Archaeological evaluation at Towcester Road, Silverstone, Northamptonshire September 2014

Report No. 14/178

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Illustrator: Amir Bassir

Project Manager: Liz Muldowney
Site Code:ENN107642
NGR:SP 67131 44710

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	**Oasis No. molanort1-190317**	
Project title	Archaeological evaluation at Towcester Road, Silverstone, Northamptonshire	
Short description	Six trenches were excavated on land at Towcester Road, Silverstone. An undated ditch, a narrow gully and a pit were identified as well as a number of post-medieval furrows associated with agricultural cultivation.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site Status		
Previous work	Geophysical survey (Headland Archaeology Ltd.)	
Current land use	Arable	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Ditch; pit; unknown Furrow – post-medieval	
Significant finds	Post- medieval pottery	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Towcester Road, Silverstone, Northamptonshire	
Post code	N/A	
OS co-ordinates	NGR SP 67131 44710	
Area (sq m/ha)	1.9ha	
Height aOD	121m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	MOLA Northampton	
Project brief originator	Lesley Ann Mather, Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton	
Director/Supervisor	James Ladocha (MOLA)	
Project Managers	Liz Muldowney (MOLA)	
Sponsor or funding body	Lend Lease	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	8 September 2014	
End date	10 September 2014	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Contents**
Physical	MOLA Northampton store ENN107642	Pottery
Paper		Site records
Digital		Survey data, report, photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)	
Title	Archaeological Evaluation at Towcester Road, Silverstone, Northamptonshire. September 2014	
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Archaeological evaluation at Towcester Road Silverstone, Northamptonshire September 2014

Abstract

Six trenches were excavated on land at Towcester Road, Silverstone. An undated ditch, a narrow linear gully and a pit were identified as well as a number of post-medieval furrows associated with agricultural cultivation

1 INTRODUCTION

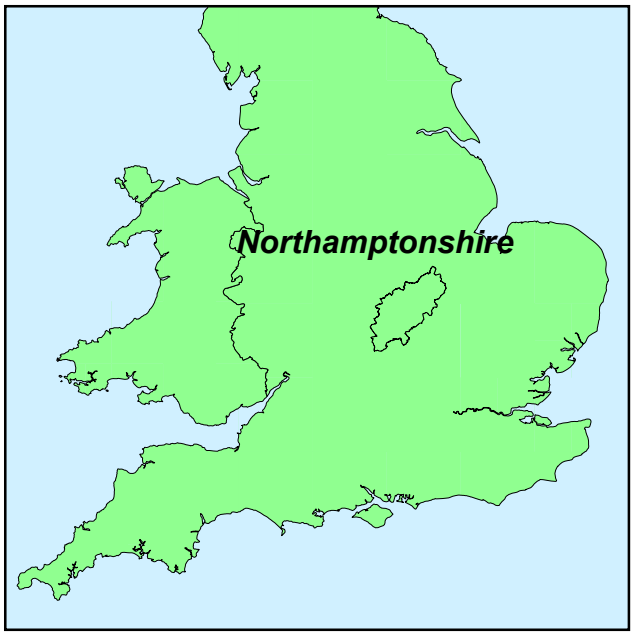
MOLA was commissioned by Lend Lease to carry out archaeological trial trenching at Towcester Road, Silverstone, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 67131 44710; Fig 1). The work is intended to inform, in advance of determination, a planning application for development of the land as a proposed school site. The works were carried out accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; DCLG 2012).

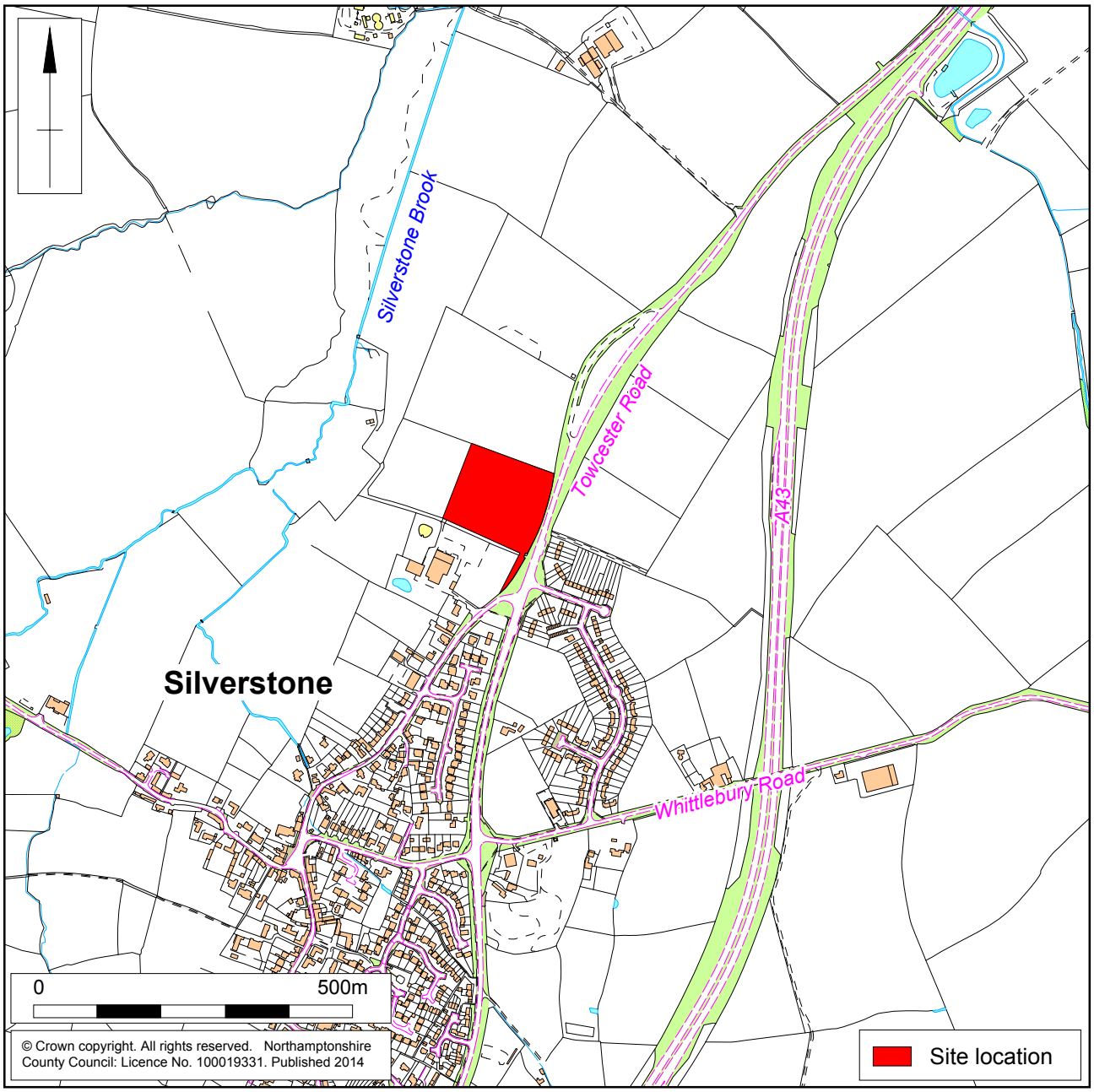
All works were undertaken in accordance with *the National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and followed a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA (Muldowney 2014).

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The proposed development area comprises 1.9ha of arable farmland. The site is located on the northern side of the village of Silverstone and comprises a rectangular portion of a larger field bounded to the east by Towcester Road, to the north and west by agricultural land and to the south by New Rookery Farm.

Topographically the site is generally flat at approximately 121m above Ordnance Datum. The geological mapping for the area shows bedrock geology as Great Oolite group-Sandstone, limestone and Argillaceous rocks, superficial geology is recorded as Diamicton Till (http://www.bgs.ac.uk accessed 09/07/14).





Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the investigation was to determine if archaeological remains were present within the application area.

The specific objectives of the project were to provide further information on the following:

- The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present at the proposed development site;
- The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present at the proposed development site.

The project addressed the research aims and made reference to the following documents as appropriate:

- *East Midlands Heritage: An updated research agenda and strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight *et al* 2012)

4 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The wider landscape around the development area is known to contain multi-period activity from the Iron Age through to the medieval period. There has been little development to the north of Silverstone and as such there is little known about the immediate site vicinity.

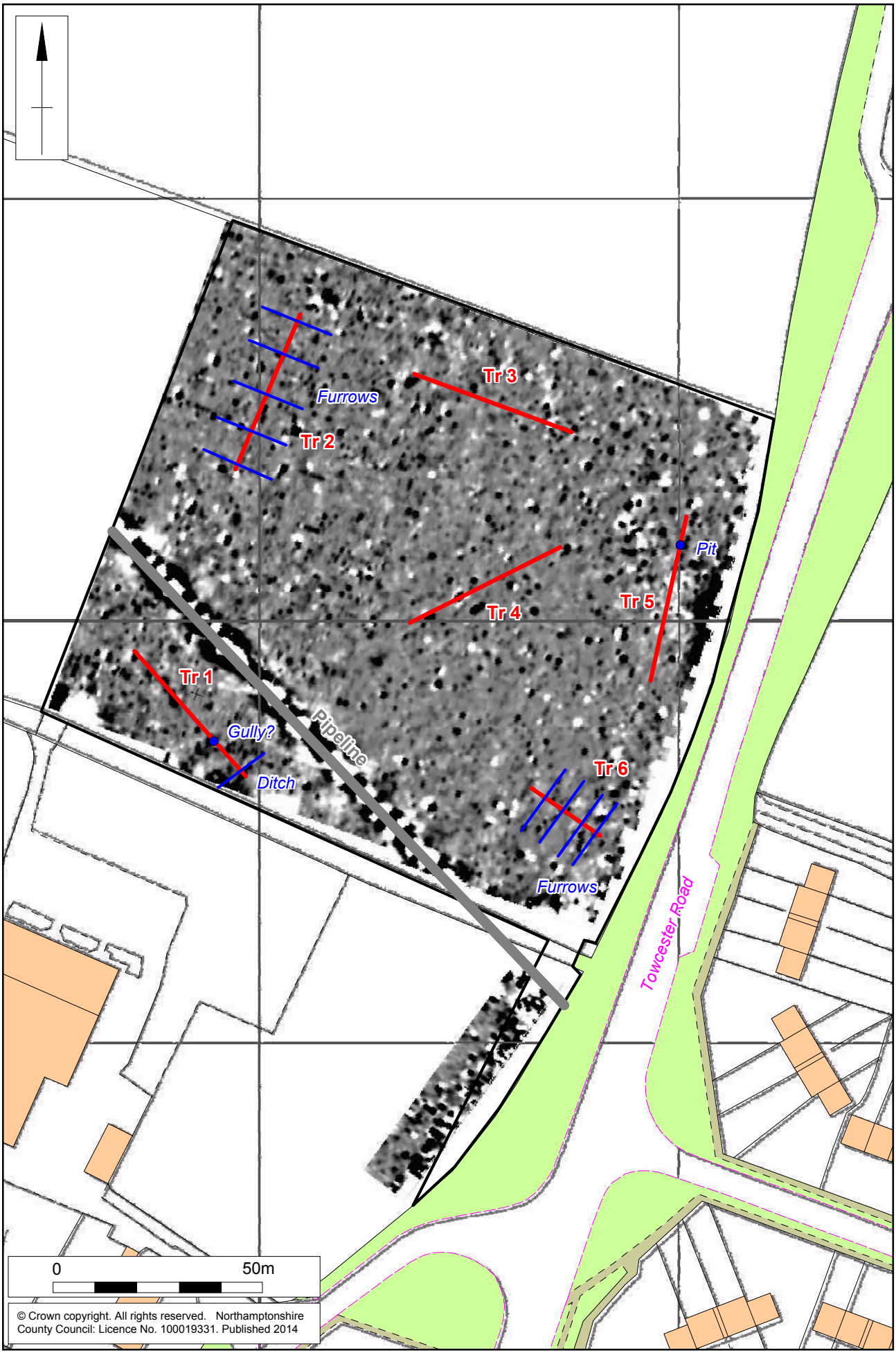
A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken by Headland Archaeology Ltd; this identified the presence of a pipeline type anomaly, but did not positively identify any archaeological features. It was unclear, prior to the evaluation, whether ground conditions affected the results of the survey or whether this was a true reflection of archaeological activity within the development area. A search of the main service providers (water, gas and electricity) failed to identify the ownership or nature of the apparatus within the development area.

5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A programme of evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Muldowney 2014) in response to a request by the Northamptonshire Country Council Archaeological Advisor. This required the excavation of six trenches, planned to investigate the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains within the development area. Five trial trenches 40m long and one trench 20m long were excavated within the available area, positioned to target the areas of maximum potential disturbance whilst maintaining a safe working distance from the unknown pipeline (Fig 2).

All six trenches were set out using differential GPS (Leica Viva) operating to an accuracy of +/- 0.05m.

All trenches were excavated using a tracked excavator, fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, operated under constant archaeological supervision.



Scale 1:1250

The excavated trenches Fig 2

The excavation and recording were carried out in accordance with MOLA guidelines and all records were created using MOLA pro-forma (MOLA 2014). Photographs were taken of all trenches and all relevant deposits on 35mm monochrome print film and high resolution digital images. Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008).

The trenches were excavated to the top of the natural geological horizon or the upper archaeological levels, whichever was the highest.

Levels in metres above Ordnance Datum were established for all trenches and excavated features using a dumpy level from temporary bench marks (TBMs) established using GPS.

Artefacts were recovered from individual contexts and stored and packed according to type.

All records and materials will be compiled in a structured archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991).

6 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Archaeological features were recorded in two of the six excavated trenches (Trenches 1 and 5). Trenches 3 and 4 contained no archaeological remains. The natural horizon across the majority of the site comprised Great Oolite group-sandstone, limestone and Argillaceous rocks (BGS 2014). Trenches 2 and 6 both show evidence of post -medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

Unless otherwise stated all recorded features cut the natural horizon and were sealed by subsoil. This soil horizon varied in hue and comprised firm silty clay between 0.04m and 0.14m thick. The subsoil was sealed by generally friable mid greyish-brown silty clay topsoil measuring approximately 0.25m thick. Full context information is included in appendix 1.

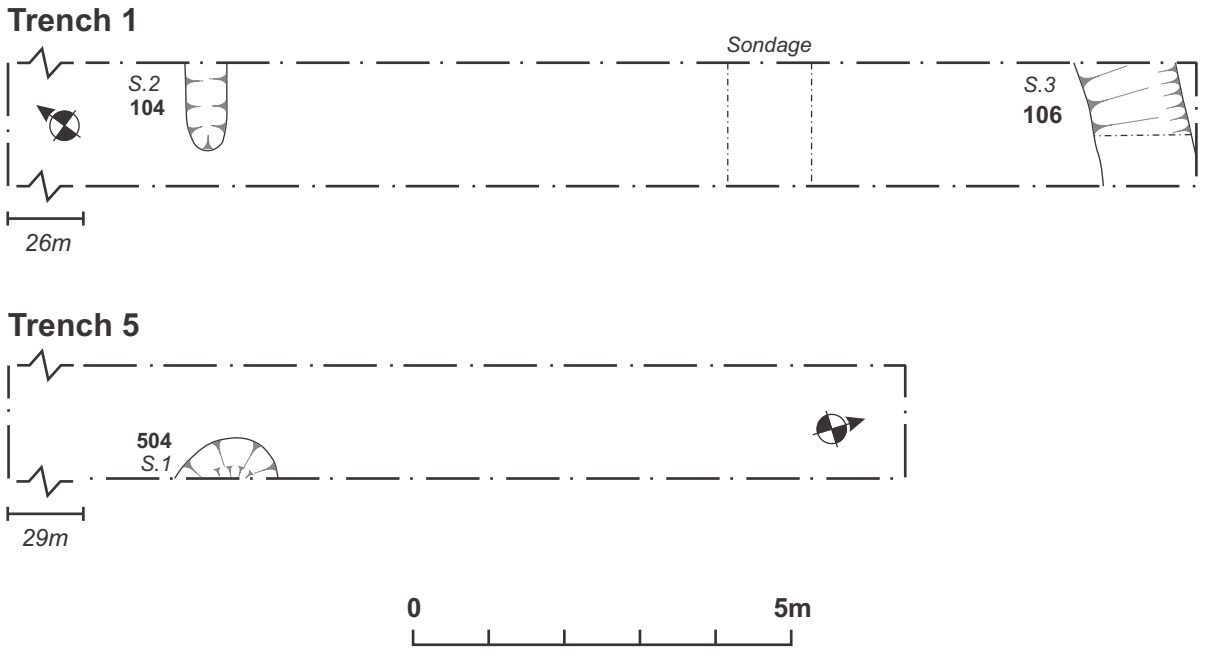
6.1 Trench 1

This trench, 40m long, 1.6m wide and 0.35m deep, was located towards the southern side of the development area and aligned north-west to south-east. It contained a ditch and a gully terminal.

A linear gully terminal [104] towards the south end of the trench was aligned north-east to south-west. It had a wide U-shaped profile, 0.60m wide and 0.26m deep, with gentle sloping sides and a concave base (Fig 3 and 5, Section 2). The fill contained no dating evidence. This feature broadly correlated to a curvilinear trace on the geophysical survey (Fig 2).

A possible linear ditch [106] was located at the southern limit of the trench and was aligned north-east to south-west. It had a wide V-shaped profile, 0.97m wide and 0.65m deep, with a moderately steep side to the north and almost vertical to the south and an uneven base (Fig 5, Section 3). The fill (107) was a firm, mid greyish- brown, silty clay with rare flint pebbles, similar to the inwashed deposits in the fissures seen in the geological horizon. Therefore, it is possible that [106] could be a natural feature rather than a constructed ditch.

Trench 1: gully [104] Fig 3



Scales 1:25 & 1:100 Trenches 1 and 5, plans and sections Fig 4

6.2 Trench 5

This trench was located towards the east side of the development area. It was 40m long and up to 0.29m deep, aligned north-west to south-east. A pit was present.

A pit [504] was located towards the north end of the trench. It measured over 0.60m long, 1.48m wide and 0.76m deep. It had a wide U- shaped profile with steep sides and a concave base. (Figs 2, 4, Section 1 and Fig 5). Fills (505) and (506) were very similar to each other in colour and composition, the result of natural weathering of the open pit over time. The upper fill (507) contained small amounts of charcoal and appeared to have more organic content which could indicate it formed as a result of slumping from the subsoil above.

Trench 5: pit [504] Fig 5

6.3 Trenches 2 and 6 (Post-medieval cultivation evidence)

Trench 2 was in the northern area of the site and was aligned north-east to south-west. It was 40m long and 0.42m deep. Trench 2 contained a series of furrows aligned east to west (Fig 2). All were steep- sided with a wide flat even base.

Trench 6 was in the south-east corner of the site, 20m long by 0.27m deep, aligned north-west to south-east. Four furrows were present within this trench aligned north-north-east to south-south-west, indicating that there might have been a headland or boundary between the two areas. Two sherds of post-medieval pottery recovered from two of the furrows.

7 THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 The pottery by Tora Hylton

Two sherds of post-medieval pottery with a combined weight of 28g were recovered from furrow deposits in Trench 6 (605, 607). Although undiagnostic they appear to represent kitchen wares (pancheons/bowls) in glazed red earthenware fabrics (CTS 426, 427), which date to the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Table 1: Summary of post-medieval pottery

Fill/Cut/Type	Fabric/CTS Code	Sherd count	Wt (g)	Comments
605/604/Furrow	Misc. glazed earthenwares/CTS 427	1	21	Base angle
607/606/Furrow	Iron glazed red earthenware/CTS 426	1	7	Base angle

7.2 Charred plant remains by Kirsty Beecham

The environmental sample recovered from fill 107 in ditch [106] was bulk floated and the flot collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned for charred plant remains, none were identified and the fine residue and flot were not retained.

8 CONCLUSION

A low volume of undated archaeological features were identified during the evaluation. The narrow terminating gully in Trench 1 might relate to a faint curvilinear anomaly identified in the geophysical survey (Fig 2) at the extreme southern limit of the development area.

The evaluation also identified the remains of post-medieval furrows relating to arable cultivation, on perpendicular alignments. These features were not identified in the geophysical survey. It is possible that the undated possible ditch in Trench 1 which was on the same alignment as the furrows in Trench 6 was part of a contemporary field boundary.

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October 2014

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height (aOD)**	**Depth & height of natural (aOD)**
1	**40mx 1.8m NW-SE**			**0.35m**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
101	Topsoil	Friable mid greyish-brown, silty-clay, occasional flint pebbles.	D:0.22m	-
102	Subsoil	Firm, mid yellowy- brown, silty clay with moderate chalk inclusions	D:0.13m	-
103	Natural	Firm, mid greyish-brown clay streaked with compact yellow-white chalk bands.	-	-
104	Gully	Linear cut of NE-SW orientation gentle sided with concave base.	L:1.50m W:0.60m D:0.26m	-
105	Fill of [104]	Firm, mid yellow-grey, silty clay, rare chalk flecks	L:1.50m W:0.60m D:0.26m	-
106	Ditch	Linear cut of NE-SW orientation, gentle sloping with uneven base	L:1.50m W:0.97m D:0.65m	-
107	Fill of [106]	Firm, mid greyish- brown, silty clay, rare flint pebbles.	L:1.50m W:0.97m D:0.65m	Sample 1

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height (aOD)**	**Depth & height of natural (aOD)**
2	**40mx1.8m NE-SW**			**0.42m**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
201	Topsoil	Friable, mid greyish-brown, silty clay. Occasional flint pebbles.	D:0.30m	-
202	Subsoil	Firm, mid yellowy- brown, silty clay. Occasional small pieces of chalk	D:0.12m	
203	Natural	Firm, light yellowy-brown, silty clay with flecks of chalk	-	-
204	Furrow	Linear cut on E-W alignment	-	-
205	Fill of [204]	Firm, mid yellowy- brown, silty clay. Occasional small pieces of chalk	-	-

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height (aOD)**	**Depth & height of natural (aOD)**
3	**40mx1.80m NW-SE**			**0.35m**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
301	Topsoil	Friable, mid brown, silty clay	D:0.24m	-
302	Subsoil	Firm, mid yellowy- brown, silty clay	D:0.11	
303	Natural	Firm, mid greyish- brown, clay, with bands of white streaky chalk.	-	-

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height (aOD)**	**Depth & height of natural (aOD)**
4	**40mx1.8m SW-NE**			**0.44m**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
401	Topsoil	Friable, mid brown, silty clay	D:0.30m	-
402	Subsoil	Firm, mid yellowy- brown, silty clay	D:0.14m	-
403	Natural	Firm, mid greyish -brown, clay, with bands of white streaky chalk.	-	-

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height (aOD)**	**Depth & height of natural (aOD)**
5	**40mx1.8m NE-SW**			**0.29m**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
501	Topsoil	Friable, mid brown, silty clay	D:0.20m	-
502	Subsoil	Firm, mid yellowy- brown, silty clay	D:0.09m	-
503	Natural	Firm, mid greyish- brown, clay, with bands of while streaky chalk.	-	-
504	pit	Circular cut. Steep- sided with concave base.	L:0.60m W:1.48m D:0.76m	-
505	Fill of [504]	Very compact, mid greyish - brown, silty clay with moderate chalk flecks	L:0.20m W:0.74m D:0.18m	-
506	Fill of [504]	Compact, mid greyish- brown, silty clay. Rare small flint pebbles	L:0.60m W:1.20m D:0.28m	-
507	Fill of [504]	Firm, mid greyish- brown, silty clay. Rare charcoal and chalk flecks	L:0.60m W:1.46m D:0.30m	-

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height (aOD)**	**Depth & height of natural (aOD)**
6	**20mx1.8m NW-SE**			**0.27m**
Context	***Context type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
601	Topsoil	Friable, mid brown, silty clay	D:0.23m	-
602	Subsoil	Firm, mid yellowy -brown, silty clay	D:0.04m	-
603	Natural	Firm, mid greyish- brown, clay.	-	-
604	Furrow	Linear, orientated E-W shallow with flat even base	-	-
605	Fill of [604]	Firm, dark grey -brown, moderate charcoal inclusions	-	Pmed pottery
606	Furrow	Same as [604]	-	-
607	Fill of [606]	Same as (605)	-	Pmed pottery
608	Furrow	Same as [604]	-	-
609	Fill of [608]	Same as (605)	-	-

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