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# LAND OFF GRIFFIN LANE, DICKENS HEATH, WARWICKSHIRE

Archaeological Watching Brief



Ref: 100190.01  
October 2013



**LAND OFF GRIFFIN LANE,  
DICKENS HEATH, WARWICKSHIRE**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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# LAND OFF GRIFFIN LANE, DICKENS HEATH, WARWICKSHIRE

## Archaeological Watching Brief

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# LAND OFF GRIFFIN LANE, DICKENS HEATH, WARWICKSHIRE

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CSa Environmental Planning, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey Midlands, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new housing development on land to the south of Griffin Lane, Dickens Heath, Warwickshire (NGR 411288 275996).

A previous archaeological desk-based assessment found that, although no archaeological remains were known to exist within the Site, evidence from the wider study suggested that there was potential for archaeological remains to be disturbed or destroyed during development. The Warwickshire Planning Archaeologist determined that an archaeological watching brief would be required in order to ensure that any archaeological remains would be recorded.

A Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief was approved by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's archaeological advisor.

Topsoil stripping for the establishment of a construction compound and the excavation of nine foundation and service trenches were monitored.

Modern made-ground deposits were recorded across the development site and were not of archaeological significance. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified during the watching brief: this is considered to be representative of the archaeological potential of the proposed development area as a whole.

The archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield, under the project code **100190**.

As there is no collecting museum for this area, it is recommended that the project archive be offered to the Solihull local studies library for long-term curation.



# **LAND OFF GRIFFIN LANE, DICKENS HEATH, WARWICKSHIRE**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief**

### **Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned by CSa Environmental Planning on behalf of Taylor Wimpey Midlands and Wessex Archaeology is grateful in this regard.

The fieldwork was carried out by Sam Fairhead, Chris Harrison, Andrew Reid and Michael Keach. The report was prepared by Kirsty Squires and Andrew Reid with illustrations by Chris Swales. Grace Corbett managed the project on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.



# LAND OFF GRIFFIN LANE, DICKENS HEATH, WARWICKSHIRE

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CSa Environmental Planning, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey Midlands, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new housing development south of Griffin Lane, Dickens Heath, Warwickshire (hereafter 'the Site').
- 1.1.2 A previous archaeological desk-based assessment found that, although no archaeological remains were known to exist within the Site, evidence from the wider study area suggested that there was potential for archaeological remains to be disturbed or destroyed during development. The Warwickshire Planning Archaeologist determined that an archaeological watching brief would be required in order to ensure that archaeological remains would be recorded.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (CSa 2013) was approved by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's archaeological advisor and Method Statement was prepared by Wessex Archaeology (2013).
- 1.1.4 This report details the results of the watching brief.

#### 1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site lies 7.2km to the southwest of Solihull town centre and is centred on NGR 411288 275996 (**Figure 1**). The 1.2ha area is located off Griffin Lane on the southern side of Dickens Heath. It is bounded to the north by housing, the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal to the east and hedgerows to the west and south.
- 1.2.2 The Site is located on level ground at approximately 135m aOD and, prior to development, was covered predominantly in scrub. The underlying geology is mapped as Mercia Mudstone overlain by alluvium deposits (British Geological Survey online viewer). The soils of the Site and surrounding area are described as a mix of slowly permeable, seasonally wet, acidic loamy and clayey soils (Soilscapes online viewer).

### 2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Summary

- 2.1.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment identified no known heritage assets within the boundaries of the development site and several heritage sites within the wider 1km study area (CSa 2012). The following summary is drawn from that assessment.





## **2.2 Medieval**

- 2.2.1 The earliest recorded heritage sites within the study area date to the medieval period but none lie within the development site.
- 2.2.2 Three possible medieval moated sites lie within the study area: one directly to the west of the Site; one within a field containing ridge and furrow, 150m to the northwest; and one at Jerrings Hall Farm approximately 750m to the east. In addition, a possible medieval house (Old Betlesworth House) lies approximately 275m to the northeast of the Site.
- 2.2.3 Ridge and furrow earthworks of either medieval or post-medieval date are recorded within 200m of the Site to the west and south.
- 2.2.4 Five areas of ancient woodland are recorded within 500-850m of the Site; to the north, west and east.

## **2.3 Post-medieval**

- 2.3.1 Six designated post-medieval heritage assets (all Grade II listed buildings) were identified within the study area: Jerrings Hall, which dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century and is located 750m to the east of the Site; Bannister Cottage, dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and positioned 830m to the east; a 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>-century barn, stables and cart shed at Little Cleobury farmhouse 630m to the south; the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>-century Old Farmhouse with a separately listed barn 550m to the southeast; and a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century granary and cart shed at Braggs Farm 330m to the south.
- 2.3.2 The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal, which forms the eastern boundary of the Site, was constructed between 1793 and 1816. The Three Maypoles canal wharf lies 750m to the north of the Site.
- 2.3.3 The earliest historic maps of the area date to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and show the Site as enclosed fields. Subsequent maps indicate that the Site has never been developed and has remained in agricultural use.

## **2.4 Previous investigations in the area**

- 2.4.1 A watching brief during construction in 1998 recovered medieval and later artefacts from the vicinity of a possible medieval moated site 150m to the north of the Site. No evidence of the moat or other features was identified.

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Aims**

- 3.1.1 The general aims of the project were to:
- identify the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits within the Site;
  - determine the extent, condition, character, significance and date of any archaeological remains encountered;
  - record the nature of the main stratigraphic units encountered in terms of their physical composition, their formation and their relationship to each other;



- accurately record any revealed archaeological deposits;
- assess the presence and condition of any artefactual, ecofactual and environmental evidence;
- prepare a comprehensive archive, record and report of any archaeological deposits identified at the Site;
- aid in the production of a mitigation strategy for the Site (if necessary).

3.1.2 The specific aims of the project were to:

- record any evidence of past settlement, funerary activities or any other land use;
- recover artefactual evidence to date any evidence of past activity that may be identified
- sample and analyse environmental remains to create a better understanding of past activity.

## **3.2 Fieldwork**

3.2.1 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by CSa Environmental Planning (2013), the Method Statement (Wessex Archaeology 2013), with industry best practice, as outlined in guidelines issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008a, 2008b and 2010) and the Generic Archaeological Fieldwork Guidelines for Warwickshire (Warwickshire County Council 2012).

3.2.2 The covering vegetation and topsoil was removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, working under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Overburden was removed in spits down to the upper archaeological horizon or the maximum level of the foundations, whichever was reached first. Any revealed deposits were hand cleaned, excavated and recorded in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's standard guidelines.

## **3.3 Recording**

3.3.1 All trenches and any archaeological features or deposits encountered were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system.

3.3.2 As no archaeological deposits were found, no archive-standard photographs were required but digital images were taken as a record of the work undertaken.

3.3.3 Strategies for finds and environmental samples were in place but were not required during fieldwork.



## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following is a summary of the information held in the archive. The areas monitored are shown on **Figure 1** and the complete stratigraphic sequence for each trench is summarised in **Appendix 1**.

### 4.2 Topsoil strip

4.2.1 The initial stage of the watching brief comprised topsoil stripping in advance of the construction of a new compound (**Figure 1**; **Plate 1**).

4.2.2 The topsoil consisted of dark brown, clayey silt up to 0.23m in depth. Beneath this was a layer of made ground, which comprised of brick, rubble and concrete slab fragments. The artefacts dated the deposit to the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The depth of this layer varied between 0.10m and 0.34m.

4.2.3 No archaeological features or artefacts were identified during this phase of the watching brief.

### 4.3 Foundation and pipe trench excavations

4.3.1 The second phase comprised a watching brief during the excavation of nine foundation and pipeline trenches (**Figure 1**).

#### *Trench 1*

4.3.2 The excavation of Trench 1 revealed two layers; topsoil (**101**) and made ground (**102**). The maximum depth of this trench measured 0.10m. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered.

#### *Trench 2*

4.3.3 Above the natural deposits (**206**) lay a former topsoil (**208**) that had been cut by a modern construction cut (**207**) which ran along the eastern edge of Griffin Road. The sides of the 0.16m-deep cut were straight and steep while the base was flat. This feature was filled with a mid grey, silty, clay deposit (**205**) which appeared to have derived from the former topsoil (**208**).

4.3.4 Above **205** lay a concrete slab (**204**), red gravel crush (**203**), made ground (**202**) and topsoil (**201**). The maximum depth of the trench was 1m.

4.3.5 No archaeological features or artefacts were identified in Trench 2.

#### *Trench 3*

4.3.6 This trench comprised topsoil (**301**), subsoil (**302**), made ground (**303**) and natural deposits (**304**). The maximum depth of the trench was 0.80m and no archaeological features or artefacts were recovered.

#### *Trench 4*

4.3.7 Trench 4 contained topsoil (**400**), subsoil (**401**), alluvium (**402**) and natural (**403**) deposits (**Plate 3**). The maximum trench depth was 2m and no archaeological artefacts or features were observed.



#### *Trench 5*

- 4.3.8 At the time of the watching brief, the topsoil in Trench 5 had already been stripped. The remaining contexts were subsoil (**500**), alluvium (**501**) and two natural layers (**502** and **503**). The maximum depth of Trench 5 was 0.80m. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered from this trench.

#### *Trench 6*

- 4.3.9 Topsoil (**601**), subsoil (**602**), alluvium (**604**) and two natural deposits (**603** and **605**) were recorded in Trench 6. The maximum trench depth was 0.90m. No archaeological artefacts or features were identified.

#### *Trench 7*

- 4.3.10 Only two contexts were recorded in Trench 7: made ground (**701**) and natural deposits (**702**). The maximum depth of this trench was 0.92m. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered.

#### *Trench 8*

- 4.3.11 The only layer identified in this trench was made ground (**801**) which extended to a maximum recorded depth of 0.92m (**Plate 2**). No archaeological artefacts or features were identified.

#### *Trench 9*

- 4.3.12 Trench 9 contained only banded yellowish grey gravels (**901**). These are likely to have been natural but the trench rapidly became waterlogged and collapsed, precluding further investigation and recording. The maximum excavated depth was approximately 0.75m. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1.1 No archaeological features or artefacts were identified during the watching brief, despite careful examination of the trenches and the spoil.
- 5.1.2 All of the made ground deposits across the Site and the construction cut in Trench 2 were of late 20<sup>th</sup>- or early 21<sup>st</sup>-century date and were not of archaeological significance.
- 5.1.3 It is considered that the aims of the watching brief were achieved and it is considered likely that the results presented in this report are representative of the archaeological potential of the proposed development area as a whole.

## **6 STORAGE AND CURATION**

### **6.1 Museum**

- 6.1.1 As there is no collecting museum for this area, it is recommended that the project archive be offered to the Solihull local studies library for long-term curation.

### **6.2 Preparation of archive**

- 6.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data will be prepared following nationally recommended guidelines



(SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013). All archive elements will be marked with the site code and a full index will be prepared.

### **6.3 Security copy**

- 6.3.1 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.

## **7 COPYRIGHT**

- 7.1.1 This report, and the archive generally, may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.
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- National Soil Resources Institute. Soilsapes Viewer. Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at: <<https://www.landis.org.uk/soilsapes/>>



## APPENDIX 1

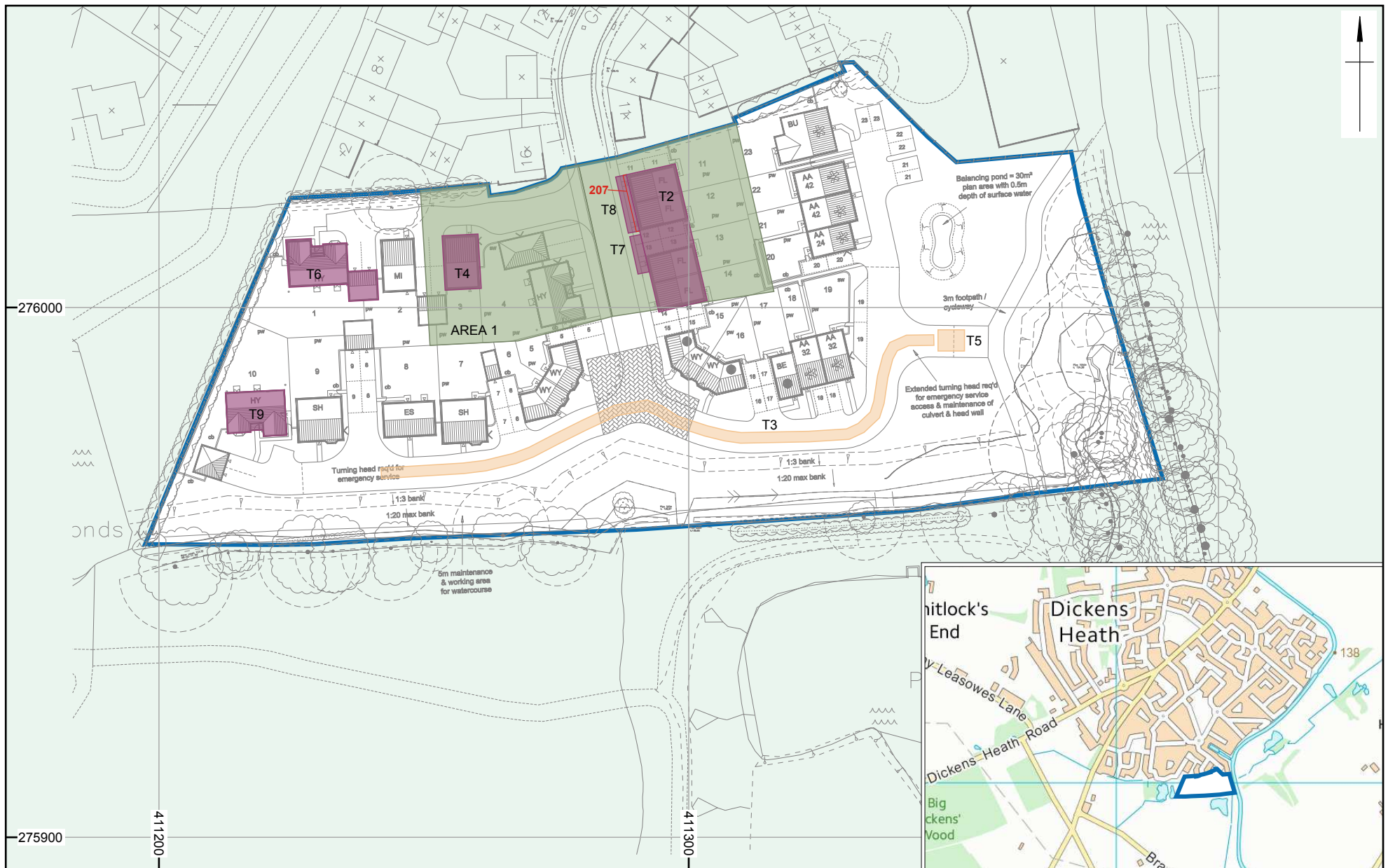
### Context data






Context	Description	Depth BGL (m)
<b>Trench 1</b>		<b>Max Depth: 0.10m+</b>
101	<b>Topsoil:</b> Dark brown, clayey silt with fine and medium sized gravel	<b>0- 0.10m</b>
102	<b>Made ground:</b> Brick, rubble and concrete slab fragments. These materials date to the 20 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>st</sup> centuries. This layer comprise the remnants of an old compound surface which was constructed for previous housing developments.	<b>0.10m+</b>
<b>Trench 2</b>		<b>Max Depth: 1.00m+</b>
201	<b>Topsoil:</b> Dark brown, clayey silt with gravel inclusions	<b>0- 0.23m</b>
202	<b>Made ground:</b> Brick, rubble and concrete slab fragments. Plastic and modern debitage also identified in this layer. This deposit is thought to date to the 20 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> centuries and was once a compound surface for previous developments.	<b>0.23- 0.34m</b>
203	<b>Red gravel crush:</b> Levelling layer deposited directly below (201). This deposit was created after the compound fell out of use.	<b>0.34- 0.52m</b>
204	<b>Concrete slab:</b> Probable compound footing	<b>0.52- 0.68m</b>
205	<b>Alluvial deposit:</b> Mid grey, silty clay with frequent medium sized pebbles, which derived from (208). Fill of (207). This layer is located below (203) and (204).	<b>0.16- 0.32m</b>
206	<b>Natural:</b> Mid yellowish brown, sand	<b>1.00m+</b>
207	<b>Cut:</b> A modern construction cut running along the east edge of Griffin Road. Filled with (205) and cuts (208). Side of the cut is straight and steep while the base is flat.	<b>0.16- 0.32m</b>
208	<b>Old field surface:</b> Grey, sandy clay. This layer is located below (203) and cut by (207).	<b>0.32- 1.00m</b>
<b>Trench 3</b>		<b>Max Depth: 0.80m+</b>
301	<b>Topsoil:</b> Dark greyish brown, clayey silt with infrequent medium pebbles	<b>0- 0.10m</b>
302	<b>Subsoil:</b> Dark greyish brown with a red hue, clayey silt with poorly sorted, frequent small and medium pebbles	<b>0.10- 0.30m</b>
303	<b>Made ground:</b> Mixed red and blue clays with poorly sorted, abundant medium pebbles. This layer was deposited to level out the area.	<b>0.30- 0.80m</b>
304	<b>Natural:</b> Greyish blue, silty clay with abundant medium sized pebbles	<b>0.80m+</b>
<b>Trench 4</b>		<b>Max Depth: 2.00m+</b>
400	<b>Topsoil:</b> Mid brown silt. Topsoil mostly removed prior to excavation.	<b>0- 0.05m</b>
401	<b>Subsoil:</b> Yellow brown, silty sand, with 40% very small (c. 0.03m in size) round pebbles and 10% general building site waste	<b>0.05- 0.45m</b>
402	<b>Alluvial deposit:</b> Orange clay alluvium with rare, large pieces of wood. This layer is absent in the south of the trench. The deposit appears and gets deeper towards the north of the trench where the land rises.	<b>0.45- 0.75m</b>
403	<b>Natural:</b> Grey clay with 10% very small (0.01m in size) round and sub-angular stones	<b>0.45- 2.00m</b>
<b>Trench 5</b>		<b>Max Depth: 0.80m+</b>
No topsoil – already stripped		
500	<b>Subsoil:</b> Yellow brown, silty sand with 40% very small (c. 0.03m in size) round pebbles and 10% general building site waste.	<b>0- 0.40m</b>
501	<b>Alluvial deposit:</b> Orange clay alluvium. Sterile layer.	<b>0.40- 0.60m</b>
502	<b>Natural:</b> Grey clay	<b>0.60- 0.80m</b>
503	<b>Natural:</b> Grey gravel	<b>0.80m+</b>



Context	Description	Depth BGL (m)
<b>Trench 6</b>		<b>Max Depth: 0.90m+</b>
601	<b>Topsoil:</b> Dark brown silt with common rounded pebble inclusions. Area predominantly stripped before excavation.	<b>0- 0.05m</b>
602	<b>Subsoil:</b> Mid brown, sandy clay with frequent, small (0.01-0.08m in size) rounded pebble inclusions. Some brick rubble and other modern material were identified in this context. This layer was deposited to level out the area.	<b>0.05- 0.28m</b>
603	<b>Natural:</b> Light grey, very sandy clay with frequent rounded gravel pebbles	<b>0.28- 0.90m</b>
604	<b>Alluvium deposit:</b> Orange clay alluvium. Pockets of commonly occurring rounded pebbles identified in this layer.	<b>0.50- 0.85m</b>
605	<b>Natural:</b> Light bluish grey, very sandy clay with frequent rounded pebble inclusions	<b>0.90m+</b>
<b>Trench 7</b>		<b>Max Depth: 0.92m+</b>
701	<b>Made ground:</b> Various soil textures with brick, concrete, rubble and metal fragments throughout this context	<b>0- 0.92m</b>
702	<b>Natural:</b> Dark brown clay with small (0.01-0.06m in size) rounded pebble inclusions	<b>0.92m+</b>
<b>Trench 8</b>		<b>Max Depth: 0.92m</b>
801	<b>Made ground:</b> Various soil textures with brick, concrete rubble and modern debitage identified throughout this context	<b>0- 0.92m</b>
<b>Trench 9</b>		<b>Max Depth:</b>
901	<b>Probable natural:</b> Banded yellowish grey gravels. This trench was heavily waterlogged and caused the edges to collapse.	<b>0-0.75m</b>





	 Site boundary  Topsoil strip  House foundation  Service trench	Date: 15/07/2013	Revision Number: 0
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Site plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Topsoil strip in Trench 1



Plate 2: Foundation and pipeline excavation in Trench 8



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Plate 3: Representative section in Trench 4

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