

**ASHTREE FARM,
LITTLE DOG DROVE,
HOLBEACH ST JOHNS,
LINCOLNSHIRE**



NGR: 533908 317215

MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER: LCNCC: 2023.195

**WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out details of the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an archaeological evaluation at Ashtree Farm, Little Dog Drove, Holbeach St Johns, Lincolnshire (NGR: 533908 317215) in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2021, as well as discussions with Jim Bonnor, Archaeological Officer at Lincolnshire County Council. The WSI complies with the principles of the NPPF (2021).
- 1.2 Independent Archaeology Consultants is an archaeological consultancy company based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. The company subscribes to the *Code of Conduct, the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (CIfA 2021), *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (EAA Occasional Paper 14) and *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (EAA Occ. Paper No 24, 2011). All relevant CIfA Codes of Practice will be adhered to throughout the course of the project.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning Permission has been applied for (H09-0818-23) for a new development at Ashtree Farm, Little Dog Drove, Holbeach St Johns, Lincolnshire. The development comprises the construction of a new grain storage unit. No archaeological features are known from within the proposed development area. The application site lies however within an area marked in the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record as containing cropmarks relating to the Roman landscape of the Fens. These remains include enclosures, field systems, droveways and water features.
- 2.2 The development area encloses an area of some 1800m² at an average height of ca. 2m AOD. The geology of the site comprises Tidal Flat Deposits of clay and silt over West Walton Formation of mudstone and siltstone (British Geological Survey 2023).
- 2.3 The site is located within an area of archaeological potential, as defined by Lincolnshire HER. Therefore, an archaeological evaluation is required prior to any construction within the site. The evaluation has been ordered by South Holland District Council, and is in line with standards described in NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Although, there are no known archaeological monuments from within the proposed development site a number of archaeological remains are known from the vicinity.
- 3.2 In the area surrounding Ashtree Farm are a number of monuments consisting of Romano-British cropmarks (MLI20238), (MLI22203) and (MLI22247).
- 3.3 An area of undated cropmarks is also known from the immediate surroundings (MLI20235).
- 3.4 Possible Roman enclosures and drove ways are known from Pear Tree Farm (MLI22158).
- 3.5 North of the proposed development site is Decoy Farm, Holbeach, a redeveloped 19th century farmstead. The farmhouse was detached from the main working complex and has an isolated location. Large modern sheds are located to the side of the farm (MLI123451).
- 3.6 South of the proposed development site is also Griffins Farm, Holbeach, a redeveloped 19th century outfarm. It has a loose courtyard with a single side of the courtyard formed by working agricultural buildings. It has an isolated location. Large modern sheds are located to the side of the farm (MLI123453).

4 AIMS

- 4.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation will be achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
 - i) to gain information about the heritage assets within the proposed development area;
 - ii) to provide detailed information regarding the date, character, extent, integrity and degree of preservation of the identified heritage assets;
 - iii) to inform a strategy for the recording, preservation and/or management of the identified assets;
 - iv) to mitigate potential threats;

- v) to inform proposals for further archaeological investigations (namely targeted area excavations) within the ongoing programme of research;
 - vi) to define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains;
 - vii) to interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context.
- 4.2 The evaluation also consider the general investigative themes outlined by: Medlycott, M. 2011 (ed.) *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24; *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties* (Glazebrook 1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000), *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda* (1997); *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005-2010* (English Heritage 2005).
- 4.3 Specifically, the following investigative aims will be accommodated in the programme of archaeological work:
- *characterisation of the site in the broader landscape;
 - *characterisation of the activities identified on the site;
 - *characterisation of changes affecting land-use through time

5 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will aim at determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. An adequate representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains are potentially threatened by the new development will be studied. Given the known historic background to the site, it is recommended that trial trenching is carried out in the undisturbed areas to be impacted upon by the building footprint.

5.1 Trial Trenching

Based on the layout of the site it is proposed that three evaluation trenches are opened up across the site in accordance with the attached plan (Appendix 1). It is suggested that the three trenches, all 15m long and 2m wide, are opened up under constant archaeological supervision using a flat bladed ditching bucket fitted onto a mechanical excavator. The total length of trenching will in that case be 45m, covering an area of 90m², or ca 5% of the approximately 1800m² large development area.

The location of the trenches will target areas of proposed ground disturbance and will focus on the area to be covered by the new grain store. Revisions and amendments of the sampling methodologies and percentages may be required in consideration of further details and ongoing fieldwork results.

The location of the trenches will, however, be slightly flexible and will take into consideration potential above- and below-ground constraints and/or hazards, such as trees, utility trenches, overhead cables and areas of modern disturbance. If necessary, the trenches will be slightly re-located. The investigation area will be searched for live cables and other potential threats before the evaluation begins, and the management of spoil heaps will be planned carefully.

The trenches will be excavated to the upper interface of secure archaeological deposits or, where these are not present, to the upper interface of natural deposits. Thereafter, hand-excavation will be required to sample any features exposed.

The field evaluation will not be carried out at the expenses of the heritage assets and will be minimally intrusive to archaeological remains.

5.2 Metal Detecting

Metal detector sweeps of exposed features and spoil heaps will be carried out in advance of, and during, the excavation process. The metal detector should not be set to discriminate against iron. Deeply buried signals will be investigated only if agreed as part of the hand excavation programme.

5.3 Hand Excavation

All man-made features will be investigated. Apparently natural features (such as tree throws) will be sampled sufficiently to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity. Hand excavation and feature sampling will be sufficient to establish the date and character, and to allow appropriate levels of recording.

Deposits and layers (including buried horizons of top- and subsoils) will be sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features. The characterisation of the artefact contents of the ploughsoil will be attempted, to provide an understanding of the presence/absence and condition of underlying archaeological remains: Are the artefacts in the topsoil mixed, and of different periods, (as a result of ploughing or recent ground disturbance) or is the stratigraphy in the ground still intact, with older artefacts in lower deposits.

All exposed features will be subject to a minimum of 50% excavation. At least 15% (or a percentage sufficient to achieve information on the character, function and dating) of linear features and/or very large and deep features will be hand excavated.

All slots through linear features will be at least 1m wide. Particular attention will be given to terminals and intersections, to ascertain stratigraphic and physical relationships.

Structural remains (stake holes, post holes and gullies, as well as masonry foundations or low masonry walls and associated features like hearths) will be excavated fully and in plan/phase, as appropriate to the requirements of the project.

The evaluation will provide a representative sample of the site's archaeology at no significant cost to the value or integrity of archaeological remains therein. Judgement regarding the removal of human remains, structural remains (*in situ* wood or masonry), or other special remains or deposits, will be led by this consideration, and will always be made in consultation with the Archaeological Officer for Lincolnshire County Council. They will also be informed immediately upon the discovery of human remains. If removal of human remains is essential an exhumation licence will be requested from the Ministry of Justice, and the coroner will be informed immediately.

Should exceptional remains be encountered the Archaeological Officer will be notified, and a new brief may be issued in conjunction with the present one. Normal conditions will apply with regard to finds ownership and the Treasure Act of 1996. Any finds that could be considered treasure under the terms of the Act made during the process of fieldworks will immediately be reported to the Finds Liaison Officer. Any item considered treasure will, if possible, be excavated and moved to a safe place the same day. Otherwise suitable security arrangements will be organized over night.

5.4 Palaeoenvironmental Sampling

The proposed development site has good potential for the preservation of faunal/plant remains and/or waterlogged timber. For this reason viable bulk samples of 40 litres (if possible) to characterise soil profiles, as well as plant remains/charred plant remains, molluscs, small faunal remains and pollen sequences, will be taken from a representative selection of suitable deposits in accordance with the evaluation aims.

Special care will be taken to understand the stratigraphy of the site: Where the investigated deposits created in dry or wet conditions, and what can this, in that case, tell us about the development and history of the site? Buried soils and deposits will be carefully studied in order to understand the processes behind their creations. Waterlogged timber will be kept wet to prevent cracking and shrinking, and to facilitate dating and analysis of the wood.

Should Prehistoric features of uncertain age be discovered, as a result of the archaeological evaluation, environmental samples can be used for extraction of

material suitable for Carbon Dating. All samples will be extracted and recorded in accordance with the following publications: *Environmental Archaeology. A Guide to the Theory and Practice and Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011), *Association for Environmental Archaeology, 1995, Environmental archaeology and archaeological evaluations. Recommendations concerning the environmental archaeology component of archaeological evaluations in England (1995)*, *A working classification of sample types for environmental archaeology (1992 for 1991)*, *A guide to sampling archaeological deposits for environmental analysis (1994)*, and in consultation with the appointed specialist and Historic England. The appointed Plant Remains and Environmental Samples Expert Val Fryer will also be available to assist throughout the project.

The following guidance documents will be consulted in order to provide an adequate strategy for the excavation, field treatment and conservation of any delicate organic materials. English Heritage, 2012, *Waterlogged Organic Artefacts: Guidelines on Their Recovery, Analysis and Conservation*; English Heritage, 2008, *Investigative Conservation: Guidance on How the Detailed Examination of Artefacts from Archaeological Sites Can Shed Light on Their Manufacture and Use*; English Heritage, 2010, *Waterlogged Wood: Guidelines on the Recovery, Sampling, Conservation and Curation of Waterlogged Wood*.

5.5 Recording

A numbered single context-based recording system, written on suitable forms and indexed appropriately, will be used for all elements of the archaeological recording programme.

Measured plans will be produced, showing all exposed features (including natural features and modern features etc.) and excavated areas. Individual measured plans and sections will be produced for all excavated features and deposits. These will be accurately tied into trench plans/trench location plans, that in turn will be accurately related to the Ordnance Survey grid and to suitably mapped local features (boundaries, buildings, roads etc.). All sections, in the scale 1:10, and plans, in the scale 1:20, will be related accurately to Ordnance Datum. Samples will be marked up and transported to laboratories as soon as possible to prevent contamination.

A photographic record comprising monochrome and digital photos will form part of the excavation record. Digital photographs may also be used in the final report (a maximum of two photographs per A4 sheet).

5.6 In Situ Preservation

Should preservation *in situ* strategy be applicable, following appropriate excavation and recording, all exposed surfaces will be cleaned and prepared for re-burial beneath construction materials. If necessary, the laying out of geotextile and buffering materials will be carried out under archaeological supervision. All decisions regarding an *in situ* strategy will be coordinated with the Archaeological Officer from Lincolnshire County Council.

6 ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW

- 6.1 The archaeological investigation will be followed by an assessment of the character and significance of all categories of the recorded evidence. The assessment will be undertaken by suitably qualified specialists in accordance with MoRPHE (English Heritage 2015).
- 6.2 The assessment report will contain a thorough appraisal of the recorded evidence within its local, regional and national context.
- 6.3 Arrangements for the long term storage and deposition of all artefacts will be agreed with the landowner and the HER before or during reporting stage. Transfer of title and the transfer of the ownership of the archive to the County's Archive Facilities or another local registered depository will be arranged at this time, and the arrangements indicated in the evaluation report.

7 REPORT

- 7.1 Specific publication requirements will be agreed during the assessment review. Publication of a short report within refereed local journal or national journals will be anticipated. Copies of the final report will be submitted to the HER and the client.
- 7.2 Reports will be supported by sufficient maps, plans and sections to complement the text. Phase plans, artefact and reconstruction drawings may form part of the report.
- 7.3 The investigation report will be concluded within four weeks from the completion of the fieldwork.
- 7.4 An OASIS form will be completed once all field work has finished. A Data Collection Form will be include in the report as required.

8 ARCHIVE

- 8.1 It is a requirement of Lincolnshire HER that significant excavation archives pertaining to Lincolnshire should be held close to source and made readily available to the public and local and national researchers. The site archive will therefore conform to the guidelines in MoRPHE (2015), and be deposited within the County's archaeological archive storage facilities on completion of site analysis and any ensuing publication.
- 8.2 If alternative arrangements for storage are agreed, the archive will be prepared to the requirements of MoRPHE (English Heritage 2015) and to the Cifa *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (Cifa 2014), *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections* 1993 (Society of Museum Archaeologists, 1993), and *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* 1992 (Museums and Galleries Commission, 1992).
- 8.3 In either case, the requirement for conservation of significant items for long term storage and display will be anticipated. As a supplement to a paper archive, proposals for the creation of a digital archive will be submitted.

9 MISCELLANEOUS REQUIREMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The Archaeological Officer for Lincolnshire County Council will be given notice of when work is due to commence. The Lincolnshire County Council Archaeological Officer will also monitor implementation of the programme of works on behalf of the Local Planning Authority and evaluate the work being undertaken on site according to the methodology detailed in this specification.
- 9.2 The Archaeological Officer for Lincolnshire County Council will also be responsible for considering any changes to the specification of works. Any such alterations will be agreed in writing with the relevant parties prior to commencement of on site works, or at the earliest available opportunity.
- 9.3 Individuals who have an archaeological interest in the area will be given an opportunity to visit the on-going evaluation.

10 STAFF

- 10.1 The site team will consist of an experienced archaeologist, who may be supplemented by additional staff as required. It is expected that the opening up

of the evaluation trenches will take one day for one archaeologist. The following day the trenches will be hand cleaned, planned and documented. Additional days may be required, should exceptional finds or features be uncovered as a result of the site works.

- 10.2 The Site Manager will be Dr. Christer Karlsson who has 25 years of experience from running archaeological sites. The project will also be directed by Dr. Karlsson, who has wide experience from performing, monitoring and managing archaeological fieldwork projects of different periods throughout Britain. He is the Director of Independent Archaeology Consultants and a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.
- 10.3 Specialists who are likely to advise and report on specific aspects of the project include Sarah Percival (Prehistoric pottery), Paul Blinkhorn (Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery), Val Fryer (Plant Remains and Environmental Samples), Dr Tania Kausmally (Human and Animal Bones) and Dr Sonia O'Connor (Archaeological Conservation). Any other categories of specialist reports will be provided by Museum of London Specialist Services. The conservation specialists will be notified prior to the project, so a stand-by system is in place should waterlogged artefacts, or other sensitive archaeological material, be uncovered.

11 MONITORING

- 11.1 The Archaeological Officer for Lincolnshire County Council may visit the site as appropriate. Site visits can be planned in during all stages of the fieldworks.

12 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 12.1 The fieldwork will be undertaken with regard to all relevant Health and Safety legislation, in accordance with the *Independent Archaeology Consultant's Health and Safety Manual* (2022). Independent Archaeology Consultants is a CSCS-accredited organisation, and has, as such, the necessary skills and requirements to direct working sites in a safe and secure manner. A copy of the Risk Assessment for the site will be sent to the Archaeological Officer for Lincolnshire County Council prior to the site works.

13 INSURANCE

- 13.1 Independent Archaeology Consultants carries appropriate levels of Public Liability, Employers Liability Insurance and Professional Indemnity Insurance. Copies of the certificates are available on request.

14 TIMETABLE

- 14.1 The archaeological evaluation can be conducted by Independent Archaeology Consultants as soon as all necessary permissions have been achieved, the WSI has been approved by the Council and the client gives the field team access to the site. It is anticipated, however, that the evaluation can be conducted during the winter of 2023/2024.

15 LITERATURE

APP (2007) *Archaeological Archives: A Guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*: Archaeological Archive Forum (2007)

BGS. *British Geological Survey* (2023)

CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS (2021 revision) *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*

CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS (2021 revision) *Standards and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials*

CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS (2021 revision) *Code of Conduct*

ENGLISH HERITAGE (1991) *Exploring Our Past*

ENGLISH HERITAGE (1997) *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda* (Unpublished draft)

ENGLISH HERITAGE (2011) *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from sampling and recovery to post excavation (second edition)* (Centre for Archaeology Guidelines)

ENGLISH HERITAGE (2009) *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* and *MoRPHE Project Planning Note 3: Excavation* (2008)

HER ARCHIVE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE. Lincolnshire County Council. (2023). Lincoln

NPPF (2021) (National Planning Policy Framework). Department for Communities and Local Government. London

TREASURE ACT (1996). London

Appendix 1: Suggested Trench Locations

