

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
Land at Farndon Road, Market  
Harborough, Leicestershire.**

**NGR: SP 71976 86507**

By Tim Higgins



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**An Archaeological Evaluation**  
**Land at Farndon Road, Market Harborough,**  
**Leicestershire**

**NGR: SP 71976 86507**

**Tim Higgins**

**For: Avant Homes**

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# **An Archaeological Evaluation Land at Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire**

**Tim Higgins**

## **Summary**

*University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land west of Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, (SP 71976 86507) from the 07 to 13 June 2017. Trenches were excavated to evaluate an area for a proposed construction of new dwellings in former arable fields. None of the trenches contained any archaeological features and apart from field drains they were generally clean and sterile. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A57.2017.*

## **1. Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land at land west of Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire (SP 71976 86507) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). This was undertaken in order to ensure that any archaeological items are investigated and recorded.

This archaeological evaluation was part of a condition within the outline planning permission that had been granted for residential development of up to 230 dwellings on land at Farndon Fields, east of Farndon Road, Market Harborough, subject to planning conditions ( Figs 1 and 2 ). Condition 21 requires a programme of archaeological work. In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an initial phase of trial trenching to assess of the potential impact on buried archaeological remains from groundworks associated with future development to help determine an archaeological mitigation strategy for the project.

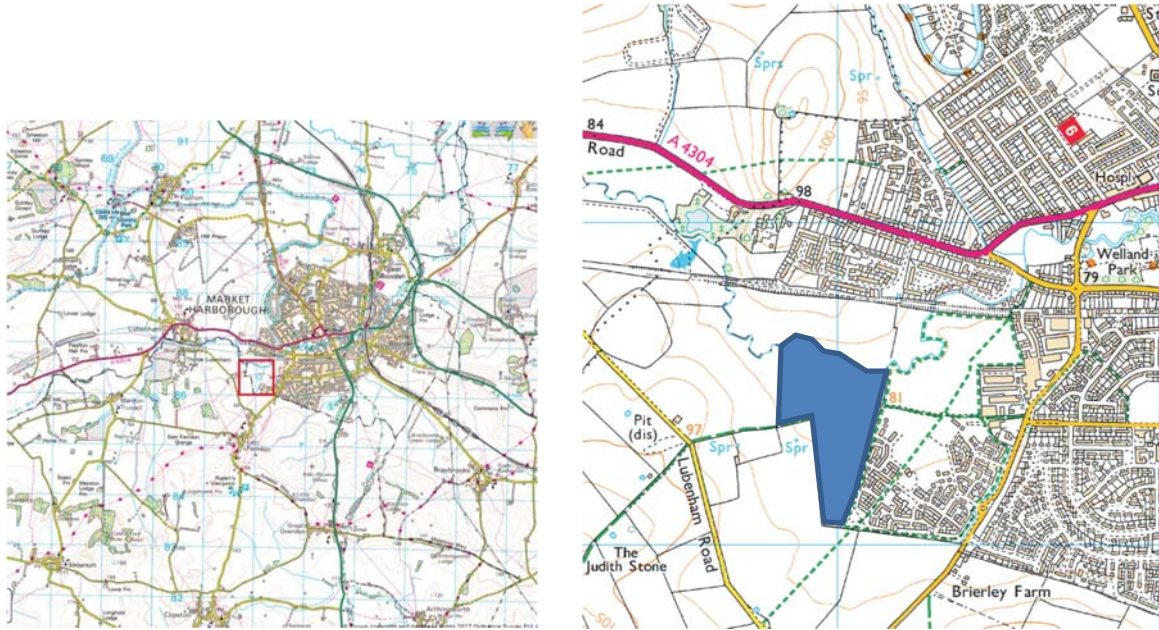


Figure 1: Location of the proposed site

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Figure 2: Google plan showing current land use.

## **2. Site Description, Topography and Geology**

The proposed development area lies on the western side of Market Harborough in the Welland Valley on flat ground bounded to the north by the river and is currently abandoned agricultural land at a height of around 80m aO.D.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology is likely to be Blue Lias and Charmouth mudstone overlain with sand and gravel river terrace deposits. There is likely to be overlying alluvium in the northern area close to the river.

## **3. Historical and Archaeological Background**

A desk-based assessment has been undertaken for the site (Dawson 2016). Although there is prehistoric activity in the vicinity at Lubenham Hill and Welland Caravan Park and Roman activity within Market Harborough, the assessment suggested that the low lying level of the site indicates that there is low potential for prehistoric and Roman activity.

At the time of Domesday Market Harborough does not appear and the site lay on agricultural land west of an early settlement. The town was probably established in the 12th century around the river. There is no evidence for ridge and furrow on the site suggesting it may have been pasture and any potential archaeology is likely to be associated with cultivation and grazing. Early OS maps show the area as fields from the 19th century onwards and the wider area has seen considerable development during the 20th and 21st centuries.

## **4. Aims and Objectives**

The main objectives of the archaeological work are:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project aims, the principal objective of the recording is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context in order to formulate a mitigation strategy to address the impacts of the proposed development on cultural heritage.

### ***Draft Research Themes***



While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project remain unknown until archaeological work is undertaken, it is possible to determine some initial objectives derived from East Midlands Heritage research agenda (Knight et al. 2012). Although there is the low potential for the site the following specific research topics have been identified:

#### *Prehistoric*

Characterise the prehistoric settlement resource and investigate intra-regional variability (4C).

Investigate intra-regional variations in development of fields and linear boundaries (4F)

#### *Romano-British*

Investigate landscape context of rural settlements (5H)

#### *Early Medieval – High Medieval*

Review the evidence for developing settlement hierarchies (6C)

Investigate the morphology of rural settlements (7E)

Investigate development of the open field system and woodland management (7I)

#### *Post-medieval*

Research the development of industry and its impact upon landscape and settlement morphology (8F).

Research aims will be reviewed and updated as the work progresses and new information comes to light.

## **5. Methodology**

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching, which took place between the 07 and 12 June 2017. It follows a strategy for the work devised by ULAS, which was set out in the Design Specification for archaeological evaluation Land at Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire (SP 71976 86507) (ULAS 2017). The trial trenching was undertaken to provide a c. 3% sample of the 2.5ha area.

A total of 25, 30m long trenches had been proposed located where constraints allow. This represented just under a 4% sample of the available area. The provisional trench plan (Figure 3) shows the proposed location of the trenches, although the size and position indicated on the provisional trench plan could vary due to unforeseen site constraints or the presence of archaeological deposits. A contingency of up to 150m of trenching was to be added following approval of the Planning Archaeologist (Richard Clark Leicestershire County Council) if needed to test areas of archaeology.

Following discussions with ecologists we were informed that parts of the northern and southern fields were ecological sensitive area and badgers and newts and otters were on the site. Following further discussions a new constraint trench plan was produced with sensitive areas to avoid. It was felt that the northern area need to be avoided altogether until more detailed ecological surveys had been undertaken as well as the edges of the southern field. A new trench plan was therefore designed and approved by the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist (Fig. 4). The trenches that could be undertaken in the southern field would then

be used to inform a second stage of trenching as part of the mitigation strategy with time allocated for further archaeological work if required.

The remaining eight trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil and overlying layers were removed under full archaeological supervision until either the top of archaeological deposits or the natural undisturbed substratum was reached. Trenches were examined for archaeological deposits or finds by hand cleaning. The trenches were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid and then were backfilled and leveled at the end of the evaluation.

The work followed the approved design specification (ULAS 2017) and adhered to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2014).



Figure 3: Proposed trench plan.



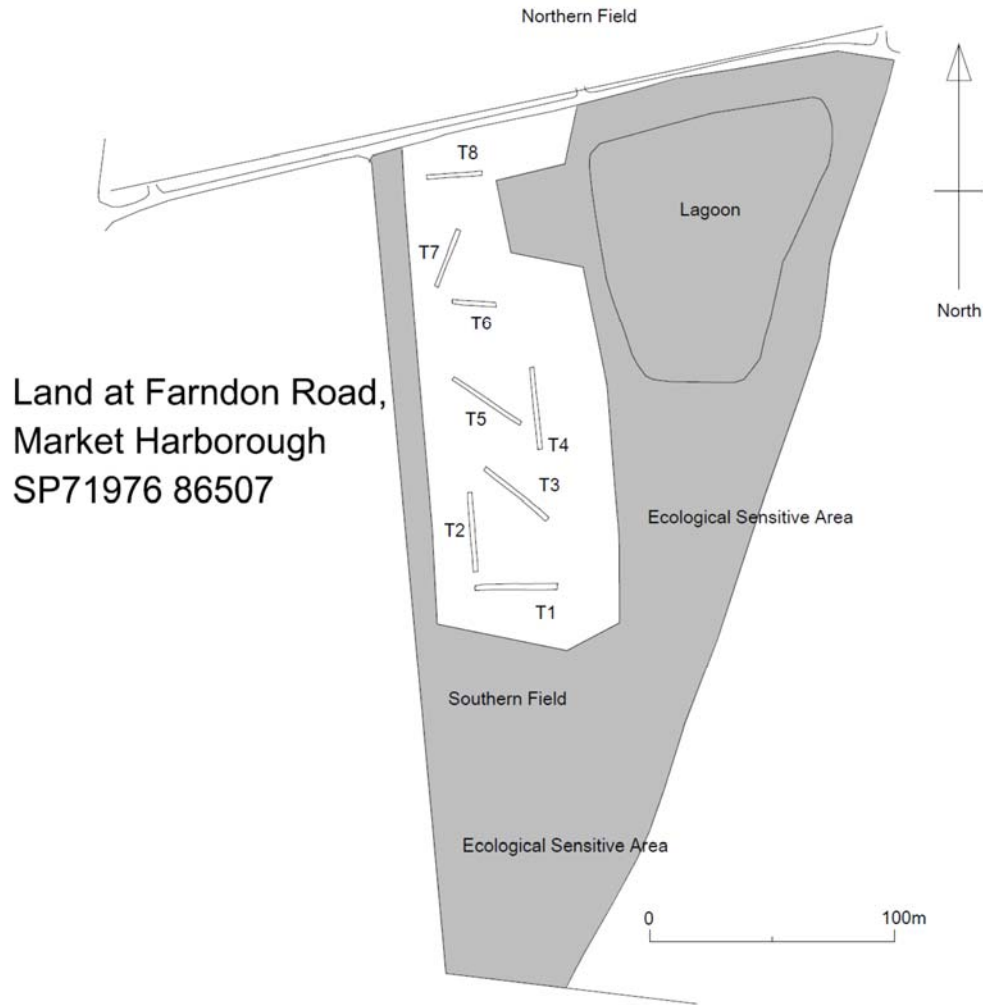


Figure 4: Excavated trenches in the southern field.

## 6. Results

The results of all excavated trenches are presented below.

Table 1: Trench Summaries

Trench	Length (m)	Height of Trench base (m OD)	Natural Substratum	Notes	Min. depth to archaeology/natural (m)
1	c.28	79.55	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench. Ceramic pipe land drain	0.50
2	c.28	79.20	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench empty	0.35
3	c.29	79.05	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench. Ceramic pipe land drains	0.60
4	c.28	78.80	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench. Ceramic pipe land drains	0.60

<b>5</b>	c.29	78.70	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench empty	0.50
<b>6</b>	c.20	78.40	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench empty	0.70
<b>7</b>	c.24	77.90	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench. Ceramic pipe land drains	0.50
<b>8</b>	c.30	77.60	Yellowish Brown plastic clay alluvium	Negative trench. Modern Plastic pipe land drain	0.60

### Southern Field

A total of 8 trenches were excavated in the southern field of the development area (Figs 4-12). No archaeological finds or deposits were located within any of the trenches. The natural substratum was generally reached after around 0.35m-0.50m of topsoil and subsoil had been removed. Most of the trenches contained a yellowish-brown, fine clay-silt between 0.30m and 0.45m deep. This deposit was thought to be possibly alluvial, which suggests that field was subjected to regular flooding from the nearby River Welland located 200m to the north.

The only features revealed within the trenches were modern field drains observed within five of the trenches (Nos 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8). The field drains typically orientated north to south or east to west and comprised of either older ceramic pipe drains or more modern gravel with a plastic pipe.



Figure 5: Trench 1 looking east



Figure 6: Trench 2 looking north





Figure 7: Trench 3 looking north-east



Figure 8: Trench 4 looking north



Figure 9: Trench 5 looking west



Figure 10: Trench 6 looking west



Figure 11: Trench 7 looking North



Figure 12: Trench 8 looking east

## 7. Discussion

The archaeological evaluation by trial trenching within the southern half of the development had revealed no evidence for archaeological features or finds within any of the trenches, apart from modern field drains. The majority of the trenches contained a possibly alluvial subsoil of between 0.3-0.45m deep indicating that the field was subjected to regular flooding.

## 8. Conclusion

The trial trenching within in the southern half Farndon Fields site indicates that there are unlikely to be any archaeological deposits present within the proposed southern development area. The lack of any archaeological deposits and the evidence that the area was potentially a floodplain in the past suggests that the potential for prehistoric activity is relatively low in this area. Based on these results a mitigation strategy has been drawn up (Appendix 1)

## 9. Archive

The site archive will be held by *Leicestershire Museums Service, under accession no. X.A57.2017.*

The site archive consists of:

- 1 Unbound A4 copy of this report
- 8 A4 Trench recording sheets
- 1 A4 Photo record sheet
- A4 Colour digital contact print 1 CD of digital photos

The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A57.2017.

## 10. Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York (Appendix 1). A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course

## 11. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author Tim Higgins of ULAS. Vicki Score managed the project. Richard Clark (Principal Planning Archaeologist LCC) monitored the work on behalf of the Planning Authority. We would also like to thank ecologists Jude Dorward and Peter Koryl both of FCPR Environment and Design Limited for their advice and assistance on this project.

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## OASIS data entry

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universil-		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An Archaeological Evaluation Land at Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire.		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	07-06-2017 - 13-06-2017		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	None		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Arable		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Residential		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning Condition		
	<b>Planning Ref.</b>	Planning Ref: 15/00746/OUT		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Farndon Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire		
	<b>Study Area</b>	2.5 ha		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SP 71976 86507		
	<b>Height OD</b>	79m AOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority (LCC) Harborough District Council		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Vicki Score		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Tim Higgins		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Williams Homes		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	LCC Mus Service	LCC Mus Service	LCC Mus Service
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>	X.A57.2017	X.A57.2017	X.A57.2017
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<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	<b>Title</b>	An Archaeological Evaluation		
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## Appendix 1: Mitigation Proposal for Land at Farndon Fields, Market Harborough

### *Introduction*

The site lies on the western side of Market Harborough in the Welland Valley just west of Farndon Road on flat ground bounded to the north by the river and is currently abandoned agricultural land (Fig.1). Outline planning permission has been granted for residential development of up to 230 dwellings and associated works (15/00746/OUT).

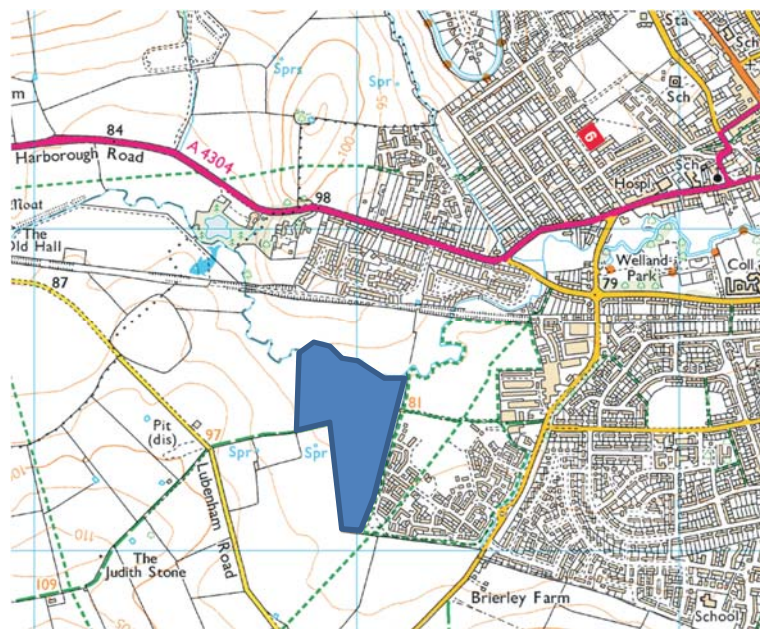


Fig. 1: Site location

Previous archaeological assessment of the site includes a desk-based study of the area. Geophysical Survey, trial trenching and palaeo-environmental assessment has been recommended by the Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council to determine the impact of the proposed scheme on any buried archaeology and produce a mitigation strategy for the site. The site in its current state is not suitable for geophysical survey. Some trial trench evaluation has taken place, however ecological constraints means only a small area is currently available for fieldwork.

### *Historical and archaeological Background*

A desk-based assessment has been undertaken for the site (Dawson 2015). Although there is late Prehistoric - Roman activity in the vicinity just to the east and at Lubenham Hill and Welland Caravan Park as well as within Market Harborough, the assessment suggested that the low lying nature of the site indicates that there is low potential for prehistoric and Roman activity.

At the time of Domesday Market Harborough does not appear and the site lay on agricultural land west of an early settlement. The town was probably established in the 12th century around the river. There is no evidence for ridge and furrow on the site suggesting it may have been pasture and any potential archaeology is likely to be associated with cultivation and grazing. Early OS maps show the area as fields from the 19th century onwards and the wider area has seen considerable development during the 20th and 21st centuries (Fig. 2).

### *Site Conditions*

The site is currently abandoned agricultural land and there are a number of constraints to archaeological field work. There is a large lagoon in the north-east corner of the site and a number of trees and shrubs in the southern part of the site. In addition there are the derelict remains of poly-tunnels and wooden supports in the northern part

by the river (Figs. 3-5). The biggest constraint however is ecological and until surveys have been carried out and a suitable timetable for work can be identified archaeological fieldwork is not feasible.



Figure 2: 1886 map showing the development area (from Dawson 2015)



Figure 3: Looking north in the southern area towards the lagoon and wooded area along the eastern side (12<sup>th</sup> May 2017).



Figure 4: Looking east in the northern area (12<sup>th</sup> May 2017).



Figure 5: Poly-tunnel supports in the northern area.

## ***2017 Trial trenching***

Trial trenching has been undertaken within the available areas (Higgins 2017). This has been confined to the ploughed area of the southern field. Eight trenches were excavated. The stratigraphy generally comprised a ploughsoil with a thin layer of yellow-brown clay-silty (probably alluvial) overlying the natural clay substrata at a depth of between 0.45-0.6m below ground level. No archaeological features were identified in these trenches (Higgins 2017).

### ***Research Objectives***

The desk-based assessment suggests that the archaeological potential of the site is low. However, while the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project remain unknown until the trial trenching is completed, it is possible to determine some initial objectives derived from East Midlands Heritage Research Agenda (Knight et al. 2012) and the following specific research topics have been identified:

#### ***Prehistoric***

Characterise the prehistoric settlement resource and investigate intra-regional variability (4C).  
Investigate intra-regional variations in development of fields and linear boundaries (4F)

#### ***Romano-British***

Investigate landscape context of rural settlements (5H)

#### ***Early Medieval – High Medieval***

Review the evidence for developing settlement hierarchies (6C)  
Investigate the morphology of rural settlements (7E)  
Investigate development of the open field system and woodland management (7I)

#### ***Post-medieval***

Research the development of industry and its impact upon landscape and settlement morphology (8F).

The research aims will be continually reviewed and updated as the work progresses and new information comes to light.

## ***Mitigation Proposals***

### **Phase 1: Trial trench evaluation**

The trial trenching of the southern area suggest that the potential for archaeological deposits is quite low. Following the ecological survey an appropriate window for trial trenching in the northern area will be identified. The previous trench plan will be used as a base (Fig. 6), although trench locations may be moved following the results of the ecological surveys. The trial trenching will determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains and its character. It will also assess the potential for palaeo-environmental evidence particularly in the northern part of the site.

### **Phase 2: Mitigation**

#### ***Southern field***

Given the negative results from the trial trenching in the southern area, a watching brief is proposed during construction. Following the production of a masterplan the areas required to be watched will be outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

#### ***Northern field***

The results of the trial trenching will inform the rest of the mitigation strategy. The specific methodology could range from open area excavation, environmental sampling and analysis to a targeted watching brief during construction. If significant archaeological deposits are found during the trial trenching, the client has confirmed that adequate time and resources will be allocated within the project's budget and timetable to complete any archaeological fieldwork needed before construction begins.

All fieldwork will follow the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance* (2014). A WSI will produced for each phase of work and will be approved by the Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council.



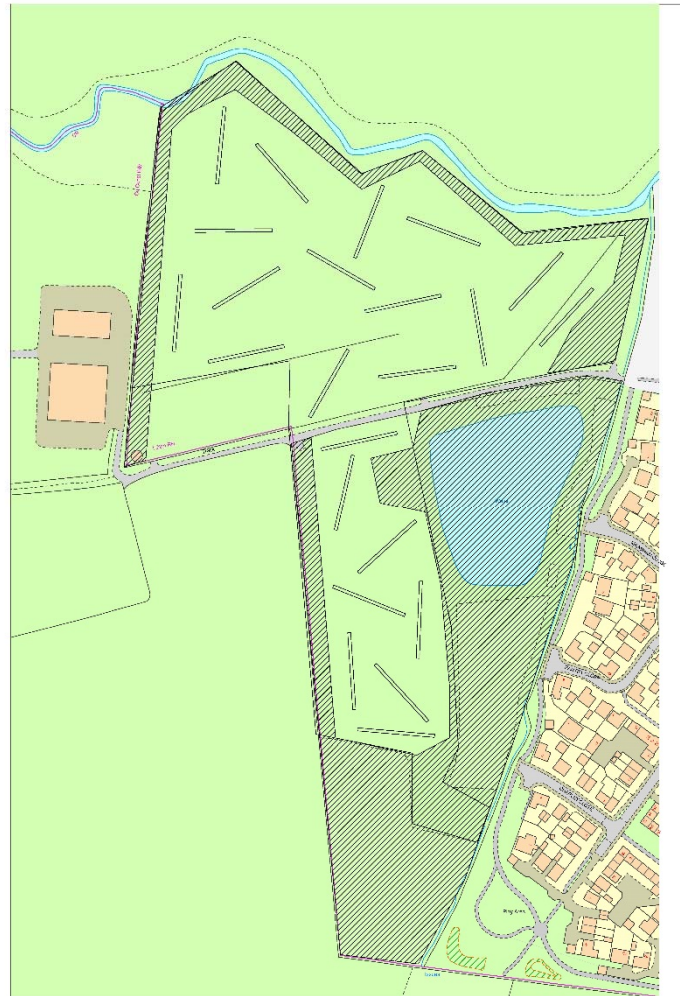


Figure 6: Proposed trench plan (only the eight trenches in the southern field were excavated).

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