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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
On Land at Northampton Road
Market Harborough,
Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 7400 8599



Roger Kipling

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On Land at Northampton Road
Market Harborough Leicestershire
NGR: SP 7400 8599**

Roger Kipling

For: Charles Church (North Midlands)

Approved by:

Signed:



Date: 12th September 2012

Name: Vicki Score

University of Leicester
Archaeological Services
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in August 2012 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Charles Church (North Midlands). The fieldwork was a pre-determination requirement on a proposed planning application for residential development on land east of Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority and an appropriate mitigation strategy put in place.

The archaeological evaluation at Northampton Road, Market Harborough, revealed no evidence of archaeological finds or features, with the exception of the remnants of recently ploughed-out medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A77.2012.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the east of Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire. A desk-based assessment (Browning 2012) indicated that the area lies outside the medieval town core of Market Harborough and medieval village cores of Great Bowden and Little Bowden, which lie to the north and north-east respectively. Although no known cultural heritage assets lay within the proposed development area, both the Leicestershire County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Northamptonshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) had identified a number of archaeological sites ranging in date from the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods in the surrounding area. The site was also recognised as containing surviving ridge and furrow, the remnant earthworks of medieval strip field systems and had not previously been subject to archaeological investigation.

In view of the potential impact of the development upon archaeological remains, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG March 2012), and following recommendations by the Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist, the planning authority required that evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken. The fieldwork specified was intended to provide indications of character and extent of any buried archaeological remains in order that the potential impact of

the development on such remains might be assessed. Fieldwork was carried out in August 2012 and involved the machine excavation of 19 trial trenches in order to assess the archaeological potential of the development area.

All archaeological work was in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2010) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008). The *LCC Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997) was also adhered to.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The site of the proposed development (SP 7400 8599; centre) is located directly to the south of the town of Market Harborough and approximately 1km north of the Northamptonshire border (Figs 1-2). It lies on the east side of Northampton Road, bounded by the A508 to the west, Compass Point Business Park (a small industrial estate) to the south and the public footpath of the Brampton Valley Way to the west (Fig. 2). The site consists of an area of approximately 5.1 hectares which is currently under pasture and lies at a height of approximately 85m OD. The high point of the land is along the western edge and it slopes to the south and east. The area of flat land adjacent to the main road has had dumps of soil spread across it and contains spoil heaps.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey Map of Great Britain, Sheet 170, indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone, overlain in the south-west corner with sand and gravel River Terrace Deposits.

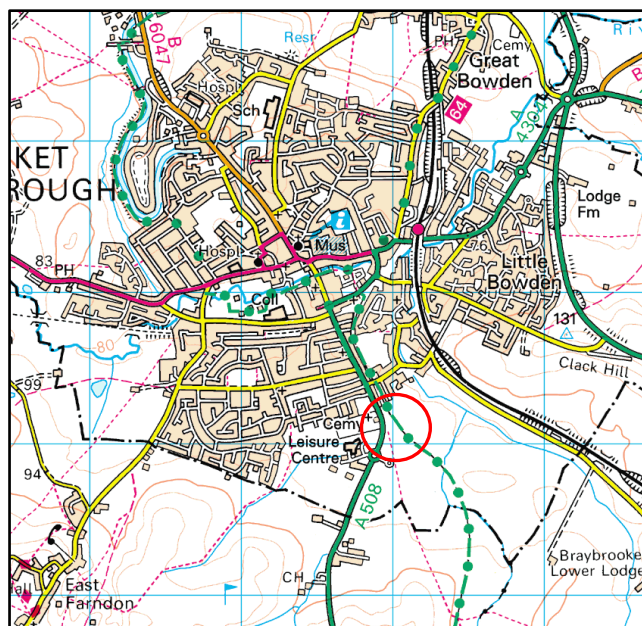


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Archaeological and Historical Background

An earlier desk-based assessment (Browning 2012) indicated that site lies outside the medieval town core of Market Harborough and medieval village cores of Great Bowden and Little Bowden, which lie to the north and north-east respectively. Although there are no known cultural heritage assets within the proposed development area, both the Leicestershire County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Northamptonshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) identified a number of archaeological sites ranging in date from the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods in the surrounding area.

Prehistoric

A possible prehistoric site was identified south-west of Braybrooke Road (HER ref. **MLE16165**) by John Moore Heritage Services in 2006. Five pits/postholes were recorded during the evaluation and consequent watching brief in 2006, which was located approximately 200m east of the proposed development site. Nine Late Neolithic flint artefacts were also recovered during the work, which led the excavators to suggest that the features, which were sealed by the ridge and furrow, may be Neolithic. A few fragments of prehistoric flint (3 flakes and 4 cores) have been recovered from a house on The Heights (**MLE17880**).

Roman

Although no Roman settlements have currently been identified close to the proposed site, a number of finds suggest Roman activity in the area. A bronze coin of Severus Alexander was recovered on the south side of Northampton Road Cemetery (**MLE7878**) c.200m west of the site. A possible Roman site is known from 32, The Heights, Little Bowden (**MLE17633**), where a number of Roman pottery sherds, one piece of glass and a possible Roman lead loomweight have been recovered in and to the rear of the garden. A bronze coin of Trajan and a sherd of Samian ware were found on the Southern estate during the excavation of house foundations (**MLE7882**).

Roman settlement is known from the north-eastern side of Market Harborough and potentially a Roman small town, is suspected around The Ridgeway, where a number of finds have been made.

Medieval

The site is located 0.9km from the historic settlement core of Little Bowden (**MLE16106**) and 1.2km from the medieval core of Market Harborough itself, which lies north of the River Welland. The presence of ridge and furrow on the site itself suggests that the land was used for agriculture in the medieval period. Ridge and furrow is particularly characteristic of the Midlands counties, such as Northamptonshire and Leicestershire.

The landscape map, provided by the Leicestershire HER, indicates that ridge and furrow formerly surrounded the site. The area to the north of the site with north-south aligned ridge and furrow belonged to a strip, which was later divided by the railway. The Northamptonshire SMR lists several areas of ridge and furrow (**6946/0/**, **8025/0/4**, **6946/0/4** and **7909/0/2**). These were recorded during the 'Turning the Plough Project' in 2000, which included the parish of Great Oxenden and aimed to identify areas of nationally important ridge and furrow.

Aims and Methods

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:

1. Identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. Establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by proposed ground-works.
3. Record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground-works.
4. 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 development. All work was recorded in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, the standard policy and practice of ULAS. The University of Leicester's Health and Safety policy was adhered to.

The Written Scheme of Investigation (ULAS 2012) approved by the LCC Senior Planning Archaeologist, on behalf of the planning authority, recommended a programme of archaeological evaluation consisting of 19 trial trenches measuring 30m x 1.6m or c.1020m² in total, equating to a 2% sample of the area.

Excavation was undertaken using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision. Large spoil-heaps west of Trench 6 prevented excavation in these areas.

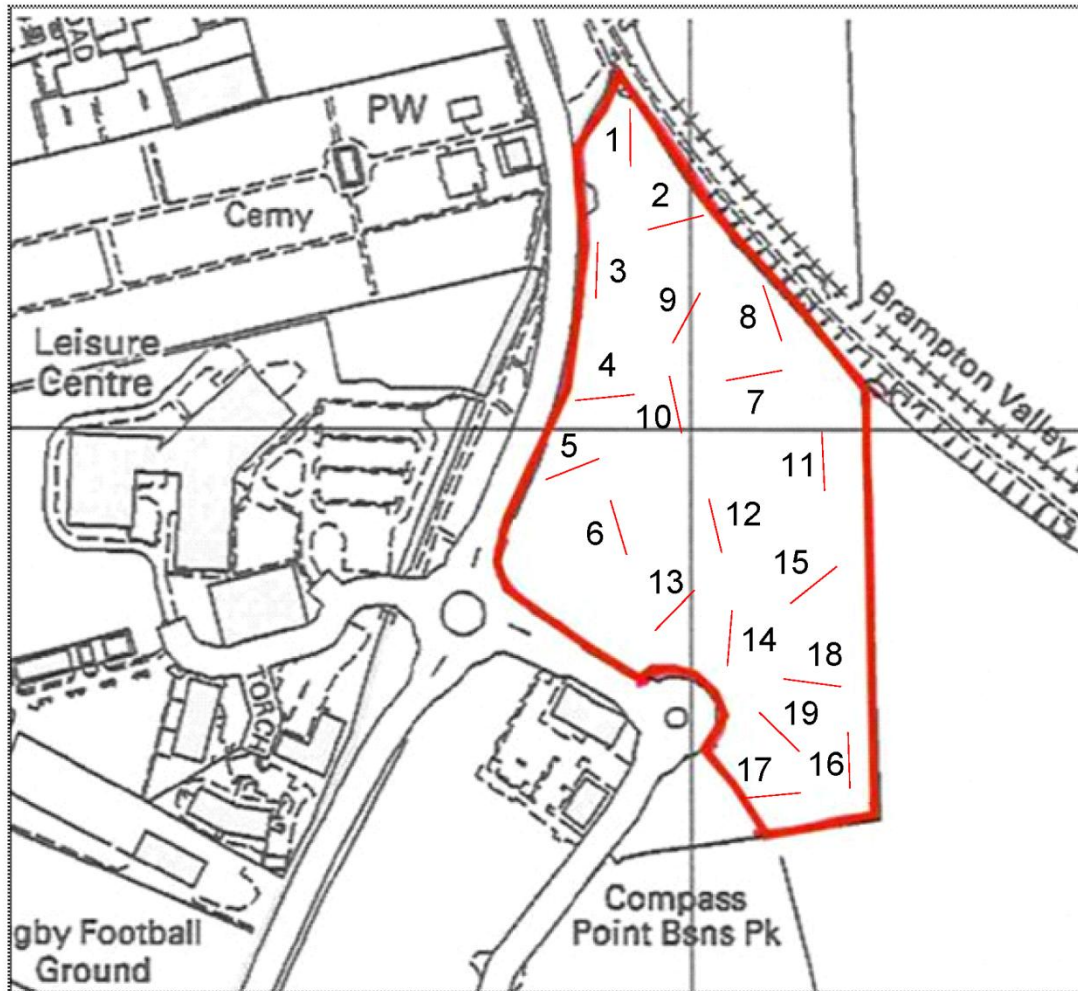


Figure 2: Location of the proposed development site (not to scale); plan supplied by client



Figure 3: Machining in progress; view southwest

Results

The 19 trial trenches, each measuring 30m x 1.6m, were positioned in order to provide an even representative coverage of the area of development (Fig. 2). All contained a consistent 0.10m-0.25m depth of dark greyish brown clayey silt topsoil overlying 0.30m-0.60m of mid greyish brown clayey silt subsoil. Natural consisted of a compact mottled mid yellow and light greenish grey silty clay. Depths of trench varied between 0.50m and 0.80m. The majority of trenches revealed traces of medieval plough furrows aligned southwest to northeast and consisting of a shallow linear cut measuring *c.* 1m in width. A representative example, [01], was excavated in Trench 1 (Figure 4). None of the trenches produced any other archaeological evidence. Service trenches were also identified in two of the trenches.



Figure 4: Trench 1; furrow [01], view east; 1m scale



Figure 5: Trench 1; view north; 2m scale



Figure 6: Trench 7: view west showing furrows; 2m scale



Figure 7: Trench 19 viewed northeast showing furrows; 1m scale

Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation at Northampton Road, Market Harborough, revealed no archaeological evidence, with the exception of traces of furrows associated with medieval cultivation and until recently visible as standing earthworks.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A77.2012), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council.

The archive consists of:

- 19 trench recording sheets
- 1 single context record sheets
- Context, drawing and photographic record indices
- 46 digital photographs
- A risk assessment form

Publication

A version of the excavation summary (see above) will appear in due course in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Roger Kipling, Jen Browning and Tom Howell of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of Charles Church (North Midlands). The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

Bibliography

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IfA, 2008, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

IfA, 2010, *Codes of Conduct and Standards*

LCC 1997 Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland

Oasis Information

Project Name	Northampton Road, Market Harborough
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Development subject to planning permission
Current Land Use	Pasture
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-determination
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 740 860
Start/end dates of field work	August 2012
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	c.5.1 ha.

Roger Kipling
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel:0116 252 2836
Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: rwk1@le.ac.uk

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Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological
Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

T: +44 (0)116 252 2848

F: +44 (0)116 252 2614

E: ulas@le.ac.uk

w: www.le.ac.uk/ulas



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