

# Land to the Rear of 90 East Street Olney Milton Keynes

## *Archaeological Evaluation*



for  
CgMs Consulting

CA Project: 660830  
CA Report: 17008

Accession Number: AYBCM: 2017.2  
MK HER event number: EMK1291

January 2017



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Olney  
Milton Keynes

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Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	05/01/17	MNC	MPH	Internal Review	QA	SRJ
B	13/01/2017		SRJ	External review	Consultant revision	SRJ
C	27/01/2017		SRJ	External Review	MKC Archaeological Advisor comment	SRJ

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## SUMMARY

<b>Project Name:</b>	Land to the rear of 90 East Street
<b>Location:</b>	Olney, Milton Keynes
<b>NGR:</b>	489107 251720
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date:</b>	19 to 20 December 2016
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	Olney Town Council: 16/00312/FUL
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	To be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum
<b>Accession Number:</b>	AYBCM: 2017.2
<b>MK HER event number:</b>	EMK1291
<b>Site Code:</b>	ESO 16

In December 2016, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation at land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney, Milton Keynes. The work was carried out to inform a planning application for the residential development of the site. The fieldwork comprised the excavation of four trenches.

The Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record records no known heritage assets within the proposed development site. Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its proximity to known Roman settlement and its location on the eastern edge of the village of Olney, which has its origins in the Saxon period and its.

Undated plough furrows, of probable medieval date, representing the remains of the open field system that once surrounded the village of Olney, were encountered across the majority of the site. In addition the evaluation also recorded an undated ditch.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 2016, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney, Milton Keynes (centred on NGR: 489107 251720; Fig. 1). The evaluation was commissioned by CgMs Consulting.
- 1.2 The evaluation was undertaken to inform a planning application to Olney Town Council (OTC; the local planning authority) for the residential development of the site, comprising the construction of 14 houses with associated garages, gardens, landscaping and access roads (ref: 16/00312/FUL). The scope of the evaluation, which comprised the excavation of four trenches, was defined during discussions between CgMs Consulting and Nick Crank, Milton Keynes Council's Historic Environment Advisor, the archaeological advisor to OTC. This discussion was informed by an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment prepared by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2016).
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2016) and approved by Nick Crank. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (HE 2016).

### **The site**

- 1.4 The proposed development area is approximately 0.5ha in size, and comprises a single field (Fig. 2). The site is bounded to the north by an area of tree plantation, with an area of open land beyond, utilised for recreational activity, to the east by sports pitches, to the south by Olney Rugby Football Club House and car parking and to the west by East Street and properties and associated rear gardens fronting onto East Street. The site slopes gently downwards from 49.9m AOD in the west to 48.7m AOD in the east, towards the River Great Ouse.
- 1.5 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as sedimentary rocks of the Rutland formation, including sandstones, limestones and mudstones formed during the Jurassic period. This is overlain by superficial quaternary deposits of water

borne Felmersham member sands and gravels (BGS online viewer, accessed 2016).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been presented in an archaeological desk-based assessment (CgMs 2016), supplemented by further research by CA. A summary of these results is presented below.

### ***Prehistoric (pre-AD 43)***

2.2 The cropmark of a circular feature measuring approximately 20m in diameter is recorded c. 730m south-south-west of the site. The form is consistent with a prehistoric or Roman feature, probably a round barrow. Further cropmarks were visible c. 575m to the west, comprising two lengths of a straight ditch, which may represent two sides of a rectangular or sub-rectangular enclosure.

2.3 There is some evidence for prehistoric activity mainly derived from archaeological intervention at the Cowper tannery where Neolithic and Iron Age features and artefacts were recovered (Green and Beckley 2010).

2.4 A Late Iron Age settlement is recorded at Ashfurlong, which expanded and evolved during the Romano-British period. The landscape around the river Ouse was well utilised in prehistory (Green and Beckley 2010).

### ***Roman (AD 43–410)***

2.5 An evaluation at 106 High Street (EMK722), c. 90m north-west of the site, recorded a 1m wide north/south orientated ditch, which contained pottery dating from the 2nd century AD (MMK5917 at SP 8897 5180). Roman pottery was found north of the former railway on the west bank of the Rive Great Ouse, c. 270m north-east of the site (MMK787 at SP 8940 5190).

2.6 An undated T-shaped drying oven, possibly dating to the Roman period, was identified during an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to 27 East Street, c. 100m north-west of the site (EMK826).



- 2.7 Evidence for Roman settlement within the wider area is focused to the north of Olney at Ashfurlong, and comprises a series of cropmarks which indicate a complex of enclosures and ditches with remains of stone buildings covering an area approximately 25ha in extent (1006918). There is little evidence to suggest that significant Roman settlement occurred within the immediate environs of the site, and it is likely that the site lay within the hinterland of any settlement, possibly having been utilised for agriculture.

### **Early medieval (AD 410–1066)**

- 2.8 A charter of AD 979 refers to Ollanega, thought to mean ‘Olla’s Island’ (Mawer and Stenton 1925); this makes Olney one of the earliest documented towns in Buckinghamshire (Green and Beckley 2010, 5). Belonging to Burgred, descendant of the King of Mercia, a meeting of the royal council is said to have taken place here in AD 1016 (ibid). After the Norman Conquest, ‘Olnei’ was granted to Bishop Geoffrey of Coutances. The name *Olnei* meaning ‘Island, or dry ground in marsh, of a man called Olla’ is of Saxon or Old English origin (KEPN: online).
- 2.9 The Domesday Book records Olney, as Olney with Warrington, as a fairly large settlement with woodland sufficient for 400 pigs, 10 meadow plough, and 10 ploughlands and a mill.

### **Medieval (1066–1539)**

- 2.10 Documentary evidence has suggested that the early medieval church at Olney was formerly located in the north of the present town, at the junction of Warrington Road and Yardley Road (MMK3734). Several complete skeletons dated to the medieval period were found during late 19th-century foundations works for the Feoffee estate cottages c. 240m north-west of the site (MMK3736). Alternatively, it has been suggested that this was the site of a medieval hospital with chapel.
- 2.11 Archaeological investigations adjacent of the site known as ‘the old churchyard’ found a large assemblage of medieval pottery sherds and a number of postholes (MMK 3735).
- 2.12 A market place at Olney is first referred to in 1205-6 (MMK3731), located c. 390m south of the site. A market house, which stood in the town centre, was demolished c. 1816 (MMK3732), and a round house, which was the town prison, was taken down and re-erected at the ‘top end’ of town prior to 1862 (MMK3730 and MMK3733).



- 2.13 An archaeological watching brief at Rose Court recorded the stone foundations, daub wall and floor remains of a medieval building (MMK5496) and a limestone boundary wall (MMK5497), c. 430m south-west of the site. The same watching brief recorded a sunken feature with a central hearth surrounded by possible post-holes, which may indicate a pit-house or 'grubenhau' (MMK5495).
- 2.14 To the north-west of these remains, c. 340m south-west of the site, a watching brief at no. 14 Market Place, recorded three intercutting pits containing pottery dating from between the 13th and 19th centuries (MMK7908).
- 2.15 Previous archaeological interventions within the vicinity of the site have revealed medieval features and finds, including a rubbish pit at The Old Barn, East Street c. 30m south-west of the site (EMK479). A number of pits and ditches dating between the medieval and modern period were recorded during a watching brief on land adjacent to 27 East Street, c. 100m north-west of the site (EMK826), and a number of medieval cellar-pits with a series of post-holes interpreted as a 12th/13th-century tenement fronting the High Street were recorded during investigations c. 100m west of the site (EMK115).
- 2.16 Elsewhere find spots of medieval pottery are recorded at the old allotments near the former railway station c. 270m north-east of the site (MMK662) and a copper alloy oval shaped seal is recorded c. 380m south of the site (MMK7196).
- 2.17 The medieval settlement of Olney was characterised by burgage plots fronting onto the High Street, with parallel East and West Streets (Green and Beckley 2010). The site was located on the edge of this core medieval development.

### ***Modern (1800–present)***

- 2.18 Evidence within the site for the post-medieval period is characterised by extant houses primarily fronting the High Street, and two churches with associated burial grounds in the south of the site, c. 100m and c. 340m south-west of the site (MMK3855 and MMK3856; MMK3853 and MMK3854).
- 2.19 Jeffrey's 1770 Map of Buckinghamshire shows the linear development of Olney situated along the main High Street, the main north/south road leading from Newport Pagnell to the south. This route provides the main river crossing in the south of the town, near to where the mill is indicated. The site is located on the eastern edge of



this development, adjacent to a road (modern East Street) that runs parallel to the main High Street. Isolated buildings front this road, and it is possible that one of these lay within the western site boundary, though this is uncertain due to the accuracy and scale of the map.

- 2.20 The 1882 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 6) shows the site in more detail, occupied mainly by a single plot of undeveloped land. Within the west of the site is a small structure or house fronting East Street. The surrounding land to the north, south and east of the site remain largely undeveloped. By 1900 the structure/house in the west of the site had been demolished. No other changes are apparent.
- 2.21 The 1950 Ordnance Survey Map shows the creation of a property boundary in the western part of the site, which defines this area as the garden/grounds of the new house erected adjacent to the north-western site boundary. Aerial photographs indicated the presence of trees within the east of the site.

### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI (CA 2016), were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. In accordance with *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable Olney Town Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

### 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of four trenches in the locations shown on the attached plan (Fig. 3). All trenches were 30m long and 1.7m wide, which equates to a 4% sample of the 0.5ha site. The position of Trench 1 was revised slightly from that indicated within the WSI (CA 2016) and divided into two parts to

avoid underground services. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS, and scanned for live services by trained Cotswold Archaeology staff using CAT and Genny equipment in accordance with the Cotswold Archaeology Safe System of Work for avoiding underground services.

- 4.2 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*; however no deposits were identified that required sampling and no artefacts were recovered.
- 4.3 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes and will be deposited with be Buckinghamshire County Museum under accession number AYBCM: 2017.2. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## 5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-6)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results (Fig. 3). Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in Appendix A.

### General stratigraphy

- 5.2 A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence was identified within all of the trenches. The geological substrate, which comprised mid brownish yellow soft clay with flint and mudstone inclusions, was identified at an average depth of 0.55m below present ground level (bpgl). This was overlain by subsoil, c. 0.3m thick, which comprised mid greyish brown soft silty clay with flint and mudstone inclusions. This was in turn sealed by dark grey brown topsoil, 0.25m thick.
- 5.3 The trenches were excavated through minimally upstanding east/west aligned ridge and furrow. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified within trenches 1, 3 and 4. Furrows were located within Trenches 1 to 4 on an east/west orientation.



***Ridge and furrow (Figs 2 & 4)***

- 5.4 Furrows running on a broadly east/west orientation, were recorded within all the excavated trenches, and were found to closely correspond with the alignment of the slightly upstanding ridges surviving within the field. The furrows were typically 0.4m to 1m wide and, where excavated, were up to 0.25m deep (Fig. 4; section AA). Their wide spacing, at c. 3.5m to 5m apart, and the slight curve in their alignment, suggests that they are probably medieval in date (Fig. 5).

***Undated (Figs 2 & 4)***

- 5.5 Located towards the eastern end of the trench was broadly east/west orientated ditch 205 (Fig. 4; section BB). It had moderately steeply sloping sides and a concave base with a sharp break of slope. No dateable material was recovered from its single silty clay fill (206).

**6. DISCUSSION*****Undated***

- 6.1 The evaluation identified a series of furrows on an east/west orientation, located within Trenches 1 to 4. Slight standing ridge and furrow earthworks were also evident in the field. These represent partial elements of the former open field system, suggesting that the area was used as arable land during the medieval period. No dateable material was recovered during the evaluation, however, a medieval date for the initial construction of the earthworks is suggested by the spacing of the selions (individual strips) and the reversed S-shaped curve evident in their alignment (Taylor 1975, 82; Rackham 1986, 167-9).
- 6.2 The furrows fit within the general alignment of the surrounding field systems depicted on current and historic Ordnance Survey mapping (Fig. 6). Based on morphological characteristics these field systems predominantly relate to Parliamentary Enclosures of the post-medieval period, with partial surviving elements of earlier medieval strip fields.
- 6.3 The evaluation also recorded an undated ditch within the centre of the site (Trench 2). The orientation of this ditch fits with the general alignment of the putative medieval to modern field systems and most likely formed a division within the existing field.

## 7. CA PROJECT TEAM

7.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Martyn Cooper, assisted by Mathieu Ferron. The report was written by Martyn Cooper. The illustrations were prepared by Esther Escudero. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Stuart Joyce.

## 8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2015 *Geology of Britain Viewer* [http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology\\_viewer\\_google/googleviewer.html](http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html) Accessed December 2016

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**APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	dark greyish brown silty clay			0.25
1	101	Layer		Subsoil	mid greyish brown soft silty clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			0.3
1	102	Layer		Natural	mid brownish yellow soft clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	dark greyish brown silty clay			0.25
2	201	Layer		Subsoil	mid greyish brown soft silty clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			0.3
2	202	Layer		Natural	mid brownish yellow soft clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			
2	203	Cut		Furrow	Shallow sided shallow base linear	1	0.6	0.25
2	204	Fill	203	Single fill	Mid grey brown silty clay			0.25
2	205	Cut		Ditch	Narrow steep sided linear	1	0.3	0.3
2	206	Fill	205	Single fill	Mid brown grey silty clay			0.3
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	dark greyish brown silty clay			0.25
3	301	Layer		Subsoil	mid greyish brown soft silty clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			0.3
3	302	Layer		Natural	mid brownish yellow soft clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			
4	400	Layer		Topsoil	dark greyish brown silty clay			0.25
4	401	Layer		Subsoil	mid greyish brown soft silty clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			0.3
4	402	Layer		Natural	mid brownish yellow soft clay with flint and mudstone inclusions			

## APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney, Milton Keynes	
Short description	<p>In December 2016, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation at land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney, Milton Keynes. The work was carried out to inform a planning application for the residential development of the site. The fieldwork comprised the excavation of four trenches.</p> <p>The Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record records no known heritage assets within the proposed development site. Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its proximity to known Roman settlement and its location on the eastern edge of the village of Olney, which has its origins in the Saxon period and its.</p> <p>Undated plough furrows, of probable medieval date, representing the remains of the open field system that once surrounded the village of Olney, were encountered across the majority of the site. In addition the evaluation also recorded an undated ditch.</p>	
Project dates	19 to 20 December 2016	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (CgMs 2016)	
Future work	Unknown	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney, Milton Keynes	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	0.5ha	
Site co-ordinates	489107 251720	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	n/a	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Stuart Joyce	
Project Supervisor	Martyn Cooper	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>	Ridge and Furrow	
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>	None	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	None	n/a
Paper	Buckinghamshire County Museum/ AYBCM: 2017.2 MK HER event number: EMK1291	WSI, pro-forma recording sheets and registers
Digital	Buckinghamshire County Museum/ AYBCM: 2017.2 MK HER event number: EMK1291	Database, digital photos, digital survey
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 <i>Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney, Milton Keynes: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report <b>17008</b>		



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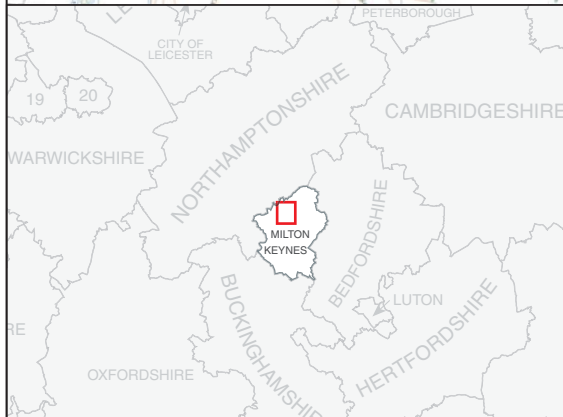
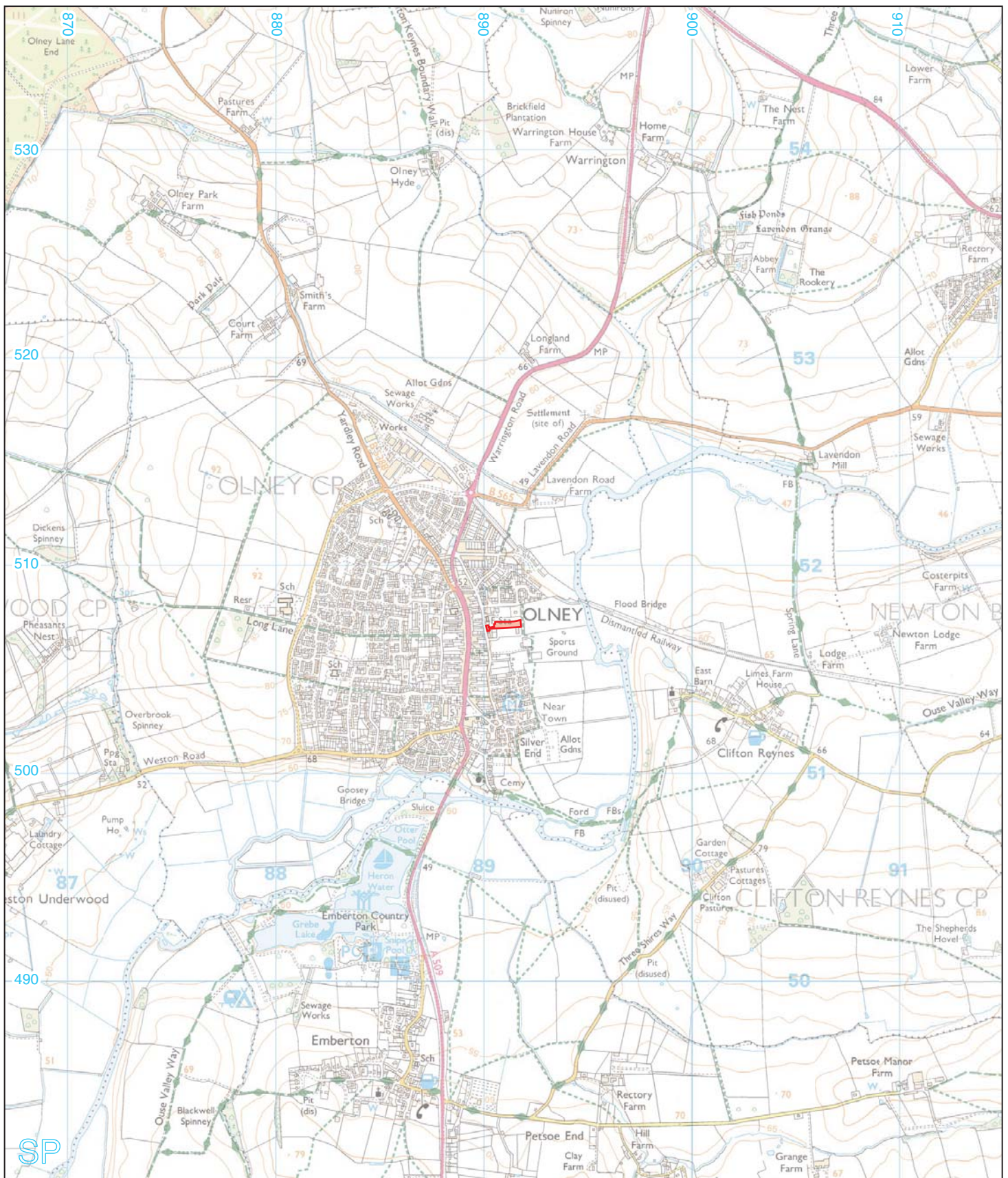
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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney  
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**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Site location plan



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Site, looking east



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PROJECT TITLE

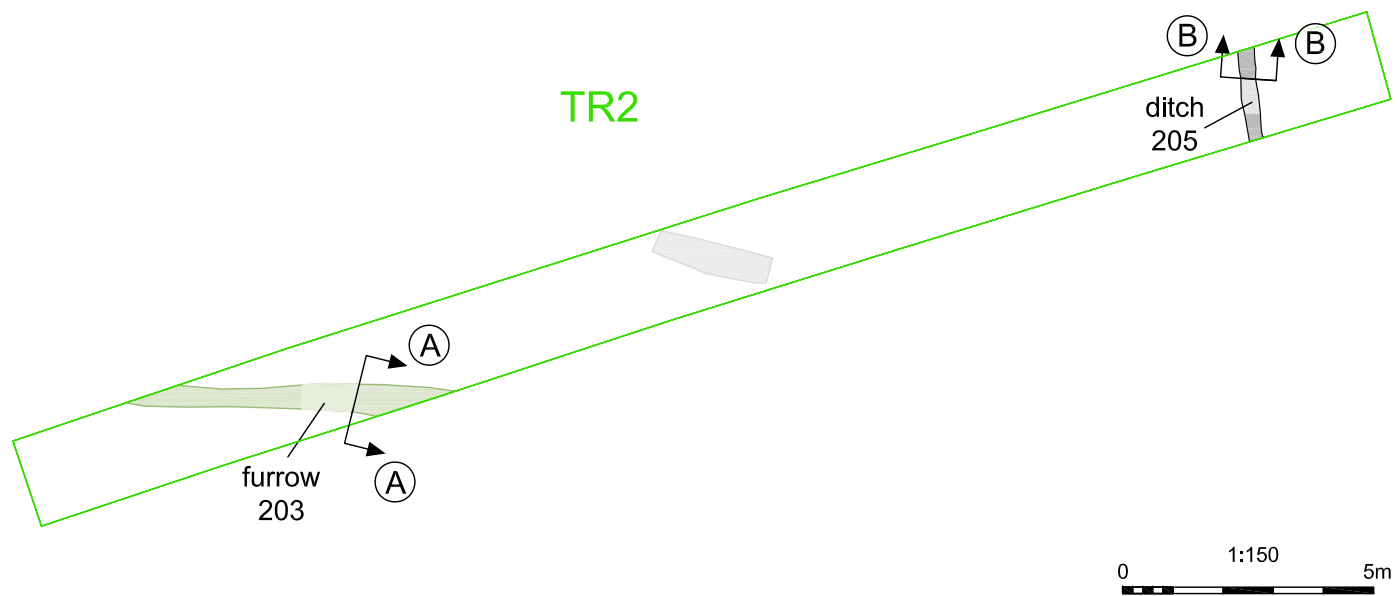
Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney  
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FIGURE TITLE

Photograph

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INSET



- site boundary
- evaluation trench
- archaeological feature
- furrow
- modern
- bioturbation
- section location



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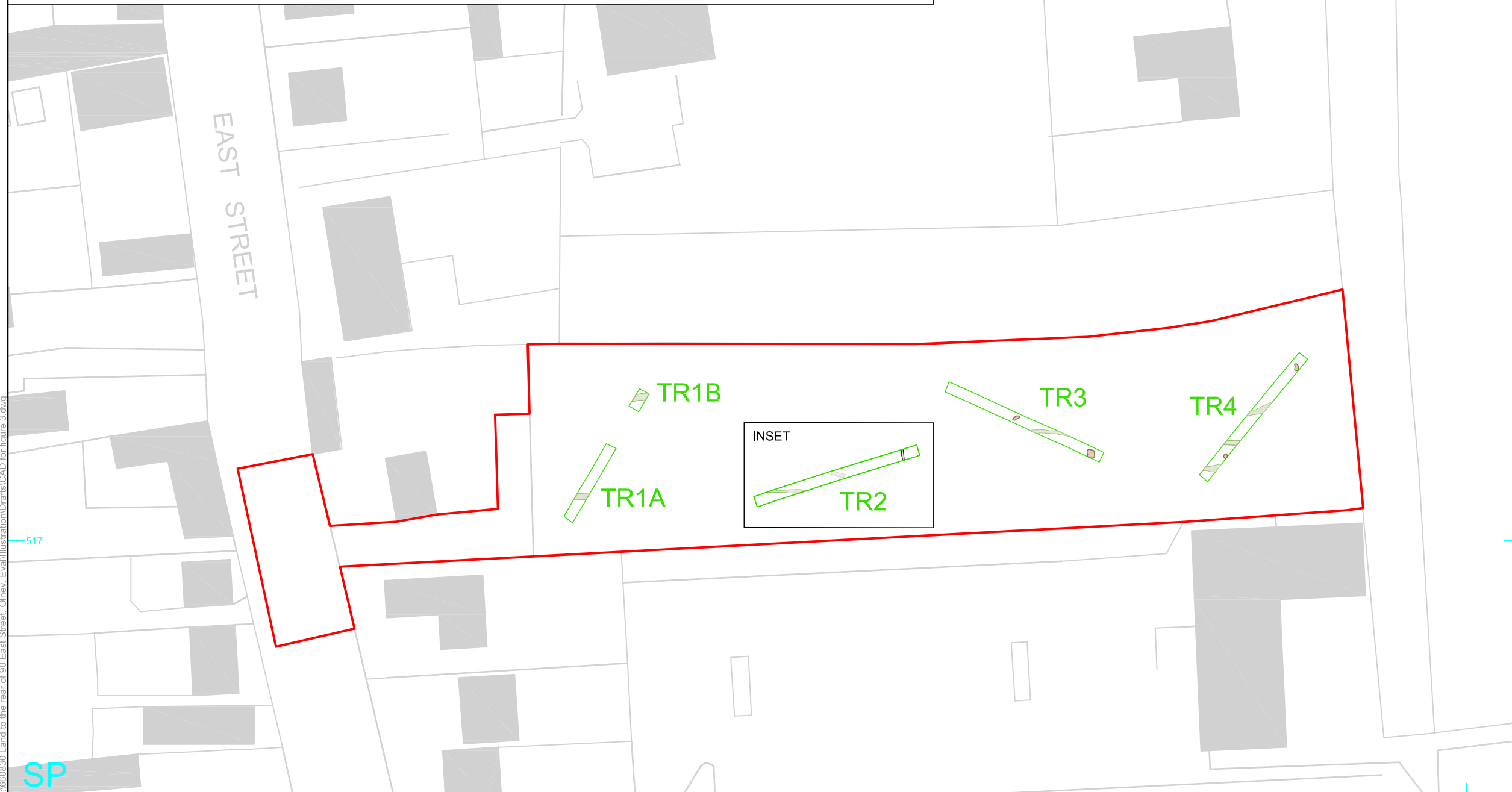
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**PROJECT TITLE**  
Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney  
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**FIGURE TITLE**  
Trench location plan, showing  
archaeological features

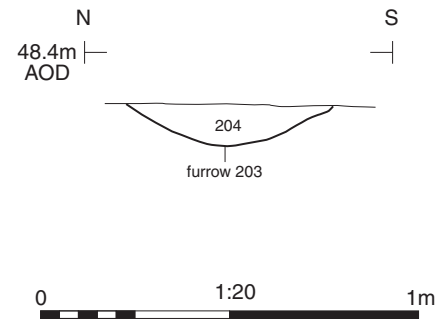
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APPROVED BY	SJ	SCALE@A3	1:750 / 1:150	



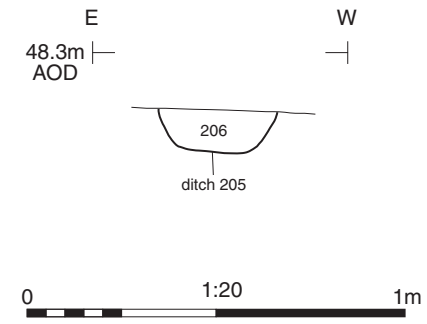
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SP

Section AA



Section BB



- A** Furrow 203, looking south-east (0.3m scale)
- B** Ditch 205, looking south (0.2m scale)



A



B


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PROJECT TITLE  
 Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney  
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FIGURE TITLE  
**Trench 2: sections and photographs**

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**Trench 4, looking north-east (2 x 1m scales)**



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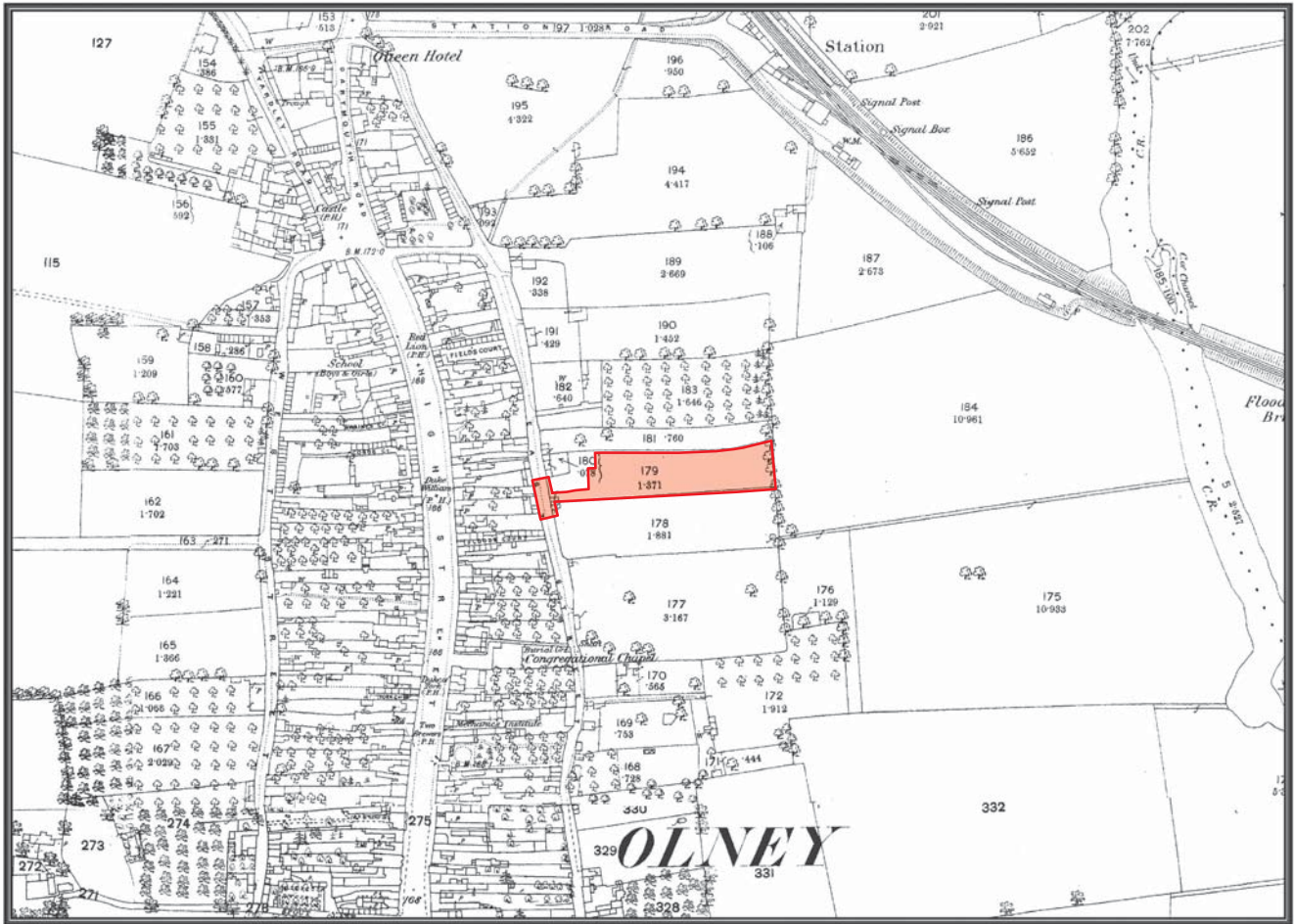
*PROJECT TITLE*

Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney  
Milton Keynes

*FIGURE TITLE*

**Photograph**

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<i>CHECKED BY</i>	<b>DJB</b>	<i>DATE</i>	<b>12/01/2017</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>APPROVED BY</i>	<b>SJ</b>	<i>SCALE@A4</i>	<b>N/A</b>	



OS County Series: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 1:2,500 1882

## Historic mapping: 1882 Ordnance Survey map of Olney

 Site boundary

Map from Old-maps:

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PROJECT TITLE

Land to the rear of 90 East Street, Olney  
 Milton Keynes

FIGURE TITLE

Historic map

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