



**Land Adjacent to Bollandsfield,
Whitchurch, Shropshire.
October 2015
V 1.1**

aeon archaeology



Archaeological Evaluation
Project Code: A0068.1
Report no. 0068



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Land Adjacent to Bollandsfield, Whitchurch, Shropshire. October 2015

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Archaeological Evaluation

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Project Code: A0068.1
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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Aeon Archaeology was asked to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching to help determine the archaeological potential of an area of land adjacent to Bollandsfield, Tarpoley Road, Whitchurch Shropshire which will help devise a strategy on how best to determine this potential and manage it through the planning process.

Nexus Heritage Report No: 3250.R01a, Written Scheme of Investigation, identified a possibility that Roman inhumations/cremations may be present in the area and recommended two trial trenches to be excavated.

The smaller trench to the south contained no archaeological remains, however the large trench which ran 30m by 4m across the proposed development yielded three features with an abundance of Roman potsherds, including rims. Evaluation of the features has shown that they are more likely to be associated with domestic activity and may be drainage gullies and discrete refuse pits which are common features in and around settlements.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

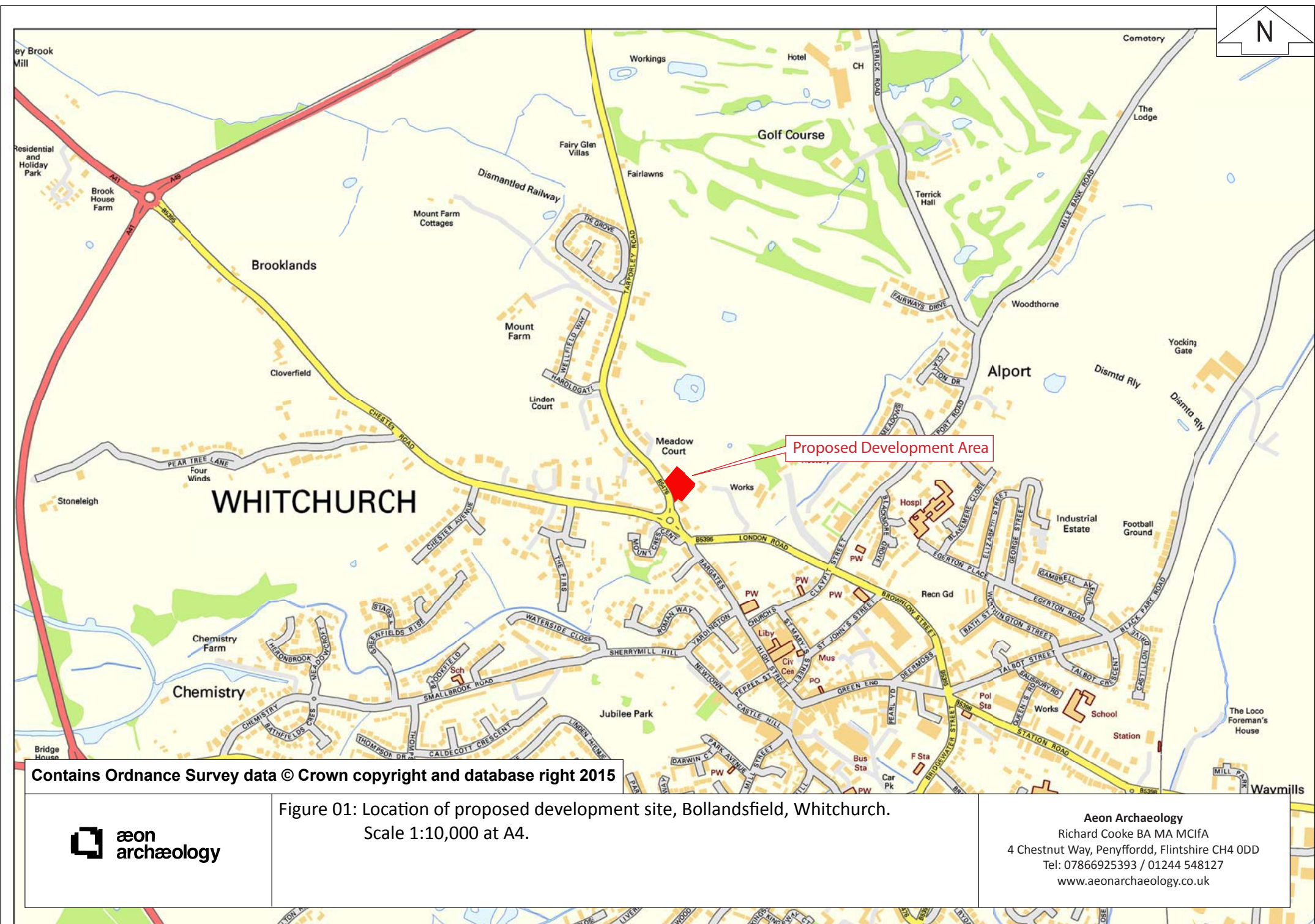
Aeon Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation within an area of land adjacent to Bollandsfield, Tarpoley Road, Whitchurch Shropshire, **NGR SJ 53952 41971**.

Aeon Archaeology was contracted to Nexus Heritage who is acting as the Archaeological consultant for the client; Muller Strategic Projects Ltd who is seeking planning permission (**ref, 15/00433/OUT**) to erect a residential development. Shropshire Council is undertaking the curatorial monitoring on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, whose officers liaised with Anthony Martin (Nexus Heritage) who then communicated with Aeon Archaeology to ensure the archaeological expectations of the Council were met.

This report documents the method and results of the archaeological evaluation and complies with the methodology and strategies identified within the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

Further archaeological recommendations are based on the findings within this document.

This report conforms to the guidelines specified in the *CIfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014).



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Figure 01: Location of proposed development site, Bollandfield, Whitchurch.
Scale 1:10,000 at A4.

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Figure 02: Location of trenches 1 and 2 at Bollandfield, Whitchurch.
Scale 1:1,000 at A4.

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3.0 PROJECT AIMS

The aim of the evaluation works was to characterise the known, or potential, archaeological remains uncovered during the excavation of the archaeological evaluation trenches.

The broad aims of the archaeological evaluation trenches were:

- To determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains on the site, the integrity of which may be threatened by development at the site.
- To establish the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusion to sub-surface deposits and, where the data allows, assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits of archaeological significance.
- To enable the client to establish a schedule for archaeological risks.
- To report on the work and determine the need, if any, for further archaeological mitigation. This may consist of attempts to preserve significant remains in situ or, if this is not possible, more extensive excavation work and reporting. Less sensitive remains may require a watching brief. Any such further work may be secured by amendment to the condition.

The detailed objectives of the archaeological evaluation trenches were:

- Insofar as possible within methodological constraints, to explain any temporal, spatial or functional relationships between the structures/remains identified, and any relationships between these and the archaeological and historic elements of the wider landscape.
- Where the data allows, identify the research implications of the site with reference to the regional research agenda and recent work in Shropshire.

The broad characteristics of the number, size, orientation and distribution of the trenches were considered to be appropriate and were agreed with the Planning Archaeologist at Shropshire Council. The trench array was proposed as part of the WSI prepared by Nexus Heritage and was designed to determine feature presence/absence, with a contingent trenching facility designed for site characterisation should features be present, the characteristics of which are insufficiently resolved within the core trenching provision. Contingent trenching was optional, upon the discovery of archaeological artefacts, deposits, features or structures the characteristics of which could only be sufficiently determined upon further spatial investigation.

The management of this project has followed the procedures laid out in the standard professional guidance *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006), and in the *CIFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (Chartered Institute For Archaeologists, 2014). Five stages are specified:

Phase 1: project planning

Phase 2: fieldwork

Phase 3: assessment of potential for analysis and revised project design

Phase 4: analysis and report preparation

Phase 5: dissemination

The current document reports on the phase 4 analysis and states the means to be used to disseminate the results. The purpose of this phase is to carry out the analysis identified in phase 3 (the assessment of potential phase), to amalgamate the results of the specialist studies, if required, with the detailed site narrative and provide both specific and overall interpretations. The site is to be set in its landscape context so that its full character and importance can be understood. All the information is to be presented in a report that will be held by the Shropshire Historic Environment Record and the OASIS database so that it can be accessible to the public and future researchers. This phase of work also includes archiving the material and documentary records from the project.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Before the evaluation trenching commenced an agreed programme of excavation timing, siting, duration, surface re-instatement and health and safety protection measures were agreed with the Client, Nexus Heritage and the Shropshire Archaeological Advisory Service.

4.1 Evaluation trenches

The evaluation trenching array was designed to investigate areas that may contain archaeological features. There was latitude on the location of each trench and slight repositioning to take account of buried services and other constraints was acknowledged as a possibility within the WSI.

A JCB excavator with toothless ditching bucket was used to open the trenches under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and overburden were to be removed by machine in spits down to archaeological deposits or natural sub-soils, whichever were encountered first. All uncovered archaeological features were to be excavated by hand.

A written record of the deposits and all identified features in each evaluation trench was completed via Aeon Archaeology pro-formas. All subsurface remains were to be recorded photographically, with detailed notations. The photographic record was completed using a digital SLR camera (Canon Eos 550D) set to maximum resolution.

Contingency provision was made for the following:

- Additional excavation of up to 100% of any given feature should the excavated sample prove to be insufficient to provide information on the character and date of the feature.
- Expansion of trench limits, to clarify the extent of features equivalent to an additional 20% of the core area.

The archaeological works were surveyed with respect to the nearest Ordnance Survey datum point and with reference to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The trenches and archaeological features within them were accurately located on a site plan prepared at the most appropriate and largest scale. All excavations were backfilled with the material excavated and upon departure the site was left in a safe and tidy condition.

4.2 Data Collection from Site Records

A database of the site photographs was produced to enable active long-term curation of the photographs and easy searching. The site records were checked and cross-referenced and photographs were cross-referenced to contexts. These records were used to write the site narrative and the field drawings and survey data were used to produce an outline plan of the site.

All paper field records were scanned to provide a backup digital copy. The photographs were organised and precisely cross-referenced to the digital photographic record so that the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) can curate them in their active digital storage facility.

4.3 Artefact Methodology

All artefacts were to be collected and processed including those found within spoil tips. Finds numbers would be attributed and they would be bagged and labelled as well any preliminary identification taking place on site. After processing, all artefacts would be cleaned and examined in-house at Aeon Archaeology. If required artefacts would be sent to a relevant specialist for conservation and analysis.

The recovery policy for archaeological finds was kept under review throughout the evaluation trenching. Any changes in recovery priorities would be made under guidance from an appropriate specialist and agreed with the Client, Nexus Heritage and the Shropshire Archaeological Advisory Service. There was a presumption against the disposal of archaeological finds regardless of their apparent age or condition.

4.4 Environmental Samples Methodology

The sampling strategy and requirement for bulk soil samples was related to the perceived character, interpretational importance and chronological significance of the strata under investigation. This ensured that only significant features would be sampled. The aim of the sampling strategy was to recover carbonised macroscopic plant remains, small artefacts particularly knapping debris and evidence for metalworking.

Advice and guidance regarding environmental samples and their suitability for radiocarbon dating, as well as the analysis of macrofossils (charcoal and wood), pollen, animal bones and molluscs would be obtained from Oxford Archaeology if required.

4.5 Report and dissemination

A full archive including plans, photographs and written material resulting from the project was prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions were labelled, and cross-referenced.

Upon approval from the Client copies of the report will be sent to the Shropshire Historic Environment Record, the Shropshire Archaeological Advisory Service, and the OASIS online database.

5.0 SITE LOCATION

(Taken from Nexus Report No: 3250.R01a)

The Site is situated on the north-western side of the town of Whitchurch, in the civil parish of Whitchurch Urban, Shropshire (centre point NGR: SJ 53950 41982), (Fig. 1). The Site consists of a single field, laid to rough, unmanaged pasture and part of the garden attached to a residential property identified as Bollandsfield. The Site slopes down to the south-east from a high-point of *c.* 103m OD in the garden of Bollandsfield to a low point of *c.* 99.60m OD at the entrance off Tarporley Road.

The proposed development area is situated on the south-eastern side of Bollandsfield and comprises part of the garden associated with Bollandsfield and a small field of rough pasture. The Site is bounded to the north-east by fences and hedges beyond which is rough pasture. To the south-east the Site is bounded by a tall hedgerow which separates it from the car park of a Sainsbury's Supermarket and the adjacent property of Bargates Cottage. The north-western boundary of the Site does not correspond to any physical boundary and is an arbitrary line defining the limits of the application Site. The south-western boundary onto Tarporley Road is a formed by multiple physical features includes a wooden gate, a privet hedge and a brick wall behind which is a bank supporting a number of trees and shrubs.

The Superficial geology of Site is Glaciofluvial Deposits of Devensian Sand and Gravel formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. The bedrock is Lias Group Mudstone (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

6.0 HISTORY OF THE SITE

(Taken from Nexus Report No: 3250.R01a)

The following section is a summary of the archaeological and historical evidence as identified in the Nexus Heritage document *Land adjacent to Bollandsfield, Whitchurch, Shropshire - Heritage Statement*, (Nexus Report No: 3046.R01). The evidence was colligated from the Shropshire Historic Environment Record, the Shropshire Record Office, Whitchurch Library and other documentary and cartographic sources. The details of the Heritage Statement need not be rehearsed here. However, the following summary provides a concise outline of the broad archaeological and historic context.

In summary there are 48 archaeological monuments within a radius of 300m from the Site centre, none of which is located wholly or partly within the Site. However, the south-western boundary of the site is coincident with the Roman Road from Wroxeter to Rutinium, Whitchurch and Chester.

There are no known prehistoric archaeological sites or find-spots within the Site or in the vicinity, but during the Romano-British period Whitchurch was established as a Roman town, identified as *Mediolanum*). A cemetery to the north-western of the settlement is suspected and if present is likely to have been tightly focussed along Bargates and possibly along the roadside.

The suspicion derives from a report, dated to 1950, that seven skeletons were found in the grounds of the residential premises The Gables and Plympton, *c.* 30m to the south-east of the Site's southern boundary. There appears to be no further information on the skeletons other than an annotation on a map made by an Ordnance Survey correspondent in 1950 and an Ordnance Survey Record Card dating to 1976. The existence of further inhumations in the vicinity remains conjectural but there is a chance that the seven inhumations may be accompanied by more, as yet undiscovered human remains, and that if present such remains may extend into the Site.

There are no confirmed archaeological remains from the Saxon/early medieval period recorded in the Site or the immediate vicinity. Whitchurch was situated in the Saxon kingdom of Mercia and lay in the Odonet Hundred and later North Bradford Hundred. There is however, no archaeological evidence of the medieval settlement at Whitchurch prior to the 11th century.

Evidence is more plentiful for the archaeology and history of Whitchurch during the medieval period. In the late 11th century the Domesday Survey identified the site of the present town within the manor of *Westune*. The first recorded use of the place-name Whitchurch is in 1271-2 and during this period the Site lay outside the urban core and the Site may have been agricultural land associated with the manor.

By the 14th century the town was prospering and had expanded outside the limit of its defences. Little is known of the early origins of the Rectory and the moated site to the south-east of the Site. It has been suggested that it was a manor house belonging to the le Strange family, although by the late 13th century the Le Strange family were resident elsewhere (North *et al* 2007). The moated site is thought to have earlier origins associated with a monastic hospital, although this attribution is not secure.

It is probably acceptable to assume that the Site was in proximity to the moat and manor house at the site of the Rectory during this period. However, there is no compelling justification to suggest that there were any buildings or other features on the Site during this period, (other than traces of agricultural activity) that would have left a trace in the archaeological record.

The landscape of the Assessment Area witnessed multiple, significant changes to the topography during the post-medieval period, as a result of influences such as population growth and

communication development. The Site, however, was not within the demesne lands associated with the Rectory. But by 1791 the incumbent had purchased additional land beyond the glebe which included the Site. By and large, the boundaries of the Site have remained stable since the late 18th century, but the south-western boundary has been altered through incremental changes to the landscape.

By the late 19th century the Site had been divided into two contrasting halves. The north-western half appears to be part of large field, given over to agricultural use. The south-eastern half appears to be laid out as formal gardens probably associated with the Rectory. The gardens are divided into two rectilinear enclosures with what appear to be paths circulating along the boundaries. The northern enclosure appears to be provided with trees and shrubs and a *Summer House*. By the first decade of the 20th century the formal gardens are no longer present and by 1926 a new, residence called Bollandfield has been constructed within the Site.

7.0 RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION TRENCHES

The WSI (Nexus Report No: 3250.R01a, Figure 2) outlined the locations of two evaluation trenches.

Contexts numbers are given in brackets '()' for deposits and '[]' for cuts.

Trench 1, measuring 8m x 4m was located at the south-western edge of the plot, 5m from the boundary, orientated NW-SE.

Trench 2, measuring 30m x 4m was located roughly at the centre of the plot, orientated roughly N-S. After discovering archaeological features this trench was extended in order to get a better understanding of their function.

Trench 1

Maximum depth: 0.8m

(1001) Topsoil 0 – 0.36m very dark yellow brown silt sand with occasional/rare poorly sorted medium to small sub rounded stone inclusions. Also contained post-medieval pottery (Buckley, Blue&White, gen. white glazed etc.)

(1002) Subsoil 0.36m – 0.76m mid orange brown silt sand with rare poorly sorted medium to small sub rounded stone inclusions. Also contained butchered animal bone, post-medieval pot, glass and brick.

(1003) Natural 0.76m – LOE mottled mid yellow orange silt sand with bands of dark red clay, occasional degraded red sandstone. Clearly affected by bioturbation.

A single post-medieval feature (1004) was identified at the southern corner of the trench. Irregular shape in plan, fill was very similar to subsoil, contained post-medieval pottery and glass. Interpreted as a possible root bole or burrow.

Trench 2

Maximum depth 0.8m

(2001) Topsoil 0 – 0.4m dark yellow brown silt sand with occasional/rare poorly sorted sub rounded – sub angular stone. Occasional post-medieval brick, pottery and glass.

(2002) Subsoil 0.4m – 0.7m mid yellow brown silt sand with flecks of charcoal, occasional stone and roots. Occasional post-medieval pottery and glass, small amount of Roman pottery at southern end of trench in area of features.

(2003) Natural 0.7m – LOE mottled yellow silt clay at northern end of trench which was clearly wet. Southern half of trench (from 16.5m south) was mid yellow silt sand which was clearly affected by bioturbation.

A series of intercutting post-medieval field drains were identified at the northern end of the trench clearly showing that efforts had been made to improve this wet area.

At the southern limit of the trench a grey clay deposit was encountered, this was given a hard clean by hand which revealed two separate features, a liner running to the south [2007] and a possible pit containing roman pottery [2011].

The trench was extended 3.2m to the south (to the edge of the ecological buffer) to assess whether additional features were present. Within the subsoil (2002) two sherds of Roman pottery (orange fabric) were encountered, post-medieval sherds were also present.

Three pits containing a large amount of butchered animal bone were found cut into the subsoil, initially it was not known whether these may be associated with Roman activity – investigation showed that Buckley pottery was present in one of the pits confirming that they were post-medieval features.

Reduction of the extension to the natural revealed that the deposit of grey clay extended further south. In order to identify the western limit of the deposit the trench was extended 0.6m west. This identified the western edge and showed that the deposit appeared to curve slightly.

The extension also revealed an orange-brown clay deposit at the eastern edge of the trench (feature 3) running roughly parallel to feature 1.

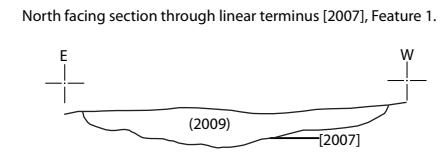
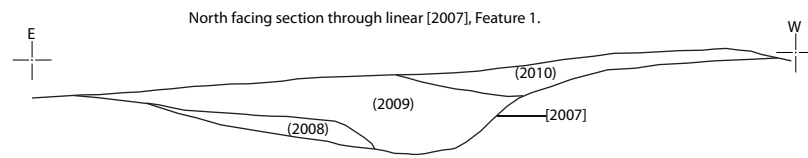
Features (see fig 4 and 5)

Feature 1– excavation of the terminus and a slot across this feature confirmed that it is a small ditch [2007] which appears to curve to the south-west. The linear measured approximately 1.0m wide, measured 4.50m (revealed) in length and a maximum of 0.26m in depth. It consisted of three fills, the main fill being a firm dark grey brown clay sand with charcoal frequently seen throughout. The feature contained approximately 30 sherds of coarse Roman pottery, a single sherd of post-medieval pottery found in the terminus is likely to be due to bioturbation which was rife across the site. A 40 litre bulk soil sample was collected from the main charcoal-rich fill (2009), as a relatively large quantity of datable Roman pottery sherds were collected from the context the sample was not processed for recovery of datable charred plant remains. The sample has been retained and palaeoenvironmental analysis could be commissioned if required, however it is not believed analysis would influence mitigation strategy and would be an unnecessary cost at this stage.

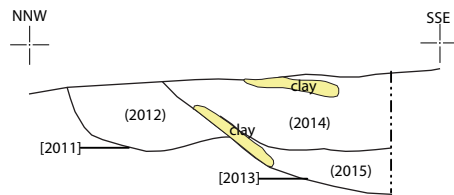
Feature 2 – what was believed to be a discrete pit showed that two features were actually present. A pit [2011] had been cut by a later curving linear [2013] which ran beyond the limits of the trench to the west. The pit [2011] had only one fill of dark grey clay sand, it measured 0.19m in depth and roughly 0.40m in diameter. Roman rim sherds which appear to be from the same, or similar, vessel were found in both the pit and linear. A total of approximately 10 sherds were found in each of the features (20 total).

Feature 3 – a slot was excavated across this deposit at the southern end of the extension. With the exception of one sherd on the surface, no Roman pottery was found in the orange-brown clay deposit (2006) which appeared to follow a gentle slope to the east, it measured 3.70m in length, 1.90m wide and up to 0.20m deep (this deposit continues under the trench edge, therefore the extent is unknown). A feature [2004] was however found at the south-eastern corner of the trench which appeared to have been truncated by the shallow cut – indicating that the slope was likely to be the result of intentional human activity. The feature was 0.18m deep and contained grey sandy clay from which a single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered.

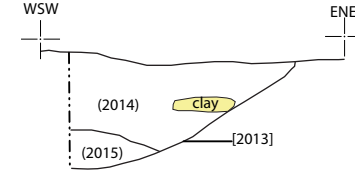
Prior to backfilling the trench all features were partially covered with geotextile to aid identification during mitigation.



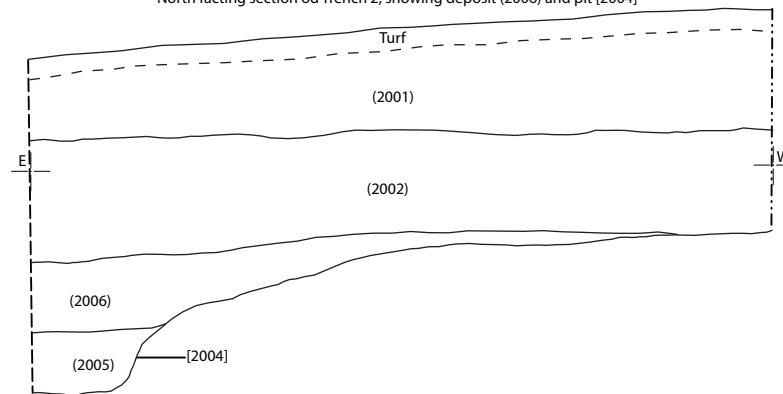
East north east facing longitudinal section through pit [2011], cut by terminus of linear [2013], Feature 2.



North north west facing, part section of linear [2013], Feature 2.



North facing section of Trench 2, showing deposit (2006) and pit [2004]



0 0,5m

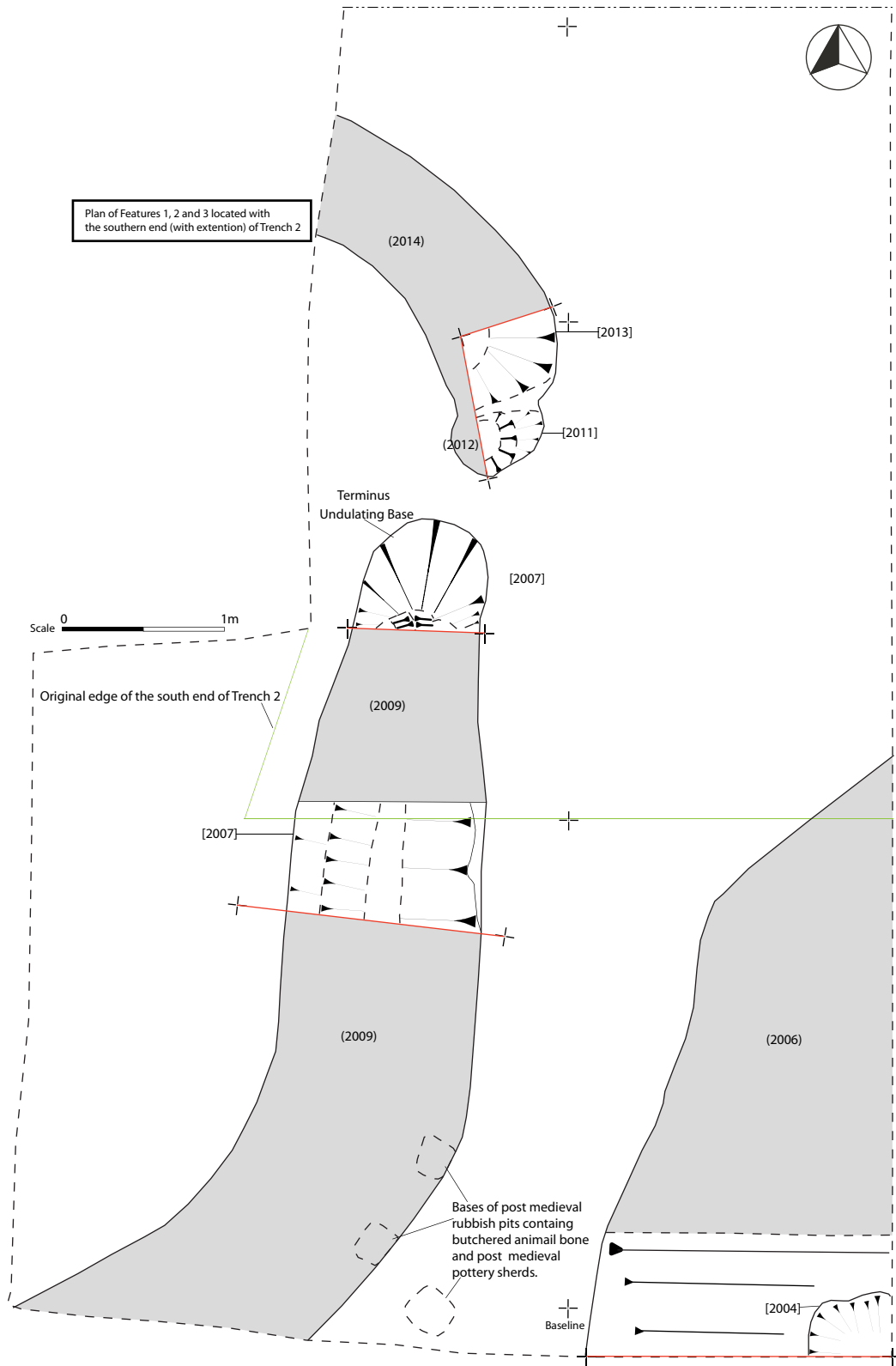
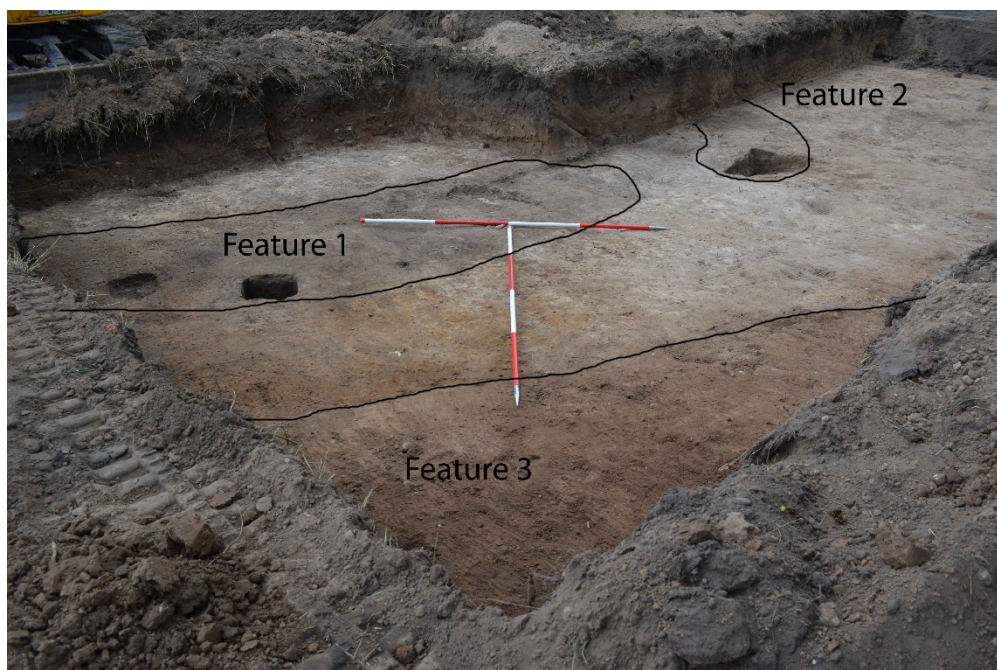


Figure 04: Plan of features.



Trench 1 post-ex (view from the east)



Features in Trench 2 (view from the south east)



Section through Feature 1 (view from the north)



Section through Feature 2 (longitudinal) (View from the east north east)



Slot through Feature 3, showing Roman pit in corner (view from the west)

8.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The excavation of the two evaluation trenches and subsequent evaluation of identified features has been successful in addressing the aims and objectives of the project. The selected methodology was successful in efficiently identifying the presence of archaeological features within the proposed development boundary. The specific function of the identified features could not be confidently interpreted, it was however possible to ascertain that they are Roman in date and material was recovered which will narrow the window of occupation following specialist analysis. The information gained during the project will be invaluable in forming mitigation strategies for the proposed development and will benefit the Historic Environment Record, demonstrating the presence of domestic activity on the fringes of Roman Whitchurch, informing future development and academic research in the area.

Roman activity at the site appears to be fairly localised as features were only identified in the southern end of Trench 2, evidence of later truncation was also identified which suggests that further features may have been damaged or destroyed.

Evaluation of the features has shown that they are likely to be associated with domestic activity and may be drainage gullies and discrete refuse pits which are common features in and around settlements.

It is possible that Feature 3, (2006) orange brown clay spread, may be the result of landscaping which has truncated earlier Roman features, e.g. [2004]. The presence of the Roman pit [2004] at the south-eastern corner of the trench does however indicate that the site contains truncated archaeological features characteristic of edge-of-settlement land use.

The pottery sherds have been identified to a broad period and class and further refinement of the typology and dating of the pottery assemblage, and comparison to the ceramic reference collection for Shropshire, awaits specialist analysis.

9.0 SOURCES

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APPENDIX I – DETAILS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

Context Number	Site Sub-division	Description
1001	Trench 1	Topsoil
1002	Trench 1	Subsoil
1003	Trench 1	Natural
1004	Trench 1	Possible root bole or animal burrow
2001	Trench 2	Topsoil
2002	Trench 2	Subsoil
2003	Trench 2	Natural
2004	Trench 2	Cut of possible pit, not fully revealed
2005	Trench 2	Fill of 2004
2006	Trench 2	Deposit overlaying possible pit 2004
2007	Trench 2	Cut of linear
2008	Trench 2	Mixed lower fill of 2007
2009	Trench 2	Charcoal rich fill of 2007
2010	Trench 2	Upper mottled fill of 2007
2011	Trench 2	Cut of pit
2012	Trench 2	Fill of pit 2011
2013	Trench 2	Cut of linear
2014	Trench 2	Upper compacted layer of linear 2013
2015	Trench 2	Lower mottled, friable fill of linear 2013

APPENDIX II – GAZETTEER OF ARTEFACTS

Small Finds Number	Context number	Feature Description	Find Description and Broad Period Class
01	2012	2011 - Pit	Rimsherd - Roman
02	2012	2011 - Pit	Potsherd - Roman
03	2012	2011 – Pit	Rimsherd – Roman
04	2012	2011 – Pit	Potsherds x10 – Roman
05	2009	2007 – Linear	Rimsherd - Roman
06	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd – Roman
07	2009	2007 – Linear	Rimsherd - Roman
08	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd x2 – Roman
09	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd – Roman
10	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd x8 – Roman
11	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd – Roman
12	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd x2– Roman
13	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd – Roman
14	2009	2007 – Linear	Potsherd – Roman
15	2014	2013 – Linear, Terminus	Rimsherd - Roman
16	2014	2013 – Linear, Terminus	Rimsherd – Roman
17	2014	2013 – Linear, Terminus	Rimsherd – Roman
18	2014	2013 – Linear, Terminus	Rimsherd – Roman
19	2014	2013 – Linear, Terminus	Potsherd x6 – Roman
20	2010	2007 – Linear	Rimsherd – Roman
21	2010	2007 – Linear	Potsherd x3 – Roman
22	2010	2007 – Linear	Potsherd x2 - Roman
23	2010	2007 – Linear	Potsherd x3 – Roman
24	2010	2007 – Linear	Fe Object – Unknown Period
25	2009- Terminus	2007 – Linear, Terminus	Base sherd - Roman
26	2009- Terminus	2007 – Linear, Terminus 2007 – Linear, Terminus	Potsherd x5 – Roman
27	2009- Terminus	2007 – Linear, Terminus	Potsherd – Roman
28	2009- Terminus	2007 – Linear, Terminus	Pottery Fragment – Roman
29	2006	2006 – Mottled, Mixed Spread above feature 2004	Potsherd – Roman?
30	2002	2002 – Subsoil	Potsherd x4 - Roman
31	2002	2002 – Subsoil	Fe Object – Unknown Period
32	Unstratified	From Spoil	Post medieval finds x5
33	2006	2006 – Mottled, Mixed Spread above feature 2004	Ceramic Fragments
34	Unstratified	From Spoil	Ceramic Fragments x4
35	2005	2004 – Possible Pit (not fully revealed)	Potsherd - Roman
36	2002	2002 – Subsoil	Post Medieval Potsherd

37	2009	2007 – Linear	Pottery Fragments x3 - Roman
38	2002	2002 – Subsoil	Cermamic Fragments x3
39	2002	2002 – Subsoil	Small Glass Shard – Period unknown

