



University of **Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Brookfield Farm, Hallfields Lane,
Rothley, Leicestershire**

NGR: SK 5885 1225

Tim Higgins



ULAS Report No. 2013-040
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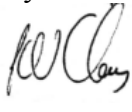
**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Brookfield Farm, Hallfields Lane, Rothley
Leicestershire**

NGR: SK 5885 1225

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An Archaeological Evaluation at Brookfield Farm, Hallfields Lane, Rothley, Leicestershire, (SK 5885 1225)

Timothy Higgins

Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Brookfield Farm, Hallfields Lane, Rothley, Leicestershire, (SK 5885 1225) in February 2013. Ten trenches were excavated within the western section of the proposed new housing development located within paddock fields and farm yard. Three of the trenches contained a few archaeological features dated to the early medieval period. Further trial trenching will be undertaken within the allotments to the east. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A15.2013.

Introduction

Planning permission has been granted for a new housing development at Brookfield Farm, Hallfield Lane, Leicestershire (NGR SK 5885 1225, Figure 1.).

This report presents the results of an initial programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken in February 2013. It partially addresses the requirements of Planning Condition 5. A strategy for the work was set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation, (Clay 2013, hereinafter the 'WSI'; Appendix 3). The trial trenching was undertaken to provide indications of character and extent of any buried archaeological remains 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 fieldwork was carried out in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment (March 2012).

Geology and Topography

The proposed development area is located in the parish of Rothley (Grid. Ref. SK 5885 1225). Rothley is located approximately 8km to the north of central Leicester. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain (Solid and Drift) Sheet 170 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Boulder Clay. The land lies at a height of c.65 metres OD, at the centre of the site sloping down to c.59 metres OD in the south-east corner.

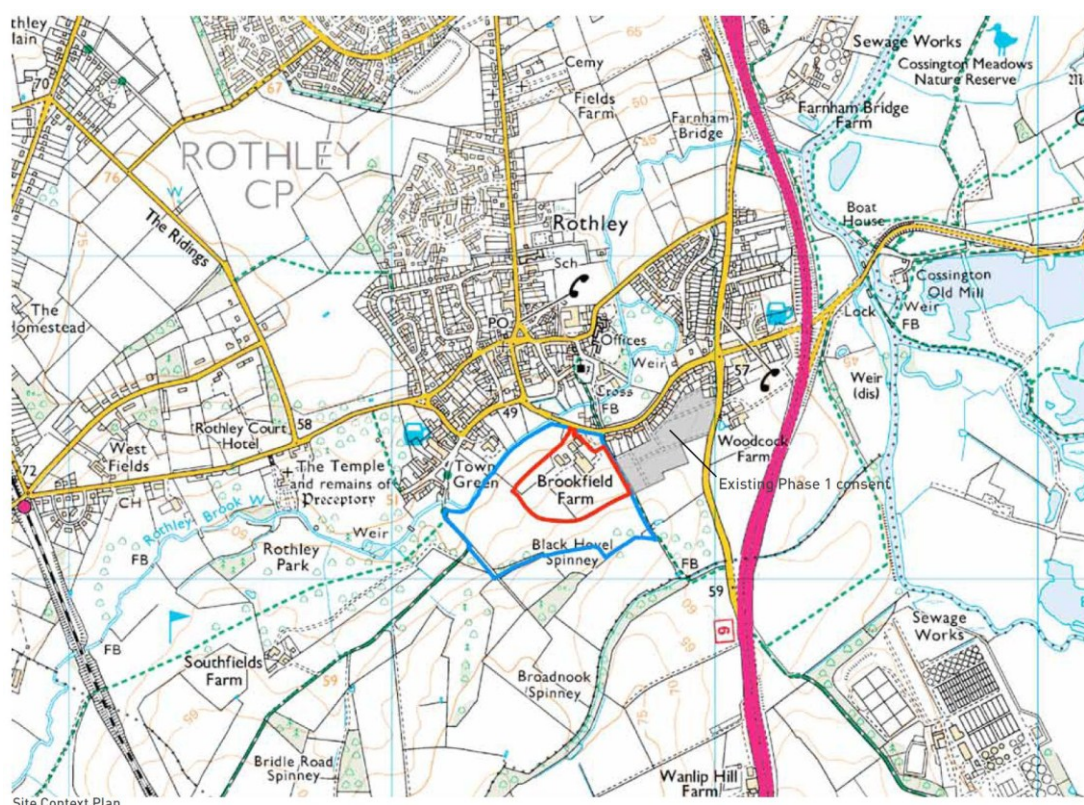


Figure 1: Site location plan (Scale 1:50 000)

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Historical and Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment has been prepared by EDP (2008). This indicated that the development was in an area of high archaeological potential as the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record indicates that the site lies within an area of archaeological potential (Fig. 1). Subsequent archaeological work to the north and east of the application area located nationally important Neolithic settlement remains together with Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains (Speed 2011). The site includes cropmarks of two sub-rectangular enclosures (HER Ref **MLE 10301**) and a ring ditch (**MLE 885**; Fig 3) of likely prehistoric date.

A geophysical survey of the area was undertaken but with inconclusive results (Smith and Butler 2010).

Archaeological evaluation and excavation of the area to the east located evidence of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon occupation (Speed 2011). The Neolithic evidence included structures and special deposits and was of national importance.

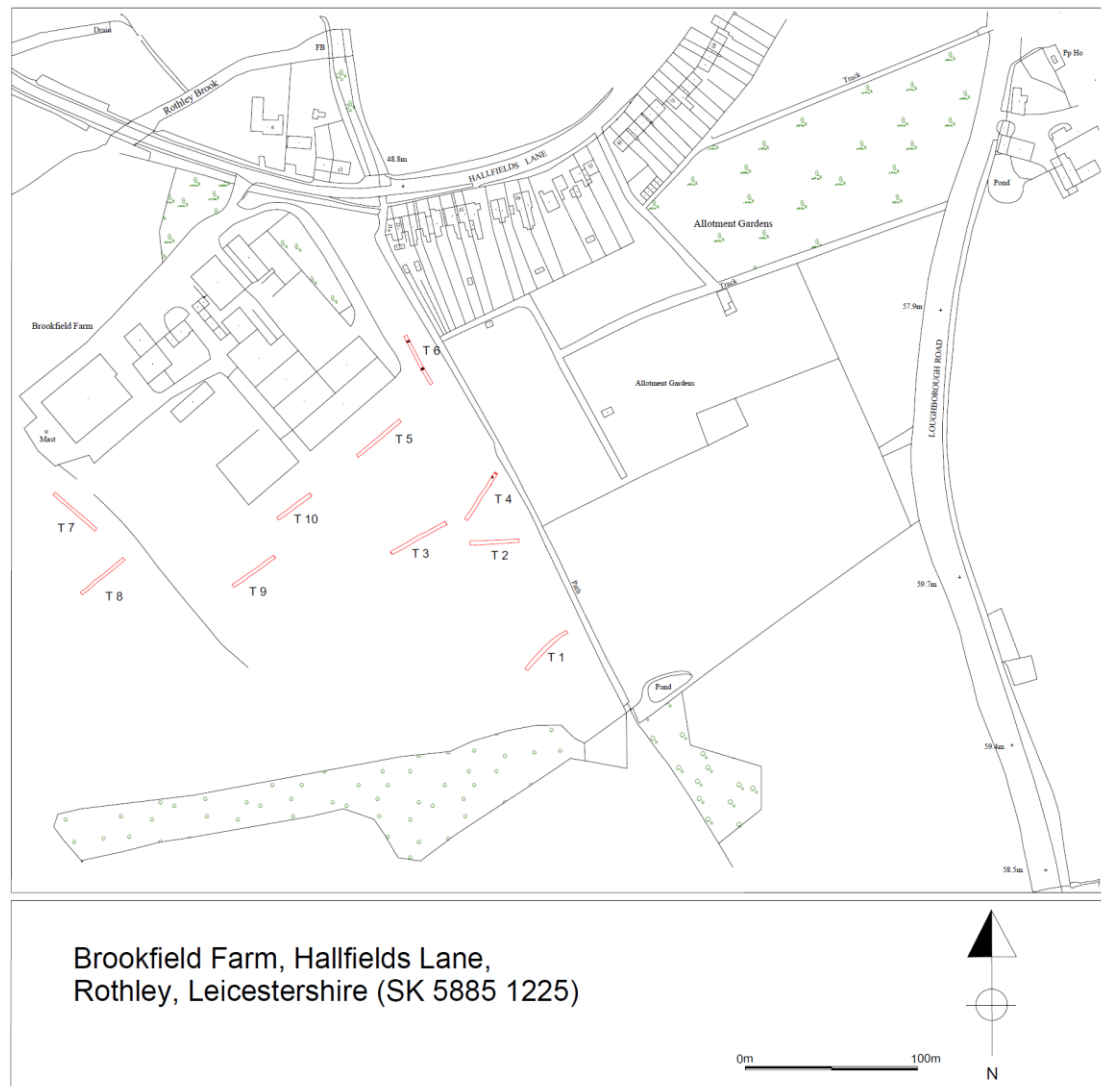


Figure 2. Trench locations

Archaeological Objectives

The main aims of the evaluation were:

To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits. In particular these would target the anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey.

To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed development

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 within the southern area of the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Methodology

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

The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by the Planning Authority suggested for the western area c. 540sq m. of trenching, the equivalent of ten 30m x 1.8 m trench a 5% sample of the area of impact (Figures 2-3). All trenches were c. 30m in length (unless stated otherwise in Trench Summaries Appendix 2 below) and c. 1.8m in width (Figure. 3). The trenches were positioned to provide a random sample in order to examine representative cover of the proposed development area although one trench (T6) was targeted to cross the possible continuation of Roman ditches located during archaeological fieldwork to the east (Speed 2011).

The size and position of the evaluation trenches did vary from those on the provisional trench plan, due to site constraints such as existing services and site access. Both Trenches 9 and 10 were relocated just outside the south-west extent of the farmyard. Trench 10 was revised in size so it could fit within a horse paddock. The topsoil and overlying layers were removed under full archaeological supervision by a 360 Hymac excavator until either the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed substratum was reached, or to a maximum safe depth given the specific site conditions.

The bases of the trenches were cleaned in areas where potential archaeology was observed. Archaeological remains were recorded and sample excavation was undertaken in order to determine the character and date of any remains. Bulk soil samples were taken as appropriate in order to evaluate the environmental potential of the site. Archaeological contexts as a cut are indicated by square brackets e.g. [09], while those that are fills are indicated by round brackets e.g. (07).

The trenches were located using a Topcon Hiper Pro GPS+ RTK System attached to a Topcon FC-100 controller. The data was processed using Topcon Tools GPS+ Post Processing Software and the final plans completed with the aid of TurboCad v.15 design software.

All the work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2010) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2008).

Results

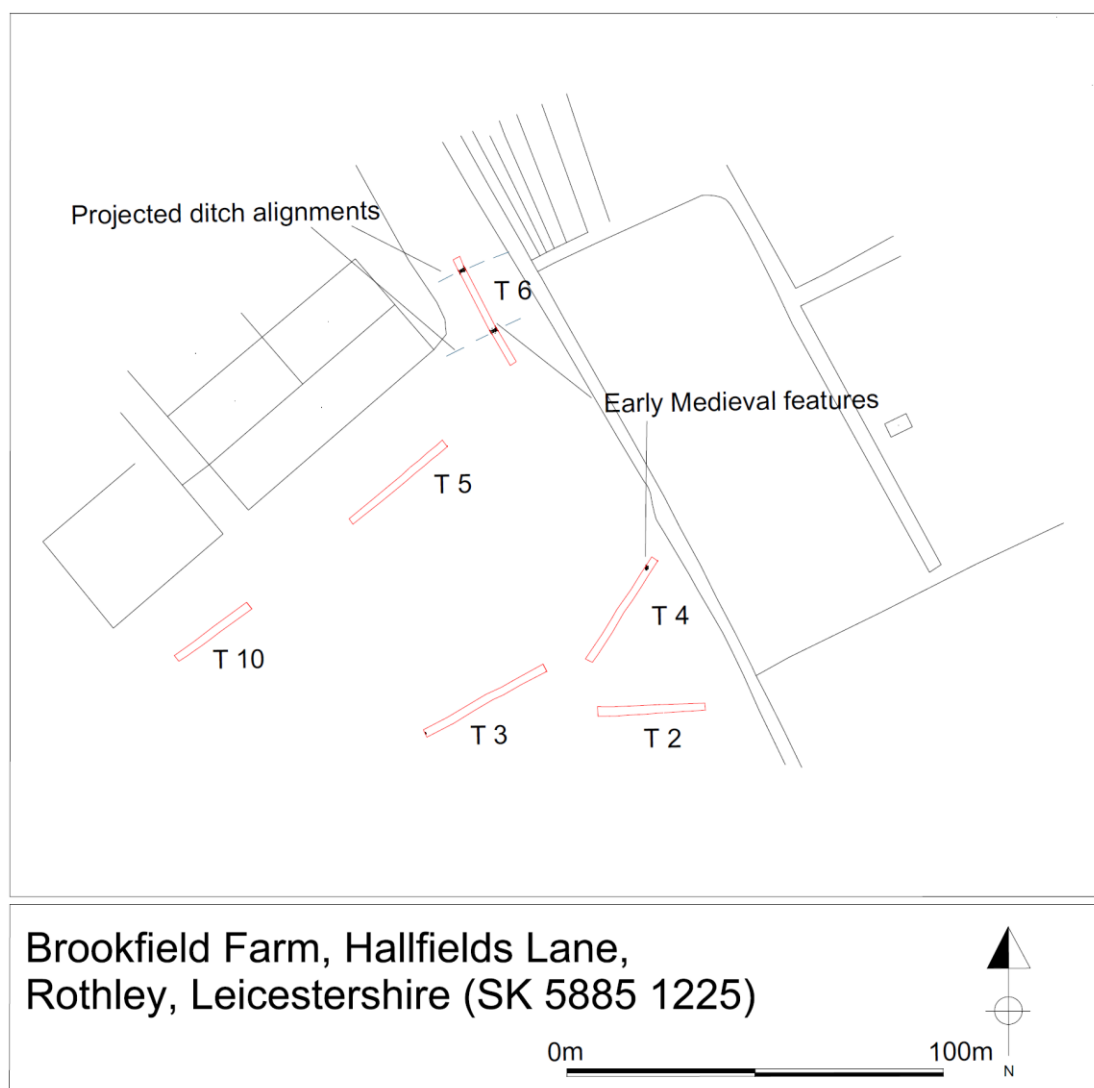


Figure 3. Trenches with archaeological features indicated

Results

A total of ten trenches were excavated within the western part of the development area.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located towards the south-east corner of the development area within a pasture field and orientated south-west to north-east (Figure 2). The natural substratum within this trench comprised brown and pale grey clay mixed with occasional fragments of igneous rock. Overlying the substratum was a subsoil deposit 0.45m deep, that comprised mid reddish brown silty-clay mixed with occasional large angular igneous rocks. Sealing the subsoil was a topsoil layer that comprised mid grey clay-loam. No archaeological features were observed within this trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located towards the eastern side of the development close to former quarry works (Figure 2). A possible natural substratum of reddish brown clay was reached at a depth 2m below ground surface. The natural substratum was reached after dark grey loam mixed red clay, modern brick and tarmac rubble (11) was removed. This trench suggests that this part of the development has been disturbed by modern stripping and was back filled with made ground perhaps as part of restoration of a nearby quarry.

Trench 3

This trench was located towards the centre of the development area within a pasture field at the base of a slope. The trench was orientated south-west to north-east (Figure 2 and 3). A natural substratum was reached at depth of 1.05m below the ground surface. The substratum comprised reddish brown clay and gravel. Towards the south-western end of the trench a post-hole [02] was located measuring 0.20m in diameter and 0.05m deep. The post-hole was sub-circular with steep sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained a fill (01) that comprised pale grey silty-loam. Sealing both the substratum and post-hole was a layer (12) of compacted pale grey sandy-clay measuring 0.40m thick. Above (12) another compacted layer (13) was observed, that measured up to 0.95m deep and comprised light brown silty-clay mixed with occasional pebble. This deep layer is likely to be a colluvial (hillwash) deposit that has sealed the buried soil horizon below. Above (13) was a topsoil layer 0.30m deep, which sealed colluvial layer (13) and comprised dark greyish loam-clay.



Plate 1. Post-hole feature fill (01) cut [02] Trench 3

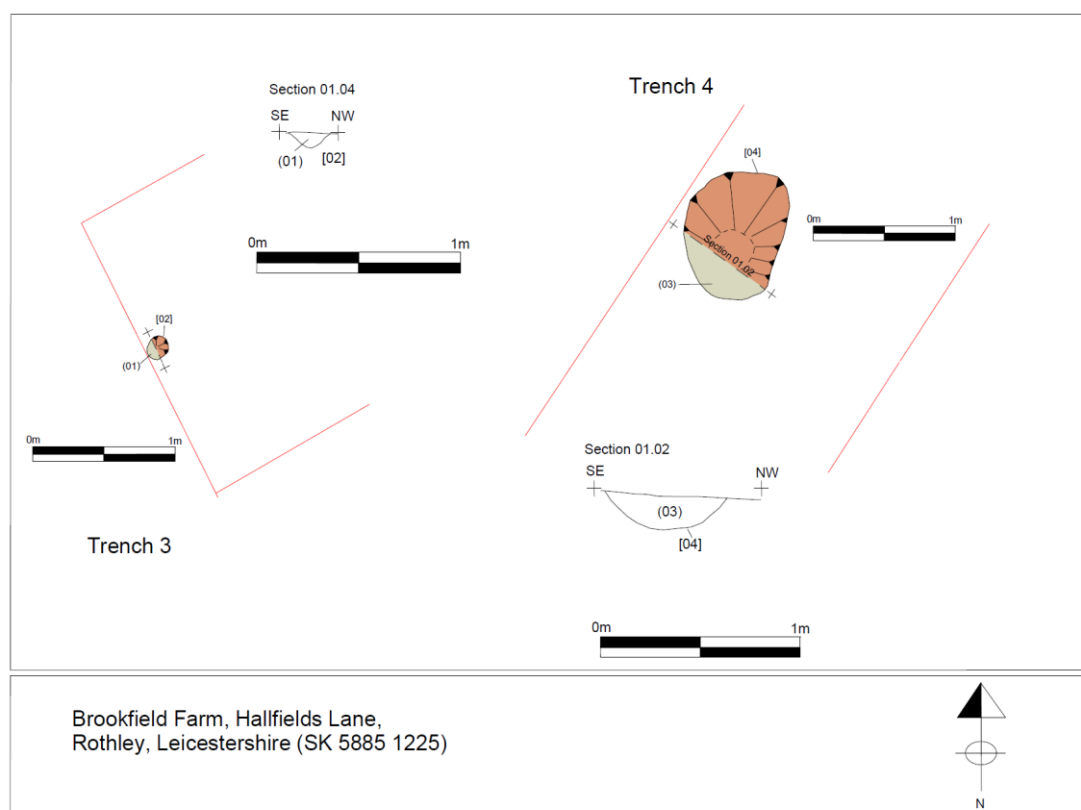


Figure 4. Archaeological features in Trenches 3 and 4

Trench 4

This trench was located towards the eastern side of the development area within a pasture field and it was orientated in a south-west to north-east direction (Figure 2). The natural substratum was reached at a depth 0.53m below the ground surface and comprised reddish brown sand and gravels. Towards the north-east end of the trench a small pit was located [04] (Figure 4). The pit was sub-circular in plan with gradual sloping sides and a flat base and contained pale brown and orange sandy fill mixed with occasional charcoal fleck and pebble (03). The pit measured 0.90m long, 0.70m wide and 0.17m deep. Residual finds found within the pit included two pieces of worked flint: a piercer and a secondary flake, which date broadly to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods. A residual sherd of Roman oxidised ware was also recovered from the pit. A single sherd of early medieval Potters Marston was also found within the pit, which suggests that it may date to the 12th or 13th centuries (see Appendix 3). Both the natural substratum and pit feature were sealed by a thick layer of colluvium (13) that measured 0.90m deep. Sealing the colluvium was a layer of topsoil (11) measuring 0.20m deep.



Plate 2. Pit feature fill (03) cut [04] Trench 4

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located towards centre of the development area close to Brookfield Farm and orientated south-west to north-east (Figure 2). The natural substratum was reached at minimum depth 0.60m below the surface and comprised reddish brown clay. The remnants of truncated medieval furrows were seen at the base of the trench orientated in a north to south direction and were filled with orange brown clay-silt. Both the substratum and furrows were sealed by a layer of subsoil 0.50m deep below a layer of topsoil up to 0.35m deep

Trench 6

Trench 6 was located towards the north-east corner of the development area close to Brookfield Farm and was orientated north to south (Figure 2 and 3). A natural substratum was reached at minimum depth of 0.60m below the surface and comprised yellow-orange sand and red-brown clay. Two ditches were found cutting the substratum at the base of this trench (Figure 5). The first ditch [06] was located towards the south-east end of the trench and was slightly curvilinear in plan. The ditch had steep sloping sides with a rounded base and measured 0.75m wide and 0.40m deep. The fill (05) comprised pale brown and grey clay-silt mixed with medium sized stones, small pebbles and heat treated pebbles.

Residual finds found within the ditch included one piece of worked flint identified as a crested blade, which dates broadly to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods. In addition two residual pottery sherds were also recovered of Iron Age and Roman date. The Iron Age sherd is scored ware in the granitic fabric R1, and dates to the mid-late Iron Age. The Roman grog-tempered ware is a transitional fabric dating to the mid-late 1st century. A single sherd of early medieval pottery was found within

the ditch which suggests that it may date to the 12th or 13th centuries (see Appendix 3).

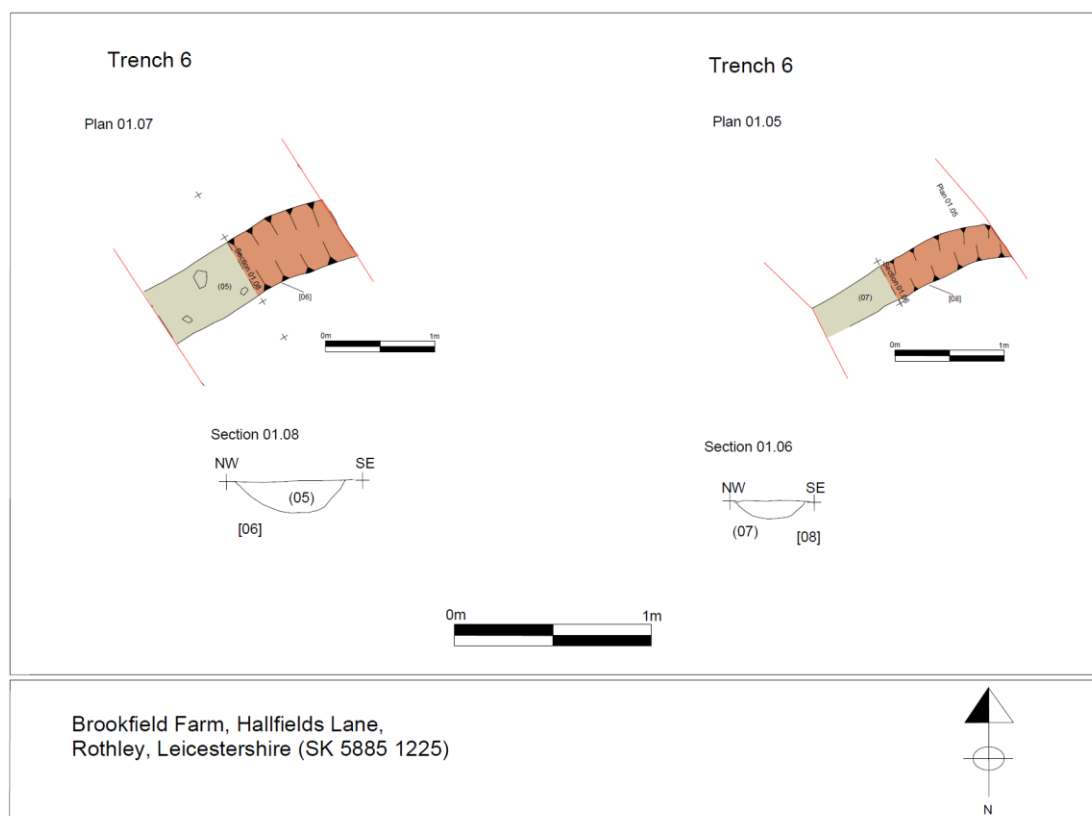


Figure 5. Archaeological features in Trench 6



Plate 3. Ditch feature fill (05) cut [06] Trench 6

A second ditch [08] was located towards the north-west end of the trench and was again slightly curvilinear in plan shape (Figure 5). The ditch measured 0.30m wide and 0.08m deep and contained a pale brown grey clay-silt fill (07) mixed the occasional medium sized angular stones.

Both features were sealed by a layer of subsoil that measured up to 0.60m deep. The topsoil had been stripped away in this area and had been replaced with a layer of made ground that measured up to 0.40m deep. The made ground layer comprised of mid grey-brown sandy loam mixed with spreads of reddish brown clay.

Trench 7

This trench was located at the base of the slope towards the western side of the development area within another pasture field. The natural substratum was reached at depth of 1.00m below the ground surface and consisted of pale yellowish brown clay. A possible narrow linear feature was seen at the north-west end of the trench but remains un-characterised as the trench sides collapsed and also filled with water. Above the natural substratum was a layer colluvium 0.70m thick that consisted of light pale brown silty-clay mixed with occasional pebble. Overlying this was a layer of topsoil that measured 0.30m deep.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was located on the western side of the development within the same pasture field as trench 7 and excavated on a slope. At a depth of 0.50m the natural substratum was reached and comprised pale reddish brown clay. The only features observed within this trench were several slate filled land drains cutting the substratum, which were orientated in north-west to south-east direction. The substratum was sealed by a layer of subsoil that measured 0.20m deep and the overlying topsoil measured 0.20m deep.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was located just to the south of the farmyard within a pasture field and was orientated south-west to north-east. The natural substratum comprised reddish brown clay mixed with occasional gravel. No archaeological features were observed within this trench. Overlying the substratum was a subsoil layer that measured 0.35m deep, which was sealed by topsoil, 0.30m deep.

Trench 10

This trench was located within a small horse paddock located towards the south-western end of the farmyard. The trench length was reduced to 25m so it could fit within the restricted space of the paddock. The substratum found at the base of this trench comprised pale reddish brown clay and sand. No archaeological features were found within this trench. Above the substratum was a layer of subsoil which measured

up to 0.50m in depth. Overlying the subsoil was a layer disturbed topsoil mixed with imported organic material that had a measured depth up to 0.60m.

Discussion

Three out of the ten evaluation trenches (trenches 3, 4 and 6; Figure 3) contained sufficient archaeological evidence to suggest some activity. The archaeology was perhaps confined to the eastern half of the development area. The bulk of the archaeological evidence recorded from the evaluation reflects early medieval activity in the form of a pit and two ditches; however they did contain residual material which included Neolithic flint, and sherds of Iron Age and Roman pottery suggesting activity from those periods within the vicinity (Appendix 3). Archaeological work to the north and east of the application area has located nationally important Neolithic settlement remains together with Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains (Speed 2011).

Two medium sized ditches were found within the Trench 6 [06] and [08]. Presumably the ditches may relate to some form of boundary activity for fields or plots owing to their projected layout. This suggests possible boundaries that are in parallel with Hallfields Lane located 100m to the north (Figures 2 and 3). A single pit [04] in Trench 4 and small post-hole [02] in Trench 3 were located south of the potential boundary plots. Some early medieval pottery sherds were found associated within their fills (Appendix 3). Some of the pottery was dated to the 12th century to early 13th century, and suggests perhaps domestic occupation from this period. Such activity may relate to structures facing onto Hallfields Lane located 200m to the north of the development area.

The western half of the development area has a natural incline sloping north-west downwards towards Rothley Brook. Trenches 7 to 10 located within this area contained no archaeological features apart from the modern field drains in Trench 8. The farmyard area appears to have been stripped and the natural incline has been levelled. Trench 2 appeared to be in an area that may have been previously stripped and quarried. It contained layers of modern rubble that had been re-deposited to help back fill the quarry and reduce the natural incline.

Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation has revealed a few archaeological deposits in the eastern half of the development area. There is likely to be extensive modern disturbance in area around Trench 2 located in south-west corner of the development area. The presence of residual finds within the medieval features that included Neolithic flint with Iron Age and Roman pottery may relate to known activity within the vicinity (Speed 2011). The medieval ditches and associated features formed the bulk of the remains, which yielded a small assemblage of 12th to 13th century pottery indicating perhaps domestic activity nearby.

The medieval remains have provided evidence of the early medieval development of Rothley. The features suggest that the northern area of the development maybe

approaching the historic medieval core of the village. However the northern area also includes the modern farmyard and structures which during their construction has stripped this area and reduced ground levels. This is likely to have reduced the potential for archaeological features within this area.

The western area therefore is of low archaeological potential in contrast to the higher potential identified in the eastern allotment area where trial trenching is to follow.

Archive

The site archive consists of:

- 1 Unbound A4 copy of this report
- 10 A4 Trench recording sheets
- 13 Context sheets
- 1 A4 Context record sheet
- 1 A4 Photo record sheet
- 1 A4 Drawing Record Sheet
- 1 A2 Plan and Section Sheet
- Black and white contact print Black and white picture negatives
- A4 Colour digital contact print 1 CD of 18 digital photos

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A15.2013.

Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York (Appendix 1).

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to the client for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken by the author with Matthew Morris. The trench plan was drawn by Gavin Speed. The project was managed for ULAS by Dr Patrick Clay.

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01/03/2013

Appendix 1: OASIS Database entry

Project Name	Beeby Lane, Sraptoft
Project Type	Evaluation
Summary	University of Leicester Archaeological Services (<i>ULAS</i>) carried out an archaeological Evaluation Brookfield Farm, Hallfields Lane, Rothley, Leicestershire, (SK 5885 1225) undertaken between 13 th and 18 th of February and 2013. This work was undertaken on behalf of the client Charles Church (North Midlands) Ltd. A total of ten trenches were excavated to evaluate an area for a proposed housing on farm land south Hallfields Lane. Three of the trenches contained archaeological features which included ditches, pit and a stakehole. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A15.2013
Project Manger	Dr Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Timothy Higgins
Previous work	None
Current Land use	Farm
Development Type	Housing
Reason for Investigation	NPPF Section 12
Position in Planning Process	Planning condition
Site Co-ordinates	SK 5885 1225
Start /end dates of field work	14/02/2013 to 18/02/2013
Archive recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study area	1.17ha

Appendix 2: Trench Summaries

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Length(m)</i>	<i>Average depth (m)</i>	<i>Notes description</i>	<i>Minimum depth to archaeology or natural substratum</i>
1	south-west to north-east	30.00m	0.54m	Negative modern slate field drain orientated north to south	0.38m 59.62m OD natural brown and grey boulder clay Mercia Mudstone
2	east to west	30.00m	1.00m	All made ground back fill of quarry	2.00m 60.00m OD natural reddish brown clay seen at the east end of the trench Mercia Mudstone
3	south-west to north-east	30.00m	1.27m	Post hole seen at the west end [02], slate land drain	1.05m 58.95m OD natural reddish brown sands and clay Mercia Mudstone
4	south-west to north-east	30.00m	0.89m	A small pit seen at the east end [4]	0.53m 59.47m OD reddish brown sands and gravels Mercia Mudstone
5	south-west to north-east	30.00m	0.80m	Three furrow bases seen at the west end of the trench	0.65m 56.35m OD natural reddish clay and orange brown clay Mercia Mudstone
6	north-west to south-east	30.00m	0.98m	Two possible medieval ditches [6] and [8].	0.60m 53.40m OD natural yellowish orange sand and red clay Mercia Mudstone
7	north-west to south-east	30.00m	1.00m	Modern Service possible linear feature	0.60m 54.40m OD natural pale yellowish brown clay Mercia Mudstone
8	south-west to north-east	31.00m	0.57m	Modern slate filled land drains	0.50m 55.50m OD natural pale reddish brown clay Mercia Mudstone
9	south-west to north-east	30.00m	0.72m	No features seen	0.65m 57.35m OD natural reddish brown clay Mercia Mudstone
10	south-west to north-east	23.00m	0.90m	No features seen	0.70m 57.30m OD natural pale reddish brown clay Mercia Mudstone

Appendix 3: Finds

Flint

Lynden Cooper

Three pieces of worked flint dating broadly to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age were recovered as follows.

Context	Cut	No. items	Description
(03)	[04]	2	Piercer and a secondary flake
(06)	[07]	1	Crested blade

The Pottery

Elizabeth Johnson

The archaeological evaluation produced six sherds of pottery weighing 60g as detailed in the table below. The pottery was classified using the Leicestershire fabric series for Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval pottery (Marsden 2011, Pollard 1994, Sawday 2009).

Cut	Cont	Fabric	Form	Ves part	Dec	Sherds	Weight (g)	Dating
04	03	OW	Misc	Base		1	1	2ndC+
04	03	PM	Misc	Body		1	7	12th-early 13thC
06	05	R1	Misc	Body	scored	1	13	Mid-late IA
06	05	GT	Jar	Base		2	35	mid-late 1stC
06	05	CS	Misc	Base		1	4	12th-early 13thC

Two sherds were recovered from Trench 4 [04] (03) comprising one sherd of Roman oxidised ware and one sherd of early medieval Potters Marston ware. Both sherds are very abraded and neither are diagnostic. Four sherds were recovered from Trench 6 [06] (05) comprising a mix of Iron Age, Roman and Early Medieval pottery. The Iron Age sherd is scored ware in the granitic fabric R1, and would date to the mid-late Iron Age. The Roman grog-tempered ware is a transitional fabric dating to the mid-late 1st century, whilst the Early Medieval sherd is a jar or bowl base in a coarse shelly fabric.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Debbie Sawday for identifying and dating the early medieval pottery.

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