



# **Trial trench evaluation on land at Caswell Road, Brackmills Northampton February 2016**

Report No. 16/33

Author: Ben Kidd

Illustrator: Olly Dindol



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Caswell Road, Brackmills  
Northampton  
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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS No: molanort1-243422</b>	
Project name	Trial trench evaluation on land at Caswell Road, Brackmills, Northampton		
Short description	MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their clients, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land at Caswell Road, Brackmills, prior to proposed development. Seven trenches were excavated across the site. One undated ditch was identified; no other archaeological features were present.		
Project type	Evaluation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Heritage Assessment (Dawson 2016)		
Current Land use	Rough grasslands/scrub		
Future work	No		
Monument type/ period	Ditch, undated		
Significant finds	None		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address (including postcode)	Caswell Road, Brackmills, Northampton		
Study area (sq. m or ha)	c.2.8ha		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	477264 258150		
Height OD	c.76-80m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	County Archaeological Advisor (NCC)		
Project Design originator	Carol Simmonds (MOLA Northampton)		
Director/Supervisor	Ben Kidd (MOLA Northampton)		
Project Manager	Anthony Maull (MOLA Northampton)		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date/End date	15/02/2016 – 17/02/2016		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Accession no.</b>	<b>Content</b>	
Physical	ENN108236	Site documents – context sheets etc	
Paper		Mapinfo plans, Word report, dxf data, digital photographs	
Digital			
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)			
Title	Trial trench evaluation on land at Caswell Road, Brackmills, Northampton, February 2016		
Serial title & volume	16/33		
Author(s)	Ben Kidd		
Page numbers	15 pages including text and illustrations		
Date	23/02/2016		

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>
2.1	Location, topography and geology
2.2	Historical and archaeological background
<b>3</b>	<b>AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>
	<b>APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY</b>

## Figures

Front cover:	General site view, looking north-west
Fig 1:	Site location with HER (Historic Environment Record) data
Fig 2:	Excavated trial trench locations
Fig 3:	Trench 5; Ditch [504]
Fig 4:	Trench 1, looking north-east
Fig 5:	Trench 2, looking east
Fig 6:	Trench 3, looking south-west
Fig 7:	Trench 4, looking north-east
Fig 8:	Trench 5, looking south
Fig 9:	Trench 6, looking north-east
Fig 10:	Trench 7, looking north-east

# **Trial trench evaluation on land at Caswell Road, Brackmills Northampton February 2016**

## **Abstract**

*MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their clients, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on land at Caswell Road, Brackmills, prior to proposed development. Seven trenches were excavated across the site. One undated ditch was identified; no other archaeological features were present.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In February 2016, MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to conduct an archaeological evaluation on land at Caswell Road, Brackmills, Northampton (NGR SP54216 70700; Fig 1), in advance of proposed development (Planning Ref: N/2015/1175).

The archaeological works were requested by the County Archaeological Advisor, Northamptonshire County Council (CAANCC) in a letter to Northampton Borough Council (NBC) planning department, dated 14th January 2016. The archaeological evaluation was required to determine the nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the development area. The requirements were outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (MOLA 2016), and were undertaken in accordance with a Brief prepared by CAANCC in February 2016 (Mather 2016a and 2016b) and the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) registered organisation. All works were prepared and undertaken in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014b) and *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014a), and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (HE 2015).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

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

The proposed development area is located at the western edge of Brackmills Industrial Estate at the southern edge of Northampton; the village of Hardingstone is located on the high ground to the west of the site. The site comprises a parcel of land c.2.8ha in size, with the northern boundary of the site being defined by a track named Houghton Hill which links Hardingstone to Brackmills Industrial Estate. The eastern boundary is formed by the junction between Caswell Road and Gowerton Road. The site is bounded to the south and west by Brackmills Country Park.

The site has a slope, falling from c.86m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the west, to c.76m aOD in the east. The underlying geology has been mapped as Whitby Mudstone Formation (BGS 2016).

## **2.2 Historical and archaeological background**

A Heritage Assessment was undertaken in November 2015 (Dawson 2015) which drew on data from Northamptonshire's Historic Environment Record (NHER) and from historic map sources. The following summary is derived from the Heritage Assessment as well as from grey literature reports produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology and MOLA Northampton.

The survey of the NHER did not identify any known sites or monuments within the proposed development area. In the wider landscape there are records for prehistoric activity on the north-eastern side of the Brackmills Industrial Estate. An archaeological excavation undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 2013 recorded two pits which were dated to the early Neolithic by an assemblage of worked flint debitage, and by the radiocarbon dating of a charred hazelnut shell (Clarke 2013; Fig 1).

Much of the recorded settlement around Hardingstone and Brackmills was situated on the higher ground of the Hunsbury Ridge; this is particularly the case during the Iron Age and into the Roman period. The site is thought to lie between two Iron Age and Roman settlements; one was located c200m to the north under part of the Brackmills estate (NHER 4968) and the second c1km to the south-west at Hardingstone. At Hardingstone there was a late Iron Age settlement covering an estimated 1.4ha on former allotment land (Woods 1969, Upson-Smith 2013). This settlement continued into the Roman period with evidence for clay extraction and pottery manufacture. Roman settlement was also recorded c200m to the south-west of the site (NHER 4976).

Occupation of the higher ground continued into the late Saxon and medieval periods with the focus of medieval settlement at the village of Hardingstone with its manor and church. Dawson (2015) suggests that the site, situated as it was on the lower ground, was likely grazing land. The parish was enclosed in 1765-6 and the new enclosed fields were typically small and rectangular in nature. The proposed development site was within 'Plat Close'; the word 'Plat' referring to meadow land.

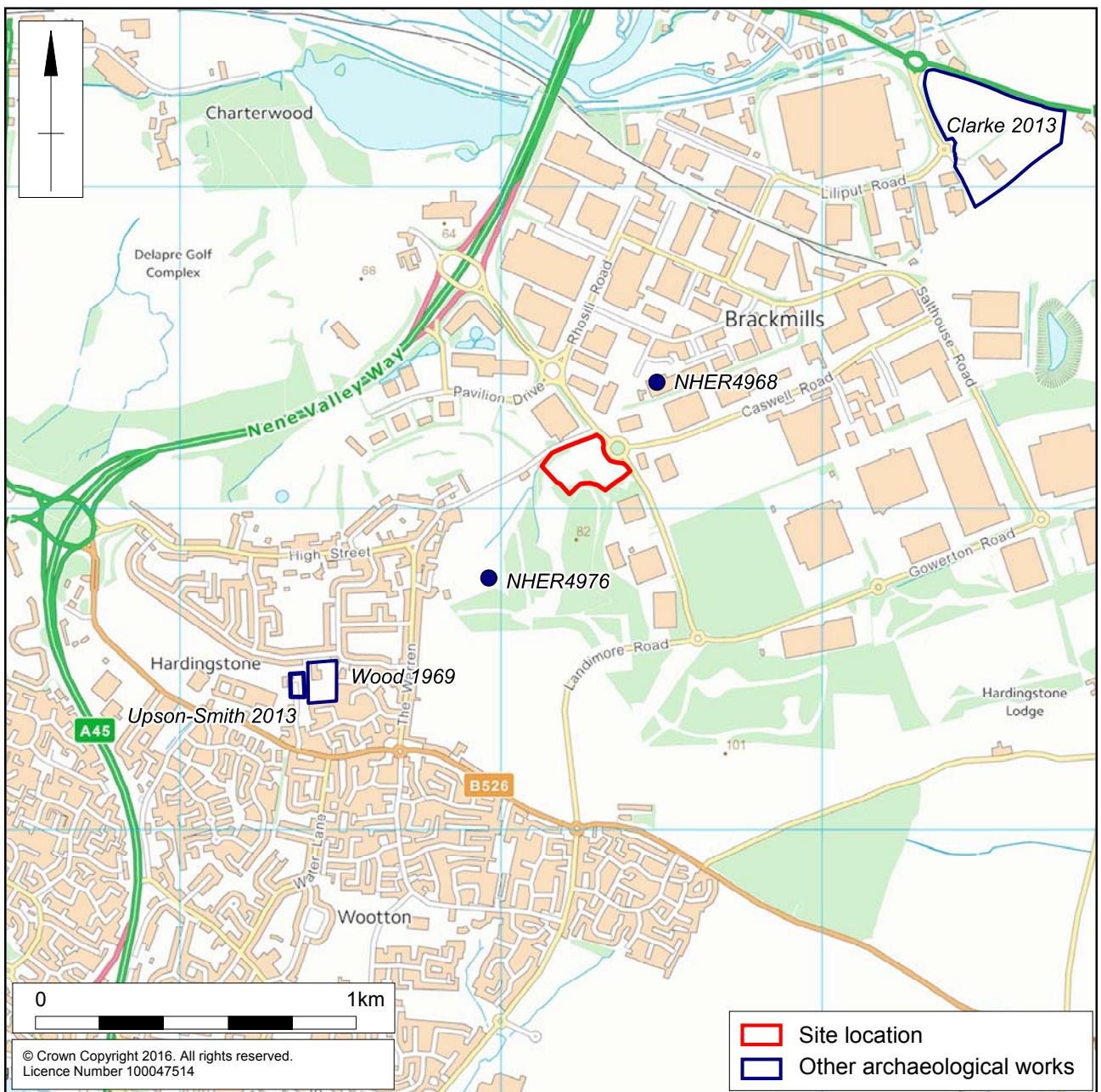
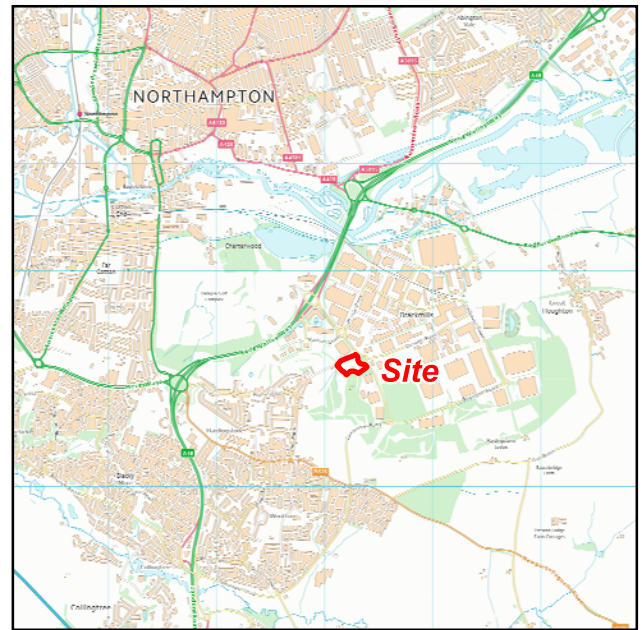
## **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the evaluation is to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains within their cultural and environmental setting (Mather 2016a and 2016b). The evaluation was also 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 trenching specifically aimed to examine:

- 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 palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;
- The impact of the proposed works upon any surviving archaeological remains;
- and inform any future excavation, mitigation and/or preservation in-situ strategy.

Specific research objectives would have been drawn from the East Midlands regional framework (Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012; Cooper 2006) or other national research agendas, should the results of the excavation have required it.

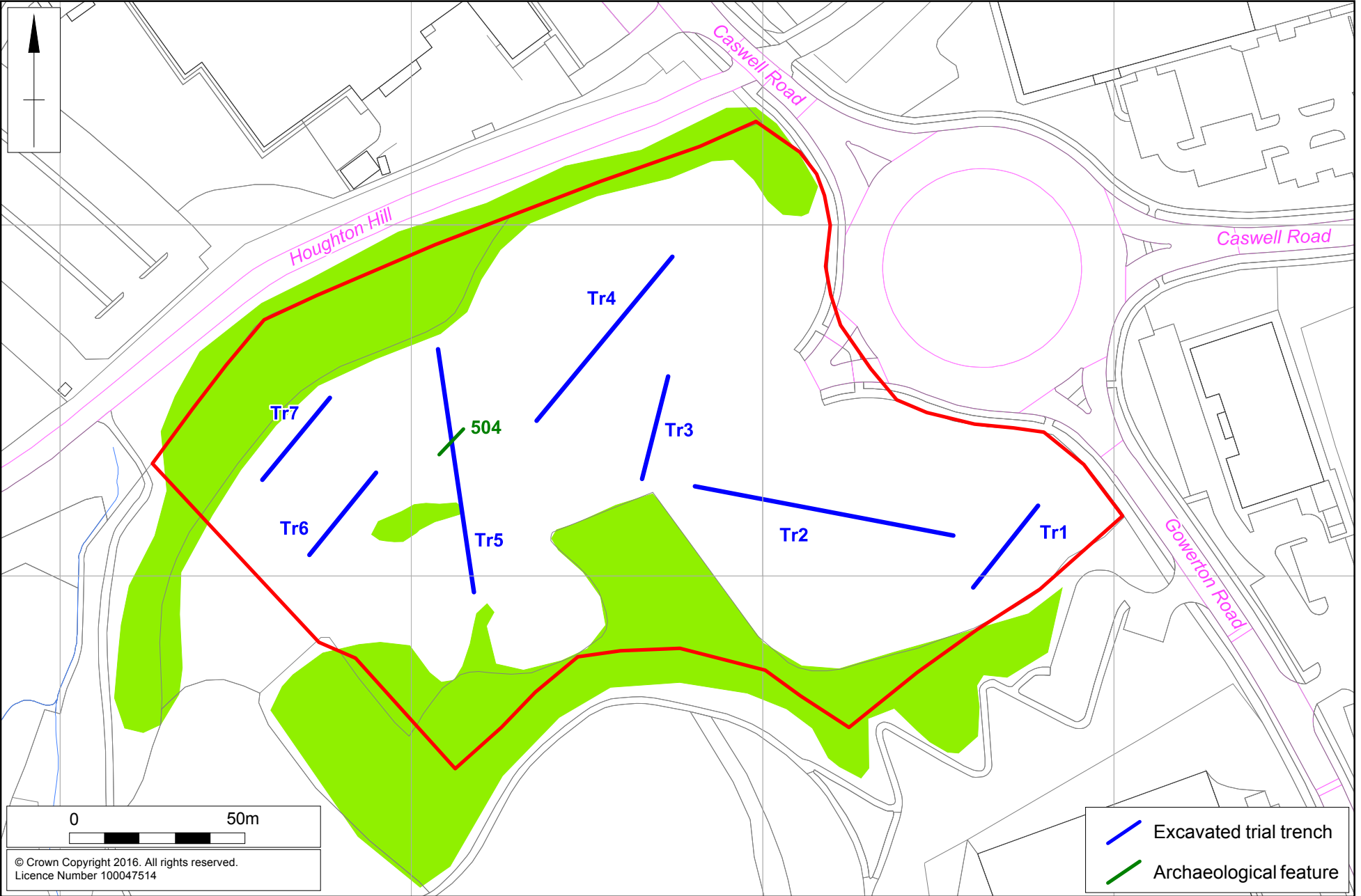




Scale 1:20,000

Site location with HER (Historic Environment Record) data Fig 1





## 4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Seven trenches were excavated within the proposed development area. Trenches 1, 3, 6 and 7 were 30m long; Trench 4 was 60m long; Trench 5 was 70m long; and Trench 2 was 75m long (Fig 2). The trenches were positioned to cover a full and varied sample of the development area, while taking into account a number of on-site constraints. These constraints included services along the eastern edge of the site, as well as areas of dense tree cover.

The trenches were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and subsoil were removed under archaeological direction to reveal archaeological features or, where these were absent, the natural substrate.

The location of the trenches was surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid using Leica Viva GPS survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of  $\pm 0.05\text{m}$ .

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. A full photographic record comprising digital images was maintained.

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the excavation were fully recorded, following standard MOLA Northampton 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.

On completion of the evaluation and following appropriate monitoring, all trenches were backfilled with their up-cast and then lightly compacted by the mechanical excavator.

The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing under accession code ENN108236, in accordance with the county guidelines (NARC 2014), as well as Walker (1990), Brown (2011), the ClfA (2014c) and the Museum and Galleries Commission (1992).

## 5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

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

The natural substrate was fairly consistent across the site, comprising mixed mid brown-yellow and blue-grey clays with bands of mid orange-brown natural sands and occurred between 0.40m and 0.60m below the present ground surface.

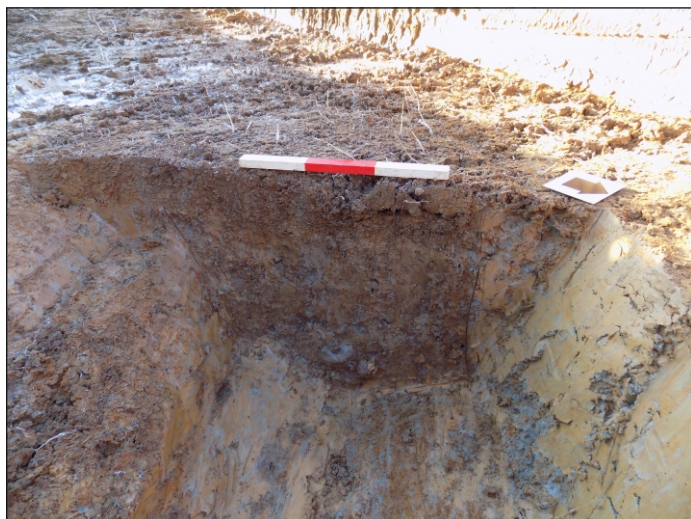
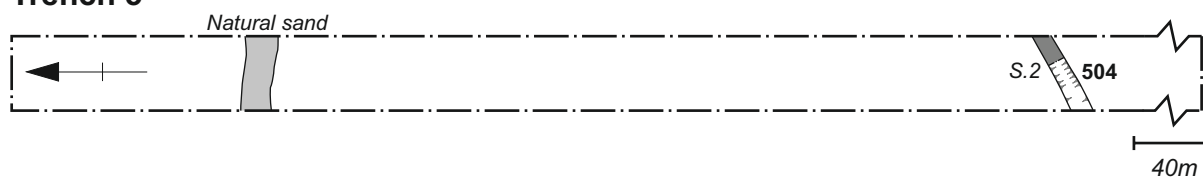
Subsoil, comprising mid brown-grey sandy silt, was present in Trenches 1 and 2. It was between 0.10m and 0.30m thick.

The topsoil comprised firm dark brown-grey silty clay, and remained consistent across the site. It was between 0.30m and 0.45m thick.

Only Trench 5, to the west of the site, contained archaeological features (Fig 2). This comprised a ditch [504], aligned broadly north-east to south-west, although its shape in plan was irregular. It was c.0.55m wide and 0.34m deep, with straight, near vertical sides and a flat base (Fig 3). The fill (503) comprised mixed mid grey-brown silty clay with infrequent small stones. No artefacts were recovered, and the feature could not be dated.

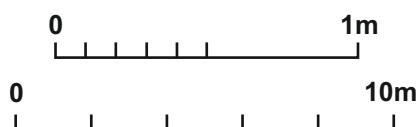
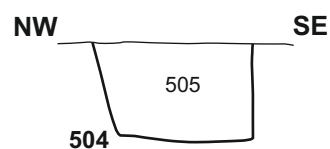
Trench 2 contained disturbance from tree-root activity, but no further features or finds were identified.

## Trench 5



Ditch 504, looking north-east

## Section 2



## **6 DISCUSSION**

The trial trench evaluation recorded a single linear feature likely to be a ditch or hedgerow. It is probable that the feature represents a sub-division within this parcel of land.

A search of historic mapping has not identified this particular feature, indicating that it is likely to be older than the first edition Ordnance Survey map in 1885, although it is thought likely that it is a post-medieval boundary. However, as no dating material or artefacts were recovered, any suggestion of date is purely speculative.

There is evidence for Iron Age to medieval occupation nearby, located on the high ground of 'Hunsbury Ridge' to the east and west (Dawson 2015). The site at Caswell Road seems to lie between these main areas of occupation, made unsuitable for habitation by its poor drainage and was therefore probably utilised as grazing land.

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MOLA Northampton  
23 February 2016



**APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>			<b>Depth of natural</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>1.9m x 30m NE-SW</b>			<b>0.40-45m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/ Samples</b>
101	Topsoil	Firm dark brown-grey sandy silt	0.30m thick	-
102	Natural	Mid brown-yellow clay with bands of mid brown-orange sand	-	-
103	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey sandy clay	0.10-15m thick	-



Trench 1, looking north-east Fig 4

<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>			<b>Depth of natural</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>1.9m x 75m E-W</b>			<b>0.55-0.60m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
201	Topsoil	Firm dark brown-grey sandy silt	0.30-45m thick	-
202	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey sandy silt	0.15-0.30m thick	-
203	Natural	Mid brown-yellow and blue clays with bands of mid yellow-brown sands	-	-
204	Fill of [205]	Mixed dark brown-grey clays	0.72m wide 0.20m deep	-
205	Tree bole	Irregular circular feature with irregular edges and base. Tree bole/disturbance	0.72m wide 0.20m deep	-



Trench 2, looking east Fig 5



<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>			<b>Depth of natural</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>1.9m x 30m NE-SW</b>			<b>0.30-0.50m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/ Samples</b>
301	Topsoil	Firm dark brown-grey sandy silt	0.30-0.45m thick	-
302	Natural	Mid blue and brown clays with bands of mid brown-orange sands	-	-



Trench 3, looking south-west Fig 6

<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>			<b>Depth of natural</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>1.9m x 60m NE-SW</b>			<b>0.50m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/ Samples</b>
401	topsoil	Firm dark brown-grey sandy silt	0.30-0.40mm thick	-
402	Natural	Mid brown and blue clays with bands/patches of mid brown-orange sands	-	-



Trench 4, looking north-east Fig 7



<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>			<b>Depth of natural</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>1.9m x 70m N-S</b>			<b>0.50m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
501	Topsoil	Firm dark brown-grey sandy silt	0.35-0.40m thick	-
502	Natural	Mid brown clays with bands/patches of mid brown-yellow sands	-	-
503	Fill of [504]	Mid grey-brown silty clay with infrequent small stones	0.34m deep 0.55m wide	-
504	Ditch	NE-SW linear with U-shaped profile with flat base and straight/near vertical sides.	0.34m deep 0.55m wide	-



Trench 5, looking south Fig 8



<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>			<b>Depth of natural</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>1.9m x 30m NE-SW</b>			<b>0.50-0.70m</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/ Samples</b>
601	Topsoil	Firm dark brown-grey sandy silt	0.30-0.40m thick	-
602	Natural	Mid brown and blue-grey clays with mid brown-orange sands	-	-



Trench 6, looking north-east Fig 9

<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>			<b>Depth of natural</b>
7	1.9m x 30m N-S			0.60-0.70m
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/Samples</b>
701	Topsoil	Firm dark brown-grey sandy silt	0.30m thick	-
702	Natural	Mid brown-blue clays with patches/bands of mid brown-orange sands	-	-



Trench 7, looking north-east

Fig 10



