University of Leicester
Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at Park House Farm, Leicester Lane, Desford, Leicestershire.

NGR: SK 4976 0358

Andrew Hyam

ULAS Report No. 2014-038

An Archaeological Evaluation at

Park House Farm,

Leicester Lane, Desford,

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Park House Farm, Leicester Lane, Desford. The work took place on the 17th of February 2014 during the excavation of a single 30m trench. The evaluation was requested by the planning authority in advance of the construction of a single agricultural building. Prior to the evaluation two later 20th century agricultural buildings partially occupied the site.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the evaluation.

The archive will be stored with the Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Number X.A20.2014

1. Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for an archaeological evaluation on land belonging to Park House Farm, Leicester Lane, Desford, Leicestershire, NGR SK 4976 0358. Under planning application 13/00965/FUL it is intended to erect a single agricultural building in the north west corner of the farm complex. The development site has been identified as an area of archaeological potential based upon the assessment of archaeological data held by the Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environmental Record (HER). Following the NPPF the planning authority require that evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken in order to ascertain whether any archaeological remains are present and, if so, to their character and extent.

2. Background

The village of Desford lies approximately 7km to the west of Leicester on the northern side of the main A47 road (Fig. 1). Park House Farm lies about 1km to the east of the village (Fig. 2). The farm sits on the top of a north facing slope. The complex of farm buildings centres around a 19th century farmhouse and outbuildings built around a central rectangular courtyard. A range of later 20th century buildings has developed to the north and east of the original farm.

The 1886 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows Park House farmhouse and the courtyard buildings but none of the surrounding structures seen today. This building layout remains the same until the 1959 edition when structures begin to appear to the

north and east. Two buildings which, until recently, occupied the site of the proposed building only appear on the current OS edition. Prior to their appearance there is a hedgeline that runs across the site from east to west.

The BGS Geology viewer suggests that the site lies on Edwalton Member – Mudstone.

It is proposed to build a single agricultural building in the north western corner of the farm complex which will partially cover the footprint of two later 20th century farm buildings (Fig. 3). The buildings had been used as farrowing sheds and, according to the client, were relatively lightweight structures with minimal foundations. At the time of the evaluation these buildings had been demolished leaving a large area of disturbed topsoil and building debris and only a small area of undisturbed field (Fig. 4).

The development site has been identified as an area of archaeological potential based upon assessment of archaeological data held by the Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER). A Roman occupation site has been recorded about 90m to the north-west of the application site (HER Ref MLE2721) including finds of roofing tiles indicative of a building and a possible pottery kiln. It is possible that related archaeological remains extend into the application site and would be disturbed by proposed groundworks. Although the existing buildings on the site may have disturbed any archaeological remains present, it is likely that features may survive outside the areas of deep impact such as foundation trenches.

In consequence the Senior Planning Archaeologist (PPA), Historic & Natural Environment Team (HNET), Leicestershire County Council, has recommended the need for a further phase of archaeological investigation comprising a programme of evaluation trenching. The investigation is required to provide an adequate sample of the development area and assess the likely archaeological impact of the development proposals.

Figure 1 Desford location

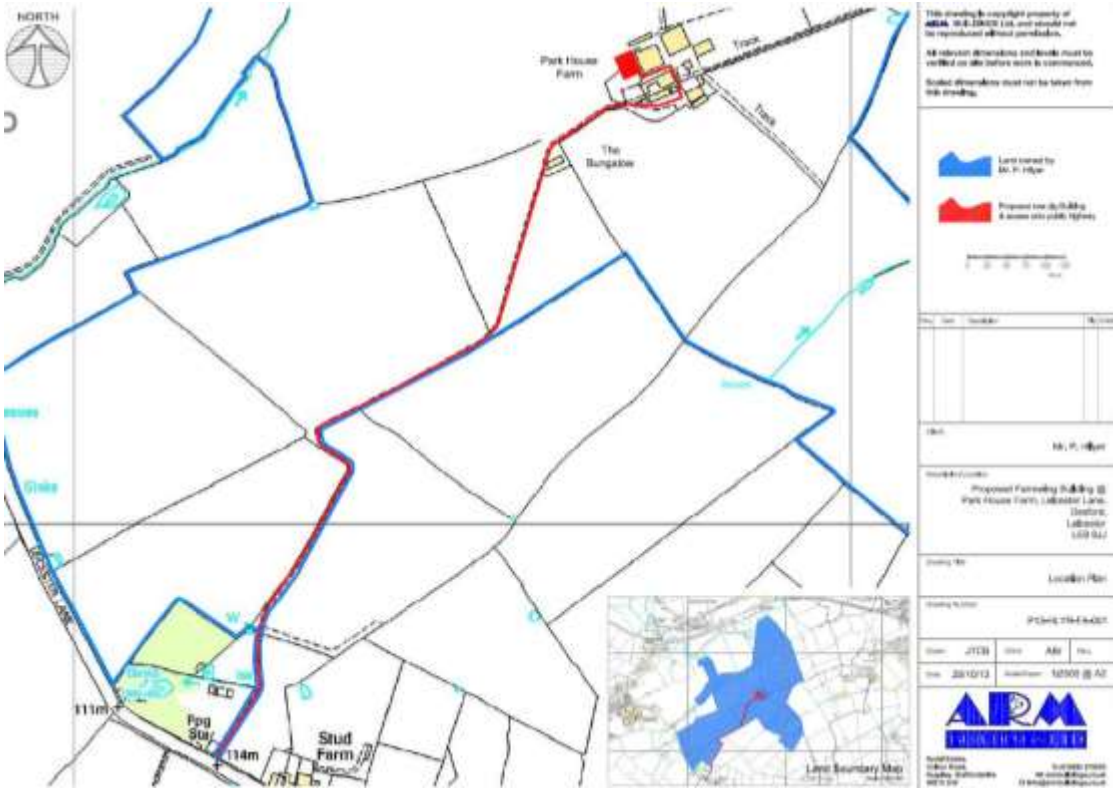

Figure 2 Park House Farm location
Plan supplied by client. New building highlighted in red

Figure 3 Proposed Development
From a plan supplied by client.
Evaluation trench shown in black. The earlier buildings are highlighted in light blue

Figure 4 Evaluation area
Looking north

3. Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

• 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/ structural evidence to be affected by the works.
• To advance understanding of the heritage assets
• To 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 proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that can demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

4. Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2011) 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 adhered to.

Prior to any machining of trial trenches general photographs of the site areas were taken. It was proposed to excavate one trial trench measuring 30m by 1.6m within the footprint of the proposed agricultural building. The trench was laid out at an angle running diagonally across the proposed building which also ensured that it only partially ran across the footprints of the earlier buildings.

Topsoil and overburden was removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision using a tracked mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground, whichever was reached first. All excavation by machine and hand was undertaken with a view to avoid damage to archaeological deposits or features which appeared worthy of preservation in situ or more detailed investigation than for the purposes of evaluation. Where structures, features or finds appeared to merit preservation in situ, they would adequately protected from deterioration.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located were planned at an appropriate scale. Archaeological deposits would be sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention was paid to the potential for buried palaeosoils and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

An adequate photographic record of the investigations was prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and any finds discovered. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

Measured drawings of all archaeological features were prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Relative spot heights were taken as appropriate.

Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. At least one longitudinal face of each trench was recorded. All sections would be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed benchmark.

Trench locations were recorded by an appropriate method and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Any human remains encountered would be initially left in situ, where appropriate the police and coroner would be informed. Human remains would 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 Leicestershire County Council, would be informed immediately upon the discovery of significant human remains.

5. Results

The demolition of the earlier buildings had caused a great deal of ground disturbance leaving a spread of mixed topsoil, building rubble and debris (Figs. 4 and 5). Despite this there was still an area of field which remained undisturbed. This undisturbed area will be under the north western corner of the proposed new building and so offered the highest potential for archaeological remains.

The evaluation trench was laid out on a diagonal, north west to south east, orientation across the new building footprint. The evaluation trench was dug from the north west (the undisturbed end) to south east. The topsoil was found to consist of a dark grey clay silt with an average depth of 0.21m. Removal of the topsoil revealed a mid yellowish grey clay silt subsoil of a thickness varying between 0.05m and 0.18m. The subsoil was removed to expose a pale yellow clay silt substratum which had occasional brighter orange sandy silt patches with some sub rounded stones (Fig. 6).

The substratum in the evaluation trench was clean and undisturbed for the first 11m from the north west end. At this point a modern land drain running from north to south along the trench was exposed. The backfill for the drain was clearly quite fresh and the machine operator remembered digging the drain a few years before. At approximately 17m along the trench an area of roots and root disturbance was seen which corresponds to the east to west hedgeline seen on the earlier OS maps and which was removed to make space for the recently demolished buildings. Beyond the line of the hedge the topsoil and subsoil became a waterlogged mix of dark grey clay silt, sludge and debris. Removal of this exposed a slightly truncated natural clay silt substratum which had been stained to a mid greenish blue by slurry and modern

activity associated with the activity within the building (Fig. 7). Despite the staining it could be seen that no archaeological features cut into the natural substratum, however it would appear that at least 0.1m of natural had been shaved off to construct the earlier buildings.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the trench.

Figure 5 Evaluation area before excavation of trench
Looking south east across undisturbed area to location of demolished buildings.
Start of trench in immediate foreground

Figure 6 Post excavation photograph of trench
Looking south east. 1m scale

Figure 7 Post excavation photograph of trench
Looking north west. 1m scale

6. Discussion

Despite the potential for exposing archaeological features none were found during the evaluation. Much of the trench, and the area of the proposed building, had already been disturbed by the two earlier buildings which, although quite lightweight and shallow, had adversely affected the upper levels of the natural substratum. It is difficult to know exactly how much of the natural has been removed but no features are now present, if any ever were.

7. Archive

The archive consists of:
This report,
1 pro-forma trench recording sheet,
1 photographic record sheet combined for black and white and digital,
11 digital photographs and contact sheet,
4 35mm black and white photographs and negatives,
CD of this report and the digital photographs.

8. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

9. Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Hilyer family for their cooperation and interest during this work and for providing the excavator.

10. Bibliography

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ULAS Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work (Trial Trench Evaluation) *Park House Farm, Leicester Lane, Desford Leicestershire.*

Appendix 1 Trench Information

Distance from South end	*0m*	*5m*	*10m*	*15m*	*20m*	*25m*	*30m*
Topsoil depth	0.20m	0.22m	0.20m	0.20m	Disturbed	Disturbed	Disturbed
Subsoil depth	0.15m	0.18m	0.05m	0.09m	Disturbed	Disturbed	Disturbed
Trench depth/top of natural	0.35m	0.40m	0.25m	0.29m	0.33m	0.34m	0.32m

Appendix 2 OASIS Information

Project Name	Park House Farm, Leicester Lane, Desford
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	R Buckley
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	None
Current Land Use	Agricultural building
Development Type	Agricultural building
Reason for Investigation	Condition
Position in the Planning Process	Ongoing
Site Co ordinates	SK 4976 0358
Start/end dates of field work	17.02.2014
Archive Recipient	LCC
Study Area	750m^2

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