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**LAND TO THE NORTH-EAST OF 5 BACK LANE, LITTLEPORT,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CHER ECB 4355

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NGR: TL 57148707		Report No: 4791
District: East Cambridgeshire		Site Code: ECB 4355
Approved: Claire Halpin		Project No:P6127
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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Land to the North-East of 5 Back Lane, Littleport, Cambridgeshire</i>		
<i>In February 2015 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation on the land to the north-east of 5 Back Lane (NGR: TL 5714 8707; Figs. 1 and 2). The evaluation was commissioned in advance of the proposed construction of 16 houses with associated services/access on land north east of 5 Back Lane, Littleport, Cambridgeshire. It was required to support a planning application (East Cambs Council Ref. 14/00017/FUM) and based on advice from Cambridgeshire County Council requiring a programme of archaeological work.</i>			
<i>The evaluation recorded archaeological features on the higher ground (Trenches 4 and 5), at the southern end of the site. The features were all ditches, and undated, except Ditch F1008 (Trench 5) which contained post- medieval to early modern CBM, and Ditch F1010 which contained a modern (18th – 20th century) pottery sherd.</i>			
<i>Roddonised prehistoric channels were revealed (Trenches 2 (L1018) and 3 (L1024)). At the north end of the site (Trenches 1 – 3) the land drops away and deeper fen deposits (clay (L1015 (Tr.1), L1019 (Tr.2) L1023 (Tr.3), alluvium (L1020 (Tr.2), L1022 and L1025 (Tr.3), and peat (L1014 (Tr.1), L1021 (Tr.2) and L1026) (Tr.3) are present.</i>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>February 2015</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work	<i>N</i>
P. number	<i>6127</i>	Site code	<i>ECB 4355</i>
Type of project	<i>Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>None</i>		
Current land use	<i>Former agricultural land</i>		
Planned development	<i>16 residences with associated services</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>Undated and post-medieval – early modern ditches</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>Roddonised prehistoric channels</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Cambridgeshire</i>	<i>East Cambridgeshire</i>	<i>Littleport</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CCC HER)</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>CB6 1QH</i>		
Area of site	<i>5500m²</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 5714 8707</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>3m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Gareth Barlow</i>		
Funded by	<i>AJ Lee (Developments) Ltd</i>		
Full title	<i>Land to the North-East of 5 Back Lane, Littleport, Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Authors	<i>Barlow, G. and Wilson, L.</i>		
Report no.	<i>4791</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>February 2015</i>		

LAND TO THE NORTH EAST OF 5 BACK LANE, LITTLEPORT, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

In February 2015 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation on the land to the North-east of 5 Back Lane (NGR: TL 5714 8707; Figs. 1 and 2). The evaluation was commissioned in advance of the proposed construction of 16 houses with associated services and access on land north east of 5 Back Lane, Littleport, Cambridgeshire. It was required to support a planning application (East Cambs Council Ref. 14/00017/FUM) and based on advice from Cambridgeshire County Council requiring a programme of archaeological work.

The site lies in an area of archaeological importance connected with a concentration of Roman saltern sites located mainly to the west and north-west along the rodden of the Old Croft River and Camel Road. There is evidence of a Roman settlement, in the form of cropmarks, to the north-west and finds such as Roman coins and pottery appear to the south and south-east (HER 02090 & 07231).

The site is also located close to the late Saxon and medieval historic town core, although as yet relatively little archaeological evidence has been recovered. This core is thought to have developed outwards during the post-medieval period with evidence of occupation along Victoria Street (HER MCB 17878), and with a 18th century house at No. 3 Station Road being the closest post-medieval dwelling to the site (HER DCB 1083). Modern evidence suggests the site sits within a ring of WWII defences with a possible pillbox (HER MCB19180), anti-tank ditch (HER MCB 19165), and gun placement (HER MCB 16420).

The evaluation recorded archaeological features on the higher ground (Trenches 4 and 5), at the southern end of the site. The features were all ditches, and undated, except Ditch F1008 (Trench 5) which contained post-medieval to early modern CBM, and Ditch F1010 which contained a modern (18th – 20th century) pottery sherd.

Roddonised prehistoric channels were revealed (Trenches 2 (L1018) and 3 (L1024)). At the north end of the site (Trenches 1 – 3) the land drops away and deeper fen deposits (clay (L1015 (Tr.1), L1019 (Tr.2) L1023 (Tr.3), alluvium (L1020 (Tr.2), L1022 and L1025 (Tr.3), and peat (L1014 (Tr.1), L1021 (Tr.2) and L1026) (Tr.3) are present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February 2015 Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation on the land to the North-east of 5 Back Lane, Littleport, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 5714 8707; Figs. 1 and 2). The evaluation was commissioned by AJ Lee (Developments) Ltd and was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition

attached to planning approval for the construction of 16 houses (East Cambs Council Ref. 14/00017/FUM); based on advice from Cambridgeshire County Council requiring a programme of archaeological work.

1.2 The project was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET) (Kasia Gdaniec, dated 28th January 2015 and a specification compiled by AS (dated 29th January 2015). It followed the procedures outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct, Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2008). It also adhered to the relevant sections of *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The principal objectives of the evaluation were:

- To establish whether any archaeological deposit exists in the area, with particular regard to any which are of sufficient importance to merit preservation *in situ*;
- To identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological deposit within the application area, together with its likely extent, localised depth and quality of preservation;
- To evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/alluvial deposits, along with the potential for the survival of environmental evidence;
- To provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological conservation strategy dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables and orders of cost; and
- Establish the potential for waterlogged organic deposits in the proposal area, their location and level and vulnerability to damage by development.

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 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Littleport is located 10km north of Ely on a fen island enclosing 400 hectares and is separated from the main Ely Island by Wood Fen. The site lies towards the north-eastern edge of Littleport located on Back Lane behind the residential properties on Station Road. The land sits between allotments to the east and residences to the west and is a former field.

3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

3.1 The site lies at c.3m AOD on the fen edge, on Ampthill and Kimmeridge Clay overlaying Tidal Flat Deposits. The underlying geology of the area comprises the Downholland series, consisting of marine alluvium and fen peat.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

4.1 The area of land that Littleport occupies is known to have been occupied in prehistory for its suitable position on higher ground above the wetland of the Fens. Flints and axe heads of both Palaeolithic and Neolithic date have been found at 22 High Street (HER MCB 16792) and at 80 Wisbech Road, where settlement has been suggested of late Bronze Age to early Iron Age date. The closest find to the site was a Neolithic flint sickle was found at an unspecified location and was perhaps used for grass cutting (HER 07233).

Romano-British

4.2 It is suggested that the Roman fenlands formed part of an imperial estate centred on Stonea Grange. There is a relatively large amount of evidence for Roman activity in the environs of Littleport; most of this comes from the north side of the modern village. The area around the Old Croft River is of archaeological importance for this period because of the abundance of saltern sites. These cover over 3 hectares and are probably a conglomeration of sub-sites, the closest being only 200m to the west (HER

CB15677 & ECB 521). There is evidence of a Roman settlement, in the form of cropmarks, to the north-west (HER 08425) and finds such as Roman coins and pottery appear to the south and south-east (HER 02090 & 07231), suggesting the site lay within the sphere of Roman influence.

Medieval

4.3 Saxon activity in Littleport is limited in evidence but this is not to say occupation did not extend through this period. This may have depended on the varying influx of water levels at the time and it is probable that the medieval core corresponds with the modern core. Documentary evidence suggests a settlement from at least the later Saxon period.

4.4 Littleport is first recorded in Domesday Book as a holding of the Abbot of Ely and having a population of 31 workers. The church of St George and St John is a Grade II* listed building dating from the early medieval period, although most of the surviving building is 15th century, restored in 1857 (HER CB14890). Medieval finds from the town comprise a late medieval well found during repaving in Main Street some 450 metres south-west of the site (HER ECB 1354). Medieval pottery from 22 High Street (HER MCB 16792), as well as pottery scatterings found amongst Roman finds on the north-west of the town (HER 07261a and MCB 10939a).

Post-medieval

4.5 Evidence suggests Littleport was occupied into post-medieval times with cartographic evidence suggesting dwellings on Victoria Street, directly south of the site, from the late 19th century onwards (HER MCB 17878). Evaluation of this site presented potential back-garden activity which could relate to illegal land enclosure. During the 17th century land enclosure began in earnest with 2,500 acres enclosed in the first half, but full enclosure was not carried out until 1840. The closest evidence to the site is No. 3 Station Road, an 18th century house (HER DCB 1083), approximately 250m to the east.

Modern

4.6 World War Two activity surrounds the site with a WWII anti-tank ditch 200m to the east (HER MCB 19165), a gun placement with an unusual embrasure 200m to the south-east (HER MCB 16420) and a possible WWII pillbox to the north-west by 350m (HER MCB19180), which aerial photographs show in 1946 but no visible trace could be identified on a site visit in 2002.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Five trenches of 30m x 1.8m were excavated (Fig. 2)

5.2 Exposed sections 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 archaeological finds.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

6.1 Individual trench descriptions are presented below:

Trench 1 (DPs 1-3; Figs. 2-3)

Sample section 1A 0.00 = 1.40m AOD		
0.00 – 0.42m	L1000	Topsoil. Dark grey brown clayey silt with sparse medium rounded flint.
0.42 – 0.64m	L1015	Clay Layer. Pale, mid pinkish grey brown, firm, silty clay.
0.64 – 0.95m	L1014	Peat Layer. Very dark brown woody peat
0.95m +	L1016	Natural. Pale grey / white, compact. chalk.

Sample section 1B 0.00 = 1.81m AOD		
0.00 – 0.42m	L1000	Topsoil. As above
0.42 – 0.88m	L1015	Clay Layer. As above
0.88 – 1.06m	L1014	Peat Layer. As above
1.06m +	L1016	Natural. As above

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present in Trench 1.

Trench 2 (DPs 4-7; Figs. 2-3)

Sample section 2A 0.00 = 2.59m AOD		
0.00 – 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.28 – 0.38m	L1017	Pale, mid pinkish grey brown, firm, silty clay
0.38 – 1.25m	L1018	Alternating layers of pale yellow and pale grey brown, firm, silty fine sand
1.25m +	L1016	Natural. As above Tr.1

Sample section 2B 0.00 = 2.42m AOD		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.30 – 0.37m	L1019	Clay Layer. Pale, mid pinkish grey brown, firm, silty clay
0.37 – 1.03m	L1018	As above
1.03 – 1.30m	L1020	Alluvium. Mid grey brown, firm, sandy clay silt.
1.30 – 1.58m	L1021	Peat Layer. Very dark brown woody peat
1.58m +	L1016	Natural. As above Tr.1

Sample section 2C 0.00 = 2.58m AOD		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.30 – 0.73m	L1019	Clay Layer. As
0.73 – 1.12m	L1021	Peat Layer. Very dark brown woody peat
1.12m+	L1016	Natural. As above Tr.1

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present in Trench 2.

Trench 3 (DPs 8-10; Figs. 2 & 4)

Sample section 3A 0.00 = 2.78m AOD		
0.00 – 0.38m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.38 – 0.55m	L1022	Alluvium. Pale mid blue grey mottled with mid brown orange, firm, sandy silt.
0.55m+	L1001	Natural. As above Tr.1

Sample section 3B 0.00 = 2.52m AOD		
0.00 – 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.28 – 0.38m	L1023	Clay Layer. Pale - mid pinkish grey brown, firm, silty clay.
0.38 – 1.22m	L1024	Alternating layers of pale yellow brown and pale grey brown, firm, fine sand.
1.22 – 1.53m	L1025	Alluvium. Pale mid blue grey mottled with mid orange brown, firm, clay silt
1.53 – 1.78m	L1026	Peat Layer. Very dark brown woody peat.
1.78m+	L1027	Mid blue grey clay silt

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present in Trench 3.

Trench 4 (DPs 11-15; Figs. 3-4)

Sample section 4A 0.00 = 2.87m AOD		
0.00 – 0.25m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.25 – 0.31m	L1002	Subsoil. Mid orange grey, firm, sandy silt
0.31 – 0.42m	L1003	Dark grey brown, firm, clay silt with sparse medium rounded and angular flint
0.42m +	L1016	Natural. As above Tr.1

Sample section 4B 0.00 = 2.90m AOD		
0.00 – 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.28 – 0.37m	L1002	Subsoil. As above.
0.37 – 0.44m	L1003	As above
0.44m +	L1016	Natural. As above Tr.1

Description: Ditches F1010 and F1012 were present in Trench 4. F1010 contained a modern (18th – 20th century) pottery sherd (9g)

Ditch F1010 was linear in plan (2.00+ x 0.50 x 0.17m), orientated NE/SW. It had moderately sloping sides and a concave base. Its fill, L1011, was a mid blue grey, compact, clay. It contained a modern (18th – 20th century) pottery sherd (9g)

Ditch F1012 was linear in plan (2.00+ x 1.67 x 0.30m), orientated E/W. It had irregular sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1013, was a mid grey brown, compact, silty clay. It contained no finds.

Trench 5 (DPs 16-21; Figs. 2 & 5)

Sample section 5A 0.00 = 2.88m AOD		
0.00 – 0.27m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.27 – 0.39m	L1028	Subsoil. Mid orange brown mottled with pale mid brown, firm, sandy silt
0.39m +	L1016	Natural. As above Tr.1

Sample section 5B 0.00 = 2.88m AOD		
0.00 – 0.35m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.35 – 0.48m	L1028	Subsoil. As above
0.48m +	L1016	Natural. As above Tr.1

Description: Ditches F1004, F1006 and F1008 were recorded in Trench 5. F1008 contained post-medieval – early modern CBM.

Ditch F1004 was linear in plan (10.00+ x 0.80 x 0.09m), orientated NE/SW. It had shallow sides and an irregular flattish base. Its fill, L1005, was a light reddish brown, compact, clay. It contained no finds. Ditch F1004 was cut by Ditch F1006.

Ditch F1006 was linear in plan (2.00+ x 0.65 x 0.18m), orientated SE/NW. It had moderately sloping sides and an uneven concave base. Its fill, L1007, was a light reddish brown, compact, clay. It contained no finds. Ditch F1006 cut Ditch F1004.

Ditch F1008 was linear in plan (8.00+ x 0.65 x 0.19m), orientated NE/SW. It had steep sides and a concave base. Its fill, L1009, was a dark brown, friable, silty clay. It contained a fragment (14g) of late post-medieval to early modern tile.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

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

8 DEPOSIT MODEL

8.1 The site was commonly overlain by Topsoil L1000, a dark grey brown clayey silt with sparse medium rounded flint. At the higher south end of the site (Trenches 4 and 5), L1000 overlay subsoil (L1002 and L1003) and thereafter the natural.

8.2 At the north end of the site (Trenches 1 – 3) the land drops away and deeper fen deposits (clay (L1015 (Tr.1), L1019 (Tr.2) L1023 (Tr.3), alluvium (L1020 (Tr.2), L1022 and L1025 (Tr.3), and peat (L1014 (Tr.1), L1021 (Tr.2) and L1026) (Tr.3) are present.

8.3 The natural geology, L1016, was a pale grey white, compact, chalk (0.39 – 1.78m below the present day ground surface).

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 The recorded features are tabulated:

Trench	Context	Description	Spot date
4	F1010	Ditch	Modern (18 th – 20 th C).
	F1012	Ditch	Undated
5	F1004	Ditch	Undated
	F1006	Ditch	Undated
	F1008	Ditch	Post-medieval – early modern CBM.

9.2 Archaeological features were recorded on the higher ground (Trenches 4 and 5), at the southern end of the site. The features were all ditches, and undated, except Ditch F1008 (Trench 5) which contained post-medieval to early modern CBM, and Ditch F1010 which contained a modern (18th – 20th century) pottery sherd (9g).

9.3 Roddonised prehistoric channels were revealed in Trenches 2 (L1018) and 3 (L1024). These channels were recorded in sondages at the south-eastern ends of the trenches and their orientation may have been NE-SW (this cannot be stated with confidence). At the northern end of the site (Trenches 1 – 3) the land drops away and deeper fen deposits (clay (L1015 (Tr.1), L1019 (Tr.2) L1023 (Tr.3), alluvium (L1020 (Tr.2), L1022 and L1025 (Tr.3), and peat (L1014 (Tr.1), L1021 (Tr.2) and L1026) (Tr.3) are present.

10 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) would like to thank Mr John Lee of AJ Lee (Developments) Ltd for his assistance and for funding the project.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Ms Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team.

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APPENDIX 1 CONCORDANCE OF FINDS

Feature	Context	Segment	Trench	Description	Spot Date	Pottery	CBM (g)	Animal Bone (g)	Other
1008	1009		5	Fill of Ditch			13		
1010	1011		4	Fill of Ditch	Mid 18th-20th C	(1) 8g			

APPENDIX 2 SPECIALIST REPORTS

The Pottery

Peter Thompson

The evaluation recovered one lightly abraded sherd of glazed red earthenware weighing 9g from Ditch F1010 (L1011). The sherd has a fine hard fired fabric and glossy black glaze, and would fit a date of mid 18th to 20th centuries in date.

The Ceramic Building Materials

Andrew Peachey CMIfA

A single fragment (14g) of late post-medieval to early modern tile was recovered from Ditch F1008 (L1009). The tile is c.10mm thick; manufactured in highly-fired red earthen ware, with traces of mortar on its underside and soot on its external face. The tile probably formed part of a hearth, chimney or similar domestic feature, though conclusions are severely limited by the size of the fragment, which may have been re-deposited through agricultural processes.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP1: Trial Trench 1 (post-excitation), looking NE



DP2: Sample Section 1A, looking SE



DP3: Sample Section 1B, looking SE



DP4: Trial Trench 2 (post-excitation), looking NW



DP5: Sample Section 2A, looking SW



DP6: Sample Section 2B, looking SW



DP7: Sample Section 2C, looking SW



DP8: Trial Trench 3 (post-excitation), looking NW



DP9: Sample Section 3A, looking NE



DP10: Sample Section 3B, looking NE



DP11: Trial Trench 4 (post-excitation), looking NW



DP12: Sample Section 4A, looking SW



DP13: Sample Section 4B, looking SW



DP14: Ditch F1010 (post-excavation), looking S



DP15: Ditch F1012 (post-excavation), looking NE



DP16: Trial Trench 5 (post-excavation), looking E



DP17: Sample Section 5A, looking S



DP18: Sample Section 5B, looking S



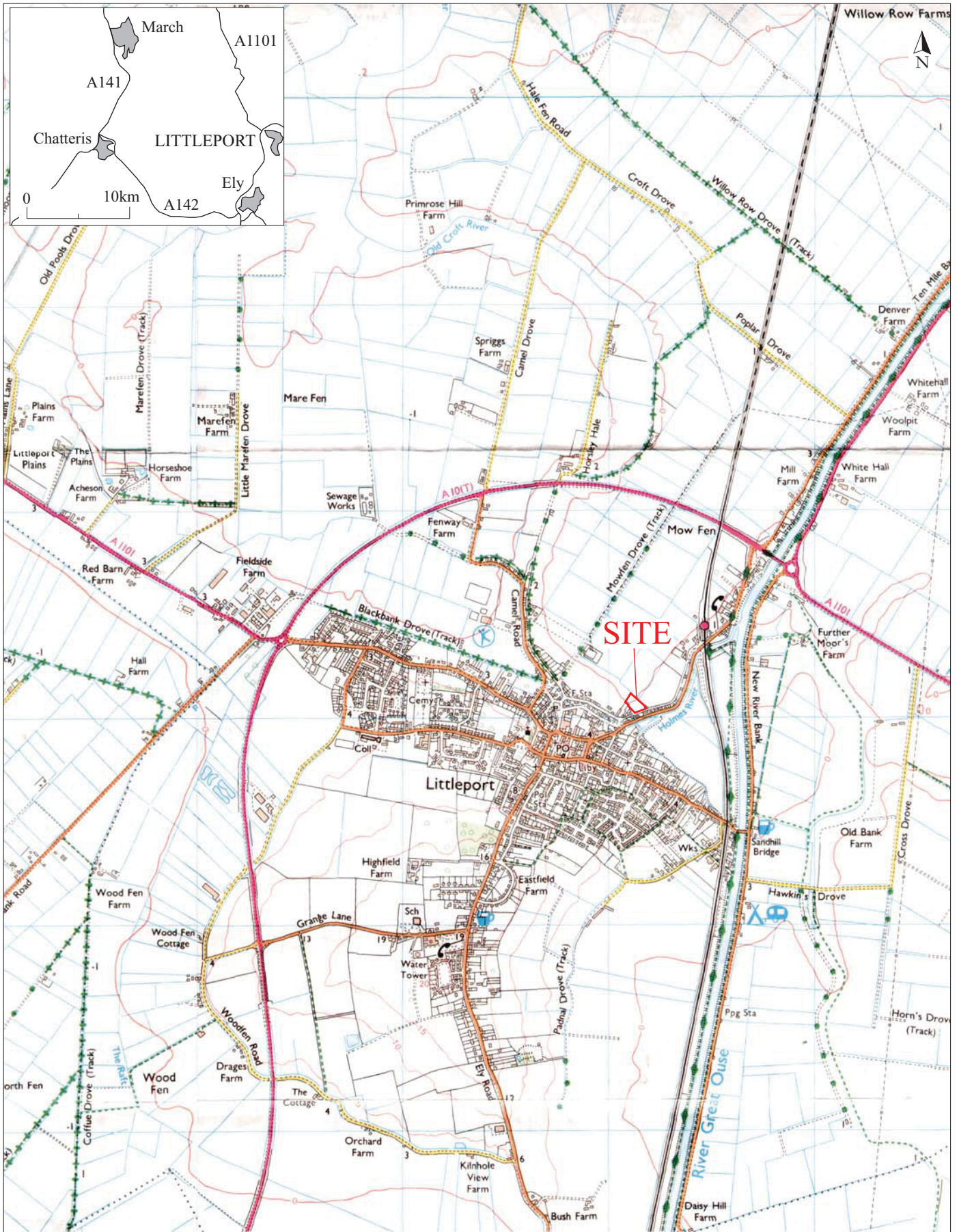
DP19: Ditch F1004 (post-excavation), looking W



DP20: Ditch F1006 (post-excavation), looking S



DP21: Ditch F1008 (post-excavation), looking SW

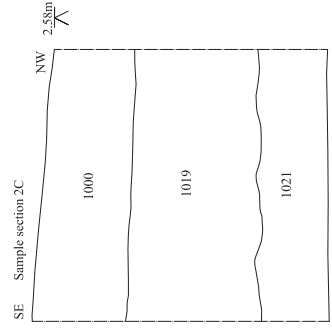
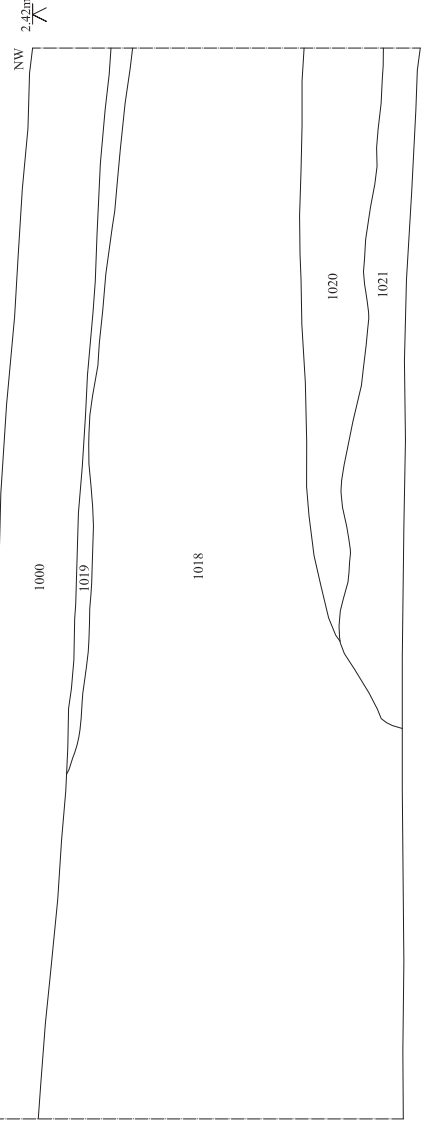
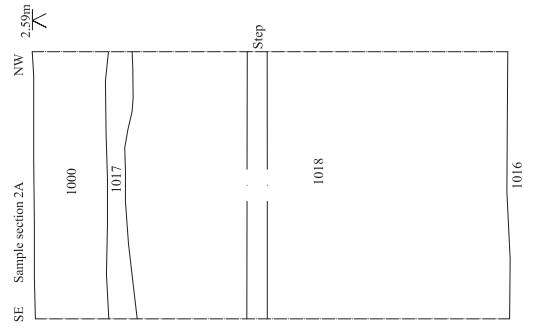
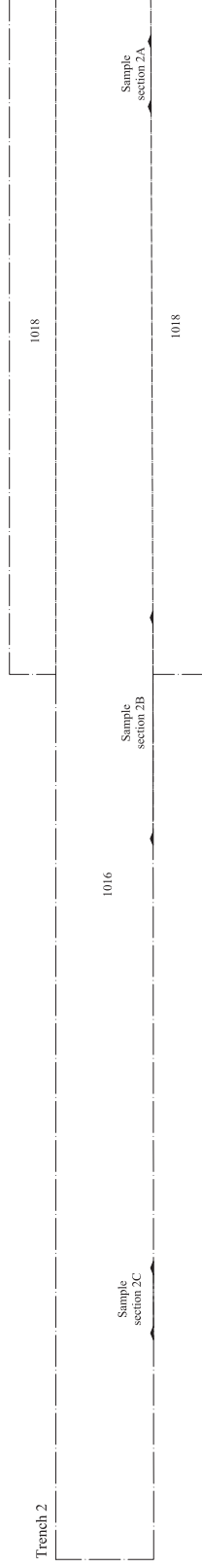
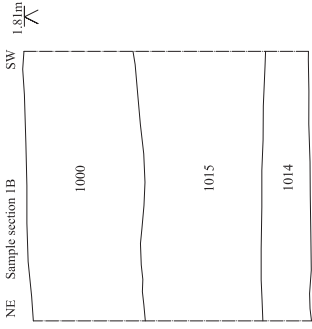
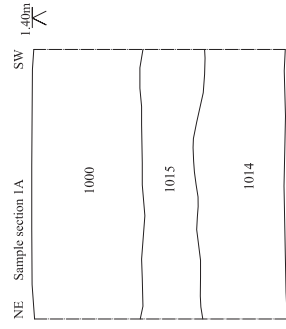
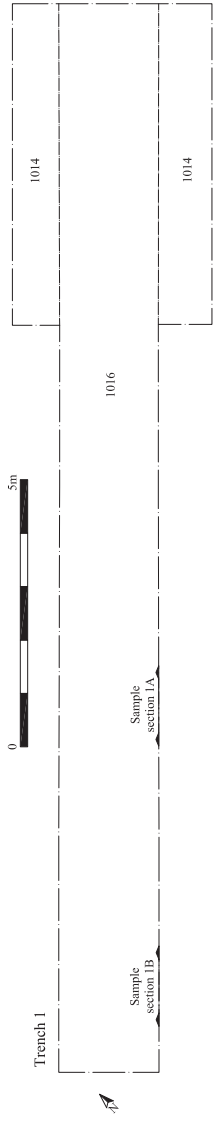


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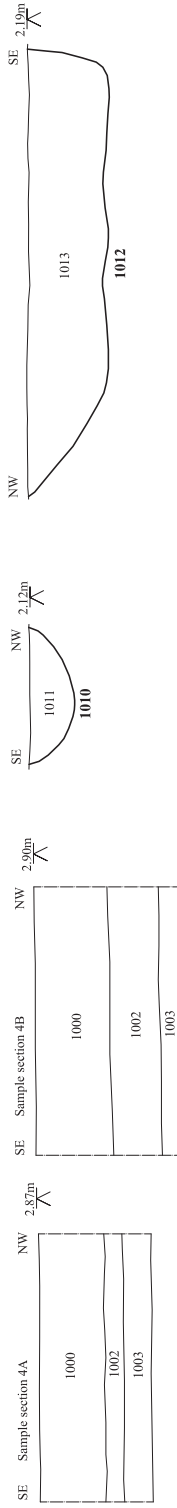
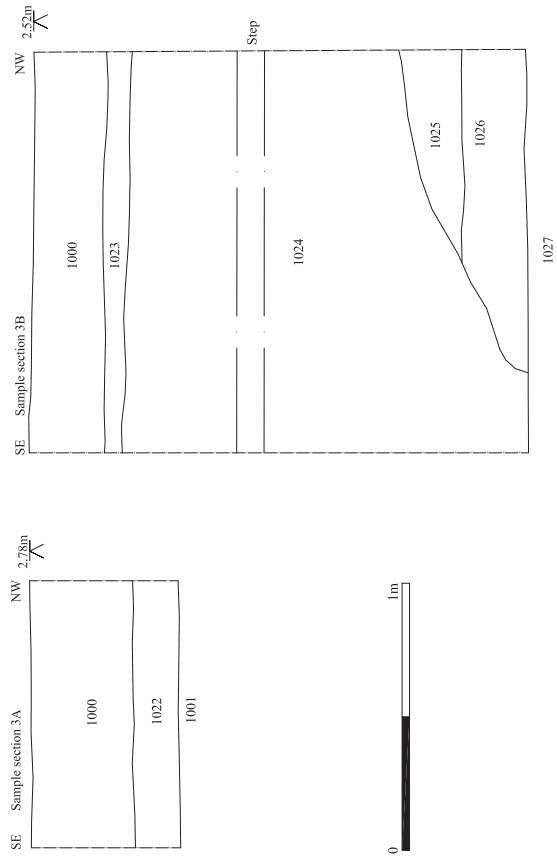
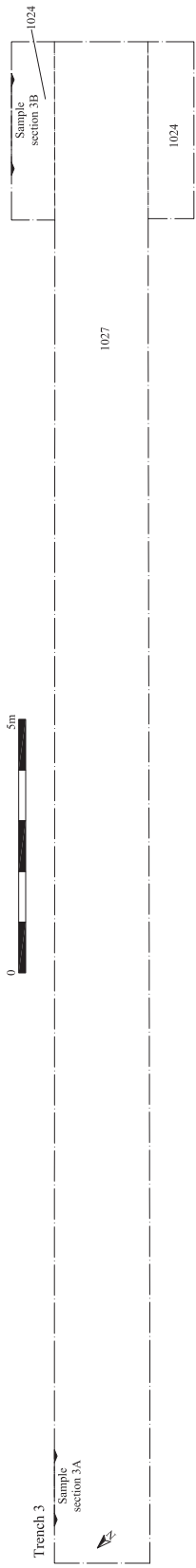
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



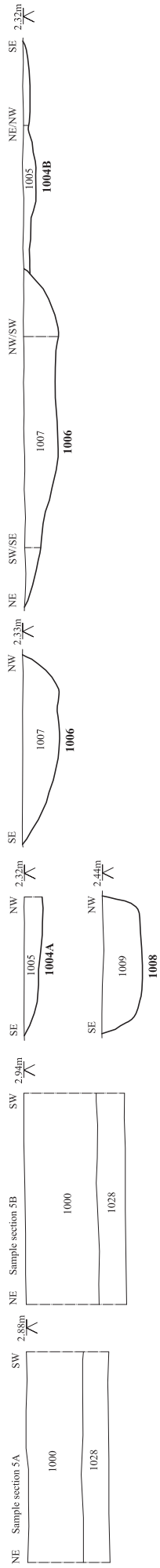
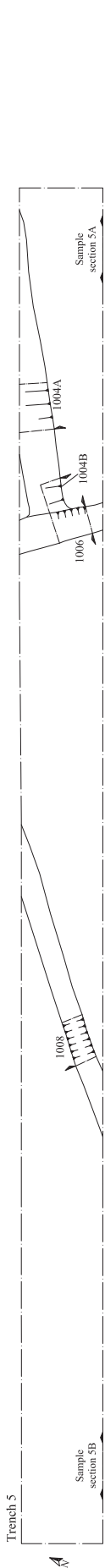
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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
Scale 1:1000 at A4



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Fig. 3 Trench plans and sections
 Scale 1:100 and 1:20 at A3



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Fig. 4 Trench plans and sections
 Scale 1:100 and 1:20 at A3



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Fig. 5 Trench plans and sections
 Scale 1:100 and 1:20 at A3