



Archaeological Evaluation Report

Land to the Rear of King William

1 The Hollow

Earl Shilton

Leicestershire

Report Number 277

Final

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Summary

Groundworks Archaeology was commissioned by Design Studio Architects to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of the former King William public house in Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. The work was carried out at the proposed development site between the 18th and 19th June 2025.

The evaluation identified a number of features across both trenches, the majority of which were modern service trenches carrying drainage pipes and a live land drain.

A linear cut of post 1800 origin with a likely 90 degree return was present in trench 2 (although the physical relationship had been truncated) with a further undated linear to its east. The fill of the latter linear was very organic and is likely to be relatively late in origin.

The evaluation fulfilled its aims with a high degree of confidence. The evidence for activity within the site is all Post-medieval and concurs with its generally undeveloped nature as seen on the historic mapping.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Groundworks Archaeology was commissioned by Design Studio Architects to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of the former King William public house in Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. The work was carried out at the proposed development site between the 18th and 19th June 2025.
- 1.2 The work was carried out according to the requirements of an archaeological condition, which was attached to the granting of planning consent (Ref: 22/00272/FUL). This is in accordance with the principles established in *NPPF: Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, revised 2021), and *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA, 2023).

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site is located to the rear of the former King William public house which fronts onto Wood Street approximately 45m east of the junction with Station Road in Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. The site comprises of an open car park which is fenced all round and bounded by the rear garden plots of surrounding dwellings. The site is centred on NGR SP 46515 97711 at an approximate height of 115m AOD (see figure 1).

Geology

- 2.2 The British Geological Survey website identifies the bedrock geology as the Edwalton Member, a mudstone sedimentary bedrock formed between 237 and 228.4 million years ago during the Triassic period.
- 2.3 Superficial deposits are recorded as the Wigston Member, a sand and gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 2.588 million years ago and the present during the Quaternary period.

3. Planning Background

- 3.1 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council have granted planning consent (Ref: 22/00272/FUL) for the “erection of 6 no x 3 bedroom dwelling houses, with associated amenity space, refuse/recycling facilities and cycle storage” on “land to the Rear of King William, 1 The Hollow, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire”.

3.2 Condition 11 states that:

No development shall commence until a programme of archaeological work, comprising further post determination trial trenching, specific metal-detecting and as necessary targeted archaeological investigation. The full programme and timetable will be detailed within a Written Scheme of Investigation, submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:

- The programme and methodology of site survey, investigation and recording (including assessment of results and preparation of an appropriate mitigation scheme)
- The programme for post-investigation assessment
- Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
- Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis, interpretation and presentation of the site investigation
- Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation
- Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works, with particular reference to the metal detecting survey, as set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.

No development shall take place other than in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved through condition.

Reason: To allow proper investigation and recording of the site, which is potentially of archaeological and historic significance in accordance with Policies DM11, DM12 and DM13 of the adopted Site Allocations Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2016).

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 A search of the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) with a 750m radius has identified 63 monuments and 32 events. There is one scheduled monument in the study area but no registered parks and gardens or registered battlefields.

Prehistoric

- 4.2 The Palaeolithic period was characterised by hunter gatherers using relatively simple stone tools. At this time the area was part of the Great Forest of Arden and numerous flint implements particularly hand axes have been found in the county suggesting repeated visits. It appears from the evidence that this activity was much reduced by the onset of the Ice Age.

- 4.3 As the climate became warmer and the ice sheets retreated, the forest was re-established. Scatters of flint are the most common evidence of Mesolithic and Neolithic activity and it is likely that these scatters represent camps, either temporary or permanent in forest clearings. Numerous sites are known in the wider area of which the most important is Blacklow Hill, near Warwick. Excavations here have revealed a substantial tool-making site. Towards the end of the Neolithic period the hunter-gatherer way of life was gradually being replaced by a simple farming economy. As farming developed, clearings were made in the forest. A single Neolithic mace head (MLE7237) has been found 362m west of the site.
- 4.4 The Bronze Age saw further development of farming communities with the establishment of field systems and more organised communities. Leicestershire being a rich agricultural area, farming continued to expand and by 1500 BC much of the woodland had been cleared and settled. An evaluation (ELE5706) 670m south of the site identified three scatters of probable Bronze Age worked flint.
- 4.5 During the Iron Age, the population continued to expand and was divided into clearly demarcated tribal zones. This changing society is reflected in the ever-increasing number of settlements found across the county. There was a wider move to more defensive settlements witnessed in the later Iron Age with the construction of hillforts such as those at Burrough Hill, Breedon Hill and Beacon Hill. An evaluation (ELE11630) 482m north of the site identified a single pit containing late Bronze Age to early Iron Age pottery.

Roman

- 4.6 For the first few decades following the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43, the Leicestershire area found itself at the frontier of Roman rule. Major roads such the Fosse Way were established which ran through Leicester and went north to Lincoln (Lindum) and south-west towards Cirencester (Corinium) and Bath (Aquae Sulis) marking the western frontier of Roman rule in Britain for several decades. Watling Street passed close to Hinckley linking London (Londinium) with Chester (Deva Victrix). The area was heavily fortified during this period and several military settlements were founded to defend the roads. The Roman period also saw the establishment of towns and an urban economy supported by villa estates in the hinterland. Leicester itself was the important site of the Roman city of Ratae Corieltavorum, the centre of the Coritani tribal territory. Roman Leicester as a tribal capital or civitas had its origins as a military fort, certainly before 80 A.D. and eventually grew to a walled city of just over one hundred acres. The evaluation which identified Prehistoric pottery (see 3.5 above) also recovered some very abraded Roman pottery. Additionally, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) records the finding of three Roman coins, a single brooch and a mount within the study area.

Early-medieval and Medieval

- 4.7 No Early-medieval finds or features been recorded in the study area to date and there is no documentary evidence for Earl Shilton prior to Domesday (1086). Domesday records that *Sceltone* was held by Hugh de Grandmesnil and comprised of a mill, arable land, meadow and woodland supporting a priest, ten villagers, four freemen, five smallholders and a slave (Morgan 1979).
- 4.8 Soon after the Norman conquest the Earls of Leicester built a small motte and bailey castle (MLE2849, SAM SM17035) which lies approximately 750m north-east of the site on the northern edge of the village (MLE9535). The castle appears to have been demolished in the late 12th century and the extent of the bailey enclosure is today probably reflected in the churchyard boundary.
- 4.9 Evidence of Medieval activity within the churchyard has been identified in an evaluation (ELE7630) 560m north of the site where a Medieval layer and evidence of a probable structure was present. A further evaluation (ELE5129) undertaken 715m south of the site in 2004 identified evidence of Medieval field boundaries and ridge and furrow.
- 4.10 A single Medieval mortar (MLE6790) was found in the garden of the Old Vicarage 530m north-east of the site in 1966. A number of stray finds have also been recorded on the PAS database within the study area which include coins, a spindle whorl and a copper alloy mount.

Post-medieval

- 4.11 The Post-medieval period saw Earl Shilton develop from an agricultural village into a centre of industry in which framework knitting predominated from the first half of the 19th century. Felkin's survey indicates that in 1844 there were 600 narrow frames at work; there were no wide frames, which, as in Barwell, may account for the fall in population between 1851 and 1881. There are few remains of domestic framework knitting in the village, but there is a pair of topshop houses at 100 Wood Street (MLE17881) and some long windows on the ground floor of a terrace of houses at 9-21 Hinckley Road (MLE17882). Across the yard here are small heated single storey workshops which were probably built for basket work in the boot and shoe industry. This penetrated the village towards the end of the 19th century and several factories were established, largely for ladies' shoes and slippers. In New Street are several three-storey brick factories with cast iron windows (MLE17895, MLE17898, MLE17899, MLE17900) while at number 94 is a single storey factory with extensive north light sheds, representing the later phases of the industry. In 1896 there were 12 boot and shoe factories, most of which have been altered or demolished (Palmer and Neaverson 1992).

- 4.12 The proposed development site lies behind the King William public house (MLE21481), which is of likely 19th century origin and was converted into flats in 2022. The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1886 shows the plot as open undeveloped land.

5. Aims and objectives of the project

- 5.1 The aim of the project was to determine the presence or otherwise of archaeological features within the application site, knowledge of which could be used to inform further mitigation.

- 5.2 The objectives of the project were:

To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the area of the development site.

To determine the type, extent, condition, nature, character, quality, function, and date, of any archaeological remains encountered.

To gain information about heritage assets identified within the area of the proposed development site.

To mitigate potential threats.

To interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national context.

To provide sufficient data to formulate a suitable archaeological mitigation plan.

6. Methodology

- 6.1 The archaeological evaluation was carried out between the 18th and 19th June 2025. This involved the mechanical excavation under archaeological supervision of two 20m x 1.80m trial trenches. The trenches were laid out vis DGPS survey as specified in the WSI.
- 6.2 Where necessary, surfaces were hand cleaned for examination and recording and deposits observed were recorded on standard pro-forma recording sheets.
- 6.3 Full context descriptions are provided in the trench summary which is presented in Appendix 1.

- 6.4 A digital colour photographic record was also maintained, some of which is reproduced in this report as plates 1–11 Appendix 2.
- 6.5 All work was carried out according to the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation and in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standards and guidance for archaeological evaluations.

7. Results

Trench 1

- 7.1 Trench 1 was orientated approximately north-east to south-west and was excavated to a total length of 17.23m, foreshortened due to the tight space constraints for the excavator adjacent to the site boundary (Figure 3, plates 3 and 4).
- 7.2 The uppermost deposit (101) was the tarmac surface of the carpark which was approximately 0.10m thick. This overlay a rubble layer (102) made up of brick and concrete up to 0.18m, thick which in turn sealed a relic subsoil (103) up to 0.41m thick. The relic subsoil directly overlay the natural geology (104) as seen on plate 5.
- 7.3 The trench contained two cut features, a land drain [105] orientated north-north-east to south-south-west which probably originated as an open drainage ditch. The fill (106) of the original cut was visible to both sides; this had been truncated by a re-cut [107] which was vertical sided and flat bottomed. Its primary fill comprised of brick rubble (108) which was sealed by a layer of re-deposited natural (109). The drain was still carrying water and flooded the south-western end of the trench. A sump was excavated to allow further investigation although the constant flow made recording extremely difficult. A further linear [110] was present in the approximate centre of the trench orientated approximately north to south. Investigation revealed that this was in fact a service trench carrying a salt glaze pipe of 20th century origin.
- 7.4 No other archaeological features were present within the trench.

Trench 2

- 7.5 Trench 2 was orientated approximately west-north-west to east-south-east and was excavated to a length of 20.36m and a width of 1.80m (Figure 3, plates 6 and 7).
- 7.6 The stratigraphy in trench 2 mirrored that of trench 1; with the uppermost deposit represented by the tarmac car park surface (201) averaging 0.07m thick overlying a rubble layer of brick and concrete (202) up to 0.62m thick.

- This in turn sealed the relic subsoil (203) which was up to 0.37m thick. As with trench 1 the relic subsoil sealed the natural geology (214), an orange sand with grey mottling. However, in this trench it was observed that the orange sand (214) was relatively thin and overlay (215), a further geological deposit of grey sand with occasional lenses of orange mottled sand.
- 7.7 The trench contained five distinct cut features. Starting at the west-north-western end of the trench a linear cut [204] was present. It measured 0.79m wide by 0.10m deep with a sharp break of slope to the side, a steep concave edge to the south and a gently sloping concave side to the north with an imperceptible break to a rounded base. It contained a single fill (205) from which post 1800 earthenware's were recovered (Figure 4, dwg 2, plate 9). What on initial observation appeared to be a 90 degree return resolved itself into a separate feature (although likely contemporary). The cut [206] measured 0.75m wide and up to 0.14m deep with a similar profile to [204]. It also contained a single fill (207) as seen on plate 10 (Figure 4 dwg 3).
- 7.8 A modern pit [208] was present in the side of the trench, it cut from directly below the tarmac with vertical sides and was 1.75m wide. It contained a single fill of type 1 aggregate with modern rubble sacks towards the base (this feature was not recorded further).
- 7.9 A linear cut [210] orientated approximately north to south was present approximately 9m from the west-north-western end of the trench. It measured 0.44m wide and was 0.17m deep. It had a sharp break of slope to the top, gently sloping concave edges and an imperceptible break to a rounded base. It contained a single fill (211) and no datable finds were recovered (Figure 4 dwg 4, plate 11).
- 7.10 At approximately 12.5m from the west-north-west end of the trench a further linear cut was present [212] which on further investigation was found to carry a salt glaze pipe of 20th century origin with a backfill of slightly clayey silt sand (213).

8. The Finds

8.1 Pottery Paul Blinkhorn

- 8.1.1 The pottery assemblage comprised three sherds with a total weight of 67g. It was all of early modern or modern date. It was recorded using the conventions of the Leicestershire County type-series (Sawday 1994), as follows:

EA6: Post-medieval Blackwares, late 17th century +. 1 sherd, 57g.

EA10: Modern Earthenwares, 1800+. 2 sherds, 10g.

The sherd of EA6 occurred in context 109 while the fragments of EA10 came from context 205. A single fragment of hand-made brick also occurred in context 109. It weighs 593g and is 114mm wide and 45mm thick. The length did not survive. It is unfrosted, and of late Medieval to earlier Post-medieval date (McComish 2015, 36).

9. Discussion and Conclusions

- 9.1 The evaluation identified a number of features across both trenches, the majority of which were modern service trenches carrying drainage pipes and a live land drain. The land drain at the south-western end of trench 1 appears to have been in use for a considerable time, possibly as an open ditch which was later recut, filled with brick rubble and sealed with re-deposited natural. The dating evidence from the rubble fill indicates a late 17th century date onwards for the re-cut. However, given that the rubble fill was extremely mixed it is possible that it had been lying around for some time prior to its deposition and was in fact residual.
- 9.2 A linear feature [204] present at the west-north-western end of trench 2 appeared to have a 90 degree return but was in fact two separate linear cuts [206]. Despite the lack of a physical relationship, the similarity in dimensions and profile and the identical fills suggest that they are related. It is possible that their physical relationship has been truncated from above as only their very base survives. Modern earthenware's recovered from their fill indicates a date post 1800. The function of this feature is uncertain, and too little survived for adequate interpretation.
- 9.3 The only other archaeological feature was an undated linear cut [210] which was cut on a north-south orientation. Despite the lack of datable finds the fill was very organic in nature and is likely to be very late, perhaps 18th or 19th century. In terms of function it may represent a property boundary, but given the lack of evidence for such divisions on the historic mapping it is more likely to have served as a drainage ditch.
- 9.4 The evaluation fulfilled its aims with a high degree of confidence. The evidence for activity within the site is all Post-medieval and concurs with its generally undeveloped nature as seen on the historic mapping.

10. Archive

- 10.1 The project will be archived with the Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession code X.A39.2025 The digital records will be lodged with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) and final reports uploaded to OASIS.

11. Acknowledgements

- 11.1 Groundworks Archaeology would like to thank Design Studio Architects for commissioning this investigation. We would also like to thank Mr William Kelly of the Leicestershire Historic and Natural Environment Team for his assistance during the course of the project.

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Appendix 1: Trench Summary

Trench 1			
Dimensions 17.23 x 1.80m			
Orientation: NE-SW			
Context	Type	Description	Depth
(101)	Layer	Tarmac car park surface	0.10m
(102)	Layer	Compact demolition layer containing brick, and concrete	0.18m
(103)	Layer	Dark brown soft silty sand relic subsoil	0.41m
(104)	Natural	Firm orange with grey mottling slightly clayey sand	>0.07m
[105]	Cut	Cut of linear, 0.49m wide, sharp break of slope to top, steeply sloping concave edges (base truncated by [107])	0.22m
(106)	Fill	F/O [105], soft dark brown slightly clayey silt sand	0.22m
[107]	Cut	Re-cut of [105], sharp break of slope, vertical edges and flat base, 0.26m wide	0.22m
(108)	Fill	Primary F/O [107] compact brick rubble	0.18m
(109)	Fill	Secondary F/O [107] soft mid brown silty sand (re-deposited natural).	0.04m
[110]	Cut	Cut of service trench (0.48m wide) carrying salt glaze pipe	0.26m
(111)	Fill	F/O [107], compact dark brown slightly clayey silty sand	0.26m

Trench 2			
Dimensions 20.36 x 1.80m			
Orientation: NW-SE			
Context	Type	Description	Depth
(201)	Layer	Tarmac car park surface	0.07m
(202)	Layer	Demolition rubble containing brick and stone	0.62m
(203)	Layer	Dark brown soft silty sand relic subsoil	0.37m
[204]	Cut	Linear cut 0.79m wide	0.10m
(205)	Fill	F/O [204] compact dark brownish grey silty sand	0.10m
[206]	Cut	Linear cut 0.75m wide	0.14m
(207)	Fill	F/O [206] Compact dark brownish grey silty sand	0.14m
[208]	Cut	Cut of modern pit, vertical sides, base unseen	>0.95m
(209)	Fill	F/O [208] Type 1 hardcore with plastic rubbish bags at base	>0.95m
[210]	Cut	Cut of linear 0.44m wide	0.17m
(211)	Fill	F/O [210], compact dark brownish grey silty sand	0.17m
[212]	Cut	Cut of service trench cut (0.43)m wide carrying salt glaze pipe	0.26m

Appendix 1: Trench Summary

(213)	Fill	F/O [212], compact dark brown slightly clayey silty sand	0.26m
(214)	Natural	Firm mid orange sand with grey mottling	0.09m
(215)	Natural	Firm grey sand with occasional lenses of orange mottled sand	>0.08m

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 1: General view of site looking south



Plate 2: General view of excavation in progress

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 3: Trench 1 looking north-east



Plate 4: Trench 2 looking south-west

Appendix 2: Plates

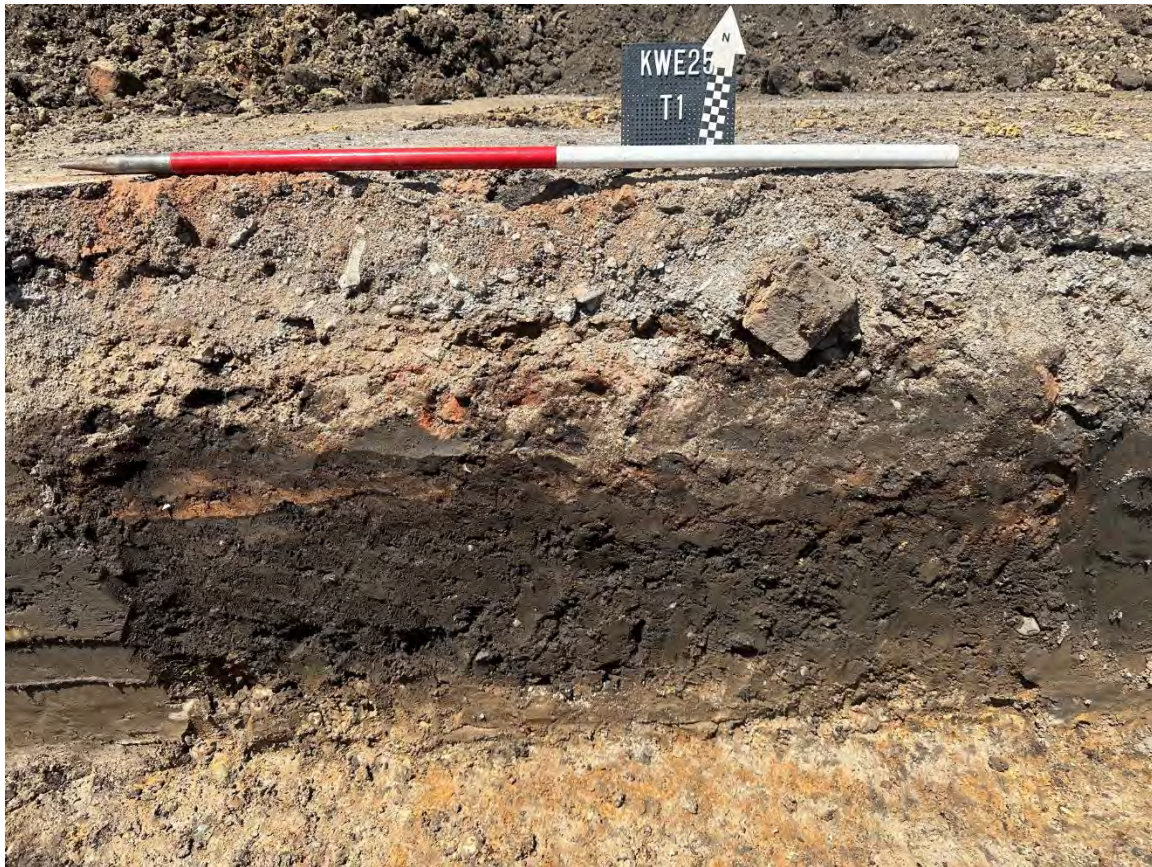


Plate 5: Trench 1 south-east facing sample section



Plate 6: Trench 2 looking south-east

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 7: Trench 2 looking north-west



Plate 8: [204] and [206] post excavation view looking west

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 9: West Facing Section [204]



Plate 10: North facing section [206]

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 11: south facing section [210]

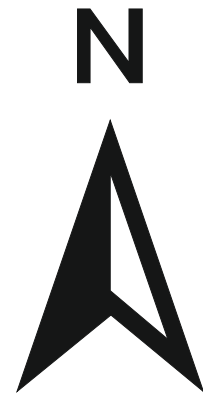
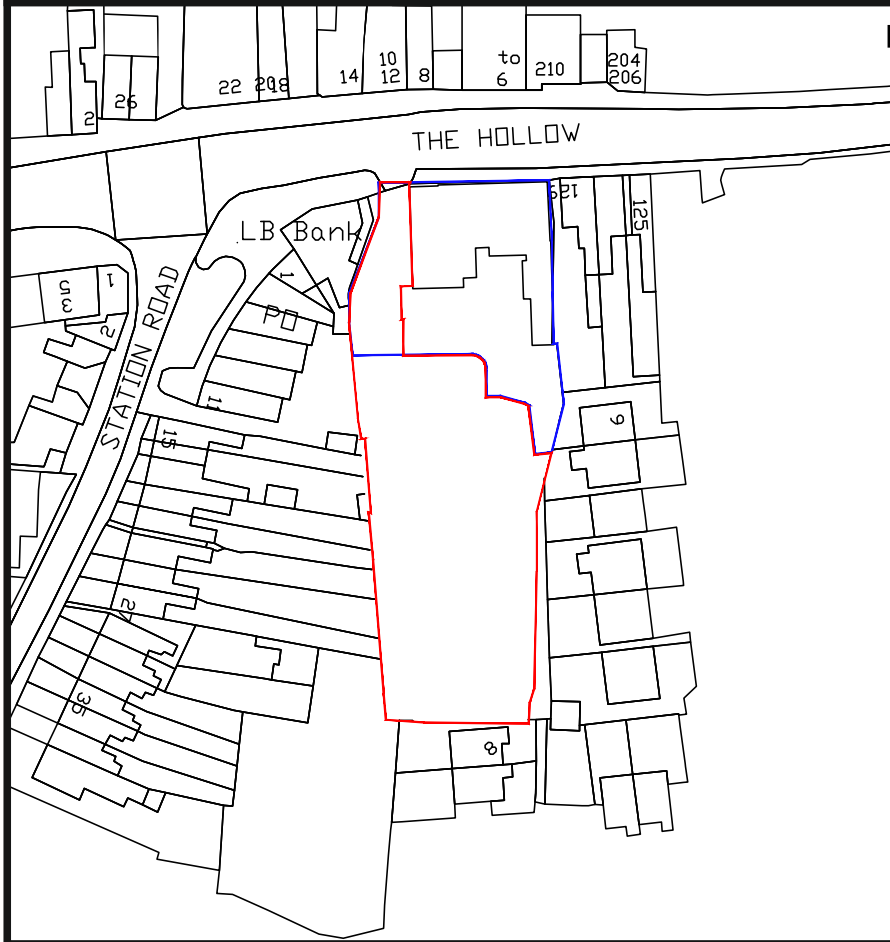
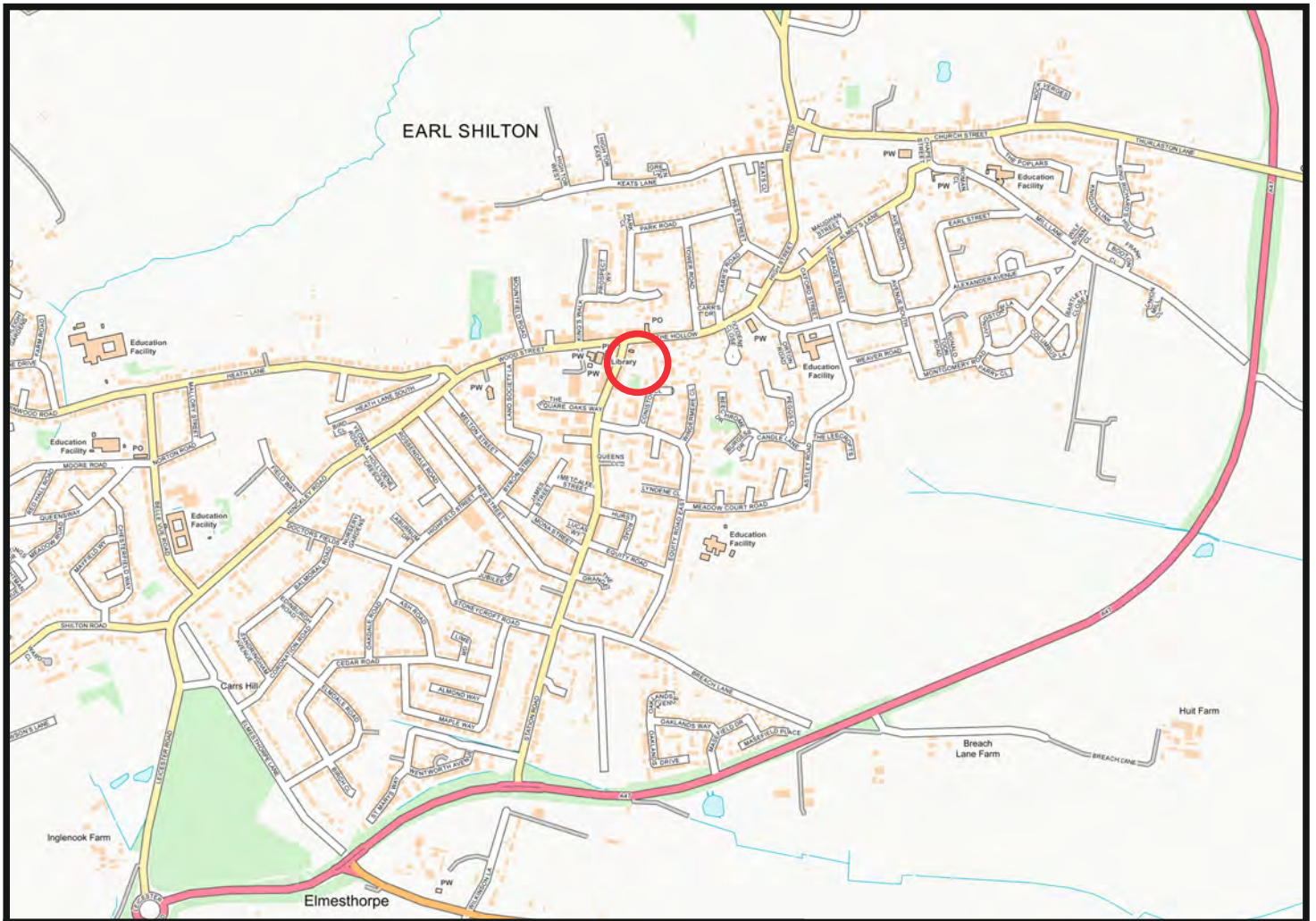


Figure 1: Site Location





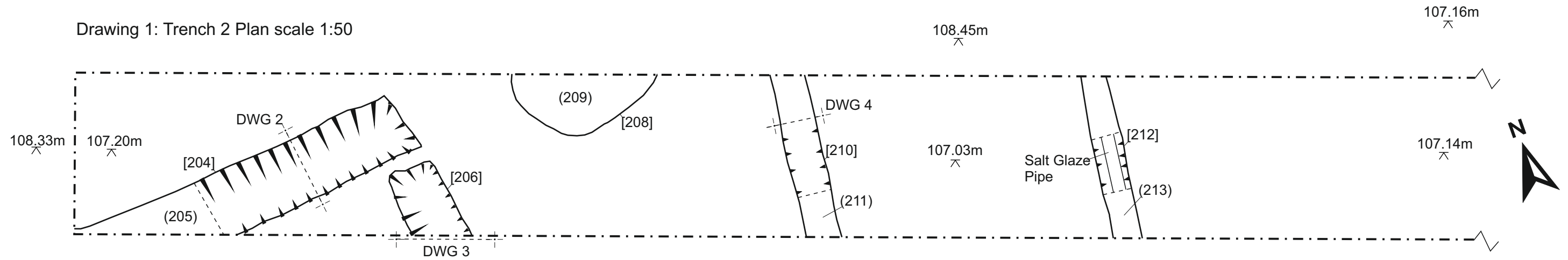
Proposed Development Plan

Trench Location Plan



Figure 2

Drawing 1: Trench 2 Plan scale 1:50



Drawing 5: Trench 1 Plan, scale 1:50

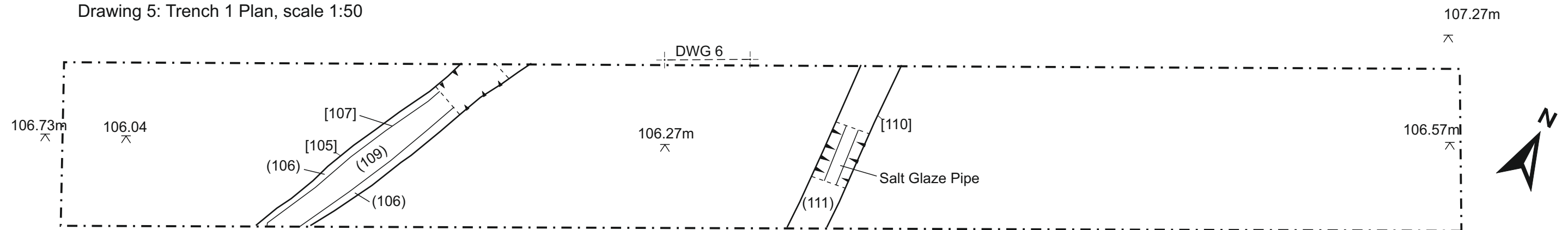


Figure 3: Trench Plans

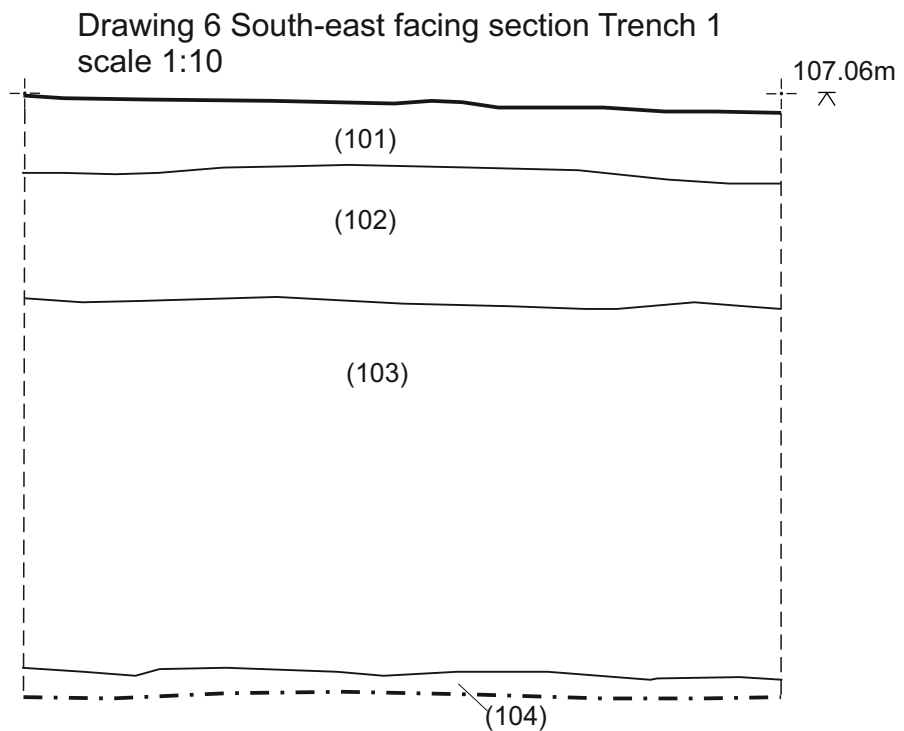
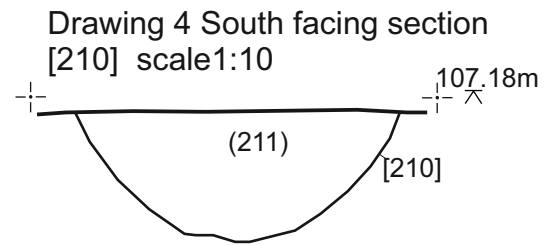
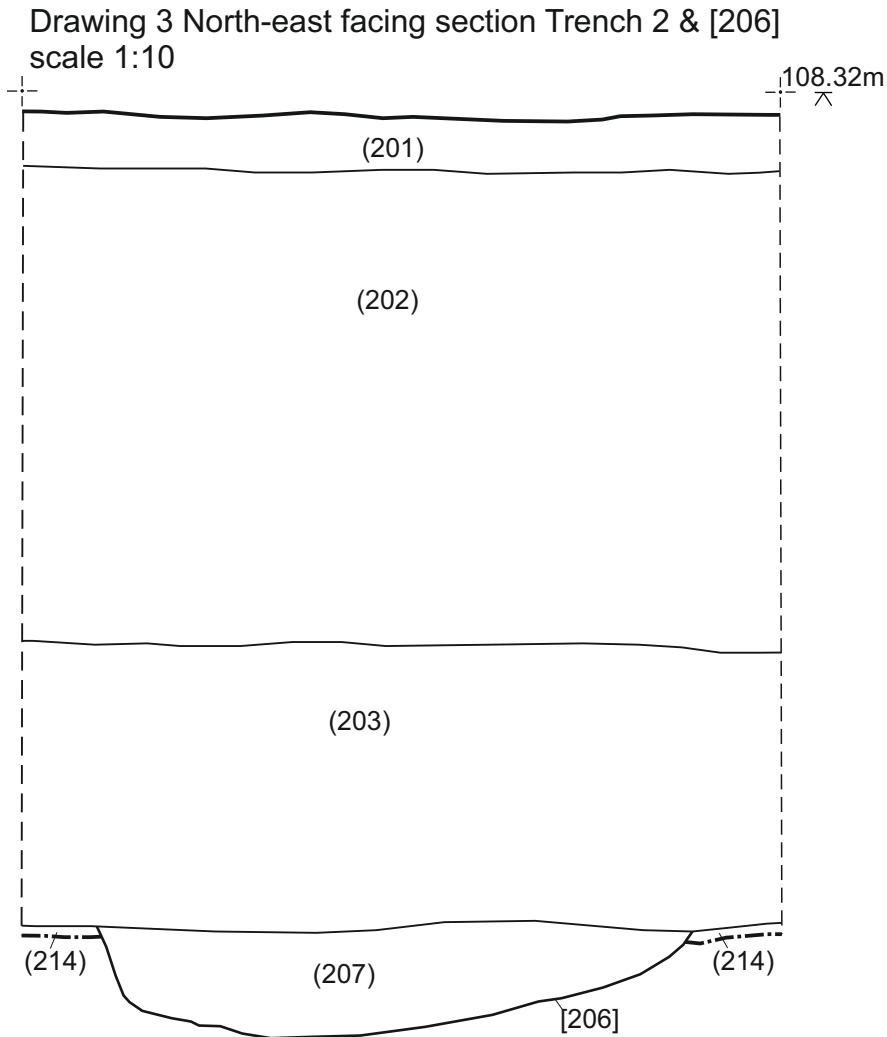
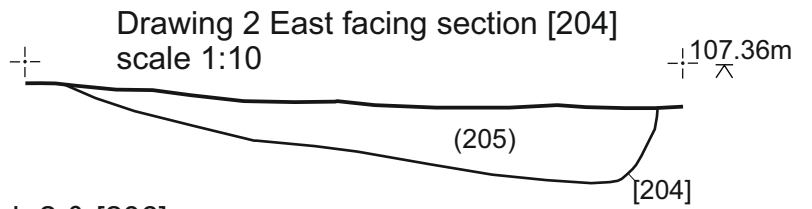


Figure 4: Archaeological Sections