JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

NORTHFIELD FARM, LONG WITTENHAM,

OXFORDSHIRE

SU 5555 9485

On behalf of

B K Grain Handling Engineers

MARCH 2008

REPORT FOR	B K Grain Handling Engineers Littlecote Road Froxfield Nr Marlborough Wiltshire SN8 3JY
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FIGURES

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire. Three trenches totalling 60 metres in length were excavated to reveal the underlying natural geology. No archaeological finds or features were uncovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Locations *(Figure 1)*

The site of the proposed development is located south of Northfield Farm and north-east of Long Wittenham (NGR SU 5555 9485). The site lies at approximately 47m OD and the underlying according to geological maps is River Terrace Gravel. The site is currently in agricultural use.

1.2 Planning Background

Scheduled Monument Consent is to be sought for the construction of a new grain storage building on the site of Scheduled Ancient Monument No. Oxfordshire 180. The planning authority (South Oxfordshire District Council) is deciding whether a full application will be required and scheduled monument consent would be required for the construction of the grain store. Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological features, including settlement evidence and the possibility of human remains, an archaeological field evaluation has been required as part of the consideration for Scheduled Monument Consent. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS), on behalf of English Heritage, prepared a Design Brief for the work.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The design brief from Oxfordshire Museum Service highlighted the potential of the site. In summary:

The site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Northfield Farm settlement site (SAM OX 180). This monument consists of a dense range of features, mostly identified through cropmarks. These include Bronze Age barrows and enclosures, Iron Age pit clusters and hut circles, and late Iron Age and Roman trackways and field systems. Burials dating to the Bronze Age through to the 3rd century have also been recorded. A long north/south trackway passes immediately to the east of the proposal site.

A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out within and around the monument including fieldwalking of a field to the west of the site which recovered worked flint and pottery dating from the later prehistoric period through to the medieval as well as Roman building material. Geophysical surveys on the site have confirmed the cropmark evidence and also highlighted that more features exist than are visible on the aerial photographs.

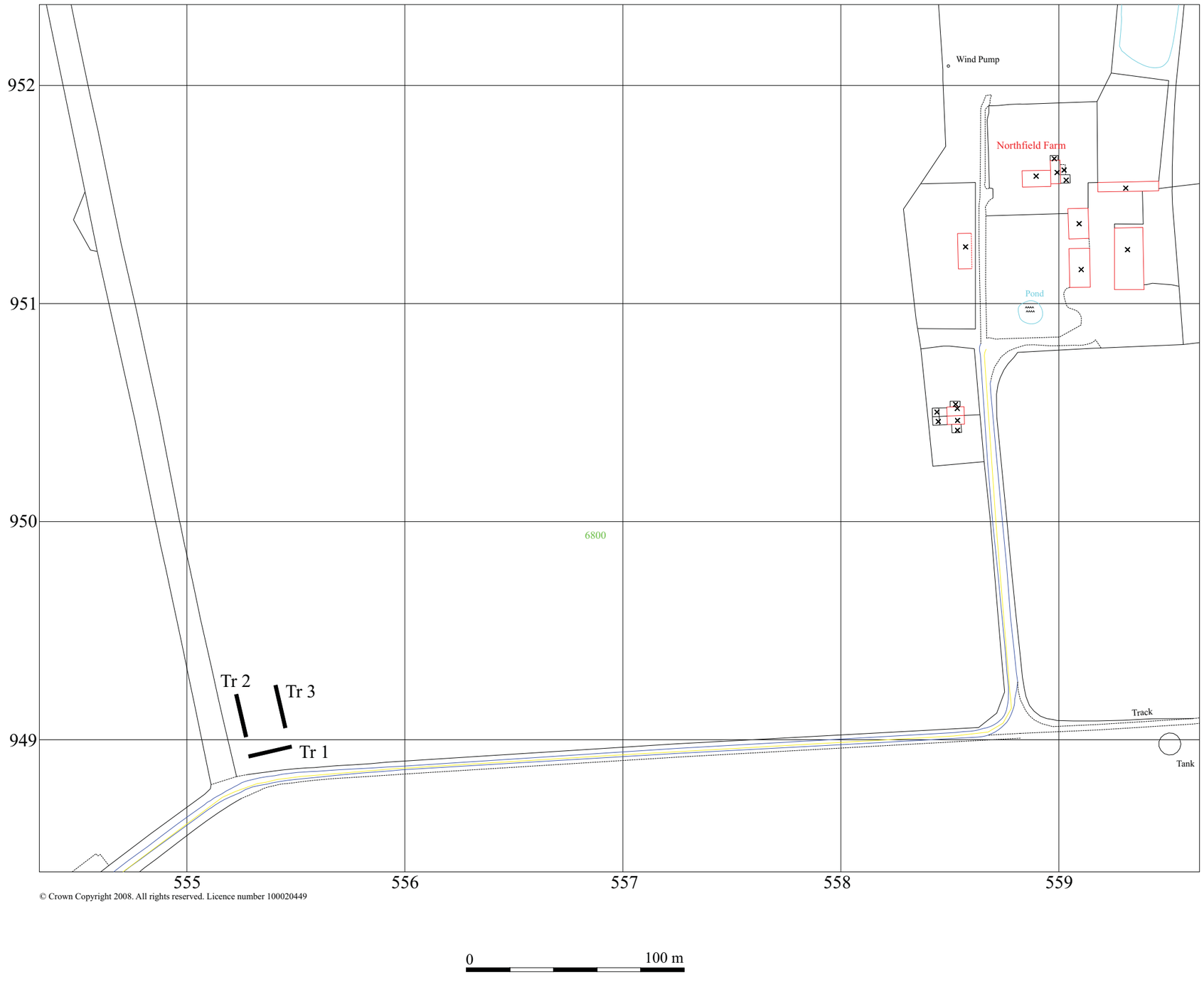

Figure 1. Site and trench locations

Further research on the landscape of the area through fieldwalking and geophysical survey has indicated that features are likely to survive outside of the scheduled area. It is therefore possible that features related to these periods could be disturbed during this proposed development.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.

In particular:

- To determine whether the prehistoric and Roman activity extends into this proposal site.

3 STRATEGY

In response to OCAS's Design Brief, a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with English Heritage and OCAS. The work was carried out by JMHS and would involved the excavation of three trial trenches each 20m long and 1.6m wide across the site area (Fig. 1).

The excavation of the three trenches done using a JCB equipped with a ditching bucket down onto the top of "natural" deposits or any higher archaeological horizon. The trenches were planned.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999), the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and the requirements of the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service's Brief. Full excavation of features would not be undertaken.

Before the investigation started, available material on the site was examined at the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record.

Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council monitored the work.

4 RESULTS

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

4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 1)

The trenches were located in the positions indicated in the Written Scheme of Investigations (WSI). All resulting spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

Trench 1 (Figure 1)

The stratigraphy revealed consisted of a mid brown/orange slightly silty clay natural (1/02) with very occasional flint gravel inclusions overlaid by a mid grey/brown silty clay topsoil (1/01) approximately 0.25m thick. A test pit was dug at the western end of the trench to check for the correct level of natural. This showed (1/02) was at least 0.52m thick and continued beyond the depth of the test pit.

No archaeological finds or features were revealed

Trench 2 (Figure 1)

Measured notes taken from this trench showed a mid brown/orange slightly silty clay natural (2/02) with very occasional flint gravel overlain by 0.30m of mid grey/brown silty clay topsoil (2/01).

No finds or archaeological deposits were noted within this trench.

Trench 3 (Figure 1)

Detailed observations made after the excavation of this trench revealed a stratigraphy consisting of mid orange/brown slightly silty clay natural (3/02) with very occasional flint gravel inclusions sealed by 0.35m of mid grey/brown silty clay topsoil (3/01).

No archaeological finds or features were revealed.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The evaluation took place during periods of sunshine and cloud with accompanying strong winds.

5 FINDS

No finds were recovered from the evaluation

5.1 Environmental results

No environmental samples were taken during the evaluation.

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological investigation was unsuccessful in locating any finds or archaeological features of any period. In particular no evidence was revealed of prehistoric or Roman activity. It is unlikely therefore that the proposed grain store construction will have a significant impact on any underlying archaeology.

It would appear that the cropmark evidence is accurate in that it shows no remains in the area of the proposed development. The archaeological remains appear to consist of two areas of settlement one to the north, and one to the south connected by a track. The track lies to the east of the proposed development. The southern extent of the archaeological features on the west side of the cropmark track is *c.* 50m north of the proposed north extent (planted boundary) of the proposal site and 55m north of the north side of the building. The west trackside ditch lies *c*. 80m east of the hedge line to the west of the proposed building. The east side of the building location as evaluated is therefore *c*. 53m from the track, with the east boundary of the proposal site (planted boundary a minimum of 40m from the track. It is possible that the building location will have to be moved *c*. 10m further east to avoid the roots of an oak tree. If this is the case then it appears that the new location will not impinge on the known trackway and that it is unlikely that other archaeological features will be present.

The above measurements of the cropmarks have been taken from the Oxfordshire HER.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects 2*

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Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation*

APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
Trench 1			0.77 (max)	1.6	20		
1/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.25	Tr.	Tr.		Modern
1/02	Natural	Mid brown/orange slightly silty clay	0.52+	Tr.	Tr.		Natural
Trench 2			0.40	1.6	20		
2/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.3	Tr.	Tr.		Modern
2/02	Natural	Mid brown/orange slightly silty clay	0.1+	Tr.	Tr.		Natural
Trench 3			0.45	1.6	20		
3/01	Layer	Topsoil	0.35	Tr.	Tr.		Modern
3/02	Natural	Mid brown/orange slightly silty clay	0.1+	Tr.	Tr.		Natural