LAND NORTH OF ASPREYS, OLNEY ,

MILTON KEYNES BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

WATCHING BRIEF SUMMARY

NGR: SP 8839 5233

ADDENDUM TO EVALUATION REPORT DATED JUNE 14TH 2005

This summary report is an addendum to a report prepared by Oxford Archaeology on an evaluation at this site earlier this year. In June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at land north of Aspreys, Olney, Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire (NGR: SP 8839 5233). The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd. in advance of residential development and followed on from an evaluation of the site by OA in May 2005.

The watching brief comprised the monitoring of test pits on the site of the new housing development, and was undertaken in accordance with a project brief set by Brian Giggins of Milton Keynes Council and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by OA (OA 2005). Appendix numbers below follow on from those contained in the original evaluation report, in order that this summary may be included with that report. Figure numbers likewise follow on from those produced for the evaluation report.

APPENDIX 4 TEST PIT DESCRIPTIONS

General

A total of 35 test pits were opened by JCB machine under archaeological supervision (Fig. 14). Each test pit measured 2 m by 1 m and was opened and backfilled within two working days. In general the topsoil measured 0.3 m in depth and overlay a layer of colluvial or plough affected soil, on average 0.1 m in depth.

The natural was predominately limestone bedrock overlying boulder clay to the southern part of the site. Elsewhere a sandy clay natural was observed. The majority of test pits contained this sequence of deposits. Where there were differences to this sequence, these are reported below.

Test Pit 4

Test Pit 4 (Fig. 15) was opened at the extreme west side of the development area between Test Pits 3 and 33. The test pit was 0.85 m deep. Natural sandy clay and natural limestone were cut by a steep sided feature (4005) with a flat base. At the base of the feature were several layers of large flat limestone slabs within a dark-brown silt clay matrix (4004). At least three individual layers were noted in the limited exposure of the Test Pit.

These were overlain by a compact brown silty clay with occasional small stones (4003). Both layers 4004 and 4003 were cut by a 'U'-shaped feature aligned NW-SE, possibly a ditch

(4002), that was filled with a dark-brown silty clay with charcoal and small stones (4001). Modern brick pieces and an iron nail were recovered from the fill, and suggested that the feature was of relatively modern date. Ploughsoil and then topsoil completed the sequence here.

Test Pit 12

The test pit (not illustrated) was opened at the south-east corner of the site and was 0.6 m deep. Cut into the natural bedrock was a small steep sided feature with a flat base (12002). It measured 0.1 m in diameter and was 0.2 m deep and was filled with a dark-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal pieces (12001). The feature was interpreted as a possible post-hole but contained no dating evidence. The fill of the post-hole was sealed by ploughsoil, in turn capped by the topsoil.

Test Pit 17

Test Pit 17 (Fig. 15) was excavated to the centre-east of the site and was 0.85 m deep. Natural sandy clay appeared to be cut by a broad feature at least 1.8 m wide (17002) that was filled with layers of limestone slabs set in a yellow-brown sandy soil matrix (17001). Smaller stones and occasional charcoal flecks were present within the soil, the whole comprising a depth of 0.35 m. The stone slabs were overlain by ploughsoil, in turn capped by topsoil. The regularity of the arrangement of the stones suggest that this may have been a possible stone path/track-way, and was similar in nature to similar features noted in the evaluation (Trench 8).

Test Pit 24

This test pit (Fig. 16) was located at the extreme north-east of the development area. The pit was excavated to a depth of 1.2 m. Natural boulder clay at the base of the pit was overlain by limestone bedrock which was in turn overlain by a layer of silty sand containing limestone pieces to a depth of 0.2 m.

A sherd of green-glazed pottery of late medieval or early post-medieval date was recovered from this deposit. Layer 24002 was overlain or cut by an interface of a possible feature (24004) that contained layers of medium and large limestone slabs (24001) bedded on a thin layer of silty sand (24003).

The larger slabs were similar in character to those noted in Test Pit 17, and could represent part of a track-way. The limited confines of the Test Pit made it difficult to ascertain if layer 24002 was an earlier surface, or indeed whether it had been certainly cut by the later feature. The stone slabs (24001) were similar in character to those noted in Evaluation Trench 10.

Test Pit 29

Test pit 29 (Fig. 16) was located to the north-west of the development area and was excavated to a depth of 0.6 m. Natural limestone bedrock at the base of the pit was apparently cut at the west side of the pit by a broad 'U'-shaped cut (29003) that was filled by layers of flat limestone pieces (29001), laying on a thin bedding layer of sand (29002). The stones were similar in character to those seen in Test Pits 17 and 24, and could represent part of a track-way or surface.

At the west side of the Test Pit was a similar feature (29006) filled with stone slabs (29004) and bedded on a layer of sand (29005). Again this may represent part of a track-way or deliberate surface. If so, then the two stone spreads appeared to be set parallel to each other

and thus could represent a double track-way. However, the limited size of the Test Pit precludes detailed interpretation.

APPENDIX 5 CONCLUSIONS

The Test Pits were widely dispersed across the development area, thus providing a further but limited view of the underlying archaeology. The stone surfaces noted in Test Pits 17, 24 and 29 possibly represent parts of a track-way or road - and this is consistent with the findings from the evaluation trenches, wherever the two could be correlated. The stone spreads certainly lay over bedding layers of sandy ?subsoil and within apparently cut features sealing the natural bedrock or boulder clay.

As was suggested by the evaluation, this appears to remove the possibility that the features are natural in origin. The only dating evidence from one of the stone spreads in Test Pit 24 was a sherd of medieval or early post-medieval green glazed pottery. This evidence should be treated with caution, however, as the sherd may have derived from plough activity in the medieval period of the soil above the stone spreads.

No further pottery of Iron Age date was recovered from the site, although a post-hole similar to those noted in parts of the site during the evaluation was seen, which could be part of an associated structure - again tentatively suggested by the evaluation to be of Iron Age date.

No evidence of Roman occupation was revealed by this exercise and the test pits were not sufficient to certainly clarify the nature and extent of the potential stone track-way(s) that were noted in the evaluation.

APPENDIX 6 WATCHING BRIEF ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Ctx	*Test Pit*	*Type*	*Depth*	*Width*	*Ht*	*Comments*	*Finds*
4001	4	Fill	0.45 m	-	-	Ditch fill - modern	Ceramic building material; iron nail
4002	4	Cut	0.8 m	0.8 m	-	NW-SE aligned ditch. Modern. Filled by 4001	-
4003	4	Layer/ fill	0.2 m	0.7 m	-	Limestone stones and slabs; possible surface within construction cut 4005; cut by 4002	-
4004	4	Layer/ fill	0.3 m	0.75 m	-	Limestone slabs in construction cut 4005; beneath 4003. Cut by 4002.	-
4005	4	Cut	0.5 m	1 m+	-	Cut filled by stone layers 4003/4004 - possible construction cut for track-way	-

12001	12	Fill	0.2 m	0.1 m	-	Silt clay fill of possible posthole 12002	-
12002	12	Cut	0.2 m	0.1 m	-	Possible posthole cut	-
17001	17	Layer/ fill	0.4 m	1.8 m	-	layer of stone slabs filling 17002; possible track-way surface	-
17002	17	Cut	0.4 m	1.8 m	-	Cut for stone slabs 17001; possible track-way construction cut	-
24001	24	layer /fill	0.3 m	1 m+	-	Possible track-way stone material	-
24002	24	layer /fill	0.2 m	1 m+	-	Possible track-way stone material under 24001	-
24003	24	Layer/ fill	0.05 m	1 m+	-	?Bedding material for stone layer/fill 24002	-
24004	24	Cut	0.55 m	1 m +	-	Possible cut of track-way feature	-
29001	29	Layer/ fill	0.15 m	-	-	Fill of cut 29002-limestone slabs and stones	-
29002	29	Layer/ fill	0.05	-	-	?Bedding material for 29001-sand	-
29003	29	Cut	0.2 m	1 m+	-	Possible track-way surface construction cut	-
29004	29	Fill	0.15 m	-	-	Fill of 29006	-
29005	29	Fill	0.05 m	-	-	?Bedding sand layer for stones 29004	-
29006	29	Cut	0.4 m	0.5 m	-	?construction cut for limestone surface	-

J. Hiller, Oxford Archaeology
30/8/2005

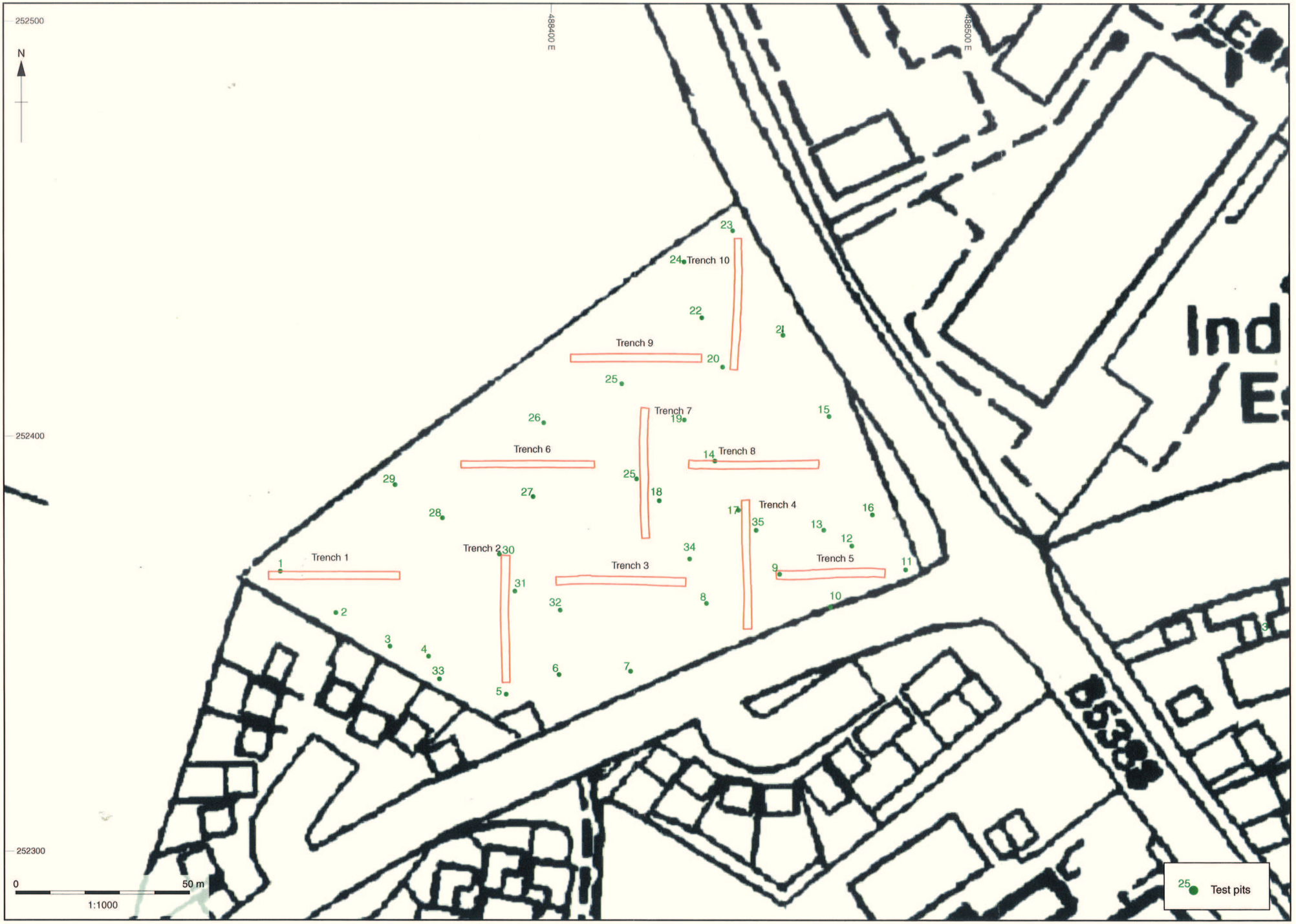


Figure 14: Test pit locations

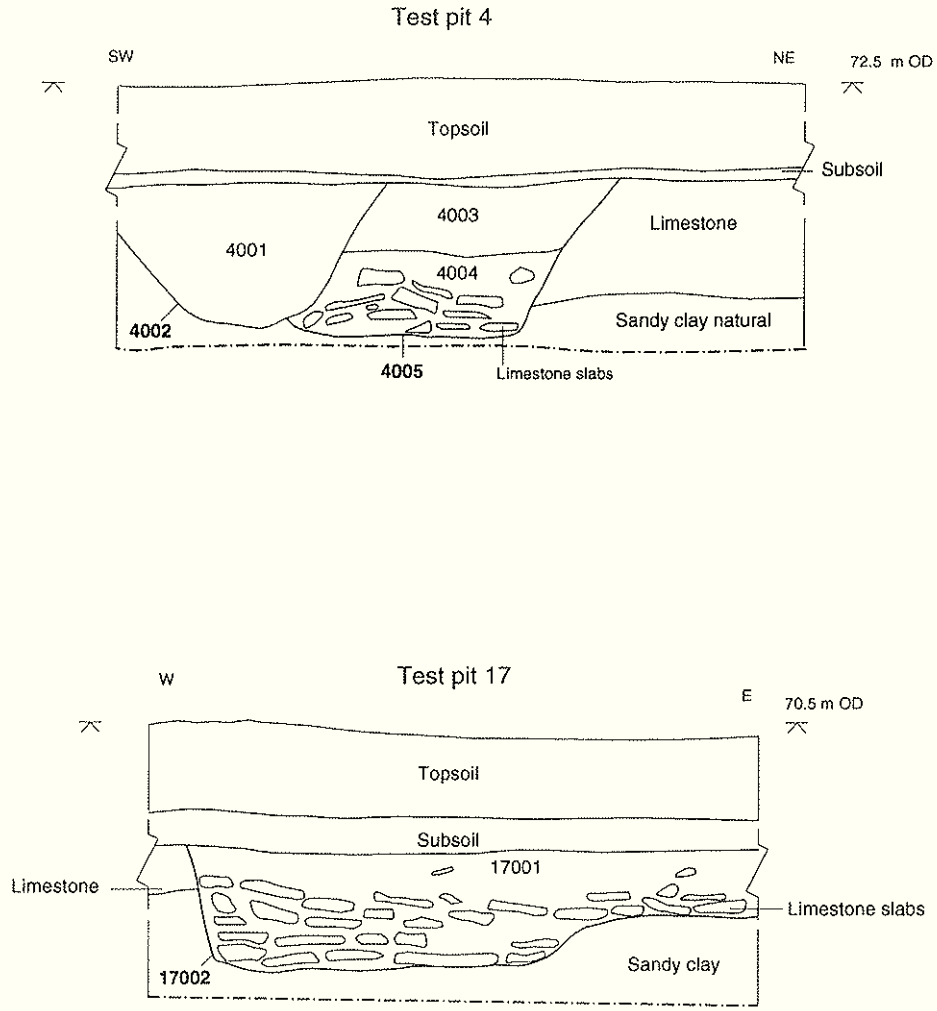
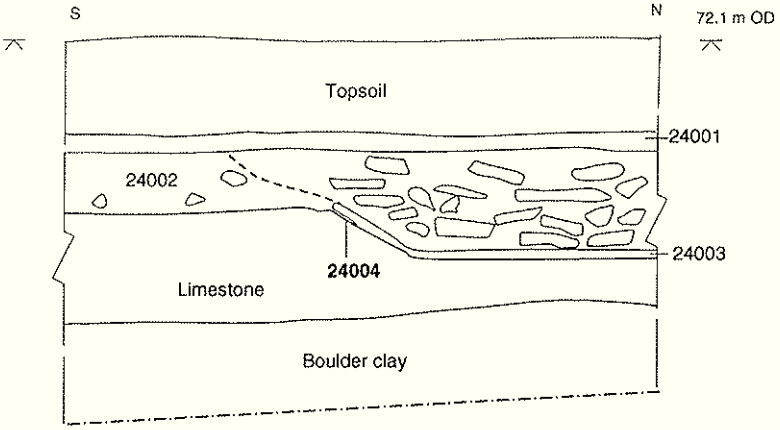
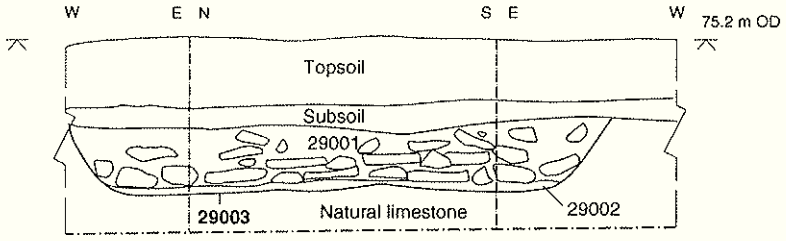


Figure 15: Test pits 4 and 17

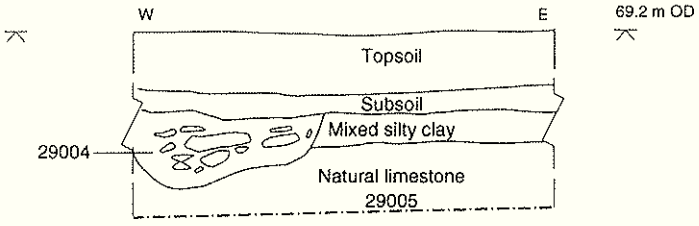
Test pit 24



Test pit 29, east section



Test pit 29, west section



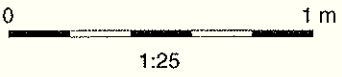


Figure 16: Sections from Test pits 24 and 29