

GFCW



GAMMONS FARM CLOSE, WATFORD

Archaeological Evaluation

for Affinity Sutton

11/00272/FULM

March 2012

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HA Job no.: GFCW

NGR: TQ 09711 99235 (Site Centre)

Parish: Watford

Council: Watford Borough

OASIS ref.: headland3-119922

HER no.: HER 15379

Archive will be deposited with Watford museum

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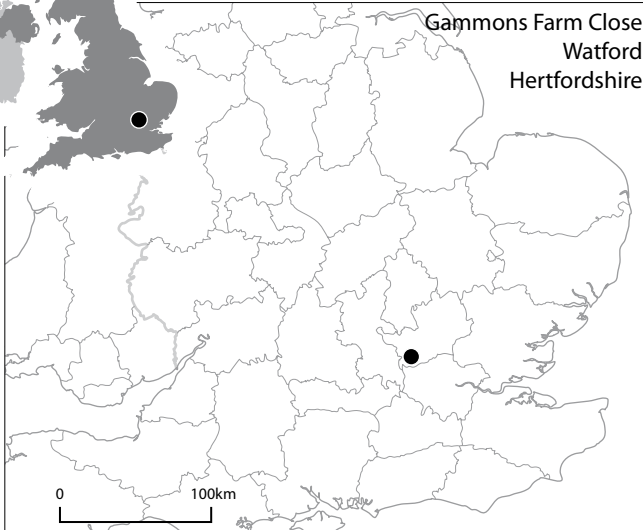
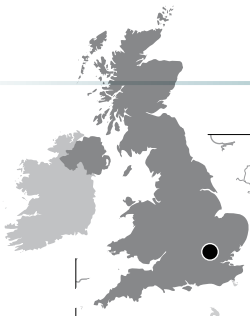
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Scale 1:1,250 @ A4



Illus 1
Site location

GAMMONS FARM CLOSE, WATFORD

Archaeological Evaluation

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd. excavated eight evaluation trenches on a derelict plot of land at Gammons Farm Close, Watford. A number of walls and rubbish pits relating to the use of the site as a working farm were revealed. Ground levels on the site had been raised during the 20th century. No significant archaeological finds or features were revealed during the course of the evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd. was commissioned by Affinity Sutton to carry out an archaeological evaluation at Gammons Farm Close in Watford. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has granted conditional planning permission for the erection of 14 new dwellings with associated roads and landscaping. The LPA has placed a condition on consent requiring that a programme of archaeological work, comprising field evaluation, should be undertaken prior to development. This is in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 Policy HE 6.1 and Policy U22 of the Watford District Plan (2000).

The project was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the County Planning Archaeologist.

2. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

The Development Area (DA) is 0.35 hectares in size and is located on Gammons Farm Close, off Gammons Lane in the north of Watford, Hertfordshire (site centre TQ 09711 99235). The site previously housed a group of static mobile homes which have been removed. However, concrete and tarmac hard-standing as well as an access road remain on the site.

The geology of the area is Seaford and Newhave Chalk Formation overlain by chalky silt, sand and gravel (British Geological Survey, no date [online]). The DA is bounded by hedgerows, fields to the north, east and south and housing on the west and lies at a height of c. 102m AOD.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

An online search of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) has been undertaken using Heritage Gateway. The HER search was conducted for an area of 1km radius centred on the site.

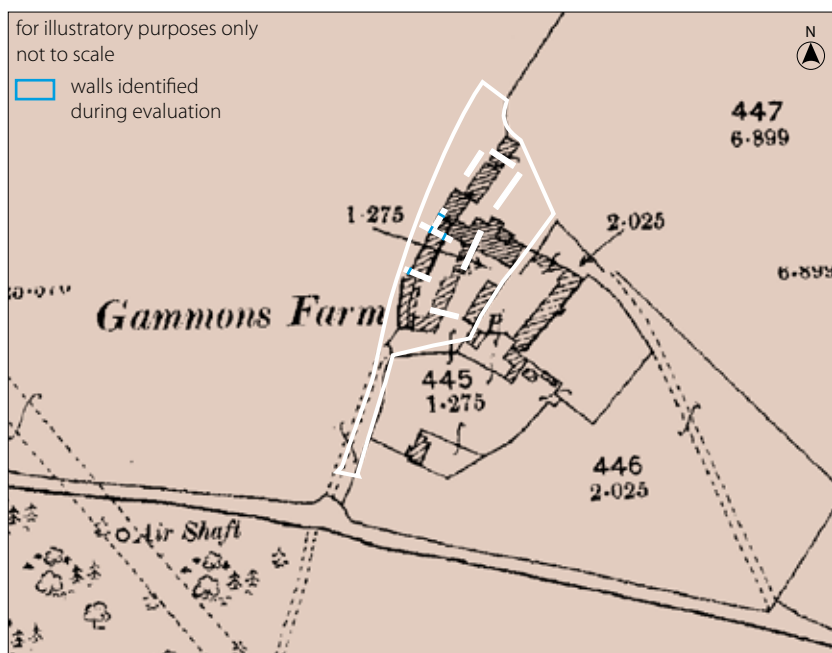
Finds in the area include Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowheads (HER 6253 / 4818), an Iron Age finds scatter (HER 973), Roman Coins (HER 974 / 960), and medieval pottery (HER 4538 / 975). The postulated route of a Roman Road is situated c 1km north-west of the site although no archaeological evidence has been found to support this.

3.1 Gammons Farm

The DA is located on the former site of Gammons Farm (HER 15379).

The site of the farm was in the ownership of the Countess Dowager of Essex in 1754 (Goodwin and Hockman 1754) but by 1786 had come under the ownership of 'Lady Capell' (HALS). The farm itself is first mentioned in 1798. The tenant at this time was Mr. Francis, and he grew barley, wheat, seeds, oats and pease on the well-drained farmland of the area. A succession of owners and tenants followed during the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Waterson 2008).

In 1919, farmland from Gammons Farm was sold to the Watford Rural City Society Ltd, William Dutton and The North Watford Allotment Association. The land was used for housing and allotments. Orchard School, to the east of the DA, was built in 1958 on a former farm orchard.



Illus 2

Trenches overlain onto 1898 OS map
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Illus 3

Trench 4 – South-east facing section. Pit [406]

During the 1960s Basil Westcott is listed as using the site in his role as a sand merchant and later as a haulage contractor but is not in residence at the site. This would suggest that the former farmhouse and buildings were not being used as part of a working farm at this time. Basil Westcott's haulage business went bankrupt in 1963 and in 1975 planning permission was granted for the establishment of a Council-owned mobile home site, intended as temporary housing. The mobile home site is believed to have gone out of use in the early part of the twenty-first century (Tim Sanderson pers comm).

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the investigation was to assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may be affected by the proposal to develop the land. The site was considered likely to contain features relating to Gammons Farm (HER 15379).

Specifically the aims of the investigation included:

- establishing the depth and character of archaeologically sterile overburden;
- identifying, characterising and dating any potential archaeological remains within the site; and
- defining any constraints encountered during the evaluation and any potential constraints encountered during the evaluation and any potential constraints for further archaeological fieldwork.

5. METHOD

5.1 Excavation

Eight trenches were excavated within the DA under the guidance and supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist. The trenches were excavated using a JCB mechanical excavator using a flat bladed ditching bucket.

The trenches varied in length between 7.5m and 15m. All trenches were 1.6m wide (Appendix 1). Exposed trench sections and bases were cleaned (where possible) and checked for archaeological deposits and all spoil was screened for archaeological material.

5.2 Recording

All recording followed JfA Standards and Guidance. Trench positions were tied into features shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 mapping. A sample section of each trench was drawn at a scale of 1:20. All contexts, photos and drawings were given a unique number and registers were maintained. 35mm black and white and

colour transparencies were taken of exposed sections. Digital photos were also taken for reporting purposes.

5.3 Samples and artefacts

No contexts suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation and no artefacts of archaeological importance were found.

6. RESULTS

6.1 Trenches containing evidence for use of the site as a farm

Trench 4

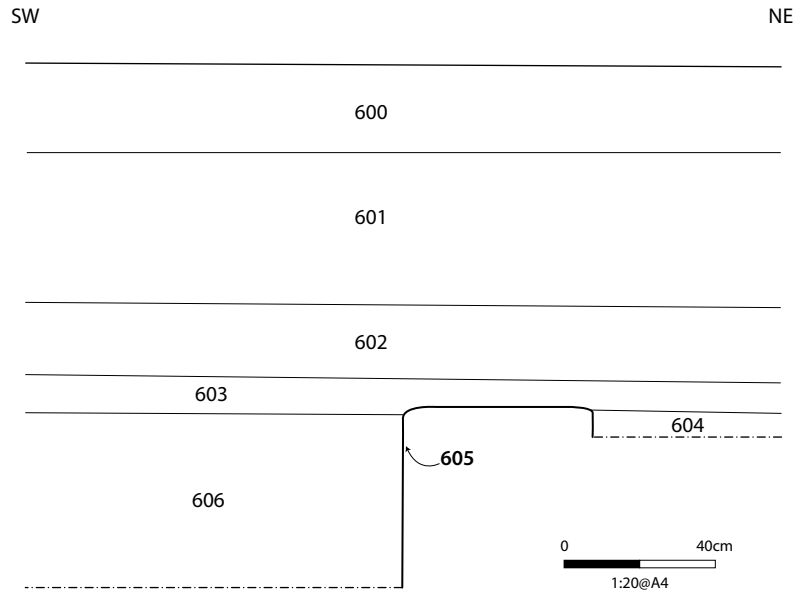
Natural gravels were present at a depth of 1.26m below ground level (BGL). Overlying the natural was a dark grey stoney clay (407) which was in turn cut by a pit approximately 1.10m in diameter. The pit [406] contained domestic refuse including broken glass, transfer printed pottery and a stoneware jar marked 'J.S. Sainsbury, Bloater Paste'. The pit was sealed by a deposit of orange gravel followed by a black clinker deposit (402) and a further layer of orange gravel (401).

Trench 6

Natural deposits were present at a depth of 0.92m BGL. Cut into the natural on a north-west / south-east alignment was a red brick wall [605]. The wall amounted to 5 courses of hand made red brick laid in an alternating header and stretcher pattern (English bond) with a lime based mortar. A further course of brick at the base of the wall projected beyond the face of the overlying courses and appears to be the lower foundation course. The top of the brick wall was identified at 0.9m BGL. A black tar-like layer (605) sealed the wall and this was subsequently overlain by a layer of orange gravel (602).

Trench 7

Trench 7 was orientated at 90° to the southern end of Trench 6. Natural deposits were present at 0.8m BGL. Two brick walls, [704] and [707], were revealed on a north-east / south-west alignment. The top of wall [704] was revealed



Illus 4

Trench 6 – South-east facing section



Illus 5

Walls [704] (foreground) and [605]

at a depth of 0.8m BGL and the wall survived to a depth of five courses. Natural deposits (706) were present to the east of the wall, whilst to the west, a mid brown silty clay (705) deposit was present. Overlying these deposits and the top of the wall was a black tar-like deposit (703).

Wall [707] was located 4.6m to the east of wall [704]. The wall was on the same alignment but in a poorer state of preservation than wall [704] with only one clearly defined course surviving at 0.8m BGL. This wall was also sealed by deposit (703) which was overlain by orange gravel aggregate (702). This deposit was subsequently overlain by a degraded black tarmac surface (701).



Illus 6

Trench 8 – Pit [805] in foreground

4

Trench 8

Natural deposits were present at a depth of 1.08m BGL. A red brick wall [806] of similar form to those identified in Trenches 6 and 7 was identified at a depth of 0.67m BGL and crossed the trench on a north-east / south-west alignment. Immediately to the west of the wall was a concrete footing or concrete lined tank [807].

To the east of wall [806] was a large pit [805], over 2m in diameter, containing redeposited topsoil and a large quantity of red clay roof tiles. The pit was cut from a level of 0.88m BGL and was overlain by a deposit of chalk or lime (803), further broken roof tiles (802) and a mixed deposit of topsoil, brick and modern rubbish (801).

6.2 Trenches containing made ground deposits

Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 5

Natural deposits on the eastern side of the site were present at a depth of between 1.22m and 1.64m BGL. A succession of deposits appear to have been laid over the natural to raise the

level of the site. Material included red brick, stone rubble, chalk and layers of redeposited natural gravel.

Within Trench 5 made ground deposits appear to have been deposited over an historic topsoil horizon (504) present at a depth of 1.22m BGL.

A tarmac surface was present at a depth of between 0.14 and 0.28m BGL in Trenches 1 and 2.

6.3 Hard standing and services

Concrete pads were present on the site that had formerly provided hard standing for static mobile homes. Where possible, trenches were excavated adjacent to these pads to assess their depth of impact. The concrete pads very found to vary in depth between 0.10m and 0.15m.

A live electrical cable was identified at the southern end of Trench 2 at a depth of approximately 0.5m BGL. Within the same trench a yellow gas pipe was identified. The pipe was left in situ and it is not known if the service was live.

A stoneware drain water pipe was identified in Trench 8 at a depth of 1.08m BGL. Gaps between the sections of pipe revealed the pipe to be dry. It is not known if the pipe is still functional.

6.4 Description of the significance of Heritage Assets

The local and regional research contexts that are provided by Medlycott (2011), Glazebrook (1997), Brown &



Illus 7

Trench 1 – North facing section. Made ground over natural deposits

Glazebrook (2000) and English Heritage (1991 & 1997) outline various gaps in knowledge in the Hertfordshire area. The following research aims are relevant to the remains of Gammons farm, identified by trial trenching.

'The development of the farmstead 1750–1914' and *'Buildings on the farm'*. (Brown and Glazebrook 2000).

The remains of walls related to the former Gammons Farm are the only Heritage Assets identified by trial trenching. These remains are considered to have limited potential to address the above research aims and are considered to be of low significance.

7. CONCLUSION

No archaeological finds or deposits predating the use of the site as a farm were revealed. Furthermore, no evidence for earlier phases of the farm were identified, supporting the existing evidence in suggesting a late 18th/early 19th century date for the farm buildings. Indeed, comparison of the walls revealed in Trenches 6, 7 and 8 with historic maps of the site (Illus 2) suggest that they relate to farm buildings present from at least 1871 when they appear on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. Indeed, historic map searches revealed no maps predating 1871. The hand made bricks used in the construction are consistent with an 18th century date, so the buildings may be contemporary with the first documentary evidence for farm buildings on the site in 1798.

A former topsoil horizon was evident in Trenches 4, 5 and 7 but no archaeological finds or features were identified within this deposit. A rubbish pit cutting this deposit in Trench 4 contained a stoneware jar of Sainsbury's fish paste which can be dated to between 1920 and 1939 (Museum of London, no date). The importation of material to raise the level of the site therefore, certainly post-dates 1920, and in all probability coincides with the demolition of the farm buildings. Photographic evidence suggests that derelict buildings were still standing on the site in 1978 (Waterson 2008). The buildings in the west of the site were demolished to their lower courses before the ground level was increased by between 0.67m and 0.9m above them.

7.1 Preservation and potential

The lack of a historic topsoil horizon in the east of the site (Trenches 1, 2 and 3), with imported deposits directly overlying natural, suggests that this area had been stripped of topsoil prior to the importation of material to raise the level of the site by between 1.2m and 1.3m. The lack of a buried topsoil horizon or any remains of the farm buildings that are shown to have existed in this area (Illus 2) suggests that the east of the site has been stripped of deposits to a greater degree than the west of

the site where the foundation courses of buildings were identified. In the remainder of the site, the presence of former topsoil deposits indicates no truncation has taken place (except within the footprint of the farm buildings where only the footings survive).

The paucity of pre-modern remains is therefore considered to be a genuine reflection of the potential of the DA. Given the evidence for truncation across the site, the preservation of remains related to Gammon Farm is also considered to be poor.

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- Waterson, J 2008 'Gammons Farm' [online] Available from <<http://north-watford-history.org.uk/pages/businesses/gammons-farm.html>> accessed February 24th 2012.

8.2 Cartographic sources

- 1898 Ordnance Survey *Map of Hertfordshire*, (1:2500) [online] Available from <<http://www.old-maps.co.uk>> accessed February 23rd 2012.



APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site registers

Trench register

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)
1	10	1.6	1.38
2	15	1.6	1.38
3	15	1.6	1.52
4	10	1.6	1.60
5	10	1.6	1.72
6	7.5	1.6	1.38
7	12.5	1.6	1.14
8	10	1.6	1.40

Context register

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (below surface m)
1	100	Mid brown silty clay topsoil	0.00–0.40
1	101	Degraded tarmac surface	0.28–0.40
1	102	Compacted orange gravel	0.36–0.40
1	103	Mixed deposit of brick rubble, chalk and tarmac	0.40–0.60
1	104	Clean white chalk deposit	0.60–0.86
1	105	Mixed deposit of red brick, clinker and stone	0.60–1.32
1	106	Orange clay with pebble inclusions (natural)	1.32 – 1.38+
2	200	Mid brown silty clay topsoil	0.00–0.24
2	201	Degraded tarmac and aggregate	0.14–0.56
2	202	Mid brown clay with red brick inclusions	0.34–0.72
2	203	Dirty chalk deposit	0.44–0.96
2	204	Orange gravel	0.70–0.90
2	205	Mixed deposit of black tar aggregate and chalk	0.90–1.04
2	206	Clean white chalk deposit	1.02–1.26
2	207	Clean light brown/orange clay (natural)	1.24–1.38+
2	208	Cut for modern pit	0.86–1.38+

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (below surface m)
2	209	Stone and brick fill of pit 208	0.86–1.38+
3	300	Turf and topsoil	0.00–0.38
3	301	Disturbed topsoil and rubble	0.28–0.60
3	302	Deposit of rubble and broken concrete	0.36–0.64
3	303	Orange gravel	0.58–0.84
3	304	Mid brown gravelly silt	0.65–1.00
3	305	Black aggregate layer	1.00–1.07
3	306	Deposit of rubble and stone	1.05–1.26
3	307	Orange gravel with large pebble inclusions (natural)	1.22–1.52+
4	400	Turf and topsoil	0.00–0.34
4	401	Orange gravel	0.32–0.64
4	402	Black aggregate/clinker layer	0.58–0.90
4	403	Orange gravel	0.74–1.10
4	404	Deposit of mixed brick and rubble. Upper fill of pit 406.	0.96–1.20
4	405	Rubble deposit containing 20th century pottery and glass. Fill of pit 406.	0.96–1.60+
4	406	Cut for 20th century rubbish pit	0.96–1.60+
4	407	Dark grey stoney clay	0.86–1.40
4	408	Light orange gravel (natural)	1.26–1.60+
5	500	Mid brown silty clay	0.15–0.42
5	501	Red gravel – redeposited natural	0.40–0.84
5	502	Black tar deposit with red brick inclusions	0.84–0.94
5	503	Yellow stoney layer	0.90–1.25
5	504	Mid brown silty clay – buried topsoil deposit?	1.22–1.68
5	505	Dark yellow/orange stoney gravel (natural)	1.62–1.72+
6	600	Turf and topsoil	0.00–0.23
6	601	Mortar/gravel deposit	0.23–0.64
6	602	Redeposited orange gravel	0.63–0.84
6	603	Compacted black tar deposit sealing wall	0.82–0.92
6	604	Mixed deposit of ash, mortar, chalk and brick fragments	0.90–0.98+
6	605	Red brick wall. 5 faced courses and foundation course. 0.48m wide.	0.90–1.38
6	606	Pink, dry gravel with large pebble inclusions (natural)	0.92–1.38+
7	700	Topsoil and turf	0.00–0.23

Trench	Context	Description	Depth (below surface m)
7	701	Black tarmac road surface	0.16–0.36
7	702	Orange gravel aggregate	0.26–0.74
7	703	Black tar-like deposit sealing walls	0.66–0.80
7	704	Red brick wall. Five faced courses visible to west, disturbed and damaged to east – only one course visible. 0.46m wide.	0.80–1.12+
7	705	Mid brown silty clay. Buried topsoil?	0.80–0.12+
7	706	Pink, dry gravel with large pebble inclusions (natural)	0.80–1.12+
7	707	Red brick wall. Heavily disturbed. Three courses visible. 0.5m wide.	0.80–1.14+
8	800	Turf and topsoil	0.00–0.36
8	801	Mixed deposit of topsoil, brick and modern rubbish	0.26–0.62
8	802	Deposit of broken terracotta roof tiles	0.44–0.62
8	803	Deposit of chalk or lime	0.60–0.92
8	804	Redeposited topsoil containing broken terracotta tile. Fill of pit 805.	0.88–1.40+
8	805	Cut for large rubbish pit.	0.88–1.40+
8	806	Red brick wall. Visible in plan only. Appears to have slight curve to western face. 0.50m wide.	0.67–1.08
8	807	Concrete tank or foundations filled with rubble. 1.96m wide.	0.50–1.05+
8	808	Orange gravel (natural)	1.08–1.40+



Appendix 2 – Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

Summary sheet

Site name and address: Gammons Farm Close Off Gammons Lane Watford WD24 5LG		
County: Hertfordshire	District: Watford	
Village/Town: Watford	Parish: Watford	
Planning application reference: 11/00272/FULM		
HER Enquiry reference: n/a		
Funding source: Private		
Nature of application: Housing		
Present land use: Brownfield		
Size of application area: 3,500m ²	Size of area investigated: 144m ²	
NGR (to 8 figures minimum): TQ 09711 99235		
Site code (if applicable): GFCW12		
Site director/Organization: James Newbould (MifA) – Headland Archaeology		
Type of work: Trial trenching evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 20/02/2012	Finish: 21/02/2012
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Watford museum		
Related HER Nos: HER 15379	Periods represented: late 18th/early 19th century	
Relevant previous summaries/reports: Waterson, J. 2008. 'Gammons Farm' [online] Available from http://north-watford-history.org.uk/pages/businesses/gammons-farm.html		
Summary of fieldwork results: Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd. excavated eight evaluation trenches on a derelict plot of land at Gammons Farm Close, Watford. A number of walls and rubbish pits relating to the use of the site as a working farm (Gammons Farm - HER15379) were revealed. Ground levels on the site had been raised during the 20th century. No significant archaeological finds or features were revealed during the course of the evaluation.		
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