TPTW/01

LAND OFF PERSHORE ROAD, TIBBERTON, WORCESTERSHIRE

Stage 1
Archaeological Evaluation of land referred to as 1a

commissioned by Stoford Developments

Planning Ref: W/10/0769 / **HER**: WSM 66208

March 2015

HEADLAND ARCHAEOLOGY

REGISTERED ORGANISATION CIfA

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project info

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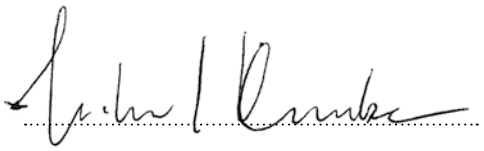

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

TECHNOLOGY PARK (TPTW/01)
land off Pershore Lane
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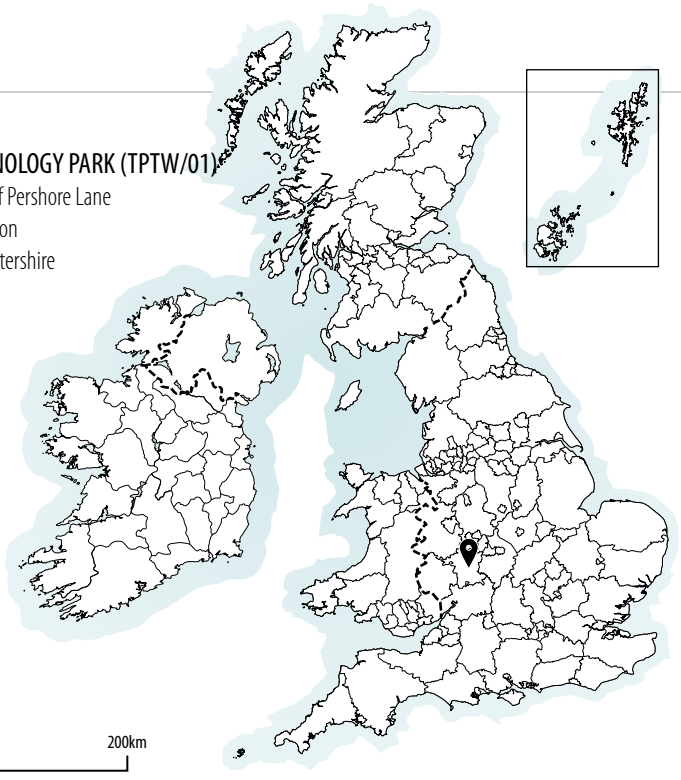

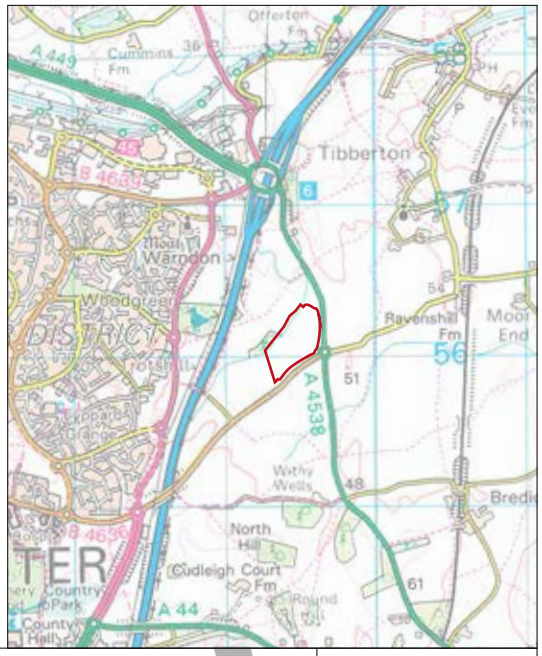

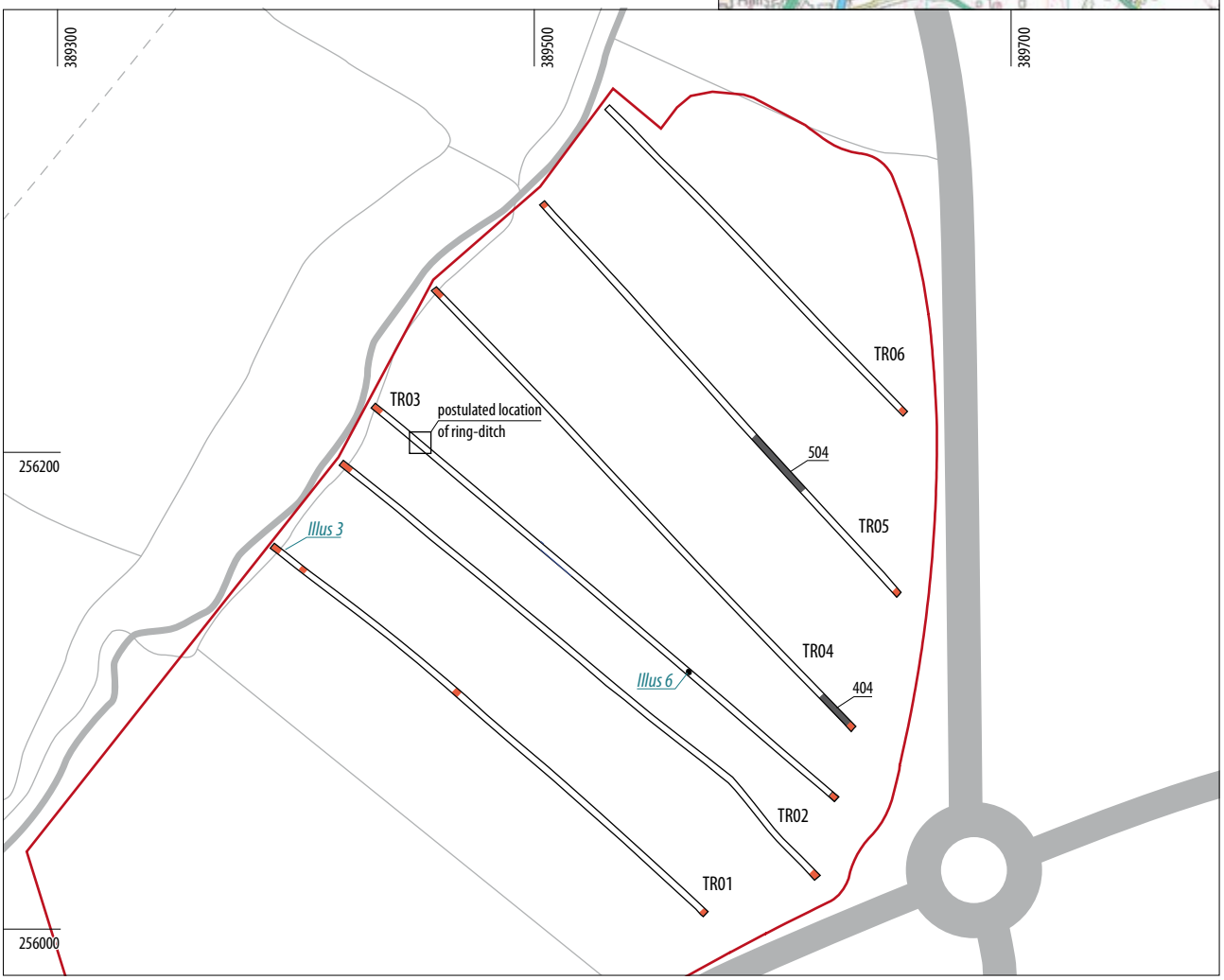

KEY
- site boundary
- trench location
- sondage

N
0 100m
scale 1:3,000 @ A4

ILLUS 1
Site location

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LAND OFF PERSHORE ROAD, TIBBERTON, WORCESTERSHIRE

Stage 1
Archaeological Evaluation of land referred to as 1a

Headland Archaeology undertook a trial trench field evaluation near Tibberton in order to determine the course of a palaeochannel previously identified on an adjacent area of land in 2010. No evidence for the channel was identified during the current evaluation therefore establishing that it does not continue into the site. A single undated archaeological feature was identified during the work, suggesting that the density of any surviving archaeological remains on the site is low.

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Stoford Developments to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Pershore Road, Tibberton, Worcestershire (the Site), prior to the submission of a planning application (Ref: W/10/0769) for the development of the land as a new technology and business park.

In 2010 an outline application for a larger development was submitted to Wychavon District Council. In response to this an archaeological evaluation was undertaken over land adjacent to the Site which revealed significant archaeological deposits. The Site itself was partially evaluated at its northern end.

The original developer pulled out of the scheme and the project was halted. Stoford Developments have now taken over the project. It was agreed with the archaeological advisor to Wychavon District Council, Mike Glyde, that archaeological investigation should be undertaken on the unevaluated portion of the Site prior to the submission of a revised planning application.

In support of the outline planning application, a targeted archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Headland Archaeology Ltd during October 2014, with the purpose of providing further information regarding the archaeological resource, and to enable appropriate planning decisions to be made. Headland Archaeology submitted and agreed a Written Scheme of Investigation (Kimber 2014) with the archaeological advisor in response to a brief issued by the planning advisory section of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (Glyde 2014).

1.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The overall development site covers an area of c.68ha between the M5, Pershore Lane and the B4636 (**Illus 1**). The subject of the current works was a c.8ha area of the development known as Site 1a, located to the northwest of the intersection of Pershore Lane and the B4636.

The site is centred on NGR 389550,256153 and comprises a single field. A small stream forms the north-western boundary of the site, and the field slopes gently towards the stream and also towards Pershore Lane from a slightly elevated level in the centre of the site. At the time of the archaeological investigation the field was set to stubble.

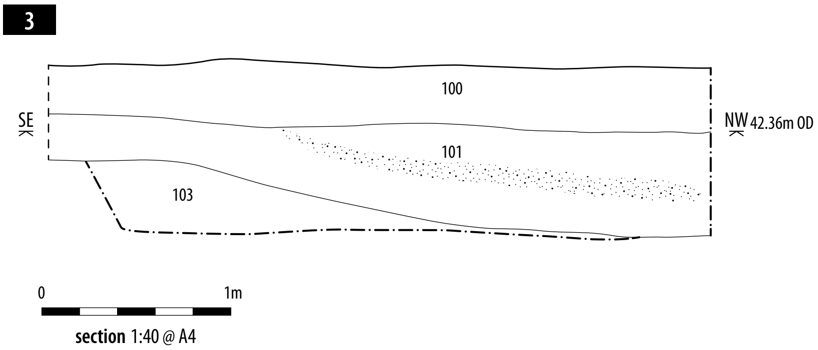
The underlying geology is predominantly Sidmouth Mudstone Formation, with superficial alluvium deposits located to the west of the site. (British Geological Survey website; http://www.bgs .ac.uk)

1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A Worcestershire Historic Environment Record Search was undertaken and the results are included in Appendix 2. The key findings are summarised below.

In 2010 an archaeological field evaluation (Keith-Lucas 2010) was undertaken over the majority of the wider development site.

The evaluation identified an historic watercourse (palaeochannel) which flowed to the north-west of the current area of investigation and potentially continued along the north-western boundary of the



ILLUS 2

SW facing view of general site stratigraphy, Trench 3

ILLUS 3

Section of deposits at NW end of Trench 1, showing alluvial deposit [101], NE facing section

The archaeological potential of this area had already been established through previous works. The specific purpose of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible whether the palaeochannel extends into the evaluation area and to define its extent in plan form.

More specific aims of the evaluation included:

- Undertake desk-based research
- Establish the location, extent, and as far as practicable, nature and date of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the areas proposed to be disturbed during the development.

The local and regional research contexts are provided by ***The Archaeology of the West Midlands: A Framework for Research***. Any evidence retrieved during the works has been analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

The results of the evaluation will be used to inform a strategy for further archaeological mitigation.

site. It is believed that the watercourse occupied a depression formed during the late glacial or early Holocene period. A complex sequence of organic and alluvial deposits was identified within the former channel. The surrounding fields saw limited prehistoric activity, with occasional pits and postholes identified. At least one burnt mound was discovered to the west of the current area of investigation. The evaluation found evidence for worked timbers of Middle Iron Age date forming possible structures along the west side of the channel depression, preserved within waterlogged peat accumulations. Three evaluation trenches exposed what was interpreted as a timber trackway, at least 150m long, through what would have been rough marsh and alder carr. Limited evidence for Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval activity was also identified on the site.

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record records the presence of a ring ditch (WSM04209) identified from aerial photographs within the proposed development site.

2 OBJECTIVES

In general, the purpose of the evaluation was to provide sufficient evidence for confident prediction of the impact of the proposal by establishing the extent, nature and importance of any heritage assets within the affected area (following PPS 5 Planning for the Historic Environment Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide 2010).

The project was undertaken in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire, issued by Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service.

The resulting archive will be organised and deposited in Worcestershire Museum to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit.

3 METHOD

Six trenches measuring between 179m and 265m in length were excavated at right angles to the course of the stream on the north-west boundary of the site.

Trench 3 was also located in order to target the postulated location of a crop-mark ring-ditch recorded in the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM04209).

All trenches were set-out using differential GPS, which was also used to provide absolute heights above OD. Service plans were consulted in advance of excavation.

Trenches were opened with a 360 degree tracked excavator, suitably equipped with a toothless ditching bucket of 2.1m width. All trenches were excavated by machine under direct archaeological supervision

ILLUS 4
Trench 1, alluvial deposit, NE facing section

ILLUS 5
S facing view of deposits at NW end of Trench 2

to remove topsoil and overburden in controlled spits. Machine excavation terminated at the top of the natural geology or the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first. Further investigation of deep depositional sequences was undertaken by machine-dug sondages at selected locations as considered necessary.

Excavation of archaeological deposits and features required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation was continued by hand (except where agreed otherwise with the archaeological advisor). On completion of machine excavation, all faces of the trench that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. The stratigraphic sequence was recorded in full in each of the trenches, even where no archaeological deposits were identified.

Archaeological features were located using differential GPS; artefacts visible on the surface of features were collected.

Only features deemed to be 'particularly unusual' were investigated through hand excavation. This typically involved excavation of 50% of discrete features, and a 1m slot of linear features.

Due to Health and Safety considerations, excavations were limited to a maximum depth of 1m below existing ground level. Test pits/ sondages were machine-excavated to greater depths; such test pits were not entered by site staff, and were backfilled immediately after excavation.

4 RESULTS

A full description of all deposits is included in Appendix 1. Key features and deposits are located on **Illus 1**.

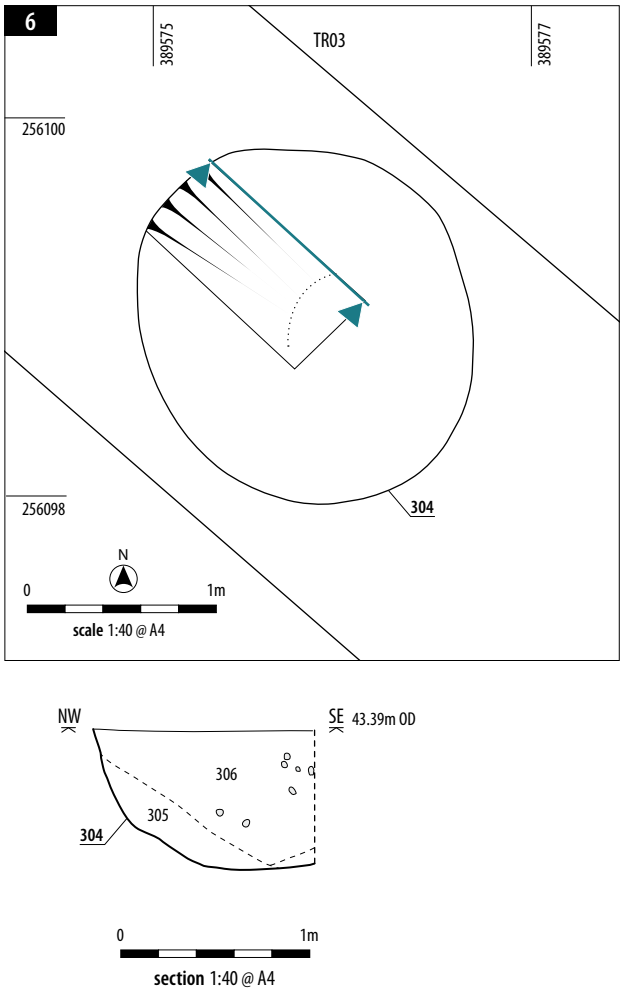
4.1 GENERAL SITE STRATIGRAPHY

The topsoil was consistent across the site and was composed of a dark brown clayey silt, with small rounded stone inclusions (e.g.100) varying in depth between 0.25m and 0.30m. Below this was a subsoil measuring approximately 0.20m thick, and composed of a mid-brown, silty clay with a reddish hue (**Illus 2**). Geological deposits were identified at an average depth of 0.50m and comprised a red silty clay with blue/ grey patches and lenses throughout. It was softer towards the upper surfaces where erosion had taken place and firmer with greater depth.

4.2 EVIDENCE FOR PALAEOCHANNEL DEPOSITS

There was no evidence for the continuation of the palaeochannel identified during the previous archaeological evaluation to the west of the site (Keith-Lucas 2010). A deposit of alluvium varying in depth between 0.20m and 0.60m was identified at the north-western ends of all six trenches (**Illus 3–5**). The alluvium occupied the north-western 5.0m – 10.0m of each trench and corresponded to the fall of the land towards the extant stream channel. Geological deposits were identified beneath the alluvium in all trenches and no evidence for the presence of organic deposits was identified.

Towards the south-east end of Trenches 4 and 5, wide bands of grey clay [404, 504] were observed within the natural geology. It was considered that the deposits potentially represented former watercourses. A sondage excavated through deposit [404] at the south-eastern end of Trench 4 identified that the deposit was approximately 0.60m in depth and was underlain by natural red clay.



ILLUS 6

Section and plan of pit [304]

ILLUS 7

Oblique SE view of pit [304]

The deposit was mixed, containing predominantly grey clay with discrete patches of red clay.

Deposits [404] and [504] were located at low spots within the topography of the field and seem likely to represent areas where water had pooled leading to the development of sediments under anaerobic conditions. There was no evidence to suggest that the deposits were contained within a channel.

4.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

A single archaeological feature, pit [304] was identified during the evaluation (**Illus 6–7**). In plan it appeared as a very regular, circular pit, measuring 1.80m in diameter, and upon excavation was found to measure 0.70m in depth. The steep sides terminated at a concave base. The feature had two fills, a primary deposit [305] was visible towards the edge of the cut, and measured approximately 0.20m in depth. It comprised a brown, friable, silty clay, likely resulting from the weathering of the sides of the feature. The second and later fill (306), comprised a firm, dark brown silty clay, containing occasional small rounded stones and small pieces of blue clay, which were focused towards the centre of the feature. A single very small piece of highly degraded pottery was identified, however due to the disintegration of the fabric during excavation it was not possibly to identify the fabric or date of the pottery, however a prehistoric date seems likely.

No evidence for the crop-mark ring-ditch (WSM04209) was identified at the location specified by the Historic Environment Record.

5 DISCUSSION

The date and function of the pit feature identified within Trench 3 is undetermined – the pottery fragment was so small and degraded it could easily be residual. The size and regular form of the feature is characteristic of Iron Age storage pits identified within Worcestershire and neighbouring counties, however, without dateable evidence any interpretation is purely speculative. Although an isolated find during the evaluation, the possibility of similar associated features cannot be ruled out, due to the wide spacing of the trenches. What the trenches have indicated is the low likelihood of there being any large scale or extensive archaeological remains in the field.

No evidence for the continuation of the palaeochannel into the current area of investigation was identified – the current north-west field boundary appears to define its edge. The site report for the previous phase of archaeological work (Keith-Lucas 2010) proposed a postulated course for the palaeochannel to the north-west of the current area of investigation. The current works appear to have confirmed this. The grey clay deposits seen towards the south-eastern ends of Trenches 3 and 4 appear to represent low points in the field where water had settled. Comparable deposits were identified in the previous phase of work, and the same interpretation reached; the grey colour resulting from the anaerobic conditions formed by the continued presence of water within the ground.

The lack of evidence for the postulated ring ditch (WSM04209) may suggest that the original interpretation was erroneous, or that the feature had subsequently been ploughed out. However, the position of the feature was only recorded to a precision of 10m, there is therefore the possibility that the evaluation failed to locate it due to inaccuracies in transferring the location of the ring ditch from the aerial photograph to modern mapping.

6 CONCLUSION

The line of the Palaeochannel was not found during the course of the evaluation, and it is concluded that its course is confined to the north-western field boundary and does not enter the area subject to the current evaluation. The identification of a single pit of archaeological significance does not rule out the presence of further features, but does suggest that the density of any archaeological activity on the site is low.

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 TRENCH REGISTER

TR1	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	240	2	0.55

Context	Description	Depth of deposit (mBGL)
100	Topsoil. Dark brown-black silty clay. Rounded stone inclusions, moderate frequency.	0.00–0.25
101	Mid brown, silty clay alluvium. Red and grey clay inclusions. Only present at NW end of trench (10m). Deepest at NW (0.60m), petering out to nothing to the SE. No inclusions. Appears as a darker/dirtier variant on the natural.	0.25–0.85
102	Subsoil. Mid brown silty clay with a red hue. Effectively the disturbed upper surface of the natural with topsoil/organic material mixed in.	0.25–0.45
103	Natural siltstone/mudstone. Red silty clay with blue/grey clay patches and lenses throughout. Soft in upper reaches (eroded) but getting firmer with depth. Laminated and more 'rock like' c.0.90mBGL	0.45–0.90m+

Summary
Under stubble, no archaeology present, occasional modern field drains.

TR2	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	265	2.10	0.65

Context.	Description	Depth of deposit (mBGL)
200	Topsoil. Dark brown-black silty clay. Rounded stone inclusions, moderate frequency.	0.00– 0.30
201	Mid brown, silty clay alluvium. Red and grey clay inclusions. Only present at NW end of trench (5m). Deepest at NW (0.35m), petering out to nothing to the SE. No inclusions. Appears as a darker/dirtier variant on the natural.	0.30–0.65
202	Subsoil. Mid brown silty clay with a red hue. Effectively the disturbed upper surface of the natural with topsoil/organic material mixed in.	0.25–0.40
203	Natural siltstone/mudstone. Red silty clay with blue/grey clay patches and lenses throughout. Soft in upper reaches (eroded) but getting firmer with depth. Laminated and more 'rock like' c.0.90mBGL	0.40–1.00+

Summary
Under stubble, no archaeology, modern field drains present.

TR3	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	255	2.10	0.50

Context.	Description	Depth of deposit (mBGL)
300	Topsoil. Dark brown-black silty clay. Rounded stone inclusions, moderate frequency.	0.00–0.25
301	Subsoil. Reddish brown, firm silty clay	0.25–0.40
302	Natural silty clay. Very firm. Blue veins appearing approx. 0.10m below upper surface.	0.40–1.00+
303	Alluvium. Orangey brown, friable, silty clay. Occasional small rounded stone inclusions. Only present at NW end of trench, extending SE for approx. 5m.	0.
304	Cut of large circular pit. 1.80m diameter x 0.70m deep. Steep sides to concave base. Very regular.	0.40–1.10
305	Primary fill of pit [304]. Mid brown, friable, silty clay, no inclusions. Weathering deposit.	0.90–1.10
306	Upper fill of pit [304]. Dark brown, firm, silty clay, Occasional small rounded stones. Single piece of heavily degraded pottery – undetermined date. Occasional charcoal flecks.	0.40–0.90

Summary
Pit [304] appears to be archaeological in origin. Characteristic of an Iron Age storage pit.

TR4	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	255	2.10	0.50

Context.	Description	Depth of deposit (mBGL)
400	Topsoil.	0.00–0.25
401	Subsoil. Mid brown silty clay with reddish hue. Frequent small rounded stone inclusions.	0.25–0.40
402	Alluvium. Dark brown silty clay with red hue. Occasional small rounded stones.	0.40–0.60
403	Natural. Red clay with blue veins/patches, very firm	0.40–1.00+
404	Natural. Band of Grey/blue clay at SE of trench (19m in width). Discrete patches of red clay throughout. Variation on deposit [403] due to waterlogging/reducing conditions.	0.40–1.00

Summary
Under stubble, slightly higher at NW end, no archaeological remains, modern field drains visible, patches of greyish, anaerobic clay [403] at SE lower end.

TR5	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	222	2.10	0.50

Context.	Description	Depth of deposit (mBGL)
500	Topsoil.	0.00–0.25
501	Subsoil. Mid brown silty clay with reddish hue. Frequent small rounded stone inclusions.	0.25–0.40
502	Natural. Red clay with blue veins/patches, very firm.	0.40+
503	Alluvium. Dark brown silty clay with red hue. Occasional small rounded stones.	0.30–0.60
504	Natural. Band of Grey/blue clay towards SE of trench (30m in width). Discrete patches of red clay throughout. Variation on deposit [403] due to waterlogging/reducing conditions.	0.40+

Summary
Under stubble, slightly higher at NW end, no archaeology remains, modern field drains visible, patches of grey anaerobic clay [504] in lower areas towards SE end.

TR6	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NW-SE	179	2.10	0.50

Context.	Description	Depth of deposit (mBGL)
600	Topsoil.	0.00–0.25
601	Subsoil.	0.25–0.40
026	Natural. Red clay with blue veins/patches, very firm.	0.40+
603	Alluvium. Reddish orange brown silty clay. Visible only in sondage at NW end of Trench.	0.30–0.60

Summary
Under stubble, no archaeology, occasional modern field drains

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