UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
Archaeological Services

An archaeological field evaluation at land south of Hunts Lane, Desford, Leicestershire

NGR SK 47022 03085

Adam Clapton

ULAS Report No 2016-156

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for

Bellway Homes East Midlands Ltd

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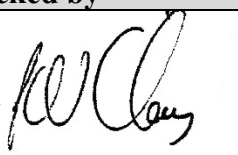
2016-156	**Patrick Clay** 	**18.11.2016**

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Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land south of Hunts Lane, Desford, Leicestershire (SK 47022 03085).

The work was commissioned by Bellway Homes East Midlands Ltd advance of the development of the site for new housing. A geophysical survey has been undertaken (Butler 2010) which appeared inconclusive and an evaluation by trial trenching by Wessex Archaeology of the field to the north-east located strip field system furrows, a sherd of Roman pottery and a fragment of daub.

Five trenches were placed within the proposed development area; however none of the trenches revealed any archaeological deposits.

The archive for the work will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with the accession number X.A130.2016.

Introduction

Planning permission has been granted to Bellway Homes East Midlands Ltd for new residential development on land to the south of Hunts Lane, Desford, Leicestershire, NGR SK 47022 03085 (P.A 14/00816/FUL).

This report represents the programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken in November 2016. It follows an archaeological desk-based assessment (Bourn 2010) and geophysical survey (Butler 2010) and adhered to a strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (hereinafter WSI; ULAS 2016).

The work involved the machine excavation of five trial trenches in order to provide a *c.*2% of the area where it was proposed to construct new residential dwellings. The proposed trench plan suggested six trial trenches measuring a total of 180m in length. across the development area, but site constraints meant that only five trenches could be excavated measuring 156m in total across the proposed development area.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG March 2012). 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).

Location and Geology

The village of Desford lies 7 miles west of the city of Leicester (Figure 1). The proposed development site is located to the south-west of the village centre; south of Hunts Lane Leicestershire (SK 47022 03085).

The application area covers an area of *c.* 1.6 hectares and currently comprises of overgrown arable fields. The site is on relatively flat land at a height of *c*. 132m OD (figure 2).

The Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates the underlying geology is Mid Pleistocene Glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits.

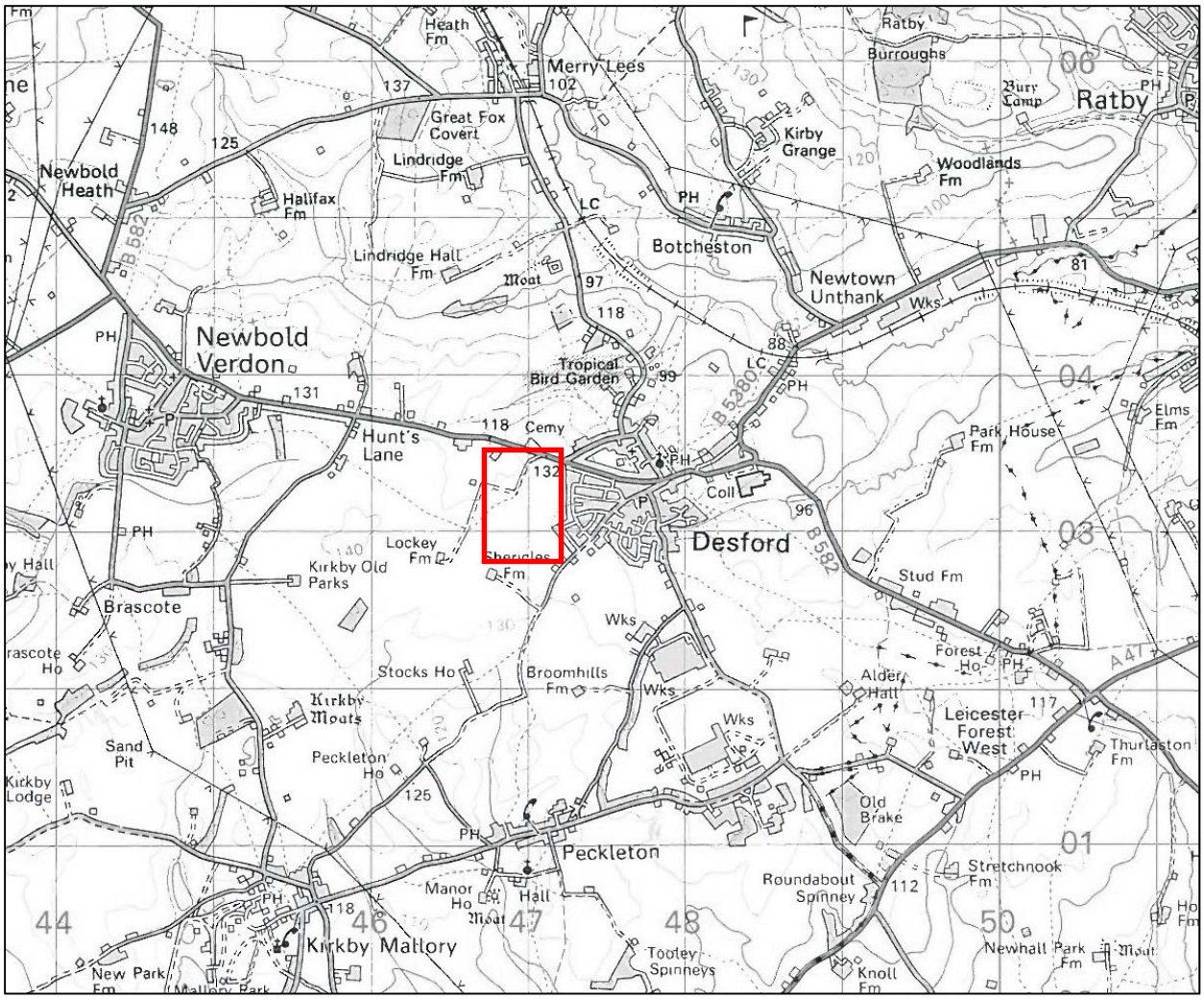

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Aerial view of Site

Archaeological and Historical Background

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, of the area has been prepared (Bourn 2010). Examination of data in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record and various published sources for a 1km radius of the site, indicates that the majority of heritage assets in the general vicinity of the site are in and around the historic core of Desford. There are Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) records of Roman finds nearby and an Iron Age enclosure to the south-west A subsequent geophysical survey (Butler 2010) was inconclusive. Evaluation by trial trenching by Wessex Archaeology of Phase 1 of the development in the field to the north-east located strip field system furrows, a sherd of Roman pottery and a fragment of daub (T. Hawtin pers.comm). There are no archaeological assets recorded within the development site.

Archaeological Objectives

The general aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- To inform a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains
- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire HER.

The results of the evaluation will enable reasoned and informed recommendations to be made to the local planning authority and, if appropriate, a suitable mitigation strategy for the proposed development to be formulated.

All work 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* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014);
- *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);*

Methodology

Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority requested an archaeological field evaluation to identify and record any archaeological remains of significance and as a consequence a programme of evaluation trenching was undertaken.

Six trenches were proposed, providing a 2% sample of the area. Due to site constraints, five trenches were excavated of variable lengths (detailed in trench descriptions) all 1.6m in width.

On arrival at the development site the area showed signs of significant machine rutting and modern disturbance, mainly due to building works ongoing immediately to the east (Figure 3) The proposed trench immediately to the west of the compound could not be excavated due to the presence of a large soil storage bund which extended south also meaning trench 1 had to be placed further south (Figure 4). Similar smaller soil storage bunds were also present on other parts of the site as well as the installation of a balancing pond in the south-east corner of the development area

Figure 3: Development site on arrival looking west

Figure 4: Large storage bund to the west of the site compound

Trench locations are shown in figure 5 and 6.

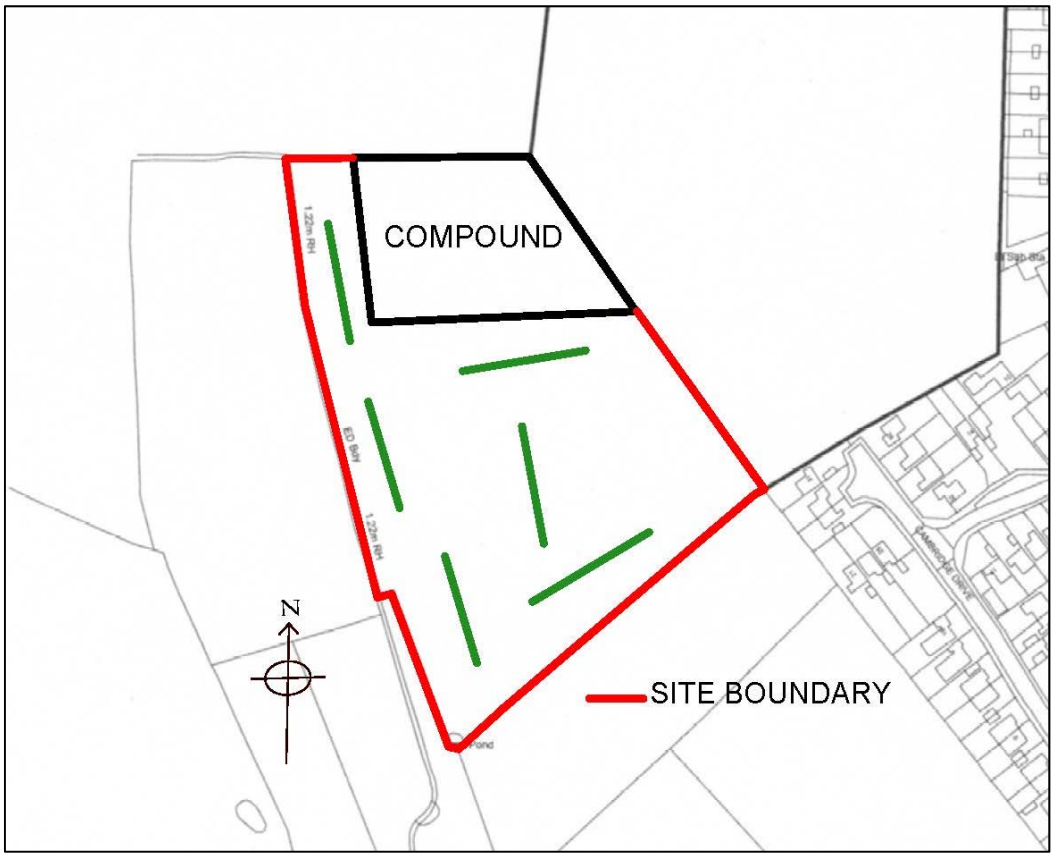

Figure 5: Proposed trench locations

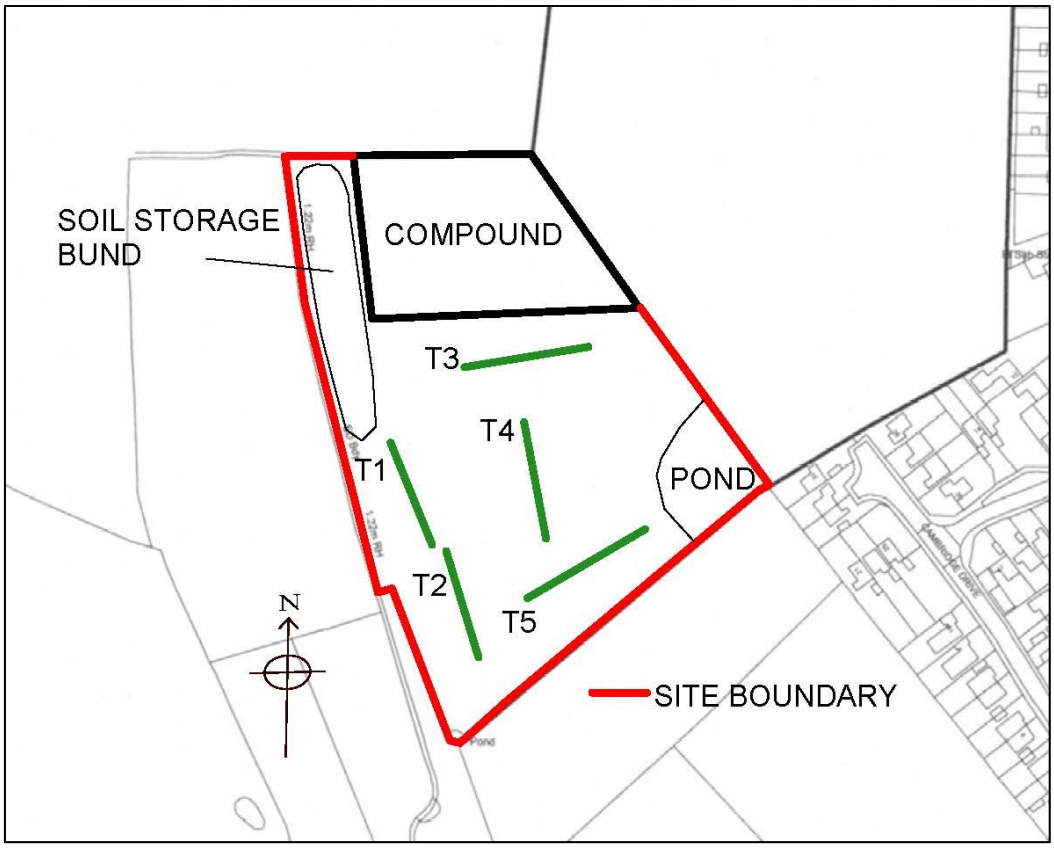

Figure 6: Actual trench locations

Topsoil and subsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (*c*.1.6m wide), under archaeological supervision. The spoil generated during the evaluation was mounded away from the edges of each trench. Topsoil and subsoil was stored separately. Mechanical excavation ceased at undisturbed natural deposits. The trenches were recorded at an appropriate scale by measured drawing and photography and were GPS-located to Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record, utilising 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 trenches were backfilled and loosely compacted.

Results

Five trenches were excavated across the area of proposed development. Unless otherwise stated, the topsoil consisted of loose, mid greyish brown sandy-silt loam with frequent building rubble and occasional sub rounded stone inclusions, below which mid-greyish brown sandy-silt friable subsoil with occasional sub rounded stones was present. The natural subsoil varied across the development area and is detailed in each trench.

All measurements were taken from the top of the trench.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located towards the west edge of the development area just to the south of the large storage bund (figure 7). The natural sub stratum consisted of pale orange silty-sand with frequent rounded stone inclusions, along with some patches of pale greyish brown sands.

Length-30.1m

Width-1.6m

Interval	N 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m S
Topsoil Depth	0.23m	0.22m	0.20m	0.26m	0.21m	0.14m	0.14m
Subsoil Depth	0.30m	0.28m	0.28m	0.30m	0.29m	0.27m	0.28m
Top of natural substratum	0.53m	0.50m	0.48m	0.56m	0.50m	0.41m	0.42m
Base of trench	0.54m	0.51m	0.48m	0.56m	0.51m	0.41m	0.42m

Two land drains were seen running north east-south west across the trench. No archaeological features were present.

Figure 7: Trench 1 looking south

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located towards the south-western edge of the development area just to the south of Trench 1 (figure 8). Its proximity to the site boundary and the position of an existing soil storage bund meant this trench could only be excavated to 24m in length. The natural substratum consisted of pale orange silty-sand with frequent rounded stone inclusions, along with some small patches of yellowish brown clay.

Length-24m

Width-1.6m

Interval	S 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	24m N
Topsoil Depth	0.10m	0.11m	Modern disturbance	0.17m	0.16m	0.10m
Subsoil Depth	0.20m	0.20m	Modern disturbance	0.23m	0.21m	0.21m

Top of natural substratum	0.30m	0.31m	0.36m	0.40m	0.37m	0.31m
Base of trench	0.31m	0.31m	0.36m	0.40m	0.38m	0.31m

A single land drain running north-east to south-west across the trench was recorded. Also an area of modern disturbance consisting of sand and modern building debris was recorded truncating the natural substratum at 10m from the south end of the trench.

No archaeological features were present.

Figure 8: Trench 2 looking south

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located just to the south of the existing site compound on an east-west alignment (Figure 9). The natural substratum consisted of pale orange silty-sand with frequent rounded stone inclusions, along with some patches of pale greyish brown sands.

Length-33.2m
Width-1.6m

Interval	SW 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m NE
Topsoil Depth	0.05m	0.10m	0.12m	0.13m	0.11m	0.12m	0.04m
Subsoil Depth	0.25m	0.21m	0.24m	0.21m	0.20m	0.20m	0.20m
Top of natural substratum	0.30m	0.31m	0.36m	0.34m	0.31m	0.32m	0.24m
Base of trench	0.32m	0.31m	0.36m	0.35m	0.32m	0.33m	0.25m

The immediate area surrounding trench 3 showed significant wheel rutting with evidence of modern debris and truncation.

No archaeological features were present.

Figure 9: Trench 3 looking north

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located in the centre of the development area on a north-south alignment (Figure 10). The natural substratum consisted of pale orange silty-sand with frequent rounded stone inclusions, along with some patches of pale greyish brown sands.

Length-31.5m

Width-1.6m

Interval	S 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m N
Topsoil Depth	0.25m	0.15m	0.07m	0.12m	0.13m	0.10m	0.19m
Subsoil Depth	0.24m	0.20m	0.10m	0.19m	0.21m	0.19m	0.25m

Top of natural substratum	0.49m	0.35m	0.17m	0.31m	0.34m	0.29m	0.44m
Base of trench	0.50m	0.36m	0.18m	0.32m	0.35m	0.30m	0.44m

The immediate area surrounding trench 4 also showed significant wheel rutting with evidence of modern debris and truncation.

No archaeological features were present.

Figure 10: Trench 4 looking north

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located close to the southern boundary of the development area between an existing balancing pond to the east and a soil storage bund to the west (figure 11). The natural

substratum consisted of pale orange silty-sand with frequent rounded stone inclusions, along with some patches of pale greyish brown sands.

Length-37.5m

Width-1.6m

Interval	E 0m	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m	37.5m W
Topsoil Depth	0.16m	0.19m	0.21m	0.24m	0.20m	0.24m	0.22m	0.21m
Subsoil Depth	0.29m	0.22m	0.22m	0.26m	0.21m	0.23m	0.24m	0.24m
Top of natural substratum	0.45m	0.41m	0.43m	0.50m	0.41m	0.47m	0.46m	0.45m
Base of trench	0.45m	0.41m	0.43m	0.51m	0.41m	0.48m	0.46m	0.45m

A single land drain running north east-south west across the trench was recorded. No archaeological features were present.

Figure 11: Trench 5 looking north

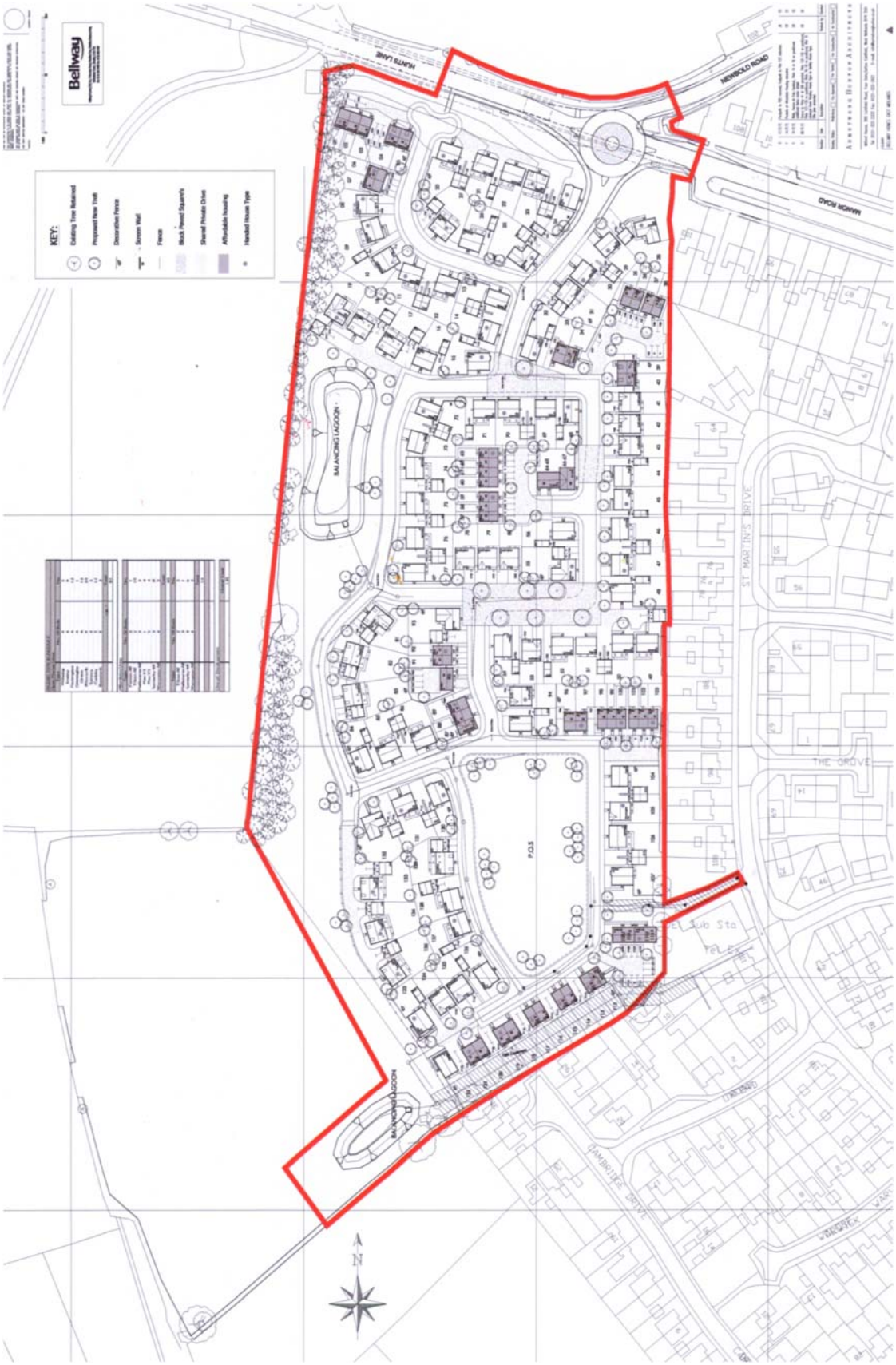

Figure 12: Plan of the proposed development

Conclusion

Despite the potential for the presence of archaeology from the Iron Age and Roman period no archaeological features were observed within any of the evaluation trenches. Post-medieval/modern ceramic field drains were observed in trenches 1, 2 and 5 suggesting the land has been used for agricultural purposes from this period. Trench 2 also showed evidence of modern disturbance truncating the natural substratum. The development site as a whole had been significantly disturbed as a result of building works immediately to the east with evidence of machine rutting and ground disturbance.

Archive

The site archive consists of five trench record sheets and digital photographs. The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A130.2016.

Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the University of York

PROJECT DETAILS	**Oasis No**	universi1-268821
	Project Name	Land to the south of Hunts Lane, Desford
	Start/end dates of field work	14/11/2016 – 14/11/2016
	Previous/Future Work	Geophysical survey / not known
	Project Type	Evaluation by trial trenching
	Site Status	None
	Current Land Use	Arable field
	Monument Type/Period	
	Significant Finds/Period	None / none
	Development Type	Residential
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF
	Position in the Planning Process	
	Planning Ref.	14/00816/FUL
PROJECT LOCATION	**Site Address/Postcode**	Hunts Lane, Desford, Leicestershire
	Study Area	1.6 hectares
	Site Coordinates	SK 47022 03085
	Height OD	*c.*132m aOD

PROJECT CREATORS	**Organisation**	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator			
	Project Design Originator			
	Project Manager	Dr Patrick Clay		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Andrew Hyam		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Bellway Homes East Midlands Ltd		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		**Physical**	**Digital**	**Paper**
	Recipient	-	Leics Mus. Service	Leics Mus. Service
	ID (Acc. No.)	-	X.A130.2016	X.A130.2016
	Contents	-	Photos Survey files Report	Trench records Report
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	**Type**	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation on land south of Hunts Lane, Desford, Leicestershire NGR SK 47022 03085		
	Author	Clapton, A.		
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	Date	2016		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf		

A summary of the work will also been submitted for publication in an appropriate local archaeological journal in due course.

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Acknowledgments

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The fieldwork was carried out by Andrew Hyam and Adam Clapton. This report was written by Adam Clapton. The project was managed for ULAS by Dr Patrick Clay.

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