LAND OFF BLUNTISHAM ROAD
NEEDINGWORTH
CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING REFERENCE: 17/01687/OUT

PCA REPORT NO: R14254

SITE CODE: ECB6211

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PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Land off Bluntisham Road, Needingworth, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation

Quality Assurance

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CONTENTS

FIGURES

PLATES

ABSTRACT

In September 2020, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd on land off Bluntisham Road, Needingworth, Cambridgeshire. The work, which was commissioned by David Wilson Homes through RPS Group, their archaeological consultant, was carried out to meet the requirements of a condition that was attached to planning consent for the residential development of the site by Huntingdonshire District Council. The evaluation, as undertaken, consisted of one 20m, one 17m and nineteen 30m evaluation trenches, a total of 607 linear metres of trial trench. The remaining thirteen trenches were not excavated due to asbestos contamination and other site constraints.

The evaluation confirmed the presence of furrows, the remnants of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing, as identified by the geophysical survey. The evaluation also identified a post-medieval ditch shown on the Second Edition OS Map 1902 in Trench 30, an undated ditch in Trench 8 and an undated pit in Trench 26. Eight trenches contained no archaeological features or deposits. The evaluation demonstrated that the site has been used as farmland since at least the medieval period and that there was no evidence for activity on the site prior to the medieval period. However, the northern and southern parts of the site remain unevaluated due to asbestos contamination and the presence of backfilled septic tanks.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2020, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land off Bluntisham Road, Needingworth, Cambridgeshire (site centred on NGR: TL 34715 72792; Fig. 1). The work, which was commissioned by David Wilson Homes through RPS Group, their archaeological consultant, was carried out to meet the requirements of a condition that was attached to planning consent for the residential development of the site by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC planning ref. 17/01687/OUT, Condition 19).

1.2 The site, which covers an area of *c.* 6.44ha consisted of several parcels of land made up of disused pasture and woodland, with the northern part of the development area occupied by heaps of rubble from the recently demolished bungalow, garden plots and sheds.

1.3 The scope of the archaeological evaluation was outlined in a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by CCCHET (CCCHET 2019) and the methodology for the evaluation was outlined in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) that was prepared by PCA (PCA 2020) and approved by CCCHET prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The evaluation was preceded by a geophysical survey of accessible parts of the site (Magnitude Surveys 2019), the results of which were used in the preparation of the trenching strategy. The evaluation was to have consisted of the excavation of 34no. 30m trial trenches (a total of 1020 linear metres, a *c.* 4% sample of accessible parts of the 6.44ha site; Fig. 2), but due to site constraints, mainly asbestos contamination (RSK 2018), it was only possible to excavated 607 linear metres of trench focused centrally within the site. The reduction in the amount of trenching was agreed on site between CCCHET and RPS.

1.4 All work relating to this project was carried out in accordance with the approved WSI (PCA 2020) and abided by *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA Rev. 2019) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (CIfA Updated 2020).

1.5 The project was managed in accordance with the Historic England procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (HE 2015).

1.6 Following Transfer of Title, the site archive will be deposited with the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Archive Facility.

2 SITE BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location, topography and geology

2.1.1 The site is located on the north-eastern edge of Needingworth, a small village that lies *c.* 3.6km east of St Ives town centre, Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1). It covers an area of *c.* 6.44ha and consists of several parcels of land made up of pasture and woodland, with the northern part of the development area occupied by heaps of rubble from the recently demolished bungalow, garden plots and sheds. The site is bounded to the north by the A1123, to the east and south by Bluntisham Rd and to the west by agricultural land.

2.1.2 Topographically, the site is situated on the north-western edge of the floodplain of the River Great Ouse, on level ground at *c.* 8m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

2.1.3 The solid geology within the site consists of undifferentiated Jurassic mudstone of the West Walton Formation and Ampthill Clay Formation. Across the central and southern parts of the site there are superficial Quaternary deposits of River Terrace sand and gravel; there are no superficial deposits recorded in the northern part of the site (BGS 2020).

2.2 Archaeological and historical background

2.2.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been presented in detail in the desk-based assessment (DBA) prepared by Pegasus (Pegasus 2017), which considered the recorded historic environment resource within a 1km study area of the proposed development. The results of the DBA have been more recently supplemented by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) data supplied with the current *Brief* (CCCHET 2019). A summary of the results is presented below (CHER references in parentheses).

Prehistoric (pre-AD 43)

2.2.2 No prehistoric finds or features are recorded within the site or in its vicinity. Prehistoric finds and features are recorded at Barleycroft Farm, located to *c.* 0.9km northeast of the site. These include the Barleycroft Bronze Age field systems and post alignments which were excavated on the eastern and western banks of the Great Ouse River at Barleycroft Farm and Over. The field systems are also associated with ring ditches, open and closed settlements and bowl barrows (designated Scheduled Monuments) located to the east of the river and the site.

2.2.3 In advance of gravel quarrying at Barleycroft Farm, *c.* 600m southeast of the site, evaluation revealed numerous field systems and three probable settlements (MCB14051, MCB15515, ECB1161). A large field system, which potentially dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age era, was recorded, as well as large amounts of pottery, flint and Neolithic pits. Three phases of occupation were revealed (MCB1329): episodes of activity and occupation at the site dated to the Neolithic, early Bronze Age; a large Bronze Age field system and settlement, although this appeared to be fairly short-lived (MCB15514); and three roundhouses and a trapezoidal longhouse enclosed by a ditch and bank system.

2.2.4 A ring ditch recorded at Barleycroft Farm, *c.* 0.9km northeast of the site, was excavated in advance of quarrying (MCB10522, ECB1109). The ring ditch, which was ovoid in shape, showed evidence of re-cutting and alteration. The first phase may potentially have been a Neolithic henge, while the second phase appears to have been a formalised ring ditch. Four features located within the ring ditch did not give any evidence as to the function of the feature, which was of possible ceremonial or ritual use. A potential Neolithic ditch system was also recorded here (MCB10523, ECB1109). Three parallel ditches were recorded, one of which contained a fragment of a loom weight, pottery sherds and a small amount of animal bone. Iron Age and Roman ditches are also recorded as a third phase of activity (MCB10521).

2.2.5 Approximately 1km southeast of the site, excavation on the floodplain at Barleycroft Farm prior to the expansion of quarrying revealed a large amount of prehistoric activity (MCB14053, ECB451). A Mesolithic tranchet axe was recorded during the excavation, which represents the earliest artefact recorded at the site. Numerous flint scatters, dating from *c.* 3500-1500 BC are recorded, representing intermittent activity at the site. Ditches were also recorded, which potentially represent a prehistoric field system. A small amount of Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery sherds was also recorded at the site.

2.2.6 A possible droveway, which culminates in a paddock-like enclosure, is recorded *c.* 1km southeast of the site (MCB10524, ECB1109). The two parallel ditches were recorded prior to gravel extraction.

2.2.7 Iron Age pottery sherds were recorded c. 450 m southwest of the site (MCB4456, ECB453). A prehistoric flake, Roman pottery, and ditches and pits associated with medieval gravel extraction were also recorded.

2.2.8 A large fragment of an Iron Age or Roman quernstone was found *c.* 600 m northeast

of the site (MCB18434). The stone was recorded in the parish boundary ditch for Bluntisham.

2.2.9 A rim sherd fragment of Bronze Age pottery was recorded *c.* 830 m southeast of the site during the ploughing of a field (MCB13746). Due to the unabraded condition of the sherd, it is considered to have possibly been ploughed out of a potential Bronze Age feature. Also recorded as unstratified was a small amount of Iron Age pottery, Roman pottery and post-medieval sherds.

2.2.10 Several pieces of worked flint were recorded from a quarry c. 1km southeast of the site (MCB16194). The flakes, some of which had evidence of having been rolled, were recorded in peat, above Jurassic clay.

Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)

2.2.11 No Romano-British finds or features are recorded within the site.

2.2.12 Romano-British finds and features have been recorded at Barleycroft Farm, *c.* 0.9km northeast of the site. Within this area numerous prehistoric features such as Neolithic pits and Bronze Age field systems and settlements were recorded. Roman finds and features have also been recorded here. The third phase of occupation comprised a Romano-British field system (MCB14052, ECB1161, ECB1329). The Roman field system was located at an angle to the earlier Bronze Age field system. As well as this, a sub-rectangular enclosure was recorded, which was cut by a Roman ditch.

2.2.13 Roman pottery was recovered at Barleycroft Farm, *c.* 1km southeast of the site (MCB14054, ECB451). Most of the pottery dated to the 1st century AD and the area was potentially utilised for agricultural purposes. No features could be certainly dated to the Romano British period.

2.2.14 A findspot of Roman pottery is recorded *c.* 85 m east of the site (MCB1116). The pottery, including an urn, olla, and jars of various wares, were recorded on a gravel subsoil at a depth of 1.2 m in the garden of 7 Council Cottages.

2.2.15 Roman pottery has also been recovered *c.* 30m and 390m southwest of the site, although it is uncertain if these records refer to the same finds (MCB4571, MCB4570). Most of the pottery dated to the late 1st century AD or early 2nd century AD.

2.2.16 Sherds of Roman pottery were recovered *c.* 450 m southwest of the site (MCB4457, ECB453, MCB 4541). The sherds were recorded in the topsoil during excavation which revealed a prehistoric flake, Iron Age pottery, and ditches and pits associated with medieval gravel extraction.

2.2.17 A small amount of Roman pottery was recorded during the ploughing of a field *c.* 800 m southeast of the site (MCB13746). Also recorded from the recently ploughed field was a sherd of Bronze Age pottery in good condition, Iron Age pottery and post-medieval pottery sherds.

2.2.18 A findspot of a Roman coin is recorded *c.* 0.9km southwest of the site (MCB 1115). The bronze coin, which depicts Posthumus, was recorded in 1936.

2.2.19 During archaeological trial trench evaluation *c.* 0.9km southeast of the site, a small Roman ditch was recorded that contained the remains of a Roman vessel (MCB19823, ECB3767). Also recorded was a potential prehistoric ditch, post-medieval pits and a post-medieval brick fragment.

Anglo-Saxon (AD 410 to 1066)

2.2.20 Anglo-Saxon pottery, including rims and bases, and medieval pottery, including two glazed sherds, are recorded *c.* 450 m southwest of the site (MCB4542, MCB4543). These pottery sherds, along with late Roman pottery fragments, were recorded as surface finds spread across residential gardens.

Medieval (1066 to 1485)

2.2.21 The site was historically located within the parish of Holywellcum-Needingworth and potentially formed part of the agricultural hinterland to this settlement from at least the medieval period. No early medieval or medieval finds or features are recorded within the site or in the immediate vicinity, other than remnant furrows that were shown on the geophysical survey of the site (Magnitude Surveys 2019). Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks are recorded by aerial photography *c.* 260m southeast of the site (MCB 15347). Further ridge and furrow earthworks are also recorded *c.* 800m southwest of the site and survive as cropmarks (MCB23255). Ridge and furrow earthworks and enclosures are also recorded *c.* 540m northeast of the site (MCB 23256). These are of unknown date, although the presence of ridge and furrow indicates medieval activity. Other undated enclosures and boundaries recorded by cropmarks are located *c.* 520m southwest and *c.* 550m southeast of the site (MCB23253, MCB23254). A ring ditch and enclosure of uncertain date are recorded *c.* 0.9km southeast of the site (MCB9768).

2.2.22 Ditches and pits associated with 14th to 16th-century gravel extraction are recorded *c.* 430m southwest of the site (MCB14642, ECB453). As well as these medieval remains, a prehistoric flake and Roman pottery was also recorded. Following the gravel extraction, the site was levelled.

2.2.23 The site of St James' Chapel is recorded *c.* 645m south of the site (MCB2005). The chapel was mentioned in 1252 and was utilised in the later 16th century, after which it is considered to have fallen into disuse. No remains are known to exist of St James' Chapel, and its precise location is uncertain, although it is considered to have been located in a field known as Chapel Close.

2.2.24 The fragments of a moulded decorated stone are recorded in a garden *c.* 845m south-east of the site (MCB16961). The decorated style of the limestone fragments is suggestive of a medieval date, although the cutting of the stone suggests a post-medieval alteration.

Post-medieval and modern (1485 to present)

2.2.25 The site is depicted on the Plan of the Lands belonging to the Duke and Earl of Manchester in the parish of Holywell-cum Needingworth 1764. The development area is located in an area labelled as 'Needingworth Plowed Land', to the northeast of the settlement adjacent to the road which leads out of Needingworth towards Bluntisham.

2.2.26 The site is depicted on the Holywell-cum-Needingworth Enclosure Map of 1803 as situated across part of one arable field under the ownership of James Britten.

2.2.27 The site is depicted on the Plan of the Lands belonging to the Duke of Manchester and the Rectory Estate of 1850 as situated within a field under the ownership of the late Mrs. Britten.

2.2.28 The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 depicts the site as situated across two fields. A building is depicted in the southeastern corner of the site, adjacent to Bluntisham Road (discussed further below). The Carpenters Arms, a former public house is recorded immediately east of the site, on the opposite side of Bluntisham Road (MCB23250). Victoria House, a residential dwelling, is also recorded on the First Edition map, located *c.* 100m south of the site (MCB 20717).

2.2.29 No major changes are depicted on the Second Ordnance Survey Map of 1902. A third field has been added in the southern area of the site adjacent to the building within the southeastern area of the development area.

2.2.30 No major changes are depicted on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1926. The fields located to the east of the site are utilised as orchards. A poultry farm is first depicted within the northern area of the site on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1973. The southern area of the site has been subdivided by this time.

2.2.31 Settlement at Needingworth primarily expanded east and south during the latter half

of the 20th century, with post-war construction infilling the settlement. The A1123 to the north of the site was constructed during the 1990s, which bypasses the settlement.

2.2.32 The building located in the southeastern corner of the site is first depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1888. It is a mix of brick and breezeblock construction with a corrugated iron roof. While there appears to be some survival of historic fabric, the building is in a poor condition and is overgrown. This building is not considered to be of sufficient significance to be considered a heritage asset.

2.2.33 Two gravel extraction pits are depicted and labelled on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 *c.* 275m and 445m southwest of the site (MCB20715, MCB20716). The cemetery at Needingworth, first depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map *c.* 400m southwest of the site, remains in use today (MCB 23251).

2.2.34 During archaeological trial trench evaluation, a line of small post-medieval pits was recorded *c.* 945m southeast of the site, one of which contained a large piece of post-medieval brick (MCB19823, ECB3767).

2.2.35 The site of Blacker's Hill Farm, depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, is recorded *c.* 0.9km west of the site (MCB20692).

2.2.36 The Great Northern and Great Eastern Joint Railway, which connected March to St Ives, was recorded *c.* 1km northwest of the site (MCB4528). The line was opened in 1848, closed to goods traffic in 1964, and closed completely in 1967.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The aim of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI (PCA 2020, 11), was to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site by trial trenching. This was achieved through the identification, sample excavation and recording of any archaeological remains encountered by the evaluation and determining their extent, date, character and state of preservation. The results of the evaluation will assist CCCHET in determining the nature and extent of any mitigation works that may be required.

3.2 Where appropriate, soil samples were taken for assessment, primarily to establish the palaeoenvironmental potential of the site but also to gain an insight into the range of activities (i.e. domestic, industrial, agricultural) that were undertaken at the site in the past.

3.3 In addition, particular attention was made to determine the presence/absence of palaeosols and old land surface soils/deposits, the presence of prehistoric and Romano-British remains below any alluvial deposits, palaeochannels and site formation processes generally.

3.4 To determine their significance in a local, regional and national context (as appropriate), reference has been made to the East Anglian regional research agendas:

- *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 1. Resource Assessment* (Glazebrook 1997);
- *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 2. Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000);
- *Regional Research Framework for the Eastern Region* (Medlycott and Brown 2008);
- *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 General

4.1.1 The evaluation, as outlined in the WSI (PCA 2020), was originally to comprise thirty-four 30m trial trenches (totalling 1020 linear metres, a *c.* 4% sample of accessible parts of the 6.44ha site). These were distributed evenly across the site in order to provide a representative sample of the development area.

4.1.2 However, the presence of asbestos prevented the opening of trenches in the northern part of the site (Trenches 1-2, 5-7, 9-12) and some of the trenches in the field to the south (Trenches 31-34). As a result of the contamination, twenty-one trenches were opened (Trenches 3-4, 8, 13-30), two of which had to be shortened (Trenches 27 and 29) in order to maintain a 20m buffer zone from any visible asbestos. Trench 4, which was located in the contaminated area, was machined on the first day of the evaluation under the supervision of the RSK asbestos specialist team, to ascertain the depth and level of contamination. Asbestos was present within the deposits being excavated. Following the advice of the specialist and in accordance with PCA's HS&E Policy, a 20m exclusion zone from all visible asbestos deposits had to be adhered to.

4.1.3 Due to the asbestos contamination, the presence of backfilled septic tanks in the northern field and the relatively low potential for significant archaeological remains (as indicated by the limited results in the trenches that were opened), a decision was made during a monitoring meeting between RPS and CCCHET that further evaluation of the contaminated areas was not required.

4.2 Excavation methodology

4.2.1 The trenches were excavated using 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and subsoil was removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded. The spoil was stored separately in temporary bunds alongside the trenches.

4.2.2 Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools.

4.3 Recording and finds recovery

4.3.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations

of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Leica GPS system with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.

4.3.2 All hand-excavation, investigation and recording were carried out in accordance with PCA's *Operations Manual I: Fieldwork Induction Manual* (Taylor and Brown 2009). Linear features were investigated by means of 1m-wide slots within the trenches. Where stratigraphic relationships between features could not be discerned in plan, relationship slots were also excavated and these were recorded as part of the GPS survey and noted on the relevant context sheets. Discrete features were half-sectioned, photographed and recorded by a cross-section scaled drawing at an appropriate scale (either 1:10 or 1:20).

4.3.3 High-resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits and were used to keep a record of the evaluation.

4.4 Metal-detecting

4.4.1 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping and throughout the excavation process. Archaeological features and spoil heaps were scanned by metal-detector periodically. No archaeologically significant metal objects were recovered by this means, the only material encountered being modern debris associated with the former use of the site as a farm/chicken sheds.

4.5 Environmental sampling

4.5.1 A single bulk sample (17 litres in volume) was taken from Ditch [5] in Trench 8 to extract and identify micro- and macro-botanical remains. The aim of this sampling was to investigate the past environment of the site and determine the site's palaeoenvironmental potential. An additional aim of the sampling was to recover small objects that are not readily recovered by hand-collection, such as metalworking debris and bones of fish and small animals. The samples were taken from sealed deposits.

5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

5.1 Paper archive

Context register sheets	3
Context sheets	11
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	22
Trench record sheets	21
Photo register sheets	5
Environmental register sheets	1

5.2 Digital archive

Digital photos	235
GPS survey files	6
Digital plans	5
Access database	1

5.3 Physical archive

Pottery	1
Animal bone	15 (249g)
Environmental bulk samples	1 (2no. 10 litre tubs)

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 The evaluation, as undertaken, consisted of the excavation of nineteen 30m trenches (Trenches 3, 4, 8, 13 - 26, 28, 30), one 20m trench (Trench 27) and one 17m trench (Trench 29) (a total of 607 linear metres of trench at 1.8m wide). The trenches were located to target the features identified by the geophysical survey and adequately sample areas not included in the geophysical survey.

6.1.2 Eleven trenches were found to contain archaeological features and or deposits (Trenches 8, 16 - 22, 24 - 26, and 30). The evaluation identified two undated ditches, an undated pit, twenty-one post-medieval furrows and two natural hollows.

6.1.3 The features and deposits investigated by the evaluation, the information relating to the trenches, the thicknesses of the ploughsoil and the depth of the geology are presented in Appendix 1. Eight trenches contained no archaeological features or deposits (Trenches 3, 4, 13-15, 23, 27, and 29).

6.2 General stratigraphy

6.2.1 The geological substrate (3) consisted predominantly of a compact, mid brownish-orange gravelly clay with chalk inclusions. In all trenches, the natural geology was directly overlain by the subsoil (2), a compact, mid reddish-brown silty clay with gravel and chalk inclusions, between 0.1-0.3m thick. The topsoil (1) consisted of firm, mid to dark greyish-brown clayey silt with gravel and chalk inclusions, between 0.1m and 0.35m thick.

6.2.2 In parts of the site medieval and/or post-medieval ridge and furrow ploughing had formed a regular pattern of undulations in the ground surface, the pattern corresponding with the furrows shown on the geophysical survey. The base of two of these furrows, [27] in Trench 25 and [47] in Trench 28, were investigated and found to have irregular, poorly-defined edges with sloping sides, flattish or uneven irregular bases and to vary in depth between 0.10m - 0.28m (Plates 7-8). Their fills were homogenous and contained no artefactual evidence.

6.3 Natural features

6.3.1 An irregular feature in Trench 8 was investigated and shown to be an animal burrow [55].

6.4 Post-medieval features

Furrows [7], [8], [14], [16], [18], [20], [21], [30], [32], [34], [36], [38], [40], [42], [44], [46], Trenches 18-22, 24-26. (Figs 3-5, Plate 12)

6.4.1 Twenty-one furrows were identified by the evaluation, of which sixteen were investigated by means of hand dug slots. The furrows were mostly aligned north to south ([14], [16], [20], [21], [30], [32], [34],[36], [38], [40], [42], [44] and, [46]) with a small number aligned north-north-east to south-south-west ([7], [8], [20]). The furrows measured between 0.47m - 1.2m wide and between 0.09m and 0.25m deep. They had gently sloping to steep sides and usually concave bases (Fig. 5, Section 16). Their fills were compact to firm, mid yellowish-brown sandy clay, a result of natural infilling. Furrow [46] yielded a single sherd of Staffordshire-type combed slipware, dated 1660-1870 (Ruth Beveridge, pers. comm). Within the site several land drains were also identified, that were running on the same alignment as the furrows.

6.4.2 The furrows roughly corresponded with the features identified by the geophysical survey; however, in some instances the trenches contained more features than shown on the geophysics, while on other occasions features identified by the geophysical survey were not identified during the evaluation.

Ditch [49]/[53] and pit/ditch or furrow terminus [51], Trench 30 (Figs 4-5, Plate 11)

6.4.3 Ditch [49]/[53] (Fig. 5, Section 20) was identified running west-north-west to east-south-east along the southern edge of Trench 30. It measured between 0.68-0.85m wide and 0.33-0.38m deep. It had moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single, sterile, homogenous fill (50)/(54), a firm, mid greyish-brown, sandy clay, a result of natural infilling. The ditch appears on the Second Edition OS Map 1902 (Fig. 6).

6.4.4 A possible pit/ditch or furrow terminus [53] was identified centrally within Trench 30. Its relationship with ditch [49]/[53] was undeterminable due to their identical, homogenous fills. The feature measured approximately 0.68m wide and 0.33m deep. It had gently sloping sides, and a concave base. Its homogenous fill (52) contained no dating evidence, however its similarity with the fill of ditch [49]/[51] indicates that the features were roughly contemporary.

6.5 Undated features

Ditch [5], Trench 8 (Figs 4-5, Plates 3-5)

6.5.1 Ditch [5] (Fig. 5, Section 1) was identified in the central part of Trench 8. It ran on an east-north-east to west-south-west alignment and measured 0.5m wide by 0.25m deep. It had moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single, homogeneous fill (4), a firm, mid brownish-grey, silty clay, which was a result of natural infilling. The ditch did not appear on any historical maps.

Pit [11], Trench 26 (Figures 4-5, Plate 6)

6.5.2 Pit [11] (Fig. 5, Section 4) was identified in the central part of Trench 26. It was circular in plan, measuring approximately 0.52m in diameter and 0.44m in depth. It had very steep, almost vertical sides, and a concave base. It contained a single, sterile, homogenous fill (12), a compact, mid reddish-brown clayey silt, which was a result of natural infilling.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 Animal bone *by Ryan Desrosiers*

7.1.1 A small assemblage of animal bone (15 fragments, 249g) was collected from two features. These remains consist of taxa from the order of mammals (Mammalia). All specimens do not display direct evidence of human consumption and are very poorly preserved, likely due to acidic soil conditions. However, some of the material recovered from sample <1> displayed evidence of burning. Due to such poor preservation the majority of these fragments were not identifiable to taxon but have been identified to approximate size class.

7.1.2 The single fill (4) of ditch [5] yielded the greatest overall quantity of remains, with the material recovered from sample <1> being wholly unidentifiable and the hand-collected material identified as a partially fragmented left horse tibia. Within the fill (39) of furrow [40], a partially fragmented and substantially waterworn cattle-sized metacarpal was recovered.

7.1.3 Overall, very little can be inferred regarding possible subsistence or animal husbandry practices from such a small assemblage. If no further work is warranted, these specimens should not be retained as part of the site archive.

7.2 Environmental assessment *by Tegan Abel*

Introduction

7.2.1 This report summarises the findings from the assessment of a single bulk environmental sample (volume 17 litres) taken from fill (4) of ditch [5]. The aims of the report are as follows: 1- To give an overview of the ecofacts and artefacts extracted from the bulk samples; 2- To evaluate the potential of the environmental remains and, 3- To make recommendations for additional analysis.

Methodology

7.2.2 Prior to being processed, the sediment volume was measured and recorded, the data for which is presented in Appendix 2. The sample was processed using a modified SIRAF floatation system; the flot residue was collected using a 300 µm mesh and the heavy residue, a 3mm mesh. After being left to dry naturally, the residue was sieved through 2mm, 5mm and 10mm sieves, and sorted to remove ecofacts and artefacts; material was recorded using a non-linear scale, as follows: 1- occasional (1-10), 2- fairly frequent (11-30), 3- frequent (31-100) and abundant (31-100).

7.2.3 The light residue was examined under a low-power binocular microscope and the contents recorded, with abundances being quantified as above.

Results

Sample <1> fill (4) ditch [5].

7.2.4 Sample <1> was taken from fill (4) of ditch [5]. Charcoal occurred commonly in this sample, which contained a high abundance of fragmented specimens. Less than 10 pieces are suitable for species identification (>4mm). Charred seeds and cereals were also present in low quantities, as was a low abundance of vitrified material. Modern plant remains and roots/tubers were present, in addition to insects and insect eggs/worm cases, which may suggest that the context suffered from bioturbation. Also noted in the retent was a low abundance of fragmented animal bone. No artefacts were present in this sample.

Conclusion

7.2.5 An assessment of the single environmental sample taken from the site has provided evidence for the potential preservation of carbonised plant material and other ecofacts at this site. Vitrified material may also suggest burning of organic remains at high temperatures. Charred seeds and cereals were not present in large enough quantities to warrant further analysis. The presence of unburnt plant material, roots and insect remains could indicate post-depositional disturbance to this context, so the charcoal would be unsuitable for radiocarbon dating due to the high potential for contamination.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Geophysical survey of the site had indicated the presence of ridge and furrow. This was confirmed by the results of the evaluation. The furrows, which were found scattered across the site, roughly corresponded with the features identified by the geophysical results. A few features which were identified within the Trenches, including ditch [5] in Trench 8, a small pit [11] in Trench 26 and a natural hollow [27] in Trench 25, were not shown on the geophysical survey.

8.2 The activity on site was characterised by post-medieval/modern furrows running on two alignments, the majority roughly north-south and a few north-north-west to south-south east or north-west to south-east. The furrows were morphologically similar and contained very little artefactual evidence. The site is known to have been farmland since its first depiction on the 1764 Plan of the lands belonging to the Duke and Earl of Manchester in the parish of Holywell-cum-Needingworth, bearing the label 'Needingworth Plowed Land'. It is very likely that the agricultural character of the site goes back to at least the medieval period and that it would have been part of an open field or pasture surrounding the medieval settlement. Later maps show that the site remained in agricultural use until the erection of the poultry sheds in the northern part of the site in the late 20th century. Most recently, the middle part of the field was used as cattle pasture, whereas the southern part contained sheds, animal enclosures and a band of woodland which was still extant at the time of the evaluation.

8.3 The evaluation also identified two ditches in Trenches 8 and 30 and one pit in Trench 26. The ditch in Trench 30 is shown on the Second Edition OS Map 1902 (Fig. 6) where it is seen enclosing a small area in the south-eastern part of the site, adjacent to a building. This area perhaps acted as an allotment with the ditch acting as boundary between this and the rest of the farmland/pasture. The ditch identified in Trench 8 contained no dating evidence and it did not appear on any historical maps, which might hint at its earlier, perhaps medieval, origins.

8.4 The pit identified in Trench 26 did not yield any dating evidence and therefore little can be said about its origins or purpose.

8.5 Although, the most northern and most southern parts of the site remain unevaluated due to the asbestos contamination it is perhaps safe to assume that the potential of encountering archaeologically significant features or deposits in the unexcavated thirteen trenches was relatively low. It is likely however that the unexcavated trenches

would contain further evidence for ridge-and furrow as well as two post-medieval boundaries shown on the Second Edition OS Map 1902 – one of which was already identified in Trench 30. The site was historically known to have played an agricultural role, which was confirmed by the results of the excavation of remaining, accessible trenches. The ridge-and-furrow was not found to 'mask' any settlement related features. The northern part of the site, which was covered in demolition rubble, was subjected to heavy truncation in the time when the former bungalow, garden plots and sheds were erected – this involving some landscaping and the establishment of septic tanks which presence was confirmed by RSK.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank David Wilson Homes for commissioning and funding the work through their consultant RPS Group and Kerry Hopper of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. PCA are also grateful to the RSK asbestos specialist team for monitoring the excavation of the trenches.

9.2 The fieldwork was undertaken by Judy Mlynarska (Project Officer), Amanda Hayes and Sarah Ebbage. The report was written by Judy Mlynarska and Sarah Ebbage, with specialist contributions from Ruth Beveridge, Ryan Desrosiers and Tegan Abel, and the figures were prepared by Rosie Scales. The project was managed for PCA by Simon Carlyle and for RPS by Simon Mortimer.

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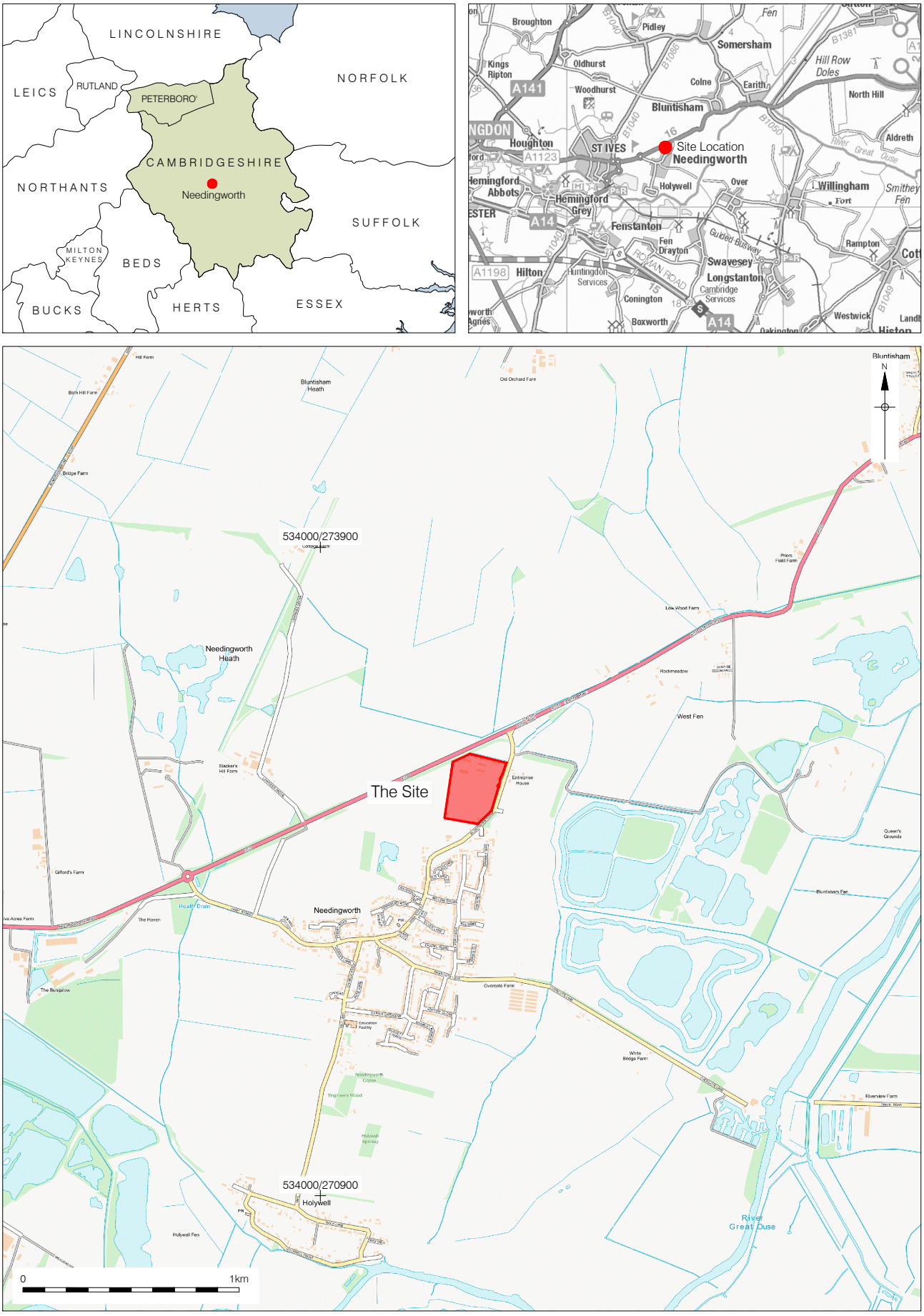


28/09/2020 RS

Figure 1
Site Location
1:2,000,000, 1:250,000, 1:25,000 at A4

28/09/2020 RS

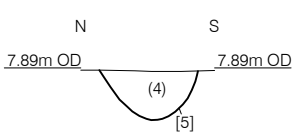
Figure 2
Excavated Trenches
1:1250 at A4

28/09/2020 RS

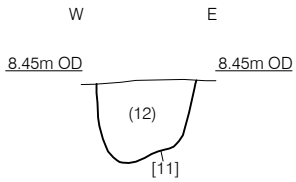
Figure 3
Phased features on Geophysics Interpretation
1:1250 at A4

28/09/2020 RS

Figure 4
Phased plan
1:1250 at A4



Section 1
Trench 8
West Facing



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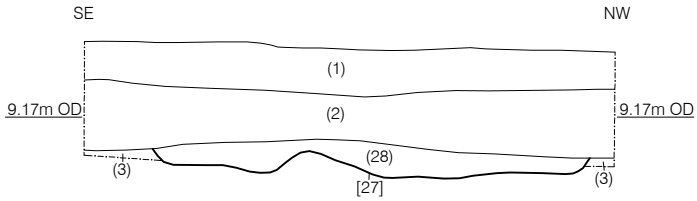
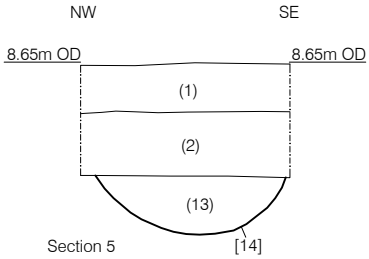
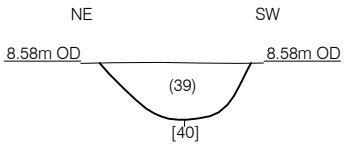
Trench 26
South Facing



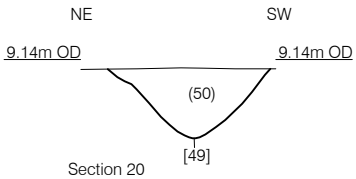
Section 10
Trench 25
Northeast Facing



Section 5
Trench 18
Southwest Facing



Section 16
Trench 24
Northwest Facing



Section 20
Trench 30
Northwest Facing

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Figure 5
Selected Sections
1:40 at A4

Second Edition OS Map of 1902 from Land off Bluntisham Road, Needingworth, Heritage Desk-Based Assessment, Pegasus Group

28/09/2020 RS

Figure 6
Second Edition OS Map 1902
1:1250 at A4

PLATES

Plate 1: The demolition rubble containing asbestos in the northern field, view east

Plate 2: The southern part of the southern field with visible fragments of asbestos, view west

Plate 3: Trench 8, with ditch [5] visible in background, view east

Plate 4: Ditch [5], Trench 8, view east

Plate 5: Sampling of ditch [5], Trench 8, view west

Plate 6: Undated pit [11], Trench 26, view north

Plate 7: Natural hollow [27], Trench 25, view south-west

Plate 8: Natural hollow [47], Trench 28, view south-west

Plate 9: Trench 30, view west

Plate 10: Ditch [49], Trench 30, view east

Plate 11: Ditch [51] and pit/ ditch or furrow terminus [53], Trench 30, view west

Plate 12: Furrow [46] Trench 24, view north

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX AND TRENCH DETAILS

Context No	Cut	Trench	Type	Category	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)	Description
1	0	0	Layer	Topsoil	0	0	0	Compact, mid to dark greyish-brown, silty clay.
2	0	0	Layer	Subsoil	0	0	0	Compact, mid reddish-brown, silty clay.
3	0	0	Layer	Natural	0	0	0	Compact, mid reddish-yellow, silty clayey gravel.
4	5	8	Fill	Ditch	1.4	0.5	0.25	Firm, mid brownish-grey, silty clay.
5	5	8	Cut	Ditch	1.4	0.5	0.25	Linear in plan, moderately sloping sides, concave base, ENE-WSW aligned.
6	7	25	Cut	Furrow	1.48	1.2	0.1	Firm, mid brownish-grey, silty clay.
7	7	25	Cut	Furrow	1.48	1.2	0.1	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, flat base, NE-SW aligned.
8	8	26	Cut	Furrow	1.3	0.77	0.59	Linear in plan, irregular sides, concave base, NNE -SSW aligned.
9	8	26	Fill	Furrow	0.7	0.58	0.43	Compact, mid greyish-brown, clayey silt.
10	8	26	Fill	Furrow	1.3	0.77	0.16	Compact, mid yellowish-brown, clayey silt.
11	11	26	Cut	Pit	0	0.52	0.44	Circular in plan, vertical sides, concave base.
12	11	26	Fill	Pit	0	0.52	0.44	Compact, mid reddish-brown, clayey silt.
13	14	18	Fill	Furrow	1	0.51	0.16	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
14	14	18	Cut	Furrow	1	0.51	0.16	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
15	16	18	Fill	Furrow	1	0.53	0.8	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
16	16	18	Cut	Furrow	1	0.53	0.8	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
17	18	19	Fill	Furrow	1	0.66	0.13	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
18	18	19	Cut	Furrow	1	0.66	0.13	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, uneven base, N-S aligned.
19	20	20	Fill	Furrow	1	0.6	0.1	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
20	20	20	Cut	Furrow	1	0.6	0.1	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, uneven base, NNE-SSW aligned.
21	21	26	Cut	Furrow	0.9	0.47	0.18	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
22	21	26	Fill	Furrow	0.9	0.47	0.18	Compact, mid greyish-brown, clayey silt.
23	23	26	Cut	Drain	0.35	0.19	0.25	Linear in plan, moderately sloping sides, concave base, NNE-SSE aligned.
24	23	26	Fill	Drain	0.35	0.19	0.25	Compact, mid greyish-brown, clayey silt.
25	25	26	Cut	Pit	0.55	0.75	0.86	Sub-rectangular in plan, verticle sides, flat base.
26	25	26	Fill	Pit	0.55	0.75	0.86	Compact, mottled, mid blueish-grey clay mixed with gravel abd mid to dark greyish-brown, silty clay.
27	27	25	Cut	Hollow	0.85	2.29	0.19	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, NNE-SSW aligned.
28	27	25	Fill	Hollow	0.85	2.29	0.19	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
29	30	21	Fill	Furrow	1	0.81	0.11	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
30	30	21	Cut	Furrow	1	0.81	0.11	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
31	32	21	Fill	Furrow	1	0.6	0.08	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
32	32	21	Cut	Furrow	1	0.6	0.08	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
33	34	22	Fill	Furrow	1	0.64	0.08	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.

Context No	Cut	Trench	Type	Category	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)	Description
34	34	22	Cut	Furrow	1	0.64	0.08	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
35	36	21	Fill	Furrow	1	0.64	0.09	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
36	36	21	Cut	Furrow	1	0.64	0.09	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
37	38	21	Fill	Furrow	1	0.55	0.1	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
38	38	21	Cut	Furrow	1	0.55	0.1	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
39	40	24	Fill	Furrow	1	0.6	0.25	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
40	40	24	Cut	Furrow	1	0.6	0.25	Linear in plan, steep sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
41	42	24	Fill	Furrow	1	0.85	0.1	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
42	42	24	Cut	Furrow	1	0.85	0.1	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
43	44	24	Fill	Furrow	1	0.61	0.17	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
44	44	24	Cut	Furrow	1	0.61	0.17	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
45	46	24	Fill	Furrow	1	1	0.1	Firm, mid yellowish-brown, sandy clay.
46	46	24	Cut	Furrow	1	1	0.1	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, N-S aligned.
47	47	28	Cut	Geological Feature	1	2.65	0.28	Linear in plan, modereate-gentle uneven sides, flatish uneven base, NE-SW aligned.
48	47	28	Fill	Geological Feature	1	2.65	0.28	Firm, mid greyish-brown, with reddish hue, sandy clay.
49	49	30	Cut	Ditch	1	0.85	0.38	Linear in plan, moderately sloping sides, concave base, WNW-ESE aligned.
50	49	30	Fill	Ditch	1	0.85	0.38	Firm, mid greyish-brown, sandy clay.
51	51	30	Cut	Pit	0.63	0.63	0.15	Sub-circular in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base.
52	51	30	Fill	Pit	0.63	0.63	0.15	Compact, mid- dark greyish-brown, slightly silty clay.
53	53	30	Cut	Ditch	1	0.68	0.33	Linear in plan, gently sloping sides, concave base, WNW-ESE aligned.
54	53	30	Fill	Ditch	1	0.68	0.33	Firm, mid greyish-brown, with reddish hue, sandy clay.
55	55	8	Cut	Pit	0.77	0.77		Sub-circular in plan, steep sides, concave base.
56	55	8	Fill	Pit	0.77	0.77		Compact, mid to dark greyish-brown, silty clay.

Trench Number	Alignment	L (m)	Topsoil thickness End 1 (m)	Subsoil thickness End 1 (m)	Topsoil thickness End 2 (m)	Subsoil thickness End 2 (m)	Summary of Archaeological Features
4	NNE-SSW	30	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	Trench not investigated due to asbestos contamination.
3	WNW-ESE	30	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	Trench not investigated due to asbestos contamination.
14	WNW-ESE	30	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	No archaeology present
13	NNW-SSE	30	0.25	0.3	0.25	0.3	No archaeology present
17	WNW-ESE	30	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	Three unexcavated furrows
15	NNE-SSW	30	0.3	0.25	0.2	0.25	No archaeology present

Trench Number	Alignment	L (m)	Topsoil thickness End 1 (m)	Subsoil thickness End 1 (m)	Topsoil thickness End 2 (m)	Subsoil thickness End 2 (m)	Summary of Archaeological Features
8	WNW-ESE	30	0.25	0.45	0.25	0.45	Ditch [5], Pit [55].
16	WNW-ESE	30	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	Two unexcavated furrow and modern pit
22	WNW-ESE	30	0.25	0	0.25	0	Furrow, [34].
19	NE-SW	30	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.3	Furrow, [18].
20	NW-SE	30	0.25	0.1	0.25	0.1	Furrow, [20].
18	WNW-ESE	30	0.2	0.2	0.15	0.15	Furrows [14], [16].
21	W-E	30	0.25	0.15	0.25	0.15	Furrows, [30], [32].
26	N-S	30	0.1	0.35	0.2	0.35	Furrow, [8], [21], Pit, [11], [25], Drain, [23].
25	NW-SE	30	0.3	0.3	0.25	0.25	Furrow, [27], Drain [7].
28	NW-SE	30	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	Geological feature [47].
24	WNW-ESE	30	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.1	Furrows, [40], [42], [44], [46].
27	NNE-SSW	20	0.2	0.4	0.15	0.2	No archaeology present
30	WNW-ESE	30	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4	Ditch, [49], [51], Pit [53].
23	NNW-SSE	30	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	Furrow, [36], [38].
29	NNE-SSW	17	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	No archaeology present

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INFORMATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

Sample Number	1
Context Number	4
Feature Number	5
Volume of flot (milliliters)	35
Volume of residue (liters)	17
FLOT RESIDUE:	
Charcoal	
Charcoal >4mm	1
Charcoal 2-4mm	2
Charcoal <2mm	4
Seeds	
Charred seeds	1
Indeterminate charred seeds	1
Cereals	
Charred cereal	1
Indeterminate cereal grains	2
Other plant macrofossils	
Modern plant material	2
Roots/ tubers	2
Other remains	
Insect eggs/ worm cases	1
Insect remains	1
Black vitrified material	1
HEAVY RESIDUE:	
Charcoal	
Charcoal >4mm	1
Charcoal 2-4mm	4
Seeds	
Charred seed	1
Cereal	
Charred cereal	1
Other	
Animal bone	1

APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-404824

Project details

Project name	Bluntisham Road, Needingworth, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	The evaluation confirmed the presence of furrows, the remnants of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing, as identified by the geophysical survey. The evaluation also identified a post-medieval ditch shown on the Second Edition OS Map 1902 in Trench 30, an undated ditch in Trench 8 and an undated pit in Trench 26. Eight trenches contained no archaeological features or deposits. The evaluation demonstrated that the site has been used as farmland since at least the medieval period and that there was no evidence for activity on the site prior to the medieval period. However, the northern and southern parts of the site remain unevaluated due to asbestos contamination and the presence of backfilled septic tanks.
Project dates	Start: 14-09-2020 End: 30-09-2020
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB6211 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Monument type	DITCH Post Medieval
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Monument type	FURROW Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	''Sample Trenches'',''Targeted Trenches''
Development type	Housing estate
Prompt	Planning condition

Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE HUNTINGDONSHIRE HOLYWELL CUM NEEDINGWORTH Land off Bluntisham Road, Needingworth
Postcode	PE27 4TA
Study area	6.44 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 34715 72792 52.336241985238 -0.022531832625 52 20 10 N 000 01 21 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 8m Max: 8m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire County Council
Project design originator	Simon Carlyle
Project director/manager	Simon Carlyle
Project supervisor	Judyta Mlynarska
Type of sponsor/funding body	House Builder

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Archive Facility
Physical Archive ID	ECB6211
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Environmental"
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Archive Facility

Digital Archive ID	ECB6211
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Database","Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Archive Facility
Paper Archive ID	ECB6211
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land off Bluntisham Road, Needingworth, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Mlynarska, J
Other bibliographic details	R14254
Date	2020
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Place of issue or publication	Pampisford
Description	A4 format, 44 pages, 6 figs, 11 plates

Entered by	Judy Mlynarska (jmlynarska@pre-construct.com)
Entered on	10 November 2020

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