

**LAND TO THE REAR OF
BARSBY COOKED MEATS,
NORTHEY ROAD,
PETERBOROUGH,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

NGR REF: TL 23037 98393



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

JANUARY 2015

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Land to the Rear of Barsby Cooked Meats, Northey Road, Peterborough: Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Independent Archaeology Consultants 27 January 2015 for a new development on land to the rear of Barsby Cooked Meats, Northey Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered during the fieldworks, although older buried peat horizons were observed. Such peat layers are fairly common in the Cambridgeshire Fenland, and have been documented at a number of archaeological investigations in the area.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site was located on land to the rear of Barsby Cooked Meats, Northey Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 23037 98393) (Figure 1-2). The area affected by the development was ca. 1200m² and the evaluation trenches covered together an area of about 52m², or ca. 4% of this area. The project was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2001), as well as discussions with Rebecca Casa-Hatton, Archaeological Officer for Peterborough. The project was based on a WSI, which complies with the principles of NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework 2012).
- 1.2 Independent Archaeology Consultants is an archaeological consultancy company based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. The company subscribes to the Code of Conduct issued by the IfA. All relevant IfA Codes of Practice were adhered to throughout the course of the project.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning Permission has been granted (14/01375/FUL) for a new development at Northey Road, Peterborough. The development comprised the retention of two touring caravans, one new static caravan with facilities block and relocation of existing stables.
- 2.2 The development site was located about 3km east of Peterborough, on the west side of Northey Road and to the north of the River Nene. It enclosed a rectangular area of some 1200m² at an average height of 4m AOD. The solid geology comprised Oxford Clay over First River Terrace gravel.
- 2.3 The site was situated within an area of archaeological potential, as defined by Peterborough HER. Therefore, an archaeological evaluation was required prior to any construction on the site. This condition was mentioned in the Planning Permission granted by Peterborough City Council, and was in line with standards described in NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Although, there were no known archaeological remains within the proposed development site, a number of archaeological features were present in the surrounding landscape.
- 3.2 The proposed development site was located between two Scheduled Monuments of national importance; Flag Fen Bronze Age Centre (Scheduled Monument 469510) to the north, and a Roman site (Scheduled Monument 20804 - provisional) to the south.
- 3.3 The proposed development had, however, no direct impact on the Scheduled Monuments, even though it may have a visual impact on their settings.
- 3.4 There was also a risk that the proposed development affected buried remains, with particular reference to the evidence for Neolithic/Bronze Age domestic, rural and funerary activities recorded immediately to the south and east of the site. The existence of Roman remains was also taken into consideration, given the location of the scheduled rural site immediately to the south of the River Nene.
- 3.5 The proposed development site was located in an area of known archaeological interest, between Scheduled Monument 469510 (List Entry No. 1406460) to the north and Scheduled Monument 20804 (provisional) (List Entry No. 1009992) to the south.
- 3.6 Scheduled Monument 469510 contains a Bronze Age post alignment and timber platform to the east of Fengate Power Station, including Bronze Age and later field systems and settlement to either side of Northey Road. The degree of preservation of the Flag Fen timber post alignment, platform and associated Bronze Age and later occupation evidence is outstanding, while the survival of features on the dry gravels to the east is good, and their condition apparently stable. In addition, the post alignment and timber platform at Flag Fen represent a class of monument where relatively few examples survive and are well documented.
- 3.7 Amongst these it is unique for its scale, completeness, longevity and complexity. The direct association of the post alignment, platform and Roman causeway with field systems and other features on the Northey side of the Flag Fen further enhances the interest of both. Waterlogged deposits and artefacts are vulnerable to changes in water levels and to the effects of encroaching development.
- 3.8 Scheduled Monument 20804 in Whittlesey Parish contains the remains of a series of undated, probably Roman, large rectilinear field enclosures and associated ditched trackways, visible as earthworks on aerial photographs. Roman activity in the area is well documented, and includes Nene Valley-type

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pottery kilns, settlement remains, burials, trackways (including the Fen Causeway) and extensive field systems. However, Roman earthwork sites are rare. Therefore, Scheduled Monument PE20804 is a site of national importance within the local context of a rich Roman landscape which is known to extend from the eastern edge of the Peterborough area into the Fenland.

- 3.9 Immediately to the south of the proposed development site Neolithic/Bronze Age cut features were recorded in 1982 during the dyke survey by the Fenland Archaeological Trust along Counter Drain through the south west edge of Northey Island. Flint, pottery and bones were also found. These remains are probably part of the general settlement evidence and field system from Northey Island to the east to Fengate to the west, across the Flag Fen basin, which have been subjected to investigations since the 1970s.
- 3.10 The general area also contains ring ditches visible on aerial photographs. These features are likely to represent Bronze Age barrow mounds and are among the few visible earthwork remains within a well recorded prehistoric ritual and funerary landscape of national significance in the Wash area and on the gravel terraces of the River Nene.
- 3.11 The proposed development site therefore contained the potential for the preservation of archaeological deposits predominately relating to the Bronze Age and Roman periods. This did not, however, prejudice the investigation against features and finds relating to other periods.

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Figure 1 Site Location

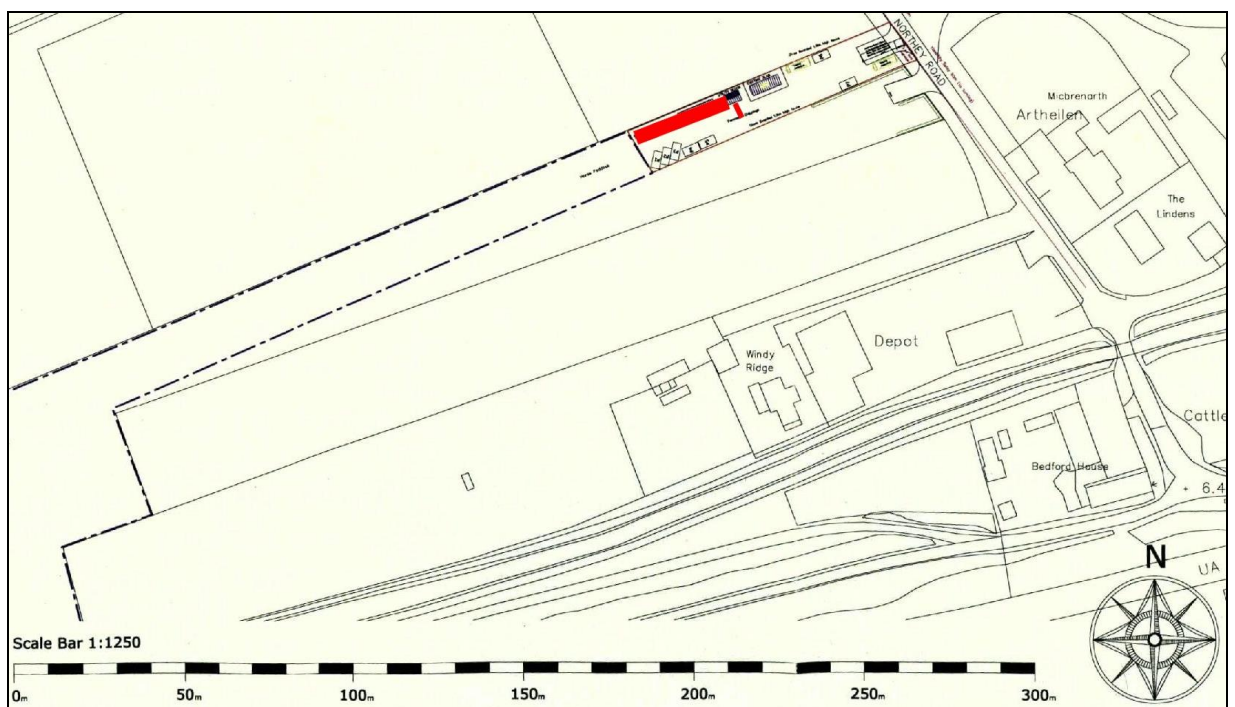


Figure 2 Trench Locations

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4 AIMS

4.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

- to gain information about the heritage assets within the proposed development areas;
- to provide detailed information regarding the date, character, extent, integrity and degree of preservation of the identified heritage assets;
- to inform a strategy for the recording, preservation and/or management of the identified assets;
- to mitigate potential threats;
- to inform proposals for further archaeological investigations (namely, targeted area excavations) within the ongoing programme of research;
- to define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains;
- to interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional, and national, archaeological context.

4.2 The archaeological evaluation also considered the general investigative themes outlined in: Medlycott, M. 2011 (ed.) *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24; *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties* (Glazebrook 1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000), *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda* (1997); *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005 - 2010* (English Heritage 2005).

4.3 Specifically, the following investigative aims were accommodated in the programme of archaeological work:

- *characterisation of the sites in the broader landscape;
- *characterisation of the activities identified on the site;
- *characterisation of changes affecting land-use through time

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 Two evaluation trenches, the first 25m x 2m and the second 2m x 1m, were opened up within the proposed development area. Both trenches were entirely situated within the footprints of the new buildings, or in areas of proposed ground disturbance. The two trenches were between 0.6m-1.4m deep and were dug down to natural deposits.
- 5.2 This was achieved through the use of a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Thereafter all cleaning and excavation of the trenches was conducted by hand. The site archaeologist was granted the opportunity to clean and record all exposed deposits.
- 5.3 All groundwork was carried out in a way that allowed early identification of archaeological features. In some cases the trenches were excavated to a lower depth than necessary to allow interpreting of the natural deposits within the site. No features suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.
- 5.4 All man-made features were investigated and all deposits were cleaned and recorded sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character and relationship with other features in the surrounding landscape.
- 5.5 Decisions about the relative value of the deposits and features within the site were made in consultation with the Archaeological Officer for Peterborough City Council.
- 5.6 Through metal detector sweeps of exposed features and spoil heaps were carried out in advance of, and during, the excavation process. Deeply buried signals were investigated only if agreed as part of the hand excavation programme.
- 5.7 All man-made features were investigated. Apparently natural features (such as tree throws and natural strips of clay in the natural) were sampled sufficiently to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity. Hand excavation was sufficient to establish the date and character, and to allow appropriate levels of recording.
- 5.8 Deposits and layers (including buried horizons) were sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features. Thereafter, mechanical removal and visual scanning for artefacts was accepted.

6 RECORDING

- 6.1 Each context was recorded separately by means of a written description. The stratigraphic relationships of each context were also recorded. Independent Archaeology Consultant's *pro forma* record sheets were used throughout. An index was kept of all record types and the trenches were described through written and photographic recording, even where no archaeological deposits were identified.
- 6.2 Each deposit was recorded by means of a measured plan at an appropriate scale. All trenches, plans and sections were accurately referenced to the Ordnance Survey grid and given spot heights related to Ordnance Datum.
- 6.3 Sections were recorded by means of a measured drawing at an appropriate scale. The locations of all sections were recorded on the site plan.
- 6.4 All drawn records were clearly marked with a unique site number, and was individually identified. The scale of the plan was recorded and all drawings were made on dimensionally stable media.
- 6.5 A photographic record comprising monochrome, colour prints/slides and digital photos formed part of the site record. Each excavation context was recorded photographically prior to removal. Every photo contains an appropriately sized scale and a north arrow.

7 RESULTS

Trench 1

- 7.1 The lowest deposit encountered in Trench 1 was the natural ground consisting of orange/light yellow, compact gravel. No archaeological features were identified as being cut into the natural. Overlaying the natural was a 0.05-0.10m thick, light brown, plastic organic layer, possible a decomposed peat layer, (104). Although this layer was hand excavated using a mattock, shovel and trowel it contained no archaeological finds or features.
- 7.2 Overlaying (104) was a 0.12m thick, dark brown, soft, organic layer of peat (103). Peat layers, such as (103) and (104), are common in the Fenland and have been documented at a number of archaeological investigations in the area. However, no archaeological finds or features were discovered in any of these layers.
- 7.3 Overlaying (103) was the 0.2m thick subsoil (102) consisting of dark grey, plastic silty clay with occasional small stones. The uppermost deposit in Trench 1 consisted of the 0.3m thick topsoil of dark brown, soft silty clay with frequent roots and occasional small stones (101).

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Trench 2

- 7.4 As Trench 2 was dug down to a deeper level than Trench 1 two different layers of natural deposits were encountered. The lower layer of natural ground consisted of light yellow, soft sand, while the 0.4m thick upper natural consisted of orange/light yellow, compact gravel. No archaeological features were identified as being cut into any of these layers of natural deposits.
- 7.5 Overlaying the upper natural in Trench 2 was the 0.2m thick subsoil (202) consisting of dark grey, plastic silty clay with occasional small stones. The uppermost deposit in Trench 2 consisted of the 0.3m thick topsoil of dark brown, soft silty clay with frequent roots and occasional small stones (201).

8 DISCUSSION

- 8.1 No archaeological finds or features were encountered during the archaeological evaluation on the land to the rear of Barsby Cooked Meats at Northey Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. Two buried peat horizons were discovered, but they contained no archaeological features or artefacts. They are a kind of peat layers known to have been built up over the centuries in the wet Fenland.
- 8.2 The surrounding area, however, contains well preserved remains, predominately dating from the Bronze Age and Roman periods. Future investigations can therefore hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the development of the cultural landscape east of Peterborough.
- 8.3 As the proposed development site was located in an area of known archaeological interest, between Scheduled Monument 469510 (Flag Fen) to the north and Scheduled Monument 20804 (the Roman settlement) to the south, further investigations of the surroundings would be of great scientific interest. Even if no archaeological remains were found during the evaluation in January 2015 the area is likely to contain rich archaeological deposits.

9 ARCHIVE

The site archive consists of the following:

The Project Brief, the Project Report, the Written Scheme of Investigation, the primary Site Records, and the Photographic and Drawn Records.

The archive is currently maintained by Independent Archaeology Consultants. The archive will be transferred to:

Peterborough Museum, Priestgate, Peterborough, PE1 1LF, Cambridgeshire

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APPENDICES

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context Nr	Depth (m)	Description	Younger than	Older than
		Trench 1 (2m by 25m)		
(101)	0.3	Topsoil of dark brown, soft silty clay with frequent roots and occasional small stones	(102)	-
(102)	0.2	Subsoil of dark grey, plastic silty clay with occasional small stones	(103)	(101)
(103)	0.12	Dark brown, soft, organic peat	(104)	(102)
(104)	0.05-0.10	Light brown, plastic organic layer, possible a decomposed peat layer	Natural	(103)
Natural	?	Upper natural of orange/light yellow, compact gravel	?	(104)
		Trench 2 (1m by 2m)		
(201)	0.3	Topsoil of dark brown, soft silty clay with frequent roots and occasional small stones	(202)	-
(202)	0.2	Subsoil of dark grey, plastic silty clay with occasional small stones	Natural 1	(201)
Natural 1	0.4	Upper natural of orange/light yellow, compact gravel	Natural 2	(202)
Natural 2	?	Lower natural of light yellow, soft sand	?	Natural 1

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