

# Archaeological Monitoring of a Gas Pipeline Installation at St. John's Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire



Dave Webb

CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



**Archaeological Monitoring of a Gas Pipeline Installation at St John's  
Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire**

**Dave Webb**

**Cambridge Archaeological Unit**  
University of Cambridge  
Department of Archaeology

August 2011

**Report No. 1033**  
**ECB3590**

## ***Summary***

*The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook the archaeological monitoring of the preparatory works for the installation of a new gas pipeline at St Johns Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire. During the monitoring no archaeological features or structures were encountered.*

## Contents

<i>Summary</i>	i
<b>1.1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Location and Topography</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.4 Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1 Results</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.1 Conclusions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>6</b>
Appendix 1: Soil Profile of main graveyard	6
<b>Oasis Form</b>	

## **1.1 Introduction**

The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook the archaeological monitoring of the cutting of a trench for the installation of a new gas pipeline at St John's Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire (NGR 5545 2586) (8<sup>th</sup> June 2011). The evaluation was commissioned by St John's Parochial Church Council with the aim of establishing and recording the presence, date, condition and significance of any archaeological remains. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by the CAU (Beadsmoore 2011). The WSI was approved and work monitored by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (McConnell 2011).

## **1.2 Location and Topography**

The Village of Little Wilbraham occupies a position approximately 8 km. (5 miles) to the east of Cambridge and to the southeast of the Cambridgeshire fen edge (former pocket fen is recorded within the parishes of Great and Little Wilbraham). The village is on the north side of the Little Wilbraham River whilst its larger neighbour of Great Wilbraham is to the south of the river. The underlying geology of the parish is largely of lower and middle chalk deposits whilst the village itself is located on a fourth terrace deposit of river gravels (BGS 1978). To the north west of the village is an area of fenland, lying below 10m, known as Little Wilbraham Fen. The church is located at c. 18m AOD.

## **1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The Church of St John's and its accompanying churchyard has been central to the village of Little Wilbraham since the Norman period and possibly the Saxon period. The body of the church dates from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century with extensive modifications in later periods, there evidence of earlier origins is in the form of a Norman Arch and two blocked doorways dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A narrow window located in the south wall of the nave in a style typical of the late Saxon period may suggest an even earlier origin or earlier structure. The earliest material recorded in the parish indicating human activity are finds of Neolithic polished stone axes (CHER 06271 and CHER 06272) originating from the Langdale sites in the Lake District. To the north of the church and the village is a round barrow dated to the Bronze Age (CHER 06275). Activity during the Iron Age and Roman period is not entered in the HER for Little Wilbraham; however, there is extensive evidence for these periods in Great Wilbraham (CHER MCB17757, CHER 06279, CHER MCB 17729). It would thus seem likely that at least some activity took place during these periods within the vicinity of Little Wilbraham. A large Saxon Cemetery of over 350 burials was excavated by Neville in 1850-51 (CHER 06330) with further excavations taking place between 1926-27. Fox described the cemetery as a "mixed cremation and inhumation was of Anglian Type" dated largely to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps with an origin in mid 5<sup>th</sup> century.

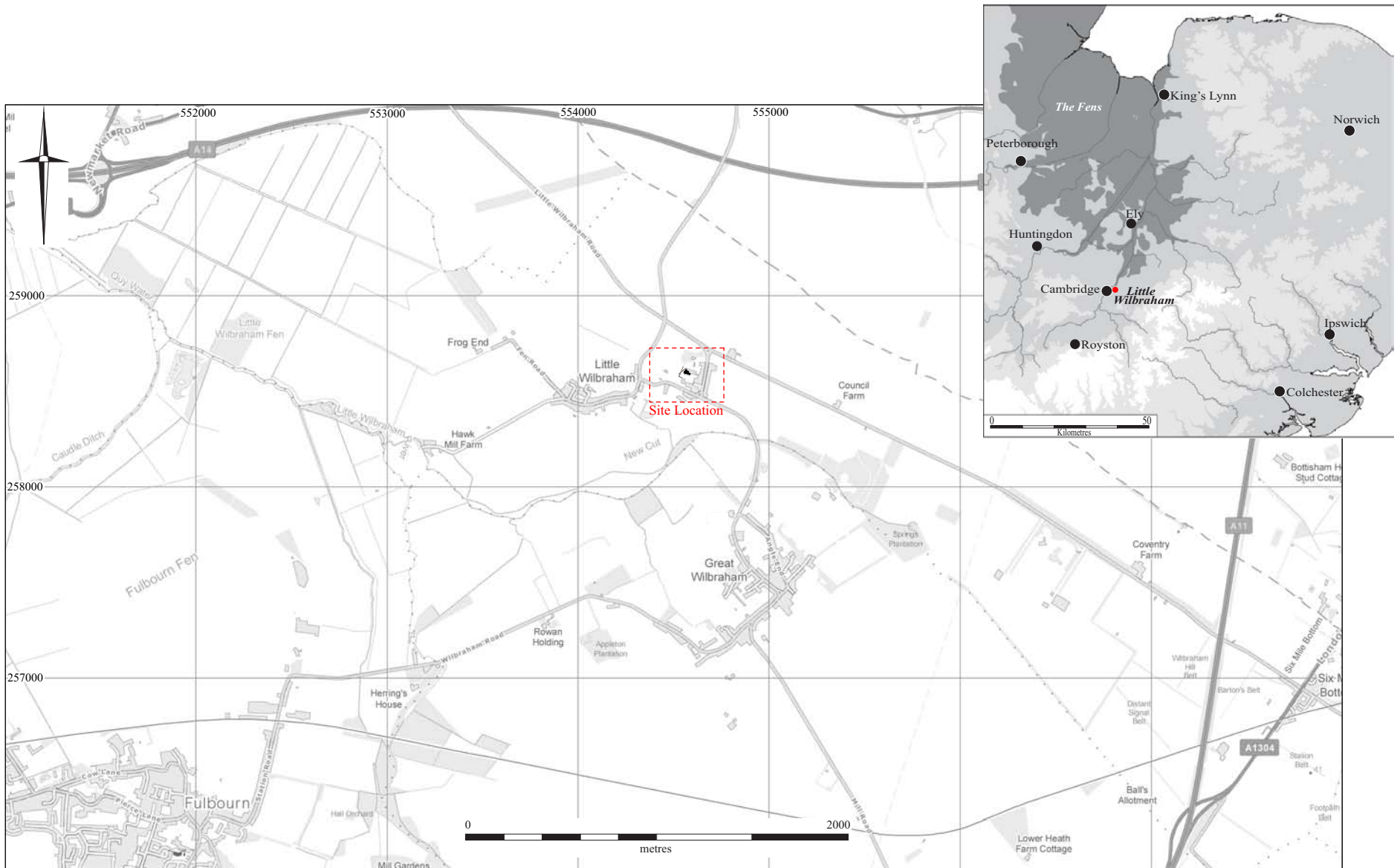


Figure 1. Location Plan

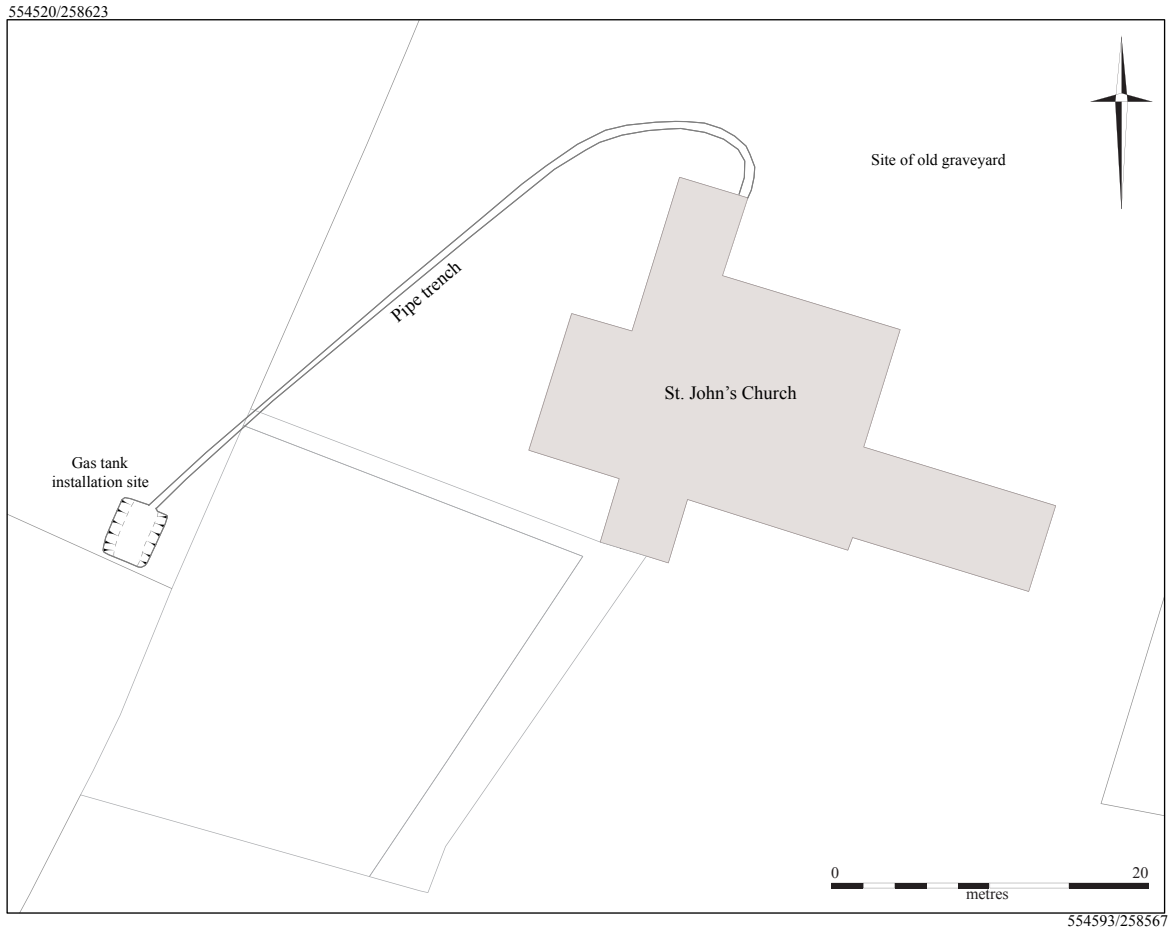
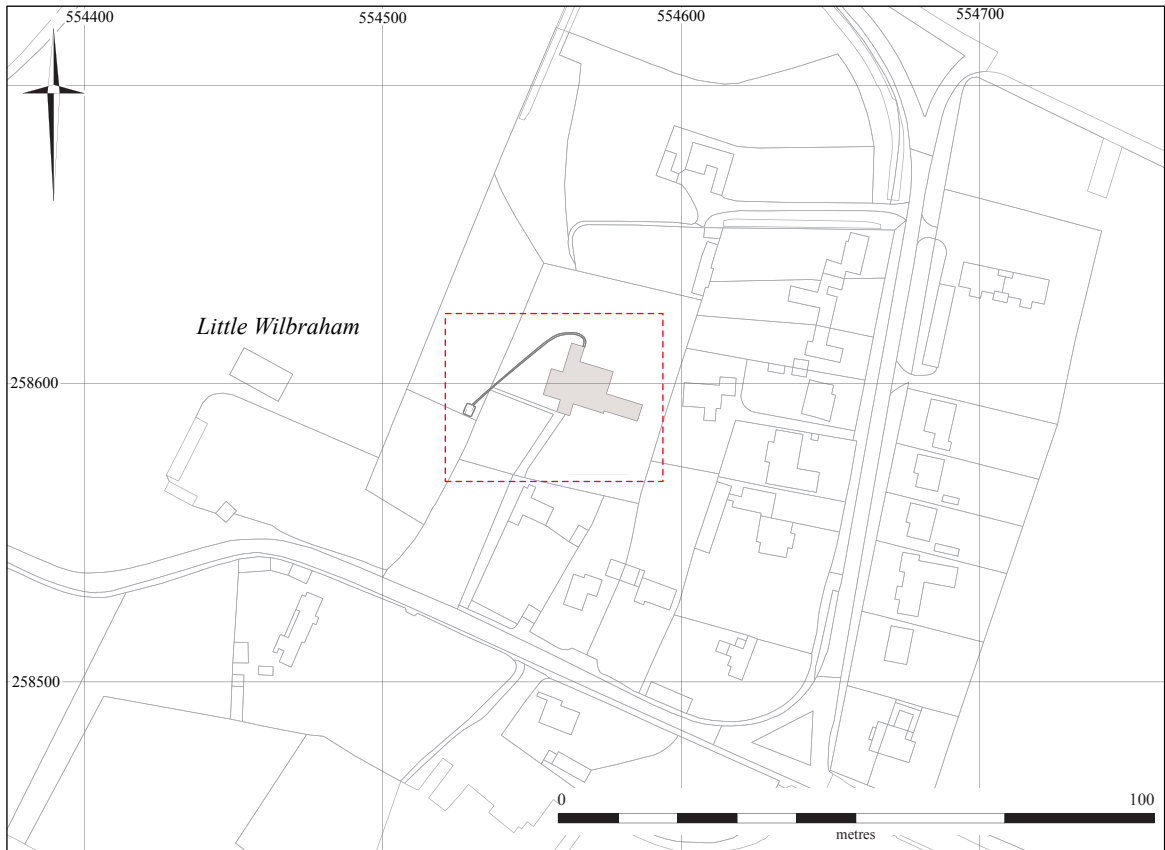


Figure 2. Trench and Pipeline Plan

## 1.4 Methodology

The pipe trench was excavated by a team of two workman monitored by a member of the CAU. The trench was machine dug to a width of 0.30m and maximum depth of 0.50m, the trench extended for approximately 50m's. The trench commenced adjacent to the north east corner of the north side vestry and continued for a short distance (3m.) in an northerly direction, then curved in a westerly direction (5m.) before turning in a south westerly direction (32m.) across the graveyard towards a gap in the boundary wall between the main church graveyard and the southern graveyard. The trench continued for a short distance into the southern graveyard to the site for the installation of the gas tank. Any potential archaeological features and material were investigated and treated in accordance with the WSI drawn up by the CAU (Beadsmoore 2011) and HET (McConnell 2011). The recording was carried out following the CAU modified MoLAS system of archaeological site recording (Spence 1990). All work was carried out in accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2005) and in full accordance with the IFA's *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IFA 2001), Gurney (2003) and the *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region).

The site code is SJW11

## 2.1 Results

The initial cut across the grassed area adjacent to the church revealed a dark grey sandy silt loam top soil (depth 0.00m – 0.30m). Beneath this was a dark yellowish brown sandy silt subsoil (depth 0.30m – 0.50m+). The trench was cut to a depth of 0.50m. The composition of the ground remained similar across the graveyard until the trench entered the southern graveyard. At this point the upper fill was slightly darker and more humic although still a sandy silt loam. At the site for the gas tank installation a rectangular pit was cut measuring 3m x 4m and to a depth of 0.70m. No archaeological features, including grave cuts, were identified during the cutting of the trench and pit. Although no cut features were identified, residual material was recovered including domestic wares and building materials. The ceramic material included mainly modern and post-medieval material, although one sin-wave decorated rim was dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century (Newman pers.com). The bones recovered were of both animal and human origin. The bones were mostly fragmentary, including the human bone (not kept), and none were articulated. The stratigraphic position of much of the material did not bear any relation to a normal chronological sequence of deposition, with recent material including plastics and tin cans found at lower depths than earlier post-medieval material. On the south side of the dry stone wall that separated the main church graveyard from the southern graveyard, large quantities of glass in the form of the remains of jam jars and bottles were encountered.

## 3.1 Conclusions

No intact burials were disturbed during the laying of the pipeline, although human remains were recovered. The origin of the bones recovered is most likely the general



background of disturbed material that accumulates in a long standing graveyard where earlier graves have been disturbed by cuts for newer graves over the centuries. The recent landscaping and repositioning of headstones within the main graveyard may further explain the abnormal chronological sequence of material seen within the top and sub-soils of the graveyard. The large quantities of glass deposited on the south side of the dividing dry stone wall is probably the result of the removal of containers for flowers left at gravestones during episodes of “tidying up” of the church graveyard.

The material recovered during the cutting of the pipe trench and its make up suggest that the upper strata of the church graveyard has been severely disturbed by recent episodes of landscaping and that little may remain *in situ*; however, the rim of 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century medieval pottery demonstrates that earlier material is likely to exist in the vicinity and *in situ* material may survive at a greater depth than that revealed by the pipe cut.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The work was commissioned by St Johns Church Parochial Church Council and the site was monitored by Dan McConnell. Emma Beadsmore was the project manager. Bryan Crossan prepared the graphics.

#### **Bibliography**

Allen, J.L. and Holt, A. 2002. *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology*. SCAUM

Beadsmore, E. 2011. *A Specification for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at St John's Church, Little Wilbraham Cambridgeshire Planning Ref: S/203310*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit

British Geological Survey. 1978. *Cambridge Solid and Drift Edition 1: 50,000 series*, Sheet 188.

English Heritage. 2006. *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, The MoRPHE Project Managers Guide*. Swindon: English Heritage.

Gurney, D. 2003. *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. (East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 14.) Gressenhall: ALGAO

IFA. 2008. *Code of Conduct: Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. London: Institute for Archaeologists

McConnell, D. 2011. *Brief for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording, St John's Church, Little Wilbraham*. Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team.

Spence. C. 1990. *Archaeological Site Manual*. Museum of London.

#### *Abbreviations*

CHER: Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Records

HET: Historic Environment Team

## **Appendix 1**

### **Soil Profile of main graveyard**

[001] 0.00-0.30m A dark grey sandy loam with frequent small to medium sub angular gravel inclusions, moderately sorted and occasional angular flint nodules. Material recovered included post medieval and modern domestic wares, construction rubble. Fragmented human and animal bones were also recovered. The Human remains included skull fragments, long bones, vertebrae, toe and finger bones. All the bones were fragmentary and exhibited earlier breaks; none were articulated.

[002] 0.30-0.50m A dark yellowish brown sandy silt with frequent small to medium sub angular gravel inclusions, moderately sorted and occasional angular flint nodules. Similar material to that recovered from [001] was also recovered including human remains.

### **Soil Profile of southern graveyard**

[003] 0.00-0.30m A very dark grey sandy loam with frequent small to medium sub angular gravel inclusions, moderately sorted and occasional angular flint nodules. The soil had a more distinct humic content than that in the main graveyard. Material recovered included post medieval and modern domestic wares and construction rubble. In the upper strata of the layer adjacent to the dry stone wall, frequent glass fragments mainly from jam jars and bottles were recovered.

[004] 0.30-0.75m A dark yellowish brown sandy silt with frequent small to medium sub angular gravel inclusions, moderately sorted and occasional angular flint nodules.

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

## Printable version

**OASIS ID: cambridg3-108142**

### Project details

Project name	Archaeological Monitoring of a Gas Pipeline Installation at St John's Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook the archaeological monitoring of the preparatory works for the installation of a new gas pipeline at St Johns Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire. During the monitoring no archaeological features or structures were encountered.
Project dates	Start: 08-06-2011 End: 08-06-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3590 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Listed Building
Site status (other)	Church
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Medieval
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Visual Inspection'
Development type	Pipelines/cables (e.g. gas, electric, telephone, TV cable, water, sewage, drainage etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE LITTLE WILBRAHAM St Johns Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire
Postcode	CB21 5LE
Study area	0.06 Kilometres
Site coordinates	TL 545 586 52.2035082102 0.261160136830 52 12 12 N 000 15 40 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 18.00m Max: 18.00m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Contractor (design and execute)
Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	David Webb
Type of sponsor/funding body	Diocese
Name of sponsor/funding body	Church of England (St John's Parochial Church Council)

**Project archives**

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID	SJWL11
Physical Contents	'Ceramics','other'
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	SJWL11
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	SJWL11
Paper Media available	'Drawing','Photograph','Plan','Survey '

**Project bibliography**

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Monitoring of a Gas Pipeline Installation at St John's Church, Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Webb, D
Other bibliographic details	Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report 1033
Date	2011
Issuer or publisher	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Place of issue or publication	Cambridge
Description	Reference copy and pdf.
Entered by	G A Appleby (gaa21@cam.ac.uk)
Entered on	19 August 2011