



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at  
Kenilworth Road (North and South)  
Balsall Common, Warwickshire  
January 2016**

**Report 16/17**

Author: Sam Egan

Illustrations: Olly Dindol



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Report No: 16/14

Quality control and sign off:

Issue No.	Date approved:	Checked by:	Verified by:	Approved by:	Reason for Issue:
1	26.1.2016	P. Chapman	M. Holmes	A.Chapman	Draft for client review

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS No: molarnort1 - 239879</b>	
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Kenilworth Road (North and South) Balsall Common, Warwickshire		
Short description (250 words maximum)	MOLA has been commissioned by BSA Heritage Ltd, on behalf of Crest Nicholson, to undertake archaeological trial trench evaluation works on a two areas of land at Kenilworth Road (North and South), Balsall Common, Warwickshire. The work was undertaken in advance of proposed development of the land. No archaeological features or finds were encountered during the evaluation.		
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Evaluation		
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None		
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	DBA		
Current Land use	Pasture and abandoned farm buildings		
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	None		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Warwickshire		
Site address (including postcode)	Kenilworth Road, Balsall Common, Warwickshire		
Study area (sq.m or ha)	c 4ha		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	SP 2463 7590 and SP 2447 7615		
Height OD	c 125m		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	County Archaeological Advisor WCC		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Sam Egan		
Project Manager	Mark Holmes MOLA, Ben Stephenson BSA Heritage		
Sponsor or funding body	BSA Heritage for Crest Nicholson		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date/End date	11/01/2015- 15/01/2015		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>	
Physical	Warwickshire Museum	Pottery and other finds	
Paper	Warwickshire Museum	Site file	
Digital	Warwickshire Museum	Mapinfo plans, Word report	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)			
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Kenilworth Road (North and South) Balsall Common, Warwickshire		
Serial title & volume	16/17		
Author(s)	Sam Egan		
Page numbers	10		
Date	22.01.16		

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# **Archaeological trial trench evaluation**

## **on land at Kenilworth Road (North and South)**

### **Balsall Common, Warwickshire**

**January 2016**

#### *Abstract*

*MOLA has been commissioned by BSA Heritage Ltd, on behalf of Crest Nicholson, to undertake archaeological trial trench evaluation works on a c4ha area of land at Kenilworth Road (North and South), Balsall Common, Warwickshire. The work was undertaken in advance of proposed development of the land and to satisfy a planning condition. No archaeological features or finds were encountered during the evaluation.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

MOLA has been commissioned by BSA Heritage Ltd on behalf of Crest Nicholson to undertake archaeological trial trench evaluation works on a c4ha area of land at Kenilworth Road (North and South), Balsall Common, Warwickshire (SP 2447 7615, Fig 1). The work was undertaken in advance of proposed development of the land to satisfy a planning condition.

The scope of works was outlined and detailed in two Written Scheme of Investigations (WSIs) prepared by MOLA (2015).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

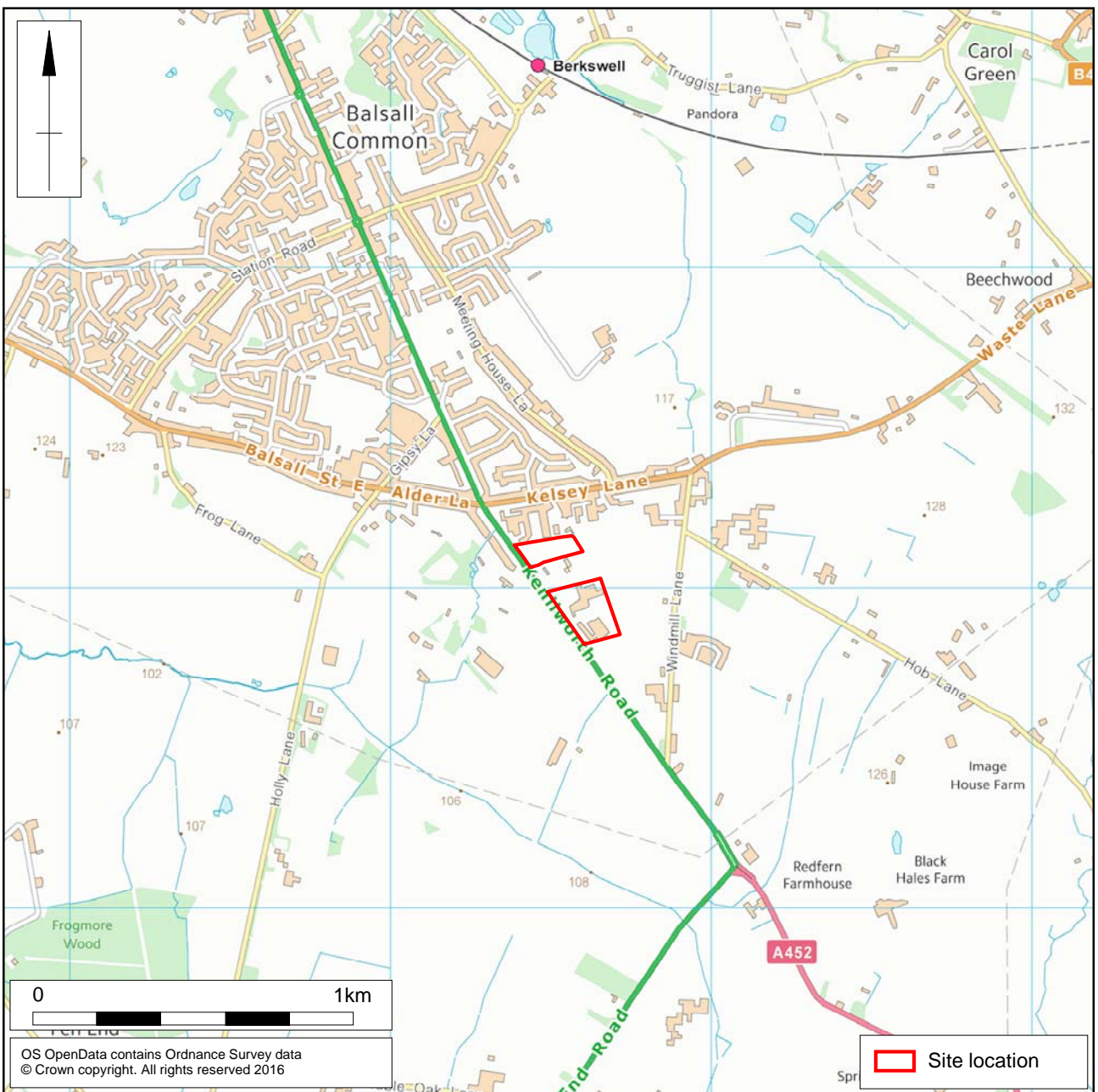
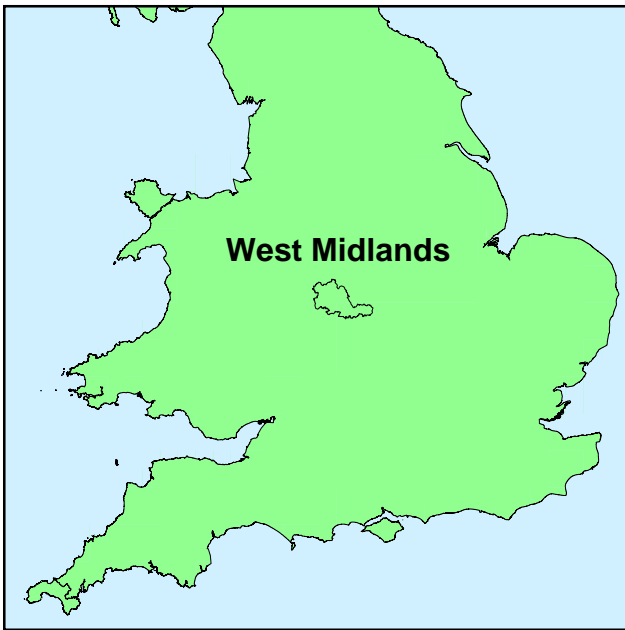
### ***Location, topography and geology***

The two areas of proposed development are c1.2ha and c2.6ha parcels of land which lie immediately to the south of Balsall Common village and to the east of Kenilworth Road (A452) which passes along the western boundary of the site.

The north site, an area of uncultivated rough grassland, is bounded to the north, west and east by hedgerows and mature trees. Beyond the road to the west, and to the north and south are residential properties. To the east and south-east lie further agricultural fields.

The south site is bounded to the north, west and east by hedgerows and mature trees, beyond which lie further agricultural fields. The land is currently occupied by former chicken farm sheds, areas of hard standing, a late Victorian property and grounds ('Southfields'), and a small nursery which sold sheds.

The topography of the site is generally level, at c25 metres above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology of the site is Mercia mudstone, overlain by superficial deposits of glaciofluvial sand and gravel close to Kenilworth Road, with till to the east (BGS 2015).



Scale 1:20,000

Site Location Fig 1

## 2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The following historical background has been summarised from a heritage statement produced by BSA Heritage, which utilised the Solihull Historic Environment Record (HER) amongst other sources (BSA 2014).

### North Site

No designated heritage assets lie within or close to the proposed development site and no previous archaeological investigations on site are known. The earliest probable activity in the area is a possible semi-circular, double-ditched enclosure c150m west of the site, noted on aerial photographs (HER10464). It is undated but probably prehistoric to medieval in origin. A further cropmark around 1km to the south, is unlikely to reflect sub-surface archaeological remains, but rather geological features (HER10463). Some prehistoric finds have been noted, including a possible Neolithic site, but at some distance from the site (BSA 2014).

A number of records note medieval ridge and furrow observed on aerial photographs. The closest area of ridge and furrow is less than 200m to the south-west (HER1397). Further areas of ridge and furrow are known to the east (HER8867, 10847), and the south-west (HER8806).

Half of the HER hits within 1km of the development area are for listed buildings. The closest listed building, 400m to the south-east of the site, is the Berkswell Windmill (Grade II\*), a three storey brick tower mill which was built in 1826 on the site of an earlier mill (HER139). The remainder lie further afield and are all Grade II. At the crossroads to the north was the site of a probable 19th-century mile post (HER1284).

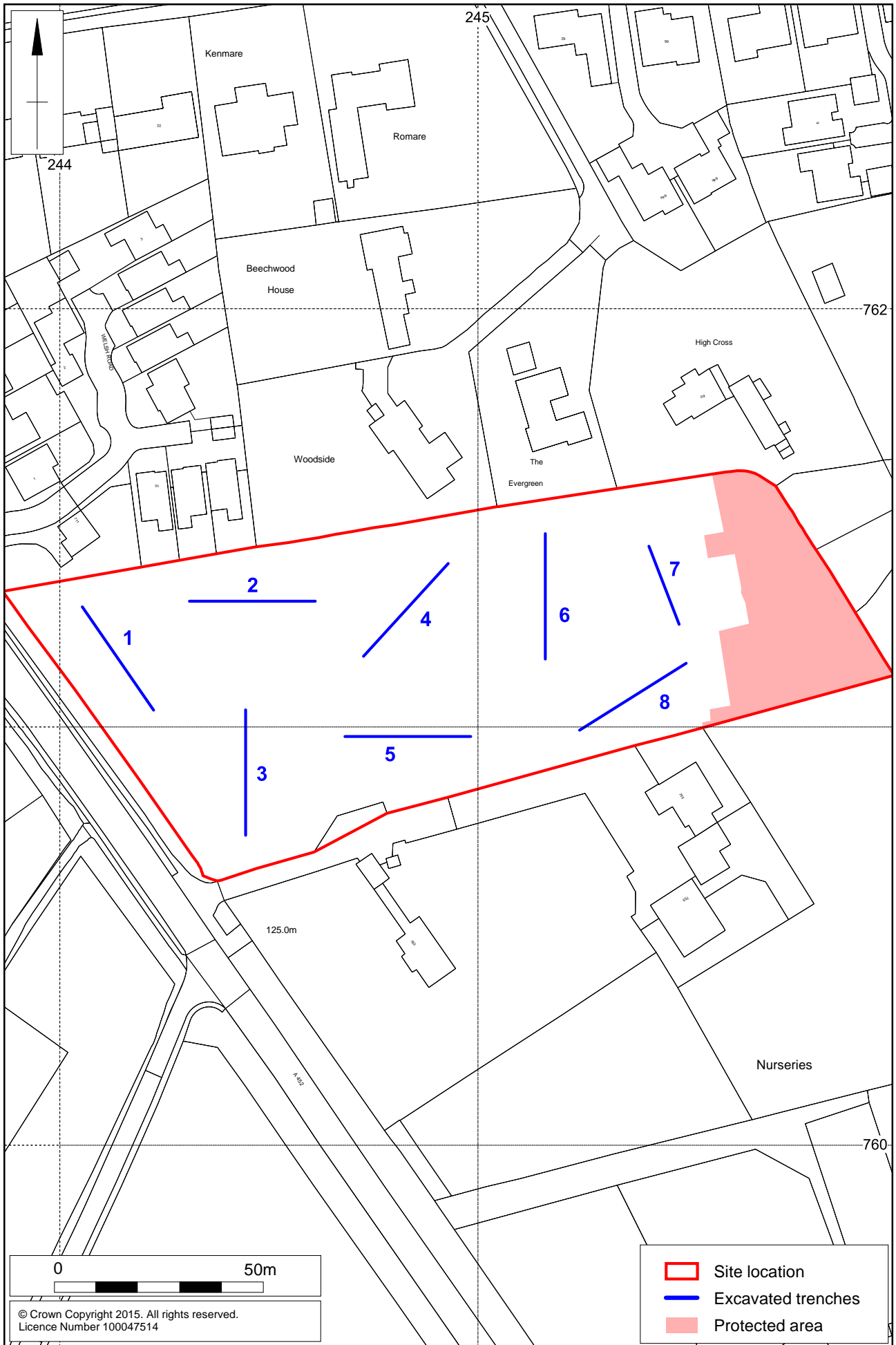
Maps from the early 18th century show the site and surrounding area formed part of Balsall Heath. By the end of the century, the site was newly enclosed as the north-western corner of land between the Kenilworth Road and parish boundary. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 shows the development area to form the northern part of a larger enclosed field edging Kenilworth Road. By 1905, the southern border of the site was established when a large house labelled as 'Oak Croft' was constructed to the south, and its grounds, including an orchard, were divided from the main field. On this map, a small unlabelled structure has also been constructed in the north-east corner of the field, probably an ancillary building of High Cross Farm. This structure is no longer marked after 1925, although by this date, several structures have been built to the east of Oak Croft. The Ordnance Survey map of 1953 indicates that the driveway for Oak Croft was extended beyond the former boundary of the development area.

### South site

The first Ordnance Survey map of 1886 shows the development area was bounded with trees that edge Kenilworth Road. The area previously marked as a gravel pit is now marked as a pond. By 1905, a house and driveway within a rectangular curtilage had been built in the centre of the site adjacent to Kenilworth Road. The pond in the south west corner is shown as a marshy area. To the north of the northern boundary lay an orchard and the property of Oak Croft beyond. On the 1925 map, this house is named as 'Southfield', and the grounds had increased to three quarters of an acre, with a brick outbuilding on the north-eastern edge of the curtilage.

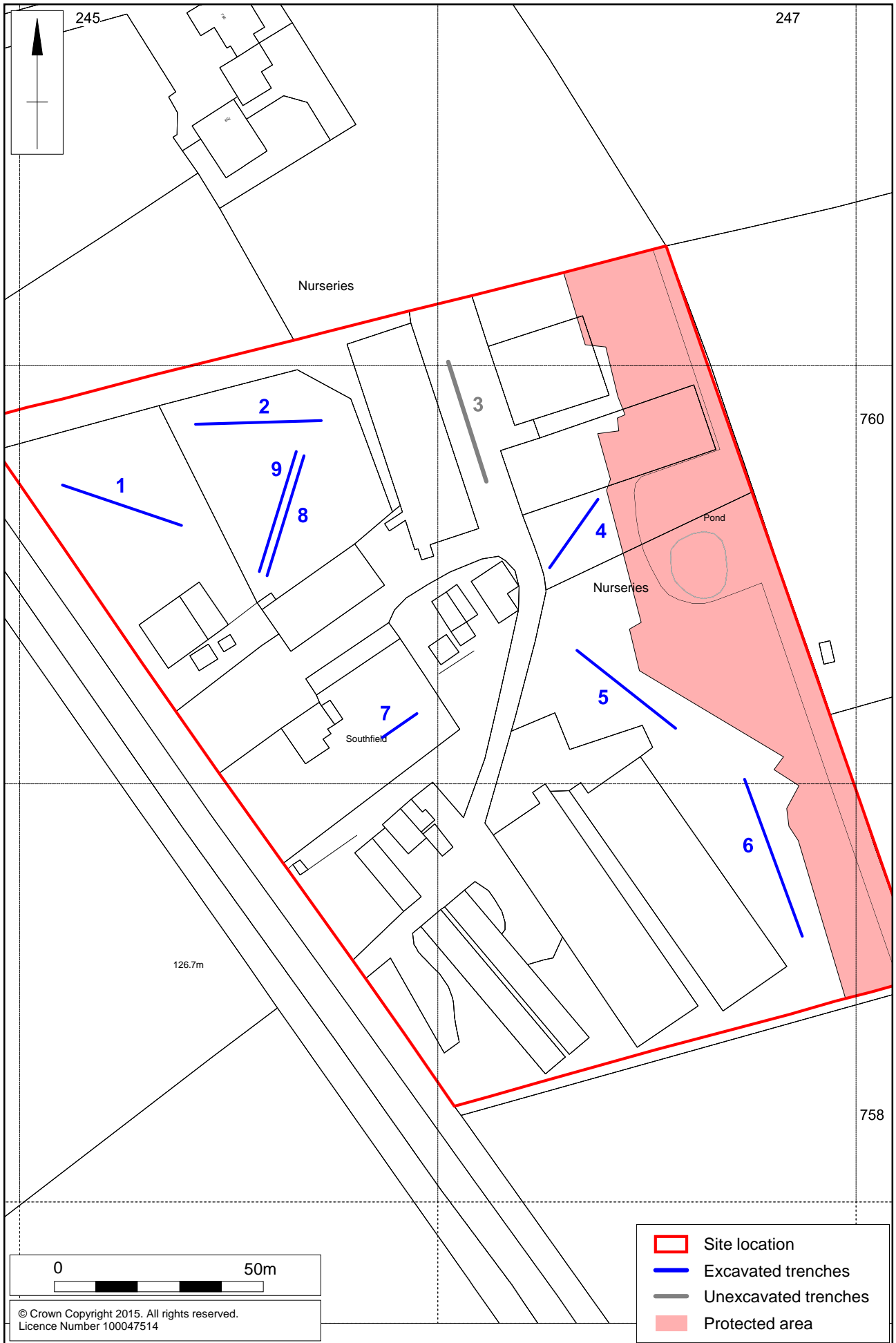


The nursery was constructed by 1953. The map of that year shows two or three large greenhouses north-east of Southfield, the pond, an area of bounded orchard in the south-east and some additional outbuildings around Southfield. Further construction of three new buildings, one west of the greenhouse and two on the south-eastern edge of the site took place by 1986.



Scale 1: 1,250

Trench locations North Fig 2



Scale 1: 1,250

Trench locations South Fig 3

### 3 OBJECTIVES

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area, and to inform any future excavation or mitigation strategy the objectives of the evaluation were to establish:

- the date, nature, significance and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- the potential for the recovery of artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- the potential for palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;
- the impact of the proposed works upon any surviving archaeological remains;

The evaluation was carried out within the parameters suggested by the published research priorities set out for the West Midlands (Watt 2011). The research aims set out will be addressed by the project, as appropriate.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

The area of the proposed development was subject to archaeological evaluation through trial trench excavation, with trenches positioned to create a broad and varied sample across the development area. Sixteen 30m long by 1.8m wide trenches, and one 20m long by 1.8m trench (N1-8 and S1-9), were positioned within the two development areas, in line with WCC requirements, and avoiding areas of protected habitat to the east (Fig 2 and 3). The northern site had a further 10m of trenching held as contingency should further definition had been required. Tr.S3 (South site) could not be excavated due to a substantial layer of concrete; an additional trench (Tr.S9) was excavated parallel to trench S8 at the request of the contamination consultants (Fig 3). Tr.S7 was shortened due to tree coverage.

The trenches were accurately measured in using Leica Viva Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of  $\pm 0.05\text{m}$  to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum.

Machine excavation was undertaken under the direction of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless bucket a minimum of 1.8m wide to reveal the undisturbed natural horizons.

## 5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The natural geology varied little across both sites, where the trenches exposed a firm, mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small to large pebble inclusions. Topsoil was dark blackish-brown sand clay with root inclusions and small to large sub-rounded pebbles. Topsoil varied between 0.25m-0.80m thick. (Fig 4)

No archaeological features were encountered during the evaluation. The southern site was heavily contaminated by the periodical demolition and construction of chicken sheds.



Sample section, trench 4 looking west Fig 4

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

In the event, the evaluation revealed no archaeological features or finds. Both sites had a low potential for archaeological remains, the northern site was undisturbed pasture land whilst the southern site had been heavily disturbed by modern farm buildings.

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MOLA Northampton

26 January 2016

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**APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF CONTEXTS****North Site**

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height aOD</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural aOD</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>30m, 1.8m &amp; NW-SE</b>	<b>424405;276127</b>	<b>23.85m</b>	<b>0.35m &amp; 23.50m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
101	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m thick	-
102	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m +	-

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height aOD</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural aOD</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>30m, 1.8m &amp; W-E</b>	<b>424431;276129</b>	<b>24.30m</b>	<b>0.35m &amp; 22.95m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
201	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m thick	-
202	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m +	-

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height aOD</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural aOD</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>30m, 1.8m &amp; N-S</b>	<b>424444;276104</b>	<b>24.20m</b>	<b>0.40m &amp; 23.80m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
301	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m thick	-
302	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m +	-



Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
4	30m, 1.8m & NE-SW	424473;276116	24.62m	0.40m & 24.22m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
401	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m thick	-
402	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m +	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
5	30m, 1.8m & W-E	424468;276097	24.78m	0.35m & 24.43m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
501	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m thick	-
502	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m +	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
6	30m, 1.8m & N-S	424516;276115	25.19m	0.38m & 24.81m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
601	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.38m thick	-
602	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.38m +	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
7	20m, 1.8m & NW-SE	424541;276142	25.13m	0.35m & 24.78m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
701	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m thick	-
702	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m +	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
8	30m, 1.8m & W-E	424550;276114	25.33m	0.40m & 24.93m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
801	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m thick	-
802	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m +	-

**South site**

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
1	30m, 1.8m & NW-SE	424512;275971	25.53m	0.40m & 25.13m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m thick	-
102	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m +	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
2	30m, 1.8m & W-E	424542;275986	25.82m	0.45m & 25.37m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
201	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.45m thick	-
202	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.45m +	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
4	30m, 1.8m & NE-SW	424638;275967	26.01m	0.50m & 25.51m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
401	Topsoil	Dark blackish brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.50m thick	-
402	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.50m +	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height aOD	Depth & height of natural aOD
5	30m, 1.8m & NW-SE	424633;275930	26.40m	0.70m & 25.70m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
501	Topsoil	Dark blackish -brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.40m thick	-
502	Subsoil	Mid brown sandy silt with rare small stones.	0.30m thick	-
503	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.70m +	-

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height aOD</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural aOD</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>30m, 1.8m &amp; NW-SE</b>	<b>424656;275916</b>	<b>26.33m</b>	<b>0.20m &amp; 26.13m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
601	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.20m thick	-
602	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.20m +	-

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height aOD</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural aOD</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>12m, 1.8m &amp; NE-SW</b>	<b>424686;275858</b>	<b>26.46m</b>	<b>0.35m &amp; 26.11m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
701	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m thick	-
702	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.35m +	-

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height aOD</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural aOD</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>30m, 1.8m &amp; NE-SW</b>	<b>424565;275891</b>	<b>26.25m</b>	<b>0.70m &amp; 25.55m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
801	Topsoil	Dark blackish- brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.70m thick	-
802	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.70m +	-

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>Surface height aOD</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural aOD</b>
9	30m, 1.8m & NE-SW	424567;275978	26.11m	0.50m & 25.61m
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
901	Topsoil	Dark blackish-brown sandy clay with small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.50m thick	-
902	Natural	Mid orange-yellow sand with root disturbance and small and large sub-rounded pebbles.	0.50m +	-



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