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Gartree 2, Market Harborough, Leicestershire

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Report No. Y529/21

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**Gartree 2,
Market Harborough,
Leicestershire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief
Official – Sensitive**

Report No. Y529/21

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. WORKING METHODS.....	6
3. RESULTS	6
4. CONCLUSION	9
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY	9

Figures

1. Site Location
2. Trial Pit, Soakaway and CBR Test Pit Locations
- 3.1 South facing section of Trial Pit 102
- 3.2 North facing section of Trial Pit 103
- 3.3 North-west facing section of Soakaway 104B
- 3.4 North facing shot of CBR Test Pit 108

SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd during ground investigation works prior to development to the south of the existing HMP Gartree. The works observed included the excavation of seven trial pits to undertake soil sampling to identify the nature of any contamination, four soakaways and a further 17 test pits to undertake CBR soil load bearing tests. No archaeological features were identified.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) intermittently between 20th July 2021 to 28th July 2021. The work was commissioned by Pick Everard and was carried out during ground investigations in advance of an outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access and scale for the construction of a new Category B prison of up to 82,555sqm GEA within a secure perimeter fence together with access parking, landscaping and associated engineering works on land adjacent to HMP Gartree, Gallow Field Rd, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7RP.

All work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation issued by Orion Heritage Ltd (2021a) and Cifa standards and guidance documents (Cifa 2014a-c). The CFA code and project number for the work are HMPG and 2625 respectively.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The site is located at SP 70489 88739 to the immediate south of HMP Gartree, and consists of around 28.2ha parcel of land. Within the town of Foxton, located c.900m to the north of the site and Market Harborough lies c.2km to the south-east. The proposed development area (PDA) covers enclosed pasture fields and part of the former runway of RAF Market Harborough Airfield.

The solid geology of the study site comprises ‘Dyrham Formation – Siltstone and Mudstone, Interbedded’ (BGS Geology of Britain Viewer 2021). No superficial geology has been recorded for the site.

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Background

A full account of the historical and archaeological background of the site has been produced in a desk-based assessment undertaken by Orion Heritage Ltd (2021b) from which the following summaries are taken.

Prehistoric

No Prehistoric features have been recorded within the PDA however, Iron Age enclosures and settlement features were identified by geophysical survey (ELE7460) and later confirmed by trial trench excavations c.820m to the east (ELE7713). Further

Iron Age settlement features were recorded c.855m to the south-east of the area (ELE9884). The PDA is considered to have a low potential for further finds and features from the Prehistoric periods.

Roman

No Roman features have been recorded within the PDA however, similar to the aforementioned Iron Age presence, excavations (ELE7460; ELE10743; ELE9884) to the east and south-east have recorded a Roman presence in the form of rectilinear and sub-circular enclosures and internal features. There is some evidence of a continuity between the Iron Age and Romano-British period and interpretation suggests the abandonment of the site(s) by the mid-3rd century. The PDA is considered to have a low potential for further finds and features from the Roman period.

Saxon and early medieval

Two key settlements during the Saxon and early medieval period lie approximately 1km north and south of the area, Foxstone and Lubenham respectively. The PDA lies within the agricultural hinterland to these settlements and is therefore considered to have a low potential for this period.

Medieval

The site falls within the northern part of the ancient ecclesiastical parish of Lubenham within Gartree Hundred in south Leicestershire. The settlements of Lubenham and Foxton continued to expand during the medieval period although the PDA remained within the agricultural hinterland and is therefore considered to have a low potential for this period.

Post-Medieval

The 1885 map shows the PDA formed of enclosed fields, by 1952 the RAF Market Harborough Airfield is established on the Ordnance Survey mapping and occupies the northern and eastern extents of the site. The airfield opened in 1943 and closed in 1947, it remained in use for storage until 1960 when it became partially repurposed for HMP Gartree. Upstanding built structures associated with the airfield have been identified. There is therefore a known potential for post-medieval features and structures relating to the airfield in the vicinity.

1.4 Previous Archaeological work

Magnitude Surveys Ltd produced a geophysical report of the PDA in 2021 (Magnitude 2021). The survey detected ridge and furrow, two former field boundaries and the remnants of structures and debris associated with the former RAF Market Harborough Airfield. A number of weak undetermined linear and curvilinear anomalies were detected however some doubt remains as to their nature and origin.

1.5 Project Aims

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation, the aim of the archaeological programme of works were:

- to determine the character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality of any archaeological remains present; therefore, ensuring their preservation by record.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 Watching Brief

In all instances the removal of the topsoil and subsequent deposits was undertaken using a wheeled backhoe excavator fitted with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket. All mechanical excavation work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision and deposits were removed sequentially (in layers not exceeding 300mm thickness) down to the top of the undisturbed natural strata or to the first significant archaeological horizon.

All excavation and on-site recording were carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

2.2 Standards and Guidance

CFA Archaeology Ltd is a registered organisation (RO) with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). CFA Archaeology follows all relevant CIfA and Historic England Standards and Guidance (CIfA 2014a-c, EH 2006 and 2008).

All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and relevant Standards and Guidance documents (CIfA 2014a) as well as the terms of the Written Scheme of Investigation.

All work was undertaken in accordance with a Covid-19 risk assessment, protocols and safe working practices based on CIfA and government guidance.

2.3 Archiving

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, plans and reports, will be deposited with an appropriate museum according to an agreed timescale, and will be ordered according to current guidelines and to nationally recognised standards (CIfA 2014c). The OASIS reference for the project is cfaarcha1-428191.

Phase	File/Box No.	Description	Quantity
Watching brief	File no. 1	Trench record sheets	14
		Digital photographic register sheets	2

3. RESULTS

The groundworks monitored during the watching brief consisted of seven trial pits, four soakaways and 17 further small pits excavated for soil load bearing (CBR) tests. Figure 2 shows the location of the trial pits and soakaways monitored.

The trial pits (TP101-TP107) were focused on areas of made-ground immediately adjacent to the former runway running approximately NE-SW through the centre of the PDA and were excavated in order to conduct soil sampling and determine the nature of any possible ground contamination. The observations within the test pits have been tabulated below.

Trial Pit No.	Description
101	<p>The 0.7 by 2.2m trial pit was orientated north to south in a small, wooded area of flat ground covered by undergrowth to the north-east of the former runway. Excavated to a total depth of 1.05m.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed at a maximum depth of 0.20m and consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy silt overlying a deposit of made-ground at a thickness of 0.40m comprising a mid-yellow-brown sandy silt with frequent stone and brick rubble inclusions overlying the natural substrate of mid orange-brown sandy clay.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
102	<p>The 0.7 by 2.2m trial pit was orientated east to west on an area of flat ground covered by undergrowth south of test pit 101. Excavated to a total depth of 1.05m (Fig. 3.1).</p> <p>Topsoil was observed at a maximum depth of 0.40m and consisted of a mid-yellow-brown sandy silt with occasional stone rubble inclusions overlying a deposit of made-ground at a thickness of 0.80m comprising a mid-dark greenish-brown clay with frequent rubble brick inclusions overlying the natural substrate of mid orange-brown sandy clay.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
103	<p>The 0.7 by 2.2m trial pit was orientated north to south into the western slope of a large mound covered by vegetation. Excavated to a total depth of 1.70m (Fig. 3.2).</p> <p>Topsoil was observed at a maximum depth of 0.15m and consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy silt overlying a deposit of made-ground at a thickness of 1.55m comprising a mid-yellow-brown sandy silt with frequent rubble brick and concrete overlying the former runway.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
104	<p>The 0.7 by 2.2m trial pit was orientated SE to NW into the north-western slope of a large mound covered by vegetation. Excavated to a total depth of 2.50m.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed at a maximum depth of 0.10m and consisted of a mid-grey-brown sandy silt overlying a deposit of made-ground at a thickness of 2.40m comprising a mid-yellow-brown sandy silt with frequent rubble brick, concrete and possible steel rebar overlying the former runway.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
105	<p>The 0.7 by 2.2m trial pit was orientated east to west into the eastern slope of a large mound covered by vegetation. Excavated to a total depth of 1.80m.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed at a maximum depth 0.10m and consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy silt overlying a deposit of made-ground at a thickness of 1.70m</p>

	<p>comprising a mid-yellow-brown sandy silt with frequent rubble brick, concrete and modern refuse overlying the former runway.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
106	<p>The 0.7 by 2.2m trial pit was orientated NE to SW on gently undulating ground covered by undergrowth, to the west of the former runway. Excavated to a total depth of 0.90m.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed to a maximum depth of 0.18m and consisted of a mid-yellow-brown sandy silt overlying a deposit of made-ground at a thickness of 0.72m comprising a mid-dark yellow-brown sandy silty clay with small to medium rubble stone inclusions. This deposit was overlying the natural substrate of mottled orange grey-brown clay.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
107	<p>The 0.7 by 2.2m trial pit was orientated north to south on gently undulating ground covered by undergrowth, to the west of the former runway. Excavated to a total depth of 0.85m.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed at a maximum depth of 0.15m and consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy silt overlying a deposit of made-ground at a thickness of 0.70m comprising a mid-yellow-brown sandy silt with frequent rubble brick inclusions. This deposit was overlying the natural substrate of mid-orange-brown clay.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>

Four soakaways (SA101-SA104) were excavated to improve surface water drainage around site and their observations tabulated below.

Soakaway No.	Description
101A/101B	<p>SA101A was backfilled following groundwater seepage rendering it inoperable. 101B was excavated to the north-east. Measuring 2.20m by 0.60m it was excavated east to west on a flat meadow to a depth of 2.80m.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed to a maximum depth of 0.35m and consisted of a mid-grey-brown sandy silt with rare small, rounded pebble inclusions overlying the natural substrate of mottled orange and grey sandy clay with common small to medium angular mudstone inclusions. Approximately 2.00m down the natural substrate becomes a dark bluish grey clay.</p> <p>The observable stratigraphy within SA101B was identical to SA101A however this was only excavated to a total depth of 1.50m.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
102	<p>Measuring 2.20m by 0.60m this soakaway was orientated NW to SE on a flat meadow to a depth of 2.30m.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed at a maximum depth of 0.30m and consisted of a dark grey-brown silt with occasional small, rounded pebble inclusions and was found to be overlying the natural substrate comprising a mottled orange and grey clay sealing the mudstone bedrock.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
103	<p>Measuring 2.20m by 0.60m this soakaway was orientated north to south on a northern facing gentle sloping meadow.</p> <p>Topsoil was observed to a maximum depth of 0.30m and consisted of a mid-orange-brown clayey silt with infrequent small, rounded pebble inclusions</p>

	<p>overlying the natural substrate comprised of a dark mottled grey and orange clay.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>
104A/104B	<p>SA104A was backfilled following groundwater seepage rendering it inoperable. 104B was then excavated adjacent reaching a level just above the water table. Measuring 2.20m by 0.60m it was excavated NE to SW on a flat meadow to a depth of 2.30m (Fig. 3.3).</p> <p>Topsoil was observed to a maximum depth of 0.40m and consisted of a mid-orange-brown clayey silt overlying the natural substrate comprised of a dark mottled orange and grey clay.</p> <p>The observable stratigraphy within SA104B was identical to SA104A however this was only excavated to a total depth of 2.0m.</p> <p>No archaeological features were identified.</p>

A further 17 small pits were excavated in order to undertake soil load bearing tests to obtain a ‘California Bearing Ratio’ (CBR). All CBR pits were excavated in areas of grassland around the site to the interface of the natural geology which varied in depth from between 0.19m to 0.60m (Figs. 2 and 3.4). There was no clear definition between the topsoil and subsoil layers, rather both can be characterised as a mid-light yellowish brown clayey silt with a diffuse interface distinguishable only by their varying degrees of compaction. In all instances the natural substrate comprised a mid-orange mottled grey clay and no archaeological features were identified.

4. CONCLUSION

The watching brief monitored the exploratory ground investigations associated with the proposed development to the south of the existing HMP Gartree, which included the excavation of seven trial pits, four soakaways and a further 17 CBR test pits. All areas of made ground recorded appeared to be associated with former construction/demolition of the RAF Market Harborough Airfield or post-date the disuse of the site (as in the case of trial pits 103-105, which showed the mounds to be sited atop the continuation of the former runway surface). These mounds consisted of demolition debris and an accumulation of fly-tipping events. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in any of the trial pits, soakaways or CBR test pits.

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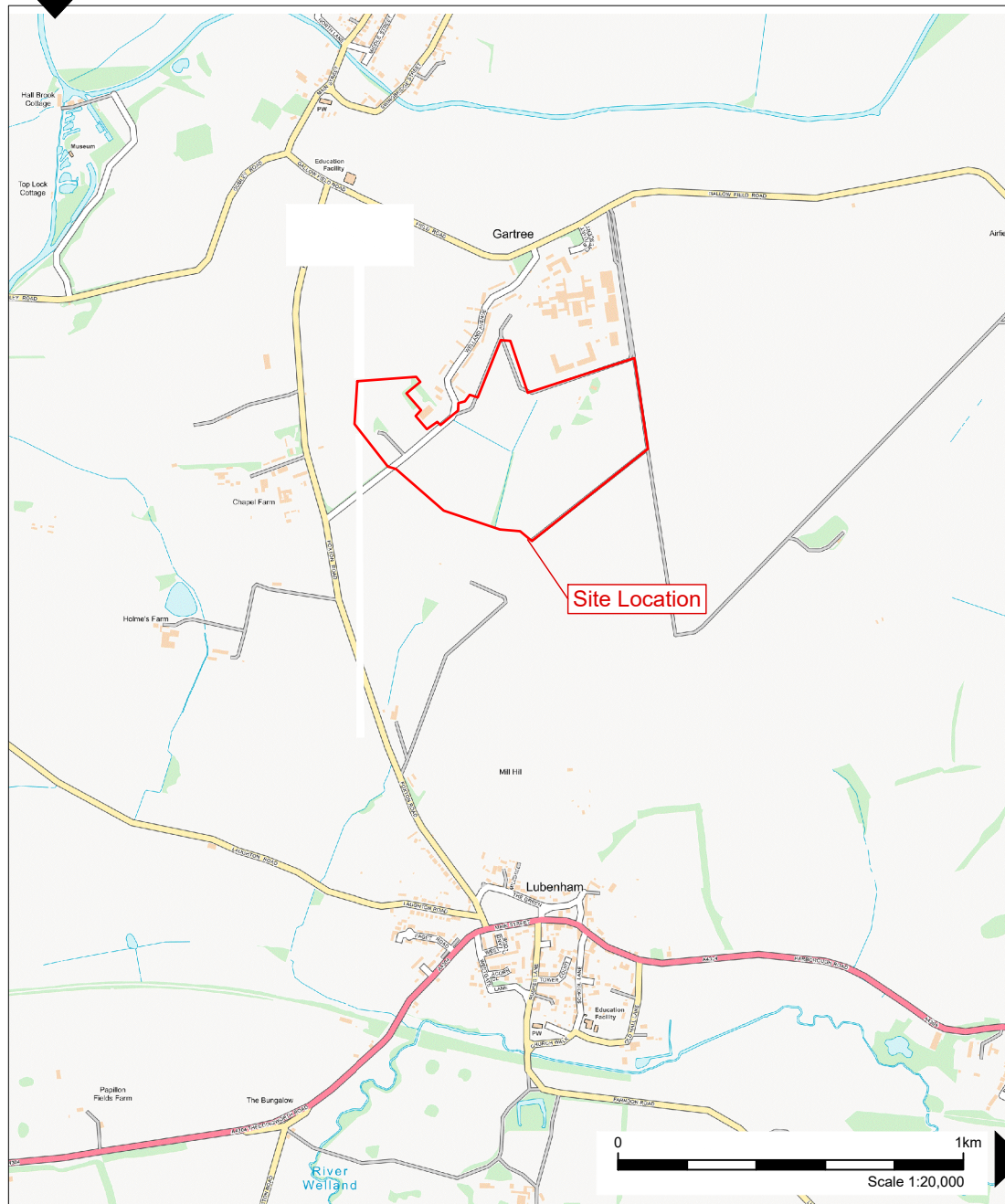
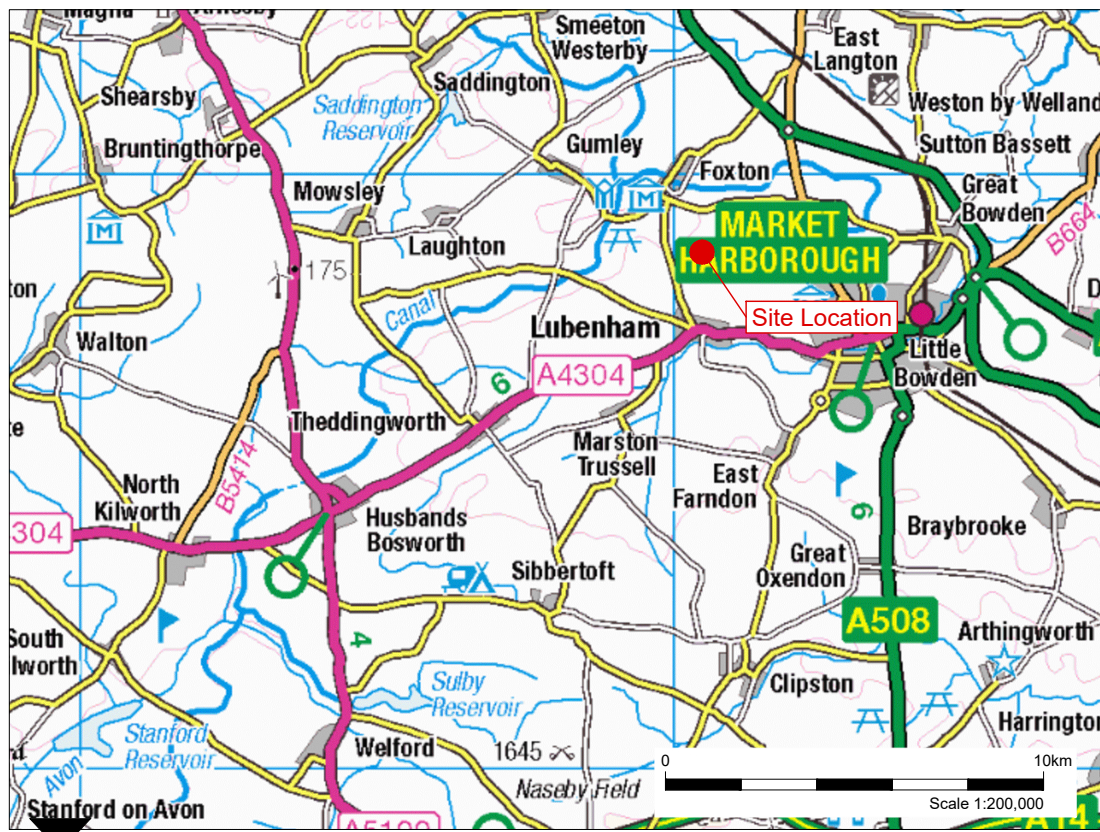
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Landis, 2020
<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes> (Accessed 02/08/2021)

FIGURES 1-3



Key:

Site Boundary

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Title:
 Site location

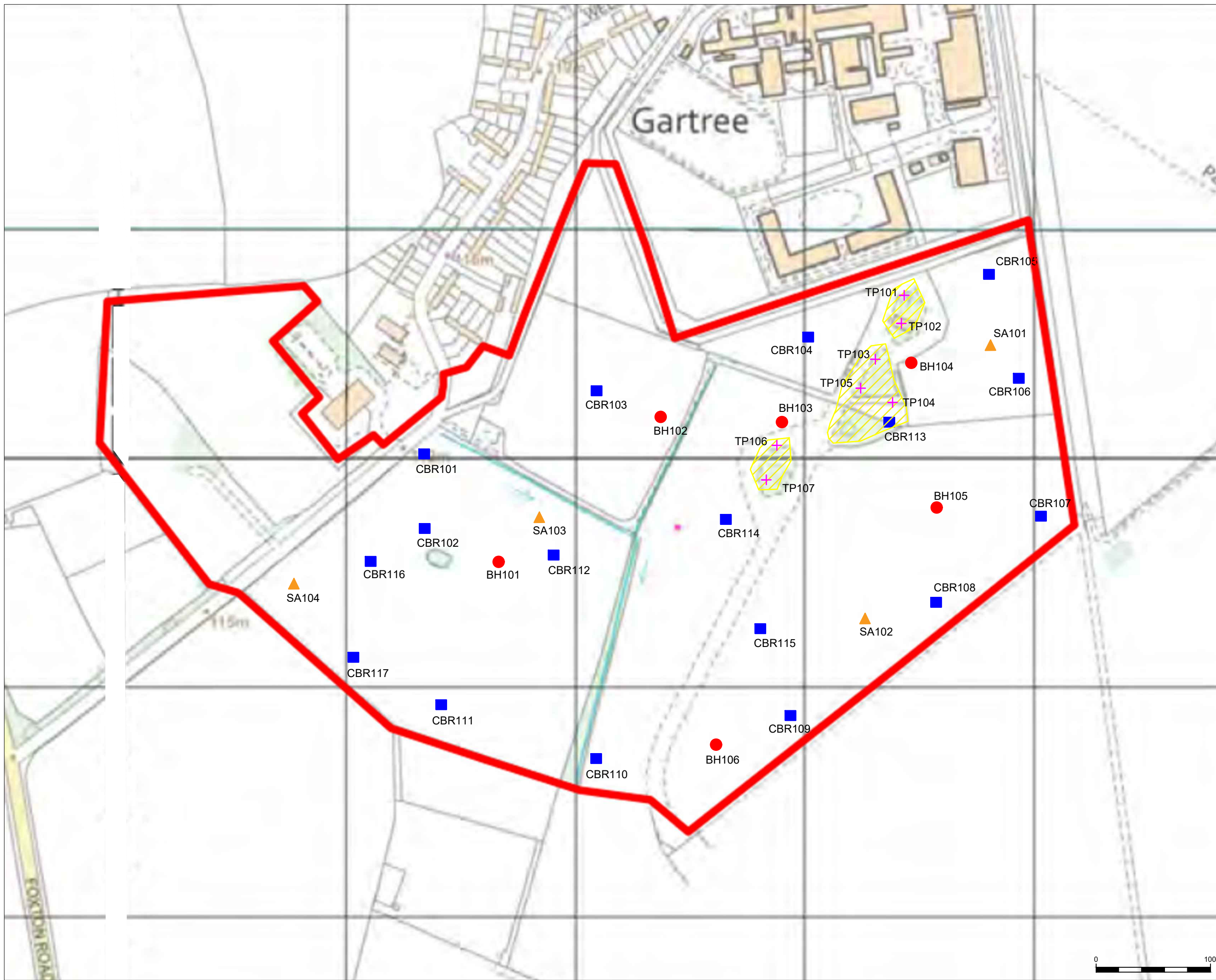
Project:
 Gartree 2, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, Archaeological Watching Brief

Client:
 Pick Everard

Scale at A3:
 Varies

Drawn by: SB **Checked:** SW **Date:** 11/08/2021

Report No.: Y529/21 **Fig. No.:** 1



Key:

- Site Boundary
- CBR
- Borehole
- + Trial Pit
- ▲ Soakaway
- Possible Contaminated Areas



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Title:
**Trial Pit, Soakaway and CBR
 Test Pit Locations**

Project:
**Gartree 2, Market
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 Archaeological Watching Brief**

Client:
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Scale at A3:
1:3000

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Report No: Y529/21	Fig. No: 2
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Fig. 3.1: South facing section of Trial Pit 102



Fig. 3.2: North facing section of Trial Pit 103

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Fig. 3.3: North-west facing section of Soakaway 104B



Fig. 3.4: North facing shot of CBR Test Pit 108

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