



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

OF

LAND ADJACENT TO MOREDON PRIMARY

SCHOOL, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE

NGR SN 1317 8712

On behalf of

Healthcare and Community Construction

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REPORT FOR Primary Secondary Design Limited
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services concluded an archaeological evaluation of two proposed development sites, from 16th –21st January 2008. A magnetometer (gradiometer) survey was undertaken that found that more than half of the site was affected by magnetic ‘clutter’ from modern ferrous and other debris which had effectively masked underlying features. In areas where the ground survey proved relatively free of magnetic disturbance there was little evidence for features of obvious archaeological interest.

Subsequently four trenches, totalling approximately 85 metres in length, were excavated to reveal the underlying natural geology. The land itself falls under two planning applications. Trench 1 deals with the planning application associated with the proposed Children’s Centre, whilst Trenches 2-4 are relevant to planning application S/072088/SC, the anticipated new Medical Centre. For the purpose of this report both areas will be discussed together. However, the discussion and conclusion will be used to differentiate the two areas.

Four potential features, two gullies and one possible ditch/large pit were revealed in Trench 1 and one potential shallow ditch/spread was revealed in Trench 3. Despite full excavation of the gullies within the confines of Trench 1, no dating evidence was recovered from either and only animal bone and one iron nail was unearthed in the ditch/large pit. The shallow ditch or spread in Trench 3 contained pottery dating to some time from the mid 12th century to late 14th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Locations (Figure 1)

The area evaluated consisted of two sites under two different planning applications. The area associated with proposed Medical Centre was made up of an irregular parcel of land c.0.5ha in size which lies on the south side of Moredon Road adjacent to Moredon Primary School. The site concerned with the new Children’s Centre comprises a rectangular plot of land (c. 0.11ha in size) further to the southwest. Both site areas are located within the confines of the former Hreod primary school (NGR SN 1317 8712). Overall the land lies at c. 108.7m OD, sloping southwards. The area known as Moredon is 3 km. to the northwest of the centre of Swindon. It is currently within the area administered by Swindon Borough Council but was formerly within the parish of Rodbourne Cheney, in the hundred of Shippen (Scripe). The underlying geology is Upper Corallian Coral Rag. This was confirmed in the evaluation.

1.2 Planning Background

It is the intention to construct a children’s centre with associated parking towards the southwest of the site whilst a medical centre with associated parking is erected towards the north under planning application S/072088/SC. Wiltshire County Council (WCC) has advised Swindon Borough Council that an archaeological evaluation of

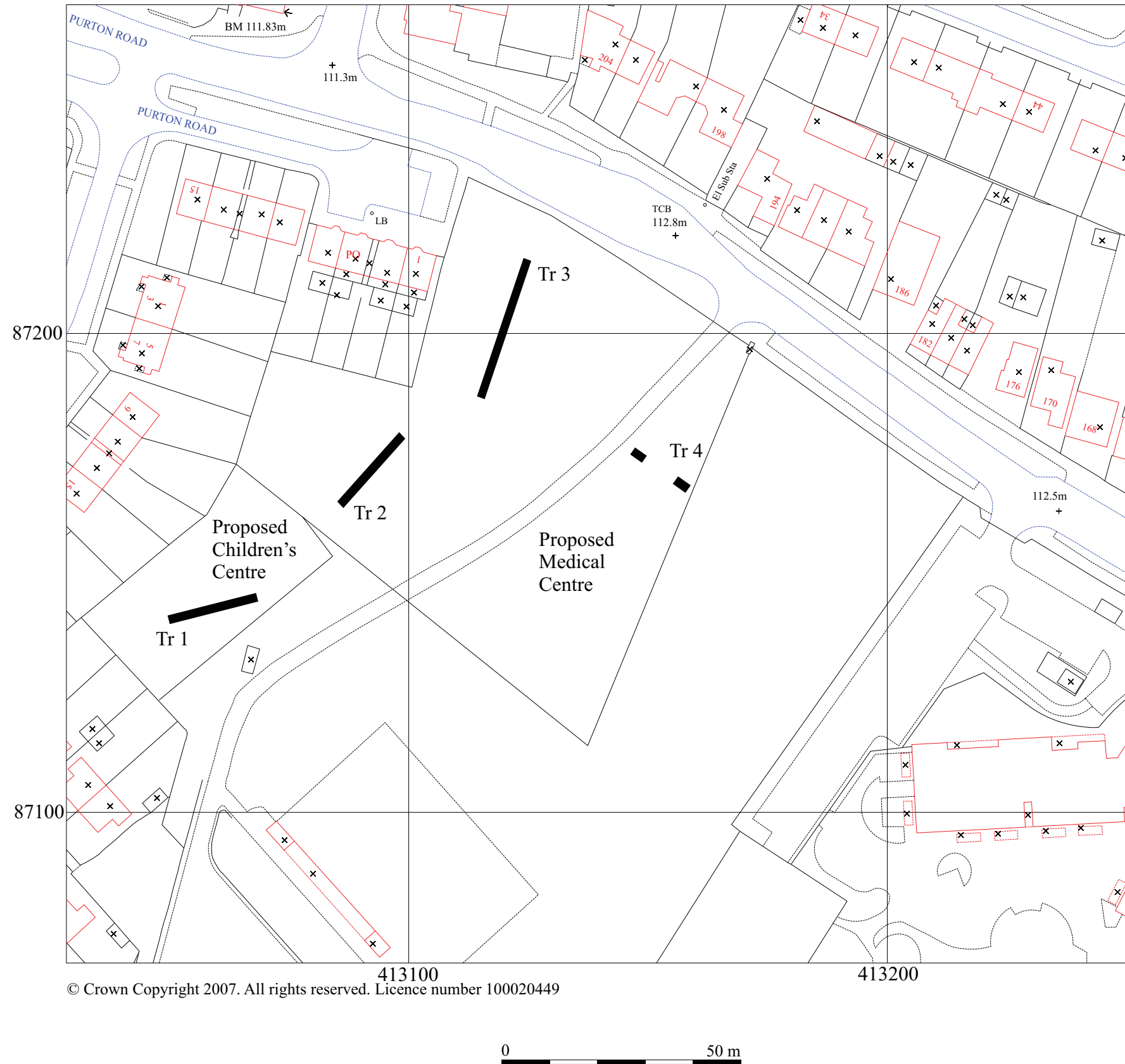


Figure 1. Site and trench locations

both areas should be carried out as part of the determination of the applications. This is due to the possibility of archaeological deposits being damaged or destroyed as a result of the developments and in order to ascertain any further possible mitigation strategies which might be needed. This was designed to establish the presence/absence and condition of any archaeological deposits thought to present within the site and is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Background research has been carried out through consultation of the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record and the County Record Office.

The settlement of Moredon is first mentioned in Anglo Saxon charters of the period 975-978 and again in other 10th century documents. In a charter dated 1008, King Ethelred restored an estate at Moredon to Abingdon Abbey. The records within Domesday indicate that there was over 60 acres of pasture and 50 acres meadow, held in three holdings (Thorn & Thorn 1979, VCH 1923).

Approximately 200m to the north of the proposed development site is the centre of the Anglo Saxon Settlement of Moredon with late medieval and post medieval settlement within the same area. A late medieval building platform has been found within 100m of the site. Iron Age features have been found approximately 500 m to the south west of the centre of the development site. Other records within the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record indicate a general spread of findspots for Romano British and medieval pottery, a Romano-British coin and a flint tool.

No previous development has been noted from an examination of the 1845 Tithe Map (Fig. 1). In 1885 the area was being used as a "Sheep Leaze". The Inclosure Award map does not include detail for the proposed development area. A small quarry, (NGR SU 1314 8718) approximately 30m in length by 8m wide and aligned northwest-southeast is indicated on the 1886 Ordnance Survey 1st edition map (Fig. 2). This feature is not indicated on subsequent mapping. No development is indicated for the proposed development site apart from Moredon Primary School which first appears on the Ordnance Survey Map for 1957- 1958.

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/absence of archaeological remains within the site areas.
- 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.

In particular:

- To determine whether any medieval remains relating to the settlement of Moredon are present.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to Wiltshire County Council's request, a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed by the Borough Council and the applicants. The initial stage of the evaluation was a magnetometer (gradiometer) survey carried out by Oxford Archaeotechnics (2008) The second stage work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of trial trenches across the two site areas (Fig. 1).

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) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The trenching sample required was achieved through the excavation of one 20m long trench for the Children's Centre application (Trench 1) and three trenches ranging from 15m to 30m for the Medical Centre proposal (Trenches 2-4). Trench 4 was not completely excavated due to the depth of deposits resulting in health and safety issues.

The trenches ranged in width from 1.80m to 2.00m and were excavated by a 360° type tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand where necessary prior to limited hand excavation of any potential archaeological deposits.

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. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

Ms M Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist for Wiltshire 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 2)

The trenches were located as close as possible to the positions indicated on the plan attached to the Written Scheme of Investigation whilst adopting a pragmatic approach to any unforeseen logistical considerations. The lowest deposit noted within the trenches consisted of ragstone mixed with clay. The stratigraphy in each trench varied considerably due to dumping. Each trench was issued with its own unique set of numbers with the trench number preceding each context number issued. The topsoil observed as deposit (01) in Trench 3 for example was recorded as (3/01).

Trench 1 (Figure 2)

Two shallow gullies and one possible ditch or large pit were noted cutting into the natural sandstone mixed with clay (1/07) within the trench. Gully [1/08] was the furthest SW of these. This was noted to be 0.72m wide and 0.10m deep, containing a light brown loam fill (1/09).

Close to this and running parallel to [1/08] was gully [1/10] measured to be 0.80m wide and 0.10m deep. It also contained a light brown loam fill (1/09). After initial recording, both of these features were fully excavated within the trench but no dating evidence for either was recovered.

Towards the NE end of the trench was feature [1/12]. Only one edge of the feature was observed. The straight cut suggests this feature to be a ditch although it could conceivably be part of a large pit. The feature, as seen within the trench, was 2.40m wide and 0.68m deep and contained a mid reddish brown silty clay (1/13). Only animal bone and one iron nail was recovered from this fill.

All of these features were sealed by a mid grey gravelly loam layer (1/06) 0.07m thick. Overlying this was a light brown/grey clay/silt with occasional gravel inclusions (1/05) 0.20m thick. This in turn was covered by 0.20m of dark grey/brown silty clay (1/04) thought to be a buried topsoil. Sealing this was a made ground yellow brown loam layer with frequent small stone inclusions (1/03) c. 0.16m thick thought to be redeposited natural. Above this was another made ground layer (1/02) noted to be 0.08m thick consisting of light brown loam. Finally, a dark brown loam (1/01) 0.15m thick, the current topsoil horizon, covered this layer.

One large sherd of medieval pottery was discovered from the spoil heap created by this trench.