

RAF Upwood Phase 1

Upwood, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Report

April 2025

**Client: Vistry South East
Midlands**

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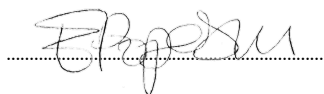
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RAF Upwood Phase 1, Upwood, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Report

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SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring was carried out at the former site of RAF Upwood in advance of a housing development. An initial visit on the 20th of September 2024 was followed by two further visits between the 14th-30th of October 2024 and the 27th-31st of January 2025. Five separate areas were monitored but no archaeological remains were uncovered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Vistry South East Midlands for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Lewis Busby who monitored the work on behalf of Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Nicholas Gilmour. The fieldwork was directed by David Browne who was supported by Anne-Laure Bollen and James Fairbairn. Digitising was carried out by Donald Horne.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project details

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Vistry South East Midlands to undertake archaeological monitoring and recording prior to the first phase of a housing development at RAF Upwood, Cambridgeshire (TL 27599 83452; Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of planning permission (Planning Ref. 1201274OUT). A brief was set by Lewis Busby of Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team detailing the local authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA (Gilmour 2024) outlining how OA implemented the specified requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was carried out in accordance with *The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct (2022)*, *Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording (2023)* and *Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording (2023)*.

1.2 Location, topography and geology (Fig. 1)

- 1.2.1 The site lies to the north of Upwood Road and Ramsey Road on a relatively flat area at c.26m OD; the site was formerly part of RAF Upwood. The site's use as an RAF base meant that large parts of the site had been truncated by both building foundations and services.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is mapped as Oxford Clay Formation overlain by superficial deposits of the Oadby Member Diamicton (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> accessed 10/02/25).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background (Fig. 2)

Prehistoric

- 1.3.1 A Neolithic flint scatter (CHER 02871) was recorded close to the development area. Further evidence for Neolithic activity was identified approximately 800m to the east at Owls End Road (CHER 10115), comprising natural hollows and tree throws.

Late Iron Age to Roman

- 1.3.2 Iron Age settlement was identified at Owls End Road (CHER 10155) and activity continued into the Early Roman period, although the settlement shifted at the time of the Conquest and much of the site was given up to an area of field system.
- 1.3.3 Roman activity has previously been identified at the site during a trial trench evaluation (ECB 3151; Jones 2009). A number of gullies interpreted as an agricultural field system were identified. Small quantities of Roman pottery were recovered from these features.
- 1.3.4 A number of Roman findspots have been identified in the area. Two coins (one of a Flavian date) and part of a quern were recorded (CHER 02872,

02886). A coin of Tiberius was also recovered approximately 100m east of the site (CHER 08669). To the south of Ramsey Road, a cropmark of a rectilinear enclosure (MCB 18537) is possibly of Roman date.

Saxon and early medieval

- 1.3.5 The excavations at Owls End Road uncovered a Saxo-Norman and medieval phase of activity comprising enclosures, boundary ditches, yard surfaces, structural remains, a terraced platform and a malt/corn drying oven (CHER 10115). This site forms part of a much larger landscape which includes Ramsey Abbey and an established Saxo-Norman settlement at Bury, both dating to the 10th century.
- 1.3.6 The burgh of Wistow, known from historic documents, is thought to have been located at Bury. An area of broken ground approximately 900m east of the development area has been suggested as its most likely location. The medieval settlement of Hepmangrove, known from documentary evidence, is thought to be in the area (HER 02885). The location is unknown, but it is believed to have originally been connected to Ramsey Parish with the brook running through Bury forming the boundary.

Medieval and post-medieval

- 1.3.7 Earthworks have been interpreted as a deserted medieval settlement approximately 900m to the east of the site (CHER 10114). Evidence comprises a series of house platforms terraced into the hillside adjacent to the medieval church. At the scarp base, a trackway leads into adjacent ridge and furrow fields.
- 1.3.8 Other extensive earthworks surviving as a series of medieval fields have been interpreted as a furlong articulated by a scarp base track leading to a nearby deserted settlement (CHER 10113).
- 1.3.9 A small number of post-medieval features were uncovered at Owls End Road (CHER 10115). These include field ditches, ponds and a small number of pits which were dated to the 16th/17th century.

Modern

- 1.3.10 RAF Upwood was first used during World War One as a night landing ground; the site was then cleared at the end of the war but later reopened in 1934 and used during World War Two when it housed two flying squadrons. The base largely went out of use in the 1980s.

Previous archaeological work

- 1.3.11 The current development site forms part of a wider, previously evaluated area (Jones 2009); three of the excavated trenches contained archaeological features or finds. A number of gullies were identified across the area and interpreted as forming part of a Roman field system; small quantities of Roman pottery were recovered from these features. However, no archaeological features were identified within the current development site.
- 1.3.12 The previous evaluation identified that not all parts of the site had undergone severe truncation from the construction of the former RAF base.

Where roads ran through areas of less impact there might be higher potential for archaeological remains.

2 PROJECT AIMS

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The overall aim of the investigation was to preserve by record any archaeological evidence contained within the footprint of the development area, prior to or during development, and investigate the origins, date, development, phasing, spatial organisation, character, function, status, and significance of the remains revealed, and place these in their local, regional and national archaeological context.

2.1.2 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- iii. Following the completion of the fieldwork, these research aims were reviewed, revised and redefined or expanded as necessary, ensuring that they contribute to the goals of the Regional Research Frameworks relevant to this area.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The brief stipulated that the stripping of the internal road system and other hard surfaced areas would need to be monitored by an archaeologist. These areas comprised the tennis court, the southern road, the central road, and the eastern and western drains (Fig. 1).

2.2.2 The WSI methodology stated that the roads be stripped in phases, comprising an initial strip through the concrete to the made ground, followed by a drainage cut. Upon consultation with CHET it was decided that the monitoring of the drainage work would provide an adequate assessment of the presence of surviving remains.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the archaeological monitoring and recording are presented below and include a stratigraphic description of the monitored areas, comprising the tennis court, the southern road, the central road, and the eastern and western drains (Fig. 1). The full details of all monitoring and recording areas with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the areas was fairly uniform. The natural geology of Oxford Clay – truncated during the airfield development – was overlain by made ground, which in turn was overlain by hardstanding.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the archaeological monitoring and recording were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features were not present but would have been easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features and deposits were not present due to intensive truncation during the construction of the airfield.

3.4 Tennis court

3.4.1 A 0.1ha area beneath the old tennis court was stripped and monitored, producing no remains. The area comprised hard standing and approximately 0.3m of made ground above natural clay. A c.30m² patch of blue-green clay was revealed, probably caused by contamination from hydrocarbons (Plate 1).

3.5 Eastern drain

3.5.1 Approximately 220m of drainage work was monitored in the eastern half of the excavation area underneath the main access road. This identified no archaeological remains as the area was severely truncated. The natural clay was overlain by approximately 0.2m of modern made ground (Plate 2). During the removal of the made ground an abraded Euro and an RAF button dating to the first half of the 20th century were recovered (see Section 3.9 below).

3.6 Western drain

3.6.1 Approximately 140m of drainage work was monitored in the north-western corner of the site underneath the road. This identified no archaeological remains as the area was truncated. The natural clay was overlain by approximately 0.2m of modern made ground and hard standing.

3.7 Central road

3.7.1 This area of road was stripped to the natural clay, which was encountered below c.0.3m of modern made ground. No archaeological remains were found.

3.8 Southern road

3.8.1 A 0.37ha area beneath the southern road was stripped to the natural clay, which was encountered below c.0.3m of modern made ground (Plate 3). No archaeological remains were found.

3.9 Finds summary

3.9.1 During the stripping of the made ground in the area of the eastern drain, a coin and a button were retrieved. The coin was found to be an abraded 50 cent Euro. The button was made of brass and displayed the RAF emblem of an eagle and a crown. The button was abraded and misshapen, but the crown could be identified as the King's Crown (Tudor Crown) indicating it was made in the era of George VI (1902-1952). It most probably dates from World War Two.

3.9.2 The finds have been fully recorded and due to their unstratified provenance are recommended for discard.

3.10 Archive summary

The paperwork archive will be deposited with Cambridgeshire Archives. The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service and the approved report will be uploaded to OASIS.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The results are reliable for the limited area observed. Modern truncation was obvious and easily dated.

4.2 Archaeological monitoring and recording objectives and results

4.2.1 No remains were present in the areas investigated. Any archaeological remains that may once have existed had been truncated by the development of the airbase in the 20th century.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 Phase 1 of RAF Upwood was intensively developed in the 1940s and 1950s as part of the air base development, and the ground level was heavily truncated during the construction of the air base buildings and associated infrastructure. This part of the air base was used for accommodation and storage and featured several substantial buildings. The base was also re-developed during the Cold War and much of the truncation identified during the monitoring and recording is thought to date from this era. The recovery of the Euro (post 2000) and the World War Two era RAF button add little to refining the chronology.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Area 1						
Southern Road					Orientation	S-N-SE
Area devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground overlying clay geology					Length (m)	154
					Width (m)	9
					Avg. depth (m)	0.30
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.3	Made Ground	-	-
101	Layer	-		Natural	-	-

Area 2						
Tennis Court					Orientation	NNE-SSW
Area devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground overlying clay geology					Length (m)	33
					Width (m)	30
					Avg. depth (m)	0.30
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.3	Made Ground	Euro coin (post 2000), 20th century button	-
101	Layer	-		Natural	-	-

Area 3						
Eastern Drainage					Orientation	NW-SE-NE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground overlying clay geology					Length (m)	220
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.20
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.2	Made Ground	-	-
101	Layer	-		Natural	-	-

Area 4						
Central Road					Orientation	SW-NE
Area devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground overlying clay geology					Length (m)	65
					Width (m)	7.7
					Avg. depth (m)	0.30
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.3	Made Ground	-	-
101	Layer	-		Natural	-	-

Area 5						
Western Drainage					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground overlying clay geology					Length (m)	140
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	0.20
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.2	Made Ground	-	-
101	Layer	-		Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Sources for finds identification:

<https://www.kellybadges.co.uk/uniform-buttons-older-types-of-military-uniform-buttons/4453-royal-air-force-23mm-with-kings-crown-brass-military-uniform-button.html>

<https://www.ecb.europa.eu/euro/coins/common/html/index.en.html>

APPENDIX C OASIS REPORT FORM

Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-531829		
Project Name	Phase 1 RAF Upwood		
Start of Fieldwork	14/10/2024	End of Fieldwork	31/1/2025
Previous Work	Yes	Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ECB7372	Planning App. No.	1201274OUT
HER Number	ECB7372	Related Numbers	UPRUPR24

Techniques used (tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography – interpretation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grab-sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new | <input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-core | <input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording of Fabric/Structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Augering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors | <input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search | <input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking | <input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey | <input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography | |

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Military Airfield	Modern (1901 to present)	none	None

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Address (including Postcode) RAF Upwood Land to North of Ramsey Road Upwood Cambridgeshire PE26 2PP
District	Huntingdonshire	
Parish	Bury	
HER office	Cambridgeshire	
Size of Study Area	9.5ha	
National Grid Ref	TL27599 83452	

Project Originators

Organisation	Oxford Archaeology
Project Brief Originator	Lewis Busby (CHET)
Project Design Originator	Nicholas Gilmour (OA)

Project Manager	Nicholas Gilmour (OA)
Project Supervisor	David Browne (OA)

Project Archives

	Location	ID
Physical Archive (Finds)	n/a	n/a
Digital Archive	ADS	ECB7372
Paper Archive	CCC	ECB7372

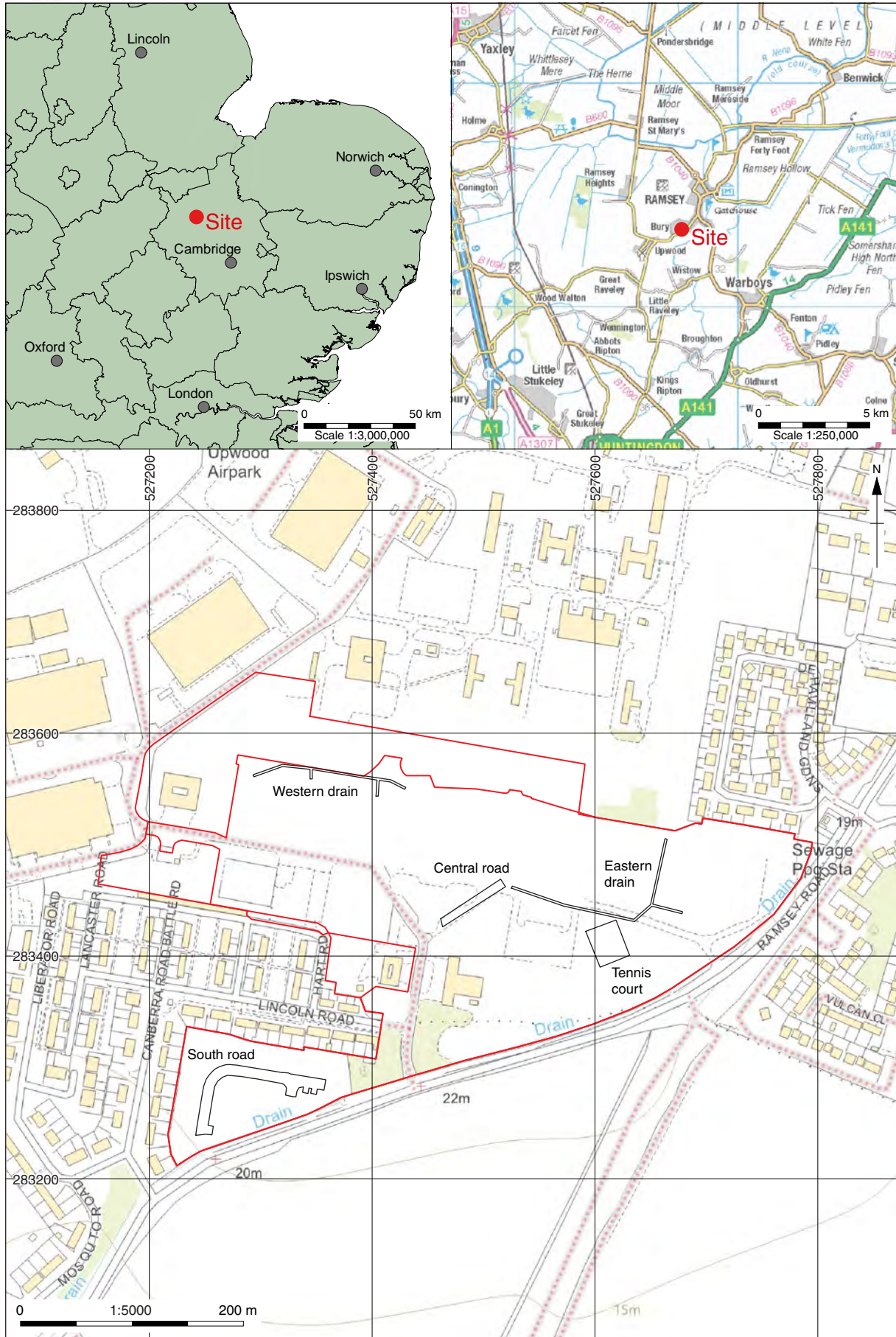
Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
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Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Remains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media

Database	<input type="checkbox"/>
GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Images (Digital photos)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Illustrations (Figures/Plates)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/>

Paper Media

Aerial Photos	<input type="checkbox"/>
Context Sheets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Matrices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microfiche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research/Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photos (negatives/prints/slides)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sections	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Figure 1: Site location showing proposed development area (red) and monitored areas (black)

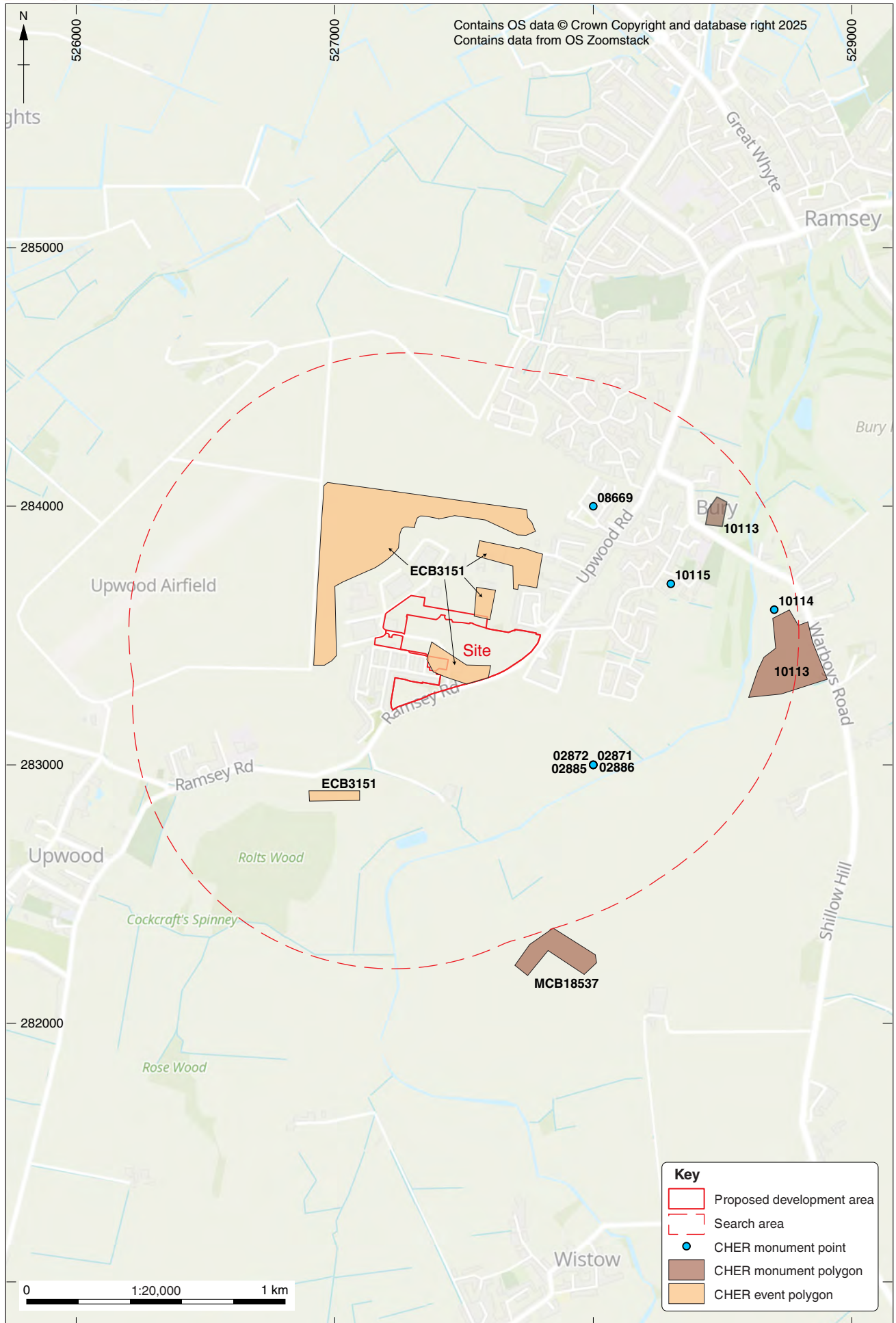


Figure 2: HER data map



Plate 1: Overview of the tennis court area



Plate 2: Representative section of the eastern drain



Plate 3: The southern road, looking west

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