

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:

### TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND AT 60 REACH ROAD, BURWELL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Planning Reference: 12/00337/FUL

NGR: TL 5848 6594

Oasis Reference: allenarc1-135067

AAL Site Code: BURE 12

CHER Event Number: ECB3856



Report prepared for  
Mr Richard Peters

By  
Allen Archaeology Limited  
Report Number 2012090

October 2012



Allenarchaeology



## Contents

Executive Summary	1
<b>1.0</b> Introduction	2
<b>2.0</b> Site Location and Description	2
<b>3.0</b> Planning Background	2
<b>4.0</b> Archaeological and Historical Background	3
<b>5.0</b> Methodology	4
<b>6.0</b> Results	4
6.1 Trench 1	4
6.2 Trench 2	4
<b>7.0</b> Discussion and Conclusions	5
<b>8.0</b> Effectiveness of Methodology	5
<b>9.0</b> Acknowledgements	5
<b>10.0</b> References	6
 <b>List of Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1:</b> Colour Plates	7
<b>Appendix 2:</b> Animal Bone Report	9
<b>Appendix 3:</b> Context Summary List	10

### List of Figures

- Figure 1:** Site location with proposed development site shown in red  
**Figure 2:** Trench location plan  
**Figure 3:** Trenches 1 and 2 plans and section

### List of Plates

- Plate 1:** General view of the site, looking southwest from the north-eastern site boundary  
**Plate 2:** Trench 1 pre-excavation, looking southeast. Scales are 1m and 0.3m  
**Plate 3:** Northeast facing section of ditch [102], looking southwest. Scales are 1m and 0.5m  
**Plate 4:** Trench 2, pre-excavation, looking northeast. Scales are 1m  
**Plate 5:** Northwest facing section of ditch [202], looking southeast. Scales are 1m  
**Plate 6:** Northwest facing section of ditch [204], looking southeast. Scales are 1m and 0.5m

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### **Executive Summary**

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Mr Richard Peters to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at 60 Reach Road in Burwell, Cambridgeshire. The work was undertaken in response to a condition attached to a planning application for a new two storey dwelling.
- The site lies within an area of recognised archaeological potential. An evaluation carried out by Allen Archaeology in 2007 to the northwest revealed evidence for later prehistoric and Roman activity, as well as the part remains of two late Iron Age inhumations buried along the edge of a former stream. An evaluation at 70 Reach Road in 2012 encountered two undated ditches cut into an alluvial deposit.
- The evaluation on 60 Reach Road uncovered three undated boundary ditches, sealed directly below the topsoil.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Mr Richard Peters to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation in advance of the construction of a new dwelling at 60 Reach Road, Burwell in Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The excavating, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (IfA 1994, revised 2001 and 2008), the regional guidelines in '*Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*' (Gurney 2003), a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Team at Cambridgeshire County Council (hereafter CHET) (McConnell 2012), a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2012) as well as all relevant English Heritage guidelines on archaeological best practice ([www.helm.org/server/show/nav.7740](http://www.helm.org/server/show/nav.7740)).
- 1.3 The documentary and physical archive will be submitted to the Cambridgeshire's County Archaeological Store within six months of the completion of the project and sorted under the CHER event number ECB3856.

## 2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Burwell is situated in the administrative district of East Cambridgeshire, approximately 16km east-northeast of central Cambridgeshire. The site is situated to the southwest of the centre of Burwell, to the northeast of Reach Road. It comprises a sub-rectangular block formerly occupied by a single dwelling with associated outbuildings. The site is centred on NGR TL 5848 6594.
- 2.2 The local geology comprises bedrock deposits of West Melbury Chalk Formation, with no superficial deposits recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

## 3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted in May 2012 for the '*erection of new two storey dwelling and detached garage on land at 60 Reach Road, Burwell*' (Planning Application Reference 12/00272/FUL). The application was granted in July 2012 subject to conditions, including the undertaking of a programme of archaeological trial trenching in order to determine the archaeological potential of the proposed development area.
- 3.2 Due to a misunderstanding regarding the archaeological requirement for the project, the proposed dwelling and garage were under construction prior to AAL being commissioned to undertake the works. Therefore, a trenching strategy was devised in agreement with CHET to locate the evaluation trenches as close to the new house and garage as possible (see Figure 2).

#### 4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 In much of the parish, prehistoric activity is attested by isolated findspots of worked lithic material, including the Burwell jadeite axe (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) Reference Number 06477). A scatter of worked flints has been recorded c.250m northwest of the site (CHER Reference Number 04337) and a Bronze Age dagger c.450m west of the site (CHER Reference Number 06459). Late Bronze Age artefacts are recorded from the vicinity of the parish church (CHER Reference Number 06769) and at least ten round barrows once existed on Burwell Heath (Cambridgeshire County Council 2006). Undated ring ditches are also recorded c.700m to the south (CHER Reference Number 06455 and 06456).
- 4.2 Romano-British remains from the parish indicate a possible villa site may have existed at Reach, to the west of the application area, with a further potential villa adjacent to Burwell Castle to the east. Other contemporary activity is recorded in and around the village of Burwell, including Roman pottery, tile and small finds recorded (Archaeology Data Service (ADS) Record ID – NMR\_NATINV-374690), (CHER Reference Numbers 40298, 04663, 06768, 06807, 06843, 10953 and CB14758).
- 4.3 The place-name Burwell is probably of Anglo-Saxon origin, and means ‘spring by the fort’. A late Saxon coin dating to 946 – 955 AD was found c.350m northeast of site (CHER Reference Number CB14760) and further east a cemetery of early to mid Saxon date has been located (CHER Reference Number 06764). At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 AD, land was owned by The Abbot of Ramsey, the nuns of the church of Chatteris and Count Alan (Williams and Martin 2002).
- 4.4 A medieval arrowhead (CHER Reference Number 06466) was found 150m east-northeast of the site in the vicinity of Burwell Castle (CHER 01775). The motte castle is an unfinished structure built by King Stephen’s forces in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with the earthworks of another moated enclosure immediately to the north (CHER Reference Number 01122).
- 4.5 Archaeological works undertaken c.200m northwest of the site (AAL 2007) revealed remains of prehistoric and Roman date, based around a former water channel, with late Iron Age burials recovered from the edge of the channel itself. A pit filled with fuel ash slag was dated to the Romano-British period and may be indicative of nearby industry during the period. At the time the landscape was most likely short turfed open grassland with some shaded/overgrown areas, with disturbance of the grassland and channel muds by livestock, probably cattle. The palaeoenvironmental evidence showed that the area became inundated with the local landscape becoming a fen meadow with few trees and standing water.
- 4.6 A subsequent programme of trial trenching c.120m to the northwest exposed a pit that was undated by finds but stratigraphically may be of an early date, as it was sealed by a possible alluvial deposit similar to those identified during the adjacent 2007 works. The trenching also revealed two undated ditches and a posthole containing early modern bricks (AAL 2012).

## 5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The fieldwork was carried out by the author and one experienced field archaeologist on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2012. Two trenches each measuring 10m long by 1.6m wide were excavated with a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket. The topsoil was removed in spits no greater than 0.1m thick until the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural geology was exposed. Further excavation was undertaken by hand.
- 5.2 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. Archaeological features and deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section (at scales 1:20 and 1:50). Photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy and all photographs incorporated scales, with an identification board and directional arrow, and a selection of these images has been included in Appendix 1.
- 5.3 Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a three digit unique identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 3. Three digit numbers within square brackets represent cut features (e.g. ditch [102]).

## 6.0 Results (Figures 2 and 3)

### 6.1 Trench 1

- 6.1.1 The uppermost deposit 100, in Trench 1 was a 0.42m thick modern topsoil comprising firm mid greyish brown silty clay. It sealed a single feature, [102], which had gradual sloping sides and a flat base and was most likely a ditch that extended beyond the limit of excavation to the west, north and south. It contained a single fill, 101, which comprised very compact mid greyish brown silty clay. A total of 51 fragments of animal bone were recovered which belonged to a large mammal but the bones were too fragmented to indicate a species.
- 6.1.2 The ditch cut through natural geological deposits, 103, which comprised firm and friable white chalky marl.

### 6.2 Trench 2

- 6.2.1 An approximately 0.45m thick topsoil, 200, formed the uppermost deposit in the trench and comprised dark brown silty clay. It sealed two undated northwest to southeast orientated linear features [202] and [204]. Ditch [202] had very steep sides and a flat base and contained a single fill, 203, which comprised very compact, mottled mid greyish brown and white silty clayey marl with occasional rootlets.
- 6.2.2 Ditch [204], to the west-southwest of [202], was not fully exposed as it extended beyond the limit of excavation to the west, where it had also been subject to recent truncation, possibly associated with the current development works underway on the site. It had a meandering and gradually sloping east side and a flat base and contained a single fill, 205, which comprised very compact, slightly mottled, dark brown and white clayey marl with occasional rootlets.
- 6.2.3 Both features were cut into a natural geological deposit, 201, which comprised firm white chalky marl.

## **7.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

7.1 Three undated probable linear features were discovered during the archaeological evaluation on 60 Reach Road. They were sealed by modern topsoil and were cut directly into natural geological deposits and as a result there are no relevant stratigraphic relationships which could be used to aid dating. The absence of finds, with the exception of a small assemblage of animal bone may be an indication that the site was some distance from the focus of any settlement or activity at the time the features were open. The ditches are likely to represent former field boundaries of pre-late 19<sup>th</sup> century date, as the area is shown as an open field and later as possibly being wooded on Ordnance Survey maps from 1887 until the early 1970's, when the recently demolished house at the site was constructed.

## **8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology**

8.1 The archaeological evaluation methodology was appropriate to the nature and extent of the proposed development. It has demonstrated that the development is likely to have had a negligible impact upon the limited archaeological resource that is present in the development area.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Mr Richard Peters for this commission and for his cooperation during the evaluation.



## 10.0 References

AAL 2007, *Archaeological Evaluation report: Trial Trenching on Land to the North-West of 60 Reach Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire*, Allen Archaeology Limited unpublished report

AAL, 2012, *Archaeological Evaluation Report: Trial Trenching on land off 70 Reach Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire*, Allen Archaeology Limited report number 2012068

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Cambridgeshire County Council, 2006, *Burwell – North Street Conservation Area: Draft Supplementary Planning Document*.

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Williams A. and Martin G.H., 2002, *Domesday Book: A complete translation*, Alecto Historical Editions, London

**Appendix 1: Colour Plates**



**Plate 1:** General view of the site, looking southwest from the north-eastern site boundary



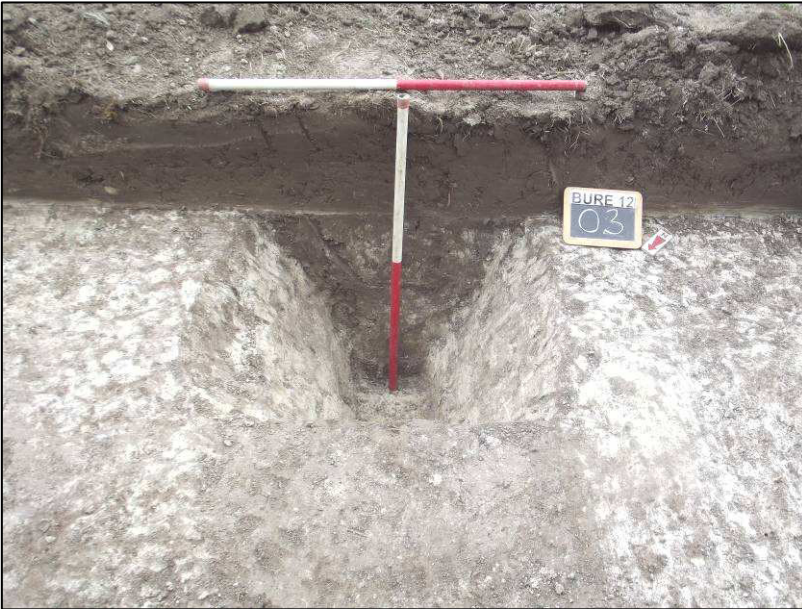
**Plate 2:** Trench 1 pre-excitation, looking southeast. Scales are 1m and 0.3m



**Plate 3:** Northeast facing section of ditch [102], looking southwest. Scales are 1m and 0.5m



**Plate 4:** Trench 2, pre-excitation, looking northeast. Scales are 1m



**Plate 5:** Northwest facing section of ditch [202], looking southeast. Scales are 1m



**Plate 6:** Northwest facing section of ditch [204], looking southeast. Scales are 1m and 0.5m

## Appendix 2: Animal Bone Report

By Jennifer Wood

### Introduction

A total of 51 (346g) fragments of animal bone were recovered during archaeological works undertaken by Allen Archaeology Ltd on land off 60 Reach Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire. The animal bone assemblage was recovered from Trench 1 undated ditch [102].

### Results

The remains were of a moderate to poor overall condition, averaging between grades 3 and 4 on the Lyman criteria (1996).

No evidence of pathology, burning, butchery, working or gnawing was noted on any of the remains.

*Table 1, Summary of Identified Bone*

Cut	Context	Taxon	Element	Side	Number	Weight	Comments
102	101	Large Mammal Size	Rib	X	26	119	Blade fragments
		Large Mammal Size	Axis	L	1	14	Body fragment
		Large Mammal Size	Thoracic	B	4	64	Centrum and neural arches
		Large Mammal Size	Thoracic	B	5	37	Spinous process
		Large Mammal Size	Cervical	X	3	50	Neural arch and body fragments
		Large Mammal Size	Vertebra	B	5	43	Centrum fragments
		Unidentified	Unidentified	X	7	19	

As can be seen from Table 1, the remains were only identifiable as large mammal size. The remains were probably articulated when deposited, representing a portion of rib cage of a single animal. The remains were highly fragmentary and not complete enough to provide further identification of the species.

The assemblage is too small to provide meaningful information on animal husbandry and utilisation, save the presence of the animals/remains on site.

### References

Lyman, R L, 1996 *Vertebrate Taphonomy*, Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

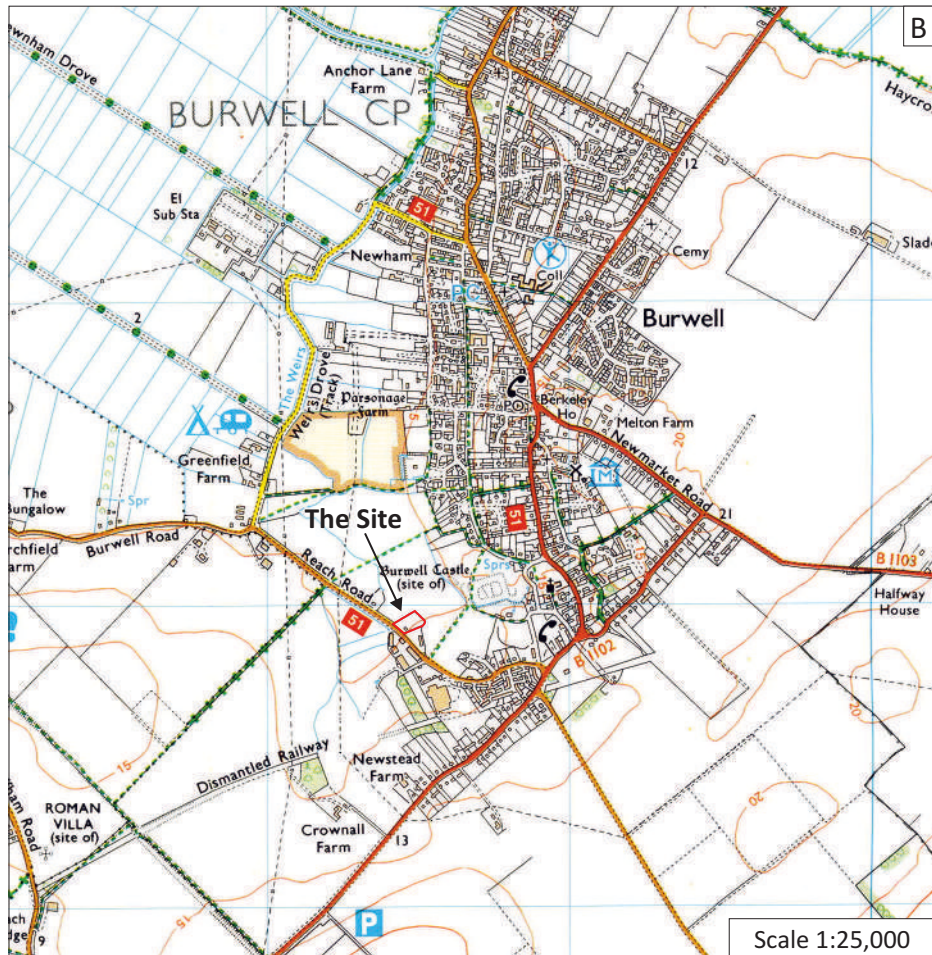
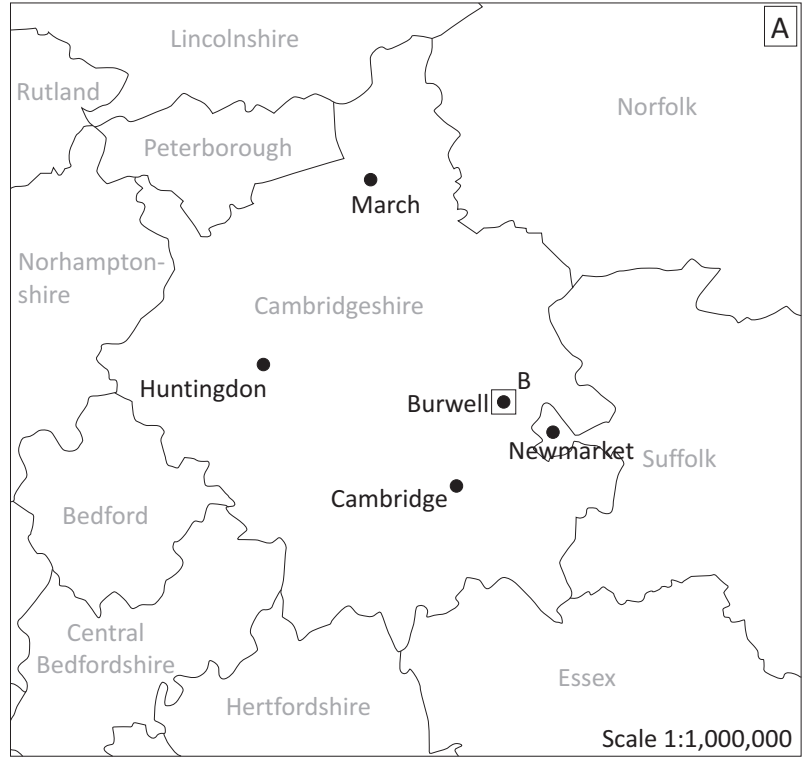
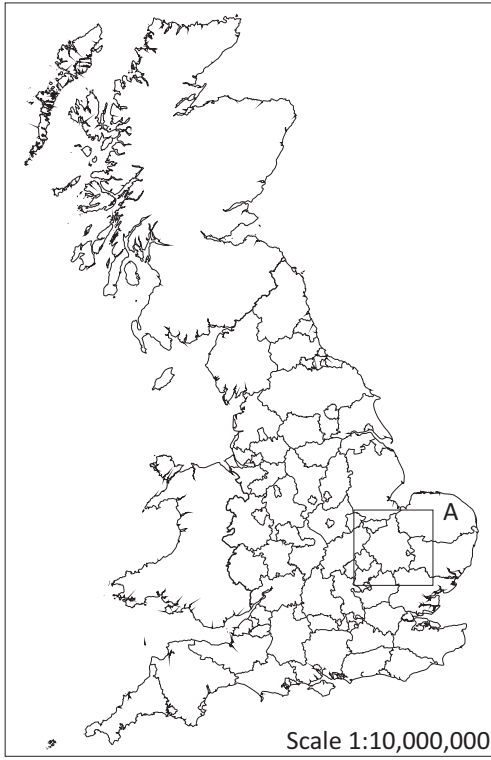
**Appendix 3: Context Summary List**

**Trench 1**

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Firm mid greyish brown silty clay. Seals 103	Topsoil
101	Fill	Very compact mid greyish brown silty clay.	Natural silting of ditch [102]
102	Cut	N-S aligned linear with gradual sloping sides to flat base, contains 101	Cut of ditch
103	Layer	Firm/friable white chalky marl. Sealed by 103	Natural geology

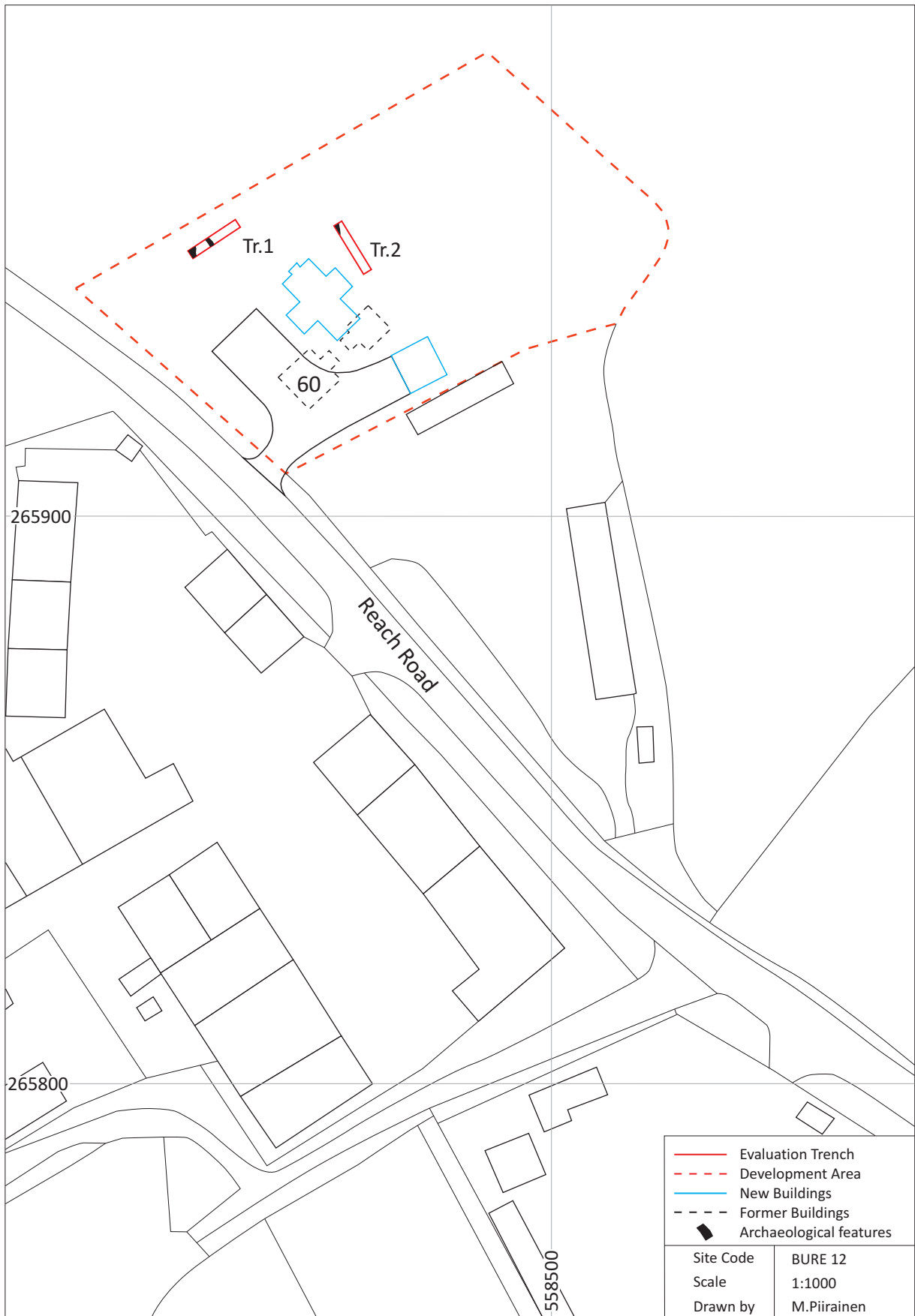
**Trench 2**

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Firm dark brown silty clay with frequent rootlets, seals 201	Topsoil
201	Layer	Firm and friable white chalky marl, sealed by 200	Natural geology
202	Cut	SE-NW aligned linear with steep sloping sides, sharp break of slope to flat base, contains 203	Cut of ditch
203	Fill	Very compact mottled mid greyish brown and white silty clayey marl with occasional rootlets	Re-deposited fill of ditch [202]
204	Cut	NW-SE aligned linear with gradual sloping sides, gradual break of slope to flat base, contains 205	Cut of ditch
205	Fill	Very compact/friable slightly mottled dark brown and white silty clayey marl with occasional rootlets	Natural silting of ditch [204]



**Figure 1:** Site location with proposed development site shown in red  
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Site Code	BURE 12	 Allenarchaeology Lincoln Birmingham Cambridge Southampton <a href="http://www.allenarchaeology.co.uk">www.allenarchaeology.co.uk</a>
Scales	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4	
Drawn by	M. Piirainen	
Date	10/10/12	



**Figure 2:** Trench location plan (Base plan provided by the client)

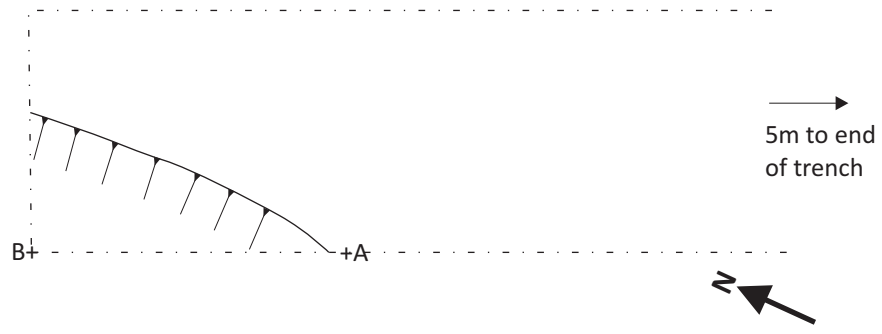
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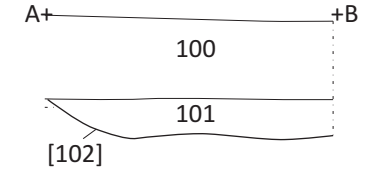
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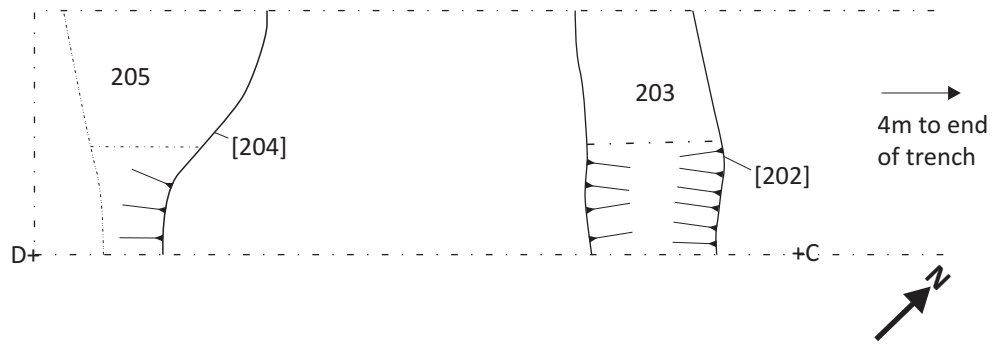
Trench 1



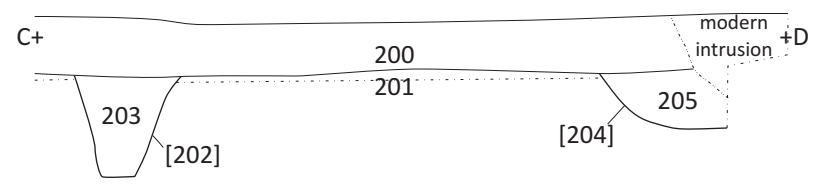
Northeast Facing Section



Trench 2



Northwest Facing Section



Site Code	BURE 12
Scale	1:50 @ A4
Drawn by	M. Piirainen
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Figure 3: Trenches 1 and 2 plans and section





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