

**An Archaeological Watching Brief during
groundworks at 53-57, Main Street, Swannington,
Coalville, Leicestershire (SK415 163)**

John Tate

**Planning Application no. 2004/00872/FUL
Planning Authority: North West Leicestershire District Council**

Checked by Project Manager

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An Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks at 53-57, Main Street, Swannington, Coalville, Leicestershire (SK 415 163)

1. Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Lychgate Homes Ltd prior to the construction of two residential dwellings, access roads and car parking spaces. No previous archaeological work had been undertaken on the site and no structures had been built on the site other than the Stone House in the 17th century. The watching brief revealed four features, a ditch of medieval date, a gully of post-medieval date and an undated pit at the south west end of the site, and the remains of a demolished sandstone outbuilding/structure of probable medieval date to the north east of the Stone House. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services Section, accession number X.A148.2005.

2. Introduction

2.1 The development area of c.4.4ha lies in the centre of the village of Swannington, near Coalville in north west Leicestershire at a height of c.120mO.D. The underlying geology is Sandstone or Boulder Clay.

2.2 The archaeological watching brief was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) and was required as a part of a scheme of work to fulfil the planning conditions (Planning Application no. 2004/00872/FUL) required by North West Leicestershire District Council.

2.3 A design specification was written according to the planning advice that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out (Tate 2005). The areas of the two new plots were levelled, removing any surviving topsoil/modern overburden in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits (see design specification in appendix). In this case archaeology was reached and seen at the top of the natural substratum.

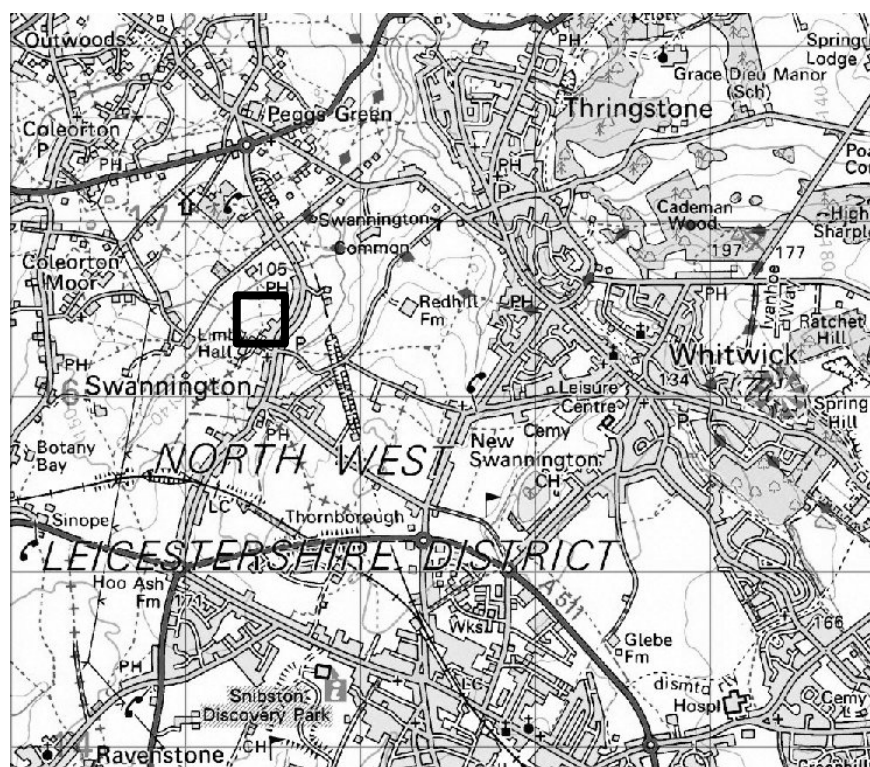


Fig.1 - Site location Scale 1:50000

Reproduced from the Landranger series 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10002186.

3. Aims and Method.

3.1 Aims

3.1.1 Through archaeological control and supervision of existing overburden stripping and by the client's contractors:

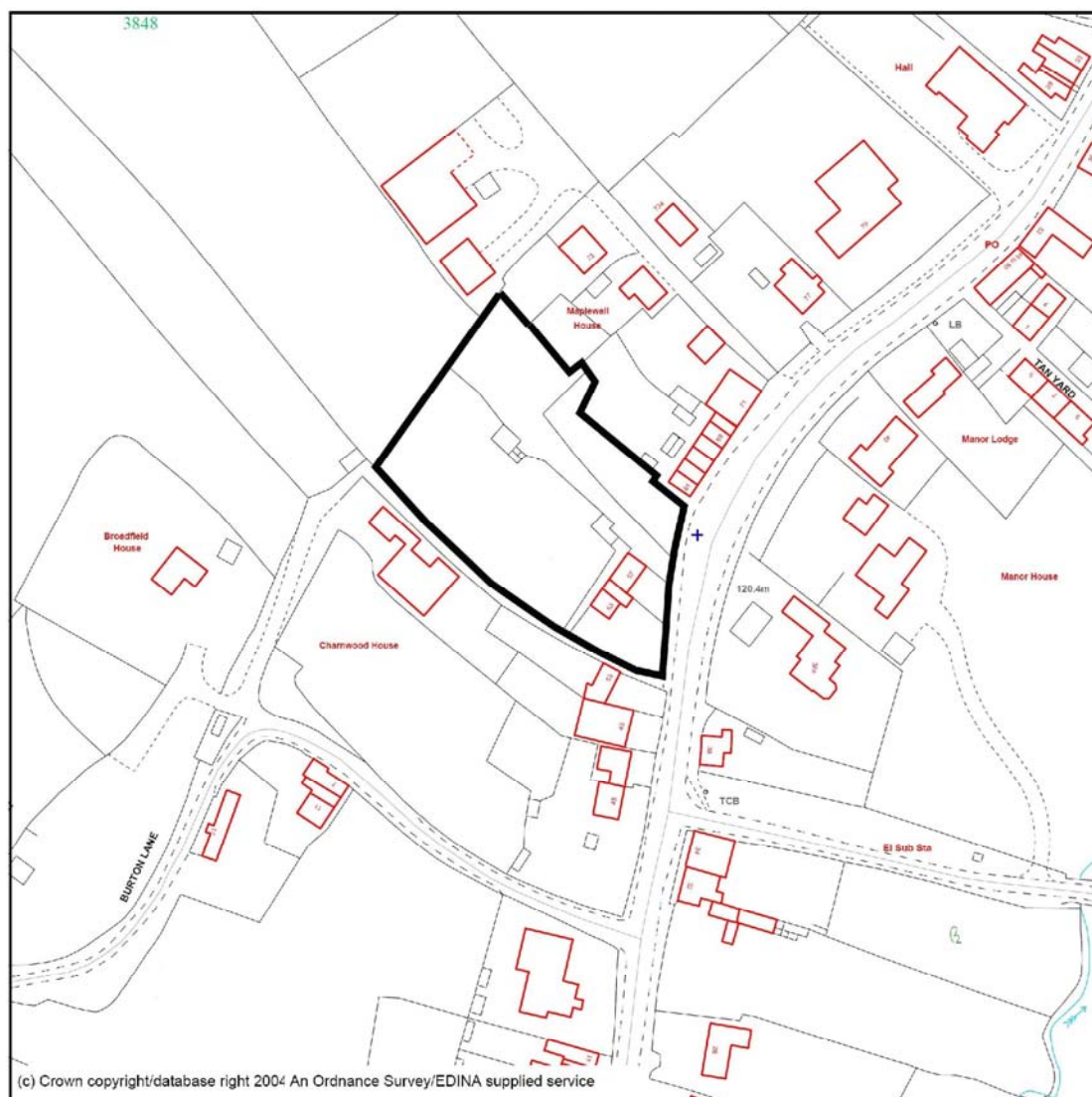
- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To excavate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive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

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 A JCB mechanical digger with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket was used to excavate disturbed subsoil in level spits and scrape back areas of exposed natural under continuous archaeological supervision.

3.2.2 All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

3.2.3 All work adhered to the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance For Archaeological Evaluation*.



Scale 1:1900

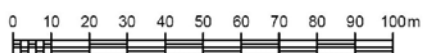


Fig.2. Location of the development area on current O.S. map

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4. Results

4.1 House Plot 1

4.1.1 Initial stripping revealed a dark brown clayey sand topsoil *c.*0.2m deep over a reddish orangey brown subsoil *c.*0.2m deep. This subsoil overlay a light-mid yellow degraded sandstone natural substratum over much of the area. In the southwest corner, a red marl and boulder clay was seen. Archaeology was reached at this level, seen cutting the natural substratum.

4.1.2 A linear feature [2] was revealed running south-south-west to north-north-east 1.4m wide and 0.46m deep. The fill (1) was a mid-orange yellow brown friable clayey sand with occasional sandstone *c.*0.1m in size, rare charcoal and root damage. This feature intersected with a smaller linear feature [3] running at right angles to this with orientation west-north-west to east-south-east. This smaller feature was 0.35m wide and 0.1m deep and filled with a mid orange brown friable clayey sand with rare charcoal and root damage (4). The intersection was inspected and no clear relationship was visible. The smaller feature [3] did not appear on the western side of linear feature [2]. However, the dating from pottery would suggest that linear [2] was considerably earlier than linear [3]. Linear [2] produced pottery from the 12th-14th centuries, whilst linear [3] contained, at the earliest, post-medieval clay pipe stems. To the south and east of these two linears was a shallow pit [5]. It was 1.2m east-west by 1.5m north-south and *c.*0.15m deep. The fill (6) was a mid orange brown friable clayey sand with rare charcoal and root damage.

4.1.3 The area to the north of this plot was truncated by an access road cutting at the rear of this property. No subsoil was evident here and modern artefacts were seen throughout the truncation deposits, with a light covering of topsoil. Similar modern truncation was seen on the east side of the excavated area.

4.1.4 Three archaeological features were seen with artefacts being found in features [2] and [3].

4.2 *House Plot 2*

4.2.1 Initial stripping revealed a dark brown clayey sand topsoil *c.*0.2m deep over a reddish orangey-brown subsoil *c.*0.2m deep. These both thinned to *c.*0.1m each towards the northwest side of the site, most likely due to the area being used to store machinery and as a spoil heap (the ground was very compacted here). This subsoil overlay a light-mid yellow degraded sandstone natural substratum and a red marl and boulder clay.

4.2.2 Half of the area was truncated by modern disturbance on the south west side, as seen in plot 1 on the north east side, both likely due to the old access road that runs between the two plots here. This truncated natural, so was not further investigated as it was also the formation level for the plot. Two other modern rectilinear features were seen containing modern brick, pottery, glass and coal/coke.

4.2.3 The garage plot for house plot 2 is placed within an area of three overhanging trees to the southeast of the house. The ground was so disturbed by tree roots and plants that nothing was visible in the sections of the foundations.

4.2.4 No archaeological features were revealed during the groundworks on this plot.

4.3 *The Stone House, 'New' Garage Plot*

4.3.1 The area for this garage plot had already been stripped of most of the topsoil, was *c.*0.2m deep, and consisted of a dark brown sandy loam. There was no subsoil in this area, as if the area had been previously stripped in the past. This possibly occurred when this area was converted into a vegetable plot in the past.

4.3.2 In most places, *c.*0.1m of topsoil remained. Only in the very northwest corner was natural exposed. Machining began in the northeast corner, and it was apparent



Fig. 3 - Location of investigated areas and archaeology found.

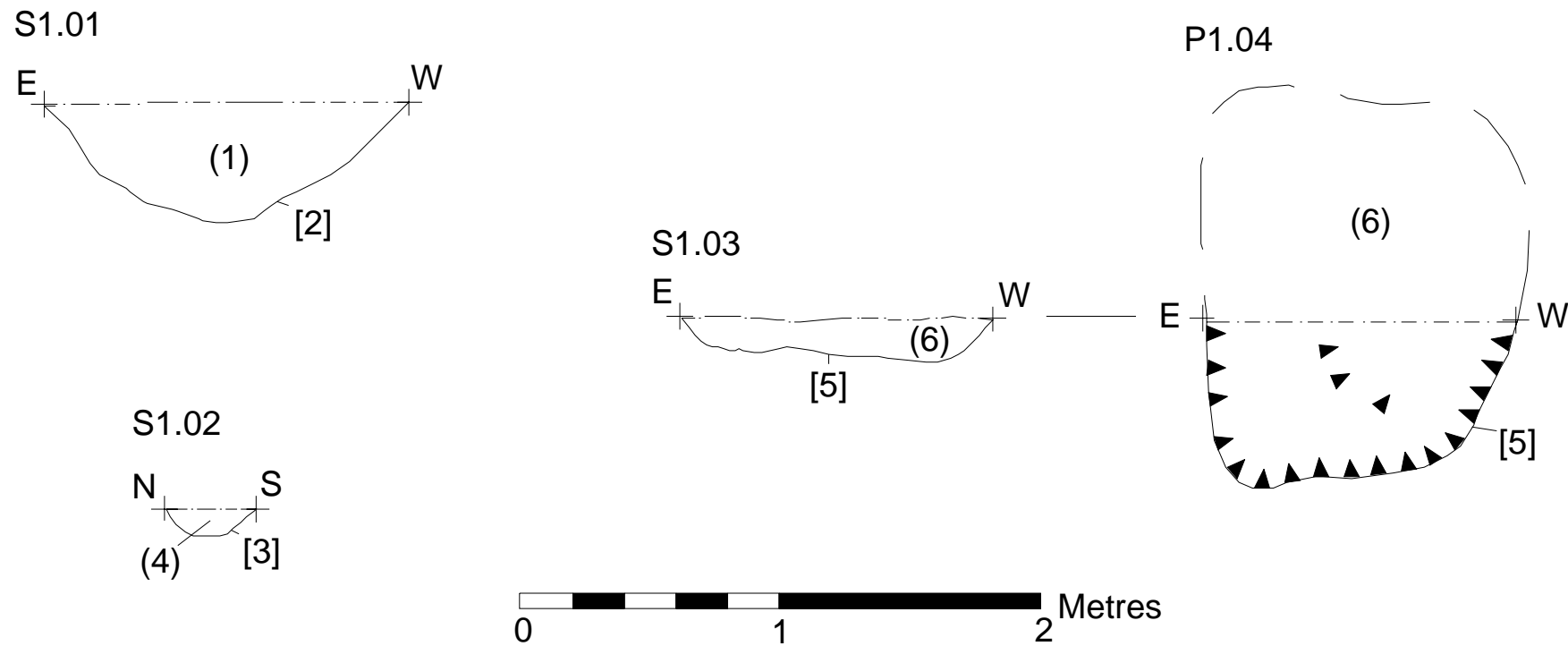


Fig. 4 – Sections and plan of archaeological features from House Plot 1.

S2.01

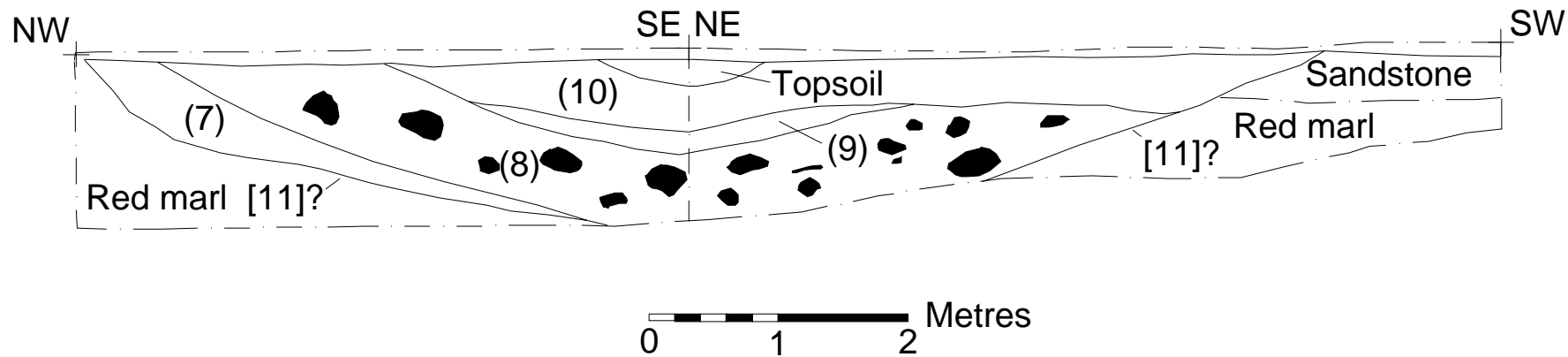


Fig. 5 – Section of Demolition feature from ‘New’ Garage Plot.

almost immediately that archaeology was reached. The demolished remains of a sandstone structure were revealed, firstly in the form of a charcoal layer (9), which was similar to the topsoil, dark brown friable silty sand. This was c.0.15m deep and revealed a layer of sandstone rubble in a matrix of pinkish brown friable clayey sand (8). The sandstone was in pieces c.0.2-0.4m in size and made up c.50-70% of the deposit. Slate was also seen, c.0.1-0.2m in size and making up c.2% of the deposit. One piece of pottery was recovered from this context. This revealed a disturbed red marl natural (7) in a possible cut [11]. The deposits were seen for 4.75m from the northeast corner to the west and for 4.75m to the south. The charcoal layer (9) was overlain by a possible slumped subsoil (10), which consisted of a mid brown friable clayey sand with occasional small pieces of sandstone and occasional charcoal. This was overlain by a slumped topsoil (Fig. 4). The one large sherd of pottery from (8) was of later 14th /15th – mid 16th century date.

4.3.3 No other archaeological features or artefacts were recovered or revealed in the rest of the foundation trench.

5. Discussion

5.1 The area of land behind The Stone House, Main Street, Swannington appears to have been relatively, heavily truncated with modern activity. The track that runs through the site truncates the natural substratum heavily, and appears on the northern edge of House plot 1 and southern edge of House plot 2. The area to the north of The Stone House appeared to have also suffered, as there was no true subsoil here. This was possibly removed, along with the topsoil, when the area had been turned into a vegetable plot in the recent past (*pers comm.* Frank Sanky), with a highly organic topsoil being laid in its place. Otherwise the site had suffered from tree disturbance, with a number of mature trees spread across the site.

5.2 Archaeology was located in the very south west and north east of the site. In the south west of the site, a 12th-14th century ditch was located running north-south. The pottery, however, has two distinct dates of 12th-mid 13th century and later 13th-14th. The earlier date was only a small sherd, so may be residual, whilst the later pottery of some size and less likely to be residual. So it is likely that the ditch is 13th in date, or later. The direction and form of the ditch would suggest that of a boundary ditch running along the hillside following the contour of the land. This area of the site also revealed an undated pit. Slag was recovered from these two features, suggesting the possibility of metal working on the site. The gully was of post-medieval date or later, also containing slag, and appeared to be running in alignment with the outside toilet at the back of the Stone House. The fact that it was not seen beyond the ditch [2] to the west is interesting, but may reflect changes in the depths of soils on this part of the hillside, and may have not been seen had it been truncating topsoil. Interpretation here is difficult.

5.3 The area to the north of the Stone House revealed a demolished sandstone structure within the foundation trench for the new garage. Not enough was seen to interpret this feature properly. It did appear that there was a cut within which a lot of building material and charcoal was seen. This may reflect the demolition of a structure, and being dated to the 14th-16th centuries, may represent a structure that existed prior to the Stone House. However, the very south west of the cut was

revealed, and it is likely that the rest of the structure would have now been removed by the lay-by that exists to the north east of the property running alongside Main Street.

6. Conclusion

Although the site has suffered a lot of truncation in recent times, there did appear to be two pockets of undisturbed stratum revealing archaeological features of medieval to post-medieval date. Due to the fragmentary nature of the evidence, lack of desk-based assessment and time constraints, interpretation in a wider context is difficult, suffice to say that the continuation of settlement, and continuing demarcation of property would best fit the nature of the archaeology present.

7. Archive

The site archive will be held by the Heritage Services section, Community Services Department, Leicestershire County Council, accession number X.A148.2005. It consists of a site plan (digital), records, and photographs. A brief summary of this report will be published in *The Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

8. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr. Frank Sanky of Lychgate Homes Ltd. for his help and co-operation during this watching brief and Richard Buckley for managing this project.

9. Bibliography

- Tate, J. 2005 ‘*Design Specification for a watching brief during groundworks at 53-57, Main Street, Swannington, Coalville, Leicestershire*’ ULAS report No. 05/173

10. Appendix 1

10.1 Site Diary

14/07/05 – JBT

15/07/05 – JBT – half day

15/08/05 – JBT – half day

31/08/05 – JBT

10.2 The Finds

The medieval and later pottery and miscellaneous finds from a watching brief at the Stone House, Swannington, Leicestershire

D. Sawday

The pottery, four sherds, weighing 386 grams, was examined under a binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to the ULAS fabric series (Davies and Sawday 1999) and weight (grams)

The three sherds from the ditch 1 [2] range in date from the twelfth to mid thirteenth century and the later thirteenth or fourteenth century. The pottery from the demolition layer, 8, dates from the later fourteenth or fifteenth to the mid sixteenth century.

Whilst one of the sherds from context 1[2], in a Reduced Sandy ware, may be local, the three other sherds from contexts 1 and 8 probably originate from kilns at Burley Hill or Ticknall in Derbyshire, which were both important centres of pottery production during the medieval period, (Beswick 1999).

The pottery provides important dating evidence for medieval activity in the area from at least the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. The large average sherd weight of 96.5 grams suggests not only that there was medieval occupation in the vicinity, but also that the archaeological levels may survive relatively intact.

Bibliography

Beswick, P., 1999. 'Medieval Pottery' in K. Challis 1999. 'Excavation of a Medieval Structure at Hemp Croft, Thurstaston, Derbyshire'. *Derbyshire Archaeol. J.* **119**, 220-259, (234-253).

Davies, S., and Sawday, D., 1999. 'The Post Roman Pottery and Tile' in A. Connor and R. Buckley, *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester*, Leicester Archaeology Mon. **5**, 165-213.

Site/Parish: Swannington, Leics. Accession No/ Doc Ref: XA148 2005/swannington1 Material: pottery & clay pipe Site Type: village core, adjacent to stone house dated 1700	Submitter: J. Tate Identifier: D. Sawday Date of Id: 7/10/05 Method of Recovery: watching brief
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Context	Fabric/ware	Sherd nos.	Weight grams	Comments
POTTERY				
1 [2] ditch	RS – Reduced Sandy ware	1	6	Body sherd, reduced grey exterior surface and core, pink buff margins and interior. Possibly a Splashed ware, 12 th - mid 13 th C.
1 [2]	MS – Medieval Sandy ware	1	106	Cooking pot/jar with everted rim, distortion of suggests it may have had a pouring lip or handle. Possibly a Burley Hill type ware from Derbyshire, fabric F3A at Hemp Croft, Thurvaston, dating from the later 13 th or 14 th centuries (Beswick 1999, 236, fig.9.3)
1 [2]	MS	1	90	Convex jug base, traces of green glaze underneath. Probably a similar fabric and date to the above.
8 – demolition layer	MP – Midland Purple was	1	184	Sooted exterior, cooking pot or jar body. Fabric possibly a variant of MP4 -? Ticknall, later 14 th /15 th – mid 16 th C. later
CLAY PIPE				
4 [3] Gulley		2		Stems – post medieval or modern

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Appendix 2

Design Specification

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for a watching brief during groundworks at 53-57, Main Street, Swannington, Coalville, Leicestershire

Client:	Lychgate Homes Ltd.
Site:	53-57, Main Street, Swannington, Coalville Leicestershire
NGR:	(SK415 163)
Development:	Erection of two dwellings and associated garaging
Project:	Archaeological Watching Brief
Planning Authority:	North West Leicestershire District Council
Planning Application:	2004/00872/FUL

1 Definition and scope of the specification

1.1 This document constitutes a written scheme of archaeological investigation which ULAS proposes to implement on behalf of the Client in mitigation of any potential damage to buried archaeological deposits which may be caused by the erection of two dwellings and associated garaging at 53-57, Main Street, Swannington, Coalville, Leicestershire. This specification has been prepared in accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning), para.30, and the 'Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief' issued by Leicester City Council, Culture and Regeneration. The strategy comprises archaeological attendance during groundworks with contingency provision for excavation and/or recording of significant deposits.

All archaeological work will adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) Code of Conduct and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

1.2 All archaeological work will adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) *Code of Conduct* and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS).

2 Background

2.1 Requirement for archaeological work

The watching brief is required to cover all ground disturbance, including removal of overburden and excavation of any foundation and service trenches.

2.2 Archaeological potential (taken from the Brief)

The Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments record (SMR) shows that the application area is of significant archaeological potential, falling within the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval village of Swannington. The site also includes The Stone House, a Grade II listed building apparently of 17th century date (ref.SK41NW 4/84).

3 Aims

3.1 Through archaeological observation of groundworks by the client's contractors:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
4. To produce an archive and report of any results.

4 Methods

4.1 The project will involve the presence on site of an experienced professional archaeologist during the works specified above. During these groundworks, if any archaeological deposits are seen to be present, the archaeologist will record areas of archaeological interest.

4.2 The archaeologist will co-operate at all times with the contractors on site to ensure the minimum interruption to the work.

4.3 Any archaeological deposits located will be hand cleaned and planned as appropriate. Samples of any archaeological deposits located will be hand excavated. Measured drawings of all archaeological features will be prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans will be tied into the National Grid using an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) where appropriate.

4.4 Archaeological deposits will be excavated and recorded as appropriate to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention will be paid to the potential for buried palaeosols and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

4.5 All excavated sections will be recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.

4.5 Any human remains encountered will be initially left *in situ* and only be removed under a Home Office Licence and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations. The Client, North West Leicestershire District Council and the coroner will be informed immediately on their discovery.

4.6 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site from the project manager. These will ensure that professional standards are being maintained. Provision will be made for monitoring visits with representatives of the Client and North West Leicestershire District Council.

4.7 In the event of significant archaeological remains being located during the watching brief which will be affected by the proposals, the archaeologist will have the power to halt the works. The Client and the County Archaeologist will be informed immediately in order that discussions can take place with a view to securing the preservation of such remains *in situ*, or for the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to mitigate any damage that will take place.

5 Recording Systems

5.1 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets.

5.2 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 1:200 (or 1:100), which will show the location of the areas investigated.

5.3 Some record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made on drawing film, related to the OS grid and at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. Elevations and sections of individual layers of features should be drawn where possible. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans.

5.4 An adequate photographic record of the investigations will be prepared. This will include black and white prints and colour transparencies 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.

5.5 This record will be compiled and fully checked during the course of the watching brief.

5.6 All site records and finds will be kept securely.

6 Report and Archive

6.1 A report on the watching brief will be provided following the groundworks.

6.2 Copies will be provided for the Client, Sites and Monuments Record and planning Authority. 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.

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 be presented to Leicester City Council, normally within six months of the completion of analysis. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

6.4 Any disk-based data will be provided for the Leicester City SMR.

6.5 ULAS is participating in the Archaeology Data Service and National Monuments Record OASIS project and will complete the appropriate OASIS forms upon completion of the report

7 Publication

7.1 A summary report will be submitted to a suitable regional or national archaeological journal within one year of completion of fieldwork. A full report will be submitted if the results are of significance.

8 Timetable and Staffing

8.1 The watching brief will observe groundworks as appropriate to the level of disturbance which has already taken place on the site. An experienced archaeologist will be present during this work. It is proposed to watch all works in undisturbed areas with appropriately timed visits during the work in consultation with the contractors.

9 Health and Safety

9.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Statement of Safety Policy and uses the ULAS Health and Safety Manual (2001) with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is in the Appendix. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate.

10 Insurance

10.1 All ULAS work is covered by the University of Leicester's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance. The Public Liability Insurance is with Gerling Insurance Services Policy No. 62/99094/D, Risk Reference LT 35101 while the Professional Indemnity Insurance is with Sun Alliance Insurance Policy No. 03A/5A 001 05978, Risk Reference LT 27229.

11 Bibliography

Brief Brief for an archaeological watching brief at 53-57, Main Street, Swannington, Coalville, Leicestershire. North West Leicestershire District Council

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Appendix

Draft Project Health and Safety Policy Statement

Groundworks at 53-57, Main Street, Swannington, Coalville, Leicestershire.

For: Lychgate Homes Ltd.

1 Nature of the work

1.1 This statement is for an archaeological watching brief.

1.2 The work will involve observation of groundworks during daylight hours and recording of any underlying archaeological deposits revealed. Overall depth is likely to be c. 0.2-0.5m. This will involve the examination of the exposed surface with hand tools (shovels, trowels etc) and excavation of archaeological features. All work will adhere to the University of Leicester Health and Safety Policy and follow the guidance in the Standing Committee of Archaeological Unit Managers manual, as revised in 1997, together with the following relevant Health and Safety guidelines.

1.3 HSE Construction Information Sheet CS8 Safety in excavations.

HSE Industry Advisory leaflet IND (G)143 (L): Getting to grips with manual handling.

HSE Industry Advisory leaflet IND (G)145 (L): Watch Your back.

CIRIA R97 Trenching practice.

CIRIA TN95 Proprietary Trench Support Systems.

HSE Guidance Note HS(G) 47 Avoiding danger to underground services. HSE Guidance Note GS7 Accidents to children on construction sites

1.4 The Health and Safety policy on site will be reassessed during the evaluation .

1.5 All work will adhere to the contractors' health and safety policy.

2 Risks Assessment

2.1 Working within a building site

Precautions. No work will be undertaken beneath section faces. Loose spoil heaps will not be walked on. Protective footwear will be worn at all times. Hard hats will be worn at all times. A member of staff qualified in First Aid will be present at all times. First aid kit, vehicle and mobile phone to be kept on site in case of emergency.

2.2 Working with plant.

Precautions. Hard hats, protective footwear and hazard jackets will be worn at all times. No examination of the area of stripping will take place until machines have vacated area. Observation of machines will be maintained during hand excavation.

Liaison will be maintained with the contractors to ensure programme of machine movement is understood.

2.3 Working within areas prone to waterlogging.

Protective clothing will be worn at all times and precautions taken to prevent contact with stagnant water which may carry Vialls disease or similar.

2.4 Working with chemicals.

If chemicals are used to conserve or help lift archaeological material these will only be used by qualified personnel with protective clothing (i.e a trained conservator) and will be removed from site immediately after use.

2.5 Other risks

Precautions. If there is any suspicion of unforeseen hazards being encountered e.g chemical contaminants, unexploded bombs, hazardous gases work will cease immediately. The client and relevant public authorities will be informed immediately.

2.9 No other constraints are recognised over the nature of the soil, water, type of excavation, proximity of structures, sources of vibration and contamination.

Richard Buckley
January 2005