

Archaeological evaluation of land off Milestone Road (Phase II), Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire



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Date: 18 May 2016
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Project reference: P4821
Report reference: 2335
Oasis id fieldsec1-250530

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Tim Cornah and Tom Vaughan

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Milestone Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (NGR SP 218 539). It was undertaken on behalf of Wardell Armstrong, whose client intends to erect 41 dwellings, associated amenity space, access, parking and associated development, for which a planning application has been submitted.

Seven trenches were excavated across the site. No archaeological features were present within the trenches, and no residual finds were retrieved from the shallow subsoil or ploughsoil, which directly overlay the undisturbed natural sands to a depth of 0.44-0.52m below the present surface.

Whilst there was considered to be the potential for the presence of prehistoric and Romano-British remains within the site, this investigation has confirmed their absence. This corroborates with the geophysical survey of the site which identified no anomalies of archaeological origin. If the trench sample is representative of the wider site then there will be no impact on archaeological deposits of construction activity.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken of land off Milestone Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (NGR SP 218 539). It was commissioned by Wardell Armstrong, whose client intends to erect 41 dwellings, associated amenity space, access, parking and associated development, for which a planning application has been submitted to Stratford-upon-Avon District Council (ref 15/00390/FUL).

It follows Phase I; the archaeological investigation of a site immediately adjacent, which was undertaken by Wardell Armstrong (2015); and a geophysical survey of the present site, undertaken in 2014 (Wardell Armstrong 2016).

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

The project conforms to a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Wardell Armstrong (Wardell Armstrong 2016).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014);

2 Aims

The aims were set out within the WSI, namely to identify any hitherto unidentified archaeological remains within the areas impacted upon by construction and, in the event that remains are encountered, interpret and fully characterise any phases of archaeological activity.

The general aims of the archaeological evaluation are to:

- determine the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains within the proposed development site
- determine the character, date, extent and distribution of any archaeological deposits and their potential significance
- determine levels of disturbance to any archaeological deposits from plough damage or from any other agricultural/industrial practices or later building activities
- investigate and record all deposits and features of archaeological interest within the areas to be disturbed by the current development
- determine the likely impact on archaeological deposits from the proposed development
- disseminate the results of the fieldwork through an appropriate level of reporting
- to provide the LPA with appropriate information so that an informed decision can be made on the requirement for further mitigation should it be required.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Walsh (BSc (hons); MSc; ACIfA; FSA Scot); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004, assisted by Elspeth Iliff (BA (hons.); MSc) and Timothy Cornah (BA (hons); MSc), who also prepared the report and illustrations. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan (BA (hons.); MA; ACIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

The historical and archaeological background was set out within the WSI and is summarised below.

3.3 List of sources consulted

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Wardell Armstrong (2016).

Fieldwork was undertaken between 25 and 27 April 2016.

Seven trenches, each approximately 50m by 1.80m, covering 630m² in area, were excavated over the site area of about 1.5ha, representing a sample of 4.2%. 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 and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). 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

Artefact retrieval was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts were identified and nothing was recovered.

3.7 Environmental archaeology methodology

3.7.1 Sampling policy

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

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 to the east of Stratford-upon-Avon town centre, on the north side of the Banbury road. The topography of the site slopes down slightly from the east. The geology is recorded as Mercian Mudstone, overlain by Ailstone Member sand and gravels (BGS 2016).

The archaeological context given here is summarised from the WSI (Wardell Armstrong 2016).

Within an earlier phase of works in the field immediately to the north-west of this site, two Bronze Age pits were identified (Wardell Armstrong 2015). Further features of the same period were recorded at Alveston Manor, along with a possible Iron Age Romano-British settlement at Loxley Road. A potential further settlement of the date had been suggested to extend into this site, based upon cropmark evidence, though was only dated as such based upon morphology.

No known features of the Romano-British or medieval eras are known to exist in the vicinity of the site, though a Romano-British road possibly existed c 400m north of the site.

Within the earlier phases of work in the field to the north-west, a post-medieval ditch was identified, along with two pits of this date.

Also as part of the earlier works, a geophysical survey was undertaken over the present site. This identified no geophysical anomalies of potential archaeological interest or significance.

4.2 Current land-use

The site was previously under arable cultivation.

5 Structural analysis

The trenches recorded are shown in Fig 2 and Plates 1-4. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Natural deposits were recorded within all seven of the trenches, consisted of light red and orange sands. These lay at a depth of 0.44-0.52m from the surface. These were in turn overlain by subsoil deposits that consisted of mid-reddish brown silty sand throughout, at depths of 0.20-0.25m below the surface.

5.1.2 Phase 2: Modern deposits

A plough soil was noted within all seven of the trenches, and consisted of mid-greyish brown silty sand to a depth of 0.20-0.25m below the surface. A single modern feature was noted in Trench 4, a machine dug geological test pit.

6 Synthesis

No archaeological features were present within the seven trenches, and no residual finds were recovered from within the shallow subsoil or ploughsoil, which directly overlay the undisturbed natural sands to a depth of 0.44-0.52m. Whilst there was considered to be the potential for the presence of prehistoric and Romano-British remains within the site, this investigation has confirmed their absence. This corroborates with the geophysical survey of the site which identified no anomalies of archaeological origin.

7 Significance and the impact of the development

No archaeological features were present within the excavated trenches. If the trench sample is representative of the wider site then there will be no impact on archaeological deposits of construction activity.

8 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.

An archaeological evaluation (Phase II) was undertaken on behalf of Wardell Armstrong of land off Milestone Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire (NGR SP218 539).

Seven trenches were excavated across the site. No archaeological features were present within the trenches, and no residual finds were retrieved from the shallow subsoil or ploughsoil, which directly overlay the undisturbed natural sands to a depth of 0.44-0.52m below the present surface.

Whilst there was considered to be the potential for the presence of prehistoric and Romano-British remains within the site, this investigation has confirmed their absence. This corroborates with the geophysical survey of the site which identified no anomalies of archaeological origin. If the trench sample is representative of the wider site then there will be no impact on archaeological deposits of construction activity.

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Jon Webster and Nick Daffern (Wardell Armstrong).

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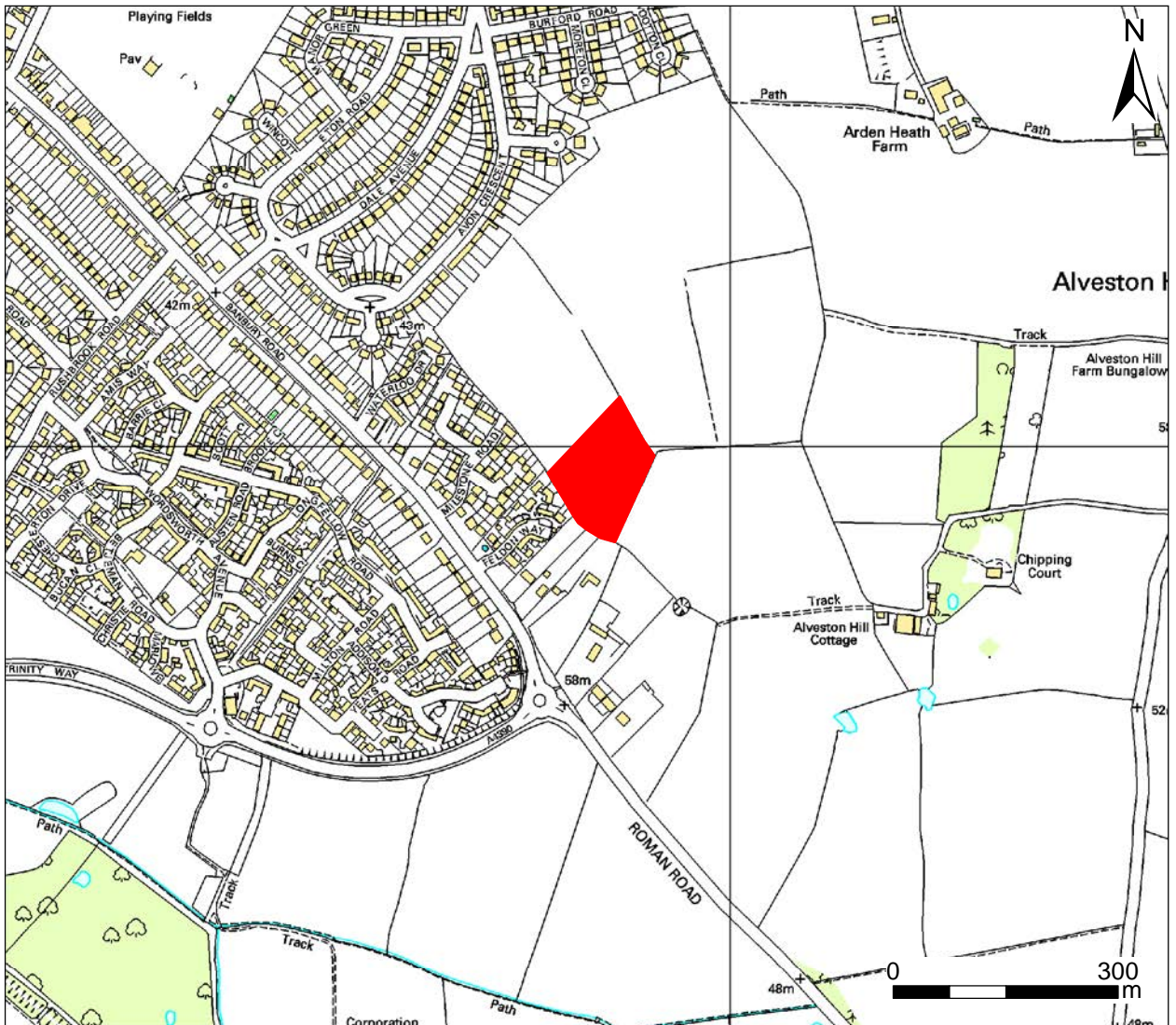
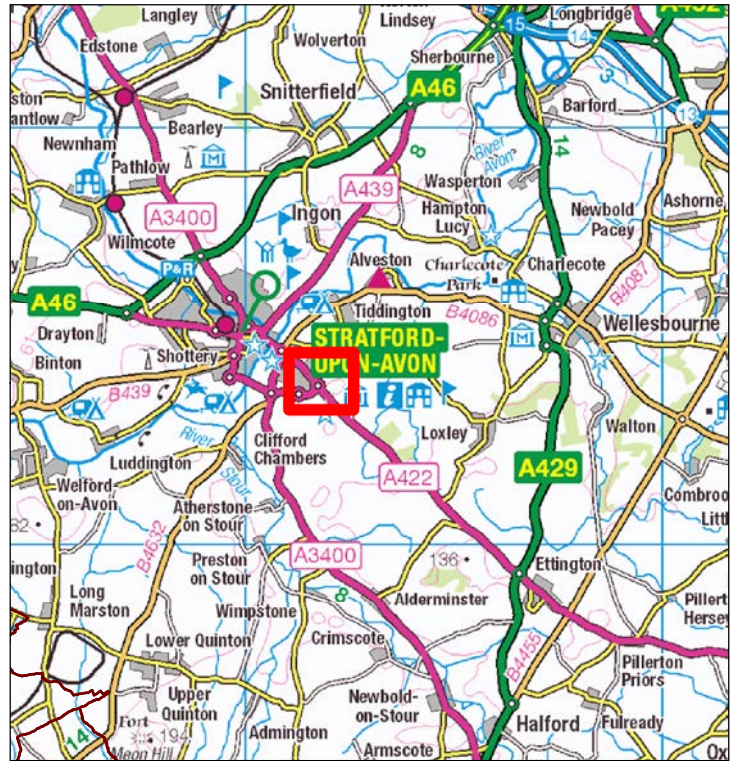
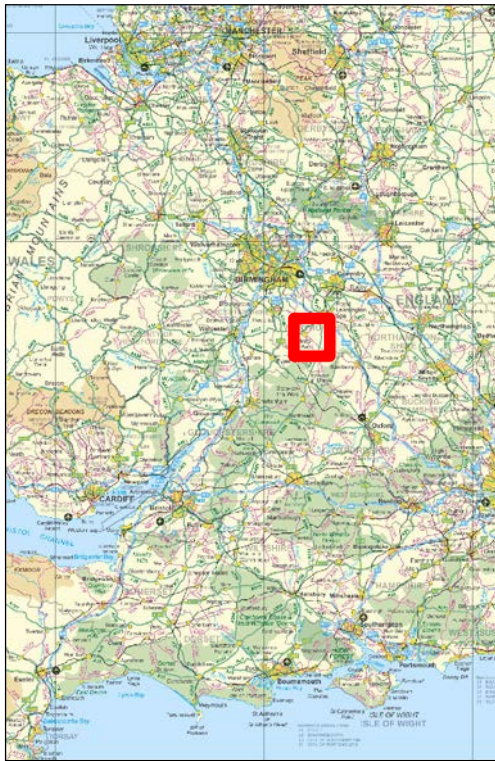
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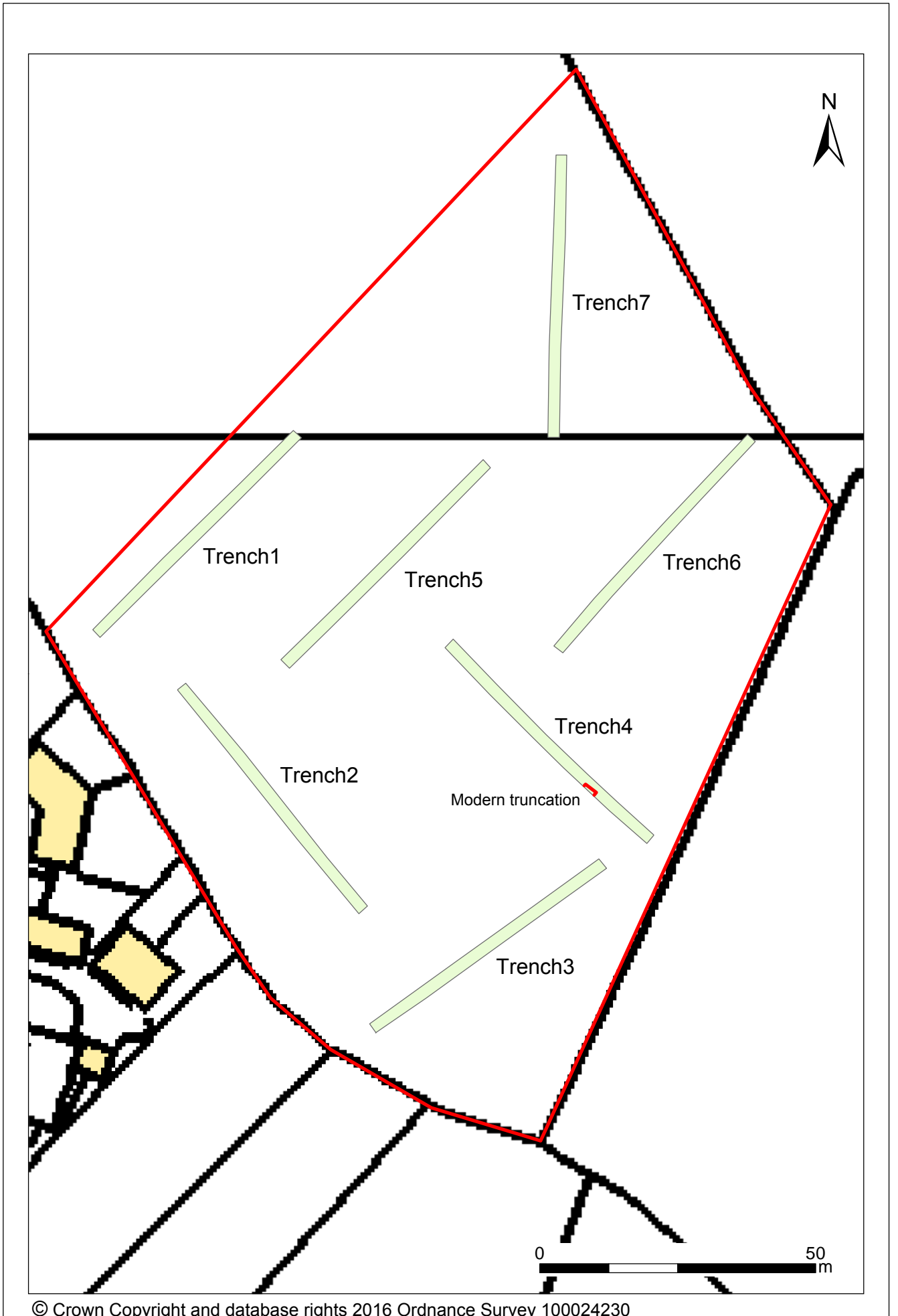
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Figures



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Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: Trench Locations

Plates



Plate 1 Trench 1, looking south-west



Plate 2 Trench 3 deposit profile, looking north-west



Plate 3 Trench 6, looking south-west



Plate 4 Trench 4, looking north-west

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length 50m Width 1.80m Orientation north-east to south-west

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Description	Depth	Interpretation
100	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.23	Topsoil
101	Subsoil	Layer	Friable mid reddish brown silty sand	0.28	Subsoil
102	Natural	Layer	Loose light reddish orange sand		Natural

Trench 2

Length 50m Width 1.80 Orientation north-west to south-east

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Description	Depth	Interpretation
200	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.20	Topsoil
201	Subsoil	Layer	Friable mid reddish brown silty sand	0.24	Subsoil
202	Natural	Layer	Loose light reddish orange sand		Natural

Trench 3

Length 50m Width 1.80m Orientation north-east to south-west

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Description	Depth	Interpretation
300	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.23	Topsoil
301	Subsoil	Layer	Friable mid reddish brown silty sand	0.25	Subsoil
302	Natural	Layer	Loose light reddish orange sand		Natural

Trench 4

Length 50m Width 1.80m Orientation north-west to south-east

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Description	Depth	Interpretation
400	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.24	Topsoil
401	Subsoil	Layer	Friable mid reddish brown silty sand	0.26	Subsoil
402	Natural	Layer	Loose light reddish orange sand		Natural

Trench 5

Length 50m Width 1.80m Orientation north-east to south-west

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Description	Depth	Interpretation
500	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.22	Topsoil

501	Subsoil	Layer	Friable mid reddish brown silty sand	0.25	Subsoil
502	Natural	Layer	Loose light reddish orange sand		Natural

Trench 6

Length 50m

Width 1.80m

Orientation north-east to south-west

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Description	Depth	Interpretation
600	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.25	Topsoil
601	Subsoil	Layer	Friable mid reddish brown silty sand	0.27	Subsoil
602	Natural	Layer	Loose light reddish orange sand		Natural

Trench 7

Length 50m

Width 1.80m

Orientation north to south

Context	Feature Type	Context Type	Description	Depth	Interpretation
700	Topsoil	Layer	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	0.23	Topsoil
701	Subsoil	Layer	Friable mid reddish brown silty sand	0.24	Subsoil
702	Natural	Layer	Loose light reddish orange sand		Natural

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress report AS2
- 1 Photographic record AS3
- 42 Digital photographs
- 7 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 CD-Rom/DVD
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Warwickshire Museum
The Butts
Warwick Warwickshire,
CV34 4SS
Tel. Warwick (01926) 412500