



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at 15  
Horsefair Street, Leicester, LE1 5BP**

**NGR: SK 58794 04390**

James Earley



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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at  
15 Horsefair Street  
Leicester, LE1 5BP  
(SK 58794 04390)  
Planning Ref: 20181413**

**James Earley**

*for*

Leicester City Council

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## **An Archaeological Watching Brief at 15 Horsefair Street, Leicester, LE1 5BP**

James Earley

### ***Summary***

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Leicester City Council at 15 Horsefair Street, Leicester, LE1 5BP between the 23rd January and 14th February 2019 during groundworks associated with the installation of fifteen 220mm diameter steel piles. The watching brief was carried out during the groundworks for the installation of the steel piles related to the erection of a new exterior wall for 11 Horsefair Street, on the site of the now demolished 15 Horsefair Street, No archaeological features or deposits were recorded.*

*The site archive will be held by Leicester Art and Museums Service under Accession Number Y.A.4.2019.*

### **Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of Leicester City Council during groundworks related to installation of fifteen 220mm diameter steel piles related to the erection of a new exterior wall for 11 Horsefair Street.

Planning Permission was approved for the demolition of a three-story shop and office building (Class A1 and Class B1), alterations and construction of wall adjacent to 11 Horsefair Street, and the provision of a new hard surface and strip lighting to form a new pedestrian link between Market Square and Town Hall Square. The works will also consolidate the eastern building façade of 17 Horsefair Street – a Grade II Listed building - with the aim of returning it to its original state (Application No. 20181413).

The development area is located on the line of the southern defences of the Roman and medieval town.

This document presents the results of the scheme of archaeological work in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

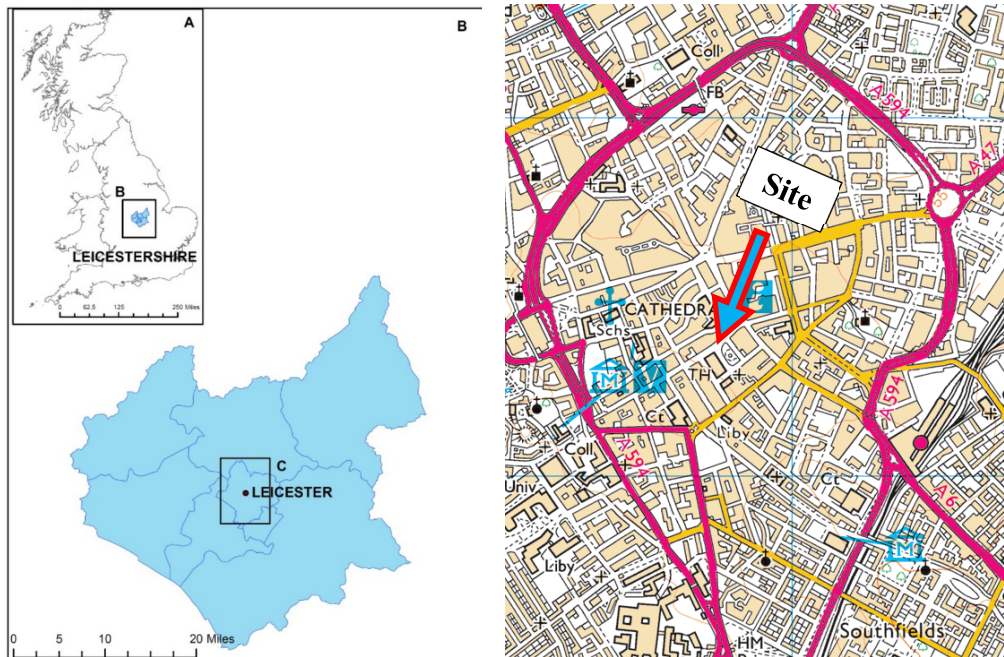


Figure 1. Site Location

## Location and Geology

The site lies in the historic urban core of Leicester at the southeast corner of the Roman and medieval town defences on Horsefair Street opposite Town Hall Square (Figure 1 & Figure 2). It consists of a three storey 1970s commercial office building with retail premises and a pedestrian walkway at ground level. The site forms a rectangular area of flat ground, covering a space approximately 146m<sup>2</sup> at c.64m aOD.

The British Geological Survey website indicates that the underlying geology consists of Branscombe Mudstone Formation Mudstone, with no superficial deposits recorded.

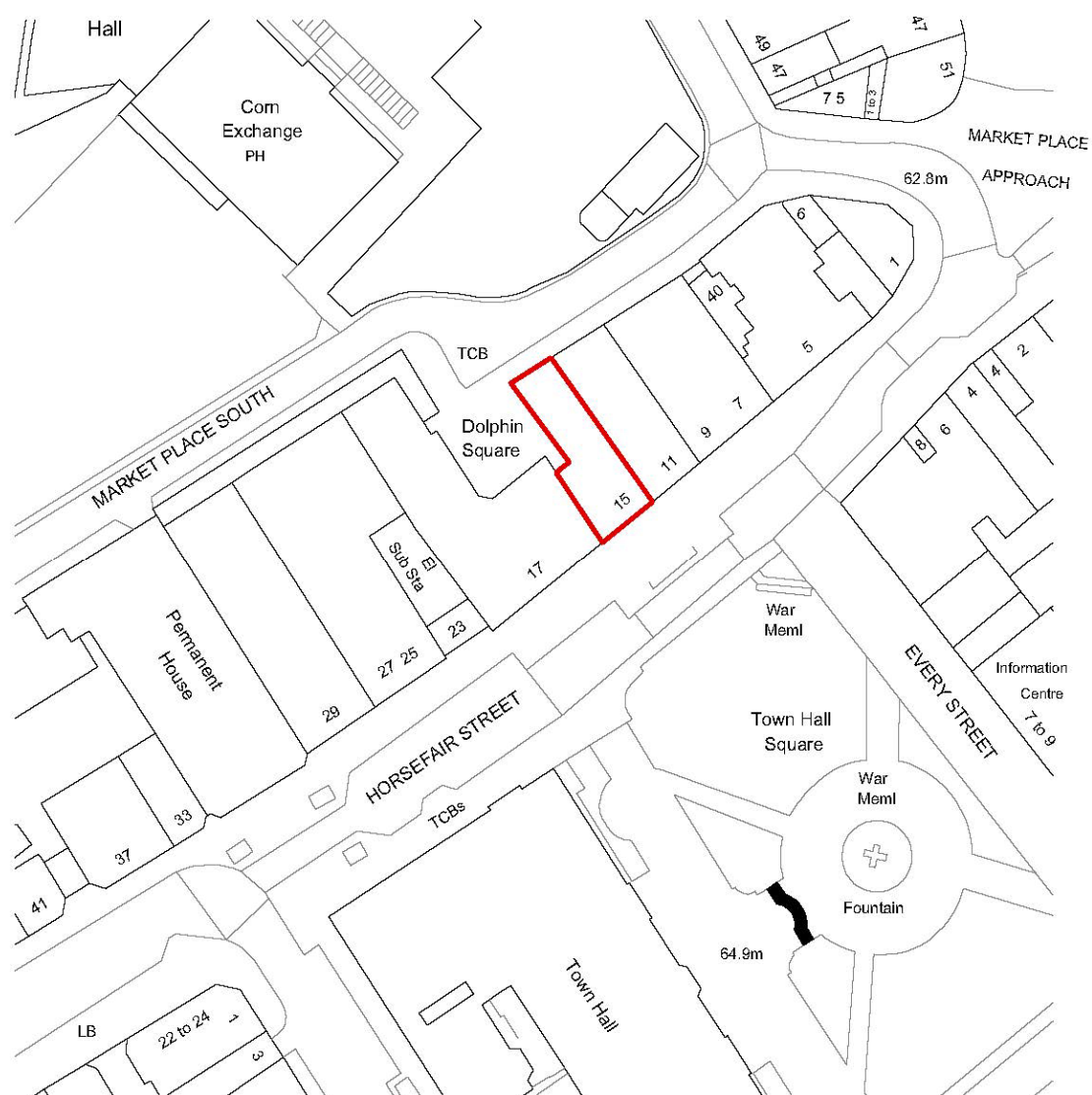


Figure 2. Plan of proposed development area (marked in red)  
Plan provided by client

## Historical and Archaeological Background

### *Prehistoric*

The later development of the Roman and medieval town of Leicester has meant that much of the evidence of the prehistoric settlement of the area has been lost or at least severely truncated. Finds from earlier prehistoric periods suggest human activity in Leicester pre-dated the Iron Age settlement. No archaeological evidence of Iron Age date has been forthcoming from within a 500m search area of the site, although excavations at Sanvey Gate *c.*750m to the north-west of the assessment area contained evidence of Iron Age activity predating the Roman town.

### *Roman*

The site of the proposed development is known to be located on the line of the southern defences of Roman and medieval Leicester, close to the south-east corner of the circuit. The Roman defences consisted first of an earthen bank and one or more ditches of the late 2nd century, the wall probably added to the front of the rampart in the 3rd century. The east gate was located at the south end of what is now Church Gate, around 220m northwest of the assessment area (**MLC121**). The gateway stood at the east end of the section of the Fosse Way which ran through the Roman town from west to east after the town defences had been established in the late 2nd century. The south gate lay about 400m west of the development area. Although the defences have been examined on a number of occasions, no study of the Roman gateways themselves has been possible. The site under consideration here had the potential to reveal evidence for the town wall and rampart.

### *Medieval*

There is a dearth of evidence for the nature of early post-Roman occupation in Leicester, but Anglo-Saxon sunken-feature buildings have been found both within the walls and to the south of the town. The density of Saxon finds from excavations during the Highcross development suggests Anglo-Saxon occupation within the town from the 5th-7th centuries. There is no evidence as yet for any repairs or modifications to the Roman defences during this period.

The site lies directly south of the Market Place (**MLC363**) 15m from the site) which includes the existing covered market area together with areas to the west and north defined by the streets Market Place, Market Place South and Cheapside. The market was probably established during the 12th or 13th centuries, and is likely to have occupied an empty part of the southeast quarter of the walled town.

The Roman town walls and possibly the gates survived into the medieval period with evidence for maintenance, but from the late 15th century onwards, the wall was gradually dismantled and the gates were demolished in the 18th century. As noted above, the site is located on the projected line of the southern town defences.

A number of significant buildings are documented in the vicinity for the medieval period, including: the Angel Inn (**MLC278**) 180m to the north and demolished during the 18th century; the timber box-framed White Swan Inn (**MLC362**) 85m to the west and now demolished; and a 15th-16th timber framed hall and great chamber at 42 Silver Street (**MLC298**) 228m to the northwest.

### *Post-Medieval - Modern*

The former Sun Alliance buildings at 17-21 Horsefair Street are adjacent to the proposed development, and are Grade II Listed buildings. In 1973/4 a planning application was submitted for the demolition and redevelopment of the then vacant Royal Hotel and Sun Alliance buildings. The potential loss of these buildings caused much public outrage. The Secretary of State subsequently 'called-in' the application and granted permission with a condition that the Horsefair Street façades were retained.

Several adjoining conservation areas occupy the central city area, including the High Street Conservation Area (**DLC455**). A number of assets fall within the boundary of the Market Place Conservation Areas (**MLC1969**) and the adjoining Town Hall Conservation Area (**DLC647**).

The study area lies within the boundaries of the latter, and is flanked to the west by the Grade II Listed Sun Alliance Buildings of 1891 by Goddard and Paget (**MLC1972**) and to the east by the late 19th century Royal Hotel building.

### **Archaeological Aims and Objectives**

The principal aim of the archaeological work was to monitor the groundworks in order to identify the presence of any archaeological deposits and, where present, to establish their nature, date, significance and state of preservation in order to determine the impact upon them from the proposed groundworks.

The objectives of the archaeological programme may be summarised as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent, and date for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed works.
- To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets.
- To produce and archive and report of any results
- To deliver archaeological supervision of works and on site guidance to contractors with the purpose of minimising risk of accidental damage and disturbance to any archaeological remains or deposits encountered.

### ***Research Themes***

The archaeological programme could contribute to national and regional research themes as identified by Cooper (2006) and Knight *et al.* (2012).

#### ***Roman***

5.3.5. How and why did the urban landscape change in the late Roman period, and what roles may fortifications have played in this period?

#### ***Early Medieval***

6.5.1. How may Anglo-Saxon and British communities have utilised late Roman towns and their immediate environs?

6.5.2. Can we identify middle Anglo-Saxon defensive works, including new foundations and refurbishments of Roman walled towns?

#### ***High Medieval***

7.1.1. How did the major towns and smaller market towns of the region develop after the Norman Conquest, both within the urban core and in suburban and extra-mural areas?

#### ***Post-medieval***

8.7.3. What was the impact of the Civil War upon urban development (notably the demolition of suburbs, as at Leicester, and post-siege development)?



These research aims have been identified based on the current state of knowledge within the Application Site of the development. These research aims were reviewed and updated as the work progressed during the course of the fieldwork.

## **Methodology**

The programme of attendance and recording followed the guidelines established by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The project involved the monitoring of the installation of fifteen 220mm diameter steel piles related to the erection of a new exterior wall for 11 Horsefair Street, to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains as well as aiming to locate any traces of the southern town defences believed to be within the development area (Figure 3). The steel piles were mechanically drilled and then hammered into the ground using a bottom driven piling rig system.

In order to install the steel piles, a 220mm drill was used to bore down to a depth of *c.* 3.00m and once this was completed a steel pile of the same diameter was inserted into the hole and hammered down to a depth of *c.* 8.00m. This methodology was used for three out of the fifteen piles, but due to the mixed and loose nature of the ground, the contractors decided to change the methodology to hammering the remainder of the piles straight into the ground without drilling prior to this.

A photographic record of the assessment area was made prior and during commencement of the ground works following the *Standard Brief for Archaeological Attendance* from Leicestershire County Council. This includes 'working shots' to illustrate the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

## **Results**

The fieldwork, consisting of monitoring and observation of groundworks, was carried out between 23rd January and 14th February 2019 and was intended to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains as well as aiming to locate any traces of the southern town defences. The steel piles were machine drilled and hammered by Midland Mini Piling and Foundations Ltd, overseen by Glympton Construction Ltd, under constant archaeological monitoring.

Due to the nature of the works and the change in methodology, only three out of the fifteen piles were monitored (Figure 4-Figure 7). Of the three piles monitored, the initial drilling revealed a layer of mixed demolition rubble *c.*1.20m thick, overlaying a deposit of mixed gravel, sand and silty clay *c.*1.40m thick, most likely used as make up and consolidation material during the construction of 15 Horsefair Street. All ground exposed during the works had been previously disturbed and no archaeological deposits or features were revealed.



Figure 3. Location of 15 Horsefair Street in relation to the proposed circuit of the town defences

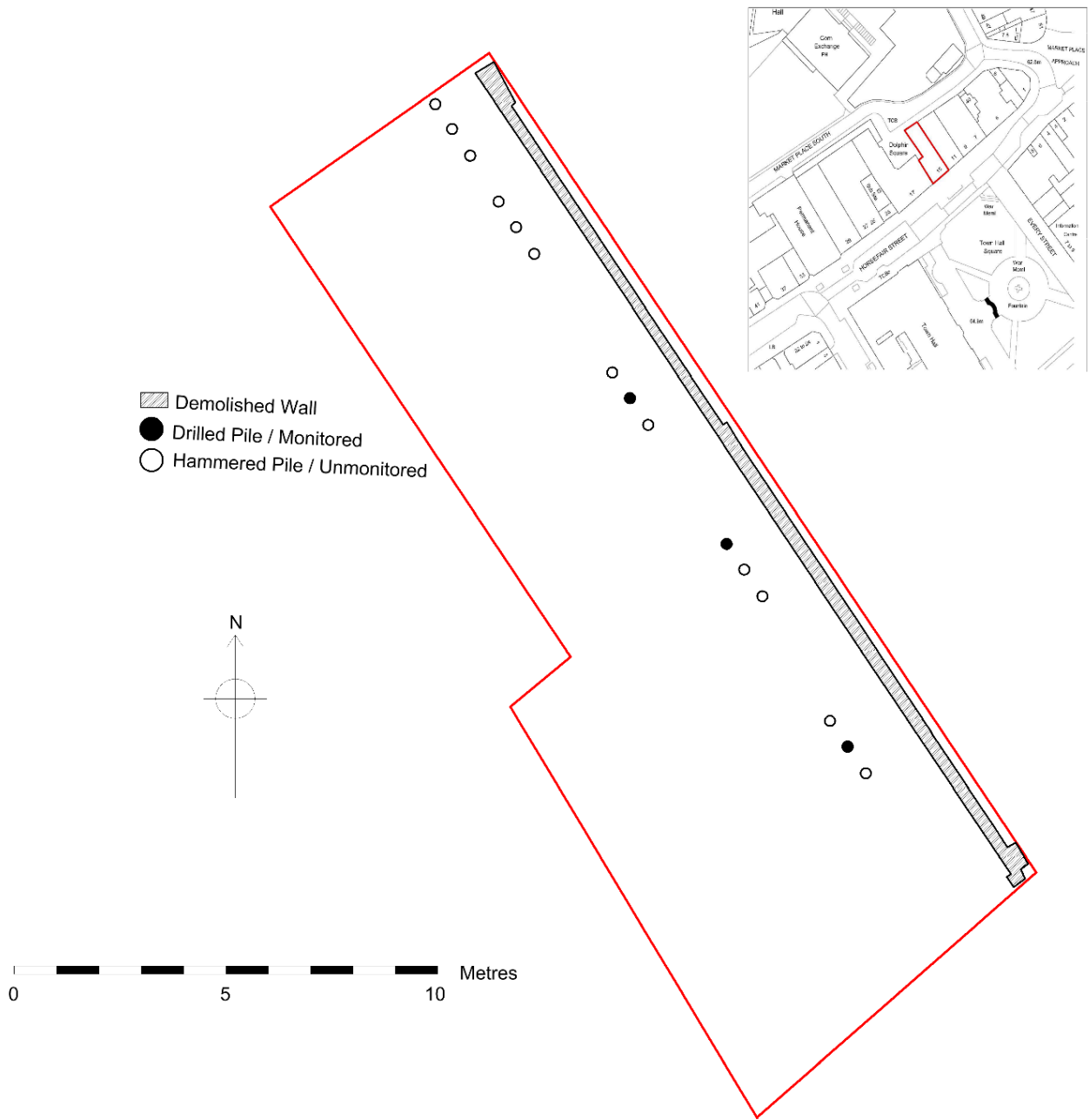


Figure 4. Location of piles within the development area



Figure 5. The site before groundworks/piling commenced



Figure 6. The pile locations marked out and located on the site



Figure 7. The drilling for the piles being monitored and the subsiding of the boreholes

## Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Dr Richard Buckley MCIfA and the fieldwork directed by James Earley. Thanks are extended to the staff of Leicester City Council and the contractors, A.R Demolition Ltd, Midland Mini Piling and Foundations Ltd, and Glympton Construction Ltd for their co-operation during the work.

## Archive

The site archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums Service under Accession Number Y.A.4.2019.

The archive consists of:

- This report,
- 3 ULAS pro-forma Watching Brief Record sheets,
- One DVD of 46 digital photographs in .jpeg format, photographic index in an excel file and pdf\_A copy of this report

## Publication

The University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. An OASIS record will also be produced and this report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service website.

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## Appendix: OASIS data entry

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	<b>Universi1- 345517</b>		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 15 Horsefair Street, Leicester LE1 5BP		
	<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	23/01/2019 - 14/02/2019		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No / No		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Recording (Watching Brief)		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	Roman and Medieval/Post-Medieval		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	As Condition		
	<b>Planning Ref.</b>	<b>20181413</b>		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	15 Horsefair Street, Leicester LE1 5BP		
	<b>Study Area</b>	c 146 m <sup>2</sup>		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK 58794 04390		
	<b>Height OD</b>	64m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	University of Leicester Archaeological Services		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Leicester City Council		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	Richard Buckley		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Richard Buckley		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	James Earley		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	Leicester City Council		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>PAPER</b>	<b>DIGITAL</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>		Leicester City Museums	Leicester City Museums
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>		<b>Y.A.4.2019</b>	<b>Y.A.4.2019</b>
	<b>Contents</b>		Context Sheet Report	Digital photography Spreadsheet Text
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature		
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