LAND TO THE REAR OF
2 GREAT NORTH ROAD
CHAWSTON
BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELD EVALUATION

Project: CH1669

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Produced for:
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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

The project was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Luckett and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Vanessa Clarke, Archaeological and HER Officer of Bedford Borough Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Christiane Meckseper (Project Officer). This report has been prepared by Christiane Meckseper and edited by Gary Edmondson (Project Manager) with figures by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

The kind help and cooperation of Mr and Mrs Luckett throughout the project are gratefully acknowledged.

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1.0	*3rd August 2010*	*n/a*

Structure of this Report

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the site, describing its location, archaeological background and the aims of the project. Section 2 describes the trial trenching methodology and Section 3 summarises the results. Section 4 is a bibliography.

Appendix 1 contains trench summary information and detailed contextual data.

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CPA	Bedfordshire Borough Council's Planning Archaeologist
Client	Mr and Mrs Luckett
HER	Bedfordshire Borough Council's Historic Environment Record
HET	Borough Council's Historic Environment Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
Procedures Manual	*Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2nd ed, 2001 Albion Archaeology

Non-Technical Summary

A pre-application archaeological evaluation was undertaken to investigate the area of a proposed lake to the rear of 2 Great North Road, Chawston. As the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity within the valley of the River Great Ouse, a recommendation was made by the Borough Council's Historic Environment Team (HET) for a pre-determination archaeological evaluation of the site to be carried out.

Three trial trenches were excavated in the area of the proposed lake. None of the trenches contained any archaeological remains indicating that the Development Area may lie in a buffer zone within higher concentrations of prehistoric funerary monuments, as recorded at St Neots and the Biddenham Loop, for example.

The exposed soils within the trenches showed the mixed gravel and sand deposits of the 1st River Terrace. The site lies on the edge of the River Great Ouse alluvial soils, indicated by a relatively thin layer of alluvium which overlay the gravels in the eastern part of the site but petered out towards the western edge of the proposed lake.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

A pre-application archaeological evaluation was undertaken to investigate the area of a proposed lake to the rear of 2 Great North Road, Chawston (Figure 1). As the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity within the valley of the River Great Ouse, a recommendation was made by the Borough Council's Historic Environment Team (HET) for a pre-determination archaeological evaluation of the site to be carried out. This recommendation is in accordance with *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*.

Part of the lake had been excavated prior to the realisation that planning permission was required. At this point all ground disturbance was stopped. Once it was clear that planning permission was required, a brief for the archaeological work was issued by the HET (2010) detailing the requirement for the development site to be evaluated by trial trenches.

In response to the brief a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared (Albion Archaeology 2010) with a trenching strategy that targeted the undisturbed part of the lake footprint (Figure 2).

The WSI was agreed with the HET and the trial trenching was undertaken on 28 July 2010. The results are presented within this report.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The site lies at the eastern margin of the dispersed village of Chawston, centred on NGR TL (5)16543 (2)56208 (Figure 1). The plot of land is situated between the Great North Road (A1 Trunk Road) to the west and the River Great Ouse to the east. The proposed lake will occupy the north-eastern part of the plot, extending some 70m by 50m. The site is relatively flat at *c.*20m OD, with a slight slope down to the east, towards the river.

The degree of disturbance within the footprint of the proposed lake is summarised in Figure 2. The area nearest the river had been excavated to a considerable depth. Within the central zone, the former cultivation soil, approximately 0.3m thick, had been removed. The western part of the proposed lake was undisturbed, comprising former cultivated land.

The superficial geology of the site comprises 1st and 2nd terrace River Terrace Deposits composed of silt, sand and gravel to the west and alluvium to the east. Until recently the site had been under cultivation.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Little is known about the archaeological potential of the area. A 1km radius search of the Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Record revealed

approximately 60 previously recorded sites. The majority of these were of post-medieval or later date, principally buildings.

Of the remaining 14 HER sites, the most significant for the current investigation is cropmark site (HER 1793) located in the area immediately to the north (Figure 3). The circular cropmarks probably define ring ditches — the ploughed-out remains of prehistoric burial mounds. This area was subsequently quarried away at a time when no archaeological investigation was required.

At least one more ring ditch (HER 8818) has been identified in the search area, suggesting that it was a funerary/ritual landscape in the prehistoric period, similar to other stretches of the river such as the Biddenham Loop.

A single prehistoric flint scatter has also been identified (HER 1387), apparently related to extraction and initial working of the flint.

Seven other cropmark sites have been identified, comprising enclosures; two of these have been the subject of limited investigation during pipeline projects, suggesting that they date to the Iron Age to Roman period. These farming sites may relate to the expansion in the cultivation of the valley in the Roman period. The remaining six sites date to the medieval period including the medieval settlement of Chawston (HER 17144).

1.4 Project Objectives

The project had the potential to add to the knowledge and understanding of the utilisation of the valley of the River Great Ouse and to produce an archive report that fully described the archaeological works.

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present at the site.

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- if there was any evidence for prehistoric or Roman occupation of the site;
- if medieval remains were present;
- the nature and extent of any alluvial deposits.

2. TRIAL TRENCHING METHODOLOGY

Three trenches were excavated ranging from 15m to 30m in length (Figure 2). The locations of the trenches were marked out on the ground in advance of machine excavation. Overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operating under close archaeological supervision. The deposits were removed down to either the top of possible archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first.

The deposits and any potential remains were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trenches were subsequently photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique recording number sequence commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc*.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

- IfA's *Code of Conduct (2010)*
- IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation (2008)*
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records* (2001)
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991)

The site was visited and the trenches approved by the CPA on 29th July 2010.

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM: 2010.39).

3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The deposits revealed are summarised below. None of the trial trenches contained archaeological remains.

More detailed information on the deposits revealed by trial trenching can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2 Overburden

Trial trenching showed that overburden consisted of a mid greyish brown silty cultivation soil that was 0.25–0.30m thick.

3.3 Alluvium

Examination of the sections along the lakeside, previously excavated by Mr. Luckett, showed a band of mid yellowish silty sand that was up to 0.30m thick in the eastern part of the site, closest to the River Great Ouse (Figure 4). Towards the central-western part of the site this layer became thinner; it was 0.10–0.15m thick in the area stripped of topsoil by Mr. Luckett. In the westernmost area of the site it was not present at all (Figure 2).

3.4 River Terrace Deposits

A band of compact mid reddish brown sandy silt gravel, 0.30–0.50m thick, was recorded in all trial trenches. This overlay a deposit of soft mid to light orange brown silty sand. A sondage excavated through the sand in the north-east part of Trench 1 showed it to be up to 0.70m thick. It overlay fine greyish white sandy gravel. All layers are part of the mixed geology of the river terrace deposits adjacent to the river Great Ouse (Figure 5).

3.5 Discussion

The proposed development area was shown to be devoid of archaeological features. Given that a number of possible ring ditches have been recorded in the area, it is interesting to note that their concentration in the Chawston area is probably not as high as those recorded along the river banks in St. Neots (Carroll in prep.) or the Biddenham Loop (Luke 2008).

Prehistoric ritual monumental complexes were concentrated in certain areas and needed buffer zones or areas with no contemporary archaeological features to highlight their importance in the landscape. Even within dense concentrations of monuments there need to be stand off zones between them. The proposed development area may represent such a buffer zone.

The evaluation did reveal details on the alluvial processes and 1st and 2nd River Terrace Deposits that exist in this part of Chawston (BGS Sheet 204). Recent alluvial deposits extended up to 0.50m west of the eastern boundary of the site (*c*. 400m west of the River Great Ouse). The compact gravel deposit below the alluvium that extends throughout the area of the lake is part of the 1st River

Terrace Deposits. It is possible that it formed through a process of erosion from the 2nd River Terrace Deposits to the west.

The mixed thick layers of sand and gravel, observed in the trial trenches and the already exposed north-south section of the lake are probably part of the 1st River Terrace Deposits. The gravel deposits show some horizontal banding of thinner sandy layers with alternating white chalk gravel, formed through the influence of flowing water. This indicates that they are very much near the boundary of the 1st River Terrace with the changing course of the River Great Ouse and show its influence on the gravel deposits to either side.

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5. APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.55 m. Max: 0.5 m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To evaluate area for potential archaeological features.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100		Friable dark grey brown sandy silt frequent small stones	☑	☐
101		Friable mid red brown silty gravel Gravel has uneven lower interface. In areas patches of reddish gravel are still visible in underlying sand, where gravel has 'slumped' due to underlying softness of sand or colluvial processes.	☑	☐
102		Loose mid yellow brown silty sand moderate small manganese staining, occasional small stones In some areas sand has outcrops of greyish white fine gravel. Also patches of red gravel (101).	☑	☐
103		Compact light grey white gravel	☐	☐

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.65 m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To evaluate area for potential archaeological features.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200		As (100).	☑	☐
201		As (101). In northern part of trench up to 0.40m thick.	☑	☐
202		As (102).	☐	☐

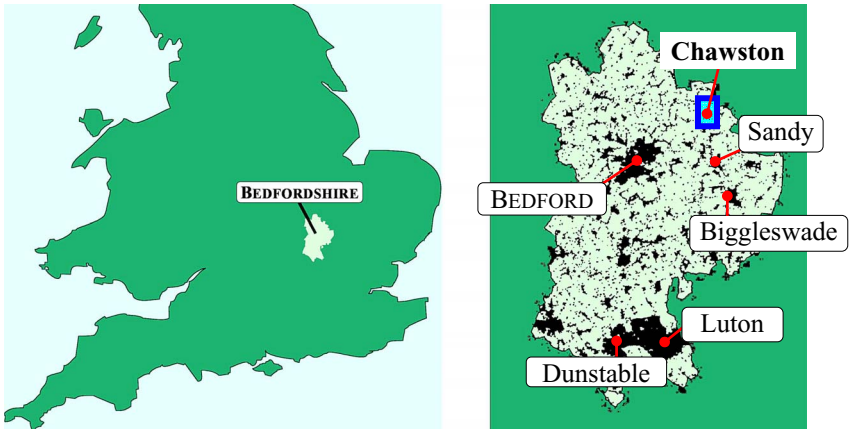
Trench: 3

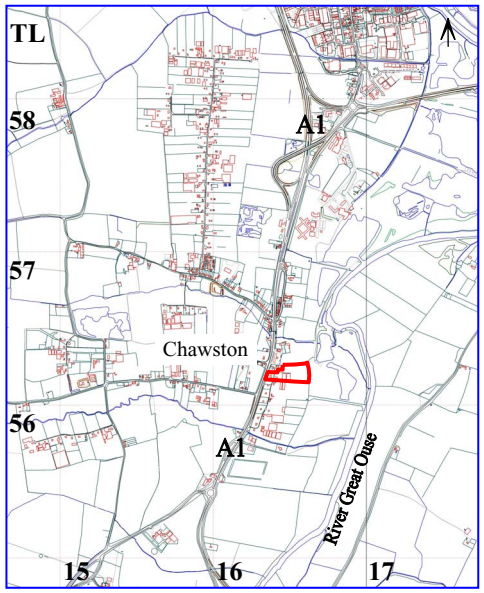
Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.5 m. Max: 0.7 m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason: To evaluate area for potential archaeological features.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300		As (100).	☑	☐
301		As (101).	☑	☐
302		As (102).	☐	☐





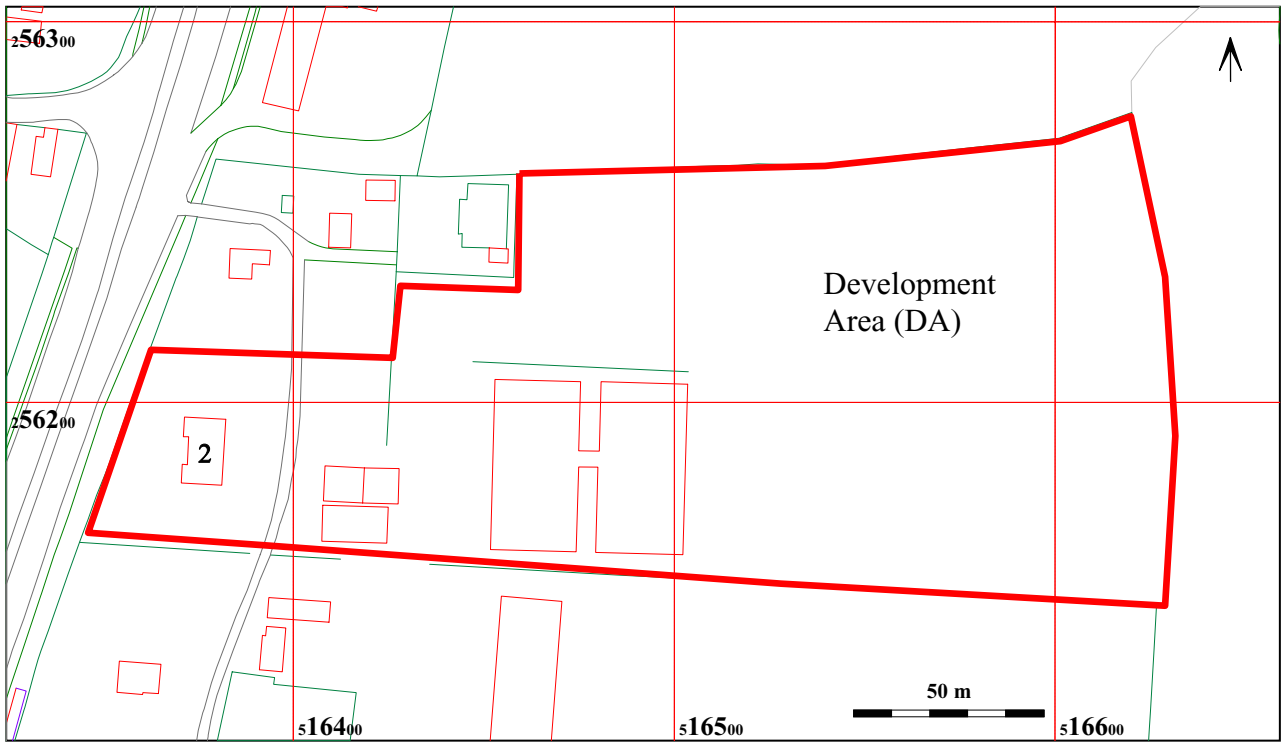


Figure 1: Location plan

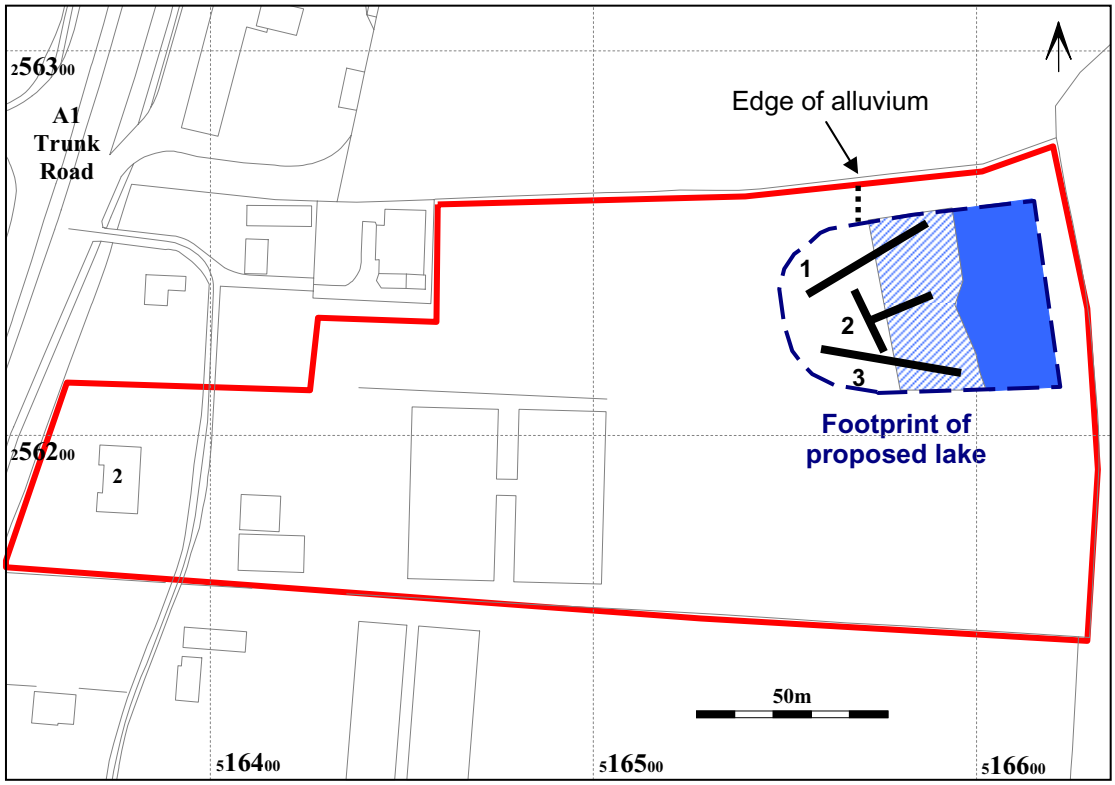


Figure 2: Trench plan in relation to proposed lake location

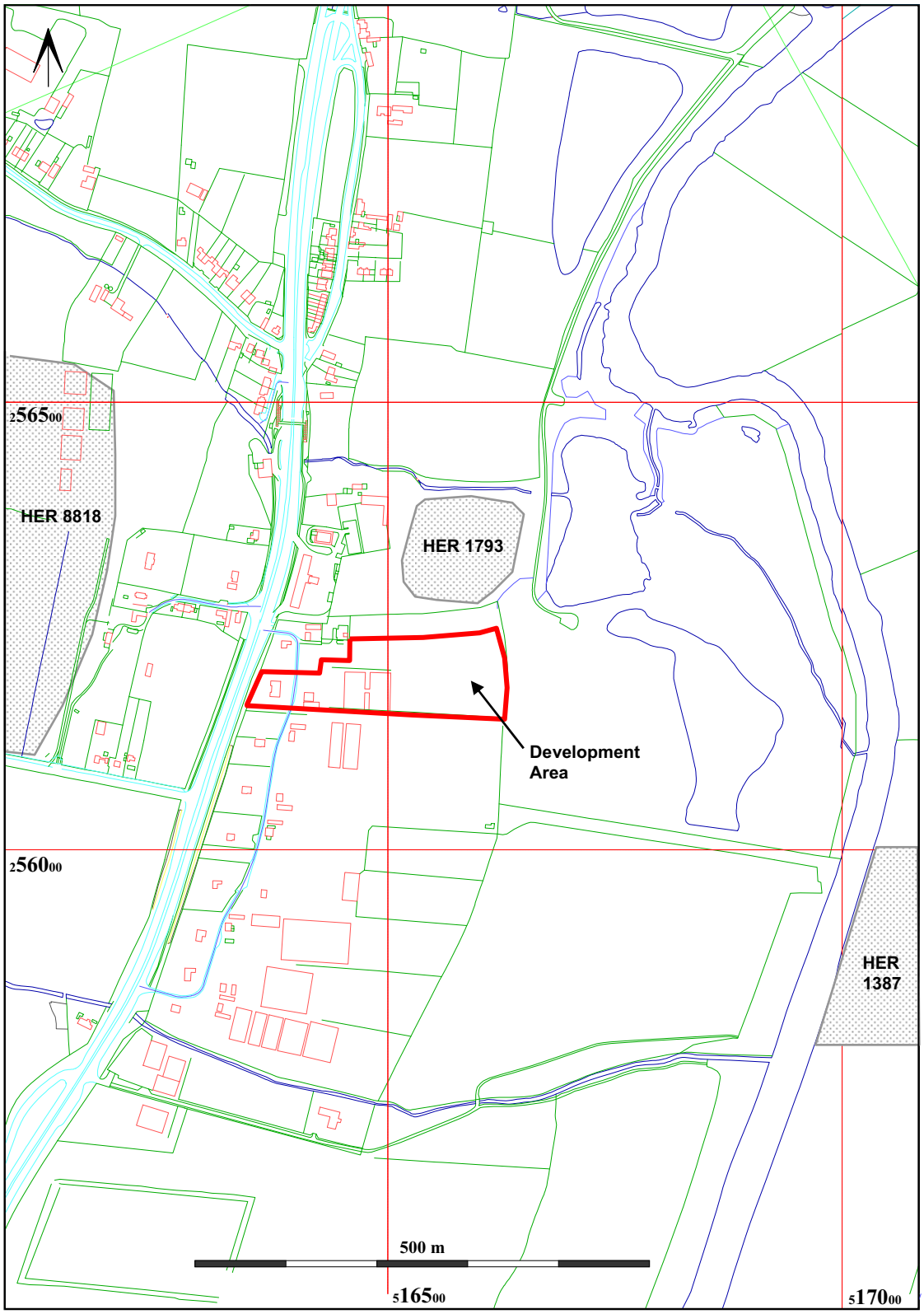


Figure 3: HER sites in the vicinity of the Development Area

Figure 4: Layer of alluvium below topsoil in south-facing section to stripped area

Figure 5: Sequence of overburden and River Terrace Deposits in south-facing section of Trench 1