



# **Archaeological test pit investigation on land adjacent to the Fosseway Syston, Leicestershire September 2014**

Report No.14/193

Author: Ben Kidd

Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS No: molanort1-192220</b>	
Project title	Archaeological investigation and observation on land adjacent to Fosseway, Syston, Leicestershire		
Short description	MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) to carry out an archaeological investigation and observation on land adjacent to the Fosseway, north of Syston, Leicestershire. Initially, two test pits were to be excavated, but one was unable to be excavated due to its proximity to the main carriageway. A single test pit, 2.0m by 1.0m was excavated to 1.35m. The stratigraphy was found to be made up of a succession of deposited layers of build up relating to the modern road. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered.		
Project type	Test pit evaluation		
Previous work	None		
Current land use	Carriageway verge		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	None		
Significant finds	None		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Leicestershire		
Site address	Land adjacent to Fosseway, Syston		
Easting Northing	SK 6210 1251		
Area (sq m/ha)	2 sq m		
Height aOD	c 50m AOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	County Archaeological Advisor LCC		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Ben Kidd		
Project Manager	Edmund Taylor (MOLA Northampton)		
Sponsor or funding body	Leicestershire County Council		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	15/09/2014		
End date	18/09/2014		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	X.A111.2014	Pottery	
Paper		Site records (1 archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF. Survey Data, Photographs	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Title	Archaeological investigation and observation on land adjacent to Fosseway, Syston, Leicestershire		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton Report 14/193		
Author(s)	Ben Kidd		
Page numbers	9 pages of text and figures		
Date	13 October 2014		

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# **Archaeological test pit investigation on land adjacent to Fosseway Syston, Leicestershire September 2014**

## **Abstract**

*MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) to carry out an archaeological investigation and observation on land adjacent to the Fosseway, north of Syston, Leicestershire. Initially, two test pits were to be excavated, but one was unable to be excavated due to its proximity to the main carriageway. A single test pit, 2.0m by 1.0m was excavated to 1.35m. The stratigraphy was found to be made up of a succession of deposited layers of build up relating to the modern road. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In September 2014, MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) to carry out an archaeological investigation and observation of flood culverts 2a and 3 on land adjacent to the Fosseway, Syston, Leicestershire, as part of mitigation works (NGR SK 6210 1251 and SK 6208 1244; Fig 1).

The work was carried out as a request by the Archaeological Advisor for Leicestershire County Council (LCC) to mitigate the impacts on the known archaeological resource within the area of works. The works were carried out in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; DCLG 2012) and followed a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA Northampton (Muldowney 2014).

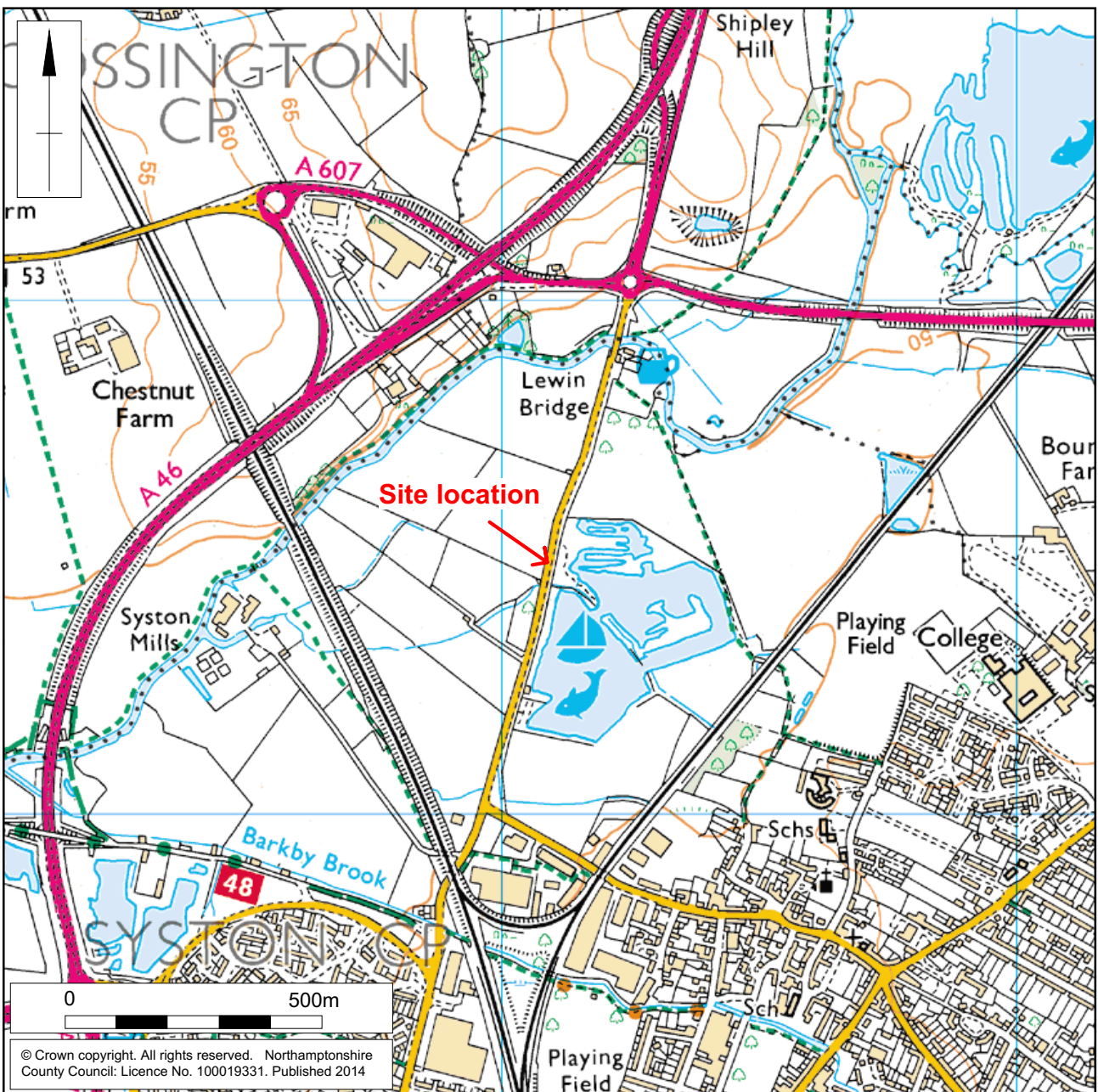
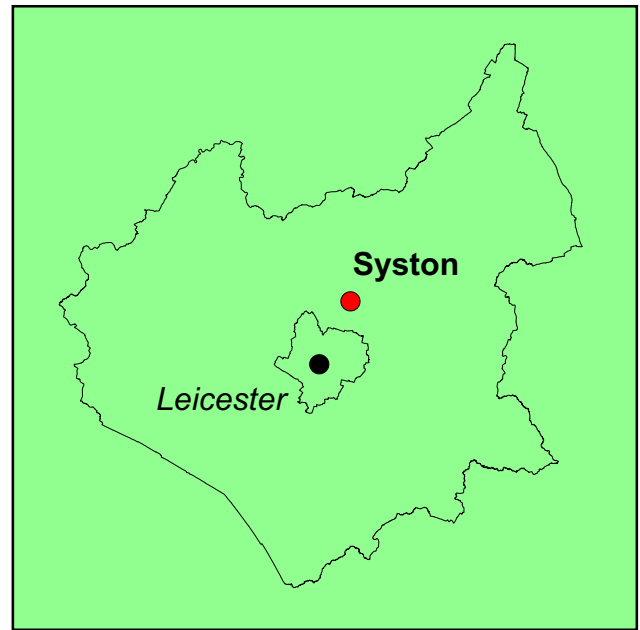
## **2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the investigation were to:

- Assess the location, extent, significance and character of any buried archaeological remains exposed during any invasive activities within the site;
- Determine and record the date, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis,

In order that:

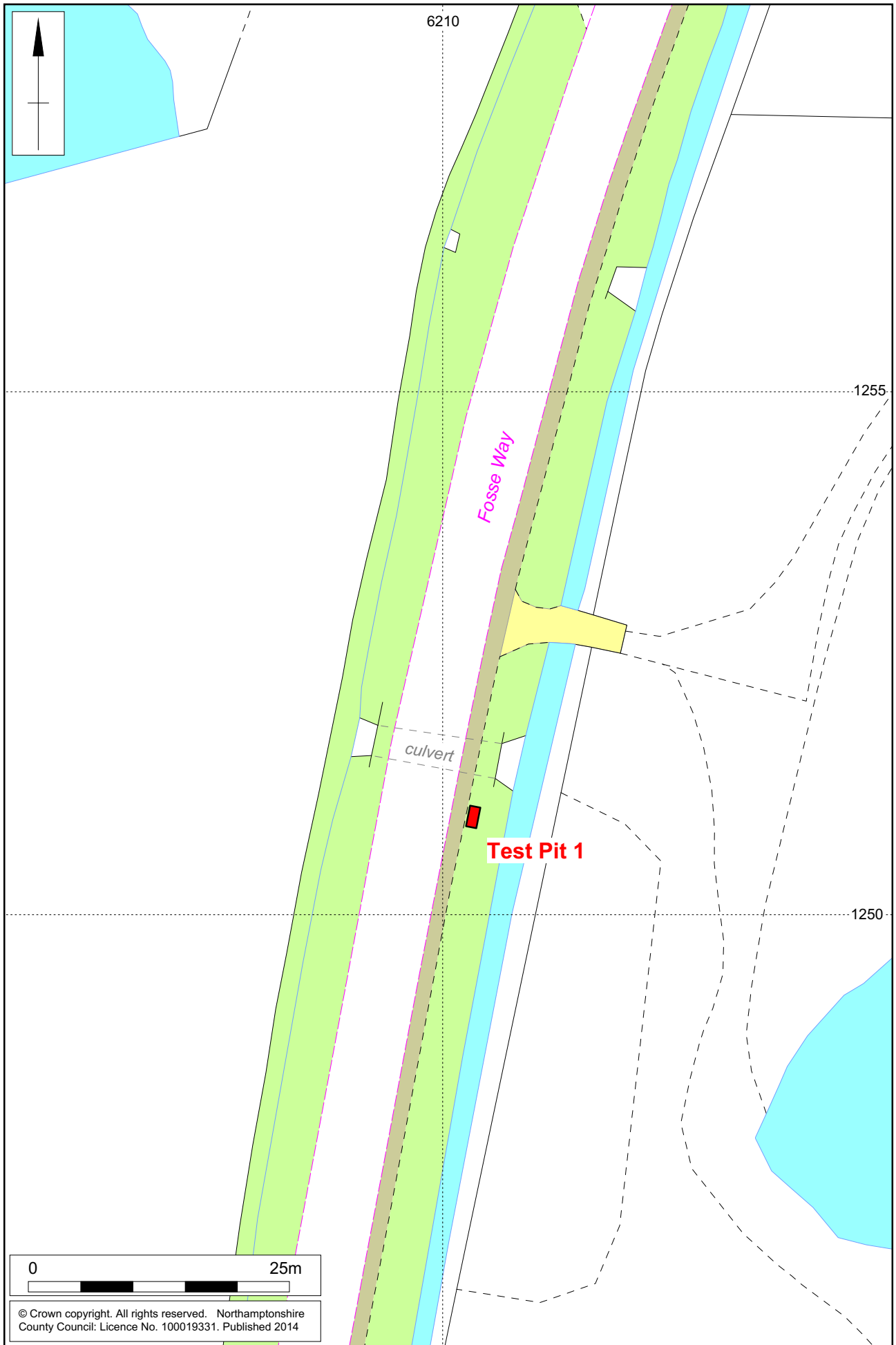
- Sufficient evidence can be gathered to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment that may affect the proposed work;
- The Principal Planning Archaeologist of Leicestershire's Historic and Natural environment team can use this evidence to decide whether to avoid, minimise or mitigate any conflict between conservation of the heritage asset and the proposed work.



Scale 1:12,500

Site Location Fig 1





Scale 1:500

The excavated test pit Fig 2



The evaluation was carried following the guidelines suggested by the IfA's standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (IfA 2008), the MOLA Fieldwork Manual (2014) and the East Midlands regional framework (Knight *et al* 2012).

### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Topography and geology**

Syston is a village on the northern outskirts of Leicester and is south-west of the town of Melton Mowbray (Fig 1). Culverts 2a and 3 lie 420m and 480m respectively, south of the Lewin's Bridge, which is north of Syston on the River Wreake. The development area comprises the existing flood culverts under the Fosseway road.

Topographically the land comprises the road verges and drainage ditches either side of the Fosseway and lies at c 50m aOD. The underlying geology comprises Triassic Mudstone of the Branscombe Mudstone formation, which is overlain by post-glacial alluvium (BGS 2014).

#### **3.2 Historical and archaeological background**

The site lies within an area of significant archaeological interest. A Bronze Age burnt mound was discovered by earlier archaeological investigations to the north-west of the site.

The site is located on the line of the former Roman road, the Fosseway (MLE1380), which connected *Ratae Corieltauvorum* (Leicester) and *Lindum Colonia* (Lincoln) with the north-east and *Corinium* (Cirencester) and *Isca Dumnoniorum* (Exeter) to the south-west. By the mid 1st century AD the road may have represented the western frontier of the province. The road is likely to have precursors as a trackway in the prehistoric period, but by the Roman period will have comprised a gravelled/cobbled surface on a causeway or 'agger' with associated drainage ditches. At Culvert 3 the Fosseway is thought to have crossed a small tributary of the River Wreake and have been bridged or forded at this point. This crossing point may have caused the character and composition of the road to change.

In an unspecified location west of Lewin's bridge an Anglo-Saxon loomweight and pottery were discovered with other features of mid to late Saxon date. There is at present no evidence for later medieval activity.

### **4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY**

Only one Test pit 1 was excavated. Due to Test Pit 2 being located in close proximity to the carriageway and its position within a drainage ditch it was not possible to excavate it at this time. It was decided that it would be safer to await the closure of the road with the start of the main works (Fig 2).

Test pit 1 measured 2.0m long by 1.0m wide and was excavated by hand and by a mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.5m wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and other overburden were removed under archaeological direction to try to reveal the natural substrate. The subsequent up cast was stacked at a safe distance the side of the excavated area.

All procedures complied with MOLA Health and Safety provisions and MOLA Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The excavated area was cleaned sufficiently to define any features. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the excavation were fully recorded, following standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 2014). All deposits were given a separate context number in a sequence continuing from those allocated during the evaluation. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Unstratified animal bones and modern material were not retained.

The location of the test pit was tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid by measurement to field boundaries and other points of detail. A full photographic record comprising digital images was maintained. The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The evaluation conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised Oct 2008). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Muldowney 2014).

## **5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

Test pit 1 was excavated to a depth of 1.35m where a layer of blue-grey clay (105) was encountered. It is possible that this was the natural underlying geology, but is more likely a layer of colluvium (Figs 3-6).

A deposit of stone mixed with modern material (104), 0.50m thick, overlay (105).

Overlying (104) was modern makeup layer 0.15-0.40m thick (103). It comprised black-brown silty clay with a high percentage of 'industrial' waste such as; brick, glass, metal fragments, metal wire, coal, charcoal and 'clinker'

Covering (103) was a second makeup layer consisting of mid brown clay (102). It contained infrequent small stone inclusions, occasional brick fragments and charcoal inclusions, 0.15-0.45m thick.

The topsoil (101) was 0.30m thick. It comprised dark brown silty clay with rare charcoal inclusions and infrequent small stone.

The substantial amount of water outflow from the sides made it unsafe to enter the test pit.

No archaeological features or finds were observed.



Test pit 1 excavated to top of layer (104), looking south Fig.3



Test pit 1 fully excavated, looking east Fig.4





Test pit 1 fully excavated, looking north Fig.5

## **6 THE FINDS**

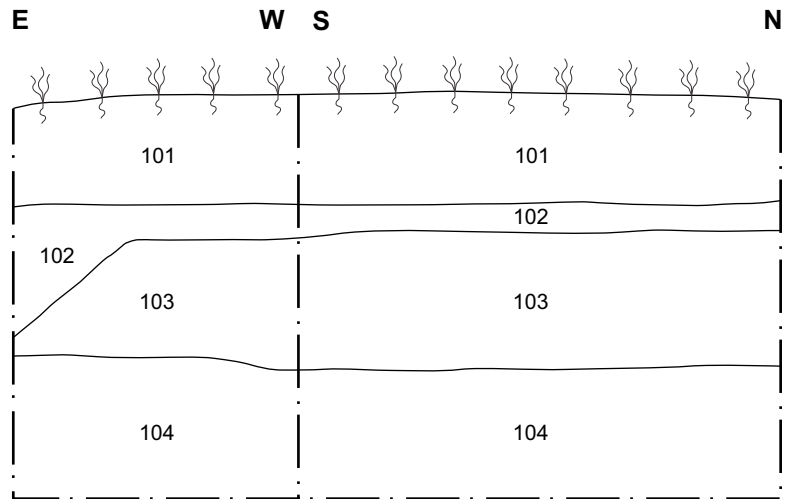
The only finds were late post-medieval and modern in date and were not retained. No finds of archaeological significance were recovered.

## **7 DISCUSSION**

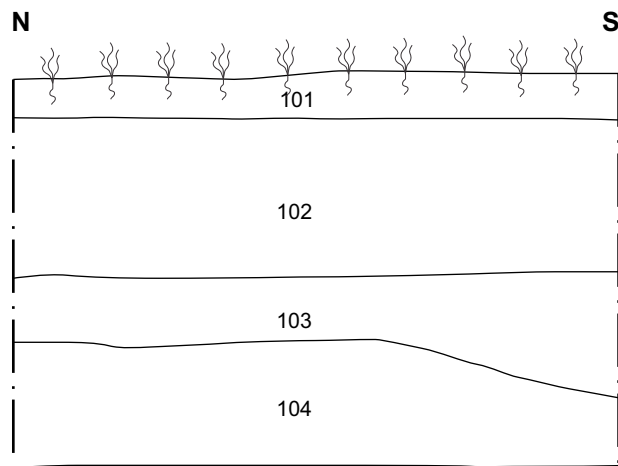
The single test pit evaluation has demonstrated that no archaeological features were identified on the eastern side of the road. The limitations of the test pit prohibit wider investigation of the area. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.35m, approximately to the same depth as the drainage ditch which was located c2m to the east. At this depth it was found that the sides of the pit were extremely loose with water intrusion in to the test pit, it was therefore necessary to cease machining at this depth as it was unsafe to enter the pit to investigate any potential archaeology.

A total of four layers were evident. Three layers were identified to be modern man-made deposits. The topsoil layer 101 was possibly a result of silt being deposited on the edge of the road from the clearing the drainage ditch. Layer 102 has likely accrued through the same processes. Layer 103 is a deposit of industrial waste with the remains of red brick, coal, charcoal, metal wire/fragments and 'clinker', all of which dated to late post-medieval/modern. There is a clear slope between layers 102 and 103 (Fig 3 and 6) indicating that 103 is modern makeup deposit containing waste material in order for the modern Fosseway road to be built upon. Layer 104 is filled with loose sub-rounded stone, with inclusions of late post-medieval to modern material, such as brick, glass, wire and 'clinker'. A layer of blue-grey clay was at the base of the test pit, it is uncertain whether this represents the underlying geology or a layer of deposited colluvium. All the layers indicate that the ground was built up with successive layers of deposited material in order to create the modern road, possibly to avoid flooding from the nearby river, which potentially masked or destroyed any archaeological deposits such as the remains of the Roman road.

### Test Pit 1 - Section 1



### Test Pit 1 - Section 2



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## WEBSITES

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MOLA

13 October 2014

## APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Test pit No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	N-S 1.0m x 2.0m		50m	Approx. 48.65m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Firm dark brown mixed silty clay with rare charcoal inclusions and infrequent small stone inclusions	0.30m thick	-
102	Layer	Firm mid brown deposited silty-clay with small infrequent stone, red brick frag and charcoal inclusions.	0.40m thick	Modern waste i.e. Red brick frag
103	Layer	Firm black deposited silty clay with small-medium moderate stone inclusions. Modern Industrial waste present.	0.45m thick	Brick, glass, 'clinker', metal wire
104	Layer	Firm/solid, deposited stone and mid brown silt layer. Modern material present.	0.50m thick	Brick, glass, 'clinker'
105	Layer/Natural?	Firm mid blue-grey clay	-	-





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