LAND AT BROADFIELD FARM, GREAT SOMERFORD, WILTSHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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Land at Broadfield Farm, Great Somerford, Wiltshire: An Archaeological Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Pre-Construct Archaeology was commissioned by the Environmental Dimension Partnership to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the land at Broadfield Farm, Great Somerford, Wiltshire. The investigations were required to investigate the potential for archaeological remains ahead of a new housing development.

A total of five trenches were excavated across two fields which revealed that the area had previously been subject to very little activity and has been agricultural in nature for at least a thousand years. The only feature of archaeological interest was an isolated former agricultural landscape management boundary ditch which is likely part of a wider field system. A single piece of late Saxon to early medieval pottery was recovered from the fill and demonstrated that the landscape was managed from this relatively early period. It is clear that the area of investigation was set away from any foci of activities such as settlement or industry and that the overall archaeological potential of the site is low.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) at Broadfield Farm, Great Somerfield, Wiltshire, SN15 5EL (centred on: SP 96411 82429 Figure 1) between the 04th and 06th September 2023. The investigations were commissioned by the Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) on behalf of their client Cotswold Homes Ltd. The works were commissioned to address Condition 15 of Planning Appeal decision provided by Wiltshire County Council (Planning Reference: **APP/Y3940/W/22/3296058**) ahead of a new housing development including access roads, infrastructure and landscaping.

1.2 The proposed development was thought to have the potential to contain agriculture or fringe settlement related archaeology from the prehistoric to post medieval periods. Given the limited knowledge of the archaeological resource and the potential for impact, by the proposed new housing development, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) required a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching to investigate this.

1.3 The definition of an archaeological field evaluation is '*a limited programme of non-intrusive and / or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quantity and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national and international context as appropriate*' (CIFA 2020a).

1.4 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by PCA (2023) in response to an archaeological brief prepared by EDP (2023) and in agreement with the Council's archaeological advisor.

1.5 In addition, the archaeological evaluation by trial trenching conforms to the guidelines and standards laid down in the following documents:

- *Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives*, Chartered Institute for

Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2022)

- *Regulations for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2021)
- *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Evaluation,* Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2020a);
- *Code of Approved Conduct for the Regulation of Arrangements in Field Archaeology*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2020b);
- *Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2020c);
- *Regulations for Professional Conduct*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2019);
- *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Policy*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2014a; updated February 2021);
- *Code of Conduct; Professional Ethics in Archaeology*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Reading (CIFA 2014b; updated October 2021);
- *Management of Archaeological Research Projects in the Historic Environment (Morphe),* Historic England: London (HE 2015);
- *Fieldwork Induction Manual: Operations Manual 1*, Pre-Construct Archaeology, London (Taylor and Brown 2018);
- *Fieldwork Operations Manual, Regional Variation Addendum; Warwick Office*, Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, Warwick (Webster 2018);
- *Guidelines and Conditions for the Preparation and Deposition of Archaeological Archives to Wiltshire Museum*, Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Society Collections Trust: Devizes (WM 2022)

1.6 The general aims of these investigations were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where observed;
- to establish the character of any potential features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to assess the impact of the application on any archaeological remains if present;
- to recover artefactual materials from as many contexts as possible to allow for a refined chronological sequence of the site to be established;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material to gain an understanding on site preservations, potential and gain an understanding of formation processes;
- to provide the Local Planning Authority with a characterisation of the potential of the site so an informed decision can be made.

1.7 And specifically to;

- Investigate, characterise and where possible date the geophysical anomalies noted in the previous survey (Sumo 2020);
- To determine the validity of the geophysical survey and its ability to provide a true indication of possible underlying archaeological assets.

1.8 This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy. The site archive will be deposited with the Devizes Museum under accession reference: **DZSWS:27-2023**.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

2.1.1 The underlying geology for the site is mapped as Siltstone interbedded with Sandstone associated with the Kellaways Sand Member. This was formed in an environment dominated by shallow seas between 166 and 163 million years ago during Callovian Age within the Jurassic Period. This is mapped as having no overlying superficial deposits (BGS 2023), with the soils mapped as free draining lime rich loam soils (Landis 2023).

2.1.2 The above mapped geology was consistent with that encountered during the course of the archaeological investigations.

2.2 Topography

2.3 The area of investigation is situated at the southern edge of Great Somerford and to the east of Seagry Road. The site currently comprises arable farmland to the south of private residential properties and buildings associated with Broadfield Farm and measures roughly 1.5ha in size. Two large fishing lakes bound the east of the site whilst the south is limited by a continuation of arable fields. The site is broadly flat and lies at a height of broadly *c*.60m AOD (above ordnance datum).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 General

3.1.1 An archaeological and heritage assessment was produced on the known historical and archaeological background of the site and wider area within a 1km vicinity (EDP 2021). This was undertaken to further the information produced by an earlier geophysical survey (Sumo 2020). It is not intended to repeat the findings of these studies here and what follows is a brief overview, for more information please refer to the original reports.

3.1.2 Due to limited number of previous archaeological investigations in the area generally very little is known. There is, however, evidence of prehistoric activity in the wider landscape. For instance, the earliest known find in the landscape comprised a Neolithic polished axe head that was found in a garden in nearby Wilkins Lane, approximately 340m north of site (HER Reference: **MW15467**). Aerial photography has also revealed a number of cropmarks which based on morphological similarities have been postulated to be of prehistoric date and comprise ring ditches and linears. Examples include a cluster of cropmarks between 350m and 650m to the northeast of site (HER References: **MWI5506**-**MWI5510**), as well as more 650m to the southeast (HER Reference: **MWI5513** & **MWI5517**) and another group between 550m and 800m to the east (HER Reference: **MWI5501**, **MWI5503**-**MWI5505**). However it should be noted that none of these features have been subjected to intrusive investigation and there have been no dateable finds from any of these, as such the dating as evidence of prehistoric activities has to remain somewhat tentative.

3.1.3 At present it appears that very little happens within the landscape for a considerable period. The next currently known archaeological evidence dates to the medieval period, located 600m to the north of site is situated a scheduled motte and the remains of a 12th century stone built structure (NHLE Reference: **1013224**). This is considered likely to be one of three castles known through documentary evidence to have been built to protect Malmesbury in 1144. Situated 20m to the east of aforementioned motte is an area of medieval settlement activity around Great Somerford Church with its

own associated motte. A limestone and sandstone building also dating to the 12th century was uncovered by archaeological investigations some 450m north of site (HER References: **MWI77187** & **MWI77188**).

3.1.4 The previous geophysical survey undertaken across the site showed evidence of possible ploughed out ridge and furrow across much of the investigation area as well as a couple of possible linear anomalies that did not respect the current landscape and so, if real, were suggestive of an earlier date.

3.2 Conclusions

3.2.1 Based on the limited above current knowledge it was thought that any archaeological features uncovered within the study area was most likely to be associated with agricultural land management. Although it is clear from the wider landscape that during the medieval period there was more going on than simple farming there was no suggestion of anything of that nature extending into the site.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Excavation and Sampling

4.1.1 The Written Scheme of Investigation (PCA 2023) proposed the excavation of five trenches, four of which measured 50m in length and one measuring 20m in length all 1.80m in width. Due to proximity to the tree line along the eastern edge of the area of investigation trench 2 had to be shortened by approximately 2m (Figure 2). The trenches were placed to best test the validity of the previous geophysical survey (Sumo 2020) with trenches placed in both the 'busy' and 'quiet areas of the site. This included placing trenches over the potential ploughed out ridge and furrow, as well as two east to west aligned linears anomalies with trenches 4 and 5. A possible curvilinear was also investigated with trench 1.

4.1.2 Deposits considered not to be significant were removed by a 360^0 tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under close archaeological supervision. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all possible features were inspected for their potential, selected deposits were excavated by hand to retrieve artefactual material and palaeoenvironmental samples. Overburden deposits were set aside beside each trench and examined visually and with a metal-detector for finds retrieval.

4.1.3 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping. Spoilheaps created were scanned by metal-detector.

4.1.4 All finds encountered were retained on site before being returned to the office where they were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* (TPQ) was then produced for each stratified context and the dates used to help determine the broad date phasing for the site. On completion of the fieldwork, the finds were cleaned and packaged according to standard *Guidelines and Conditions for the Preparation and Deposition of Archaeological Archives to Wiltshire Museum*, Devizes (WM 2022), the *Standards and Guidance for the Collection, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (CIFA 2020c) and the *Standard and Guide to Best Practice for Archaeological Archiving in Europe* (Perrin et al. 2014). Please

note, the following categories of materials will be discarded after a period of six months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified;
- modern pottery;
- material that has been assessed as having no obvious grounds for retention.

4.1.5 Archaeological features were inspected for their palaeoenvironmental potential with the intention of taking samples for further study. However, in this instance, no features or deposits were exposed that were suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling.

4.1.6 Field excavation techniques and recording methods are detailed in the PCA Fieldwork Induction Manual (Operations Manual I; Taylor & Brown 2018) and PCA Fieldwork Operations Manual Regional Variation Addendum; Warwick (Webster 2018).

4.2 Recording Methodology

4.2.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Geomax Mesa^2 rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better. Each point was recorded in relation to the OSGB36 geod model and coded to an internal PCA database to provide a dataset which records feature type, context number, associated drawing numbers and any other information that may be relevant.

4.2.2 This survey provides a three-dimensional geo-referenced visual representation of the archaeology present. Where features were determined to require more detailed illustration, these were undertaken by hand and drawn in relation to a feature specific geo-referenced baseline and drawn at an appropriate scale on polyester based drafting film and labelled in relation

to a site specific drawing register.

4.2.3 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as 'context numbers') and recorded on individual pre-printed forms (Taylor and Brown 2018; Webster 2018). Context sheets were primarily filled in by the archaeologist who excavated the feature/deposit. All deposits recorded during the evaluation are listed in Appendix 2.

4.2.4 All deposits were recorded with sufficient data to allow for a full characterisation of the context and its relationships to be made and allow for future studies to query and compare the dataset with confidence.

4.2.5 High-resolution digital photographs were taken at all stages of the evaluation process using a Canon EOS 1300D digital SLR camera with a 18.0-megapixel resolution. Digital Photographs were taken of all deposits and all images will be labelled appropriately and cross-referenced in relation to a site specific photography register and regarded as part of the primary archive.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Across the two fields a total of five trenches were opened. Trenches 1 and 2 were in the small western Field A, and Trenches 3, 4 and 5 at the northern end of the larger Field B. The site was relatively flat with the highest point being at the northern end of Trench 1 which was recorded a height of 61.77m AOD before the area slightly sloped down to the southeast to a height of 59.43m AOD on the eastern side of Trench 5. Due to a largely uniform substrate across the trenches, they were all similar in depth, ranging from a minimum depth of 59.12m AOD in Trench 5 to a maximum depth of 61.22m AOD in Trench 1.

5.1.2 All trenches were 1.80m in width and Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5 were 50m in length. Trench 2 was originally meant to be 20m in length, however, due to proximity to the tree line it was shortened to approximately 18m. Trench 1 was aligned north to south, Trenches 2 and 3 were aligned east to west, Trench 4 ran northwest to southeast and Trench 5 ran northeast to southwest. Only Trench 3 in Field B contained any archaeological features; a linear that was likely a boundary ditch **[3004]**. The rest of the trenches were devoid of any archaeology. The anomalies from the geophysical survey of two possible east-west linears that ran through Trenches 4 and 5, and the projected curvilinear feature in Trench 2, were demonstrated not to be present.

5.2 Natural substrate

5.2.1 Trenches 1, 2, 4 and 5 were all devoid of archaeology, and all five trenches were very similar in terms of the stratigraphy encountered. The natural substrate **(1003), (2003), (3003), (4003)** and **(5003)** was relatively uniform across site, appearing at an average height of 60.06m AOD. It was comprised of a light yellowish grey firm sandy clay, with frequent light greyish blue streaks in Trenches 1, 2 and 5 with occasional manganese flecks also visible in Trenches 1 and 2. In Trenches 1 and 4 there were also occasional small gravel patches.

5.2.2 This was overlain by a firmly compacted mid-orangish brown sandy clay

(1002), (2002), (3002), (4002) and **(5002)** that varied in thickness from a maximum of 0.94m in Trench 4 to around 0.40m in Trenches 1 and 2. The above was in turn covered by a very humic mid greyish brown, friable sandy clay silt topsoil **(1001), (2001), (3001)**, **(4001)** and **(5001)** that was consistent across all trenches and varied in thickness from 0.23m to 0.28m.

5.1 Boundary Ditch

5.1.1 The only trench that contained archaeological remains was Trench 3 located in the far north-western side of Field B, directly to the east of Field A (See figure 2). The natural substrate was revealed at a depth of 0.67m and ranged in height from 60.33 AOD at the west end of the trench, descending to a height of 59.98m AOD at the eastern limit. Located near the centre of the trench a north-south aligned linear feature **[3004]** was revealed**.** Measuring 3.40m in width, it descended from a moderately steep top break of slope via moderately steep concaved sides 0.38m onto a broadly flat base seen at a height of 59.94m AOD (Figure 4). It was filled by a sterile friable mid greyish brown sandy clay rich silt **(3005)** that was demonstrated to have been deposited primarily through natural aeolian deposition over an unknown period of time.

5.2 Palaeoenvironmental Sampling

5.2.1 All deposits were inspected for their palaeoenvironmental potential, although in this instance no deposits were suitable for palaeoenvironmental sampling.

6 FINDS ASSESSMENT BY CHRIS JARRETT

6.1 A single fresh sherd of pottery (22g), with fresh breaks, was recovered and was found in fill **(3005)** of the boundary ditch **[3004]**. The sherd of non-diagnostic pottery is in a good condition, is absent of surface deposits and consists of late Saxon-early medieval Cotswold-type ware, distinctive by its Oolitic limestone inclusions, dated c. 875–1225 (Mellor 1994, 44–52, 28, fig.5).

6.2 The single sherd of pottery has little significance as the find has little meaning. The pottery sherd dates the context it was recovered from and indicates late Saxon-early medieval activity on the study area. There are no recommendations for further work on the sherd.

7 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The archaeological evaluation demonstrated that the proposed development is situated within a landscape which is largely devoid of previous activity and has likely been associated with agriculture beyond the fringes of settlement for at least the last thousand years. The general lack of archaeological deposits does seem to have been a true reflection of the site, with very little evidence of later truncation through ploughing or similar activities that could have removed earlier archaeological evidence.

7.2 The results of the archaeological trenching in comparison to the geophysical survey demonstrated that the geology was not overly conducive in this instance, as variations in the geology presented as potential features whilst the archaeology revealed was seen only as a very faint response in the survey results.

7.3 The presence of the isolated single linear feature dating to late Saxon/early medieval is of some limited interest. From the sterile nature of its fill and its isolated occurrence it is clear that this feature was most likely associated with agricultural land management away from any settlement as part of a wider field system.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank EDP for commissioning the work. PCA are also grateful to Tim Havard for their advice and for monitoring the work. The author would also like to thank the project team: Sean Rice. Illustrations were produced by Diana Valk. Finds assessment was conducted by Chris Jarrett. The project was managed by Jonathan Webster, who was also responsible for the quality of the project.

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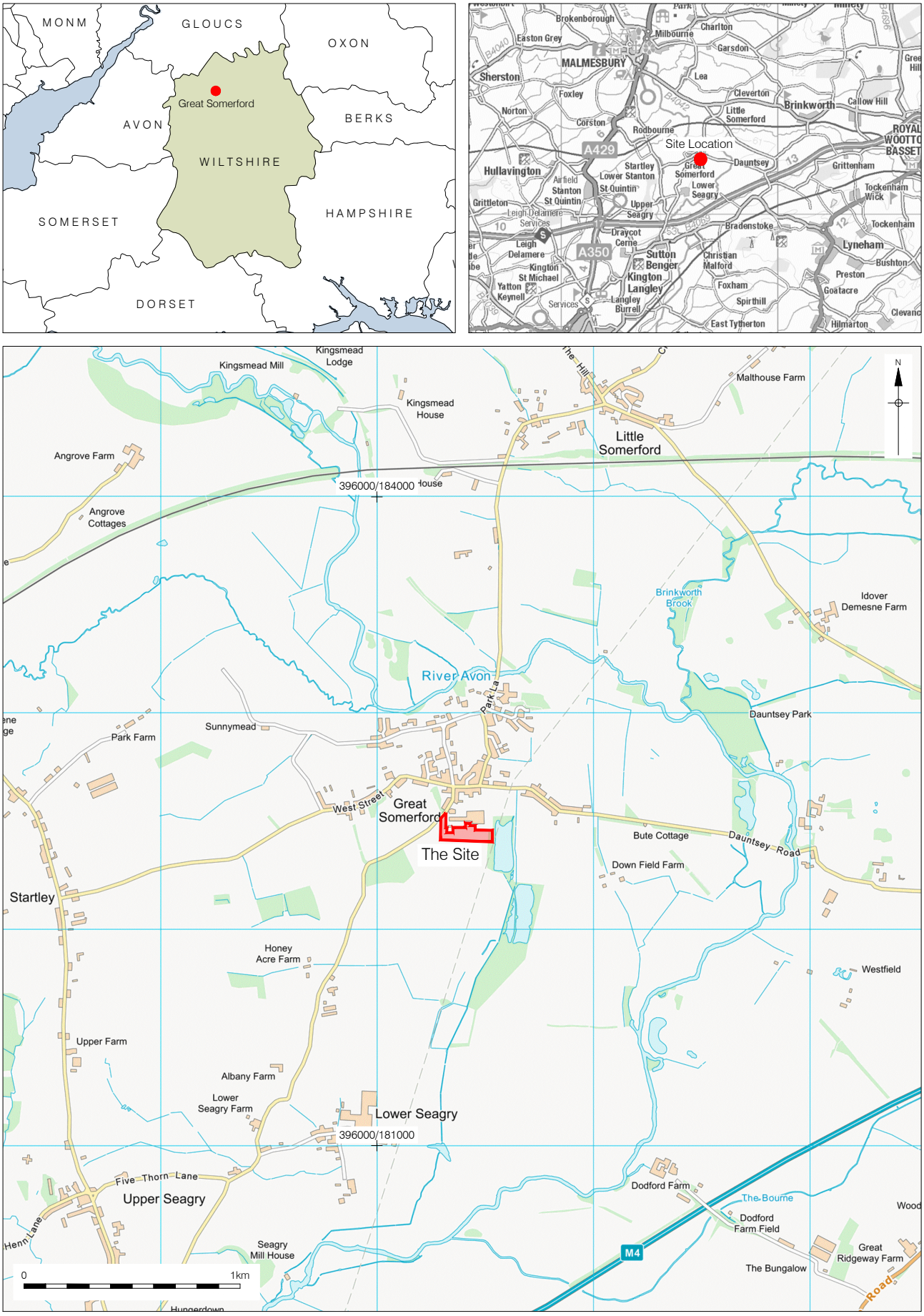
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www.bgs.ac.uk

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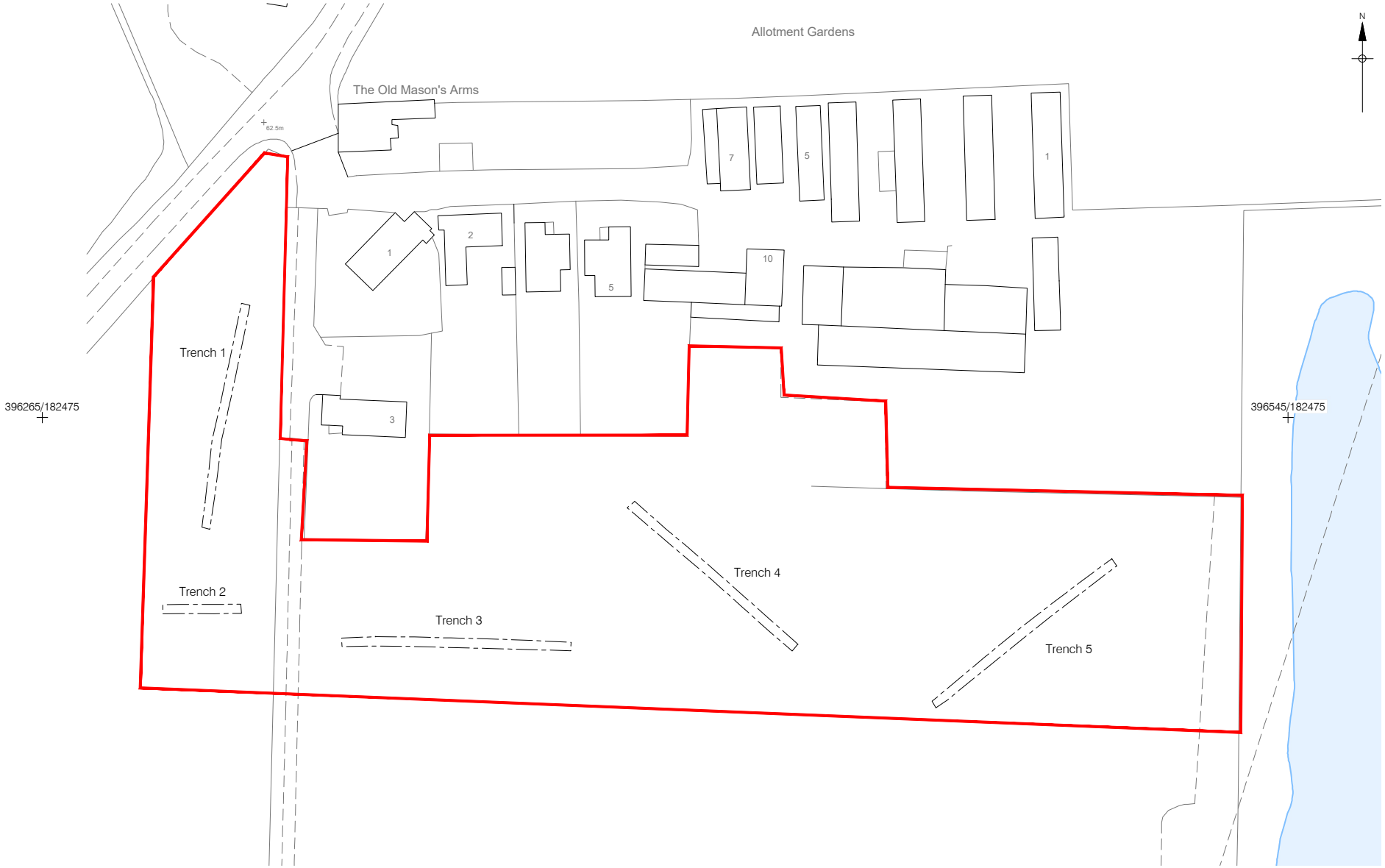
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Figure 1
Site Location
1:2,000,000, 1:250,000, 1:25,000 at A4

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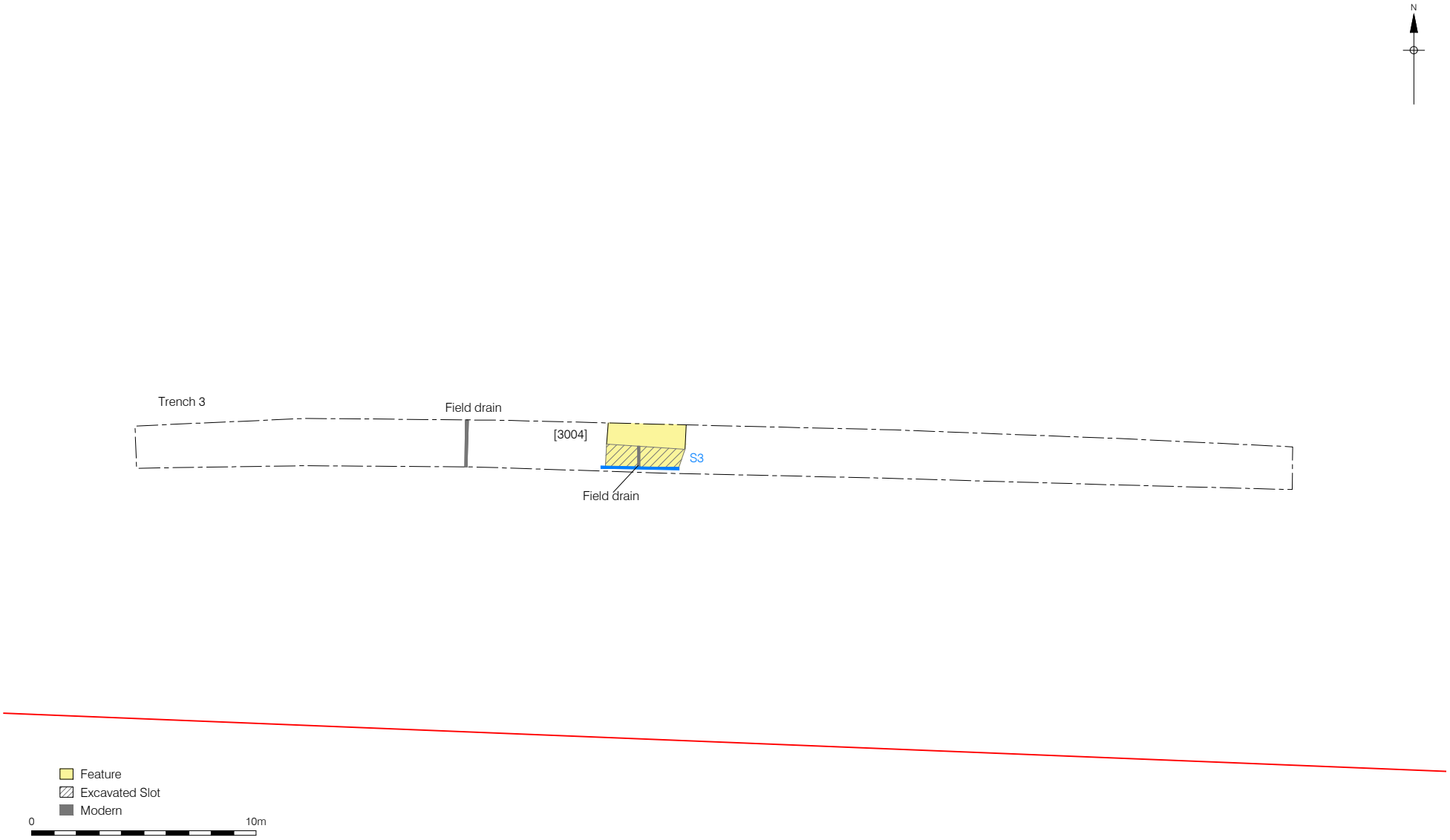
0 50m

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Figure 2
Detailed Site Plan
1:1,250 at A4

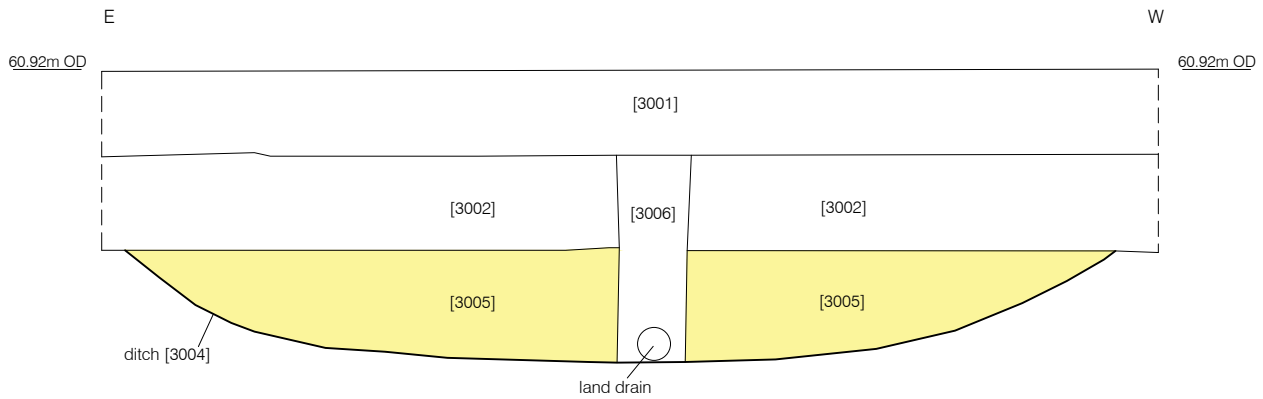
P:\PROJECT DATA\Out of London\Wiltshire\K8495 Broadfield Farm, Great Somerford Eval\CAD\EVAL\Fig 03_Trench 3.dwg



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Figure 3
Plan of Trench 3
1:250 at A4

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Section 3
North Facing
Trench 3

Feature

0 1m

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Figure 4
Section
1:25 at A4

10 APPENDIX 1: PLATES



Plate 1: North facing shot of Trench 1



Plate 2: West facing representative section of Trench 1



Plate 3: West facing shot of Trench 2



Plate 4: Southeast facing shot of Ditch [3004] (Trench 3)



Plate 5: Northwest facing shot of Trench 4



Plate 6: Northeast facing shot of Trench 5

11 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Trench 1

Length: 50m Width: 1.8m Orientation: N-S

Average Depth: 0.70m Maximum Depth: 0.96m

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
1000	Unstratified	N/A	N/A	Unstratified finds located around trench area.
1001	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown, friable sandy clay silt.	0.28m	
1002	Subsoil	Mid orangish brown firm sandy clay.	0.42m	
1003	Natural Substrate	Light yellowish grey firm clayey sand with light blueish grey streaks and moderate manganese inclusions. Patches of whitish grey sandstone at northern end.	0.14m+	

Trench 2

Length: 18m Width: 1.80m Orientation: E-W

Average Depth: 0.67m Maximum Depth: 0.82m

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
2000	Unstratified	N/A	N/A	Unstratified finds located around trench area.
2001	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown, friable sandy clay silt.	0.23m	
2002	Subsoil	Mid orangish brown firm sandy clay.	0.40m	
2003	Natural Substrate	Light yellowish grey firm sandy clay with rare manganese streaks and patches of light greyish blue.	0.08m+	

Trench 3

Length: 50m Width: 1.80m Orientation: E-W

Average Depth: 0.67m Maximum Depth: 0.78m

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
3000	Unstratified	N/A	N/A	Unstratified finds located around trench area.

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
3001	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown, friable sandy clay silt.	0.28m	
3002	Subsoil	Mid orangish brown firm sandy clay.	0.50m	
3003	Natural Substrate	Light yellowish grey compact sand and clay.	-	
[3004]	Cut	N-S orientated ditch. 3.40m in width with gentle concave sides and base.	0.38m	Due to size likely boundary ditch.
(3005)	Fill	Mid greyish brown friable sandy clay silt with rare pot sherd inclusions.	0.38m	Formed by natural infilling not deliberate backfill.
[3006]	Cut	Modern land drain.		Cuts though ditch [-3004] and subsoil (3002).

Trench 4

Length: 50m Width: 1.80m Orientation: SW-NE

Average Depth: 0.93m Maximum Depth: 1.24m

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
4000	Unstratified	N/A	N/A	Unstratified finds located around trench area.
4001	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown, friable sandy clay silt.	0.28m	
4002	Subsoil	Mid orangish brown firm sandy clay silt.	0.;94m-0.47m	
4003	Natural Substrate	Light yellowish grey mottled firm sandy clay with gravel patches.	-	

Trench 5

Length: 50m Width: 1.80m Orientation: SW-NE

Average Depth: 0.90m Maximum Depth: 0.98m

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
5000	Unstratified	N/A	N/A	Unstratified finds located around trench area.
5001	Topsoil	Mid greyish brown, friable sandy clay silt.	0.23m	
5002	Subsoil	Mid orangish brown	0.40m	

Context Number	Context Type	Description	Height/Depth	Discussion
		firm sandy clay.		
5003	Natural Substrate	Light yellowish grey firm sandy clay with rare manganese streaks and patches of light greyish blue.	0.08m+	

12 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS Summary for preconst1-518961

OASIS ID (UID)	preconst1-518961
Project Name	Evaluation at Broadfield Farm, Great Somerford, United Kingdom
Sitename	Broadfield Farm, Great Somerford, United Kingdom
Sitecode	BFGS-23
Project Identifier(s)	Land at Broadfield Farm, Great Somerford, Wiltshire
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	APP/Y3940/W/22/3296058
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project Dates	04-Sep-2023 - 06-Sep-2023
Location	Broadfield Farm, Great Somerford, United Kingdom NGR : ST 96444 82900 LL : 51.54498226663015, -2.052668072283268 12 Fig : 396444,182900 NGR : ST 96321 82455 LL : 51.540983, -2.054441 12 Fig : 396321,182455
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Wiltshire District : Wiltshire Parish : Great Somerford
Project Methodology	Five trenches excavated based on geophysical survey and random grid array. Four trenches were 50m in length and 1.8m in width, one was 20m in length and 1.8m in width. All archaeology hand excavated and recorded.
Project Results	Evaluation trenches found to be mainly sterile of any archaeological features or finds, apart form one linear that contained pot sherds.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation Environmental Dimension Partnership
HER	Historic England review - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	J Webster
HER Identifiers	
Archives	

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