

WA112941 - Ashtree Farm, Rugby – Summary of Archaeological Evaluation

Wessex Archaeology have been commissioned by The Millbridge Group plc (hereafter 'the Client') to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching to inform proposals for a new motorway service area off M6, Junction 11, Rugby, Warwickshire (hereafter 'the Site'), roughly centred on NGR 451217, 279452. The trenching follows previous geophysical survey on the Site.

The archaeological programme comprised the excavation of 42 archaeological evaluation trenches across the Site, each measuring 50 m in length and 2 m in width. One of the trenches was extended to try and identified the extents of a burnt spread. The trenching took place between 26th of September and 14 October 2016.

The site was within a large, open, farmed field, sharply sloping down to the north and west.

The soils underlying the Site consist of slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils.

The majority of the trenches were archaeologically blank. Archaeological features, including a probable prehistoric burnt spread or mound, two small pits (one prehistoric and one undated), and a post-medieval ditch, were found within four trenches in the northern and western areas of the site, under 0.3 m deep topsoil and 0.15 m deep subsoil. Two areas of waterlogged clay, one possibly associated with the burnt mound, were also identified to the south-west and north-west of the site and may be large pits. Two field boundaries, visible on the 1st edition OS mapping, and recorded by geophysical survey, were also recorded.

The burnt spread which measured 8m by 5 m and up to 0.4m in depth consisted of heath shattered stone, flint and pebbles compacted within charcoal, sand and sandy clay. The spread, sitting on a heath affected clay, was at its north end truncated by two modern linear features which contained field drainage pipes. This spread was also recorded in another trench, 3 m to the south.

The two small pits were located approximately 20 m to the west of the burnt spread. These were circular, 0.22 m and 0.38 m in diameter, and filled with charcoal rich silty clay. Several fragments of prehistoric pottery were found within one of the pits.

The post-medieval ditch found in a trench approximately 70m to the south east of the burnt spread was 1.64 m wide, filled with greyish brown silty clay. Fragments of tobacco clay pipe (possibly 17th century) were found within the fill. A possible stone sling-shot was found within the topsoil of this trench.

Geological features which have been shown to produce magnetic contrasts in magnetometer survey were also noted.