

# **Witham** Archaeology

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A Report to Mr John Chambers

July 2014



## **LAND AT 111 HIGH STREET, CHATTERIS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

### **Trial Trench Evaluation**

*R Trimble*

# LAND AT 111 HIGH STREET, CHATTERIS CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CHER EVENT NO.: ECB4209

FENLAND DC PLANNING REF.: F/YR11/0369/F

NGR: TL 3912 8661

OASIS ID: withamar1-185303

## *Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation*

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# **LAND AT 111 HIGH STREET, CHATTERIS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION**

### ***SUMMARY***

*This report presents the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation undertaken on land east of 111 High Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire. The project was commissioned by Mr John Chambers in response to a condition of planning permission imposed by Fenland District Council.*

*Previous evaluations along the High Street have demonstrated a potential for medieval and post medieval occupation.*

*Two trial trenches were excavated at the current site, revealing probable plough-soils indicative of medieval and/or post medieval arable cultivation. There was no evidence to suggest occupation on the site.*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation undertaken by Witham Archaeology on the site of a small scale residential development at 111 High Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire. The project was commissioned by Mr John Chambers, in response to a condition of planning permission imposed by Fenland District Council. Fieldwork was carried out on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. Witham Archaeology cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Archaeologists.

### **2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY (see Figs. 1 and 2)**

The town of Chatteris in the administrative district of Fenland, Cambridgeshire, is located c. 25km southeast of the centre of Peterborough.

The site lies on the north side of Chatteris, to the rear of 111 High Street, at NGR TL 3912 8661. The area, on a gentle northeast facing slope, was covered by grass and light vegetation.

The site is located on solid geology of the Ampthill Clay Formation formed during the Jurassic Period, overlain by drift geology of March Gravels (British Geological Survey, Solid & Drift, 1:50 000), at around 5.0m above Ordnance Datum.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The archaeological record for the area around Chatteris area has been greatly influenced by topography and geology, the settlement being situated on a fen island formed by Jurassic clays. In the Cambridgeshire fens, freshwater peat formation appears to have commenced in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, followed by marine flooding from around the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. This resulted in the widespread deposition of alluvium and the increasing prevalence of saltmarsh conditions during the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods. Increasingly wet conditions led to peat formation in areas subject to direct marine influence, resulting in the accumulation of peat deposits over deposits of marine silt and clay. Peat growth was largely continuous until large-scale drainage of the fens in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Chatteris, early peat formation was restricted to the fringes of the parish and was

rapidly succeeded in the early Bronze Age by marine flooding and the accumulation of clay (Hall 1992 & 1996).

Neolithic occupation sites, Early Bronze Age barrows and Bronze Age field systems (Hall 1996) have been identified on areas of sand and gravel terrace to the south of the existing settlement. During the Iron Age, the focus of settlement in the area appears to have shifted to higher ground extending between Langwood and Honey Hill, where the Fenland Survey located six sites, two of which were possibly associated with cropmarks. Detailed investigations have since demonstrated the presence of a major early Iron Age settlement, noted as one of the largest open area settlement sites known in Britain (Evans 2000 and 2003). Occupation at Langwood and Honey Hill continued into the Roman period. A relative absence of Saxon remains in areas covered by the Fenland Survey suggests increasing nucleation in the area of the modern settlement of Chatteris.

Extensive excavations in the historic core of Chatteris, immediately north of the parish church (ECB123 and ECB3219) have revealed complex multi-period remains (Roberts 2000 and Cooper 2004). These remains include Bronze Age pits containing fragments of Beaker and Collared Urn pottery, early Iron Age, late Iron Age and early Roman pits and postholes, Roman enclosures, structures and industrial features of second to 4<sup>th</sup> century date, Anglo-Saxon pits, postholes and ditches, and medieval pits. Further investigation on adjacent land to the north (ECB2211), extending to New Road, revealed primarily Iron Age remains including three burials, an early Iron Age post-built structure, a hearth, ditches and pits (Thatcher 2006). Further investigation on the same site revealed activity ranging from the Mesolithic to medieval periods.

The Domesday Book of AD1086 records land in Chatteris held by Ramsey Abbey (given by Athelstan Mannessone and confirmed by Edgar in AD974) and a smaller manor in the possession of the Church of Ely (Pugh 2002). The former remained with Ramsey Abbey until the dissolution, while the latter appears to correspond to the manor of Chatteris Nunns held by the Benedictine nunnery in Chatteris. The nunnery, located in the centre of the town, was founded in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century by Ednoth, bishop of Dorchester, and was dissolved in 1538 (CHER No. 03832). In AD1563 there were 206 householders in Chatteris, which is significantly lower than the numbers recorded for Whittlesey and Ely (*ibid*).

A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out along the High Street in Chatteris, revealing evidence of medieval and post medieval occupation.

A trial trench evaluation (ECB3924) on the west side of the High Street at No. 84 revealed two medieval pits (one possibly a ditch terminal) dated on the basis of associated pottery to the 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century (Adams 2013). Medieval features were sealed by a thick layer of soil indicative of later agricultural use. Above the soil, evidence was located for a late post medieval structure.

A recent evaluation at Nos. 81 – 83 High Street located pits of late medieval or early post medieval date, again overlain by a soil layer indicative of arable cultivation (Trimble 2014; ECB4171). Trial trenching at Tern Gardens, c. 200m southeast of the current site (House 2009; ECB3285), and 91 High Street (Green and Unger 2008; ECB2941) recorded thick ‘subsoils’ and primarily later post medieval and modern deposits.

Further evaluations to the north of the current site have recorded a single undated ditch off Black Horse Lane (Cooper 2002; HER ref. CB15012), and post medieval deposits including nineteenth century rubbish pits at 9 Bridge Street, north of Black Horse Lane (Cooper 2005; HER ref. ECB1879).

The current site is located to the rear of the former Rose and Crown public house. The area – bounded by Slade Pond Road (now Black Horse Lane) to the east and buildings fronting onto the High Street (presumably including the Rose and Crown) to the west - is depicted on the 1819 enclosure award map. The area is also depicted on the Ordnance Survey 1888 and 1902 1:2500 County Series maps. No structures are present on the maps mentioned above.

There are a number of Grade II Listed Buildings along the High Street, including a one storey 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage (identified as the Old Ship Inn on the 1902 OS map) at No. 105, south of the former Rose and Crown.

## **4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

The principal objectives of the project, as set out in a Witham Archaeology specification of 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014, were to:

- *provide information on the presence/absence, nature, date and quality of survival of archaeological deposits and remains which might be contained within the site, at the depth of proposed construction disturbance, and to assess the importance of such remains in terms of their local, regional and national context.*
- *assess the possible scale of development impact on any remains and provide information which might influence development design so that impact on any remains can be avoided or minimised.*
- *provide information that will allow the local planning authority to reconcile development proposals with their policy for preserving archaeological remains and make an informed and reasoned decision on a planning application.*
- *provide site specific archaeological information which (if necessary) would allow for the design and integration of timing and funding of any further archaeological work (or other mitigating strategy) which might be required in advance of or during any subsequent development programme.*
- *produce a project archive for deposition with the appropriate museum and from which the potential for further study and academic research could be assessed.*
- *provide information for accession to the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER).*

## **5.0 METHODOLOGY**

Two trenches were excavated, each around 10m long by 1.6m wide and set at right angles to the High Street. The trenches were targeted on the footprints of house-plots 1 and 2, where there was the greatest potential for disturbance to archaeological remains.

Topsoil and other recent deposits were removed by a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. Trench bases and representative samples of the trench sides were then cleaned by hand.

Plans of the trenches were produced at scale 1:20, while sections were drawn at scale 1:10. A photographic record was compiled in digital colour and 35mm black and white film, while written context descriptions were made on individual *pro forma* recording sheets. Trenches and reference points used for recording were located in relation to fixed reference points.

## **6.0 RESULTS (see Figs. 3 and 4)**

Excavations were carried out to depths of between 0.70 and 0.75m in Trench 1 and 0.85m to 1.00m in Trench 2. Full context descriptions are provided in Appendix A.

### **6.1 Trench 1**

In Trench 1, 'natural' deposits of sand with silt, (04), were encountered at around 0.58m below existing ground level. The 'natural' was overlain by greyish blue silt, (03), 0.10m thick, interpreted as possible alluvium. Layer (03) was in turn sealed by a deposit of sandy silt, (02), 0.15m thick. The latter was interpreted as probable plough-soil. Topsoil, (01), was 0.32m thick in Trench 1.

### **6.2 Trench 2**

In Trench 2, 'natural' deposits of mixed sand and clay, (08), were encountered at around 0.80m below existing ground level. The 'natural' was overlain by mid grey and orange-brown silty clay, (07), 0.20m thick, interpreted as possible alluvium. Layer (07) was in turn sealed by brownish grey silty clay, (06),

0.25m thick, interpreted as possibly further alluvium. Topsoil in Trench 2, (05), attained a maximum thickness of 0.35m.

## **7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

The programme of trial trenching has established that natural sands mixed with clay and/or silt are present in the area east of No. 111 High Street at depths of between around 0.60 and 0.80m below existing ground level. This is consistent with findings from previous investigations along the High Street.

The top horizon of the 'natural' slopes down to the east, and alluvial clay and silt appears to have accumulated on the lower lying ground. The alluvium gradually lenses out on higher ground in Trench 1, surviving as a shallow layer at the end closest to the High Street.

A probable plough-soil evident in Trench 1 but not in Trench 2 indicates a phase of arable cultivation. Although undated, this activity may have commenced during the medieval period as part of 'open' field cultivation. There was however, no conclusive evidence to suggest the presence of 'ridge and furrow' field systems on the site.

The absence of evidence for post medieval occupation in the area is consistent with historic map evidence, which shows the site as undeveloped from at least 1819 (see above).

In conclusion, it would appear that during the medieval and post medieval periods, the area evaluated lay beyond the area of occupation associated with the High Street. The land was probably enclosed in the post medieval period and may have been used for small-scale cultivation and/or as a paddock.

## **8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author of this report would like to thank Mr John Chambers for assistance in preparations for fieldwork and for the supply of machinery. Thanks are also due to Kasia Gdaniec and the Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council for relevant advice and information.

## **9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **10.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS**

### **10.1 Project Information**

CHER EVENT NO.: ECB4209

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: F/YR11/0369/F

FIELD OFFICER: R & G Trimble

NGR: TL 3912 8661

CIVIL PARISH: Chatteris

DATE OF INTERVENTION: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Trial Trench Evaluation

UNDERTAKEN FOR: Mr John Chambers

### **10.2 Archive Details**

PRESENT LOCATION: Witham Archaeology, Unit 6, Sleaford Station Business Centre, Station Road, Sleaford Lincolnshire, NG34 7RG

FINAL LOCATION: Cambridgeshire Archaeological Store

MUSEUM ACCESSION NO.: To be confirmed

ACCESSION DATE: January 2014

#### ***The Site Archive Comprises:***

Context Records	8
Plans at Scale 1:20	2
Section Drawings at Scale 1:10	2
Black and White photographs	4 views
Digital Photographs	33 files
Set of Site Notes	1

*It is intended that transfer of the archive in accordance with current published requirements will be undertaken following completion of this project.*

## ***COLOUR PLATES***



*Plate 1: Work in progress in Trench 1, looking southwest towards the High Street*



*Plate 2: Trench 1, looking southwest; 2 x 1m scales*





*Plate 3: Trench 1, Section 1, looking northwest; 0.5m and 1m scales*



*Plate 4: Trench 2, looking southwest; 2 x 1m scales*

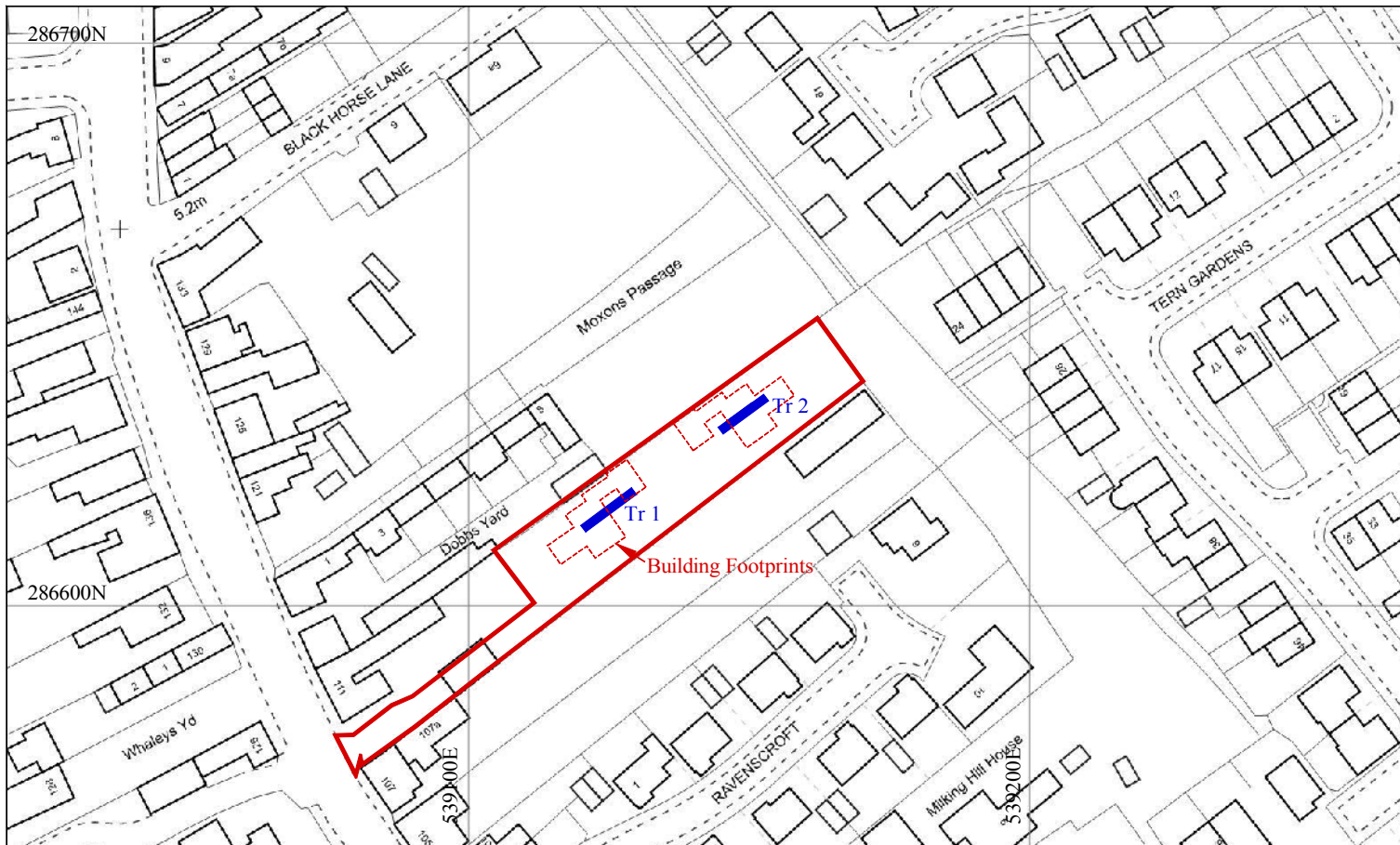




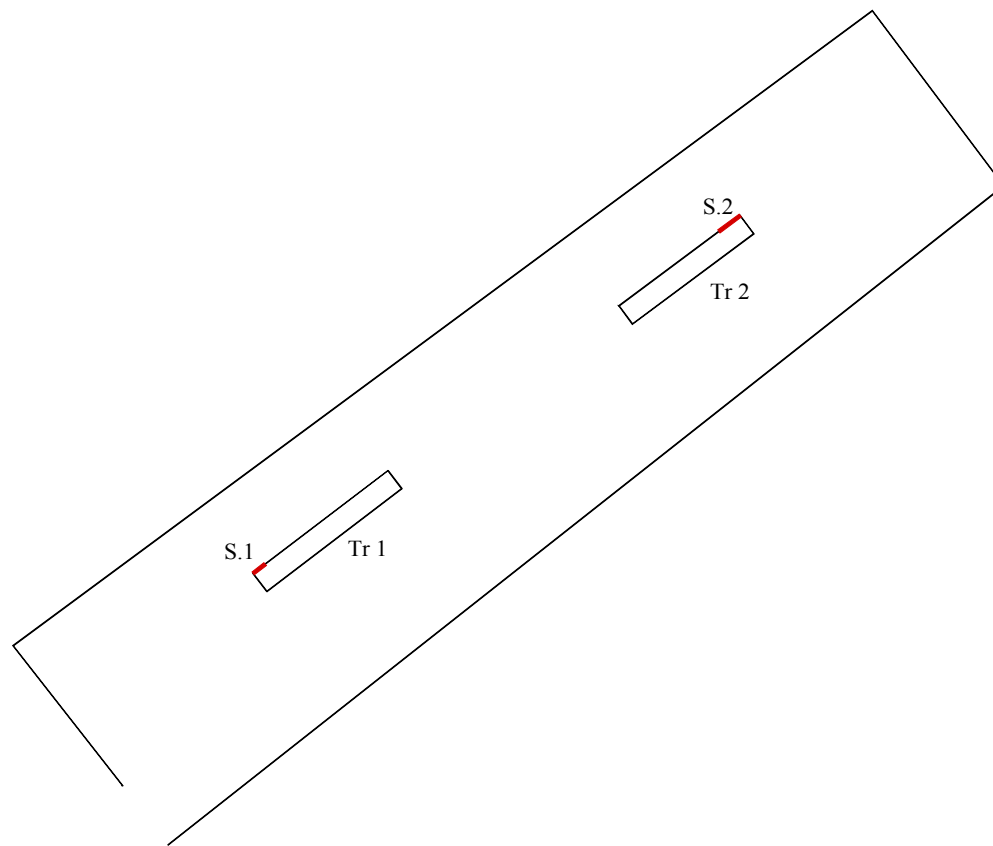
*Plate 5: Trench 2, Section 2, looking northwest; 0.5m and 1m scales*

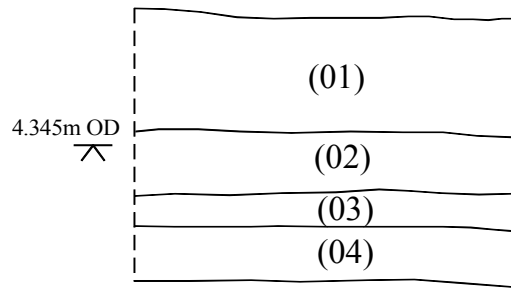




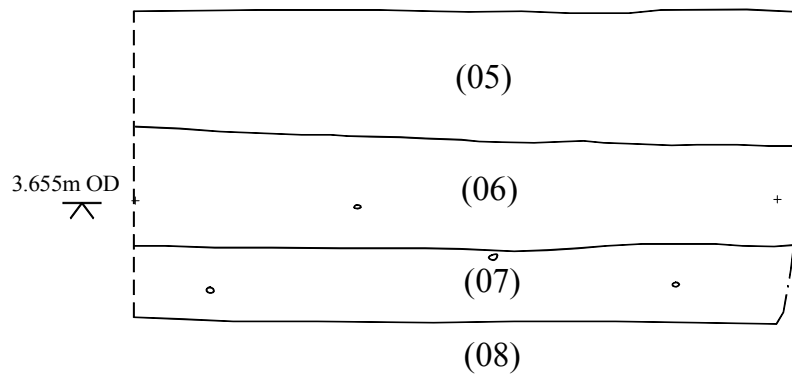


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Section 1



Section 2





## APPENDIX A - CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<i>Context</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Description</i>
01	Topsoil	Firm but crumbly, dark grey, silty sand containing moderate peagrit; 0.32m thick, extending throughout Trench 1
02	Ploughsoil?	Soft, mixed mid brown and orange, sandy silt containing moderate small angular stones; 0.15m thick, extending throughout Trench 1
03	Alluvium?	Soft, mid greyish blue silt containing small angular stones; 0.10m thick
04	Natural	Loose, mid orange, coarse sand with patches of silt
05	Topsoil	As (01) in composition; average 0.20m thick
06	Alluvium?	Firm, mid brownish grey with orange mottles, silty clay containing occasional irregular stone to 20mm; average 0.25m thick
07	Alluvium	Moderately compact (malleable but crumbles under pressure), mid grey and orange-brown (mottled 50/50), mixed silty clay and clayey sand. Contains very occasional irregular stone to 15mm; average 0.20m thick at NE end of Trench, uncertain to SW where it may lens out on higher ground.
08	Natural = (04)?	Moderately compact (malleable but crumbles under pressure) light yellowish brown mixed with orange brown mixed sand and clay (50/50); extends throughout base of Trench 2.

## **APPENDIX B**

# **OASIS SUMMARY DETAILS FORM**

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

## Printable version

**OASIS ID: withamar1-185303**

### Project details

Project name	Trial Trench Evaluation on Land at 111 High Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	Two trial trenches were excavated in advance of a small scale residential development on land to the east of 111 High Street (formerly the Rose and Crown Public House), Chatteris, Cambridgeshire. The trenches located undated deposits interpreted as alluvium, which thickened over lower lying ground to the east. In the trench nearest the High Street the alluvium was overlain by probable ploughsoil. No artefacts were recovered from the site and there was no evidence to suggest previous occupation in the area.
Project dates	Start: 23-06-2014 End: 23-06-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4209 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country England

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND CHATTERIS Land to the east of 111 High Street, Chatteris

Postcode PE16 6NP

Study area 1000.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TL 3912 8661 52.4592999107 0.047826773346 52 27 33 N 000 02 52 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Witham Archaeology

Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator Russell Trimble

Project director/manager Russell Trimble

Project supervisor Russell Trimble

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body Mr John Chambers

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Store

Digital Contents "Stratigraphic", "Survey"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Store

Paper Contents "Stratigraphic", "Survey"

Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Drawing", "Matrices", "Notebook - Excavation", 'Research', ' General Notes', "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey "

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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Author(s)/Editor(s) Trimble, R.

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