

Land at NIAB HQ Site, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge Spine Road and Phase 1B

An Archaeological Evaluation



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Spine Road and Phase 1B**
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Non-Technical Summary

Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook an archaeological evaluation on land at the NIAB HQ Site between the 1st and 2nd of November 2010. No archaeological activity was identified within any of the seven excavated trenches, although two of them had been heavily truncated by greenhouses which formerly occupied part of the site.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) between the 1st and 2nd of November 2010 on land at the NIAB HQ Site, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge during the redevelopment of this area. Commissioned by CgMs on behalf of David Wilson Homes, the evaluation aimed to establish the presence, date, state of preservation and significance of any archaeological remains. The evaluation was carried out and this report written in accordance with archaeological specifications written by CgMs (Flitcroft 2010) and the CAU (Beadsmoore 2010) in response to a brief by Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment Team (HET). It was approved and monitored by an Archaeological Officer from HET.

Location, Topography and Geology

The development area is centred on TL 4324 6041 and located on land formerly used by NIAB (National Institute of Agricultural Biology) off Huntingdon Road, northwest Cambridge (see Figure 1). The underlying geology comprises of Gault Clay (British Geological Survey, 1978) and modern ground surface averaged 21.7m OD across the area.

Archaeological Background

The development area and surrounding land has been subject to an extensive program of archaeological investigations consisting of a desk based assessment (John Samuals Archaeological Consultants report ref JSAC 1104/03/03), an aerial photo reassessment (Air Photo Services report 2006/15), fieldwalking (Northamptonshire Archaeology report 06/157), geophysical survey (GSB report ref 2006/74) and field evaluation (Mason 2008). This evaluation, which covered the southern half of the development area, identified only a few features consisting of two undated pits and a further pit which contained medieval pottery.

The development area is situated within an area of archaeological potential however; and is next to Huntingdon Road which is the known route of a major Roman road (the Via Devana) that linked Cambridge with Godmanchester to the northwest and Colchester to the southeast. Just off Huntingdon Road and 500m to the northwest of the development area is a late Roman and Saxon cemetery (CHER 5274) whilst to the southwest of this road a substantial archaeological evaluation carried out by the CAU (Evans & Newman 2010) found evidence for several Roman settlements and their Middle-Late Iron Age precursors.

Methodology

Evaluation of the development area was initially planned to be carried out by six trenches totalling 200m, however due to the constraints of the site this was reduced to 165.2m, although a short seventh trench was also excavated.

Topsoil, subsoil and other deposits were removed under archaeological supervision using a tracked 360° machine using a 1.50m wide toothless ditching bucket. Where present, topsoil was scanned by eye and metal detected for finds. No features were

identified or recorded, although several natural features were test excavated using hand tools. Trenches were planned at scale 1:50 and sections drawn at scale 1:10. 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 & Safety policy. The CAU site code is NHR 10 and CHER number is ECB3451.

Archive

No features were recorded and no finds recovered. A data sheet recording the general information of each trench was generated and a digital photographic archive was compiled. These records have been assembled into a catalogued archive in line with Appendix 1 of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and are being stored at the CAU offices.

Results

The underlying geology within all seven trenches was yellowish brown Gault Clay with some blue/grey clay patches. No archaeological features were identified and no finds were recovered from any of the trenches or from metal detecting the topsoil. Table 1 gives a brief summary of each trench.

Trench 1

Measuring 49m in length on a southwest-northeast orientation, T.1 had topsoil averaging 0.25m deep and subsoil 0.2m deep. No archaeology was present, although a field drain and deactivated service cable were identified.

Trench 2

Due to the presence of a public footpath and fence line which bisected one of the original trench positions, T.2 was offset from T.1. Measuring 11.5m in length on a southeast-northwest orientation, the topsoil averaged 0.32m deep and subsoil 0.14m deep. No archaeology was present.

Trench 3

T.3 measured 20.7m in length and was orientated southeast-northwest. It was located within an area formerly occupied by greenhouses and there was no surviving top or subsoil. Overburden consisted of upto 0.4m of made ground, hardcore and rubble which overlay a series of parallel plastic pipes approximately 1.2m apart, two concrete foundations and a probable concrete sewer pipe. The underlying geology was heavily truncated and no archaeology was identified.

Trench 4

T.4 was originally planned to be orientated southeast-northwest, however due to the presence of a temporary access road it was realigned northeast-southwest. It was 15.5m in length and no topsoil or subsoil survived. Overburden consisted of 0.4m of

made ground, hardcore and rubble which overlay a pea-gravel filled pipe channel which extended down most of the trench in addition to three concrete foundations. The underlying geology was less truncated than in T.3, yet still no archaeology was identified.

Trench 5

T.5 was located within the back-garden of The White House and was originally planned to be orientated southwest-northeast, however due to the presence of several large trees it was realigned southeast-northwest. It measured 10m in length with a topsoil depth of 0.39m deep and subsoil 0.25m deep. A field drain was present within the trench but no archaeology was identified.

Trench 6

T.6 was 28.5m in length and orientated southwest-northeast. Replacing the topsoil was a layer of imported organic material including woodchips 0.25m deep which overlay disturbed subsoil averaging 0.21m deep. No archaeology was present, although a substantial deactivated electric cable was present in much of the trench, together with a further service cable and a modern foundation.

Trench 7

T.7 was 30m in length and orientated southeast-northwest. Replacing the topsoil was a thin layer of rubble and other demolition debris upto 0.15m deep which overlay a disturbed subsoil up to 0.30m deep. No archaeology was identified although an electric cable and field drain were present.

Trench No.	Orientation	Length (m)	Topsoil Avr (m)	Subsoil Avr (m)	Other Deposits (m)	Notes
1	SW-NE	49	0.25	0.2	-	No archaeology
2	SE-NW	11.5	0.32	0.14	-	No archaeology
3	SW-NE	20.7	-	-	0.4	Heavily truncated by former greenhouses
4	SW-NE	15.5	-	-	0.4	Truncated. No archaeology
5	SE-NW	10	0.39	0.25	-	No archaeology
6	SW-NE	28.5	-	0.21	0.25	Two electric cables. No archaeology
7	SE-NW	30	-	0.3	0.15	No archaeology

Table 1: Trench Summary

Discussion

The results of this phase of evaluation indicates that the potential for archaeology surviving within the footprint of the former greenhouses, and other structures within the development area, is very low due to the level of truncation. The lack of archaeology within the less truncated trenches also suggests this area, despite being

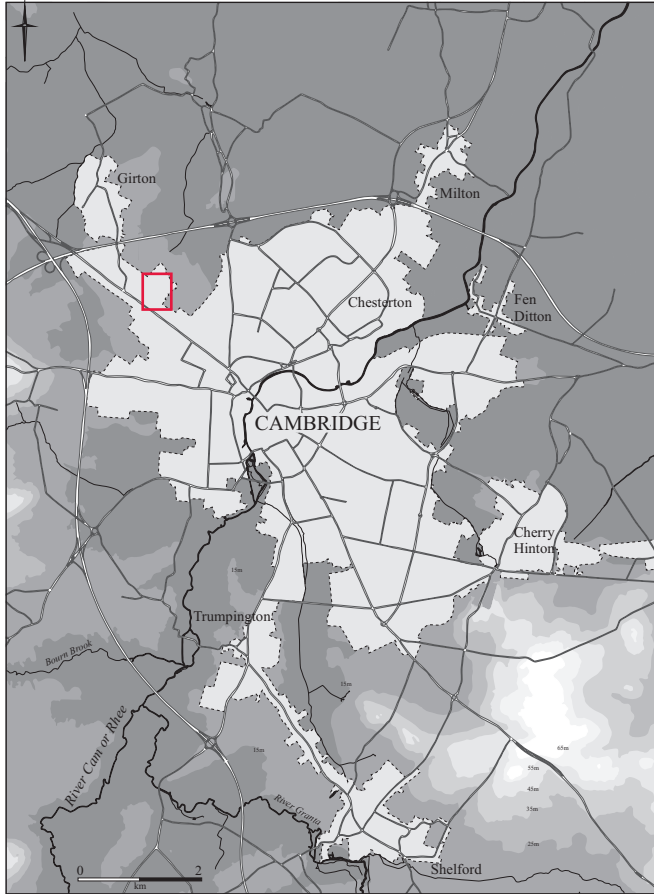
adjacent to a Roman road and near to several prehistoric and Roman settlements, was not densely utilised. It also suggests that the medieval pits identified in the previous phase of work (Manson 2008) were possibly associated with roadside activity and did not extend to this part of the development area.

Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by CgMs on behalf of David Wilson Homes and the site was monitored by Dan McConnell (HET). Emma Beadsmore was the project manager and thanks go to Katie Anderson for assisting the author on site and Bryan Crossan for surveying the trenches.

References

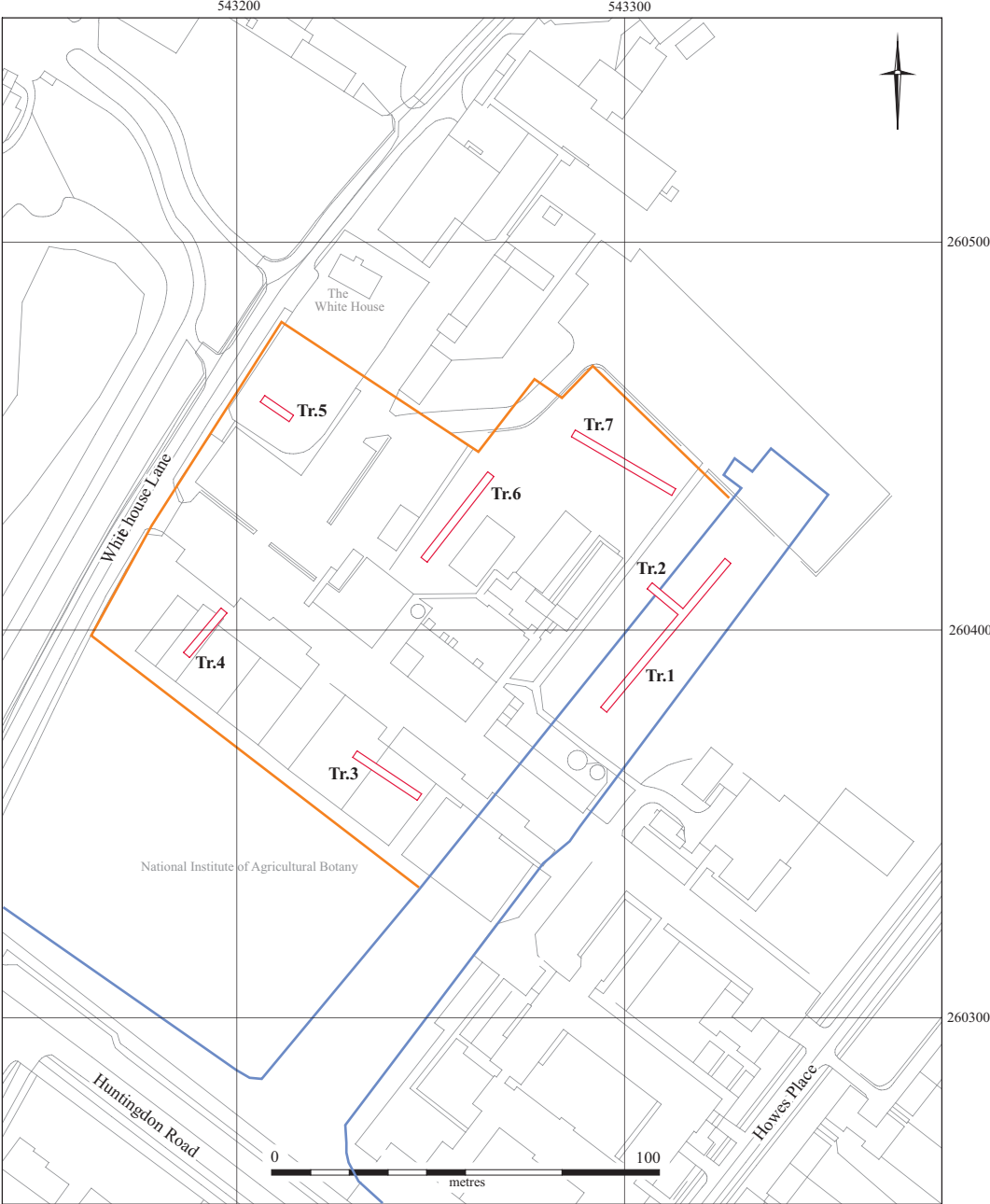
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- Evaluation trench
- Phase 1B
- Spine Road

Figure 1. Site location and trench plan



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Project details

Project name	Land at NIAB HQ Site, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge: Spine Road and Phase 1B: An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook an archaeological evaluation on land at the NIAB HQ Site between the 1st and 2nd of November 2010. No archaeological activity was identified within any of the seven trenches, although two of them had been heavily truncated by greenhouses which formerly occupied part of the site.
Project dates	Start: 01-11-2010 End: 02-11-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Land at NIAB HQ Site, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge: Spine Road and Phase 1B An Archaeological Evaluation
Postcode	CB3 0LF
Study area	1.00 Hectares

Site coordinates TL 4324 6041 52.2228215891 0.09725645426460 52 13 22 N 000 05 50 E Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 21.70m Max: 21.70m

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 Matthew Collins
 Type of sponsor/ funding body Developer
 Name of sponsor/ funding body CgMs on behalf of David Wilson Homes

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit
 Digital Archive ID NHR 10
 Digital Contents 'none'
 Digital Media available 'GIS','Survey'
 Paper Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit
 Paper Archive ID NHR 10
 Paper Contents 'none'
 Paper Media available 'Correspondence','Diary','Drawing','Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey ','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

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