



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Report

Colt House,
Southern Green,
Rushden,
Hertfordshire

Event/Accession No: RUS/CHSG '24



Quality Check

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Summary

In February 2025 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Monitoring and Recording at Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Hertfordshire as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site. A total of twelve footings trenches were excavated for a new house and garage, as well as a pit for a septic tank. Despite their proximity to western arm of the nearby moat, none of these excavations revealed any features or archaeological deposits.

It seems likely that the reason the edge of the moat wasn't present in the garage footings trenches, as expected, was probably due to historical mapping inaccuracies.

1 Introduction

1.1 In February 2025 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Monitoring and Recording at Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by Joe Abrams of Abrams Archaeology, who prepared the Written Scheme of Investigation for Barker Parry, acting on behalf of a private client. The project was carried out at the request of Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team (HHET) Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), North Hertfordshire District Council. The relevant planning application reference is 24/00873/FP.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This project has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DLUHC 2023) and as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *The Site*

Location and Description

The site lies just south of Friars Wood which lies on a relatively high piece of land on a line of rolling hills which runs from the eastern edge of Stevenage to the western edge of Saffron Walden. Royston lies just north of this higher ground and Bishops Stortford lies just to the south. The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 32297 32535 (Figs. 1 and 2).

Geology and Topography

The British Geological Survey (BGS) identifies the underlying solid geology across the majority of the Site as being Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation - Chalk. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 93.9 and 83.6 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. Superficial geological deposits are described as Lowestoft Formation - Diamicton. Sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 480 and 423 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period.

The site lies at c. 145m OD. The surrounding land is sloping upwards to the north, reaching a peak at c. 151m OD just north of Friars Wood. To the south, east and west land is sloping downwards.

Development

The development entailed the erection of one 4-bed dwelling with associated outbuilding and landscaping following demolition of existing detached dwelling and outbuilding (Fig. 3).

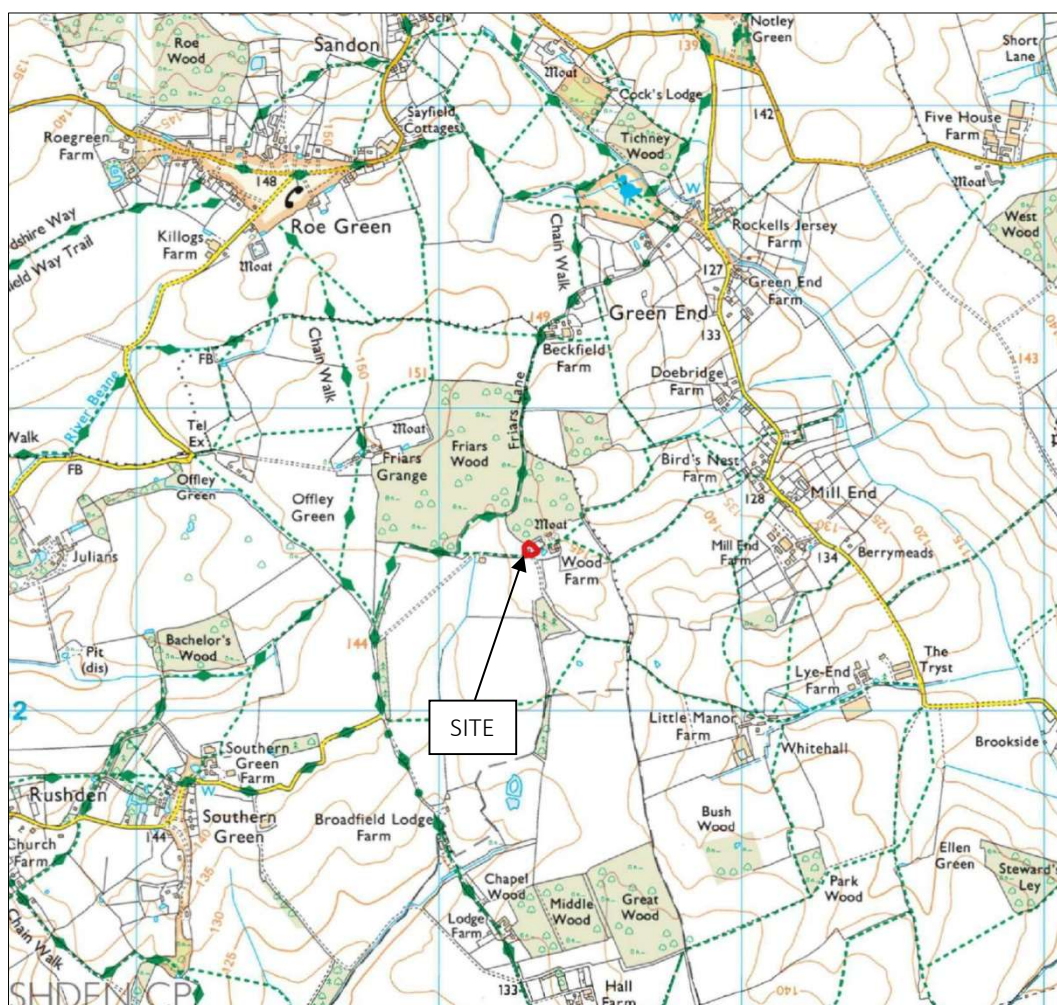


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)



Figure 2: Site location (scale as shown)



Figure 3: Development plan (scale 1:400)



2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Abrams 2024) were:

- to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains,
- to record the character, date location and preservation of any archaeological remains on site,
- to record the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological deposits or remains on site.

The specific research aims as per the East of England Regional Research Framework included:

- Med (Rural) 13: Can we clarify the dating, form and function of medieval rural moated sites? (Research Frameworks 2025)

2.2 Methods

In line with the requirements of the WSI (Abrams, 2024), the methods used were as follows:

- All construction related groundworks were monitored by an archaeologist.

2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2022)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (CIfA 2023a)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Guidance for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (CIfA 2023b)
- Current Historic England guidelines (HE 2008, HE 2015)
- The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003)
- Data Protection Act 2018



3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The following section is taken from Section 2.5 of the WSI (Abrams, 2024):

3.1.1 This Section reviews the available archaeological evidence for the Site and the archaeological/historical background of the general area, and, in accordance with NPPF, considers the potential for any as yet to be discovered archaeological evidence on the Site.

3.1.2 What follows comprises a review of known archaeological finds/remains within a 1km radius of the Site (Figure 6), also referred to as the study area, being items held on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), together with a historic map regression exercise charting the development of the study area from the 19th century onwards until the present day.

3.1.3 In terms of relevant designated heritage assets, there are no nationally designated, Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck sites on the Site. A listed building lies close by, c. 50m to the northeast (Figure 4 – DHT6763). The heritage list describes this as a Grade II building named Wood Farm House and it has the listing reference 1102637. The HER describes the building as follows:

“The house at Wood Farm dates to the late 16th century, a timber-framed three-cell lobby entry house with one storey and attic, and an axial red brick chimney stack behind the entrance left of centre. In the 18th century a narrower and lower outshut was added; a gabled wing was added in the 20th century<1>. The layout of the post-medieval farmstead is shown on<2>, within the complex medieval moat [1937] at the SE end of Friars Wood. The house had a garden on its west, and two barns to the south; more farm buildings stood around a yard further south. The farm buildings have since disappeared. The farmstead clearly succeeded a high-status medieval site; see also Friars Grange [16489]”. (MHT16490)

3.1.4 The above description refers to a complex Medieval Moat (MHT1937). The HER description for that Moat is:

Remains of large, possibly originally multiple, moated complex. 'Remains ... 35m NS by 35m EW, within the NE corner of a further moated area c70m NS by 70m EW. The former area encloses Wood Farm house'; mostly dry and silted<1>. The site was significantly altered during 1986, with the W arm remodelled, central arm filled, and part of surviving wet arm at N also partly filled<2>. Some of its complexity is visible on<3>. For the farm, see [16490]. (MHT1937).

3.1.5 We note that the Site sits upon part of the western arm of this Moat and that the above description notes that this was altered in 1986. If the reader refers to Figure 3 (Tithe Map, 1845) it is possible to see that the Site clearly sat upon a portion of that western arm of the Moat. The mid-19th C Tithe Map has captured the Post-Medieval and, probably, the Medieval landscape of the area prior to the changes it experienced in the late 19th and 20th C. It is the relationship of the Site to this moated feature and to Wood Farm which form the core archaeological interest in the Site. A key question being was the remodelling carried out in the 1980s at the surface level, or did it extend below that. We make this point as such moated sites are frequently 1.5-2m deep, below the ground surface.

3.1.6 This moated site was also commented upon in the advice letter from the Senior Historic Environment Advisor:

The site is located at Wood Farm and lies within an Area of Archaeological



Significance as identified in the Local Plan. The Historic Environment Record (HER) notes that Wood Farm includes the remains of large medieval moated complex that possibly included multiple moats (HER1937). The house at Wood Farm dates to the late sixteenth century and is Listed as being of architectural and historic importance (LB II, 1102637). It is a timber-framed three-cell lobby entry house with one storey and attic, and an axial red brick chimney stack behind the entrance. Additions were made in the eighteenth century and a gabled wing was added in the twentieth century. The farmstead is believed to have succeeded a high-status medieval site (HER16490).

Although this proposal lies partly over the existing footprint there is high potential for heritage assets from the medieval and post-medieval periods.

- 3.1.7 The study area (Figure 4) also contains 10 other listed buildings and their locations and a brief description of each are shown on Figure 4 and within Appendix 2 respectively. An HER search was carried out and the information gathered via that is presented within Appendix 2 and upon Figures 3-9. Within this WSI, we have commented only upon those records most directly relevant to the Site. The HER data will be reviewed when the work on the Site is completed and connections will be made where appropriate at that time.
- 3.1.8 By reviewing this data and considering the location of the Site within what is known about the local landscape. It is our professional opinion that the Site is most likely to contain remains of Medieval, Post-Medieval and Modern date. These remains are most likely to comprise the remains of the Moat (MHT1937). These are most likely to be contained in the eastern portion of the garden and to be buried remains. Although the Moat started its period of use in the Medieval period, it was retained as a wet, and then as a dry feature within the landscape until well into the 20th C. Therefore, these remains span the Medieval to Modern periods.

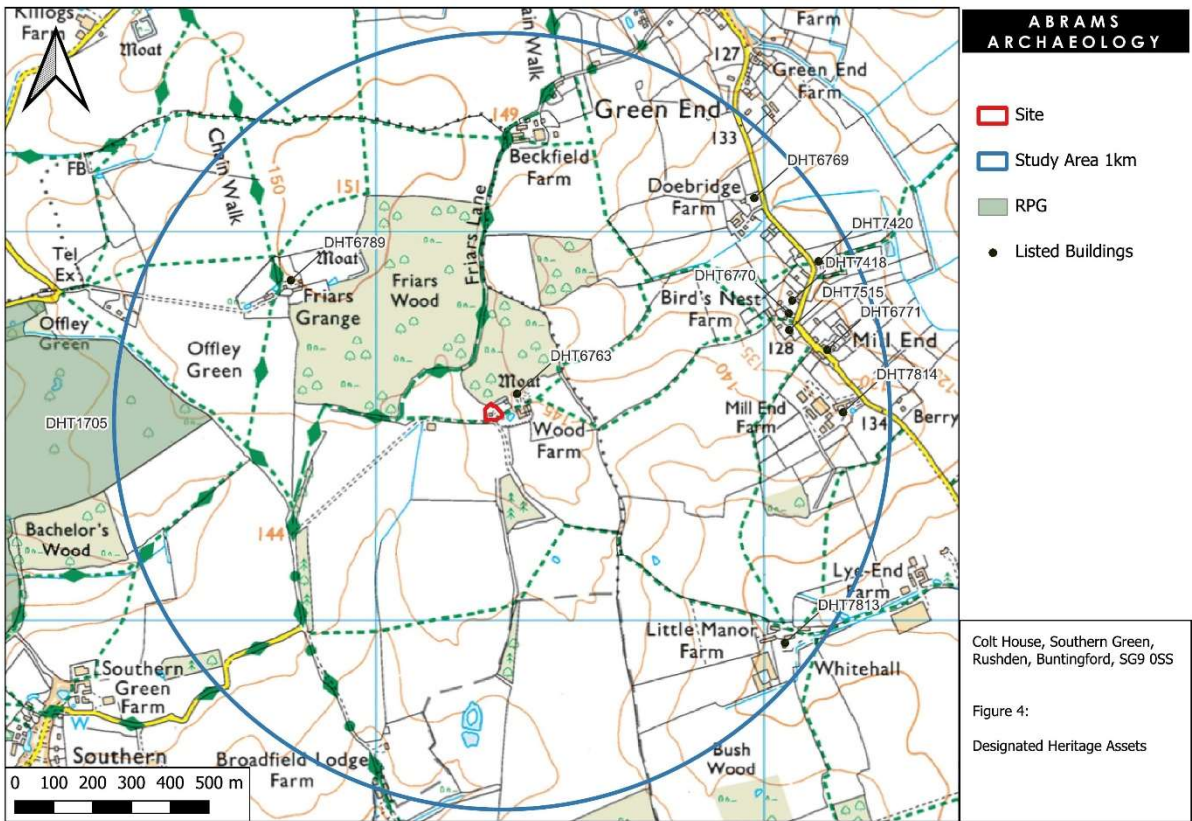


Figure 4: HER plan – Designated Heritage Assets (scale as shown)

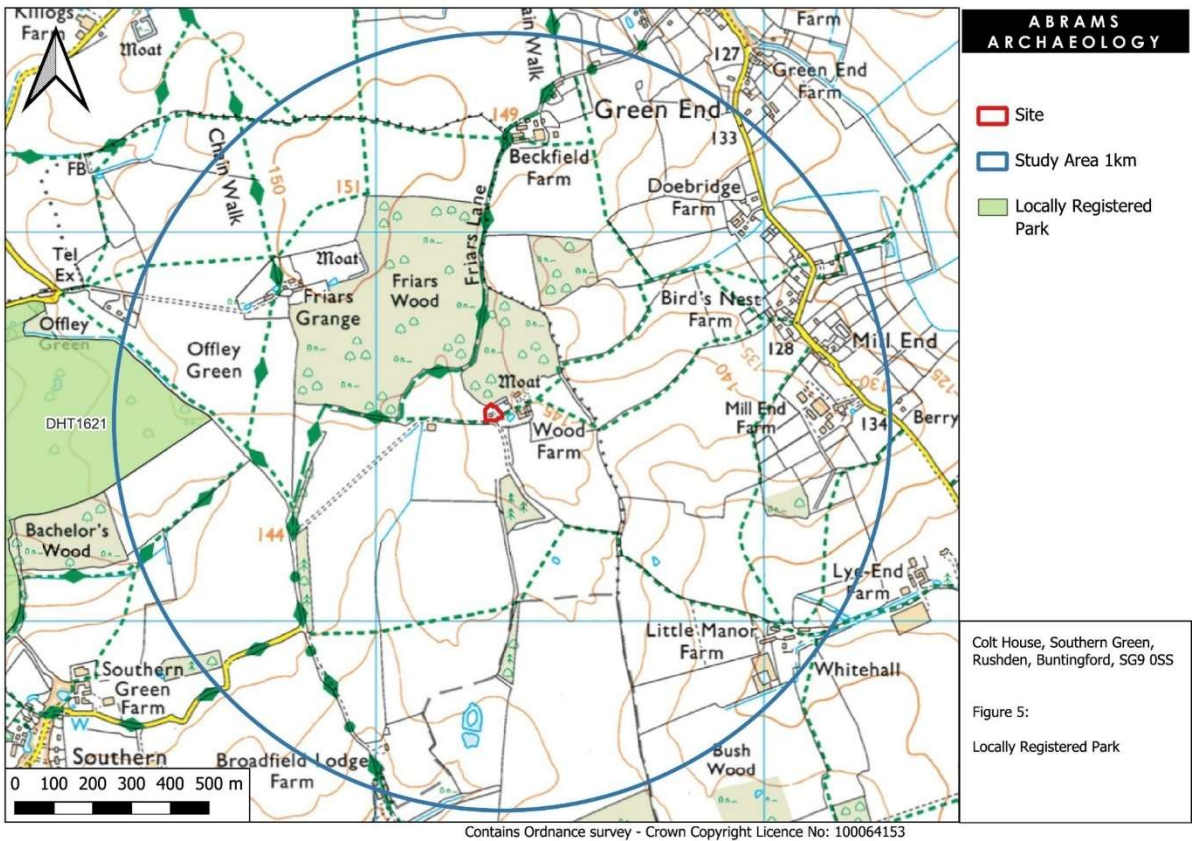


Figure 5: HER plan – Locally Registered Park (scale as shown)

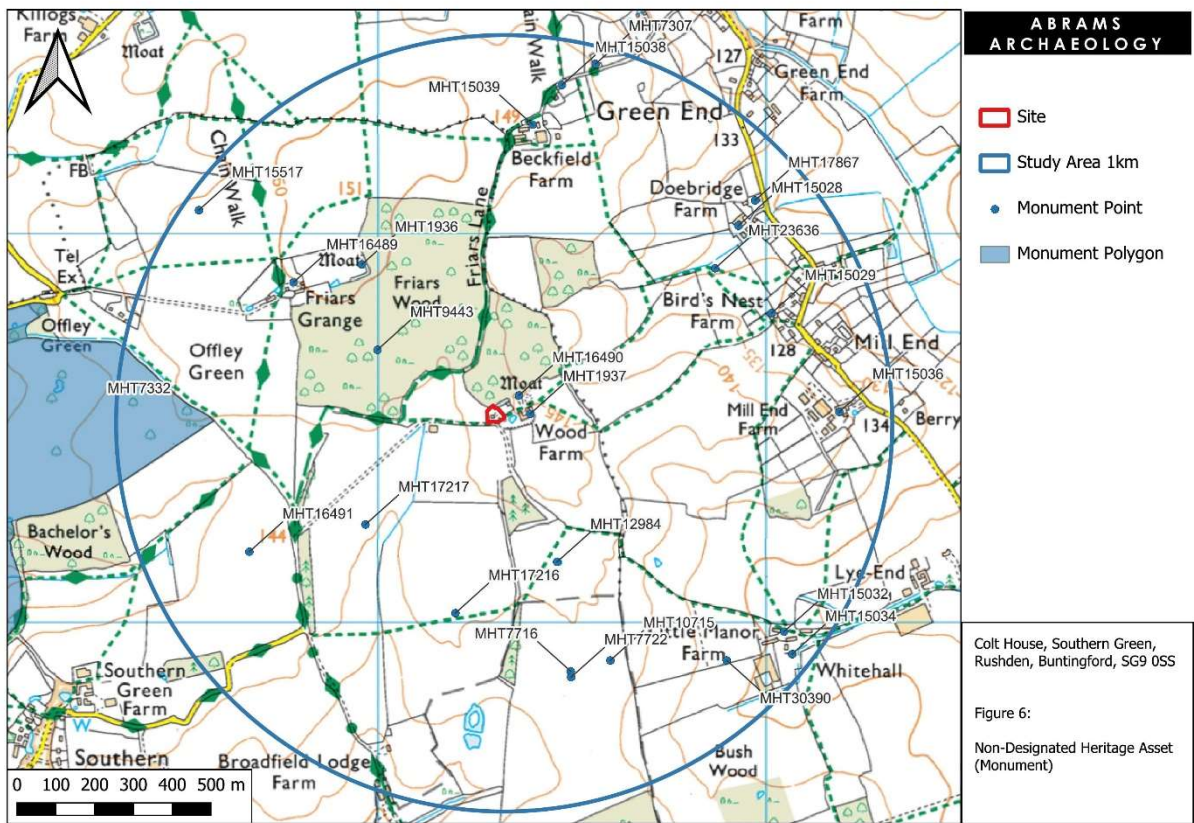


Figure 6: HER plan – Non-designated Heritage Assets (scale as shown)

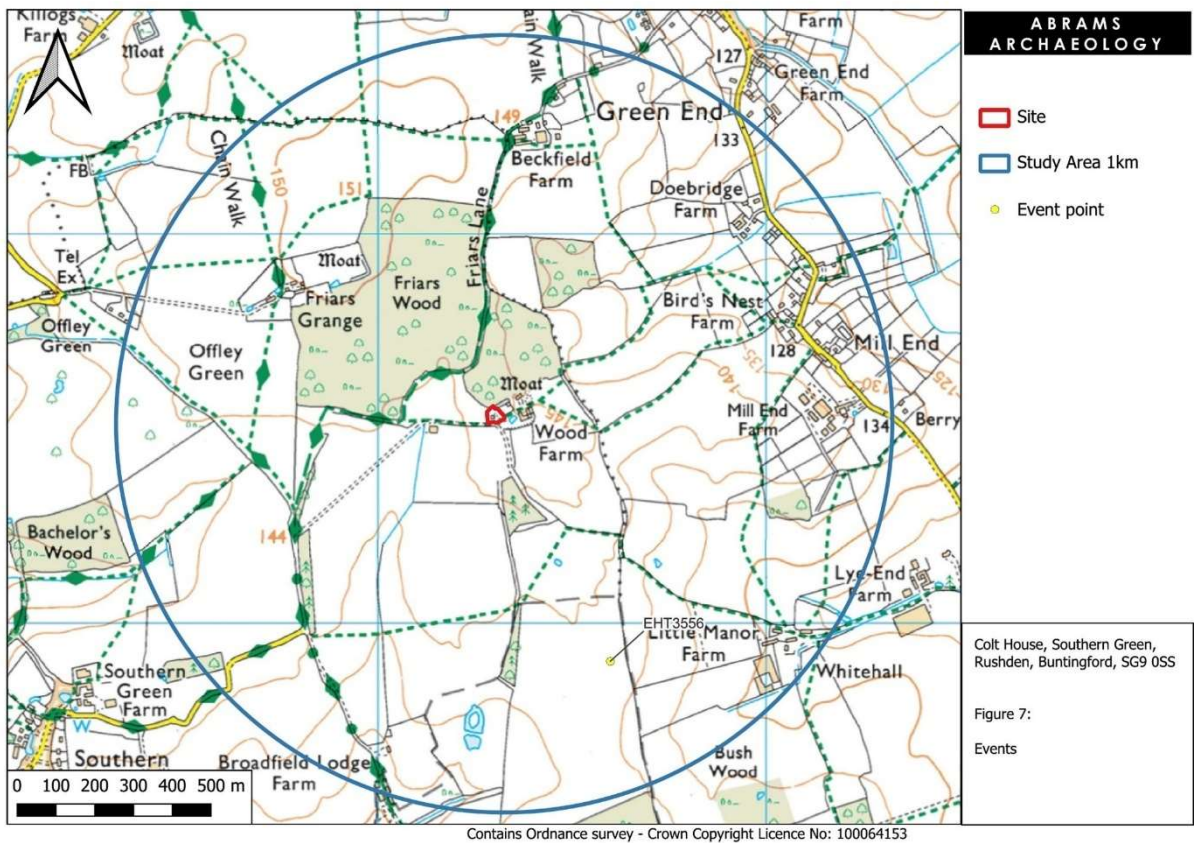


Figure 7: HER plan – Events (scale as shown)

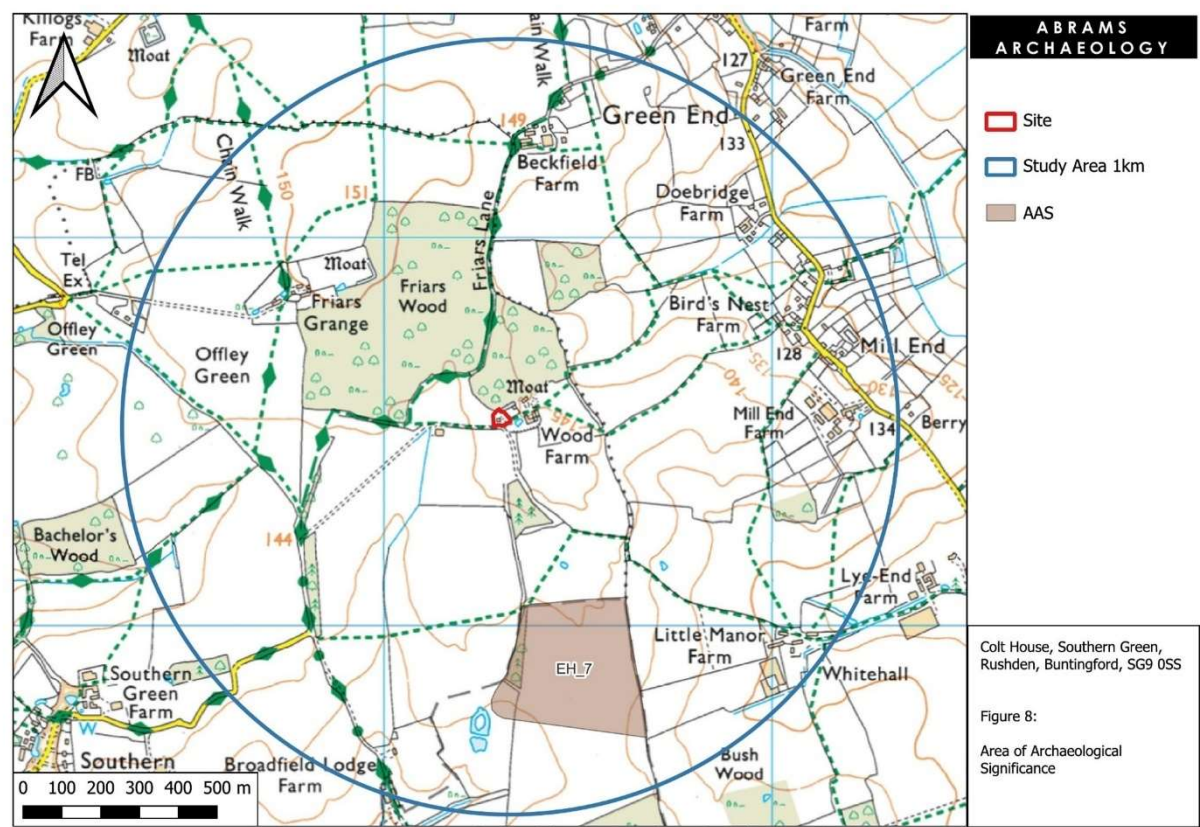


Figure 8: HER plan – Area of Archaeological Significance (scale as shown)

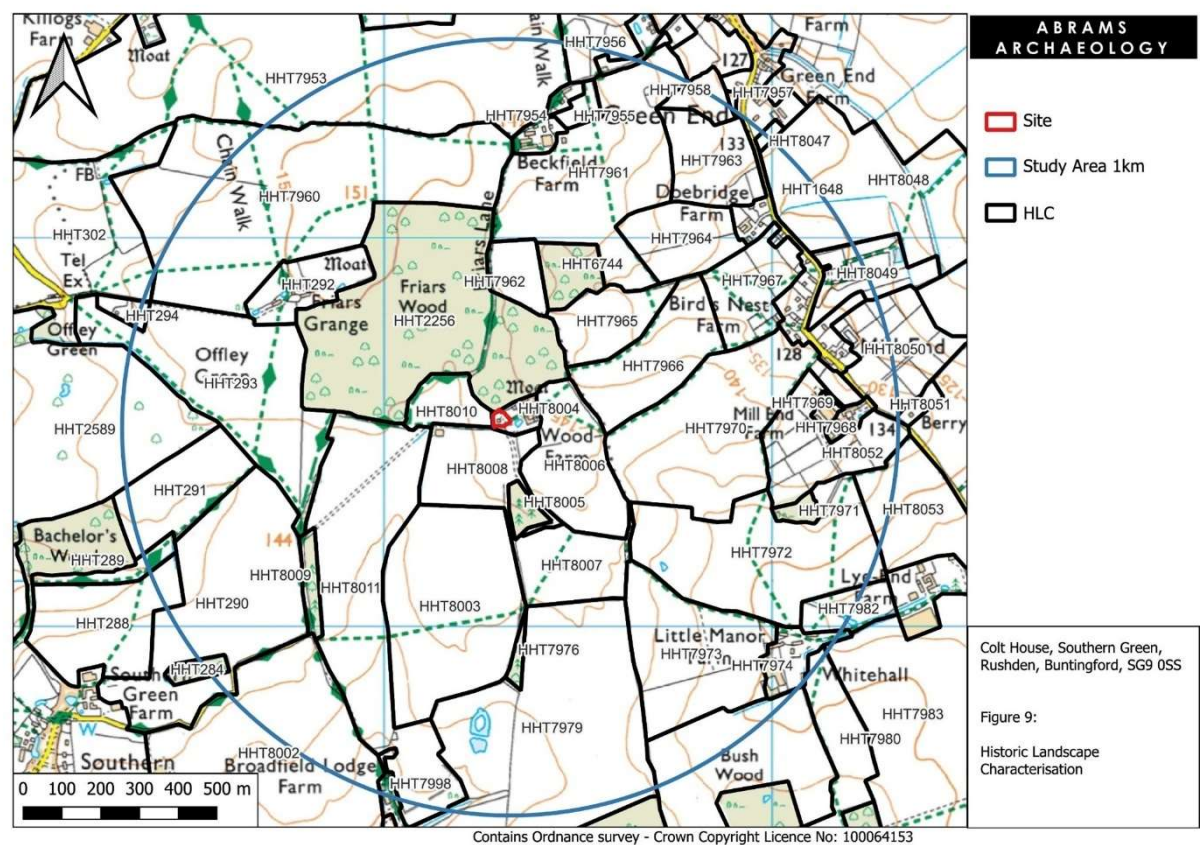


Figure 9: HER plan – Historic Landscape Characterisation (scale as shown)



3.2 Map Regression

The following section is the results of a map regression carried out in preparation of the WSI (Abrams 2024).

- 3.2.1 The earliest large-scale map of the Site was provided by the Tithe Survey of Rushden parish carried out in 1845. The Tithe map shows that, in 1845, the Plots of land closest to the Site are named and described as follows:

Plot No	Accompanying description in Tithe Apportionment
50	Landowner - Adolphus Meetkerke Esquire, Tenant - Adolphus Meetkerke Esquire. Wood (Woodland).
51	Landowner - Adolphus Meetkerke Esquire, Tenant - Ann Field. Hang Croat. Pasture.
52	Landowner - Adolphus Meetkerke Esquire, Tenant - Ann Field. Homestead.
53	Landowner - Adolphus Meetkerke Esquire, Tenant - Ann Field. Orchard.
54	Landowner - Adolphus Meetkerke Esquire, Tenant - Ann Field. Pasture.
55	Landowner - Adolphus Meetkerke Esquire, Tenant - Ann Field. Pelly Croft. Pasture

- 3.2.2 The Tithe Map confirms that the Site was partly within Plot 53 (Orchard) and partly within Plot 55 (pasture). These two plots were divided by the western arm of the moated site described above (MHT1937, Section 2.5).
- 3.2.3 The 1877 Ordnance Survey (OS) map illustrates that the portion of the moat within the Site was dry by this point. Still an earthwork, its limits are depicted by small lines showing a break of slope. The rest of the Moat to the east and south of the Site is depicted with water still present.
- 3.2.4 The layout and condition of the Site stay relatively unchanged until Colt House appears on the 1976-77 ordnance survey map. A dray earthwork is still visible on the mapping at this time. We note that the distinctive crescent shaped northeast corner of the Site is defined by the remnant of Moat which exists to the immediate east of the Site. We note that the *Site Plan as Proposed* (Figure 3) shows that the proposals are located to the west of the former Moat.
- 3.2.5 The Site lies within an agricultural setting to the immediate south of Friars Wood and between the village of Rushden (west) and Mill End (east). In terms of Historic Landscape Characterisation, the Site is described as lying within HHT8804 (built up areas – urban development).



4 Results

4.1 Introduction

The project required the excavation of twelve footings trenches, eight for the new dwelling and four for the new garage. Limited ground reduction took place on the southern side of the site, as well as the excavation of a septic tank. The work was carried out using a 5-tonne tracked excavator fitted with 0.9m and 0.4m wide toothless buckets.

4.2 Description

The stratigraphy was uniform in all excavations and was represented in Footings Trench 1 (Plate 1, Fig. 10). It consisted of mid greyish brown silty clay topsoil, generally c. 0.1m deep. Below this was a layer of light greyish brown silty clay subsoil measuring around 0.25m deep. This overlay the natural geology, which was mid orangey brown clay with large chalk inclusions, becoming grey chalky clay as it extended deeper.



Plate 1: Representative stratigraphy in Trench 1

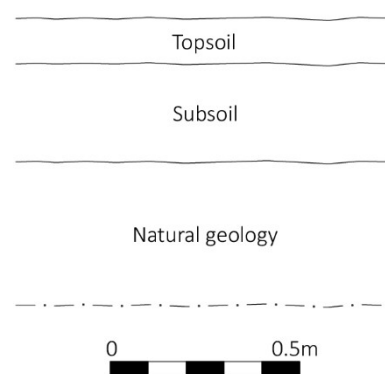


Figure 10: Representative stratigraphy diagram

The footings of the new dwelling, represented by Trenches 1 – 8, were arranged in a footprint measuring 13.5m long by 9.7m wide including four large perimeter trenches and four interior trenches (Plates 2 – 9). Trenches 9 – 12 were located to the east and were for the new garage, arranged in a footprint measuring 8.5m long by 5.4m wide (Plates 10 – 13). All footings trenches were 0.6m wide and 1.1m deep. An area immediately to the south of the house measuring 10.2m long by 8.6m wide was reduced to a depth of 0.3m. This did not breach the subsoil and therefore did not reach the archaeological horizon (Plate 14). The septic tank was excavated to the north of the house and measured 3.2m long by 2.4m wide. It reached a depth of 2.2m (Plate 15). No evidence of archaeological finds or features were identified in any of the excavations (Fig. 11).



Plate 2: Trench 1, looking north



Plate 3: Trench 2, looking east



Plate 4: Trench 3, looking east



Plate 5: Trench 4, looking south



Plate 6: Trench 5, looking south



Plate 7: Trench 6, looking south



Plate 8: Trench 7, looking east



Plate 9: Trench 8, looking west



Plate 10: Trench 9, looking west



Plate 11: Trench 10, looking north



Plate 12: Trench 11, looking south



Plate 13: Trench 12, looking west



Plate 14: Stripped area, looking south



Plate 15: Septic tank, looking south-southeast

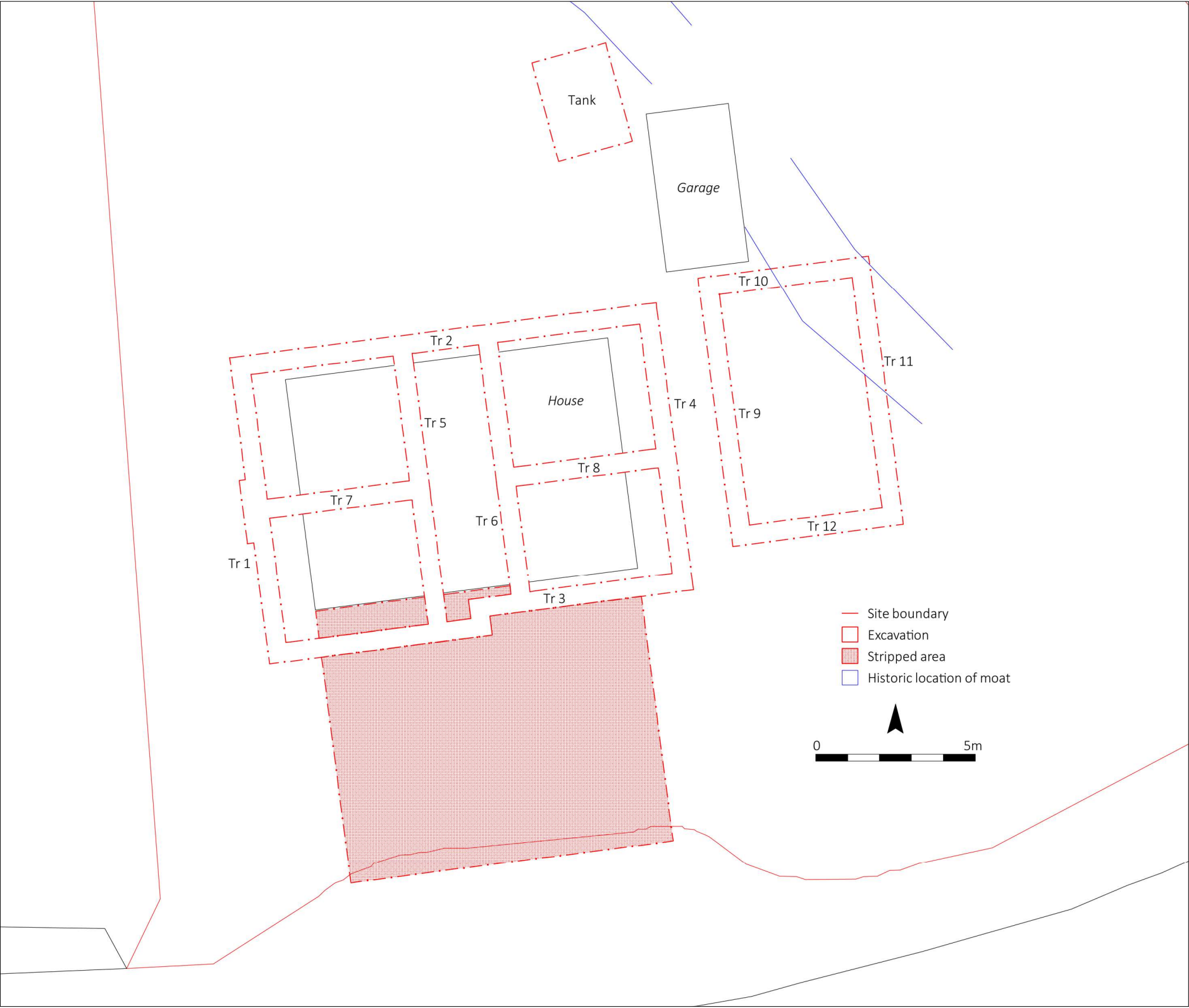


Figure 11: Excavation plan (scale 1:150)



5 Conclusions

This project required the monitoring of twelve footings trenches, as well as the excavation of a septic tank to the north and shallow ground reduction to the south. A planning condition was applied due in part to the proximity of the development to the large medieval moated complex located immediately to the northeast of the site, with the west arm of the moat running through the site.

Despite intensive monitoring of all groundworks associated with the project, no features or finds of archaeological significance could be seen in the excavations. Several plans, including historic Ordnance Survey maps, show the top break of slope of the moat running through the footprint of the new garage, which was excavated as Trenches 9 – 12. The historic top of the earthwork should have run through Trenches 10 and 11, however, no cut or change in stratigraphy could be discerned in the sections of the trenches. In fact, observation on site confirmed that the current position of the slope appeared to be located at least 2m further to the northeast of the trenches.

The presence of subsoil in the site stratigraphy suggests that the ground has remained largely undisturbed over a long period of time, so the lack of any archaeological features might be explained by the location of the site being close to the edge of the moat. The fact that the edge wasn't present in the garage footings trenches, as expected, was probably due to historical mapping inaccuracies.

Given the lack of archaeological features, it was not possible to contribute to the research questions at this time.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Joe Abrams for commissioning this report on behalf of ##. Thanks are also due to Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team for monitoring the project.

Special thanks go to Bruce Bass and the staff of Cain East Ltd for their assistance on site.

The fieldwork was carried out by Chris Martin-Taylor BSc and Barney King PCIfA. The report was written by Chris Martin-Taylor, and edited by David Kaye BA ACIfA.



7 Archive

- 7.1 The project archive will comprise a digital version of the Monitoring and Recording Report which will contain the following:
- List of photographs
 - Site Records
 - OASIS summary report
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with OASIS (kdkarcha1-528717).



8 References

Standards and Specifications

- Abrams J. 2024 *Written Scheme of Investigation: Archaeological Monitoring – Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Buntingford, SG9 0SS*. Hitchin: Abrams Archaeology Ltd
- ADS. *Guides to Good Practice*: <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/help-guidance/guidesto-good-practice/>
- ADS. *Instructions for Depositors*:
<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/helpguidance/instructions-for-depositors/>
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- Campbell G, Moffett L & Straker V 2011 *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods from sampling and recovery to post-excavation*. Portsmouth: English Heritage
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Watkinson D. & Neal V. 1998 *First Aid for Finds*. Hertford & London: Rescue.

Online Sources

British Geological Survey: <https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/>

Research Frameworks 2025 *East of England Research Framework*.
<https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/> [accessed 12.02.2025]



Appendix 1: Photograph List

Shot	Plate	View	Subject
1	14	S	Stripped area at front
2	-	S	Stripped area at front
3	-	SSE	VOID
4	15	SSE	Septic tank overall
5	2	N	Trench 1
6	1	W	Trench 1 stratigraphy
7	3	E	Trench 2
8	4	E	Trench 3
9	5	S	Trench 4
10	6	S	Trench 5
11	7	S	Trench 6
12	8	E	Trench 7
13	9	W	Trench 8
14	10	N	Trench 9
15	11	E	Trench 10
16	12	S	Trench 11
17	13	W	Trench 12



Appendix 2: Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Buntingford	Project Site Code	879/RSCH
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-528717	Event/Accession no	RUS/CHSG '24
OS reference	TL 32297 32535	Study area size	158.98m ²
Project Type	Archaeological Monitoring and Recording	Height (mAOD)	145m
Short Description	In February 2025 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Monitoring and Recording at Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Hertfordshire as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site. A total of twelve footings trenches were excavated for a new house and garage, as well as a pit for a septic tank. Despite their proximity to western arm of the nearby moat, none of these excavations revealed any features or archaeological deposits. It seems likely that the reason the edge of the moat wasn't present in the garage footings trenches, as expected, was probably due to historical mapping inaccuracies.		
Previous work	None	Site status	Area of Archaeological Significance
Planning proposal	Erection of one 4-bed dwelling with associated outbuilding and landscaping following demolition of existing detached dwelling and outbuilding.	Current land use	Dwelling
Local Planning Authority	North Hertfordshire District Council	Planning application ref.	24/00873/FP
Monument type	Moated site	Monument period	Medieval - Post-medieval
Significant finds	None	Future work	Unknown
RESEARCH AIMS			
Research framework	Section /Question	Summary of outcome	
East of England	Med (Rural) 13	Can we clarify the dating, form and function of medieval rural moated sites?	
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	Joe Abrams	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	David Kaye BA ACIfA	Director/Supervisor	Chris Martin-Taylor BSc
Sponsor/funding body	Captain Jeremy James 1963 Marriage Settlement		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	03.02.2025	End date	12.02.2025
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical	N/A	N/A	
Paper	N/A	N/A	
Digital	OASIS	Report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			



Title	Archaeological Monitoring and Recording: Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Buntingford		
Serial title & volume	879/RSGCH/1		
Author(s)	Chris Martin-Taylor BSc		
Page no's		Date	07.03.25



Appendix 3: OASIS summary

OASIS ID (UID):

Project Name:

Sitename:

Activity type:

Project Identifier(s):

Planning Id:

Reason For Investigation:

Organisation Responsible for work:

Project Dates:

Location:

NGR:

Administrative Areas: Country : England

County :

District :

Parish :

Project Methodology:

Project Results:

Keywords:

Funder:

HER :

Person Responsible for work;

HER Identifiers:



Appendix 4: Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Sheet

Site name and address: Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Buntingford		
County: Hertfordshire	District: North Hertfordshire	
Village/Town: Rushden	Parish: Rushden	
Planning application reference: 3/22/2243/FUL		
Client's name, address, & tel. no: Captain Jeremy James 1963 Marriage Settlement		
Nature of application: Erection of one 4-bed dwelling with associated outbuilding and landscaping following demolition of existing detached dwelling and outbuilding.		
Present land use: Dwelling		
Size of application area: 1325.63m ²	Size of area investigated: 158.98m ²	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 3230 3254	Site code: 879/RSGCH	
Site director: Chris Martin-Taylor BSc	Organization: KDK Archaeology Ltd	
Type of work: Archaeological Monitoring and Recording		
Date of Work:	Start: 03.02.2025	Finish: 12.02.2025
Curating museum: OASIS		
Related HER no's: N/A		Periods represented: N/A
Relevant previous summaries/reports: N/A		
Summary of fieldwork results: In February 2025 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Monitoring and Recording at Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Hertfordshire as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site. A total of twelve footings trenches were excavated for a new house and garage, as well as a pit for a septic tank. Despite their proximity to western arm of the nearby moat, none of these excavations revealed any features or archaeological deposits. It seems likely that the reason the edge of the moat wasn't present in the garage footings trenches, as expected, was probably due to historical mapping inaccuracies.		
Author: Chris Martin-Taylor BSc		Date: 07.03.25