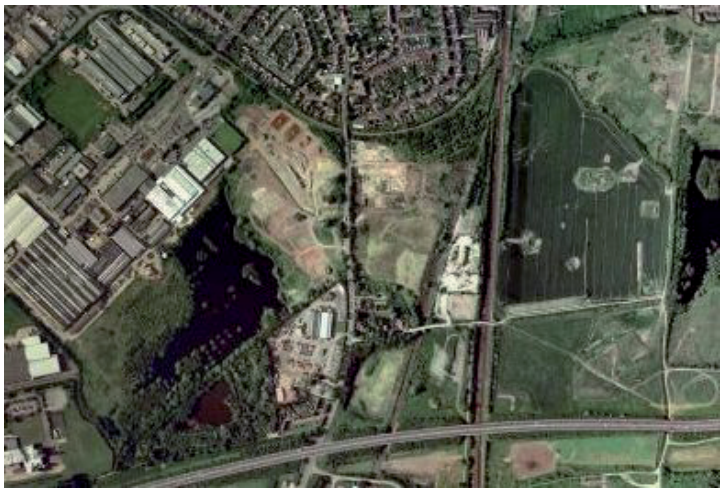
Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at the Old Brickworks, London Road, Old Fletton, Peterborough

June 2006



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June 2006

Report 06/092

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Adam Yates		
Approved by	Steve Parry		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at the Old Brickworks, London Road, Old Fletton, Peterborough, June 2006	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Trial trenches in the area of the development established an absence of archaeological deposits	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Archaeological desk-based assessment (JSAC 2003)	
Current Land use	Waste ground	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Huntingdonshire	
Site address	The Old Brickworks, London Road, Old Fletton, Peterborough	
Study area	38 ha approx.	
OS Easting & Northing	5188 2965	
Height OD	*c.*10-18m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Ben Robinson, Peterborough City Council	
Project Design originator	Clare Herring, John Samuels Archaeological Consultants	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Adam Yates, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	O & H Properties	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	June 2006	
End date	June 2006	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Content**
Physical		None
Paper		Site Trench Record, Photographic Record, Levels & Client Report
Digital		Client Report
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title		
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)		
Page numbers		
Date		

Contents

Figures

Plates

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT THE OLD BRICKWORKS, LONDON ROAD, OLD FLETTON, PETERBOROUGH

JUNE 2006

Trial excavation in the area of the proposed development established an absence of archaeological deposits. The surface of the natural substrate was identified in each trench and was sealed below 20th century demolition and levelling deposits associated with former brickworks. Substantial modern overburden was present in all of the trenches.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (JSAC), acting on behalf of O & H Properties, to conduct an archaeological evaluation in the area of the proposed development at the Old Brickworks, London Road, Old Fletton, Peterborough (NGR TL 188 965: Fig 1). The work was undertaken in compliance with PPG16 at the request of Peterborough City Council to inform planning decisions for the development (Planning Application: 05/01078/OUT).

The project was conducted to a specification prepared by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants in accordance with the recommendations of the Peterborough City Archaeologist (JSAC 2006). All works were approved and monitored by the Peterborough City Archaeologist.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Archaeological background

An archaeological Desk-based Assessment (DBA) was conducted by JSAC in 2002 which confirmed that the proposed development site lay in an area of recorded prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity (JSAC 2002). The DBA identified a range of archaeological interests summarised below:

- The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) provided details for scattered finds of Neolithic date recorded to the west and south-west of the development area (SMR 01633a; 01412; 51121).

- Bronze Age occupation evidence was recorded in the vicinity, located *c*300m to the east of Wyman's Bridge, a railway bridge on Hicks Lane, which lies to the east of the development area (SMR 18196; 1633). The evidence comprised food vessels, inhumations and a cinerary urn containing cremated human remains.

- A series of pit dwellings of Iron Age origin were located 1km to the east of the site that produced animal bone and pottery (SMR 1348). The features have since been destroyed by quarrying activity.

- Roman material was identified within the western portion of the development area during the construction of the London Brick Company's number 4 yard. This material comprised coins, pottery, pin, human burials and "huts" (SMR 1713). The area has since been destroyed by quarrying.

- Excavations in the historic core of Fletton have produced evidence for Saxon remains including beads and a cremation urn (SMR 8251; 50585). Sunken floored dwellings and an extensive Saxon cemetery were located *c*1km to the north of the site in the historic core of Fletton (SMR 1716).

- The place-name "Fletton" was first recorded in a charter dated 664AD, largely based on the Domesday accounts of Peterborough's estates (Sawyer *et al* 1968). The name alludes to the origin of 9th-11th century settlement in the vicinity and comprises two elements derived from Old English, *fleot* identifies an estuary or confluence for a river, presumably the River Nene, and the second element *–tun* is generally accepted to infer the presence of a small manorial farmstead or village (Ekwall 1960). Stray finds and areas of ridge and furrow cultivation were present in the surrounding area of the village (SMR 1422; 1408; 50692).

- The site became brickworks in the late 1880s and belonged to a succession of successful businesses, the most recent of which was the Orton Brickworks. The site continued in use throughout the early 20th century, by the mid- 1950s it was densely packed with brick yards, tramways, sidings, spoil heaps and extraction pits with only relatively small pockets of land undisturbed. Industrial archaeological deposits for the period of its operation were largely destroyed in the 1970s during land clearance on the site when the majority of the brick pits were reinstated with

pulverised fuel ash (PFA). The brickworks were finally closed after this work in the 1980's.

The DBA demonstrated that substantial parts of the development area had been disturbed by previous quarrying. Land use for potentially industrial areas were identified and these were designated Areas A-D in the specification (JSAC 2006).

2.2 Topography and geology

The site lies to the south of the modern centre of New Fletton, Peterborough, on the flood plain of the lower Nene Valley. It is divided into four distinct blocks of land, the present Transport Depot, the land to the west of the A15 London Road, the land to the east of the A15 London Road and the land to the south of Hicks Lane. The site as a whole is bounded to the north and east by railway lines. A light industrial estate occupies the land to the west of the site. The southern side of the site is bounded by the A1139 Peterborough bypass.

The majority of the site is derelict land, except for the Transport Depot which is still in operation under lease to GKL Ltd. This comprises a tarmac and reinforced concrete surfaced yard with engineering workshops and offices. Much of the land in the east and west of the site is covered by hard-standing, where the former buildings and brick yards were located, and aggregate associated with the former tramways and sidings interspersed with dense undergrowth. The ground surface is roughly level but varies across the site from *c*10m to 18m OD, in general it slopes gently downwards towards the north-east corner of the site, near to the railway. The Transport Depot is located at the highest point and there is a large subsoil spoil heap in the east of the site.

The site lies within an area of geologically unsurveyed land to the south of the River Nene in Peterborough (SSEW 1983). Excavations on the site identified the geology as Lower Oxford Clay overlain by First Terrace Nene River Gravels similar to other evaluations in the vicinity (JSAC 2006). There is no evidence for the 3rd century deposit of clay alluvium identified at the Ikea Distribution Centre to the east, and no evidence for brickearth deposition in more recent times as on the land to the south of the A1139 Peterborough bypass (SAS 2001; WA 2000).

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was conducted to provide information that contributes towards more informed decisions within the planning process and an enhanced understanding of the

potential of the archaeological resource on the site of the former brickworks at Old Fletton, Peterborough. The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits within the four pockets of potentially undisturbed land upon the site (Areas A-D) and the Transport Depot, at the request of the Peterborough City Archaeologist,.
- to establish where possible the nature, approximate date, extent, function, state of preservation and depth of burial of the deposits encountered.

If significant archaeological remains were encountered, the further objectives were:

- to assess the artefactual and environmental potential of the deposits present.
- to place the remains within their local, regional and national context together with further information on the historic character of the local area.
- to produce a site archive for deposition with the Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery and information for access in the local SMR.

Fieldwork was conducted in June 2006. Sixteen trenches were located according to the specification to assess the four pockets of potentially undisturbed land upon the site within the constraints provided by live buried services, standing buildings, party walls, operating businesses and busy roads (Fig 2). The excavation of the trenches was conducted using a 360° wheeled excavator fitted with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were set out to their full extent, but were shortened where obstructions were encountered that could not be dug out, such as service lines, substantial wall foundations and reinforced concrete footings. All machine operation was carried out under continuous archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated until the archaeological horizon or the natural substrate was encountered, or to a safe working depth where there was poor stability of brick rubble backfill. Potential archaeological features were photographed, drawn to scale and recorded without risk to personnel. All non-modern material was retained. A site record was maintained using pro-forma Northamptonshire Archaeology trench record sheets supplemented by sketch plans, sections and photographs on both colour and monochrome 35mm film as appropriate. A single continuous context numbering sequence was employed with a unique number assigned to each event that was recorded in the paper archive. Levels were established in relation to Ordnance Datum and the trench positions were recorded in relation to the Ordnance Survey national grid.

4 RESULTS

A deposit model showing the sequence and depth of deposits in relation to Ordnance Datum for each trench has been provided to illustrate the essential information on the thickness of deposits identified in the trench descriptions below (Fig 3).

4.1 The west of the site (Areas A & B)

No archaeological features were present within these trenches. Trenches in the west of the site were comparable, Areas A & B were situated on pylons of undisturbed natural gravel substrate whilst the areas between had been heavily quarried and reinstated with demolition material. Demolition material had been spread across the area to even out the ground surface.

Trench 1

Clean bright orange gravel was encountered across the trench at 11.56m OD in the north-west end of the trench and 12.29m OD in the south-east end of the trench. Patches of clean blue-grey boulder clay were visible filling ice wedges formed by the periglacial processes of the Devensian glaciation.

The gravel was overlain by light pink crushed brick mixed with brown silty clay and pulverised fuel ash (PFA). This was overlain by topsoil comprising light brownish-grey silty clay containing frequent brick rubble, mixed aggregate and recent vegetative material. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 12.52-13.04m OD across the trench.

Trench 2

Orange gravel was encountered in the north-east end of the trench at 12.90m OD. The majority of the trench was filled by reinstated 20th century backfill material. A sondage was excavated at the south-east end of the trench to the maximum safe extent of the machine bucket without collapsing the sides. The base of the sondage was at 11.95m OD, no natural substrate was evident. Instead the basal deposit of the sondage comprised levelling layers of dark blackish-grey silty-clay containing PFA, crushed brick, loose brick, fragmented ironwork and other debris forming the reinstatement of a large extraction pit.

A modern brick wall crossed the trench at the north-east end with the foundation cut into the natural gravel substrate. The wall was orientated from the north-west to the south-east and was 600mm wide and approximately 340mm high with three courses surviving.

Overlying the whole of the trench was disturbed topsoil comprising light brownish-grey silty clay containing frequent brick rubble and mixed aggregate. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 13.29-13.57m OD across the trench.

Trench 3

The gravel substrate was encountered at the south-east end of the trench at 13.44m OD cut by a disused water pipe. A sondage was excavated to either side of a brick wall (see below) at the north-west end of the trench to 11.47m OD, no natural substrate was evident. Instead the basal deposit of the sondage comprised similar reinstated backfill material to that observed in Trench 2.

The brick wall crossed the trench orientated north-east to south-west. It was a substantial double wall of modern brick constructed using a stretcher bond. The two wall facings were separated by 2m and filled between with aggregate. The foundation was set on concrete, 0.4m deep, and laid above the backfilled material of a former extraction pit. The wall appeared to have been part of a brick yard judging by the distribution of hard-standing outside the trench.

A brick-bat floor was encountered at the south-east end of the trench that was one course thick separating the levelling layers from the modern topsoil. The whole trench was sealed by a modern 20th century demolition layer and covered by a patchy deposit of blackish-grey topsoil. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 13.62-13.77m OD across the trench.

Trench 4

Bright orange gravel was encountered across the trench at 13.54m OD in the north-west end of the trench and 13.72 OD in the south-east end of the trench. No periglacial clay deposits were present.

The surface of the gravel was cut by three disused water pipes and overlain by a mixture of light pink crushed brick and brownish-grey silty clay containing PFA. This was overlain by a brick-bat floor that was one course thick separating the levelling layers from a thin deposit of recent vegetative matter. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 14.44-14.56m OD across the trench.

4.2 The south-east of the site (Area C)

This was the only trench to produce potential features. Sample excavation was unable to confirm their date of origin or function but it is thought likely they were associated with nearby standing structures.

Trench 5

Clean bluish-grey Lower Oxford Clay was encountered across the trench at 15.21m OD at the north-west end and 15.22m OD at the south-east end. A sondage was sunk to check the nature of the clay at the south-east end, this showed clear evidence of glacial polygons.

Two small gullies, [504] and [506], crossed the trench from east to west, neither gully produced datable finds. The fills were comparable comprising light-mid- brown silty clay lacking any inclusions. Gully [504] was 0.42m wide by 0.29m deep and gully [506] was 0.62m wide by 0.17m deep. These may have been brush drains providing past drainage for cultivation or minor post-medieval boundaries associated with a land plot extending from the building to the west that have been renovated from a 19th century barn into modern offices.

The whole trench was overlain by deposits of 20th century origin comprising mixed light-orange brown clay gravels, brick and dark blackish brown silty ash. The topsoil comprised mid-brown clay loam and was distributed evenly across the surface at 16.03-16.06m OD.

4.3 The Transport Depot

No archaeological features were present within these trenches. Trenches in the Transport Depot were comparable with all three trenches having encountered substantial disused buried services and natural gravel at similar depths. There was a considerable build-up of levelling layers that included former yard surfaces, no buried soils survived.

Trench 6

The trench was shortened to 12m to avoid a live British Telecom fibre-optic cable located by CAT scan and service checks at the northern end of the trench. Mid- orange gravel was encountered at 17.07m OD. A brown salt glazed foul water pipe crossed the trench between the depot buildings and the road. No archaeological features were observed.

Above the natural horizon was a levelling layer clearly formed from 20th century waste comprising dark brownish-grey silty clay mixed with PFA, on top of this was a layer of

brick-bats two courses thick forming a yard surface. The trench was capped with reinforced concrete laid in slabs forming the present surface of the transport depot, the top of which was at 17.56m OD.

Trench 7

The natural gravel horizon was identified at either end of the trench at 16.99m OD and 17.57m OD respectively. A small area between was crossed by a former wall foundation on an east to west alignment, the concrete foundation of which was too tough for the machine bucket to break through. Two electrical cables were encountered at the north-west end of the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment. Qualified electrical engineers tested these finding them to be unused. No archaeological features were observed.

A sequence of thin 19th-20th century levelling layers formed distinct horizons above the natural substrate. Mid- orangey-brown gravely sand was overlain by greyish-brown clay silt and subsequently a band of black silty clay containing PFA and brick rubble. The whole of the trench was sealed by a compacted dull greyish aggregate which may have been an old yard surface and was capped by a compact light yellow stone aggregate that provided the formation layer for the present tarmac surface. The top of the tarmac surface was at 18.18m OD.

Trench 8

River terrace gravel was identified across the trench at 17.42m OD at the western end and 17.26m OD at the eastern end. Three concrete features crossed the trench, two of them aligned north to south and one at the western end aligned north-east to south-west. The concrete features cut the natural gravel and may either be former wall foundations or concrete cased service pipes. A disused metal heating duct with insulation cladding was encountered at the eastern end of the trench located adjacent to an old brick wall foundation aligned north to south. This was reburied immediately. No archaeological features were observed.

A sequence of levelling layers formed distinct horizons above the natural substrate similar to Trench 7. Mid- orangey-brown gravely sand was overlain by greyish-brown clay silt and subsequently a band of black silty clay containing PFA and brick rubble. There was a layer of brick demolition rubble without PFA above this before the top of the trench was sealed by a compacted dull greyish aggregate equivalent to the old yard surface in Trench 7. The ground surface was at 18.36m OD.

4.4 The north-east of the site (Area D)

None of these trenches contained archaeological features. The trenches were comparable showing levelling horizons overlying the natural clay and gravel. In general the sequence was similar throughout with a thicker orange gravely clay subsoil containing organic and charcoal smears at the base overlain by a dark greyish-brown silty clay topsoil with extensive disturbance and vegetative intrusions. Some trenches showed slight variation from the theme with spreads of modern material, railway aggregates and one brick-bat surface, but in general the main deposits were consistent with modern subsoil, probably derived from a former spoil heap and overlain with reinstated topsoil from elsewhere on the site.

Trench 9

Orange gravel was encountered across the trench at 12.34m OD in the west end of the trench and 12.73m OD in the east end of the trench.

The gravel was overlain by greenish-orange silty clay and sealed by topsoil comprising dark greyish-brown silty clay containing recent vegetative material. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 13.38-13.60m OD across the trench.

Trench 10

Orange gravel was encountered across the trench at 12.13m OD in the north end of the trench and 12.40m OD in the south end of the trench.

The gravel was overlain by orangey-brown silty clay with rounded gravel inclusions, organic intrusions and charcoal smears. At the southern end of the trench was a spread of crushed and powdered lime overlain by a thin spread of pink crushed brick. The whole trench was sealed by topsoil comprising dark greyish-brown silty clay containing recent vegetative material and mixed with frequent scatters of bricks. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 13.25-13.32m OD across the trench.

Trench 11

Bluish-grey clay with patches of orange gravel was encountered across the trench at 11.80m OD in the west end of the trench and 11.98m OD in the east end of the trench.

The substrate was overlain by mid- orangey-brown gravely-clay and sealed by topsoil comprising dark grey silty clay loam. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 12.74-12.89m OD across the trench.

Trench 12

Bluish-grey clay was encountered across the trench at 11.52m OD in the north end of the trench and 11.90m OD in the south end of the trench.

The natural clay was overlain by dark orange-brown gravely clay containing organic smears. On top of this was black silty clay containing frequent recent vegetative material and brick, equivalent to the topsoil in the other trenches in Area D. The surface was sealed by a layer of sterile re-deposited orange-blue natural clay evenly distributed at 12.42-12.62m OD across the trench.

Trench 13

Orange gravel with patches of bluish-grey clay was encountered across the trench at 11.24m OD in the west end of the trench and 11.26m OD in the east end of the trench.

The substrate was overlain by dark orangey-brown clayey-gravel with some charcoal smears. This was covered by a spread of mixed PFA, crushed brick and black silty clay with scattered bricks. On top of this was a dark greyish-brown silty clay levelling layer containing recent vegetative material similar to the buried soil in Trench 12. The top of the trench was sealed by a layer of sterile re-deposited orange-blue natural clay evenly distributed at 12.44-12.45m OD across the trench.

Trench 14

Orange gravel with patches of bluish-grey clay encountered across the trench at 11.04m OD in the north end of the trench and 10.98m OD in the south end of the trench.

The substrate was overlain by dark brown silty clay containing organic and charcoal smears and covered by a mixed orangey-brown gravely clay. Blackish-grey silty clay containing PFA formed a spread close at the surface at the northern end of the trench, whilst the southern end of the trench was sealed by a layer of sterile re-deposited orange-blue natural clay. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 11.65-12.09m OD across the trench.

Trench 15

Orange gravel was encountered across the trench at 10.97m OD in the west end of the trench and 10.80m OD in the east end of the trench.

The gravel was overlain by mid- to dark orangey-brown clay silt with frequent rounded gravel inclusions, organic intrusions and charcoal smears. It was sealed by topsoil comprising mixed black silty loam containing recent vegetative material, brick and PFA. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 11.57-11.67m OD across the trench.

Trench 16

Orangey-blue clay was encountered across the trench at 9.61m OD in the north-east end of the trench and 9.93m OD in the south-west end of the trench.

The natural clay was overlain by orangey-brown gravely clay and then covered by mixed dirty greyish-brown silty clay and gravel. These layers and the natural substrate were cut at the southern end of the trench by a large modern pit filled with blue clay, a broken railway sleeper, PFA and polyhydrocarbon chemical residues. A single course brick-bat floor extended across the whole trench sealing previous deposits, it was covered by a layer of mixed gravel aggregates containing coke, coal dust and PFA which formed the surface of the former tramway. The ground surface was evenly distributed at 10.65-11.02m OD across the trench.

4 DISCUSSION

Of the four main areas of the site originally identified by the desk-based assessment as being potentially undisturbed only one, Area C, produced any evidence for archaeological features and these were two small sterile gullies of probable post-medieval origin or agricultural association. None of the trenches produced residual artefacts pre-dating the 20th century and the dry, free-draining soils suggested a lack of potential for environmental evidence.

Trenches in Areas A, B & D all demonstrated that the desk-based assessment had been correct in its conclusion that these areas had not been subject to clay extraction. The presence of substantial modern deposits and levelling layers, combined with an absence of buried soils pre-dating the 20th century showed that all of these areas had been stripped to the natural substrate in the past.

The nature and extent of the levelling layers and the inclusion of PFA in most of the darker soils indicated that the reinstatement works during the 1970s had taken place throughout the site and that large scale earthmoving had utilised these unquarried areas, particularly Area D, for the storage of spoil, much of which had been used to spread across the site to form level ground.

Where buried structures of the former brickworks were encountered, these had been subject to a high level of destruction with only the very base footings, brick-bat floors and former service lines remaining intact. The only exception to this was in the Transport depot, where the former buildings remain standing as part of an operating business and the preservation of 20th century remains is relatively good. Earlier remains were not evident and the absence of subsoil suggested that the natural substrate below the Transport Depot was stripped and prepared during groundwork to build the engineering workshops and yard spaces that are present there today.

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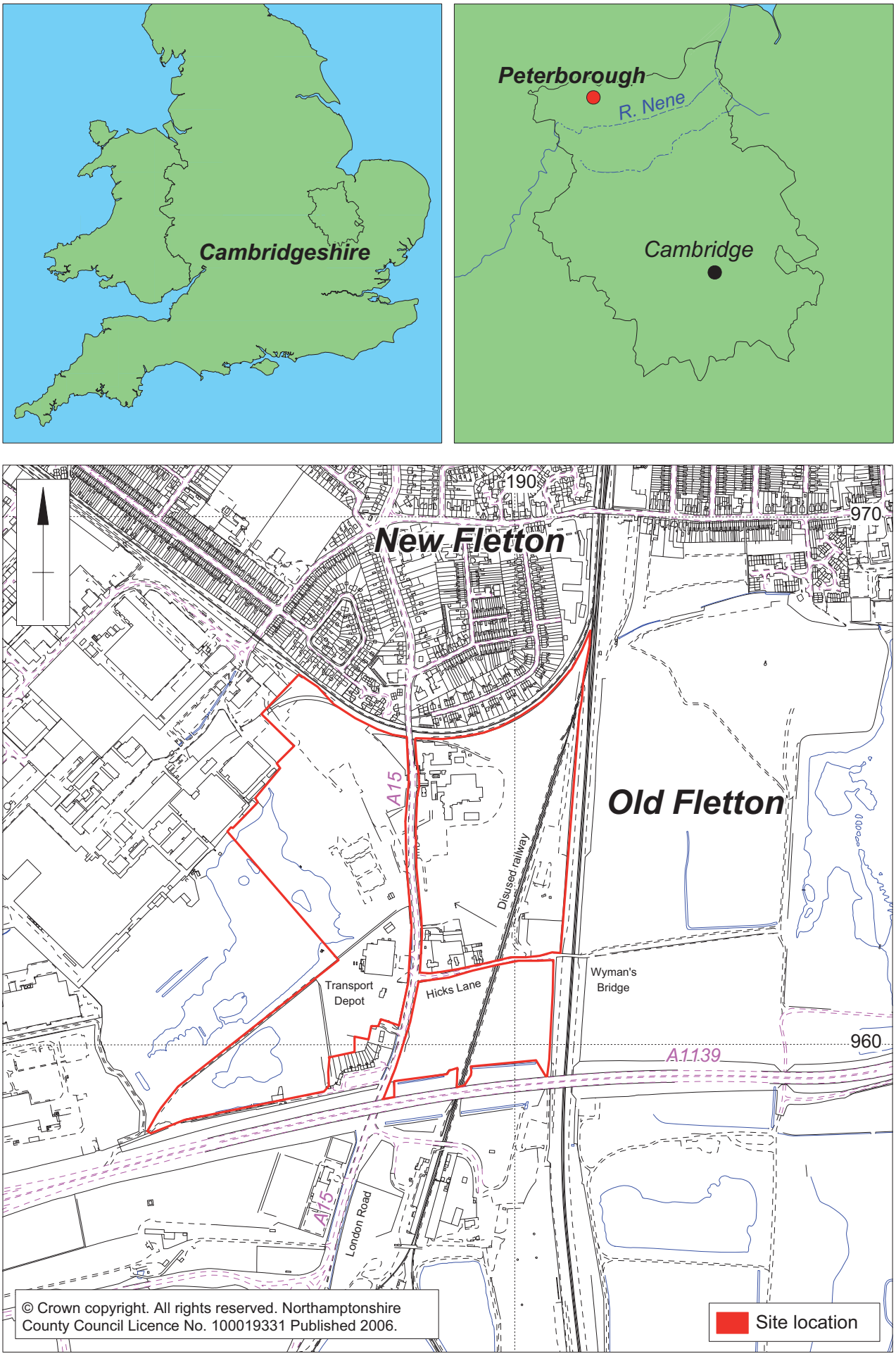
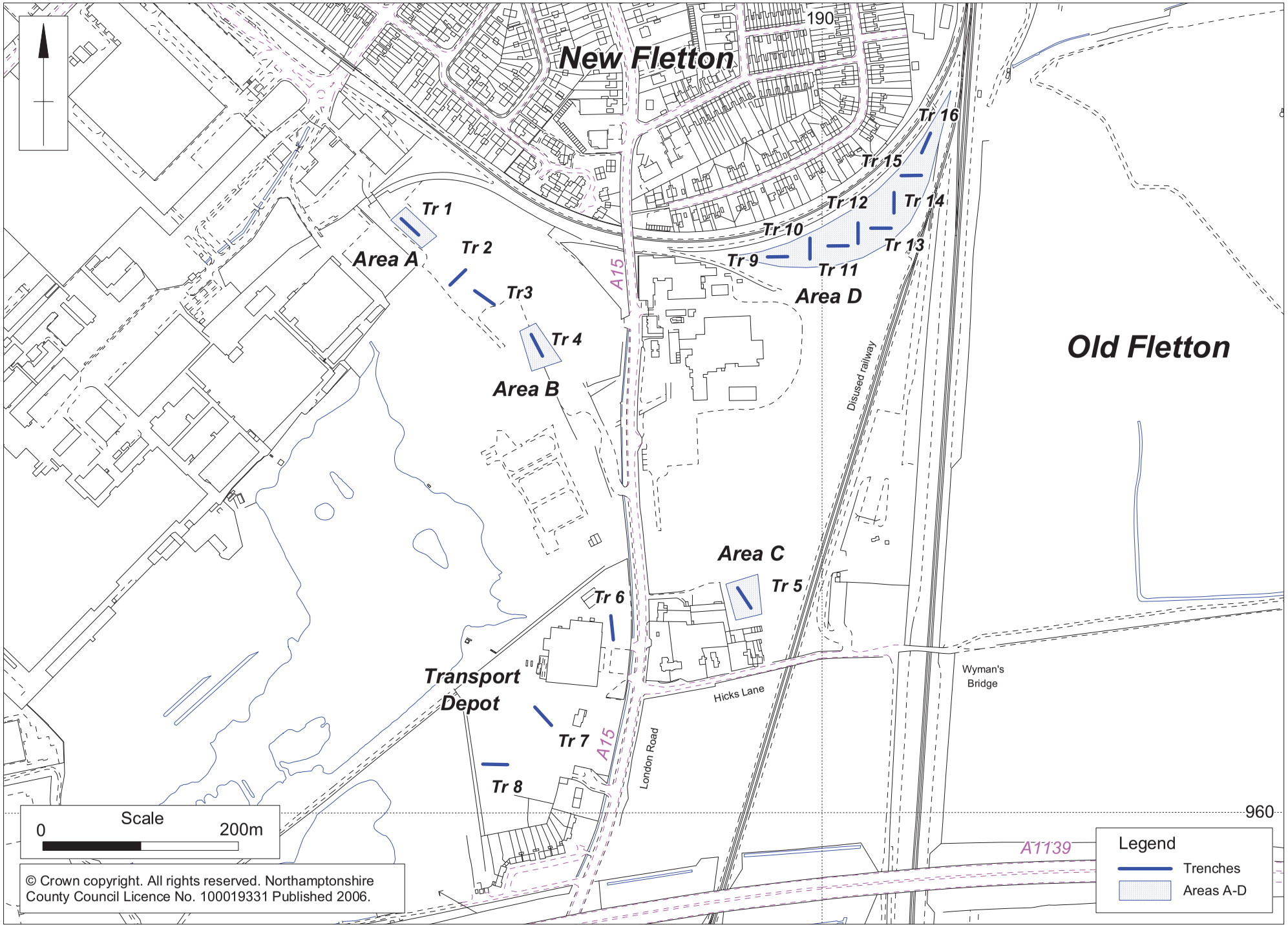


Scale 1:10,000

General site location plan Fig 1


Scale 1:5000
New Fletton
190
Old Fletton
Tr 1
Tr 2
Tr3
Tr 4
Area A
Area B
Area C
Area D
Tr 5
Tr 6
Tr 7
Tr 8
Tr 9
Tr 10
Tr 11
Tr 12
Tr 13
Tr 14
Tr 15
Tr 16
A15
A15
A1139
Disused railway
Hicks Lane
London Road
Wyman's Bridge
Transport Depot
960
Scale
0
200m
Legend
Trenches
Areas A-D
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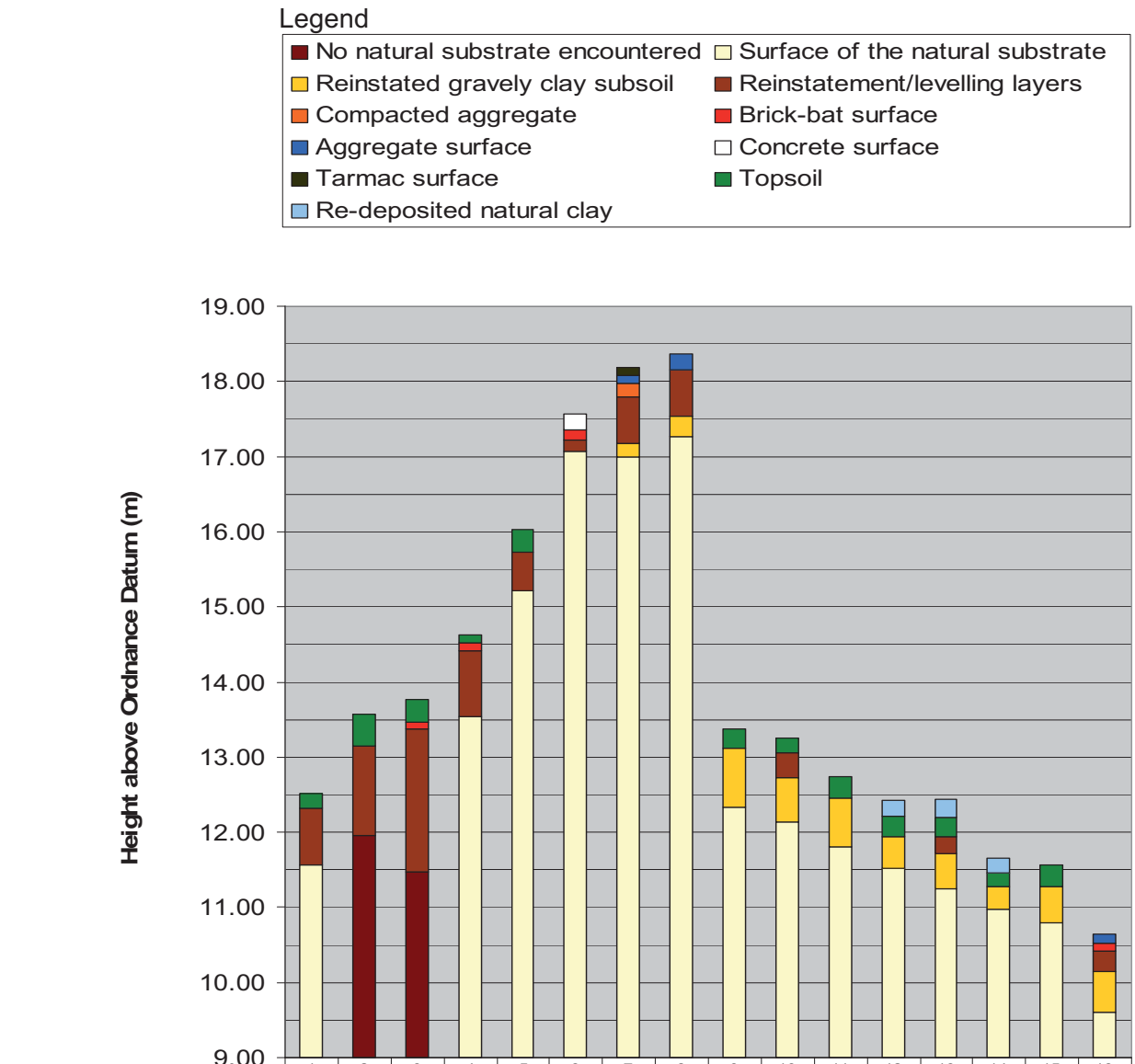
Trench location plan
Fig 2

Deposit model



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Re-deposited natural clay												0.21	0.24	0.19		
Topsoil	0.20	0.42	0.30	0.10	0.30				0.26	0.19	0.29	0.27	0.26	0.19	0.30	
Tarmac surface							0.10									
Concrete surface						0.20										
Aggregate surface							0.10	0.20								0.13
Brick-bat surface			0.10	0.10		0.14										0.10
Compacted aggregate							0.18									
Reinstatement/levelling layers	0.76	1.20	1.90	0.88	0.52	0.15	0.62	0.62		0.33			0.23			0.28
Reinstated gravely clay subsoil							0.19	0.28	0.78	0.60	0.65	0.42	0.47	0.29	0.47	0.53
Surface of the natural substrate	11.56			13.54	15.21	17.07	16.99	17.26	12.34	12.13	11.80	11.52	11.24	10.98	10.80	9.61
No natural substrate encountered		11.95	11.47													

Trench numbers and deposit thicknesses with height above Ordnance Datum at the base of the trench (m)

Deposit model Fig 3