
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT 12 ELM HIGH ROAD
WISBECH,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
(WIEH 11)**

**Work Undertaken For
Prospect Archaeology Limited
On behalf of
Economy Windows Limited**

November 2011

Report Compiled by
Paul Cope-Faulkner BA (Hons)

National Grid Reference: TF 4687 0836
Planning Application No: F/YR11/0578/F
HER Event No: ECB 3677
OASIS Record No: archaeo11-113968

APS Report No. **130/11**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Plates

1.	SUMMARY	1
2.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.1	DEFINITION OF A WATCHING BRIEF.....	1
2.2	PLANNING BACKGROUND.....	1
2.3	TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY.....	1
2.4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL SETTING	1
3.	AIMS	2
4.	METHODS	2
5.	RESULTS	2
6.	DISCUSSION	2
7.	CONCLUSION	2
8.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
9.	PERSONNEL	3
10.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	3
11.	ABBREVIATIONS	3

Appendices

1. Context descriptions
2. Glossary
3. The Archive

List of Figures

- Figure 1 General location plan
- Figure 2 Site location plan
- Figure 3 Plan of the development showing section locations
- Figure 4 Sections 1 to 3

List of Plates

- Plate 1 General view of the development area
- Plate 2 Section 1
- Plate 3 Section 3

1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at 12 Elm High Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. The watching brief monitored the excavation of stanchion pits for a new storage warehouse.

The site lies over the course of the post-medieval (AD 1540-1900) Wisbech Canal. The canal was opened in 1797 and closed in 1926 following competition from a tramway, which lay to the east of the site, and from railways. The channel was infilled during the 1970s.

The watching brief revealed deposits associated with the infilling of the channel which must date to the 1970s. These deposits lay beneath levelling and demolition layers which are probably associated with former development at the site.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as “*a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits maybe disturbed or destroyed.*” (IfA 2008).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Prospect Archaeology Limited on behalf of Economy Windows to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with a new storage warehouse at 12 Elm High Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. Approval for the development was sought through

the submission of planning application F/YR11/0578/F. The watching brief was carried out on the 2nd November 2011 in accordance with a specification prepared by Archaeological Project Services (Appendix 1) and approved by the Senior Archaeologist, Planning and Countryside Advice, Cambridgeshire County Council.

2.3 Topography and Geology

Wisbech is located 52km north of Cambridge in the administrative district of Fenland, Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1).

The site is located 1.3km south of the centre of Wisbech as defined by the parish church of SS Peter and Paul at National Grid Reference TF 4687 0836 (Fig. 2). The site lies on the west side of Elm High Road at a height of c. 4m OD on generally level ground.

The site is on soils of the Blacktoft Association, typically gleyic brown alluvial silts, and Wisbech Association, coarse silty calcareous soils (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 124; 361). These soils are developed on a drift geology of marine alluvium.

2.4 Archaeological Setting

The site is located on the line of the Wisbech Canal which was opened in 1797 and connected the Nene at Wisbech to the Old River Nene at Outwell. The canal lay a short distance from Elm High Road with its towpath located on the west side, broadly along the line of the rear property boundaries at the west of the site.

In 1883, the Wisbech and Upwell Tramway opened and followed the course of the canal on the east side of Elm High Road. This and the railways gradually saw the end of the canal which was formally closed in 1926. The channel was filled in with waste during the 1970s.

The site also lies in a general area of Romano-British cropmarks including

salterns, settlements and field systems. Romano-British remains are also known from the centre of Wisbech.

3. AIMS

The aim of the watching brief, as detailed in the specification (Appendix 1), was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the groundworks should be recorded and, if present, to determine their date, function and origin.

4. METHODS

Stanchion pits for the new warehouse were excavated by machine to depths required by the development, generally between 0.6m and 0.7m below the current ground level. Following excavation, the sides of the trenches were then cleaned and rendered vertical. Selected deposits were excavated further to retrieve artefactual material and to determine their function. Each deposit was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their descriptions appears as Appendix 2. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services practice.

Following excavation the records were checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them.

5. RESULTS

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

The sequence of deposits was broadly the same in each stanchion pit. The earliest deposit, perhaps a fill within the canal channel, comprised grey clayey silt with modern dumped material (105) which was encountered only in Pit 1. This was sealed by brownish grey silt (104) that was 0.3m thick and equates to a similar deposit in the other recorded pits (1203 and 304) which measured in excess of 0.22m thick.

Sealing the possible canal fill was a levelling deposit of dark grey sandy silt (103, 1202 and 303). This measured between 0.28m and over 0.48m thick. This was in turn overlain by a demolition deposit of brown sandy silt and rubble (102, 1201 and 302) that was up to 0.18m thick.

The demolition deposit was sealed by the current yard surface comprising greyish brown sandy silt and gravel (101 and 301). In Pit 12, this deposit was absent.

6. DISCUSSION

Earliest deposits are likely to be associated with the infilling of the Wisbech Canal which occurred during the 1970s. No deposits were encountered that relate to the construction or use of the canal or of any previous land surface. These deposits were overlain by levelling and demolition deposits probably created prior to previous development at the site.

No finds were retrieved during the investigation.

7. CONCLUSION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 12 Elm High Road, Wisbech, as the site lay over the remains of a late 18th century canal.

However, only deposits that infilled the channel were recorded with no limits (such

as canal banks) discovered to them. The infilling deposits were overlain by levelling and demolition layers which post-date the 1970s. No other archaeological features were identified and no artefacts were retrieved.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Ms N Field of Prospect Archaeology Limited for commissioning the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis on behalf of Economy Windows Limited. The work was coordinated by Gary Taylor who edited this report along with Tom Lane. Dave Start kindly allowed access to the library maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

9. PERSONNEL

Project coordinator: Gary Taylor
Site Supervisor: Bob Garland
Photographic reproduction: Sue Unsworth
Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner
Post-excavation analysis: Paul Cope-Faulkner

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hodge, CAH, Burton, RGO, Corbett, WM, Evans, R and Seale, RS, 1984 *Soils and their use in Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales **13**

IfA, 2008, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

IfA Institute for Archaeologists



Figure 1 General location map

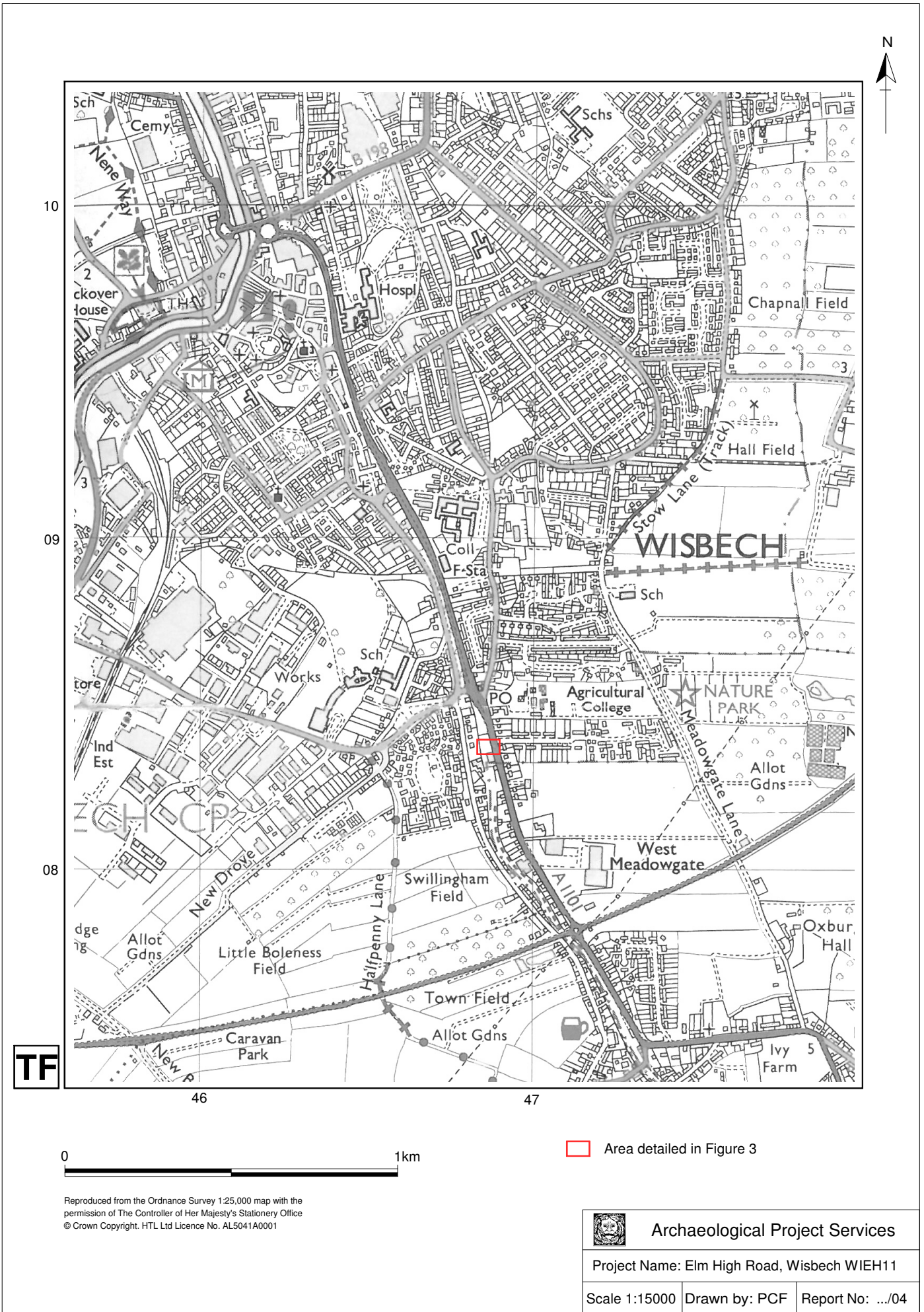


Figure 2 - Site location plan

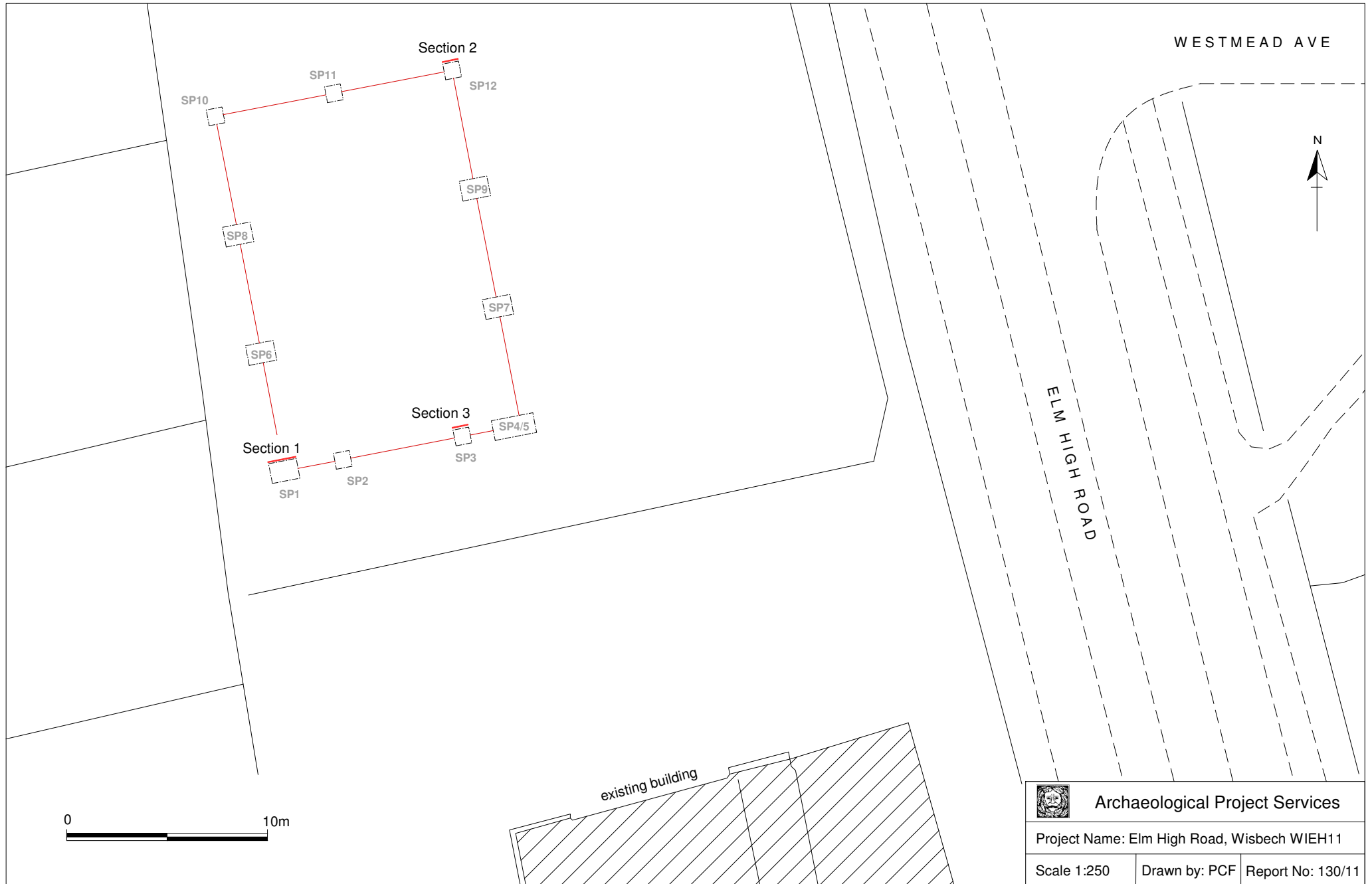
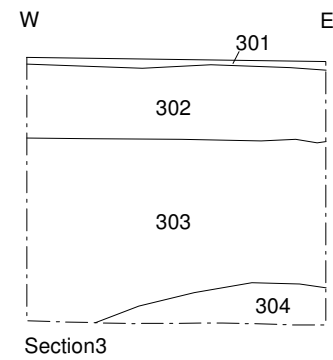
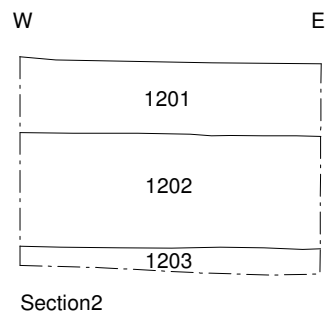
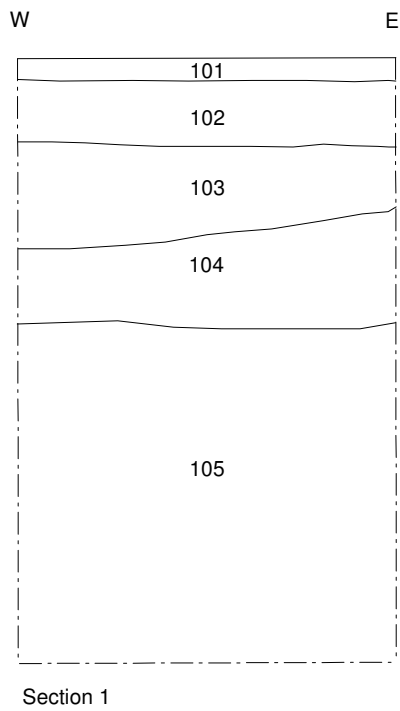


Figure 3 - Plan of the development showing section location




	Archaeological Project Services	
Project Name: Elm High Road, Wisbech WIEH11		
Scale 1:20	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 130/11

Figure 4 - Sections 1 to 3



Plate 1 – General view of the development area, looking north



Plate 2 – Section 1, looking north



Plate 3 – Section 3, looking north

Appendix 1

SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT 12 ELM HIGH ROAD, WISBECH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 *An archaeological watching brief is required during development at 12 Elm High Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.*
- 1.2 *The site is in an area of industrial archaeological remains including a former canal and towpath and a tramway. Iron Age and Roman settlements and salt-making sites are also known in the general Wisbech area.*
- 1.3 *The investigation will involve monitoring of development groundwork. Deposits exposed will be recorded in writing, graphically and photographically.*
- 1.4 *On completion of the fieldwork a report will be prepared detailing the results of the investigation. The report will consist of a narrative supported by illustrations and photographs.*

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This document comprises a specification for an archaeological watching brief during development at Elm High Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.
- 2.2 This document contains the following parts:
 - 2.2.1 Overview.
 - 2.2.2 Stages of work and methodologies.
 - 2.2.3 List of specialists.
 - 2.2.4 Programme of works and staffing structure of the project

3 SITE LOCATION

- 3.1 Wisbech is located from 52km north Cambridge in the Fenland District of Cambridgeshire. The site is about 1km southeast of the town centre, on the west side of Elm High Road, just south of the junction with Westmead Avenue, at National Grid Reference TF 4687 0836.

4 PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Planning permission (F/YR11/0578/F) for a storage warehouse has been granted subject to conditions including the need for an archaeological watching brief during development.

5 SOILS AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 5.1 The investigation site is on level ground at about 4m OD. It is located at the junction of Blacktoft Association gleyic brown alluvial silts to the east, with Wisbech Association coarse silty calcareous soils to the west. Both soil types are developed on marine alluvium that overlies glacial drift (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 124; 361).

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

- 6.1 Iron Age and Roman settlement and saltern remains have been identified in the general Wisbech area previously. The site is outside the historic core of medieval and later settlement at Wisbech. The site is in an area of industrial archaeological significance, on the route of the infilled Wisbech Canal, immediately adjacent to the towpath. Elm High Road is also on the course of the Wisbech-Upwell tramway.

7 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 The aim of the work will be to record and interpret the deposits and any archaeological features exposed

during the development groundwork.

7.2 The objectives of the investigation will be to:

- Determine the form and function of the archaeological features encountered;
- Determine the spatial arrangement of the archaeological features encountered;
- As far as practicable, recover dating evidence from the archaeological features, and
- Establish the sequence of the archaeological remains present on the site.

8 **SITE OPERATIONS**

8.1 General considerations

- 8.1.1 All work will be undertaken following statutory Health and Safety requirements in operation at the time of the investigation.
- 8.1.2 The work will be undertaken according to the relevant codes of practise issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), under the management of a Member of the institute (MIfA). Archaeological Project Services is IfA registered organisation no. 21.
- 8.1.3 Any and all artefacts found during the investigation and thought to be ‘treasure’, as defined by the Treasure Act 1996, will be removed from site to a secure store and promptly reported to the appropriate coroner’s office.

8.2 Methodology

- 8.2.1 The watching brief will be undertaken during the groundworks phase of development, and includes the archaeological monitoring of all phases of soil movement.
- 8.2.2 Stripped areas and trench sections will be observed to identify and record archaeological features that are exposed and to record changes in the geological conditions. The section drawings of the trenches will be recorded at a scale of 1:10. Should features be recorded in plan these will be drawn at a scale of 1:20. Written descriptions detailing the nature of the deposits, features and fills encountered will be compiled on Archaeological Project Services pro-forma record sheets.
- 8.2.3 Finds recovered will be bagged and labelled for later analysis.
- 8.2.4 Throughout the investigation a photographic record will be compiled. The photographic record will consist of:
- the site during the investigation to show specific stages of work, and the layout of the archaeology within the area.
 - individual features and, where appropriate, their sections.
 - groups of features where their relationship is important.
- 8.2.5 Should human remains be located they will be left *in situ* and only excavated if absolutely necessary. Should removal be required the appropriate Ministry of Justice licence will be obtained before the exhumation of the remains. In addition, the Local Environmental Health Department, coroner and the police will be informed, where appropriate.

9 **POST-EXCAVATION**

9.1 Stage 1

- 9.1.1 On completion of site operations, the records and schedules produced during the investigation will be checked and ordered to ensure that they form a uniform sequence forming a level II

archive. A stratigraphic matrix of the archaeological deposits and features present on the site will be prepared. All photographic material will be catalogued and labelled, the labelling referring to schedules identifying the subject/s photographed.

- 9.1.2 All finds recovered during the fieldwork will be washed, marked and packaged according to the deposit from which they were recovered. Any finds requiring specialist treatment and conservation will be sent to the Conservation Laboratory at Lincoln.

9.2 Stage 2

- 9.2.1 Detailed examination of the stratigraphic matrix to enable the determination of the various phases of activity on the site.
- 9.2.2 Finds will be sent to specialists for identification and dating.

9.3 Stage 3

- 9.3.1 On completion of stage 2, a report detailing the findings of the investigation will be prepared.
- 9.3.2 This will consist of:
 - 9.3.2.1 A non-technical summary of the results of the investigation.
 - 9.3.2.2 A description of the archaeological setting of the investigation.
 - 9.3.2.3 Description of the topography of the site.
 - 9.3.2.4 Description of the methodologies used during the investigation.
 - 9.3.2.5 A text describing the findings of the investigation.
 - 9.3.2.6 A consideration of the local, regional and national context of the investigation findings.
 - 9.3.2.7 Plans of the archaeological features exposed. If a sequence of archaeological deposits is encountered, separate plans for each phase will be produced.
 - 9.3.2.8 Sections of the trenches and archaeological features.
 - 9.3.2.9 Interpretation of the archaeological features exposed, and their chronology and setting within the surrounding landscape.
 - 9.3.2.10 Specialist reports on the finds from the site.
 - 9.3.2.11 Appropriate photographs of the site and specific archaeological features.

10 **REPORT DEPOSITION**

- 10.1 Copies of the report will be sent to: the client and to Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Record.

11 **ARCHIVE**

- 11.1 Prior to the project commencing, the Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Office will be contacted to obtain their agreement to receipt of the project archive and to establish their requirements with regards to labelling, ordering, storage, conservation and organisation of the archive.
- 11.2 The documentation and records generated during the investigation will be sorted and ordered into format acceptable to the appropriate local museum. This sorting will be undertaken according to the guidelines and conditions stipulated by the museum, and appropriate national guidelines, for long-term storage and curation.
- 11.3 Upon completion and submission of the investigation report, the landowner will be contacted to arrange legal transfer of title to the archaeological objects retained during the investigation from themselves to

the receiving museum. The transfer of title will be effected by a standard letter supplied to the landowner for signature.

12 PUBLICATION

- 12.1 Details of the investigation will be input to the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS).
- 12.2 If appropriate, notes on the findings will be submitted to the appropriate local and national journals *Proceedings of the Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society*; *Britannia* for discoveries of Roman date, and *Medieval Archaeology* for findings of medieval or later date.

13 CURATORIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 13.1 Curatorial responsibility for the archaeological work undertaken on the site lies with Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office. They will be given written notice of the commencement of the project.

14 VARIATIONS AND CONTINGENCIES

- 14.1 Variations to the proposed scheme of works will only be made following written confirmation of acceptance from the archaeological curator.
- 14.2 In the event of the discovery of any unexpected remains of archaeological importance, or of any changed circumstances, it is the responsibility of the archaeological contractor to inform the archaeological curator.
- 14.3 Where important archaeological remains are discovered and deemed to merit further investigation additional resources may be required to provide an appropriate level of investigation, recording and analysis.
- 14.4 Any contingency requirement for additional fieldwork or post-excavation analysis outside the scope of the proposed scheme of works will only be activated following full consultation with the archaeological curator and the client.

15 PROGRAMME OF WORKS AND STAFFING LEVELS

- 15.1 The investigation will be integrated with the programme of construction and is dependent on the developers' work programme, and also on the quantity and complexity of archaeological remains encountered. It is therefore not possible to specify the person-hours for the archaeological site. Post-excavation work is likewise dependent on the quantity and complexity of archaeological remains encountered.
- 15.2 An archaeological supervisor with experience of investigations of this type will undertake the work.
- 15.3 Post-excavation analysis and report production will be undertaken by the archaeological supervisor, or a post-excavation analyst as appropriate, with assistance from a finds supervisor, illustrator and external specialists.

16 SPECIALISTS TO BE USED DURING THE PROJECT

- 16.1 The following organisations/persons will, in principle and if necessary, be used as subcontractors to provide the relevant specialist work and reports in respect of any objects or material recovered during the investigation that require their expert knowledge and input. Engagement of any particular specialist subcontractor is also dependent on their availability and ability to meet programming requirements.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Body to be undertaking the work</u>
Conservation	Conservation Laboratory, Lincoln
Pottery Analysis	Prehistoric – D Trimble, APS/ Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust Roman – A Beeby, APS/B Precious, Independent Specialist Post-Roman -A Irving, APS
Non-pottery Artefacts	J Cowgill, Independent Specialist/G Taylor, APS

Animal Bones	P Cope-Faulkner, APS
Environmental Analysis	J Rackham, Independent Specialist
Human Remains Analysis	Dr R Gowland, Independent Specialist

17 **INSURANCES**

- 17.1 Archaeological Project Services, as part of the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire, maintains Employers Liability Insurance of £10,000,000, together with Public and Products Liability insurances, each with indemnity of £5,000,000. Copies of insurance documentation can be supplied on request.

18 **COPYRIGHT**

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- 18.4 The author of any report or specialist contribution to a report shall retain intellectual copyright of their work and may make use of their work for educational or research purposes or for further publication.

19 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Hodge, CAH, Burton, RGO, Corbett, WM, Evans, R, and Seale, RS, 1984 Soils and their use in Eastern England, Soil Survey of England and Wales 13

Specification: Version 1, 03-10-11

Appendix 2

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
101	Friable mid greyish brown sandy silt with gravel, 50mm thick	Yard surface
102	Friable mid brown sandy silt and demolition rubble, 0.17m thick	Demolition deposit
103	Soft to friable dark grey sandy silt, 0.28m thick	Levelling deposit
104	Soft light brownish grey silt, 0.3m thick	Possible canal infill
105	Loose dark grey clayey silt with brick, stone and modern debris, >0.9m thick	Possible canal infill
1201	Friable mid brown sandy silt and demolition rubble, 0.18m thick	Demolition deposit
1202	Soft to friable dark grey sandy silt, 0.3m thick	Levelling deposit
1203	Soft light brownish grey silt, >60mm thick	Possible canal infill
301	Friable mid greyish brown sandy silt with gravel, 20mm thick	Yard surface
302	Friable mid brown sandy silt and demolition rubble, 0.18m thick	Demolition deposit
303	Soft to friable dark grey sandy silt, >0.48m thick	Levelling deposit
304	Soft light brownish grey silt, >0.11m thick	Possible canal infill

Appendix 3

GLOSSARY

Alluvium	A deposit (usually clay, silts or sands) laid down in water. Marine alluvium is deposited by the sea and freshwater alluvium by streams, rivers or within lakes.
Context	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretations of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, <i>e.g.</i> (004).
Cropmark	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) which become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Layer	A layer is a term to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Post-medieval	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
Saltern	Salt producing site typified by ash, derived from fuel needed to evaporate sea water, and briquetage.

Appendix 4

THE ARCHIVE

The excavation archive consists of:

11	Context record sheets
3	Sheets of scale drawings
1	Photographic record sheet
1	Section record sheet
1	Daily record sheet

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Cambridgeshire County Council
Castle Court
Shire Hall
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

Accession Number: ECB 3677

Archaeological Project Services Site Code: WIEH 11

OASIS Record No: archaeo11-113968

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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