

## WPo29(B) Historic Environment Works – Weeford to Whittington – Enabling Works North Contract

Interim Report: Trial Trenching

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## 1 Executive Summary

- This interim report details the results of archaeological trial trenching on WP29B Weeford to 1.1.1 Whittington. The work was carried out by Connect Archaeology between the 24<sup>th</sup> of April and the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. The trial trench investigation site ('the Site') is 2.9km long and is located just to the north of Watling Street in the south (HS2 Chainage 178500) and Whittington Heath in the north (HS2 Chainage 181430), in Staffordshire. The Site covers approximately 62ha and is required as part of the construction land requirements for the enabling works and subsequent main works for HS2 Phase One. The works were undertaken to assess the potential for the survival of sub-surface archaeological remains within the site that may be affected by the proposed scheme. The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 414746, 306134 and mostly comprises agricultural fields subdivided by hedgerows. The trial trenching scope, as detailed in the Project Plan for Trial Trenching from Weeford to Whittington (Doc No: 1EW04-LMJ-EV-PLN-NSo6\_NL16-029003), comprised 158 trenches. A further seven contingency trenches were added to the scope increasing the total to 165. During the phase of work reported here 95 trenches were excavated; 70 (Trenches 1-21, 82-84 and 113-158) could not be excavated as access to several areas was not possible. The remaining trenches will be excavated once access has been established, towards the end of 2019/early 2020. The results of that phase of trial trenching will be appended to this report. An additional seven contingency trenches (Trenches 159-165), and extensions to two existing trenches (Trenches 104 and 106) were added to the scope of the project during this phase of trial trenching.
- 1.1.2 The trial trenching identified a concentration of archaeological remains in the area of Trenches 104-105, 107 and 160-162. The features identified in Trenches 107 and 162 contained pottery dating to Romano-British period. A linear feature in Trench 79 could also date to this period.
- 1.1.3 The remaining trenches were largely devoid of archaeological remains, though several, sporadic linear features and pits were present in the area of Trenches 22-81. Apart from Trench 79, no finds were recovered from these features though assessment of the environmental remains suggests a post-medieval date.

#### 2 Site Location

2.1.1 The evaluation area is located in the Lichfield District of Staffordshire and runs for c. 2.9km just to the north of Watling Street in the south (HS2 Chainage 178500) and Whittington Heath in the north (HS2 Chainage 181450). It is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 414746, 30613 and covers an area of approximately 62ha, mostly comprising agricultural fields subdivided by hedgerows (Figure 1). The project code for this site is IC19WEETT.



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## 3 Methodology

- The trial trenching was conducted according to the detailed methodology laid out in the Project Plan for Trial Trenching from Weeford to Whittington (Doc No: 1EWo4-LMJ-EV-PLN-NSo6\_NL16-o29003) (Appendix 15.1). This covers the methodology for all parts of the investigation, including setting out (Section 4.3.13-4.3.16), mechanical excavation (Section 4.3.17-4.3.21), fieldwork recording (Section 4.3.22-4.3.32), human remains (4.3.33-4.3.39), environmental sampling (Section 4.3.40-4.3.52), preservation in situ (Section 4.3.53), backfilling (Section 4.3.54-4.3.55), and post-investigation reporting and archiving (Section 5.1.1-5.1.4). The work also adhered to Technical Standard: Archaeology and Built Heritage Approach to Ground Investigation (Doc No: HS2-HS2-EV-STD-000-000038).
- The trial trench plan and numbering of trial trenches was specified by the Project Plan for a Trial Trench Evaluation between Weeford and Whittington (Doc No: 1EWo4-LMJ-EV-PLN-NSo6\_NL16-029003). The trenches were positioned to provide coverage across the entirety of the site (Figure 1). The trial trenching comprised the excavation of 88 trenches, each measuring 50m x 2m. Seventy trenches (Trenches 1-21, 82-84 and 113-158) could not be excavated as access to the areas they were located in was not possible at the time of the works reported here.
- In addition to the original trench plan, seven contingency trenches were excavated, Trenches 159-165, as well as extensions to Trenches 104 and 106 in order to further characterise the archaeological remains within them. The extension to Trench 104 measured 22m by 3.5m and was located centrally on the north side of the trench. A second, smaller extension on the south side of Trench 104 measured 3m by 2m (Figure 2.8). The extension of Trench 105 measured 2m by 2m and was located at the south end of the trench, on the west side (Figure 2.10).
- 3.1.4 All archaeological features were metal detected prior, during, and after excavation and recorded using proforma record sheets and surveyed to be tied into the national grid using a Trimble GPS.

# 4 Factual Summary of Key Archaeological Findings

- In total 95 trenches were excavated during the first phase of the trial trenching of which 79 (Trenches 24-36, 38-43, 45, 47-63, 65-69, 72-76, 80-82, 85-103, 106, 108-112, 159 and 163-5) were found to contain no evidence of archaeological activity. Natural features including palaeochannels and tree throws were identified within Trenches 64 and 70.
- 4.1.2 A range of confirmed and potential archaeological features were encountered in the remaining 14 trenches (Trenches 22-23, 37, 44, 46, 71, 78-79, 104-105, 107 and 160-162) and these will be discussed below from Whittington in the north to Weeford in the south.



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#### Trench 22 (Figure 2.4)

A single sub-ovoid feature [2205] measuring 0.95m x 0.7m and 0.45m deep was identified within Trench 22. Although the possibility that it was a tree throw cannot be discounted, burnt material noted within the fills (2204), (2206) and (2207) could indicate that it was a pit. The burnt material present in fill (2204) comprises large fragments of soft wood, probably Pine (*Pinus* sp.), potentially suggesting a more recent (late medieval to post-medieval) date for the burning activity. No other dating evidence was recovered from Trench 22.

#### Trench 23 (Figure 2.4)

Two ditches, one aligned NNW-SSE [2305] the other NW-SE [2307] crossed the central part of Trench 23. Ditch [2305] was the more substantial, with a width of 2.3m and a depth of 0.4m. The second ditch [2307] was considerably narrower with a width of 0.77m and a depth of 0.17m. Although both these ditches were comparatively shallow it is possible that their upper levels have been truncated through agricultural activity. No dating evidence was recovered from Trench 23.

#### Trench 37 (Figure 2.4)

Three intercut features [3705, 3707 and 3709] were recorded towards the western end of Trench 37. The earliest feature [3709] was aligned NE-SW, was 2.3m wide and 0.42m deep and it extended beyond the northern limit of excavation. It is interpreted as the southern terminal of a ditch. Two further features [3705 and 3707] were cut through the fill of [3709]. These were also aligned NE-SW and although they were considerably smaller than [3709], with widths of 0.38m and 0.51m and depths of 0.27m and 0.26m respectively, they could potentially represent recuts to the original ditch. The fill of feature (3705), (3704), contained burnt material comprising large fragments of soft wood, probably Pine (*Pinus* sp.), potentially suggesting a more recent (late medieval to post-medieval) date for the burning activity. Small amounts of cinders were also present in fill (3704) suggesting small-scale industrial activity. No other dating evidence was recovered from Trench 37.

#### Trench 44 (Figure 2.5)

Two ditches [4405] and 4407] were recorded towards the southern end of Trench 44. The first [4405] was aligned NE-SW and the more substantial of the two, with a width of 1.6m and a surviving depth of 0.24m. The second [4407] was aligned E-W and was considerably narrower with a width of 0.68m and a surviving depth of 0.08m. Although [4405] crossed the width of the trench, the eastern terminus of [4407] lay within the trench. No dating evidence was recovered from Trench 44.



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#### Trench 46 (Figure 2.5)

- Three intercut features, a ditch [4613], a possible pit [4605] and a possible post-hole [4610] were recorded at the northern end of Trench 46. The earliest feature, ditch [4613], was aligned NE-SW, was 0.6m wide and 0.64m deep. It was cut, or possibly recut by [4605] which was also aligned NE-SW, although it was less regular and could potentially have been created by root action. Both [4605] and [4613] were cut by a third feature [4610] which was 0.6m deep and could potentially have been a post hole although it may simply have been a final recut of [4613]/[4605].
- 4.1.8 No dating evidence was recovered from Trench 46, although burnt material was recorded within (4604) the fill of [4605]. The burnt material present in fill (4604) comprised large fragments of soft wood, probably Pine (*Pinus* sp.), potentially suggesting a more recent (late medieval to post-medieval) date for the burning activity.

#### Trench 71 (Figure 2.6)

4.1.9 A single NW-SE aligned ditch [7105] was recorded crossing the central part of Trench 71. The ditch was 1.2m wide and 0.52m deep. No dating evidence was recovered from Trench 71.

#### Trench 78 (Figure 2.6)

4.1.10 A single NW-SE aligned ditch [7805] crossed the northern part of Trench 78. The ditch was 1.80m wide and survived to a depth of 0.32m, it shared a similar alignment to ditch [7105], which lay to the northeast, suggesting that the two ditches may have been associated. No dating evidence was recovered from Trench 78.

#### Trench 79 (Figure 2.7)

4.1.11 A single NW-SE aligned ditch [7905] was recorded at the eastern end of Trench 79. The ditch was 1.30m wide and survived to a depth of 0.20m. It was filled by a single deposit of mottled mid-red brown silty sand (7904) from which one sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered.

#### Trench 104 (Figure 2.8)

A broad range of features including four ditches [10405/10420], [10416], [10418] and [10420], five pits [10407], [10410], [10422], [10424] and [10426] as well as two post holes [10412] and [10414] were recorded, dispersed across the central and western parts of Trench 104. Trench 104 was extended to allow greater scope for investigation. Taken together these results suggest the presence of a possible enclosure formed by ditch [10405/10420] which was broadly aligned east E-W and ditch [10416] which was SE of [10405/10420] on a WNW-ESE alignment. However, a note of caution has to be sounded as [10416] stopped 0.15m short of conjoining with [10405] and a 0.63m wide break was recorded in the line of [10405/10420]. It is therefore possible that these ditches were unrelated. Both ditches were comparatively small; [10405/10420] was 0.97m wide and 0.18m deep, [10416] was 0.60m wide and 0.13m deep. The terminus of [10418] was recorded to the south of [10426] on a SW – NE alignment, it was 0.72m wide and 0.15m deep.



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- 4.1.13 Of the five pits, four [10407], [10422], [10424] and [10426] were intercut with ditch [10405/10420], two being cut by it [10407] and [10426], and two being cut through its fills [10422] and [10424]. These pits measured between 0.97m and 1.27m in diameter and were between 0.08m and 0.26m deep. The shallow depth of both the ditches and the pits suggest that have been heavily truncated by overlying cultivation.
- 4.1.14 A pair of post holes [10412] and [10414], set 0.15m apart were recorded west of ditch [10405/10420]. Both post holes were either vertical or near vertical sided and concave based; [10412] measured 0.2m in diameter and was 0.25m deep, [10414] had a diameter of 0.36m and was 0.19m deep.
- Originally thought to be a ditch terminal, discounted by the smaller extension to Trench 104, feature 10410 is interpreted as a pit or possible three throw. It measured 3m by 0.8m, was 0.34m deep and had an amorphous shape in plan. The nature of the two fills, and their arrangement within the feature are suggestive of a tree throw.
- 4.1.16 No dating evidence was recovered from Trench 104, which could suggest that the remains that were recorded there lay on the periphery of a settlement.

#### Trench 105 (Figure 2.10)

4.1.17 A single possible post hole [10507], measuring 0.36m in diameter and 0.13m deep was recorded within Trench 105. A second possible feature [10505], was found to be a tree throw. No dating evidence was recovered from Trench 105.

#### Trench 107 (Figure 2.9)

Two ditches [10705] and [10707] were recorded within Trench 107. Ditch [10705], was the most substantial of the two, aligned SW-NE, measuring 1.92m in diameter and 0.57m deep. The second ditch, [10707], which had a distinctive 'V' shaped profile was aligned NW-SE, was 0.64m wide and 0.39m deep. Two fragments of Romano-British pottery were recovered from (10706), the fill of ditch [10707] which, along with its distinctive 'V' shaped profile could suggest that it was either a drainage ditch or a small field boundary.

#### Trench 160 (Figure 2.8)

Trench 160 was a contingency trench that was excavated to the north of, and broadly parallel to,
Trench 104 in order to establish whether the undated remains that were recorded there
continued northwards. However, only a single feature [16005] was located within Trench 160.
This was a small shallow possible pit which measured 1.16m in diameter and was 0.18m deep
Although it had a clear form possible tree root tracks were noted. No finds were recovered from
Trench 160 and the absence of confirmed remains would support the suggestion that the
remains recorded to the south in Trench 104 lay at the periphery of the settlement.



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#### Trench 161 (Figure 2.9)

Trench 161 was excavated to the south of Trench 104, parallel with Trench 107 to its east. A single NE-SW aligned ditch [16105], with a width of 1.71m and a depth of 0.52m was recorded. This ditch lay to the SW of ditch [10705] (located in Trench 107) and extended its alignment to the SW suggesting that it may have been a continuation of the same feature. A possible pit [16109], measuring 0.65m in diameter and 0.17m deep was recorded to the north of [16105], although indications of root action suggest that this could potentially be a tree throw. No finds were recovered from Trench 161, suggesting that it lay beyond the settlement core.

#### Trench 162 (Figure 2.9)

4.1.21 Trench 162 was excavated south of Trench 104 and east of Trench 107. A single NE-SW aligned ditch [16205] was recorded at the southern end of the trench. This ditch had a width of 1.55m, a depth of 0.25m and was filled by a very dark greyish brown sandy silt (16204) which contained small quantities of charcoal. Eight sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from (16204), the fill of ditch [16205].

## 5 Interim Artefactual Summary

5.1.1 A small assemblage of 11 sherds of pottery weighing 118g was recovered. All are Roman in date.

Table 1 Provisional quantification and dating

| Artefact Type | Estimated Quantity | Provisional date |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Ceramics      | 11 Sherds          | Romano-British   |

## 6 Interim Palaeo-Environmental Summary

| MATERIALS (hand collected) | Quantity | Range of Species (if<br>known) | Preservation | Taphonomy |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Bone                       | N/A      | N/A                            | N/A          | N/A       |
| Shells                     | N/A      | N/A                            | N/A          | N/A       |
| Charcoal                   | N/A      | N/A                            | N/A          | N/A       |
| Waterlogged<br>wood        | N/A      | N/A                            | N/A          | N/A       |
| Summary of potential to    | N/A      |                                | •            | de        |



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| contribute to<br>HERDS<br>objectives   |   |  |                     |                 |
|--|---|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| BULK<br>SAMPLES  | No. taken   | Vol. taken   | Vol. processed      | No. Assessed    |
|  | 33 samples  | 491 litres   | 210 litres          | 13 samples      |
|  | Range of materials  | Range of species   | Preservation and T  | aphonomy        |
|  | Carbonised plant  | Cereal grains – 1 x  | Generally abraded a | ind fragmentary |
|  | remains   | Indeterminate  | Carbonised/Charred  | Plant Remains   |
|  | Wood charcoal Small fragment of undiagnostic fired clay Cinders | Rhizomes (underground stem fragments) - indeterminate Wood charcoal - occasional fragments of non-oak (hazel/birch/alder, etc) fragments; large amounts of softwood, probably Pine (Pinus sp.) were recovered from Samples 1, 7 and 9. Small amounts of heather charcoal (Calluna/Erica spp.) were recovered from Sample | No Waterlogged Re   |                 |
| The small amount of plant remains (cereal grain, rhizomes) does not allow for discussion and no further detail analysis is recommended.  The cereal grain recovered would not be suitable for AMS dating.  The majority of the wood charcoal recovered from the samples was small, must fragments of non-oak (i.e. hazel/birch/alder).  Large fragments of softwood, probably Pine (Pinus sp.), were recovered from samples (1, 7 and 9). The pine charcoal was recovered along with cinders from suggesting some industrial activity. The pine charcoal was recovered from dipossible pit (or tree-bole) uncovered in Trenches 22, 37 and 46, which are located to the west of Horsley Brook Farm. The recovery of pine from the potentially suggests a more recent (late medieval to post-medieval) date for and it is possible that the concentration of pine charcoal in this area may be to |   | ered from three nders from Sample 9, ed from ditches and a ch are located close to e from the samples ) date for the activity  |                     |                 |



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|                       | required. Further detailed analysis of the wood charcoal would add little to that detailed above. |                           |                          |                      |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| SPECIALIST<br>SAMPLES | Were any What was taken? What were they taken for? taken?   |                           |                          |                      |
|                       | N/A   | N/A                       | N/A                      |                      |
|                       | Are they waterlogged?   | Have they been processed? | Have they been assessed? | How are they stored? |
|                       | N/A   | N/A                       | N/A                      | N/A                  |

## 7 Provisional Interpretation and Discussion

- Archaeological remains and features were recorded within 14 trenches (Trenches 22-23, 37, 44, 7.1.1 46, 71, 78-79, 104-105, 107 and 160-162; Figures 2.4 to 2.10) although only three produced dating evidence (Trenches 79, 107 and 162) suggesting that the features that were recorded in the remainder could possibly represent dispersed field boundaries, or isolated features away from concentrations of settlement. The notable exception being within the field to the SE of Moor Covert (Packington Moor), centred on NGR 414720 305370, where the remains of pits and ditches were recorded within a cluster of trenches (Trenches 104-105, 107 and 160-162; Figures 2.8 to 2.10) at a location where an area of possible pits and ditches (DHW143) was identified in the ES1. Although dating evidence was limited to 11 sherds of Romano-British pottery recovered from the fills of two features within Trenches 107 and 162, it does support the interpretation of these features as representing a possible Romano-British settlement. However, given the limitations of the archive assemblage it is possible that these remains may have been peripheral to the core of the settlement. It is also worth noting however that many of the features showed evidence of being truncated through ploughing and its therefore likely that any intact ground surfaces will have been destroyed.
- 7.1.2 A further sherd of Romano-British Pottery was recovered from the fill of ditch [7905] within Trench 79 which was located to the SW of Whittington at NGR 414794 306242. Although it is possible that this material was residual, it could suggest the presence of Romano-British field systems within the northern part of the survey area.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Document Title: WP 029(B) Historic Environment Works – Weeford to Whittington – Project Plan for Trial Trenching – Enabling Works North Document no.: 1EW04-LMJ-EV-PLN-NS06\_NL16-029003, Page 11 Para 2.2.27

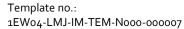


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## 8 Potential Contribution to Specific Objectives

Table 2 contribution to specific Objectives- Knowledge Creation

| Specific Objective (KC)  | Potential Contribution   | Suggested Methods   |
|--|--|---|
| KC10: Provide further understanding of the transition between a mobile pattern of settlement in the Early Bronze Age to the development of fixed settlement and enclosure, in the Middle and Late Bronze Age;            | No evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified within those trenches which have been excavated at the present time.   | None  |
| KC15: Can we identify regional patterns in the form and location of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements across the route, and are there associated differences in landscape organisation and enclosure?             | No evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified within those trenches which have been excavated at the present time.   | None  |
| KC16: Investigate the degree of continuity<br>that existed between Late Bronze Age and<br>Iron Age communities in terms of population,<br>mobility and subsistence strategies  | No evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified within those trenches which have been excavated at the present time.   | None  |
| KC18: Explore the evidence for increasing social complexity in the archaeological record in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, and identify patterns of intra-regional and regional variation;                            | No evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified within those trenches which have been excavated at the present time.   | None  |
| KC19: The Romano-British period saw the beginning of a more established infrastructure network. Can we investigate the development of these routes, trackways and roads and the influence they had on landscape change?; | Remains of potential Romano-British date were identified at two locations within the survey area, although none could be explicitly related to roads routes and trackways. | Mitigation works in the form an area excavation would further characterise the possible Romano-British remains located within, and adjacent to, DHW143. |
| KC21: Assess the evidence for regional and cultural distinctiveness along the length of the route in the Romano-British period, with particular regard to the different types encountered along the route;               | Remains of potential Romano-British date were identified at two locations within the survey area.  | Mitigation works in the form an area excavation would further characterise the possible Romano-British remains located within, and adjacent to, DHW143. |





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| KC23: Identify evidence for late Roman occupation and attempt to identify any continuity in settlement patterns between the end of the Romano-British period and the early medieval period;   | Remains of potential Romano-British date were identified at two locations within the survey area.                                      | Mitigation works in the form an area excavation would further characterise the possible Romano-British remains located within, and adjacent to, DHW143. |
|---|--|---|
| KC30: Identify the location and form of Early<br>and Middle Saxon settlement and investigate<br>evidence for land use in the period;  | The trenches relating to this objective could not be excavated due to access restrictions.  Trenches will be excavated at future date. | The trenches relating to this objective could not be excavated due to access restrictions. Trenches will be excavated at future date.                   |
| KC31: Identify the location of Middle to Late Saxon settlement, explore processes of settlement nucleation and understand the development of associated field types and agricultural regimes; | The trenches relating to this objective could not be excavated due to access restrictions. Trenches will be excavated at future date.  | The trenches relating to this objective could not be excavated due to access restrictions. Trenches will be excavated at future date.                   |
| KC35: Investigate the impacts on rural communities of social and economic shocks in the mid-14th century and thereafter and their contribution to settlement desertion; and                   | None   | None  |
| KC40: Identify patterns of change within medieval rural settlement from the 11th to mid-14th century  | None   | None  |

Table 3 Specific Objectives- Community

| Specific Objective (CE)             | Potential Contribution    | Suggested Methods                                    |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| CE <sub>5</sub> : Contribute to the | Engagement with the local | Community participation in archaeological mitigation |
| process and facilitation of         | community.                | excavations.   |
| audience project creation           |                           |  |

### 9 Provisional Conclusion

The provisional conclusions are based on the trial trenching works carried out to date. Issues with land access prohibited completion of the full programme of works. Further trial trenching will be undertaken at a future date once access issues have been resolved. The provisional results indicate that the area around Trenches 104-105, 107 and 160-162 have the potential to contribute to specific objectives KC19, 21 and 23. The process of identifying further works will be discussed with stakeholders and agreed with the Employer.



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## Appendix 1

| 10.1.1 | Figure 1        | Plan of trench locations                                  |
|--------|-----------------|---|
| 10.1.2 | Figure 2.1-2.3  | Plan of trench locations and features recorded            |
| 10.1.3 | Figure 2.4-2.10 | Detail of key trenches containing archaeological features |



