

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for land at the Hermitage Hotel,
Oadby, Leicestershire (SK 624 003)**

Leon Hunt

For Taylor Woodrow Development.

Planning Application No: 02/279/8M

Checked by Project Manager

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services, on behalf of Taylor Woodrow, Development during topsoil stripping and groundworks for residential development on land at the Hermitage Hotel, Oadby, Leicestershire. The watching brief revealed no archaeological deposits and no significant finds were made. The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services. (Accession Number: X.A264.2003).

1 Introduction

1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during topsoil stripping and groundworks associated with residential development on land at the Hermitage Hotel, Oadby, Leicestershire on behalf of Taylor Woodrow Developments. Archaeological work was required as a condition of the planning permission granted by Leicestershire County Council (application number: 02/279/8M).

1.2 The area is situated within the historic core of the medieval village of Oadby and is close to the medieval church. The north-western part of the development area has been shown to contain the original route of the Wigston Road, a thoroughfare which had associated later medieval occupation (Marsden 2002). Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains have also been located in the Oadby area.

1.3 The planned development of flats, access roads and car parking, along with soft landscaping and tree planting was seen to have the potential to have a damaging impact on any archaeological remains if present. An archaeological watching brief was required by the Planning Archaeologist of Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services, in her capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, as a condition on the planning permission, in order that any archaeological deposits disturbed or exposed by the works could be recorded.

1.4 The watching brief was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on the 11th and 16th December 2003.

2 Background

2.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment was commissioned from University of Leicester Archaeological Services the results of which were summarised as follows:

The desk-based archaeological assessment for the proposed residential development on land at the Hermitage Hotel, Oadby, Leicestershire has shown that the area is situated within the historic core of the medieval village of Oadby. It is also close to the medieval church. Map evidence indicates that the north-western part of the development area contains the original route of the Wigston Road, a thoroughfare which had associated later medieval occupation. These cottages known as Tinker's Thatch were demolished in the mid-1960s. The proposed development area therefore has considerable potential for containing archaeological remains, particularly of a medieval date. (Marsden 2002)

2.2 The site is situated within the medieval core of the village of Oadby (LE9060) and is located c.50m to the south of the medieval church of St. Peter (LE 4951).

2.3 Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains have been discovered in the Oadby area. These include a medieval or Roman carved stone head (LE 6916), a Mesolithic quartzite pebblehammer (LE7099), an early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (LE6405) and Roman coins, pottery and burials (LE 8066), (LE 4954-5).

2.4 The 1886 Ordnance Survey map shows the 'Hermitage' residence and its gardens and two fields occupying the application area. In the west the area includes the old Wigston Road along with two cruck cottages 'Tinkers Thatch' believed to date from the late 15th or 16th century. Trial trenching in this area by the Oadby Archaeological Society revealed sherds of medieval pottery.

2.5 The application area is c.0.9ha in size. The Ordnance Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology consists of alluvium or Lower Lias clays and limestone overlying boulder clay. The land slopes down mainly to the south and south-east at a height of c.96-94m aOD.

3 Aims and Methods

3.1 The purpose of the watching brief was to ascertain whether archaeological deposits were present. If so, the character, extent and date range of any deposits identified would be established, in order to assess their significance (see Appendices, Design Specification). Recording of these deposits would be carried out as appropriate, and an archive and this report produced. The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, and adhered to the University's Health and Safety policy.

3.2 The site was visited by an archaeologist on 11th and 16th December 2003 and groundworks associated with the development were observed (Fig. 3). The spoil heaps were also examined for archaeological finds.

4 Results

4.1 The site was first visited following the demolition of the later Hermitage Hotel buildings and the adjacent car park to the west had been stripped of its Tarmac. The car park to the east of the site was still extant.

4.2 The foundations for the first building had been excavated to a depth of 1.2m through the asphalt and into the natural sediments below. Under the thin asphalt was

a 0.3m thick layer of pinkish brown type 1 hardcore. This overlay 0.6m of very dark grey silty clay which itself overlay yellowish brown sandy clay.

4.3 Towards the south-eastern corner of the first building the trench had to be deepened considerably to 2m due to the unstable structure of the underlying geology which needed to be strengthened by a thicker layer of concrete. Under the hardcore in this area was a very dark grey, almost black, layer of silt, which overlay the dark grey layer that was sandier with around 20% small rounded stones. This overlay a yellowish brown sand and gravel with lenses of grey silt or silty clay. It was not possible to identify the exact nature of these sediments due to the dangerous depth of the trenches, which had been fenced off. No archaeological features or finds were observed or recovered from these trenches.

4.4 The northern area of the site, which until recently contained the annexes of the Hermitage Hotel, appeared to have been heavily disturbed. This area is sloped and had been levelled and the underlying strata consisted of disturbed and made ground, mainly consisting of sand and gravel with modern brick, plaster and pieces of wood and metal. No archaeological features or finds were discovered.

4.5 The spoil heaps contained a vast quantity of modern building material. The heaps were searched for artefacts, but no significant archaeological finds were made.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Despite the confirmed archaeological potential of the site, no significant features or finds were discovered.

5.2 The northern area, which lay below the former modern Hermitage Hotel buildings, consisted of made up and disturbed ground.

5.3 The area to the south of the site, under the former car park, was relatively undisturbed, but only natural substrata were observed in the foundation trenches.

5.4 The spoil heaps were observed for archaeological artefacts, and were noted as containing a vast amount of modern building debris. No significant archaeological finds were recovered.

5.5 The south-western part of the site, where less disturbance appeared to have previously occurred, had been investigated on two occasions with no positive results. The northern end of the site was noted as consisting of disturbed ground, caused by the construction of the former annexe buildings to the rear of the original Hermitage building. No further visits to the site were deemed necessary.

5.6 The archaeological watching brief undertaken during the redevelopment of the Hermitage Hotel would suggest that no archaeological deposits lie within the area affected by the development proposals. The north-eastern area of the site would appear to have suffered considerable disturbance during the construction of the previous buildings that stood on the site, and this may potentially have removed any archaeological deposits that may have been present here.

6 Archive

6.1 The archive consists of 2 watching brief report sheets including sketch sections and plan, and a number of colour slides. The archive will be held by

Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services under the accession number X.A264.2003.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Ray Jordan of Taylor Woodrow Developments for his courtesy and co-operation during this watching brief. The watching brief was undertaken by the author. The project was managed by James Meek.

Bibliography

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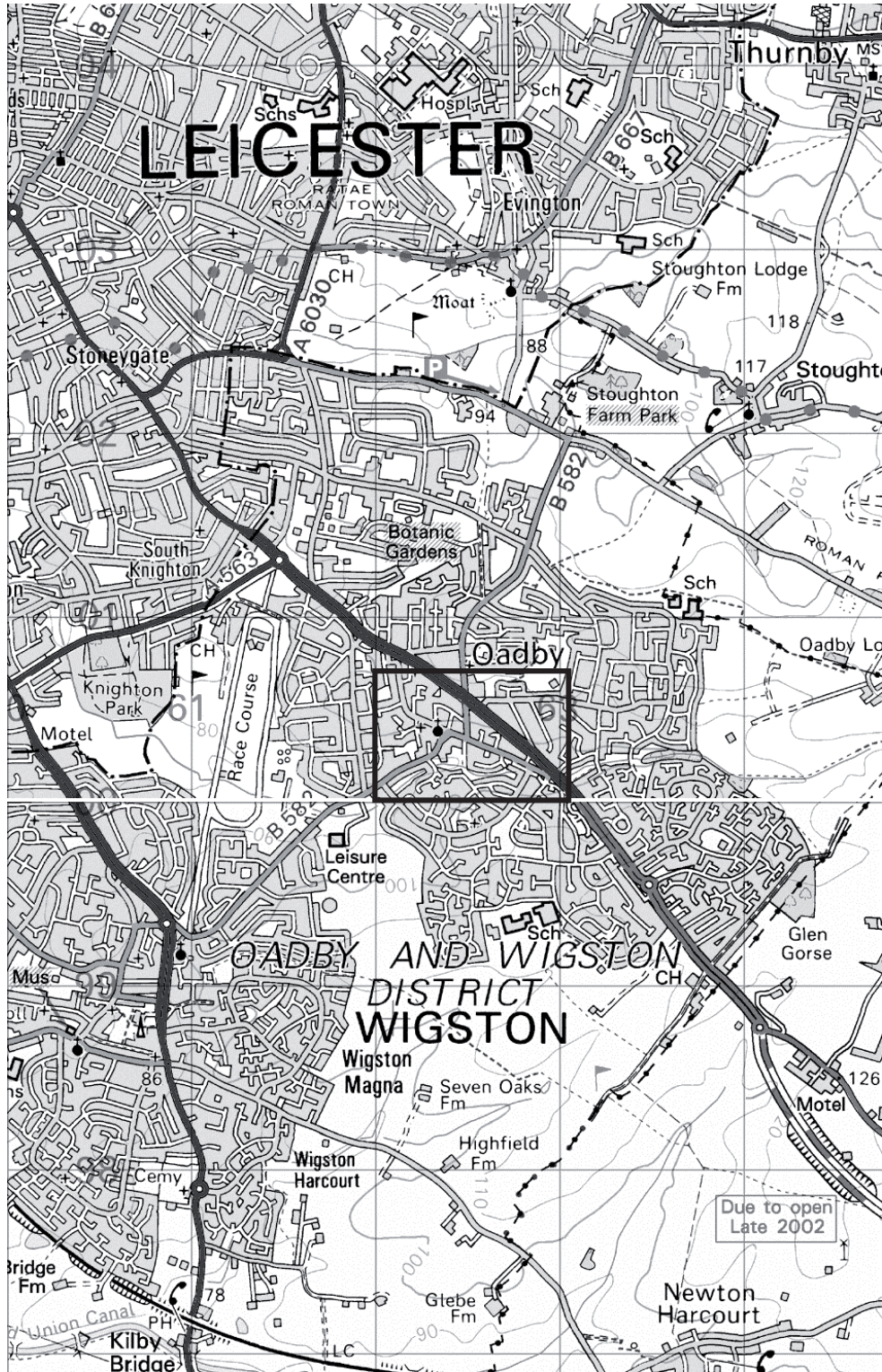


Figure 1: Location Plan

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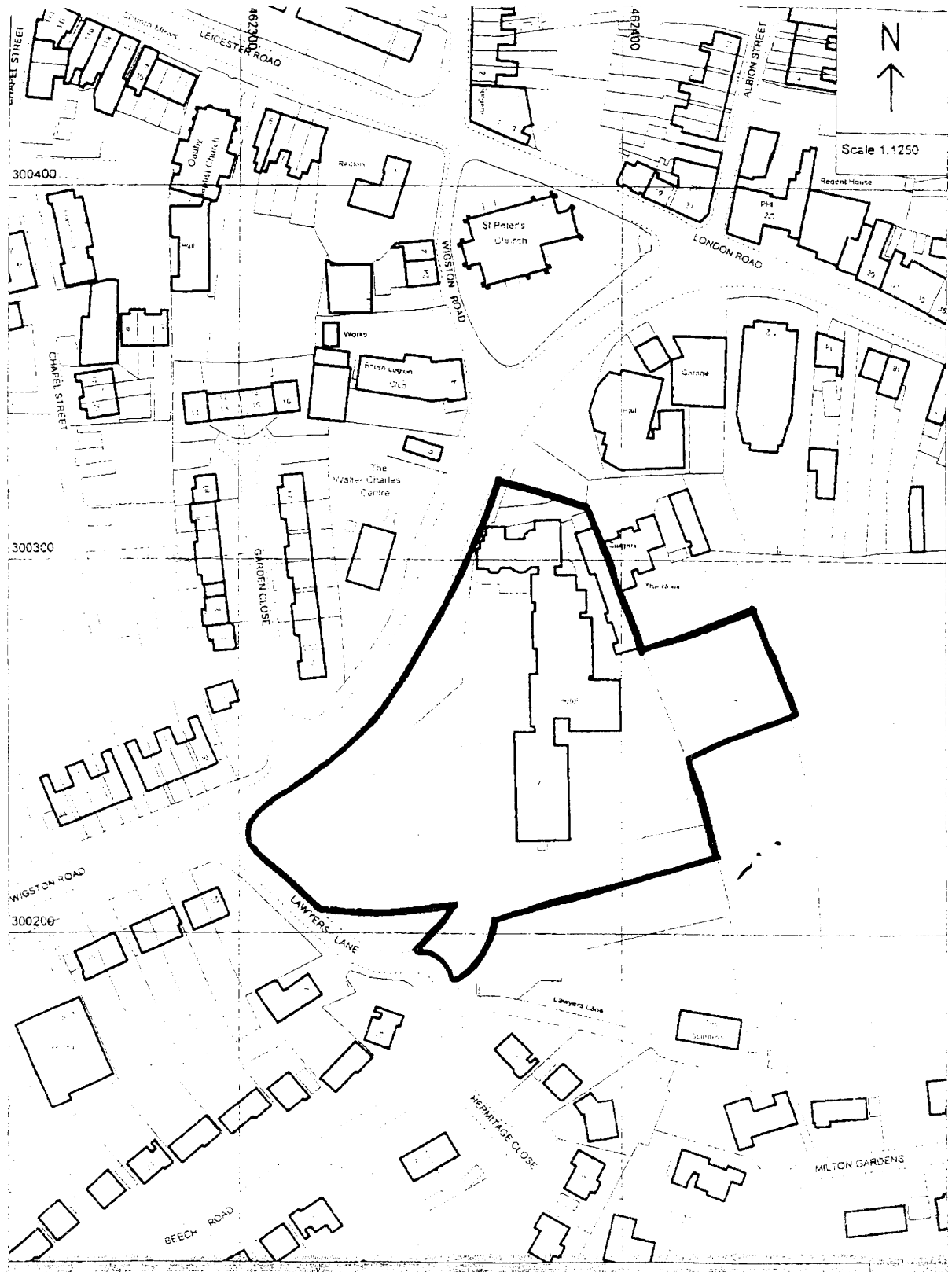


Figure 2: The Hermitage Hotel Location Plan (Bryant Homes)

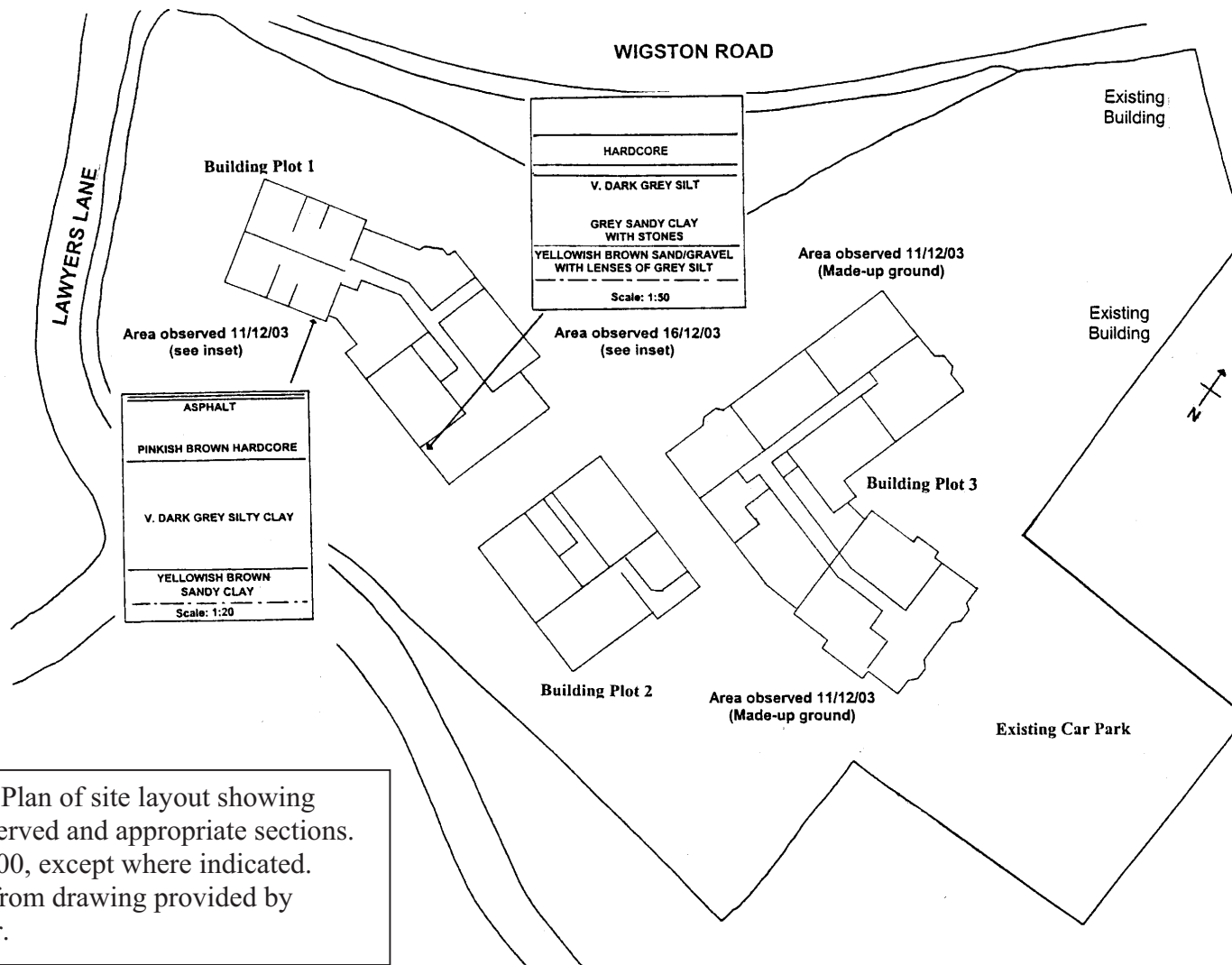


Figure 3: Plan of site layout showing areas observed and appropriate sections. Scale 1:400, except where indicated. Derived from drawing provided by developer.

**Appendix: Design Specification for Archaeological Works
The Hermitage Hotel, Oadby, Leicestershire**

ULAS Design Specification: 04-306-01

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for Archaeological Works

Site: *The Hermitage Hotel, Oadby, Leicestershire*

NGR: *SK 624 003*

Client: *Taylor Woodrow Development*

Planning Authority: *Oadby and Wigston Borough Council*

Planning Application Numbers: *02/279/8M*

Summary

In view of the potential of the site for containing buried archaeological remains relating to the medieval settlement at Oadby, the site lying within the historic core of the town and close to the medieval church, the archaeological adviser to the planning authority has recommended archaeological attendance and recording during topsoil stripping and groundworks for the proposed development, to ensure that affected deposits are adequately recorded. This specification provides details of the methodologies and standards to be adopted by ULAS on behalf of the client during the course of the work.

1. Introduction

1.1 Definition and scope of the specification

In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning), para.30, and the condition placed on planning permission, this specification constitutes a 'written scheme of archaeological investigation' which ULAS intends to implement on behalf of the Client in mitigation of any damage which may be caused to buried or standing archaeological remains from the development.

1.2 The definition of archaeological watching brief, taken from the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance: for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IFA S&G: AWB) is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

1.3 The purpose of a watching brief, as laid down in the IFA S&G AWB is:

to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.

to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment.

1.4 This document provides a scheme of works for:

Archaeological attendance and recording during topsoil stripping and groundworks likely to disturb archaeological remains, if present.

2. Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives, within the resources available, are

- 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 excavate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

3. Background

- 3.1 The proposed development site is located in Oadby (Grid. Ref. SK 624 003). Planning permission has been sought from Oadby and Wigston Borough Council for the application no.02/279/8M). It consists of an area of c.0.9 ha within which it is proposed to construct three units of flats, access roads and car parking. It is also proposed to undertake soft landscaping and plant new trees (see fig.7).
- 3.2 The Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record indicates that the proposed site is located in an area of archaeological interest, within the historic core of the medieval village of Oadby and close to St Peter's church.
- 3.3 An archaeological desk-based assessment was commissioned from University of Leicester Archaeological Services the results of which were summarised as follows:
- The desk-based archaeological assessment for the proposed residential development on land at the Hermitage Hotel, Oadby, Leicestershire has shown that the area is situated within the historic core of the medieval village of Oadby. It is also close to the medieval church. Map evidence indicates that the north-western part of the development area contains the original route of the Wigston Road, a thoroughfare which had associated later medieval occupation. These cottages known as Tinker's Thatch were demolished in the mid-1960s. The proposed development area therefore has considerable potential for containing archaeological remains, particularly of a medieval date. (Marsden 2002)*
- 3.4 Due to the sites location it is seen as having the potential to contain associated archaeological deposits of medieval and later periods. There is still a potential for archaeological deposits predating the early medieval period to survive, although this level of potential has not been assessed.
- 3.5 In response to Oadby and Wigston Borough Council initial planning applications 02/279/8M from Bryant Homes to construct three units of flats, access roads and car parking the Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services advised the planning authority that planning permission should be granted subject to an archaeological condition. It is also proposed to undertake soft landscaping and plant new trees. The groundworks will comprise the removal of topsoil, excavation of footings, associated services and access routes, which would severely damage or destroy any archaeological remains that may be present on the site.
- 3.6 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of alluvium or lower Lias clays and limestone overlying boulder clay. The land slopes down mainly to the south and south-east at a height of c.96-94m aOD.
- 3.7 The original building of The Hermitage in Oadby is seen to be a building of historical interest. It is likely that further building recording works may be required prior to it being converted to residential accommodation.

4. Methodology

4.1 *General Methodology and Standards*

- 4.1.1 All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.
- 4.1.2 Staffing (as far as is possible), Recording systems, Health and Safety provisions and Insurance details are included below.
- 4.1.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site by the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are met and professional standards are maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the Senior

Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Councils Heritage Services Section, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council planning authority and the Client, if required.

4.2 ***Watching brief methodology***

- 4.2.1 The archaeologist will be present during all groundworks that have the potential to affect any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area. The commencement of groundworks and subsequent timetable of works must be agreed between the Client, the Client's contractor and ULAS.
- 4.2.2 The archaeologist will observe any topsoil stripping and the excavation of foundation trenches and drains, by the Client's contractors, in order to obtain an adequate record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed by groundworks associated with the development.
- 4.2.3 The archaeologist will cooperate at all times with the contractors to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays to the work. However, if any archaeological deposits are seen to be present, the archaeologist will have the power to temporarily halt the works in order to define and record areas of archaeological interest.
- 4.2.4 Any archaeological deposits encountered will be recorded and excavated using standard ULAS procedures (see section 5 below).
- 4.2.5 In the event that unforeseen archaeological discoveries are made during the development, ULAS shall have the power to halt any ground works and shall inform the site agent/project manager and the Senior Planning Archaeologist, and prepare a written statement with plan detailing the archaeological evidence. Following assessment of the archaeological remains by the Senior Planning Archaeologist, ULAS shall, if required, implement on behalf of the Client a contingency scheme for salvage excavation of affected archaeological features.

4.3. ***Environmental Sampling***

- 4.3.1 If significant archaeological features are subject to excavation, the sampling strategy will include the following if practicable, within the scope of the project and with the allocated resources:

A range of features to represent all feature types, areas and phases will be selected on a judgmental basis. The criteria for selection will be that deposits are datable, well sealed and with little intrusive or residual material.

Any buried soils or well-sealed deposits with concentrations of carbonised material present will be intensively sampled taking a known proportion of the deposit.

Spot samples will be taken where concentrations of environmental remains are located.

Waterlogged remains, if present, will be sampled for pollen, plant macrofossils, insect remains and radiocarbon dating provided that they are uncontaminated and datable. Consultation with the specialist will be undertaken.

4.4 ***Recording Systems***

- 4.4.1 The ULAS recording manual will be used as a guide for all recording.
- 4.4.2 Individual descriptions of any observed archaeological strata and features exposed by the works will be entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.
- 4.4.3 A site location plan based on the current Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map (reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO) will be prepared. This will be supplemented by a plan at appropriate scale, which will show the location of the investigation area in relation to the OS or site grid, as appropriate.
- 4.4.4 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made. Sections including the half-sections of individual layers of features will be drawn as necessary, typically at a scale of 1:10. Relative levels of archaeological deposits will be taken across the site area.
- 4.4.5 A photographic record of the investigations will be prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also

include 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

- 4.4.6 As a minimum, the watching archaeologist will record the location and depths of any areas of groundworks, including descriptions and depths of all principal strata disturbed, even if no archaeological features are present.

5. Finds and Samples

- 5.1 The IFA Guidelines for Finds Work will be adhered to.
- 5.2 All antiquities, valuables, objects or remains of archaeological interest, other than articles declared by Coroner's Inquest to be subject to the Treasure Act, discovered in or under the Site during the carrying out of the project by ULAS or during works carried out on the Site by the Client shall be deemed to be the property of ULAS provided that ULAS after due examination of the said Archaeological Discoveries shall transfer ownership of all Archaeological Discoveries unconditionally to Leicestershire Museums for storage in perpetuity.
- 5.3 The accession number **X.A264.2003** will be used for the watching brief which will be used to identify all records and finds from the site.
- 5.4 All identified finds and artefacts are to be retained, although certain classes of building material will, in some circumstances, be discarded after recording with the approval of the Senior Planning Archaeologist. The IFA Guidelines for Finds Work will be adhered to.
- 5.5 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner. Where appropriate they will be cleaned, marked and receive remedial conservation in accordance with recognised best-practice. This will include the site code number, finds number and context number. Bulk finds will be bagged in clear self sealing plastic bags, again marked with site code, finds and context numbers and boxed by material in standard storage boxes (340mm x 270mm x 195mm). All materials will be fully labelled, catalogued and stored in appropriate containers.

6. Report and Archive

- 6.1 The full report in A4 format will usually follow within four weeks of the completion of the fieldwork and copies will be dispatched to the Client (2 copies), Senior Planning Archaeologist/Leicestershire SMR (2 copies) and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council Planning Officer (1 copy).
- 6.2 The report will include:-
- Summary
 - The aims and methods adopted in the course of the watching brief.
 - The nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any structural, artefactual and environmental material uncovered.
 - Appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs.
 - The location and size of the archive.
- 6.3 A full copy of the archive as defined in *The Guidelines For The Preparation Of Excavation Archives For Long-Term Storage* (UKIC 1990), and *Standards In The Museum: Care Of Archaeological Collections* (MGC 1992) and *Guidelines for the Preparation of Site Archives and Assessments for all Finds* (other than fired clay objects) (Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700 1993) will usually be presented to within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

7 Publication and Dissemination of Results

- 7.1 A summary of the work will be submitted to the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for publication. A larger report will be submitted for inclusion if the results of the archaeological works warrant it.

8. Acknowledgement and Publicity

- 8.1 ULAS shall acknowledge the contribution of the Client in any displays, broadcasts or publications relating to the site or in which the report may be included.
- 8.2 ULAS and the Client shall each ensure that a senior employee shall be responsible for dealing with any enquiries received from press, television and any other broadcasting media and members of the public. All enquiries made to ULAS shall be directed to the Client for comment. The Senior Planning Archaeologist will also be consulted when dealing with such enquiries.

9. Copyright

- 9.1 The copyright of all original finished documents shall remain vested in ULAS and ULAS will be entitled as of right to publish any material in any form produced as a result of its investigations.

10. Timetable/Staffing

- 10.1 One member of ULAS staff will be present on the site during groundworks. An initial start date for the works has not been made known to ULAS. This design specification will need to be approved by the Senior Planning Archaeologist prior to any archaeological works commencing.
- 10.2 The report will normally be completed within eight weeks of the completion of fieldwork.

11. Health and Safety

- 11.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety manual with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is attached as Appendix 1. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate. The HSE has determined that archaeological investigations are exempt from CDM regulations.

A Risks assessment form will be completed prior to work commencing on-site, and updated as necessary during the site works.

It is assumed that the locations of all services on the site are already known to the Client, and that this information will be made known to the attending archaeologist.

12. Insurance

- 12.1 All employees, consultants and volunteers are covered by the University of Leicester public liability insurance with Gerling Insurance Service Co. Ltd. and others (leading policy no. 62/99094/D). Professional indemnity insurance is with Sun Alliance, £10m cover, policy no. 03A/SA 001 05978. Employer's Liability Insurance is with Eagle Star, cover £10m.

13. Monitoring arrangements

- 13.1 Unlimited access to monitor the project will be available to both the Client and his representatives and Senior Planning Archaeologist subject to the health and safety requirements of the site. Usually at least one weeks notice will be given to the Senior

Planning Archaeologist before the commencement of the archaeological works in order that monitoring arrangements can be made, unfortunately in this case there has been some confusion with planning conditions resulting in the works commencing prior to archaeological.

- 13.2 All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the IFA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.
- 13.3 Internal monitoring will be carried out by the ULAS project manager.

JEM

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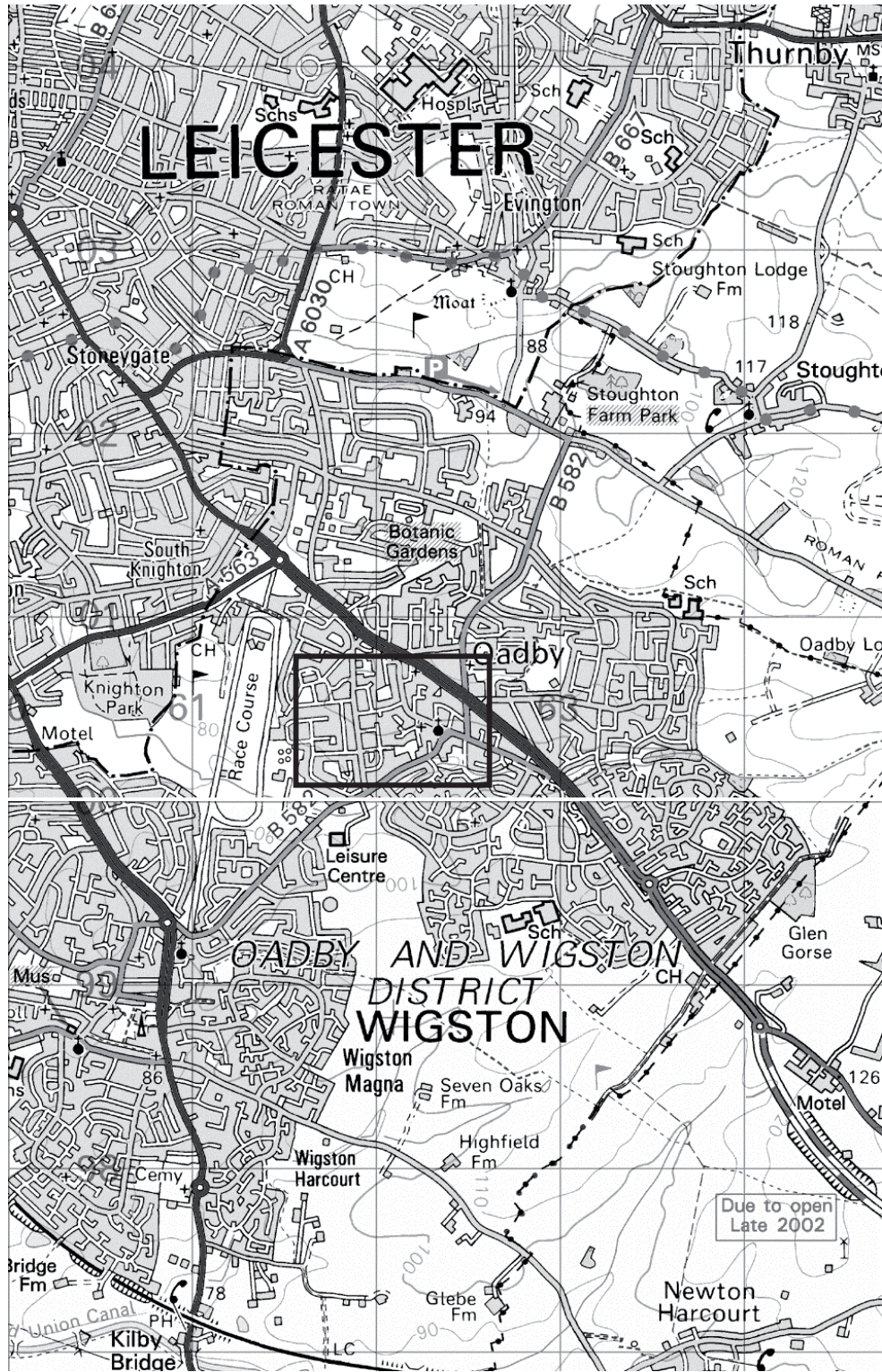


Figure 1: Location Plan

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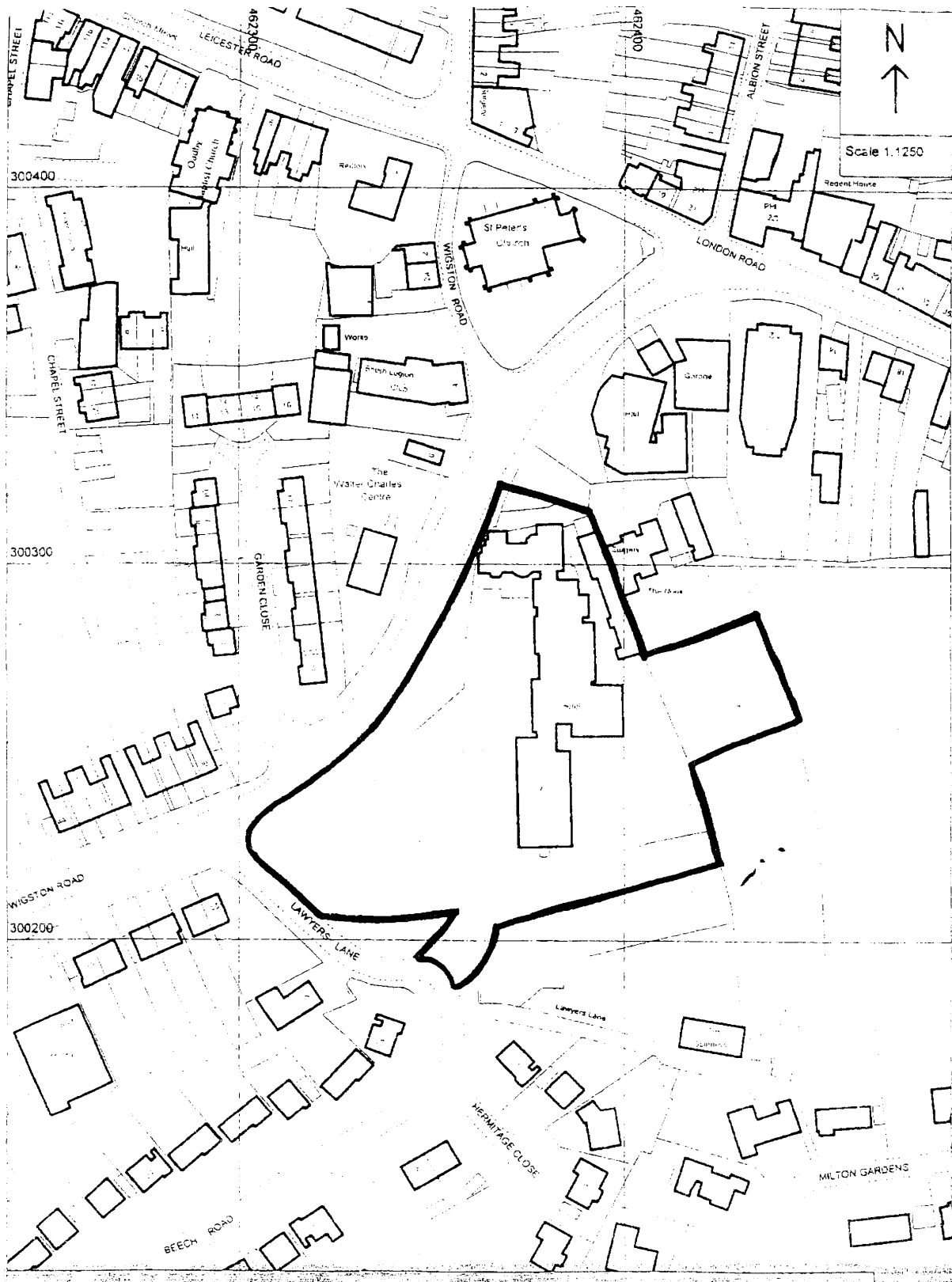


Figure 2: The Hermitage Hotel Location Plan (Bryant Homes)