

**Land at Springfields  
Towcester  
Northamptonshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

Site Code: SPRT 15



*for*

**Lovell Partnerships Ltd**


CA Project: 660406  
CA Report: 15061

February 2015

# Land at Springfields Towcester Northamptonshire

## Archaeological Evaluation

CA Project: 660406  
CA Report: 15061

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date	10 February 2015
issue	01

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## SUMMARY

<b>Project Name:</b>	Land at Springfields, Towcester
<b>Location:</b>	Towcester, Northamptonshire
<b>NGR:</b>	SP 6840 4812
<b>Type:</b>	Evaluation
<b>Date:</b>	26-27 January 2015
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	S/2012/1485/MAF
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre
<b>Site Code:</b>	SPRT15

In January 2015, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of a plot of disused land adjacent to the South Northamptonshire Council offices at Springfields, Towcester. The evaluation, which was commissioned by Lovell Partnerships Ltd, was carried out in order to fulfil a condition attached to planning consent for the residential development of the site. A series of test pits in the Council office car park had also been proposed in the programme of archaeological evaluation, but in the light of the initial evaluation results and following discussions with Lesley-Ann Mather, Northamptonshire County Council's Archaeological Advisor, this was dropped from the trenching scheme.

The evaluation comprised the excavation of seven 30m trial trenches in an area of recently cleared scrubland to the south-west of the Council offices. A modern ditch was identified in the central part of the site; this appears to demarcate the south-western edge of a stand of trees that formerly occupied the north-eastern edge of the site, prior to recent felling and clearance. The ditch probably dates to the 1970s, when the area was landscaped following the construction of the Council offices. The ridge and furrow earthworks shown on historic aerial photographs of the site were no longer evident and appear to have been levelled around the time the Council offices were built.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2015, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation of a plot of disused land adjacent to the South Northamptonshire Council offices at Springfields, Towcester (site centred on NGR: SP 6840 4812; Fig. 1). The evaluation, which was commissioned by Lovell Partnerships Ltd, was carried out in order to fulfil a condition attached to planning consent for the residential development of the site (South Northamptonshire Council planning ref. S/2012/1485/MAF, Condition 11).
- 1.2 The site is located within the administrative boundary of South Northamptonshire Council and archaeological advice on planning matters has been provided by Lesley-Ann Mather, Northamptonshire County Council's Archaeological Advisor (NCCAA). The scope of the evaluation, which was informed by a *Heritage Desk-Based Assessment* (HDBA) prepared by CA (2012), originally comprised geophysical survey followed by trial trenching and test pitting. However, following clearance of the south-western part of the site it was decided that the ground conditions were not suitable for survey, so the number of trenches in this area was increased in order to compensate for the loss of information the survey would have provided. Also, in the light of the initial evaluation results and following discussions with NCCAA, it was decided that the test pitting in the car park would not be necessary to fulfil the requirements of the planning condition.
- 1.3 The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by CA (2014) and abided by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2009) and the English Heritage procedural documents *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006). The project was monitored by Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor, with a site visit being made on 27 January 2015.

### **The site**

- 1.4 The proposed development site, which covers an area of c. 2.5ha, is located off Springfields, on the western outskirts of Towcester, adjacent to the A43 Towcester By-Pass (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by Springfields to the north-east, Green Lane

to the north-west, housing to the south-west and a leisure centre and associated car park to the south-east. The site currently comprises the extant offices and associated car park of South Northamptonshire Council, and an unused plot of land to the south-west of the council offices, which has recently been cleared of trees and scrub (Fig. 3). The latter covers an area of c. 0.8ha and its north-eastern edge is currently occupied by cabins and an electricity substation.

- 1.5 The site is situated on a south-east facing slope overlooking Silverstone Brook, a tributary of the River Tove, at c. 95m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The geology comprises Jurassic mudstone of the Whitby Formation, with rocks of the Northampton Sand Formation outcropping along the northern edge of the site (BGS 2015).

### ***Archaeological background***

- 1.6 The historical and archaeological background of the site has been presented in detail in the HDBA prepared by CA (2012). This concluded that there are currently no known heritage assets within the site, although given its location directly to the west of the Roman town of *Lactodurum* it should be considered that there is moderate potential for currently unrecorded remains of Roman date to extend into the site.
- 1.7 Known archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity include two ditches, potentially of Roman date, that have been recorded immediately to the east of the site and a Roman surface, possibly a road that has been recorded a short distance to the north. A Saxon cemetery has been recorded at Belle Baulk Farm, approximately 200m to the north of the site, which included a small quantity of cremated bone in a Saxon pottery vessel, along with two partially articulated skeletons, two brooches and a small iron blade.
- 1.8 The Tithe map of 1844 shows the site as farmland, with a field boundary passing through the centre of the site on a north-west to south-east alignment, separating the land into two large fields that extend from Green Lane to Silverstone Brook. By 1884, when the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of the area was published, the fields had been subdivided into smaller rectangular fields, with their main axis still on a north-west to south-east alignment. Medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow earthworks are shown on aerial photographs of the site from the mid-1940s onwards; these were removed by the construction of the council offices in the 1970s.

### **Archaeological objectives**

- 1.9 The objectives of the evaluation, as outlined in the WSI (CA 2014), were to:
- Establish the location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
  - Determine the palaeoenvironmental potential of the site through the assessment of bulk soil samples taken from any suitable archaeological deposits;
  - Determine the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.
- 1.10 The evaluation results will enable NCCAA, archaeological advisor to South Northamptonshire Council, the local planning authority, to identify and assess the particular significance of the site's heritage resource, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance, and develop plans to avoid or minimise conflict between heritage resource conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

### **Methodology**

- 1.11 The evaluation comprised the excavation of seven 30m trenches (210 linear metres) in the locations shown in Figure 2. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using Leica GPS and surveyed in accordance with CA's *Technical Manual 4: Survey Manual* (CA 2009).
- 1.12 The trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the geological substrate, whichever was encountered first. Where archaeological deposits were encountered they were excavated by hand in accordance with CA's *Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.13 Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites* (CA 2003). No archaeological deposits were

encountered that were suitable for environmental sampling and there were no finds (other than modern building debris) in the excavated deposits.

- 1.14 The archive from the evaluation, which is currently held by CA at their office in Milton Keynes, will eventually be deposited with the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (NARC), when this facility becomes available. A summary of information from this project, as set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## 2. RESULTS

- 2.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of seven 30m trial trenches in an area of recently cleared scrubland to the south-west of the South Northamptonshire Council offices and car park at Springfields, Towcester (210 linear metres; Fig. 2). A modern ditch (202/502) was identified in the central part of the site, in Trenches 2 and 5; this appears to demarcate the south-western edge of a stand of trees that formerly occupied the north-eastern edge of the site, prior to recent felling and clearance. There were no archaeological features in Trenches 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7. Details of the features and deposits recorded by the evaluation are presented in Appendix A and are summarised below.

### ***General stratigraphy***

- 2.2 The geological substrate was predominately firm light to mid yellowish-brown clay (Fig. 4), becoming sandier in the north-western corner of the site where the geology changes to Northampton Sands. The overlying topsoil, which varied in thickness between 0.16m–0.32m, comprised soft mid greyish-brown silty clay, with extensive root mats evident in the north-eastern part of the site, which had recently been cleared of trees and vegetation. In places the topsoil contained modern brick rubble and modern refuse, suggesting that it had been redeposited.





## **Modern**

### ***Trench 2***

- 2.3 Passing through the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment, ditch 202 had a steep-sided, U-shaped profile and measured c. 0.3m wide by 0.23m deep (Fig. 5). There appeared to be a broad, shallow ledge on its southern side, although this may have been formed by tree roots as the clay substrate was very mixed. It is likely that the ditch is a continuation of ditch 502 in Trench 5.

### ***Trench 5***

- 2.4 At the western end of the trench, ditch 502 was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east, had a splayed V-shaped profile with a narrow concave base and measured 2.0m wide by 0.48m deep (Fig. 6). It was filled with three deposits, the upper one of which (505) appeared to have been backfilled into the partly silted-up ditch. Fragments of modern brick, clinker and other modern refuse were noted in the fills (not retained). Although it is on a slightly more northerly alignment, the ditch is likely to be a continuation of ditch 202 in Trench 2.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The original evaluation scheme, as agreed with Lesley-Ann Mather, Northamptonshire County Council's Archaeological Advisor, had been to undertake a geophysical survey of the area of disused land to the south-west of the South Northamptonshire Council Offices (the south-western part of the site), as this area had not been previously developed and there was considered to be good potential for archaeological remains, if present, to survive here. However, removal of a stand of mature trees from the north-eastern edge of this area and general scrub clearance elsewhere had rendered the site unsuitable for geophysical survey, so additional trenches were excavated to compensate for the loss of information a geophysical survey may have provided.
- 3.2 Trial trenching demonstrated that parts of the site had been extensively disturbed, not only by recent site clearance but possibly by activities associated with the construction of the Council offices in the 1970s. This disturbance was most apparent in the south-eastern half of the site, where the topsoil appears to have been previously stripped and reinstated, having been mixed with brick rubble and other

modern debris. Near the entrance to the site, some of the rubble appears to have been put down to form areas of hardstanding.

3.3 Although this part of the site had not been developed, reference to the Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (CA 2012) confirms that the land has undergone some form of ground disturbance as aerial photographs taken from the mid-1940s onwards show ridge and furrow earthworks within the site. However, immediately prior to site clearance and at the time of the current evaluation there were no earthworks within the site, suggesting that they had been levelled, probably in the 1970s.

3.4 Despite slight variations in alignment, it is likely that the two modern ditches investigated in Trenches 2 and 5 are collinear and form part of the same boundary/drainage ditch. They do not correspond with field boundary ditches shown on historic mapping but they do demarcate the boundary between the now-felled stand of trees and the open ground to the south-west. It is therefore likely that the ditch was excavated in the 1970s as part of the landscaping of the site, following the construction of the Council offices.

#### 4. CA PROJECT TEAM

4.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Peter James and Emily Evans. The report was written by Peter James, with illustrations prepared by Dan Bashford. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Emily Evans. The project was managed for CA by Simon Carlyle.

#### 5. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2015 [www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex), accessed 6 January 2015

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2012 *Land at Springfields, Towcester, Northamptonshire: Heritage Desk Based Assessment*, report **12151**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 *Land at Springfields, Towcester, Northamptonshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

**APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS****Trench 1**

Context	Interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)	Spot-date
100	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown friable silty clay containing tree roots, possibly redeposited	-	-	0.32	
101	Geology	Light/medium yellowish-brown firm sandy clay	-	-	-	

**Trench 2**

Context	Interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)	Spot-date
200	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown friable silty clay, possibly redeposited	-	-	0.28	
201	Geology	Light yellowish-brown firm sandy clay	-	-	-	
202	Ditch					Modern
203	Fill of 202					

**Trench 3**

Context	Interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)	Spot-date
300	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown friable silty clay containing tree roots, possibly redeposited	-	-	0.27	
301	Geology	Light/medium yellowish-brown firm sandy clay	-	-	-	

**Trench 4**

Context	Interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)	Spot-date
400	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown friable silty clay containing tree roots, brick rubble and plastic waste, possibly redeposited	-	-	0.26	
401	Geology	Light yellowish-brown firm sandy clay	-	-	-	

**Trench 5**

Context	Interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)	Spot-date
500	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown friable silty clay containing tree roots, brick rubble and plastic waste, possibly redeposited	-	-	0.26	
501	Geology	Light yellowish-brown firm sandy clay	-	-	-	
502	Ditch	Linear ditch, aligned NW-SE	>1m	2m	0.48	Modern
503	Fill of 502	Medium yellowish-brown firm clay, basal fill	-	-	0.24	
504	Fill of 502	Medium yellowish-grey silty clay	-	-	0.22	
505	Fill of 502	Medium yellowish-brown firm clay, deliberate backfill	-	-	0.20	

**Trench 6**

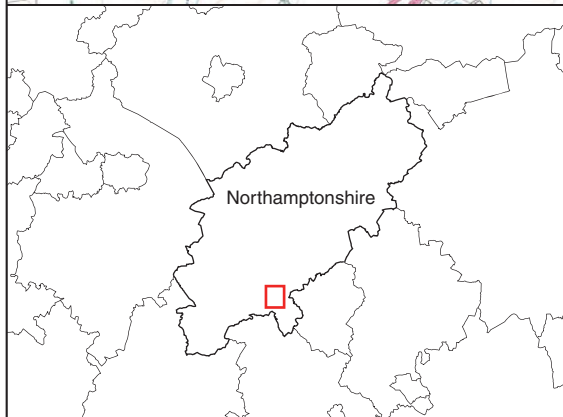
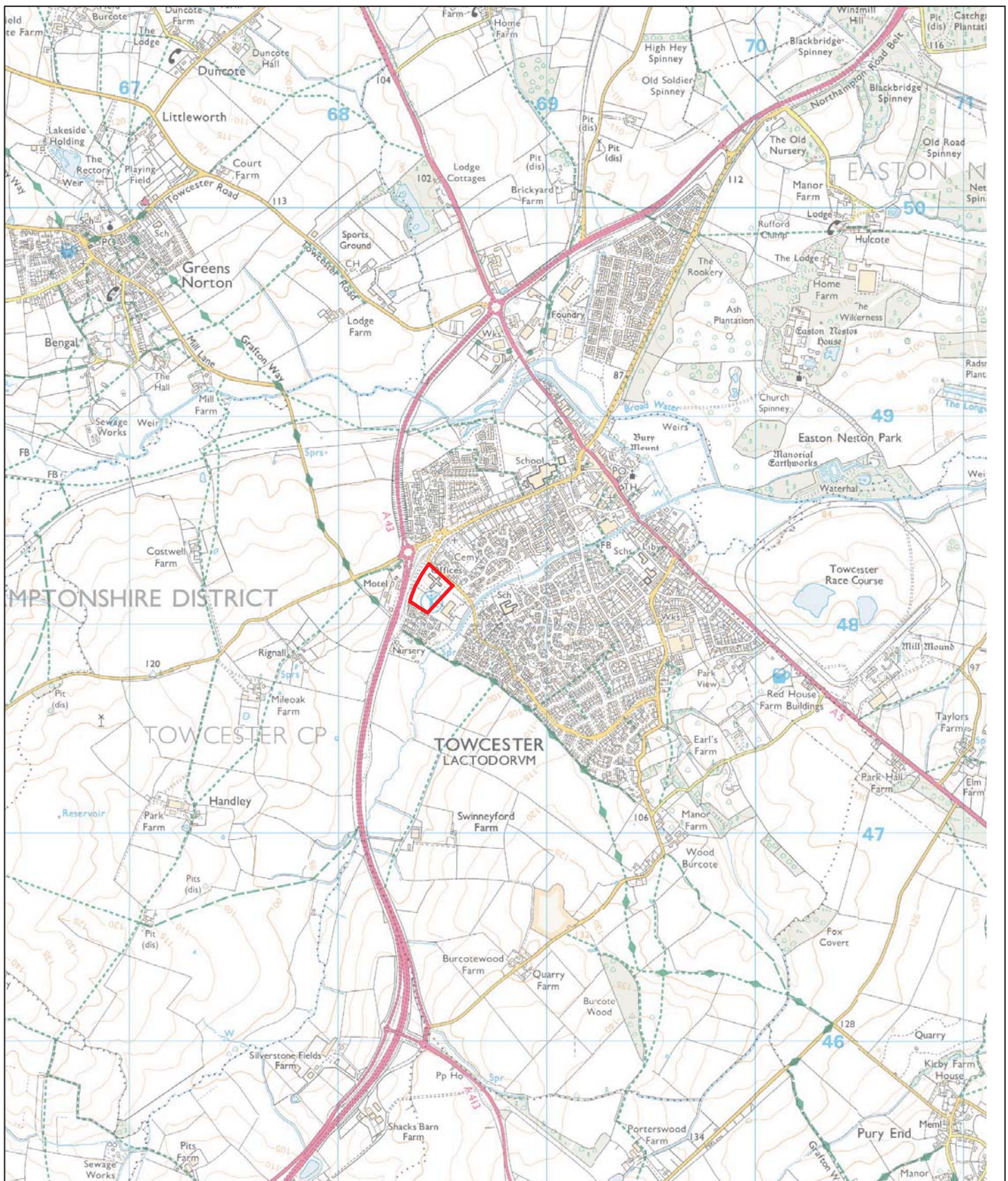
Context	Interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)	Spot-date
600	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown friable silty clay containing tree roots, brick rubble and plastic waste, possibly redeposited	-	-	0.30	
601	Geology	Light yellow brown firm sandy clay	-	-	-	

**Trench 7**

Context	Interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	D/T (m)	Spot-date
700	Topsoil	Mid greyish-brown friable silty clay containing tree roots, brick rubble and plastic waste, possibly redeposited	-	-	0.26	
701	Geology	Light yellowish-brown firm clay with blue striations	-	-	-	

**APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	Land at Springfields, Towcester	
Short description	The evaluation comprised the excavation of seven 30m trial trenches in an area of recently cleared scrubland to the south-west of the Council offices. A modern ditch was identified in the central part of the site; this appears to demarcate the south-western edge of a stand of trees that formerly occupied the north-eastern edge of the site, prior to recent felling and clearance. The ditch probably dates to the 1970s, when the area was landscaped following the construction of the Council offices. The ridge and furrow earthworks shown on historic aerial photographs of the site were no longer evident and appear to have been levelled around the time the Council offices were built.	
Project dates	26-27 January 2015	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (CA 2012)	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type	None	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site location	Land off Green Lane, Springfields, Towcester	
Study area	c. 2.5ha	
Site co-ordinates	SP 6840 4810	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology (CA)	
Project Brief originator	-	
Project Design (WSI) originator	CA	
Project Manager	Simon Carlyle (CA)	
Project Supervisor	Peter James (CA)	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		
	Accession no: n/a	Content
Physical	Northamptonshire Archaeological	None
Paper	Resource Centre (NARC)	Site records
Digital	Northamptonshire HER	Report, digital photos
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2015 <i>Land at Springfields, Towcester, Northamptonshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report <b>15061</b>		



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**PROJECT TITLE**

Land at Springfields, Towcester,  
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**FIGURE TITLE**

Site location plan

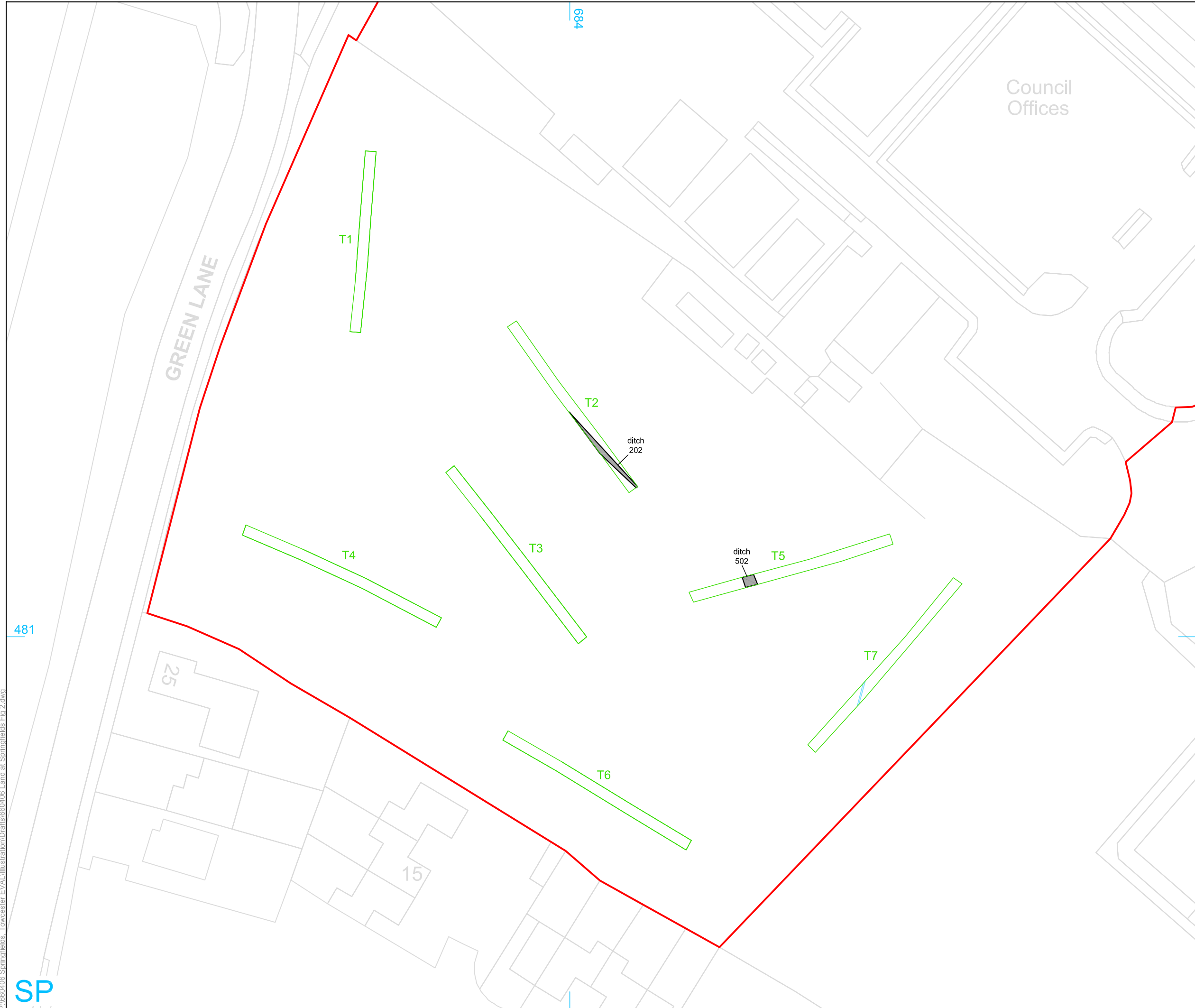


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FIGURE NO.

1



- site boundary
- evaluation trench
- archaeological feature
- field drain



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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Land at Springfields, Towcester,  
 Northamptonshire

**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Trench location plan showing  
 archaeological features

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P:\660406 Springfields - Towcester EYA\Illustration\Drafts\660406 Land at Springfields Fig 2.dwg





3



4

3 General view of site, looking east

4 Trench 7 soil profile (scale 1m)



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FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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FIGURE NO.  
**3 & 4**





5



6

5 Trench 2, ditch 202, looking west (scale 1m)

6 Trench 5, ditch 502, looking north-west (scale 1m)



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FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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FIGURE NO.  
**5 & 6**