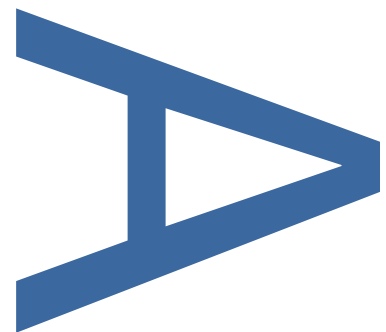
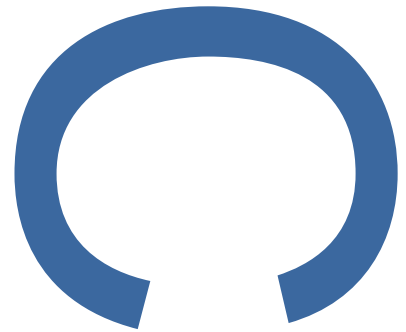


**24 HIGH STREET, WISBECH,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING  
BRIEF**



**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:  
FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**REPORT NO: R13557**

**FEBRUARY 2019**

**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**

## 24 High Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief

**Local Planning Authority:** Fenland District Council

**Planning Reference:** F/YR17/1198/FDC

**Central National Grid Reference:** NGR TL 4612 0965

**Site Code:** ECB5446

**Oasis Reference No:** preconst1-341479

**Report No.** R 13557

**Written and researched by:** Christiane Meckseper

**Project Manager:** Christiane Meckseper

**Commissioning Client:** Fenland District Council

**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) XX

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

**©Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd**  
**February 2019**

*The material contained herein is and remains the sole property of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd and is not for publication to third parties without prior consent. Whilst every effort has been made to provide detailed and accurate information, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd cannot be held responsible for errors or inaccuracies herein contained.*

## CONTENTS

CONTENTS .....	2
ABSTRACT .....	3
1 INTRODUCTION .....	4
2 SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY .....	5
3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND .....	6
4 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE .....	10
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS .....	11
6 DISCUSSION .....	12
7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	13
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	14
9 FIGURES .....	16
10 APPENDIX 1: PLATES .....	20
11 APPENDIX 5: OASIS FORM .....	23
FIGURE 1 SITE LOCATION .....	17
FIGURE 2 DETAILED SITE LOCATION .....	18
FIGURE 3: LOCATION OF GEOTECHNICAL TEST PITS .....	19
PLATE 1: BASEMENT WITH LOCATION OF TEST PITS 3 AND 4 .....	20
PLATE 2: TEST PIT 1 .....	20
PLATE 3: TEST PIT 2 .....	21
PLATE 4: TEST PIT 3 .....	21
PLATE 5: TEST PIT 4 .....	22
PLATE 6: TEST PIT 5 .....	22

## ABSTRACT

*Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Fenland District Council to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring at 24 High Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. The proposed development at 24 High Street is for an accessible piece of public architecture that is intended to transform the existing site and offer a new an inspiring piece of public realm.*

*Five geotechnical test pits and boreholes were monitored on 17 September and 6 November 2018. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered. The test pits showed that the brick foundations of the existing buildings were cut straight into fine, silty, sterile flood deposits. These deposits were recorded to a minimum depth of 2.0m below present basement level.*

*The size of the test pits was very small and shallow and did not allow a comprehensive modelling of the deposits present, in contrast to similar nearby investigations at Wisbech Market Place or Wisbech Market Mews, which revealed a deeply stratified sequence of medieval and post-medieval deposits, including several episodes of flooding. It is therefore not possible to say with any certainty whether 24 High Street represents a 'blank' area within the medieval centre of Wisbech, or whether the areas sampled were simply too small to draw any conclusions.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) was commissioned by Fenland District Council to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring at 24 High Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 4612 0965; Figure 1). The proposed development at 24 High Street is for an accessible piece of public architecture that is intended to transform the existing site and offer a new an inspiring piece of public realm.
- 1.2 The site is in the medieval core of the town, immediately west of the Market Place, and northwest of the site of the medieval castle (SMR 01926, TF 4619 0957). Medieval finds and extensive stratified archaeological deposits of medieval and post-medieval date are likely to survive throughout the historic centre of Wisbech. Because of the high archaeological potential of the site, the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET), acting as advisor to the local planning authority, requested a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording of any groundworks associated with the proposed development. This is in line with National Planning Policy Framework 2018.
- 1.3 The monitoring was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by PCA (Pullen 2018) in response to a Brief for archaeological monitoring and recording issued by Andy Thomas of the CHET (Thomas 2018).
- 1.4 The archaeological monitoring and recording focussed on groundworks in the basement area of the footprint of the proposed new structure. The initial work involved monitoring of test pits and boreholes. Subsequent works are likely to involve monitoring and recording of ground reduction required for construction.
- 1.5 This document comprises a report of the archaeological monitoring and recording. The site archive will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Stores.

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

### **2.1 Site Location**

- 2.1.1 The site is located at NGR TF 4612 0965 (Figure 2). No. 24 High Street, Wisbech is a “gap” site on the west side of High Street in Wisbech. It is located within the Wisbech Conservation Area. A grade II listed building that had previously occupied the front of the site collapsed in the late 1980’s. The total external footprint of the ground floor of the proposed development is 75.5sqm.
- 2.1.2 The building to the south side of the development site is 23 High Street, also a grade II listed property.

### **2.2 Geology and Topography**

- 2.2.1 The solid geology at Wisbech comprises Jurassic Amptill clays, while pre-Flandrian gravels have been observed below -15.0m OD. The Flandrian deposits covering the Wisbech area consist of Terrington Beds comprising marine clays, silts and sands (British Geological Survey 2018).
- 2.2.2 Wisbech lies approximately 64km north of Cambridge some 16km from the current coastline of The Wash. The town was originally sited where the Ouse (Wellstream) joined the Nene (Wysbeck).

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The following information is taken from a 1km radius search of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record supplied with the brief (CHET, Thomas 2018) and summarised in the WSI (Pullen 2018).
- 3.2 There is little evidence for Prehistoric activity near the site. A Neolithic flaked flint axe reportedly found in the 1970s at the Station Hotel site (possible the Midland Counties Hotel, Chapel Road, Wisbech (MCB17756, TF 45877 09731). A fragmentary Early Iron Age Bronze Scabbard in Wisbech Museum is assumed to be found in neighbourhood of town (04008, TF 4609).
- 3.3 A limited number of Roman finds have been found within the vicinity of the site. A Roman greyware cup was found in 1930 near LNER goods yard (03889, TF 458 092). A crude Roman painted sherd is in Wisbech Museum, provenience unknown (03891, TF 46 09). Three Roman coin hoards are recorded in the HER radius search (03910, TF 46 09; 03934, TF468 091; CB14764, TF 45705 09405). Only one of these hoards (CB14764, TF 45705 09405) has good locational provenance and was found on South Brink. Aerial photographic assessment identified Roman settlement to west of Wisbech (ECB2916, TF 41036 06773).
- 3.4 Wisbech formed an interface between the medieval fens and the North Sea. The towns history is inextricably bound up with its position at the junction of the shifting outflows of two rivers – the Nene (Wysbeck) and the Ouse (Wellstream). Its low-lying position, proximity to the sea and marked deterioration of the climate during the medieval periods combined to ensure that the town was the victim of frequent and severe flooding. Flooding carried enormous quantities of water-borne silts, effectively burying phase after phase of new development over the centuries (Hinman & Popescu 2012).
- 3.5 The development site is in the medieval core of the town, immediately west of the Market Place, and northwest of the site of the medieval castle (SMR 01926, TF 4619 0957). Medieval finds and extensive stratified archaeological deposits of medieval and post-medieval date are likely to survive throughout the historic

centre of Wisbech.

- 3.6 The location of the site would have been just outside the bailey of the 11th/12th century castle (Hinman & Popescu 2012). The first fortification of this site was built by the orders of William I in 1086 (01926, TF 4619 0957). It was built of stone and covered an area of 2 acres. The castle was nearly circular in form and likely belonged to the motte and bailey type.
- 3.7 The HER (01926, TF 4619 0957) notes that it is possible that a structure of timber and turves existed on the site of the castle in Saxon times as a defence against the Danes.
- 3.8 In 1236 the castle was badly damaged by a sea flood and was rebuilt and subsequently dismantled (at least partially) before the end of Henry III's reign. The pattern of the town centre clearly indicates the shape and extent of the original castle. It is said to have had a moat 40ft wide towards the town (01926, TF 4619 0957).
- 3.9 Excavations carried out within the cellar of 4 Ely place produced evidence of a large, infilled ditch feature, believed to represent a defensive ditch associated with a castle on a different alignment to the known post-medieval castle moat in the area. The feature is apparently a continuation of a ditch-like feature found in earlier excavations at the adjacent library building in 2008/2009 (MCB19264, TF 4622 0960; MCB18486, TF4624 0959).
- 3.10 The original motte and bailey castle was replaced by a palace for the Bishops of Ely in 1478. This building was demolished and replaced by Thurloe's mansion in 1656. Elements of Thurloe's Mansion survive in the present building (also known as Wisbech Castle). Four trenches and forty test pits were excavated at the Castle in 2009/2010, looking for evidence of the remains of the Bishops Palace and other related structures (01926, TF 4619 0957; MCB19349, TF 4619 0957).
- 3.11 The site is situated near what for a long time was the single town bridge crossing of the River Nene (MCB 19789, TF 4602 0965). A succession of earlier bridges



was located at the site of the present town bridge. The earliest known bridge (a wooden structure) was recorded as being there in 1326. In 1758 a stone bridge was built. It was replaced by a single span Iron Bridge built by Armstrong and Co of Newcastle in 1857.

- 3.12 Finds made during building alterations to the market included a carved bone, pottery including the base of a medieval jug (from Hill Street), carved architectural fragments (from Market Street), and broken gravestones (10489, TF 462 097).
- 3.13 The Rose and Crown Inn located nearby to the north east of the development site is the most ancient surviving hostelry in Wisbech. There is a deed of conveyance for the same property dated 1461 at which time it was called the swan (MCB19782, TF 4613 0970).
- 3.14 A medieval crypt or undercroft was recorded at 29 Market street (10493, TF 461 097). The vault comprised a three bay chamber with a vaulted ceiling in the late Medieval style. The vault ribs are supported by corbels, and the central boss is of a male face surrounded by a wreath.
- 3.15 Excavation (CB1469, TF 46293 09692) at Market Mews revealed a sequence of deeply stratified medieval and post-medieval deposits, including evidence for industrial metalworking as well as at least eight distinct building phases, the earliest of which has been dated to 13th c. Floors associated with these buildings were sealed by extensive accumulations of fine silts deposited during episodic flooding. The archaeological sequence extends in excess of 3.00m below current ground surface.
- 3.16 Excavations (MCB 16870, 4637 0952) at Church Terrace Wisbech (an area peripheral to the main medieval settlement in Wisbech) revealed numerous silt layers which suggest the site had been very prone to flooding. Midden deposits and other evidence of human activity dating to the 13th to 15th centuries were seen to the south west of the site.
- 3.17 The centre of Wisbech is rich in post-medieval architecture. In 1792 Joseph

Medworth purchased from the See of Ely, not only Wisbech castle but also the land around it with the various outbuildings that stood on it. He cleared the site and parcelled it out for building and redevelopment.

- 3.18 The north side of the river Nene is well-known for its Georgian houses, among which is the National Trust property, Peckover House, built in 1722. A 16th century brick barn is situated in the grounds (04011a, TF 4586 0966).
- 3.19 Excavations at New Inn Yard recorded pits and flood deposits dating to the 16th to 19th century (MCB 19829, TF 4614 0974). The pits contained domestic and industrial rubbish.

## 4 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

### 4.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	1
Context sheets	8
Plan registers	1
Plans at 1:50	0
Plans at 1:20	0
Plans at 1:10	0
Plans at 1:5	0
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	3
Trench record sheets	0
Photo register sheets	1
Small finds register sheets	0
Environmental register sheets	0

### 4.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	46
GPS survey files	0
Digital plans	0
GIS project	0
Access database	0

### 4.3 Physical Archive (none)

Struck flint	0
Burnt flint	0
Pottery	0
Ceramic building material (CBM)	0
Glass	0
Briquetage	0
Small Finds	0
Slag	0
Animal bone	0
Shell	0
Environmental bulk samples	0
Environmental bulk samples (10 litre buckets)	0
Monolith samples	0
Other samples (specify)	0
Black and white films	0
Colour slides	0

0

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **5.1 Methodology**

- 5.1.1 Archaeological monitoring of five geotechnical test pits in the basement of the proposed installation was undertaken (Figure 3). Three test pits were monitored on 17 September 2018 and the remaining two test pits on 6 November 2018. The test pits were hand excavated by the contractor RSA Geotechnics. Test pits 1 and 5 were additionally hand augured with an auger approx. 0.15m in diameter, to a depth of 1.95m and 2.0m respectively from current ground level.
- 5.1.2 Archaeological deposits were recorded on PCA pro-forma record sheets. High-resolution digital photographs were taken at all stages of the monitoring
- 5.1.3 Field excavation techniques and recording methods are detailed in the PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual (Operations Manual I; Taylor & Brown 2009).

### **5.2 Results**

- 5.3 The test pits generally measured 0.30-0.50m in width and 0.25- 0.5m in depth. The pits were cut against and partially through existing brick foundations of the adjacent buildings (Plates 1-6). The upper deposits recorded in test pits 1-5 were a pale, mid yellowish brown soft sandy silt with no inclusions (contexts 002, 004, 008, 201 and 211). These had a thickness of 0.45-1.15m.
- 5.4 Auguring in Test pits 1 and 5 revealed a further light brown soft clayey silt with a notably higher moisture content underlying those deposits (contexts 202 and 212). These were recorded to a minimum thickness of 1.15m to the base of the borehole.
- 5.5 No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were present. No environmental samples were taken.
- 5.6 The natural deposits comprised fine, waterborne silts and were most likely caused through flooding.
- 5.7 The brick foundations of the existing buildings were cut straight into the silty flood deposits.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The test pits excavated at 24 High Street, Wisbech revealed a sequence of sterile, natural flood deposits, observed to a depth of 2.0m below current basement level. No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were present within the test pits.
- 6.2 It is not possible to say with any certainty whether 24 High Street represents a real, 'blank' area within the medieval centre of Wisbech, or whether the areas sampled were simply too small to draw any conclusions.
- 6.3 The size of the test pits was very small and shallow and did not allow a comprehensive modelling of the deposits present, in contrast to similar nearby investigations at Wisbech Market Place or Wisbech Market Mews, which revealed a deeply stratified sequence of medieval and post-medieval deposits, including several episodes of flooding (HER 14619 and 10312).

## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) would like to thank Fenland District (FDC) council for commissioning and funding the work. Taleyna Fletcher managed the project for FDC and Christiane Meckseper for PCA. Peter Crawley of PCA and Taleyna Fletcher of FDC undertook the fieldwork, the report was written by Christiane Meckseper. Rosie Scales, of PCA's CAD department prepared the figures.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey 2018 Online Viewer. Available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> [Accessed 14/06/2018]

Brown, N. and Glazebrook, J. (eds.) 2000 Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. Research Agenda and Strategy. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 8

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) 2017. Deposition of Archaeological Archives in Cambridgeshire. Available at: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-&-culture/archaeology/archaeology-archives/> [Accessed 14/11/2017]

CHET (Thomas, A) 2018. Site of former 24 High Street, Wisbech. Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

Dallas-Pierce-Quitero 2017. No 24 High Street – ‘The Gap’ Design & Access Statement. NS 23 Netil House, 1 Westgate Street London E8 3RL

Glazebrook, J. (ed.) 1997 Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties, 1. Resource Assessment. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 3

Hinman & Popescu 2012. Extraordinary Inundations of the Sea: Excavations at Market Mews, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. East Anglian Archaeology Report No 142. Oxford Archaeology East.

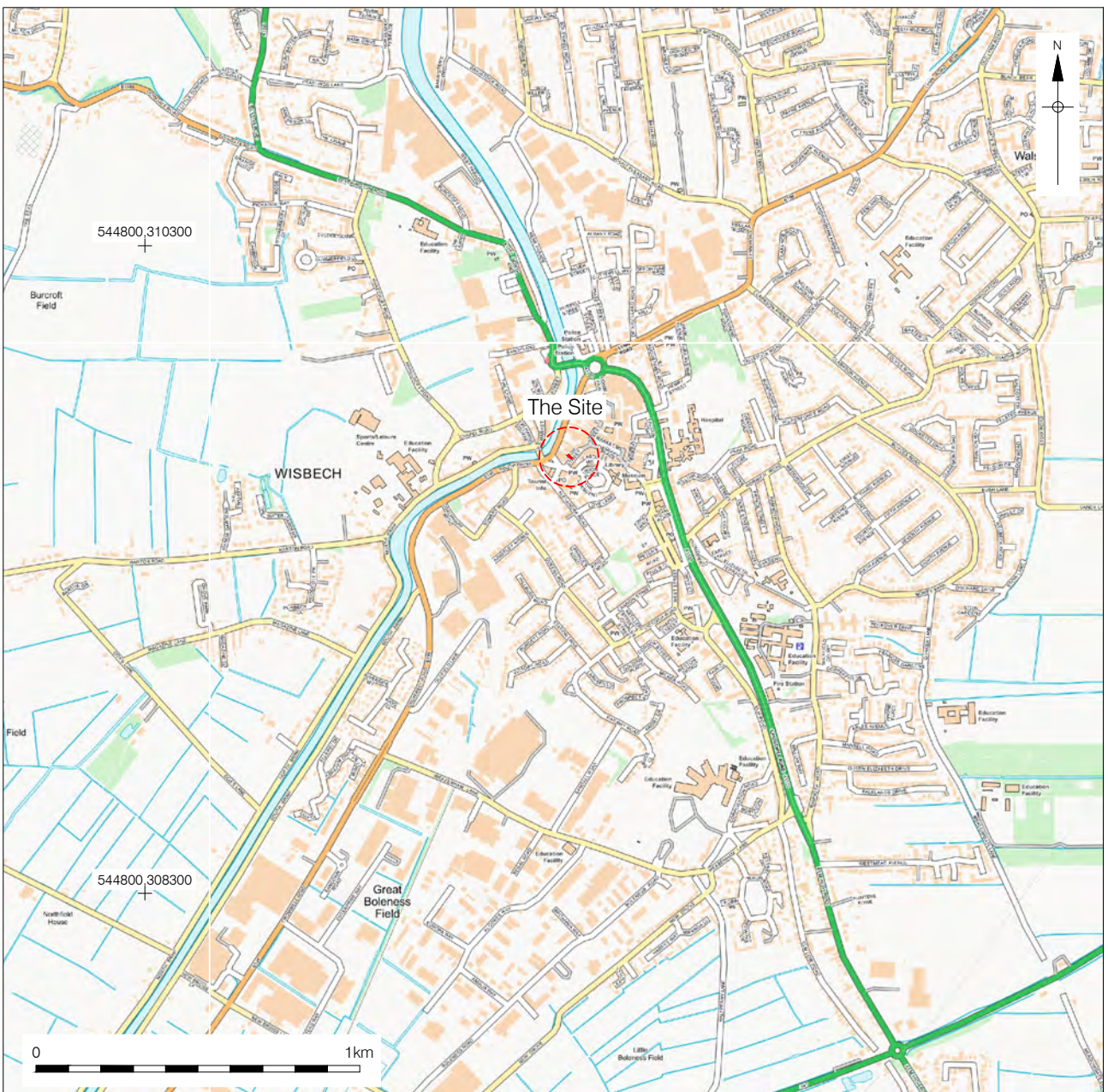
Historic England 2015 Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide. Historic England

Medlycott, M. 2011 (ed.) Research and Archaeology Revisited: A revised framework for the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional

Pullen, A 2018 24 High Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording. PCA unpublished report

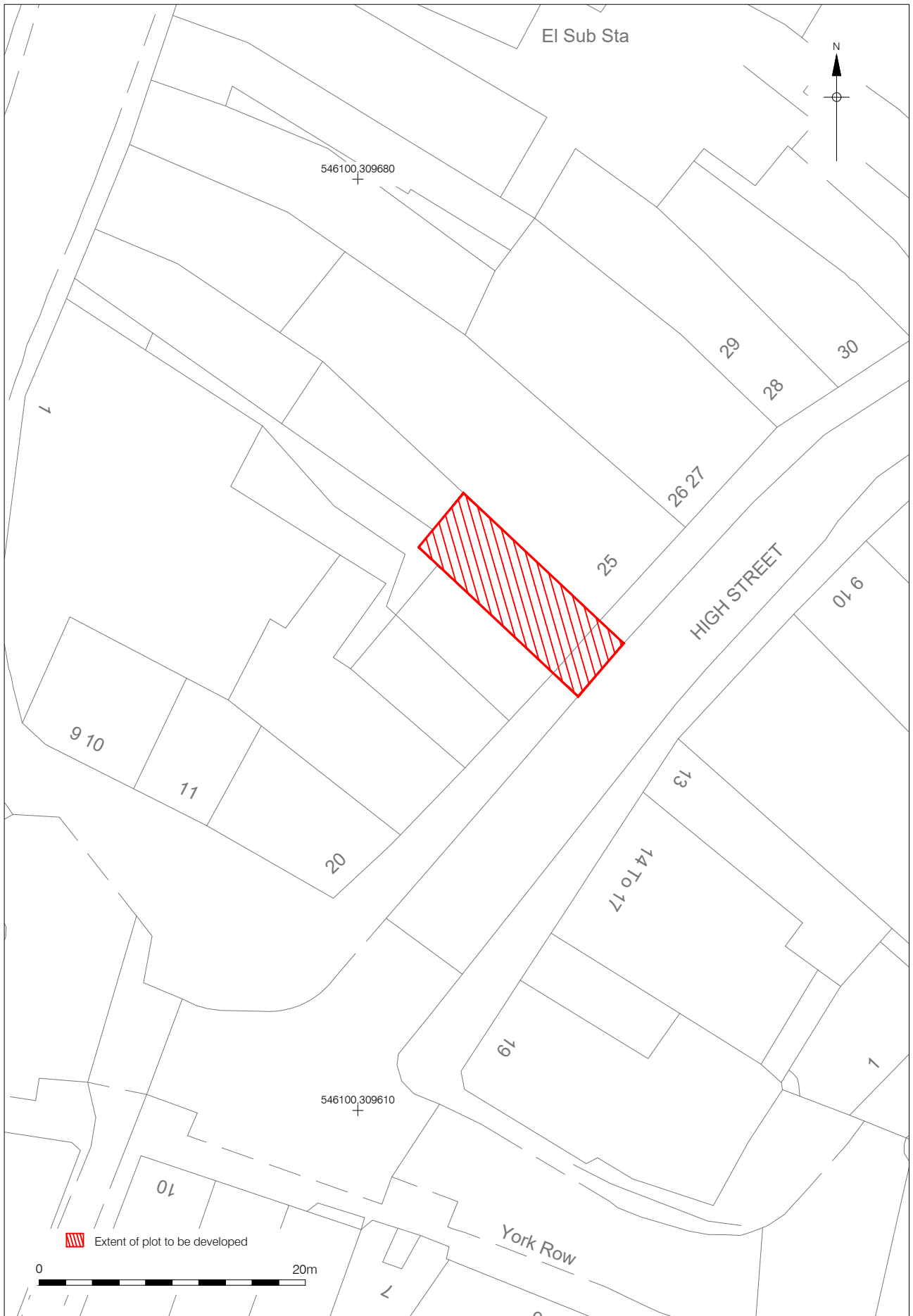


## 9 FIGURES



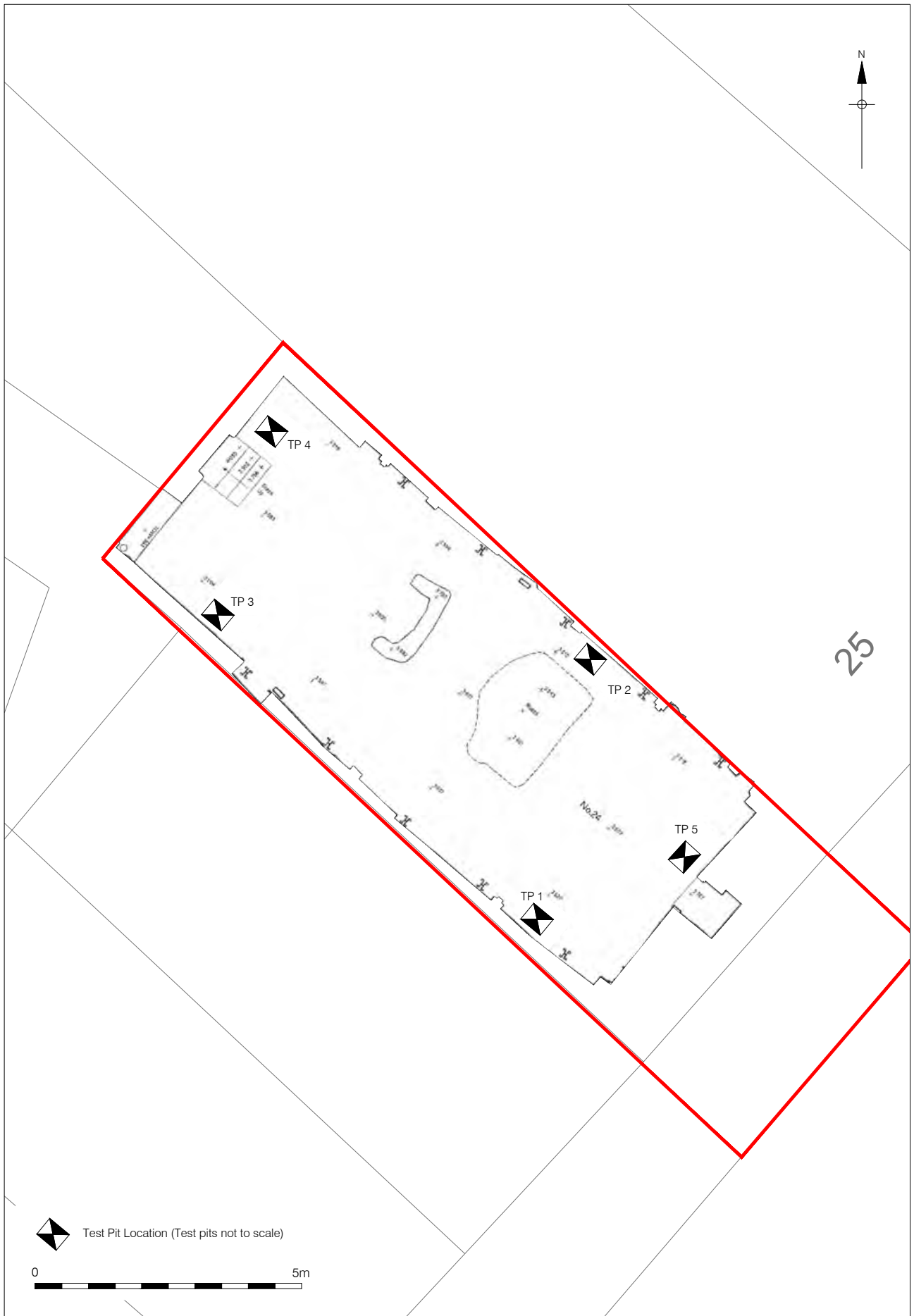
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018  
 © Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd 2018  
 13/06/18 RS

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



© Crown copyright 2018. All rights reserved. License number PMP36110309  
© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd 2018  
13/06/18 RS

Figure 2  
Detailed Site Location  
1:400 at A4



© Crown copyright 2018. All rights reserved. License number PMP36110309  
 © Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd 2018  
 07/11/18 RS

Figure 3  
 Location of Geotechnical Test Pits  
 1:400 at A4



## 10 APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: Basement with location of test pits 3 and 4



Plate 2: Test Pit 1





Plate 3: Test pit 2



Plate 4: Test pit 3





Plate 5: Test pit 4



Plate 6: Test pit 5

## APPENDIX 5: OASIS FORM

**OASIS ID: preconst1-341479**

### Project details

Project name 24 High Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire

Short description of the project Archaeological watching brief during excavation of five geotechnical pits in basement of disused building. Prior to re-development of the site into a public viewing platform/artwork. The test pits were 0.3-0.5m wide and up to 0.5m deep with additional hand auguring to a depth of up to 2.0m below current basement floor level. The test pits revealed a very fine silt, most likely a flooding layer, but no archaeological features or artefacts.

Project dates Start: 17-09-2018 End: 06-11-2018

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference codes ECB5446 - HER event no.

Any associated project reference codes ECB5446 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

### Project location

Country England

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND WISBECH 24 High Street, Wisbech

Study area 75.5 Square metres

Site coordinates TL 4612 0965 51.765958328646 0.11775411196 51 45 57 N 000 07 03 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited

Project brief originator Cambridge HET

Project design originator Pre-Construct Archaeology

Project Christiane Meckseper



director/manager

Project supervisor Peter Crawley

---

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient CCC County Archaeology Store

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

Paper Archive recipient CCC County Archaeology Store

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

---

Project bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Publication type

Title 24 High Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological  
Watching Brief

Author(s)/Editor(s) Meckseper, C

Other bibliographic R13557  
details

Date 2019

Issuer or publisher Pre-Construct Archaeology

Place of issue or CAMBRIDGE  
publication

Description A4 pdf

---

Entered by Christiane Meckseper (cmeckseper@pre-construct.com)

Entered on 31 January 2019

# PCA

## **PCA CAMBRIDGE**

THE GRANARY, RECTORY FARM  
BREWERY ROAD, PAMPISFORD  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE CB22 3EN  
t: 01223 845 522  
e: [cambridge@pre-construct.com](mailto:cambridge@pre-construct.com)

## **PCA DURHAM**

UNIT 19A, TURSDALE BUSINESS PARK  
TURSDALE  
DURHAM DH6 5PG  
t: 0191 377 1111  
e: [durham@pre-construct.com](mailto:durham@pre-construct.com)

## **PCA LONDON**

UNIT 54, BROCKLEY CROSS BUSINESS CENTRE  
96 ENDWELL ROAD, BROCKLEY  
LONDON SE4 2PD  
t: 020 7732 3925  
e: [london@pre-construct.com](mailto:london@pre-construct.com)

## **PCA NEWARK**

OFFICE 8, ROEWOOD COURTYARD  
WINKBURN, NEWARK  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE NG22 8PG  
t: 01636 370410  
e: [newark@pre-construct.com](mailto:newark@pre-construct.com)

## **PCA NORWICH**

QUARRY WORKS, DEREHAM ROAD  
HONINGHAM  
NORWICH NR9 5AP  
T: 01223 845522  
e: [cambridge@pre-construct.com](mailto:cambridge@pre-construct.com)

## **PCA WARWICK**

UNIT 9, THE MILL, MILL LANE  
LITTLE SHREWLEY, WARWICK  
WARWICKSHIRE CV35 7HN  
t: 01926 485490  
e: [warwick@pre-construct.com](mailto:warwick@pre-construct.com)

## **PCA WINCHESTER**

5 RED DEER COURT, ELM ROAD  
WINCHESTER  
HAMPSHIRE SO22 5LX  
t: 01962 849 549  
e: [winchester@pre-construct.com](mailto:winchester@pre-construct.com)

