



University of
Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An archaeological strip, plan and
sample excavation on land at 7
Leicester Road, Billesdon,
Leicestershire**

NGR: SK 7180 0287

Mathew Morris



ULAS Report No. 2013-163
©2013

**An archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation
on land at 7 Leicester Road, Billesdon**

Leicestershire

NGR: SK 7180 0287

Mathew Morris

Client: Sandrion Ltd.

Planning Application: 13/00992/FUL

Checked by:

Signed:



Date: 09/10/2013

Name: Patrick Clay

University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH

Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

ULAS Report Number 2013-163

©2013

X.A157.2013

CONTENTS

Summery	2
Introduction	2
Geology and Topography	2
Historical and Archaeological Background	3
Archaeological Aims and Objectives	4
Methodology	4
Results	4
Plot A.....	4
Plot B.....	5
Discussion	7
Bibliography.....	7
Archive	7
Publication.....	9
Acknowledgements	9

FIGURES

Figure 1: Location maps with development area highlighted	3
Figure 2: The stripped building footprint in Plot A, looking south-west.....	5
Figure 3: The stripped building footprint in Plot B, looking north-east	6
Figure 4: The north-western extension in Plot B, looking south-east.....	6
Figure 5: Plan of the proposed development showing Plot A, Plot B and the areas of archaeological work.	8

An archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation on land at 7 Leicester Road, Billesdon, Leicestershire (SK 7180 0287)

Mathew Morris

Summery

An archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation was carried out at 7 Leicester Road, Billesdon, Leicestershire (SK 7180 0287) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 1 October 2013. The work was carried out in advance of construction of a new dwelling and detached garage (Plot A) and as part of a pre-planning inquiry for a second dwelling (Plot B). Work involved supervision and inspection of machine removed overburden over the unexcavated footprint of the proposed building. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed during the course of the work and the result of the investigation proved negative. Across Plot A the ground appeared to have been extensively disturbed by tree-roots and related garden activity associated with recent occupation of 7 Leicester Road. Ground across Plot B was less disturbed but the investigation only produced evidence of the sites former use as farmland (plough scars and a field drain). The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A157.2013.

Introduction

This document constitutes the final report for an archaeological scheme of work (strip, plan and sample excavation) carried out on land at 7 Leicester Road, Billesdon, Leicestershire (SK 7180 0287; Figure 1). The work was carried by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 1 October 2013.

The proposed development is twofold. Planning permission has been granted for the erection of a dwelling and detached garage (Plot A) on the northern half of the site (planning application no. 13/00992/FUL). Construction of a second dwelling (Plot B) is proposed on the southern half of the site (planning application forthcoming).

The project area is located on the south-east corner of London Road and Knights Close, c.100m north-west of Billesdon's market place, on the western side of Billesdon approximately 13km east of Leicester. The total development area covers c.955 square metres.

The strip, plan and sample excavation of Plot A was requested by the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council as archaeological advisor to the local planning authority, Harborough District Council, in accordance with *NPPF Sec. 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* (DCLG March 2012), as laid out in the *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work* (Clay 2013). The archaeological work across Plot B was pre-emptive, carried out as part of a new planning application submission.

Geology and Topography

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156 (Leicester), indicates that the underlying geology consists of superficial deposits of mid-Pleistocene glaciolacustrine deposits of clay and silt overlying bedrock deposits of Jurassic siltstone and mudstone

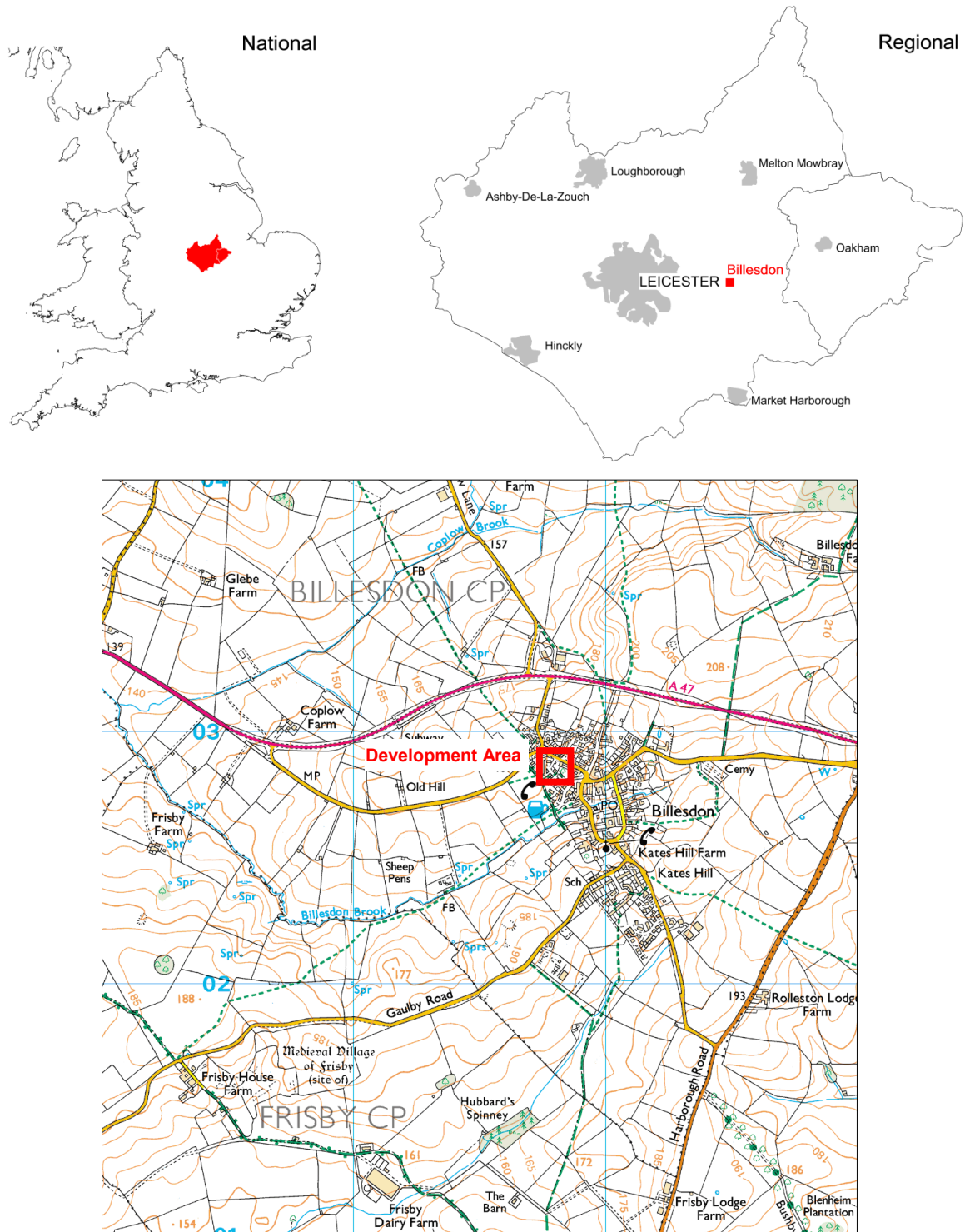


Figure 1: Location maps with development area highlighted

Reproduced from Explorer® 233 Leicester and Hinckley 1:25,000 OS map by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown copyright 2009. All rights reserved. License number AL100029495.

belonging to the Dyrham Formation (BGS 2008). The site lies at c.175m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Historical and Archaeological Background

The village of Billesdon is first mentioned in the Domesday Book in AD 1086 as *Billesdone*. The placename is Old English, meaning ‘an expanse of high land associated with a man called

Bill or Bilheard' (Bourne 2003, 31). Alternately, the first element 'Bill' may be Old English for 'sword' referring to a 'pointed hill' (Mills 2011). Before 1066 the village formed part of the estate of a Saxon called Tochi but after the Norman Conquest it was held by Norman, a sub-tenant of Geoffrey Alselin (Lee & McKinley 1964).

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the project area lies within the historic medieval and post-medieval settlement core of Billesdon, a medieval and post-medieval market village (HER refs. MLE8911, MLE1223). Archaeological work to the immediate south-east of the site recorded a number of shallow, undated post-holes, pits and linear features; interpreted as post-medieval garden features and property boundaries. Some unstratified early medieval and post-medieval pottery was also recovered along with a single piece of heavily abraded Roman greyware (Hyam 2005; MLE10543). On the north-east corner of the site is St Anne's, 7 Leicester Road, a Grade II listed early 19th century brick house (MLE14286).

Available historic mapping from the 19th century to present day shows that the site lay in fields on the outskirts of the village, which appear to have remained undeveloped until the recent construction of housing on Knights Close and Turnball Close to the west and south of the project area. The land was formerly garden and orchard for 7 Leicester Road.

Archaeological Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To advance understanding of the local heritage assets.
- To produce a report and archive of any results.

Methodology

The project involved the controlled supervision of overburden removal and other groundworks across the unexcavated footprint of the proposed dwellings by an experienced professional archaeologist to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. This was carried out using a mini-360° mechanical excavator with a c.1.6m wide ditching bucket.

All exposed areas, sections and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Any archaeological deposits were hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate to addressing the objectives of the strip, map and sample excavation. Field notes were recorded on a pro-forma ULAS record forms.

All work followed the *Institute for Archaeologists' (IFA) Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS)*.

Results

Plot A

The northern half of the project area forms Plot A. It lies on a gentle north facing slope and fronts onto Leicester Road to the north. In total, approximately two-thirds of the building

footprint in Plot A was stripped down to archaeological levels/natural substratum (Figure 5). The remaining third, forming the Leicester Road frontage, could not be examined because of a line of conifer tree-stumps which had yet to be removed.



Figure 2: The stripped building footprint in Plot A, looking south-west

Grey clayey-silt topsoil, *c.* 0.15-0.26m thick, covered Plot A. This was extensively disturbed by tree-roots and contained occasional charcoal flecks and small quantities of building rubble. Across the eastern half of the footprint topsoil overlay natural orangey-grey clay covering yellowish-orange sand with greyish-orange mottling (Figure 2). Across the western half of the footprint, topsoil covered *c.* 0.17m of orangeish-grey clayey-sandy-silt subsoil on top of natural orangeish-grey clay. The natural substratum appeared to tip down gently to the west.

Overall, natural substratum was observed *c.* 0.26m below ground level in the north-eastern corner of the site, *c.* 0.2m below ground level along its southern-eastern edge and *c.* 0.32m at its western end.

Along the northern edge of the stripped area extensive root disturbance penetrated the natural substratum and would have likely destroyed archaeological activity if present.

Plot B

The southern half of the project area forms Plot B. It lies on high ground which drops gently in all directions. Set back from the Leicester Road frontage it borders Knights Close to the west. No condition for archaeological work was attached to Plot B and its investigation formed part of a pre-planning inquiry. A *c.*4m x *c.*19m trench was machined north-east to south-west across the proposed building footprint (Figure 3), with a *c.*2m x *c.*10m extension

projecting north-west at right-angles, c.5m from its south-western end (Figure 4). This area constituted approximately fifty-percent of the building's proposed footprint (Figure 5).



Figure 3: The stripped building footprint in Plot B, looking north-east



Figure 4: The north-western extension in Plot B, looking south-east

Grey clayey-silt topsoil, c.0.16-0.34m thick, covered Plot B. This lay over c.20mm-0.42m of orangeish-grey clayey-sandy-silt subsoil. Both topsoil and subsoil were extensively disturbed by tree-roots. The natural substratum across much of the site was greyish-orange sandy-clay becoming more clayey with chalk nodules in the north-western extension.

Overall, natural substratum was seen c.0.18m below ground level at the north-eastern end of the site, c.0.38m at its north-western end and c.0.76m at its south-western end. This increased depth at its south-western end, with a corresponding increase in the depth of subsoil may represent colluviation on the site's southern facing hillslope. No evidence of archaeological activity was observed.

Faint east/west 'score-lines' in the natural clay in the north-western extension may represent plough damage. An east/west ceramic field-drain was also observed crossing the northern half of the footprint.

Discussion

Across Plot A, natural ground level was very shallow and much of the ground within the proposed building's footprint appeared to have been extensively disturbed by tree-roots and related garden activity associated with recent occupation of 7 Leicester Road. No evidence for underlying archaeological activity was observed.

Ground beneath Plot B was equally sparse. Subsoil in this area was thicker than in Plot A with less modern disturbance, meaning any archaeological remains were more likely to be better preserved. However, no evidence of archaeological activity was observed and the only features uncovered were possible plough scars and a ceramic field-drain, underlining the site's previous use as farmland.

Overall, no archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed during the course of the work and the result of the investigation proved negative.

Bibliography

- B.G.S., 2008 *England and Wales Sheet 156 Leicester: Bedrock and Superficial Deposits*. 1:50,000 scale geology series
- Bourne, J., 2003 *Understanding Leicestershire and Rutland Place Names*.
- Clay, P., 2013 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work: 7, Leicester Road, Billesdon, Leicestershire*. Unpublished ULAS document
- Hyam, A., 2005 *An Archaeological Evaluation at Forge Field to the rear of 5 Market Place, Billesdon, Leicestershire*. Unpublished ULAS Report 2005-065.
- Lee, J.M. & McKinley, R.A. (eds.), 1964 'Billesdon' in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. A History of Leicestershire Vol. 5*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 6-22
- Mills, A.D., 2011 'Billesdon' in *A Dictionary of British Place-Names*. Oxford, Oxford University Press

Archive

The site archive consists of: 1 A4 watching brief record form
1 A4 annotated plan
Digital and monochrome photographs

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A157.2013



Figure 5: Plan of the proposed development showing Plot A, Plot B and the areas of archaeological work.

Plan supplied by the client.

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.

OASIS database project number – **universi1-160244**

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 and contractors for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken, and the report written by Mathew Morris. The project was managed for ULAS by Patrick Clay.

Mathew Morris MA AIFA
Archaeological Services (ULAS)
School of Archaeology and Ancient History
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614
Email: mlm9@le.ac.uk

02/10/2013

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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



THE Awards Winner
2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012