



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

FRITWELL C of E SCHOOL, EAST STREET,

FRITWELL, OXFORDSHIRE

SU 52860 29455

On behalf of

Bluebird Homes

MAY 2006

REPORT FOR

Bluebird Homes
c/o East West Demolition
Neath Abbey Industrial Estate
Neath Abbey
Neath
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PREPARED BY

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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the ground reduction and excavation for foundations and services for a residential development. No archaeological remains were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site was located at part of Fritwell CE Primary School on the east side of the village of Fritwell, and lying to the east of East Street (NGR SP 528294). The geology is Great Oolite and the site lies at approximately 128m OD. The site was formerly part of the school. The east part of the site had formerly been part of the playing field. Elsewhere were a mixture of soft landscaping and paths.

1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council granted planning permission for the erection of 15 two bedroom dwellings, parking, access and landscaping (03/01035/F). Due to the archaeological sensitivity of the area, a condition was attached to the planning consent that required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the course of ground works in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lay within the historic core of Fritwell. Fritwell appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Fertewelle. Excavations for a replacement sewerage pipeline to the south of the proposed site, revealed evidence for limited medieval activity suggesting that the bulk of the medieval settlement was in the northern part of the village. In addition the development site lay close to the line of the prehistoric Grims Ditch as shown on the 1st edition OS map.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record
 - any evidence relating to the medieval and post medieval settlement of Fritwell.
 - any evidence associated with Grims Ditch
- The results of the investigations will be made public.

Figure 1. Site location.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) issued a Brief for the work, which John Moore Heritage Services carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OCAS, on behalf of the local planning authority. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored the ground reduction of the eastern third of the site down to natural geological deposits. The reduction for the new western block of housing units was examined after excavation as was the trench for services to the north of this block. Elsewhere levels were built up for landscaping. The only other excavation that had the potential to reveal archaeological deposits was a short length of service trench to the north of the old school building that was retained. This building is located towards the East Street frontage.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2 & 3)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

The lowest deposit seen was compact Great Oolite, which was fractured in small and medium pieces in a matrix of pale brown-yellow clay with occasional pockets of clean red-brown slightly clayey silt (02). This was only seen in the extreme south-east part of the site. Overlying the geological deposits in the east part of the site, which formerly had been part of the playing field, was moderately compact yellow-brown clayey silt with 1-2% fine stone (Oolite). This (01) was 220mm deep.

Under the soft landscaping in the central part of the site was a deposit of moderately compact yellow-brown silty clay with 2% small Oolite pieces (03). This varied in thickness from 1-350mm and had been mostly removed in the area of the former playing field surviving as a thin deposit along the western edge. This deposit may have been a ploughsoil. It overlay the Oolite (02) and was covered by deposit (01)

Further west the site had been extensively disturbed by the excavation for outbuildings, services and landscaping.

The new service trench to the north of the retained school building revealed a sequence of deposits (01) over (03) over great Oolite (02).

5 FINDS

The only finds seen were 20th material, which were not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

There were no signs of any medieval use of the site. The line of Grims Ditch was not seen. It may lie further to the west towards East Street.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for
Archaeological Field Evaluations*