



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation by Trial
Trench on Land at 124-126 High Street,
Olney, MK46 4BE**

NGR: SP 88931 51852

Stephen Baker



ULAS Report No 2017-190

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**An Archaeological Attendance and Recording during groundworks
on Land at 124-126 High Street, Olney, MK46 4BE**

NGR: SP 88931 51852

Stephen Baker

For: Hilary Brock Ltd

Planning Authority: Milton Keynes Council

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An Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trench on Land at 124-126 High Street, Olney, MK46 4BE

Stephen Baker.

Summary^[GS2]

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) undertook an archaeological evaluation by trial trench on land at 124-126 Main Street, Olney, Milton Keynes from 27th-30th November 2017 as a planning condition in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and in advance of the construction of one of two detached residential properties and associated car parking and garages on the site. A number of undated archaeological features were uncovered and sample excavated including post-holes, gullies and a ditch, dated to the medieval period and perhaps representing evidence of burgage plots. A number of modern truncations were also observed related to the later function of the site.

The site archive will be held by ULAS in view of deposition with Northamptonshire County Council, under accession number EMK1332.

1. Introduction

1.1 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on land at Land at 124-126 Main Street, Olney, Milton Keynes on 27th-30th November 2017 in advance of the construction of one of two detached properties on the site, with associated car parking (Figure 1)

1.2 This work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land for Hilary Brock Ltd 124-126 High Street, Olney, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment). The results described below are intended to provide a preliminary assessment of the character and extent of any heritage assets on the site in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority.

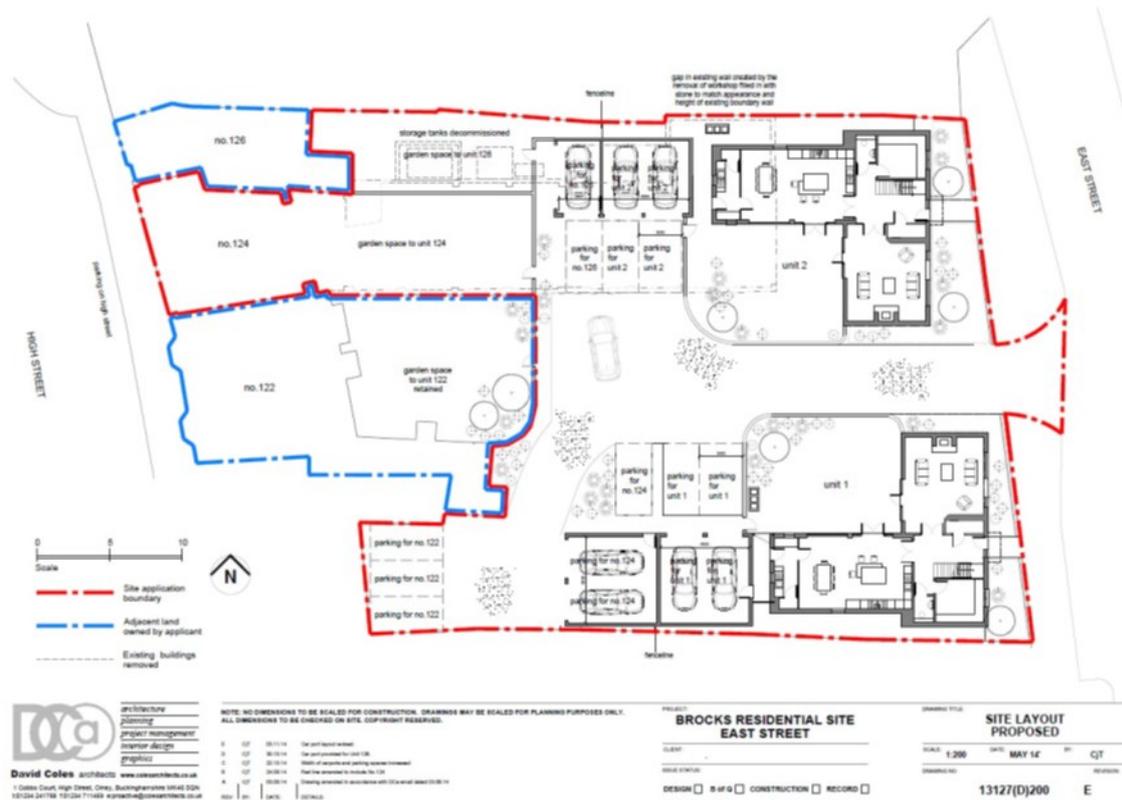


Figure 1: Proposed development area

2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

2.1 Olney lies roughly midway between Northampton to the northwest and Milton Keynes to the south in the county of Buckinghamshire, near the border with Northamptonshire (**Error! Reference source not found.**, Figure 2).

2.2 The sites lies towards the centre of the town of Olney and fronts onto the High Street (A509) running north – south directly through the town. The site is bounded on the west by High Street, and on the east by East Street (Figure 3). It is surrounded by businesses and dwellings. The land lies at an approximate height of c.51m O.D.

2.3 The Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology consists of Rutland Formation - Argillaceous Rocks with Subordinate Sandstone and Limestone.

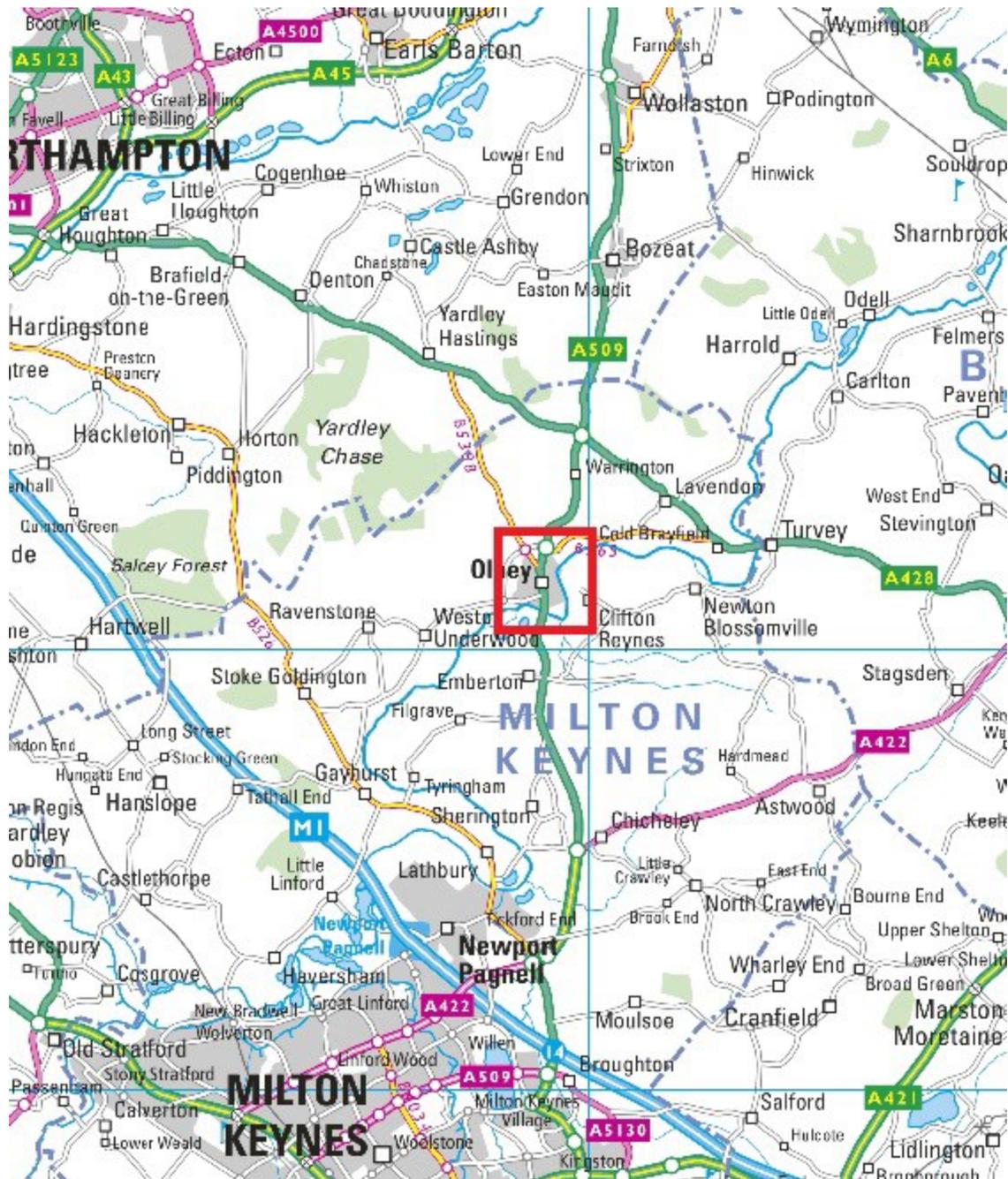


Figure 2: Olney location



Figure 3: Location of development area

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

3.1 A search of the Historic Environment Record (HER) has shown that there are no known archaeological sites within the assessment area. However, there is evidence for activity from the prehistoric to the post-medieval period in the immediate vicinity.

3.2 Prehistoric

There is some evidence for prehistoric occupation within the town which has mainly come from archaeological excavation at Cowper Tannery where Neolithic and Iron Age artefacts and features were discovered. A pit alignment containing an inhumation was discovered at Aspreys and some aerial photography would suggest settlement close to the river Ouse.

3.3 Roman

There have been a number of finds and sites discovered within Olney, although nothing to suggest that there ever was a Roman town here. Olney is, however, in close proximity to the Roman town of Ashfurlong. A 2nd century water channel/gully was discovered during an evaluation in the garden of 106 High Street and a ditch at East Street. The excavation at Cowper Tannery produced large amounts of Roman pottery which was largely residual.

3.4 Saxon

Archaeological interventions have suggested good evidence for a Saxon settlement. The excavation at the Cowper Tannery also revealed a series of post-holes and chaff-tempered pottery dating to the middle Saxon period. More tentative evidence for the middle Saxon period was found during a watching brief at Rose Court where a sunken feature and hearth was interpreted as a potential sunken building or *grubenhau*s. Evidence for the late Saxon period has been found in excavation at Limehouse and Tunns Cottage.

3.5 Medieval

St Peter & St Paul's Church, Church Street is a Grade I listed building situated to the south of the town. The building is constructed in a decorated style and much of the fabric is believed to date to 1330 with the distinctive tower and spire dating to the later 14th century (Pevsner & Williamson, 1993: 587). To date there has been only one watching brief in the church yard which yielded archaeology dating to the post medieval period.

There are mentions of two Manor Houses in Olney; Warrington Manor first mentioned in around 1232, when it was detached from the principal Manor, and Olney Manor which was first mentioned in AD 979 (Page, W 1927).

4. Previous Archaeological Work

4.1 In November 2010 an initial evaluation was undertaken (Rouse 2010) and four trenches were dug on the southern part of the site and across unit 1. Medieval pottery was found in two of the four trenches: 28 sherds in Trench two dating to c.16th – 17th centuries, and 12 sherds dating to the 13th-15th century which comprised brown-glazed red earthenware and green glazed whiteware. Some bone fragments were also found.

5. Aims and Objectives

5.1 The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- 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 establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

5.2 Within the stated project aims, the principal objective of the recording was to establish the nature, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context in order to assist in the formulation of a mitigation strategy to address the impacts of the proposed development on cultural heritage.

6. General Methodology and Standards

6.1 All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (2014) and adhered to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (2014).

6.2 A site specific accession number/site code was obtained and used to identify all records and artefacts.

6.3 Unlimited access to monitor the project was available to the Client and his representatives, subject to the health and safety requirements of the site and representatives of Milton Keynes Council visited the site on 30th November 2017, prior to backfilling. Internal monitoring procedures were also undertaken where appropriate.



Figure 4: Machining Trench 01

7. Methodology

7.1 Two trenches covering approximately 1.5% of the development area were proposed in order to investigate the impact of intrusive groundworks (Figure 5). This entailed a 10m trench located across the footprint of the residential building and a 15m one across the

associated car parking and garages. Subject to amendment in the light of the removal of some modern fuel storage tanks to the west of the site, associated with the former use of the site as a vehicle garage, a single trench, 24m long, was excavated across both footprints using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Figure 4) (Figure 6).

7.2 The work followed the approved design specification (Buckley/Gonzalez, 2016) and adhered to the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2013).

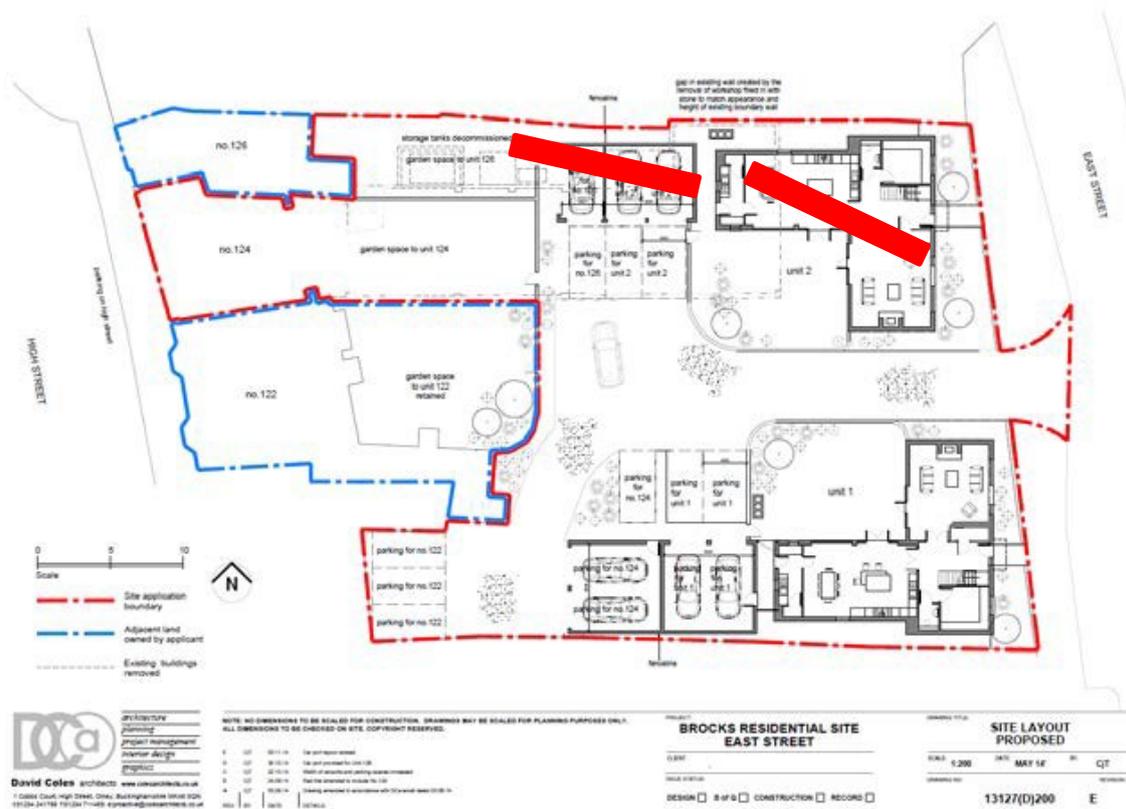


Figure 5: Proposed trench location

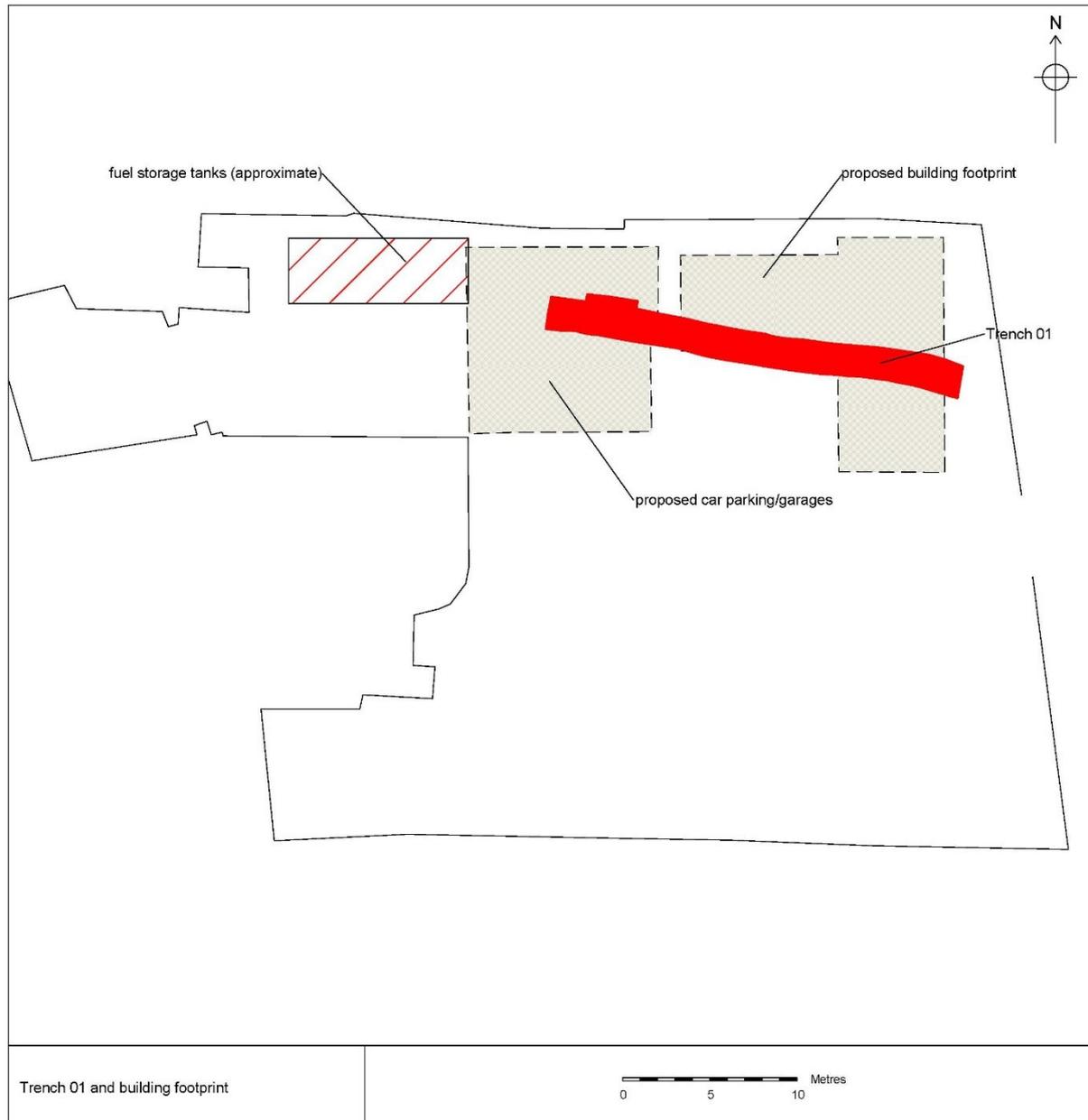


Figure 6: Actual trench location

8. Constraints

8.1 Two fuel storage tanks towards the existing buildings in the west of the development area were removed prior to the evaluation being undertaken. Any survival of archaeological levels in this area was likely to have been compromised so it was avoided by the subsequent work. A 2m minimum buffer was left between the trench sides and all existing property boundaries.

9. Results

Trench 01 (Figure 7, Figure 8)

Length: 24m

Width: 1.80m

Depth: 0.40 – 0.80m

9.1 Trench 01, orientated east/west, was located in the north of the proposed development area and was positioned to investigate the footprint of the building in the east and car parking facilities in the west. It was excavated down to the light yellow/brown well-sorted gravels containing crushed limestone fragments. A number of archaeological deposits, some dated, were identified within the trench and were subject to sample excavation. These included a series of pairs of gullies and a ditch, all on a similar orientation, and several post-holes. At the western extent of the trench concrete foundations associated with other modern deposits are likely to have truncated archaeological remains there.



Figure 7: Trench 01, looking west, 1m scale

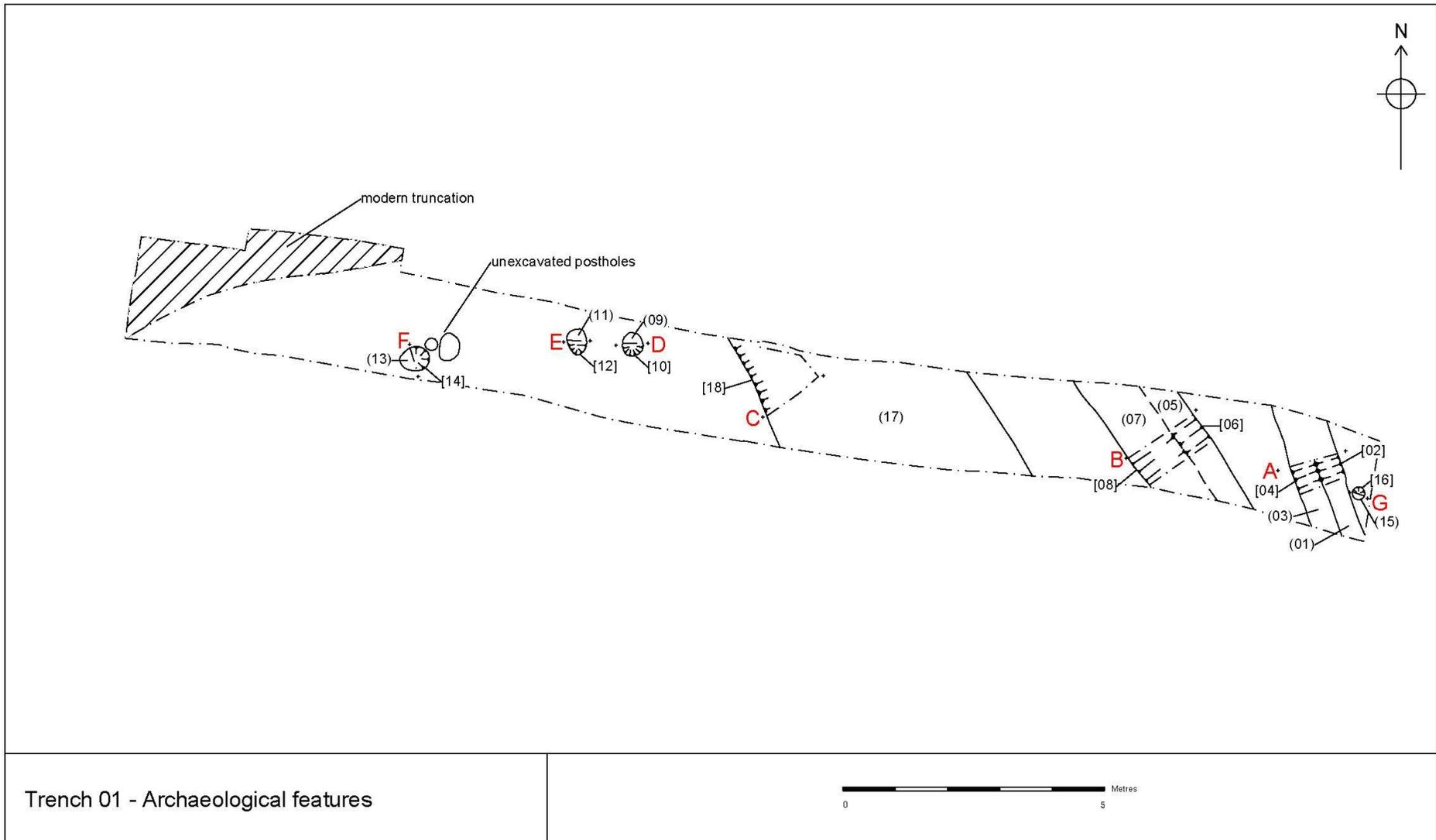


Figure 8: Trench 01 - features

9.2 Gullies (Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11)

Two linear features, orientated northwest/southeast were identified toward the eastern end of the trench and sample excavation revealed them to represent a pair of double or recut gullies with typically straight gradual sides merging with central and concave bases.

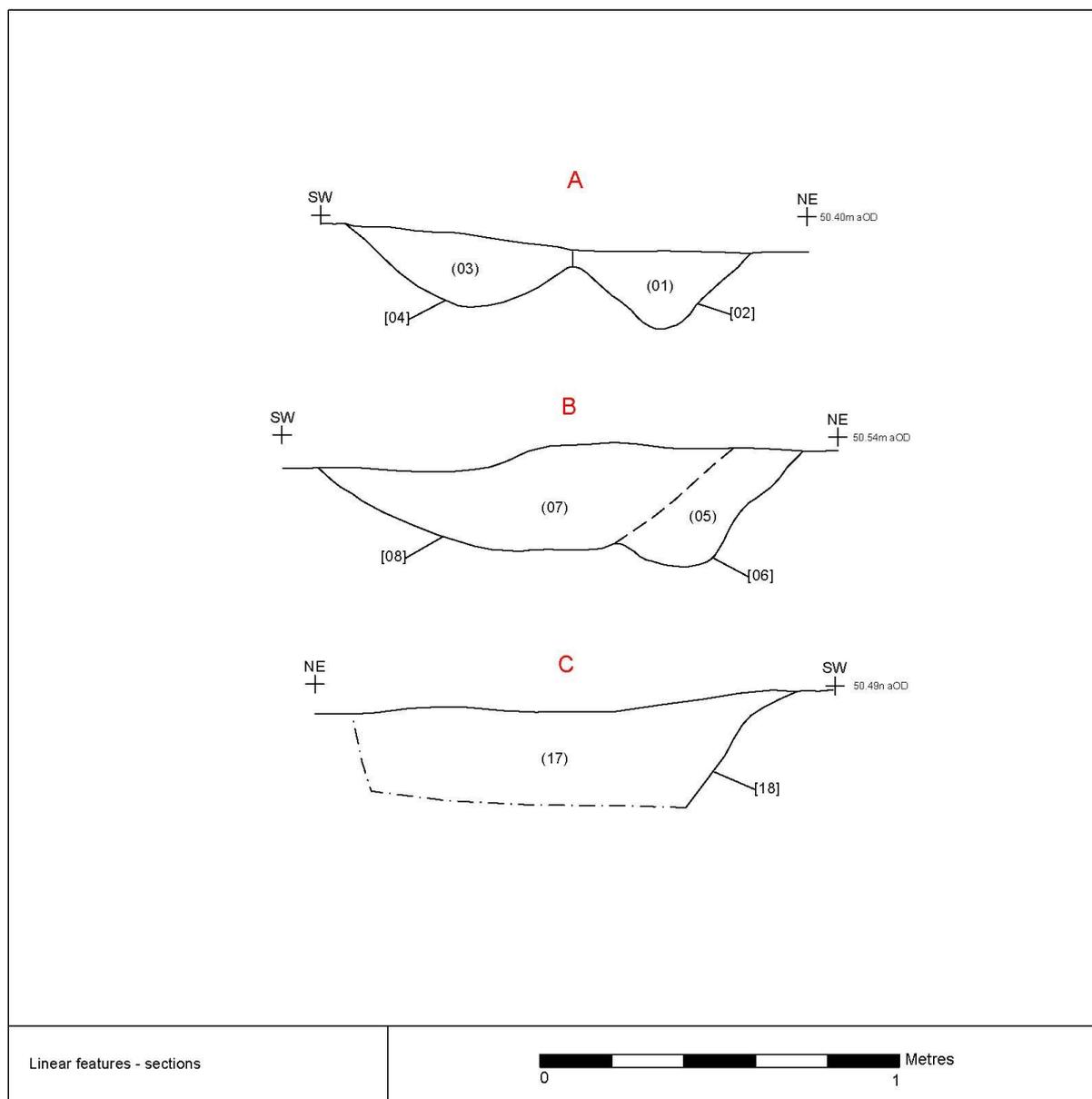


Figure 9: Linear features - sections

Gully [02] was *c.*0.20m deep, *c.*0.50m wide and 2.5m+ long had moderately sloping sides and contained a single mid-brown silty clay fill (01). Parallel gully [04], *c.*0.23m deep and *c.*0.63m wide, contained an indistinguishable fill (03) from the former making the stratigraphic relationship between the features difficult to ascertain. Medieval pottery dating from *c.*1150-1500AD was recovered from fill (01) and (03).



Figure 10: Gullies [02] [04], looking north, 1m scale

Located approximately 2m to the west another linear was also sample excavated and found to represent another two parallel gullies traversing the trench on a similar orientation. Gully [06], to the east, *c.*0.34m deep and *c.*0.39m wide, possible the earlier of the two, contained a single mid-brown silty clay (05). Later gully [08] with a depth of *c.* 0.31m and width of *c.*0.97m, contained a slightly greyer fill of the same consistence (07) and had a wavy eastern side. Both were devoid of finds.



Figure 11: Gullies [06] [08], looking northwest, 1m scale

9.3 Ditch (Figure 9, Figure 12, Figure 13)

A substantial linear on the same orientation as the gullies was investigated and interpreted as a ditch [18]. Due to its apparent size (*c.*3.80m wide) and the difficulty in excavating a profile across it, it was only partially excavated to a depth of *c.*0.36m. A relatively straight side was exposed and the single mid-brown/grey silty clay fill (17) was absent of pottery but did contain a partial animal skeleton identified as a dog.



Figure 12: Ditch [18], looking southeast, 1m scale



Figure 13: Animal burial in Ditch [18], 0.20m scale

9.4 Postholes (Figure 14)

Six post-holes were identified within Trench **01** and four of these were sample excavated by half-section. Three of them in the western half of the trench formed a tentative line, although only one of these produced datable pottery.

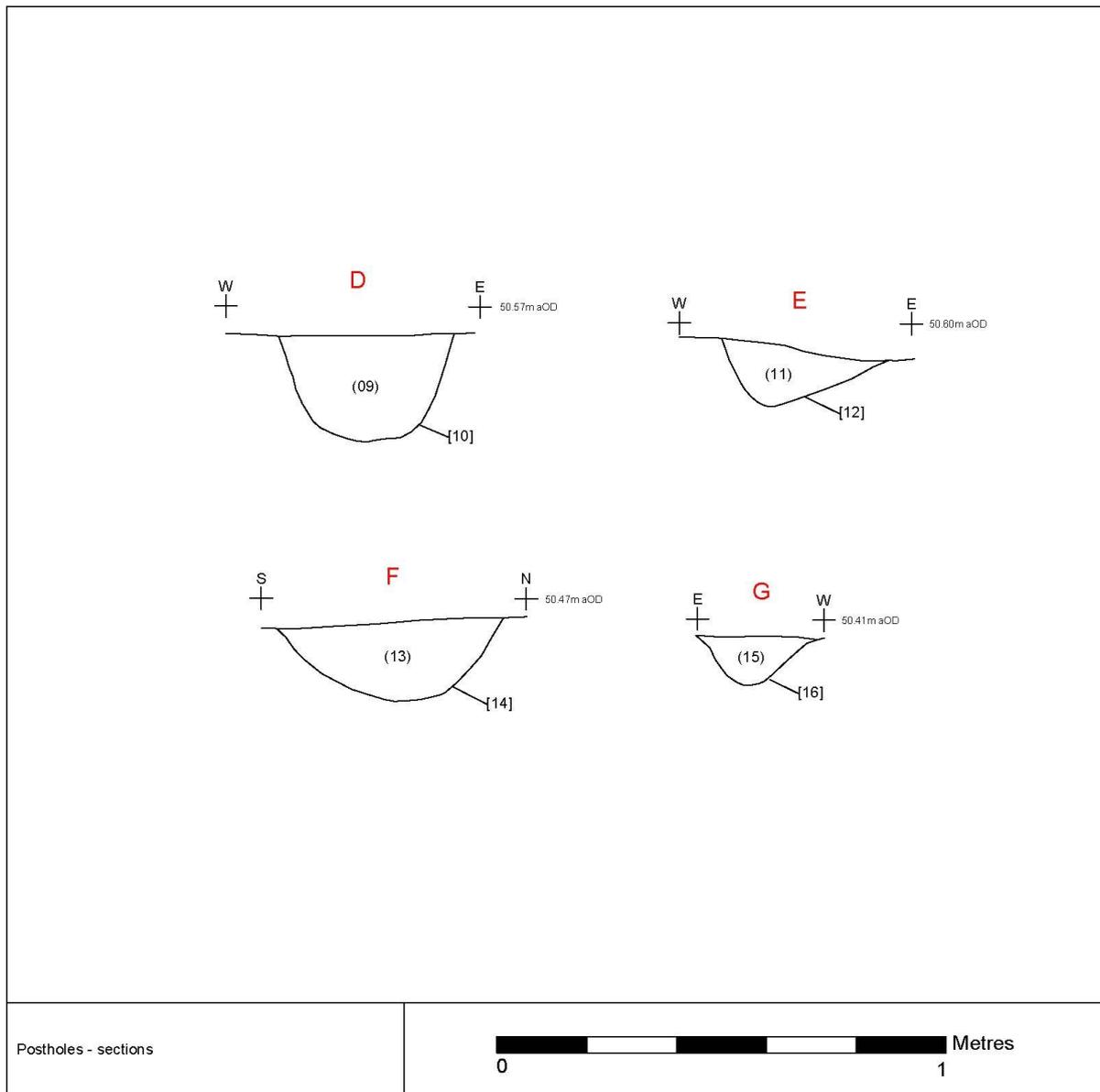


Figure 14: Posthole sections

Circular Posthole **[10]** (Figure 15), the easternmost investigated and located approximately 2m from the western edge of the ditch, was *c.*0.24m deep with a diameter of *c.*0.38m. It had straight steep side merging with a concave central base and contained a single dark grey/brown silty sand fill **(09)** with a single sherd of medieval pottery dating from *c.*1150 – 1500AD (Figure 15).



Figure 15: Posthole [10], looking north, 0.50m scale

Sub-circular post-hole [12] (Figure 16) was located approximately 1m further west and had a diameter of *c.*0.37m and depth of *c.*0.16m. With a steeper western side merging with a slightly off-centre base, it contained a similar single fill (11) but was devoid of finds (Figure 16).



Figure 16: Posthole [12], looking north, 0.50m scale

Posthole [14] (Figure 17), also sub-circular, with a depth and diameter of *c.*0.18m and *c.*0.050m respectively, was one of a cluster of three post-hole features, two of which were left unexcavated. Its sides and base were concave and contained a single dark grey/brown silty clay fill (13), also devoid of finds (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Posthole [14], looking west, 0.50m scale

The final post-hole [16] (Figure 18) was located at the far eastern extent of the trench alongside gully [02]. Sub-circular but significantly smaller, with a *c.*0.27m diameter and depth of *c.*0.10m. Straight sides and a concave base contained a dark brown/grey silty clay fill (15) that was devoid of finds (Figure 18).



Figure 18: Posthole [16], looking south, 0.20m scale

9.4 Modern Truncation

The western extent of the trench, towards the area where the fuel tanks were, was subject to modern truncation. A substantial concrete foundation was removed using the machine and this was found to be associated with a straight cut feature containing dark grey loam with complete and fragmentary brick. It seem probable that it was related to the construction of the tanks.

10. The Ceramics *D. Sawday*

10.1 Methodology

The pottery, three sherds, weighing 37 grams, was examined under a binocular microscope with reference to the Northamptonshire fabric series (Blinkhorn 1996) and listed by context. The results for the pottery are shown below (Table 1). Contexts with animal bone are also recorded here.

10.2 Discussion

Lyveden Stanion A ware, the product of a major ceramic industry in the north-east of the county, is an important ware in the area, and is dated generally from C. AD.1150-to c.?1400. However, the relatively fine fabric and the pale buff surfaces and the lack of reddish-purple or bluish-grey colouration may suggest that these sherds lie within a later period in the industry, dating from c.1350 to c.1500, although further research is clearly needed here (Blinkhorn 2001, 286-288).

10.3 Conclusion

The pottery together with the cut features provides evidence of activity in the area during the medieval period.

context	Fabric/ware	No	Grams	Comments
POTTEY				
1 [2] gully	319- Lyveden Stanion A	1	11	Body –abraded surfaces
3 [4] gully	319- Lyveden Stanion A	1	20	Abraded – body, traces of two bands of rouletting on exterior. Similar incised decoration is generally rare on these vessels, but was noted on this ware at West Cotton (<i>ibid.</i> 2001, fig.1021.147)
9 [10] post hole	319- Lyveden Stanion A	1	6	Jar with hammer-headed rim, estimated diameter c.170mm, EVEs 0.0275.
ANIMAL BONE				
1		3		
17		44		

Table 1: The finds by context

11. Assessment of the animal bones *Joseph Bartholomew*

11.1 Introduction

A small animal bone assemblage (46 fragments) was hand collected from two medieval contexts: (1) a gully and (17) a ditch fill, during an excavation at the site.

11.2 Methodology

The bones were identified by comparison to reference material held at the University of Leicester and recorded in a catalogue (Table 2). Condition was scored using Harland et al.'s (2003) scale.

11.3 Results

The assemblage was well preserved, all elements from (1) were scored as 'excellent' and those from (17) were scored as 'good'. Two bones from (17) however exhibited root etching. Three bones were present in (1): a chicken femur, tibiotarsus and ulna. The remaining bones were from (17) and the majority were identified as a dog including bones of the leg, foot and lower spine. The presence of two left dog pelvi indicates a minimum of two animals are represented. Whilst tarsals and rib elements in (17) were not identified to taxa, the prevalence of dog

suggests that these also belong to this taxon. All of the dog bones present were fused and a pathology was present, a bony growth, on the distal metaphysis of the femur. There was no evidence of burning or butchery across the assemblage.

11.4 Discussion

The dog bones are most likely the remains of a disturbed burial. The chicken remains may possibly represent food waste.

11.5 Statement of Potential

Further work could be carried out on the dog remains including ageing, sexing, and measuring the bones to reveal more information about the animals represented. However, this was not felt appropriate at assessment level.

If further excavation is carried out at the site animal remains should be collected. The recovery of more animal bone may lead to a better understanding of domestic activities, with the excellent/good preservation enabling further identification. It is suggested that environmental samples are also taken to allow for the recovery of smaller remains.

Context	Feature	Date	Element	Taxon	Side	Fragments	Preservation	Comment
1	Gully	Med	Femur	Chicken	L	1	1	>75% complete
1	Gully	Med	Tibiotarsi	Chicken	L	1	1	>75% complete
1	Gully	Med	Ulna	Chicken		1	1	>75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Tibia	Dog	R	1	2	Root etching >75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Femur	Dog	R	1	2	Bony growth on distal metaphysis
17	Ditch	Med	Pelvis	Dog	L	1	2	Root etching, 50-75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Pelvis	Dog	R	1	2	>75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Pelvis	Dog	L	1	2	>75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Thoracic vertebrae	Dog		4	2	4 vertebrae, >75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Lumbar vertebrae	Dog		5	2	5 vertebrae, >75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Sacrum	Dog		1	2	>75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Caudal vertebrae	Dog		5	2	5 vertebrae, >75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Metatarsals	Dog	R	4	2	Metapodials 2,3,4,5, >75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Tarsals	Medium mammal	L	2	2	Calcaneum, astragalus >75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Tarsals	Medium mammal	R	3	2	Cuboid, scaphoid, ectocuneiform, >75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Ribs	Medium mammal		11	2	Minimum 8 ribs, 50-75% complete
17	Ditch	Med	Fibula	Dog		3	2	Shaft fragments, >75% complete
Total						46		

Table 2: The hand collected animal bone

12. Discussion

An archaeological attendance and recording was undertaken in November 2017 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Hilary Brock Ltd. The development was for the proposed construction of a single residential property with car parking facilities and garages. The area of the proposed building footprint and car-parking revealed several features of archaeological interest although the western end of the trench was disturbed by modern truncation, possibly related to the construction of some subterranean fuel tanks. These features included a pair of double gullies, a ditch and a series of post-holes, some dated to the medieval period (c.1150 -1500AD) and three of them in a tentative line. Whilst it is difficult to say anything tangible about these remains in their relationship to each other, their proximity to the medieval core of Olney suggests they could relate to the development of the settlement in this period. Possibly in the 12th/13th century, Olney was

subject to planned extension northwest by the addition of parallel streets, West Street and East Street, either side of the existing Main Street. Burbage plots with tofts and crofts may have extended back from these and the archaeological deposits revealed may represent their remains, the linear features running parallel to the roads. Medieval village layouts are diverse in Northamptonshire but planned villages of this sort are not uncommon and include such villages as Clipston near Daventry where the church and Manor House are located at one end, comparable to Olney.

13. Archive

The site archive will be held by **Buckinghamshire County Museum**, under accession no. EMK1332.

The archive contains:

- 1 context summary record, 18 context sheets
- 1 trench recording sheet
- 1 photographic recording sheet
- 1 Drawing Index sheet
- CD containing digital photographs and report
- Unbound copy of this report
- Thumbnail print of digital photographs

14. OASIS data entry^[GS3]

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-305244		
	Project Name	An Evaluation by Trial Trench on Land at 124-126 High Street, Olney, MK46 4BE		
	Start/end dates of field work	27-11-2017 - 30-11-2017		
	Previous/Future Work	Yes / Not known		
	Project Type	Field Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Vacant - Previously developed		
	Monument Type/Period	Gullies/Medieval (1150 – 1500AD) Ditch/undated Postholes/Medieval (1150 – 1500AD)		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery / Medieval (1150 – 1500) Animal bone/undated		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
Planning Ref.	14/01328/FUL			
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	124-126 High Street, Olney, MK46 4BE		
	Study Area	c.50m ²		
	Site Coordinates	SP 88931 51852		
	Height OD	51m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Richard Buckley		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Stephen Baker		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Hilary Brock Ltd		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	ULAS	ULAS	ULAS
	ID (Acc. No.)	EMK1332	EMK1332	EMK1332
	Contents	Pottery Animal bone	Photos Survey data	Watching brief records Field Notes
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trench on Land at 124-126 High Street, Olney, MK46 4BE		
	Author	Stephen Baker		
	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report No 2017-190		
	Date	2017		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf		

15. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal *South Midlands Archaeology* in due course. The report has been added to the Archaeology Data Service's (ADS) Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the University of York.

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17. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken for Hilary Brock Ltd and was carried out by Stephen Baker of ULAS. Nick Crank monitored the project for Milton Keynes Council and Richard Buckley managed the project.

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