



**Trial trench evaluation on land at  
Mill Lane, Sawston  
Cambridgeshire  
February 2015**

Report No. 15/37

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Illustrator: Carol Simmonds



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## OASIS PROJECT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>molanort120</b>	
Project title	Trench evaluation on land at Mill Lane, Sawston, Cambridgeshire, February 2015		
Short description	MOLA Northampton was commissioned by Manor Oak Homes to carry out a trench evaluation on land at Mill Lane, Sawston. The evaluation identified two post-medieval gullies and two hedgerows. Leaching or made ground and 18th century dumping was noted across the site. There were no pre-modern finds.		
Project type	Trench evaluation		
Previous work	Geophysical Survey (Fisher 2015)		
Current land use	Pasture		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Modern Farm Building and Foundations		
Significant finds	None		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Cambridgeshire		
Site address	Mill Lane, Sawston, Cambridgeshire.		
Easting Northing	548140 4990		
Area (sq m/ha)	ha		
Height aOD	15m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CONTACTS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project Originator	Cambridgeshire County Council, Senior Archaeologist Andy Thomas		
Project Design originator	MOLA 2015		
Director/Supervisor	Jim Burke MOLA		
Project Manager	Anthony Maul MOLA		
Sponsor or Funding Body	Manor Oak Homes		
<b>PROJECT DATES</b>			
Start date	09/02/2015		
End date	17/02/2015		
<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	ECB 4340		
Paper		Site records	
Digital		Site pictures, report	
<b>REPORT INFORMATION</b>			
Title	Trench evaluation on land at Mill Lane, Sawston, Cambridgeshire, February 2015		
Serial title / Volume	MOLA Northampton 15/37		
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# Trial trench evaluation on land at Mill Lane, Sawston Cambridgeshire February 2015

## Abstract

MOLA was commissioned by Manor Oak Homes to conduct a trial trench evaluation in advance of proposed development at Mill Lane, Sawston, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 48140 49090) (Fig 1). The trial trenching follows a geophysical survey which had been undertaken by MOLA between January and February 2015 (Fisher 2015).

## 1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by Manor Oak Homes to conduct a trial trench evaluation in advance of proposed development at Mill Lane, Sawston, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 48140 49090) (Fig 1). The trial trenching follows a geophysical survey which had been undertaken by MOLA between January and February 2015 (Fisher 2015).

The works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Muldowney 2015) prepared by MOLA in response to a Brief provided by the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team Senior Archaeologist (Thomas 2014) setting out the requirements for works. The evaluation was undertaken between the 9 and 10 February 2015, according to the CIAS (2014) and MOLA's in-house manual (MOLA 2014).

## 2 MAIN OBJECTIVES

The general aims of the archaeological evaluation were to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development, and to inform any mitigation decisions which might be required.

Specifically, the work aimed to:

- establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region
- recover palaeoenvironmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

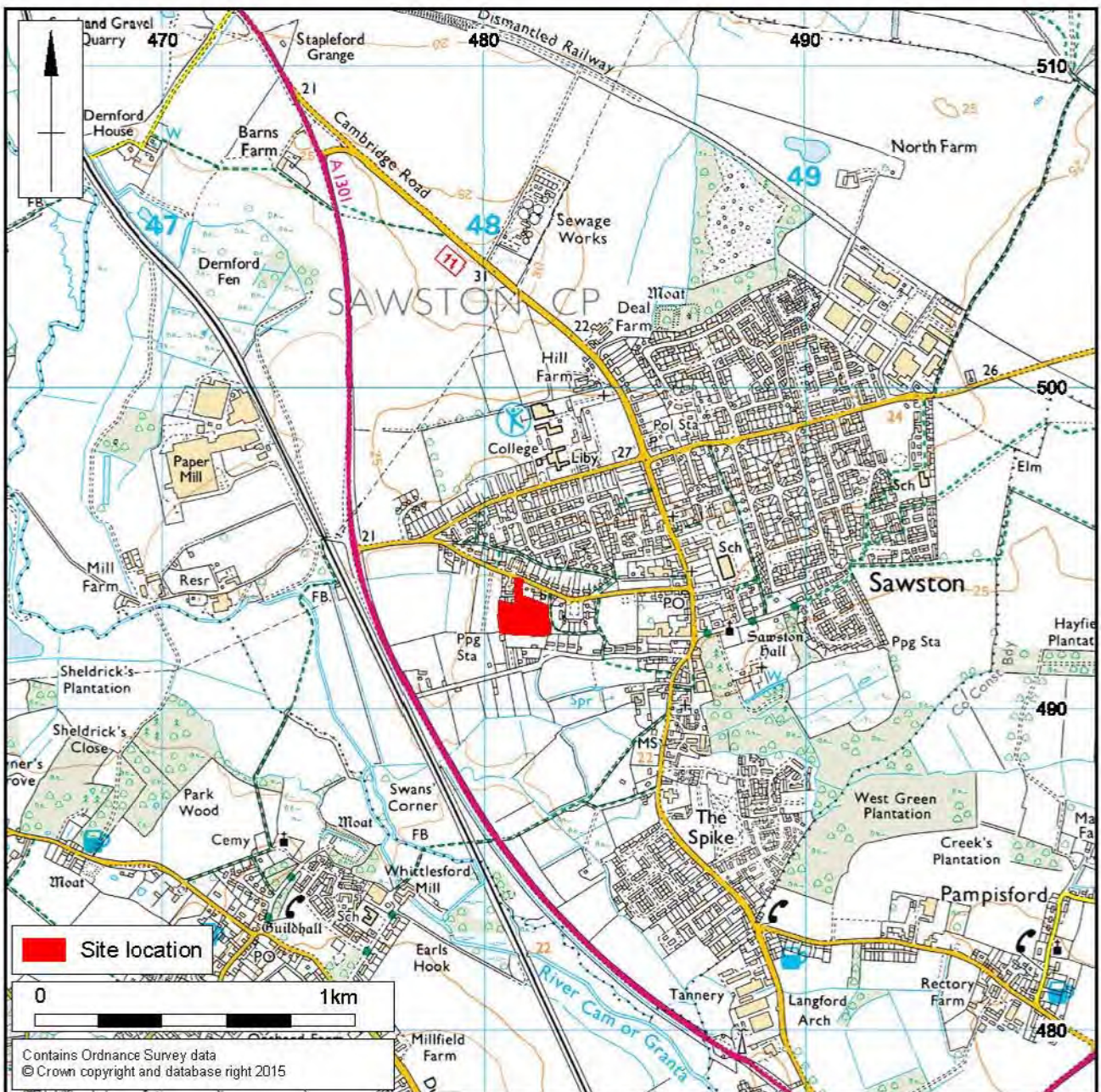
Specific research objectives were to be drawn from national and regional research frameworks documents (English Heritage 1991, and Medlycott 2011) warranted by the results of the evaluation.

## 3 CONCLUSIONS

### 3.1 Location and geology

Sawston is located to the south of Cambridge and north of the villages of Whittlesford and Pampisford. The development site is located behind existing properties on the south side of Mill Lane, which leads westwards out of the village. The proposed development site comprises four pasture fields covering 1.5ha containing a derelict farm, and with a north-south access route off Mill Lane in the north-west corner. The low lying ground to the south-east of the site is waterlogged.





Site location Fig 1

The north, east and south boundary to the site variously comprises a hedge, fence and mature trees marking the extent of neighbouring properties. The west boundary consists of to the south, an artificial line across the neighbouring field, and to the north the fence and hedge boundary of the adjoining property. The site is currently accessed from Mill Lane.

The bedrock geology of the site is recorded as comprising two chalk formations, the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and the Bag Chalk Formation. The site contained superficial deposits of alluvium, clay, silt, sand and gravel (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk> accessed 19/01/15). The topography of the site is flat, and it is situated at 100m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

## 2 Historical and archaeological background

The site lies on the west edge of the historic village of Sawston, and no designated heritage assets are known from within the site itself. Thus far very few remains have been identified in close proximity to the site – most are located within the core of Sawston itself – within Whittlesford village to the south-west, or are related to Borough Hill Iron Age hill fort 300m to the west.

The only early prehistoric finds from the vicinity comprise a small collection of Mesolithic flints that were recovered around 150m to the north-east of the site, from land on Bowers Terrace (MCB17619).

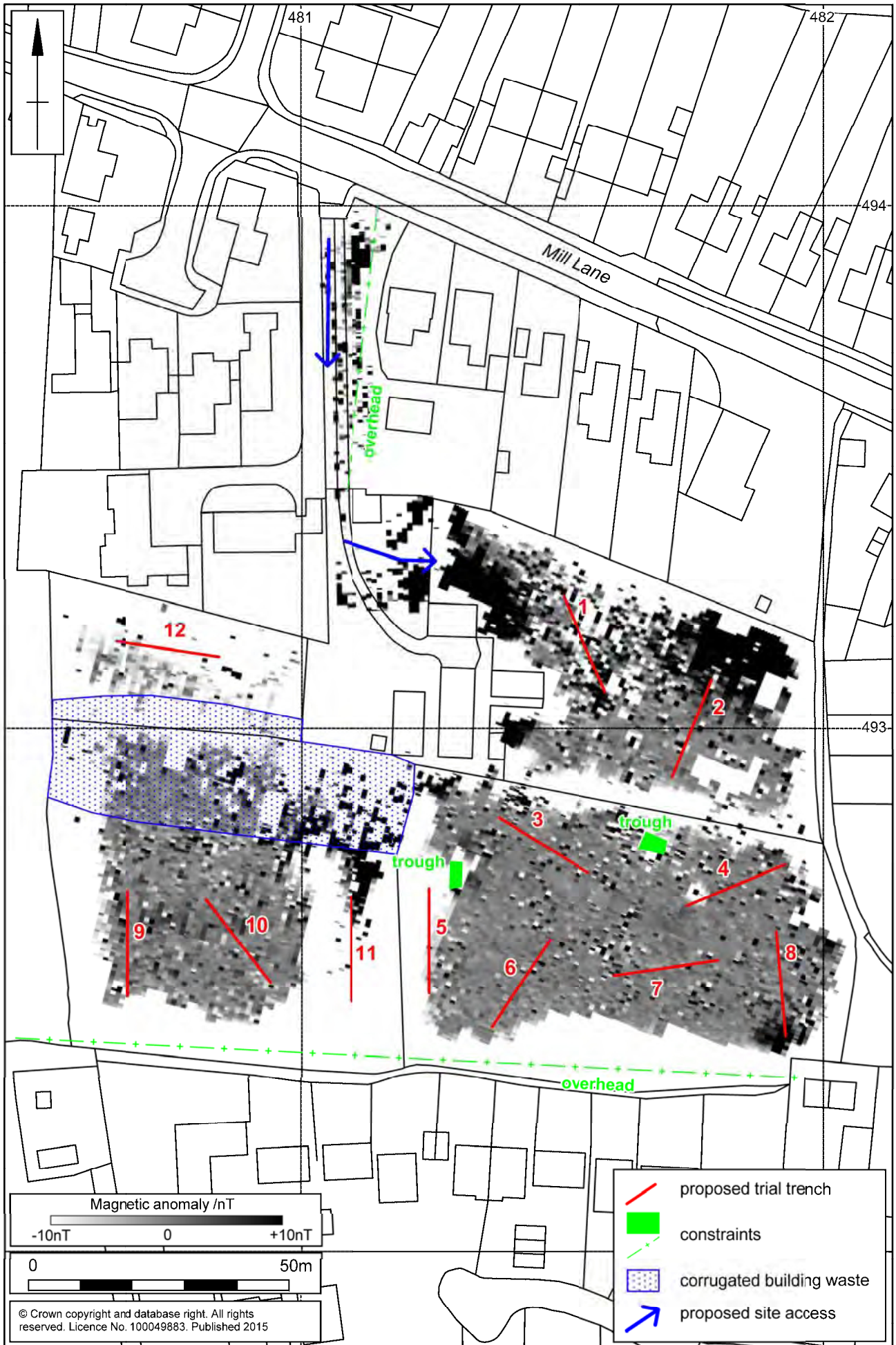
The area of Borough Hill produced the most significant prehistoric remains in the region. The hill itself is an area of slightly high ground, 15m AOD, overlooking the River Cam, and crowned with an Iron Age multi-tallate hill fort (MCB190/HER 0974). As well as a series of internal features identified on a geophysical survey, the scheduled monument has a circuit of defences of varying arrangements of banks and ditches, all enclosing an area of approximately 8ha.

Roman occupation has also been identified at Borough Hill during a watching brief (ECB1378) and some finds of this period were recovered 1960m during work at Swan's Corner, Whittlesford (ECB1833). Roman pottery was recovered during an evaluation at Sawston Hall (ECB0091) 1660m to the south-east. These areas, however, all lie some distance from the development site.

Within 300m of the site, to the south-south-west, a chance discovery was made of an Anglo-Saxon brooch or shield ornament (HER 0411). This may, however, be a casual loss, rather than an indication of Saxon settlement. Later medieval remains near to the site include the partial remains of a moated site and earthworks at Huntingdon Farm 380m to the south-east, (HER 01068, 10005) and medieval ditches and pits at John Faulkner School 1600m to the east-north-east (MCB0139).

The archaeological geophysical survey (Fisher 015) recorded a substantial area of magnetic noise and disturbance associated with the abandoned farm and trackway in the northern field and round the edges of the southern fields. There is a possible archaeological feature in the south-western field which appears to be a curvilinear ditch, but might also be a geological anomaly (Fig 1).





Scale 1:1000

The geophysical results and trench layout Fig 2

## 5.1 Methodology

A total of twelve trenches, each measuring 10m long and 1.8m wide, were located across the development area, targeting both anomalies and apparently blank areas seen in the geophysical survey. Trenches were positioned away from known constraints such as overhead telegraph cables and water troughs. During the geophysical survey an area of building debris was identified, including corrugated sheeting, in the western part of the site (Fig 1). Trenches have been positioned away from this area.

The trial trenches were surveyed using Leica iDx Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3σ tolerance of ±0.05m. The trenches were excavated using a JCB 3C excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision to reveal archaeological remains or, where these were absent, undisturbed natural horizons. The topsoil and subsoil were stacked separately at the side of the excavated trench.

The excavation and recording were carried out in accordance with MOLA guidelines, following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 014 and Gurney 003. All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, 000000 0000 0000 0000 MoRPHE 0EH 006.

Each trench was hand cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features, unless it was certain that there were no archaeological remains present. All archaeological deposits and artefacts identified during the course of the evaluation were recorded following standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 014). Levels were related to the Ordnance datum. Photographs were taken of all trenches and any relevant deposits on 35mm monochrome print film and high resolution digital images.

## 5.2 Results

Naturally undulating geological substrate, comprising light yellow/orange silty sand with small sub-angular stones and patches of clay, flint and chalk inclusions, was present in all trenches at a variable depth between 0.48-1.1m below modern ground level. The topsoil was also comparable across all the trenches, comprising a mid grey/black sandy silt, with frequent flint, gravel, and chalk inclusions. Trenches 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 all contained one or two layers of artificially built up subsoil, formed of mid grey/brown or orange/brown sandy silt between 0.14 and 0.55m thick overlying a layer or patches of light orange or grey/brown alluvial sandy silty clay with chalk inclusions between 0.11m and 0.37m thick. None of these trenches produced any archaeological features or finds.

### 5.3 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the north of the site, to the east of the access road and nearest to the standing buildings (Fig 1). As suggested by the geophysical results, the evaluation uncovered a layer of modern dumping immediately below the topsoil (Fig 3). The layer comprised mixed sandy silt and chalk, with modern debris of brick, broken tree-trunk, glass and large blocks of angular flint (10) which had raised the ground level by 0.39m. This dumping layer was found to overlay three buried horizons of grey/brown sandy silt and mid grey/brown silty clay (103, 104, 105) with a total depth of 0.4m to 0.70m. No archaeological features were noted.



Trench 1 section showing modern dumping, looking southwest Fig 3

## 5.2 Trenches 5 and 12

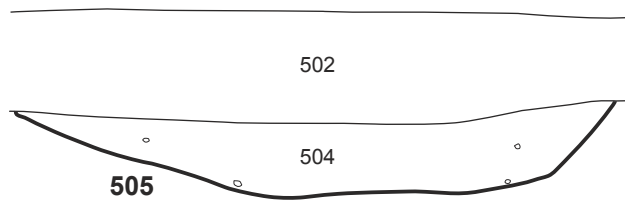
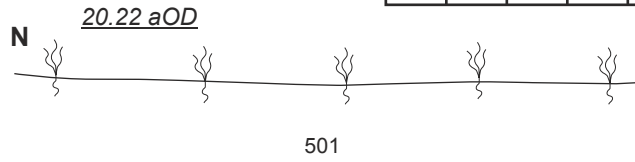
Trenches 5 and 12 both contained former hedgerows, cultivated in shallow, U-shaped cuts with sloping, irregular sides and bases (05, 107) (see Fig 4). The hedgerow in Trench 5 was aligned east-west, and measured 1.0m wide and 0.4m deep, with a fill of light brown-grey sandy clay (04). The hedge cut in Trench 12 seemed to be aligned more or less north-south, and was 1.0m wide and 0.48m deep, with more steeply sloping sides. In Trench 12, the cut for the hedge had two slightly different fills of grey-brown silty clay (105, 106). Trench 12 also had two additional layers of buried topsoil and alluvium to Trench 5 (03, 108). No finds were recovered from either hedgerow cut or fill.



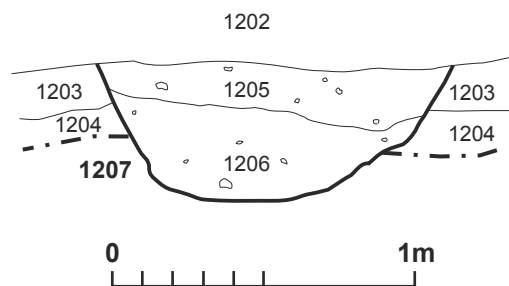
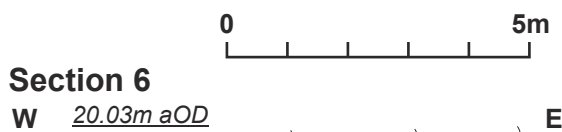
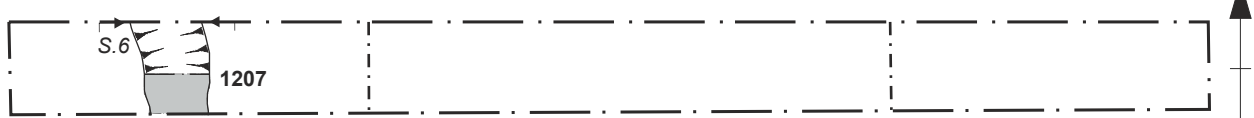
### Trench 5



### Section 5



### Trench 12





## 5.1 Trench 8

Two linear gullies were noted within the evaluation area during the geophysical survey, one of which crossed Trench 8 at the southern end close to the boundary of the development area (B06) aligned north-east by south-west (Fisher 2015). The gully had a shallow U-shaped profile, and was overlain by two layers of built-up subsoil and alluvium (B01, B03) (see Fig 5). The fill of the gully was a mixed light and mid grey-brown sandy clay with sub-rounded stones and chalk (B05). The fill also contained the top of a modern tin can (Fig 6). The can had a distinctive ring-pull of a type in wide circulation in the late 1970 until the late 1980s when a new design of retained ring pull cans was adopted (BCME Canmakers). This finding firmly dates the fill of the gully to that period, as well as indicating the alluvium and built up layers above were also of modern date. Similar alluvium and built up layers were found across the site.



Trench 8, 1970s or 1980s can in the fill of modern gully (B06) Fig 6

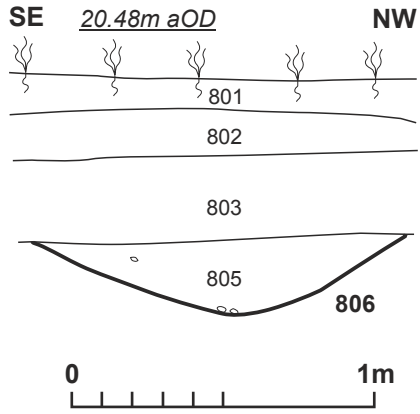
## 5.2 Trench 11

The second linear gully (106) was aligned north-north-east by south-south-west, and had an almost V-shaped profile, with straight, angled sides and a flat base, 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep (106). This gully was also identified during the geophysical survey. The fill (105/1107) was light orange grey-brown sandy clayey silt with patches of chalk and some charcoal flecks (Fig 19). The fill contained no finds, but the feature is likely to be of modern date (Fig 5).

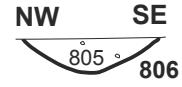
### Trench 8



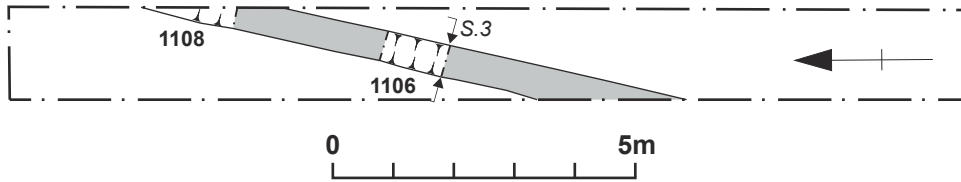
### Section 1



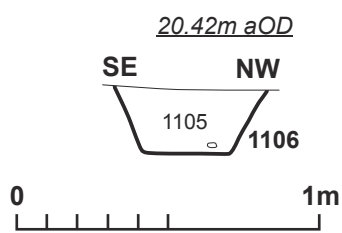
### Section 2



### Trench 11



### Section 3





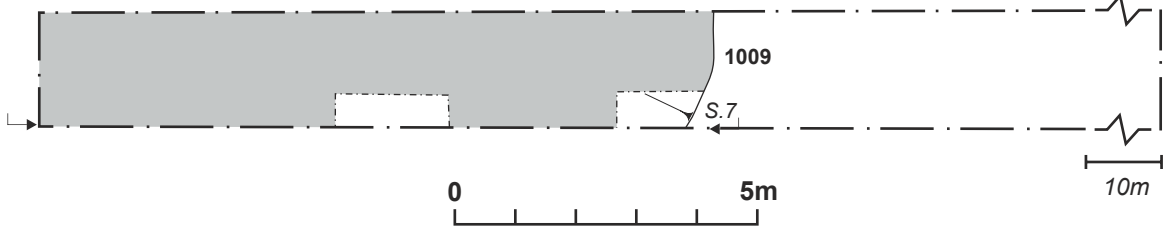
## 5.5 Trench 10

Trench 10 was located at the south-western area of the site, and targeted the possible curved ditched feature identified in the geophysical survey (Fig 6). At the south-east end of the trench, the natural substrate of light orange-brown silty sand with patches of whitish sandy clay was visible, underlying a light orange-brown sandy silt subsoil layer. From around halfway along the trench to the north-west end, a possible ponding area was recorded (Fig 7). This was identified by the cut 009 of a large feature which appears to be circular in plan (Fig 8). The full extent of the feature is not known, but it is greater than 5.0m in diameter, and has a minimum depth of 0.98m. The cut had several fills of silty sandy clay or silty chalky clay with gravel, chalk and flint inclusions. The secondary fill lay on the water table 007 and was a dark grey-black silty clay, with frequent gravel. No finds were recovered from any of the fills which might aid in dating this feature.



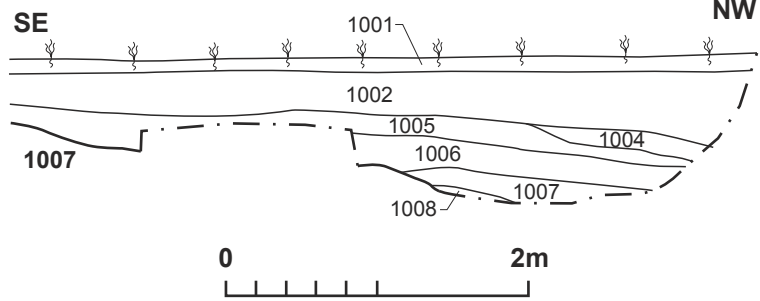
Overview of trench 10, with possible area of ponding in the foreground (Fig 7)

### Trench 10



### Section 7

20.31m aOD







Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height (a.s.l.)	Depth & height of natural surface
1	10m x 20m, N-S	5 x 150 2 x 25	20.00m	0.00 - 1.11m 1.02 - 1.00m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil/Layer	Mid grey/black sandy silt organic layer.	0.10m	
102	Layer	Layer of mixed chalk with modern brick, green brick, tile and broken glass	0.33 x 0.39m	
103	Layer	Mid/dark grey brown silty sandy clay alluvium, frequent gravel, chalk and flint	0.18 x 0.08m	
104	Buried topsoil	Mid grey/brown sandy silty clay frequent gravel and chalk	0.13 x 0.00m	
105	Layer	Light/mid grey/brown sandy silty clay frequent chalk, flint and gravel	0.11 x 0.00m	
106	Natural	Light grey/brown sandy clay stained and mixed due to area flooding		



Overview of trench 1, looking south-east Fig 9

Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height	Depth & height of natural ground
2	10m x 20m, S-S	500m <sup>2</sup>	20.02m	0.00m - 0.10m 1.00m - 1.10m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
C01	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy clay, frequent flint, gravel and chalk	0.16m	
C02	Layer	Mid grey/brown sandy silty clay occasional gravels, flint and chalk	0.40-0.30m	
C03	Layer	Light grey/brown silty clay alluvium only noted at NE part of trench	0.05m	
C04	Natural	Light yellow/orange chalky till	0.10m	



Overview of trench 2, looking southwest Fig 10



Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height	Depth & height of natural ground
3	10m x 20m, S-E	5001 x 2002	1005m	000 x 001m 1000 x 100m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silty clay, frequent gravel and flint	0.14 x 0.16m	
302	Layer	Mid orange/brown sandy silt moderate gravel, flint and chalk	0.01m	
303	Layer	Light grey/orange sandy silty clay frequent gravel, flint and chalk	0.00 x 0.30m	
304	Layer/Alluvium	Mid brown/grey sandy clay moderate gravel, flint and chalk	0.00m	
305	Natural	Light yellow/orange and sandy orange/white sandy chalk till		



Overview of trench 3, looking northwest Fig 11



Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height	Depth & height of natural ground
4	10m x 20m, S-E	500 x 2200	100m	0m to 0.13m 1m to 1.00m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
401	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and chalk	0.13m	
402	Layer	Mid grey/brown sandy silt moderate gravel, flint and chalk	0.15m	
403	Layer/Alluvium	Light brown/grey sandy silty clay moderate gravel, flint and chalk	0.15 to 0.30m	
404	Layer/Alluvium	Mixed light brown/orange and light grey/brown silty sandy clay moderate gravels	0.10 to 0.20m	
407	Natural	Light yellow/orange sandy clay with light orange/white patches of chalky gravel		



Overview of trench 4, looking southwest Fig 10

Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height	Depth & height of natural surface
5	10m x 1m, S	500120200200	20.2m	0.50 x 0.38m 1.00 x 1.00m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
501	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and flint, heavy root disturbance at southern end	0.50x.38m	
502	Layer/Alluvium	Light orange/brown sandy silty clay occasional gravels	0.30x.53m	
503	Natural	Light yellow/orange silty sand with patches of yellow/white sandy clay		
504	Fill of hedgerow	Light brown/grey sandy clay moderate gravel, stone, chalk and flint,	1.95m wide 0.5m deep	
505	Cut of hedgerow	Shallow U-shaped irregular sides and base	1.95m wide 0.5m deep	



Overview of trench 5, looking north Fig 13



Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height	Depth & height of natural ground
6	10m x 20m, S-E	500 x 200 = 2500	200-55m	0-100 x 0-100m 1000 x 1000m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
601	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and chalk	0.1m	
602	Layer	Mid grey/brown sandy silt occasional gravels and chalk	0.14-0.17m	
603	Layer	Light orange/brown sandy silty clay moderate gravels, flint and chalk	0.15-0.37m	
604	Natural	Light orange/brown silty sand with patches of orange/white and yellow/white sandy clay		



Overview of trench 6, looking southwest Fig 14

Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Grid	Surface height (a.s.l.)	Depth & height of natural ground
7	10m x 20m, S-E	500100 200255	20.15m	0.51 to 0.80m 1.00 to 1.5m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
701	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and chalk	0.11m	
702	Layer	Mid grey/brown sandy silt occasional gravels and chalk	0.15 to 0.1m	
703	Layer	Light orange/brown sandy silty clay moderate gravels, flint and chalk	0.00 to 0.5m	
704	Natural	Light orange/brown silty sand with patches of orange/white and yellow/white sandy clay		



Overview of trench 7, looking south-west Fig 15



Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Grid	Surface height	Depth & height of natural ground
8	1.5m x 1.5m SS	50100 200201	20.00m	0.52 x 0.15m 1.00 x 1.00m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
801	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and chalk	0.1m	
802	Layer	Mid grey/brown sandy silt occasional gravel, flint and chalk	0.14-0.17m	
803	Layer	Light orange/brown sandy silty clay moderate gravels, flint and chalk	0.19-0.31m	
804	Natural	Light orange/brown silty sand with patches of orange/white and yellow/white sandy clay		
805	Fill of 806	Mid grey/brown silty sandy clay frequent gravels and flint	0.50m wide 0.15m deep	Modern tin can lid Not retained
806	Cut of gully	U-shaped gully concave base aligned NE-SW	0.50m wide 0.15m deep	



Overview of trench 8, looking south-south-east Fig 16

Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height	Depth & height of natural ground
9	11m x 20m NS	500m <sup>2</sup> x 200m <sup>2</sup>	2021m	0m to 0.1m 1m to 1.1m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
901	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and chalk root disturbance at southern part of trench	0.30 x 0.5m	□
902	Layer	Light orange/brown sandy silty clay moderate gravel, flint and chalk	0.19 x 0.5m	□
903	Layer	Mid grey/brown sandy silt occasional gravel and chalk heavy root disturbance at southern part of trench	0.10 x 0.9m	□
904	Natural	Light orange/brown silty sand with patches of orange/white and yellow/white sandy clay	□	□



Overview of trench 9, looking north Fig 17



Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Grid	Surface height (a.s.l.)	Depth of natural ground
10	11m x 20m SS	50001 20200	2000m	0000.5m 202m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1001	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and chalk	0.30.30m	
1002	Layer	Light orange/brown sandy silty clay moderate gravel, flint and chalk	0.10.50m	
1003	Natural	Light orange/brown silty sand with patches of orange/white and yellow/white sandy clay to SE		
1004	Layer/soil	Light grey silty chalky clay moderate gravel and flint re-deposited natural	Sondage 0.0m deep	
1005	Layer/soil	Mottled grey/brown silty sandy clay occasional stone, flint and chalk	Sondage 0.4m deep	
1006	Layer/soil	Mottled grey/orange silty sandy clay frequent gravel, chalk and flint	Sondage 0.4.40m deep	
1007	Layer/soil	Dark grey/black silty clay, frequent gravel and on water table	Sondage 0.0m excavated	
1008	Layer/soil	Mid grey/brown silty clay frequent gravel and flint	Sondage Not excavated	
1009	Cut	Cut of possible pond		



Overview of trench 10, looking northwest Fig 18

Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Area	Surface height (a.s.l.)	Depth of natural ground
11	10m x 1m SS	5000 x 2000	202.0m	0.50-0.5m 1.0m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1101	Topsoil	Mid grey/black sandy silt moderate gravel and chalk	0.11m	
1102	Layer	Mid grey/brown sandy silt occasional stone, gravel and flint	0.140.00m	
1103	Layer	Light orange/brown sandy silty clay moderate gravel and flint	0.190.05m	
1104	Natural	Light orange/white chalk with a band or orange brown chalky gravel		
1105	Fill of 1106/1108	Light orange/brown silty sandy clay moderate gravels	0.49m wide 0.00m deep	
1106	Cut of gully	Steep sides and a flat base. aligned NNE-SSW	0.49m wide 0.00m deep	
1107	Fill of 1108/1106	Light orange/brown silty sandy clay moderate gravels		
1108	Cut of gully	As 1106		



Overview of trench 11, looking north Fig 19



Trench no	Length, width & alignment	Grid	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
12	10m x 20m E-W	50000 20001	10005m	0.1m - 0.2m 1000 1000m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
1001	Topsoil	Mid grey-brown sandy silty loam moderate gravel and chalk	0.05m	□
1002	Layer	Mid brown silty loam frequent gravel and flint	0.40-0.50m	□
1003	Layer	Dark brown silty loam frequent gravels chalk and flint	0.16-0.18m	□
1004	Natural	Mixed natural, silty chalky clay with frequent flint and sandy chalky light grey brown to yellow-orange chalky clay	□	□
1005	Fill of 1007	Silty grey-brown sandy clay rare gravel	1.16m wide 0.16m deep	□
1006	Fill of 1007	Silty mid grey-brown silt with orange sands streaks	0.95m deep 0.30m deep	□
1007	Cut of hedgerow	Irregular sides and base shallow U-shape	1.16m wide 0.46m deep	□
1008	Layer	Possible buried soil dark brown silty sand with occasional flint and gravel	0.10m deep	□



Overview of trench 1, looking west Fig 00



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