Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological trial trench evaluation at Grace Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire October 2013

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QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	**OASIS No: 164025**	
Project name	An archaeological trial trench evaluation at Grace Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire, October 2013	
An archaeological trial trench excavation in arable fields to the east of Grace Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire identified medieval ridge and furrow on a north-east to south-west alignment. Most of the trenches were without other features and there was no archaeological evidence other than for the open field cultivation. No finds were recovered.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (Hunt 2013) Geophysical survey (Richardson 2013)	
Current land use	Arable farmland	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/period	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Leicestershire	
Site address	Grace Road, Sapcote	
Study area	8.48ha	
OS NGR	SP 49257 93689	
Height a OD	*c*95-96m above Ordnance Datum	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Teresa Hawtin, Leicestershire County Council	
Project Design originator	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisors	Chris Chinnock, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Managers	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	David Wilson Homes	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	7th October 2013	
End date	10th October 2013	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Leicestershire Museums X.A161.2013	None
Paper		Trench record sheets, site registers, photographic archive, background documents
Digital		Client PDF report
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report	
Title	An archaeological trial trench evaluation at Grace Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire, October 2013	
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION AT GRACE ROAD, SAPCOTE, LEICESTERSHIRE OCTOBER 2013

Abstract

An archaeological trial trench excavation in arable fields to the east of Grace Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire identified medieval ridge and furrow on a north-east to south-west alignment. Most of the trenches were without other features and there was no archaeological evidence other than for the open field cultivation. No finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) undertook trial trench excavations at Grace Road, Sapcote, Leicestershire in October 2013, for CgMs Consulting acting on behalf of David Wilson Homes. The proposed development site lies to the east of Grace Road in an area of arable farmland and lies due south of former quarry works (Fig 1; NGR SP 49257 93689). Prior to archaeological trial trench investigations the site was the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment (Hunt 2013) and geophysical survey (Richardson 2013). The possibility of archaeological remains associated with prehistoric and Roman settlement, predating the medieval open fields of Sapcote, was considered feasible. Few prehistoric and Roman finds have been made locally, but little work has been undertaken in the area to verify their extent. Subsequently, Leicestershire County Council (LCC), as advisors to the planning authority, required a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation in order to assess the presence or absence, date and preservation of any such remains. No formal brief was issued; however, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by NA in advance of the work to meet the requirements of LCC in accordance with their *Generic Brief* (LCC 2013; Brown 2013). All work was undertaken in compliance with the expectations of LCC and was monitored by a member of their archaeological advisory team.

Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) registered organisation which abides by the established *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010). All works were completed in accordance with the procedural documents of English Heritage (EH 1997; 2006; 2008; 2011) and the appropriate standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (IfA 2008a). The accession number X.A161.2013 was assigned in advance of the fieldwork.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Summary of previous archaeological work

A desk-based assessment and geophysical survey were conducted for the development site prior to the trial trench works (Hunt 2013; Richardson 2013). The desk-based assessment indicated that finds of Mesolithic and Iron Age date had been found in the vicinity of Potters Marston, the parish to the north, which was also a centre for medieval pottery production.

A brief overview of heritage assets indicated low level discoveries in the area, mainly dated from the 12th to 13th centuries onwards:

Prehistoric

A Neolithic stone axe was recovered from Ortons Hill during quarry works, although its location is not known.

Roman

Roman pottery was recovered from a watching brief at Park House Farm, Sapcote. A beehive quern and 'ancient pottery' have been recovered from Mill Hill, Stoney Stanton.

Saxo-Norman and medieval

A ditch was identified during evaluation works off Grace Road, to the north, where it becomes Sapcote Road entering into Stoney Stanton.

Within Sapcote, Toot Hill castle motte lay at the medieval core, but was levelled post-1778. Remains of a 12th to 13th-century yard surface, and a boundary that was filled in the 14th century were found to the rear of the former Methodist Church, also within Sapcote, and medieval pottery was recovered during works at 20 Stanton Road and from a watching brief at Park House Farm. Remains of a possible medieval road surface were identified during works at the former Lord Basset Arms.

There are slightly confused reports of two coffins found in Stoney Stanton parish, near to the present site, during quarry works. One coffin was in stone, the other made of lead found *c*1885-1897 and in 1905. A windmill stood at Mill Hill in Stoney Stanton, documented in 1279.

Post-medieval

The Lord Basset Arms was a 19th-century public house in Sapcote, demolished in 2005. A cobbled surface, together with pits and ditches was found at the Old Schoolhouse and an 18th-century wall was recorded at 41 Church Street. A watching brief at Park House Farm recorded 18th-century farm outbuildings and features.

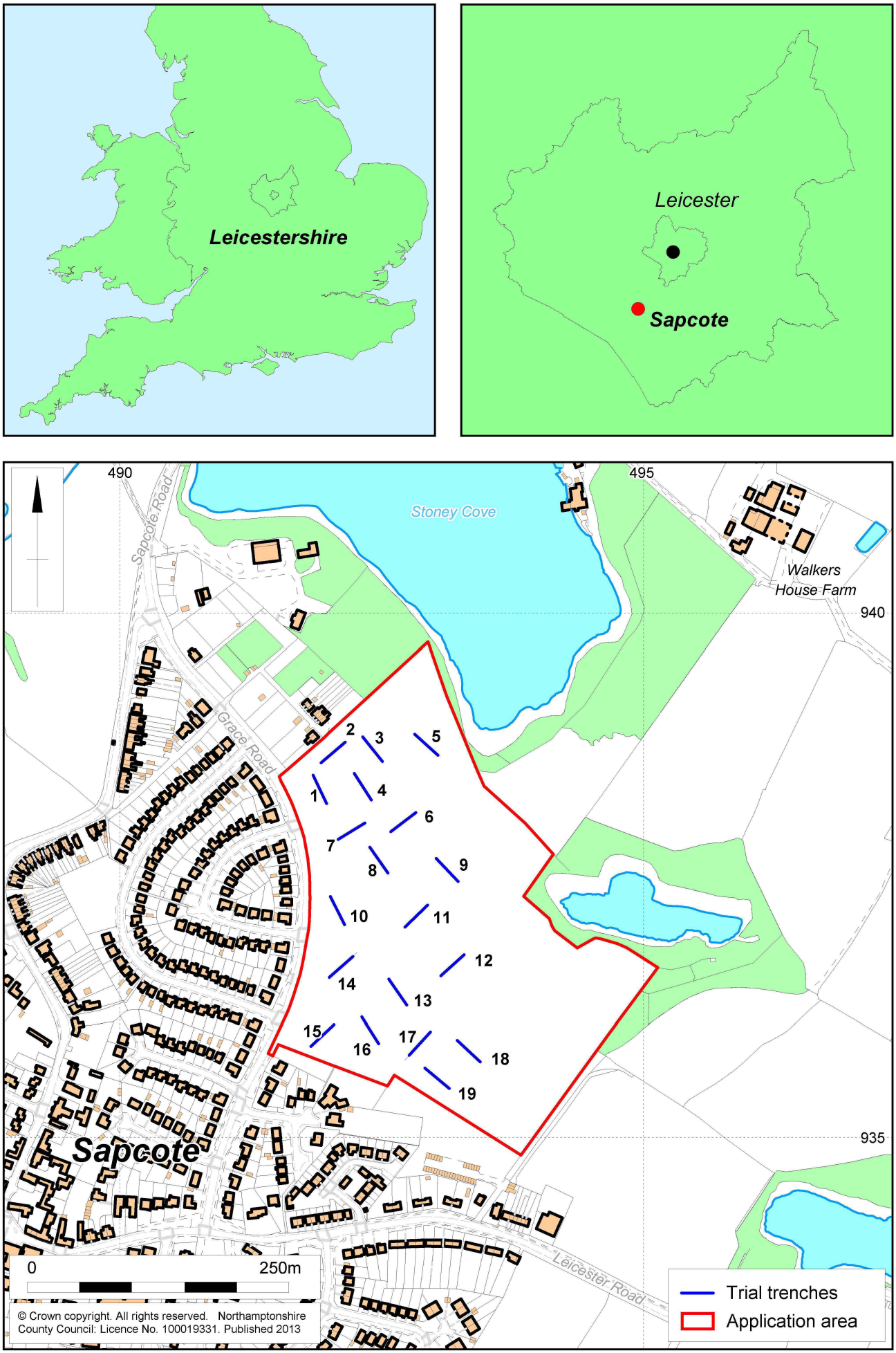
Geophysical surveys in 2009, to the north of the site, in Stoney Stanton parish, identified the former mineral railway that served the quarries. In 1806 a bath house was built over the site of Golden Well Spring, nearby. A windmill was mapped near the site by the Ordnance Survey in 1814, and noted in ruins in 1860, which survived until 1904. A 19th-century well has been recorded at 6 Church Street, Sapcote, and another was noted at Mill Hill, Stoney Stanton, *c*1885-1897.

Geophysical survey

A geophysical survey conducted on the present site identified ridge and furrow cultivation, aligned north-east to south-west, and a small concentration of possible features in the north of the site (Richardson 2013).

2.2 Topography and geology

Sapcote is located within 1km of the Fosse Way Roman road, on its north-west side. The proposed development occupies 8.48ha of arable land. The site is bounded to the west by Grace Road, to the north and east by disused quarries, now lakes, and to the south by properties fronting the Leicester Road. The land is inclined, sloping gradually down towards the village from north-east to south-west, *c*96-95m above Ordnance Datum.



Scale 1:5,000

Site location and trench layout Fig 1

According to the solid geology map of Southern England the site is Triassic (Mercia) mudstone (BGS 2001). However, the drift geology of the area is mixed comprising Thrussington Tills, Wolston Clays and Wolston sand and gravels (http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html) and in the flood plain areas this is overlain by alluvium. The soils are of Beccles 3 (711t) association and comprise slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy soils over chalky clay till (LAT 1983).

3 EXCAVATION STRATEGY

3.1 Objectives

The principal aim of archaeological evaluation was to quantify the quality and extent of the archaeological resource and inform further decisions regarding the archaeological mitigation strategy for the site with due regard for applicable regional research objectives (Cooper 2006; Knight *et al* 2012).

The aim of trial trench evaluation was to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character and date, state of preservation and depth of burial for any archaeological remains within the application area. Specifically in order to:

- establish whether any archaeological deposit existed in the area with particular regard to any which merited preservation *in situ;*
- identify the date, form and function of any archaeological deposit, together with its extent, depth and quality of preservation;
- evaluate the likely impact of past land use and the possible presence of masking ridge and furrow features;
- establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence, and;
- provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practises, timetables and overheads.

3.2 Methodology

Nineteen trial trenches were excavated, each 30m long by 1.8m wide, scattered across the area of the housing development and based on a 2% sample of the area. Two trench positions were adjusted to accommodate overhead power lines. The trench locations were agreed in advance with the LCC prior to works commencing (Brown 2013). The trenches were located so as to avoid principal constraints formed by obstructions and were mapped onto the Ordnance Survey using Leica 1200 GPS equipment with an accuracy of ±20mm.

Each trench was graded under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Machine excavation continued to reveal undisturbed natural horizons, in the absence of an archaeological horizon. Machine excavation removed topsoil, subsoil and the sufficient of the medieval furrows to determine whether they masked earlier deposits beneath. Spoil was scanned by eye and with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

Each excavation area was cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features. All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of excavation were fully recorded. The recording followed the standard NA context recording system with context record sheets using unique each deposit, cross-referenced to scale plans, section drawings and photographs in digital, and on 35mm monochrome film (NA 2011). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* record sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Archaeological sections of trenches were drawn at scale 1:10 and all levels were related to Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights were determined for each trench and significant deposit using the recent topographical survey of the site.

Unstratified animal bones and modern artefacts were noted, but not retained. The field data has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing in accordance with best practise (IfA 2008b; MGC 1992; AAF 2007).

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

The natural substrate was yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel, which contained occasional sand and gravel clasts throughout. The surface deposits were distributed above this geological horizon, with no evidence for features predating the medieval open fields (Appendix, trench photos).

The trial trench evaluation confirmed the presence of remnant furrows from open field cultivation, aligned roughly north-east to south-west, in a number of trenches and synonymous with the anomalies identified by the forerunning geophysical surveys (Richardson 2013). The furrows were much clearer at the south-east end of the field against the firm yellow clay when compared with the mid yellow-brown sandy natural recorded elsewhere. The cultivation soil within the furrows comprised light to mid-orange-brown sandy clay loam. Furrows were generally spaced at 6-8m intervals, with the deepest furrow cut at no more than 0.16m deep, suggesting extensive overall site truncation.

Possible archaeological anomalies had been suggested by the geophysical survey in the north of the field, which were investigated by Trench 5 and found to be the product of natural gravel bands. In the south of the field, Trenches 15 and 16 contained a large spread of modern construction waste, up to 0.40m thick, including asphalt, concrete blocks, bricks and other debris associated with the construction of the 1970s estate to the west of Grace Road. A large anomaly at the south-west end of Trench 17 was caused by two large steel cables which were deeply embedded into the natural clay. The cables appeared similar to the anchoring cables attached to nearby telegraph poles, perhaps a previous route for the overhead power lines.

No features of archaeological interest were observed in any of the excavated trenches and there were no residual finds recovered from the topsoil or subsoil layers.

The subsoil comprised orange-brown sandy loam which was up to 350mm thick in the north of the site, thickening to 410mm deep in the centre of the site and thinning to 120mm thick, in the south of the site. The topsoil, which is a modern plough soil, was distributed in a similar fashion to the subsoil at 250-440mm thick, which comprised dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size. The topsoil contained stubble from the earlier harvest. The soil distribution suggests that ploughing has filled a natural dip in the hillside that once existed from north-west to south-west across the central area, but there was no evidence for a watercourse and this was probably sculpted by glacial run off.

5 CONCLUSIONS

There is no evidence to suggest that significant archaeological features may be found within the proposed development footprint. No finds were recovered as residual artefacts amongst the medieval or later plough soils to suggest that such features had been truncated by earlier ploughing.

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APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY & TRENCH PHOTOGRAPHS

Trench 1 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	300mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	270mm thick	-
103	2x furrows	light to mid-orange-brown sandy clay loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	1.9-2.2m wide	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 2 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	340mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	350mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 3 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	300mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	320mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 4 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	300mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	270mm thick	-
103	furrow	light to mid-orange-brown sandy clay loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	1.6m wide	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 5 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	340mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	290mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 6 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	360mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	320mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 7 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	400mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	290mm thick	-
103	2x furrows	light to mid-orange-brown sandy clay loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	1.6-1.9m wide	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 8 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	310mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	320mm thick	-
103	2x furrows	light to mid-orange-brown sandy clay loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	1.8-2.1m wide	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 9 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	440mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	320mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 10 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	430mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	340mm thick	-
103	furrow	light to mid-orange-brown sandy clay loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	2.0m wide	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 11 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	420mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	410mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 12 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	340mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	250mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 13 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	420mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	120mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 14 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	530mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	160mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 15 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	280mm thick	-
102	overburden	dark black silty clay mixed with brick, tile and rubble	400mm thick	-
103	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	180mm thick	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 16 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	260mm thick	-
102	overburden	dark black silty clay mixed with brick, tile and rubble	320mm thick	-
103	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	150mm thick	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 17 30m x 1.8m NE-SW				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	300mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	170mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 18 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	250mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	190mm thick	-
103	3x furrows	light to mid-orange-brown sandy clay loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	1.8-2.0m wide	-
104	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

Trench 19 30m x 1.8m NW-SE				
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Dimensions**	**Artefacts/ Samples**
101	topsoil	dark greyish-brown sandy clay loam with occasional small angular pebbles <8mm in size	280mm thick	-
102	subsoil	orange-brown sandy loam with infrequent small angular grit <5mm in size	120mm thick	-
103	natural	yellow and deep yellowish-orange sand, sandy clay and gravel with occasional sand and gravel clasts	-	-

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