

Archaeological Field Unit

**An Archaeological Desktop Assessment:
The new Milton Road Primary School Site,
Cambridge**

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Cambridgeshire County Council

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SUMMARY

This study is designed to assess the archaeological potential of an area of land (presently school playing fields) immediately to the south of the Lady Adrian School (Courtney Way, Cambridge). This land lies to the north of the centre of Cambridge City, within Chesterton Parish, east of Gilbert Road and north of Milton Road (TL 545300 260000). This land is the proposed site of the new Milton Road Primary School. The study was commissioned by Dean Clark (Design Team Leader) of Cambridgeshire County Council (Property & Procurement) in advance of a planning application.

Although no archaeological remains have been recorded within the development area, the present study shows that the site lies within a rich and important archaeological landscape. The site has significant archaeological remains surrounding it, notably the complex multi-period site at Castle Hill (Shire Hall) lying c900m southwest and the extensive Roman (and multi-period) site(s) on Arbury Road and around Kings Hedges, some 500-1300m north.

Prehistoric (Neolithic) remains have been found 400m to the west (on Stretton Avenue).

Within 500m of the subject site are known Roman remains located to the south of Arbury Road (lying less than 400m to the north of the development area) and the Roman Road of Akeman Street also less than 400m to the west (along present day Carlton Way).

There are known Saxon remains to the south and east of the proposed development area, and these include an Anglo-Saxon cemetery site (Swann's Gravel Pit) now occupied by the Westbrook Centre (off Milton Road).

Historical cartographic evidence has confirmed that the subject site has not been developed since at least the 19th century and most probably was agricultural since the medieval period at least.

This lack of development is the most likely explanation for the absence of any archaeological discoveries on the site and given the extent of known archaeological remains in the vicinity, remains of Roman and perhaps Saxon date may reasonably be expected to be encountered.

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**An Archaeological Desktop Assessment:
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TL 45300 60000**

1 INTRODUCTION

The desktop assessment was commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council Department of Property and Procurement. This study covers an area of land (present day playing fields) immediately to the south of the Lady Adrian School (Courtney Way, Cambridge). This land lies to the north of the centre of Cambridge City, within Chesterton Parish, east of Gilbert Road and north of Milton Road (TL 545300 260000). This land is the proposed site of the new Milton Road Primary School.

The aims of this assessment are to define the extent, preservation and importance of the archaeology within the area. This document is a pre-planning request and is not in response to a Planning Brief issued by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Section.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development area lies to the north of Cambridge city. The British Geological survey has mapped the underlying geology and the site lies on 2nd Terrace Gravels (BGS Sheet 188). The site is presently under grass and is the playing fields for the Lady Adrian School, the buildings of which is immediately to the north of the land.

The site lies above the 10m (OD) contour, on the northern side of the River Cam. The former topography has been lost due to the 20th century expansion of Cambridge.

3 SOURCES

As part of the Desktop Assessment, the sources consulted included the archives of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit, the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the County Record Offices in Cambridge.

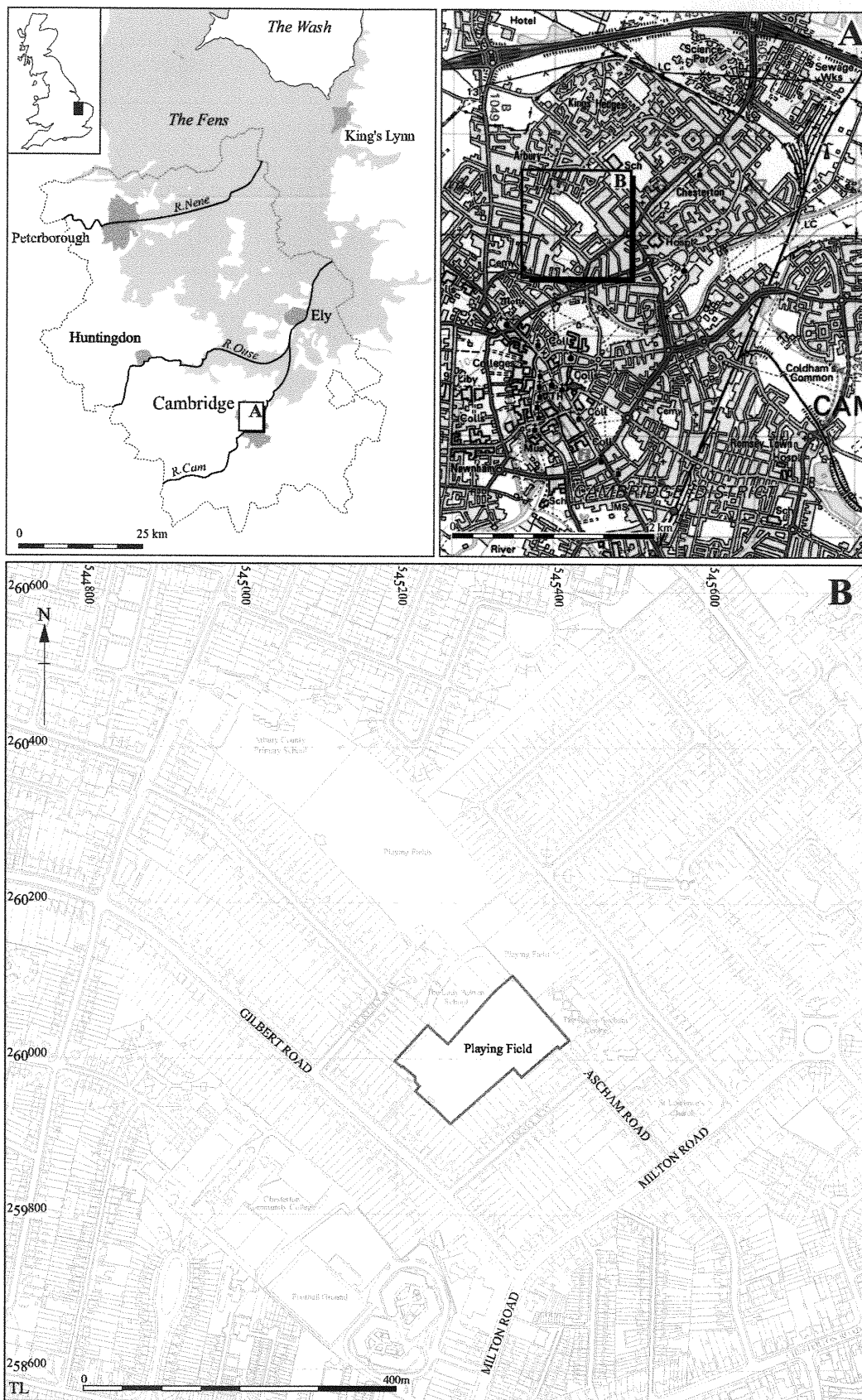


Figure 1 Location of Proposed Development Area (in red).



Plate 1 Aerial photograph of development site (outlined in white)

3.1 Sites and Monuments Record (Fig 2)

The SMR of Cambridgeshire County Council has recorded extensive archaeological activity around the development area, although not within the subject site itself (Fig 2 & Appendix 1). These records are from a number of sources and vary from individual stray flint pieces to whole monuments such as villas (potentially at Kings Hedges) and the large multi-period excavation site at Castle Hill (Shire Hall) which is the remains of the Roman Town of Cambridge. Most of the SMR records have been generated from finds dating from the 1950's but a number include more recent investigations in the 1990's. The latter includes desk-top studies, archaeological trial trench evaluations and full scale excavations.

3.2 Cartographic Evidence

The first comprehensive maps for the site are the 1840 Enclosure and Tithe Maps (both produced in the same year. In addition Speed's Map of Cambridge (1611) was consulted. Finally the 1885 25" Edition Ordnance Survey map was studied. Overall, these documents provide useful information on the medieval and post medieval history of the site and have relevance to understanding the later land-use and lack of recorded discoveries on the site.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Prehistoric

There is very limited evidence of any prehistoric remains close to the subject site. There is a single stray find (Neolithic flint axe and arrow head, SMR No: 1900-CB2430) found at Stretten Avenue in 1987 (c400m west of the development site). This discovery is close to the route of Akeman Street Roman, Road. Prehistoric remains (Iron Age settlement and finds spots) have been found c900m north of the development area during the excavations in the 1950's and 1960's at the Arbury Road and Kings Hedges sites (SMR nos: 05414a, 05415a, 05416a, 05419a, 05422a). Similarly, prehistoric remains (again predominately Iron Age) were recorded during the excavations at Castle Hill (SMR no: 05251a etc). An Iron Age village (SMR no: 08768a etc.) was identified at Castle Hill, immediately predating the Roman conquest and fort/town at Castle Hill (Roman Cambridge).

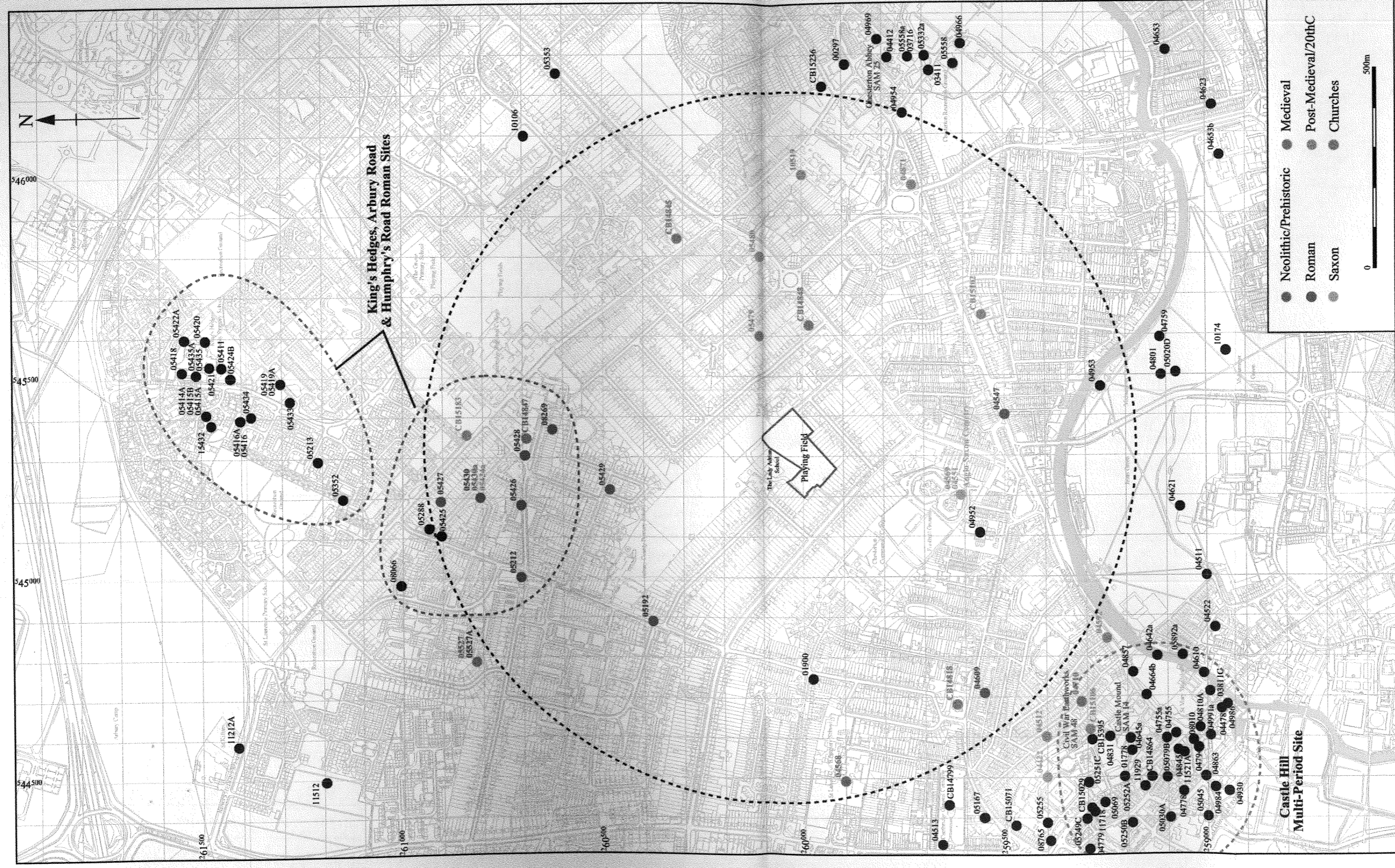


Figure 2 Sites and Monuments Record locations (showing 500m circle)

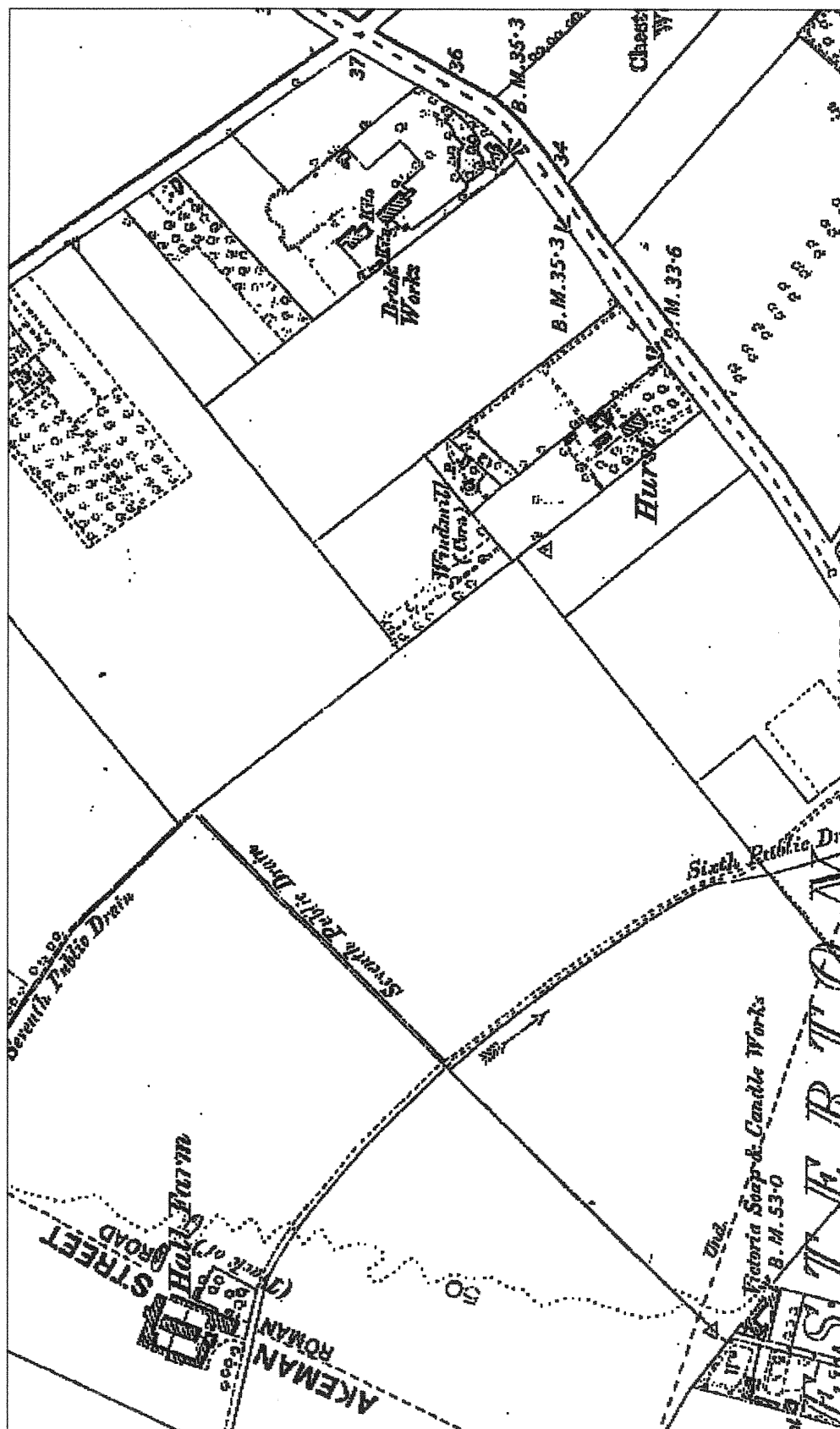


Figure 3 1885 26" Edition Ordnance Survey Sheet

4.2 Romano-British

Roman archaeology has been found to the north and northwest of the development area as well as further to the north (Arbury/Kings Hedges) and southwest (Castle Hill). Both these sites have been extensively excavated since the 1950's/60's and although they lie some c900m from the development area, their presence is significant.

To the north the Arbury Road and Kings Hedges sites revealed a 2nd-3rd century high status Roman Villa (with a tessellated court, hypocaust, religious artefacts etc.) with an associated agricultural settlement, field systems and significant features including pottery kilns and wells. This site was preceded by a Belgic (1st C BC/AD) Iron Age settlement (SMR 5424a).

Lying 900m to the southwest is Castle Hill, the location of the Roman Town of Cambridge. Although this site is some distance from the development area, it is a very important area of archaeological activity, with both preceding prehistoric archaeology (see 4.1 above) and later Saxon (Village SMR No: 04422 etc.), Medieval (Norman Motte & Bailey Castle) and English Civil War remains (SMR 08434), as well as the Roman town (SMR Nos: 05075, 05086, 05087, 05251 & main ref 08768-CB10525). It is not within the scope of this report to describe these remains further, other than to make note of their presence and their significance.

Remains of extensive Roman settlement have been found within 500m of the development area directly to the north. The closest remains of Roman date were discovered just under 400m to the north on Brimley Road. These relate to a rich Cremation burial that was discovered with glass bottles and a stack of decorated Samian vessels (SMR no: 05429). Sherds of Roman pottery were recovered 450m northwest, on Carlton Way (SMR No: 05192) on the route of Akeman Street Roman road (SMR 05766a etc.). Some 800m to the north of the site, along Alex Wood Road and Ansell Way were Roman remains (including ovens, hearths, a well and pottery) found by Professor Friend in the 1950's and 1960's (SMR refs: 05212, 05426 & 05428) and a stray Roman coin found in 1987 (SMR No: 08269). The largest Roman remains within 500m of the development site lie just to the north of these finds on Fortescue Road (SMR No: 05427) and Humphreys Road (SMR No: 05430), also excavated by Professor Friend in the 1950's. These investigations uncovered stone buildings, ovens, hearths and a long burial sequence part of the remains of a large later (3rd Century AD) Roman settlement.

Notwithstanding the Roman remains at Castle Hill, to the south of the subject site have been two documented Roman finds; possible Roman drain pipes on Chesterton Road (SMR No: 04557) and along Victoria Road (pottery sherds SMR No: 04609), the precise location of both finds is unknown.

4.3 Anglo-Saxon

Evidence of Anglo-Saxon burial remains were identified within 500m of the site. The Urban Archaeological Database and Sites & Monuments Record show the presence of a (pagan?) Saxon burial ground (SMR No: 04551 & UAD 294) at Swann's Gravel Pit (now the present day Westbrook Centre, 300m south of the site). There is no accurate date for this discovery but predates 1903 (Fox 1923). There are Saxon remains on Castle Hill (SMR No: 04422), and the only other Saxon remains also appear to relate to pagan burials with the recording of two bronze brooches at the junction of Gilbert and Milton Road during sewer excavations in 1938.

4.4 Medieval

Medieval ridge and furrow (SMR 5527 & 5527a) has been recorded c500m northwest of the development site from cropmarks on Roseford Road (now under modern housing). Ridge and furrow (SMR No: 10106) was also identified c500m+ to the northeast. The excavations (c 450m north) at Humphreys Road (see 4.3 above) recorded medieval remains, including a well and pottery (SMR 5430a). The only other medieval remains (again not including Castle Hill) is a 'Dole Stone' of boundary marker (SMR 04710).

4.5 Post-medieval and modern

The Cromwellian earthworks (SMR 04512, 08434) on Castle Hill will not be described in detail here and lie over 700m from the development area. Other finds within 500m of the development site include; two cannon balls (SMR No: 10519) at 47 Milton Road, a Smock Mill (wind) (SMR 04568) 500m due west, further windmill remains at the Westbrook centre (SMR 04569) and off Highworth Avenue (SMR 05479) and Chesterton Hall (SMR 04871).

The Speed (1611), Enclosure (1840) and 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Maps all record the development site having been and remained agricultural land (though the medieval and post-medieval periods) and it is probable that the site has not been subject to any development since the medieval period.

5 ASSESSMENT

The aim of the desktop study was to obtain information to be analysed in order to determine the location, extent, survival and significance of the known archaeological and historical remains in the vicinity and within the development area.

Although no archaeological remains have been recorded within the development site itself to date, the present study shows that the site lies within a rich and important archaeological landscape. The site has significant archaeological remains surrounding it, notably the complex multi-period site at Castle Hill (Shire Hall) lying c900m southwest and the extensive Roman (and multi-period) site(s) on Arbury Road and around Kings Hedges, some 500-1300m north.

Prehistoric (Neolithic) remains have been found 400m to the west (on Stretten Avenue).

Within 500m of the subject site are known Roman remains to the south of Arbury Road (lying less than 400m to the north) and the Roman Road of Akeman Street also less than 400m to the west (along present day Carlton Way). To the north of the site (within 500m) are rich and extensive Roman remains centred on Humphrey's Road and spreading south. These remains have been discovered during the construction of housing since the 1950's and are perhaps the most probable type of archaeology (i.e. Roman) predicted to be present on the development site.

There are Saxon remains to the south and east of the proposed development area, and these include an Anglo-Saxon cemetery site (Swann's Gravel Pit) now occupied by the Westbrook Centre (off Milton Road).

Historical cartographic evidence has confirmed that the subject site was agricultural land in the 19th century and most probably since the Medieval period.

This absence of development (particularly house building) is the most likely explanation for the lack of any archaeological discoveries on the site and given the extent of known archaeological remains in the vicinity.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Based on the assessment of the archaeological potential of the development site (5 above), ratings can be described as follows:

Neolithic-Bronze Age	low
Iron Age	low/moderate
Roman	moderate/high
Anglo-Saxon	low/moderate
Medieval	low
Post-Medieval	very low

The present study shows that the site lies within a rich archaeological landscape, close (<500m) to large Roman sites, with very large known sites to the north (Arbury) and southwest (Castle Hill) within 900m. Although no

finds are known from the subject site itself, its archaeological potential can be considered moderate to high, with particular reference to the Roman period.

The site has remained agricultural land since at least the 17th century and has now been surrounded by 20th century housing developments, surviving as a playing field.. Most archaeological finds recorded in the vicinity have been discovered during these buildings works and the very fact the subject site has remained un-developed is perhaps the only reason no archaeological remains have yet to be recorded.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The assessment of the surrounding archaeology would suggest that the proposed development is in an area with substantial archaeological potential with particular reference to the evidence from the Roman and perhaps Saxon periods.

Remains of Roman settlement are the most probable to be encountered in any development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Cambridgeshire County Council Department of Property and Procurement (Dean Clark) who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. Thanks go to Sarah Poppy, SMR Officer, who gave helpful advice and supplied most of Fig 2. Thanks also go to the Cambridgeshire Records Office and to Crane Begg who prepared the illustrations at very short notice.

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APPENDIX 1

Sites and Monuments within Assessment Area
(generally within c500m radius)

SMR No	Grid Ref	Details
08269	TL 4537 6063	C4 Roman Coin (Arcadius)
08434	TL 445594	Cromwellian Earthworks (Castle Hill)
08768b	TL 445 593	Via Devana Roman Road (Castle Hill)
08768a	TL 445 593	Belgic (1 st C BC/AD) Village (Castle Hill)
08768	TL 445 593	Excavation of Roman settlement (Castle Hill)
10106	TL 461 607	Medieval Ridge and Furrow
10519	TL 4660	Two Iron Cannon Balls
CB14818	TL 446 596	St Luke's Church
CB14845	TL 458603	Arbury Road Baptist Church
CB14847	TL 453 607	Good Shepard Church
CB 14848	TL 455 599	St Laurence's Church
01900	TL 4475 5998	Neolithic axe and arrowhead
04422	TL 445 594	Saxon village (Castle Hill)
04512	TL 446 594	Cromwellian Ditch
04557	TL 454595	Ro? Drainpipes?
04551	TL 452 596	Anglo-Saxon inhumations
04568	TL 445599	Smock (wind) mill
04569	TL 452 596	Windmill
04609	TL 4470 5955	Roman pottery find
04710	TL 447 593	Dole Stone
04871	TL 4597 5973	Chesterton Hall
04952	TL 4511 5956	Almshouse
05075	TL 445 593	Roman knife (Castle Hill)
05076	TL 445 593	Reburied Bones (Med/Post-Med) (Castle Hill)
05986	TL 445 593	Roman pottery (Castle Hill)
05087	TL 445 593	Roman pottery (Castle Hill)
05192	TL 4489 6038	Roman pottery
05212	TL 450 607	Roman oven
05251	TL 445 593	Roman settlement (Castle Hill)
05251a	TL 445 593	Prehistoric settlement (Castle Hill)
05251b	TL 445 593	Saxon settlement (Castle Hill)
05251c	TL 445 593	Medieval settlement (Castle Hill)
05414 + a	TL 454 615	Prehistoric and Roman remains at Arbury Road Site IX
05415 + a-b	TL 454615	Prehistoric, Roman & Medieval Remains at Arbury Road Site VIII
05416 + a	TL 454 614	Prehistoric & Roman Remains at Arbury Road Site VII
05418	TL 455 615	Roman Remains at Arbury Road Site V
05419 + a	TL 455 613	Prehistoric & Roman Remains at Arbury Road Site IV
05420	TL 456 615	Roman remains at Arbury Road Site III
05422 + a	TL 456 615	Prehistoric & Roman Remains at Arbury Road
05424 + a	TL 455 614	Manor Farm Roman settlement (Villa) + Saxon remains
05432	TL 4538 6149	Roman settlement at Neptune Close
05433	TL 4544 6128	Roman building
05434	TL 4541 6138	Roman pottery
05435 + a	TL 456 615	Roman field system & Medieval Ridge and furrow
05527	TL 448608	Cropmark
05527a	TL 448 608	Medieval Ridge and Furrow



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