

**THE WHITE HART  
OXFORD ROAD  
SWINDON  
WILTSHIRE**

**NGR: SU 1845 8636**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

October 2015  
Report No. 1089



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES**

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**Quality Assurance**

This Document has been compiled and authorised in accordance with AMS's Quality Procedures (BS EN ISO 9001: 2008)

Author: Roy King BA CMIfA

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Approved: Diana King BA CMIfA

QA Checked: Tracy Michaels BSc CAIfA

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## CONTENTS

Summary

Glossary

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 RESULTS
- 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS
- 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Site Plan

## APPENDIX 1: Stratigraphic Data

## **SUMMARY**

Between 17<sup>th</sup> February and 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015, Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at The White Hart, Swindon, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 1845 8636) (Figures 1 and 2) in relation to the construction of a new accommodation block, car parking and access. The works were undertaken on behalf of Arkells Brewery Ltd.

No archaeological features were identified during the course of the watching brief. No finds were recovered from either the topsoil or the top of the natural clays which, in conjunction with the stratigraphic sequence of a thin turf and topsoil, (with no evidence for a subsoil or any agricultural activity) clearly indicates that the site had previously been stripped to the top of the natural clays. This activity is likely to have taken place during the construction of the overflow car park, although it is also possible that soils were removed from the site during the construction of the adjacent bypass. No information was available as to levels of potential truncation, but it is unlikely that any former site stripping works would have penetrated deeply into the natural clays.

The archaeological monitoring observed only the footprint of the new accommodation block, as a communication error resulted in the monitoring archaeologist not being informed of the works to create the new car park. It is considered unlikely, however, that these works would have resulted in a significant impact on any surviving archaeological deposits. It is clear that approximately half of this new car parking area had previously already been utilised for car parking and it is understood that the new works did not penetrate below the existing geotextile layer. As a result, the new car parking area may be considered to retain a degree of archaeological potential and, despite the absence of archaeological finds or features in the footprint of the accommodation block, consideration should be given to further monitoring should this area be subject to further development in the future.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### *Archaeology*

For the purpose of this project archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the Modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set for the Modern period, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

### *CBM*

Ceramic building material.

### *DMV*

Deserted Medieval Village

### *LOE*

Limit of excavation

### *Medieval*

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *c.* AD 1500.

### *Natural*

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

### *NGR*

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

### *OD*

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level.

### *OS*

Ordnance Survey.

### *Post-medieval*

The period from *c.* AD 1500 onwards.

### *Prehistoric*

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43. Traditionally sub divided into; Palaeolithic – *c.* 500,000 BC to *c.* 12,000 BC; Mesolithic – *c.* 12,000 BC to *c.* 4,500 BC; Neolithic – *c.* 4,500 BC to *c.* 2,000 BC; Bronze Age – *c.* 2,000 BC to *c.* 800 BC; Iron Age – *c.* 800 BC to AD 43.

### *Romano-British*

Term used to define the fusion of indigenous Iron Age traditions with invasive Roman culture. Traditionally dated AD 43 to *c.* AD 410.

### *Saxon*

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between 17<sup>th</sup> February and 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015, Foundations Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at The White Hart, Swindon, Wiltshire (NGR: SU 1845 8636) (Figures 1 and 2) in relation to the construction of a new accommodation block, car parking and access. The works were undertaken on behalf of Arkells Brewery Ltd.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Foundations Archaeology (2014). The WSI conformed to the principles of NPPF12 (*National Planning Policy Framework 2012*), the standard brief issued by Wiltshire Council, the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (2011) and *Standards for Field Evaluation and Assessment in Wiltshire* (CAS 1995).
- 1.3 This document presents the findings of the archaeological watching brief and complies with the specification set out in MoRPHE (English Heritage, 2006).

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is located on the eastern edge of Swindon in the parish of Stratton St. Margaret. It is sited immediately to the southeast of The White Hart public house in an area partially set to grass and containing an overflow car park.
- 2.2 The site's bedrock geology is Kimmeridge Clay - Mudstone formation. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS online viewer).
- 2.3 Planning permission has been granted by Swindon Borough Council under reference S/07/2212 for an additional 24 no. bedrooms to the existing hotel in a new 2-storey building to the rear (Revision of Planning Permission S/06/2099). The permission included a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief.
- 2.4 The proposed development area is archaeologically sensitive, a Mesolithic flint scatter (MWI15827) was found beneath the old land surface below a medieval Highworth Circle (MWI15918) approximately 350m to the south-southeast. Both sites were destroyed by the construction of the A419 bypass. A Roman brooch (MWI15866) has also been located at 54 Oxford Road, to the west of the site and an undated small circular feature (MWI15961) has been identified from aerial photography to the southeast. Extensive Roman activity has also recently been identified further to the east and north-east during archaeological investigations and a Roman town (scheduled monument ref. 1004684) is known approximately 650m to the southeast of the site.
- 2.5 The archaeological potential of the site was therefore perceived as moderate-high for deposits and features of Roman and Medieval date. This did not prejudice the watching brief against the recovery of finds or features relating to other periods.

### **3 AIMS**

3.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains; as well as to make recommendations for the management of the resource, including further archaeological works if they proved necessary. This allowed reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the development.

3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) to define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;

ii) to attempt to characterise the nature and preservation of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning and extent of features present on the site;

iii) to recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence which attempted to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;

iv) to determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

4.1 Groundworks consisted of a site strip to the top of the natural clays followed by the excavation of traditional strip foundations. The relevant groundworks were initially undertaken under continuous watching brief conditions as defined in the Section 4.2 (below). Monitoring was subsequently reduced to an intermittent watching brief in agreement with the County Archaeological Service.

4.2 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

### **5 RESULTS**

5.1 The initial groundworks consisted of a site strip across the footprint of the new accommodation block. Wet conditions meant that the strip did not, in itself, provide sufficient clarity to demonstrate that the site did not contain archaeological deposits and monitoring of the footings subsequently took place. Monitoring of these works was initially continuous but was reduced to an intermittent watching brief in areas where the site strip suggested that no archaeological deposits existed. All footings trenches were, however, observed prior to concreting.

- 5.2 The stratigraphic sequence was consistent throughout the monitored area in the form of clean firm orange-brown natural clay deposits, becoming anaerobic at depth (1003). The top of the clays were present at a depth averaging between 0.2-0.3m (102.35m OD) from the modern ground surface. Footing trenches measured approximately 600mm wide and were excavated to depths between 1.2m and 2.0m. The natural clays were predominantly present beneath a thin turf and topsoil layer (1001) up to 0.3m thick and, at the southwestern margin, immediately beneath existing car park hardcore deposits (1002), themselves on a layer of terram geotextile.
- 5.3 No archaeological finds or features were present within the monitored area and no potential for palaeoenvironmental sampling was identified.

## 6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 No archaeological features were identified during the course of the watching brief. No finds were recovered from either the topsoil or the top of the natural clays which, in conjunction with the stratigraphic sequence of a thin turf and topsoil, (with no evidence for a subsoil or any agricultural activity) clearly indicates that the site had previously been stripped to the top of the natural clays. This activity is likely to have taken place during the construction of the overflow car park, although it is also possible that soils were removed from the site during the construction of the adjacent bypass. No information was identified as to levels of potential truncation, but it is unlikely that any former site stripping works would have penetrated deeply into the natural clays.
- 6.2 The archaeological monitoring observed only the footprint of the new accommodation block, as a communication error resulted in the monitoring archaeologist not being informed of the works to create the new car park. It is considered unlikely, however, that these works would have resulted in a significant impact on any surviving archaeological deposits. It is clear that approximately half of this new car parking area had previously already been utilised for car parking and it is understood that the new works did not penetrate below the existing geotextile layer. As a result, the new car parking area may be considered to retain a degree of archaeological potential and, despite the absence of archaeological finds or features in the footprint of the accommodation block, consideration should be given to further monitoring should this area be subject to further development in the future.
- 6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology, but will be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery once suitable storage facilities become available. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.



## 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2012. *National Planning Policy Framework*.

English Heritage. 2006. *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*.

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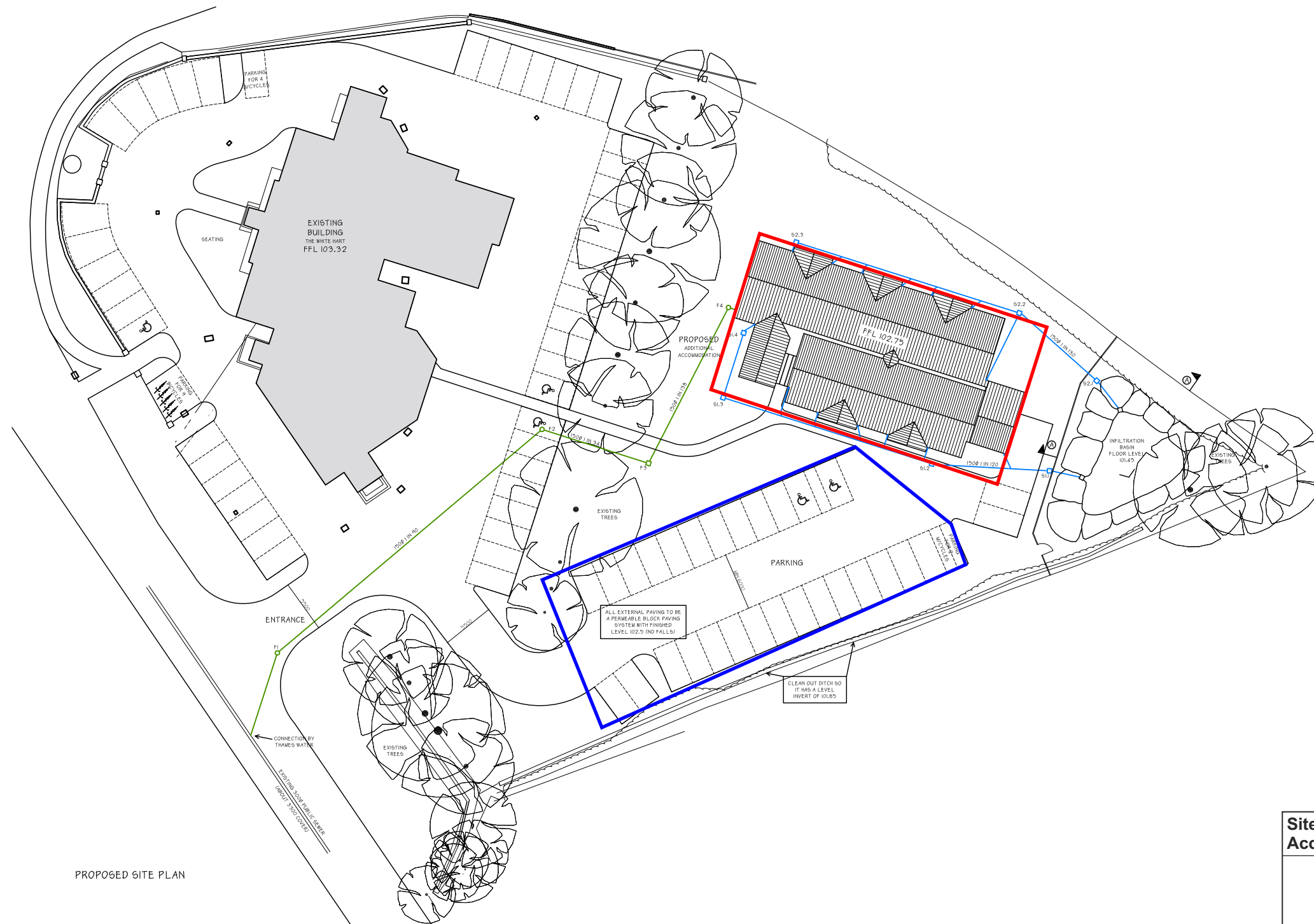
## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations Archaeology would like to thank Arkells Brewery Ltd, Edmont Construction Ltd, Clark & Maslin Planning, the Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service and the staff of The White Hart for their assistance during the course of this project.

**APPENDIX 1: Stratigraphic Data**

<b>CXT</b>	<b>D(m)</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CUTS/LATER THAN</b>	<b>CUT BY/EARLIER THAN</b>
1001	0.2-0.3	Topsoil: mid brown-grey clay-silt topsoil; no finds or charcoal	1003	n/a
1002	0.3-0.35	Former car park, terram, gravel hardcore, tarmac	1002	n/a
1003	n/a	Natural substrate: orange-brown, compact, plastic clay; no finds or charcoal	n/a	1001/1002





PROPOSED SITE PLAN

Site Code: WHS15  
 Accession Code:

N

█ Groundworks Monitored  
█ Groundworks Unmonitored

0m 20m  
 1:500

**FIGURE 2: Proposed Site Plan**