

Proposed new dwellings on land at rear of 17 Holders Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire:

Results of an archaeological watching brief

Centred on SU 16172 41848

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Document No. ACW861/2/0

Date: March 2016



archaeology

PROPOSED NEW DWELLINGS ON LAND REAR OF 17 HOLDERS ROAD, AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE:

NGR: SU 16172 41848

Results of an archaeological watching brief

Summary

Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken during groundworks associated with the proposed erection of two new dwellings on land to the rear of 17 Holders Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire in January 2016. The works area lies broadly within an area of archaeological interest, and is located near to a number of find spots. No features or finds of archaeological interest were recorded as a result of the monitoring works.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the proposed erection of two new dwellings on land to the rear of 17 Holders Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire (Fig.1).
- 1.2 The monitoring was undertaken by AC archaeology Ltd. on behalf of the site developers and in compliance with the requirements of a planning consent granted by Wiltshire Council (Ref. 14/05346/OUT).
- 1.3 The development covers approximately 600m² and is situated to the rear of the existing property. The site lies at around 86m OD, with the underlying geology comprising sand and gravel river terrace deposits overlying Seaford Chalk.
- 1.4 The site works primarily involved the excavation of building footings for two new dwellings and associated works, including drainage and the installation of a number of soakaways.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies within the Saxon town of Amesbury. The town was originally called *Ambresbyrig*, with a Saxon Abbey founded in the town in c. AD979.
- 2.2 There are no recorded heritage assets within the development area. However, a small number of finds have been recorded in the vicinity. These include a Mesolithic axe (Wiltshire and Swindon HER ref. MWI11871), a Romano-British coin (HER ref. MWI11991) and a fragment of a Romano-British brooch (HER ref. MWI12015). No features have been recorded in association with these finds. The site lies outside the boundary of the Amesbury Conservation Area.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The principal aims of the archaeological watching brief were;

- To record any archaeological features and finds which may be revealed or disturbed by the groundworks associated with the erection of the new dwellings, and;
- To provide an interpretive report on the results of the monitoring.

3.2 The site works were undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by Wiltshire Council (Robinson, 2015). Attendance by the site archaeologist, Dan Brace, was *comprehensive* during all relevant groundworks and ground disturbance. The areas of observation are shown on Fig. 1.

3.3 The archaeological monitoring commenced during the excavation of footings for the new dwellings. In addition, monitoring took place during drainage works associated with the installation of a series of soakaways, located approximately 20m to the south of the proposed garage. Monitoring took place until such time as the site archaeologist was satisfied that no further exposure of archaeological deposits was possible.

3.4 Site observations were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*.

3.5 The archive has been prepared using the unique site code ACW861.

4. RESULTS

4.1 AC archaeology staff were in attendance on three separate occasions in January 2016 to observe relevant groundworks. The results are presented below.

4.2 The deposits encountered and context numbers allocated during the fieldwork are listed in Table 1 below, with deposits assigned to the building footings and to the soakaways.

Table 1: The general stratigraphic sequence

Context Number	Description	Depth	Interpretation
Building footings: plots 1 & 2			
300	Mid grey brown silty clay. Contained some building debris	c. 300mm	Topsoil (turf previously removed)
301	Mid to dark yellow-brown silty clay	c.400mm	Subsoil
302	Off white chalk with silt. Loose	-	Natural geology
Building footings: plots 3 & 4			
400	Mid grey brown silty clay. Contained some building debris	c. 200mm	Topsoil (turf previously removed)
401	Mid to dark yellow-brown silty clay	c. 300mm	Subsoil
402	Off white chalk with silt. Loose	-	Natural geology
Soakaway 1			
100	Dark grey brown silty clay. Soft with occasional stones	c. 300mm	Topsoil (turf previously removed)

101	Dark yellow brown silty clay. Soft and friable	c. 500mm	Subsoil
102	Off white chalk. Loose with occasional flint gravels	-	Natural geology
Soakaway 2			
200	Dark grey brown silty clay	c. 200mm	Topsoil (turf previously removed)
201	Dark yellow brown silty clay. Soft	c. 600mm	Subsoil
202	Off white chalk. Loose with rare flint	-	Natural geology

Building Footings (Plan Fig. 1, Plate 1 & 2)

- 4.3** Initial works carried out in January 2016 comprised the stripping of turf and topsoil and the demolition of a brick garage. All groundworks were completed using a mini excavator. Following the removal of topsoil (layers 300, 400), building footings were excavated to a maximum depth of 1m and a width no greater than 0.7m (Plate 1). A series of deposits were noted in section, underlying the topsoil, and are described in table 1. The topsoil itself contained fragments of modern glazed pottery sherds and building debris; these were not collected.
- 4.4** Within plots 1/2 a pit-like feature (F303) was noted in section within the west extent of the footings. It was possibly sub-circular in plan with straight slopping sides and a very diffuse south-eastern edge (Plate 1). It had a width of c. 2.0m, a depth of 0.40m and was filled by a dark yellow brown silty clay. It was sealed by the overlying subsoil (301). However, the feature had fairly diffuse edges, was sterile and very rooty. Given this, and the fact that large fruit trees were formerly present on the site, F303 is believed to be the result of tree roots or a geological anomaly.
- 4.5** Also within plots 1/2, a possible ditch (F304) was noted in one trench (Plate 2). This comprised an ephemeral NW-SE aligned linear feature visible in section and in plan. It was filled with a dark yellow-brown silty clay (301). No artefacts were recovered from this fill. It was unclear if this feature was of archaeological origin.

Soakaways

- 4.6** Archaeological monitoring and recording was also carried out during the excavation of two soakaways. These revealed a series of deposits above the natural chalk, comprising a dark grey brown topsoil over a dark yellow brown clayey subsoil. Modern pottery and building debris (from the demolished garage) was recovered from the topsoil but discarded on site.



Plate 1: Section of F303 from the southwest (scale 1m)

Plate 2: Section of F304 from southeast (scale 1m)



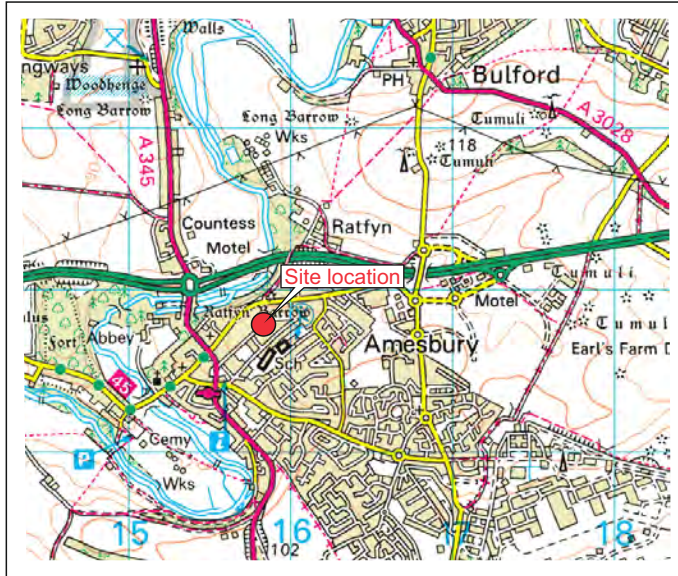
5. COMMENT

- 5.1** The archaeological monitoring and recording has revealed limited evidence for archaeological activity on the site.
- 5.2** No finds or artefacts of archaeological significance were recovered as a result of the site works. Both possible archaeological features. Some residual demolition debris, a possible tree throw and ditch were noted.

6. REFERENCES

Robinson, R. 2015, Proposed new dwellings on land rear of 17 Holders Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief. AC archaeology document no. ACW861/1/0

CIfA. 2001 (and subsequent revisions), Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief. Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists



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