

Archaeological Field Evaluation

On Behalf of
Vistry Homes

Concerning
**Land N of Hill Top Farm
Earl Shilton
Leicestershire
LE9 7DP**

May 2025

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2



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Contents:

1	Non-Technical Summary.....	1
2	Introduction.....	2
3	Site Description.....	2
	3.1 General	2
	3.2 Soils & Geology	4
4	Historical & Archaeological Background	4
	4.1 Previous Investigations.....	4
	4.2 Prehistoric.....	4
	4.3 Romano-British.....	5
	4.4 Anglo-Saxon.....	5
	4.5 Medieval	5
	4.6 Post-Medieval to Modern	5
5	Aims & Objectives.....	6
6	Methodology	6
	6.1 General	6
	6.2 Site-Specific	6
	6.3 Recording.....	7
	6.4 Palaeoenvironmental/Palaeoeconomic Sampling	7
	6.5 Recovery, Processing & Curation of Artefactual Data.....	7
7	Results	10
	7.1 General	10
	7.2 Trench 001.....	10
	7.3 Trench 002.....	13
	7.4 Trench 004.....	15
8	Discussion & Significance of Results.....	18
8	Archive Deposition	18
9	Acknowledgements	18
10	Copyright	19
11	References	20
12	Appendix 1: Context Tabulation	21
13	Appendix 2: OASIS Summary	24

1 Non-Technical Summary

This report details the results of a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation undertaken between the 12th and 19th February 2025 in connection with proposed residential development at Land N of Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire LE9 7DP (NGR: SP 46636 98417). The works were carried out on behalf of Vistry Homes in response to Condition 4 of the Planning Condition (Planning Ref.: 21/00135/OUT).

The Development Area was located immediately to the N of Earl Shilton and to the W of Leicester Road; only a roughly triangular area (the Site) located within the central part of Development Area (within the easternmost field) was subject to the Archaeological Field Evaluation, with Archaeological Mitigation also being undertaken concurrently elsewhere.

A total of five evaluation trenches were set out across the Site to provide a comprehensive assessment of its archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential; however, no archaeological features or deposits were identified, although Trenches 001, 002 and 004 each contained a single modern ditch.

2 Introduction

Border Archaeology (BA) was instructed by Vistry Homes to carry out a programme of Archaeological Field Evaluation (AFE) in connection with a residential development to comprise up to 140 dwellings with Public Open Space, a children's play area, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) at Land N of Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire LE9 7DP (NGR: SP 46636 98417 – approx. centre; *fig. 1*). Only a triangular area located within the central part of the Development Area was subject to AFE (see *fig. 2*), henceforth referred to as the Site. The works were undertaken in response to Condition 4 of the Planning Condition (Planning Ref.: 21/00135/OUT).

This Report concerns solely the results of the AFE; Archaeological Mitigation works were undertaken concurrent with the AFE, the results of which will be reported on separately.

The AFE was carried out between the 12th and 19th February 2025. This Report details the results of the programme of archaeological works and is for submission to William Kelly, Senior Planning Archaeologist (Heritage) of Leicestershire County Council.

3 Site Description

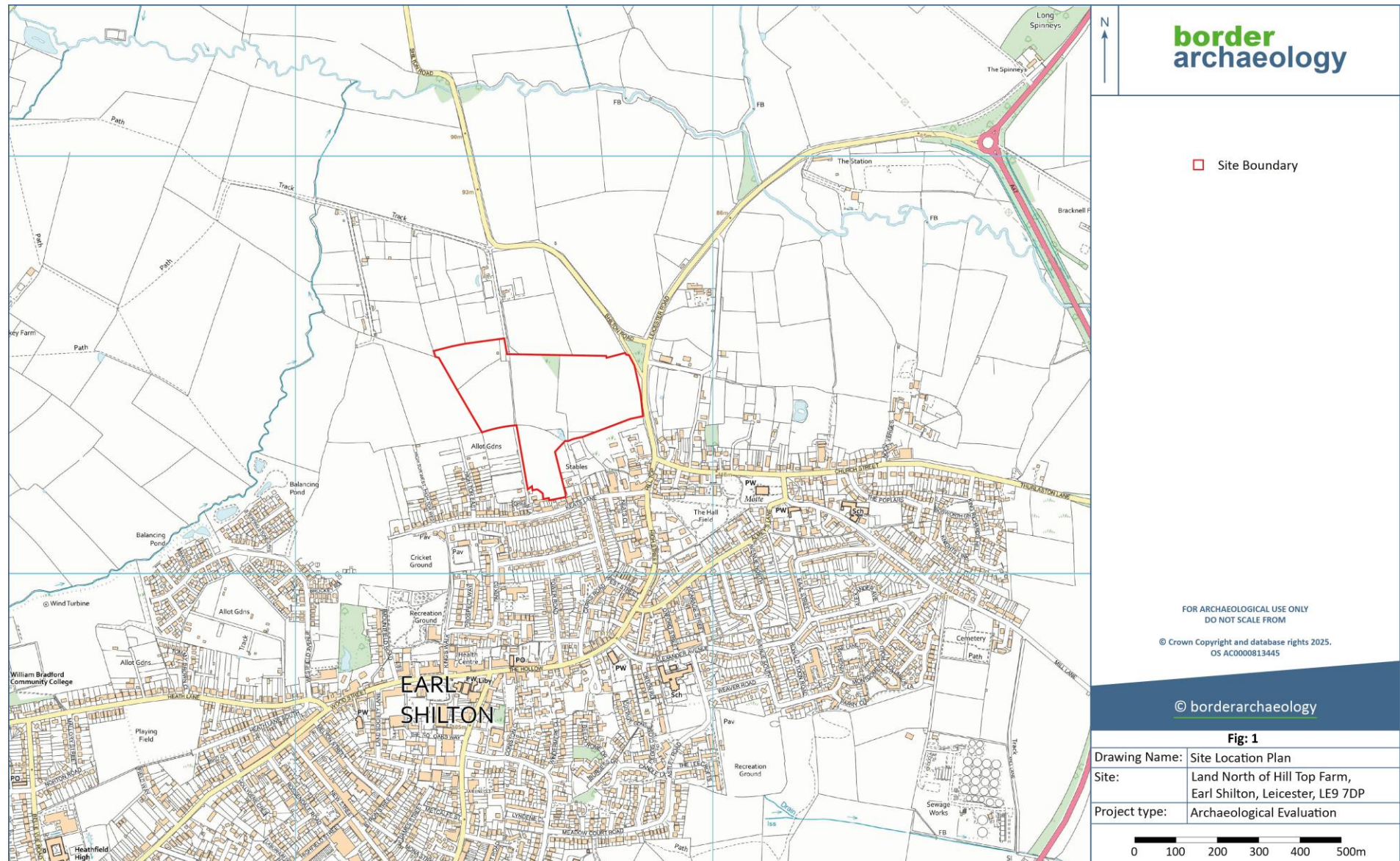
3.1 General

Earl Shilton is located approximately 16km WSW of Leicester and 8km NE of Hinckley in the Hinckley & Bosworth District in the SE part of Leicestershire.

Composed of four large arable fields, the Development Area measured c.94,500 sqm and was situated at a height of between c.118m (S) and c.99m (NE) above Ordnance Datum (aOD). It was bordered by mature hedgerows and trees to the N and E (as well as part of the W), by allotments to the SW, and by residential properties to the S; the former farmyard of Hill Top Farm also lay immediately to the SSE. To the E, the Development Area was bounded by Leicester Road.

The Site formed an approximately triangular area measuring c.4400 sqm located within the E-most field of the Development Area – see *fig. 2*.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), Registered Parks and Gardens or Listed Buildings within the boundaries of the Site; however, the Grade II listed Top House (List Entry No.: 1180239) was recorded c.100m to the S, while the Earl Shilton Conservation Area was located just under 730m to the SW.



3.2 Soils & Geology

The British Geological Survey (BGS) lists the underlying solid geology of the Development Area as mudstone of the Gunthorpe Member, sedimentary bedrock that formed between 247.1 and 237 million years ago during the Triassic period. While no overlying superficial geology was noted for the majority of the Development Area, that for the S field (with the exception of the NE corner, for which there is no data) was recorded as sand and gravel of the Wigston Member, which formed during the Quaternary period between 2.588 million years ago and the present (BGS 2025a).

No historic borehole data was recorded for the Development Area or the immediate vicinity (BGS 2025b), although one (SP49NE69) located at Huit Farm c.1.7km to the SE (the nearest with accessible depths) recorded the natural as being encountered at 4ft (c.1.2m) below ground level (bgl).

4 Historical & Archaeological Background

A *Heritage Statement* was previously produced by Savills Heritage Planning (2021) as part of the planning application and the following summarises the information contained therein.

4.1 Previous Investigations

A geophysical survey was undertaken on the Site in 2021; few features of archaeological interest were identified, although possible traces of linear ditches of indeterminate date as well as medieval or later ridge and furrow were recorded (MOLA 2021).

As a consequence, Trial Trenching was carried out in 2021 to investigate the above features; of the 22 trenches, excavated 11 contained no archaeological features, while another four revealed only ridge and furrow. However, Trench 3 (located at the N of Site) contained a metalled surface, possibly a floor or a trackway, and a large shallow pit, which produced a small ceramic assemblage of prehistoric date; by contrast, Trench 11 (towards the S of Site) contained a “complex series of layers and features”, which may be structural evidence and which was dated provisionally to the medieval period due to the discovery of a single sherd of pottery (Allen Archaeology 2021).

Other features identified included a boundary ditch of 18th/19th Century date (Trench 9 – towards the central part of Site) as well as a pit and a number of linear features of unknown date (*ibid.*).

4.2 Prehistoric

In addition to the aforementioned pit and (possibly) associated metalled surface, prehistoric activity in the vicinity is limited to a pit alignment (HER No.: MLE17758), located approximately 1km to the N of Site, as well as a small number of lithic artefacts, including a Neolithic mace head (HER No.: MLE15877), located c.690m to the SW.

Approximately 1.3km to the SE of Site (along the Earl Shilton bypass), prehistoric settlement activity was recorded along with two Bronze Age ring-ditches and possible barrows (HER No.: MLE9771); Iron Age activity, comprising a trackway and a trade route known as the 'Salt Road', has been recorded at Shilton Hill, which lies c.0.25km to the SE.

A trial trench evaluation SE of Earl Shilton produced evidence for activity dating to multiple periods, the most common of which were deposits and finds belonging to the Bronze Age and early Iron Age.

4.3 Romano-British

There is limited evidence for Romano-British activity in the vicinity; however, a small number of artefacts (principally pottery fragments) were recovered during groundworks at The Poplars, which is located c.700m to the E of Site, and metal-detecting at land adjacent to Shilton Road to the N of Site has found a number of coins.

4.4 Anglo-Saxon

While there is no archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity within the vicinity, Earl Shilton is mentioned in the Domesday Book, where it is recorded as *Scelftone*, which derives from the compound of the Old English words '*scelf*' meaning a 'shelf' (here, in the geographical sense) and '*tun*' meaning enclosure, farmstead or village; it is recorded as having three ploughs, four sokemen, a priest, 10 villeins and five bordars and as comprising 12 acres of meadow, eight furlongs of woodland and a mill (Williams & Martin 2002).

4.5 Medieval

During the medieval period, the Site had been considered likely to have been agricultural land, usage which continued into the post-medieval period; it was likely characterised by "piecemeal enclosures" (HER No.: MLE7078) and rectilinear fields (HER No.: MLE5006).

Within the wider area, a number of medieval features and buildings have been identified, the most significant of which is Earl Shilton Castle (HER No.: MLE2849; List Entry No.: 1010302), a Scheduled Ancient Monument located c.500m to the SE of Site; to the E of this lies the Grade II* Listed Church of St Simon and St Jude with associated burial ground (HER No.: MLE12985; List Entry No.: 1074259), which may have 13th Century roots. Extensive ridge and furrow cultivation (HER No.: 10486) has also been recorded at Westfield Farm, which is located c.0.5km to the SW.

4.6 Post-Medieval to Modern

Evidence for post-medieval activity within Earl Shilton is primarily industrial in nature, predominantly relating to the knitting industry due to the introduction of the stocking frame in 1640, one of the first of its type existing

outside of London; in the 19th/20th Centuries, the town contained various shoe, boot, knitwear and hosiery factories.

5 Aims & Objectives

Generally, the main aims of the AFE were to:

- ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on Site;
- establish the extent to which previous development and/or other processes have affected archaeological deposits at the Site; and
- establish the likely impact on archaeological deposits of the proposed development.

Additionally, the work sought to address specific areas of interest as set out in the *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight, Vyner & Allen 2012) and any relevant national research strategies. However, in the event, due to a lack of archaeological deposits or features, no such aims could be addressed.

6 Methodology

6.1 General

The archaeological programme of work was carried out in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2023) together with accepted professional standards, including *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023a), *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2023b), *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2020a), and Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) *Generic Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation (Trial Trenching)* (2019). BA adhered to the requirements of the *ClfA Code of conduct* (2022) and was cognisant of *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015).

6.2 Site-Specific

As per the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; BA 2025), a total of five evaluation trenches, each measuring approximately 30m × 2m, were set out across the Site in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of its archaeological potential.

The evaluation trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket operating under archaeological supervision. Undifferentiated topsoil was removed in level spits, with care taken

not to machine away seemingly homogenous layers that might have included the upper parts of archaeological features or old land surfaces.

All BA staff were suitably qualified and experienced to discharge their project roles effectively, were fully cognisant of aims and methodologies and were suitably equipped to undertake the work.

6.3 Recording

The following reference numbers were assigned to this fieldwork project:

- HER Number: tbc;
- OASIS ID: borderar1-530889;
- Museum Accession Number: X.A23.2025.

Full written, graphic, and photographic records were made in accordance with BA's *Archaeological Field Recording Manual* (2023), as outlined in the WSI (BA 2025).

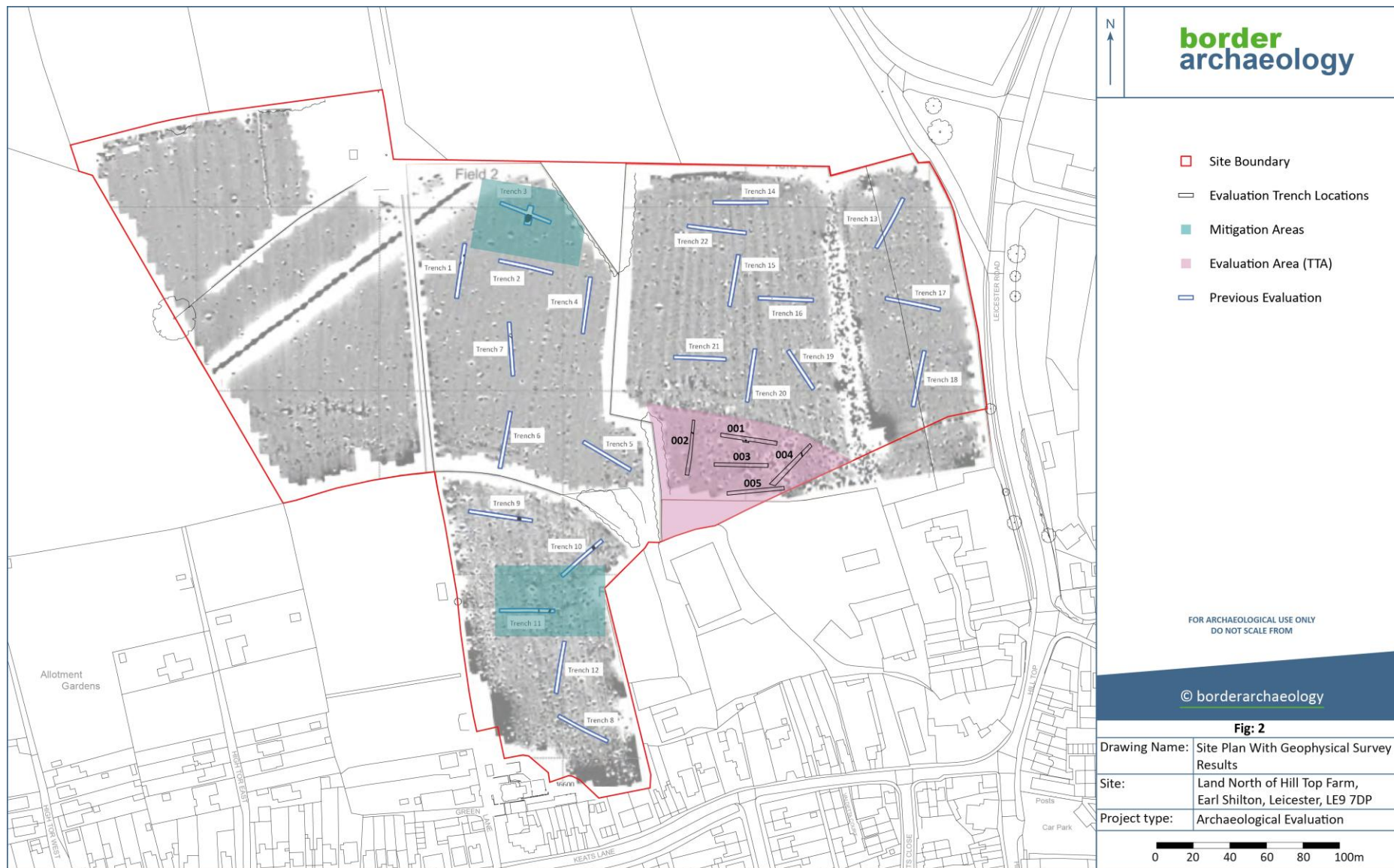
The progress of the works was recorded and assessed using BA's ISO 9001 procedures.

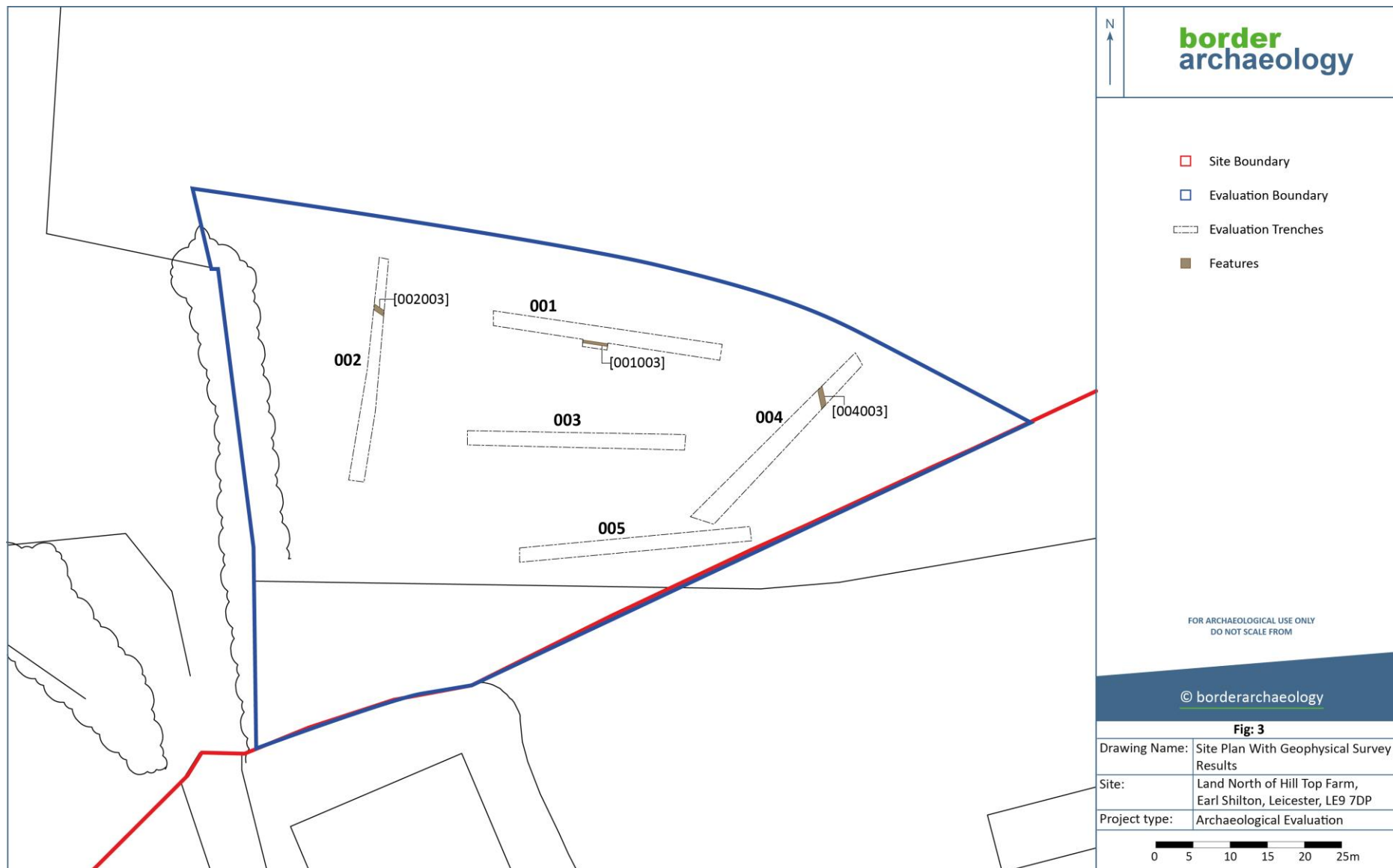
6.4 Palaeoenvironmental/Palaeoeconomic Sampling

No archaeological deposits suitable for Palaeoenvironmental sampling were encountered during the course of the AFE.

6.5 Recovery, Processing & Curation of Artefactual Data

With the exception of modern waste (i.e. CBM, modern glass etc) within topsoil and the ditch fills (which were not retained), no artefactual material was recovered during the course of the AFE.





7 Results

7.1 General

Of the five trenches excavated, none contained any archaeological features or deposits of note, although Trenches 001, 002 and 004 contained modern ditches (*fig. 2*); the stratigraphic sequence for these Trenches is detailed below (see *Appendix 1* for full context descriptions).

Generally, each trench contained a similar sequence of deposits, namely topsoil, which consisted of a c.0.3m thick mid-grey brown sandy clay with occasional small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones, overlying the natural geology, which was composed of a mid-/dark red brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium-sized rounded/sub-angular stones.

7.2 Trench 001

Located towards the N of the Site, Trench 001 contained a single WNW-ESE orientated ditch, which was observed in the NNE-facing section; this necessitated a minor enlargement at this point in order to fully characterise the feature.

Ditch [001003] was linear in plan and was affected by rooting; its dimensions measured >3.6m (L) × c.0.56m (W) (avg.) × c.0.2m (D) (avg.) and exhibited an irregular profile, having generally steep/moderate sides leading to an uneven base. Its single fill was (001004), a mid-grey brown sandy clay with small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones, from which modern steel wire was recovered, this providing a modern date for the ditch. Due to the irregular shape and profile of the ditch, it may have been an *ad hoc* drainage feature.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered – see *figs. 3 & 4* and *plates 1 & 2*.

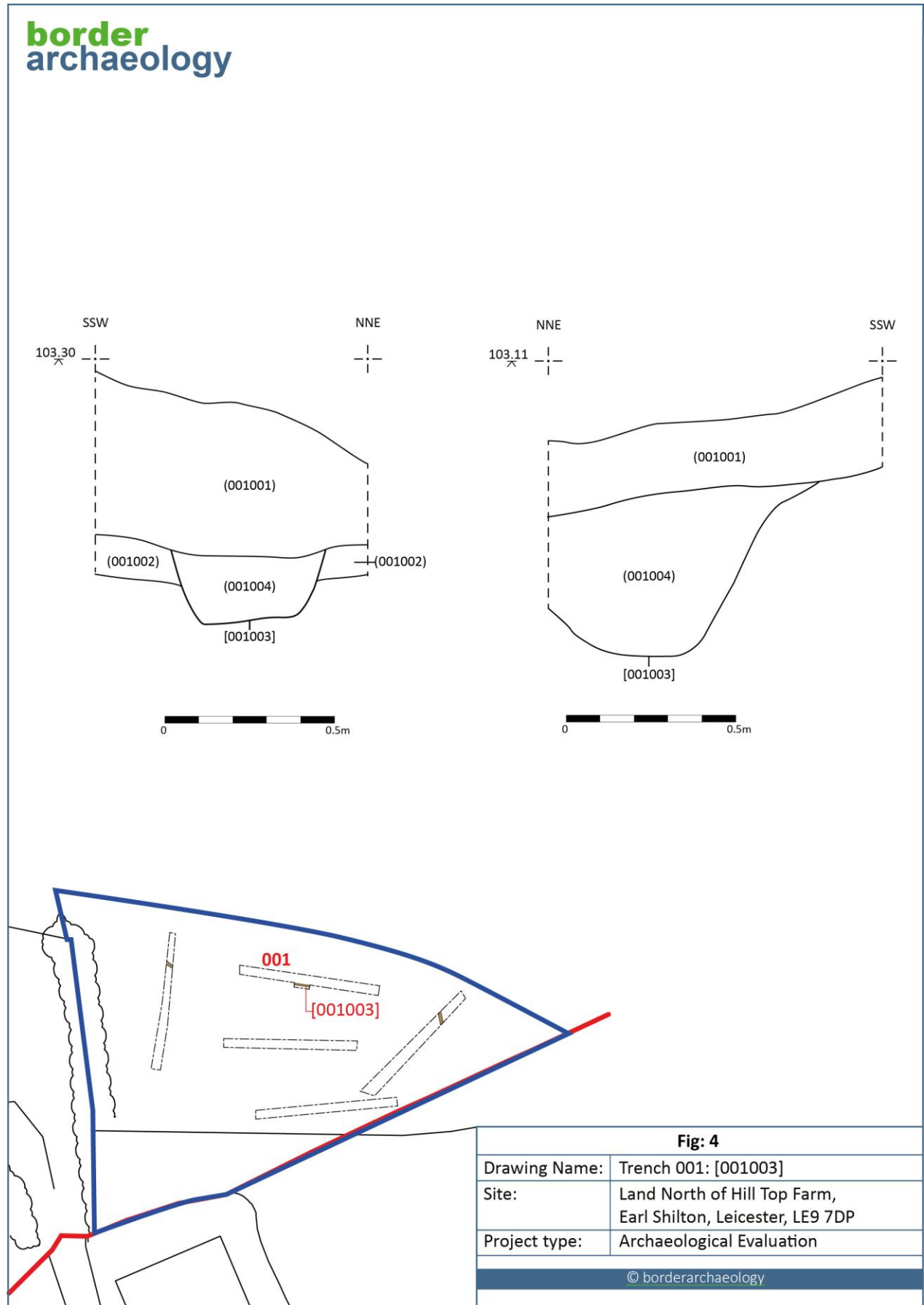




Plate 1: WSW-facing Section of Ditch [001003]



Plate 2: Plan view of Ditch [001003], looking WNW

7.3 Trench 002

Located to the W of Trench 001, Trench 002 contained an additional WNW-ESE ditch; it is possible that it might be contemporary with or the same as Ditch [001003] in Trench 001, although the alignments differ slightly.

Ditch [002003] was also linear in plan and was similarly affected by rooting along its length; it measured >2m (L) × c.1.2m (W) (avg.) × c.0.13m (D) (avg.) and had generally irregular sides leading to a roughly concave base. Two fills were recorded, these being basal fill (002005), a c.0.04m thick light grey brown clayey silt, and upper fill (002004), a c.0.13m thick mid-grey brown sandy silt.

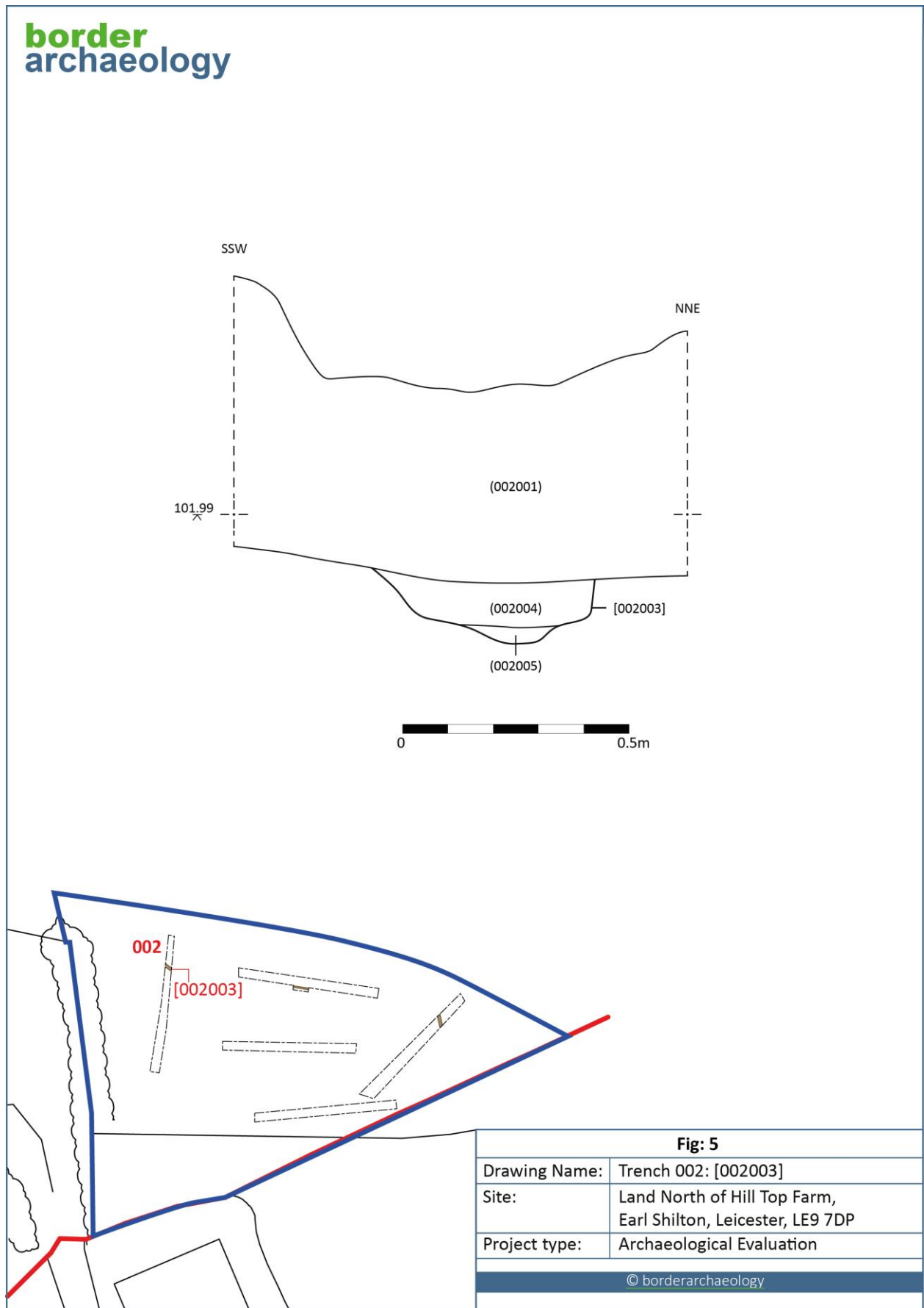
Basal fill (002005) contained a single piece of Fe, which was interpreted as being part of a modern agricultural implement/machinery.

As with Ditch [001003], Ditch [002003] may have had an *ad hoc* drainage purpose, this being suggested by its irregular shape and profile.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered – see *plate 3* and *figs. 3 & 5*.



Plate 3: WNW-facing Section of Ditch [002003]



7.4 Trench 004

Trench 004 was located at the E of the Site and contained a single NW-SE orientated ditch; its dimensions and alignment differed from those ditches in Trenches 001 and 002, although it is possible that they are contemporary.

Ditch [004003] was linear in plan and measured >1.9m (L) × c.1.6m (W) (avg.) × c.0.6m (D) (avg.); its profile generally had moderately sloping sides and a roughly flat base. Its single fill was (004004), which consisted of a dark grey brown sandy clay with moderate small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; two pieces of a modern shoe were retrieved, which provided a modern date for the ditch.

Due to its more regular profile and shape, it is possible that Ditch [004003] was a more established drainage ditch and/or internal land division, although this is by no means certain.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered – see *figs. 3 & 6* and *plates 4 & 5*.

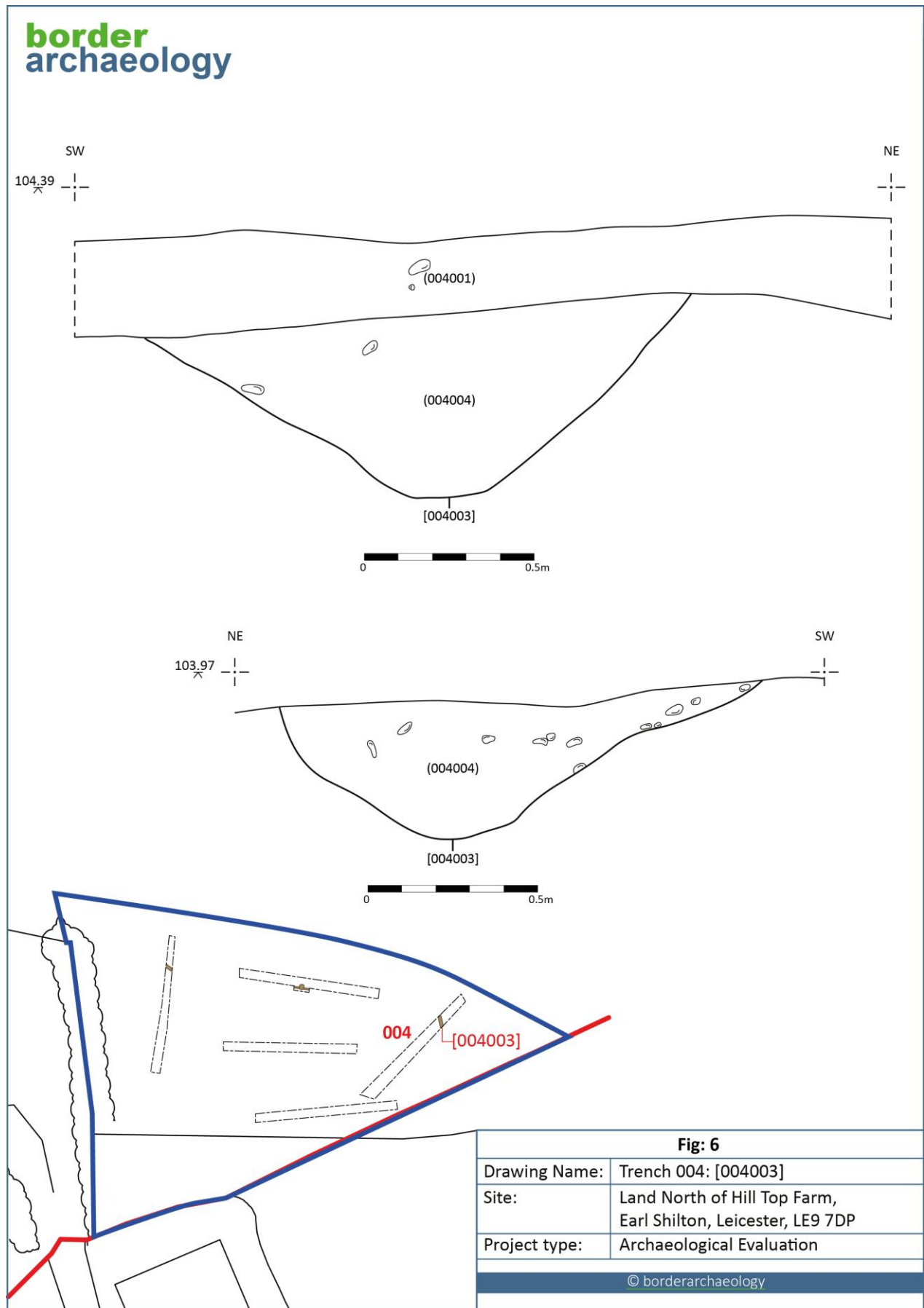




Plate 4: NW-facing Section of Ditch [004003]



Plate 5: Post-excavation view of Ditch [004003]

8 Discussion & Significance of Results

The programme of AFE at Land N of Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire LE9 7DP revealed no archaeological features or deposits; in all Trenches, the stratigraphic sequence revealed a c.0.3m thick topsoil – (001001)-(005001) – overlying natural sandy clay – (001002)-(005002).

However, Trenches 001, 002 and 004 each contained a single modern ditch, with those in Trenches 001 and 002 potentially being contemporary/same as due to the similarity in profiles and general alignment in plan, although their orientations, while similar, differed slightly. The ditch in Trench 004 was more substantial and regular and may have been a more permanent/planned feature in the landscape, potentially serving as an internal land division or providing more formal drainage than Ditches [001003] and [002003], which appeared more *ad hoc* in nature.

Unfortunately, none of the research aims contained within the *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight, Vyner & Allen 2012) could be addressed due to the nature of the findings.

8 Archive Deposition

In accordance with *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CIfA 2020b), a digital copy of the report will be uploaded to OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations) under the OASIS ID: borderar1-530889, while the physical archive will be offered to Leicestershire County Council Museums (Museum Accession Number: X.A23.2025) together with the archive for the Archaeological Mitigation works, which were undertaken concurrently with the programme of AFE and which were reported on separately.

9 Acknowledgements

Border Archaeology would like to thank the following members of staff for their contributions to this project.

Fieldwork was led by Ruben Cencerrero Alonso PCIfA, with the assistance of Chris Hodgson PCIfA, Rebecca Latham PCIfA, Oliver Harrison, Adam Scott and Brianna Sewell. Surveying was undertaken by Stuart Forsythe BSc ACIfA, Manager: Surveying/UAV Drone Operator.

This report was written by Ross Shurety MA (Cantab.). The illustrations were produced by Holly Litherland-Forrest BA, Senior Manager: Archaeological Illustration & Digital Processing. It was edited by Lyndsey Clark BSc (Hons.) MCIfA, Director: Archaeological Operations & Reporting, and was approved by Amy Bunce BSc MA MCIfA. The archive has been prepared for digital deposition by Kate Smith MA ACIfA, Director: Performance Delivery with George Children MA MCIfA, Director: Quality and Compliance, providing technical and editorial guidance.

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12 Appendix 1: Context Tabulation

Trench No.	Context	Type	Filled by	Fill of	Description	Interpretation	Finds nr=not retained	Samples	Provisional date
001	(001001)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted, mid-grey brown sandy clay with occasional small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; c.0.3m thick (avg.); overlies (001004).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern
	(001002)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted, mid-to-dark red brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; cut by [001003].	Natural	-	-	Geological
	[001003]	Cut	(001004)	-	Linear in plan; orientated ENE-WSW; steeply/moderately sloping sides leading to an uneven base; dimensions: >3.6m × c.0.56m (avg.) × c.0.2m; cuts (001002).	Cut of Ditch	-	-	Modern
	(001004)	Fill	-	[001003]	Moderately compacted, mid-grey brown sandy clay; small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones & roots; c.0.2m thick (avg.); underlies (001001).	Single fill of Ditch [001003]	Steel wire (nr)	-	Modern
002	(002001)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted, mid-grey brown sandy clay with occasional small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; c.0.3m thick (avg.); overlies (002004).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern
	(002002)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted, mid-to-dark red brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; cut by [002003].	Natural	-	-	Geological
	[002003]	Cut	(002004) (002005)	-	Linear in plan; orientated E-W; near vertical (N) to gently sloping (S) sides leading to a roughly concave base; dimensions: >2m × c.1.2m (avg.) × c.0.13m (avg.); cuts (002002).	Cut of Drainage Ditch	-	-	Unknown

Trench No.	Context	Type	Filled by	Fill of	Description	Interpretation	Finds nr=not retained	Samples	Provisional date
002	(002004)	Fill	-	[002003]	Moderately compacted, mid-grey brown sandy silt; no inclusions; c.0.13m thick; overlies (002005); underlies (002001).	Upper fill of Ditch [002004]	-	-	Unknown
	(002005)	Fill	-	[002003]	Moderately to firmly compacted light grey brown clayey silt; no inclusions; c.0.04m thick; underlies (002004).	Basal fill of Ditch [002004]	-	-	Unknown
003	(003001)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted mid-grey brown sandy clay; occasional small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; c.0.3m thick (avg.); overlies (003002).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern
	(003002)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted, mid-to-dark red brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; underlies (003001).	Natural	-	-	Geological
004	(004001)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted, mid-grey brown sandy clay; occasional small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; c.0.3m thick (avg.); overlies (004004).	Topsoil	CBM (nr) Pottery (nr)	-	Modern
	(004002)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted mid-to-dark red brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; cut by [004003].	Natural	-	-	Geological
	[004003]	Cut	(004004)	-	Linear in plan; orientated NNW-SSE; moderately sloping sides leading to a roughly flat base; dimensions: >1.9m × c.1.6m (avg.) × c.0.6m (avg.); cuts (004002).	Cut of Ditch	-	-	Modern
	(004004)	Fill	-	[004003]	Moderately compacted dark grey brown sandy clay; moderate small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; c.0.6m thick; underlies (004001).	Single fill of Ditch [004003]	CBM (nr) Shoe (nr)	-	Modern
005	(005001)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted mid-grey brown sandy clay; occasional small-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; c.0.3m thick (avg.); overlies (005002).	Topsoil	-	-	Modern

Trench No.	Context	Type	Filled by	Fill of	Description	Interpretation	Finds nr=not retained	Samples	Provisional date
005	(005002)	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted mid-to-dark red brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium-sized rounded/sub-angular stones; underlies (005001).	Natural	-	-	Geological

13 Appendix 2: OASIS Summary

OASIS ID (UID)	borderar1-530889
Project Name	Archaeological Field Evaluation at Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire, LE9 7DP
Sitename	Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire
Sitecode	HTF25
Project Identifier(s)	BA2511HTF
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	21/00135/OUT
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Border Archaeology Ltd
Project Dates	12-Feb-2025 - 19-Feb-2025
Location	Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire NGR: SP 46636 98417 LL: 52.5815714985477, -1.31316908828016 12 Fig: 446636,298417
Administrative Areas	Country: England County/Local Authority: Leicestershire Local Authority District: Hinckley and Bosworth Parish: Earl Shilton
Project Methodology	Border Archaeology (BA) has been instructed by Vistry Homes to carry out a programme of Archaeological Mitigation (AM) and associated Archaeological Field Evaluation (AFE) to inform further mitigation in connection with a residential development for up to 140 dwellings with Public Open Space, a children's play area, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) on Land N of Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire LE9 7DP (NGR: SP 46636 98417 – approximate centre; henceforth known as the Site. The main aims of the AFE will be to: • ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, date, significance and condition of any archaeological remains on Site; • establish the extent to which previous development and/or other processes have affected archaeological deposits at the Site; and • establish the likely impact on archaeological deposits of the proposed development. Additionally, the work will aim to address specific areas of interest as set out in the East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (Knight, Vyner & Allen 2012) and any relevant national research strategies.
Project Results	The programme of AFE at Land N of Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire LE9 7DP revealed no archaeological features or deposits; in all Trenches, the stratigraphic sequence revealed a c.0.3m thick topsoil – (001001)-(005001) – overlying natural sandy clay – (001002)-(005002). However, Trenches 001, 002 and 004 each contained a single modern ditch, with those in Trenches 001 and 002 potentially being contemporary/same as due to the similarity in profiles and general alignment in plan, although their orientations, while similar, differed slightly. The ditch in Trench 004 was more substantial and regular and may have been a more permanent/planned feature in the landscape, potentially serving as an

	internal land division or providing more formal drainage than Ditches [001003] and [002003], which appeared more ad hoc in nature. Unfortunately, none of the research aims contained within the East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (Knight, Vyner & Allen 2012) could be addressed due to the nature of the findings.
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation Vistry Homes
HER	Leicestershire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	R Shurety
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Documentary Archive - to be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums; Accession Id(s): X.A23.2025



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