

**ECTON BROOK PLAYING FIELDS
GREAT BILLING WAY
NORTHAMPTON**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD INVESTIGATION

Albion
archaeology



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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by BWB Consulting Ltd and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Elizabeth Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Advisor. The fieldwork was undertaken by Marcin Koziminski (Archaeological Supervisor) and Catie Watts (Assistant Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Marcin Koziminski with figures produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and finds analysed by Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shottliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

AAA	Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council
ADS	Archaeology Data Service
CifA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
Client	BWB Consulting Ltd
HER	Historic Environment Record
PDA	Proposed development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission (N/2015/1249) was granted by Northampton Borough Council for a housing development at Ecton Brook Playing Fields, off Great Billing Way, Northampton. A condition was attached to the planning permission requiring a programme of archaeological work be carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation. The works comprised trial trench evaluation followed by 'strip, map and sample' investigation.

The trial trench evaluation was undertaken on 28th September 2016. A total of five trenches, measuring between 25–50m long by 1.8m wide, were opened so as to investigate the archaeological potential of the proposed housing plots. The subsequent 'strip, map and sample' excavation was carried out on 10th November 2016. It comprised stripping of the subsoil within the confines of the proposed access road and stretched over an area c. 10m by 11m around features revealed in Trench 2 during the trial trenching.

The only archaeological features revealed within the proposed development area (PDA) PDA were in the form of modern wheel ruts that were likely associated with the construction of the nearby Ecton Brook Primary School.

The absence of any other features suggests that the PDA may be some distance away from any earlier settlement focus. In addition, none of the archaeological remains recorded in the Northamptonshire HER continued into the PDA. However, the scarce presence of Roman artefacts within the subsoil may indicate at least some level of activity datable to the Roman period in the vicinity of the site.

The remains identified within the site are of negligible significance and have no potential to address regional archaeological research agenda. The findings of the field investigation also suggest that the development of the site will have no significant archaeological impact.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission (ref. N/2015/1249) was granted by Northampton Borough Council for a housing development at Ecton Brook Playing Fields, off Great Billing Way, Northampton. Condition 14 required a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation.

The Assistant Archaeological Advisor (AAA) to Northamptonshire County Council advised that the programme of archaeological work should initially comprise two methods:

- Archaeological ‘strip, map and sample’ excavation (HER Event no. ENN108440) and
- Trial trench investigation (HER Event no. ENN108441).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by BWB Consulting Ltd (Client) to produce a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the archaeological works (Albion Archaeology 2016) and to undertake the fieldwork. The WSI was approved by the AAA in advance of the fieldwork. Trenching was undertaken on 28th September 2016.

One trial trench contained features that were potentially of archaeological interest. Consequently, the AAA requested that a second stage of investigation, comprising ‘strip, map and sample’, be carried out during groundworks in the vicinity of the features. This was completed on 10th November 2016.

The results of these archaeological works are set out in this report.

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

The site comprises a part of the former playing fields of Ecton Brook Primary School, located to the south of Ecton Brook Road, within the parish of Great Billing, located on the eastern edge of Northampton (Figure 1). It comprises c. 1.4ha of relatively flat land lying at c. 60m OD centred on NGR SP 817 623. The topsoil had been stripped and the subsoil exposed within the site prior to the commencement of investigation.

The underlying geology comprises deposits of clay and silt overlying mudstone¹.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The AAA has advised that a number of archaeological features and sites have been identified within the vicinity of the proposed development area (PDA). Romano-British pottery and kiln material was found during archaeological works carried out during the construction of the A45 to the south of the site, which suggests a pottery production site may lie nearby. To the east, further Romano-British pottery has been found, along with prehistoric flints; crop-marks within the area suggest possible settlement enclosures and funerary sites

¹ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> accessed 03/10/2016



may be present.

Subsequent to the approval by the AAA of version 1.0 of the WSI, BWB Consulting Ltd commissioned a geophysical magnetic survey of the site (Phase Site Investigations Ltd, in prep.). A revised trenching strategy was proposed to reflect the preliminary results, which generally consisted of possible agricultural features and areas of modern disturbance. Some stronger responses could be modern or might indicate features such as kilns, given the archaeology recorded within the wider area.

The Northamptonshire HER was consulted in order to establish the archaeological context for the project. This was carried out after the completion of the field investigation as agreed with the AAA. The HER search of a 500m radius area around the PDA provided information on:

- possible prehistoric activity – located predominantly to the east and south of the PDA;
- possible Roman settlement with associated pottery production site – located to the east of the site;
- find-spots of the medieval date – located to the north-west of the PDA.

1.4 Project Objectives

The objective of the fieldwork was to provide information on any archaeological remains present and to enable an appropriate mitigation strategy to be formulated, if required.

The overall aims of the investigation were:

- to establish the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present;
- to assess the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present.
- to recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region.
- to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

The results of the archaeological works were examined in the report in relation to their local, regional and national context. Given the proximity of Roman remains the results of the work might have potential to contribute to a number of research questions in the relevant chapter of the East Midlands Research Agenda (Knight et al. 2012). The report examines the significance of the results with reference to regional research frameworks (Knight et al. 2012).



2. METHODOLOGY

The project comprised two methodological approaches – archaeological trial trenching and archaeological strip/map and sample during construction of a section of the new road; these are summarised below and detailed in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2016).

The standards and requirements set out in the following documents were adhered to throughout the project:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd ed. 2001)
• Archaeological Archives Forum	<i>Archaeological Archives: A Guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation</i> (2nd ed. 2011)
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Projects Managers' Guide</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation.</i> (2015)
• CfA	<i>Charter and By-law; Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief</i>
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
• Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre	<i>Northamptonshire Archaeological Archives Standard</i> (2014)

2.1 Archaeological Trial Trenching

The trial trench evaluation was undertaken on 28th September 2016. A total of five trenches were located so as to investigate the archaeological potential of the proposed housing plots (Figure 1); these were between 25–50m long by 1.8m wide. The position of Trench 5 was altered due to the presence of topsoil heap in the area of its original location.

Trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket and operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. Spoil heaps were scanned by eye and metal detector for finds recovery.

Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. All deposits were assigned a unique context number commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc.* Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as



appropriate.

The trenches were inspected by the AAA prior to their backfilling.

2.2 Archaeological 'Strip, Map and Sample' Excavation (Area 1)

The 'strip, map and sample' works were carried out on 10th November 2016. These comprised stripping of the subsoil within the confines of the proposed access road (Figure 4) and stretched over an area *c.* 10m by 11m around features revealed in Trench 2 during the trench evaluation. The groundworks were monitored by an archaeologist and spoil heap was scanned for artefacts recovery.

Any potential archaeological remains were cleaned, investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. All deposits were assigned a unique context number, commencing at 1, and were subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All features and deposits found during the investigations are described below and shown on Figures 2–5. Detailed information on features and deposits revealed during the investigation can be found in Appendices 1 and 2. The artefacts recovered from the features and deposits are summarised within this section.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

The topsoil had been removed from the site prior to the commencement of archaeological investigation. The subsoil was uniform across the site, comprising 0.10–0.28m of grey-brown to brown-grey sandy silt. In addition, external dump layer (501) of 0.14m-thick blue-grey clay was revealed in Trench 5.

Subsoil (100) in Trench 1 produced two sherds (24g) of post-medieval abraded red-slipped black glazed earthenware as well as one fragment (16g) of a fine greyware jar rim (200mm diameter) dated to the Roman period. Moreover, a single base angle sherd (42g) of the Roman period Nene Valley greyware was recovered from subsoil (200) in Trench 2; this was dated to the 3rd/4th century.

Undisturbed geological deposits were similar across the PDA, comprising grey-orange to orange-brown clay silts, with outcrops of pure clay and patches of gravel towards the south. Additionally, three geological features on NW to SE alignment [102] were revealed in Trench 1; these were formed by bands of orange-brown sandy silt material.

3.3 Features Recorded During Trial Trenching

3.3.1 Modern features

Three shallow, parallel linear features were present in Trench 2; these were on a NW to SE alignment and were *c.* 1.0–2.0m apart. They were between 0.59–0.95m wide and had irregular profiles that ranged from 0.11–0.21m in depth (Figure 2); they were infilled by homogenous mid-grey-brown sandy silt deposits. Feature [204] produced a single sherd (8g) of a modern transfer-printed plate rim with a floral design, whilst fill (207) of feature [206] yielded an abraded cattle molar (27g).

3.3.2 Tree-throws

Several tree-throws were encountered in Trenches 3 and 5 (Figure 2 and Figure 3: Image 4); a number of these were investigated by hand but they produced no dating evidence.

3.4 Features Recorded During ‘Strip, Map and Sample’ Investigation

3.4.1 Modern features

A number of intermittent, irregular linear remains was revealed within the



proposed access road, which appeared to correspond with linears [202]/[204]/[206] in Trench 2 (Figures 4 and 5). A single segment [3] was excavated by hand. This revealed an irregular concave profile of the feature that was 0.5m wide by 0.16m deep.

Given the irregular characteristics of the features, it seems most likely that the remains represent modern wheel ruts, probably associated with the construction of the former Ecton Brook Primary School playing fields.

3.4.2 Tree-throws

Two tree-throws were revealed and excavated by hand (Figures 4 and 5) but these yielded no dating evidence.



4. CONCLUSION

The only potentially archaeological features revealed within the PDA were in the form of modern wheel ruts that may be associated with the construction of the former playing fields of the nearby Ecton Brook Primary School.

The absence of any other features suggests that the PDA may be some distance away from any earlier settlement focus. In addition, none of the archaeological remains recorded in the Northamptonshire HER continued into the PDA. However, the scarce presence of Roman artefacts within the subsoil may indicate at least some level of activity datable to the Roman period in the vicinity of the site.

The remains identified within the site are of negligible significance and have no potential to address regional archaeological research agenda. The findings of the field investigation also suggest that the development of the site will have no significant archaeological impact.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2001, *Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork* (2nd ed. 2001).

Albion Archaeology 2016, *Ecton Brook Playing Fields, Great Billing Way, Northampton: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Field Investigation*. Report no: 2016/167, v. 2.0.

Knight, D., Vyner, B. and Allen, C. 2012, *East Midlands Heritage: An updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*.

Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre 2014, *Northamptonshire Archaeological Archives Standard*.



6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.17 m. Max: 0.21 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81696: Northing: 62406)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81672: Northing: 62389)

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of site.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Subsoil	Compact mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones Max thickness: 0.21m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
101	Natural	Compact mid brown orange clay silt moderate small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural interface	Linear NW-SE sides: concave base: uneven dimensions: max breadth 0.94m, max depth 0.11m, min length 2.m General Number refers to three parallel similar bands.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Fill	Friable mid orange brown sandy silt moderate small stones General Number refers to fills of three similar bands.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 50.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.14 m. Max: 0.25 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81724: Northing: 62429)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81711: Northing: 62380)

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of site.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Subsoil	Compact mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones Up to 0.26m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
201	Natural	Compact light orange brown clay silt moderate small stones With patches of sandy silt and gravel. Heavy rooting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Wheel ruts	Linear NW-SE sides: irregular base: uneven dimensions: max breadth 0.59m, max depth 0.11m, min length 1.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Fill	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Wheel ruts	Linear NW-SE sides: irregular base: uneven dimensions: max breadth 0.95m, max depth 0.21m, min length 1.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Fill	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
206	Wheel ruts	Linear NW-SE sides: irregular base: uneven dimensions: max breadth 0.66m, max depth 0.16m, min length 1.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Fill	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.2 m. Max: 0.28 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81740: Northing: 62386)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81726: Northing: 62366)

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of site.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Subsoil	Compact mid brown grey sandy silt occasional small-medium stones 0.2-0.28m thick. Occasional rooting.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Natural	Compact mid brown orange clay silt With outcrops of gravel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 25.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.15 m. Max: 0.17 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81676: Northing: 62362)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81690: Northing: 62341)

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of site.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Subsoil	Compact mid brown grey sandy silt occasional small-medium stones Occasional rooting. Between 0.15-0.17m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Natural	Compact mid grey orange clay silt With moderate pockets of clay.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.18 m. Max: 0.24 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81714: Northing: 62327)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 81686: Northing: 62315)

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of site.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Subsoil	Compact mid brown grey sandy silt occasional small-medium stones Occasional rooting. Between 0.10-0.18m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
501	Dump material	Compact mid blue grey clay Layer extends for c. 20m from SW end of trench and may be related to construction of nearby A45. Maximum thickness: 0.14m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
502	Natural	Compact mid grey orange clay silt With pockets of gravel and clay.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7. APPENDIX 2: AREA SUMMARY

Area: 1

Extent (ha): 0.011

OS Co-ordinates:

Description: Area around features in Trench 2.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1	Subsoil	Compact mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stones. Up to 0.25m thick deposit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Natural	Compact light orange brown clay silt moderate small stones. With patches of gravel and sandy silt. Heavy rooting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Wheel ruts	Curving linear sides: irregular base: uneven dimensions: max breadth 0.5m, max depth 0.16m. Intermittent and irregular in plan. They correspond with features [202/204/206] in Trench 2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Fill	Firm mid grey brown sandy silt occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

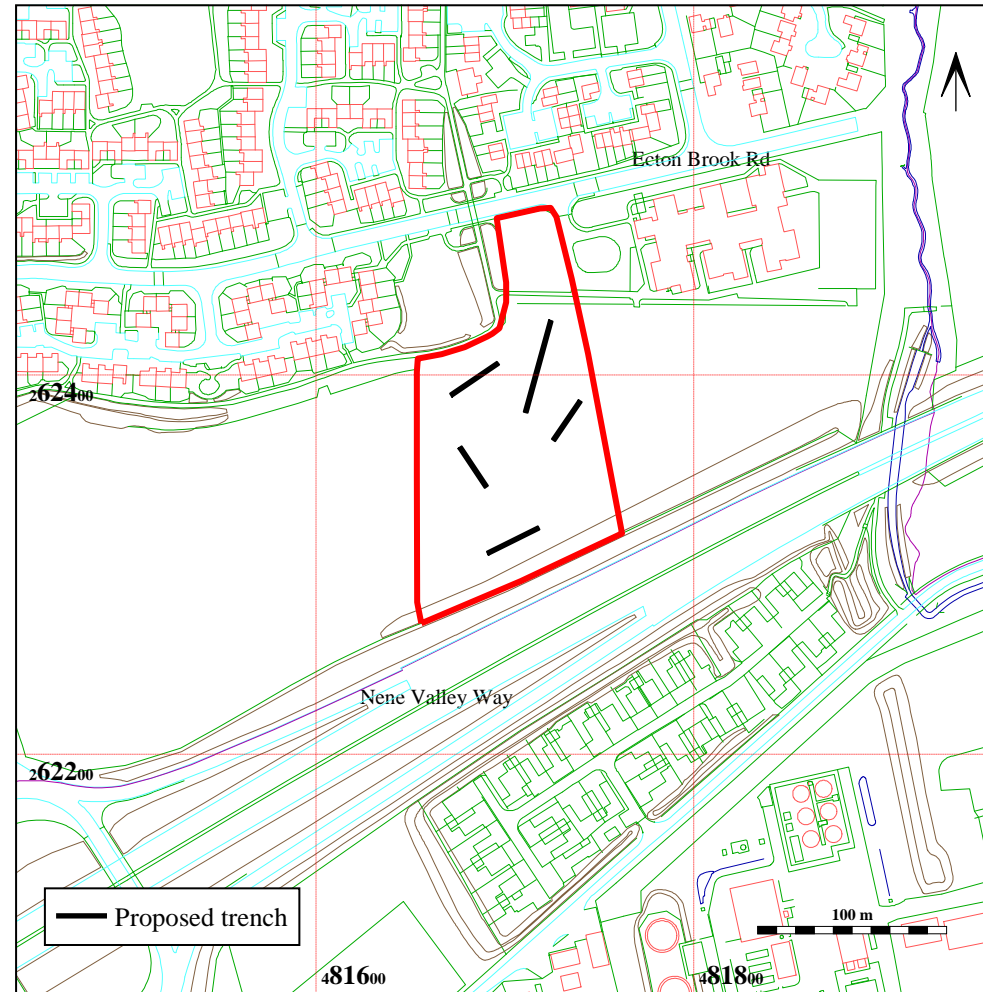
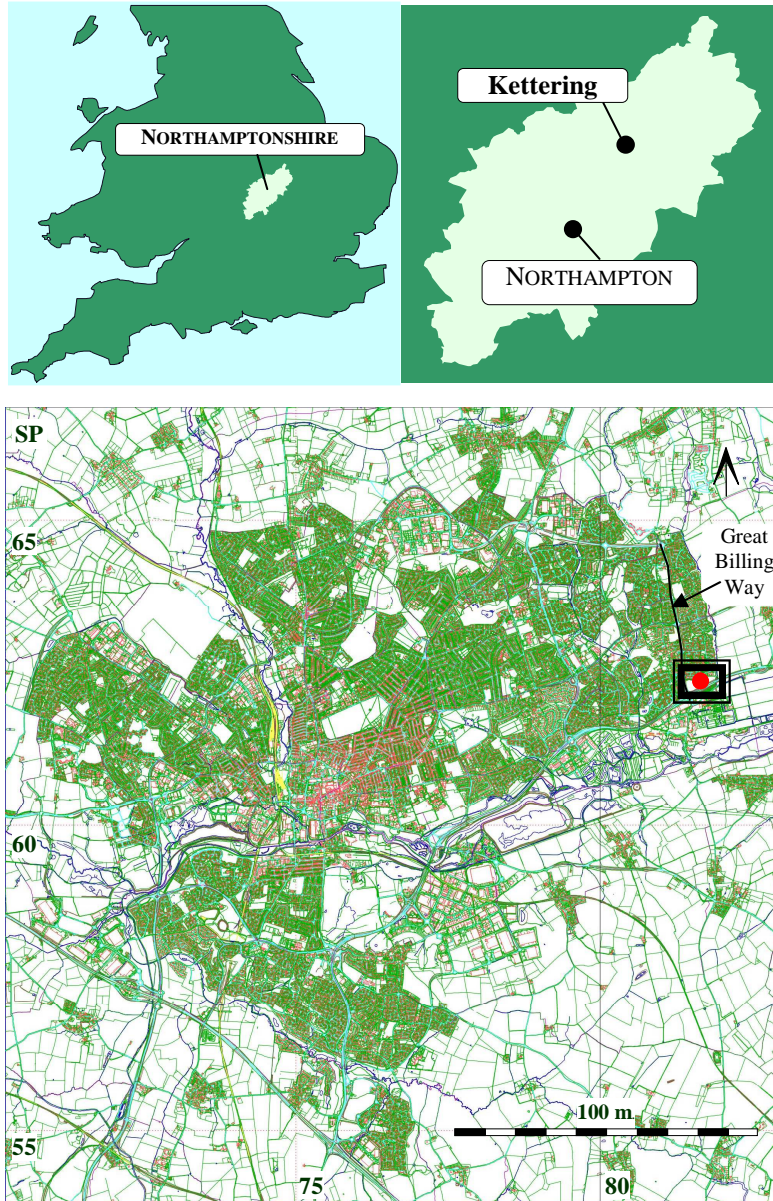


Figure 1: Site location

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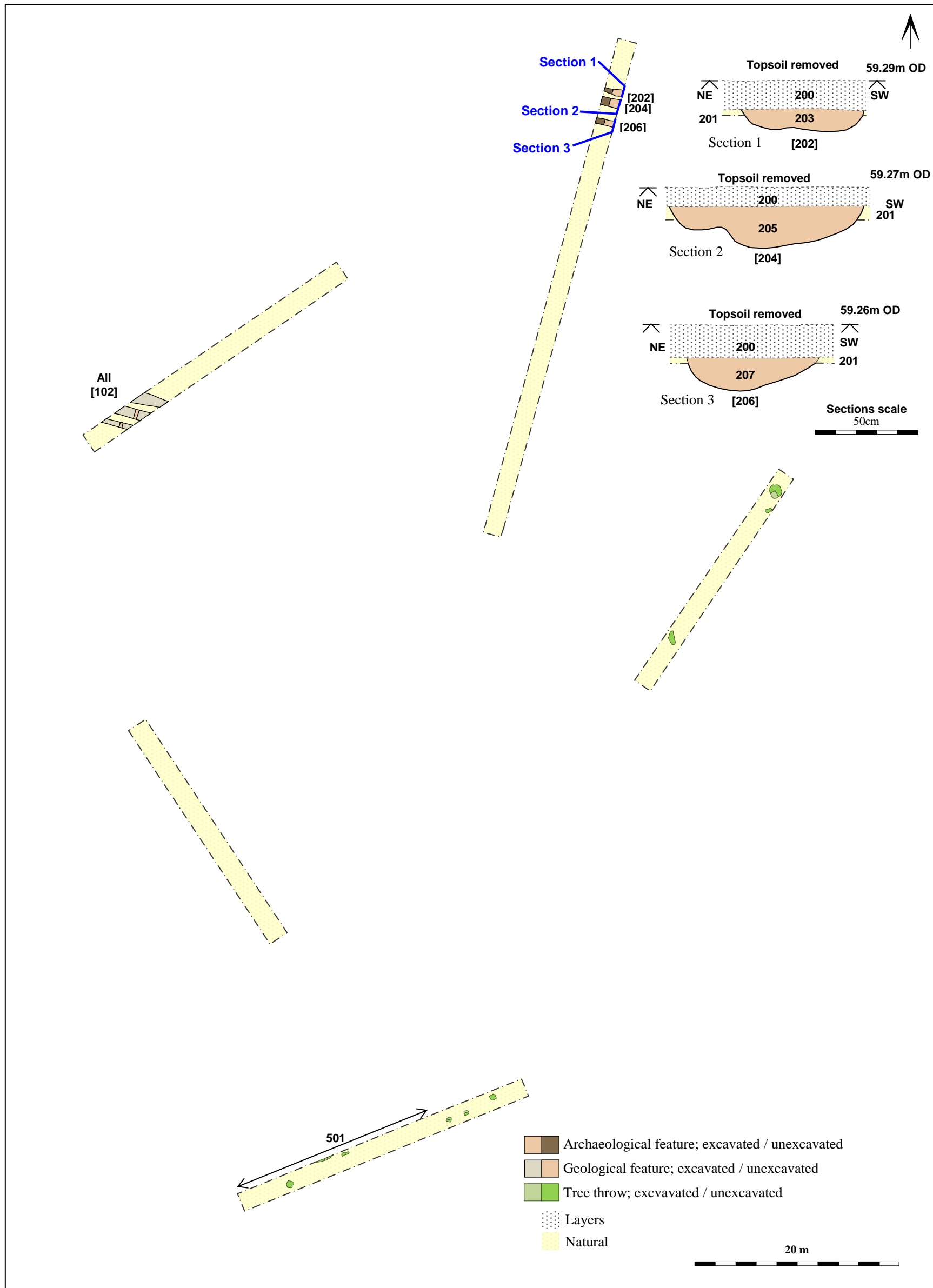


Figure 2: Trial trenching results



Image 1: View of Trench 5; looking NE. External dump layer (501) in baulk sections. Scale 1m



Image 2: Wheel ruts [202], [204] and [206] in Trench 2; looking SE. Scale 1m



Image 4: Tree throw in Trench 3; looking NE. Scale 1m



Image 3: Geological features Gen no. [102] in Trench 1; looking NW. Scale 1m

Figure 3: Selected images

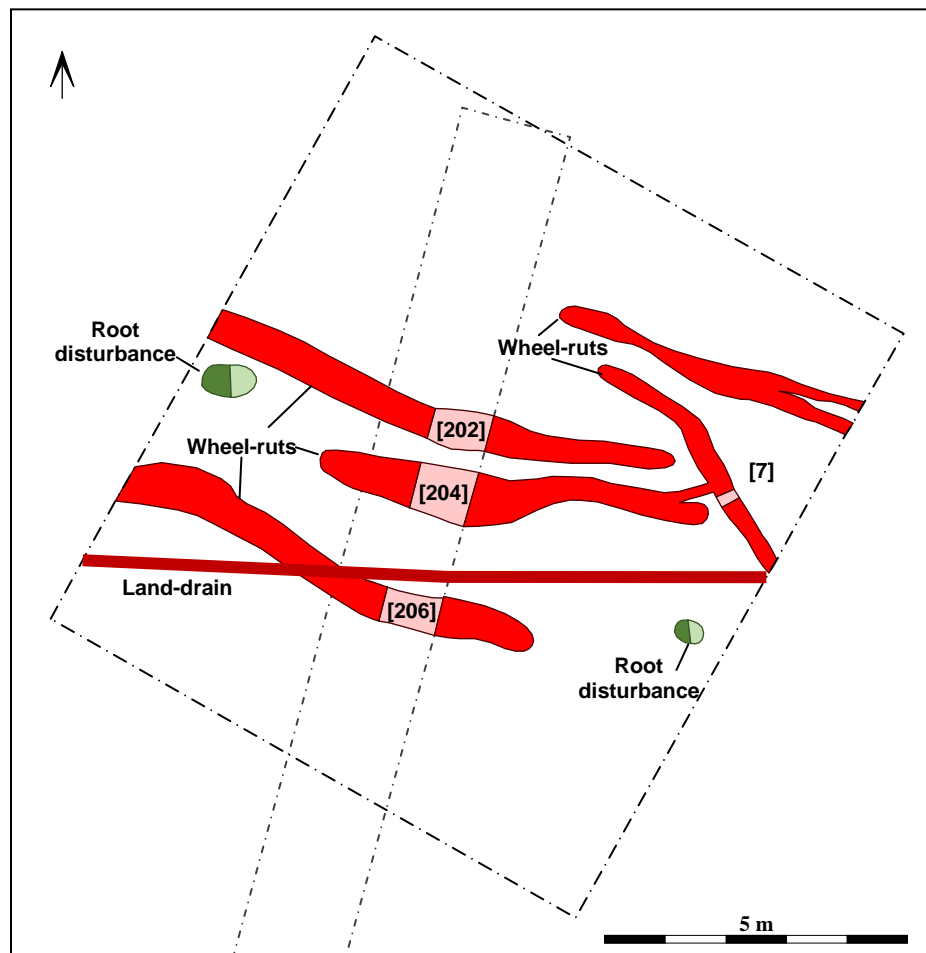
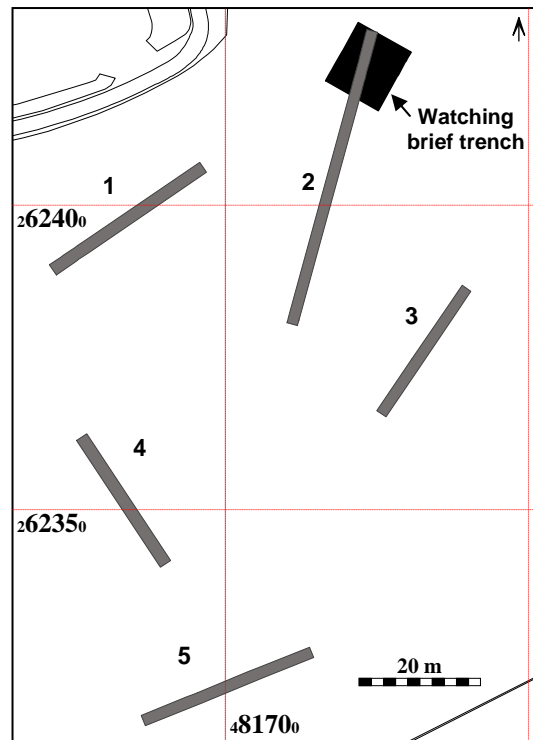


Figure 4: Watching brief trench (Area 1)



The trench as stripped. Looking north-west. Scale 1m



The trench with features outlined with yellow paint. Looking north-west. Scale 1m



Root disturbance, half-sectioned. Looking north-west. Scale 30cm

Figure 5: Selected images