

Archaeological evaluation at land east of Shaw Lane, Albrighton, Shropshire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for Boningale Homes

March 2021



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LAND EAST OF SHAW LANE ALBRIGHTON SHROPSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Land east of Shaw Lane, Albrighton, Shropshire
Local planning authority: Shropshire County Council
Planning reference: 15/02448/FUL
Central NGR: SJ 82056 04161
Commissioning client: EDP Ltd, for Boningale Homes
WA project number: P6041
WA report number: 2908
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-417690

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Archaeological evaluation of land east of Shaw Lane, Albrighton, Shropshire

By Roland Tillyer

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land east of Shaw Lane, Albrighton, Shropshire (NGR SJ 82056 04161). It was commissioned by EDP Ltd. on behalf of Boningale Homes, in advance of a proposed housing development which has been granted planning permission subject to a programme of archaeological works. Six trenches were excavated across the site, but no archaeological remains were identified other than a potential post-medieval field boundary ditch. Given the lack of archaeological features and as no finds were recovered from either the topsoil or subsoil it is highly unlikely any significant remains are present in the proposed development area.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation, comprising 6 evaluation trenches, was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in March 2021 at land east of Shaw Lane, Albrighton, Shropshire (NGR SJ 82056 04161) (Fig 1). The project was commissioned by EDP Ltd. on behalf of Boningale Homes, prior to the construction of houses across the site. Shropshire County Council has granted planning permission for the development subject to several conditions, including a programme of archaeological works (planning reference 15/02448/FUL). The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development had the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets.

The evaluation conforms to a WSI prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (2021) and approved by Shropshire County Council and to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site comprises approximately 3ha of arable land and forms part of a larger 16.6ha development site. It is located 150m to the east of Albrighton and north of Kingswood Road. It is bounded by arable fields to the east, north and west and by a construction site, an earlier phase of the development, to the south. The site is generally flat at around 105m AOD, with a slight east-west slope.

The underlying geology comprises mudstone and halite-stone of the Mercia Mudstone group, with superficial deposits of Diamicton till from the Devensian recorded in the north western area of the site (BGS 2021).

2 Archaeological and historical background

A previous geophysical survey of the site identified several discrete anomalies of uncertain origin (GSB Prospection 2015) and two east to west aligned former field boundaries, visible on the 1888 OS mapping (Shropshire XLIV.SE (includes: Albrighton; Boningale; Donington))

A previous archaeological evaluation carried out in the southern portion of the development area in 2015 identified one of these post-medieval field boundaries and a medieval pit (Headland Archaeology 2015). The results of the earlier evaluation are consistent with the desk-based assessment (EDP 2015) which suggests that the site has been used as agricultural land since the medieval period and has low archaeological potential

3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project were to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify their location, nature, date and preservation;
- assess their significance;
- assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2021). Fieldwork was undertaken on 15 and 16 March 2021.

Six trenches, each 55m long and 1.8m wide, were excavated over the 3ha site, representing a sample of 2%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were positioned to target several discrete, anomalous trends visible in the results of the geophysical survey, while avoiding the storage and welfare facilities of the adjacent construction site. The position of several trenches were slightly altered from their proposed positions due to the presence of spoil heaps, debris and stored materials from the construction site.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. 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) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a GNSS device with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through structural evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology but eventually it will be deposited at Shropshire Museums.

5 Archaeological results

The trench and context inventory are presented in Appendix 1 and plates 1-4 illustrate the typical natural deposits and soil profiles encountered.

5.1 Trench and deposit descriptions

No archaeological features were identified in Trenches 1-5.

5.1.1 Natural deposits across the site

atural deposits were highly variable, consisting predominantly of light brownish pink sand interspersed with bands of firm pink clay and patches of gravel. However, in some areas the natural sand deposits were brown with patches of sandstone banding.

These were overlain by a mid orangey brown sandy silt subsoil between 0.20-0.30m thick and a friable dark brownish grey sandy silt topsoil also between 0.20-0.30m thick.

5.1.2 Post-medieval

A shallow, concave depression (603) was located in the southern end of Trench 6, at the approximate location where the east to west aligned geophysical anomaly, thought to be a post-medieval ditch, crossed the trench. The depression did not fully extend across the width of the trench and no ditch cut was seen in the overlying subsoil (Fig 3, Plate 4).

5.1.3 Modern activity

Modern ceramic land drains were recorded in Trenches 1 and 5, on a broadly north-east to south-west alignment.

6 Artefactual evidence

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

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental 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.

8 Discussion

No confirmed archaeological remains, other than two ceramic land drains were identified during the evaluation. Although the geophysical survey identified several linear anomalies, these are thought to reflect the highly variable natural deposits which often featured bands of gravel and clay. This is not unexpected as the British Geological Survey (BGS 2021) records both sandstone and mudstone bedrock in the area, overlain by areas of glacial till.

The very base of the post-medieval field boundary identified in the geophysical survey may have been present in Trench 6 (602). As this ditch was not identified during the previous evaluation (Headland 2015) it is likely that for the most part this ditch is only present in the subsoil and only occasional cuts through the natural.

9 Significance

No archaeological features of significance were identified during the evaluation.

10 Confidence

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

11 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah, ACIfA, assisted by Roland Tillyer.

The project was managed by Andrew Mann, MCI fA. The report was produced and collated by Roland Tillyer. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

12 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Ed Oakley (EDP Ltd.), and Hugh Hannaford (Shropshire County Council).

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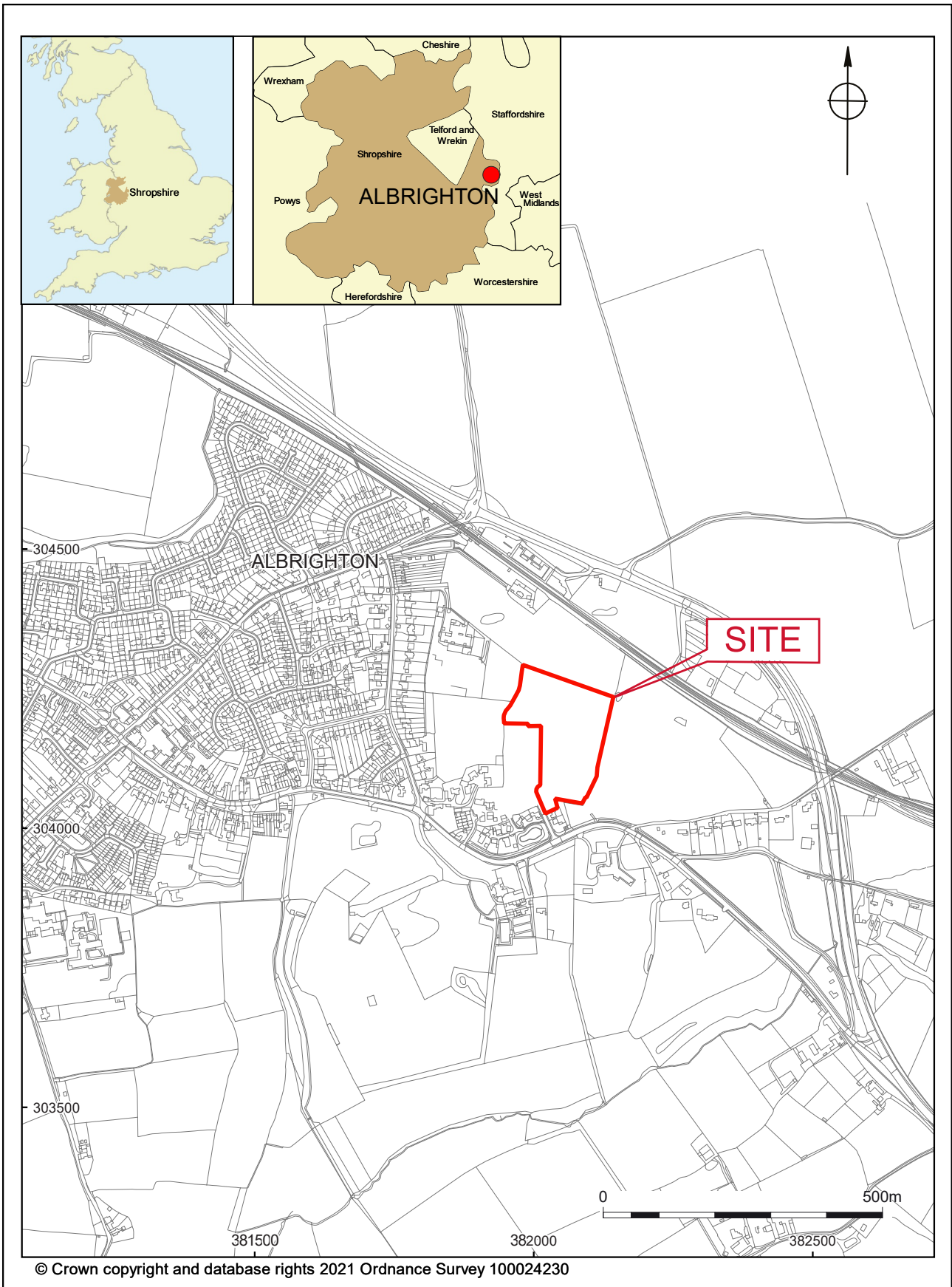
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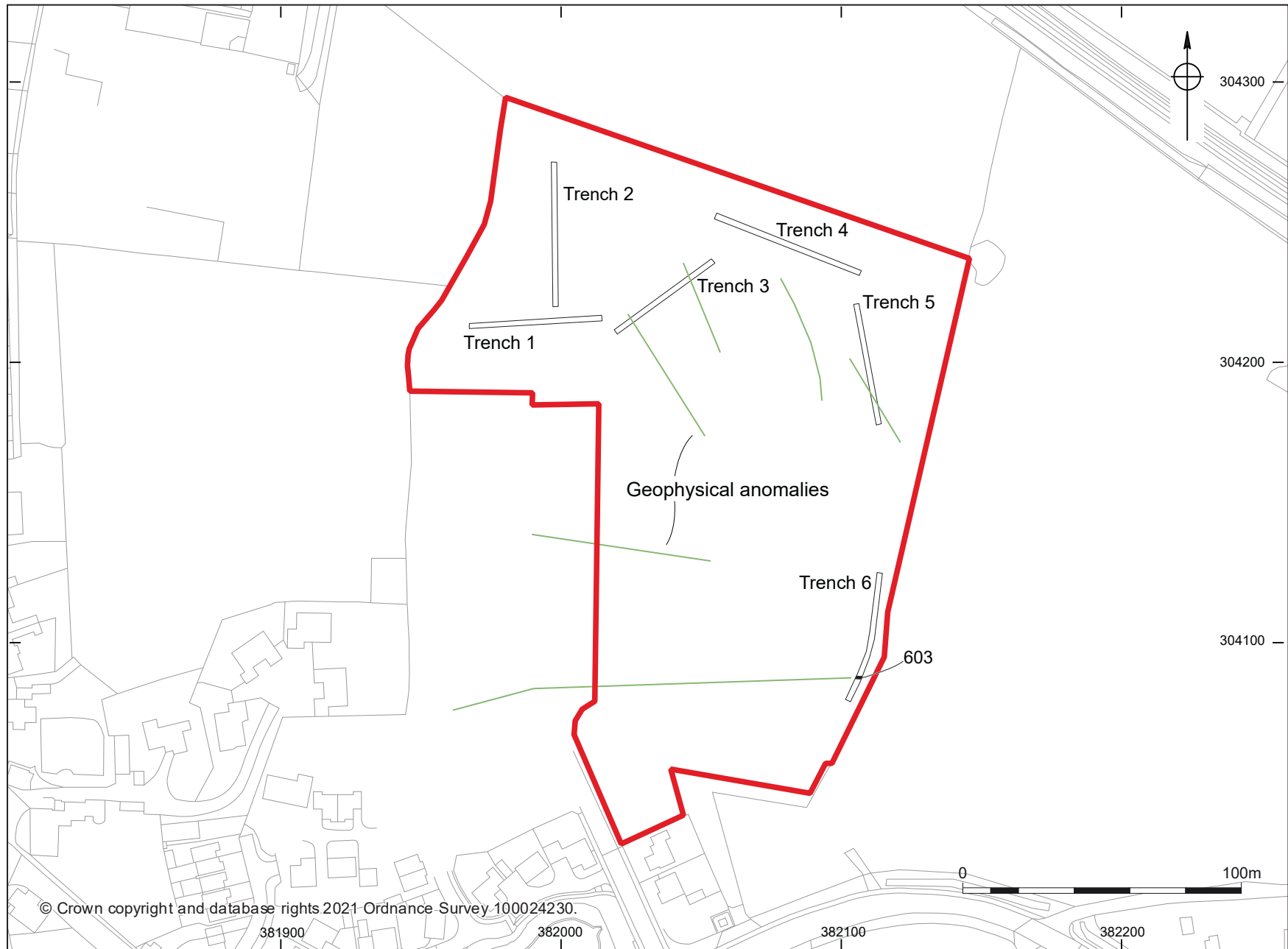
Figures



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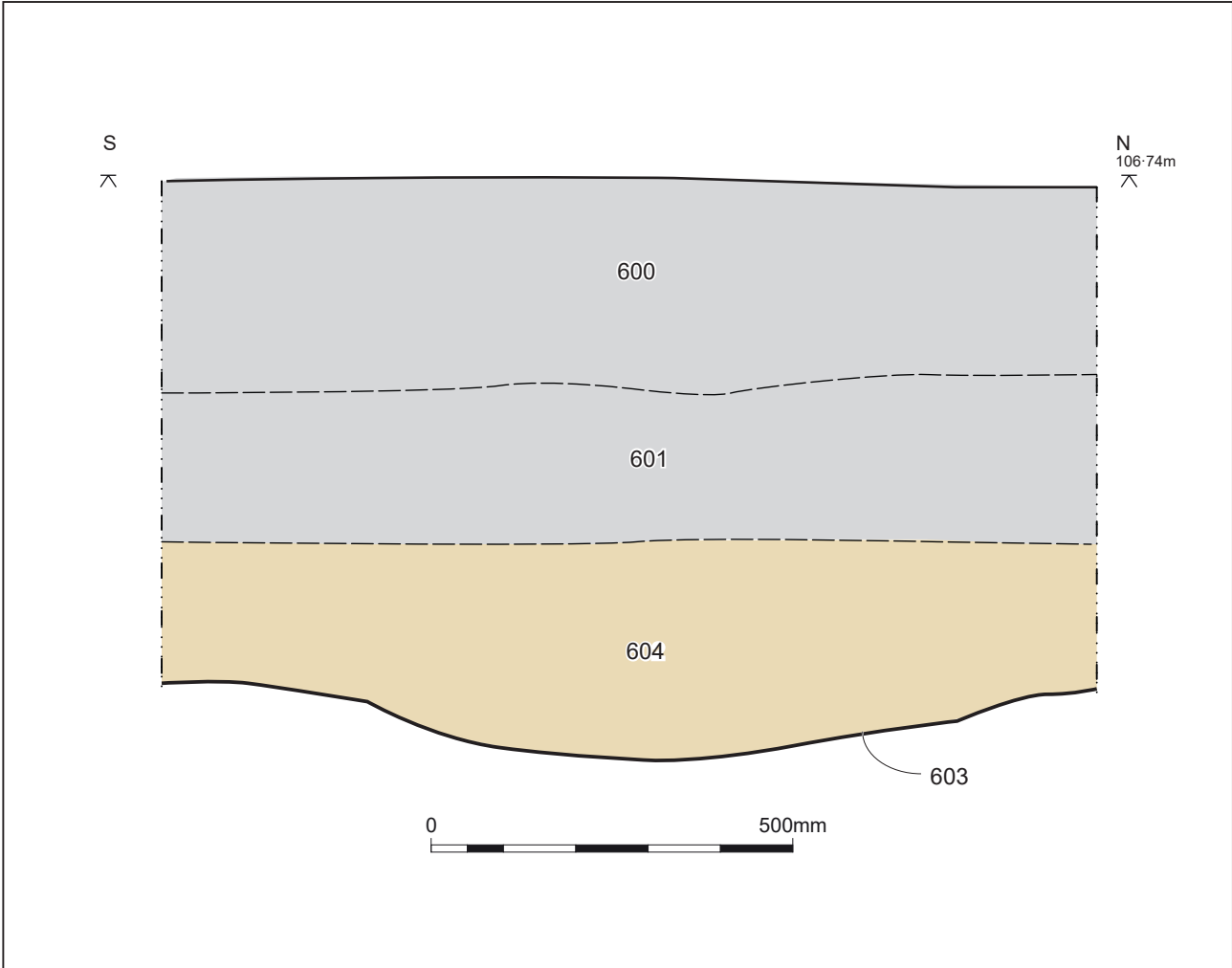
Location of the site

Figure 1



Trench Locations

Figure 2



Shallow ditch 603

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Tr 1, view east, 2x1m scales



Plate 2: Tr 3, view south-west, 2x1m scales



Plate 3: Tr 6, view south, 2x1m scales



Plate 4: Tr 6, possible base of post-medieval ditch (603), view east, 1m scale

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 50m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Topsoil	Layer		0.2m	Soft brownish grey sandy
101	Subsoil	Layer		0.15m	Soft reddish brown sandy silt
102	Natural	Layer			Moderately Compact yellowish red sand

Trench 2

Length: 50m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Topsoil	Layer		0.2m	Friable brownish grey sandy silt
201	Subsoil	Layer		0.2m	Soft greyish brown sandy
202	Natural	Layer			Moderately Compact brownish pink sand

Trench 3

Length: 50m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer		0.2m	Friable brownish grey sandy silt
301	Subsoil	Layer		0.2m	Soft reddish brown silty clay
302	Natural	Layer			Soft brownish pink sandy clay

Trench 4

Length: 50m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Topsoil	Layer		0.3m	Friable greyish brown sandy silt
401	Subsoil	Layer		0.25m	Soft reddish brown sandy clay
402	Natural	Layer			Firm brownish pink clay

Trench 5

Length: 50m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
500	Topsoil	Layer		0.25m	Friable reddish brown sandy silt
501	Subsoil	Layer		0.3m	Soft reddish grey sandy silt
502	Natural	Layer			Soft brownish pink sandy clay

Trench 6

Length: 50m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
600	Topsoil	Layer		0.3m	Friable grey sandy silt
601	Subsoil	Layer		0.2m	Soft reddish brown sandy silt
602	Natural	Layer			Soft reddish brown sandy silt
603	Linear	Cut	Possible ditch, more likely due to natural variation.		
604	Ditch	Fill	Sterile and probably natural.		Soft reddish brown sandy silt. Indistinguishable from subsoil

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Context sheet, Drawing, Photograph, Plan, Report, Section, Survey
Digital	Images raster/digital photography, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. The record archive will be offered to an appropriate museum.