

HERITAGE NETWORK



**86 HIGH STREET,
Ramsey,
Cambridgeshire**

HN898

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION REPORT***

THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

86 HIGH STREET,
Ramsey, Cambridgeshire

Project ref.: HN898
LPA ref.: 1001170FUL
Event no.: ECB3520

Archaeological Evaluation

Prepared on behalf of City Renovations

by

Helen Ashworth (HONS) AIFA

Report no. 643

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The front cover shows the site looking south-east

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by James Snee. The report text and illustrations were prepared by Helen Ashworth and edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to: Neil Hollingworth, City Renovations; Toby Maloy, CMI Consulting; Daniel McConnell & Sally Thompson, Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	86 High Street, Ramsey, Cambs. PE26 1BS		
County:	Cambridgeshire	District:	Huntingdonshire
Village/town:	Ramsey	Parish:	Ramsey
Planning reference:	1001170FUL	NGR:	TL 2886 8511
Client name and address:	City Renovations, Unit 8 Enigma Building, Bilton Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK1 1HW		
Nature of work:	New dwellings	Current land use:	Warehouse
Site Status:	n/a	Reason for investigation:	Direction of LPA (PPS5)
Position in planning process:	After full determination	Project brief originator:	Local Authority
Size of affected area:	450m ²	Size of area investigated:	33.5m ²
Site code:	HN898	Event no:	ECB3520
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc...	Field evaluation	Archive recipient:	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Start of work:	18/01/2011	Finish of work:	15/02/2011
Related HER nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Unknown
OASIS UID:	heritage1-90366	Significant finds:	None
Monument types:	n/a		
Physical archive:	n/a		
Previous summaries/reports:	None		

Synopsis:

In order to characterise the archaeological potential of the site of a proposed new development on land to the rear of 86 High Street, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developers to undertake an archaeological field evaluation. This work was a requirement of the planning consent granted by the local planning authority.

Two trial trenches were excavated across the footprints of the proposed new buildings. Apparent hydrocarbon contamination was present in both trenches. Trench 1 was blank and Trench 2 contained a brick culvert and a foul drain. No features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were encountered during the present project.

On the basis of these results, the risk that the development might encounter archaeological remains of significance may be considered to be *Low* for all periods.

1 Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of City Renovations as part of the archaeological evaluation of the proposed redevelopment of land at 86 High Street, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire.

1.2 The planning permission for the development (ref: 1001170FUL) granted by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), was subject to a standard archaeological condition issued under the Department of Communities and Local Government's *Planning Policy Statement 5* (PPS5). A full specification for the work carried out is contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design* dated February 2011.

1.3 The present site is located on the northern side of the High Street (centred on NGR: TL 2886 8511). The plot was formerly a warehouse to the rear of 86 High Street. Access to the new development will be created along the northern plot boundary with Little Whyte.

1.4 The proposed development is located in the core of medieval Ramsey. To the southeast is the medieval Ramsey Abbey (HER DCB81) and archaeological investigations a short distance to the west have revealed evidence for Saxo-Norman and medieval domestic occupation (HER MCB16483).

1.5 The proposed development entails the construction of two blocks of semi-detached dwellings, with associated landscaping and services.

1.6 The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains that are liable to be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional, archaeological and historical context for them, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000), should they be discovered. It was considered that such investigation had the potential to contribute to a number of regional research topics, including the foundation and development of Ramsey from the late Saxon period; the economic and industrial development of the settlement in the medieval period and its relationship with the rural hinterland; the landscape, environment and economy of the surrounding fenland in the medieval period.

1.7 The present report is intended to provide the planning authority with sufficient data to allow it to consider the archaeological implications of the proposed development, and to determine what further mitigation measures, if any, may be required to allow the development to proceed.

2 Fieldwork

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The study area lies on the northern side of High Street in the core of medieval Ramsey at approximately 4m AOD. The town is located at the northern end of a spur of higher ground extending into the fens (Hall 1992, 41).

2.2 The underlying solid geology consists of Oxford Clay, which extends beneath both the low fenland and the higher ground (www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience). This is overlain in the immediate vicinity of the study area by a narrow band of deposits of alluvial clay, silt, sand and gravel (ibid).

2.3 The superficial deposits observed on the site consisted of a mid yellowish brown, slightly clayey silt alluvium containing occasional pebbles.

2.4 As the present site is located in an urban area the local soils are unsurveyed. However, the present site lies close to a number of areas with different soil types. Immediately to the north is an area of Fenland peat belonging to the Adventurers' 1 Association (1024a); immediately to the south is an area of calcareous clayey soils belonging to the Evesham 3 Association (411d); and to the south-west is an extensive band of chalky till soils belonging to the Cannamore Association (513) (SSEW 1983).

METHODOLOGY

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

2.6 The trenches were located by triangulation from known points using fibreglass tape measures. They were opened using a 5 tonne 360° machine fitted with a 1.7m wide toothless ditching bucket. Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts and a metal detector was used to scan the spoil heaps for ferrous finds. The trench was machined to the first significant archaeological horizon, or to the natural geological horizon, as appropriate.

2.7 The trench was cleaned by hand, and all potential archaeological features and deposits were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

2.8 All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:10 and 1:50.

RESULTS

2.9 Two evaluation trenches were excavated across the footprints of the proposed new dwellings. Trench 1 measured 9.40m by 1.70m and Trench 2 measured 10.30m by 1.70m, giving a total coverage of 33.5m², representing a sample of approximately 7% of the area directly affected by the development.

Trench 1

2.10 Trench 1 was located on the western side of the site, across the footprint of Plots 1 and 2 (Figure 2). It was orientated north-west to south-east and measured 9.40m in length, 1.70m in width and was excavated to a depth of 1.25m (Plate 1).

Trench 1 data:

Length (m):	9.40	Width (m):	1.70	Maximum Depth (m):	1.25	Orientation	NW-SE
Level at NW End of Trench (mOD)		Top	5.05	Level at SE End of Trench (mOD)		Top	5.41
		Base	3.80			Base	4.24
Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)				
			Length	Width	Depth		
-	Layer	Mixed brick rubble and soil overburden	9.40+	1.70+	0.25		
-	Layer	Dark olive grey (5Y 3/2) clayey silt, with brick & tile fragments.	9.40+	1.70+	0.90		
-	Layer	Black contaminated clayey silt alluvium.	9.40+	1.70+	-		

2.11 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of layer of overburden, comprising mixed brick rubble and soil, up to 0.25m in depth, above dark olive grey (5Y 3/2) clayey silt alluvium, containing post-medieval brick and tile fragments, approximately 0.90m in depth. Beneath the subsoil the natural substratum was revealed, which consisted of black, diesel scented, silty clay alluvium with chalk flecks, over 0.05m in depth.

2.12 No features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were present in the trench.

Trench 2

2.13 Trench 2 was located on the eastern side of the site, across the footprint of Plots 3 and 4 (Figure 2). It was aligned north-east to south-west and measured 10.30m in length, 1.70m in width and was excavated to a depth of 1.20m.

Trench 2 data:

Length (m):	10.30	Width (m):	1.70	Maximum Depth (m):	1.20	Orientation	NE-SW
Level at NW End of Trench (mOD)		Top	77.69	Level at SE End of Trench (mOD)		Top	77.05
		Base	77.04			Base	76.63
Context	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)				
			Length	Width	Depth		
-	Layer	Mixed brick rubble and soil overburden.	10.30+	1.70+	0.20		
-	Layer	Dark olive grey (5Y 3/2) clayey silt alluvium, with brick & tile fragments. Diesel scented.	10.30+	1.70+	1.00m max		
-	Layer	Pale yellowish brown silty clay alluvium, with chalk flecks.	10.30+	1.70+	-		

2.14 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of layer of overburden, comprising mixed brick rubble and soil, 0.20m in depth, above dark olive grey (5Y 3/2) clayey silt alluvium, containing post-medieval brick and tile fragments, up to 1m in depth. This layer was redolent of heavy oil or diesel. Beneath the subsoil the natural substratum was revealed, which consisted of pale yellowish brown silty clay alluvium with chalk flecks.

2.15 Two modern features were exposed in the trench. A brick culvert was encountered at the north-eastern end of the trench, running on a north – south alignment. Approximately 3.80m to the south a foul drain crossed the trench on a parallel alignment (Figure 2).

2.16 No features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were present in the trench.

3 Discussion

Archaeological Background

3.1 The study area lies to the north of High Street, between High Street and Little Whyte, and within the medieval core of Ramsey

3.2 The earliest evidence from the area is a lithic implement (HER 02873) of probable Bronze Age date, recovered to the south of the development area.

3.3 Scattered evidence for Romano-British activity, in the form of chance finds of pottery sherds, (HER 01550, HER 02874 and HER 08016A), has been recovered throughout the town.

3.4 Ramsey Abbey (HER DCB81) is located approximately 400m to the east of the proposed development. Historical sources state that it was established in 969AD and Late Saxon remains revealed during excavations at the Abbey School (HER MCB16055) would support such a foundation date.

3.5 In addition to the Abbey, Ramsey appears to have had a domestic or non-religious settlement from the Late Saxon period onwards. Archaeological investigations, located approximately 150m to the west of the present site, revealed evidence of Saxo-Norman and Medieval domestic occupation (HER MCB16483).

3.6 Archaeological investigations along High Street (HER MCB16326) suggest that medieval settlement activity was concentrated on the street frontage, with the backs of the plots remaining wet and marshy.

3.7 In the 1970s excavations were undertaken on a number of pottery and tile kilns (HER MCB16875) located close to Ramsey Abbey. No details of these excavations have been published but the kilns have been broadly dated to the medieval or post-medieval period.

3.8 Ramsey contains a number of post-medieval buildings including a 19th century windmill (HER 02880) and a former four storey steam mill (HER MCB16642), now converted into flats.

3.9 In World War Two, Ramsey formed part of the GHQ line and a number of military structures remain (HER CB15187).

Research Design

3.10 The aim of the evaluation has been to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any remains that are liable to be threatened by the development, and to provide a local and regional, archaeological and historical context for them, in accordance with the current published regional research agenda (Glazebrook 1997;; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Medlycott and Brown 2008), should they be discovered. It was considered that such investigation had the potential to contribute to a number of regional research topics, including:

- The foundation and development of Late Saxon Ramsey and a unique settlement type (Medlycott and Brown 2008, p 96);

- the economic/industrial development of Ramsey during the medieval period in relation to its rural hinterland (Medleycott and Brown 2008, p 97);
- the Medieval fenland landscape, including its environment and economy (Medlycott and Brown 2008, p 96).

Conclusions

3.11 Despite the defined archaeological potential of the site, no features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were encountered during the present project.

3.12 The trenches were targeted evenly across the site in areas that would be subject to disturbance from the development groundworks. Approximately 7% of the area directly affected by the new development was investigated.

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 The archaeological trial trenching did not reveal any significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts during the investigation.

3.15 A number of factors may have had a slight negative influence on the identification and recording of potential archaeological features and deposits. These include the presence of standing water and possible contamination. The winter light was also poor and the weather conditions were very cold. On this basis, the confidence rating for the work may be considered to be *Moderate to High*.

4 Bibliography

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5 Illustrations

Figure 1 Site location

Figure 2 Site layout

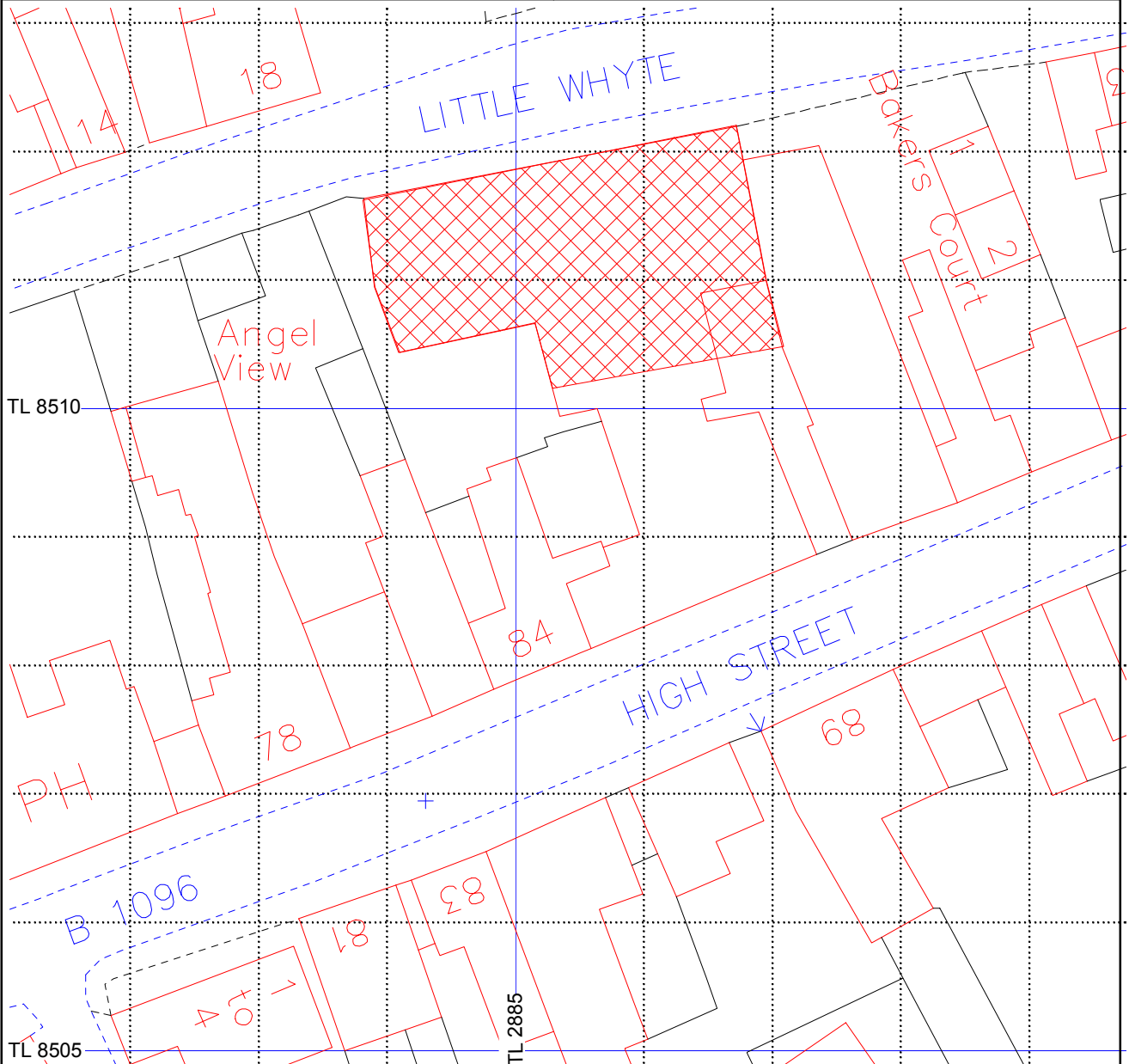
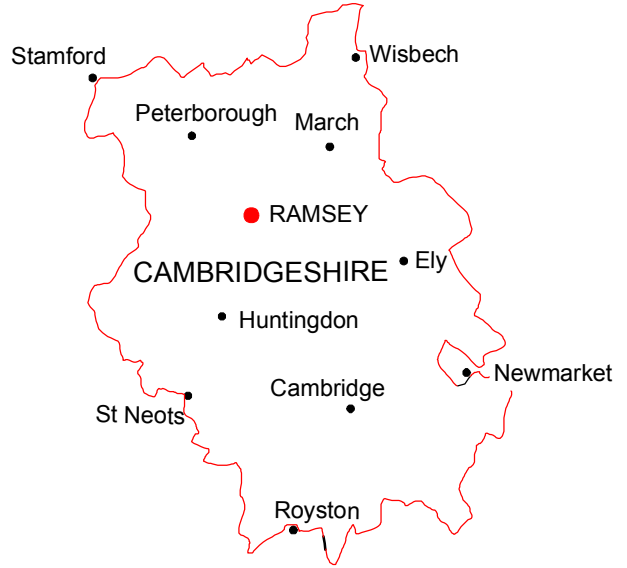
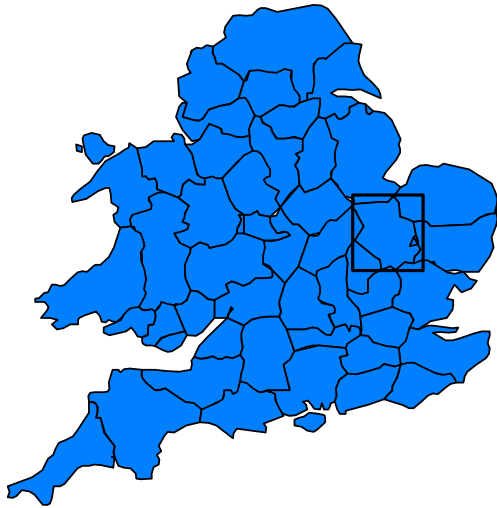
Plate 1 Trench 1, looking NW

Plate 2 Trench 2, looking NE

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86 High Street, Ramsey, Cambs.

HN898



Site Location

Scale 1:500

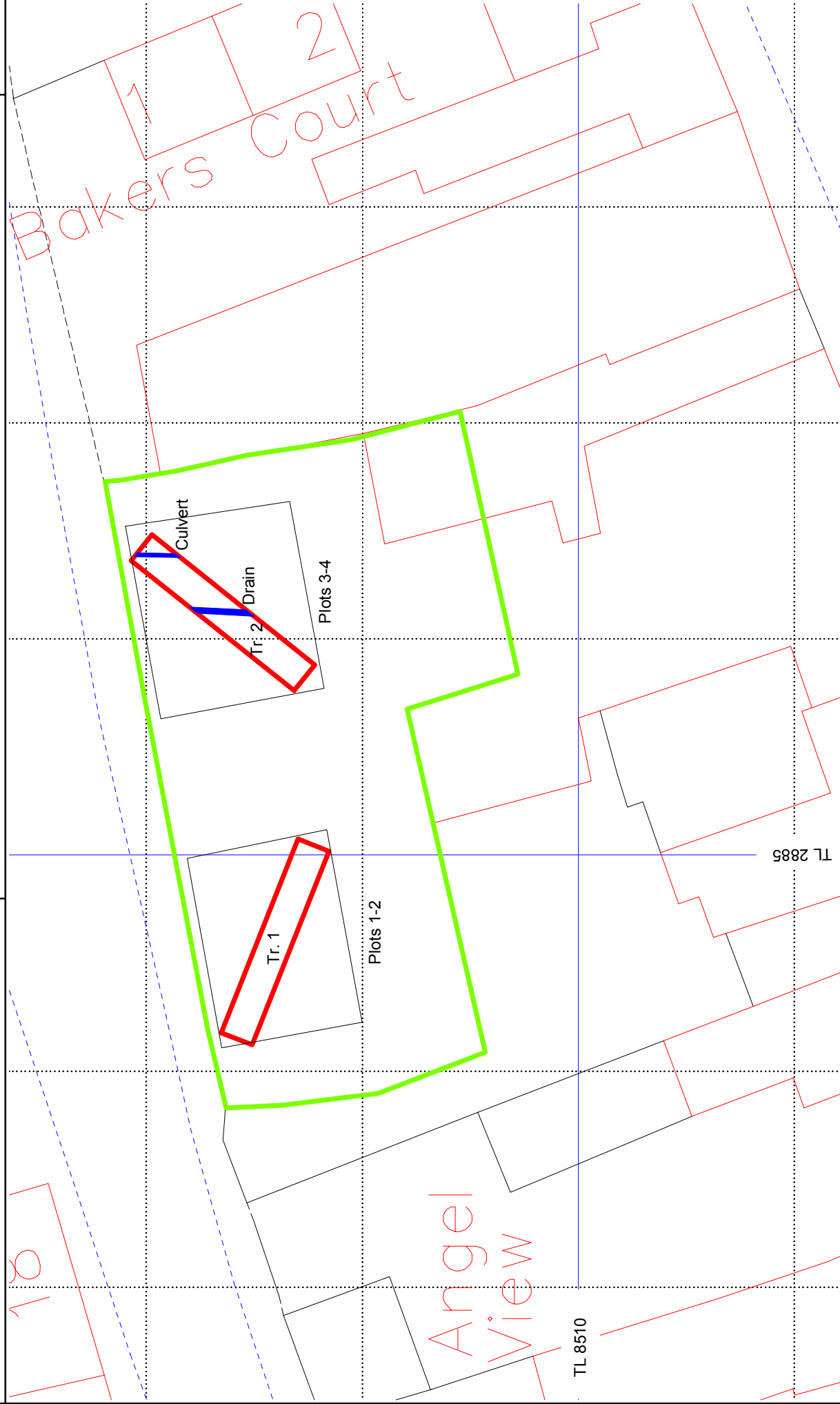
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Figure 1

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86 High Street, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire

HN898



Site layout

Scale 1:250

Figure 2

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Plate 1: Trench 1, looking NW



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking NE

Appendix

Oasis Summary Sheet

OASIS ID: heritage1-90366	
Project details	
Project name	Ramsey, 86 High Street
Short description of the project	In order to characterise the archaeological potential of the site of a proposed new development on land to the rear of 86 High Street, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developers to undertake an archaeological field evaluation. This work was a requirement of the planning consent granted by the local planning authority. Two trial trenches were excavated across the footprints of the proposed new buildings. Apparent hydrocarbon contamination was present in both trenches. Trench 1 was blank and Trench 2 contained a brick culvert and a foul drain. No features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were encountered during the present project
Project dates	Start: 18-01-2011 End: 15-02-2011
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HN898 – Contracting unit no.
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3520 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 4 - Storage and warehousing
Monument type	DRAIN Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (e.g. As a condition)
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE HUNTINGDONSHIRE RAMSEY 86 High Street
Postcode	PE26 1BS
Study area	450 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 2886 8511 52.4483439134 -0.103684884562 52 26 54 N 000 06 13 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: c.107m Max: c.109m
Project creators	
Organisation	Heritage Network
Project brief author	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design author	Heritage Network
Project director	David Hillelson
Project supervisor	James Snee

Funding body	Developer
Project archives	
Physical Archive?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Digital Archive ID	ECB3520
Digital Media ?	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Paper Archive ID	ECB3520
Paper Media?	'Diary','Drawing','Miscellaneous Material','Report'
Project bibliography	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	86 High Street, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Evaluation
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Description	A4 booklet, comb bound, green cover, 10 pages, 3 Figures, 2 Plates