

HS2 Central Section, Archaeological Works, Trial Trench Evaluation, M25 Access Slip Roads, 1C17MSRTT Summary Report

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1 Summary

- 1.1.1 A test pit trial evaluation was undertaken on land located either side of the M25, to the east of Chalfont St Peter (NGR 502157, 191967) ahead of the construction of Phase One of the new High Speed Two (HS2) railway network. The site comprised three parcels of land measuring c. 5.1ha to the west of the M25 and 9.7ha to the east. The land is required for construction of slip roads and bell-mouths which will allow access to the Chiltern Tunnel South Portal main construction compound and construction site, located to the south. Prior to the trial evaluation three test pits were machine excavated to the base of the plough soil and spoil hand sieved through a 6mm mesh for artefact recovery. The trial evaluation comprised a 4% sample of the land amounting to 109 30m trenches.
- 1.1.2 Artefacts from the test pits comprised 852 flints flakes, 90% of which were debitage flakes, with several blades and scrapers being represented. The general spread of lithic material is on the higher ground above the River Colne. The evidence would suggest that heavy ploughing impacts on a very localised area of Neolithic/Bronze Age activity that is now represented by only plough soil derived finds.
- 1.1.3 The trial trench evaluation revealed minimal evidence of archaeological activity across the site. Several undated post holes, small pits and ditches were recorded, in addition to a number of large post-medieval to modern quarry pits in Trenches 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 13, 34, 48, 55, 62, 72, 81 and 91. Two pits of prehistoric date (one of which in Trench 12 could be securely dated to the Neolithic/Bronze Age) were excavated in trenches 12 and 31, both of which produced assemblages of worked flint. Another pit in trench 60 produced a small quantity of early Iron Age pottery. A north-south aligned boundary ditch was recorded in trench 92 that produced a small amount of late Iron Age to Roman pottery.
- 1.1.4 The results of the test pitting and trial trench evaluation have revealed a moderately significant distribution of worked flint including a small number of diagnostically Mesolithic to Bronze Age lithics. Aside from the single pit in Trench 12 these were almost exclusively collected from the plough soil. Although there is substantial evidence of prehistoric and Roman settlement throughout the Colne valley minimal evidence of this was revealed during this program of works.