



Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation and Archaeological Monitoring at the former Star Service Station, Huntingdon Road Cambridge March and June 2014

Planning reference: 110876FUL

Report No. 14/141

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Site Code: ECB 4141
NGR: 544290 259440

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Quality control and sign off:

Issue No.	Date approved:	Checked by:	Verified by:	Approved by:	Reason for Issue:
1	16.07.14	Pat Chapman	Adam Yates	Andy Chapman	Draft for client review

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No: molanort1 – 184659	
Project title	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation and Archaeological Monitoring at the former Star Service Station, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, March and June 2014		
Short description	In March 2014, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out at the former Star Service Station, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge. Archaeological monitoring of fuel tank removal was then undertaken on the site in June of the same year. The site had been extensively truncated by remodelling in the 20th century for the Service Station and the garage that predated it. The base of a medieval ditch survived at the southern limit of the site, elsewhere there was a single wall foundation dating from either the 19th or 20th century and a series of deep pits probably associated with earlier fuel storage tanks.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation and archaeological monitoring		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Commercial property		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Medieval ditch, post-medieval wall, modern pits		
Significant finds	Pottery		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Cambridgeshire		
Site address	Huntingdon Road, Cambridge		
Easting Northing	544290 259440		
Area (sq m/ha)	0.13ha		
Height aOD	c21m above Ordnance Datum		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	James Ladocha (MOLA)		
Project Manager	Liz Muldowney (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	Cambridge Land Limited		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	14/03/2014		
End date	09/06/2014		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical		Pottery	
Paper		Site records (1 archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF, Photographs	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Title	Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation and Archaeological Monitoring at the former Star Service Station, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, March and June 2014		
Serial title & volume	14/141		
Author(s)	James Ladocha and Liz Muldowney		
Page numbers	19		
Date	July 2014		

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Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation and Archaeological Monitoring at the former Star Service Station, Huntingdon Road Cambridge March and June 2014

Abstract

In March 2014, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out at the former Star Service Station, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge. Archaeological monitoring of fuel tank removal was then undertaken on the site in June of the same year. The site had been extensively truncated by remodelling in the 20th century for the Service Station and the garage that predated it. The base of a medieval ditch survived at the southern limit of the site, elsewhere there was a single wall foundation dating from either the 19th or 20th century and a series of deep pits probably associated with earlier fuel storage tanks.

1 INTRODUCTION

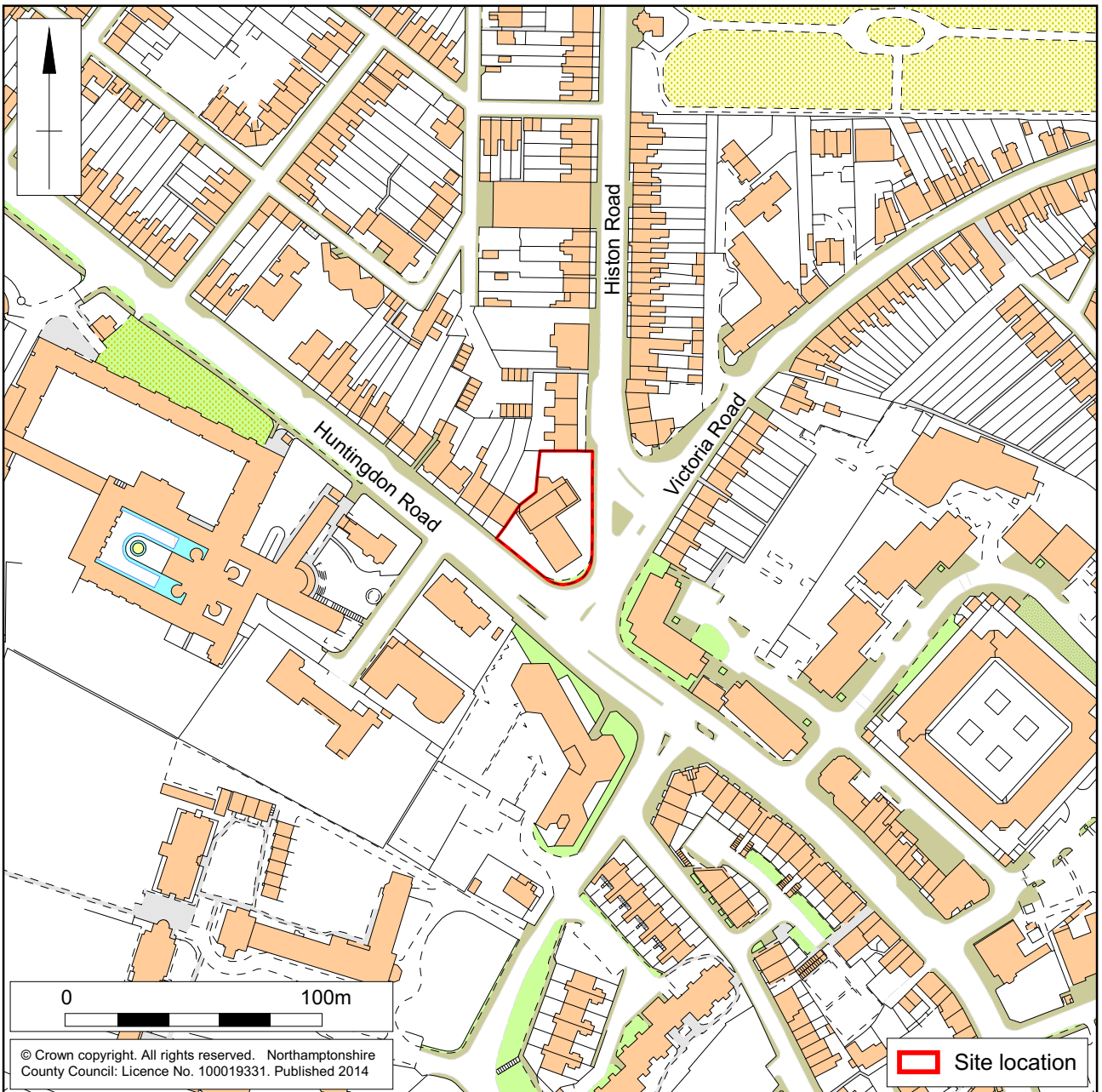
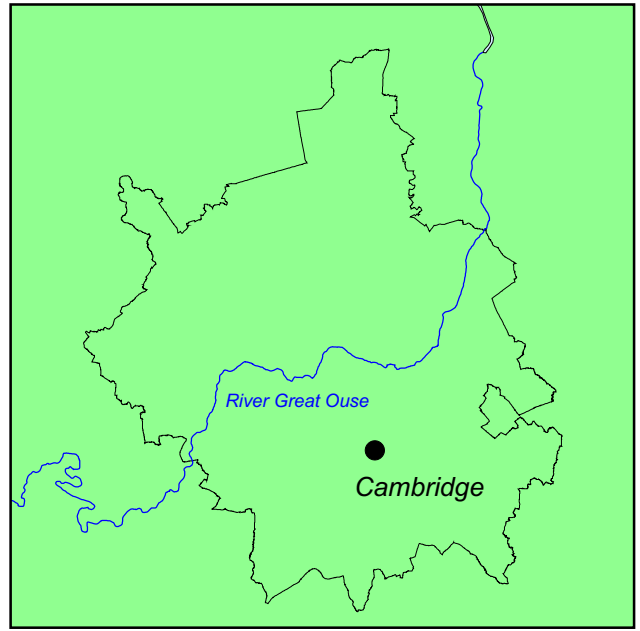
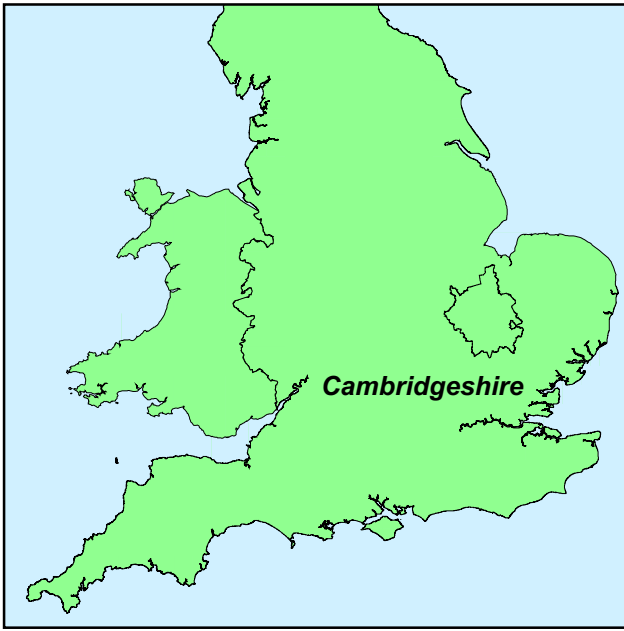
MOLA was commissioned by Edmund Shipway to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation and archaeological monitoring on the site of a former service station at the junction of the Huntingdon and Histon Roads, Cambridge (NGR 544290 259440, Fig 1). The site has received outline planning consent for student housing accommodation, retail outlets and associated infrastructure from Cambridgeshire County Council (110876FUL). The works were undertaken in accordance with *the National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

The scope of works was outlined and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Muldowney 2014), in response to a brief provided by the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (Gdaniec 2014). MOLA is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Registered Organisation and all works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents of English Heritage (EH 2006; 2008) and the appropriate standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (IfA 2008a-c).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The site is located 0.5 miles to the north-west of Cambridge city centre. It comprises an irregular parcel of land at the junction of the Huntingdon and Histon Roads, previously occupied by a petrol station and subsequently by a hand car wash establishment. The site is bounded to the north-west by suburban residential and commercial development.



Scale 1:2500

Site location Fig 1

The bedrock geology is recorded as a spur of West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, no superficial geology has been recorded at this location but nearby they are recorded as upper river terrace sands and gravels (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk> accessed 01/03/14). The site is situated at approximately 21m above Ordnance Datum.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

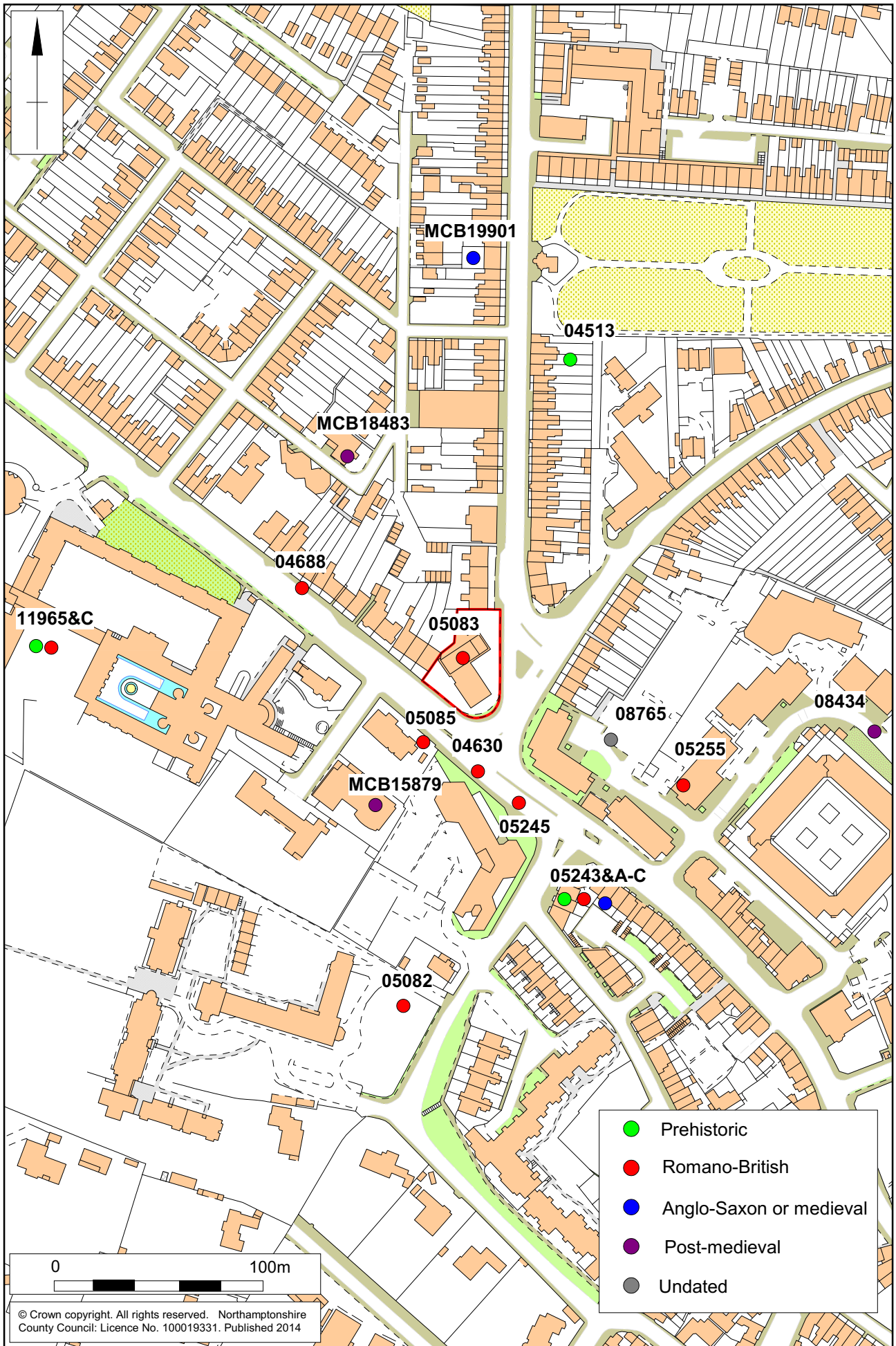
The development area is sited just to the west of the once enclosed 'upper town' of Roman *Duroliponte* on the northern side of the *Via Devana*. The road ran between Chester and Colchester, entering Cambridge from Godmanchester to the west. The modern Huntingdon Road follows the line of this earlier route. This area of the town has been Cambridge's administrative centre from the Norman period.

The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER) contains numerous references to areas of historical and archaeological interest in the vicinity of the site. The following summarizes selected references within approximately 200m of the centre of the development area by period. The details are presented in Appendix 1 and their location is shown on Figure 2.

Prehistoric remains, at low levels, have been recorded surrounding the development area. To the north of the site a Neolithic chert axe (04513), believed to have come from Denmark, and dating from between 4000 and 2000 BC was recovered from a back garden on the Histon Road. To the south of the site prehistoric pottery was recovered during mid 20th-century excavations prior to building work in a former orchard (05243A). More recent excavation at Murray Edwards (New Hall) College revealed evidence for Bronze Age features believed to form part of a settlement as well as Iron Age ditches and evidence for earlier prehistoric activity in the form of Neolithic and Mesolithic flint artefacts (11965).

The majority of the references within 200m of the site relate to Romano-British activity. These include two references to Romano-British earthworks of uncertain form associated with or close to the Huntingdon Road recorded in the 19th or early 20th century (04630; 05245). Romano-British human remains have been recorded to the south and west of the development area and presumably relate to roadside cemeteries outside the wall of the Roman upper town (05082; 04688). Roman artefacts have been recorded widely in the vicinity of the site and within the development area itself. Romano-British pottery (05083) was recovered from the site itself in 1929 when Chestnut House was demolished prior to the construction of Churchill's Garage. Other finds from nearby include more pottery (05255) as well as a finger ring associated with a statuette of Mercury (05085). The modern excavations at New Hall College recorded evidence for a settlement in use between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, this area had evidence for roads, settlement, quarrying and metalworking (11965C). Other Romano-British features, including ditches and wells, were recorded to the south and east of the development area (05243; 08765). A large ditch recorded just to the east of the junction of the Huntingdon and Histon Roads (08765) is believed to be part of the defences of the Roman upper town, however, as it was undated it is uncertain whether it was part of the reworked Cromwellian defences associated with the castle site.

There is some evidence for Anglo-Saxon and medieval activity within a 200m radius of the site including Anglo-Saxon pottery recovered from the excavations at the former orchard site (05243B); Medieval earthworks and a well were recorded at the same site (05243C); a late medieval ditch (MCB19901) was recorded on a perpendicular alignment to the Histon Road during a recent evaluation north of the development area.



Scale 1: 2500

Selected Historic Environment Record references Fig 2

To the east of the road junction are remnants of the earthworks (08434) constructed in 1642-3 associated with the Cromwellian fort on the site of the old medieval castle site. Post-medieval remains, including ditches, pits and postholes, were recorded just to the north-west of the present development area (MCB18483). These dated from the 18th century onwards. Just to the south of the development area, on the south side of the Huntingdon Road, were the remains of a coprolite quarry dating to the 19th century (MCB15879). Roman skeletons had been recorded during the quarrying and residual Romano-British pottery and human bone were noted when the remains of the quarry were revealed during recent excavations. This activity is likely to have had a significant impact on archaeological remains to the south of the road, but is unlikely to have had an impact on the development area as this had already been subject to development prior to this period.

The 1886 Ordnance Survey map of the area shows 'Chestnut House' located within the development area. The footprint of this building was largely within the footprint of the former petrol station that was extant during the trial trench evaluation. Chestnut House was demolished in 1929 to make way for a garage which was later redeveloped into a petrol station. The structure of which remained the same for the hand car wash establishment that was on site prior to the works.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives

The aims of the investigation were to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development.

Due to the limited results from the evaluation it was not possible to draw further research objectives from national and regional research framework documents (EH 1997; Medleycott 2011; Knight *et al* 2012).

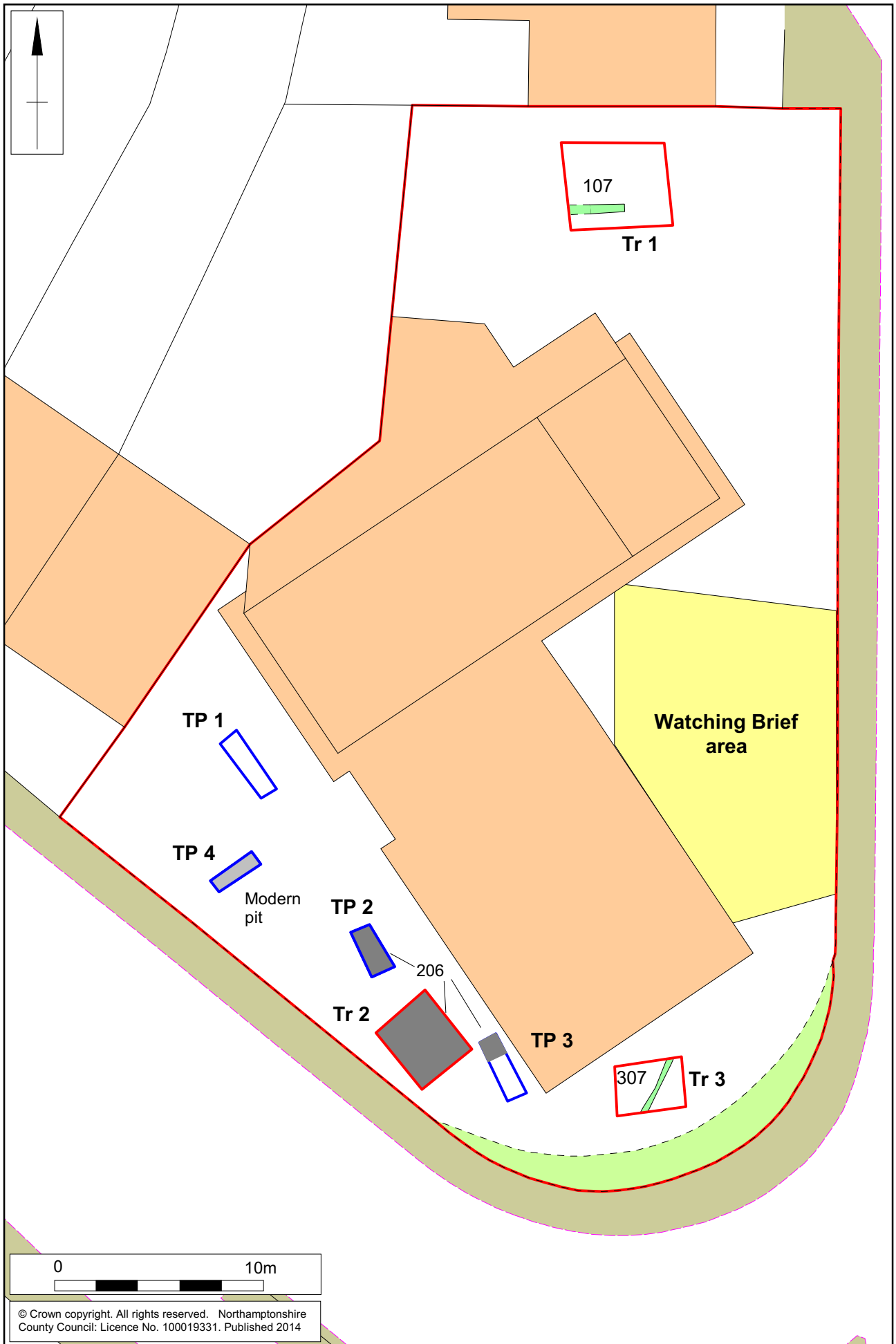
3.2 Methodology

The archaeological works were split into two phases (Fig 3): an archaeological trial trench evaluation, and archaeological monitoring of below ground infrastructure removal (fuel tanks and associated services of the former petrol station).

Trial trench evaluation

The trial trench evaluation comprised three archaeological trenches; two of which (Trenches 2 and 3), had to be shifted and reduced in size from those proposed in the WSI, to avoid possible services detected with a CAT scanner. A further four test pits were also excavated; however, these were under the supervision of a geotechnical engineer and were excavated to a much greater depth once the archaeological requirements were dealt with.

The trenches were excavated using a 13 tonne 360 degree tracked excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, operated under constant archaeological supervision.



Scale 1: 250

Areas of archaeological evaluation and observation Fig 3

The excavation and recording were carried out in accordance with MOLA guidelines and all records were created using MOLA pro-forma (MOLA 2014). Plans and sections were produced at an appropriate scale and photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits on 35mm monochrome print film supported by high resolution digital images. Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008a).

Overburden was removed by machine to the top of the archaeological horizon or to the natural sub-strate, and was stockpiled separately for appropriate reinstatement. Hand cleaning continued in order to define archaeological features where necessary.

All finds were retained from archaeological contexts for inspection except those that were obviously modern. The trenches and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

Archaeological monitoring of infrastructure removal

An archaeologist was present for the primary stages of below ground infrastructure removal. All machine operations were under the control of the main site contractors. The insertion of the infrastructure was found to have been more extensive than had been anticipated and no surviving archaeological horizons were encountered and on the approval of the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team the monitoring was curtailed.

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The stratigraphic sequence across the site comprised tarmac and concrete surfacing over a series of levelling and demolition layers sealing light yellowish white chalk with sand and clay lenses. In some areas fuel contamination had affected the substrate. The full stratigraphic sequence for each trench is described in appendix 2. Two features were encountered during the evaluation, a wall in Trench 1 and a truncated ditch in Trench 3. Trench 2 was sited over a modern backfilled feature 3.5m in total depth.

4.1 Trench 1

This trench was located towards the northern limit of the development area and measured 4.5m by 4m.

The tarmac forecourt surface (101) was 0.03m thick and overlay an 0.15m thick brownish-orange bedding layer (102). This sealed a sequence of three demolition/levelling layers (103-5) approximately 1m thick all containing rubble hardcore and incorporating portions of previous tarmac surfaces (Fig 4).

A wall trench [107], 0.4m wide and aligned east to west (Fig 3) was observed cutting into the natural chalk and sealed below rubble layer (105). The wall had been previously removed and the trench was filled with rubble (106) including some light whitish-yellow brick fragments (Fig 4).



Trench 1, wall trench [107] and overlying demolition layers, looking east Fig 4

4.2 Trench 2

This trench was located towards the south-west limit of the development area and measured 3.5m by 3m.

The upper part of the sequence was identical to that in Trench 1 with tarmac (201) overlying a bedding layer (202) that in turn overlay demolition/levelling layers. In this trench two such layers were observed (203 and 204) similar in composition to the layers in Trench 1 and measuring 0.54m thick (Fig 5).

The levelling layers sealed a backfilled modern pit [206] that extended across the majority of Trench 2. The pit measured 2.64m deep and was filled with dark grey silty clay containing demolition rubble contaminated with fuel (Fig 5).



Trench 2, upper backfill of pit [206] and levelling layers, looking north-west Fig 5

4.3 Trench 3

This trench was located 9m to the east of Trench 2 at the southern end of the development area and measured 3m by 2.4m.

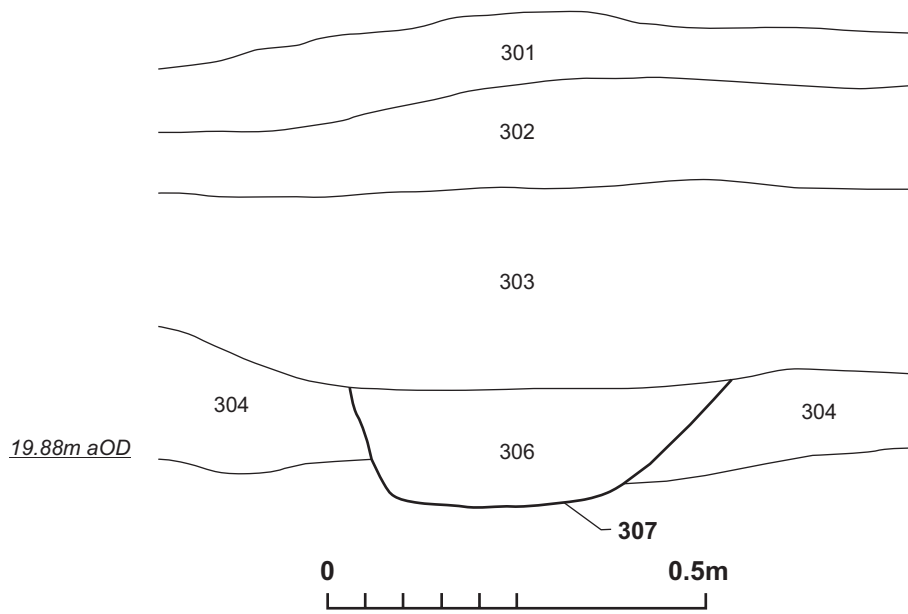
The upper part of the sequence was identical to that in Trench 1 with tarmac (301) overlying a bedding layer (302) that in turn overlay a single demolition/levelling layer (303). This layer, 0.12m thick, contained less rubble than the other levelling deposits elsewhere on the site (Fig 6, Section 1).

The levelling layer sealed a heavily truncated linear ditch [307] aligned north-east to south-west that extended across the trench (Fig 6). The ditch measured 0.40m wide and 0.18m deep with steep truncated sides and a flat base (Fig 6, Section 1). The fill (306) contained three sherds of mid to late 12th-century AD pottery.

Section 1

E

W



Scale 1:10

Trench 3, ditch [307], section and views pre and post-excavation Fig 6



Views of test pits 1 - 4 Fig 7

4.4 Test pit 1

This pit was located to the south-west of the garage building and aligned north-west to south-east. The sequence comprised a layer of reinforced concrete (1001) above bedding layer (1002) above two demolition levelling layers (1003-1004). These layers, measuring 0.79m in total, were directly above the natural chalk horizon (Fig 7).

4.5 Test pit 2

This pit was located two metres to the north-west of Trench 2 and aligned north-west to south-east. It revealed the same sequence of activity as Trench 2, pit [206] was shallower at 1.50m deep (Fig 7).

4.6 Test pit 3

This pit was located immediately to the south-east of Trench 2 and aligned north-west to south-east. The sequence was again identical to Trench 2 and Test pit 2 with the forecourt surface and demolition/levelling layers sealing the backfilled modern pit [206]. The pit extended for 1m from the north-west limit of the test pit and measured 0.7m deep with a near vertical south-eastern edge (Fig 7).

4.7 Test pit 4

This pit was located to the south of Test pit 1 and aligned north-east to south-west. The sequence comprised a layer of tarmac (4001) over bedding layer (4002) that sealed two demolition/levelling layers (4003-4004) with a total depth of 0.59m. These layers sealed a backfill deposit that extended across the test pit measuring 1.8m deep (Fig 7). It was dissimilar to the fill of pit [206] seen in Trench 2 and Test pits 2 and 3 and therefore may have been the fill of another deep modern pit.

4.8 The watching brief area

No surviving archaeological horizons remained within the monitored area (Fig 3), the insertion of fuel tanks and associated infrastructure had removed all material to a depth of in excess of 1.3m (Fig 8).



Fuel tank removal, looking north

Fig 8

5 MEDIEVAL POTTERY by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised three sherds with a total weight of 39g. They were all recovered from the fill of ditch [307]. The group appears most likely to be of mid-late 12th century date. The following fabric types were noted:

Ely Ware, mid 12th -15th century (Spoerry 2008): Generic name for a quartz sand and calcareous tempered group of pottery fabrics mainly manufactured in Ely, but also with a second possible source in the Hunts. Fenland. 1 sherd, 21g,

Hard Orange Ware, 12th century? (Coppack 1980). Sandy ware, abundant fine quartz. Bright orange with a dark grey core. 1 sherd, 11g.

Hertfordshire Grey Ware, Mid 12th – 14th centuries (Turner-Rugg 1993). Hard, reduced sandy wares, probably from a number of sources, including Hitchin. 1 sherd, 7g,

All the wares are typical finds in the region. The group comprised entirely unglazed bodysherds from jars, with the sherd of Hard Orange Ware having combed decoration.

6 DISCUSSION

The trial trench evaluation and watching brief on the site of the former petrol station showed that the site had been subject to severe truncation and disturbance in the 20th century during the various redevelopments of the plot.

The 12th-century medieval ditch [307], recorded at the southern end of the plot, had been truncated almost to its base and no other associated features were identified. It was aligned perpendicular to the Huntingdon Road and is likely to be the remains of a plot or field boundary offset from the road.

The wall foundation in Trench 1 is likely to relate either to the late 19th-century domestic property, Chestnut House, or to the early 20th-century garage that replaced it.

The extensive, deep pits recorded in the south-west part of the site contained fuel contaminated backfill are likely to relate to previous fuel storage tanks.

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MOLA
16 July 2014

APPENDIX 1: SELECTED HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD REFERENCES

Reference	Type	Form	Date	Description
MCB15879	Excavation	Coprolite quarry	19th century	Residual Romano-British pottery and human bone recovered
MCB18483	Excavation	Ditches, pits and postholes	Post-medieval	18th century remains
MCB19901	Excavation	Ditch	Late medieval	East to west aligned ditch, perpendicular to the Histon Road
04513	Findspot	Chert axe	Neolithic	Possibly from Denmark (4000 to 2000 BC)
04630	Feature	Unknown	Romano-British	Recorded under the Huntingdon Road
04688	Findspot	Skeleton	? Romano-British	Skeleton recorded during the laying of a gas pipe
05082	Antiquarian excavation	Skeleton; pottery	Romano-British	Recorded during coprolite quarrying
05083	Find spot	Pottery	Romano-British	Found during demolition of Chestnut House in 1929
05085	Findspot	Ring Figurine	Romano-British	Finger ring found in association with a statuette of Mercury
05243	Excavation	Well	Romano-British	Pottery and plaster recovered
05243A	Excavation	Pottery	Prehistoric	Found during excavation of former orchard in mid 20th century
05243B	Excavation	Pottery	Anglo-Saxon	Found during excavation of former orchard in mid 20th century
05243C	Excavation	Earthworks Well	Medieval	Found during excavation of former orchard in mid 20th century
05245	Feature	Earthwork	Romano-British	Unidentified feature recorded at site of 'Morley's Garage'
05255	Excavation	Pottery	Romano-British	
08434	Earthworks	Defences	Post-medieval	Cromwellian fort defences dating from 1642-3
08765	Excavation	Ditch	Undated	Either Romano-British town ditch or Cromwellian fortification
11965	Excavation	Feature	Prehistoric	Neolithic and Mesolithic flint Bronze Age features Iron Age boundaries/enclosure
11965C	Excavation	Settlement Road Quarry	1st to 3rd century AD	Romano-British settlement to the west of the presumed limit of the later town

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth of natural
1	4.5m x 4.0m	544294 259471		1.16m
Context	Context type Feature & type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
101	Surface	Tarmac	0.03m thick	
102	Layer – bedding	Mid brownish-orange loose clayey sand with occasional gravel	0.15m thick	
103	Layer – demolition/levelling	Concrete and concreted hardcore	0.55m thick	
104	Layer – demolition/levelling	Friable dark grey clay with tarmac and rubble	0.10m thick	
105	Layer – demolition/levelling	Firm light greyish-white sandy clay with rubble	0.33m thick	
106	Fill of [107]	Loose greyish-white sandy clay with brick rubble	Unknown	
107	Wall foundation trench	Linear, east to	2.5m x 0.4m	
108	Layer – natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth of natural
2	3.5m x 3.0m	544285 259431		2.0m
Context	Context type Feature & type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
201	Surface	Same as 101	0.12m thick	
202	Layer – bedding	Same as 102	0.20m thick	
203	Layer – demolition/levelling	Same as 103	0.18m thick	
204	Layer – demolition/levelling	Friable mid yellowish-green clayey sand	0.36m thick	
205	Fill of pit [206]	Friable dark brownish-grey silty clay with demolition debris, smells of fuel	1.14m thick	
206	Pit	Extends across whole trench	1.14m deep	
207	Layer – natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth of natural
3	3.0 x 2.4m	544296 259428		0.46m
Context	Context type Feature & type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
301	Surface	Same as 101	0.09m thick	
302	Layer – bedding	Same as 102	0.10m thick	
303	Layer – demolition/levelling	Friable mid grey-brown silty clay with gravel	0.12m thick	
304	Layer – natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		
305	Layer – natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		
306	Fill of ditch [307]	Firm dark grey-brown silty clay with occasional small stones and charcoal flecks	0.18m thick	Pottery
307	Ditch	Linear aligned north-east to south-west with steep sides and a flat base	0.40m wide, 0.18m deep	

Test pit No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth of natural
1	3.0m x 1.0m	544277 259444		0.79m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type Feature & type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1001	Surface	Reinforced concrete	0.13m thick	
1002	Layer – bedding	Same as 102	0.10m thick	
1003	Layer – demolition/levelling	Dark grey silt with rubble and tarmac	0.19m thick	
1004	Layer – demolition/levelling	Friable orangey-brown clay sand with rare gravel inclusions	0.37m thick	
105	Layer – natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		

Test pit No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth of natural
2	2.4m x 1.0m	544283 259435		2.31m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type Feature & type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
2001	Surface	Same as 201	0.10m thick	
2002	Layer – bedding	Same as 202	0.21m thick	
2003	Layer – demolition/levelling	Same as 203	0.50m thick	
2004	Fill of pit [206]	Same as 205	1.50m thick	
2005	Natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		

Test pit No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth of natural
3	3.0m x 1.0m	544289 259429		1.20m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type Feature & type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
3001	Surface	Same as 201	0.12m thick	
3002	Layer – bedding	Same as 202	0.10m thick	
3003	Layer – demolition/levelling	Same as 203	0.28m thick	
3004	Fill of pit [206]	Same as 205	1.60m thick	
3005	Natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		

Test pit No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth of natural
4	2.4m x 1.0m	544276 259439		2.29m
Context	Context type Feature & type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
4001	Surface	Same as 201	0.12m thick	
4002	Layer – bedding	Same as 202	0.08m thick	
4003	Layer – demolition/levelling	Loose white gravel	0.03m thick	
4004	Layer – demolition/levelling	Loose mid brown-grey silty clay with demolition debris	0.36m thick	
4005	Pit fill	Friable mid grey silty clay with fuel contamination	1.80m thick	
4006	Natural	Light yellowish-white chalk with lenses of plastic brown clay		



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