



Land South of 1-7 Old School Lane, Upware, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

June 2020

Client: Matt Cannon and Michael Jones

Issue No: 2

Report No: 2386

NGR: TL 5376 7004

Event No: ECB5957



Client Name: Matt Cannon and Michael Jones
Document Title: Land South of 1-7 Old School Lane, Upware, Cambridgeshire
Document Type: Watching Brief Report
Report No.: 2386
Grid Reference: TL 5376 7004
Planning Reference: 15/00482/OUT
Site Code: WICOSL19 / ECB5957
Invoice Code: WICOSL19
Receiving Body: Cambridgeshire County Council Stores
Accession No.: ECB5957

OA Document File Location: Y:\Cambridgeshire\WICSLO19_Old School Lane _Upware WB
OA Graphics File Location: Y:\Cambridgeshire\WICSLO19_Old School Lane _Upware WB\Project Data\Graphics

Issue No: 2
Date: June 2020
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Land South of 1-7 Old School Lane, Upware, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Robin Webb BA MA ACIfA

With illustrations by David Brown BA and Gillian Greer BSc

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Summary

On the 21st of October 2019 Oxford Archaeology East conducted a watching brief on land to the south of 1-7 Old School Lane, Upware, Cambridgeshire (centred on TL 5376 7004). The site was located on the south-western edge of the village, 170m to the east of the River Cam.

The works comprised of two trenches being opened – one as an access point from Upware Road, and the other as a service trench – covering a total area of 13.4m². The area being trenched covered an extant boundary that was visible as a ditch, bank and hedge, and the edge of the cut for the construction of Upware Road. The natural geology was not reached during these works.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) would like to thank Matt Cannon and Michael Jones for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET) for monitoring the works.

The project was managed for OA East by Matt Brudenell. The fieldwork was directed by Robin Webb. Digitising was carried out by David Brown and Gillian Greer. Thanks are also extended to the team of OA staff that prepared the archive under the supervision of Katherine Hamilton.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 OA East was commissioned by Matt Cannon and Michael Jones to undertake a watching brief on land to the south of 1-7 Old School Lane, Upware, Cambridgeshire ahead of the cutting of an access point and service trench as part of the development of four dwellings (Figure 1). This work follows on from a programme of archaeological evaluation (Blackbourn 2017) and excavation (Robinson Zeki 2019) carried out in 2017-2018.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 15/00482/OUT). A Brief (Stewart 2019) was set by Gemma Stewart of CCC HET outlining the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Brudenell 2019) was produced by OA East detailing the methods by which OA East proposed to meet the requirements specified in the Brief and the requirements of the *EAA Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the south-western side of the village of Upware, East Cambridgeshire, approximately 3.3km west of Wicken and 5km south of Stretham.
- 1.2.2 The development area (0.57ha), which lies between 2.4m and 3.7m OD, is bounded to the east by Upware Road, the north by residential houses, and to the west and south by pastureland. The River Cam lies 60m to the west of the development area. The current site is located on the eastern edge of the development area, against Upware Road.
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology of the development area comprises Upware Limestone Member, with the site situated c.2km south of the limestone outcrop (BGS 2019), with former fenland to the east, south and west of the limestone peninsula. Although no superficial deposits have been recorded on the BGS map, the 2017-2018 excavation recorded superficial deposits of a mix of clays and sands with occasional small patches of degraded limestone towards the north of the site (Robinson Zeki 2019, 1). The soils are shallow calcareous soils.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been presented in the WSI (Brudenell 2019, 4-5) and the Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design (PXA) for the main body of the wider development (Robinson Zeki 2019, 2-3), and will only be summarised here, with the Historic Environment Record (HER) points (commissioned under licence number 19-4002) shown on Figure 1 written in **bold**.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.2 The findspot of an unidentified Mesolithic object (CHER 06917) is recorded c.1km north-west of the site, whilst an assemblage of Mesolithic flintwork (**CHER 06896**)

consisting of cores, flakes, blades and microliths, has been recovered from land just north of Old School Lane.

- 1.3.3 A Neolithic polished flint axehead (CHER 06968), a flint axehead, stone axehead and flint tools (CHER 06969A) were recovered from land c.0.5m north-east of the site. Another axehead (CHER 06579) was also collected from land c.0.3km to the south.
- 1.3.4 A Bronze Age socketed axehead (CHER 06969) is recorded as being in a field c.0.5km to the north-east of the site.

Roman

- 1.3.5 An archaeological evaluation conducted at the site in September 2017 revealed evidence for Late Roman settlement activity (see Section 1.3.13). Subsequent excavation on the site in December 2017 to July 2018 revealed intense and long-lived Roman activity that peaked in the Late Roman period (c.AD 200-400+; see Section 1.3.14-16).
- 1.3.6 A number of other Roman findspots are recorded in the vicinity of the site. Finds include pottery and puddingstone quern (CHER 06942) from land c.0.3km north-west of the site; pottery sherds (CHER 06940) from 0.25km to the east; and pottery and puddingstone quern (CHER 06943) from land c.0.6km to the north. Roman pottery sherds have also been recovered just 60m to the east of the site (**CHER 06930**) and from the eastern edge of the site itself (**CHER 06939**).

Anglo-Saxon and medieval

- 1.3.7 An Anglo-Saxon scramasax, along with a small knife and skeletal remains (CHER 08152), was recovered from land c.0.5km east of the site.
- 1.3.8 An early 13th century sword (CHER 02107) was dredged from the River Cam in 1982, c.0.8km north of the site.
- 1.3.9 To the south of the site, Reach Lode (**CHER 07896**) is an artificial navigable water course that runs for 4.5km between Upware and Reach. It dates from at least the 13th century, although it is believed to have Roman origins.

Post-medieval and modern

- 1.3.10 Immediately north of Old School Lane are the rectangular cropmarks of a moated Civil War gun battery (**CHER 01066**).
- 1.3.11 The Burwell pumping station (**CHER 06524**) is located adjacent to Upware Road, c.60m south of the site. The Swaffham Prior pumping station (CHER 06398), is also c.0.25km to the south. The site of a steam engine pump (CHER 06873) is also recorded c.0.35km to the south.
- 1.3.12 A number of artificial drains are also located to the south-east of Upware, including Commissioner's Drain (CHER 06874), which runs for 8km across Bottisham and Swaffham Fen, and Wicken Lode (CHER 06817) which runs between Wicken and Burwell.

Previous investigations

- 1.3.13 In September 2017 an archaeological evaluation was conducted in the development area (ECB5205; Blackburn 2017). This identified significant Late Roman settlement remains, including a relatively dense network of ditches, gullies and pits forming parts of several rectilinear enclosures. Artefacts recovered from the site included Roman pottery, primarily dating between c.AD250-400, animal bone, ceramic building material, fragments of quern, stone, shell, three late Roman coins and a lead weight.
- 1.3.14 The subsequent excavation of the site between December 2017 and July 2018 (Robinson Zeki 2019) revealed a level of prehistoric features and finds that suggested a background presence during the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. A ring gully was revealed in the north of the site, suggesting the presence of a pre-Roman round house.
- 1.3.15 The excavation revealed evidence for intense and long-lived Roman activity, with part of a ladder-like settlement with enclosures, boundary ditches, pits, postholes and substantial structural remains uncovered. A rectangular building with stone foundations, a wide entranceway and two parallel lines of large post-settings was partially exposed in the north of the site. Human remains in the form of a double adult inhumation, multiple neonate burials and a cremation were also found along the eastern edge of the site.
- 1.3.16 A large assemblage of pottery, animal bone, ceramic building material and metalwork was recovered including painted plaster, coins, jewellery items and a key. Smaller assemblages of glass and worked bone contributed to a picture of domestic occupation.

2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The overall aim of the investigation was to preserve by record any archaeological remains exposed during ground works, and to ensure that any artefactual evidence was retained, recorded and analysed to an acceptable standard. The work also aimed to ensure that no burials were damaged or destroyed.

2.1.2 The results of the investigation will feed into addressing the research questions identified in the Updated Project Design (in the PXA Report) for the excavations immediately to the west (ECB5205; Robinson Zeki 2019). These are listed as follows:

1. What is the form of the Roman settlement? Are different activity zones apparent and how were they used? How does the settlement structure develop over time? How does the settlement morphology compare with other similar settlements in the local and wider area?
2. What can be reconstructed about the environmental conditions on this fen-edge settlement, as well as how they changed over the Roman period.
3. What is the range of ceramics used on the site, and how do they develop over time? What are their sources, and what does their distribution reveal about how the site was connected to wider patterns of material culture in the late Roman period?
4. What can be said about the animals and crops and how they were used? What can be said about wider agricultural practices and land use on this fen-edge site? What can be said about animal husbandry on the site and the wider area?
5. What was the economic basis for the settlement? What did it produce and what did it import? In particular, what can the site's ceramic sequence and proximity to the River Cam reveal about trade and communication in the region and into the Fens during the Roman period?

2.2 Research frameworks

2.2.1 The excavation took place within, and will contribute to the goals of Regional Research Frameworks relevant to this area:

- i. *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern counties: 1. Resource Assessment* (Glazebrook 1997, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 3);
- ii. *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern counties: 2. Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown & Glazebrook 2000, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 8)
- iii. *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24)

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 A total of two trenches were opened for the cutting of an access point (Trench 1) and service trench (Trench 2), covering a total area of 13.4m² (Figure 1). These were

located on the edge of the development area, between works undertaken in 2017-2018 (ECB5205) and Upware Road. The results of these interventions are described in Section 3 below.

- 2.3.2 The works were carried out by the client using a 360° 8-tonne tracked mechanical excavator to the depth at which hardcore was to be inserted (Trench 1; Plate 1) and at which services would go (Trench 2). A toothless ditching bucket with a bucket width of 1.5m was used to excavate the trenches. Overburden was excavated in spits not greater than 0.1m thick, and spoil was removed to a separate store on the site. All machine excavation took place under the supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 2.3.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector set to not discriminate against iron, with only a modern iron bar identified just below the surface of the ditch silting. No environmental samples were taken.
- 2.3.4 Records comprised drawn, written and photographic data, with all archaeological features recorded using OA East pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and high-resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits, as well as general site shots. Photographs include a scale, north arrow, site code and feature number (where relevant) unless they were to be used in publications, with the photograph register recording these details and photograph numbers listed on the corresponding context sheets.
- 2.3.5 A register was kept of the trenches, features and photographs. All features and deposits have been issued with unique context numbers. All site drawings include the following information: site code, scale, section number, orientation, date and initials of the archaeologist who prepared the drawing.
- 2.3.6 Sections of the trenches (including features) were drawn at scales of 1:20. All sections were tied in to Ordnance Datum and the site plan was tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. Trench plans and sections illustrating the results can be found in Figures 2-3. The progress of the archaeological works and the trenches can be seen in Plates 1-3. Context numbers follow on from those assigned during the previous works at the site and begin at 961. These reflect the order in which features were identified, and cut numbers in the text are shown in **bold**. The full details of all trenches, with dimensions and depths of all deposits, form the content of Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence was fairly uniform. The natural geology was not revealed during excavation. The subsoil, a friable mid yellow brown clayey silt (961) was overlain by a friable dark brown grey clayey silt topsoil (966).

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the watching brief were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout, with only a small amount of drizzle during the works. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying subsoil.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were present in both trenches, although in both cases they equated to modern activity. The details of these are described below.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 (Figure 2) was located on the eastern edge of the development area, where an access point into the site was being created. Its eastern edge was against Upware Road and extended 2.75m into the site. The trench was 4.55m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.5m.

3.4.2 The eastern edge of the trench (by the road) revealed a steep modern cut (**962**; Figure 3, Section 314; Plate 2), 0.5m deep, with a flat base that extended beyond the edge of the road surface and trench edge on a north-to-south alignment. This was filled by a soft dark brownish grey sandy silt (963) with frequent grit inclusions. To the west of this was a ditch (**964**), on the same north-north-east-to-south-south-west alignment, which measured 1.75m wide and extended deeper than the base of Trench 1. It was visible outside the trench as an extant earthwork. This had gentle sides and was filled by a friable dark grey brown clay silt (965) that contained a plastic bottle, concrete blocks and an iron bar. None of these finds were recovered as they were clearly modern.

3.5 Trench 2

3.5.1 To the south of Trench 1, and measuring 1.7m in length by 0.4m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 0.7m, Trench 2 lay on a west-north-west-to-east-south-east

orientation. This trench was excavated under the current development boundary fence and revealed the western edge of a ditch (**967**) (Figure 3, Section 315; Plate 3) that extended to the east of the trench, and in line with the ditch (**964**) identified in Trench 1. The ditch had steep sides and was visible outside the trench as an extant earthwork c.1.75m wide. This was filled by a friable dark grey brown clay silt (968) that contained no finds.

3.6 Finds summary

- 3.6.1 Only material of a clearly modern nature was identified during the works and these were not retained. They included a plastic and glass bottle, concrete blocks, red brick and an iron bar.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Archaeological features were clear against the subsoil. The areas of the trenches were only small and shallow, and did not extend below the lower subsoil horizon, meaning that only a limited amount of archaeology would be visible. The fact that the natural geology was not reached during the works means that older archaeological features will not have been seen, only the later disturbance.

4.2 Watching Brief objectives and results

4.2.1 The overall aim of the investigation, to preserve by record any archaeological remains exposed during ground works, and to ensure that any artefactual evidence is retained, recorded and analysed to an acceptable standard has been met – only modern features were identified, and these were recorded. Modern material (plastic, brick, metal and concrete) recovered during the works has not been retained.

4.2.2 The results of this investigation do not contribute to the five research questions identified in the Updated Project Design for the excavations immediately to the west (as listed in Section 2.1) as only modern features were identified. This modern ditch (**964=967**) is likely to have truncated any archaeological along its route.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 Only features relating to the current surroundings were identified. These included the cut for the installation of the present Upware Road on the eastern edge of the development area as well as the boundary ditch that forms the eastern edge of the site. This boundary ditch remains partly extant, with the lower level having silted-up and contained modern rubbish. A small bank of topsoil was visible on the western edge of the ditch, with trees growing into its base. The ditch was visible before trenching began, and the edges identified in the trenches corresponds to those visible on the surface.

4.4 Significance

4.4.1 Only modern features relating to the current road and boundary ditch were identified during the works. These are likely to truncate any older archaeological remains.

APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	ESE-WNW
Trench contains a modern ditch and modern road cut. Consists of topsoil and subsoil, with the natural geology not reached.					Length (m)	4.55m
					Width (m)	2.75m
					Avg. depth (m)	0.5m
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
961	layer	-	>0.5m	subsoil	-	-
962	cut	-	0.5m	cut for road	-	modern
963	fill	-	0.5m	fill for road	-	modern
964	cut	1.75	>0.5m	cut of ditch	-	modern
965	fill	1.75	>0.5m	fill of ditch 964	plastic bottle, concrete, glass bottle	modern
966	layer	-	0.2m	topsoil	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	ESE-WNW
Trench contains a single modern ditch. Consists of topsoil and subsoil, with the natural geology not reached.					Length (m)	1.7m
					Width (m)	0.4m
					Avg. depth (m)	0.7m
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
961	layer	-	>0.5m	subsoil	-	-
966	layer	-	0.2m	topsoil	-	-
967	cut	1.75m	>0.5m	cut of ditch	-	modern
968	fill	1.75m	>0.5m	fill of ditch 967	-	modern

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blackbourn, K. 2017. *Late Roman Settlement at Old School Lane, Upware, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Evaluation Report*. OA East Report 2146 (unpublished)

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Gurney, D. 2003. *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14

Robinson Zeki, L. 2019. *Land South of Nos 1 to 7 Old School Lane, Upware. Post-Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design*. OA East Report 2322 (unpublished)

Stewart, G. 2019. *Land South of 1 to 7 Old School Lane, Upware. Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*. CCC HET (unpublished)

Maps consulted:

British Geological Survey (BGS). 2019. Available:

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> accessed 22 October 2019

APPENDIX C

SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-371258		
Project Name	Old School Lane, Upware		
Start of Fieldwork	21 October 2019	End of Fieldwork	21 October 2019
Previous Work	Yes	Future Work	Yes

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ECB5957	Planning App. No.	15/00482/OUT
HER Number	ECB5957	Related Numbers	ECB5205

Prompt	NPPF
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 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 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditch	Modern (1901 to present)	Plastic bottle (not retained)	Modern (1901 to present)

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Address (including Postcode) 1-7 Old School Lane Upware Road Upware Cambridge CB7 5ZR
District	East Cambridge	
Parish	Wicken	
HER office	CCC HET	
Size of Study Area	13.4m ²	
National Grid Ref	TL 5376 7004	

Project Originators

Organisation	OA East
Project Brief Originator	CCC HET

Project Design Originator	OA East
Project Manager	Matt Brudenell
Project Supervisor	Robin Webb

Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	N/A	N/A
Digital Archive	OA East	ECB5957
Paper Archive	CCC HET	ECB5957

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"/>
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media

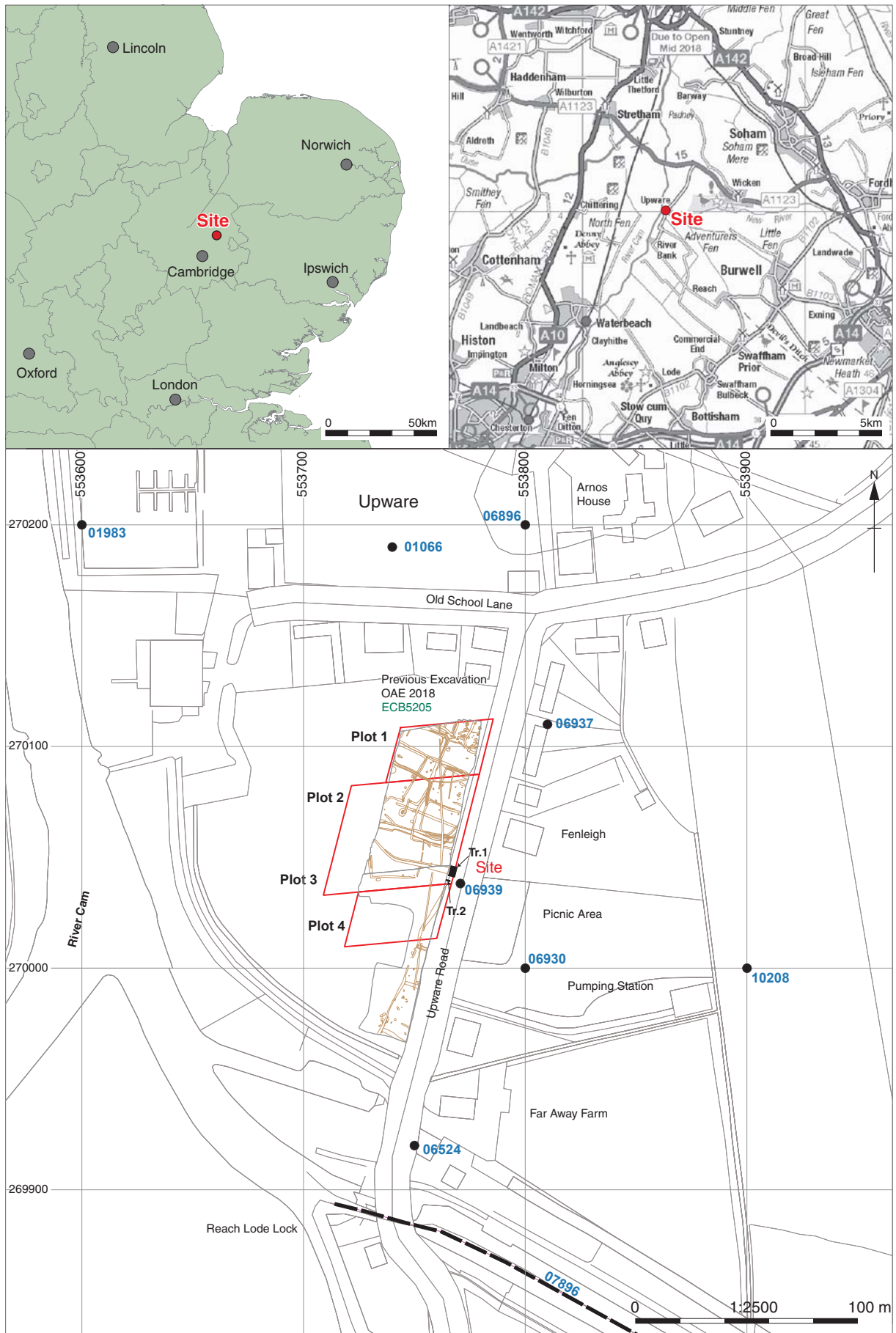
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Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>

Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further Comments

Modern finds recorded on site but not retained



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Figure 1: Site location showing the archaeological trenches (black), in development area (red) and showing nearby HER data

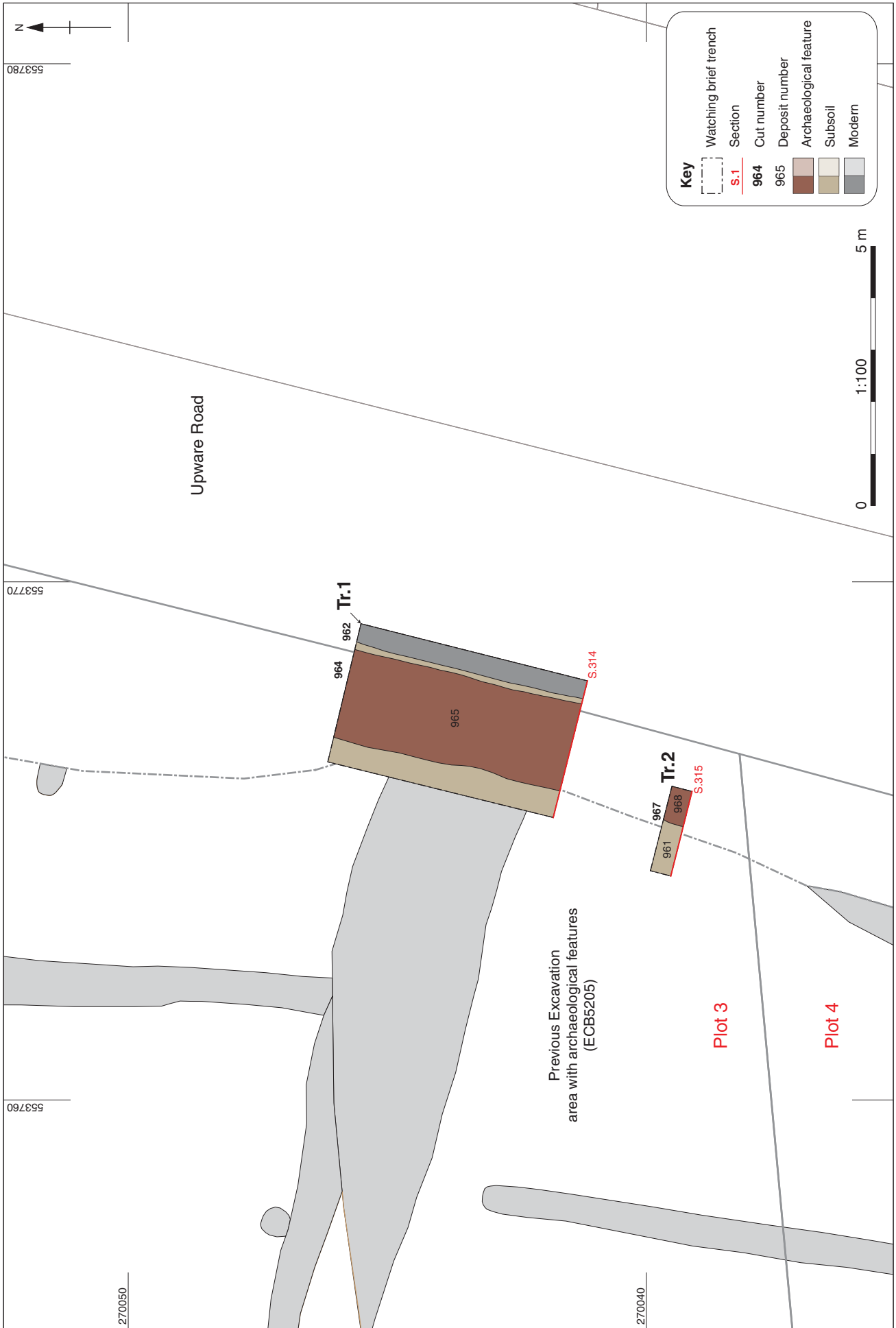


Figure 2: Trench plan

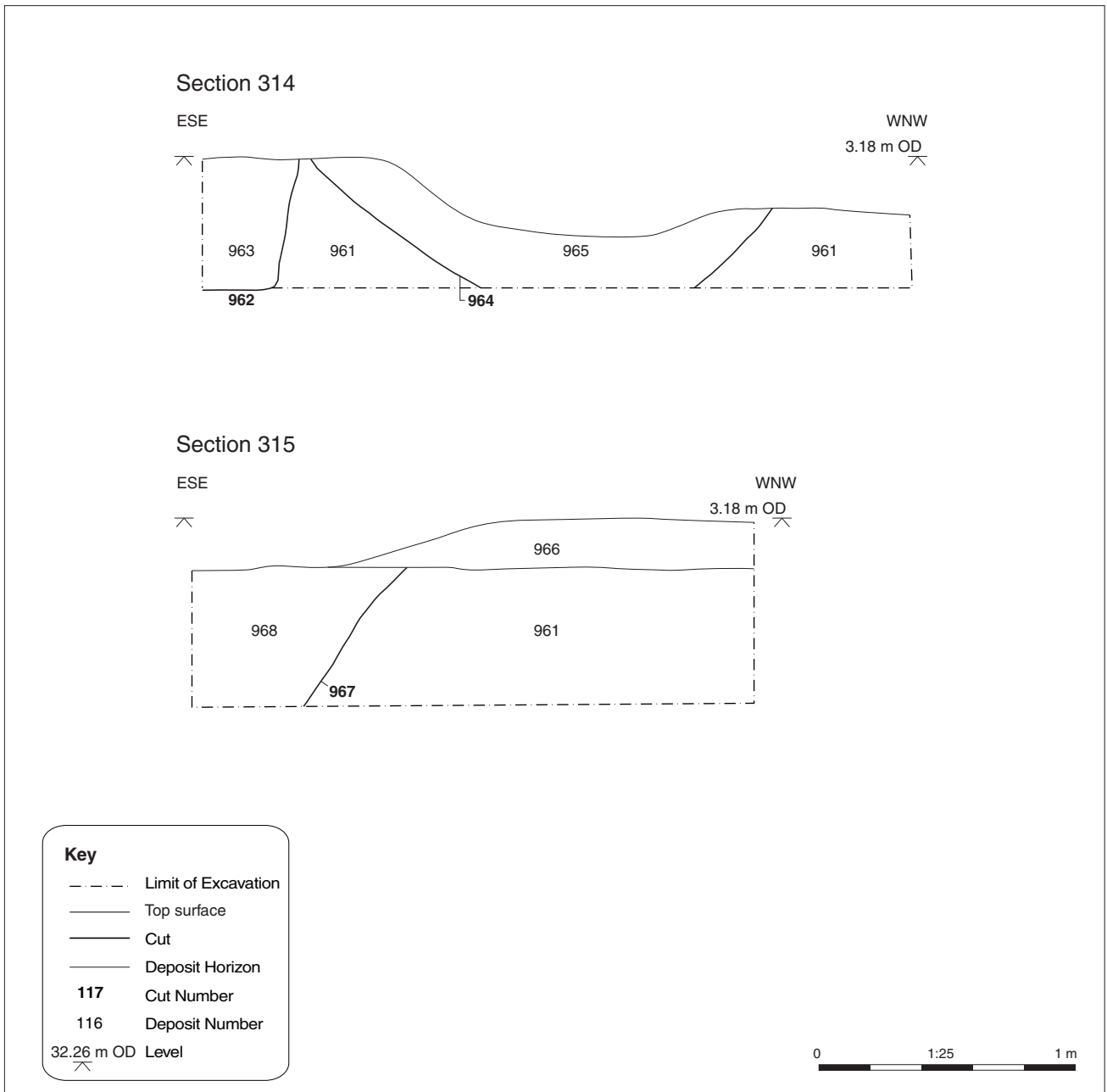


Figure 3: Selected sections



Plate 1: Machine excavation of Trench 1, looking south-west



Plate 2: Southern edge of Trench 1, showing the cut for the road (962) and the extant ditch (964), looking south



Plate 3: Trench 2 with ditch 937 at the near end, looking south



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