

An Archaeological Evaluation on land at Oakham Road,
Somerby, Leicestershire, LE14 2QL

NGR: SK 7831 1027

Claire LaCombe



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**For: Hazelton Homes
Planning Authority: Melton Borough Council
Planning Ref: 16/00100/OUT**

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Oakham Road, Somerby, Leicestershire, LE14 2QL (SK 7831 1027), on behalf of Hazelton Homes.

Six trenches, totalling 282.56m², of the site, were excavated to evaluate an area in advance of a proposed residential development. The archaeological work was carried out from the 16th-18th of July 2018, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

Evidence for modern truncation was recorded. The archaeological evaluation proved to be negative as no archaeological features or deposits were observed in any of the six trenches.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire Museums under the Accession Number X.A77.2018.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Hazelton Homes to carry out an archaeological field evaluation on land at Oakham Road, Somerby, Leicestershire, in advance of a proposed residential development.

The fieldwork was intended to provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any heritage assets in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority.

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, this document forms the report for an archaeological evaluation, with an assessment of the potential impact on buried archaeological remains from groundworks associated with future development.

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological trial trenching, which took place in July 2018. It followed a strategy for the work devised by ULAS, which was set out in the Design Specification for Land off Oakham Road, Somerby, Leicestershire LE14 2QL (LaCombe 2018).

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014).



Figure 1: Site location (shown in red). Scale 1: 50 000

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Figure 2: Proposed development plan provided by client (north to the right).



Figure 3: Results of geophysical survey provided by client.



Figure 4: Proposed trench plan taken from the WSI. Three of the trenches were positioned to target linear anomalies from the geophysical survey.

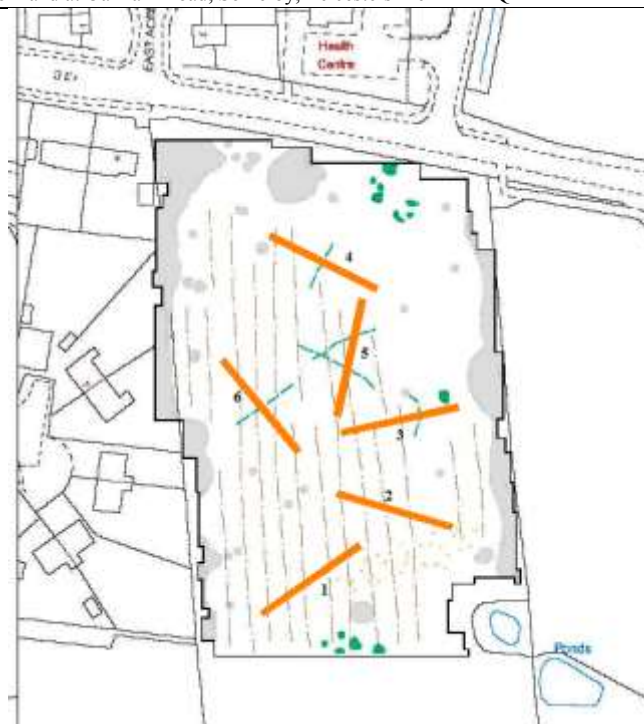


Figure 5: Final location of trenches after moving trench 5

Location and Geology

Somerby village is located approximately 9km south of Melton Mowbray in Melton Borough, close to the border with Rutland (fig 1). The assessment area lies at the south-eastern edge of the village along the southern side of Oakham Road and consists of a pasture field known as 'Football field', with a pond on the eastern boundary. The site is surrounded by mature hedgerows and some large trees. The land slopes gently from south at 179m OD to north at 178m OD. The adjacent land to the south and east is farmland. Directly to the west is a residential area, and there is a large dwelling to the north side of Oakham Road, which is surrounded by farmland and medieval ridge and furrow. The development proposal is for new housing (fig. 2) and trial trenching is required by the planning authority to determine if there are any archaeological deposits that might be impacted by the proposed scheme.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology consists of Marlstone Rock Formation limestone.

Historical and Archaeological Background

The site exists outside the Somerby Conservation Area and is in close proximity to a number of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland indicates that there are no known archaeological sites within the assessment area, however there are a few known archaeological sites in the area from prehistoric, Roman and Medieval sites in the vicinity of the assessment area. A field walking survey undertaken in the neighbouring hamlet of Pickwell in 1991, on land 1km north-east of the assessment area located an assemblage of prehistoric flint tools. Other flint artefacts had been found here in 1942, including scrapers and arrowheads (MLE7600). Iron Age and Roman finds were also found nearby during fieldwalking. A geological trial hole excavated in the area revealed further Iron Age and Roman material, suggesting that there is a site somewhere in the vicinity (MLE4083). The site lies around 2km

south-east of the Iron Age hillfort of Burrough Hill. The lack of known earlier archaeological sites in the area listed on the HER is most likely due to the archaeologically unattested nature of the area, which has seen little survey or large scale development in recent years.

The village is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and has an early medieval origin. The suffix 'by' within the place-name suggests a Scandinavian origin. The medieval and post-medieval historic settlement core of the village core has been deduced using landscape maps. The assessment area lies just outside the known medieval core (MLE8617).

A detailed magnetometer survey was conducted across the area before the trial trenching took place (fig. 3). The survey did not identify any definite archaeological anomalies, although several discrete features and linear anomalies of uncertain origin were thought to be of modern or natural origin. Evidence of ridge and furrow was also present in the data, along with an area of natural magnetic variation and disturbance resulting from ferrous objects (SUMO 2018).

Archaeological Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological work was:

- 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 recover artefacts and ecofacts to compare with other assemblages and results.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets.
- To produce an archive and report any results.

Within the stated project aims, the principal objective of the recording is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, and significance of the heritage assets within their local and regional context in order to formulate a mitigation strategy to address the impacts of the proposed development on cultural heritage. While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project were unknown until archaeological work was undertaken, some initial objectives were derived from East Midlands Heritage research agenda (Knight *et al.* 2012) accessible online.

Relevant research objectives include:

Research Objective 6C - Review the evidence for developing settlement hierarchies;

Research Objective 7E- Investigate the morphology of rural settlements;

Research Objective 7I- Investigate the development of the open-field system and medieval woodland management.

Methodology

The work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (LaCombe, 2018) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (2014a) and adhered to their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations (2014b). An accession number/site code was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts.

Prior to any machining general photographs of the site areas were taken. The programme of work consisted of the excavation of six trenches mostly measuring 30m x 1.6m and were distributed to target geophysical anomalies across the site.

Excavation was carried out with a machine appropriate for the work (JCB 3CX fitted with 1.6m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket) to expose the underlying strata. The machine did not track over any surfaces until the archaeologist had inspected and cleared the area. Topsoil and

overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision. The trenches were excavated down to the top of natural undisturbed ground. All excavation by machine was undertaken with a view to avoid damage to archaeological deposits or features which appear worthy of preservation *in situ* or more detailed investigation than for the purposes of evaluation.

The ULAS recording manual was used as a guide for all recording. Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. Relative spot heights were taken as appropriate. At least one longitudinal face of each trench was recorded. Trench locations were recorded by an appropriate method and then be tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The trenches were then backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.

Results

A total of six trenches were excavated between the 16th and 18th July 2018. These trenches measured approximately 30m x 1.6m, with the exception of Trench 5 which was 26.6m in length. Three of the trenches were placed to target linear features picked up in the geophysical survey, and three were located to evaluate the blank areas of the survey, and to complete a general coverage of the development area.

The weather was dry and conditions for the excavation were good. Prior to the start of the evaluation, the trench locations were set out using a Topcon GPS unit in order to precisely locate the planned position of the trenches.

The topsoil was consistent across the site and consisted of a dark-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was also consistent across the site and consisted of an orange-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles. The natural substratum varied across the site from a bright orange clay with >10% manganese flecks to a grey smooth clay.

Table 1: Trench Summary

| Trench | Orientation | Min. Depth | Max. Depth | Length of Trench | Width of Trench | Total area of trench | Comments |
|--------|-------------|------------|------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | NE-SW | 0.40m | 0.55m | 30.00m | 1.60m | 48.00m ² | No Archaeological features |
| 2 | E-W | 0.33m | 0.46m | 30.00m | 1.60m | 48.00m ² | No Archaeological features |
| 3 | ENE-WSW | 0.35m | 0.53m | 30.00m | 1.60m | 48.00m ² | No Archaeological features |
| 4 | NNW - SSE | 0.41m | 0.57m | 30.00m | 1.60m | 48.00m ² | No Archaeological features |
| 5 | NE-SW | 0.32m | 0.49m | 26.60m | 1.60m | 42.56m ² | No Archaeological features |
| 6 | NW-SE | 0.30m | 0.47m | 30.00m | 1.60m | 48.00m ² | No Archaeological features |

Trench 1 (fig. 6)

Trench 1 was the southernmost trench on the proposed development site and sat to the west of the existing pond. The trench was orientated north-east / south –west. The natural substratum was observed at depths between 0.40m and 0.55m. It consisted of a dark-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was also consistent across the site and consisted of an orange-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles. The natural substratum consisted mostly of yellow/orange silty clay, with some discontinuous areas of smooth grey clay patches. Two modern land drains truncated the trench. One in an east-west direction, and one roughly running north-south. There was also visible plough scarring and the presence of furrows from the previous medieval field system. No archaeological deposits or residual finds were recovered.



Figure 6: Trench 1, Post-excavation, looking north-east. Scale 1m

Trench 2 (fig. 7)

Trench 2 was situated north west of the existing pond on the proposed development site. The trench was orientated east-west. The natural substratum was observed at depths between 0.33m and 0.46m. It consisted of a dark-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was also consistent across the site and consisted of an orange-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles. The natural substratum consisted mostly of yellow/orange silty clay, with some discontinuous areas of smooth grey clay patches. Three modern land drains truncated the trench running roughly north-south, but varying slightly. There was also visible plough scarring and the presence of furrows from a previous medieval field system. No archaeological deposits or residual finds were recovered.



Figure 7: Trench 2, Post-excavation, looking east. Scale 1m

Trench 3 (fig. 8)

Trench 3 was the first of the three targeted trenches, a small curvilinear anomaly was present here in the geophysical survey and the trench was positioned so that it should cut straight across it at a 90° angle. The trench was orientated east-north-east to west-south-west. The natural substratum was observed at depths between 0.35m and 0.53m. It consisted of a dark-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was also consistent across the site and consisted of an orange-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles. The natural substratum consisted mostly of yellow/orange silty clay, with some discontinuous areas of smooth grey clay patches. Five modern land drains truncated the trench, three in a north-south direction, one roughly running east-west, and another roughly north-west to south-east. There was the presence of furrows from the previous medieval field system. No archaeological deposits or residual finds were recovered.



Figure 8: Trench 3, Post-excavation, looking east-north-east. Scale 1m

Trench 4 (fig. 9)

Trench 4 was the northernmost trench on the proposed development site and sat south of the entrance gateway. The trench was orientated north-east to south-west and was targeting a linear anomaly apparent on the geophysical survey. The natural substratum was observed at depths between 0.32m and 0.49m. It consisted of a dark-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was also consistent across the site and consisted of an orange-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles. The natural substratum consisted mostly of yellow/orange silty clay, with some discontinuous areas of smooth grey clay patches. One very large modern pipe truncated the trench, with what appeared to be a repair or access trench to the pipework running next to it but at a slightly different alignment. There was some disturbance that appeared to connect the two features, and evidence of repaired pipework. The pipe ran in a north-east to south-west direction. There was also the presence of furrows from the previous medieval field system. No archaeological deposits or residual finds were recovered.



Figure 9: Trench 4, Post-excitation, looking north-north-west. Scale 1m

Trench 5 (fig. 10)

Trench 5, which was not targeting any geophysical anomalies features, had to be re-located due to the presence of overhead cables and a water trough. The trench was moved to the centre of the field (fig. 5), where it crossed two linear features which were present in the geophysical survey. The trench was orientated north-east to south-west. The natural substratum was observed at depths between 0.32m and 0.49m. It consisted of a dark-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was also consistent across the site and consisted of an orange-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles. The natural substratum consisted mostly of yellow/orange silty clay, with some discontinuous areas of smooth grey clay patches. Two modern land drains truncated the trench. One in an east-west direction, and the other north-east to south-west. There was the presence of furrows from the previous medieval field system. No archaeological deposits or residual finds were recovered.



Figure 10: Trench 5, Post-excitation, looking south-west. Scale 1m

Trench 6 (fig. 11)

Trench 6 was located to the west of the field, roughly half way down the proposed development site. The trench was orientated north-west to south-east. This trench was located in order to target a linear feature apparent on the geophysical survey, crossing the trench at a 90° angle. The natural substratum was observed at depths between 0.30m and 0.47m. It consisted of a dark-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles and occasional modern debris such as brick fragments. The subsoil was also consistent across the site and consisted of an orange-brown, silty-clay which contained <10% small pebbles. The natural substratum consisted mostly of yellow/orange silty clay, with some discontinuous areas of smooth grey clay patches. Three modern land drains truncated the trench all running roughly in a north-south direction. There was also visible plough scarring and the presence of furrows from the previous medieval field system. No archaeological deposits or residual finds were recovered.



Figure 11: Trench 6, Post-excavation, looking north-west. Scale 1m

Conclusion

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 16th and 18th July 2018 by University of Leicester Archaeological services on behalf of Hazelton Homes in advance of a proposed residential development. Six trenches were excavated by JCB to provide a representational sample of the development area and to target linear anomalies that had been identified during a previous geophysical survey. The geophysical anomalies proved to have been caused by modern drains. There was some evidence from plough scars and furrows to suggest past agricultural activity and land drains across the site but no archaeological deposits were observed during the evaluation.

Archive

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession No. X.A77.2018.

The archive contains:

- 1 x A4 report
- 1 x Trench summary index sheet
- 6 x Trench recording sheets
- 1 x Digital photo index

- 1 x Digital photo sheet

Publication

University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. The online OASIS form (Appendix 1) shall be completed detailing the results of the evaluation and once the report has become a public document following its incorporation into the Historic Environment Record it shall be placed on the website.

Acknowledgements

The project was managed by John Thomas, the fieldwork was directed by Claire LaCombe with the assistance of Claire Brown. Thanks go to Alan Ridley and Paul Harris of Planters (Leicester) Ltd, for operating the machinery.

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20/07/2018

Appendix 1: OASIS data entry

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|---|
| PROJECT DETAILS | Oasis No | universi1- 323041 | | |
| | Project Name | Oakham Road, Somerby | | |
| | Start/end dates of field work | Start: 16-07-2018-2018 End: 18-07-2018 | | |
| | Previous/Future Work | No/ Not known | | |
| | Project Type | Evaluation | | |
| | Site Status | None | | |
| | Current Land Use | Pasture | | |
| | Monument Type/Period | None | | |
| | Significant Finds/Period | None | | |
| | Development Type | Residential | | |
| | Reason for Investigation | NPPF | | |
| | Position in the Planning Process | Planning condition | | |
| | Planning Ref. | 16/00100/OUT | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION | Site Address/Postcode | Land off Oakham Road, Somerby, Leicestershire, LE14 2QL | | |
| | Study Area | 1.14 Hectares | | |
| | Site Coordinates | SK 7831 1027 | | |
| | Depth | Min: 178m OD Max: 179m OD | | |
| PROJECT CREATORS | Organisation | ULAS | | |
| | Project Brief Originator | Local Planning Authority (LCC) | | |
| | Project Design Originator | ULAS | | |
| | Project Manager | J. Thomas | | |
| | Project Director/Supervisor | C. LaCombe | | |
| | Sponsor/Funding Body | Hazelton Homes | | |
| PROJECT ARCHIVE | | Physical | Digital | Paper |
| | Recipient | n/a | Leicestershire Museums Service | Leicestershire Museums Service |
| | ID (Acc. No.) | | X.A77.2018 | X.A77.2018 |
| | Contents | | | Trench recording sheets, photo record sheets, general notes, unpublished report |
| PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY | Type | Grey Literature (unpublished) | | |
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