MILL CROFT, ROYSTON ROAD, BARKWAY, NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBERS: PRE-PLANNING

PCA REPORT NO: 13243

SITE CODE: HMCB18

APRIL 2018

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Mill Croft, Royston Road, Barkway, North Hertfordshire:

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Local Planning Authority:	**North Hertfordshire District Council**
Planning Reference:	**18/00329/FP**
Central National Grid Reference:	**TL 3828 3618**
Site Code/Event Number:	**HMCB18**
Report No.	**R13243**
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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology on land at Mill Croft, Royston Road, Barkway, North Hertfordshire (NGR TL 3828 3618) on the 9th April 2018. The archaeological work was commissioned by Hanson Services Ltd. in advance of a planning application to demolish the existing detached house and outbuildings and construct 6 new dwellings with associated landscaping and services. The aim of the work was to characterise the archaeological potential of the proposed development area and inform the design of an appropriate management strategy for the site's heritage assets.

The principal result of the evaluation was the recording of five modern features, comprising pits and postholes, mainly focused in Trench 2, in the east of the site. A single modern wall foundation was also identified in Trench 3.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) at Mill Croft, Barkway, North Hertfordshire, SG8 8BU (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 3828 3618) on 9th April 2018 (Figure 1).

1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Hanson Services Ltd. in advance of a planning application (North Hertfordshire District Council Planning Reference 18/00329/FP) to demolish the existing detached house and outbuildings and construct 6 new dwellings with associated landscaping and services.

1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Tom Woolhouse of PCA (February 2018), in response to archaeological advice issued by Hertfordshire County Council's Natural, Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team (HCC NHBEAT) (email from S. Wood, dated 30/01/18).

1.4 The aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, date, extent, character, condition and quality of any archaeological remains on the site, to assess the significance of any such remains in a local, regional, or national context, as appropriate, and to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on the site's archaeology.

1.5 A total of three 1.8m by 20m trenches and one 1.8m by 10m trench were excavated and recorded.

1.6 This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy for the site. The site archive will be deposited at North Hertfordshire Museum.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

2.1.1 The underlying geology of the site is the Lewes Nodular Formation and Seaford Chalk Formations. The superficial deposits in the area comprise Lowestoft Formation chalky tills, sands and gravels, formed approximately two million years ago (British Geological Survey; Website 1). This deposit was present in the evaluation as (102), a mid-brownish-grey sandy silt, mixed with weathered yellowy-white chalk.

2.2 Topography

2.2.1 The site comprises approximately 2700m² and is located in the northern part of the village of Barkway, 5km south-east of Royston, along the route of the B1368. The site is situated at an elevation of approximately 142m OD (above Ordnance Datum), which rises to a high point (150m OD) approximately 250m to the north-west. The land drops into the valley of the River Quin 600m to the south-east of the site. A stream, partly canalised in field boundary ditches, and one of several which rises from springs between Barkway and Reed, flows south-eastwards 200m south-west of the site.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site lies in an area of known archaeological significance, as recorded in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HHER). This archaeological and historical background has been drawn from the Written Scheme of Investigation, compiled by PCA (Woolhouse 2018) and the available 'grey literature' reports documenting nearby archaeological investigations.

3.2 The site is located on the north-western edge of the village of Barkway in North Hertfordshire. It comprises an existing residential plot occupied by a detached house, outbuildings and gardens, with an overall area of 2700m².

3.3 The proposed development lies just outside the eastern boundary of an Area of Archaeological Significance, as identified in the Local Plan. This covers an area of possible prehistoric activity, comprising a ring-ditch (HHER 6154) and trackway (HHER 7792), identified through aerial photography.

3.4 Archaeological evaluations, comprising geophysical survey followed by trial trenching, have recently taken place in the fields directly north and east of the site (Bull 2016; Foundations Archaeology 2017). These investigations have found later Bronze Age / Early Iron Age features, comprising pits, postholes and ditches, the east to west continuation of the above trackway, and an Early Roman enclosure. Therefore, prehistoric or Roman remains might have been expected on the present site.

3.5 Barkway is recorded in Domesday Book (AD 1086) as '*Birchwig*' or 'Birch Way'. The core of the late Saxon and medieval village was probably some 500–600m to the south, close to the parish church of St Mary Magdalene and Manor Farm. The post-medieval and modern village is mainly linear in form and focused along the High Street/ Royston Road, 300m to the south-east of the site, where there are a number of 15th- and 16th-century buildings. The road is part of the old London to Cambridge coaching route.

3.6 North Hertfordshire is an area of 'ancient countryside' with a dispersed medieval settlement pattern and, as such, there are other focuses of medieval activity in the landscape around the village. Notably, there are

remains of a possible motte-and-bailey castle 800m west of the site at Periwinkle Hill (HHER 855).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Excavation and Sampling

4.1.1 The Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation proposed the excavation of four trial trenches (3 x 20m; 1 x 10m), distributed across the site (Figure 2) and providing an overall 5% sample of its area. The trenches were positioned in order to adequately sample the overall area of the site, taking into account constraints caused by the presence of standing buildings and live services.

4.1.2 Ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision using a 5-ton tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1m-wide toothless ditching bucket (Plate 1). Trenches were excavated to two bucket widths (i.e. 2m). Due to the presence of two modern services, Trench 1 was excavated in two segments. Topsoil, subsoil and overburden deposits were removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded. With the exception of a modern wall in Trench 3, no archaeological features or deposits were present above the level of the natural geology. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools. Overburden deposits were set aside beside each trench and examined visually and with a metal-detector for finds retrieval.

4.1.3 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping and throughout the excavation process. Archaeological features and spoilheaps were scanned by metal-detector as they were encountered/ created.

4.1.4 Field excavation techniques and recording methods are detailed in the PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual (Operations Manual I) by Joanna Taylor and Gary Brown (2009).

4.1.5 All features which were not of a clearly modern date were investigated and recorded in order to properly understand the date and nature of the archaeological remains on the site and to recover sufficient finds assemblages to assess the chronological development and socio-economic

character of the site over time.

4.1.6 Discrete features, such as pits and postholes, were at least 50% excavated.

4.2 Recording Methodology

4.2.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Leica GS014 GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.

4.2.2 Manual section drawings of archaeological features and deposits were drawn at an appropriate scale (1:10, 1:20 or 1:50).

4.2.3 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as 'context numbers') and recorded on individual pre-printed forms (Taylor and Brown 2009). Archaeological processes recognised by the deposition of material are signified in this report by round brackets (thus), while events constituting the removal of deposits are referred to here as 'cuts' and signified by square brackets [thus]. The record numbers assigned to cuts and deposits are entirely arbitrary and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits recorded during the evaluation are listed in Appendix 2. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.

4.2.4 High-resolution digital photographs were taken at all stages of the evaluation process. Digital Photographs were taken of all archaeological features and deposits and black and white film photographs were taken when considered appropriate by the excavator and supervisor.

4.2.5 Artefacts and ecofacts were collected by hand and assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from the site (CIfA 2001; Walker 1990; Watkinson 1981).

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The trenches are described below in numerical order, with technical data tabulated. Features and deposits are subdivided into feature type, before being described in numerical cut order within the trench. Archaeological features and deposits were sealed by the subsoil, unless otherwise stated.

5.1.2 The principal result of the evaluation was the recording of a small number of modern features, comprising pits and postholes.

5.2 Trench 1

5.2.1 Trench 1 contained two modern services, which were aligned roughly east to west. One of these services was picked up prior to excavation as part of a CATSCAN survey. As such, Trench 1 was split into two segments to avoid the location of this signal.

TRENCH 1	**Figure 2**	**Plate 2**	
Trench Alignment: N–S	Length: 19.2m	Max. Machine Depth (m OD): 142.75	
Deposit	**Context No.**	**Average Depth (m)**	
		N End	**S End**
Topsoil	(100)	0.32m	0.31m
Subsoil	(101)	0.41m	0.42m
Natural (max. machined depth)	(102)	0.43m+	0.43m+

Summary

Trench 1 was located close to the eastern boundary of the site.
The trench contained two modern services, which resulted in the site being split into two segments.

5.3 Trench 2

5.3.1 The trench contained three postholes and a single pit. All of the features present were of modern date.

5.3.2 Posthole [105] was located towards the east end of the trench and was sub-circular in plan with a gently-sloping round-based profile (0.51m wide x

0.06m deep). It had a single fill (104), a dark grey sandy silt which contained occasional coke and charcoal flecks.

5.3.3 Posthole [107] was located towards the east end of the trench and was sub-circular in plan with a gently-sloping round-based profile (0.38m wide x 0.05m deep). It had a single fill (106), a dark grey sandy silt which contained occasional coke and charcoal flecks. A small fragment of modern glass was recovered from the fill of this posthole.

5.3.4 Posthole [109] was located towards the east end of the trench and was sub-circular in plan with a gently-sloping round-based profile (0.22m wide). It had a single fill (108), a dark grey sandy silt which contained occasional coke and charcoal flecks.

5.3.5 Pit [111] was located towards the west end of the trench and was sub-oval in plan (0.68m wide). It had a single fill (110), a dark grey sandy silt which contained occasional coke and charcoal flecks. The feature was not excavated but fragments of bottle glass and sherds from a ceramic vessel were recovered from its upper levels (Plate 3). All are of modern (late-19th-/ 20th-century) date.

TRENCH 2	**Figures 2 & 3**	**Plates 3 & 4**
Trench Alignment: E–W	Length: 10.3m	Max. Machine Depth (m OD): 143.33

Deposit	**Context No.**	**Average Depth (m)**	
		E End	**W End**
Overburden (Tarmac, pea-gravel)	(104)	0.35m	-
Topsoil	(100)	-	0.33m
Subsoil	(101)	0.60m	0.51m
Natural (max. machined depth)	(102)	0.62m+	0.53m+

Summary

Trench 2 was located in the eastern part of the site.
The trench contained three postholes and a single pit; all of the features present were of modern date.

5.4 Trench 3

5.4.1 The trench contained a single modern wall foundation [115], which was composed of red brick and breezeblocks with a sandy concrete overlay.

TRENCH 3	**Figure 2**	**Plate 5**
Trench Alignment: E–W	Length: 19.4m	Max. Machine Depth (m OD): 143.72

Deposit	**Context No.**	**Average Depth (m)**	
		E End	**W End**
Topsoil	(100)	0.19m	0.29m
Overburden (Chalk, rubble and tarmac)	(114)	0.43m	0.59m
Subsoil	(101)	0.51m	0.68m
Natural (max. machined depth)	(102)	0.52m+	0.70m+

Summary

Trench 3 was located in the north-western part of the site.
The trench contained a single modern wall.

5.5 Trench 4

5.5.1 The trench contained a single pit, which was of a modern date.

5.5.2 Pit [113] was located towards the south-east end of the trench and was sub-oval in plan (1.28m wide). It had a single fill (112), a light pink sand which contained frequent brick and concrete rubble, corrugated iron and other debris of modern date. The feature was not excavated.

TRENCH 4	**Figure 2**	**Plate 6**
Trench Alignment: NW–SE	Length: 20.5m	Max. Machine Depth (m OD): 143.10

Deposit	**Context No.**	**Average Depth (m)**	
		NW End	**SE End**
Topsoil	(100)	0.3m	0.29m
Subsoil	(101)	0.35m	0.38m
Natural (max. machined depth)	(102)	0.36m+	0.40m+

Summary

Trench 4 was located in the south-western part of the site.
The trench a single pit, which was of a modern date.

6 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The principal result of the evaluation was the identification of five modern features, comprising pits and postholes, mainly focused in Trench 2, in the east of the site. A single modern wall foundation was also identified in Trench 3. These features are likely to relate to the modern use of the site as a domestic garden attached to a care home.

6.2 There was no sign of significant truncation in any of the trenches. As such, the lack of archaeological features can be considered 'genuine' rather than a result of past ground disturbance. No evidence for a continuation of the prehistoric and Roman activity previously identified to the east of the site was found during the course of the evaluation.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Hanson Services Ltd., in particular Tom and James Hanson, for commissioning and funding the work. PCA are also grateful to Simon Wood of HCC NHBEAT for monitoring the work. The author would also like to thank PCA's CAD Department for preparing the figures. The project was managed for PCA by Tom Woolhouse. Finds were processed and photographed by Heidi Hauser.

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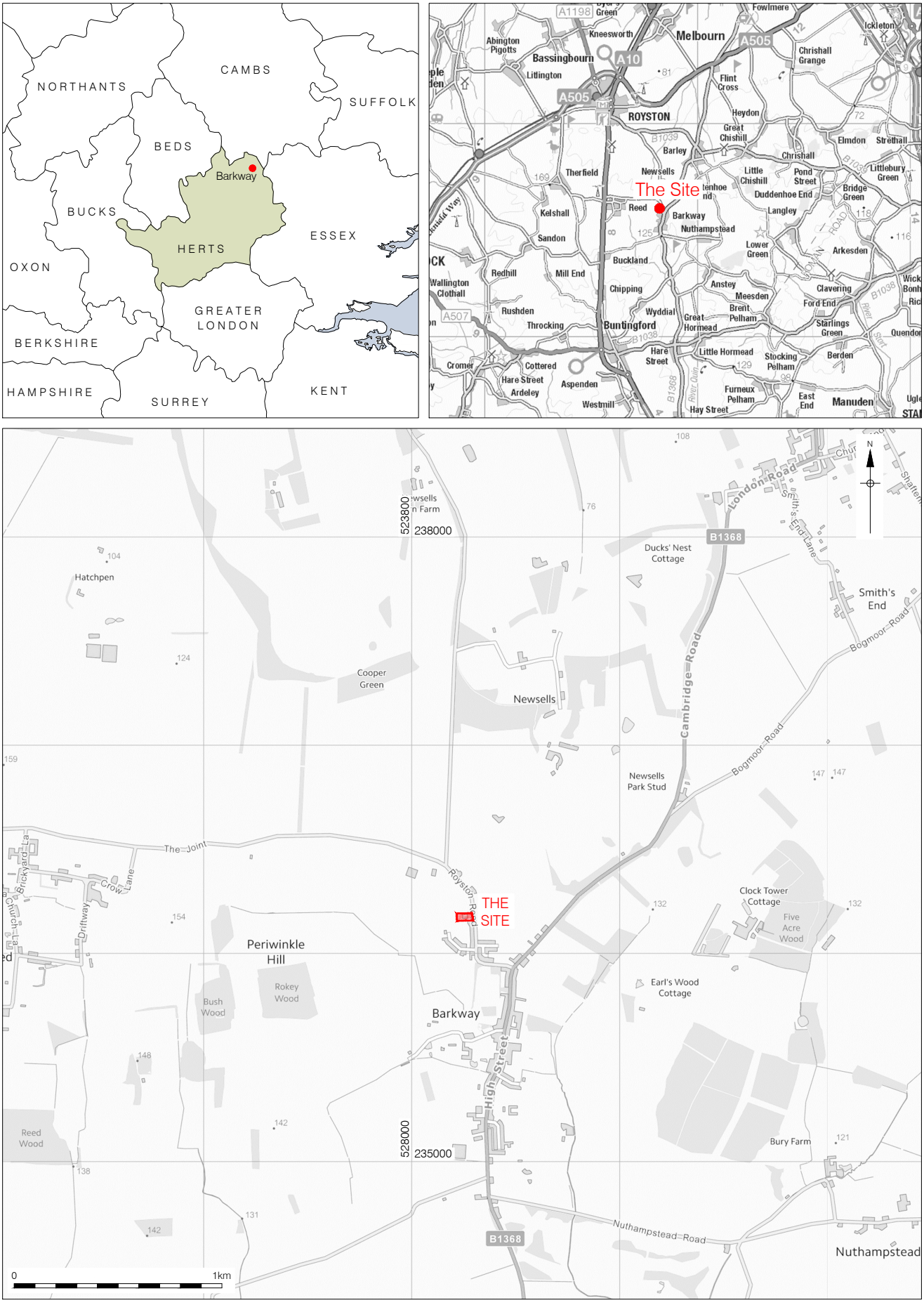
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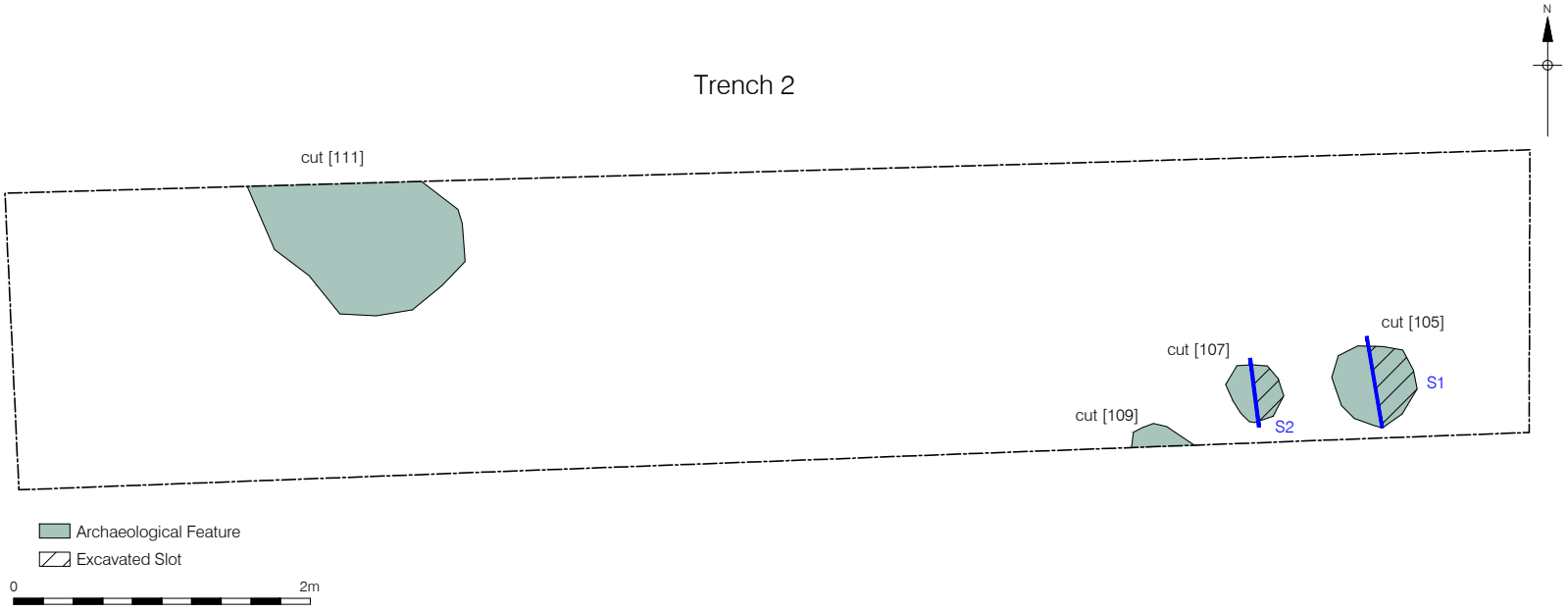
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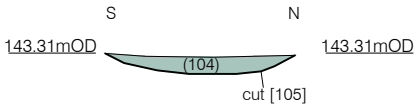
Figure 1
Site Location
1:2,000,000; 250,000 & 25,000 at A4



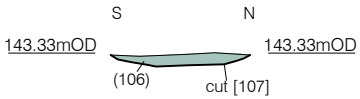
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Figure 2
Trench Location Plan
1:500 at A4





Section 1
Trench 2
East Facing



Section 2
Trench 2
East Facing

0 1m

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Figure 3
Plan of Trench 2
Plan 1:50 and Sections 1:20 at A4

9 APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: Trench 1, machining, view north



Plate 2: Trench 1, view south with pipe trench visible in foreground



Plate 3: Trench 2, Pit [111], finds



Plate 4: Trench 2, view west



Plate 5: Trench 3, view east



Plate 6: Trench 4, view north-west

10 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No.	Cut	Trench	Type	Category
100	0	0	Layer	Topsoil
101	0	0	Layer	Subsoil
102	0	0	Layer	Natural
103	0	2	Layer	Made Ground
104	105	2	Fill	Posthole
105	105	2	Cut	Posthole
106	107	2	Fill	Posthole
107	107	2	Cut	Posthole
108	109	2	Fill	Posthole
109	109	2	Cut	Posthole
110	111	2	Fill	Pit
111	111	2	Cut	Pit
112	113	4	Fill	Pit
113	113	4	Cut	Pit
114	0	3	Layer	Made Ground
115	0	3	Structure	Wall

11 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

Project details	
Project name	Mill Croft, Royston Road, Barkway, North Hertfordshire: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation
Short description of the project	This report describes the results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology on land at Mill Croft, Royston Road, Barkway, Crystal Park, North Hertfordshire (NGR TL3828 3618) on the 9th of April 2018. The archaeological work was commissioned by Hanson Services Ltd. in response to a planning condition attached to the demolition of the existing detached house and outbuilding and the construction of new dwellings with associated landscaping and services. The aim of the work was to characterize the archaeological potential of the proposed development area. The principal result of the evaluation was the recording of a small number of modern features, comprising pits and postholes, mainly focused in Trench 2. A single modern wall foundation was also identified in Trench 3.
Project dates	Start: 09-04-2018 End: 09-04-2018
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HMCB18 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	POSTHOLE Modern
Monument type	PIT Modern
Monument type	WALL Modern
Significant Finds	GLASS Modern
Significant Finds	POTTERY Modern
Methods	& "Sample Trenches"

techniques	
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	Pre-application
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE BARKWAY Mill Croft, Royston Road, Barkway, North Hertfordshire
Postcode	SG8 8BU
Study area	2700 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 3828 3618 52.006362710315 0.014840329744 52 00 22 N 000 00 53 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 142.75m Max: 143.72m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	PCA
Project brief originator	Hertfordshire County Council
Project design originator	PCA Central
Project director/manager	Tom Woolhouse
Project supervisor	Lawrence Morgan-Shelbourne
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Hanson Services Ltd
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	North Hertfordshire Museum

Physical Contents	"Ceramics","Glass"
Digital Archive recipient	North Hertfordshire District Council Museum Services
Digital Contents	"Ceramics","Glass"
Digital Media available	"Database","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	North Hertfordshire District Council Museum Services
Paper Contents	"Ceramics","Glass"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Survey","Unpublished Text"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Mill Croft, Royston Road, Barkway, North Hertfordshire: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Morgan-Shelbourne, L
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