



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Leicester Road, Ashby De La Zouch March and December 2012



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Northamptonshire
County Council

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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 139163
Project title	Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation at Leicester Road, Ashby De La Zouch	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological trial trench excavation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Leicester Road, Ashby De La Zouch, Leicestershire prior to the proposed development on the site. A reduced number of trenches were excavated due to problems with access. Only eleven trenches out of the twenty-four were excavated revealing no archaeological features, only post- medieval ridge and furrow and rubble spreads.	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical survey	
Current land use	Arable	
Future work	Additional trial trenching	
Monument type and period	Unknown	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Fields off Leicester Road	
OS co-ordinates	SK 366 165	
Area (sq m/ha)	c 13ha	
Height aOD	135m to 140m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Principal Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones	
Project Manager	Mark Holmes	
Sponsor or funding body	David Wilson Homes Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	15/03/2012	
End date	06/12/2012	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents
Physical	X.A40.2012	None
Paper		Site records
Digital		Client report PDF
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Trial Trenching Evaluation at Leicester Road, Ashby De La Zouch, March and December 2012	
Serial title & volume	12/60	
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION
AT LEICESTER ROAD, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
LEICESTERSHIRE
MARCH 2012
X.A40.2012

Abstract

An archaeological trial trench excavation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Leicester Road, Ashby De La Zouch, Leicestershire prior to the proposed development on the site. A reduced number of trenches were excavated due to problems with access. Only eleven trenches out of the twenty-four were excavated revealing no archaeological features only post-medieval ridge and furrow and rubble spreads.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March and December 2012, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land at Leicester Road, Ashby De La Zouch Leicestershire (NGR: SK 366 165; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd for David Wilson Homes Ltd and was undertaken to inform a planning application for the proposed development of the land for residential use.

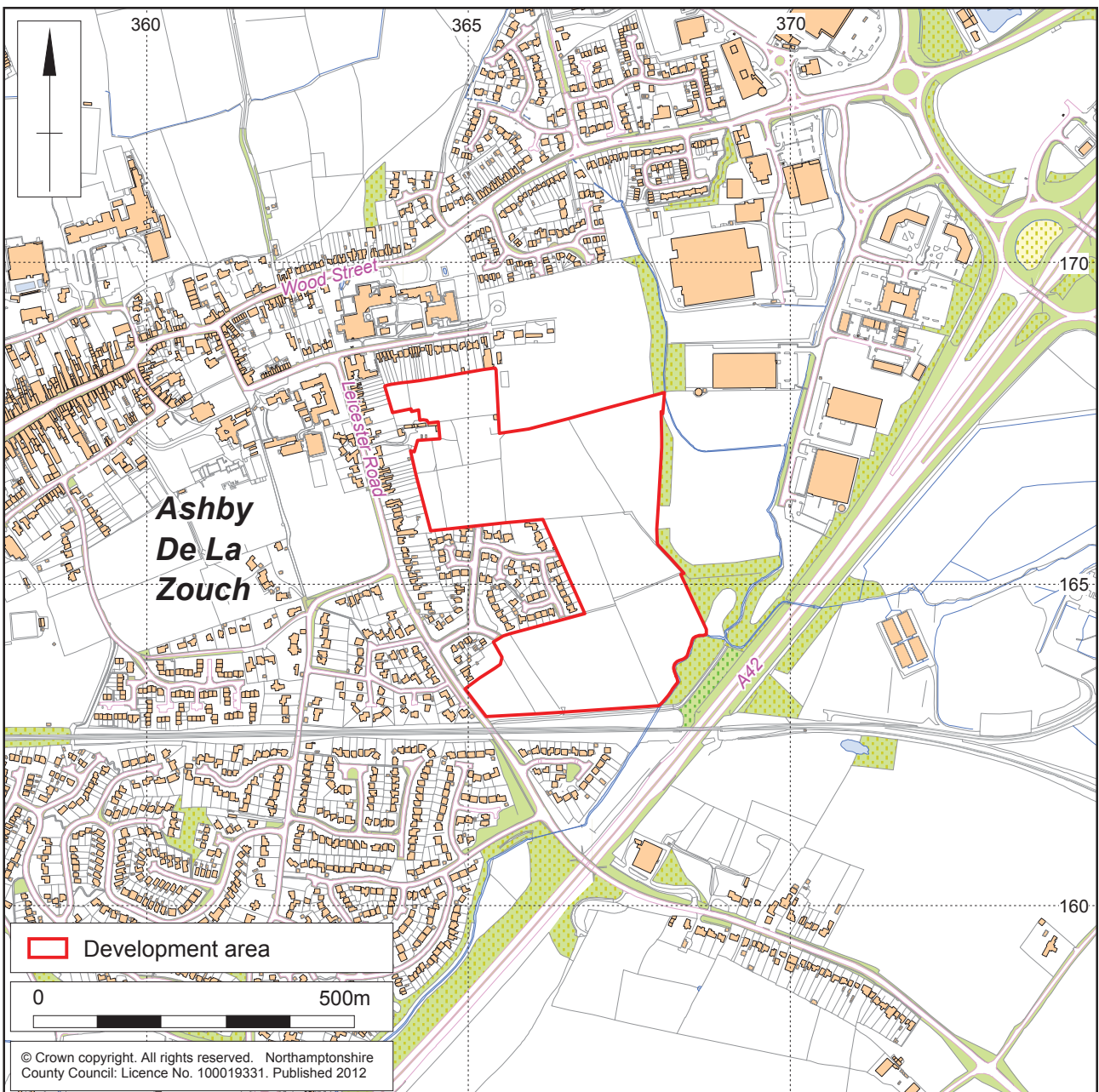
The scope of works was outlined in the brief issued by Leicestershire County Council's Senior Planning Archaeologist (Clarke 2012) and detailed in the written scheme of investigation prepared by NA (NA 2012). The accession number is X.A40.2012.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the objectives of the archaeological work were to:

- Assess the archaeological significance of the site and any archaeological deposits encountered during the evaluation;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Assess the evidence within its setting, regional context and aim to highlight any research priorities where applicable;
- Assess the results from an Environmental and/or Archaeological Scientific investigation;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The national framework for research is set out by English Heritage (1997). The broad research frameworks for the East Midlands are set out by Cooper (2006). The Research Aims set out in these documents were not applicable as there were no significant archaeological deposits.



Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

The underlying soils are classed as the Bardsey Association, which rest on Carboniferous Mudstone. The site is currently used as rough pasture and is located on the eastern edge of Ashby de la Zouch. It lies at a approximate height of 135-140m aOD.

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

No archaeological sites or artefacts have been recorded within the site. The earliest evidence for activity in the area dates to the prehistoric period and consists of finds identified by fieldwalking in advance of the A50 Ashby Bypass. These remains were found c1.4km to the north of the development site.

Roman remains are known from Lawn Hills, c 1.1km to the north-west of the proposed development, where two pots filled with coins were found. Long Lane, c400m to the north-east of the site, may be a Roman road (SMR 31NE U). The route of this Roman road crosses the proposed development area, although there was no evidence of it in the geophysical survey results (Roseveare 2007). No other remains are known in the area.

The earliest documentary evidence for Ashby De La Zouch is to be found in Domesday, where it is recorded as being held by one Ivo from Hugh de Grandmesnil. In Domesday the town was referred to as *Ascebi*, a name that derives from the Old English word *æsc*, meaning an Ash tree, and the Old Norse *by*, meaning a settlement or village. The latter part of the name derives from the area's overlord in the first part of the 13th century, Roger de la Zouch.

At the time of the Domesday survey, Ashby had a priest and was clearly a thriving village. In the 12th century, Ashby castle was established by the Beaumonts, the Earls of Leicester. The buttery, pantry and hall are all of this date, although the castle was later developed and expanded.

The castle is a Scheduled Monument (SM) lying c100m to the west of the development site. St Helen's parish church lies 400m to the west of the proposed site and is of 15th century date, having been built by Lord Hastings on the site of an earlier 11th century church. Other buildings of 14th century date and later are known in the town centre, which is c 500m to the west of the proposed development. Ridge and furrow earthworks are evident on aerial photographs of the proposed development site.

Ashby appears to have remained fairly small throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. It was, however, one of the chief Royalist garrisons during the English Civil War and was subject to a siege that only ended with the surrender of the garrison in 1646. It later came to prominence as a spa town during the late 19th century, when saline springs were found at the Moira colliery, and the Marquess of Hastings promoted the town in this capacity. Nowadays the town is one of the fastest-growing in Leicestershire.

The desk-based assessment for this project identified a low potential for archaeological remains within the development area (JSAC 2000). The areas of ridge and furrow that survive within the development area could preserve earlier remains, but there is no evidence of pre-medieval settlement close to the development site so this seems unlikely. The geophysical survey (Roseveare 2007) identified a few possible ditches, gullies and pits scattered across the site.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

All works were conducted in accordance with the IfA *Standards and guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (1994, revised 1999) and the *Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists* (1985, revised 2010).

Monitoring of the programme of fieldwork was carried out by the Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council (LCC). All parties were informed of the commencement and progress of works.

The trial trenches were positioned to ensure a full coverage of the area, whilst also targeting anomalies identified during the geophysical survey as well as avoiding known services (Fig 2). Known constraints included overhead telegraph lines across the northern fields.

Each trench was located using a Leica System 1200 GPS operating to an accuracy of +/- 0.05m to Ordnance Survey National Grid and Datum.

The trial excavation was originally to be of twenty-four trenches, measuring 50m x 2m (a total of 1200 linear metres) but due to access problems in fields 5, 8, 9 and 10 only eleven trenches were excavated. Trenches 3 to 11 were excavated in March 2012 and trenches 1 and 2 excavated in December 2012.

The trenches were excavated under continuous archaeological supervision and were excavated to the first archaeological remains or, where these were absent, the upper interface of geological deposits. Topsoil and subsoil were stored separately on either side of the trench, at least 1.0m from the trench edges.

The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features, unless it was certain that there are no archaeological features or deposits present.

A photographic record was kept of the excavation, comprising black and white negatives and colour slides with supporting digital photographs. The field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

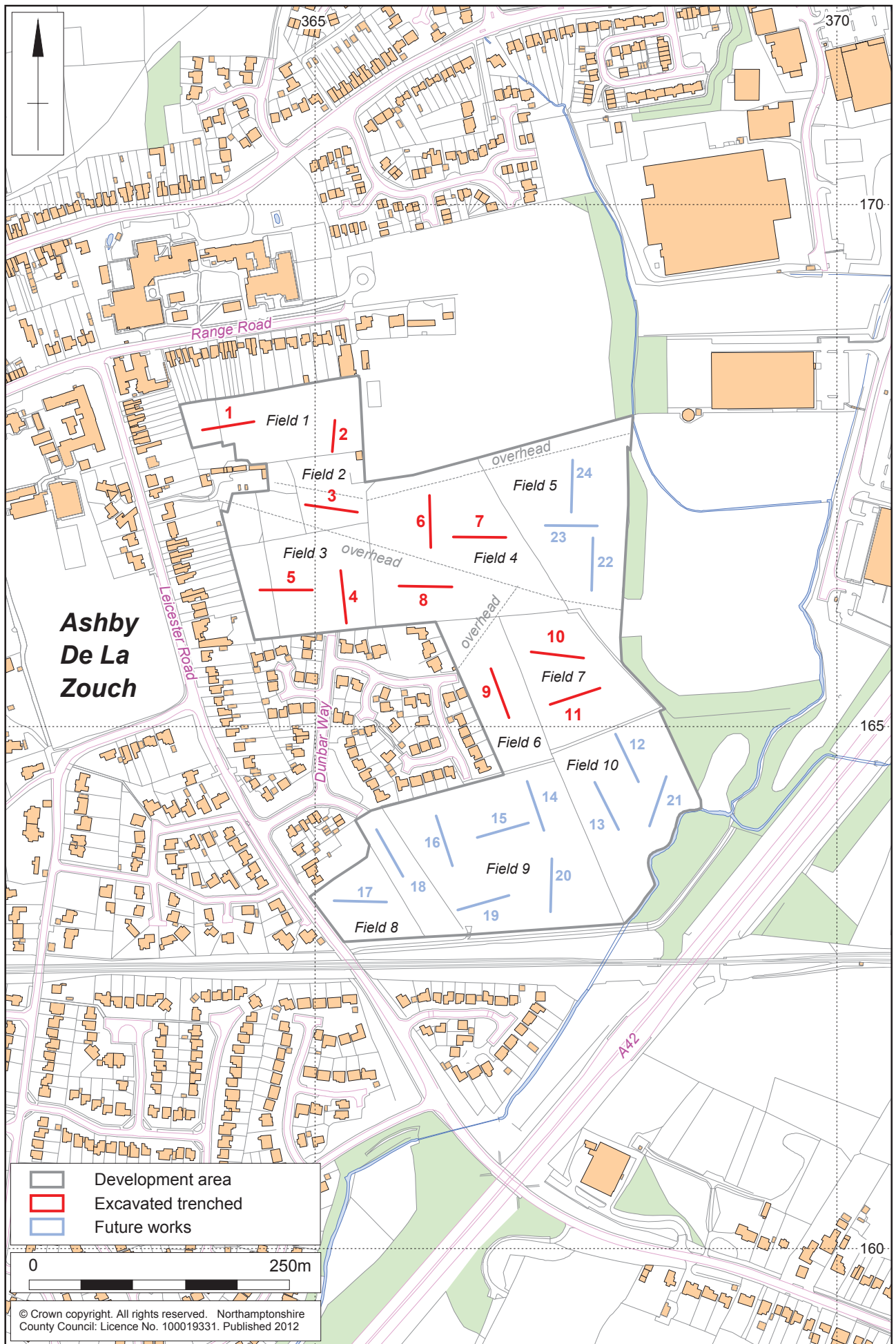
The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

The trenches were backfilled with their up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical digger. Subsoil and topsoil were backfilled separately.

5 EXCAVATION RESULTS

The average depth of the trenches was 0.40m onto grey silt clay natural, overlain with a light brown clay loam of mixed subsoil and furrows. The topsoil was up to 0.28m deep and consisted of a dark brown loam.

None of the trenches excavated revealed any archaeological features, only furrows of medieval field cultivation and post-medieval rubble spreads.



Scale 1:5000 (A4)

Trial trench locations Fig 2

6 THE FINDS

No finds were recovered from the evaluation, except post-medieval materials which were not retained.

7 DISCUSSION

The reduced evaluation confirmed the geophysical survey that no archaeological features were present except for the remains of ridge and furrow. The anomalies in the fields turned out to be post-medieval rubble spreads.

Because only eleven of the twenty-four trenches were excavated the possibility must remain of archaeology features being present in the remaining fields to the south and east of the development area.

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- Roseveare, M J, 2007 *Leicester Road, Ashby De La Zouch, Leicestershire, Geophysical Survey Report*

APPENDIX: CONTEXT DATA

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	50m x 1.8m E-W	436418/316787		0.50m,
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown silty loam	0.20m thick	Brick, roof slate, glass
102	Subsoil	Mid grey-brown silty loam	0.30m thick	—
103	Natural	Orange/brown mudstone with sandy patches	-	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	30m x 1.8m NE-SW	436518/316778		0.40m,
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
201	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.17m thick	—
202	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.17m thick	—
203	Natural	Orange-yellow sandy clay	-	—
204	Fill	Light grey silty clay	1.30m wide >0.40m deep	—
205	Furrow	E-W, linear	1.30m wide >0.40m deep	—
206	Fill	Light grey silty clay	1.20m wide >0.40m deep	—
207	Furrow	E-W, linear	1.20m wide >0.40m deep	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
3	50m x 1.8m E-W	436517/316709		0.40m,
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
301	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.17m thick	—
302	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.17m thick	—
303	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay	0.06m thick	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4	50m x 1.8m N-S	436527/316623		0.45m,
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
401	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.17m thick	—
402	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.19m thick	—
403	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay	0.09m thick	—
404	Fill	Fill of 405. Grey-brown clay	2.25m wide 0.40m deep	—
405	Cut	Furrow	2.25m wide 0.40m deep	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
5	50m x 1.8m E-W	436471/316630		0.50m,
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
501	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.23m thick	—
502	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.21m thick	—
503	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay	0.06m thick	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
6	50m x 1.8m N-S	436610/316694		0.43m,
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
601	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.28m thick	—
602	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.15m thick	—
603	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay		—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
7	50m x 1.8m E-W	436660/316681		0.37m,
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/ Samples
701	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.27m thick	—
702	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.10m thick	—
703	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay		—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
8	50m x 1.8m E-W	436602/316634		0.41m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
801	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.26m thick	—
802	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.15m thick	—
803	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay		—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
9	50m x 1.8m N-S	436676/316532		0.34m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
901	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.24m thick	—
902	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.10m thick	—
903	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay	0.07m thick	—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
10	50m x 1.8m E-W	436729/316569		0.44m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1001	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.27m thick	—
1002	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.17m thick	—
1003	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay		—

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
11	50m x 1.8m E-W	436748/316529		0.39m
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
1101	Topsoil	Dark grey-brown clay loam	0.26m thick	—
1102	Subsoil	Light orange-brown clay	0.13m thick	—
1103	Natural	Orange-grey silt clay		—



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