

# The Waste Management Park, Ely Road, Waterbeach

*An Archaeological Watching Brief*



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## Contents

Introduction.....	2
Topography and Geology .....	2
Archaeological and Historical Background .....	2
Methodology.....	3
Results.....	3
Discussion.....	5
Bibliography .....	6
Figure .....	7
Oasis Form.....	8

## **Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2013 on land adjacent to the Waste Management Centre, Ely Road, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. Commissioned by Bidwells on behalf of AmeyCespa Ltd, the watching brief aimed to establish the presence, date, state of preservation and significance of any archaeological remains in eight geotechnical trial pits. There was no evidence of archaeology in any of these eight pits.

## **Topography and Geology**

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is centred on TL 486 688 and covered *c.*6.16 hectares. It is located on former agricultural land along the 'Fen Edge', and is bordered by the Waste Management Centre to the northeast, Beach Drain to the northwest, Ely Road (the A10) to the southeast and agricultural land to the southwest (see Figure 1). The PDA is in a slight hollow, with the centre of the site averaging 2.25m OD, the northwest end 2.80m OD and the southeast end 2.60m OD. Underlying geology was 2<sup>nd</sup> Terrace River Gravels overlaying Kimmeridge Clay and Lower Green Sand (British Geological Survey 1978).

## **Archaeological and Historical Background**

The CAU has carried out a series of archaeological investigations in relation to the expansion of the Waste Management Centre since 1992 (Wait 1992, Oswald 1992, Gibson 1999, Masser 2002, Cooper & Whittaker 2004, Ranson 2008, Slater 2009, Tabor 2010 and Collins 2010) and their findings are briefly summarised below.

### *Prehistoric*

Worked and burnt flint scatters dating to the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods have been identified in several locations within the surrounding 'Fen Edge' landscape, for example at Gravel Diggers Farm (Oswald 1992). Excavations adjacent to the PDA have identified a possible Iron-Age ditch (Ranson 2008) and two small pits, one of which yielded Late Bronze Age pottery (Slater 2009), whilst slightly further to the north a series of undated pits, postholes and a round structure were tentatively dated as prehistoric due to the presence of burnt and worked flint (Cooper & Whittaker 2004).

### *Romano-British*

Ely Road (the A10) which borders the southeast edge of the PDA is believed to be the route for Akeman Street, a Roman Road which linked Cambridge with Ermine Street to the south and The Fens to the north. Whilst just to the west of the PDA is Car Dyke, a probable canal dug along the western Fen Edge during the Roman period. A Romano-British temple has been identified from cropmarks as having existed 350m north of the PDA, which could have been an important regional ritual centre. Excavations by the CAU within the Waste Management Centre have established the presence of dense Romano-British activity including agricultural boundaries and enclosures, a probable droveway, several structures, preserved midden deposits (containing significant quantities

of material culture), and a preserved buried soil (Ranson 2008, Slater 2009, Tabor, 2010, Collins 2010). Several of the Romano-British boundaries and the trackway cross the PDA, and the northern corner is adjacent to dense archaeology seen in one of the previous excavations (Tabor 2010, Collins 2010).

### *Medieval and Post-Medieval*

Due to seasonal flooding of these low lying Fen Edge areas during the medieval period activity at this time largely focused on the nearby villages of Waterbeach and Cottenham. One exception to this is Denny Abbey located on a gravel island 400m east of the PDA which was established by Benedictine monks in 1159 AD. The Beach Ditch which borders the northwest edge of the PDA is also believed to have its origins in the medieval period (Ravensdale 1974). The area was probably brought back into agricultural use in the late medieval/early post-medieval period when large areas of Fenland were drained, and aerial photographs suggest the presence of ridge and furrow across the area.

### **Methodology**

The geotechnical trial pits were machine excavated with a backhoe excavator with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket, which removed the topsoil and subsoil down to an archaeological level, under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist. A datasheet detailing the characteristics of each trial pit was generated augmented by a colour digital photographic record.

The site was surveyed into the Ordnance Survey Grid and Ordnance Datum by means of a handheld GPS unit with an accuracy of approximately 5m. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of FAME (Allen & Holt 2010) and in accordance with a site specific risk assessment and the CAU Health and Safety policy. The CAU assigned site code is ERW 13. No features were identified during the monitoring programme.

### **Results**

The geotechnical trial pits were positioned to cover the PDA while avoiding the known archaeological features detailed in the previous archaeological evaluation (Collins 2010). All pits were oblong in shape and were oriented on a NE-SW alignment. There was no evidence of archaeological activity in any of the eight excavated pits.

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 1</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural was orange sandy gravel with patches of clayey. Underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions and patches of limestone.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.31
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.19
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.21
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.5
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.70
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48669 68835	2m OD

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 2</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural substrate was loose orange sandy gravel. The underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.35
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.15
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.65
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.50
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.50
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48604 68793	2m OD

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 3</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural substrate was loose orange sandy gravel. The underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.29
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.20
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.55
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.40
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.40
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48666 68755	2m OD

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 4</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural substrate was very loose saturated orange sandy gravel. The underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.25
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.15
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.55
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.00
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48637 68719	2m OD

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 5</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with moderate gravel inclusions. The natural substrate was loose saturated orange sandy gravel. The underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.30
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.15
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.85
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.50
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.45
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48722 68783	2m OD

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 6</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural substrate was very loose orange sandy gravel. The underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.35
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.18
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.45
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.40
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.00
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48711 68733	2m OD

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 7</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural substrate was mid/loose orange sandy gravel. The underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.30
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.20
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.45
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.00
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48740 68638	2m OD

<b>Geotechnical Trial Pit 8</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	NE-SW
Trial Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sand with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural substrate was mid/loose orange sandy gravel. The underlying geology was blue/grey clay with few gravel inclusions.	<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.30
	<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.15
	<b>Avg. Natural Depth (m)</b>	1.55
	<b>Approx. Width (m)</b>	1.50
	<b>Approx. Length (m)</b>	2.40
	<b>Approx. Depth (m)</b>	2.00
<b>GPS Location</b>	TL 48839 68696	2m OD

## **Discussion**

This investigation produced no evidence of archaeological activity. The lack of archaeological features and artefacts is probably due to the targeted positioning of the pits in areas where known archaeological features were not projected to cross the PDA. Also, the limited size of the geotechnical trial pits must be taken into account as they provided a partial view of any potential archaeological activity within the PDA.

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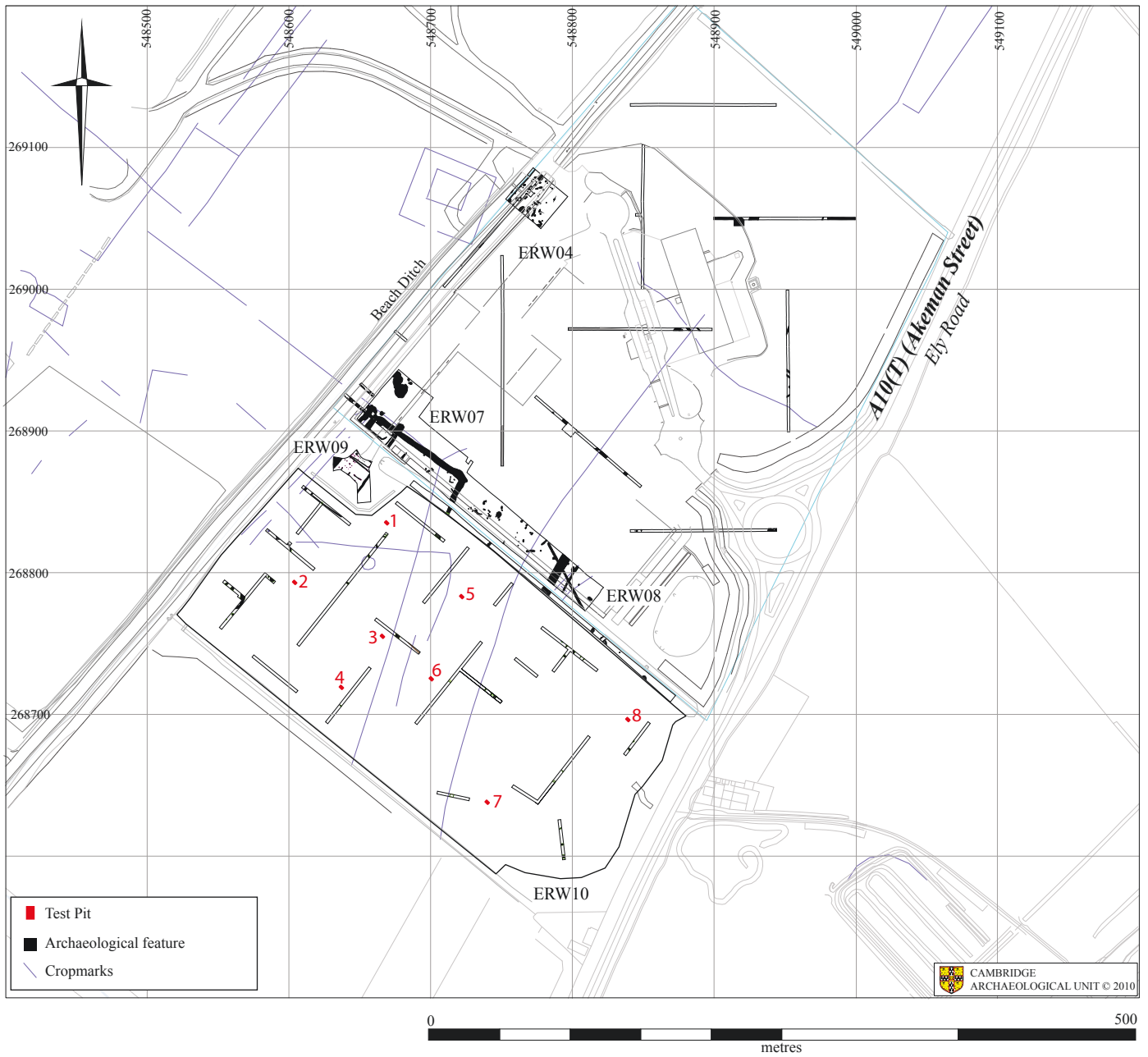


Figure 1. Test Pits in relation to surrounding cropmarks and previous archaeological phases

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**OASIS ID: cambridg3-141345**

### Project details

Project name	Waste Management Park, Ely Road, Waterbeach
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on the 14th of January 2013 on land adjacent to the Waste Management Centre, Ely Road, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. Commissioned by Bidwells on behalf of AmeyCespa Ltd, the watching brief aimed to establish the presence, date, state of preservation and significance of any archaeological remains in eight geotechnical trial pits. There was no evidence of archaeology in any of these eight pits.
Project dates	Start: 14-01-2013 End: 14-01-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ERW13 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3438 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 5 - Character undetermined
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE WATERBEACH The Waste Management Park, Ely Road, Waterbeach
Postcode	CB25 9PQ
Study area	6.16 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 486 688 52 0 52 17 48 N 000 10 45 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 2.25m Max: 2.80m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Self (i.e. landowner, developer, etc.)
Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Leanne Zeki

Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	AmeyCespa Ltd

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	ERW 13
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	ERW 13
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Notebook - Excavation', ' Research', ' General Notes"

### Project bibliography

1

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