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**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation Land at 51 Main Street, Desford,  
Leicestershire**

**NGR: SK 47730 03549**

**Stephen Baker**



**ULAS Report No 2019-140**  
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**Site Name:** 51 Main Street, Desford, Leicestershire

**Grid Ref:** SK 47730 03549

**Author:** Stephen Baker

**Client:** S and S Contracting

**Planning Ref.** N/A

**ULAS Report Number:** 2019-140

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## OASIS RECORD

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	universi1-406942		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An archaeological field evaluation at 51 Main Street, Desford, Leicestershire		
	<b>Start/end dates</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2019		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	None		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Gardens		
	<b>Monument Type/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Significant Finds/Period</b>	None		
	<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF		
	<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Planning condition		
<b>Planning Ref.</b>	N/A			
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>County</b>	Leicestershire		
	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	51 Main Street, Desford, Leicestershire, LE9 9GR		
	<b>Study Area</b>	3839msq		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SK47730 03549.		
	<b>Height OD</b>	132m aOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Vicki Score		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Stephen Baker		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	S and S Contracting		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
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## Contents

Summary .....	2
Introduction.....	2
Location and Geology (Figure 1).....	3
Historical and Archaeological Background (from the WSI) .....	4
Archaeological Objectives .....	4
Research Objectives.....	4
Methodology (Figure 2) (Figure 3).....	5
Results.....	7
Trench 1 .....	7
Trench 2 .....	7
Trench 3 .....	7
Trench 4 .....	10
Discussion and Conclusion .....	13
Archive and publication.....	13
Acknowledgements.....	13
References.....	14

## Figures

Figure 1: Site Location.....	3
Figure 2: Original Trench Location plan. ....	6
Figure 3: Actual location of trial trenches .....	6
Figure 4: Trench 1, looking southeast.....	8
Figure 5: Trench 2, looking northeast.....	8
Figure 6: Trench 3, post – excavation, looking northeast.....	9
Figure 7: Pit [06], Trench 3, looking north.....	9
Figure 8: Trench 4, looking south.....	10
Figure 9: Pit [02], Trench 4, looking north.....	11
Figure 10: Posthole [04], Trench 4, looking east.....	12
Figure 11: Trench 4, after widening, post – excavation, looking south.....	12

## **An archaeological field evaluation at 51 Main Street, Desford, Leicestershire (SK 47730 03549)**

**Stephen Baker**

### **Summary**

*This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological trial trench evaluation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at 51 Main Street, Desford, Leicestershire (SK 47730 03549) in advance of residential development.*

*The development site consists of an area of gardens to the rear of several properties on the south east side of Main Street, Desford.*

*A total of four trenches were opened across the gardens, intended to traverse the footprints of the proposed buildings although the locations were flexible to avoid mature vegetation, boundaries and protected trees. The evaluation revealed evidence for archaeological activity in the form of pits and postholes of possibly medieval date to the south of the proposed development area. After direction from Leicester County Council planning department one trench was expanded to determine the extent of these remains.*

*The archive for the site will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A92.2019*

### **Introduction**

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were contracted by the client, S and S Contracting, to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at 51 Main Street, Desford, Leicestershire (NGR:SK47730 03549). The work was carried out between 10th – 14th October 2019.

The work was required by the Planning Authority following advice from the Leicestershire Planning Archaeologist in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, MHCLG 2018). All work was undertaken as per the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

The site was located on the on the south east side of Main Street, Desford, Leicestershire.

Archaeological work comprising trial trenching was therefore required to fulfil the conditions of the planning permission.

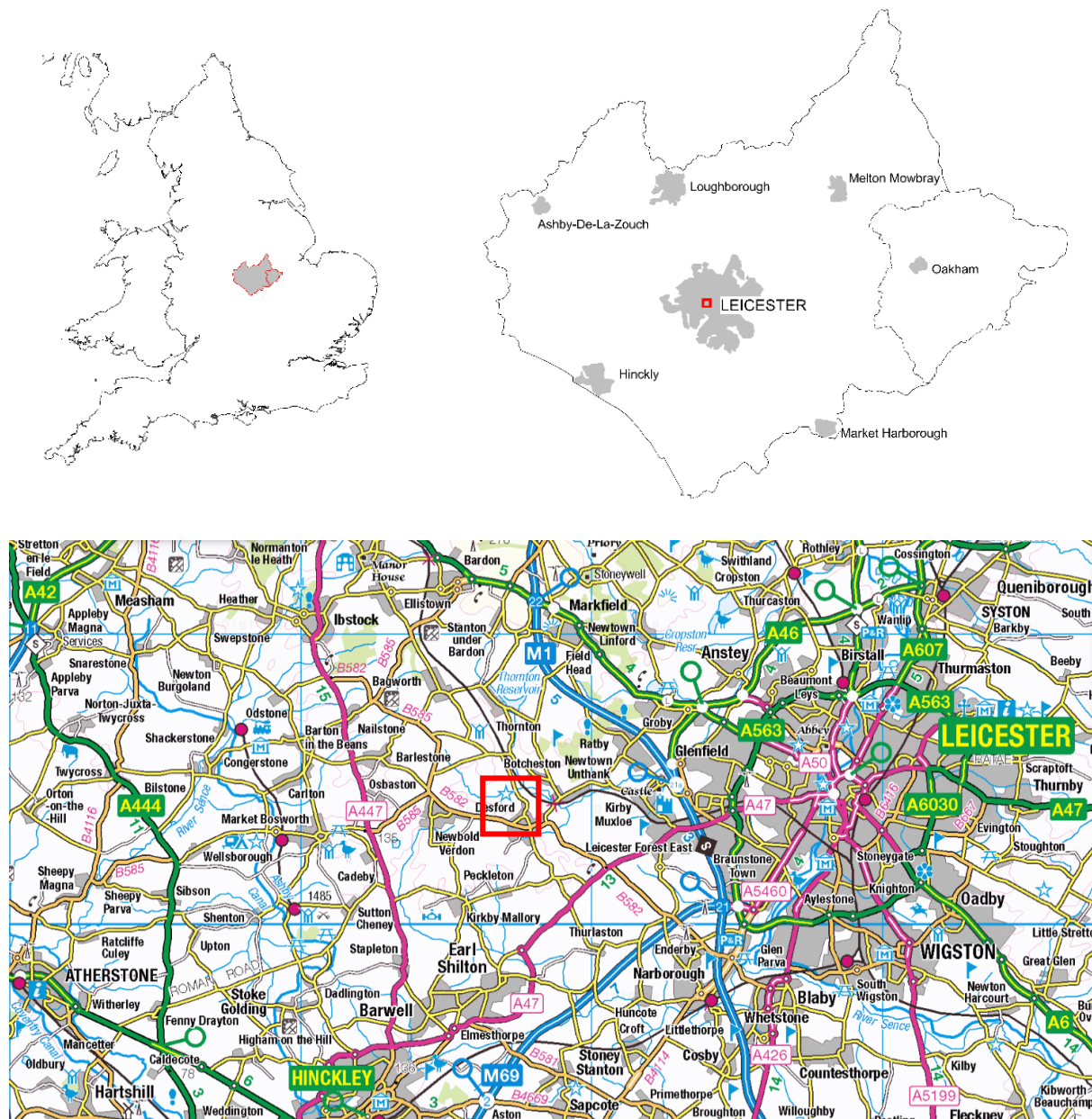


Figure 1: Site Location

*Reproduced from Landranger® 1:50 000 scale Sheet 140 (Leicester Coventry & Rugby) by permission © of Ordnance Survey ® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office copyright 2009 All rights reserved Licence number AL 100029495.*

## Location and Geology (Figure 1)

The development area is currently an area of land to the rear of a number of residential properties along the southeast of Main Street. It comprises mostly of gardens and also an area of hardstanding for car parking. It is generally level and lies at a height of approximately 130m aOD, rising slightly towards the south east.

The British Geological Survey identifies the bedrock geology of the area as Edwalton Member – Mudstone. This is overlain by Sand and Gravel Glaciofluvial Deposits.

### **Historical and Archaeological Background** (from the WSI)

The site lay within the historic medieval core of the village. The historic core of the village contains a number of historical buildings however none are in the vicinity of the development area.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicestershire and Rutland indicates that there were no known archaeological remains recorded in the assessment area itself, but adjacent to it there are records of Roman Pottery Kilns found during building work in 1960 (MLE2742).

Fieldwork has found evidence of an Iron Age/Roman site on the south side of High Street during work in 1999/2000 (MLE 9267). Excavations showed the site had two phases, the earlier of which including an enclosure and corn drier, but the later showing evidence for metalworking and tile, suggesting a stone building nearby.

While these records do not relate directly to the development area, archaeology nearby suggests that there was the possibility for archaeology to be present on the site.

### **Archaeological Objectives**

The main objectives of the archaeological work were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range, and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- 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 this evaluation 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 remained unknown until archaeological work is undertaken, it was possible to determine some initial objectives derived from East Midlands Heritage research agenda (Cooper 2006, Knight et al. 2012). The site's location just outside the historic village core suggested that there was potential for archaeological deposits from the medieval period onwards. The finds spots and HER records also suggested that there existed some potential for



archaeological deposits of Iron Age and Roman origin. The evaluation therefore had the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

#### *Romano-British*

How and why did settlement forms and building traditions vary within the region and over time? (5.4.2)

What patterns can be discerned in the location of settlements in the landscape? (5.4.5)

These research aims have been identified based on the current state of knowledge within the area of the scheme. The research aims were re-assessed and updated during the course of the fieldwork.

### **Methodology (Figure 2) (Figure 3)**

Leicestershire County Council, Principal Planning Archaeologist as archaeological advisor to the planning authority requested a *c.* 4% sample of the undisturbed area comprising four 20m trenches. The location and length of these was flexible due to constraints of existing vegetation and protected trees, but the objective was to evaluate the archaeological remains across the footprints of the four proposed residential properties.

Trench 2 was re-located where possible between existing vegetation and orientated northeast-southwest, running along the north of the proposed building footprint. Trench 3 was rotated to north to avoid mature tree rooting and Trench 4 was likewise rotated.

Prior to any machining of trial trenches, general photographs of the site areas were taken. The trenches were excavated using a 2 tonne mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were examined for archaeological deposits or finds by hand cleaning. The trenches were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid using a Topcon Hiper SR GPS and then were backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation after inspection by Sophie Clarke from the Leicestershire County Council Planning Department (LCC).

The work followed the approved WSI (ULAS 2019) and adhered to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2014).





Figure 2: Original Trench Location plan.

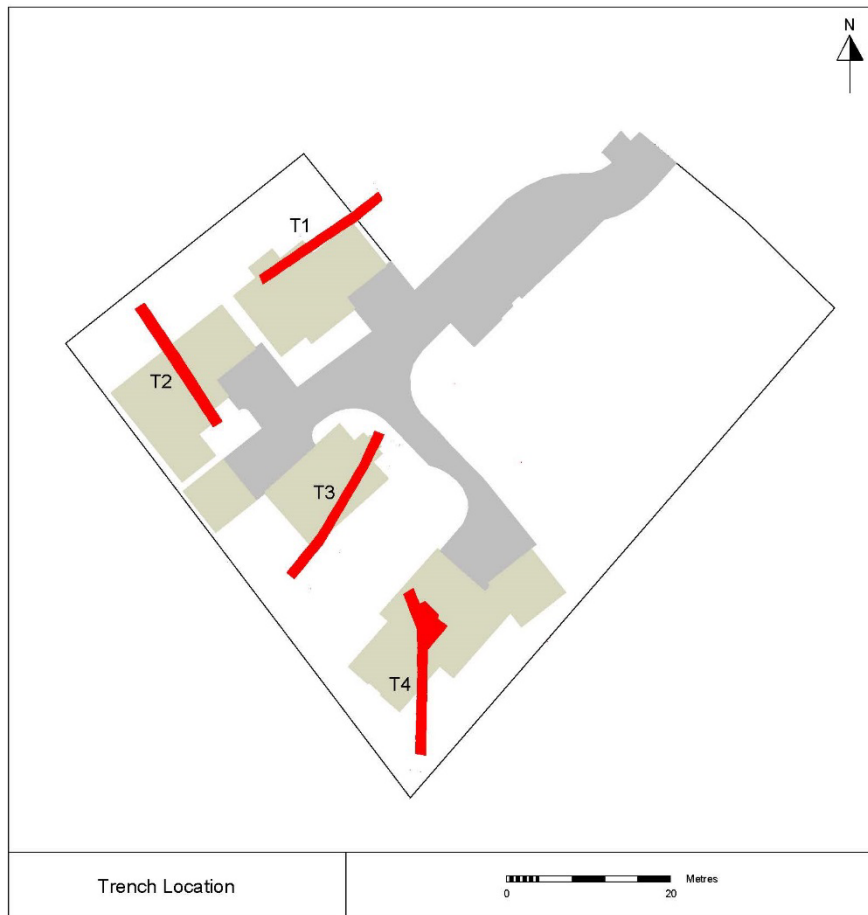


Figure 3: Actual location of trial trenches.

## Results

A total of 4 trenches was excavated within the development area.

TRENCH	ORIENTATION	LENGTH AND WIDTH (metres)	TOPSOIL THICKNESS (metres)	SUBSOIL THICKNESS (metres)	DESCRIPTION	TRENCH DEPTH (MIN-MAX metres)
1	NW - SE	17.30	0.20 – 0.35	0.10 – 0.23	No archaeological deposits	0.47 – 0.86
2	NE - SW	17	0.23 – 0.44	0.10 – 0.27	No archaeological deposits	0.57 – 0.68
3	NE - SW	20	0.10 – 0.45	0.10 – 0.40	Pit [06]	0.35 – 0.90
4	N - S	18	0.30 – 0.55	0.17 – 0.30	Pit [02] Posthole [04]	0.72 – 0.88

### *Trench 1*

Trench 1 was *c.*17.30m long and 1.20m wide and located in the northwest of the development area. It was orientated northwest/southeast and was excavated through gardens and an area set aside for domestic horticultural activity. It had a depth of between 0.47 – 0.86m and was excavated down to an orange – brown sand and gravel natural substratum. A consistent topsoil across the wider proposed development area was recorded as a friable dark grey brown sandy silty loam, with occasional small – large rounded stones. The subsoil underlying this was consistently a mid-light brown silty sand, with more common small – large sub-rounded and rounded stone and a clear distinction with the natural. The base of the trench varied somewhat whilst attempting to reach the appropriate level. No archaeological deposits were observed.

### *Trench 2*

Orientated northeast/southwest, Trench 2 was located in the northeast of the area. It was *c.*17m long with a depth ranging between 0.57 – 0.68m down to the natural sands and gravels. There was significant tree root disturbance at the northeast end. No archaeological deposits were observed.

### *Trench 3*

Trench 3, located in the centre of the development area was *c.*20m long, and between 0.55 – 0.90m in depth. It contained a small undated circular pit [06], located *c.*1.3m from the north end which was hand excavated and recorded. With gently sloping sides, it had a diameter of *c.*0.77m and maximum depth of 0.20m. The fill (05) was a mid-grey brown silty sand with common small – large rounded stones. No finds were recovered from the feature and no other deposits of archaeological significance were observed.



Figure 4: Trench 1, looking southeast



Figure 5: Trench 2, looking northeast





Figure 6: Trench 3, post – excavation, looking northeast



Figure 7: Undated Pit [06], Trench 3, looking north

### ***Trench 4***

Trench 4 was located in the southwest of the development area. It was *c.* 18m long with a depth of 0.72 – 0.88m. It was dog-legged at its northern end to avoid some constraints and it was in this area that some archaeological features were identified and investigated.



Figure 8: Trench 4, looking south

A large irregular oval pit [02], extending beneath the southeast baulk was excavated. It had straight, moderately sloping sides and an uneven central base. It was *c.* 2.72m long, *c.* 1.27m wide, with a maximum depth where excavated of *c.* 0.47m. The fill (01) was a mid-grey/brown silty sand with occasional small – large sub-rounded and rounded stones (Fig. 9). Initially interpreted as a ‘quarry pit’ and following consultation with Sophie Clarke (LCC) the trench was widened to evaluate the rest of the feature. Several sherds of medieval pottery and some fragmentary animal bone were recovered but the function of the pit is impossible to ascertain.





Figure 9: Pit [02], Trench 4, looking north

Less than 1m north of this was a solitary undated circular posthole [04] with steep sides and concave, central base. With a diameter of *c.*0.24m and maximum depth of *c.*0.30m, its fill (03) was a mid-grey/brown silty sand with common small – large rounded stones (Fig. 10). No finds were recovered.





Figure 10: Posthole [04], Trench 4, looking east



Figure 11: Trench 4, after widening, post – excavation, looking south



## Discussion and Conclusion

The trial trenches revealed evidence for sparse archaeological activity across the proposed development area, identified and recorded in the southern two of the four trenches. The undated pit in Trench 3 contained a different fill to those in Trench 4 and it is not possible to determine whether they are contemporary. Although not intensive the features probably represent back yard medieval activity associated with properties fronting onto the main street *c.*65m to the east. Dating evidence was only recovered one of the features from the nature of the deposits investigated it is difficult to be more detailed about functionality or purpose.

## Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A92 2019 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2019-140)
- 4 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.

## Acknowledgements

ULAS would like thank S and S Contractors for their help and co-operation with the project. Stephen Baker carried out the fieldwork for ULAS and the project was managed by Vicki Score. The project was monitored by Sophie Clarke, Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council.

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