

The Howe Howe Road, Watlington Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation



for:
Kernon Countryside Consultants

on behalf of:
Lesley Hughes

CA Project: MK0247
CA Report: MK0247_1
Planning Ref.: P20/S0907/FUL

July 2020



The Howe Howe Road, Watlington Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: MK0247
CA Report: MK0247_1

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SUMMARY

Project name:	The Howe, Howe Road
Location:	Watlington, Oxfordshire
NGR:	469693 192228
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	25 June 2020
Planning reference:	P20/S0907/FUL
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).
Accession Number:	OXCMS: 2020.55
Site Code:	HORO20

In June 2020, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at The Howe, Howe Road, Watlington, Oxfordshire, in connection with development proposals located within the suggested extent of Watcombe Deserted Medieval Village.

Two trenches were excavated; however, no archaeological finds or features were identified. The trenches were located on a hill incline, with Trench 1 located at 147m aOD and the south-western edge of the field at 158m aOD. This gradient suggests an unfavourable location for a settlement and the site more likely falls into the agricultural hinterland of Watcombe.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In June 2020, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at The Howe, Howe Road, Watlington, Oxfordshire (centred at NGR: 469693 192228 Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken for Kernon Countryside Consultants, acting on behalf of their client, Lesley Hughes.
- 1.2. The evaluation results will help inform determination a planning application (P20/S0907/FUL) that has been made to South Oxfordshire District Council (hereafter SODC) for the construction of an indoor riding arena measuring 40m by 20m. The application site is situated in an area of archaeological potential and comments provided by the Planning Archaeologist at the County Archaeological Service, Oxfordshire County Council (hereafter CAS), in their capacity as archaeological advisor to SODC, indicated that a pre-determination archaeological evaluation would be required to support the application and provide information to aid in making further recommendations regarding the archaeological potential of the site. The evaluation will help to determine to the presence or absence, date, character, condition and significance of any heritage assets that are present, the likely impact of the development on the significance of those assets and, where the significance of any assets that are identified would not act as a bar on the proposed development, the need for, nature and extent of any mitigation works that may be required to adequately record those assets prior to their damage or loss. This process is in line with policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2019).
- 1.3. The sample size for the evaluation was confirmed by the CAS (see section 4 below) and the evaluation was carried out in accordance with an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CA (2020) and approved by the CAS.
- 1.4. The evaluation was also undertaken in line with the Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2014), Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation (Historic England 2015) and Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide (Historic England 2015).

The site

- 1.5. The proposed development site is approximately 0.15ha in extent. It lies on the western side of the B480 (Howe Hill), on the south-eastern outskirts of Watlington. The site currently comprises a paddock, bounded to the west by trees, to the north east by an existing riding school and to the south by further pasture. The site lies at approximately 147m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), with the land sloping from the south-west to the north-east.
- 1.6. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk formation (undifferentiated) – chalk sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 90 to 101 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period (BGS 2020). No superficial deposits are recorded.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A search of the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER ref 20 - 37) was obtained based upon a 1km search area centred on the site, to inform the evaluation and assist in placing the results in their local context.

Prehistoric

- 2.2. A Neolithic Polished Flint Axe (HER ref: 12750), recovered during digging leaf mould in woodland between 1960 and 1965 is the only evidence of Prehistoric date within 1km of the site. The hand axe dated to the Neolithic period between 4000 BC to 2351 BC.

Roman & Post-Roman

- 2.3. No Roman or Early to Late Saxon sites are recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site, although the hamlet of Watcombe (see below) may well have had origins in the Late Saxon period.

Medieval-Modern Periods

- 2.4. The proposed development is situated within the suggested extent of Watcombe Deserted Medieval Settlement (HER ref: 964), an outlying hamlet of Watlington. While the exact focus of the settlement is not clear it is likely that the hamlet was in

the same position as modern Howe or very close to it, however this has not been proven.

- 2.5. Located behind Marigold Cottage, to the south of the Site, a large Holloway, dated to the Medieval to post-Medieval period has been recorded (HER ref: 15869). The feature shallows out at the top of the gradient behind Marigold Cottage and runs up to Howe Road, ending near Home Cottage. The Holloway, measuring up to 6m wide and 3-4m deep at its greatest extents, runs roughly parallel with, and to the west of, the present Howe Road and has been interpreted as the main road up to Home Hill until the late 18th century. Located at the northern end of the Holloway, several small chalk quarries were likely used for pothole repairs and road metalling. The Deer Park and Warren at Watlington Park (HER ref: 10549), to the east, also dates to the Medieval to Post-Medieval periods. The park was enclosed by the Earl of Cornwall before 1272, ostensibly as a deer park, with a rabbit warren first mentioned in documentary evidence dating from 1337.
- 2.6. The Grade II* listed Watlington Park house (HER ref: 10532; NHLE 1059422) is located within the Watlington Park estate. Taking the form of a large H-shaped house built in 1675 and then replaced in c. 1755, an historical and archaeological study and building assessment of the park undertaken in 2002/2003, notes that the building had gone through many developments and improvements throughout the late 18th century through to the 20th century.
- 2.7. Located approximately 40m south of Watlington Park, the mid-18th century kitchen garden walls are listed Grade II (HER ref: 20432, NHLE 1059423). The wall is of brick laid in an English bond, with segmental-arched doorways, one with a wrought-iron gate.
- 2.8. Several surviving buildings dating from the 17th and 18th centuries still stand within the 1km study area around the site. Two cottages (HER ref: 20507), located approximately 15m north of the 17th century Howe Farmhouse, Howe Hill (HER ref: 20509), are dated to the 17th century and extended in the 18th century. The Howe, Howe Hill (HER ref: 20511) is a further example of a late 17th century farmhouse, now a house and flat.
- 2.9. Located approximately 15m southeast of Howe Farmhouse, a granary (HER ref: 20510), dated to the late 17th century/early 18th century survives. The granary is made from an uncoursed flint rubble with brick dressings with a gabled tile roof.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objective of the evaluation was to provide further information on the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date and state of preservation. The information gathered will enable the CAS to determine the likely impact of the development on the significance of those assets and, where the significance of any assets that are identified would not act as a bar on the proposed development, the need for, nature and extent of any mitigation works that may be required to adequately record those assets prior to their damage or loss.
- 3.2. In the event that significant archaeological remains had been identified reference would have been made to Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (Hey, G & Hind, J. 2014), to place the identified remains within their local and regional context. However, the negative results of the evaluation mean that the work will not contribute to any regional research framework objectives.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The evaluation was originally intended to comprise a single 40m long by 2m wide trench but, with the agreement of the CAS this was divided in two trenches to take account of onsite constraints including a gate, fence and overhead tree canopy (see Fig.2). The trenches as-excavated measured:
 - Trench 1 - 31.8m x 2.2m.
 - Trench 2 - 9.4m x 2.2m
- 4.2. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS. Overburden was stripped from the trenches by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. All machining was conducted under archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate, which was the level at which no archaeological features were encountered.
- 4.3. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.4. No deposits were identified that required sampling and no artefacts were recovered.

- 4.5. CA will make arrangements with Oxfordshire Museums Service (OXCMS: 2020.55) for the deposition of the project archive. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).
- 4.6. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A.

- 5.2. The natural geological substrate, consisting of chalk, was exposed in the two excavated trenches (Trenches 1 and 2), sealed by a clayey silt topsoil. No superficial deposits were recorded. The site has previously been used as a paddock and although located on a slope the field itself was relatively flat and potentially has been rolled and or managed to allow for its former and future purpose.

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 & 3)

- 5.3. Trench 1 was located on the northern side of the development area on an east-west alignment, and measured 31.8m in length by 2.2m in width, with a maximum depth of 0.23m. The substrate comprised a degraded hill chalk, recorded at a depth greater than 0.2m, which was covered by topsoil. The trench was archaeologically sterile.

Trench 2 (Figs. 2 & 3)

- 5.4. Trench 2 was located on the north side of the development area, orientated on a north-south alignment and measuring 9.4m in length, 2.2m in width, with a maximum depth of 0.28m. As with trench 1, the topsoil directly overlaid the natural substrate, which again comprised a degraded chalk. No archaeological features were recorded in Trench 2.

6. THE FINDS & BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- 6.1. No environmental samples were taken due to the site being archaeologically sterile and no artefactual material was recovered.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1. Due to the close proximity to The Howe and the suspected, but unproven, location of Watcombe Deserted Medieval Village the development area was considered to hold some potential for surviving archaeological remains. However, no archaeological finds or features were identified.
- 7.2. The trenches were located on a hill incline, with Trench 1 located at 147m aOD and the south-western edge of the field at 158m aOD. This gradient suggests an unfavourable location for a settlement and more likely falls into the agricultural hinterland of Watcombe.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 8.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Bush. This report was written by Steve Bush and Tim Street. The report illustrations were prepared by Esther Escudero. The project archive has been compiled by and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neil. The project was managed for CA by Adrian Scruby.

9. REFERENCES

British Geological Survey 2020 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>
Accessed 26 June 2020

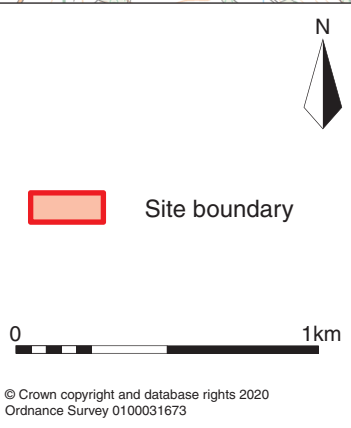
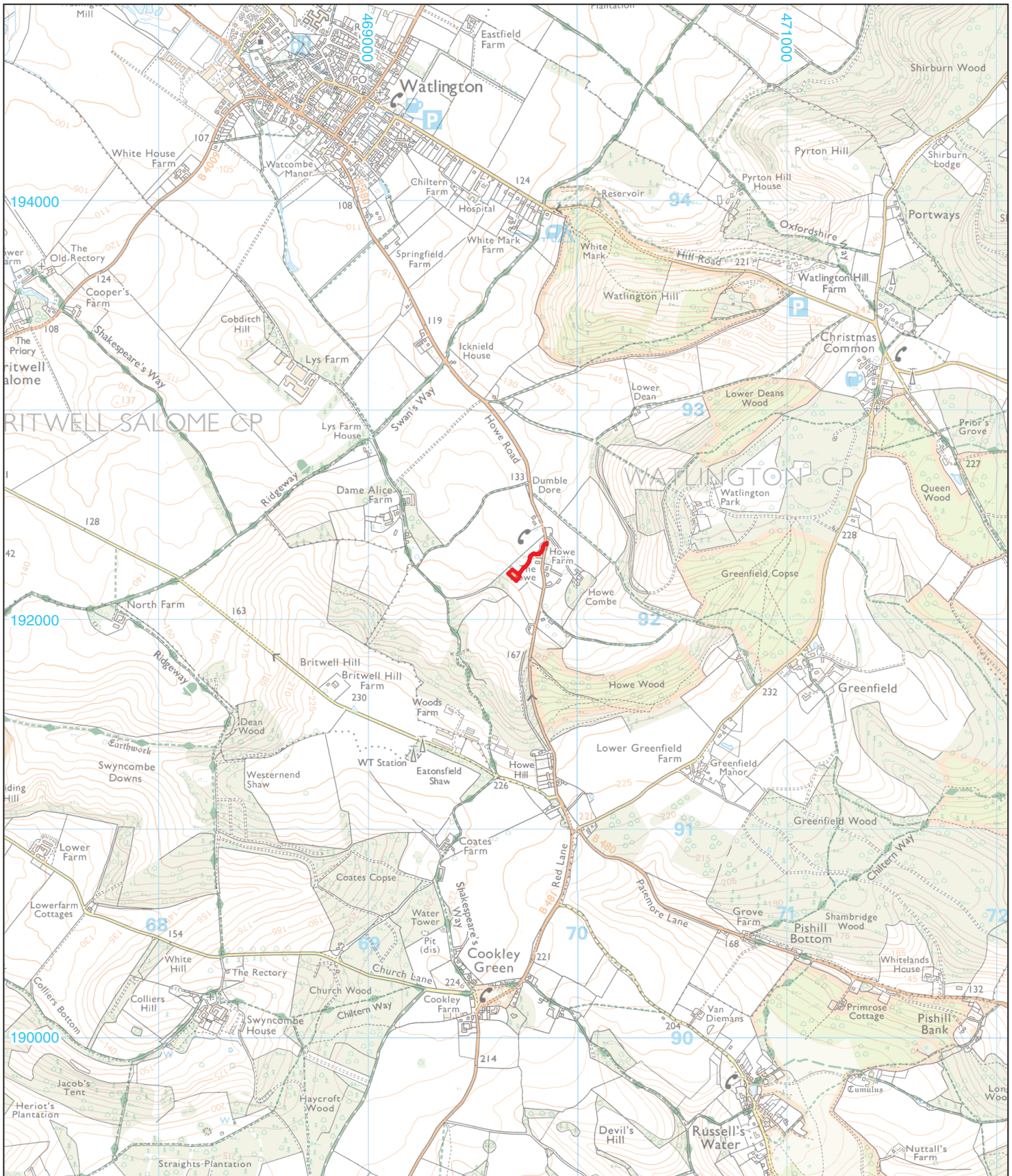
Cotswold Archaeology 2020 *The Howe, Howe Road, Watlington, Oxfordshire:
Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		topsoil	Mid Brown Grey, clayey silt	31.8	2.2	0-0.2 (0.2)	-
1	101	Layer		natural	Off white, degraded hill chalk	31.8	2.2	>0.2 (>0.03)	-
2	200	Layer		topsoil	Mid Brown Grey, clayey silt	9.4	2.2	0-0.25 (0.25)	-
2	202	Layer	102	natural	Off white, degraded hill chalk	9.4	2.2	0-0.25 (>0.03)	-

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	The Howe, Howe Road, Watlington, Oxfordshire	
Short description	<p>In June 2020, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at The Howe, Howe Road, Watlington, Oxfordshire, in connection with development proposals located within the suggested extent of Watcombe Deserted Medieval Village.</p> <p>Two trenches were excavated; however, no archaeological finds or features were identified. The trenches were located on a hill incline, with Trench 1 located at 147m aOD and the south-western edge of the field at 158m aOD. This gradient suggests an unfavourable location for a settlement and the site more likely falls into the agricultural hinterland of Watcombe.</p>	
Project dates	25 th June 2020	
Project type	Field Evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	The Howe, Watlington, Oxfordshire	
Study area (m ² /ha)	2191	
Site co-ordinates	SU 469693 192228	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator	County Archaeological Service, Oxfordshire County Council	
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Adrian Scruby	
Project Supervisor	Steven Bush	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	None	None
Paper	Oxfordshire Museums Service	Context Sheets
Digital	Oxfordshire Museums Service	Photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2020 <i>The Howe, Howe Road, Watlington, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> CA typescript report MK0247.1		



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PROJECT TITLE
The Howes, Watlington, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan

DRAWN BY EE PROJECT NO. MK0247 FIGURE NO.
 CHECKED BY DJB DATE 29/06/2020 1
 APPROVED BY AS SCALE@A4 1:25,000

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Ordnance Survey 0100031673



- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench



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PROJECT TITLE
The Howes, Watlington, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan

DRAWN BY	EE	PROJECT NO.	MK0247	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	29/06/2020	2
APPROVED BY	AS	SCALE	1:400	



Trench 1, looking west (1m scales)



Trench 2, looking south-west (1m scales)



General site photograph, looking west



General site photograph, looking north.


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PROJECT TITLE
 The Howes, Watlington, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Photographs

DRAWN BY	EE	PROJECT NO.	MK0247	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	29/06/2020	3
APPROVED BY	AS	SCALE@A3	NA	

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