

**Land at the Wheatsheaf
Main Street, Upper Benefield
Northamptonshire**
Archaeological Evaluation



for
Wheatsheaf Strategic Land Holding Ltd

CA Project: MK0027
CA Report: MK0027_1
Site Code: TWMS17

Event UID: ENN109506

June 2019



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B	24/07/19	EG	JN	FINAL	FOR ISSUE	AS

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land at the Wheatsheaf
Location:	Main Street, Upper Benefield, Northamptonshire
NGR:	498130 289315
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	30 April and 1 May 2019
Planning Reference:	18/02423/FUL
Location of Archive:	To be retained at CA offices until a suitable repository is available
Site Code:	TWMS17

Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on 30 April and 1 May 2019 on land at the Wheatsheaf, Main Street, Upper Benefield, Northamptonshire. Three trenches were excavated targeting the footprint of the proposed development and adjacent open areas.

Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its location within the historic settlement of Upper Benefield. There is evidence in the wider area for Roman period activity, with an area of possible settlement to the south, and a former quarry to the north-east. The village of Benefield may have originated prior to the 10th century, and earthworks to the north and south of the site are thought to be the remains of medieval and post-medieval activity associated with the development of agriculture and the settlement. To the south of the site lies another relatively more recent disused former quarry.

The evaluation identified one undated ditch, probably of fairly recent origin and potentially having had an agricultural function, perhaps for drainage purposes or serving as part of a boundary. In addition, Modern period development was evidenced with the dumped and levelling deposits and Tarmac surfacing and the remains of a concrete wall cut and foundation. Much of the latter is probably associated with the recent history of the site as a public house. The wall foundation, for example, may be associated with former boundary walls at the south of the former Wheatsheaf site; evident on historic mapping. No other archaeological remains were evident.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 30 April and 1 May 2019 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Wheatsheaf Strategic Landholding Ltd at land at the Wheatsheaf, Main Street, Upper Benefield, Northamptonshire (centred on NGR 498130 289315, Fig. 1).
- 1.2 Planning permission for residential development was granted by East Northamptonshire District Council (ENDC, the local planning authority), and was conditional on a programme of archaeological work (planning reference 18/02423/FUL, having been allowed at appeal: APP/G2815/W/15/3132868).
- 1.3 The scope of the archaeological work, which comprised three archaeological trenches, was defined in discussions between CA and Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor (NCCAAA).
- 1.4 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA and approved by the ENDC acting on the advice of the NCCAAA. The WSI was guided in its composition by the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014), *the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Planning Note 3* (English Heritage 2008), *the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2015) and any other relevant standards or guidance contained within Appendix B. The evaluation was monitored by Liz Mordue the NCCAAA, including a site visit on 1 May 2019.

The site

- 1.5 The development area lies to the south of the former coaching inn, on the south side of Main Street. The development area was formerly part of the land belonging to the inn. Topographically the site is level and lies at approximately 36m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.6 The solid geology of the site comprises undifferentiated Kellaways formation and Oxford Clay formation mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. The bedrock is overlain by superficial deposits of the Oadby Member, comprising unstratified and poorly-

sorted deposits of glacial till (diamicton) (BGS 2019). The natural substrate revealed on site was a mix of silt and clay.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The site lies in an area of archaeological potential within the historic settlement of Upper Benefield. Reference to the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (NHER) has identified several archaeological sites within 500m of the development area (HER numbers in parenthesis); additional information has been gathered from online sources (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>).

Prehistoric period (pre-AD 43)

2.2 No evidence of early prehistoric sites pre-dating the Iron Age is recorded within the wider vicinity of the site and little that can be attributed to the Iron Age either, that may not be considered discrete from later Roman period activity.

Roman period (AD 43 – AD 410)

2.3 There is a reasonably significant body of evidence, however, in the wider area for Roman period activity. To the south of Upper Benefield, south-west of the site and on higher ground, lies an area of possible settlement (NHER 2508) and a second may also be present to the north-east of a former quarry (NHER 7554). Some evidence of Roman period activity is also recorded to the west of the site where fieldwalking and a metal detector survey yielded unstratified pottery (NHER 7889).

Early medieval, medieval and post-medieval periods (AD 410 - 1900)

2.4 Evidence of early medieval period activity has not been recorded within the wider area. However, the village of Benefield may have originated prior to the 10th century when it is first recorded as *Beringafeld* (c.AD 970). This settlement may subsequently become Upper Benefield as it became established.

2.5 The open fields survey by David Hall (1995) established the nature of the parish from the 13th century when the two vills, Upper Benefield and Lower Benefield, were referred to as Upton and Netherpton (CgMs 2012). Hall estimates that by the 15th century less than half the parish was under arable agriculture, with the remainder gradually undergoing the process of assarting through the following two

centuries. In 1633 Upper Benefield was surrounded by open fields, though elements of the Rockingham Forest also survived.

- 2.6 The Rockingham Forest Project demonstrated that early in the medieval period the settlement lay entirely within the forest (CgMs 2012). It recorded that in the 13th century, for instance, Fulk de Lisurs, the King's forester, cleared large parts of the parish to create arable fields. Upper Benefield, which has neither a manor nor a church, is subordinate to Lower Benefield and may, therefore, actually have been established to exploit newly cleared arable land; or may have expanded with the improvement of that land. The project has identified earthworks to the north and south of the site which are thought to be the remains of medieval and post-medieval activity associated with the development of agriculture and the settlement itself (ENN103153). To the south of the site lies a relatively more recent, though disused former quarry (NHER 9218).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the evaluation, as stated in the *Brief* (NCCAAA 2017a, 2017b), were to:
- Establish the location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
 - Determine the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.
- 3.2 In accordance with the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014), the evaluation was designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered would enable ENDC, as advised by NCCAAA, 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* (MHCLG 2019).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of three trenches, one 20m long (Trench 1), and two 10m long Trenches 2 and 3); 40 linear metres in total, each trench measuring 1.8m wide, in the locations shown on Fig. 2. The 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 a 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*.
- 4.3 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*. No deposits were identified that required sampling. All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 3: Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.
- 4.4 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at its office in Milton Keynes. There is currently no depository accepting archives from archaeological sites in this region of Northamptonshire. The project archive will therefore be held by CA at its office in Milton Keynes until such a time as a depository becomes available. 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 (FIGS 2-4)

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B respectively.
- 5.2 A broadly similar stratigraphic sequence was identified within each of the three evaluation trenches. The natural geological substrate comprised light yellow grey clay with chalk and stone in Trench 1, and mid yellow brown silty clay with stone in

Trenches 2 and 3. The natural geological substrate was encountered at an average depth of 0.49m below present ground level (BPGL). In Trench 1 this was sealed by subsoil, 0.17m thick, which was in turn overlain by a sequence of modern dumped and levelling material, and a Tarmac surface. In Trenches 2 and 3 the natural geological substrate was overlain by subsoil measuring 0.27m thick and sealed by topsoil measuring 0.22m thick.

Trench 1 (Figs 2 & 3)

- 5.3 Ditch 108 was located centrally in Trench 1 and was aligned east/west. The ditch measured 0.57m wide and 0.12m deep, with shallow sides and a concave base, and was truncated to the south-east by modern pit 110. No finds were recovered from fill 109 which formed through natural infilling processes.
- 5.4 Tree throw 106 was located at the north-western end of the trench. It measured 0.4m wide by 0.14m deep. No finds were recovered from fill 107, which represents redeposited natural material formed through natural processes.
- 5.5 Modern pit 110 was located centrally within the trench and cut the subsoil and natural substrate. Fill 111 contained brick rubble in a sand silt matrix and was sealed by modern made ground layers 101-102 and by the Tarmac surface 100.

Trench 2 (Figs 2 & 4)

- 5.6 Concrete wall foundation 204, measuring 2.6m long, 0.6m wide and 0.2m thick was located toward the north-eastern end of Trench 2 and was aligned broadly east/west. The wall foundation was built in construction cut 203, which measured over 3m in width and cut the natural substrate to a depth of 0.2m. Post-medieval ceramic material of 18th – 20th century origin, and animal bone (the latter not retained), was recovered from backfill deposits 205, 206 and 207 within the construction cut.

Trench 3 (Fig 2)

- 5.7 No archaeological features, finds or deposits were encountered within this trench.

6. THE FINDS by Pete Banks

- 6.1 The artefactual material from the evaluation was all recovered from the fill of the construction cut for a concrete wall foundation (Appendix B). The material was 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 *et al.* 2016).

Post-medieval

- 6.3 The rim of a small plate or saucer (2g) made in refined white earthenware fabric (REFW) was recovered from wall structure fill (206). The sherd is small and although surfaces survive intact, fractures show signs of minor abrasion. The sherd is decorated with a moulded floral design.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The evaluation identified one undated ditch in the western part of the site, in Trench 1. The archaeological background had suggested some potential for the presence of Roman, medieval and post-medieval activity in the wider area surrounding the site. However, whilst this ditch could represent the truncated remains of agricultural activity, perhaps the remains of a drainage or boundary ditch, related to any one of these periods, there was no dating evidence to provide a firmer interpretation. On balance the likelihood is that it represents later, rather more than earlier activity. In addition, Modern period development was evidenced with the dumped and levelling deposits and Tarmac surfacing in Trench 1, and the concrete wall cut and foundation in Trench 2. The latter may be associated with boundary walls at the south of the former Wheatsheaf site and evident on historic mapping (CA 2018).
- 7.2 Whilst post-medieval and modern period truncation was evident in the exposed natural geological substrate, particularly in Trenches 1 and 2, potentially removing evidence of earlier activity, there was no indication that further archaeological remains of earlier periods was present elsewhere on the site.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 8.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Dale Langford, assisted by Barbara Grahame. The report was written by Edmund Grenier. The finds report was written by Pete Banks. The illustrations were prepared by Gemma Bowen. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Dr Mark Hewson and Julian Newman.

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Accessed 20 May 2019

BHO (British History Online) <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

Accessed 20 May 2019

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench No	Context	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Thickness (m)
1	100	Layer		Modern surface	Tarmac	>20	>1.8	0.08
1	101	Layer		Made ground	Sub angular and sub rounded gravel	>20	>1.8	0.13
1	102	Layer		Made ground	Light yellow sand	>20	>1.8	0.07
1	103	Layer		Subsoil	Mid grey brown clay with occasional chalk rubble and occasional rounded stone inclusions (0.05-0.08m diameter)	>20	>1.8	0.17
1	104	Layer		Levelling	Dark brown silty clay and mid red brown clay with brick rubble inclusions	>20	>1.8	0.66
1	105	Layer		Natural substrate	Light yellowy grey clay, frequent chalk rubble and chalk flecking, occasional round/sub angular stone inclusions (0.04-0.09m diameter)	>20	>1.8	>0.11
1	106	Cut		Cut of tree throw	Sub circular in plan, irregular sides and base	0.48	0.4	0.14
1	107	Fill	106	Fill of tree throw	Loose mid brown silty clay, with occasional chalk inclusions	0.48	0.4	0.14
1	108	Cut		Cut of ditch	Linear in plan with shallow concave sides and flat base, E-W alignment. Heavily truncated by machining	>3.6	0.57	0.12
1	109	Fill	108	Fill of ditch	Mid yellowish brown friable silty clay with occasional small stone and occasional chalk inclusions. No dating	>3.6	0.57	0.12
1	110	Cut		Cut of modern pit	Sub circular in plan, N-S alignment.	>1.1	1.3	Not excavated
1	111	Fill	110	Fill of modern pit	Light brownish grey sandy silt with modern brick and rubble inclusions	>1.1	1.3	Not excavated
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Mid greyish brown clayey silt with modern debris inclusions	>10	>1.8	0.22
2	201	Layer		Subsoil	Light greyish brown clayey silt with occasional small-medium stone and modern debris inclusions	>10	>1.8	0.27
2	202	Layer		Natural substrate	Mid yellowish brown silty clay with occasional small-medium sub rounded/sub angular stone inclusions	>10	>1.8	>0.11
2	203	Cut		Construction cut	Linear in plan, with concave sides and flat base, E-W alignment.	>2.45	>3	0.2
2	204	Structure		Wall foundation	Modern concrete with gravel	>2.45	0.6	0.2
2	205	Fill	203	Fill of construction cut on south side of wall	Compact mid yellowy brown/mid orangey brown clayey silt with patches of clay and sparse rounded and sub rounded stone, 0.03-0.07m diameter and occasional CBM flecking and chalk flecking inclusions	>2.45	0.6	0.28

2	206	Fill	203	Fill of construction cut on north side of wall	Friable yellowish brown sandy clay with common stone rubble	>2.45	1.3	0.41
2	207	Fill	203	Upper fill of construction cut	Moderately compact light yellowy brown silty clay with frequent chalk flecking and occasional chalk rubble, and occasional sub rounded stone inclusions (0.01-0.025m diameter)	>2.45	>3.36	0.21
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	Mid greyish brown clayey silt with modern debris inclusions	>10	>1.8	0.31
3	301	Layer		Subsoil	Light greyish brown clayey silt with occasional small-medium stone and modern debris inclusions	>10	>1.8	0.23
3	302	Layer		Natural substrate	Mid yellowish brown silty clay with occasional small-medium sub rounded/sub angular stone inclusions	>10	>1.8	>0.18

APPENDIX B: THE FINDS

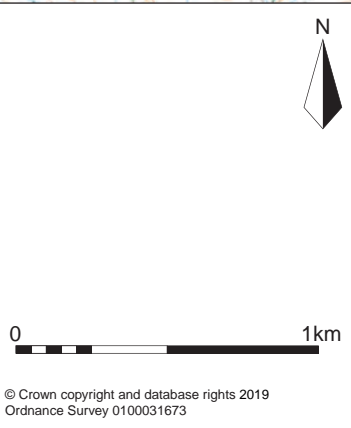
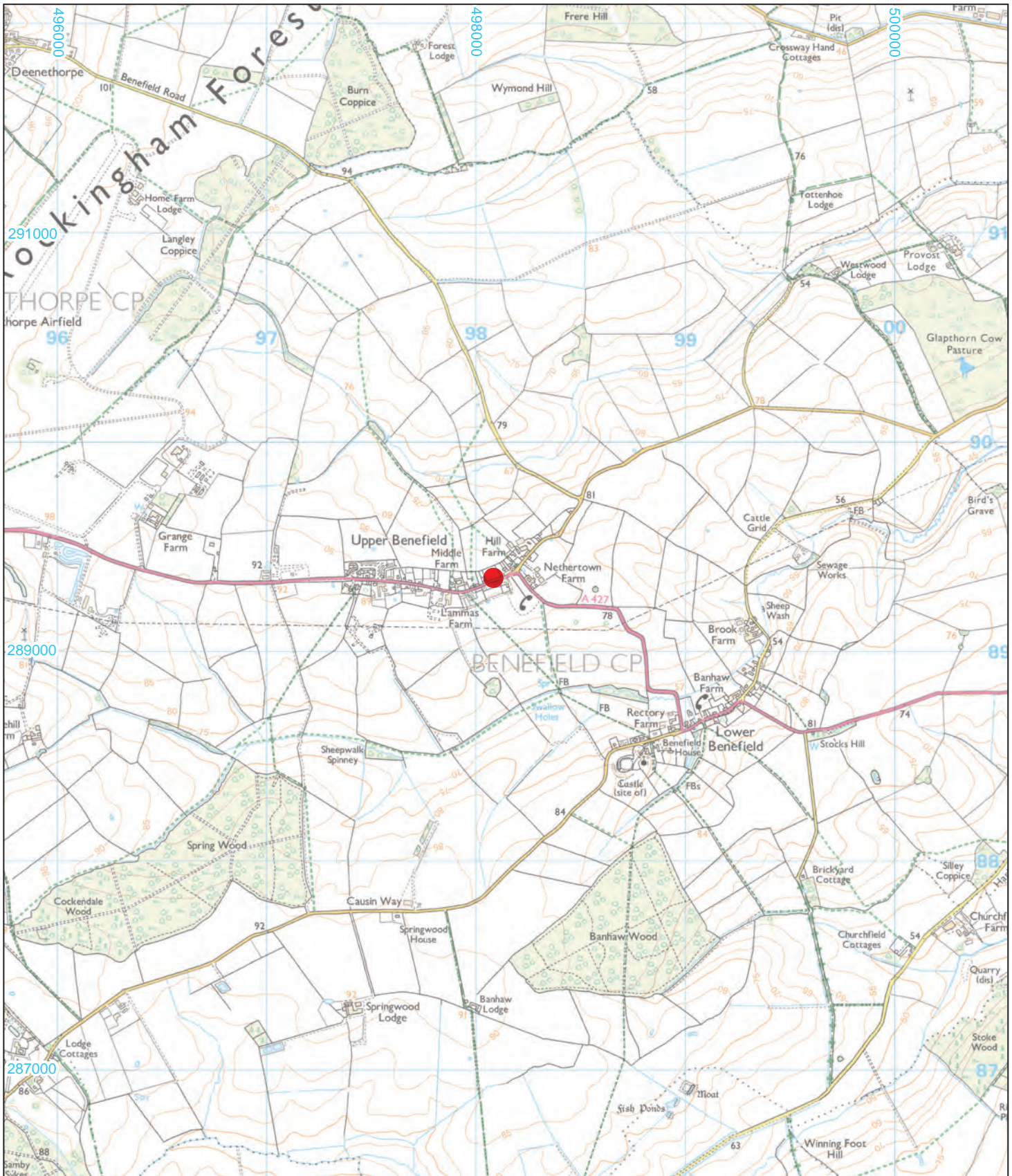
Table 1: Finds concordance

Context	Class	Description	Fabric Code	Count	Weight (g)	Spot-date
206	Post-medieval pottery	Refined white earthenware	REFW	1	2	LC18-C20

APPENDIX C: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Land at the Wheatsheaf, Main Street, Upper Benefield, Northamptonshire: Archaeological Evaluation	
Short description	<p>Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation in April and May 2019 on land at the Wheatsheaf, Main Street, Upper Benefield, Northamptonshire. Three trenches were excavated targeting the footprint of the proposed development and adjacent open areas.</p> <p>Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its location within the historic settlement of Upper Benefield. There is evidence in the wider area for Roman period activity, with an area of possible settlement to the south, and a former quarry to the north-east. The village of Benefield may have originated prior to the 10th century, and earthworks to the north and south of the site are thought to be the remains of medieval and post-medieval activity associated with the development of agriculture and the settlement. To the south of the site lies another relatively more recent disused former quarry.</p> <p>The evaluation identified one undated ditch, probably of fairly recent origin and potentially having had an agricultural function, perhaps for drainage purposes or serving as part of a boundary. In addition, Modern period development was evidenced with the dumped and levelling deposits and Tarmac surfacing and the remains of a concrete wall cut and foundation. Much of the latter is probably associated with the recent history of the site as a public house. The wall foundation, for example, may be associated with former boundary walls at the south of the former Wheatsheaf site; evident on historic mapping. No other archaeological remains were evident.</p>	
Project dates	30 April and 1 May	
Project type	Archaeological Evaluation	
Previous work	Unknown	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Upper Benefield, Northamptonshire	
Study area (M ² /ha)		
Site co-ordinates	498130 289315	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Julian Newman	
Project Supervisor	Dale Langford	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	To be deposited with the Northamptonshire Archives once this repository becomes available	Ceramic
Paper	To be deposited with the Northamptonshire Archives once this	Pro-forma recording sheets, registers, WSI,

	repository becomes available	permatrace
Digital	To be deposited with the Northamptonshire Archives once this repository becomes available	Database, digital photos and digital records
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2019 <i>Land at the Wheatsheaf, Main Street, Upper Benefield, Northamptonshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report MK0027_1		



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PROJECT TITLE
 The Wheatsheaf, Main Street,
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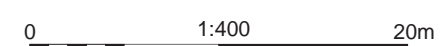
FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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- Site boundary
- Excavation area
- Archaeological feature
- Structure
- Modern feature
- Tree throw
- Field drain



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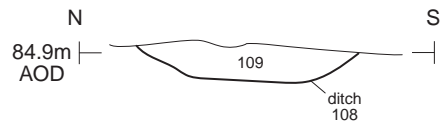
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PROJECT TITLE
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FIGURE TITLE
 Trench location plan showing
 archaeological feature

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Section AA



0 1:20 1m



West facing section of truncated ditch 108



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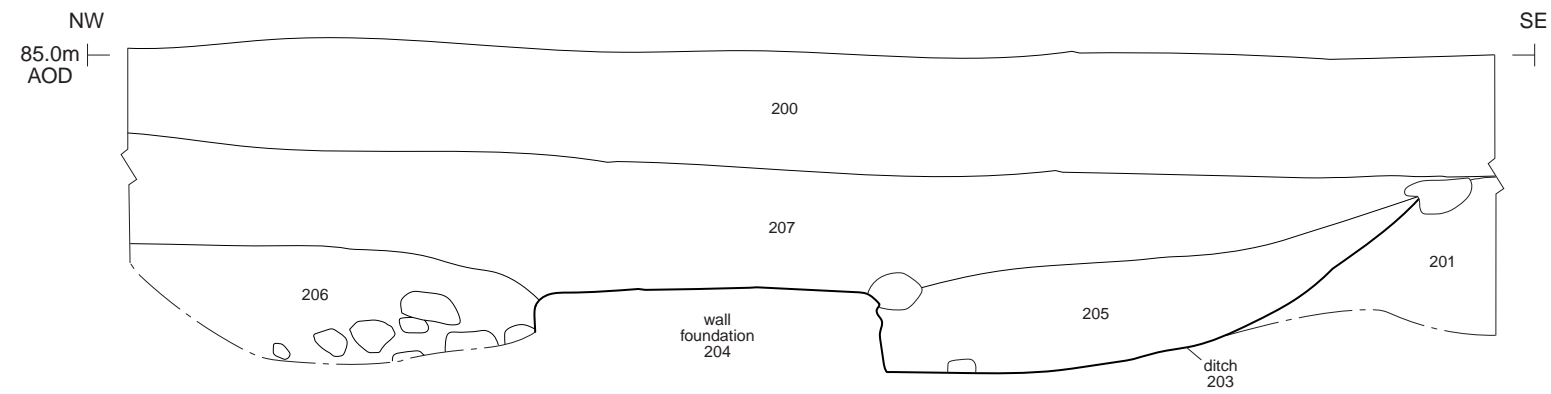
FIGURE TITLE

Trench 1: Section and photograph

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Section BB



0 1:20 1m



Northwest facing section of Trench 2, showing concrete wall foundation 204

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FIGURE TITLE
Trench 2: Section and photograph

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