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An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

of Wheldrake Hall, Wheldrake, York

NGR SE 6840 4495

prepared by

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on behalf of

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Project Design for archaeological excavation at Wheldrake Hall, Church Lane, Wheldrake, York

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Bryant Homes have received planning permission to construct a residential development at Wheldrake Hall, Church Lane, Wheldrake, York. The planning permission includes a condition for archaeological excavation prior to development commencing.

1.2 Archaeological Background

1.2.1 The site has been subject to archaeological desk-top study, geophysical survey and trial trenching. It is located between the medieval parish church and the site of Wheldrake Manor. The village has been the subject of significant research, indicating that it developed as a planned village in the 12th century gradually increasing in size from then until the later 14th century. Shrinkage of the village in the 14th century was the result of population decline and movement, variously attributed to climatic deterioration and plague.

1.2.2 The geophysical survey identified a number of anomalies across the site. The majority of these were subsequently shown to be late 13th – 14th century settlement remains. A cottage is known to have stood in the north-western corner of the site and at least one other is also thought to have been located along the Church Lane frontage (pers. Comm. Mrs Grattan, Wheldrake Hall Farm). There was no definite evidence for earlier activity and no vertical or complex stratigraphy. The ceramic finds were particularly well preserved and further finds of this nature have a high potential for useful detailed analysis. Modern activity in the form of a large ditch or pond was identified along the street frontage towards the western part of the site.

1.3 The archaeological excavation proposed will comprise mechanical removal of topsoil over two areas totalling 2050m² followed by hand excavation of features identified. The specific methodology for this is described below and is based on current best practice and national guidelines including: *Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1995, revised 1999); and *Management of Archaeological Projects* [MAP2] (English Heritage 1991).

2.0 Aims and Objectives

2.1 The excavation aims to preserve by record all archaeological features within the specified area in advance of development of the site. In addition to this aim, the specific research objectives are as follows:

- to identify and record medieval property boundaries and layouts within the study area and to relate these, if possible to the planned settlement;
- to establish dates of foundation and of abandonment of settlement within this area and to relate this to the medieval development of the village;

- to assist in the construction of a medieval pottery type series for the York area;
- to establish the nature of the economy and diet (through environmental sampling and artefact collection) of the inhabitants of this settlement.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Excavation

- 3.1.1 A 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket will remove topsoil and modern overburden. This will be undertaken under continual archaeological supervision and excavation will cease at the uppermost archaeological deposit or undisturbed natural deposits.
- 3.1.2 Features will be sampled by hand excavation. The extent of sampling will be determined by the nature of individual features. It is expected that this will be as follows: linear features (ditches, gullies) – 25%; discrete features (pits, postholes) – 50%; structural deposits (occupation spreads, floors) – up to 100%. However, these percentages may be increased or decreased in consultation with the Principal Archaeologist, City of York Council. In the event of large numbers of similar features being identified, eg where large numbers of postholes or groups of similar sized/shaped pits are identified, a percentage of their total number not exceeding 50% will be identified for excavation. Areas of modern disturbance will be given low priority in excavation. If appropriate, mechanical excavation may be recommended. All specific alterations to this methodology will be discussed and agreed with the Principal Archaeologist, City of York Council.
- 3.1.3 Excavation and recording will be based on individual contexts, each being separately identified by a unique code. All finds will be bagged and labelled according to the context from which they were recovered.
- 3.1.4 Recording will be in written, drawn and photographic format, utilising pro-forma sheets for individual contexts, and relevant registers. Features will be recorded in plan and section at relevant scales (normally 1:10 or 1:20 for sections and 1:20, 1:50 and/or 1:100 for plans), including an overall site plan showing the location of features across the excavated area. The photographic record should use colour print, black & white print and colour transparencies as appropriate. Both individual features and groups of features where their relationships are important should be recorded photographically.
- 3.1.5 Stratified artefacts and ecofacts will be collected by hand and treated in accordance with the guidelines contained within *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson & Neale 1999, 3rd edition). Any finds requiring specialist treatment will be left in situ until appropriate specialist advice has been sought.
- 3.1.6 A programme of environmental sampling will be carried out as specified in Appendix 1. A copy has been forwarded to the English Heritage Regional Science Advisor for comment.

3.2 *Post-excavation and Reporting*

- 3.2.1 A post-excavation assessment report will be prepared to MAP2 Phase 3 standard within 2 months of the completion of fieldwork. Four copies of the report plus a digital (MS Word97) copy on 1.4Mb HDD floppy disk, will be submitted to York City Council. This report and consultation with the Principal Archaeologist will determine the level of further analysis and reporting necessary.
- 3.2.2 All records and finds will be checked and cross-referenced. Finds processing, specialist analysis, and conservation of artefacts / ecofacts will be undertaken by either the Yorkshire Archaeological Trust or other appropriately experienced and professionally competent specialists.
- 3.2.3 Yorkshire Museum has been contacted with regard to treatment of finds and archiving procedures. Their requirements will be adhered to throughout, including appropriate use of accession and numbering systems. It is expected that the material and paper archive will be deposited with Yorkshire Museum, however, Bryant Homes reserve the right to retain any individual items that are recovered.
- 3.2.4 One or more articles will be prepared for submission to local, regional and/or national journals as appropriate. The level of publication will be discussed with the Principal Archaeologist following submission of the assessment report.

4.0 Timetable and Personnel

- 4.1 Fieldwork is expected to take 10 working days. The post-excavation assessment report will be submitted within 8 weeks of the completion of fieldwork. A final report will be prepared no more than 12 months from the submission of the assessment report.
- 4.2 Up to eight qualified / experienced archaeologists, including an experienced supervisor, will undertake the work. Nansi Rosenberg BA, MA, PIFA will direct the project for EC Harris. CVs will be provided on request.
- 4.3 Appropriate specialists will be commissioned as they become needed. Appointment of specialists is subject to the approval of the Principal Archaeologist, City of York Council. At this stage, it is expected that the following specialists will be needed:

Jane Young and/or Alan Vince – medieval and post-medieval ceramics;

James Rackham – environmental sampling and animal bone.

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Summary

Bryant Homes commissioned John Samuels Archaeological Consultants to undertake a desk-based archaeological assessment of Wheldrake Hall, Wheldrake, York, to identify any archaeological remains in advance of the development of the site.

The study area is situated to the south of Church Lane in the village of Wheldrake, York, centred on NGR SE 6840 4495. The area proposed for development covers approximately 1.7ha of land currently short grass and standing buildings. The proposed development area is roughly level and bounded mainly by brick walls and hedges.

Desk-top research undertaken by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants was based on an area of 500m around the proposed development site. It comprised analysis of relevant information contained in and provided by City of York County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR); documentary and cartographic searches of relevant material in published and unpublished sources were also undertaken. Information about Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Battlefields and Registered Parks & Gardens was obtained from English Heritage.

It is concluded that the site has clear potential for the remains of a medieval grange and post-medieval manor house to survive within its limits. Lesser potential exists for remains of Neolithic occupation on the basis of the discovery of a flint axe within the site. Geophysical survey of the site has produced anomalies that may relate to medieval and post-medieval occupation. However, there has been significant disturbance from modern farming activities, most notably the laying of pipes and it is possible that the anomalies are a result of this disturbance.

Trial trenching is recommended. This will establish the nature, date and level of preservation of these features and allow an informed decision to be made on the planning application. Trial trenching should be targeted at those anomalies identified but also investigate apparently 'blank' areas to establish the validity of the geophysical survey.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Bryant Homes commissioned *John Samuels Archaeological Consultants* to undertake a desk-based archaeological assessment of Wheldrake Hall, Wheldrake, York, to identify any archaeological remains in advance of the development of the site.
- 1.2 The study area is situated to the south of Church Lane in the village of Wheldrake, York, centred on NGR SE 6840 4495. The area proposed for development covers approximately 1.7ha of land currently short grass and standing buildings. The proposed development area is roughly level and bounded mainly by brick walls and hedges.
- 1.3 This assessment was written by Nansi Rosenberg in consultation with John Samuels BA, PhD, FSA, MIFA.

2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 This assessment conforms to: Government Guidance to Local Planning Authorities: *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16), DoE 1990; *The Hedgerow Regulations 1997*, DoE 1997; advice from English Heritage: *Management of Archaeological Projects*, English Heritage 1991; and is based on the requirements of the professional standards: *Code of Conduct*, Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994; *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994.
- 2.2 Desk-top research undertaken by *John Samuels Archaeological Consultants* was based on an area of 500m around the proposed development site. It comprised analysis of relevant information contained in and provided by City of York County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR); documentary and cartographic searches of relevant material in published and unpublished sources were also undertaken. Information about Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Registered Battlefields and Registered Parks & Gardens was obtained from English Heritage.
- 2.3 A site visit and walkover survey was undertaken to examine the topography and current land use of the site, and to identify any previously unrecorded above ground archaeology.
- 2.4 Following the assessment, conclusions were drawn and an indication provided of the archaeological potential of the proposed land for development and the importance of any sites directly affected or where their setting may be a consideration. Where appropriate, recommendations have been made.
- 2.5 At the time of writing there is no nationally agreed method of measuring the relative importance of archaeological monuments. PPG16 (paragraph 8) draws a distinction between nationally important remains and those of lesser distinction. On this basis it is possible to distinguish between monuments of national, regional local or negligible

importance.

- National** Monuments that are scheduled and protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), those suitable for scheduling, or considered to be of national importance but not covered by the Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling.
- Regional** Sites listed in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) or other sources which are of a reasonably well defined extent, nature and date and significant examples in the regional context.
- Local** Sites listed in the SMR or other sources which are of very low potential or minor importance.
- Negligible** Areas in which investigative techniques have produced negative or minimal evidence of antiquity, or where large scale destruction of deposits has taken place (eg by mineral extraction).

2.6 The potential of a site to contain archaeological remains is based upon a consideration of its topography and the distribution and nature of recorded archaeological finds in the locality. It is measured on the basis of High, Medium, Low and Negligible.

2.7 The setting of a monument is generally considered what can be seen or heard to and from the monument. Its impact can be assessed on the basis of Major, Medium, Minor or Insignificant.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Assessment

NB Numbers in bold within brackets refer to the Sites and Monuments Record entries

- 3.1 The proposed development site comprises the farm buildings of Wheldrake Hall, short grass paddocks and is crossed by unmade tracks. Although historically within the East Riding of Yorkshire, Wheldrake now falls within the limits of the City of York authority. The site is located on the southern side of Church Lane, immediately south-east of the parish church, within the village of Wheldrake. It lies at approximately 13m above Ordnance Datum and slopes very slightly to the east, towards the River Derwent some 900m away. Local soils are of the Bishampton 1 association, being deep fine and loamy, derived from the underlying till and glaciofluvial drift geology (572s, SSEW 1983).
- 3.2 The earliest evidence for human activity within the village is the discovery on two separate occasions of flint axes. One of these was found at the western end of the village (5657.00.003), whilst the other was found from the proposed development site (5657.00.002). As isolated finds they cannot be taken as evidence of early prehistoric settlement within the area, although they do indicate activity on some level.
- 3.3 Cropmarks have been identified in the surrounding fields which may indicate the use of this area for burial in the Bronze Age. A group of six circular marks roughly 11m in diameter (5659) are an example of this, although they may have a natural origin. These are located c. 2.6 kilometres west of the proposed development area. An isolated example, 900m to the south-west of the proposed development site, measures approximately 15m in diameter (5660). Neither of these areas will be affected by the proposed development.
- 3.3 No evidence for later prehistoric or Roman use of the local landscape is recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record. This may reflect the wooded nature of this part of Britain prior to the medieval period, when large tracts of forest were cleared.

- 3.4 The first documentary reference to Wheldrake is in the Domesday Book of 1086, where it is listed as *Coldrid*. Variants of the name include *Coldric*, *Queldrich*, *Qweldrike*, *Coudric* and *Codriz* through the 12th and 13th centuries, eventually becoming *Weldrik* in the 13th century and *Wheldrake* in 1535. The origin and meaning of the name is not certain; it either means 'strip of land/road/stream where a death took place' or 'strip of land (etc) near a spring or well' (Smith 1937: 269-70), which may refer to the wells or springs which occur at the site (Allison (ed) 1976: 120). The village lies on an east-west ridge and it is probably this to which the *-ric*, 'strip of land', element refers.
- 3.5 The Domesday Book records a small population of only 6 persons, although there was also a church and three fisheries. Mention is made of the value of the manor prior to the Norman conquest, indicating its earlier origin (Page (ed) 1912: 262-263).
- 3.6 Studies of the parish carried out in the 1960s by J Sheppard (cited in Allison 1976: 124) have indicated that by 1140 an area of arable land around the village was bounded by a turf bank and that the village was a planned settlement. Sheppard identifies an area of 350 acres of arable land enclosed by the bank, which would have supported 15-20 households and her reconstruction of the planned settlement comprises 16 plots arranged on either side of the main street. It is further suggested that this planned settlement dates to the Anglo-Scandinavian period or immediately following the Norman invasion. The former date is more likely based on the evidence of the Domesday Book (Hey 1986).
- 3.7 A castle is recorded in the parish, ordered to be demolished by King Stephen in 1149. The location of this castle is not clear although it is probably to the south-east of the village, overlooking the River Derwent. A licence to castellate was also granted to Richard Malebisse in 1200, however this was immediately withdrawn following complaints from the citizens of York (Cathcart-King 1983; 5666). Richard Malebisse subsequently granted all of his property at Wheldrake to Fountains Abbey at his death in 1210 (Allison (ed) 1976: 122).

- 3.8 The parish gradually increased in size and by 1316 there were 69 households, rising to 84 by 1348. The rise in population may have been related to the foundation of a grange by Fountains Abbey. This led to an increase in arable cultivation beyond the limits of the turf bank, at the expense of the woodland. The location of the grange is unknown and it is suggested to have been at the site of the manor house (Allison 1976: 121; **5656**). Given that the land owned by Fountains Abbey was a grant from Richard Malebisse, this perhaps suggests that this was also the location at which Malebisse had applied for licence to castellate.
- 3.9 The plague resulted in a rapid decline in the population in the later 14th century. By 1394, the number of households had dropped to 56 (Hey 1986). A hamlet adjacent to the River Derwent known as Waterhouses began to be abandoned at this time. At least one house survived into the 16th century (**5665**). It is possible that this abandoned settlement also marks the site of one or more of the fisheries recorded in the Domesday Book although it only appears in documentary records from the 13th century (Allison (ed)1976).
- 3.9 Although a church is recorded in the Domesday Book, the present Church of St Helens retains a medieval tower, containing a 14th century window. The body of the church, which was largely restored in the late 18th century, is of brick (Pevsner1972: 369; **5657.03**).
- 3.10 Following the dissolution, the grange was abandoned and a manor house built on the site. Little is known of this manor and the buildings were replaced by the present farm in c.1820.

4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1 The site has clear potential for the remains of the medieval grange and the post-medieval manor house to survive within its limits. Lesser potential exists for remains of Neolithic occupation on the basis of the discovery of a flint axe within the site. Geophysical survey of the site has produced anomalies that may relate to medieval and post-medieval occupation. However, there has been significant disturbance from modern farming activities, most notably the laying of pipes and it is possible that the anomalies are a result of this disturbance.
- 4.2 Trial trenching is recommended. This will establish the nature, date and level of preservation of these features and allow an informed decision to be made on the planning application. Trial trenching should be targeted at those anomalies identified but also investigate apparently 'blank' areas to establish the validity of the geophysical survey.

5.0 Figures

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Known archaeological sites in the vicinity

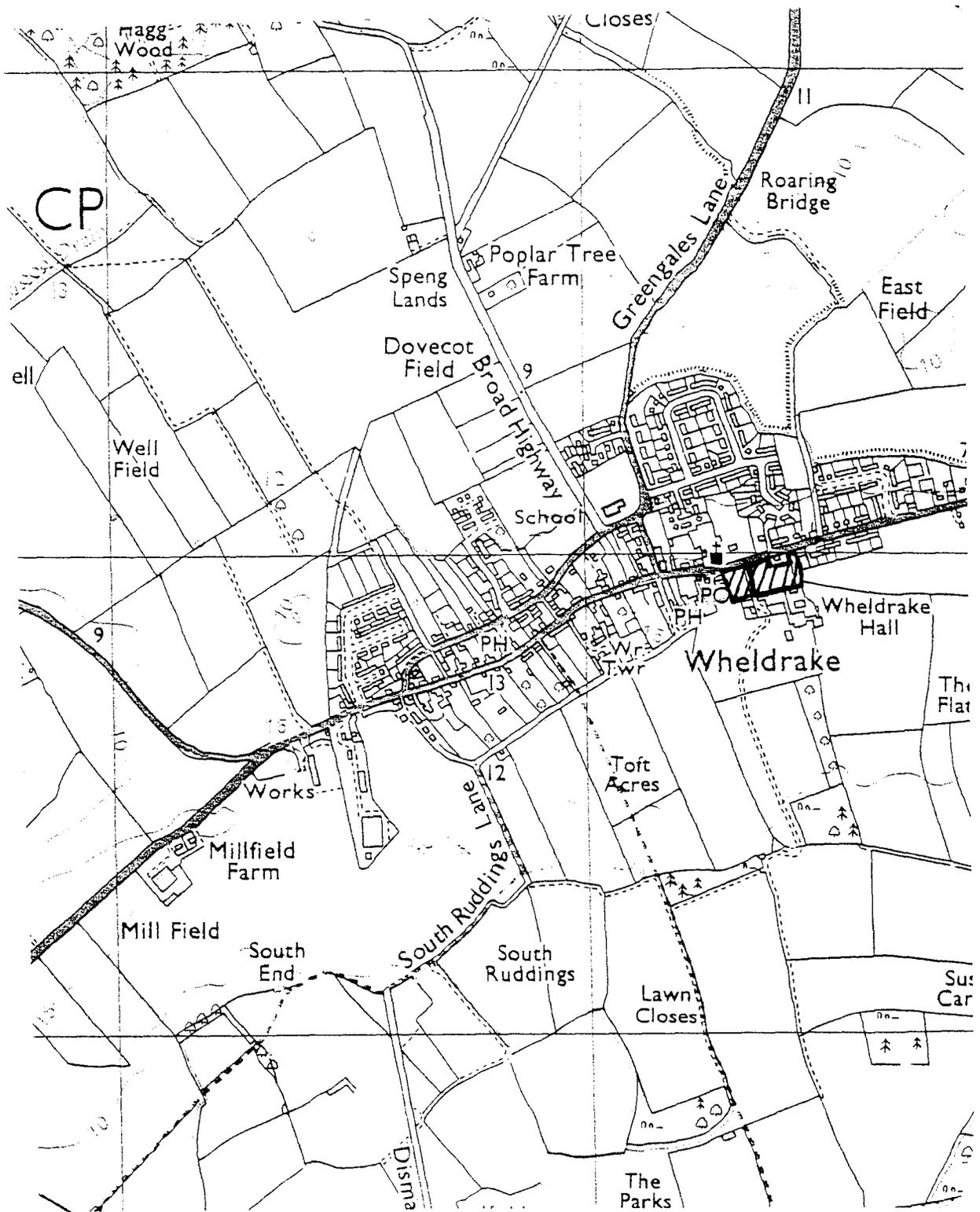


Figure 1: Site Location

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