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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
on Land at Little Battleflats Farm
Ellistown, Coalville, Leicestershire
(SK 437 112)**




Roger Kipling

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**An Archaeological Evaluation On Land at
Little Battleflats Farm, Ellistown, Coalville,
Leicestershire
(NGR: SK 437 112)**

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For: CgMs Consulting

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Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in September 2012 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of CgMs Consulting. The fieldwork was undertaken as a preliminary to the possible submission of a planning application for the construction of distribution sheds at Little Battleflats Farm, Ellistown, Coalville, Leicestershire and following a desk-based assessment and geophysical survey, in order to assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains as may be present.

The archaeological evaluation at Little Battleflats Farm, Ellistown, Coalville, produced no evidence of archaeological activity, either in artefactual or structural terms. Consequently, anomalies identified in the geophysical survey are likely to be geological in origin.

The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A90. 2012.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Little Battleflats Farm, Ellistown, Coalville, Leicestershire. A desk-based assessment (Mortimer 2011) had indicated that the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record site does not list any designated or undesignated heritage assets within the area of the proposed development, whilst a follow-up geophysical survey identified a number of linear anomalies which correlate well with the position of former field boundaries. A large number of discrete positive and linear anomalies were evident in the survey data undertaken by Stratascan, the majority of which were, however, interpreted as likely geological or pedological, rather than archaeological in origin.

Consequently a programme of archaeological investigation was devised by CgMs, in agreement with the Planning Archaeologist, in order to evaluate the development site's archaeological potential and to enable the impact of the new development to be fully assessed. The agreed scheme was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation

(WSI; Mortimer 2012). The fieldwork specified was intended to provide further indications of the 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 September 2012 and involved the machine excavation of six trial trenches targeting anomalies identified by the geophysical survey in order to assess the archaeological potential of the development area.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG March 2012). 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 is located at Little Battleflats Farm, Ellistown, Leicestershire. The overall application area measures approximately 38 hectares in extent and is centred at National Grid Reference SK 437 112. The site is bounded by Beveridge Lane to the north, by properties off Francis Way and David Lees Close to the west, by industrial units to the south and by a railway embankment to the east. The land is currently under arable agricultural cultivation.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates the bedrock below the site to be as predominantly Mudstone of the Edwalton member, overlain by superficial deposits of Oadby member diamicton. The superficial deposits at the western extent of the site are not recorded and it is possible that some of the western extent of the site may be underlain by deposits of Cotgrave Sandstone.

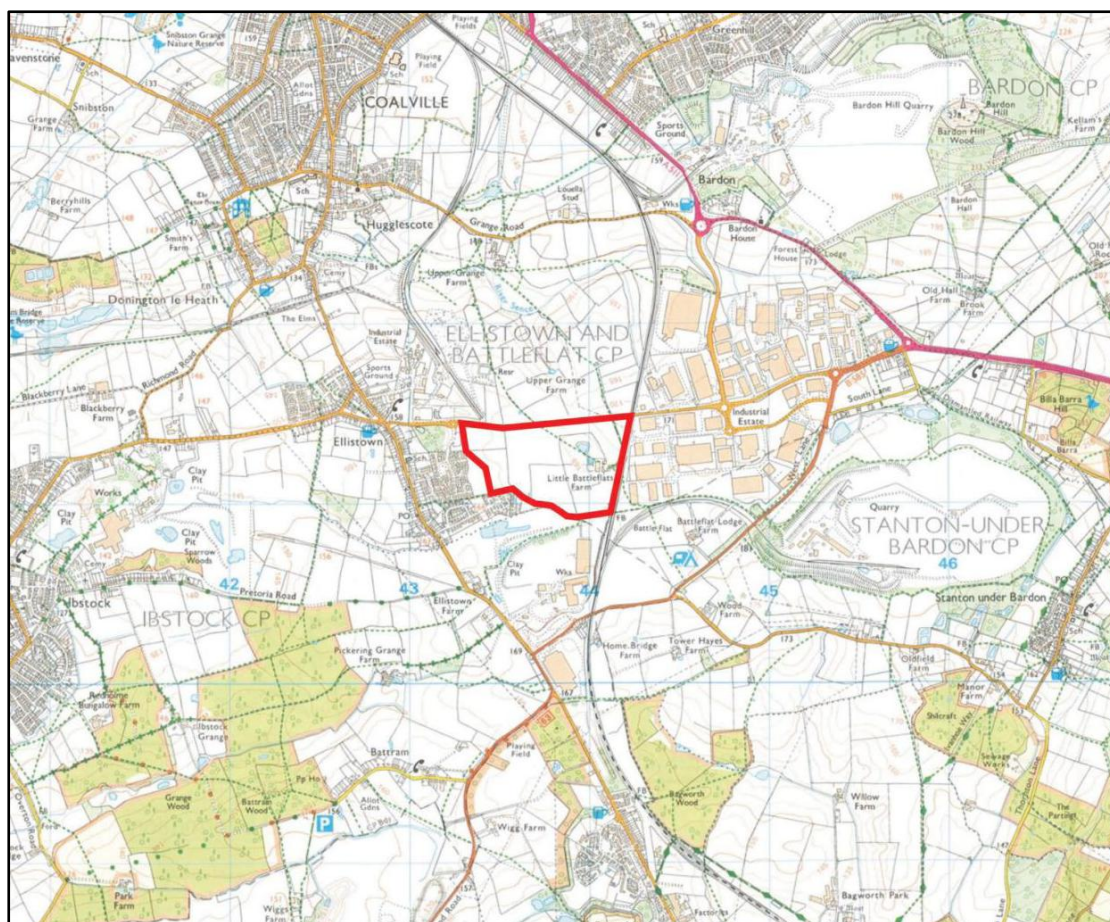


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Archaeological and Historical Background

An investigation of the Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire and Rutland for the desk-based assessment (Mortimer 2011) indicated that no archaeological sites, finds or discoveries have been forthcoming from the study site itself. There are, however, 13 known records of sites of archaeological interest from the wider search area (1 km radius of the site).

Prehistoric & Romano-British

Two worked flints, (a Mesolithic core and a Late Neolithic scraper) were recovered during fieldwalking to the north-west of the site (**MLE10357**). There is also aerial photographic evidence for small, undated circular and sub-circular features (**MLE 16770**) immediately to the north of the site, possibly evidence of a small prehistoric settlement.

The HER record includes three records relating to Romano-British activity within the 1km search area in addition to a single Event record relating to the discovery of

abraded Iron Age pottery during an evaluation at Ibstock Quarry. The projected alignment of the Via Devana Roman road (**MLE 4345**) is located *c.* 1 km to the south of the site, the best evidence for which lies outside the study area and it was not found within the Ibstock quarry site (**Events 5052 and 5890**).

It has been suggested that Beveridge Lane (**MLE 56545**), which forms the site's northern boundary, may be the route of a Roman road based upon its form, alignment (towards the Roman small town north of Ibstock; **MLE 9016**), the Roman pottery scatter close to its alignment north of Pasture Farm, Ibstock (**MLE 4566**), the coincidence with parish boundaries (west of Ellistown) and the potential conjunction with the Via Devana.

Six sherds of Roman pottery were found during fieldwalking by the voluntary sector of a site to the south-east of The Limes in 1997 (**MLE 5984**). Whilst this and the sherds found within Ibstock Quarry attest to a general background of activity in the Roman period there is no suggestion of extensive settlement.

Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

The HER does not include any records relating to Anglo-Saxon finds or sites within the 1km search area. The data provided by the LRHER includes two related records of medieval activity within the 1km search area, relating to the construction of Hugglescote Grange, attached to Garendon Abbey (**MLE 4559**). The Grange and its associated earthworks, including a dammed area to the east of the structure (**MLE18333**) have little relevance to any assessment of the site's significance.

The parish boundary, which extends to the south-west from the southern point of the medieval deerpark at Bardon (**MLE 4354**), is potentially medieval in origin. The alignment continues to the southern edge of the proposed development area, before continuing to the west. It is believed that some of the existing boundaries, including potentially the track to Little Battleflats Farm, may be related albeit indirectly to activity at Hugglescote Grange (**MLE4559**) and/or woodland clearance within Charnwood Forest.

Aims and Objectives

The general aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- To inform a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains

- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire HER.

Specific evaluation aims are to:-

- Seek to establish the nature of the geophysical anomalies and to determine if they are of archaeological significance

The results of the evaluation will enable reasoned and informed recommendations to be made to the local planning authority and, if appropriate, a suitable mitigation strategy for the proposed development to be formulated.

This specification conforms to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). It has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice and the appropriate national standards and guidelines including:

- *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991);
- *Model Briefs and Specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations* (Association of County Archaeological Officers, 1994);
- *Code of Conduct* (Institute for Archaeologists, 2010);
- *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Institute for Archaeologists, 2010);
- *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Association of Local Government Officers, 2003);
- *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicestershire County Council 1997)

Methodology

Archaeological Trial Trenches

Prior to the commencement of works an Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed on Details, Location and Creator forms.

CgMs Consulting had reached agreement with the Principal Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council that the trial trench evaluation should focus upon assessing the geophysical anomalies identified in Fields 5 and 7.

It was proposed that 560m² of archaeological trial trenches (five trenches each 50 m in length and c.2m wide and a single trench measuring 30 m by 2m) should be opened in the locations indicated on Figure 2. A contingency had also been allowed for the excavation of a further three trenches each measuring 50 m by 2m. The trench layout targeted geophysical anomalies and therefore there was only very limited scope for adjustment of trench locations in the field.

Trench locations were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) prior to excavation, service information for the site having been sought from the client.

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (c.2 m wide), under archaeological supervision. The spoil generated

during the evaluation was mounded away from the edges of each trench. Topsoil and subsoil was stored separately. Mechanical excavation ceased at undisturbed natural deposits. Upcast and spoil from mechanical excavation was scanned by eye and by metal detector to aid the recovery of topsoil artefacts.

The trenches were recorded at an appropriate scale by measured drawing and photography and were located to Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record, utilising black and white negative film, supplemented by high resolution digital data capture, was maintained during the course of the fieldwork and included:

- the site prior to commencement of fieldwork;
- the site during work, showing specific stages of fieldwork;

Upon completion of the evaluation trenching, the excavated trenches were backfilled and loosely compacted.

Results

As set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Mortimer 2012), 560m² of archaeological trial trenches (five trenches each 50 m in length and c.2m wide and a single trench measuring 30 m by 2m) were excavated in order to assess geophysical anomalies identified in Fields 5 and 7. The presence of a water pipe necessitated the repositioning of one of the six trenches (Trench 02).

Excavation was undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

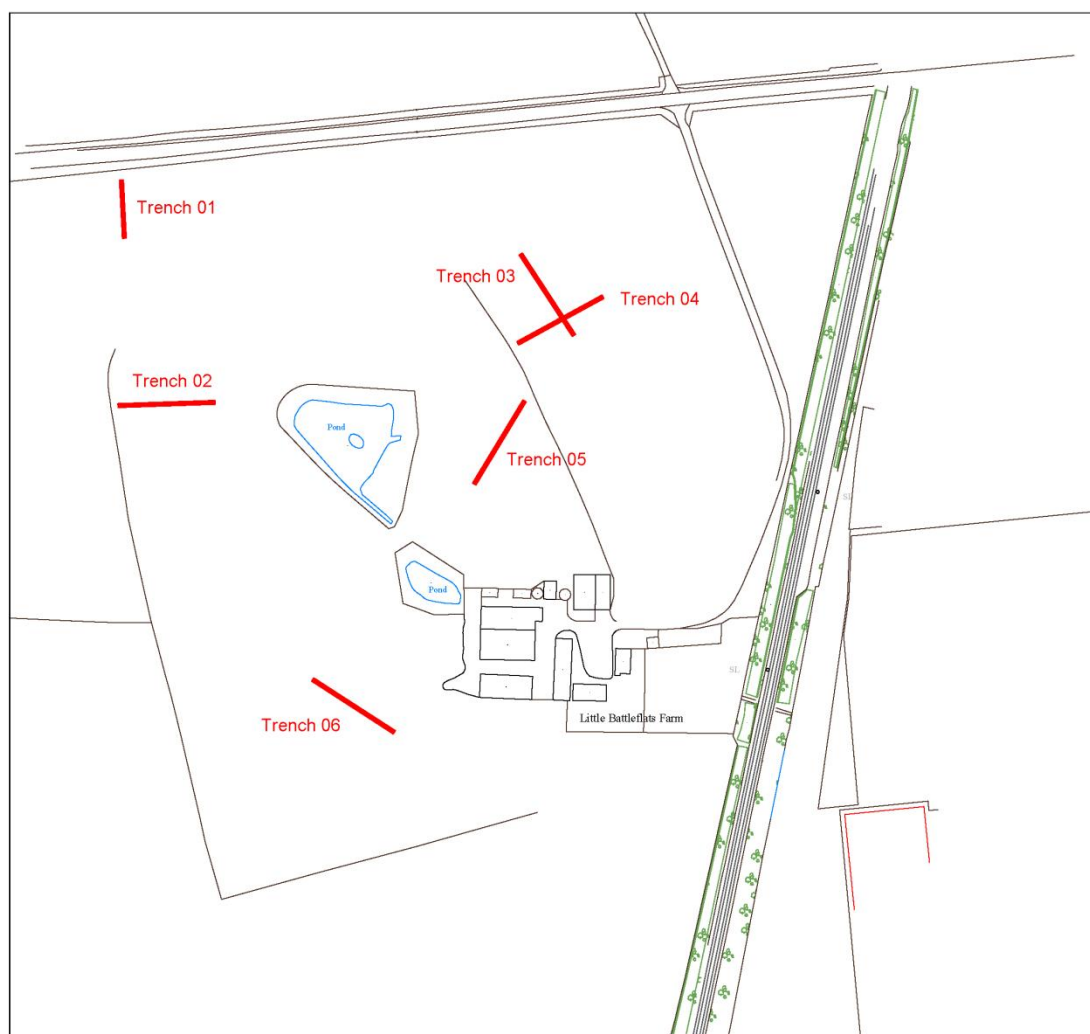


Figure 2: Location of the proposed development site showing trench locations



Figure 3: Trench 01: view south; 1m scales

Trench 01

Trench 01, located at the northern site boundary at the north end of Field 5 and aligned north-south, was the shortest of the six trenches excavated, measuring 28m x 2.20m and between 0.30m and 0.50m in depth. A 0.30m-0.50m accumulation of dark grey clay loam plough soil overlay patchy pale grey and pale yellowish brown sandy natural clay with intermittent gravel patches. There was no subsoil present, and no evidence of archaeological finds or deposits.



Figure 4: Trench 02: view east; 1m scales

Trench 02

Trench 02 was located c.80m to the south of Trench 01 at the western boundary of Field 5; its intended position was adjusted slightly in order to avoid damage to a water pipe. The trench measured 50m east-west x 2.20m and between 0.35m and 0.50m in depth. Plough soil and natural were the same as observed in Trench 01. A shallow subsoil (0.10m-0.18m) was observed in the eastern half of the trench. There were no indications of archaeological finds or deposits present.



Figure 5: Trench 03: view looking north-west; 1m scales

Trench 03

Trench 03 was one of two trenches opened in Field 7 in order to target anomalies revealed in the geophysical survey of 2011. Trench 03, aligned north-west to south-east and measured 50m x 2.20m. An accumulation of 0.27m-0.40m of plough soil overlay a patchy pale grey and pale yellowish brown sandy natural clay with intermittent gravel patches. The clay was markedly reddish, likely due to the presence of manganese, towards the north-west end of the trench. In the absence of archaeological activity, this apparently higher iron content may explain higher geophysical signals from this area.



Figure 6: Trench 04: view west; 1m scales

Trench 04

Trench 04 (50m x 2.20m) crossed Trench 03 at right angles on a south-west to north-east alignment and measured 0.25m-0.48m in depth. As with Trench 03, the natural clay was markedly iron-rich towards the northeast. Subsoil was absent from both Trenches 03 and 04, and there was no archaeological evidence present.



Figure 7: Trench 05: view north-east; 1m scales

Trench 05

Trench 05 was positioned in the south-east area of Field 5, directly to the east of the farm pond. A 0.30m-0.50m depth of plough soil overlay patchy pale grey and pale yellow-brown sandy natural clay. Patches of coarse gravel were more prevalent in the central and western sections of the trench. No archaeological finds or deposits were present.



Figure 8: Trench 06: view north-west; 1m scales

Trench 06

This, the sixth and final trench, was located in the southern area of Field 5, to the south of the pond. Shallow (0.35m-0.50m) plough soil overlay the same clay natural as was observed in Trench 05 to the east. No archaeological finds or deposits were present.

Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation at Little Battleflats farm, Ellistown, Coalville, produced no artefactual or structural evidence of archaeological activity. Consequently, anomalies identified in the geophysical survey are likely to be geological in origin.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A90.2012), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service.

The archive consists of:

- 6 trench recording sheets
- Photographic record indices
- 17 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 and Rutland Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Roger Kipling and James Harvey of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of CgMs Consulting. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

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- IfA, 2008 *Codes of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*.

Oasis Information

Project Name	Little Battleflats Farm, Ellistown
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Development
Current Land Use	Agricultural
Development Type	Light industrial
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	NGR SK 347 112
Start/end dates of field work	September 2012

Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	38ha.

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