

CABO17



# LAND WEST OF BRETCH HILL, BANBURY, OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF SITE COMPOUND AND  
REPLACEMENT BADGER SETT  
PLANNING REF. 13/00444/OUT

commissioned by Bloor Homes

February 2018



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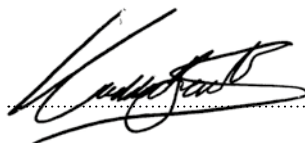
#### PROJECT INFO:

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Approved by **Luke Craddock-Bennett**





## PROJECT SUMMARY

Archaeological field evaluation, via trial trenching, was undertaken by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd on Land at Bretch Hill, Banbury, Oxfordshire, in advance of construction of a site compound and new badger sett associated with residential development of the land. Five trenches were excavated with a single undated post-hole, a post-medieval ditch, an undated linear feature and remnants of former ridge and furrow agriculture identified.

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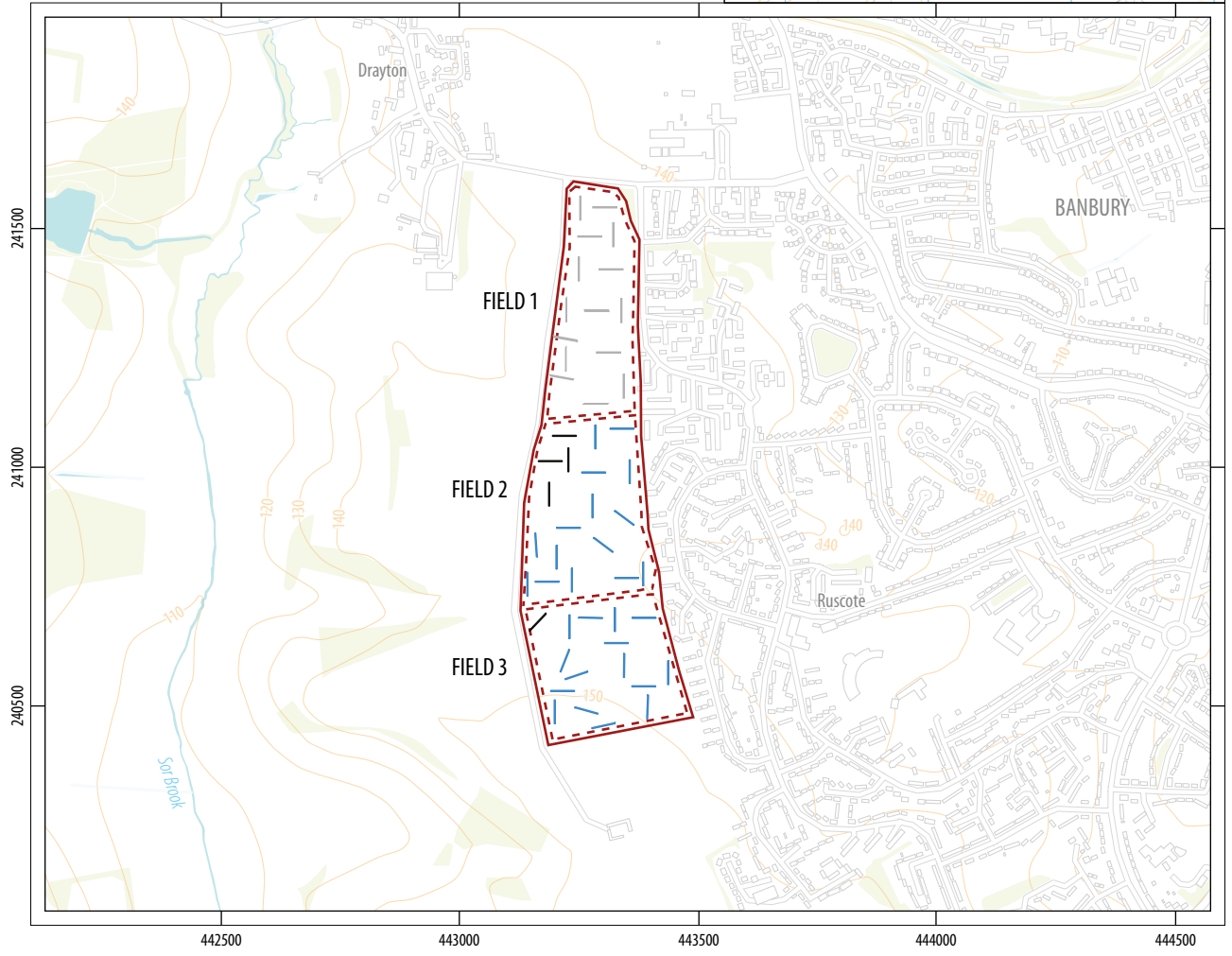
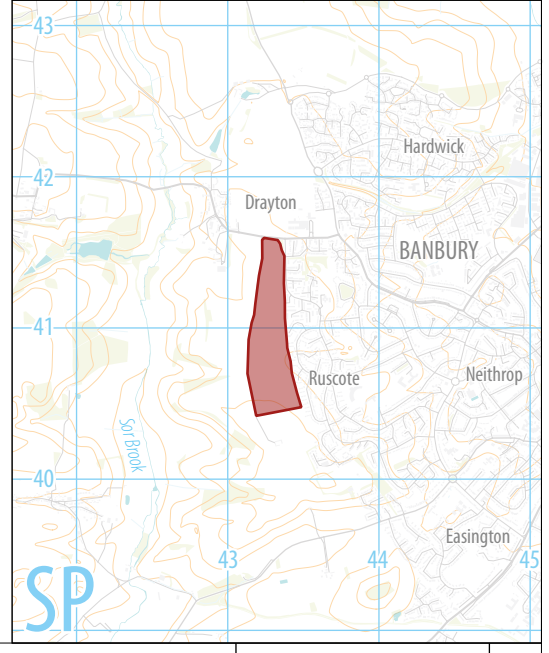
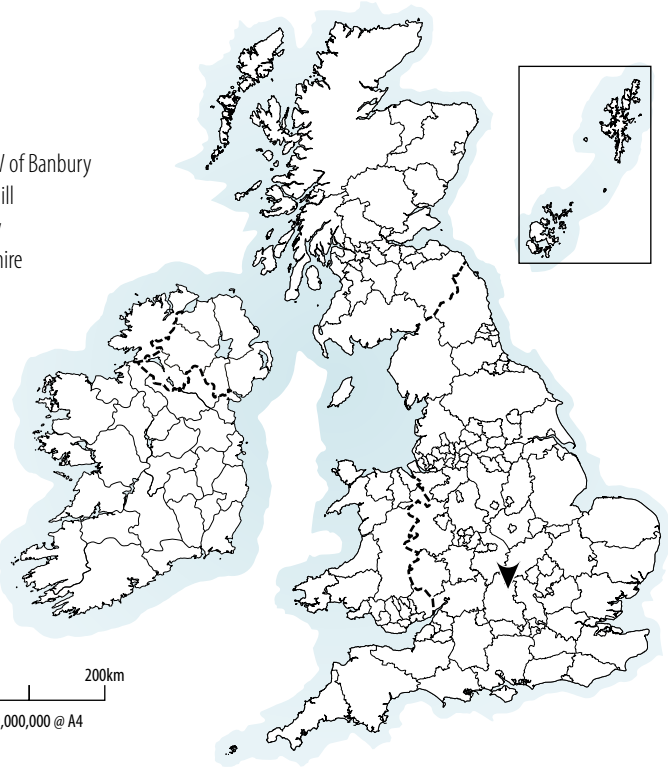
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Land SW of Banbury  
 Bretch Hill  
 Banbury  
 Oxfordshire

0 200km  
 1:10,000,000 @ A4



0 250m  
 1:15,000 @ A4

- development boundary
- field boundary
- trench location
- trial trench still to be undertaken
- trial trenching 2016

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ILLUS 1 Site location



# LAND WEST OF BRETCH HILL, BANBURY, OXFORDSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF SITE COMPOUND AND REPLACEMENT BADGER SETT

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological site investigation on land at Bretch Hill, Banbury. Archaeological trial trenching was undertaken in two areas related to construction requirements for a new site compound area and relocation of a badger sett as part of a wider, phased programme of archaeological investigation across the proposed development area.

#### 1.1 PLANNING BACKGROUND

Bloor Homes Ltd commissioned Headland Archaeology to undertake an archaeological evaluation on an area of land to the west of Bretch Hill in Banbury, Oxfordshire.

The work relates to the wider proposed development of the site (Planning Ref: 13/00444/OUT) and will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Written Scheme of Investigation (Craddock-Bennett 2017).

A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken in March 2016. The northern field within the development area was subject to trial trenching and an area of mitigation excavation in 2016. Further trial trenching is required within the southern fields of the site and is anticipated to be undertaken in 2018.

#### 1.2 SITE LOCATION, DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

The application area comprises three large arable fields within a rectangular parcel of land to the west of Banbury (Illus 1). The site is centred at SP 43209 41051 and covers 26ha.

The application area is bound to the north by the A422 Stratford Road, to the west by a farm track leading to Withycombe Farm and to the south by a public footpath beyond which lies arable farmland. The site is bound to the east by Bretch Hill, a residential housing estate.

To enable easy identification the three fields comprising the development area have been numbered 1 to 3 from north to south.

The new compound area is located in the north-west corner of Field 2 and the new badger sett in the north-west corner of Field 3 (Illus 2). The compound area lies within a field under crop and gradually slopes towards the north and east from more level ground at 145m AOD to 143.50m AOD. The location of the badger sett lies at approximately 146.50m AOD on relatively level ground which had been ploughed and harrowed.

The underlying bedrock consists of Marlstone Rock Formation – Ferruginous limestone and ironstone. No superficial deposits are recorded (NERC 2017). The soils in the north of the site are classified in the Soilscape 7 association, characterised as freely draining, slightly acid but base-rich soils (Cranfield University 2017).

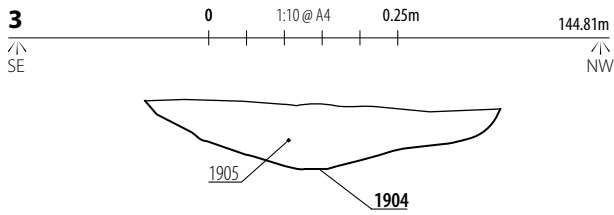
#### 1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A Desk-Based Assessment of the site (Bourn 2013) established that no archaeological remains are recorded within the application area. The site is considered to have a low potential for all archaeological periods with the exception of the Roman period, for which a moderate potential is ascribed.

The site is located in an area where very little formal archaeological investigation has been undertaken and therefore little is known about the prehistoric and Roman potential of the site. The site



ILLUS 2 Trench plan



**ILLUS 3** South facing section through post-hole [1904] **ILLUS 4** Plan view post-hole [1904]

of a possible Roman Villa has been identified 320m west of the application site after a number of Roman coins, a possible mosaic and a bath were found in the C19th (PRN 2347). The site of a Roman farmstead has also been recorded from pottery finds from field-walking 800m to the south of this site, 600m west of the application area (PRN 15894). Recent geophysical survey 650m south of the site has recorded a series of probable prehistoric enclosures and a small Iron Age farmstead has been excavated on the southern edge of the Town.

Geophysical survey to the south of the Saltway, 1.5km south of the application site, has recorded a number of previously unknown Bronze Age barrows as well as a continuation of a causewayed enclosure. Further Barrows have been recorded from geophysical survey on two sites to the north of the town 1km north of the town. These barrows have proved difficult to identify during evaluation but have subsequently been recorded during excavation which might explain why so little is recorded for this period. This site, therefore, has the potential to encounter further, previously unknown, archaeological deposits related to the prehistoric and Roman period.

Trial trenching in Field 1 (Thomson 2016) corroborated results of prior geophysical survey of the site (Harrison 2016) with a probable Romano-British enclosure and later Iron Age occupation identified and subsequently excavated (Thomson 2017). The focus of the occupation during these periods lay outside of the western edge of the field with only peripheral remains and the eastern boundary of the probable enclosure within the development area.

The current areas of investigation are located within parts of the site where geophysical survey indicated little in the way of possible archaeological anomalies, with only potential agricultural features suggested.

## 2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In general, the purpose of the evaluation was to provide sufficient evidence for confident prediction of the impact of the development proposal by establishing the extent, nature and importance of any heritage assets within the affected area (following the National Planning Policy Framework).

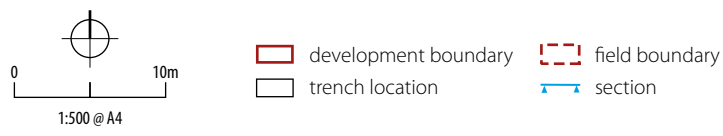
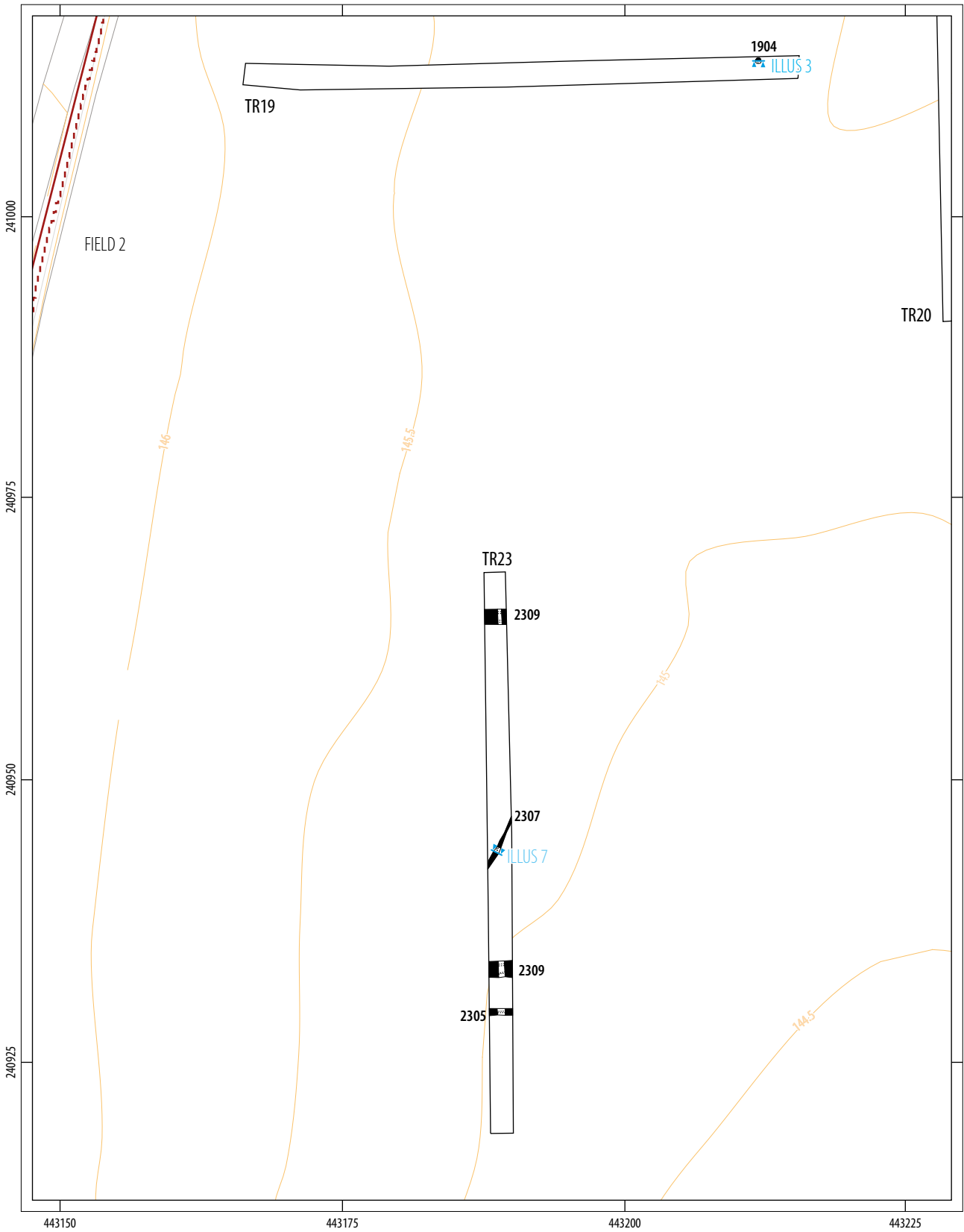
The local and regional research contexts are provided by the Solent Thames Research Framework. Any evidence retrieved during the works will be analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

The objectives of the evaluation were outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Headland Archaeology (Craddock-Bennett 2017). The primary objectives were:

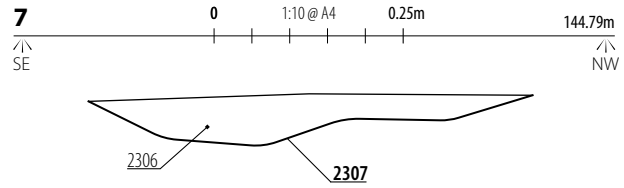
- › to establish the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the areas proposed to be disturbed during the development;
- › to establish the integrity and state of preservation of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the areas proposed to be disturbed during the development;
- › to inform the planning committee;
- › To assist in developing a mitigation strategy should remain of significance be present on the site; and
- › to produce and deposit a satisfactory archive and disseminate the results of the work via grey-literature reporting and publication as appropriate.

The results of the evaluation will be used to describe the significance of heritage assets potentially affected by the development, allowing the planning authority to make an informed assessment of any potential impacts on the historic environment in line with Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The local and regional research contexts are provided by the Solent Thames Research Framework. Any evidence retrieved during the works will be analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

The resulting archive (finds and records) will be organised and deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service to facilitate access for future research and interpretation for public benefit.



ILLUS 5 Plan of Trenches 19 and 23



**ILLUS 6** View of ditch [2307] looking south-west **ILLUS 7** North-east facing section through linear [2307]

### 3 METHOD

The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the above mentioned WSI and method statement and in accordance with the following documents:

- › Code of Conduct (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014a)
- › Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014b)

A total of five trenches measuring 50m long and 1.9m wide were excavated in two fields, specifically targeting a new construction compound area in Field 2 and a new badger sett construction in Field 3 (Illus 2). The work was carried out on the 24th and 25th October 2017. Prior to excavation, utility plans were consulted and a cable avoidance tool was used to check for the presence of potential buried services. A 15m stand-off from overhead power lines was in place relative to the positioning of Trench 35 in Field 3. Trenches were excavated using a 13t tracked, 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a bladed ditching bucket to depths where archaeological features were identified or geological deposits encountered.

Trench numbering was determined relative to the wider scope of the development, with further trenching within both Fields 2 and 3 required at a later date prior to any further construction work.

Exposed archaeological remains were recorded on Headland Archaeology pro forma record sheets and identified features were subsequently sample excavated by hand to determine form, function and retrieve dateable material. The general stratigraphy of the site

and interventions made were recorded photographically and digitally surveyed. Where appropriate, scale hand drawings were reproduced of sections through the exposed archaeological remains.

All recording followed standard archaeological guidelines as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The recorded contexts were assigned unique numbers and recording was undertaken on Headland Archaeology pro forma trench and context record sheets. Digital and black and white photographs were taken of all trenches and identified features, with a graduated metric scale clearly visible. An overall site plan of the trenches and recorded features was digitally produced. Digital surveying was undertaken using a Trimble dGPS system.

### 4 RESULTS

Results are presented below with a preceding summary and description of the general stratigraphy across the entire site. Geological deposits were generally encountered between 0.32 and 0.40m below ground level.

A summary of trenches and recorded contexts is presented as Appendix 1.

#### 4.1 GENERAL STRATIGRAPHY

The soil profile across the site displayed general consistency in form between both Fields 2 and 3 and was of a brown-earth type, probably ferritic, aerated and relatively free draining.



**ILLUS 8** General view of Trench 35 looking north-east

The earliest deposit encountered represented geological deposition and was represented by a mid-yellowish brown, brashy ironstone and mudstone and sandy clay (eg 1601, 3501). Narrow, broadly north-south plough scars were observed throughout the trenches, with pockets of subsoil in stone pulls and voids.

The geological deposit was overlain by a variably thick, 0.10–0.25m deep, reddish brown slightly sandy, silty clay subsoil (eg 1601). The subsoil existed in greater depth in areas where the ground sloped from the south-west to the north-east in Field 2, particularly evident in Trench 16; the eastern end of Trench 19 and north end of Trench 20. Elsewhere, the subsoil was shallow, more of a plough interface horizon between the plough-soil and geological deposit. The plough-soil was a 0.25m thick mid-brown clayey silt (eg 1601, 3501).

Rare, modern glazed ceramic and ceramic building material fragments were observed within both the sub and plough-soil layers though not retained. A single piece of flint debitage was noted within the plough-soil in Trench 35 (3501).

## 4.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

A sub-circular feature [1904] measuring 0.50 x 0.45m was recorded towards the eastern end of Trench 19 and interpreted as a post-hole (Illus 3 and 4). The feature was sealed below a greater depth of subsoil (0.20m) though appeared heavily truncated surviving to only 0.09m deep. The single fill (1905) contained heat affected stones, concentrated towards the centre of the fill potentially suggesting former packing material.

Within Trench 23 (Illus 5), remnants of east-west oriented ridge and furrow agriculture were identified [2309] which corresponded with geophysical anomalies.

Towards the centre of the trench, a shallow north-east/south-west oriented linear feature [2307] was recorded (Illus 6 and 7). The feature measured 0.51m wide and 0.08m deep and was observed to extend beyond the edges of the trench. The feature contained a single fill of mid-brown slightly sandy, silty clay (2306), similar in character to the subsoil. No dateable material was recovered from the feature.

Towards the south of the trench, an east-west oriented ditch was identified [2305] (See Illus 5) which broadly corresponded with a geophysical anomaly suggested to be of agricultural origin. Clay pipe stem and bowl fragments together with a sherd of blue glazed ceramic were recovered from the fill (2304). The feature represented a relatively recent, post-medieval field boundary.

Trenches 16 and 20 contained no archaeological remains. Trench 35 in Field 3 also contained no archaeological remains (Illus 8).

## 5 DISCUSSION

The shallow nature of the stratigraphic profile on the site and of features identified strongly suggests a high level of plough truncation, particularly in areas of higher, more level ground such as Trenches 23 and 35.

A single post-hole identified in Trench 19, contained heat-affected stone which is likely to have represented former packing material. The heat affected stone would also suggest some level of anthropogenic activity in proximity. The stone may have been re-used as packing material and could potentially relate to peripheral activity associated with occupation identified to the north during earlier work on the site in Field 1.

The linear feature [2307] recorded in Trench 23 yielded no dateable material. The orientation of the feature contrasted sharply with that of the ridge and furrow remnants and an identified post-medieval ditch. That and the high level of truncation could argue for a potentially earlier date for the feature though its interpretation as a ditch can only be tenuous at best due to the poor level of survival and limited exposure of the feature.

The remnants of ridge and furrow identified in Trench 23, corresponded with the results of geophysical survey, with a slightly curving profile identified which could be suggestive of an earlier medieval 'S' type ridge and furrow agriculture. No dateable material was retrieved from the surviving remnants of furrows.

A general paucity of cultural material of any period was noted, particularly in Field 2, with only rare modern ceramic noted. The lack of any residual material from earlier periods may suggest that the area was not subject to any intensive activity or occupation and may have existed as agricultural land for some time. A residual topsoil find of struck flint in Field 3 should be considered relative to future trenching due to take place in the field.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Archaeological evaluation of land at Bretch Hill, in the areas of a new compound and badger sett construction, revealed a single post-hole and possible undated ditch. Remnants of ridge and furrow agriculture and a post-medieval field boundary were also recorded. The evaluation largely corroborated the findings of the geophysical survey and appear to indicate that the areas investigated are likely to have lay outwith any focus of settlement and occupation and existed as primarily agricultural land for some time.

The evaluation has confirmed the possibility of the survival of discrete features not identified by geophysical survey, where sealed below a greater depth of subsoil.

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## 8 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 TRENCH AND CONTEXT REGISTER

DBGL = Depth below ground level

TR16	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	E-W	50	1.9	0.40
Context	Description	DBGL (m)		
1601	Ploughsoil – Mid-brown clayey silt containing occasional small sub-angular stones	0–0.22		
1602	Subsoil – Slightly sandy, silty clay containing frequent angular and sub-angular small ironstones, rare charcoal frags, coal frags and modern ceramics	0.22–0.40		
1603	Geological deposit – mid-yellowish brown ironstones and sandy clay	0.40 (LOE)		
Summary: No Archaeological Remains				
TR19	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	E-W	50	1.9	0.35
Context	Description	DBGL (m)		
1901	Ploughsoil – Mid-brown clayey silt containing occasional small sub-angular stones	0–0.25		
1902	Subsoil – Slightly sandy, silty clay containing frequent angular and sub-angular small ironstones, rare charcoal frags, coal frags and modern ceramics	0.25–0.35		
1903	Geological deposit – mid-yellowish brown ironstones and sandy clay	0.35 m(LOE)		
1904	Sub-circular cut, 0.50m x 0.45 x 0.09m deep, gradual slope eastern side, steep to west and south, concave base – Post-hole	0.40		
1905	Mid-reddish brown, slightly stoney silty clay, containing heat affected stone – single fill of [1904]	0.40		
Summary: Post-hole				
TR20	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	N-S	50	1.9	0.35
Context	Description	DBGL (m)		
2001	Ploughsoil – Mid-brown clayey silt containing occasional small sub-angular stones	0–0.24		
2002	Subsoil – Slightly sandy, silty clay containing frequent angular and sub-angular small ironstones, rare charcoal frags, coal frags and modern ceramics	0.24–0.35		
2003	Geological deposit – mid-yellowish brown ironstones and sandy clay	0.35 (LOE)		
Summary: No Archaeological remains				

TR23	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	N-S	50	1.9	0.32
Context	Description	DBGL (m)		
2301	Ploughsoil – Mid-brown clayey silt containing occasional small sub-angular stones	0–0.24		
2302	Subsoil – Slightly sandy, silty clay containing frequent angular and sub-angular small ironstones, rare charcoal frags, coal frags and modern ceramics	0.24–0.32		
2303	Geological deposit – mid-yellowish brown ironstones and sandy clay	0.32 (LOE)		
2304	Mid reddish brown, slightly sandy, silty clay containing frequent sub-angular ironstones, rare charcoal flecks – fill of [2305]	0.32		
2305	Linear cut – E-W orientation, steeply sloping sides, uneven base 0.53m wide x 0.19m deep – field boundary ditch	0.32		
2306	Mid-brown, slightly sandy, silty clay and small sub-angular ironstones, containing rare flecks of charcoal – fill of [2307]	0.32		
2307	Possible linear cut, NE-SW orientation, 0.51m wide x 0.08m deep, uneven base – possible truncated ditch	0.32		
2308	Light yellowish brown, slightly sandy, silty clay containing frequent angular ironstones, rare charcoal and coal frags. – fill of 2309	0.32		
2309	Linear – E-W orientation 1.36-1.40m wide, up to 0.10m deep – Undulating ploughed base, gradually sloping sides – Furrows in R & F field system	0.32		
Summary: 1 x post-medieval ditch, 1 x undated possible truncated ditch, R & F remnants				
TR35	Orientation	L (m)	W (m)	Av. D (m)
	NE-SW	50	1.9	0.35
Context	Description	DBGL (m)		
3501	Ploughsoil – Dark reddish brown, slightly sandy, silty clay containing frequent small ironstones, occa. CBM frags and rare modern ceramics	0–0.25		
3502	Subsoil – Mid-reddish brown silty clay containing frequent angular ironstones	0.25–0.35		
3503	Geological deposit – Mid-yellowish brown ironstones and sandy clay	0.35 (LOE)		
Summary: No Archaeological remains				







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