



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Strip, Plan and
Sample Excavation and Watching
Brief at 24A Britannia Road,
Burbage, Leicestershire
(SP 44103 92017)**



Roger Kipling

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**An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation
and Watching Brief at 24A Britannia Road,**

Burbage, Leicestershire

(SP 44103 92017)

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For: Colmar Construction Ltd.

Approved by:

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Summary

An archaeological strip, map and sample excavation and watching brief was undertaken in October 2015 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Colmar Construction on land at 24A Britannia Road, Burbage, Leicestershire. The fieldwork was undertaken in order to mitigate the impact on the localised remains of a residential development and associated access road.

The archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation and watching brief revealed archaeological evidence in the form of ditches, a gully and post-hole. Previous archaeological fieldwork undertaken immediately south of the present development revealed evidence for ditched Romano-British field systems, and it is possible that the two undated ditches identified in the present excavation formed part of the same network.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A112.2015.

Introduction

An archaeological strip, map and record excavation and watching brief was undertaken west of Britannia Road, Burbage, Leicestershire (SP 44103 92017). Colmar Construction have been granted planning permission for the erection of two dwellings with associated access (PA 14/00115/FUL and 14/01240/FUL).

Following National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) as archaeological advisors to the planning authority required that an archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation be undertaken. All archaeological work was in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014). The LCC *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997) was also adhered to.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The development area is located west of Britannia Road, Burbage, Leicestershire (SP 44103 92017) and covers an area of c.0.17 ha. which is currently under pasture. The site slopes north-north-west down to south-south-east which appears to be the original topography.

The geology of the site are of the Salop Association which comprise “*slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged reddish fine loamy over clayey, fine loamy and clayey soils associated with fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging*” (711m: Soil Survey 1983; Sheet 3). The solid geology comprises reddish till.

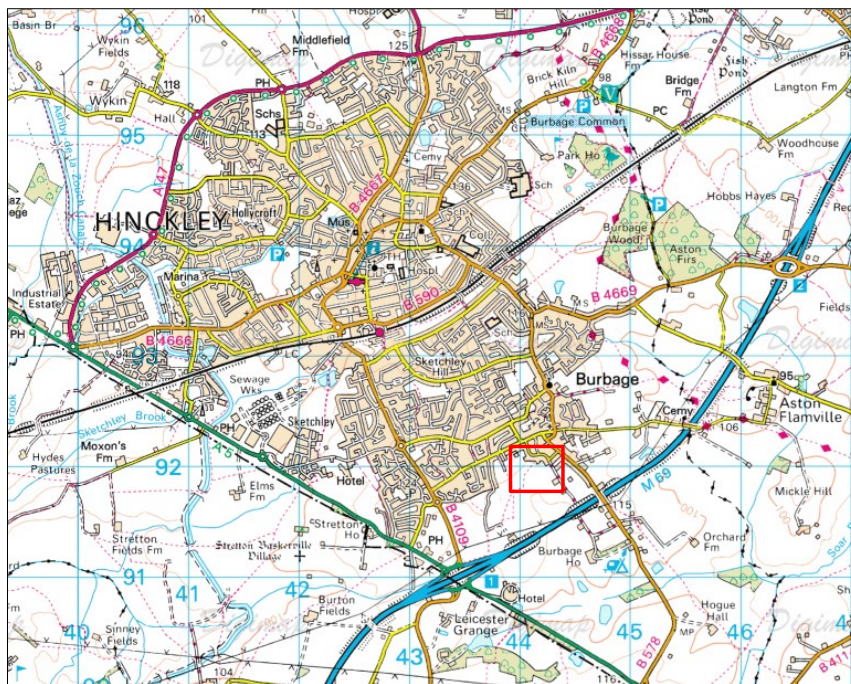


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Figure 2: Location of excavation (outlined in red)

Archaeological and Historical Background

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland records that a number of archaeological sites have been identified in the vicinity of the development area. In addition to the historic settlement core of Burbage, which contains a number of listed buildings and other post-medieval archaeological remains, there are also archaeological remains within the immediate vicinity, west of the proposed development area, including an Anglo-Saxon Brooch (HER ref MLE 6181) and twelve Roman coins (HER ref MLE 2846). Although not on the HER a ring ditch, possibly indicating the former location of a Bronze Age burial mound is located immediately to the south-east of the application area.

An archaeological desk-based assessment, geophysical survey, trial trench evaluation and strip plan and sample excavation of the area to the immediate west have been undertaken (Richards 2009; Butler 2010; Coward 2010; Higgins 2012). The geophysical survey located anomalies suggesting a possible enclosure to the north-east, medieval ridge and furrow, ferrous signals and much building debris (Butler 2010; Fig. 3). Subsequent trial trench evaluation located four areas where localised Roman deposits were present (Fig 2; Coward 2010).

In the light of the results from the evaluation further recording by strip, map and sample excavation was undertaken to mitigate the impact on the localised remains. The project revealed Roman field systems, of local significance, aligned north-east to south-west which are likely to be associated with a nearby, as yet unidentified, settlement. The archaeological work to the west therefore confirmed that there were archaeological remains within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development area, notably features of possible Roman date (Higgins 2013). Evidence of Bronze Age cremations has been located recently to the east (T. Hawtin pers.comm.)

Aims and Objectives

The general aims of the strip, map and record were as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of 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 a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire HER.

Specific evaluation aims are to:-

- Seek to establish the nature of the geophysical anomalies and to determine if they are of archaeological significance

In addition, the archaeological evaluation was deemed to have the potential to contribute to the following research aims:

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

- The development of burial practices – the area contains evidence of Bronze Age cremation burials and the scheme may uncover archaeological assets associated with these. Palaeoenvironmental evidence may provide information on agricultural practices and land use.
- *Late Iron Age (Willis 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2010)*
- There are Iron Age settlements in the vicinity of the scheme. 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 Roman Period (Taylor 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2012)*
- There are several Roman sites within the study area including field systems. The excavation may contribute to knowledge on Iron Age – Roman transitions in rural settlement, landscape and society. Artefacts may identify trade links and economy.

This specification conforms to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). It has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice and the appropriate national standards and guidelines including:

- *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991);
- *Model Briefs and Specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations* (Association of County Archaeological Officers, 1994);
- *Code of Conduct* (Institute for Archaeologists, 2010);

- *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014);
- *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Association of Local Government Officers, 2003);
- *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicestershire County Council 1997)

Methodology

Archaeological Strip, map and sample excavation and Watching Brief

Prior to the commencement of works an Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed on Details, Location and Creator forms. Following recommendations from the Principal Planning Archaeologist (PPA) of Leicestershire County Council, a programme of strip, map and sample excavation was undertaken.

The design specification for the project required the controlled supervision of overburden removal and other groundworks within the footprints of the three buildings and access road by an experienced professional archaeologist in order to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains.

Fieldwork comprised three stages; firstly a watching brief was maintained during a machine strip along the line of an access road. Secondly, a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket (c.1.2m wide) was employed in order to open two evaluation trenches, under constant archaeological supervision, within the footprints of the proposed structures. Mechanical excavation ceased at undisturbed natural deposits. Thirdly, following the discovery of archaeological remains in the first trench, two larger areas were opened by machine, targeting the footprints of the two proposed buildings in order to target further archaeology. A follow-up programme of excavation and recording was subsequently, undertaken, with the excavated areas recorded at an appropriate scale by measured drawing and photography and located to Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record, utilising black and white negative film, supplemented by high resolution digital data capture, was maintained during the course of the fieldwork and included:

- the site prior to commencement of fieldwork;
- the site during work, showing specific stages of fieldwork;

Upon completion of the evaluation trenching, the excavated areas were backfilled and loosely compacted.

Results

Two archaeological evaluation trenches totalling c.63m² were initially excavated, in addition to a controlled strip along the roadline. A further two areas totalling c.200m²

were excavated on the footprints of housing Plots 1 & 2. Excavation was undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.



Figure 3: General view north-east across development

Trench 1, located in the north-east corner of the development site, measured 25m x 1.30m x 0.58m-0.97m deep and was aligned north-east to south-west. The removal of 0.10m-0.85m of mid grey clay-loam topsoil and 0.12m-0.62m of underlying mid brown slightly sandy clay-silt subsoil revealed a pale grey brown natural sandy-clay substratum. The eastern end of the trench contained two small ditches running closely parallel to one another on a north-east to south-west alignment. Ditch [01] measured 0.17m deep, 0.48m wide and 12m+ in length, with an open U-shaped profile and a rounded base. Its companion, ditch [03], measured 0.45m+ wide, 0.30m+ deep and 6m+ long. Neither mid grey sandy-silt fill (02) & (04) produced any finds.

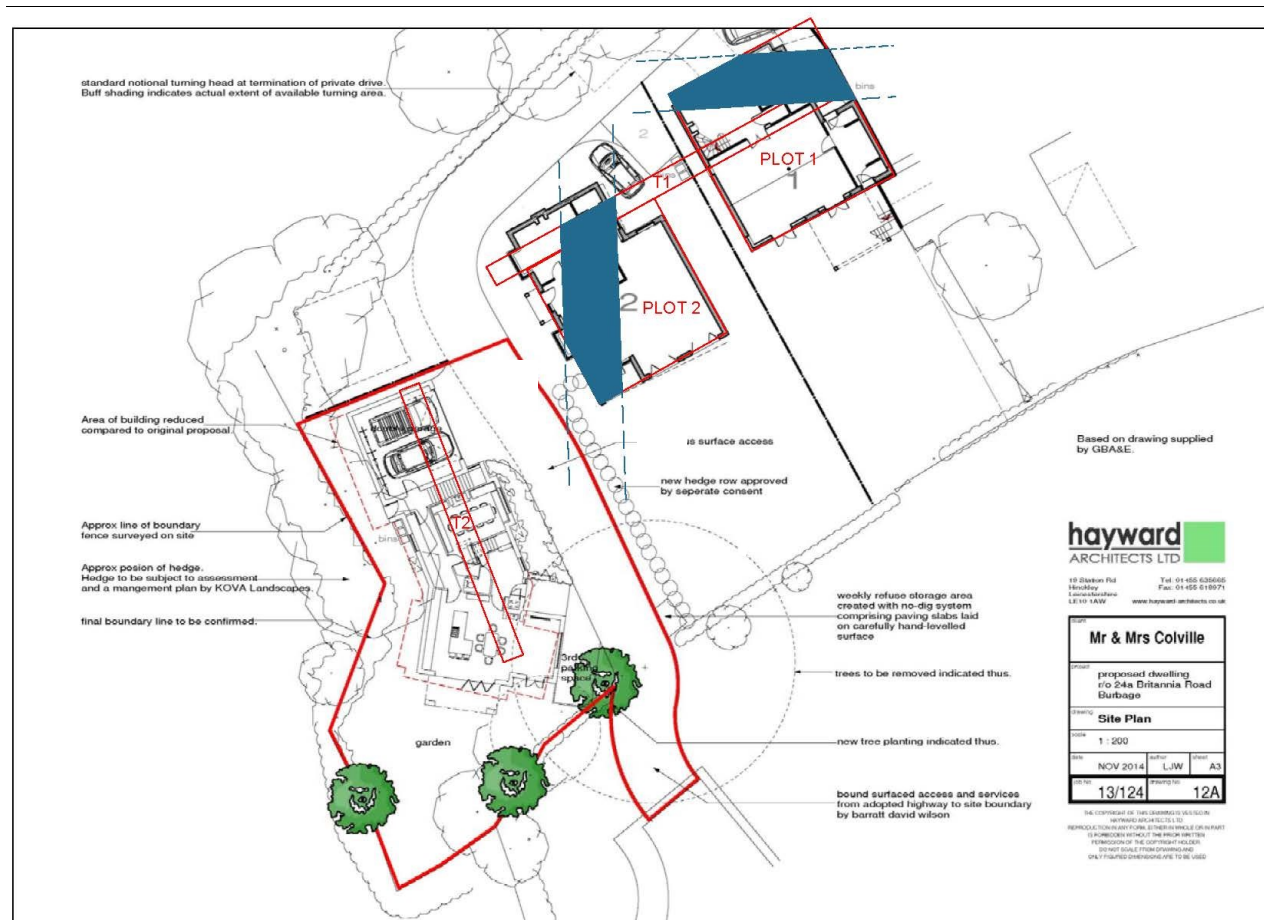


Figure 4: Development area showing area of strip map and sample excavation in relation to proposed development

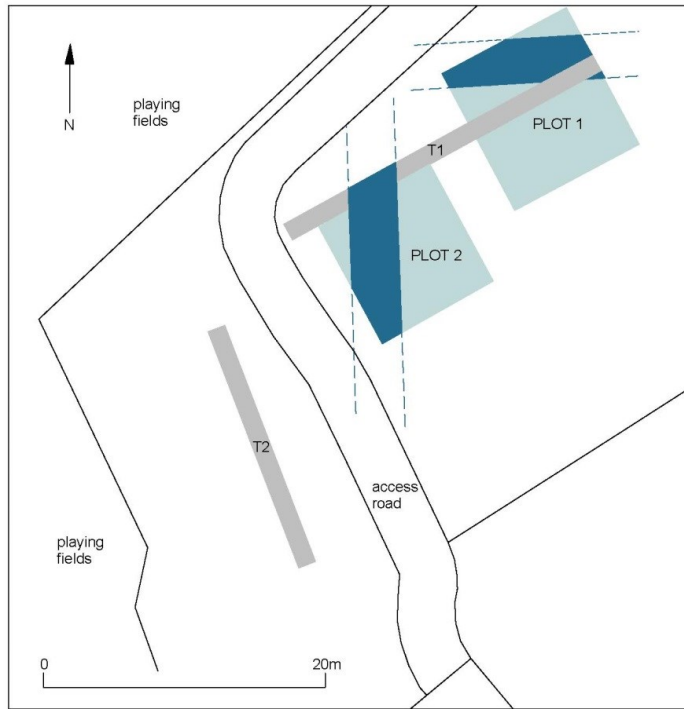


Figure 5: Development area showing archaeology (dark blue) and stripped areas (pale blue)

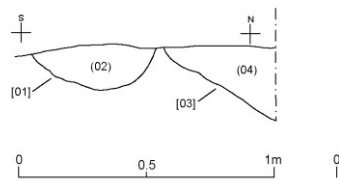
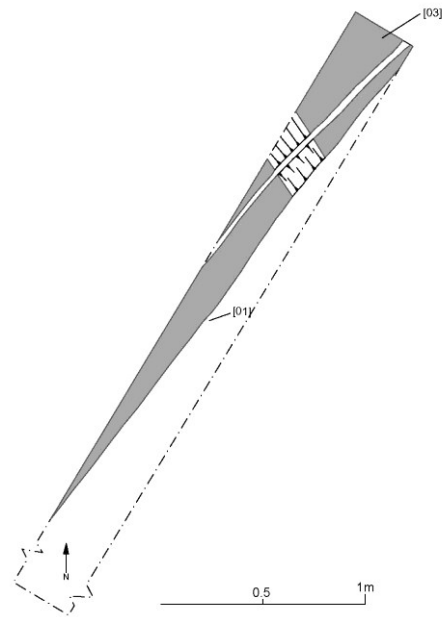


Figure 6: Trench 1 (east end); plan and section of archaeological features



Figure 7: Trench 1; ditches [01] & [03]; view west (1m scale)

The machined area was expanded to *c.*10m x 10m in order to investigate the full footprint of the proposed building. Principally, ditch [03]/[05] was revealed to be a substantial feature aligned east-west measuring 3m wide x 0.58m deep with 45° sides descending to a flattish base. An insubstantial, likely contemporary gully [07] with a slight fall to the south drained into the ditch from the north. The feature measured 1.6m+ x 0.35m wide x 0.14m deep and produced no dating material. A single undated isolated post hole [09] lay *c.*8m to the south-east.

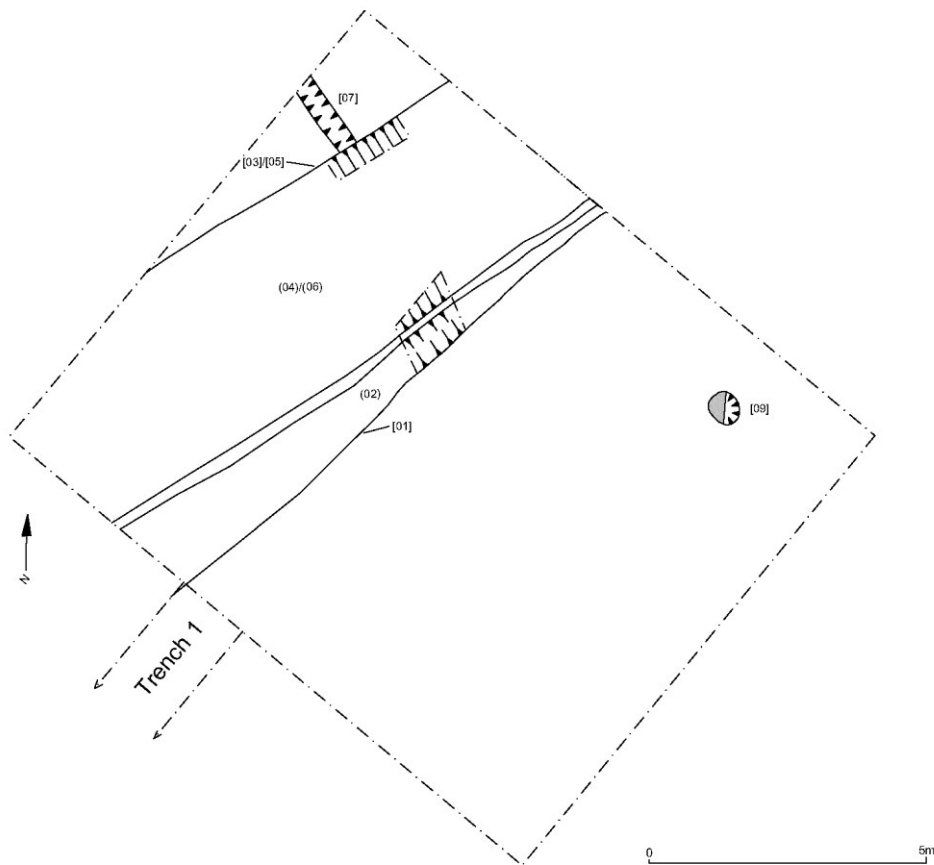


Figure 8: Plot 1 general plan



Figure 9: Ditch [05]: view north-east (1m scale)



Figure 10: Ditch [05] & gully [07] viewed north-west (1m scale)

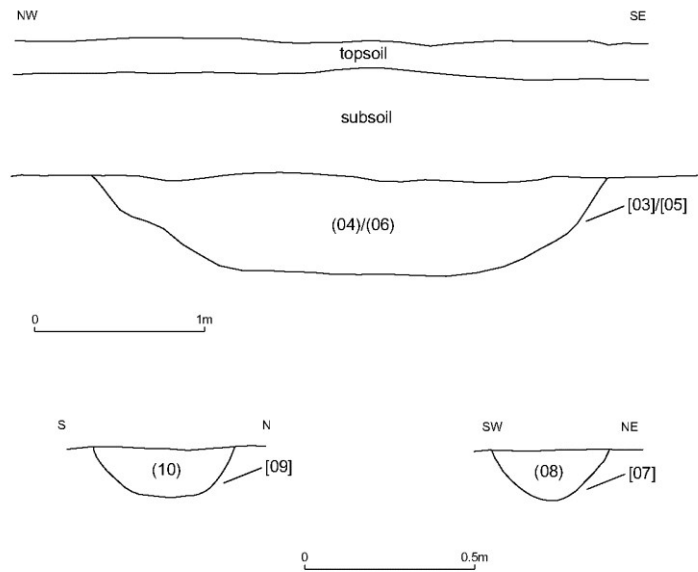


Figure 11: Plot 1: sections

A second machined area, targeting **Plot 2**, produced a second truncated ditch [11], running north-south and at right angles to [03]/[05]. The undated linear ditch measured 3m x 0.50m deep x 10m+ in length. Similarities in form and scale between the two ditches indicate that they were contemporary and likely formed elements of the same land and/or field division system.

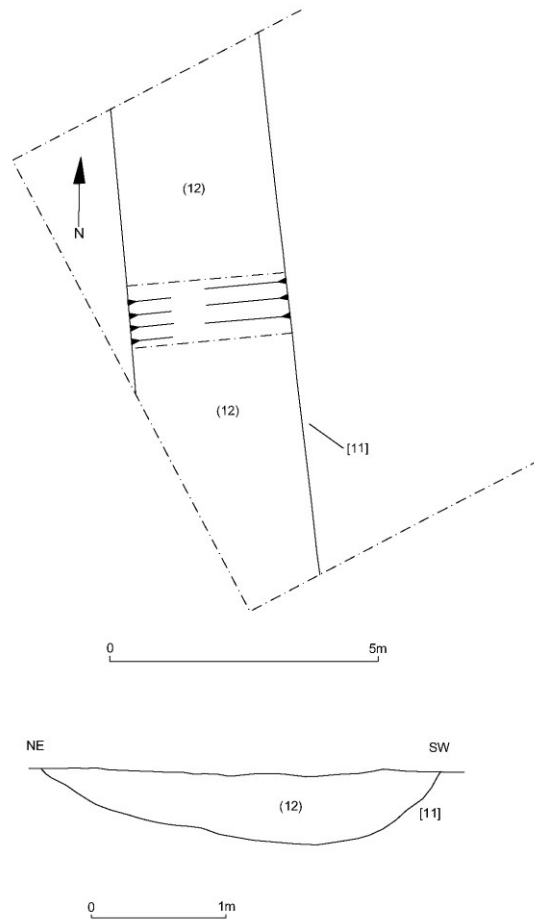


Figure 12: Plot 2: plan and sections

Comment [pnc31]: Can this be related to Fig 4. Ideally re-orientated to have No at the top



Figure 13: Ditch [11]: view south (1m scale)

Trench 2, located to the west of the site access roadline, measured 18m x 1.30m x 0.30m x 0.66m deep. The removal of 0.15m-0.26m of topsoil and 0.10m-0.40m of subsoil revealed a pale/mid grey brown slightly sandy clay natural. There were no archaeological features.

A watching brief was also undertaken during machine stripping of material along the line of the access road, consisting of removal of topsoil and subsoil to a depth of c.0.30m, followed by further material down to the top of undisturbed natural clay along a representative 0.5m wide strip along the road line. No archaeology was observed.



Figure 14: Trench 2: general view north-west (1m scale)



Figure 15: General view north-west along access road (1m scale)

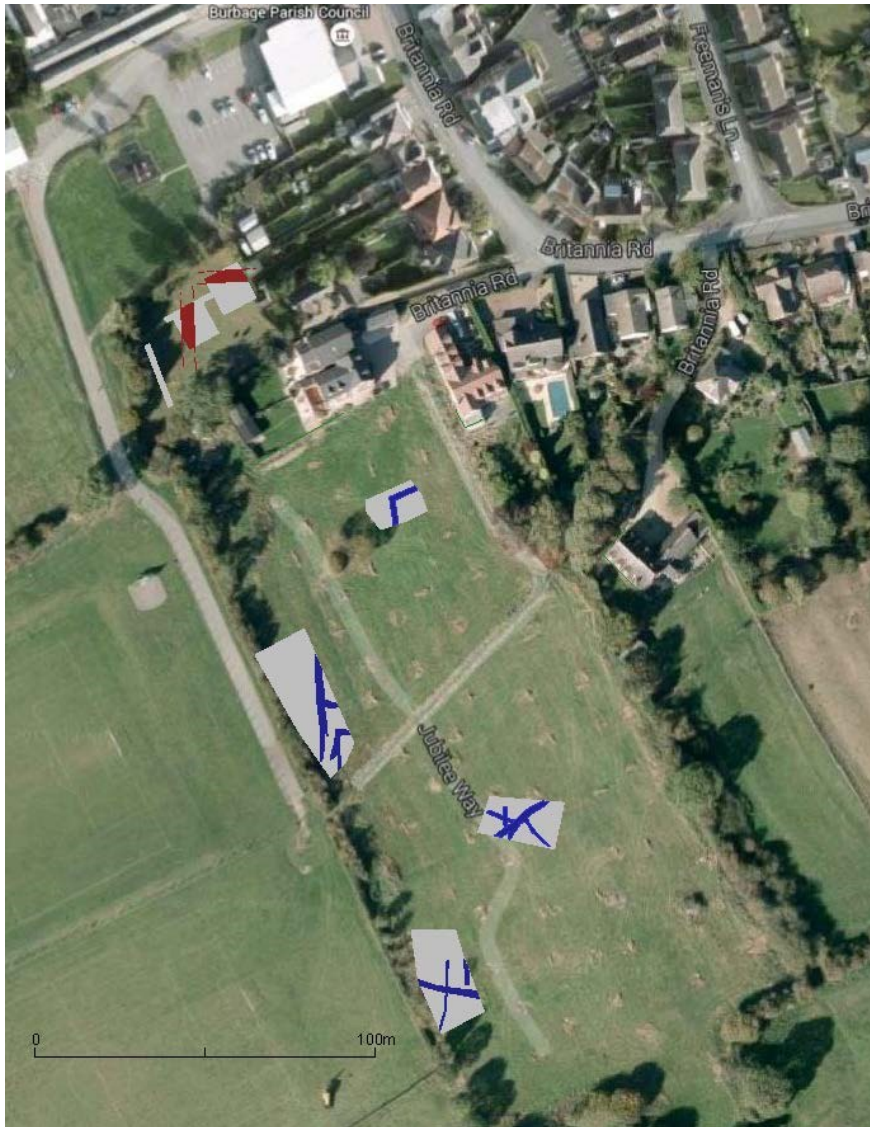


Figure 16: Archaeology (in red) in relation to results from 2013 (in blue)

Discussion and Conclusions

The archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation and watching brief on land at 24A Britannia Road, Burbage, Leicestershire, revealed limited archaeological evidence; namely ditches, a gully and post-hole. Previous archaeological fieldwork undertaken immediately south of the present development in 2013 revealed limited evidence for ditched Romano-British field systems, and it is likely that the two undated ditches identified in the present excavation formed part of the same network (Figure 16: Archaeology (in red) in relation to results from 2013 (in blue)).

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A112.2015), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service.

The paper archive consists of:

- Trench records sheets
- 1 x A3 drawing sheet
- 4 x context record sheets
- Photographic record indices
- 17 digital photographs
- Monochrome photographs
- A risk assessment form

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 of ULAS undertook the archaeological excavation and watching brief on behalf of Colmar Construction Ltd. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

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Oasis Information

Project Name	24A Britannia Road, Burbage, Leicestershire
Project Type	Archaeological strip, plan and sample and watching brief
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Development
Current Land Use	Agricultural/paddock
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Post-determination
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 44103 92017
Start/end dates of field work	October 2015
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	0.17ha.

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