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**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An archaeological field evaluation at  
Land adjacent to Mill Lane, Smeeton  
Westerby, Leicestershire**

**NGR SP 67730 93026**

Claire LaCombe



ULAS Report No 2017-048

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**An archaeological field evaluation at Land adjacent to Mill Lane, Smeeton  
Westerby, Leicestershire**

**NGR SP 67730 93026 (SP 67730 93026)**

**Claire LaCombe**

**for**

**Stainforth Architects Ltd**

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## **An archaeological field evaluation at land adjacent to Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire (SP 67730 93026)**

**Claire LaCombe**

### **Summary**

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on Land adjacent to Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire NGR SP 67730 93026.*

*The work was commissioned in advance of the development of the site for a residential property and associated parking.*

*Two trenches were placed within the proposed development area; however neither of the trenches revealed any archaeological deposits.*

*The archive for the work will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with the accession number X.A29.2017.*

*Cover Photograph: Development site on arrival looking east.*

### **Introduction**

Planning permission has been granted for a new residential development and associated parking on land adjacent to Mill Lane, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire, NGR SP 67730 93026 (16/00876/FUL).

This report represents the programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken in March 2017. It follows and adheres to a strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (hereinafter WSI; ULAS 2017).

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.

The work involved the machine excavation of two trial trenches measuring a total of 30m in length across the 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

Smeeton Westerby lies north-west of Market Harborough in the Harborough District of Leicestershire (Fig. 1). The site lies south of Mill Lane (SP 67730 93026; Figs 2-3) at an elevation of approximately 115m OD.

The application area covers an area of c.0.1 hectares and currently comprises of a parcel of land planted sporadically with young trees and bounded by mature trees and hedgerows.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology is likely to be Till, Mid Pleistocene Diamicton above Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (undifferentiated) - Mudstone.

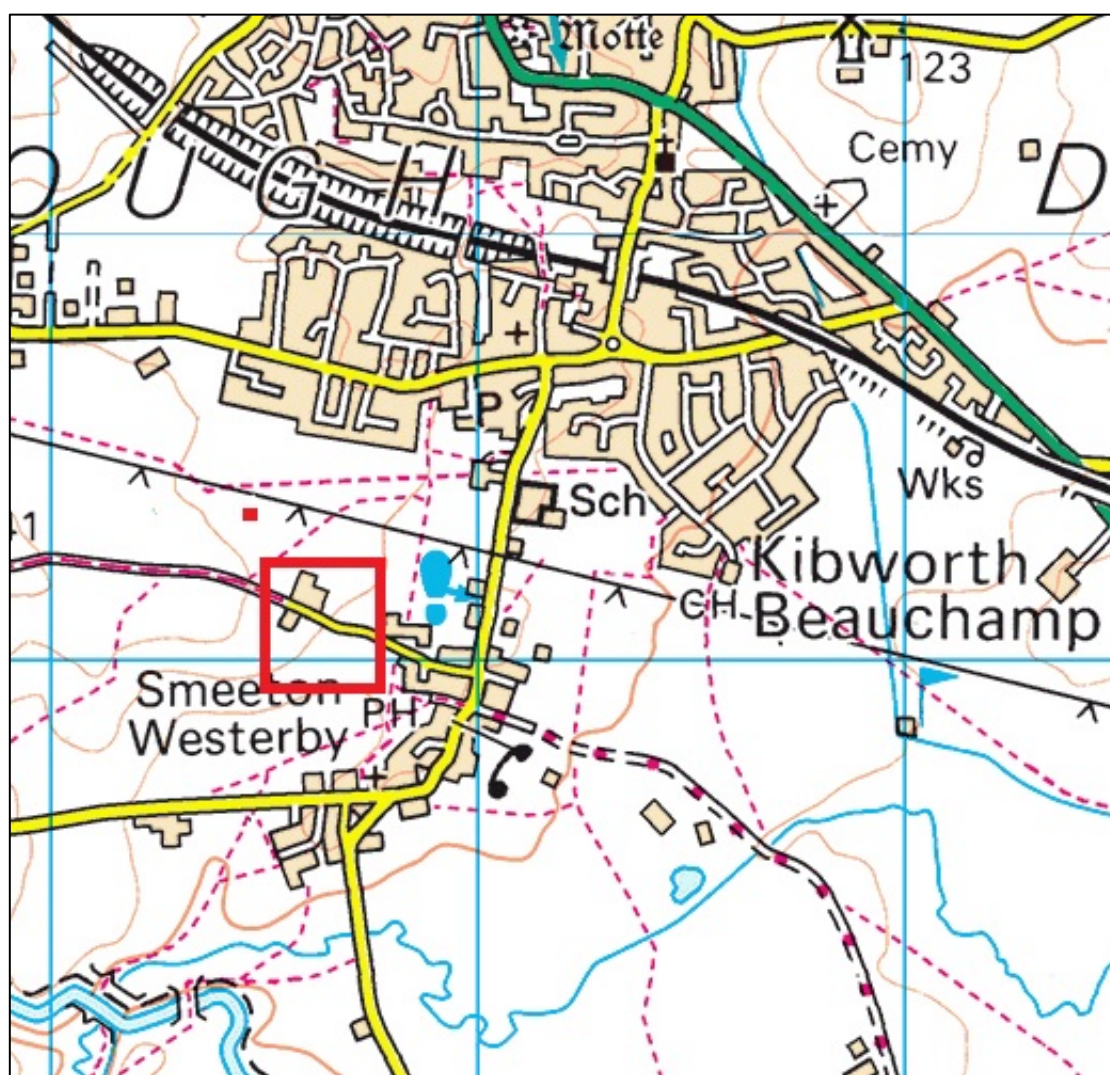


Figure 1: Site location (red line). Contains OS data.



## Archaeological and Historical Background

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application site lies within an area of archaeological interest within the historic medieval and post-medieval core of the village of Smeeton Westerby (HER ref. **MLE9333**), thereby having potential to contain evidence for Saxon and medieval occupation. Earthworks have been noted on Beaker Close/Main Street, (**MLE2394**) and finds recovered from this location include rare Middle Saxon pottery along with pottery dating from the 10th to 13th centuries (**MLE19270**, **MLE19990**). In addition, elsewhere an undated burial was found during the 19th century with references to further burials being found during quarrying in the locality (**MLE2392**). Recently, Roman, medieval and later pottery has also been recovered in the immediate vicinity of the site (**MLE19266**, **MLE19277**, **MLE19976**, **MLE19977**).

An archaeological evaluation at 73 Main Street, Smeeton Westerby revealed no archaeological finds or deposits, the area having been subject to late 19th / early 20th century quarrying (Speed 2012).

## 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 the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Codes of Conduct* (2014) and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2014).

## Methodology

Two 15m trenches were proposed, providing a sample of the area (detailed in trench descriptions) all 1.6m in width.

On arrival at the development site the area showed signs of significant recent activity. Many trees had been felled and the logs were piled up ready to be removed from the site leaving the stumps in situ. Many young trees have been planted in recent years across the whole of the site in an evenly spaced fashion. The southernmost boundary was created out of leylandii and therefore of no great age (Figs 4-5).



*Figure 4: Development site on arrival looking west*



*Figure 5: Development site on arrival looking south*

Trench 1 was placed 2.3m from the eastern boundary of the site due to the location of some large tree stumps. However, it was still placed along the original proposed alignment and



covered a length of 16.8m in total. Trench 2 was positioned as planned with the northernmost corner approximately 3.0m from one of the large mature tree trunks along the northern Mill Lane boundary and was 15.3m in length (Fig. 6).

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.

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.

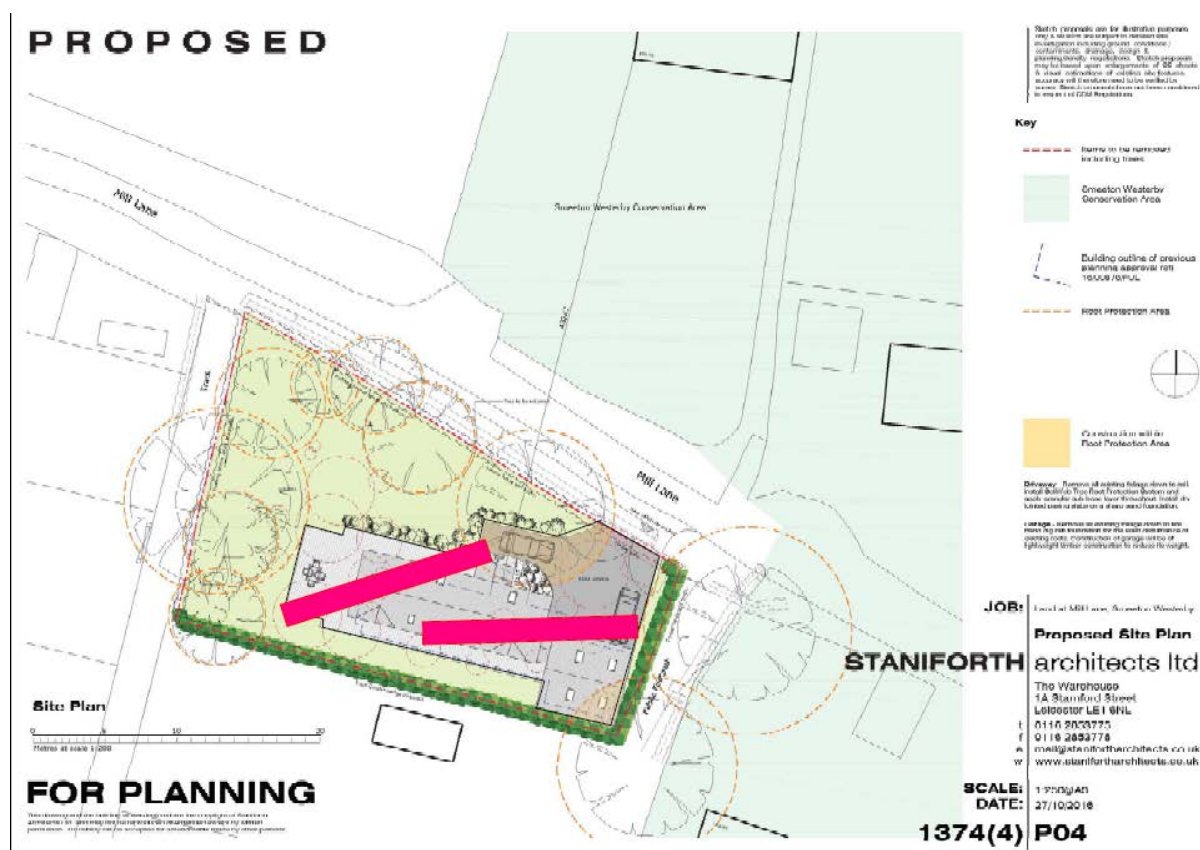


Figure 6: Trench plan overlain on illustrative plan

## Results

Two trenches were excavated across the area of proposed development. The topsoil consisted compacted and sticky dark brown soil with occasional sub rounded stone inclusions, below which mid-brown sandy-silt friable subsoil with occasional sub rounded stones was present. The natural sub-stratum consisted of dark orange sandy clay with no inclusions, along with some patches of pale greyish brown clay.

All measurements were taken from the top of the trench.

### *Trench 1*

Trench 1 was positioned east to west towards the eastern edge of the development area, with the eastern end 2.3m from the eastern boundary due to the proximity of some large tree stumps. The western end of the trench was 1.6m from the southern boundary.

<b>Interval</b>	<b>W 0m</b>	<b>5m</b>	<b>10m</b>	<b>15m E</b>
<b>Topsoil Depth</b>	0.30m	0.30m	0.30m	0.32m
<b>Subsoil Depth</b>	0.12m	0.22m	0.13m	0.00m
<b>Top of natural substratum</b>	0.42m	0.52m	0.43m	0.32m
<b>Base of trench</b>	0.42m	0.72m	0.56m	0.40m

Length-16.8m

Width-1.6m

No archaeological features were present (Fig. 7).



Figure 7: Trench 1 looking south west

## Trench 2

Trench 2 was positioned as planned south-east to south-west with the northernmost point being positioned 3.0m from the trunk of the largest mature tree to be retained adjacent to Mill Lane.

Interval	SW 0m	5m	10m	15m NE
Topsoil Depth	0.25m	0.25m	0.17m	0.12m
Subsoil Depth	0.00m	0.10m	0.15m	0.20m
Top of natural substratum	0.25m	0.35m	0.32m	0.32m
Base of trench	0.25m	0.40m	0.32m	0.37m

Length-15.3m

Width-1.6m

No archaeological features were present (Fig. 8).



*Figure 8: Trench 2 looking north east*

### **Conclusion**

Despite the potential for the presence of archaeology from the Roman, Saxon and Medieval period, no archaeological features were observed within any of the evaluation trenches. The development site as a whole had been disturbed as a result of landscaping / planting, and there was some disturbance to the underlying soils from tree roots.

### **Archive**

The site archive consists of two trench record sheets and digital photographs. The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A29.2017.

### **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.

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

## Acknowledgments

ULAS would like to extend its thanks to the landowner for their cooperation during the work and also to Jim for operating the mechanical excavator.

The fieldwork was carried out by Claire LaCombe. This report was written by Claire LaCombe. The project was managed for ULAS by Dr Richard Buckley.

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## Sources

British Geological Survey Website

HER Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire and Rutland (Leicestershire County Council: Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record, County Hall

Imagery © 2016, Map data © 2016 Google

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<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-XXXXXX		
	<b>Project Name</b>	Land adjacent to Mill lane, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	13/03/2017		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	Not known		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation by trial trenching		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Orchard.		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None / none		
	<b>Development Type</b>	Residential		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Granted with conditions.		
	<b>Planning Ref.</b>	Harborough 16/00876/FUL		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Land adjacent to Mill lane, Smeeton Westerby, Leicestershire. LE8 0QL		
	<b>Study Area</b>	0.1 hectares		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SP 67730 93026		
	<b>Height OD</b>	c.115m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Dr Richard Buckley		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	Dr Richard Buckley		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Dr Richard Buckley		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Claire LaCombe		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>			
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