

HERITAGE NETWORK

LAND AT HAY CLOSE, BALSHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

HN622

Interim Archaeological Summary

Site name and address:	Land at Hay Close, Balsham, Cambridgeshire		
County:	Cambridgeshire	District:	South Cambridgeshire
Village/town:	Balsham	Parish:	Balsham
Planning reference:	S/0177/06/F	NGR:	TL 5895 5050
Client name and address:	McCann Homes Ltd., Arden Press House, Arden Press Way, Pixmore Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, Herts. SG6 1HL		
Nature of work:	Housing Development	Former land use:	Allotments
Site Status:	None	Reason for investigation:	Direction of local planning authority (PPG16)
Position in planning process:	After full determination (as a condition)	Project brief originator:	Local authority
Size of affected area:	c.4276m ²	Size of area investigated:	c.203m ²
Site Code:	HN622	Other reference:	ECB2374
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Project type, methods etc...	Evaluation	Archive Recipient:	Cambridge County Council Heritage Service
Start of work	03/10/06	Finish of work	11/10/06
Related SMR Nos:	NMR 374495, 374485, 373958, 37448, SAM7	Periods represented:	Early Iron Age
Oasis UID:	heritage1- 19089	Significant finds:	Pottery, animal bone, flint
Monument types:	Pits and ditch/gully		
Physical archive:	Pottery, bone, flint		
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Narrative:

In order to meet the requirements of a condition on the planning permission for building work on land at Hay Close, Balsham, Cambridgeshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by McCann Homes Ltd. to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation.

The site is located within former allotments and covers approximately 0.44ha. It is situated at the south-eastern limit of the village of Balsham and centred on NGR TL 5895 5050. Residential dwellings form the boundary to the north and west, more allotments to the east, and open agricultural land to the south. The development proposes the construction of 17 new dwellings with associated access road, car parking and landscaping, and the creation of 6 new allotment plots immediately to the south.

The development lies within an important historic landscape with defined archaeological activity ranging from the Neolithic period onwards. Bronze Age evidence, in the form of a flint dagger and beakers (NMR 374495), have been located 1km to the south of the site. Iron Age 'A' pits (NMR 374485) have been investigated 1.5km to the north-west. Several Roman roads run through or near the village and 1.5km to the south-west of the village are crop marks, thought to represent a Roman farmstead (NMR 373958). The line of Fleam Dyke, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM7) of Anglo Saxon date, lies 2km to the north of the village. An Anglo Saxon grave slab (NMR 37448), lies 400m north of the site. The village of Balsham has its origins in the Anglo Saxon period, suffered Viking raids, and is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1087 as *Belesham* and *Belesham*.

Five evaluation trenches were located within the footprints of the proposed dwellings (Figure 1). They varied in depth from 0.35-0.45m with c.0.3m of very dark brown (10YR 2/2) silty grey cultivation overlying a light olive brown (2.5Y 5/6) clay natural.

Trenches 1-4 contained no archaeological features. Trench 5 contained a small complex of pits [503] & [505] cut by a later shallow ditch or gully [501] (Figure 2). There was also a separate small pit [507] 4m to the south of pit [505].

The fill of the ditch/gully (502) contained flint tempered pottery dating to the early Iron Age. There was also some cattle bone and three pieces of possible flint debitage.

The fill of the main pit (504) also contained early Iron Age pottery and animal bone from cattle, horse and sheep/goat. A tibia recovered had indications of pronounced muscle attachments suggesting the animal may have been work-horse. There were also some crude knife or butchery marks on the bone.

From within this fill twelve stones of mixed geology, 100-150mm in length were recovered, scattered throughout the matrix. Some showed signs of being heat effected and may have been part of a hearth or used as 'pot boilers'.

The single pit [507] contained pieces of charcoal up to 130mm in length, but no immediate dating evidence was recovered. The remaining fill was taken for environmental sampling.

Conclusion:

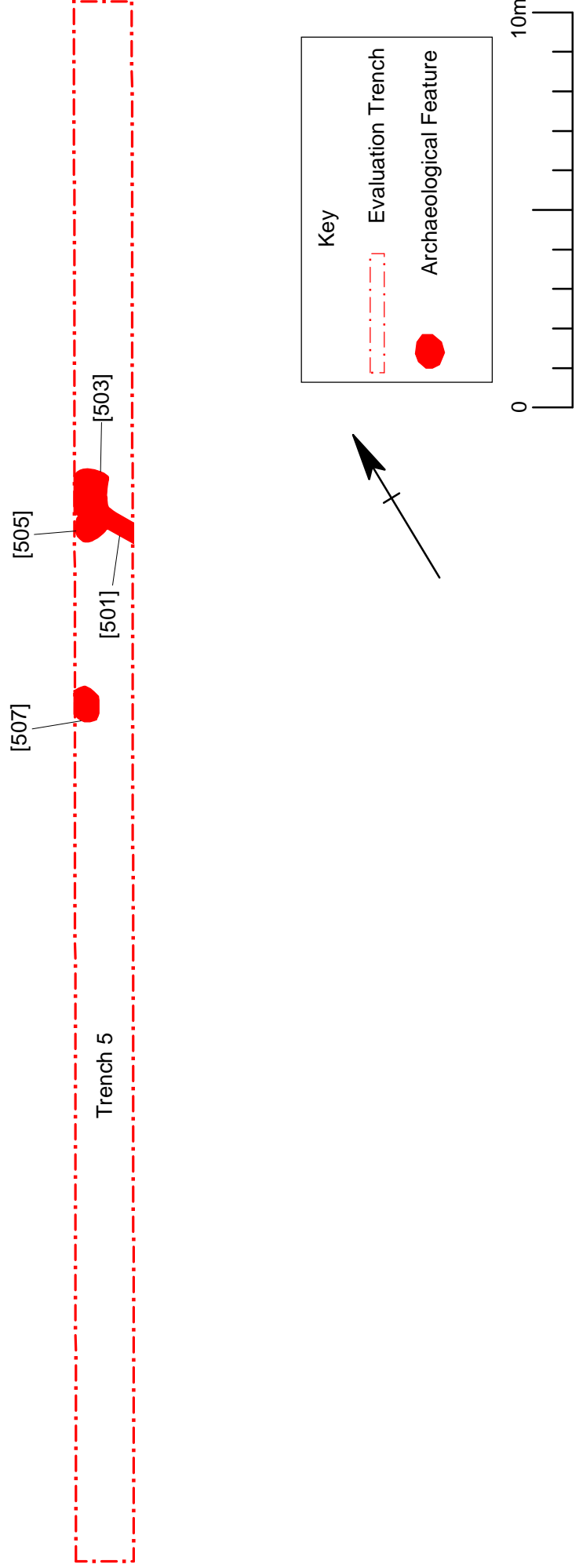
All the archaeological features were concentrated in the north west corner of the site, 15-20m from the existing development. Without further examination of the immediate area, it is impossible to assess the exact nature of the archaeological activity. However, the larger feature [503] may be rubbish pit or possibly a hearth pit, though the surrounding natural geology showed no sign of being heat effected. The smaller, single pit [507] may contain the remnants of a fire. The ditch/gully was orientated NW-SE across the width of the trench and cut pit [503]. It appears to have been back-filled rather than having silted up. No artefacts were recovered from pit [505].

Despite the site's proximity to known archaeology from other periods, only early Iron Age material was identified in this evaluation process. However, some pottery of possible Roman has been recovered by one of the allotment holders immediately to the east of the site (*pers. com.*).

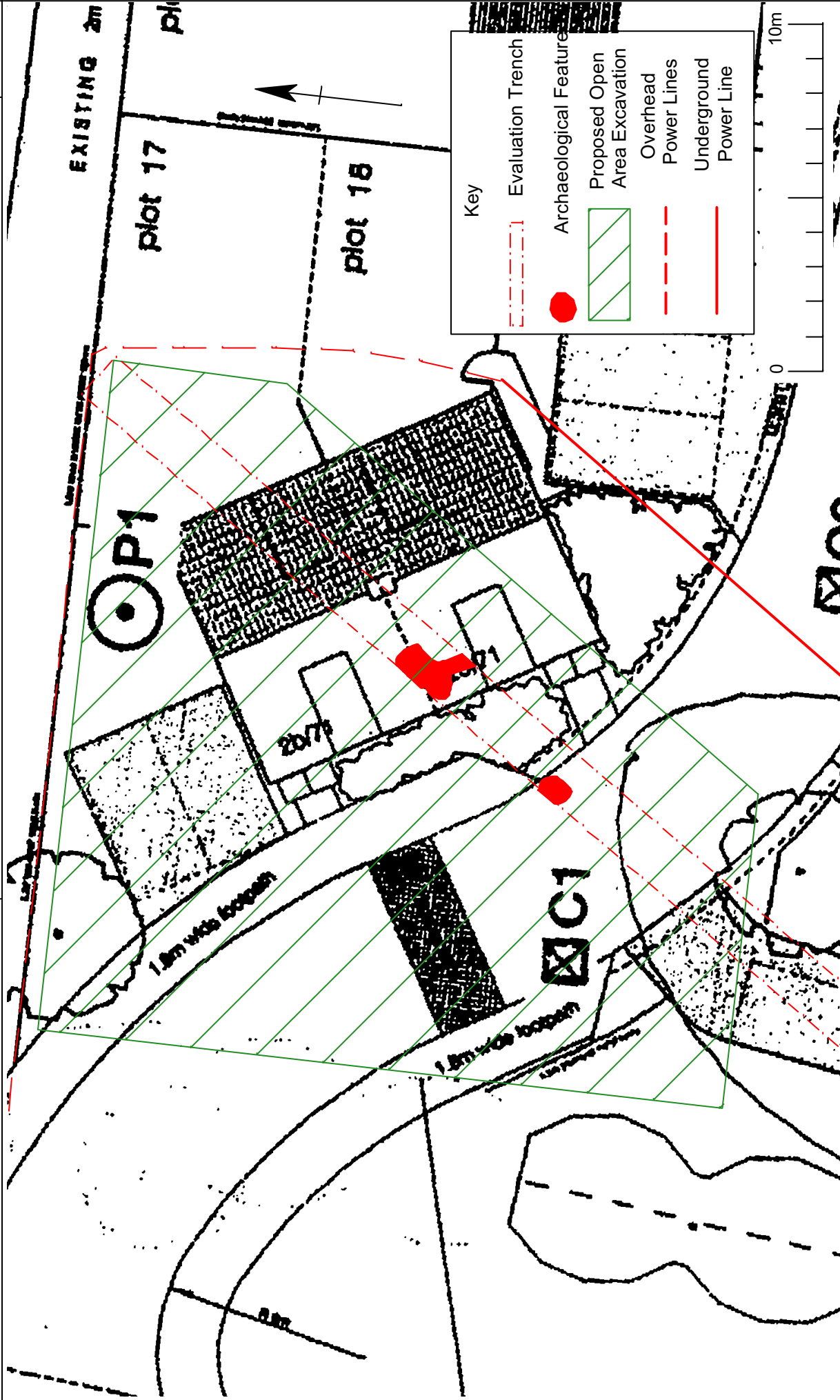


Site Layout

Scale 1:400
Figure 1



Features Layout



Proposed Open Area Excavation