



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological  
Strip, Map & Sample  
excavation (first  
phase) on land at  
Saredon Hill Quarry,  
Saredon,  
Staffordshire**

**(SJ 94690 07836)**

James Patrick



**An Archaeological Strip, Map and  
Sample excavation (first phase), on land at  
Saredon Hill Quarry, Saredon, Staffordshire.  
(SJ 94690 07836)**

*for*

NRS Aggregates Ltd

**Planning application No. SS12/15/602/MW**

**Checked by Project Manager**

**Signed:**



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## **An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample excavation (first phase), on land at Saredon Hill Quarry, Saredon, Staffordshire (SJ 94690 07836)**

James Patrick

### **Summary**

*An archaeological inspection was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) during ground-works in the first phase of recommed extraction at Saredon Hill Quarry, Saredon, Staffordshire. The work was commissioned by NRS Aggregates Ltd and was required as a condition of the planning consent, issued by Staffordshire County Council for the continuation of aggregate extraction. There are no archaeological sites recorded by the Historic and Environment Record for Staffordshire within the development area. Crop-marks recorded by aerial photographs from 1947 are known to the east of the site. The Staffordshire HER has recorded various earthworks of different periods around the application area. The stripping of the top soil over the first phase of a new area began in May 2016. Soils were shallow in depth up to 0.30m with sub-soil only apparent at the foot of a north facing slope. Archaeological remains were recovered in the form of three isolated pits of unknown date and two post-Medieval field boundary ditches. A quarry pit with parallel field boundary ditch was revealed which was confirmed by the 1884 map.*

*The archive for the site will be deposited with Leicestershire museums with accession number 2016.LH.37.*

### **Introduction**

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by NRS Aggregates Ltd. to carry out an archaeological inspection (strip, map and sample excavation) during ground-works in the first new phase, prior to aggregate extraction at Saredon Hill Quarry, Saredon, Staffordshire (NGR SJ 9460 07836). The site was visited nine times between the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May and 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 during the main stripping of the site. Four subsequent visits were made during August and September 2016.

This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

The work was required as a condition of the planning consent, issued by Staffordshire County Council for resumed aggregate extraction by NRS East of the existing quarry.

### **Site Location, Geology and Topography**

Saredon Hill Quarry is situated in South Staffordshire and is located just north of the village of Little Saredon approximately five kilometres to the south-west from Cannock town centre. It is just to the West of junction 11 of the M6 Motorway and reached via the A460 between Cannock and Wolverhampton (Figure 1). The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, indicates that the underlying geology (sheet 153) is glacial Till over Wildmoor sandstone formations and Kidderminster formation.

The site slopes from a maximum height of 154OD at the South–east and to a minimum of 89.69OD to the west of the area and existing aggregate extraction. The stripped area covers approximately one hectare. Fence lines, hedgerows and mature trees define the study area (Figure 3, Phase 1) with the quarry road bounding the north-eastern side. The fence line along the west side divides the new quarry area in the east from the already existing quarry in the west which has been re-activated.

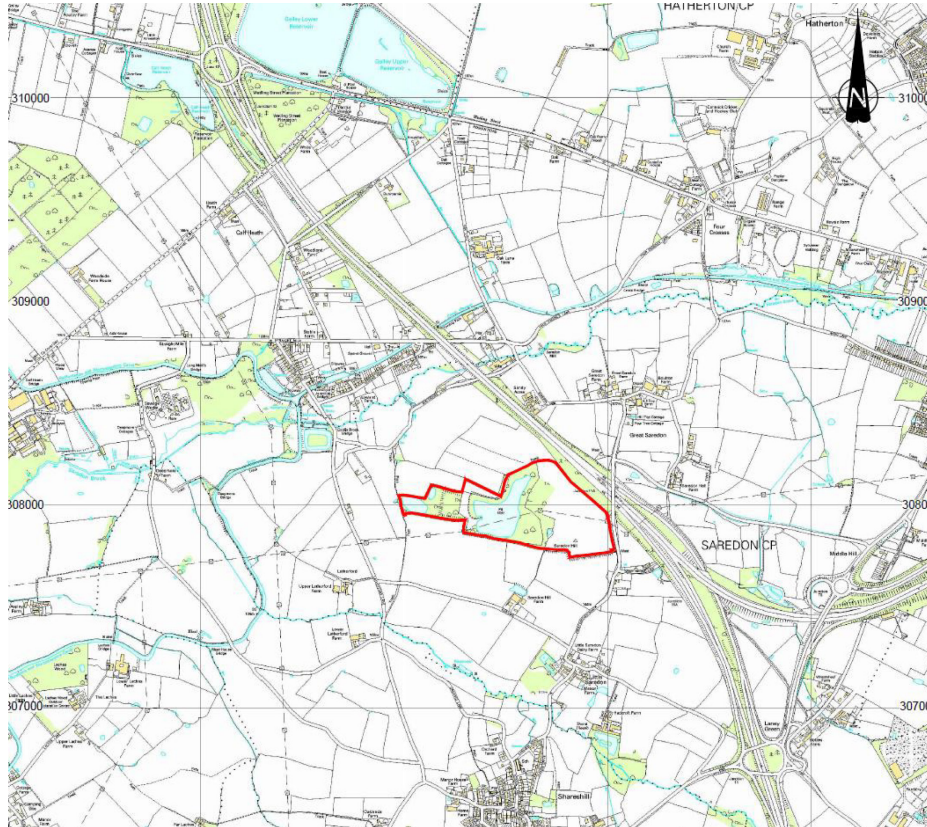


Figure 1 Site Location (Provided by the Client)

### Archaeological Objectives

The main objective of the archaeological excavation is to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any significant archaeology on the site in its cultural and environmental setting.

The aims of the strip plan and sample excavation are:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground-works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground-works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

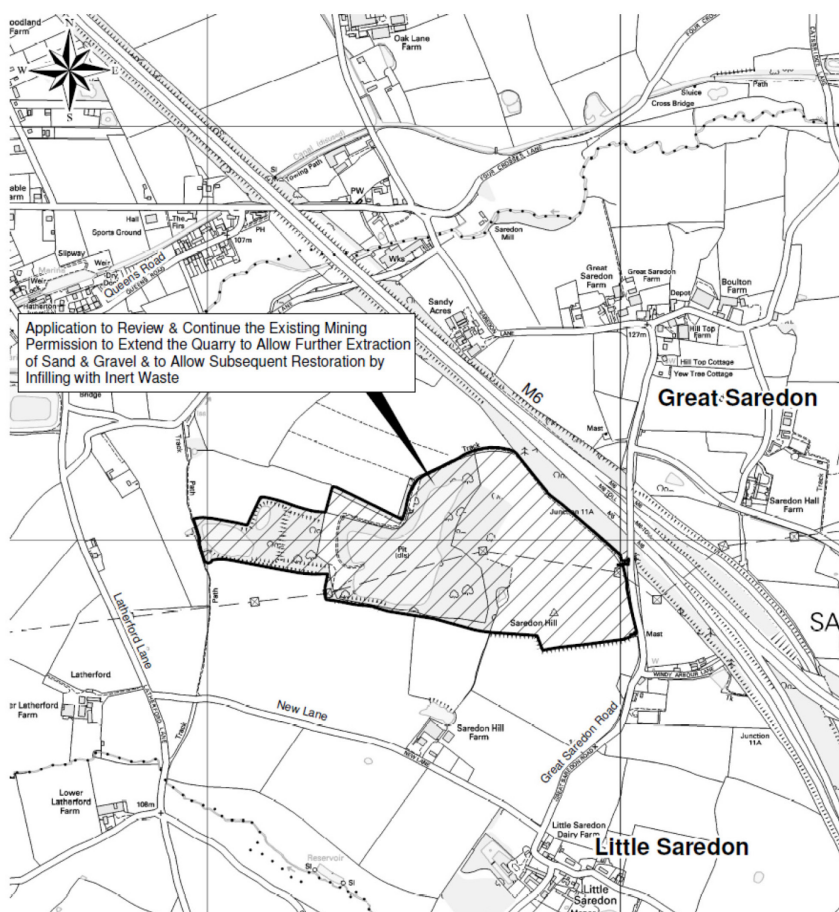


Figure 2 Proposed development area (Provided by the Client).

### Historical & Archaeological Background

The Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application site does not contain any sites of archaeological interest. However Prehistoric activity had been recorded within a thousand metre radius of the site. This includes two burnt mounds dating to the Bronze-age 770 metres north-east and 840 metres south of the site (HER **01082** and **01075**). Burnt mounds are rarely directly associated with settlement and are often located in marginal areas; a lack of associated material culture has led to a poor understanding of their functions. A possible Bronze Age Barrow (funerary monument) has been recorded 780 metres east of the site (HER **01813**). Additional archaeological activity from later periods in the form of crop marks has been recorded by HER from later periods including a curving bank (HER **05424**) and ditched enclosure (HER **04535**) within 70 metres south-east and 600m south-east of the site. This is along with two deserted settlements (HER **05423** and **05425**) as yet undated possibly relating to the Iron Age or Roman periods. From the Anglo- Saxon period the HER refers to documentary and earthworks evidence for the settlements at Little and Great Saredon (HER **02559** & **02560**) within 700 metres of the proposed site boundary. The settlements of Great Saredon and Little Saredon are mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. By 1167 these settlements along with the land in the proposed development site boundary were located within the Royal forest of Cannock. At Little Saredon, documentary evidence refers a moated site during the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the proposed extraction lying within / near to fields with Medieval ridge and furrow around the site boundary. The post medieval period up to present date shows a gravel pit at the

south-east corner of the site along with a field enclosure ditch running parallel to the woods. These later features were identified during the current work.

## Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (rev.2014) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (rev. 2014).

*A Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work* was produced by ULAS prior to the archaeological work being undertaken.

The project involved the supervision of overburden removal and other groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist during the works.

The work was carried out by a tracked 360 excavator fitted with a 2.0m wide ditching bucket. The stripping of top and sub-soil was undertaken by way of a series four north-west to south-east strips of varying widths from fifteen metres to twenty two metres with three approximate ten metre wide bunds in between (Figure 4). The decision was taken to strip down slope from south-east from the quarry road to north-west gradually advancing to the rectangular wooded area at the south-west of the site. Following discussion with the Staffordshire County Archaeologist, further intermittent visits were to be planned after the removal of the bunds which covered 40 per cent of the sites area. However when the site was monitored, the bunds had already been removed along with the remaining overburden without archaeological supervision. Therefore the site was visited a further three times, not only to supervise the re-stripping of the areas beneath the bunds, but also to metal detect the spoil heaps on a previous visit, and another visit after the re-strip to observe if any archaeological remains weathered out over the interim week.

## Results

The site proved largely negative for archaeological remains. This was with exception to three shallow pits of unknown date. Post-Medieval activity included two north to south field enclosure ditches and a quarry pit shown on the 1884 OS map.

All features were relatively shallow and covering soils were thin, probably as a direct consequence of plough truncation.

Contexts: (Figure 4, Figure 6)

### **Pit [01] (02); Pit [03] (04) (05) (10); Pit [08] (09) : Ditch [06] (07)**

Pit [01] and [03] were both circular in shape with [01] reasonably defined in plan with moderate sides onto a concaved base having a diameter of approximately one metre. It was heavily truncated with a depth of just 0.10m. The single fill, (02) consisted of a light orange brown sandy silt with 5 % charcoal flecks and 10% small pebbles.

Pit [03] (Figure 10) was 60 metres down slope to the north from pit [01]. This was much better defined in plan with steep sides with a depth of 0.28m onto a flat base and measured 1.50m in diameter. This pit contained three fills. The lowest deposit, (10) was represented by a 0.05 m thick lens of re-deposited natural. The middle deposit (05) consisted of a dark greyish black silt deposit with frequent charcoal flecks with a shallow depth of 0.04m. The upper fill (04) consisted of a dark orangey brown silty sand with moderate charcoal flecks and small well sorted rounded pebbles including

some fire-cracked stone. The pit was post-dated by post-medieval field boundary ditch [06] which had truncated the pit on its east side [03].

The third feature was pit [08], a small feature at the foot of the slope in the north-west of the field. Like pit [03], the fill (09) also contained fire cracked stone, within a mid orangey brown silty sand with abundant fire-cracked stone inclusions. The pit was 0.52m in diameter and 0.25m deep, and it was of a sub- circular shape. The gradient of sides varying from moderate on the south to vertical on the north with a flat base.

None of the three discrete features contained any finds and no bulk samples were retained or processed.

Two ditches on parallel north-west to south-east alignments were recorded. The more northern ditch [06] was excavated to clarify its relationship with pit [03] (Figure 10), and it was found to contain post medieval pot and ceramic building material (CBM).

The ditch is not shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1884 OS map and was probably removed prior to that date. However a short section of field boundary on the same alignment is shown on the Ordnance Survey map immediately to the south-west, and this was probably part of the same feature (Figure 5)

The more southern ditch was part of the woodland boundary recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition map, and this was not excavated.

The western edge of a substantial feature was partly revealed in the south-west of the stripped area, at least 36m x 16m. A quarry pit is shown in the same area on the 1884 OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition map, of approximately 30 by 30 metres and it is most likely that these features correspond.

## **Conclusion**

Archaeological remains were generally scant in the area monitored. The three scattered pits were undated and heavily plough truncated with erosion increased due to the location on a slope. However the features had certain edges, and the presence of charcoal in the fills of two of the features together with the fire cracked stone is a very clear indicator of human activity. Isolated pits can exist on the periphery of more concentrated settlement or occupation, and therefore there is a potential for archaeological to survive in adjacent phases. To the south, the slope breaks to a plateau, which has good vantage points, and this topographic feature may increase the potential for past human activity and the survival of archaeological remains.

That no finds were recovered from the deposits might possibly suggest a prehistoric date although this is speculative. It is of note that burnt mounds are recorded in the vicinity of Saredon, 800m to the northeast and 1100m to the south (above p3). Burnt Mounds which are generally Bronze Age in date comprise mounds or spreads of fire-cracked stone and charcoal which have resulted from the repeated heating of water in pits or 'troughs' by immersing heated stones. The function of these sites is not understood, but it is speculated they were used for preparing food, steam bathing or in textile production.

Burnt Mounds are usually located adjacent to streams or rivers in order to provide a water supply ( eg Beamish 2009, 157), and most commonly in valley bottom locations. The nearest streams mapped to the current development area are some 600m away, and



these features are at a higher local elevation and therefore very unlikely to relate to burnt mounds per se.

The ditch features recorded in the excavation area are of medieval or post-medieval origin. The more southern is recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey. The more northern is not recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey but would look to extend a short length of field boundary 50m to the southeast, that is recorded in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century mapping (Figure 5).

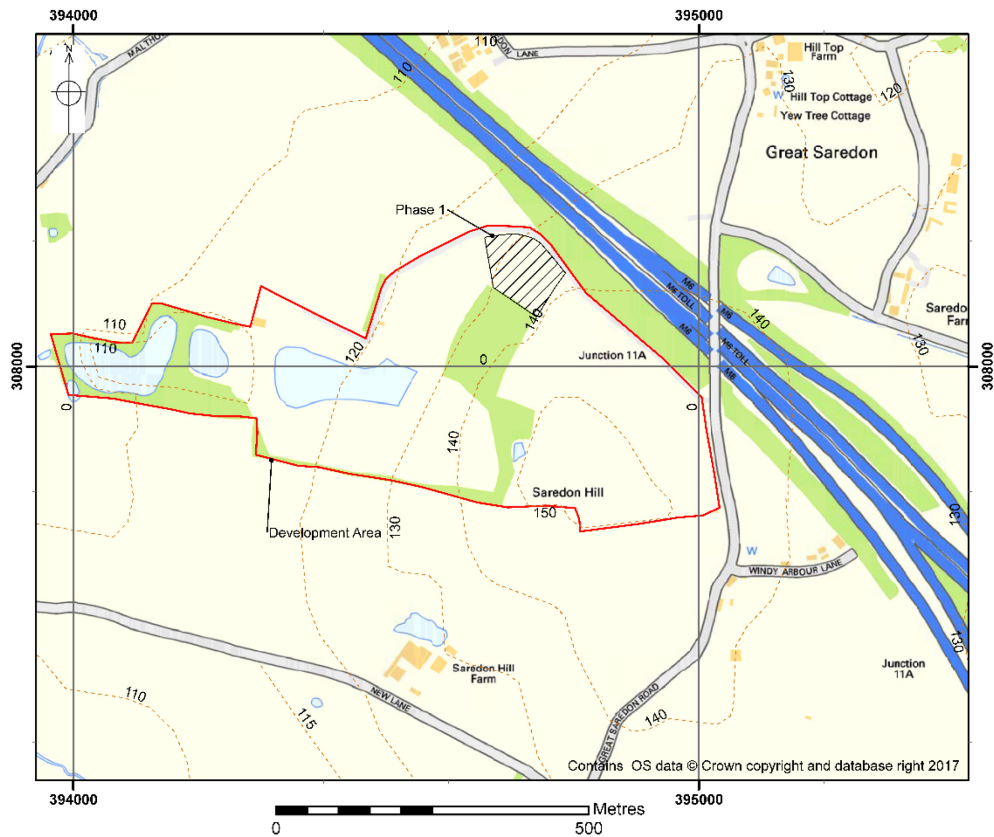


Figure 3 Location of phase

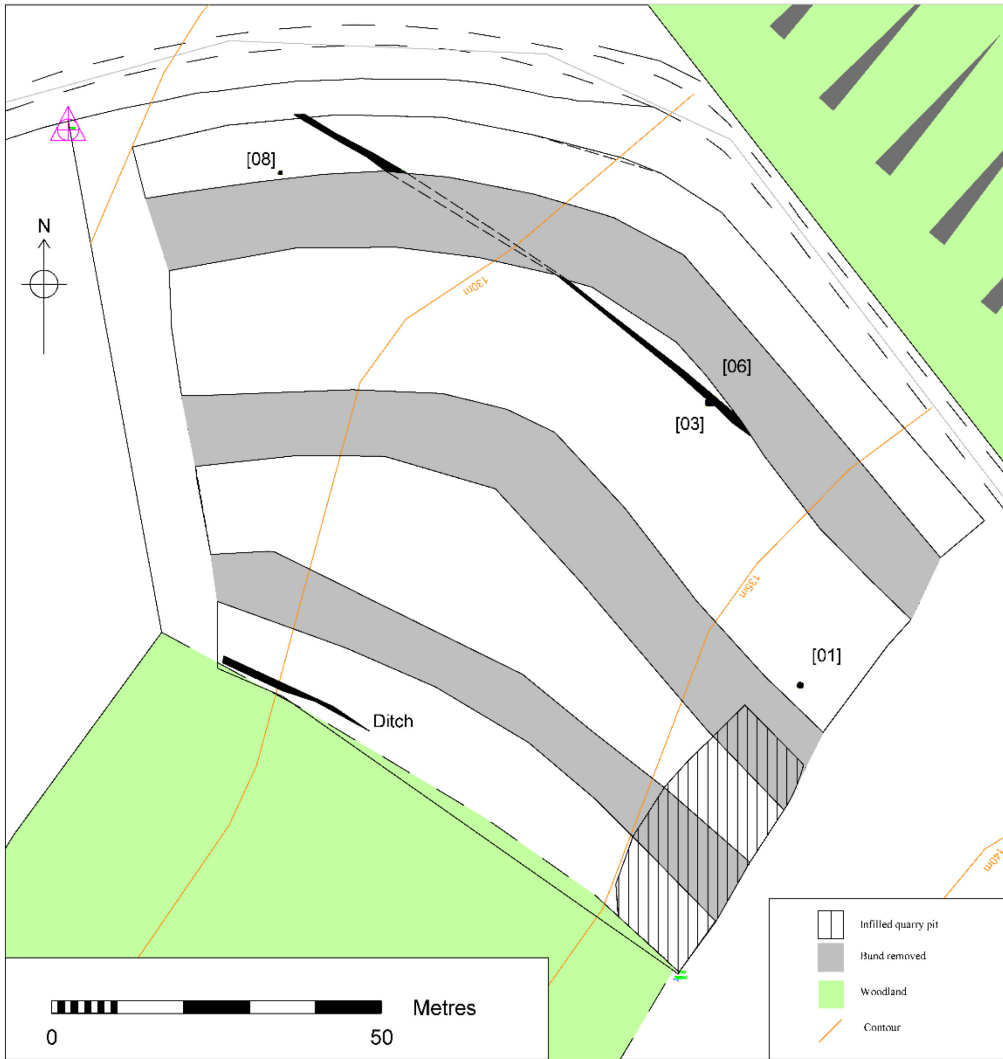
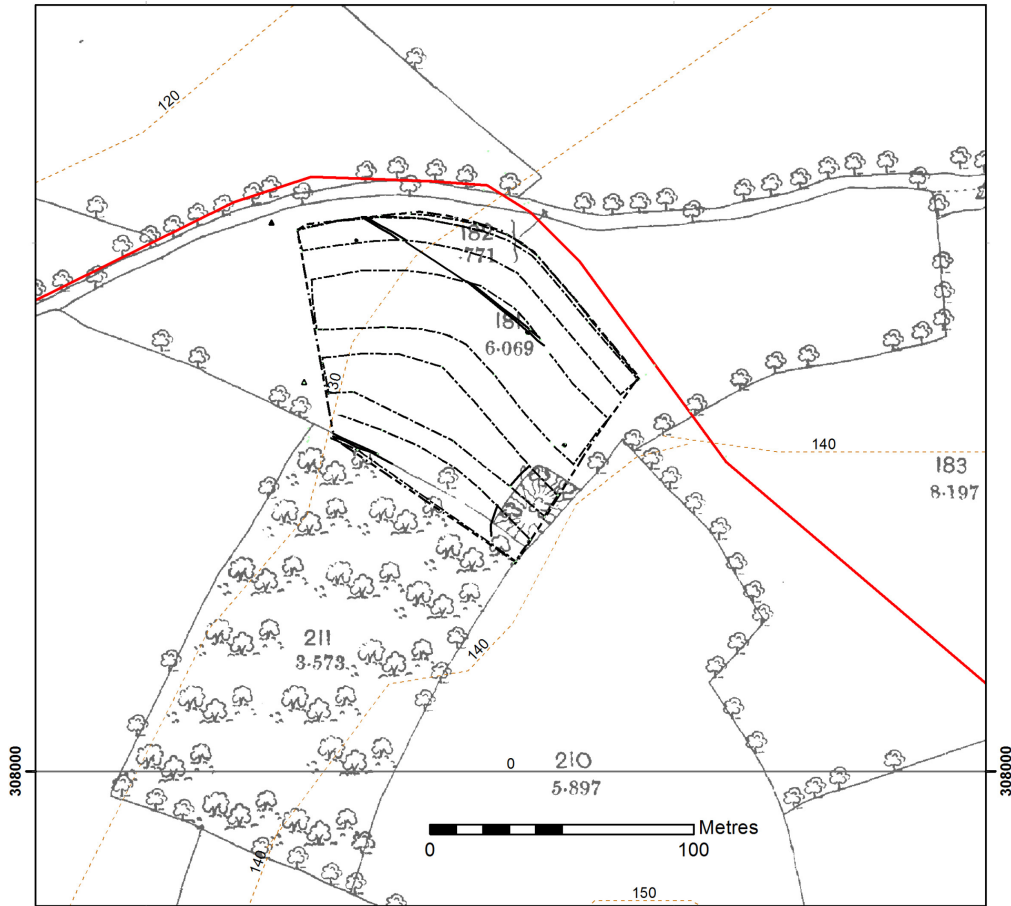


Figure 4 Location of Features



Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2017

Figure 5: Showing stripped area, development boundary (red) and 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey (1884) with field boundaries and quarry pit in southeast of stripped area.

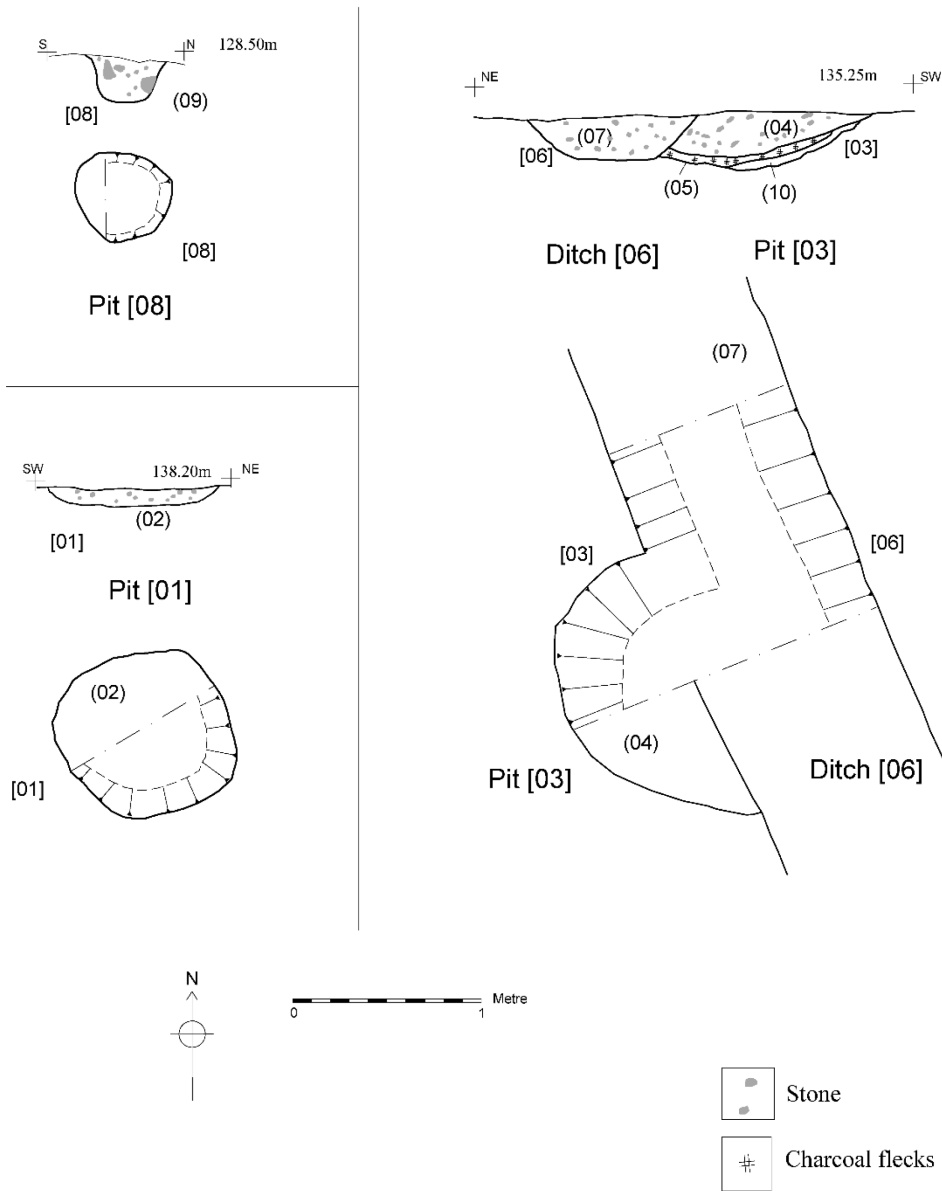


Figure 6: All archaeological features



Figure 7 The site prior to commencement of works, looking north-west



Figure 8 Stripping in progress. Looking North



Figure 9: Pit 1, half sectioned.



Figure 10: The largest of the three pits [03] half sectioned, cut by Post-Medieval ditch [06] to the left (facing south).



Figure 11: Pit 08, half sectioned.

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## **References**

### **Acknowledgements**

ULAS would like to thank NRS Aggregates Ltd for the undertaking the archaeological works and to the machine driver Wayne Hamilton who carefully excavated the top and sub-soils. The archaeological work was carried out by the author and the project was managed by Matt Beamish. Thanks also to Mr Stephen Dean, Principal Archaeologist, Staffordshire County Council.

### **Archive**

The archive for this project will be deposited with the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent as the accepting museum for archaeological archives in Staffordshire with accession number 2016. LH.37 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound Copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2016-145)
- 10 Watching Brief Recording Sheets
- 3 Contact Sheets of digital photographs
- 1 CD of digital photographs
- 2 Sheets of A3 permatrace with primary drawings
- 9 Context Sheets

### **Publication**

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

*OASIS data entry*



## Appendix 2 OASIS

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-269307		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An Archaeological Strip, Map, and Sample at Saredon Hill Quarry (First phase).		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	1/5/2016-		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No		
	<b>Project Type</b>			
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Arable (not under crop)		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	N/A		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	N/A		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Aggregates		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition		
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	SS12/15/602/MW			
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Little Saredon, Staffordshire. WV10 7LL		
	<b>Study Area</b>	1.2ha		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 5280 1010		
	<b>Height OD</b>	154m OD max		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority (SCC)		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Matt Beamish		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	James Patrick		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Developer NRS Aggregates		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	NA	Potteries Museum & Art Gallery	Potteries Museum & Art Gallery
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>		2016.LH.37	2016.LH.37
	<b>Contents</b>		Photos Survey data	Watching brief records Field Notes
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	<b>Title</b>	An Archaeological watching brief...		
	<b>Author</b>	Patrick, J.		
	<b>Other bibliographic details</b>	ULAS Report No 2016-145		
	<b>Date</b>	2017		
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	<b>Description</b>	Developer Report A4 pdf		

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