

Land at Dinghurst Road Churchill North Somerset

> ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

> > REPORT

June 2020

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Looking after the past, today...





Land at Dinghurst Road Churchill North Somerset

for

Coln Residential

C1 project code: C1/EVA/20/DCS

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Front cover image: Looking NE towards Trenches 6-8 ©Context One Archaeological Services Ltd



Summary

Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (C1) carried out an archaeological evaluation through trial trenching to accompany a planning application for the construction of 48 no. dwellings, community orchard and associated car parking on Land at Dinghurst Road, Churchill, North Somerset. The project was commissioned by Coln Residential.

The trial trenching formed the third stage of a programme of pre-application works and follows a desk-based assessment and geophysical survey. The survey identified a modest set of anomalies that could be archaeological in origin, and these were targeted for investigation. The evaluation comprised 8 linear trenches of variable length totalling 185m or 1.23% of the Site and were spread across two fields (Areas 1 & 2).

The Site lies within an agricultural landscape that dates back to the later prehistoric and Romano-British period. Of particular note is the nearby Iron Age hillfort known as Dolebury Hillfort and Star Roman Villa, a Scheduled Monument. Smaller farmsteads are also likely to have been dispersed across their hinterlands; indeed, evidence of an Iron Age settlement has been recorded extending into the former Churchill Quarry. During the medieval period, settlement appears to have been focussed around Churchill Court, with evidence of a deserted medieval settlement to the north of the extant 14th century Church of St John the Baptist.

The trial trenching did not encounter any archaeological features or deposits of any significance and the modest number of geophysical anomalies can be explained. The most noteworthy of these is some evidence for a former orchard in Area 1 which is known to have existed in the early 19th century at least, and a modified natural terrace in Area 2 that could relate to a former field boundary although there was insufficient evidence to substantiate this. Other anomalies appeared to relate to geological fissures in the loose mudstone geology. A small number of finds, all Victorian in date, were probably manured onto the field as part of soil improvement in the 19th century.



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Heritage & Archaeology (C1) carried out an archaeological field evaluation through trial trenching to accompany a planning application (planning reference: 19/P/2713/FUL) for the construction of 48 no. dwellings, community orchard and associated car parking on Land at Dinghurst Road, Churchill, North Somerset (the 'Site') (**Figure 1**). The project was commissioned by Coln Residential. The trial trenching formed the third stage of a programme of pre-application works and follows a desk-based assessment and geophysical survey carried out by Cotswold Archaeology and SUMO Geophysics Ltd, respectively.
- 1.2 The evaluation was requested by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), North Somerset Council (NSC) on the advice of the county Historic Environment Service (HES). In a reply to an email consultation request from Mr Andrew Stevenson (Case Officer, NSC) on 26 November 2019, Ms Cat Lodge, Senior Historic Environment Officer, NSC stated:

"An archaeological desk-based assessment has been submitted as part of the application. The desk-based assessment states 'At this stage, there is no indication for known or potential buried archaeological remains of such significance that their truncation or loss through pre-construction and/or construction activities would preclude development. However, this requires clarification and confirmation by means of further archaeological investigation, to provide additional data regarding the presence, nature, extent and significance of buried archaeological remains, and if necessary, mitigation by record and/or design, offset any harm thereto'.

As stated in my advice at pre-application stage, a programme of investigation must be undertaken to further inform any required archaeological mitigation in line with paragraph 189 of the NPPF and Policy DM6 (Archaeology) of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan. The desk-based assessment concludes that there is 'accordingly potential for buried evidence of later prehistoric/Romano-British and historic agricultural use, but any such remains are not anticipated'. Whilst this is entirely possible, without further investigation in the form of geophysical survey and targeted evaluation based on the results of that survey. This must be undertaken predetermination in order to inform any necessary mitigation, including the possibility of preservation in situ should such remains be discovered, which cannot be entirely ruled out at this stage. This can allow for discussions to take place and appropriate mitigation to be implemented."

- 1.3 The programme of archaeological works will comprise four elements: the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which sets out the project strategy (McConnell 2020); trial trenching; post-excavation and report production (this document); and archive preparation and deposition.
- 1.4 The requirement follows advice by Central Government as set out in paragraph 189 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) (DCLG 2019).

2. The Site

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR ST 344624 159732) covers 2.7 hectares and is located on the eastern extent of the village of Churchill, 12km east of Weston-super-Mare and 4km south of Congresbury, North Somerset (Figure 1). The Site is bounded to the north by the A368, to the west by Skinners Lane and to the east by residential housing off the A38, with the proposed construction area encompassing two fields separated by a hedgerow aligned approximately north to south. A further field south of the eastern field will be a green space. The western (smaller) field (Area 2) occupies ground situated at *c*. 55m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the northwest to 61m aOD in the south, while the eastern (larger) field (Area 1) is stepped with the eastern boundary situated at 52m aOD and rising to 60m aOD at the southern extent. The recorded geology for the Site is sedimentary bedrock comprising mudstone and halite-stone belonging to the Mercia Mudstone Group (BGS 2020). Within the northern and eastern extent of the Site, superficial (drift) geology is recorded as Head deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel (*ibid*.). The soils are characterised as slightly acid loam and clay with impeded drainage (CSAIS, 2020). The Site is currently grazing pasture.
- 2.2 The county Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that a number of heritage assets have been recorded within a 1km radius of the Site, although not within the proposal area itself. These are discussed in full within the desk-based assessment carried out by Cotswold Archaeology and are summarised briefly below.



- 2.3 The Site lies within an agricultural landscape that dates back to the later prehistoric and Romano-British period. Of note is a large univallate Iron Age hillfort known as Dolebury Hillfort, *c*. 550m south-east of the Site, and Star Roman Villa, a Scheduled Monument situated *c*. 1.5km to the south-west. Smaller farmsteads are also likely to have been dispersed across their hinterlands; indeed an Iron Age settlement has been recorded extending into the former Churchill Quarry *c*. 250m south of the Site and some Roman activity indicated by coin finds at distances of *c*. 730m to the south-east and *c*. 630m to the north-west (Taylor et al 2020, 21). During the medieval period, settlement appears to have been focussed around Churchill Court, *c*. 860m to the north-west, with evidence of a deserted medieval settlement to the north of the extant 14th century Church of St John the Baptist (*ibid.,* 22).
- 2.4 The assessment concluded the following:

"It has been established, from consulting a wide range of sources, that the Site has likely comprised agricultural land for much of its history. In the Romano-British period, it may have been part of the wider estate of the villa situated over 1km south-west of the Site. During the early medieval and medieval periods, it is almost certainly part of open fields or commons outlying the hamlets of Churchill, Dinghurst and Langford. In the post-medieval period, the open fields and commons were enclosed and the field of which the Site is part adopted its present boundaries. There is accordingly potential for buried evidence of later prehistoric/Roman-British and historic agricultural land use, but any such remains are not anticipated to be so significance as to warrant preservation in situ and thus preclude development." (Taylor et al 2020, 3).

2.5 The subsequent geophysical survey carried out by SUMO Geophysics Ltd as the second stage of works reported the following:

"The magnetometer survey has not recorded any anomalies that could be interpreted as being of definite archaeological interest. A number of discrete and linear trends have been detected in the dataset and are likely to be due to modern or natural processes. A negative linear response in Area 1 could be associated with a pump which is recorded on historic mapping. A former field boundary is also visible in the magnetic data (Cockcroft 2020, 3)

2.6 Despite the modest set of geophysical anomalies, the survey data alone could not prove the presence or absence of significant archaeological features and deposits. As such, and in line with HES advice, a third stage of pre-application works in the form of targeted trial trenching was commissioned by Coln Residential.

3. Archaeological aims and research objectives

- 3.1 The principal aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:
 - identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits encountered;
 - determine the character of the archaeological remains, where present;
 - recover environmental information, which may provide further information relating to the local historic environment of the area;
 - provide sufficient information to enable further mitigation strategies to be determined, where appropriate
- 3.2 The research objectives were to:
 - determine whether there is any evidence of later prehistoric and/ or Roman agricultural land-use or livestock enclosures;
 - identify any evidence for the development of the medieval and/ or post-medieval field boundaries.
- 3.3 The broader research objectives accord with several research aims of the South West Archaeological Research Framework 2008 & 2012 (SWARF). These included:
 - Research Aim 21b: Medieval and Post-Medieval agriculture
 - Research Aim 29: Improve understanding of non-villa Roman rural settlement



- Research Aim 33: Widen our understanding of the origins of villages
- Research Aim 42: Improve our understanding of Medieval farming

4. Methodology

- 4.1 All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 1994, rev. 2001, 2008, 2014). C1 adhered to the *Code of Conduct* of the CIfA (1985, rev. 2000, 2014), and *Regulations for Professional Conduct* (CIfA, 2014, rev. 2015) at all times. The fieldwork methodology is summarised below.
- 4.2 C1 gave notification of the commencement of the works to the HES but it was not possible for a representative to visit the Site and monitor the fieldwork. However, monitoring will continue until the deposition of the Site archive.
- 4.3 The archaeological evaluation consisted of 8 trenches (referred to as Tr followed by a unique number), 1.8m wide and of variable lengths totalling 185m of trenching. This represents *c*. 1.23% of the proposal area. The excavated trench lengths were as follows: Area 1: Tr3 20m, Tr4 10m, Tr5 20m, Tr6 30m, Tr7 20m and Tr8 35m, Area 2: Tr1 30m, Tr2 20m. Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 were positioned to target the identified geophysical anomalies while the remaining trenches were placed as a control to test 'blank' areas. All the trenches were laid out with an Emlid Reach RTK GPS unit with an accuracy of 1-2cm (see **Figure 2, p.9**).
- 4.4 A 7.5 tonne Wacker Neuson 360-degree tracked machine equipped with a 1.8m toothless (grading) bucket was used to remove topsoil/overburden under the constant supervision of C1 archaeological staff. Machine excavation continued until archaeological features or natural geology was encountered, whichever was first. Spoil was mounded either side of each trench but no less than 1m from the trench edges and examined for the retrieval of artefacts.
- 4.5 Once machine work was completed, the trenches were examined and, where necessary, selectively cleaned using hand tools. Core details of each trench were recorded on C1 pro-forma evaluation trench forms in digital format using iPad mini tablets. This included logging a representative section of each trench to allow an understanding of the stratigraphy. Stratigraphic relationships were recorded using a "Harris-Winchester matrix" diagram. Soil colours were logged using a Munsell soil colour chart. A digital photograph of each trench in plan and section was taken in .jpg format. The photographic record also included working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted. All trenches were levelled to Ordnance Datum by means of temporary bench marks established by GPS. Any suspected archaeological features/deposits were then identified for sampling and appropriate manual excavation undertaken.

5. Results

5.1 The deposits encountered during the evaluation are listed and described in **Appendix 1** and summarised below. In accordance with standard archaeological practice, each deposit recorded during the investigation was given a unique context number and is shown in standard brackets, e.g. (100) with the first digit indicating the trench number: (100) Tr1, (200) Tr2 etc. Deposit colours were matched on Site against a Munsell soil colour chart and described against the relevant hue and reference, e.g. Very dark grey (10YR 3/1).

Deposit sequence

5.2 The deposit sequence was similar in all eight evaluation trenches (**Figures 3-10**). The topsoil (-00) was a brown friable sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments (<0.02m) and measured between 0.15m and 0.30m deep. This overlay a subsoil (-01) which was also a brown friable sandy clay loam, with occasional sub-angular and sub-rounded stone fragments (<0.05m) and between 0.30m and 0.45m deep with the deeper deposits in Tr3-5 and Tr8. Tr6 contained a further subsoil (602) consisting of a dark brown sandy clay loam with frequent small sub-angular stone fragments and 0.40m deep. Below the subsoil was a dark reddish brown sandy clay natural deposit (-02) and (603), containing frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.30m in depth and interspersed with patches of strong brown sand. The natural in Tr6 also contained the occasional discrete patch of pale green clay.



Other deposits

5.3 Tr6 was located across a broad but slight linear earthwork which ran north north-west to south south-east; this measured 16.20m wide and had a break of slope on its east side. Located beneath the highest point of the mound was a discrete patch of sterile dark reddish brown clay (604) with occasional sub-angular and sub-rounded stones <0.10m. Tr1 contained three areas of dark reddish grey sandy clay loam (103) with a moderate amount of sub-angular stones <0.05m. Two of these areas were circular and the other was linear in plan and orientated north to south.

6. The finds

6.1 The occasional sherd of Victorian pottery was observed in Tr1, Tr5, Tr6 and Tr8 but not collected.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

- 7.1 Despite the geophysical survey indicating a number of anomalies of possible archaeological origin, no features or deposits of any significance were encountered during trial trenching, and many of the anomalies can be explained as background activity that largely relates to a recent agricultural past.
- 7.2 The geophysical survey identified a roughly north-south narrow linear anomaly in Area 1 which was interpreted as a former field boundary. This certainly coincides with a boundary shown on the 1903 25" Ordnance Survey map (Taylor et al: 26) but there was no evidence for it in Tr6 which was positioned to investigate it. Instead, a broad earthwork identified in the assessment walkover survey (ibid.: 18) and slightly to the east of the former field boundary (**Figure 2, p.9**) did have some sub-surface remains. The earthwork is characterised by a broad but low mound with a slight 'ditch' on its eastern side, with a difference in height of 0.55m between the two. The contrast in height largely reflects a natural terrace that also extends to the south along an extant field boundary. It is likely that ground to the east has been excavated to accentuate the height of the terrace (possibly equating to the additional deposit observed as context 602), and perhaps the terrace once served as a boundary although this is not shown on any historic maps.
- 7.3 A substantial circular anomaly at the western end of Tr3 turned out to be the magnetic effects of a buried road pin. Most of the remaining linear anomalies straddled by trenches 2, 4 and 8, despite their magnetic strength, were the result of natural fissures in the loose mudstone geology.
- 7.4 A number of the geophysical anomalies and trends shown in Area 2 almost certainly relate to the former use of this field as an orchard; indeed, several circular and linear areas of sandy clay loam noted in Tr1 either conform to tree boles and perhaps sub-divisions. The field was described as an orchard in the Winscombe Tithe Apportionment of 1839.
- 7.5 In conclusion, the trial trenching did not encounter any archaeological features or deposits of any significance and the modest number of geophysical anomalies can be explained. The most noteworthy of these is some evidence for a former orchard in Area 2 which is known to have existed in the early 19th century at least, and a modified natural terrace in Area 1 that could relate to a former field boundary although there was insufficient evidence to substantiate this. Other anomalies appeared to relate to geological fissures in the loose mudstone geology. A small number of finds, all Victorian in date, were probably manured onto the field as part of soil improvement in the 19th century.

8. Archive and dissemination

8.1 The NPPF requires that an archaeological archive arising from development works is made publicly accessible (para. 199). The archive comprises two parts: the paper/digital archive including site records and images; and the artefact/ecofact assemblage.

Paper/digital archive

8.2 Where archaeological features/deposits are recorded, the archive generated from this usually comprises site records, drawings and photographs either in paper format or born-digital data. Within three months of the



conclusion of a project this is normally transferred into the care of a Trusted Digital Repository such as the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) as scanned paper records or native born-digital data. The digital archive will be compiled in accordance with the standards and requirements of the ADS, as set out on their website.

8.3 As no archaeological evidence was encountered, all relevant data has been incorporated into this assessment report and the paper/digital archive will be stored on the C1 cloud storage server or discarded.

Physical archive

- 8.4 The artefact/ecofact assemblage is the legal property of the landowner (excluding human remains and any items that fall under The Treasure Act 1996). However, in accordance with NPPF (para. 199), there is a presumption that the landowner will transfer ownership of this assemblage to a receiving institution (usually a museum) once it has been fully assessed and/or analysed. Receiving institutions store the assemblage and make it publicly accessible. In the event that the designated museum cannot receive the physical archive, the material will be stored for a time-limited period with C1.
- 8.5 On this occasion, there is no physical archive to deposit.

Dissemination: report

8.6 Copies of the report will be submitted to the following:

- client and/or agent
- the HES so that it can be included as part of the county Historic Environment Record (HER)
- the ADS, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations http://oasis.ac.uk/england/)

Dissemination: publication

8.7 By default, a short entry will be prepared for publication in the summary section of the next county archaeological journal or equivalent periodical.

9. Bibliography

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Figure 1. Site setting



Figure 2. Geophysical survey results and trench locations







Figure 3. Tr1 (2 x 1m scales, looking NE)



Figure 4. Tr2 (2 x 1m scales, looking NE)



Figure 5. Tr3 (2 x 1m scales, looking NW)



Figure 6. Tr4 (2 x 1m scales, looking NE)





Figure 7. Tr5 (2 x 1m scales, looking SW)



Figure 8. Tr6 (2 x 1m scales, looking NW)



Figure 9. Tr7 (2 x 1m scales, looking SW)



Figure 10. Tr8 (2 x 1m scales, looking W)



Appendix 1. Context Summary

CONTEXT NO.	PERIOD	ТҮРЕ	DESCRIPTION	LATER THAN	EARLIER THAN	LENGTH	WIDTH/ DIAMETER	THICKNESS/ DEPTH (m)
Trench 1 – 3	Trench 1 – 30m x 1.8m							
100	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments <0.02m	101	-	>30m	>1.80m	0.25m
101	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with occasional sub-rounded stone fragments <0.05m	102	100	>30m	>1.80m	0.30m
102	Natural	Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.30m but predominantly <0.10m stone fragments	-	101	>30m	>1.80m	>0.20m
103	Modern	Deposit	Deposit. Dark reddish grey (5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with moderate sub-angular stones <0.03m					
Trench 2 – 2	0m x 1.8m							
200	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments <0.02m	201	-	>20m	>1.80m	0.20m
201	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with occasional sub-rounded stone fragments <0.05m	202	200	>20m	>1.80m	0.30m
202	Natural	Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.30m and areas of strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand	-	201	>20m	>1.80m	>0.10m
Trench 3 – 2	Trench 3 – 20m x 1.8m							
300	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments < 0.02m	301	-	>20m	>1.80m	0.20m
301	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular stone fragments <0.05m	302	300	>20m	>1.80m	0.40m
302		Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with moderate sub-angular and sub-rounded stones <0.20m and frequent stone fragments <0.05m and areas of strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand	-	301	>20m	>1.80m	>0.10m
Trench 4 – 1	.0m x 1.8m							
400	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments <0.02m	401	-	>10m	>1.80m	0.20m
401	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular stone fragments <0.05m	402	400	>10m	>1.80m	0.45m
402	Natural	Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.30m but mostly <0.10m stone fragments and areas of strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand	-	401	>10m	>1.80m	>0.15m
Trench 5 – 2	Trench 5 – 20m x 1.8m							
500	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments <0.02m	501	-	>20m	>1.80m	0.30m
501	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with rare sub-rounded and sub-angular stones <0.20m and occasional stone fragments	502	500	>20m	>1.80m	0.40m



CONTEXT NO.	PERIOD	ТҮРЕ	DESCRIPTION	LATER THAN	EARLIER THAN	LENGTH	WIDTH/ DIAMETER	THICKNESS/ DEPTH (m)
502	Natural	Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with moderate sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.20m and frequent stone fragments <0.05m and areas of strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand	-	501	>20m	>1.80m	>0.10m
Trench 6 – 30m x 1.8m								
600	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments <0.02m	601	-	>30m	>1.80m	0.15m
601	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments and sub- rounded stones <0.05m	602	600	>30m	>1.80m	0.30m
602	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Dark brown (7.5YR 3/4) sandy clay loam with frequent small sub-angular stone fragments	603	601	>30m	>1.80m	0.40m
603	Natural	Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.30m but predominantly <0.10m stone fragments, discrete pale green (gley 1 7/2) clay deposits and areas of strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand.	-	602	>30m	>1.80m	>0.10m
604	Natural	Layer	Layer associated with the variation in ground surface. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/4) clay with occasional sub-angular and sub-rounded stones <0.10m	-	602	>30m	>1.80m	0.05m - 0.20m
Trench 7 – 20m x 1.8m								
700	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments <0.02m	701	-	>20m	>1.80m	0.15m
701	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments and sub- rounded stones <0.05m	702	700	>20m	>1.80m	0.30m
702	Natural	Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.30m but predominantly <0.10m stone fragments and areas of strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand	-	701	>20m	>1.80m	>0.10m
Trench 8 – 3	Trench 8 – 35m x 1.8m							
800	Modern	Layer	Topsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/2) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments <0.02m	801	-	>35m	>1.80m	0.30m
801	Modern	Layer	Subsoil. Brown (7.5YR 4/4) sandy clay loam with occasional small sub-angular stone fragments and sub- rounded stones <0.05m	802	800	>35m	>1.80m	0.40m
802	Natural	Layer	Natural. Dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3) sandy clay with frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones up to 0.30m but predominantly <0.10m stone fragments and areas of strong brown (7.5YR 4/6) sand	-	801	>35m	>1.80m	>0.20m

Hillside : Hunger Hill : East Stour : Gillingham : Dorset : SP8 5JS

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