



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
At Winchester Road, Blaby,
Leicestershire
NGR: SP 571 966**



Jon Coward

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**An Archaeological Evaluation
at Winchester Road, Blaby Leicestershire
NGR: SP 571 966**

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For: Westleigh Homes Limited

Approved by:

Signed:



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Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in February 2014 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Westleigh Homes Limited. The fieldwork was a post-determination requirement on a planning application for residential development on land east of Winchester Road, Blaby, Leicestershire, in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains might be assessed by the Planning Authority and an appropriate mitigation strategy put in place.

The archaeological evaluation revealed no evidence of archaeological finds or features, with the exception of remnants of medieval plough furrows; this corresponds with previous negative results obtained in 2012 from trenching around the periphery of the area.

The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A18.2014.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the east of Winchester Road, Blaby, Leicestershire. A desk-based assessment (Clarke 2012) indicated that the site lies outside the Conservation Area of Blaby and outside the medieval village core. It lies adjacent to the site of Blaby Hall, a post-medieval mansion, the grounds of which contain medieval earthworks and other medieval and post-medieval features. The site is also close to the findspot of Neolithic flint artefacts and to a series of linear features believed to be Iron Age in date, but had not previously been subject to archaeological investigation.

In view of the potential impact of the development upon possible archaeological remains, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG March 2012), and following recommendations by the Leicestershire County Council (LCC) Senior Planning Archaeologist, the planning authority required that evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken. The fieldwork specified was intended to provide further indications of character and extent of any buried archaeological remains in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains might be assessed. The site was a playing field, fieldwork had previously been carried out in August 2012

(Kipling 2012) but at that time the pitch itself was still in use. The present tranche of work was to evaluate the pitch area missed out from the previous evaluation.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance 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) were also adhered to.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The site of the proposed development (SP 571 966; centre) is located approximately 7km to the south-west of Leicester, bound to the north by the River Sence and the Grand Union Canal, and to the west by the main Lutterworth Road (Figure 1). The assessment area consists of approximately 0.8 hectares of land located to the south of Blaby village, on the eastern side of Winchester Road. The site is bound to the north by a housing estate, with open fields located to the south and east.

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology of the site is likely to consist of mudstone. The land is level across the width of the original pitch but drops somewhat to the east edge, and lies at a height of approximately 80m OD.

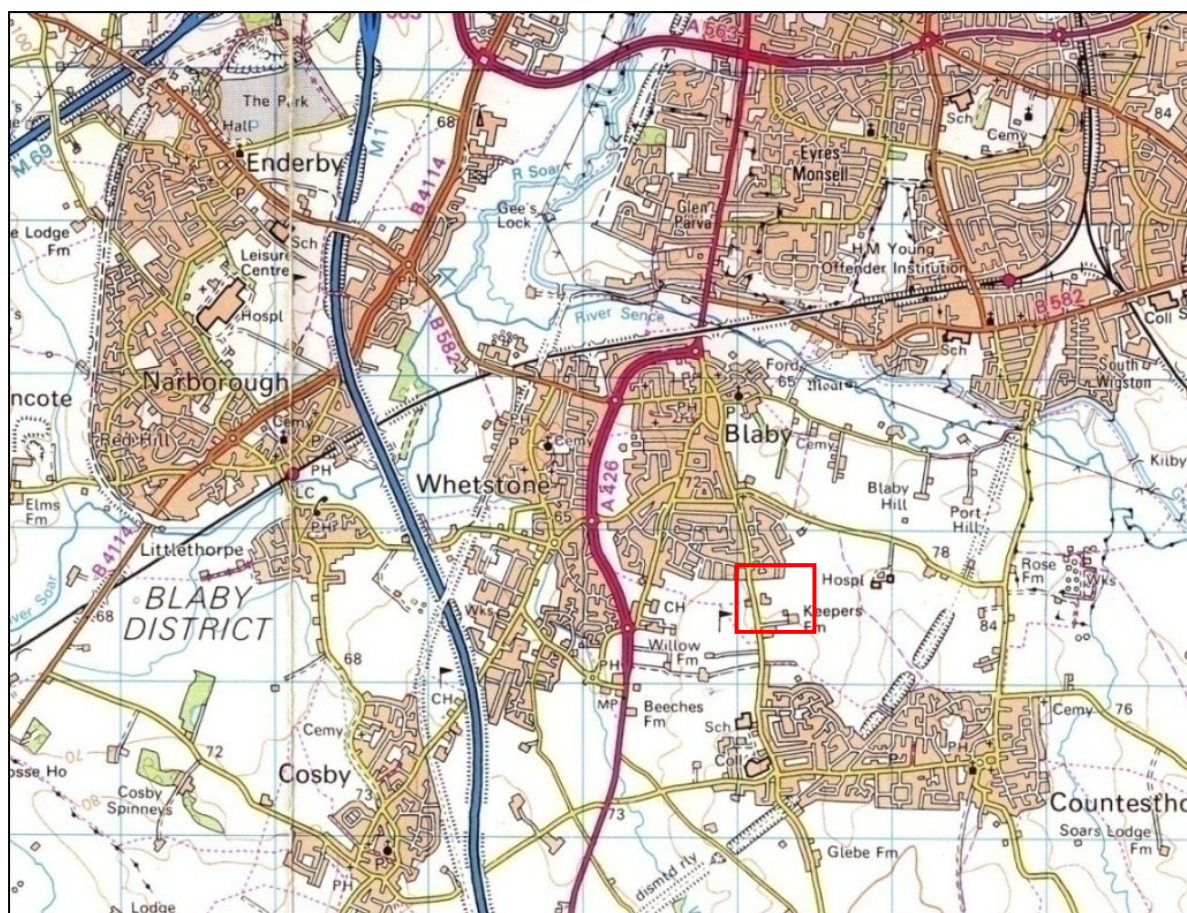


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Archaeological and Historical Background

The Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire and Rutland (Clarke 2012) indicated that there are no known archaeological sites within the assessment area itself, although a number are indicated in the vicinity, which are summarised below. The application area lies near to the site of Blaby Hall, a post-medieval mansion, the grounds of which contain medieval earthworks and other medieval and post-medieval features.

Undated

In 2008, geophysical survey of land located approximately 500m to the west of the assessment area revealed evidence of a linear, ditch type feature in association with several pits (**MLE17023**), likely to be of archaeological significance.

Prehistoric

A Bronze Age spear-head (**MLE6254**) and palstave (**MLE6255**) have been recovered by metal-detector from fields to the west and to the south of Blaby Hospital, approximately 500m to the east of the assessment area.

A cropmark located approximately 600m to the south of the site (**MLE29**) is undated but thought to represent later prehistoric remains. Other cropmarks located 900m to the north-east of the assessment area (**MLE24**) are thought to represent the remains of an Iron Age rectilinear enclosure and trackway.

Roman

The site lies around 700m to the east of the Roman Tripontium road that runs south from Leicester and follows the line of the present Lutterworth Road (**MLE1902**).

Medieval

The assessment area lies approximately 900m to the south of the medieval settlement core of Blaby village, which has been deduced from early maps (**MLE9336**); the proposed development site lies outside this core and also lies outside the Conservation Area. The frame of a medieval purse was found approximately 300m to the north (**MLE6614**), in the garden of number 4, Chester Road and medieval coins have been found approximately 500m to the east of the assessment area (**MLE6615, 6616**).

Post-medieval

A number of sites dating to the post-medieval period are also located in the vicinity of the assessment area and are listed on the HER. These are all located more than 1km away from the assessment area and do not appear to have any direct bearing on the site itself. Details of these can be found within the Appendix.

Ridge and Furrow

A survey of the preserved medieval ridge and furrow of Leicestershire undertaken by R F Hartley in the 1980s and derived from earlier aerial photographs, shows ridge and furrow aligned east to west across the site. This has not survived to the present day, having been levelled off during the formation of the football pitch.

Aims and Methods

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:

1. Identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. Establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by proposed ground-works.
3. Record any archaeological deposits affected by the ground-works.
4. 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 on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the development. All work was recorded in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, the standard policy and practice of ULAS. The University of Leicester's Health and Safety policy was adhered to.

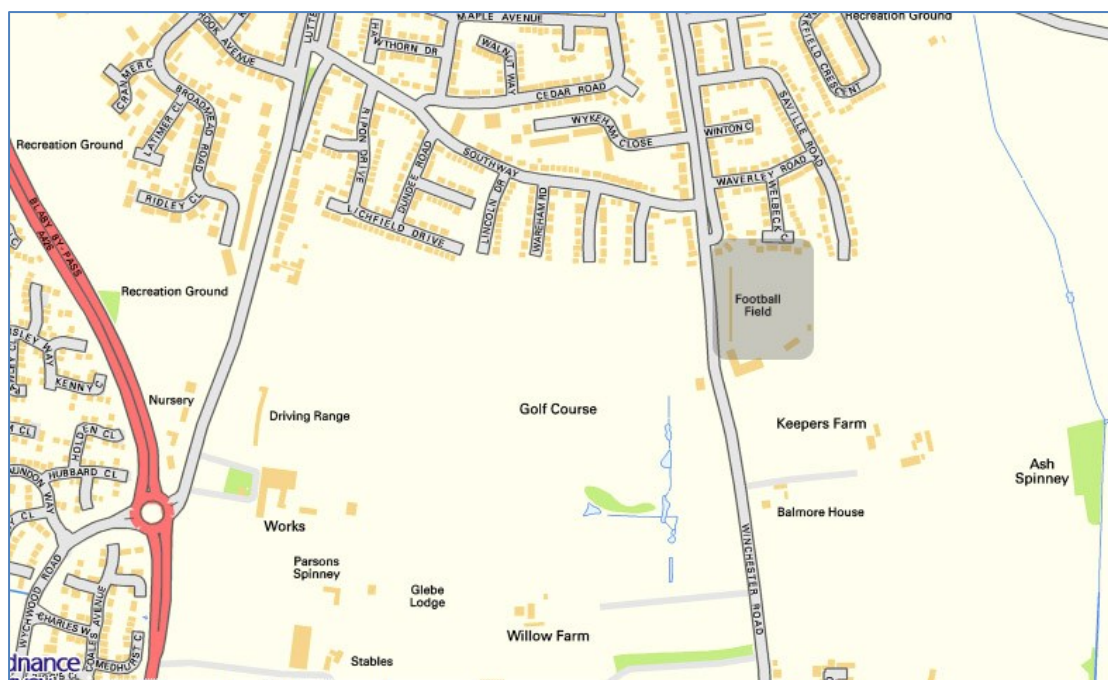


Figure 2 Location of area of investigation (shaded)
NTS. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013

The Written Scheme of Investigation (ULAS 2014), approved by the LCC Senior Planning Archaeologist, on behalf of the planning authority, proposed a programme of archaeological evaluation consisting of a 2.8% sample by trial trenching of the former 0.8ha football pitch through the examination of five 30m by 1.6m trial trenches.

Excavation was undertaken using a 360 mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket, with deposits removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

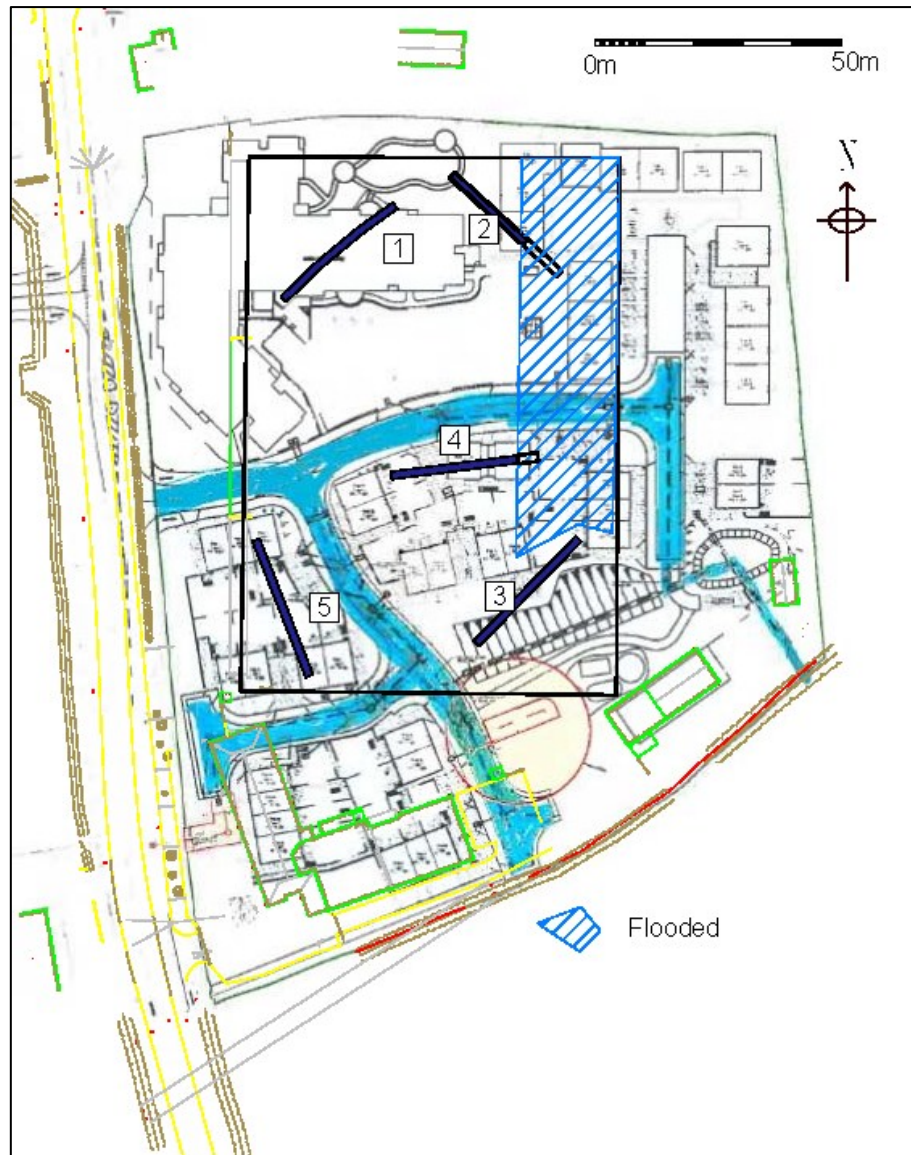


Figure 3: Proposed development with pitch (black rectangle) and trench locations. Area of flooding marked.

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 (Figure 4) ran SW – NE. Topsoil was a mid brown very sandy loam. This extended down 0.20 – 0.30m from top of the trench straight onto natural reddish-yellow clay; there was no subsoil. Two orientations of pitch drains were noted, as well as plough furrows crossing the trench obliquely on an east-west alignment. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.



Figure 4 Trench 1, looking north-east (1m scale)

Trench 2

Topsoil was a mid brown very sandy loam identical to trench 1. This extended down 0.20 – 0.25m from top of the trench onto natural orange-yellow clay; again no subsoil was present. This trench (Figure 5) ran for c. 17m before running into a flooded area. Pitch drains were noted, as well as east–west plough furrows. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.



Figure 5 Trench 2, looking south-east (1m scale)

Trench 3

Trench 3 (Figure 6) ran SW – NE. The topsoil visible in trenches 1 and 2 was largely absent and much of the area disturbed. Natural yellow –orange clay with fine pebbles was reached at 0.45m – 0.50m depth; at the SW end it was obvious that natural clay had been removed from elsewhere (probably the lower ground to the east) and dumped on top of the *in-situ* natural. Where pitch drains survived they cut this redeposited material. Much of the NE end flooded after excavation. Traces of east-west plough furrows could be seen although they were less clear than in other trenches. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.



Figure 6 Trench 3, looking north – east (1m scale)

Trench 4

Trench 4 (Figure 7) ran approximately east – west for 23m before running into a flooded area. Topsoil and pitch drains were noted as per trenches 1 and 2. The top of natural orange-yellow clay was at 0.15-0.20 m depth. No archaeological finds or features were encountered, nor any furrows, although as the furrow alignment is east-west there is no reason why the trench would cross any.



Figure 7 Trench 4, looking east (1m scale)

Trench 5

Trench 5 (Figure 8) ran NNW – SSE. The west side of the trench at the north end clipped an area of hardstanding, almost certainly the edge of the original pitch judging by the angle. Topsoil was as trenches 1, 2 and 4, there was no subsoil, and natural orange-yellow clay, plus patches of natural reddish sand was encountered at a depth of 0.20 – 0.30m depth, along with the usual pitch drains, but no obvious medieval plough furrows. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.



Figure 8 Trench 5, looking south (1m scale)

Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation at Winchester Road, Blaby, revealed no archaeological evidence, with the exception of traces of furrows associated with medieval cultivation. The topsoil was unusually homogeneous, very sandy, and probably imported especially for the pitch. Landscaping in the south east corner (trench 3) involved making up the ground to achieve a level playing area, this material perhaps being taken off the lower land to the east, or perhaps bladed off the south-west corner given that there were no obvious furrows crossing trench 5. A strip of the pitch area on the east side was unable to be evaluated because of flooding, but given the negative results from the trenching carried out in 2012 immediately to the east (trenches 4 – 7 Figure 9), there is unlikely to be significant archaeology present.

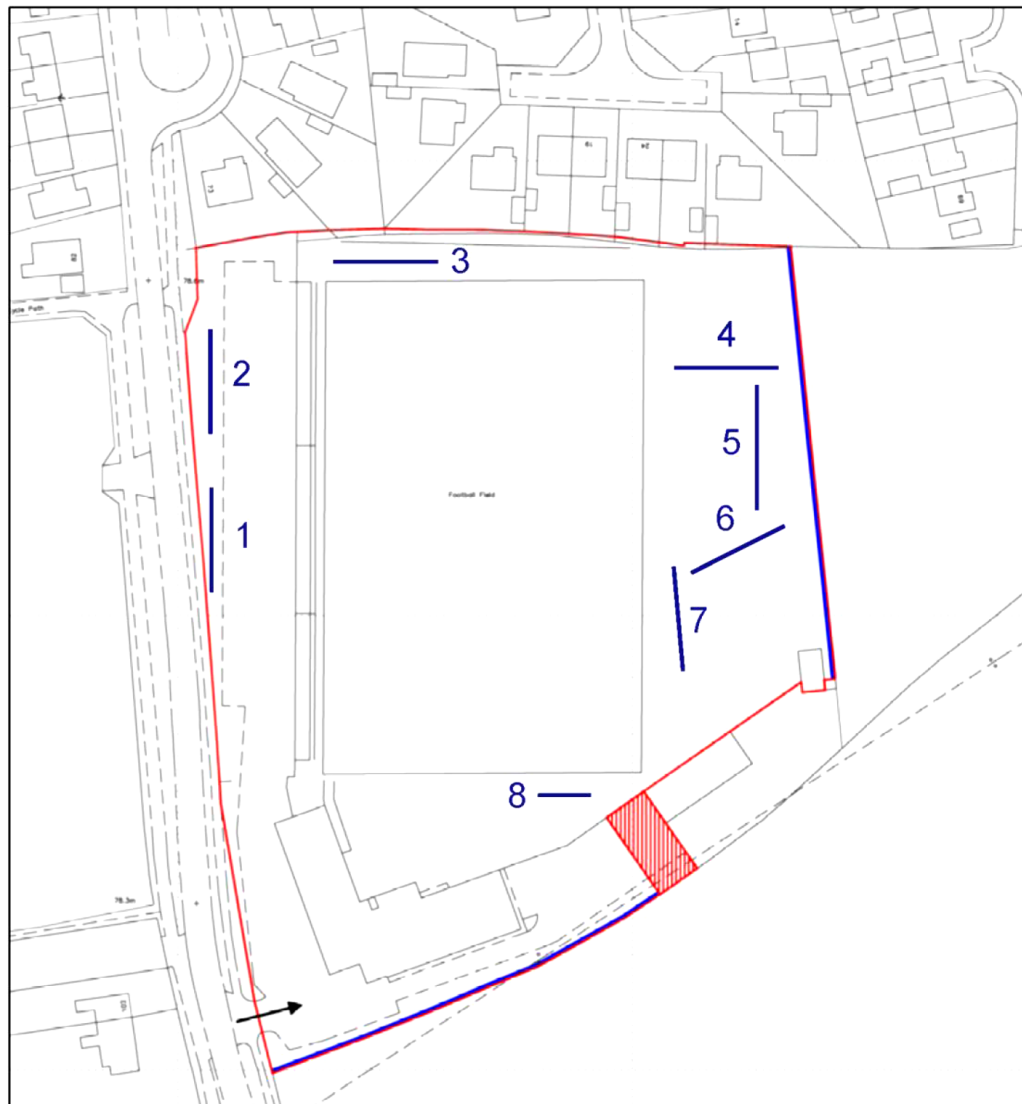


Figure 9 Previous trenches. Taken from Kipling, 2012

Archive and Publications

The site archive, consisting of
5 *pro-forma* trench record sheets
Monochrome negatives and contact sheet
Digital images
Photographic index

will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under accession code X.A18 2014 in due course.

Publication

A version of the excavation summary (see above) will appear in due course in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Roger Kipling directed the excavation with the assistance of Jon Coward, on behalf of Westleigh homes. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

Bibliography

- Brown, D., 2008 *Standard and guidance for the preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists)
- Clarke, S.J., 2012 *An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for land at Winchester Road, Blaby, Leicestershire (SP 571 966)*. ULAS Report 2012-047
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- Kipling, R., 2012 *An Archaeological Evaluation at Winchester Rd, Blaby, Leicestershire SP 571 966* ULAS report 2012-139

Oasis Information

Project Name	Winchester Road Blaby
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Development subject to planning permission
Current Land Use	Recreational
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	NPPF section 12
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-determination
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 571 966
Start/end dates of field work	February 2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	c. 0.8 ha.

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