

MOD MERRION CAMP, CASTLEMARTIN, PEMBROKESHIRE

APPLICATION NO: NP/20/0294/FUL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



Prepared by: DAT Archaeological
Services

For: Archaeology Collective



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PEMBROKESHIRE**
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Gan / By

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MOD MERRION CAMP, CASTLEMARTIN, PEMBROKESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground works associated with new accommodation blocks at MOD Merion Camp, Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire (SR 9412 9681). No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered.

CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL

Comisiynwyd Gwasanaethau Archeolegol YAD i ymgymryd â brîff gwylio archeolegol yn ystod gwaith daear sy'n gysylltiedig â blociau lletyau newydd yng Ngwersyll Merion y Weinyddiaeth Amddiffyn, Castlemartin, Sir Benfro (SR 9412 9681). Ni ddarganfuwyd unrhyw ddarganfyddiadau, nodweddion na dyddodion archeolegol arwyddocaol.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

- 1.1.1 DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned by Archaeology Collective (part of HCUK Group) on behalf of Reds 10 (UK) Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with new accommodation blocks at MOD Merion Camp, Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire (SR 9412 9681; Figures 1 and 2).
- 1.1.2 In 2020 a desk-based assessment was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology to assess the archaeological potential of the site. Its results were summarised as follows:

In January 2020, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) was commissioned by Fairhurst to undertake a Heritage Desk-Based Assessment in respect of land at Castlemartin Camp, Merion, Pembrokeshire. Presently a green field, the Site is located within the Castlemartin military camp, south of the B4319 in the hamlet of Merion, Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire.

The lack of investigations undertaken within the study area means that the archaeological resource is not well understood but considering the few records within the area it is believed that there is potential for the presence of unknown buried remains related to the prehistoric and post-medieval periods within the Site. It is possible that archaeological deposits and remains survive within the Site, most likely comprising the remains of the agricultural use of the landscape (field systems, trackways, ditches, paddocks, etc.) most likely dating from the prehistoric or post-medieval periods. Such remains would be of evidential and historic (illustrative) value, but it is highly unlikely that they would be of such significance that they would preclude development of the Site. The heritage impacts of their truncation and / or removal could be mitigated by a programme of appropriate and proportionate archaeological works to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

- 1.1.3 Due to the potential for archaeological remains and the lack of previous archaeological investigations within the boundary of the development area the archaeological advisors (Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Development Management (DAT-DM)) to the planning authority (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority) recommended an archaeological watching brief (Condition no.5) be attached to planning permission for the development (Planning Application No. NP/20/0294/FUL). This condition states that:

No development shall take place until a qualified and competent archaeologist has submitted a written scheme of investigation (WSI) that has been approved in writing by the local planning authority. This WSI shall describe the different stages of the work and demonstrate that it has been resourced and given adequate time. On behalf of the local planning authority their archaeological advisors (DAT DM) will monitor all aspects of this work through to the final discharging of this condition. The work will not be complete until all aspects of the WSI have been addressed and a final report submitted and approved in writing.

Reason: to protect the historic environment interests at the site and ensure their recording.

1.2 Scope of the Project

1.2.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a watching brief was prepared by James Meek, Director, Archaeology Collective (part of the HCUK Group) prior to the commencement of the works and which was approved by the planning authority (DAT-DM) prior to the works commencing. The WSI outlined the aims and objectives for the watching brief. The aims were:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains;
- To record the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on site;
- To record the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological deposits or remains on site;
- To direct the machine excavation required for ground investigation works and groundworks to allow for observation and recording and;
- To observe and record any archaeological features so as to ascertain their extent, form, function, and where possible, date.

1.2.2 The objectives for the watching brief were:

- To undertake work in accordance with national best practice and guidelines;
- To archaeologically record any deposits, features or structures of significance;
- To analyse any remains with reference to the existing documentary evidence for historical development and land use;
- To produce a written account to include: summary; site description; deposit descriptions; deposit levels (relative to ordnance datum); conclusions and recommendations for future work (if needed);
- To disseminate the findings of the work in an illustrated report, integrating the findings of the archaeological evaluation to produce as comprehensive a record as possible, and;
- To provide an ordered archive.

1.2.3 The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and their codes of conduct (CifA 2014).

1.3 Report Outline

1.3.1 This report provides a summary and discussion of the archaeological watching brief and its results.

1.4 Illustrations

- 1.4.1 Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale. On maps, north is towards the top of the page unless otherwise indicated.

1.5 Timeline

- 1.5.1 The following timeline (Table 1) is used within this report to give date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within the text.

Table 1: Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales.

Period	Approximate date	
Palaeolithic –	c.450,000 – 10,000 BC	Prehistoric
Mesolithic –	c. 10,000 – 4400 BC	
Neolithic –	c.4400 – 2300 BC	
Bronze Age –	c.2300 – 700 BC	
Iron Age –	c.700 BC – AD 43	
Roman (Romano-British) Period –	AD 43 – c. AD 410	Historic
Post-Roman / Early Medieval Period –	c. AD 410 – AD 1086	
Medieval Period –	1086 – 1536	
Post-Medieval Period ¹ –	1536 – 1750	
Industrial Period –	1750 – 1899	
Modern –	20th century onwards	

¹ The post-medieval and Industrial periods are combined as the post-medieval period on the Regional Historic Environment Record as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

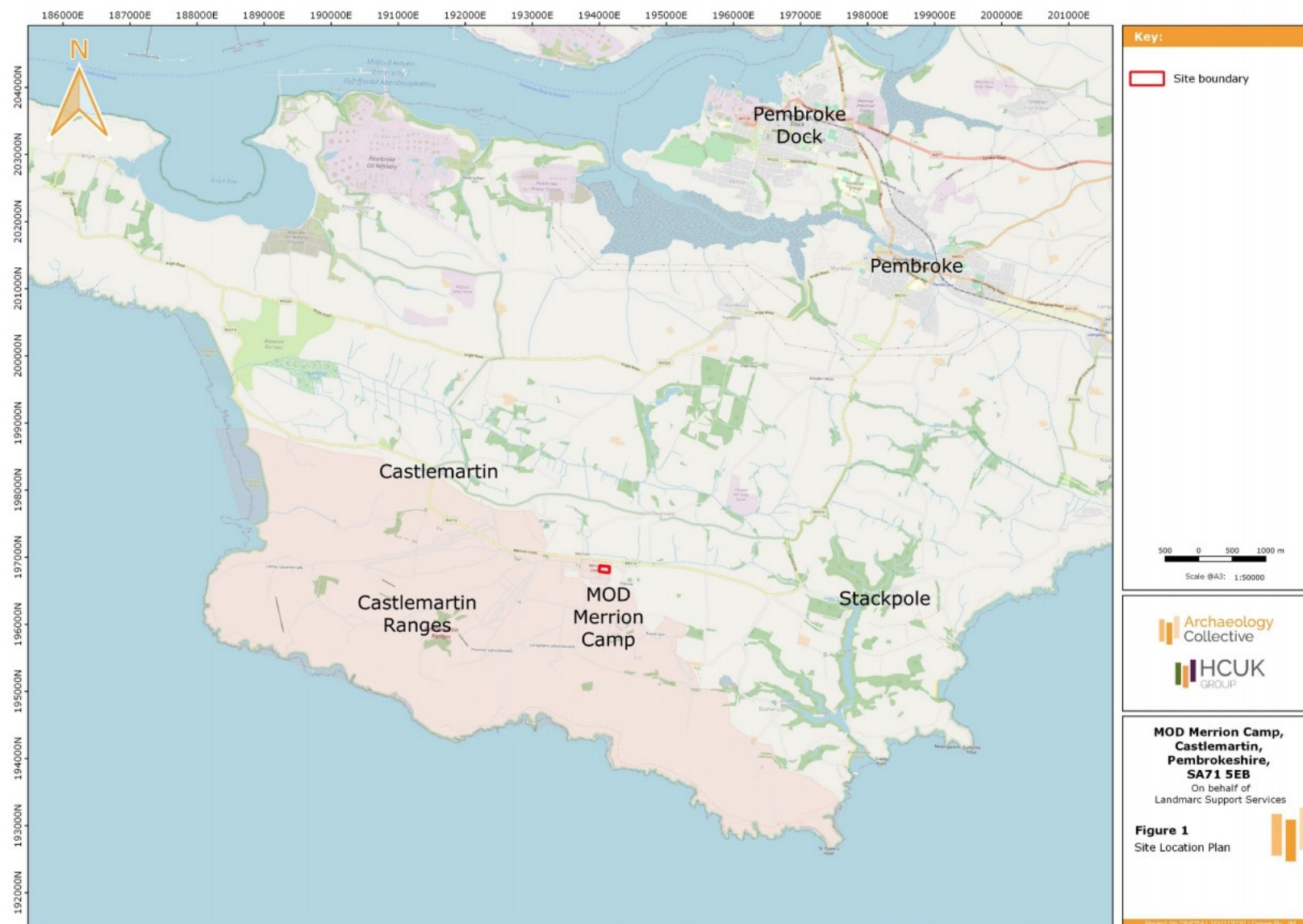


Figure 1: Location of proposed development (shaded in red). Plan supplied by client.

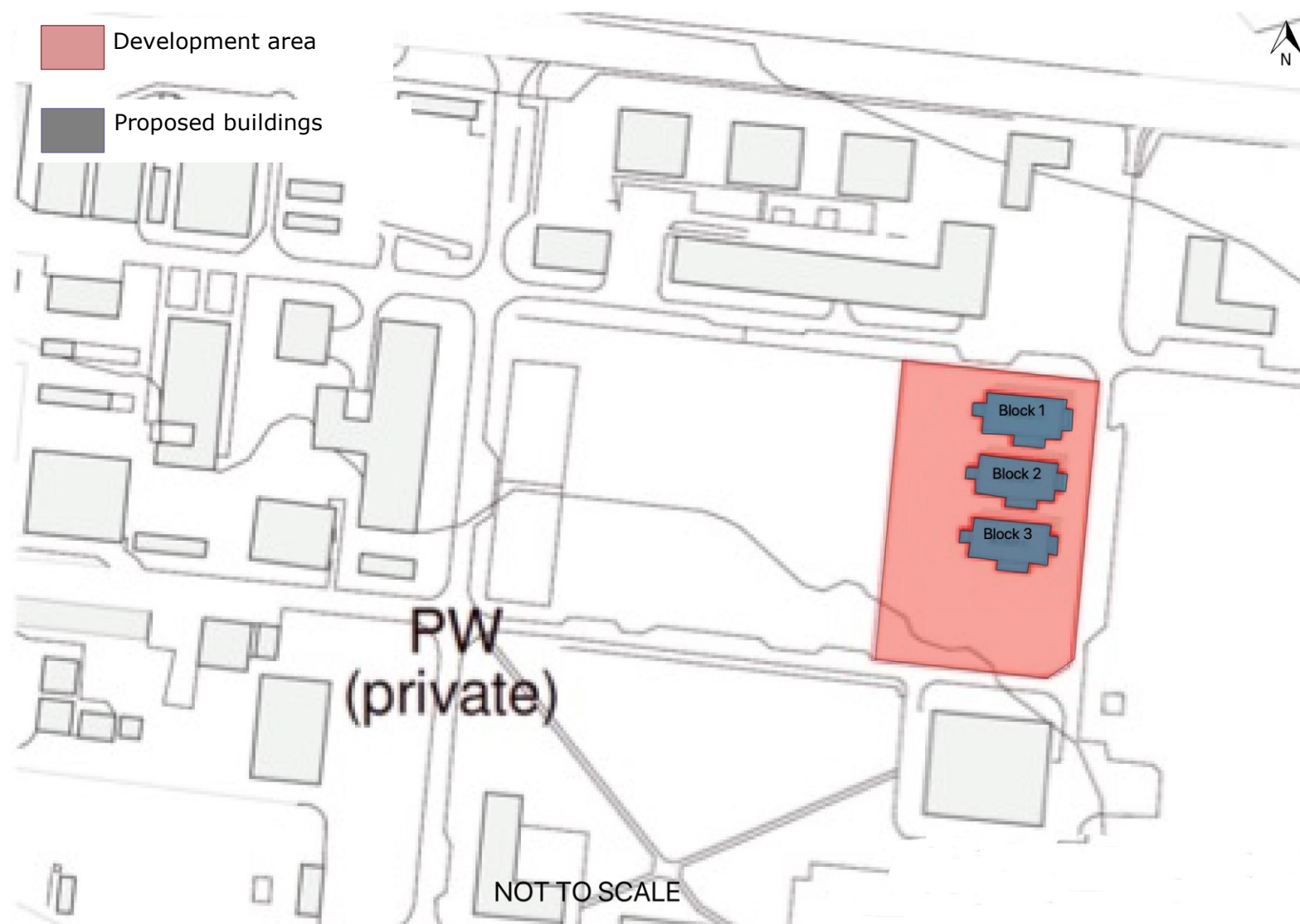


Figure 2: Plan of development area and proposed buildings (amended from plan supplied by client).

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location and Archaeological Potential

- 2.1.1 The development area is located in southern Pembrokeshire in south-west Wales (Figure 1). It lies 4.1km to the east of the small village of Castlemartin and 6km to the south-west of the town of Pembroke. The development lies off the modern B4319.
- 2.1.2 The development itself lies in MOD Merrion Camp, on the southern fringe of Castlemartin range, one of the few locations where the British Army live fires large ordnance such as tanks.
- 2.1.3 Within MOD Merrion Camp the development area is located on a somewhat raised flat piece of grassland, surrounded by an access road that slopes towards the north (Photographs 1 and 2). Beyond this low-level army buildings can be found. The development area was rough grassland prior to development.
- 2.1.4 The proposed development consists of the three buildings which will form new accommodation blocks at the base (Block 1, 2 and 3- Figure 2). These buildings are prefabricated off site with groundworks including the stripping of the topsoil and the drilling of pile foundations upon which the buildings can be dropped.
- 2.1.5 Very little is known archaeologically about this area. Due to this an archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in 2020 to assess the archaeological potential of the site. The findings of this report are summarised in Section 1.1.2, but it highlighted a potential for archaeological remains of the prehistoric and post-medieval periods within the site area; most likely agricultural in nature. The assessment went on to state that:

This could have served multiple purposes such as a tented camp area, for agriculture or exercises. However no conclusive evidence of this was discerned during the writing of this assessment.

- 2.1.6 However, upon arrival on site it appeared to be common knowledge among staff that the area had been levelled to function as a sports/football pitch in recent times and was very likely to comprise made-ground.
- 2.1.7 The bedrock geology is described as limestone of the Pembroke Limestone Group, sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 329 to 359 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period, in a local environment previously dominated by shallow carbonate seas (BGS 2020).



Photograph 1: Southern end of development area. Looking south



Photograph 2: Northern end of development area, Looking north-west.

3. WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 3.1.2 A written scheme of investigation was prepared by James Meek of Archaeology Collective detailing the proposed archaeological works, which was approved by DAT-DM in their capacity as advisors to the local planning authority prior to the works commencing.
- 3.1.3 Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual² used by DAT Archaeological Services. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout this watching brief. All contexts encountered during this watching brief were recorded.
- 3.1.4 The topsoil stripping was undertaken using both a 5 and 15 tonne 360° excavator fitted with flat bladed buckets. A 5 tonne dumper was used for the removal of spoil.

3.2 Timetabling of Fieldwork

- 3.2.1 The watching brief took place on Tuesday the 24th of November 2020. Post-fieldwork recording was undertaken in early December.

3.3 Post-Fieldwork Reporting and Archiving

- 3.3.1 An archive will be prepared if it meets the requirements of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust archive retention policy (2018). If it does, then data recovered during the watching brief will be collated into a site archive structured in accordance with the specifications in *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2011), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth. The National Standards for Wales for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives produced by the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales will also be adhered to. Digital archives will be collated using the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales systems (2015) and deposited with the RCAHMW. The Guidance for the Submission of Data to the Welsh Historic Environment Records (HERs) shall be followed.
- 3.3.2 The results of the fieldwork have been assessed in local, regional and wider contexts. The report includes a desk-based research element to ensure that the site is placed within its wider archaeological context.
- 3.3.3 A report fully representative of the results of the fieldwork has been prepared.

² DAT Archaeological Services have adopted the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available on-site for inspection if required.

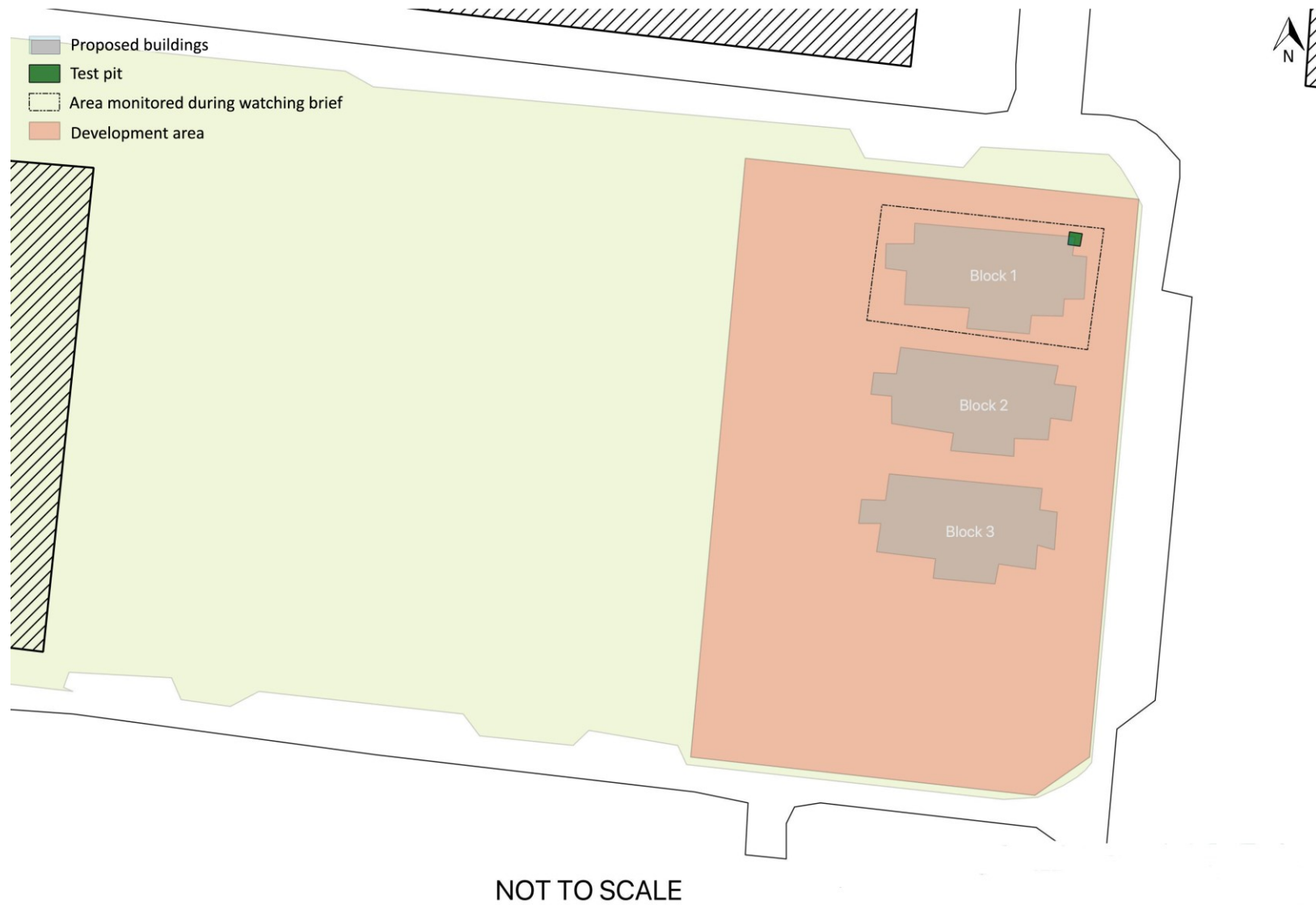


Figure 3: Plan showing area monitored during watching brief

4. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 4.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Luke Jenkins on Tuesday the 24th of November. The weather was overcast/wet.
- 4.2 The proposed development consisted of three buildings (Blocks 1, 2, and 3, Figure 2). It had been initially planned that the topsoil stripping for all three buildings would be undertaken in a single day and that this would be monitored during the watching brief. However, due to the imminent arrival of Block 1's prefabricated units it was decided by the client that only the area within which Block 1 would be placed (Figure 3) was to be stripped that day.
- 4.3 Two 360° mechanical excavators of 5 and 15 tonnes (Hitachi) both with a grading bucket were used for topsoil stripping during the visit. A test pit described below was excavated using a toothed bucket.
- 4.4 The area monitored during the watching brief measured approximately 40m east/west and 25m north/south and lay in the northern part of the development area where Block 1 was to be built (Figure 3; Photograph 3, 4, 5 and 6).
- 4.5 The topsoil measured between 0.17m at the western edge of the area and 0.13m at the eastern edge. It comprised mid-brown silt with occasional small angular stones. There were frequent modern finds such as porcelain, glass, and concrete.
- 4.6 Upon excavation it was clear that the area of the development comprised made-ground. This made-ground consisted of mixed silts and rubble which were orange-brown in colour with occasional patches of mid-brown (Photographs 5 and 6). Inclusions within this deposit included modern pottery, concrete blocks, tarmac and broken ceramic pipe.
- 4.7 It is suggested that this made-ground deposit served to level the area for the former football pitch that was situated here and is not archaeologically significant.
- 4.8 During the topsoil stripping, in order to determine the depth of this made-ground deposit, and whether the pile foundations would penetrate it, a test pit was excavated in the north-eastern corner of the stripped area for Block 1 (Figure 3, Photographs 7 and 8). This was excavated to the full depth of the proposed pile foundations at 0.90m beneath the topsoil. This confirmed that made-ground existed to at least this depth. No undisturbed natural deposits were revealed in the test pit.

Table 2: Context Register

Context	Description
001	Topsoil. Friable, mid brown silt. Occasional small angular stone. 0.17m thick. Finds include modern pottery, concrete, glass.
002	Made-ground. Compact, mixed mid orange-brown clayey-silt. Abundant medium-large sub-angular rubble. >0.90m thick. Finds include modern pottery, concrete, tarmac, drainage pipe.



Photograph 3: Development area of Block 1. Looking south-west



Photograph 4: Development area of Block 1. Looking north-east.



Photograph 5: General shot of eastern end of Block 1 area. Looking west; 1m scale.



Photograph 6: General shot of western end of Block 1 area. Looking east; 1m scale.



Photograph 7: Location of test pit in north-eastern corner of Block 1 area. Note test pit bottom right. Looking south-southeast.



Photograph 8: Showing section of test pit. Note mixed composition of material seen in sides of test pit and deposit of concrete at bottom of test pit on left. Looking east; 1m scale.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 A watching brief was conducted during groundworks associated with the construction of three new accommodation blocks at MOD Merrion Camp, Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire.
- 5.2 The development area lies within an area with an identified potential for archaeological remains. Thus a condition was placed on planning permission requiring an archaeological watching brief during ground reduction works, including topsoil stripping.
- 5.3 The supervised groundworks encompassed the topsoil stripping of an area for one of the three new accommodation blocks (Block 1). This was undertaken using 360° mechanical excavators using grading buckets.
- 5.4 The watching brief established that topsoil measured between 0.13m and 0.17m. It comprised mid-brown silt with occasional small angular stones. The topsoil contained frequent modern finds such as porcelain, glass, and concrete.
- 5.5 The watching brief recorded that beneath the topsoil lay deposits comprising made-ground. The made-ground deposit contained noticeable amounts of modern pottery, concrete blocks, tarmac and broken ceramic pipe. It is suggested that these made-ground deposits were associated with levelling the site for a former football pitch.
- 5.6 A single test pit was excavated in the north-eastern corner of the area for Block 1 that confirmed that modern made-ground lay at a greater depth than the proposed depth of the piles for the new buildings.
- 5.7 No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were identified during the groundworks within the area for Block 1.
- 5.8 As a consequence of these findings it was considered that it was unlikely that the proposed development would damage or destroy archaeological remains or deposits within the remaining area proposed for Blocks 2 and 3.
- 5.9 Following the completion of the watching brief on Block 1, James Meek of Archaeology Collective contacted the Development Management section of Dyfed Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, to agree that due to the negligible archaeological potential of the site that no further watching brief works were needed.

6. SOURCES

Brown 2011. *A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation* (Archaeological Archives Forum 2011)

Cotswold Archaeology, 2020. *Castlemartin Camp, Pembrokeshire: Heritage Desk-Based Assessment*. CA Project: CR0290

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Ordnance Survey; Pembrokeshire 1st edition 1:2500 1889

Ordnance Survey; Pembrokeshire 2nd edition 1:2500 1906

Database

British Geological Survey: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
(Accessed December 2020)

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, housed with Dyfed Archaeological Trust in The Corner House, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 6AE

RCAHMW Coflein Database: -<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>

Cof Cymru - National Historic Assets of Wales:

<http://cadw.gov.wales/historicenvironment/recordsv1/cof-cymru/?lang=en>

