



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services



An Archaeological field evaluation at
Ashton Close, Beaumont Leys, Leicester
(SK 5789 0877)

Wayne Jarvis

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**An Archaeological field evaluation at
Ashton Close, Beaumont Leys,
Leicester**

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for

JC Trans Ltd.

Checked by Project Manager

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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land at Ashton Close, Beaumont Leys, Leicester (SK 5789 0877). The work was in advance of a proposed development for a warehouse unit. Seven trenches were excavated across the site area. The trenching works proved negative, with only natural deposits and occasional modern disturbance being exposed, and no finds were retrieved during the work.

The archive for this work will be deposited with Leicester City Museums with accession number A8 2015.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by JC Trans Ltd. to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land at Ashton Close, Beaumont Leys, Leicester (SK 5789 0877). This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

The site lies to the north of Mowmacre Hill. The proposals for the site are for a warehouse unit with associated office and staff facilities.

Site Location, Details and Geology

The proposed development area is located on land at Ashton Close, Beaumont Leys, Leicester (SK 5789 0877 centre, Figure 1). The site is north of Mowmacre Hill in an area of similar industrial units. The area is broadly rectangular with the elongated side running north-south along the east edge of Ashton Close.

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 almost level and lies at a height of 92m OD.

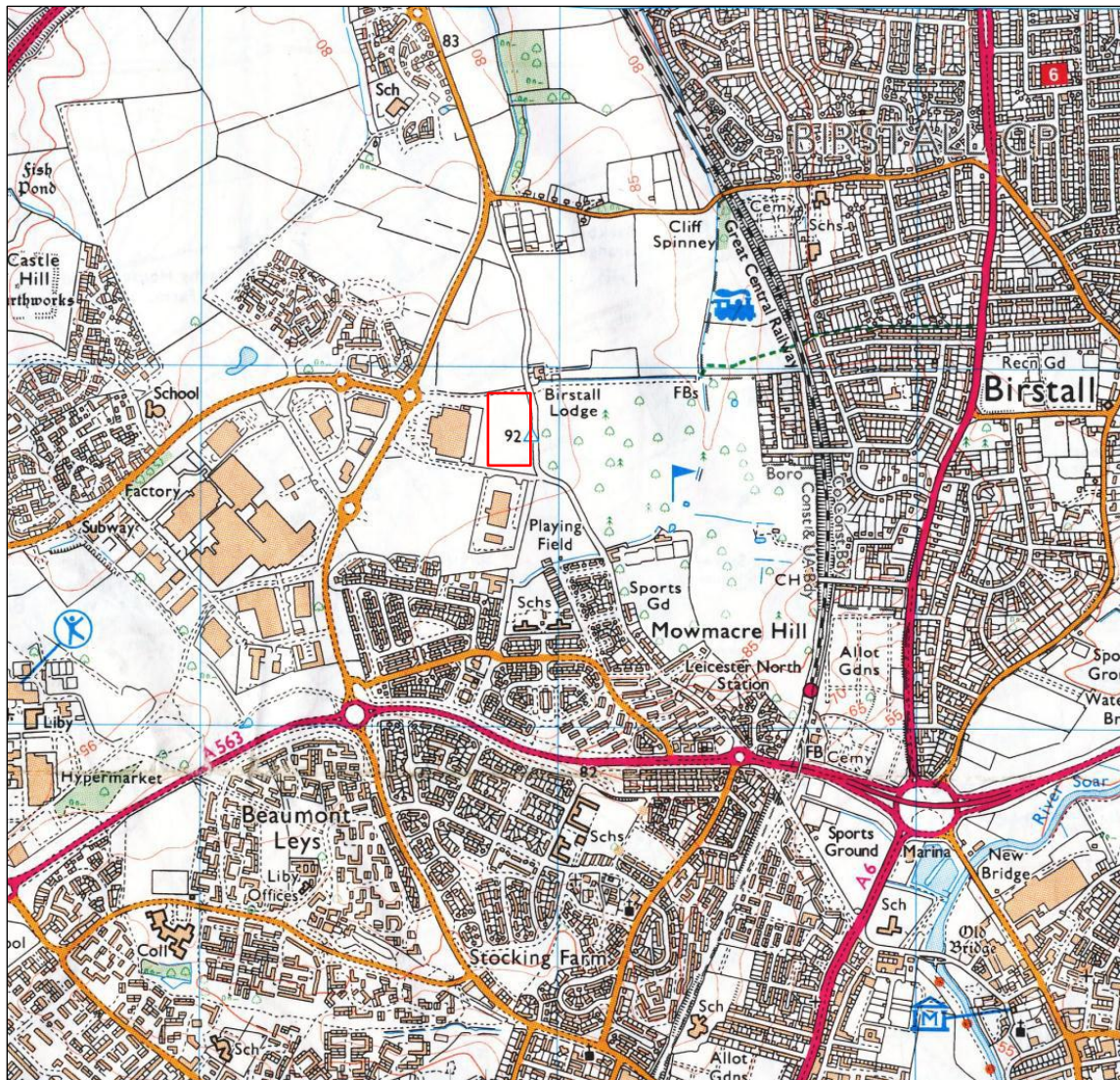


Figure 1: Location Map. Location of site indicated.

1:50 000 (Landranger) ©Crown Copyright. Licence No. 100021186.

Archaeological and Historical Background

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 (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 immediately north of the application area revealed evidence for an Iron Age settlement (Hunt 2014).

There is therefore potential for finds or deposits of prehistoric date within the development area. 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).

Archaeological Objectives

The archaeological evaluation had the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

Neolithic and Early Middle Bronze Age (Clay 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2010)

There is evidence of Neolithic-Bronze Age activity from the area and its vicinity.

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

The earlier evaluations and excavations 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.

The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- 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 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 will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014). The archaeological work followed the *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological work* (WSI) prepared by ULAS.

Prior to any machining of trial trenches general photographs of the site areas would be taken.

A c. 5% sample of the c.1.97 acre application area was proposed being the equivalent of seven 30m by 1.8m trenches (c. 340 sq. m.). The provisional trench plan showed the proposed location of the trenches, although the size and position indicated on the provisional plan would be varied due to unforeseen site constraints or the presence of archaeological deposits (see Figure 2).

Results (Table 1)

The seven trenches were excavated as per the original layout in the WSI (Figure 2). The majority of the site area had already had 250-300mm of topsoil removed, and this had been banded up along the east edge of site. The surface had not been stripped to an even level however, and had weathered after exposure. Excavation of the trenches therefore involved the removal of the weathered interface between the topsoil and natural substratum and any subsoil where it survived. Most of the trenches exposed natural deposits at very shallow depths, between 0.01m and 0.12m below current ground level (Table 1). No archaeological features were observed. Several modern intrusions were recorded including some small disturbances and several drainage and service trenches. No artefacts were recovered from any of the work.



Plate 1: Site area prior to trenching works, looking north

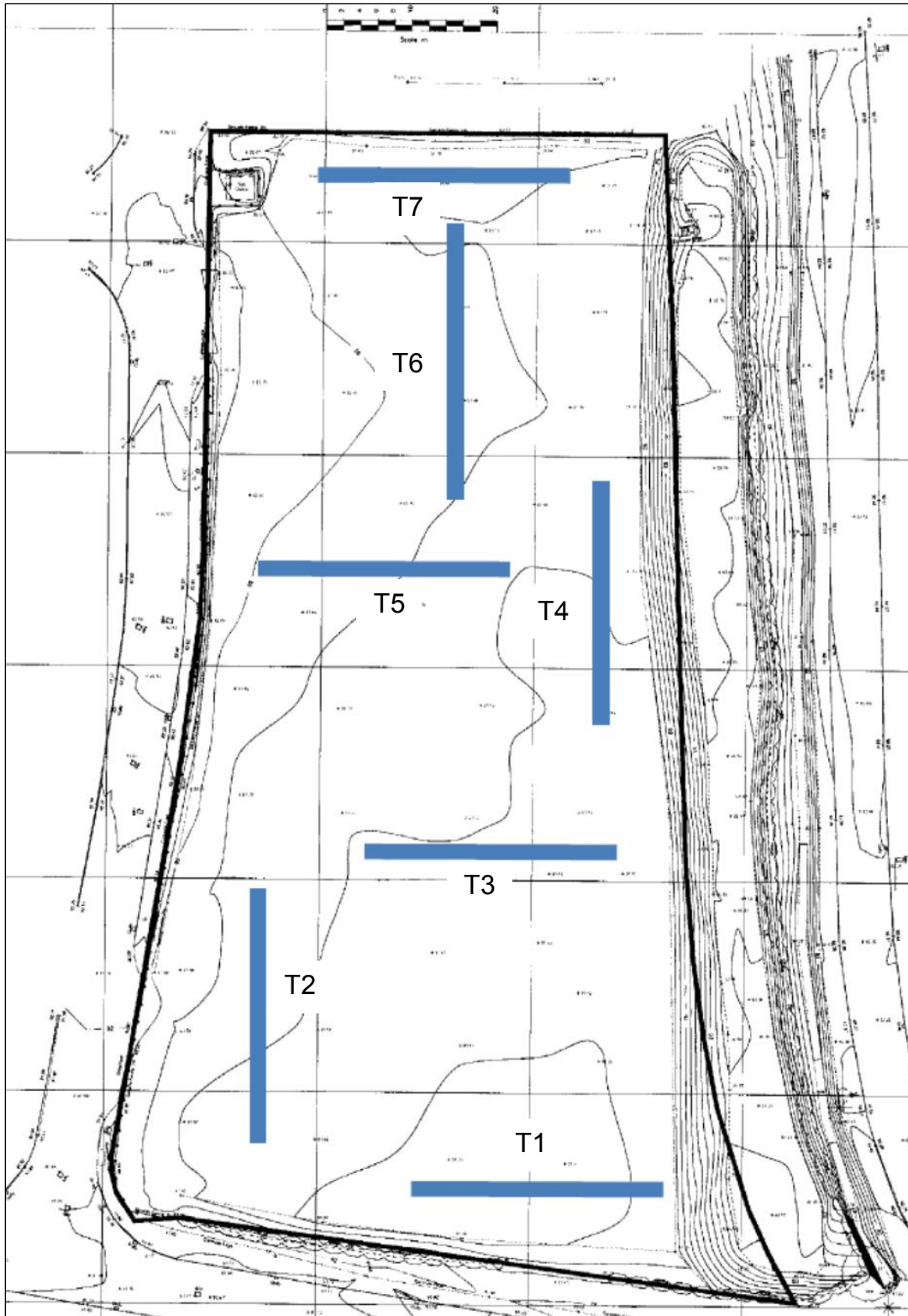


Figure 2: Trench plan (Scale at top, 20m)



Plate 2: Trenching works being carried out, Trench 7

Conclusion

The trial trenching consisted of the excavation of seven 30m trenches, and spread across the site area. These trenches did not identify any archaeological features, with only natural deposits and occasional modern disturbances being identified. No artefacts were recovered during the work either.

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Keshiv Sudera of Design Studio Architects on behalf of JC Trans Ltd. for their help and co-operation with this project. The project was monitored on behalf of the Planning Authority by Chris Wardle. The project was managed by Patrick Clay and the fieldwork was carried out by the author with assistance from Leon Hunt also of ULAS.

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.

OASIS data entry

Project Name	Ashton Close, Beaumont Leys
Project Type	Evaluation

Project Manager	P. Clay
Project Supervisor	W Jarvis
Previous/Future work	DBA/unknown
Current Land Use	Brown field
Development Type	Warehouse
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre Planning enquiry
Site Co ordinates	SK 5789 0877
Start/end dates of field work	30/03/2015
Archive Recipient	Leicester City Museums
Study Area	1.97acres

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicester City Museums with accession number A8 2015.

The archive consists of the following:

Trench Index (1 A4 page) and 7 Trench recording sheets.

1 Photo Record sheet.

1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report 2015-054).

Digital photograph contact sheets.

Digital photographs on CD.

Black and White negatives and contact sheet.

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31-03-2015

Appendix 1. Trench Details

Tr No	Co ords (SK)	Notes
1	57888 08728	E-W, Nat at .05-.11m
2	57867 08746	N-S, Nat at .04-.09m
3	57892 08765	E-W, Nat at .01-.07m
4	57904 08788	N-S, Service trench, Nat at .01-.08m
5	57880 08789	E-W, Nat at .02-.08m
6	57881 08807	N-S, Land drain, Nat at .01-.08m
7	57891 08836	E-W, Stony Nat, Nat at .02-.12m

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