



**Archaeological observation, investigation and
recording on land at the former Middle School
Kingsthorpe, Northampton**

July 2016

Report No. 16/130

Author: Gemma Hewitt

Illustrator: Oliver Dindol



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-258862	
Project name	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at the former Middle School, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, July 2016		
Short description	<i>MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by Persimmon Homes to carry out archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication on land at the former Middle School, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, prior to proposed development. Two truncated pits dating to the Middle Iron Age were identified. The excavation also located extensive recent disturbance related to the construction and use of the school.</i>		
Project type	Mitigation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Trial trench evaluation (MOLA 2016)		
Current Land use	Rough grasslands/scrub		
Future work	No		
Monument type/ period	Iron Age pits		
Significant finds	Iron Age pottery		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address (including postcode)	Former Middle School, Kingsthorpe, Northampton		
Study area (sq. m or ha)	4.6ha		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	474860 264000		
Height OD	95m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA		
Project brief originator	County Assistant Archaeological Advisor (NCC)		
Project Design originator	MOLA		
Director/Supervisor	Gemma Hewitt (MOLA)		
Project Manager	Ant Maull (MOLA)		
Sponsor or funding body	Persimmon Homes		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date/End date	11/07/2016 –12/07/2016		
ARCHIVES		Accession no.	Content
Physical	ENN108337		Site documents – context sheets etc
Paper			Mapinfo plans, Word report, dxf data, digital photographs
Digital			
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)			
Title	Archaeological observation and investigation on land at the former Middle School, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, July 2016		
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Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at the former Middle School Kingsthorpe, Northampton July 2016

Abstract

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by Persimmon Homes to carry out archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication on land at the former Middle School, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, prior to proposed development. Two truncated pits dating to the Middle Iron Age were identified. The excavation also located extensive recent disturbance related to the construction and use of the school.

1 INTRODUCTION

In July 2016, MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) undertook an archaeological excavation on land at the former Middle School, Kingsthorpe, Northampton in advance of proposed residential development (NGR 474860 264000; Fig 1).

The work was commissioned by Persimmon Homes and followed on from an earlier trial trench evaluation at the site (MOLA 2016a). The excavations were required in order to satisfy a condition placed on outlining planning permission for the site by Northampton Borough Council. The specification for the archaeological works was discussed and agreed with the Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council (NCCAAA) and presented in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (MOLA 2016b).

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) registered organisation. All works were prepared and undertaken accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation* (CIfA 2014a) and *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014b), 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 in Kingsthorpe, a former village now a suburb of Northampton on a site previously occupied by Kingsthorpe Middle School (Fig 1). The western half of the site comprises an area of hard standing for the former school buildings, whilst the eastern half previously functioned as the school playing field and is now rough grassland. The site is bounded to the north by housing and allotments, to the east by Kingsthorpe Recreation Ground, to the west by allotments and to the south by Penfold Close and further housing.

The site lies on ground which rises gently to the north at an approximate height of between 90m and 95m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology has been mapped as comprising Stamford Member Sandstone and Siltstone (BGS 2016).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site itself lies within an area of archaeological interest with the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) listing a number of entries within 1km of the site.

Cropmarks have been recorded immediately to the north of the site, however, these have not been investigated and it is unclear as to whether they impact on the development area.

Roman coins and a number of medieval pottery sherds have been recorded on the opposite side of Welford Road to the south of the site. Medieval ridge and furrow has been recorded in the vicinity of Kingsthorpe recreation ground to the east of the site and which overlay possible earthworks indicating earlier settlement activity. Kingsthorpe was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086AD, where it is identified as *Torpl* meaning *Kings-land*; the village was partly encompassed by Northampton in around 1900, to be fully absorbed into the borough in 1931.

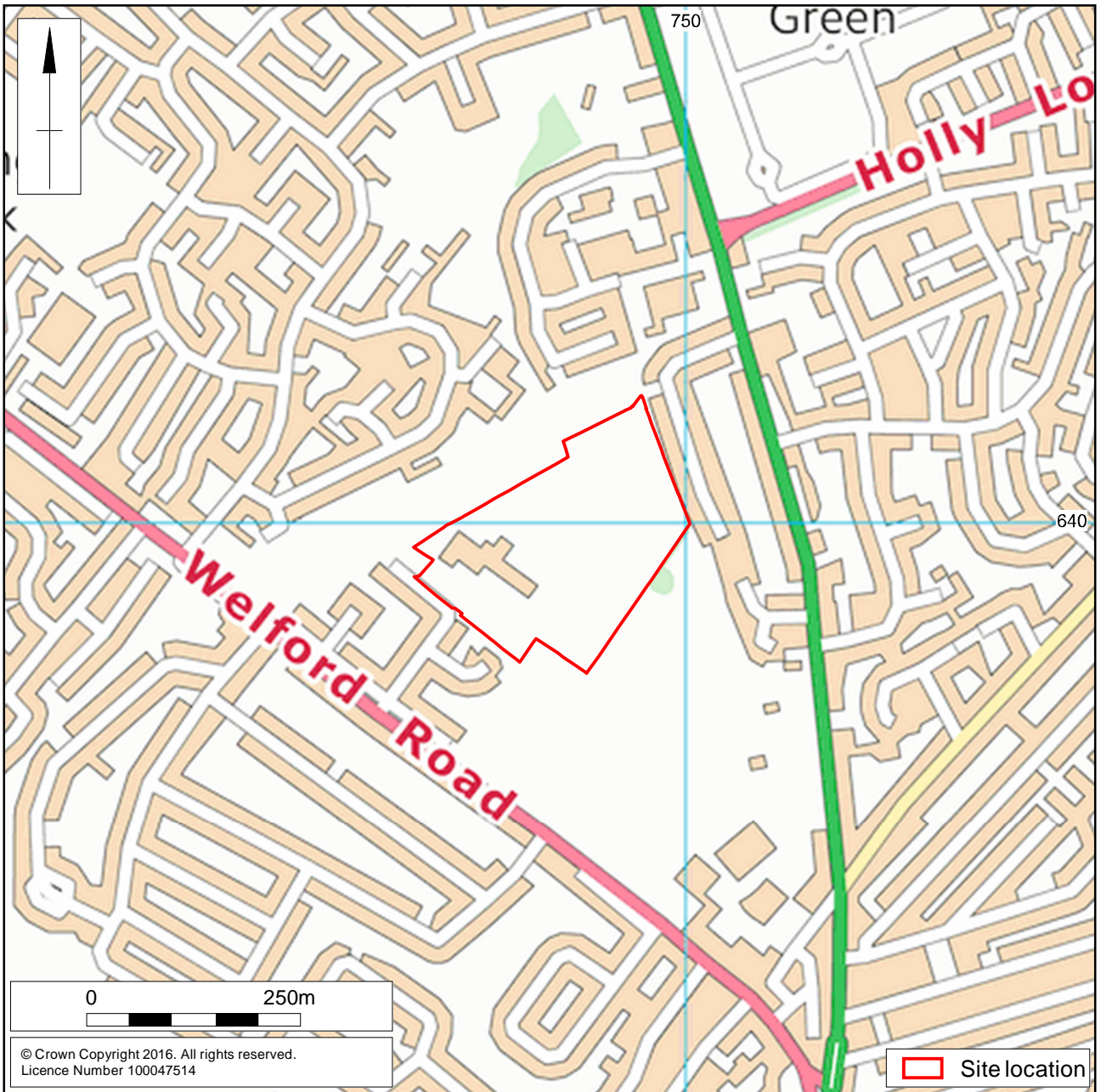
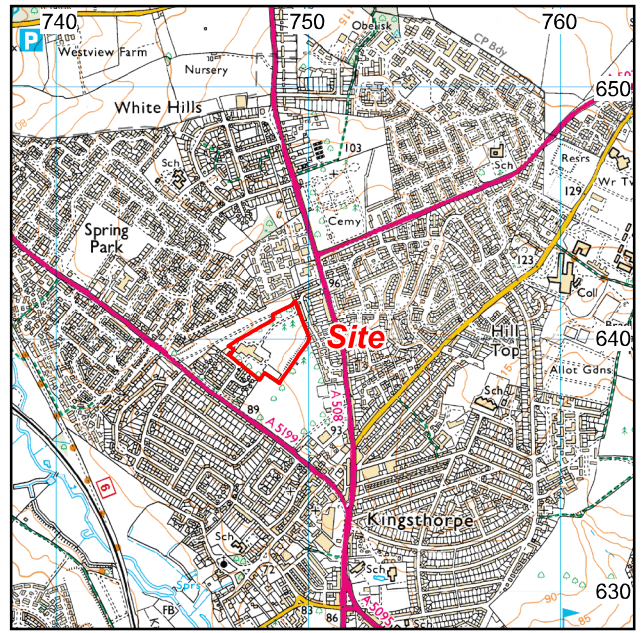
The earlier archaeological evaluation at the site was undertaken in May 2016 (MOLA 2016a). Eight trenches were excavated and a shallow pit dating to the Middle Iron Age was recorded within Trench 1. A post-medieval ditch and three undated ditches were also identified. The site was also shown to have been disturbed by the building of the former school. The subsequent excavation works focussed on the area where the Middle Iron Age pit was recorded.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the archaeological investigation was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any archaeology revealed within its cultural and environmental setting. In particular the investigation aimed to:

- mitigate the impact of the development through preservation by record;
- establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation.

Specific research objectives were drawn from national and regional research frameworks as relevant (Cooper 2006, updated by Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012).



Scale 1:7500

Site location Fig 1

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

A single area, 21.5m by 20m, was excavated, centred on the location of the Iron Age pit found during the earlier trial trench evaluation. The area was excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and subsoil were removed separately under archaeological direction to reveal archaeological features or, where these were absent, the natural substrate. The location of the area 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.

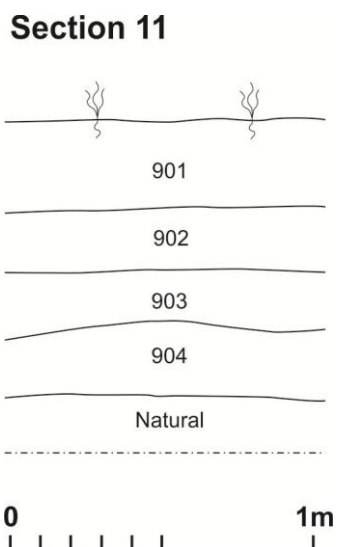
On completion of the excavation and following appropriate monitoring and approval from NCCAAA, the area was backfilled with the excavation up-cast and then lightly compacted by the mechanical excavator.

The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing under accession code ENN108397, in accordance with the county guidelines (NARC 2014), as well as Walker (1990), Brown (2011), ClfA (2014c) and the Museum and Galleries Commission (1992).

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

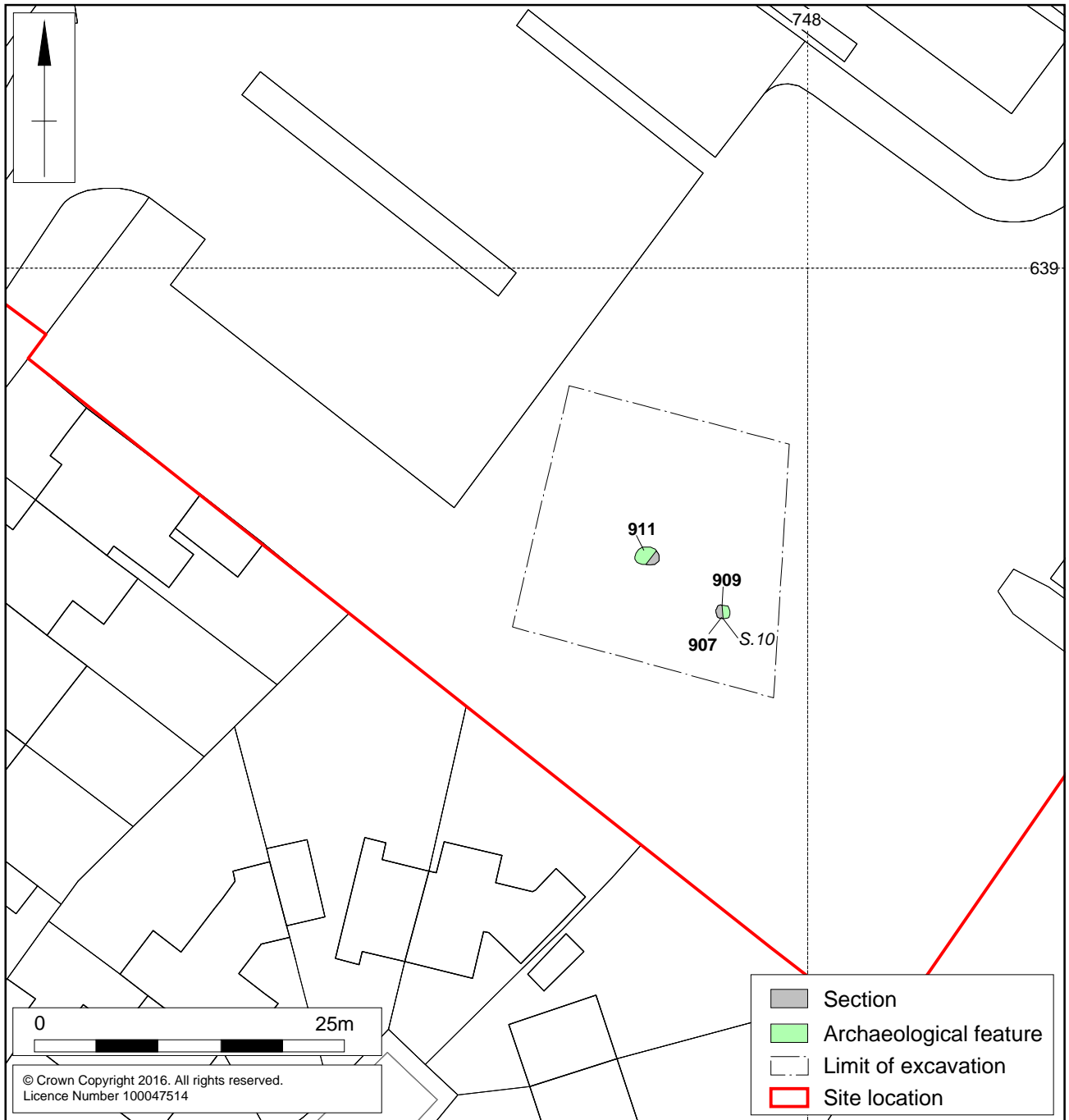
5.1 General stratigraphy

The natural substrate varied across the site but mainly comprised mixed light-mid grey-yellow and orange sands with patches of orange clay and ironstone. It occurred between 0.90m and 1.00m below the present ground surface (Fig 2). This variation in depth was the result of terracing to create a level area prior to the construction of the school. Made ground was encountered throughout the area and was 0.60m deep. A full list of deposits can be found in the context inventory (Appendix 1).



General stratigraphic sequence of site

Fig 2



Scale 1: 500

Plan of excavated features Fig 3

5.2 The archaeological features

The area contained three pits [907] [909] and [911] all of which were dated to the Middle Iron Age. Pit [911] had previously been identified during the earlier trial trench evaluation (MOLA 2016a, 6; figs 3-6)

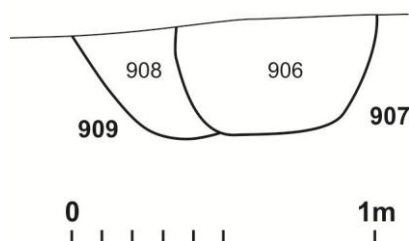
A layer of recent buried soil and made ground sealed the three pits. Pit [909] was oval in plan and was 1.0m wide, 1.2m long and 0.40m deep with gently sloping sides and flat base (Figs 3, 4 and 5). The pit was filled with mixed medium brown-grey silty sand with orange mottling and contained pottery dating to the Middle Iron Age. The pit had been cut through on its southern edge by [907].

Pit [907] was 0.66m wide and 0.40m deep with a U-shaped profile and flat base (Figs 3, 4 and 5). Its fill was mid-dark grey brown silty sand with 1% charcoal flecks (906). No finds were recovered.



Pits [907] and [909] looking east Fig 4

Section 10



Pits [907] and [909] looking east Fig 5

Pit [911] had originally been identified during the earlier trial trenching evaluation (feature [105]). The pit was oval in plan and was 1.80m wide by 2.4m long but only 0.11m deep (Figs 3, 6 and 7). It had an uneven profile and base and was filled with loose mid to dark brown orange sandy silt with 1% charcoal and 20% limestone fragments (910). Eight sherds of Middle Iron Age pottery and some worked flint were recovered from the feature.



Remains of pit [911] and evaluation Trench 1, looking east Fig 6



Pit [911] fully excavated, looking north Fig 7

6 THE FINDS

6.1 The Iron Age pottery by Andy Chapman

The fills of two pits produced a total of 11 sherds of hand-built pottery weighing 65g

The fill (906) of pit [907] contained three sherds, weighing 20g, of Middle Iron Age pottery, comprising plain body sherds. The fill (910) of pit [911] contained eight sherds, weighing 45g, also comprising plain body sherds of probable Middle Iron Age date.

This small group can only be broadly dated to the Middle Iron Age, although the single carinated vessel may suggest that it belongs in the early Middle Iron Age (c 450-250BC).

6.2 The animal bone by Adam Reid

A small fragment of indeterminate mammal bone was recovered from the fill of pit [911]. The fragment had been calcined, which suggests that it had been heated to higher temperatures than those required primarily for cooking. The small bone fragment has limited interpretative value but the absence of bone from any of the other excavated features indicates the poor quality of preservation offered by the acidic sandy fills that were encountered at the site.

6.3 The worked flint by Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

In total four pieces of worked flint were recovered as residual finds from later features. The flint comprised one core, two flakes and one fragment. The lithics were collected by hand during the excavation. Each object was macroscopically assessed and recorded onto an MS Access database by type, condition, possible raw material and tool form.

Raw material and condition

The condition of the artefacts was good with post-depositional damage consisting of occasional nicks of the edges. The raw material was a mid to dark grey-brown vitreous flint. The cortex was white or mid brown coloured. The raw material was likely to have originated from local gravel deposits.

Assemblage composition

The assemblage consists of one core, two flakes and one fragment. The artefacts are catalogued in Table 1.

Table 1 catalogue of flint

Context	Flake/blade	Portion	Raw material/cortex	Tool	comments
906	Fragment	Whole	Dark grey-brown vitreous flint	-	Possible primary flake
906	-	-	Dark grey-brown vitreous flint	Core, flake	flake core with multiple striking platforms
910	Flake	Whole	mid grey-brown vitreous flint	-	Cortical striking platform
910	Flake	Whole	Mid grey-brown vitreous flint	-	Cortical striking platform

The core had several flakes removed from multiple directions. It was relatively small in size. The fragment may have been a primary flake. The two flakes have broad cortical striking platforms.

Discussion

The technological characteristics suggest a late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date. Multiple striking platforms on a flake core and cortical striking platforms on flakes are typical of this period.

7 DISCUSSION

Three pits were recorded during the investigation, all dating to the Middle Iron Age. One of these had been recorded within the previous trial trenching (MOLA 2016). The pits were set c 6m apart and no other features were present within the area. The three pits were truncated by the makeup layers relating to the construction of the former school. The pits may be isolated features within the landscape as no evidence of Iron Age settlement has been recorded within the immediate local area.

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MOLA Northampton
28 July 2016

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
901	Topsoil	Firm, med grey-brown silty sand with 10% rooting	D:0.30m	-
902	Makeup layer	Compact, orange brown , silty sand with 50% ironstone fragments	D:0.20m	-
903	Makeup layer	Compact dark grey-black , silty sandy clay with 30% charcoal flecks and 5% tarmac fragments and bricks	D:0.20m	-
904	Makeup layer	Firm, mid orange brown red, silty sand with 5% small stones	D:0.25m	
905	Natural	Compact, mixed–brown and orange, sand with bands of clay	-	
906	Fill of 907	Friable, mid-dark grey brown silty sand	W:0.35m+ D:0.40m	-
907	pit	Circular, U-shaped with a rounded base	W:0.35m+ D:0.40m	-
908	Fill of 909	Friable, mixed brown-grey silty sand with orange mottling	W:0.65m D:0.40m	Pottery flint
909	pit	Circular, gentle sloping with slightly rounded base	W:0.65m D:0.40m	-
910	Fill of 911	Firm, mid dark brown orange with 1% charcoal and 20% limestone fragments	W:1.80m D:0.11m	Pottery Bone flint
911	pit	Oval, with uneven sides and base	W:1.80m D:0.11m	-



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