

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:

TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF MALLARD ROAD, PETERBOROUGH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Planning Application: 12/01071/FUL
NGR: TF 1660 0237
AAL Site Code: PEMR 13
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-144830



Report prepared for WPL Consulting LLP
on behalf of Crown Records Management

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
Report Number AAL 2013021

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Allenarchaeology



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Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Crown Records Management to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at 17 Mallard Road, Peterborough as a condition of a planning application for a proposed extension to an existing warehouse.
- The site lies within an area of archaeological potential, with abundant evidence for prehistoric activity with the wider area. Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon activity has also been recorded in the vicinity of the site.
- Three trenches were excavated in the proposed development area in order to provide further information upon the nature and extent of the archaeological resource. The trenches revealed only natural clay geology beneath a thick layer of hardcore for the existing concrete surface. It was apparent that the site had been extensively landscaped and truncated for the construction of the current warehouse.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by WPL Consulting LLP, on behalf of Crown Records Management to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching as a condition of planning permission for a proposed warehouse extension on land at 17 Mallard Road, Peterborough.
- 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 1999, revised 2001 and 2008), the English Heritage document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (English Heritage 2006) and a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2012a). All appropriate English Heritage guidance on archaeological practice was also followed (www.helm.org/server/show/nav.7740).
- 1.3 The documentary archive will be submitted to Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery within six months of the completion of the report.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site at 17 Mallard Road is located in the Bretton area of Peterborough, approximately 4.6km to the northwest of the centre of the city. The proposed development site itself (hereafter referred to as 'the site') is situated to the northeast of Mallard Road, centred on NGR TF 1660 0237. The site is bordered by Mallard Road to the southwest, a railway to the northeast, and further light industrial and business units to the northwest and southeast.
- 2.2 The bedrock geology comprises Oxford Clay Formation, with no superficial deposits recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The site is generally flat and lies at c.8-9m OD.

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application has been submitted to Peterborough City Council for '*extension to existing document storage warehouse*' (Reference 12/01071/FUL). The application was granted with conditions, including for the undertaking of a programme of archaeological investigation and recording in advance of development. As an initial stage of investigation, a programme of trial trenching was agreed, in order to further characterise the archaeological resource, and to provide sufficient information to allow the planning authority to develop any appropriate strategies to mitigate the effects of the development upon the archaeological resource as a final stage of mitigation.
- 3.2 The approach adopted is consistent with the recommendations of Chapter 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012) and Policy CS17 of the adopted Peterborough Core Strategy DPD.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The site is situated in an area of significant archaeological potential. There is abundant evidence of prehistoric activity in the Peterborough area, although much of this is focussed close to the River Nene to the south and southeast of the site. Evidence in the vicinity of the current site is represented by a Palaeolithic flake found c.500m to the southeast (Peterborough Historic Environment Record (hereafter PHER) Reference 07998) and a Palaeolithic handaxe recorded just under 1km to the east-southeast (PHER Reference 02211). A Neolithic bone awl has also been found c.500m to the southeast (PHER Reference 07999).
- 4.2 There is firmer evidence of Romano-British activity in the vicinity of the site. Excavations off Marhom Road, c.100m to the southwest exposed part of a Roman building measuring 16m by 8m, along with tesserae, ashlar masonry and hypocaust, suggesting a high status structure. A multi phase complex of field ditches was also recorded on the site, containing pottery and coins of 2nd to 4th century AD date (PHER Reference 00936). Further evidence for Roman settlement and agriculture has been recorded c.700m to the southwest (PHER Reference 02189), and there are numerous scattered find spots to the east and west of the proposed development area.
- 4.3 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles record the foundation of a monastery in Peterborough in the year 655 AD, then known as *Medehamstede*, and named after a local spring, *Medeswael*. The site was founded by Peada, king of Mercia, and entrusted to a loyal follower, Seaxwulf as first abbot. Peada's successor Wulfhere continued to fund the monastery in 656 following Peada's death, granting large tracts of land to Seaxwulf (Garmonsway 1972). Seaxwulf was appointed bishop of Mercia in 675 and succeeded as abbot by Cuthbald, by which time the abbey already had cells at Thorney in Lincolnshire and Brixworth in Northamptonshire (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906). Tradition states that the abbey was destroyed by Viking raiders in 870, although there is no firm documentary or physical evidence to support this notion. The abbey was however refounded in 966 by bishop Aethelwold of Winchester (*ibid.*). The first abbot of the new foundation, Eadwulf reputedly much improved the abbey's estates, clearing woodland and building new farms to let the lands for rental income, and a large wall was built around the precinct by his successor Kenulf, resulting in the settlement being re-named Burgh, with the addition of Peter to the name soon after, after the saint to whom the abbey was consecrated (*ibid.*).
- 4.4 Elements of the Anglo-Saxon period church survive beneath the medieval cathedral, having been exposed during restoration of the central tower and subsequent excavations in the late 19th century, and were subject to further investigations in 1979. As many as four phases of development were apparent in the Anglo-Saxon building remains, and Roman tiles had been re-used in the superstructure of the church (PHER References 51590 and 80066).
- 4.5 The current site is situated well beyond the focus of Anglo-Saxon activity, around the cathedral precinct c.4.7km to the southeast, although the fieldwork immediately southwest of the site exposed evidence for activity of this period, with a newly laid out system of ditched enclosures and a possible grubenhaus of early Saxon date superseding the preceding Roman evidence. Finds included plentiful pottery, an early Anglo-Saxon brooch and part of a bone comb (PHER Reference 00936a).
- 4.6 The Anglo-Saxon monastery survived the Norman Conquest, as well as attacks by the Saxon rebel Hereward the Wake in 1070 after the appointment of a Norman bishop, Thorold (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906). In the same year bishop Thorold built a motte, now known as Tout Hill and located in the north-east corner of the precinct within the Deanery Gardens. The motte was built by the bishop as part of a substantial fortification of the monastic holdings, in the turbulent years

following the Norman Conquest (PHER Reference 80065). Documentary evidence suggests that the defences were pulled down in the middle of the 12th century by a later abbot, Martin de Bec (PHER Reference 80065), a date which accords well with the evidence from excavations at the south side of the precinct (PHER Reference 80004). The monastery was almost completely destroyed by an accidental fire in 1116 however, which is reported to have burned for nine days (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906). Rebuilding of the Abbey began soon after and it was expanded and altered by successive abbots in the following centuries.

- 4.7 Beyond the cathedral precinct, the medieval town extended to the north and northwest of the cathedral, and across the floodplain to the river. Much of the early expansion of the town is believed to be the responsibility of Martin de Bec, abbot in 1132 – 55, who is reputed to have shifted the town from east of the cathedral precinct to the west (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906). The existing market square was laid out at this time, at the north end of a road running down to the river (*ibid.*).
- 4.8 The current site appears to have been in an agricultural hinterland at this time, well beyond the medieval town, with the smaller medieval villages of Marholm to the west and Werrington and Walton to the east. It may have been farmland at the time, as ridge and furrow earthworks are recorded c.500m to the north (PHER Reference 05684), although a recent survey of Pockocks Wood a similar distance to the west of the site suggested that this was medieval woodland (PHER Reference 51517), and it is possible that the surrounding area was also wooded in the Middle Ages.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 A programme of trial trenching was proposed and agreed with the Archaeologist at Peterborough City Council (AAL 2012). The works comprised three trenches, one measuring 30m long, one measuring 35m long, and one measuring 15m long. Site constraints however caused some variation to this scheme. Trench 2 had to be moved due to its position cutting across the current access to the staff car park. The trench had to be attached to the west end of Trench 1 and shortened to 10m due to the presence of underground services; this was the only available area to move the trench to, to allow the warehouse to continue operating and avoid live services.
- 5.2 The fieldwork was carried out by a team of experienced field archaeologists under the supervision of the author between Monday 28th and Wednesday 30th January 2013. In each trench, concrete and tarmac surfaces were broken out with a wheeled 360° excavator fitted with a hydraulic breaker, after which each trench was excavated using a 1.8m wide toothless bucket. Underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed in spits no greater than 0.1m until the natural geology was exposed.
- 5.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL context recording sheets. The stratigraphic sequence in each trench was recorded in section at an appropriate scale. Photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy. All photographs incorporated scales, with an identification board and directional arrow, and a selection of these images has been included in Appendix 1.
- 5.4 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 2.

6.0 Results (Figure 3)

6.1 Trenches 1 and 2

- 6.1.1 The uppermost layer within Trenches 1 and 2 consisted of a reinforced concrete slab which was 0.2m thick, 100, which overlay a compact stone and sand bedding layer which was 0.6m thick, 101, and represented the hardcore make up/levelling layer for the concrete slab. The hardcore make-up layer directly overlay the natural mid blue grey clay, 102.
- 6.1.2 A sondage was machine excavated at the junction of Trenches 1 and 2 in order to help confirm that the clay layer 102 did not seal earlier deposits. The natural clay, 102, continued to a thickness of 0.55m before a thin, 0.05m thick gravel layer was encountered, 103, which again overlay a laminated blue grey clay, 104 which extended below the limit of excavation.

6.2 Trench 3

- 6.2.1 The stratigraphic sequence in Trench 3 was similar to Trenches 1 and 2. A layer of tarmac, 300, overlay a 0.25m thick layer of hardcore make up which directly overlay a mid grey/green clay natural 302.
- 6.2.2 A sondage was excavated in the southern end of Trench 3 to ascertain the nature of the deposits to a depth of 2m. The mid grey/green clay was 0.85m thick and overlay a dark blue clay, 303, which extended below the depth of excavation. This clay was again made up of thin laminations and can be equated with clay layer 104 in Trenches 1 and 2.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 The evaluation has revealed no archaeological finds, features or deposits of interest, with a largely similar sequence throughout the site. The tarmac, concrete and associated hardcore levelling layers directly overlay natural clays withy no evidence for any former topsoil or ploughsoil. It seems highly likely that the site has been truncated/levelled during the construction of the adjacent warehouse and associated car park and loading areas.
- 7.2 As a result, any potential archaeological features, if once present, are likely to have been removed.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The evaluation methodology was appropriate to the nature and extent of the proposed development. It has identified a negligible archaeological potential for the site.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank WPL Consulting and Crown Records Management for this commission. The staff of Crown Records Management are also thanked for their cooperation during the fieldwork.

10.0 References

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Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General view of the site, showing the area of Trenches 1 and 2, looking east



Plate 2: General shot of Trenches 1 and 2, looking southeast. Scales are 2m and 1m



Plate 3: View of the sondage excavated at the junctions of Trenches 1 and 2, looking northeast. Scales are 2m and 1m



Plate 4: General shot of Trench 3, looking northeast. Scales are 2m and 1m

Appendix 2: Context Summary List

Trenches 1 and 2

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Reinforced concrete with heavy steel bars, 0.2m thick. Seals 101	Car park/loading area surface
101	Layer	Compact yellow brown sand with frequent small angular stones, 0.6m thick, sealed by 100, seals 102	Hardcore/levelling layer
102	Layer	Compact mid blue grey silty clay 0.5m thick, sealed by 101, seals 103	Natural geology
103	Layer	Friable yellow brown gravel within a sandy matrix, 0.05m thick, sealed by 102, seals 104	Natural geology
104	Layer	Well compacted dark blue grey silty clay, over 0.8m thick, laminated, sealed by 103	Natural geology

Trench 3

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
300	Layer	Tarmac	Tarmac road/loading area
301	Layer	Compact yellow brown sand with frequent small angular stones with occasional brick fragments, 0.25m thick, sealed by 300, seals 302	Hardcore/levelling layer
302	Layer	Compact mid grey/green silty clay with thin laminations, 0.8m thick, sealed by 301, seals 303	Natural geology
303	Layer	Well compacted dark blue grey silty clay with thin laminations, over 0.8m thick, sealed by 302	Natural geology

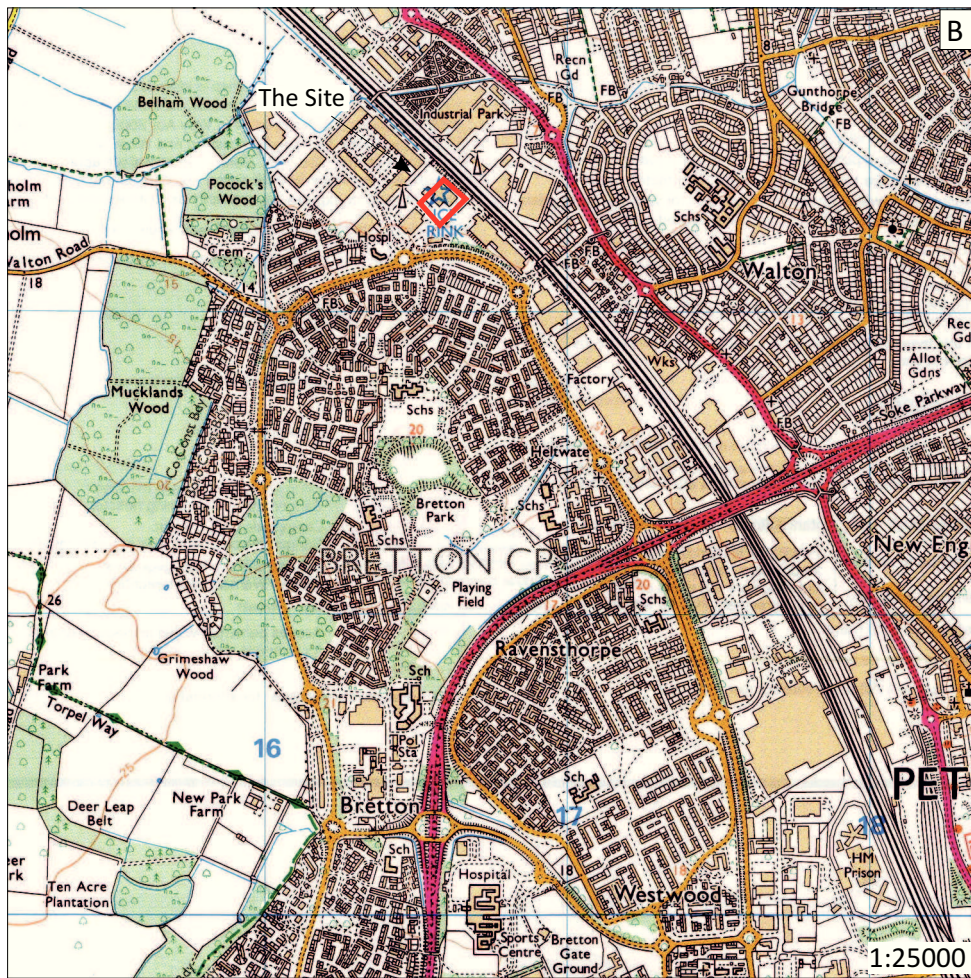
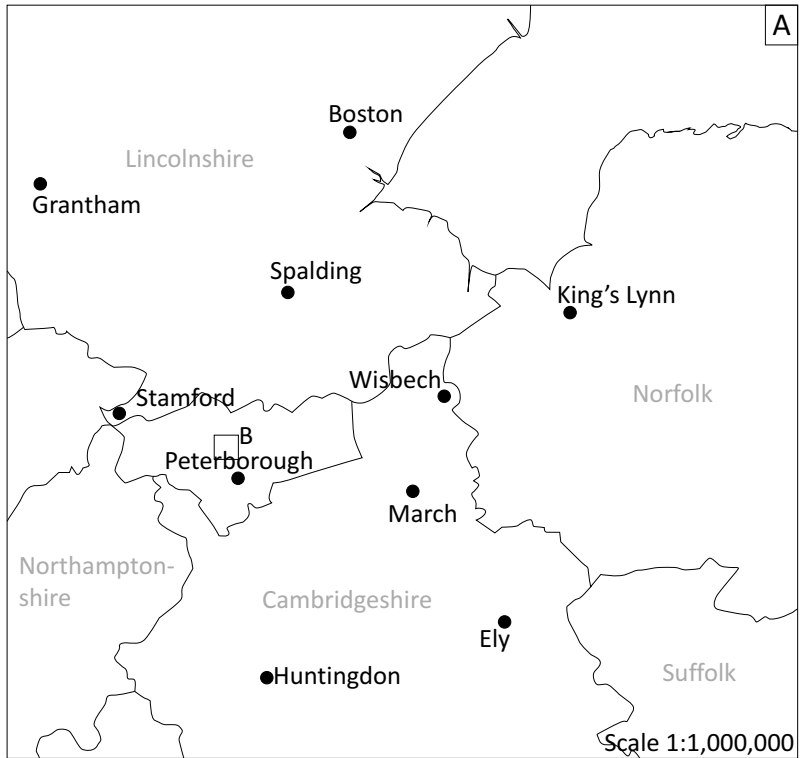
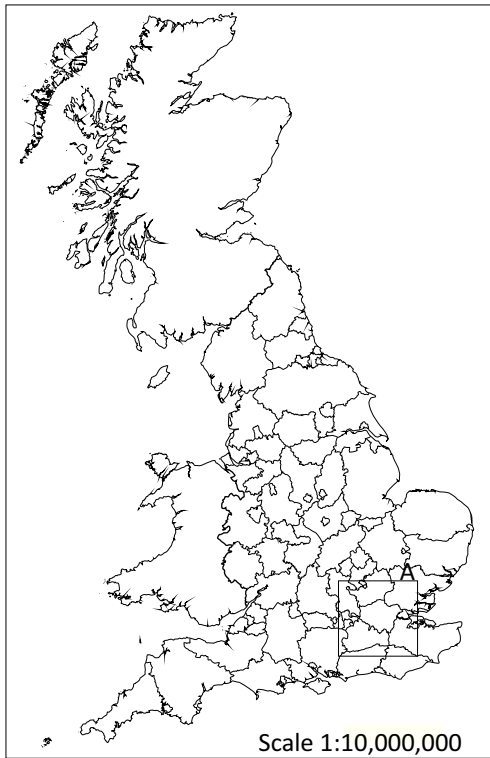
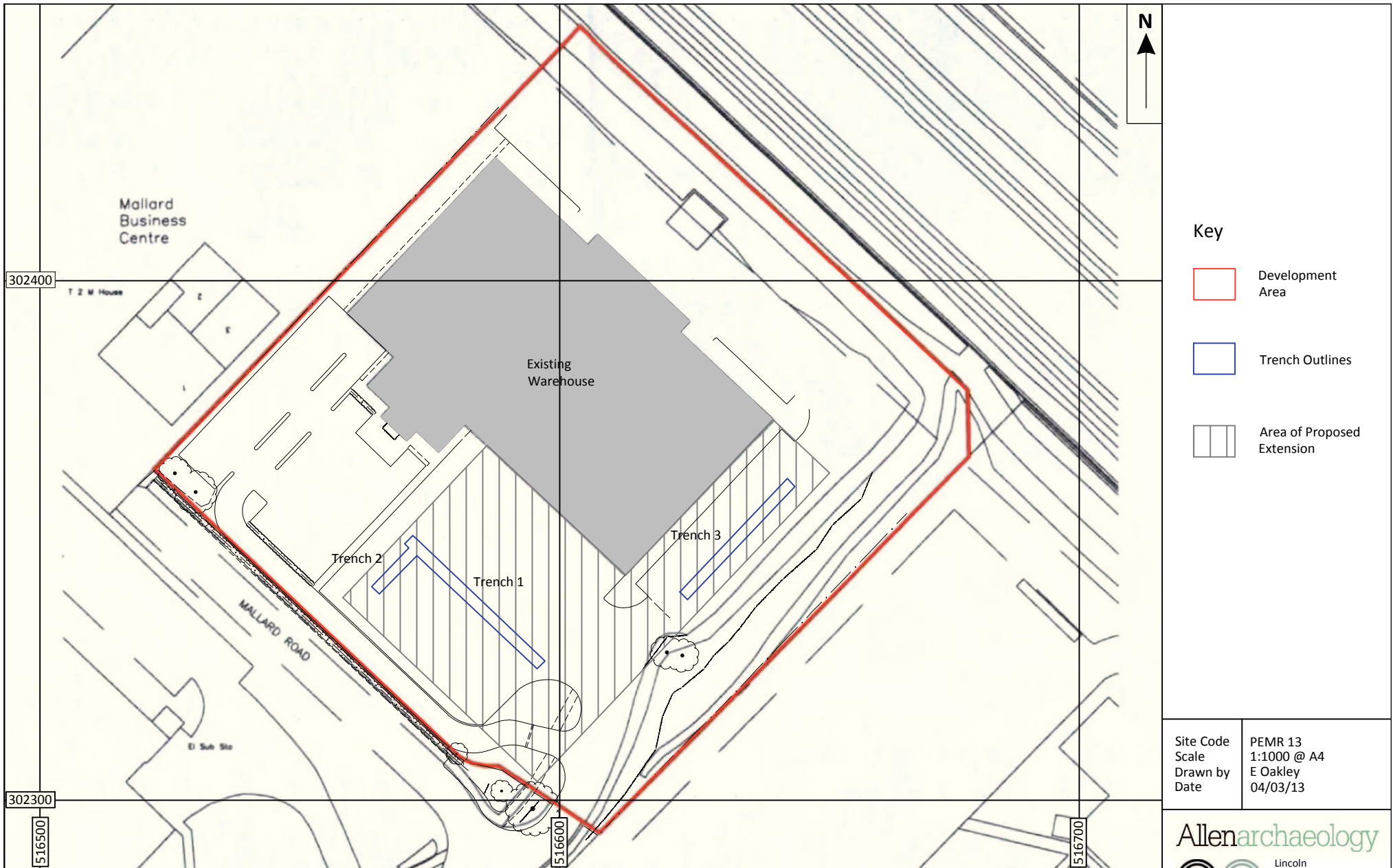


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red
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Site Code	PEMR 13
Scales	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4
Drawn by	E Oakley
Date	04/03/13

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Key

- Development Area
- Trench Outlines
- Area of Proposed Extension

Site Code	PEMR 13
Scale	1:1000 @ A4
Drawn by	E Oakley
Date	04/03/13

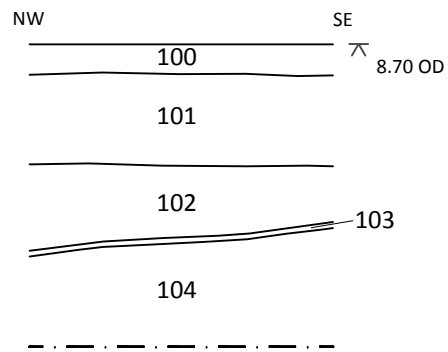
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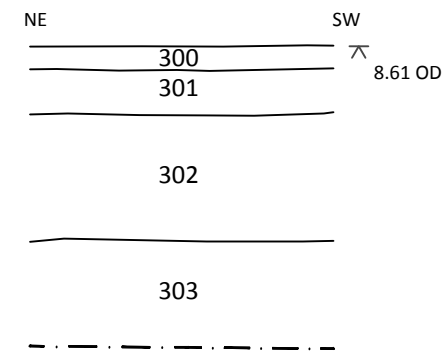
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Figure 2: Plan showing the location of the trenches and area of proposed development

Trenches 1 and 2
Southwest Facing Section



Trench 3
Northwest Facing Section



Site Code	PEMR 13
Scale	1:50 @ A4
Drawn by	E Oakley
Date	04/03/13

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Figure 3: Representative sections from the sondages in Trenches 1, 2 and 3



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