



**Trial trench evaluation on land at
Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch
Leicestershire
March 2015**

Report No. 15/68

Author: Ben Kidd

Illustrator: James Ladocha



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-208946	
Project name	Trial trench evaluation on land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire.		
Short description (250 words maximum)	MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their client, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire prior to proposed development of the site. Ten trenches were excavated within the development area. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered, only post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation and land drains.		
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Evaluation		
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Geophysical survey (Roseveare 2007), Trial Trench evaluation (Jones 2012)		
Current Land use	Pasture		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	None		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Leicestershire		
Site address (including postcode)	Land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch		
Study area (sq.m or ha)	c 4.6ha		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	SK 36693 16384		
Height OD	c 126m to 129m		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Council Principal Planning Archaeologist		
Project Design originator	MOLA		
Director/Supervisor	Ben Kidd		
Project Manager	Adam Yates		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date/End date	30/03/2015-31/03/2015		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)	
Physical	None	None	
Paper	MOLA Northampton Offices: X.A40.2012	Site file	
Digital		MapInfo plans, Word report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	Trial trench evaluation on land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire, March 2015		
Serial title & volume	15/68		
Author(s)	Benjamin Kidd		
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Trial trench evaluation on land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire March 2015

Abstract

MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their client, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire prior to proposed development of the site. Ten trenches were excavated within the development area. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered, only post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation and land drains.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2015, MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their client, to conduct an archaeological evaluation on land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire (NGR SK 36693 16384; Fig 1).

The Principal Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council (LCC) has advised that a programme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to determine the nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the Development Area. The requirements were outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA (Finn 2015).

This trial trench evaluation comprises the third stage of a staged evaluation programme as set out by the Principal Planning Archaeologist for LCC. The first stage comprised detailed geophysical survey which identified a small number of anomalies with a possible archaeological origin (Roseveare 2007). A secondary stage of trial trench evaluation was also undertaken in 2012 in the northern area of the site, comprising evaluation Trenches 1-11 (Jones 2012), with this third stage comprising Trenches 12-21.

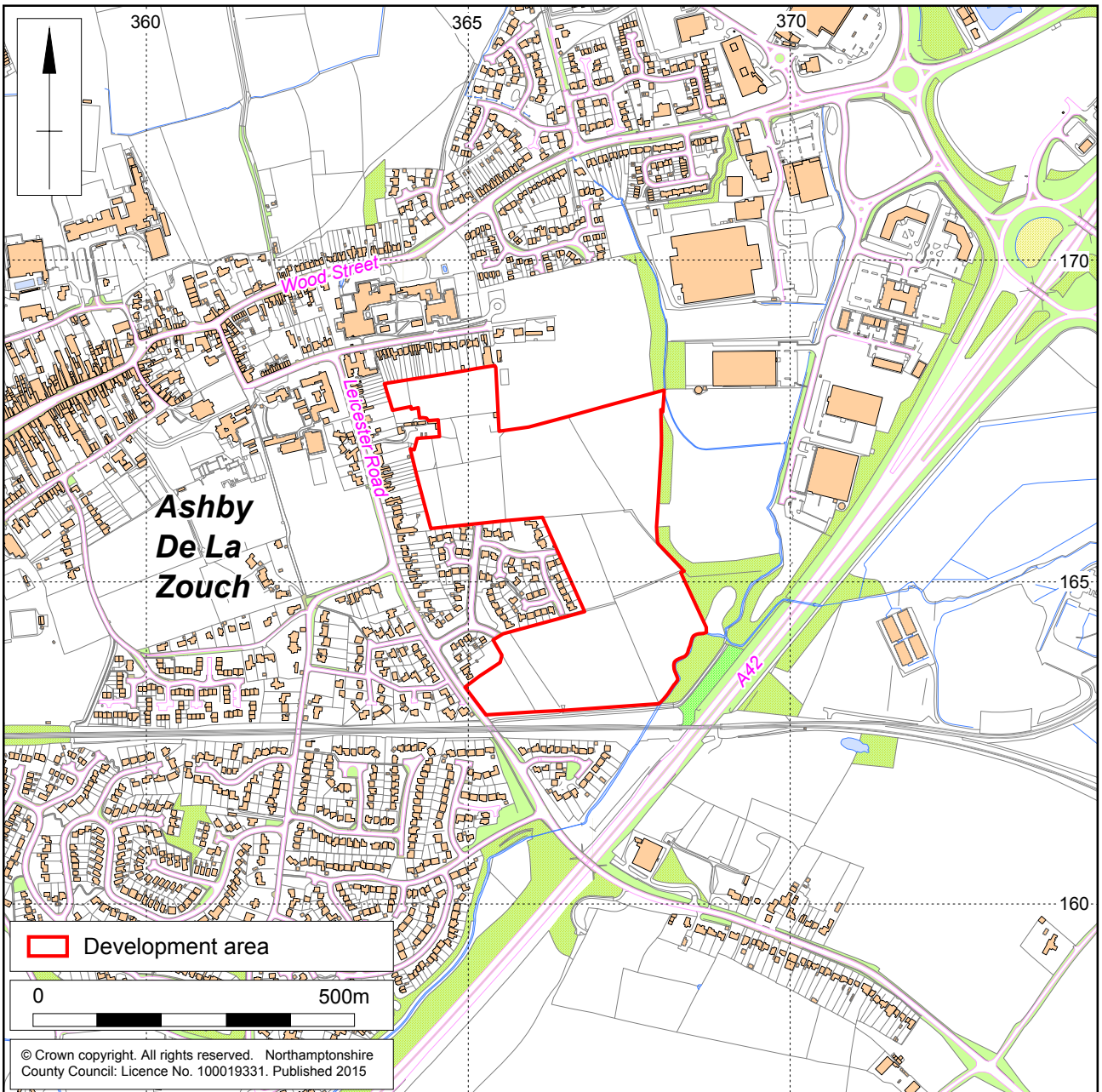
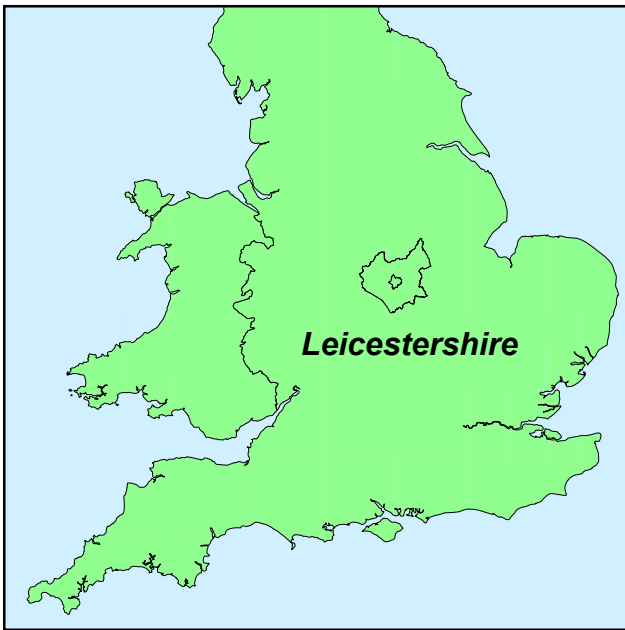
2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The evaluation of the site was designed to provide information that will allow for the effective targeting of further investigation of the site, if required, prior to or during the early phases of its development.

The following information was required to allow the development of a strategy for further investigation of the site:

- *The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;*
- *The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.*

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



Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

This phase of evaluation targeted three fields at the southern end of the development area, c 4.6ha in area, on the outskirts of Ashby de la Zouch on land to the east of Leicester Road. The current land use is rough grassland and the area is bounded to the west by Leicester Road and housing, to the north by new housing development, to the east by an exclusion zone of mature tree growth and the A42 and to the south by further tree growth and a rail line (Fig 1).

The site lies on slightly sloping ground, falling from 129m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the south-west to 126 aOD in the north-east corner. The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Society as comprising Bardsey Association, which rests on Carboniferous Mudstone of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex).

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

The development area lies on the edge of the historic town of Ashby de la Zouch and the Historic Environment Record was consulted as part of the desk-based assessment (JSAC 2000) and is summarised below.

No archaeological sites or artefacts have been recorded within the site. Evidence for prehistoric activity consists of finds identified in fieldwalking c1.4km to the north of the site.

Roman activity has been identified c1.1km to the north-west of the site at Lawn Hills where two pots filled with coins were found. Activity has also been identified at Long Lane c400m to the north-east where a possible Roman road is located, the route of which crosses the development area, although there was no evidence of it in the geophysics results (Roseveare 2007).

Ashby de la Zouch is recorded in the Domesday book where it is recorded as being held by Ivo from Hugh de Grandmesnil and is referred to as *Ascebi*, a name which derives from the Old English word *æsc*, meaning an Ash tree, and the Old Norse *by*, meaning a settlement or village; with the latter part of the name being derived from the area's overlord in the first part of the 13th century, Roger de la Zouch. In the medieval period Ashby appears to be a thriving village with a castle being established by the Beaumonts in the 12th century. The castle is a scheduled monument and lies c100m to the west of the site with the 15th-century parish church of St Helens lying 400m to the west, other buildings of 14th century date and later are known in the town centre, c500 to the west.

Ashby remained fairly small throughout the later medieval and post-medieval dates though it was one of the main Royalist garrisons during the English Civil War and was subject to a siege that only ended with the surrender of the garrison in 1646.

The geophysical survey (Roseveare 2007) identified a few possible archaeological anomalies, including potential ditches, gullies and pits. The trial trench evaluation just to the north of the current area did not uncover any archaeological features or finds with the exception of post-medieval ridge and furrow and rubble spreads (Jones 2012).

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Ten trenches 12-21, were excavated using a 360 mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8 m-wide toothless ditching bucket (Fig 2). Trench 18 was abandoned due to the proximity of modern sewerage services and the presence of a modern service trench within it.

The topsoil and subsoil were removed under archaeological direction to reveal natural substrate. The topsoil and subsoil were stacked separately at the side of the excavated area. All procedures complied with MOLA Health and Safety provisions and MOLA Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

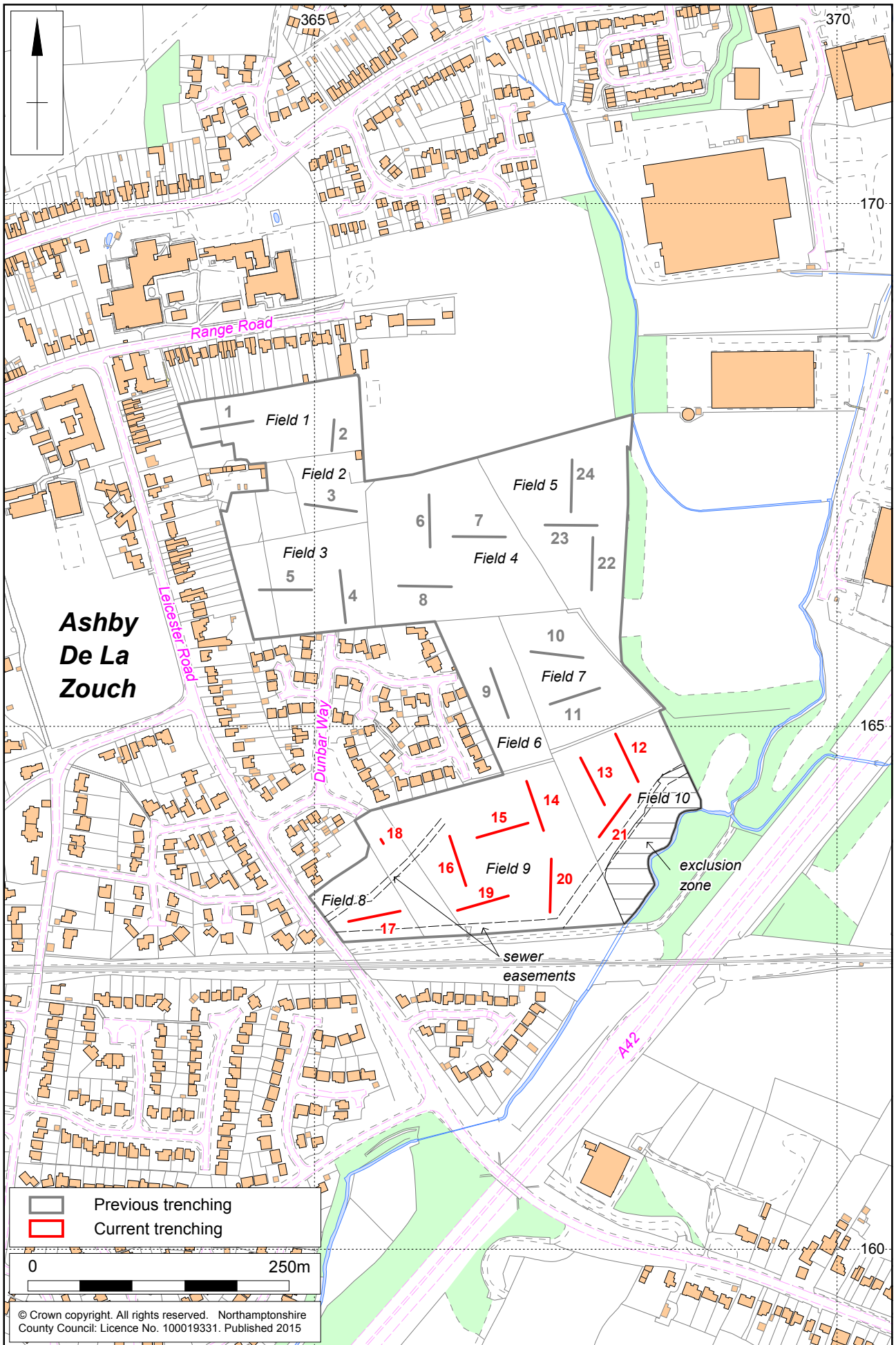
The excavated area was cleaned sufficiently to define any features. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

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. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. No artefacts were recovered.

The location of the trenches were surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid using Leica Viva dGPS survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$. A full photographic record comprising both 35mm black and white negatives and 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 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014). 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 (Finn 2015).

All trenches were backfilled with their up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical excavator.



Scale 1:5000 (A4)

Excavated trenches Fig 2

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General stratigraphy

The natural substrate was similar across the site, in trenches 12-16 and 19-21 the natural comprised firm mid brown-orange silty clay with rare-frequent patches of small stone inclusions and occurred 0.35-0.60m below the present ground surface. The natural changed towards the west end of the area with the natural in Trench 17 comprising dark brown-red sandy clay with moderate patches of small stones and occurred 0.30-0.35m below the present ground surface. No natural was visible in Trench 18 due to modern service disturbance.

There was no subsoil present across the site.

The topsoil remained the same across the site and was between 0.30-0.50m thick comprising firm dark brown sandy clay.

A full list of deposits by trench can be found in the Context Inventory (Appendix).

5.2 The archaeological features

None of the trenches excavated revealed any archaeological features, only furrows and land drains of post-medieval to modern date.

6 THE FINDS

No finds were recovered from the evaluation, except post-medieval materials which were not retained.

7 DISCUSSION

Trial trench evaluation on land at Leicester Road, Ashby de la Zouch recorded no archaeological features apart from ridge and furrow cultivation of post-medieval date.

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MOLA
23rd April 2015

APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
12	NW-SE 1.8m x 50m		126.10m	0.35-0.40m 125.70m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1201	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.35-0.40mm thick	-
1202	Natural	Mid brown-orange, grey mottled sandy clay.	-	-



Trench 12, looking north-west Fig 3

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
13	NE-SW 1.8m x 50m		126.15m	0.40m 125.75m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
1301	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.40m thick	-
1302	Natural	Mid brown-orange, grey mottled sandy clay.	-	-



Trench 13, looking south-east Fig 4

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
14	NW-SE 1.8 x 50m		127.18m	0.40-0.50m 127.68m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
1401	Topsoil	Mid- dark brown sandy clay	0.40-0.50m thick	-
1402	Layer	Mid brown-yellow silty clay	-	-



Trench 14, looking north-west Fig 5

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
15	ENE-WSW 1.8 x 50m		127.05m	0.40m 127.65m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1501	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.40m thick	-
1502	Natural	Mid brown-yellow silty clay	-	-



Trench 15, looking east-north-east

Fig 6

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
16	NNW-SSE 1.8 x 50m		128.10m	0.35-0.40m 127.70m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
1601	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.35-0.40m thick	-
1602	Natural	Mid brown-yellow silty clay with moderate patches of grey-brown silty clay and small stones	-	-



Trench 16, looking north-north-west Fig 7

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
17	WSW-ENE 1.8 x 50m		129.10m	0.30-0.35m 128.75m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1701	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.30-35m thick	-
1702	Natural	Brown-red sandy clay with moderate small stones	-	-



Trench 17, looking west-south-west

Fig 8

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
18	NW-SE 1.8 x 8m		128.90m	0.40m 128.50m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1801	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.40m thick	-
1802	Modern backfill	Modern gravel backfill of service trench	-	-



Trench 18, looking north-west (Note: Gravel backfill) Fig 9

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
19	NE-SW 1.8 x 50m		127.05m	0.40-0.50m 126.65m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
1901	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.40-0.50m thick	-
1902	Natural	Mid brown-yellow silty clay and brown-yellow silty clay with frequent stones	-	-



Trench 19, looking north-east

Fig 10

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
20	NE-SW 1.8 x 50m		126.90m	0.50-0.60m 126.30m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
2001	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.50-0.60mm thick	-
2002	Natural	Mid brown-yellow silty clay	-	-



Trench 20, looking north-east

Fig 11

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, NW end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
21	NE-SW 1.8 x 50m		126.10m	0.35-0.40m 125.70m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
2101	Topsoil	Dark brown sandy clay	0.40m thick	-
2102	Natural	Mid brown-yellow silty clay	-	-



Trench 21, looking north-east

Fig 12



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