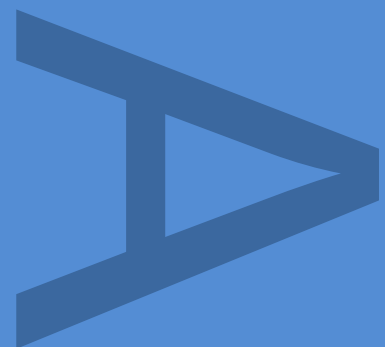


**LAND AT ERMINE STREET,  
CAXTON: AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL  
TRENCH EVALUATION**

**MARCH 2016**



**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY  
R12394**

# LAND AT ERMINE STREET, CAXTON

## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

### Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd	
Project Number	K4353
Report Number	R12394

	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	Stephen Porter		March 2016
Graphics Prepared by:	Mark Roughley		March 2016
Graphics Checked by:	Josephine Brown	<i>Josephine Brown</i>	March 2016
Project Manager Sign-off:	Shannon Hogan	<i>Shannon Hogan</i>	March 2016

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Rev. 1	May 2016	<i>Shannon Hogan</i>	May 2016

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited  
The Granary  
Rectory Farm  
Brewery Road  
Pampisford  
Cambridgeshire  
CB22 3EN

## Land at Ermine Street, Caxton: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

**Local Planning Authority:** South Cambridgeshire District Council

**Planning Reference:** S/1504/13/FL

**Central National Grid Reference:** TL 3022 5895

**Event Number and Site Code:** ECB4641

**Report No.** R12394

**Written and researched by:** Stephen Porter  
Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

**Project Manager:** Shannon Hogan

**Commissioning Client:** SMDL New Homes Ltd

**Contractor:** Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd  
Central Office  
The Granary  
Rectory Farm  
Brewery Road  
Pampisford  
Cambridgeshire  
CB22 3EN

**Tel:** 01223 845522

**E-mail:** [mhinman@pre-construct.com](mailto:mhinman@pre-construct.com)

**Website:** [www.pre-construct.com](http://www.pre-construct.com)

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**February 2016**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This report describes the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology on land at Ermine Street, Caxton (NGR TL 3022 5895) on the 15th of February 2016. The archaeological work was commissioned by SMDL New Homes Ltd in response to a planning condition attached to the construction of ten residential dwellings (Planning Reference S/1504/13/FL). The aim of the work was to characterise the archaeological potential of the proposed development area.*

*The evaluation identified three furrows in Trench 2, aligned east to west. These corresponded with the ridge and furrow visible on the surface of the development area. Post-medieval CBM and glass fragments were recovered from these features but not retained.*

*No archaeologically significant features or deposits were revealed in the evaluation trenches despite the proximity of the site to the 1st century AD Roman Road later known as Ermine Street.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land at Ermine Street, Caxton, centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 3022 5895 from the 15th to the 17th February 2016 (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by SMDL New Homes Ltd in response to an archaeological planning condition attached to the construction of ten new residential dwellings (Planning Reference S/1504/13/FL).
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Clare Jackson of PCA (Jackson 2016) in response to a Brief for archaeological evaluation issued by Kasia Gdaniec (Gdaniec 2015) of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET).
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 A total of three trial trenches were excavated and recorded.
- 1.6 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 Geology**

2.1.1 The area is underlain by West Walton Formation and Ampthill Clay Formation (BGS 2015).

2.1.2 The soils of the general area are of the Oadby Member (Boulder Clay) (BGS 2015). This consists of brown to grey clay and silty clay with chalk and flint fragments and subordinate lenses of sand and gravel, clay and silt.

### **2.2 Topography**

2.2.1 The site lies at the north end of Caxton village, approximately 650m north of Bourn Brook, at an approximate elevation of 61m AOD.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 General**

3.1.1 The following archaeological background is taken from the Archaeological Brief (Gdaniec 2015) for the site.

#### **3.2 Prehistoric**

3.2.1 There were no discoveries of early prehistoric activity predating the Neolithic period within the search area.

3.2.2 A Bronze Age flint scatter (CHER 11874) comprising mainly of waste flakes was recorded at Swansley Wood during a field walking exercise. A possible Bronze Age round house and pit was recorded at a site at Lower Cambourne (CB15589), however no datable material was recovered from the features. Three phases of Iron Age settlement were also uncovered (CB15438) on the site, along with two inhumation burials which were recovered from the earliest Iron Age phase.

3.2.3 An evaluation on School Lane, Cambourne (CB15427) revealed a Later Iron Age pit and ditch, thought to be part of an early enclosure. A single human inhumation was also recorded, dating to the Iron Age. Four phases of sub-enclosure ditches dating to the Romano-British period were also recorded on site along with a series of intercutting pits.

#### **3.3 Roman**

3.3.1 The development is located on the 1st century AD Roman Road later known as Ermine Street (MCB15034), which connected the legionary forts of the IX Legion from London to Lincoln and then to York. The route was adopted for both military and civilian use and further established between c. 45 and 75 AD by the Legio IX Hispana as a major road. Ermine Street is the later Saxon name for the road which relates to a tribe living close to the route; Earingstraet – the road of Earn's folk, or the Earningas. Other spellings of the name include Earnings Straete and Erming Street.

3.3.2 Remains of Roman occupation is known from the west side of the village, most notably from the mosaic pavement found alongside a former land



boundary to the south of Bourn Brook (MCB3044), while Roman and Medieval evidence was found at Firs Farm (MCB20254) and Tates Farm (MCB18545).

- 3.3.3 Evidence of Romano-British field systems, enclosures and settlement were recorded at a number of archaeological investigations during work at the sites of the new Cambourne development and Caxton bypass (CHER 13024, CB15430, CB15429, CB15437, CB15590).

### **3.4 Saxon**

- 3.4.1 Late Saxon features have been recorded to the southwest within the village of Caxton, indicating a phase of Saxon settlement (HER 10099, ECB1118). Excavations on earthworks at St Peter's Street, Caxton (CHER 10099) revealed ditches dating to the late 11th-12th centuries, thought to be Late Saxon to medieval property boundaries relating to the Saxon occupation of St Peter's Street.

- 3.4.2 Archaeological investigations at the new Cambourne development found Saxon wells or deep pits (CB15591). A cobbled surface extended south from one of the pits, suggesting it was frequently used.

### **3.5 Medieval**

- 3.5.1 Medieval settlement remains, including a well and house platforms, were uncovered in excavations within Caxton to the southwest (HER 09961, ECB1882, CHER 03409), whilst evidence of ridge and furrow has been recorded at sites around the village (CHER 03436, CHER 05556, CHER 09922, CHER 09960, CB15587, MCB17871).

- 3.5.2 A moated site located at Firs farm is thought to be the manor house for the Manor of Colne (CHER 10192). The remains lie on the south side of Bourn Brook, to the west of Peter Street, also known as Rosemary Green Road and consist of a small moat, two ponds and an enclosure.

- 3.5.3 The site of a former windmill is located on 'Windmill mound' near Caxton (CHER 02418), giving the fields on either side the names 'Mill Hill' and 'Nether Mill Hill'.

3.5.4 A scheduled monument known as Caxton Moats (CB15405) is located to the southwest of the development site. The monument includes a group of three contiguous moated enclosures arranged in an inverted 'L'-shaped plan, with associated water management features, fishponds and warren earthworks. Fragments of Roman pottery, 12th and 13th century wares, daub and wall plaster has been found at the site, indicating substantial medieval buildings and perhaps earlier occupation.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Excavation and Sampling**

- 4.1.1 The Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation proposed the excavation of 3 trial trenches, distributed across the site to target any potential roadside ditches, former routes aligned parallel to Ermine Street and any potential roadside activity which might include funerary and/ or settlement activity (Figure 2).
- 4.1.2 Ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision using a 7-ton wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools. Overburden deposits were set aside beside each trench and examined visually and with a metal-detector for finds retrieval.
- 4.1.3 Bucket sampling of the subsoil and topsoil were undertaken for each trench. Only a few fragments of post-medieval and modern building material were found in the topsoil deposit, which were not retained.
- 4.1.4 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping and throughout the excavation process. Archaeological features and spoilheaps were scanned by metal-detector as they were encountered/ created.
- 4.1.5 Field excavation techniques and recording methods are detailed in the PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual (Operations Manual I) by Joanna Taylor and Gary Brown (2009).
- 4.1.6 All features were investigated and recorded in order to properly understand the date and nature of the archaeological remains on the site and to recover sufficient finds assemblages to assess the chronological development and socio-economic character of the site over time.

4.1.7 Discrete features such as pits and postholes were at least 50% excavated and, where considered appropriate, 100% excavated.

4.1.8 Significant features such as structural remains, including walls and demolition deposits, were recorded in plan but left in-situ pending any future open area excavation.

## **4.2 Recording Methodology**

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2 Manual plans and section drawings of archaeological features and deposits were drawn at an appropriate scale (1:10, 1:20 or 1:50).

4.2.3 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.

4.2.4 High-resolution digital photographs were taken at all stages of the evaluation process. Digital Photographs were taken of all archaeological features and deposits and black and white film photographs were taken when considered appropriate by the excavator and supervisor.

4.2.5 Artefacts and ecofacts were collected by hand and assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved, receiving appropriate

care prior to removal from the site (IfA 2001; Walker 1990; Watkinson 1981).

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The trenches are described below in numerical order, with technical data tabulated. Features and deposits are described from west to east or south to north depending on the alignment of the trench. Archaeological features and deposits were sealed by the subsoil, unless otherwise stated. The evaluation identified

### 5.2 Trench 1

5.2.1 No archaeologically significant features or deposits were present within the trench.

TRENCH 1	Figure 2	Plate 5	
Trench Alignment: E-W	Length: 20m	Level of Natural (m OD): 60.1	
Deposit	Context No.	Average Depth (m)	
		E End	W End
Topsoil	(100)	0.28m	0.26m
Subsoil	(101)	0.2m	0.34m
Natural	(102)	0.48m+	0.6m+
<b>Summary</b>			
Trench 1 was located close to the north-western boundary of the site.			
No archaeologically significant features or deposits were present within the trench.			

### 5.3 Trench 2

5.3.1 The trench contained three plough furrows aligned east to west.

5.3.2 Furrow [104] (Figure 2, Plate 2) was 0.8m wide and 0.08m deep with gently sloping sides and a wide, slightly concave base. It contained a single fill of mid greyish brown silty clay (103) that contained fragments of post-medieval CBM.

5.3.3 Furrow [106] (Figure 2, Plate 3) was 1.48m wide and 0.14m deep with gently sloping sides and a wide, slightly concave base. It contained a single fill of mid greyish brown silty clay (105) that contained fragments of post-medieval CBM. It was cut by a ceramic land drain.

5.3.4 Furrow [108] (Figure 2, Plate 4) was 2.1m wide and 0.12m deep with gently sloping sides and a wide, slightly concave base. It contained a single fill of mid greyish brown silty clay (108) that contained fragments of post-medieval CBM and glass. It was cut by a ceramic land drain.

<b>TRENCH 2</b>	<b>Figure 2</b>	<b>Plate 1, 2, 3, 4</b>	
Trench Alignment: NE-SW	Length: 40m	Level of Natural (m OD): 60.12	
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Average Depth (m)</b>	
		<b>NE End</b>	<b>SW End</b>
Topsoil	(100)	0.18m	0.18m
Subsoil	(101)	0.13m	0.19m
Natural	(102)	0.31m+	0.38m+
<b>Summary</b>			
Trench 2 was located in the centre of the site.			
The trench contained three plough furrows aligned east to west.			

## 5.4 Trench 3

5.4.1 No archaeologically significant features or deposits were present within the trench.

<b>TRENCH 3</b>	<b>Figure 2</b>	<b>Plate 6</b>	
Trench Alignment: E-W	Length: 20m	Level of Natural (m OD): 60.0	
<b>Deposit</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Average Depth (m)</b>	
		<b>E End</b>	<b>W End</b>
Topsoil	(100)	0.26m	0.26m
Subsoil	(101)	0.16m	0.2m
Natural	(102)	0.42m+	0.46m+
<b>Summary</b>			
Trench 3 was located close to the south-eastern boundary of the site.			
No archaeologically significant features or deposits were present within the trench.			

## **6 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The evaluation consisted of three trenches, a total of 80 metres, placed to test the archaeological potential of the development area. The trenches were deployed to target any potential roadside ditches, former routes aligned parallel to Ermine Street and any potential roadside activity which might include funerary and/ or settlement activity associated with Roman Ermine Street.
- 6.2 The northern and southern parts of the site (Trenches 1 and 3) contained no significant archaeological remains.
- 6.3 The evaluation identified three plough furrows in the centre of the site (Trench 2), aligned east to west. These corresponded with the undulating nature of the ridge and furrow visible on the surface of the development area; that is, that the furrows within Trench 2 were located between the ridges where the ground surface was at its lowest. Post-medieval CBM and glass fragments were recovered from these features.
- 6.4 The evaluation did not reveal any archaeologically significant features or deposits despite the proximity of the site to the 1st century AD Roman Road later known as Ermine Street.



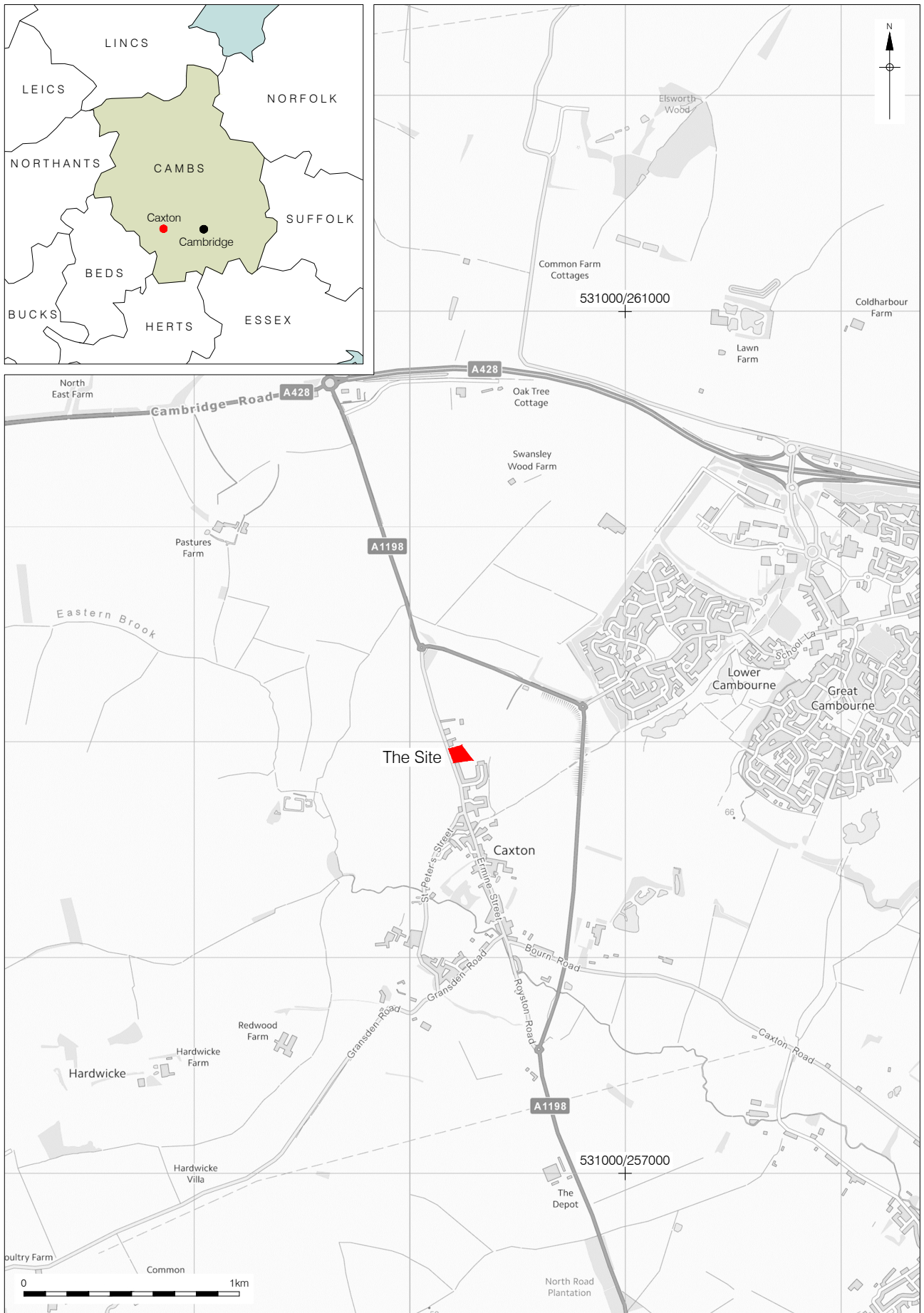
## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank SMDL New Homes Ltd for commissioning the work and Anthill Plant Hire for operating the excavator. PCA are also grateful to Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team for her advice and for monitoring the work. The author would like to thank Shannon Hogan for managing the project. The author would also like to thank Tom Learmonth for his hard work on site and PCA's CAD department for preparing the figures.

## **8 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Jackson, C. 2016. Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Evaluation at Land at Ermine Street, Caxton. Pre-Construct Archaeology (unpublished)

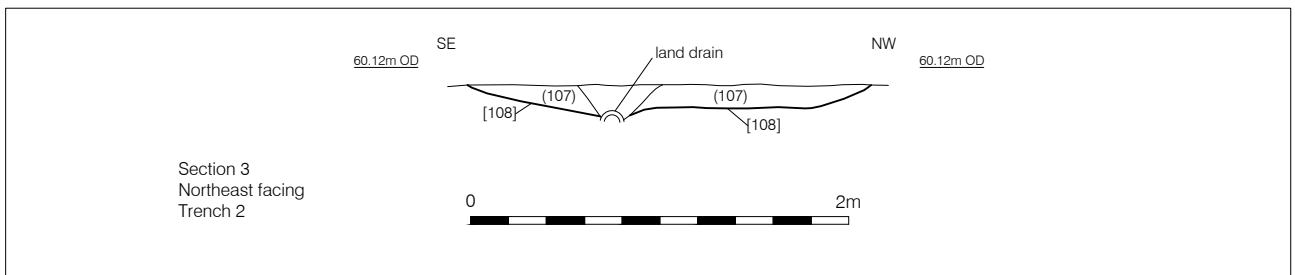
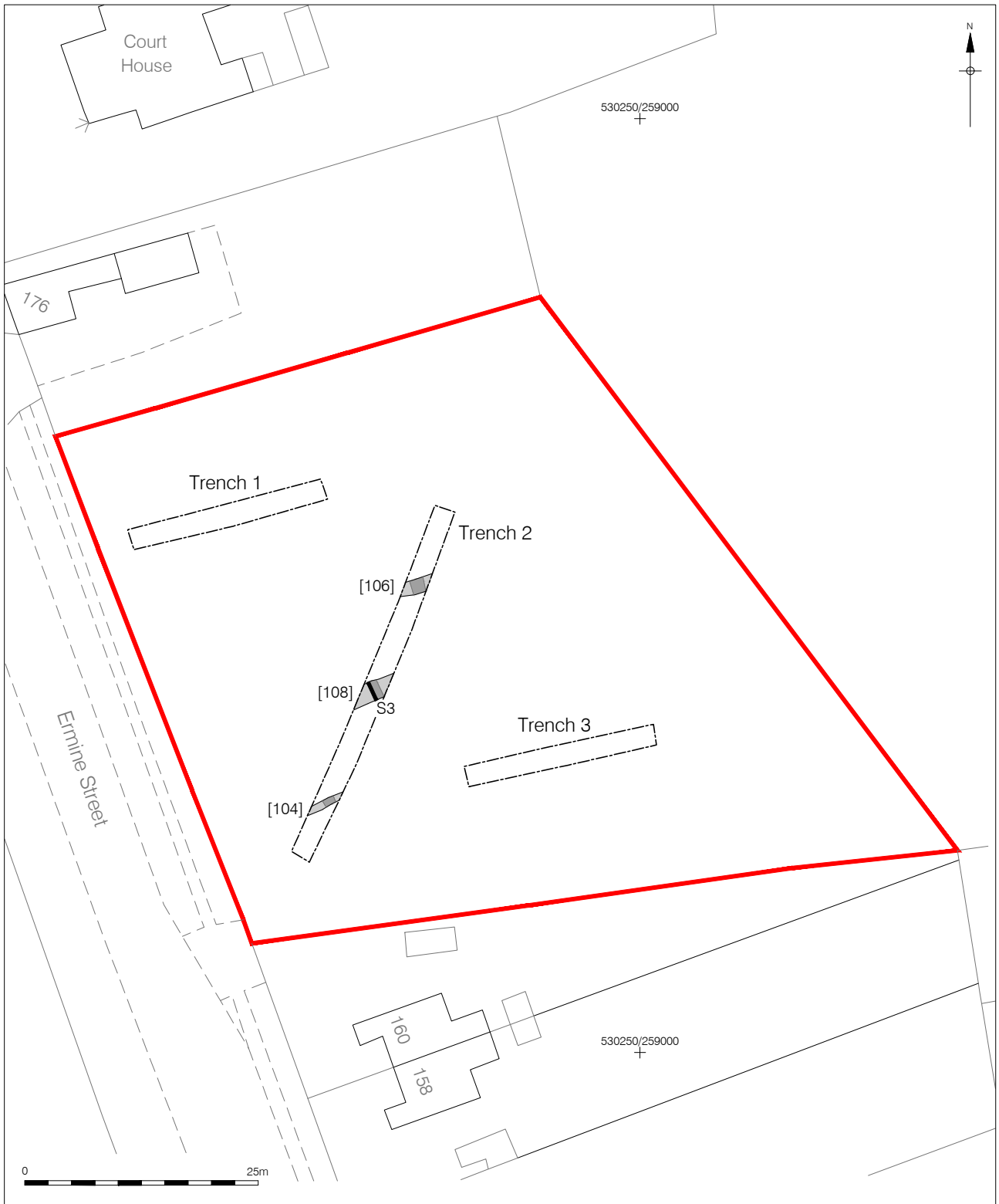


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23/02/16 MR

Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:2,000,000; 1:25,000 at A4



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 23/02/16 MR

Figure 2  
 Trench Location showing features and Section 3  
 1:625 & 1:40 at A4

## 9 APPENDIX 1: PLATES

Plate 1: Trench 2, view south-west.



Plate 2: Furrow [104], view west.



Plate 3: Furrow [106], view west.



Plate 4: Furrow [108], view west.



Plate 5: Trench 1, view east.



Plate 6: Trench 3, view west.



## 10 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Cut	Type	Category	Interpretation	Trench Number
100	-	Layer	Topsoil	Overburden	-
101	-	Layer	Subsoil	Overburden	-
102	-	Layer	Natural	-	-
103	104	Fill	Furrow	Fill of [104]	2
104	104	Cut	Furrow	Agricultural	2
105	106	Fill	Furrow	Fill of [106]	2
106	106	Cut	Furrow	Agricultural	2
107	108	Fill	Furrow	Fill of [108]	2
108	108	Cut	Furrow	Agricultural	2



## 11 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-242846

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### Project details

Project name Land at Ermine Street, Caxton: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Short description The evaluation identified three plough furrows in the centre of the site of the project aligned east to west. These corresponded with the ridge and furrow visible on the surface of the development area. Post-medieval CBM and glass fragments were recovered from these features. The evaluation failed to identify any archaeologically significant features or deposits despite the proximity of the site to the 1st century AD Roman Road later known as Ermine Street.

Project dates Start: 15-02-2016 End: 15-02-2016

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes ECB4641 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds NONE None

Methods & "Targeted Trenches" techniques

Development type Rural residential

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 CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Land at Ermine Street, Caxton: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Postcode CB23 3PG

Study area 0.4 Hectares  
Site coordinates TL 3022 5895 52.212941416509 -0.09381860399 52 12 46 N 000 05  
37 W Point

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#### Project creators

Name of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd  
Organisation

Project brief Cambridge HET  
originator

Project design Shannon Hogan  
originator

Project Shannon Hogan  
director/manager

Project supervisor Stephen Porter

---

#### Project archives

Physical Archive Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store  
recipient

Physical Archive ECB4641  
ID

Digital Archive Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store  
recipient

Digital Archive ID ECB4641

Digital Contents "Survey"

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

Paper Archive Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store  
recipient

Paper Archive ID ECB4641

Paper Media "Context  
available sheet","Drawing","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Survey "

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Project  
bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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Entered on 5 May 2016

# PCA

---

## PCA SOUTH

UNIT 54  
BROCKLEY CROSS BUSINESS CENTRE  
96 ENDWELL ROAD  
BROCKLEY  
LONDON SE4 2PD  
TEL: 020 7732 3925 / 020 7639 9091  
FAX: 020 7639 9588  
EMAIL: [info@pre-construct.com](mailto:info@pre-construct.com)

---

## PCA NORTH

UNIT 19A  
TURSDALE BUSINESS PARK  
DURHAM DH6 5PG  
TEL: 0191 377 1111  
FAX: 0191 377 0101  
EMAIL: [info.north@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.north@pre-construct.com)

---

## PCA CENTRAL

THE GRANARY, RECTORY FARM  
BREWERY ROAD, PAMPISFORD  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE CB22 3EN  
TEL: 01223 845 522  
FAX: 01223 845 522  
EMAIL: [info.central@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.central@pre-construct.com)

---

## PCA WEST

BLOCK 4  
CHILCOMB HOUSE  
CHILCOMB LANE  
WINCHESTER  
HAMPSHIRE SO23 8RB  
TEL: 01962 849 549  
EMAIL: [info.west@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.west@pre-construct.com)

---

## PCA MIDLANDS

17-19 KETTERING RD  
LITTLE BOWDEN  
MARKET HARBOROUGH  
LEICESTERSHIRE LE16 8AN  
TEL: 01858 468 333  
EMAIL: [info.midlands@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.midlands@pre-construct.com)

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