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Archaeological Services

**Strip, Map and Sample on Land at
Hall Farm Courtyard, Hall Lane,
Ashby Magna LE17 5ND**

SP56444 90548

Mireya González Rodríguez



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Hall Farm Courtyard, Hall Lane, Ashby Magna LE17 5ND**

NGR: SP56444 90548

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For: Mr Jonathan Gunn

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out intermittently between the 22nd of November 2017 and 27th of February 2018 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Mr Jonathan Gunn on land at Hall Farm Courtyard, Hall Lane, Ashby Magna LE17 5ND (SP56444 90548). The fieldwork was required by Harborough District Council to fulfil Planning Condition 17 of planning application 16/00270/FUL for the demolition of an existing barn and the erection of single detached dwelling and garage. The scheme of archaeological work, an archaeological soil strip, map and sample of the development area during groundworks, was established in order to mitigate the potential impact of the development on any such archaeological remains as might be present.

The programme of archaeological work revealed no archaeological activity.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Museums under Accession Number XA48.2018.

Introduction

This document forms the report for an archaeological programme consisting of strip, map and sample on land Hall Farm Courtyard, Hall Lane, Ashby Magna LE17 5ND in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*. Under planning application number **16/00270/FUL** permission has been granted for the demolition of an existing barn and the erection of a single dwelling and garage (Fig. 4), subject to conditions, including Condition 17 which stipulates the need for an archaeological programme of investigation.

The Planning Archaeologist for Harborough District Council as advisor to the planning authority specified the need for a scheme of work comprising archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication before any groundworks commence in order to mitigate the potential impact of the development on any such archaeological remains as might be present.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

Ashby Magna is a small village located 21 kilometres to the south of Leicester, between Junctions 20 and 21 of the M1 (Fig. 1). The assessment area, Hall Farm Courtyard, lies on the east side of the historic village. The land under investigation was the location of a complex of converted farm buildings and comprises a flat waster area used for parking surrounding the demolished barn (Fig. 2).

The assessment area is accessible from Hall Lane via a driveway running in a west-east direction to the north of the development. The private section of the driveway is gated on the north-western boundary of the site and from here the paved track forks to the south. The site opens up to an approximate width of 10m on the north edge and c.30m on the southern boundary and c.32m in length, covering an area of approximately 625m².

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone overlain with Mid Pleistocene Diamicton Till. The ground level is c.130m aOD.



Figure 1. Location of Ashby Magna (site marked in red)



Figure 2. Location of assessment area (marked in red) and current land use (Source: GoogleEarth)

Historical and Archaeological Background

Ashby Magna was also known in the past as Great Ashby or Much Ashby. At the time of the Domesday Survey it was known as 'Esseby'. Ashby is a common name in the Midlands and the north of England, and is usually derived from the Old English or Old Scandinavian for 'town where ash trees grow', or 'town belonging to a man called Aski'.

The proposed development site opens onto the edge of the pasture ground between the Grade II listed post medieval hall, the Grade II listed Church of St. Mary and the Scheduled medieval moated site and fishponds associated with the early manor.

The barn on the development site appears on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 3) as part of a complex of buildings associated with Hall Farmhouse, an 18th century Grade II listed building (**MLE11020**).



Figure 3. 1885 Ordnance Survey map with assessment area (marked in red)

Archaeological background

Various archaeological remains and sites have been located within the vicinity of the proposed development area including a fragment of medieval floor tile, and a number of sherds of early medieval pottery in the field east of the church (**MLE15768**). To the south of the assessment area is a medieval moated site (**MLE1203**), which is a scheduled ancient monument (Scheduled Monument **17040**). A ditch containing medieval pottery was recorded during an archaeological evaluation and watching brief at number 4, Old Forge Road (**MLE9773**) and a number of medieval earthworks can be seen within the village (**MLE1199**, **MLE1204** and **MLE10492**). The Church of St. Mary, to the southwest of the proposed development area has 13th century origins (**MLE11018**).

Aims and Methods

All exploratory and mitigation work was considered in light of the *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper 2006) and *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight et al. 2012), along with targeting national research aims, highlighted as English Heritage's critical research priorities for the medieval period (EH 2012). Within the research objectives, this archaeological scheme of work could contribute to regional research agendas on medieval landscape studies and morphologies of rural settlements.

Generally the main objectives of the archaeological investigation were:

- 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 record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.

- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape and to advance understanding of the heritage assets.
- To recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project aims, the principal objective was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context.

Draft Research Themes

The villages of the English Central Midlands appear to have evolved alongside their open field systems during the later first millennium AD. Buried archaeological evidence spanning the period from the earliest evolution of the village to its more recent past might be present within the development area. The archaeological programme may thus contribute towards research into the origins and development of medieval settlement, landscape and society. Environmental evidence could provide information on local environmental conditions as well as settlement activity, craft, industry and land use. Additionally, artefacts can assist in the development of a type series within the region and provide evidence for craft, industry and exchange across broad landscape areas.

Therefore, the archaeological scheme of work had the potential to contribute to:

- Reviewing the evidence for developing settlement hierarchies
- Researching regional communications infrastructure
- Investigating the morphology of rural settlements including
 - (a) the development, structure and landholdings of manorial estate centres
 - (b) the development of open-field system and woodland management

Methodology

The *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) (Score 2016) approved by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the planning authority required an archaeological programme consisting of strip, map and sample during groundworks in order to determine the presence/absence, character and extent of archaeological remains.

Ground reduction was undertaken using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.70m toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and overburden was removed under archaeological supervision. The excavation of foundation trenches for the garage was conducted using a flat toothed 0.70m wide bucket.

A photographic record of the investigation was prepared as per WSI. This included photographs illustrating in both detail and general context the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014), and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Watching Briefs* (2014) and *Archaeological Excavations* (2014).

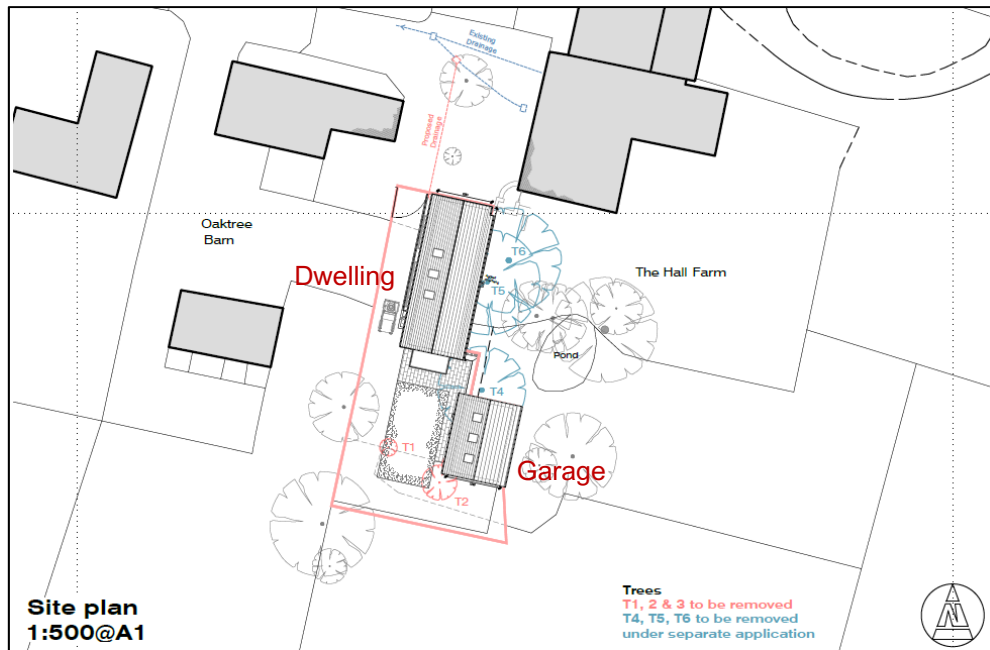


Figure 4. Proposed development (provided by Client)

Results

The programme of archaeological strip, map and sample consisted of the observation of groundworks associated with the reduction of ground, removal of trees and excavation of footprint of the garage and dwelling. Most of the archaeological programme was carried out under ice and snow conditions.

Prior to arrival on site above ground demolition of the barn had taken place, along with some superficial clearance of the development area. Groundworks commenced on the southern end of the assessment area with the removal of topsoil, a mid grey brown silty clay, and trees as per planning application (Fig. 5), under supervision.



Figure 5. Ground reduction on the southern end of the assessment area prior removal of trees.

Due to site logistics and constraints the garage strip and foundations were excavated first (Fig. 6). The footings measured 0.70m in width and varied in depth between 0.70m and 1.90m. Overburden appeared to be a broad mixture of modern demolition material (plastic, tile, brick, concrete and tarmac) and modern landscaping activity. The soils were general mid-dark grey brown in colour of a friable consistency and a mixture of loamy topsoil and silty sands and gravels. It was noted that demolition material was more prevalent in the northern foundation of the garage and was up to 0.90m in depth at which natural red clay substrata was reached. The footings on the southern end of the garage truncated less disturbed subsoils and the natural red clay substrata was reached at a depth of 0.60m from ground surface. No archaeological deposits or features were observed during the excavation of the garage footings.



a. North facing view of assessment area



b. Southeast view of excavation of garage footings



c. East facing view of retaining wall of garage (Scale: 1.00m)



d. East facing view of north wall footings of garage (Scale: 1.00m)



e. South facing view of west trench footings of garage (Scale: 1.00m)

Figure 6. Excavation of garage footings (Scale: 1.00m)

Immediately to the west of the northern foundation of the garage, a 'retaining' wall foundation was also excavated (Fig. 6c). This was excavated to a depth of 0.70m. Overburden was comparable to the seen in the northernmost garage foundation and appeared to be a mixture of modern demolition material and landscaping soils. Natural substrata was not reached and no archaeological deposits were observed.



a. North facing view of reduced ground



b. West facing section of assessment area



c. West facing section of reduced ground



d. East facing section

Figure 7. Ground reduction for erection of dwelling (Scale: 1.00m)

The footprint of the dwelling on the north end of the assessment area was reduced using a JCB mechanical excavator with a 1.70m toothless ditching bucket. Observation of the groundworks was carried out until natural ground was reached at a depth of approximately 0.70m. The topmost 0.50m comprised mixed soils and building debris, consisting of bricks, cobbles and hard core made up ground, especially on the western side. The accumulation of debris and made up ground are related to the demolition of the barn.

On the south end of the east facing section, the remains of a possible cobbled yard surface were noted (Fig. 8) at approximately 0.80m below ground surface. The spoil was checked for finds, but there was no indication of archaeological activity.

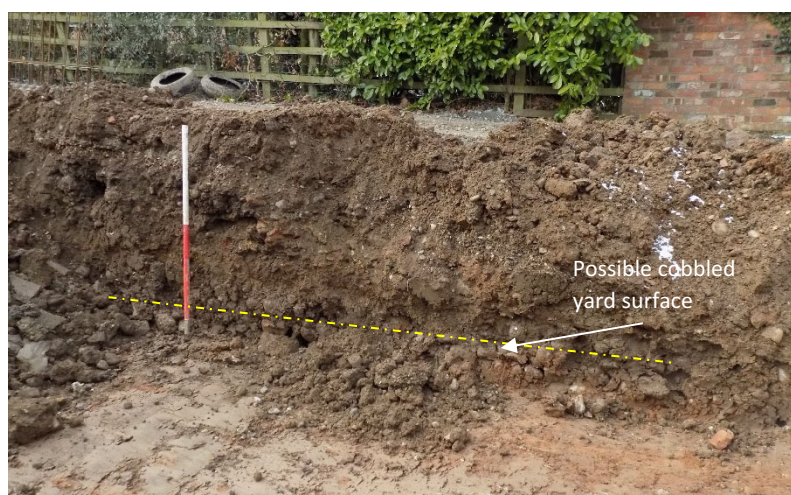


Figure 8. East facing section showing possible cobbled yard surface (Scale: 1.00m)

Conclusion

No archaeological activity was observed during ground reduction for the dwelling on the north of the assessment area or for the excavation of the garage footings to the south. The depth of overburden indicates that the site has been previously landscaped and the central area of the new development shows signs of disturbance related to the demolition of the barn.

No archaeological deposits were uncovered, although a disturbed cobbled yard surface was noted, possibly related to the earlier farm buildings.

Archive and Publications

A copy of the report shall be submitted to the Leicestershire Historic and Environment Records (HER) as a single bound copy with PDF/A on a CD, the completed OASIS record (Appendix I) and digital images. Rutland County Museum shall receive the full archive for deposition Accession Number XA48.2018.

The site archive consists of:

PAPER 4x ULAS pro forma Watching Brief Recording Sheets
 1x ULAS Digital Photography Record sheet
 1x unbound copy of this report

DIGITAL 1 CD-R with 42 digital photographs; excel file with a copy of the site
 photographic index; a PDF_A copy of this report

A version of this report and excavation summary will appear in due course in the *Transactions the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*. The University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The online OASIS data entry has been completed detailing the results of the project (see Appendix I of this report). This is digitally accessible through The Archaeological Data Services (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>).

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to the contractors for their cooperation on site. The fieldwork was carried out by Mireya González Rodríguez with the assistance of Naomi Cooper, and Adam Clapton. The project was managed by Vicki Score.

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Appendix I. OASIS Data Entry

PROJECT DETAILS	OASIS ID	Universi1-315406		
	Project Name	Strip, Map and Sample on Land at Hall Farm Courtyard, Hall Lane, Ashby Magna LE17 5ND		
	Start/end dates of field work	22-11-2017/27-02-2018		
	Previous/Future Work	No/No		
	Project Type	Recording Project		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Garden		
	Monument Type/Period	None/None		
	Significant Finds/Period	None/None		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Condition		
	Planning Ref.	16/00270/FUL		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Hall Farm Courtyard, Hall Lane, Ashby Magna LE17 5ND		
	Study Area	625m ²		
	Site Coordinates	SP56444 90548		
	Height OD	130m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	University of Leicester Archaeological Services		
	Project Brief Originator	Planning Archaeologist Harborough District Council		
	Project Design Originator	University of Leicester Archaeological Services		
	Project Manager	Vicki Score		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Mireya González Rodríguez		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Developer		
PROJECT ARCHIVE	Recipient	Physical		
		Digital	Leicestershire County Museums	Leicestershire County Museums
	ID (Acc. No.)		XA48.2018	XA48.2018
	Contents		Digital Photographs Excel File PDF_A	4 pro forma record sheets 1 photographic index Unbound copy of report
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature		
	Title	Strip, Map and Sample on Land at Hall Farm Courtyard, Hall Lane, Ashby Magna LE17 5ND		
	Author	González Rodríguez, M.		
	Other bibliographic details	University of Leicester Archaeological Services Report No. 2018-076		
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