

# Archaeological Evaluation at Land adjacent to 39 Offenham Rd, Evesham, Worcestershire



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Worcestershire Archaeology  
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## **Archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to 39 Offenham Rd, Evesham, Worcestershire**

Author Peter Lovett

### **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land adjacent to 39 Offenham Rd, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0515 4396, WSM67784). It was undertaken on behalf of Pasquale Nicosia, Director at Greystone UK Ltd.*

*Four trenches 25m long were excavated over the site. Only natural deposits were encountered, with linear features likely to be as a result of natural variations in the geology. No significant archaeological artefacts, features or deposits were present. Environmental samples were taken of a possible pit, but yielded no significant organic material for environmental analysis.*

*The archaeological investigations demonstrate that the Early Bronze Age, Late Iron Age settlement activity found in the northwest in the wider vicinity does not extend into the site. Similarly no later evidence of medieval agricultural practices or further developments were evident.*

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land adjacent to 39 Offenham Rd, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0515 4396). It was commissioned by Pasquale Nicosia, Director at Greystone UK Ltd, who intends to construct a 65 bed care home along with associated access, car parking and landscaping. A planning application has been submitted to Wychavon District Council (reference W/15/01750/PN).

The proposed development site is considered to include the potential for heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2016) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2016).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014) and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM67784.

### 2 Aims

The aims and scope of the project are given in the Brief (Section 4.2) and are as follows:-

Identify the date, approximate form and purpose of any archaeological deposit together with its likely extent, localised depth and quality of preservation;

- Evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, including the extent of any ground disturbance/truncation arising from the previous use of the site, and the possible presence of masking colluvial/alluvial deposits;
- Establish the potential for the survival of environmental evidence;
- Provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, if required.

The evaluation will only assess heritage assets which are of archaeological interest. This project will not include consideration of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas or historic hedgerows.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The project was led by Peter Lovett (BSc (hons.)), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2012 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Nina O'Hare (BA (hons.)). The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MCIfA).

#### 3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 550m radius of the site.

#### 3.3 List of sources consulted

##### *Cartographic sources*

- 1883 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560
- 1905 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560

- 1924 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560
- 1938 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560

#### *Documentary sources*

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

### **3.4 Fieldwork strategy**

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 12<sup>th</sup> April and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The site reference number and site code is WSM 67784.

Four trenches, amounting to just over 160m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated over the site area of 4000 m<sup>2</sup>, representing a sample of 4%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 360° wheeled 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 and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012a). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material..

### **3.5 Structural analysis**

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

### **3.6 Artefact methodology**

#### **3.6.1 Artefact recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2). In the event, no significant artefacts were present from any of the features or deposits excavated on site.

### **3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.7.1 Sampling policy**

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event, although two samples were taken for environmental analysis, no significant organic deposits were identified in the flot. A total of 1 sample (10 litres) were taken from the site from the following contexts:

- 403 – Fill of pit

#### **3.7.2 Processing and analysis**

For each of the samples a sub-sample of 1 litre was processed by the wash-over technique as follows. The sub-sample was broken up in a bowl of water to separate the light organic remains from the mineral fraction and heavier residue. The water, with the light organic fraction was decanted onto a 300µm sieve and the residue washed through a 1mm sieve. The remainder of the bulk sample was retained for further analysis.

The samples were processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a 300µm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

No significant organic residues were present.

### **3.7.3 Discard policy**

The samples will be discarded after a period of 6 months after the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them:

### **3.8 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 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The site is located on the eastern bank of the River Severn within the Vale of Evesham. It is part of the flood plain of the Severn with a corresponding, broadly flat topography. The underlying geology of the site is Ailstone Member sand and gravel, overlying Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2016).

The archaeological activity of the area is known to have started within the Early Bronze Age period, as shown by settlement to the west and north-west of the site (WSM42881). The site was identified with an archaeological evaluation and comprised of ditches which probably formed enclosures, with further postholes. A small amount of well stratified material culture was retrieved that dated the deposits and showed the settlement extending into the Late Iron Age period. A further crop mark existed in the area that may represent an enclosure, though the origin and date of this are far from certain (WSM26950).

The area appears to have been in agricultural use throughout the medieval era, as shown by ridge and furrow to the south-east of the site (WSM67910) and is likely to have been part of the agricultural hinterland of Evesham at this time. The agricultural nature of the area continued into the post-medieval era as shown by Prospect House (WSM52744) which was part of a wider farmstead. Six further unlisted buildings are located within the area and are houses dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, apart from a Drill Hall which is of 20<sup>th</sup> century date. A 19th century brickworks also formerly existed to the south of the site (WSM36613). The cartographic evidence shows the site partially in use as an orchard in 1883 and continued in either full or partial use as such up until 1938.

### **4.2 Current land-use**

The site remains in use as grassland pasture.

## **5 Structural analysis**

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

### **5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits**

The natural geology consisted of a soft to moderately compact yellowish orange silty sand with frequent gravels. Occasionally, areas of heavy iron panning created particularly hard patches of gravel. The underlying mudstone was encountered only on the eastern edge of the site. The natural was reached at a depth of between 0.56 and 0.6m in all trenches.

### **5.1.2 Phase 2: Undated deposits**

Three features were excavated across the site, none of which yielded any datable artefacts.

In Trench 2 (Plates 3 and 4) a small linear feature [204] was excavated. This was possibly a variation in the natural sands, which was subsequently shaped into a ditch by the excavator.



In Trench 4 (Plates 5-7) was an oval shaped pit [404], with a sterile stony fill (403). This was sealed beneath the subsoil, suggesting a prehistoric date, though no function could be ascertained for it. It may also have been due to natural variations. Similarly sterile and undated was curvilinear feature [406]. This was quite irregular in shape, and may well have been the result of natural processes, rather than human activity.

### 5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits

In Trench 1, a soakaway constructed of stone rubble was fed by a ceramic pipe leading from a modern shed that had previously stood in the field (Plate 2). A number of land drains were identified, running roughly north-east to south-west across the site.

The subsoil and the topsoil were both uniformly thick at c.0.3m, and were covered the whole site.

## 6 Synthesis

The archaeological remains that were identified and excavated were all undated. No artefactual evidence was recovered. The two linear features were possibly the result of natural variation in the geology, rather than evidence of human activity. The pit was a regularly shaped feature, though its fill was sterile, and its function, like its date, remains unclear. That may also be due to variations in the natural.

### 6.1 Research frameworks

The lack of archaeological remains prohibits any interrogation of the research frameworks as outlined in *The archaeology of the West Midlands: a framework for research* (Watt 2011).

## 7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology 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.

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## 8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Pasquale Nicosia, Director at Greystone UK Ltd, and Adrian Scruby (Historic Environment Advisor, Worcestershire County Council).

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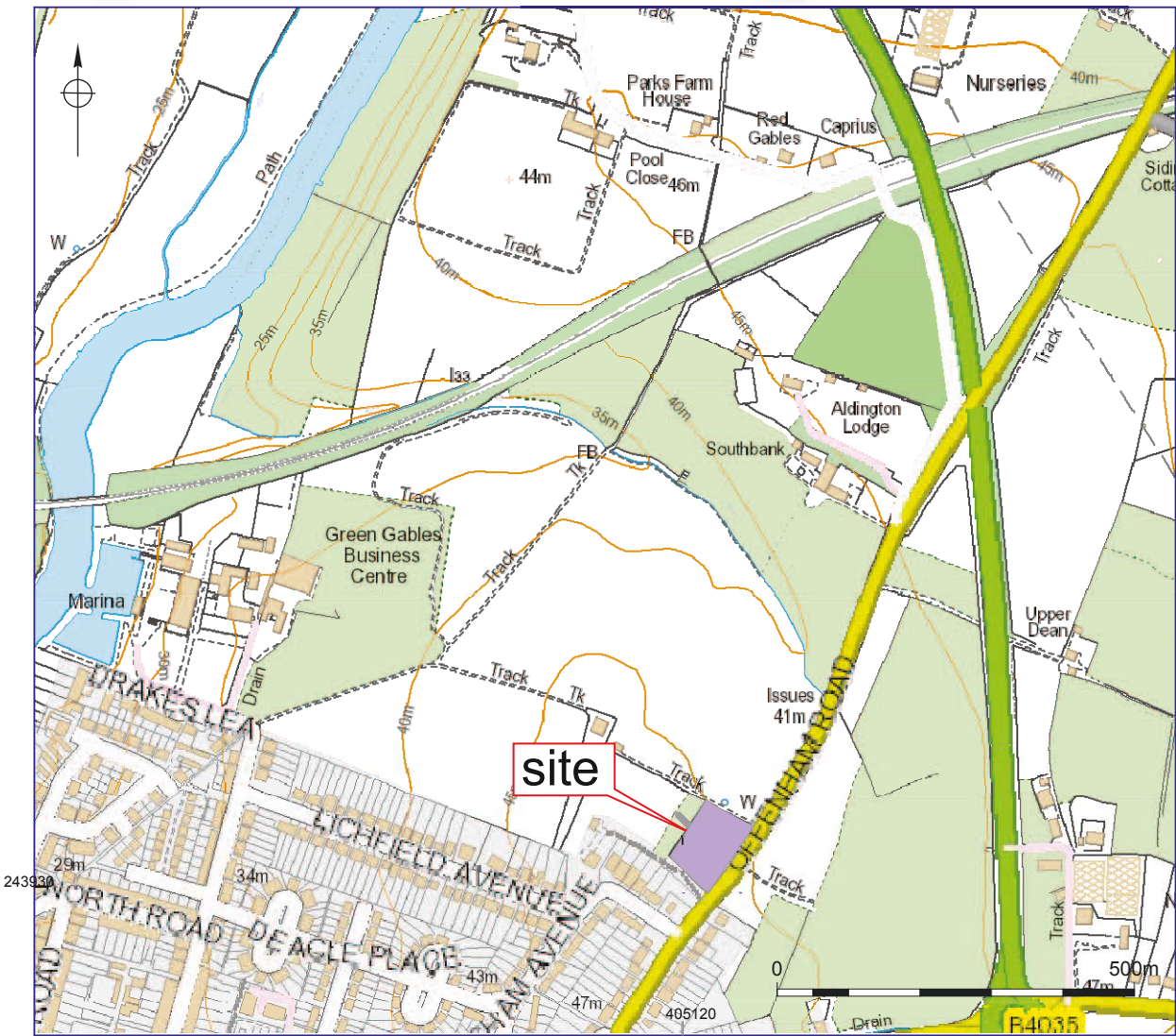
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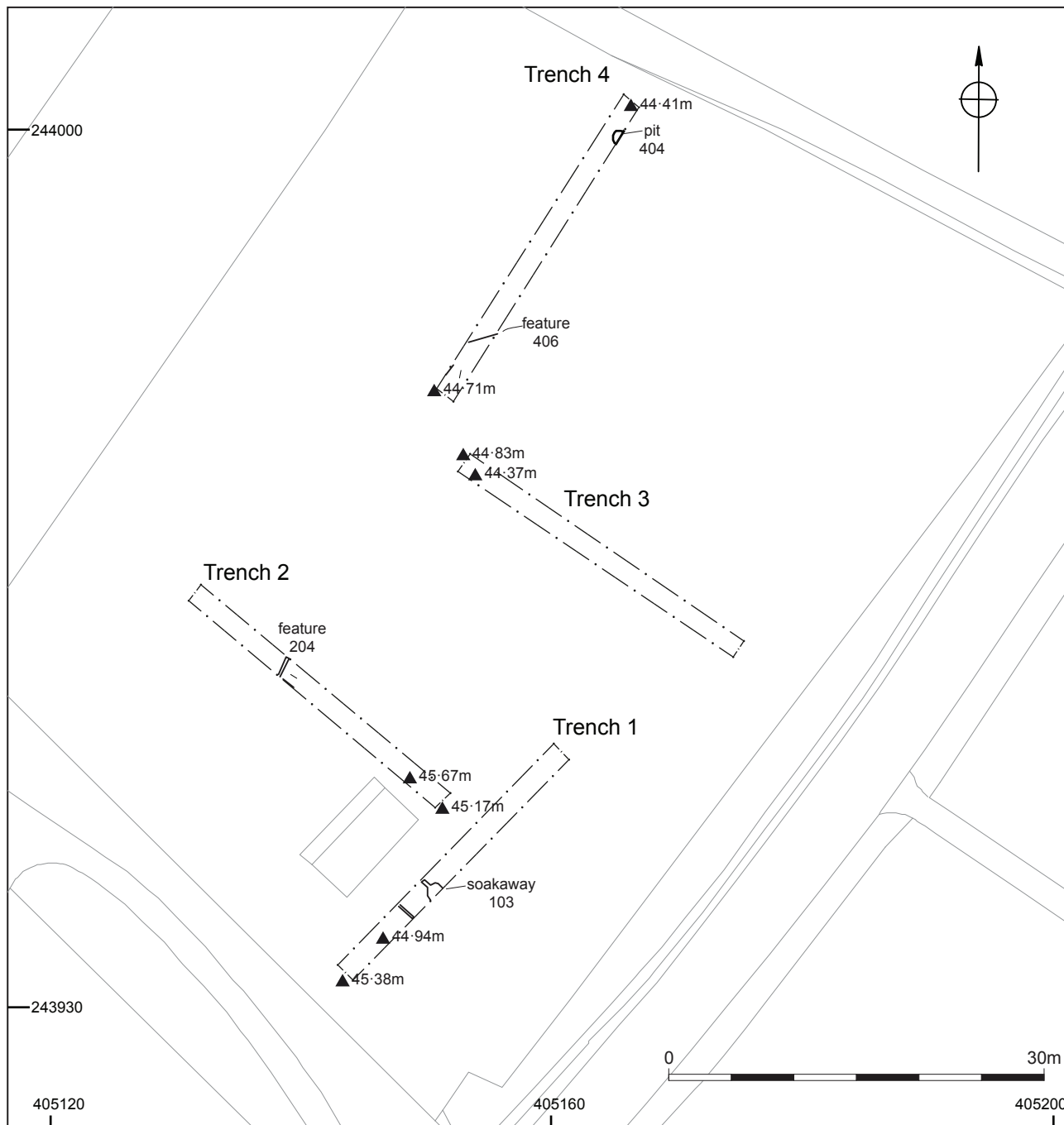
**Figures**



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench locations

Figure 2



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## Plates



*Plate 1 General shot of site, showing hardstanding of shed*



*Plate 2 Soak away 103 in Trench 1, looking south-east (1m scales)*

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*Plate 3 General shot of Trench 2, looking north-west (1m scales)*



*Plate 4 Section of ditch 204, looking south-west (0.5m and 1m scales)*

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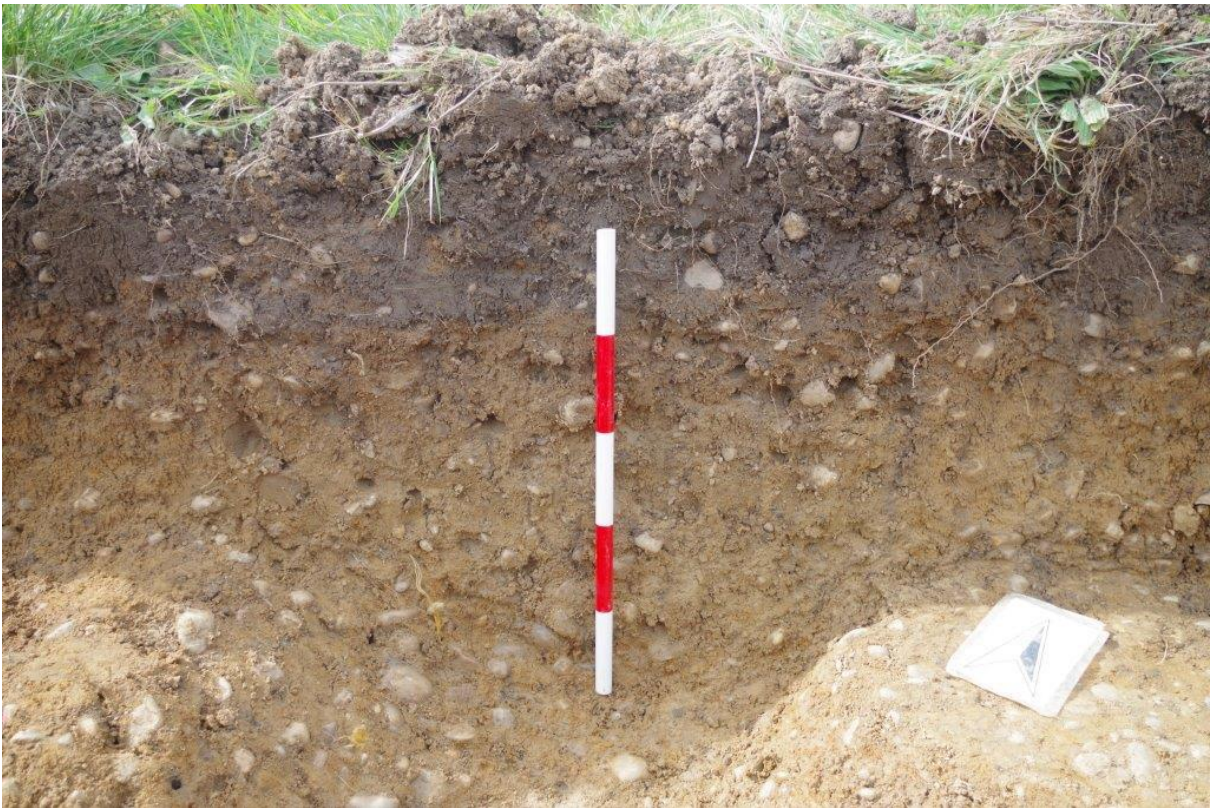


Plate 5 General shot of Trench 4, looking south-west (1m scales)



Plate 6 Section of pit 404, looking south-east (0.5m and 1m scales)





*Plate 7 Section of curvilinear feature 406, looking north-west (0.5m scale)*

## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Length: 25m      Width: 1.6m      Orientation: North-east to south-west

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
100	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark brownish grey sandy loam	0.3m	Topsoil
101	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid yellowish brown silty sand	0.32m	Subsoil
102	Natural	Layer	Soft mid yellowish orange silty sand		Natural
103	Drain	Structure			Stone rubble soakaway and water pipe associated with modern shed to north

### Trench 2

Length: 25m      Width: 1.6m      Orientation: North-west to south-east

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
200	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark brownish grey sandy loam	0.3m	Topsoil
201	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid yellowish brown silty sand	0.26m	Subsoil
202	Natural	Layer	Soft mid yellowish orange silty sand		Natural
203	Ditch	Fill	Soft light brownish yellow silty sand	0.32m	Sterile fill of possible ditch
204	Ditch	Cut		0.32m	Possible ditch, though could be variation in natural and dug to shape

### Trench 3

Length: 25m      Width: 1.6m      Orientation: North-west to south-east

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
300	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark brownish grey sandy loam	0.28m	Topsoil
301	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid yellowish brown silty sand	0.26m	Subsoil
302	Natural	Layer	Soft mid yellowish orange silty sand		Natural

## Trench 4

Length: 25m

Width: 1.6m

Orientation: North-east to south-west

### Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Interpretation
400	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark brownish grey sandy loam	0.3m	Topsoil
401	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid reddish brown silty sand	0.28m	Subsoil
402	Natural	Layer	Moderately compact mid brownish orange silty sand		Natural
403	Pit	Fill	Moderately compact mid brownish grey silty sand	0.16m	Sterile fill of pit. Undated, but sealed below the subsoil so potentially prehistoric. Could also be natural.
404	Pit	Cut		0.16m	Regular shaped oval pit, undated. Unknown function.
405	Ditch	Fill	Soft light greyish brown silty sand	0.16m	Sterile and undated fill of curvilinear feature.
406	Ditch	Cut		0.16m	Curvilinear feature, slightly irregular in shape. Unknown function or date. Possibly natural variation in geology

## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 67784)**

The archive consists of:

- 4 Context records AS1
- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 53 Digital photographs
- 1 Drawing number catalogues AS4
- 1 Scale drawings
- 1 Sample number catalogues AS18
- 4 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 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  
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ  
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

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