



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on
land to the rear of 12 Peacock Lane,
Leicester**

NGR: SK 58468 04376

Jon Coward



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on land to the rear of
12 Peacock Lane, Leicester
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Jon Coward

For: S.B.Holdings

Approved by

Signed:  **.Date:** 10/4/2011.

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An Archaeological Watching Brief on land to the rear of 12 Peacock Lane, Leicester

1. Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by ULAS in March 2011 for S.B. Holdings on land to the rear of 12 Peacock Lane, Leicester, SK 58468 04376 in advance of residential development. A small trench footprint was excavated in advance of piling. The trenching cut through demolition layers, but failed to locate any structural elements or cut features. No artefacts of any antiquity were recovered in the watching brief. The archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums under accession code A2.2011 in due course.

2. Background

An office building at 12 Peacock Lane, Leicester LE1 5PX is to be converted into residential units. This will involve the construction of an extension to the rear of the property. As the property is situated near the centre of town in an Archaeological Alert Area, and groundworks on the site had the potential to disturb areas of archaeological interest, the City Archaeologist recommended that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during groundworks, in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 .

3. Historical Background

Several archaeological desk-based assessments have been carried out in the immediate area (e.g. Meek, J. 2005), including one covering the next door property (Flitcroft, M., 2010). They have concluded that it is in an area of high archaeological potential, within the heart of Roman and medieval Leicester, with the possibility of remains of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date. Any disturbance such as that created by the provision of foundations, footings and services has a strong possibility of impacting on potential archaeological deposits

4. Aims

The aim of the watching brief was :

1. To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
4. To produce an archive and report of any results.



Figure 1 Location of site in Leicester City Centre.

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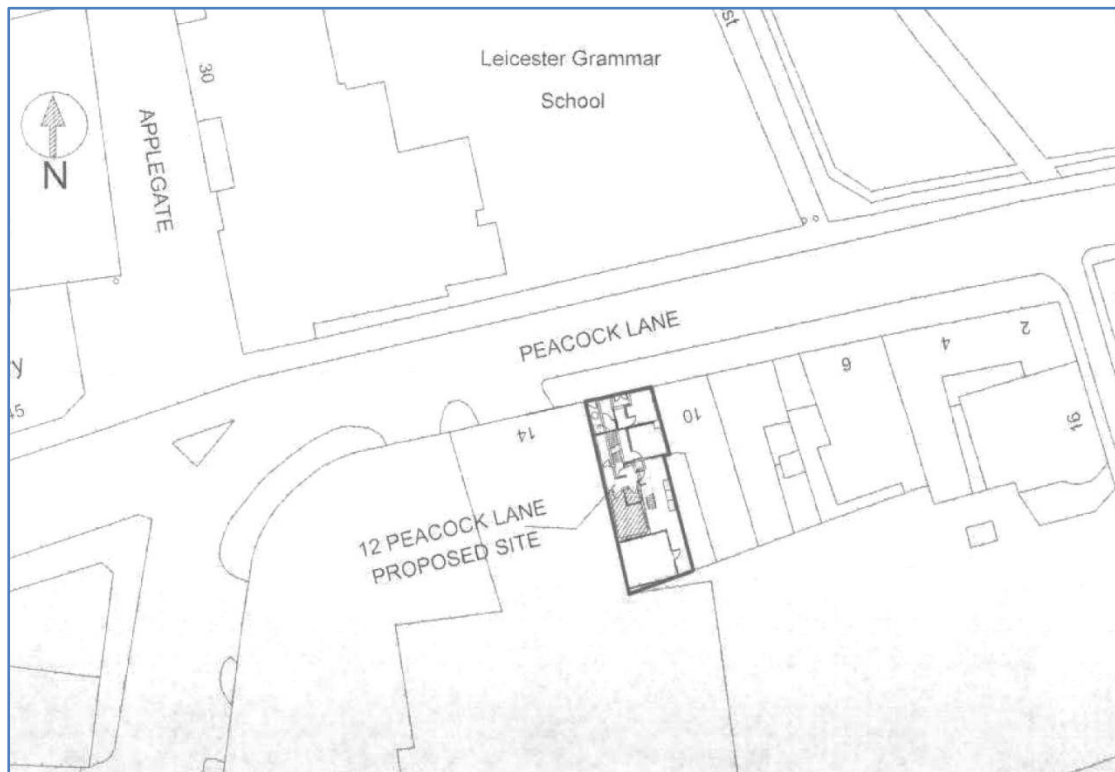


Figure 2 12 Peacock Lane

NTS based on a plan provided by the developers

5. Methods

A trench was to be dug by hand over the footprint of the rear extension, to a depth of approximately 0.60m and width 0.50m, and any deposits of archaeological

significance were to be recorded before piling with a mini-piling rig was commenced. The property is already cellared, and according to the owner, no further service trenches are needed in addition to the ones already servicing the extant building (S. Bola, *pers.comm.*) All archaeological work adhered to the Institute for Archaeologist's (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

6. Results

The trenching extended south of the present structure, enclosing an area of approximately 2.50m east-west by 5.00m north-south (Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5). The western and southern footing trenches were dug through a homogenous thick mid grey brown clayish soil which was heavily contaminated with building rubble of no apparent antiquity: fragments of frogless bricks within it looked convincingly Victorian. The eastern trench was cutting through discrete layers of building debris, including red sand, smashed mortar and/or plaster, crushed brick fragments, red clay, burnt material etc. These layers were tending to drop slightly as they headed south. Beneath them at a depth of approximately 0.45m below ground level mid grey-brown clay soil with common small rubble pieces was encountered; this appeared to be the same layer as encountered in the other footing trenches. No structural or cut features were encountered on the way down, nor were visible in the trench base; no finds were retained.



Figure 3 The east trench in the course of excavation. From above, looking south-east.



Figure 4 The west trench as excavated. Looking south.

7 Discussion

As might be expected, the hand-dug part of the footings were not deep enough to impact on any extant Roman deposits, which are probably a metre or more further down in this part of the town centre. Although exact Ordnance Datum levels could not be obtained as the site is completely enclosed in a rear yard, the ground level at the rear of the property must be very close to the street ground level at the front (*c.* 64.0m OD), as there is no step up or down between the front and back of the building. The potential depth of medieval deposits is more difficult to predict; for example the Guildhall adjacent is very close to present street level. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, the footing trenches did not appear to have gone through any extant *in situ* medieval deposits, so presumably any such deposits in the area are either lower, or have already been removed by previous building activity. In passing, it may be mentioned that the present building is described as mid-19th century in the planning documentation; conversely the author would guess it to be earlier-mid 20th century. If so, this would explain why the new footings appear to be cutting mid-19th century demolition debris.



Figure 5 Eastern trench, west baulk.
Note debris layers and slight slope down to south (left). Looking west .

8. Archive

No finds were retained; the archive consists of:

1 pro-forma watching brief sheet

Digital images showing the nature of the work undertaken.

It will be deposited with Leicester City Museums under accession code A2.2011

9. Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Richard Buckley and carried out by Jon Coward, of ULAS. ULAS would like to thank Surinder Bola of SB Holdings, and Dinesh Tailor of DT Designs Ltd, for their assistance during the course of the project.

10. Bibliography

Meek, J. 2005 *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of Land at Peacock Lane, Leicester (NGR SK 5837 0439)* ULAS report 2005-098

Flitcroft, M., 2010 *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment at the Former Bus Depot, Peacock Lane, Leicester.* Unpub CgMs report MF/11466 2010

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INFORMATION REQUIRED	EXAMPLE
Project Name	
Project Type	
Project Manager	
Project Supervisor	
Previous/Future work	
Current Land Use	
Development Type	
Reason for Investigation	PPG16
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	
Start/end dates of field work	
Archive Recipient	
Height min/max	
Study Area *	Either hectares or square metres (even for building surveys)
Finds	Periods

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