

Kommos Conservation Project: Final Work Plan, 2026-2030

Historical Significance of Kommos

- For more than 1500 years from c. 1700 to c. 150 BCE Kommos was a Cretan harbor town with contacts around the Mediterranean. In the Bronze Age it was the harbor of the Minoan palace at Phaistos and Ayia Triada. It was known as Amyklai—a name attested by a contemporary inscription of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III of the 14th c. BCE and suggested to have been listed on three Linear B tablets at Knossos. The remains at Kommos have disclosed palace-style monumental buildings in the harbor area and a settlement surrounding them over an area likely as much as 9 hectares (c. 22 acres). Kommos has more imported pottery from Egypt, the Levant, Cyprus, and Anatolia (western Turkey) than any other Bronze Age site in the Aegean and without doubt was a major node in the maritime network of the eastern Mediterranean during the 16th-13th c. BCE. When that system collapsed at the end of the 13th c. BCE, Kommos was abandoned.
- About 230 years after its abandonment, c. 1020 BCE, a shrine was established over the ruins of the harbor buildings. During the 9th c. BCE, Kommos became a stopover for Phoenician mercantile journeys, probably heading west to Tarshish/Tartessos, which must have been Cadiz and Huelva in southwestern Spain, where excavations have recovered Phoenician pottery of the same kind as found at Kommos where it dates from c. 875 to c. 650 BCE. As early as c. 800 BCE the temple at Kommos was outfitted with a tri-pillar shrine known to be an element of Phoenician worship. At this time one of the rooms of the Late Bronze Age harbor building was modified to be a “customs house” for storage, industry, and management. Worship, sacrifice, and feasting occurred continuously down to c. 600 BCE. Among the debris were many locally made cups that bear inscriptions in the various local alphabets of Greek dialects testifying to worship and feasting by sailor-merchants plying the Mediterranean. By the 7th c. Kommos was identified by Homer as the place where Menelaos and his crew found refuge from a storm that Zeus sent to interrupt their voyage home from Troy.
- At this time Gortyn emerged as the dominant city-state of the region. Kommos was its harbor and the sanctuary was the focus of athletic games of initiation for young men. Between c. 650-600 BCE a large new customs house was built, probably for provisioning the Greek colonies established at Cyrene and Tocras on the Libyan coast. Surely by this time Kommos again was identified as Amyklai, which was an epithet of Apollo, whose major worship was at Gortyn. Beginning with the 6th c. Gortyn moved its port to Matala or one of the other better protected ports on the southern coast. Kommos-Amyklai declined until the sanctuary was rebuilt in the 4th century BCE and continued to be used through the 2nd c. BCE. By the middle of the 2nd c. of the Roman imperial era it was no longer in use and began to be covered by wind-blown sand until its discovery by Sir Arthur Evans in 1926.
- The abundant architectural remains at Kommos are threatened by the increased intensity and frequency of localized storm cells. Strong waves erode the berm that protects the harbor area while high wind and intense rain exacerbate surface erosion. The master plan for conservation is designed to mitigate these problems and turn Kommos-Amyklai into an archaeological park at this popular beach on the southern strand of the Gulf of the Mesara. Kommos’ close proximity and historical association with Phaistos, Ayia Triada, and Gortyn completes the touristic circuit that naturally begins with the new Mesara Archaeological Museum at Gortyn.

The Goals of the Kommos Conservation Project and Outreach

- The importance of Kommos-Amyklai argues strongly for the preservation and display of the prehistoric and historic harbor town and Greek-Phoenician Sanctuary. The execution of the master plan has the primary goal of opening Kommos for public access and education. Our work complements that of the Ministry of Culture, which is implementing the UNESCO World Heritage designation for the Minoan palace sites by improving visitor access to Phaistos and Ayia Triada. Since the opening of the new Archaeological Museum of the Mesara near Gortyn, Kommos is an obvious and important stop on the touristic circuit of the Mesara. With the opening of the new airport at Kastelli, access to the Mesara will increase tourism to the region, which already is highly developed. As it stands our own survey showed that over 200 cars daily were visiting the beach at Kommos during October 2022. Local residents and tourists are eager to know more about the site, but there is a dearth of information available. The only guide to the site is Joseph Shaw's informative and entertaining *Kommos: A Minoan Harbor Town and Greek Sanctuary in Southern Crete* (2006), which, though published in multiple languages, is not readily available and in need of up-dating. The websites of [Kommos](#) through the University of Toronto and the [Kommos Conservancy](#) need to be improved and made available in Greek, while we aim to publish short guidebooks, improve social media coverage, and offer public lectures in Greek and English.

Work accomplished since 2021

- 2021-2022 (Figure 1): testing of mortars, application of mortars to buildings of the Harbor Area; conservation assessment of masonry and stress-testing of mortars, approved by Ministry of Culture, Dec. 2022; approval of Study and Plans for the 85 m long by 5.5 m high Sea Wall (Figure 2) to prevent wave erosion and provide the pedestrian platform and Drainage system (Figure 3) of earthen berms to feed surface water to cement lined drains that divert water away from the standing remains.
- 2023-2025 (Figure 1): stabilization of Harbor Area buildings, Central Hillside buildings, and Hilltop buildings including back-filling of deep soundings. Testing of hyper-adobe system (Figure 4) for protecting exposed soil scarps and terraces. Reinforcement in 2025 of existing Sea-Wall (Figure 5).

Timeline of work during 2026-2027

- 2026: Pilot project for repairing and replacing facings of major terraces of the Harbor Area
 - Part 1: Spring 2026 (Figure 6) study and test several meters around the Altar Terrace where a combination of degraded and rusting mortar-faced drywall and mortar-encased metal mesh needs repair and replacement; micromorphology of Altar Terrace; Engineering study of structural analysis by Vasilis Kasimis, civil engineer.
 - Estimated Budget \$80,000

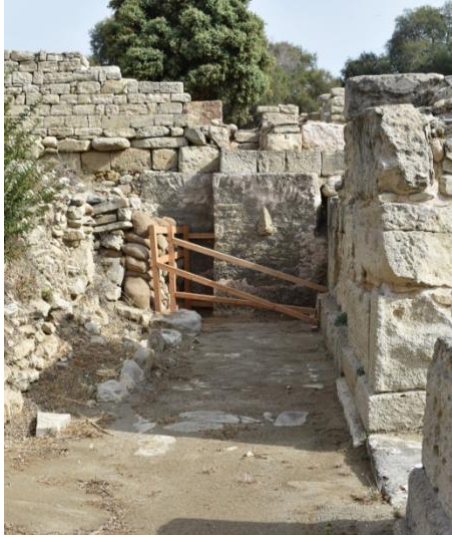
- Part 2: Autumn 2026 (Figure 6): Repair and replace facings of major terraces of the Harbor Area: total of 68 m long and 2.5 m high terracing.
 - Estimated Budget \$80,000
 - Preparation of application for a permit from the American School of Classical Studies that will be available for excavation in 2028—due November 30, 2026 with announcement in Spring 2027.
 - A permit is necessary because the Master Plan designates specific areas where required conservation will involve excavation in areas where ancient remains will be found.
 - The permit would begin in Spring 2028 and extend at least through 2029
- 2027: Spring and Autumn—Complete repair or replacement of facings of major terraces that do not need excavation (Figure 7). Prepare for 2028 excavation and conservation seasons
 - Estimated Budget \$160,000

Assuming we are awarded the ASCSA Permit, a project proposal and budget will be submitted to foundations for funding, e.g. Loeb Classical Library Foundation, National Geographic Foundation, Niarchos Foundation, etc. In addition annual funding appeals will be sent to our donors.

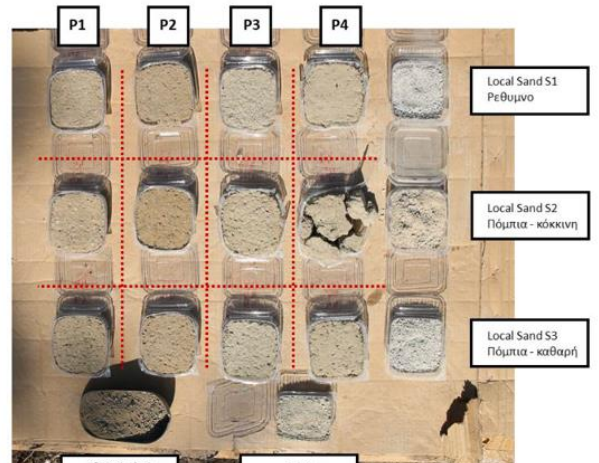
Below is the current projected schedule for completion of the stabilization of Kommos:

- 2028: Spring and Autumn (Figure 7a): Excavation of Altar Terrace to reexamine stratigraphy from Late Bronze Age through Hellenistic periods (c. 1700-150 BCE). Systematic scientific recovery of all organic and inorganic remains by a team of specialists following current protocols for recovery, analysis, and interpretation. Excavation and conservation of prioritized areas (Figure 7)
- 2029: Spring and Autumn— Excavation and conservation of prioritized areas (Figure 7), backfilling of Harbor areas for installation of drainage system
- 2030: Spring and Autumn—Excavation and conservation of remaining areas, installation of East-West drain through center of Harbor Buildings and (Figure 3); further stabilization of temporary Sea Wall of 2025 as needed (Figure 5).

Upon completion of this work Kommos will be turned over to Ministry of Culture for completion of the Master Plan. The engineering, logistics, and cost of building the permanent sea-wall is estimated to be about Euro 1 million. Its construction would necessitate the erection of a permanent fence around the site according to ministerial requirements along with a guard house and ticket booth, toilets, walkways, signage, and any other facilities deemed necessary for visitation of the site. My team and I would be involved in developing the narrative for the signage and social media links.



Temporary intervention of 2019



Mortar tests with different textures, colors, inclusions, and adhesive percentages



Testing two different mortar recipes 2021



Curing of mortars in House X, 2023



Completed stabilization of Central Hillside 2024



Completed stabilization of Hilltop Houses 2025

Figure 1. Illustrations of mortar recipes, tests, and applications, 2019-2025

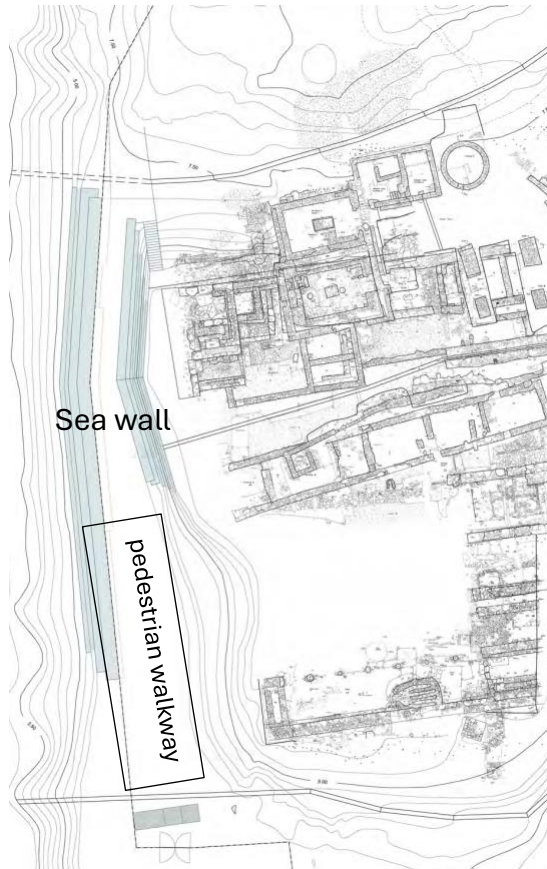
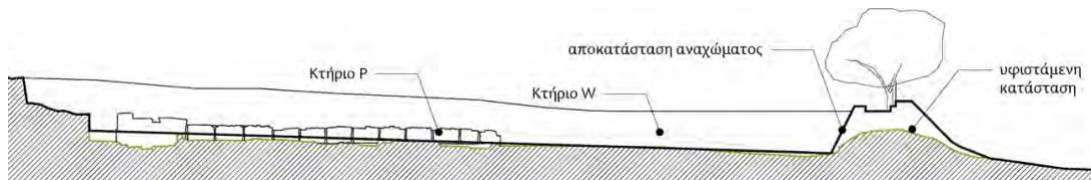
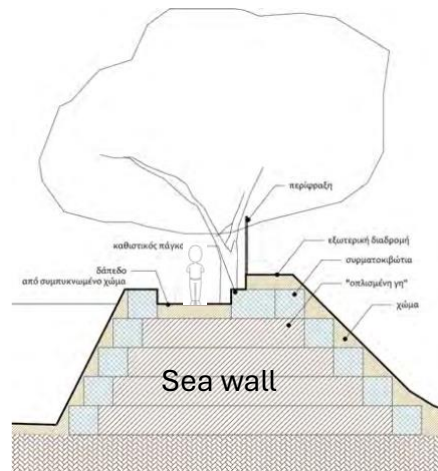


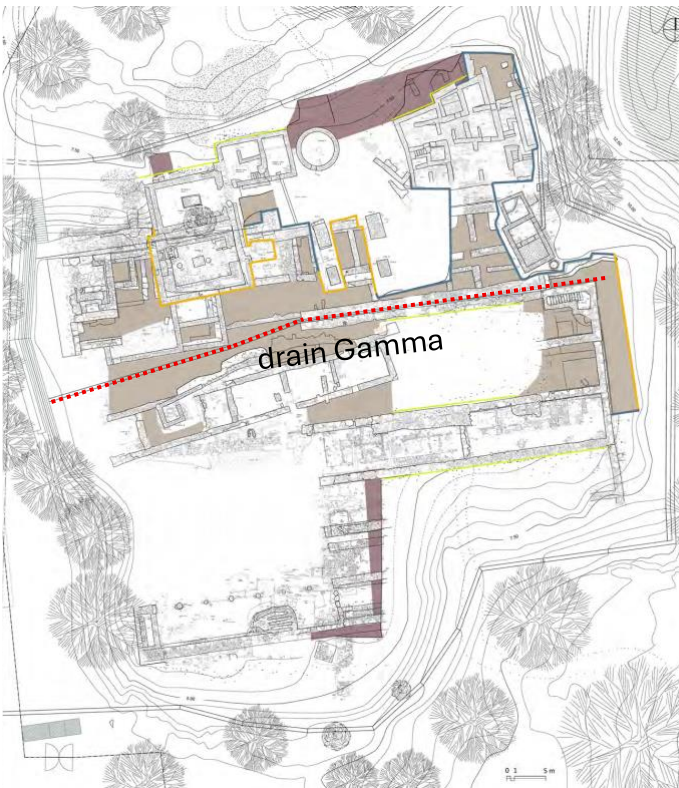
Figure 2. Plan at left showing approved plan in blue for 85 m long x 13 w x 5.5 m high pyramidal platform of steel encaged stone and soil berm with pedestrian walkway (section below).



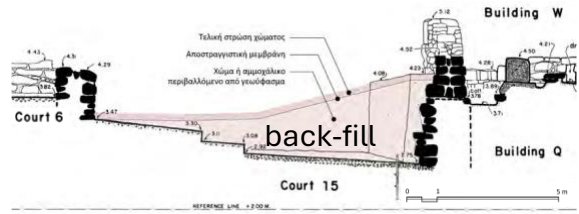
Above: Section showing Harbor Area remains protected by sea

Below: photograph of current degraded sand berm protecting site





Plan of area where drain Gamma will be placed;
Light brown is back-filling to direct surface
water into drain Gamma

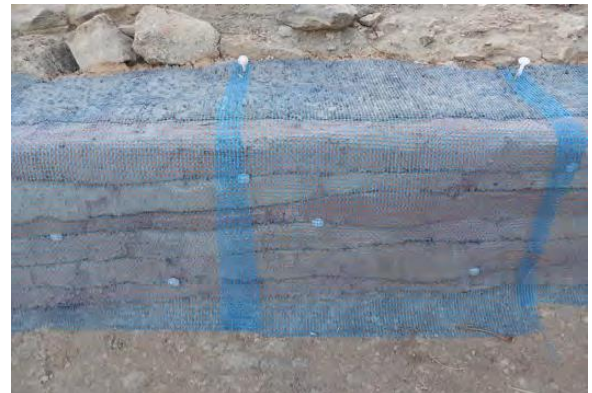


After back-filling and installation of drain

Figure 3. Showing main cement-lined drain Gamma diverting surface water under the sea-wall to the beach after back-filling of rooms of main Harbor Buildings of the Minoan period



Laying hyper-adobe around soil scarp under Building W



Applying polypropylene netting over layers



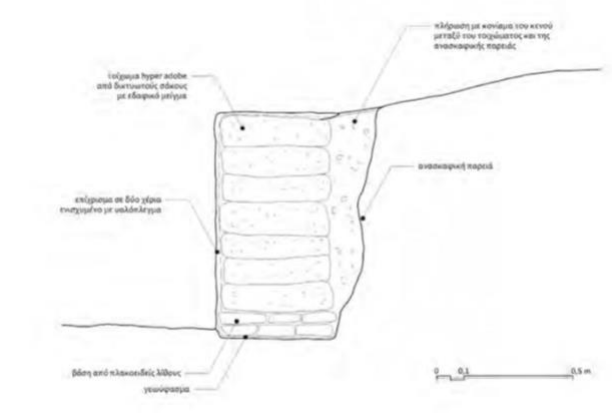
Packing mortar between soil scarp and adobe layers; Building W in background



Curing hyper-adobe and mortar facing



View after completion, Building W in background atop Building Q in foreground



Section through hyper-adobe and retained soil scarp

Figure 4. Pilot project laying *hyper-adobe* to protect soil scarp under Building W atop Building Q. Plans and photos by G. Ninos.

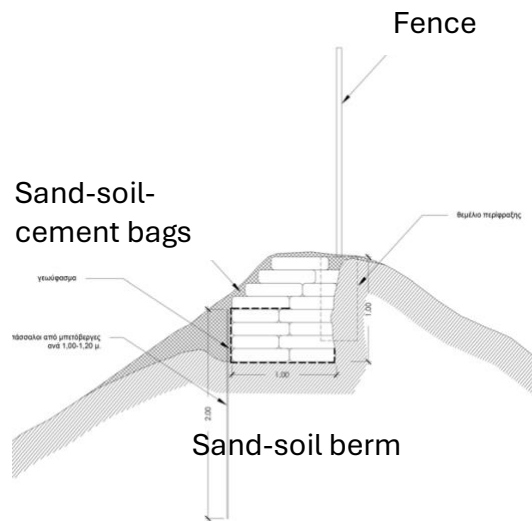


Figure 5. Soil-sand-cement bags stabilizing temporary sea-wall and new fence. November 2025





Altar terrace scarp from SE showing exposed eroded soil at corner.



North face of Altar scarp showing exposed rusting metal mesh.



West and south face of Altar Terrace with altars at upper center.



Terrace scarp north of Altar terrace showing foundations and eroding mortar facing



Example in Central Hillside of a new terrace with polypropylene netting enmeshed in mortar, spring 2024

Upper left: photograph of existing terraces supporting sanctuary temple from south

Lower left: Visualization of completed restoration of terraces

Figure 6. Scarps that will be restored after completion of pilot project to replace with new stainless steel or hyper-adobe embedded in facing mortar supported by new foundations

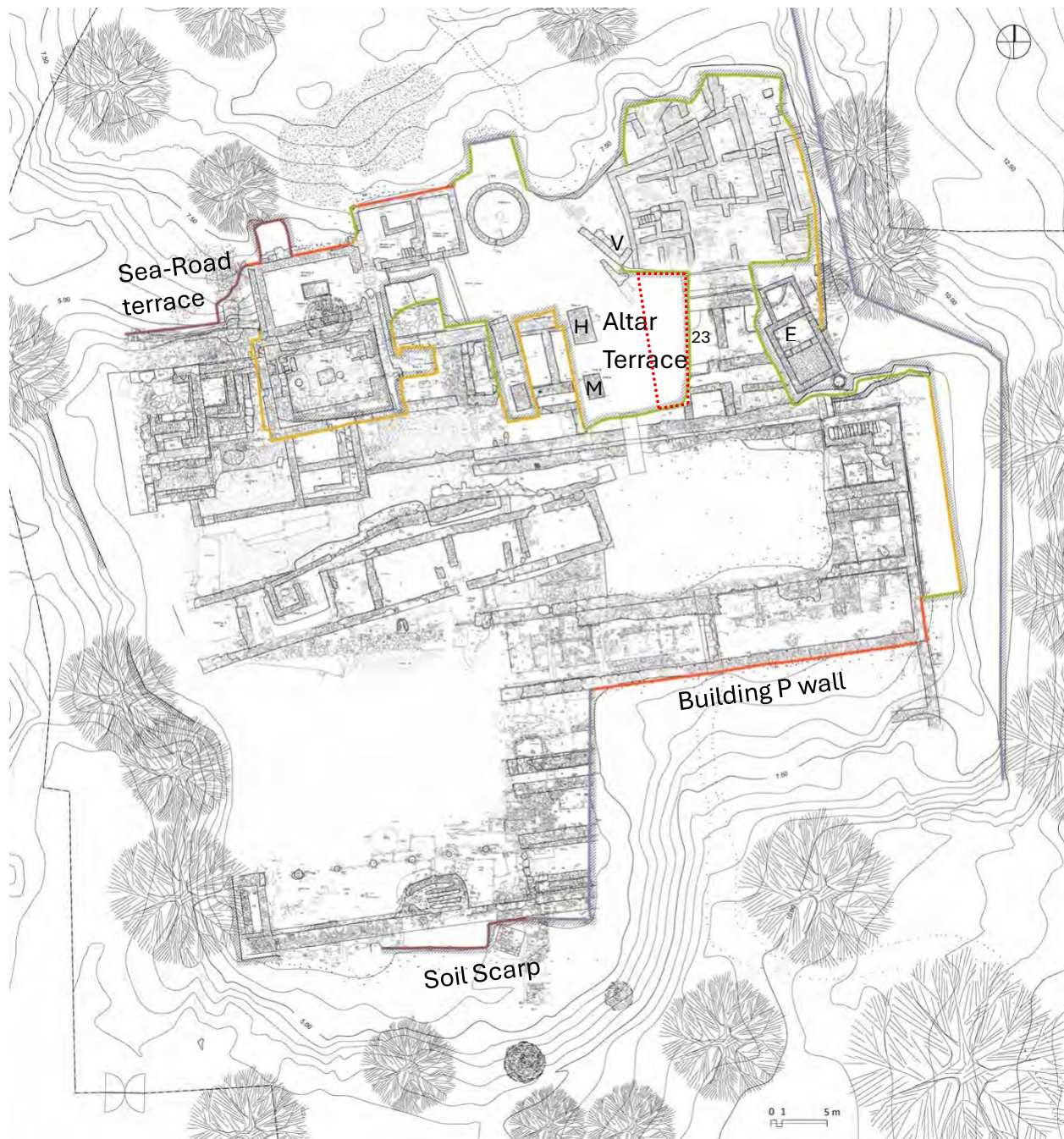


Figure 7a. Harbor buildings and Sanctuary

KEY: Red denotes areas where excavation is required for conservation. Dotted RED is area for stratigraphic excavation. GREEN are areas where eroded facing needs to be replaced with either stainless steel or hyper-adobe encased in mortar. YELLOW are areas where dry wall exists and where 'windows' of 1990s restoration will be filled with dry-wall

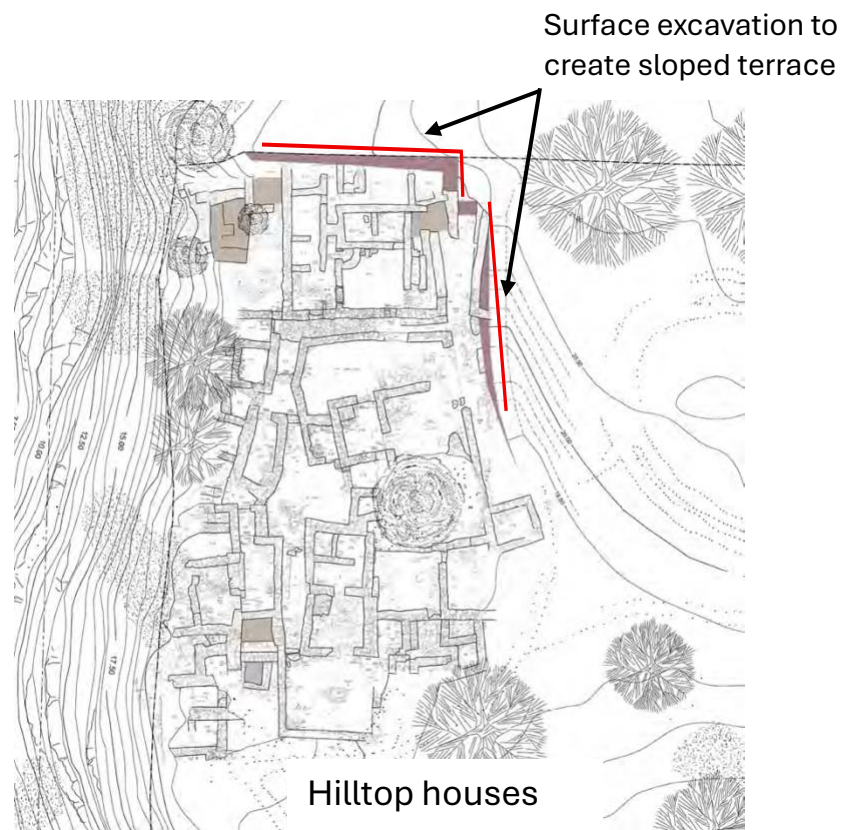


Figure 7b Showing trench sides that require excavation for stabilization. Yellow completed

