



QUERCUS HERITAGE

Tashkent New Gateway Hub International Airport Cultural Heritage Review

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1. SCOPE OF REVIEW & SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

For the purposes of ensuring compliance to International Financial Institution (IFI) Performance Standard 8 guidelines, this report reviews the cultural heritage status and sensitivity of a total of thirteen potential sites identified within or close to the development footprint, as separately evaluated in three previous documents:

- The NACO Report, 2024
- The ESIA 2026
- The Academy of Sciences (AoS) Report 2026

Following the Academy of Sciences Report 2026, The Tashkent region Agency of Public Heritage recommended on 19th June 2026 that “*future implementation works must be executed under archaeological supervision in cooperation with the Cultural Heritage Department of Tashkent Region.*” This review supports this recommendation by offering more detailed guidance on the specific nature of the archaeological supervision necessary.

The review involved consulting the three documents itemised above, analysis of satellite imagery and relevant published historical materials; and a site visit of nine of the total thirteen sites (See **Figure 1**) for visual assessment, as summarised in **Table 1**.

The outcome of the review recommends one of the following categorisations for each site:

- A. **Site within the development footprint of potential cultural heritage value, where pre-construction precautionary measures are recommended as a matter of urgency**
- B. Site immediately outside the development footprint with potential cultural heritage value which should be included in the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP)
- C. Site within the development footprint previously identified as having potential heritage value, to be excluded as likely having any significant heritage value, but subject to the Chance Finds Procedure as will be set out in the CHMP

Three sites are identified as category A, three sites as category B and seven sites as category D.

The next section summarises the necessary actions required to fulfil the recommendations for each category and a brief description of each of the sites within each category, as per the findings of this review.

Table 1: Summary of potential cultural heritage sites previously identified and the recommended actions following this review

ESIA 2026 SITE ID	NACO REPORT 2024 SITE ID	ACADEMY OF SCIENCES 2026 SITE ID	Site Name / Description	Location X	Location Y	VISITED DURING REVIEW?	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Gaz 1	Location 4	Sector D	Graveyard on mound (Location 4)	515473.24	4548166.61	YES	Category A: Urgent precautionary measures recommended
Gaz 2	Location 5	Sector E	Graveyard on mound (Location 5)	519041.34	4550318.81	YES	Category A: Urgent precautionary measures recommended
Gaz 3	N/A	N/A	Russian/Korean graveyard	520697.72	4548560.55	NO	Category B: Outside project footprint, but within buffer zone -recommended to be included in CHMP
Gaz 4	Location 2	Sector A	Graveyard on mound (Location 2)	517883.11	4548762.07	YES	Category A: Urgent precautionary measures recommended
Gaz 5	N/A	Sector B	Graveyard on mound	516591.14	4547743.86	NO	Category C: Exclude as site of cultural heritage value, subject to Chance Finds Procedure in CHMP
Gaz 6	Location 1	N/A	Recent Graveyard (location 1)	520711.03	4550581.09	NO	Category B: Outside project footprint, but within buffer zone -recommended to be included in CHMP

ESIA 2026 SITE ID	NACO REPORT 2024 SITE ID	ACADEMY OF SCIENCES 2026 SITE ID	Site Name / Description	Location X	Location Y	VISITED DURING REVIEW?	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Gaz 7	N/A	N/A	Previous Structure at intersection of field boundary and bridge	518124.28	4547825.63	YES	Category C: Exclude as site of cultural heritage value, subject to Chance Finds Procedure in CHMP
Gaz 8	N/A	N/A	Unverified Structures	517303.60	4549268.43	YES	Category C: Exclude as site of cultural heritage value, subject to Chance Finds Procedure in CHMP
Gaz 9	N/A	N/A	Unverified Structures	517288.18	4548901.37	YES	Category C: Exclude as site of cultural heritage value, subject to Chance Finds Procedure in CHMP
Gaz 10	N/A	N/A	Previous Structure on canal	515697.17	4548322.28	YES	Category C: Exclude as site of cultural heritage value, subject to Chance Finds Procedure in CHMP
Gaz 11	N/A	N/A	Railway	520571.78	4549275.56	NO	Category B: Outside project footprint, but within buffer zone -recommended to be included in CHMP
Gaz 12	N/A	N/A	Ruin (pa 36)	516328.80	4548343.55	YES	Category C: Exclude as site of cultural heritage value, subject to Chance Finds Procedure in CHMP
Gaz 13	N/A	N/A	Mound / ruin	515924.24	4548428.20	YES	Category C: Exclude as site of cultural heritage value, subject to Chance Finds Procedure in CHMP

2. DETERMINATION OF SITE CATEGORIES

Category A: Sites where pre-construction precautionary measures are urgently advised

Mechanical and/or manual excavation of minimum 2-3m deep trenches at targeted positions in and around the centre of the features (as per suggested locations in **Figures 2, 3 and 4** and the methodology outlined below) should be conducted as a precautionary measure as soon as possible, ideally before November 2026, during pre-construction activities. This should take place under the supervision of a local 'open sheet' permit holding archaeologist and a second independent archaeologist not involved in the original Academy of Sciences survey and report (2026). We understand that it would be within the scope and permissions of the Academy of Sciences archaeologists to conduct this work manually, which may be necessary at Gaz 2, where access for mechanical excavators would be restricted. This work can be implemented in the post-EIA, pre-construction phase. But work should take place before the 'open sheet' permits expire in December and before the wet season (before November); and allow for additional archaeological works that may be required should significant archaeological remains be found (as seems likely), which might last for up to 16 weeks according to the Academy of Sciences guidelines.

This activity may be supplemented with geotechnical cores to 5m at targeted positions on the proposed trenches lines to help evaluate the best positioning and/or the necessary depth of trenches; and/or in other locations of the mound to provide additional data. However, this method should not be used as the only method for assessment on the mounds, as it provides a narrow stratigraphic samples in locations which may lie between significant features or may not be representative of the wider site.

Rationale for proposed methodology

1. The positioning of the test pits of the Academy of Sciences archaeological survey were generally peripheral to the likely position of potential archaeological features, focusing on areas of midslope, where there is more likely secondary deposition of materials from erosion and disturbance.
2. The large density of the presence of ceramics from different periods found in the test pits suggests a high probability that these are anthropogenic mound formations associated with settlement sites potentially dating back to the first millennium CE
3. There is a precedence in central Asian and Uzbek archaeology for mound formations (“Tepa”) representing settlement sites, often reused as cemeteries, similar to the sites found here; and there may be some association between the three sites identified here and a nearby scheduled monument, located only some 800m to the north of ‘Gaz 2’ site (**Figure 5**). These sites may offer important information concerning the history of settlement in this part of Uzbekistan, otherwise uncovered at other nearby sites.
4. Satellite imagery of the three sites selected here as ‘Category A’, especially Gaz 1 and Gaz 2, display possible evidence of surviving subsurface ditch formations, rectilinear and circular structures (**Figures 6, 7, 8**). The ditches seem to delineate external perimeters, which could represent external territorial and/or defensive settlement ditches. The rectilinear formations may represent the foundations of structures of mudbrick or other materials.

Methodology for trench excavation

1. Trenches should be position precisely as per the locations provided in **Figures 2-4** (unless recent or contemporary burials are found in the same location, in which case, we are happy to provide alternative recommended locations).
2. To enable unimpeded trenching, any surface vegetation and overburden should first be cleared.
3. Trenching should take place under the supervision of a local ‘open sheet’ permit holder and another experienced independent archaeologist who was not involved in the original Academy of Sciences survey and report (2026).
4. Each trench should be 20m x 2m and minimum depth of 2-3m
5. Either:
 - a. The use of 20-tonne 360 excavators fitted with a 2.0m-wide toothless ditching bucket is recommended (**Figure 9**). Excavators should work backwards from the excavation areas to avoid tracking over exposed areas.

- b. Hand-dug trenches with a team of workers using all appropriate excavation tools and personal protection equipment
- 6. Depth of trenching should continue to 2-3 meters at least unless significant archaeological features (i.e.: structures) are encountered or natural subsoil is encountered. This may necessitate a stepped trench and initial exposure of a wider width area for the first 1m-1.5m of depth (**see Figure 9**).
- 7. The lower levels of topsoil/subsoil should be removed in spits of no more than 0.15m to cleanly expose the surface of the natural subsoil.
- 8. If archaeological features are encountered, trenching may be extended to allow for archaeological features to be fully exposed, or to permit safe excavation.
- 9. Before and during excavation, surfaces and spoil heaps should be systematically scanned with a high-quality metal detector operated by a trained archaeologist (the detector will not be set to discriminate against iron)
- 10. Where buried soils are encountered, machine stripping should temporarily cease, and the soils sampled by hand.

Should any significant potential cultural heritage be observed in this process, fuller archaeological investigation should commence and be completed ahead of construction activities.

It is important that this precautionary measure is not left to the construction phase of the development, and it is recommended should take place before November 2026 ahead of the wet season (and prior to current 'open sheet' permits expiring in December 2026) and to allow enough time ahead of the construction phase in case a full archaeological excavation (up to 16 weeks) is necessary.

Gaz 1 (NACO Location 4 / AoS Sector D): “Graveyard on mound”

A significant mound formation with dimensions of between 200m x 50m and c.250m x 140m (between c. 1.2ha and 3.5ha), with a maximum elevation of between 3 and 5 meters. Three hand-dug test-pits have been excavated in the mound. All have ceramics of mixed forms and ages associated with them (See Academy of Sciences Report pages 28-41 for ceramics found associated with pits 1 and 2; and see **Figure 10** for ceramics found associated with pit 3 during this survey). The AoS Report documents that an ashy feature (probably a hearth) was uncovered at the upper level of Pit 1 but not excavated or investigated further. It is possible that there is some asset of archaeological interest at this location which has not been ruled out. Based on visual inspection of photos in the AoS report, pottery found on this site appears to range from the 13th-15th century and some possibly from the first millennium CE. Given the quantity and the range (domestic glazed/unglazed wares) it seems likely that there is a settlement here or nearby in addition to later burials of unconfirmed date. While it is possible that the mound represents disturbed archaeological features and redeposited material lacking original contexts as suggested in the AoS report, the absence of still in-tact features and the probable original source or location of the archaeological deposits have not been positively confirmed.

Gaz 2 (NACO Location 5 / AoS Sector E): “Graveyard on mound”

A mound of between 50m x 50m and 70m x 50m (between 0.25ha and 0.35ha) with an elevation of up to 5m above the surrounding land. Test pits suggest several defined layers and a possible lowest level of laid ceramics (see AoS report pg 46) and stone. Some of the ceramics are also visible scattered on top and around the mound (**Figure 11**) and some ceramics found may belong to the first half of the first millennium CE. This site is close to the nationally scheduled site of "Elliboytepa" (Chardara) just to the north (**Figure 5**) which likely had a large suburban occupation, and therefore may be related. The possible presence of significant historic settlement and/or association with the registered monument to the north has not yet been properly ruled out.

Gaz 4 (NACO Location 2 / AoS Sector A): “Graveyard on mound”

Mound formation on this site which rises to at least 2m above surrounding fields with at least five marked Muslim burials. The graveyard is set on very uneven raised ground and the presence of many small mounds or ‘Kurgans’, which may indicate successive use as a burial site and/or other artificial formation of potential archaeological interest. The pottery retrieved from two test pits appear to span the 10th-15th centuries CE and some moulded architectural tile fragments were observed at the site during this review (**Figure 12**). Given that there is a reasonable amount of ceramics and evidence of other material culture much of which would not typically be associated with cemetery sites, it is likely that there is an settlement of historic interest in the area and this has not yet been ruled out with any certainty.

Category B: Sites outside the development footprint to be included in the CHMP

Due to these site’s potentially exposed locations close to the development footprint, it is recommended that some measures should be taken as part of the CHMP to clearly mark and delineate these sites during construction activity.

Gaz 3: Russian Korean Graveyard

This feature lies outside the Project development area, but within the 500m buffer zone. The site is known as the burial place of a Korean community who are no longer present and therefore the graveyard is thought to be no-longer in-use. Notably it sits on a mound which rises to 4m at its highest point above the relatively flat surrounding landscape. It is possible that this location represents an earlier settlement or burial location, which has been re-used as a graveyard in the twentieth century.

Gaz 6 (NACO Location 2): Recent Graveyard

This graveyard is located just outside the Project area, but within the 500m buffer area, following the NACO report recommendation for the Project site to be moved some 300m westward “to prevent any disturbances to the railway line, the service road, and to maintain the sanctity of the

graveyard itself.” The graveyard, which is possibly still in use (this is contested and not verified), appears to sit in an area elevated by c. 2m in relation to the surrounding ground level. This likely artificial feature may, once again, suggest either successive use of the site or some other underlying archaeology.

Gaz 11: Railway

The railway line to the east just outside the Project development area but within the buffer zone. The railway line may be considered of cultural heritage value, if it was part of the original nineteenth or early twentieth century railway building programme.

Category C: Sites to be excluded as likely having any significant heritage value

The following sites are determined to not represent potentially significant cultural heritage sites and can be excluded from any precautionary actions, except for the Chance Finds Procedure to be set out in the CHMP, as it would apply to all parts of the development during construction.

Gaz 5 (AoS Sector B): Graveyard on Mound

This small mound site which satellite imagery suggested a possible cemetery location has satisfactorily been demonstrated in the AoS survey as displaying no signs of cultural features or activity (see AoS Report, pgs 24-27).

Gaz 7: Previous Structure at intersection of field boundary and bridge

This site, which is located just outside the southeasterly quadrant of the Project area and within the 500m ‘buffer zone’ appeared on historic mapping as a previously existing structure close to a bridge which traversed a drainage ditch. All traces of it above ground are no-longer evident in satellite imagery. The site (now a cotton plantation) was visited during this review and no evidence of any surviving materials on the surface of the ground or anomalies in the land formation.

Gaz 8: Unverified Structures

This site appears on historic mapping marked in Cyrillic with the letters “МТО” (Материально-техническое обеспечение, Materialno-tekhnicheskogo obespechenie), which could be considered as having potential historic military value. The structure/s are no longer visible above ground in contemporary and recent satellite imagery and visit to the site in this review revealed an empty field with no signs of remains of any footing above or below ground. Is assumed that MTO structure were likely buildings of light or temporary construction.

Gaz 9: Unverified Structures

Historic mapping shows a cluster of structures, without any indication of their age or function. As part of this review, the site is confirmed as comprising of several twentieth century buildings used as part of an agricultural college; with no signs of remnants of any other historic buildings.

Gaz 10: Previous Structure on canal

An anomaly is visible on historic mapping on or close to a former canal/drainage ditch. The terrain has changed and no similar anomaly is visible on current satellite imagery in precisely the same location. A visit to the site as part of this review confirmed that there is no evidence of any remains of building footings, rubble, unnatural land formations or any masonry or other material culture which suggests any significant historic assets at this location.

Gaz 12: Ruin (pa 36)

Historic Soviet mapping indicates that there is a ruin at this location, labelled “pa 36”. As part of this review, the within a radius of c. 300m was visually surveyed. There was no visible evidence of any remains of building footings, rubble, unnatural land formations or any masonry or other material culture which suggests any significant historic assets at this location. The location provided on the historic mapping is not precise and appears to be approximate. It is possible that the ruin references the remains noted at Gaz 13 (below), some 350m to the northwest of this location.

Gaz 13: Mound / ruin

An oval-shaped slightly elevated mound-like formation in an arable field, measuring c.76m by c.40m. Satellite imagery indicates that ploughing and growing takes place around the formation seasonally, suggesting a significant perturbation in the ground. As part of this review, a low-lying double-mound formation was found (**Figure 14**), verifying the satellite imagery. The area was rich in masonry and construction materials, mainly comprising of nineteenth or twentieth century bricks, fragments of concrete construction material (**Figure 15**), fragments of an engraved decorated polished limestone architectural feature (**Figure 13**), a twentieth century concrete mortar or ‘havoncha’ which may have formed part of a farmhouse or yard floor for food preparation (**Figure 13**) and twentieth century metal items (**Figure 16**), including mechanical parts and tea-pot lid. All the finds at this location suggest the remains of a twentieth century agricultural outbuilding or similar structure. There was no evidence of any ceramics or other finds from earlier periods and there does not appear to be any evidence of remains of cultural heritage of significance. This may be the location of the “ruin” identified on Soviet mapping (Gaz 12).

FIGURES

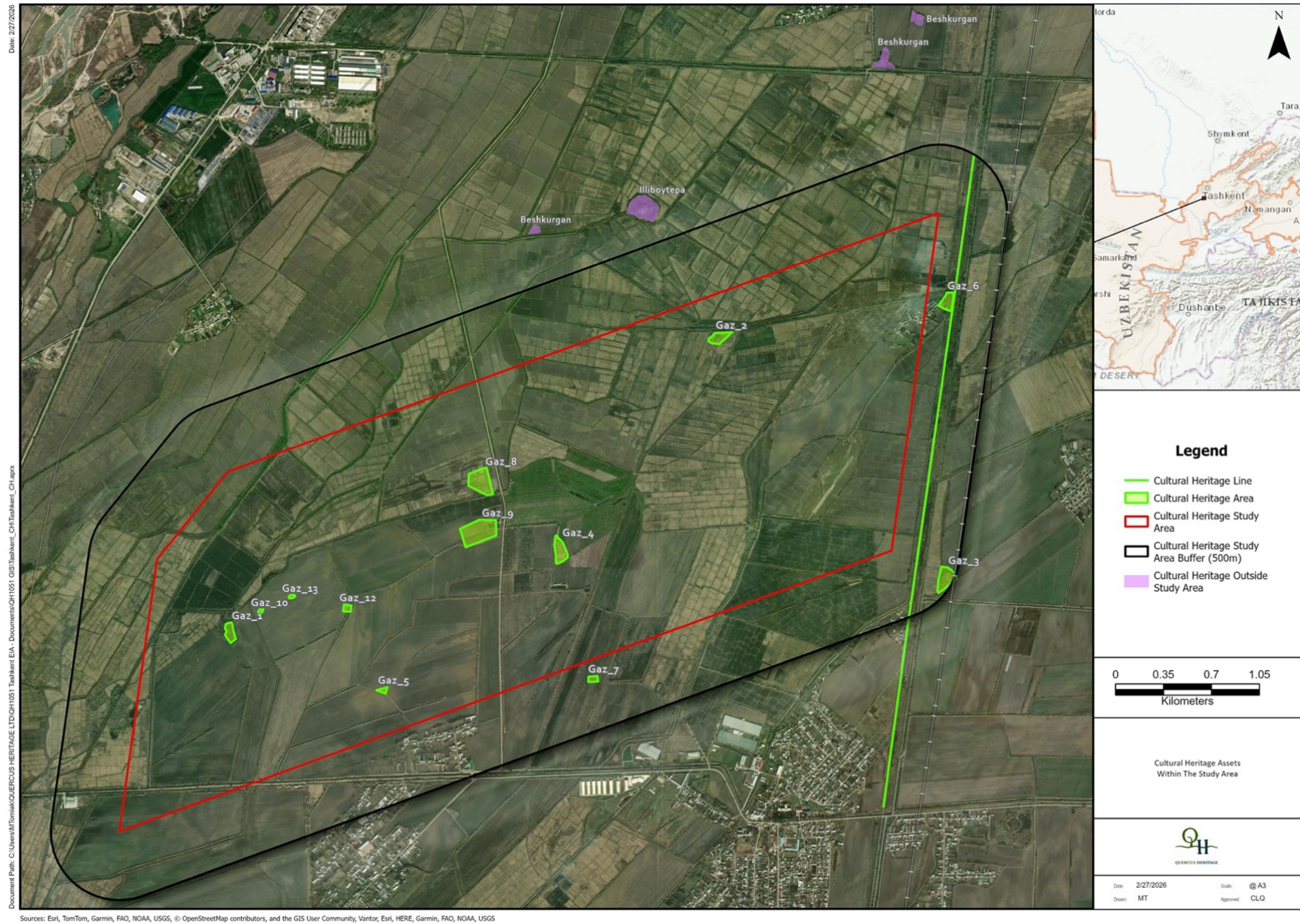


Figure 1: Map showing location of sites in relation to the development footprint



Figure 2: Gaz 1 recommended preconstruction trenches. NOTE: Academy of Sciences test pits shown in green were significantly smaller than as represented in the report and replicated here. Actual dimensions: 1-shurf = 3mx2m (c. one sixth of size shown); 2-shurf = 2m x 2m (c. quarter of size shown)



Figure 3: Gaz 2 recommended preconstruction trenches. NOTE: Academy of Sciences test pits shown in green were significantly smaller than as represented in the report and replicated here. Actual dimensions: 3m x 2m (c. a sixth of the size shown)



Figure 4: Gaz 4 recommended preconstruction trenches. NOTE: Academy of Sciences test pits shown in green were significantly smaller than as represented in the report and replicated here. Actual dimensions: 1-shurf = 3m x 2m (half size shown); 2-shurf = 2mx1m (c. one twelfth of size shown)



Figure 5. Scheduled monument Illyboytepa (top/north) 800m to the north of Gaz 2 (bottom).



Figure 6. Circular and rectilinear formations at the site of Gaz 1 visible in some satellite images (bisected here with white lines where trenches are recommended).



Figure 7. Circular and rectilinear formations at the site of Gaz 2 visible in some satellite images (bisected here with white lines where trenches are recommended).



Figure 8. Circular formations at the site of Gaz 4 visible in some satellite images (bisected here with white lines where trenches are recommended).



Figure 9. Example of two-stepped 2m deep trench (2m internal trench and 4m w external step) using mechanical 360 excavators fitted with a 2.0m-wide toothless ditching bucket.



Figure 10: Ceramic fragments found in Gaz 1, trench 3



Figure 11: Ceramic fragment found on the surface of the mound at Gaz 2.



Figure 12: Decorated clay tile fragments found at Gaz 4



Figure 13: Mortar and engraved limestone fragment found at Gaz 13



Figure 14: Architectural fragments found at Gaz 13



Figure 15: metal object found at Gaz 13



Figure 16: Two low lying mounds visible at Gaz 13