



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**Land to Rear of 26,
High Street, Desford,
Leicestershire**

**An Archaeological
Evaluation 2000**

(Planning Application No. 99/00973/FUL)

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



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Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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November 2000

**Land to Rear of 26, High Street, Desford, Leicestershire:
An Archaeological Evaluation 2000
(Planning Application No. 99/00973/FUL)**

by
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An Archaeological Evaluation of Land to Rear of 26, High Street, Desford, Leicestershire

By Dan Slater

1.0 Summary

Two trial trenches were excavated to cover a proportionate sample of the land proposed for development (Planning Application No.99/00973/FUL) to the rear of Manor Farm, Desford, centered on N.G.R. SK 47940324. The work was carried out by staff from Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in August 2000. The aim of the evaluation was to identify any evidence of Romano-British or Medieval settlement and the degree to which it would be affected by any development. No evidence of any archaeological features was recovered in either of the evaluation trenches. A record of the identified stratigraphy was made.

2.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of two evaluation trenches excavated within an undeveloped area of garden to the rear of Manor Farm, in the village of Desford. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, on behalf of David Wilson Estates, to carry out the evaluation prior to application for planning consent for development of the site (Planning Application No.99/00973/FUL). The evaluation was carried out in order to assess the survival of archaeological remains associated with the Medieval village, or with any earlier activity and to assess the affect of development on any such remains. The evaluation consisted of two 19m long trenches excavated by machine and further investigated by hand excavation, this constituted a 1½% sample of the total site area. The work was carried out in accordance with the BUFAU Specification (see Appendix 1), and with the requirements set down in the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994, revised 1999), and Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS, 1999). A note on the results of this evaluation will be forwarded to the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for publication.

3.0 Site Location (Figs. 1 & 2)

Desford is a small village to the west of Leicester, and Manor Farm is located at 26, High Street. The application site covers approximately 0.4 hectares of disused land to the south of the farm house, centered on N.G.R. SK 4794 0324. The site is currently overgrown garden covered in rough grass, scrub and mature trees, the extent of which provided problems for vehicle access. There is a band of trees down the western side of the site which are under a preservation order, and the land slopes gently from northwest to southeast.

4.0 Archaeological Background

An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site was carried out (John Samuels Archaeological consultants, 2000) which highlighted evidence of Bronze Age and Iron Age activity within the immediate vicinity. This was discovered during an evaluation excavation to the east of the development site, which also identified some areas of settlement dated to the Romano-British period. Within the village of Desford there is evidence of further Romano-British activity, including industrial activity, specifically pottery kilns. The site also lies on the extreme southern edge of the Medieval core of the village.

5.0 Objectives

The general objective of the trial trenching was to define the survival, nature, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits encountered, so that appropriate mitigation strategies could be formulated.

Specific objectives relating to the area proposed for development were the recovery of evidence of Romano-British or Medieval activity.

6.0 Method

The two trial trenches measured 19m x 1.6m (Fig. 2). Due to the density of the undergrowth and the feasibility of machine access, these were 1m shorter than in the BUFAU specification (Appendix 1), though the possible need for flexibility in the lengths and locations of the trial trenches had been noted in the specification. These were measured in with tapes off the existing field boundaries. The excavation of the overburden in the trenches was carried out by a J.C.B. Excavator, fitted with a 1.6m wide, toothless ditching bucket and operated under archaeological supervision. The deposits were to be machine excavated down to the archaeological or natural horizon, whichever was first encountered. Any significant archaeological deposits were to be excavated by hand and recorded on *pro-forma* record cards supplemented by scale plans, section drawings and photographs, where appropriate. Soil samples, where necessary, were to be collected from a representative sample of datable features for assessment of the potential for recovery of charred plant remains. Where no archaeological deposits were identified, the stratigraphy was recorded and photographed.

These records comprise the site archive, which, at the time of writing, is currently stored at Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit and will later be transferred to the Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monument Record.

After completion of the evaluation the trenches were backfilled by machine.

7.0 The Trial Trenches (Fig. 3)

7.1 Trench 1 (Plate 1)

Trench 1 was covered with a 0.25 to 0.40 thick deposit of topsoil (1000), which had a dark brown sandy clay content and contained some root activity, and contained no finds. Underneath this was a possible subsoil horizon (1001), a brown sand, reaching a maximum depth of approximately 0.25m towards the centre of the trench. This sand overlay the natural subsoil (1002), which consisted of orange-brown sandy gravel located at depths of between 0.40m and 0.50m. No archaeological features were identified within this trench.

Context	Description
1000	Topsoil
1001	Subsoil interface
1002	Natural Subsoil

7.2 Trench 2 (Plate 2)

Both of the trenches were similar in terms of stratigraphy. The topsoil (2000) within Trench 2 became a lighter brown, sandier soil down slope towards the south. It varied in depth between 0.30m and 0.40m, and also contained some root activity. As in Trench 1, a thin brown sandy horizon (2001) lay between the topsoil and the natural brown sandy gravel. It was shallower here, between 0.10m to 0.20m deep, and the depth was more uniform throughout the trench section. Underlying this, the natural (2002) was similar to that in Trench 1, again being found at approximately 0.50m below the surface. As in Trench 1, no archaeological finds or features were identified.

Context	Description
2000	Topsoil
2001	Subsoil interface
2002	Natural Subsoil

8.0 Assessment of the Archaeological Importance of the Site

There was no evidence of archaeological features identified within either of the evaluation trenches. The lack of any Romano-British features or finds would suggest that the settlement identified to the east does not extend as far as the development site. The negative evidence of Medieval activity on this site also suggests that the Medieval core of Desford did not extend this far back from the High Street. There was also no evidence of any truncation of the subsoil which may have destroyed any surviving archaeology.

Overall, the evidence from these two trial trenches suggests that the archaeological potential of the site is low, with minimal evidence for human activity.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Gary Coates supervised the evaluation which was carried out by Andy Newton, Andy Rudge and Dan Slater. Lucie Dingwall managed the project. Mark Breedon prepared the illustrations and Simon Buteux edited the report.

Thanks are due to John Samuels Archaeological Consultants for organising the evaluation, for whom Forbes Marsden acted as project consultant. Anne Graf and Lesley Ann Mather monitored the project on behalf of Leicestershire County Council.

Thanks are also due to Mr. and Mrs. Ward, of 26, High Street, for their hospitality and cooperation.

10.0 Reference

John Samuels Archaeological Consultants 2000 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land to Rear of Manor Farm, Desford, Leicestershire*, JSAC 632/00/01

Figures

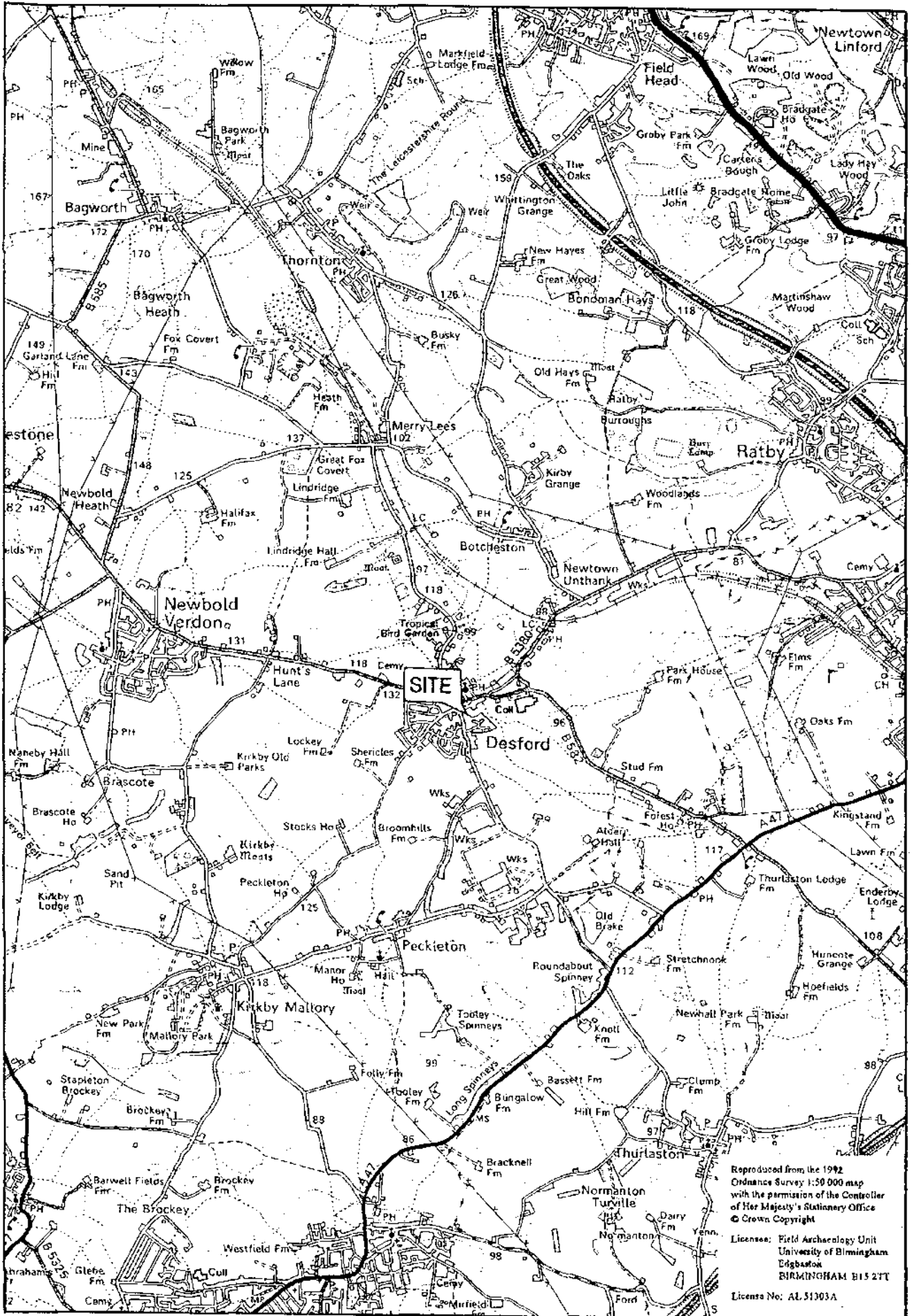


Fig. 1

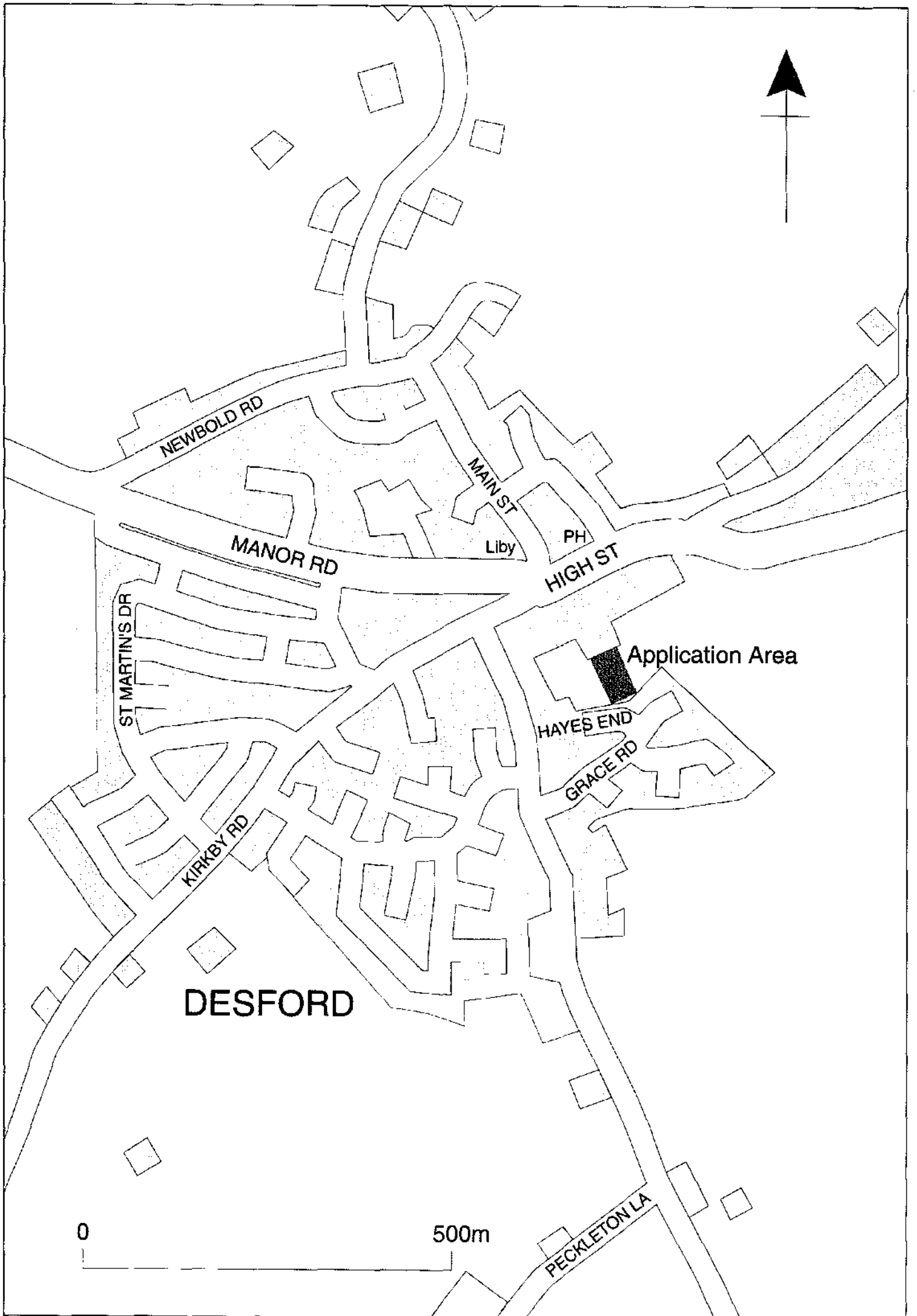


Fig.2

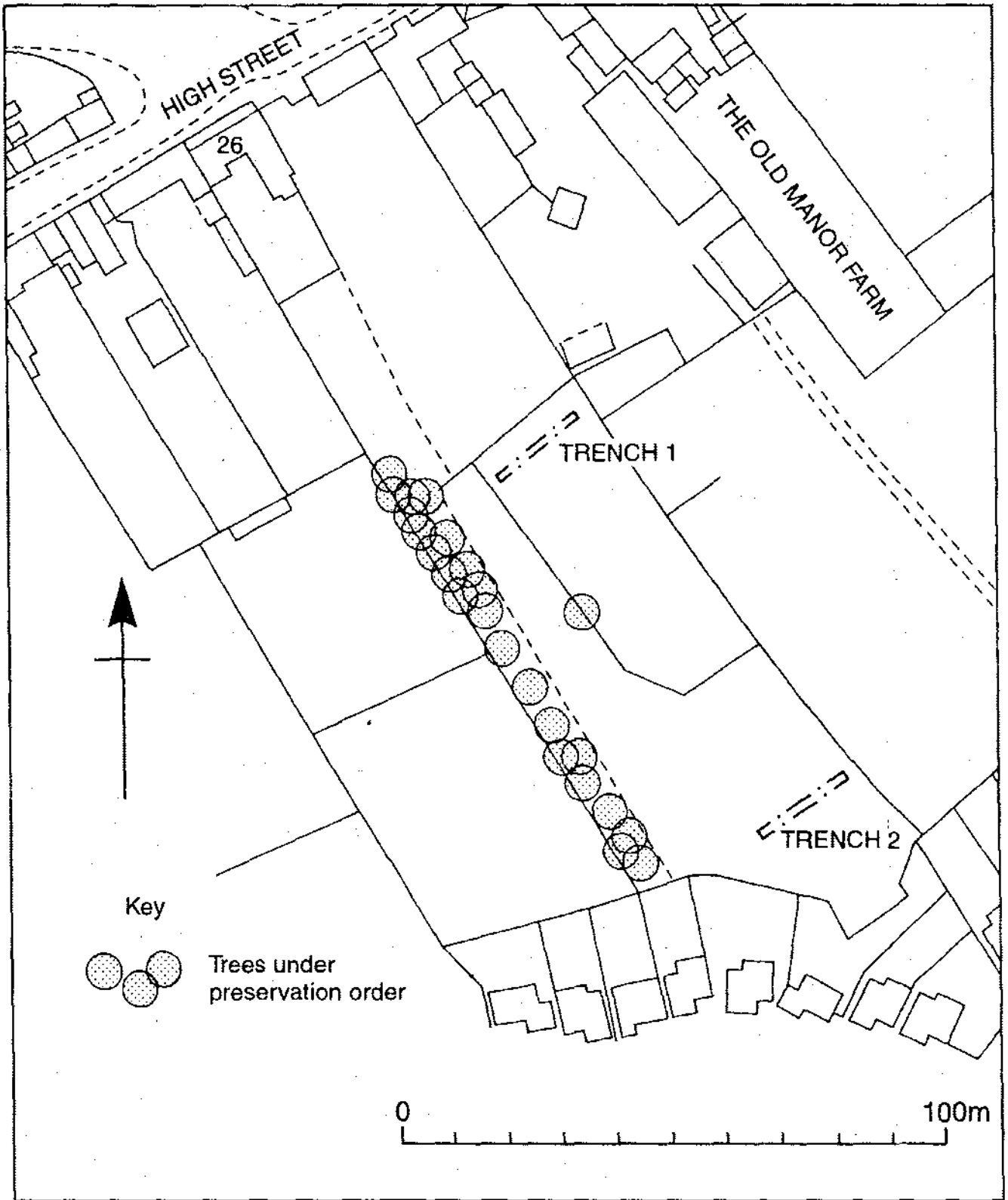


Fig.3

Plates



Plate 1.

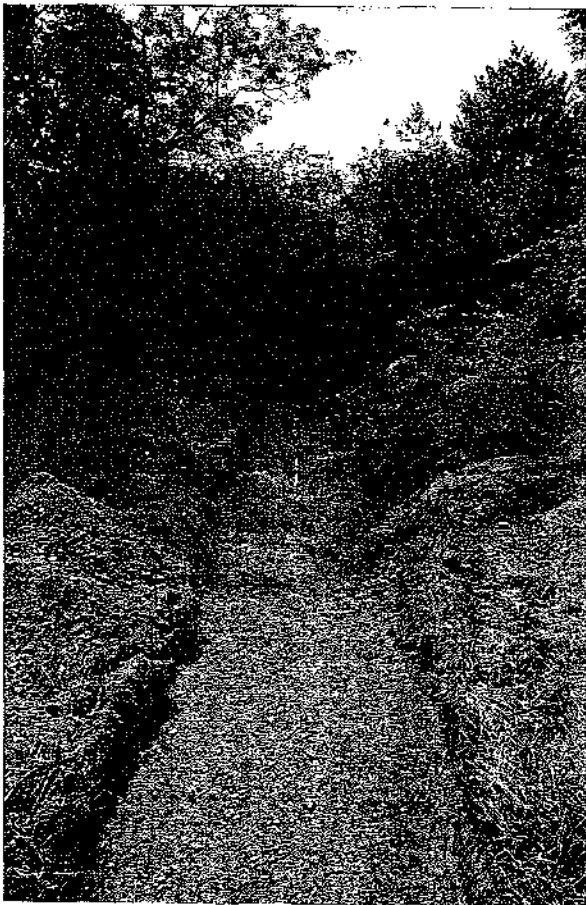


Plate 2.

Appendix 1

Archaeological Evaluation Excavation of Land to Rear of Manor Farm, Desford, Leicestershire

Archaeological Specification

1.0: INTRODUCTION

This document provides a specification for an archaeological field evaluation of land to the rear of Manor Farm, Desford, Leicestershire (NGR SK 4794 0324). The specification has been prepared for John Samuels Archaeological Consultants on behalf David Wilson Estates in advance of a planning application for proposed development of the site.

2.0 THE SITE

The site is located to the south of Manor Farm, at 26 High Street, Desford, Leicestershire. The area proposed for development covers approximately 0.4 hectares and is currently gardens covered in rough grass, scrub and mature trees.

3.0: ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site has been carried out (John Samuels Archaeological Consultants *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of Land to Rear of Manor Farm, Desford, Leicestershire*, JSAC 632/00/01). The findings of the assessment were that no finds or features of archaeological interest are known within the proposed development site. However, Iron Age activity and Roman settlement remains have been uncovered during evaluation excavation immediately to the east of the proposed development site, and the site lies on the extreme southern edge of the medieval core of the village. Overall, it was concluded that the archaeological potential of the proposed development site is low – medium. As the site is unsuitable for geophysical survey or fieldwalking, evaluation by means of two trial trenches, each measuring 20m x 1.6m, was recommended to further test the archaeological potential of the site.

4.0: EVALUATION

4.1: Aims

The objectives of the archaeological evaluation are to contribute to an understanding of the presence, nature, extent and significance of any significant archaeological remains which may survive within the area proposed for development and to permit the formulation of a mitigation strategy, if appropriate.

4.2: Methods

Two trial trenches will be excavated, each measuring 20m x 1.6m. The precise location of the trenches will be determined on site with respect to trees and other obstructions. The trenches will be opened by machine to the top of archaeologically significant levels. Subsequent sampling of archaeological deposits and features will be by hand.

All recording will be undertaken using pro-forma context and feature record cards supplemented by plans and sections at appropriate scales, and colour slide and monochrome photography.

20 litre soil samples, if necessary, will be collected from a representative sample of datable features for assessment of the potential for recovery of charred plant remains.

5.0: PROJECT TEAM

The fieldwork will be carried out by an appropriately-qualified supervisor assisted by two experienced professional site assistants.

Specialist advice and reporting will be provided by, as appropriate:

Dr Ann Woodward BA PhD MIFA (Research Fellow, University of Birmingham; Researcher, BUFAU): Prehistoric pottery

Jane Evans BA (Research Fellow, University of Birmingham; Finds Officer, BUFAU): Roman pottery

Stephanie Ratkai BA (Honorary Research Fellow, University of Birmingham): Medieval and post-medieval pottery

Lynne Bevan BA MPhil MIFA (Research Fellow, University of Birmingham; Finds Researcher, BUFAU): lithics and small finds

Dr James Grieg PhD (Senior Research Fellow, University of Birmingham): pollen analysis and microbotanical remains.

Marina Ciaraldi MA (Environmental Supervisor, BUFAU): charred, mineralised and waterlogged plant macro-fossils.

Umberto Albarella BSc (Research Fellow, University of Birmingham): animal bone.

Dr Megan Brickley BA MSc PhD (Lecturer in Human Osteology, University of Birmingham): human bone.

Dr David Smith MA PhD (Lecturer in Environmental Archaeology, University of Birmingham): insect remains.

All finds and environmental specialists will liaise with colleagues working in the region and further afield as appropriate.

6.0: REPORT

The results of the fieldwork will be described in an illustrated report (6 copies to be provided), which will contain the following:

- (a) Description of the archaeological background.
- (b) Methodology.
- (c) A narrative description of the results and discussion of the evidence, set in their local and regional context, supported by appropriate plans and sections.
- (d) Summary of the finds and environmental evidence.
- (e) An assessment of the potential of any artifactual, faunal and ecofactual evidence for further study.
- (f) An assessment of the importance any surviving archaeological remains.

7.0: ARCHIVE

The site archive will conform to the guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects.

8.0: HEALTH AND SAFETY

All current legislation, regulations and guidance will be complied with. In accordance with the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992* a Risk Assessment will be prepared.

9.0: GENERAL

All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

The project will follow the requirements set down in the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994, revised 1999), and Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS, 1999).