



Thorpeville, Moulton Northamptonshire

Archaeological Evaluation



Planning Ref: WND/2022/0265
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Unit R6
Sheaf Bank Business Park
Prospect Road
Sheffield
S2 3EN

www.wessexarch.co.uk

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Fieldwork directed by	Jack Needham
Assisted by	Kai Gopsill
Project management by	Catherine Douglas
Document compiled by	Ashley Tuck and Kate Fitzpatrick
Graphics by	Elizabeth Garwood
Document edited by	Patrick Daniel

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1	4/12/2023	AWT	CD



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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Barnes-West Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of a 1.02 ha parcel of land located to the rear of Woodlands, Thorpeville, Moulton in Northamptonshire. The evaluation area is centred on NGR 479179 265557.

The aims of the evaluation have been met, although negatively.

No significant archaeological features, deposits, structures or artefacts were identified. A single modern pit was revealed. No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.

Although prehistoric, Romano-British, early medieval and post-medieval remains have been recorded in the near vicinity of the site, these remains did not extend into the investigated trenches. The lack of subsoil may indicate that the site has been subject to deep agricultural ploughing that may have truncated any archaeological remains. In places the topsoil directly overlay bedrock, consistent with intensive ploughing. This would explain the absence of the continuation of archaeological features known from nearby excavations. The site is presently occupied by scrubland and trees; however it may be that it was subject to intensive agriculture at some point in the 20th century or before.

The archive resulting from the evaluation is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield. The collecting museum is Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre. Given the negative result, and in line with guidance from the museum, it is recommended that an 'all-in-one' report is compiled for the museum, containing the digital elements of the archive. An OASIS form, wessexar1-521020 , has been provisionally completed and will be finalised at the time of deposition.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Barnes-West Developments Ltd, for commissioning the archaeological evaluation. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of the Planning Archaeologist, who monitored the project for North Northamptonshire Council.



Thorpeville, Moulton, Northamptonshire

Archaeological Evaluation

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project and planning background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Barnes-West Developments Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of a 1.02 ha parcel of land located to the rear of Woodlands, Thorpeville, Moulton in Northamptonshire. The evaluation area is centred on NGR 479179 265557 (Fig. 1).

1.1.2 The proposed development comprises the demolition of an existing dwelling and the construction of its replacement, along with 14 new dwellings. A planning application (WND/2022/0265) submitted to North Northamptonshire Council (NNC), was granted, subject to conditions, some of which relate to archaeological investigation:

- *Fieldwork in accordance with the agreed written scheme of investigation.*
- *Post-excavation assessment (to be submitted within six months of the completion of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Planning Authority).*
- *Completion of post-excavation analysis, preparation of site archive ready for deposition at a store (Northamptonshire ARC) approved by the Planning Authority, completion of an archive report, and submission of a publication report to be completed within two years of the completion of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Planning Authority.*

1.1.3 All works were undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed in order to undertake the evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2023). The Planning Archaeologist for NCC approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to fieldwork commencing.

1.1.4 The evaluation comprising the excavation of four trial trenches (2% sample) was undertaken on 13 and 14 November 2023.

1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed description of the results of the evaluation, to interpret the results within a local, regional or wider archaeological context and assess whether the aims of the evaluation have been met.

1.2.2 The presented results will provide further information on the archaeological resource that may be impacted by the proposed development and facilitate an informed decision with regard to the requirement for, and methods of, any further archaeological mitigation.

1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The evaluation area covers a parcel of land situated to the east of a row of residences on the road Thorpeville in the village of Moulton, approximately 6 km north-east of



Northampton. It is bounded in the east by the A43 and in the north by Kefford Drive and Thompson Way. The land comprises scrubland.

- 1.3.2 Existing ground levels lie at 95 m above Ordnance Datum (OD) in the east, and rise gently to 100 m OD in the west.
- 1.3.3 The bedrock geology is Northampton Sand Formation – Ironstone and ooidal, with no superficial deposits recorded (British Geological Survey 2023).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 A desk-based assessment was not produced in relation to this development, however an assessment undertaken for archaeological works immediately to the west of the area considered the recorded historic environment within 1 km (HPS 2020). The WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023) included a summary of the findings, which is presented below. Relevant entry numbers from the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) are included and additional sources of information are referenced, as appropriate.

2.2 Archaeological and historical context

Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 Three prehistoric findspots are recorded 650 m north of the site. A possible Neolithic hengiform feature (MNN161239) was discovered around 900 m north-east of the proposed site with geophysical survey showing a double ring ditch. The Jurassic Way route (MNN160137), an important prehistoric trackway, bounds the western edge of the site, and a probable Iron Age stock enclosure is located 300 m to the east (MNN161233). Previous excavation revealed a generally east to west aligned curving boundary ditch which likely extends across the present site (MoLA 2019).

Romano-British

- 2.2.2 Remains of a low-status Romano-British farmstead settlement (MNN6064) were located around 650 m east of the site. It was detected by geophysical survey (ENN104977) and tested through evaluation trenching (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2011). The settlement included a series of intersecting rectilinear enclosures (MNN161236, MNN161289, MNN161288, MNN161236, MNN161234).
- 2.2.3 Further Romano-British settlements have been identified 480 m to the south-east (MNN6065), 470 m to the south-south-east (MNN1916), and 800 m to the south (MNN1911). A Roman villa is located about 1 km to the south-south-west (MNN140219).

Medieval

- 2.2.4 The town of Moulton (MNN6068) around 800 m to the north-west is regarded as having Saxon origins. The name possibly derives from the 'town of the mill' or 'protected town' (Meleton; Moulton Parish Council 2021).
- 2.2.5 Two sunken featured buildings (MNN170632) were identified up to 600 m to the east (MoLA 2019). There was a Saxon settlement at Booth Rise (MNN168951) around 930 m to the south.
- 2.2.6 Medieval activity in the area is generally concentrated to the north-west around the main settlement of Moulton. Unstratified finds have been found in the wider landscape, as well

as surviving ridge and furrow with a pronounced medieval-type 'S'-shape (MNN133941) 480 m to the north-west.

Post-medieval

- 2.2.7 Much of the fabric of the settlement of Moulton is of post-medieval date. The Northampton to Kettering Turnpike was located adjacent to the site, following the route of the Jurassic Way. To the west straighter and narrower ridge and furrow earthworks (MNN133942), indicating they are more likely to be post-medieval in origin.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General aims

- 3.1.1 The general aims of the evaluation, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023) and in compliance with the ClfA *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a), were to:

- provide information about the archaeological potential of the site; and
- inform either the scope and nature of any further archaeological work that may be required; or the formation of a mitigation strategy (to offset the impact of the development on the archaeological resource); or a management strategy.

3.2 General objectives

- 3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the general objectives of the evaluation were to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified area;
- establish, within the constraints of the evaluation, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains;
- place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- make available information about the archaeological resource within the site by reporting on the results of the evaluation.

3.3 Site-specific objectives

- 3.3.1 Following consideration of the archaeological potential of the site and the regional research framework (Research Frameworks 2023) the site-specific objectives defined in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023) were to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- identify the possible continuous location of features identified in previous works;
- assess the potential for the recovery of artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- assess the likely impact of the development on the archaeology that is found;

- determine how the distribution of towns correlate with Iron Age foci, and how far their social, political and economic roles have overlapped;
- determine how and why did settlement forms and building traditions vary within the region and over time;
- determine what patterns can be discerned in the location of settlements in the landscape;
- determine if we can chart more closely the processes of agricultural intensification and expansion and the development of field systems; and,
- determine if spatial and temporal variations in the morphology, functions and status of settlements can be defined more precisely.

4 METHODS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methods set out within the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

4.2 Fieldwork methods

General

- 4.2.1 The trench locations were set out using a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), in the approximate positions proposed in the WSI (Fig. 1).
- 4.2.2 Four trial trenches, each measuring 20 m in length and 2 m wide, were excavated in level spits using a 360° excavator equipped with a toothless bucket, under the constant supervision and instruction of the monitoring archaeologist. Machine excavation proceeded until either the archaeological horizon or the natural geology was exposed.
- 4.2.3 Where necessary, the base of the trench/surface of archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand. A sample of archaeological features and deposits was hand-excavated, sufficient to address the aims of the evaluation.
- 4.2.4 Spoil from machine stripping and hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. Except for obviously modern material that was not retained, no artefacts were identified.
- 4.2.5 Trenches completed to the satisfaction of the client and the Planning Archaeologist were backfilled using excavated materials in the order in which they were excavated, and left level on completion. No other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken.

Recording

- 4.2.6 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete record of excavated features and deposits was made, including plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections) and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid.

- 4.2.7 A Leica GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service surveyed the location of archaeological features. All survey data is recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSTN15 and OSGM15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.
- 4.2.8 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 16 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.3 Finds and environmental strategies

- 4.3.1 Strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of finds and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2023). Guidelines for the treatment of artefacts and environmental remains were in general accordance with: *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b), *Environmental Archaeology. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011), and ClfA's *Toolkit for Specialist Reporting* (2023a; Type 2: Appraisal).

4.4 Monitoring

- 4.4.1 The Planning Archaeologist monitored the evaluation on behalf of the LPA. Any variations to the WSI, if required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with the client and the Planning Archaeologist.

5 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The evaluation trenches were largely archaeologically sterile (Figs 2–5), with only a single modern pit (203; Fig. 6) revealed. The sequence in each intervention was simple, comprising only natural overlain by topsoil.
- 5.1.2 Detailed descriptions of individual contexts are provided in the trench summary tables (Appendix 1). Figure 1 shows a plan of the evaluation trenches including the location of pit 203.

5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits

- 5.2.1 Bedrock was revealed in the south end of trench 1 and in part of trench 4.
- 5.2.2 The natural undisturbed geological substrate comprised reddish or yellowish brown sandy silt (102, 202, 302 and 402; Figs 2–5). A 0.7 m deep sondage in trench 3 revealed no change in the appearance of this stratum.
- 5.2.3 The natural was overlain by 0.21–0.38 m of greyish brown sandy silt topsoil (101, 201, 301 and 401).

5.3 Modern (20th century)

- 5.3.1 Pit 203 (at least 1.78 x 1.06 x 0.35 m; Fig. 6) was sub-rectangular and appeared to have been cut with a machine bucket. The pit continued beyond the trench edge and it is possible that it was instead a ditch terminal. Its brown sandy silt fill (204) contained modern glass, pottery, metal and ceramic building material, which were not retained.



6 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

- 6.1.1 The only artefacts identified were obviously modern and were not retained, in accordance with the methodology set out in the WSI.
- 6.1.2 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 The aims of the evaluation have been met, although negatively.
- 7.1.2 No significant archaeological features, deposits, structures or artefacts were identified. A single modern pit was revealed.
- 7.1.3 Although prehistoric, Romano-British, early medieval and post-medieval remains have been recorded in the near vicinity of the site, these remains did not extend into the investigated trenches. The lack of subsoil may indicate that the site has been subject to deep agricultural ploughing that may have truncated any archaeological remains. In places the topsoil directly overlay bedrock, consistent with intensive ploughing. This would explain the absence of the continuation of archaeological features known from nearby excavations. The site is presently occupied by scrubland and trees; however historic maps (not reproduced) show that it was used for agriculture in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

8 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

- 8.1.1 The archive resulting from the evaluation is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Sheffield. The collecting museum is Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre. Given the negative result, and in line with guidance from the museum, it is recommended that an 'all-in-one' report is compiled for the museum, containing the digital elements of the archive. This approach is subject to approval by the museum and the Planning Archaeologist.

8.2 Preparation of the archive

Physical archive

- 8.2.1 The physical archive, which comprises a single paper index and a drawing, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (Brown 2011; ClfA 2014c; SMA 1995).

Digital archive

- 8.2.2 The digital archive generated by the project, which comprises born-digital data (e.g., site records, survey data, photographs and reports), will be subject to the selection strategy laid out below.

8.3 Selection strategy

- 8.3.1 It is widely accepted that not all the records and materials (artefacts and ecofacts) collected or created during the course of an archaeological project require preservation in perpetuity. These records and materials will be subject to selection in order to establish what will be retained for long-term curation, with the aim of ensuring that all elements selected to be retained are appropriate to establish the significance of the project and support future

research, outreach, engagement, display and learning activities, i.e., the retained archive should fulfil the requirements of both future researchers and the receiving museum.

8.3.2 Project-specific proposals for selection are presented below. These proposals are based on recommendations by Wessex Archaeology's internal specialists and will be updated in line with any further comment by other stakeholders (museum, local authority). The selection strategy will be fully documented in the project archive.

8.3.3 Any material not selected for retention may be used for teaching or reference collections by Wessex Archaeology.

Finds

8.3.4 None recovered.

Palaeoenvironmental material

8.3.5 None recovered.

Documentary records

8.3.6 Paper records comprise only a single photographic register (other *pro forma* site records are digital) and a single drawing. All will be scanned and deposited with Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre as part of an 'all-in-one report'. The physical archive will then be discarded.

Digital data

8.3.7 Given the very limited results of the fieldwork, it is considered that the site conforms to the definition of a 'sterile project' (i.e., one that produces nothing of evidential value), according to the *CifA Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives* (2023b; archaeological archives from sterile projects). It is therefore recommended that only selected digital data are deposited with ADS, an approach commensurate with the scale and significance of the project. Deposition will involve the uploading of the site report via OASIS only.

8.4 Security copy

8.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g., Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

8.5 OASIS

8.5.1 An OASIS (online access to the index of archaeological investigations) record (<http://oasis.ac.uk>) has been initiated, with key fields completed (Appendix 2). A .pdf version of the final report will be submitted following approval by the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the LPA. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ArchSearch catalogue.

9 COPYRIGHT

9.1 Archive and report copyright

9.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with



all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.

- 9.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

9.2 Third party data copyright

- 9.2.1 This document and the project archive may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g., Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which Wessex Archaeology are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of such material.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Trench summaries

Trench No 1		Length 20 m	Width 2 m	Depth 0.40 m
Context Number	Fill Of/Filled With	Interpretative Category	Description	Depth BGL
101		Topsoil	Mid-greyish brown sandy silt, 1% rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2-40 mm, common moderate rooting throughout layer, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 102, ground churned up due to construction activity.	0-0.31
102		Natural	Mid-reddish brown sandy silt, 1% rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2-40 mm, patch of bedrock in south end of trench, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 101	0.31+

Trench No 2		Length 30 m	Width 2 m	Depth 0.30 m
Context Number	Fill Of/Filled With	Interpretative Category	Description	Depth BGL
201		Topsoil	Mid-greyish brown sandy silt, 1% rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2-40 mm, common moderate rooting throughout layer, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 202, ground churned up due to construction activity.	0-0.21
202		Natural	Mid-yellowish brown sandy silt, 50% abundant well sorted sub-angular sandstone 2-120 mm, possible bedrock layer, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 201	0.21+
203	204	Pit	Sub-square pit with moderate, concave sides and a flat base. Length: 1.78 m. Width: >1.06 m. Depth: 0.35 m.	0.21-0.56
204	203	Secondary fill	Mid-brown sandy silt with 3% sparse poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2-40 mm 10% moderate light rooting	0.21-0.56



Trench No 3		Length 20 m	Width 2 m	Depth 0.41 m
Context Number	Fill Of/Filled With	Interpretative Category	Description	Depth BGL
301		Topsoil	Mid-greyish brown sandy silt, 1% rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2–40 mm, sparse moderate rooting throughout layer, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 302, ground churned up due to construction activity.	0–0.30
302		Natural	Mid-reddish brown sandy silt, 5% sparse poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2–80 mm, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 301	0.30+

Trench No 4		Length 30 m	Width 2 m	Depth 0.52 m
Context Number	Fill Of/Filled With	Interpretative Category	Description	Depth BGL
401		Topsoil	Mid-greyish brown sandy silt, 1% rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2–40 mm, common moderate rooting throughout layer, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 402, ground churned up due to construction activity.	0–0.38
402		Natural	Mid-reddish brown sandy silt, 1% rare poorly sorted sub-rounded gravel 2–40 mm, patch of bedrock in trench, loose compaction, moderately clear horizon with 401	0.38+



Appendix 2 OASIS summary

OASIS ID (UID): wessexar1-521020

Project Name: Thorpeville, Moulton, Northamptonshire: Archaeological Evaluation

Activity type: Evaluation

Sitecode(s): 288840

Project Identifier(s): Thorpeville, Moulton, Northamptonshire

Planning Id: WND/2022/0265

Reason for Investigation: Planning: Post determination

Organisation Responsible for work: Wessex Archaeology

Project Dates: 13-Nov-2023 - 14-Nov-2023

HER: Northamptonshire SMR

HER Identifiers: [no data]

Project Methodology: Small trial trench evaluation (4 trenches).

Project Results: No significant archaeological features, deposits, structures or artefacts were identified. A single modern pit was revealed. No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered. Although prehistoric, Romano-British, early medieval and post-medieval remains have been recorded in the near vicinity of the site, these remains did not extend within the investigated trenches. The lack of subsoil may suggest that the site has been subject to deep agricultural ploughing that may have truncated any archaeological remains. In places the topsoil directly overlay bedrock, consistent with intensive ploughing. This would explain the absence of the continuation of archaeological features known from nearby excavations. The site is presently occupied by scrubland and trees; however it may be that it was subject to intensive agriculture at some point in the 20th century or before.

Keywords:

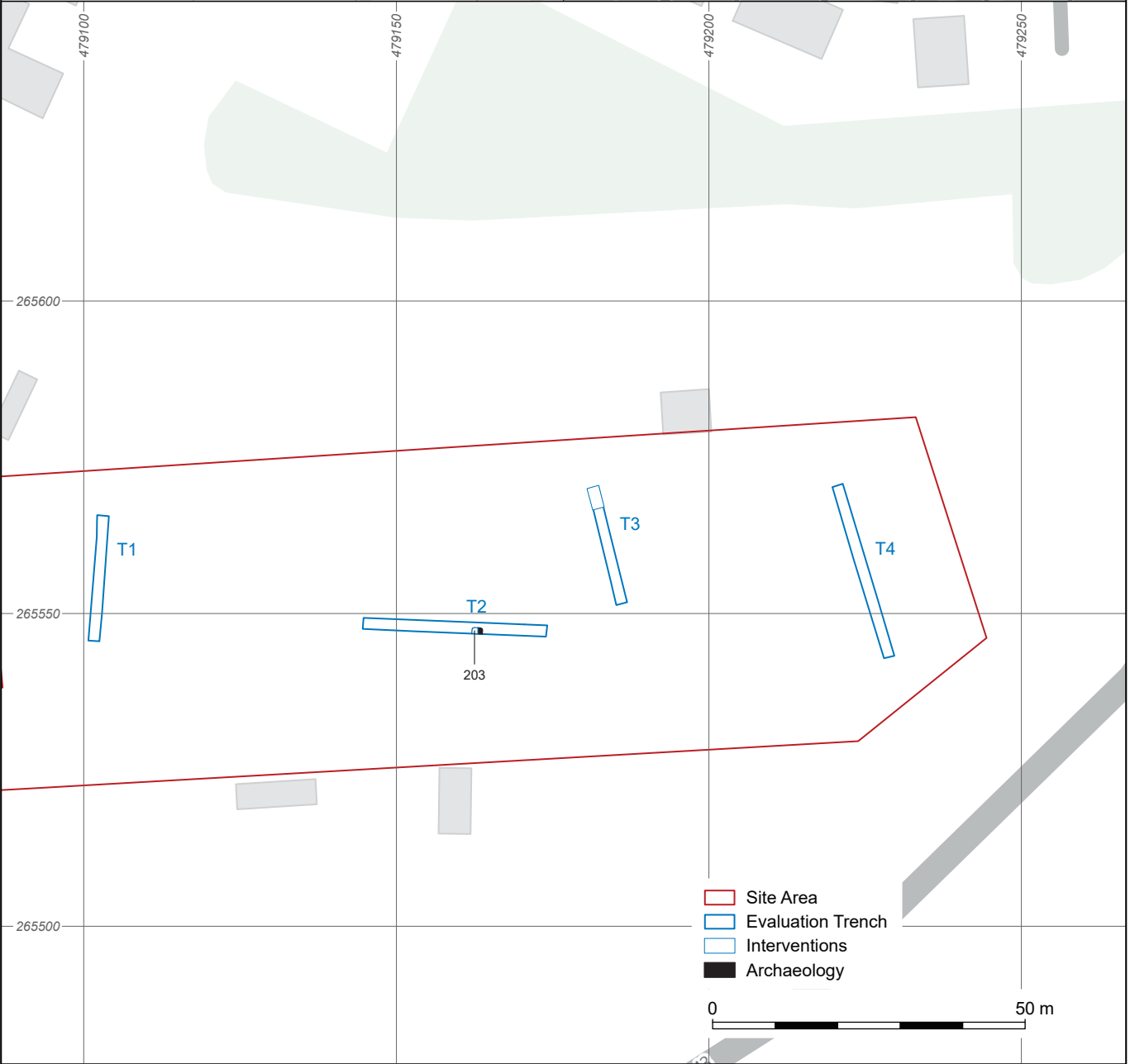
Archive:

Digital Archive - to be deposited with Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre;

Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;

Reports in OASIS:

Tuck, A. and Fitzpatrick, K., (2023). Thorpeville, Moulton, Northamptonshire: Archaeological Evaluation. Sheffield: Wessex Archaeology. 288840.03.



Coordinate system: OSGB 1936 British National Grid

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Figure 1: Site location and plan





Figure 2: Trench 1 from south, 2 x 1 m scales



Figure 3: Trench 2 from east, 2 x 1 m scales



Figure 4: Trench 3 from north, 2 x 1 m scales



Figure 5: Trench 4 from north, 2 x 1 m scales



Figure 6: Pit 203 from west, 1 x 1 m scale



Wessex Archaeology Ltd registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB
Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk