

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
At Sandhills Avenue (Phase 4),  
North Hamilton,  
Leicester (SK 636 071)**

**Leon Hunt**

*for*

Bellway Homes

**Checked by Project Manager**

**Signed: .....Date:**

**Name: .....**

**University of Leicester**

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH

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

ULAS Report No. 2005-177 ©2005

## CONTENTS

Summary .....	2
Introduction.....	2
Site Location and Geology .....	2
Aims and Methods .....	3
Results.....	4
Conclusion .....	5
Bibliography .....	5
Archive.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	6

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Site Location OS Map. Explorer 233 Leicester & Hinckley. Scale 1:25 000 with North Hamilton development site highlighted with Phase 4 in red.....	3
Figure 2: Location plan of Phase 4 at North Hamilton (highlighted) .....	4
Figure 3: Plan of ground-works observed during watching brief .....	7

## PLATES

- Plate 1:** General shot of site on 09/12/05, looking south
- Plate 2:** Linear features observed on 18/10/05, looking north
- Plate 3:** South west facing section of service trench
- Plate 4:** North west facing section of service trench
- Plate 5:** General shot of site with foundation trenches, looking north east

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at Sandhills Avenue (Phase 4), North Hamilton, Leicester (SK 636 071)**

Leon Hunt

### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Sandhills Avenue (Phase 4), North Hamilton, Leicester (SK 636 071; Planning Application 2005083) during ground-works associated with the building of new houses. The site lies within an area evaluated and excavated by ULAS in the 1980s and more recently in 2000 and 2002, which revealed Iron Age and Roman archaeology. The site, therefore, had a high archaeological potential. However, no archaeological remains were observed. The archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums with accession number A12.2005.*

### **Introduction**

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Bellway Homes to carry out a watching brief during the ground-works at Sandhills Avenue (Phase 4), North Hamilton, Leicester (SK 636 071). Archaeological work was required as a condition of the planning permission granted by Leicester City Council (Planning Application No. 2005083).

Previously the site has been subject to archaeological evaluation comprising fieldwalking surveys, geophysical survey and trenching (Leicestershire Museums Arts and Records Service Archaeological Survey Team Report 94/3; Leicestershire Archaeological Unit Report 94/41; ULAS Reports 2000-032; 2000-040; 2000-067). This work confirmed that there is archaeological potential in three main and three ancillary areas including two Iron Age and Romano-British sites (ULAS Report 2000-067 11-12). The Sandhills Avenue Phase 4 area includes an area that has already been excavated and an early Iron Age site was located (Beamish 2003).

The site is close to a regionally important Iron Age settlement, which is located 3km to the south. It is also to the east of the deserted medieval village of Hamilton and Hamilton Roman Villa.

A watching brief was carried out during the construction of a primary school on the northern side of Sandhills Avenue, a few hundred metres to the west of the present site. No archaeology was observed during this work (Hunt 2004).

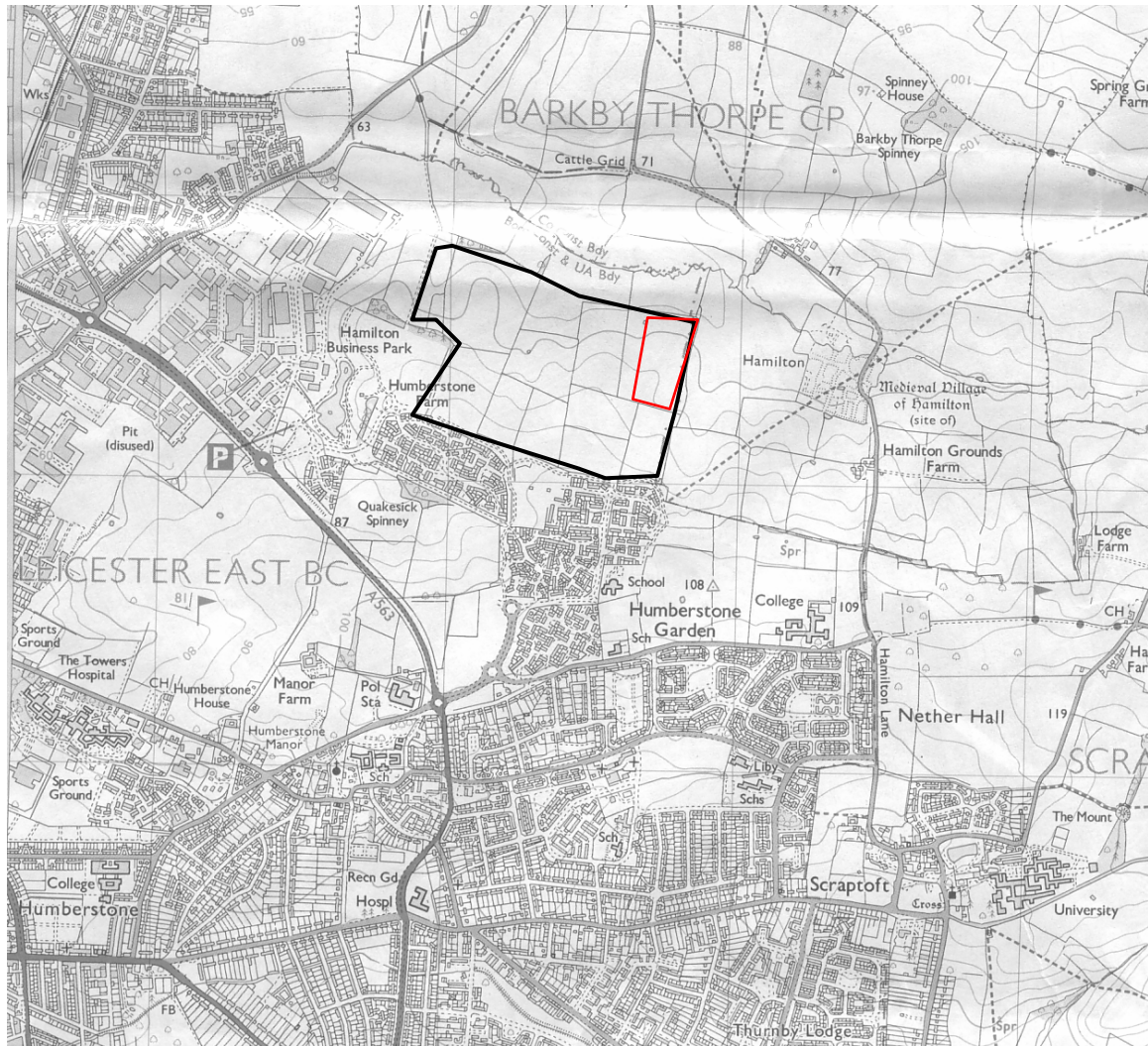
The planned development of new homes with associated services, garages and access roads was seen to have the potential to have a damaging impact on any archaeological remains if present. A Design Specification for a watching brief was prepared by ULAS (appendix).

### **Site Location and Geology**

The site lies north of Humberstone Village approximately 5.6km northeast of Leicester City Centre. The development area comprises c.9.9 acres on a north-facing slope, which falls from c.95-65m OD towards the Melton Brook to the north.

The site covered by this report is Phase 4 of the North Hamilton Development Site, which covers an area of 52.42 ha, and is situated c.300m north of the eastern end of Sandhills Avenue and 400m from the deserted medieval village of Hamilton.

The underlying geology consists of glacial boulder clay with areas of overlying sand and gravel and outcropping bands of Mercia Mudstone and deposits of alluvium to the north (Geology Sheet 156 (Leicester) Solid and Drift).



**Figure 1: Site Location OS Map. Explorer 233 Leicester & Hinckley. Scale 1:25 000 with North Hamilton development site highlighted with Phase 4 in red**

©Crown Copyright. Licence No. 100021186.

### **Aims and Methods**

The purpose of the watching brief was to ascertain whether archaeological deposits were present. If so, the character, extent and date range of any deposits identified would be established, in order to assess their significance (see Appendices, Design Specification). Recording of these deposits would be carried out as appropriate, and an archive and this report produced. The work followed the Institute of Field

Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, and adhered to the University's Health and Safety policy.



**Figure 2: Location plan of Phase 4 at North Hamilton (highlighted)**

## Results

An archaeologist visited the site on 18th October and 9th December 2005 and 21st February and 9th May 2006 and topsoil stripping and trenching for services was observed throughout this time. Throughout the site the topsoil consisted of 0.2-0.3m of dark brown clayey loam, and the natural substratum was very varied, from brownish red or yellow sand to brownish red clay. The visibility during the topsoil

stripping for the cabins on 18th October was very good and the stripped surface could be easily observed.

The site was not systematically stripped in other areas and wet weather often rendered the clayey areas very difficult to monitor.

During the visit of 18th October the stripping revealed orangey brown silty clay under the fairly thin (0.2m) topsoil. Several narrow dark linear features were observed (Plate 2), running mainly north-south across the site. These contained a compacted dark grey fill, which appeared very loam like.

By the visit of 9th December the site had developed considerably, with a group of foundations to the south of the site fully completed and several large service trenches had been excavated to the north and east. The formation levels for the central road system had also been virtually completed. Areas around the service trenches seemed to have been mostly stripped of their topsoil and only the substrata could be seen in section. This mainly consisted of brownish yellow sand and gravel, with clay in some areas.

By the following visit of 21st February the central access road and roundabout had been completed and trenching had started to the west of the roundabout. The trenches contained little topsoil but the natural substratum of orangey brown clay could be seen.

The site was visited again on the 9th May 2006. Work was mainly focused on house construction at this time and few open ground-works were observed. A small drain trench, c.0.5m deep was observed but only natural clay was observed.

No archaeology or finds were observed during these visits and the visibility was very poor. No further visits were made to the site.

### **Conclusion**

The lack of systematic stripping on the site combined with poor weather meant that the visibility was very poor and not conducive to close archaeological investigation. Stripped areas were often heavily churned up by machinery and trenches were often waterlogged.

The dark linear marks encountered during the visit of 18th October 2006 (Plate 2) appeared to contain topsoil and were likely to be wheel ruts from previous ground-works.

No archaeological remains were found during the watching brief.

### **Bibliography**

Hunt L. 2004 *An Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks at the Primary School Site, North Hamilton, Leicester.* (SK 633 074) ULAS Report No. 2004-102

### **Archive**

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicester City Museums with accession number A12.2005 and consists of the following:

4 x Watching Brief Recording Sheets

1 CD of Digital Images

## **Acknowledgements**

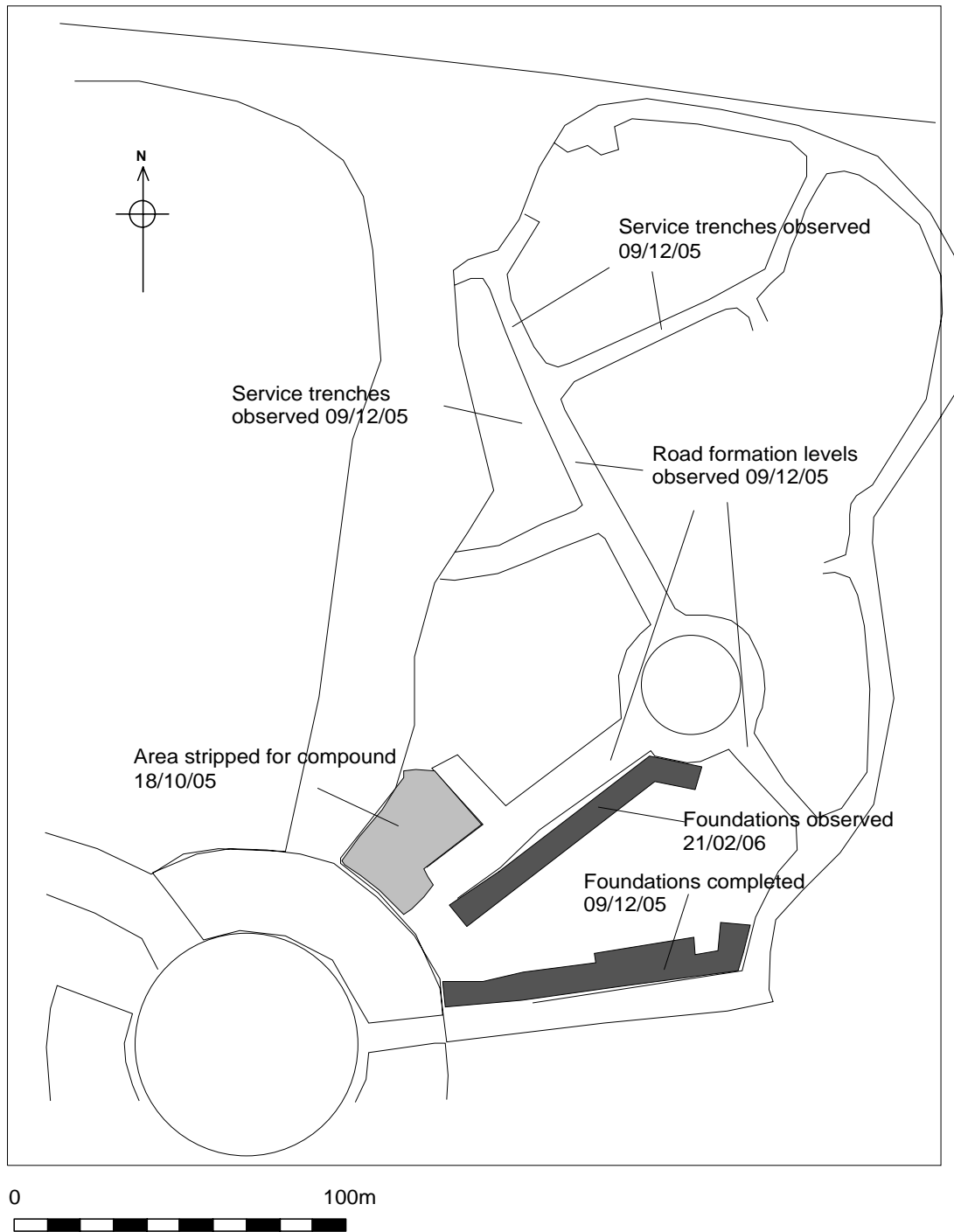
ULAS would like to thank the representatives of Bellway Homes for their assistance. Leon Hunt carried out the watching brief. Patrick Clay managed the project.

Leon Hunt

ULAS  
University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel:0116 252 2848  
Fax: 0116 252 2614

[lh90@le.ac.uk](mailto:lh90@le.ac.uk)



**Figure 3: Plan of ground-works observed during watching brief**





**Plate 1:** General shot of site on 09/12/05, looking south



**Plate 2 :** Linear features observed on 18/10/05, looking north



**Plate 3:** South west facing section of service trench



**Plate 4:** North west facing section of service trench



**Plate 5:** General shot of site with foundation trenches, looking north east

**APPENDIX**  
**DESIGN SPECIFICATION**