

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**PROPOSED FARM OFFICE, LAND AT BUTCHERS HILL FARM, WISBECH
ROAD, LITTLEPORT, ELY CB6 1ST**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

ECB NO. 3768

Authors: Stuart Rathbone (Fieldwork and report) Megan Stoakley MA PifA (Research)	
NGR: TL 5301 9101	Report No: 4085
District: East Cambridgeshire	Site Code: AS1494
Approved: C Halpin MIfA	Project No: 4830
Signed:	Date: May 2012

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET			
Project name	<i>Proposed Farm Office, Land at Butchers Hill Farm, Wisbech Road, Littleport, Ely CB6 1ST. An Archaeological Evaluation.</i>		
<p><i>In May 2012 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Butchers Hill Farm, Wisbech Road, Littleport, Ely CB6 1ST (NGR TL 5301 9101; Figs. 1-2). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the redevelopment of the site comprising the proposed construction of a new farm office with a car park and associated access (East Cambs DC Ref. 12/00163/FUL).</i></p> <p><i>The site lies in an area of archaeological potential within a rural location some 4.5km to the north west of Littleport. It lies NW of Wisbech Road, close to Butchers Hill Farm to the NW. The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record records the presence of late Bronze Age (CHER MCB5189), Iron Age (CHER NCB10284) and Roman settlement remains (CHER NCB10285) and metal detecting of the higher ground to the NE has revealed Bronze Age, Roman and medieval finds (CHER MCB15276). An archaeological evaluation in 2009 in advance of the construction of a new agricultural store close to the existing farm buildings revealed an undated ditch and a tree-throw. Roman salt-working sites lie close by to the north of the farm, associated with the former tidal reaches of the Old Croft River, and further lodes or canals likely extended southwards from the Old Croft tributaries to take water to the salt evaporation tanks on areas of higher ground.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>May 2012</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work (Y/N/?)	<i>TBC</i>
P. number	<i>4830</i>	Site code	<i>AS1494</i>
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>-</i>		
Current land use	<i>Agricultural Field</i>		
Planned development	<i>Construction of a new farm office with car park & access</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>None</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>None</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Cambridgeshire</i>	<i>East Cambridgeshire</i>	<i>Littleport</i>
HER for area	<i>Cambridge Historic Environment Record (CHER)</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>CB6 1ST</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 1106.89m²</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 5301 9101</i>		
Height AOD (min/max)	<i>c. 2m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Archaeological Solutions Ltd</i>		
Funded by	<i>J Gilbert & Son (Littleport) Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>Proposed Farm Office, Land at Butchers Hill Farm, Wisbech Road, Littleport, Ely CB6 1ST. An Archaeological Evaluation.</i>		
Authors	<i>Rathbone, S., & Stoakley, M.</i>		
Report no.	<i>4085</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>May 2012</i>		

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SUMMARY

In May 2012 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Butchers Hill Farm, Wisbech Road, Littleport, Ely CB6 1ST (NGR TL 5301 9101; Figs. 1-2). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the redevelopment of the site comprising the proposed construction of a new farm office with a car park and associated access (East Cambs DC Ref. 12/00163/FUL).

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential within a rural location some 4.5km to the north west of Littleport. It lies NW of Wisbech Road, close to Butchers Hill Farm to the NW. The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record records the presence of late Bronze Age (CHER MCB5189), Iron Age (CHER NCB10284) and Roman settlement remains (CHER NCB10285) and metal detecting of the higher ground to the NE has revealed Bronze Age, Roman and medieval finds (CHER MCB15276). An archaeological evaluation in 2009 in advance of the construction of a new agricultural store close to the existing farm buildings revealed an undated ditch and a tree-throw. Roman salt-working sites lie close by to the north of the farm, associated with the former tidal reaches of the Old Croft River, and further lodes or canals likely extended southwards from the Old Croft tributaries to take water to the salt evaporation tanks on areas of higher ground.

In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2012 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Butchers Hill Farm, Wisbech Road, Littleport, Ely CB6 1ST (NGR TL 5301 9101; Figs. 1-2). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning approval for the redevelopment of the site comprising the proposed construction of a new farm office with a car park and associated access (East Cambs DC Ref. 12/00163/FUL).

1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief prepared by Kasia Gdaniec at the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET) (dated 24th April 2012), and a specification prepared by AS (dated 26th April 2012), and 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, 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 (Figs. 1-2)

2.1 Butchers Hill Farm is located in the fenlands in the north-east part of the county of Cambridge. It is located c.13.4km to the north-west of Ely and c.4.5km of Littleport. The Hundred Foot Washes run NE/SW c.600m to the north-west of the farm. Numerous farms are situated within close proximity of Butchers Hill Farm, including Four Balls Farm and Grubbs Farm c.1-1.25km to the south-east, Hill Farm c.1km to the north-east and Toll Farm c.600m to the north-west. Fens within close proximity of the farm include Westmoor Fen c.1.5km to the south-west.

2.2 The site at Butchers Hill Farm is located in an extensive area of agricultural land within the fens. A number of drains are located within close proximity and include Butchers Hill drain and Martins Drain c.750m to the south-west and south-east respectively. Butchers Hill Farm is accessed from the south-west via the NW/SE aligned Wisbech Road and a SW/NE concrete farm track leads to the farm and its grounds. The site comprises a regular rectangular plot of open agricultural terrain c.50m to the south-west of the buildings on Butchers Hill Farm. The site comprises an area of c.1106.89m².

3 THE EVIDENCE

3.1 Topography, Geology and Soils

3.1.1 The site is situated in low-lying fenland, comprising fresh-water and sea-water wetlands which, since the 17th century, have been artificially drained and protected with drainage banks and pumps. The west-east aligned Old Croft river, situated c.1.25km to the north, feeds into the NE/SW Hundred Foot Washes located c.600m to the north-west of the farm, which consist of a double-river channel/drain comprising the New and Old Bedford Rivers. A number of drains run parallel to the Hundred Foot Washes to the south-west and south-east of the site. The site lies on level ground at c.2m AOD with low-lying terrain to the east and west of the site at c.0m AOD.

3.1.2 The solid geology of the site comprises Kimmeridge Clay capped with Boulder Clay with small outcrops of terrace sand and gravel (BGS 1978, Hall *et al* 1996, 19). The soils of the site belong to the Downholland 1 association (851a) and are defined as deep, stoneless humose clayey soils, calcareous in places, with some peat soils and deep humose calcareous silty soils (SSEW 1983). Crops favouring this type of soil include wheat, potatoes, sugar beet and onions.

3.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric

3.2.1 Evidence of prehistoric occupation is limited within the environs of the site, although finds of prehistoric date discovered c.70m to the south-east of the site indicate that the area was used as an occupation site continuously throughout the prehistoric periods (Hall *et al* 1996, 25). These finds include a Mesolithic macehead (CHER 08577B), a Neolithic polished stone axe (CHER 08577A) and an undated prehistoric layer of fire-cracked flint patches (CHER 08577C). A second Neolithic stone axe (CHER 07268) was discovered c.60m to the north-east of the site.

3.2.2 Evidence of Bronze Age occupation within the vicinity of the site is represented by a dark occupation layer c.110m to the north-east of the site that produced a significant quantity of late Bronze Age pottery (CHER 04278) (Hall *et al* 1996, 25). A Bronze Age palstave and socketed axe (CB15276) were found via metal-detector c.140m to the south-east of the site on land at Butchers Hill Farm. Archaeological remains of Iron Age date are represented by a dark occupation layer discovered c.130m to the south-east (CHER 08576) which contained a large amount of burnt stone/pebbles as well as a large quantity of early Iron Age pottery sherds (*Ibid*).

Romano-British

3.2.2 Romano-British archaeological remains within the wider area of the site comprise a settlement site (CHER 07337) discovered at Hill Farm c.600m to the north-east. Evidence included the structural remains of a house/dwelling and a hearth as well as numerous ditched enclosures field systems (Fowler 1950). Numerous platforms/mounds were discovered and overlain by structural remains of 18 circular hut enclosure sites with floors of stamped clay and evidence of daub chimneys and ovens (Phillips 1970). A significant quantity of ash was found within the ovens and hearths, possibly suggestive of peat fires. It has been suggested that this site was possibly a salt-working industrial site (Hallan

1960). A large quantity of animal remains, bottles, briquetage, 3rd century coins and pottery was also discovered (Fowler 1950).

3.2.3 Evidence of Romano-British occupation within the vicinity of the site is represented by a dark occupation layer (CHER 08577) located c.70m to the south-east of the site from which a large quantity of Samian and colour-coated ware pottery was discovered. A large amount of Roman pottery, coins and a pin (CB15276) was discovered c.140m to the south-east of the site on land at Butchers Hill Farm. An archaeological evaluation (ECB3256) conducted c.120m to the north-east revealed an agricultural ditch whose profile was similar to that of a Roman bedding ditch (Ingham 2009).

Saxon & Medieval

3.2.4 Within the wider area of the site a Saxon hut site (CHER 07337A) was discovered c.600m to the north-east of the site. The site produced structural remains as well as several complete and fragmentary querns of Niedermendig lava, limestone and millstone grit (Fowler 1950). Anglo-Saxon archaeological remains are not recorded within the environs of the site.

3.2.5 The land surrounding the island of Littleport c.4.5km to the south-east, signifying 'small town', was ploughed in a ridge-and-furrow fashion and the surrounding area was given over to arable farming (Hall *et al* 1996, 29). Approximately 2.25km to the south-east, it is recorded in 1251 that the hamlet of Apes Hall was known as 'Apesholt', signifying 'aspen-tree wood' and Westmoor Fen c.1.5km to the south-west, was known as 'westmor' in 1306 (Reaney 1943, 225-6). There is no evidence that the small islands in the fens surrounding the town of Littleport were ever ploughed (*Ibid*). It is likely that the fenland at the location of the site and its surrounding area was uninhabitable and too marshy/wet for agricultural farming. It is therefore of little surprise that there is a dearth of medieval archaeological remains within the vicinity of the site with the exception of an ampulla (CB15276) discovered by metal-detector on land at Butchers Hill Farm c.140m to the south-east of the site.

Post-medieval

3.2.6 Throughout the post-medieval period the area of the site and its surrounding landscape remained uninhabitable and marshy. The 17th century witnessed the installation of numerous banks and pumps to artificially drain and protect the fenland (Hay *et al* 1996). Post-medieval archaeological remains within the vicinity of the site are very limited and comprise three wind pumps (CHERs 07266, 07267 & 07269) located c.300-400m to the north-west, west and c.450m to the north-east respectively. An archaeological evaluation (ECB3256) conducted c.120m to the north-east revealed an agricultural ditch whose profile was similar to a post-medieval drainage ditch (MCB19437) (Ingham 2009).

Cartographic Sources (Figs. 3-5)

3.2.7 The 1887 and 1891 Ordnance Survey maps (Fig. 3) depict Butchers Hill Farm in an extensive rural landscape comprising regular square and rectangular rural plots. Butcher's Hill Gate Lodge is to the south-west on the NW/SE Wisbech Road (not labelled) and a SW/NE track runs in the direction of Butchers Hill Farm. The plan of Butchers Hill Farm comprises a regular grid of six rectangular plots flanked by two rectangular buildings to the north-west and south-east with a large irregular rectangular dwelling to the north-east. An L-plan building is located to the south-east of the main building. A pit is depicted to the

north-east of the farm in the adjacent field.

3.2.8 The 1927 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4) depicts a landscape largely unchanged since 1891. Two additional rectangular outbuildings are to the north and south-east of the main dwellings at Butchers Hill Farm. An engine house is to the south-east of the farm and a sand pit is depicted to the south-west of Wisbech Road (not labelled). A building has replaced the pit to the north-east of the farm previously shown in 1891. The 1950 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 5) depicts a landscape largely unchanged since 1927. The northern outbuilding and part of the L-plan building to the south-east of the main farm buildings are no longer depicted. The rectangular outbuilding to the south-east previously depicted in 1927 is no longer depicted and has been replaced with a smaller outbuilding further to the north-east.

3.2.9 The site is depicted in all three Ordnance Survey maps to the south-west of the farm buildings (Figs. 3-5) and has remained undeveloped since 1887.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 One trench was excavated using a mechanical 180° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The trench location was approved by CCC HET. A single trench of 25m x 1.6m provided for a 5% sample of the site.

4.2 Topsoil and subsoil were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

The trench description is presented below:

Trench 1 (Fig. 2)

<i>Sample section 1A: east end, north facing</i>		
<i>0.00 = m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.45m	L1000	Topsoil. Dark blackish brown, compact, slightly sandy clay
0.90m+	L1001	Natural. Light grayish yellow, firm, sandy clay

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present. A modern field drain was identified.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

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

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

7.1 The topsoil, L1000, got considerably deeper (0.90m) towards the north-western end of the trench as it approached the farm lane. The ground level on the north side of the road is much lower than on the south side of the road, and it appears that soil has accumulated against the road.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The site lies in an area of archaeological potential within a rural location some 4.5km to the north west of Littleport. It lies NW of Wisbech Road, close to Butchers Hill Farm to the NW. The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record records the presence of late Bronze Age (CHER MCB5189), Iron Age (CHER NCB10284) and Roman settlement remains (CHER NCB10285) and metal detecting of the higher ground to the NE has revealed Bronze Age, Roman and medieval finds (CHER MCB15276). An archaeological evaluation in 2009 in advance of the construction of a new agricultural store close to the existing farm buildings revealed an undated ditch and a tree-throw. Roman salt-working sites lie close by to the north of the farm, associated with the former tidal reaches of the Old Croft River, and further lodes or canals likely extended southwards from the Old Croft tributaries to take water to the salt evaporation tanks on areas of higher ground.

8.2 In the event the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds.

9 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at the Cambridgeshire County Store. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank J Gilbert & Son (Littleport) Ltd for funding the project and for their assistance, and Mr Mike Hastings of Mike Hastings Building Design for his assistance.

AS is pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Mr Daniel McConnell of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team, and the staff of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record

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WEB RESOURCES

Accessed on 3rd May 2012

www.heritage-gateway.org.uk

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

www.old-maps.co.uk

APPENDIX 1 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT DATA (HER)

The following sites are those that lie within a 500m radius of the site. The table has been compiled from data held by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER).

HER No.	NGR Sp	Description
Mesolithic		
08577B	TL 5315 9096	Mesolithic macehead, Littleport.
Neolithic		
07268	TL 5306 9111	Polished stone axe.
08577A	TL 5315 9096	Neolithic axe, Littleport. Black polished flint axe found.
Bronze Age		
04278	TL 5323 9104	Late Bronze Age occupation area, Littleport. Dark occupation area, lots of sherds, possibly late BA.
CB15276	TL 5320 9080	Metal detecting finds, Butcher's Hill Farm. A number of metal finds discovered during a metal detector rally at Butcher's Hill Farm in autumn 2002. Bronze Age palstave & socketed axe.
Iron Age		
08576	TL 5324 9095	Iron Age settlement site, Littleport. Dark occupation area with burnt pebbles and a lot of sherds. Early IA?
Undated Prehistoric		
08577C	TL 5315 9096	Burnt mound, Littleport. Fire-cracked flint patches.
Roman		
08577	TL 5315 9096	Roman settlement site, Littleport. Dark area, runs on to clay, Samian and colour coated wares.
CB15276	TL 5320 9080	Roman coins, pin & pottery found during metal-detecting, Butchers Hill Farm.
07337	TL 538 918	Roman settlement, Hill Farm, Littleport. Features include ditches, enclosure, field systems, a house, platform, mound, a hearth & a possible salt-works. Finds include animal remains, a bottle, briquetage, coin and Roman pottery.
Saxon		
07337a	TL 538 918	Saxon hut site, Hill Farm. One hut site produced querns (complete and fragmentary) of Niedermendig lava, millstone grit, limestone and pudding stone.
Medieval		
CB15276	TL 5320 9080	Medieval ampulla found during metal-detecting at Butchers Hill Farm.
Post-medieval		
07266	TL 522 910	Wind pump, Downham.
07267	TL 525 914	Wind pump, Downham.
07269	TL 538 913	Wind pump, Littleport
Undated		
09207	TL 523 904	Curvilinear feature, Westmoor Fen, Downham.
MCB19437	TL 5318 9115	Undated ditch, Bate's Drove. An evaluation revealed an agricultural ditch, whose profile was similar to that of a Roman bedding ditch and also similar to a post medieval drainage ditch. A single flint flake was recovered from the ditch, which remains undated.
ECB3256		

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



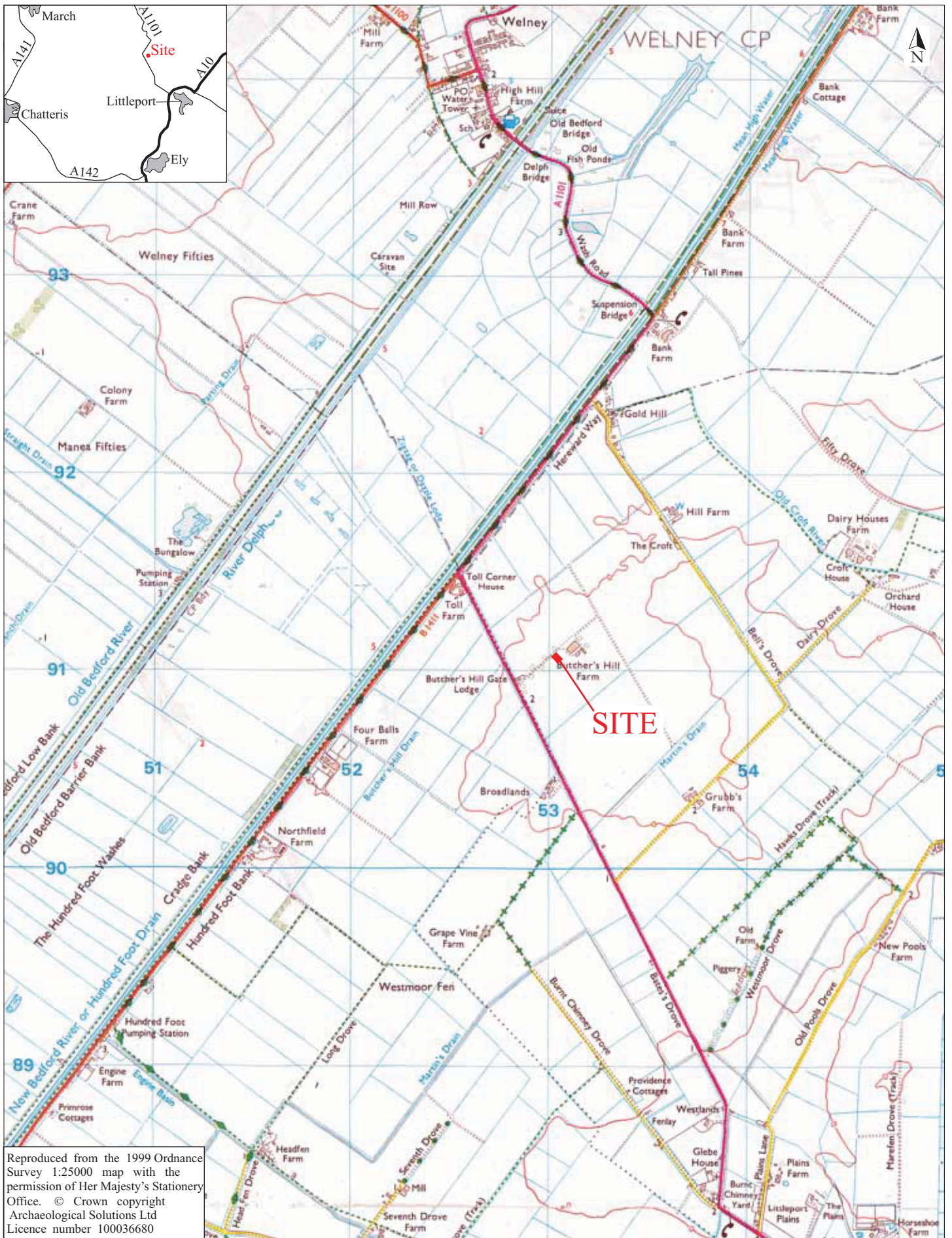
DPI

Sample section 1,. facing north-east



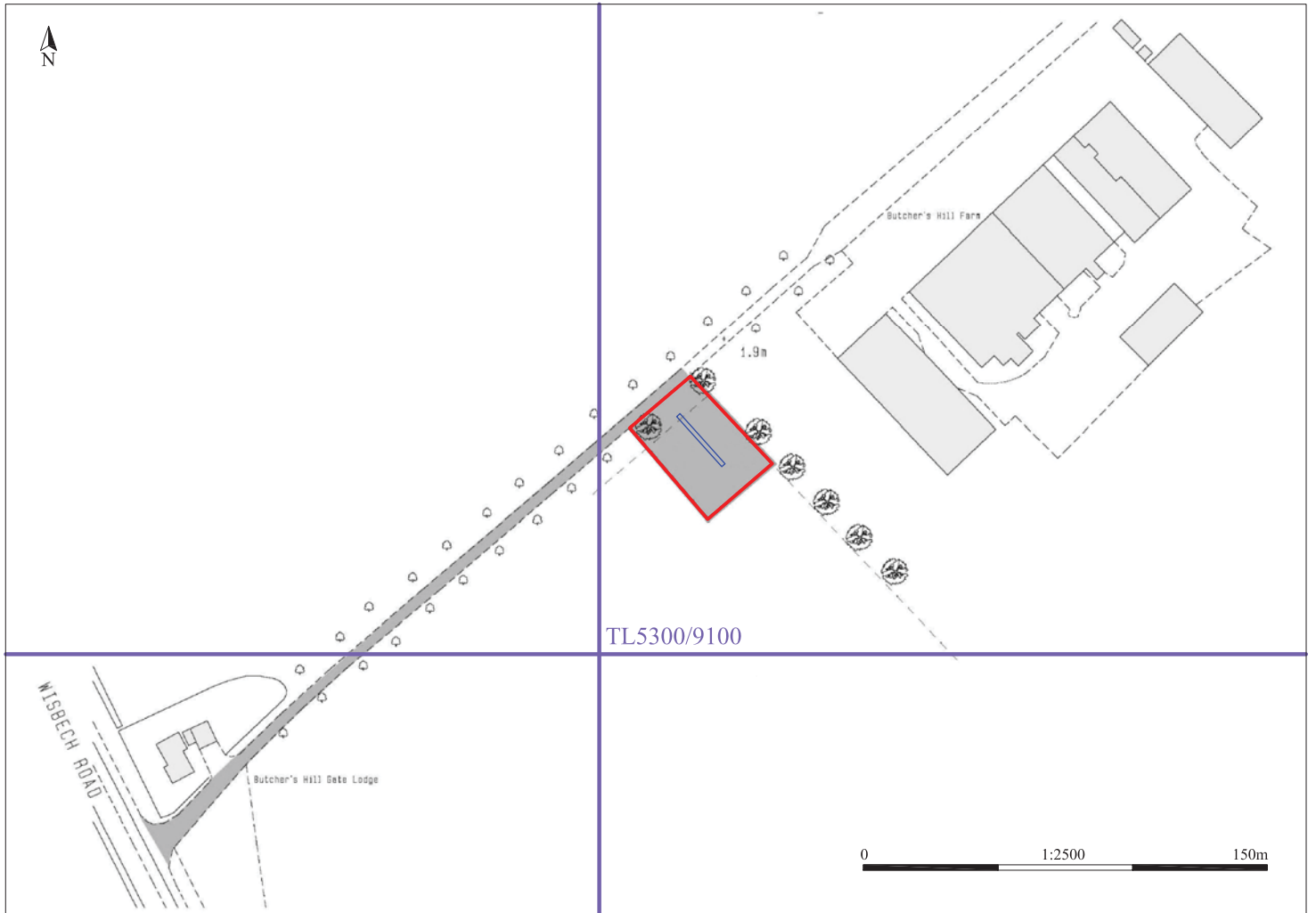
DP2

Trench 1, facing south-east

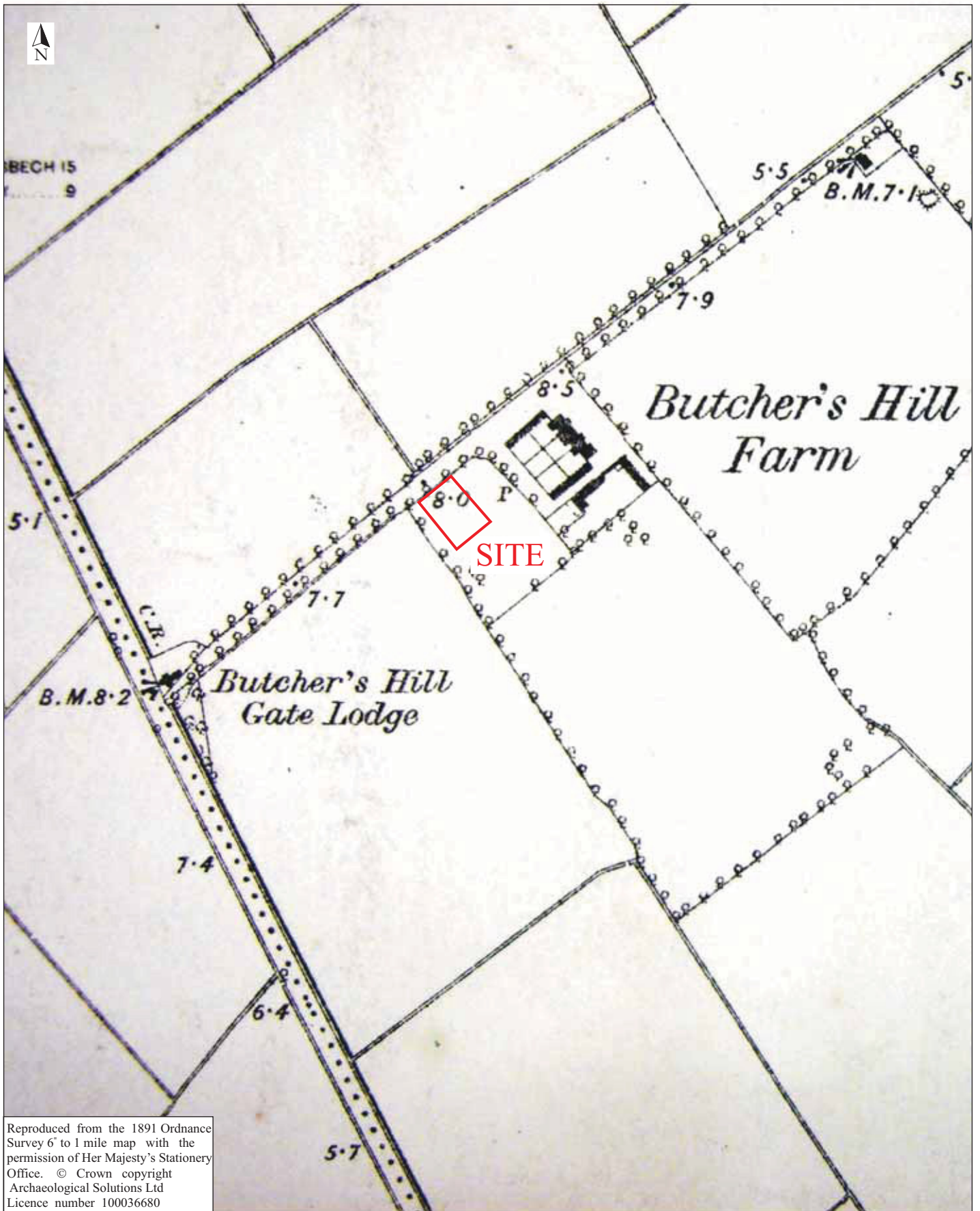


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Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4

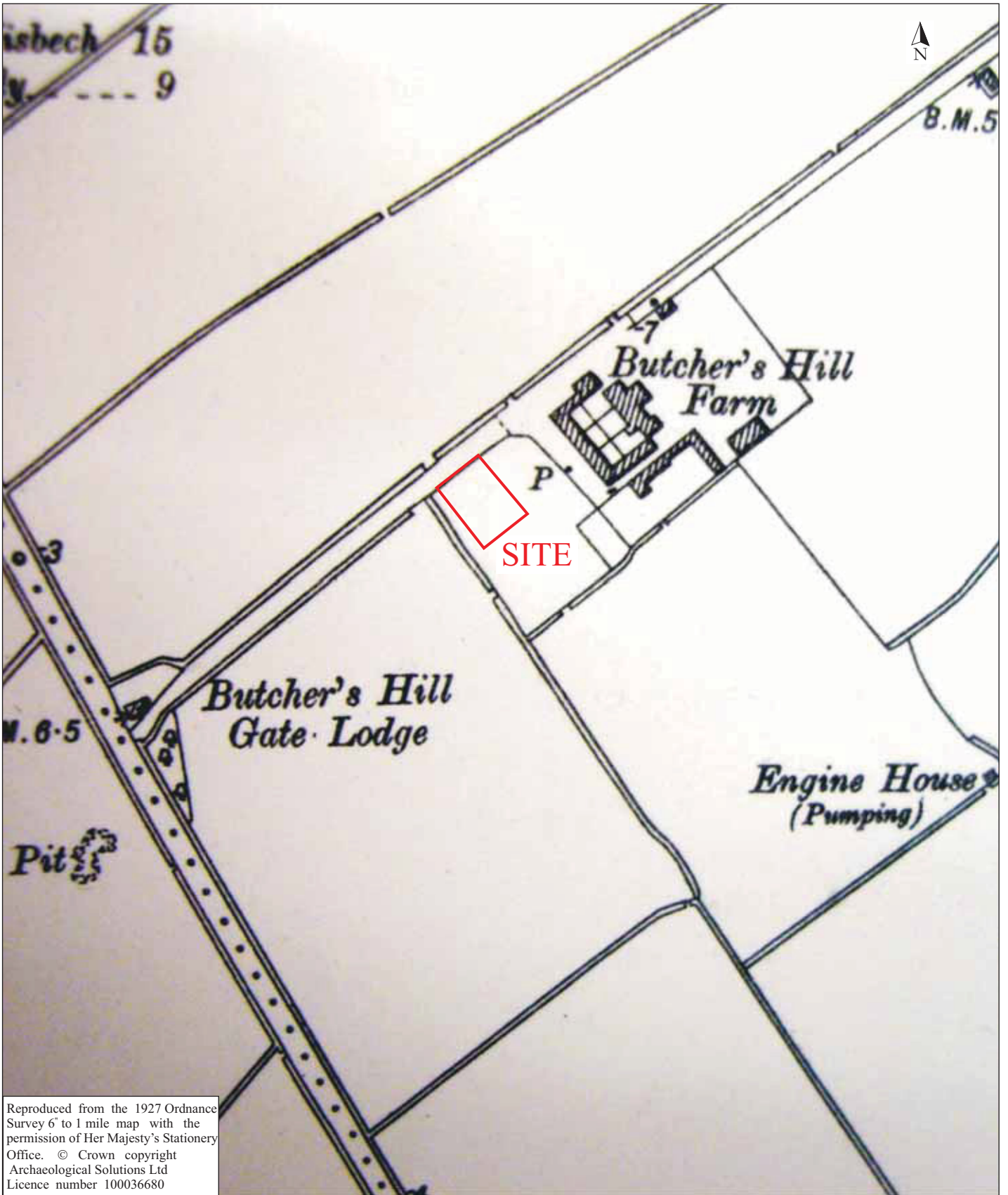


<i>Archaeological Solutions Ltd</i>
Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
Scale 1:400 at A4



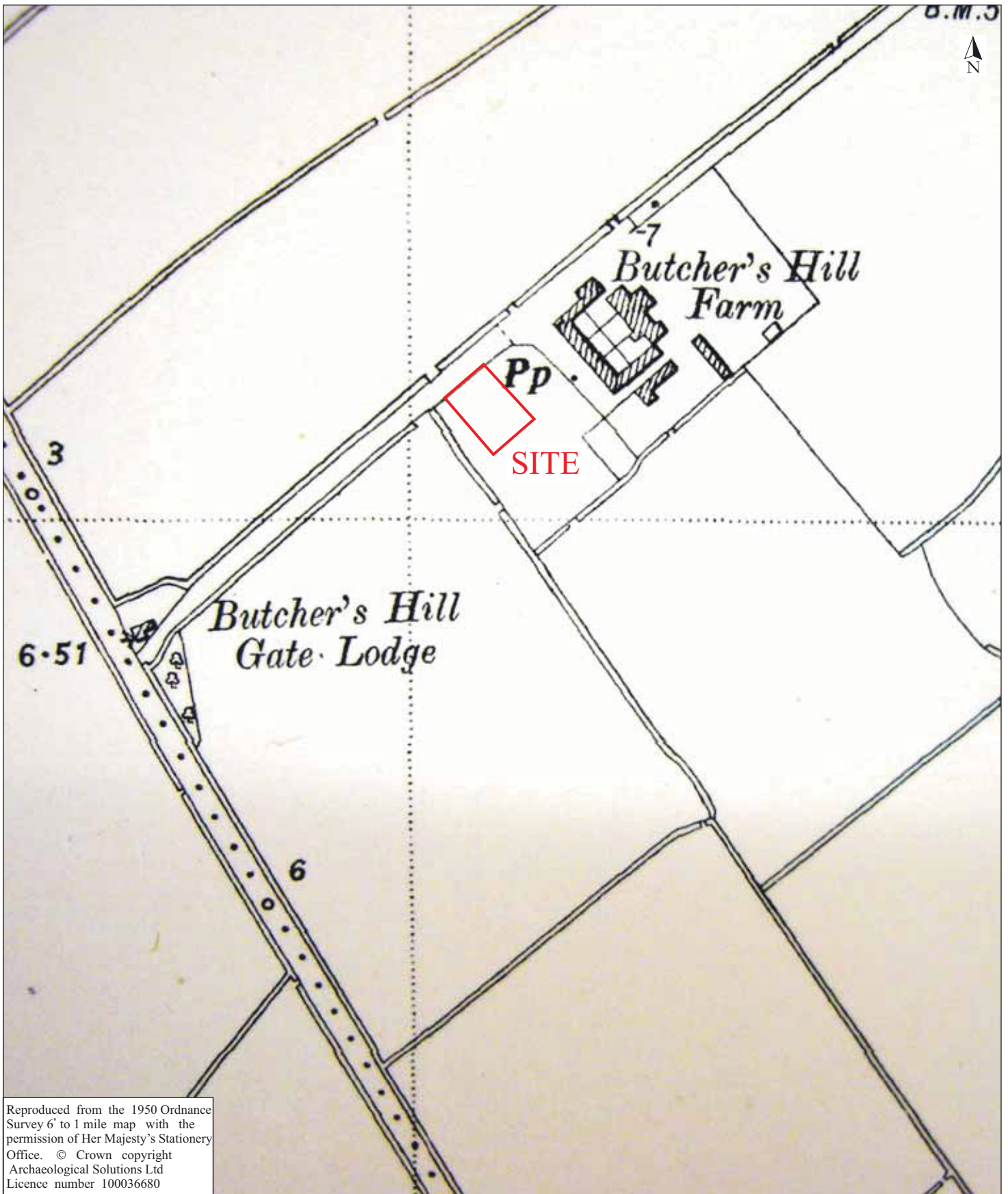
Reproduced from the 1891 Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile map with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright Archaeological Solutions Ltd Licence number 100036680

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Fig. 3 OS map, 1891
Not to scale



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Fig. 4 OS map, 1927
Not to scale



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Fig. 5 OS map, 1950
Not to scale