Cotswold Archaeology

Land off Turnpike Road
Blunsdon
Swindon

Archaeological Evaluation

for
Hollins Strategic Land

CA Project: CR0232
CA Report: CR0232_1
SMAG Accession Number: SWIMG:2019.163

November 2019

Land off Turnpike Road
Blunsdon
Swindon

Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: CR0232
CA Report: CR0232_1
SMAG Accession Number: SWIMG:2019.163

Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
A	22 November 2019	Liam Wilson	Alex Thomson	Final		Richard Young

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SUMMARY

Project Name:	Land off Turnpike Road
Location:	Blunsdon, Swindon
NGR:	415040 189941
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	11-18 November 2019
Planning Reference:	SBC ref: S/OUT/19/0467
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
Accession Number:	SWIMG:2019.163
Site Code:	TURB19

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2019 on land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon. Twelve trenches were excavated.

Evidence of undated and post-medieval/modern gravel extraction was identified within the north-west and south-eastern areas of the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2019 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Hollins Strategic Land on land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon (centred at NGR: 415040 189941; Fig. 1). The evaluation was undertaken to accompany a planning application for a residential development, submitted to Swindon Borough Council (SBC; ref: S/OUT/19/0467).

1.2 The archaeological evaluation was recommended by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council (WC), the archaeological advisors to SBC, and was conducted in accordance with a detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CA (2019) and approved by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014). It was monitored by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger.

The site

1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 3.5ha, and comprises two agricultural fields. The site is bonded to the south-west by Turnpike Road, to the south-east by residential properties, to the north by a hotel, car park and the B4109 road and to the east by further fields. The site lies at approximately 142m AOD and slopes gently to the south-east.

1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as limestone of the Stanford Formation formed during the Jurassic Period (BGS 2019). The natural geological substrate, consisting of weathered limestone brash, overlain by mixed limestone gravel, was observed in all excavated trenches during the course of the evaluation fieldwork.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The site has previously been the subject of a geophysical survey (SUMO 2019). A summary of this report and information available from archaeological works within the wider area are outlined below.

2.2 Prehistoric activity within the area is limited to isolated Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age finds at Groundwell Ridge, Abbey Meads and The Grange, all to the

west of the current site (FA 2013), whilst Iron Age activity has been identified at Groundwell West and during the construction of the A419 Blunsdon Bypass, 100m to the west of the proposed development area (CA 2004; Brett & McSloy 2011).

2.3 The nearest identified evidence of Roman activity is Ermin Street, a major road linking the civitates of *Calleva* (Silchester) and *Corinium* (Cirencester), which runs directly to the west of the site, along the course of the present-day Turnpike Road. An evaluation undertaken off Ermin Street, 500m to the north-west of the current site, identified a pit containing early Roman pottery (CA 2013). A rural sanctuary (Scheduled Monument 1018496) was uncovered during building works at Groundwell Ridge, approximately 1km to the south-west of the current site. Subsequent extensive geophysical analysis and excavation (e.g. CA 2003) of the site revealed a complex of buildings and earthworks, including hillside terracing, four courtyards, a bathhouse and a stone-lined cistern, possibly a nymphaeum (EH 2006). Two hoards, one of 3rd century coins and the other of 4th-century silver-plate were excavated at the site.

2.4 There is evidence for Saxon activity in the form of human burials at Abbey Meads, approximately 700m to the west of the site, suggesting the presence of a settlement in the near vicinity (CA 2008).

2.5 The site likely lay within the agricultural hinterland of Broad Blunsdon and Blunsdon St. Andrew during the medieval and post-medieval periods and is depicted in its current form from the late 19th century on historic cartographic sources. Quarrying and gravel extraction are depicted within the wider area of the site from the late 19th century. Specifically, a '*gravel pit*' is shown within the south-east of the proposed development area from the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900 (when the site is also annotated as '*allotments*'), until their apparent backfilling by the early 20th century.

2.6 A geophysical survey undertaken within the current site (SUMO 2019) identified no anomalies of archaeological interest. Several former field boundaries were identified, some of which are corroborated by cartographic evidence, whilst others remain conjectural. A large area of former quarrying was recorded in the south of the site and anomalies of uncertain origin, likely to be due to similar features, or formed by agricultural or natural causes (or likely the previously allotment activity), were also identified (*ibid.*).

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 *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014). This information will enable Swindon Borough 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* (MHCLG 2019).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of 12 trenches. The excavated trenches varied between 25m and 50m in length and all trenches measured 1.8m in width. Trenches 2, 5, 8, 10 and 12 were moved during the course of the fieldwork due to their proximity to overhead services. 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 The 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*.

4.3 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*, but 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 from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble. The site archive will be deposited with Swindon Museum and Art Gallery under accession number SWIMG:2019.163. 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 (FIGS 2-3)

5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix A.

5.2 The general stratigraphic sequence recorded across the site was broadly uniform. The natural geological substrate was identified at a typical depth of 0.38m below present ground level (bpgl). Within Trenches 1-11 this was overlain by *c*. 0.12m of silty-clay weathered natural, which was sealed by *c*. 0.26m of silty-clay topsoil.

5.3 Overall, there was very good correlation between the locations of the archaeological features identified during the current works and the results of the preceding geophysical survey. Archaeological features were identified within Trenches 3-5 and 12. All other trenches contained no archaeological features.

Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

5.4 At the eastern end of Trench 3 irregular quarry pit 303/307 was identified (see Fig. 3). It measured at least 11.6m in length, 1.8m in width and up to 0.77m in depth, with steep to sheer sides and a flat base, and contained undated silty-clay fill 304/308. The western edge of quarry pit 303/307 was later cut by north-west/south-east aligned ditch 309, which measured at least 2.6m in length, 1.02m in width and 0.1m in depth. It contained undated silty-clay fill 308.

5.5 Quarry pit 305 was identified at the western end of Trench 3 (see Fig. 3), measuring at least 25m in length, 1.8m in width and 0.63m in depth. It contained undated silty-clay fill 306.

5.6 The quarrying features recorded within Trench 3 showed good correlation to an area of ‘ferrous/magnetic disturbance’ identified during the preceding geophysical survey, whilst ditch 309 showed broad correlation to a trend of ‘uncertain origin’ (see Fig. 2).

Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

5.7 Quarry pit 305 was identified at the northern end of Trench 4 and measured at least 11.7m in length and 1.8m in width (see Fig. 3). It measured 0.25m in depth and contained undated silty-clay fill 304. As with the quarrying identified within Trench 3, quarry pit 305 correlated to the eastern extent of an area of 'ferrous/magnetic disturbance' identified by the geophysical survey.

5.8 Bank 405 was located within the centre of Trench 4, on an east/west alignment. It closely correlated to an extant earthwork within the field and to a linear anomaly identified by the preceding geophysical survey. It consisted of a silty-clay deposit which had no clear boundary with the surrounding topsoil horizon. It measured at least 1.8m in length, 2.5m in width and 0.3m in height.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3)

5.9 Quarry pit 503 was identified extending throughout the central area of Trench 5 (see Fig. 3). It measured at least 36m in length, 1.8m in width and at least 1.15m in depth. It contained undated silty-clay fill 504. This quarrying activity was not highlighted by the preceding geophysical survey, although it is visible within the un-processed greyscale plot as an area of disturbance.

Trench 12 (Fig. 3)

5.10 Quarry pit 1202 was identified extending throughout the entirety of Trench 12 (see Fig. 3). A sondage excavated at the south-eastern end of the trench demonstrated that the quarry pit extended to a depth of approximately 2.5m. It contained silty-clay fill 1203, which produced modern material, including plastics and building waste, which was not retained. The northern and western extents of the quarrying were visible as extant earthworks within the field and the feature correlated very well to the area of disturbance highlighted by the geophysical survey and to a '*gravel pit*' depicted on historic cartographic sources.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The archaeological evaluation successfully demonstrated that there was good correlation between the identified geophysical anomalies and the archaeological features that were subsequently revealed during the current trenching. Whilst many of the features remained undated individually, it is likely that they date to the later post-medieval and modern periods.

6.2 The quarrying identified in the north-west of the site, within Trenches 3-5, and in the south-east of the site, in Trench 12, likely relates to gravel extraction. The features in Trenches 3-5 remained undated and are not depicted on any available historic mapping, possibly indicating that they pre-date the mid-19th century. The quarrying in Trench 12 correlates to a '*gravel pit*' that is first shown on the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900; it appears to have been backfilled in the 20th century, as evidenced by the modern material found through its fill and by contemporary mapping.

6.3 It is likely that the anomalies interpreted as being of 'uncertain origin' or as a 'former field boundary', relate to the site's previous use as allotments in the 20th century. Correlation to these anomalies was only seen with ditch 309 in Trench 3 and bank 405 in Trench 4; the lack of features within the other areas of such geophysical anomalies may indicate that these activities remained within the topsoil horizon.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

7.1 Fieldwork was undertaken by Liam Wilson, assisted by Gary Baddeley and Neus Esparza Nogues. The report was written by Liam Wilson. The illustrations were prepared by Esther Escudero. The archive has been compiled by Liam Wilson, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Alex Thomson.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2019 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology viewer google/googleviewer.html Accessed 22 November 2019

Brett, M. and McSloy, E. 2011 'Prehistoric pits and Roman enclosures on the A419 Blunsdon Bypass, Blunsdon St Andrew: excavations 2006–7' *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* **104**, 95–114.

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2003 *Groundwell Ridge, Swindon, Wiltshire*, CA Report No. **03104**

CA 2004 *A419, Blunsdon Bypass, Swindon, Wiltshire*, CA Report No. **04004**

CA 2008 *Two Anglo-Saxon Burials at Abbeymeads, Blunsdon St. Andrew, Wiltshire*, CA Report No. **08027**

CA 2013 *Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon: Archaeological Evaluation*, CA Report No. **13402**

CA 2013 *Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon: Archaeological Evaluation*, CA Report No. **13402**

CA 2019 *Land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

EH (English Heritage) 2006 *Groundwell Ridge Roman Villa, Swindon, Wiltshire: Excavations 2003–2005*. Research Department Report Series **77**.

FA (Foundations Archaeology) 2013 *Land off Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Borough of Swindon, Wiltshire: Archaeological Assessment*. Report No. **875**.

MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) 2019 *National Planning Policy Framework*

SUMO 2019 *Geophysical Survey Report: Land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon*, SUMO report **15354**

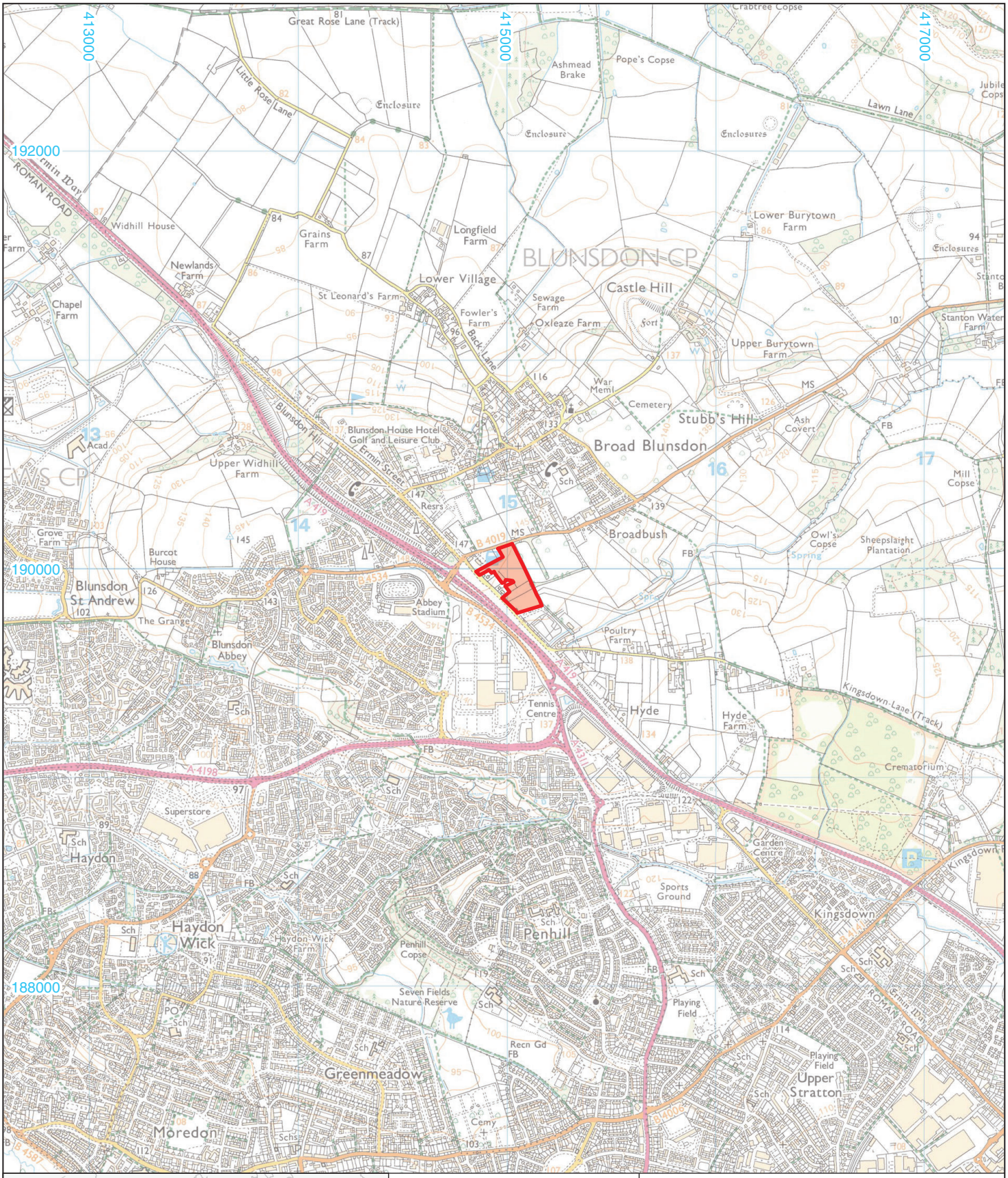
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

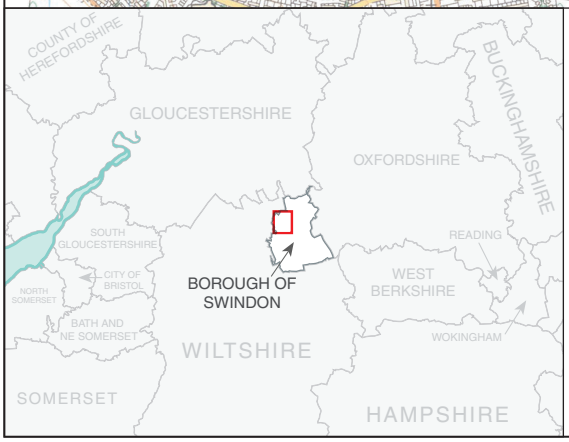
Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
1	101	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	>20	1.8	0.10
1	102	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.56
2	200	Layer		topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
2	201	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	>20	1.8	0.10
2	202	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.56
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
3	301	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	>20	1.8	0.10
3	302	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.56
3	303	cut		Quarry pit	Irregularly shaped, steep sides, flat base	11.6	>1.8	0.77
3	304	fill	303	Backfill	Light yellowish brown silty clay, with limestone and quartzite brash throughout	11.6	>1.8	0.77
3	305	cut		Quarry pit	Irregularly shaped, steep sides, flat base	25	>1.8	0.1
3	306	fill	305	Backfill	Light yellowish brown silty clay, with limestone and quartzite brash throughout	25	>1.8	0.1
3	307	cut		Quarry pit	Irregularly shaped, steep sides, flat base	11.6	>1.8	0.77
3	308	fill	307	Backfill	Light yellowish brown silty clay, with limestone and quartzite brash throughout	11.6	>1.8	0.77
3	309	cut		Ditch	NW-SE aligned, very irregular sides and base	>2.6	1.02	0.1
3	310	fill	309	Ditch fill	Dark grey brown silty clay	>2.6	1.02	0.1
4	400	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
4	401	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	>20	1.8	0.10
4	402	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.56
4	403	cut		Quarry pit	Irregularly shaped, steep sides, flat base	>11.	>1.8	0.25
4	404	fill	403	backfill	Light yellowish brown silty clay, with limestone and quartzite brash throughout	>11.	>1.8	0.25
4	405	Deposit		Bank	Dark brown silty clay	>1.8	2.5	0.3
5	500	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
5	501	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	>20	1.8	0.10
5	502	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.56
5	503	cut		Quarry pit	Irregularly shaped, steep sides, flat base	36	>1.8	>1.15
5	504	fill	503	backfill	Light yellowish brown silty clay, with limestone and quartzite brash throughout	36	>1.8	>1.15
6	600	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.3
6	601	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	50	1.8	0.24
6	602	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.1
7	700	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
7	701	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	50	1.8	0.14

7	702	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.1
8	800	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	35	1.8	0.35
8	801	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	35	1.8	0.20
8	802	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	35	1.8	>0.1
9	900	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
9	901	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	50	1.8	0.10
9	901	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.1
10	1000	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	26.5	1.8	0.25
10	1001	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	26.5	1.8	0.10
10	1002	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	26.5	1.8	>0.1
11	1100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	1.8	0.25
11	1101	Layer		Weathered Natural	Mid yellowish brown silty clay, limestone and quartzite pieces	50	1.8	0.10
11	1102	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	50	1.8	>0.1
12	1201	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay	50	2.5	0.25
12	1202	cut		Quarry pit	Irregularly shaped, steep sides, flat base	50	1.8	2.5
12	1203	fill	1202	backfill	Light yellowish brown silty clay, with limestone and quartzite brash throughout	50	2.5	2.5
12	1204	Layer		Natural geological substrate	Light Yellow Brown silty clay and limestone quartzite brash	>10	1.8	>0.1

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Land Off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon	
Short description	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in November 2019 on land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon. Twelve trenches were excavated. Evidence of undated and post-medieval/modern gravel extraction was identified within the north-west and south-eastern areas of the site	
Project dates	11-18 November 2019	
Project type	Evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical survey (SUMO 2019)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon	
Study area (M^2/ha)	3.5ha	
Site co-ordinates	415040 189941	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	N/A	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Alex Thomson	
Project Supervisor	Liam Wilson	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	N/A	N/A
Paper	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery: SWIMG:2019.163	Field recording sheets and drawings
Digital	Swindon Museum and Art Gallery: SWIMG:2019.163	Database, digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2019 *Land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon: Archaeological Evaluation*, CA Report No. **CR0232_1**		





N

0 1km

Cotswold Archaeology

Andover 01264 347630
Cirencester 01285 771022
Exeter 01392 573970
Milton Keynes 01908 564660
Suffolk 01449 900120
w www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk
e enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

PROJECT TITLE

Land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

DRAWN BY	**EE**	*PROJECT NO.*	**CR0232**	*FIGURE NO.*
CHECKED BY	**DJB**	*DATE*	**22/11/2019**	**1**
APPROVED BY	**ADT**	*SCALE@A4*	**1:25,000**	

N

Site boundary

Evaluation trench

Archaeological feature
(excavated/unexcavated)

Overhead cable 5m buffer

Service 3m buffer

Geophysical survey results
SUMO Survey (2019)

- Former Quarry
- Uncertain Origin (trend)
- Former Field Boundary (corroborated / conjectural)
- Agriculture
- Pipe / Service
- Ferrous / Magnetic Disturbance

0 1:1250 50m

Cotswold Archaeology

Andover 01264 347630
Cirencester 01285 771022
Exeter 01392 573970
Milton Keynes 01908 564660
Suffolk 01449 900120
w www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk
e enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

PROJECT TITLE

Land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon

FIGURE TITLE

Trench location plan, showing geophysical survey results and archaeological features

DRAWN BY	**EE**	*PROJECT NO.*	**CR0232**	*FIGURE NO.*
CHECKED BY	**DJB**	*DATE*	**22/11/2019**	**2**
APPROVED BY	**ADT**	*SCALE@A3*	**1:1,250**	

Quarry pit 303/307, looking south (1m scale)

Quarry pit 303/307, looking south-west (1m scale)

Quarry pit 305, looking north-west (1m scale)

Quarry pit 403, looking south-east (1m scale)

Quarry pit 503, looking north-east (1m scale)

Quarry pit 1202, looking north-east (1m scales)

Cotswold Archaeology

Andover 01264 347630
Cirencester 01285 771022
Exeter 01392 573970
Milton Keynes 01908 564660
Suffolk 01449 900120
w www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk
e enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

PROJECT TITLE

Land off Turnpike Road, Blunsdon, Swindon

FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

DRAWN BY	**EE**	*PROJECT NO.*	**CR0232**	*FIGURE NO.*
CHECKED BY	**DJB**	*DATE*	**22/11/2019**	**3**
APPROVED BY	**ADT**	*SCALE@A3*	**NA**	

Cotswold Archaeology

Andover Office

Stanley House
Walworth Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 5LH

t: 01264 347630

Cirencester Office

Building 11
Kemble Enterprise Park
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 6BQ

t: 01285 771022

Exeter Office

Unit 1, Clyst Units
Cofton Road
Marsh Barton
Exeter
EX2 8QW

t: 01392 573970

Milton Keynes Office

Unit 8 - The IO Centre
Fingle Drive, Stonebridge
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK13 0AT

t: 01908 564660

Suffolk Office

Unit 5, Plot 11, Maitland Road
Lion Barn Industrial Estate
Needham Market
Suffolk
IP6 8NZ

t: 01449 900120

e: enquiries@cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk