



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Bedford Road, Houghton Regis Bedfordshire



Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



Northamptonshire
County Council

Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

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STAFF

Project Manager: Adam Yates BA MIfA
Text: Yvonne Wolfram-Murray BSc PhD
Fieldwork: Gemma Hewitt BA
Yvonne Wolfram-Murray
Illustrations: Amir Bassir BSc PlfA

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Adam Yates		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 151344
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land north of Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at land off Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire. Eleven trenches were excavated. An undated pit, two tree throws and colluvial deposits were recorded.	
Project type	Evaluation	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Geophysical survey	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Undated remains	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	Land north of Bedford Road, Houghton Regis	
Study area	c 7ha	
OS grid reference	TL 01562 24485	
Height OD	114-124m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray	
Project Manager	Adam Yates	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	13 May 2013	
End date	17 May 2013	
ARCHIVES	Location	Content
Physical	Accession number applied for 7th May 2013	
Paper		Site survey records
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report	
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land north of Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION ON LAND
NORTH OF BEDFORD ROAD, HOUGHTON REGIS, BEDFORDSHIRE
MAY 2013**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at land off Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire. Eleven trenches were excavated. An undated pit, two tree throws and colluvial deposits were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, to carry out archaeological trial trenching on a proposed development site at land off Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 01562 24485, Fig 1). The works were undertaken in accordance with *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) and a WSI prepared by CgMs Consulting (Gajos 2013). Accession number applied for 7th May 2013.

The evaluation was required to support a planning application for residential development. The proposed development site was identified as archaeologically sensitive due to its proximity to other heritage assets and the potential to contain archaeological remains.

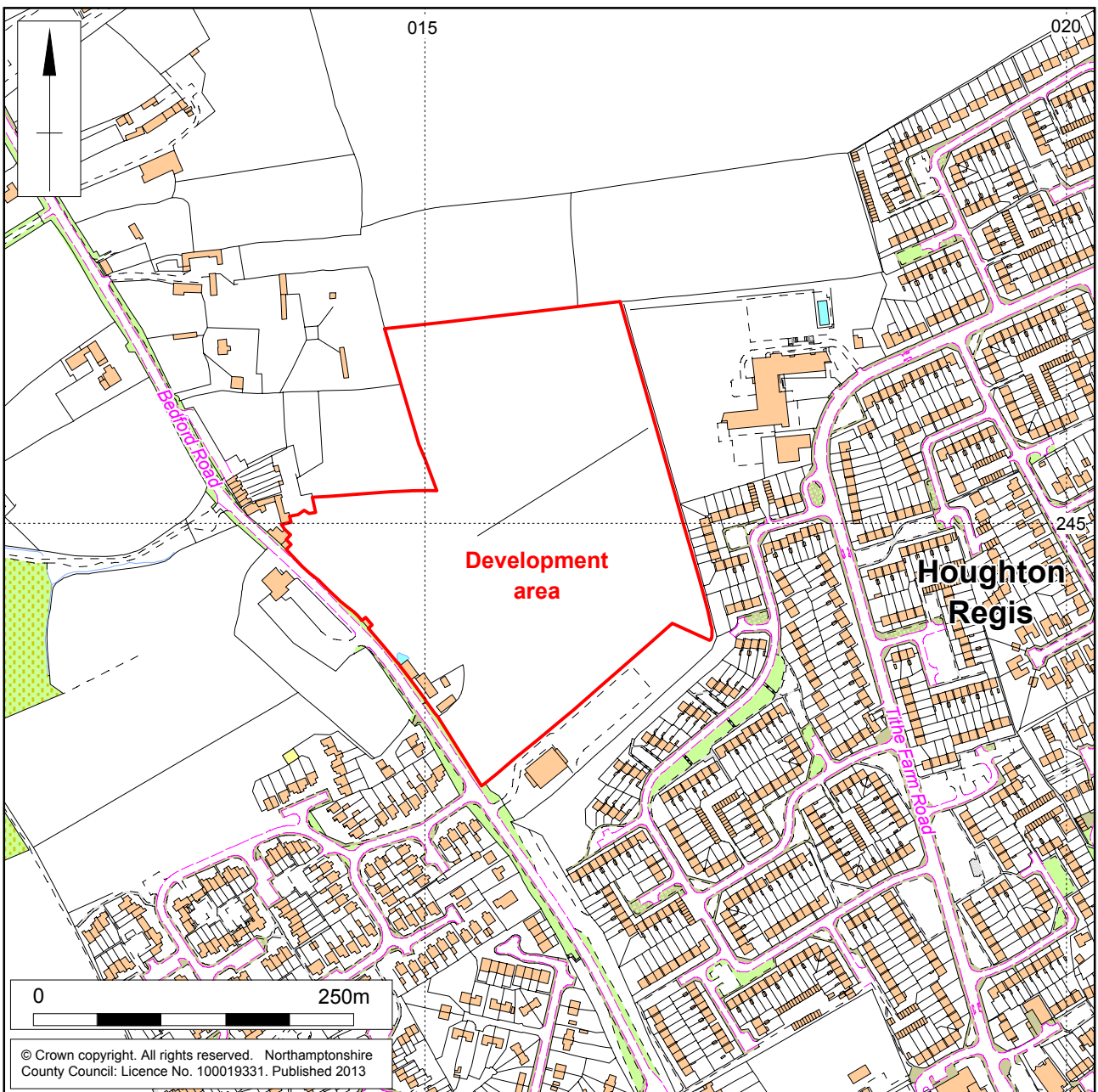
Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) registered organisation. This document was prepared in accordance with *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008b) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the investigation was to determine if archaeological remains were present within the application area. The national framework for research is set out by English Heritage (EH 1991). The local and regional research frameworks are set out by Glazebrook (1997), Brown and Glazebrook (2000), Oake *et al* (2007) and Medlycott (2011).

The specific objectives of the project were to provide further information on the following at the proposed development site, as set out in the WSI (Gajos 2013):

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains



Scale 1:5000

Site Location Fig 1

- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- To inform a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains
- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Central Bedfordshire HER.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

The site is located to the north-east of Bedford Road (A5120), Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire. The overall application area measures approximately seven hectares in extent and is centred at National Grid Reference TL 01562 24485 (Fig 1 & 2). Its western boundary is defined by Bedford Road; it is bounded to the north by fields and the hamlet of Bidwell, and to the south and east by the modern village expansion of Houghton Regis.

The British Geological Survey (<http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer>) records the bedrock below the site as belonging to the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation. The drift geology is not recorded.



General view of site, looking south Fig 2

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

There is extensive evidence of archaeological activity, dating from the Mesolithic through to post-medieval periods, in the wider vicinity of the site. Recent evaluation of c 260ha of land to the north of Houghton Regis by Albion Archaeology (Meckseper, 2012), which borders the northern edge of the site, have identified a series of Iron Age/ Roman farmsteads with a hinterland of fields and trackways. The nearest of these farmsteads to the site is located c 250m to the north.

Cropmark evidence from the HER had indicated the presence of a double ditched enclosure c 100m to the north of the site (HER 12284), however, trenching of that area did not identify any archaeological remains. Other than ploughed out remains of medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow no archaeological features were found within 200m of the northern boundary of the site. The now shrunken settlement of Bidwell (HER 16987) was first recorded in 1228. The HER marks the south-eastern extent of the former settlement falling within the westernmost part of the site. The HER also records the cropmark of a former post-medieval track/roadway in the north-eastern part of the site (HER 12260).

Previous archaeological work on the site comprised a geophysical survey in December 2012. The survey identified one feature of indeterminate archaeological or geological origin, two modern pipes, and a scatter of modern debris in the ploughsoil (Simmonds 2013).

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

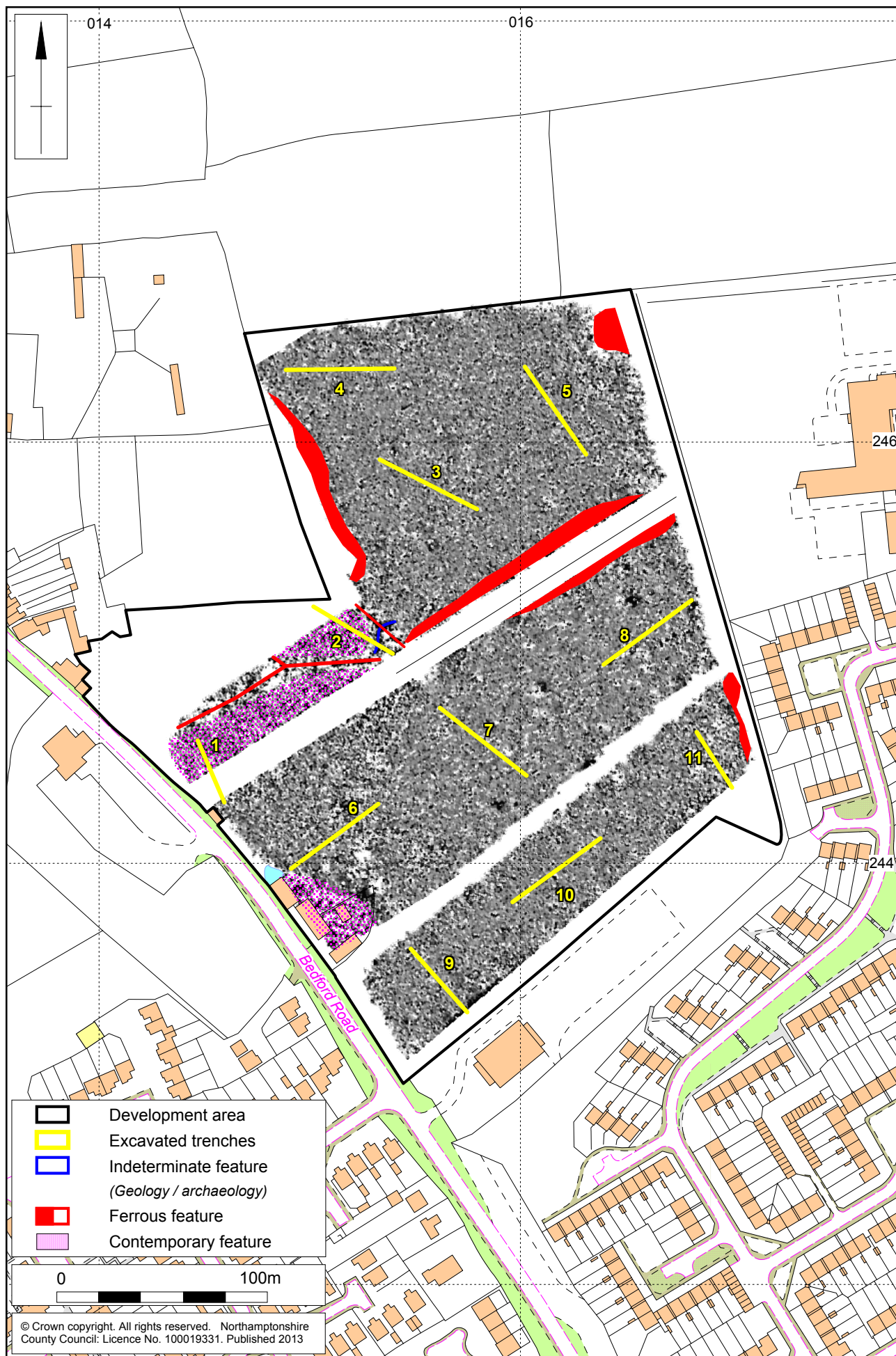
Eleven (11) trial trenches, 50m long and 2m wide were excavated (Fig 3). Trench 1 was shortened and moved due to access, Trench 7 was moved due to a footpath, and Trench 11 was shortened due to a footpath. Trench 2 was targeted on a potential archaeological feature noted on the geophysical survey, but had to be changed to a NW-SE orientation due to metal pipes, Trenches 3 and 10 were expanded to further investigate potential features. All areas of ground disturbance were accurately surveyed in and marked out prior to the commencement of work.

Machine excavation was undertaken under the direction of a suitably experienced archaeologist. Trenches were excavated by machine using a toothless ditching bucket wide, to reveal archaeological remains or, where absent, undisturbed natural horizons.

Each trench was cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features. All archaeological features were investigated. All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of evaluation were fully recorded. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire Archaeology procedures (NA 2011). All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on pro-forma context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds.

Archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50. Sections through features were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. All levels were related to Ordnance Datum. A photographic record was maintained using black and white film supplemented by digital photography. Photographic views of the site were taken prior to excavation and after backfilling. Each trench was photographed, together with views of individual features.

The field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive.



Scale 1:2500

Trench locations Fig 3

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

5.1 General comments

The natural substrate consisted of light brown-grey chalky clay (Fig 4), this was overlain by mid brownish-grey silty clay subsoil. The topsoil was dark grey-brown silty loam sealing all features (see Appendix for details).



Trench 5 showing general geology of the site, looking south Fig 4

An undated pit was uncovered In Trench 2. In Trench 1 three 19th/20th-century ditches were noted, in Trench 10 a hollow filled with colluvial deposits was recorded, and in Trench 3 two tree throws were found (Figs 5 and 6). No archaeological features were recorded in Trenches 3-9 and 11, and these are therefore not discussed below.

Colluvium was noted below the subsoil in Trenches 2, 4, 6, 10, and 11. It had accumulated in hollows, especially on the north-west slopes of the site, no colluvium was detected in the trenches on the south-eastern slopes (eg Trenches 7 and 8). Two layers of colluvium were recorded. The lower comprised a layer of dark grey-brown silty clay, containing a moderate frequency of stone inclusions, which was overlain by medium grey-brown silty clay colluvial deposits. The lower colluvium was only detected in Trenches 2 and 11 (Fig 7).



Tree throw [305],
looking south-west

Fig 5



Tree throw [307],
looking south-west

Fig 6



Section showing both layers of colluvium in Trench 11, looking north-east Fig 7

5.2 Trench 1

This trench was 32m long by 2m wide and aligned north-west to south-east (Figs 8 and 10). The trench was shortened and moved as there was no access to the north-western part of the site and the geophysical anomaly indicating a pipe. Three modern ditches were uncovered, one north-south orientated in the north-western part of the trench, and two parallel east to west orientated ditches in the south-eastern part of the trench. The two parallel ditches contained 19th/20th-century tile, metal objects and animal bone, which were not retained.



General shot of Trench 1, looking north-west Fig 8

5.3 Trench 2

This trench, which was 50m long by 2m wide, was targeted on a geophysical survey (Fig 10). An undated pit was uncovered near the south-eastern end of the trench apparently underlying the colluvial deposits, although the fill was very similar to the colluvial deposits. The circular pit [207], with a U-shaped profile and flat base, was 1.40m wide and 0.28m deep. It was filled by dark brown clay silt (206), no finds were recovered (Fig 9).

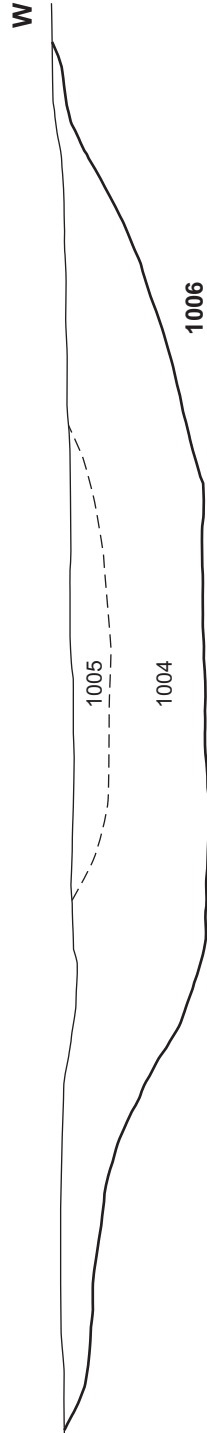
No features corresponding with the geophysical anomalies were present, although modern rubble was noted in the topsoil, perhaps accounting for the magnetic anomaly.



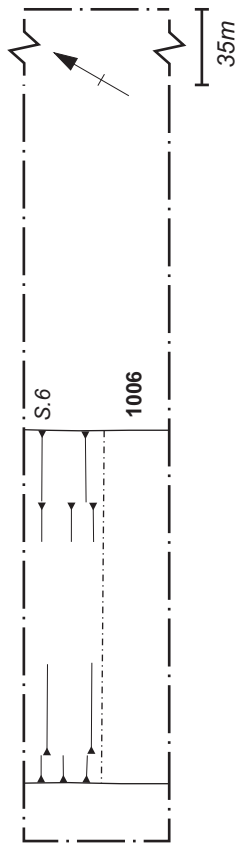
Pit [207], looking south-west Fig 9

Section 6 **E**

119.22m aOD



Trench 10

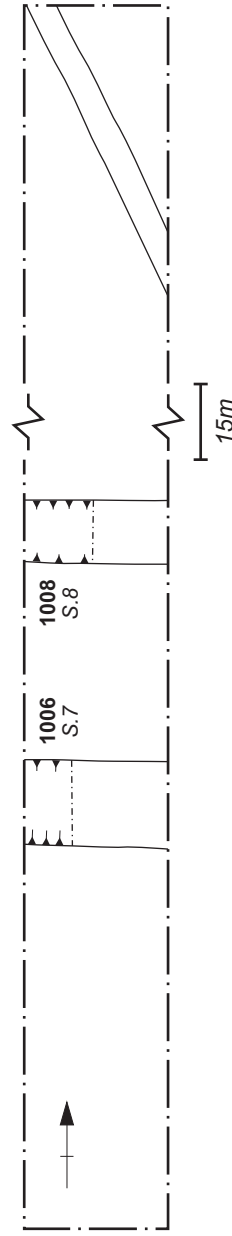


Section 2

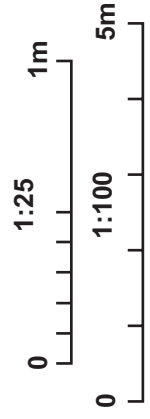
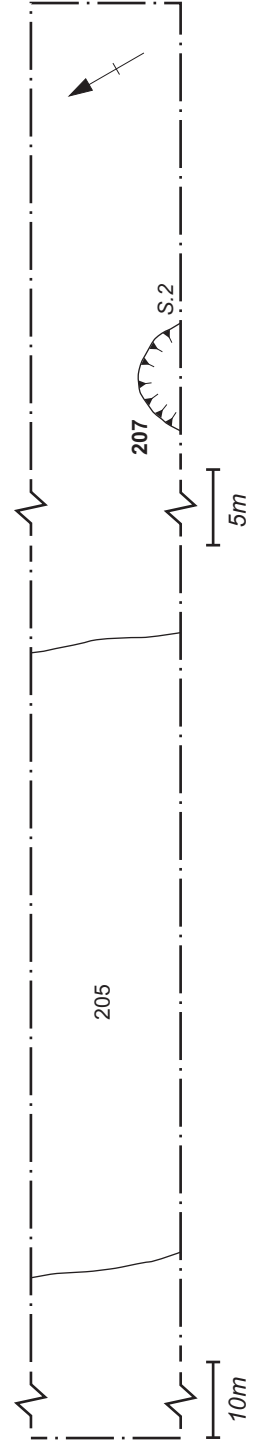


120.00m aOD

Trench 1



Trench 2



5.4 Trench 10

This trench was 50m long by 2m wide and aligned south-west by north-east (Fig 11). The trench was extended by 3m to the west to investigate a deposit at the western end of the trench (Figs 11 and 12). The deposit [1006] was 2.7m wide and 0.55m deep, comprising medium brown clay silt (1004) overlain by dark brown clay silt with frequent charcoal flecks (1005). The shallow profile of this feature does not appear to be archaeological, and is likely to represent the accumulation of colluvial deposits within a natural hollow running down the slope.



Deposit [1006] in Trench 10 partially excavated, looking south Fig 11



Deposit [1006] fully exposed, looking south Fig 12

6 DISCUSSION

Trench 2 was targeted on a geophysical anomaly of geological or archaeological origin. It is possible that this signal stems from the rubble deposit in the topsoil.

An undated pit was uncovered in the south-western end of Trench 2, otherwise no archaeological features or artefacts were found on the site. On the north-western slopes deposits of colluvium was recorded in hollows that have filled in over time.

A rapid assessment of the available historic maps (www.old-maps.co.uk) showed that during the 19th and early 20th centuries there were low-scale housing or farm buildings fronting onto Bedford Road. These structures are indicated on modern Ordnance Survey mapping although they have been recently demolished. The modern features uncovered in Trench 1 are likely to be related to these structures.

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APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	32m x 2m NW-SE	TL 01464 24448	114.06m aOD	0.55m, 113.51m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
101	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.25m thick	-
102	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions	0.15m thick	-
103	Layer		0.15m thick	-
104	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-
105	Fill of [106]	Dark brown-grey clay silt	-	Modern finds – tile and bone, not retained
106	Cut of drainage ditch	Linear, north-south orientated, bowl shaped with flat base	0.20m deep 1.20m wide	-
107	Fill of [108]	Dark brown-grey clay silt	-	Modern finds - glass and metal, not retained
108	Cut of drainage ditch	Linear, north-south orientated, bowl-shaped with flat base	0.15m deep 1m wide	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	50m x 2m S-N	TL 01542 24525	119.54m aOD	0.76m, 118.78m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
201	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.26m thick	-
202	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions	0.15m thick	-
203	Layer	Medium brown silty clay	0.20m thick	-
204	Layer	Dark brown-grey silty clay with black organic part	0.15m thick	-
205	Layer	Orange gritty sand; lot of medium-sized inclusion – possible building rubble	0.10m thick	-
206	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-
206	Fill of [207]	Dark brown-grey clay silt; occasional small stones	-	-
207	Cut of pit	Circular, U-shaped profile with a flat base	0.28m deep 1.40m wide	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
3	50m x 2m N-S	TL 01562 24587	120.15m aOD	0.59m, 119.56m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
301	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.34m thick	-
302	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions	0.25m thick	-
303	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-
304	Fill of [305]	Mid grey-brown silty clay; occasional small chalk inclusion; very frequent snail inclusions	-	-
305	Cut of tree throw	Irregular oval outline, base and sides; V-shaped	0.20m deep 0.52m wide	-
306	Fill of [307]	Mid grey-brown silty clay; occasional small chalk inclusion; very frequent snail inclusions	-	-
307	Cut of tree throw	Irregular oval outline, base and sides; V-shaped	0.22m deep 0.73m wide	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
4	50m x 2m W-E	TL 01523 24634	116.36m aOD	0.73m, 115.63m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
401	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.33m thick	-
402	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions; not present in west part of trench	0.28m thick	-
403	Colluvium	Mid grey-brown clay silt; frequent small stone inclusions and very frequent snail fragments	0.40m thick	-
404	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
5	50m x 2m N-S	TL 01631 24617	121.78m aOD	0.26m, 121.52m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
501	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.26m thick	-
502	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions		Animal bone, not retained

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
6	50m x 2m W-S	TL 01511 24417	116.99m aOD	0.69m, 116.30m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
601	Topsoil	Mid brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.26m thick	-
602	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions	0.43m thick	-
603	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
7	50m x 2m SE-NW	TL 01596 24480	120.54m aOD	0.32m; 120.22m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
701	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.32m thick	-
702	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
8	50m x 2m NE-SW	TL 01659 24514	122.16m aOD	0.33m; 121.82m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
801	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.33m thick	-
802	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
9	46m x 2m S-N	TL 01557 24346	117.90m aOD	0.50m; 117.40m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
901	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.30m thick	-
902	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions	0.20m thick	-
903	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
10	50m x 2m SW-NE	TL 01621 24407	119.37m aOD	0.50m; 118.87m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
1001	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.25m thick	-
1002	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions	0.25m thick	-
1003	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-
1004	Fill of [1006]	Medium dark brown clay silt with flecks of charcoal; merging with (1004)	-	-
1005	Fill of [1006]	Medium brown clay silt	-	-
1006	Cut of deposit	Linear; west to east orientated; bowl-shaped with stepped sides; flat base	0.75m deep 2.7m wide	-

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
11	30m x 2m S-N	TL 01696 24460	121.63m aOD	1.52m; 120.11m aOD
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/samples
1101	Topsoil	Dark brown-grey clay loam; frequent small to medium stone inclusions of chalk, flint and stones	0.29m thick	-
1102	Subsoil	Mid brown-grey silty clay; occasional small stone and chalk inclusions	0.25m thick	-
1103	Natural	Light brown-grey chalky clay; frequent small to large chalk and flint inclusions	-	-
1104	Colluvium	Medium brown silty clay	0.38m thick	-
1105	Colluvium	Dark brown silty clay, stone inclusions	0.60m thick	-



Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 **f.** 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk

w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



**Northamptonshire
County Council**