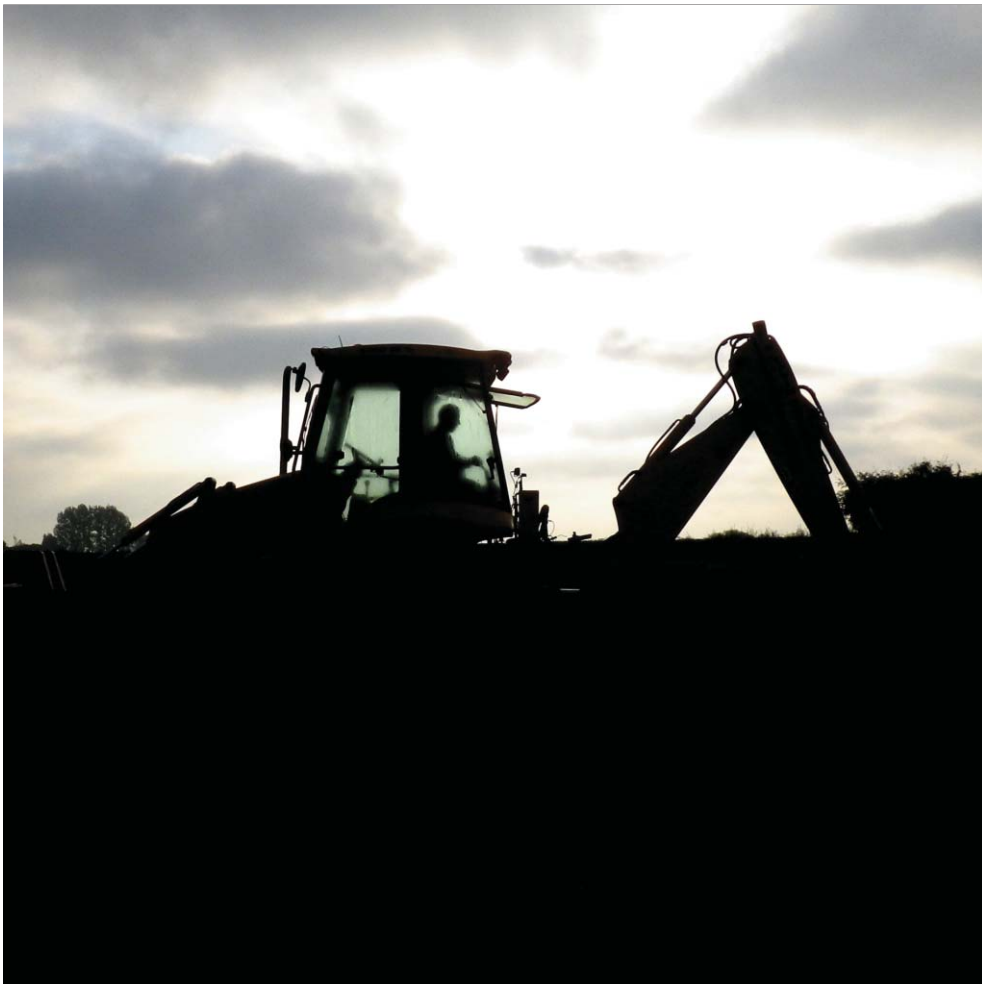




making sense of heritage

Thame, Site C, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Ref: 106230.01
October 2014



**Thame, Site C,
Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Thame, Site C, Oxfordshire

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd to carry out a programme of evaluation trenching on an area of agricultural land south of Thame, Oxfordshire (hereafter the 'Site', centred on NGR 471386, 204738) in advance of a proposed residential development by Taylor Wimpey. This initial evaluation covers only the northwest field of this development area. A total of twelve trenches, measuring 30m by 2.25m, were excavated across the Site to determine the archaeological potential of the Site and characterise any remains identified. The fieldwork was carried out between the 22nd and 26th September 2014.

Several linear features were identified, the examination of which revealed Post-medieval ridge and furrow features which contained artefacts of a Post-medieval and modern date. In addition to this a network of modern ceramic field drains was also uncovered. An ephemeral feature, interpreted as a hedge line, was identified in **Trench 8** containing a number of Bronze Age pottery sherds. No other significant archaeological features were revealed.

The results of the archaeological evaluation have shown the presence of prehistoric activity within the development area. Bronze Age pottery was discovered in a shallow irregular feature. However, no features that could be definitively associated with prehistoric settlement or agricultural activity were identified.

The project archive has been compiled according to the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Wessex Archaeology 2014) and is fully cross-referenced and indexed. It is currently held by Wessex Archaeology under the project code **106230** and will be deposited to Oxfordshire Museums Service under accession number **OXCMS:2014.207** in due course.



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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd and is grateful to Cathy Patrick in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Richard Oram, the Planning Archaeologist, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) for his involvement in the project.

The fieldwork was directed by Philip Roberts with the assistance of Natasha Brett. The report was compiled by Philip Roberts with a contribution by Lorraine Mephram (pottery). The illustrations were prepared by Alix Sperr. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Chris Swales.



Thame, Site C, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd to carry out a programme of evaluation trenching on an area of agricultural land south of Thame, Oxfordshire (hereafter the 'Site', centered on NGR 471386, 204738) in advance of a proposed residential development by Commercial Estates Group and Taylor Wimpey. This initial evaluation covers only the northwest field of this development area.

1.1.2 The Site has been subject to a Desk Based Assessment (CgMs 2014) which included an overview of the archaeological potential and of the Site. The Site has also been subject to a geophysical survey (Stratascan 2014). Both the Desk Based Assessment and geophysical survey demonstrated a low archaeological potential for the Site. Following this work and discussions between Cathy Patrick (CgMs) and Richard Oram, (South Oxfordshire District Council Planning Archaeologist) it was agreed that a programme of archaeological evaluation, to confirm the absence of significant archaeology from the proposed development area, would be attached to any planning consent.

1.1.3 A total of twelve trenches, measuring 30m by 2.25m, were excavated across the Site (2% sample) to determine the archaeological potential of the Site and characterise any remains identified (**Figure 1**).

1.1.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) set out the strategy and methodology by which Wessex Archaeology (2014) implemented the archaeological evaluation. All works undertaken conformed to current best practice and to the guidance outlined in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment ('MoRPHE') (English Heritage 2006), the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) Standards and Guidance for archaeological evaluation (2008). The WSI was submitted to CgMs and Richard Oram (South Oxfordshire District Council Planning Archaeologist) for approval prior to fieldwork commencing.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The Site comprises four separate fields on the southern side of Thame, Oxfordshire (centered on NGR 471386, 204738). The Site covers an area of 30ha and is bounded to the north by the B4012 and industrial developments at Thame. The Site is bounded to the east by open fields and to the south by an area of scrubland. The Site is bounded to the west by the B4012 Thame Park Road (**Figure 1**). The minor watercourse of Cuttle Brook is located to the immediate south of the Site.

1.2.2 The topography of the area slopes from the northwest downwards to the southeast with a change in levels from 76m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 70m AOD at Cuttle Brook.



- 1.2.3 The solid geology of the Site comprises Mudstone of the Gault Formation. Overlaying superficial deposits are made up of River Terrace Deposits 3-4, comprising sand and gravels. The southern extent of the Site is overlain by alluvial deposits associated with the flooding of Cuttle Brook.

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following section summarises the Site's historical and archaeological background as presented in the Desk Based Assessment (CgMs 2014).

2.2 Prehistoric and Roman

- 2.2.1 Late prehistoric and Roman settlement has been recorded 450m to the east of the development area. No such features have been identified in the geophysical survey carried out within the development area.

2.3 Medieval and Post-Medieval

- 2.3.1 Former ridge and furrow has been recorded within the locale of the Site and by the geophysical survey carried out within the development area. The ridge and furrow may have truncated earlier archaeological deposits.

2.4 Previous archaeological investigations

- 2.4.1 The Site has been subject to a Desk Based Assessment (CgMs 2014) which included an overview of the archaeological potential of the Site. A geophysical survey was also carried out (Stratascan 2014). No below ground archaeological investigations have taken place within the proposed development area.

2.5 Summary

- 2.5.1 The Desk Based Assessment established that there were no designated archaeological assets within the proposed development area. Within the wider search area (1km) several known heritage assets were identified including; the Thame Conservation Area, the Grade II* registered Thame Park and a number of Grade II*-II listed buildings associated with the registered park and historic site of Thame and Parkgrange Farm. Moreton Conservation Area is located 1.2km to the southwest of the Site.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 This report focusses on the results of the archaeological evaluation. The following summarises the methodologies set out in full in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2014).

3.2 Aims and objectives

3.2.1 General

- *To record, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains observed;*



- *To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features identified;*
- *To provide sufficient information to enable an informed decision to be made about the need for additional archaeological mitigation;*
- *To make available the results of the work.*

3.2.2 Specific

- *To support or disprove the identified low archaeological potential for the Site indicated by the Desk Based Assessment and geophysical survey.*

3.3 Fieldwork methodology

3.3.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of twelve trenches (**Figure 1**) measuring 30m by 2.25m in size.

3.4 Machine excavation

3.4.1 Topsoil and subsoil were removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, working under the continuous direct supervision of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Topsoil was removed in a series of level spits down to the level of the natural geology.

3.5 Hand excavation

3.5.1 Natural features were excavated sufficiently to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity.

3.5.2 Archaeological features were hand excavated but the complete excavation of obviously modern features was not regarded as necessary.

3.6 Recording

3.6.1 All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology pro forma recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system. A stratigraphic matrix was compiled to record the relationships between features and deposits (including those within 'blank' trenches).

3.6.2 All trenches were located by means of a RTK GPS system in relation to the OS grid, and other plans, sections and elevations of archaeological features and deposits were drawn as necessary at 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate.

3.6.3 Photographs were taken of all trenches and natural and archaeological features to produce a photographic record consisting of digital images to a resolution of at least 10 megapixel.

3.7 Monitoring

3.7.1 No monitoring visit was deemed necessary by the South Oxfordshire District Council Planning Archaeologist.

3.8 Specialist strategies

Artefacts

3.8.1 Finds recovery followed the agreed WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2014). All finds were kept and included a total of 17 pottery sherds, 1 glass sherd, and 4 fragments of clay tobacco



pipe stem from **Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 8**. Trench 8 contained a total of 15 pottery sherds which have been dated to the Middle Bronze Age.

Environmental

3.8.2 No environmental samples were taken due to the absence of archaeological features.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A total of twelve trenches was excavated across the Site measuring 30m x 2.25m in size. Trenches were excavated to depths of between 0.37m – 0.58m below ground level (bgl).

4.1.2 The archaeological layers and stratigraphy were very similar in all the trenches, though depths of deposits varied across the Site. Features of note are described by trench below. A full trench context listing is provided in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 General summary

Natural geology

4.2.1 The underlying natural geology consisted mainly of mixed grey blue yellow brown clay with a common frequency (40 - 60%) of fairly well sorted medium to large sized angular flint fragments. **Trenches 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11** had areas of reddish brown gravel consisting of smaller flint fragments. Natural was observed at undulating depths across the twelve trenches varying from 0.3m (**Trench 12**) to 0.42m (**Trench 5**) bgl.

Subsoil

4.2.1 A highly mixed mid yellow brown sandy clay with occasional orange mottling was observed across the site. This represented a mix of topsoil and natural deposits and is highly suggestive of a remnant plough soil, which is also supported by the presence of occasional flint fragments discovered. Bioturbation, in the form of rooting, could also be observed in all the trenches. Subsoil was encountered at varying depths across site ranging from 0.11m (**Trench 3**) to 0.15m (**Trenches 7 and 8**) bgl.

Topsoil

4.2.2 The topsoil was predominantly a light - mid grey brown sandy clay and formed the turf layer of the field. Bioturbation, in the form of heavy rooting, was observed throughout all twelve trenches. Very little difference was noted in the character of the layer across the site and small quantities of artefacts were recovered from contexts **101, 201 and 301**, comprising of CBM, glass, pottery and clay pipe. Topsoil varied in depth across site from 0.11m (**Trench 3**) to 0.15m (**Trenches 7 and 8**) bgl.

4.3 Features of note

4.3.1 **Trenches 5, 7 (Plates 3 and 4), 10 and 12** were archaeologically sterile, while **Trenches 4, 6, 9 and 11** contained only Post-medieval drains in the form of ceramic or stone French land drains on a series of different alignments.

4.3.2 **Trench 1** contained three French drains, aligned east to west, and a number of artefacts recovered from topsoil deposit **101** including one fragment each of glass, clay tobacco pipe stem and pottery of a Post-medieval date. These were found in the topsoil and although the general character of site is one of a pastoral landscape it is likely that this was brought in via earlier ploughing as shown by the geophysics results (Stratascan 2014).



- 4.3.3 **Trench 2 (Plates 1 and 2)** contained two modern ceramic drains, aligned east to west, running parallel to one another and two fragments of plain Post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stems, recovered from topsoil deposit **201**. Due to their modern nature the two land drains were not considered to be of sufficient interest to be excavated.
- 4.3.4 **Trench 3** was devoid of any features of archaeological note but small quantities of artefacts were recovered from topsoil deposit **301** including one fragment of post medieval clay tobacco pipe stem and modern refined whiteware pottery. Of greater interest is a fragment of ceramic building material (CBM) that has been dated and identified on fabric grounds as a medieval roof tile.
- 4.3.5 **Trench 8 (Plates 5, 6, 7 and 8 and Figure 2)** contained an ephemeral feature **804** located at the southern end of the trench. Curvilinear in shape and measuring 2m in length, 0.53m wide and 0.17m in depth **804** contained 15 sherds of a coarse fabric Middle Bronze Age pottery. Two sondages were excavated and characterised the feature as a shallow, indistinct natural feature. While it is too well defined to be an undulation in the natural, subsequently silted up by subsoil **802** overtime, it's shallow and undefined nature suggests it may be evidence of former rooting from a nearby tree or hedge line.

5 FINDS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered, deriving from contexts in four of the trenches excavated (**Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 8**). Within these trenches, finds were recovered from topsoil layers, and from one natural feature (hedgeline **804** in **Trench 8**). The assemblage included a mixture of pottery, CBM, glass and clay pipe. Table 1 gives quantities by context and material type.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Context	CBM	Clay Pipe	Glass	Pottery
101		1/4	1/5	1/5
201		2/5		
301	1/13	1/5		1/3
805				15/181
TOTALS	1/13	4/14	1/5	17/189

5.2 Trenches 1, 2 and 3

- 5.2.1 All of the finds came from topsoil contexts (**101, 201 and 301** respectively), and these are almost exclusively of Post-medieval date, including pottery (modern refined whittwares), plain clay tobacco pipe stems, and green bottle glass. One fragment of ceramic building material from **Trench 3** is undiagnostic, but on fabric grounds is likely to belong to a medieval roof tile.

5.3 Trench 8

- 5.3.1 Finds from a possible tree or hedge line fill in **Trench 8** (context **805**) comprise 15 pottery sherds, all in coarse fabrics containing abundant, moderately well sorted inclusions of crushed calcined flint. Although undiagnostic (all are body sherds), these can be dated on fabric grounds as Middle Bronze Age.



6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 A total of twelve 30m by 2.25m trenches was excavated across the Site. The evaluation uncovered evidence of prehistoric activity in the area in the form of Bronze Age pottery discovered within irregular natural feature **804**. However, no features definitively relating to prehistoric settlement or agricultural activity were identified. In addition to this the identification, and subsequent excavation, of a series of linear features have confirmed the presence of a Post medieval agricultural landscape in the form of ridge and furrow. This has confirmed the results of the geophysical survey. A network of modern ceramic land drains were observed in a total of five trenches. Artefactual remains recovered from topsoil contained Post-medieval pottery and undiagnostic clay pipe stem fragments.

6.2 Conclusions

6.2.1 The evaluation has demonstrated presence of a Post-medieval agricultural landscape centred on arable farming as evidenced by both the geophysical survey (Stratascan 2014) and the occasional furrows found during excavation in **Trenches 4** and **6** all sharing the same east to west alignment. The presence of modern land drains in **Trenches 1, 2, 4, 9** and **11** indicates that the arable use of the land had long ceased and that the furrows had been infilled prior to the insertion of the land drains.

6.2.2 The topsoil across the Site was fairly homogeneous and the low yield of artefactual evidence suggested that the current overlying land usage as open grassy parkland had changed little during the Site's recent history.

6.2.3 **Trench 8** has revealed prehistoric activity in the area in the form of Middle Bronze Age pottery sherds. However, the pottery was recovered from a probable hedge line and is not directly linked to any evidence of settlement.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

7.1.1 The complete project archive has been prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (MGC 1991, IfA 2007). Wessex Archaeology will retain the Archive until further notice. It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service under accession number **OXCMS:2014.207**. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

7.2 Archive

7.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Oxfordshire Museums Service and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

7.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the site/accession code (**OXCMS:2014.207**), and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive comprises one file document case of paper records and one box of recovered and processed artefacts.



7.3 Discard policy

- 7.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in Selection, Retention and Dispersal (Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 7.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; IfA 2009). No samples were recovered during the investigation.

7.4 Security copy

In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011) on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.



8 REFERENCES

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9 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix 1: Trench context tables

Trench 1		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.37m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
101	Topsoil – Mid brown sandy clay. Large amounts of rooting.	0-0.11
102	Subsoil – Mid brown clay with unworked flint and sub-angular stone inclusions.	0.11-0.16
103	Natural – Mixed grey orange brown clay with large amounts of unworked flint inclusions. Very firm and compact. Occasional rooting.	0.16-0.37+

Trench 2		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.55m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
201	Topsoil – Mid brown sandy clay with large amounts of rooting.	0-0.13
202	Subsoil – A mid brown clay with unworked flint and stone inclusions.	0.13-0.35
203	Subsoil – Mixed grey orange brown clay with large amounts of unworked flint inclusions. Very firm and compact. Occasional rooting.	0.35-0.55+

Trench 3		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.58m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
301	Topsoil – Mid brown sandy clay with large amounts of rooting.	0-0.11
302	Subsoil – A mid brown clay with unworked flint and stone inclusions.	0.11-0.31
303	Natural – Mixed grey orange brown clay with large amounts of unworked flint inclusions. Very firm and compact. Occasional rooting.	0.31-0.58+

Trench 4		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.40m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
401	Topsoil – Light brown grey sandy clay. Very friable and large amounts of rooting. Some occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.13
402	Subsoil – Mid brown clay with some faint orange mottling. Occasional rooting and small stone inclusions. Very firm and dry.	0.13-0.33
403	Natural - A mid brown yellow blue grey clay. Frequent unworked flint inclusions. Very rare amounts of rooting.	0.33-0.4+



Trench 5		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.56m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
501	Topsoil – Light brown sandy clay with orange mottling. Very friable and large amounts of rooting. Some occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.14
502	Subsoil – Light brown grey clay. Very hard and compact. Occasional rooting and some small sub angular stone inclusions.	0.14-0.42
503	Natural – A compact blue grey yellow natural clay. Occasional flint inclusions.	0.42-0.56+

Trench 6		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.40m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
601	Topsoil – Light grey brown sandy clay. Friable and very dry. Large amounts of rooting and occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.13
602	Subsoil – Mid brown sandy clay. Occasional rooting and small stone inclusions. Rare unworked flint inclusions. Very similar to 601 .	0.13-0.34
603	Natural – Mid yellow clay with reddish orange mottling. Frequent unworked flint inclusions.	0.34-0.40+

Trench 7		Dimensions: 30 and x 2.25m Max depth: 0.45m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
701	Topsoil – Light grey brown sandy clay. Friable and very dry. Large amounts of rooting and occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.15
702	Subsoil – Mid brownish yellow sandy clay. Occasional rooting and small stone and unworked flint inclusions. Very hard and compact.	0.15-0.38
703	Natural – Mid blue grey yellow clay. Very firm and compact. Occasional unworked flint inclusions. Patches of a reddish orange sandy gravel are present.	0.38-0.45+

Trench 8		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.65m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
801	Topsoil – Light grey brown sandy clay. Friable and very dry. Large amounts of rooting and occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.15
802	Subsoil – Mid brownish yellow sandy clay. Occasional rooting and small stone and unworked flint inclusions. Very hard and compact. Probable interface between 801 and 803 .	0.15-0.38
803	Natural – Mid blue grey yellow clay. Very firm and	0.38-0.48+



Trench 8		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.65m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
	compact. Frequent small gravel like unworked flint inclusions.	
804	Cut – Possible rooting roughly aligned north to south.	0.48-0.65
805	Fill – A dark brown sandy clay fill of 804. Contains roots and small to medium angular stones. Middle Bronze Age pottery sherds were also found.	0.48-0.65

Trench 9		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.43m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
901	Topsoil – Light grey brown sandy clay. Friable and very dry. Large amounts of rooting and occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.13
902	Subsoil – Mid yellow brown sandy clay. Occasional rooting. Occasional small sub angular stone and unworked flint inclusions.	0.13-0.36
903	Natural – Mid grey blue yellow clay with frequent unworked flint inclusions. Occasional patches of a reddish orange sandy gravel are also present.	0.36-0.43+

Trench 10		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.48m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
1001	Topsoil – Light grey brown sandy clay. Friable and very dry. Large amounts of rooting and occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.14
1002	Subsoil – Mid grey brown clay with orange mottling. Firm and compact. Some occasional rooting. Occasional ceramic field drain fragments, unworked flint and small stone inclusions.	0.14-0.38
1003	Natural – Mid yellow orange clay with blue grey patches. Occasional – frequent unworked flint inclusions.	0.38-0.48+

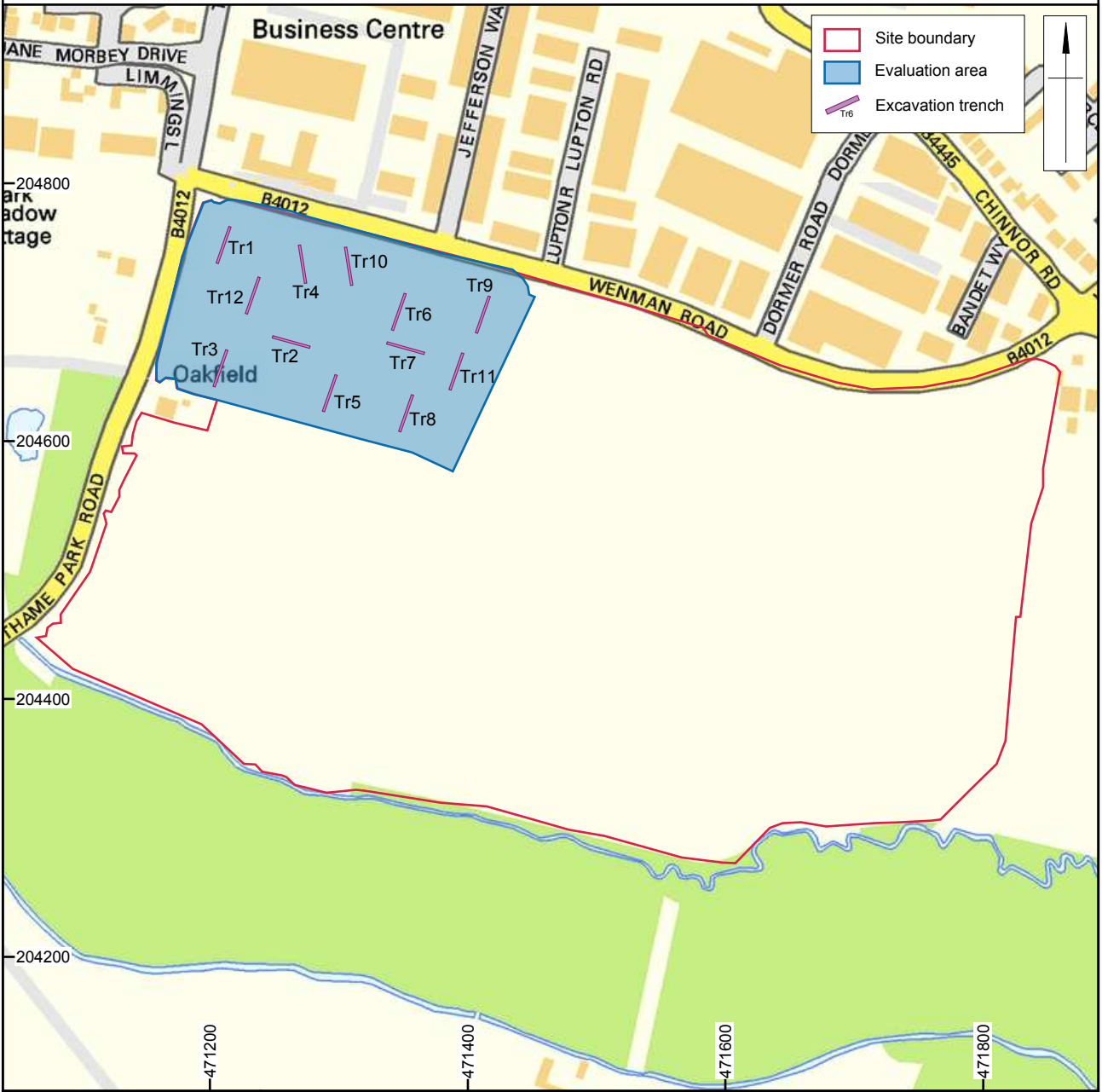
Trench 11		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25m Max depth: 0.46m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
1101	Topsoil – Light – mid grey brown sandy clay. Friable and very dry. Large amounts of rooting and occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.13
1102	Subsoil – Mid yellow brown sandy clay with orange mottling. Occasional rooting and small stone inclusions. Rare unworked flint inclusions.	0.13-38
1103	Natural – Mid yellow clay with grey blue patches. Occasional patches of a reddish orange sandy gravel are also visible. Frequent unworked flint inclusions.	0.38-0.46+



Trench 12		Dimensions: 30 x 2.25 Max depth: 0.4m
Context	Description	Depth (m)
1201	Topsoil – Light – mid grey brown sandy clay. Friable and very dry. Large amounts of rooting and occasional small stone inclusions.	0-0.12
1202	Subsoil – Mid grey brown clay with orange mottling. Occasional rooting and small-medium stone inclusions. Occasional unworked flint inclusions.	0.12-3
1203	Natural – mid yellow clay with grey blue patches. Rare rooting. Occasional small land drain fragments. Occasional unworked flint inclusions.	0.3-0.4+



9.2 Appendix 2: OASIS form



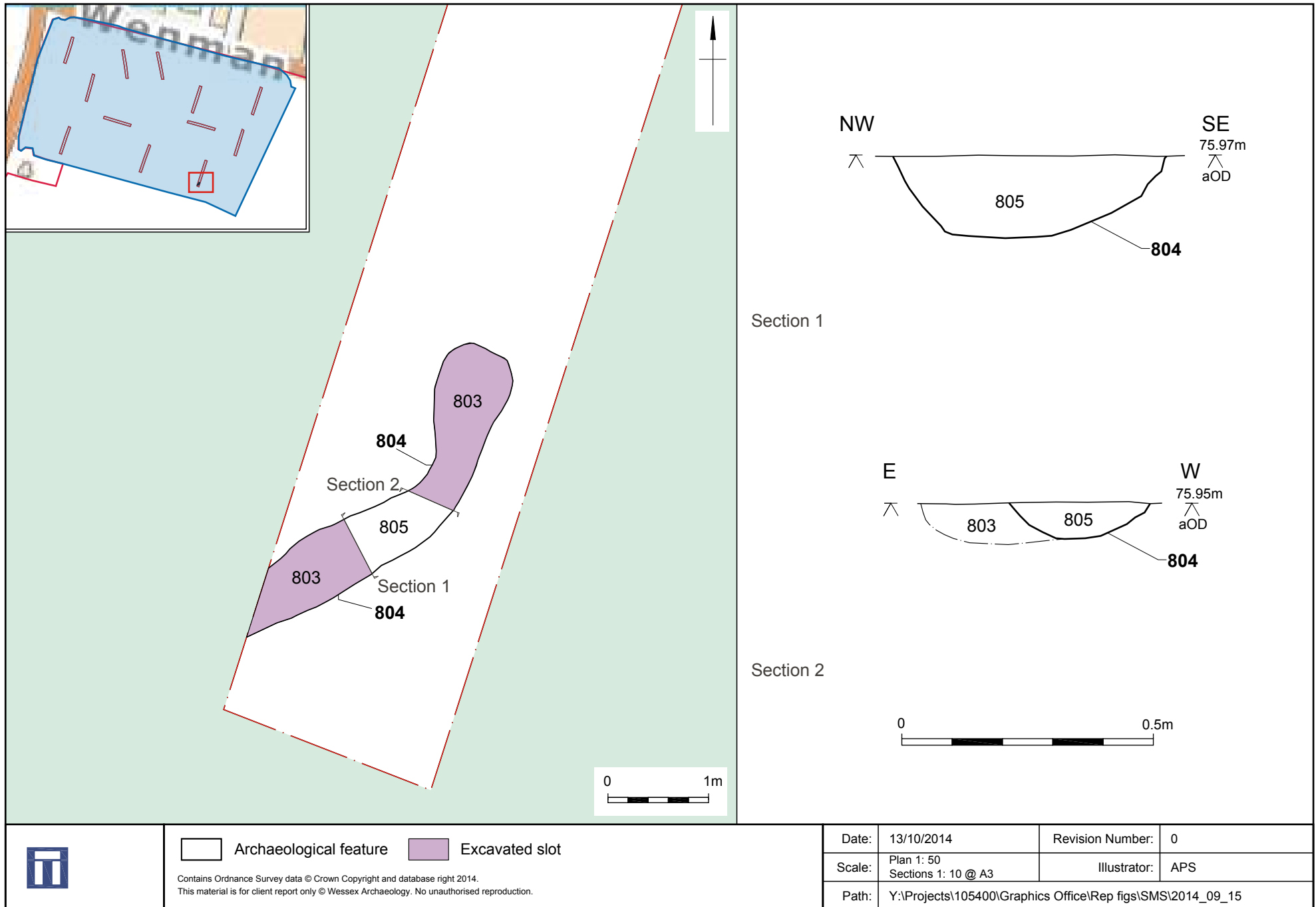
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Date:	29/09/2014	Revision Number:	0
Scale:	Main graphic - 1: 10,000 @ A4	Illustrator:	APS
Path:	Y:\Projects\106230\Graphics Office\Rep figs\Eval\2014_10_13		

Site location and proposed trenches

Figure 1



Plan of Trench 8, with north-east and south facing sections through 804

Figure 2



Plate 1: East facing general shot of **Trench 2**, showing land drains

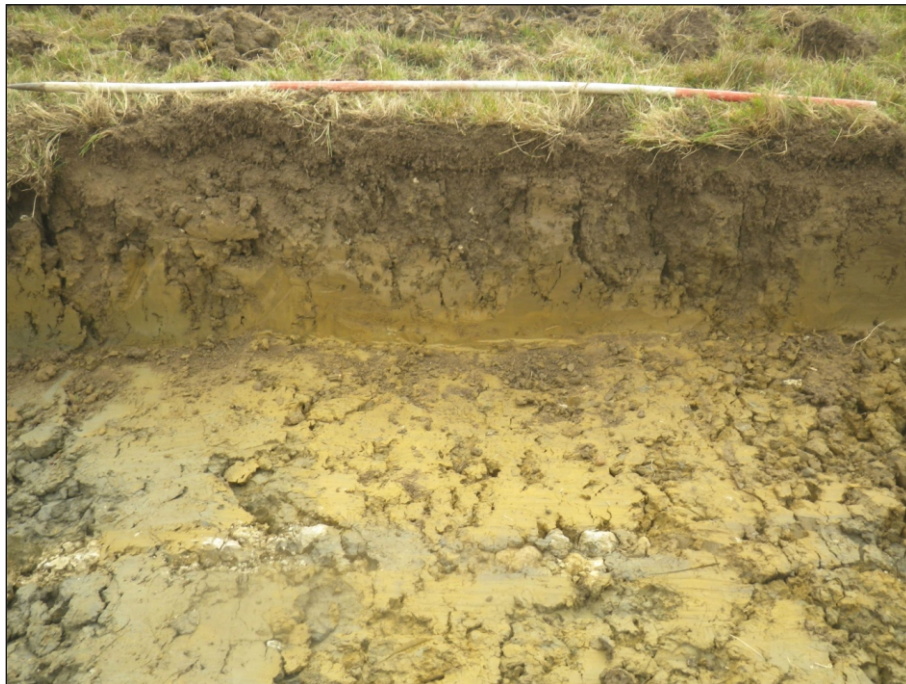


Plate 2: North facing section of **Trench 2**


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Plate 3: East facing general shot of **Trench 7**



Plate 4: North facing section of **Trench 7**


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Plate 5: North facing shot of **Trench 8**, showing natural feature **804** before excavations



Plate 6: Natural feature **804** after excavation


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Plate 7: North-east facing section through **804**

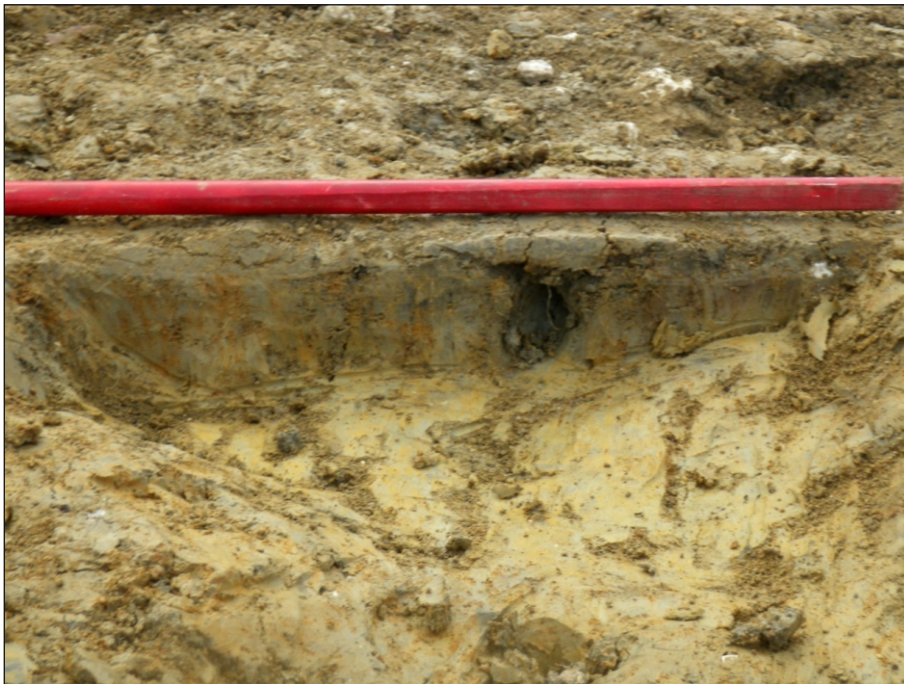


Plate 8: South facing section through **804**



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Plate 9: East facing section of **Trench 8**

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