

**Elms Farm Business Park
Grove Road
Wantage
Oxfordshire**
Archaeological Evaluation



for
Carter Jonas LLP

CA Project: 770824
CA Report: 18720

December 2018



Elms Farm Business Park Grove Road Wantage Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	20/11/18	Tim Sperring	Ray Kennedy	Internal Review	General Edit	Richard Greatorex

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SUMMARY

Project Name: Elms Farm Business Park, Grove Road
Location: Wantage, Oxfordshire
NGR: 440219 189136
Type: Evaluation
Date: 19 November 2018
Planning Reference: P18/V2025/O
Location of Archive: Oxford Museum Services
Site Code: ELFA18

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2018 at Elms Farm Business Park, Grove Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire. Two trenches were excavated.

No archaeologically features were identified in either of the trenches, but both trenches did, however, produce sherds of pottery from the sub soil. These ranged in date from the Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, and Post-medieval periods. The heavily abraded nature of the pottery indicates it is residual in nature, and probably associated with manuring.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2018 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Carter Jonas LLP at Elms Farm Business Park, Grove Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 440219 189136, (see Figure 1).
- 1.2 The evaluation was undertaken to accompany an outline planning application (P18/V2025/O) made to the Vale of White Horse District Council for the extension to the existing business park comprising up to 4,470sqm of employment floor space (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8).
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (CA 2018) for archaeological evaluation approved by Hugh Coddington, the Archaeology Team Leader at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC 2017), the archaeological advisor to Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC). The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014), and the county standards (OCC 2017).

The site

- 1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 1.6ha, and comprises modern business park within an open agricultural landscape c. 430m north of Wantage and c. 210m south-east of Grove. The site slopes downwards from approximately 101m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the south to approximately 94m aOD in the north. It is currently occupied by a number of industrial buildings and ancillary structures.
- 1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as calcareous sandstone and siltstone of the Upper Greensand Formation, sedimentary bedrock formed 94 to 113 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. The majority of the Site is overlain by superficial head deposits (ie. clay, silt, sand and gravel), with the western extent comprising alluvium, formed between 2 and 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (BGS Online 2018).



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The archaeological background given below is a succinct summary of a Heritage Desk Based Assessment of the site by Cotswold Archaeology (CA 2018).

Palaeolithic to Bronze Age

2.2 There is limited evidence for early prehistoric activity within the Site environs prior to the Bronze Age. During the Mesolithic period, the wider landscape is likely to have been exploited by hunter and gatherer groups and waterways would have been favoured as sources of food and for transport. The concentration of known Mesolithic sites in Oxfordshire along the rivers provides archaeological evidence for this pattern of exploitation (Hey 2010). The second phase of evaluation at Crab Hill, c. 800m to the south-east of the Site, revealed residual prehistoric worked flint tools, including a Mesolithic bladelet (CA 2013 and 2014).

2.3 An isolated Neolithic trimmed flake was discovered c. 1km to the south-east of the Site, and another core dated to the Neolithic period was recovered from a later feature at Crab Hill (Cotswold Archaeology 2013 and 2014).

2.4 There is archaeological evidence for human activity within the wider environs of the Site throughout the Bronze Age. Activity is represented by the isolated find of four palstaves c. 830m to the south-west, a linear feature c. 850m to the south-west, and a ditch and pit containing pottery c. 710m north-west of the Site.

2.5 The investigations carried out recently at Crab Hill, c. 130m and 830m to the southeast of the Site, revealed features related to the late Bronze Age activity, including ditches which are thought to indicate a more permanent settlement and the organisation of the landscape (Cotswold Archaeology 2012, 2013 and 2014).

Iron Age and Romano-British

2.6 The settlement activity within Crab Hill was identified as cropmarks on aerial photographs (Oxford Archaeology 2009) and later confirmed during the geophysical survey. The two stages of trial trench evaluation targeting the anomalies revealed that the settlement was most active during the Early to Mid-Iron Age and the dating evidence indicates that the occupation continued into the Roman period (Cotswold Archaeology 2012, 2013 and 2014).

- 2.7 Following the evaluation, the two identified sites c. 130m and 390m to the southeast, are thought to have represented two areas of different activities associated with one settlement, with further activity recorded in the south-eastern part of the evaluation area, north of the A417.
- 2.8 The archaeological investigations revealed settlement features such as roundhouses, enclosures and areas of extensive pitting. Following the investigations, it seems that the Iron Age settlements were unenclosed, with the southern site becoming enclosed by a number of ditches in the late Iron Age and Roman periods. It is considered that the settlements were deliberately placed at this location, within the western edge of a plateau and in close proximity to the Letcombe Brook, situated at a short distance to the west. During this period, the proposed development Site, located on an elevated slope overlooking Letcombe Brook to the west, may have been a focus for settlement activity, with the immediate environs to the north and north-east forming part of the surrounding agricultural landscape.
- 2.9 The activity within Crab Hill continued into the Roman period, although such activity is less well represented and comprises predominantly features associated with land management such as field boundaries.
- 2.10 Additional Iron Age settlement features were revealed at Stockham House in Wantage, as the field system, established in the Bronze Age, continued to have been used throughout the Iron Age. Situated c. 830m south-west of the Site, an undated inhumation burial was also found during the evaluation. Iron Age pottery was also recorded in Wantage c. 410m south of the Site, and coins are known to have been found in Grove, c. 740m to the north-west.
- 2.11 During the Roman period, the principal settlement was located in Wantage and was focussed around the modern Mill Street, situated over 1km to the south-west of the Site (Oxford Archaeology 2009, Holbrook and Thomas 1997). This settlement is thought to have been located predominantly to the south-east of the northeast/south-west aligned Roman road linking Wantage with Oxford. Numerous features, artefacts, inhumations and findspot scatters are recorded within the vicinity of Mill Street, over c. 500m south-west of the Site. The Roman road may have contributed to the shaping of the landscape in the Roman period, by enabling the growth of small roadside settlements or scattered farmsteads. The remains of settlement and a villa extending from the 1st to 4th century AD are recorded c. 920m to the south-

west. The Site is located c. 170m to the east of the Roman road as recorded by the OHER, however, its exact alignment is yet to be confirmed (Cotswold Archaeology 2014).

- 2.12 Outside of the known settlement, Roman coins, pottery and tile have been recorded c. 510 and 530m south and 810m south-west of the Site.
- 2.13 During this period, it is likely that the landscape north and north-east (i.e. the Site) of the Roman settlement centred on Mill Lane comprised agricultural land, with the remnants of Roman enclosures and ditches recorded during investigations, c. 410m and 830m south-west of the Site.

Early medieval and medieval

- 2.14 There is limited archaeological evidence for early medieval activity within the environs of the Site. In Wantage, early medieval remains have been found on sites occupied in the late Roman period (Oxford Archaeology 2009). The town of Wantage developed in the 9th century as an important regional centre and a royal manor, and is first recorded as *Wanetinz* in the Domesday Survey of 1086 (Page and Ditchfield 1924).
- 2.15 Early medieval activity is represented by the remains of two ditches and a broad feature on east/west orientation, recorded during investigations at Crab Hill, c.210m south of the Site. Such features are suggested to have been associated with a land division, such a field boundary (Cotswold Archaeology 2013).
- 2.16 Further evidence of early medieval activity comprises the alleged site, one of six possible locations, of King Alfred's birthplace c. 890m south-west of the Site.
- 2.17 From the medieval period onwards, the Site formed part of the hamlet of Grove in Wantage parish, as is recorded on the 1806 enclosure map for the parish (see below). Whilst Grove is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, it is likely to have comprised a manor within Wantage. The manor is first recorded in documentary sources from the mid-12th century onwards, when it was granted to the Abbot of Bermondsey. Within the immediate environs of the Site, Charlton, now a suburb of Wantage, was recorded in the Domesday Survey as *Carletone*, and comprised a settlement of considerable size (Page 1926; Cotswold Archaeology 2014).

- 2.18 In the medieval period, the farmland associated with the abovementioned settlements comprised an open field system. Such field systems often comprised blocks of furlongs within which ridge and furrow earthworks had been formed. An extensive system of ridge and furrow has been observed on aerial photographs, as part of the NMP for Lambourn Downs, across a large area to the east and west of the Site. At the time of early aerial photographs, in the 1940s and 1950s, these remains partially survived as earthworks, although much of the system has been subject to later development or subsequent arable cultivation, resulting in the removal of these features. This agricultural practice may have continued into the post-medieval period, and the remains of the furlongs have been recorded during previous investigations c. 410m south and 830m south-west of the Site, and on LiDAR imagery within the field immediately adjacent to the west of Elms Farm Business Park.
- 2.19 In the wider landscape, earthworks associated with a settlement have been observed on aerial photographs at Charlton, c. 800m to the south-east of the Site, and embanked boundaries, which could have been associated with settlement or agriculture, have been recorded at Grove c. 540m to the north-east. During investigations at Yoplait Dairy Crest, immediately to the west of Grove Road, the presence of ditches, pottery and animal bone, has been suggested to indicate the presence of small farmstead within the vicinity (Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd 2001). A building, postulated to be of medieval origin, is also recorded c. 720m north-west of the Site.
- 2.20 Further evidence of medieval activity within the study area comprises an assemblage of pottery collected during the investigations at Crab Hill to the south of the Site and c. 1km to the south-east of the Site, and a silver groat c. 750m to the north-west.
- 2.21 The available data indicates that there is the potential for the presence of archaeological remains associated with medieval activity within the Site. This activity is likely to have been associated with agricultural practices, as remains related to these activities are recorded within the vicinity of the Site.

Post-medieval and modern

- 2.22 The settlement pattern established in the medieval period, comprising a number of nucleated settlements as well as farmsteads scattered throughout the countryside, seems to have continued into the post-medieval period. It is considered likely that the Site and its environs continued to have been used predominantly for agriculture and orchards during the post-medieval period.
- 2.23 During this period, development included the construction of buildings, such as dwellings and agricultural structures, within the settlements of Grove, Charlton and Wantage and scattered across the landscape. A number of such properties are designated as Grade II Listed Buildings or located within Conservation Areas.
- 2.24 In the late 18th century, the construction of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal was authorised, c. 260m, north of the Site. The waterway carried considerable traffic from 1810, however, its importance diminished in the late 19th century and the canal closed in 1914. A number of features associated with the canal, such as bridges and locks, are also recorded. Other modern assets comprise Wantage Branch Railway, which ran along the existing route of Grove Road (A338), and the former Second World War military airfield, Grove Airfield, c. 250m to the north-west (Cotswold Archaeology 2018).

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 *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable the archaeological advisor to 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).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of two trenches in the locations shown on the attached plan (Figure 2). The trenching was limited to the undisturbed area of land in the north-west corner of the site; the remaining areas were either covered in dense woodland or the modern industrial park. The trenches measured 10 x 1.85m. Trench 4 was moved 5m to the east at the northern end due to fencing. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA Technical Manual 4 Survey Manual.
- 4.2 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 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*.
- 4.3 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental 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. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with Technical Manual 3 *Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.4 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts) will be deposited with Oxford Museum Services. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix C, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGURE 3)

- 5.1 A total of two trenches were excavated. No archaeological features were observed within the trenches but the subsoil in both trenches produced sherds of pottery ranging in date from the Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, and Post-medieval periods
- 5.2 The topsoil across the entire site consisted of a dark grey brown silty clay with an average depth of 0.21m. Subsoil was present in both trenches as mid-grey/brown

silty/clay averaging 0.17m in depth. The natural geology comprised light green/grey silty/clay and was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.39m below the present ground surface. All layers/contexts across the site had rare sub-angular calcareous mud stone <40mm and rare sub angular flint <40mm.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 The artefactual material is recorded from two subsoil deposits (Appendix B). The material was all recovered by hand.

Pottery

- 6.2 The pottery recovered from the evaluation is recorded in Appendix B and discussed below. Recording of the finds assemblage was direct to an Excel spreadsheet; this now forms the basis of Appendix B (Table 1). The pottery was examined by context, using a x40 hand lens and quantified according to sherd count and weight per fabric type. The fabrics are described in Appendix B (Table 2) in accordance with the Historic England guidelines (Barclay 2016) and where appropriate the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998) or with the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group Guidelines (PCRG 2010).
- 6.3 The assemblage comprises of six sherds (92g) of pottery recorded from two subsoil deposits. The condition of the assemblage is poor; the majority of fractures are heavily abraded and some surfaces have been degraded. The mean sherd weight is (15.3g).

Late Prehistoric

- 6.4 One angular sherd (9g) of handmade late prehistoric pottery is recorded from subsoil deposit 201. It is made in a flint and sand-tempered fabric (QFL). The sherd is heavily abraded and it is not possible to make out any distinguishing features or refine the dating further.

Roman

- 6.5 One sherd (18g) of Oxfordshire white slipped ware mortarium (**OXF WS**) is recorded from subsoil deposit **101**. It is possibly a WC6 form but again the sherd is too heavily abraded to be certain. The Oxfordshire white slipped ware mortaria in general can be dated to the mid-3rd to 4th centuries AD (Young 2000, 121 fig.38, nos.WC4-7).

Medieval

One sherd (3g) of medieval coarse ware (MCW) is recorded from deposit **201**. The sherd is small and heavily abraded with no distinguishing features.

Post-medieval

Three sherds (62g) of glazed red earthenware (GRE) are recorded from deposit **101**. All three sherds are heavily abraded and have lost some or all of their surfaces. These sherds date from the 16th to 18th centuries.

Summary

- 6.3 The assemblage is too small and in too poor a condition to provide any meaningful analysis. There is wide variance in the date ranges of the material, as all sherds are recorded from subsoil deposits this is to be expected.

Ceramic building material

- 6.4 One fragment (32g) of ceramic building material is recorded from subsoil deposit **101**. The fragment is part of a roof tile made in a fine sandy fabric (fs). Based on its thickness and firing the fragment most likely dates to the late-medieval or post-medieval period.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 Despite the archaeological potential within the wider vicinity of the site (see archaeological background above), no archaeologically significant features were identified during the course of the evaluation. Both trenches did, however, produce sherds of pottery from within the subsoil. These ranged in date from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval periods. The heavily abraded nature of the pottery indicates it is residual in nature, and probably associated with manuring.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Sperring, assisted by John Dobbie. The report was written by Tim Sperring. The finds and biological evidence reports were written

by Peter Banks. The illustrations were prepared by Dan Bashford. The archive has been compiled by Richard Paxford, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Oliver Good.

9. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2018 *Geology of Britain Viewer*
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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 silty clay	11	1.85	0.19	
1	101	Layer		subsoil	mid brown grey silty clay	11	1.85	0.18	
1	102	Layer		natural geology	light green grey silty clay	11	1.85	>0.12	
1	200	Layer		topsoil	dark grey brown silty clay	11	1.85	0.23	
1	201	Layer		subsoil	mid grey brown silty clay	11	1.85	0.16	
1	202	Layer		natural geology	light green grey silty clay	11	1.85	>0.37	

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

Table 1: Finds concordance

Context	Class	Description	Fabric Code	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
101	Post medieval pottery	Glazed red earthenware	GRE	3	62	C16-C18
	Roman pottery	Oxfordshire white slipped ware	OXF WS	1	18	
	CBM	Tile x 1	fs	1	32	
201	Late prehistoric pottery	Sandy flint-tempered fabric	QFL	1	9	MED
	Medieval pottery	Medieval coarse ware	MCW	1	3	

* National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes in bold

Table 2: Pottery fabric descriptions

Date	Description	Fabric Code*	Count	Weight (g)
Late prehistoric pottery	Rare poorly sorted angular coarse flint ≤9mm Sparse moderately sorted sub-rounded fine quartz sand ≤1mm	QFL	1	9
Roman pottery	Oxfordshire white slipped ware	OXF WS	1	18
Medieval pottery	Medieval coarse ware	MCW	1	3
Post medieval pottery	Glazed red earthenware	GRE	3	62
Total			6	92

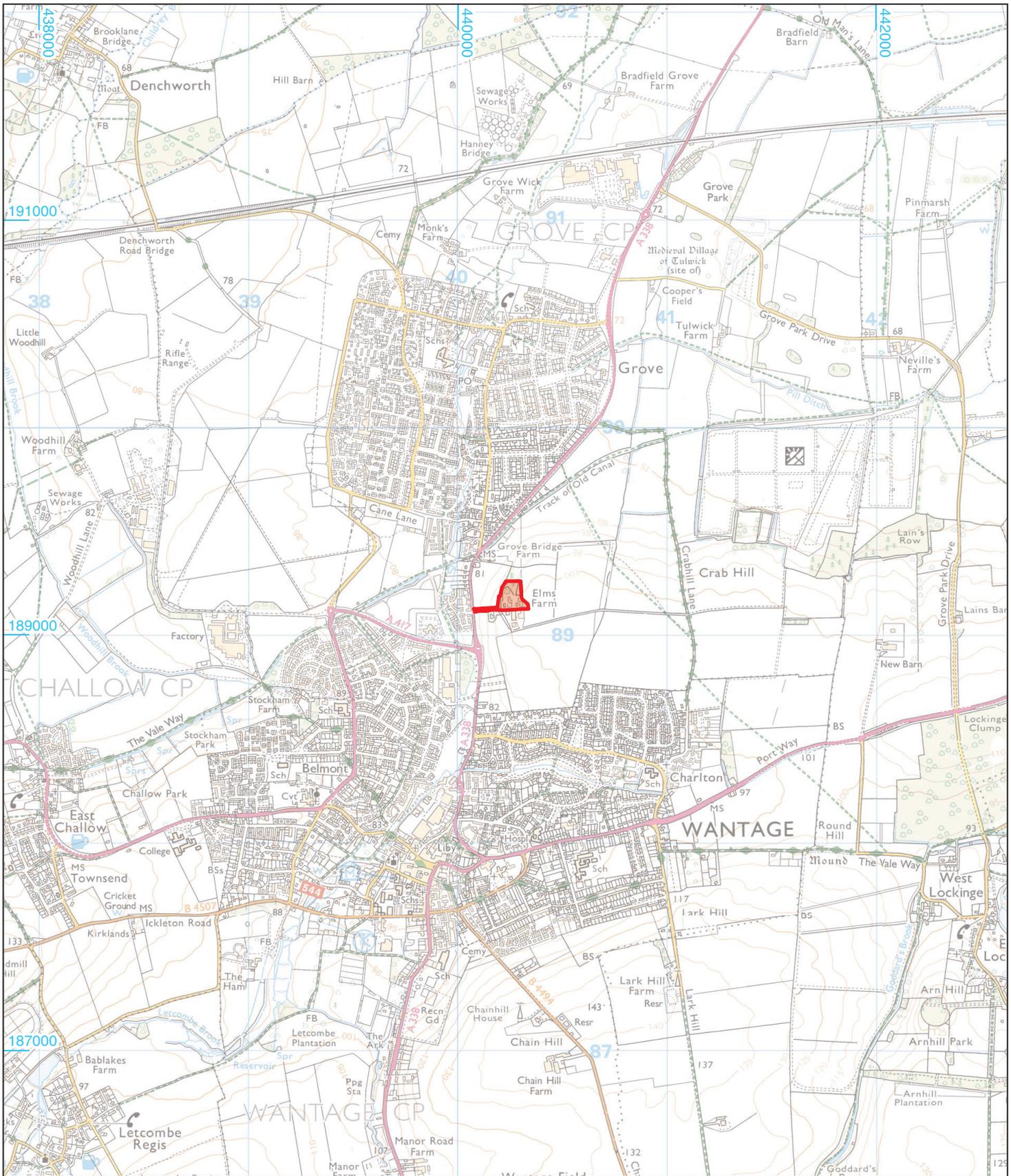
* National Roman Fabric Reference Collection codes in bold

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APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Elms Farm Business Park, Grove Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire	
Short description	<p>An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2018 at Elms Farm Business Park, Grove Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire. Two trenches were excavated.</p> <p>No archaeologically significant features were identified in either of the trenches, but both trenches did, however, produce sherds of pottery from the sub soil. These ranged in date from the Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, and Post-medieval periods. The heavily abraded nature of the pottery indicates it is residual in nature, and probably associated with manuring.</p>	
Project dates	19 th November 2018	
Project type	Field Evaluation	
Previous work	Desk Based Assessment (CA 2018)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Elms Farm Business Park, Grove Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire	
Study area (M ² /ha)	1.6Ha	
Site co-ordinates	440219 189136	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	N/a	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Oliver Good	
Project Supervisor	Tim Sperring	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Oxford Museum Services	ceramics,
Paper	Oxford Museum Services	Trench Sheets, Registers
Digital	Oxford Museum Services	Report, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
<p>CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2018 <i>Elms Farm, Grove Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i>. CA typescript report 18720</p>		



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PROJECT TITLE
Elms Farm, Grove Road, Wantage,
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FIGURE TITLE
Site location plan

DRAWN BY	TB	PROJECT NO.	770824	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	22.11.18	
APPROVED BY	OG	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	1



- site boundary
- evaluation trench



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PROJECT TITLE
Elms Farm, Grove Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
Trench plan

DRAWN BY	DJB	PROJECT NO.	770824	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	TB	DATE	22.11.18	2
APPROVED BY	OG	SCALE@A3	1:1000	

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



Trench 2, looking east (1m scales)



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FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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FIGURE NO.

3

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