
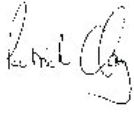


**An Archaeological Evaluation at Breach Farm,  
Breach Lane, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire.  
NGR: SP 468 966**

**Andrew Hyam**

**For: Mrs G A Abbott**

Checked by
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## **An Archaeological Evaluation at Breach Farm, Breach Lane, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. NGR: SP 468 966**

Andrew Hyam

### **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken for Mrs Abbott by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 21st and 22nd of January 2008 in advance of a proposed ménage, stables and hardstanding area to the south of Breach farm, Breach Lane, Earl Shilton (planning application number 07/01087/FUL). The site, covering approximately 0.87ha, was subject to a geophysical survey that identified possible curvilinear ditches and features. In view of this the site was considered to have significant potential for undisturbed archaeological features and deposits. Three evaluation trenches were excavated to reveal two undated post holes and a possible natural feature. The geophysical anomalies appear to be variations within the natural substratum.*

*Records will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council, under accession number X.A.22.2008.*

### **1. Introduction**

In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG 16, Archaeology and Planning), para 30, this document forms the report for an archaeological evaluation on land to the south of Breach Farm, Breach Lane, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 468 966). Mrs G. Abbott has applied for planning permission to construct a ménage, stable block and an area of hardstanding (planning application number 07/01087/FUL).

Earl Shilton lies approximately 11km south-west of Leicester and 4km north-east of Hinckley (fig.1). Breach Farm is located on the southern side of Breach Lane with the development site being a rectangular field approximately 150m to the south of the farm buildings (fig. 2). It is at a height of *c.* 90m OD with a gentle downward slope from north to south. The underlying geology is of Mercia Mudstone with superficial deposits of Wolston sand and gravel with lenses of silt and clay. Open fields surround the site although two agricultural buildings have recently been erected in the field to the west.

The geophysical results and the presence of known archaeological sites and finds within the locality meant that there was a strong likelihood for surviving buried archaeological remains. In view of this Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisors to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough planning authority, requested that an archaeological evaluation take place as a condition of planning permission.

## 2. Background

Place name evidence suggests that Earl Shilton has Saxon origins with suggestions that Shil comes from a personal name or from shelf or ridge so that Shilton can be interpreted as the settlement on a ridge.

The following information is taken from the ULAS design specification for archaeological evaluation at Breach Farm (Appendix 2):

The Earl Shilton area is rich in archaeological remains. The prehistoric period is represented by a cropmark, possibly a Neolithic enclosure, close to the eastern edge of Earl Shilton village (SP477 979) and is not listed on the SMR. A Neolithic macehead was recovered from Earl Shilton (SMR 49NE.F). A middle Bronze Age cremation burial was recorded from Earl Shilton itself and a bronze palstave from close to Huit Farm (SMR 49NE.AQ). Cropmark ring-ditches (SMR 49NE.CB and AA) might be ploughed out Bronze Age round barrows or could be associated with later prehistoric settlement. Other cropmarks include a pit-alignment (SMR 49NE.AV), enclosures (SMR 49NE.S, P and J) and linear cropmarks, which may represent Iron Age and Romano-British settlement sites and agricultural activity. A pottery kiln (SMR 49NE.BF) and a possible villa site near to Mirfield Farm (SMR 49NE.BZ) may also be of Romano-British date.

Anglo-Saxon activity is demonstrated only by the find of a 7th century gold sword pommel from Elmsthorpe (SMR 49NE.BY). By contrast, there is considerable evidence for medieval settlement. This includes the settlement cores of Barwell and Earl Shilton and the manorial complex at Basset Farm (SMR 49NE.Q), agricultural earthworks at Alexander Avenue, Earl Shilton and Huit Farm and well-preserved manorial earthworks and fishponds at Elmsthorpe (SMR 49NE.BG *et al*). A series of linear cropmarks along the parish boundary between Earl Shilton and Tooley (SMR 49NE.N) may indicate the line of the former boundary hedges and most probably date from the post-medieval period.

The available map and documentary evidence indicates that there has not been any development on the site for at least the last hundred years. The development site is currently used as open pasture with hedges surrounding it. There is some evidence of surviving ridge and furrow running from north to south down the slope of the field (fig. 4)

## 3. Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

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 produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of

archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

#### **4. Methodology**

The Senior Planning Archaeologist requested that a minimum sample of 5% be evaluated within the development area which was equivalent to one 20m x 1.6m trench and two 15m x 1.6m trenches. As the proposed building layout was changed just before the evaluation started it was decided to increase the length of the trenches to 25m, 16m and 19m to ensure that an adequate sample beneath each of the developments was evaluated (fig. 3).

The trenches were excavated using a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket fitted to the rear actor. The topsoil and subsoil were removed in level spits under continuous archaeological supervision and the spoil scanned for finds. The trenches were examined by hand cleaning and one longitudinal face from each was recorded using standard pro-forma trench recording sheets.

All archaeological deposits located were excavated and planned at the appropriate scale in order to establish any stratigraphic and chronological sequences. Sections of all excavated features were also drawn at the appropriate scale. All deposits were recorded by notes and sketches using standard ULAS recording forms. Digital colour photographs and 35mm black and white photographs were taken throughout.

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Work*.

#### **5. Results**

##### *Trench 1*

25m x 1.6m

Located within the proposed stable area along an east to west alignment. The stables are to be built to the north of the geophysical anomalies. An average depth of 0.22m of mid grey-brown topsoil was removed to reveal a mid orange-brown silty clay subsoil measuring between 0.1m and 0.13m in thickness. Beneath this was the natural substratum consisting of irregular patches of pale orange-brown or creamy-yellow clay and mid orange-brown sandy gravel (fig. 5). Plough furrows were observed approximately every 2 to 2.5m running north to south across the trench which is still visible as shallow ridge and furrow on the field surface. A single feature which appeared to be a shallow oval-shaped scoop or possible post hole [3] was located near to the western end of the trench below a furrow but did not contain any datable finds (fig. 8). The fill, (4), consisted of a greyish-yellow clay. No other archaeological features were seen within this trench.

##### *Trench 2*

16m x 1.6m

Located in the centre of the proposed hardstanding and placed to cut across the largest of the geophysical anomalies (fig. 3). Topsoil with an average depth of 0.2m was removed as was 0.1m of subsoil to reveal patches of sandy gravel and pinkish-orange sandy clay within the pale orange-brown substratum (fig. 6). Evidence of plough

furrows could be seen running from north to south across the trench as could a number of modern land drains. A long and thin feature, [7], was observed towards the western end of the trench adjacent to a furrow but no datable material was recovered (fig. 8). It is possible that this was a natural feature as it was extremely shallow and the edges were very wavy and diffuse. The fill, (8), consisted of a clean yellow-grey sandy clay.

It is not clear what caused the geophysical response which should run through the centre of the trench. However, the patches of natural pinkish-orange sandy clay of a type not seen in the other trenches may have been responsible.

### *Trench 3*

19m x 1.6m

The final trench was on an east to west alignment running across the centre of the proposed ménage area. Topsoil with an average depth of 0.21m was removed to reveal a layer of 0.11m deep subsoil. Beneath this was a sandy gravel and pale orange brown clay natural substratum (fig. 7). Furrows were again in evidence as were land drains, one of which was exposed and shown to be 0.9m below current ground level. A single oval and shallow post hole [5] was observed between two furrows near to the eastern end of the trench. It was fully excavated but did not contain any datable material (fig. 8). The fill of this feature, (6), consisted of a pale creamy-yellow silty clay with some flecks of charcoal.

No other archaeological features were observed within this trench.

## **6. Discussion**

Despite the promising geophysical survey results, the trench across one of the anomalies failed to reveal anything other than a variation in the natural substratum. Other archaeological evaluation work within the locality has also shown similar changes within the natural. It is possible however that some of the other geophysical anomalies are features with archaeological origins but, for the purposes of this evaluation, they lie outside the development area. The two post holes located in Trenches 1 and 3 were extremely shallow and cannot be easily interpreted especially due to the lack of finds within their fill. The post hole in Trench 1 must pre-date the ridge and furrow as it lies beneath a furrow but is otherwise undatable. They certainly cannot be associated with one another. The feature [7], in Trench 2, seems most likely to be a natural phenomenon, possibly from tree root disturbance, due to its irregular shape and clean fill.

## **7. Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

3 pro-forma trench recording sheets,

8 context recording sheets,

1 context index sheet,

1 A3 drawing sheet,

1 contact sheet of digital photographs,

1 contact sheet of 35mm black and white photographs,  
35mm black and white negatives,  
1 combined photograph record sheet for black and white and colour,  
1 cd containing this report and the digital photographs.

The archive is to be held by Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A.22.2008

### **8. Publication**

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. Oasis is an online index to archaeological grey literature reports.

### **9. Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was undertaken by A R Hyam and R Poulter. The project was managed by Dr P Clay.

### **10. Bibliography**

Clay, P. 2008. *Design Specification for Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching. Breach Farm, Breach Lane, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire.* (ULAS 08-568).

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19.03.2008

## Appendix 1. Figures

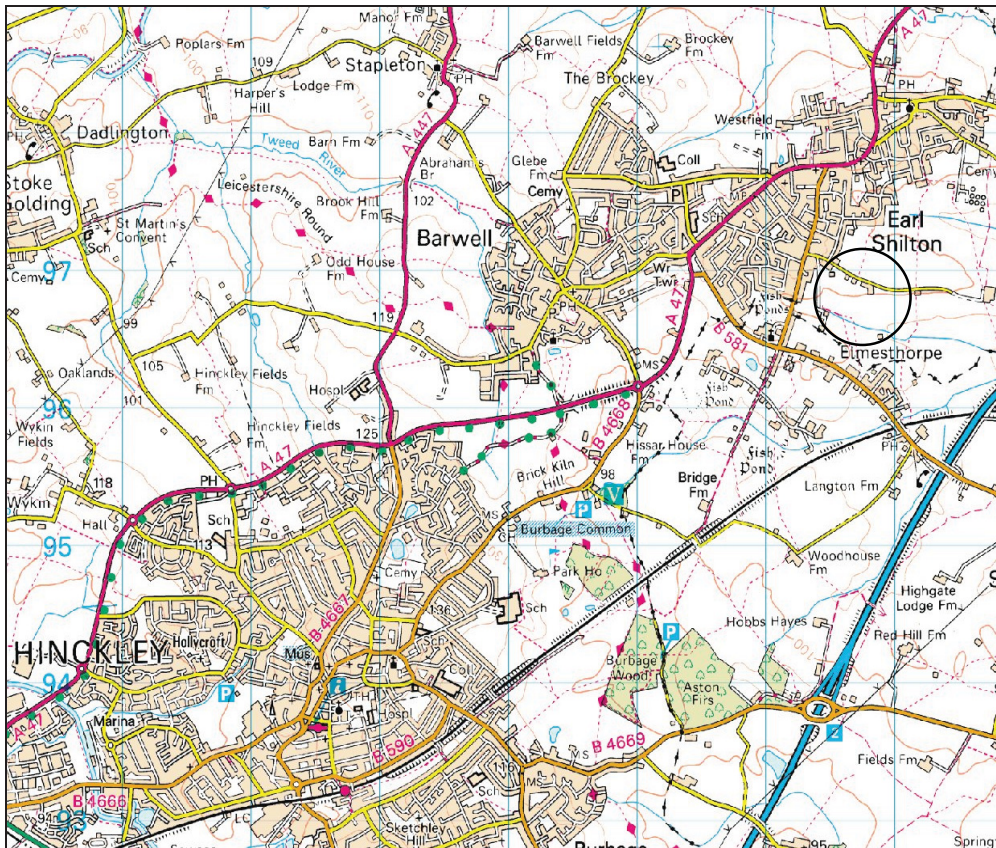


Figure 1. Site location.

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10009495.



Figure 2. Development site location.

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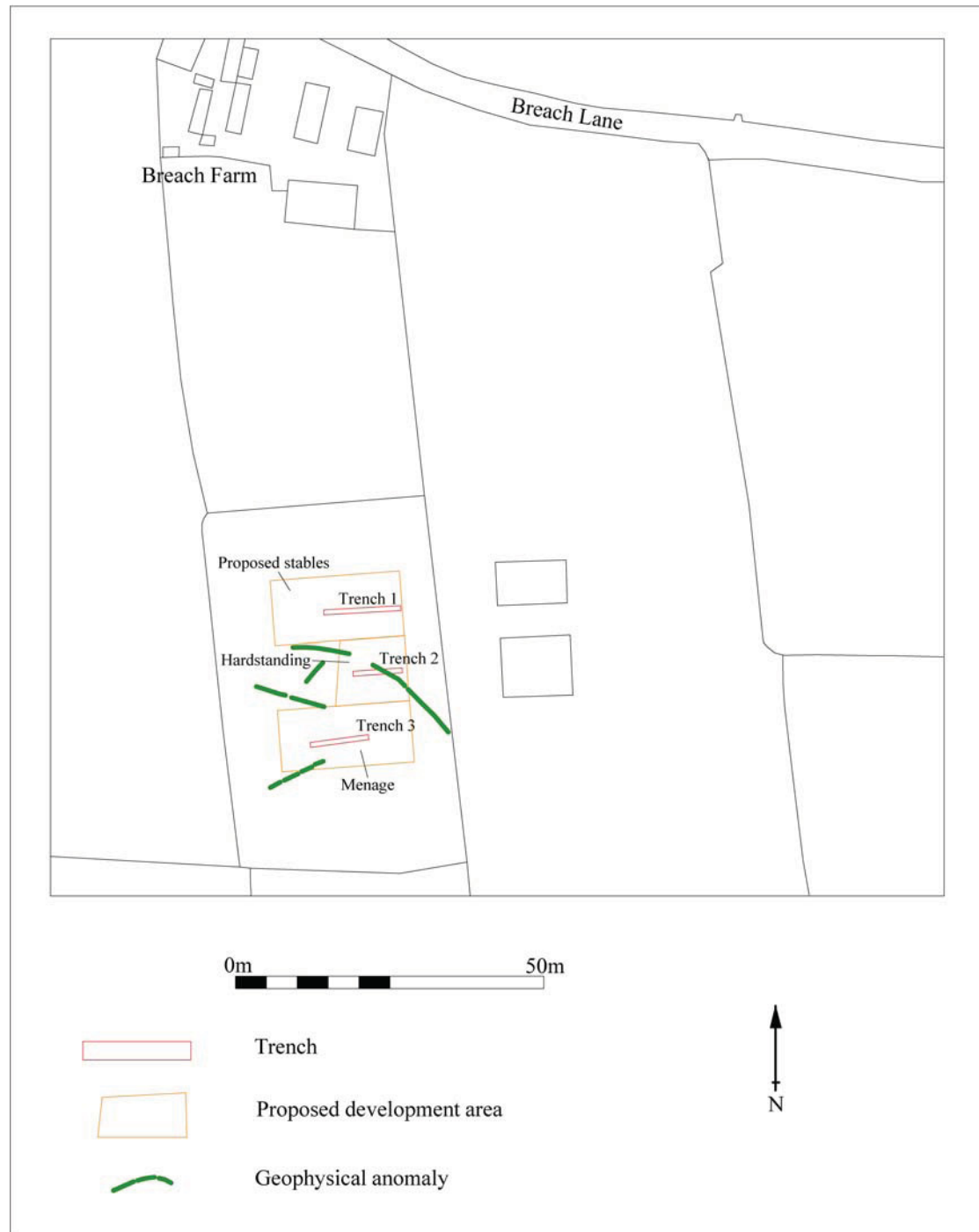


Figure 3. Trench locations.



Figure 4. Development site before excavation.  
Ridge and furrow running across the picture.



Figure 5. Trench 1 looking west.



Figure 6. Trench 2 looking west.



Figure 7. Trench 3 looking west.

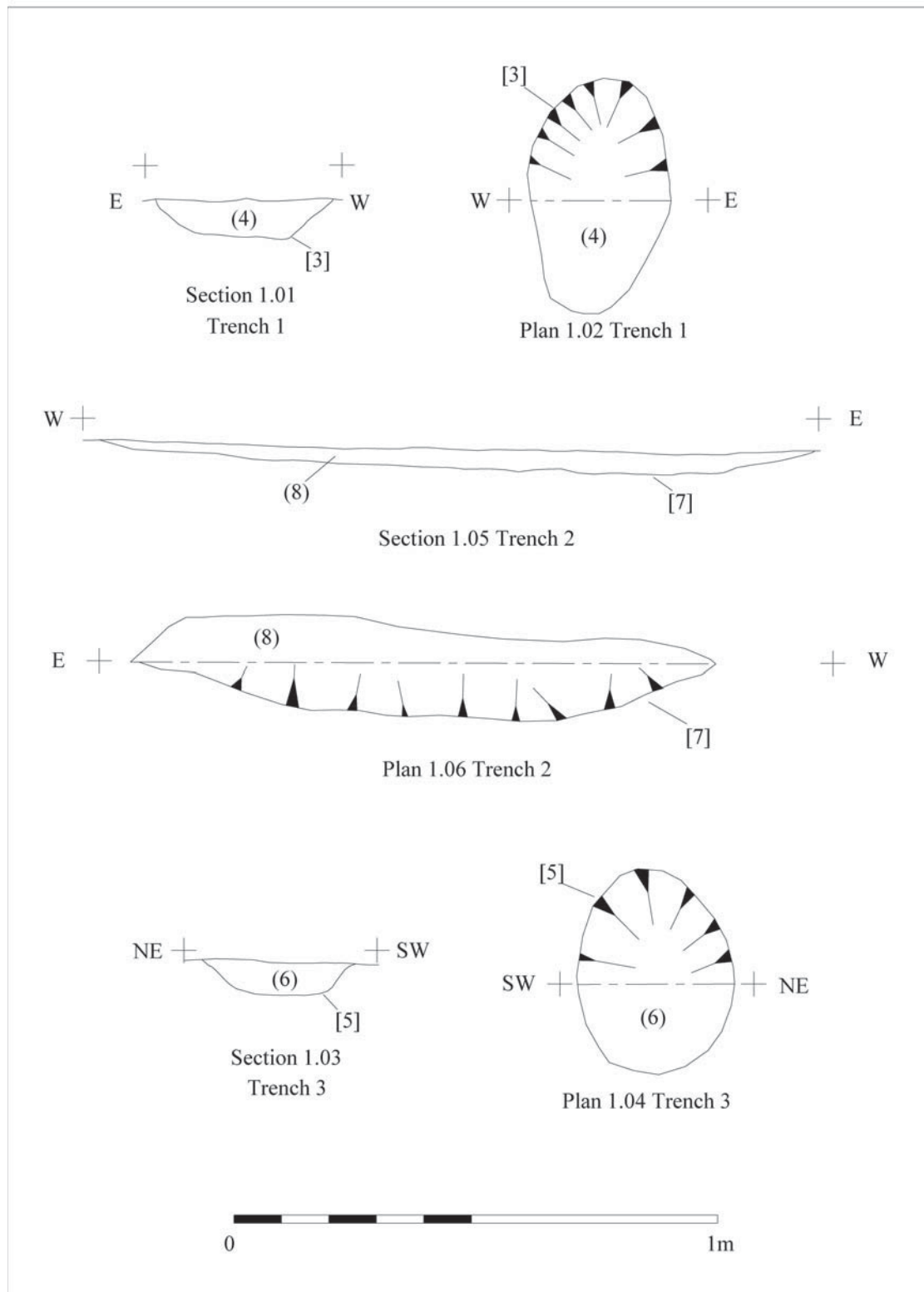


Figure 8. Plans and sections.

## **Appendix 2. ULAS Design Specification**

### **UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES**

#### **Design Specification for Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching**

*Job title: Breach Farm, Breach Lane, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire*

*NGR: SK 468 966*

*Client: Mrs G A Abbott*

*Planning Authority: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council*

*Planning application Nos. 07/01087/4*

## **1 Introduction**

### *1.1 Definition and scope of the specification*

This document is a design specification for a second phase of archaeological field evaluation (AFE) at the above site, in accordance with DOE Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning, para.30). The fieldwork specified below is intended to provide preliminary indications of character and extent of any buried archaeological remains in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority.

1.2 The definition of archaeological field evaluation, taken from the *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance: for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IFA S&G: AFE) is a limited programme of non-intrusive and/ or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.

## **2. Background**

### *2.1 Context of the Project*

2.1.1 The site is located to the south of Breach Lane, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire at c. SK 473 966. The proposal is for a ménage, hard standing and stable block.

2.1.2 Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority details the level of archaeological work required (their letter of 26.11.2007 to HBBC).

### *2.2 Geological and Topographical Background*

2.2.1 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 142 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of boulder clay (Brief 4.1). The site lies at a height of c.90m O.D.

### *2.3 Archaeological and Historical Background*

2.3.1 The application area was subject to geophysical survey by GSB Prospection (Report 2002/60). This identified possible curvilinear ditch –like anomalies suggesting possible archaeological deposits.

2.3.2 The Earl Shilton area is rich in archaeological remains. The prehistoric period is represented by a cropmark, possibly a Neolithic enclosure, close to the eastern edge of Earl Shilton village (SP477 979) and is not listed on the SMR. A Neolithic macehead was recovered from Earl Shilton (SMR 49NE.F). A middle Bronze Age cremation burial was recorded from Earl Shilton itself and a bronze palstave from close to Huit Farm (SMR 49NE.AQ). Cropmark ring-ditches (SMR 49NE.CB and AA) might be ploughed out Bronze Age round barrows or could be associated with later prehistoric settlement. Other cropmarks include a pit-alignment (SMR 49NE.AV), enclosures (SMR 49NE.S, P and J) and linear cropmarks, which may represent Iron Age and Romano-British settlement sites and agricultural activity. A pottery kiln (SMR 49NE.BF) and a possible villa site near to Mirfield Farm (SMR 49NE.BZ) may also be of Romano-British date.

2.3.3 Anglo-Saxon activity is demonstrated only by the find of a 7th century gold sword pommel from Elmsthorpe (SMR 49NE.BY). By contrast, there is considerable evidence for medieval settlement. This includes the settlement cores of Barwell and Earl Shilton and the manorial complex at Basset Farm (SMR 49NE.Q), agricultural earthworks at Alexander Avenue, Earl Shilton and Huit Farm and well-preserved manorial earthworks and fishponds at Elmsthorpe (SMR 49NE.BG *et al*). A series of linear cropmarks along the parish boundary between Earl Shilton and Tooley (SMR 49NE.N) may indicate the line of the former boundary hedges and most probably date from the post-medieval period.

### 3. Archaeological Objectives

3.1 The main objectives of the evaluation will be:

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 produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

3.3 Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1 *General Methodology and Standards*

4.1.1 All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1999).

4.1.2 Staffing, recording systems, health and safety provisions and insurance details are included below.

4.1.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site by the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are met and professional standards are maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the Senior Planning Archaeologist, the Planning authority and the Client.

#### 4.2 *Trial Trenching Methodology*

4.2.1 Prior to any machining of trial trenches general photographs of the site areas will be taken.

Topsoil/modern overburden will be removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by JCB 3C or equivalent using a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches will be excavated to a width of 1.6m and down to the top of archaeological deposits.

The trenches will be backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.

The Senior Planning Archaeologist has requested a 5% sample to be evaluated in areas available, the equivalent of one 20m x 1.6m trenches and two 15m x 1.6m trenches (Fig. 1). The location of these may vary depending on constraints on site.

Trenches will be examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located will be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans will be tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.

4.2.6 Sections of any excavated archaeological features will be drawn at an appropriate scale. At least one longitudinal face of each trench will be recorded. All sections will be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed bench mark.

4.2.7 Trench locations will be recorded using an electronic distance measurer. These will then be tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

4.2.8 Any human remains will initially be left *in situ* and will only be removed if necessary for their protection, under a Home Office Licence and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations.

#### 4.3 *Recording Systems*

4.3.1 The ULAS recording manual will be used as a guide for all recording.

4.3.2 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.

4.3.3 A site location plan based on the current Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) will be prepared. This will be supplemented by a trench plan at appropriate scale, which will show the location of the areas investigated in relationship to the investigation area and OS grid.

4.3.4 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made. Sections including the half-sections of individual layers of features will be drawn as necessary, typically at a scale of 1:10. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be recorded.

4.3.5 A photographic record of the investigations will be prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

4.3.6 This record will be compiled and checked during the course of the excavations.

## **5. Finds and Samples**

5.1 The IFA *Guidelines for Finds Work* will be adhered to.

5.2 All antiquities, valuables, objects or remains of archaeological interest, other than articles declared by Coroner's Inquest to be subject to the Treasure Act, discovered in or under the Site during the carrying out of the project by ULAS or during works carried out on the Site by the Client shall be deemed to be the property of ULAS provided that ULAS after due examination of the said Archaeological Discoveries shall transfer ownership of all Archaeological Discoveries unconditionally to the relevant Museum for storage in perpetuity.

5.3 Before commencing work on the site, a Site code/Accession number will be agreed with the Planning Archaeologist that will be used to identify all records and finds from the site.

5.4 During the fieldwork, different sampling strategies may be employed according to the perceived importance of the strata under investigation. Close attention will always be given to sampling for date, structure and environment. If significant archaeological features are sample excavated, the environmental sampling strategy is likely to include the following:

A range of features to represent all feature types, areas and phases will be selected on a judgmental basis. The criteria for selection will be that deposits are datable, well sealed and with little intrusive or residual material.

Any buried soils or well sealed deposits with concentrations of carbonised material present will be intensively sampled taking a known proportion of the deposit.

Spot samples will be taken where concentrations of environmental remains are located.

Waterlogged remains, if present, will be sampled for pollen, plant macrofossils, insect remains and radiocarbon dating provided that they are uncontaminated and datable. Consultation with the specialist will be undertaken.

5.5 All identified finds and artefacts are to be retained, although certain classes of building material will, in some circumstances, be discarded after recording with the approval of the Senior Planning Archaeologist. The IFA *Guidelines for Finds Work* will be adhered to.

5.6 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner. Where appropriate they will be cleaned, marked and receive remedial conservation in accordance with recognised best-practice. This will include the site code number, finds number and context number. Bulk finds will be bagged in clear self sealing plastic bags, again marked with site code, finds and context numbers and boxed by material in standard storage boxes (340mm x 270mm x 195mm). All materials will be fully labeled, catalogued and stored in appropriate containers.

## **6. Report and Archive**

6.1 The full report in A4 format will usually follow within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork and copies will be dispatched to the Client, Senior Planning Archaeologist; SMR and Local Planning Authority.

6.2 The report will include consideration of:-

The aims and methods adopted in the course of the evaluation.

The nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any structural, artefactual and environmental material uncovered.

The anticipated degree of survival of archaeological deposits.

The anticipated archaeological impact of the current proposals.

Appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs.  
Summary.

The location and size of the archive.

A quantitative and qualitative assessment of the potential of the archive for further analysis leading to full publication, following guidelines laid down in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage).

6.3 A full copy of the archive as defined in *The Guidelines For The Preparation Of Excavation Archives For Long-Term Storage* (UKIC 1990), and *Standards In The Museum: Care Of Archaeological Collections* (MGC 1992) and *Guidelines for the Preparation of Site Archives and Assessments for all Finds* (other than fired clay objects) (Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700 1993) will usually be presented to within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

## **7 Publication and Dissemination of Results**

7.1 A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*. A larger report will be submitted for inclusion if the results of the evaluation warrant it.

## **8. Acknowledgement and Publicity**

8.1 ULAS shall acknowledge the contribution of the Client in any displays, broadcasts or publications relating to the site or in which the report may be included.

8.2 ULAS and the Client shall each ensure that a senior employee shall be responsible for dealing with any enquiries received from press, television and any other broadcasting media and members of the public. All enquiries made to ULAS shall be directed to the Client for comment.

## **9. Copyright**

9.1 The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

## **10. Timetable**

10.1 The evaluation is scheduled to start during late January 2007 with two staff. Further staff will be added as appropriate.

10.2 The report will be ready within three weeks of the completion of fieldwork. The on-site director/supervisor will carry out the post-excavation work, with time allocated within the costing of the project for analysis of any artefacts found on the site by the relevant in-house specialists at ULAS.

## **11. Health and Safety**

11.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety manual with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is attached as Appendix 1. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate. The HSE has determined that archaeological investigations are exempt from CDM regulations.

11.2 A Risks assessment form will be completed prior to work commencing on-site, and updated as necessary during the site works.

## **12. Insurance**

12.1 12.1 All ULAS work is covered by the University of Leicester's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance. The Public Liability Insurance is with St Pauls Travellers Policy No. UCPOP3651237 while the Professional Indemnity Insurance is with Lloyds Underwriters (50%) and Brit Insurances (50%) Policy No. FUNK3605.



### **13. Monitoring arrangements**

13.1 Unlimited access to monitor the project will be available to both the Client and his representatives and Planning Archaeologist subject to the health and safety requirements of the site. At least one weeks notice will be given to LCC Planning Archaeologist before the commencement of the archaeological evaluation in order that monitoring arrangements can be made.

13.2 All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the IFA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*.

13.3 Internal monitoring will be carried out by the ULAS project manager.

### **14. Contingencies and unforeseen circumstances**

14.1 In the event that unforeseen archaeological discoveries are made during the project, ULAS shall inform the site agent/project manager, Client and the Planning Archaeologist and Planning Authority and prepare a short written statement with plan detailing the archaeological evidence. Following assessment of the archaeological remains by the Planning Archaeologist, ULAS shall, if required, implement an amended scheme of investigation on behalf of the client as appropriate.

### **15. Bibliography**

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| MAP 2        | The management of archaeological projects 2nd edition English Heritage 1991   |
| MGC 1992     | Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections 1992 (Museums and Galleries Commission)  |
| RFG/FRG 1993 | Guidelines for the preparation of site archives (Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700 1993)   |
| SMA 1993     | Selection, retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 1993 (Society of Museum Archaeologists) |

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