

An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Hamilton Lane, Leicester

NGR: SK 64206 06771 (centre)

Andrew Hyam



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# An Archaeological Evaluation

# On land at Hamilton Lane

#### Leicester

NGR: SK 64206 06771 (centre)

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For: Bellway Homes East Midlands Limited

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#### **Andrew Hyam**

#### **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land to the west of Hamilton Lane, Leicester between the 1st and 4th of November 2016. Eighteen 30m long trenches were excavated across the proposed Bellway Homes Limited residential development. Recent excavations to the west of the development site have revealed evidence of Iron Age agricultural activity and Roman settlement activity. The proposed development site appeared to have undergone extensive landscaping and other disturbances in the recent past. No archaeological features or deposits were located during this evaluation.

The report will be archived under accession number A15.2016

#### 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 evaluation on land to the west of Hamilton Lane, Leicester NGR: SK 64206 06771 (centre). Under planning ref 20140509 permission has been granted to Bellway Homes East Midlands Limited for a residential development consisting of 73 dwellings. The development will be accessed from the newly constructed Laverton Road which forms part of the extensive housing development to the west of the site.

The ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation for Evaluation on Land at Hamilton Lane Leicester (hereafter the WSI) specified twenty two 30m long trenches to give a c. 4% sample of the site. A number of site constraints which are discussed below reduced this number to 18 trenches, one of which was only 23m in length.

#### **Background**

The proposed development site is located to the north-east of the city with the city/county border running along its northern boundary (Fig. 1). It is approximately 6km to the north-east of the city centre and sits on the current eastern extent of a large multi-developer residential area which forms the Hamilton estate. The site comprises two fields which have a large number of semi-mature trees and dense scrub growing across it. The southern part of the site is rough pasture. A playing field belonging to Hamilton College forms the southern boundary to the site and has high steel railings running along its length. The eastern boundary is an older field boundary with mature trees and hedging beyond which is a narrow field running alongside Hamilton Lane. The northern boundary of the site is another field boundary consisting of mature trees and a hedgerow with a steep drop-off in ground level towards the north-west. The site's western boundary exists only as a line of Heras fencing dividing this site and the adjacent housing development which is nearing completion. Running from north to south down the centre of the Bellway site is a former field boundary consisting of a wide earth bank with trees and remnants of hedging along it. A rectangular pond, which

appears to be modern, is located in the south-west corner of the site. A former pond on the north-west site boundary has been excavated and modified into a balancing pond with concrete pipes which appear to lead from the housing estate to the west. A spring is shown on Ordnance Survey maps near to the pond but could not be identified on site. The site lies at a height of approximately 106m above OD. The underlying geology is Oadby Member Till overlying a solid geology of Lower Lias clays.

An evaluation carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeological Services in 2014 on land immediately to the west of this development site revealed evidence of Iron Age and Roman activity. The evidence from the Iron Age was limited to possible land division boundaries with some industrial activity which suggested that it was close to the edge of a settlement. Earlier work by ULAS and other archaeological contractors indicate that the Iron Age activity is likely to have extended to the west and southwards from the Pre-Construct area. Roman activity was identified from the 1st to the 3rd centuries and appeared to show potential for extending into the Bellway development site.

At the time of the evaluation the trees and scrub were being cleared by a landscaping company. The trees being felled ranged in size with many trunks being up to 0.3m in diameter. The bank and former field boundary running from north to south down the centre of the site will retain their mature trees in the development proposals (Fig. 2). Shortly before the commencement of the evaluation the western half of the site haul road had been stripped down to the natural substratum. The site compound had also been stripped and stoned-up and welfare cabins placed in the north-west corner of the site. In view of these limitations some of the trenches indicated in the WSI had to be relocated and four of the 22 proposed trenches could not be excavated (Fig. 3).

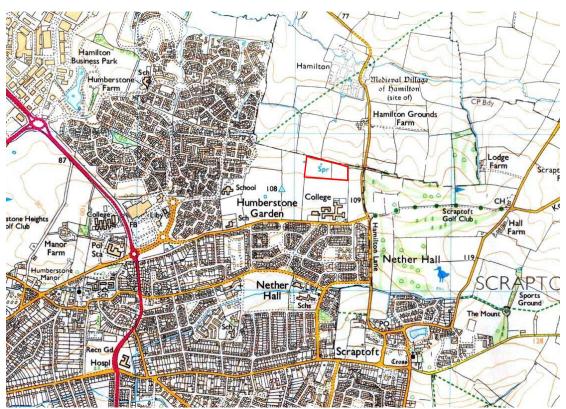


Figure 1 Site location

Note that the entire area to the west of the site is now a housing estate



Figure 2 Development proposals Bellway Homes Limited

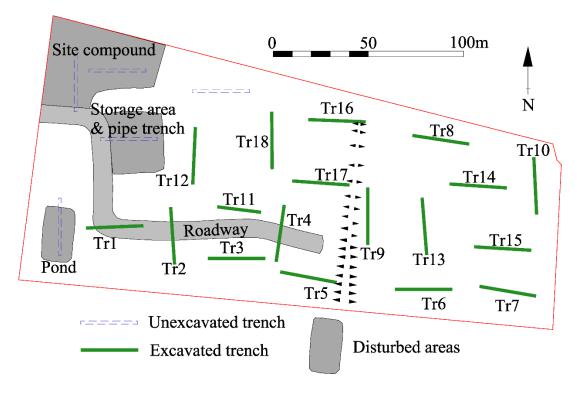


Figure 3 Evaluation trench layout Hachures indicate bank and hedge line running across the site

#### **Objectives**

The objectives are as set out in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation for Evaluation on land at Hamilton Lane, Leicester, planning ref 17/533 18.10.2016 (the WSI) approved by the City 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

Seventeen 30m long trenches and one 23m long evaluation trench were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket on the rear actor. The methodology and recording system employed were as stated in the ULAS WSI. All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014). Many of the trenches had to be moved slightly from that shown in the WSI in order to avoid large tree stumps and other obvious areas of disturbance.

#### Results

The 18 evaluation trenches were laid out flowing a north to south or east to west orientation across the development site. The trench number reflects the order in which they were excavated hence the rather random numbering system shown in Figure 3 above.

Trench	Orientation	Length (m)	Minimum depth (m)	Maximum depth (m)
1	E-W	30.7	0.03	0.25
2	N-S	30.0	0.02	0.34
3	E-W	30.0	0.25	0.34
4	N-S	30.0	0.04	0.29
5	E-W	30.0	0.25	0.30
6	E-W	29.6	0.24	0.32
7	E-W	29.0	0.30	0.37
8	E-W	29.0	0.20	0.25
9	N-S	30.0	0.27	0.35
10	N-S	30.0	0.29	0.40
11	E-W	23.0	0.25	0.26
12	N-S	30.0	0.22	0.24
13	N-S	30.0	0.20	0.30
14	E-W	30.0	0.25	0.35
15	E-W	30.0	0.30	0.36
16	E-W	30.0	0.31	0.35
17	E-W	30.0	0.24	0.28
18	N-S	30.0	0.24	0.26

Table 1 Trench measurements

#### Trench 1

Trench 1 was located towards the south-west corner of the development site and placed to investigate the area for the proposed estate road (Fig.4). As already noted the road had been stripped down to the natural substratum shortly before the start of the evaluation although this stripping had, in fact, only removed approximately 0.25m of overburden. At the west end of the trench 0.1m of dark grey brown silty-clay material roughly equivalent to topsoil was removed to expose a similar but slightly lighter subsoil with an average depth of around 0.15m. Both of these layers appeared to be disturbed. The natural substratum consisted of a mid-greenish brown clay with chalky inclusions and some flint nodules. The same substratum was present across the whole site. Because the roadway had already been stripped by site contractors the eastern end of the trench was scraped clean with the JCB bucket by removing the upper 30mm of natural substratum.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 2

Trench 2 was placed across the width of the estate road to the east of Trench 1 (Fig. 5). As with Trench 1 only a thin layer of disturbed topsoil and subsoil with a maximum combined depth of 0.34m was encountered. The central part of the trench which crossed the road was only cleaned to remove approximately 20mm of the natural substratum. A modern ceramic field drain bedded in gravel was seen running from north-west to south-east across the southern end of the trench. The drain was a modern circular section drain of around 0.15m and seems likely to be no more than thirty years old.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 3

Running on an east to west alignment to the south of the roadway Trench 3 topsoil and subsoil appeared to be quite mixed and disturbed (Fig. 6). Another field drain was observed close to the west end of the trench. Interestingly the school playing field which is 20m to the south of this trench is around 1m higher than the development site. This may suggest that some landscaping may have taken place either by reducing this site or raising the playing field.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 4

As with Trench 2 this trench cut across the site roadway (Fig. 7). Another gravel-filled land drain was observed running across the otherwise empty trench

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 5

The eastern end of Trench 5 partially cut into the north to south bank and former field boundary running across the site (Fig. 8). The bank sits almost 0.8m higher than the surrounding land and is only slightly lower than the school playing field. It may be possible that this represents the original ground level of the site which has since been reduced hence the lack of any real topsoil or subsoil.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 6

Very little distinction could be seen between the topsoil and subsoil in the trench (Fig. 9). Disturbed ground around the topsoil of this trench and around Trench 7 appeared to be full of modern rubbish which once again indicates that the area has undergone a high degree of disturbance.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 7

Three modern land drains and a sand-filled geotechnical pit were observed within this trench (Fig. 10). The overburden above the natural substratum appeared to be very disturbed.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 8

Trench 8 was located near to the north-east corner of the site (Fig. 11). Only a very thin layer of subsoil with a depth between 0.05m and 0.1m was observed. A slight shallow sided dip in the level of the natural substratum was observed close to the centre of the trench running from north to south. The dip measured approximately 4m in width and was 0.1m at its greatest depth. There was no difference in the subsoil above it and a single sherd of heavily abraded late medieval pottery was recovered from the base. It is probable that this was a remnant of a plough furrow although no other furrows were found across the rest of the site. It may be a remnant of an earlier field boundary although it does not match any boundaries shown on the first and subsequent editions of the Ordnance Survey.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 9

Trench 9 was placed to run from north to south along the eastern side of the banked hedge line in the middle of the site (Fig. 12). A large number of trees had been removed whose roots had caused a great deal of disturbance to the natural substratum.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 10

As with Trench 9, Trench 10 was badly disturbed by root activity from semi-mature trees (Fig. 13). This was the deepest evaluation trench with a maximum depth of 0.4m suggesting that, as it was located in the north-eastern corner of the site, it had avoided the landscaping or modern disturbance seen across the rest of the site.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 11

Trench 11 was an extra trench placed to fill a gap between trenches in the original trench layout. The additional trench was excavated as a partial compensation for the loss of the trenches in the north-west corner of the site. Constraints around the trench meant that it could only be 23m long. Tree roots had also caused a large amount of disturbance to the natural substratum (Fig. 14).

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 12

A large area of disturbance was observed across the central 20m of Trench 12. Removal of some of this disturbed material recovered plastic bottles and other modern detritus. The modern material was excavated to 0.4m below the level of the surrounding natural substratum without reaching the base. The undisturbed natural substratum was seen at the north and south ends of the trench (Fig. 15).

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 13

Three gravel covered modern ceramic land drains were observed running from southeast to north-west across this otherwise blank trench (Fig. 16). As with almost all of the other trenches the difference between the topsoil and subsoil was quite indistinct and the excavated trench depth was quite shallow.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 14

The area around Trench 14 appears to be quite boggy in wet conditions as there were a number of deep wheel ruts running across this area. Excavation of this trench revealed the wheel ruts to cut into the natural substratum in several places (Fig. 17). A large bonfire area had stained the soil down to the natural substratum. Elsewhere the natural remained undisturbed.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 15

Areas of root disturbance and a gravel covered modern land drain were observed within this trench. (Fig. 18). Elsewhere the natural substratum remained undisturbed.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 16

Trench 16 was placed across the northern end of the banked hedge line running across the middle of the site (Fig. 19). At this point the surrounding land was at a similar height to the bank. Once again the natural substratum was heavily disturbed by root action.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 17

Trench 17 also butted against the banked hedge line (Fig. 20). Heavy root disturbance was encountered from recently felled trees in this part of the site.

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### Trench 18

Although Trench 18 ran on a parallel course to Trench 12 with the large area of disturbance (Fig. 21). No such disturbance was seen in Trench 18 which had clean and undisturbed natural

No archaeological features or deposits were present within this trench.

#### The unexcavated trenches

Three trenches were specified in the WSI to be located in the north-western corner of the development site. Prior to arrival on site most of this area had been cleared and stoned to accommodate the site offices and car park thus preventing any further excavation in this area (Fig. 22). The ground appears to have been stripped of overburden and seems likely to have exposed the natural substratum.

Another trench was to be excavated to the east of the site car park but at the time of the evaluation was still covered with semi-mature trees which are likely to have caused a great deal of root disturbance (Fig. 23). A final trench should have been excavated in the south-west corner of the site but a large rectangular pond was in this position which had already disturbed the area. The pond appears to have been present for a number of years.

#### **Discussion**

Despite the reasonably high potential for Iron Age and Roman archaeology no evidence was found during this evaluation. Most of the site appeared to have undergone extensive landscaping or disturbance over the last few decades so that only a thin layer of disturbed topsoil and subsoil were present. The deepest trench, and the one with the clearest distinction between topsoil and subsoil was Trench 10 in its somewhat protected location in the north-eastern corner of the site. The large number of trees and scrub across the site has also disturbed the natural substratum. The difference in height of the adjacent playing field, to the south, and the raised bank of the centre hedge line raises the possibility of the site having been stripped to provide levelling material for the playing field. The school buildings appear to have been built in the early 1970s. Cursory inspection of a number of the felled trees indicated them having between 20 and 25 growth rings which may coincide with a period of landscaping and creation of the playing field associated with the school.

All of this disturbance suggests that despite the current site activity of road stripping and car park construction is unlikely to have destroyed any archaeological features.

#### **Archive**

The archive consists of:

This report,

18 ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheets,

3 contact sheets of all (100) digital photographs,

1 photographic record sheet,

1 DVD of 36 digital photographs (rationalised from 100)

#### **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.

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Figure 4 Trench 1
Looking east. Trench 2 being excavated in background. 1m and 2m scales



Figure 5 Trench 2 Looking north



Figure 6 Trench 3
Looking west. Note height of adjacent school playing field on left



Figure 7 Trench 4
Looking south across site roadway towards school playing field



Figure 8 Trench 5
Looking east towards hedgeline running across centre of site (top and bottom of bank highlighted)



Figure 9 Trench 6
Looking east. Trench 7 being excavated in distance



Figure 10 Trench 7 Looking east



Figure 11 Trench 8
Looking east. The dip in the natural can be seen adjacent to the spoil heap on the left



Figure 12 Trench 9 Looking north



Figure 13 Trench 10 Looking north



Figure 14 Trench 11 Looking east



Figure 15 Trench 12
Looking south. Sample excavation of the modern disturbance can be seen beyond the 1m scale



Figure 16 Trench 13
Looking north. Gravel covered land drain in foreground



Figure 17 Trench 14 Looking west. Burnt area in centre of trench



Figure 18 Trench 15 Looking west



Figure 19 Trench 16
Looking east. Banked hedge line at far end of trench



Figure 20 Trench 17
Looking east. Banked hedge line at far end of trench



Figure 21 Trench 18 Looking north



Figure 22 North-west corner of site and site car park
Looking west

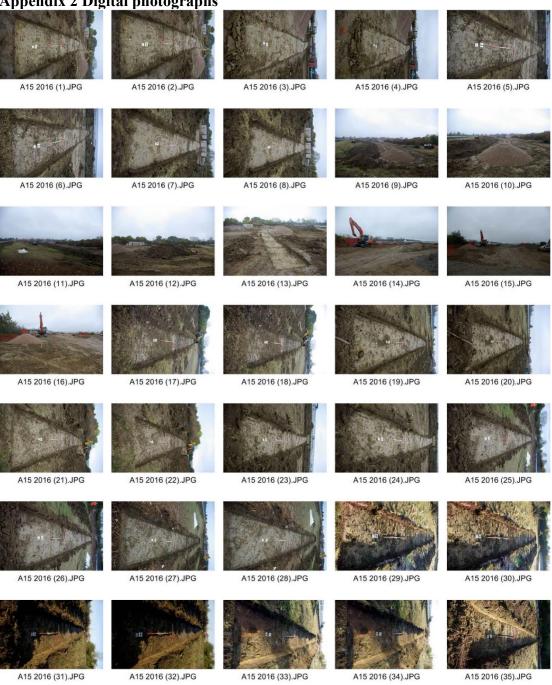


Figure 23 Unexcavated trench location Looking east. Trench was to be located within tree line on right of photo

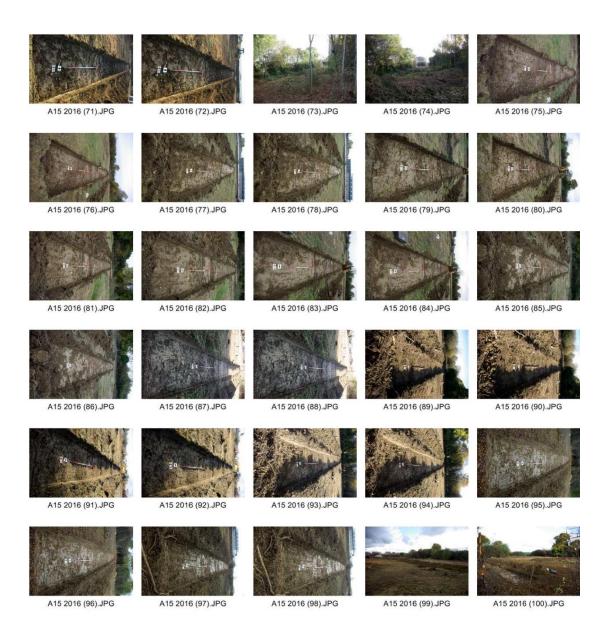
# **Appendix 1 OASIS Information**

	Oasis No	universi1-269446			
	Project Name	Evaluation on land at Hamilton Lane, Leicester			
	Start/end dates of field work	01-11-2016 - 0	4-11-2016		
	Previous/Future Work	Not on this field	d / Ni a 4 1 a		
			1 / Not known		
	Project Type	Evaluation			
	Site Status	None	1		
	Current Land Use	Cultivated Land			
PROJECT	Monument	N/A			
DETAILS	Type/Period	37/4			
	Significant	N/A			
	Finds/Period				
	Development Type	Residential			
	Reason for	NPPF			
	Investigation				
	Position in the	Planning condition			
	Planning Process				
	Planning Ref.	20140509			
	Site Address/Postcode	Hamilton Lane, Leicester			
PROJECT	Study Area	3.15 ha			
LOCATION	Site Coordinates	SK 64206 06771 (centre)			
	Height OD	106 m OD			
	Organisation	ULAS			
	Project Brief	Local Planning Authority (Leicester City Council)			
	Originator				
	Project Design	ULAS			
PROJECT	Originator				
CREATORS	Project Manager	Dr Patrick Clay			
	Project	A Hyam			
	Director/Supervisor				
	Sponsor/Funding	Developer / Bellway Homes Ltd			
	Body				
		Physical	Digital	Paper	
PROJECT	Recipient		LCC	LCC	
ARCHIVE	ID (Acc. No.)		A15.2016	A15.2016	
I III T	Contents		Photos	Trench records	
			Survey data	Field Notes	
	Type	Grey Literature			
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at		Land at	
		Hamilton Lane, Leicester			
PROJECT	Author	A Hyam			
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Other bibliographic	ULAS Report No 2016-155			
DIDLIO GIVII III	details				
	Date		2016		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services /			
		University of Leicester			
	Description	Developer Rep	ort A4 pdf		

# Appendix 2 Digital photographs









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