

The Corner of Ermine Street and St Peter's Road, Huntingdon Archaeological Evaluation Report

July 2017

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The Corner of Ermine Street and St Peter's Road, Huntingdon

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Nicholas Cox BSc.

With contributions from Carole Fletcher HND BA (Hons) ACIFA, Zoë Ui Choileáin BA MA BABAO and illustrations by Emily Abrehart BA.

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Summary

On the 17th of July 2017 Oxford Archaeology East (OAE) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land on the corner of Ermine Street and St Peter's Road, Huntingdon.

A total of two trial trenches, one 10m long and the other 5m long were excavated.

Both trenches found a potential buried late to post-medieval soil layer which contained late medieval pottery, clay pipe and animal bone fragments. No archaeological features were present in the trenches.

Above the soil the only remains were from the construction and subsequent demolition of a 20th century garage.



Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Ray Westwood of Hunts Properties Ltd for commissioning this project. Monitoring of the work on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council was undertaken by Andy Thomas, to whom we are grateful for advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Aileen Connor. The fieldwork was directed by Nicholas Cox. Survey and digitizing was carried out by Robin Webb. Thanks also to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Natasha Dodwell, and prepared the archive under the management of Katherine Hamilton.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology East (OAE) was commissioned by Hunts Properties Ltd to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site on the corner of Ermine Street and St Peter's Road, Huntingdon.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 16/00826/FUL). A brief was set by Andy Thomas and a written scheme of investigation was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located within the historic town of Huntingdon adjacent to Ermine Street, an arterial route of Roman date. Previous archaeological works carried out within the vicinity of the development area have demonstrated that Huntingdon expanded along this road during the medieval period.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of an open grassed area on the junction between Ermine Street and St Peter's Road. It was formerly the site of a 20th century garage. The elevation of the site is 13.7m OD. The ground gently drops down towards the south-east.
- 1.2.3 The British Geological Survey indicates that the solid geology of the site comprises Oxford Clay Formation (Mudstone). No superficial deposits are recorded.

http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html

(access date: 30/06/2017)

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following archaeological and historical background of the site is drawn from the Written Scheme of Investigation (Graham 2017).

Neolithic

1.3.2 There has been very little prehistoric activity recorded in the vicinity of the site. There have been several prehistoric finds within Huntingdon, mainly dating from the Later Neolithic onwards (Abrams 2000). These finds may be related to the communities using the ceremonial complex at Rectory Farm, Godmanchester 1.5km south-east of the development area (Hinman and Kenney 1998).

Roman

1.3.3 Roman activity in the vicinity of the site is evidenced primarily by the course of Ermine Street that follows the current line of Stukeley Road. Excavations at Stanton Butts, north of the site uncovered the remains of a 'V' shaped ditch, dated to the Roman period, that was interpreted as the roadside ditch. The location of a possible Late Iron



Age and Roman settlement was uncovered 750m to the east at Mill Common (Cooper and Spoerry 2000) but no evidence of settlement has been found in the immediate vicinity of the site. However, finds such as a bronze key (HER 02613) attest to Roman activity in the area and a Roman roadside ditch at Stukeley Road (MCB16823).

Saxon and Early Medieval

1.3.4 Excavations at Stukeley Road (MCB16823) located evidence of settlement from the Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman and medieval periods, comprising building and boundary remains. The Saxon remains appeared to be ephemeral structures made of earth fast posts and beams, with no evidence of internal floors. From 1150 onwards the site developed into a substantial medieval roadside settlement, with buildings, tenements and possible alleys. Pits were used for rubbish deposition but also as a source of gravel to maintain Ermine Street.

Later medieval

- 1.3.5 North-west of the proposed development area, where Ermine Street becomes Stukeley Road, a number of medieval features have been identified.
- 1.3.6 An evaluation at Former Bus Depot, Huntingdon (MCB18503) north-west of the proposed development area revealed remains of medieval activity dating from the mid-11th to 14th centuries. Remains of post-built structures along the frontage of Ermine Street were recorded, comprising postholes and beam slots, and associated pits. The pits contained small quantities of 11th-15th century pottery, animal bone and environmental remains, indicating they were used for rubbish disposal.
- 1.3.7 Further pits and a possible well were recorded to the rear of these structures, representing probable backyard activity. To the West of the development a large undated ditch was uncovered, and probably represents a rear boundary to the medieval activity. The excavation at the site which followed identified the continuation of remains encountered during the evaluation. A large number of postholes and beam slots, the majority of which were located towards Stukeley Road, had no specific plan to identify the layout of structures but have been interpreted as possibly foundations to buildings fronting on to the road. Four groups were identified consisting mainly of postholes with a few beam slots, pottery recovered from the features are dated to the 12th-14th centuries. Behind these structures appears to be Medieval backyard activity in the form of rubbish pits which appear in clusters. Boundary ditches marked out the individual building plots and similar pottery was recovered from them, suggesting all activity on this site occurred around the same time.
- 1.3.8 Directly west of the development area at Stukeley Road, an evaluation (MCB17983) revealed a number of medieval features, comprising pits, ditches and postholes, located close to the road. The finds suggest domestic roadside occupation during the 12th and 13th centuries, although no definitive structural remains were identified. The ditches respect the alignment of the road, although do not appear to be directly associated. It is likely that the evidence at the site reflected suburban sprawl alongside the road during the 13th century, before the decline of the town in the following century (Rees 2009).



1.3.9 North-west of the site an archaeological evaluation (MCB11959) revealed a total of 48 features, increasing in density towards the north of the site. The features comprised a series of rubbish pits from the 12th century, and a foundation trench, possibly representing the northern side of a large timber building or a major fenced boundary. This site may represent the furthest known expansion of medieval Huntingdon before the plagues of the 14th century forced its contraction.

Post-medieval and Modern

- 1.3.10 The area around the site was used for several purposes during the 19th and 20th centuries.
- 1.3.11 In the 19th century the Union Workhouse was located to the north of the site as shown on the 1st edition OS Map (1886). The OS map also shows a school on the site itself, which occupied the eastern edge of the development area. This was the National Boys School which was built in 1813 to accommodate 175 children (Kelly's Directory 1898, 284). The school was still extant in 1914 (Kelly's Directory 1914, 44).
- 1.3.12 By 1971 the site is shown as a garage with an L-shaped building running along both the northern and eastern edges of the site. The garage has since been demolished and replaced by an open grassed area.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:
 - i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
 - ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
 - iii. set results in the local, regional, and national archaeological context and, in particular, its wider cultural landscape and past environmental conditions
 - iv. 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

- 2.2.1 Two trenches were excavated, one measuring 10m long x 1.6m wide, and the other 5m long by 1.6m wide providing a 5.75% sample of the area to be disturbed by construction. Due to limited space, and the presence of secure fencing around the site the trenches were moved slightly from the original layout in the WSI (Fig.2).
- 2.2.2 Service plans were checked before work commenced on site. Before trenching, the footprint of the trench was scanned by a qualified and experienced operator using a CAT and Genny with a valid calibration certificate.
- 2.2.3 Only a thin layer of topsoil was present on site, which had been deliberately deposited overlying modern demolition layers. As this was not in-situ bucket sampling would not have produced relevant evidence and was not carried out.
- 2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector.
- 2.2.5 All machine excavation was undertaken under the supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 2.2.6 The trial trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator to the upper interface of archaeological features or deposits. A toothless ditching bucket was used to excavate the trench. Overburden was excavated in spits not greater than 0.1m thick.
- 2.2.7 Spoil was stored alongside trenches. Topsoil, subsoil, and archaeological deposits were kept separate during excavation, to allow for sequential backfilling of excavations.
- 2.2.8 Site survey 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.
- 2.2.9 The site grid is accurately tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and located on the 1:2500 or 1:1250 map of the area. Elevations are levelled to the Ordnance Datum.
- 2.2.10 A register has been kept of all trenches, contexts, and photographs.



- 2.2.11 All features, layers and deposits have been issued with unique context numbers. Each feature is individually documented on context sheets, and hand-drawn in section. Written descriptions are recorded on pro-forma sheets comprising factual data and interpretative elements.
- 2.2.12 Sections of features have been drawn at 1:20. All sections are tied in to Ordnance Datum.
- 2.2.13 All site drawings include the following information: site name, site code, scale, section number, orientation, date and the name or initials of the archaeologist who prepared the drawing.
- 2.2.14 The photographic record comprises high resolution digital photographs.
- 2.2.15 Photographs include both general trench shots and photographs of the stratigraphic sequence. Photographs include a scale, north arrow, site code, and feature number (where relevant), unless they are to be used in publications. The photograph register records these details, and photograph numbers are listed on corresponding context sheets.
- 2.2.16 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.
- 2.2.17 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence between all trenches was identical. The natural geology of sandy clay was overlain by a post-medieval and modern deposits, which in turn was overlain by topsoil.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the trenches remained dry throughout.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 No archaeological features were present in either trench but both contained a late medieval or post-medieval soil layer.

3.4 Trenches 1 and 2

- 3.4.1 The sequence of modern and post-medieval layers was identical in the two trenches (Fig.3 Sections 1 and 2, Plates 2 and 3).
- 3.4.2 Overlying the natural throughout both trenches was a layer of the dark brownish grey clayey silt (5). This 0.56m thick in Trench 1 and 0.61m thick in Trench 2. The layer produced one sherd (25g) of 13th-14th century pottery, one fragment of late/post-medieval tile (11g), a clay pipe stem and 42g of animal bone (Plate 1).
- 3.4.3 A layer of mid yellowish brown sandy gravel (4) had been laid on top of the soil (5). This was 0.21m thick in Trench 1 and 0.24m thick in Trench 2.
- 3.4.4 A tarmac surface (3) was laid on top of layer 4. This contained occasional CBM fragments and was 0.19m thick in Trench 1 and 0.12m thick in Trench 2.
- 3.4.5 The tarmac surface was then overlain by a compacted dump of modern rubble (2), including bricks and fragments of concrete paving slabs. This was 0.29m thick in both trenches.
- 3.4.6 A thin deposit of topsoil (1) covered the rubble in both trenches, this had a maximum thickness of 0.15m in Trench 1 and 0.09m in Trench 2.

3.5 Finds summary

- 3.5.1 One sherd (25g) of 13th-14th century pottery, along with a clay pipe stem, and a late/post-medieval tile fragment (11g) were recovered from the soil deposit 5.
- 3.5.2 A small quantity (42g) of animal bone was also recovered from soil deposit 5.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 Both trenches produced an identical sequence of stratigraphy throughout.
- 4.1.2 The depths and thicknesses of the stratigraphic layers were broadly similar in both trenches. The layers were clearly defined as was the top of the geological horizon.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation found no evidence for archaeological features within the trenches but there was a late medieval or post-medieval soil layer across the site below the modern layers.
- 4.2.2 Both trenches indicated modern deposits to a depth of nearly a metre across the site.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 The soil layer (5) appeared to cover the whole of the site with an average thickness of 0.6m at a depth of around 0.8m. This layer contained finds of late medieval and post-medieval date. The layer could be a buried deposit of late medieval or post-medieval cultivation soil. The presence of this layer suggests that the site may have been built up rather than truncated.
- 4.3.2 The evidence for the presence of the former buildings on the site consisted of a sandy gravel bedding layer (4) on top of which a tarmac surface (3) was laid.
- 4.3.3 After the garage was demolished the rubble was flattened out over the top of the tarmac surface as layer 2.
- 4.3.4 A thin layer of topsoil (1) was then spread across the site.

4.4 Significance

- 4.4.1 The presence of the buried soil layer below the modern disturbance indicates that the site has likely been built up. There is however no indication of any features either cutting the buried soil or sealed beneath it, and the soil itself produced limited quantities of material ranging from 13th century to possibly 19th century in date.
- 4.4.2 It is therefore postulated that the medieval suburb that occupied Ermine Street did not extend this far.



APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

| Trench 1 | | | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|----------|-------------|------------------------------|----------------|----------|--|--|
| General o | descriptio | n | Orientation | SE-NW | | | | |
| Trench d | evoid of | archaeol | Length (m) | 10 | | | | |
| modern o | constructi | on and o | demolitio | n layers and a post-med soil | Width (m) | 1.60 | | |
| layer. Wit | th natural | geology | of sandy | clay. | Avg. depth (m) | 1.40 | | |
| Context | Type | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | | |
| 1 | Layer | - | 0.15 | Topsoil | - | - | | |
| 2 | Layer | - | 0.29 | Demolition Layer | - | Modern | | |
| 3 | Layer | - | 0.19 | Tarmac Surface | - | Modern | | |
| 4 | Layer | - | 0.21 | Bedding Layer | - | Modern | | |
| 5 | Layer | - | 0.56 | Buried Soil | Pottery, CBM | Medieval | | |
| 6 | - | - | - | Natural | - | - | | |

| Trench 2 | | | | | | | |
|------------|--------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------|--|
| General c | lescription | n | Orientation | NE-SW | | | |
| Trench de | evoid of a | rchaeolo | gy. Cons | ists of thin topsoil overlying | Length (m) 5 | | |
| modern o | construction | on and d | emolition | n layers and a post-med soil | Width (m) | 1.60 | |
| layer. Wit | h natural | geology | of sandy (| clay. | Avg. depth (m) | 1.35 | |
| Context | Туре | Width | Depth | Description | Finds | Date | |
| No. | | (m) | (m) | | | | |
| 1 | Layer | - | 0.09 | Topsoil | - | - | |
| 2 | Layer | - | 0.29 | Demolition Layer | - | Modern | |
| 3 | Layer | - | 0.12 | Tarmac Surface | - | Modern | |
| 4 | Layer | - | 0.24 | Bedding Layer | - | Modern | |
| 5 | Layer | - | 0.61 | Buried Soil | Clay pipe | Medieval | |
| 6 | - | - | - | Natural | - | - | |



APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Ceramics

By Carol Fletcher

Assemblage

- B.1.1 A small assemblage of pottery, ceramic building material (CBM) and white ball clay tobacco pipe was recovered from cultivation soil, context 5 in Trenches 1 and 2.
- B.1.2 In Trench 1 a single moderately abraded sherd from a decorated medieval Lyveden-Stanion jug was recovered, alongside a small fragment of late medieval or early post-medieval roof tile. From Trench 2 a fragment of undecorated or marked, white ball clay tobacco pipe stem was recovered, that can only be broadly dated from the late 16th-19th century (CAFG 2012).

Conclusion

- B.1.3 The pottery, CBM and clay tobacco pipe is only moderately abraded, having undergone some reworking within the buried soil layer. The pottery suggests low levels of medieval rubbish deposition or manuring. The small fragment of CBM may also have become incorporated into the buried soil layer through manuring, while the clay tobacco pipe recovered represents what is most likely a casually discarded pipe stem. The pipe fragment does little other than to indicate the consumption of tobacco and the stem cannot be closely dated, although the stem bore suggests the pipe is 18th century.
- B.1.4 If no further work is undertaken, the following tables act as a full record and the finds may be deselected prior to archival deposition.

| Trench | Context | Form, Fabric and Description | MNV | No. of | Weight | Date |
|--------|---------|--|-----|--------|--------|---|
| | | | | Sherds | (kg) | |
| 1 | 5 | Lyveden/Stanion body sherd from a green-glazed jug with white slip decoration | 1 | 1 | 0.025 | Early 13th-end 14th century |
| | | Sub-rectangular fragment of roof tile, hard fired dull red-buff surfaces, thin dull red margins and mid grey core. Common calcareous inclusions up to 1mm. Length 34mm, width 24mm, 13mm thick | | 1 | 0.011 | Late medieval- early post- medieval |

Table 1: Pottery and CBM (MNV=minimum number of vessels)



| Trench | Context | Form | No of stem fragments | Description | Weight (kg) | Date |
|--------|---------|-----------|----------------------|--|----------------|---------------------|
| 2 | 5 | Pipe stem | 1 | Partial stem with complete mouth- piece. Somewhat oval in section with neatly trimmed mould seams that are slightly more prominent towards the mouth-piece. Length 98mm, oval 7x6mm tapering to 5x4mm at the mouthpiece, with a stem bore slightly larger than 4/64ths inch. Undecorated or marked. | 0.022 | Not closely datable |

Table 2: Clay Tobacco Pipe



APPENDIX C ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Faunal Remains

By Zoë Ui Choileáin

Assemblage

- C.1.1 A left pig humerus was excavated from a cultivation soil layer (5) during the evaluation. The humerus weighed 42 grammes and was that of an adult pig. The condition of the bone was good representing a 1 on the McKinley scale where erosion has masked very little of the surface (Brickley and McKinley 2004, 11).
- C.1.2 Two small cut marks were recorded on the right side of the shaft and a further cut mark was observed on the distal epiphysis indicating that butchery had taken place.
- C.1.3 This was the only specimen of bone recorded and unless further excavations yield more material to study it has no potential to provide further information about the nature of the site.



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Accessed: 28/7/2017



APPENDIX E OASIS REPORT FORM

| Project Details | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|--|--------------------------------------|
| OASIS Number | oxfordar | | | | Lou | <u> </u> | 5 1 | |
| Project Name | The Corr | ner of I | Ermine Sti | reet a | nd St | Peter's | Road, | Huntingdon |
| C (E.] | 17.07.20 | 047 | | | - 1 | C C: 11 | 1 | 17.07.2017 |
| Start of Fieldwork | 17-07-20 | J1/ | | | | of Fieldy | | 17-07-2017 |
| Previous Work | None | | | | Futur | e Work | | None |
| Project Reference | Codes | | | | | | | |
| Site Code | HUNPET | NPET17 | | | Plann | ing App | o. No. | 16/00826/FUL |
| HER Number | ECB 517 | 0 | | | Relate | ed Num | bers | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Prompt | | | tion from | | plann | ing aut | hority | |
| Development Type | | Urba | n Residen | tial | | | | |
| Place in Planning Pr | ocess | After | full deter | minat | tion (e | g. As a | condit | ion) |
| Techniques used (tick all th ☐ Aerial Photography — interpretation ☐ Aerial Photography - new | | nat apply) ☐ Grab-sampling ☐ Gravity-core | | | ☐ Remote Operated ☑ Sample Trenches | | • | |
| ☐ Annotated Sketch | | | Laser Scar | nning | | | | Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure |
| □ Augering □ Dendrochonological Survey □ Documentary Search □ Environmental Sampling □ Fieldwalking □ Geophysical Survey | | ✓ Measured Survey ✓ Metal Detectors ☐ Phosphate Survey ☐ Photogrammetric Survey ☐ Photographic Survey ☐ Rectified Photograph | | y c Surve rvey | у | | Targeted Trenches Test Pits Topographic Survey Vibro-core Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) | |
| Monument | Perio | od | | C | Object | t | | Period |
| Buried Soil | Medi 1540 | | .066 to | _ | /essel | | | Medieval (1066 to 1540) |
| | Choo | se an i | tem. | Т | īle | | | Post Medieval (1540 to 1901) |
| | Choo | se an i | tem. | | Clay Pi | pe | | Post Medieval (1540 to 1901) |
| Project Location County | Cambrid | lgeshir | e | | | Addre | ss (inc | luding Postcode) |
| District | Hunting | donshi | re | | | | ine Ro | |
| Parish | Hunting | don | | | | Huntii | ngdon, | , |
| HER office Cambrid | | | е | | | Cambs, | | |
| Size of Study Area | 431 sq. r | n | | | PE29 7SD | | | |
| National Grid Ref | TL 52342 | 27 272 | 418 | | | | | |
| Project Originators | . | | | | | | | |
| Organisation | | OA Eas | st | | | | | |
| Project Brief Origina | ator / | Andy T | homas | | | | | |
| 3 | <u> </u> | | | | | | | |



The Corner of Ermine Street and St Peter's Road, Huntingdon

| Project Design Originator | Steve Graham |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Project Manager | Aileen Connor |
| Project Supervisor | Nicholas Cox |

Project Archives

Physical Archive (Finds) Digital Archive Paper Archive

| Location | ID |
|------------|----------|
| CCC Stores | ECB 5170 |
| OA East | ECB 5170 |
| CCC Stores | ECB 5170 |

| Physical Contents | Present? | Digital files associated with Finds | Paperwork associated v | vith |
|--|----------|--|------------------------|------|
| Animal Bones Ceramics Environmental Glass Human Remains Industrial Leather Metal Stratigraphic Survey Textiles Wood Worked Bone Worked Stone/Lithic None | | | | |
| Digital Media Database GIS Geophysics Images (Digital photos) Illustrations (Figures/Plat Moving Image Spreadsheets Survey Text Virtual Reality | tes) | Paper Media Aerial Photos Context Sheets Correspondence Diary Drawing Manuscript Map Matrices Microfiche Miscellaneous Research/Notes Photos (negatives/prints) Plans Report Sections Survey | □ /slides) | |



Further Comments

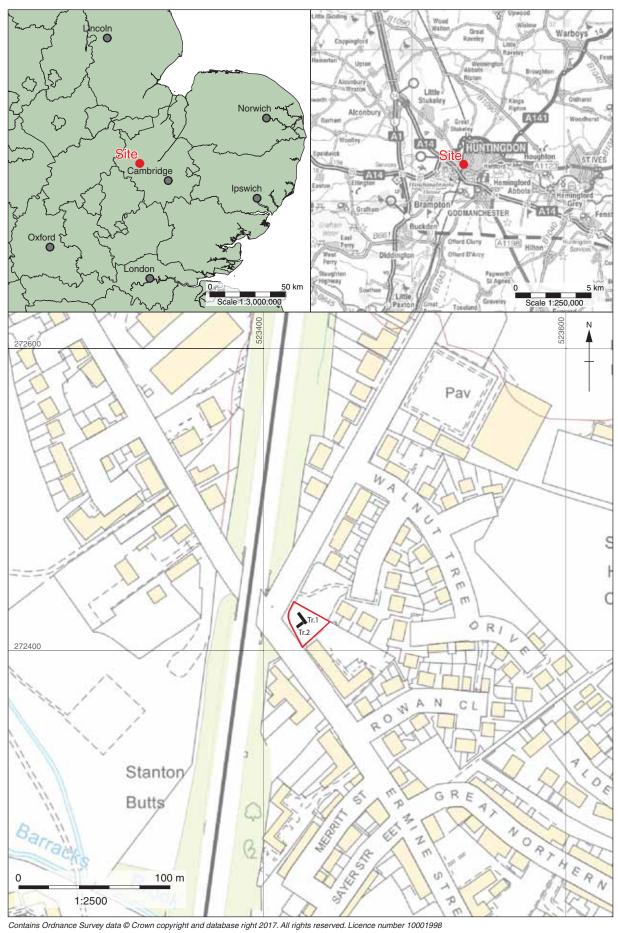


Figure 1: Site location showing archaeological trenches (black) in development area (red)



east

east

Figure 2: Trench plan



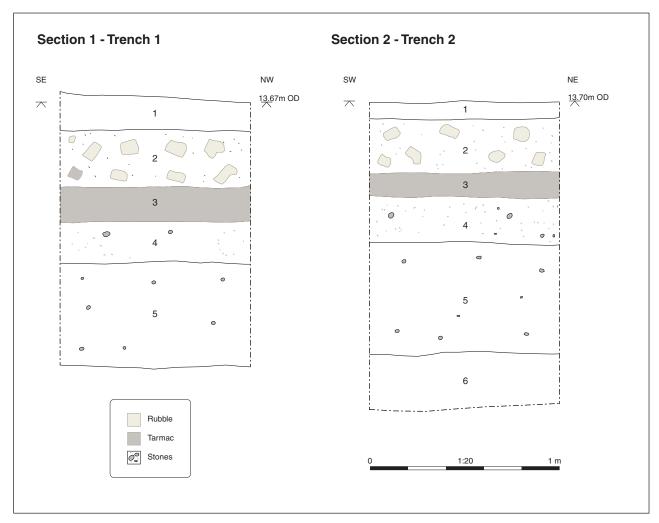


Figure 3: Sections. Scale 1:20

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Plate 1: Trench 1, looking south-east



Plate 2: Section 1, Trench 1, looking south-west





Plate 3: Section 2, Trench 2, looking north-west





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