

**LAND WEST OF LUCAS LANE,
HITCHIN, HERTFORDSHIRE**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: NORTH
HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

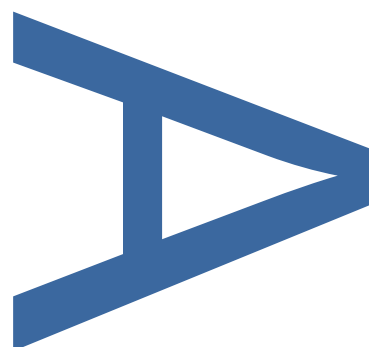
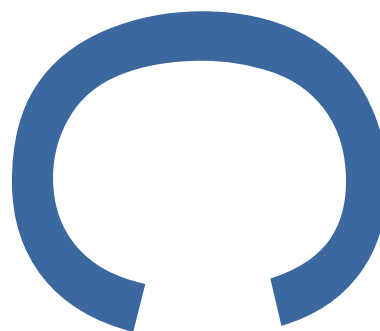
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PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Land west of Lucas Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire: An Archaeological Evaluation

Local Planning Authority: North Hertfordshire District Council

Planning Reference: 22/00516/FP (Condition 11)

Central National Grid Reference: TL 17506 29225

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Report No. R 17826 v1.1

Written and researched by: Jenn Hulse

Project Manager: Michael Joyce

Commissioning Client: RPS Consulting Ltd.

Contractor: Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.
Central Office
The Granary Rectory Farm
Brewery Road
Pampisford
Cambridgeshire
CB22 3EN

Tel: 01223 845522

E-mail: mjoyce@pre-construct.com

Website: www.pre-construct.com

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.

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Quality Control

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	Name	Approved	Date
Text Prepared by:	Jenn Hulse	Michael Joyce	27/02/2025
Graphics Prepared by:	Ramon Navas	Michael Joyce	27/02/2025
Project Manager Sign-off:	Michael Joyce	Michael Joyce	27/02/2025

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ABSTRACT

A programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. (PCA) on land west of Lucas Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 17506 29225) from the 3rd to the 5th of February 2025, to address Condition 11 of the planning permission for the development of the site.

The archaeological evaluation comprised four 30m long, 1.8m wide trenches and two 15m long, 1.8m wide trenches, which represented a 5% sample of the site area, where it was anticipated to be of high archaeological potential.

The archaeological results from the site are very limited, comprising two ditches and two pits. Trench 1 revealed a natural feature, which was excavated and ascertained to be a root channel or glacial scarring. Trenches 4-6 were devoid of any archaeological finds, features or deposits.

Trench 2 revealed a single pit ([7]) and Trench 3 revealed two undated ditches ([11] and [13]) and a pit of unknown date and function ([9]) but speculated to be modern animal disturbance.

Very little datable artefactual material was recovered from these features. One very abraded sherd (2g) of East Anglian Plainware (400BC – AD 0-50) was recovered from Ditch [11]/ (10) of Trench 3. Four sherds (6g) of Belgic-type tradition pottery (50/20 BC - AD50/70) was recovered from Pit [7]/ (6) of Trench 2.

Due to the small size and abraded nature of the pottery assemblage, it cannot be seen to accurately date the features, it may have been residually deposited into the features due to agricultural or natural processes such as manuring/ ploughing or animal burrowing.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. (PCA) on land west of Lucas Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 17506 29225) from the 3rd to the 5th of February 2025 (Figure 1).
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by RPS Consulting Ltd., in compliance with the pre-commencement condition attached to planning permission for the development (NHDC planning ref 22/00516/FP, Condition 11). It details a programme of trial trenching to identify any significant archaeological interest within the site and is in line with *National Planning Policy Framework* 2024, Section 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by PCA (Meckseper and Boughton, V.5, 2024) in compliance with the planning condition.
- 1.4 The aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, date, extent, character, condition and quality of any archaeological remains on the site, to assess the significance of any such remains in a local, regional, or national context, as appropriate, and to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on the site's archaeology.
- 1.5 A total of 6 evaluation trenches (2x 20m and 4x 30m at 1.8m wide) totalling 160 linear metres were excavated and recorded (Figure 2).
- 1.6 This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy. Following Transfer of Title, the site archive will be deposited at the North Hertfordshire Museum.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

- 2.1.1 The underlying geology of the site is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation-Chalk (BGS 2025).
- 2.1.2 The superficial deposits are Galciofluvial Deposits, Mid Pleistocene – Sand and Gravel.

2.2 Topography and Site Location

- 2.2.1 The site lies on an area of high ground to the south of the Rivers Oughton and Purwell, at approximately 91m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 2.2.2 The site lies at the western edge of Hitchin. It is bounded by Lucas Lane to the east, an area of wood/scrubland with a private property coming off Gray's Lane to the west, and the Lavender Fields Centre to the North. Gray's Lane forms the southern boundary of the site (Figure 2). To the east of the proposed development site, 20th century suburban housing has been erected, and to the west lie agricultural fields. The site lies to the immediate north of the Foxholes Archaeological Alert Area (AA141), designated by the Hertfordshire Historical Environment Record (HHER).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The archaeological background has been taken from the WSI for the evaluation for the site (Meckseper and Boughton 2024). Numbers in brackets in the following text are HHER asset identifiers.

3.2 The site was subject to a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) prepared by PCA (Slater 2016). The DBA concluded that the site has a moderate potential for prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity and a moderate-high potential for Iron Age and Roman activity.

3.3 Previous Archaeological Investigations

3.3.1 The proposed development site itself has not been subject to any archaeological investigation. However, programmes of archaeological work have previously been carried out in the near vicinity:

3.3.2 A Trial Trench Evaluation was undertaken by Mola, to the immediate south of the site, at Foxholes on Pirton Road in June 2017 (Sharrock 2017). The trenches targeted anomalies identified in a previous geophysical survey. The evaluation recorded archaeological features across the entire area, with a concentration of Iron Age to Roman settlement features on the high ground at the centre of the site.

3.3.3 A Watching Brief and Trial Trench Evaluation at the Foxholes Nursing Home in 1996-98 recorded a pit containing mid-late Iron Age pottery as well as features relating to a former post medieval walled garden. Roman burials with grave goods had been found at Foxholes in the 1880s (Slater 2016).

3.3.4 A Trial Trench Evaluation at Samuel Lucas Primary School, c. 430m east of the site in 2013, revealed no archaeological remains (Slater 2016).

3.4 Prehistoric

3.4.1 Numerous Neolithic flints have been found in the vicinity, the closest are a stone axe found at Ducklands Cottage to the north-west and flint implements at Crow Furlong to the south (MHT289, MHT292, MHT290 and MHT293).

3.4.2 A Palaeolithic flint implement was found approximately 160m to the south-east

of the proposed development site (MHT281). Mesolithic activity is also known in the area, with a perforated macehead found c.500m to the south-east of the site (MHT6453) and a blade found c.650m to the south (MHT11795).

- 3.4.3 Flints and pottery of Bronze Age date have also been found close to the proposed development site. Three struck flints of Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date were found during a Trial Trench Evaluation approximately 650m to the south-east; one of these was possibly a crude awl (MHT11794). An Early Bronze Age beaker was supposedly found near Hitchin (MHT300), as was a fragment of a stone axe (MHT4867).

3.5 Iron Age and Roman

- 3.5.1 A Trial Trench Evaluation, located behind Lewesford House on Upper Tilehouse Street, c.600m to the south-east revealed a Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age boundary ditch (MHT12858). Late Iron Age coins have also been found in the vicinity of the site, indicating Iron Age activity in the area (MHT131, MHT4872 and MHT4873).
- 3.5.2 A Romano-British cemetery is believed to be located at Foxholes, approximately 200m to the south-west of the site (MHT1184). Several inhumations and cinerary urns, along with Samian ware, domestic objects, 1st century fibulae, bronze objects, two knife blades and 2nd-4th century coins, were discovered in 1880 in the kitchen garden of Foxholes. A Trial Trench Evaluation of the walled former kitchen garden in 1996 found no evidence relating to the cemetery but monitoring during construction work in 1998 found a pit which contained 23 pot sherds dated from the Late Iron Age to the Early 2nd century AD (MHT10912).
- 3.5.3 Additional Roman activity in the vicinity of Lucas Lane has been found at 35 Tilehouse Street, c.650m to the southeast of the Site (MHT11793). Unstratified sherds of Romano-British pottery, fragments of tegula, brick and other building materials were found during a Trial Trench Evaluation of the site.
- 3.5.4 A Trial Trench Evaluation, located immediately south of the Site, revealed archaeological features across the entire evaluation area, with a concentration

of Iron Age to Roman settlement features on higher ground in the centre of the site (Sharrock 2017). These comprised an enclosure ditch, internal postholes and a number of boundary ditches extending to the west and south-west. An area of Post Medieval quarry pitting was recorded in the north-eastern corner of the site (Sharrock 2017).

3.6 Anglo-Saxon

- 3.6.1 Evidence of Early to Middle Saxon dated activity has been found in Gaping Lane, approximately 400m to the north-east of Lucas Lane (MHT1609). A small pot of possible 5th-6th century date was found in one of the gardens on Gaping Lane. No evidence for Saxon activity was present during a Trial Trench Evaluation at Samuel Lucas Primary School on Gaping Lane in 2013 (Slater 2016).
- 3.6.2 A rare Middle Saxon silver penny of Offa was discovered in 1923 near Foxholes, approximately 600m to the south-west (MHT1181). Apparently, a silver penny of Offa could often be picked up in the fields around Hitchin in the 18th century (Hine 1927-9). A gold ring was also found at Hawthorne Close (MHT4901). The ring has an intaglio depicting Mars with a spear and shield, which dates to the 2nd or 3rd century, but the setting is believed to be Saxon.
- 3.6.3 Further evidence of continued activity in the area was found during an evaluation at 35 Tilehouse Street, where sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery were found (MHT11792).

3.7 Medieval

- 3.7.1 At the corner of Gray's Lane and Lucas Lane is a hedgebank which may be a remnant of the earth bank of a small medieval park (MHT12679). Recorded field names place this as the area bounded by Paynes Park, Tilehouse Street, Grays Lane, Lucas Lane, Oughtonhead Way and Bedford Road. A grant of the manor of Hitchin dated 1380 included 'the park called Pinfold', implying a small park for keeping animals rather than a hunting park. A second remnant earthwork survives at the corner of Lucas Lane and West Hill (MHT12680).
- 3.7.2 A Late Medieval timber-framed hall house, now divided, lies at 77-78 Tilehouse

Street (MHT15871). It forms a small, open hall house with some timber framed exposed externally, which is now divided into two cottages. This is the only Medieval building within a 750m radius of the proposed development site.

3.7.3 Approximately 600m to the north-east is the site of Medieval common land and archery butts (MHT12421). Butts Close is believed to be the site of medieval archery butts, recorded from after 1465. It was surrounded by an earth bank until 1829.

3.7.4 A Watching Brief and Trial Trench Evaluation, located behind 35 Tilehouse Street, also recorded evidence of Medieval activity (MHT11789). A large number of abraded medieval South Hertfordshire Greyware sherds were found, as well as postholes and a drainage ditch. A Medieval buried soil horizon was also seen.

3.8 Post Medieval

3.8.1 The site of a Post Medieval windmill, demolished in the mid-19th century, was located 100m to the west of the Site (MHT5990 Site 28). It was moved to this location from a field between Manley Highway and Offley Road. A sketch of the windmill is included on the 1844 tithe map, within a small subrectangular plot at the corner of a larger field, on the north side of Gray's Lane. It ceased grinding corn by wind power c.1865 and no remains are still visible (Slater 2016).

3.8.2 Evidence of Post Medieval industrial activity was identified during the works behind 35 Tilehouse Street (MHT11789). The kiln had truncated earlier layers of chalk, possibly floors. A pit behind Lewesford House, Upper Tilehouse Street contained pieces of peg tile of 17th-18th century date (MHT12857). Some of the tiles appeared to be overfired, suggesting that they are wasters from the tile kiln.

3.8.3 Historic maps from Dury and Andrews 1766 map onwards show the site as undeveloped land and open fields. Possible hedgerows or the remains of medieval strip farming are shown running north-south on the Ordnance Survey map of 1881.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation comprised 2x 20m and 4x 30m trial trenches, totalling 160 linear meters. The trenches were spaced to provide an even coverage of the site and taking into account known site constraints and conditions. The site covers an area of approximately 5200m² and the trenching represents just over a 5% sample as requested by Hertfordshire County Council.
- 4.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023a), *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023b), and the *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2020).

4.2 Excavation methodology

- 4.2.1 The trial trenches were excavated using a 9-tonne 360° tracked mechanical excavator, operating under archaeological supervision and direction. Topsoil and other overburden of low archaeological value was removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded.
- 4.2.2 Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate, and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools.

4.3 Recording and Finds Recovery

- 4.3.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Geomax GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.
- 4.3.2 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 with PCA's bespoke digital recording system using terminology defined in PCA's

excavation manual (Taylor and Brown 2018) and linked to a Geographical Information System (QGIS) used to interrogate the data.

- 4.3.3 Archaeological processes recognised by the deposition of material are signified in this report by round brackets (thus), while events constituting the removal of deposits are referred to here as ‘cuts’ and signified by square brackets [thus]. Where more than one slot was excavated through an individual feature, each intervention was assigned additional numbers for the cutting event and for the deposits it contained (these deposits within cut features being referred to here as ‘fills’). The record numbers assigned to cuts, deposits and groups are entirely arbitrary and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits excavated during the evaluation and excavation are listed in Appendix 1. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.
- 4.3.4 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping and throughout the excavation process. Archaeological features and spoil heaps were scanned by metal-detector periodically. Only objects of modern date were found and were not retained for accession.
- 4.3.5 Cameras with an APS-C or larger sensor and with a resolution of no less than 10 megapixels were used. Images are of archival quality, non-proprietary RAW (.DNG) or .TIFF files. Suitable horizontal and vertical scales were used as appropriate. Digital photographs were taken of all trenches, archaeological features, and deposits. Regrettably, due to a memory card failure, 15 photographs have been lost. Fortunately, these were largely pre-start site photographs and record shots of Trench 1. Trench 1, however, was photographed by a phone camera (Plate 2) and can also be seen in the record shots of the Natural Feature [5].

4.4 Sampling Strategy

- 4.4.1 Discrete features were half-sectioned, photographed and recorded by a cross-section scaled drawing at an appropriate scale (either 1:10 or 1:20). Where large or significant finds assemblages were present, features were subsequently 100% excavated for finds recovery.

4.4.2 Linear features were investigated with a minimum of 1m width.

4.5 Environmental Sampling

4.5.1 A total of two bulk samples (4 and 16L in volume) were taken to extract and identify micro- and macro-botanical remains. The aim of this sampling was to investigate the past environment and economy of the site, the diet of the ancient inhabitants and the agricultural basis of the settlement. An additional aim of the sampling was to recover small objects that are not readily recovered by hand-collection, such as metalworking debris and bones of fish and small animals.

5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	1
Context sheets	13
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	5
Trench record sheets	6
Photo register sheets	1
Environmental register sheets	1

5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	131:15 photos were lost due to a memory card failure
GPS survey files	1
Digital plans	1
GIS project inc all context and trench data	1
Access database	1

5.3 Physical Archive

Pottery	8g
Ceramic building material (CBM)	5g
Animal bone	17 fragments
Environmental bulk samples	3

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS BY TRENCH

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The trenches are described below in numerical order, with technical data tabulated (Appendix 1). Features and deposits are first split into feature type and then described in numerical cut order. Archaeological features and deposits were sealed by the topsoil or subsoil, unless otherwise stated. The principal result of the fieldwork was the identification of two ditches and two undated pits. Very little datable artefactual material was recovered from the features, being limited to five sherds (8g) of abraded Middle to Late Iron Age/ Early Roman pottery and a single piece of CBM (g).

6.2 Overburden and Natural Geological Deposits

- 6.2.1 Each trench contained a topsoil deposit (3) which was a dark brown clayey silt, measuring 0.15-0.3m in thickness. Within Trenches 1 and 3, this was overlaying a subsoil deposit (2) which was a mid-brown clayey silt, measuring approximately 0.1-0.2m in thickness. Within Trenches 3-6, the topsoil
- 6.2.2 The natural substrate (1), observed within the trenches, consisted of an orangish red sandy silt with frequent gravel inclusions. Bands of clayey silt were also observed within the base of the trenches across the Site.

6.3 Blank Trenches: Trench 4-6 (Figure 2; Plates 5-7)

- 6.3.1 No archaeological features were identified within these Trenches. These were excavated and recorded with no evidence of human interaction within them.
- 6.3.2 Natural features and land drains were investigated in some of these trenches and confirmed as being of no archaeological value.

6.4 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

- 6.4.1 Trench 1 contained one natural feature, which was excavated and ascertained to be a root channel or glacial scarring.
- 6.4.2 Natural Feature [5] (Plate 8, Figure 3, Section 1) was irregular in plan with moderately steep sides and an irregular base, measuring 1.8m in length, 0.95m wide and 0.38m deep. It contained a single fill (4), a firm mid-brownish yellow

silty clay, which contained no datable artefacts. Due to its irregular shape in plan and the characteristics of deposit (4) within it as having a rooted but otherwise sterile clay-rich nature, it was recorded as a natural feature.

6.5 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

- 6.5.1 Trench 2 contained one pit of unknown function.
- 6.5.2 Pit [7] (Plate 9, Figure 4, Section 2) was circular in plan with moderately steep sides and a concave base, measuring 0.45-0.48m in diameter and 0.34m in depth. It contained a single fill (6), a dark brown silty clay which contained four sherds (6g) of Belgic-type tradition pottery, typically dated to 50/20 BC - AD 50/70. Environmental sample <2> was taken from this feature and contained charred nutshell and indeterminate charred grain with significant evidence of bioturbation. The function of this pit is unknown.

6.6 Trench 3 (Figure 5)

- 6.6.1 Trench 3 contained two undated ditches and a pit of unknown date.
- 6.6.2 Pit [9] (Plate 10, Figure 5 and Section 3) was sub-circular in plan, with moderate sides and an irregular base, measuring 0.37-0.56m in diameter and 0.04m in depth. It contained single fill (8), a mid-greyish brown clayey silt, which contained 17 disarticulated bones from a small adult canid (fox or dog) and one small piece (5g) of CBM. Environmental sample <1> was taken from this feature and contained amorphous charred material with significant evidence of bioturbation. The function of this pit is unknown but likely represents a modern incomplete burial or a disturbed animal burrow.
- 6.6.3 Ditch [11] (Plate 11, Figure 5 and Section 4) was linear in plan, with moderate sides and a concave base, aligned north-south. It measured 1.88m in length within the trench (with a 1m long intervention), 0.50m in width and 0.18m in depth. It contained single fill (10), a mid-brownish grey sandy silt, which contained one very abraded sherd (2g) of East Anglian Plainware, typically dated to 400BC – AD 0-50. Due to the small size of the sherd, it cannot be seen to accurately date the feature as it may have been residually or intrusively deposited within. The function and form of this ditch is unknown and was not

observed within Trench 5 located to the north of Trench 3.

Ditch [13] (Plate 12, Figure 5 and Section 5) was linear in plan, with gradual sides and a concave base, aligned north-north-east to south-south-west, and was immediately to the west of Ditch [11]. It measured 1.8m in length within the trench (with a 1m long intervention), 0.57m in width and 0.11m in depth. It contained a single fill (12), a mid-brown sandy silt, which contained no datable evidence. The function and of this ditch is unknown and was not observed within Trenches 4 or 5, located to the north-north-east of Trench 3.

7 THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 Prehistoric Pottery

Lawrence Morgan-Shelbourne

Introduction

- 7.1.1 A very small assemblage comprising five sherds (8g) of prehistoric pottery was recovered from the Site. The pottery derived from two contexts, recovered from a single ditch [11] and a single pit [7] (Table 1).
- 7.1.2 The pottery recovered can be tentatively split into two ceramic traditions, which can in turn be assigned to various chronological periods. The earliest tradition represented was the East Anglian Plainware tradition; this tradition is characteristic of the Middle Iron Age regionally, although it can continue in use into the Late Iron Age.
- 7.1.3 The remaining sherds were represented by Belgic-type ceramics (Thompson 1982, 4-5) which similarly are most characteristic of the Late Iron Age but can continue in use into the Early Roman period.
- 7.1.4 Due to the small size and lack of diagnostic value of the assemblage detailed analysis was not undertaken due to a lack of statistical reliability. The ceramics are in a stable condition. This report provides a quantified description of the assemblage with a brief discussion.

Methodology & terminology

- 7.1.5 All the pottery has been fully recorded following the recommendations laid out by the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group (2010; Barclay et al. 2016). The recording methodology used follows two similar but different approaches, the split being made between the sherd of characteristically Middle Iron Age and earlier ceramic traditions (method one), and sherds of characteristically Late Iron Age or Late Iron Age/Early Roman transitional ceramic traditions (method two).

Fabric

- 7.1.6 Following method one; fabric types were devised on the composition of inclusions present, as well as their density and modal size. Fabric types are

designated based on shorthand abbreviated codes, recorded as INCLUSIONTYPE-frequency-size in the catalogue to facilitate wider comparative analysis. These groups were then given site specific codes, i.e. FL1, QUFL2 in this report. In cases where the fabric recipe included more than one inclusion type, the more frequent inclusion is recorded first, i.e. fabric FLQU1 would have calcined flint as the dominant inclusion, with sand being the secondary inclusion. Where tertiary, incidental inclusions were intermittently present within sherds of a given fabric, or where unusual fabric qualities (outside the bounds of the code system) were notable, these are recorded in the longform fabric descriptions given below (Table 2; i.e. 'incidental fossil shell'). It should be noted that the recording of incidental fabric qualities in this manner is for descriptive purposes only, i.e. a sand fabric with 'incidental fossil shell' should not be seen as analogous to a QUSH (sand with shell) fabric recipe for comparative purposes.

- 7.1.7 In the case of method two, Late Iron Age and transitional sherds were assigned to wider fabric families and names only (e.g. GROG; RW GROG). The sherds were also not individually weighed or assigned to a size category, with each fabric being recorded in bulk per context (including pottery crumbs). Where sherds of comparable fabric that could be visually assigned to separate vessels were present within a context assemblage, the grouped sherds were recorded in separate entries in the catalogue. As a result, each entry in the catalogue for sherds recorded using method two is considered to be a separate 'vessel', meaning additional vessel numbers were not required to be assigned.

Class, form, surface treatments/decoration and miscellaneous characteristics

- 7.1.8 In both methodologies, sherd type (or bulk sherd types) was recorded in the catalogue using the convention R=rim, U=bodysherd, SH=shoulder and B=base, with the suffix 'D' being used to indicate the presence of decoration, i.e. RDU is a rim and body sherd with decoration on the rim, RDSHD a rim and shoulder sherd with decoration on the rim and shoulder etc.
- 7.1.9 For both methodologies where possible sherds were assigned to a ceramic tradition, based on their exhibited characteristics. In the case of method one, rim and base forms were described using a codified system appropriate to their

ceramic tradition, with shoulder type also being described using a generalised format. Rim and base sherds were then assigned vessel numbers. For method two, rim and shoulder types were not recorded (the more detailed form categories serving this purpose for these ceramic traditions), although base types were still recorded using an appropriate more generalised format.

7.1.10 The site assemblage contained a minimum of two vessels (combined results of all methodologies).

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	SSFabric code	Fabric name	Count	Weight	Ceramic tradition	Ceramic context date
10	11	3	Ditch	QU 1		1	2	EAST ANGLIAN PLAINWARE	400BC-AD0/50
6	7	2	Pit		RW(SHEL)(OX SURFACES); RW(Q)(OX SURFACES)	4	6	BELGIC-TYPE	50/20BC-AD50/70
TOTAL						5	8		

Table 1: Prehistoric pottery by context

SSFabric code	Shorthand fabric type	Fabric name	Longform fabric description
QU1	QU-RS-FM		Rare to sparse, fine to moderate sand
		RW(SHEL)(OX SURFACES)	Reduced ware, shell (oxidized surfaces)
		RW(Q)(OX SURFACES)	Reduced ware, sand (oxidized surfaces)

Table 2: Fabric descriptions

Middle Iron Age; East Anglian Plainware tradition

7.1.11 The assemblage of this tradition comprised a single abraded body sherd (2g), recovered from Ditch [11] in Trench 3.

Fabric:

7.1.12 The sherd was composed of poorly sorted sand-tempered fabric, which was relatively thick-walled but undecorated.

Summary:

- 7.1.13 The use of sand as a sole inclusion is characteristic of Later Iron Age assemblages regionally, although this recipe is also found at a lower level (20.1%) in Early Iron Age, Post Deverel-Rimbury Mature Decorated Ware assemblages (Brudenell 2012, Table 5.18, 204). This characteristic is however by no means exclusive to any one prehistoric ceramic tradition, although this fabric and the thick-walled, hand-made nature of the sherd can be 'best-fitted' into the East Anglian Plainware tradition.

Late Iron Age; Belgic-type tradition

- 7.1.14 The 'Belgic-type' ceramic tradition period assemblage consisted of four, probably wheel-made sherds (6g), all of which were recovered from environmental samples from Pit [7] in Trench 2.

Fabric:

- 7.1.15 One of the sherds (2g) was composed of a leached fabric using shell as the sole inclusion, whereas the remaining sherds were composed of a fine, sand with grog fabric. All sherds exhibited oxidized surfaces, indicative of being exposed to oxygen at the end of the firing/during the cooling process. None of the sherds exhibited any diagnostic features or decoration.

Summary:

- 7.1.16 The fabrics are characteristic of Belgic-type tradition ceramics regionally in their use of fabrics. Hertfordshire lies inside Thompson's (1982, 15-16) 'Zone 7; Hertfordshire and the Chilterns' areas of Belgic-type ceramic use, where grog fabrics (often mixed with sand) are predominant. The use of shell is more unusual for the region, being a phenomenon more associated with Essex assemblages where clay sources with fossil shell are more available. None of the sherds exhibited any diagnostic features or decoration. Although subdividing within the broad later 1st century BC-1st century AD range of Belgic-type ceramics is not possible with any degree of confidence, the lack of indicators of more 'Romanising' manufacture suggest the assemblage can be best-fitted into the Late Iron Age.

Discussion

- 7.1.17 The pottery recovered can be tentatively split into two ceramic traditions, which can in turn be assigned to various chronological periods. The earliest tradition represented was the East Anglian Plainware tradition; this tradition is characteristic of the Middle Iron Age regionally, although it can continue in use into the Late Iron Age (c. 400/350BC-AD0/50).
- 7.1.18 The second tradition represented were Belgic-type ceramics, which are most characteristic of the Late Iron Age but can continue in use into the Early Roman period. Although diagnostic characteristics were absent, the traits exhibited by these sherds suggest that they represent the use of this tradition in the Late Iron Age period (c. 50/20BC-AD50)

Recommendations

- 7.1.19 The assemblage has been fully catalogued and is in a stable condition. The results of this report should be fully incorporated with any future phases of work on the site. PCA curates the physical and digital archive.

7.2 Ceramic Building Material

Amparo Valcarcel Estors

- 7.2.1 A small, undiagnostic fragment of ceramic building material, weighing 5g, was recovered from fill (8) within Pit [9], located in Trench 3. The fragment is composed of a sandy fabric and lacks sufficient diagnostic features for precise dating, suggesting a possible range from the Roman to Post Medieval period. Consequently, the fragment is thought to have been redeposited within the fill of Pit [9], likely due to agricultural or natural processes, such as manuring, ploughing, or animal burrowing. No further analysis of this material is recommended.

7.3 Animal Bone

Tess Townend

Introduction

- 7.3.1 Animal bone from Trial Trenching at Lucas Lane, Hitchin comprised a total of 17 small adult canid bones, within one feature, Pit [9]. Given the paucity of dating evidence and archaeological activity, coupled with the well-preserved nature of the bones, this possibly represents a relatively modern animal burial.

This section details the assessment of these faunal remains, their analytical potential, and presents any recommendations.

Methodology

- 7.3.2 The animal bone recovered from Lucas Lane was identified and recorded to species level whenever possible using Schmid (1972) as a reference. Age estimation using epiphyseal fusion followed Silver (1969). During the recording of individual elements recovered, attributes including, species, bone portion, condition, taphonomy, pathology, or anthropogenic alteration to elements were noted. Attempts were made by the analyst to refit all possible elements within contexts, with the total number of fragments being noted.
- 7.3.3 Most of the animal bones were collected by hand. The remaining portion were collected by bulk samples which have been subjected to flot processing and subsequent filtration using a >2 μ mesh.

Assemblage Description

- 7.3.4 Trench 3, located next to the southern boundary of the site, contained Pit [9], yielding a total of 17 disarticulated, undated bones from a small adult canid. No hind limb bones were recovered. All present bones, apart from the ribs and scapula, are complete, with minimal signs of taphonomic damage. Given the paucity of dating evidence and archaeological activity, coupled with the well-preserved nature of the bones, this possibly represents a modern or intrusive burial.

Bone/side	Left	Right	Not recorded	Total
Calcaneus	1	1		2
Humerus	1	1		2
Metacarpal 2	1			1
Metacarpal 5	1			1
Phalanx 1			1	1
Phalanx 2			1	1

Radius	1	1		2
Rib			5	5
Scapula		1		1
Ulna		1		1
Total	5	5	7	17

Table 3: Canid bones (MNI 1) from Pit [9]/ (8), Trench 3

Given the small overall NISP within the assemblage present, the Lucas Lane, Hitchin assemblage is not analytically significant.

Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.3.5 All the animal bone was recovered from one modern pit [9]/ (8) and no other bones were recovered from the other evaluation features. This likely due to the natural geological conditions, indicating that bone preservation and recovery would be limited if further work occurs.

7.4 Environmental Archaeology

Sophie Pallet

Introduction

- 7.4.1 This report presents the environmental findings from an archaeological evaluation at Hitchin, Lucas Lane, Hertfordshire. Two samples of under 40L (4L: sample 1 and 16L: sample 2) were taken from two pits on the Site. This was due to the small size of the features, despite both pits being 100% excavated and sampled.

Aims

- 7.4.2 The aims of this assessment are threefold: to give an overview of the contents and abundances of the assessed samples, to determine the environmental potential of the assessed samples, and to recommend further analysis of the assessed samples, if necessary.

Methodology

- 7.4.3 Two samples of under 40L were processed through floatation; material was collected using a 300 µm mesh for the flot and a 1mm mesh for the heavy

residue. The heavy residue was dried and sieved through 10mm, 5mm, and 2mm fractions before being sorted. Archaeological material was extracted, labelled and recorded from these residues. The abundance of each material type was recorded using a non-linear scale: "1" showing occasional occurrence (1-10 items found), "2" showing fairly frequent occurrence (11-30 items found), "3" showing frequent occurrence (31-100 items found), and "4" showing an abundant presence of material (>100 items found).

- 7.4.4 The flot was dried, labelled and scanned under a low power binocular microscope in order to identify the presence and quality of environmental material, such as seeds, chaff, grain, molluscs, charcoal and modern material. It was separated into sieve fractions of >4mm, 2-4mm and <2mm. Abundances of material were recorded in the same manner as detailed above within the heavy residue. Seed and cereal identifications were made using standard reference materials (Jacomet, Greig 2006; and Cappers et al., 2012).

Results

Sample <1>- (8), [9], pit.

- 7.4.5 Sample <1> [9] contained occasional charcoal 2-4mm, and fairly frequent <2mm. The sample also contained occasional amorphous charred material. Sample <1> [9] also contained fairly frequent uncharred seeds, insect remains and terrestrial molluscs, as well as frequent modern plant material and abundant roots/tubers. Also noted were small quantities of animal bone.

Sample <2>- (6), [7], pit.

- 7.4.6 Sample <2> [7] contained occasional charcoal 2-4mm, and fairly frequent <2mm. The sample also contained occasional charred nutshell and indeterminate charred grain. The sample also contained occasional uncharred seeds and terrestrial molluscs, in addition to frequent modern plant material and abundant roots/tubers. Also noted were small amounts of pottery.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

- 7.4.7 The sample set recovered from Hitchin, Lucas Lane, Hertfordshire, is largely sterile. The preservation within the sample was also poor, with the only instance

of charred grain being indeterminate. There was also significant evidence of bioturbation throughout the sample in the form of modern plant material, roots/tubers, burrowing terrestrial molluscs, insect remains, insect eggs/worm cases and uncharred seeds.

8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1.1 Limited conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the evaluation due to the lack of the archaeological material that allows us to date the features. Archaeological activity from the Site comprised two ditches and two pits.
- 8.1.2 However, a Trial Trench Evaluation undertaken to the immediate south of the site at Foxholes, Pirton Road, (EHT8536) revealed a probable Middle to Late Iron Age/ Early Romano-British enclosure, with associated ditches, pits and postholes (Sharrock 2017, p 24). It is possible the limited archaeological results of Lucas Lane are part of a wider system connected to the enclosure revealed at Foxholes (approximately 50m south). Roman burials with grave goods are also reported to have been found at Foxholes in the 1880s.
- 8.1.3 Similarly, a Watching Brief and Trial Trench Evaluation at the Foxholes Nursing Home in 1996-98 (EHT5056 and EHT4829) recorded a pit containing Mid-Late Iron Age pottery.
- 8.1.4 This sets the Lucas Lane site in a wider landscape of Middle to Late Iron Age and Early Roman activity, in which these features may have been a part of.
- 8.1.5 Unfortunately, there is no definitive evidence from the Trial Trench Evaluation to support this. The only datable evidence of five sherds (8g) of Middle to Late Iron Age/ Early Roman pottery may have been residually deposited into the features due to agricultural or natural processes such as manuring/ ploughing or animal burrowing.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. would like to thank RPS Consulting Ltd. for commissioning and funding the work. PCA are also grateful to Alison Tinniswood of the Hertfordshire LEADS Growth and Infrastructure Unit for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. The project was managed for PCA by Michael Joyce and was supervised by Jenn Hulse. The author would like to thank Zack Evans for his hard work on site. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by PCA's CAD Department.

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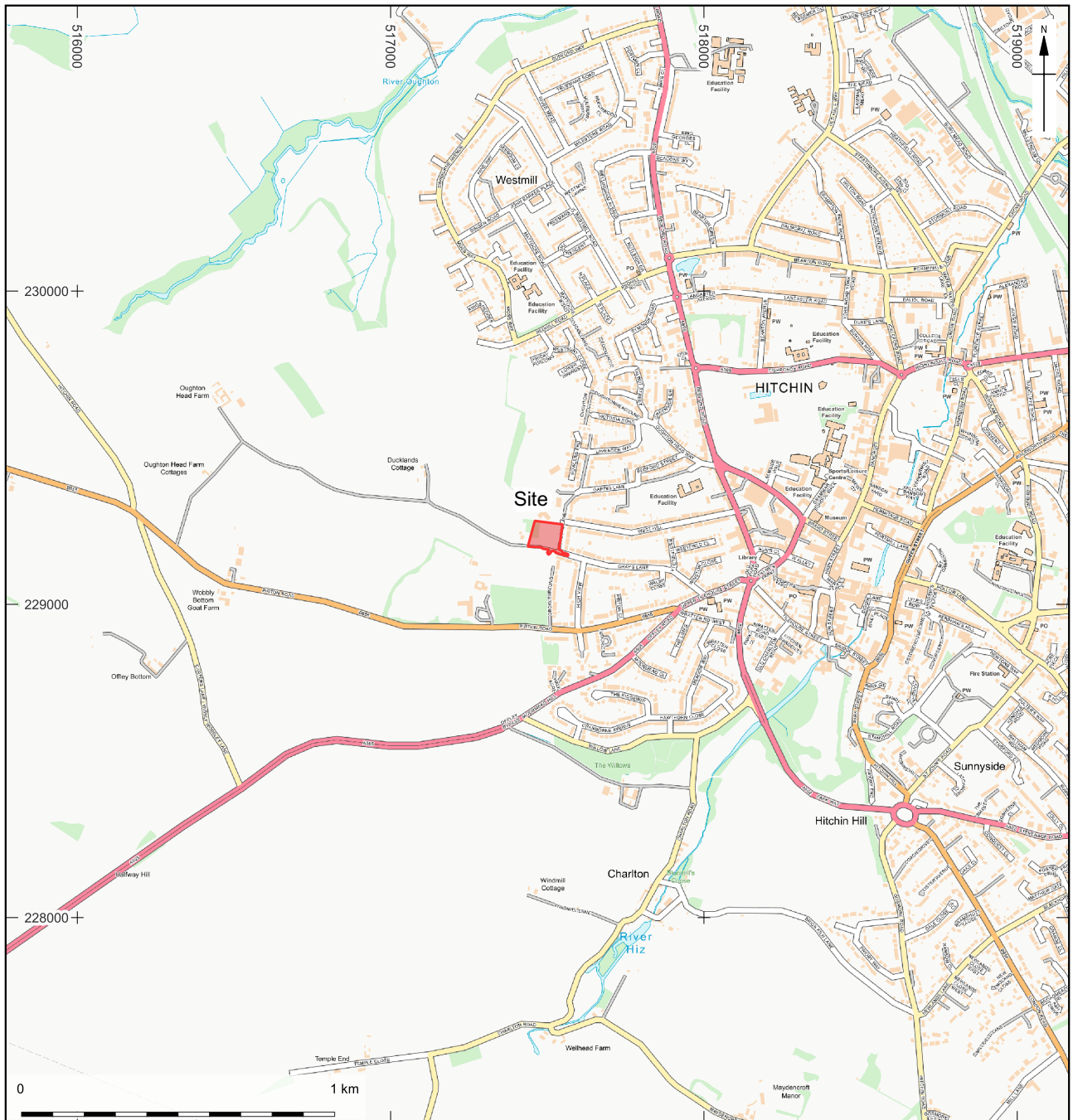
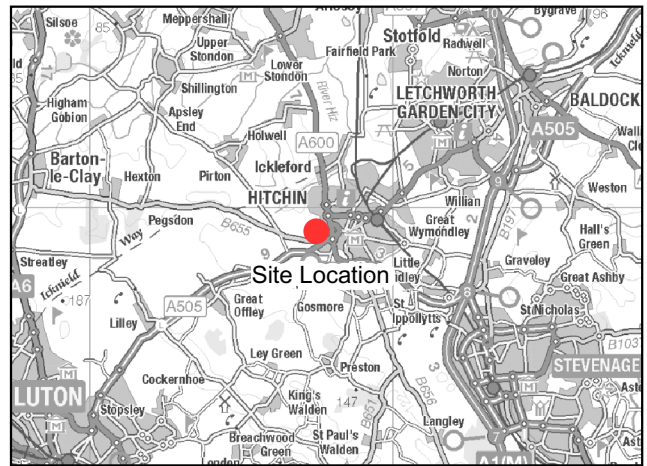
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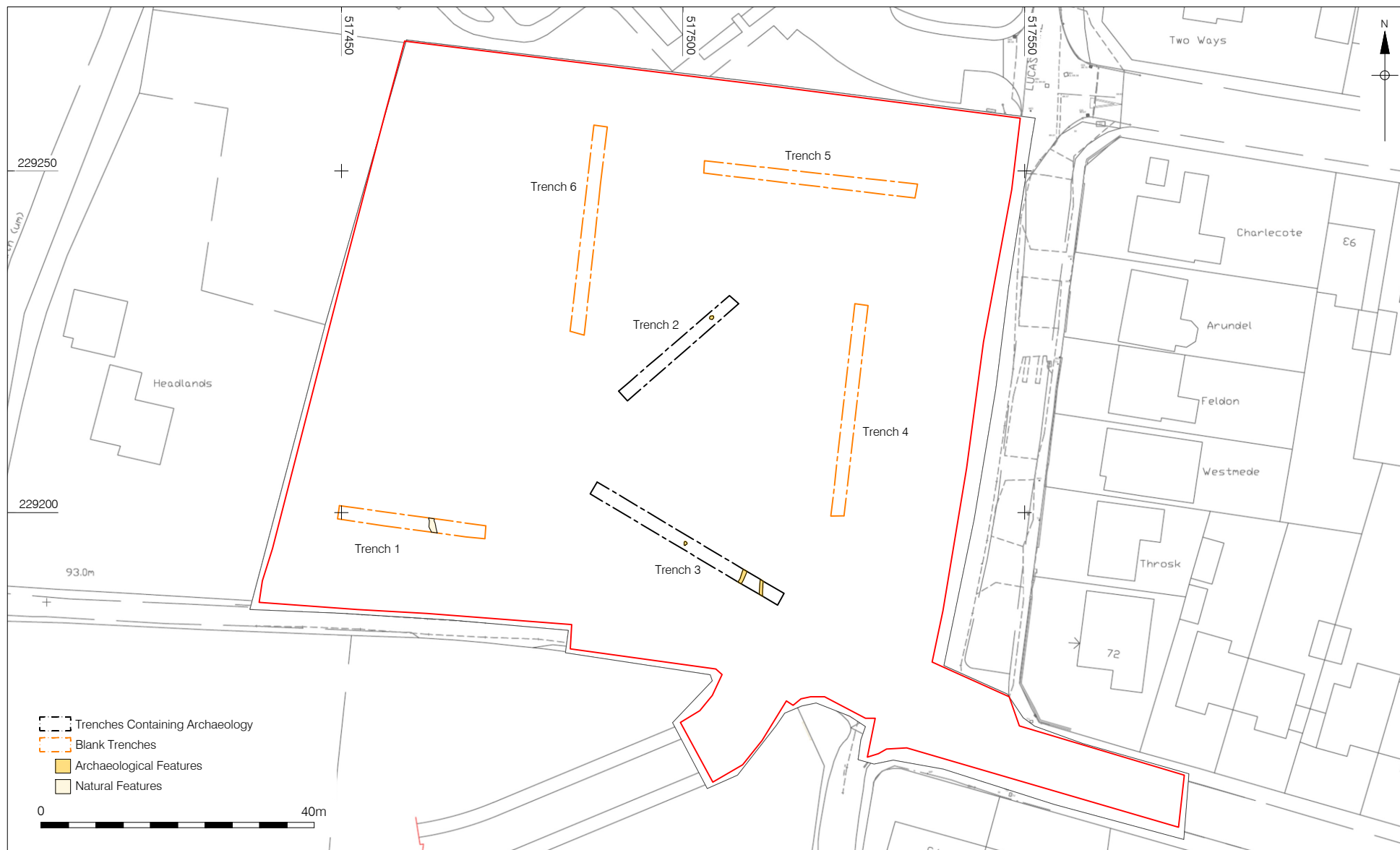
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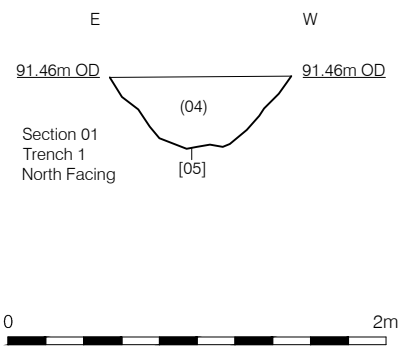
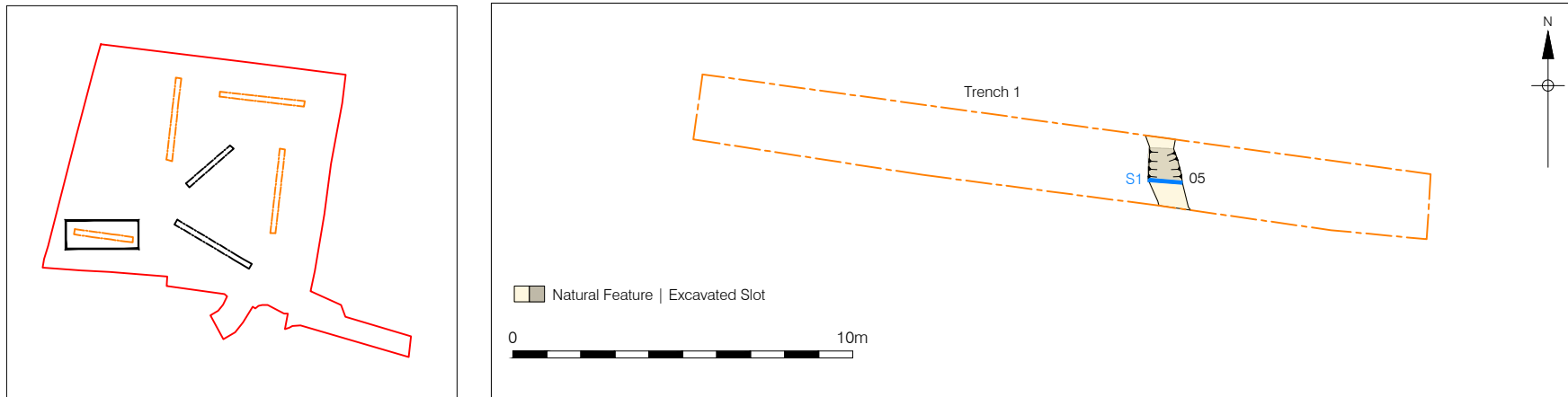
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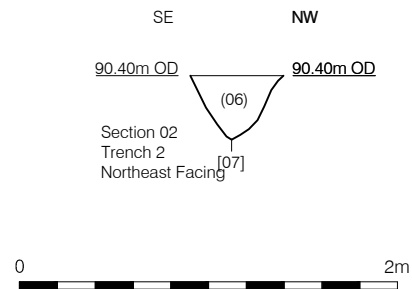
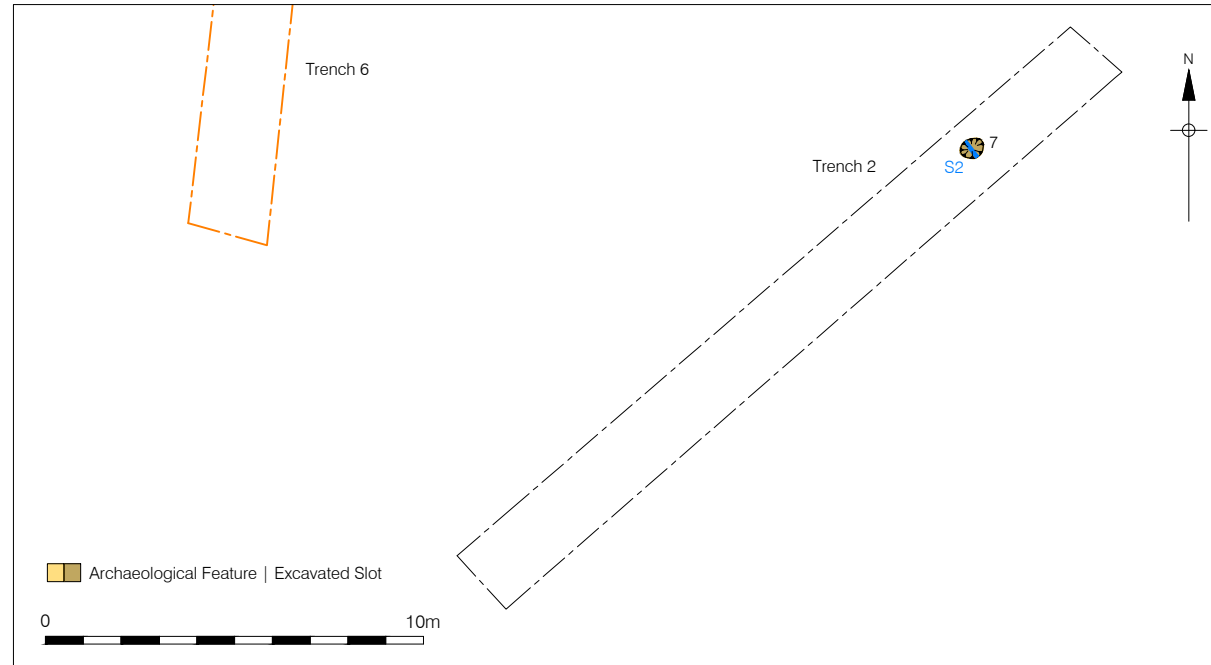
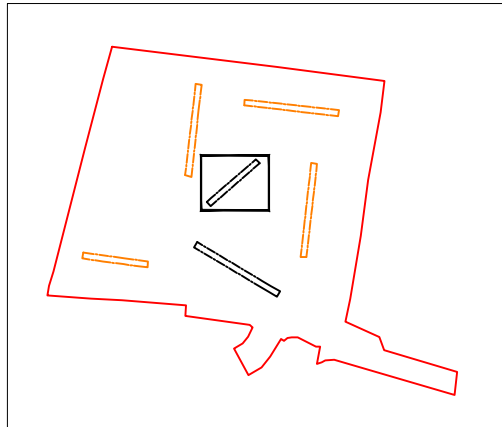
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11 FIGURES









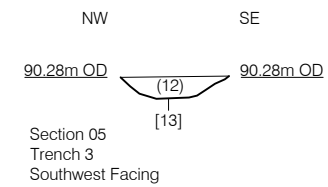
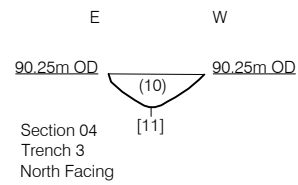
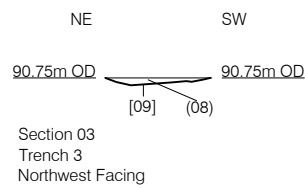
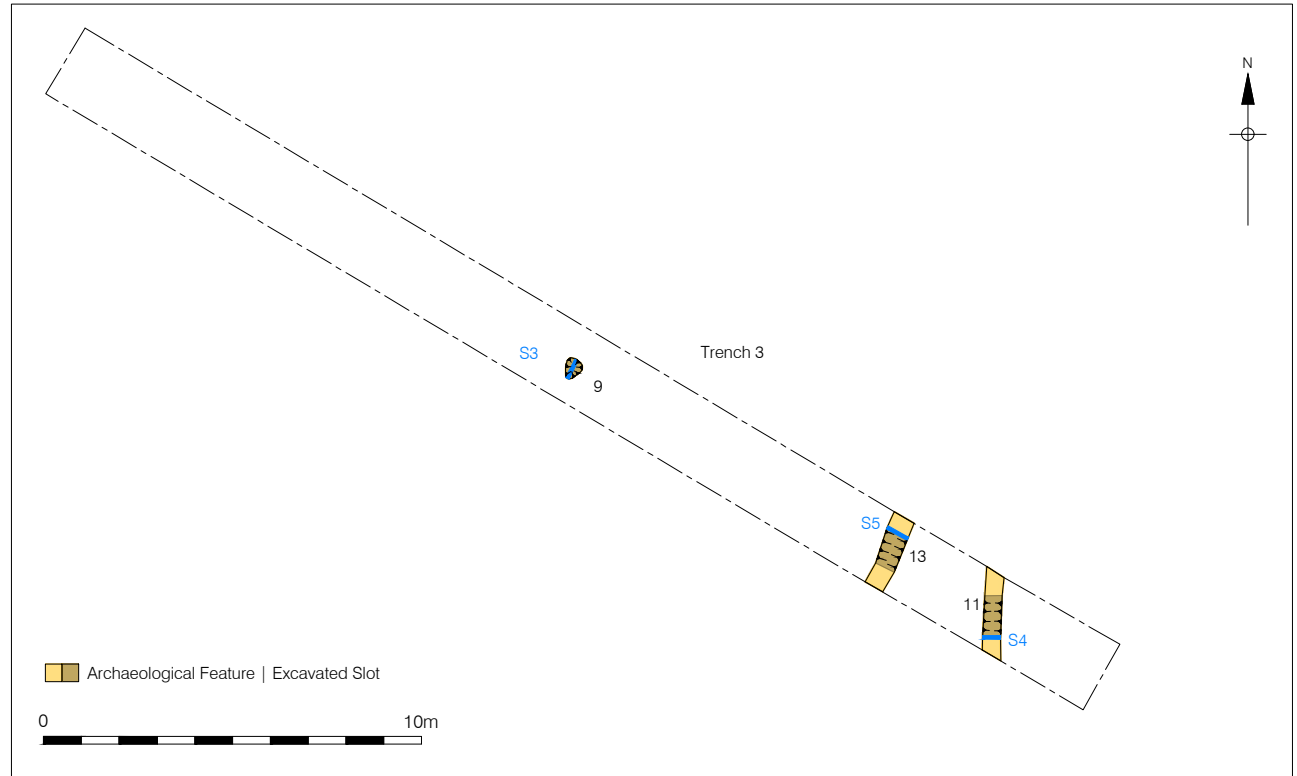
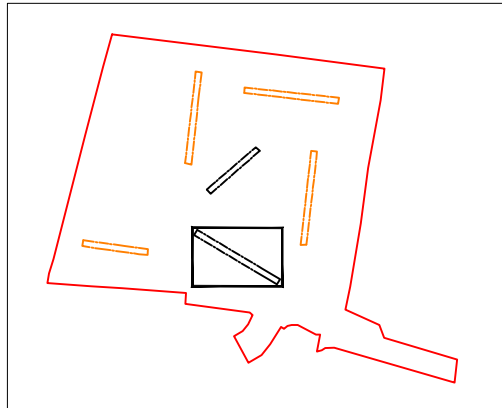


Figure 5
Trench 3, Plan and Sections
Inset 1:2,500, Plan 1:200, Sections 1:40 at A4

12 PLATES



Plate 1: Site pre-evaluation; view west.



Plate 2: Trench 1; view west.



Plate 3: Trench 2; view north-east.



Plate 4: Trench 3; view south-east.



Plate 5: Trench 4; view north.



Plate 6: Trench 5; view east.



Plate 7: Trench 6; view south.



Plate 8: Natural Feature [005]; view south.



Plate 9: Pit [007]; view south-west.



Plate 10; Pit [009]; view south-east.



Plate 11: Ditch [011]; view south.



Plate 12: Ditch [013]; view north-east.

13 APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DETAILS AND CONTENTS INDEX

Trench Number	Trench Length	Trench Width	Trench Orientation	End 1 Location	Topsoil Thickness End 1	Subsoil Thickness End 1	End 2 Location	Topsoil Thickness End 1	Subsoil Thickness End 2	Maximum Trench depth
1	20m	1.8m	E-W	W	0.3m	0.2m	E	0.2m	0.2m	0.6m
2	20m	1.8m	NE-SW	NE	0.15m	-	SW	0.15m	-	0.2m
3	30m	1.8m	SE-NW	NW	0.3m	0.1	SE	0.3m	0.1m	0.45m
4	30m	1.8m	N-S	N	0.25m	-	S	0.25m	-	0.35m
5	30m	1.8m	E-W	E	0.25m	-	W	0.25m	-	0.35m
6	30m	1.8m	N-S	N	0.25m	-	S	0.25m	-	0.3m

Context	Cut	Trench	Type	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Category
1	1	All	Layer	0	0	0	Friable mid-reddish orange sandy silt	Natural
2	2	1, 2	Layer	0	0	0	Loose light brown clayey silt	Subsoil
3	3	All	Layer	0	0	0	Friable dark brown clayey silt	Topsoil
4	5	1	Fill	1	0.95	0.38	Firm mid- brownish yellow silty clay	Natural Feature
5	5	1	Cut	1	0.95	0.38	Irregular shape, moderate sides and an irregular base	Natural Feature
6	7	2	Fill	0.45	0.48	0.34		Pit
7	7	2	Cut	0.45	0.48	0.34	Circular shape, moderate sides and a concave base	Pit
8	9	3	Fill	0.37	0.56	0.04	Friable mid-greyish brown clayey silt	Pit
9	9	3	Cut	0.37	0.56	0.04	Sub-circular shape, moderate sides and an irregular base	Pit
10	11	3	Fill	1	0.5	0.18	Friable mid-brownish grey sandy silt	Ditch
11	11	3	Cut	1	0.5	0.18	Linear, moderate sides, concave base and a N-S alignment	Ditch
12	13	3	Fill	1	0.57	0.11	Firm mid brown sandy silt	Ditch
13	13	3	Cut	1	0.57	0.11	Linear, gradual sides, concave base and a NW-SE alignment	Ditch

14 APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS Summary for preconst1-530508

OASIS ID (UID)	preconst1-530508
Project Name	Evaluation at Lucas Lane, North Hertfordshire SG5 2QY, United Kingdom
Sitename	Lucas Lane, North Hertfordshire SG5 2QY, United Kingdom
Sitecode	HIT/LL'23
Project Identifier(s)	Land west of Lucas Lane trial trenching
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	22/00516/FP
Reason For Investigation	Planning requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project Dates	03-Feb-2025 - 05-Feb-2025
Location	Lucas Lane, North Hertfordshire SG5 2QY, United Kingdom NGR : TL 17615 29550 LL : 51.952014484544726, -0.289991660188199 12 Fig : 517615,229550
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Hertfordshire Local Authority District : North Hertfordshire Parish : North Hertfordshire, unparished area
Project Methodology	Trial Trench evaluation
Project Results	A programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. (PCA) on land west of Lucas Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 17506 29225) from the 3rd to the 5th of February 2025. This was carried out following a Historic Desk Based Assessment (Slater 2016) to address Condition 11 of the planning permission for the development of the site. The Archaeological Evaluation comprised four 30m long, 1.8m wide trenches and two 15m long, 1.8m wide trenches, which represented a 5% sample of the site area, where it was anticipated to be of high archaeological potential. Trenches 1-3 had archaeological features located within them, whilst trenches 4-6 were devoid of any archaeological finds, features or deposits. Very little datable artefactual material was recovered from the features, with these being limited to five sherds (8g) of abraded Middle to Late Iron Age/ Early Roman pottery recovered from Pit [7] and Ditch [11] in Trenches 2 and 3 respectively.
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	Hertfordshire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	
HER Identifiers	
Archives	

15 APPENDIX 3: HERTS HER SUMMARY FORM

Site name and address: Land west off Lucas Lane, Hitchin, SG5		
County: Hertfordshire		District: North Hertfordshire
Village/Town: Hitchin		Parish: N/A
Planning application reference: 22/00516/FP, Condition 11		
HER Enquiry reference: 115.23		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: RPS Consulting Ltd., 20 Western Ave, Milton Park, Milton, Abingdon OX14 4SH		
Nature of application: Pre-commencement		
Present land use: Arable		
Size of application area: 5200m ²		Size of area investigated: 160 linear metres
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 1750 2922		
Site code (if applicable): HIT/LL'23		
Site director/Organisation: Michael Joyce/ Pre-Construct Archaeology		
Type of work: Evaluation		
Date of work: February 2025	Start: 03/02/2025	Finish: 06/02/2025
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum:		
Related HER Nos: N/A	Periods represented:	
Relevant previous summaries/reports: Slater, M., 2016. Land to the West of Lucas Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire: An Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment. Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. Report no: R12628		
Summary of fieldwork results: 6 trial trenches were excavated (2x 20m and 4x 60m). Trenches 4, 5 and 6 were devoid of any archaeological finds, features or deposits. Trench 1 contained a natural feature, probable rooting channel or glacial scarring. Trench 2 contained a small undated pit. Trench 3 contained a small undated pit and two shallow undated ditches.		
Author of summary: Jenn Hulse		Date of summary: 07/02/2025



PCA CAMBRIDGE

THE GRANARY, RECTORY FARM
BREWERY ROAD, PAMPISFORD
CAMBRIDGESHIRE CB22 3EN

t: 01223 845 522

e: cambridge@pre-construct.com

PCA DURHAM

THE ROPE WORKS, BROADWOOD VIEW
CHESTER-LE-STREET
DURHAM DH3 3AF

t: 0191 377 1111

e: durham@pre-construct.com

PCA LONDON

UNIT 54, BROCKLEY CROSS BUSINESS CENTRE
96 ENDWELL ROAD, BROCKLEY
LONDON SE4 2PD

t: 020 7732 3925

e: london@pre-construct.com

PCA NEWARK

16 LONDON ROAD
NEWARK
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE NG24 1TW

t: 01636 370410

e: newark@pre-construct.com

PCA NORWICH

QUARRY WORKS, DEREHAM ROAD
HONINGHAM
NORWICH NR9 5AP

T: 01223 845522

e: cambridge@pre-construct.com

PCA WARWICK

2 PLESTOWES BARN
HAREWAY LANE, BARFORD
WARWICKSHIRE CV35 8DD

t: 01926 485490

e: warwick@pre-construct.com

PCA WINCHESTER

5 RED DEER COURT, ELM ROAD
WINCHESTER
HAMPSHIRE SO22 5LX

t: 01962 849 549

e: winchester@pre-construct.com

