UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at The Depot, Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire

(SP 45989 96604)

Mathew Morris

ULAS Report No 2017-200

An Archaeological Evaluation at The Depot, Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire (SP 45989 96604)

Mathew Morris

For: Mr Paul Mac

Planning application ref.: 13/0443/1/OX

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An Archaeological Evaluation at The Depot, Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire (SP 45989 96604)

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out on land at The Depot, Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire (SP 45989 96604) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 11 December, 2017. Work was undertaken for Mr Paul Mac in order to establish the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits which may be present, in order that an assessment may be made of the impact of any proposed development on the buried remains. The application area comprised a c.0.35 ha area of agricultural/commercial buildings and hard standing.

Two 25m by 1.6m trenches were excavated, with a third to be dug once buildings have been cleared form the site. Altogether, this will achieve a c.3.5% sample of the application area. The two trenches were dug in areas of hard standing between standing buildings in areas which corresponded with the footings of the proposed development. The evaluation has only produced limited evidence for modern agrarian farming practices – namely a ceramic field drain. No other archaeological features or deposits were recorded and no artefactual evidence was recovered for archaeological activity in the vicinity. On the balance of evidence recorded during the investigation so far, it would appear that ground across the application area has been extensively reworked in the latter half of the 20th century. This groundwork has removed topsoil and subsoil from the site, and terraced the natural substratum, and any archaeology, if present, is unlikely to survive.

The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A151.2017.

Introduction

In December 2017, University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire (SP 45989 96604 - Figure 1). The work was undertaken for Mr Paul Mac to establish the nature, extent, date, and significance of any archaeological deposits which might be present, in order that an assessment may be made of the impact of any proposed development on the buried remains.

In June 2013, a planning application was submitted to Blaby District Council for the 'erection of 7 dwellings with access from Station Road' (app. No. 13/0443/1/OX). Outline planning permission was granted in January 2015, with Condition 7 stating that 'No demolition/development shall take place/commence until a programme of archaeological work, commencing with an initial phase of trial trenching and followed by appropriate mitigation, has been detailed within a Written Scheme of Investigation , submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing'. This was in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012), the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire, as archaeological advisor to the local planning authority requiring the investigation to be undertaken in order that the potential impact of the development on any archaeology could be assessed and an appropriate mitigation strategy implemented.

Archaeological work took place on Monday 11 December 2017. This report presents the results of the archaeological investigation to date.

Site Location, Geology and Topography

The application area is on the north-western side of Elmesthorpe, on land north of Station Road, *c.*15km south-west of Leicester (SP 45989 96604 - Figure 1). The area comprises a broadly rectangular plot containing several late 20th-century agricultural/commercial buildings, set back *c.*75m north of Station Road/B581 (Figure 2), with the A47 Earl Shilton bypass curving around its northern and western extent, and Church Farm forming its eastern boundary. Altogether, the application area covers *c.*0.35 ha.

The British Geological Survey shows that the underlying geology is likely to consist of superficial deposits of Quaternary sand and gravel of the Wolston Sand and Gravel overlying bedrock deposits of

Triassic mudstone belonging to the Edwalton Member (BGS OpenGeoscience). The application area lies on relatively flat ground at *c.*110m aOD, with ground dropping down gently to the north, east and south, and rising gently to the west.

Local

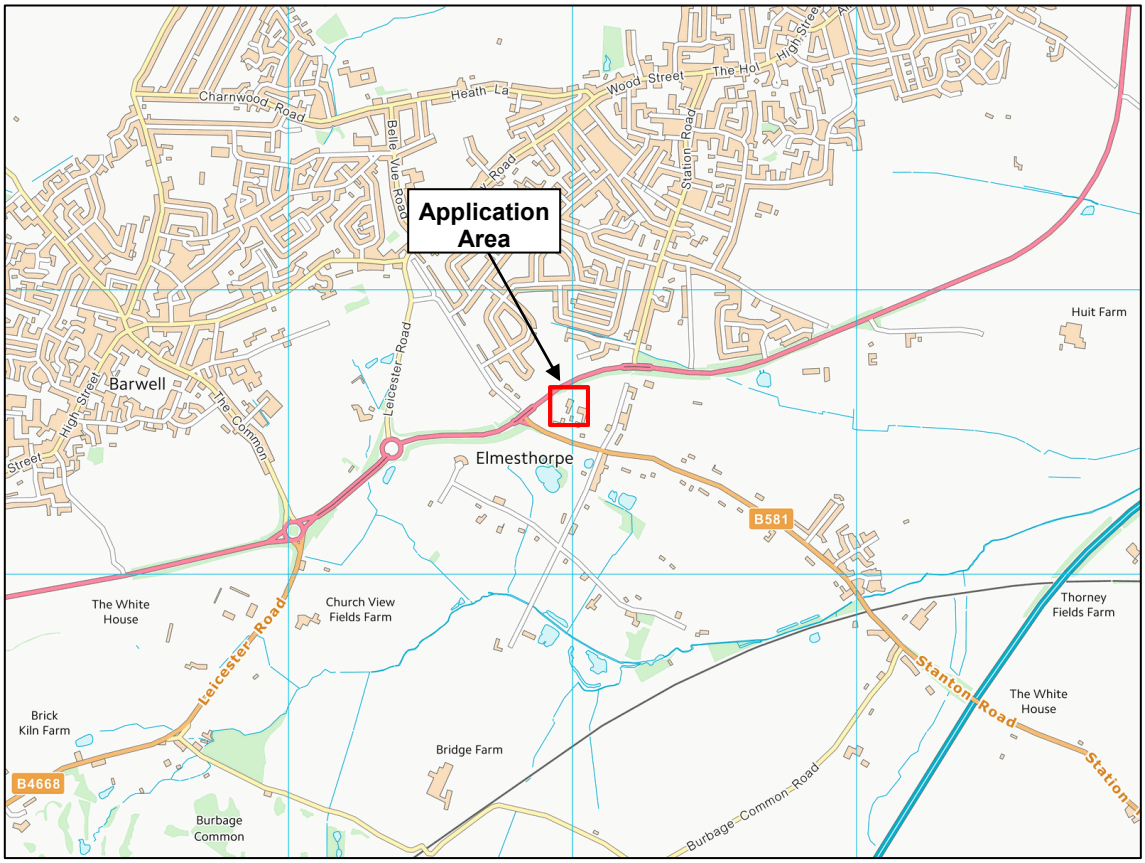

Figure 1: Location Plans with project area highlighted (contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2016).

Archaeological and Historical Background

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application area lies in an area of archaeological interest within the historic settlement core of Elmesthorpe Deserted Medieval Village (HER ref. MLE70). Prehistoric, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon remains are known nearby, from land north and west of Church Farm (MLE17742, MLE17739 & MLE17740) – recorded during

construction of the Earl Shilton Bypass (Jarvis 2009). The application area is also adjacent to the 19th-century Church Farm, formerly Elmesthorpe Farm (MLE20891) and possibly the site of Elmesthorpe Hall (MLE16977), and close to the 14th-century parish church of St Mary (MLE11899).

A series of earthworks lie/lay to the north of the application area (MLE69). These are now partly destroyed and partly buried by the Earl Shilton bypass but were investigated in the 1980s and in 2007/8 (Jarvis 2009), and have been interpreted as the remains of ornamental garden ponds from a large 17th-century formal garden or pleasure ground associated with Elmesthorpe Hall.

Elmesthorpe is first documented as *Aylmerestorp* in 1207. The name probably derives from the Old English/Scandinavian male personal name Aethelmaer, and the Old Scandinavian word *thorp*, meaning outlying/dependent farmstead or hamlet – i.e. The outlying settlement of Aethelmaer (Bourne 2003, 44). Whilst the settlement name is not recorded until the 13th century, it is likely of late Saxon date. By 1603 only one family was still living in the village.

Archaeological Objectives

The principle aims of the archaeological excavation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of archaeological deposits
- To establish the character, extent, survival and date range for any archaeological deposits, artefacts and ecofacts to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To appropriately record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

The results of the investigation will be considered in light of the East Midlands Research Agenda (Cooper 2006) and updated Agenda and Strategy (Knight et. al 2012).

The Roman Period (Taylor 2006, Knight et. al 2012)

- Roman spot finds in the area are an indication of potential Roman activity. Therefore, the evaluation may contribute to knowledge on Iron Age/Roman transitions in rural settlement, landscape, and society. Artefacts may identify trade links and economy.

The Anglo-Saxon Period (Vince 2006, Knight et. al 2012)

- Anglo-Saxon finds have been located in the area and there may be potential for Anglo-Saxon settlement or burial evidence to be present.

The Medieval Period (Lewis 2006, Knight et. al 2012)

- The area lies close to the medieval village core and medieval earthworks of Elmesthorpe and may contribute to the study of rural medieval settlement.

Methodology

During the evaluation, modern overburden and soil was removed in level spits under continuous archaeological supervision down to the uppermost archaeological deposits or the natural substratum, depending on which was reached first. This was carried out with a mini-360° mechanical digger using a 0.6m toothed bucket to remove tarmac and concrete, and a 1.6m wide, toothless ditching bucket.

All trenches, open areas, exposed sections, and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. Features would be hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as appropriate. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS urban trench recording forms whilst stratigraphic units were to be given a unique context number and recorded on proforma ULAS context sheets. Trench and feature plans/sections were drawn at appropriate scales and tied into the National Grid using appropriate methods. A photographic record of the excavation was prepared, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital photographs were taken throughout the excavation. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

All work followed the approved written scheme of investigation (Beamish 2017) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014a) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014b).

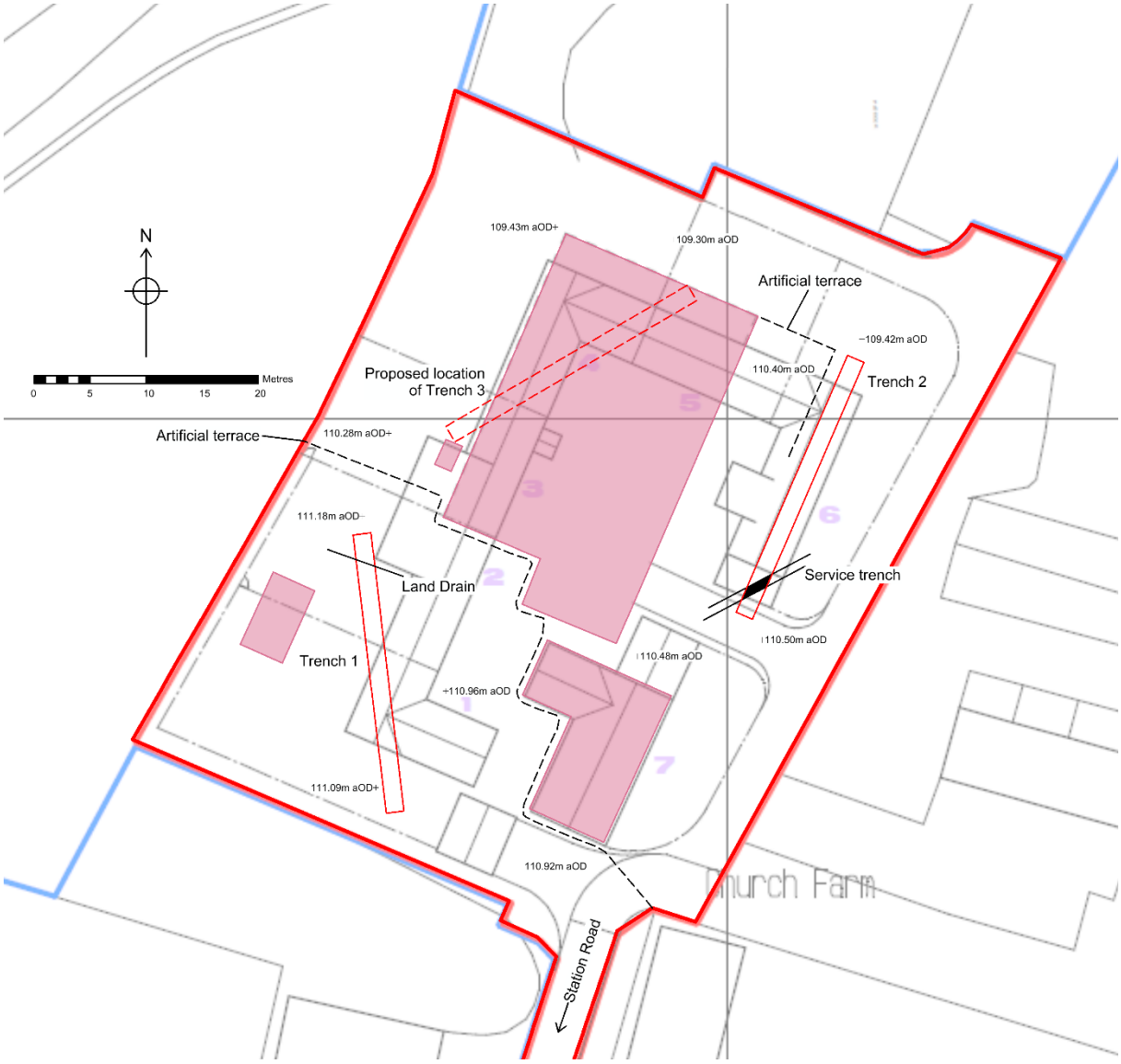

Figure 2: Plan of the area showing trench locations.
Present buildings = pink, evaluation trenches = red, observations = black. Background map showing proposed development and spot-heights provided by client.

Results

The written scheme of investigation (Beamish 2017) provided for the investigation of three 25m by 1.6m trial trenches (120 sq m) to achieve a c.3.5% sample of the *c.*0.35 ha application area (Figure 2), as request by the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire. At the request of the client, work was to be divided into two phases, with two trenches to be excavated before demolition work commenced and the third to be excavated later once standing buildings had been cleared from the site.

Trenches 1 and 2 were excavated on 11 December 2017, in freezing, overcast conditions with snow on the ground.

Figure 3: Trench 1, looking north.

Trench 1

Length (m)	Width (m)		Area (sq m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)	
25	1.6		40		0.44		0.72	
Interval (m) from S	0	5	10	15	20	25m to N		
Ground (m aOD)	c.111.09	-	-	-	-	c.111.18		
Overburden depth	0.27	0.17	0.20	0.16	0.18	0.31		
Subsoil depth	0.33	0.13	0.10	0.09	0.12	0.15		
Top of natural substratum	0.60	0.30	0.30	0.25	0.30	0.46		
Top of natural substratum (m aOD)	110.49	-	-	-	-	110.72		
Base of trench	0.72	0.66	0.55	0.60	0.44	0.66		

Trench 1 was positioned on flat ground within the south-western quarter of the application area at c.111m aOD, and was broadly orientated north to south. This area is presently hard standing. The mechanical digger removed a *c.*0.16-0.31m thick layer of asphalt, concrete and modern hard core, and *c.*0.09–0.33m of compacted brownish-grey clayey-silty-sand subsoil, revealing the natural substratum *c.*0.46-0.6m below ground level (between *c.*110.72-110.49m aOD) - Figure 3. Along the northern *c.*20m of the trench, the natural was soft greyish-orange silty-sand with occasional gravel inclusions. This overlay firm, mottled greyish-orange and greyish-pink clayey sand, which was recorded along the southern *c.*5m of the trench. The natural ground level dropped down very gently from north to south.

No archaeological substrata or features were identified in the trench, the only feature being a modern ceramic land drain which crossed the trench from south-east to north-west, *c.*0.5m below ground level, *c.*3m from the northern end of the trench (Figure 2).

Figure 4: Trench 2, looking north-north-east, with modern service trench in foreground.

Trench 2

Length (m)	Width (m)	Area (sq m)	Min. depth (m)	Max. depth (m)
25	1.6	40	0.30	0.72

Interval (m) from SSW	0	5	10	15	20	25m to NNE
Ground (m aOD)	c.110.50	-	-	-	-	c.109.42
Overburden depth	0.30	0.40	0.20	0.30	0.44	0.24
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-
Top of natural substratum	0.30	0.40	0.20	0.30	0.44	0.24
Top of natural substratum (m aOD)	110.20	-	-	-	-	109.18
Base of trench	0.30	0.58	0.30	0.50	0.72	0.60

Trench 2 was located on gently sloping ground in the north-eastern quarter of the application area between *c.*10.50-109.42m aOD, and was broadly orientated south-south-west to north-north-east. This area is presently hard standing. The mechanical excavator removed a *c.*0.2-0.44m thick layer of asphalt, concrete and modern hard core, revealing the natural substratum *c.*0.2-0.44m below ground level (between *c.*110.20-109.18m aOD) - Figure 4. Along the southern *c.*15m of the trench, the natural was compact greyish-orange sand with occasional gravel, whilst along the northern *c.*10m it was compact orangeish-grey sand with occasional gravel. It is possible this colour change is due to ground contamination, equally it could be geological.

No archaeological substrata or features were identified in the trench, the only feature being a *c.*0.75m wide modern service trench filled with concrete which crossed the trench from north-east to south-west, *c.*0.3m below ground level, *c.*1m from the southern end of the trench (Figure 2 & Figure 4).

Trench 3

Excavation TBC.

Figure 5: Photo looking north at the north-west quarter of the application area. The ground falls away sharply which is interpreted as a result of terracing.

Figure 6: Photo looking north-east at the north-west quarter of the application area. The ground falls away sharply which is interpreted as a result of terracing.

Discussion

Overall, the results of the archaeological investigation were negative, aside for a modern service trench and land drain. It was clear from both trenches that there has previously been extensive groundwork on the site which has removed large areas of topsoil and subsoil and replaced it with modern hard core, asphalt and concrete. In Trench 1 this modern hard standing rested on a thin surviving subsoil whilst in Trench 2 it rested directly on the natural. This reworking of the ground most likely happened in the late 1950s or 1960s when the present buildings were erected, and the disturbance makes it impossible to

determine whether archaeology was present in the application area or not. If archaeological deposits had been present the evidence indicates that recent groundwork is of an extent to render any survival unlikely. Prior to 1900, historic Ordnance Survey maps show the application area in an undeveloped field adjacent to Church (formerly Elmesthorpe) Farm.

Trench 3 has yet to be investigated. An inspection of the proposed location in the north-western quarter of the application area was made. Falling ground across the site, from *c.*111m aOD along the southern edge to *c.*109m aOD along the northern edge, has been terraced around the southern side of the present buildings (Figure 2, Figure 5 & Figure 6), with a steep *c.*0.5-0.9m drop in ground to an artificially levelled area across the northern half of the site.

The natural ground level at the northern end of Trench 1, at *c.*110.72m, is *c.*0.44m above the artificial ground level north of the terrace, at *c.*110.28m aOD. Whilst the natural ground level at the southern end of Trench 2 is *c.*110.2m aOD, just 80mm below the artificial ground level to the north-west. At the northern end of Trench 2, the natural ground level is *c.*109.18m aOD, with the surrounding artificially levelled ground only *c.*0.12-0.24m higher. Considering the average thickness of the hard standing across trenches 1 and 2, *c.*0.27m, it is unlikely that topsoil, subsoil or archaeology survive across the artificially levelled area to the north-west, or beneath the steel-clad building in the centre of the site.

Conclusion

The evaluation has produced limited evidence for modern agrarian farming practices – namely a ceramic field drain. No other archaeological features or deposits were recorded and no artefactual evidence was recovered for archaeological activity in the vicinity. On the balance of evidence recorded during the investigation, it would appear that ground across the application area has been extensively reworked in the latter half of the 20th century. This groundwork has removed topsoil and subsoil from the site, and terraced the natural substratum, and any archaeology, if present, is unlikely to survive.

Archive

The site archive consists of 2 trench record sheets, 13 digital photographs and a photo index, and 1 A4 annotated location plan. The archive will be held by Leicestershire Museum Service under the accession number X.A151.2017

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 (see Table 1).

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

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to extend its thanks to our client, Mr Paul Mac for his assistance (as digger driver) and co-operation throughout the project; and also to Teresa Hawtin, Senior Archaeological Advisor for Leicestershire County Council, for her advice and support. Mathew Morris completed the fieldwork and this report. The project was managed for ULAS by Matthew Beamish.

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Table 1: Summary of OASIS information

PROJECT DETAILS	**Oasis No**	universi1-303753		
	Project Name	Archaeological Evaluation at The Depot, Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire		
	Start/end dates of field work	11/12/2017		
	Previous/Future Work	none / not known		
	Project Type	Evaluation by trial trenching		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Agricultural/commercial		
	Monument Type/Period	None/none		
	Significant Finds/Period	None / none		
	Development Type	Rural residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	After full determination (e.g. as a condition)		
	Planning Ref.	13/0443/1/OX		
PROJECT LOCATION	**Site Address/Postcode**	The Depot, Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe		
	Study Area	0.35 ha		
	Site Coordinates	SP 45989 96604		
	Height OD	109-111m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	**Organisation**	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body		
	Project Design Originator	Matthew Beamish		
	Project Manager	Matthew Beamish		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Mathew Morris		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Developer		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		**Physical**	**Digital**	**Paper**
	Recipient	-	Leics Mus. Service	Leics Mus. Service
	ID (Acc. No.)	-	X.A151.2017	X.A151.2017
	Contents	-	Photos Report	Trench records Sketch plan Photo index Report
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	**Type**	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	An Archaeological Evaluation at The Depot, Church Farm, Station Road, Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire (SP 45989 96604)		
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