



## **Trial Trench Evaluation on Cox's Land Leicester Forest East, Leicestershire October 2014**

Report No. 14/230

Accession Code: X.A14.2014

Author: Ben Kidd

Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS No: molanort1-195947</b>	
Project name	Trial trench evaluation on Cox's land, Leicester Forest East, Leicestershire		
Short description	MOLA Northampton was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out archaeological trial trenching on Cox's land, Leicester Forest East prior to proposed development. Seventeen trenches were excavated. A shallow ditch and possible ditch terminal were undated but may relate to old field boundaries. The brick foundations of a post-medieval to modern farm building were also observed. Modern disturbance on the site probably relates to the construction of the adjacent M1 in the 1960s.		
Project type	Evaluation		
Site status	None		
Previous work	Geophysical survey (Haddrell 2009), Desk-based assessment (Dawson 2012)		
Current Land use	Arable farmland		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval farm building		
Significant finds	None		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Leicestershire		
Site address (including postcode)	Cox's land, Leicester Forest East, Leicestershire		
Study area (sq.m or ha)	c 9.2ha		
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. letter code)	SK 535 027		
Height OD	c 95m		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Archaeological Advisor		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	B Kidd		
Project Manager	A Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting for David Wilson Homes		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date/End date	27/10/2014 – 3/11/2014		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content</b>	
Physical	-	None	
Paper	X.A15.2014	Site documents – context sheets et al	
Digital	X.A15.2014	Mapinfo plans, Word report, dxf data, digital photographs	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)			
Title	Trial trench evaluation on Cox's Land, Leicester Forest East, Leicestershire, October 2014		
Serial title & volume	14/230		
Author(s)	Ben Kidd		
Page numbers	24 pages including text and illustrations		
Date	20/11/2014		

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**Trial trench evaluation Cox's land**  
**Leicester Forest East Leicestershire**  
**October 2014**

**Abstract**

*MOLA was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out archaeological trial trenching on Cox's land, Leicester Forest East prior to proposed development. Seventeen trenches were excavated. A shallow ditch and possible ditch terminal were undated but may relate to old field boundaries. The brick foundations of a post-medieval to modern farm building were also observed. Modern disturbance on the site probably relates to the construction of the adjacent M1 in the 1960's.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

In October 2014, MOLA was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of David Wilson Homes, to conduct an archaeological evaluation on Cox's land, Leicester Forest East, Leicestershire (NGR SK 535 027) (Fig 1).

The Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council (LCC) has advised that a programme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to determine the nature and extent of any archaeological remains within the development area. The requirements were outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (2014).

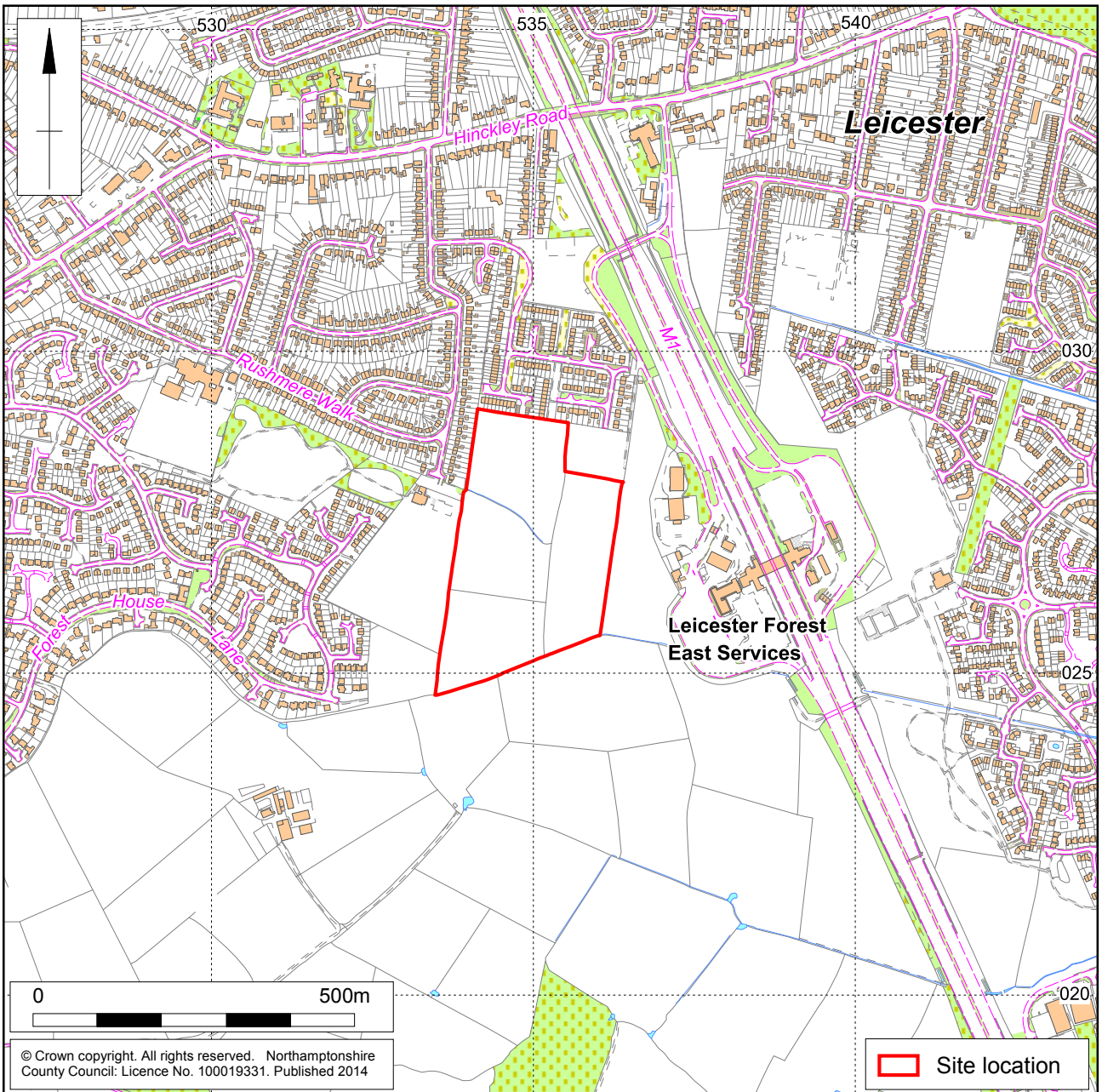
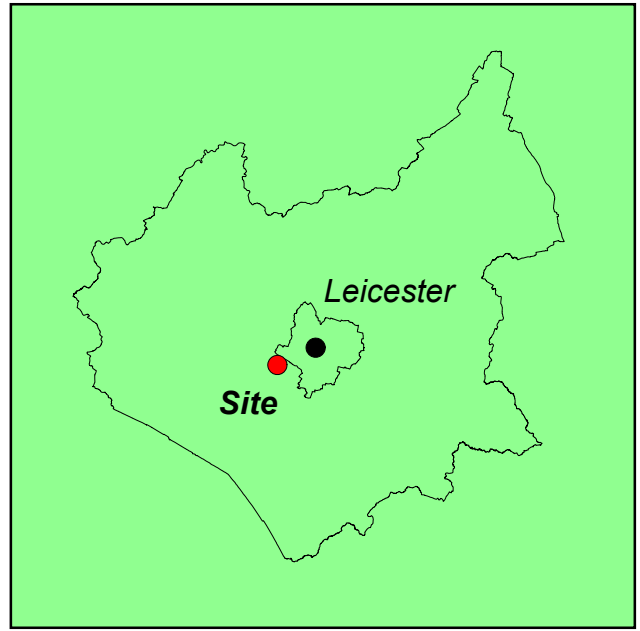
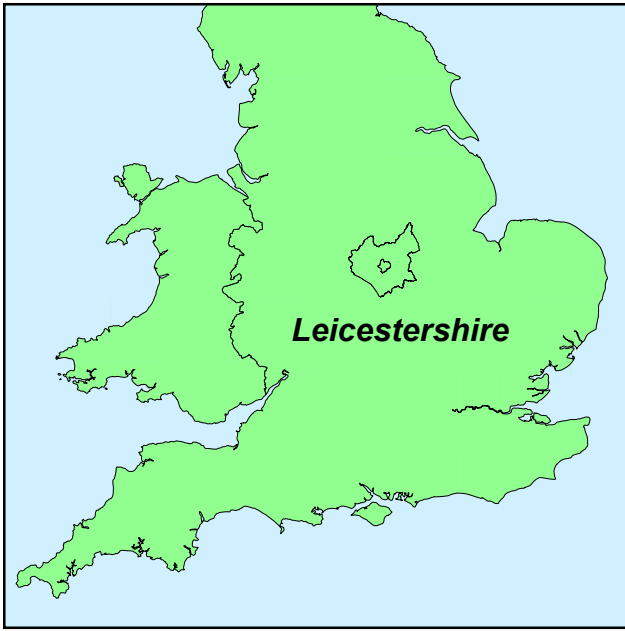
**2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The evaluation of the site was designed to provide information that will allow for the effective targeting of further investigation of the site, if required, prior to or during the early phases of its development.

The following information was required to allow the development of a strategy for further investigation of the site:

- *The location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;*
- *The integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present.*

The evaluation was carried following the guidelines suggested by the IfA's *Standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008), the MOLA Fieldwork Manual (2014) and the East midlands regional framework (Knight *et al* 2012).



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

### 3 BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Topography and geology

The proposed development area consists of three arable fields and is c 9.2ha and lies on Cox's land to the immediate south east of Leicester Forest East. The area is bounded to the north and west by housing, to the east by the M1 motorway and Leicester Forest East services and to the south by further arable fields (Fig 1).

The site is undulating and is at an average height of 95m above Ordnance datum (aOD). The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Society as comprising Mercia Mudstone, part of the Triassic series ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex)).

#### 3.2 Historical and archaeological background

The development area lies within an area of archaeological interest; however, none of the entries in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) are located within the development area. The HER information is summarised below; the details are included in Table 1 (MOLA 2014).

The surrounding area has a broad range of artefacts and historic sites dating from the prehistoric to the modern day. Individual find spots for the prehistoric period include a Neolithic mace head (MLE7373), found c 700m to the east of the site and a broad bladed Middle Bronze Age palstave (MLE6268), located c 600m to the west of site. A Bronze Age ring ditch (MLE218) lies c 600m to the south-west of the site and this combined with the Bronze Age palstave, indicates Bronze Age activity nearby.

The Roman period is well represented in the area, with nearby *Ratae* (Leicester) being the tribal capital of the Corietauvi tribe. The site itself lies c 1.5km to the south of the main Roman road linking the Roman settlements of *Manduessedum* (Mancetter) and *Ratae* (Leicester). The nearest Roman settlements to the site are located near the Roman road and were identified by scatters of pottery and metal work (MLE197, 208 and 7199).

During the medieval period the development area lay partly within the boundaries of Leicester Chase, a royal hunting forest. Survey work by R F Hartley (1989) recorded that many of the fields in and around the site were under plough in the medieval period. The nearest settlement at the time of the Domesday Book is Kirkby Muxloe c 2km away, and it is likely that the majority of medieval settlement in this area was concentrated there. Any medieval occupation relating directly to the site included Forest Lodges such as Boyer lodge (MLE11087), medieval rabbit warrens are also present near the development area (MLE221 and 20166).

The landscape of the development area was sparse during the post-medieval period and it is likely that the area remained primarily agricultural in nature. A small farm ('cottage farm') was built within the development area at some point during the late post-medieval period and is recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 (Dawson 2013).

Geophysical survey carried out by Stratascan in 2009 (Haddrell 2009) identified a spread of debris associated with the former buildings of Cottage Farm. It also recorded a possible southwest to northeast aligned ditch in the north-western field as well as a pattern of agricultural marks and possible pits/dipolar anomalies.



Table 1: Historic Environment Record data for monuments close to Cox's land, Leicester Forest East

Historic Environment Record (Preferred reference)	Description
197	Roman settlement/activity
208	Roman settlement/activity
218	Bronze Age ring ditch
221	Medieval rabbit warren
6268	Broad bladed Middle Bronze Age palstave
7199	Roman settlement/activity
7373	Neolithic unfinished mace head
11087	Boyer House medieval forest lodge
20166	Medieval rabbit warren

#### 4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

A total of eighteen trenches were originally planned although seventeen trenches were excavated using a 360 mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m-wide toothless ditching bucket (Fig 3). This was owing to trench 6 being outside the development area in field 2 to which access was denied. The topsoil and subsoil were removed under archaeological direction to reveal natural substrate

The location of the trenches were surveyed and related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid using Leica Viva dGPS survey equipment using SMARTNET real-time corrections, operating to a 3D tolerance of  $\pm 0.05\text{m}$ . A full photographic record comprising both 35mm black and white negatives and digital images was maintained. The field data from the evaluation has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The excavated area was cleaned sufficiently to define any features. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the excavation were fully recorded, following standard MOLA procedures (MOLA 2014). All deposits were given a separate context number. They were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation.

All trenches were backfilled with their up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical excavator.

The evaluation conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised Oct 2008). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (2014).

## **5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE**

### **5.1 General comments**

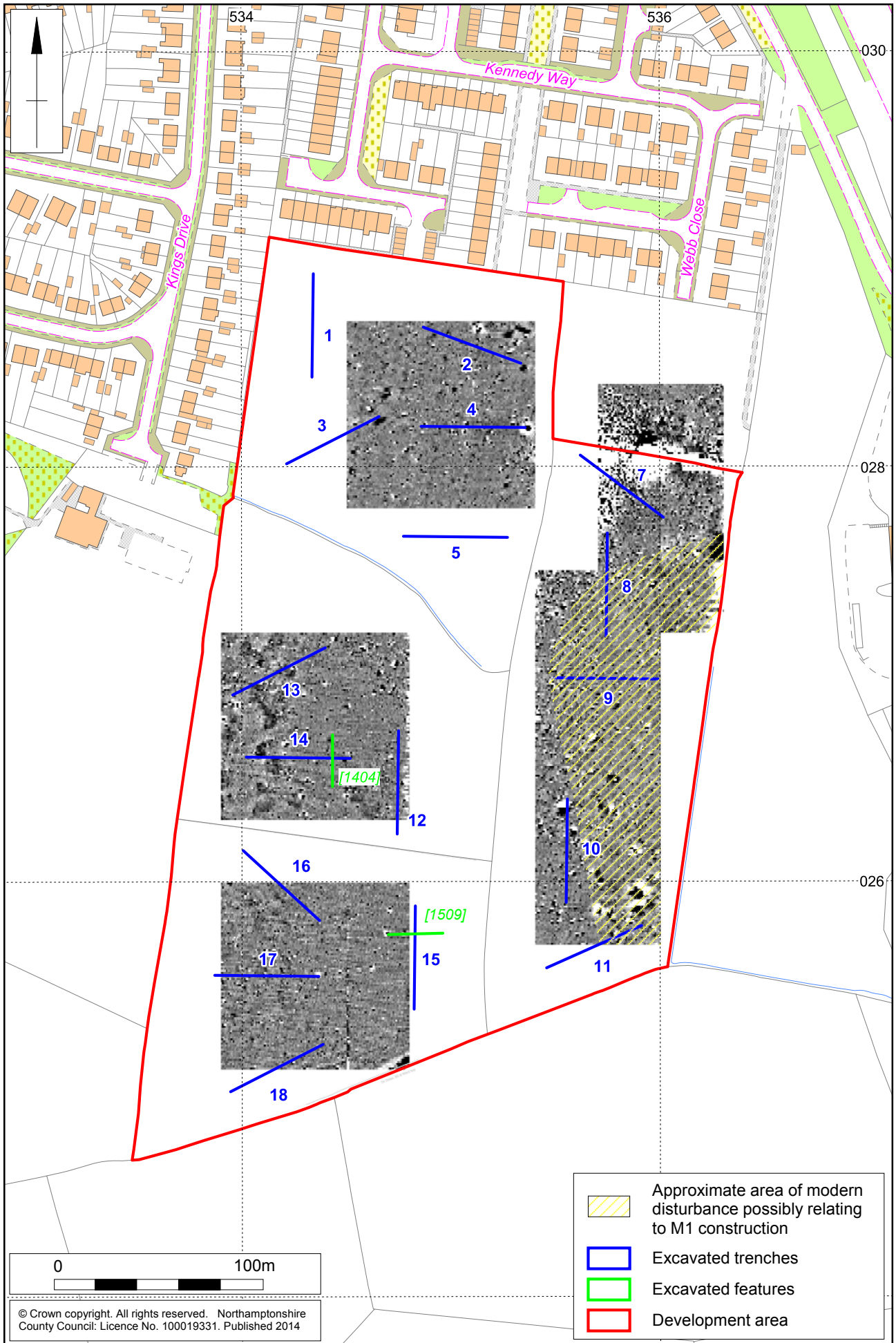
A full list of deposits by trench can be found in the Context Inventory (Appendix 1).

The natural substrate was consistent across the site, in trenches 1-5 and trenches 12-18 the natural comprised firm mid yellow-brown and red silty clay with moderate to frequent bands and patches of sand and gravel and occurred 0.30-0.60m below the present ground surface. In trenches 8-11 the natural was not visible due to heavy truncation and subsequent made up ground relating to the construction of the M1 motorway to c 1.2m.

No soil was recorded across the site.

The topsoil also remained the same across the site and was between 0.30-0.60m thick and comprised firm dark brown silty clay

Two undated linear ditches, a brick post-medieval building footing, tree disturbance and modern truncation and made up layers relating to the M1 construction were identified during the evaluation. No artefacts were recovered.



Scale 1:2500

Trench and feature locations with geophysical survey Fig 2

## 5.2 The archaeological features

At the eastern end of Trench 4, there was a shallow pit [404] (Fig 3), 0.35m long, 0.40m wide and 0.05m deep with an irregular profile and base. It is likely to be a grubbed out tree root that has shown up on the geophysical survey as an anomaly.



Pit/tree disturbance [404], looking north-east Fig 3

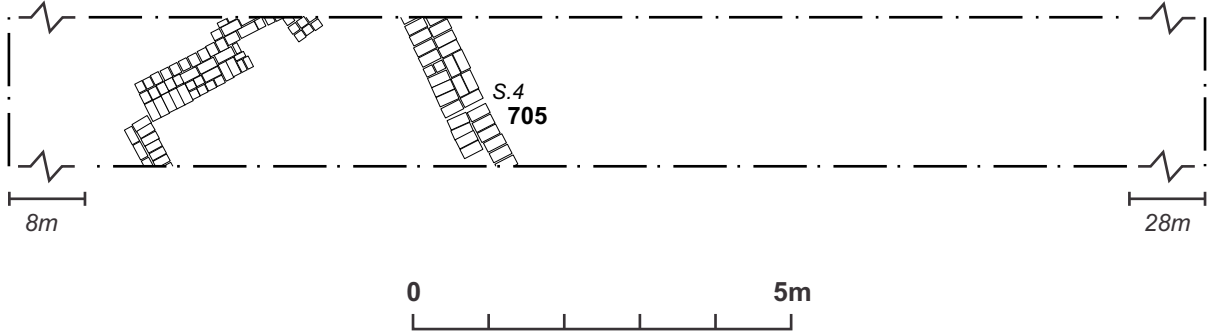
In Trench 14 there was a shallow, rounded, ditch terminal [1404] aligned north-south, 0.40m wide, and 0.12m deep (Fig 4). No dateable finds were recovered. This may have formed part of a former field boundary. It was not visible in any other trench.



Ditch terminal [1404], looking north Fig 4

At the western end of Trench 7 there were brick footings of a recent structure (Fig 5). The footings were on average 0.60m wide and consisted of two to three bricks and were one brick deep. The bricks were plain 0.24m long, 0.12m wide and 0.075m thick.

**Trench 7**



[705] looking south - west



[705] looking south - east

Trench 15 contained a shallow linear ditch [1509] (Fig 6), aligned east-west, 0.80m wide and 0.19m deep, with a shallow, broad U-shaped profile and irregular base. The fill comprised friable mid yellow-brown sandy silt with frequent small stones.



Ditch [1509], looking east Fig 6

Trenches 8, 9, 10 and 11 were heavily truncated and contained made ground which contained modern debris including metal wire, wood, metal bars and brick fragments (Figs 7 and 2). Machine excavated Sondages were excavated to ascertain the depth of the deposits in the trenches and the natural substrate was not uncovered at up to 1.4m deep. It is likely that this made ground relates to the backfilling of truncated ground associated with the construction of the adjacent M1 motorway in the 1960s.



Sondage at western end of Trench 9, looking north Fig 7

## 6 DISCUSSION

Trial trench evaluation on Cox's land at Leicester Forest East identified two undated linear ditches; it is likely that these represent former field boundaries. Geophysical survey (Haddrell 2009) identified anomalies in the approximate location of a post-medieval farm, identified by historic maps as 'Cottage farm' (Dawson 2012). In this area a single brick layer foundation was identified and it is likely that this belongs to the post-medieval farm buildings.

The features identified suggest that the development area lay within the agricultural hinterland surrounding the nearby settlement of Kirkby Muxloe during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

The modern disturbance and made up layers in the eastern and south-eastern areas of the site probably relate to the truncation and backfilling of land related to the construction of the nearby M1 motorway and the adjacent motorway services.

Geophysical survey (Haddrell 2009) identified further anomalies in the north-western area of the site, these represent shallow agricultural features and tree disturbance.

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## **WEBSITES**

[www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html)

MOLA  
20 November 2014



## APPENDIX: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	1.8m x 50m N-S		96.99m N end	0.35m 96.64
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Firm dark Brown firm silty clay (site wide)	0.35m thick	-
102	Natural	Firm mid yellow-brown and red sandy clay with frequent bands of gravel and sand. (Site wide)	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
2	1.6m x 30m NW-SE		96.05m SE end	0.35m 95.7m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
201	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.35m thick	-
202	Natural	Same as 102	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
3	1.8 x 50m NE-SW		96.04m NE end	0.40m 95.64m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
301	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.40m thick	-
302	Natural	Same as 102	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
4	1.8 x 50m NW-SE		96.32m SE end	0.50m 95.92m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
401	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.50m thick	-
402	Natural	Same as 102	-	-
403	Fill of [404]	Firm mid grey-brown silty clay fill with charcoal inclusions	-	-
404	Cut of tree disturbance	Irregular tree root disturbance	0.40m wide, 0.05m deep	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, E end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
5	1.8 x 50m E-W		95.16m E end	0.30m 94.86m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
501	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.30m thick	-
502	Natural	Same as 102	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
7	1.8 x 50m NW-SE		96.57m NW end	0.35m 96.22m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
701	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.35m thick	-
702	Natural	Same as 102	-	-
703	Layer	Firm mid-dark brown silty clay. Disturbance associated with structure [704]		
704	Structure	Brick-built foundation of post-medieval farm building	c 0.60m wide	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
8	1.8 x 50m N-S		96.03m N-end	1.2m +
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
801	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.30m thick	-
802	Layer	Firm mid brown mixed silty clay and topsoil. Possible backfill relating to M1 construction	0.90 m + thick	Modern debris including; metal wire, wood, brick

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, W end (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
9	1.8 x 50m W-E		94.60m W end	1.3m +
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
901	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.40m thick	-
902	Layer	Same as 802	0.9m thick	Modern debris
903	Layer	Firm mid grey clay with frequent charcoal inclusions and modern debris i.e. brick, wood etc. Possible backfill relating to M1 construction	-	Modern debris

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
10	1.8 x 50m NE-SW		92.69m SW end	1.3m +
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1001	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.50m thick	-
1002	Layer	Same as 802	0.80m thick	Modern debris
1003	Layer	Same as 903	-	Modern debris

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
11	1.8 x 50m NE-SW		91.21m SW end	1.35m +
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1101	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.45m thick	-
1102	Layer	Same as 802	0.9m thick	Modern debris
1103	Natural	Not visible	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
12	1.8 x 50m N-S		95.12m N end	0.35m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1201	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.35m thick	-
1202	Natural	Same as 102	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height, (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
13	1.8 x 50m SW-NE		97.51m NE end	0.30m 97.21m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1301	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.30m thick	-
1302	Natural	Same as 102	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
14	1.8 x 50m E-W		97.38m E end	0.35m 97.03m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1401	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.35m thick	-
1402	Natural	Same as 102	-	-
1403	Fill of [1403]	Mid grey-brown silty clay	-	-
1404	Ditch	Broad, shallow U-shaped ditch terminal.	0.15m deep, 0.40m width	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
15	1.8 x 50m N-S		91.59m N end	0.30m 91.29m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1501	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.30 m thick	-
1502	Subsoil	Friable mid yellow-brown silty sand. Visible for c 10m.	0.05m thick	-
1503	Natural	Same as 102	-	-
1504	Fill of [1505]	Firm mid grey fill of tree disturbance	0.05m deep, 0.32m wide	-
1505	Tree disturbance	Sub circular tree disturbance pit with irregular profile		
1506	Fill of [1507]	Mid grey-brown silty clay fill of root disturbance	-	-
1507	Tree disturbance	Circular tree disturbance	0.04m deep, 0.60m wide	-
1508	Fill of [1509]	Friable mid yellow-brown sandy silt with frequent small stones	-	-
1509	Ditch	shallow, broad U-shaped profile and irregular base	0.80m wide, 0.20m deep	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
16	1.8 x 50m NW-SE		96.91m SE end	0.30m 96.71m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1601	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.30m thick	-
1602	Natural	Same as 102	-	-

Trench No.	Length, width & alignment		Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
17	1.8 x 50m E-W		94.35m E end	0.30m 94.05m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/ Samples</i>
1701	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.30m thick	-
1702	Natural	Same as 102	-	-

<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Length, width &amp; alignment</b>		<b>Surface height (aOD)</b>	<b>Depth &amp; height of natural (aOD)</b>
18	1.8 x 50m NE-SW		92.49m NE end	0.30m 92.19m
<b>Context</b>	<b>Context type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Artefacts/ Samples</b>
1801	Topsoil	Same as 101	0.30m thick	-
1802	Natural	Same as 102	-	-



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