



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation
on land at Salop Leisure Limited
Atcham, Shrewsbury
Shropshire
August 2016**

Report No. 16/137

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Illustrator: James Ladocha



**Archaeological trial trench evaluation
at Salop Leisure Limited
Atcham, Shrewsbury
Shropshire
June - July 2016**

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-259572	
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Salop Leisure Limited, Atcham, Shrewsbury, Shropshire		
Summary	<p>MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by EDP, Shrewsbury, acting on behalf of their clients Salop Leisure Limited, to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Salop Leisure Limited, Atcham, Shrewsbury in advance of the proposed development of the site. As part of the current application, and prior to the trial trench evaluation, a geophysical survey was undertaken of the site which indicated the presence of archaeological remains suggestive of a prehistoric ring ditch, two enclosures, and other features. Twenty-three trenches were excavated positioned to target the geophysical anomalies and to adequately assess the archaeological potential of the site. A curvilinear gully was recorded from which four sherds of probable prehistoric pottery datable to between the late Neolithic and late Bronze Age were recovered. Evidence of post-medieval agricultural activity in the form of plough scars cut into the natural substratum were noted in one of the trenches along the western boundary of the site. No evidence for the features suggested by the geophysical survey were found and there was no correlation between the results of the geophysical survey and the archaeological deposits recorded during the trial trench evaluation.</p>		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Geophysical Survey (MOLA 2016)		
Current land use	Pasture		
Future work	To be determined		
Monument type/period	Gully, late Neolithic to late Bronze Age		
Significant finds	Prehistoric pottery		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Shropshire		
Site address	Salop Leisure Limited, Atcham, Shrewsbury, Shropshire		
Postcode	SY5 6QS		
OS co-ordinates	SJ 523 101		
Area (sq m/ha)	c8.5ha		
Height aOD	55m – 65m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA		
Project Brief originator	Shropshire County Council Natural and Historic Environment Manager		
Project Design originator	EDP Limited		
Director/Supervisor	David J Leigh MOLA		
Project Manager	Huw Sherlock MOLA		
Sponsor or funding body	Salop Leisure Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	27-6-2016		
End date	1-7-2016		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content	
Physical	Accession No: E.01014	None	
Paper		Site records; background data, photographs; plans and sections on permatrace	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Salop Leisure Limited, Atcham, Shrewsbury, Shropshire		
Serial title & volume	MOLA Northampton Reports 16/137		
Author(s)	David J Leigh		
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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
2	BACKGROUND
3	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
4	METHODOLOGY
5	THE RECORDED EVIDENCE
6	THE FINDS
	6.1 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn
	6.2 The ceramic building material by Paul Blinkhorn
7	DISCUSSION
	BIBLIOGRAPHY

Figures

Cover: General view of site, pre-excavation, looking south-west

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: General site view, looking south-west

Fig 3: The Wrekin, view looking west from the investigation area

Fig 4: The location of the trenches and the excavated feature

Fig 5: The stratigraphic sequence in Trench 7, north facing section

Fig 6: Gully [2304], looking south-east

Fig 7: Plan of gully [2304], 1:100

Back cover: View of the Wrekin, looking west from the site

Tables

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Salop Leisure Limited, Atcham Shrewsbury, Shropshire June – July 2016

Abstract

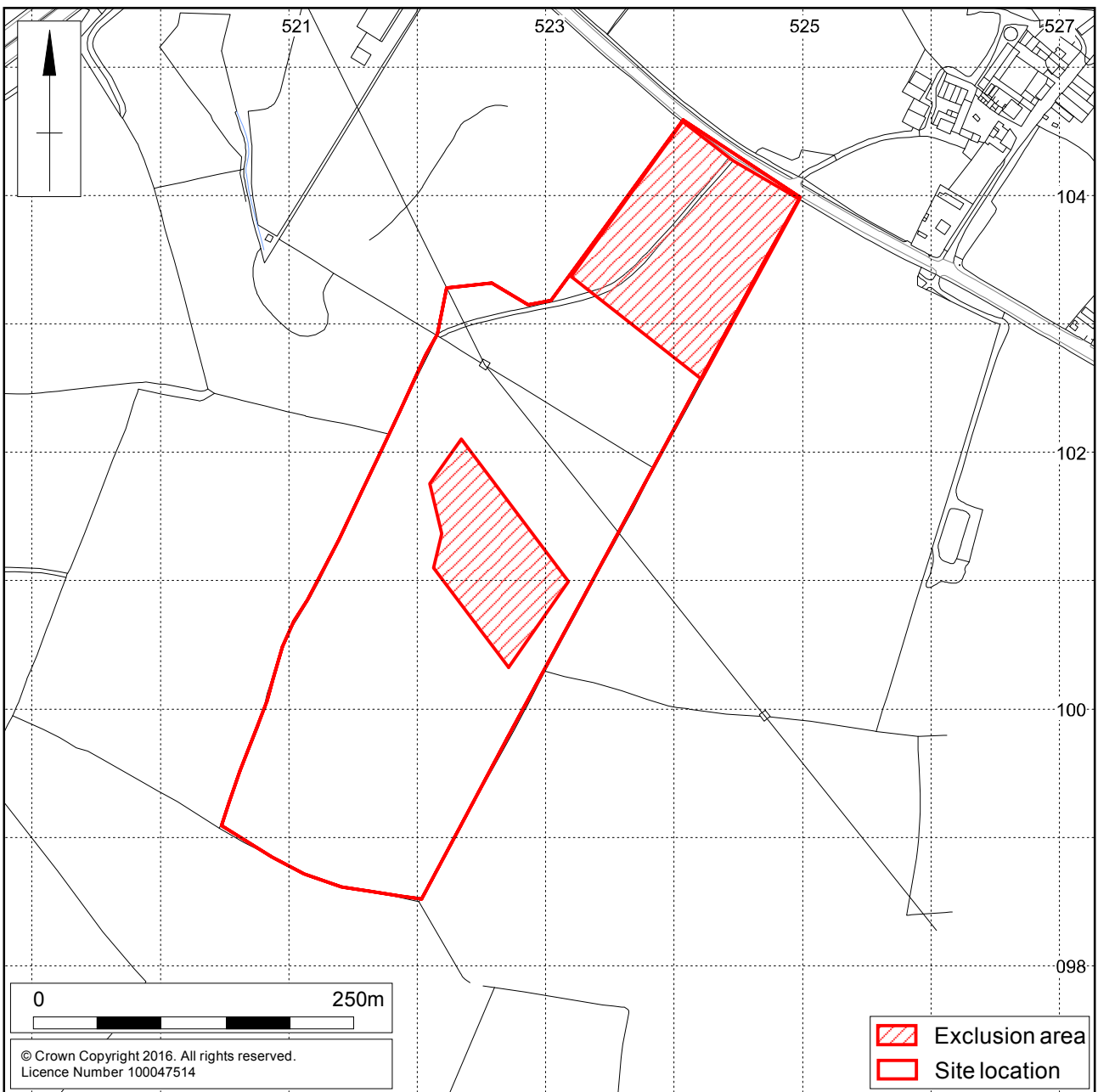
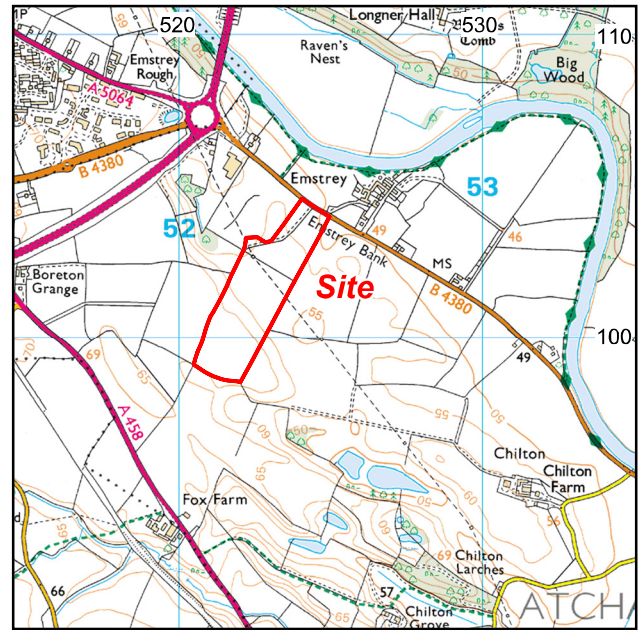
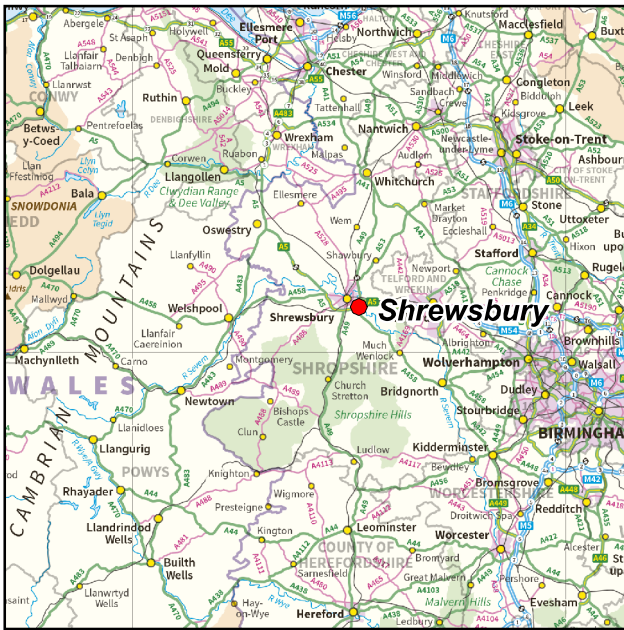
MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by EDP, Shrewsbury, acting on behalf of their clients Salop Leisure Limited, to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Salop Leisure Limited, Atcham, Shrewsbury in advance of the proposed development of the site. As part of the current application, and prior to the trial trench evaluation, a geophysical survey was undertaken of the site which indicated the presence of archaeological remains suggestive of a prehistoric ring ditch, two enclosures, and other features. Twenty-three trenches were excavated positioned to target the geophysical anomalies and to adequately assess the archaeological potential of the site. A curvilinear gully was recorded from which four sherds of probable prehistoric pottery datable to between the late Neolithic and late Bronze Age were recovered. Evidence of post-medieval agricultural activity in the form of plough scars cut into the natural substratum were noted in one of the trenches along the western boundary of the site. No evidence for the features suggested by the geophysical survey were found and there was no correlation between the results of the geophysical survey and the archaeological deposits recorded during the trial trench evaluation.

1 INTRODUCTION

EDP (Shrewsbury) Ltd commissioned MOLA to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Salop Leisure Limited, Atcham, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (NGR SJ 523 101, Figs 1 and 2; Planning Application No: P151121/0). The works followed on from a geophysical survey undertaken as part of the present application (MOLA 2016) and were required by a condition (18) contained within the planning permission (9/2014/0249/OM).

The Shropshire County Council Natural and Historic Environment Manager 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 and methodology were outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by MOLA (Sherlock 2016) on behalf of EDP Limited.

The evaluation conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance: archaeological field evaluation* (2014a) and *Code of Conduct* (2014b). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with Historic England procedural documents (MoRPHE) (HE 2015).



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The investigation area lies to the east of the offices of Salop Leisure in the parish of Atcham just on the southern edge of Shrewsbury.

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey as comprising Bridgnorth Sandstone and Salop Formation Mudstone capped deposits of Glacial Till and River Terrace Gravel (BGS Geoindex <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).



General site view, looking south-west Fig 2

2.2 Historical background

The development site lies within an area of archaeological interest. Approximately 10km to the south-east lies an Iron-Age hillfort (Scheduled Monument No SA 96) set atop the Wrekin at a height of 407m aOD (Fig 3). This has been subject to a number of archaeological investigations, including those carried out in 1939 by Kathleen Kenyon, who investigated the inner ramparts, finding them to have been of stone wall construction. These were subsequently rebuilt in soil and stone rubble, the bank possibly being surmounted by a wooden palisade.

The site of Wroxeter Roman city (SM 670) lies approximately 4.7km to the south-east. This originated initially as a military base during the 1st Century AD, but soon developed into the fourth largest town in Roman Britain.

Previous archaeological investigations carried out in the vicinity have comprised a geophysical survey carried out in the adjacent site (Smith 2009) which indicated the presence of a circular enclosure and linear features, however no evidence of these were identified during the subsequent trial trench evaluation.

Within the present investigation area, information held by the Shropshire Council Historic Environment Archaeology Service (SCHEAS) has been summarised by Andrew Wigley (SCHEAS) as follows:

“A series of cropmarks immediately north of the proposed development site (HER PRN 02495) were evaluated in 2009 prior to the extension of the Salop Leisure site. In the event, these were determined to be either non-archaeological or of recent agricultural origin. There are, however, a number of other cropmark features within the wider vicinity of the site which are thought to represent archaeological features. These include a cropmark ring-ditch (HER PRN 04483) of likely Early Bronze Age date c.250m to the west, and a rectilinear cropmark enclosure of likely Iron Age to Roman date c.290m to the south. Given the extent of the proposed development site, it is therefore possible that currently unknown archaeological features and deposits of prehistoric or Roman date may be present on it. It is therefore considered to have moderate-high archaeological potential.”

As part of the current application a geophysical survey was carried out by MOLA (MOLA 2016) which indicated the presence of a possible prehistoric ring ditch and possibly two enclosures, along with a number of undetermined linear features.



The Wrekin, view looking west from the investigation area Fig 3

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the evaluation was to record the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance, and quality of any surviving archaeological remains. The trenching specifically aimed to examine:

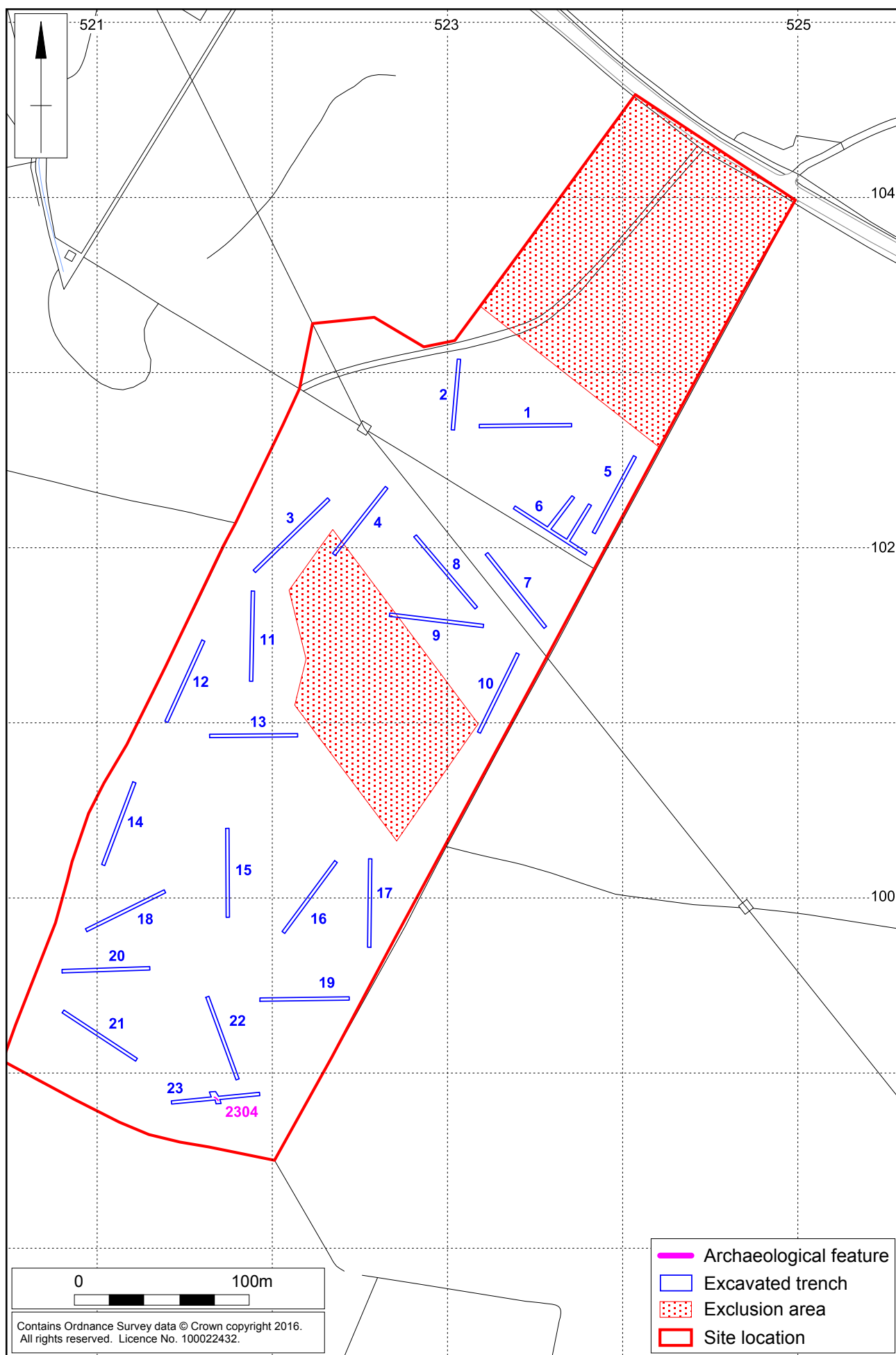
- the date, nature, significance and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- the potential for palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;
- the impact of the proposed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

4 METHODOLOGY

Twenty-three trenches, each 50m long by 1.8m wide were excavated within the proposed development area (Fig. 4), excluding two areas which were not subject to the archaeological investigation. 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 natural substrate. Topsoil and subsoil was stored separately to one another. All trenches were backfilled with their up-cast material and were then compacted by the mechanical excavator. All works complied with MOLA Health and Safety policy and procedures (MOLA 2015).

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 in a sequence assigned to each trench. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. All trench locations were recorded using Leica Viva Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$. A full digital photographic record 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: archaeological field evaluation* (2014a). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with the procedural document, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (HE 2015). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Sherlock 2016).



Scale 1:3000

Excavated trenches Fig 4

5 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

A consistent stratigraphic sequence was recorded across the site (Fig 5). The natural substratum was encountered between 0.30m and 0.50m below present ground level, and comprised reddish-yellow sand and gravel, with pockets of coarse mid-dark red sand. This was overlain by mid-brown sandy loam subsoil, up to 0.38m thick, containing occasional irregular and rounded stones. Sealing this was grey-black sandy loam topsoil up to 0.23m thick, containing occasional irregular stones and occasional unstratified sherds of post-medieval pottery. A similar but significantly deeper stratigraphy was noted in the area of Trench 3, which lay towards the bottom of the hill slope, here the subsoil increased in depth to approximately 0.45m, with a correspondingly deeper topsoil, up to 0.40m thick.

Trench 6 was extended (Fig 4) to investigate possible archaeological features identified in the geophysical survey. Two possible features were investigated, however these were found to be of natural geological origin and no archaeological deposits were encountered.

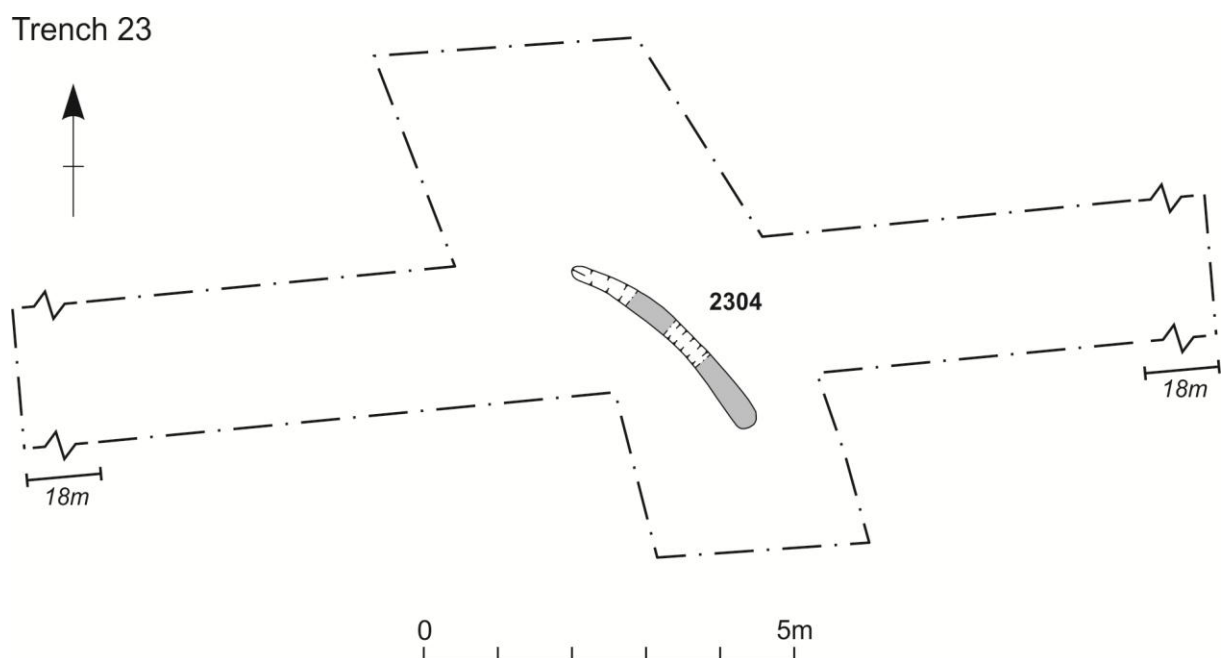
Cut into the natural substratum in Trench 23 was a single gully [2304], (Figs 4 and 6). This crossed the trench curving from north to south and measured 3.10m long by 0.25m wide. It had concave sides falling to a rounded base at a maximum depth of 0.13m. It was filled by grey-brown silty loam, containing pockets of fine pea gravel (2305) from which were recovered four sherds of pottery datable to between the late Neolithic to late Bronze Age. The trench was widened to the north and south of the feature in order to establish how far the gully continued in these directions. However, in the event, the gully terminated almost immediately beyond the trench edges.



The stratigraphic sequence in Trench 7, north facing section Fig 5



Gully [2304], looking south-east Fig 6



Scale 1:100

Plan of gully [2304] Fig 7

6 THE FINDS

6.1 The pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 10 sherds with a total weight of 70g. It was largely of post-medieval or modern date, and unstratified, other than four possible sherds of prehistoric material. The following fabric types were noted:

MB: **Midland Blackwares**, AD 1580-1700. (Brears 1969). Two sherds, 7g.

MOD: **Miscellaneous 19th and 20th century wares**. Three sherds, 41g.

PRE: **Prehistoric?** Late Neolithic – late Bronze Age (Williams 1993).
Four sherds, 12g.

SMW: **Staffordshire Manganese Mottled Ware**, late 17th–18th century (Brears 1969). One sherd, 10g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The wares are all common finds in the region.

The four possible sherds of prehistoric pottery from context (2305), the fill of gully [2304], are all very soft and somewhat abraded. The fabric contains angular fragments of igneous and metamorphic rock up to 4mm, and has close similarities to late Neolithic to late Bronze Age material from the Shrewsbury area, specifically from Meole Brace (Williams 1993). It should be noted that the poor condition of the sherds makes this identification tentative, although the suite of minerals present in the fragments is very distinctive.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Tr	Cntxt	PRE		MB		SMW		MOD		Date
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
2	U/S	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	U/S
16	Topsoil	-	-	-	-	1	10	1	23	U/S
22	U/S	-	-	2	7	-	-	-	-	U/S
23	U/S	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	7	U/S
23	2305	4	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	LNEO?
Total		4	12	2	7	1	10	3	41	

6.2 The ceramic building material by Paul Blinkhorn

Two unstratified roof tile fragments weighing 43g occurred in Trench 22. They are from the topsoil, and unstratified. Both are in a red sandy fabric, and 11mm thick. They are probably late medieval or post-medieval in date. A small fragment of undatable fired clay weighing 1g was collected which may be a fragment of brick.

A fragment of hand-made brick weighing 47g occurred in the topsoil in Trench 19. It is in a coarse sandy fabric, and none of its original dimensions survived. It is probably of 17th – 18th century date.

7 DISCUSSION

A single gully was recorded from which four sherds of probable late Neolithic to late Bronze Age pottery was recovered. No indication as to the function of this feature was present, however it is possible that this is the base of a feature truncated by agricultural activity. No other archaeological deposits were encountered.

There was no evidence of the complex of archaeological features indicated in the geophysical survey, nor any correlation with the archaeological feature recorded in the trial trench evaluation. The reason as to why there is an absence of any features relating to the geophysical report is unclear at present. It is possible that the geophysical survey identified traces of now ploughed out or truncated archaeological deposits of which only the magnetic residue remains.

A comparable result may be considered during the archaeological investigations on the adjacent site (Smith 2009). There, the geophysical survey tentatively indicated the presence of a circular enclosure along with linear features, which was not found to be present during the subsequent trial trench evaluation.

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MOLA
8 August 2016

