

# Anglia Ruskin Sports Facility, Howes Close, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation



Jonathan Tabor

**ANGLIA RUSKIN SPORTS FACILITY,  
HOWES CLOSE, CAMBRIDGE**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**Jonathan L. Tabor**

**Illustrations by Bryan Crossan**

**Cambridge Archaeological Unit**  
University of Cambridge

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## *Summary*

*A trial trench based archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the Anglia Ruskin sports facility to the north of Hotel Felix, Howes Close, Cambridge (TL 4330 6070) in June 2014. The only archaeological features recorded within the proposed development area comprise the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation, which is likely to be medieval in origin and the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A trial trench based archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the Anglia Ruskin sports facility to the north of Hotel Felix, Howes Close, Cambridge (TL 4330 6070) in June 2014. The proposed development area (PDA) total c.4.5ha and comprises the sites of two all weather sports pitches and a new pavilion.

The project was undertaken in order to address a condition placed upon planning consent for the construction of the sports pitches and pavilion. Work was carried out in accordance with a project design specification (Beadsmoore 2014) produced by the CAU in response to a brief issued by Dan McConnell of the Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council.

The work was commissioned by Anglia Ruskin University.

### **Location, Topography and Geology**

The PDA is located c. 350m north-east of Huntingdon Road on the north-western edge of Cambridge (Figure 1). The site is located within an existing sports ground bounded to the north-west by housing and by Hotel Felix to the south-west; warehouses and areas of open fields lie to the north-east and south-east.

The PDA is flat and situated at approximately 24m AOD. The underlying geology comprises Gault clay ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex))

### **Archaeological Background**

The PDA lies within a rich archaeological landscape and while no archaeological finds have been reported from the site itself and no archaeological investigations have taken place within its boundaries, there are sites recorded in the vicinity dating from early prehistory to the present day.

A detailed breakdown and discussion of the archaeology within the site's immediate environs is included within the Desk Top Assessment (Appleby 2014) and is not repeated here although a brief summary is provided below:

#### *Early prehistory*

Stone tools dating to the Palaeolithic period (c. 600,000 years ago) have been recovered during gravel extraction from the former Traveller's Rest pit to the south-west of the site.

#### *Later prehistory*

Flint scatters and isolated finds of worked flint recorded in the surrounding area indicate a Mesolithic and Neolithic presence within the area, however, the first clear settlement dates to the Bronze Age. The evidence includes ring ditches, enclosures and elements of a possible Middle Bronze Age fieldsystem to the west of the PDA

(Evans *et al.* 2013). A small cluster of Bronze Age features and two cremation cemeteries have also been recorded at the NIAB site immediately to the south-east of the PDA, which also produced evidence of Iron Age settlement activity (Albion Archaeology 2013).

#### *Romano-British*

Evidence of Romano-British activity is extensive and recent excavations ahead of the North West Cambridge development to the south-west of the PDA (eg. Evan *et al.* 2013), and NIAB to the south-east, (Albion Archaeology 2013) have both encountered significant Roman settlement sites and cemeteries set within contemporary field systems. Two high status cremations have also been found in the grounds of Girton College. Huntingdon Road follows the putative route of the *Via Devana* Roman Road and the destruction of a Roman barrow was recorded during the construction of the modern road in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Medieval*

The site of Howes Close medieval hamlet/village lies directly opposite the PDA on the south-west side of Huntingdon Road. The site is referenced in various historical sources and settlement remains have been encountered at the site during recent excavations undertaken ahead of the North West Cambridge development (Cessford forthcoming).

#### *Post-medieval*

Extensive gravel quarrying is recorded throughout the post-medieval period although there is no evidence for any such activity within the PDA itself.

### **Geophysical Survey**

A magnetic survey (gradiometry) was undertaken across the PDA in April 2014 by Stratascan (Chetwynd and Prestidge 2014). No probable or possible archaeological features were identified.

### **Methodology**

The trial trenching programme consisted of seven trenches, a total of 210m of trenching (Figure 2). Trial trenches were excavated using a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a toothless bucket and operating under direct archaeological supervision at all times. Trenches were located using an advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights obtained. Potential archaeological features were sample excavated with all archaeological finds retained. A written record of archaeological features and soil sequences was created using the CAU recording system (a modification of the MoLAS system). A digital photographic record of the trenching programme was also maintained.

The work was carried out in full accordance with the IFA's *Standard Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*.

## RESULTS

The trial trenching revealed a soil sequence, which was consistent across the PDA and comprised topsoil 0.25–0.3m thick overlying a silty clay subsoil (effectively a relict plough soil) 0.2–0.32m thick. The underlying natural geology comprised a mixed deposit of grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent gravel lenses and small stones, and occasional nodules of flint.

The only archaeological features encountered were a series of plough furrows aligned approximately south-west to north-east, which were recorded in Trenches 2, 4 and 6. A total of eleven furrows were recorded although it is clear that ridge and furrow cultivation has occurred across the site. The recorded furrows measured between 0.75m and 1.8m wide (the degree to which they were truncated evidently being the cause of any variation in width) and were no more than 0.07m in depth. The furrows were spaced at 6-7 m intervals and contained a silty clay fill equivalent to the relict plough soil layer, which occurs across the site. No finds were recovered from the furrows themselves although three sherds of abraded coarseware pottery were recovered from the relict plough soil/subsoil; one sherd from Trench 5 and two sherds from Trench 6. The pottery sherds clearly date to either the medieval or Romano-British period although given their abraded condition they cannot be more closely dated with any confidence.

The only other features recorded were clearly relatively recent in origin and comprised two pits in Trench 7 located *c.* 5.5m apart. With vertical sides and a minimum of 0.5m deep, the pits or ‘slots’ were clearly machine excavated and contained a backfill of natural clay mixed with topsoil. The features yielded a sherd of post-medieval pottery, a fragment of coal and brick fragments. The location of the pits appears to roughly coincide with former goal posts visible on aerial photographs and the features may well mark the location of postholes, perhaps (given their spacing) for rugby goal posts.

Trenches 1, 3 and 5 were devoid of features except for modern field drains.

## DISCUSSION

The only archaeological features recorded within the PDA comprise the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation, which is likely to be medieval in origin. Both the geophysical survey of the site (Chetwynd and Prestidge 2014) and aerial photographs (eg. Google Earth 2003) appear to show the characteristic reverse ‘S’ shaped pattern of ridge and furrow occurring across the site. Aerial photographs also show ridge and furrow in the adjacent field to the front of Hotel Felix. As such the PDA almost certainly lies in an area of formerly cultivated land or ‘infields’ around the medieval settlement of Howes Close to the south-west of the site and was probably worked by its inhabitants (despite the site itself apparently being part of the parish of Impington; Cessford *pers comm.*).

The three abraded pottery sherds recovered from the subsoil, whether medieval or Romano-British, are probably related to settlement activity in the surrounding area (Howes Close or the Roman settlements at NIAB, for example) but in themselves do

not represent activity on any scale and their presence on site almost certainly results from manuring of agricultural land.

A lack of any other archaeological features exposed within the trenches would appear to confirm that the PDA lies in an area 'between' the known prehistoric and Roman settlement zones that are recorded in the wider locale.

## **STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL**

The results of the trial trench evaluation, together with the geophysical survey, suggest that the archaeological potential of the site is low. Given the presence of traces of ridge and furrow and a lack of any other archaeological features, it appears likely that prior to its current function the PDA has only ever been utilised as agricultural land.

## **Acknowledgements**

The work was commissioned by Anglia Ruskin University and the CAU are grateful for the cooperation of Stephen Eccles of Anglia Ruskin University and David Langford of the Sweett Group. The project was managed by Emma Beadsmoore and monitored by Dan McConnell of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team. The author was assisted on site by Tony Baker and the site survey was undertaken by Donald Horne. The report graphics are the work of Bryan Crossan.



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Albion Archaeology. 2013. *NIAB, Cambridge. Preliminary summary of results (Areas 3, 4 and 5)*. Albion Archaeology Report.

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## Web sources

Google Earth Version 7.1.2.2041. 10/16/2003. Howes Close. 52°13'52.71" N, 0°05'46.84" E [Date accessed 28/06/2014]

## APPENDIX 1

### Trench descriptions

<b>Trench 1</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	SW-NE
Trench contained no convincing archaeological features although a shallow subsoil-filled hollow (0.1m deep) may represent the remains of a plough furrow? Exposed natural subsoil comprised a mottled grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent gravel lenses	<b>Max. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.3
	<b>Max. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.32
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

<b>Trench 2</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	SE-NW
Trench contained three shallow plough furrows aligned approximately SE–NW. No other archaeological features were encountered. Exposed natural subsoil comprised a mottled grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent gravel lenses	<b>Max. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.3
	<b>Max. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.2
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

<b>Trench 3</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	SW-NE
Trench contained no archaeological features. Exposed natural subsoil comprised a mottled grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent gravel lenses. NB. This trench was moved 15m to the south-east in order to avoid goal posts at the original specified location.	<b>Max. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.25
	<b>Max. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.15
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

<b>Trench 4</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	SE-NW
Trench contained four shallow plough furrows aligned approximately SE–NW. No other archaeological features were encountered. Exposed natural subsoil comprised a mottled grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent gravel lenses	<b>Max. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.25
	<b>Max. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.2
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

<b>Trench 5</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	SW-NE
Trench contained no archaeological features. Exposed natural subsoil comprised a mottled grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent gravel lenses	<b>Max. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.3
	<b>Max. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.2
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

<b>Trench 6</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	SE-NW
Trench contained four shallow plough furrows aligned approximately SE–NW. No other archaeological features were encountered. Exposed natural subsoil comprised a mottled grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent	<b>Max. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.3
	<b>Max. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.25

gravel lenses	<b>Width (m)</b>	2
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

<b>Trench 7</b>		
<b>General Description</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	SW-NE
Trench contained two modern machine cut features filled with a mix of topsoil and natural clay and containing post-medieval pottery, brick fragments and a fragment of coal. No other archaeological features were encountered Exposed natural subsoil comprised a mottled grey/grey brown/orange brown clay with frequent gravel lenses	<b>Max. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.3
	<b>Max. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>	0.3
	<b>Width (m)</b>	2
	<b>Length (m)</b>	30

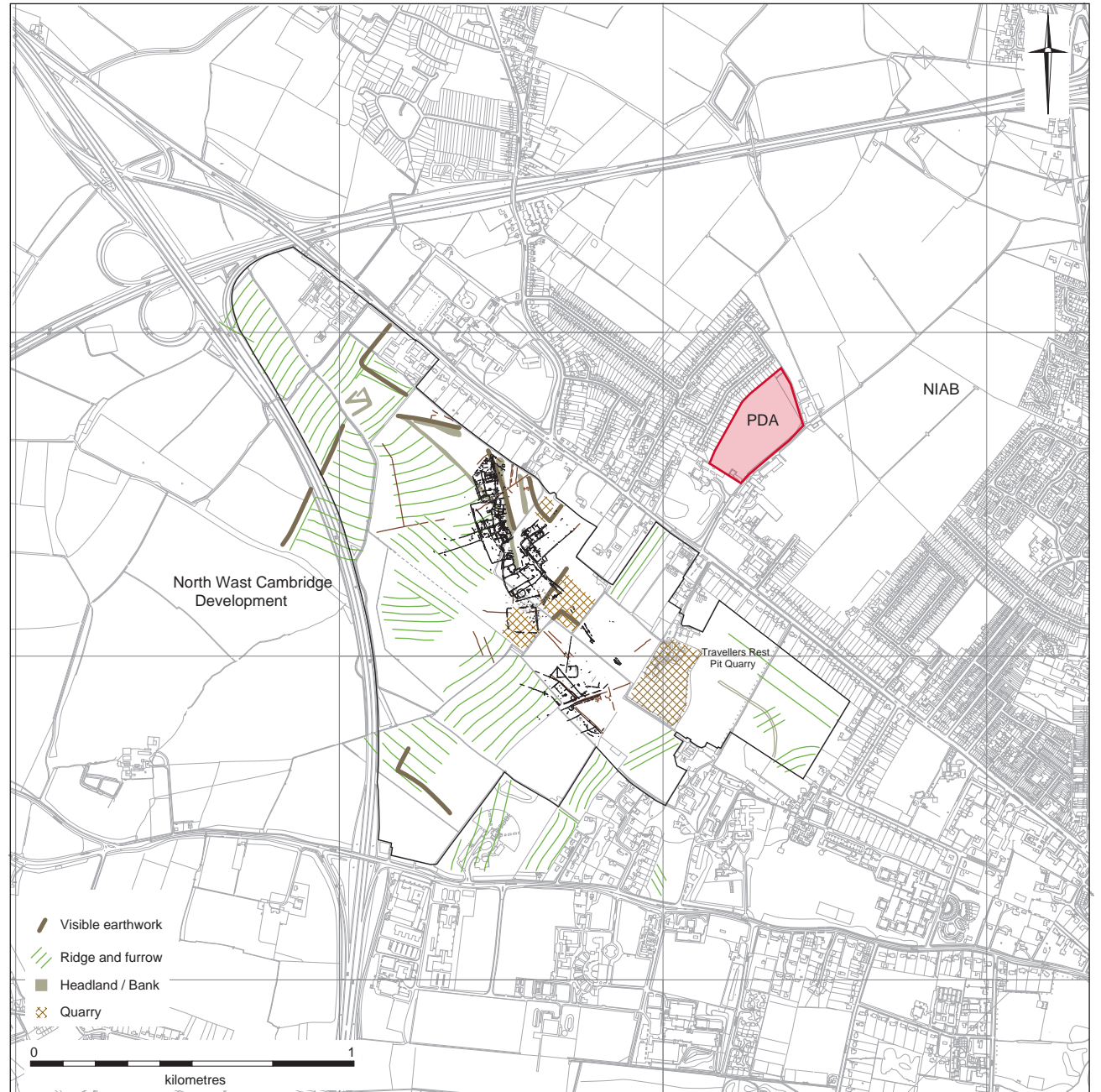
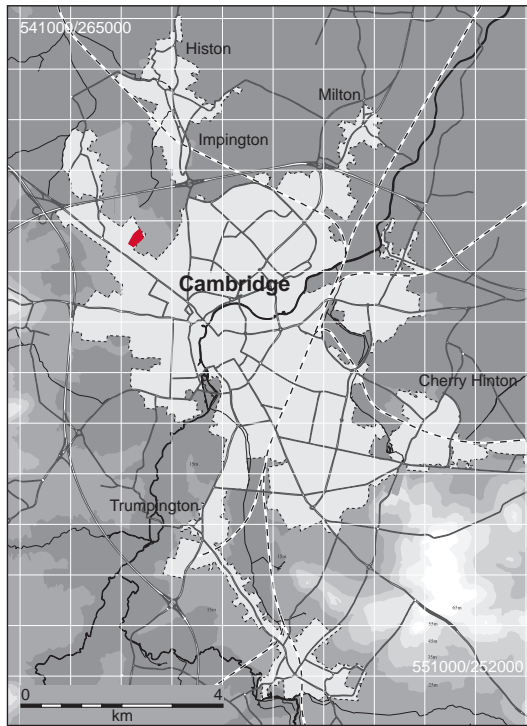
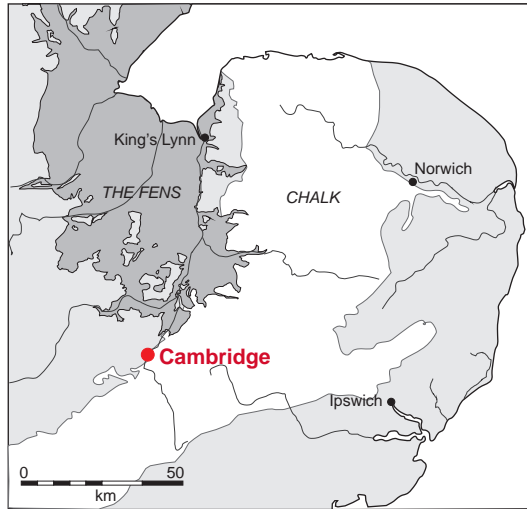


Figure 1. Site location

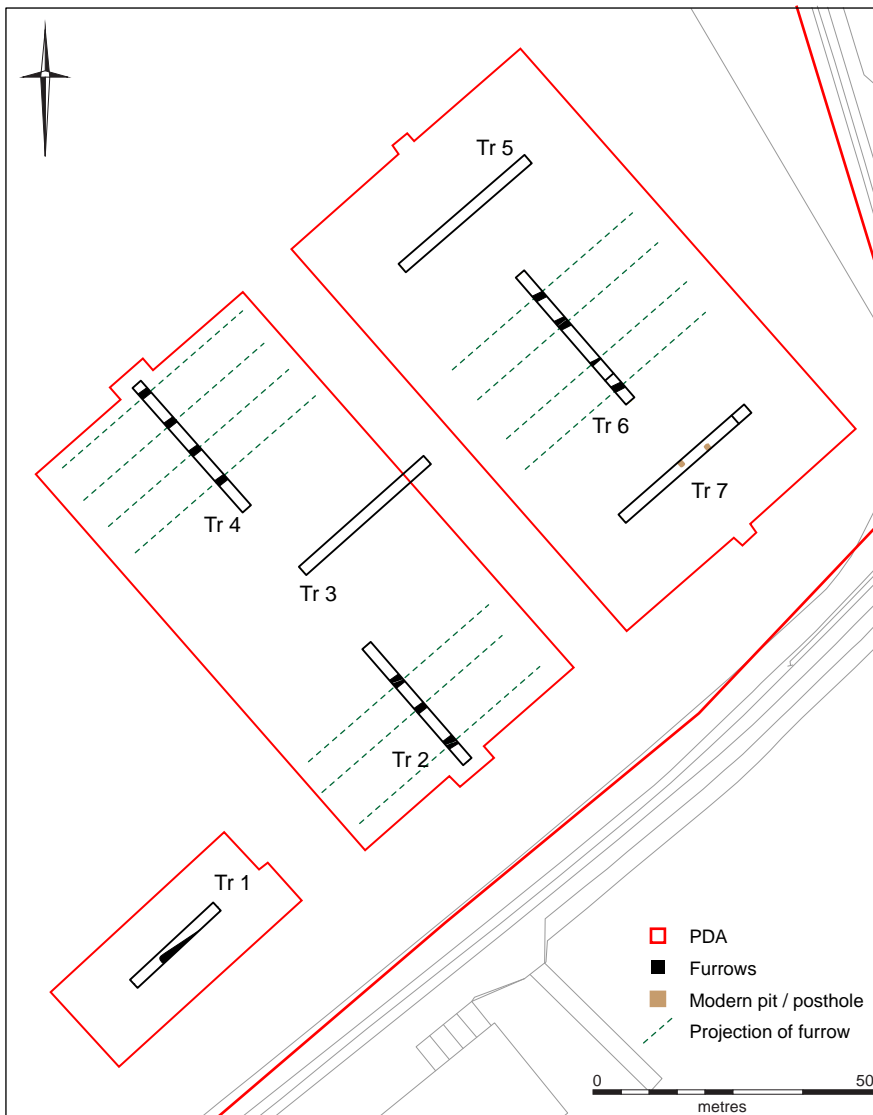
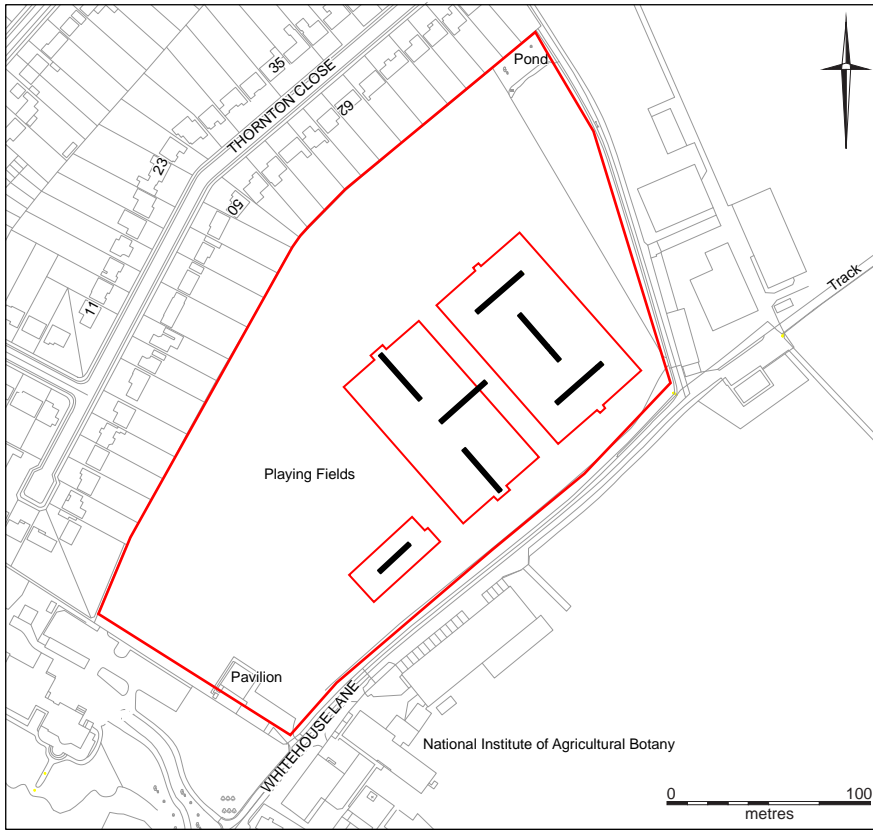


Figure 2. Trench plan

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**OASIS ID: cambridg3-182866**

### Project details

Project name	Anglia Ruskin Sports Ground, Cambridge
Short description of the project	A trial trench based archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the Anglia Ruskin sports facility to the north of Hotel Felix, Howes Close, Cambridge (TL 4330 6070) in June 2014. The only archaeological features recorded within the proposed development area comprised the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation, which is likely to be medieval in origin and the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low.
Project dates	Start: 27-06-2014 End: 27-06-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HCC14 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4213 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	PLOUGH FURROW Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Uncertain
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Amenity area (e.g. public open space)
Development type	Sports pitches and pavilion
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Anglia Ruskin Sports Ground
Postcode	CB3 0NG
Study area	4.50 Hectares

Site coordinates TL 4330 6070 52.2254116908 0.0982571824633 52 13 31 N 000 05 53 E Point  
 Height OD / Depth Min: 24.00m Max: 24.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Cambridge Archaeological Unit  
 Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body  
 Project design originator Emma Beadsmoore  
 Project director/manager Emma Beadsmoore  
 Project supervisor Jonathan Tabor  
 Type of sponsor/funding body Developer  
 Name of sponsor/funding body Anglia Ruskin University

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No  
 Digital Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit  
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 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"  
 Paper Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit  
 Paper Archive ID HCC14  
 Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Report"

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