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LAND OFF THRIPLOW ROAD, FOWLMERE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

ECB NO. 3746

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NGR: TL 4258 4612	Report No: 4046	
District: South Cambridgeshire	Site Code: AS1478	
Approved: C Halpin	Project No: 4056	
	Date: March 2012	
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The site is located at the north eastern edge of the village of Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire. The site is part of a large triangular field that is currently used as pasture. Fowlmere has its origins in the medieval period. Its location on the London to King's Lynn Road was of considerable importance during the height of the 17th century wool trade. Sites and artefacts (pottery and flints) of prehistoric origin are known from several sites in the general vicinity, as are sites of the Roman and Anglo Saxon periods. Crop marks representing archaeology of unknown date are present to the immediate north and east of the site.

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LAND OFF THRIPLOW ROAD, FOWLMERE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

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The site is located at the north eastern edge of the village of Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire. The site is part of a large triangular field that is currently used as pasture. Fowlmere has its origins in the medieval period. Its location on the London to King's Lynn Road was of considerable importance during the height of the 17th century wool trade. Sites and artefacts (pottery and flints) of prehistoric origin are known from several sites in the general vicinity, as are sites of the Roman and Anglo Saxon periods. Crop marks representing archaeology of unknown date are present to the immediate north and east of the site.

The trial trenching revealed a pair of parallel undated ditches orientated approximately east/west across the northern end of the site, approximately 12m south of the current field boundary.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2012 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land off Thriplow Road, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 4258 4612; Figs. 1-2). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the construction of ten residential dwellings.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by Dan McConnell, Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET; dated 18th August 2010), and a specification prepared by AS (dated 7th February 2012), approved by CCC HET. The project adhered to appropriate sections of Gurney (2003) 'Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England', *East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14*, and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* and *Standard* and *Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2008).
- 1.3 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine, as far as was possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. In addition it was hoped to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and hence assess the degree of survival of buried deposits and surviving structures of archaeological significance.

Planning policy context

- 1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.
- 1.5 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings and scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

- 2.1 Fowlmere is one of the southernmost villages in the county of Cambridgeshire and is located *c*.14.4km south-west of Cambridge. It is located at the edge of an area of small, closely spaced villages including Newton, Foxton and Meldreth *c*.4-6km to the north and west. The A10 and A505 roads run 2-3km to the north-west and south-east of the village respectively. The NW/SE motorway M11 runs *c*.7km to the east of the village. The B1368 road runs through the centre of the village from south-west (from London) to north-east (to Cambridge). The River Cam runs on a NE/SW course *c*.4km to the north-west of the village and the Hoffer Brook diverges off the River Cam, running a NW/SE course and located *c*.2.5km to the north of the village.
- 2.2 The site is located in the north-east part of Fowlmere and lies to the east of the historic core of the village. It is situated within a triangular network of roads comprising the north-east section of the B1368 (Cambridge Road), Thriplow Road situated to the south of the site and Fowlmere Road situated to the east of the site. Triangle Farm House is situated adjacent to the site on the south-west side. The properties on Thriplow Road to the south-east comprise residential properties. The site comprises a regular, trapezoidal strip of open land of *c*.0.288ha.

3 THE EVIDENCE

3.1 Topography, Geology and Soils

- 3.1.1 The site lies c.4km to the south-east of the River Cam. The Hoffer Brook diverges off the River Cam and is located c.2.5km to the north of the village. The site is situated on relatively even ground at a height of c.25m AOD. The land gradually rises to c.45m AOD over a distance of 3km in the south-east and rises to c.35m AOD in the north-east towards Thriplow. To the north-west, the land slopes gently to c.20m AOD. A more pronounced hill is located c.1.5km to the south-west, adjacent to the Fowlmere Nature Reserve, the summit reaching a height of 36m AOD.
- 3.1.2 The site lies on a solid geology of predominantly (Cretaceous) Lower Chalk and chalky drift with small areas of Taele Gravel and Alluvium overlying the natural. The overlying soil is of the Swaffham Prior association (511e), described as well drained calcareous and fine loamy soils over chalk rubble, with deep non-calcareous loamy soils in places and striped and polygonal soil patterns locally (SSEW 1983).

3.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

Palaeolithic - Neolithic

3.2.1 Palaeolithic flint implements (HER 11694) have been discovered $c.500 \mathrm{m}$ to the south-west of the site. Mesolithic flint implements (HERs 04038, 11137A & MCB16114) have been discovered $c.750 \mathrm{m} - 2.5 \mathrm{km}$ to the south-east and south-west of the site respectively. Neolithic archaeological remains comprise numerous flint implements (HERs 04040 & 04028) discovered $c.1.25 - 1.75 \mathrm{km}$ to the south of the site, whilst a large quantity of Neolithic flint tools and Peterborough ware pottery (HERs 04054, 04047, 04220, 04048, 04286a & MCB16723) have also been discovered in Thriplow $c.1.5 \mathrm{km}$ to the north-east.

Bronze Age – Iron Age

- 3.2.2 Bronze Age ring ditches are known at North Farm (HER 08761) and at West Hill near Foxton (MCB 17776) located *c*.1-2.5km to the north-west of the site. A Bronze Age barrow (HER 04286) and enclosure site (MCB18452) are situated *c*.2km to the north-east of the site and a large quantity of Bronze Age flint implements (HER 04054A) were discovered *c*.2.5km to the south-east of the site.
- 3.2.3 Iron Age archaeological remains comprise a midden and pottery sherds (HERs 11897 & 04286b) discovered c.2km to the north-east. A large middle to late Iron Age enclosure site (HER 07870) was discovered at Herod's Farm, Foxton c.1.5km to the north-west of the site and a small ditch (HER 11138A) was revealed during an archaeological evaluation on Fowlmere High Street c.280m to the south-west of the site (Spoerry 1993). The Round Moat (HER 01258) located c.375m to the south-west of the site has been compared to Iron Age hillforts in the area due to its shape.

Undated Prehistoric

3.2.4 There are a large number of cropmarks in the wider landscape which are possibly indicative of prehistoric settlement activity. These include MCBs 10355, 10720 & 10356) located to the north of the site, further up the chalk ridge. Further cropmarks are located to the east of the site (MCBs 10367 & 10356) which may be related to the aforementioned cropmarks further north. Cropmarks are located c.2km to the north-west (HER 08620) and two sets of ring ditches are situated c.2.5km to the south-west of the site (HERs 09739 & 09731). The Icknield Way, presumed to form part of a prehistoric trackway, is located c.4km to the south-west of the site.

Romano-British

3.2.5 Roman villas and evidence of settlement sites were discovered at Brown Spinney, Shepreth (HER 03364) and at Foxton (HERs 07870B & 04006) c.1.5-3.5km to the north-west of the site. A large quantity of metalwork and pottery were discovered at Foxton (HERs 04007, 11563, 10264 & 10269). At Thriplow c.1.5km to the north-east of the site there are field systems (CB14685) discovered during geophysical surveys (Brooks $et\ al\ 1995$) and a Roman enclosure and associated pottery concentration (MCB17710 & 04286c) were revealed during a magnetometry survey (Scarle 2007) and through excavations (Sanderson 2008). Roman archaeological remains are virtually absent within the vicinity of the site, with the exception of a 3^{rd} century coin (MCB16115) discovered c.150m to the south-west of the site.

Saxon

- 3.2.6 Bran Ditch (HER 07802), located *c*.2km to the south-west of the site, is one of four Cambridgeshire dykes created in order to cut routes across the Icknield Way in the Saxon period. Early Saxon archaeological remains comprise a *grubenhauser* and a pony buried in a pit (CBs 14599 & 14600) discovered during excavations between High Street and the Round Moat *c*.280m to the south-west of the site. A large double-ditch enclosure containing a 10th century bone clamp was discovered during an archaeological evaluation (MCB16309) on Rectory Lane *c*.520m to the west of the site (Thompson *et al* 2004).
- 3.2.7 A large late Anglo-Saxon burial cemetery (HER 04072) was discovered along the course of Bran's Ditch to the south-west of the site. Comprising some sixty individuals, many of the burials displayed signs of violence, including decapitation (Lethbridge *et al* 1929). Numerous structural remains possibly indicative of gallows were discovered parallel to Bran's Ditch (Salzman 1948). It has been suggested that these graves represented an Anglo-Saxon *cwealmstow*: a cemetery for criminals, who had been executed and displayed at a crossing point of the Bran Ditch before a hasty burial (Halliday 1996).

Medieval

3.2.8 The village was known as *Fuelmere* in Domesday Book, meaning 'Wild Birds Mere' and the record states that the manor was held by Aluric Campe of King

Edward prior to 1066. Fowlmere appears to have been a prosperous centre during the 11th and 12th centuries. Its location on the main Kings-Lynn to London Road (modern B1368) was vital to the village's economic success (Keeling 1982). The medieval church, St Mary's, (CB14838) located *c*.425m to the south-west of the site dates to *c*.1130 and would have served as a focal point for the community of the village.

- 3.2.9 The Round Moat (HER 01258, SAM 24430), an embanked and ditched 'ringwork' is situated *c*.375m to the south-west of the site. Excavations in 1906 found animal bone and medieval pottery. In 1975, an area between the moat and the church was excavated revealing 11th to 13th century pottery (MCB16160) (Spoerry 1994). Animal bone, pottery and metal objects were recovered together with remains of structures during an archaeological excavation *c*.450m to the south-west of the site (HER 04222) (Taylor 1976). An archaeological evaluation on the High Street revealed further evidence of medieval occupation (HER 11138) (*Ibid*). A smaller moated site known as the "Crows Parlour" lies to the south of the Round Moat (MCB161160). Another possible moat (HER 01256) is situated *c*.500m to the west of the site although it does not appear to be a habitation site.
- 3.2.10 In 1207, the village was granted a fair and by the late 13th century, the population had increased to '100 households' (possibly 500 people) (Taylor 1997). The arrival of the Black Death in the 14th century had a devastating impact on the population and the economy although by the late 15th century, the population had increased to 70 households (Keeling 1982). Further evidence of medieval settlement including ditches, pits and post holes was discovered during an archaeological evaluation on Rectory Lane (MCB 16310) *c*.520m to the west of the site (Thompson *et al* 2004).

Post-medieval

- 3.2.11 Post-medieval archaeological remains include refuse pits, a ditch and the remains of a floor discovered during an archaeological evaluation on Rectory Lane (MCB 16310) *c.*520m to the west of the site. A large amount of horse bones were found in an abandoned well, suggesting that the site may have been used as a knackers yard (Thompson *et al* 2004). The enclosure at the Round Moat (CB 14599) had been extended or re-built with a silty cap and a large quantity of 17th century post-medieval pottery was discovered there (HER 04222a).
- 3.2.12 In the mid-17th century, many of the village's inhabitants were employed in the wool trade and in the late 17th century, numerous inns and taverns were built along the London to King's Lynn road (modern B1368). A late 17th century cottage named 'Fieldhouse' (DCB5785) is located *c*.70m to the east of the site. In the 18th century, a large number of milestones were built along this road (MCB18064). Two dovecotes of late 18th century date are located *c*.450m to the south-west of the site (HERs 10415 & 10416).

Modern

3.2.13 In 1915 the War Office occupied c.30 acres of land south-west of the village on Fawden or Farthing Hill as a landing station for aeroplanes, taking over another

220 acres to the south, near the London road, in 1917. By 1918 there were 700 R.A.F. staff there but in 1919 it was abandoned and the buildings were demolished in 1923. In 1940 another airfield was developed a little to the north. It was extended in 1943 and shortly after 1945 it reverted to farmland. The area to the west of the village was used as watercress beds in the mid- 20^{th} century and in 1977 the R.S.P.B. bought c.27ha there for use as a Nature Reserve.

Cartographic Sources (Figs. 3-4)

3.2.14 Consultation of Ordnance Survey maps from 1886 and 1901 (Fig. 3) depict the site as open. An outbuilding is depicted to the east of the site in 1901, although it is not depicted on the 1903-1904 Ordnance Survey map. Consultation of a composite village plan from 1952-1960 (Fig. 4) depicts the site as open. A large gravel pit is located to the south of the site.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Three trenches measuring 30m x 1.6m (providing a 5% sample and broad coverage of the 2880 square metre site) were excavated. The trenches were excavated using a 180° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, and the trench locations were approved by CCC HET.
- 4.2 Undifferentiated overburden was mechanically excavated. This exposed a layer of heavily weathered natural which was scraped clean to check for archaeological features or deposits and then removed mechanically to expose the un-weathered natural and several possible archaeological features. Exposed surfaces were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Deposits and cuts were recorded using pro-forma recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed. Excavated spoil was checked for finds and the trenches and spoil heaps were scanned by metal detector.

5 RESULTS (Figs. 5-10)

Individual trench descriptions are presented below:

Trench 1 DP 1 & 2

Sample section: North west end, South west facing section.		
0.00 = 25.20m AOD		
0.00 - 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. Mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional
		small stones.
0.28 - 0.95m	L1001	Subsoil. Mid orange brown clayey silt with occasional
		small stones.
0.95 – 1.00m	L1002	Weathered natural. Light greyish white chalk (with a
		clay like texture). Frequent evidence of worm activity
		in the form of vertical tubes of L1001 extending into
		and through this layer.
1.00m +	L1007	Natural. Light slightly greyish firmly compacted chalk.

Sample section: South east end, South west facing section.			
0.00 = 25.36m AOD			
0.00 - 0.24m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.	
0.24 - 0.5m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.	
0.50 - 0.67m	L1002	Weathered natural. As above.	
0.67m +	L1007	Natural. As above.	

Description: The soil sequence in this trench was repeated across the site with topsoil overlying a deep subsoil. Below this there was a layer of weathered natural, where excessive worm action had broken up the top of the underlying chalk parent material, mixing it through with sub soil. Interestingly although the surface of the field is very flat, the depth at which the weathered natural was encountered increased considerably towards the north western end of the trench, being 0.45m lower than at the south eastern end of the trench.

Two ditches crossed the trench close to its north western end. The features were parallel to each other and were orientated roughly east to west. The northern linear F1004 was the larger of the pair (1.08m wide and up to 0.58m deep). It had a moderately sloping northern side and a steep southern side. The base was narrow and gently concave. Its fill, L1003, was a light orange brown silty clay. A continuation of Subsoil L1001 filled the upper portion of Ditch F1004.

Located 0.6m south east of F1004 was Ditch F1006 (0.56m wide and up to 0.18m deep). It had moderately sloping sides and a highly irregular base. Its fill, L1005, was a medium orange brown slightly sandy silty clay. Like F1004 a continuation of Subsoil L1001 filled the upper portion.

Trench 2 DP 3 & 4

Sample section: North east end, North west facing section.			
0.00 = 25.12m AOD			
0.00 - 0.27m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.	
0.27 - 0.35m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.	
0.35 – 0.55m	L1002	Weathered natural. As above.	
0.55m +	L1007	Natural. As above.	

Sample section: South west end, North west facing section.			
0.00 = 25.18m AOD			
0.00 – 0.30m L1000 Topsoil. As above.			
0.30 - 0.44m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.	
0.44 - 0.64m	L1002	Weathered natural. As above.	
0.64m +	L1007	Natural. As above.	

Description: The soil sequence in this trench was similar to the south eastern end of Trench 1. Here again the top of the weathered natural was encountered at a relatively shallow depth. The trench contained no archaeological features or finds. Four hollows were present and when excavated were natural.

Trench 3 DP 5 & 6

Sample section: North west end, South west facing section. 0.00 = 25.23m AOD			
	_	Topsoil. As above.	
0.25 – 0.55m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.	
0.55m +	L1007	Natural. As above.	

Sample section: South east end, South west facing section.			
0.00 = 25.14m AOD			
0.00 – 0.36m L1000 Topsoil. As above.			
0.36 - 0.96m	L1001	Subsoil. As above.	
0.96 – 1.05m	L1002	Weathered natural. As above.	
1.05m +	L1007	Natural. As above.	

Description: The soil sequence in this trench was similar to that found in Trenches 1 and 2, although the presence of a large natural hollow filled with subsoil at the north western end of the trench meant that the weathered natural was not present in that area. As with Trench 1 the depth at which the top of the weathered natural was encountered increased considerably towards the edge of the field. The trench contained no archaeological features or finds. Four hollows were present, each when excavated proved to be natural.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

- 7.1 The deposit model was uniform across the site. Topsoil L1000 was a mid greyish brown sandy silt with occasional small stones. It contained very small amount of modern pottery and brick fragments. It varied in depth between 0.24m and 0.36m.
- 7.2 Beneath L1000 there was a deep subsoil L1001, a mid orange brown silt with occasional small stones. No finds were recovered from this layer. It varied in thickness considerably being much deeper at the north west and south east of the field than in the middle. At the north western end this subsoil was up to 0.67m thick and at the south east it was up to 0.6m thick. In the centre of the field it was between 0.08m and 0.15m thick.
- 7.3 Beneath Subsoil L1001 was a layer of weathered natural, L1002, a light greyish white silty chalk (with a clay-like texture) with frequent evidence of worm activity in the form of vertical tubes of subsoil extending into and through this layer. This layer was thinner at the north west and south east of the field, 0.05m and

0.09m respectively and thicker in the middle where it was between 0.17m and 0.22m thick.

7.4 At the base of the stratigraphic sequence lay L1007, the natural chalk, a light slightly greyish firmly compacted chalk. The chalk was encountered at a depth of between 0.55m and 0.67m in the middle of the field, at 1.00m at the north west and at 1.05m at the south east.

8 DISCUSSION

- 8.1 Two ditches were recorded at the northern end of Trench 1, spaced 0.6m apart and orientated approximately east to west. The northern ditch F1004 was the larger of the two, measuring 1.08m in width and 0.58m in depth. The smaller southern ditch, F1006, measured 0.56m in width and 0.18m in depth. Both ditches contained a single fill, but in both instances the deposit did not entirely fill the feature and the upper portions were in-filled with a continuation of the subsoil L1001. The features contained no finds.
- 8.2 Fowlmere has its origins in the medieval period. Its location on the London to King's Lynn Road was of considerable importance during the height of the 17th century wool trade. Sites and artefacts (pottery and flints) of prehistoric origin are known from several sites in the general vicinity, as are sites of the Roman and Anglo Saxon periods. Crop marks representing archaeology of unknown date are present to the immediate north and east of the site. In the event the evaluation revealed two ditches likely of relatively recent origin, perhaps former field boundaries or drainage channels.

9 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

9.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at Cambridgeshire County Store. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com

www.british-history.ac.uk

www.heritage-gateway.org.uk

www.rheesearch.org.uk

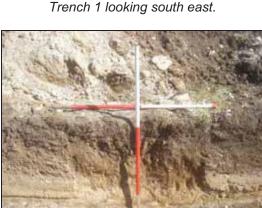
http://wtp2.appspot.com/wheresthepath.htm

www.historicaldirectories.org

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



Trench 1 looking south east.



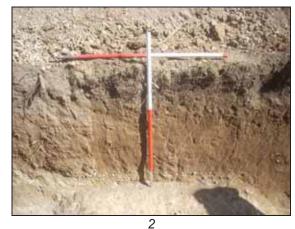
Sample Section 1B, Trench 1, looking north east.



Trench 2 looking south west.



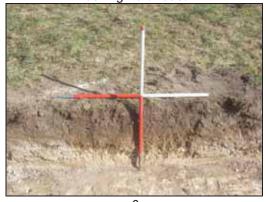
Sample Section 2B. Trench 2, looking south east.



Sample Section 1A. Trench 1, looking north east.



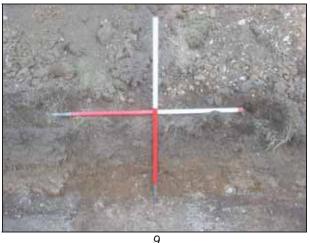
Ditches F1004 (left) and F1006 (right). Looking north east.



Sample Section 2A. Trench 2, looking south east.



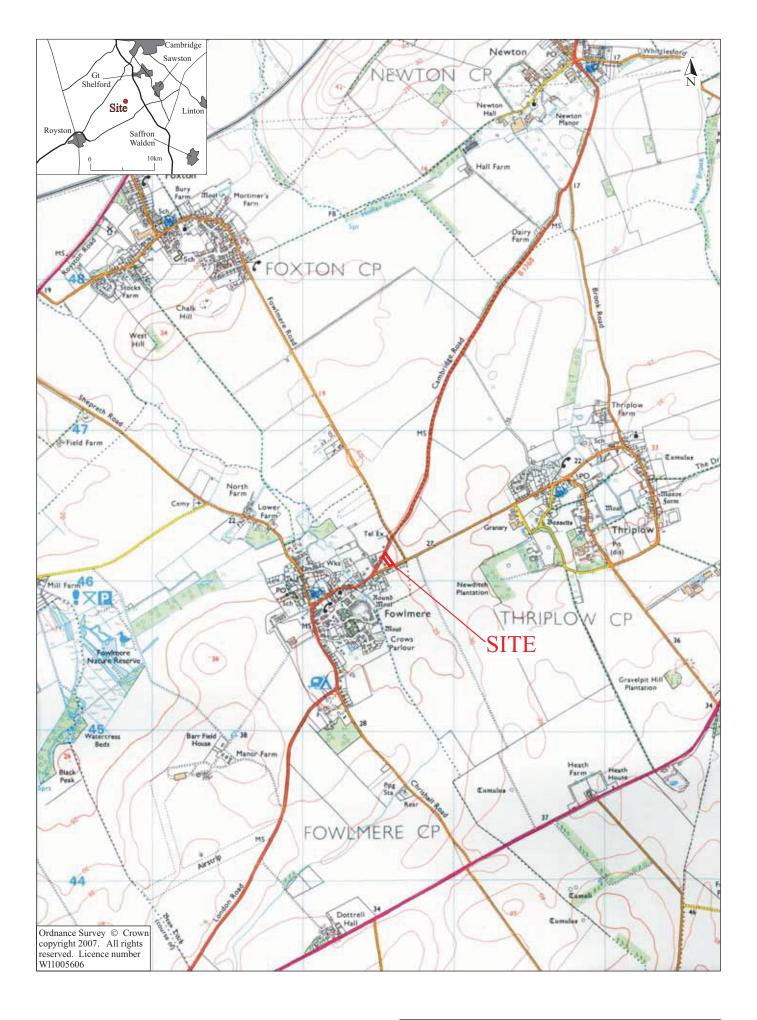
Trench 3 looking north west.



9 Sample Section 3A, Trench 3, looking north east.



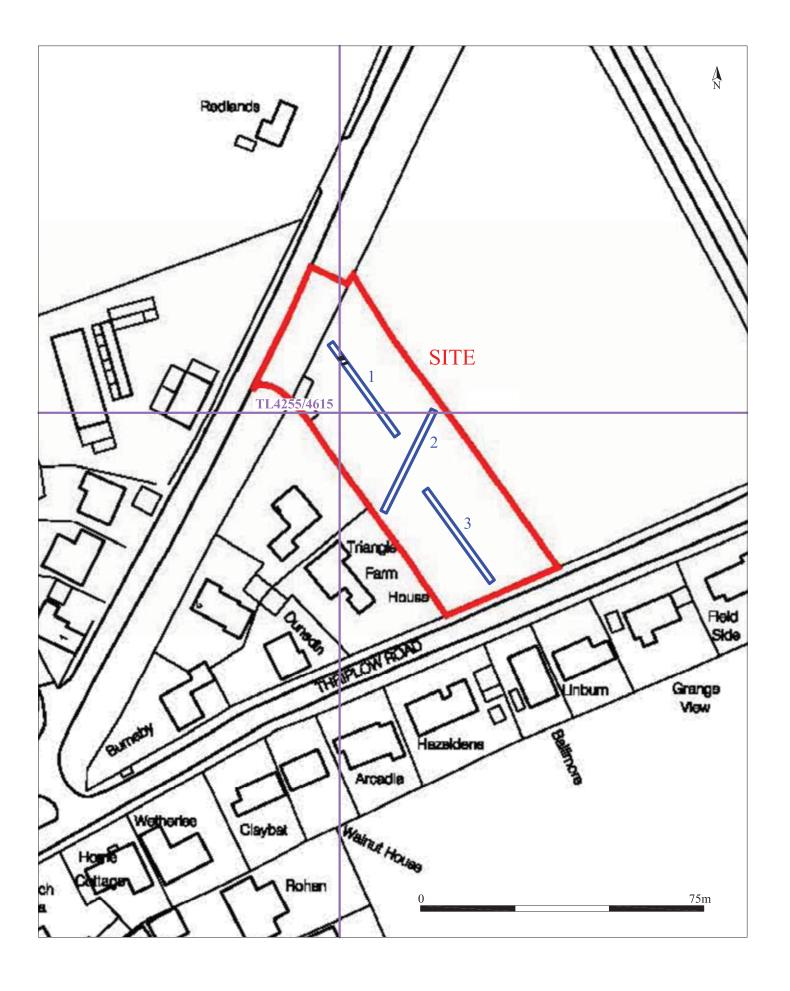
10 Sample Section 3B, Trench 3, looking north east.



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Fig. 1 Site location plan

Scale 1:25,000 at A4



Archaeological Solutions Ltd Fig. 2 De Scale 1:1000 at A4 Detailed site location plan

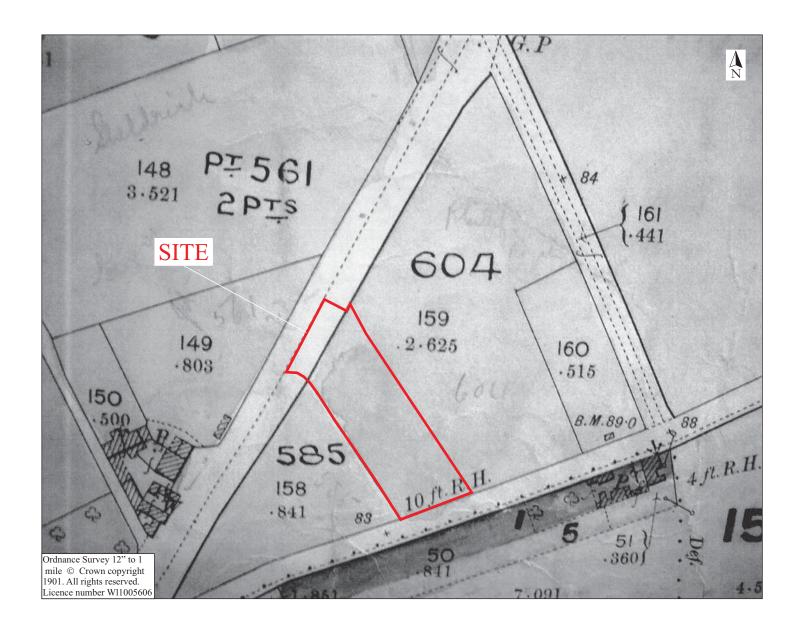


Fig. 3 Map of Cambridgeshire, 1901

Not to scale

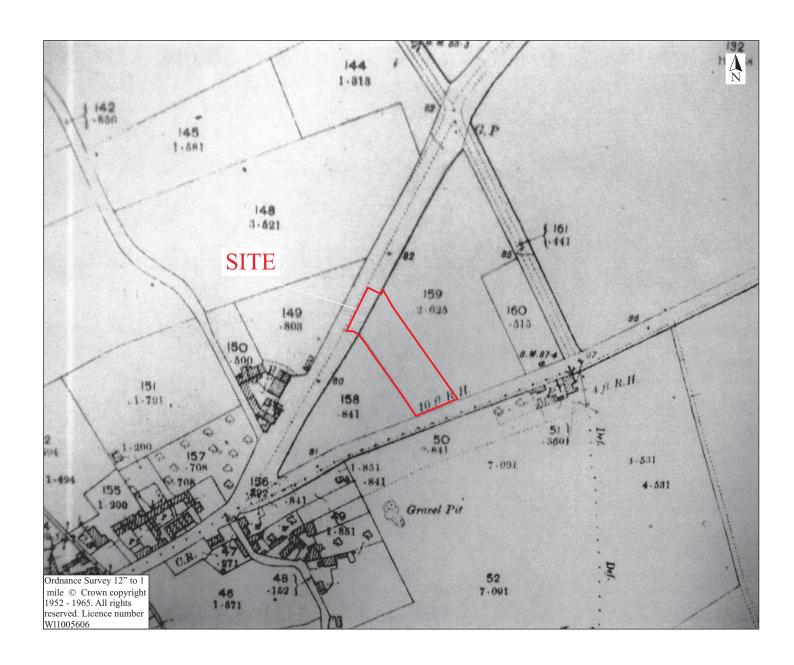
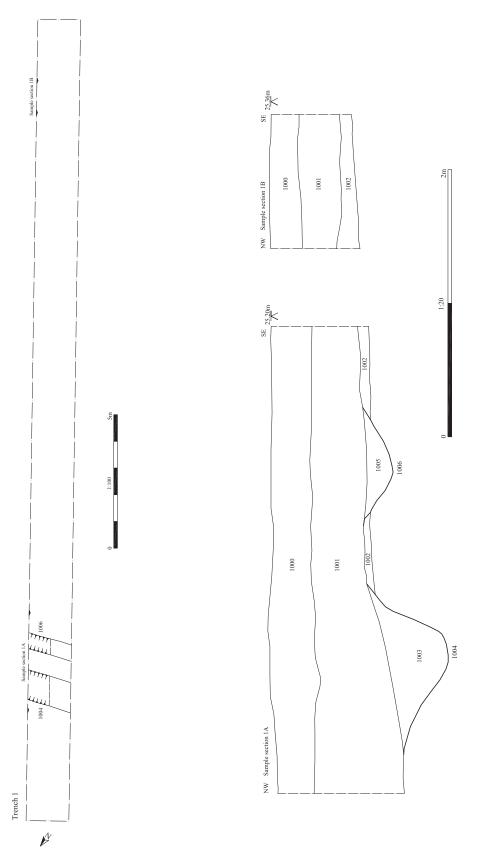
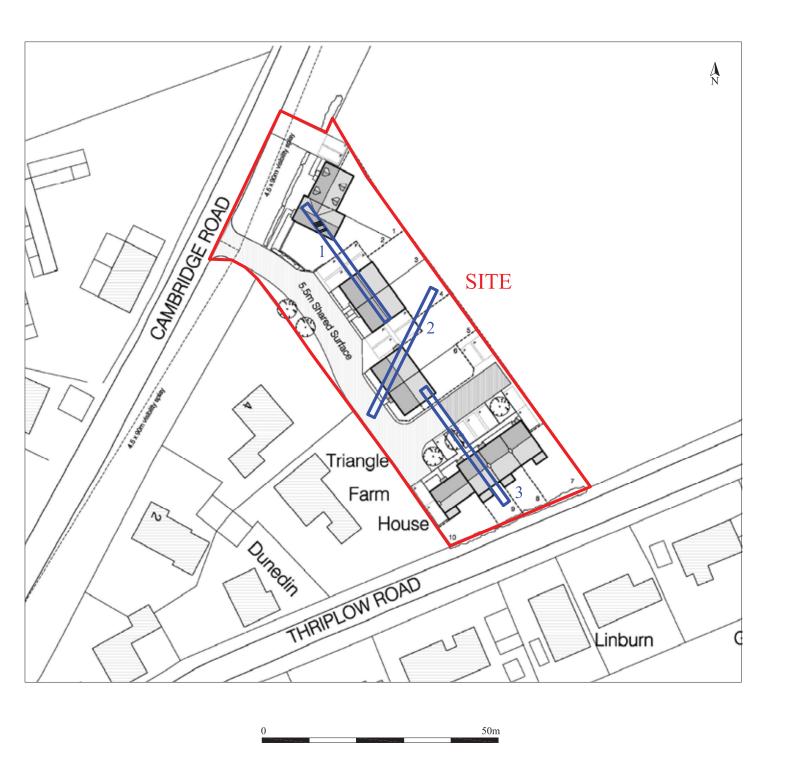


Fig. 4 Composite village plan of Fowlmere, 1952-1965

Not to scale





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Fig. 6 Proposed development plan
Scale 1:800 at A4