



**An Archaeological Evaluation at the  
Former Ambulance Station,  
Leicester Road,  
Melton Mowbray,  
Leicestershire.**

**NGR: SK 74693 18825**

Andrew Hyam



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## **An Archaeological Evaluation at the former Ambulance Station, Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.**

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### **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at the former Ambulance Station, Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire between the 13th and 15th of July 2016. The work was carried out in advance of the demolition of existing buildings on site and the construction of a new superstore and car park.*

*Six evaluation trenches were excavated to the north and south of the current buildings. No archaeological features or deposits were found during the evaluation work. Much of the site appears to have been landscaped and truncated during the creation of the current car park and buildings. Numerous live services also appear to have disturbed much of the area.*

*The report will be archived with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Number X.A85.2016*

### **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 field evaluation at the former Ambulance Station, Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. As part of the planning permission (PA: 15/00476/FUL) the Principal Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, requested that an archaeological field evaluation take place in order to provide information on the character and extent of any buried archaeological remains which may exist on the site. Planning permission has been granted for the demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of a Class A1 food retail store with associated access, car parking and landscaping with access to the adjacent site known as Site B.

### **Background**

Melton Mowbray is located approximately 20km to the north-east of Leicester and approximately the same distance to the south-east of Nottingham (Fig. 1). The proposed development site lies approximately 1km to the west of the town centre on the south-eastern side of Leicester Road. At the time of the evaluation the proposed development site consisted of a number of buildings, including an Ambulance Station, a County Council building and a day care centre. An access road leads from Leicester Road into

areas for car parking surrounded by small grass verges. To the east of the buildings is a large garden area covered in grass and, for the purposes of this work, identified as Site B (Fig. 2). To the south-west of the garden lies the possible post-medieval windmill mound known as The Mount. The development area covers an area of approximately 7500m<sup>2</sup> and is at a height of around 71m above OD. A recently completed housing estate runs around the south-eastern and south-western site boundaries. A number of light industrial workshops and adapted buildings line the north side of Leicester Road.

An archaeological desk-based assessment produced in 2012 for Leicestershire County Council Property Services identified that there was a moderate to high potential for prehistoric and medieval remains to be found within the site (Hunt 2012). In 2001 ULAS undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation work to the south and west of the development site. The evaluation produced evidence of Mesolithic and Neolithic activity along with possible Bronze Age, Iron Age and early Roman settlement activity (Finn 2001; Harvey 2007). Following on from this evaluation ULAS carried out further archaeological work in 2010 revealing similar patterns of activity (Harvey 2010). Of particular significance was a possible Neolithic mortuary enclosure (Harvey 2011).

At the time of this evaluation all of the buildings had been out of use for a number of months although none appeared to be suffering from deterioration or vandalism. The surrounding roads and car parks were also in a reasonable state of repair. Some fly-tipping had taken place over the southern boundary fence from the recently built housing estate (Figs 3 and 4).

Historic map evidence indicates that, at least during the later post-medieval period, the site has been part of the fields surrounding the town. The buildings presently on site appear to date to the late 1960s or early 1970s. The entire complex of buildings and roads seems to have been built at, or nearly at, the same time. The present buildings will be demolished and replaced by a purpose-built supermarket and car park as shown in Figure 5 below. It is not clear how much the footprint of the existing buildings will have damaged any potential underlying archaeological deposits. None of the buildings appear to be cellared.

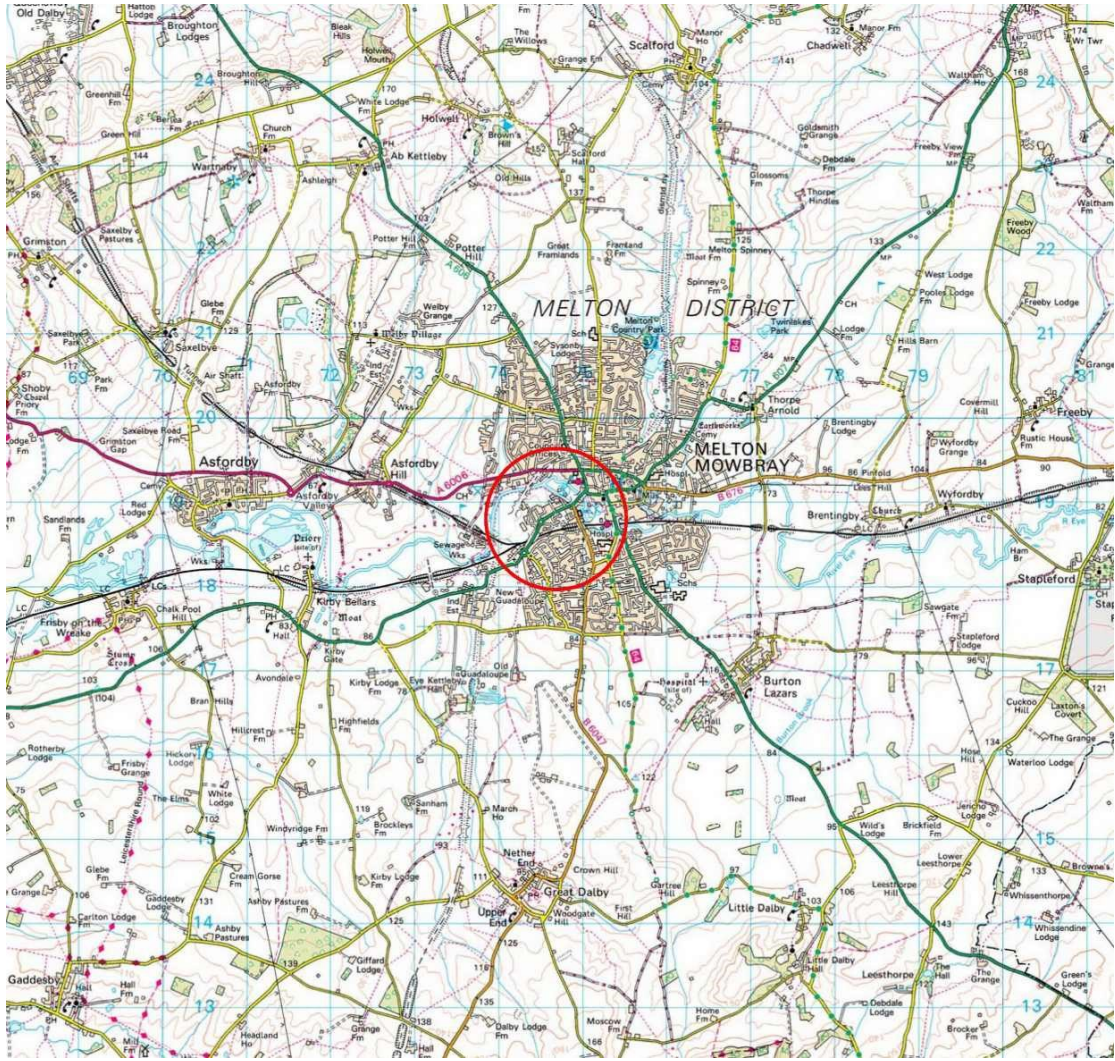


Figure 1 Site location  
Supplied by Client





Figure 2 Site layout  
Red outline shows evaluation area. Blue outline shows Site B which was not evaluated.  
Plan supplied by Client



Figure 3 Site seen from Leicester Road  
Looking south-west



Figure 4 Rear of site  
Looking north-west

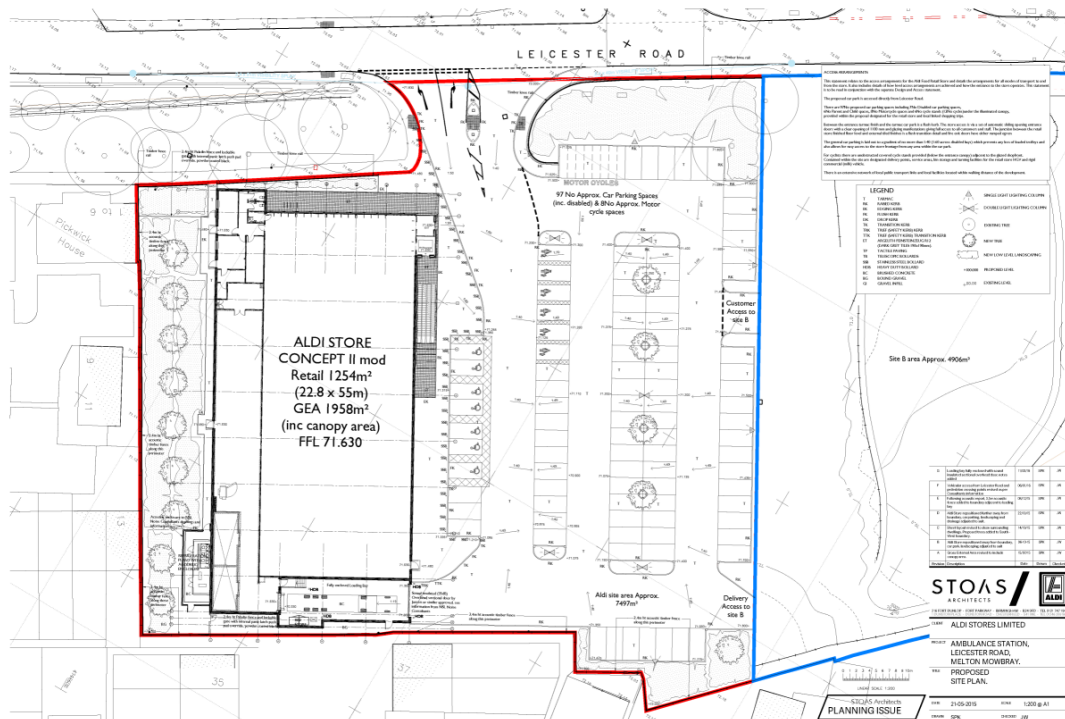


Figure 5 Proposed site layout  
Supplied by Client



## Objectives

The archaeological objectives for the evaluation are discussed in detail in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved by the Principal Planning Archaeologist. 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 any archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development. This includes the characterisation of the site within the broader landscape, any activities identified on the site and changes in land-use over time.

## Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (2014). The Leicestershire County Council *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* was adhered to. The general methodology for archaeological evaluations is shown in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Evaluation Work: The Former Ambulance Station, Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire* (hereafter the WSI).

The WSI specified six 30m long trenches to be placed around the current buildings to ensure an even coverage of the area and to provide a 4.8% sample of the site. Consultation of the available service plans forced a revision of the trench layout and a slight reduction in the trench lengths. An on-site CAT-scan at the time of the evaluation revealed more live services and also that the locations of the known services were not necessarily as shown on the service plans. The services and revised trench locations are shown in Figure 6.

All of the trenches were located within areas of tarmac road or car park. Each trench required the use of a concrete breaker to break through the tarmac and the broken debris was removed. Each trench was then CAT-scanned for a second time to ensure that no services would be hit. Make-up, overburden and subsoil were then removed in spits under archaeological supervision until the undisturbed natural substrata was reached.

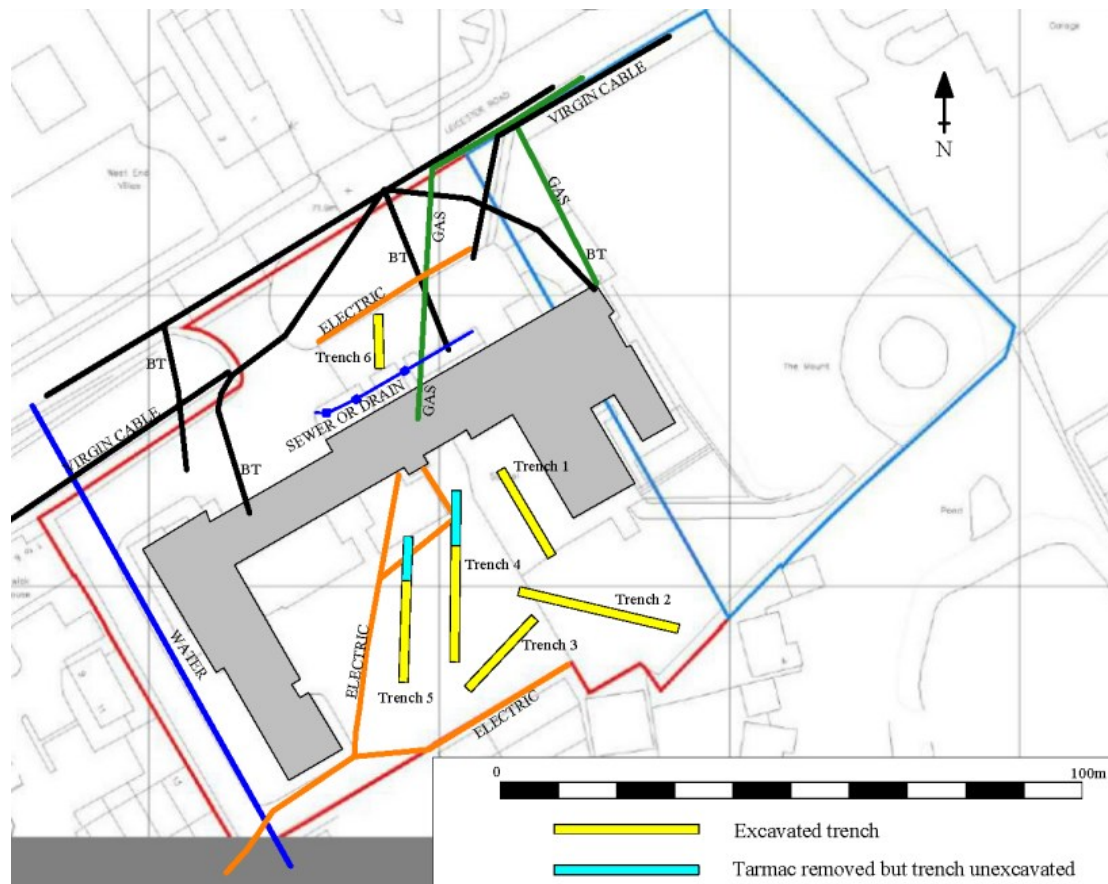


Figure 6 Trench locations and live services

## Results

As noted, the presence of live electricity, water, BT, cable and gas services necessitated the relocation and shortening of all of the evaluation trenches. Trenches were numbered in the order of their excavation. The trench lengths and depths are shown in Appendix 1.

### *Trench 1*

Trench 1 was located within the angle of the day care centre and the rear of the ambulance station (Fig. 6). It was excavated on a north-west to south-east alignment and had a total length of 17.3m. Beneath the tarmac layer was a thick layer of mill-waste stone and hard-core giving a total depth between 0.4m and 0.5m. Removal of these modern layers exposed the natural mid greyish brown sandy clay substratum (Fig. 7). There was no evidence of any topsoil or subsoil. Running along the centre of the trench were six rectangular 0.4m wide post-holes, five of which were full of modern building debris. The sixth post-hole still contained its concrete base showing that all were very modern. Other modern disturbances were present in the centre of the trench.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.



Figure 7 Trench 1

Looking south-east. 0.5m scale. Modern post holes seen as areas of stone either side of scale and extending down the length of the trench

### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 was placed in the south-eastern corner of the site partially on the tarmac and extending 3m into a large turf bank to the south-east. The trench was laid out on a west-south-west to east-north-east alignment and was 28.2m long. Excavation of the bank showed it to consist almost entirely of clean mid grey brown silty-sand with a thickness of 0.6m. Beneath this was a 0.2m thick layer of mid-red brown sandy-clay subsoil. Elsewhere along the trench the tarmac car park surface had been laid on a bed of sand and gravel with building rubble mixed in. Between 0.2m and 0.12m of subsoil survived beneath this area. The natural substratum consisted of mid-orange brown clay-sand with occasional gravel pockets (Fig. 8). A large area of apparently contaminated natural substratum smelling strongly of diesel was encountered half way along the trench. Beneath the car park the trench depth varied between 0.4m and 0.45m increasing to 0.95m beneath the bank material.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.





Figure 8 Trench 2

Looking south-west. 1m scale. The dark patch is the contaminated area

### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 was placed towards the southern boundary of the site but had to be shortened due to the presence of a live cable running along the edge of the car park. The trench followed a north-north-east to south-south-west alignment and was 16.8m long. Removal of the tarmac layer exposed a make-up and rubble layer over a disturbed mid red brown subsoil which contained a large amount of brick rubble. Between 0.55m and 0.6m below the car park surface was the natural substratum consisting of a mid-orange brown clay-sand (Fig. 9).

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.





Figure 9 Trench 3  
Looking south-west. 1m scale

#### *Trench 4*

Trench 4 was placed towards the eastern edge of the main car park on a north to south alignment. A total length of 29.5m of tarmac was removed but when the trench area was CAT-scanned for a second time a live cable was detected near to the north end. This area was therefore left unexcavated leaving a 19.6m long excavated trench (see Fig. 6). Removal of the tarmac revealed a thick layer of bricks creating a domed surface for the car park to allow water runoff. Below the bricks was a layer of make-up and rubble extending down to the natural substratum between 0.4m and 0.65 below present ground surface (Fig. 10).

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.



Figure 10 Trench 4  
Looking north. 1m scale

### *Trench 5*

Trench 5 was placed on a parallel alignment to the west of Trench 4. Once again the removal of the tarmac revealed a live cable running across the northern end of the trench. It had been intended to extend this trench northwards into a grass area beyond the tarmac but the presence of at least two live cables prevented this. The eventual excavated trench length was 16m. The same layering of brick rubble over make-up on top of the natural substratum observed in Trench 4 was present in this trench although there was a trace of disturbed subsoil 5m from the southern end of the trench (Fig. 11). The trench depth from surface down to natural varied between 0.45m and 0.70m.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.





Figure 11 Trench 5  
Looking north. 1m scale

### *Trench 6*

Trench 6 was placed on the northern side of the ambulance station across the perimeter roadway on a north to south alignment. The original intention was to run the trench into the grass verge or to run along the road on a north-east to south-west alignment but a live cable was detected running along the edge of the verge and roadway and a probable sewer or drain was thought to run across the road to the west. The main gas supply ran across the road to the east. The tarmac was removed which appeared to be laid on a thin bed of concrete. Layers of rubble and make-up were removed to expose a thin layer of mid-red brown sandy clay subsoil approximately 0.07m thick which may be redeposited material. A brick-built culvert made with later 20th century bricks was encountered at the northern end of the trench. This was left in-situ as it may contain services. A thicker band of concrete below the curb on the southern side of the trench was also left in place as it was getting quite close to the drain or sewer. The natural substratum consisted of mid-yellowish brown clayish sand (Fig. 12).

No archaeological features or deposits were present in this trench.



Figure 12 Trench 6  
Looking north-west. 1m scale. Brick structure in top left corner

### Discussion

No archaeological features or deposits were present within any of the evaluation trenches. The presence of make-up layers and rubble extending down to the top of the natural substratum and the almost complete absence of subsoil suggests that much of the site was stripped and possibly levelled in preparation for the buildings and car park. It is not clear how much of the natural substratum may have been removed during this work. The large bank of topsoil in the south-eastern corner of the site may be the result of the initial topsoil strip which was dumped and landscaped in this corner.

The presence of so many services prevented an even distribution of the evaluation trenches although it seems likely that any spaces between the services would have been truncated. Despite being only one storey high it is probable that the existing buildings will have cut into the natural substratum and hence into any features or deposits which may have been present.



## Archive

The archive, to be deposited with Leicestershire Museums under Accession Number X.A85.2016, consists of:

This report,  
6 ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheets,  
1 Photographic record sheet,  
2 A4 contact sheets of the digital photographs taken during the work,  
1 CD with 51 digital photographs

## 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.

## Bibliography

- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014. *Codes of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*.
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18/07/2016

### **Appendix 1 Trench measurements**

<b>Trench</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Maximum depth</b>	<b>Minimum depth</b>
1	17.3	0.50	0.30
2	28.2	0.95	0.40
3	16.8	0.75	0.50
4	29.5	0.65	0.40
5	25.0	0.70	0.45
6	8.1	0.82	0.80

All trenches were 1.6m wide

## Appendix 2 OASIS Information

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universil-xxxx		
	<b>Project Name</b>	Evaluation at the former ambulance station, Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	13-07-2016 - 15-07-2016		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No/ Not known		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Former local authority buildings		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Retail		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition		
	<b>Planning Ref.</b>	15/00476/FUL		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE13 0DA		
	<b>Study Area</b>	0.75ha		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 74693 18825		
	<b>Height OD</b>	71m OD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Dr Patrick Clay		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	A Hyam		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Developer / ALDI Stores		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	NA	LCC MusService	LCCMusService
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>		XA85.2016	XA85.2016
	<b>Contents</b>		Photos	Trench records Field Notes
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	<b>Title</b>	An Archaeological evaluation at the former Ambulance Station, Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire		
	<b>Author</b>	A Hyam		
	<b>Other bibliographic details</b>	ULAS Report No 2016-114		
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