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# Headlands, Downton Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Planning ref: S/2010/1548  
Ref: 74491.02  
July 2014



## **Headlands, Downton Wiltshire**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

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## Quality Assurance

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# Headlands, Downton Wiltshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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## Headlands, Downton Wiltshire

### Archaeological Watching Brief Report

#### Summary

Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by of Midsummer Homes Ltd, to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Headlands, Downton, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 417113 121285.

Planning permission (S/2010/1548) has been granted by Wiltshire Council for the construction of 9 no. two and three bedroom houses and 4 no. one bedroom flats, on condition (Condition 18) that a programme of archaeological work was undertaken.

An archaeological evaluation report (WA 2010) was submitted with the planning application, and detailed the results of a trial trench evaluation in the west of the Site. No archaeological remains were recorded on that occasion, however, due to difficulties accessing part of the Site, the Assistant County Archaeologist requested a condition was attached to any planning consent granted to ensure an archaeological watching brief could be maintained during construction in areas not previously investigated.

The archaeological watching brief was implemented during groundwork associated with Plots 7-13 in the eastern half of the site. No archaeology was identified during the investigation, and significant truncation and dumping of modern waste material was observed in Plots 12-13 in the north-east corner of the site. As a result, it was agreed in consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist, that no further monitoring was required.

The watching brief was undertaken between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014.



## **Headlands, Downton Wiltshire**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

#### **Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned by Midsummer Homes Ltd, and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Paul Martin of Midsummer Homes Ltd of in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Claire King (Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council), for her advice during the project.

The watching brief was undertaken by Mike Dinwiddy, who also compiled and wrote this report. The report illustrations were prepared by Karen Nichols. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

# Headlands, Downton Wiltshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Midsummer Homes Ltd, to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Headlands, Downton, Wiltshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 417113 121285, hereafter referred to as 'the Site' (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 Planning permission (S/2010/1548) has been granted by Wiltshire Council for the construction of 9 no. two and three bedroom houses, and 4 no. one bedroom flats, on condition (Condition 18) that a programme of archaeological work is undertaken.
- 1.1.3 An archaeological evaluation report (WA 2010) was submitted with the planning application, and detailed the results of a trial trench evaluation in the west of the Site. No archaeological remains were recorded on that occasion, however, due to difficulties accessing part of the Site, the Assistant County Archaeologist requested a condition was attached to any planning consent granted to ensure an archaeological watching brief could be maintained during construction.
- 1.1.4 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological work was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; WA 2014), which was approved by the Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council prior to works commencing. The WSI proposed the monitoring of groundwork associated with construction activity in Plots 7-13, and included monitoring during the excavation of foundation trenches, services and landscaping.

#### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The Site comprises an irregular parcel of land measuring approximately 0.3ha, and is located in the village of Downton, lying midway between Salisbury and Fordingbridge in southern Wiltshire. The Site itself is located within the southern half of the village, and is bounded by Braemore Road (A388) to the west, Downton Trafalgar School to the east, residential properties to the south, and a tool repair shop to the north. Two existing residential properties within the Site, Cedar House and Stanbury View, had been recently demolished to facilitate the development proposals.
- 1.2.2 The Site is generally level, lying at an elevation of c. 37m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology of the Site is described by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as Newhaven Chalk Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 71 to 86 million years BP. Overlying this, superficial deposits are recorded as River Terrace Deposits, comprising sand and gravel which formed up to 3 million BP.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The section below has been compiled from data held by the Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record, which records a number of finds and features predominantly of a late medieval and post-medieval date, within a 1km radius of the Site. In addition, information from the Extensive Urban Survey at Downton (Wiltshire County Council, 2004), detailing the historical and archaeological background of the village has been considered.
- 2.1.2 An archaeological evaluation (WA 2010) has also been completed in the western half of the Site, the results of which are summarised below.

### **2.2 Prehistoric and Romano-British activity**

- 2.2.1 Although evidence of prehistoric activity and Romano-British activity is scarce in the village, a cluster of sites and finds are known from an area to the south of the historic core of the village, and east of the Site. Excavations to the west of Moot Lane (Rahtz 1961) recorded a settlement site and chipping floor containing quantities of worked and waste flint.
- 2.2.2 An evaluation to the rear of Tannery House (WA 1991) recovered an assemblage of worked flint. Individual finds include flint tools from Lode Hill and the Moot, residual worked flint in later contexts from Moot Lane (WA 1996) and sherds of Iron Age pottery from Castle Meadow (Rahtz 1961).
- 2.2.3 Romano-British features have been recorded during excavations at Moot Close (Rahtz 1961) and Castle Meadow (*ibid.*) where two intersecting Roman roads were discovered, with ditches and postholes. Coins have been found at Lode Hill and to the west of Moot Lane, and black burnished pottery has been retrieved from the rear of Tannery House.

### **2.3 Saxon and later activity**

- 2.3.1 Downton was one of three manors endowed to the church at Winchester in the mid to late 7<sup>th</sup> century (Crowley 1980), however, the first documentary reference to the village is from the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, when King Offa confirmed the endowment of 100 *mansae* of land to the church.
- 2.3.2 Excavations in Castle Meadow have revealed a large gravel pit and a series of ditches of Saxon date. A group of three iron axes were discovered during excavations at the former Downton Mills to the south-east of the Site and dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, a handful of Saxon pottery sherds were recovered at the Tannery House evaluation (WA 1991).
- 2.3.3 Several sites and finds of medieval date are recorded in the village. Excavations at the Old Court have identified remains of one or more substantial masonry buildings relating to the Episcopal manor.
- 2.3.4 An earthwork of a type used for motte and bailey castles, now called The Moot, was constructed during the outbreak of hostilities between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.3.5 Excavations within the south-eastern part of Castle Meadow (Rahtz 1964) recorded a series of ditches and gullies dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- 2.3.6 The Site is positioned at the western-most end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century planned settlement area (Wiltshire County Council 2004) which comprised a large area of burgage plots and a market place. The market place is today well preserved in plan due largely to its failure to compete with the contemporary market at Salisbury.

## 2.4 Previous investigations

- 2.4.1 An archaeological evaluation (WA 2010) was undertaken within the western half of the Site, and comprised the machine excavation of two trenches, each measuring approximately 11m in length. Although no archaeological features or deposits were recorded within either trench, the presence of a well-developed topsoil and subsoil, confirmed the western half of the Site had not been subject to significant disturbance during the construction of the existing properties.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1 The WSI set out the methodology in order to meet the aims and objectives of the watching brief at the Site. All works were carried out in accordance with the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008), in accordance to the approved WSI (WA 2014).

### 3.2 Aims

- 3.2.1 The aims of the watching brief were:
- to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and should remains be present, to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;
  - to confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;
  - to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;
  - to determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains;
  - to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present; and to prepare a report on the results of the watching brief

### 3.3 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.3.1 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundwork associated with construction activity in Plots 7-13, and included monitoring during the excavation of foundation trenches, services and landscaping. The watching brief was maintained by an experienced archaeologist. The mechanical excavation was undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision and to the required construction level. No archaeology was revealed.
- 3.3.2 A digital photographic record was compiled showing the ground works and their location within the general context of the Site. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure the long term accessibility of the image set.
- 3.3.3 A representative section of each plot was recorded showing the depth of the overburden deposits using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of levels was calculated.
- 3.3.4 A unique site code **74491** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds

### **3.4 Health and safety**

- 3.4.1 Health and safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices countered archaeological considerations at all times.
- 3.4.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 The following summary details the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out intermittently on the Site between 17<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014, and comprised the archaeological monitoring of ground clearance and the excavation of foundation trenches in the east of the Site.

### **4.2 Natural soil sequence**

- 4.2.1 The stratigraphic sequence encountered was generally uniform across the Site, and comprised a grey brown clay sandy loam subsoil, with occasional poorly sorted sub-angular flint, overlying compact orange brown poorly sorted gravel natural.

### **4.3 Plots 7-13**

- 4.3.1 The archaeological watching brief was maintained during all groundwork undertaken within plots 7-10 (**Plate 1**). Subsequent groundwork within plots 11, 12 and 13 was monitored sufficiently to establish significant truncation and disturbance (**Plate 2**) had occurred previously in the north-east of the Site.
- 4.3.2 As a result, and in consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist, it was agreed that no further observation would be undertaken.
- 4.3.3 No archaeological features were recorded during the watching brief.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Discussion**

- 5.1.1 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were encountered during the excavations associated with the groundwork undertaken within plots 7-13.
- 5.1.2 Coupled with the results of the previous evaluation (WA 2010), it suggests the archaeological potential within the Site is low, and accords with the results of the Extensive Urban Survey (WCC 2004), which had indicated the Site lay immediately outside of the 13<sup>th</sup> century planned settlement.

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## 7 APPENDIX

### 7.1 Headland, Downton, Wiltshire - Wessex Archaeology

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#### Versions

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Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s
Boundary file submitted?	No	Boundary filename
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Site location and watching brief area


Figure 1



Plate 1: Ground works area 7-10



Plate 2: Modern disturbance and dumping, area 11-13

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