



Archaeological evaluation on land at Potton Road, Biggleswade Bedfordshire October 2014

Report No. 14/214

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Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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at Potton Road, Biggleswade
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No. molanort1-194417	
Project title	Archaeological evaluation on land at Potton Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire		
Short description	Ten trenches were excavated by MOLA Northampton to investigate the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains within the development area. Trenches 4 and 5 were placed to investigate ferrous object readings found during the geophysical survey. Trench 11 was not opened as permission had not been given to cross the neighbouring field, it was agreed that this would be left till a later phase. Two out of ten trenches contained archaeological features, with a third containing a single natural feature. Two pits and a gully were recorded, with the pit in trench 3 and the gully in trench 2 both containing iron objects. A single flake of struck flint was found in the topsoil of trench 3.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site Status			
Previous work	Geophysical survey (Chinnock 2013)		
Current land use	Agricultural		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Pits and gully, unknown date.		
Significant finds	Iron nail, struck flint.		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Bedfordshire		
Site address	Land at Potton Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire		
Post code	SG18 0BF		
OS co-ordinates	NGR 519900 245900		
Area (sq m/ha)	11 hectares		
Height aOD	31.08m to 31.87m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	James Fairclough		
Project Managers	Liz Muldowney (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	Bellway Homes		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	21 October 2014		
End date	23 October 2014		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	MOLA Northampton	Struck flint, iron nail and iron fragment	
Paper	store	Site records	
Digital	BEDFM:2012.29	Survey data, report, photographs	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	Archaeological Evaluation on land at Potton Road, Biggleswade Bedfordshire. October 2014		
Serial title & volume	14/214		
Author(s)	James Fairclough		
Page numbers	15 pages, 5 figs		
Date	November 2014		

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Archaeological evaluation on land at Potton Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire October 2014

Abstract

Ten trenches were excavated by MOLA Northampton to investigate the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains within the development area. Trenches 4 and 5 were placed to investigate ferrous object readings found during the geophysical survey. Trench 11 was not opened as permission had not been given to cross the neighbouring field, it was agreed that this would be left till a later phase. Two out the ten trenches contained archaeological features, with a third containing a single natural feature. Two pits and a gully were recorded, with the pit in trench 3 and the gully in trench 2 both containing iron objects. A single flake of struck flint was found in the topsoil of trench 3.

1 INTRODUCTION

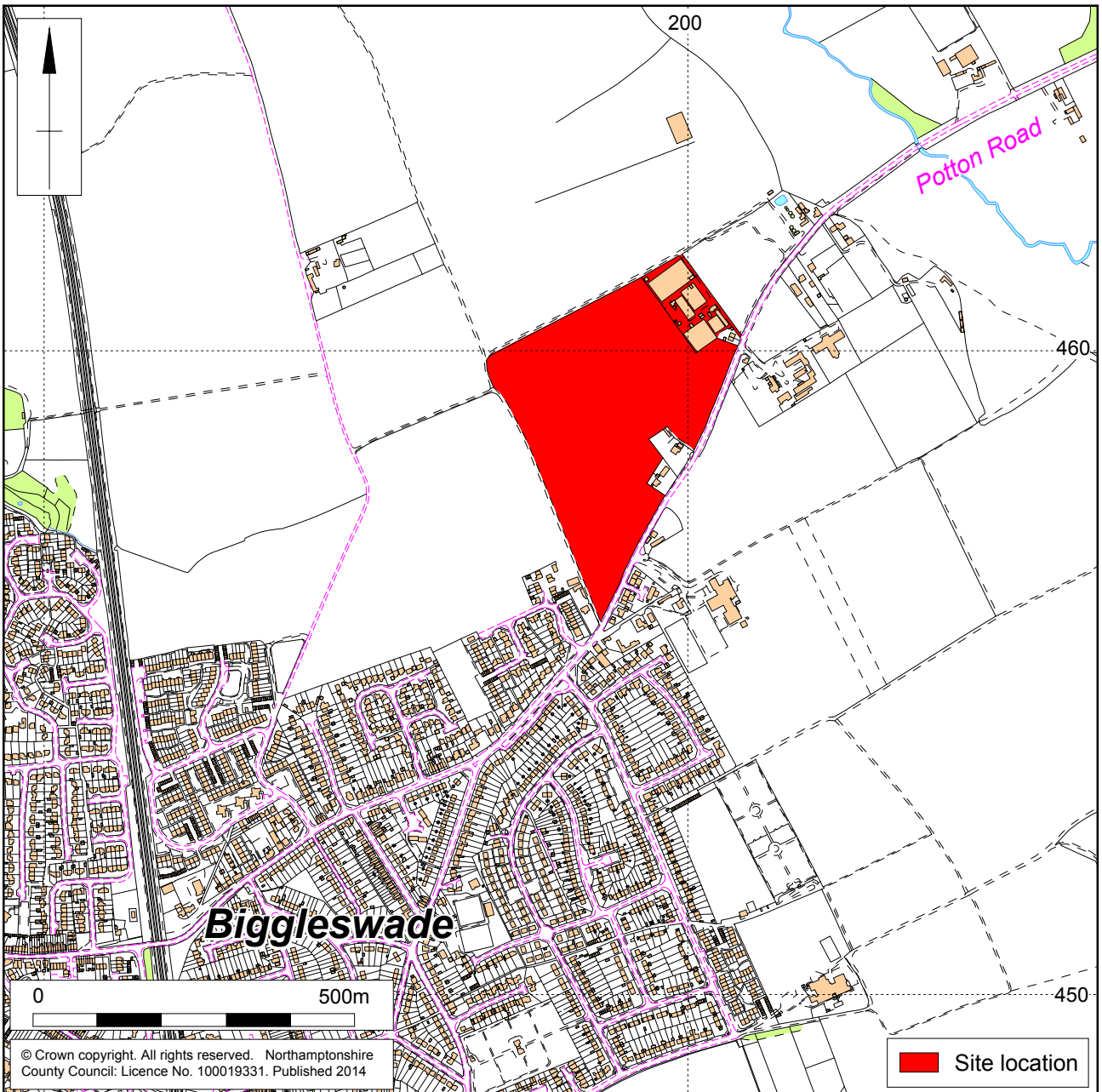
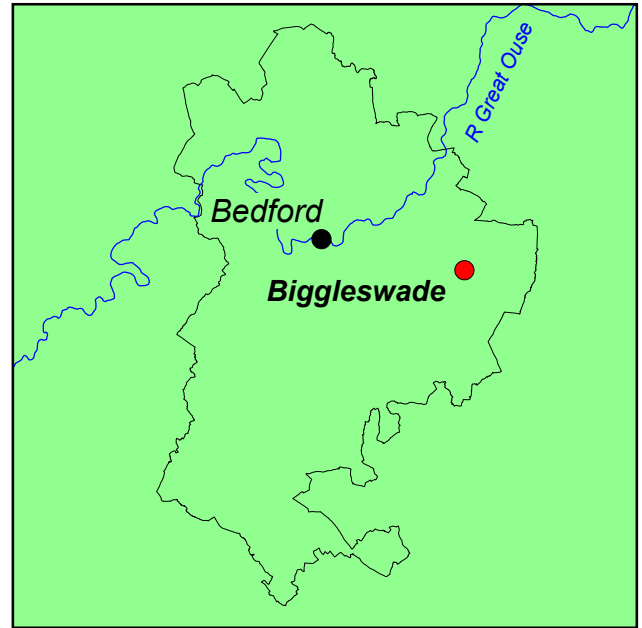
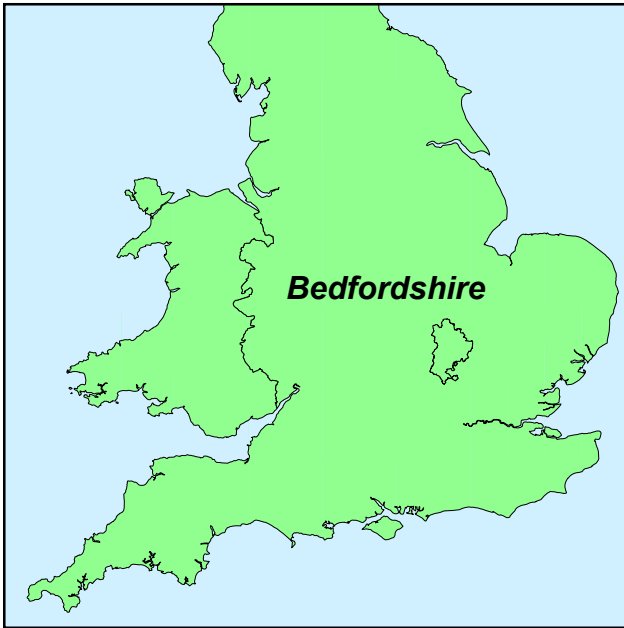
MOLA was commissioned by Bellway Homes to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land off Potton Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire (TL 1990 4590, Fig 1). The site is allocated for residential development under the 2010 Local Development Framework for the Former Mid Bedfordshire Area produced by Central Bedfordshire Council (Site HA1).

All works were undertaken in accordance with Policy 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012) and the Local Validation Checklist for Development in Central Bedfordshire, as well as a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA (Yates 2014)

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site occupies a triangular area of land, approximately 11ha in area to the north-east of Biggleswade. The site is bounded by open fields to the north and east with buildings along High Street to the south.

Geology comprises the sandstone of the Woburn Sands formation overlain by 1st and 2nd River Terrace Sands and Gravels. Current land use comprises an arable and pasture fields, with an area of disused nursery in the north-eastern corner of the site.



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 as follows:

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

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

- *Research and Archaeology, A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 1, Resource Assessment* (Glazebrook 1997)
- *Research and Archaeology, A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 2, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000)
- *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003)
- *Bedfordshire Archaeology, Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake et al 2007)
- *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

4 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The development area lies outside the historic core of Biggleswade, but in an area that contains a number of archaeological interests. Of principal relevance is an Historic Environment Record entry for undated enclosures identified from cropmarks within the north-western corner of the site (HER 15079). The archaeological background below is drawn from the HER data and readily available resources. HER numbers are given in brackets, those prefaced EBD refer to Events- previous archaeological works.

A number of archaeological interventions have taken place on land surrounding the site. Works immediately opposite the site identified and recorded two clusters of Neolithic and Bronze Age pits (13544, EBD624 and EBD397; GSB 2007, Albion 2008 and Jones 2009). Extensive evaluation to the east of Biggleswade identified Bronze Age funerary remains and areas of Iron Age settlement and activity (EBD359 and EBD429, 3544, Oxford Archaeology 2033 and 2004). Evaluation for the Boddington Gardens Flood Alleviation Scheme to the west of the site identified two Iron Age pits (7842, EBD832, Patenall and Corlyle 2010).

Early prehistoric

Immediately to the north of the site, a possible cursus monument was identified from cropmarks (16818). Only the eastern end of the monument was identified and it may extend into the development site. This appears similar in form to a second cursus monument identified 500m to the north (644), extending to the north-west, where it was partly investigated during construction of the sewage treatment works. A cluster of other cropmark features occur around this cursus.

Excavation in 2009 in the field opposite the site, to the east of the B1040 (Jones 2009 & Chapman 2011) located a single cluster of Neolithic pits containing an assemblage of Peterborough Ware pottery.

Iron Age/Roman

A D-shaped enclosure and two smaller rectangular enclosures within the north-western corner of the development area (15079) may represent remains of Iron Age or Roman date. Another enclosure and a short stretch of pit alignment have been identified at Furzenhall Road (15101).

A complex of cropmarks identified from aerial photographs 600m to the north-east of the site may represent a series of rectilinear enclosures and associated features (509). Some may be Iron Age or Roman in date, but many probably relate to the deserted medieval village of Kinwick.

Saxon/medieval

At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086AD the Parish of Biggleswade with the hamlets of Stratton and Holme lay within the Hundred of Biggleswade (Page 1908). Prior to Domesday the Manor of Biggleswade was held by Archbishop Stigand, but at the time of the Domesday Survey it belonged to Ralph de Lisle, when it was assessed as 10 hides. In 1132 Henry I granted Biggleswade manor to Alexander bishop of Lincoln and his successors as an endowment for the cathedral, in whose ownership it was retained until the 16th century.

The Manor was rented to a series of under-tenants of the Bishops of Lincoln, among which the Le Blunt or Blundell family appears to have been prominent (Page 2008). Simon Blundell and Emma his wife held lands and rents in Biggleswade in 1276, and some years later William Blundell was holding there. In 1304 on the death of Alan Blundell an inquisition shows that he held land there. In the 15th century the Enderbys also were tenants of the bishop. Maud Bothe, widow of John Enderby, held 10 messuages and 200 acres of land in 1474, and her son Richard Enderby held six messuages and land in 1488.

Some 600m to the north-east of the site a series of cropmarks may relate to the deserted medieval village of Kinwick (509), which in the 1086 Domesday survey was held by Saint Edmund's Abbey in Bury Suffolk, afterwards the abbey of Bury St Edmunds. Earthworks perhaps representing medieval fields and some other more enigmatic features are present to the north of Biggleswade Hospital (1615). Further agricultural earthworks are present to the east (3543) and south (3544).

There was a deer park in Biggleswade mentioned in documents of 1777 and 1838 (13929), and this may well be medieval in origin.

Post-medieval/modern

In 1547 the Bishop of Lincoln transferred the Manor to Edward VI (Page 1908). It was leased in the time of Henry VIII to William Steward, until at least 1575. In 1604 it became part of the jointure of Queen Anne wife of James I and at a later date of Henrietta wife of Charles I. In 1689 the Manor was held by Lord Carteret and in 1772 Robert, Earl Granville, became lessee. In 1807 it was sold to Sir Francis Willes, who bequeathed it to Peter Harvey Lovell on his death in 1827.

At Turnpike Farm there is the site of a former toll house (4324) associated with the Biggleswade to Potton and Ramsey Turnpike road, constructed in 1755. Turnpike Farm itself (5443) is a Grade II Listed Building. At Shortmead House there is an area of landscaped gardens shown on Bryant's 1826 map of Bedfordshire (9439). Barn

Field is thought to be the site of an old barn (13919). Other activity in the vicinity of the site includes a post-medieval sand pit near Furzenhall Riding School (13923) and two Beer Houses (13960 and 13961).

Historic maps from 1885 onwards show the area as open fields, the only development being the construction of the nursery in the mid 20th century.

Remains associated with WW2 military activity within Biggleswade include a tank trap (17839), Home Guard firing range (17846) and hutted camp (17847).

5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The programme of evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Yates 2014). This required the excavation of eleven trenches, planned to investigate the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains within the development area. Trenches 4 and 5 were placed to investigate ferrous object readings found during the geophysical survey (Chinnock 2013). Trench 11 was not opened as permission had not been given to cross the neighbouring field, it was agreed that this would be left till a later phase.

The trenches were set out using differential GPS (Leica Viva) operating to an accuracy of +/- 0.05m. No variation to the original trench plan was required.

All trenches were excavated using a tracked excavator, fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, operated under constant archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated to 1.8m wide and 50m long. Trench 9 was shortened due to a fence line.

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, high resolution digital images were also taken. 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

Levels in metres above Ordnance Datum were established for all trenches using GPS and for all 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 three of the excavated trenches. The natural horizon, across the whole site, was a firm, mid red-orange mix of sand and gravel. The subsoil was a firm, mid grey-brown sandy silt and was generally around 0.1m thick. Topsoil was a friable, dark brown-grey sandy silt generally 0.35m deep. Subsoil was not present in trenches 3,4,6 and 7. Only three trenches contained features. Trench 1 contained a single natural feature; trench 2 contained two archaeological features and trench 3 contained a single pit and natural rooting. Full context descriptions can be found in appendix 1.

6.1 Trench 1

This trench was located in the southernmost corner of the site. It was 50m long and 0.4m deep, aligned north-east to south-west. It contained what appeared to be natural feature, most likely caused by tree rooting.

Feature 106 was located towards the south-west end of trench 1. It was 1.25m wide and 0.39m deep, with moderately curving sides and an irregular base. Its full extent was not visible within the trench (Fig 3, section 1). Its lower fill (105) was a firm, light grey-yellow sand, this was partially overlain by the upper fill (104) a firm, mid grey-brown silty sand. No finds were present.

6.2 Trench 2

This trench was located 18m to the north-north-east of trench 1. It was 50m long and 0.35m deep, aligned north-west to south-east. A pit and gully were recorded, with an iron fragment being found in gully 208.

Pit 206 lay towards the south-east end of the trench and measured 1.4m wide and 0.13m deep, its full extent was not visible. It was circular in plan with gently curving sides and a flat base (Fig 3, section 2). The lower fill (205) was a friable, light brown-yellow sand, and appeared to be a naturally accumulated deposit that had formed on the south-east edge of the pit. This was sealed by the upper fill (204) which was a firm, mid grey-brown silty sand.

Gully 208 was located near the centre of the trench, aligned north-east to south-west. It was 0.67m wide and 0.19m deep, with gradually curving sides and a concave base (Fig 3, section 4, Fig 4). Its fill (207) was a firm, mid grey-brown silty sand. A continuation of gully 208 was not visible in trench 3. Fill (207) contained a small iron fragment.

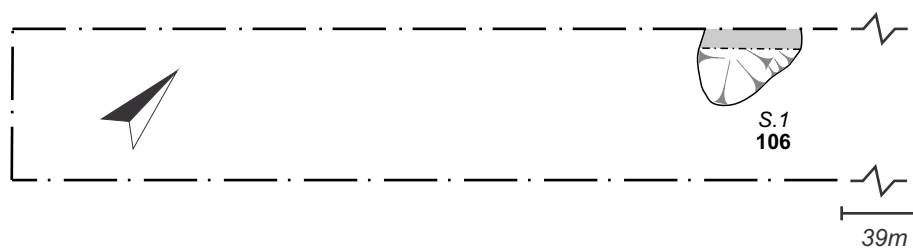


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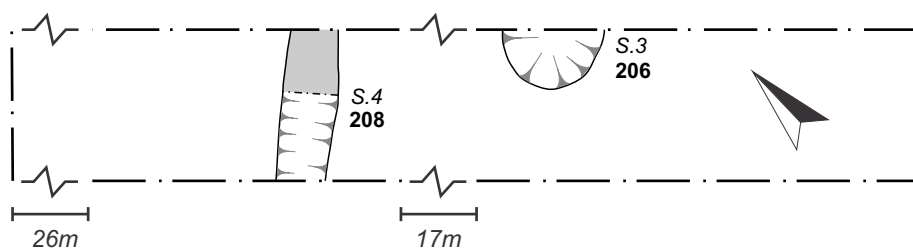
The excavated trenches, showing geophysical survey results

Fig 2

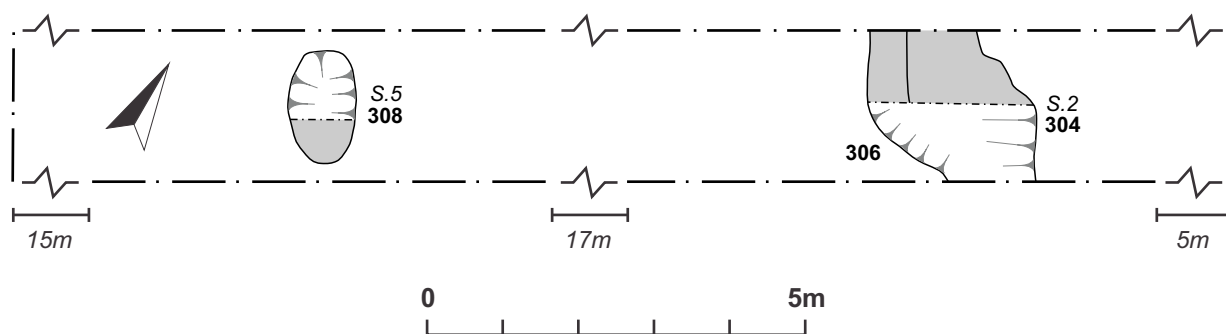
Trench 1



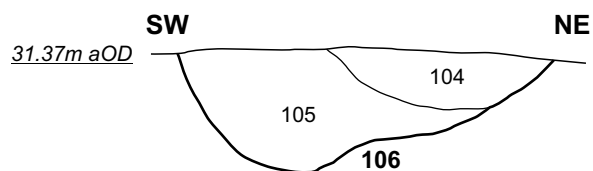
Trench 2



Trench 3



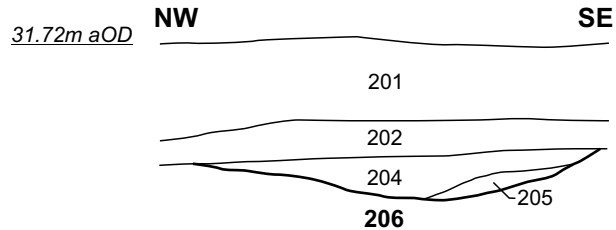
Section 1



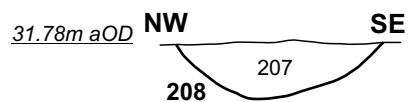
Section 2



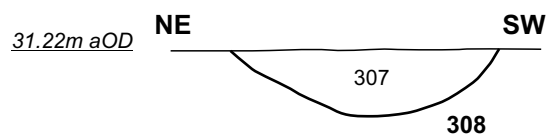
Section 3



Section 4



Section 5





Gully 208, looking north-east Fig 4

6.3 Trench 3

This trench was located 60m north of trench 1. It was 50m long and up to 0.47m deep, aligned north-east to south-west. A pit and what appeared to be tree rooting were recorded. A piece of worked flint was found in the topsoil (301).

Pit 308, which lay near the centre of the trench, was 1.5m long, by 0.9m wide, and 0.21m deep. It was oval in plan with gently curving sides and a flat base (Fig 3, section 5, Fig 5). The fill (307) was a firm, dark brown-orange silty sand, and included a single iron nail.

An area of root disturbance at the north-east end of the trench was made up of two visible parts 304 and 306 (Fig 3, section 2). One part 304 was 1.6m wide and 0.25m deep with very irregular sides and uneven base, and a fill (303) of friable, mid grey-brown silty sand. The other part 306 was 0.6m wide and 0.25m deep with a U-shaped profile, and a fill (305) of firm, dark grey-brown silty sand. It is possible that feature [306] possibly could have been archaeological, but had been heavily truncated by the root disturbance 304.

Two samples (Samples 1 and 2) were taken from feature 304 and pit 308. The samples contained only highly comminuted fragments of charcoal, neither produced any charred plant macrofossils, no further analysis was necessary.



Pit 308, looking south-east Fig 5

7 THE FINDS

7.1 Flint by Andy Chapman

A single worked flint, from the topsoil (301) in Trench 3, is a blade-like flake, 35mm long by 9-14mm wide, in light grey opaque flint, with edge damage. It has been struck from a prepared core with previous blade-like removals. This piece may date to the early Neolithic.

7.2 Metalwork by Tora Hylton

Two undated iron objects were recovered from features present within Trenches 2 and 3.

A vestige of a flat-sectioned tapered strip was recovered from Gully 208 (Trench 2). The strip has a curved profile and is partially covered in corrosion products, both terminals are missing, making identification impossible. A complete hand forged nail with a flat sub-circular head and a tapered square-sectioned shank was recovered from Pit 308 (Trench 3). The nail measures 57mm in length and the shank is clenched at right angles, indicating that it had been used.

8 CONCLUSION

The evaluation produced very little archaeological evidence, but an area of activity could be seen in the southern area of the site. Although not all archaeological, Trenches 1, 2, and 3, were the only trenches to contain features of any kind. In Trench 1 what appeared to be a natural feature [106] was present towards the south-west of the trench. Trench 3 contained tree root disturbance.

There were three features of archaeological interest, although they did not contain dateable evidence. Pit [206] was very clear in plan and showed no evidence of damage. Gully [208] and pit [308], both contained non-dated iron fragments.

Previous work in the field opposite the site (Jones 2009 & Chapman 2011) had revealed a cluster of Neolithic pits. Although there was no continuation of this found in this evaluation, a single struck flint was discovered in the topsoil of Trench 3, suggesting that prehistoric activity was present in the vicinity.

The enclosures identified by cropmarks and the geophysics results (Chinnock 2013) are found in the north-west corner of the site and have yet to be investigated. It is therefore unclear as to their relationship with the limited archaeological remains identified in this first phase of evaluation.

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MOLA Northampton
November 2014

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	50m x 1.8m, NE-SW	519852.53 245646.03	31.80m	0.45m deep 31.35m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.35m thick	-
102	Subsoil	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.10m thick	-
103	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		
104	Fill of [106]	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.		-
105	Fill of [106]	Firm light grey-yellow sand with occasional small sub-round flint.		-
106	Natural feature	Sub-circular with moderately curving sides and a concave base.	Length 1.1m, width 1.25m, and depth 0.39m	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
2	50m x 1.8m, NW-SE	519861.77 245667.22	31.79m	0.38m deep 31.41m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.30m thick	-
202	Subsoil	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.10m thick (South-east end only)	-
203	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		
204	Fill of pit [206]	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small angular flint.		-
205	Fill of pit [206]	Friable light brown-yellow sand with occasional small angular flint.		-
206	Pit	Circular with gently curving sides and a flat base.	Length 0.70m+, width 1.40m and depth 0.13m	

207	Fill of gully [208]	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.19m thick	Fe Object, Sample 3
208	Gully	Linear orientated north-east/south-west. Gradually curving sides and a concave base.	Length 1.8m+, width 0.67m and depth 0.19m	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
3	50m x 1.8m, NE-SW	519864.34 245702.71	31.64m	0.47m deep 31.17m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.35m thick	Struck Flint
302	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		
303	Fill of rooting [304]	Friable mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small stone and flint, as well as occasional charcoal flecks.	0.25m thick	Sample 1
304	Rooting	Sub-circular with irregular sides and an uneven base.	Length 1.80m+, width 1.60m and depth 0.25m	
305	Fill of feature [306]	Firm dark grey-brown silty sand with occasional small stone and flint.	0.25m thick	-
306	Possible feature	Linear(?) with a U-shaped profile.	Width 0.60m and depth 0.25m	
307	Fill of pit [308]	Firm dark brown-orange silty sand with occasional small stones and flints.	0.21m thick	Iron nail, Sample 2
308	Pit	Oval with gently curving sides and a flat base.	Length 1.50m, width 0.90m and depth 0.21m	

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
4	50m x 1.8m, NW-SE	519832.77 245721.44	31.44m	0.43m deep 31.01m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
401	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.43m thick	-

402	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		
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Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
5	50m x 1.8m, NE-SW	519816.34 245770.41	31.09m	0.45m deep 30.64m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
501	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.37m thick	-
502	Subsoil	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.05m thick	-
503	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
6	50m x 1.8m, NW-SE	519927.85 245725.79	31.76m	0.40m deep 31.36m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
601	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.32m thick	-
602	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
7	50m x 1.8m, NE-SW	519880.74 245775.86	31.26m	0.41m deep 30.85m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
701	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.32m thick	-
702	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
8	50m x 1.8m, NE-SW	519891.98 245823.83	31.20m	0.35m deep 30.85m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
801	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.32m thick	-
802	Subsoil	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.05m thick	-
803	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
9	45m x 1.8m, E-W	519963.35 245891.68	31.38m	0.50m deep 30.88m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
901	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.32m thick	-
902	Subsoil	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.14m thick	-
903	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
10	50m x 1.8m, NW-SE	520002.90 245862.91	31.27m	0.45m deep 30.82m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
1001	Topsoil	Friable dark brown-grey silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.36m thick	-
1002	Subsoil	Firm mid grey-brown silty sand with occasional small sub-angular flint.	0.10m thick	-
1003	Natural	Firm mid red-orange sand/gravel mix.		



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