



**ARCHAEOLOGY
WARWICKSHIRE**

Padge Hall Farm Nuneaton Warwickshire

Archaeological evaluation

Archaeology Warwickshire
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Warwickshire
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Padge Hall Farm, Nuneaton
Archaeological evaluation
Date: March 2024

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Padge Hall Farm, Nuneaton, on behalf of RPS Heritage, ahead of proposed industrial development, on land adjacent to extensive previous evaluation trenching that was largely sterile.

A total of 19 trenches were excavated from an initial 37, which, due to an intervening programme of monitoring covering the northeastern side of the site, had been reduced to 25 trenches, as agreed with the archaeological advisor from Leicestershire. Six of these could not be excavated due to standing water, and will not be excavated following agreement with the archaeological advisor from Warwickshire.

Two undated gullies were uncovered in the northern part of the site, in close proximity to the Harrow Brook, although only one could be excavated due to a rising water table. Given they were filled with sterile bluish clay it is likely that they had a drainage function. A significant layer of Alluvium was also present in this area.

The buried and extant remains of ridge and furrow cultivation were discovered across the site, as were ditches representing former field boundaries present on the Ordnance Survey map of 1888. A large clay extraction pit was also discovered, it contained no datable material though four others were discovered during the previous phase of trenching and were dated to the post-medieval period.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Planning permission is being sought from Hinckley and Bosworth District Council (Planning ref 21/01191/HYB), Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC, Planning ref 038340) and Rugby Borough council (RBC, Planning ref R21/0985) for the construction of a large industrial complex and associated infrastructure at Padge Hall Farm, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. The current evaluation area is within Rugby Borough and Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough and is henceforth referred to as 'the Site'.
- 1.2 Condition 3 (NBBC) and condition 4 (RBC) requires the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. Archaeology Warwickshire were commissioned by RPS Heritage on behalf of Oxalis Planning to carry out a trial trench evaluation in February 2024 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (RPS 2023) approved by the Planning Authority. This report presents the results of that work.
- 1.3 The project archive, as detailed in Appendix C, will be deposited with Warwickshire Museum under Site Code NP24 with digital data submitted to the Archaeology Data Service.
- 1.4 The work was carried out in accordance with The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023).

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The Site, centred on National Grid Reference SP 39800 92750 south of the A5, Watling Street, and is within the parish of Stretton Baskerville, Warwickshire (Fig 1). The Leicestershire border is immediately to the north-east of the Site.
- 2.2 The Site lies within farmland surrounding Padge Hall Farm. The Harrow Brook flows from northeast to southwest along the western part the site. The site elevation varies from c. 88m to c. 91m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), sloping from northeast to southwest with the Harrow Brook
- 2.3 The British Geological Survey (BGS) 1:50,000 records the geology within the site as Mercia Mudstone, overlain by Anker Sand and Gravel, Bosworth Clay member and Thrussington Till.

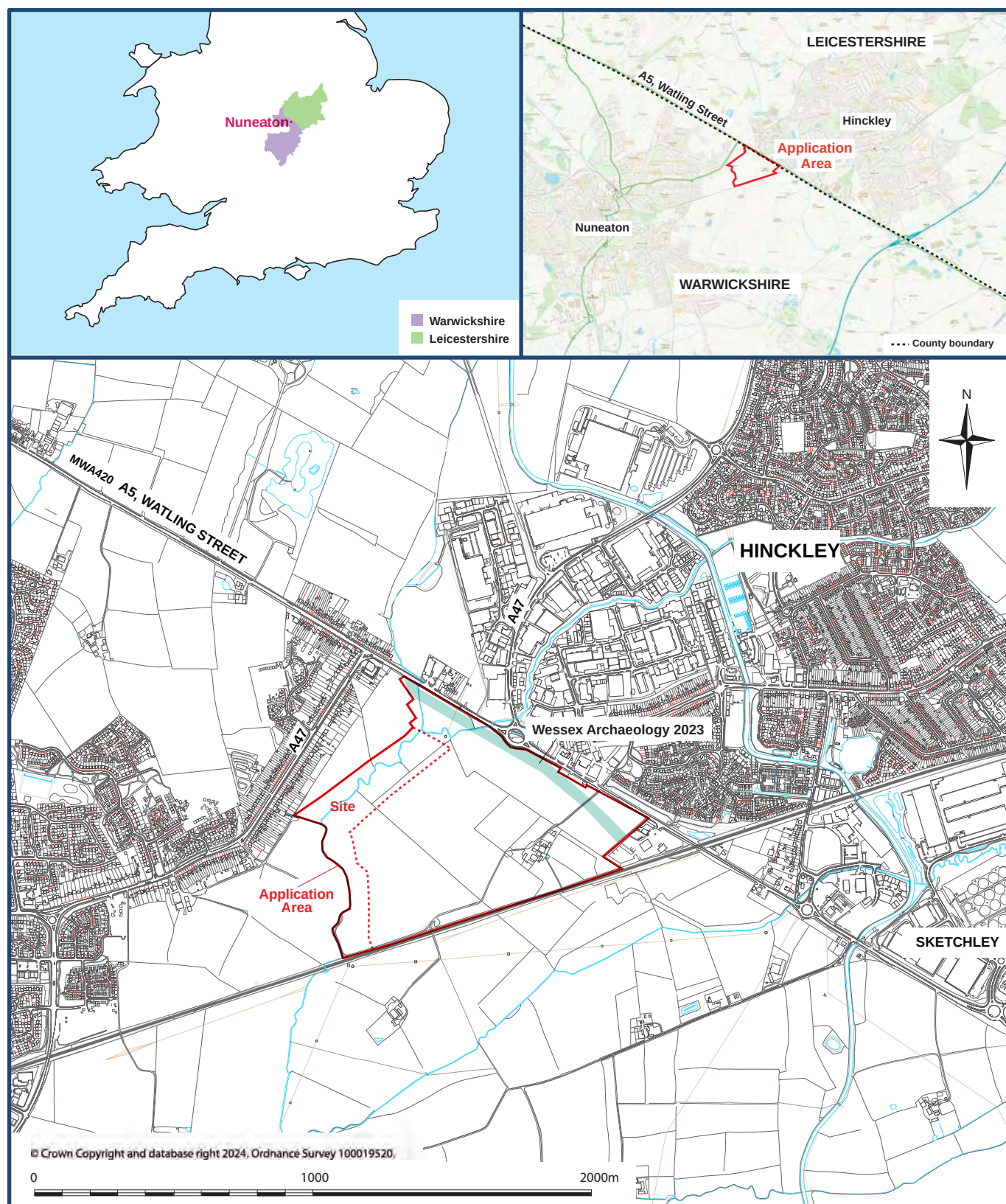


Fig 1: Location of site and Historic Environment information

3 BASELINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

- 3.1 The baseline archaeological data relating to the work was described in a previous phase Written Scheme of Investigation (Rann 2020) supplemented with the results of a trial trench evaluation (Child 2021). The Written Scheme of Investigation for the current work summarised the background as *'One hundred and twenty-eight trenches were excavated, none of which identified any finds or deposits of archaeological significance. Two undated features were recovered which were tentatively interpreted as a pit and gully (Archaeology Warwickshire 2021)'* (RPS 2023).

Prehistoric

- 3.2 A palaeolithic hand axe (pastscape 1234821) and a palaeolithic flake (MLE6062) were found in the glacial till just over the border in Leicestershire.
- 3.3 Two Neolithic stone Axes were reportedly found c. 750m to the south of the site (MWA1662, MWA9418).
- 3.4 An Iron Age settlement was excavated prior to a housing development c. 700m to the north-east of the site, on the edge of Hinckley (MWA8919). The Iron Age settlement was overlain by a Roman enclosure (MLE8920). Similar enclosures were found to the north-east (MLE10141). The archaeological evidence seemed to indicate that the Roman settlement associated with the features lay further to the north.

Roman

- 3.5 The site itself, is located to the south of the Roman Road of Watling Street (MWA420) which was constructed to link Dover to London, St Albans and ultimately Wroxeter. On the southern side of Watling Street, the only evidence for Roman activity near to the site, has been Roman period artefacts found by metal detectorists (MWA 21426, MWA 29638).

- 3.6 Metal detectorists have also reported finding migration period artefacts in the vicinity of the site (MWA21427).

Medieval

- 3.7 The deserted medieval village of Hydes Pasture (MWA2758) lies just 200m to the south of the site. The village is known from references in Dugdale's History of Warwickshire but its exact location is not certain. It is recorded as having a small chapel and that in 1730 there were visible remains of the settlement but only one surviving dwelling (VCH 1951). It is possible that the development site would have lain within the open fields associated with this settlement. The geophysical survey across the site picked up linear anomalies consistent with ploughed out ridge and furrow (Sumo 2020). Ridge and furrow is also visible on aerial photographs (google earth) and is particularly clear around the farm buildings.

Post-medieval

- 3.8 An archaeological watching brief on land to the north-east of the Site identified a single post-medieval ditch (Wessex Archaeology, forthcoming).

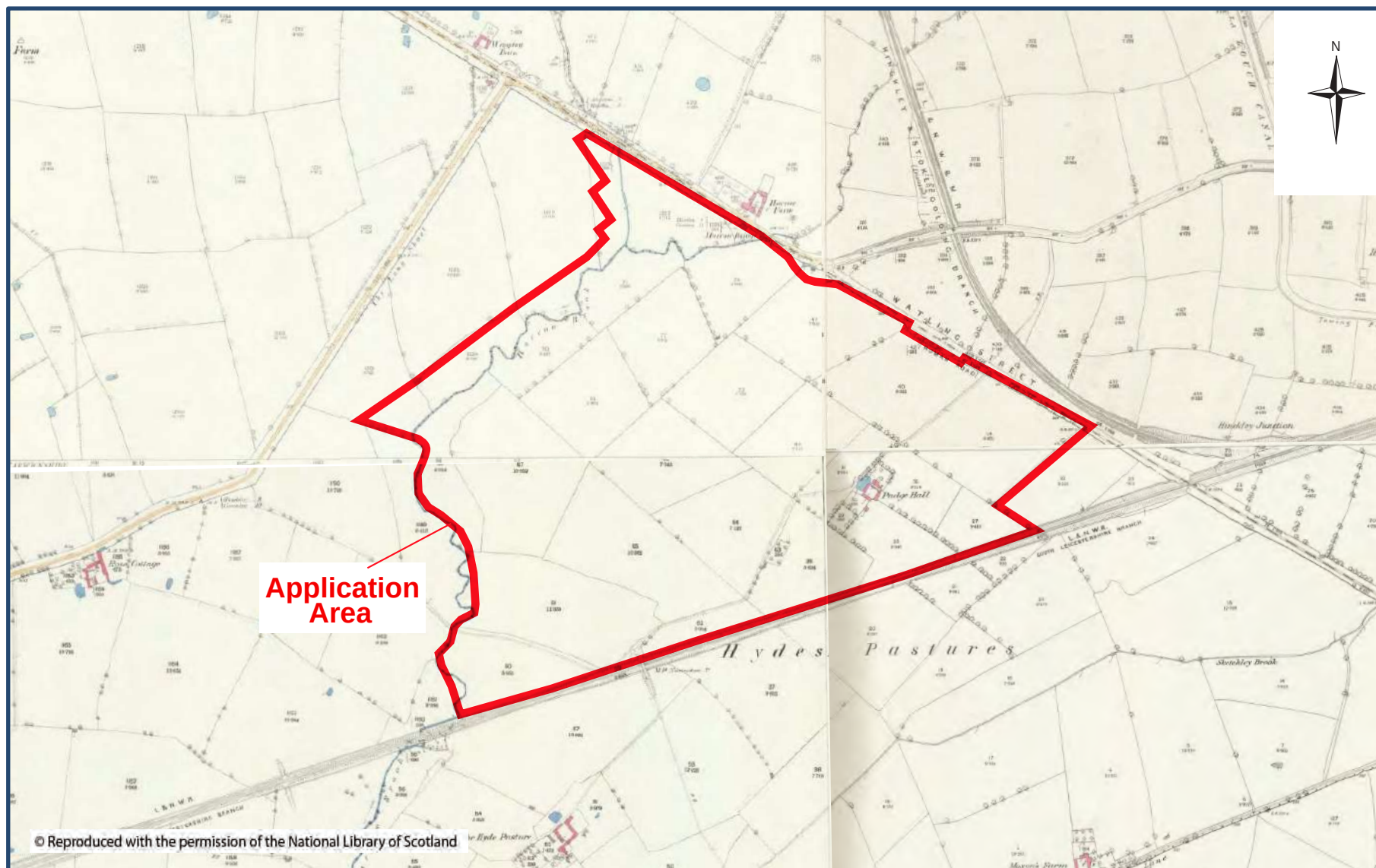


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey maps 1:2500 of 1888 (Warwickshire XI.10 and Leicestershire XLII.6/7/100)

4 AIMS AND METHODS

- 4.1 The main aim of the evaluation was to determine if there are any significant archaeological remains in the area to be developed; to form an understanding of their value and their potential to shed light on the subsequent development of the area. Secondary aims included placing the results in their wider local and regional contexts as appropriate.
- 4.2 The objectives stated in the WSI were 'to better understand the archaeological potential of the site in order that an informed decision can be made regarding mitigation requirements, if/as required.
- 4.3 Specific research aims, were in line with the West Midlands Regional Research Framework and the East Midlands Regional Research Framework were:
- 4.4 If archaeological remains are present with the site, what is their date, character, extent, form, function, state of preservation and significance?
- 4.5 The objectives were to locate, record and analyse archaeological materials and deposits and to disseminate the results in an appropriate format.
- 4.6 It was agreed with the archaeological advisor from Leicestershire that the trenches running adjacent to the A5 were not required due to previous archaeological monitoring during ongoing water main works, which determined that no significant remains were present in the area.
- 4.7 The area was to be evaluated by means of 1250m of trial trenching with each trench 50m long by 1.8m wide. Trenches 11, 15, 21, 22 and 23 were moved from the positions specified in the WSI to avoid standing water, and trenches 2, 3, 8, 9, 14 and 20 could not be excavated for the same reason. Therefore, only 950m of trenching was completed. The reduction in the excavated trenches was agreed with the archaeological advisor from Warwickshire.

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- 4.8 Topsoil, former ploughsoils and demonstrably modern overburden were removed by an appropriate machine using a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision. Ground reduction was carried out in shallow spits until the uppermost archaeological horizon, or the geological natural was reached (whichever the higher).

5 RESULTS

Geological Natural

- 5.1 The geological natural across the site is brownish red gravelly clay (102, 402, 502, 602, 702, 1002, 1102, 1202, 1302, 1501, 1602, 1702, 1802, 1902, 2102, 2202, 2302, 2402, 2501). It was exposed between 0.3m and 0.95m below the current ground surface.

Deposit Sequence

- 5.2 Where not disturbed by anthropogenic activity, the clay substrate was overlain by a simple sequence of plough-derived subsoil (101, 401, 501, 601, 701, 1001, 1101, 1201, 1301, 1701, 1801, 2101, 2301, 2501) and topsoil (100, 400, 500, 600, 700, 1000, 1100, 1200, 1300, 1500, 1600, 1700, 1800, 1900, 2100, 2200, 2300, 2400, 2500).
- 5.3 A layer of alluvium (1601, 1901, 2201, 2401) was apparent in four trenches alongside the Harrow Brook.

Archaeological Features and Deposits (Figs 3 & 4)

- 5.4 Two undated linear gullies were observed in the northern part of the site, by the Harrow Brook. Northeast/southwest gully 2203 (Photo 1) was 0.66m wide with a concave profile 0.26m deep and was filled with dark bluish grey sandy clay suggestive of semi-permanent waterlogging. No finds were recovered. Northeast/southwest gully 1603 could not be excavated due to rapidly rising water levels.
- 5.5 Evidence of ridge and furrow was widespread across the site, including furrows 503 and 2303, which were up to 1.02m wide by 0.23m deep and were filled with a light greyish brown sandy clay. A small area of extant ridge and furrow was visible at the sites northern edge.

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- 5.6 In Trench 1 in the southwestern extremity of the site, a 6m wide clay extraction pit (103), contained redeposited natural clay and topsoil but was not excavated.
- 5.7 In Trenches 4 and 6 were two ditches which corresponded to linear geophysical anomalies and long-lived field boundaries present from at least the 1888 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (403, 603; Photos 2 & 3). Their profiles were up to 1.18m wide x 0.45m deep.



1 Gully 2203, looking SW

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2 Field Boundary 403, looking WNW



3 Field Boundary 603, looking WNW