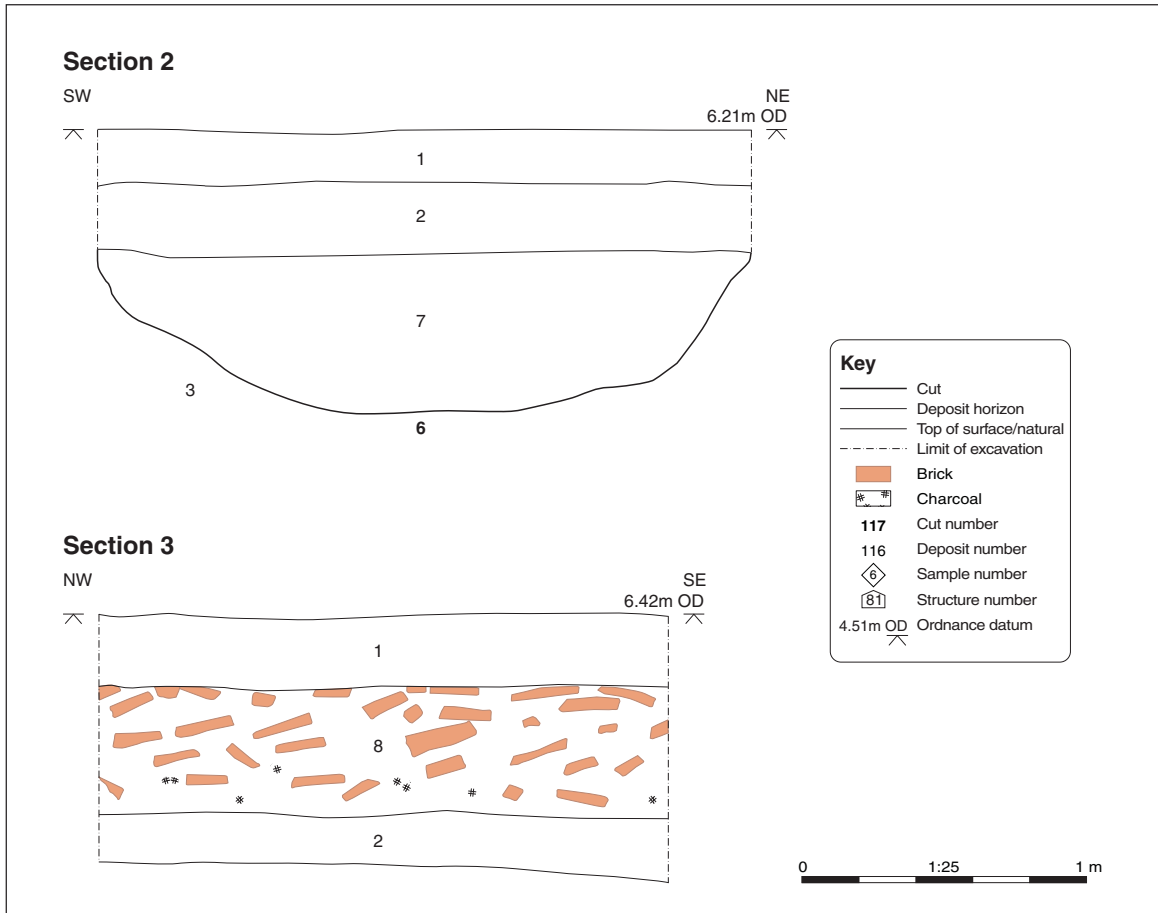


Figure 3: Selected sections



Plate 1: Trench 1, looking South-West



Plate 2: Pit 6, Trench 1, looking North-West



Plate 3: Baulk Section, Trench 4



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