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LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation on land
east of Cosby Road, Littlethorpe,
Leicestershire
NGR: SP 54392 96500**

Jamie Patrick



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Leicestershire**

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For: Jelson Limited

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Contents

Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Site Description, Topography and Geology.....	2
Archaeological and Historical Background.....	4
Aims and Objectives.....	4
Research Objectives.....	5
Methodology.....	5
Results.....	8
Trench 1.....	8
Trench 2.....	9
Trench 3.....	10
Trench 4.....	11
Trench 5.....	12
Trench 6.....	13
Discussion and Conclusion.....	14
Archive and publication.....	15
References.....	15
Acknowledgements.....	16
OASIS data.....	16

Figures

Figure 1: Site Location.....	2
Figure 2: Provisional trench plan over proposed house footprints.....	3
Figure 3: The development area before excavation, looking east.....	3
Figure 4: Excavation in progress of Trench 2, looking south-east.....	6
Figure 5: Post-ground-works Trench Plan. 50m scale.....	7
Figure 6: Excavated Trench Plan in relation to LIDAR ridge and furrow plan.....	7
Figure 7: Trench 1 looking east (2m scale).....	8
Figure 8: Trench 2 looking south-east (2m scale).....	9
Figure 9: Trench 2 section showing excavated furrow. Looking north-east (2m scale).....	10
Figure 10: Trench 3 looking north-east (2m scale).....	11
Figure 11: Trench 4 looking west. Shows excavated slot through Furrow (2m scale).....	12
Figure 12: Trench 5 looking south-west. (2m scale).....	13
Figure 13: Trench 6 looking north-west. (2m scale).....	14

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Summary

This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological trial trench evaluation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on land East of Cosby Road, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire (SP 54392 96500). Outline Planning Permission has been granted for the construction of up to 25 dwellings with associated off road parking and garages together with a public open space. Also included within the development is the excavation of a balancing pond at the North-eastern extent of the site (Planning Application 13/0884/1/OX).

The proposed development site covers an area of approximately 0.9ha on land recently used for livestock pasture. No known previous recorded development has taken place on the field. A small wooden barn and shed is located at the South-west corner of the field. The development area is bounded on the west by Cosby Road, with new houses to the North, and fields to the east and south. Previous work included a desk based assessment undertaken in 2013 (Dawson 2013) with subsequent archaeological work to the north of the site in 2014 on the basis of a single Prehistoric pit identified in an evaluation trench (Thomas 2011.) The 20m by 20m strip undertaken for further potential archaeological remains proved negative (Walker 2014).

A total of 7x 20m trenches were proposed across the development area, including one over the proposed balancing pond which was not undertaken due to the land not currently in the possession of the Client. The other six trenches were targeted over the proposed house footprints potentially disturbing any archaeological remains. With exception to faint remains of east to west medieval Ridge and Furrow as shown by LiDAR survey, no archaeological features were observed.

The archive for the site will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service with accession number X. A22.2019.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for trial trenching of land east of Cosby Road, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire. It details the programme of archaeological trial trenching that was undertaken in March 2019 and follows the strategy of work set out in the Written Scheme for Investigation (Speed 2019).

A planning application (13/0884/1/OX) has been submitted by Jelson Limited for the construction of up to 25 dwellings with associated off road parking and garages together with a public open space. Also included within the development is the excavation for a balancing pond at the north-eastern extent of the Site (Figure 2). The Leicestershire County Planning

Archaeologist as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, requested an archaeological field evaluation to identify and record any archaeological remains of significance in order to determine the impact of the proposed scheme on any buried archaeology.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The study area is located on the south side of the village of Littlethorpe, with recent housing development directly to the north and is accessed via a gate directly east of the un-classified Cosby Road. It is located approximately eight kilometres south-west of Leicester City Centre (Figure 1). The proposed development site covers an area of 0.9ha with the former pastoral field formed by a sub-rectangular shape. The Site sits on recently grazed grassland with a very gentle slope to the south-east lying at a height of *c.* 65-70m aOD (Figure 3). The River Soar lies downslope approximately 600m to the north. The British Geological Survey indicates that the underlying bedrock geology of the area as Mudstone Formation with superficial deposits of sand and gravel.

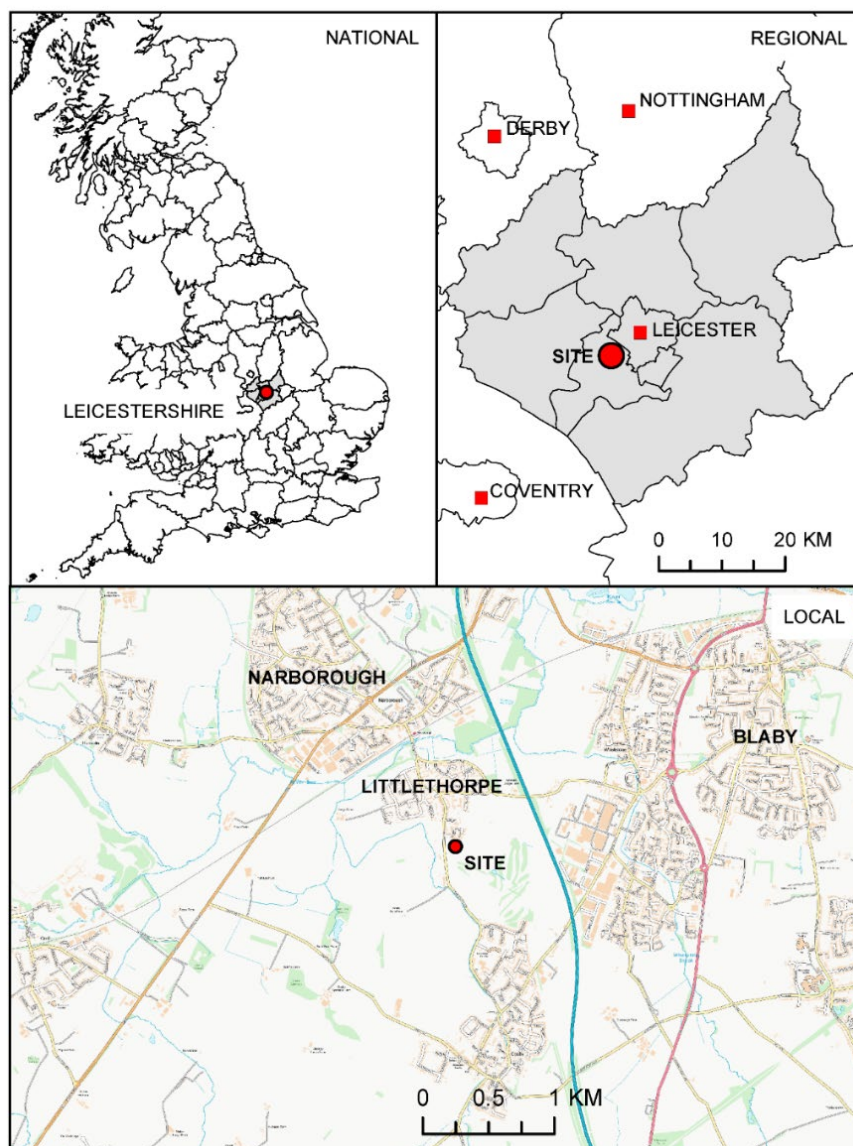


Figure 1: Site Location.

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Figure 2: Provisional trench plan over proposed house footprints.



Figure 3: The development area before excavation, looking east.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Littlethorpe is recorded in the Domesday Book as ‘Torp’ meaning hamlet in Middle English. The settlement core has been located within the medieval parishes of Narborough and Cosby and has been recorded as ‘Thorpe juxta Norboro’ and ‘Thorpe juxta Cosby’. The Late Saxon, Medieval and Early Post-Medieval settlement core is located 200m to the north of the application area (MLE 9565). Throughout these periods the settlement was almost certainly surrounded by open fields. This is evidenced by the east-west orientated ridge and furrows, visible on LiDAR. The LiDAR also shows a possible headland soil along the east field.

A geophysical survey was undertaken in 2010 by Northampton Archaeology (Walker & Butler 2010) across a large area of 3.8ha, including this current Site (‘Field 3’ in the report). No archaeological features were identified. Two ferrous debris was identified, along with an area of brick/tile debris around the entrance between the two fields. A modern pipeline was identified in the northern edge of the second small field. Medieval / post-medieval ridge and furrow was seen in the field to the east.

A desk-based assessment for the Site was undertaken in 2013 by CgMs (Dawson 2013). The assessment established that there are no heritage assets currently recorded within the site. The report established that the site has a very low potential for Palaeolithic remains, and a low potential for Mesolithic remains. A pit containing burnt clay, bone and two struck flints was identified during archaeological trial trenching on the development immediately to the north of the application site in 2011 (MLE20526, SP 543 965, Thomas 2011). This pit could not be securely dated but was thought to represent prehistoric activity in the near vicinity. In view of the discovery, the site is considered to have a moderate potential for the presence of other Neolithic, Bronze Age or Iron Age archaeological remains. The site has a low potential for the presence of significant Roman, Saxon, Medieval or Post-Medieval remains.

Since the desk-based assessment in 2013 there has been further archaeological work to the north of the Site, notably in 2014 by MOLA Northampton immediately to the north. An area strip was undertaken over an evaluation trench that contained a prehistoric pit (Thomas 2011), no further archaeological features were located in the 20 x 20 m strip (Walker 2014).

Aims and Objectives

The general objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to assess the impact of the proposed development on cultural heritage and to help formulate a mitigation strategy
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

The results of the evaluation will provide information in order for the local planning authority to make informed recommendations and to identify an appropriate mitigation strategy for the proposed development.

Research Objectives

While the nature, extent and quality of archaeological remains within the areas of investigation for the project remain unknown until archaeological work is undertaken, it is possible to determine some initial objectives derived from *East Midlands Heritage* research agenda (Knight *et al.* 2012). The Site lies far outside of the medieval core giving low potential for medieval evidence. However, the discovery of a single pit containing worked flint found close to the north, gives some potential for archaeological deposits for the early prehistoric period. The evaluation therefore has the potential to contribute to the following research aims:

Neolithic to Early to Middle Bronze Age

Continuity of hunter-gatherer traditions: Can we discern continuities or discontinuities in the distributions of later Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic lithic scatters?

Settlement Patterns: How may we characterise more effectively the frequently ephemeral structural traces that might relate to settlement activity?

Methodology

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014b) and adhered to their Code of Conduct (2014a). The archaeological work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation prepared by ULAS and agreed with the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist (March 2019). The work was monitored by the client (Jelson Limited) and Leicester County Council Planning Archaeologist.

An accession number (X.A22.2019) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts

A total of 7 trenches each measuring 20m long was proposed targeting areas affected by the development (Figure 5). The site was free of overhead and underground services, although a ferrous pipeline is known crossing the Northern part of the site just south of the recent housing development, therefore all trenches were initially tested for additional unknown services before being excavated. A single trench covering the proposed balancing pond to the north-east of the site was not undertaken. This was due to it being located in a separate field to the east of the main development area, and as yet not in the client's procession. The land is also separated by a hedgerow, potentially with nesting Birds also hindering access to the site.

The six remaining trenches were excavated using tracked 360° excavator with a 1.90m ditching bucket supplied by the Client (Figure 4). The total coverage initially met a minimum 2.5 % of the development area based on the standard 1.60m ditching bucket. Based on six trenches rather than the proposed seven, the same sample was met due to the wider ditching bucket. The Overburden was removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision and separated with top-soil and sub-soil stored over metre from either side of the trench edge. No stepping was required. The trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground, whichever was encountered first.

The ULAS recording manual was used as a guide for all recording. Individual descriptions of archaeological strata were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. Excavated trench locations

were recorded by an appropriate method and be tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record of the investigations was prepared, illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered and their location and context. The primary photographic record was by digital camera and the record also included overall site and working shots' which illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

After completion of the trenching and following prior agreement with the Planning Archaeologist, the trenches were re-instated by Jelson Limited.



Figure 4: Excavation in progress of Trench 2, looking south-east.



Figure 5: Post-ground-works Trench Plan. 50m scale



Figure 6: Excavated Trench Plan in relation to LIDAR ridge and furrow plan

Results

The overburden across the excavated trenches consisting of an undulating mid yellowish grey friable loam top-soil overlying a light yellowish brown soft clayey silt sub-soil at the west end of the site. The loamy soils were evident within Trenches 1, 2, 5, & 6 while further to the east, with a very gradual decrease in height, the soils became a more clayey consistency with a slightly greater depth in excess of 0.60m onto the natural. The natural substratum was reached in all trenches varying from sand and gravel deposits with areas of silty yellowish grey clay.

Trench 1

Interval	(E) 0m	4m	8m	12m	16m	20 m (W)
Top-soil Depth	0.30m	0.32m	0.20m	0.25m	0.25m	0.32m
Subsoil Depth	0.09m	0.15m	0.22m	0.18m	0.18m	0.10
Depth of Natural	0.39m	0.47m	0.44m	0.43m	0.43m	0.42
Base of Trench	0.50m	0.57m	0.44m	0.50m	0.50m	0.46m

The trench was positioned approximately 13m at a right angle from the hedgerow and Cosby Road, south at the foot of the field. No archaeological features were observed.



Figure 7: Trench 1 looking east (2m scale).

Trench 2

Interval	(NW) 0m	4m	8m	12m	16m	20m (SE)
Topsoil Depth	0.28m	0.30m	0.20m	0.24m	0.30m	0.30m
Subsoil Depth	0.10m	0.15m	0.30m	0.18m	0.20m	0.24m
Depth of Natural	0.38m	0.45m	0.50m	0.42m	0.50m	0.54m
Base of Trench	0.38m	0.50m	0.50m	0.55m	0.60m	0.56m

The trench was positioned twenty metres to the east of Trench 1 slightly to the north. A trace of east to west ridge and furrow with a parallel ceramic field was identified at the west end of the trench. A north to south linear was identified towards the eastern half of the trench with two similar orientated granite filled field drains two metres to the east of the linear. A 0.50m hand excavated slot through the linear showed characteristics of a furrow with very shallow sides with a depth of 0.15m onto a flat base. The width of the furrow approximately 1.50m.



Figure 8: Trench 2 looking south-east (2m scale).



Figure 9: Trench 2 section showing excavated furrow. Looking north-east (2m scale).

Trench 3

Interval	(NE) 0m	4m	8m	12m	16m	20m (SW)
Top-soil Depth	0.25m	0.30m	0.26m	0.30m	0.26m	0.30m
Subsoil Depth	0.32m	0.25m	0.35m	0.32m	0.36m	0.25m
Depth of Natural	0.57m	0.55m	0.61m	0.62m	0.62m	0.55m
Base of Trench	0.68m	0.68m	0.70m	0.70m	0.70m	0.60m

This represented the deepest of the six trenches and was excavated at the east end of the field, parallel and approximately ten metres away from the hedgerow. No archaeological features were observed.



Figure 10: Trench 3 looking north-east (2m scale).

Trench 4

Interval	(NW) 0m	4m	8m	12m	16m	20m (SE)
Top-soil Depth	0.30m	0.24m	0.25m	0.30m*	0.30m	0.30m
Subsoil Depth	0.20+m	0.25m	0.24m	0.20m	0.15m	0.16m
Depth of Natural	---	0.49m	0.49m	0.50m	0.45m	---
Base of Trench	0.50m	0.50m	0.49m	0.70m	0.50m	0.46m

Located no less than ten metres from the east to west ferrous service pipe trench, Trench 4 at the north-east end of the field showed the continuation of north-south linears. Two parallel ones were observed across the trench with a width of between 1.0m and 1.50m filled with the same sub-soil like deposit as within the linear in Trench 2. Machine excavation showed the same shallow sides with a depth of no more than 0.15m which was filled with an alluvial like yellowish- grey clay. A further trace of east to west trace of ridge and furrow was observed at

the west end of the trench with a less defined furrow at the east end with a parallel ceramic field drain.



Figure 11: Trench 4 looking west. Shows excavated slot through Furrow (2m scale).

Trench 5

Interval	(SW) 0m	4m	8m	12m	16m	20m (NE)
Top-soil Depth	0.30m	0.24m	0.30m	0.24m	0.30m	0.30m
Subsoil Depth	0.22m	0.20m	0.20m	0.18m	0.18m	0.18m
Depth of Natural	0.52m	0.44m	0.50m	0.42m	0.48m	0.48m
Base of Trench	0.60m	0.44m	0.50m	0.42m	0.50m	0.50m

Located mid- way between Trench 4 and Trench 6 at the north half of the field, no less than ten metres away from the east to west service pipe, the only features observed was a north-west to north-east granite filled field drain. Otherwise no archaeological features were evident.



Figure 12: Trench 5 looking south-west. (2m scale).

Trench 6

Interval	(NW) 0m	4m	8m	12m	16m	20m (SE)
Top-soil Depth	0.40m	0.28m	0.28m	0.30m	0.28m	0.38m
Subsoil Depth	0.12m	0.16m	0.26m	0.17m	0.18m	0.08m
Depth of Natural	0.50m	0.46m	0.56m	0.47m	0.46m	0.46m
Base of Trench	0.52m	0.50m	0.56m	0.50m	0.58m	0.58m

Located less than 15 metres from the farm gate onto Cosby Road the trench proved negative for archaeological remains. A very faint east to west furrow was identified at the North end of the trench.



Figure 13: Trench 6 looking north- west. (2m scale).

Discussion and Conclusion

The proposed development area on land east of Cosby Road, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire had some potential for archaeological remains of early Prehistoric date due to its proximity to an isolated pit of Neolithic date (Thomas 2011). Despite no archaeological features identified to the north of the site in advance of the previous Housing development (Walker 2014), there was still potential for further isolated pits of similar date in the present study area. Although the evaluation failed to identify further pits/ other archaeological features as such, it's possible all the trenches have missed any similar pits. However, no artefactual evidence was recovered in the excavated overburden, with only the occasional sherd of post-medieval / modern Panchon ware pottery which was not retained.

The trial trenches did reveal traces of east to west furrows as indicated by the LiDAR survey, although they were only evident to the north of the site and very shallow. Observation of the field prior to ground-works showed no evidence of the Ridge and Furrow despite the land being recently grazed by Sheep. The few ceramic field drains identified were also orientated east to west, indicative of the remaining similar orientated furrows. The LiDAR survey also showed north to south linears north of the present pre-development area crossing the regular east to west ridge and furrow. The two faint linears identified together with similar orientated granite filled field drains may represent another phase of Ridge and Furrow due to the similar characteristic profile of the one excavated in Trench 2.

As no archaeological deposits were identified during the work, the results from this site will not contribute towards the Regional research objectives.

Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicester City Museums Service with accession number X.A22.2019 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2019-038)
- 6 Trench recording sheets
- 1 Photo Record sheet
- 1 Contact sheet of digital photographs
- 1 CD digital photographs

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.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

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OASIS data

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-346583
	Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation on Land east of Cosby Road, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire
	Start/end dates of field work	19-03-19 – 20-03-19
	Previous/Future Work	unknown
	Project Type	Evaluation
	Site Status	None
	Current Land Use	Pastoral
	Monument Type/Period	None
	Significant Finds/Period	None
	Development Type	Residential
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF

	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	13/0884/1/OX		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Cosby Road, Littlethorpe, Leicestershire. LE19 2LE		
	Study Area	0.9 ha		
	Site Coordinates	SP 54392 96500		
	Height OD	70maOD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Originator Brief	Leicestershire County Council		
	Project Originator Design	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Dr Gavin Speed		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Jamie Patrick		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	University of Leicester		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	Leicestershire County Museum Service	Leicester County Museum Service	Leicester County Museum Service
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A22.2019	X.A22.2019	X.A22.2019
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