



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

Archaeological Evaluation on

Land at Forest House,
Leicester Lane, Desford

NGR: SK 49875 02250

Joseph Bartholomew



Project Type:	Archaeological evaluation
Site Name:	Land at Forest House
Grid Ref:	SK 49875 02250
Author:	Joseph Bartholomew
Date:	February 2025
Client:	Savage Marine Ltd.
Planning Authority:	Hinkley and Bosworth District Council
Planning Ref:	22/01160/OUT
ULAS Job No:	25-507
ULAS Report No:	25-012
Accession No:	X.A3.2025
OASIS Ref:	universi1-- 531614

Cover photo: Looking west towards site as excavation commences

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Document and Version Control

Revision History

Date	Filename/Version	Edited/Checked by	Notes
14/02/2025	25-507_Desford_Leicester_Lane_TT_Draft_V1	J. Bartholomew	Draft version
20/02/2025	25-012_V1	A.Clapton	Draft Version to Client and Senior Planning Archaeologist
25/02/2025	25-012_Final	A.Clapton	Approved by Senior Planning Archaeologist

Approval History

Date	Filename/Version	Approved by	Position
19/02/2025	25-012_V1		Director

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1- 531614		
	Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation at Land at Forest House		
	Start/end dates	12/02/2025-12/02/2025		
	Previous/Future Work	None		
	Project Type	Archaeological Evaluation		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Agricultural		
	Monument Type/Period	None		
	Significant Finds/Period	None		
	Reason for Investigation	Planning regulation		
	Position in the Planning Process	Condition		
	Planning Ref.	22/01160/OUT		
PROJECT LOCATION	County	Leicestershire		
	Site Address/Postcode	Forest House, Leicester Lane, Desford		
	Study Area	0.23h		
	Site Coordinates	449875 302250		
	Height OD	122m		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS)		
	Project Brief Originator	Hinkley and Bosworth District Council		
	Project Design Originator	University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS)		
	Project Manager	A Clapton		
	Project Director/Supervisor	J Bartholomew		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Savage Marine Ltd.		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	-	ADS	Leicestershire County Council Museums -
	ID (Acc. No.)	-	X.A3.2025	X.A3.2025
	Contents	-	Photographs	Archive and Report
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Description	Report A4 pdf		
	Title	An archaeological evaluation at land at Forest House, Leicester Lane, Desford		
	Author	J Bartholomew		
	Other bibliographic details	University of Leicester Archaeological Services Report No. 2025-012		
	Date	2024		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		

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An archaeological Evaluation on Land at Forest House, Leicester Lane, Desford

Joseph Bartholomew

Summary

This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at land at Forest House, Leicester Lane, Desford, Leicestershire LE9 9JJ. The work was undertaken on 12/02/2025 on behalf of Savage Marine Ltd. in advance of the development of a new commercial unit.

Archaeological work consisted of the excavation of three trenches measuring 30m x 1.6m down to undisturbed natural geology. A modern ditch or backfilled service was noted transecting the proposed development area on a broadly northeast-southwest orientation. No features of archaeological interest were recorded.

The physical archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums under the accession number X.A.03.2025. The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).

Introduction

This document is a report on a programme of archaeological evaluation on land at Forest House, Leicester Lane, Desford, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Section 16 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment (DLUHC 2023).

This work was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Savage Marine Ltd.

Planning Permission (**22/01160/OUT**) has been granted for the proposed development of a new commercial unit (Class E(g)(i,ii,iii)) on the development area (PDA). The permission includes a condition for archaeological work (Figs. 2-4).

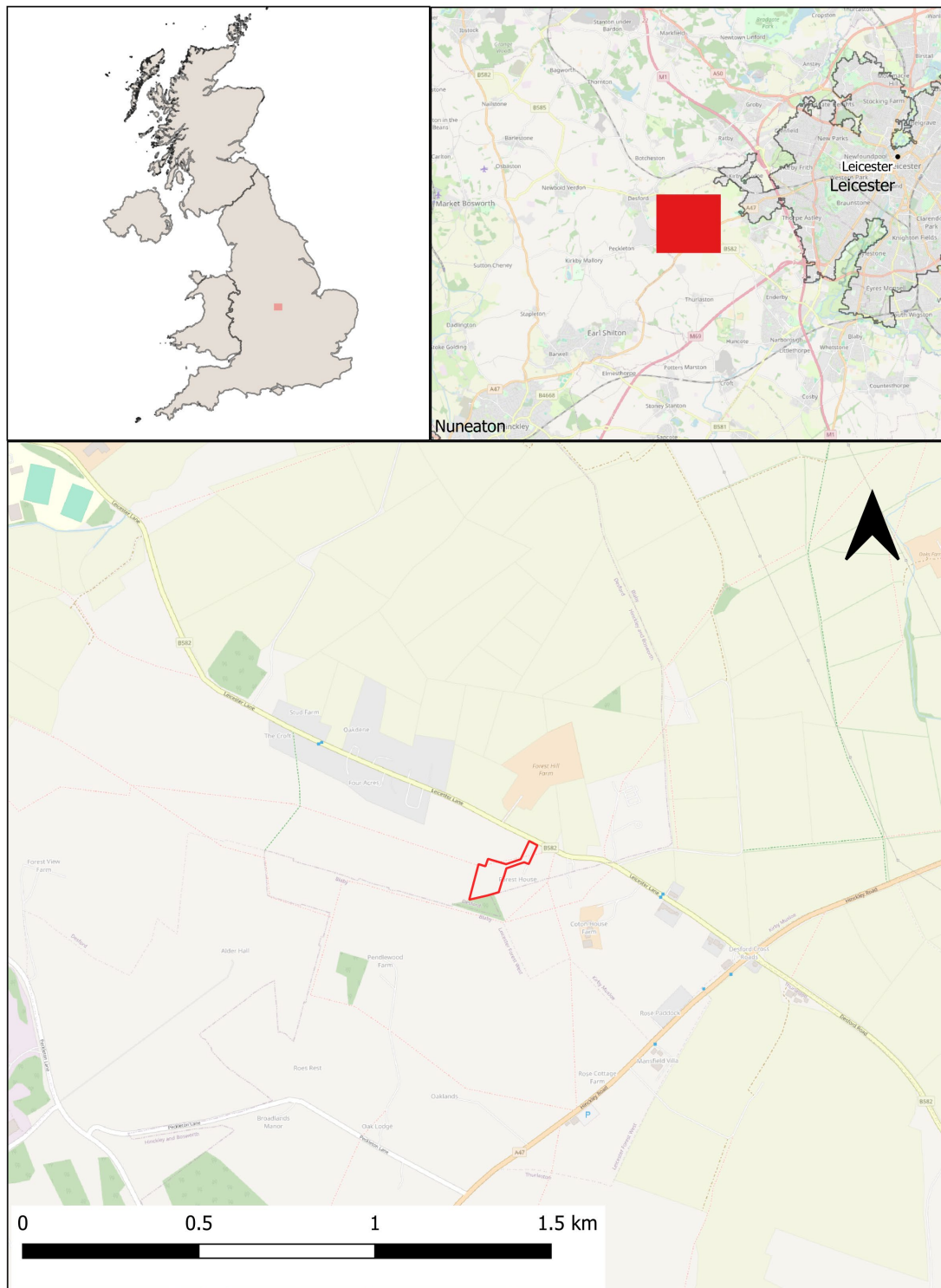
Due to the archaeological potential, the Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire as advisor to Hinkley and Bosworth District Council has requested archaeological evaluation through trial trenching to determine the impact of the proposed scheme on any buried archaeological remains and, if necessary, to provide a mitigation strategy for the development site.

Location, topography and geology

Desford lies 11km west of the centre of Leicester. The site is located 2.4km southeast of the village and is accessed from Leicester Lane (B582). It is located on land to the immediate west of Forest House, comprising two grassed fields that lie around 122m above OD (Fig.1).

The British Geological Survey identifies the geology of the area as Oadby Member Diamicton overlying Edwalton Member Mudstone (BGS; <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer/> accessed 13/02/2025).

The Soilscape website indicates that the soils, will be slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (Soilscape 18 <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/> accessed 13/02/2025).



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Created by: J Bartholomew
Created on: 12/02/2025

Figure 1: Site Location, within UK, county, and local.

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Figure 2: Current site plan (provided by client).



Figure 3: Detailed site location plan showing proposals (provided by client).

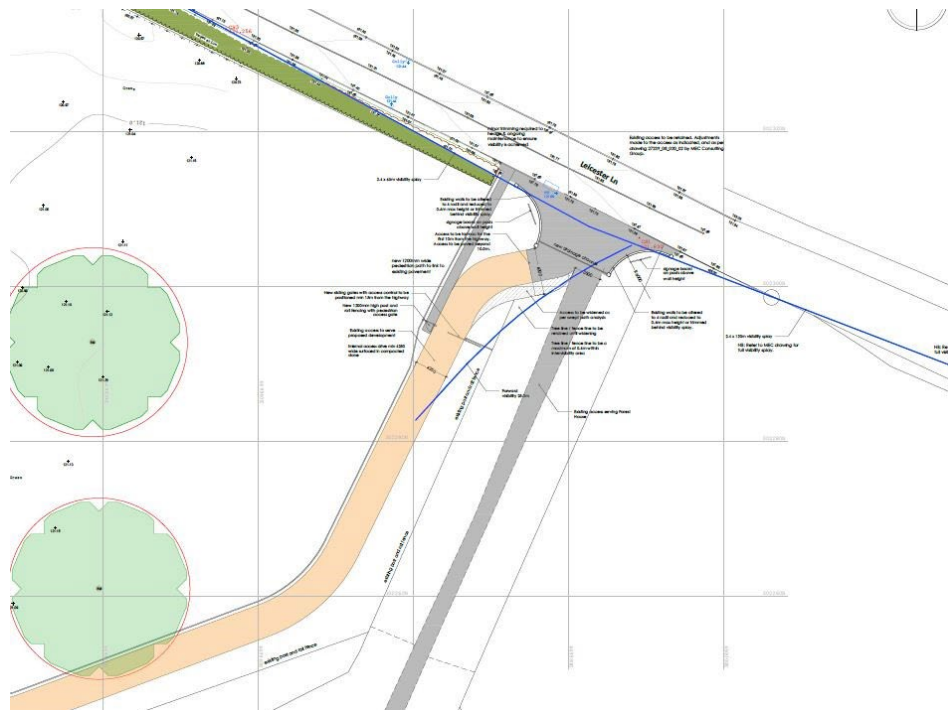


Figure 4: Site plan showing access (provided by client).

Historical and Archaeological Background

Prehistoric

Several cropmarks suggesting the remains of Bronze Age barrows or Iron Age ditch and enclosure earthworks have been recorded between 750m and 1km west and southwest of the PDA. The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) for Leicestershire records that an Iron Age mount and Neolithic arrowhead have been recovered during metal detecting around these areas.

Roman

The line of the Mancetter Roman road runs north-east to south-west around 100m north of the PDA, with traces of it noted as parchmarks and areas of cobbles being found during groundworks along the line of the road.

Evidence of Roman activity has been found on land c. 980m to the west of the PDA, consisting of cropmarks, features and finds which may indicate a Roman building. 1.5km to the south of the PDA fieldwalking and metal detecting have discovered a Roman site with pottery kilns. The PAS for Leicestershire has also recorded various Roman finds in the vicinity of the PDA.

Anglo-Saxon to Medieval

The place-name for Desford is of Anglo-Saxon origin and 'Deor's Ford'. During the medieval period the land at Leicester Forest West (including the PDA) lay within Leicester Forest in the area of 'The Chase' or 'The Thwaite'. Three Henry III pennies were found south-west of Alder Hall in the 1980's, and the PAS for Leicestershire records various medieval finds in the area.

Post-medieval to Modern

Leicester Lane and the nearby Hinkley Road were authorised as turnpike roads between mid-18th and late 19th century. Several post-medieval buildings are located in the area of the PDA including The Forest; a former blacksmiths workshop located 75m to the east. Various post-medieval finds are recorded by the PAS for Leicestershire within a 1km radius of the site.

Archaeological Potential

Due to the presence of potential prehistoric remains within a 1.5km radius of the PDA, the site was considered to have a moderate potential for prehistoric remains. Additionally, due to the proximity of the site to the Mancetter Roman road, the location of sites of Roman activity to the west and south and the recovery of Roman finds closer to the PDA the site was considered to have moderate potential for Roman remains (ULAS 2025).

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the investigation was to identify and record any archaeological remains and provide evidence in order for the local planning authority to make informed recommendations and to identify an appropriate mitigation strategy for the proposed development.

The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To characterise the extent, date range, character, condition and significance of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To excavate and record archaeological deposits uncovered during the work.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- Interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional, and national, archaeological context.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets and establish the relationship of any remains within the wider landscape.
- To produce a report and archive of the results.

Research Objectives

The site has the potential to add to research objectives mainly from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods, identified within the East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework <https://researchframeworks.org/emherf/introducing-the-research-agenda/>

The presence of possible Bronze Age barrows and possible Iron Age enclosure in the vicinity of the PDA indicates a potential for archaeology relating to these periods. The PDA also lies close to the line of a Roman road and there is evidence for a Roman villa nearby. There is therefore potential for remains that could contribute to the following Research Objectives:

Bronze Age to Iron Age

- 4C Characterise the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlement resource and investigate intra-regional variability
- 4E Assess the evidence for the evolution of settlement hierarchies

- 4F Investigate intra-regional variations in development of fields and linear boundaries
- 4G Study the production, distribution and use of artefacts

Roman

- 5H Investigate landscape contexts of rural settlements.
- 5I Support research and publication of landscape syntheses.
- 5J Instigate regional scale characterisation study of industry



Figure 5: The development under excavation looking north

Methodology

The fieldwork followed the procedures set out in the approved *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) for the project (ULAS 2025).

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (2023), *Standard for Archaeological field evaluation* (2023) and *Code of Conduct : professional ethics in archaeology* (updated 2022) <https://www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa> . The accession number X.A3.2025 was used to identify all records and artefacts.

Fieldwork was carried out by ULAS on 12/2/2025 and was followed by post-excavation and reporting.

The project involved the proposed excavation of five 30m trenches across the development site. Due to site constraints comprising an access track and underlying services located in the northern area of the site, the excavation of two trenches in this area was not possible. However, the three trenches located on the footprint of the proposed commercial unit were excavated using an eight-tonne wheeled backhoe loader with a 1.60m ditching bucket.

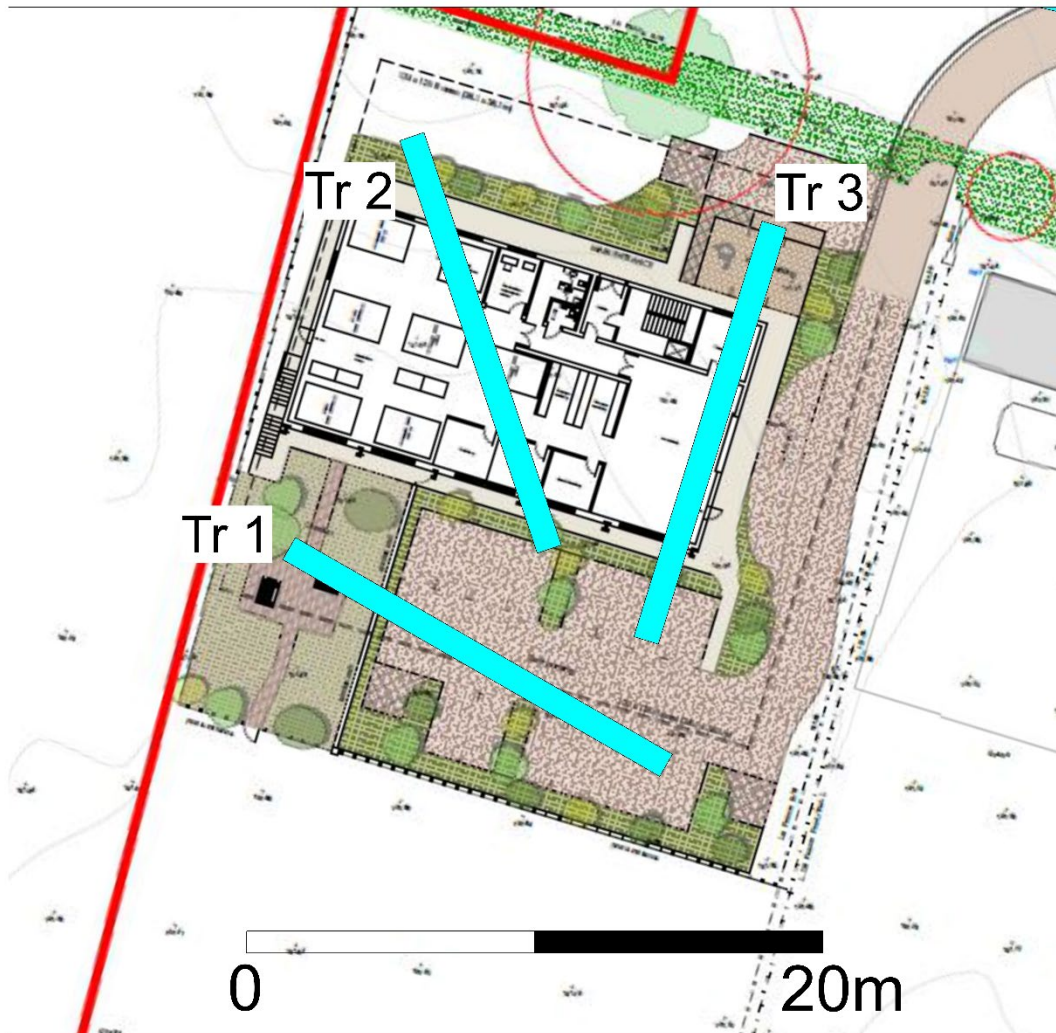


Figure 6: Plan of excavated trenches overlain proposed development

Monitoring

Internal monitoring procedures were undertaken with the Project Manager, to ensure that project targets were met and professional standards maintained. No monitoring visits were undertaken, but photos and descriptions of the results were shared with Planning archaeologist during the work

Results

Field	Trench	Orientation	Min. Depth	Max. Depth	Length of Trench	Width of Trench	Comments
1	1	NW-SE	0.24	0.48	30	1.6	Modern feature (01) [02]
1	2	NNW-SSE	0.35	0.49	30	1.6	Modern feature (01) [02]
1	3	SE-SW	0.28	0.4	30	1.6	No archaeology present

Topsoil across all trenches was a consistent loose mid-greyish brown silt. Subsoil across all trenches was a similarly consistent loose light yellowish grey silty sand. The thickness of overburden was also consistent across all trenches. Subsoil formed only a thin layer and appeared to be more consistent with a diffuse interface between the topsoil and undisturbed natural geology. Natural geology across the trenches appeared to form bands of mottled silty sands, orange gravels and grey clays. Silty sands were noted in Trenches 2 and 3, with grey clays being recorded only to the south in Trench 1.

A modern feature representing the backfill of a ditch or drain (01) [02] was recorded in Trenches 1 and 2, aligning with the field edges on a broadly northeast-southwest orientation. The feature was observed in section cutting through all overburden deposits. No trenches contained archaeological features.



Figure 7: Trench 01 looking northwest, Scale 2 x 1m



Figure 8: Trench 02 looking north-northwest, Scale 2 x 1m.



Figure 9: Trench 03 looking north-east, Scale 2 x 1m.

Discussion

A programme of archaeological trenching evaluation was undertaken by ULAS on Land at Forest House, Leicester Road, Desford in February 2025. The presence of prehistoric and Roman archaeological activity in the area suggested that the PDA had moderate potential for archaeology relating to these periods. However, excavation did not uncover any evidence of archaeological activity, with only a modern service or ditch recorded transecting the site. Overburden and natural geology were otherwise undisturbed across the PDA, indicating that the absence of archaeological features was not the result of truncation.

Archive and Publication

The physical archive for the project will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museums using accession number X.A03.2025 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (Report number)
- 3 Trench record sheets
- 1 Context indices
- 2 Context sheets
- 1 Photographic record sheet
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photos

The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS): <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>) and consists of:

- Digital Photographs.

The online OASIS data entry has been completed detailing the results of the project and the report will be digitally accessible through The Archaeological Data Service (www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk) with universi1-531614 as the identifier.

A summary of this report will appear in due course in the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork and post-excavation were undertaken by Andy Hyam, Roger Kipling and Joseph Bartholomew and project managed by Adam Clapton for ULAS.

The author would like to thank the client for providing access to the site and a machine to conduct the excavation.

Bibliography

(All websites accessed 13 February 2025)

British Geological Survey: <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer/>

CIfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2022, *Code of Conduct: Professional Ethics in Archaeology*

CIfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2023a, *Standard for Archaeological Field Evaluation*.

ClfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2023b, *Universal Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2023, (Rev.), *National Planning Policy Framework*

OASIS <https://www.oasis.ac.uk/>

Soilscapes: <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>

ULAS 2023 *ULAS Recording Manual*.

ULAS 2025 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation for Land at Forest House, Leicester Lane, Desford, Leicestershire*. ULAS Job No. 25-507. University of Leicester Archaeological Services: Leicester.

Appendix 1: Context List

Context	Type	Description	Finds		Suggested Date
01	Fill	Fill of modern ditch or service.	-	-	Modern
02	Cut	Cut of modern ditch or service.	-	-	Modern



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