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**The Butts, Fowlmere**  
**Archaeological Evaluation**  
**Report No. MK013/15**

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**The Butts, Fowlmere**  
**Archaeological Evaluation**  
**Report No. MK013/15**

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## **1. SUMMARY**

*On the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015 CFA Archaeology Ltd carried out an archaeological evaluation on land south of The Butts Business Centres, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire on behalf of Ion Science. Previous excavations and evaluations within the parish had revealed evidence of Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, Norman and medieval settlement. The site itself was known to contain the foundations of WWII airfield buildings. The evaluation identified 3 structures and a ditch that appear to relate to the 1944 plan of the airfield buildings. No other archaeological features were revealed. In the western half of the site a large sterile feature was exposed; this is thought to be of geological origin.*

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 General**

- 2.1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) on the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015 prior to the development of land south of The Butts Business Centres, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 4187 4573). The work was commissioned by Synergy on behalf of Ion Science.
- 2.1.2 Ion Science has been granted planning permission (Ref: S/1249/13/FL) from South Cambridgeshire Council for a development on a site south of The Butts Business Centre, on the west side of the village of Fowlmere. The terms of the planning consent required a programme of archaeological works including a trial trenching evaluation.
- 2.1.3 The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) dated 23 April 2015 covering this programme of works produced by CFA in response to a Brief issued by CCHET on 30<sup>th</sup> March by Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCCHET).

### **2.2 Background**

- 2.2.1 The site is approximately 6,700 square metres centred on OS grid ref. TL 4187 4573, on an open area of ground with some remains of concrete bases for WWII RAF and USAF buildings. The geology is Upper Chalk. The CCHET Brief contains the detailed information from the Historic Environment Record and is summarised below.
- 2.2.2 The site lies on the western edge of the historic core of Fowlmere; St Mary's Church (MCB14838) and the site of the Manor House (04152) lie adjacent. There are 17 archaeological excavations/evaluations within the parish, and just outside the historic core in a 1km study area around the site. These reveal evidence of Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, Norman and medieval settlement. Cropmarks of Iron Age and Roman settlement lie in the fields away from the current village including some designated as a Scheduled Monument (ECG755). Stray finds broaden this picture of the growth of the village. There are over 34 Listed Buildings dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (not including the 12<sup>th</sup>-century medieval church which is mostly of 14<sup>th</sup>-century fabric). Two moats, Round Moat and Crows Parlour, lie within the village and both are designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments (DCB200 and DCB450) and are of early medieval date. Archaeological evidence of these and later periods may well survive within the site.
- 2.2.3 The WWII remains were identified by RPS Historic Environment Assessment in May 2013 as 'in December 1944, a post-and-wire 'Fuel Compound' (185), a 'Recreation Hut' (186), an 'Airmen's Showers & Ablutions' block (187) and a large 'Institute' (192).' They concluded that these were built to a pattern

with the possible exception of the Recreation Hut.’ RAF 19 Squadron (Spitfires) and USAF 399<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group (P-51 Mustangs) were based at Fowlmere and both had distinguished service.

## **2.3 Objectives**

2.3.1 In accordance with the brief the objectives of the project were to determine the ‘location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development’.

2.3.2 The Research Objectives were to:

- To investigate the evidence for and origins of the different phases of land use and enclosure within the area, including any evidence for pre-Roman, Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity;
- To place the results of the investigation within the wider landscape context and contribute to an understanding of the pattern of land use;
- Using the spectrum of environmental techniques appropriate for this aspect of investigation, an attempt will be made to model the landscape and its transformation brought about by the settlement’s inhabitants and due to natural events.

## **3. WORKING METHODS**

### **3.1 General**

3.1.1 CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists’ Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance.

### **2.2 Evaluation**

2.2.1 Six trenches were excavated (Fig. 1). It was discovered on arrival at site that that the trees which had restricted the evaluation area had been had been cut down. This meant that the area of the proposed hand-excavated trench could be evaluated by machine. The locations of the trenches also differed slightly from the WSI to avoid two live water pipelines and a ground investigation tube.

2.2.2 Natural chalk bedrock was revealed in all trenches with the overlying topsoil and subsoil deposits removed in spits by a machine equipped with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket. All mechanical excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision.

2.2.3 All hand excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

- 2.2.3 The stratification of all excavated areas was recorded whether or not significant archaeological deposits were identified and sample sections drawn at 1:20. Trench positions were surveyed using industry standard GPS surveying equipment.
- 2.2.4 A volume of 1m<sup>3</sup> of topsoil and subsoil were sieved from each end of each trench in order to determine the date and density of artefacts within the topsoil; no finds were recovered.

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

#### **3.1 General**

- 3.1.1 Only trenches where features were identified are described below and a summary of all of the trenches excavated is contained in Appendix 3. Numbers in bold refer to contexts, a full list of which is contained in Appendix 2. Other site records are included as Appendices 1, 4 and 5.

#### **3.2 Trench 1 (Fig. 2)**

- 3.2.1 In the centre of this trench was a 0.7m wide linear feature with vertical sides and a flat base (**0105**) filled with a grey-brown silty sand and chalk fragments, containing no datable material. The trench section revealed that this feature was cut from the level of the topsoil. At the south-west end of the trench a compact layer of made ground containing brick rubble, gravel and glass waste (**0104**) was revealed between the topsoil and subsoil. The trench was abandoned after excavating through a live water main at the south-west end.

#### **3.3 Trench 2 (Fig. 2)**

- 3.3.1 This trench cut through three WWII structures crossing the trench diagonally on an east-west alignment and a ditch. At the north-east end was the corner of a cracked concrete platform (**0204**) just below the ground surface. Excavation through the platform revealed it to be 0.35m thick and set on the subsoil. South-west of this platform was a line of concrete blocks 0.4m wide (**0205**) edging a compact 0.4m thick deposit of crushed cinders, concrete and brick fragments (**0206**). The blocks forming (**0205**) had been created by filling hessian sacks with concrete. The hessian had rotted away leaving the textile impression and shape of the bag. Ink painted onto the original sack had also transferred. An unidentified stamp and the letters 'MOD' could be made out on some of the blocks (Fig.7). The line of concrete blocks appears to have been an edging for (**0206**) and may have been the very bottom of the foundations for a poorly constructed wall. Hard standing (**0206**) may represent a floor deposit on one side of this wall. No edging was revealed on the south-west side of (**0206**) suggesting the deposit on this side had been truncated. To the south-west of (**0206**) was a 4m wide ditch (**0207**) with two fills, a thin clay layer (**0208**), a deposit laid down by water while the ditch was open, and the main infill of the ditch (**0209**), a brown sandy silt. Neither layers contained datable material but the feature lined up with an existing open ditch running



north-south to the south of the trench (Fig. 8). At the far south-west end of the trench was a 0.15m thick concrete platform (**0210**) just below the ground surface set on top of the subsoil on the same alignment as (**0204**).

### **3.4 Trench 3 (Fig. 2)**

3.4.1 This trench revealed a single feature measuring 28m across which had gently sloping sides, steepening towards the centre, and a dished base. The trench was stepped for H&S reasons in order to excavate by machine deeply enough to gauge the feature's full depth - which was 1.8m. The feature was filled with three deposits (**0304**, **0305** and **0306**). Primary deposit (**0304**) was a firm 0.15-0.20m thick layer of stony grey clay containing no datable material that thickened towards the centre of the feature. Above the clay in the centre of the feature was a black organic layer (**0305**) with a maximum thickness of 0.7m containing rotted fibrous plant/wood material and many small snail shells. No finds were revealed in this layer though it was sampled for palaeobotanical analysis. The upper fill (**0306**) was a moderate to loose brown sandy silt which darkened towards the base. No datable material was found in this layer and there were no tip lines visible. The boundary between this deposit and the trench subsoil (**0302**) was indistinct. The same sequence of deposits was revealed in Trench 4 showing that the feature extended to the north.

### **3.5 Trench 4 (Fig. 2)**

3.5.1 This trench revealed a large feature with a similar profile to the feature in Trench 3 and an identical set of deposits: A primary layer of stony clay (**0404**), a black organic fill above (**0405**) and an upper deposit of brown sandy silt (**0406**). The feature sloped gently up to the north-west ending 8m from north-west end of the trench. The base of the feature was not bottomed but a small sondage was excavated by machine to obtain a sample of the organic material (**0405**). As the deepest part of the feature lay next to the deepest part of the feature in Trench 3 and its deposits were identical it can be safely assumed that both trenches revealed parts of one single large feature.

3.5.2 At the north-west end of the trench was a small narrow linear feature (**0407**) measuring 0.25m wide which terminated half was across the trench. A hand-dug sondage revealed that it had a depth of over 1m, vertical sides and a flat base. No finds were discovered the backfill (**0408**), a mixed deposit of topsoil and chalk fragments.

## 4. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL WATERLOGGED SAMPLES June 2015

*by Mhairi Hastie*

### 4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Two bulk soil samples (each 20 litres in volume) were retained for palaeoenvironmental analysis during the archaeological evaluation undertaken by CFA at The Butts Business Centre, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire. Samples were thought to potentially contain uncharred plant remains preserved by waterlogging.

4.1.2 A one litre sub-sample, from each sample, was washed through a 250 µm and 0.5 mm mesh sieves, and then scanned under a binocular microscope (x10-x100 magnification) to assess the presence/absence of uncharred waterlogged plant/insect remains and other archaeobotanical material.

The results are summarised below in **Table 1**.

### 4.2 Results

4.2.1 The samples principally contained fragments of snail shell, along with occasional small fragments of wood charcoal/insect wing cases and occasional root debris. Apart from the snail shell which was well preserved, the other material was much abraded and fragmentary. There was no evidence to indicate that the samples contained any archaeologically significant waterlogged plant/insect remains.

Sample number	Context number	Trench number	Approx. sub-sample vol (litres)	Snail shell	Wood charcoal	Insect remains	Additional comments
1	0405	4	1	++	+ (BLOI)	+	Small amounts of modern root debris
2	0305	3	1	++++	+ (BLOI)		Small amount of modern root debris

**Table 1. Composition of samples (BLOI – below level of identification)**

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 WWII features

- 5.1.1 The remains in Trench 1 and 2 appear to correspond to the buildings shown on the 1944 RAF plan (Fig. 3). Two buildings orientated north-south intersect the north-east end and the south-west ends of Trench 2. These probably relate to the concrete platforms (0204) and (0210) found during the evaluation and it is likely that the platforms were concrete bases for the buildings. The thinner concrete platform (0210) matches up with the northern end of building 186, the recreation hut. The thicker platform with the corner (0204) appears to roughly align with the northern end of building 187, the airman's showers and ablutions block. Layers (0205) and (0206) also appear to relate to this building and may have been an internal wall foundation and floor hard standing inside the block.
- 5.1.2 The space in between the two buildings on the RAF plan roughly lines up with ditch (0207) in Trench 2. Given that this feature is absent from any of the early Ordnance Survey maps it seems likely that this feature relates to the WWII buildings and provided drainage.
- 5.1.3 Close to the south-west end of Trench 1 is a small building on the RAF plan. This building lies close to where rubble layer (0104) was found and it seems likely that this layer is either demolition debris from this structure or hard standing for its foundations.
- 5.1.4 Linear feature (0105) does not correspond to any buildings on the RAF plan, only the edging of a road into the RAF site. The shape of this feature along with its square profile and flat base suggest that it was probably a trench for a service that has been removed. Given the extensive number of WWII remains in the area, it is possible that this was once the trench of a service supplying one of the buildings.
- 5.1.5 No remains were revealed in Trench 4 of building 185, the fuel compound. As a post and wire compound it would not leave any substantial archaeological remains.

### 5.2 Geological feature

5.2.1 The large feature encountered in Trench 3 is approximately the same size and filled with the same deposits as the large feature in Trench 4. This suggests that there is just one feature spanning both trenches measuring 28m north-east to southwest (Trench 3) and more than 23m north-west to south-east (Trench 4). Several lines of evidence point to this being a non-archaeological feature.

- Firstly there was a no distinct cut, rather a blurred horizon between the lowest fill and the underlying chalk.
- Secondly, there was an absence of any finds within its three fills and the palaeoenvironmental analysis of the black silt (0305/0405) did not reveal any anthropogenic remains.

- Thirdly, the main fill of the feature (**0306/0406**) is a fine homogenous silty sand which appears to have been accumulated very slowly as there were no fragments of chalk to suggest disturbance of the natural geology by ploughing and hence a high energy deposition process.
- Fourthly, there appeared to be no distinct shape to the feature and the break of slope around the top was very shallow.

Taken together, these attributes suggest that the feature is likely to be a natural water worn channel that filled up with natural deposits. The thin primary clay layer was probably deposited as ground up chalk sludge (perhaps created through freeze thaw action) which slowly infilled the feature with the moisture in it being absorbed by the chalk. Over time this would have created a clay layer impermeable to water which led to the feature becoming seasonally waterlogged and eventually, the build of a black silt layer (**0305/0304**) as vegetation grew in and around the water. As mentioned above the homogenous silty sand layer above this appears to have been deposited slowly over a long time. The date of this feature is uncertain.

Natural features have been encountered elsewhere around Fowlmere. In 2009 the evaluation at Piper's Close (ECB3211) revealed several 'large geological features' containing no archaeological material. In 1993 the evaluation from the High Street to Round Moat (ECB851) noted that a fish pond in the area was probably a re-used natural feature.

### **5.3 Field Drain**

- 5.3.1 The narrow linear feature in Trench 4 (**0407**) despite revealing no ceramic pipe in its base, is consistent in appearance with the cut of a machine dug field drain. The lack of a ceramic pipe in this instance may be due to the trench only cutting the very end of this feature.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The evaluation located the slight remains of WWII structures of the USAAF base and a large, possibly, geological feature.
- 6.2 The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the County Archaeology Store.
- 6.3 Following the completion of this project, an online entry into OASIS will be submitted.

## **8. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*British Geological Survey*

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*Ordnance Survey 6 Inch map of Cambridgeshire LVIII.NE (1886)*

*Ordnance Survey 6 Inch map of Cambridgeshire LVIII.NE (1904)*

*Ordnance Survey 6 Inch map of Cambridgeshire LVIII.NE (1950)*

*The Butts, Fowlmere: Archaeological Evaluation Written Scheme of Investigation. 2015. CFA Archaeology.*

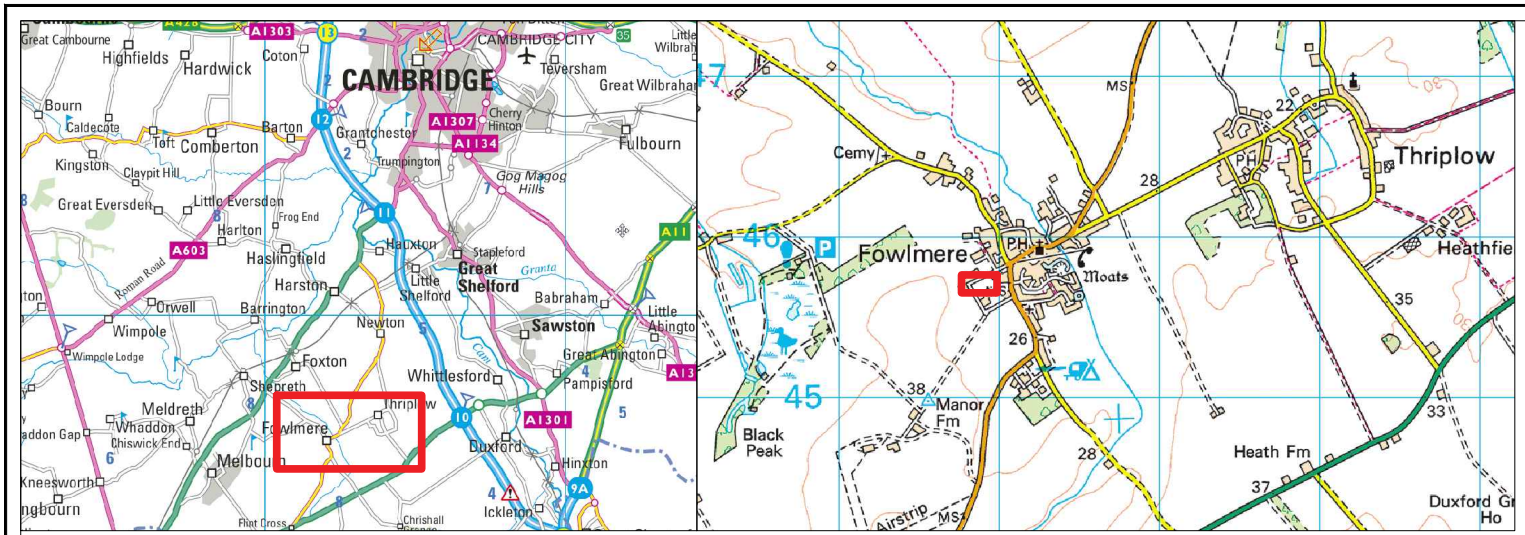
## APPENDIX 1: Context Register

Context	Fill of	Description	Trench
0101	-	Topsoil	1
0102	-	Subsoil, light grey-brown silty sand, firm, very occ small stones	1
0103	-	Natural bedrock, Zig Zag Chalk Formation. No tree root activity present	1
0104	-	Dark grey compact layer containing clay, brick rubble, gravel, concrete fragments and glass waste. Made ground - levelling for WWII Buildings	1
0105	-	Linear feature cut from level of the topsoil, 0.65-0.70m wide, 0.22m deep, vertical sides, flat base. Possible robbed out service from WWII buildings	1
0106	0105	Fill of [0105]. Light grey-brown firm silty sand with 40% chalk fragments and flint	1
0201	-	Topsoil	2
0202	-	Subsoil, light grey-brown silty sand, firm, very occ small stones	2
0203	-	Natural bedrock, Zig Zag Chalk Formation. Tree root activity present	2
0204	-	Concrete platform, 0.3m thick, constructed / set on subsoil at NE end of Trench 2. Hard standing around WWII buildings	2
0205	-	Line of concrete blocks edging NE side of layer (0206), 0.4m wide. Blocks created by filling hessian or jute sacks with concrete. Edge of hard standing or possible foundations of demolished WWII building	2
0206	-	A compact mixed layer of cinders, crushed brick and concrete abutting layer (0205), 0.3-0.25m thick. Hard standing for WWII building	2
0207	-	Cut of linear ditch, 4m wide, 0.55m deep, sides 20-30 degrees, base dished, orientation N-S. Drainage ditch	2
0208	0207	Primary fill of [0207], grey-brown soft silty clay , 0.15m thick	2
0209	0207	Secondary fill of [0207], mid-brown silty sand, moderate to loose compaction, 0.4m thick	2
0210	-	Concrete platform, 0.15m thick, constructed / set on subsoil at SW end of Trench 2. Hard standing around WWII buildings	2
0301	-	Topsoil	3
0302	-	Subsoil, light grey-brown silty sand, firm, very occ small stones	3
0303	-	Natural bedrock, Zig Zag Chalk Formation. No tree root activity present	3
0304	-	Primary layer of large geological feature in Trench 3, a grey clay with frequent fragments of chalk 0.001-0.01m diameter, firm, 0.02-0.15m thick. Same as (0404).	3
0305	-	Black organic silt containing partially rotted fibrous vegetation and many small snail shells, 0.7m thick. Above (0304). Same as (0405)	3
0306	-	A mid brown silty sand, moderate to loose compaction with occ small pieces of flint, 1.5m thick. Layer darkens towards base. Above (0305). Upper fill of geological feature in Trench 3. Same as (0406). Boundary between layer and rest of trench subsoil indistinct.	3
0401	-	Topsoil	4

Context	Fill of	Description	Trench
0402	-	Subsoil, light grey-brown silty sand, firm, very occ small stones	4
0403	-	Natural bedrock, Zig Zag Chalk Formation. No tree root activity present	4
0404	-	Primary layer of geological feature in Trench 4, a grey clay with frequent fragments of chalk 0.001-0.01m diameter, firm, 0.05-0.12m thick. Same as (0304).	4
0405	-	Black organic silt containing partially rotted fibrous vegetation and many small snail shells, 0.37m thick. Above (0404). Same as (0305)	4
0406	-	A mid brown silty sand, moderate to loose compaction with occ small pieces of flint, 1.2m+ thick, not bottomed. Layer darkens towards base. Above (0405). Upper fill of geological feature in Trench 4. Same as (0306). Boundary between layer and rest of trench subsoil indistinct.	4
0407	-	A narrow linear feature, 0.25m wide and 1m deep cut from topsoil level. Feature terminates half way across trench. Field drain cut	4
0408	0407	Fill of [0407], mixed topsoil and 50% chalk fragments	4
0501	-	Topsoil	5
0502	-	Subsoil, light grey-brown silty sand, firm, very occ small stones	5
0503	-	Natural bedrock, Zig Zag Chalk Formation. Tree root activity present	5
0601	-	Topsoil	6
0602	-	Subsoil, light grey-brown silty sand, firm, very occ small stones	6
0603	-	Natural bedrock, Zig Zag Chalk Formation. Tree root activity present	6

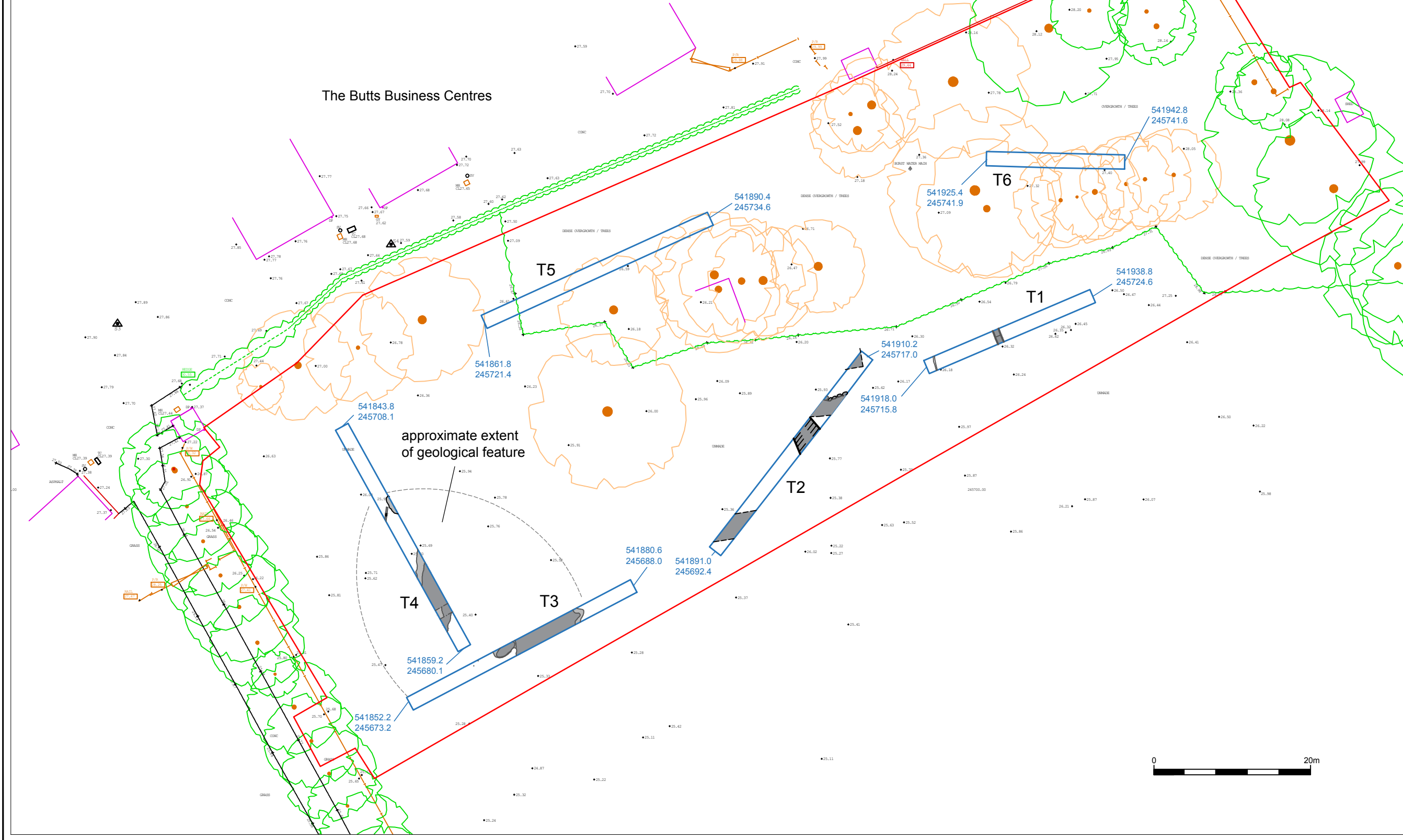
## APPENDIX 2: Trench Summary

Trench No.	Size (m)	Topsoil Depth (m)	Subsoil Depth (m)	Trench Depth (m)	Features
1	22 x 1.8	0.015-0.25	0.2-0.33	0.75-0.85	Linear [0205], made ground (0204)
2	31 x 1.8	0.10-0.10	0.1	0.38-0.6	Concrete bases (0204), (0210), building layers (0205), (0206), ditch [0207]
3	32 x 1.8	0.2	0.2	0.88-2.3	Geological feature containing layers (0304), (0305), 0306)
4	32 x 1.8	0.22-0.23	0.22-0.23	0.67-1.5	Geological feature containing layers (0404), (0405), 0406)
5	31.5 x 1.8	0.2-0.25	0.2-0.25	0.7-0.8	None
6	17.5 x 1.8	0.15-0.22	0.15-0.22	0.5-0.7	None



Key:

- Development Area
- Archaeological Evaluation Trenches
- Features Found During Evaluation
- Trees Removed Prior to Evaluation



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Fig. No: **1** Report No: **MK013/15**

Title:  
**Site and trench location plan**

Project:  
**The Butts, Fowlmere  
 Archaeological Evaluation**

Client:  
**Ion Science**

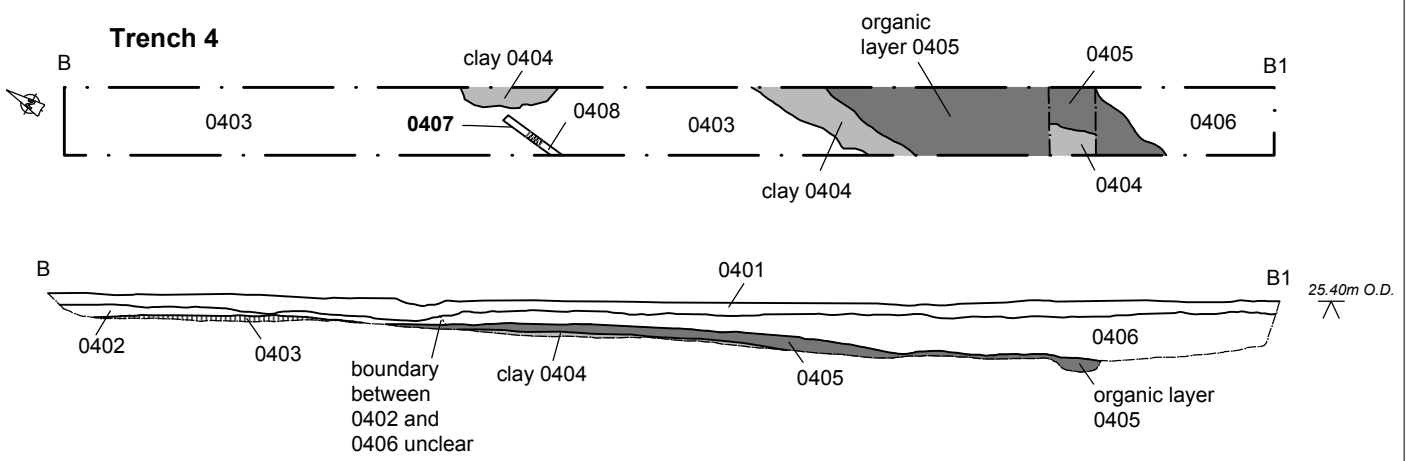
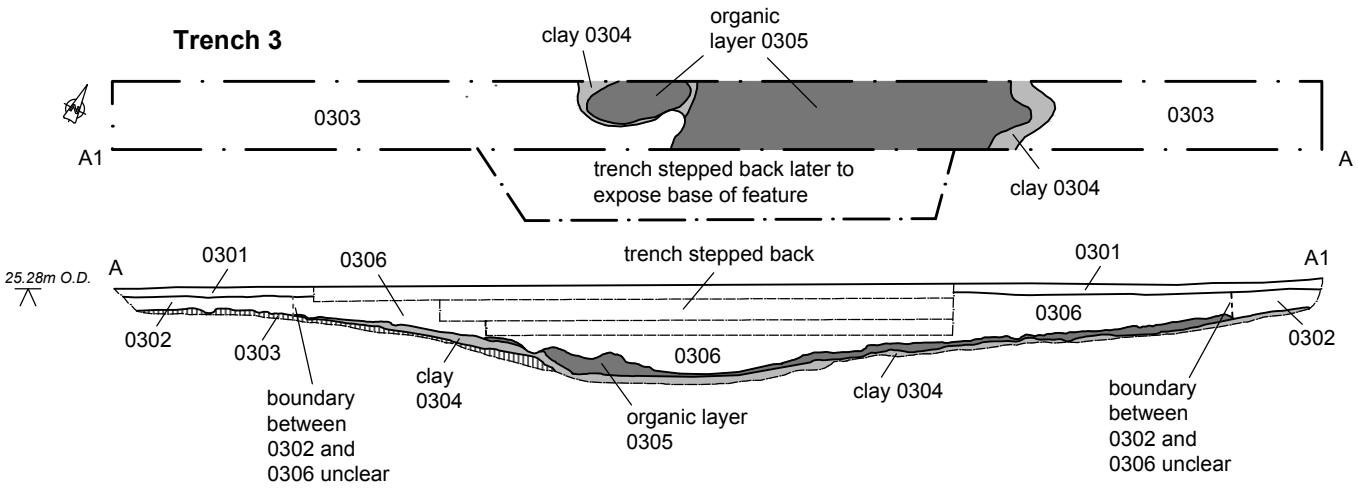
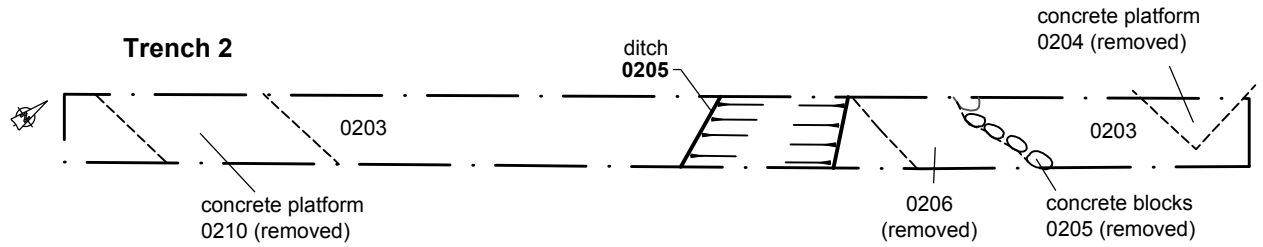
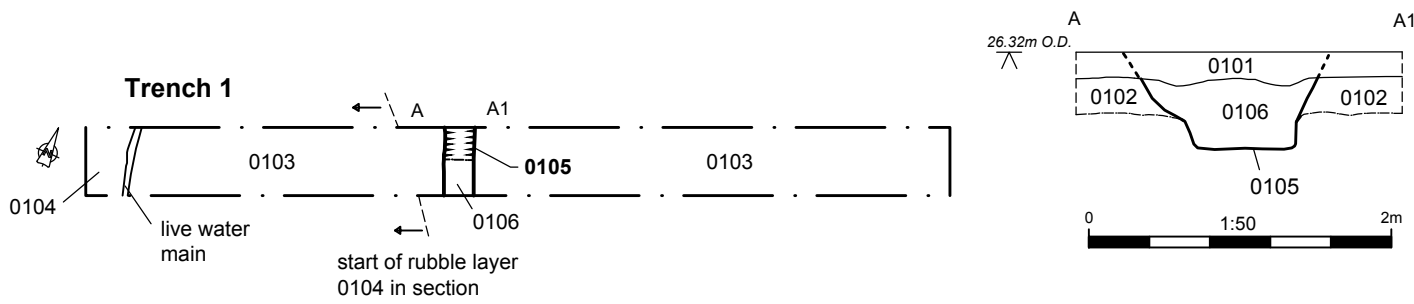
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- Organic Layers 0305 / 0405 in geological feature
- Clay Layers 0304 / 0404 in geological feature
- Chalk bedrock 0303 / 0404 (sections only)



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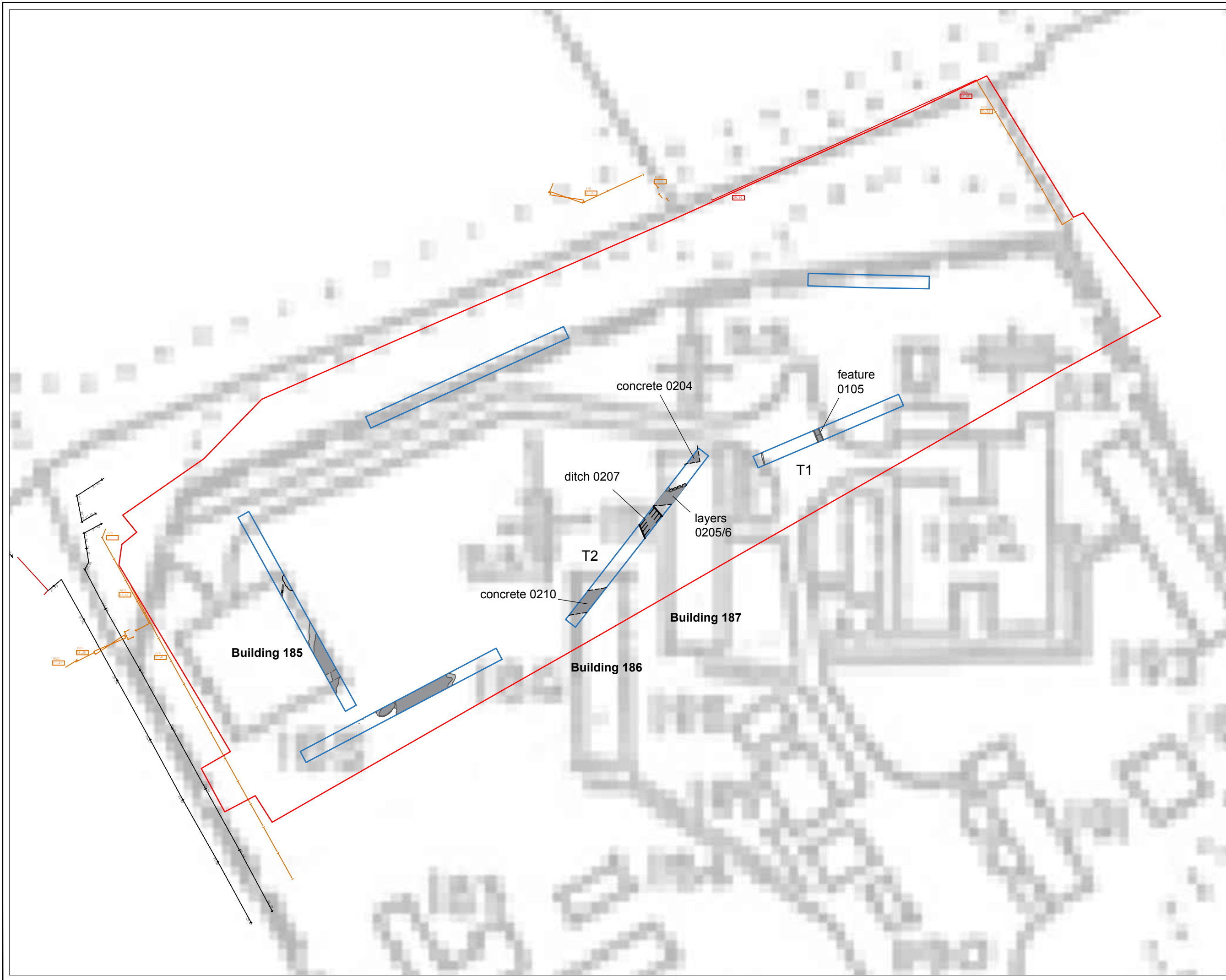
Title:  
**Plans of trenches 1 - 4, sections of geological feature and feature 0105**

Project:  
**The Butts, Fowlmere  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Fig No: **2** Report: **MK013/15** Drawn by: **TB** CKD: **MR** Date: **08/07/14**

Client:  
**Ion Science**

Scale:  
**Section of 0105, 1:50. Others, 1:200**



**Key:**

- Development Area
- Archaeological Evaluation Trenches
- Features Found During Evaluation



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Fig. No: **3** Report No: **MK013/15**

Title:  
**Evaluation trenches on the 1944 RAF plan (from RPS Historic Environment Assessment)**

Project:  
**The Butts, Fowlmere Archaeological Evaluation**

Client:  
**Ion Science**

Scale at A3:  
**1:500**

Drawn by:	Checked:	Date:
TB	MR	08/07/2015

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*Fig. 4 - General shot of the site from the north-west showing cut down trees.*



*Fig. 5 - Trench 1 after excavation showing water pipe at south-west end.*



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**Selected Photos**

Fig. **4 - 5**

Report:  
**MK013/15**

Drawn: **TB**

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Project:  
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*Fig. 6 - Photo excavating through deposits 0305 and 0306, Trench 2, looking south-west.*



*Fig. 7 - Photo showing 'MOD' marking on concrete blocks, deposit 0305.*



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	Client: <b>Ion Science</b>				
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*Fig. 8 - Photo showing ditch 0307 in Trench 2 lining up with the ditch to the south, looking south.*



*Fig. 9 - Shot showing clay layer 0304, the primary layer of the geological feature in Trench 3.*



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*Fig. 10 - Photo showing the north-west-facing section of the geological feature in Trench 3 (not fully bottomed), looking south-west. Layers 0304, 0305 and 0306 are visible in shot.*



*Fig. 11 - Photo showing the geological feature in Trench 3 fully bottomed, looking south-west.*



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*Fig. 12 - Photo showing geological feature in Trench 4, looking north-west.*



*Fig. 13 - Photo of Trench 5 after excavation, looking south-west.*



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*Fig. 14 - Photo of Trench 6 after excavation, looking west.*



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