

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Aston Close Plot 2, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre Hill, Leicester

> NGR: SK 578 088 Tim Higgins



ULAS Report No. 2013-168 ©2013

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Ashton Close Plot 2, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre Hill, Leicester

NGR: SK 578 088

Tim Higgins

For: The Ashton Works Ltd

Approved by:

Signed:

Date: 07.10.2013.

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An Archaeological strip plan sample excavation and watching brief at Ashton Close Plot 2, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre Hill, Leicester NGR SK 578 088

Tim Higgins

Summary

An Archaeological strip plan sample excavation and watching brief on land at Ashton Close Plot 2, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre, Leicester, was undertaken by ULAS on behalf of The Ashton Works Ltd. The initial groundwork consisted of the removal of overburden consisting topsoil and subsoil. Attendance at the site occurred from the 12th August 2013.

The strip plan sample excavation and watching brief revealed only ridge and furrow during the inspection of the site. The archive will be deposited with, subject to their confirmation with Leicester City Council Museums.

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of an archaeological strip plan sample excavation and watching brief groundworks on land at Ashton Close Plot 2, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre, Leicester (NGR SK 578 088). A planning application has been approved with conditions for the erection of a two storey industrial unit with associated parking and landscaping. In view of the potential impact of the development this was undertaken as a mitigation strategy following recommendations by the City Archaeologist at Leicester City Council as archaeological advisor to the planning authority.

The ground-works involved archeologically controlled ground clearance, removal of overburden and excavation of foundation trenches.

The archaeological strip plan sample excavation and watching brief was carried out in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012). All archaeological work adhered to the Institute for Archaeologist's (IfA) Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.

2. Archaeological and Historical background

An archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) (Hunt 2013). This showed that the proposed development area lies within an area that is rich in prehistoric archaeology. Archaeological evaluations carried out by ULAS in 2001, 2002 and 2005 within the area and the land to the south and east have identified evidence of a substantial Iron Age settlement in the vicinity. There was therefore potential for finds or deposits of prehistoric date within the development area.

Two trenches have already been examined within the development area itself, with part of another extending into the assessment area from the north. A further trench to the east

revealed one linear feature from which Iron Age pottery was retrieved, which possibly indicates the continuation of settlement into this area (Hunt 2005).

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicester indicates that several prehistoric sites have also been identified within the vicinity. The HER references are in **bold** in the following text.

An archaeological evaluation carried out in 2002 on an area 300m south-west of the site produced Neolithic finds, including sherds of Peterborough Ware pottery. Further work revealed roundhouses and 43 post-hole features dated to the Iron Age (MLC1544) (Abrams 2002). A second phase of work undertaken by ULAS in 2006 20 round houses, several fence lines, 11 four-post structures, possibly grain stores, and 3 large rectilinear structures (Thomas 2008; 2011). For a period the edge of the settlement was defined by a ditch, but the settlement appears to have expanded beyond this ditch at a later stage. The work produced a large quantity of artefacts, including pottery, fired clay, quernstones, animal bones and evidence of metalworking including iron slag. The pottery evidence suggested that the site continued to be used into the Roman period (MLC1484) (Thomas 2008; 2011).

In 2010, geophysical survey of land 400m north of the site identified a number of anomalies, which appear to be a rectilinear enclosure with various other features (MLC2233 & MLC2234). Trial trenching confirmed that the features appeared to correspond to an Iron Age farmstead with roundhouses and a number of boundary ditches and postholes. Artefacts included pottery, quernstones, and charred plant remains (Higgins 2010; Beamish 2010).

A strip, map and sample excavation of the adjacent plot to the south in April 2013 did not locate any archaeological remains.

3. Aims and Methods

The main objectives of the archaeological work will be:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

The archaeological strip plan and sample excavation has the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

• *Iron Age* (Willis 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2010)

The earlier evaluation revealed evidence of Iron Age settlement. Information on the sequence and chronology of settlements may be recovered and palaeoenvironmental evidence could provide information on agricultural practices and land use. Artefacts can provide evidence for evidence for craft industry and exchange across broad landscape areas.

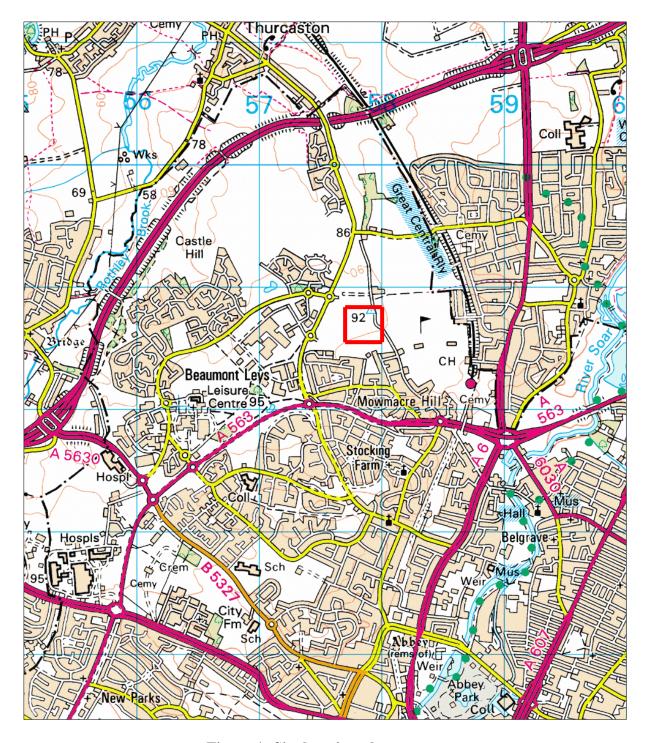


Figure 1: Site location plan

Figure 1: Site location: Reproduced from the Landranger OS map 140 Leicester, Coventry and Rugby area 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10002187.

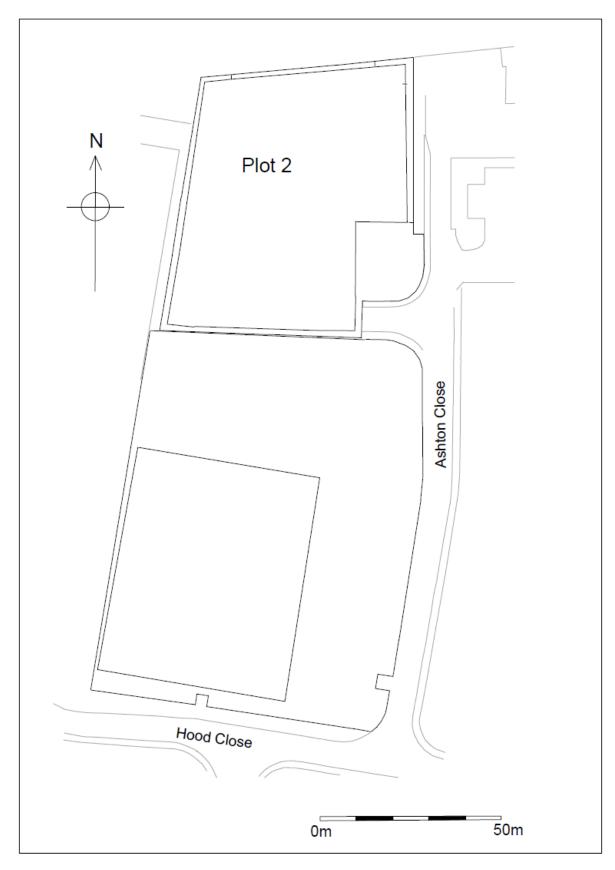


Figure 2: Plot 2 location plan

4. Results

Initial groundwork involved the clearance of topsoil and subsoil within Plot 2 (Figure 2 and Plate 1) and a site visit was undertaken on the 12th and 15th of August 2013. The machine used for the ground works was a JCB 360 degree excavator fitted with a 1.80m wide ditching bucket. A visual inspection was conducted across the newly stripped areas which encompassed most of the Plot 2 area. The natural substratum consisted of pale yellow brown clay mixed with rounded pebbles found at depth of 0.40m below the present ground surface.

The only archaeological evidence revealed during the machine strip appeared to be furrows probably from the pre-Enclosure strip field system. Plot 2 contained the truncated remnants of furrows that appeared to be running parallel with the Ashton Close. No dating evidence was recovered although these may be medieval in origin. No other archaeological deposits, features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered during this inspection of the site.

The ridge and furrow were sealed with a layer of subsoil 0.20m deep comprising dark yellowish brown clay, and sand mixed with modern pottery sherds, that were probably deposited during the manuring of the fields. Overlying was a topsoil layer consisting of dark grey sandy clay and measured 0.20m deep.



Plate 1: Development area looking south-west

5. Conclusion

The strip, map and sample excavation and watching brief undertaken at Plot 2 Ashton Close only revealed evidence of ridge and furrow from pre-enclosure field system. No dating evidence was recovered from the furrows although they may be medieval in origin. No other archaeological deposits, features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered during this inspection of the site.

6. Archive and Publication

The archive will be held by Leicester City Museums under Accession Number A1.2015.

The content of the paper archive consists of:

1 Unbound A4 copy of this report

2 A4 watching brief sheets

1 A4 Photo record sheet

A4 Colour digital contact print 1 CD of digital photos

A record of the project will be submitted to the Oasis project. Oasis is an online index to grey literature reports.

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions in due course.

7. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by the author while Patrick Clay managed the project.

8. Bibliography

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07.10.2013

Appendix 1: OASIS Database entry

Project Name	Ashton Close Plot 2, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre Hill
	Leicester
Project Type	Watching Brief
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Tim Higgins
Previous/Future work	None
Current Land Use	Industrial unit
Development Type	Two Storey unit
Reason for Investigation	NPPF Section 12
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co-ordinates	SK 578 088
Start/end dates of field work	12/081/2013 - 14/08/2013
Archive Recipient	Leicester City Council Museums
Study Area	c. 2ha.

Appendix 2 Specification

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work

Job title: Ashton Close, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre Hill, Leicester

NGR: SK 578 088

Client: Lotan Ltd.

Planning Authority: Leicester City Council

Planning application No. 20121786

Scheduled Start date: w/c 22.04.2013

1 Definition and scope of the specification

- 1.1 This document is a design specification for an archaeological strip plan and sample excavation and watching brief at the above site, in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012). This specification provides a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the fieldwork specified below which is intended to provide information on the character and extent of any buried archaeological remains which may exist on the site and if present record to an appropriate level.
- 1.2 The definition of archaeological excavation, taken from the Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidance: for Archaeological excavations (IfA S&G) is a controlled programme of intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features, structures, and as appropriate, retrieves artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. The records made and objects gathered during fieldwork are studied and the results of that study published in detail appropriate to the project design.

2. Background

Context of the Project

- A planning application has been approved with conditions for the erection of a two storey industrial unit with associated parking and landscaping on land at Ashton Close, off Hoods Close, Mowmacre Hill, Leicester (Planning application: 20121786).
- 2.2 The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology of the area is likely to be Oadby Member Diamicton overlying Edwalton Member mudstone (www.bgs.ac.uk). The land is flat and lies at a height of 92m OD.
- 2.3 Following National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012), the City Archaeologist at Leicester City Council as archaeological advisor to the planning authority recommended that an archaeological strip map and sample excavation is undertaken to clarify the archaeological potential of the site and record deposits as appropriate (email 19.03.13).

2.1 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment prepared by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) encompasses the site (Hunt 2013). This showed that the proposed

development area lies within an area that is rich in prehistoric archaeology. Archaeological evaluations carried out by ULAS in 2001, 2002 and 2005 within the area and the land to the south and east have identified evidence of a substantial Iron Age settlement in the vicinity. There is therefore potential for finds or deposits of prehistoric date within the development area.

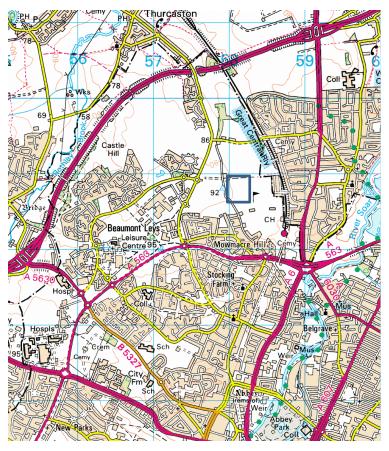


Figure 1: Site location: Reproduced from the Landranger OS map 140 Leicester, Coventry and Rugby area 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10002187.

- 2.2 Two trenches have already been examined within the development area itself, with part of another extending into the assessment area from the north. A further trench to the east revealed one linear feature from which Iron Age pottery was retrieved, which possibly indicates the continuation of settlement into this area (Hunt 2005).
- 2.3 The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicester indicates that several prehistoric sites have also been identified within the vicinity. The HER references are in **bold** in the following text.
- An archaeological evaluation carried out in 2002 on an area 300m south-west of the site produced Neolithic finds, including sherds of Peterborough Ware pottery. Further work revealed roundhouses and 43 post-hole features dated to the Iron Age (MLC1544) (Abrams 2002). A second phase of work undertaken by ULAS in 2006 20 round houses, several fence lines, 11 four-post structures, possibly grain stores, and 3 large rectilinear structures(Thomas 2008 & 2011). For a period the edge of the settlement was defined by a ditch, but the settlement appears to have expanded beyond this ditch at a later stage. The work produced a large quantity of artefacts, including pottery, fired clay, quernstones, animal bones and evidence of metalworking including iron slag. The pottery evidence suggested that the site continued to be used into the Roman period (MLC1484) (Thomas 2008 & 2011).
- 2.5 In 2010, geophysical survey of land 400m north of the site identified a number of anomalies, which appear to be a rectilinear enclosure with various other features (MLC2233 &

MLC2234). Trial trenching confirmed that the features appeared to correspond to an Iron Age farmstead with roundhouses and a number of boundary ditches and postholes. Artefacts included pottery, quernstones, and charred plant remains (Higgins 2010 and Beamish 2010).

3. Archaeological Objectives

- 3.1 The main objectives of the archaeological work will be:
 - To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
 - To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
 - To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
 - To produce an archive and report of any results.
- 3.1 The archaeological strip plan and sample excavation has the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

Iron Age (Willis 2006; Knight et al 2012, English Heritage 2010)

3.1.2 The earlier evaluation revealed evidence of Iron Age settlement. Information on the sequence and the chronology of settlements may recovered and palaeoenvironmental evidence could provide information on agricultural practices and land use. Artefacts can provide evidence for craft industry and exchange across broad landscape areas.

4. Methodology

4.1 General Methodology and Standards

- 4.1.1 All work will follow the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological excavations* (2008).
- 4.1.2 Staffing, recording systems, health and safety provisions and insurance details are included below.
- 4.1.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site by the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are met and professional standards are maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the City Archaeologist, the Planning authority and the Client.

4.2 Strip map and sample excavation

- 4.2.1 The project will involve the supervision of overburden removal and other groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist in advance of the commencement of groundworks and determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. A series of exploratory trial trenches may be investigated in the first instance to clarify the depth of overburden and the presence or absence of archaeological deposits to inform the stripping methodology.
- 4.2.2 Should significant archaeological remains be identified this will be followed by a programme of excavation and recording, using additional personnel as necessary.
- 4.2.3 The archaeologist will control and supervise the topsoil and overburden stripping and the excavation of services, by the Client's contractors, in order to obtain an adequate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed by groundworks associated with the development. All top and subsoil stripping should be undertaken so as to avoid damaging and obscuring archaeological remains.
- 4.2.4 Any archaeological deposits encountered will be recorded and excavated using standard ULAS procedures (see section 5 below).

4.3 Recording Systems

- 4.3.1 The archaeological deposits will be hand-cleaned by trowel or draw hoe. The cleaned surface may be scanned by metal detector.
- 4.3.2 The archaeological features exposed by the machine stripping will be planned and sample excavated to provide an adequate sample to address the objectives (3.1).

- 4.3.3 Measured drawings of all archaeological features will be prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans will be tied into the National Grid using a Total Station Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM). All excavated sections will be recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.
- 4.3.4 The location of the excavation will be surveyed using a GPS or Total Station Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) linked to a hand held computer.
- 4.3.5 Archaeological deposits will be excavated and recorded as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention will be paid to the potential for buried palaeosoils and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.
- 4.3.6 Any human remains encountered will be initially left in situ, where appropriate the police and coroner shall be informed. Human remains will only be removed following appropriate liaison with the Ministry of Justice and in compliance with their requirements and in accordance with appropriate professional standards and guidance, as well as other relevant environmental health regulations. In all circumstances the developer and Leicester City Council, will be informed immediately upon the discovery of significant human remains.
- 4.3.7 Any material recovered which would be regarded as treasure following the Treasure Act 1996 will be reported to the coroner.
- 4.3.8 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site from the project manager. These will ensure that professional standards are being maintained. Provision will be made for monitoring visits with representatives of the developer and the planning authority, Leicester City Council.
- 4.3.9 In the event of significant archaeological remains being located during the fieldwork programme there may be the need for contingency time and finance to be provided to ensure adequate recording is undertaken. On the discovery of potentially significant remains the archaeologist will inform the developer, the City Archaeologist at Leicester City Council and the planning authority. If the archaeological remains are identified to be of significance additional contingent archaeological works will be required.

5. Finds

- 5.1 The IfA *Guidelines for Finds Work* will be adhered to.
- 5.2 Before commencing work on the site, a Site code/Accession number will be agreed with the City Archaeologist that will be used to identify all records and finds from the site.
- All antiquities, valuables, objects or remains of archaeological interest, other than articles declared by Coroner's Inquest to be subject to the Treasure Act, discovered in or under the Site during the carrying out of the project by ULAS or during works carried out on the Site by the Client shall be deemed to be the property of ULAS provided that ULAS after due examination of the said Archaeological Discoveries shall transfer ownership of all Archaeological Discoveries unconditionally to the appropriate authority for storage in perpetuity.
- 5.4 All identified finds and artefacts are to be retained, although certain classes of building material will, in some circumstances, be discarded after recording with the approval of the City Archaeologist.
- 5.5 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner. Where appropriate they will be cleaned, marked and receive remedial conservation in accordance with recognised best practice. This will include the site code number, finds number and context number. Bulk finds will be bagged in clear self-sealing plastic bags, again marked with site code, finds and context.

5.6 Finds which may constitute 'treasure' under the Treasure Act, 1996 must be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be taken to protect the finds from theft.

6. Environmental Sampling

- 6.1. If features are appropriate for environmental sampling a strategy and methodology will be developed on site following advice from ULAS's Environmental Specialist. Preparation, taking, processing and assessment of environmental samples will be in accordance with current best practice. The sampling strategy is likely to include the following:
 - A range of features to represent all feature types, areas and phases will be selected on a judgmental basis. The criteria for selection will be that deposits are datable, well-sealed and with little intrusive or residual material.
 - Any buried soils or well-sealed deposits with concentrations of carbonised material present will be intensively sampled taking a known proportion of the deposit.
 - Spot samples will be taken where concentrations of environmental remains are located.
 - Waterlogged remains, if present, will be sampled for pollen, plant macrofossils, insect remains and radiocarbon dating provided that they are uncontaminated.
- 6.2 All collected samples will be labelled with context and sequential sample numbers.
- 6.3 Appropriate contexts (i.e. datable) will be bulk sampled (50 litres or the whole context depending on size) for the recovery of carbonised plant remains and insects.
- 6.4 Recovery of small animal bones, bird bone and large molluscs will normally be achieved through processing other bulk samples or 50 litre samples may be taken specifically to sample particularly rich deposits.
- 6.5 Wet sieving with flotation will be carried out using a York Archaeological Trust sieving tank with a 0.5mm mesh and a 0.3mm flotation sieve. The small size mesh will be used initially as flotation of plant remains may be incomplete and some may remain in the residue. The residue > 0.5mm from the tank will be separated into coarse fractions of over 4mm and fine fractions of > 0.5-4mm. The coarse fractions will be sorted for finds. The fine fractions and flots will be evaluated and prioritised; only those with remains apparent will be sorted. The prioritised flots will not be sorted until the analysis stage when phasing information is available. Flots will be scanned and plant remains from selected contexts will be identified and further sampling, sieving and sorting targeted towards higher potential deposits.
- Where evidence of industrial processes are present (e.g. indicated by the presence of slag or hearth bases), samples will be taken for the analysis of industrial residues (e.g. hammer scale).

7. Report and Archive

- 7.1 The full report in A4 format will usually follow within six months of the completion. Copies will be provided for the client and the Local Planning Authority and deposited with the Historic Environment Record.
- 7.2 The report will include consideration of:
 - The aims and methods adopted in the course of the work.
 - The nature, location and extent of any structural, artefactual and environmental material uncovered.
 - The anticipated degree of survival of archaeological deposits.
 - The anticipated archaeological impact of the current proposals.
 - Appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs.
 - Summary.

- a summary of artefacts, specialist reports and a consideration of the evidence within its local, regional, national context.
- The location and size of the archive.
- A quantitative and qualitative assessment of the potential of the archive for further analysis leading to full publication, following guidelines laid down in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage).
- 7.3 A full copy of the archive as defined in the IfA Standard and Guidance for archaeological archives (Brown 2008) will normally be presented to Leicester City Council within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken and will follow the LCC guidelines detailed in *The Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service* (LMARS).
- 7.4 The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

8 Publication and Dissemination of Results

- 8.1 A summary report will be submitted to a suitable regional archaeological journal following completion of the fieldwork. A full report will be submitted to a national or period journal if the results are of significance.
- 8.2 University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The online OASIS form at http://www.oasis.ac.uk will be completed detailing the results of the project. ULAS will contact the HER prior to completion of the form. Once a report has become a public document following its incorporation into the HER it may be placed on the web-site.
- 8.3 Where possible the archaeological work will include community involvement in the form of displays, open days and talks subject to the results of the archaeological work.

9 Acknowledgement and Publicity

- 9.1 ULAS shall acknowledge the contribution of the Client in any displays, broadcasts or publications relating to the site or in which the report may be included.
- 9.2 ULAS and the Client shall each ensure that a senior employee shall be responsible for dealing with any enquiries received from press, television and any other broadcasting media and members of the public. All enquiries made to ULAS shall be directed to the Client for comment.

10 Copyright

10.1 The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

11 Monitoring arrangements

- Unlimited access to monitor the project will be available to both the Client and his representatives and City Archaeologist subject to the health and safety requirements of the site.
- 11.2 All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the IfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations and Watching briefs (2008)
- 11.3 Internal monitoring will be carried out by the ULAS project manager.

12 Timetable and Staffing

- 12.1 A start date for the groundworks is provisionally w/c 22.04.2013.
- 12.2 The on-site director/supervisor will carry out the post-excavation work, with time allocated within the costing of the project for analysis of any artefacts found on the site by the relevant in-house specialists at ULAS.

13 Health and Safety

13.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Statement of Safety Policy and uses the ULAS Health and Safety Manual (revised 2010) with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is in the Appendix. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate.

14. Insurance

14.1 All ULAS work is covered by the University of Leicester's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance. Public Liability Insurance and Employers Liability Insurance: Allianz Insurance plc Policy No. SZ/21696148. Professional Indemnity Insurance – Novae Underwriting Ltd. Policy No. 702610MMA120

15. Contingencies and unforeseen circumstances

15.1 In the event that unforeseen archaeological discoveries are made during the project, ULAS shall inform the site agent/project manager, Client and the City Archaeologist and Planning Authority and prepare a short written statement with plan detailing the archaeological evidence. Following assessment of the archaeological remains by the City Archaeologist, ULAS shall, if required, implement an amended scheme of investigation on behalf of the client as appropriate.

15. Bibliography

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