Contents

An Archaeological Watching Brief

At Silver Birches, Seaton, Rutland.

NGR: SP 903 984

Summary

A two stage watching brief was undertaken for Mrs J. Whittle by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 17th of August 2004 for geo-technical test pitting and on the 10th, 11th and 12th of May 2005 for topsoil stripping and groundworks in advance of proposed development of a domestic dwelling, planning application: FUL/2004/0482/ID. The site is situated within the historic core of Seaton village close to recently investigated archaeological sites. Because of this the works were seen as having potential for uncovering archaeological deposits.

The test pits revealed a 0.8m thick layer of disturbed imported material sealing the original buried topsoil. Below the 0.25m thick layer of buried topsoil lay the natural ironstone bedrock. No archaeological deposits or features were observed in the two test pits.

During the larger scale area strip a disturbed layer of mixed and redeposited topsoil and subsoil was removed to reveal the original topsoil with an orange-brown clay silt subsoil beneath. The redeposited layer was between 0.5 and 0.83m in thickness. Below the subsoil the natural substrata consisted of natural patches of reddish-brown ironstone, reddish-brown clay and grey silty clay with yellowish-grey sand. The whole footprint of the proposed building was excavated to create a level platform cutting into the sloping site. No archaeological features or deposits were recorded.

Records will be deposited with Rutland County Council, Accession number RT06.2004

1. Introduction

The village of Seaton, in the parish of Seaton, Rutland lies approximately 3km south east of Uppingham (fig.1). It lies along the southern side of a valley which drops down from north to south with Main Street running at right angles to this slope. The Silver Birches site is located near to the centre of Seaton and on the northern side of Main Street (figs. 2 and 3). The original ground level of the wedge shaped site sloped steeply upwards from its apex near Main Street, in the south, up to the existing bungalow at its northern end. Relatively recently however, the southern area of the site has been landscaped with the addition of extra imported topsoil to create a flatter garden area with the result that Thompsons Lane now passes through a small hollow way and the lower part of the driveway is below the garden level (fig. 2 and plate 1).

The new two storey detached development will be constructed in front of the existing Silver Birches bungalow so that the two properties will occupy the same plot. In order to reduce the visual impact of the new property it was proposed that it should be partially buried within the contour of the slope so that the south facing front of the house will start at the height of the original ground level. This would involve the removal of a large amount of spoil of up to 2.96 metres in depth which would effectively remove any surviving archaeological deposits that may be present (plate 2).

In view of the potential for uncovering archaeological deposits it was necessary that there should be archaeological attendance during the work to ensure that any affected deposits were adequately recorded. Initially two geo-technical test pits were specified in order to assess the nature of the buried stratigraphy, after which full-scale topsoil and subsoil stripping across the whole footprint of the building would take place.

2. Background

The village of Seaton has Saxon origins and has remained under constant occupation since that period. Former medieval fishponds remain in existence around the Ridings Farm located nearby, to the south of the Silver Birches site. In addition to this, recent archaeological excavations at West Farm, south east of the site, have revealed medieval structures along with evidence of later Anglo-Saxon and early medieval activity. A number of Anglo-Saxon burials have also been found within the village boundary not far from the site. As the development site lies closer to the village core than these sites it appeared likely that there was a high potential for further archaeological discoveries to be made.

Prior to redevelopment the site had been used as lawned gardens with occasional trees and shrubs around the perimeter. A number of years ago much of the area had been landscaped by the addition of a thick layer of mixed topsoil in an attempt to create a level garden rather than one which followed the steep contour of the slope. It was suspected that this might mask any archaeological deposits or features cutting the original ground surface.

3. Archaeological Objectives

To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.

To establish the character, extent, date range and significance of any archaeological deposits affected by the proposed ground works.

To excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the ground works.

To produce an archive and report of any results.

4. Methodology

The two geo-technical test pits were machine excavated using a JCB 3CX fitted with a 0.6m wide toothed bucket to create pits 0.6m wide by 2m long. The first pit (Trench 1) was located towards the southern boundary of the development area whilst Trench 2 was at the northern end. As it was known that there was a redeposited layer of material these test-pits were excavated to a depth of nearly 3m which extended well into the natural substrate in order to ensure that all stratigraphic layers could be seen and assessed.

The topsoil strip covering the entire footprint (fig. 3) of the proposed building and a small area of driveway to the south also used a JCB but this time fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All topsoil, made ground and any disturbed subsoil was removed in spits using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket under full archaeological supervision until undisturbed substrata or archaeological deposits were encountered. In order to create a level building plot at the correct height for the proposed building it was necessary to excavate quite deeply into the natural substrata resulting in a 2.96m section at the northern edge of the site.

All deposits were recorded by notes and sketches using the standard ULAS pro-forma watching brief form. Colour slide photographs were also taken throughout both phases of work.

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.*

5. Results

Trench 1.

Trench 1 measured 0.6m wide by 2m long. It was excavated to a depth of approximately 2.8m revealing a section with approximately 0.8m of disturbed imported orange-brown clay silt sealing the original grey-brown topsoil. The topsoil was around 0.25m deep and appeared to sit directly on top of the natural ironstone strata. No archaeological deposits were observed during the excavation of the pit or in any of its sections.

Trench 2.

Trench 2, which was the same size as Trench 1, was located at the northern end of the site. It showed a similar history of redeposited material over the original land surface. In this trench the original topsoil was observed 0.65m below current ground level as a 0.2m thick layer on top of a similar thickness of subsoil. No archaeological deposits were observed during the excavation of the pit or in any of its sections.

House footprint strip.

As the area was excavated from south to north it became clear that the original ground surface rose at a much steeper angle than it does currently. At the extreme northern edge the old topsoil is only 0.5m below current ground level whilst halfway down the site it is 0.83m below. Most of the area being excavated has been used as a lawn with a small number of shrubs occupying the south west corner of the plot. An electricity cable ran across the centre of the site in an east to west direction creating a disturbed trench approximately 1m deep and 0.5m wide. This cable was diverted shortly before excavation work commenced and now follows the line of the existing driveway. Slightly further north a small water pipe followed a similar orientation creating a 0.4m wide strip of disturbance varying between 0.7m and 1.3m in depth.

Below the current turf line is the layer of disturbed redeposited orange-brown clayish silt with large lumps of mid grey-brown clay silt spread throughout. It is not known where this apparent mix of topsoil and subsoil was imported from but no pottery fragments or archaeological finds were observed within this layer. Sealed below the imported material is the original topsoil layer consisting of a grey-brown sandy silt varying in thickness from 0.06m in the south to 0.11m at the northern end. The orangey-brown sandy silt subsoil showed a similar trend varying from 0.1m up to 0.2m in the north.

The plot excavation continued well into the natural substrata which consisted of bands of reddish-brown ironstone and mid grey silty clay with patches of light grey clayish sand and yellowish-grey sand. Occasional large patches of clean pale grey clay were also observed within the silty sandy clay matrix. At its maximum depth at the northern end of the excavation the total depth below current ground level was 2.96m (plate 3).

No archaeological deposits or features were observed cutting through the imported layer nor were any seen sealed beneath this layer.

6. Discussion

Despite the high potential no archaeological deposits, features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered during the test-pitting or watching brief phases.

7. Archive

The archive consists of site notes, sketches and photographs to be held either by Rutland County Museum or Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team under accession number RT06.2004

8. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

9. References

ULAS: *Design Specification for Archaeological Works at Silver Birches, Seaton, Rutland.*

10. knowledgements

The watching Brief fieldwork was undertaken by A R Hyam with test-pitting by Gerwyn Richards. The project was managed by J. Meek.

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Appendix 1. Figures and Plates

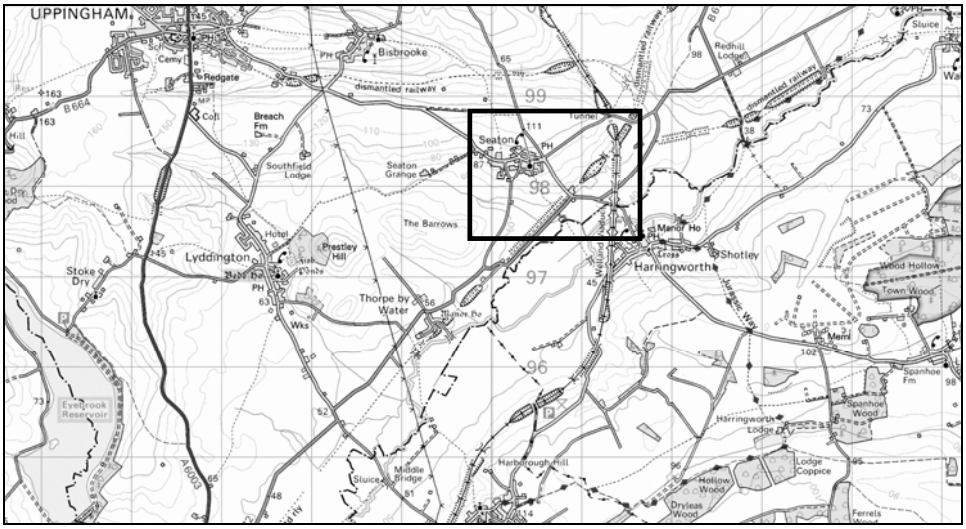

Figure 1: Location Plan

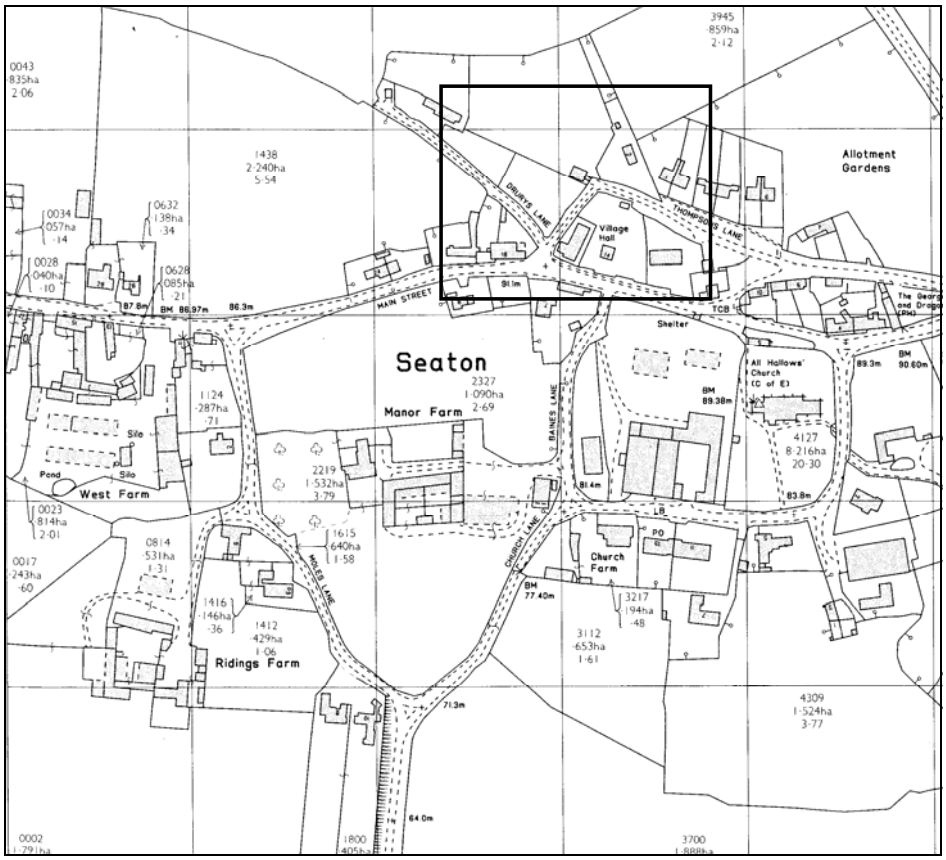

Fig. 2: Area of proposed development within Seaton village

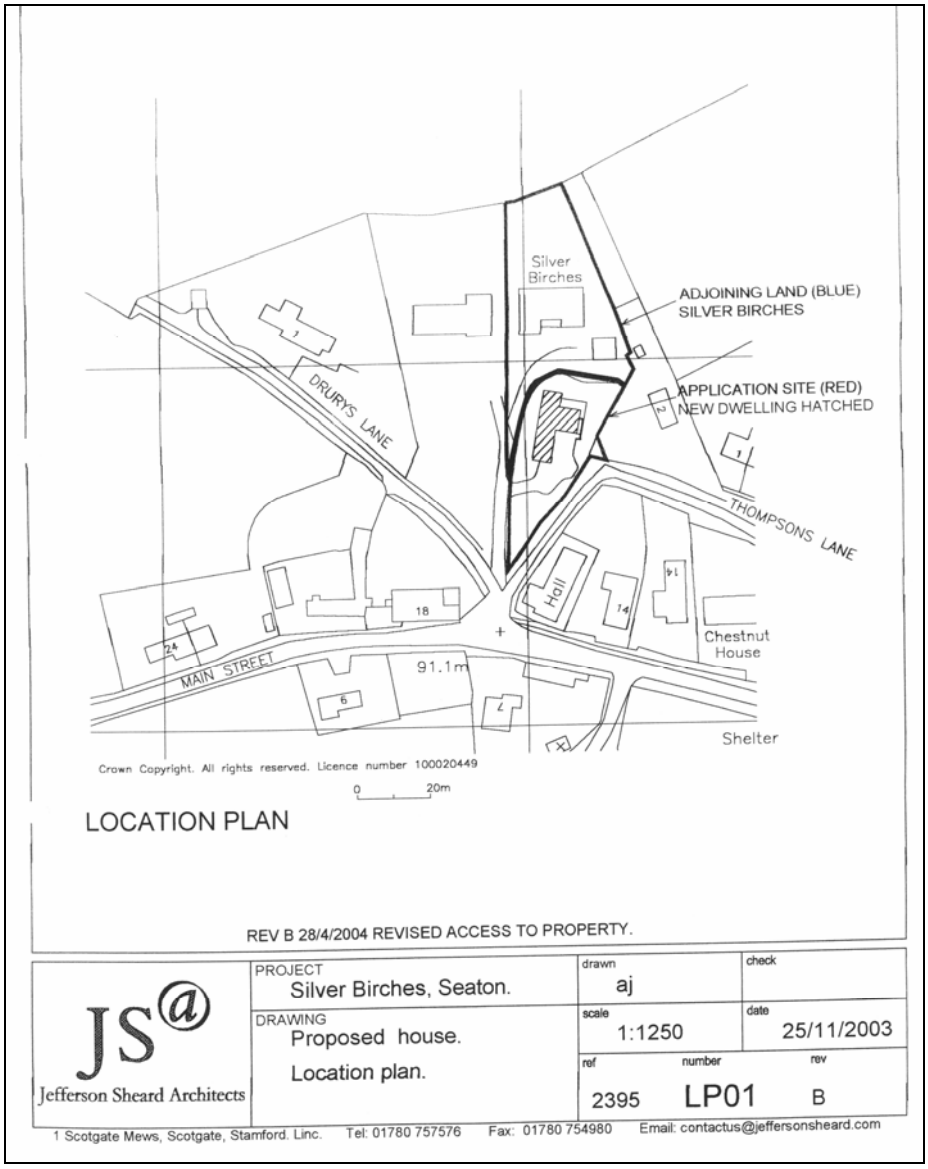

Figure 3: Development Proposals (Plan supplied by Jefferson Sheard Architects)

Plate 1. Silver Birches site viewed from Main Street looking north showing height of made-up ground.

Plate 2. Site viewed from existing house looking south. Half of site excavated.

Plate 3. Northern limit of excavation.
Redeposited material and sealed topsoil can be seen in left hand section.

Appendix 2. Site visits.

Site visits

Date		Duration
18.8.04	Test-pitting	Full day
10.5.05	Site strip	Full day
11.5.05	Site strip	Full day
12.5.05	Site strip	Half day

Appendix 3. ULAS Design Specification for Archaeological Works.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for Archaeological Works

Site: ***Silver Birches, Seaton, Rutland***

NGR: ***SP 903 984***

Client: ***Joan Whittle***

Planning Authority: ***Rutland County Council***

Planning Application Number: ***FUL/2004/0482/ID***

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Summary

In view of the potential of the site for containing buried archaeological remains relating to the medieval settlement at Seaton, the site lying within the historic core of the village, the archaeological adviser to the planning authority has recommended archaeological attendance and recording during topsoil stripping and groundworks for the proposed development, to ensure that affected deposits are adequately recorded. This specification provides details of the methodologies and standards to be adopted by ULAS on behalf of the client during the course of the work.

1. Introduction

1.1 ***Definition and scope of the specification***

In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG16, Archaeology and Planning), para.30, and the condition placed on planning permission, this specification constitutes a 'written scheme of archaeological investigation' which ULAS intends to implement on behalf of the Client in mitigation of any damage which may be caused to buried or standing archaeological remains from the development.

1.2 The definition of archaeological watching brief, taken from the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance: for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IFA S&G: AWB) is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

1.3 The purpose of a watching brief, as laid down in the IFA S&G AWB is:

to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.

to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment.

1.4 This document provides a scheme of works for:

Archaeological attendance and recording during topsoil stripping and groundworks likely to disturb archaeological remains, if present.

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2. Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives, within the resources available, are

- 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. Background

3.1 The proposed development site is located in Seaton, (Grid. Ref. SP 903 984; see fig 1 and 2). Planning permission has been granted by Rutland County Council for the application no. FUL/2004/082/ID for the erection of two storey detached dwelling house and associated works and creation of new vehicular access; see Figure 3). It consists of an area of *c* 0.05 ha.

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3.2 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheets 157 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Northamptonshire Sand Ironstone and possibly Liassic clay. The area of the proposed tennis court slopes down from north to south.

3.3 The site is located within the boundaries of the known Saxon and medieval village and archaeological remains are situated in the vicinity. Former medieval fishponds exist to the south of the site around The Ridings Farm. Recent archaeological excavations at West Farm to the south-west of the proposed development area have revealed archaeological remains of medieval structures, as well as later Anglo-Saxon and early medieval activity. Anglo-Saxon burials have also been found within the village, not too far from the development area.

3.4 The site is seen as having the potential to contain deposits of medieval date. There is a possibility that archaeological deposits of both earlier and later date may also be present on the site, although the potential for these is unknown.

3.5 A previous watching brief was undertaken within the site area by ULAS on 17/08/2004 during the excavation of two geotechnical test pits. No archaeological deposits were revealed and no finds were made during this watching brief.

4. Methodology

4.1 ***General Methodology and Standards***

4.1.1 All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.*

4.1.2 Staffing (as far as is possible), Recording systems, Health and Safety provisions and Insurance details are included below.

4.1.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site by the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are met and professional standards are maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Councils Historic and Natural Environment Team, Rutland County Council planning authority and the Client, if required.

4.2 ***Watching brief methodology***

4.2.1 The archaeologist will be present during all groundworks that have the potential to affect any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area. The commencement of groundworks and subsequent timetable of works must be agreed between the Client, the Client's contractor and ULAS.

4.2.2 The archaeologist will observe any topsoil stripping and the excavation of foundation trenches and drains, by the Client's contractors, in order to obtain an adequate record of any

archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed by groundworks associated with the development.

4.2.3 The archaeologist will cooperate at all times with the contractors to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays to the work. However, if any archaeological deposits are seen to be present, the archaeologist will have the power to temporarily halt the works in order to define and record areas of archaeological interest.

4.2.4 Any archaeological deposits encountered will be recorded and excavated using standard ULAS procedures (see section 5 below).

4.2.5 In the event that unforeseen archaeological discoveries are made during the development, ULAS shall have the power to halt any ground works and shall inform the site agent/project manager and the Senior Planning Archaeologist, and prepare a written statement with plan detailing the archaeological evidence. Following assessment of the archaeological remains by the Senior Planning Archaeologist, ULAS shall, if required, implement on behalf of the Client a contingency scheme for salvage excavation of affected archaeological features.

4.3. ***Environmental Sampling***

4.3.1 If significant archaeological features are subject to excavation, the sampling strategy will include the following if practicable, within the scope of the project and with the allocated resources:

A range of features to represent all feature types, areas and phases will be selected on a judgmental basis. The criteria for selection will be that deposits are datable, well sealed and with little intrusive or residual material.

Any buried soils or well-sealed deposits with concentrations of carbonised material present will be intensively sampled taking a known proportion of the deposit.

Spot samples will be taken where concentrations of environmental remains are located.

Waterlogged remains, if present, will be sampled for pollen, plant macrofossils, insect remains and radiocarbon dating provided that they are uncontaminated and datable. Consultation with the specialist will be undertaken.

4.4 ***Recording Systems***

4.4.1 The ULAS recording manual will be used as a guide for all recording.

4.4.2 Individual descriptions of any observed archaeological strata and features exposed by the works will be entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.

4.4.3 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 appropriate scale, which will show the location of the investigation area in relation to the OS or site grid, as appropriate.

4.4.4 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made. Sections including the half-sections of individual layers of features will be drawn as necessary, typically at a scale of 1:10. Relative levels of archaeological deposits will be taken across the site area.

4.4.5 A photographic record of the investigations will be prepared 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.

4.4.6 As a minimum, the watching archaeologist will record the location and depths of any areas of groundworks, including descriptions and depths of all principal strata disturbed, even if no archaeological features are present.

5. Finds and Samples

5.1 The IFA Guidelines for Finds Work will be adhered to.

5.2 All antiquities, valuables, objects or remains of archaeological interest, other than articles declared by Coroner's Inquest to be subject to the Treasure Act, discovered in or under the Site during the carrying out of the project by ULAS or during works carried out on the Site by the Client shall be deemed to be the property of ULAS provided that ULAS after due examination of the said Archaeological Discoveries shall transfer ownership of all Archaeological Discoveries unconditionally to The Historic and Natural Environment Team at Leicestershire County Council for storage in perpetuity.

5.3 An accession number will be used for the watching brief which will be used to identify all records and finds from the site (number to be confirmed).

5.4 All identified finds and artefacts are to be retained, although certain classes of building material will, in some circumstances, be discarded after recording with the approval of the Senior Planning Archaeologist. The IFA Guidelines for Finds Work will be adhered to.

5.5 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner. Where appropriate they will be cleaned, marked and receive remedial conservation in accordance with recognised best-practice. This will include the site code number, finds number and context number. Bulk finds will be bagged in clear self sealing plastic bags, again marked with site code, finds and context numbers and boxed by material in standard storage boxes (340mm x 270mm x 195mm). All materials will be fully labelled, catalogued and stored in appropriate containers.

6. Report and Archive

6.1 The full report in A4 format will usually follow within four weeks of the completion of the fieldwork and copies will be dispatched to the Client (2 copies), Senior Planning Archaeologist/Leicestershire SMR (2 copies) and Rutland County Council Planning Officer (1 copy).

6.2 The report will include:-

- Summary
- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the watching brief.
- The nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any structural, artefactual and environmental material uncovered.
- Appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs.
- The location and size of the archive.

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 usually be presented to within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

7 Publication and Dissemination of Results

7.1 A summary of the work will be submitted to the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for publication. A larger report will be submitted for inclusion if the results of the archaeological works warrant it.

8. Acknowledgement and Publicity

8.1 ULAS shall acknowledge the contribution of the Client in any displays, broadcasts or publications relating to the site or in which the report may be included.

8.2 ULAS and the Client shall each ensure that a senior employee shall be responsible for dealing with any enquiries received from press, television and any other broadcasting media and members of the public. All enquiries made to ULAS shall be directed to the Client for comment. The Senior Planning Archaeologist will also be consulted when dealing with such enquiries.

9. Copyright

9.1 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.

10. Timetable/Staffing

10.1 One member of ULAS staff will be present on the site during groundworks. An initial start date for the works has not been made known to ULAS, although it is thought likely to be during early 2005.

10.2 The report will normally be completed within eight weeks of the completion of fieldwork.

11. Health and Safety

11.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety manual with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is attached as Appendix 1. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate. The HSE has determined that archaeological investigations are exempt from CDM regulations.

A Risks assessment form will be completed prior to work commencing on-site, and updated as necessary during the site works.

It is assumed that the locations of all services on the site are already known to the Client, and that this information will be made known to the attending archaeologist.

12. Insurance

12.1 All employees, consultants and volunteers are covered by the University of Leicester public liability insurance with Gerling Insurance Service Co. Ltd. and others (leading policy no. 62/99094/D). Professional indemnity insurance is with Sun Alliance, £10m cover, policy no. 03A/SA 001 05978. Employer's Liability Insurance is with Eagle Star, cover £10m.

13. Monitoring arrangements

13.1 Unlimited access to monitor the project will be available to both the Client and his representatives and Senior Planning Archaeologist subject to the health and safety requirements of the site. Usually at least one weeks notice will be given to the Senior Planning Archaeologist before the commencement of the archaeological works in order that monitoring arrangements can be made, unfortunately in this case there has been some confusion with planning conditions resulting in the works commencing prior to archaeological.

13.2 All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the IFA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.*

13.3 Internal monitoring will be carried out by the ULAS project manager.

JEM

Bibliography

MAP 2, The management of archaeological projects 2nd edition English Heritage 1991

MGC 1992, Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections 1992 (Museums and Galleries Commission)

RFG/FRG 1993, Guidelines for the preparation of site archives (Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700 1993)

SMA 1993, Selection, retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 1993 (Society of Museum Archaeologists)