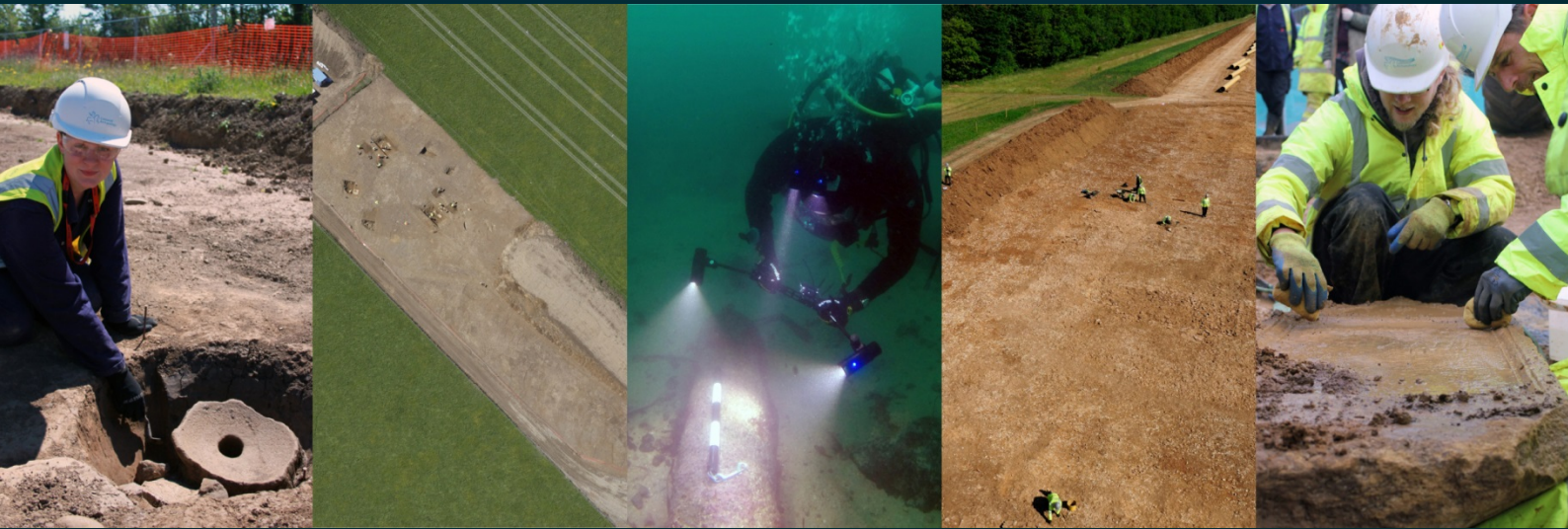


Land at Parklands School Besselsleigh Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation



for
CgMs Heritage

on behalf of
Millgate Homes

CA Project: 770760
CA Report: 18319

June 2018



Land at Parklands School
 Besselsleigh
 Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: 770760
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Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	18-06-18	Steven Bush	M. Nichol	Internal Review	General Edit	Richard Greatorex

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Parklands School
Location:	Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire
NGR:	445264 201043
Type:	Trial Trench Evaluation
Date:	29-30 May 2018
Planning Reference:	P18/V0359/FU
Location of Archive:	Oxfordshire Museum Service
Accession Number:	OXCMS: 2018.54
Site Code:	PSB18

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology (CA) in May 2018 at Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire. Six trenches were machine excavated. No archaeological features, finds or deposits were found.

An isolated tree bowl was identified in **Trench 2** and modern buried services in **Trench 4**. The proximity of trenches located near to existing school structures, buried services, and extensive levelling across the Site, seen by the presence of modern terracing and made ground, represent severe disturbance and truncation. This is likely to have destroyed any potential for archaeological remains.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In May 2018 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation for CgMs Heritage on behalf of Millgate Homes at Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire (centred at NGR: 445264 201043), and hereafter referred to as the Site (see **Figure 1**).

1.2 The trial trench evaluation was undertaken in response to a planning application (ref: P18/V0359/FU) made to Vale of the White Horse District Council (VWHDC). The redevelopment proposals comprise the demolition of structures in the north-eastern area of the Site and the construction of a residential development of 44 units.

1.3 The archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation: Archaeological Field Evaluation (WSI)* (CA, 2018) and approved by Hugh Coddington, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), Archaeological Advisor to the local planning authority (LPA). The fieldwork also followed Standard and guidance: *Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991), the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006). The evaluation was managed Cotswold Archaeology (CA) Project Manager, Oliver Good. The work was monitored by Hugh Coddington. All machined trenches were backfilled and reinstatement was completed to the satisfaction of the client.

The site

1.4 The proposed development area measures approximately 9.5ha, and comprises school buildings and wooded grounds. The Site is bounded by woodlands to the north, the A420 to the south and open pasture to the east and west. The western area of the Site lies at c. 90m AOD and slopes gently westwards to c. 96m AOD.

1.5 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Kingston Formation – Sandstone, a sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 157 to 164 million years ago in the Jurassic Period; no superficial deposits are recorded (BGS 2018).



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 CgMs Heritage (2018) produced an archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA) of the Site with a surrounding study area of 1.25km. Below is a summary of the results;

Prehistoric

2.2 The recovery of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze-Age lithics have been recorded along the length of the Corallian Ridge. This material was mainly recovered by field walking and as stray finds.

2.3 Initial field evaluation at Tubney Wood Quarry, c. 640m to the south-west of the Site, revealed an extensive scatter of Mesolithic flint in the topsoil and subsoil. Further investigations identified two flint concentrations located c. 250m to the west of the Site. The scatters may have resulted from continuous occupation, although periodic occupation in seasonal or broader cycles is more probable. Mesolithic flint scatters were also recorded c. 450m to the south-west, c. 670m to the south and c. 900m to the south of the Site.

2.4 Worked flint dated from the Early Neolithic to the Bronze Age was found c. 250m west, c. 350m to the west, c. 750m to the south-west and c.1km south of the Site.

2.5 Bronze Age find spots and two cremation burials were recorded during test pitting c. 250m to the west of the Site. The presence of these cremations suggests that barrows formerly existed in this location.

2.6 A Late Prehistoric cremation was also recorded c. 750m to the south of the Site. It contained the remains of an infant and an adult.

2.7 A ploughed out Bronze Age barrow is recorded in the northern part of Tubney Wood, c. 500m to the south-west of the Site and a Bronze Age palstave was recorded c. 800m to the south of the Site.

2.8 The Middle Iron Age is the earliest period when settlement evidence first becomes prolific in the Upper Thames Valley. A cluster of 37 pits, and Iron Age ditches, (c. 550m and c. 250m respectively) were recorded west of the Site, likely representing a



settlement activity. An Iron Age enclosure complex was recorded c. 350m to the north of the Site and two Iron Age urns were found c. 800 south of the Site.

Roman

- 2.9 Excavations at Tubney Wood Quarry, c. 640m to the south-west of the Site revealed parts of a long-lived Romano-British farmstead. A large trapezoidal ditched enclosure and a smaller penannular enclosure were recorded immediately west from the Site and c. 500m to the south-west of the Site. No buildings were recorded during the excavation, only a number of postholes. The ditches in the northern complex, adjacent to the study site, silted up in the 3rd century AD (Extension Area 3 in Appendix 2) and Late Roman activity is restricted to an area c. 500m to the south-west from the study site, where a small inhumation cemetery was located (Extension Area 2 in Appendix 2). The late 4th century inhumation cemetery contained 8 burials and it was succeeded by a cemetery of 6 burials dated to the 5th or early 6th century suggesting the persistence of Romano-British cultural affiliations into the early Anglo-Saxon period.
- 2.10 A Roman Road is projected in the north-east/south-west direction c. 150m to the south of the Site.
- 2.11 Roman find spots were recorded c. 350m west of the Site. Romano-British pottery and 4 Roman coins were found c. 830m to the south of the Site.

Anglo-Saxon & Medieval

- 2.12 There is little evidence for the Anglo Saxon period within the study area. Archaeological excavations at Tubney Wood Quarry, c. 640m to the south-west of the Site, recorded a burial of a mutilated female dated to AD 535-640. The burial exhibits several of the characteristics common for early Anglo-Saxon execution cemeteries. No further evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation was recorded.
- 2.13 Anglo-Saxon find spots were recorded c.1.1km to the south from the Site and a pond of a possible Saxon origin was recorded c. 800m to the north of the Site.
- 2.14 Besselsleigh was the nearest settlement to the Site recorded in the 1086 Domesday survey. It lay c. 500m to the north-east and was characterised as a medium sized settlement. Besselsleigh was first mentioned in 1086 and means '*belonging to the Besyles family*'.

- 2.15 The Site of the Besselsleigh Manor House is recorded c. 50m to the east of the study site which is also the location of a deserted medieval village. The medieval church of Besselsleigh currently stands in isolation in parkland c. 140m to the east from the Site. Map evidence such as Rocques Map of 1761 documents that there were once other buildings in the vicinity. Evidence for an avenue and ridge and furrow cultivation marks are also present in the area.
- 2.16 The deserted medieval village of Tubney was originally centred on Tubney Manor Farm c.300m west from the study site, which was moated on two sides and had a drawbridge until about 1840. The village was deserted by the early sixteenth century, and the medieval church had been demolished by 1731. Archaeological investigations at Tubney Woods Quarry, c. 640m to the south-west of the Site, revealed evidence of the former boundary of a plot of land shown on the 1841 tithe map interpreted as the former medieval church graveyard. No graves were located within this land plot, however a large medieval quarry was found.

Post-medieval and Modern

- 2.17 The Site is shown in open agricultural land to the west of the village of Besselsleigh on the 1761 Rocque's Map.
- 2.18 The 1811 Ordnance Survey shows a north-east/south-west trackway running across the Site and a newly built structure in the south-eastern area of the study site.
- 2.19 The 1841 Besselsleigh Parish Tithe Map and associated award show the study site in the following six plots:
- 1 – House, garden, barn and field; arable
 - 92 – Able Grove: pasture
 - 102 – Han Grounds
 - 103 – Home Paddock; pasture
 - 104 – Garden
 - 104 – House plantation and lawn
- 2.20 The modern manor house of Besselsleigh and associated gardens were constructed in the north-eastern area of the Site by 1876. The farm and barn that previously occupied the northern part of the Site were removed and a new outbuilding is shown along the northern Site boundary. The cottage in the south-eastern area of Site remains unchanged but was demolished by 1899.

- 2.21 A playing field was built to the west of the manor house by 1913 and an existing pond in the north-western area of Site has been redesigned into a circular shape.
- 2.22 The Site remained largely unchanged until the second half of the 20th century when the manor house was converted into a school. The 1972 Ordnance Survey shows that staff houses, a tennis court and additional buildings were added to the school. The Site remains largely unchanged until the present.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation were to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality. In accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2014), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable Oxfordshire County Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).
- 3.2 If significant archaeological remains were identified, reference will be made to the appropriate research framework, with reference, i.e. *Solent-Thames Archaeological Research Framework* (Chapters published 2006-2009) so that the remains can, if possible, be placed within their local and regional context (http://www.algao.org.uk/england/research_frameworks).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 A total of six trial trenches were machine excavated at the Site in May 2018. All trenches were shortened in length or moved several metres to avoid on-site obstructions; to include overhanging tree canopies and existing upstanding structures.
- 4.2 Excavated trial trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using

Leica GPS. The final completed trench survey was recorded using Leica GPS in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 *Survey Manual*.

- 4.3 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.4 Due regard for known services was undertaken prior to, during excavation and upon completion of the work at the Site. All work was undertaken in accordance with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and *Safe Systems of Work for – Excavations, Working Outdoors, Avoiding Overhead Services & Underground Services, Asbestos and Substances/Contaminated ground* and correct PPE worn at all times.
- 4.5 Deposits were assessed for their biological potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: *The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* and, no deposits were identified that required sampling. No artefacts were recovered that needed to be processed in accordance with Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.6 The archive is currently held by CA at their office in Andover. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, the site archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services under accession number **OXCMS: 2018.54**. A summary of information from this project, set out within **Appendix B**, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGURES 2-5)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the trial trench evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are to be found in **Appendix A**.
- 5.2 The underlying bedrock geology of Kingston Sandstone Formation was present throughout the Site ranging from greyish yellow sand with patches of dark reddish



brown sand with sandstone inclusions. The natural substrata found within **Trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6** was observed to be root disturbed (see **Figure 2**).

- 5.3 No archaeological features, deposits or finds were found during the trial trench evaluation. The topsoil and subsoil deposits found within each trench during the work (**Trenches 1 – 6**) were heavily truncated. A general description for each trench can be found below;

Trench 1 (Figures 2 & 3)

- 5.4 **Trench 1** was located to the north-west within the Site and sub-divided (**Trenches 1.1 and 1.2**) due to on-site obstructions. The natural geology **102** was located within **Trench 1.1 and 1.2** at a depth of up to 0.64m and comprised light greyish yellow sand with sandstone bedrock visible to north within **Trench 1.2**. The natural geology was covered by mid reddish brown silty sandy clay subsoil **101** throughout with a thickness of up to 0.42m which in turn was covered by dark greyish brown sandy silt topsoil **100** with a thickness of up to 0.22m. A modern service was orientated on an east-west alignment centrally within the original **Trench 1** location.

Trench 2 (Figures 2 & 3)

- 5.5 **Trench 2** was located to the north-west within the Site and contained a large tree bowl **204** which extended outside the trench limits. The tree bowl comprised a length of 1.85m and width greater than 2m. The base was uneven and the feature contained a single mid reddish brown silty sand fill **205**. No finds were identified. The tree bowl cut a light yellow sandy natural horizon **202** at a depth of 0.62m and covered by dark brown red silty sandy clay subsoil **201** with a thickness of up to 0.36m. The subsoil was covered by topsoil **200** consisting of dark reddish brown silty sandy clay with a thickness of up to 0.26m.

Trench 3 (Figures 2 & 4)

- 5.6 **Trench 3** was located to the north within the Site and consisted of light reddish yellow sandy natural horizon **302** with patches of dark brownish red sandy clay within sandstone bedrock at a depth of 0.94m. The natural geology was covered by mid brownish red sandy silty clay subsoil **301** with a thickness of up to 0.6m. The subsoil appeared to have been recently re-deposited. A final layer of topsoil **300** comprising dark greyish brown sandy silty clay with a thickness of up to 0.34m covered the subsoil.

Trench 4 (Figures 2 & 4)

- 5.7 **Trench 4** was located to the north-east within the Site and consisted of light greyish yellow sandy natural horizon **402** at a depth of 0.74m. The natural geology was covered by mid brownish red silty sandy clay subsoil **401** with a thickness of up to 0.41m. A final layer of topsoil **400** comprising dark greyish brown sandy silty clay with a thickness of up to 0.25m covered the subsoil. During the machine excavation of the trench, five modern services were identified; two cables were located to the north-west within the trench at a shallow depth of 0.1m. Another unidentified service was also identified within the trench. Two drains were also found. The remains of a modern path located to the south-east within the trench were uncovered below the existing topsoil.

Trench 5 (Figures 2 & 5)

- 5.8 **Trench 5** was located to the south-east within the Site and contained light reddish yellow sandy natural horizon **503** at a depth of 0.83m. The natural geology was covered by mid reddish brown silty sandy clay subsoil **502** with a thickness of up to 0.51m. A layer of topsoil **501** comprising dark reddish brown sandy silty clay with a thickness of up to 0.22m covered the subsoil. A final layer **500** consisting of modern aggregate and concrete slabs with a thickness of 0.12m completed the stratigraphic sequence. Layer **500** comprised recently made ground relating to the nearby upstanding structures construction.

Trench 6 (Figures 2 & 5)

- 5.9 **Trench 6** was located to the south-east within the Site between two separate woodland areas and contained light reddish yellow sandy natural horizon **601** at a depth of 0.69m. The natural geology was covered by dark reddish brown silty sandy clay topsoil **600** with a thickness of up to 0.57m.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 No artefacts were identified during the trial trench evaluation.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The Site is located in a wider area of known archaeology; however no archaeological features, deposits or finds were discovered during the trial trench

evaluation. The proximity of trenches to the existing school structures, the location of buried services, the visible levelling across the Site seen by the presence of modern terracing and the made ground all represent recent heavy disturbance and truncation. This is likely to have destroyed any potential for archaeology that may have been present. The absence of any finds at the Site appears to confirm this.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by CA Project Leader Steve Bush, assisted by CA Site personnel Chris Brown and Jon Dobbie. The report was written by Steve Bush. The illustrations were prepared Daniel Bashford. The archive has been compiled by Steve Bush, and prepared for deposition by Zoe Emery. The project was managed for CA by Oliver Good.

9. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2018 *Geology of Britain Viewer*

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 31 May 2018

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2018 *Land at Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation*

CgMs Ltd (2018) *Land at Parklands School Besselsleigh Oxfordshire Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*

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

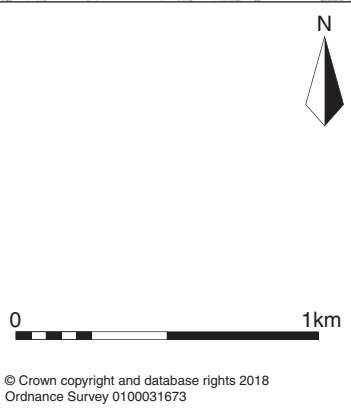
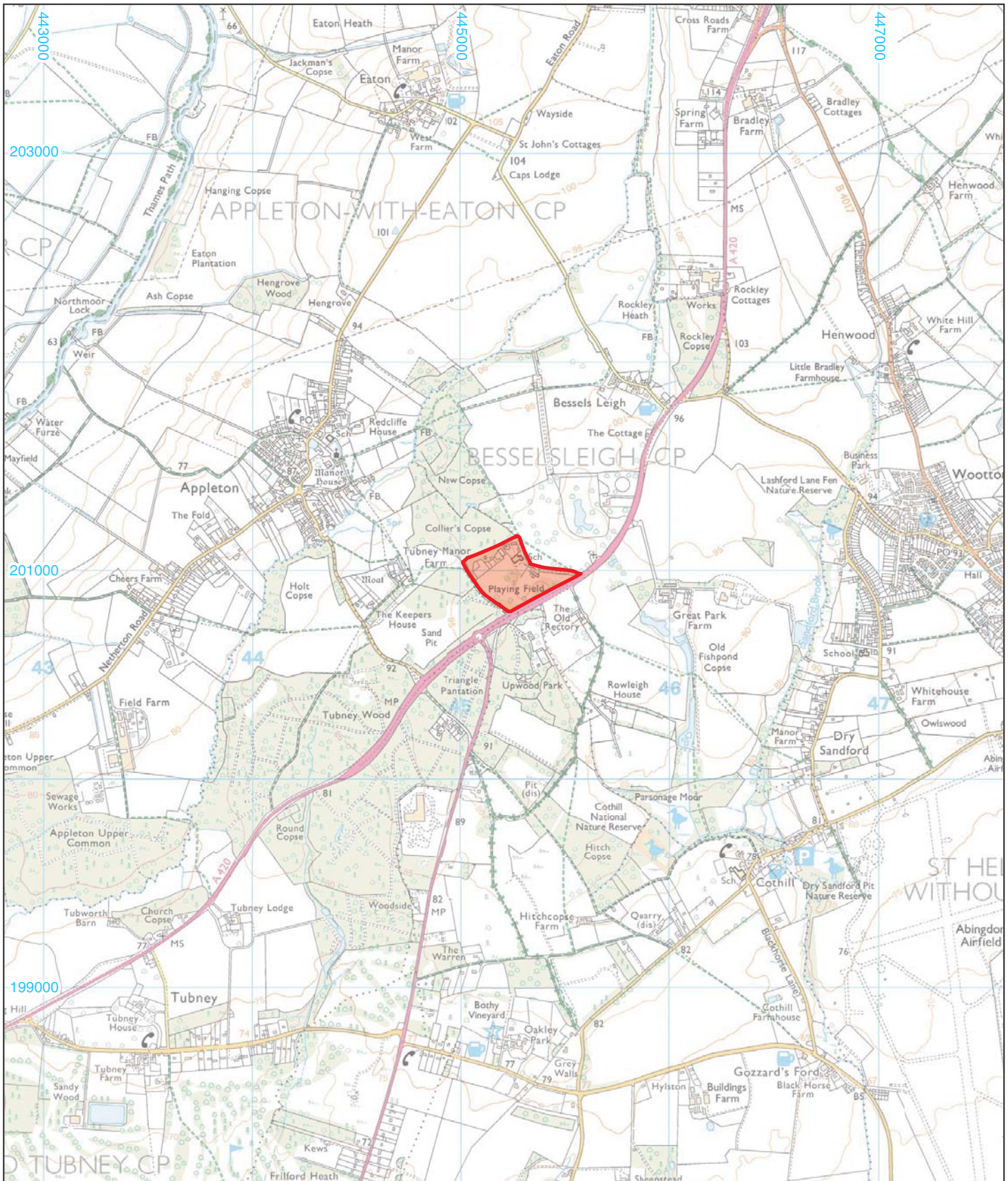


APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown, sandy silt, loose, no apparent inclusions, moderate clarity with Subsoil (101)	14.2	2	0.2	Modern
1	101	Layer		Subsoil	Mid red brown silty sand, friable, no apparent inclusions, good clarity with natural (102)	14.2	2	0.4	
1	102	Layer		Natural	Light grey yellow, sand, friable, no apparent inclusions, contains concentrated area of bedrock (sandstone) in northern area of trench	14.2	2	>0.	
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown, sandy silt, loose, no apparent inclusions, lightly rooted	18.5	2	0.2	Modern
2	201	Layer		Subsoil	Dark red brown, soft, silty sand, lightly rooted with minimal inclusions	18.5	2	0.3	
2	202	Layer		Natural	Light white yellow, sand, some patches of darker red sand and rooting marks, no apparent inclusions	18.5	2	>0.	
2	203	Layer		Natural	Dark red brown sand with sandstone pieces	n/a	<1.5	n/a	
2	204	Cut		Tree bowl	Irregular tree bowl	>2.0	1.95	0.3	
2	205	Fill	204	Fill of tree bowl	Mid red brown friable silty sand, heavily rooted	>2.0	1.95	0.3	
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown, loose, sandy silt, no apparent inclusions, heavily rooted, good clarity with subsoil (301)	8.1	2	0.3	Modern
3	301	Layer		Subsoil	Mid dark brown, friable, sandy silt, no apparent inclusions, good clarity with natural (302)	8.1	2	0.6	
3	302	Layer		Natural	Light red yellow, sand with concentrations of dark brown, friable, red sandy clay within area of bedrock, no apparent inclusions	8.1	2	>0.	
4	400	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown, loose, sandy silt, no apparent inclusions, heavily rooted, good clarity with subsoil (401)	22.3	2	0.2	Modern
4	401	Layer		Subsoil	Mid dark brown, friable, sandy silt, no apparent inclusions, good clarity with natural (402)	22.3	2	0.4	
4	402	Layer		Natural	Light grey yellow, sand, friable, no apparent inclusions, contains areas of rooting and geological features	22.3	2	>0.	
5	500	Layer		Occupation Layer	Modern aggregate and concrete slabs, underlain by gravel, only occurs at SE end of Tr5	5.4	2	0.1	Modern
5	501	Layer		Topsoil	Dark red brown, loose, sandy silt, no apparent inclusions, good clarity with subsoil (502), heavily rooted	9.5	2	0.2	Modern
5	502	Layer		Subsoil	Mid-dark red brown friable silty sand, no apparent inclusions, good clarity with natural (503)	9.5	2	0.5	
5	503	Layer		Natural	Light red yellow, friable, sand with concentrations of sandstone bedrock, no apparent inclusions	9.5	2	>0.	
6	600	Layer		Topsoil	Dark red brown, friable, silty sand, no apparent inclusions, good clarity with natural (601)	15.3	2	0.5	Modern
6	601	Layer		Natural	Natural, light red yellow sand, friable, no apparent inclusions very patchy due to bioturbation and geological weathering	15.3	2	>0.	

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project Name	Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire
Short description	<p>An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology (CA) in May 2018 at Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire. Six trenches were machine excavated. No archaeological features, finds or deposits were found.</p> <p>An isolated tree bowl was identified in Trench 2 and modern buried services in Trench 4. The proximity of trenches located near to existing school structures, buried services, and extensive levelling across the Site, seen by the presence of modern terracing and made ground, represent severe disturbance and truncation. This is likely to have destroyed any potential for archaeological remains.</p>
Project dates	
Project type	Trial Trench Evaluation
Previous work	CgMs 2018 Desk based assessment (DBA)
Future work	Unknown
PROJECT LOCATION	
Site Location	Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire
Study area (M ² /ha)	9.5ha
Site co-ordinates	NGR: 445264 201043
PROJECT CREATORS	
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology
Project Brief originator	CgMS
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology
Project Manager	Oliver Good
Project Supervisor	Steve Bush
MONUMENT TYPE	
None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	
None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	
Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Oxfordshire Museums Service	No Finds
OXCMS: 2018.54	
Physical	None
Paper	Context sheets, matrices etc
Digital	Database, digital photos etc
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2018 <i>Land at Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i>. CA type script report</p>	



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PROJECT TITLE
 Land at Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire

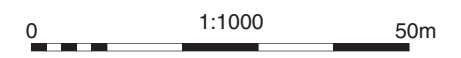
FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench
- Modern feature
- Treethrow
(excavated/unexcavated)



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PROJECT TITLE
Land at Parklands School, Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan

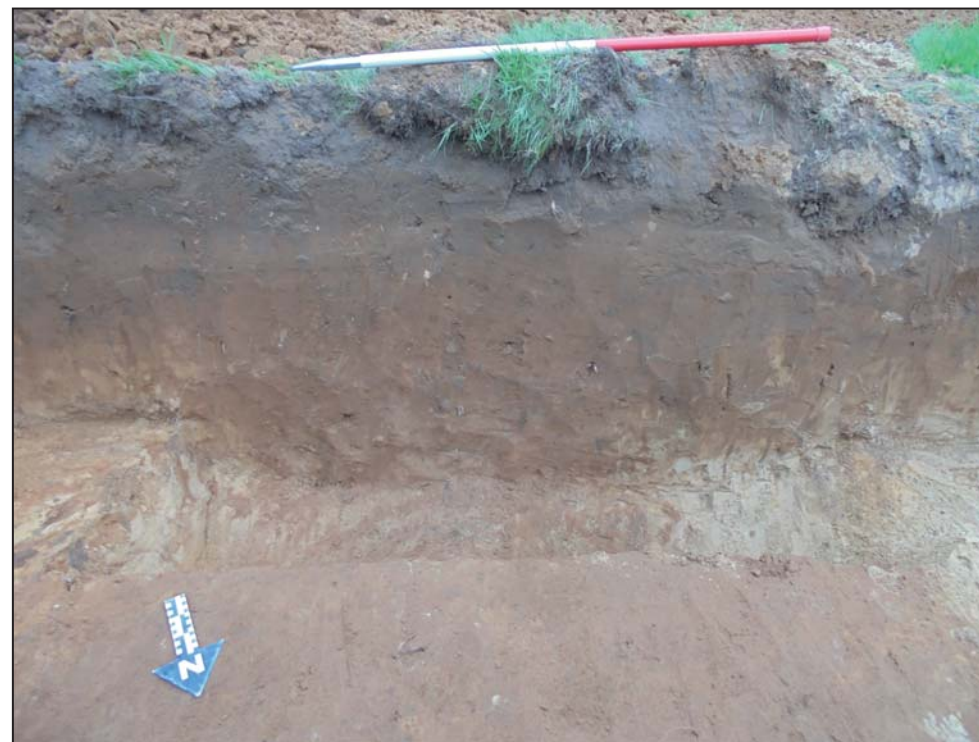
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Trench 1, looking south-west (1m scales)



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



Tree throw 204, looking south-east (1m scale)



Trench 3, looking south-west (1m scales)



Trench 4, looking north-west (1m scales)



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Parklands School, Besselsleigh,
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FIGURE TITLE

Trenches 3 and 4, photographs

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Trench 5, looking south-east (1m scales)



Trench 6, looking north-east (1m scales)



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Parklands School, Besselsleigh,
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FIGURE TITLE

Trenches 5 and 6, photographs

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