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# HORTICULTURAL SITE BETWEEN 8 AND 14 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



Report Number: R1313

September 2021

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## HORTICULTURAL SITE BETWEEN 8 AND 14 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared on behalf of:

TVR Design Consultancy

By:

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<b>Site Code</b>	ECB6742	<b>NGR</b>	TL 44320 81082
<b>Project No.</b>	P1349	<b>Museum ACC</b>	-
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	19/00799/OUT	<b>OASIS</b>	britannii1-425350
<b>Approved By:</b>		<b>Date</b>	August 2021



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## Abstract

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2021, Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trenching evaluation on behalf of TVR Design Consultancy. The archaeological work was required as a condition of application 19/00799/OUT, for the construction of 2 residential dwellings with associated services and access at Horticultural Site Between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal (TL 44320 81082) (Fig. 1). A design brief issued by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET) (Robinson Zeki, L. 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021) required a programme of linear trial trenching to evaluate the development area which was achieved by excavating two trenches measuring 15.00m x 1.80m (Fig. 4).

The site had a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods, particularly evidence of the shrunken medieval village and agricultural practices. There was a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the Iron Age and Roman periods. The potential for features and finds from the early prehistoric period was considered to be low.

Despite the above potential no archaeological features or finds were present. The presence of a former agricultural subsoil represents the past use of the site as agricultural land, and the presence of an imported topsoil mixed with modern waste building material indicated that the site has recently been used for other activity causing some minor disturbance.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2021, Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trenching evaluation on behalf of TVR Design Consultancy. The archaeological work was required as a condition of application 19/00799/OUT, for the construction of 2 residential dwellings with associated services and access at Horticultural Site Between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal (TL 44320 81082) (Fig. 1).

A design brief issued by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET) (Robinson Zeki, L. 17th June 2021) required a programme of linear trial trenching to evaluate the development area. This was achieved by excavating two trenches measuring 15.00m x 1.80m (Fig. 4). The trenches were excavated using a 360<sup>o</sup> tracked, mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.



## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located at the north end of the village of Mepal, situated c.9.5km west of Ely. It was bounded to the east and north by agricultural fields, to the west by Bridge Road, and to the south by residential properties. The site was a grass-covered plot occupied by sheds.

### 2.1 Site Geology

The bedrock geology was recorded as Ampthill Clay Formation - Mudstone. This sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 157 to 164 million years ago in the Jurassic Period when the local environment was previously dominated by shallow seas (BSG, 2021).

No superficial geology was recorded at the time of writing.





### 3.0 PLANNING POLICIES

The archaeological investigation was carried out under a planning condition of the local planning authority, following guidance laid down by the National Planning and Policy Framework (NPPF, DCLD 2021). The relevant local planning policy is the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (S 6.16.4; 2015).



## 4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2 & 3)

The following archaeological background draws on the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) (1km search centred on the site), Historic England Research Records, and the Archaeological Data Service ([www.ads.ahds.ac.uk](http://www.ads.ahds.ac.uk)) (ADS) (Figs. 2 and 3). The Cambridgeshire HER preferred reference has been provided where possible.

### 4.2 Prehistoric

A Neolithic polished stone axe and smoothed pebble (08042) were found c.890m northwest of the site, and a Bronze Age palstave (05806) was found in plough soil c.530m southwest of the site.

### 4.3 Iron Age and Roman

Archaeological investigations c.330m northwest of the site revealed evidence of late Iron Age to Roman activity (MCB26922). A dense spread of features which included enclosure/boundary ditches and pits was identified. It is likely the site was located close to or perhaps even within an area of settlement. The pottery assemblage lacked any fine wares and so the settlement is likely to have been of low status and perhaps a farmstead.

Roman pottery and metalwork were found during metal detecting (MCB16264) c.710m northeast of the site.

### 4.4 Saxon and Medieval

Archaeological investigation c.250m southwest of the site identified late Saxon features including post holes and a ditch, as well as medieval ditches and pits (MCB27794). In addition, excavations c.520m southwest of the site identified late Saxon to early medieval features (MCB29264). A series of late Saxon to 12<sup>th</sup> century ditches and pits were concentrated in the southern half of the site.

Saxon metalwork was found during metal detecting (MCB16264) c.710m northeast of the site.



Cropmarks of possible medieval remains (05831) have been identified adjacent to the west of the site. The earthworks include a possible moat, hollow ways, house platforms, and ridge and furrow and are thought to represent the remains of a shrunken medieval village.

An earthworks survey at Manor Farm (MCB20932) c.250m southwest of the site identified a series of ditches which created an approximately square platform. A further platform might extend under the extant farm buildings. In addition, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken which revealed a number of medieval ditches.

The medieval Saint Mary's Church (CB14893) is located c.260m west of the site. The church is 13<sup>th</sup> century in origin but with later renovations and additions, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 4.5 Medieval/Post Medieval

Cropmarks and earthworks of ridge and furrow of medieval to post-medieval date have been identified in the fields surrounding Mepal.

More specifically, evidence for ridge and furrow has been identified c.240m south of the site (11464), c.370m west of the site(09269), c.510m south of the site (11923), c.600m southwest of the site (MCB27795), c.720m southwest of the site (MCB30173), and c.800m southeast of the site (09269).

#### 4.5 Post Medieval and Modern

The Old Bedford River (MCB23922) is located c.670m northwest of the site. The river was cut in c.1631 in response to an agreement to drain the Great Level of the Fens and is a tributary of the River Great Ouse. The Old Bedford River was part of the first major phase of drainage in Cambridgeshire and was constructed by Cornelius Vermuyden. The cut was not completely successful and this led to a more ambitious project to provide permanent drainage, resulting in the construction of the New Bedford River (Hundred Foot Drain) artificial drainage dyke (MCB23934) located c.400m northwest of the site. The New Bedford River is also a tributary of the River Great Ouse in the Fens and was also constructed by Cornelius Vermuyden c.1650 to facilitate better drainage of the Fens.



Mepal airbase (CB15142) is located c.840m south of the site. This WW2 airfield was opened in 1943 as part of 3 Group bomber operations and was later converted to a base for Thor missiles. Little of the original airfield now survives.

#### 4.6 Archaeological Potential

Given the above records the site had a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods, particularly evidence of the shrunken medieval village and agricultural practices. There was a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the Iron Age and Roman periods. The potential for features and finds from the early prehistoric period was considered to be low.



## 5.0 PROJECT AIMS

The CHET brief stated that the evaluation should aim to determine, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains within the permitted development area. An adequate representative sample within the development was studied (Robinson Zeki, L. 2021, Brief, Section 3.1).

Both the WSI, fieldwork and resulting report/archiving were undertaken in accordance with CIfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation, 2020 and Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England, 2003.



## 6.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Research objectives for the project were in line with those laid out in Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24 (Medlycott, 2011).

Specific objectives outlined in the brief (section 3.4) stated that a particular importance be placed on:

- Presence /absence of palaeosols and old land surface soils/deposits
- The character of deposits and their contents within negative features
- palaeochannels
- site formation processes.



## 7.0 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

The CHET brief required a programme of linear trial trenching to sample the site ahead of development. This was achieved by excavating two trenches measuring 15.00m x 1.80m (Fig. 4).

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with CIfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations, 2020 and Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England, 2003.

A 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to machine down to the first archaeological horizon, thereafter all excavation work was undertaken by hand (Fig. 4).

The archaeology was recorded using pro-forma record sheets, drawn plans and section drawings and photographs.



## 8.0 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (Figs. 4-6)

A summary of the features and layers encountered is presented below. Full context descriptions can be found in Appendix 1.

A professional metal detectorist scanned the trench locations prior and post excavation along with the spoil heaps. No finds were recovered.

Bucket sampling was conducted in each trench, 90 litres of spoil was hand sorted for each soil horizon encountered. No finds were recovered.

### 8.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the eastern portion of the site on an east-west orientation, measuring 15.00m x 1.80m. No archaeological features or finds were present.

### 8.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the western portion of the site on a north-south orientation, measuring 15.00m x 1.80m. No archaeological features or finds were present.





## 9.0 DEPOSIT MODEL (Figs. 5-6)

The deposit model was consistent across the site.

At the top of the stratigraphic sequence in both trenches was topsoil 1000 which was present to a maximum depth of 0.30m in sample section 1. It comprised a mid brownish grey, compact, silty clay and represented the modern imported topsoil mixed with modern material (plastics and building aggregate).

Below topsoil 1000 in both trenches was subsoil 1001, which was present to a maximum depth of 0.36m in sample section 1 with a maximum thickness of 0.15m. It comprised a light yellowish brown, compact, silty clay and represented a former agricultural subsoil.

At the base of the stratigraphic sequence in both trenches was natural geology 1002 which was comprised of mid yellowish orange, compact, silty clay, with frequent inclusions of small sub-angular stones.



## 10.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The site had a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods, particularly evidence of the shrunken medieval village and agricultural practices. There was a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the Iron Age and Roman periods. The potential for features and finds from the early prehistoric period was considered to be low.

Despite the above potential no archaeological features or finds were present. The presence of a former agricultural subsoil represents the past use of the site as agricultural land. The site until recently formed part of the field that lies directly adjacent to the north. The presence of an imported topsoil mixed with modern waste building material indicated that the site has recently been used for other activity causing some minor disturbance.



## 11.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

The final archive will be deposited with Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeological Archive Storage Facility. An appropriate accession number will be obtained in advance of deposition.

The digital archive resulting from the works will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) or another publicly accessible CoreTrustSeal certified repository as required by CHET (Brief, 9.8) on completion of the archaeological programme.



## 12.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Britannia Archaeology would like to thank TVR Design Consultancy for commissioning and funding the project.

We would also like to thank Leanne Robinson-Zeki of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team for her advice and assistance on the project.

Special thanks to Mr Steve Clarkson (PCIfA) for his specialist services in metal detecting on the site.

The site was excavated by Martin Brook of Britannia Archaeology Ltd.



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Heritage Gateway <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

Archaeological Data Service (ADS) [www.ads.ahds.ac.uk](http://www.ads.ahds.ac.uk)

DEFRA Magic <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic>



## APPENDIX 1 – TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

### TRENCH 1

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
1	E-W	3.91m	1
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
1	E end of trench, S side	N	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.30m	Topsoil: Mid brownish grey, compact, silty clay.	
1001	0.30-0.36m	Subsoil: Light yellowish brown, compact, silty clay.	
1002	0.36m+	Natural: Mid yellowish orange, compact, silty clay, with frequent inclusions of small sub-angular stones.	

### TRENCH 2

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
2	N-S	4.04m	3
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
2	N end of trench, W side	E	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.21m	Topsoil: Mid brownish grey, compact, silty clay.	
1001	0.21-0.35m	Subsoil: Light yellowish brown, compact, silty clay.	
1002	0.35m+	Natural: Mid yellowish orange, compact, silty clay, with frequent inclusions of small sub-angular stones.	



## APPENDIX 2 – Oasis Sheet

[OASIS FORM - Print view](#)

<https://oasis.wc.uk/forms/print.cfm>

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Log out](#)

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OASIS ID: britanni1-425350

### Project details

Project name	Horticultural Site Between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal
Short description of the project	On the 24th of August 2021, Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook a trial trenching evaluation on behalf of TVR Design Consultancy. The archaeological work was required as a condition of application 19/00799/OUT, for the construction of 2 residential dwellings with associated services and access at Horticultural Site Between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal (TL 44320 81082) (Fig. 1). A design brief issued by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET) (Robinson Zeki, L. 17th June 2021) required a programme of linear trial trenching to evaluate the development area which was achieved by excavating two trenches measuring 15.00m x 1.80m (Fig. 4). The site had a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods, particularly evidence of the shrunken medieval village and agricultural practices. There was a moderate potential for features and finds relating to the Iron Age and Roman periods. The potential for features and finds from the early prehistoric period was considered to be low. Despite the above potential no archaeological features or finds were present. The presence of a former agricultural subsoil represents the past use of the site as agricultural land, and the presence of an imported topsoil mixed with modern waste building material indicated that the site has recently been used for other activity causing some minor disturbance.
Project dates	Start: 24-08-2021 End: 24-08-2021
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	EC06742 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Project location	
Country	England





OASIS FORM - Print view

<https://oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm>

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE MEPAL, Horticultural Site Between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal  
Postcode CB6 2AR  
Study area 0 Hectares  
Site coordinates TL 44320 81082 52.406276709679 0 121625045152 52 24 29 N 000 07 16 E Point  
Height OD / Depth Min: 0m Max: 0m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation Britannia Archaeology Ltd  
Project brief originator Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)  
Project design originator Dan McConnell  
Project director/manager Martin Brook  
Project supervisor Martin Brook  
Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists? No  
Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire HER  
Digital Archive ID ECR6742  
Digital Contents 'none'  
Digital Media available 'GIS', 'Images raster / digital photography', 'Spreadsheets', 'Survey', 'Text'  
Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire HER  
Paper Archive ID ECR6742  
Paper Contents 'none'  
Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Drawing', 'Map', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section', 'Survey'

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
Title Horticultural Site Between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal  
Author(s)/Editor(s) L.Cunningham  
Other bibliographic details R1313  
Date 2021  
Issuer or publisher Britannia Archaeology Ltd  
Place of issue or publication Bury St Edmunds  
Description A4 bound report with A3 Pull-out Figures

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OASIS FORM - Print view

<https://oasis.archaeology.com/print.cfm>

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Entered on: 21 September 2021

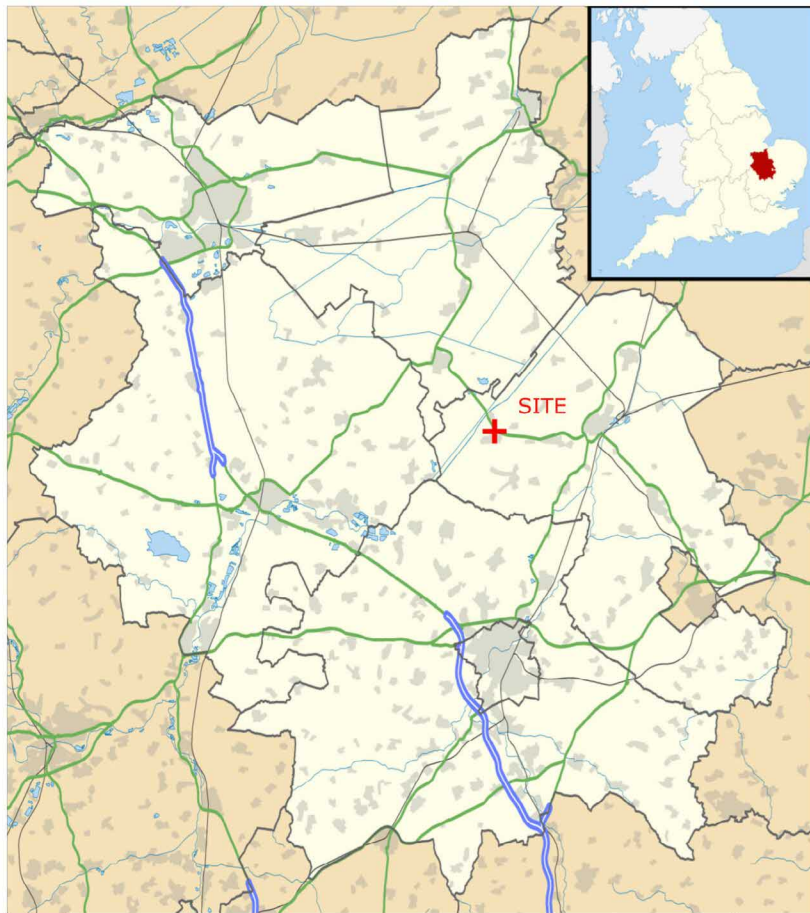
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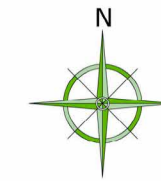
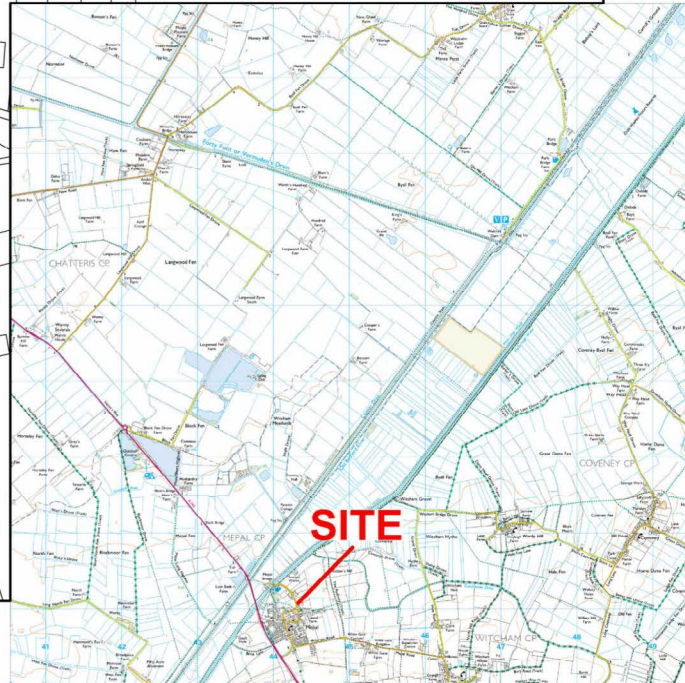
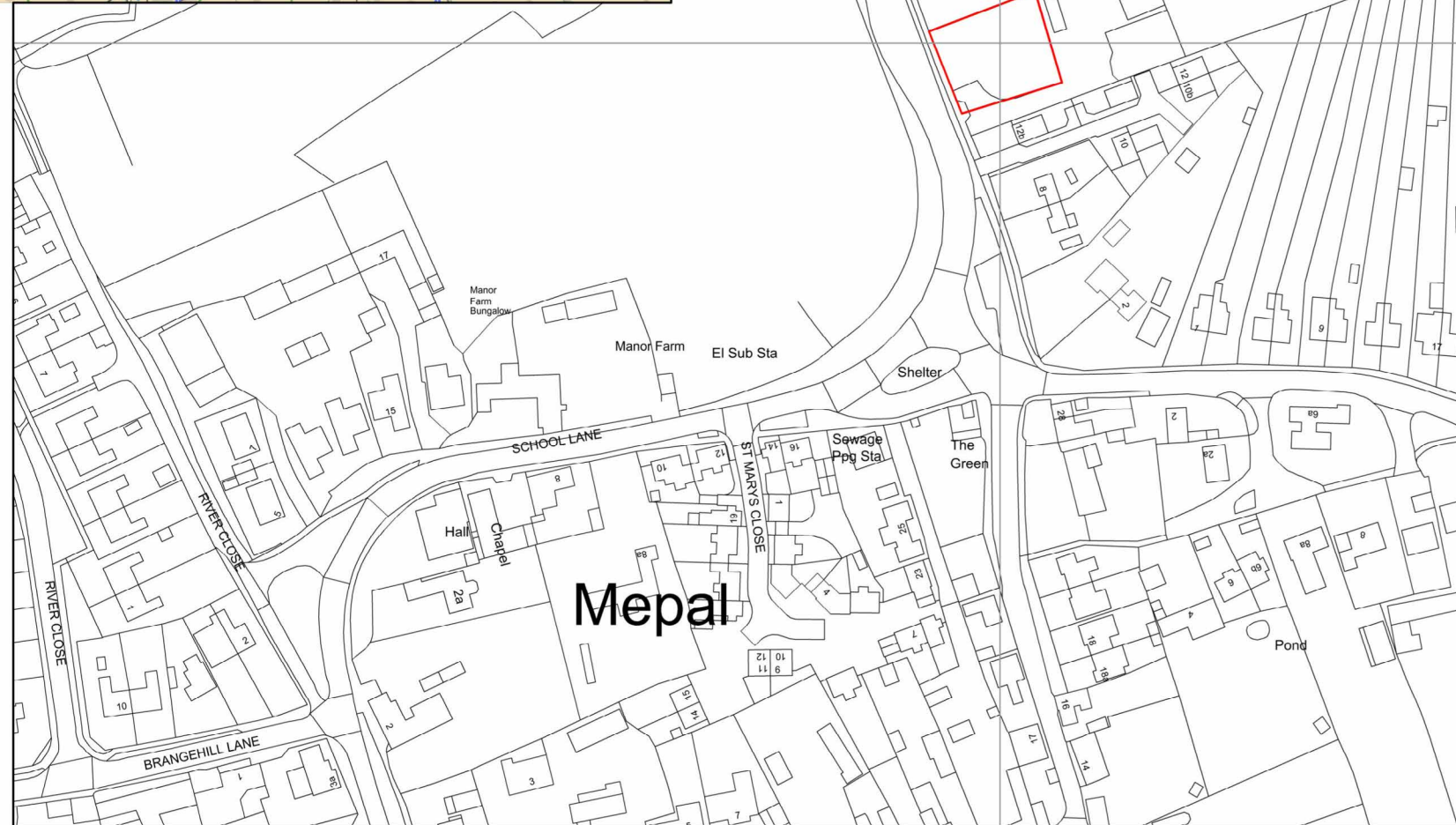
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Site Boundary

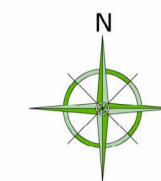
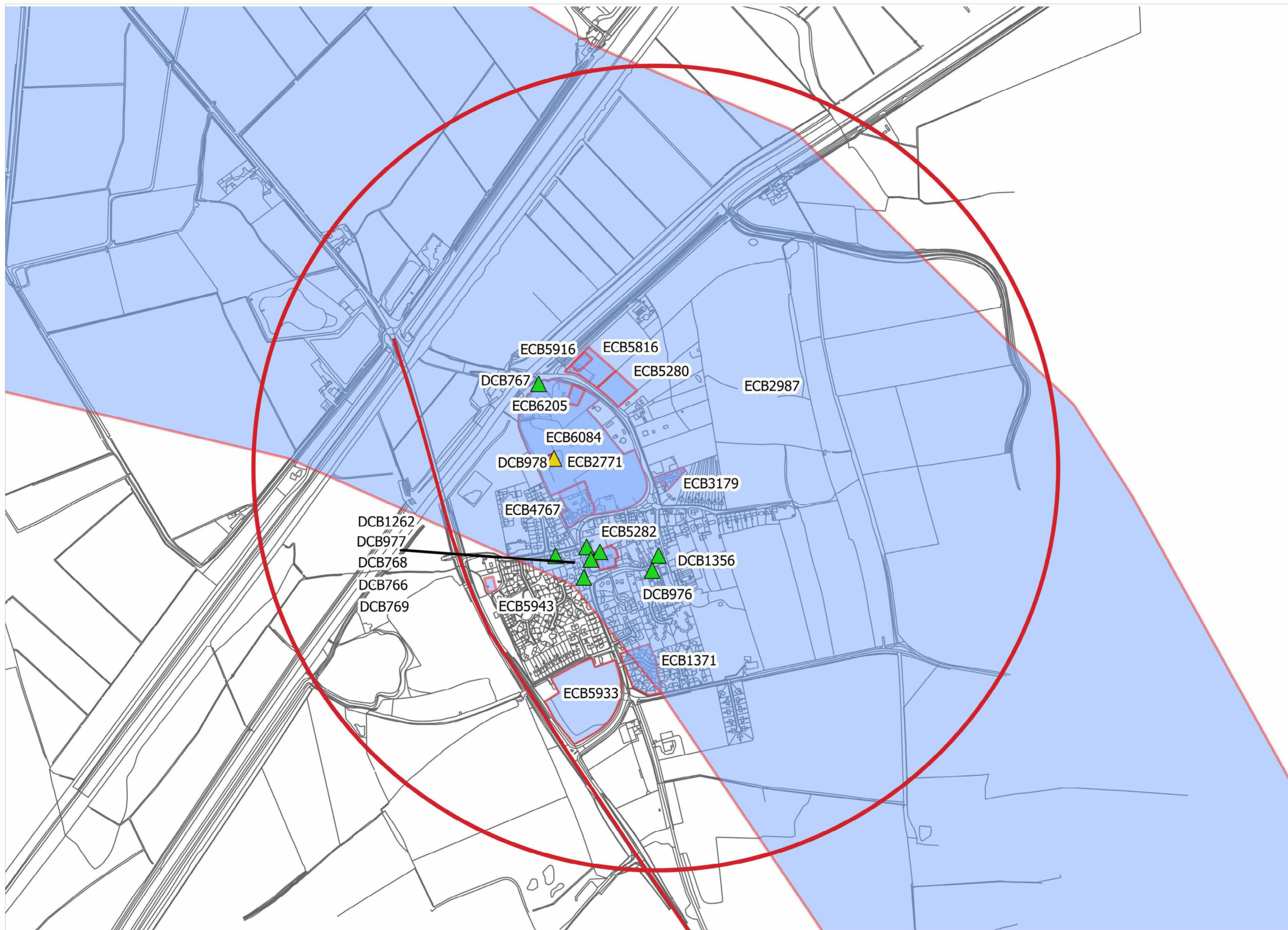
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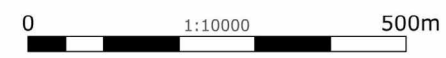
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CLIENT:	TVR DESIGN CONSULTANCY		
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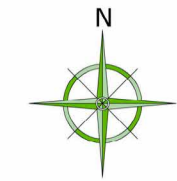
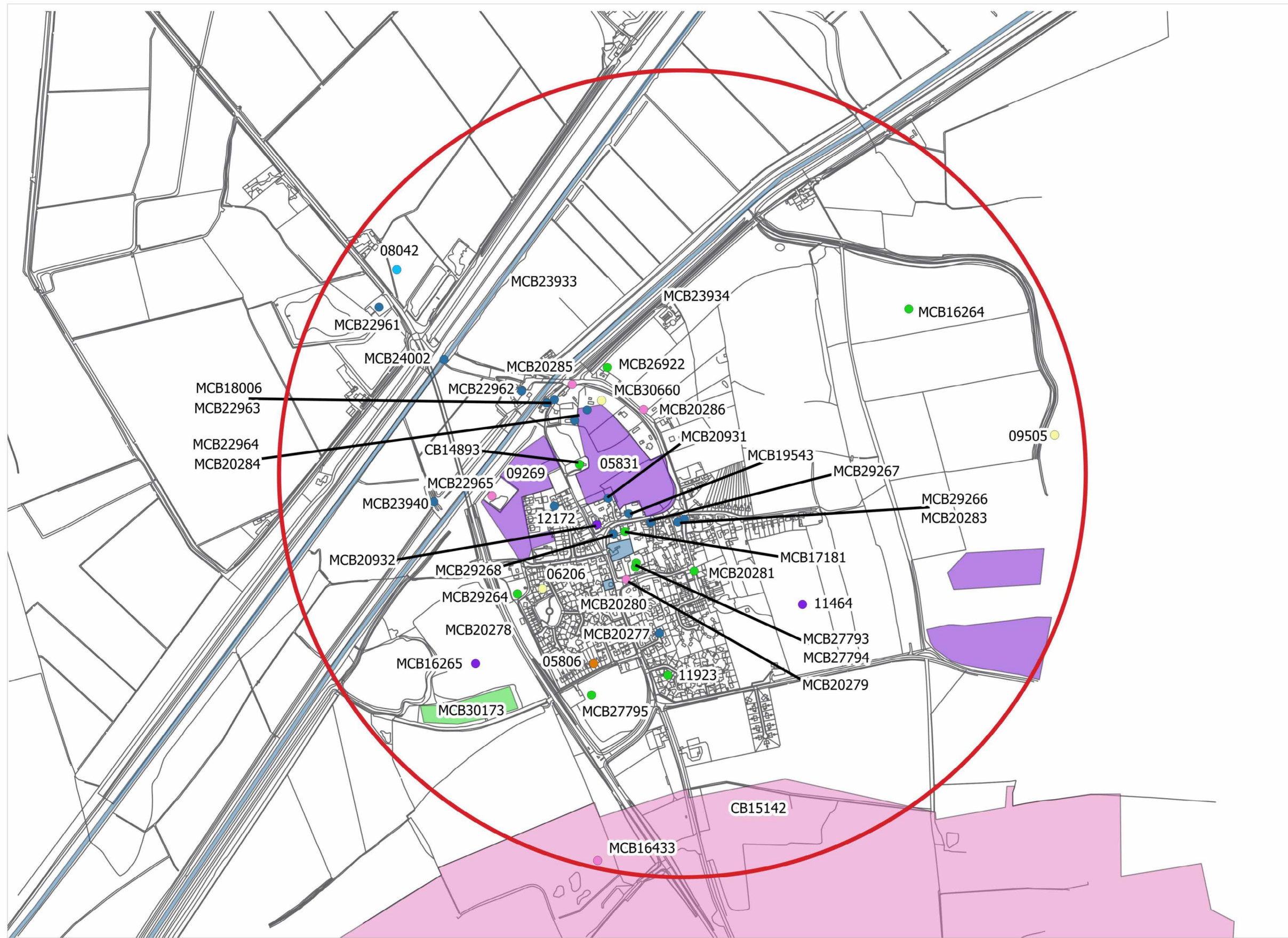
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- Archaeological Event
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area
- Registered Parks & Gardens

- Listed Buildings
- Grade I
  - Grade II\*
  - Grade II

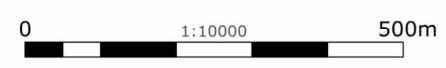


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APPROVED: MB		

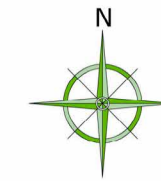


- HER Search Area
- Site Boundary
- Undated Record
- Multiperiod Record
- Modern Record
- Post-medieval Record
- Medieval Record
- Anglo Saxon Record
- Roman Record
- Iron Age Record
- Bronze Age Record
- Neolithic Record
- Mesolithic Record
- Palaeolithic Record



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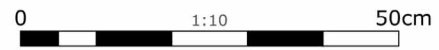
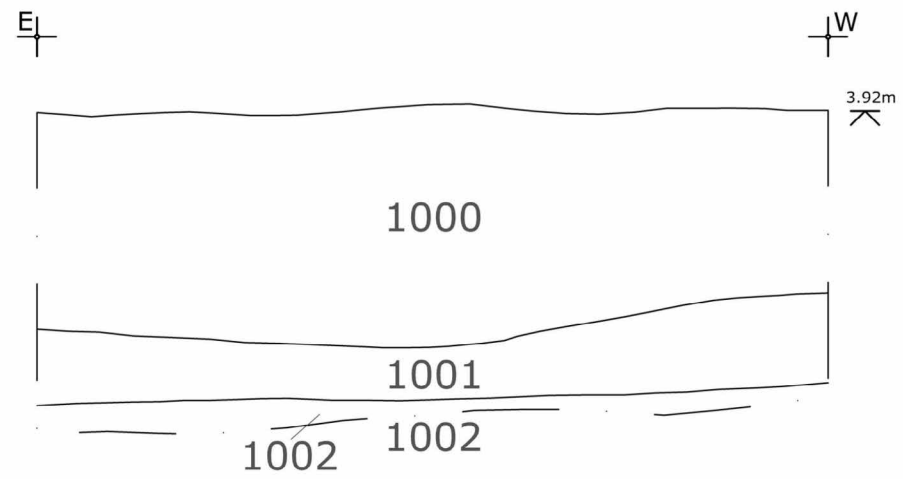
-  Trench
-  Site Boundary



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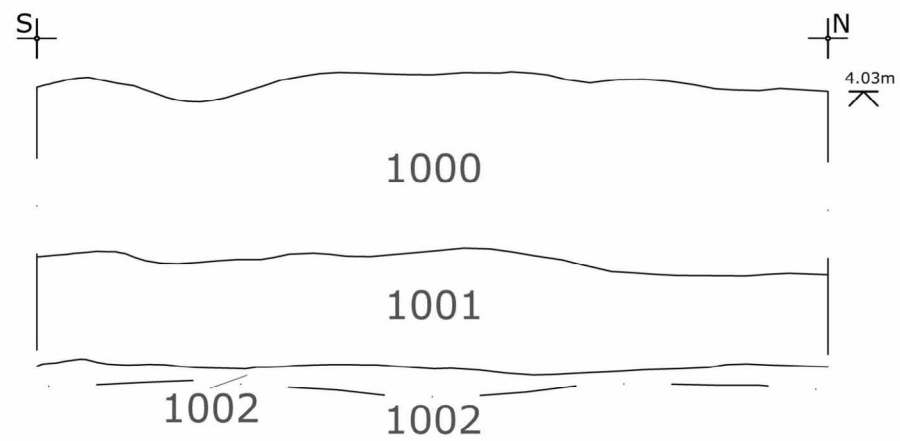
NGR: 544325 281080	REF: R1313	
PROJECT: HORTICULTURAL SITE BETWEEN 8 & 14 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE		
DESCRIPTION: TRENCH PLAN		
CLIENT: TVR DESIGN CONSULTANCY		
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DATE: SEPT 2021	PLOT: A3	VERSION: 2
AUTHOR: DPM	APPROVED: MB	FIGURE: 4

### SITE SECTION 1



DP1 - SS1 - VIEW S

### SITE SECTION 2



DP3 - SS2 - VIEW W

NGR: 544325 281080 REF: R1313

PROJECT: HORTICULTURAL SITE BETWEEN 8 & 14 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

DESCRIPTION: TRENCH SECTIONS & PHOTOGRAPHS

CLIENT: TVR DESIGN CONSULTANCY

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FIGURE: 5



DP2 - TT1 - VIEW W



DP4 - TT2 - VIEW N

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PROJECT: HORTICULTURAL SITE BETWEEN 8 & 14 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

DESCRIPTION: TRENCH PHOTOGRAPHS

CLIENT: TVR DESIGN CONSULTANCY

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FIGURE: 6