
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**PROPOSED SUPERMARKET, LISLE LANE,
ELY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CHER ECB 3495

Authors: Tim Schofield HND BSc PIFA	
NGR: TL 5475 8030	Report No: 3725
District: East Cambridgeshire	Site Code: AS1379
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 3361
Signed:	Date: January 2011

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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OASIS SUMMARY

Project name	Proposed Sainsbury's store Lisle Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire		
<i>Project description.</i> <i>In January 2011 Archaeological Solutions Ltd conducted a trial trench evaluation on land off Lisle Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire (TL 5475 8030). The evaluation was undertaken in advance of the development of a new supermarket.</i> <i>The site is located on the north-eastern periphery of the historic core of the medieval city and largely served horticultural purposes until the latter half of the 20th century. Demolition work has cleared the modern light industrial units, and only the 1970's chemical works remains standing when the evaluation was undertaken.</i> <i>The trial trench evaluation revealed an undated gully and a modern pit. Modern land drains, terracing, modern building foundations and modern services were all encountered and had caused truncation, but not sufficient that had archaeological features been present they would have been revealed. In fact the made ground layers afforded some protection to the stratigraphy in the south-eastern sector of each terrace where undisturbed fen deposits were recorded. No archaeological remains were present.</i>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	January 17 th -27 th		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	P3361	Site code	AS1379
Type of project	An archaeological evaluation.		
Site status	-		
Current land use	Chemical factory and Industrial estate with associated car parks.		
Planned development	Supermarket with associated car park		
Main features (+dates)	Undated gully, modern pit.		
Significant finds (+dates)	-		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	Cambridgeshire	East Cambridgeshire	Ely Trinity
HER/ SMR for area	Cambridgeshire HER		
Post code (if known)	CB7 4AS		
Area of site	1.87 ha		
NGR	TL 5475 8030		
Height AOD	3-7m AOD		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice (CAPCA)		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	T. Schofield		
Funded by	Sainsburys Stores Ltd		
Full title	Lisle Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Evaluation		
Authors	Schofield, T.		
Report no.	3725		
Date (of report)	January 2011		

LISLE LANE, ELY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

In January 2011 Archaeological Solutions Ltd conducted a trial trench evaluation on land off Lisle Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire (TL 5475 8030). The evaluation was undertaken in advance of the development of a new supermarket.

The site is located on the north-eastern periphery of the historic core of the medieval city and largely served horticultural purposes until the latter half of the 20th century. Demolition work has cleared the modern light industrial units, and only the 1970's chemical works remains standing when the evaluation was undertaken.

The trial trench evaluation revealed an undated gully and a modern pit. Modern land drains, terracing, modern building foundations and modern services were all encountered and had caused truncation, but not sufficient that had archaeological features been present they would have been revealed. In fact the made ground layers afforded some protection to the stratigraphy in the south-eastern sector of each terrace where undisturbed fen deposits were recorded. No archaeological remains were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In January 2011, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) undertook a trial trench evaluation on land off Lisle Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire (TL 5475 8030; Figs.1-2). The evaluation was commissioned by Henry Riley LLP on behalf of Sainsburys Stores Ltd. It was required by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA; as advisors to the local planning authority), as a condition attached to planning consent (09/00420/FUM and 09/00427/CAC).

1.2 The site measures 1.87 ha, and is situated on the north-eastern periphery of Ely. An archaeological desk-based assessment had been undertaken (Sutcliffe 2009).

1.3 The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by CAPCA (dated 27th October 2010), and a specification compiled by AS (dated 5th November 2010), and approved by CCC CAPCA. The project followed the procedures outlined in the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*, and *Standards 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).

1.4 The principal objectives of the evaluation was to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. An adequate representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains are potentially threatened was studied, and attention was given to sites and remains of all periods. The evaluation also sought to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and hence assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits and surviving structures of archaeological significance.

Planning Context

1.5 PPS5 states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The Planning Policy Statement 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. It aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. It states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment and to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past, and to make this publicly available, should be taken, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The historic cathedral city of Ely occupies a prominent island position within the otherwise broad flat expanse of the fens. Centuries of land reclamation have drained the wetlands that formerly characterised this area and provided the uplands with their competitive edge. Despite some important industrial development, particularly following expansion during the past half century, the modern city closely follows the medieval layout.

2.2 The site is located on the north-east outskirts of Ely, in the former Isle of Ely District, now in the county of Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1). Cambridge is located c. 23km to the south and the port of King's Lynn lies a further 48km to the north; these two important trading and cultural centres were historically accessible via the Great Ouse and its tributary the river Cam.

2.3 The built-up area of the city encompasses approximately 1 square mile; the site lies just on the perimeter of this, in an area comprised of residences and light industrial premises. Encompassing some 1.87 ha, the site is roughly trapezoid in plan with its long axis aligned south-west to north-east. It is

contained and accessed via two roads: Lisle Lane (formerly known as Bull Lane), running north-east to south-west, demarcates the western boundary and Cresswells Lane, running north-west to south-east provides the southern limit (Fig. 2). The majority of buildings on the site had been demolished at the time of the evaluation.

3 THE EVIDENCE

3.1 Topography, geology and soils

3.1.1 Ely occupies an 'island' of higher ground some 25m above the level of the surrounding low lying fens, historically very marshy and rich in peat. The significance of this upland location is demonstrated in the choice of place-name: the suffix '-y' is derived from Old English and means island; the first element attests the former prevalence of the eel in fenland waters and its high significance for the inhabitants of Ely (Ekwell 1960, 166).

3.1.2 The site lies at an uppermost elevation of 10m along Lisle Lane, demarcated by a contour line on the modern OS map (Fig. 1). A drop of 5m occurs mid way through the site, again demarcated by a contour line running south-west north-east. The lowest elevation of the site on its south-east boundary is unrecorded on the OS map and lies within 200m of the river.

3.1.3 The development site is situated on the west bank of the Ouse and has been terraced with a quantity of made-ground in order to counteract the downward slope of the land toward the river. A minimum height AOD of 3.07 m is located on the south-west limit of the site on Cresswells Lane and a maximum of 7.12 m at the north-east corner on Lisle Lane. Terracing of the site into three discrete areas is also evident.

3.1.4 Owing to the urban nature of the centre of Ely it has yet to be surveyed by the Soil Survey of England and Wales; however, soils in the vicinity are shown to be chiefly of the Hanslope series. This comprises chalky till with slowly permeable calcareous and non-calcareous clayey soils. To the north-west, soils of the Bearstead 1 series occur and are characterized by well drained coarse loamy and sandy soils over sand, with some permeable coarse and fine loamy soils affected by groundwater. Cereals, sugar beet and other arable crops, some horticultural and fruit, have traditionally been supported on these soils. By contrast, to the south-east, the fertile peat soils of Adventurers' 1 and Downholland 1 series occur, requiring ground water management through the use of ditches and pumps; arable farming of cereals, sugar beet, potatoes and field vegetables are currently combined with dairying on the grasslands to the south-west (SSEW 1983).

3.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.2.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment had been undertaken (Sutcliffe 2009). In summary:

On the basis of the archaeological evidence from the surrounding area, the development site has a high potential for revealing remains of medieval and modern date; a lower to moderate potential for Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon remains; and a low potential for prehistoric evidence.

A significant degree of previous truncation to archaeological deposits is likely to have occurred during the construction of the light industrial buildings that formerly occupied the site, and the terracing identified during the site visit. Undisturbed deposits may still exist outside of the footprints of these buildings and their associated service runs.

4 METHODOLOGY (TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION)

4.1 Ten trenches were mechanically excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket under the close supervision of an archaeological Project Officer. Trenches 1 and 3 - 6 measured 20 x 2.10m, Trench 2 measured 15m x 2.10m, Trench 7, 9 and 10 measured 40 x 2.10m and trench 8 measured 35m x 2.10m. Trenches 3 and 4 had to be shortened due to the close proximity of a high pressure water main. The trenches were sited to avoid an area of identified contamination in the central northern part of the site and a main sewer traversing the central part of the site.

4.2 The topsoil and overburden were mechanically excavated and thereafter all further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* record sheets; whole length trench sections were drawn to scale and photographed. The trenches and features were recorded accurately using a Leica 805 Total Station. Soil heaps were scanned for finds and metal detected using a C.Scope CS1220R.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Individual trench descriptions are presented below.

Trench 1 Figs.2-3; DP1

<i>Sample Section. north-east side, south-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 5.37m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.15m	L1000	Reinforced Concrete Road. Light yellow white concrete.
0.15 – 0.33m	L1001	Levelling Layer. Mid orange yellow, loose sand and concrete rubble.
0.33m–0.80m max	L1002	Made Ground. Compact, mottled mid yellow, blue and orange compact silty clay with brick and rubble.
0.80m+	L1003	Alluvial Clay. Light yellow blue and mid yellow orange, compact clay with pockets of water borne gravel.

Description: No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 2 Figs.2-3; DP2

<i>Sample Section; north-east side, south-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 5.30m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.15m	L1000	Reinforced Concrete Road. As above Trench 1.
0.15 – 0.48m	L1001	Levelling Layer. As above Trench 1.
0.48m+	L1003	Alluvial Clay Deposit. As above Trench 1.

Description: Trench 2 contained a modern service pipe, orientated NE/SW. No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 3 Figs.2-3; DP3

<i>Sample Section; north-east side, south-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 4.65m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.40m	L1004	Topsoil. Dark orange brown, sand silt and clay.
0.40 – 0.80m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
0.80 – 0.95m	L1005	Peat. Dark black brown peat.
0.95 – 1.10m	L1011	Alluvial Silt. Mid blue grey compact silt.
1.10 – 1.45m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. Mid grey blue compact silt.
1.45m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: Trench 3 contained a natural hollow (orientated NE/SW) and a land drain orientated N/S. No archaeological finds or features were present.

A natural hollow was revealed in Trench 3 and was at its maximum depth in the centre of the trench. It contained two layers of alluvial silt (L1006 and L1011), the result of a localised flood event. The hollow was overlain by Peat Layer L1005.

Trench 4 Figs.2-3; DP4

<i>Sample Section; south-east side, north-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 3.27m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.10m	L1004	Topsoil. As above Trench 3.
0.10 – 1.20m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
1.20 – 1.35m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
1.35 – 1.55m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
1.55m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: Trench 4 contained two land drains orientated E/W. No archaeological finds or features were present.

Trench 5 Figs.2-3

<i>Sample Section; south-west side, north-east facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 4.35m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.10m	L1001	Levelling Layer. As above Trench 1.
0.10 – 1.20m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
1.20 – 1.35m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
1.35 – 1.55m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
1.55m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: No archaeological finds or features were present within Trench 5.

Trench 6 Figs.2-3; DP5

<i>Sample Section; north-east side, south-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 3.90m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.80m	L1004	Topsoil. As above Trench 3.
0.80 – 1.12m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
1.12 – 1.40m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
1.40 – 1.55m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
1.55m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

<i>Sample Section; south-west end, south-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 2.98m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.32m	L1004	Topsoil. As above Trench 3.
0.32 – 0.64m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.

0.64 – 0.86m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
0.86 – 0.93m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
0.93m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: A modern rubbish pit was present within Trench 6.

Trench 7 Figs.2 & 4; DP6

<i>Sample Section; south-west end, north-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 3.64m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.45m	L1004	Topsoil. As above Trench 3.
0.45 – 0.63m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
0.63 – 0.80m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
0.80 – 0.95m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
0.95m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

<i>Sample Section; north-east end, north-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 5.14m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.45m	L1001	Levelling Layer. As above Trench 1.
0.45 – 0.70m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
0.70 – 1.00m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
1.00 – 1.12m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
1.12m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: No archaeological finds or features were present within Trench 7.

Trench 8 Figs.2 & 4; DP7

<i>Sample Section 9; north-west side, south-east facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 3.34m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1001	Levelling Layer. As above Trench 1.
0.30 – 0.60m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
0.60 – 0.90m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
0.90m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: Two land drains orientated E/W were present within Trench 8. A heavily abraded sherd of post-medieval pottery was present within Peat Layer L1005.

Trench 9 Figs.2 & 4; DP8

<i>Sample Section 10; north-west end, north-east facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 1.38m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1001	Levelling Layer. As above Trench 1.

0.30 – 0.40m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
0.40 – 0.70m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
0.70 – 0.90m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
0.90m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

<i>Sample Section; south-east end, north-east facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 1.05m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1001	Levelling Layer. As above Trench 1.
0.30 – 0.60m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
0.60 – 1.00m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
1.00 – 1.20m	L1009	Made Ground. Mid blue grey, compact clay with concrete rubble.
1.20 – 1.35m	L1010	Peat. Mid red brown, firm peat.
1.35 – 1.60m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
1.60m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: Two land drains orientated E/W and N/S were present within Trench 9. A clay pipe stem fragment was present within Made Ground Layer L1002.

Trench 10 Figs.2 & 4; DP9

<i>Sample Section 12; north-east side, south-west facing.</i> <i>0.00 = 2.78m AOD</i>		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1001	Levelling Layer. As above Trench 1.
0.30 – 0.65m	L1002	Made Ground. As above Trench 1.
0.65 – 1.20m	L1005	Peat. As above Trench 3.
1.20 – 1.60m	L1006	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 3.
1.60m+	L1003	Alluvial Silt. As above Trench 1.

Description: An undated gully (F1007) orientated NW/SE and two land drains orientated E/W and N/S were present within Trench 10.

Gully F1007 (DP10) was linear in plan (2.10+ x 0.62 max x 0.08m) orientated NW/SE. It had shallow sides and a concave base. Its fill, L1008, was a dark brown grey, moderately compact silty peat. No finds were present.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features and finds, excepting that the area between Trenches 1 and 2, and Trenches 5-7 could not be trenched due to the presence of known contamination (Fig.2).

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

7.1 The stratigraphy varied across the site with the presence of three terraces cut into the rise, and parallel with Lisle Lane. The trenches located within each terrace had a broadly similar sequences described below.

Upper Terrace

7.2 The upper (north-western) terrace was present at a height of approximately 5.30m AOD, and contained Trenches 1 and 2. Uppermost was Reinforced Concrete Road Layer L1000 (maximum depth 0.15m). Levelling Layer L1001 underlay the reinforced concrete road (L1000; maximum depth 0.55m). Landscaping was evident within Trench 1 with Made Ground Layer L1002 (depth 0.80m max). L1002 was not present in Trench 2. At the base of the stratigraphic sequence was Alluvial Silt Layer L1003 (maximum depth 0.80m (Trench 1) and 0.55m (Trench 2).

Central Terrace

7.3 Trenches 3 - 7 were located on the central terrace (height approximately 4.50m AOD). Uppermost in Trenches 3 - 4, 6 and the majority of Trench 7 was Topsoil L1004. Trench 5 and the north-western end of Trench 7 were located on a concrete road that bisected the centre of the site. The road surface had been recently removed by a demolition team leaving Levelling Layer L1001 (0.30m thick). Below L1004 and L1001 in all trenches was Made Ground L1002 (maximum depth 1.20m below ground level (Trench 4) and minimum depth 0.63m below ground level (SW end of Trench 7). L1002 may comprise the material derived from the creation of the terraces creation.

7.4 Below Made Ground Layer L1002 was Peat L1005 (maximum thickness 0.30m (Trench 7) and minimum 0.15m (Trenches 3 and 4). Alluvial Silt Layer L1006 was present below Made Ground L1002 (maximum depth 1.55m (Trenches 5 and 6) and minimum depth 0.93m (SW end of Trench 3). At the base of the sequence was Alluvial Silt L1003 (maximum depth 1.55m (Trenches 4, 5 and 6).

Lower Terrace

7.5 The lower (south-eastern) terrace was at a height of approximately 3.20m AOD, Trenches 8, 9 and 10 were located here. This area was used previously as a car park and is susceptible to flooding annually.

7.6 Uppermost was Levelling Layer L1001 (depth 0.30m below the ground surface), the associated tarmac surface having been removed by the demolition

team. Peat L1005 was present below L1001 only in Trench 8. Trenches 9 and 10 contained Made Ground L1002 below L1001, laid to counteract the slope. Peat L1005 was present below L1002 in Trenches 9 and 10. Below L1005 was Alluvial Silt L1006. At the base of the stratigraphic sequence was Alluvial Silt L1003.

7.7 The south-eastern end of Trench 9 was located at the lowest height and had a different stratigraphy to that of the north-western half of the trench. The ground here is particularly susceptible to flooding. The uppermost levels are similar to the north-western end of the trench but below Layer L1005 was Made Ground L1009, laid to raise the height of the land. Below L1009 was Peat L1010. Below L1010 was Alluvial Silt L1006 and at the base of the stratigraphic sequence was Alluvial Silt L1003.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The site was considered to have a low potential for prehistoric, Iron Age, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon remains. A moderate potential for medieval and post-medieval activity, and a high potential for modern. In the event an undated gully (F1007) was recorded in Trench 10, and a modern pit was present in Trench 6. Modern land drains, terracing, modern building foundations and modern services were all encountered and had caused truncation but not sufficient that had archaeological features been present they would have been revealed. In fact the made ground layers afforded some protection to the stratigraphy in the south-eastern sector of each terrace where undisturbed fen deposits were recorded. No archaeological remains were present.

ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with the finds from the site at the Cambridgeshire County Archaeology 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Ltd would like to thank Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd for funding of the evaluation, and their planning consultants, Henry Riley LLP for commissioning the project (in particular Mr Mike Hays).

AS is pleased to acknowledge the advice and input of Mr Daniel McConnell of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice

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PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX

DP1



Post-excavation shot, Trench 1,
looking north-east.

DP2



Post-excavation shot, Trench 2,
looking north-east.

DP3



Post-excavation shot, Trench 3
looking south-east.

DP4



Post-excavation shot, Trench 4
looking north-east.

DP5



Post-excavation shot, Trench 6,
looking south-east.

DP6



Post-excavation shot, Trench 7,
looking north-east.

DP7



Post-excavation shot, Trench 8,
looking south-west.

DP8



Post-excavation shot, Trench 9,
looking south-east.

DP9

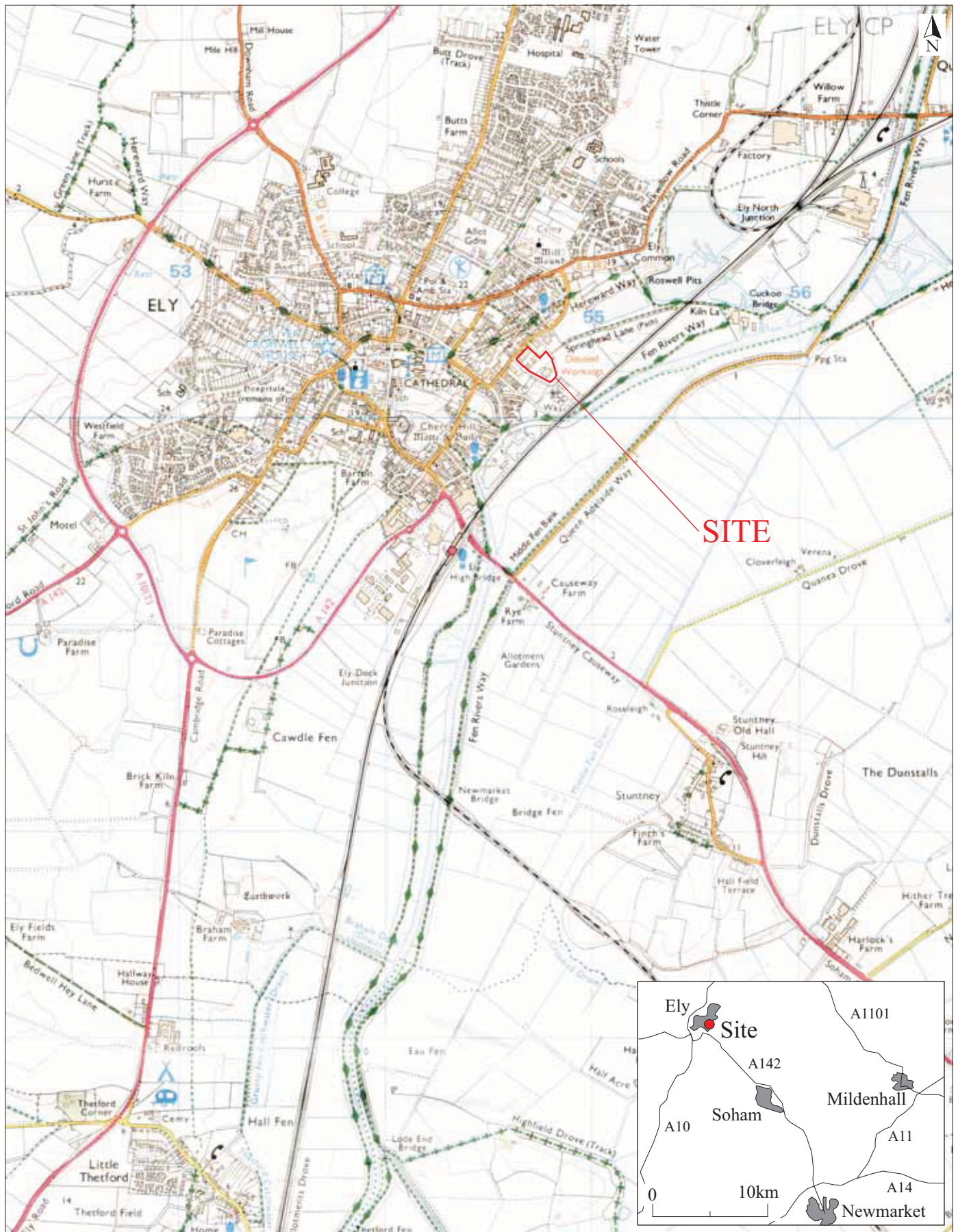


Post-excavation shot, Trench 10, looking south-west.

DP10

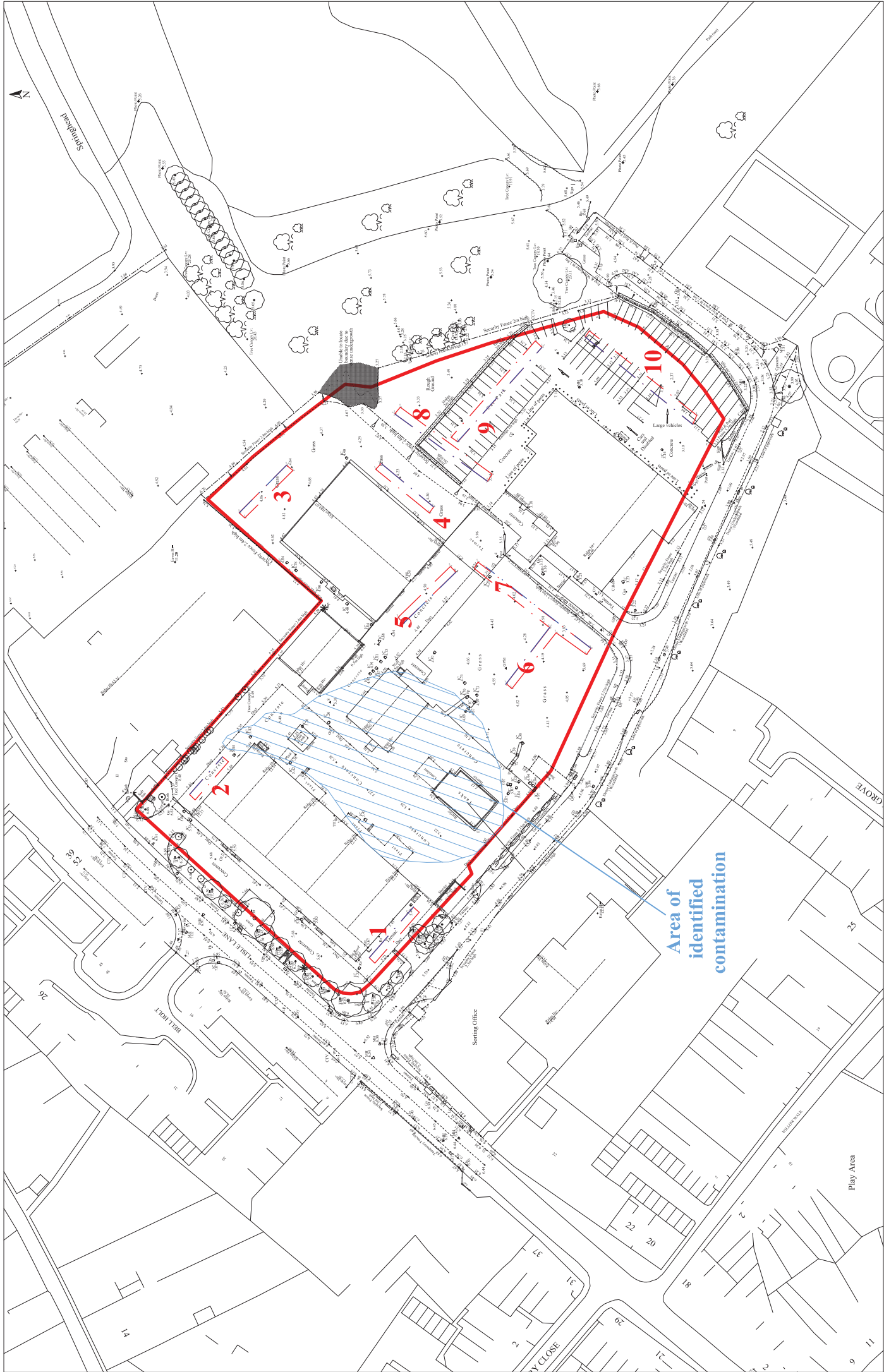


Post-excavation shot, Gully F1007, Trench 10, looking south-east.

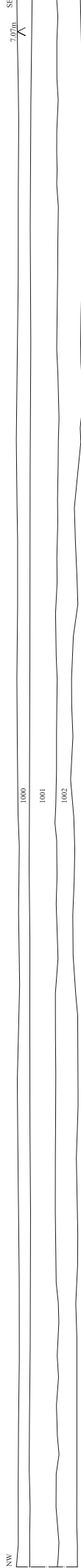


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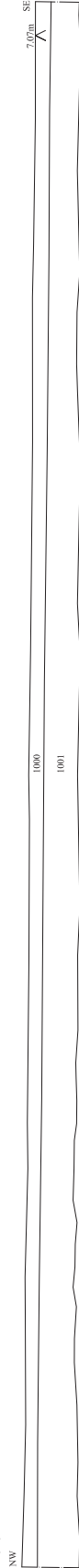
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



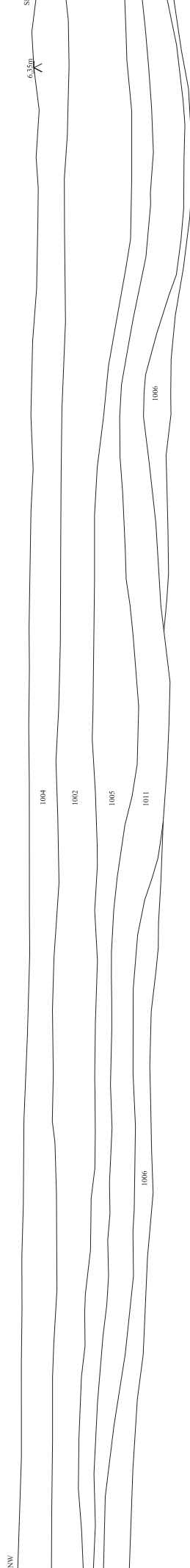
Trench 1



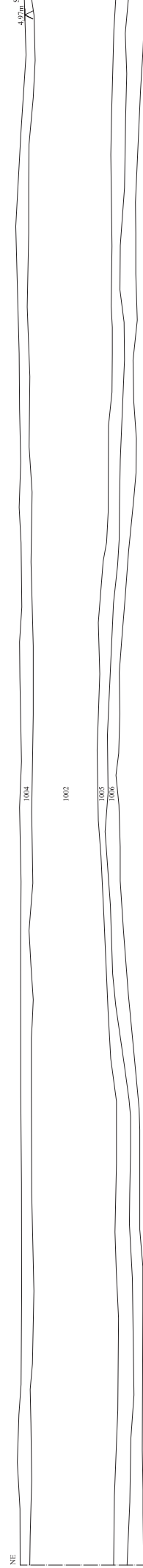
Trench 2



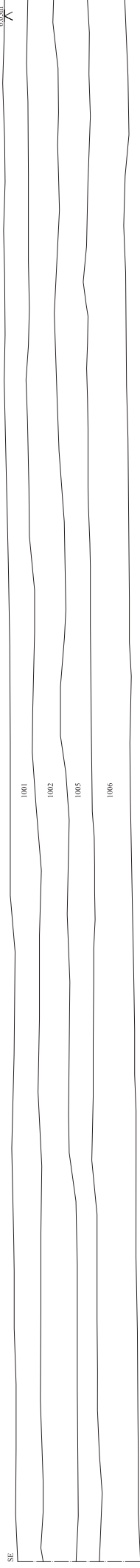
Trench 3



Trench 4



Trench 5



Trench 6



