

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
LAND OFF NORTH MARSTON LANE
WHITCHURCH
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

NGR: SP 7938 2130

on behalf of McInerney Homes Ltd



David Fell BA MA MIFA

April 2010

ASC: 1290/WNM/2



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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	WNM	<i>ASC project no:</i>	1290
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	76367	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Whitchurch		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Whitchurch		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 7938 2130		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	Grazing		
<i>Present use:</i>	Grazing		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	9/02282/APP		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Aylesbury Vale District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	April 2010		
<i>Client:</i>	McInerney Homes Ltd Unit 8 Basset Court Loake Close Grange Park Northampton NN4 5EZ		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Lee Ellis		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	David Fell	<i>Date:</i>	29th April 2010
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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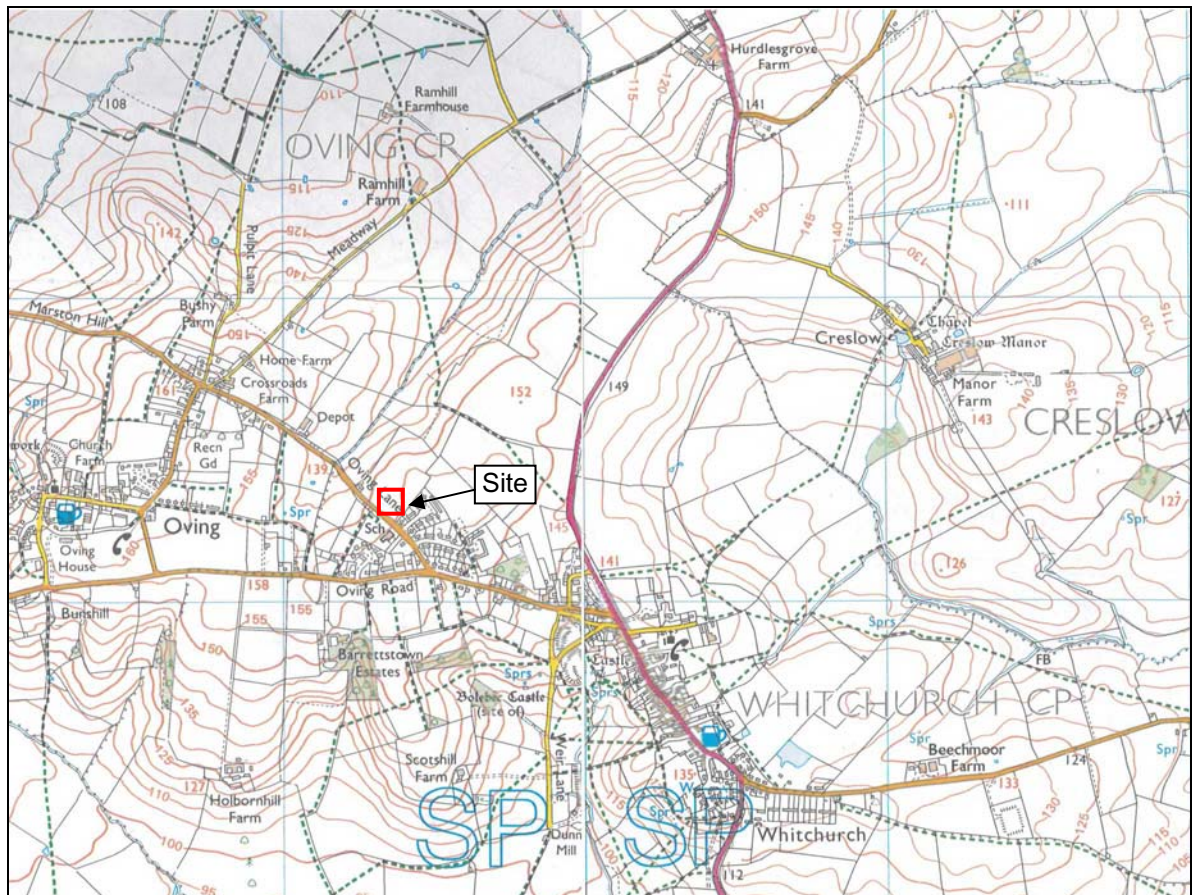


Figure 1: General location (Scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In April 2010 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at North Marston Lane, Whitchurch, Buckinghamshire in advance of the construction of a housing development. Four evaluation trenches were excavated but the only evidence of past activity was a quarry pit, probably dating to the 19th century. No other archaeological features or artefacts were present and the development is unlikely to have an impact on significant archaeological remains. The archaeological impact of the development is considered to be low.

1. Introduction

1.1 In April 2010 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an evaluation at North Marston Lane, Whitchurch, Buckinghamshire. The project was commissioned by *McInerney Homes Ltd* and was carried out according to a brief (Beckley 2010) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Aylesbury Vale District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), the *Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service*, and a project design prepared by ASC (Rouse 2010). The relevant planning application reference is 09/02282/APP.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16) as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

ASC is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Organisation* by the Institute for Archaeologists and is also accredited ISO 9001, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *The Site*

1.4.1 *Location and Description*

The site is situated in Whitchurch, in the administrative district of Aylesbury Vale, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). It lies on the west side of the village, on the north side of North Marston Lane and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 7938 2130 (Fig. 2).

1.4.2 *Geology and Topography*

The natural soils of the development site comprise the *Aberford Association*, namely shallow locally brashy, well drained calcareous soils over limestone (Soil Survey 1983, 511a). The underlying geology comprises Upper Jurassic Portland Sand (BGS, Sheet 219).

The land forms the southern crest of a shallow valley and slopes down from east to west. The east side of the development site lies at an elevation of 155.4m OD.

1.4.3 *Proposed Development*

The development proposal comprises the construction of six houses, two flats and associated access (Fig. 3).

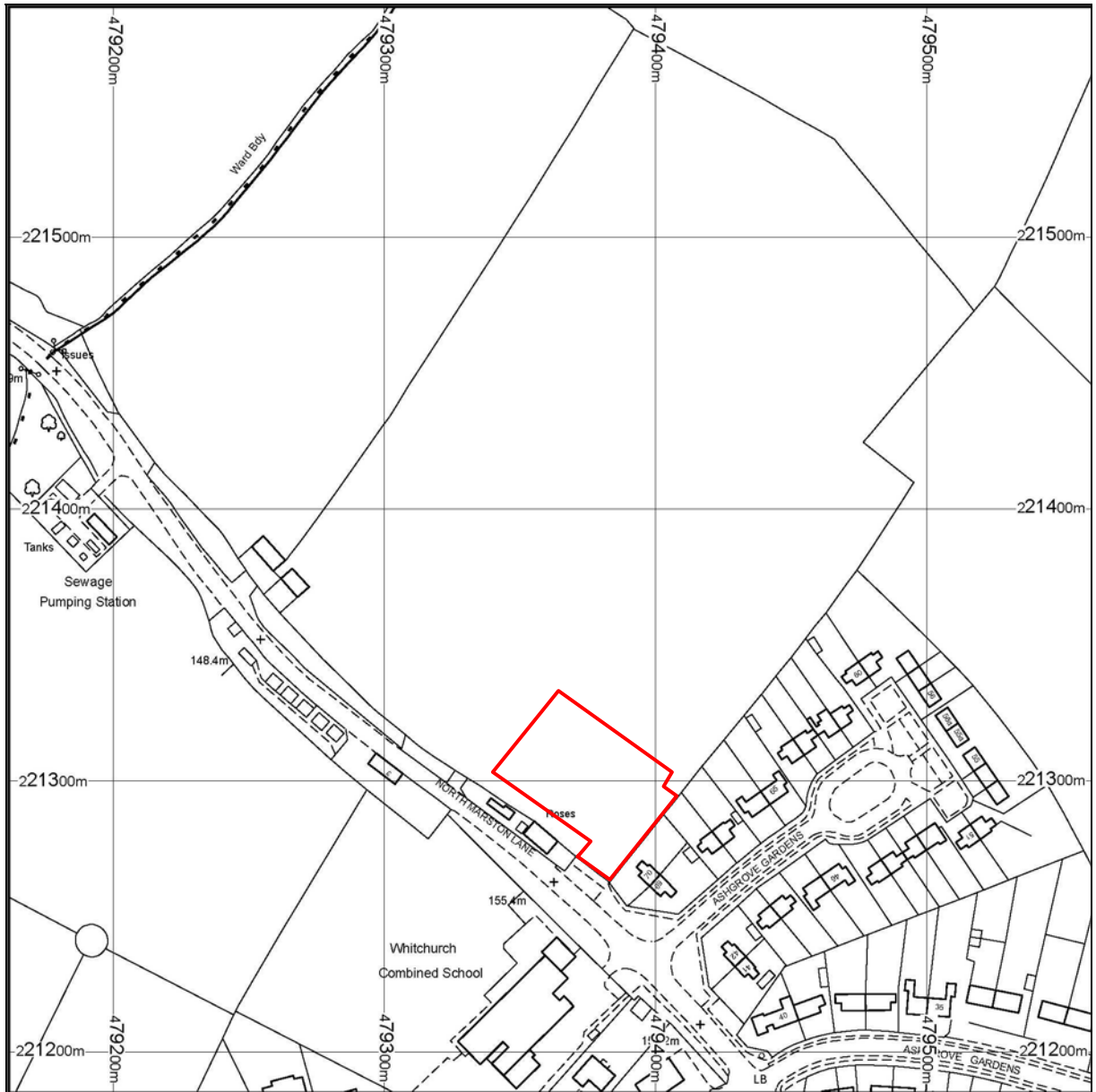


Figure 2: Site plan (Scale 1: 2,500)

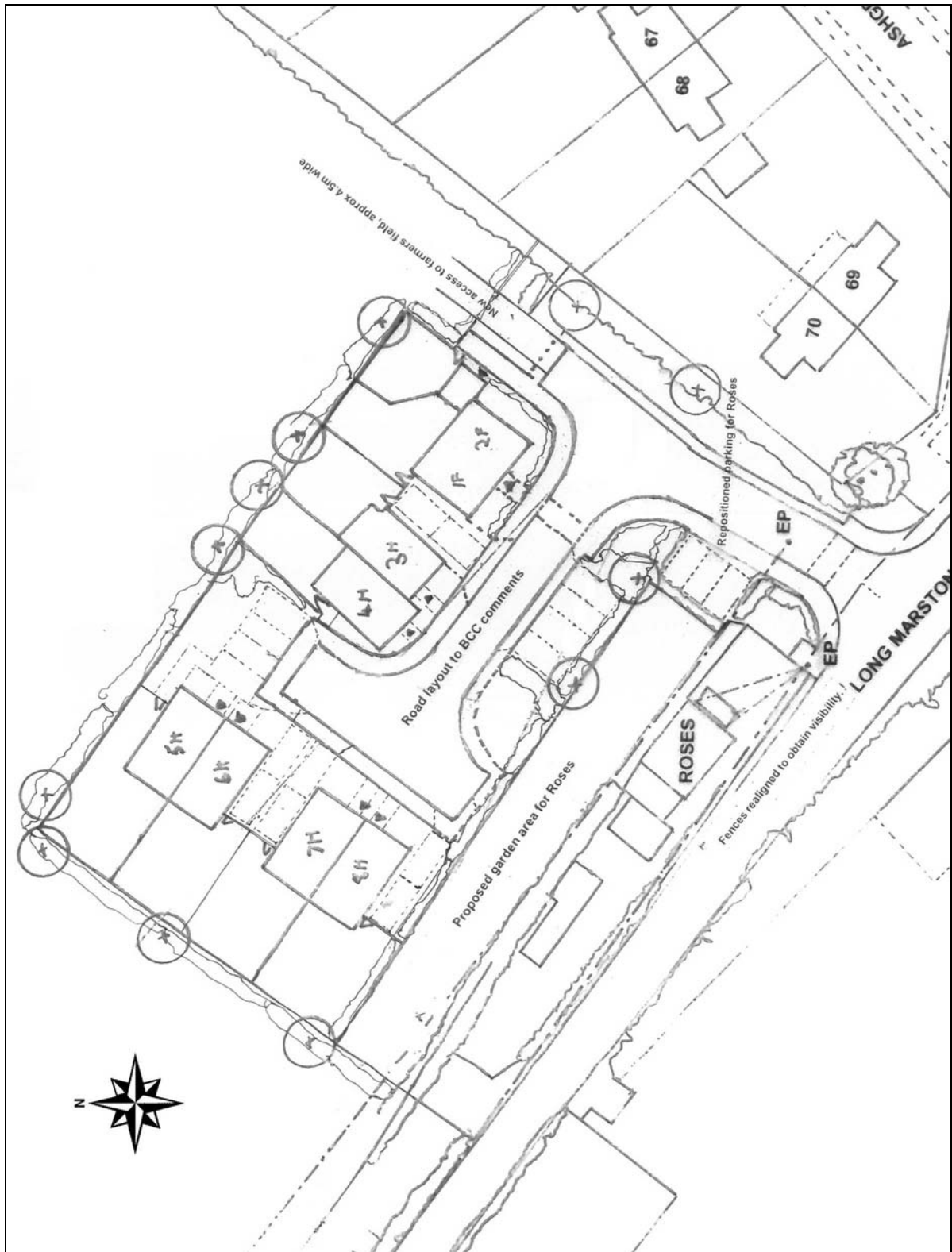


Figure 3: Plan of the proposed development (Scale 1: 500)

2. Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the *brief* (Section 6), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of important archaeological remains and associated palaeo-environmental deposit.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design (Rouse 2010), to the relevant sections of the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the *brief* (Section 8):

- An approximate 4% sample of the development site was excavated, equating to 80 linear metres of trenches. The locations of the trenches are shown in Fig. 4.
- The trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless blade with a minimum width of 2m under continuous archaeological supervision

2.4 Constraints

2.4.1 Due to the location of the construction compound and in order to maintain access to the development site, it was necessary to adjust the location of Trench 4. The trench was excavated a little to the northwest of the agreed position and the location is shown on Fig. 4.

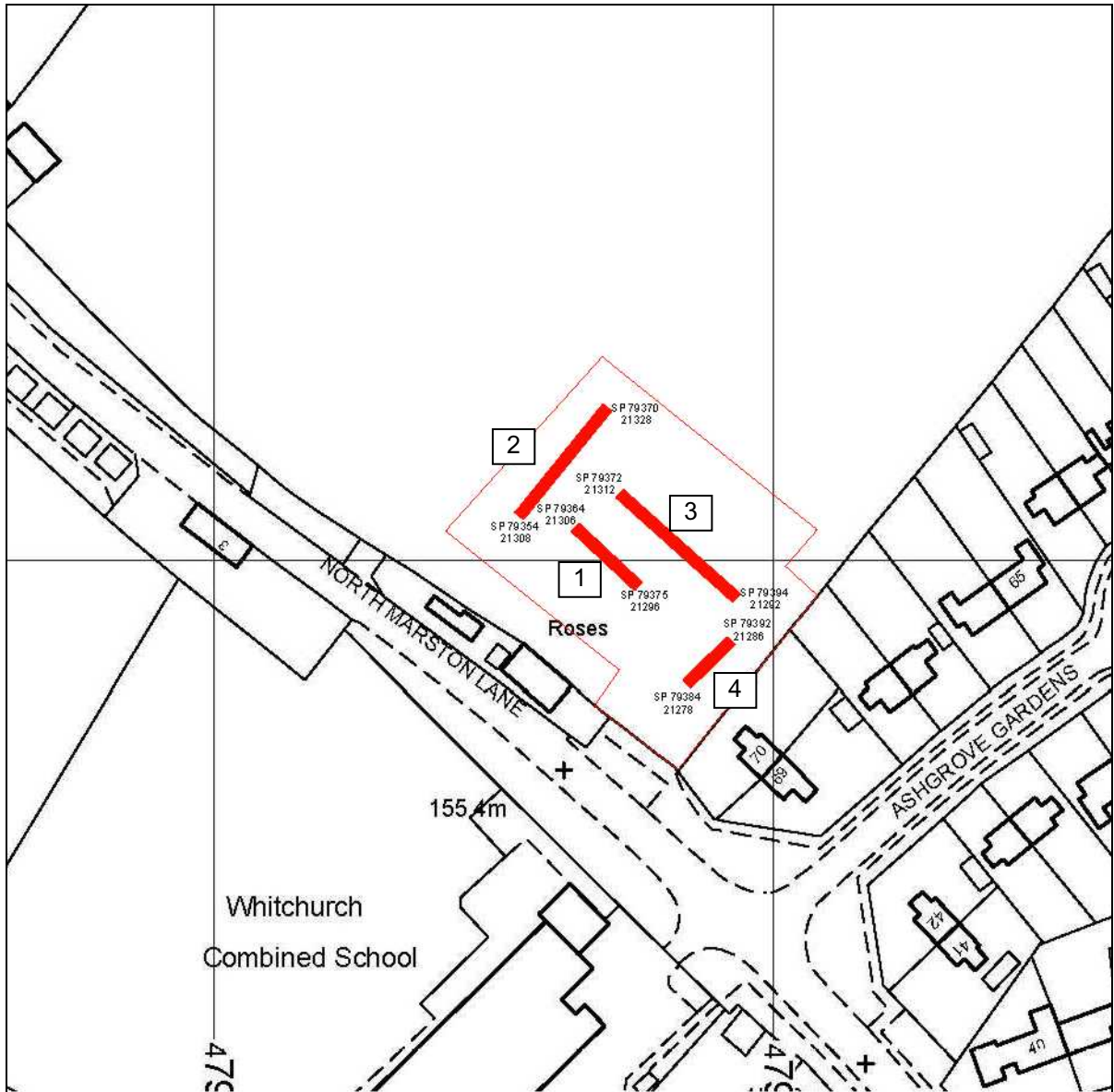


Figure 4: Trench location plan (Scale 1: 1,250)

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The following section provides a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs. Whitchurch is an area of considerable archaeological and historical interest (Tompkins 2008), and the development site was considered to offer potential for the discovery of remains ranging from the prehistoric to medieval periods.

This section has been compiled with information from the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record (HER) ASC's own library and other readily available sources.

2.2 **Prehistoric - Roman** (before 600BC- c.AD450)

The early history of Whitchurch is not well understood, and the earliest evidence for human activity in the area comes from extensive metal detector surveys carried out in fields to the north east of the development site, where over 300 Roman coins have been recovered, dating from the late 2nd century to the late 4th century. Three 1st century coins and the head of a 'Dolphin' bow brooch dating to the late 1st – mid 2nd centuries were also recovered during the surveys, as well as a large assemblage of fairly abraded Romano British pottery (HER2463). Also recovered was a cast bronze fitting with two studs in the form of two Celtic trumpets. The fitting has been dated to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, and may have military associations (HER5104). The sheer quantity of these finds suggests the area may have been occupied during the Roman period.

3.3 **Saxon** (c.450-1066)

Whitchurch is mentioned in the Domesday Survey, suggesting that the settlement was established during the Saxon period (Tompkins 2008). The metal detecting survey discussed above also recovered two Saxon sceattas (coins), one of which is a copy of an East Kent issue, along with an animal headed wire torque. These finds have been dated to the 7th and 8th centuries (HER2463, 5418).

3.4 **Medieval** (1066-1500)

The Domesday Survey records Whitchurch as a slightly larger than average rural manor, and it seems likely that it's urban character did not develop until after it became the seat of the small Norman barony of Hugh de Bolbec (Tompkins 2008).

Bolebec Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument located c.0.7km southeast of the development site. It is a motte and bailey castle, first mentioned by Pope Eugenius as 'castleworks wrongfully exacted by Hugh de Bolbec in 1147' suggesting it was built during the time of the Anarchy to oppose the crown. In its early years, the castle served as the stronghold of the De Bolbec and De Vere families. Little is known of the following history of the site, but a masonry castle is recorded as being demolished on the site during the Civil War (HER0306).

There is documentary evidence for a windmill dating as far back as the 13th century, located c.0.15km south of the development site. The area is now built over and there are no physical remains to suggest the presence of a mill, but the ground is higher than the surrounding area and provides a suitable location for a windmill (HER4300).

The metal detecting survey carried out in fields to the east of the development site recovered a damaged papal bulla dating to the early 13th century approximately 400m from the development site, along with 3 jettons and six 17th-18th century tokens (HER5092).

3.5 ***Post-Medieval & Modern*** (1500- present)

Whitchurch has remained a relatively small settlement that has not expanded greatly during the post medieval and modern periods. The village was expanded to the north and north west after WWII by the construction of private and social housing. The development site is located at the northwestern extent of this expansion.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction:

4.1.1 This section provides a summary of the results of the evaluation. Full descriptions, in tabulated form, are provided in Appendix 1.

4.1.2 Four trenches were excavated (Fig. 4) using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 2m wide toothless bucket operating under continuous archaeological supervision. Following excavation each trench was cleaned sufficiently to determine if archaeological remains were present. Basic trench information was recorded on pro-forma sheets and a photographic record was made. The spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Trenches 1 and 2

Trenches 1 and 2 were situated in the central and west parts of the development site respectively and the sequence of soil layers was similar in both trenches. At the time of the fieldwork the development site was laid out to grass (Plate 1) and the topsoil (100), (200) was *c.*200mm thick and comprised mid/dark brown clayey silt. The underlying subsoil (101), (201) comprised slightly lighter brown clayey silt and was *c.*100 – 200mm thick. The underlying natural strata (102), (202) comprised variable orangy brown clayey silt mixed with localised bedded deposits of Jurassic limestone.

No significant archaeological features or artefacts were present in these trenches.

4.2.2 Trench 3 (Fig. 5; Plates 2 and 3)

Trench 3 was situated in the northeast part of the development site and prior to the opening of the trench a negative earthwork was visible on the surface (Plate 1).

The topsoil was similar to that elsewhere on the development site and comprised a *c.*300mm thick layer of dark greyish brown silty clay (300). The underlying subsoil (301) comprised mid grey brown silty clay. It became thicker and more homogenous in character towards the southeast end of the trench where its base was not reached. In this area the subsoil was similar in character to the subsoil in the adjacent Trench 4 (section 4.2.3).

The subsoil (301) had been cut by an irregular shaped feature [302], which is interpreted as a quarry pit. Its location in the trench coincided with the negative earthwork visible on the surface (Plate 1). It was asymmetrical in shape and was *c.*10.7m wide. In the northwest part of the trench the construction cut had been excavated vertically into the underlying natural strata (303) and it had a horizontal base at a depth of *c.*500mm. The southeast side of the feature comprised a deeper 'U' shaped cut which had a maximum depth of *c.*1.2m.

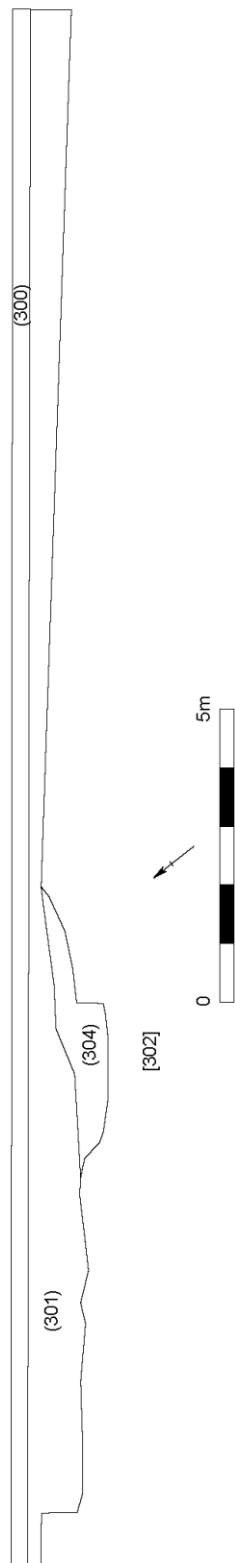


Figure 5: southeast facing section through Trench 3, showing quarry pit [302]

The quarry pit contained a mixed fill of redeposited sand and limestone with bands of reddish brown sand and redeposited subsoil (304).

A single small sherd of 19th or 20th century bottle glass (not retained) was present at the base of the fill (section 5.2). A vein of bedded sandstone blocks were present at the base of the pit (Plate 3) and the feature is interpreted as a modern quarry pit exploiting the beds of stone.

The underlying natural strata comprised orangy brown clayey silt mixed with localised bedded deposits of sandstone.

4.2.3 Trench 4

Trench 4 was situated in the east side of the site. Due to the location of the construction compound it was necessary to adjust the trench location and the trench was excavated a little to the northwest of the agreed position (Fig. 4).

The topsoil was *c.*200mm thick and comprised dark greyish brown silty clay (400). The underlying subsoil (401) was thicker than the subsoil in Trenches 1-3 and comprised a more homogenous greyish brown silty clay. The trench was excavated to a depth of 700mm, but the underlying natural strata was not reached.

No significant archaeological features or artefacts were present in this trench.



Plate 1: Photograph of the site prior to the commencement of the evaluation



Plate 2: Pit [302] (*Scale = 1m*)



Plate 3: View of base Pit [302] with band of natural bedded stone (*Scale = 1m*)

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Four archaeological trial trenches were excavated across the development site, targeting the footprints of the proposed buildings and access route. No significant archaeological features or artefacts were present in the trenches.
- 5.2 The development site is situated on the western periphery of Whitchurch and no evidence for pre-modern activity was present. The quarry pit [302] recorded in Trench 3 was probably worked during the 19th century in order to exploit local deposits of Corellian Sandstone (section 1.4.2). The location of this quarry was visible as a shallow hollow, prior to the commencement of the fieldwork (Plate 1) and a number of similar earthworks were observed in the field to the west of the development site. Remains of these quarry pits are likely to be considered to be of local significance.
- 5.3 Significant archaeological features were not revealed during the evaluation. While the occasional existence of individual isolated archaeological features away from the trenches cannot be specifically excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of archaeological features are present on the development site. It is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant impact on archaeological remains and the archaeological impact of the development is likely to be low.

5.4 *Confidence rating*

The work was undertaken in dry, hot and sunny weather conditions and full co-operation was received from the client and machining contractor. Accordingly, a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the evaluation.

6. Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Lee Ellis on behalf of *McInerney Homes Ltd*. The writer is grateful to Mr Paul Drake of *McInerney Homes* for his assistance with the on-site works. Mr Sandy Kidd BSc MA MIFA of the *Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service* acted as curatorial monitor on behalf of the local planning authority.

The fieldwork was led for ASC Ltd by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA, assisted by David Fell BA MA MIFA. The report was prepared by David Fell and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site records
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with *Buckinghamshire County Museum*.

8. References


Standards & Specifications


- Beckley R, 2010 *Brief for an archaeological excavation at North Marston Lane, Whitchurch, Buckinghamshire*. Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).
- IFA 2000a Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2001 Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- Rouse C, 2010 *North Marston Lane, Whitchurch, Buckinghamshire. Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation*. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd document no. **1290/WNM/1**


Secondary Sources


- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend*.
- Tompkins, M 2008 *Buckinghamshire Historic Towns Project Historical Documentary Research*
Leicester University

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1											
						Max Dimensions (m)					
						Length	15.5m	Width	2m	Depth	0.45m
						Levels					
						Trench top NW			153.47m OD		
						Trench base NW			153.14m OD		
						Trench top SE			153.91m OD		
						Trench base SE			153.41m OD		
						NGR Co-ordinates					
						NW	SP 79364 21306		SE	SP 79375 21296	
						Orientation			NW - SE		
Reason for Trench			General evaluation								
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)				
100	Layer	Mid/dark brown clayey silt with turf above. Topsoil			-	200	-				
101	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay with occasional small stones. Merges with (102). Subsoil			-	c.100	200				
102	Layer	Light orangy brown clayey silt & bedded stones. Natural strata.			-	150+	300				

Trench 2											
						Max Dimensions (m)					
						Length	25m	Width	2m	Depth	0.45m
						Levels					
						Trench top NE			153.52m OD		
						Trench base NE			152.94m OD		
						Trench top SW			153.07m OD		
						Trench base SW			152.81m OD		
						NGR Co-ordinates					
						SW	SP 79354 21308		NE	SP 79370 21328	
						Orientation			SW - NE		
Reason for Trench			General evaluation								
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)				
200	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty clay with turf above. Topsoil			-	c.200	-				
201	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay. Merges with (202). Natural subsoil			-	c.200	c.200				
202	Layer	Light orangy brown clayey silt & bedded stones. Natural strata.			-	150+	c.400				

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	28m	Width	2m	Depth	1m (average)
	Levels					
	Trench top SE			155.23m OD		
	Trench base SE			154.29m OD		
	Trench top NW			153.96m OD		
	Trench base NW			153.45m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NW	SP 79372 21312		SE	SP 79394 21292	
	Orientation			NW - SE		
Reason for Trench			General evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)	
300	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty clay with turf above. Topsoil	-	300	-	
301	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay. Natural subsoil	-	c.400	300	
304	Fill	Mixed grey brown silty clay with bands of reddish brown silty sand. Backfilling/nat. infilling of quarry [303]	10.7m	c.450	c.700	
302	Cut	Asymmetrical cut. Construction cut of modern quarry pit	10.7m	c.450	c.700	
303	Layer	Light orangy brown clayey silt & bedded stones. Natural strata.	-	-	c.700	

Trench 4						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	11m	Width	2m	Depth	0.7m
	Levels					
	Trench top SW			155.03m OD		
	Trench base SW			154.56m OD		
	Trench top NE			155.23m OD		
	Trench base NE			155.59m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	NE	SP 79392 21286		SW	SP 79384 21278	
	Orientation			NE - SW		
Reason for Trench			General evaluation			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Width (max: mm)	Thickness (max: mm)	Depth (BGL: mm)	
400	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty clay with turf above. Topsoil	-	200	0	
401	Layer	Mid grey brown silty clay. Natural subsoil	-	500+	200	

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: North Marston Lane, Whitchurch			SITE NO/CODE: 1290/WNM
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		✓	General view of the development site looking west
2		✓	General view of the development site looking northwest
3		✓	General view of the trenches looking north
4		✓	General view of the trenches looking northwest
5		✓	General view of the trenches looking north
6	✓	✓	Trench 1
7	✓	✓	Trench 2
8	✓	✓	Trench 3
9	✓	✓	Trench 4
10		✓	Pit [302] in Trench 3 looking southwest
11	✓	✓	Pit [302] in Trench 3 looking northeast
12	✓	✓	Base of Pit [302] in Trench 3

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	North Marston Lane, Whitchurch	OASIS reference:	Archaeol2-76367
Short Description:	In April 2010 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at North Marston Lane, Whitchurch, Buckinghamshire in advance of the construction of a housing development. Four evaluation trenches were excavated but the only evidence of past activity was a quarry pit, probably dating to the 19 th century. No other archaeological features or artefacts were present and the development is unlikely to have an impact on significant archaeological remains. The archaeological impact of the development is considered to be low		
Project Type:	Evaluation		
Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	none	Site status: (eg. none, SAM, listed)	none
Current land use:	pasture	Future work: (yes/no/unknown)	unknown
Monument type:	none	Monument period:	
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Buckinghamshire	OS reference: (8 figs min)	SP 7938 2130
Site address: (+ postcode if known)	North Marston Lane, Whitchurch		
Study area: (sq. m. / ha)	0.28ha	Height OD: (metres)	155m OD
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	BCAS	Project design originator:	ASC Ltd
Project Manager:	David Fell BA MA MIFA	Director/Supervisor:	J Hunn BA PhD MIFA
Sponsor / funding body:	McInerney Homes Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:		End date:	
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	n/a	n/a	
Paper:	Bucks County Museum	Project design, report, client plans, etc.	
Digital:	Bucks County Museum	CD with all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	Archaeological Evaluation: North Marston Lane, Whitchurch, Buckinghamshire		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1234/WNM/2		
Author(s):	David Fell		
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