



Brakenhale Academy Redevelopment Bracknell, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Planning Ref: 17/01155/FUL
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Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

www.wessexarch.co.uk

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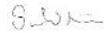
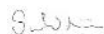
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Basingstoke
Hampshire
RG21 4HG

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Summary

In May 2018 Wessex Archaeology were commissioned by Wates Construction Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation prior to development at Brakenhale Academy, Bracknell.

The evaluation comprised five 10m x 1.8m machine excavated trenches. The evaluation identified an area of truncation and an area of made ground consisting mostly of imported topsoil, probably taken from the truncated area. These areas are most probably associated with landscaping during the construction of the original school buildings in the 1950s or further development on the site since then. Though there are significant archaeological deposits in the vicinity relating to prehistoric activity no evidence for similar deposits was identified, though were these to exist elsewhere within the schools site, they are more likely to exist in areas unaffected by the truncation.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Wates Construction Ltd, for commissioning the archaeological evaluation and for their co-operation on site. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of Roland Smith, the archaeological advisor to Bracknell Forest Council.

The fieldwork was directed by Peter Capps with the assistance of Matt Whelan. This report was written by Peter Capps and reviewed by Simon Woodiwiss. Alex Brown (geoarchaeologist) kindly discussed the reasons for the gley soils in Trench 2. The project was managed by Simon Woodiwiss.



Brakenhale Academy Redevelopment

Archaeological Evaluation

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and planning background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Wates Construction Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development relating to planning application 17/01155/FUL. The development includes the erection of an educational building (2,650 m²), with associated access, parking, landscaping and creation of ancillary sports pitches.
- 1.1.2 All works were undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed in order to undertake the evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2018). The WSI was issued in support of the planning application with the support of Roland Smith, the archaeological advisor to Bracknell Forest Council (the Local Planning Authority, prior to fieldwork commencing).
- 1.1.3 The evaluation comprised five trenches to sample the footprint of the proposed development, located to address the aims identified below. Fieldwork was undertaken from the 13th of May to the 14th of May 2018.

1.2 Scope of the report

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed description of the results of the evaluation, to interpret the results within a local, regional or wider archaeological context and assess whether the aims of the evaluation have been met.
- 1.2.2 The presented results will provide further information on the archaeological resource that may be impacted by the proposed development and facilitate an informed decision with regard to the requirement for, and methods of, any further archaeological mitigation. The school grounds have been subject to landscaping, and one aim of the evaluation was to identify broad areas of cut and fill.
- 1.2.3 Historic building recording (a photographic survey) has also been undertaken at the school. This focussed on the earliest school buildings, those most closely associated with the development of Bracknell as a New Town. A separate report has been prepared for this survey.

1.3 Location, topography and geology

- 1.3.1 The proposed evaluation area was located at Brakenhale Academy, Rectory Lane, in the town of Bracknell (SU 86959 68261 approximate property centre; **Fig 1**). The evaluation trenches focused on the main new building to be constructed. They were located to test a landscaped school activity area close to the existing buildings and areas of higher and lower ground thought to relate to landscaping (cut and fill).
- 1.3.2 Existing ground levels are shown on a topographic survey kindly provided by the client.



- 1.3.3 The underlying geology is mapped as sand of the Bagshot Formation, with no superficial deposits (British Geological Survey 2018).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background has been presented in an earlier heritage statement (Wessex Archaeology 2017). A summary of the results is presented below, augmented by information kindly provided by Bracknell Forest's archaeological advisor (Roland Smith).

2.2 Previous investigations related to the proposed development

- 2.2.1 Aside from the heritage statement the site has not been subject to any earlier archaeological investigation.

2.3 Archaeological and historical context

Prehistoric to medieval

- 2.3.1 There are a number of prehistoric sites in the vicinity, the closest being a Bronze Age barrow at Bill Hill (a scheduled ancient monument), located less than 100 m from the site. A "flint working floor" has been identified at Kyles Close. For the medieval period there was a spread of 13th–14th century pottery at Byways, south of Crowthorne Road.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General aims

- 3.1.1 The general aims of the evaluation were, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018) and in compliance with the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a), were:

- To provide information about the archaeological potential of the site; and
- To inform either the scope and nature of any further archaeological work that may be required; or the formation of a mitigation strategy (to offset the impact of the development on the archaeological resource); or a management strategy.

3.2 General objectives

- 3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the general objectives of the evaluation were:

- To determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified area;
- To establish, within the constraints of the evaluation, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
- To place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- To make available information about the archaeological resource within the site by reporting on the results of the evaluation.



3.3 Site-specific objectives

3.3.1 Following consideration of the archaeological potential of the site, the site-specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- To establish, beyond reasonable doubt, the presence or absence of significant archaeological deposits, which the context of the site suggests may be of prehistoric and or medieval date. This may then inform future decision making should significant deposits be located;
- Indicate the effects of earlier construction activity, especially with regard to cut and fill activity, on the levels at which significant archaeological deposits may occur.

4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methods set out within the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a).

4.2 Fieldwork methods

General

4.2.1 The trench locations were set out using a GPS (kindly undertaken by the client), in the approximate positions as those proposed in the WSI, though Trench 1 had to be slightly moved from their original position due to the presence of spoil heaps. The actual positions of all trenches were recorded using a GPS.

4.2.2 Five trenches, each measuring 10 m in length and 1.8 m wide, were excavated in level spits using a 360° excavator equipped with a toothless bucket, under the constant supervision of an archaeologist. Machine excavation proceeded until either a significant archaeological horizon or the natural geology was exposed.

4.2.3 Where necessary, the base and sides of the trench were cleaned by hand.

4.2.4 Spoil derived from machine stripping was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. Where found, artefacts were collected and bagged by context. All artefacts from excavated contexts were retained, although those from features of modern date (19th century or later) were recorded on site and not retained.

4.2.5 Trenches completed to the satisfaction of the client and the archaeological advisor were backfilled (kindly undertaken by the client).

Recording

4.2.6 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete drawn record of excavated features and deposits was made including both plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections), and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD: Newlyn) heights of all principal features were calculated, and levels added to plans and section drawings.

4.2.7 A Leica GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service surveyed the location of archaeological features. All survey data is recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and

heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSGM15 and OSTN15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.

- 4.2.8 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.3 Artefactual and environmental strategies

- 4.3.1 Appropriate strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of artefacts and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2018). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b) and *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011).

4.4 Monitoring

- 4.4.1 Roland Smith the archaeological advisor to Bracknell Forest Council, monitored the evaluation, but a field visit was not considered to be necessary.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 All of the trenches showed signs of landscaping. **Trench 5** showed evidence of ground reduction (cut) and **Trenches 1, 2, 3, and 4** of made ground (fill).
- 5.1.2 The area of made ground and ground reduction were visible in the topography of the site. The site sloped down quickly to the east and south of **Trenches 4 and 3 (Fig. 1)**.
- 5.1.3 Modern disturbance probably relating to the same phase of activity as the landscaping and cut and fill were also encountered in **Trenches 5 and 4**. These consisted of a concrete footing in **Trench 5** and an area of dumped humic material in **Trench 4**. Also cutting the natural in **Trench 4** were two modern drainage pipes.
- 5.1.4 Detailed descriptions of individual contexts are provided in the trench summary tables (**Appendix 1**). **Figure 1** shows all archaeological features recorded within the trenches, as well as depicting the areas interpreted as either being cut or fill.

5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits

- 5.2.1 The natural typically consisted of a reddish brown to greyish yellow sandy clay across most of the trenches (**Plate 1**). The only variation is this was **Trench 5** where the pre-existing ground level had been reduced. The natural here was a greyish yellow clay, with pockets of gravel.
- 5.2.2 The other trench varying from this was **Trench 2** where the natural was the same consistency, a sandy clay, but had been discoloured by the humic material above, resulting in a bluish grey. This discoloration is indicative of a reducing environment perhaps due to localised waterlogging or rapid covering of the area (Alex Brown pers comm).



Trenches 1 and 2

- 5.2.3 In **Trench 2**, the natural was overlain by a buried soil (**203**). This was a dark brown silty clay and humic material. Covering this was an imported topsoil (**202**). This was further covered by a layer of stones creating a hard standing (**201**; **Plate 2**).
- 5.2.4 In **Trench 1** the natural was overlain by a buried subsoil (**103**) a humic dark brownish grey silty clay and a buried topsoil/ turf line (**102**) a dark brownish humic silty clay (**Plate 3**).
- 5.2.5 Across both **Trenches 1** and **2** these deposits were covered by an imported soil, typically a silty clay loam, probably a topsoil/subsoil that had been removed from another area of site, possibly the area around **Trench 5**, and used to landscape the area (**Plates 2** and **3**).
- 5.2.6 In **Trench 2** this deposit of imported soil was covered a layer of stone with silt between, presumably an area of hardstanding, perhaps indicating the location of a construction compound (**Plate 2**).

Trenches 3 and 4

- 5.2.7 In **Trenches 3** and **4** the natural was directly overlain by a made ground of redeposited topsoil/subsoil mix. This material was a silty clay loam, with the exception of some clay lenses/patches in **Trench 4**. As in **Trenches 1** and **2** this was most probably derived from the ground reduction around **Trench 5**.

Trench 5

- 5.2.8 In **Trench 5** the natural was covered by a layer of stone, presumably a hardstanding (again perhaps indicating the location of a construction compound), this was further covered by a layer of rubble, containing modern brick, and flint nodules. The sequence was finished by a thin layer of turf (**Plate 4**).

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The evaluation revealed no archaeological remains or deposits relating to the prehistoric or medieval periods as previously discovered in the vicinity. Whereas the buried soils and evidence potentially of waterlogging and consequent good preservation of organic remains may suggest deposits of interest, the context of evidence for landscaping for construction of the school make their recent date the most obvious explanation. Such deposits are not considered significant. The development across the site in the 1950s with the construction of the school has reduced former ground surfaces in the south-western part of site making it less likely that any significant deposits will exist in this area (**Fig. 1**). Although landscaping has preserved some buried soils across the northern and eastern parts, these can only be dated to directly before the development of the site and as such should be interpreted as modern. They may, however, overlay significant deposits, should they exist, though within the footprint of the new building, at least, there is no evidence (in the form of buried deposits or artefacts) that any significant deposits exist.

7 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

- 7.1.1 The site falls within an area that has no collecting museum. Every effort will be made to identify a suitable repository for the archive resulting from the fieldwork, and if this is not possible, Wessex Archaeology will initiate discussions with the local planning authority in an attempt to resolve the issue. If no suitable repository is identified, Wessex Archaeology

will continue to store the archive, but may institute a charge to the client for ongoing storage beyond a set period (usually a minimum of three months after the report has been submitted and approved).

7.2 Preparation of the archive

7.2.1 The complete project archive, which included paper records, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by any appropriate, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011; ADS 2013). The archive will usually be deposited within one year of the completion of the project, with the agreement of the client.

7.2.2 All archive elements are marked with the site/accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:

- 1 files/document cases of paper records and A3/A4 graphics.

7.3 Selection policy

7.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows national guidelines on selection and retention (SMA 1993; Brown 2011, section 4). In this case, however, no artefacts were recovered and the archive is confined to written records and digital data.

7.4 Security copy

7.4.1 In line with current best practice (eg, 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.

7.5 OASIS

7.5.1 An OASIS online record (<http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main>) has been initiated, with key fields and a .pdf version of the final report submitted. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service ArchSearch catalogue.

8 COPYRIGHT

8.1 Archive and report copyright

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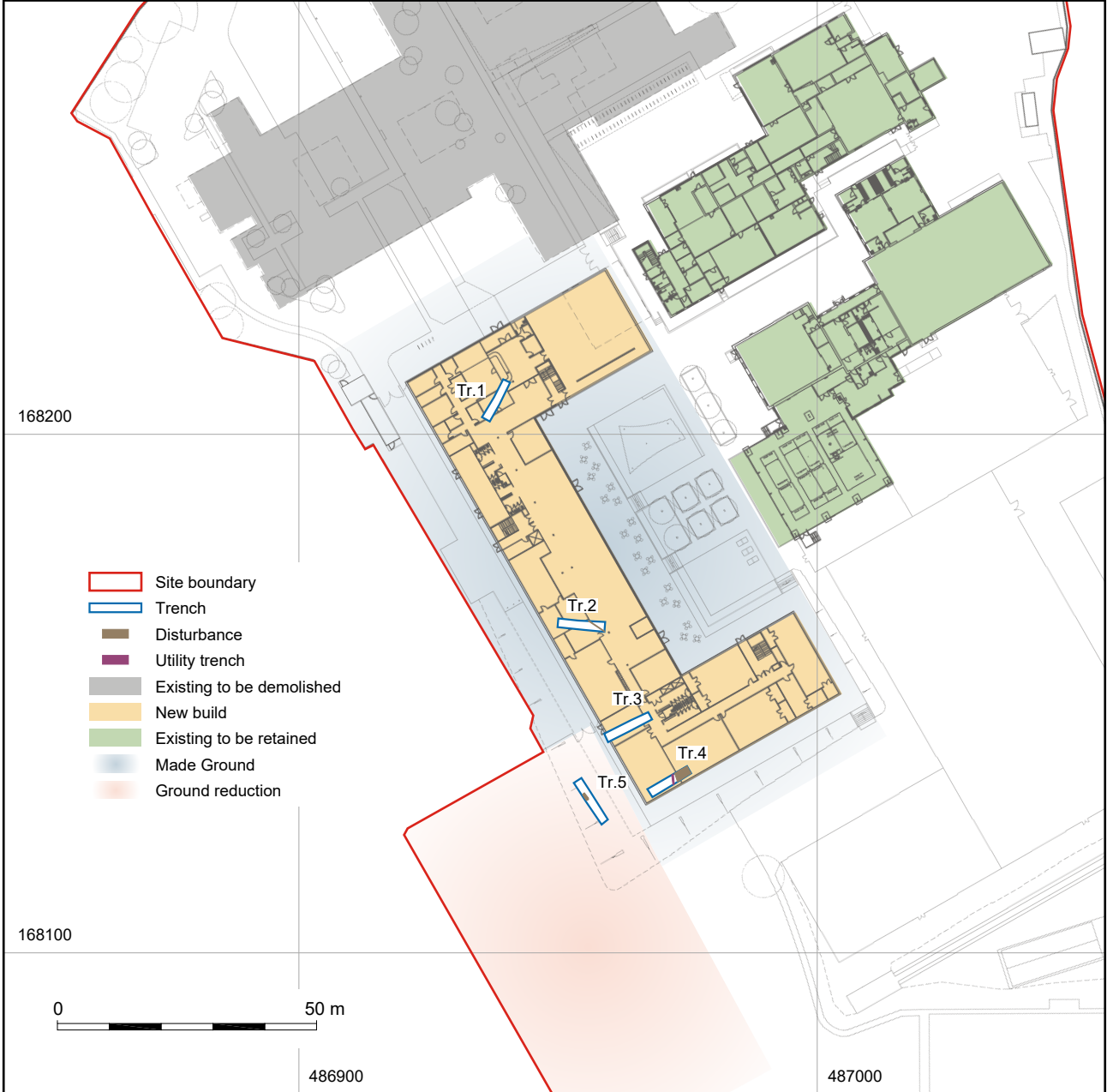
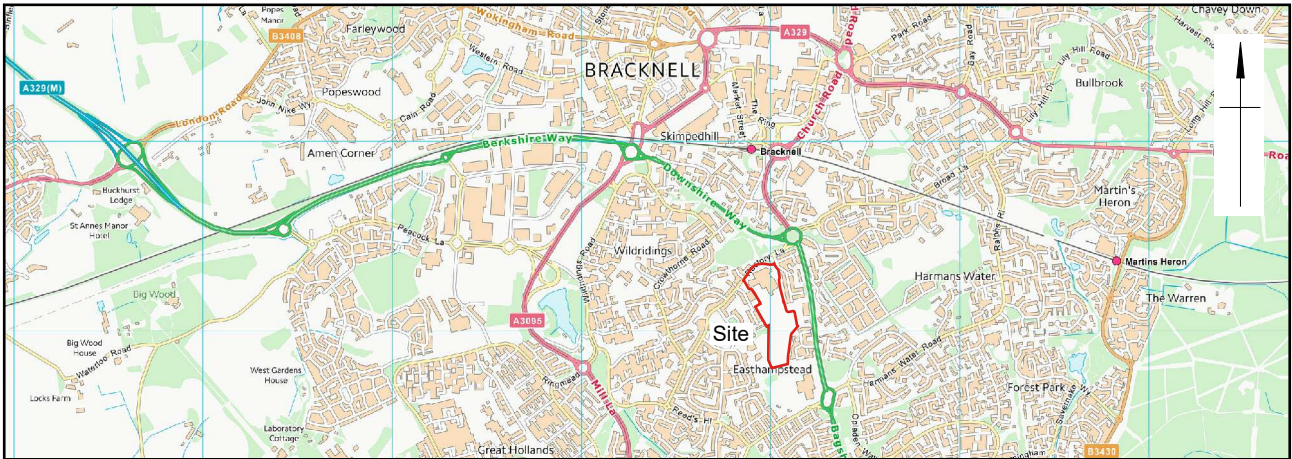
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Base plan provided by the client.
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Coordinate system:
 OSGB36
 (OSTN15/OSGM15)

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Site plan showing site location, trench layout and areas of truncation and fill

Figure 1

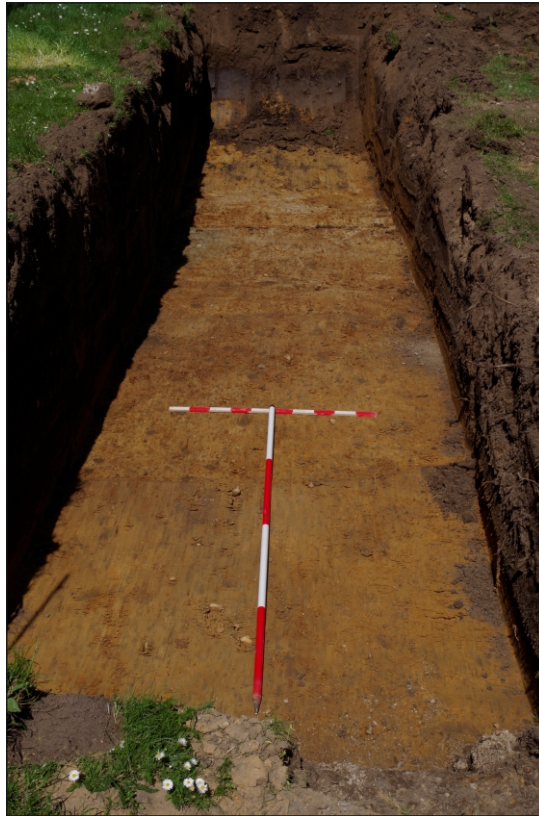


Plate 1: Trench 1 taken from the south-west. 1m and 2m scales



Plate 2: North facing section of trench 2. 1m scale



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Plate 3: South-east facing section of trench 1.
1m scale



Plate 4: South-west facing section of trench 5. 1m scale

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Trench summaries

NGR coordinates and OD heights taken at centre of each trench; depth bgl = below ground level

Trench 1	10m x 1.8m x 1.3m	NGR 486938.3067 168206.5939		81.30m OD
Context No	Interpretation	Fill of	Description	Depth (bgl)
101	Made Ground	-	Imported topsoil. Mid brown grey clayey silt. Rare small to medium sized stones.	0-0.72m
102	Buried soil	-	Buried topsoil/turf horizon. Very dark brown, humic silty clay.	0.72-0.9m
103	Buried soil	-	Buried subsoil. Dark brownish grey silty clay, humic, no inclusions.	0.9-1.11m
104	Natural	-	Dark reddish brown clayey sand, homogenous.	1.11m+

Trench 2	10m x 1.8m x 0.95m	NGR 486954.4293 168163.2601		79.55m OD
Context No	Interpretation	Fill of	Description	Depth (bgl)
201	Made Ground	-	Hard standing. Silty and abundant stones 80%+. Modern.	0-0.24m
202	Made Ground	-	Imported soil. Dark brownish grey humic silty clay with rare small stone inclusions.	0.24-0.65m
203	Buried soil	-	Buried topsoil. Dark brown silty clay, humic. No inclusions.	0.65-0.85m
204	Natural	-	Natural sands. Blueish in colour, most likely discoloured by humic material above.	0.85m+

Trench 3	10m x 1.8m x 0.65m	NGR 486963.8812 168143.718		78.57m OD
Context No	Interpretation	Fill of	Description	Depth (bgl)
301	Topsoil	-	Topsoil, probably imported as is common across the site. Modified to such an extent that no subsoil or other deposits exist above the natural.	0-0.64m
302	Natural	-	Natural. Mid greyish yellow sand. With rare small to medium rounded stones.	0.64m+



Trench 4	10m x 1.8m x 0.75m	NGR 486971.4093 168133.0398		78.33m OD
Context No	Interpretation	Fill of	Description	Depth (bgl)
401	Topsoil	-	Mid greyish brown clayey silt.	0-0.26m
402	Made Ground	-	Numerous lenses of dumped soils and clay. Evidence of reworking of ground. Modern	0.26m-0.74m
403	Natural	-	Mid greyish yellow clays, rare small to medium sub rounded stones.	0.74m+

Trench 5	10m x 1.8m x 0.35m	NGR 486963.8812 168143.718		78.57m OD
Context No	Interpretation	Fill of	Description	Depth (bgl)
501	Topsoil	-	Mid greyish brown silty clay	0-0.05m
502	Made Ground	-	Rubble deposit, including large stones and brick, flint nodules and a dark greyish brown silty clay between.	0.05m-0.2m
503	Made Ground	-	Fine pink grit making up part of a hard standing.	0.2-0.26m
504	Made Ground	-	Pink stone gravel with light grey silt. Makes up part of a buried hard standing.	0.26-0.32m
505	Natural	-	Natural clay. Mid greyish yellow with some sparse gravel pockets. Appears to be truncated.	0.32m+
506	Structure	-	Modern concrete footing. Visible in plan cutting the natural.	0.32m+



Wessex Archaeology Ltd registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB
Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

