CgMs HERITAGE
PART OF RPS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Land at Arnolds Farm
Rableyheath
Hertfordshire

March 2018

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Arnolds Farm
Location:	Rableyheath, Hertfordshire
NGR:	TL 23714 18546
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	12 – 13 March 2018
Planning Reference:	North Hertfordshire District Council 16/02967/1
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with North Hertfordshire Museum
Site Code:	COD/RH/AF'17

In March 2018, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology on land at Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire. The evaluation was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition attached to the planning consent for the residential development of the site. The fieldwork comprised the excavation of five trenches and one test pit.

Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its location within a wider landscape utilised within the Prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods.

Despite this archaeological potential, no archaeological, features or deposits were observed during the evaluation and no finds pre-dating the modern period were encountered.

Evidence of modern landscaping and truncation was evidenced across the site by deposits of made ground, which directly overlay the natural substrate within each of the trenches. It is probable that this recorded ground disturbance occurred during the construction of 20th-century buildings and development associated with Welwyn Equestrian Centre.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In March 2018, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire (centred at NGR: TL 23714 18546; Fig. 1). The fieldwork was commissioned by CgMs Heritage.

1.2 Planning permission for the residential development at the site, comprising five 5-bedroom and eight 4-bedroom dwellings with associated garages, parking and amenity space following demolition of all current buildings and structures was granted by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC; the local planning authority, conditional on a programme of archaeological work (reference no. 16/02967/1).

1.3 The scope of the evaluation, which comprised the excavation of five trenches and one test pit, was defined during discussions between CgMs Heritage and Andy Instone, Senior Historic Environment Advisor for Hertfordshire County Council (SHEAHCC; the archaeological advisor to NHDC).

1.4 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a subsequent detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by CgMs Heritage (2018) and approved by Andy Instone. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014). It was monitored by Andy Instone, including a site visit on 13 March 2018 by Simon Wood on his behalf.

The site

1.5 The proposed development site is approximately 0.5ha in area, and comprises parts of an equestrian centre, including multiple buildings (stables, barns, and the former riding school) separated by areas of hard standing and green space. The site is bounded on all sides by agricultural land, utilised as a mixture of arable and pasture. The site lies at approximately 126m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) on relatively flat ground.

1.6 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation (undifferentiated) chalk of the Cretaceous Period, overlain by superficial Neogene and Quaternary deposits of clay, silt and sand (BGS 2018).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been presented in a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by CgMs Heritage (2018). The following section is summarised from this source. No archaeological remains are recorded within the site although Prehistoric, Roman and medieval sites are recorded in the wider landscape. Hertfordshire HER numbers are given in parenthesis.

Prehistoric (pre-AD 43)

2.2 A Palaeolithic axe head is recorded from a gravel quarry, north of Heath Road, *c*. 1.2km east of the site.

2.3 Cropmarks located through aerial photography are recorded on higher ground *c.* 1km east of the site near Woolmer Green. The cropmarks, which comprise linear ditches at TL 2500 1935 (MHT7676) and a field system at TL 2495 1901 (MHT7677), could be late prehistoric agricultural features but may equally represent early medieval activity.

2.4 Within the cropmarks two ring ditches, located at TL 2489 1901 (MHT7679) and TL 2499 1910 (MHT7678), are identified, both of which could comprise the remains of round barrows. The former has a diameter of *c.* 30m and the latter a diameter of *c.* 9m. The ring ditches occupy an elevated position within the landscape, characteristic of the location of Bronze Age barrows, which were sighted to be major landmarks within the prehistoric landscape.

2.5 The Portable Antiquities Scheme records a copper alloy blade from a Bronze Age sickle (BH-6CC3F5) which was found near to Welwyn approximately 1km to the south of the site.

Roman (AD 43-410)

2.6 Fragments of Roman pottery have been recovered from Rableyheath Farm *c*. 500m to the north-east of the site (364850; TL 237 187). The HER further records fragments of two small Roman amphora, discovered in 1908, almost 1km east of the site (MHT4163; TL 2490 1810).

2.7 The Portable Antiquities Scheme database records the findspot of a copper alloy brooch of Roman date discovered near Welwyn (BH-6D1860).

Medieval and post-medieval (1066-1800)

2.8 At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, the closest recorded settlement to the site was at Knebworth, located approximately 2km to the north (Open Domesday 2018).

2.9 Documentary sources indicate that potters were working in the vicinity of Rableyheath during the 13th century (VCH 1908).

2.10 A review of the historic Ordnance Survey mapping sequence indicates that by the late 19th century the majority of the site was occupied by arable land, with several agricultural buildings associated with Arnolds Farm located adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. The layout of the small number of agricultural buildings alters several times during the greater part of the 20th century, suggesting the farm experienced several phases of re-development during this period, although the arable land within the site remains unchanged. It is not until the late 20th century that the site is developed into its current form.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the evaluation, as detailed within the WSI (CgMs 2018), are to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality, in accordance *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014). This information will enable North Hertfordshire District Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The fieldwork comprised the excavation of five trenches and one test pit in the locations shown on the attached plan (Fig. 2). Trenches 1, 2 and 5 measured 10m long and 1.8m wide; Trench 3 measured 20m long and 1.8m wide and Trench 4 was 28m long and 1.8m wide. Test pit 7 measured 3m by 3m. With the approval of SHEAHCC the position of Trenches 2, 3, 4 and 5 and Test pits 7 and 8 were

adjusted from those shown in the WSI. The position of Trench 2 was adjusted in order to avoid a mature tree; Trenches 3 and 4 were moved to the south-west to maintain a safe working distance from existing structures; Trench 5 was relocated to the western side of the riding school building in order to avoid a number of mature trees in its original planned location. Test pits 7 and 8 were combined into a single larger test pit (Test Pit 7) due to the presence of mature trees and live services in their original locations. Trench 6 was not able to be excavated due to the presence of live services.

4.2 Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS, except for Trenches 3 and 4, which were set out manually using measuring tapes off-set from known points. Excavated trenches were surveyed in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 4: Survey Manual*, again with the exception of Trenches 3 and 4, whose positions were manually recorded.

4.3 All trenches were excavated by mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. No archaeological deposits or feature were encountered.

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* and no deposits were identified that required sampling and no artefacts were recovered.

4.5 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes and will be deposited with North Hertfordshire Museum. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 1-5)

5.1 This section provides an overview of the evaluation results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix A. No archaeological finds, features or deposits pre-dating the modern era were encountered within any of the trenches.

The former car park area (Trenches 1, 2, and 5)

5.2 Trenches 1, 2, and 5 were excavated within the area of a former car park at the northernmost end of the site (Figs 3 & 5). A similar stratigraphic sequence was recorded within all three trenches. The natural substrate (102, 202, and 502), consisting of firm mid reddish orange clay with some natural flints, was encountered at depths of between 0.33m and 0.4m below present ground level (bpgl). This was overlain by a layer of dark blue grey silty clay, which contained abundant brick fragments (101, 201, and 501). It measured between 0.28m and 0.35m thick and appeared to represent reworked natural formed as a result of modern construction activities. This was in turn sealed by tarmac (100, 200, and 500) approximately 0.05m thick, forming the current ground surface.

The former riding school building (Trenches 3 and 4 and test pit 7)

5.3 Trenches 3 and 4 (Fig. 4) were excavated within the footprint of the former riding school building. Identical stratigraphic sequences were recorded within both trenches. The natural substrate (302 and 402), consisting of mid reddish orange clay with natural flints, was encountered at a depth of between 0.2m and 0.45m bpgl. This was overlain by a degraded fabric covering (301 and 401), which in turn was overlaid by silica sand (300 and 400) ranging between 0.1m and 0.29m thick, representing the former floor surface of the riding school.

5.4 Test pit 7 was excavated outside the building, adjacent to its south-eastern wall (Fig. 5). The test pit was located within a discrete area of sloping ground, suggesting that the area had been landscaped during or following the construction of the riding school building. The natural geology (701) was encountered at a depth of 0.26m bpgl and consisted of mid reddish orange clay with some natural flints. This was overlain by a 0.26m thick layer of dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil 700.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its location within a wider landscape utilised within the Prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods (see archaeological background above (paragraphs 2.2 to 2.9). Evaluation was undertaken to determine if the archaeological remains associated with this activity extended into the proposed development area and to assess the level of truncation caused by previous development to the site.

6.2 Despite the archaeological potential of the site, no archaeological features or deposits were observed during this evaluation and no evidence for Prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity or archaeological remains associated with the possible Bronze Age ring ditches recorded to the east of the site, were identified.

6.3 Modern landscaping and truncation was identified across the site, evidenced by deposits of made ground, which directly overlay the natural substrate within each of the trenches. Layers 101, 201 and 501 appear to represent a former construction layer comprised of re-worked natural and indicate that the site has undergone extensive ground disturbance in these areas. Trenches 3 and 4 further indicate that this area was reduced to at least the top of the natural substrate either before or during construction of the present building on this location. It is probable that the recorded ground disturbance across the site occurred during the construction of the 20th-century buildings and associated development associated with Welwyn Equestrian Centre.

6.4 The absence of encountered archaeological deposits may indicate that archaeological remains associated with the Prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity recorded within the wider environs of the site did not extend into the site. Although it is likely that had any archaeological remains once have been present that these remains would have been removed by the truncation encountered across the site.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Anna Moosbauer, assisted by Abigail Breen and Anne Templeton. The report was written by Anna Moosbauer. The illustrations were prepared by Esther Escudero. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Michelle Collings.

8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2018 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology viewer_google/googleviewer.html Accessed 14 March 2018

CgMs (CgMs Heritage) 2018 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation: Arnolds Farm, Pottersheath, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire*

CIfA 2014 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Reading)

DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*

Open Domesday 2018 https://opendomesday.org Accessed 22/03/2018

VCH (Victoria County History) 1908 *Victoria County Histories A History of the County of Hertford Vol 2 1908*

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

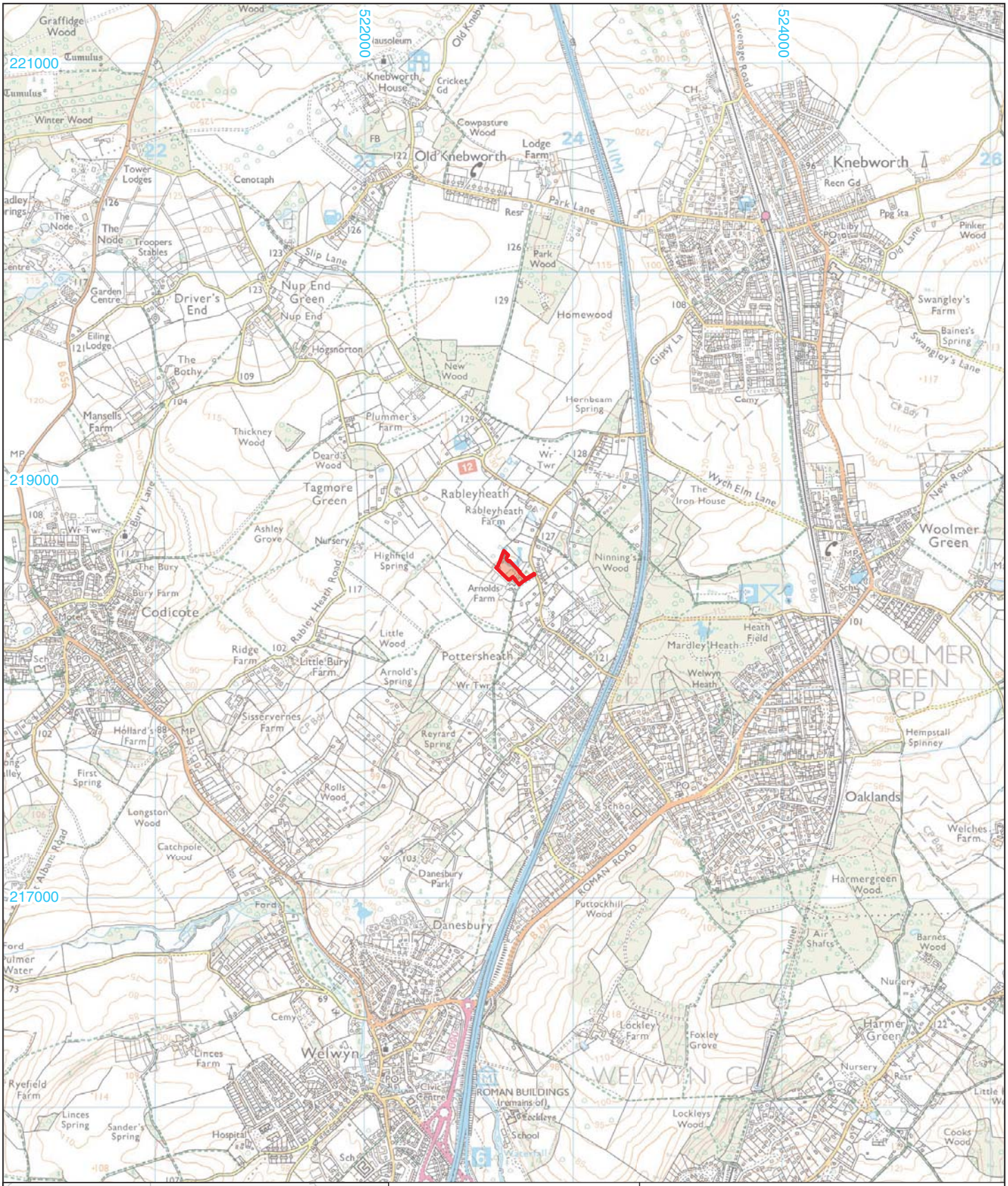
Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D (m)
1	100	Layer	Hardstanding	Degraded tarmac	>10	>1.8	0.05
1	101	Layer	Made ground	Brick rubble and stones in a dark grey silty clay matrix	>10	>1.8	0.28
1	102	Layer	Natural	Mid reddish orange, firm, clay, some small stones/flints	>10	>1.8	
2	200	Layer	Hardstanding	Degraded tarmac	>10	>1.8	0.05
2	201	Layer	Made ground	Brick rubble with dark grey silty clay, stones	>10	>1.8	0.31
2	202	Layer	Natural	Mid reddish orange, firm, clay, some small stones/flints	>10	>1.8	
3	300	Layer	Made ground	Mid greyish brown, soft, silica sand	>20	>1.8	0.29
3	301	Layer	Fabric cover	Fabric tarpaulin covering (degraded)	>20	>1.8	0.19
3	302	Layer	Natural	Mid reddish orange, firm, clay, some small stones/flints	>20	>1.8	
4	400	Layer	Made ground	Mid greyish brown, soft, silica sand	>27	>1.8	0.10
4	401	Layer	Fabric cover	Fabric tarpaulin covering (degraded)	>27	>1.8	0.10
4	402	Layer	Natural	Mid reddish orange, firm, clay, some small stones/flints	>27	>1.8	
5	500	Layer	Hardstanding	Degraded tarmac	>10	>1.8	0.05
5	501	Layer	Made ground	Brick rubble with dark grey silty clay, stones	>10	>1.8	0.40
5	502	Layer	Natural	Mid reddish orange, firm, clay, some small stones/flints	>10	>1.8	
7	700	Layer	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown, soft, silty clay	>3	>3	0.26
7	701	Layer	Natural	Mid reddish orange, firm, clay, some small stones/flints	>3	>3	

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire	
Short description	In March 2018, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology of land at Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire. The evaluation was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition attached to the planning consent for the residential development of the site. The fieldwork comprised the excavation of five trenches and one test pit. Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its location within a wider landscape utilised within the Prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods. Despite this archaeological potential, no archaeological, features or deposits were observed during the evaluation and no finds pre-dating the modern period were encountered. Evidence of modern landscaping and truncation was evidenced across the site by deposits of made ground, which directly overlay the natural substrate within each of the trenches. It is probable that this recorded ground disturbance occurred during the construction of 20th-century buildings and development associated with Welwyn Equestrian Centre.	
Project dates	12 – 13 March 2018	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire	
Study area (M^2/ha)	0.5ha	
Site co-ordinates	TL 23714 18546	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	None	
Project Design (WSI) originator	CgMs Heritage	
Project Manager	Michelle Collings	
Project Supervisor	Anna Moosbauer	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	n/a	n/a
Paper	North Hertfordshire Museum	Pro-forma recording sheets, registers, WSI
Digital	North Hertfordshire Museum	Digital photographs, digital survey data
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2018 *Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation.* CA typescript report **18153**		

APPENDIX C: HERTFORDSHIRE HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire
County: Hertfordshire	**District:** North Hertfordshire
Village/Town:	**Parish:** Rableyheath
Planning application reference:	16/02967/1
Client name:	CgMs Heritage
Nature of application:	Residential development, comprising five 5-bedroom and eight 4-bedroom dwellings with associated garages, parking and amenity space following demolition of all current buildings and structures.
Present land use:	Parts of an equestrian centre, including multiple buildings (stables, barns, and the former riding school).
Size of application area:	**Size of area investigated:** 0.5ha
NGR:	TL 23714 18546
Site Code:	COD/RH/AF'17
Site director/Organization:	Anna Moosbauer Coyne/Cotswold Archaeology
Type of work:	Archaeological evaluation
Date of work:	12 – 13 March 2018
Location of finds/Curating museum:	North Hertfordshire Museum
Related SMR Nos:	**Periods represented:** None
Relevant previous summaries/reports:	None
Summary of fieldwork results:	In March 2018, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology on land at Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath, Hertfordshire. The evaluation was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition attached to the planning consent for the residential development of the site. The fieldwork comprised the excavation of five trenches and one test pit. Archaeological interest in the site is derived from its location within a wider landscape utilised within the Prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods. Despite this archaeological potential, no archaeological, features or deposits were observed during the evaluation and no finds pre-dating the modern period were encountered. Evidence of modern landscaping and truncation was evidenced across the site by deposits of made ground, which directly overlay the natural substrate within each of the trenches. It is probable that this recorded ground disturbance occurred during the construction of 20th-century buildings and development associated with Welwyn Equestrian Centre.
Author of summary: Stuart Joyce	**Date of Summary:** 25 March 2018





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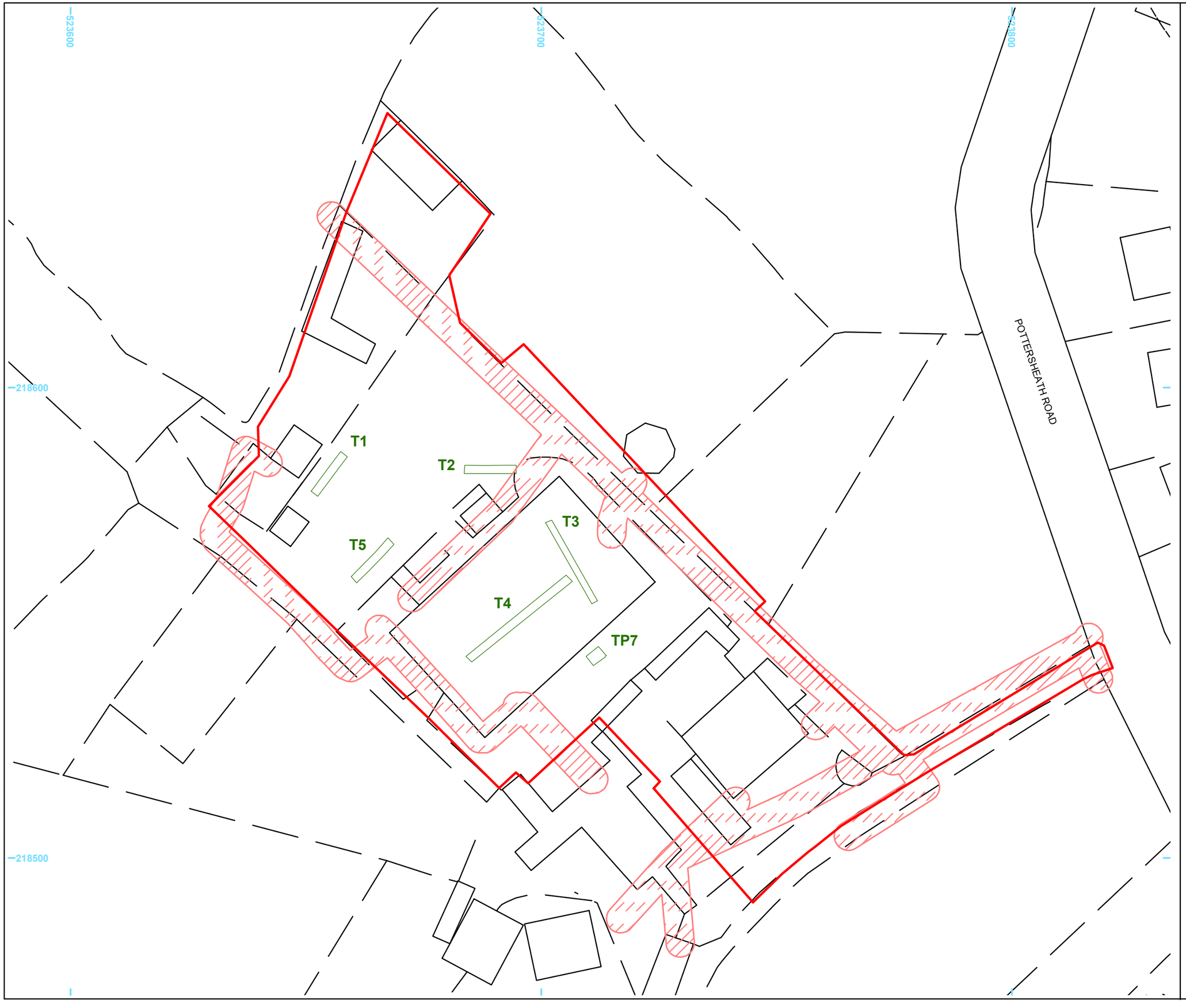
PROJECT TITLE

Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath
Hertfordshire

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

DRAWN BY	**EE**	*PROJECT NO.*	**661032**	*FIGURE NO.*
CHECKED BY	**DJB**	*DATE*	**20/03/2018**	**1**
APPROVED BY	**SJ**	*SCALE@A4*	**1:25,000**	



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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

Trench location plan

DRAWN BY	EE	PROJECT NO	661032	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	20/03/2018	2
APPROVED BY	SJ	SCALE@A3	1:750	

Document Path: P:\661032 Arnolds Farm, Rabley Heath, Herts, Eva\Illustration\Drafts\661032 _ arnolds farm, Rableyheah - figure 2.mxd



Trench 1, representative section, looking north-west (1m scale)



Trench 2, representative section, looking south-west (1m scale)



Trench 1, looking north-east (1m scales)



Trench 2, looking south-east (1m scales)

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PROJECT TITLE

Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath
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FIGURE TITLE

Trenches 1 and 2: photographs

DRAWN BY	**EE**	*PROJECT NO.*	**661032**	*FIGURE NO.*
CHECKED BY	**DJB**	*DATE*	**20/03/2018**	**3**
APPROVED BY	**SJ**	*SCALE@A3*	**NA**	



Trench 3, representative section, looking south-west (1m scale)



Trench 4, representative section, looking north-west (1m scale)



Trench 3, looking south-east (1m scales)



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

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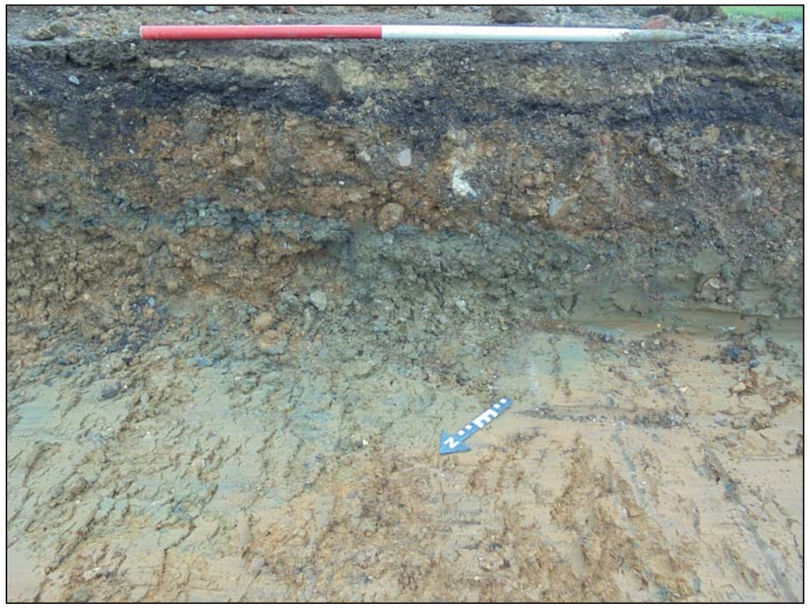
PROJECT TITLE

Arnolds Farm, Rableyheath
Hertfordshire

FIGURE TITLE

Trenches 3 and 4: photographs

DRAWN BY	**EE**	*PROJECT NO.*	**661032**	*FIGURE NO.*
CHECKED BY	**DJB**	*DATE*	**20/03/2018**	**4**
APPROVED BY	**SJ**	*SCALE@A3*	**NA**	



Trench 5, representative section, looking south-east (1m scale)



Test pit 7, representative section, looking west (1m scale)



Trench 5, looking north-east (1m scales)



Test pit 7, looking south (1m scales)

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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

Trench 5 and Test pit 7: photographs

DRAWN BY	**EE**	*PROJECT NO.*	**661032**	*FIGURE NO.*
CHECKED BY	**DJB**	*DATE*	**20/03/2018**	**5**
APPROVED BY	**SJ**	*SCALE@A3*	**NA**	

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