

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:**

**TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF DODDINGTON ROAD, BENWICK, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Planning Reference: F/YR13/0557/F

NGR: TL 3439 9066

AAL Site Code: BEDR 14

CHER Event Number: ECB 4312

OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-197693



Report prepared for Harnson Homes

By

Allen Archaeology Limited  
Report Number AAL2014143

December 2014



Allenarchaeology



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*Cover Image: View of site looking northeast*

## **Executive Summary**

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Harnson Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in order to fulfil a planning condition for the construction of four dwellings on land off 13 Doddington Road, Benwick, Cambridgeshire.
- Two evaluation trenches were investigated within the proposed development area. The trenches exposed a sequence of natural alluvial deposition, as well as a modern pit and layers of modern hardcore.
- The archaeological potential of the site is considered to be negligible and the impact of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource is likely to be similarly negligible.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL) was commissioned by Harnson Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in order to fulfil a planning condition for the construction of four new dwellings on land off 13 Doddington Road, Benwick, Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The excavation, recording and reporting conformed 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), regional guidelines '*Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*' (Gurney 2003). All relevant English Heritage guidelines on archaeological best practice will also be followed.
- 1.3 The documentation and records generated by the evaluation were assembled in accordance with the national guidelines in '*Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*' (AAF 2007). The archive will be submitted to Cambridgeshire Museums Service within six months of the completion of the report.

## **2.0 Site Location and Description**

- 2.1 The site is situated to the northeast of the traditional core of Benwick, in the Fenland District of Cambridgeshire. The proposed development area is currently a flat area of disused land, bounded by properties to the west and north, by Heron Way to the east and Doddington Road to the south. The site centres on NGR TL 3439 9066.
- 2.2 The local geology comprises bedrock deposits of Oxford Clay Formation mudstone, overlain by superficial deposits of Tidal flats of clay, sand and silt (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

## **3.0 Planning Background**

- 3.1 A planning application (F/YR13/0557/F) was submitted to Fenland District Council for '*the erection of four houses and ancillary works. Due to the high archaeological potential of the site, a condition has been placed on planning consent requiring a scheme of archaeological work to be undertaken at the site. The first phase of this work will be an archaeological evaluation to assess the nature and potential of the site*'.
- 3.2 A brief was supplied by Cambridgeshire County Council (McConnell 2014) and a specification produced by Allen Archaeology (AAL 2014) that was approved by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team.
- 3.3 The planning application was accepted subject to the undertaking of a programme of archaeological trial trenching in order to determine the archaeological potential of the proposed development area.

## **4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 4.1 A search of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) suggests limited early exploitation of this landscape, which would have been a low-lying area of fenland unsuited to sustained settlement or agricultural activity for much of the prehistoric and Roman periods.

However, it is possible that some activity did occur on any raised islands or roddons (silt filled creeks), which may have existed in this area.

- 4.2 Benwick is not recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086; however, the neighbouring settlement of Doddington (*Dodinton*) is mentioned as being on a large fen 'island' and was noted as producing 27,150 eels annually (Williams and Martin 2002). Benwick was presumably at this time still in the low lying fens surrounding this higher land.
- 4.3 Benwick (*Beymwich*) is first mentioned in 1221 when it had 15 tenants and was part of Doddington Parish. Another record in 1251 mentions a rush ground, suggesting cultivation of rushes in a still largely wetland landscape (Pugh *et al.* 2002). Other historical accounts from this period mention Benwick Marsh and forest suggesting sparsely settled landscape (*ibid*).
- 4.4 During the post-medieval period, a tower windmill (CHER 03756) was built northwest of the site; the tower and mound have since been levelled. Another former windmill of possible medieval origin is noted on an 18<sup>th</sup> century map (CHER 04833) lying northeast of the development.
- 4.5 St. Mary's Church (CHER 04769), built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, once lay to the west of the site but was demolished in 1983. A 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist chapel (MCB 19531) formerly lay south of the development site but has also been demolished. The village parish church of St. Mary built in 1850 (NHLE 1399039) still survives to the west of the development.

## 5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 A trial trenching programme was agreed consisting of two trenches, each measuring 10m long by 1.6m wide. The works were undertaken by a team of experienced field archaeologists on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014, and were supervised by the author.
- 5.2 The trenches were located on site using a Leica GS08 RTK NetRover GPS, allowing centimetre accurate real-time precision. In each trench, topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed, in spits no greater than 10cm in thickness, by a JCB 3CX wheeled excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. All further excavation was carried out by hand.
- 5.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard AAL trench recording sheets. Archaeological deposits were drawn in plan and section (at scale 1:50), with Ordnance Datum heights displayed on each class of drawing. Colour photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and all photographs had scales, an identification board and directional arrow.

## 6.0 Results

### *Trench 1*

- 6.1 Trench 1 contained a very light greyish brown sandy silt natural geology, 103. This was sealed by a compact dark brown organic silt, 102, which was 0.40–0.70m thick. This was overlain by a series of modern hardcore deposits, 101, measuring 0.50m thick. The uppermost deposit was a very dark brown sandy silt topsoil, 100, which was 0.30m thick (Plate 1).



*Plate 1: Northeast facing representative section of Trench 1. Scales are 2m and 1m*

## **Trench 2**

6.2 Trench 2 contained a natural sandy gravel geology, 201, sealed by a very dark brown sandy silt which was 0.23m thick. At the northeastern end was a modern pit [202] cut into the natural sandy gravel, containing a mid-grey sandy silt, 203, with large amounts of modern building debris (Plate 2).



*Plate 2: Northwest facing section of Trench 2 showing Pit [202]. Scale is 2m*

## 7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 The trial trenching identified no features or deposits of archaeological interest. The sequence of deposits was typical of natural alluvial deposition in a fenland landscape, but was notably different in the two trenches, with a deep organic silt recorded in Trench 1, and natural gravels in Trench 2. It is possible this represents the remnants of a very slight outcrop of glacial gravel, as the ground surface in this trench, at c.1.48m OD, was slightly higher than Trench 1 at c.1.12m.
- 7.2 Layers of modern hardcore in Trench 1 are likely to relate to a former compound created for the construction of the adjacent housing estate. The modern pit at the northeastern end of Trench 2 containing concrete, bricks and rubble is also likely to be related to the construction of the housing estate.

## 8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The trial trenching methodology was appropriate to the nature and extent of the proposed development. It has shown that there were no archaeological features or deposits of interest present on the site, and that the proposed development will have a negligible impact upon the archaeological resource.

## 9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 AAL would like to thank Harnson Homes for this commission and Mr Tony Richardson for the use of his facilities.

## 10.0 References

- AAF, 2007, *Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*, Archaeological Archives Forum
- AAL, 2014, *Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Excavation: Land off 13 Doddington Road, Benwick, Cambridgeshire*, unpublished planning document
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- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation*, Penguin Books, London

## Appendix 1: Context Summary List

### Trench 1

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Loose, very dark brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded stones, c.0.30m thick; seals 101	Topsoil
101	Layer	Loose layers of limestone hardcore, c.0.50m thick; seals 102	Modern hardcore
102	Layer	Very compact, very dark brown silt with organic material, c.0.40m-0.70m thick; seals 103	Peat layer
103	Layer	Compact, very light greyish brown sandy silt	Natural geology

### Trench 2

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Layer	Loose, very dark brown sandy silt with occasional small stones, c.0.23m thick, seals 201 and 203	Topsoil
201	Layer	Loose, very light brown sandy gravel	Natural geology
202	Cut	Very steep side - only one edge visible aligned north – south, contains 203	Cut of modern pit
203	Fill	Very loose, mid grey sandy silt with frequent concrete, bricks and rubble	Backfill of [202]



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**OASIS ID: allenarc1-197693**

### Project details

Project name	TRIAL TRENCHING ON LAND OFF DODDINGTON ROAD, BENWICK, CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Short description of the project	Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL) was commissioned by Harnson Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in order to fulfil a planning condition for the construction of 4 new dwellings with associated services and landscaping on land off 13 Doddington Road, Benwick, Cambridgeshire. Two trenches were excavated, exposing only modern features and deposits
Project dates	Start: 04-12-2014 End: 04-12-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND BENWICK LAND OFF 13 DODDINGTON ROAD, BENWICK, CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Postcode	PE150UA
Study area	800.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 3439 9066 52.4968789699 -0.0201188249465 52 29 48 N 000 01 12 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 1.00m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Allen Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	Client and Local Authority Archaeologist
Project design originator	Mark Allen
Project director/manager	Mike Wood
Project supervisor	Robert Evershed
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Harnson Homes

**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Digital Archive ID	ECB 4312
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store
Paper Archive ID	ECB 4312
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Miscellaneous Material", "Plan", "Report", "Section"

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Evaluation Report: Trial Trenching on Land off Doddington Road, Benwick, Cambridgeshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Evershed, R
Other bibliographic details	AAL report number 2014143
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Allen Archaeology Limited
Place of issue or publication	Lincoln

Entered by Chris Clay (chris@allenarchaeology.co.uk)

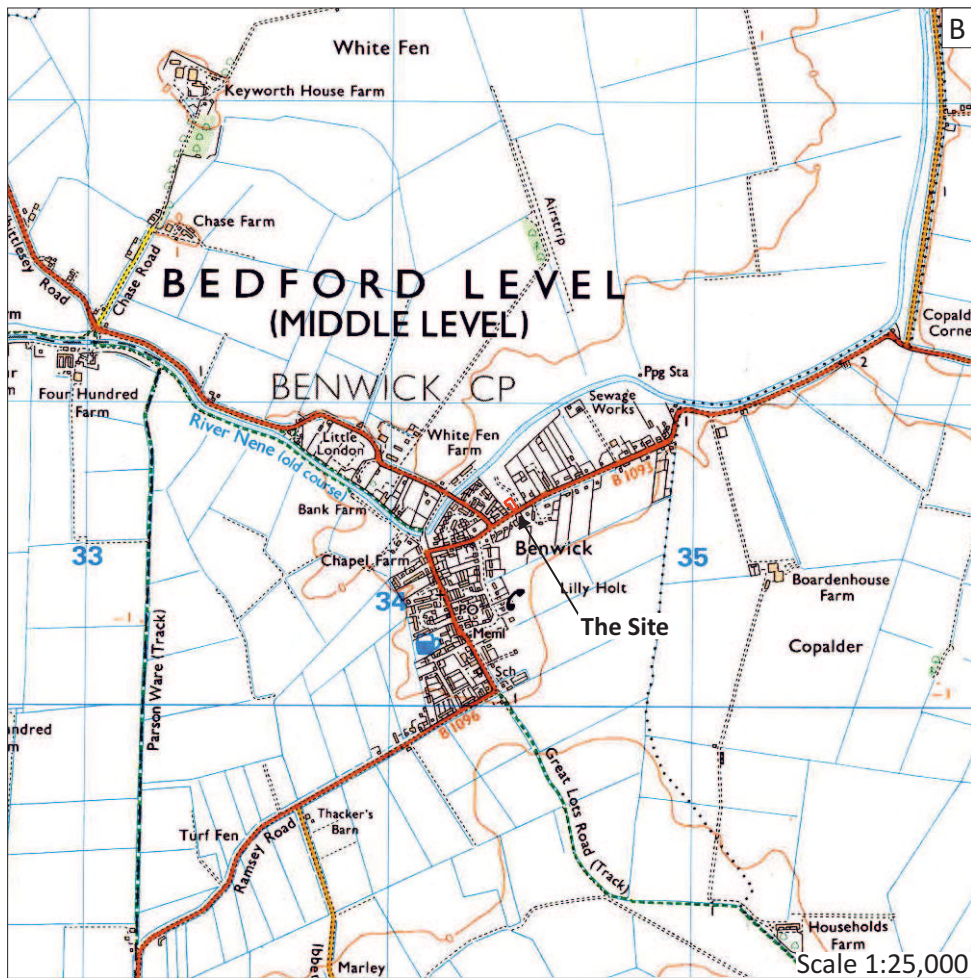
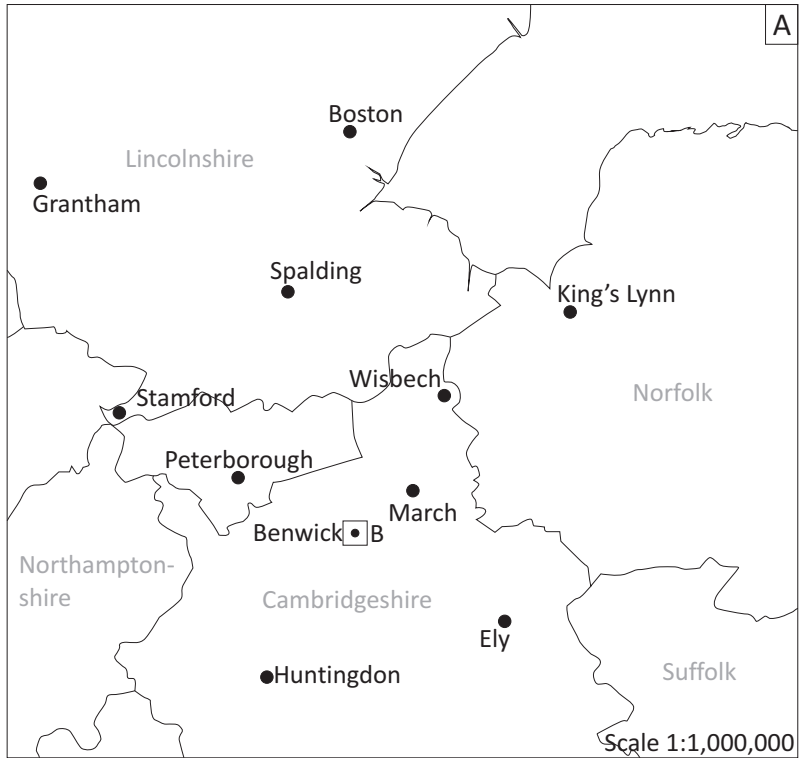
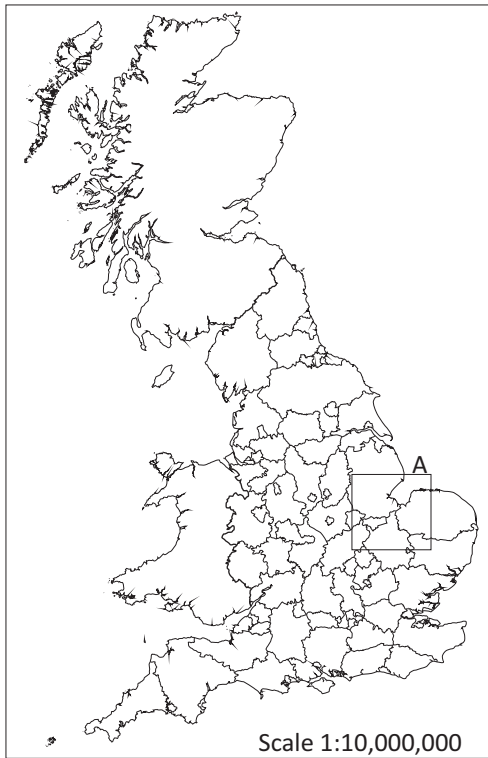
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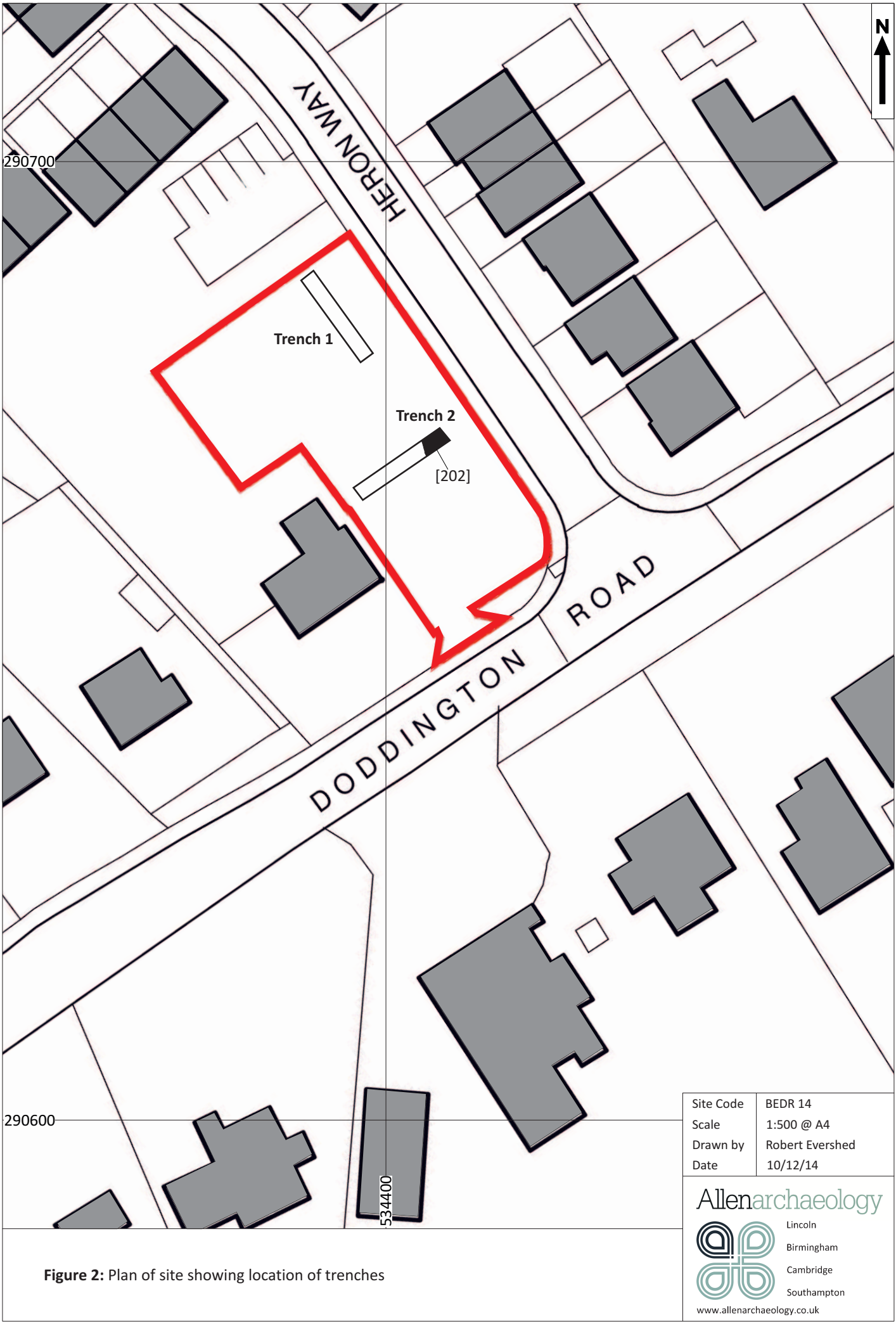


**Figure 1:** Site location outlined in red

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Site Code	BEDR 14
Scales	1:10,000,000 1:1,000,000 1:25,000 @ A4
Drawn by	R Evershed
Date	10/12/2014

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**Figure 2:** Plan of site showing location of trenches

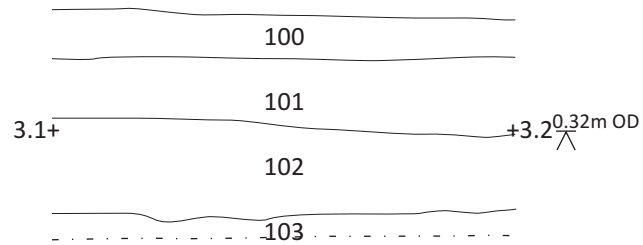
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Scale	1:500 @ A4
Drawn by	Robert Evershed
Date	10/12/14

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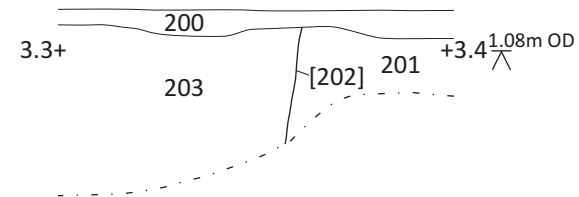
Trench 2 Plan



Trench 1 Northeast Facing Section



Trench 2 Northwest Facing Section



Site Code	BEDR 14
Scale	1:50 @ A4
Drawn by	Robert Evershed
Date	10/12/14

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Figure 3: Trench 2 plan and Trenches 1 and 2 sections



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