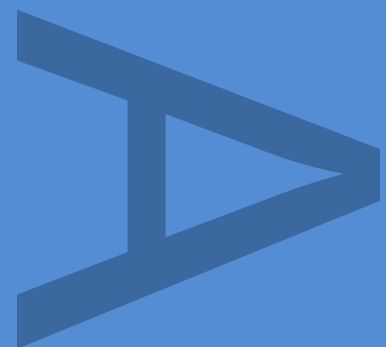


**Land southwest of Queen Street  
Close, March, Cambridgeshire  
PE15 8NQ: An Archaeological  
Trial Trench Evaluation**

**August 2014**

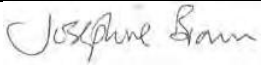
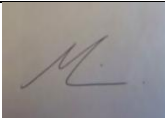


LAND SOUTHWEST OF QUEEN STREET  
CLOSE, MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
PE15 8NQ

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

**Quality Control**

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd	
Project Number	
Report Number	R 11799

	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	Jonathan House		August 2014
Graphics Prepared by:	Hayley Baxter		August 2014
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Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved

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## Land southwest of Queen Street Close, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 8NQ:

### An Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

**Local Planning Authority:** Fenland District Council

**Planning Reference:** F/YR11/0388/O

**Central National Grid Reference:** TL 4173 9767

**Site Code:** CQSC14

**ECB Reference:** ECB4219

**Report No.** R11799

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**Commissioning Client:** CgMs on behalf of Grosvenor Partnership

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This report describes the results of a five-trench archaeological evaluation carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology on land southwest of Queen Street Close, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8NQ (NGR TL 4173 9767) on 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July 2014. The archaeological work was commissioned by Grosvenor Partnership in response to a planning condition attached the development of the site. The aim of the work was to characterise the archaeological potential of the site.*

*The evaluation identified no features or deposits of archaeological significance. Although the site showed signs of modern disturbance, the natural gravel substrate appeared to be intact, showing minimal truncation. No residual or stray finds were recovered from the overlying topsoil or subsoil indicating a lack of archaeological activity in the immediate vicinity.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land southwest of Queen Street Close, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8NQ (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 4173 9767) on 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July 2014 (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The 0.16ha site is located within the northern part of March, in a densely developed part of the town, just south of the railway line and is currently listed as a brownfield site. The proposed development comprises the demolition of the existing structures and subsequent erection of 8 new residential dwellings.
- 1.3 The archaeological work was commissioned by CgMs on behalf of Grosvenor Partnership in response to a planning condition placed upon the development (Planning Reference F/YR11/0388/O).
- 1.4 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Mark Hinman of PCA (Hinman 2014) in response to a brief for archaeological evaluation from Kasia Gdaniec (Gdaniec 2014) of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET).
- 1.5 The aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, date, extent, character, condition and quality of any archaeological remains on the site, to assess the significance of any such remains in a local, regional, or national context, as appropriate, and to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on the site's archaeology.
- 1.6 Five trial trenches were excavated and recorded on 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July, totalling 71.5m. No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.
- 1.7 This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy. The site archive will be deposited at Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store.

## **2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

2.1 The underlying bedrock geology of the development area comprises Ampthill Clay formed during the Jurassic period, overlain by superficial deposits of sand and gravel ('March Gravel').

2.2 The surrounding fens are characterised by deposits of tidal silts and clays, overlain by fen peat. The site is located within the town of March and is situated on the higher gravel island protruding from the lower-lying fens.

### **2.3 Topography**

2.4 The site is situated at a height of approximately 4.5m above Ordnance Datum (OD) and is relatively flat. The site is currently registered as brownfield, occupied by commercial and light industrial buildings, and is bordered by Queen Street Close to the north, All Saints Primary School to the west and residential dwellings to the south and east.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1.1 The site is located in an area of known archaeological sites and remains. The town of March is located on a gravel 'island' amid the low-lying Cambridgeshire fenland and has consequently been a focus for settlement and other activity throughout the prehistoric, Roman and later periods.
- 3.1.2 Prehistoric activity is well documented along the lower slopes of such fen 'islands' and, at March, there is evidence to suggest that prehistoric activity occurred across the higher ground later occupied by Roman settlement. To the immediate west of the site, Bronze and Iron Age features, including a crouched inhumation burial, were found during excavations at the Northern Offices (HER CB 15266) and a Bronze Age pottery urn was found during groundworks associated with the railway line, a few hundred metres to the north (HER 05924). A pit of Neolithic date was excavated at Norwood Road, to the west of the Northern Offices development, and Early Bronze Age remains were excavated some 800m northwest of the site at Whitemoor Sidings (HER MCB 16673). During this investigation, fragments of a collared urn and decorated beakers were recovered, potentially suggesting further burial and/ or ceremonial activity within the area. This evidence suggests that prehistoric settlement and activity was not restricted to the 'island' edges. Further evidence of prehistoric activity (features predating the growth of peat) has been investigated 500m east of the site at Creek Road (HER CB 15633).
- 3.1.3 The Fen Causeway Roman road was located approximately 0.75km to the north of the site (HER CB 15033) and a portion of the roadside ditch has previously been investigated at Elm Road (HER MCB 16828). Remains of Roman settlement and associated activity have been found across March, notably immediately to the west of the site at the Northern Offices (HER CB 15267), at Norwood Road (HER MCB 18160), at Middle Level Yard (1km southeast of the site; HER 05927), and 800m northeast at Estover Road (HER 07936). At Estover Road, remains of Bronze Age and Late Iron Age date were also revealed (HER 07936a and 07936b), suggesting the continuation of prehistoric settlements into the Roman era. Further



enclosures and features have been recorded as cropmarks to the north (HER 08972) and east (HER 08981) of March and are likely to relate to the later prehistoric and Roman activity recorded nearby. Additional cropmarks to the northeast of March (HER 09381) are thought to represent remains of Roman or medieval activity. The number of cropmarks visible in the surrounding rural landscape and surviving in areas of limited urban development serve to highlight the extent of settlement and associated activity across March 'island'. Salt production during the earlier Roman period is also documented at the edges of many fen 'islands', and at March, evidence has been found at Cedar Close (on the north of the island) to suggest a substantial salt-manufacturing industry associated with the neighboring settlement (HER CB 15717; Lane *et al.* 2008). Roman pottery and other artefacts have been recovered throughout March and are listed in the HER, attesting to the existence of a substantial settlement beneath the present town.

- 3.1.4 The Great Northern and Great Eastern Joint Railway (HER 03698) is located a few hundred metres north of the development site, suggesting associated works may be located within the vicinity. A few features of medieval and post-medieval date were also encountered during the excavations at the Northern Offices, immediately west of the development site (HER CB 15268), and there exist several post-medieval buildings within March that have been included in the HER or designated due to their architectural or historical interest. Areas of post-medieval strip quarrying have also been identified to the southwest of the development area (HER MCB 18437), suggesting earlier buried remains could have been damaged or destroyed in some locations.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The archaeological evaluation comprised five trial trenches totalling 71.5m long, the trenches were excavated 1.8m wide. All trenches were excavated post-demolition of the buildings on site.
- 4.2 Ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision using a 7-tonne wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. A breaker was used to remove areas of tarmac and concrete; once cleared subsoil deposits were removed in spits down to the level of undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel as appropriate and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools.
- 4.3 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Leica 1200 GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.
- 4.4 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as 'context numbers') and recorded on individual pre-printed forms (Taylor and Brown 2009). Archaeological processes recognised by the deposition of material are signified in this report by round brackets (thus), while events constituting the removal of deposits are referred to here as 'cuts' and signified by square brackets [thus]. The record numbers assigned to cuts and deposits are entirely arbitrary and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits recorded during the evaluation are listed in Appendix 2. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.
- 4.5 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping and throughout the excavation process. Archaeological features and spoil heaps were scanned by metal-detector. Only objects of modern date were found

and were not retained for accession.

- 4.6 High-resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits, and were used to keep a record of the excavation process.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were exposed in the trial trench evaluation. The trench information is presented below in table form, in numeric order. No finds were recovered from the archaeological investigation.

<b>TRENCH 1</b>	<b>Figure 2 and 3</b>		<b>Plates 1</b>	
Alignment: N-S	Trench Length: 12m	Level of Natural (m OD): 3.56m		
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Average Depth (m)</b>		
		<b>S End</b>	<b>N End</b>	
Modern deposits	100	0.2m	0.23m	
Subsoil	101	0.22m	0.2m	
Natural (Gravels)	102	0.1m+	0.07m+	
<b>Summary</b>				
Trench 1 was located at the eastern edge of the site. The trench length was reduced due to site restrictions and to avoid an existing borehole. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed.				

<b>TRENCH 2</b>	<b>Figure 2 and 3</b>		<b>Plate 2</b>	
Alignment: E-W	Trench Length: 16.5m	Level of Natural (m OD): 3.51m		
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Average Depth (m)</b>		
		<b>E End</b>	<b>W End</b>	
Modern deposits	100	0.38m	0.35m	
Subsoil	101	0.05m	0.07m	
Natural (Gravels)	102	0.09m+	0.07m+	
<b>Summary</b>				
Trench 2 was located along the southern boundary of the site. The trench was split into two separate trenches due to the presence of services aligned N-S. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed.				

<b>TRENCH 3</b>	<b>Figure 2 and 3</b>		<b>Plates N/A</b>	
Alignment: NW-SE	Trench Length: 6m	Level of Natural (m OD): 3.46m		
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Average Depth (m)</b>		
		<b>NW End</b>	<b>SE End</b>	
Modern deposits	100	0.2m	0.21m	
Subsoil	101	0.21m	0.2m	
Natural (Gravels)	102	0.1m+	0.07m+	
<b>Summary</b>				
Trench 3 was located centrally within the site. This trench formed the second part of trench 2, which was terminated due to services. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed.				

<b>TRENCH 4</b>	<b>Figure 2 and 3</b>		<b>Plates 3</b>	
Alignment: NE-SW	Trench Length: 26.8m	Level of Natural (m OD): 3.50m		
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Average Depth (m)</b>		
		<b>NE End</b>	<b>SW End</b>	
Modern deposits	100	0.24m	0.24m	
Topsoil (Buried)	103	-	0.15m	
Subsoil	101	0.06m	0.09m	
Natural (Gravels)	102	0.29m+	0.16m+	
<b>Summary</b>				
Trench 4 was located on the western side of the site. The trench length was shortened due to constraints on the ground. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed.				

<b>TRENCH 5</b>	<b>Figure 2 and 3</b>		<b>Plates 4</b>	
Alignment: E-W	Trench Length: 10.3m	Level of Natural (m OD): 3.52m		
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Average Depth (m)</b>		
		<b>E End</b>	<b>W End</b>	
Modern deposits	100	0.25m	0.26m	
Subsoil	101	0.08m	0.07m	
Natural (Gravels)	102	0.28m+	0.14m+	
<b>Summary</b>				
Trench 1 was located in the northwest of the site. This trench was excavated to increase site coverage. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed.				

## **6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 None of the trenches contained any archaeological features or deposits. The trenches revealed evidence of modern ground reduction (removal of topsoil and truncation of subsoil) presumably in preparation for the foundations of the previously-extant buildings. Modern deposits associated with these buildings (concrete layers and pads) were noted in all of the trenches, although the southwest end of Trench 4 appeared to have seen little ground disturbance, with the original topsoil and subsoil layers surviving. The natural gravel substrate was essentially intact across the site with only a minor level of truncation noted in areas.
- 6.2 The impact of the modern activity on site (ground reduction and subsequent truncation of subsoil and occasionally the surface of the geological horizon) is not considered to have removed any archaeological remains or deposits. The lack of even truncated archaeological features implies a lack of archaeological activity within the site, however the modern ground reduction and establishment of modern soils and building deposits could have resulted in the removal of any stray or residual finds which could have indicated the potential for archaeological activity within the wider area.

## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank CgMs on behalf of Grosvenor Partnership for commissioning the work. PCA are also grateful to Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team for monitoring the work on behalf of Kasia Gdaniec. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Hayley Baxter PCA's CAD Department.

## **8 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **8.1 Printed Sources**

Hinman, M. 2014. 'Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Queen Street Close, March, Cambridgeshire'. (unpublished, Pre-Construct Archaeology)

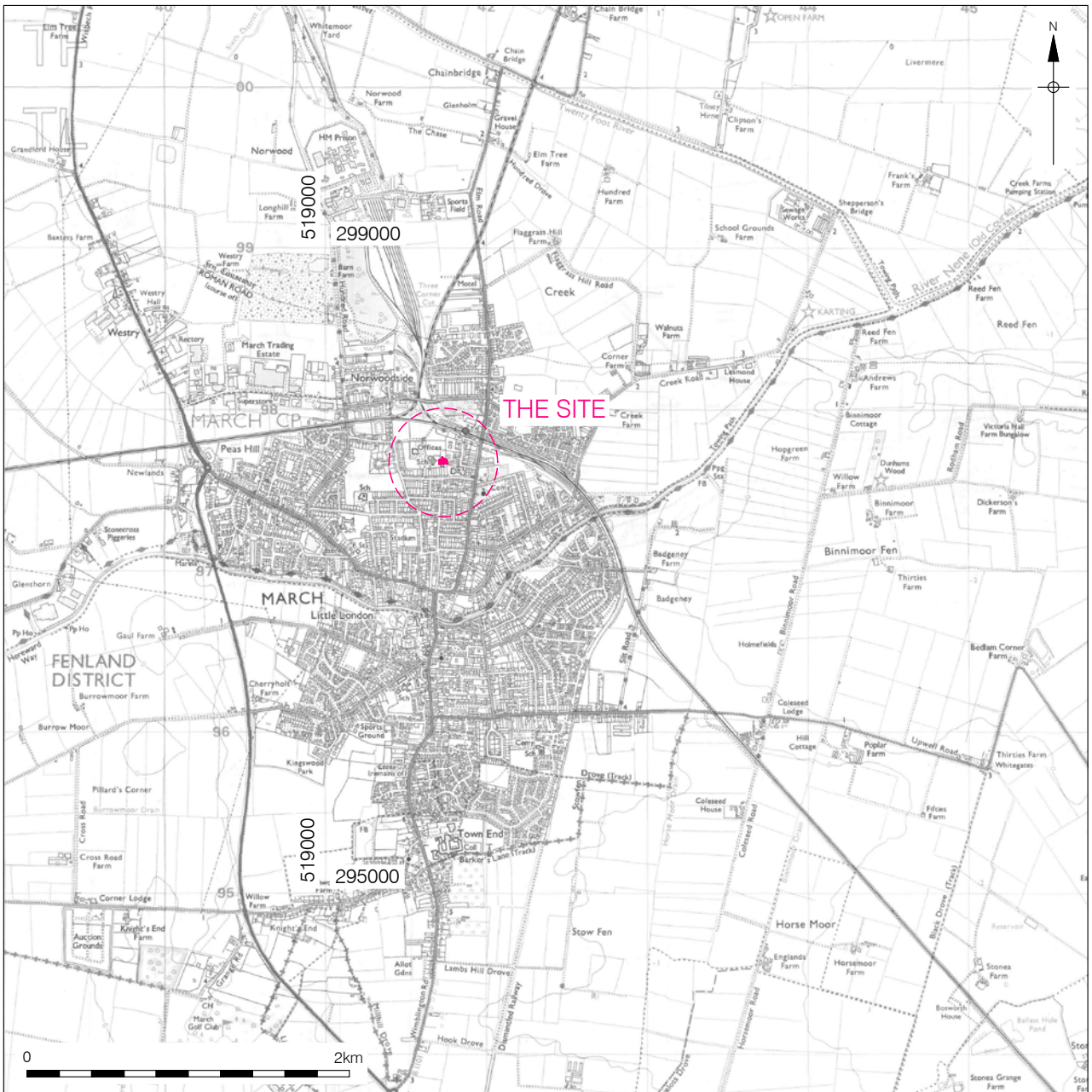
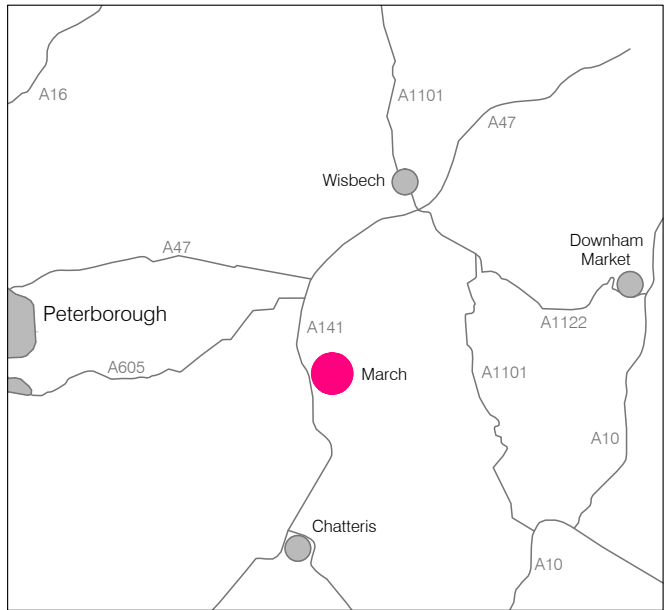
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Gdaniec, K. 2014. 'Brief for Archaeological Evaluation: Land Southwest of Queen Street Cloe, March'. (unpublished, Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team)

### **8.2 Websites**

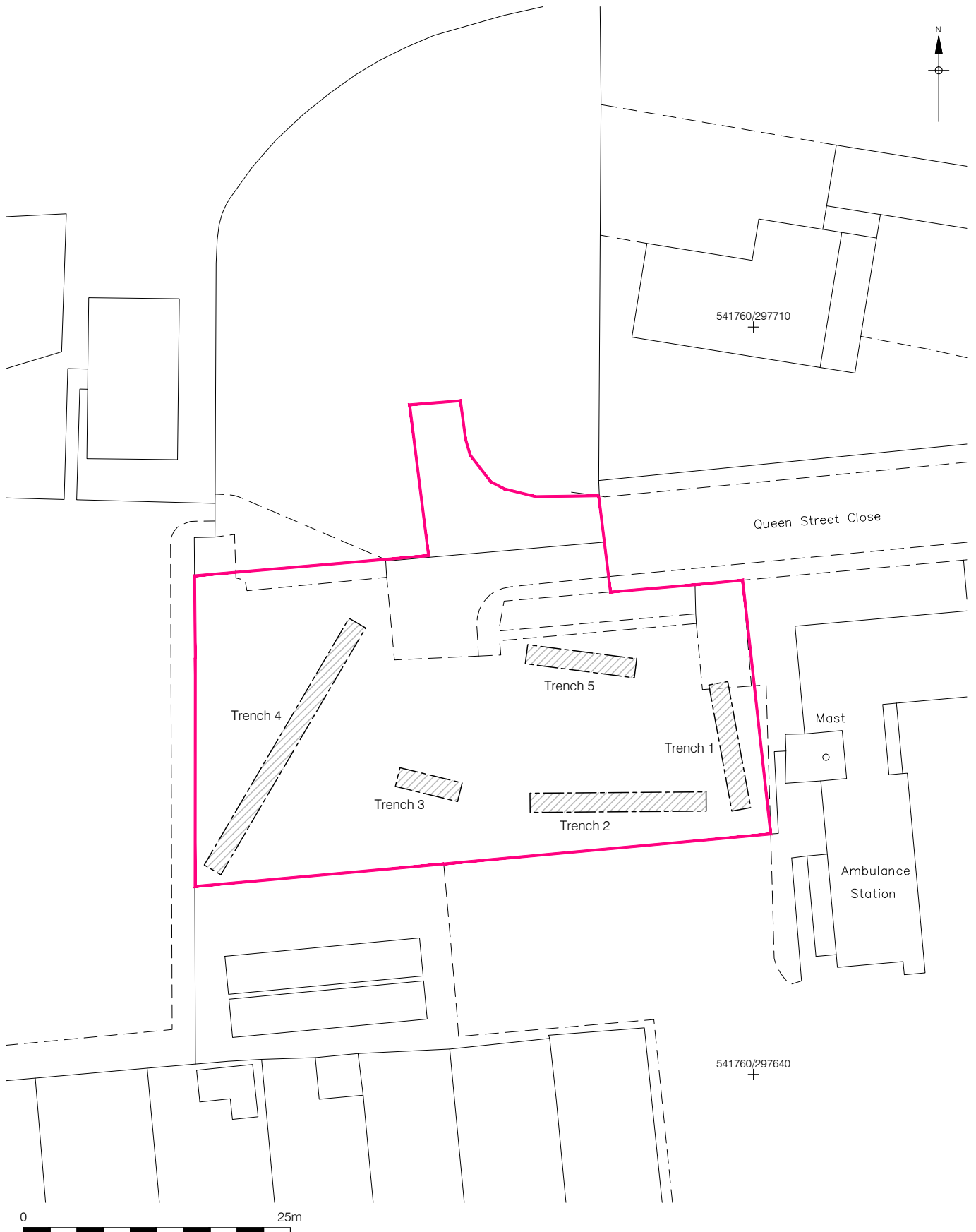
1) British Geological Survey 2014 Geology of Britain Viewer  
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain>. Date accessed 24/07/2014





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Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:2,000,000, 500,000 & 1:40,000 at A4



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Figure 2  
 Trench Location  
 1:500 at A4

**9 APPENDIX 1: PLATES**



Plate 1: Trench 1 taken from the north.



Plate 2: Trench 2, taken from the west.



Plate 3: Trench 4 taken from the northeast.



Plate 4: Trench 5 taken from the east.

## 10 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

<b>Context</b>	<b>Cut</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Comments</b>
100	-	Layer	Made Ground	Concrete, tarmac, and made ground
101	-	Layer	Subsoil	Former plough soil.
102	-	Layer	Natural	Natural gravel deposits
103	-	Layer	Subsoil	Buried former topsoil deposit

## 11 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

### OASIS ID: preconst1-186195

#### Project details

Project name	Land southwest of Queen Street Close March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	The evaluation identified no features or deposit of archaeological significance, although the site showed signs of prior soil movements and disturbance, the natural gravels appeared to be intact, showing limited levels of truncation. No residual or stray finds were recovered during the archaeological investigation suggesting the site and its immediate vicinity has low archaeological potential.
Project dates	Start: 28-07-2014 End: 29-07-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4219 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	CQSC14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	CONCRETE Modern
Significant Finds	CONCRETE Modern
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND MARCH Land southwest of Queen Street Close, March
Postcode	PE15 8NQ
Study area	0.16 Hectares

Site coordinates	TL 4173 9767 52.558000831 0.0909308617267 52 33 28 N 000 05 27 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 3.91m Max: 4.11m

---

#### **Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire County Council
Project design originator	Mark Hinman
Project director/manager	Mark Hinman
Project supervisor	Jonathan House
Type of sponsor/funding body	Private Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Grosvenor Partnership

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#### **Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	CCC County Archaeology Store
Digital Archive ID	CQSC14
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	CCC County Archaeology Store
Paper Archive ID	CQSC14
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Map","Plan","Report","Section"

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#### **Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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