

**SAWS19**  
**Cambridgeshire Event Number: ECB6042**  
**OASIS: headland4-370858**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**  
**Former Spicers Site Sawston**



**Client:** Orion Heritage, on behalf of Huawei Technologies Ltd

**Grid Reference:** 546936 249698  
**Address:** Former Spicers Site, Sawston, Cambridgeshire  
**Parish:** Sawston  
**Council:** Cambridgeshire County Council  
**Project Manager:** Tony Walsh  
**Text:** Thomas Hodgson  
**Edited and approved:** Emma West  
**Fieldwork:** Jeremy Mordue

**Schedule**  
Fieldwork dates: 10/10/2019  
Report dates: October 2019

**Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd**  
**Building 68c**  
**Wrest Park**  
**Silsoe**  
**Bedfordshire**  
**MK45 4HS**

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# FORMER SPICERS SITE, SAWSTON CAMBRIDGESHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

## **Summary**

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was requested by Orion Heritage to continue an archaeological watching brief during geotechnical works carried out by Arcadis on land at the Former Spicers Site, Sawston, Cambridgeshire. This work was being undertaken to inform future development proposals for the site by Huawei Technologies Ltd. Orion Heritage began the watching brief on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2019. Monitoring was completed by Headland Archaeology on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019, on two infiltration pits, and this report covers the monitoring of these two infiltration pits. No archaeological remains were identified during these monitoring works.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Planning Background**

Headland Archaeology Ltd. was requested by Orion Heritage to continue a programme of archaeological monitoring during geotechnical works on land at the Former Spicers Site, Sawston, Cambridgeshire. This geotechnical work was undertaken by Arcadis to inform future development proposals by Huawei Technologies Ltd. A planning application (Ref S/2122/19/FL) for the construction of a research and development unit with associated office accommodation, external storage, car and cycle parking, utilities, servicing infrastructure and landscaping had been withdrawn and the submission of a new application pending.

The geotechnical investigations comprised the excavation of boreholes, test pits, infiltration pits and CBR. These were mostly located within an area previously cleared of archaeology by Birmingham University in 2008 (Birmingham University 2010). However, a separate series of investigations (TP204, TP205 and INFIL 13, 16 and 17) around the scheduled ancient monument of Borough Hill (NHLE 1009396) and the non-designated Sawston Mill required archaeological monitoring. TP204, TP205 and INFIL 13, were monitored on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2019 by Orion Heritage. INFIL 16 and 17 were monitored by Headland Archaeology on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

This work followed the compilation of a Heritage Desk Based Assessment and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) by Orion Heritage Ltd (Orion Heritage Ltd 2019a and 2019b).

This report covers the monitoring of INFIL 16 and 17.

### **1.2 Site Description**

The site is located at the Former Spicers Site, Sawston, Cambridge. It is positioned within an irregular parcel of land to the west of the existing warehouses, with the access routes around the north and south of the main warehouse. The site measures 4.9ha and is centred on NGR 546936 249698. It is currently vacant with areas of woodland and stockpiled up-cast/demolition debris along its southern boundary.

It lies at around 30m AOD on predominately flat land and is underlain by a bedrock geology of Zig Zag Chalk Formation, overlain along its western edge by clays, sands and gravels associated with the river Cam.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The scheduled monument of Borough Hill (NHLE1009396), the second largest of Cambridgeshire's, seven hillforts, is located on the Former Spicers Site. Although listed as a hillfort, this enclosed Iron Age site is perhaps best described as a marsh-fort given its relatively low, wetland location. The monument is broadly oval in plan with varying arrangements of banks and ditches enclosing an area of around 8ha. Evidence for contemporary settlement has been identified within its defences (JSAC 2003).

During investigations to the north-west of Borough Hill in 2008, Birmingham University uncovered seven phases of archaeological activity dating from the Mesolithic to the Post-medieval period (Birmingham Archaeology 2010 ECB3083). This included Mesolithic flint finds (a tranchet axe, two microliths and micro burin); Early-Middle Neolithic pottery, post-holes and a ditch; Late Neolithic / Early Bronze Age occupation (ditches, pits, postholes, buried soil layer); a large Roman ditch; Saxon settlement (4 SFBs); Medieval enclosures and drainage ditches; and Post-medieval horse burials.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives and methodology followed was outlined in the WSI (Orion Heritage Ltd 2019b).

The archaeological investigations were undertaken in order to:

- Ensure the recording of archaeological assets discovered during the geotechnical investigations;
- Ensure that any below-ground archaeological deposits exposed are promptly identified;
- Ensure the recording of archaeological remains, to place this record in its local context.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Headland Archaeology monitored invasive geotechnical groundworks at the site on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019. This involved the excavation of two infiltration pits (INFIL 16 & INFIL 17). These infiltration pits were located within and adjacent to Borough Hill 'marsh-fort' (Illus 1).

Both infiltration pits were excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothed bucket, under archaeological supervision. Both pits measured 2m (L) X 1m (W) and were excavated to a depth of 2m. The position of Onfiltration Pit 17 was relocated slightly to the east to avoid services.

All recording followed the guidance laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA 2014b) and was in line with the approved WSI (Orion Heritage 2019b). All recording was undertaken on pro forma recording sheets which conform to archaeological standards, with contexts assigned a unique number and stratigraphic relationships recorded. A full photographic record was taken using digital photography with a metric scale clearly visible.

The resulting archive will be organised and deposited in the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Archive (Event Number ECB6042), to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit (ClfA 2014a). An online OASIS form will be ultimately submitted with the approved version of the report (headland4-370858).

## 4. RESULTS

### INFIL 16 (Infiltration Pit 16) – Illus 2

This measured 2m (L) x 1m (W) and was excavated to a depth of 2m, using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothed bucket.

The excavation revealed a 0.05m surface layer of asphalt underlain by reinforced concrete to a depth of 0.35m below ground level. This overlay 0.15m of brick rubble in a dark grey/black matrix.

Below this was a 0.50m layer of firm, grey clay with chalky flecks. This rested on the chalk bedrock at 1m below ground level.

No archaeology was observed.

### INFIL 17 (Infiltration Pit 17) – Illus 3

The original position of this pit was relocated slightly to the east to avoid services. It measured 2m (L) x 1m (W) and was excavated to a depth of 2m using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothed bucket.

A 0.05m thick surface layer of asphalt covered reinforced concrete, 0.25m thick. Beneath this was a 0.10m layer of crushed coal, overlying 0.30m of made ground (yellow brick in a loose, grey ashy mortar matrix). Beneath this was a deposit containing industrial waste, coke and spent fuel, which extended beyond 2m below ground level.

Excavation ceased at 2m and no natural stratigraphy was encountered.

No archaeology was observed.

#### **4.1 Finds**

There were no finds recovered.

#### **4.2 Environmental Report**

There were no samples taken.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The archaeological watching brief on the two infiltration pits did not identify any archaeological remains.

The natural geological substrate was observed in Infiltration Pit 16 at c.0.5m beneath the ground-surface. This comprised a firm grey clay and directly overlay the chalk bedrock (observed at 1m beneath the ground-surface).

The natural geology was not observed in Infiltration Pit 17. Instead, there were thick layers of made-ground, extending to beyond 2m beneath the ground-surface. These made-ground layers may have been used to 'terrace' the area when the buildings were constructed, potentially needed because of its location adjacent to the River Cam.

No remains associated with the Iron Age 'marsh-fort' were identified in either of these infiltration pits.

## **6. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Birmingham Archaeology, 2010. *Land at Spicers, Mill Lane, Sawston, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Excavation 2008/2009.*

ClfA, 2014a. *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Field Evaluation.*

ClfA, 2014b. *Standards and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives.*

JSAC, 2003. *An Archaeological Evaluation Excavation at Borough Hill, Sawston, Cambridgeshire.*

Orion Heritage, 2019a. *Former Spicers Site, Sawston, Cambridgeshire. Heritage Desk-Based Assessment.*

Orion Heritage, 2019b. *Former Spicers Site, Sawston, Cambridgeshire. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief.*

## Appendix I – Trench and Context Summary

<b>INFIL 16</b>					
<b>Length</b>		2m	<b>Width</b>		1m
<b>Minimum Depth to Geological level</b>		1m	<b>Maximum Depth to Geological Deposit/level of archaeological significance</b>		1m
<b>Context No</b>	<b>Description (Layer, Cut, Fill)</b>	<b>Dimensions (as appropriate)</b>			
		<b>Diameter</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Depth</b>
(1601)	Asphalt				0.00-0.05m
(1602)	Concrete with reinforcements				0.05m-0.35m
(1603)	Made ground; brick rubble in a dark grey/black matrix				0.35m-0.50m
(1604)	Grey, firm clay with chalky flecks				0.50m-1.00m
(1605)	Bedrock - chalk				1.00m+

<b>INFIL 17</b>					
<b>Length</b>		2m	<b>Width</b>		1m
<b>Minimum Depth to Geological Level</b>		Not excavated to geo level	<b>Maximum Depth to Geological Deposit/level</b>		Not excavated to geo level
<b>Context No</b>	<b>Description (Layer, Cut, Fill)</b>	<b>Dimensions (as appropriate)</b>			
		<b>Diameter</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Depth</b>
(1701)	Asphalt				0.00-0.05m
(1702)	Concrete				0.05m-0.3m
(1703)	Made ground; black, crushed coal				0.3m-0.4m
(1704)	Made ground; brick rubble – mostly yellow bricks in a loose, grey ashy mortar matrix				0.4m-0.7m
					0.7m – 2m+

## Appendix II – Photographic Register

<b>Photo number</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	1090132	INFIL 17 before excavation
2	1090133	INFIL 17 under excavation
3	1090134	INFIL 17
4	1090135	INFIL 16 before excavation
5	1090136	INFIL 16 under excavation
6	1090137	INFIL 16
7	1090138	INFIL 16

## Appendix III – OASIS Form

### OASIS ID: headland4-370858

#### Project details

Project name	Former Spicers Site, Sawston
Short description of the project	Watching brief on two infiltration pits at the Former Spicers Site, Sawston, Cambridgeshire. These pits were close to the scheduled ancient monument of Borough Hill, an Iron Age 'marsh fort'. No archaeological remains were identified in either pit. Natural geology was observed in one pit at 0.5m beneath the ground-surface, overlying the chalk bedrock. The stratigraphy in the other pit comprised layers of made-ground extending to beyond 2m beneath the ground-surface.
Project dates	Start: 10-10-2019 End: 10-10-2019
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECB6042 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 4 - Storage and warehousing
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE SAWSTON Former Spicers Site, Sawston
Postcode	CB22 3JG
Study area	4 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 46936 49698 52.125596840388 0.146690762171 52 07 32 N 000 08 48 E Point

#### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Headland Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Orion Heritage
Project design originator	Orion Heritage



Headland Archaeology

Project director/manager	Emma West
Project supervisor	Jeremy Mordue
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Huawei Technologies Ltd

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**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Report", "Unpublished Text"

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**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Watching Brief: Former Spicers Site, Sawston
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Hodgson T
Date	2019
Issuer or publisher	Headland Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Silsoe
Description	Short report detailing results of watching brief.

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Entered by	Emma West (emma.west@headlandarchaeology.com)
Entered on	17 October 2019



Illus 1: Site plan showing location of Infiltration Pits.





**Illus 2:** Infiltration Pit 16.



**Illus 3:** Infiltration Pit 17.