



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
the Market Centre, Leicester Market
Place**

NGR: SK 58740 04430

Wayne Jarvis



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**An Archaeological Watching Brief
at the Market Centre, Leicester Market Place**

NGR: SK 58740 04430

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For: Kier Construction

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An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Market Centre, Leicester Market Place (SK 58740 04430)

Wayne Jarvis

Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out at the Market Centre, Leicester Market Place (SK 58740 04430) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between June and September 2013. The work was carried out on behalf of Kier Construction in advance of the construction works as part of the Leicester market regeneration.

Trialholes were observed to depths of as much as 3.3m, excavated initially to identify stanchion obstructions, then within the pile footprints to expose service obstructions. Overall the watching brief proved negative, producing no evidence of archaeological features or any finds. Pitting or other ground disturbance and probably of recent date was observed only in the north-west of the site area. Natural ground was exposed at a depth of c.2.6m across the site area with garden soils above, and below level this were seen only dirty mixed natural deposits. The archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums under the accession number A12 2013.

Introduction

This document is a report for archaeological work carried out at Market Centre, Leicester Market Place (Fig. 1; SK 58740 04430). The work was carried out on behalf of Kier Construction by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between August and September 2013.

The proposed development involves the construction of a new covered 'indoor' marketplace within the footprint of the old market buildings (Planning application Ref: 20130510). The work involved machine excavation of test pits to expose the original stanchions, then excavation of the footprints of the proposed pile layout also to identify any obstructions.

The work was requested by the Leicester City Archaeologist in their capacity as archaeological advisor to Leicester City Council, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012). The work followed the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Score 2013).

Geology and Topography

The underlying bedrock is identified as Branscombe Mudstone (British Geological Survey of Britain). The site lies at c.64.40m above Ordnance Datum (OD) on ground sloping down slightly to the north and east.

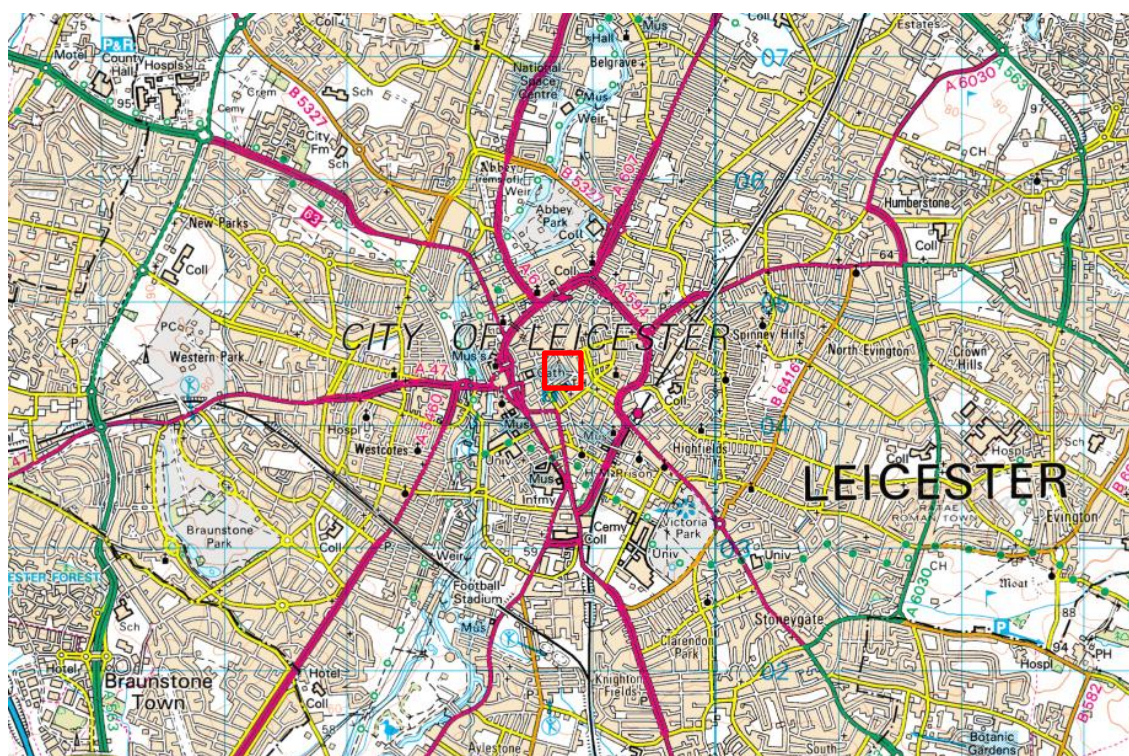


Figure 1: Location map with development area highlighted

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Historical and Archaeological Background

The site lies within the Market Place Conservation Area. Work will expose the facades of the Corn Exchange and Molly O'Grady's (formerly the Saracen's Head), (Fig. 2). The area was a designated market place from the 13th century (Greig and Stephenson Architects 2013) and the location of the site suggests the potential for the possible presence of deposits relating to the origins and the development of the medieval market as well as possible earlier activity. Work could contribute to knowledge on market development, settlement, and society. Artefacts can provide evidence for on-site activities, craft, industry and exchange across broad landscape areas and palaeoenvironmental evidence could provide information on agricultural practices and land use.

Archaeological Objectives

The principal objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date of any archaeological deposits to be effected by the proposed ground works.
- To excavate and record any archaeological deposits to be effected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce a report and archive of any results.

Methodology

The proposed development involves the construction of a new covered 'indoor' marketplace within the footprint of the old market buildings (Planning application Ref: 20130510). Work for the development with a potential impact on archaeology involved the excavation by machine test pits to expose the original stanchion bases for the former covered marketplace, and the excavation of 3m by 3m test-pits and the footprints of the proposed pile layout also to

identify any obstructions (Fig. 3). Additionally a reduced level dig was carried out over the site, but this was at insufficient a depth to go below the level of the modern make-up deposits.

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2012) and adhered to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (2008). The *Leicestershire County Council Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997) was adhered to. An accession number was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts.

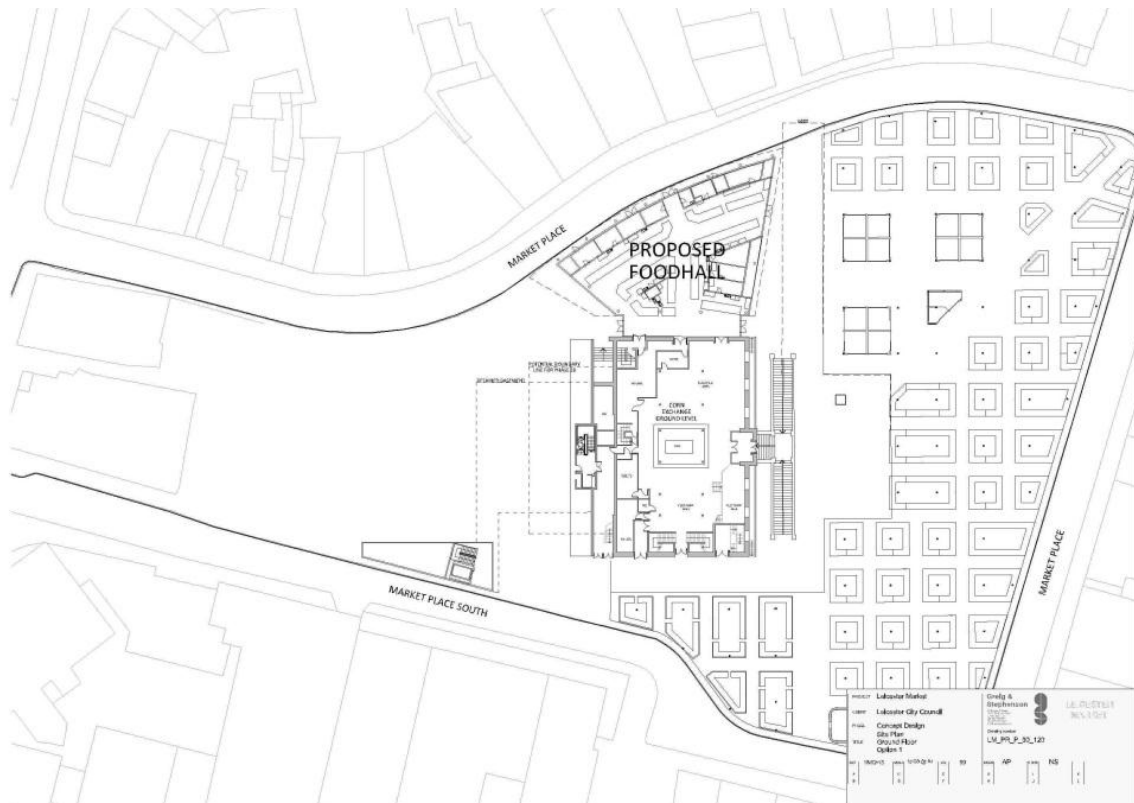


Figure 2: Site development plans

Results

Observations were made over a period of time between 19/6/13 and 21/08/13 when a series of visits were made to target new areas of ground being opened up. Initial work involved observations of four testpits dug alongside surviving concrete stanchion bases. These testpits were dug to identify the base of the stanchions, and none of these were excavated deep enough to reach archaeological deposits, only reaching as deep as 'garden soils' (Fig. 4). Follow-up work involved the excavation of trialholes measuring 3m by 3m and up to 3.3m deep. These were sited on the footprint of the proposed pilecaps, to identify any live services or other intrusions. Five of these trialholes were observed across the site area, and all reached to sufficient depth at which archaeological stratigraphy would be expected. The base of the garden soil was seen at a depth of c. 2.6m, and below this were largely only seen dirty mixed natural deposits. In the trialhole in the north-west of the site, further redeposited sands and gravels were observed interpreted as being potentially from intercutting quarry pits but at a shallower depth of 1.8m, of uncertain date but potentially late due to the depth from which they were cutting. No archaeological features were identified, and no artefacts were recovered. Further deep works on site involved only piling within the already excavated areas and continuation of services within the depths observed across the site previously. Reduced level works across the area (production of the pile mat) impacted only modern made up ground for the previous market place hard standing.

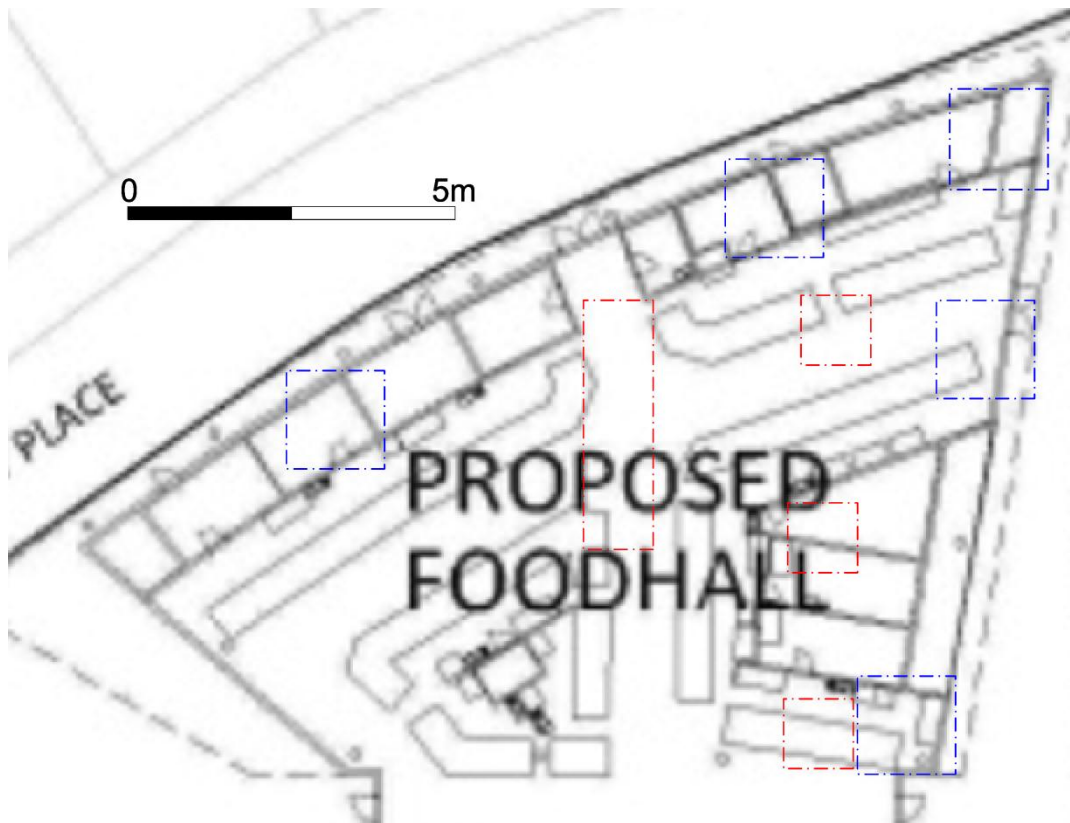


Figure 3: Location of observed test-pits (red – stage one, previous stanchions, blue - stage 2 proposed pile caps)



Figure 4: Initial test-pit to identify base of stanchion (at end of spade) showing garden soils only



Figure 5: Disturbance at shallow depth on Market Place frontage

Discussion

Despite the site's proximity to documented significant activity dating back to the prehistoric and later periods, and the site being the location of the medieval market, no archaeological features were found during the works. No artefacts were recovered during any of the works either. The relatively clean nature of the overburden (and 'garden soil') suggests probable small-scale agricultural activity, and this may have truncated any earlier deposits.

Archive

The site archive consists of:

- 2 Watching Brief recording forms including photo index,
- an unbound copy of this report
- 26 digital photographs as a contact sheet and on CD

The archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums under the accession number A12 2013.

Publication

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

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

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Oasis Information

OASIS Project No.	Universi1_166153
Project Name	Market Centre, Leicester Market Place
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	Vicki Score
Project Supervisor	Wayne Jarvis
Previous/Future work	None
Current Land Use	Retail (market place)
Development Type	Retail (market place)
Reason for Investigation	NPPF, Section 12
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	SK 58740 04430
Start/end dates of field work	19/6/13 to 21/08/13
Archive Recipient	Leicester Museums
Study Area	c.400 square metres
Site Code	Acc No. A12 2013

Acknowledgements

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