



global environmental solutions

Land of Ruyton Road, Baschurch, Shropshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

SLR Ref : 406-04964-00001

April 2014



with Meres & Mosses
Housing Association

Version: Rev 1

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Purpose of document	1
1.2 Planning Background.....	1
2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	2
2.1 Location and land use	2
2.2 Geology and topography.....	2
2.3 Archaeological and historical background	2
3.0 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY	4
3.1 Aim.....	4
3.2 Trial Trenching.....	4
4.0 RESULTS	6
4.1 Trench 1.....	6
4.2 Trench 2.....	7
4.3 Trench 3.....	9
4.4 Trench 4.....	13
5.0 ASSESSMENT AND IMPACT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE	15
6.0 CLOSURE.....	16

FIGURES

Figure 1 Site location.....	1
Figure 2 1884 OS Map (1:5000)	3
Figure 3 Aerial photograph of ring ditch HER 04086, north of the application site.....	4
Figure 4 Trench location plan	5
Figure 5 Trench 1 facing SE	6
Figure 6 Trench 2 plan and sections of archaeological features.....	7
Figure 7 SW facing shot of Pit [209], with Gully [207] at rear of picture	8
Figure 8 Trench 3 facing SE	8
Figure 9 Trench 3 plan and sections of archaeological features.....	9
Figure 10 SSW facing section of ditch [305]	10
Figure 11 West facing section of pit [313].....	11
Figure 12 W facing section of gully [309]	12
Figure 13 SE facing shot of gully [311].....	12
Figure 14 South facing shot of Trench 4	13
Figure 15 Trench 4 plan and section of archaeological feature.....	14
Figure 16 South facing section of Ditch [406].....	14
Figure 17 Trench plan and archaeological features superimposed over proposed housing	16

Status of report: Final

Author	Marcus Headifen BA
Date	28 th April 2014
Reviewed	Tim Malim BA, FSA, MIfA
Date	29 th April 2014
Comments	Typographical errors and sense of English amended
Revisions	6 th May 2014
Final issued	7 th May 2014

The SLR staff involved in the implementation of this project were:

Tim Malim BA, FSA, MIfA	Technical Director	QA and Project Management
Marcus Headifen BA	Archaeologist	Fieldwork and report writing
Caroline Malim BA, PGCE, Mphil	Senior Illustrator	Report Drawings

Acknowledgements

SLR is grateful for the assistance of James Wood and Tim Charnley (Saxonby) and Andy Wigley (Shropshire Council) during the course of the site works.

The investigation was designed and directed by Tim Malim (SLR). Fieldwork was undertaken by Marcus Headifen (SLR Consulting).

SLR is a Registered Organisation with the IfA, an audited status which confirms that work is carried out to the highest standards of the profession. SLR operates a quality management system to help ensure all projects are managed in a professional and transparent manner, which enables it to qualify for ISO 9001. SLR is a member of the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers.

SUMMARY

In April 2014, four trenches were excavated on Land to the North of Ruyton Road, Baschurch, (centred on NGR 342419 322238), to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site for Saxonby. The results of the archaeological evaluation were a small post-medieval pit, four undated ditches, two undated pits and a large undated ditch, which may all be associated with the Bronze Age ring-ditch in the adjacent field.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of document

This document contains a report on the results of an archaeological site investigation. It forms a supporting statement to a planning application for residential development.

1.2 Planning Background

Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Team has requested an archaeological evaluation of the site prior to determination of any planning application. In response Saxonby¹ (the client) which is currently in the process of making an application (ref. 14/00216/OUT) for residential development (20 affordable dwellings), commissioned SLR Consulting to design a scheme, documented as a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a programme of archaeological work which is in accordance with NPPF 141, and which has been approved by the planning authority².

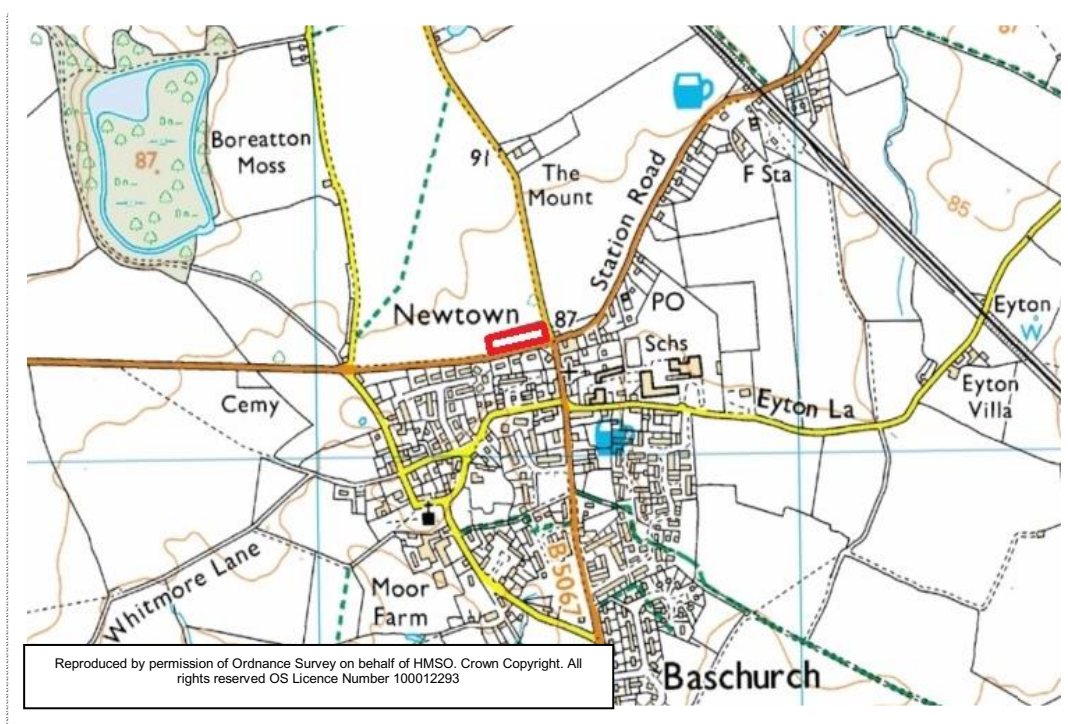


Figure 1 Site location

¹ with Meres and Mosses Housing Association

² SLR Consulting April 2014 *Land North of Ruyton Road, Baschurch, Shropshire: Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation*

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 Location and land use

The site is located to the north of Ruyton Road, and to the west of the road from Weston Lullingfields to Prescott, on the northern side of the village of Baschurch (Figure 1). The site comprises 0.445 ha of unimproved pasture, which has been used to keep horses on, and had not been ploughed “within living memory.”³

2.2 Geology and topography

The site is located at c. 87m AOD, with a very slight rise in the north east of the site, and a slight hollow in the west of the site. The site is on Devensian glaciofluvial till, overlying Bollin formation mudstone.

2.3 Archaeological and historical background

The site is located at the crossroads between the B4397 Rowton Road, a turnpike built in the 19th century to replace the original road that was located further to the north next to Boreatton Moss, and the B5067 (Figure 2), which extends to the north to Weston Lullingfields and Stanwardine, and to the south through Prescott, possibly fording the River Perry at Adcote and onto Shrawardine. This road is of an uncertain age, though it has been suggested it may be of Roman origin⁴.

The site lies c.0.25km north-east from the historic core of Baschurch, (which was around the parish church of All Saints) and 0.15km north of the later medieval planned settlement of Newton, which was based around the crossroads to the east⁵ of the church. The application site is rectangular in shape, at c.36m NNW-SSE by c.120m ENE-WSW, with the shorter side running parallel to the B5067. The shape of the field, as seen in Figure 2, is similar in size to the properties to the south and east, and it is due to this information that the site has been included as part of the medieval development at Newton.

³ Pers Comm, Charles Lloyd (Landowner)

⁴ T.G. Hill 2009 The possible significance of the –wardine and –wic Place-names in Shropshire *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society*

⁵ Buteux, V 2005 Archaeological assessment of Baschurch, Shropshire *Extensive Urban Survey - The Central Marches Historic Towns Survey 1992-6*



Figure 2
1884 OS Map (1:5000)

The application site is located within a landscape that also includes several prehistoric monuments. A Bronze Age round barrow cemetery (SMR 1016824) is located 1km to the SW of the application site, roughly halfway between Ruyton Road and Whitmore Lane, while 1.5km NNE of the site is The Berth (SMR 1004770) a prehistoric swamp hillfort. There are also several cropmarks within 1km of the application site, especially in the fields to the north. These include several ring ditches (HER numbers. 04038, 04086, 02396, 02397, 02398 and 02454) and possible associated field systems (e.g. Figure 3).

While there have been several archaeological investigations in and around Baschurch in the past two decades, using modern archaeological recording techniques, most have been within the historical core of Baschurch and Newton, and have had limited recovery of Medieval and Post-Medieval features. An evaluation by Marches Archaeology in 2001 0.6km west of the application site, at SJ419221, found a number of prehistoric pits. The function of these are unknown, however it has “been suggested, that the pits encountered may in fact have been grave cuts, bone preservation on the site being poor”⁶.

⁶ <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archsearch/record.jsf?titleId=1824900>



Figure 3
Aerial photograph of ring ditch HER 04086, north of the application site

3.0 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim

The aim of the evaluation was to characterize the nature, date, extent and condition of preservation of any archaeological remains within the site.

3.2 Trial Trenching

3.2.1 Strategy and general approach

Four trenches were laid out to investigate the buried archaeology (Figure 4). Trenches 1 – 3 were all 30m in length and laid out on a roughly NW–SE and NE-SW alignment, designed to determine the extent of the prehistoric landscape. Trench 4 was 17m long on a N-S alignment parallel to the West Lullingfield - Baschurch road, and located to test the hypothesis of whether the site was part of the medieval development of Newton, through the survival of burgage plot boundaries, both E-W and N-S. Trench 3 was later extended to reveal the full width of ditch [305].



Figure 4
Trench location plan

The trial trenches were excavated on 10th April 2014 using a mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, under the direction of an experienced archaeologist. The machine excavator removed the topsoil and overburden down to natural geological deposits, and thereafter manual cleaning, investigation and recording was undertaken from 11th – 16th December.

The investigation was guided by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* 2008.

3.2.2 Fieldwork and recording

Trenches were recorded along one long face to illustrate the stratigraphic sequence, a Trench Recording Form was completed for each trench, and each was drawn and digitally photographed before backfilling. Deposits and modern intrusions were recorded using a proforma recording system, and fully cross-referenced.

The drawn record includes trench plans at 1:50 and 1:10 for sections of the trenches and from the features. The altitude was established at 87m AOD from plans obtained from the surveyors.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 30m in length and laid out on a NW – SE alignment, the northern end of the trench being at the NW corner of the application site (Figure 5). It was excavated into a small depression located along the western edge of the application site, to a maximum depth of 0.8m. The topsoil (101) was a 0.3 – 0.5m thick firm dark grey brown slightly sandy silt, with a few small fragments of post medieval brick and tile, which overlay (102) the 0.15 – 0.3m thick subsoil, a light orange brown firm sandy slit. This overlay the natural glacial till (103), which varied greatly along the trench, from a mid red orange sand and grit to a yellow orange with frequent rounded gravel and cobbles.



Figure 5
Trench 1 facing SE

The trench was not fully excavated to natural geology, but within the deeper excavated areas there was no buried archaeology, nor were any residual finds retrieved. As seen in Figure 3, this trench was located close to HER 04086, described as a Bronze Age ring-ditch or burial monument⁷.

⁷ <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archsearch/record.jsf?titleId=71255>

4.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 30m long, located roughly between the metal gate and small wooden shed in the middle of the field, on a northeast – southwest axis. On average it was machine excavated to 0.5m deep, with a 0.35m thick dark grey brown sandy silt topsoil (201) overlying a 0.15m thick mid brown silty sand subsoil (202), which overlay the mid red orange sand and gravel natural (203) glacial till.



Figure 6
Trench 2 plan and sections of archaeological features

At the SW end of the trench, a small oval post-medieval/ early modern pit [205] cut through the subsoil, and was half sectioned (Figure 6). This contained a 0.42m deep dark brown grey sandy silt fill (204), intermixed with deposits of charcoal and burnt clay, and from which a small fragment of brick and a slightly corroded nail was retrieved, which are both post medieval, probably 19th century. This feature was the only evidence in the evaluation of a more recent occupation, and probably relates to agricultural use.

In the centre of Trench 2, two intercutting features, Pit [207] and gully [209] (Figures 6 and 7) were excavated and recorded. However the relationship between them could not be ascertained within the confines of the trench. Pit [207] is c. 1.8m by 1.2m wide, on a roughly N-S alignment, and was filled with (206), a 0.45m deep firm mid brown sandy silt with occasional pebbles, though without any cultural inclusions. This was in an unknown relationship with [209], a 45° sloped ditch with a slightly concave base, on a roughly E – W alignment. Ditch [209] was filled with a 0.45m deep mid brown sandy silt (208), which while very similar in colour and consistency to (206) had less frequent pebbles.

While neither of these two features had any datable evidence, they have been tentatively recorded as being prehistoric, due to the fill of each having the appearance of being leached out through the acidity of the local glacial till, something that would not be apparent in more recent deposits.



Figure 7
SW facing shot of Pit [209], with Gully [207] at rear of picture



Figure 8
Trench 3 facing SE

4.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 30m long on a NW-SE axis, similar to Trench 1. It was later extended at the NW end for 6m on a WNW axis to understand the extent of ditch [305] (Figure 9). The trench was machine excavated to a maximum depth 0.6m at the SE end of the trench, while the depth at the NW end of the trench was 0.3m depth. The overlying topsoil (301) and subsoil (302) were very similar to (201) and (202), while the natural glacial till (303) varied from a yellow orange sand with frequent rounded cobbles, similar to that found in Trench 1, and a mid orange sand and grit at both the south-eastern end and in the western extension, similar to (203).

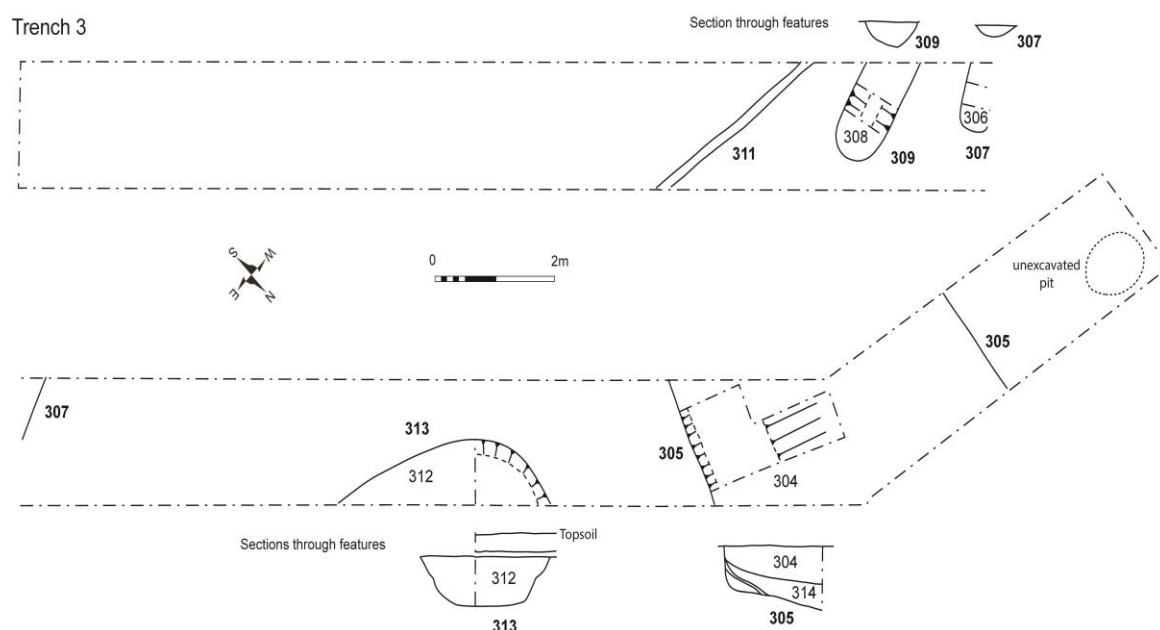


Figure 9
Trench 3 plan and sections of archaeological features

There were five archaeological features recorded in Trench 3 (Figures 9 and 10), including three gullies [307], [309], and [311], a pit [313] that extended into the northern Limit of Excavation, and a ditch [305] that extended beyond the north-western end of the trench.

As [305] extended into the Limit of Excavation, a 1.8m in length 'box' section was excavated to determine the sides (Figure 10) and, if possible, the base of the feature within the extent of Trench 3. The uppermost fill of this feature, (304), was at maximum a 0.6m thick friable mid brown sandy silt, with frequent grit and well sorted small rounded pebbles (as seen in Figure 5). This fill overlay (314), a 0.38m thick firm dark yellow brown silty sand, with frequent grit and well sorted sub-rounded pebbles, with very occasional chalk flecks and a single fragments of both chalk and compacted clay. Below (314) was a 0.04m thick lens of mid orange sand, with no inclusions (315). This appears to be a deposit formed by slumping of the natural sands onto the primary ditch fill (316), a friable mid brown grey sandy silt with frequent rounded pebbles and occasional rounded cobbles. No finds were recovered from any of these fills. The slope of the excavated side of [305] was at 80°, to a depth of 0.7m. It then had a sharp break of slope onto a 25° sloping base, with this presumably leading to a concave base.



Figure 10
SSW facing section of ditch [305]

The trench was extended on 16th April to understand the full width of the feature. This was slightly hampered by a change in the superficial geology, from the obviously natural yellow orange sand with frequent rounded cobbles, to a mid orange sand and grit, which at first appeared to be very similar to the uppermost fill of the [305], though through cleaning back the surface of the extended trench with a hoe, and waiting for it to dry out, the edge of ditch [305] became more obvious. The feature was recorded as 4.8m wide, on a generally north-south alignment, though the relationship between this feature and the others excavated on site was not able to be determined.

Pit [313] was possibly oval, or sub oval, in plan, due to it extending into the L.O.E. (Figure 11). It had a 65° slope onto a slightly concave base. This was filled by (312), a firm dark brown sandy silt with frequent sub-rounded pebbles and occasional rounded cobbles. Much like the other features on the site, no finds were retrieved from (312), though several pieces of post medieval pottery were found in the upper 0.05m of the fill, which are accounted for as being intrusive, probably through root, worm and plough action. The fill (312) is very similar in colour and consistency to (308).



Figure 11
West facing section of pit [313]

The three gullies, [307], [309] and [311] (Figures 9, 12 and 13) were all on a roughly NE-SW alignment, roughly in the centre of the trench. [307] was a 0.13m deep gully with 35° slope and a concave base, filled by a mid grey brown loose sandy silt (306), with occasional rounded pebbles. One metre SW of this feature was [309] a 0.35m deep gully with a 65° slope and a sharply concave base. This was filled by (308), a firm dark grey brown sandy silt, and beyond [309] by a further 1.5m was [311], which was not recorded in section as it was >0.02m deep, though the fill of the gully (310) did appear to be very similar to the two previous fills.

The two excavated gullies terminated within Trench 3, although the terminuses were not excavated during evaluation, as more information would possibly be gained during full excavation, rather than by a slot through the features. All three gullies were on roughly the same alignment, and appear to follow the local contour within the microtopography of the field. While only a short length of each was exposed, it is possible to suggest that they are associated features, and probably part of a ring ditch or field system. Gully [309] may be also be related to gully [209].



Figure 12
W facing section of gully [309]



Figure 13
SE facing shot of gully [311]

4.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was 17m long on a roughly N-S alignment, machine excavated parallel to the eastern boundary, to an average depth of 0.6m. The topsoil (401), was a 0.3m thick dark grey brown clay silt, which overlay the 0.3 m thick orange brown clay silt subsoil (402). At the base of the trench, the natural glacial till (403) was very similar to that found in Trench 1 and in part of Trench 3, though this was only seen along the northwest side. The remainder of the western side was a light grey silt, while along the eastern side of the trench was a deposit that appeared as very similar to (402), though less impacted upon by rooting.



Figure 14
South facing shot of Trench 4

Trench 4

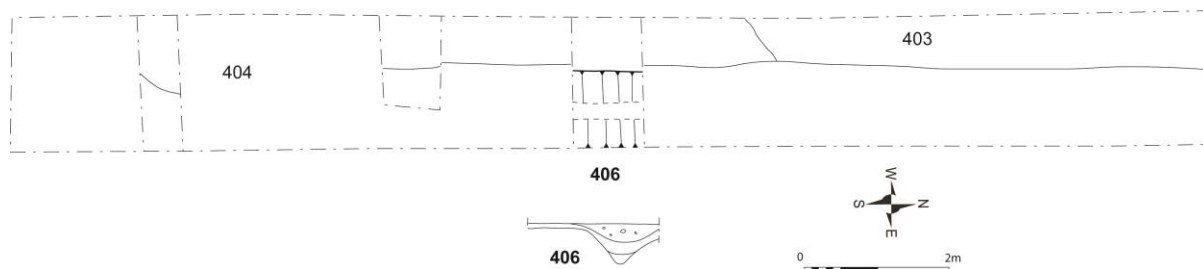


Figure 15
Trench 4 plan and section of archaeological feature

A slot was excavated through this subsoil-like material, which revealed a ditch [406] in excess of 1.0m wide and 0.7m deep, with a 45° slope and a concave base (Figures 14, 15 and 16). At the top of this feature was a deposit that was very similar to overlying subsoil, though being slightly darker orange brown silty clay (404), which had been possibly been modified through the large amount of rooting from the neighbouring hedgerow that had taken place. This overlay a compacted light grey silt (405) with evidence of iron panning, and lenses of charcoal in parts towards the bottom of the fill. A small sample of this material was taken, but processing failed to retrieve any charcoal for radiocarbon dating, or any artefacts or macrofossils. This in turn overlay (407), a firm dark brown grey sand silt which was the primary deposit in the ditch.



Figure 16
South facing section of Ditch [406]

The ditch appears to be parallel to the existing property boundary, with a possible turn to the west at the southern end of the trench, though further excavation to determine this was inconclusive. The silting (405), which seals the glacial till along the western side of the trench, has been recorded as the same as the fill of the ditch as well. The full extent of the silt layer is unknown, as is the formation process from which it resulted, and it may form part of a wider feature, which would only be understood by further excavation.

5.0 ASSESSMENT AND IMPACT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The landscape surrounding the application site contains many prehistoric sites, including the hillfort at The Berth, the Bronze Age barrow cemetery to the southwest and the ring-ditches in the surrounding fields. The results of the evaluation show a continuation of this landscape.

Trench 1 had no archaeology identified within the more deeply excavated parts of the trench. The surveyed plan of the application site might indicate why no archaeology was present, in that Trench 1 is located over a small depression in the landscape, which extends just beyond the boundary to the west, and may be the remains of a small pond, around which archaeological remains could have been focussed. This is also shown by the results of Trenches 2 and 3, in which the archaeology appears to be following the slightly higher land within the local topography. Due to the thickness of the overburden, however, parts of the trench were not fully excavated, and given the proximity of the adjacent ring-ditch HER 04086, and the amount of archaeology exposed in the two trenches to the east, this trench may be regarded as an anomaly rather than demonstrating a complete lack of evidence.

Trench 2 had three features in it, a small post-medieval pit [205], an undated pit [209] and associated gully [207]. Trench 3 had five features; three associated gullies [307], [309], [311], an undated pit [313] and a large ditch [305]. The post-medieval pit appears to be a relatively recent intrusion, while the remainder of the features, with the exception of [305], were probably of a comparable age, due to the similarities in the colour and consistency of their fills. [307] and [311] could be part of segmented gullies or boundaries, while [207] and [309] could be part of a coaxial field system. Their interpretation might indicate a habitation site, or outlying field boundaries, linked to the ring-ditch HER 04086.

Ditch [305] was a slight anomaly, in that while the feature as excavated and recorded was very large, there was no evidence of it from either aerial photography, or from any form of datable evidence, either environmental or cultural material. The former may be explained from the consistency of the fills, in that they did not appear to retain the nutrient or water levels required to produce cropmarks, while the question of dating can be answered by the fills being quite acidic, and having the appearance of being leached out; thus any cultural inclusions at once present would have disappeared over time.

Trench 4 had a single ditch running parallel to the existing boundary. The depth of overburden in this trench was surprisingly deep, and a wider exposure of this feature might result in the field being understood as part of the medieval development at Newton. However this trench suggests that this field was not subdivided for use as burgage plots, but appears to have been a single field

While only one feature in the evaluation was dated convincingly (the post-medieval pit in Trench 2), in addition [406] was parallel to the existing eastern property boundary, and thus possibly indicative to the original medieval alignment. The failure of a soil sample to produce datable charcoal hampered any attempt to develop a chronology for the site. The remaining features appear to conform with previously excavated prehistoric landscapes in the wider Severn Valley, representing a relatively dense concentration of activity. How these features extend over a wider area, whether the linear features present were segmented, linear or curvilinear, or whether different phases exist, were question it was not possible to establish from the site investigation. Area excavation would help in recovering a better understanding of the spatial arrangement and nature of the archaeology in the application site, more samples for establishing a chronology based on scientific dating techniques, and would allow its heritage significance to be determined. The relationship between the archaeological remains and proposed groundworks for construction of housing on site is shown below in Figure 17.



Figure 17
Trench plan and archaeological features superimposed over proposed housing

6.0 CLOSURE

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of Saxonby, and Meres & Mosses Housing Association; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR.

SLR disclaims any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.



global environmental solutions

AYLESBURY

7 Wormal Park, Menmarsh Road,
Worminghall, Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire HP18 9PH
T: +44 (0)1844 337380

BELFAST

24 Ballynahinch Street, Hillsborough,
Co. Down, BT26 6AW Northern Ireland
T: +44 (0)28 9268 9036

BRADFORD-ON-AVON

Treenwood House, Rowden Lane,
Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire BA15 2AU
T: +44 (0)1225 309400

BRISTOL

Langford Lodge, 109 Pembroke Road,
Clifton, Bristol BS8 3EU
T: +44 (0)117 9064280

CAMBRIDGE

8 Stow Court, Stow-cum-Quy,
Cambridge CB25 9AS
T: + 44 (0)1223 813805

CARDIFF

Fulmar House, Beignon Close, Ocean
Way, Cardiff CF24 5PB
T: +44 (0)29 20491010

CHELMSFORD

Unit 77, Waterhouse Business Centre,
2 Cromar Way, Chelmsford, Essex
CM1 2QE
T: +44 (0)1245 392170

DUBLIN

7 Dundrum Business Park, Windy
Arbour, Dundrum, Dublin 14 Ireland
T: + 353 (0)1 2964667

EDINBURGH

No. 4 The Roundal, Roddinglaw
Business Park, Gogar, Edinburgh
EH12 9DB
T: +44 (0)131 3356830

EXETER

69 Polsloe Road, Exeter EX1 2NF
T: + 44 (0)1392 490152

FARNBOROUGH

The Pavilion, 2 Sherborne Road, South
Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6JT
T: +44 (0)1252 515682

GLASGOW

4 Woodside Place, Charing Cross,
Glasgow G3 7QF
T: +44 (0)141 3535037

HUDDERSFIELD

Westleigh House, Wakefield Road,
Denby Dale, Huddersfield HD8 8QJ
T: +44 (0)1484 860521

LEEDS

Suite 1, Jason House, Kerry Hill,
Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4JR
T: +44 (0)113 2580650

LONDON

83 Victoria Street,
London, SW1H 0HW
T: +44 (0)203 691 5810

MAIDSTONE

19 Hollingworth Court, Turkey Mill,
Maidstone, Kent ME14 5PP
T: +44 (0)1622 609242

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Sailors Bethel, Horatio Street,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 2PE
T: +44 (0)191 2611966

NOTTINGHAM

Aspect House, Aspect Business Park,
Bennerley Road, Nottingham NG6 8WR
T: +44 (0)115 9647280

SHEFFIELD

STEP Business Centre, Wortley Road,
Deepcar, Sheffield S36 2UH
T: +44 (0)114 2903628

SHREWSBURY

Mytton Mill, Forton Heath, Montford
Bridge, Shrewsbury SY4 1HA
T: +44 (0)1743 850170

STAFFORD

8 Parker Court, Staffordshire Technology
Park, Beaconside, Stafford ST18 0WP
T: +44 (0)1785 241755

WARRINGTON

Suite 9 Beech House, Padgate Business
Park, Green Lane, Warrington WA1 4JN
T: +44 (0)1925 827218

WORCESTER

Suite 5, Brindley Court, Gresley Road,
Shire Business Park, Worcester
WR4 9FD
T: +44 (0)1905 751310



Energy



Waste
Management



Planning &
Development



Industry



Mining
& Minerals



Infrastructure