

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Syston Health Centre, Main Street, Syston,
Leicestershire (SK 627 117)**

Matthew Parker

Planning Application ref: 05/0057/2

Client: Edward Symmons and Ashley House plc.

Checked by Project Manager

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Matthew Parker

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Matthew Parker

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during April 2006 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) as required by Charnwood Borough Council as part of the planning conditions (ref 03/1758/2). The site lies close to the medieval core of Syston and a number of entries from the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) are recorded in the vicinity. No archaeological deposits were located during the watching brief. The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services under the Accession Number X.A89.2006

1: Introduction

1.1: In accordance with Planning and Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and planning) and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), section 2, a watching brief was undertaken during ground works in advance of the development of the area for the construction of a new health centre. The work follows the *Design Specification for Archaeological Work* (ULAS 06/544; Appendix 1).

1.2: This work was carried out as part of a mitigation strategy for potential archaeological remains as required by the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisor to the planning authority as detailed in the 'Brief for archaeological attendance for inspection & recording (a watching brief)' (LCC 14.7.2005). The archaeological desk-based assessment (Harvey 2005) had found that the proposed development area did have some archaeological potential as it falls within the medieval village core of Syston. Furthermore, medieval and early post-medieval remains had been found within the vicinity of the development area. Thus it was deemed necessary to have adequate archaeological supervision whilst the foundation works were being undertaken.

2: Geology and Topography

2.1: The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology was likely to consist of river gravel terraces. The site lies at a height of c.56 m O.D.

3: Archaeological and Historical Background (from Harvey 2005)

3.1 No archaeological sites have been recorded within the proposed development area, however this may reflect the lack of systematic archaeological investigation. The proposed development site is located within the northeast part of historic medieval village core of Syston (**MLE1008**). The church of St. Peter and St. Paul (**MLE 1001**) is located 90m to the northwest. This is a large fourteenth century church of pink

granite and white limestone. The church has an unusual interior design; hexagonal piers panelled all over. The arches of the arcade and tower arch are also panelled. Documentary sources indicate a mill was located 480m to the east (**MLE1004**). A medieval rowel spur was found 980m to the northeast. A rowel consists of a small stellar wheel or disk with sharp radial points and capable of rotation, forming the extremity of a spur.

3.2 Two prehistoric archaeological sites have been recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development site. Two possible Bronze Age ring ditches have been located from aerial photography 900m to the north (**MLE789**) and an Early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead was found 750m to the south in the rear garden of 29 Hungarton Drive (**MLE6295**).

3.3 The route of the Fosse Way Roman road appears some 750m to the west of Melton Road (**MLE1380**). A single Roman site has been identified in the vicinity of the proposed development area. A copper alloy coin which is an 'unofficial copy' of a Roman example dating to 348-361 was found 300m to the northwest at 7 Barry Drive (**MLE7784**).

3.4 Early Anglo-Saxon activity has been identified in the vicinity of the proposed development area in the form of a rich inhumation burial that contained a large amount of grave goods including a sword and glass that was found 900m to the northeast in Queneborow Field (**MLE791**). Also a sword was found 550m to the northeast that could indicate another burial.

3.5 Post-medieval sites include a windmill located on a map of 1779, 700m to the east. Also the oldest brick fronted small house in the country, dated to 1686 is located 300m to the west (**MLE1003**). Two other late seventeenth century buildings are located in the vicinity, 180m and 300m to the west (**LE8730** and **MLE8731**).

3.6 Historical Environment landscape maps do not show any areas of cropmarks or ridge and furrow within the proposed development area, however it does show that cropmarks of undated enclosures and ditches are located in the vicinity. These include a straight linear feature aligned southwest-northeast and other linear features at right angles that are located 1100m to the northeast (**MLE782**). Also faint cropmarks trace of two, possibly three sub rectangular enclosures have been located 1000m to the east (**MLE 785**). Another sub-rectangular enclosure with a smaller associated enclosure to the east has been located 700m to the north. The online catalogue of the Cambridge University Collection of Air Photos was searched, and found to contain no oblique photographs of the site. There are no listed buildings within the proposed development area.

3.7 In the Domesday Book land at Syston was held by Swein from Hugh of Grandmesnil. Hugh of Grandmesnil was the greatest landowner in Leicestershire and a favourite of William I. Swein is an old English name and this makes it likely that Syston was one of the few villages to have an English lord in 1086 (Barker *et al* 2000). Included under the Domesday entry is "Land for 6 ploughs. In lordship 1. 17

villagers with a priest, 1 smallholder and 11 Freemen have 6 ploughs. A mill at 8s; meadow 30 acres” (Morgan 1979). Syston was a substantial village at the time of the Domesday Book. The name Syston means “possibly ‘farmstead or village of a man called Sigehæth’” (Mills 2003).

3.8 The 1778 Enclosure Map (Harvey 2005, fig.3) of Syston shows that the development area together with the land associated with the current health centre makes up an entire field belonging to Mary Kendall that had no structures located within it. There was no Tithe map and the 1835 1” map is too small and abstract to gain any clear insight into the development area. The first edition OS Map 1884 (fig.4) shows a large building towards the front of Melton Road (within the area of the current health centre). This building had an ornate driveway and other smaller associated buildings. The proposed development area lies to the rear of this property, which at the time consisted of landscape gardens with no structures. There is no observable changes in the 1903, 1930, 1956 or 1966 OS maps (figs. 5 and 6). The 1976 OS map (fig. 7) shows that the buildings towards the front of Melton Road have all been removed to make way for the current health centre. The land to the rear still contains no structures although a part of it may represent a parking area and the current map shows this situation to be virtually unchanged.

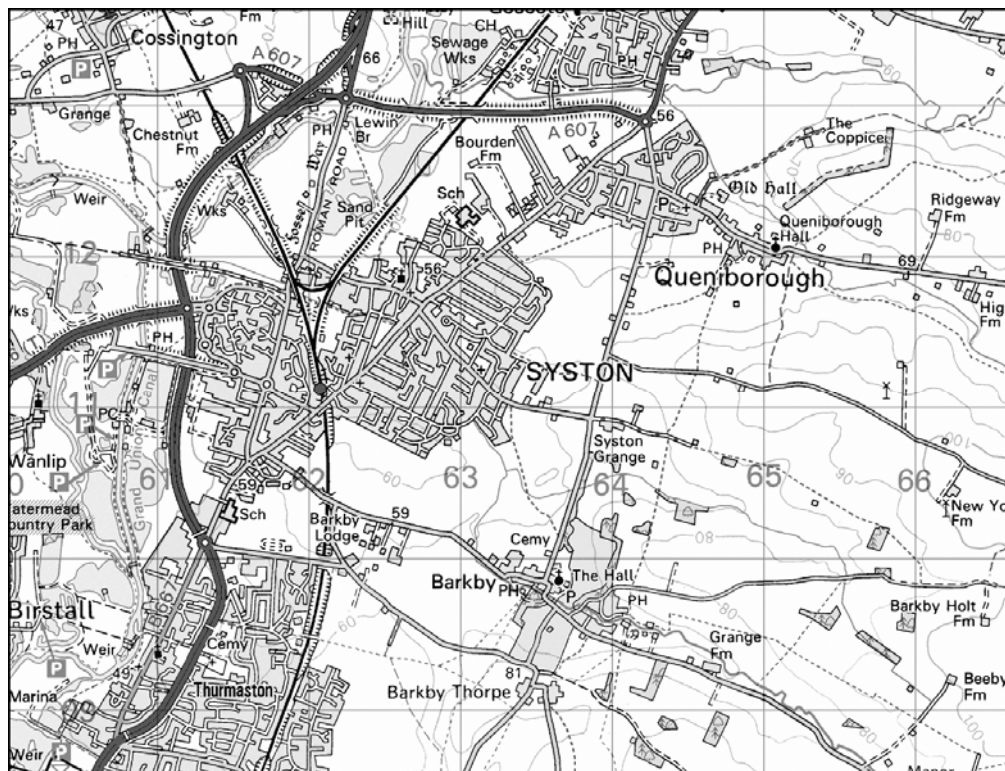


Figure 1 Site location Scale 1:50000

Reproduced from the Landranger OS map 129 Nottingham and Loughborough area 1:50000 map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10002186.

4: Archaeological Objectives

4.1: The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to ascertain whether any archaeological deposits were present following the *Design Specification for Archaeological Work* (ULAS 06/544). In summary, these were as follows

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the nature, extent, date, and significance of any archaeological deposits affected by the proposed ground works.
- To excavate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the groundwork's.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

4.2: All work was undertaken in accord with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhering to their *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. The work also was in accordance with the Leicestershire County Council *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland*.

4.3: The archaeological watching brief was undertaken during topsoil and overburden stripping on 27.04.2006 and foundation excavation on 29.04.2006 by Matthew Parker.

5: Methods

5.1: The removal of topsoil and the subsequent excavation of the trenches for the foundations completed were undertaken with a JCB 3C excavator using 1.8m ditching bucket for the topsoil stripping and a 0.4m toothed bucket for the foundation trenches. The machining was observed in order to monitor for evidence of archaeological deposits or remains and the topsoil was also searched for artefacts. The stripped surface and sections of foundation trenches were then examined for evidence of archaeological deposits cutting into the substratum.

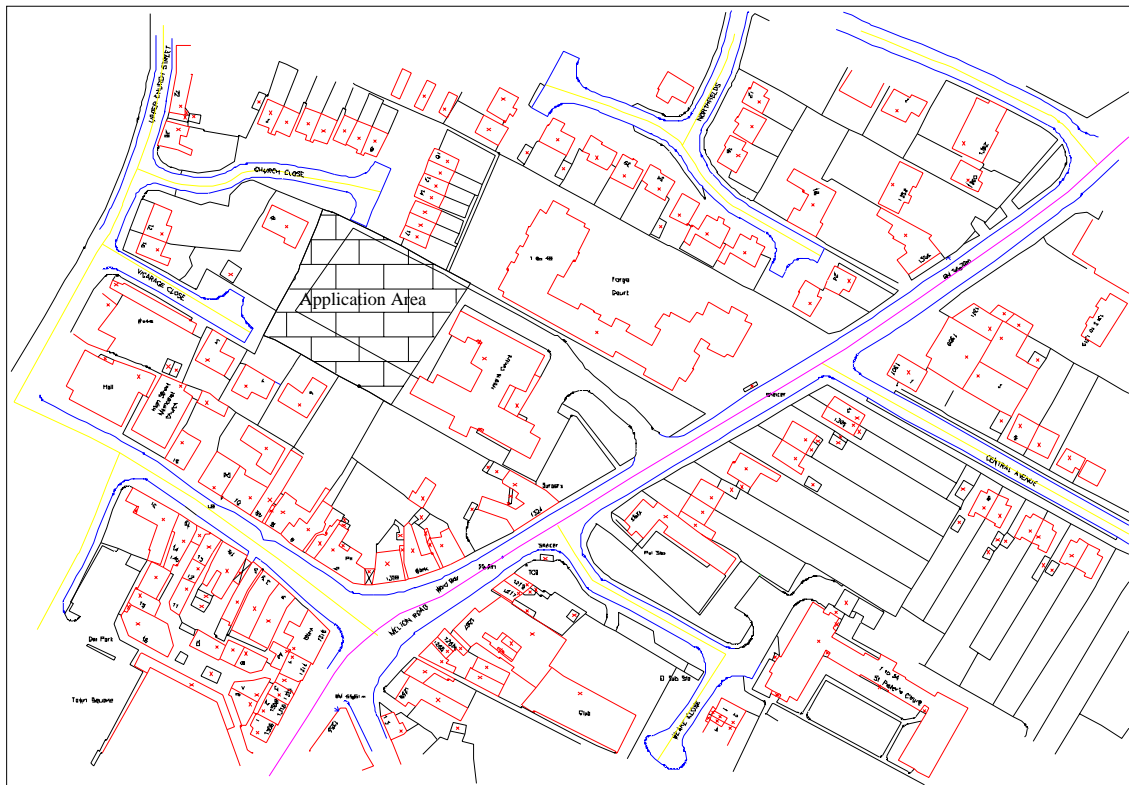


Figure 2 Location of the development area (hatched) Scale 1:1000.

6: Results

6.1: The topsoil was removed down into the natural substratum to a depth of 1.05m. The upper deposit comprised a 0.30 depth of topsoil and turf over a 0.75m subsoil deposit overlying the sand and gravel substratum. The foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of c.1.4m through the upper subsoil and sand and gravel substratum.

6.2 Observation of the topsoil stripping and excavation of the foundation trenches, did not reveal any evidence of archaeological features visible in the stripped surface or within the foundation trench sections. No pre-modern material was present in the spoil. A rectangular brick floor was observed to the northwest of the area during stripping for the car park area.

7: Conclusions

7.1: The archaeological watching brief at Melton Road, Syston has revealed an absence of archaeological deposits. This indicates that either the site was not in use or that the usage was not intensive enough to leave archaeological traces. Alternatively any archaeological remains may have been disturbed by previous

8: Archive

8.1: The site archive (X.A89.2006) consisting of paper records and digital colour photographs will be housed with Leicestershire County Council Community Services Department.

9: Publication

9.1: A version of the summary (see above) will appear in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

10: Acknowledgements

10.1: The work was undertaken by Matt Parker of ULAS on behalf of Edward Symmons and Ashley House plc. The project was managed by Dr. Patrick Clay.

11: Bibliography

Harvey, J., 2005. *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for proposed development at Syston Health Centre, Melton Road, Syston, Leicestershire (SK627 117)*. ULAS 2005-086

ULAS 2006. *Design Specification for archaeological work Syston Health Centre, Melton Road, Syston, Leicestershire (SK627 117)*. ULAS 06/552

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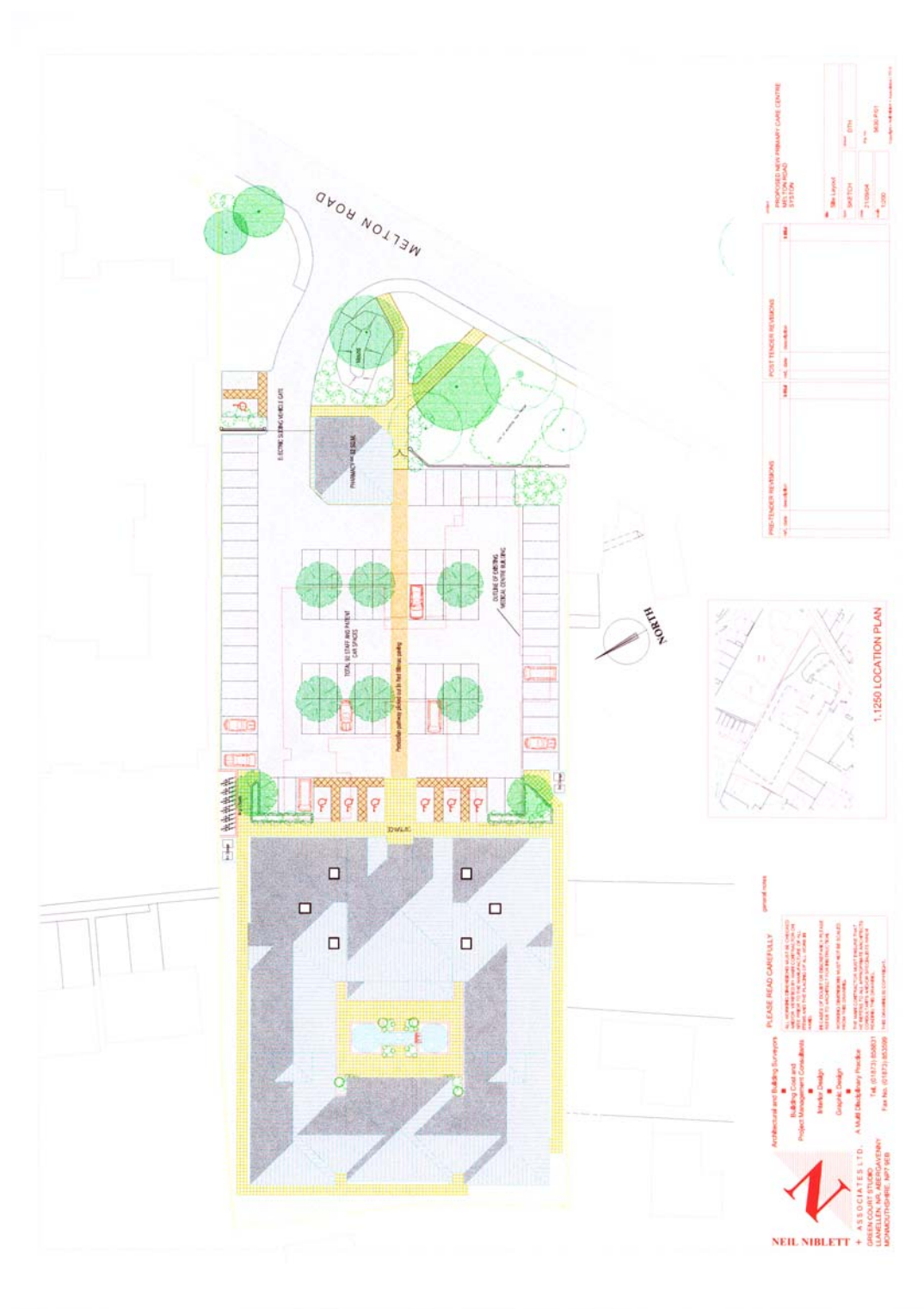


Figure 4 Plan of the new Health Centre development



Fig 5 Ground reduction in progress in the area of the car park



Fig. 6 Car park ground reduction. Natural substratum below subsoil and topsoil visible in section

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for archaeological work

Syston Health Centre, Melton Road, Syston, Leicestershire (SK627 117)

Planning Application No. 05/0057/2

For: Edward Symmons and Ashley House plc

1 Definition and scope of the specification

1.1 In accordance with Planning Policy Guidelines 16 (PPG16, Archaeology and planning), para.30, this specification provides a written scheme for a archaeological attendance (control and supervision), as required by the Planning Authority, of any ground works on the site which may disturb areas of archaeological potential in connection with a planning application for a new health centre at Syston Health Centre, Melton Road, Syston, Leicestershire (SK627 117); Planning Application: 05/0057/2) for Edward Symmons and Ashley House plc. It addresses the requirements from Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological adviser to the planning authority (Their 'brief for archaeological attendance for inspection & recording (a watching brief) 14.7.2005).

1.2 All archaeological work will adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland (LMARS)*.

2 Background

2.1 Requirement for archaeological work

2.1.1 The archaeological attendance brief is required to cover ground disturbance to identify any deposits of archaeological importance. It forms part of a scheme of work to fulfil the planning conditions required by Charnwood Borough Council following recommendations from Leicestershire County Council, as advisors to the planning authority.

2.2 Archaeological potential

2.2.1 A desk-based assessment has been prepared for the site (ULAS Report 2005-086). The Leicestershire Historic Environment Record indicates that the site lies within the medieval core of Syston (**MLE 1008**). In addition, three other medieval sites have been identified in the vicinity of the development (**MLE1001**, **MLE1004** and **MLE6668**). Various archaeological sites have also been recorded within 1km of the proposed development site. These include two prehistoric (**MLE789** and **MLE6295**), one Roman (**MLE7784**), two Anglo-Saxon (**MLE781** and **MLE6118**), four post-medieval (**MLE787**, **MLE1003**, **MLE8730** and **MLE8731**) and five undated sites (**MLE782**, **MLE 783**, **MLE785**, **MLE788** and **MLE1005**).

3 Aims

3.1 Through archaeological observation of the overburden stripping and, if necessary, foundation and service trench excavation by the client's contractors:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
4. To produce an archive and report of any results.

4 Methods

4.1 The project will involve the presence on site of an experienced professional archaeologist during the works specified above. During these groundworks, if any archaeological deposits are seen to be present, the archaeologist will record areas of archaeological interest.

4.2 The archaeologist will co-operate at all times with the contractors on site to ensure the minimum interruption to the work.

4.3 Any archaeological deposits located will be hand cleaned and planned as appropriate. Samples of any archaeological deposits located will be hand excavated. Measured drawings of all archaeological features will be prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100. All plans will be tied into the National Grid using an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) where appropriate.

4.4 Archaeological deposits will be excavated and recorded as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits, recognising and excavating structural evidence and recovering economic, artefactual and environmental evidence. Particular attention will be paid to the potential for buried palaeosols and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

4.5 All excavated sections will be recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into the Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.

4.5 Any human remains encountered will be initially left *in situ* and only be removed under a Home Office Licence and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations. The owner, Leicestershire County Council, and the coroner will be informed immediately on their discovery.

4.6 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site from the project manager. These will ensure that professional standards are being maintained. Provision will be made for monitoring visits with representatives of Homes by Marshall Ltd, Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services and Charnwood Borough Council.

5 Recording Systems

5.1 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets.

5.2 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 1:200 (or 1:100), which will show the location of the areas investigated.

5.3 Some record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made on drawing film, related to the OS grid and at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. Elevations and sections of individual layers of features should be drawn where possible. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans.

5.4 An adequate photographic record of the investigations will be prepared. This will include black and white prints and colour transparencies 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.

5.5 This record will be compiled and fully checked during the course of the watching brief.

5.6 All site records and finds will be kept securely.

6 *Report and Archive*

6.1 A report on the watching brief will be provided following the groundworks.

6.2 Copies will be provided for the client, Sites and Monuments Record and planning Authority. 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.

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 County Council, Heritage Services 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 be presented to Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services within six months of the completion of analysis. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

6.4. Any disk-based data will be provided for Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services.

7 *Publication*

7.1 A summary report will be submitted to a suitable regional or national archaeological journal within one year of completion of fieldwork. A full report will be submitted if the results are of significance.

8 *Timetable and Staffing*

8.1 The watching brief is scheduled to commence at the inception of the contractors groundworks. An experienced archaeologist will be present during this work. It is proposed to watch all works, as specified above, with appropriately timed visits during the work in consultation with the contractors.

9. *Health and Safety*

9.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Statement of Safety Policy and the ULAS Health and Safety Policy (2001). Generic risk assessments and relevant legislation guidelines are contained within the ULAS Health and Safety Manual (2001). This augments and updates the Standing Committee of Archaeological Unit Managers (SCAUM) Health and Safety Manual (1997).

9.2 Health and Safety procedures will be agreed between ULAS and the site tenants prior to the commencement of work, and will be subject to review by both parties for the duration of the works.

10. Insurance

10.1 All ULAS work is covered by the University of Leicester's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance. The Public Liability Insurance is with St Pauls Travellers Policy No. UCPOP3651237 while the Professional Indemnity Insurance is with Lloyds Underwriters (50%) and Brit Insurances (50%) Policy No. FUNK3605.

11. Bibliography

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

MGC 1992, *Standards in the County Council, Heritage Services Care of Archaeological Collections* (County Council, Heritage Services and Galleries Commission)

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

SMA 1993, *Selection, retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections. Guidelines for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (Society of County Council, Heritage Services Archaeologists)

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20.03.2006

Appendix 1

Syston Health Centre, Melton Road, Syston, Leicestershire (SK627 117)

Planning Application No. 05/0057/2

For: Edward Symmons and Ashley House plc

1 Nature of the work

1.1 This statement is for an archaeological watching brief.

1.2 The work will involve observation of groundworks during daylight hours and recording of any underlying archaeological deposits revealed. Overall depth is likely to be c. 0.2-0.5m. This will involve the examination of the exposed surface with hand tools (shovels, trowels etc) and excavation of archaeological features. All work will adhere to the University of Leicester Health and Safety Policy and follow the guidance in the Standing Committee of Archaeological Unit Managers manual, as revised in 1997, together with the following relevant Health and Safety guidelines.

1.3 HSE Construction Information Sheet CS8 Safety in excavations.

HSE Industry Advisory leaflet IND (G)143 (L): Getting to grips with manual handling.

HSE Industry Advisory leaflet IND (G)145 (L): Watch Your back.

CIRIA R97 Trenching practice.

CIRIA TN95 Proprietary Trench Support Systems.

HSE Guidance Note HS(G) 47 Avoiding danger to underground services. HSE Guidance Note GS7 Accidents to children on construction sites

1.4 The Health and Safety policy on site will be reassessed during the evaluation .

1.5 All work will adhere to the contractors' health and safety policy.

2 Risks Assessment

2.1 Working within a building site

Precautions. No work will be undertaken beneath section faces. Loose spoil heaps will not be walked on. Protective footwear will be worn at all times. Hard hats will be worn at all times. A member of staff qualified in First Aid will be present at all times. First aid kit, vehicle and mobile phone to be kept on site in case of emergency.

2.2 Working with plant.

Precautions. Hard hats, protective footwear and hazard jackets will be worn at all times. No examination of the area of stripping will take place until machines have vacated area. Observation of machines will be maintained during hand excavation. Liaison will be maintained with the contractors to ensure programme of machine movement is understood.

2.3 Working within areas prone to waterlogging.

Protective clothing will be worn at all times and precautions taken to prevent contact with stagnant water which may carry Wile's disease or similar.

2.4 Working with chemicals.

If chemicals are used to conserve or help lift archaeological material these will only be used by qualified personnel with protective clothing (i.e a trained conservator) and will be removed from site immediately after use.

2.5 Other risks

Precautions. If there is any suspicion of unforeseen hazards being encountered e.g chemical contaminants, unexploded bombs, hazardous gases work will cease immediately. The client and relevant public authorities will be informed immediately.

2.9 No other constraints are recognised over the nature of the soil, water, type of excavation, proximity of structures, sources of vibration and contamination.

Patrick Clay
20.03.2006