

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION AT THE FORMER  
MARLFIELD FARM FIRST  
SCHOOL, REDSTONE CLOSE,  
CHURCH HILL NORTH,  
REDDITCH,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt and Laura Templeton

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Project 3471  
Report 1896  
WSM 46045



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# **An Archaeological evaluation at the former Marlfield Farm First School, Redstone Close, Church Hill North, Redditch, Worcestershire**

**Simon Sworn and Tom Vaughan**

## **Part 1 Project summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the site of the former Marlfield Farm First School, Redstone Close, Church Hill North, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0607 6867), on behalf of Mansell Construction Services Ltd, who intends to develop the site for housing, for which a planning application has been submitted.

This report on an archaeological evaluation describes and assesses the significance of a heritage asset with archaeological interest potentially affected by the application. The impact of the application on the significance is assessed.

A total of ten trenches were excavated. No significant archaeological features, layers, deposits or structures were identified, nor artefacts recovered. The only activity identified related to late 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century drainage, services and landscaping relating to the former school.



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## Part 2 Detailed report

### 1. **Planning background**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the former Marlfield Farm First School, Redstone Close, Church Hill North, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0607 6867, Fig 1), on behalf of Mansell Construction Services Ltd. The client intends to develop the site for housing and has submitted a planning application to Redditch Borough Council (reference R/10/0253/FUL).

The proposed development site is considered to have the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest, the significance of which may be affected by the application (WSM 30441).

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (HEAS 2010) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (HEAS 2011).

### 2. **Aims**

The aims of this archaeological evaluation are:

- to describe and assesses the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site;
- to assess the impact of the application on the archaeological site.

More specifically the following aims have been identified:

- to determine if any roadside settlement associated with Ryknild Street (WSM 30441) is located within the site.

### 3. **Methods**

#### 3.1 **Documentary search**

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

#### 3.2 **Fieldwork methodology**

##### 3.2.1 **Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service (HEAS 2011).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 12 and 15 December 2011. The site reference number and site code is WSM 46045.

10 trenches, amounting to just over 575m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated over the site area of 1.2ha (12,000 m<sup>2</sup>), representing a sample of 4.8%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Service practice (HEAS 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

### 3.2.2 **Structural analysis**

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural and artefactual, allied to the information derived from other sources.

## 3.3 **Artefact methodology**

### 3.3.1 **Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Service practice (HEAS 2012, appendix 2). This in principal determines that all finds, of whatever date, must be collected. However, in this case only later 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century material was recovered. This was all identified on site and none was retained for further analysis.

## 3.4 **Environmental archaeology methodology**

### 3.4.1 **Sampling policy**

The environmental sampling strategy conformed to standard Service practice (HEAS 2012, appendix 4). In the event no deposits were revealed which were considered to be suitable for environmental sampling and analysis, so no samples were taken.

## 3.5 **Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## 4. **Topographical and archaeological context**

The site occupies level ground on the site of the former school, presently open playing fields, tarmac play areas and car parks and concrete slabs from the demolished late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings (Fig 1). The site lies in an unsurveyed urban area. However immediately to the north and west the predominant soils belong to the Whimple 3 Soil Association (572f), comprising reddish fine loamy or fine silty over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. The underlying geology consists of drift over Permo-Triassic and Carboniferous reddish mudstone (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

No archaeological works have been undertaken previously on the site. The proposed development site lies 250m to the west of Ryknild Street Roman Road (WSM 30441). Activity in the form of roadside settlements or farmsteads may extend either side of the road.

Until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the site remained as undeveloped fields, as part of Marlfield Farm, which lay to the south (WSM 10218). However the area was developed as the Church Hill suburban development in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bomford Hill Park remains



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undeveloped to the immediate north of the site. The site of the possible shrunken medieval settlement of Beoley lies to the north of the park (WSM 06112).

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

#### 5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

The natural marl geology was noted in all 10 trenches at depths varying between 0.22m – 0.75m below the present ground surface. Sondages were excavated at the end of each trench to determine the nature of these deposits.

#### 5.1.2 Phase 2: Modern deposits

Ceramic field drains were noted within Trenches 4, 5, 7 and 8. Trench 9 contained a number of redundant services relating to the former school building. These included electric, waste water and drainage. The services were visible at 100.30m AOD, roughly 0.35m below the existing ground level.

A single north-east to south-west aligned gully (106) was observed within Trench 1. Upon excavation this gully was found to be 0.50m wide and 0.30m deep and contained a mixed clay. However, this gully contained many broken fragments of field drains and was clearly of a 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date. Sealing this gully and visible across the entire extent of Trench 1 and the western end of Trench 2 was a layer of re-deposited red marl (102, 204 and, 205). This layer contained 20<sup>th</sup> century material and appeared to represent a levelling of the original ground surface to form a level edge of the former playing field. This material is most likely to have derived from the excavations during the building of the school. The re-deposited material was laid directly on top of the former topsoil (103 and 202; Plate 2), which also contained modern material.

Modern topsoil, subsoil and hard standing were observed throughout the site.

No significant archaeological features, layers, deposits or structures were identified in any of the 10 trenches.

## 6. Synthesis

### 6.1 Modern

Only deposits of a clearly modern date were observed during the evaluation and relate to either drainage of the fields in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and activities associated with the construction and usage of the school.

## 7. Significance

### 7.1 Significance of a heritage asset with archaeological interest

The aim of an archaeological evaluation is to provide the client and the planning authority (and its advisors) with sufficient information to assess the significance of a heritage asset with archaeological interest, in line with *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic*

*Environment* (DCLG 2010: Policy HE6). More detailed guidance on assessing the significance of site with archaeological interest is set out in the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide*, which advises that an on-site evaluation should establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological interest in order to provide sufficient evidence for confident prediction of the impact of the proposal (DCLG/DCMS/EH 2010: Section 5, Development Management).

## 7.2 Assessment of significance

There was no evidence for Roman remains associated with Ryknild Street Roman Road, located approximately 250m to the west. No significant archaeological features, layers, deposits or structures were identified in any of the 10 trenches, nor were any artefacts recovered dated earlier than the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There is therefore at present no evidence of remains of archaeological interest on the site.

## 8. Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Mansell Construction Services Ltd at the former Marlfield Farm First School, Redstone Close, Church Hill North, Redditch, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0607 6867; HER ref. WSM 46045). A total of ten trenches were excavated. No significant archaeological features, layers, deposits or structures were identified, nor artefacts recovered. The only activity identified related to late 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century drainage, services and landscaping relating to the former school.*

## 9. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, John Booth and Paul Costello (Mansell Construction Services Ltd) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

## 10. Personnel

The fieldwork and report preparation was led by Simon Sworn. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Sworn and Mike Nicholson, illustration was by Carolyn Hunt and Laura Templeton.

## 11. Bibliography

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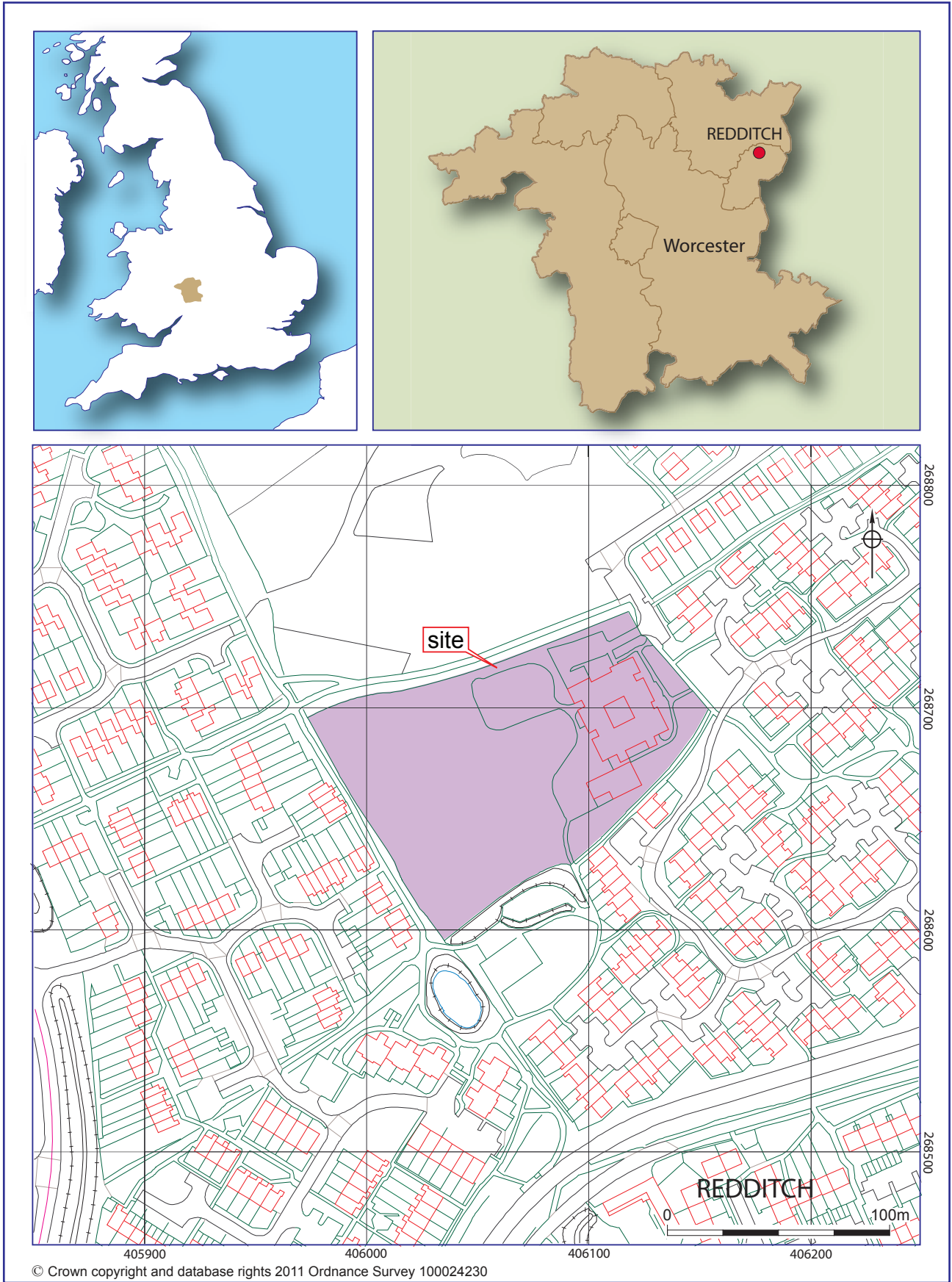
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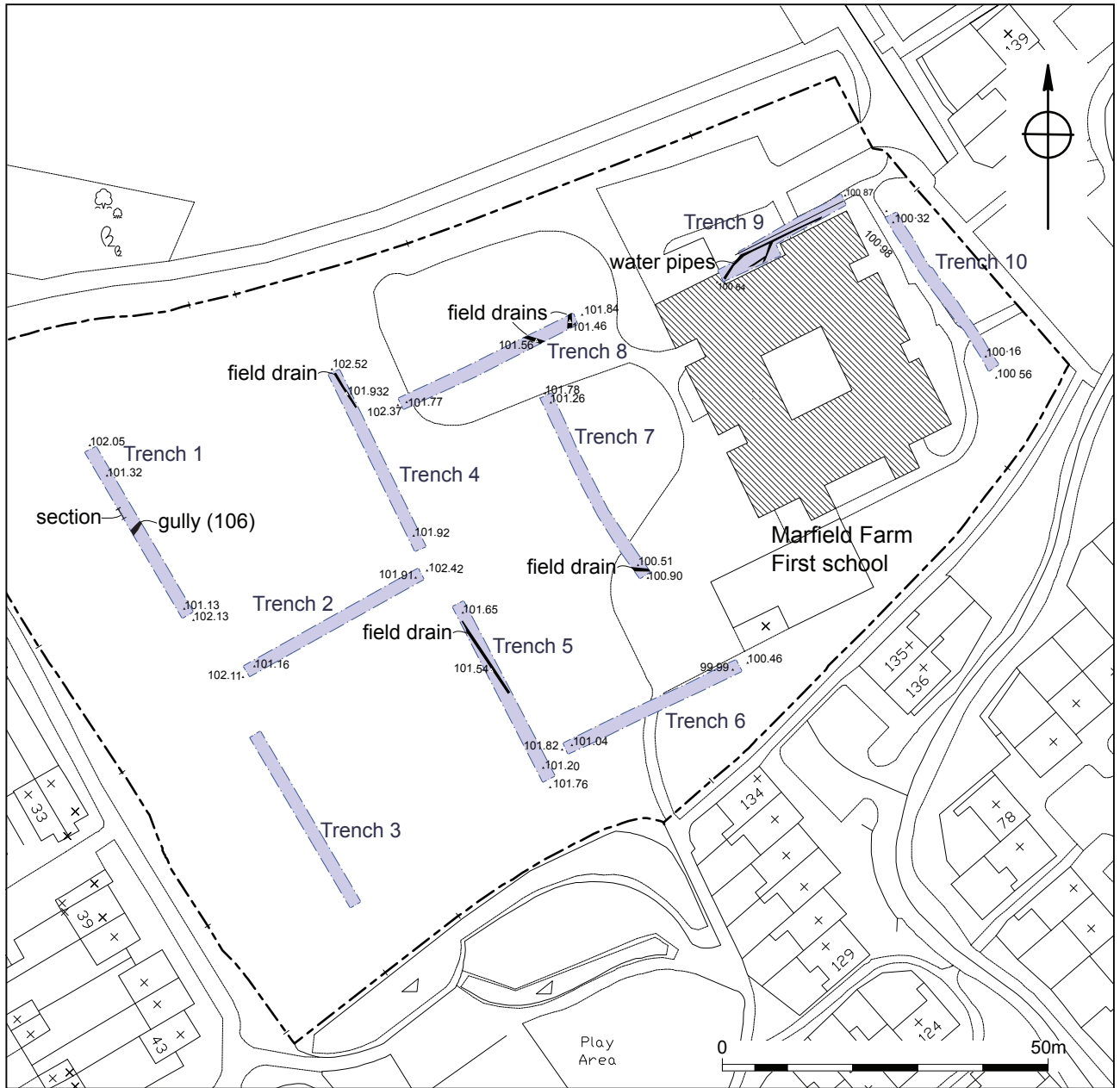
Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983 *Midland and Western England, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*

## **Figures**



Location of the site

Figure 1



Plan of trenches

Figure 2



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## Plates



*Plate 1: The site from the west*



*Plate 2: Sample section, Trench 1, showing layers of red made ground (102) and darker buried soil horizon (103) below. Scale at 1m, facing west*

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## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.70-1.10m

Orientation: N – S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-0.14m
101	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.14-0.30m
102	Layer	Re-deposited natural, firm red marl, with modern material.	0.58-0.82m
103	Layer	Mid brown silty clay, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Buried soil horizon.	0.30-0.58m
104	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.30m+
105	Fill	Mid reddish pink firm silty clays, field drain fragments	0.82-1.10m
106	Gully cut	'V' shaped linear cut. Modern gully.	0.82-1.10m

### Trench 2

Maximum dimensions: Length: 31m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.64-1.09mm

Orientation: E - W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
200	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-0.20m
201	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.20-0.48m
202	Layer	Mid brown silty clay, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Buried soil horizon.	0.78-1.16m
203	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.64m+
204	Layer	Re-deposited natural, firm red marl, with modern material.	0.23-0.81m
205	Layer	Re-deposited natural, firm red marl and mid brown silty clay, with modern material.	0.52-1m



**Trench 3**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.5m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.44-1.37m

Orientation: N – S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
300	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-0.24m
301	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.24-0.38m
302	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.38+

**Trench 4**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.5m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.60m

Orientation: N – S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
400	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-0.22m
401	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.22-0.40m
402	Layer	Mid brown silty clay, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Buried soil horizon.	0.40-0.60m
403	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.60m+
404	Land Drain	Modern linear ceramic drain.	0.60m+

**Trench 5**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.5m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.67-1.29m

Orientation: N – S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
500	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-0.19m
501	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.19-0.38m
502	Layer	Mid brown silty clay, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Buried soil horizon.	0.38-0.62m
503	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.62m+
504	Land Drain	Modern linear ceramic drain.	0.62m+

### Trench 6

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.5m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.44-0.83m

Orientation: E – W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
600	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-0.26m
601	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.26-0.53m
602	Layer	Mid brown silty clay, small-medium sub-rounded pebbles. Buried soil horizon.	0.53-83m
603	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.83m+

### Trench 7

Maximum dimensions: Length: 32m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.50m

Orientation: N – S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
700	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-20m
701	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.20-38m
702	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.38m+
703	Surface	Modern brick surface, former play area.	0-0.10m
704	Surface	Existing tarmac surface	0-0.16m
705	Made ground	Compact pinkish red mixed marl. Made ground for 704.	0.16-0.33m
706	Made ground	Compact pinkish red mixed marl. Made ground for 703.	0.23-0.39m

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**Trench 8**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 30.5m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.49m

Orientation: E - W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
800	Tarmac	Existing play area.	0-0.14m
801	Made ground	Made ground for 800.	0.14-0.31m
802	Made ground	Hardcore deposit for 800.	0.31-0.46m
803	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.46m+
804	Land drain	Modern linear ceramic drain.	0.46m+
805	Land drain	Modern linear ceramic drain.	0.46m+

**Trench 9**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 28.5m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.46m

Orientation: E - W

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
900	Tarmac	Existing footpath.	0-0.08m
901	Made ground	Made ground for 900.	0.08-0.22m
902	Made ground	Made ground for 900.	0.22-0.35m
903	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.35m+
904	Drain	Gravel filled 'French drain' cut.	0.35m+
905	Drain	Gravel filled 'French drain' cut.	0.35m+
906	Land drain	Modern linear ceramic drain.	0.35m+

**Trench 10**

Maximum dimensions: Length: 29m Width: 1.90m Depth: 0.53m

Orientation: N - S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1000	Topsoil	Mid brown soft loam, occasional small rounded stones. Rare charcoal flecks, with root disturbance.	0-0.16m
1001	Subsoil	Light-mid brown silty clay, occasional small sub-rounded stones.	0.16-0.25m
1002	Natural	Firm, well compacted red marl.	0.25m+

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## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 46045)**

The archive consists of:

1	Field progress reports AS2
1	Photographic records AS3
110	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
1	Scale drawings
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum  
Museums Worcestershire  
Hartlebury Castle  
Hartlebury  
Near Kidderminster  
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