

Land South of Lewis Court, Southwick Wiltshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Bristol: May 2026



Avon Archaeology Limited





Document Title	Land South of Lewis Court, Southwick, Wiltshire
Document Subtitle	Archaeological Evaluation Report
Client Name	Ashford Homes (SW) Ltd
Site Location	As Above
National Grid Reference	NGR ST 84220 54945
Planning Authority	Wiltshire County Council
Planning Reference	PL/2025/08329
Museum Name	Wiltshire Museum, Devizes
Museum Accession	DZSWS 18:2026
OASIS ID	Avonarch2-541876
HER Number	Pending
Project Code	AAL 26-27.878
Document Author	Rachel Heaton
Date of Preparation	August 2025

Document Author	Edited and Approved by	Review Date
R Heaton	J Davis	28/05/26

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Avon Archaeology Ltd

Unit 36, Avondale Business Centre, Woodland Way, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 1AW

Tel: 0117 960 8487

Email: mail@avonarchaeology.co.uk

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Abbreviations

AOD	<i>Above Ordnance Datum</i>
BA	<i>Bronze Age</i>
IA	<i>Iron Age</i>
Med	<i>Medieval</i>
Mod	<i>Modern</i>
PM	<i>Post-medieval</i>
RB	<i>Romano British</i>
UD	<i>Undated</i>
UP	<i>Upper Palaeolithic</i>
LD	<i>Land Drain</i>

Summary

Avon Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Orion Heritage Ltd, on behalf of their clients Ashford Homes (SW) Ltd, to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on a parcel of land south of Lewis Court, Southwick, Wiltshire. The site has been designated for the development of nine residential dwellings and associated works (application reference PL/2025/08399). Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service requested an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching to better understand a series of anomalies that were identified during a magnetometer survey of the site (Archaeological Surveys Ltd, 2025). Southwick is a settlement that has medieval origins, and a number of isolated Romano-British sites have been recorded in the wider area.

A total of five trenches were excavated across the site. Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were archaeologically negative. Trench 5 contained a series of diffuse blots, which upon further inspection were interpreted as variation in the natural strata. Trench 4 contained two discrete features, [403] & [405]. The fill of [405], (406) contained six, small, heavily abraded fragments of prehistoric ceramic, of probable Iron Age date.

The findings were vague, and did not provide enough information to make a reliable interpretation of activity on the site other than to indicate late prehistoric activity in the wider area.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Avon Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Orion Heritage on behalf of Ashford Homes Ltd to undertake a programme of Archaeological Evaluation by trial trenching, in compliance with the desires of Wiltshire County Council, on a parcel of land on the south of Lewis Court, and off Goose Street, Southwick, Wiltshire (centred on NGR ST 84220 54945 **Figure 1**).
- 1.2 The evaluation was requested to inform the planning process prior to an application to develop the site for housing. A magnetometer survey of the site located a number of anomalies that had potential to reflect archaeological features and required archaeological investigation.
- 1.3 A total of five 1.5 x 25m trenches were excavated, reflecting a 5% sample of the overall site area (**Figure 2**). The trench locations and methodology were set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (AAL 2026), which was approved by Wiltshire Council (WC).
- 1.3 The fieldwork work was undertaken in early April 2026 and was led by Rachel Heaton. The project has been entered into the OASIS archaeological database under the reference Avonarch2-541876 and the digital archive will be uploaded to the Archaeological Data Service (ADS). The physical and documentary archive will be given to the care of Devizes Museum; reference DZSWS 18:2026. An entry detailing the project will be placed in the Wiltshire HER.

2 SITE LOCATION GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1 The project site is located on the east side of Goose Street and south of Lewis Court, on the southern edge of the village of Southwick in Wiltshire (Figure 1). The town of Trowbridge lies approximately 2 miles to the north-east of the village, and the city of Bath 7 miles to the north-west.
- 2.2 The site occupies a roughly trapezoid shaped parcel of land, 0.4 hectares in size. It is bounded by mature hedgerows on all sides. Lewis Court lies beyond the northern hedge, and to the south are two residential dwellings. There is farmland to the east and Goose Street forms the western boundary.

- 2.4 Topographically, the site slopes down from the south –east corner of the site at 49m aOD dropping 2m to around 47maOD along the west side.
- 2.5 The underlying geology of the site consists of Kellaways Formation-Sandy mudstone. These sedimentary rocks are shallow-marine in origin. They are detrital, ranging from coarse- to fine-grained (locally with some carbonate content) forming interbedded sequences (BGS 2026).

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Historically, Southwick was a part of the parish of North Bradley, although neither is mentioned by name in Domesday Book (1086), their accounts probably being counted silently under the parent manor of Steeple Ashton. Southwick first appears to be identified by name in the late 12th century, but as a bounded territorial entity it almost certainly originated before the Norman Conquest. The first element of the place-name is probably a reference to its position in relation to Trowbridge. Southwick was being referred to as a manor in its own right by just before the middle of the 13th century (Gover, Mawer, Stenton 1939, 144; Thorn and Thorn 1979; VCH 1965).
- 3.2 There have been few archaeological investigations within close proximity of the site. The closest was an evaluation conducted by Cotswold Archaeology (2023) on land at Southwick Court, approximately 950m north-west of the project site (HER ref: MW178457). The evaluation identified a number of post holes, pits, surfaces, ditches and a single cremation burial interpreted as being associated with a low level Romano-British settlement.
- 3.3 Evidence of prehistoric activity has been identified in the wider area. Discoveries of two pits containing a small assemblage of worked flints and hammerscale were recorded on a site approximately 1km north-west of the project site (Cotswold Archaeology, 2022).
- 3.5 The site boundary has been as it is today since the publication of the Tithe map of circa 1840 (KYP Wiltshire, 2026) and does not seem to appear to have been used as anything but a field in modern history.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The purpose of an Archaeological Evaluation, as defined in the ClfA *Universal Guidance* (ClfA 2023) is to gather information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site

(including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;

4.2 The specific aims of this project were set out and agreed in the WSI (Heaton, 2026) and need only be summarised here as follows:

- To establish any evidence for prehistoric or Roman features or deposits, as indicated to be a potential by the discoveries in the wider locale.
- To investigate the provenance of geophysical anomalies recorded during geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys Ltd, 2025).
- To determine whether there is any indication of medieval activity on the site, currently thought not to extend beyond agricultural.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The project fieldwork was conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Heaton, 2025), which was approved by the Archaeological Officer for Wiltshire Council prior to any work being undertaken on site.

5.2 A total of five 25m x 1.5m trenches were excavated, reflecting a 5 % sample of the 0.4 hectare site. In the first instance the trenches were opened by machine using a toothless bucket to the depth of either the first archaeological feature or significant deposit or buried natural substrate. Excavation of selected features was then undertaken by hand, by the staff of Avon Archaeology Ltd.

5.3 All archaeological deposits and features were recorded using the Avon Archaeology Limited's pro forma single context recording system and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid. All features, including OD heights, were recorded in plan and in section using a Topcon Hiper SR GPS Rover.

5.4 A full photographic record was made, using a digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels.

- 5.5 The Wiltshire County Council Archaeological Officer was informed of the start date of the evaluation and invited to make a site visit.
- 5.6 The work was conducted in accordance with the relevant guidelines for archaeological fieldwork projects issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeology. Specifically the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Evaluation*, first issued by the CIfA in Dec. 2014, and most recently substantively revised and updated in Dec. 2023. The project will also follow both the guidelines for archaeological projects set out in MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, 2015), and will be underpinned by the guidelines set out at national level in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework, as most recently revised Dec. 2024).

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 Descriptions of all contexts are tabulated in Appendix 1. Trenches and deposits are discussed below by trench. Ordnance datum levels are given on the trench plans (**Figures 3, 4 & 5**).
- 6.2 The upper stratigraphy was largely consistent across the site. The natural substrate consisted of firm mustard brown clay with occasional mottled light blue grey patches throughout. It was sealed by a band of subsoil of friable mid, yellow grey-brown, silt clay. A soft/crumblily grey-brown silt topsoil containing random fragments of ceramic building material overlay the subsoil. The natural was generally reached around 0.3m below the ground surface. All deposits were surprisingly dry, and very quickly turned hard upon exposure despite preceding months of exceptionally wet weather.
- 6.3 The natural substrate in all trenches was truncated by a network of land drains that crossed the site. They were of mixed type; some were narrow linear trenches packed with angular stone while others were of ceramic pipe.
- 6.4 Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were found to be archaeologically sterile (**Plates 1-3**). Trench 1 contained a layer of compacted light coloured crushed stone mixed with grey brown sandy silt, containing regular small fragments of CBM (red brick/roof tile), context (101). The location of the deposit corresponded with the site entrance and was likely the result of modern ground stabilisation.
- 6.5 Trench 5 contained several diffuse blots crossing the south end of the trench (**Plate 5 & 8**). A section was excavated across one of these 'features'. Excavation found ill-defined edges and

base, and a sterile fill which was not perceptible in section or against the natural strata. They were interpreted as a variation in the natural strata.

- 6.6 Trench 4 did contain two features of probable archaeological origin (**Figures 4 & 5**). The two features, [402] and [404], were found adjacent to each other and located towards the north-west end of the cutting. Both were ill-defined in plan, and found to be ambiguous and shallow when excavated (**Plate 6 & 7**). Cut [402] contained a single fill (403), a friable silt clay, yellow grey brown in colour, very similar to the subsoil (401). Context (403) contained occasional charcoal inclusions and most significantly a selection of abraded pottery fragments. Feature [404] also contained a single fill (405), which contained frequent flecks of charcoal.
- 6.7 The evidence available is so vague that it isn't really possible to make a reliable interpretation of these features other than to infer activity in the vicinity of later prehistoric date.

7 FINDS

- 7.1 A rapid assessment was undertaken of the small assemblage of 6 sherds of pottery weighing 18g was recovered from context (403). The condition of the assemblage is very poor with an overall average sherd weight of 3g and a paucity of chronologically diagnostic sherds. The sherds are in degraded, discoloured condition suggesting disturbed or exposed deposits or particularly adverse ground conditions.
- 7.2 All sherds are of gritty calcite tempered fabric with variation in firing. Three sherds originated from the same vessel fitting together to form a part of a base, probably of a domestic storage vessel indicative of the Iron Age period.
- 7.3 The assemblage has value in terms of indicating some prehistoric activity at or near the site, but it is too small and poorly preserved to draw any further conclusions as to the nature and extent of any occupation.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 A geophysical survey of the site conducted in the early part of 2025 (Archaeological Surveys Ltd) found a number of anomalies, which required further investigation prior to development.
- 8.2 The trial trenching found that the natural substrate was relatively close to the current ground surface, sealed by subsoil and topsoil of an average 0.4m thickness. Two probable

archaeological features were recorded in Trench 4. Both were shallow and ill-defined however, the fill of [402] contained frequent charcoal inclusions while the other, [404] contained several sherds of prehistoric pottery. Hand excavation of the features did not provide definitive interpretation other than to give a vague indication of prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site.

- 8.3 The two features found in Trench 4 did appear to roughly correspond with anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey. On the whole, possible features identified by the geophysical survey were not found. The survey results may be affected by inconsistent physical properties of subsurface material – random CBM was found throughout the topsoil in the locations of excavated trenches, while differences in soil moisture can also affect results.
- 8.4 Although the site was dry at the time of excavation, numerous land drains indicate the site has poor natural drainage and has been affected by waterlogging in the past, despite the natural slope of the land. The installation of so many drains indicate the site has been meddled with in the recent past. The practice of laying drainage across farm land was established in the early 19th century.

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Figure 1

Site Location Map Grid Lines at 1000m Intervals



Plans and maps based on the Ordnance Survey Sheets are represented by the permission of His Majesty's Stationery Office.

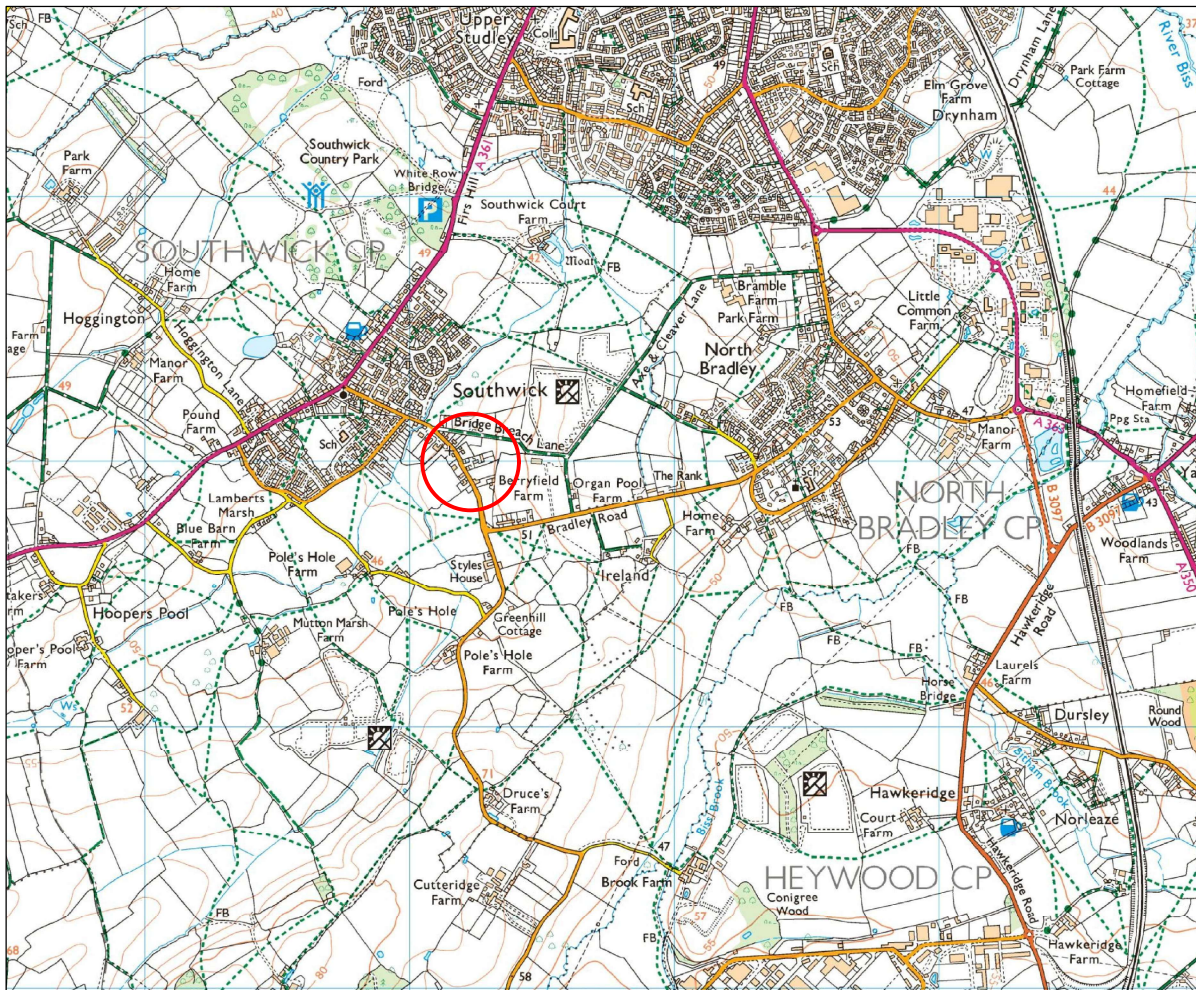


Figure 2

Site location map with site red line boundary
showiing excavated trenches

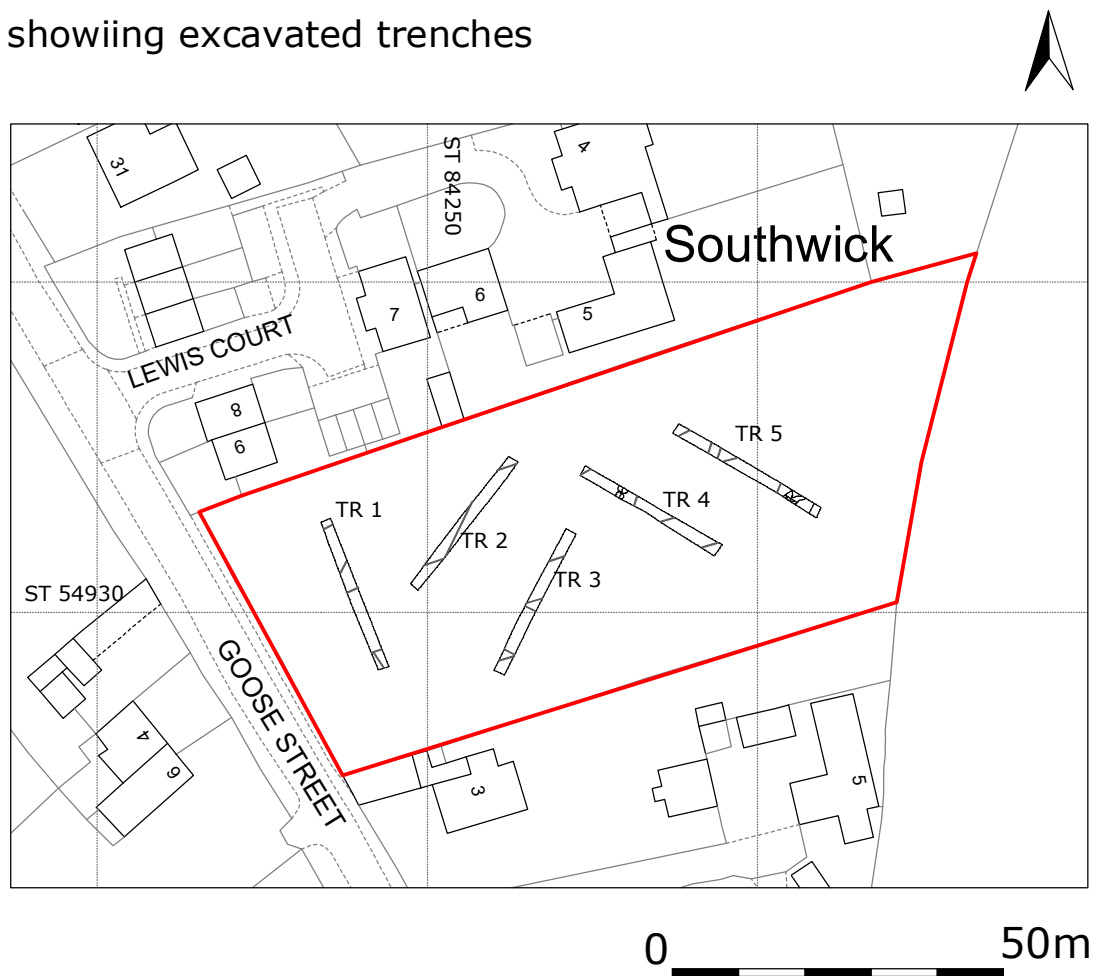
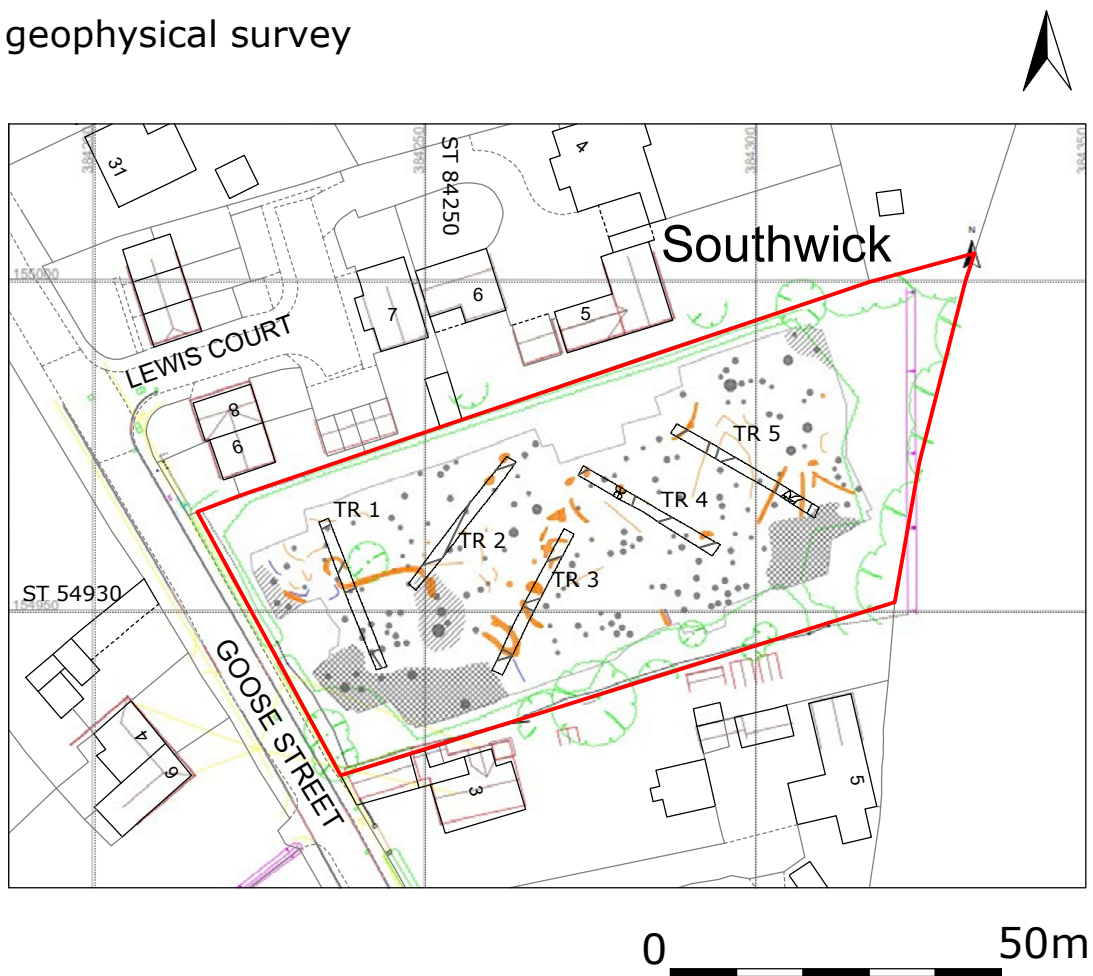


Figure 3

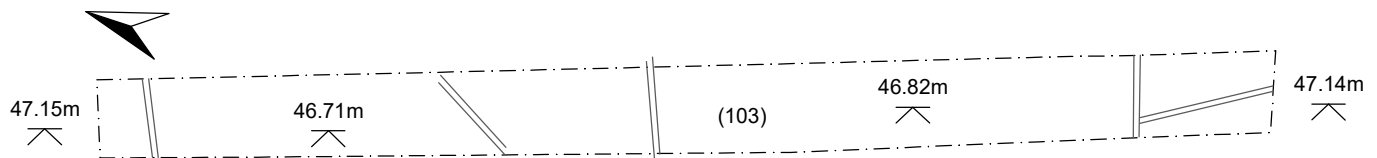
Excavated trenches and features overlain the
geophysical survey



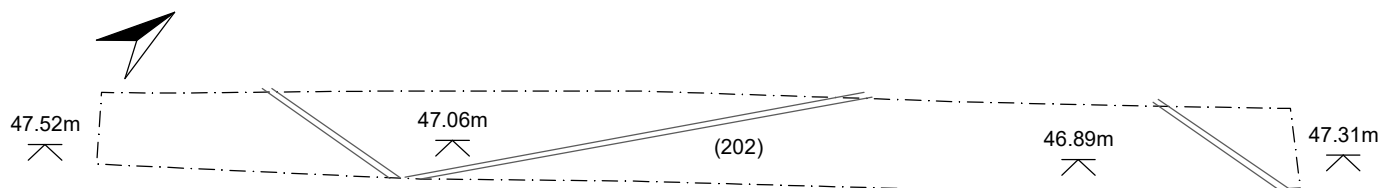
Trench Plans

Figure 4

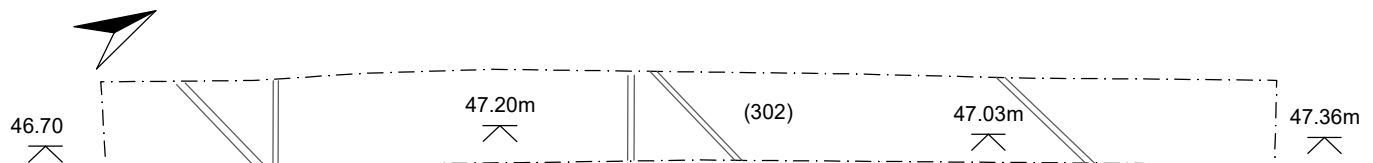
Trench 1



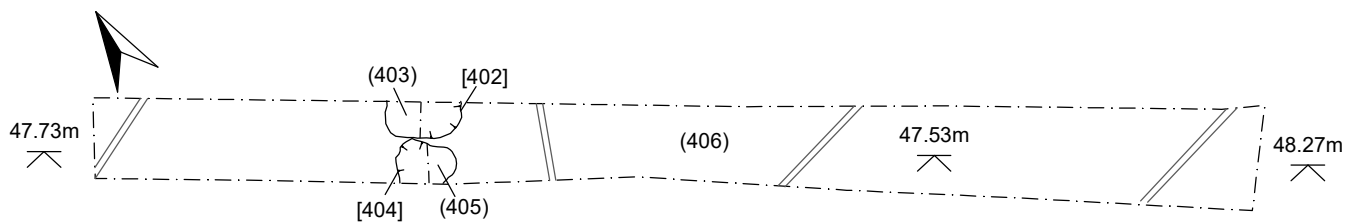
Trench 2



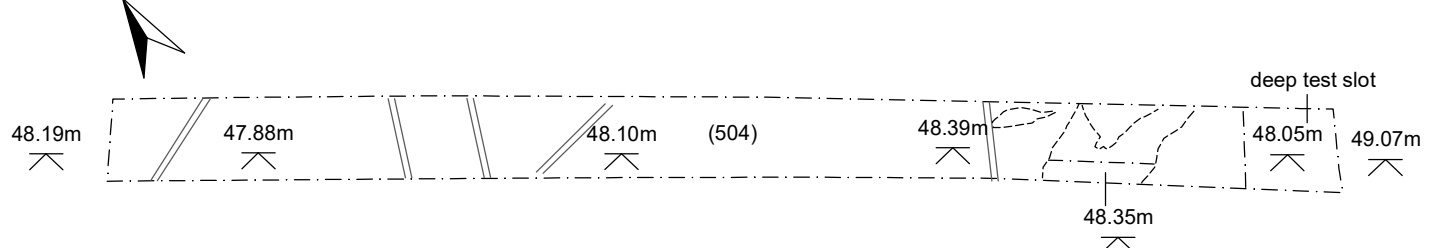
Trench 3



Trench 4



Trench 5

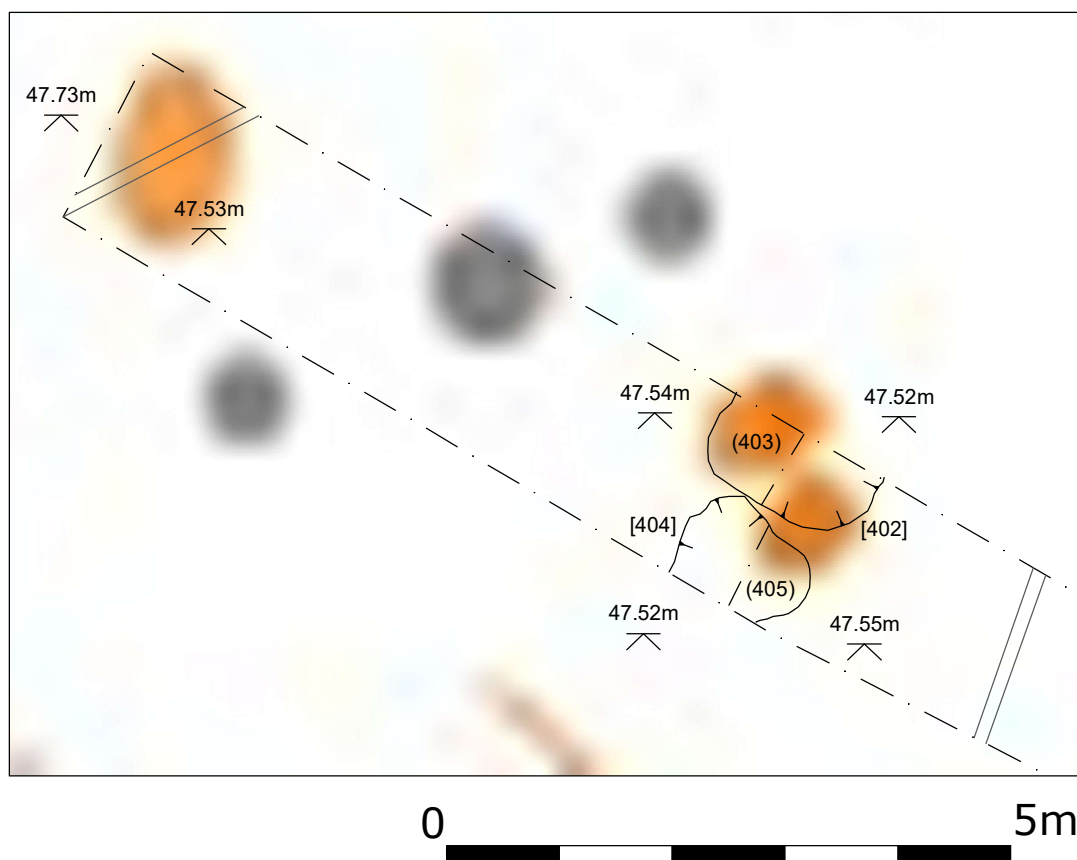


0 5m



Figure 5

Detail of Trench 4, including geophysical survey



PLATES



Plate 1: Trench 1 viewed south. 2 x 0.8m scales.



Plate 2: Trench 2 view north-east. 2 x 0.8m scales.



Plate 3: Trench 3 view north. 2 x 0.8m scales.

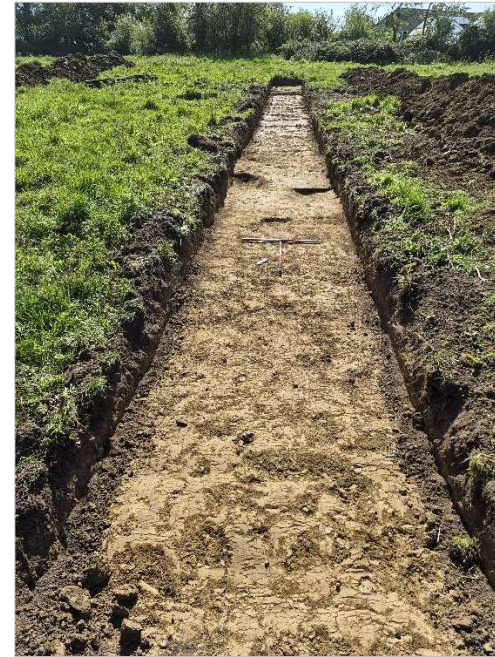


Plate 4: Trench 4 view south-east. 2 x 0.8m scales.



Plate 5: Trench 5 view south-east. 2 x 0.8m scales.



Plate 6: Trench 4 looking south-east towards [402] & [404]. 2 x 0.8m scales.



Plate 7: Trench 4 overhead view of [402] & [404]. 2 x 0.8m scales.



Plate 8: Trench 5 view of west facing section and slot across possible feature [503]. Interpreted as a natural variation in the geology. 2 x 0.8m scales.

Appendix 1 - Table of Contexts

Trench 1				
Context	Type	Description/Interpretation	Dimensions	Date
100	Deposit	Soft/crumblly grey-brown silt, with frequent roots. Very occasional small pebble inclusions. Topsoil.	0.13m	-
101	Deposit	Layer of compacted light coloured crushed stone mixed with grey brown sandy silt, containing regular small fragments of CBM – red brick/roof tile. Directly below (100) from the middle of the trench extending to the south end. Overlies (102). Directly corresponds with site entrance – stabilising material?	0.10m	-
102	Deposit	Narrow band of friable silt clay, yellow grey brown, subsoil.	0.09m	-
103	Geology	Firm mustard brown clay with occasional blue mottles. natural substrate reached at 0.32m below surface	-	-

Trench 2				
Context	Type	Description/Interpretation	Dimensions	Date
200	Deposit	Friable grey-brown silt, with frequent roots. Very occasional small pebble inclusions and random fragments of CBM. Topsoil.	0.18m	-
201	Deposit	Narrow band of friable silt clay, yellow grey brown, subsoil.	0.12m	-
202	Geology	Firm mustard brown clay with occasional blue mottles. Natural substrate. 0.3m below surface	-	-

Trench 3				
Context	Type	Description/Interpretation	Dimensions	Date
300	Deposit	Friable grey-brown silt, with frequent roots. Very occasional small pebble inclusions and random fragments of CBM. Topsoil.	0.19m	-
301	Deposit	Narrow band of friable silt clay, yellow grey brown, subsoil.	0.12m	-
302	Geology	Firm mustard brown clay with occasional blue mottles. natural substrate	-	-

Trench 4				
Context	Type	Description/Interpretation	Dimensions	Date
400	Deposit	Friable grey-brown silt, with frequent roots. Very occasional small pebble inclusions. Topsoil.	0.19m	-
401	Deposit	Narrow band of friable silt clay, yellow grey brown, subsoil.	0.1	-
402	Cut	Ill-defined roughly lozenge shaped feature, against north edge of trench, adjacent to [404]. Found to be very shallow, indefinite edges to flat base. Cuts (406) contains a single fill, (403).	1.4m long/0.7m 0.02m deep	-
403	Fill	Friable silt clay, yellow grey brown, subtle difference from the subsoil. Contains fragments of Pre-hist ceramic. Very occasional fleck of charcoal. Fill of [402]	As above	-



404	Cut	Ill-defined roughly circular shaped feature, against south edge of trench and adjacent to [402]. Found to be very shallow, indefinite edges to flat base. Cuts (406) contains a single fill, (405).	1.2m long/0.68m wide 0.02m/0.03m deep	-
405	Fill	Friable silt clay, yellow grey brown, subsoil, barely discernable from the subsoil but containing frequent charcoal inclusions.	As above	
406	Geology	Firm mustard brown clay with occasional blue mottles. natural substrate		

Trench 5				
Context	Type	Description/Interpretation	Dimensions	Date
500	Deposit	Friable grey-brown silt, with frequent roots. Very occasional small pebble inclusions and random fragments of CBM, particularly concentration towards the southern end of the trench. Topsoil.	0.22m – 0.25m	-
501	Deposit	Narrow band of friable silt clay, yellow grey brown, subsoil.	0.1m	-
503	Geology	Firm mustard brown clay with occasional blue mottles. natural substrate		

Appendix 2

OASIS Summary

OASIS ID (UID)	avonarch2-541876
Project Name	Evaluation at Land South of Lewis Court, Southwick, Wiltshire
Sitename	Land South of Lewis Court, Southwick, Wiltshire
Sitecode	AAL878
Project Identifier(s)	AAL 26-27.878
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	PL/2025/08329
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Pre application
Organisation Responsible for work	Avon Archaeology Limited
Project Dates	28-Apr-2026 - 30-Apr-2026
Location	Land South of Lewis Court, Southwick, Wiltshire NGR: ST 84220 54945 LL: 51.29341324768027, -2.227692159211144 12 Fig: 384220,154945
Administrative Areas	Country: England County/Local Authority: Wiltshire Local Authority District: Wiltshire Parish: Southwick
Project Methodology	Excavation of five evaluation trenches
Project Results	A total of five trenches were excavated across the site. Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were archaeologically negative. Trench 5 contained a series of diffuse blots, which upon further inspection were interpreted as probable tree bole. Trench 4 contained two discrete features, [403] & [405]. The fill of [405], (406) contained six, small, heavily abraded fragments of prehistoric ceramic, of probable Iron Age date. The findings were vague, and did not provide enough information to make a reliable interpretation of activity on the site other than to indicate late prehistoric activity in the wider area.
Keywords	Sherd - Iron Age - FISH Archaeological Objects Thesaurus
Funder	Private or public corporation Ashford Homes Ltd
HER	Wiltshire and Swindon HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Rachel Heaton
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Physical Archive - to be deposited with Wiltshire Museum; Documentary Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;