

**Archaeological Investigations at Sutton Farm,  
177 Leicester Road, Sutton in the Elms,  
Broughton Astley, Leicestershire  
(SP 512 940 and SP 521 950)**

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### **1. Summary**

*A Topographical survey of ridge and furrow earthworks and an Archaeological evaluation of the floodplain areas was carried out by ULAS at Sutton Farm, 177 Leicester Road, Sutton in the Elms, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire (SP 512 940 and SP 521 950) on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2004 and from 16<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005 respectively. This work was in advance of the proposed groundworks across the site, and more specifically regarding the evaluation, in the floodplain of the River Soar in response to a Geophysical survey carried out by Stratascan Limited, which revealed a number of potential archaeological features within said areas. This work was carried out on behalf of Mr. K. Oldham. Trial trenching revealed few features of archaeological significance, but did discover some land clearance evidence that occurred some time in antiquity and a linear feature of unknown date. The topographical survey has added a detailed overview of the extant ridge and furrow within the development area. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services Section, accession number X.A.126.2005.*

### **2. Introduction**

2.1 This document constitutes the third stage of archaeological assessment to have been carried out at Sutton Farm. A desk-based assessment (Marsden 2000) and an archaeological evaluation of the „greens’ areas (Jarvis 2002) had previously been undertaken by ULAS on behalf of Mr. K. Oldham. The desk-based assessment indicated the possibility for archaeological remains to be present at the site, which was confirmed by the trial trench evaluation, which revealed archaeological features of various dates. The remains revealed included a possible Prehistoric burnt mound, a Romano-British circular structure, early-mid Saxon structures including at least one sunken featured building (SFB), and a series of ditches and gullies.

2.2 A brief for further work involving an archaeological watching brief, topographical survey of the extant ridge and furrow, and an archaeological evaluation of the proposed golf course was prepared by the Senior Planning Archaeologist at the

Heritage Services Section (now called Historic and Natural and Environment Team), Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the planning authority.

2.3 Further to this, design specifications were produced by ULAS for these non-intrusive and intrusive works (Meek 2003 and Meek 2004 respectively; see appendices). The principal aim of the intrusive work would be to 'establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits...in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development' (Meek 2004). Whilst the principal aims of the non-intrusive work are to 'record any archaeological remains threatened by destruction. Such remains may be exposed or potentially damaged by the groundworks, for example in areas where machine wheel ruts are caused due to ground conditions or where the ground surface is inadvertently disturbed during movement of inert material/topsoil' (Meek 2003).

2.4 This report presents the results of this archaeological work, the fieldwork also being carried out on behalf of Mr K. Oldham (Planning Application number 01/0532/FUL).

### **3. Site background**

3.1 The proposed golf course lies on the western side of Sutton in the Elms, Broughton Astley parish, on land surrounding Sutton Farm (NGR SP516 943) as shown in figures 1 and 2.

3.2 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain sheet 169 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of alluvium adjacent to the river Soar in the south and a tributary stream in the north. Other deposits in the area include sand and gravel, Wolston clay and clays of the Oadby and Thrussington Tills.

3.3 The land slopes down to the west in the southern part of the area, between *c.*84 to 73m. North of Sutton Farm the land slopes down northwards between *c.*87 to 70m (Marsden 2000). The site area is some 41ha.

3.4 The site is located directly east of the Fosse Way Roman Road, which runs south-west to north-east along its boundary. Finds of this date are considered a possibility within the development area. For example, Sapcote Roman villa is situated *c.*1km to the south-west on the opposite side of the Roman road.

3.5 Sutton in the Elms is known to have Anglo-Saxon and medieval origins, and is recorded in the Domesday Book. Ridge and furrow (medieval ploughing) survives as earthworks, and has been recorded from aerial photography in fields within the

development area. These most likely represent the fields associated with the medieval settlement at Sutton in the Elms.



Fig. 1 Site Location. Scale 1:50000

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## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 General Methodology and Standards**

4.1.1 All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their relevant *Standard and Guidance*.

### **4.2 Watching brief methodology**

4.2.1 The initial watching brief methodology involved an archaeologist being present during the start of the works at the site involving the deposition of imported material to raise the level of the proposed golf course above topsoil. The aim of the works was for an archaeologist to be present to guard against any inadvertent damage of buried archaeological deposits and to record any accidentally discovered/revealed archaeology during periods of inert material and topsoil distribution. The watching brief was initially required to be „intensive’, as stated in the Project Design Proposal (Dawson 2003) where an archaeological presence is required during any earthmoving operations that have the potential to disturb underlying archaeological remains.

4.2.2 Following a number of visits, the methodology being employed by the contractors for inert materials and topsoil distribution was seen to be successful and archaeological deposits were neither being damaged or exposed by the groundworks. The watching brief has since been undertaken only occasionally, and for very short visits, to monitor progress and check the methodology is still working.

### **4.3 Survey and Recording of Ridge and Furrow**

4.3.1 The construction methodology of the golf course will obscure all areas of existing earthworks, and thus a preliminary record and survey of existing earthworks was required, and this was undertaken by ULAS.

4.3.2 An initial walkover survey of the site area was undertaken, and surviving earthwork features noted to determine the general characteristics, such as the presence of headlands, baulks, related earthworks, later ditches left by enclosures and the presence of any other hitherto unrecorded monuments.

4.3.3 Information from aerial photographs, compiled by the former Leicestershire Museums Arts and Records Service, was used to gain further information regarding earthworks across the site area, including the use of formerly prepared landscape maps.

4.3.4 Plans were prepared detailing the location of known ridge and furrow and other earthworks.

4.3.5 A measured profile across several selected ridges was undertaken using an electronic distance measurer (EDM). Different profiles evident from general observation were noted, and different examples surveyed.

#### **4.4 Trial Trenching Methodology**

4.4.1 Trenches were set out prior to machining, using an approximation of the proposed trench location plans as prepared by the Senior Planning Archaeologist and Mike Dawson of CgMs.

4.4.2 Topsoil and subsoil were removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural ground by small tracked excavator and a JCB using toothless ditching buckets.

4.4.3 For the area of the floodplain of the River Soar on the western side of the golf course five 20m x 1.6m wide trenches and one 25m x 1.6m wide trench were proposed.

4.4.4 For the floodplain area in the northern part of the golf course two 20m x 1.6m trenches, two 40m x 1.6m trenches and one 35m x 1.6m trench were proposed.

4.4.5 Trenches were examined by appropriate hand cleaning and archaeological deposits or significant natural deposits were planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establish the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans have been tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

4.4.6 Sections were drawn as appropriate, including records of at least one longitudinal face of each trench.

4.4.7 Trench locations were recorded using an electronic distance measurer and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.



## 5. Results

### 5.1 Evaluation Results

#### 5.1.1 Area 1

Area 1 was located in the northern floodplain area, on the north side of the development site (Fig.2) where four trenches were excavated (Fig.3).

#### Trench 1

##### *Trench 1 Details*

<i>Length of Trench</i>	40m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	60 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.70m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.68.82m

Trench 1 was situated in the southern part of the area under investigation and orientated southeast-northwest. The trench was located to investigate two linear anomalies shown on the geophysical survey. A dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil was stripped away to reveal an orangey brown clay subsoil at a depth of c.0.22m. The subsoil gave way to a grey/blue alluvial clay with iron pan „blotches’ after a further c.0.23m. This in turn revealed a brown alluvial clay, also with iron panning, after a further c.0.25m. This layer of alluvium was seen for a further 0.23-0.59m before an orangey brown clay or orange brown gravel natural was seen. These alluvial layers were seen in all four trenches in this field and are classic of gleyed, intrazonal soil profiles associated with floodplains and waterlogged soils in general (Waugh, 1990, p253). A ceramic land drain was seen to the north-western end of the trench running north-south, on line with the linear anomaly picked up by the geophysics that was considered to be a thermoremnant material such as brick (Donaldson, 2004). Unfortunately the second anomaly was not discovered in this trench. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

## **Trench 2**

### ***Trench 2 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	35m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	52.5 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.70m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.68.82m

Trench 2 lies to the north-east of trench 1 and runs north-east to south-west, intersecting with trench three at c.25m to the north-east. This trench was situated to reveal a pit anomaly. The soil descriptions and depths are the same as those in trench 1. However, the brown alluvium was shallower with a depth of c.0.21m and revealed a further layer at c.20m from the northeast end continuing to the end of the trench. This was a grey silty clay plastic layer with high levels of iron panning. The natural level was noted to deepen to the south-west end of the trench. The only feature seen was a modern ditch drain 1.8m wide and 0.8m deep c.4m from the south-western end running south-east to north-west through the trench, dug by the land owner. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

## **Trench 3**

### ***Trench 3 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	40m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	76.5 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.70m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.68.92m

Trench 3 was situated at right-angles to trench 2 running northwest to south-east intersecting with trench 2 at c.10m for the north-western end. The trench was extended at the south-eastern end by a further 3m x 5.5m (Fig.4). This trench was also situated to reveal some possible pit anomalies revealed on the geophysical survey towards the south-eastern end of the trench. The soil descriptions are the same as trench 1, but the depths vary, with the topsoil being c.0.16m deep, subsoil c.0.32m, grey/blue alluvium c.0.20m and brown alluvium c.0.30m deep. An area rich in charcoal was seen c.15m from the south-eastern end within the blue alluvium c.0.70-

0.75m from ground level. Initial identification of some of the charcoal was oak. Charcoal was seen within the grey/blue alluvium from *c.*20m from the south-eastern end to this more concentrated patch. A small patch of burning *c.*0.4m across was also located *c.*3.8m from the south-eastern end and *c.*0.01m deep. Another smaller patch *c.*0.2m across was seen to the north-east of this at the same level (Plate 1). All burning and charcoal could be considered natural in origin. It may be considered that the burnt patches of alluvium may represent a fire with the charcoal to the west representing wash away from the fire. A pit-like feature was seen *c.*5.5m from the south-eastern end cutting the natural. The fill was the grey/blue alluvium with a slightly higher organic content than usual for the layer. However, due to water-logging further work was not possible. The lack of anthropomorphic evidence would suggest that it was not associated with any man-made activity. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

#### **Trench 4**

##### ***Trench 4 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	25m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	37.5 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 70m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 69.13m

Trench 4 was situated to the north of the previous trenches and orientated south-west to north-east. Again, the soil descriptions are the same as trench 1, but depths were different. Topsoil was seen to be *c.*0.17m deep, subsoil 0.33-0.19m deep, grey/blue alluvium 0.15-0.04m deep and brown alluvium 0.24-0.07m deep. These last three layers became shallower towards the south-western end of the trench, where the depth to natural rose, 0.87-0.45m deep. Two possible features were sample excavated but revealed to be a tree-bole *c.*0.2m deep and 0.45m east-west at *c.*12m from the north-east end and an odd change in natural *c.*3m from the same end of the trench. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench.

### 5.1.2 Area 2

Area 2 was located to the south of the development site (Fig.2), within the floodplain of the River Soar, where six trenches were excavated (Fig.5).

#### Trench 5

##### *Trench 5 Details*

<i>Length of Trench</i>	20m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	30 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.73m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.71.73m

Trench 5 was situated in the north of the south field and orientated east-west. The removal of the dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil c.0.17m deep revealed an orangey brown silty clay subsoil 0.19-0.49m deep. The intrazonal gleyed profile was the same here as in the north field, as was expected. Removal of the subsoil revealed a blue/grey alluvium c.0.21m deep and then an orangey brown alluvium of varied depth, 0.08-0.42m. However, this field also revealed a further layer of a mid/dark grey/blue alluvium with a high content of waterlogged wood. This layer was 0.15-0.34m deep and was apparent that the wood content was natural. This layer was c.0.2m above the natural gravels and checked at the start of the trench. Breaching the gravels meant instant water-logging of trenches, so this organic layer was treated like natural so the trenches would not fill with water so fast. At c.0.9-1m deep an odd feature was revealed c.6-9m from the western end (Fig.6a). This was c.0.1m above the lower layer in the sequence, in the orangey brown alluvium. The feature was irregular in plan and c.3.5m north-south and 0.75m seen in the trench east-west, lined with a dark brownish manganese stained silty clay. This was overlain by an orange and reddened oxidised clay with a crumble texture. This crumble texture can be derived when a soil is intermittently waterlogged (A. Monkton, *pers comm.*). Another one of these features was seen 3m from the eastern end of the trench, measuring c.2.5m north-south and visible throughout the width of the trench. Sample excavation of the first feature revealed an irregular base c.0.3m deep and irregular sides, thin at the edge, deepening to the centre. Ground water oozed from these features as it did from the natural gravel, so excavation and recording was very difficult. Similar features were discovered on an excavation at Willington, South Derbyshire in similar flood

plain alluviums, and although more evidence of charcoal was evident there, they were interpreted as burnt tree-boles (Beamish, 2000). No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

## **Trench 6**

### ***Trench 6 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	20m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	30 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.73m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.71.87m

Trench 6 was located c.15m to the south of trench 5 and orientated north-south. The soil description and layers were the same as trench 5 but varied considerably in depth (Fig.7b of Section.3.01 illustrates this). At a depth of c.0.8m the same type of irregular tree-bole features appeared (Fig.7, Plate 2). One was c.0.75m north-south and c.0.85m east-west seen, at c.1.5m from the northern end of the trench and another, (3) and (4), c.3.75m from the south end extending for 2.85m to the north, seen across the width of the trench. Sample excavation revealed the features to be identical in nature to the ones seen in trench 5. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

## **Trench 7**

### ***Trench 7 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	20m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	30 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.73m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.71.79m

Trench 7 was c.70m to the south of trench 6 and orientated north-south. The soil descriptions are the same as trench 5 except for depths. Here, the topsoil was a depth of c.0.20m, subsoil c.0.54m deep, blue/grey alluvium c.0.13m deep and brown

alluvium *c.*0.25m deep. The dark organic alluvium was reached, as seen in trench 5 and 6, and known to be *c.*0.2m above the natural gravels where it was checked to still be there. No archaeological features were revealed, however one fragment of modern tile was recovered from the topsoil in this trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

## **Trench 8**

### ***Trench 8 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	20m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	30 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 73m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 71.80m

Trench 8 was situated *c.*23m to the south of trench 7, orientated east-west. The soil descriptions are the same as trench 5 except for depths. Topsoil was *c.*0.18m deep, subsoil *c.*0.27m deep, blue/grey alluvium *c.*0.21m deep, brown alluvium *c.*0.08-0.42m deep and then *c.*0.2m of the dark blue/grey organic alluvium. The irregular tree-bole features were reached again at *c.*0.8-0.9m deep within the last 0.1-0.2m of the brown alluvium (Fig.6b). One was located *c.*3-5.25m from the west end throughout the width of the trench, and another was located *c.*2-4.5m from the eastern end of the trench also throughout the width of the trench. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

## **Trench 9**

### ***Trench 9 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	25m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	37.5 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 73m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 71.65m

Trench 9 was situated *c.*80m to the southeast of trench 8 and orientated east-west. The soil descriptions were the same as trench 5 but the depths varied. Topsoil was at a

depth of *c.*0.21m, subsoil 0.12-0.30m deep, grey/blue alluvium 0.23-0.57m deep, brown alluvium *c.*0.25m deep. The brown alluvium was not seen to the eastern end of the trench but becomes apparent as a layer by 5m from the eastern end. Again, the dark blue/grey organic layer was treated as natural and gravel checked at the eastern end of the trench. This time, the possible tree-bole features appeared again but lacked the dark brown silty clay lining. Otherwise they were identical in nature. One patch of this orange-brown crumble textured clayey silt was located *c.*11-15m from the eastern end of the trench at a depth of *c.*1m and being 0.06m in depth. No archaeological features were revealed, however one sherd of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery was recovered from the topsoil in this trench. This trench filled with water very quickly to reveal the groundwater level.

## **Trench 11**

### ***Trench 11 Details***

<i>Length of Trench</i>	17m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	25.5 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 73m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	<i>c.</i> 71.8m

Trench 11 was situated 16m to the west of trench 6 orientated north-south over a collection of geophysical anomalies. This trench was excavated in addition to the ten evaluation trenches to confirm the anomalies that were picked up in the geophysical survey were these irregular possible tree-bole type features. Whilst machining, a land drain was machined through that happened to be being fed by the river to the west. This resulted in fast water-logging of the trench to a higher than usual level. However, machining continued to the south and one of the irregular tree-bole features was picked up in the last metre of the trench at the southern end. Recording of the trench was impossible but the visual record states that it was identical to the other trenches in this field, particularly trench 6. No archaeological features were revealed and no finds were recovered from the trench.

### 5.1.3 Area 3

Area 3 was located to the south of the development site (Fig.2) where one trench was machined (Fig.8).

#### Trench 10

##### *Trench 10 Details*

<i>Length of Trench</i>	20m
<i>Area of Trench</i>	30 sq. m
<i>Surface Level (m OD)</i>	c.73m
<i>Base of Trench (m OD)</i>	c.72.32m

Trench 10 was situated in a field south of trenches 5-9 and orientated east-west. A dark brown silty clay topsoil was removed to a depth of c.0.25m to reveal an orange brown silty clay subsoil 0.12-0.27m deep. A grey/blue alluvium was seen from c.5m from the eastern end of the trench with a gradually increasing depth to the west of 0.16-0.32m. This lay above the natural light yellowish brown sandy, clayey gravels. A linear feature [7] was seen at 6.4m from the eastern end, running north-south through the trench with a width of 0.55m (Fig.9, Plate 3). Its primary fill (6) was a mid brown grey silty clay with iron panning and a secondary fill (5) of a light blue/grey alluvial clay, obviously washed in and sealing the feature. The profile was curved with gentle breaks of slope and very similar in construction style to the Roman curvi-linear feature seen in trenches 24/28 c.100m to the east on an elevated piece of land, in the same field, in the evaluation of the golf course green areas (W. Jarvis, 2003). The fills are also very similar. Unfortunately no dating evidence was discovered from this linear and water-logging soon became a problem.

## 5.2 Earthwork survey results

5.2.1 There were four fields that still displayed extant earthworks within the development area (Fig.10 & 11). These earthworks were exclusively ridge and furrow, with varied orientation and survival. All the profiles have been enhanced to show the ridge and furrow clearly, profiles A-E have a Z factor of 5 (height), and profile F an X and Y factor of 5 (length).



### 5.2.2 *Field 1*

The earthworks here represent the remains of a ridge and furrow field system running in roughly a north-east to south-west alignment which follows the current south-eastern field boundary. They only survive, however, in the eastern corner of the field for *c.*110m north-east to south-west and *c.*51m north-west to south-east. The profile through these earthworks shows a gradual slope down towards the northwest (Fig.12: Profile A).

### 5.2.3 *Field 2*

The ridge and furrow in this field was divided in two by a blank area of 20m, which may represent a possible droveway or later removal of hedgerows. However, both systems are on the same alignment of north-north-east to south-south-west, and cover a fair extent of the field. The profile through these shows a gradual slope down towards the north-west (Fig.12: Profile B).

### 5.2.4 *Field 3*

The ridge and furrow here displays evidence for the removal of a hedgerow, as two distinct systems are seen with a gap of 13m between them. One runs north-north-east to south-south-west, whilst the other is at right angles (to the west) to this, east-south-east to west-north-west. They do not align with any of the field boundaries in this field. The profiles show a distinct slope down toward the north (Fig.12: Profile D-F).

### 5.2.5 *Field 4*

The ridge and furrow only survives in the very east of the field on a rise above the River Soar flood plain. They run at right angles to the flood plain running west-north-west to east-south-east, and survive for almost all the width of the field. They are aligned with the current southern field boundary that is bounded by a ditch and runs parallel to the Coventry Road (Fig.12: Profile C).

## 5.3 **Watching Brief results**

The watching brief has confirmed that the methodology for topsoil and inert material deposition has so far had no impact on buried archaeological remains. Land fill was all above ground and up to a height of 0.5m. The filling was always carried out from an area that was already made-up, avoiding vehicles tracking on the existing topsoil.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Evaluation

#### 6.1.1 Area 1

No archaeological material was found within this field and all the trenches displayed relatively the same gleyed intrazonal soil profiles classic of flood plains (Waugh 1990, p253). The geophysical survey shows both linear features and pit anomalies. Trench 1 may have explained one of these linear features as a land drain. The others were not picked up. Trench 3 may have discovered the 'pit' anomalies, which may have derived from patches of concentrated burning or charcoal. The alluvial clay filled pit feature may have also been the cause of one of the anomalies. No archaeology was revealed within the area.

#### 6.1.2 Area 2

The trenches all displayed relatively the same gleyed intrazonal soil profiles classic of flood plains. The 'pit' anomalies picked up in this field by the geophysical survey are most likely to have been caused by the possible burnt out tree-boles that appeared to be widespread throughout the field, and may relate to a natural occurrence at some time in antiquity, or could even be the result of a prehistoric phase of land clearance. However, the geophysical survey discovered fluvial activity to the south of this field that can only be explained by undulations in the natural gravels and collection and variation in depths of alluvium in these recesses. No archaeology was revealed within this area.

#### 6.1.3 Area 3

The trench in this field managed to locate archaeology, as did the two trenches in the previous evaluation of the golf course greens (Jarvis 2003). An undated linear feature was seen running north-south next to the river, constructed for either drainage or boundary purposes. However, the geophysical survey only discovered fluvial activity, which can again only be explained by undulations in the natural gravels and collection and variation in depths of alluvium in these recesses, a suggestion put forward by the geophysics report (Donaldson, 2004).

## 6.2 *Earthwork survey*

6.2.1 The earthwork survey has provided evidence that supports the desk-based assessment (Marsden, 2000), which concluded that the development area was probably part of the medieval open fields of the village of Sutton in the Elms.

6.2.2 Ridge and furrow earthworks were formed by repeated ploughing, using a coulter, share and mouldboard. Although the mouldboard had been in use since prehistoric times, this type of ploughing equipment was common from the 11th century. It required a team of oxen or horses to provide traction. The coulter and share were pulled through the earth and the mouldboard turned the sod to one side. When the team had turned, the process was repeated from the opposite direction, turning the sod so that it abutted the first, forming a ridge. The ridge was thought to aid drainage and also to define the limits of a persons land (Astill, 1988, 70). From the 16th century onwards fields were turned over to permanent pasture, which has lead to the effect of „fossilising’ ridge and furrow in the landscape (Astill 1988, 71). Similar earthworks have also been made by more modern processes, such as 19th – early 20th century steam ploughing; however, these tend to be very straight and exactly parallel with hedge boundaries.

6.2.3 The earthwork survey has indicated two possible alignments in the landscape (Fig.10). Fields 2, 3 and 4 share the same alignment or are at right angles to this alignment, north-east to south-west, which is the same alignment as the old Roman road „The Fosse Way’ to the west of the development area. This fits in with much of the ridge and furrow alignments as noted in the SMR Landscape maps of the immediate area. Field 4 however displays a more acute angle than this and displays the same alignment as the fields of ridge and furrow to the immediate east of the site.

6.2.4 The accuracy of the sketches on the SMR maps may be questionable, and cannot be relied upon and taken to be the true representation of ridge and furrow alignment within this landscape. It is more likely that the variation seen within the survey data is a truer reflection of the variable nature of ridge and furrow spread out in a landscape. Where a massive visual linear landmark is seen within a landscape, it can be mimicked and utilised for later alignments, but the further from this landmark,

the more skewed the alignment may become. The natural contours of the landscape are also a significant factor, which do vary over the survey area.

### **6.3 *Watching Brief results***

There has been no impact on archaeology seen during the watching brief to date.

## **7. Conclusion**

**7.1** The evaluation, although aimed at potential archaeological features revealed by geophysics, resulted in the discovery of one certain archaeological feature, natural features and undulation in the natural substratum.

**7.2** Area 1 produced no archaeological artefacts or convincing archaeological activity. The tree-bole features discovered in area 2 are the likely cause of the geophysical pit anomalies, and not possible burnt mounds like that discovered to the south in trench 16 of the previous evaluation (Jarvis 2003). The fluvial activity in areas 2 and 3 seem to relate to undulations in the natural gravels, in particular, where they are higher than in the rest of the floodplain area.

**7.3** The evaluation revealed only one archaeological feature. A linear feature of unknown date in area 3, a field which has already yielded significant archaeological deposits of Roman date (Jarvis 2003).

**7.4** The earthwork survey resulted in the detailed record of four fields with extant ridge and furrow of varying survival, supporting the evidence that the development area was once a part of the medieval open fields of the village of Sutton in the Elms. An alignment with a dominant feature in the landscape, the Roman „The Fosse Way’, has also been noted.

**7.5** Although no significant archaeological deposits were discovered, the site still contains the potential for environmental data. The alluvial layers in the floodplain

areas will contain significant data that can aid in the reconstruction of past environments. This can be constructed from pollen evidence, organic remains, soil micromorphology and charcoal identification. Where there was evidence for burning, carbon-14 dating can be used to establish the time-scale of these processes.

## **8. Archive**

The site archive will be held by the Heritage Services section, Community Services department, Leicestershire County Council, accession number X.A.126.2005. It consists of finds, site plans (inc. digital), records, and digital photographs. A brief summary of this report will be published in *The Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

## **9. Acknowledgements**

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## **10. Appendices**

### **10.1 Site diary**

#### *10.1.1 Evaluation*

16/05/05	JT, SB
17/05/05	JT, SB
18/05/05	JT, SB
19/05/05	JT, SB
20/05/05	JT, SB
23/05/05	JT, WJ (half day)

#### *10.1.2 Earthwork Survey*

06/02/04	JT, WJ
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#### *10.1.3 Watching Brief*

Between 11/08/03-14/02/04, 10 half days and one whole day was spent on site  
– WJ

## 10.2 Contexts

Context	Feature Type	Description	Comments	Finds Y/N
1	Layer	Mid/light greyish blue clay, frequent iron panning	Alluvial layer	N
2	Layer	Mid/light greyish brown clay, frequent iron panning	Alluvial layer	N
3	Fill/Lining	Dark greyish brown silty clay with manganese and iron pan staining	Mineralised stained lining of natural feature, tree-bole?	N
4	Fill	Light orangey/red brown silty clay with a crumbly texture	Waterlogged fill of tree-bole, old topsoil fill?	N
5	Fill	Light blue grey clay with occasional medium and small rounded stone	Secondary fill of linear N-S	N
6	Fill	mid brown grey silty clay, occasional iron panning with occasional rounded and angular medium flint	Primary fill of linear N-S	N
7	Cut	N-S linear, with gentle breaks, 80degree sides and curved base	Cut of linear N-S	N

## 10.3 The finds

**Pottery, Brick and Tile** by Nicholas J. Cooper.

Context	Cut	Trench	Sherd no.	Weight (g)	Comments/dating
Topsoil	-	7	1	3	fragment modern tile
Topsoil	-	9	1	8	sherd of a post medieval or modern earthenware plate or dish, internal brown glaze with yellow trailed slip, probably 19th century from Staffordshire

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Plate 1 – Showing burnt patches of natural in trench 3 (scale = 2m)



Plate 2 – Showing partial profile of tree-bole feature (3)/(4) in trench 6 (scale = 0.5m)



Plate 3 – Showing undated linear [7] in trench 10 (scale = 0.5m)