

Land at Heath Road Breachwood Green Hertfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation



for:
Blakeney Estates Ltd

CA Project: MK1172
Site code: KNW/HRBG'24
CA Report:MK1172_1

August 2025



Land at Heath Road Breachwood Green Hertfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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SUMMARY

Project name:	Land at Heath Road
Location:	Breachwood, Hertfordshire
NGR:	514883 222435
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	16–17 June 2025
Planning reference:	22/02942/OP
OASIS ID:	TBC
Location of archive:	To be deposited with North Hertfordshire Museum and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)
Accession number:	TBC
Site code:	KNW/HRBG'24

In June 2025, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation on the land at Heath Road, Breachwood, Hertfordshire. A total of 6 trenches were excavated. All the proposed trenches were targeting development footprints.

All excavated trenches revealed the same soil sequence, disturbed garden soils with frequent modern inclusions overlaying the natural geology. No features, finds or deposits of archaeological interest were identified during the evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In June 2025, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation on the land at Heath Road, Breachwood, Hertfordshire (centred at NGR: 514883 222435; Fig. 1). This evaluation was undertaken for Blakeney Estates Ltd.
- 1.2. North Hertfordshire Council has granted planning permission for the erection of 10 dwellings within the Site (planning ref: 22/02942/OP). Condition 4 of the draft planning permission requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with an approved WSI:

4.A *No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:*

- 1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;*
- 2. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording as required by the evaluation;*
- 3. The programme for post investigation assessment;*
- 4. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording;*
- 5. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation ;*
- 6. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation;*
- 7. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.*

4.B *The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A).*

4.C *The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in*

accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.

Reason: *The site lies within an area where there is significant potential for archaeological remains and any finds should be retrieved and/or recorded before they are damaged or destroyed as a result of the development hereby permission and to comply with Policy HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.*

1.3. The scope of this evaluation was defined by the Senior Historic Environment Advisor at Hertfordshire County Council (SHEA; Alison Tinniswood). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CA (2025) and approved by the SHEA.

1.4. The evaluation was also in line with:

- *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023);
- *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023);
- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015); and
- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015).

The site

1.5. The proposed development site is approximately 0.56ha in extent. It lies on the northwestern edge of Breachwood Green to the east of Luton. The site currently comprises a pasture field bounded to the east by Heath Road, to the north and south by allotments and residential properties fronting onto Heath Road, and to the west by agricultural land. The ground within the Site is broadly level at approximately 151m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

1.6. The underlying bedrock geology of the Site is mapped as chalk of the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed between 93.9 and 83.6 million years ago during the Cretaceous period (BGS 2024). This is overlain by clay, silt, sand and gravel of the Clay-with-flints Formation, a sedimentary

superficial deposit formed between 23.03 million and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Neogene and Quaternary periods (BGS 2024).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Comments provided on the planning application by the SHEA suggest that the Site is in a favourable location for settlement, although no archaeological finds are recorded from the proposed development area or its immediate vicinity. A search of records held by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) has been carried out (ref. 140.24), and the following text represents a summary of this information.

Roman

- 2.2. Approximately 530m to the south-west of the Site, a number of worked flints and Roman debris were recovered during a programme of fieldwalking at Hearn's Field Common (HER ref. EHT5287; 12600).
- 2.3. A programme of geophysical survey approximately 900m to the south-west of the Site, near the assumed site of an Anglo-Saxon burial (see below), identified a small complex of pit- and ditch-like anomalies possibly representative of a Roman farmstead (HER ref. MHT7358).

Early medieval and medieval

- 2.4. A probable female interment dated c.AD 670 was found by workmen in 1913 (HER ref. MHT1248), c.940m to the south-west of the Site, although the exact location remains unclear. The finds consisted of four Anglo-Saxon brooches (a pair measuring 2.7 inches in length; one 2.75 inches in length and the remains of another in gilt bronze), a pair of bronze tweezers, a girdle-hanger, fragments of bronze (possibly the lip of a drinking cup); and fragments of a coarse pot with three bosses on the shoulder interspersed with vertical incised lines. No skeletal remains were recovered.

Post-medieval and modern

- 2.5. A late medieval house and associated outbuildings is located 150m to the north of the Site. Heath Farm was built in the late 15th century as a hall and two cross-wings flush with it.
- 2.6. A post-medieval farmstead with medieval origins is located c.195m to the south-west of the Site (HER ref. MHT15132). Brownings Farm has been converted into two residential properties called North Barn and South Barn, each with one long range and a small

outbuilding/garage. The two barns were timber-framed and weatherboarded on brick sills, dating to the early 18th century. The farmstead had medieval origins, being associated with the family of Robert Browning, documented in 1307.

- 2.7. Another post-medieval farmstead is recorded by the HER (ref. MHT15135) approximately 350m to the south of the Site. Colemans Farm is timber-framed and dates to the 17th century or earlier, comprising a long two-storey house three bays wide. In the 18th or 19th century the building was cased in brick, and a gabled porch was added in the 19th century. A large rear extension was added in the 20th century.
- 2.8. Just to the north of Colemans Farm, Medlow House (HER ref. MHT15134) is shown on the later 19th century Ordnance Survey maps as a neat farmstead around a compartmented yard and with the farmhouse at the south-east corner but set back from the road.
- 2.9. The site of a 19th century brick kiln and associated clay pits is recorded by the HER approximately 100m to the south of the Site (HER ref. MHT31043). The 1881 Ordnance Survey map shows here two large and one small pits marked 'Old Clay Pits', and some rectangular structures marked 'Brickkiln' to the SE. By 1898, all but one of the structures had disappeared. The site of the kiln itself has been built over, but the remainder is known as The Spinney, with surviving trees.
- 2.10. The site was used by the residents for communal gardening before abandonment. Individual garden plots are still visible on satellite images using the time-lapse of the Google Earth free application.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objective of the evaluation was to provide further information on the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date and state of preservation. This information will enable NHC to identify and assess the particular significance of any archaeological heritage assets within the site, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance and, if appropriate, develop strategies to avoid or minimise conflict between heritage asset conservation and the development proposals, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 2024).

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- 3.2. A further objective of the project was to compile a stable, ordered, accessible project archive.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The evaluation fieldwork comprised the excavation of 6no. 20m by 1.8m trenches as shown in Fig. 2. The trenches have been located to provide a representative sample of the Site, targeting the proposed development footprints. It represented 4% sample of the development area. No constraints were known before the initial trench set outs were approved by the curator. The following amendments were made due to the presence of trees on site:

- The orientation of Trench 1 was completely altered from NE-SW to NW-SE to fit in between two standing trees.
- Trench 5 was moved closer to east end of Trench 3, and its orientation completely altered from NW-SE to NNE-SSW.
- Trench 6 was moved close to Trench 5, and its orientation altered from NE-SW to ENE-WSW.

- 4.2. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS. Overburden was stripped from the trenches by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. All machining was conducted under archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate.

- 4.3. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.

- 4.4. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. No deposits were identified that required sampling.

- 4.5. CA will make arrangements with North Hertfordshire Museum for the deposition of the project archive. A digital archive will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). This archive will be compiled in accordance with the *ADS Instructions for Depositors* (2025). The archives (museum and digital) will be prepared and deposited in accordance with:

-
- *Guidelines for essential archive tasks and the preparation of archives (CA 2024);*
 - *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020); and*
 - *Standard and Guide to Best Practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe: EAC Guidelines 1 (Europae Archaeologia Consilium 2019).*

4.6. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

5.1. This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A.

5.2. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within any of the trenches excavated, and no artefacts were recovered.

5.3. The natural geological substrate of light to mid greyish brown clay with flints was exposed in all trenches. It was encountered on a depth varying between 0.4m and 0.5m below present ground level. Overlaying the natural was a sequence of really compacted modern made grounds present across the whole of the site, between 0.4m-0.5m thick.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. The evaluation encountered no features or deposits of archaeological interest. No finds were encountered nor recovered.

6.2. Until abandonment the site was used for communal gardening. The time lapse of the satellite images proves that the made grounds are the result of modern activities. The individual plots and small-scale buildings like sheds, etc visible on the satellite images were all dismantled by the time of the evaluation. The previous activities affected the site significantly and resulted in creation of the made ground present on site. The depth of impact is not deeper than it would be expected on an agricultural field.

6.3. Due to the limited archaeology found during the fieldwork, no contribution could be made to any research aims and objectives set out in the *East of England Regional Research Framework* (RFN 2023).

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Levente-Bence Balazs, assisted by Ian Spiller and Victor Alonso. This report was written by Levente-Bence Balazs. The report illustrations were prepared by Helena Munoz-Mojado. The project archive has been compiled by CA Levente-Bence Balazs and prepared for deposition by Clare Bond. The project was managed for CA by Daniele Pirisino and Antoni Nowak.

8. REFERENCES

- AAF (Archaeological Archives Forum) 2011 *Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation*
- ADS (Archaeology Data Service) 2025 *Instructions for Depositors*
<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/advice/guidelinesForDepositors.xhtml>
- BGS (British Geological Survey) 2024 *BGS Geology Viewer*
<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer/> Accessed 27 February 2024
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2025 *Land at Heath Road, Breachwood Green, Hertfordshire, Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*
- ClfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2020 Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives
- ClfA/Historic England 2022 Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives
- ClfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2023a Standard for archaeological field evaluation
- ClfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2023b Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation
- EAC (Europae Archaeologia Consilium) 2019 *Standard and Guide to Best Practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe: EAC Guidelines 1*
- HAM (Hertfordshire Association of Museums) 2023 *Hertfordshire Archaeological Archive Standards: A Countywide Standard for the Creation, Compilation and Transfer of Archaeological Archives in Hertfordshire*
- HE (Historic England) 2011 *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation (2nd Edition)*
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HE (Historic England) 2018 *The Role of the Human Osteologist in an Archaeological Fieldwork Project*

Medlycott, M (ed), 2011 *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 24*

MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) 2023 *National Planning Policy Framework*

RFN (research Frameworks Network) 2023 *East of England Regional Research Framework*. Part of the Research Framework Network.

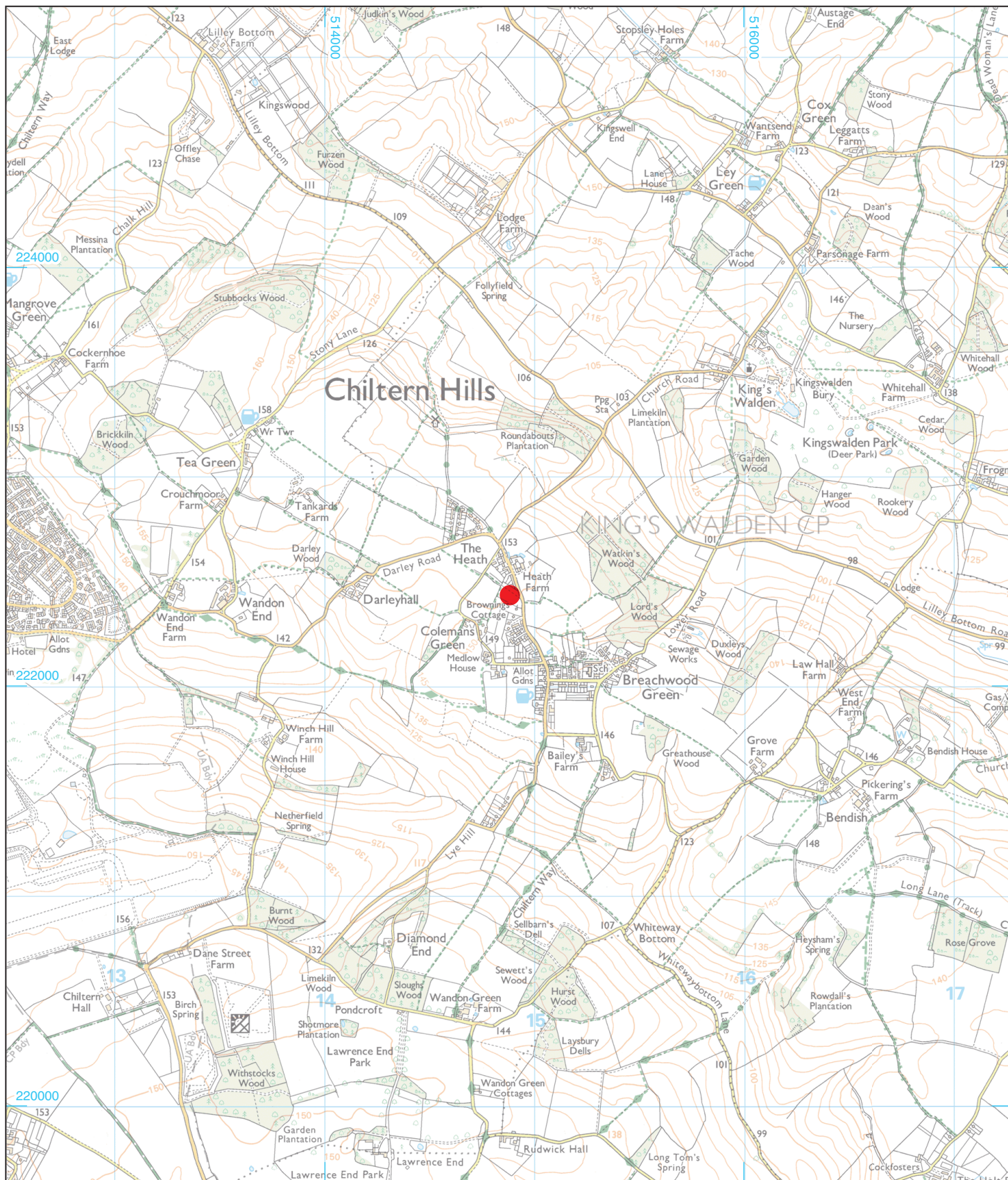
<https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/>

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/thickness (m)
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Cemented; mid to dark greyish brown silty loam; frequent small modern CBM inclusions	20	>1.8	0.40
1	101	Layer		Natural	Compact; light grey brown; clayey silt; with occasional rounded flint nodules up to 60mm	20	>1.8	
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Cemented; mid to dark greyish brown silty loam; frequent small modern CBM inclusions	20	>1.8	0.5
2	201	Layer		Natural	Compact; light grey brown; clayey silt; with occasional rounded flint nodules up to 60mm	20	>1.8	
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	Cemented; mid to dark greyish brown silty loam; frequent small modern CBM inclusions	20	>1.8	0.5
3	301	Layer		Natural	Compact; light grey brown; clayey silt; with occasional rounded flint nodules up to 60mm	20	>1.8	
4	400	Layer		Topsoil	Cemented; mid to dark greyish brown silty loam; frequent small modern CBM inclusions	20	>1.8	0.5
4	401	Layer		Natural	Compact; light grey brown; clayey silt; with occasional rounded flint nodules up to 60mm	20	>1.8	
5	500	Layer		Topsoil	Cemented; mid to dark greyish brown silty loam; frequent small modern CBM inclusions	20	>1.8	0.5
5	501	Layer		Natural	Compact; light grey brown; clayey silt; with occasional rounded flint nodules up to 60mm	20	>1.8	
6	600	Layer		Topsoil	Cemented; mid to dark greyish brown silty loam; frequent small modern CBM inclusions	20	>1.8	0.4
6	601	Layer		Natural	Compact; light grey brown; clayey silt; with occasional rounded flint nodules up to 60mm			

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Land at Heath Road, Breachwood Green, Hertfordshire	
Site code	KNW/HRBG'24	
Short description	In June 2025, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation on the land at Heath Road, Breachwood, Hertfordshire. A Total of 6 trenches were excavated targeting the footprints of	
Project dates	16-17 June 2025	
Project type	Archaeological evaluation	
Planning reference number	22/02942/OP	
Development type	Erection of 10 dwellings	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
Methodology	The evaluation fieldwork comprised the excavation of 6no of trenches as shown in Fig. 2: • Trench 1: (20m x 1.8m); • Trench 2: (20m x 1.8m); • Trench 3: (20m x 1.8m); • Trench 4: (20m x 1.8m); • Trench 5: (20m x 1.8m); • Trench 6: (20m x 1.8m); The trenches have been located to provide a representative sample of the Site, targeting the proposed development footprints. It represented 4% sample of the development area.	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Heath Road, Breachwood Green, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 8PN	
Study area (m ² /ha)	0.56ha	
Site co-ordinates	NGR: 514883 222435	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Antoni Nowak	
Project Leader	Levente-Bence Balazs	
Funder	Blakeney Estates Ltd	
SCIENTIFIC DATING UNDERTAKEN	No	
ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING	No	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
RESEARCH FRAMEWORKS	No contribution to any specific research framework	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	N/A	N/A
Paper	North Hertfordshire Museum	WSI, report, context sheets,
Digital	Archaeology Data Service (ADS)	DRS, digital photos, report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2025 <i>Land at Heath Road, Breachwood Green, Hertfordshire</i> typescript report MK1172_1		



● Site location

0 1:25,000 1km

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Ordnance Survey AC0000808122



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Heath Road, Breachwood Green,
Hertfordshire

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

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- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench



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PROJECT TITLE
Land at Heath Road, Breachwood Green,
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FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	25/06/2025	2
PM	AN	SCALE@A3	1:1000	



General view of site, looking north-west



General view of site, looking north-west



General view of site, looking south-east



General view of site, looking east


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PROJECT TITLE
**Land at Heath Road, Breachwood Green,
 Hertfordshire**

FIGURE TITLE
Site photographs

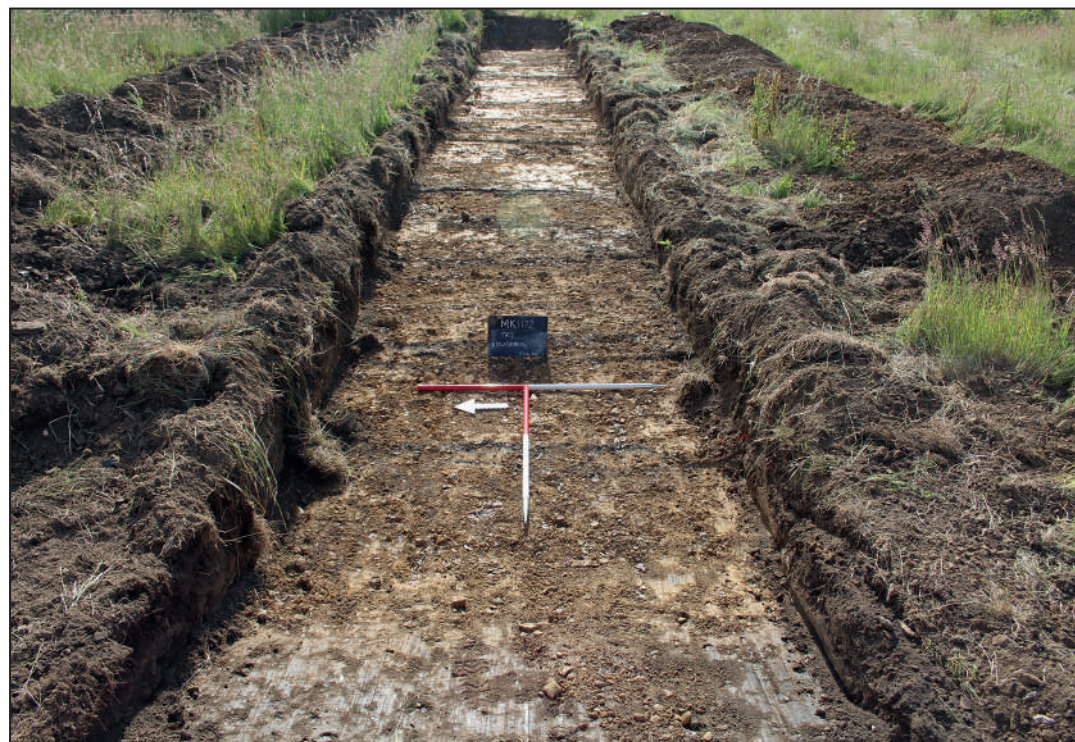
DRAWN BY CHECKED BY PM	HMM DJB AN	PROJECT NO. DATE SCALE@A3	MK1172 25/06/2025 NA	FIGURE NO. 3
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Trench 1, looking north-west (1m scales)



Trench 1, representative section showing made ground and natural, looking south-west (1m scale)



Trench 2, looking east (1m scales)



Trench 2, representative section showing made ground and natural, looking north (1m scale)



Trench 3, looking north-west (1m scales)



Trench 3, representative section showing made ground and natural, looking north-east (1m scale)



Trench 4, looking north-west (1m scales)



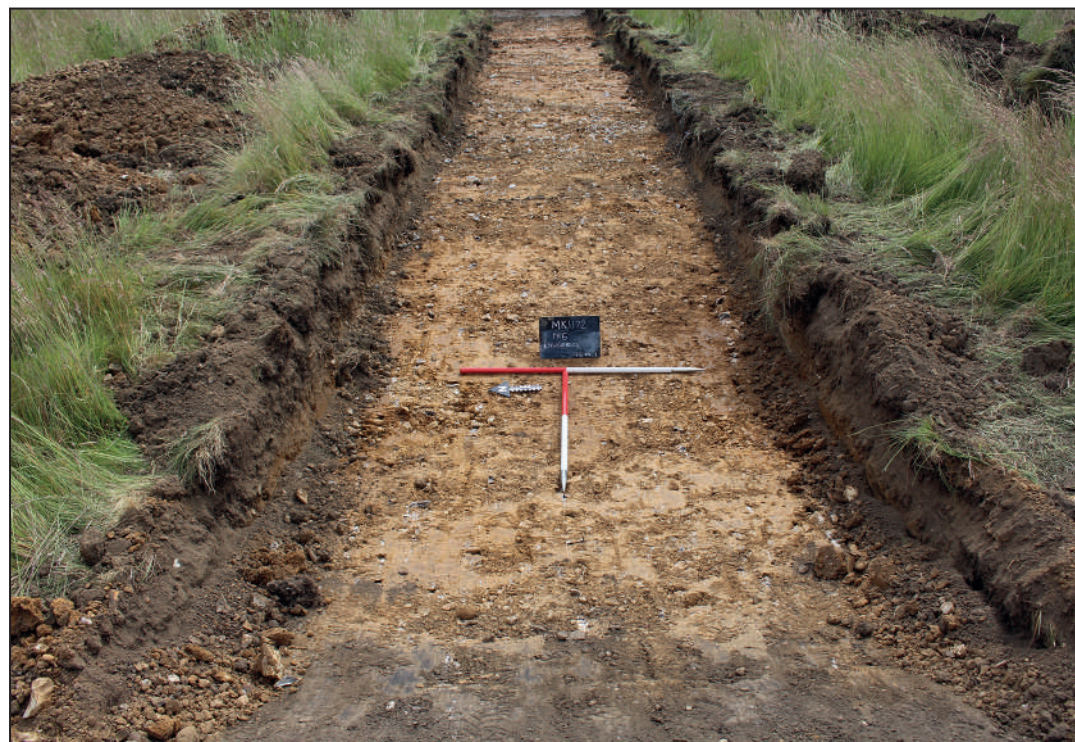
Trench 4, representative section showing made ground and natural, looking north-east (1m scale)



Trench 5, looking south-west (1m scales)



Trench 5, representative section showing made ground and natural, looking south-east (1m scale)



Trench 6, looking east (1m scales)



Trench 6, representative section showing made ground and natural, looking south (1m scale)

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