



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation on land at Chapel Drive, Aston Clinton Buckinghamshire



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QUALITY CONTROL

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Approved by	Andy Chapman	<i>AC</i>	04/10/13

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 160409
Project name	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Chapel Drive, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, to conduct an archaeological evaluation for land at Chapel Drive, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire, prior to a proposed development. Four trenches were excavated. A medieval pit is dated to the late 12th-13th centuries by a single sherd of pottery. Occasional furrows associated with medieval ridge and furrow cultivation were observed. Two small undated drainage gullies were recorded, their orientation and location suggests they are related to medieval agricultural activity. A pair of postholes are of post-medieval to recent date.	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Evaluation	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	None	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	None	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Buckinghamshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Land at Chapel Drive, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire HP22 5EN	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	2.1ha	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	NGR SP 882 124	
Height OD	Approx. 95 aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Archaeological Planning Officer, BCC	
Project Design originator	CgMS Consulting	
Director/Supervisor	Chris Chinnock	
Project Manager	Antony Maull	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	23/09/13	
End date	24/09/13	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Buckinghamshire County Museum AYBCM:2013.101	
Paper	Buckinghamshire County Museum AYBCM:2013.101	Site file
Digital	Buckinghamshire County Museum AYBCM:2013.101	Mapinfo plans, Word report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation for Land at Chapel Drive, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire	
Serial title & volume	13/191	
Author(s)	Chris Chinnock	
Page numbers		
Date		

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION ON LAND AT
CHAPEL DRIVE, ASTON CLINTON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
SEPTEMBER 2013**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, to conduct an archaeological evaluation for land at Chapel Drive, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire, prior to a proposed development. Four trenches were excavated. A medieval pit is dated to the late 12th-13th centuries by a single sherd of pottery. Occasional furrows associated with medieval ridge and furrow cultivation were observed. Two small undated drainage gullies were recorded, their orientation and location suggests they are related to medieval agricultural activity. A pair of postholes are of post-medieval to recent date.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, to conduct an archaeological evaluation on land at Chapel Drive, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 882 124). The fieldwork was carried out on 23rd and 24th of September 2013.

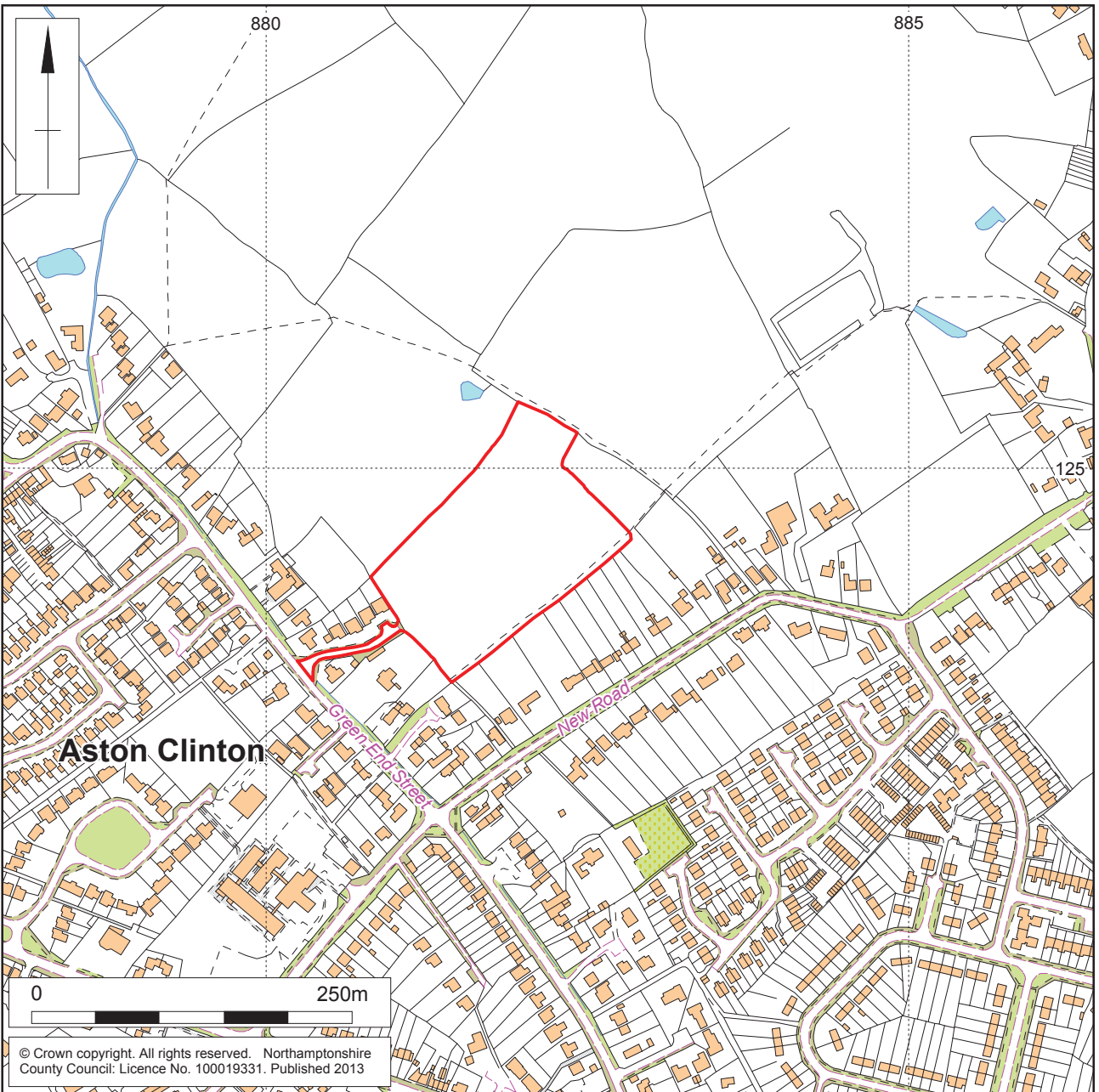
Following recommendations by the Archaeological Planning Officer for Buckinghamshire a programme of archaeological evaluation within the area of the proposed development was required. The requirements were outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by CgMs Consulting (Mortimer 2013).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The evaluation of the site was designed to provide information that will allow for the effective targeting of further investigation of the site, if required, prior to or during the early phases of its development.

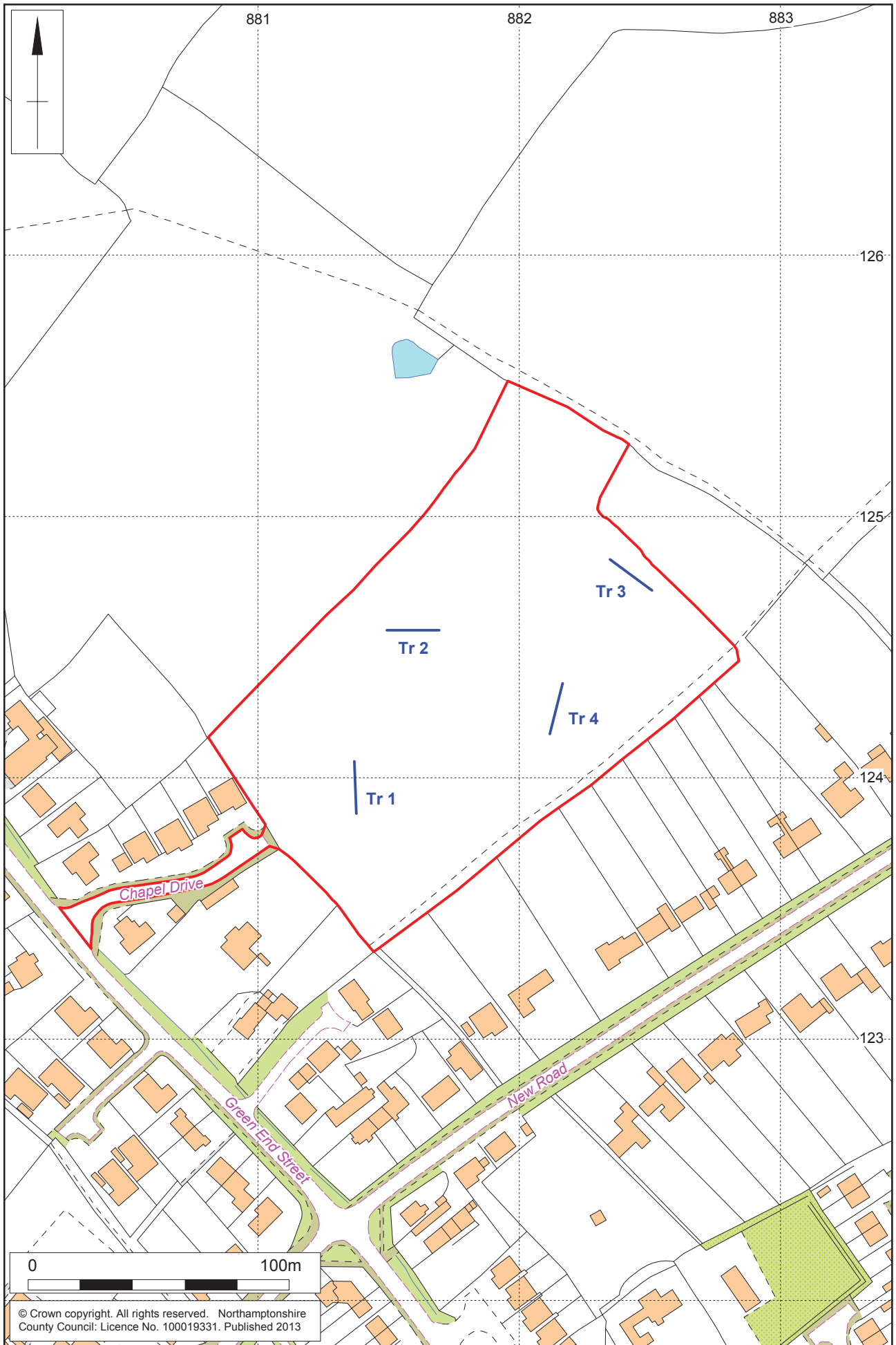
The following information was required to allow the development of a strategy for further investigation of the site:

- The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
- The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.



Scale 1:5000

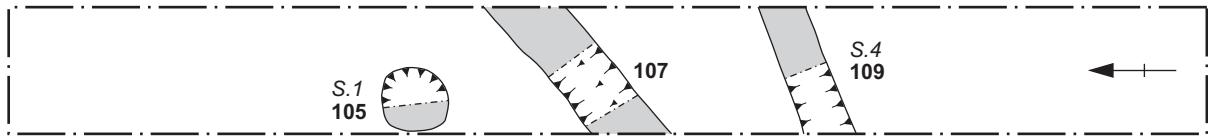
Site Location Fig 1



Scale 1:200

Trench location plan Fig 2

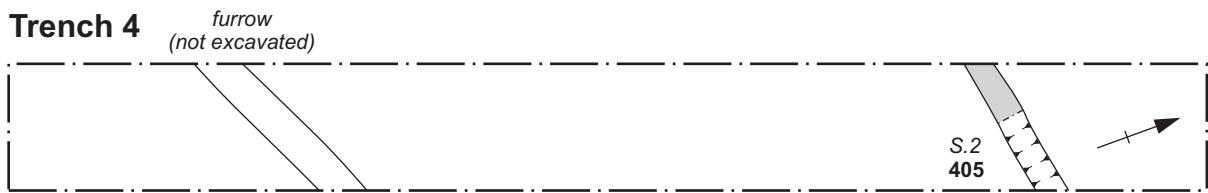
Trench 1



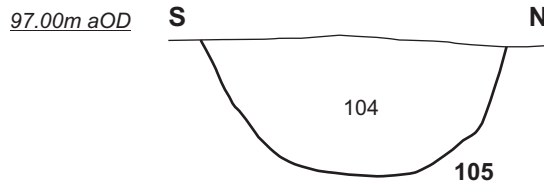
Trench 2



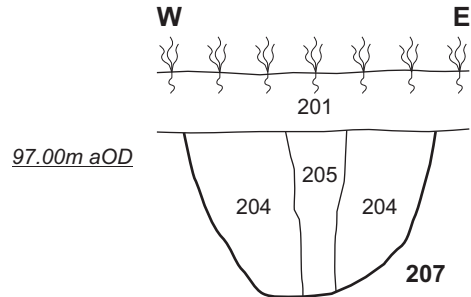
Trench 4



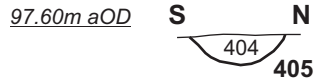
Section 1



Section 3



Section 2



Section 4



The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the IfA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008), the *Northamptonshire Archaeology Fieldwork Manual* (NA 2011) and English Heritage's *Management of projects in the historic environment* (EH 2006)

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

Aston Clinton is approximately four miles east of Aylesbury in eastern central Buckinghamshire. The site occupies a sub-rectangular area of land (2.1ha) and is bounded by a residential estate to the south and arable farmland to the north. It lies at approximately 95m aOD. The underlying geology is mapped as Mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (www.bgs.ac.uk). The superficial geology is recorded as slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils (LAT 1983).

3.2 Archaeological background

A geophysical survey was conducted on the site by Stratascan prior to the trial trench evaluation (Richardson 2013). This survey revealed evidence for medieval ridge and furrow across the proposed development area. One positive anomaly was interpreted as a possible cut feature and a weak negative anomaly described as a possible bank. Overall the survey suggests little potential for surviving archaeological remains within the area. A similar conclusion was drawn from an assessment of the Historic Environment Records for the development area and immediate surroundings by CgMs Consulting (Thornton 2013). A small evaluation was conducted by Cotswold Archaeology (2009) to the south-west of the site which found three small ditches of Roman date. Other sporadic find spots of prehistoric and Roman date are recorded. Activity increased dramatically in the medieval period.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Four trenches were excavated using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and subsoil were removed under archaeological direction to reveal natural substrate. The topsoil and subsoil were stacked separately at the side of the excavated area. All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to define any features. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the evaluation were fully recorded, following standard NA procedures (NA 2011). All deposits were given a separate context number. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Unstratified animal bones and modern material were not retained.

The location of the trenches were surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A full photographic record comprising both 35mm black and white negatives and digital images was maintained. The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The evaluation conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised Oct 2008). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with recommendations made by the Archaeological Planning Officer for Buckinghamshire County Council and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CgMs Consulting (Mortimer 2013).

5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The excavated trenches reveal limited evidence for medieval agriculture on the same alignment as identified in geophysical data in the north-east corner of the development area (Richardson 2013). Two small gullies on the same alignment are likely to be related to this activity. One isolated medieval pit, dated to the late 12th-13th centuries, was recorded as well as a pair of postholes, probably from a post-medieval field division.



Pit [105], looking west Fig 4

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the south-western end of the field, and was aligned north-south (Fig 2).

The natural substrate (103) comprised light grey silty-chalky clay with occasional patches of dense chalk and sub-angular flint throughout, occurring between 0.40m and 0.50m below the current ground surface. The subsoil (102) was 0.12m-0.16m thick and consisted of compact dark grey silty clay. The topsoil (101) was a root disturbed dark brown silty clay loam 0.22m-0.25m thick.

A steep-sided circular pit [105], 1.02m in diameter and 0.46m deep was recorded (Fig 3). The fill (104) comprised firm mid grey clay with small chalk and sub-angular flint throughout. One small fragment of animal bone and a single small sherd of pottery were recovered. The pottery has been identified as medieval greyware, which dates to the late 12th-13th centuries (P Blinkhorn pers comm).

A shallow irregularly-shaped linear feature [107], 1.0m wide and 0.12m deep and aligned north-east to south-west is interpreted as a furrow base. The fill (106) comprised firm mid-grey silty clay. Post-medieval finds including glass and pottery were noted.

A shallow wide U-shaped linear feature [109] was recorded towards the south end of the trench on a similar alignment to the nearby furrow [107] (Fig 3). The possible gully was 0.63m wide and 0.12m deep with a fill (108) of firm mid-grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and chalk throughout.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located on the north-western side of the field, aligned east-west (Fig 2).

The natural substrate (203) comprised light grey silty-chalky clay with occasional patches of dense chalk and sub-angular flint throughout, occurring between 0.44m and 0.55m below the current ground surface. The subsoil (202) was 0.16m-0.20m thick and consisted of compact dark grey silty clay. The topsoil (201) was a root disturbed dark brown silty clay loam 0.24m-0.25m thick.

A pair of postholes, [207] and [209] were recorded (Fig 3). Posthole [207] was circular, 0.82m in diameter and 0.55m deep with steep sides and a shallow bowl-shaped base. A parallel-sided, straight post-pipe c. 0.25m in diameter, was visible in the centre of the posthole. The fill of the post-pipe comprised friable black charcoal, burnt quartz and flint (205). The main backfill around the post (204) was mid grey silty clay, very similar to the surrounding natural. In section the posthole and post-pipe could be seen to extend through the subsoil suggesting that they relate to more recent activity (Figs 3 and 5).

The other posthole [209] was left unexcavated though, in plan, it had comparable dimensions and fill.



Posthole [207], looking north Fig 5

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located at the north-eastern end of the development area, aligned north-west to south-east (Fig 2).

The natural substrate (303) was a mid to light grey silty chalk clay with bands of orange silty clay with flint gravel occurring intermittently throughout the trench. The natural is present between 0.56m and 0.61m below the current ground level. The subsoil (302) was 0.24m-0.38m thick and consisted of compact dark grey silty clay. The topsoil (301) was a root disturbed dark brown silty clay loam, 0.24m-0.26m thick.

No archaeological features were observed in this trench. The anomaly identified in the geophysical survey (Richardson 2013) is likely to relate to geological changes observed in the natural substrate (303).

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was located on the south eastern side of the field aligned north-east to south-west (Fig 2).

The natural substrate (403) comprised light grey silty-chalky clay with occasional patches of dense chalk and sub-angular flint throughout, occurring between 0.46m and 0.51m below the current ground surface. The subsoil (402) was 0.18m-0.20m thick and consisted of compact dark grey silty clay. The topsoil (401) was a root disturbed dark brown silty clay loam, 0.22m-0.25m thick.

A small undated gully [405], 0.32m wide and 0.10m deep, was aligned roughly east to west. The fill (404) comprised amid grey silty clay with rare chalk and angular flint inclusions. No finds were recovered, it is thought likely that the gully relates to medieval agricultural practices due to the nearby furrows on the same alignment (Fig 3).

6 DISCUSSION

The features identified in the proposed area for development largely reflect medieval agricultural practices.

A single pit in Trench 2 is dated to the late 12th -13th centuries by a single sherd of medieval greyware. No other features were identified that would suggest further medieval activity on-site.

Remnant furrows and associated drainage gullies relating to medieval agricultural practices were recorded following a roughly north-east to south-west alignment. This correlates with the slight evidence for ridge and furrow in the northern corner of the site seen in the geophysical data (Richardson 2013).

A pair of postholes, in Trench 2, cut from above the subsoil, are of post-medieval or modern date.

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www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html

APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1	Length, Width & Alignment 20mx1.8m N-S		Surface Height (North end) 97.44m aOD	Depth & Height of Natural 0.41m 97.03m aOD
Context	Context Type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay with rooting throughout and occasional small stones.	0.25m thick	
102	Subsoil	Dark grey silty clay with occasional small chalk and flint inclusions.	0.16m thick	
103	Natural	Mid to light grey silty clay with frequent calcerous/chalky patches.	0.05-0.12m visible in section.	
104	Fill of pit [105]	Mid grey firm silty clay with small chalk and angular flint throughout.	1.02m in diameter. 0.46m deep	Animal bone and one sherd of Early Medieval pottery.
105	Pit	Deep bowl with step sides and slightly concave base. Circular in plan.	1.02m in diameter. 0.46m deep	
106	Fill of furrow [107]	Firm mid-grey silty clay with small chalk and flint inclusions throughout.	1.0m wide, 0.12m deep	Animal bone and post-medieval glass/pottery.
107	Furrow	Irregular linear with indistinct edges.	1.0m wide, 0.12m deep	
108	Fill of gully [109]	Mid grey silty clay with small chalk and angular flint inclusions throughout.	0.63m wide, 2m long and 0.12m deep	
109	Gully	Wide shallow U-shape. Regular edges and a flat-slightly concave base.	0.63m wide, 0.12m deep	

Trench 2	Length, Width & Alignment 20mx1.8m E-W		Surface Height (West end) 97.24m aOD	Depth & Height of Natural 0.32m 152.21m aOD
Context	Context Type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
201	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay with rooting throughout and occasional small stones.	0.25m thick	
202	Subsoil	Dark grey silty clay with occasional small chalk and flint inclusions.	0.20m thick	
203	Natural	Mid to light grey silty clay with frequent calcerous/chalky patches.	0.04-0.06m visible	
204	Fill of posthole [206]	Firm mid grey silty/chalky clay.	0.82m in diameter. 0.55m deep	
205	Post-pipe in posthole [206]	Sub-rectangular in section, filled with loose burnt quartz, flint and charcoal.	0.25m diameter, 0.55m deep.	
206	Posthole	Large circular post-hole with steep sides and a slightly concave base.	0.82m diameter. 0.55m deep	
207	Fill of posthole [208]	Firm mid grey silty/chalky clay.	0.80m diameter	
208	Posthole	Unexcavated. Same shape in plan as [206].	0.80m diameter	

Trench 3	Length, Width & Alignment 20mx1.8m SE-NW		Surface Height (NW end) 97.66m aOD	Depth & Height of Natural 0.54m 97.12m aOD
Context	Context Type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
301	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay with rooting throughout and occasional small stones.	0.24m thick	
302	Subsoil	Dark grey silty clay with occasional small chalk and flint inclusions.	0.30m thick	
303	Natural	Mixed light to mid-grey chalky/silty clay with bands and patches of orange clay with flint gravel.	0.07m visible	

Trench 4	Length, Width & Alignment 20mx1.8m NE-SW		Surface Height (SW end) 98.15m aOD	Depth & Height of Natural 0.45m 97.70m aOD
Context	Context Type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
401	Topsoil	Dark brown silty clay with rooting throughout and occasional small stones.	0.25m thick	
402	Subsoil	Dark grey silty clay with occasional small chalk and flint inclusions.	0.20m thick	
403	Natural	Mid to light grey silty clay with frequent calcerous/chalky patches.	0.04-0.08m visible.	
404	Fill of gully [405]	Firm mid-grey silty clay with rare charcoal flecks and occasional small chalk and sub-angular flint throughout.	0.32m wide, 0.10m deep	
405	Gully	Shallow, U-shaped, linear feature.	0.32m wide, 0.10m deep	



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