

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**OF**

**LAND AT OXFORD DOWNS CRICKET CLUB,  
ABINGDON ROAD, STANDLAKE**

**SP 3881 0326**

*On behalf of*

*Cranbourne Homes*

**FEBRUARY 2006**

**REPORT FOR** Cranbourne Homes Ltd.  
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## **Summary**

*An evaluation of this site was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2006. Three trenches, totalling 60 metres in length, were excavated to reveal the underlying natural geology at a maximum height of 65.64m.*

*Archaeological features were limited. Five undated ditches were revealed, along with two possible small pits. A very small quantity of medieval pottery was recovered, however it was not associated with any of the man-made features.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site is located on the north east side of the A415 Abingdon Road at the junction with Croft Lane (NGR SP 3881 0326). The 0.46ha site is currently a cricket ground. The underlying geology is First Terrace Gravel and the site lies at approximately 66m OD.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission has been granted to construct eleven dwellings with access on part of Oxford Downs Cricket Ground (03/1871/P/OP & 05/0985/P/RM). Due to the potential for remains of archaeological significance to be present on the site a condition was attached requiring that a watching brief is undertaken. However, the applicant agreed that an archaeological field evaluation would be a more appropriate method to determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The Davis map of 1797 shows the areas fronting onto Abingdon Road as being divided into a series of separate property holdings. Nearby archaeological investigation has revealed that these properties and their boundaries date to the medieval period and contain structures and evidence of domestic and light industrial activities. Directly to the south is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 140). This is a cropmark site containing enclosures, roads, hut circles and pits. Its full extent northwards is unclear and may be masked by later overburden on either side of Abingdon Road. It was considered that associated features therefore may extend into this development site.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.

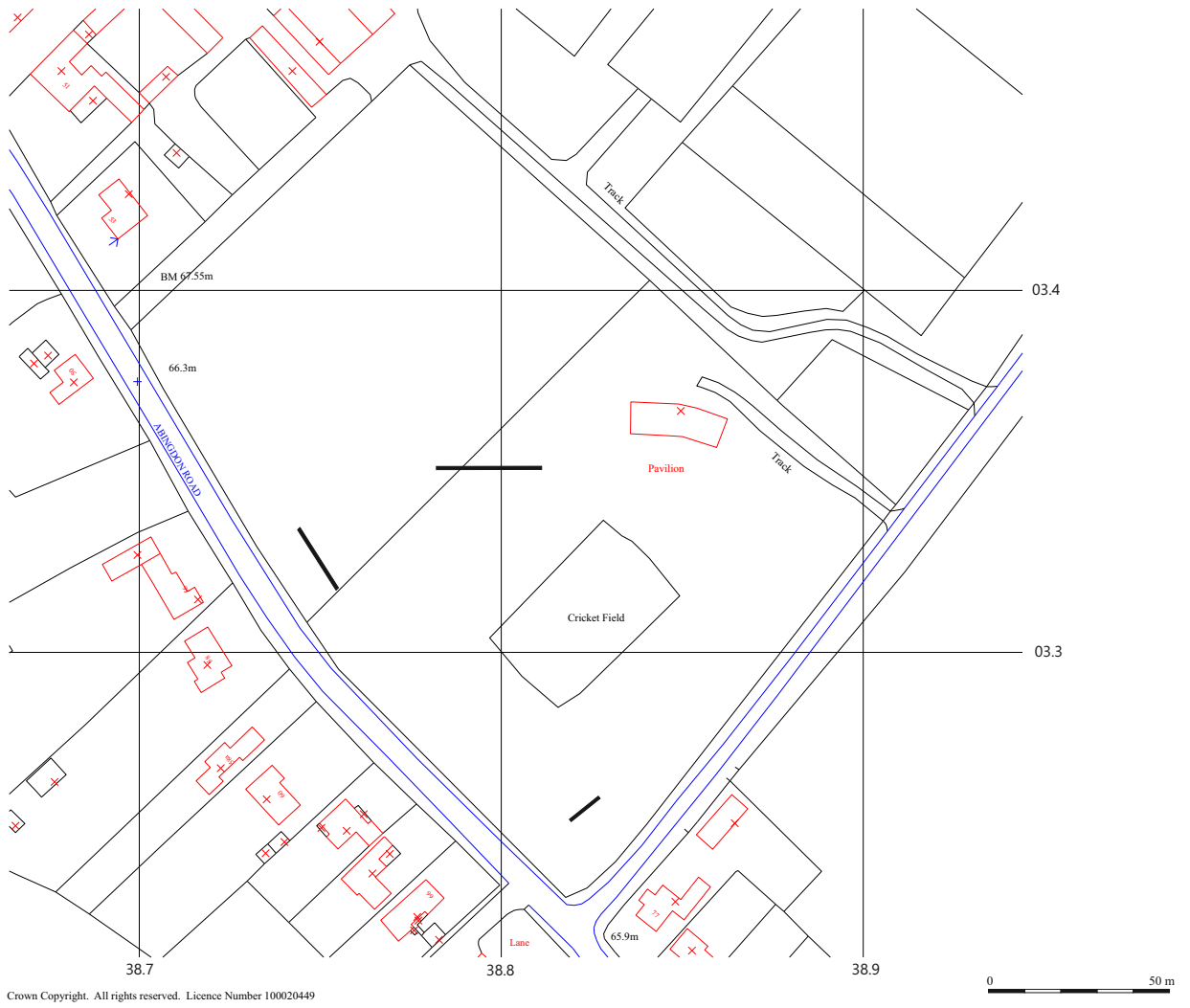


Figure 1: Site location

- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

In particular

- To determine whether the medieval and post-medieval settlement is present on the site
- To determine whether the cropmark site to the south extends into the site

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

In response to a *Brief* issued by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the excavation of a total of three trenches across the site (Fig. 1).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The field evaluation comprised the mechanical excavation of three trenches measuring 30m (Trench 1), 10m (Trench 2) and 20m (Trench 3) long and all 1.6m wide. This was supplemented by limited hand investigation of archaeological deposits. The integrity of any archaeological features or deposits that might have been better excavated in conditions pertaining to full excavation, or might warrant preservation *in situ*, was not to be compromised.

Excavation was by a JCB using a 1.6m wide ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation was taken down to the top of the natural undisturbed geology.. The resulting surface was hand cleaned where necessary and selected features and deposits were sampled and excavated by hand in order to meet the aims as defined above.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

Mr Hugh Coddington of the County Archaeological Services monitored the work.

## 4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

The uppermost layer in all trenches was a dark brown sandy loam (1/01), (2/01) & (3/01), that varied in depth from 0.25m to 0.55m across the site. Below this in all trenches was a mid orange-brown sandy clay loam (1/02), (2/02) & (3/02) that was on average 0.2m thick. This lay over the natural orange-brown sand and gravel (1/03), (2/03) & (3/03). Along with these deposits archaeological features were present in every trench.

### Trench 1

Cut into the natural sand and gravel (1/03) were a broad ditch [1/04], a second ditch [1/11], and a number of features; interpreted as animal burrows and a tree throw [1/06], [1/08], [1/15] & [1/16], although [1/06] and [1/08] in particular may represent irregular pits.

Ditch [1/04] was very shallow and ran N-S across at the east end of the trench. The makeup layer was 0.08m deep and 2.10m wide. The feature was constituted of a light brown sandy loam with gravel (1/05) and contained animal bone.

All the other features of this trench were located in its western portion. Two possible pits [1/06] & [1/08] represent the most regular examples in a group of 4 such features in close proximity to a large tree-throw, the fill of which (1/10) was found to contain a single sherd of medieval pottery and was recorded for this reason. Both [1/06] and [1/08] were sub-circular in plan and “U-shaped” in section with moderately steep regular sides, although [1/06] was shallower at its western edge.

Towards the west end of trench 1 a narrow ditch [1/11] was revealed to run obliquely across the trench, it was aligned SE – NW. Regular in profile this ditch was flat bottomed with straight sides at approximately 45 degrees to its base and was 0.50m in width at its upper extant limit. No finds were recovered from its grey-brown silty loam fill (1/12).

At the extreme west of trench 1 two further irregular features [1/15] & [1/16] were observed. Both exhibited a greyish-brown sandy silt fill with (1/13), the fill of [1/15], containing a piece of medieval tile while (1/14), the fill of [1/16], also contained a sherd of medieval pottery. These features were not considered to be man made.

### Trench 2

Trench 2 revealed two ditches [2/04] & [2/06], while an obviously modern post hole was left unrecorded. A sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil (2/01) of this trench.

Both ditches run across the trench roughly E – W being apparently parallel to one another. Ditch [2/04] was observed as a uniform cut 0.90m wide and 0.12m in depth. To the north, ditch [2/06] was narrower at 0.50m wide but of similar depth at 0.10m. The ditches share the same profile; with shallow concave sides and flat bottoms, while

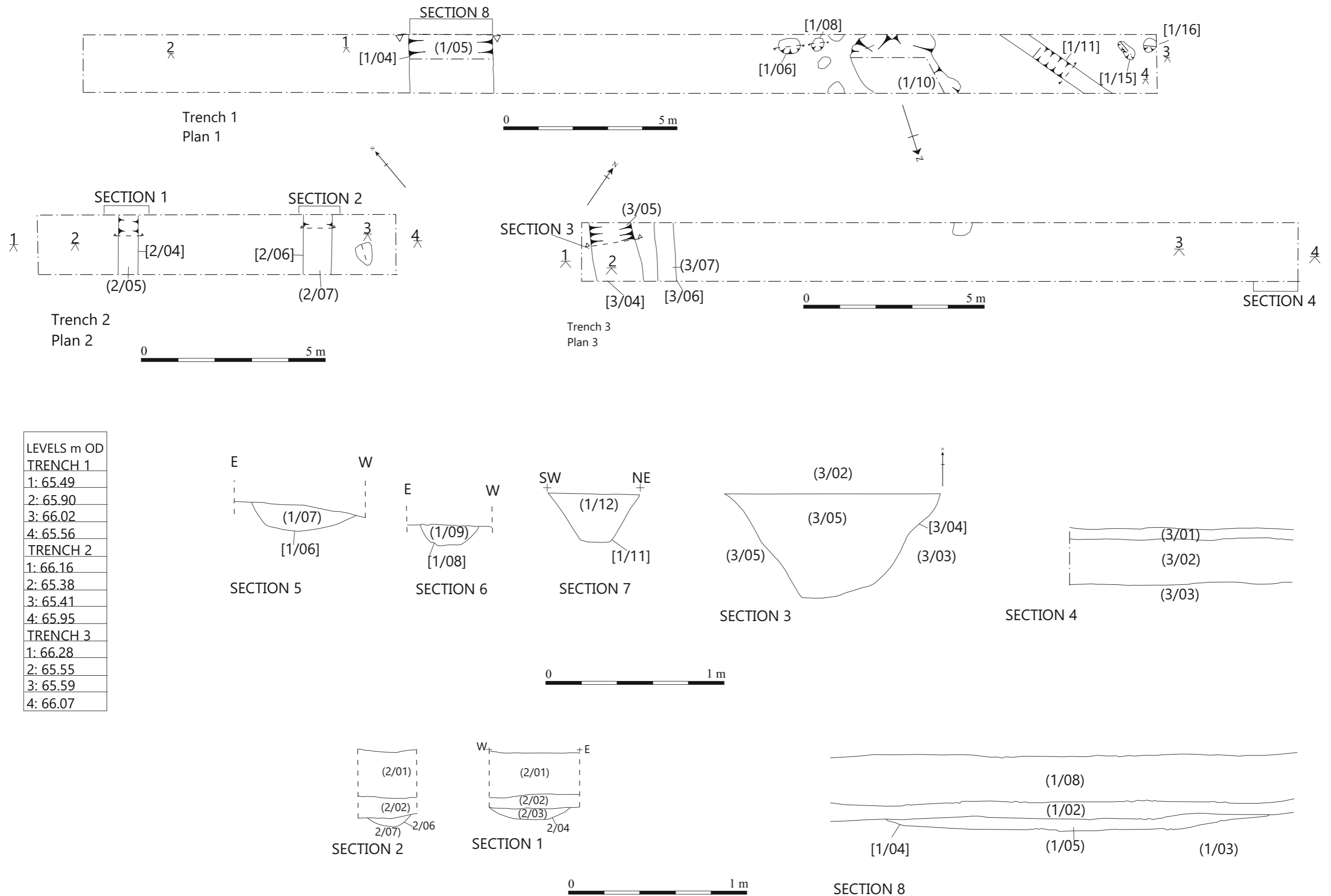


Figure 2: Trench plans and sections



the fills (2/05) and (2/07) respectfully are likewise similar light brown sandy loams. Neither ditch yielded any finds.

### Trench 3

Trench 3 contained two ditches [3/04] & [3/06] running roughly N-S across the trench at its westernmost extremity.

Ditch [3/04] runs across the trench at a slight oblique angle, it was 1.15m wide at its highest extant level and was excavated to its base at 0.55m in depth at 65.59m OD. In section the ditch was roughly V-shaped and was seen to exhibit a steep regular western side and a shallower irregular concave eastern side. The fill (3/05) of this feature was a homogenous mid greyish-brown sandy clay loam and contained no finds.

To the east, ditch [3/06] crossed Trench 3 in a more perpendicular fashion. Narrower than [3/04] at a uniform 0.60m it was seen to contain a virtually identical fill. This feature was not excavated.

In the centre of the trench was a small modern square-cut feature, which was not excavated.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery (By Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery assemblage comprised 3 sherds with a total weight of 17g. It was all of Saxo-Norman or medieval date. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 1 sherd, 10g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 2 sherds, 7g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. A fragment of possible medieval floor tile weighing 47g was recovered from trench 1 context 13.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Tr	Context	OXAC		OXAM		Date
		No	Wt	No	Wt	
1	10	1	10			11thC?
1	14			1	4	13thC
2	1			1	3	13thC
	Total	1	10	2	7	

## 6 DISCUSSION

Five ditches were revealed.

The two relatively large examples in Trench 3 [3/04] & [3/06] were aligned roughly south-west to north-east, perpendicular to Abingdon Road, while ditch [1/11] runs roughly north-west to south-east along the line of the road. Given the likely medieval origin of Abingdon Road, the respective alignments of these three ditches and the nature of their fills, we can assume a medieval or later date for the ditches.

The two ditches in Trench 2 follow a similar alignment to the example in Trench 1, and as such may represent a lane or drove-way radiating from nearby Croft Lane and also of medieval or later origin. However, the proximity of these features to Abingdon Road and the nature of their fills suggests otherwise. A similar fill is found in the broad shallow ditch [1/04] which follows an alignment apparently unrelated to the road. It is therefore most likely that these three features are of an altogether different period and as such may represent a continuation of the crop-marks to the south.

Unfortunately no dating evidence was collected for any of these features during the evaluation.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
<b>Trench 1</b>			0.35	1.60	30		
1/01	Layer	Dark brown sandy clay loam	0.26	Tr.	Tr.	-	
1/02	Layer	Mid orange-brown clay loam	0.09	Tr.	Tr.	-	
1/03	Natural	Yellow-brown sand and gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
1/04	Cut	Linear cut	0.08	2.10	Tr.	-	
1/05	Fill	Light brown sandy loam	0.08	2.10	-	Animal bone	
1/06	Cut	Irregular cut – possible pit	0.14	0.58	0.50	-	
1/07	Fill	Mid-brown slightly sandy loam	0.14	-	-	-	
1/08	Cut	Irregular cut – possible pit	0.12	0.33	0.30	-	
1/09	Fill	Mid-brown sandy loam	0.12	-	-	-	
1/10	Fill (of tree - throw)	Mid-brown sandy loam	-	Tr.	2.40	Pot	
1/11	Cut	Linear Cut	0.28	0.52	Tr.	-	
1/12	Fill	Light greyish-brown sandy silt	0.28	-	-	-	
1/13	Fill Of [1/15]	Mid greyish-brown sandy silt	0.10	-	-	Tile	Medieval?
1/14	Fill Of [1/16]	Dark greyish-brown sandy silt with occ. charcoal	0.19	-	-	Pot	Medieval?
1/15	Cut	Irregular cut – probable burrow	0.10	0.40	0.80	-	
1/16	Cut	Irregular cut – probable burrow	0.19	0.50	0.50	-	

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
<b>Trench 2</b>			0.74	1.60	10		
2/01	Layer	Mid – dark brown sandy clay loam	0.56	Tr.	Tr.	Pot	Medieval?
2/02	Layer	Orangey-brown sandy clay loam	0.18	Tr.	Tr.	-	
2/03	Natural	Yellow-brown sand and gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
2/04	Cut	Linear cut	0.12	0.90	Tr.	-	
2/05	Fill	Light brown silty sandy loam	0.12	-	-	-	
2/06	Cut	Linear cut	0.10	0.50	Tr.	-	
2/07	Fill	Light brown sandy loam	0.10	-	-	-	

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
<b>Trench 3</b>			0.32	1.60	20		
3/01	Layer	Dark brown sandy loam	0.06	Tr.	Tr.	-	

3/02	Layer	Orangey-brown sandy clay loam	0.26	Tr.	Tr.	-	
3/03	Natural	Yellow-brown sand and gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	
3/04	Cut	Linear cut	0.60	1.20	Tr.	-	
3/05	Fill	Mid greyish-brown sandy clay	0.60	-	-	-	
3/06	Cut	Linear cut	-	0.60	Tr.	-	
3/07	Fill	Mid greyish-brown sandy clay	-	-	-	-	