

23/00330/OUT Earl Shilton Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) Mill Lane Earl Shilton – Excavation Areas

Area 1

Trial trenching in 2010 identified archaeological activity in twelve trenches. A rectilinear Iron Age ditched enclosure with associated pits, gullies and post-holes was identified in the area's south-western corner. A possibly medieval windmill mound within the southeast of the area was identified both through trenching and a circular cropmark/geophysical anomaly (previously listed in the HER as a possible Neolithic or Early Bronze Age henge or enclosure).

A substantial Iron Age ditch and associated features were identified in four trenches within the northwest of the area and was subject to an excavation in 2020.

Our recommendation is for an area excavation to encompass Tr 2-3 and 9, excluding 4. We would like the area to encompass Tr 8, to resolve the relationship with that apparent element of the field system, and to include contingency for an area west of Tr 8 to the southern end of Tr 10. This should pick up the other arm of the field system as well as any extension of the main enclosure north of the housing off Mill Lane.

A second excavation area should investigate the probable mill site, targeting the geophysical 'footprint' and excavated results from Tr 6. The area should provide a 10m buffer around the outer edge of the ring ditch and a further 25% contingency.

Area 2

Trial trenching in 2013 identified archaeological remains dating to the Bronze Age and early Iron Age in Area 2, including ditches, pits and a cremation. Trench 16 identified several features, consisting of a mid-late Bronze Age cremation urn, an Iron Age/Bronze Age gully, and an early Iron Age pit. Tr 13 identified a possible prehistoric pit and a single ditch containing Roman pottery, although the feature could date to an earlier period, whilst Tr 14 contained a single ditch of unknown date.

Our recommendation is for an area excavation consisting of a 20m buffered area around the features in Tr 16 and up to site boundary, with a further 25% contingency made available. We would also welcome clarification on the possible feature in Tr 01 from the 2022 evaluation. Given the presence of other nearby features it may be appropriate to extend the excavation area outlined above to encompass these trenches as well.

Area 3

Within Area 3 2013 trial trenching identified a single pit in Tr 23, the fill of which contained a concentration of burnt stone, interpreted as a possible dumping event. Tr 25 revealed an isolated posthole containing stone inclusions. We would recommend an area excavation encompassing these trenches, with a 10m buffered area around the two features, to determine whether they are isolated or if there are associated features nearby.

Area 4

Trial trenching in 2013 identified a pit in Tr 03 containing a dark charcoal fill and 19 lithic artefacts of prehistoric tradition, suggesting nearby occupation (e.g., domestic fires). During evaluation in 2022, Tr 46 identified a N-S aligned ditch nearby the location of the pit recorded in 2013. A near complete polished stone axe of Neolithic date was also recovered during the 2012 geophysical survey on the ploughed surface of Field 7, to the north of these two features, supporting a potential for further activity within this area.

Our recommendation for Area 4 is for an excavation area to encompass Tr 03 (2013 evaluation) and Tr 46 (2022 evaluation), with a 20m buffer area around the pit and ditch. A further excavation area should investigate the vicinity of the findspot, consisting of a 20m buffer area. A further contingency should be included to extend the excavation between the features and the findspot if shown necessary during the excavation.

Area 5

Trial trenching in 2013 identified a pit in Tr 06, interpreted as a possible prehistoric feature, whilst nearby trenching in 2022 identified the terminus of a ditch in Tr 62, and two ditches within Tr 63. Whilst these features did not contain any finds or other dating evidence, their proximity to the pit recorded in 2013 represent a cluster of activity, for which further mitigation would be appropriate. We would therefore recommend an area excavation to encompass these trenches including a 10m buffer area around the features.