

**Land at Hill Top Farm
(Phase 2)
Earl Shilton
Leicestershire**

Archaeological Evaluation



for:
Tricas Construction Ltd

on behalf of:
Midland Heart

CA Project: MK0943
OASIS ID: MK0943_1

November 2023



Land at Hill Top Farm (Phase 2) Earl Shilton Leicestershire

Archaeological Evaluation

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SUMMARY

Project name:	Land at Hill Top Farm (Phase 2)
Location:	Earl Shilton, Leicestershire
NGR:	446811 298313
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	16–18 October 2023
Planning reference:	20/00916/FUL
OASIS ID:	Mk0943_1
Location of archive:	To be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Museum
Accession number:	X.A67.2023
Site code:	EARL23

In October 2023, Cotswold Archaeology carried out a second phase of trial trenching on land at Hill Top Farm at Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. The current work followed on from a preceding geophysical survey and initial phase of trial trenching.

Of the eight proposed trenches, seven were excavated in full with one trench, trench 3, not excavated due to the presence of trees and other constraints.

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were present. The natural geological substrate, which appeared to have been partially terraced when the existing farmstead was constructed, was directly overlain by modern made ground deposits, presumably used as levelling layers associated with the most recent farm buildings on the site.

As with the results from the phase 1 trenching, there was no evidence for activity pre-dating the modern period, although the extent of truncation and modern made ground was such that it is suggested that had any archaeological remains previously survived in this area they are unlikely to have survived such extensive reworking of the site levels.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In October 2023, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a second phase of archaeological evaluation of Land at Hill Top Farm at Earl Shilton, Leicestershire (centred at NGR: 446811 298313; Fig. 1). This evaluation was undertaken for Tricas Construction on behalf of Midland Heart.
- 1.2. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council has granted planning permission (HBBC; planning ref.: 20/00916/FUL) for residential development of the Site, comprising demolition of farm buildings and Ashby House and development of 50 dwellings comprising 49no. affordable houses and 1no. bungalow to replace Ashby House, with access road off Leicester Road, open space, landscaping, drainage basin, and foul pumping station. Condition 24 of this planning permission requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with an approved WSI:

24. No development shall commence until a programme of archaeological work, comprising 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 this 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).*

1.3. The scope of this second phase of evaluation trenching, which follows on from the granting of planning permission for the scheme, was set out by William Kelly, Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council (SPALCC) and reflected in the WSI (CA 2023), The evaluation was also in line with:

- *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014; updated October 2020).
- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015a); and
- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015b).

The site

1.4. The development site is approximately 1.6ha in extent and is located on the northern edge of the village of Earl Shilton, bounded to the east by Leicester Road, to the south by residential properties fronting onto Keats Lane, and to the north and west by agricultural land. The Site currently comprises a number of farm buildings arranged along a narrow yard/access track in the southern and central areas of the Site, surrounded by overgrown pasture fields or former paddocks. The Site lies at approximately 111m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), rising slightly towards the east and south.

1.5. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as Gunthorpe Member mudstone, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 237 to 247 million years ago in the Triassic Period. This is overlain in the southern parts of the Site by Wigston Member sand and gravel, formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (BGS 2022). No superficial deposits are recorded for the northern portion of the Site.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The archaeological background of the area has previously been presented as part of a Heritage Statement (Savills 2021). The information presented within that document

has been supplemented by the results of a geophysical survey (SUMO 2021) and the results of the first phase of trial trenching (CA 2022).

Prehistoric

- 2.2. The only known evidence of prehistoric activity within the immediate area is a pit alignment recorded via aerial photography to the south of Folly Farm, just over 1km to the north of the Site. The findspot of a prehistoric mace head is recorded at Brockley Farm, approximately 300m to the north-west, with another Neolithic mace head recorded 700m to the south-west at Wood Street.
- 2.3. Excavations along the route of the Earl Shilton bypass, approximately 1.2km to the south of the Site, recorded a number of prehistoric sites including two Bronze Age barrows and an adjacent Middle Iron Age pit alignment to the south of Thurlaston Lane. An assemblage of 66 worked flints, mostly of mid to late Bronze Age date were also recovered from the same site. Between Mill Lane and Thurlaston Lane, further evidence of prehistoric settlement was encountered, including an Iron Age enclosure straddling the line of Mill Lane.

Roman

- 2.4. During the early 2nd century a small scale pottery industry was established in the area, on Shilton Heath, producing relatively low-grade greyware vessels for everyday storage and cookery uses.
- 2.5. Other than this, evidence of Roman activity within the area is sparse, comprising isolated findspots including 2 sherds of greyware recovered during groundworks c.600m to the east of the Site, as well as a single sherd of 3rd to 4th century Oxfordshire Ware. A number of Roman coins have also been found during metal detecting adjacent to Shilton Road, to the north.

Medieval

- 2.6. Earl Shilton is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Scelftone, granted to Hugh de Grandmesnil after the Conquest. Following the death of Hugh in 1094, his son Ivo de Grandmesnil became Sheriff of Leicester, and lord of Earl Shilton. In order to finance his participation in a Crusade to the Holyland, Ivo pledged all his domains, including Earl Shilton to Robert de Beaumont. Ivo died in Jerusalem and de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester became lord of Earl Shilton

-
- 2.7. Robert de Beaumont's son inherited Earl Shilton in 1118 and sided with King Steven during the Anarchy of the 12th century and the wars between Steven and Matilda. It is likely that it was during this period that Earl Shilton castle was built. In 1173 Prince Henry raised a rebellion against his father, Henry II; the Earl of Leicester joined the Prince. The Earl was captured in Suffolk and imprisoned at Falaise in Normandy. Henry II set about destroying the Earl of Leicester's castles, including Earl Shilton, by now a hunting lodge and Simon de Montfort was created the 5th Earl of Leicester. It was during this period that the Earl prefix was added to the village placename.
- 2.8. King Henry briefly held Shilton manor after the death of Simon de Montfort, before handing to his son Edmund, who had been created Earl of Leicester and Lancaster in 1272. Following the death of Edmund in 1298, his son, Thomas of Lancaster became Lord of Earl Shilton, at that time the Manor consisted of the main house and gardens and 240 acres of land.
- 2.9. In 1359, John of Gaunt the fourth son of Edward III married Blanche, the younger daughter of Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Lancaster, as part of her dowry; the Manor of Earl Shilton was given to Gaunt. Following the Wars of the Roses Earl Shilton was granted to Edward Trussel and during the reign of Henry VIII, land in Earl Shilton was granted to Trinity Hospital, Cambridge.
- 2.10. The Leicestershire HER records a number of medieval features within the area, particularly centred on the historic settlement core of Earl Shilton. The most significant of these is the Earl Shilton Castle, designated as a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1010302). East of the Castle is the Church of St Simon and St Jude (Figure 2), a Grade II* listed building, with an associated burial ground (NHLE 1074259). The church is thought to have originated in the 13th century as a chapel associated with the castle. Immediately to the south-east of the church an early, un-dated map records "Pinfold Close", suggesting the location of the medieval pound.
- 2.11. Approximately 800m north of the Site, early mapping records Mill Holme, suggesting the location of a medieval water mill. The HER also identifies the forest of Leicester and one of the four parks within it, Tooley deer park, to the northeast of the Site, which at one time belonged to the Castle at 'Earle Shilton'.
- 2.12. Medieval find spots within the area include an Edward I penny found east of the allotments to the east of the Site. Further medieval coins were found east of Brockley

Farm to the west. Metal detecting adjacent to Shilton Road, to the north-west of the proposed development area, recovered a Henry III hammered penny. A fragment of medieval mortar, 5" high, with a diameter of 6 3/4" was found in 1966 in the Old Vicarage Garden.

Post-medieval and modern

- 2.13. By the reign of Elizabeth I in 1564, there were 10 families living in Earl Shilton. In 1640 William Iliffe introduced the first knitting frame to nearby Hinckley, the first recorded outside London, thus changing the whole economy of the area. The Stocking frames soon spread to Earl Shilton, with each stocking maker renting his frame and working from his cottage. This marked the beginning of larger-scale industrialisation of the area.
- 2.14. In 1778 an Act of Enclosure was passed enclosing Earl Shilton's open fields, meadows as well as some 1,500 acres of heath, the bulk of which went to Thomas, Viscount Wentworth. By the early 19th century the village, as a satellite of Hinckley, became dependent on the framework knitting industry with a population in 1831 of 2017. Framework knitters almost exclusively worked in their own home, renting their frame; and in 1844 there were 650 stocking frames, all in the houses for the workers. Following the introduction of the factory system of working, stocking making at home faded. Boot and shoe, as well as the hosiery industry eagerly adopted factory working and so, factories began appearing in Earl Shilton.
- 2.15. In the later years of the 19th century boot and shoe making became the predominant employer in the town, replacing framework knitting. Between the 19th and late 20th centuries, Earl Shilton was an industrial village with numerous shoe, hosiery and knitwear factories. A group of historic shoe factories are grouped to the south of the Site, these now house local businesses.
- 2.16. The HER identifies a number of features and buildings of the post-medieval period within the wider area. A majority of the heritage assets identified from this period are located along the main high street and within the conservation area itself. Early mapping records a windmill to the south-east of Westfield Farm, located to the southwest of the Site.

Geophysical survey

- 2.17. A detailed magnetometer survey (SUMO 2021) was previously conducted within the accessible areas of the Site. The survey did not identify any anomalies of definite

archaeological interest. Three former field boundaries were mapped, while the remainder of the data were dominated by areas of strong ferrous disturbance and made ground.

Evaluation Phase 1

- 2.18. Ten trenches were excavated across the accessible portions of the Site as part of the first phase of trial trenching. Though the topsoil across the evaluation area contained large quantities of modern brick, barbed wire and vehicle tyres, in trenches 1 and 5-10 in particular, with the exception of trenches 5 and 9, the natural substrate was exposed with no visible modern disturbance or truncation.
- 2.19. Trench 2 exposed a single north-west/south-east ditch that corresponded with an anomaly identified by the geophysical survey (SUMO 2021) and a boundary depicted on the 1892-1914 Ordnance Survey Map.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objective of the evaluation was to provide further information on the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date and state of preservation. This information will enable HBBC, as advised by the SPALCC, to identify and assess the particular significance of any archaeological heritage assets within the site, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance and, if appropriate, develop strategies to avoid or minimise conflict between the conservation of those heritage assets and the development proposal. This process is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2021).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The second phase of evaluation intended to comprise the excavation of eight trenches, consisting of seven measuring 20m long by 2m wide and one measuring 10m long by 2m wide, in the locations shown on Figure 2. However, trench 3 was not excavated due to presence of a tree root protection zone. Other minor adjustments were made to the trench locations to take account of ecological constraints (a badger sett), previously unrecorded services and stockpiled demolition debris.
- 4.2. Together with the trenches excavated during the first phase of evaluation, the trenching equates to a 4% sample of the Site area, with the phase 2 trenches

positioned to provide a representative sample of those parts of the site that could not be accessed during the phase 1 works.

- 4.3. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS, Overburden was stripped from the trenches by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. All machining was conducted under archaeological supervision; sondages were placed in trenches 2 – 5 , where the natural substrate was encountered at 1.6m below existing ground level. Stepped extensions were made in trenches 2 and 4 in order to safely expose the natural substrate and record a representative section.
- 4.4. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.5. No deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.6. CA will make arrangements with the recipient museum, Leicestershire County Council Museum, for the deposition of the project archive. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The archives (museum and digital) will be prepared and deposited in accordance with Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020).
- 4.7. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix D, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A.
- 5.2. In all trenches the natural substrate comprised mid orangish brown friable silty loam. It was exposed at between 1m – 1.6m below existing ground level and was directly sealed by Early Modern – Modern made ground deposits comprised mid reddish orangish friable sandy clay with debris including brick, concrete and stones. A small number of fragments of corrugated asbestos sheet were also observed in the arisings from trenches 7 and 8. In trench 7 areas of deeper truncation were noted, taking the form of several large pits cutting the natural substrate, all of which contained the same overlying made ground deposit, brick etc.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were identified during the current works. The depth of made ground in parts of site suggests that parts of it may have previously been terraced or dug-out, most likely prior to the construction of some of the later farm buildings/ barns, while in other area the made ground deposits were most likely used as levelling layers to create level yard and floor surfaces.
- 6.2. As with the results from the phase 1 trenching, there was no evidence for activity pre-dating the modern period, although the extent of truncation and modern made ground was such that it is suggested that had any archaeological remains previously survived in this area they are unlikely to have survived such extensive reworking of the site levels.
- 6.3. Overall, there was no evidence for activity pre-dating the Early Modern period, although the extensive modern truncation identified within the farmyard area could have removed any earlier archaeological remains that may once have been present.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Joan Roig assisted by Ricky Menzies, Kris Chadwick and Rachel Westbrook. This report was written by Joao Heitor. The report illustrations were prepared by Helena Munoz Mojado. The project archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Molly Agnew-Henshaw. The project was managed for CA by Adrian Scruby

8. REFERENCES

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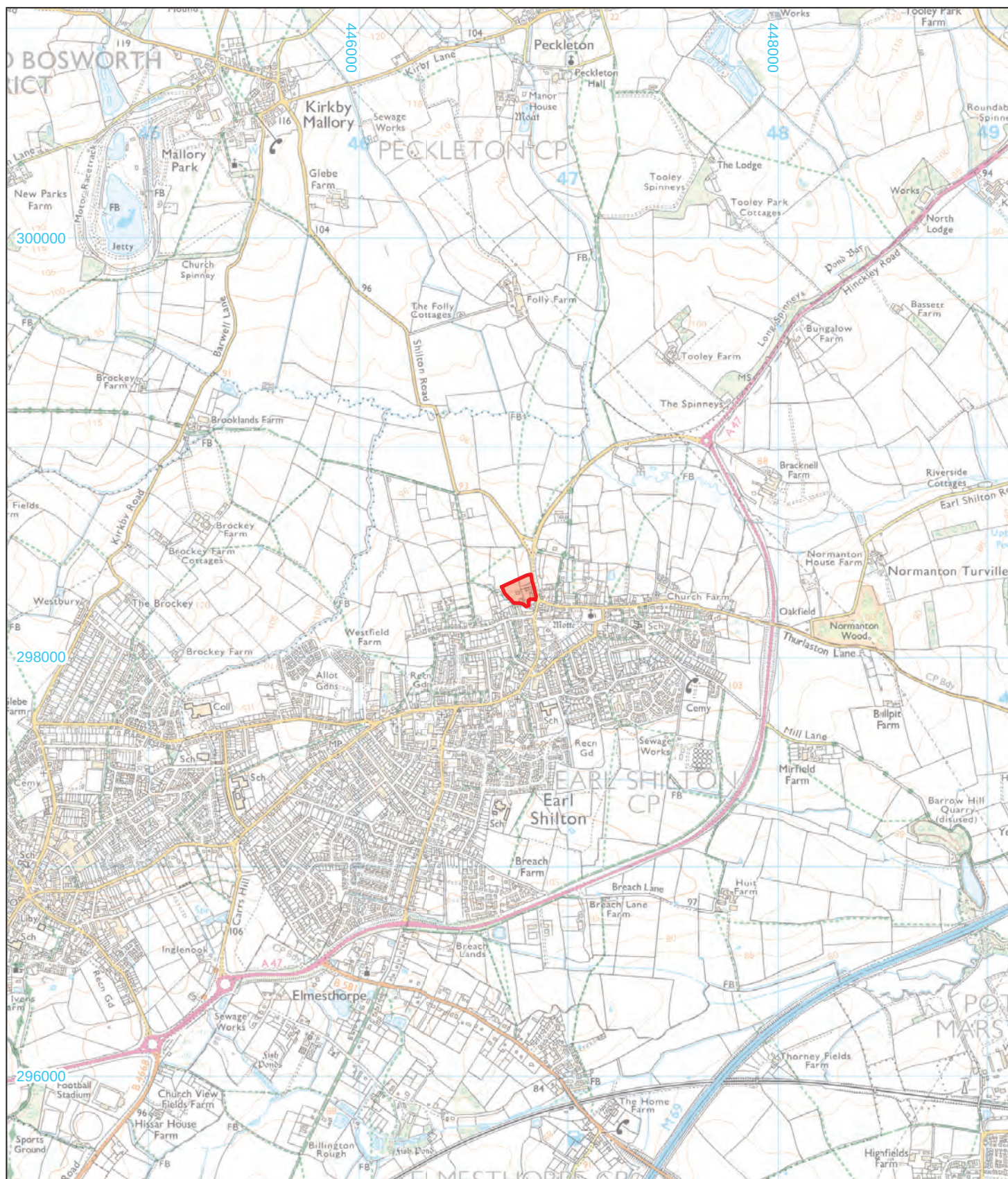
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Trench	Context	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/thickness (m)
1	102	layer		Other Layer	Mid greyish brown, silty sand friable 5% stone (0.10-0.30mm)	10m	2	1
1	103	layer		Natural	Mid orangish brown silty loam friable 25% sub-rounded stone (0.10-0.60mm)	10m	2	
2	203	layer		Other Layer	Friable mid greyish brown silty clay 20% stone inclusions	2m	2	1
2	204	layer		Natural	Friable mid reddish orangish silty sand 40% stone inclusions	2m	2	
3	300	layer		Other Layer	Mid orangish brown silty loam friable 80% sub-rounded stone (0.10-0.60mm) and modern debris	20m	2	1
3	301	layer		Natural	Friable mid reddish orangish silty sand 40% stone inclusions	2m	2	1
4	403	layer		Other Layer	Friable mid reddish orangish sandy clay 10% stone inclusions	2m	2	0.4
4	404	layer		Natural	Mid orangish brown, silty sand friable 25% sub-rounded stone (0.10-0.60mm)	20m	2	0.1
5	500	layer		Other Layer	Mid orangish brown, silty loam friable 80% sub-rounded stone (0.10-0.60mm) and modern debris	20m	2	1
5	501	layer		Natural	Mid orangish brown, silty sand friable 25% sub-rounded stone (0.10-0.60mm)	20m	2	1
6	600	layer		Other Layer	Mid orangish brown, silty loam friable 80% sub-rounded stone (0.10-0.60mm) and modern debris	20m	2	1
6	601	layer		Natural	Friable mid reddish orangish silty sand 40% stone inclusions	2m	2	1

7	700	layer		Other Layer	Mid orangish brown, silty loam friable 80% sub-rounded stone (0.10-0.60mm) and modern debris	20m	2	1
7	701	layer		Natural	Friable mid reddish orangish silty sand 40% stone inclusions	2m	2	1
8	800	layer		Other Layer	Friable mid orangish brown, silty loam friable	20m	2	1
8	801	layer		Natural	Friable mid reddish orangish silty sand 40% stone inclusions	2m	2	1

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Land at Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire, Phase 2	
Short description	In October 2023, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of Land at Hill Top Farm at Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. From the 8no proposed trenches a total of 7no trenches were excavated at the site. No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were present. The natural geological substrate was directly overlain by modern made ground deposits, indicating extensive modern truncation – presumably used as levelling layer associated with the most recent farm buildings in the area. In line with results from phase 1 of the archaeological evaluation, there was no evidence for activity pre-dating the modern period, supporting the idea that the Site lay outside the early historic core of the village.	
Project dates	16-18 October 2023	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical Survey (SUMO 2021) Heritage Statement (Savills 2021) Archaeological evaluation phase 1 (Cotswold Archaeology 2022)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire	
Study area (m ² /ha)	1.6ha	
Site co-ordinates	446811 298313	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Principal Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council	
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Adrian Scruby	
Project Supervisor	Joan Roig	
MONUMENT TYPE		
None		
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
None		
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Leicestershire County Council Museum	None
Paper	Leicestershire County Council Museum	report
Digital	Archaeology Data Service	Digital records; survey, webmap; report
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 20023 <i>Land at Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire Archaeological Evaluation</i> CA typescript report Mk0943_1		



 Site boundary

0 1km

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Ordnance Survey 0100031673



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton,
Leicestershire

FIGURE TITLE

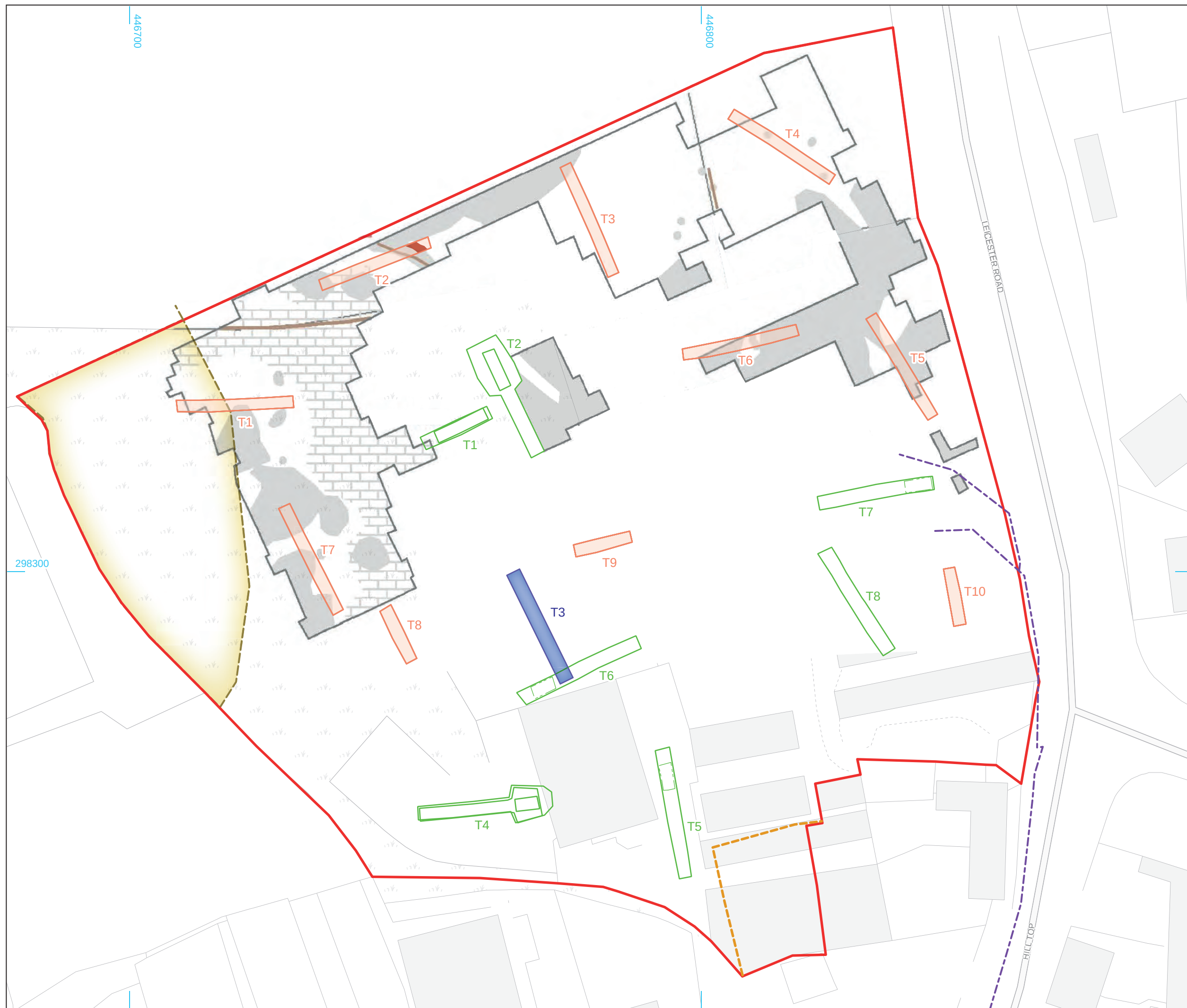
Site location plan

DRAWN BY HMM
CHECKED BY DJB
APPROVED BY JH

PROJECT NO. MK0943
DATE 12/11/2023
SCALE @A4 1:25,000

FIGURE NO.

1



- Site boundary
- Previous evaluation trench (CA 2022)
- Previous archaeological feature (CA 2022)
- Unexcavated trench
- Evaluation trench
- Sondage
- Service constraint
- ACM Safety buffer
- Ecological exclusion zone

Geophysical survey results (SUMO, 2021)

- Former field boundary (corroborated)
- Magnetic disturbance - made ground
- Ferrous

0 1:600 30m
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PROJECT TITLE
Land at Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire

FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan showing geophysical survey results and Phase 1 trench locations



Trench 1, looking north-east (1m scales)



Trench 1, representative section, looking north-west (1m scale)



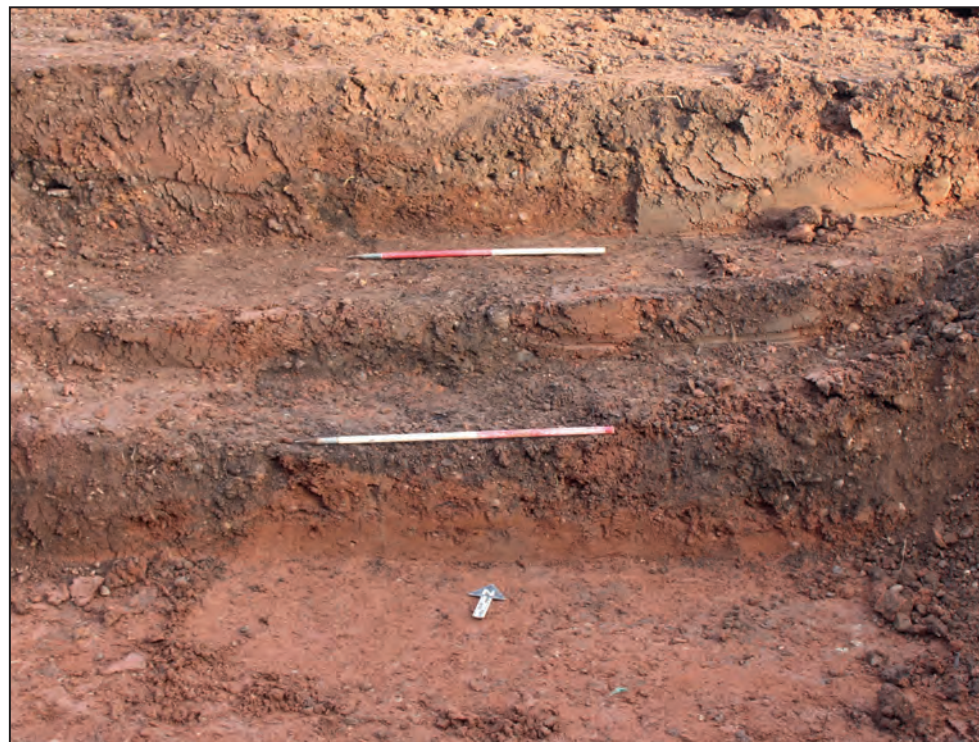
Trench 2, looking south-east (1m scales)



Trench 2, representative section, looking north-east (1m scales)



Trench 4, looking west (1m scales)



Trench 4, representative section, looking north (1m scales)



Trench 5, looking south (1m scales)



Trench 5, representative section, looking east (2m scale)


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PROJECT TITLE
 Land at Land at Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton
 Leicestershire

FIGURE TITLE
 Trenches 4 and 5: photographs

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Trench 6, looking north-east (1m scales)



Trench 6, representative section, looking south-east (1m scale)



Trench 7, looking north-east (1m scales)



Trench 7, representative section, looking south (1m scale)



Trench 8, looking south-east (1m scales)



Trench 8, representative section, looking south-west (1m scale)



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PROJECT TITLE

Land at Land at Hill Top Farm, Earl Shilton
Leicestershire

FIGURE TITLE

Trench 8: photographs

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FIGURE NO.

6

Andover Office

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