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**LAND BETWEEN THE RAILWAY LINE, ST NEOTS  
BYPASS AND POTTON ROAD, ST NEOTS,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY**

Authors: Mark Blagg-Newsome Dr David Bescoby Andrew Peachey (Background research)	
NGR: TL 1902 5837	Report No: 5209
District: Huntingdonshire	Site Code: ECB 4785
Approved: Claire Halpin MCIfA	Project No: 6706
	Date: 14th September 2016

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*Geophysical surveys*  
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*Post excavation analysis*  
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## OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

<b>Project details</b>			
Project name	<i>Land between the railway line, St Neots Road and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire</i>		
<p><i>In September 2016, Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a magnetic gradiometer survey on 4.15 hectares of land between the railway line, St Neots Bypass and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 1902 5837). The survey was commissioned to inform and support a planning application for a proposed residential development of 79 dwellings on the site.</i></p> <p><i>The survey identified four positive trending linear anomalies (1-4) that are of potential archaeological significance. A further positive anomaly was observed in the west of the survey area that corresponds to an historic field boundary (5). A series of parallel positive linear responses of varying amplitudes can be seen in the data (6), which may represent ploughed-out medieval ridge and furrow, or alternatively, may represent modern plough marks.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	September 2016		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work	<i>Trial Trenching</i>
P. number	6706	Site code	<i>ECB 4785</i>
Type of project	<i>Geophysical Survey</i>		
Site status	-		
Current land use	<i>Agricultural</i>		
Planned development	<i>Residential</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<p><i>Four linear anomalies, inc. one ring-ditch feature of probable archaeological origin (1-4)</i></p> <p><i>One positive anomaly representing an historic field boundary (5)</i></p> <p><i>Series of varying amplitude positive linear anomalies which may represent medieval ridge and furrow or modern plough marks (6)</i></p>		
Significant finds (+dates)	-		
<b>Project location</b>			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Cambridgeshire</i>	<i>Huntingdonshire</i>	<i>Eynesbury Hardwicke</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Record</i>		
Post code (if known)	-		
Area of site	<i>4.15ha</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 1902 5837</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>c.20/30m AOD</i>		
<b>Project creators</b>			
Brief issued by	<i>Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team</i>		
Project supervisor/s	<i>Mark Blagg-Newsome</i>		
Funded by	<i>The Banks Trustees</i>		
Full title	<i>Land between the railway line, St Neots Road and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire</i>		
Authors	<i>Blagg-Newsome, M. Bescoby, D. and Peachey, A.</i>		
Report no.	<i>5209</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>September 2016</i>		

# LAND BETWEEN THE RAILWAY LINE, ST NEOTS BYPASS AND POTTON ROAD, ST NEOTS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

## GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

### SUMMARY

*In September 2016, Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a magnetic gradiometer survey on 4.15 hectares of land between the railway line, St Neots Bypass and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 1902 5837). The survey was commissioned to inform and support a planning application for a proposed residential development of 79 dwellings on the site.*

*The survey identified four positive trending linear anomalies (1-4) that are of potential archaeological significance. A further positive anomaly was observed in the west of the survey area that corresponds to an historic field boundary (5). A series of parallel positive linear responses of varying amplitudes can be seen in the data (6), which may represent ploughed-out medieval ridge and furrow, or alternatively, may represent modern plough marks.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2016, Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a magnetic gradiometer survey on 4.15 hectares of land between the railway line, St Neots Bypass and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 1902 5837). The survey was commissioned to inform and support a planning application for a proposed residential development of 79 dwellings on the site. based on the advice of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET).

1.2 The survey was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by CCC HET (26th April 2016), and a specification compiled by AS (26th July 2016) and approved by CCC HET. The geophysical survey was carried out in accordance with the Historic England document *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008), and ClfA, *The use of Geophysical Techniques in Archaeological Evaluations and ClfA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey* (2014).

#### *Objectives*

1.3 The investigation of the site by geophysical survey was designed to determine the nature, extent and significance of sub-surface features in order to inform and target further trial trench evaluation of the site.

## *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**

2.1 The site is located on the south-eastern edge of St Neots, bounded to the west by the main railway line, to the south by the St Neots Bypass and to the north east by Potton Road. It is a field in arable use, with a dense tree belt along its southern and north eastern edges. The open area of the field extends to some 4.15ha.

2.2 The site lies at c.20-30m AOD, sloping upwards to the north east. The solid geology is Oxford Clay, with superficial Ouse valley gravels to the west.

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

3.1 The site lies within an area of archaeological potential, where known extensive evidence of multi-period landscape activity is present dating from the prehistoric and Romano-British periods.

3.2 Mesolithic activity has been recorded close to the site but appears restricted to the areas of gravel immediately adjacent to watercourses, with a Mesolithic flint working site and flint artefacts recorded c.800m to the west adjacent to the River Great Ouse (HER 00377, 10198A and ECB1535), and Mesolithic perforated hammer-stones c.800m to the north adjacent to the Hen Brook, a tributary of the River Great Ouse (HER 00404). Further Mesolithic implements have been found elsewhere in the vicinity of the site (HER 00514).

3.3 Prehistoric monuments are present on the terrace gravels of the Ouse to the west. Archaeological investigations and aerial photographic assessments (HER ECB1649, EBB2432 and ECB1641) have identified an area of monumental ceremonial and funerary Neolithic activity. The most significant element of this landscape comprises a cursus monument with eastern, southern and northern sections (HER 06150, MCB17676 and 11671). A long barrow (HER00381), hengiform ring ditch (HER 00376), field system (HER 05689), and flint scatter (HER 10198B) have also been recorded. A flint scatter of Neolithic/Bronze Age date has also been recorded (HER 00447), as have possible Neolithic features at Ernulf School (HER MCB17395), a double enclosure (HER MCB17697) and Neolithic pits (HER MCB17698).

3.4 Monumental and settlement archaeology of Bronze Age date has, like the Neolithic evidence, also been recorded on the river gravels of the River Great Ouse. Bronze Age ring ditches have been recorded by excavation (HER 10198; MCB15828) and as cropmarks (HER 637; 00367), while urned and unurned cremations (HER MCB17703; 00381; 11671), and an enclosure and flint scatter (HER MCB17704 and 00447) have also been recorded.

3.5 Iron Age pottery, postholes and features have been recorded under the area of the Tesco superstore (HER 10198, MCB15825 and ECB323). Finds of this date have been made in the area of the Brickhills Estate (HER 00403A). Eynesbury Fields is the location of an extensive early Iron Age to Roman enclosure system and possible hengiform monument (HER 05689). Late Bronze Age to Iron Age features have been recorded at Barford Road (HER MCB15831) and a late a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pit alignment has been recorded to the west (HER MCB17704). Other finds include pottery (HER10198C).

3.6 Investigations in advance of proposed development to the north east of the current site have revealed an extensively utilised Iron Age/Roman landscape, with rural settlements and agricultural exploitation (HER ECB3024). Cropmarks adjacent to the current excavation area were shown to be more extensive than previously thought, and may extend into the current development area (HER09972).

3.7 Roman agricultural ditches and a trackway have been recorded to the west of the assessment site (HER 116174, MCB15950 and MCB17705), but the principal area of Roman activity appears to be to the north of the

assessment site, moving away from the floodplain and on to the higher slopes of the river valley. Nonetheless, rural occupation evidence (HER 00403, ECB631, 11671A and 10898) may relate to a villa estate further to the west. Bronze coins of Vespasian (HER 00385), residual sherds of Roman pottery recovered in 1984 during field walking prior to the construction of the A428 (HER ECB2017), earthworks and pottery of Roman date (HER 00617), pottery (HER 101198D) also represent Roman activity in the area.

3.8 Anglo-Saxon Sunken Featured Buildings and a cemetery have been recorded to the west (HER 10198E and MCB17706). Other features have been recorded at Berkeley Street (HER MCB17687) and further SFBs and associated activity at Eynesbury Hardwicke (HER MCB19113)

3.9 The medieval period is represented by a building of this date (HER 00402) and evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation (HER10198F; MCB17211; MCB18827; HER ECB2121)

3.10 The site thus has a potential for further remains of Iron Age/Romano-British landscape activity, and also preceding Neolithic/ Bronze Age activity.

## 4 METHOD OF WORK

### *Introduction*

4.1 The magnetic survey was performed using a dual sensor Grad601-2 Magnetic gradiometer manufactured by Bartington instruments Ltd. The gradiometer measures small distortions in the earth's magnetic field caused by the presence of magnetically susceptible buried objects. The instrument is capable of detecting changes in magnetic field strength of the order of 0.1 nanoTesla (nT) in the field.

### *Survey Methodology*

4.2 Grid squares measuring 30m x 30m were set out across the entirety of the survey area, forming a grid network – see **Fig. 3**. The exact spatial location of the survey grid was recorded using a Leica GS09 GPS smart rover. Geophysical data were collected systematically in a zig-zag pattern within each grid square along traverses spaced at 1 m apart. The gradiometers were configured to record measurements at 0.25m intervals along each traverse, giving a total of 3600 measurements per grid square.

### *Data Processing*

4.3 The remedial processing of the data can enhance anomalous responses caused by potential archaeological features and eliminate magnetic noise from natural/modern sources. Data processing also allows for the correction of spatial errors introduced during the survey and inherent



instrument heading errors. The survey data were processed using Terrasurveyor LITE software, where the following data processing routines were applied:

Destripe: Removal of striping effects from the raw data caused by discrepancies between different sensors and walking directions.

Destagger: Correction of the displacement of anomalies caused by alternate zig-zag traverses.

Compress: Weak anomalies of archaeological interest were further enhanced by applying an arctangent weighing to the data, accentuating small magnetic responses. The data were further clipped to a range of -0.5nT and +0.5nT.

Interpolation: Finally the overall appearance of the data were improved (smoothed) by adding interpolated data points between each traverse using a binomial function.

#### *Display and interpretation*

4.4 The processed data are displayed as a greyscale magnetic map (**Fig. 5**) and the interpretation of anomalous magnetic responses undertaken manually with recourse to documented responses from subsequently excavated features along with reference to Cambridgeshire HER and historic map data. A graphical interpretative plan of the site identifying potential archaeological features (**Fig. 6**) was then produced in AutoCAD LT2015.

## **5 RESULTS**

5.1 The unprocessed data from the magnetic survey are shown in **Fig. 4**, displayed as an x-y trace plot indicating the overall range of magnetic values recorded within the study area. The processed data, following the application of the data processing methodology described in 4.3 above, is shown in **Fig. 5**. The processed data revealed some anomalous responses of potential archaeological significance, the interpretation of which is described below.

#### *Interpretation*

5.2 The survey revealed a number of low amplitude, positive linear responses (**1-3, Fig. 6**) in the central and eastern portions of the site, as well as a single weakly positive curvilinear response (**4**). These magnetic responses would appear to indicate surviving infilled cut features of potential archaeological origin and feature (**4**) could correspond to the partially surviving remains of a ring ditch type feature.

### *Historic Boundaries*

5.3 A positive, linear response (**5**) running NW-SE for c.62m was revealed in the west of the site, approximately 55m west of anomaly (**1**). This anomalous response is consistent with a field boundary seen in historic mapping between 1800 and 1924 (**Figs 7-10**). In OS Maps from 1889 to 1924 (**Figs 8-10**) the original field boundary is shortened to half the width of the field, which is consistent with the observed survey data.

### *Agricultural Features*

5.4 A series of close set, parallel positive responses of varying amplitudes and lengths are recorded in the data, running NE-SW c.8m apart and between c.54 and 153m in length (**6**). These linear anomalies are likely to represent the ploughed-out remnants of medieval ridge and furrow, examples of which were recorded to the south of the survey area during the installation of a water pipeline in 2005-6 (Peachey 2011; HER ECB2121). However, the direction of modern agricultural activity on the site corresponds with these anomalies, which could also be derived modern plough ruts.

5.5 A number of linear responses were recorded that would appear to relate to modern field drainage, labelled (**7**) in **Fig. 6**. Five run broadly N-S at a spacing of c.27-30m, intersecting with a broadly E-W anomaly in the southern portion of the site

5.6 Three further linear anomalies (**8**), with a faint alternating pattern of both positive and negative responses, run across the site on a NW-SE alignment. This type of alternating positive/ negative response suggests these features relate to some form of pipe trench.

### *Modern Disturbance*

5.7 The data displayed a number of strong magnetic responses derived from modern sources (**Fig. 6**) which are described below.

5.8 Five areas of increased magnetic noise have been identified as probable disturbed ground in the east, south-east corner and south-western parts of the site (**9**). These most likely represent modern disturbance of the topsoil.

5.9 Two areas of strong bipolar responses can be seen in the south-east and south-west corners of the survey area (**10** and **11**). The largest response in the south-west (**10**) represents a modern gas pipeline running NW-SE for c.86m. The large 'halo' effect produced by this pipeline could mask the visibility of weaker archaeological anomalies in this area of the site. The second bipolar response in the south-east of the site (**11**), aligned N-S for c.33m, produced no halo effect, so is less likely to be masking other potential archaeological anomalies in this area. This bipolar response is probably the result of a modern service being placed in the bottom of an existing field boundary and then backfilled, as this anomaly corresponds in alignment with

a field boundary observed in this part of the field in the Eynesbury Inclosure and OS Maps between 1800 to 1983 (**Figs 7-12**).

5.10 Along the western-most boundary running NE-SW, is another large bipolar response (**12**) caused by the site's proximity to a metal fence and railway line. It is possible that the large halo effect produced by this boundary disguises potential weaker archaeological responses.

5.11 Numerous high amplitude magnetic spikes can be seen in the data (**13**). Each of these discrete magnetic spikes consists of a well defined dipolar response. Their high amplitudes suggest the presence of ferrous debris in the plough soil.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 The geophysical survey identified a number of magnetic anomalies that appear to be of archaeological origin. Concentrated mainly in the central and eastern parts of the survey area, four potential features of archaeological origin are represented by positive linear trending anomalies synonymous with infilled ditch type features (**1-4**).

6.2 A further positive linear trending anomaly in the western portion of the site (**5**) is consistent with an historic ditch boundary observed in the Eynesbury Inclosure and OS Maps between 1800 to 1924 (**Figs 7-10**).

6.3 A series of close set, parallel positive responses of varying amplitudes and lengths were recorded in the data (**6**), which could represent the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation. However, the direction of modern agricultural activity on the site corresponds with these anomalies, which could also be derived modern plough ruts. A network of seemingly modern field drains were also recorded (**7**)

6.4 Numerous areas of magnetic disturbance and interference were recorded (**10-13**), which may have had the effect of masking responses from weaker archaeological anomalies in the affected areas of the site.

6.5 In the surveyed areas that are free of magnetic disturbance, the overall magnetic contrasts seen in the data were small, requiring additional data processing (compression) to draw out weaker responses. This would suggest that either the truncation of earlier features has occurred or that site formation processes, and underlying geological and pedological conditions, were not especially conducive to achieving a strong magnetic enhancement of infilling materials.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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AS is pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET).

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Historic England (English Heritage), 2008. *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation*, London, Historic England

Peachey, A. 2011. *Land South of Potton Road, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. Archaeological Solutions Report No. 3707

Chartered Institute For Archaeologists, 2014, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey*. Available online at: [http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CIfAS&GGeophysics\\_1.pdf](http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CIfAS&GGeophysics_1.pdf)

**APPENDIX 1****CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Location</b>
1800	Eynesbury Inclosure Map	-	HALS
1889	1 <sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map, Huntingdonshire Sheet XXV.15	6":1 mile	HALS
1900	Ordnance Survey map, Huntingdonshire Sheet XXV.15	6":1 mile	HALS
1924	Ordnance Survey map, Huntingdonshire Sheet XXV.15	6":1 mile	HALS
1970	Ordnance Survey map, Sheet TL1858-1958	1: 2500	HALS
1983	Ordnance Survey map, TL1958	1: 2500	HALS

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: archaeol7-278095**

### Project details

Project name	Land between the railway line, St Neots Road and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	In September 2016, Archaeological Solutions Ltd carried out a magnetic gradiometer survey on 4.15 hectares of land between the railway line, St Neots Bypass and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 1902 5837). The survey was commissioned to inform and support a planning application for a proposed residential development of 79 dwellings on the site. The survey identified four positive trending linear anomalies (1-4) that are of potential archaeological significance. A further positive anomaly was observed in the west of the survey area that corresponds to an historic field boundary (5). A series of parallel positive linear responses of varying amplitudes can be seen in the data (6), which may represent ploughed-out medieval ridge and furrow, or alternatively, may represent modern plough marks.
Project dates	Start: 01-09-2016 End: 30-09-2016
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	P6706 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4785 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Monument type	LINEARS Uncertain
Monument type	RING DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Geophysical Survey"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Pre-application
Solid geology	Unknown
Drift geology	Unknown
Techniques	Magnetometry

**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE HUNTINGDONSHIRE EYNESBURY HARDWICKE Land between the railway line, St Neots Road and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire
Study area	4.15 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 1902 5837 52.210267193124 -0.257884076178 52 12 36 N 000 15 28 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 20m Max: 30m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team
Project design originator	Jon Murray
Project director/manager	Jon Murray
Project supervisor	Mark Blagg - Newsome

**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Digital Contents	"Survey"
Digital Media available	"Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Paper Contents	"Survey"
Paper Media available	"Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Survey "

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land between the railway line, St Neots Road and Potton Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Blagg-Newsome, M
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Bescoby, D
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Peachey, A
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Entered by                      Sarah Powell ([info@ascontracts.co.uk](mailto:info@ascontracts.co.uk))

Entered on                      2 March 2017

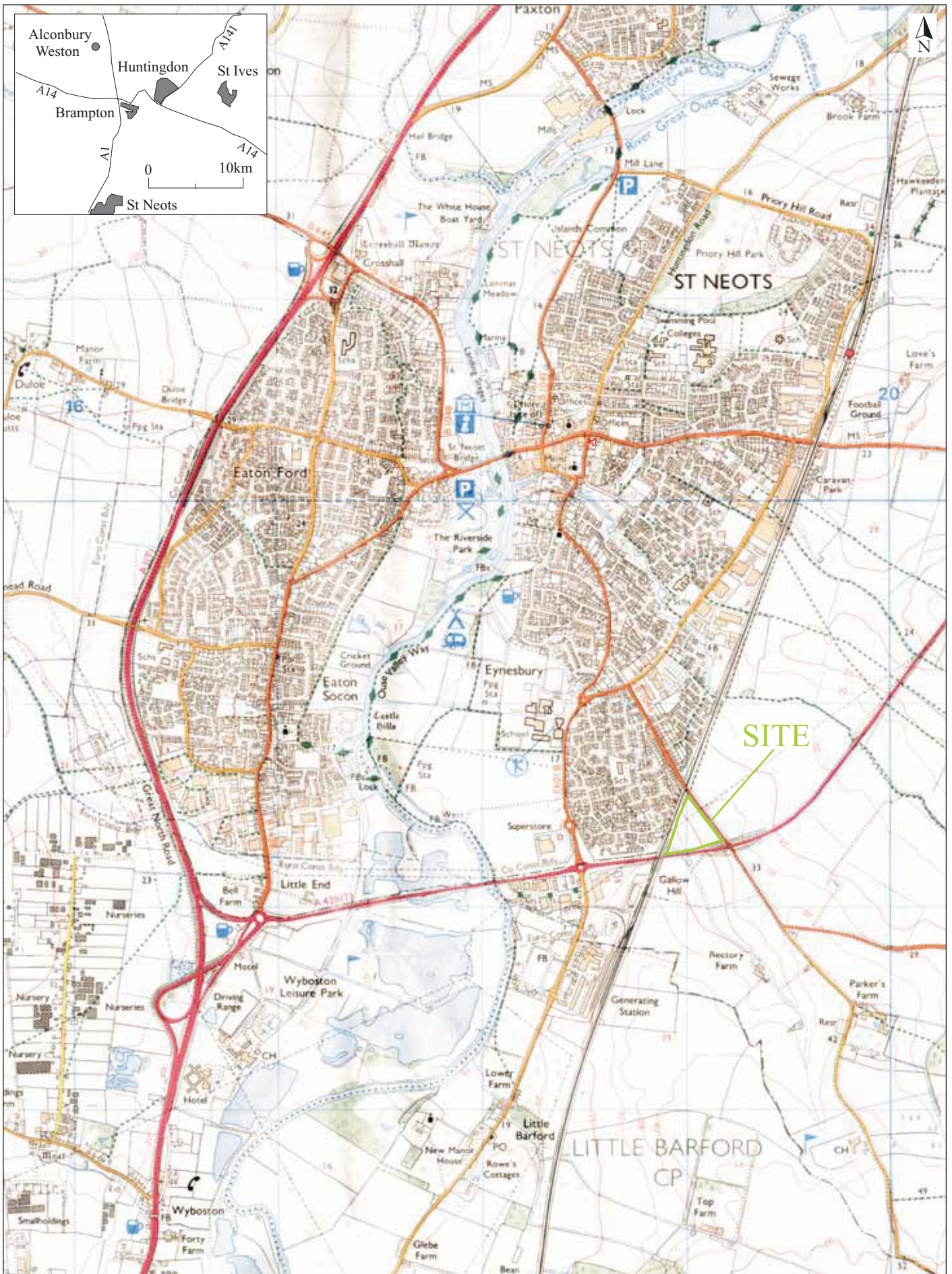
## OASIS:

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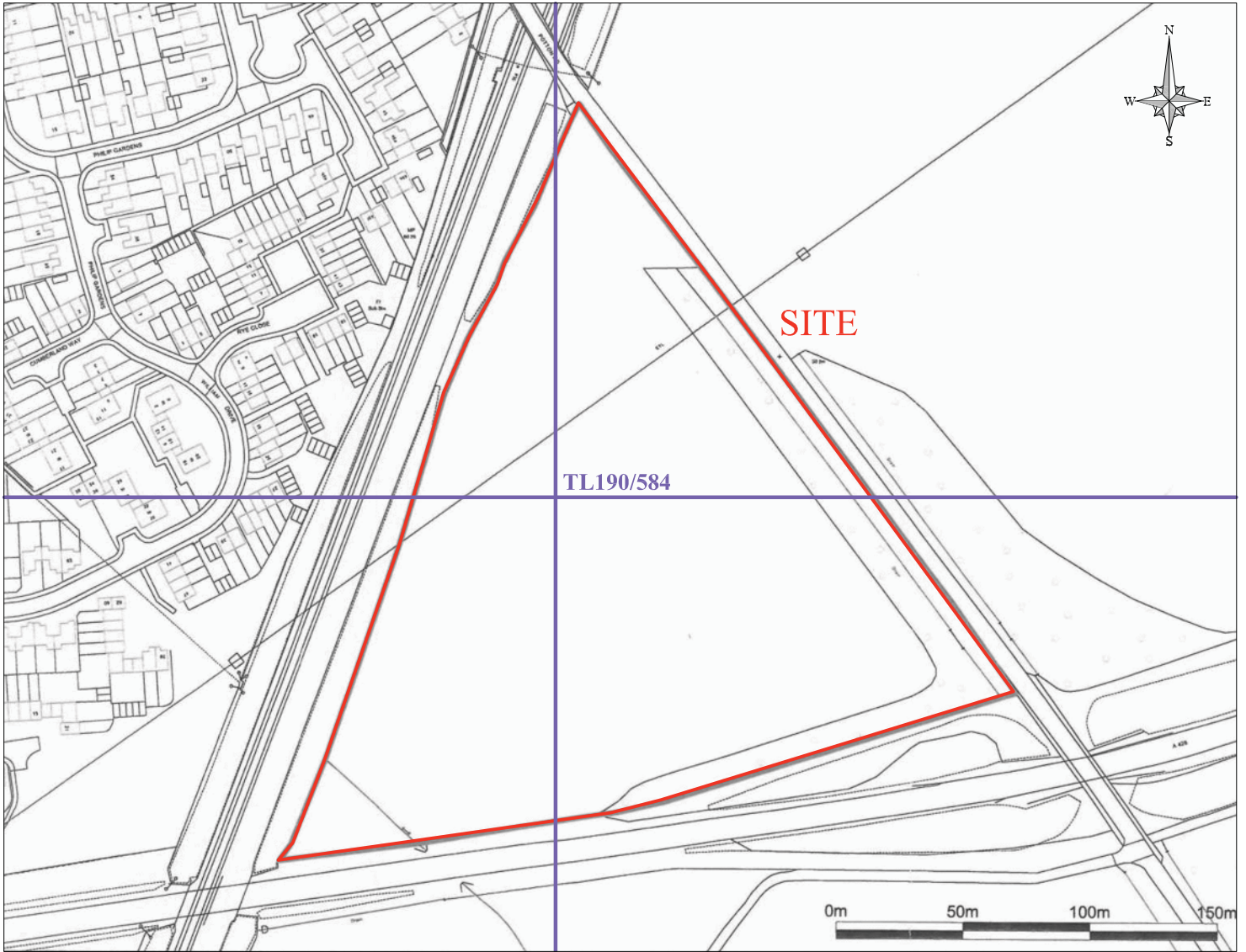
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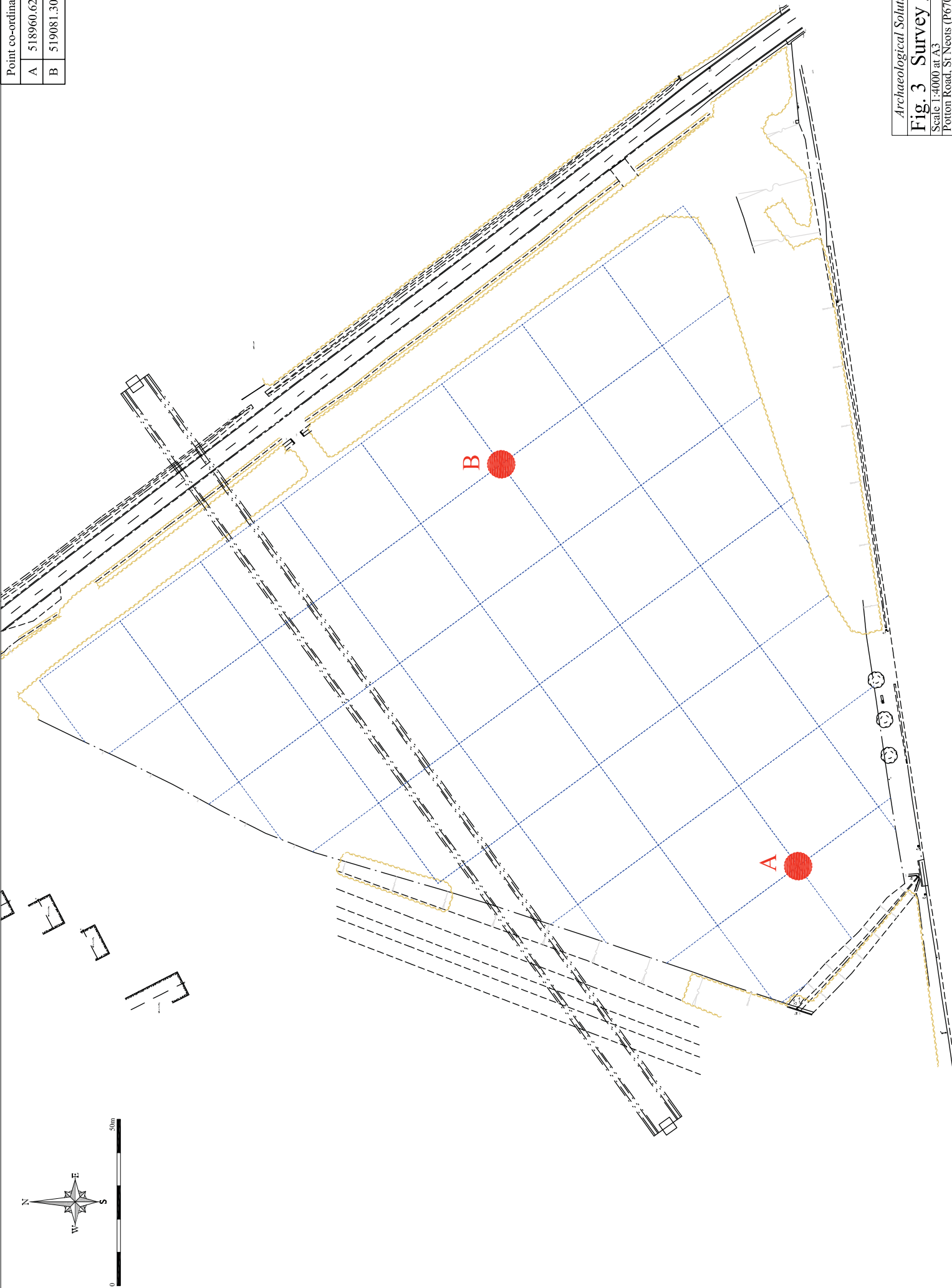
*Archaeological Solutions Ltd*  
**Fig. 1 Site location**  
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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<b>Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan</b>
Scale 1:2500 at A4
Potton Road, St Neots (P6706)

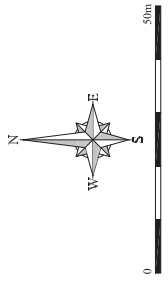
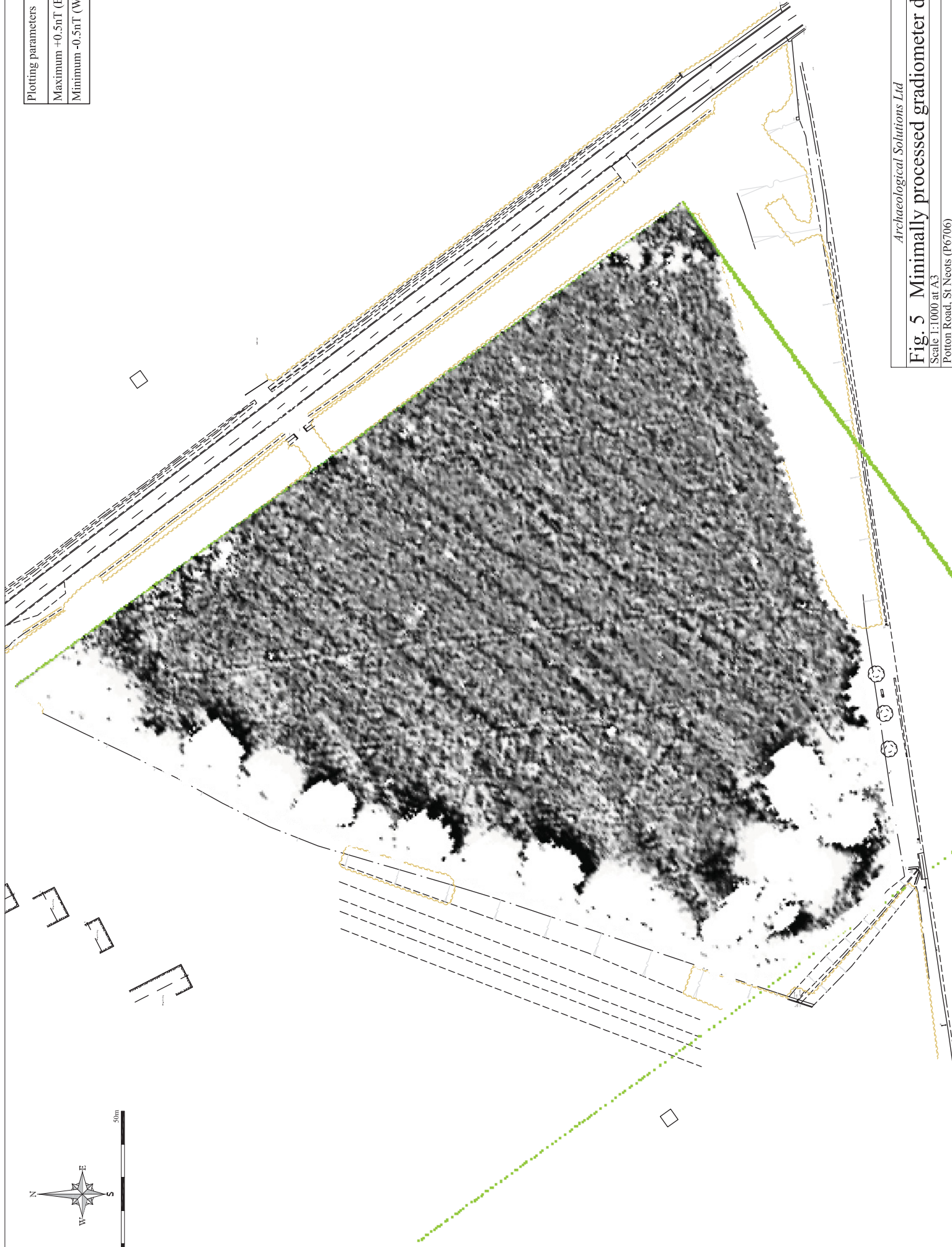
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B	519081.30, 258392.93



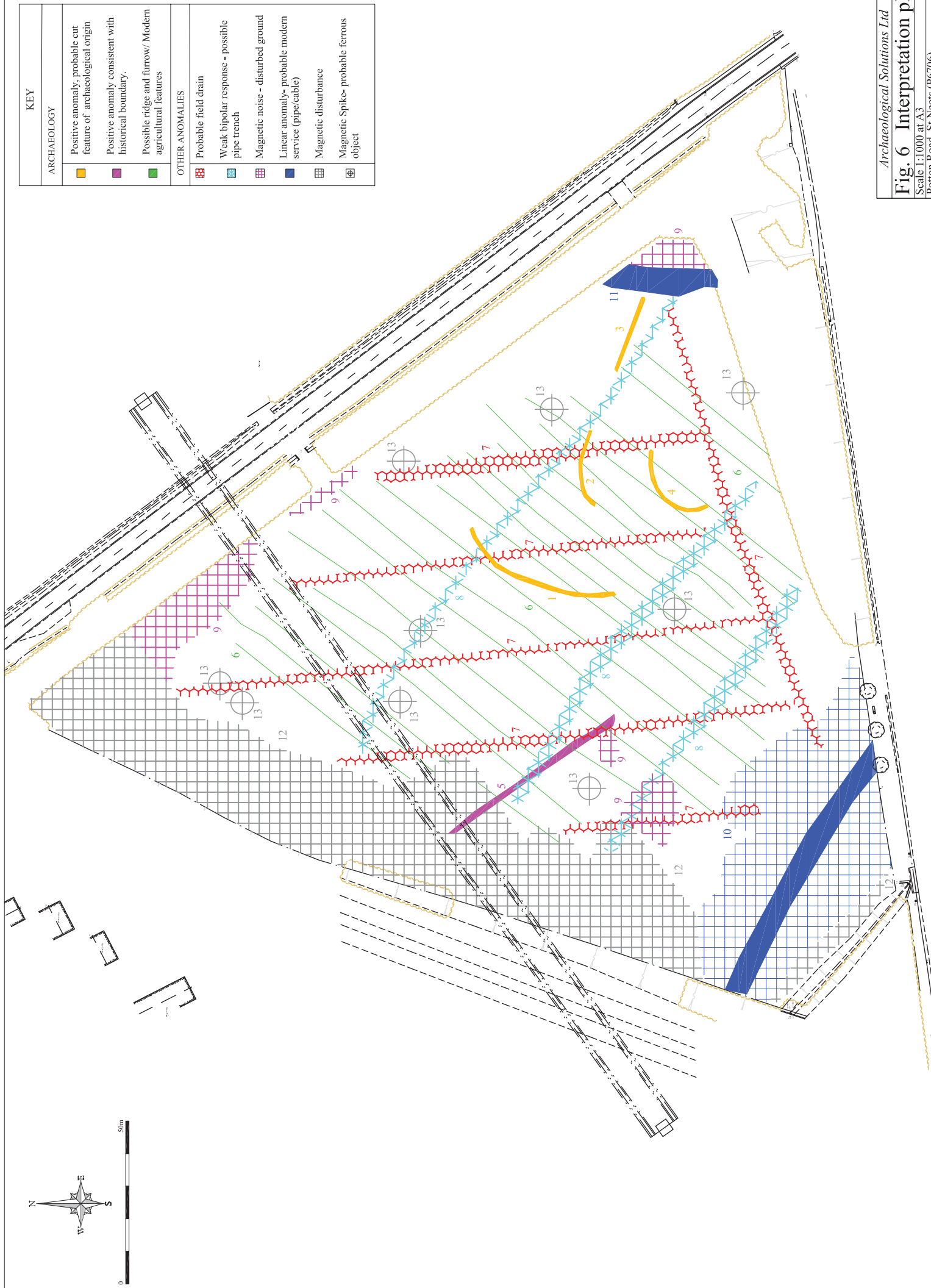
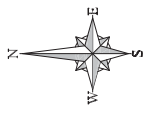


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**Fig. 4 X-Y trace plot of gradiometer data**  
Scale 1:1000 at A3  
Potton Road, St Neots (P6706)

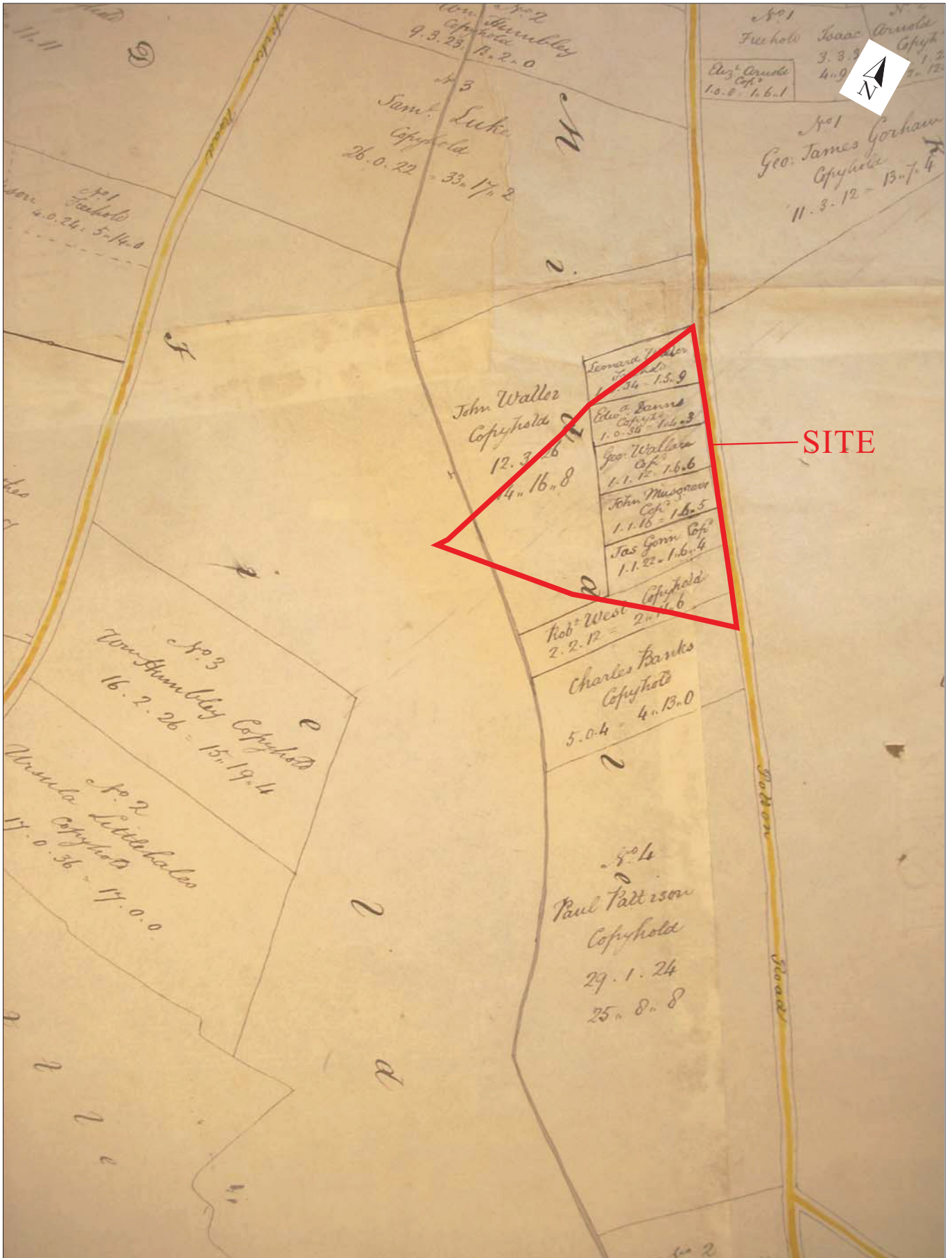
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Minimum -0.5nT (White)



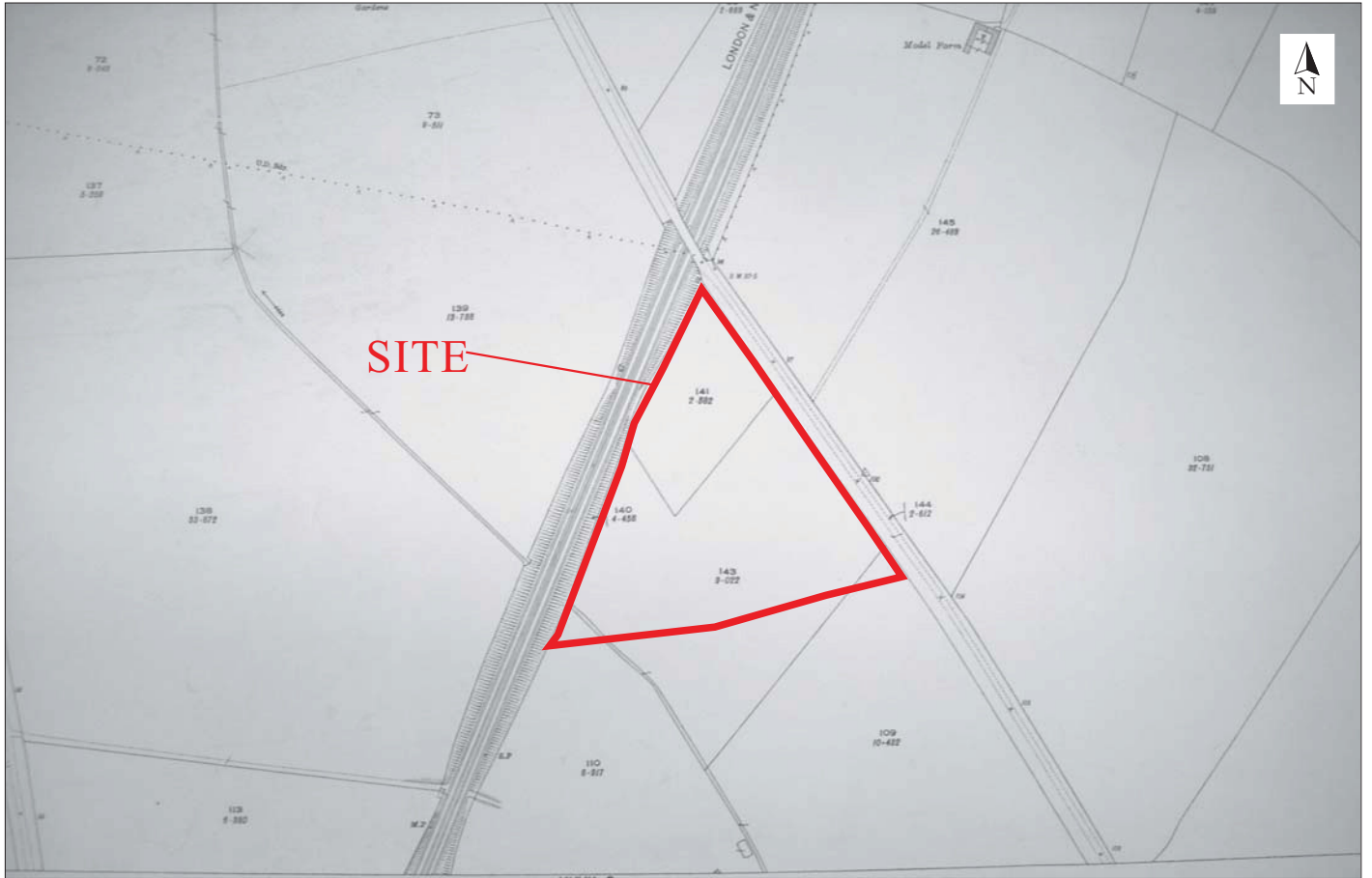
Archaeological Solutions Ltd  
**Fig. 5 Minimally processed gradiometer data**  
 Scale 1:1000 at A3  
 Pottor Road, St Neots (P6706)



KEY	
ARCHAEOLOGY	
	Positive anomaly, probable cut feature of archaeological origin
	Positive anomaly consistent with historical boundary.
	Possible ridge and furrow/ Modern agricultural features
OTHER ANOMALIES	
	Probable field drain
	Weak bipolar response - possible pipe trench
	Magnetic noise - disturbed ground
	Linear anomaly- probable modern service (pipe/cable)
	Magnetic disturbance
	Magnetic Spike- probable ferrous object



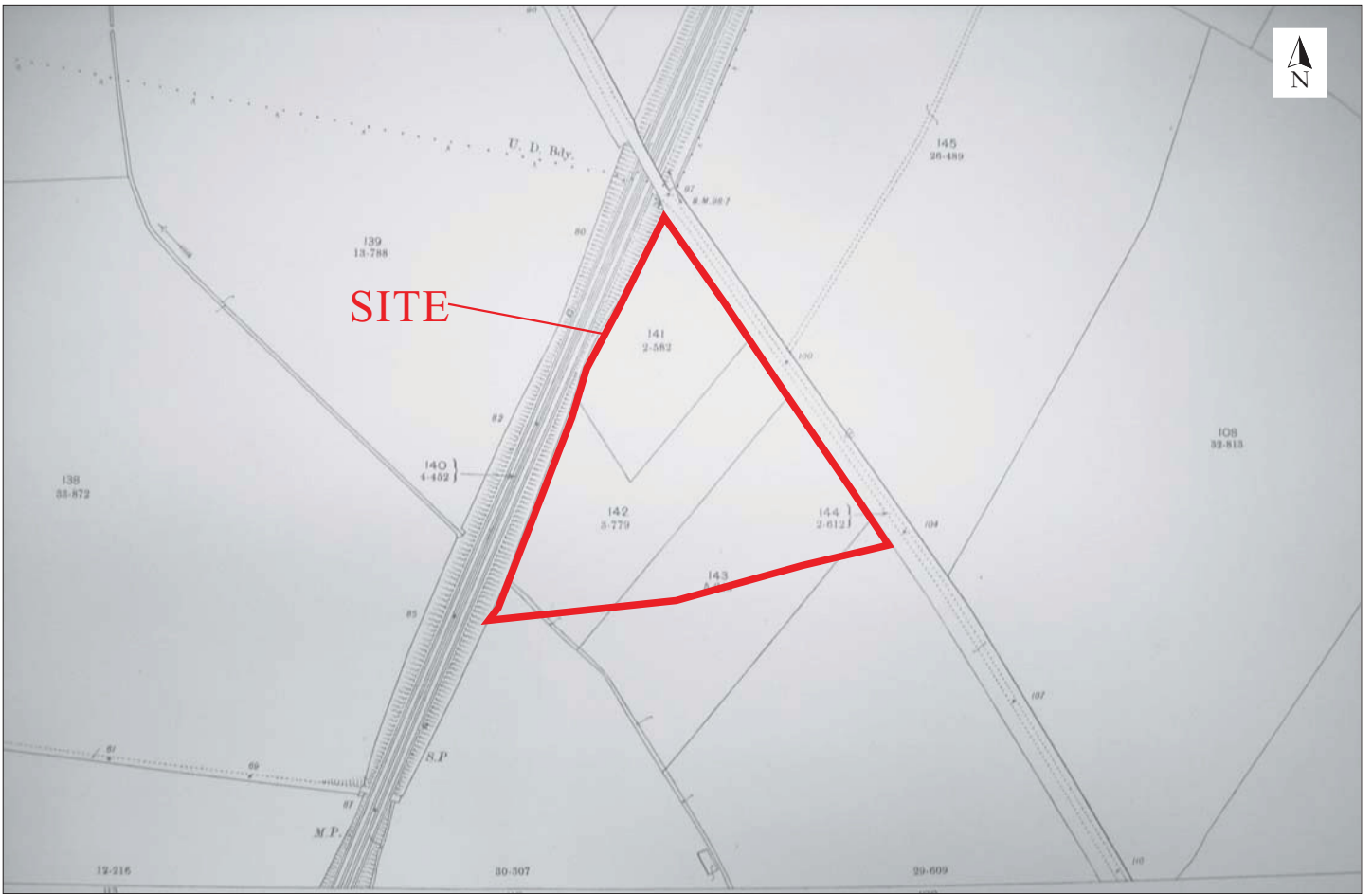
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 Fig. 7 Inclosure map, 1800  
 Not to scale



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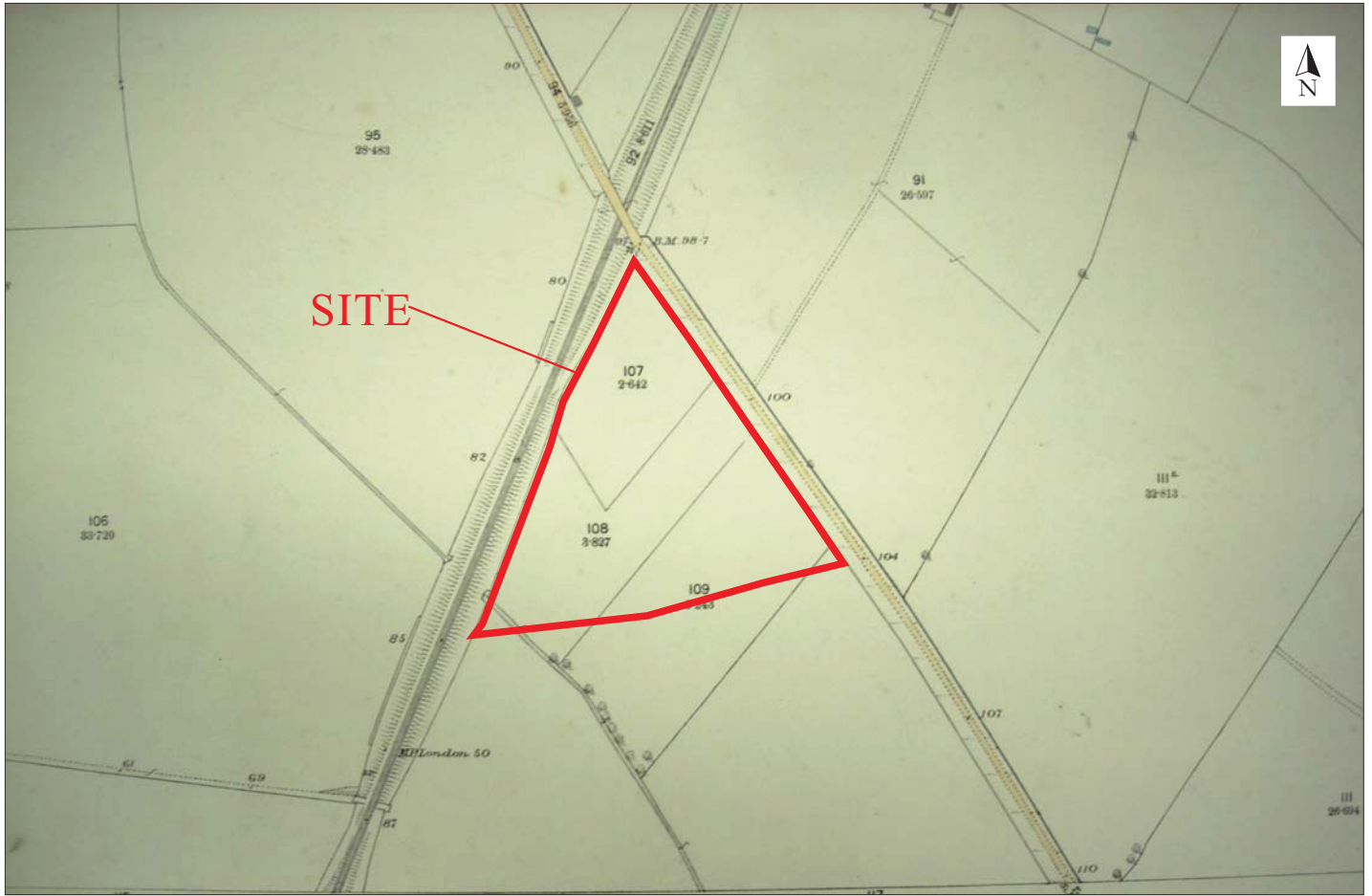
<i>Archaeological Solutions Ltd</i>
<b>Fig. 8 OS map, 1889</b>
Not to scale





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<b>Fig. 9 OS map, 1900</b>
Not to scale



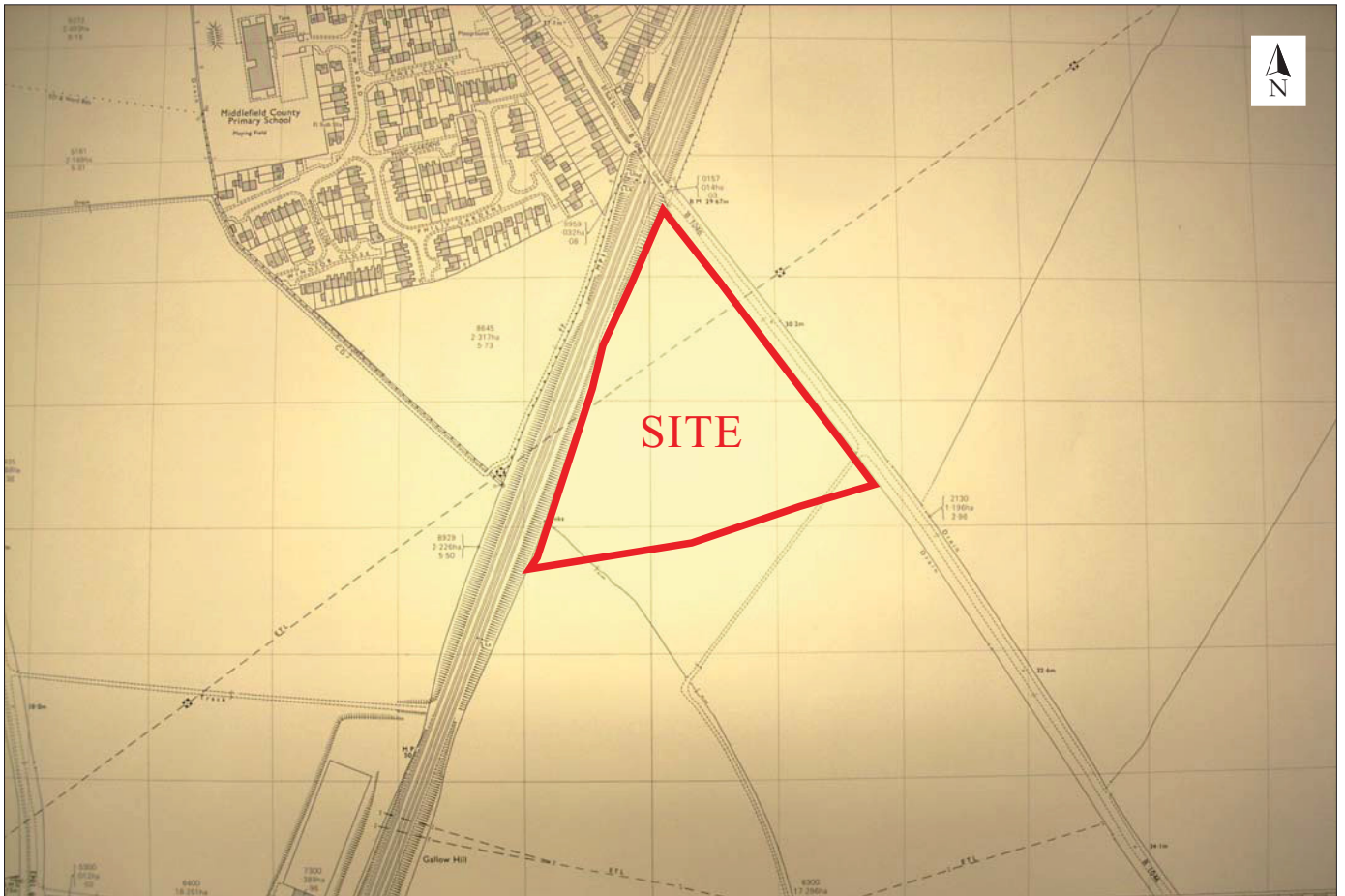
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**Fig. 10 OS map, 1924**  
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<b>Fig. 11 OS map, 1970</b>
Not to scale



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**Fig. 12 OS map, 1983**  
Not to scale