

# HERITAGE NETWORK

*Specialists in Archaeology and the Historic Environment Since 1992*



## **LAND AT 48A & 50 HIGH STREET St. Neots, Cambridgeshire**

HN1205

### ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT***

[Revision A]



# HERITAGE NETWORK

*Registered with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists*

Managing Director: David Hillelson, BA MCifA

Land at and including  
48A & 50 HIGH STREET  
St. Neots, Cambridgeshire

Project ref.: HN1205  
Planning Ref: 1402093FUL  
Event Number: ECB4465

## *Archaeological Evaluation*

*Prepared on behalf of Mr Turgay Aslan*

by

Greg Jones, BA (HONS) MA ACIfA

Report no. 941

*June 2015*

[Revision A – 22 July 2015]

© The Heritage Network Ltd

11 FURMSTON COURT, ICKNIELD WAY, LETCHWORTH SG6 1UJ  
TEL: (01462) 685991 FAX: (01462) 685998



## Contents

	Summary .....	Page i
Section 1	Introduction .....	Page 1
Section 2	Fieldwork .....	Page 2
Section 3	Discussion .....	Page 4
Section 4	Sources Consulted .....	Page 7
Section 5	Illustrations .....	following Page 8
Appendix	OASIS summary sheet.....	Page 9

*The cover illustration shows the entrance to the site looking south west*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Greg Jones and Mark Sycamore. The report text and illustrations were compiled by Greg Jones and Mark Sycamore, and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to the client's agent, Oktay Aslan, and to Gemma Stewart of the Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

<b>Site name and address:</b>	48A & 50 High Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 1JG		
<b>County:</b>	Cambridgeshire	<b>District:</b>	St. Neots
<b>Village/town:</b>	St. Neots	<b>Parish:</b>	St. Neots
<b>Planning reference:</b>	1402093FUL	<b>NGR:</b>	TL 1846 6029
<b>Client name and address:</b>	Turgay Aslan, c/o OAOA Track Ltd, 18 West Street, St. Neots, PE19 1AH		
<b>Nature of work:</b>	Residential development	<b>Former land use:</b>	Car Park & Offices
<b>Site status:</b>	St Neots Conservation Area	<b>Reason for investigation:</b>	Direction of local planning authority
<b>Position in planning process:</b>	After full determination (as a condition)	<b>Project brief originator:</b>	Local authority
<b>Size of affected area:</b>	295m <sup>2</sup>	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>	16m <sup>2</sup>
<b>CHER Event No:</b>	ECB4465	<b>HN reference:</b>	HN1205
<b>Organisation:</b>	Heritage Network	<b>Site Director:</b>	David Hillelson
<b>Project type, methods etc.:</b>	Field Evaluation	<b>Archive recipient:</b>	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
<b>Start of work:</b>	18/06/15	<b>Finish of work:</b>	18/06/15
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	N/a	<b>Periods represented:</b>	Modern
<b>Oasis UID:</b>	heritage1-210612	<b>Significant finds:</b>	None
<b>Monument types:</b>	Wall - 19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> century		
<b>Material archive:</b>	None		

### Synopsis:

In order to investigate the archaeological potential of a proposed development located on land at 48A & 50 High Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to undertake a programme of targeted trial trenching. This work was a requirement of the planning consent granted by the local planning authority.

One trial trench was excavated across the western side of the site, focusing on the area of greatest potential impact. The trench revealed evidence of modern demolition and levelling activity, which suggests that any earlier archaeological features on the site would have been heavily disturbed or destroyed.

On the basis of the results of the investigation, the risk that the proposed development might disturb archaeological remains of any significance may be considered to be *Low* for all periods.

# 1 Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared at the request of OAOA Track Ltd, acting on behalf of Mr. Turgay Aslan, to cover a programme of archaeological work to be carried out as part of the proposed development of land at 48A and 50 High Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire.

**1.2** Planning consent for the development (ref. 1402093FUL) has been granted by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), subject to a standard archaeological condition issued under the provisions set out in the Department of Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF).

**1.3** The scope of work required was defined in a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Cambridgeshire County Council, acting as archaeological adviser to HDC. A full specification for the work is contained in the Heritage Network's approved Project Design, dated May 2015.

**1.4** The site is located in the historic core of the town of St. Neots, on the southern side of the High Street, centred at NGR TL 1846 6029 (Figure 1 & 2).

**1.5** The HET Brief notes that the site lies within the St Neots Conservation Area, which covers the town of St Neots, together with the village of Eynesbury on the west side of the River Ouse. It also notes that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential, approximately 110m to the north of the 13<sup>th</sup> century church of Saint Mary (HER MCB14932), and medieval and post-medieval structures (HER MCB14643) survive in the vicinity. Excavations carried out in the 1960s identified a deep Saxon defensive ditch sweeping round the corner of Church Street and Cambridge Street. This ditch is thought to have enclosed a Saxon settlement and the discovery of Saxon buildings at Hall Place in the 1920s and 30s supports this theory (HER MCB17662). More recently, excavations carried out to the south-east have found further evidence of Saxon settlement and earlier Roman occupation (HER ECB2597).

**1.6** The aim of the evaluation has been to establish the likely presence or absence of archaeological remains on the site, and characterise them in terms of location, depth, extent, date, character and condition should they be present; to consider the local and regional archaeological and historical context of such remains, and their significance and quality, in relation to current published regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook 2000, Medlycott 2011); and to ensure that an appropriate strategy for the mitigation of damage or destruction of such remains by the development was adopted, as required. It was considered that such investigation had the potential to provide evidence that could contribute to an understanding of the settlement of St. Neots from the prehistoric period onwards, with particular emphasis on the Saxon settlement.

**1.7** The proposed development entails the alteration and extension of an existing building to create a new dwelling, and the construction of new three dwellings with associated services, following the demolition of a retail unit.

## 2 Fieldwork

### *TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY*

**2.1** The study area is located on the southern side of the High Street in the core of the Saxon and medieval settlement, approximately 350m to the east of the River Great Ouse. The geology of the site consists of the Oxford Clay formation and River Terrace deposits. The site is fairly flat and stands at approximately 15.5m AOD.

### *METHODOLOGY*

**2.2** All fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the approved Project Design, current health and safety legislation, and the appropriate CIFA and ALGAO guidance documents.

**2.3** One archaeological trial trench was located across the western side of the site, by triangulation from known points using fibreglass tape measures.

**2.4** Within the trench, overburden was removed using a tracked 3-tonne 360-degree excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, and spoil from the machining was inspected visually and with a metal detector for the recovery of unstratified archaeological artefacts.

**2.5** A sondage was excavated at the northern end of the trench, avoiding a live cable running diagonally across the southern part of the trench. A record of the stratigraphy was made by photography and using the appropriate pro-forma.

### *RESULTS*

#### *Trench 1*

**2.6** Trench 1 was located on the western side of the site (Figures 2 & 3, Plate 1). The trench, which was oriented approximately north to south, measured 8m in length, 2m in width, and was excavated to a maximum depth of c. 1.65m at the northern end.

**2.7** The site was very restricted, with very little room for stockpiling spoil. The decision was taken to remove the tarmac and concrete overburden over the entire area of the trench and a sondage measuring 2m by 2.5m was excavated down to a depth of 1.65m to ascertain the nature of the stratigraphy and the depth of the natural substratum.



**Trench data:**

<b>Length (m):</b>	8	<b>Width (m):</b>	2.00	<b>Maximum Depth (m):</b>	1.65	<b>Orientation</b>	N-S		
<b>Level at N End of Trench (mOD)</b>			<b>Top</b>	16.20	<b>Level at S End of Trench (mOD)</b>			<b>Top</b>	16.20
			<b>Base</b>	14.55				<b>Base</b>	15.80
<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions (m)</b>						
			<b>Length</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Depth</b>				
-	Layer	Tarmac over reinforced concrete over demolition spread / levelling deposit.	-	-	0.5				
-	Layer	7.5YR 3/1 Very dark grey friable silty clay made-ground with moderate to frequent charcoal and chalk flecks and lumps of occasional red handmade brick and CBM and large lenses of charcoal.	-	-	1				
-	Layer	10YR 7/8 Yellow soft sandy clay natural with no inclusions.	-	-	>0.15				

**2.8** The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of 0.50m of modern surfacing (comprising tarmac, reinforced concrete and a sub-base of brick, mortar and concrete rubble), sealing a 1m depth of made-ground formed of very dark grey silty clay mixed with occasional fragments of hand-made red brick and lenses of charcoal. Below this, the natural substratum consisted of a soft yellow sandy clay (Figure 3, Plate 1).

**2.9** A demolished modern wall foundation, orientated east-west, was noted within the made-ground.

**2.10** No significant archaeological features, finds or deposits were revealed within the trench.

## 3 Discussion

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

**3.1** The study area is located on the southern side of the High Street in the core of the Saxon and medieval settlement, approximately 350m to the east of the River Great Ouse.

**3.2** The town grew up around the priory of St Neot, originally founded in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century by Earl Aelric and his wife Aelfleda on two hides of land within the parish of Eynesbury (Victoria County History 1932). It was refounded as a cell of the Abbey of Bec Harlouin in the later 11<sup>th</sup> century by Rothais, wife of Richard fitzGilbert. Rothais gave the lands to the priory to form a separate manor in 1113, and it is likely that the township was named St Neots from this time. The first recorded use of the name is in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century.

**3.3** St Neots flourished as a result of the adjacent river crossing, which brought pilgrims visiting the bones of St Neot, as well trade and wealth into the town (ibid.). Roads from Huntingdon, Kimbolton and Bedford converge here on the west side of the river, while roads from Godmanchester, Cambridge and Sandy converge from the east. The large Market Square, originally laid out in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, lies close to the eastern side of the bridge.

**3.4** The County Historic Environment Record (HER) has been consulted for a 500m radius from the site centre. The recorded entries have been listed in chronological order:

- Evidence for early prehistoric and has been recorded from the immediate vicinity of the study area. Palaeolithic flint implements (HER 00568) were discovered to the immediate east of the study area at Hall Place, Church Street.
- No clear evidence for Iron Age activity has been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the present study area. However pottery dating to the Iron Age (HER 00550) was located approximately 400m to the southwest of the site and a roundhouse and a ditched enclosure (MCB 17381) dating to this period was located over 800m to the northeast of the site.
- Roman activity has been recorded from the immediate vicinity of the present study area in the form of pottery sherds (HER CB15258), recovered during archaeological investigations on Church Lane just to the east of the site.
- Saxon activity has been recorded to the immediate east of the site. Excavations by C. F. Tebbutt between the 1920s and 1960s revealed evidence for a late Saxon settlement in the area of the town centre. This has been suggested as representing the known settlement of this date at Eynesbury (Addyman 1973, 51). It has also been suggested that the parish church of St Neots may lie on the site of the church recorded at Eynesbury in the Domesday Record of 1086. Excavations on Church Street in 2009 (HER MCB18499) revealed evidence of occupation from the late Saxon period onwards. A deep defensive ditch (HER 00565) of late Saxon and early medieval date, has been traced running parallel with Cambridge Street and turning to follow the line of Church Street. This is thought to have enclosed the site of the pre-Conquest village. The ditch was filled in during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and buildings erected on the present street layout.
- The parish church of St Mary (HER CB14932) is a Grade I listed building and is located 130m to the south of the study area. A church is known to have existed on the site since at least 1183, although no 12<sup>th</sup> century features exist in the present building. The font and parts of the chancel wall appear to be of 13<sup>th</sup> century date and the north

vestry dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The church was largely rebuilt in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, at a time of prosperity, with the west tower added in c.1535.

- A listed post-medieval timber-framed building (HER 00561) dating to the post-medieval period is located 70m to the east of the study area.

**3.5** Cartographic evidence shows the present site as containing buildings from at least the late post-medieval period.

### **RESEARCH AIMS**

**3.6** The aims of the present project have been:

- to establish the likely presence or absence of archaeological remains on the site, and characterise them in terms of location, depth, extent, date, character and condition should they be present;
- to consider the local and regional archaeological and historical context of such remains, and their significance and quality, in relation to the current published regional research agenda (Brown and Glazebrook 2000, Medlycott 2011);
- to ensure that an appropriate strategy for the mitigation of damage or destruction of such remains by the development was adopted.

**3.7** It was considered that the site had the potential to provide evidence that could contribute to an understanding of the origins and development of St. Neots, and has the potential to encounter remains from the prehistoric onwards and contribute to a number of research topics highlighted in the published regional research agenda, including:

- gaining a greater understanding of Anglo-Saxon settlement;
- gaining a greater understanding of the origin and development of medieval towns in Cambridgeshire;
- characterising regional variation.

### **COLLECTED DATA**

**3.8** The excavation of the trial trench demonstrated a stratigraphy consisting of modern surfacing extending to a depth of 0.5m, and sealing made-ground extending a further metre. The natural was encountered 1.5m below the existing surface, and consisted of a soft yellow sandy clay.

**3.9** No evidence for activity of prehistoric or Roman date was encountered during the present project.

**3.10** No evidence for activity of Saxon or medieval date was encountered during the present project.

**3.11** Evidence for 19<sup>th</sup> /20<sup>th</sup> century activity was encountered in the form of demolition and levelling deposits, the lowest of which contained fragments of handmade red brick. No other finds, features or deposits were encountered during the investigation.

## CONCLUSIONS

**3.12** The site at 48A & 50 High Street, lies within the Saxon and medieval core of St. Neots. The trial trench revealed evidence of modern demolition and levelling extending to a depth of 1.5m below the existing surface, and sealing the natural sandy clay. This suggests that any earlier archaeological features on the site are likely to have been heavily disturbed or destroyed. No unstratified material earlier than post-medieval in date was noted in the overburden.

**3.13** On the basis of the results of the evaluation, the risk that the proposed development might disturb archaeological remains of any significance may be considered to be *Low* for all periods.

### Confidence Rating

**3.14** In the course of the trenching programme, the weather, ground and light conditions were acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits.

**3.15** The site was highly restricted, however, and the presence of live modern services meant that the area available for excavation to the natural horizon was significantly limited. On this basis, the confidence rating for the conclusions of the evaluation stage of the project should be considered to be *Moderate*.

## 4 Sources Consulted

- Brown, N. & Glazebrook, J. 2000 *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the eastern counties, 2. Research agenda and strategy*. East Anglian Archaeology
- Dobney *et al.* 1995, *Environmental Archaeology and Archaeological evaluations: recommendations concerning the environmental component of archaeological evaluations in England*. Working Papers of the Association for Environmental Archaeology, Number 2
- Dept. of Communities and Local Government, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*. (TSO)
- English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*. (HBMC)
- English Heritage 2006 *Management of Field Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide*. (HBMC)
- English Heritage 2008 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: Archaeological Excavation* (HBMC)
- English Heritage, 2011, *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation (second edition)*. (HBMC)
- English Heritage 2015 *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning* (HBMC)
- Gurney, D. *et al* 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. ALGAO (EER)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014, *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation*. (CIfA)
- Jones, G. 2015 *Land at and Including 48A and 50 High Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Project Design*. Heritage Network
- Medlycott, M. (ed.) 2011 *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper no.24

## Illustrations

Figure 1 ..... Site location

Figure 2 ..... Trench location

Figure 3 ..... Plan and section of evaluation trench

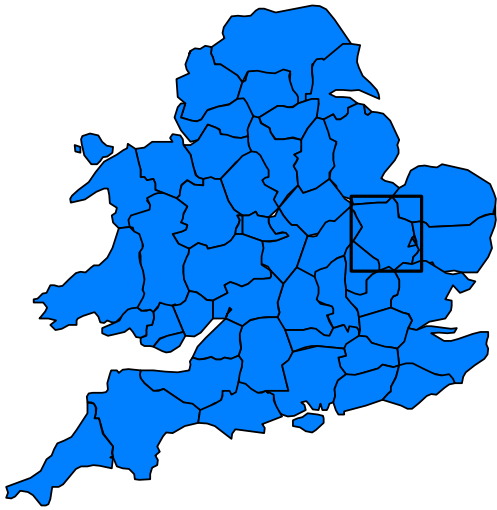
Plate 1 ..... Evaluation trench, looking north-west

Plate 2 ..... Sondage and section, looking south-west

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

48A and 50 High Street, St Neots

HN1205

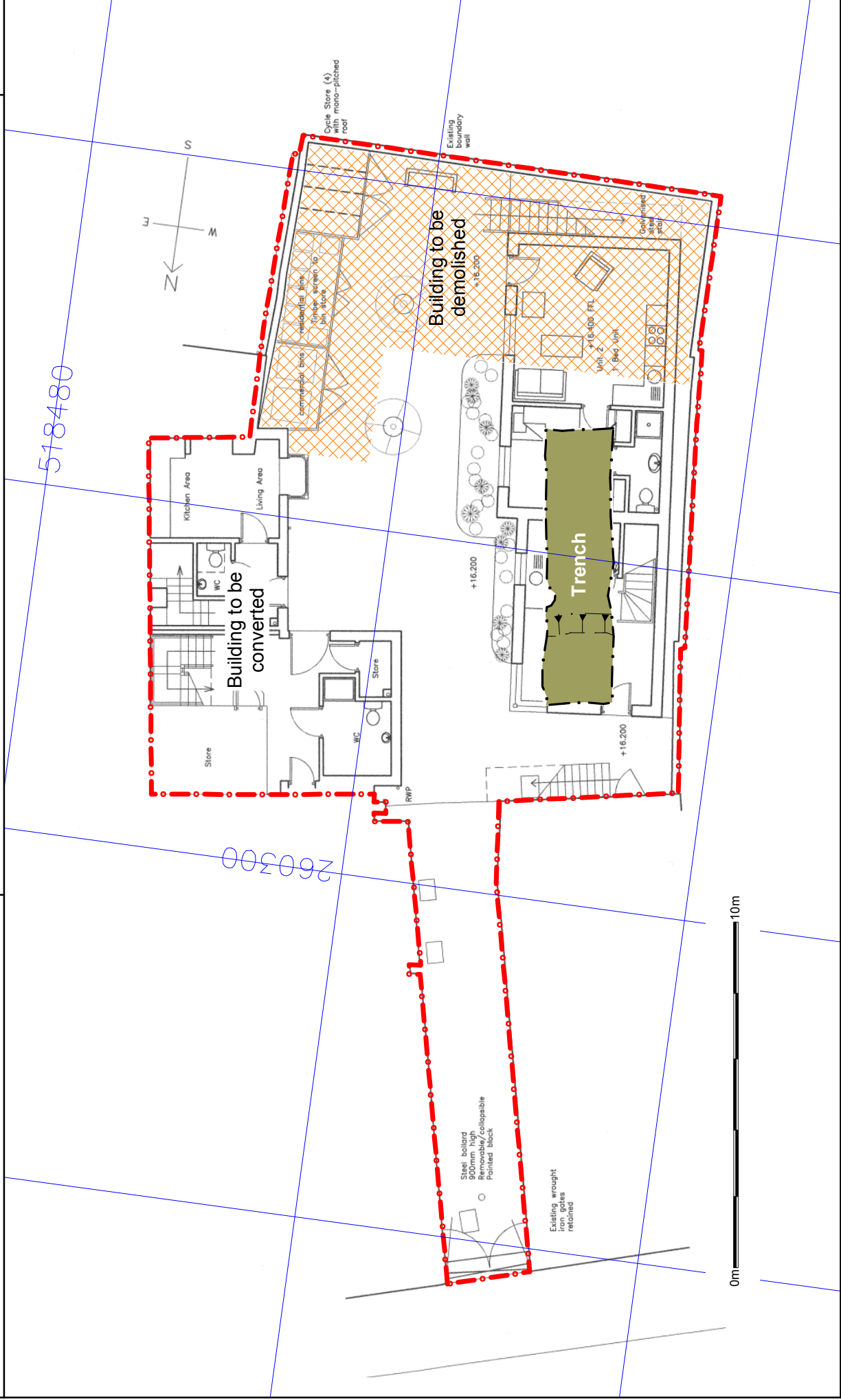


Site Location

Scale 1:10000

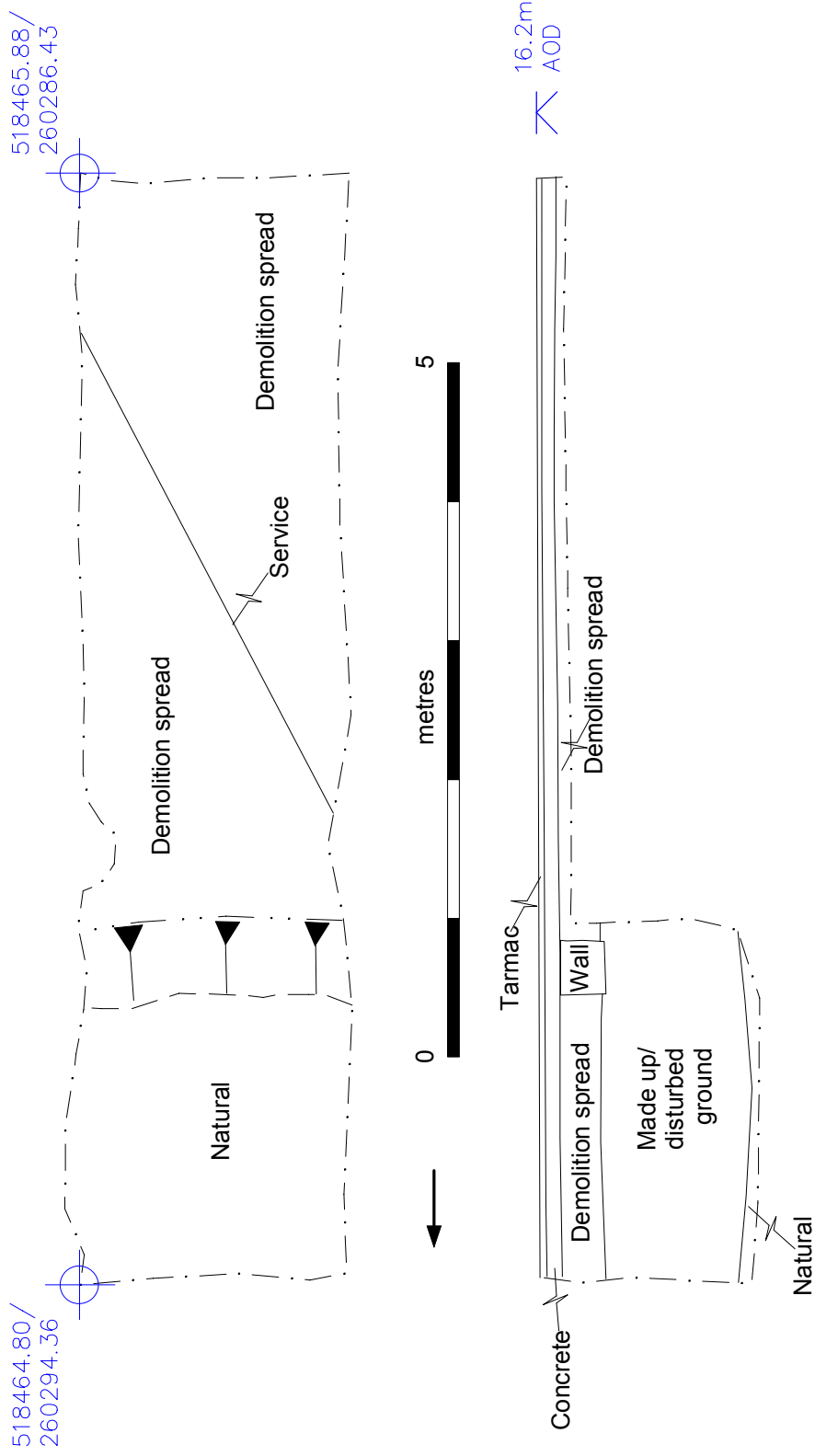
Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Licence no.100014861

Figure 1



Trench location





Plan and section of evaluation trench



Plate 1: Evaluation trench, looking north-west



Plate 2: Sondage and section, looking south-west

# Appendix

## Oasis Summary Sheet

<i>OASIS ID: heritage1-157127</i>	
<b>Project details</b>	
Project name	Land at and including 48A & 50 High Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	<p>In order to investigate the archaeological potential of a proposed development located on land at 48A &amp; 50 High Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to undertake a programme of targeted trial trenching. This work was a requirement of the planning consent granted by the local planning authority.</p> <p>One trial trench was excavated across the western side of the site, focusing on the area of greatest potential impact. The trench revealed evidence of modern demolition and levelling activity, which suggests that any earlier archaeological features on the site would have been heavily disturbed or destroyed.</p> <p>On the basis of the results of the investigation, the risk that the proposed development might disturb archaeological remains of any significance may be considered to be Low for all periods.</p>
Project dates	Start: 18-06-2015 End: 18-06-2015
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Associated project reference codes	ECB4465 - HER event no.
Associated project reference codes	HN1205- Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE St. Neots, land at 48A & 50 High Street.
Postcode	PE19 1JG
Study area	295.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 1846 6029
<b>Project creators</b>	
Name of Organisation	Heritage Network
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Heritage Network
Project director	David Hillelson
Project supervisor	Greg Jones
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

<b>Project archives</b>	
Physical Archive ID	ECB4465
Physical Contents	"None"
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Digital Archive ID	ECB4465
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Diary", "Plan", "Report", "Section"
<b>Project bibliography 1</b>	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land at 48A & 50 High Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Evaluation Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Jones, G.
Other bibliographic details	Report no.941
Date	2015
Issuer or publisher	Heritage Network
Place of issue or publication	Letchworth, Herts.
Description	A4 booklet, comb bound, green cover, 10 text pages, 3 figures, 2 plates