

April 2014

Land west of Chesterton

Archaeological Assessment

Prepared by
CSa Environmental Planning

On behalf of
Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Report No: CSa/2325/03

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents an assessment of the archaeological potential of land (the Site) required for a proposed residential development to the west of Chesterton in Oxfordshire.

Conservation Area & Listed Buildings

The top of the tower of the grade II* listed Church of St. Mary, approximately 250m to the east, is visible from the western part of the Site through an existing tree/hedge line. However, views from the Chesterton Conservation Area and other listed buildings into the Site are otherwise screened by built development and, in the case of the western tip of the conservation area designation along the A4095, by hedgerows. It is therefore highly unlikely that low-rise residential development within the Site will result in any change to the significance of the conservation area or any listed buildings.

Archaeological Background

The Site lies approximately 100m to the north of a Roman road known as Akeman Street, now followed by Green Lane, which led to the Roman town of Alchester approximately 1.2km to the south-east. The Site therefore lay within the hinterland of this Roman town. However, an archaeological evaluation carried out in 2009 approximately 100m to the south on the southern frontage of Akeman Street did not identify any significant archaeology.

The Site was probably part of an open field system known as Hale Field throughout the medieval period and continued to be so prior to field enclosure in 1768. The Site was part of a single field on Ordnance Survey maps of 1875 and 1899 but by 1922 the north-eastern field was part of a larger allotment garden, becoming grassland by 1989.

Archaeological Potential

No significant archaeology was identified in the 2009 archaeological evaluation approximately 100m to the south. However, given the proximity of Akeman Street and the location of the Site within the hinterland of the Roman town of Alchester, the possibility of associated Roman remains being present within the Site cannot be discounted. The Site was almost certainly under arable cultivation as part of an open field system throughout the medieval period, and remained so until enclosure in 1768. The north-eastern field has also been part of a wider system of allotments and the south-western field is currently under arable cultivation. The centuries of arable activity and also the allotment digging may have had an adverse effect on any surviving archaeological remains although deeper features cut into the underlying natural deposits could still survive. The nature of linear marks observed on aerial photographs in the south-western field is unknown.

Because of the potential for the Site to contain buried archaeology of Roman date it is recommended that a geophysical survey be carried out. Depending on the results of this survey a programme of trial trenching may also be required. The results of this archaeological work will allow an informed decision to be made as to whether buried archaeology is present and if archaeological mitigation works will be required.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an assessment of the potential archaeological resource on 2.79ha of land west of Chesterton (the Site) centred on NGR SP 5580 2139 (Figure 1). The aim of the assessment is to inform on the archaeological implications of a proposed residential development.
- 1.2 The Site is bounded to the north-west by a road, connecting Green Lane to the south with the A4095 to the north, with a golf course beyond, to the north-east by allotments, to the south-east by a residential development and to the south-west by a field. The Site itself consists of two fields. The north-eastern field (F1) is under pasture with a range of outbuildings on the western road frontage. The larger field to the south-west (F2) is under arable cultivation. The fields are separated by a post and rail fence and hedgerows are located on the north-western, south-western and south-eastern Site boundaries.
- 1.3 The Site is located on ground which slopes very gently from around 78m AOD on the road frontage to around 75m AOD on the south-eastern Site boundary. The Gagle Brook lies approximately 400m to the north and east. The underlying bedrock consists of the Cornbrash Limestone Formation (<http://maps.bgs.ac.uk>).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This report has been produced in accordance with guidelines in the *Standard and Guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (2012).

2.2 The report involved consultation of publicly available archaeological and historical information from documentary, cartographic and aerial photographic sources. The major repositories of information comprised:

- the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) for records of known relevant archaeological sites and artefact findspots within the vicinity of the Site;
- the National Heritage List for England for designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the Site;
- historic maps and documents held by the Oxfordshire History Centre;
- historic aerial photographs held by the National Monuments Record (NMR); and
- records made during a Site visit on 28th March 2014.

2.3 Section 3 of this report summarises relevant planning guidance. Section 4 summarises recorded heritage assets close to the Site and these are marked on Figure 1 and listed in Appendix A. Section 5 summarises the results of map/aerial photographic regression and a Site visit. Extracts from historic maps are shown in Figures 2-4, an aerial photograph in Figure 5 and Site photographs in Figures 6-7. Section 6 presents the conclusions of this report.

3.0 PLANNING GUIDANCE

- 3.1 The most relevant planning guidance concerning archaeology and other heritage assets is to be found in paragraphs 126-141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). These advise on planning procedures covering designated heritage assets (e.g. world heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks & gardens and registered battlefields) and also non-designated heritage assets which are of heritage interest and therefore a material planning consideration.
- 3.2 Paragraph 128 addresses planning applications, stating that *“local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation”*.
- 3.3 Designated heritage assets are addressed in Paragraph 132 which states that *“when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional”*.

4.0 RECORDED HERITAGE ASSETS

Conservation Area and listed buildings

- 4.1 The Site is located approximately 120m to the south and east of the Chesterton Conservation Area (see Figure 1), a designation which contains the grade II* listed Church of St. Mary and the grade II* listed Manor House Farm, both of which have late 12th century origins, together with six grade II listed buildings.
- 4.2 The top of the tower of the Church of St. Mary, approximately 250m to the east, is visible from the western part of the Site through an existing tree/hedge line (Figure 6, plate 1 and Figure 7, plate 3). However views from the Chesterton Conservation Area and other listed buildings into the Site are otherwise screened by built development and, in the case of the western tip of the conservation area designation along the A4095, by hedgerows.

Other recorded heritage assets

- 4.3 No entries are recorded within the Site on the Oxfordshire HER although several are recorded in close vicinity. However, it should be emphasised that the HER is constantly being updated and, as it can only include sites and artefact findspots which are known about, cannot be interpreted as a definitive list of all surviving archaeological remains. The recorded entries are as follows:

Prehistoric (500,000 BC – AD 43) and Roman (AD 43 – 410)

- 4.4 Recorded entries of prehistoric and Roman date on the HER are as follows (see Figure 1):
- two contiguous circles identified on aerial photographs approximately 900m to the north-east may represent Bronze Age barrows (1). A further possible barrow has been identified on an aerial photograph approximately 1.2km to the south-west (HER 13906);
 - the line of Akeman Street approximately 100m to the south (2). Now followed by Green Lane this was a major Roman road which linked Watling Street at St Albans with the Fosse Way at Cirencester. The Roman town of Alchester, which is designated as a scheduled monument, was located on this road approximately 1.2km to the south-east; and
 - a findspot of around 25 Roman coins approximately 675m to the south (3).

Early Medieval (AD 410-1066), Medieval (AD 1066-1500) and Post-Medieval (AD 1500-1900)

- 4.5 The placename of Chesterton may imply that the site was named in the early medieval period after the nearby Roman settlement of Alchester. Chesterton

is also mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and the medieval village may have been grouped around a green with the nucleus being the church and manor house, now Manor Farm (VCH 1959). The following entries of medieval and post medieval date are recorded on the HER (see Figure 1):

- the earthwork remains of a 13th century building approximately 225m to the east (no. 4);
- ditches and a pit dating from the 12th to the 13th centuries identified in an archaeological investigation approximately 275m to the east (5);
- a rubbish pit and ditch, both of early medieval or medieval date found in an archaeological investigation approximately 300m to the east (no. 6);
- a deserted medieval village at Bignell approximately 500m to the north (7); and
- the site of the post medieval Manor Farm Mill approximately 450m to the east (8).

Previous archaeological investigations

- 4.6 No archaeological investigations have been carried out within or immediately adjacent to the Site. However, an archaeological evaluation in 2009, consisting of 27 trial trenches covering an area of around 3.25ha on the southern frontage of Akeman Street approximately 100m to the south, did not identify any significant archaeology (see Figure 1; TVAS 2009).
- 4.7 A geophysical survey was also carried out approximately 900m to the north-east of the Site in 2012. Potential ditches thought to represent a field system identified on aerial photographs were identified along with traces of a former windmill and less distinct anomalies which could reflect earlier mills, or possibly much earlier remains such as barrows. Traces of a penannular enclosure were also observed, as well as ridge and furrow (see Figure 1; PCA 2012).

5.0 HISTORIC MAPPING, AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY & SITE VISIT

1764-8 Estate map

- 5.1 The earliest detailed map of the Site consulted was an estate map dated to between 1764-8 (Figure 2). This shows the Site under a series of field strips which were part of a medieval open field system known as The Hale to the west of Chesterton (then known as Great Chesterton). The road on the western frontage of the Site was called Windmill Way and then led north towards a windmill. Green Lane to the south was known as Coach Lane and an area of mortar pits is marked just to the south. This open field system was enclosed in 1768 (VCH 1959).

1875, 1899 and 1922 Ordnance Survey maps

- 5.2 By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1875 the Site was part of a single field with the former mortar pits to the south described as an old quarry (Figure 3). The same situation is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1899 (not illustrated). By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1922 field 1 (F1) was under allotment gardens (Figure 4).

1947 aerial photograph

- 5.3 An aerial photograph taken in 1943 again shows field 1 (F1) as part of a larger allotment. Field 2 (F2) is shown under grassland apart from a strip of allotments along the south-eastern Site boundary. The same situation is shown on aerial photographs taken in 1947 (Figure 5) and 1954. By the time of a photograph taken in 1961 the allotment strip on the south-eastern Site boundary had been abandoned and given over to grassland. By the time of another photograph taken in 1989 field 1 (F1) was also under grassland.

1975 aerial photograph

- 5.4 A linear mark can be seen in field 2 (F2) running parallel with the road to the west on an aerial photograph taken in 1975 (see Figure 1 for approximate location). The same mark is present on another photograph taken in 1994 and also on modern Google mapping, along with a shorter NE-SW aligned linear mark just to the south-east.

Site Visit

- 5.5 Field 1 (F1) was under pasture at the time of the Site visit and field 2 (F2) was under arable. A range of outbuildings are also located on the road frontage of field 1 and a corrugated shed also lies on the northern boundary. General Site photographs are shown in Figures 6 and 7. No earthworks or features which

could be of archaeological origin were observed, although a very slight topographic rise towards the north-western end of field 1 was observed.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Conservation Area & Listed Buildings

- 6.1 The top of the tower of the grade II* listed Church of St. Mary, approximately 250m to the east, is visible from the western part of the Site through an existing tree/hedge line. However, views from the Chesterton Conservation Area and other listed buildings into the Site are otherwise screened by built development and, in the case of the western tip of the conservation area designation along the A4095, by hedgerows. It is therefore highly unlikely that low-rise residential development within the Site will result in any change to the significance of the conservation area or any listed buildings.

Archaeological Background

- 6.2 The Site lies approximately 100m to the north of a Roman road known as Akeman Street, now followed by Green Lane, which led to the Roman town of Alchester approximately 1.2km to the south-east. The Site therefore lay within the hinterland of this Roman town. However, an archaeological evaluation carried out in 2009 approximately 100m to the south on the southern frontage of Akeman Street did not identify any significant archaeology.
- 6.3 The Site was probably part of an open field system known as Hale Field throughout the medieval period and continued to be so prior to field enclosure in 1768. The Site was part of a single field on Ordnance Survey maps of 1875 and 1899 but by 1922 the northern field was part of a larger allotment garden, becoming grassland by 1989.

Archaeological Potential

- 6.4 No significant archaeology was identified in the 2009 archaeological evaluation approximately 100m to the south. However, given the proximity of Akeman Street and the location of the Site within the hinterland of the Roman town of Alchester, the possibility of associated Roman remains being present within the Site cannot be discounted. The Site was almost certainly under arable cultivation as part of an open field system throughout the medieval period, and remained so until enclosure in 1768. Field 1 has also been part of a wider system of allotments and field 2 is currently under arable cultivation. The centuries of arable activity and also the allotment digging may have had an adverse effect on any surviving archaeological remains although deeper features cut into the underlying natural deposits could still survive.
- 6.5 Because of the potential for the Site to contain buried archaeology of Roman date it is recommended that a geophysical survey be carried out. Depending on the results of this survey a programme of trial trenching may also be required. The results of this archaeological work will allow an informed decision

to be made as to whether buried archaeology is present and if archaeological mitigation works will be required.

7.0 REFERENCES

- HER Historic Environment Record reference no.
- PCA 2012 *Whitelands Farm, Bicester, Oxfordshire. Report on Geophysical Survey.* Pre-Construct Archaeology.
- TVAS 2009 *Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire. An Archaeological Evaluation.* Thames Valley Archaeological Services.
- VCH 1959 *Chesterton* in A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 6, p 92-103. Victoria County History. www.british-history.ac.uk

Appendix A

Recorded relevant heritage assets (from the Oxfordshire HER)

Appendix A: The Known Relevant Heritage Resource within 1km (supplied by the Oxfordshire HER)

Figure 1	HER no.	Date	Description
1	13588 - MOX5629	Bronze Age	Two contiguous circles identified on aerial photographs, the north-westerly of which appears to have a raised central area. There may be two others in the area represented by roughly circular dark areas. Some may be natural features (possibly anomalies in the underlying limestone). In the same area are a series of rectangular enclosures and linear features.
2	8921 - MOX1703	Roman	Akeman Street, part of the Roman road from Alchester to Cirencester.
3	16452 - MOX11297	Roman	Findspot of around twenty-five late Roman coins.
4	D1591 - MOX5587	Medieval	Earthwork remains of a 13 th century building. The associated pottery suggests that occupation stopped in the 14 th century.
5	D4986 - MOX5568	Medieval	Ditches and a pit dating from the 12 th to the 13 th centuries identified in an archaeological investigation.
6	26417 - MOX23847	Early medieval	A rubbish pit and ditch, both of early medieval or medieval date found in an archaeological investigation. These features appear contemporary with medieval remains found 40m north-east of St Mary's Church to the west. The ditch could represent a boundary ditch delineating the edge of the settlement. The pit contained fragments of pot, bone and floor tile spanning the period AD 450-1350.
7	861 - MOX5586	Medieval	Bignell deserted medieval village and the ruins of a chapel near Bignell, formerly the manor of <i>Bigenhull</i> which were recorded around 1700 AD. The village was deserted between 1350 and 1450 AD.
8	4369 - MOX5459	Post medieval	Site of Manor Farm Mill. The walls of a wheel space on the small stream mark the remains of the mill.

Appendix B:

Consulted historic maps (from the Oxfordshire History Centre)

Appendix B: Consulted historic maps (from the Oxfordshire History Centre)

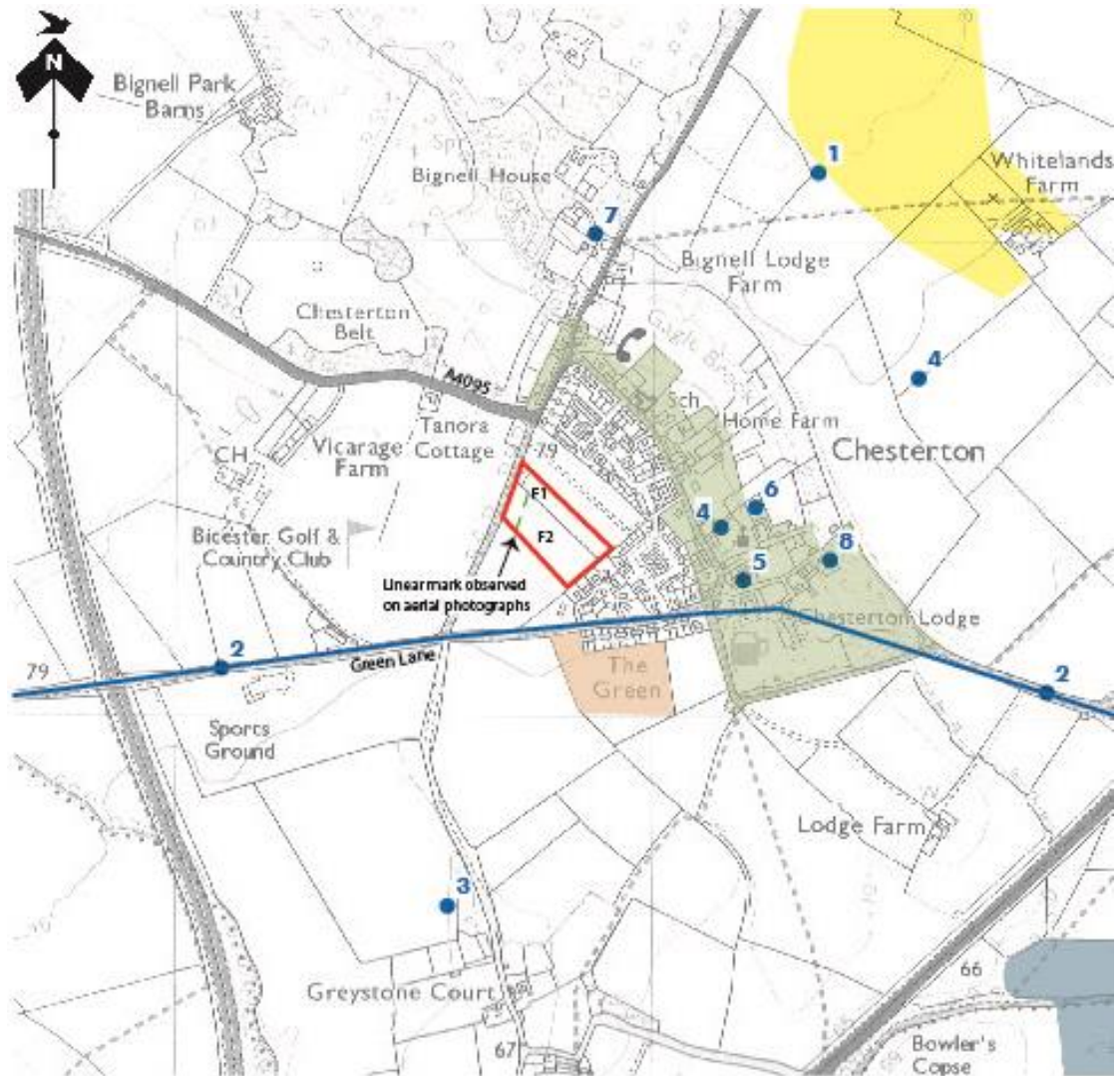
1764-8	Estate map of Great Chesterton
1875	Ordnance Survey (25")
1899	Ordnance Survey (25")
1922	Ordnance Survey (25")

Appendix C:
Consulted aerial photographs (from the NMR)

Appendix C: Consulted aerial photographs (from the NMR)

7.11.1943	RAF/16/AC638
10.8.1945	RAF/106G/UK/620
16.4.1947	RAF/CPE/UK/2013
26.7.1949	RAF/541/340
12.2.1952	RAF/540/673
1961	FSL/6125
4.8.1954	RAF/542/1
31.8.1954	RAF/82/1006
1.9.1954	RAF/540/1400
16.8.1961	RAF/58/4627
29.4.1966	OS/66042
5.7.1975	OS/75312
21.9.1975	OS/75392
23.9.1989	OS/89439
10.4.1991	OS/91021
19.9.1991	OS/91258
28.6.1994	OS/94213
15.6.1996	OS/96633
3.9.1999	OS/99329

Figure 1: Recorded heritage assets



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- Site boundary
- Conservation Area
- Scheduled monument
- 2009 evaluation
- 2012 geophysical survey
- 1 HER entries

Figure 2: Extract from an estate map of 1764-8



Figure 3: Extract from an Ordnance Survey map of 1875

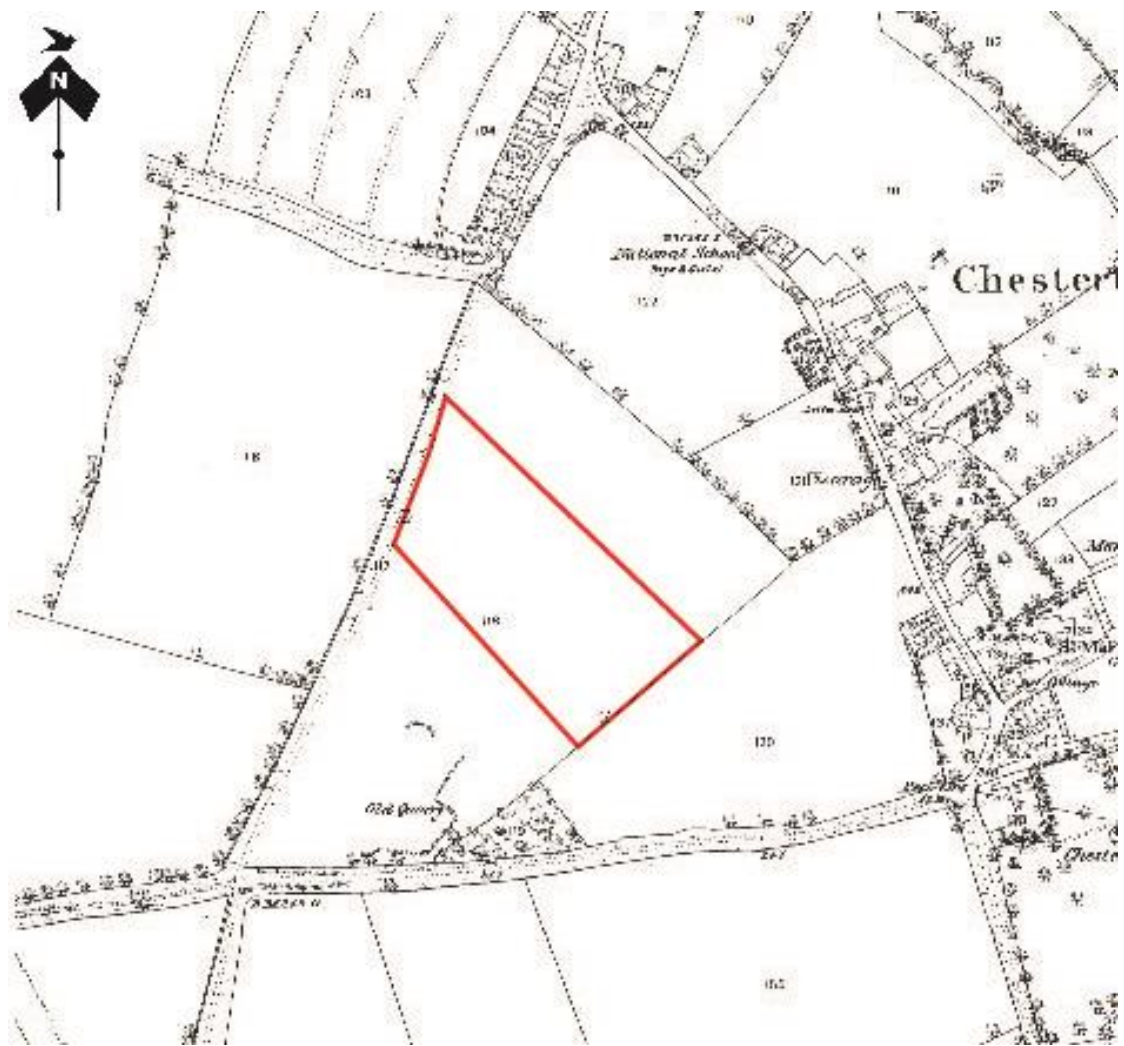


Figure 4: Extract from an Ordnance Survey map of 1922

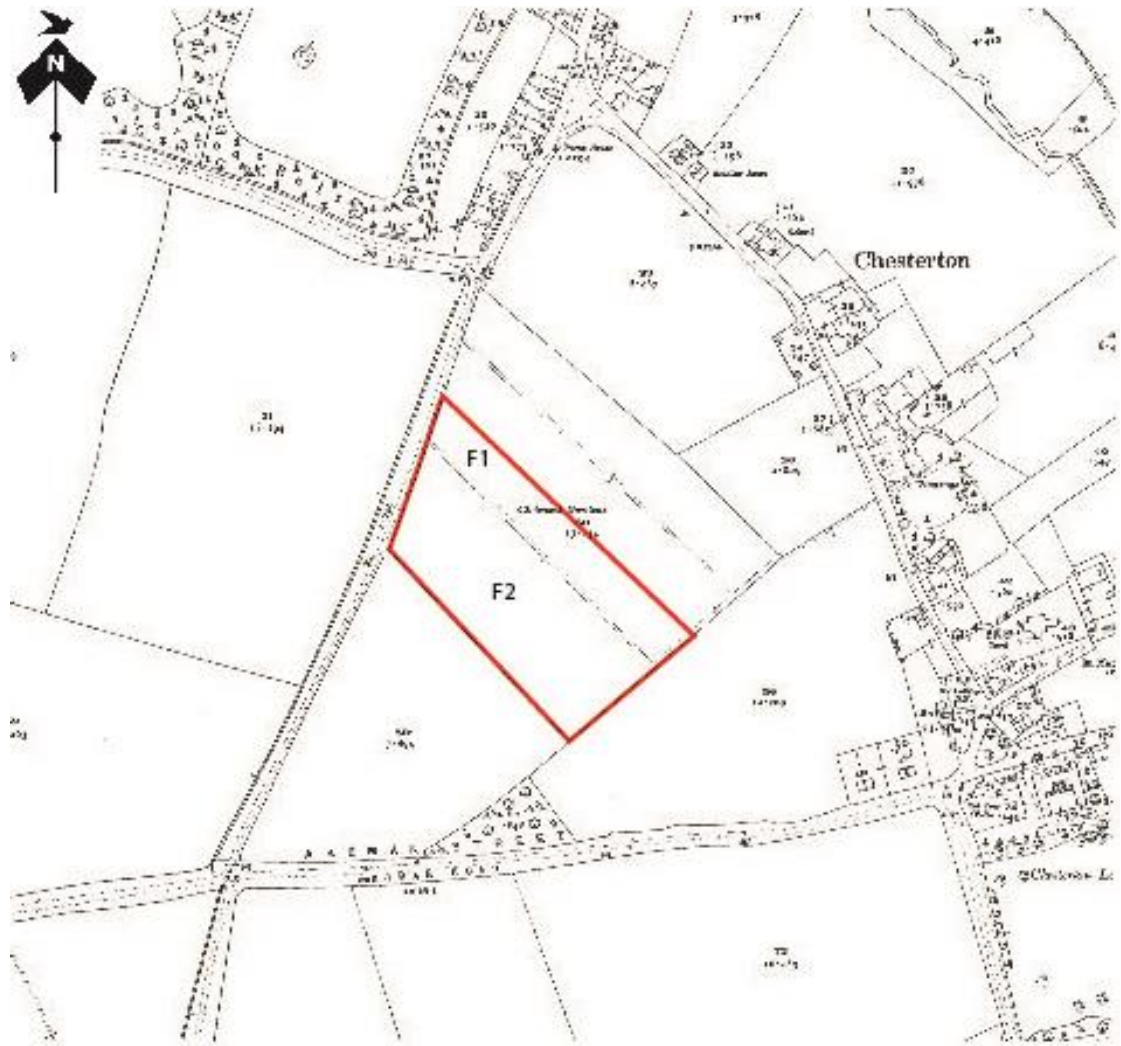


Figure 5: Extract from an aerial photograph of 1947



Reproduced courtesy of English Heritage from an aerial photograph held by the National Monuments Record. RAF/CPE/UK/2013. Library no. 603. Frame no. 4098. Taken 16th April 1947.

 Site boundary

Figure 6: Site photographs



Plate 1: Field 1 looking south-east



Plate 2: Field 1 looking north-west

Figure 7: Site photographs



Plate 3: Field 2 looking south-east



Plate 4: Field 2 looking north-west