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**High Street
Willingham
Cambridgeshire.**

- An Archaeological Desktop Study -

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1. The Project

This study was commissioned by Eagle Homes in advance of the residential development of an area between High Street, Church Street and Long Lane Willingham (TL403 702). The project consists of a desktop study of the known and potential archaeology of the area, a total of 2.8ha, as illustrated in Figure 1.

2. The Study Area

Topography

The topography of the site generally consists of horticultural land and the rear gardens of existing properties. A pig farm occupies part of the area.

Geology

The study area lies on Second and Third Terrace Gravels.

3. Policies

The proposed development site occupies most of the area designated as Willingham 2 in the Development for Willingham Consultation Document (South Cambridgeshire District Council 1992). Part of the northern boundary coincides with edge of the Willingham Conservation Area (designated 12th July 1974) which covers most of the properties on the Church Street frontage.

4. The Archaeological Data

Sites and Monument Records

The primary source of information used is the county based Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs). Each county maintains its own SMR, largely based on its own criteria but incorporating guidelines set by The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (English Heritage) and the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME). This study is fortunate in that Cambridgeshire has a well maintained SMR.

Despite the value of the SMRs, they are inevitably biased towards certain types of information. The precursor to the SMRs was the Ordnance Survey, whose records were biased towards standing earthworks and single find spots. This emphasis has been recently supplanted by the use of the aerial photographic record, which in turn is biased towards lighter soils (e.g. river gravels) and arable land uses. Resources for the systematic survey or excavation of sites have always been severely limited, so the majority of sites known in an SMR are of unknown extent, date or

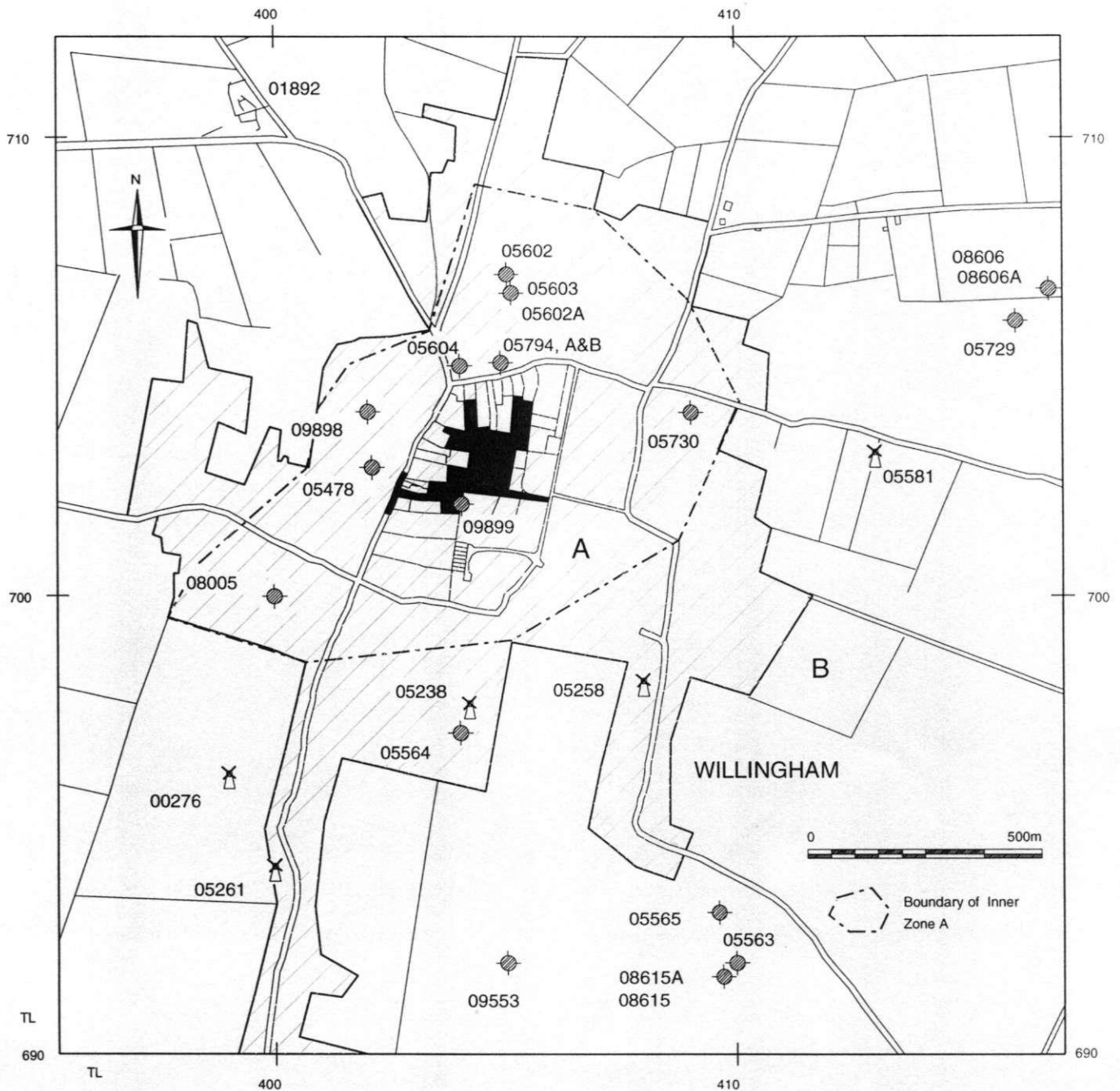


Figure 1 Site Location and SMR Information

character. The distribution of known sites may often reflect the activities of interested local amateur antiquarians and professional archaeologists. Historical sources are used to supplement the archaeological record, but rarely have a direct relation to the archaeology. Archaeology is always concerned with the unknown, and this is well illustrated by the continual discovery of new sites and the steady growth of SMRs. In summary, the SMR constitutes neither a comprehensive, nor random sample. The SMR may however be used to locate all known sites and their date, character and significance, if they have been investigated.

Sites which are of national importance are designated *scheduled ancient monuments* (SAMs) and have statutory protection through the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 (and see also the Department of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, *Archaeology and Planning*). The care and protection of *scheduled ancient monuments* is entrusted to the Department of the Environment as advised by English Heritage. Development proposals affecting SAMs are referred to English Heritage for adjudication, but the presumption is that development will not be allowed which would adversely affect a monument or its setting.

There is no SAM designated within or nearby the proposed development area.

5. The Archaeological and Historical Background

Historical Evidence

The fen edge north and east of the village was densely settled from the second century AD, though all the known sites were abandoned in the wetter post-Roman period (Lewis 1989: 399). The village of Willingham appears to have originated in the Saxon period, the name deriving from 'the home of the people of Wifel' (Taylor 1973: 52). Ufi probably left the whole vil to Ely Abbey between 996 and 1001AD, the abbots and bishops being the principal landlords of the village for the next 600 years. Willingham (also known as Wivelingham until the eighteenth century) has nearly always been one of the more populous villages in Cambridgeshire. The compactness and regularity of the village plan suggests that the village grew by several planned stages after the late eleventh century. Early development was along the line of Church Street, linking the green in the east to the church in the west. From 1575 both High Street and Throckwell/Throcknole/Rockmill End (the southern end of which is now called Green Street) were built up on both sides (Lewis 1989: 401).

About two kilometres north of the village lies a large basin where sub-soil sands and gravels are buried to a depth of 1.30 - 2.50m by deposits of peat, alluvium and marl. This, in part, was the area of Willingham Mere, a freshwater lake where the water lay to such a depth as to retard reed growth and subsequent peat formation. Today it is still visible as an area of off-white discolouration, caused by shellfish beds (Evans 1992: 2). In post-medieval times the Mere was recorded as extending over 32ha and being 5m deep. It is known to have supported an earlier locally important open water fishery (Hinde 1975: 167, fig. 1).

The agricultural land surrounding the village is very rich. Apart from some piecemeal Inclosure in the middle ages and seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries Willingham's arable farming was established and remained in three large open fields to the south and east. Inclosure finally came with the 1846 act enacted in 1853 (Lewis 1989: 398).

Sites Within the Proposed Development Site

The SMR indicates one site within the proposed development site. SMR 09899 is described as low earthworks on the right hand side of the track adjacent to the school playing fields. No date or interpretation is suggested in the SMR entry, but the earthworks are most probably medieval or post-medieval in origin and may represent former agricultural, horticultural or settlement activity.

Sites within a Wider Landscape

The area surrounding the proposed development site has been divided into two zones, an inner Zone A and an outer Zone B. Zone A lies entirely within the bounds of Willingham village, Zone B overlaps the village boundaries.

Zone A

There are eleven SMR entries within the inner zone:

Roman

SMR 05603 was a scatter of pottery; SMR 05604 was a large scatter of pottery; SMR 05730 was a stray find of a Roman coin; SMR 05602 and was a stray find of seven pottery sherds.

Anglo-Saxon

SMR 08005 was a vaguely located stray find constituting a hoard of Anglo-Saxon and medieval plate, coins rings and brooches; SMRs 05794 is the Church of St. Mary and All Saints. Within the church are preserved evidence of its possible Anglo-Saxon origins and later rebuilding and alterations from the Norman period onwards.

Medieval and post-medieval

05602A was a stray find of three medieval pottery sherds. SMR 05794A & B refer to the Church of St. Mary and All Saints. Inside the church are several medieval wall paintings and a seventeenth century painting of the Ten Commandments; SMR 05478 lies on the opposite side of the High Street to the proposed development site. Bourney's Manor Farm is a standing post-medieval farm house. SMR 09898 is undated earthworks in a field adjacent to Manor farm.

Zone B

There are fifteen SMR entries within the outer zone:

Iron age

SMR 08615 is a soilmark and finds scatter.

Roman

SMR 01892 is a pottery scatter and cropmark evidence of enclosures and linear features on the west side of West Fen Road. Second, but mainly fourth century AD pottery has been recovered from within the cropmark (Evans 1992; 11); SMR 05563 is a pottery spread and a grave group in Cadwin field; SMR 05564 was a coin, and 05565 a pottery stray find; SMR 05279 is a finds scatter consisting of tile, pottery and mortaria; SMR 08215A is a finds scatter, including pottery, and soilmark. A grave group was noted 100m to the north. SMR 08606 is a soilmark and finds scatter including querns, roof tile and pottery.

Anglo-Saxon

SMR 08686A was a stray find of pottery.

Medieval and post-medieval

SMRs 00276, 05238, 05258, 05261, 05581 are a series of medieval and post-medieval windmills around the southern and eastern edges of the village. Of these only Cattel's Hill (SMR 05238) survives as an extant building, the rest as architectural fragments or documentary references.

Environs

Two kilometres to the east of the village lies Belsar's Hill, a major ringwork fortification of probable Iron Age date that commands the landward approach to the Aldreth Causeway leading to the Isle of Ely. Within and around the earthwork are preserved the ridge and furrow of the medieval field system.

To the north of the study area (beyond the area covered by the map) lie an extensive series of cropmarks indicating densely settled land bounded to the north by a band of peat within which lies Willingham Mere (Evans 1992). The hub of the arc - the modern village of Willingham - occupies the high ground and may well mask traces of earlier settlement. That previous occupation of the high ground was probable is emphasised by the radiating tracks to the north, at least five of which can be recognised running from Willingham towards (and in one case, in to) the peat. The systems appear to date to the Romano-British period, with most settlements yielding pottery of the second and fourth centuries (Evans 1992: 30).

6. Discussion

The proposed development site lies in the heart of the village of Willingham. Early village development took place to the north along Church Street, later medieval expansion along streets to the east and west. The site sits within the block of land defined by these streets, partially occupying the rear portion of some of the Church Street properties. This location allows for the possibility that the open area of the site preserves evidence of early village development - if the Church indicates the focus of the Anglo-Saxon village, evidence of this may be preserved in the northern part of the proposed development site. The one site recorded by the SMR within the proposed development area is a series of low earthworks of unknown date, which do not appear to have been previously investigated. These may relate to previous agricultural, horticultural or settlement activity and, without any supporting evidence, are likely to be medieval or post-medieval in origin.

The broader landscape around the village is archaeologically very rich, particularly in earlier periods. As the proposed development site lies at the heart of the village, so the village itself lies at the hub of a developed Romano-British field system, indicating an organised landscape. The Roman evidence within the village itself is so far limited to pottery scatters and a coin stray find. This indicates Roman activity and the pottery would tend to suggest settlement nearby. If the later village is masking evidence of earlier settlement, as Evans suggests is possible (1992: 30), this may be preserved within the area of the proposed development site.

7. Potential

The proposed development area is surrounded by evidence of archaeological and historical importance from various periods. There is indication of Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity both within the village and in the area immediately surrounding it. This, together with information from slightly further afield, (see above *Environs*) suggests that Willingham lies within, if not at the centre of a rich and important archaeological and historical landscape.

Ranking the potential of archaeological evidence in a case such as this is useful to suggest areas of interest for investigation:

1. *The earthworks, SMR 09899*

The extent and nature of the earthworks is unrecorded, and the date is unknown. As the feature is still upstanding there is a good chance of sufficient preservation to determine nature and perhaps date, should excavation be required.

2. Early (i.e. pre-village) Features

As discussed by Evans (1992), and above, the village occupies the high ground in an area surrounded by extensive evidence of Romano-British field systems. The village may well serve to mask earlier features related to these systems.

3. Early Village Development

As discussed above the proposed development area lies between the three main streets of early and medieval village development. It is possible that elements of this development sequence are archaeologically preserved on the site. For the most part, however, the proposed development area occupies open ground and rear properties. This may suggest that it is less likely to contain such evidence in the first place, though the earthworks do indicate that activity has taken place of which this is the may be only the visible evidence.

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Appendix I
Gazetteer of Sites and Monument Records

| SMR | Grid | Period | Type of Evidence | Description |
|--------|-------------|--------|-------------------------|---|
| 00276 | TL399-/696- | PMed | Documentary evidence | Wind mill |
| 01892 | TL399-/711- | Rom | Finds scatter, cropmark | Pottery scatter continued on west side of W. Fen road; cropmark evidence of enclosures and linear features. |
| 01892 | TL399-/711- | Rom | Cropmark | Enclosure and linear features with some 2nd, but mostly 4th century AD pottery. |
| 05238 | TL4042/6975 | PMed | Building | Cattel's Hill: Wind mill |
| 05258 | TL408-/698- | PMed | Documentary evidence | Mill Croft: Wind mill, base survives as architectural fragment |
| 05261 | TL400-/694- | Med? | Building | Wind mill pre 1702 |
| 05478 | TL4021/7028 | PMed | Roofed building | Bourney's Manor Farm: Farm house, manor, door |
| 05563 | TL410-/692- | Rom | Finds scatter | Cadwin Field: Pottery spread, coin; grave group of two pots. |
| 05564 | TL404-/697- | Rom | Stray find | Coin |
| 05565 | TL4096/6931 | Rom | Stray find | Pottery (2 pots) |
| 05581 | TL413-/703- | Med? | Documentary evidence | Wind mill |
| 05602 | TL4051/7066 | Rom | Stray find | Pottery (7 sherds) |
| 05602A | TL4051/7066 | Med | Stray find | Pottery (3 sherds) |
| 05603 | TL405-/707- | Rom | Finds scatter | Pottery |
| 05604 | TL403-/704- | Rom | Finds scatter | Pottery (large quantity) |
| 05729 | TL416-/706- | Rom | Finds scatter | The Stacks: Tile, pottery, mortarium |
| 05730 | TL409-/704- | Rom | Stray find | Coin |
| 05794 | TL404-/705- | Med | Building | Church of St Mary and All Saints: standing gravestone, wall painting, monument |

| SMR | Grid | Period | Type of Evidence | Description |
|--------|-------------|---------|-------------------------|---|
| 05794A | TL408-/705- | AS | Architectural fragment | Church of St Mary and All Saints: cross, coffin, gravestone" |
| 05794B | TL40--/70-- | PMed | Wall painting | Church of St Mary and All Saints: C17th painting of the Ten Commandments |
| 08005 | TL4---/7--- | AS, Med | Stray find | Hoard, ring, coin, plate, brooch |
| 08606 | TL4167/7067 | Rom | Soilmark, finds scatter | Settlement, quern, roofing tile, pottery |
| 08606A | TL4167/7067 | AS | Stray find | Pottery |
| 08615 | TL4097/6917 | IA | Soilmark, finds scatter | Settlement, burnt area, pottery |
| 08615A | TL4097/6917 | Rom | Soilmark, finds scatter | Settlement, burnt area, pottery. Grave group 100m to N. |
| 09553 | TL405-/692- | U | Cropmark | Ring ditch |
| 09898 | TL402-/704- | U | Earthwork | Trackway?, pond? in field adjacent to Manor Farm. |
| 09899 | TL404-/702- | U | Earthwork | Low earthworks on right hand side of track adjacent to school playing fields. |