

Archaeological Evaluation Report

# LEDHAM ROAD

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For CgMs Consulting

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R.S. Matthews BSc

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Archaeological Evaluation Report

# LEDHAM ROAD

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Client: CgMs Consulting

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Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Council

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NGR: 336500,376220

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Planning App ref: 13/04015/OUT

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Author(s): R S Matthews

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Doc Ref: 2050C-AER-v1.2

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Site Code: LP2050

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Date: February 16

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## L-P: ARCHÆOLOGY

A trading name of the L – P : Heritage LLP

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# Abstract

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Sutton New Hall Farm, Ledsham Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. Three 10m by 2m trenches were excavated across an area designated for Phase 1 works on the site in an area of archaeological potential. Further phases of archaeological works are to be undertaken at a later date. The work was carried out by Christopher Matthews and George Lacey of L - P : Archaeology on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2016. This report has been prepared by Rachael Matthews of L - P : Archaeology on behalf of CgMs Consulting.

Research shows evidence of activity from the Prehistoric period within the surrounding area, with several Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman finds having been discovered near the site. However, there is no evidence of activity on the site itself.

During the Medieval period the land belonged to the Benedictine abbey of St. Werburgh in Chester, later Chester Cathedral, and was used for agricultural purposes. A manor house was built in 1399 on or around the site associated with the demesne, but was demolished by 1750. The current farmhouse New Sutton Hall Farm was built in 1811. Human remains have previously been discovered, thought to be part of an old cemetery on the site. Later in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the field was used as a World War II military airfield, the effect of which can still be seen in the air hangers, now used for storage on the site.

The archaeological evaluation in all three trenches revealed a stratigraphic sequence of topsoil, plough soil and natural clays and bedrock, which occurred at 0.54m to 0.8m depth. A series of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century field drains were cut into the plough soils orientated north-south across the excavated area. A single sherd of Post Medieval pottery was recovered from Trench 1, thought to be associated with agricultural activity.

No deposits or features of significance were encountered during the evaluation.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document refers to the proposed development of land off Ledsham Road, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port. A planning application (13/045015/OUT) has been granted for residential, retail, educational and community buildings, with associated public open space and infrastructure. Cheshire Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (CAPAS) requested an archaeological evaluation be carried out in advance of works.
- 1.2. This document forms an interim evaluation report, which details the results of the excavation of three trenches within Phase 1 of the overall development area. A total of eight trenches are proposed along with a strip and map exercise on a 25m square. The five remaining trenches and 25m strip and map area are to be investigated at a later date. A full, all inclusive, report detailing the results of all archaeological investigations will be submitted on completion of all the evaluation works.
- 1.3. This interim report has been prepared by Rachael Matthews of L - P : Archaeology on behalf of CgMs Consulting.
- 1.4. This report details the results of the archaeological evaluation carried out between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2016. The fieldwork was carried out by Christopher Matthews and George Lacey of L – P : Archaeology. This report was written by Rachael Matthews of L - P : Archaeology.
- 1.5. The site is located in at Sutton New Hall Farm, Ledsham Road, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. The NGR is centred on 336500,376220 (FIGURE 1).
- 1.6. The site code allocated by L – P : Archaeology is **LP 2050**.
- 1.7. The work was carried out in accordance with an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Emily Mercer of CgMs Consulting (Document reference SM/EM/21095) (MERCER 2015). The work was carried out in accordance with Cheshire County Council's revised General Conditions for Archaeological Contractors and Consultants (CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2003) in conjunction with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Evaluation (CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS 2014A).

## 2. Site Background

### 2.1. PLANNING

2.1.1. Planning permission (13/045015/OUT) was granted in July 2015 for the development of:

*“a residential area, consisting of around 1500 dwellings, 400 sqm of retail floor space for a local shop, a new primary school, a community building, a new linear car park, playing fields and other public open space, new allotment, together with new accesses, streets and other related infrastructure.”*

2.1.1. The site does not lie within any areas of Archaeological Importance, Areas of Archaeological Potential, Conservation Areas, Registered Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens, and contains no Scheduled Monuments. Several Listed Buildings lie to the north and east of the site, including Sutton Hall, but none are located in the development area. Sutton New Hall Farm itself, is a locally listed building (5622) built around 1811 and described as a “typical three storey late Georgian house with a pitched slated roof and walls of local brick”.

2.1.2. In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG 2012). This document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment and replaces all previous Planning Policy Guidance, specifically PPS5. Section 12 of the NPPF sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment.

2.1.3. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF indicates planning decisions should be made based on the significance of Heritage Assets. These are defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.

2.1.4. In considering any planning application for development the local planning authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC), take advice from Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (CAPAS).

2.1.5. CgMs Consulting and CAPAS agreed the methodology for these works in a WSI which was prepared by Emily Mercer of CgMs Consulting (MERCER 2015) and was submitted to and agreed by Cheshire Archaeological Planning Advisory

Service (CAPAS). L – P : Archaeology submitted a method statement to CgMs Consulting for the works in advance of carrying out the evaluation.

## **2.2.GEOLOGY**

2.2.1. The bedrock geology consists of sandstone and pebbly gravels, part of the Chester pebble beds formation, with a superficial geology of Devensian Till (BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY 2014).

## **2.3.TOPOGRAPHY**

2.3.1. The study site occupies gently undulating terrain at a general height of 38m AOD, sloping gently to the west and south.

2.3.2. It is bounded on the north side by Ledsham Road, to the east a housing development and to the south and west by open fields (FIGURE 2).

## **2.4.SITE CONDITIONS**

2.4.1. The area under investigation for Phase 1 works had been stripped prior to site attendance. Although, until recently, the area had previously been used as pasture, at the time of survey it lay reasonably level with exposed subsoil forming the upper surface. Poor weather conditions at the time of evaluation meant that much of the area quickly became waterlogged and boggy.

### 3. Archaeology and History

PERIOD	FROM	TO
<b>PREHISTORIC</b>		
PALAEOLITHIC	450,000	12,000 BC
MESOLITHIC	12,000	4,000 BC
NEOLITHIC	4,000	1,800 BC
BRONZE AGE	1,800	600 BC
IRON AGE	600	43 AD
<b>HISTORIC</b>		
ROMAN	43	410 AD
EARLY MEDIEVAL	410	1066 AD
MEDIEVAL	1066	1485 AD
POST MEDIEVAL	1485	PRESENT

*Table 1- Historic Periods*

3.1. This section aims to give a brief history of the site area and not intended as a complete history of Little Sutton.

#### 3.2. PREHISTORY

3.2.1. Neolithic activity has been recorded as scattered across Cheshire, with evidence of settlement, pottery and flint production and funerary monuments. Pottery has been recovered from Birkenhead and Kelsborrow, either side of Ellesmere Port and stone axes recorded in the Wirral and Mersey areas (EDWARDS 2007)

3.2.2. During a fieldwalking exercise undertaken in 2012 (HEYES 2002) a struck flint was discovered on the development site.

3.2.3. Within the Wirral area the Bronze Age gives evidence of funerary and settlement practises with a series of urns and middens recorded; buildings and evidence of metalworking and crop production have also been identified at a site in Irby (EDWARDS 2007)

3.2.4. A Bronze Age looped palstave was discovered c. 700m to the east of the site, it is believed to be residual (HEYES 2002).

3.2.5. The Iron Age is mostly represented by a series of hill forts in the mid-Cheshire

Ridge, with small enclosures and farmsteads to the north of Cheshire and the Mersey area. However there is nothing is specifically mentioned about the Ellesmere Port region (EDWARDS 2007)

### **3.3.ROMAN**

- 3.3.1. Evidence for Roman activity in Cheshire is vast, although it is mostly focused around the fortress in Chester and production areas to the east in Middlewich, Nantwich and around the Warrington area (EDWARDS 2007).
- 3.3.2. However, a known Roman road runs less than one kilometre to the west of the site from Chester going north, past Ledsham and through the Wirral (MERCER 2015).
- 3.3.3. Previous archaeological work undertaken by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit in 2002, revealed a quantity of cut features within the site, although these were undated they are believed to be Roman in origin. In 2012 two sherds of possible Roman pottery were also discovered during a fieldwalking exercise over the proposed development area (HEYES 2002).

### **3.4.EARLY MEDIEVAL**

- 3.4.1. In the Early Medieval period Chester and Cheshire show continuous occupation, with evidence of settlement in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Saxon invaders. It has been referred to as a a frontier zone and power was transferred between Welsh Powys and the Mercian kingdoms at different times. Little evidence is in the Ellesmere Port area (EDWARDS 2007).

### **3.5.MEDIEVAL**

- 3.5.1. During the Medieval period Cheshire flourished, with towns and settlements growing throughout the county. The Wirral and Chester hinterlands would have been park of some of the great woodlands in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and as such would have been under Forest Law and settlement is recorded as *dense* by the Domesday Book (EDWARDS 2007).
- 3.5.2. Sutton in the Domesday book is part of the Wirral Hundred and it contain the manors of what is now Great and Little Sutton and is referred to several times.

Part was held by the Bishop of Chester and the church, noting that it was held by the church before 1066, with other areas held by Robert Son of Hugh (MORRIS 1978).

3.5.3. Both Great and Little Sutton are recorded as *Sudtone* in the Domesday book, it derives from one of the most common 'Old English' meanings, 'the *southern farmstead*' (POULTON-SMITH 2012). It was not until 1278 that they were documented separately as 'Sutton Magna' and 'Parva Sutton' respectively (MERCER 2015).

3.5.4. The two manors were held by the Benedictine abbey of St. Werburgh in Chester, later Chester Cathedral. The site lies predominantly within Little Sutton (the south-east corner fell into Great Sutton), an area known as the *demesne* which was farmed by the abbey and managed by a farmstead.

3.5.5. A manor house is recorded on the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER) at Little Sutton and is believed to be of high status, as in 1399 it was granted a licence for fortification. This house has disappeared with little evidence of its exact location (possible the site of the current Sutton Hall north of Ledsham road), the associated hall is thought to have been demolished about 1750.

### 3.6. POST MEDIEVAL

3.6.1. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century a network of canals and waterways were built across Cheshire including around the Sutton area and in 1838 a new railway line opened to the west of the site. It was during this period of industrial development that new settlements, Ellesmere Port included, were established (EDWARDS 2007).

3.6.2. In 1811 the construction of New Sutton Hall Farm was undertaken, recorded as a typical late three-storey Georgian house, it is now a locally listed building (5622), however during building works a number of graves were discovered, suggesting a possible grave yard associated with St Werburgh's. In the HER it is documented as 42ft square, enclosed by 25 compartments, 36 pillars with bodies laid in rows.

- 3.6.3. During archaeological fieldwalking in 2002, two fragments of glazed Cistercian ware dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century were recovered. A large assemblage of 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century ceramics were also collected, including Earthenware and Slip ware and a single fragment of clay pipe believed to date to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (HEYES 2002).
- 3.6.4. During the Second World War part of the land was used as military airfield. Opened in 1941 it was used as a satellite airfield for RAF Sealand before it was closed in 1946. comprising temporary accommodation and three portable blister hangers. Evidence of this can be seen from the large hanger, now used for agricultural storage and through metal finds such as anti-aircraft cartridges found within the site (HEYES 2002).



## 4. Aims & Objectives

4.1. The aims and objectives of the evaluation as defined in the WSI were:

4.2. The overarching aim is to identify whether there are any previously unrecorded archaeological features within the site and to determine the character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality of any identified archaeological deposits; therefore ensuring their preservation by record.

4.3. In order to address the overarching aim, the general objectives of the archaeological investigation are to:

- ◆ identify the location, extent and character of archaeological remains within the site; and
- ◆ provide information that will enable an assessment of the impact of the development on any potential archaeological remains identified.
- ◆ ensure that any below-ground archaeological deposits exposed are promptly identified; and
- ◆ ensure the recording of archaeological remains, to place this record in its local context and to make this record available.

## 5. Methodology

- 5.1. A WSI was submitted by CgMs Consulting (MERCER 2015) containing a detailed methodology, and had been agreed in advance of works by the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority, CWaC.
- 5.2. Three trenches measuring 10m by 2m were excavated within the Phase 1 area, positioned randomly within an area of archaeological potential associated with Sutton New Hall, previously a site of a Medieval Grange and possible graveyard. The trenches were located in order to recover any archaeological data (FIGURE 2). Trench 1 was relocated 15m to the south of its original location due to the presence of a large spoil heap created by the current development. An area to the northeast of the site had already been stripped to the natural clay, this area was cleaned and investigated by the archaeologists to ascertain whether there were any archaeological features present.
- 5.3. The trench locations were accurately surveyed prior to excavation and related to the National Grid.
- 5.4. Homogenous overburden was removed under the supervision of an archaeologist by a ground works contractor.
- 5.5. Examination and cleaning of all archaeological deposits was by hand using appropriate tools. All archaeological deposits were examined and recorded both in plan and section.
- 5.6. All works were carried out in accordance with the Code of Approved Practice as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS 2014B). Accordingly the project team abided by the CIFA's code of approved practice and GLAAS guidance papers nos 2, 4 and 5 (ENGLISH HERITAGE 2009).
- 5.7. The WSI was adhered to at all times during the groundworks. Therefore, the methodological approach to addressing the aims and objectives was satisfactory and the highest confidence can be placed in the data recovered and the report.

## 6. Results

6.1. This section will outline the results of the archaeological evaluation trench by trench and then the stripped area. Deposit numbers are given in (parentheses) and cut numbers are given in [square brackets].

6.2. All three trenches were located to the southwest corner of the area designated as Phase 1 of the site, along the western boundary. The stripped area was located in the northeast area of the trenching area.

### 6.3. TRENCH 1

6.3.1. Trench 1 was located to the north of the other trenches, 10m by 2m in size, to a depth of 0.5m. It was relocated 15m to the south side of its original position due to the presence of a large spoil heap created by the current development.

6.3.2. Trench 1 comprised an upper layer of residual overburden remaining from the site strip that was carried out prior to the evaluation trenches being undertaken. This sealed the turf and topsoil (101) 0.30m thick. Below this was a silty orange-grey sandy clay (102) 0.22m thick and likely forming a plough-soil (PLATE 1). Within this context were a number of cuts for 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century land drains (104), orientated north-south. Beneath the plough-soil was a mixture of natural clays and sands (103) encountered at a depth of 0.5m (FIGURE 3).



Plate 1: Trench 1, south facing section. 0.5m scale

6.3.3. The ploughsoil (102) produced a single sherd of Post Medieval pottery, however, it was unclear whether this was redeposited during excavations for the modern land drains.

#### 6.4. TRENCH 2

6.4.1. Trench 2 was located between Trenches 1 and 3, 10m by 2m in size and excavated to a depth of 0.6m, where the natural was encountered.

6.4.2. Trench 2 consisted of a turf and dark brown-grey topsoil (201) 0.3m thick, as found across the site (PLATE 2). Below which was a firm orange-brown sandy clay (202), 0.3m thick forming a plough-soil, less silty than in trench one (FIGURE 5), and containing several ceramic land drains. Underlying this were mixed natural clays with buff sand channels (203) at a depth of 0.6m, which when investigated appeared to be natural (FIGURE 5).



Plate 2: Trench 2, north facing section. 0.5m scale

#### 6.5. TRENCH 3

6.5.1. Trench 3 was located in the most southern part of the Phase 1 area, 10m by 2m in size and excavated to a depth of 0.8m, where bedrock was encountered (PLATE 3).

6.5.2. Trench 3 was similar to Trenches 1 and 2, with a brown-grey topsoil (301)

0.3m thick, sealing a firm orange-brown sandy clay plough-soil (302) 0.24m thick. Underlying this was the same mixed natural clays with buff sand channels (303), 0.26m thick. In order to assess the natural clays, a sondage was excavated into the eastern portion of the trench which revealed the natural bedrock (304) was at a depth of 0.8m (FIGURE 6).



Plate 3: Trench 3, north facing section. 1m and 0.5m scale.

## 6.6. SOIL STRIPPED AREA

- 6.6.1. An area to the northeast of the Phase 1 site had already been stripped to the underlying natural clay, before the archaeological monitoring began on site (PLATE 4).
- 6.6.2. Archaeological investigation showed the same stratigraphy as the trial trenches and onto the same clays and buff sands as the rest of the site. Several field drains were also present in this area, resembling the same as were found in Trenches 1 and 2.





Plate 4: Stripped area to the northeast of site, facing east. 1m scale.

## 7. Finds

7.1.A single sherd of black glazed Post Medieval pottery, dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, was found in Trench 1. This is believed to be residual and probably associated with the agricultural activity on the site.

## 8. Summary and Conclusions

- 8.1. As part of planning permission 13/045015/OUT a series of three archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated prior to groundwork commencing, targeted in an area of archaeological potential. This forms phase one of a multi-phase archaeological approach to the site, with five more trenches remaining and a 25m square strip and map area.
- 8.2. Whilst there is evidence in the wider area for Prehistoric and Roman activity, there is limited evidence to suggest activity on the site. Previous work has revealed a single Prehistoric struck flake and potential Roman features on the site. However, these remain uninvestigated. During the Medieval period the land belonged to the Benedictine abbey of St. Werburgh in Chester, later Chester Cathedral, and was used for agricultural purposes. A grange was built in 1399 on or around the site associated with the demesne, but was demolished by 1750. This was targeted as part of this phase of evaluation. The current farmhouse New Sutton Hall Farm was built in 1811. Human remains were discovered at the farm house and are thought to be part of an old cemetery on the site, and was also targeted as part of this phase of work. Later in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the field was used as a world war two military airfield, the effect of which can still be seen in the air hangers, now used for storage on the site.
- 8.3. The archaeological evaluation revealed a stratigraphic sequence of topsoil and plough-soil above natural clays and bedrock occurring at a depth of 0.54m to 0.8m. A series of field drains were cut into the plough soils orientated north-south across the excavated area.
- 8.4. A single 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century black glazed pottery sherd was recovered from Trench 1, thought to be a residual fragment from agricultural activity, likely dragged through the field through ploughing activity.
- 8.5. No deposits or features of archaeological interest were encountered during the works.



## 9. Archive

9.1. The paper archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x Drawing Film
- ◆ 1 x Photographic Register
- ◆ 24 x photographs
- ◆ 1 x Context Register
- ◆ 11 x Context sheets

9.2. The finds archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x boxes of artefacts as described in Section 6 (all materials).

9.3. The archive is to be deposited with the Cheshire West and Chester Museum Service.

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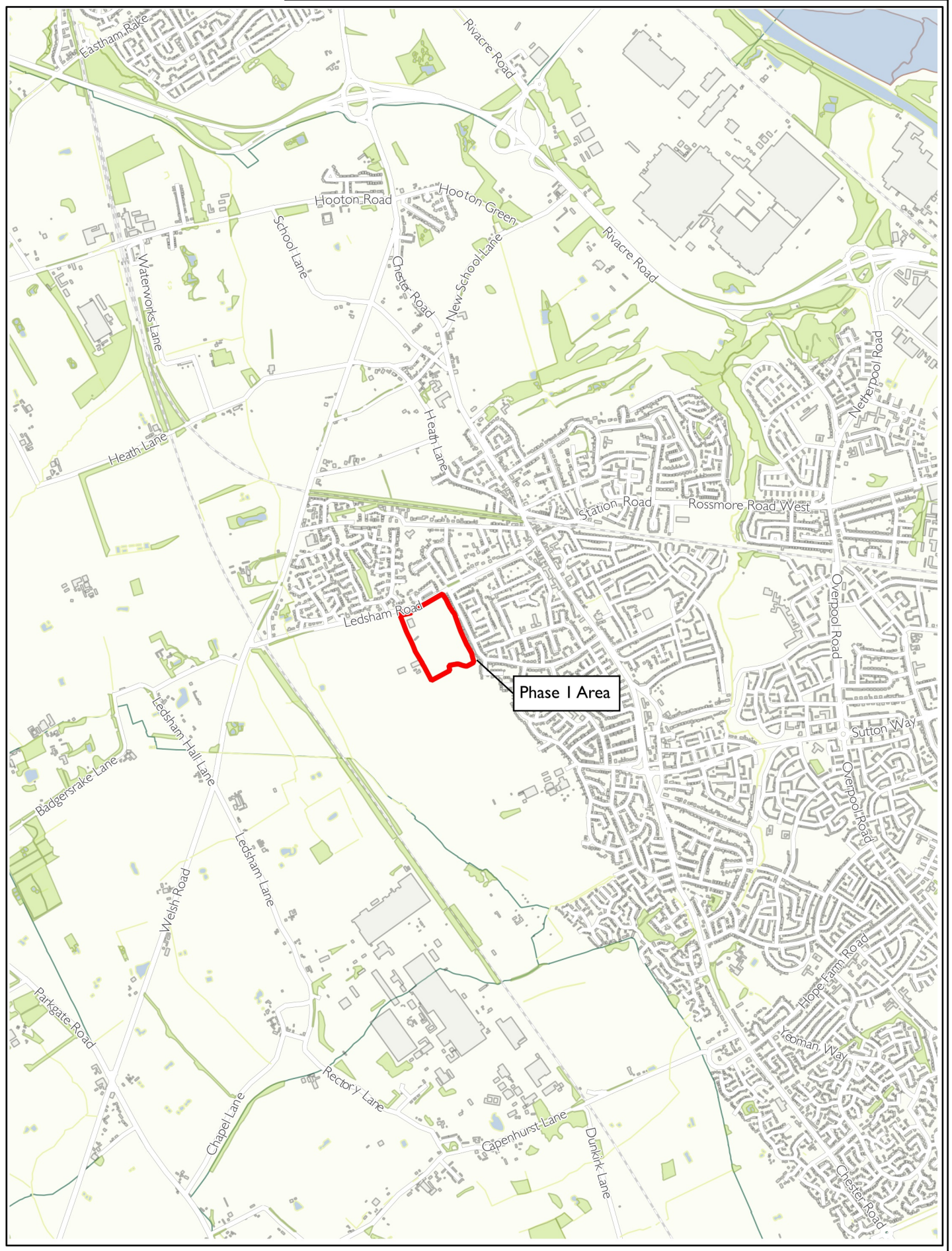
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# FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site Location - General



Phase I Area

0 1000 m



PROJECT // 2050C - Ledsham Road

DESCRIPTION // Site Location - General

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FIGURE 2 // Site Location - Detail



0 100 m



PROJECT // 2050C - Ledsham Road

DESCRIPTION // Site Location - Detail

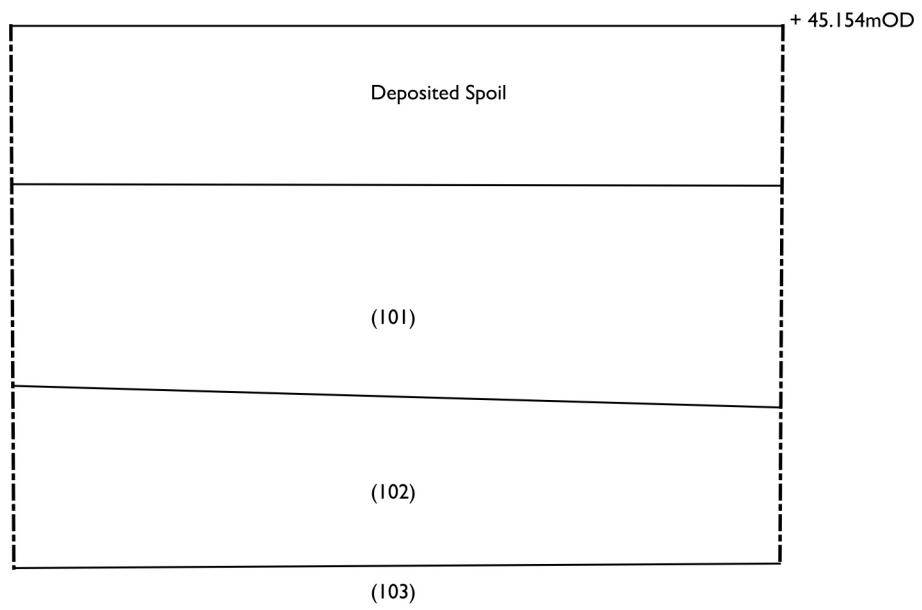
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FIGURE 3 // Trench I South Facing Section



0 0.5 m

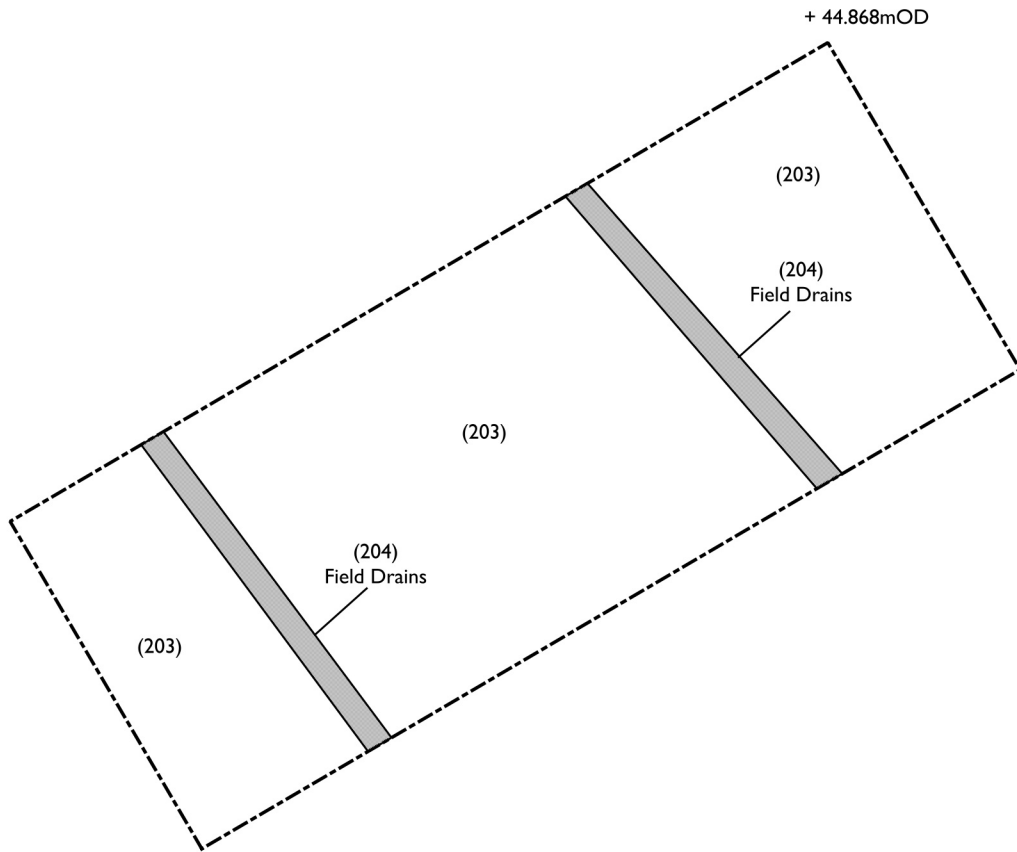
PROJECT // 2050C - Ledsham Road

DESCRIPTION // Trench I South Facing Section

DOC REF: LP2050C-AER-v1

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FIGURE 4 // Trench 2 Plan



0 1 m



PROJECT // 2050C - Ledsham Road

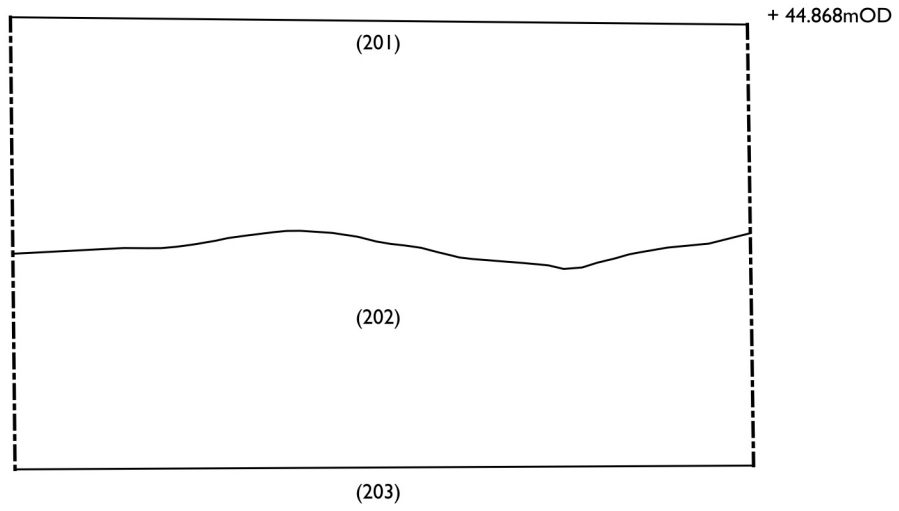
DESCRIPTION // Trench 2 Plan

DOC REF: LP2050C-AER-v1

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FIGURE 5 // Trench 2 North Facing Section



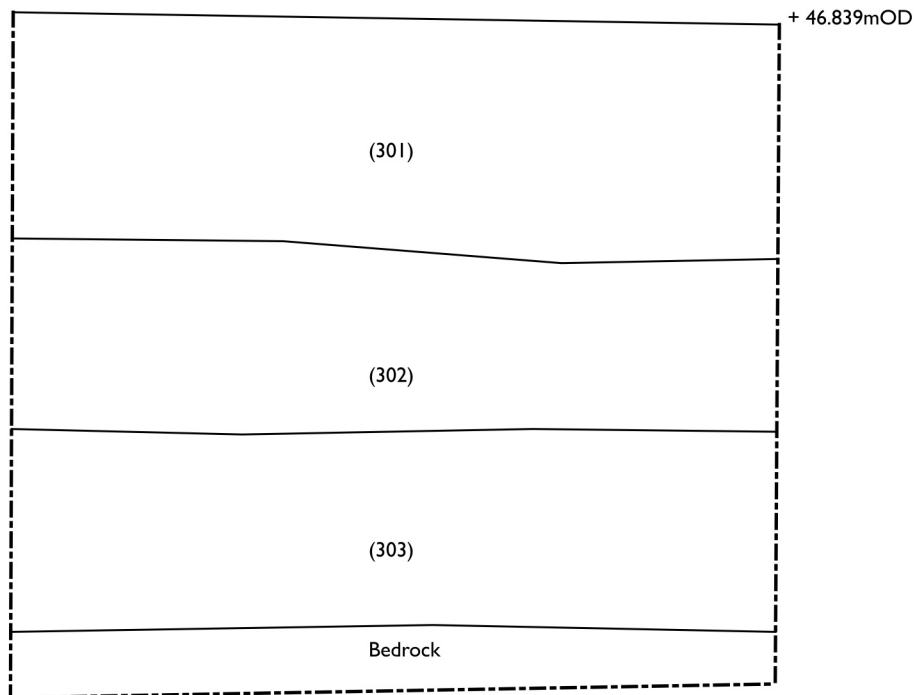
PROJECT // 2050C - Ledsham Road

DESCRIPTION // Trench 2 North Facing Section

DOC REF: LP2050C-AER-v1

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FIGURE 6 // Trench 3 North Facing Section



0 0.5 m

PROJECT // 2050C - Ledsham Road

DESCRIPTION // Trench 3 North Facing Section

DOC REF: LP2050C-AER-v1

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# OASIS FORM

## APPENDIX I

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

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**OASIS ID: lparchae1-242873**

## Project details

Project name	Ledhsam Road, Little Sutton
Short description of the project	Archaeological evaluation of three trenches, constituting phase one of archaeological works, at Ledsham Road, Little Sutton.
Project dates	Start: 08-02-2016 End: 15-02-2016
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	LP2050C - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 1 - Minimal cultivation
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Housing estate
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After outline determination (eg. As a reserved matter)

## Project location

Country	England
Site location	CHESHIRE ELLESMERE PORT AND NESTON ELLESMERE PORT Ledsham Road
Postcode	CH66 4UQ
Study area	8 Hectares
Site coordinates	SJ 336530 376325 52.931673524506 -2.987176037431 52 55 54 N 002 59 13 W Point

Height OD / Depth      Min: 45m Max: 46m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation      CgMs  
 Project brief originator      Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body  
 Project design originator      CgMs  
 Project director/manager      Blair Poole  
 Project supervisor      George Lacey  
 Type of sponsor/funding body      Developer  
 Name of sponsor/funding body      CgMs Consulting

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?      No  
 Digital Archive recipient      Cheshire Museum Service  
 Digital Archive ID      LP2050C  
 Digital Contents      "none"  
 Digital Media available      "Images raster / digital photography","Text"  
 Paper Archive recipient      Cheshire Museum Service  
 Paper Archive ID      LP2050C  
 Paper Contents      "none"  
 Paper Media available      "Context sheet","Drawing","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type      Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
 Title      Archaeological Evaluation Report for Ledhsam Road  
 Author(s)/Editor(s)      Matthews, R.  
 Other bibliographic details      LP2050C-AER-v1.2  
 Date      2016  
 Issuer or publisher      L - P : Archaeology  
 Place of issue or publication      Chester  
 Description      Negative results of the archaeological evaluation of three trenches on the site.  
 Entered by      R Matthews (chester@lparchaeology.com)  
 Entered on      17 February 2016

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