

**LAND NORTH OF 37 GREAT NORTH  
ROAD, EATON SOCON,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

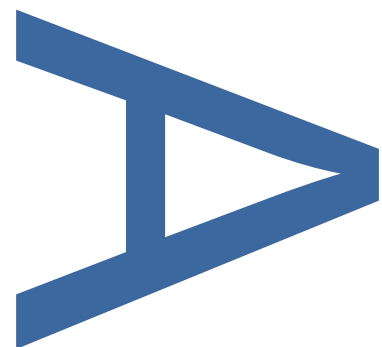
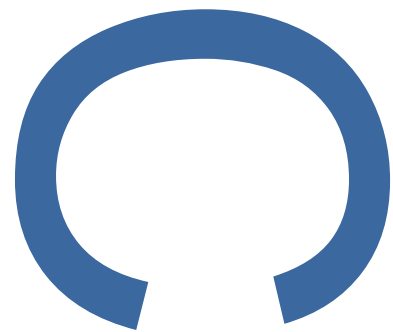
**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:  
HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PLANNING REF: 17/02010/FUL**

**SITE CODE: ECB5390**

**JUNE 2018**



**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**

## Land North of 37 Great North Road, Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation

**Local Planning Authority:** Huntingdonshire District Council

**Planning Reference:** 17/02010/FUL

**Central National Grid Reference:** NGR TL 1692 5816

**Event Number and Site Code:** ECB5390

**Report No.** R13247

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**June 2018**

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## ABSTRACT

*Pre-Construct Archaeology have undertaken an archaeological evaluation on Land North of 37 Great North Road, Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire, on behalf of the Adil Group in order to support the submission of a planning application to Huntingdonshire District Council for the commercial development of the land.*

*Two trial trenches of 51m length in total were excavated between the 18th and 20th April 2018. The evaluation revealed two undated ditches and a pit. Two worked flint fragments, a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age pottery fragment and one animal bone were recovered from the pit. The pottery and flint were interpreted as being residual and it is likely that the pit represents quarrying activity in the Roman period due to its similarity with features excavated on the Priors Gate site to the north.*

*Archaeological features in both trenches were truncated by footings of modern 20th century buildings. These are not recorded on any OS maps so may have been short-lived (Fig.5).*

*While the site is located in an area of a known high density of prehistoric, Roman and Saxon settlement and industrial features, as evidenced on the adjacent KFC site to the south, this intense settlement and industrial activity does not seem to have extended into the current development area. However, the high degree of modern truncation may also have destroyed any potential earlier archaeological features present.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology have undertaken an archaeological evaluation on Land North of 37 Great North Road, Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The Adil Group have received planning permission by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) for a new drive through restaurant (use Class A3/A5) plus amendments to the layout of the existing KFC/Costa car park and provision of new cycle stands, landscaping and tree planting (planning application ref 17/02010/FUL). Because of the high archaeological potential of the proposed development site a condition requiring archaeological work was attached to the planning consent.
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Christiane Meckseper of PCA (Meckseper 2018) in response to a brief for archaeological evaluation issued by Gemma Stewart (Stewart 2018) of the CHET (Cambridge County Council Historic Environment Team).
- 1.4 As concrete foundations for the new building had already been installed across the site, making the trench position given in the WSI difficult to access, a trench along the northern perimeter was excavated first. This represented a change in strategy from the agreed WSI and after consultation with Andy Thomas of the CHET, a second trench was excavated in the original position across the centre of the site.
- 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 Two evaluation trenches were excavated and recorded (Figures 2 and 3), measuring 22m and 29m long respectively.

This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy. After Transfer of Title has been obtained, the site archive will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Store.

## **2 SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **2.1 Site location, topography and geology**

2.2 The site is located in an industrial complex at the southern edge of Eaton Socon close to the junction between the A1 and A428 motorways. It is bordered to the south by the KFC and Costa Coffee development and to the north by Alpha Road and the Alpha Road/Great North Road roundabout. The site is centred on national grid reference (NGR) TL 1692 5816.

2.3 Topographically, the area around the development site gently slopes from west to east down towards the River Great Ouse and Wyboston Lakes, located 1.1km and 500m respectively to the south-east. The development site itself lies on level ground at a height of 17m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

2.4 The underlying bedrock is comprised of Oxford Clay Formation mudstone. This is a Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 156 to 165 million years ago in the Jurassic Period, in a local environment dominated by shallow seas.

2.5 The superficial geological deposits are comprised of River Terrace Sand and Gravel, formed in the Quaternary period up to 3 million years ago in riverine environments. Fine silts and sands from overbank flooding may also be present (BGS 2018).



### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Archaeological Background**

- 3.1.1 Archaeological investigations were undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) at 21 to 35 Great North Road between November 2015 and February 2016 (Figure 1), just to the south of the proposed development area. These revealed evidence for prehistoric features, Roman settlement activity and the later establishment of the medieval hamlet of Little End. This archaeological background is partly taken from the PCA excavation report (House 2017) as well as Historic Environment Record (HER) data provided with the archaeological brief for the site (Stewart 2018).
- 3.1.2 Numbers given in brackets in the following text are HER asset and event numbers. For the final report the results will be set into context with data provided by the Cambridgeshire HER as well as data provided by the adjacent Bedfordshire HER.
- 3.1.3 The proposed development area is located at the south end of the historic Cambridgeshire village of Eaton Socon, in the parish of St Neots.
- 3.1.4 The development site lies in an area of high archaeological potential, within a multi-period landscape. Archaeological investigations undertaken to the immediate north and west have revealed extensive evidence for Neolithic activity, Roman field systems and settlement and evidence of Saxon settlement (MCB 20473, MCB16504, ECB1965, ECB2719). In addition, investigations to the south east have revealed further evidence of Neolithic and Romano-British occupation (MCB16709, MCB16710).

#### Prehistory

- 3.1.5 A very dense scatter of Mesolithic flints (HER 00373) was discovered to the north-east of the study site, at the bank of the River Great Ouse. This assemblage included blades, flakes, cores and an anvil.
- 3.1.6 A Neolithic Hearth (HER 00369) was revealed to the north of the study site, at Little End. This contained burnt and fire affected stones, potsherds and flint

flakes.

- 3.1.7 The investigations on the adjacent KFC site revealed evidence for a small number of discrete prehistoric features and a residual flint assemblage, that demonstrates long lasting prehistoric activity at the site (ECB4416, House 2017).

Roman

- 3.1.8 A possible Roman villa (HER 04253) is visible as a cropmark on the north bank of the River Great Ouse at Barford Road, Eynesbury. This is proximate to another villa site to the north east (MCB 12803).
- 3.1.9 Roman field systems are present within the study area (HER 11778) as well as a potential metalled Roman road near 'The Bell' public house located nearby to the site area, to the north.
- 3.1.10 A Roman site with numerous different ditches, enclosures, roads and possible graves has been identified through geophysical survey and subsequent archaeological evaluation and excavation at Priors Gate (MCB 16504), directly to the north of the proposed development site. The evidence comprised a large number of ditches, forming field systems, enclosures and a droveway. Other features included a large number of quarry pits, as well as two ring gullies and a small rectangular enclosure, thought to represent animal windbreaks or enclosures. Two irregular pits were also excavated, thought to be a shallow watering hole and tanning/dying pit. Two possible grave cuts were also identified. Little material culture was retrieved from the features, although refuse pits and a possible hearth were present. Settlement activity was undoubtedly in the vicinity, and the density of pottery and animal bones suggests that structures may have been located to the south of the excavation area.
- 3.1.11 The investigations on the adjacent KFC site identified extensive Roman activity in the form of pits and ditches, and ritual activity in the form of deliberately placed deposits. The finds included significant late Roman remains potentially continuing into the 5th century (ECB 4416, MCB20473).

The activity was indicative of Roman settlement, or nearby settlement, and in the late Roman/Saxon period the site may have shifted towards the nearby Alpha Park Saxon settlement, discussed below.

#### Saxon

3.1.12 As part of a multi-period site, investigations to the immediate west of the proposed development site at Alpha Park revealed significant evidence of archaeological features relating to Saxon settlement (MCB18207). Initial evaluation in 2001 recorded the presence of a pit, interpreted as a Saxon sunken feature building (SFB) and further investigation in 2007 confirmed the presence of more contemporary remains including a large pit with associated postholes, representing another sunken feature building. The occurrence of this, and another possible SFB at the west of the site suggests that there is a high probability of evidence of Saxon settlement activity continuing to the north and/or west of Alpha Park, potentially continuing into the proposed development area.

3.1.13 Late Saxon to medieval (9th-12th century) pottery was retrieved from a single pit on the KFC site (ECB 4416, MCB20473).

#### Medieval

3.1.14 The Castle Hills complex (HER 00374) to the north of the site is a Norman ringwork castle which overlies part of the late Saxon Vill and medieval village of Eaton Socon which was deserted, at least in part, to make way for the stronghold. The ringwork was used subsequently as the site of a windmill. The full extent of the settlement is not known but it has been estimated that it extended at least 100m to the west of the outer ditch of the castle. Study of the pottery assemblage, which included St Neots ware, shows that the settlement began as a vill as early as the 9th century, prospered in the 11th century and continued after the Conquest of 1066 before being abandoned, at a relatively early date, in the mid-12th century.

3.1.15 The adjacent KFC site (ECB 4416, MCB20473) showed evidence for the establishment and growth of the hamlet of Little End, a settlement that developed at the southern edge of the village of Eaton Socon. The remains

included a 19th century agricultural farmer's cottages with brick footings fronting onto the Great North Road, and an earlier structure with stone footings.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 General**

4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation comprised one 29m and one 22m long evaluation trench. The shorter trench was located in the north of the proposed development site, parallel with the northern site boundary, while the longer trench was located centrally across the site

4.1.2 The trench across the northern perimeter was excavated first, as concrete foundations for the new building had already been installed across the site, making the original position difficult to access. This represented a change in strategy from the agreed WSI and after consultation with Andy Thomas of the CHET, a second trench was excavated in the original position across the centre of the site (Figure 2).

### **4.2 Excavation methodology**

4.2.1 Trenches were excavated using a 14 ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator. Topsoil and other overburden of low archaeological value was removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded.

4.2.2 Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools.

### **4.3 Recording and Finds Recovery**

4.3.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of the trenches were recorded using a Leica 1200 GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better. In addition, plans of the trenches were hand drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections at a scale of 1:10.

4.3.2 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]. Where more than one slot was excavated through an individual feature, each intervention was assigned additional numbers for the cutting event and for the deposits it contained (these deposits within cut features being referred to here as 'fills'). The record numbers assigned to cuts, deposits and groups are entirely arbitrary and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits excavated during the evaluation and excavation are listed in Appendix 1. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.

4.3.3 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 periodically. No metal objects were detected.

4.3.4 High-resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits and were used to keep a record of the excavation process. In addition, monochrome photographs were taken of significant features.

#### **4.4 Sampling Strategy**

4.4.1 Discrete features were half-sectioned, linear features were investigated by means of regularly-spaced 1m wide slots. All interventions were photographed and record by a cross-section scaled drawing at an appropriate scale (either 1:10 or 1:20).

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

5.1 The evaluation revealed two ditches and one pit. Neither of the ditches contained any dateable finds, therefore the features remain undated. The features are described by trench below.

### **5.2 Overburden and natural geological deposits**

5.2.1 Made ground comprising concrete and stone hardcore rubble (03) was found across the site. Overburden on the site consisted of a fine, sterile, dark humic subsoil, which may be very recently accumulated on account of occasional plastic detritus being present (04). The combined depth of the made ground and overburden ranged from 0.60m - 0.90m across the site.

5.2.2 Natural geological deposits comprised dark red brown gravelly silt sand with patches of light yellow and white pea gravel (05). It was truncated in large areas by modern concrete building foundations and also likely by the modern hardcore rubble (03) in Trench 1.

### **5.3 Undated pit**

5.3.1 Trench 2 contained a single pit [08] measuring 2.20m in diameter with steep sides. It was excavated to a depth of 0.40m and had three fills. The pit contained one beaker-type potsherd of Early Bronze Age date, two worked flints, both likely residual, and one animal bone (see specialist reports below).

### **5.4 Undated ditches**

5.4.1 Trench 1 contained one ditch [01] on a WNW-ESE alignment, located at the east end of the trench. The ditch was 0.64m wide and up to 0.17m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a dark, firm, silt fill (02). The ditch contained no finds.

5.4.2 Trench 2 contained a ditch terminus [06] in its western half, oriented southwest-northeast, 0.59m wide and 0.2m deep with moderately sloping sides and a sloping base. The ditch was partially truncated by modern foundations. It contained a single fill (07) of dark, humic silt with no finds present. The ditch was truncated by a modern wall footing on a similar

alignment.

## **5.5 Modern features**

- 5.5.1 Trench 1 contained three modern concrete wall foundations with brick superstructure, oriented roughly parallel with and perpendicular to the present Alpha Road to the north and Great North Road to the east. The foundations were recorded as far as a depth of 0.80m below the current surface level, and were continuing into the natural (Fig. 3).
- 5.5.2 Trench 2 also contained two modern concrete wall footings on the same alignment as those in Trench 1. They were recorded at a depth of 0.95m below the current surface level, and continuing into the natural. At the western end of the trench was a modern drain oriented north-south (Fig. 3).



## **6 THE FINDS**

### **6.1 Pottery**

#### **By Lawrence Morgan-Shelbourne**

- 6.1.1 The evaluation produced a single small sherd (<4cm diameter) of pottery, weighing 9g, which derived from context (11), the upper fill of pit [88]. The sherd was in relatively poor condition, with both its exterior and interior surfaces having suffered a degree of abrasion. Having stated this, some diagnostic features were present; the sherd was from the rim of a vessel, with the rim type being upright and rounded. The exterior of the sherd exhibited multiple horizontal bands of linear impressions, in a 'ladder' pattern. The fabric of the sherd was soft and contained rare to sparse quantities of fine to moderate (1-3mm) subangular grog.
- 6.1.2 This combination of qualities is most characteristic of the Beaker tradition of the Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age. Differentiation within this broad tradition is difficult, due to the typological arrangement and chronological sequence of Breakers currently being under review (Ambers et. Al. 1992, Case 1993, 2001), as well as the limitations inherent in such a small assemblage. However, Beakers are generally acknowledged to date from c. 2500-1750 BC.

### **6.2 Animal Bone**

#### **By Kevin Rielly**

- 6.2.1 One animal bone in 4 pieces was retrieved from fill (11) in pit [08]. This was a cattle radius and ulna (fused), clearly from a rather large fully adult animal, most likely a bull. The bone was poorly preserved on the anterior surface perhaps suggesting poor burial (left open to the elements for some time).

### **6.3 Flint**

#### **By Ella Egberts**

- 6.3.1 Two residual flakes of flint were retrieved from fill (11) of pit [08]. Flint descriptions and dates are as follows.
- 6.3.2 Flint 1: Thick, damaged flint flake (length 50mm; width 27mm; thickness

12mm; weight 12.5g). Very fine-grained, soft and smooth, opaque light grey to translucent grey/brown flint. Dorsal side characterised by two negative flake scars and a small patch of cortex consisting of an ancient, patinated fracture. Technological and typological characteristics of the flake are not univocally attributable to a single period and it could date from the Neolithic to Iron Age.

- 6.3.3 Flint 2: Small (length 23mm; width 20mm; thickness 7mm; weight 2.3g) decortication flake. Two negative flake scars on dorsal side and weathered and stained nodular cortex. The flake is difficult to date. The small negative flake scars on the dorsal side may point to an earlier date, the obtuse striking platform looks later. Decortication flakes are often undiagnostic and can be similar throughout prehistory. The age range for this piece therefore can be Mesolithic to Iron Age although it appears rather earlier than later.

## **7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The evaluation revealed two ditches and one pit, the latter contained a small assemblage of finds.
- 7.2 The earliest feature was a possible quarry pit [08] that contained a small number of likely residual finds. This included a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age incised potsherd (see Morgan-Shelbourne, 6.1), two fragments of worked flint and one animal bone. The size and shape of the pit is very similar to quarry pits recorded immediately to the north of the site at Priors Gate (MCB 16504), which were Roman in date, and it is therefore likely that the pit represents a continuation of similar sand/gravel extraction activity.
- 7.3 Undated features were ditches [01] and [06] in Trenches 1 and 2, respectively. These were small and shallow features, indicating their possible use as drainage.
- 7.4 While the site is situated in an area of a known high density of archaeological features, as evidenced by prehistoric and Roman pits and ditches, and activity of an agricultural/industrial nature on the adjacent KFC site (ECB 4416, MCB20473), this intense settlement and industrial activity does not seem to have extended into the current development site. However, there was also a high degree of modern truncation on the site, which may have destroyed potential earlier archaeological features.
- 7.5 The nature of the modern foundations is unclear. The foundations are sizeable and extend across the entire site, however, they are not shown on any Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and it is likely that they were short-lived. It is possible that they were associated with The Bell public house, which stood on the present KFC site from the late 19th to the mid- 20th century, however, there is no cartographic proof (Fig. 5).

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Donald Sutherland of the Pegasus Group and the Adil Group for commissioning and funding the work. PCA are grateful to Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. The project was managed for PCA by Christiane Meckseper, and fieldwork was undertaken by Laura Malric-Smith and Rory Fisher. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by PCA's CAD Department.

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## 10 APPENDIX 1: TRENCH TABLES AND CONTEXT INDEX

### 10.1 Trench 1

<b>TRENCH 1</b>		
Figures:	2, 3, 4, 5	
Plates:	1-4	
Trench Alignment:	E-W	
Length:	22m	
Width:	1.2m	
	<b>E End</b>	<b>W End</b>
Max Depth:	0.8m	0.8m
<b>Level of Natural (m OD):</b>	17.19	17.26

### 10.2 Trench 2

<b>TRENCH 2</b>		
Figures:	2, 3, 4, 5	
Plates:	5-7	
Trench Alignment:	E-W	
Length:	29m	
Width:	1.2m	
	<b>E End</b>	<b>W End</b>
Max Depth:	1m	0.9m
<b>Level of Natural (m OD):</b>	17.04	17.17

### 10.3 Context Index

Context	Cut	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
1	1	Cut	Ditch	1.5	0.64	0.17	Linear in shape, moderately sloping sides and concave base.
2	1	Fill	Ditch	1.5	0.64	0.17	Mid to dark grey brown silt, slightly firm.
3		Layer	Made Ground			0.6	Stone hardcore rubble and concrete.

4		Layer	Made Ground			0.35	Dark rich brown loam silt.
5		Layer	Natural				Dark brown red silt sand and pale yellow pea gravel.
6	6	Cut	Ditch	0.59	0.2	0.11	Linear in shape, moderately sloping sides and a sloping base.
7	6	Fill	Ditch	0.59	0.2	0.11	Dark grey brown, soft silt.
8	8	Cut	Pit	1.1	2.2	0.4	Circular in plan, steep sides.
9	8	Fill	Pit	1.1	2.2	0.4	Mid to dark red brown sandy gravel.
10	8	Fill	Pit	1.9	1.9	0.4	Mid grey brown sand silt, with dark yellow sand lenses.
11	8	Fill	Pit	0.75	0.7	0.11	Dark grey brown soft silt.



## 11 APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-315473

### Project details

Project name Land North of 37 Great North Road, Eaton Socon

Short description of the project Two trial trenches of 51m length in total were excavated between the 18th and 20th April 2018. The evaluation revealed two undated ditches and a prehistoric pit. A small residual finds assemblage of pottery, bone and flint was recovered from the pit, which is potentially linked to Roman quarrying activity recorded immediately to the north of the proposed development area. In both trenches there was extensive truncation by modern brick and concrete foundations which may have removed other earlier archaeological features present.

Project dates Start: 18-04-2018 End: 20-04-2018

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes ECB5390 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Current Land use Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed

Monument type DITCH Uncertain

Monument type DITCH Uncertain

Monument type PIT Roman

Methods & techniques "Sample Trenches"

Development type Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)

Prompt Planning condition

### Project location

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE HUNTINGDONSHIRE ST NEOTS Land North of 37 Great North Road, Eaton Socon

Postcode PE19 8AN

Study area 0 Square metres

Height OD / Depth Min: 17.04m Max: 17.26m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Cambridge HET

Project design originator Christiane Meckseper

Project director/manager Christiane Meckseper

Project supervisor Laura Malric-Smith

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#### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store

Physical Contents "Ceramics", "Worked stone/lithics"

Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store

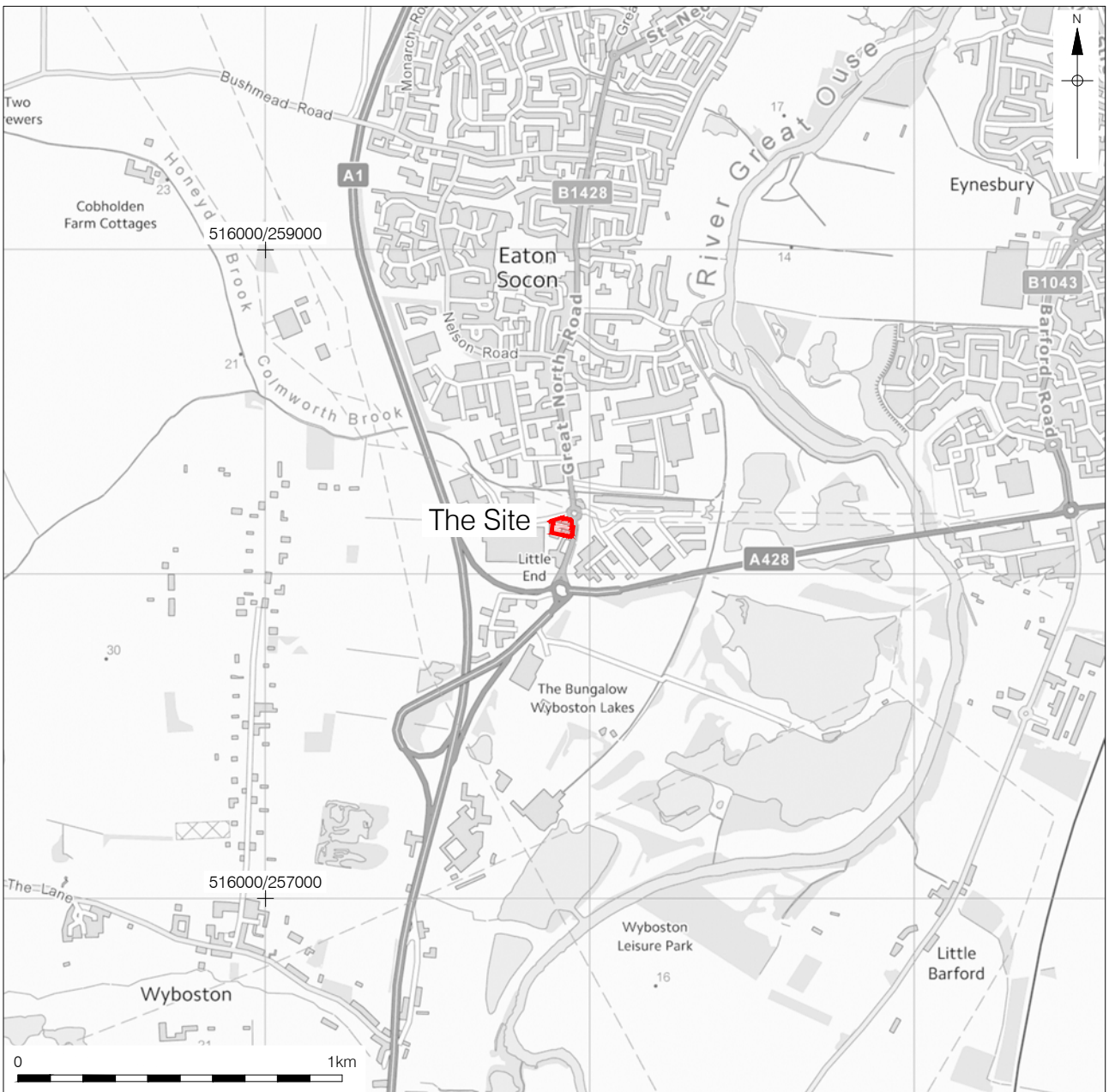
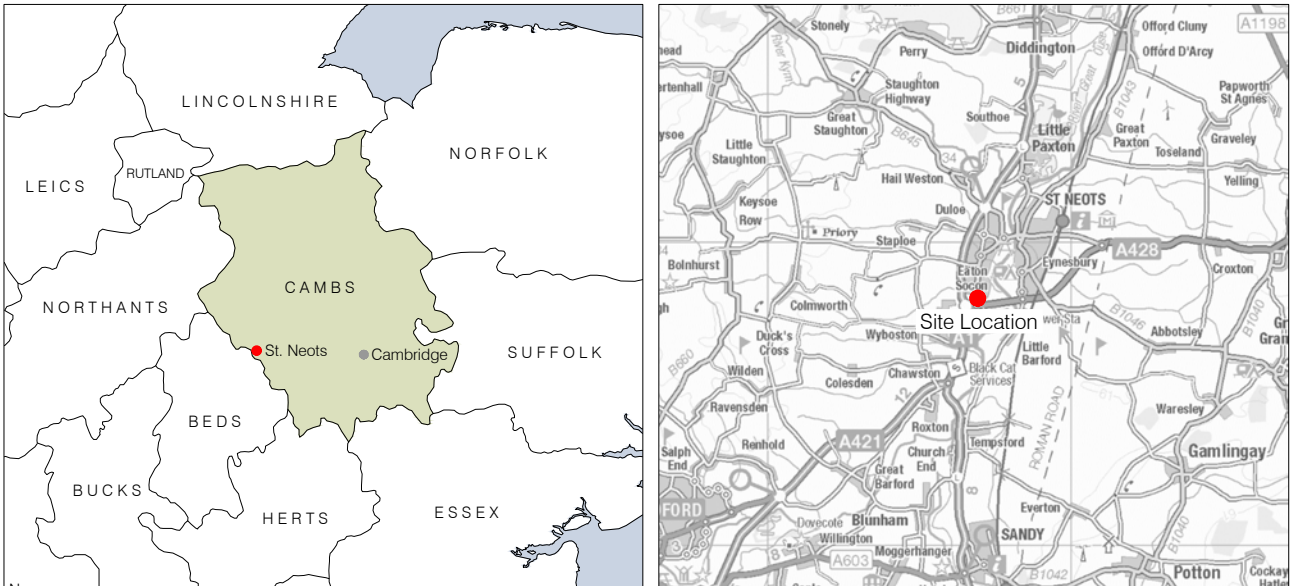
Digital Media available "Database", "Images vector", "Survey", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store

Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Report", "Section"

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## **12      FIGURES**



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 25/03/18 MS

Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:2,000,000, 1:250,000 & 1:20,000 at A4

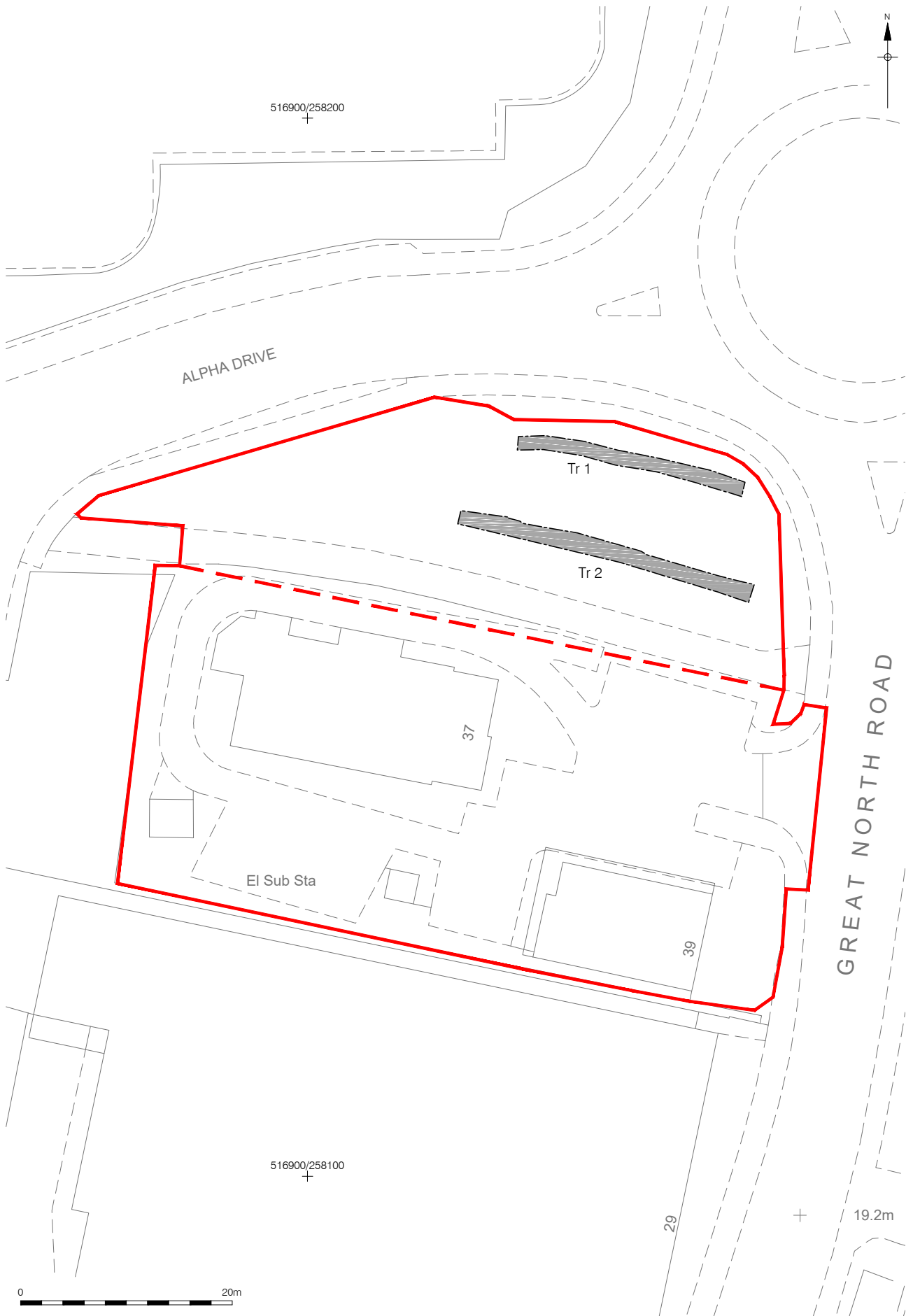
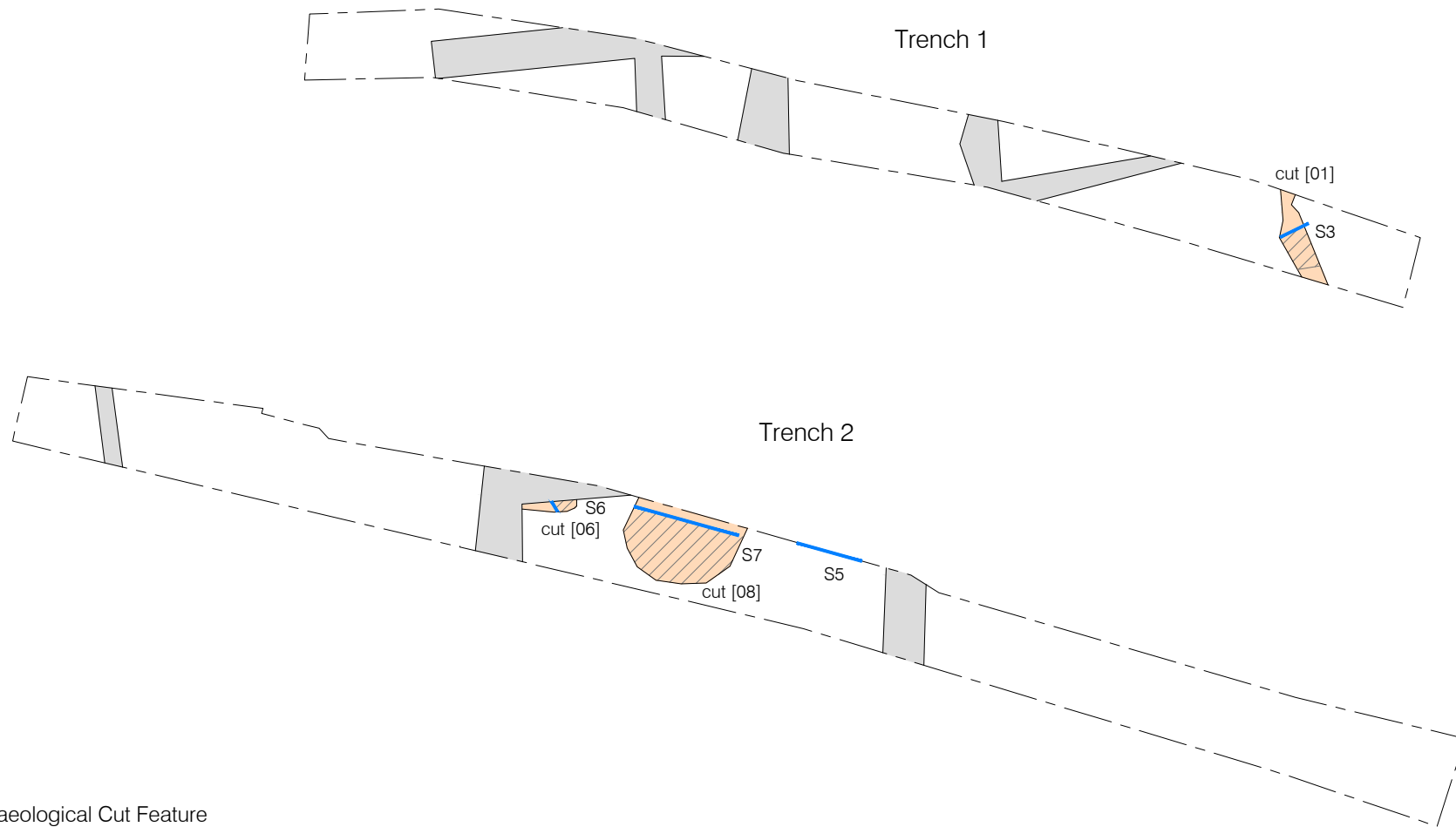


Figure 2  
 Detailed Site Location  
 1:500 at A4

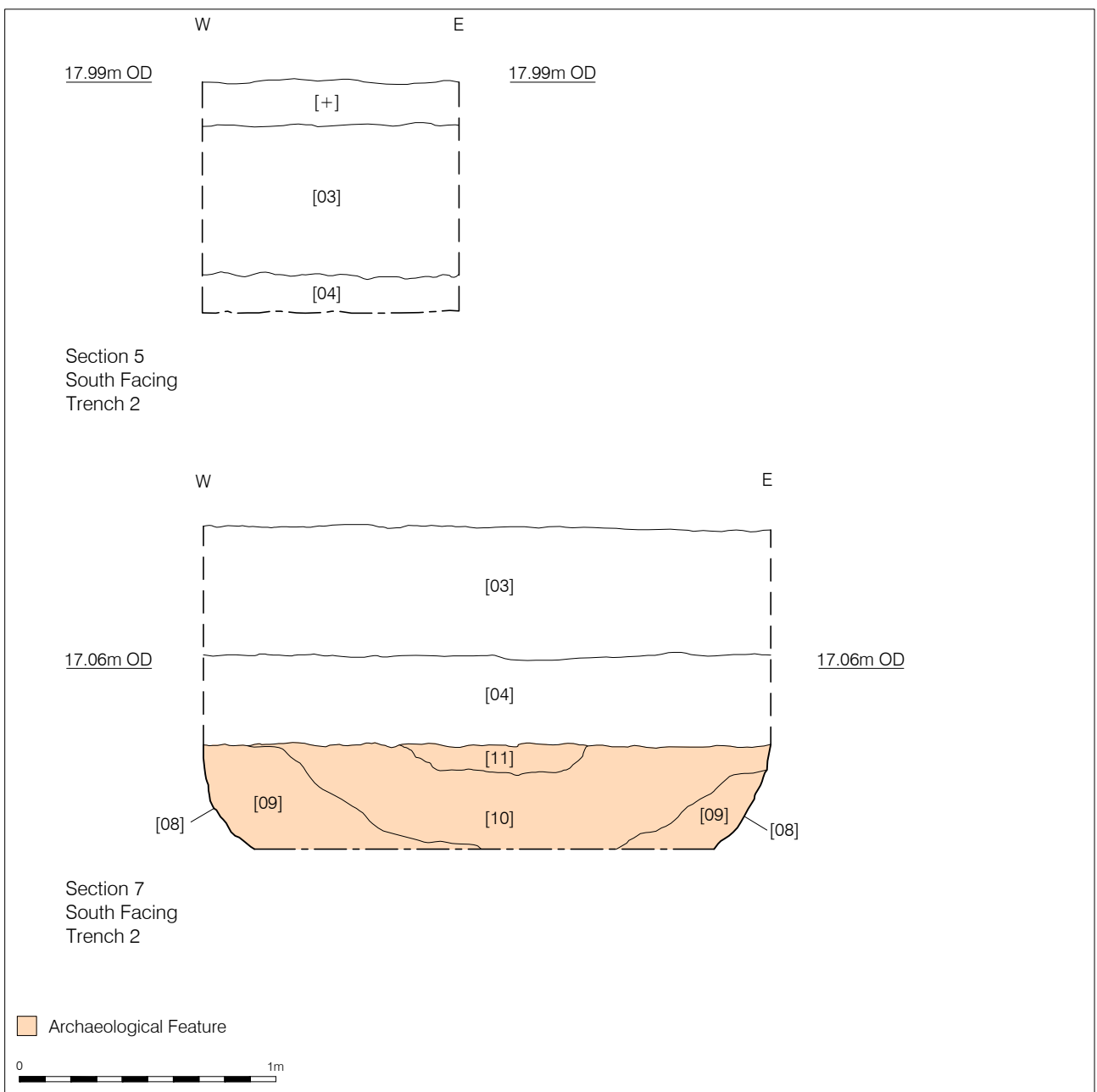
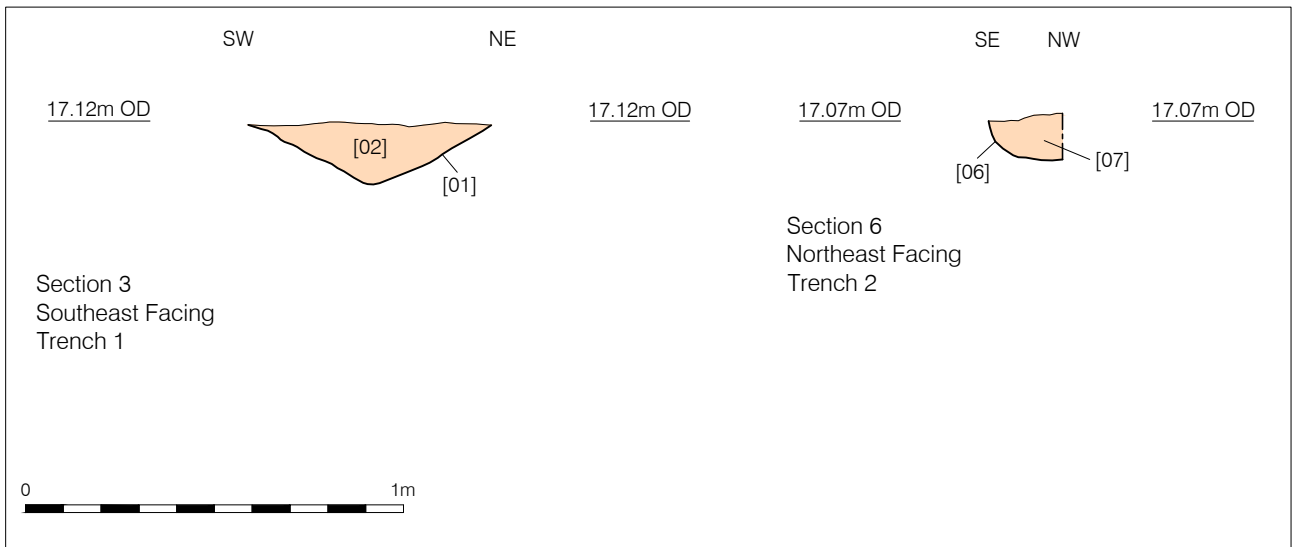


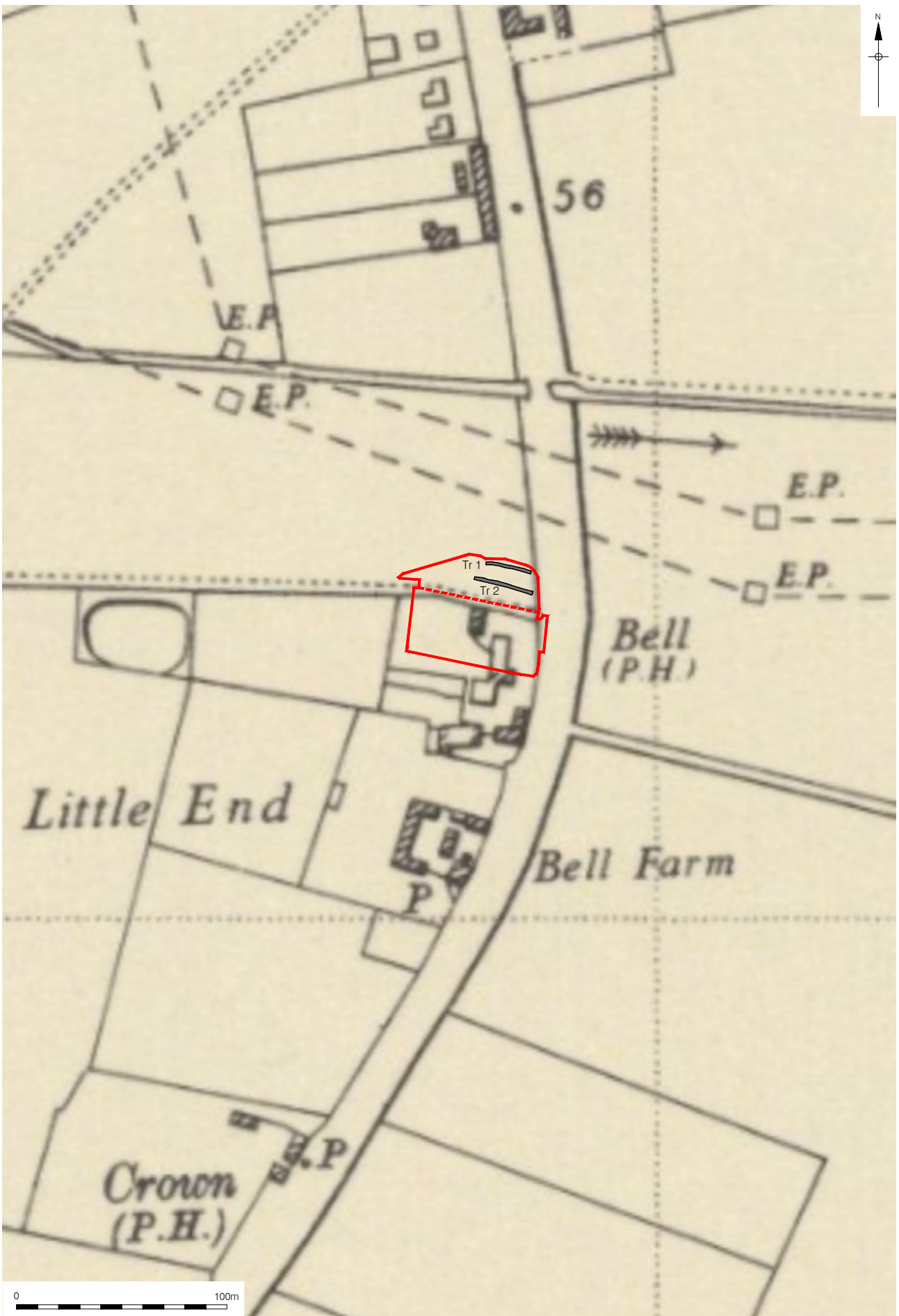
- Archaeological Cut Feature
- Excavated Slot
- Modern Feature

0 5m

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Figure 3  
Trench Plans  
1:125 at A4







## 13 PLATES



Plate 1: The site, looking north-west



Plate 2: Trench 1 looking west



Plate 3: Trench 1 sample section showing modern hardcore layer (03), looking north



Plate 4: South east facing section of Ditch [01]



Plate 5: Trench 2, looking east



Plate 6: South facing section of Pit [08], Trench 2



Plate 7: South facing section of Pit [08], oblique view to north-east