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Archaeological Services

An archaeological evaluation
on land at Littlethorpe House,
10, The Square, Littlethorpe,
Leicestershire
(SP 542 969)

Jon Coward



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**An archaeological evaluation
on land at Littlethorpe House,
10, The Square, Littlethorpe,
Leicestershire
(SK 542 969)**

Jon Coward

for:

Dr Helen Scott and Wells McFarlane

Planning Application: 10/0669/1/OX

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CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction.....	1
2 Context of the Project	1
4 Aims and Methods	3
5 Results.....	5
Trench 1 (8.5m)	5
Trench 4 (15m)	7
Trench 5 (8 metres).....	9
Trench 6 (10m)	9
Trench 7 (11m)	9
Trench 8 (11m)	9
Discussion	9
Archive.....	10
Acknowledgements.....	11
Bibliography	11
Appendix: Trench record tables.....	14
Oasis record	16

FIGURES

Figure 1 Location of site (arrowed)	2
Figure 2 The northern garden, looking east	4
Figure 3 The southern garden, looking south-east.....	4
Figure 4 Trench 1(E) under excavation, looking west.....	6
Figure 5 Position of trenches within garden areas.	7
Figure 6 Trench 2, looking south-east. Pit [2], and in the background, a concrete wall footing.....	8
Figure 7 Trench 2 showing pit [2] and concrete footing	8
Figure 8 Trench 7, looking south. Modern cut feature is visible in centre of trench base.	12
Figure 9 Looking south. Trenches 7 (rear) and 8 after backfilling.....	13

An archaeological evaluation on land at Littlethorpe House, 10, The Square, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire (SP 542 969)

Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by ULAS in March 2011 for Dr Helen Scott and Wells McFarlane in the gardens of Littlethorpe House, 10, The Square, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire (SP 542 969), in advance of proposed residential development. The evaluation located relatively recent garden features, but little of archaeological significance was noted, with no finds of any antiquity and a single undated pit being the only feature located in one of the evaluation trenches. The archive will be deposited with LMARS under accession code X.A42.2011 in due course.

1 Introduction

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services at Littlethorpe House, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire in advance of proposed residential development (Figure 1)

This work was in accordance with DOE Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment) and was intended to provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any archaeological remains that may be present on the site, so that the Planning Authority could assess the potential impact of the proposed development on such remains.

Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority had requested a field evaluation to identify and locate any archaeological remains of significance

2 Context of the Project

In response to the applicant's submission to Blaby District Council of a planning application 10/0669/1/OX for the erection of seven dwellings and garages and creation of new access at land to the rear of 10 The Square, Littlethorpe, the Planning Authority advised that planning permission should be deferred until suitable archaeological field evaluation had been undertaken to assess the location, extent, significance and character of any buried archaeological remains.

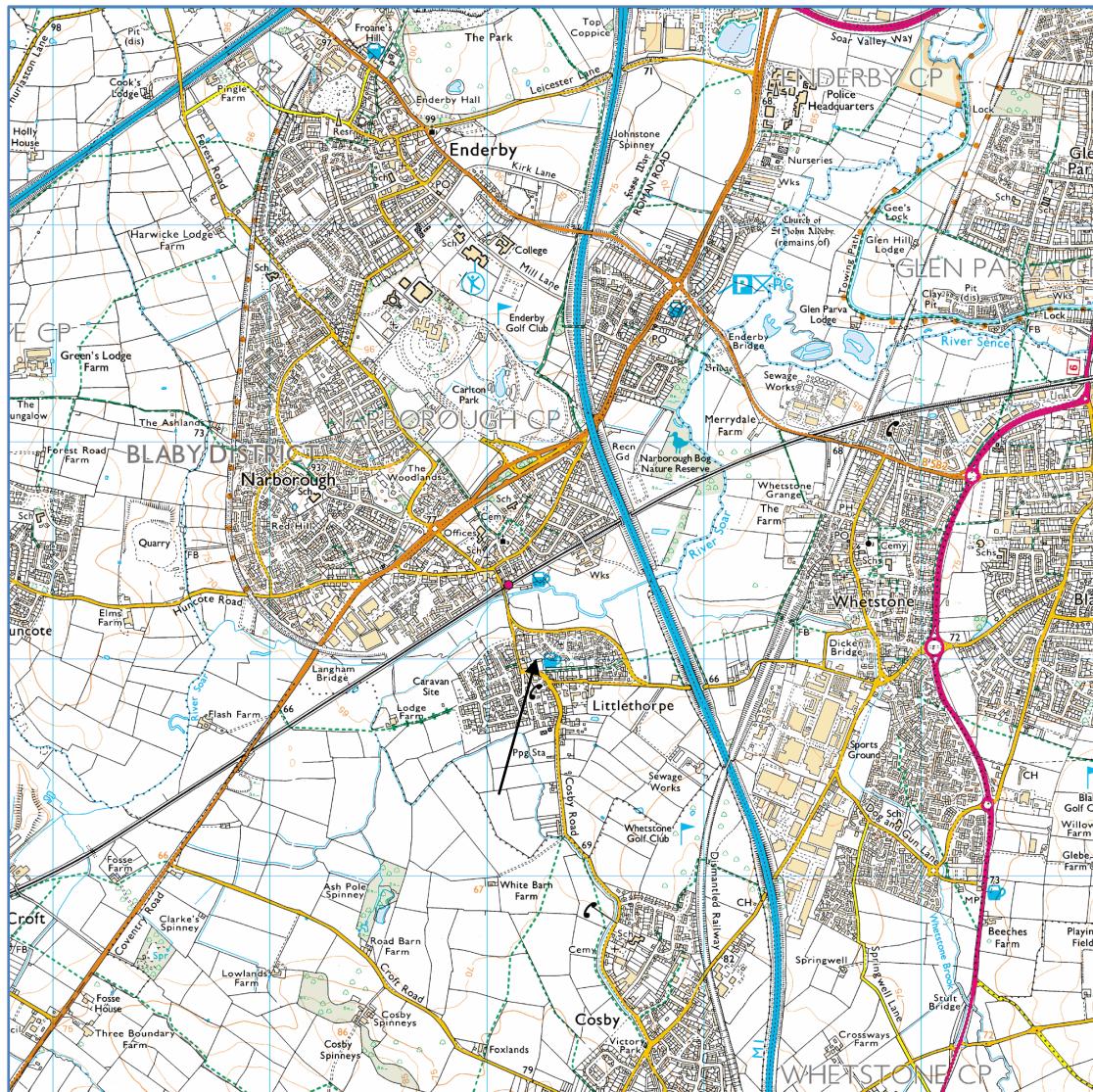


Figure 1 Location of site (arrowed)

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The development site has been identified as an area of significant archaeological potential based upon assessment of archaeological data held by the Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER), which shows that the application site lies in an area of archaeological interest within the historic settlement core of Littlethorpe (HER ref. MLE9565). An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment has confirmed this, and further highlighted the possibility for the presence of prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains (especially Anglo-Saxon and medieval) (George 2004). Map evidence indicates that the proposed development site has been built on in the 19th and mid-20th century with some untouched areas. Consequently, there was a possibility that buried archaeological remains would be affected by the development.

Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) as archaeological advisors to the planning authority required that an evaluation be undertaken as detailed in their *Amended brief for archaeological evaluation of land to*

the rear of 10 The Square, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire (LCC HNET 25.02.2011 – hereinafter the ‘Brief’).

3 Location, Geology and Topography

The site was located at the rear of 10, The Square, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire and consisted of two relatively flat lawned areas to the north and south (Figure 2-3), with large borders and beds within the lawns containing shrubs and a number of large and medium sized trees. The gardens were walled on all sides and a large brick and glass building lay between the two main garden areas. The area covered c.0.43 hectares with other residential properties to the west, north and east, while The Square and Waudby Close lie to the south. The site is located at a height of c.68m OD. The geology of the site was mapped as Lower Lias clay and limestone (Geological Survey of England & Wales, Sheet 156), but in the event clay was encountered only in the southern trench 6, all other trenches having in pebbly gravel substrata.

4 Aims and Methods

The definition of archaeological field evaluation, taken from the Institute for Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008) is a limited programme of non-intrusive and/ or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologist’s (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*.

Prior to any machining of trial trenches general photographs of the site areas were taken.



Figure 2 The northern garden, looking east



Figure 3 The southern garden, looking south-east

It was proposed that trial trenches be placed across the site to cover the areas that will be disturbed by any subsequent development. Minimising the impact of the work on the existing garden was an important consideration and therefore a trial trench layout was devised that avoided undue damage to the garden and an earth-moving

methodology was imposed that allowed for the sensitive removal, holding/storing and replacement of turf, topsoil and subsoil. The movement of the mechanical excavator over the proposed development area was also carefully managed, minimising the impact of any earth moving vehicle within the site.

A total of eight trenches was placed across the gardens (Figure 5). The sizes of the trenches were adjusted in order to fit around large trees and known underground water pipes and also to minimise the damage to the lawn and stonework by the excavator. All trenches were 1.25m in width, except for trench 6 which was 0.75m in width. In total *c.* 96 sq metres were excavated in accordance with the requirements of the 'brief'.

Topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket. Trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed substratum, whichever was reached first.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located were recorded, sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence, recognising structural evidence and recovering any economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Attention was paid to the potential for buried palaeosols and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

5 Results

Trench 1 (8.5m)

This trench was situated near the north-west boundary, in amongst an area of leylandii or similar tree planting (Figure 4). The topsoil was a dark organic loam; subsoil was brown sandy silts. There was much root disturbance and the soils were dry, typical of areas with trees while the natural substrata comprised orangey brown pebbly gravels in a sand matrix at *c.* 0.70m below ground level. The trench was divided into an eastern and western arm to avoid the roots of a large non-coniferous tree. No artefacts or features were noted in the trenches.

Trench 2 (9m)

Trench 2 was situated in a lawned area north of the range of outbuildings which separated the two gardens. Topsoil was a mid grey-brown sandy loam, over a sandy silt subsoil. Natural pebbly gravel with sand patches occurred at *c.* 0.50m below ground level.

At the east end of the trench, under the topsoil (Figure 6-7) was a concrete footing, crossing the trench at a slight angle. This headed towards the junction of two of the outbuildings and is clearly a garden feature removed some time in the 20th century. Approximately half way down the trench, in the south baulk, was part of a cut [2] feature. It was *c.* 0.40m in depth, and steep-sided; the fill (1) was a light orangey brown clean silty sand. Visible dimensions were 1.70m east-west and 0.50m north-south.



Figure 4 Trench 1(E) under excavation, looking west.

Trench 3 (6m)

Trench 3 was situated in a lawned area on the north edge of the garden. It had a dark grey brown sandy loam topsoil over a dark brown silty sand subsoil. Natural substrata were encountered at *c.*0.85m below ground level at the south end rising to *c.* 0.65m below ground level at the north end. No artefacts or features were noted in the trench.

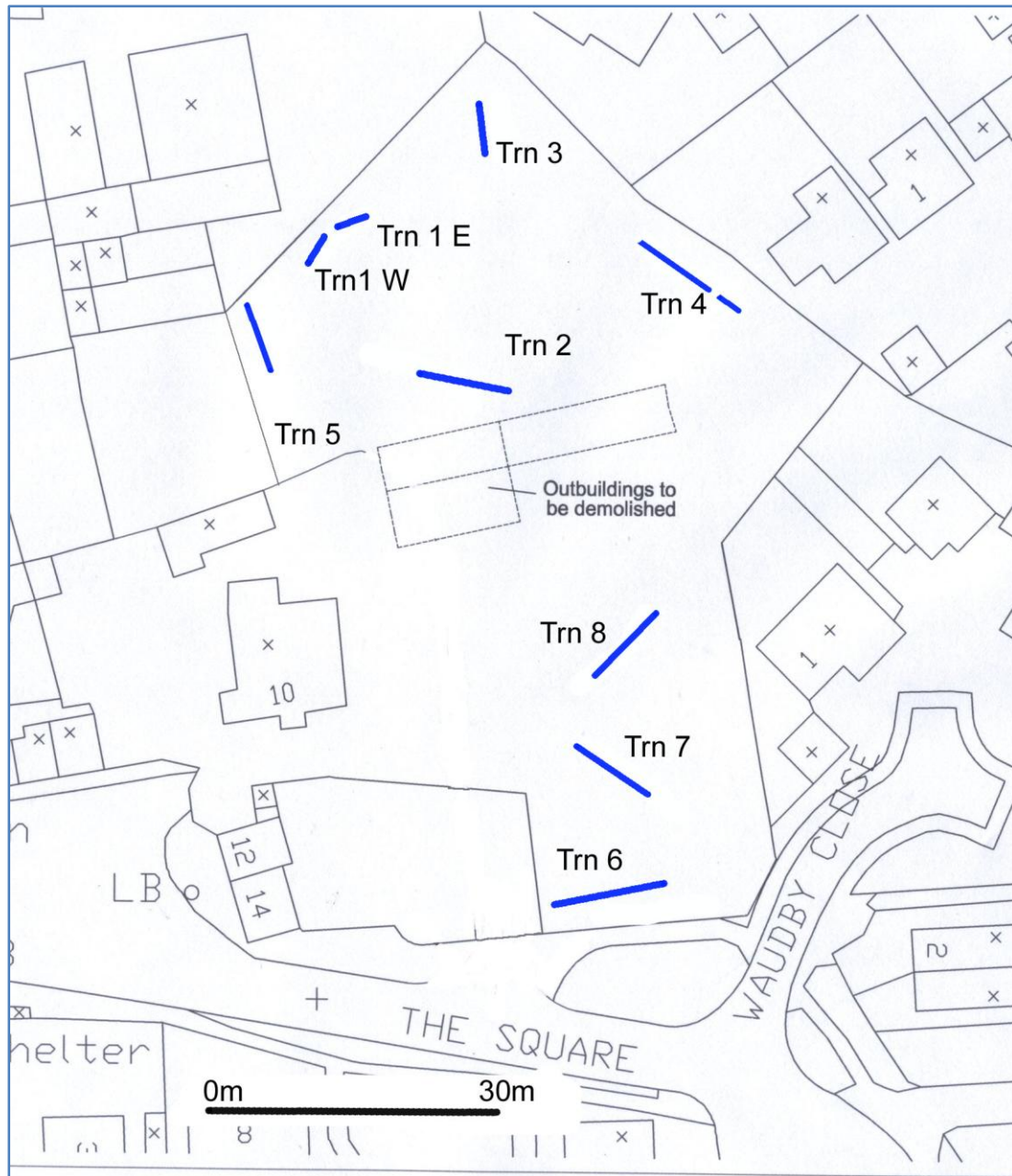


Figure 5 Position of trenches within garden areas.
Based on a plan supplied by the developer. North to top.

Trench 4 (15m)

Trench 4 ran through a flowerbed in the north-eastern part of the site. A large tree root necessitated interrupting the trench at the south-east end. Topsoil was a mid-grey brown sandy-loam, over a sandy-silt subsoil. Natural substrata comprised clay silt patches and coarse gravels in sand. The natural substrata were lower in this trench, at *c.* 1.00m to 1.20m below ground level. No artefacts or features were noted in the trench.



Figure 6 Trench 2, looking south-east. Pit [2], and in the background, a concrete wall footing

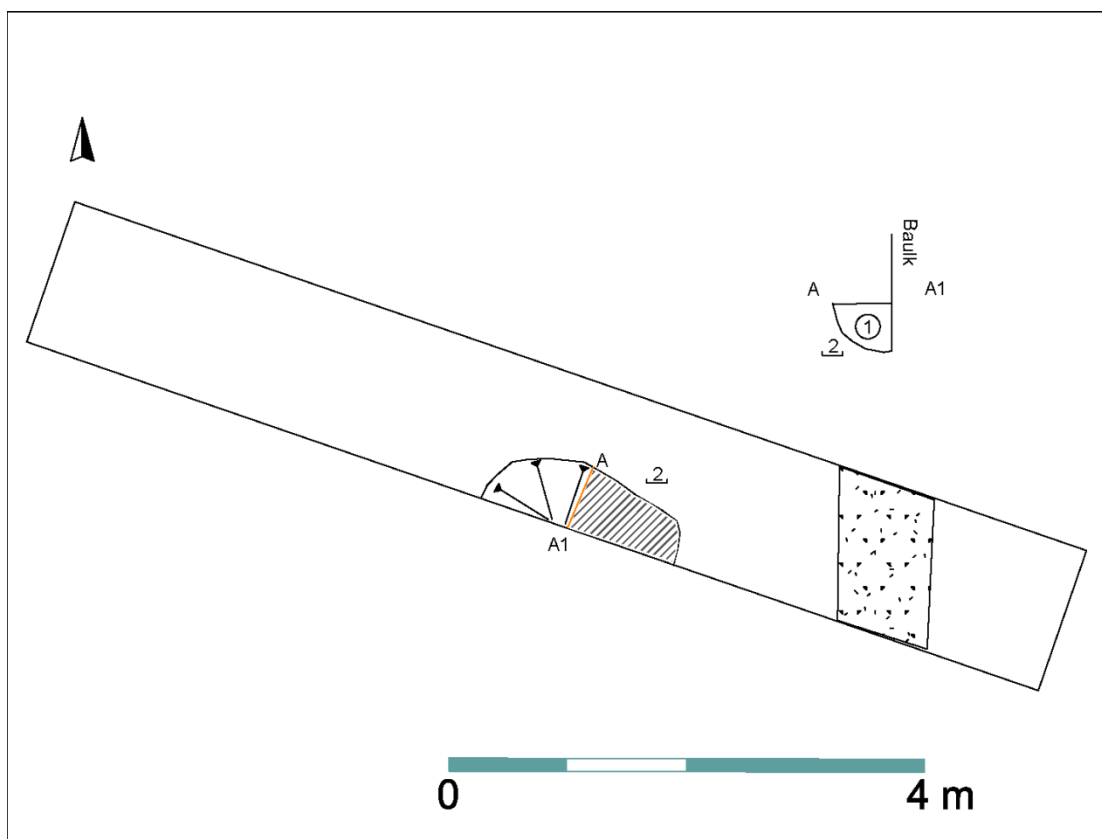


Figure 7 Trench 2 showing pit [2] and concrete footing

Trench 5 (8 metres)

Trench 5 ran down the side of a footpath, in a flowerbed. It had a dark grey sandy loam topsoil over a mid-grey silty-sand subsoil. Natural substrata were clay-silt patches and pebbly coarse gravels in sand at a depth of *c.* 0.70m (north end) to 0.90m (south end) below ground level. A water pipe ran diagonally across the trench cut into the natural sub-strata at the north end. No artefacts or features were noted in the trench.

Trench 6 (10m)

Trench 6 ran alongside a line of conifers on the south edge of the property. The roots and a very hard dry topsoil and subsoil proved to be impenetrable for the mini-digger, which needed to change to a narrow pipe-trenching bucket in order to reach the natural substrata. This was the only trench where the clay natural substrata predicted by the geology mapping were identified, at a depth of between 0.40m and 0.60m below ground level. No artefacts or features were present in the trench.

Trench 7 (11m)

Trench 7 was situated in the lawn. About half-way along the trench (Figure 8) a stretch of gravel hardcore was encountered below the topsoil; this represents the line of a path which used to run eastwards from the front of the present house, turning southwards in the vicinity of trench 7 to meet a gate in the southern boundary. Adjacent to this hardcore a deep cut feature with a clay lining was encountered which had been backfilled with clay-rich soil containing white china, clinker and other modern ceramic building material (CBM) fragments. This appears to have been a garden feature, perhaps a pond, and as it was clearly modern it was not excavated. It was still present at a depth of 0.90m below ground level. Apart from these modern features, no artefacts or features were noted in the trench.

Trench 8 (11m)

Trench 8 was situated in the lawn. It had a dark grey friable sandy loam topsoil over a mid grey-brown clay loam. Natural substrata were dull orange coarse sandy gravels, with streaks of pale grey sandy silt running parallel to each other. One of these was investigated as a potential archaeological feature, but it appeared completely clean with a maximum depth of 0.2m, and they are most likely glacio-fluvial features within the natural gravel substrata.

6 Discussion

The evaluation trenching revealed only one deposit which could possibly be of some antiquity, the undated pit in trench 2. This could however also be a modern garden feature connected with the concrete wall adjacent. The garden area has undergone some alteration in the past, as evidenced by removed paths and backfilled cut features, for example. However, in addition to the lack of archaeological features, there is also an absence of any archaeological artefacts; it is slightly unusual for an evaluation in a village core to fail to locate a single sherd of pre-modern pottery. Given the lack of

both finds and features, it is perhaps unlikely that any concentration of medieval or earlier deposits survive in the garden area.

7 Archive

The archive consists of:

27 Monochrome film images and associated contact prints

27 Digital images and associated contact prints

8 *pro-forma* trench record sheets

1 context sheet

1 photographic index

It will be archived with Leicestershire County Council under accession code X.A42.2011 in due course.

8 Acknowledgements

The Project was carried out by Jon Coward and Dr Roger Kipling of ULAS. Project management was by Patrick Clay. ULAS would like to thank Dr Helen Scott, her gardener, Brian, and Trevor Wells and Victoria Strickland of Wells McFarlane for their assistance during the project.

9 Bibliography

George, S., 2004 *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for a Residential Development at land to the rear of 10 The Square, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire (SP 542 969)* ULAS report 2004-090

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Figure 8 Trench 7, looking south. Modern cut feature is visible in centre of trench base.



Figure 9 Looking south. Trenches 7 (rear) and 8 after backfilling

Appendix: Trench record tables

Trench 1 E (to left of table) and 1W (to right)

Interval from NE end in metres	0	1	2	3	4.5	0	1	2	3
	Depth in cms from ground level								
Base of topsoil	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	30	30
Base of subsoil/top of natural	70	75	80	80	80	60	55	80	80
Base of trench	70	75	80	80	80	70	60	80	80

Trench 2

Contexts in trench: (1) [2]

Interval from W end in metres	0	3	6	9
	Depth in cms from ground level			
Base of topsoil	40	35	25	25
Base of subsoil/top of natural	70	50	50	50
Base of trench	80	65	60	60

Trench 3

Interval from S end in metres	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Depth in cms from ground level						
Base of topsoil	20	20	20	25	25	25	25
Base of subsoil/top of natural	85	85	70	65	62	62	62
Base of trench	85	85	70	65	62	62	62

Trench 4

Interval from N end in metres	0	4	8	12	15
	Depth in cms from ground level				
Base of topsoil	20	25	30	20	30
Base of subsoil/top of natural	95	90	75	90	55
Base of trench	95	90	90	90	60

Trench 5

Interval from NW end in metres	0	2	4	6	8
	Depth in cms from ground level				
Base of topsoil	35	35	45	40	40
Base of subsoil/top of natural	75	70	90	90	90
Base of trench	75	70	90	90	90

Trench 6

Interval from NE end in metres	0	2	4	6	8	10
	Depth in cms from ground level					
Base of topsoil	45	40	25	15	15	15
Base of subsoil/top of natural	60	50	60	30	35	35
Base of trench	60	60	60	40	45	45

Trench 7

Interval from NW end in metres	0	2	4	6	8	10
	Depth in cms from ground level					
Base of topsoil	25	20	20	20	20	20
Base of subsoil/top of natural	60	feature	feature	75	65	60
Base of trench	70	90	90	75	65	60

Trench 8

Interval from SW end in metres	0	2	4	6	8	10
	Depth in cms from ground level					
Base of topsoil	20	15	10	15	15	15
Base of subsoil/top of natural	65	50	55	43	45	33
Base of trench	65	55	55	48	45	40

Appendix 2 Oasis record

INFORMATION REQUIRED	
Project Name	10 The Square Littlethorpe
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Jon Coward
Previous/Future work	Previous: Desk-based assessment
Current Land Use	Garden
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-determination
Site Co ordinates	SK 542 969
Start/end dates of field work	March 2011
Archive Recipient	LCC
Height min/max	67.5- 68.5m OD
Study Area *	0.43 hectares
Finds	none

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