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**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Field Evaluation on land adjacent to 41A Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire.**

**NGR: SP 80089 93389**

**Georgia Day**



**ULAS Report No.2021-004**

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**Site Name:** Land adjacent to 41A Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire.

**Grid Ref:** SP 80089 93389

**Author:** Georgia Day

**Client:** RSJ New Homes Ltd.

**Planning Ref.** 18/00399/FUL

**ULAS Report Number:** 2021-004

**Accession Number:** XA.116.2020

<b>Filename/Version</b>	<b>Amended/Checked by</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Draft</b>	<b>Vicki Score</b>	<b>06/01/2021</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> edit</b>
<b>Final</b>	<b>Vicki Score</b>	<b>25/01/2021</b>	<b>Final</b>

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University of Leicester, Archaeological Services,  
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH  
Tel: (0116) 2522848  
[www.le.ac.uk/ulas](http://www.le.ac.uk/ulas)

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## OASIS RECORD

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	<b>Oasis No</b>	Universi1-413999		
	<b>Project Name</b>	An archaeological field evaluation on land adjacent to 41A Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire.		
	<b>Start/end dates</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> January 2021		
	<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	DBA, WSI		
	<b>Project Type</b>	Evaluation		
	<b>Site Status</b>	None		
	<b>Current Land Use</b>	Land under pasture		
	<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>	18/00399/FUL		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	<b>County</b>	Leicestershire		
	<b>Site Address/Postcode</b>	Land adjacent to 41A, Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire.		
	<b>Study Area</b>	-		
	<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SP 80089 93389		
	<b>Height OD</b>	c.80m AOD		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	Harborough District Council		
	<b>Project Design Originator</b>	ULAS		
	<b>Project Manager</b>	Vicki Score		
	<b>Project Director/Supervisor</b>	Georgia Day		
	<b>Sponsor/Funding Body</b>	RSJ New Homes Ltd (Client)		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE</b>		<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
	<b>Recipient</b>	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service
	<b>ID (Acc. No.)</b>	XA.116.2020	XA.116.2020	XA.116.2020
	<b>Contents</b>	N/A	Photographs	Report/ Photo Record/ Trench Sheets/ Context Sheets/ Drawings Sheets
<b>PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>Type</b>	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	<b>Description</b>	Developer Report A4 pdf		
	<b>Title</b>	An Archaeological Field Evaluation on adjacent to 41A Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire.		
	<b>Author</b>	Day, G		
	<b>Other bibliographic details</b>	ULAS Report No. 2021-004		
	<b>Date</b>	2021		
	<b>Publisher/Place</b>	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		

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## **An archaeological field evaluation on land adjacent to 41A Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire (SP 80089 93389).**

**Georgia Day**

### **Summary**

*This document is a fieldwork report for an archaeological trial trench evaluation, carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at land adjacent to 41A Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire in advance of a residential development comprising five dwellings and associated infrastructure. The development site comprised a triangular parcel of land under pasture bordered by Main Street to the west, trees to the east and a residential property to the south.*

*A total of 4 trenches were excavated across the development site, targeting areas that will be affected by the proposed development.*

*No archaeological activity was identified in any of the four trenches, and no residual pottery was recovered from the topsoil. Trenches 1 and 2 both revealed the corresponding furrows to ridges visible at ground level. Trench 2 partially overlay a slope forming the eastern boundary of the site, which was identified as comprising a subsoil deposit likely the result of upcast from the adjacent railway line located beyond the site boundary to the east.*

*Trenches 3 and 4 both contained deep colluvial/redeposited soils. They were both located across a raised area visible at ground level probably the remains of a headland or field boundary associated with the ridge and furrow present in the northern corner of the development site.*

*The site will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A116.2020.*

## Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by RSJ New Homes Ltd. (hereafter referred to as ‘the client’) to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land adjacent to 41A Main Street, Medbourne, Leicestershire (Fig. 1). The work was carried out on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2021.

The work was undertaken as part of a programme of archaeological work required by the Planning Authority following advice from the Leicestershire Planning Archaeologist in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019).

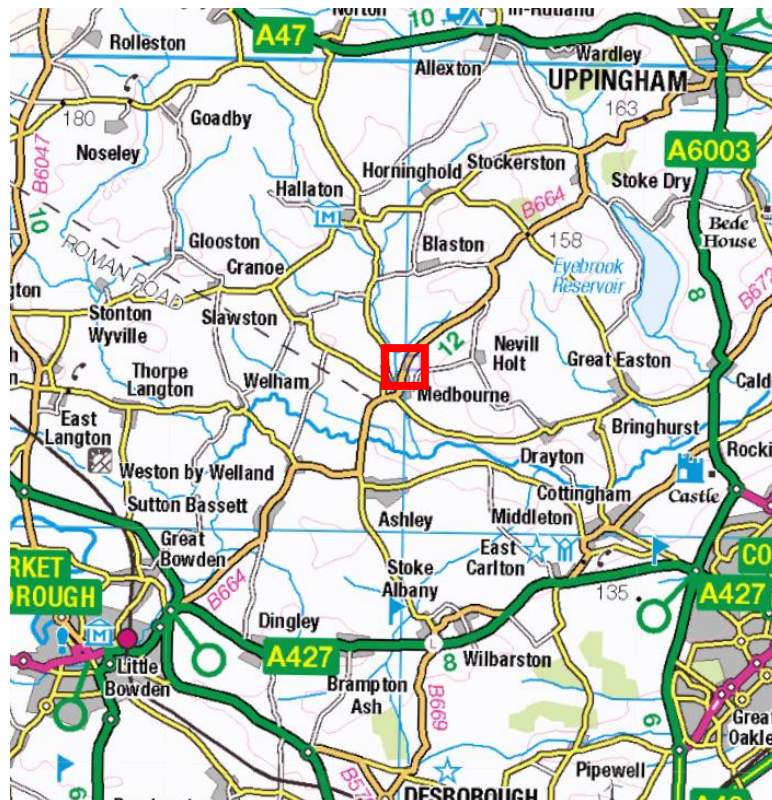


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Contains OS data © Crown copyright 2000. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495. Bottom plan provided by client.



Figure 2: Plan of Development site (provided by client).

### Location and Geology

Medbourne is a village and civil parish in the Harborough District of Leicestershire and is approximately 19 miles southeast of Leicester City Centre. The proposed development is located near the northern limit of the village, adjacent to Main Street and just north of the medieval settlement core of the village. The development site is currently undeveloped and comprises a roughly triangular parcel of land that at the time of works was under pasture.

The site is generally level at c.80m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum), however the southeast corner of the site rises sharply up to c.83m AOD. To the east of this and beyond the site boundary lies the extant cut for the no longer present railway line built by the Great Northern and London and North Western joint Railway in 1879.

The British Geological Survey (BGS) indicates that the bedrock geology present on the development site comprises Mudstone as part of the Whitby Mudstone Formation, a Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 174 to 183 million years ago during the Jurassic Period and is representative of a local environment previously dominated by shallow seas. No

overlying superficial geology is recorded in this area however during excavation it was observed that a layer of colluvium was present in areas of the development site.

### **Historical and Archaeological Background**

Medbourne and its surrounding area have a rich history of occupation, evidenced by a wealth of archaeological remains identified and recorded which date from prehistoric to modern periods. A desk-based assessment was undertaken for the development site in 2015 (PCA 2015) and forms the basis for the following section;

Findspots dating to the prehistoric period have been recovered to the north, south and west of the village of Medbourne, comprising flint flakes, scraper, arrowheads, cores and blades (MLE7453, MLE7461, MLE7451, MLE7455, MLE7531 etc.). Sherds of pottery dating to the Iron Age have also been found in similar locations (MLE10337, MLE1249). To the west of the development site, fieldwalking in Bruce's farm during the 1980's identified a scatter of Neolithic worked flint with the assemblage totaling around 25 items and indicative of potential Neolithic occupation. Further fieldwalking north of Holmfield Bungalow to the north of the development site yielded a small number of flakes and struck fragments of Neolithic and Mesolithic date. To the east of the development site a small number of prehistoric flints were also recovered during fieldwalking at Bottom Close.

North of the development site, approximately half-way between Medbourne and the neighbouring settlement of Blaston is an area of possible Anglo-Saxon activity, represented by the recovery of a number of Middle Saxon pottery sherds during fieldwalking in 1982 (MLE1280). A series of gullies containing Iron Age/early Roman pottery were also discovered during a watching brief at Bentley's Orchard approximately 460m south-southwest of the development site.

Medbourne has been identified as a Roman small town (Liddle 1995) based on extensive fieldwalking of the surrounding area and several archaeological investigations within the village and its surrounds. The Roman small town of Medbourne (MLE2005) is situated north-west of the extant village on the line of Gartree Road, with a high status Roman villa (MLE2001) situated to the west. Gartree Road once ran immediately south of the village, approximately 680m south of the development site, with several sites of Roman activity identified along it. Evidence for the Roman Villa complex was first identified during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century with the discovery of a tessellated pavement mosaic in a yard north of the Red Lion Public House in c1721. Further investigations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century uncovered a further fragment of mosaic near to the church and close to the stream. A number of Roman artefacts were discovered within the garden of Saddler's Cottage during the 1980's, including pottery, tesserae and a bone hair pin. Later work during the 1990's and 2000's revealed further tessellated floors, a corridor with evidence for rooms leading from it, a midden and several Roman make-up layers. Excavation in 1997 revealed the Bath House for the villa, and evidence for a possible hypocaust was encountered during a watching brief at Manor Farm, approximately 80m to the north of Sadler's Cottage. Two coins dated to the late Roman period were also found close to the farmhouse and Manor Farm during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, at present, the villa complex is estimated to cover an area of 53m by 58m, located close to the Medbourne brook approximately 425m southeast of the development area.

Large quantities of Roman pottery have been recovered through fieldwalking in areas surrounding the village of Medbourne, most notably in the vicinity immediately around the Roman settlement and villa complex.

The name Medbourne derives from the Old English *maed* – meadow, and the Old English *burna* – stream, therefore meaning 'The meadow stream'. The Medbourne Brook still flows



prominently through the village centre today. The village name is first recorded in 1076 as ‘*Medburna*’ then 10 years later in the Domesday Book as ‘*Medburne*’. Domesday records two manors in Medbourne, one held by Robert de Toden and the other by the king’s soke of Great Bowden. A church was present at Medbourne during the 12<sup>th</sup> century on the manor held by the king, however the sub-circular shape of the churchyard has been suggested to represent an earlier origin for the foundation of the church. The first church is thought to have burnt down in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and was subsequently replaced by the current church in 14<sup>th</sup> century (MLE14463). It is thought that the church was a focus of activity in the village during the medieval period.

Immediately west of the church is the scheduled 13<sup>th</sup> century Packhorse Bridge, built of random masonry piece with four semi-circular arches across Medbourne Brooke, which would one have given access to the church from the medieval settlement on the west side of the Brooke. Within Medbourne the only other 13<sup>th</sup> century structure is the Manor House, approximately 367m southeast of the development site. Tree ring dating of the houses timber structure has identified timbers spanning the whole of the medieval period with the earliest timber felled between 1212 – 1232. Written records and a building survey indicate the house to have been partially rebuilt and extended during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and directly opposite the manor on the south side of Manor Road is a field containing circular earthworks through to be associated with the medieval manor house.

A rectory at Medbourne is mentioned in a document dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 1354, which is is though to have been located at what is now 4 Rectory lane however, an archaeological watching brief undertaken opposite this site at Old Hall, Rectory Lane only recovered three fragments of medieval pottery. The only other archaeological investigations to have identified medieval material within Medbourne all took place in and around Saddler’s Cottage, revealing a number of medieval pits and pottery sherds.

The closest medieval activity to the development site comprises a set of earthwork enclosures believed to represent building enclosures that once formed part of the medieval village, located in a field approximately 122m south-west of the development site. Aerial photographs show the remains of ridge and furrow farming in the majority of fields surrounding the village, including possible remains aligned east to west in the northern portion of the development site.

The post-medieval period is well represented within the extant village of Medbourne, with a large number of residential and commercial buildings constructed during this time. The closest to the development site is located further south on Main Street and comprises Shaw’s Farmhouse, a three-storey building dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century activity is characterised by two houses in the village, Manor Farm and Saddler’s Cottage, with the latter retaining its thatched roof. Six buildings scattered throughout the village date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and, a further nine can be attributed to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The 1848 tithe Map shows the development area to be situated within an agricultural landscape to the north of Medbourne. The development site predominantly incorporates an L-shaped field labelled 53, with the northern and south-eastern edges of the development site protruding into the neighbouring fields. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the development area undergoes extensive change through the introduction of large scale national infrastructure. In 1879 the Great Northern and London and North Western joint Railway built a railway line running south from Market Harborough to the Nottingham/Grantham line. The railway line was closed in 1962 due to light passenger traffic, however the railway line formed the northeast and eastern boundary of the development site.

## Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits;
- To establish the character, extent, date range and significance of any 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; and,
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to identify any archaeological deposits and establish their character, extent, date, significance in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

The results of the evaluation will provide sufficient information to allow the local authority to make an informed decision on the impact of the proposed development and, if deemed necessary by the results of the evaluative work, develop and appropriate mitigation strategy.

## Research Objectives

Initial objectives were derived from *East Midlands Heritage* research agenda (Cooper 2006, Knight *et al.* 2012). The site's location in proximity to areas of known Roman activity and, just outside the medieval and post-medieval historic settlement core of Medbourne, suggests that there is potential for archaeological deposits from the Roman period onwards. The evaluation therefore has the potential to contribute to the following specific research aims;

### 5. Romano-British

#### 5.4 Rural settlement patterns and landscapes

#### 5.5 Agricultural Economy

#### 5.6 Artefacts: production, distribution and social identity

### 6. Early Medieval

#### 6.4 Rural settlement patterns

#### 6.7 The agricultural economy and rural landscape

### 7. Medieval

#### 7.2 Rural settlement

#### 7.3 Manors and manorial estates

#### 7.7 The agrarian landscape and food-producing economy

### 8. Post-medieval

#### 8.1 Urbanism: morphology, functions and buildings

#### 8.2 Landscapes of display: country houses and gardens

#### 8.3 Agricultural landscapes and the food-producing economy

### 9. Modern

#### 9.2 Buildings in town and countryside

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

### **Methodology**

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (rev. 2014a) in accordance with their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (rev. 2014b). The archaeological work followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (ULAS 2020) agreed with the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist.

An accession number (X.A116.2020) was obtained prior to commencement of the project and used to identify all records and artefacts

A total of four trenches measuring 30m proposed. These were located to target areas of possible impact. Figure 4 shows the trench locations.

Trenches were located using hand measuring tapes and magnetic compass. The excavation of the trenches was carried out using a Takeuchi TB290-2 excavator, fitted with an Engcon grading bucket and tiltrotator allowing 45-degree tilt and 360-degree rotation. An experienced archaeologist supervised the work at all times (Fig. 6).

Trenches were excavated to the level of the natural sub-stratum or to archaeological layers, whichever the higher in the sequence. All archaeological work was undertaken as specified within the WSI.

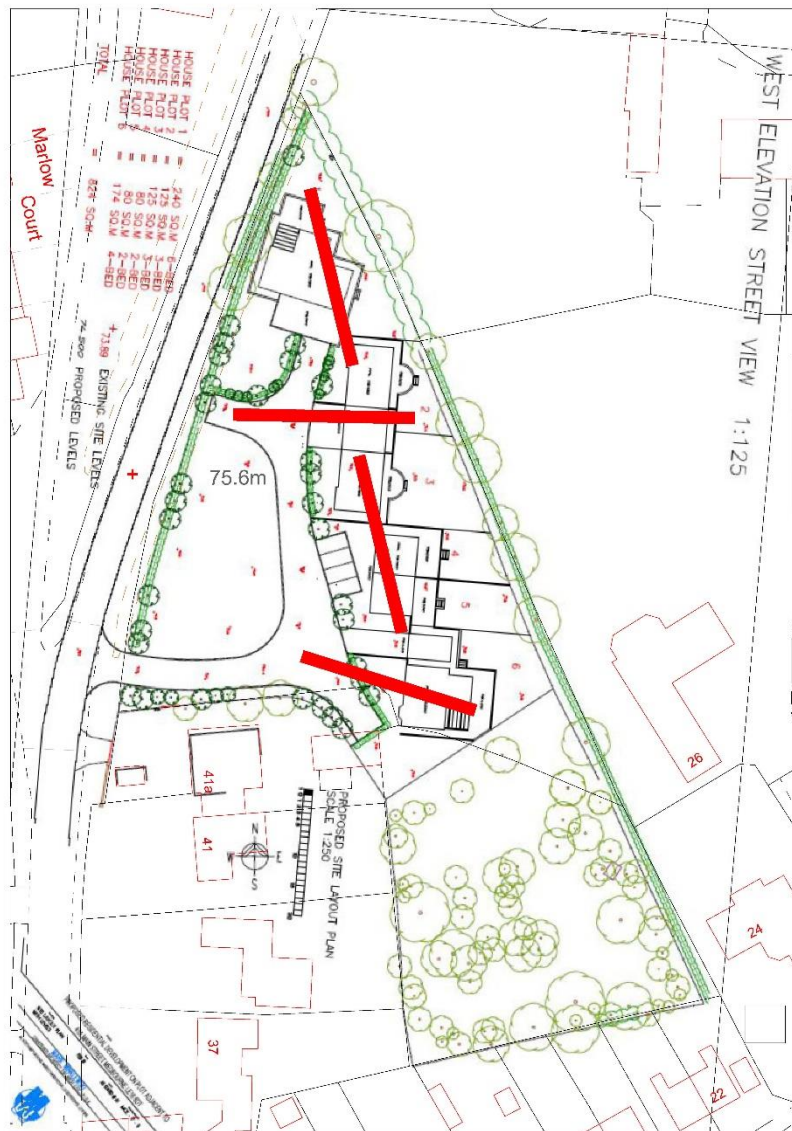


Figure 3: Location of the evaluation trenches overlain on the proposed plan. Plans provided by client.



Figure 4: Work in progress.

## Results

At the time of evaluation, the site comprised a triangular parcel of land under pasture, bordered by trees to the east, Main Street to the west and residential properties to the south.

The topsoil comprised dark orange-brown soft clay silt with occasional small, subangular, iron-rich limestone fragment inclusions. It varied in depth across the site from 0.13m to 0.35m in depth, and overlay the subsoil comprising a mid-orange-brown soft plastic silty clay. The subsoil contained occasional small rounded quartzite pebbles and varied in depth between 0.16m and 0.82m across the development site.

Natural substratum was reached in trenches one and two, comprising mid orange-grey clay with <40% grey clay patches and no inclusions, at depths ranging from 0.36m to 0.73m however, a colluvial deposit was identified below the subsoil in trenches three and four. The colluvial deposit comprised an orange-brown silty clay with frequent manganese staining and was identified at depths of between .055m and 0.82m. Due to the depths of this alluvial deposit, an underlying natural substratum was not reached in these trenches. No features of archaeological interest were identified in any of the four trenches, and it should be noted that no residual pottery was recovered across the site, from any deposit present.

### ***Trench 1***

Trench 1 was positioned to target the northernmost of the proposed dwellings, oriented northwest-southeast and located in the northern corner of the development site between Main Street and the site boundary. Excavation of the trench revealed a series of five linear features identified as furrows running east-west. The remains of their corresponding ridges were still visible at ground level and so they were not excavated (Fig. 5). A modern land drain was also recorded within the trench.

<b>OD Height</b>	<b>0m (N)</b>	<b>5m</b>	<b>10m</b>	<b>15m</b>	<b>20m</b>	<b>25m</b>	<b>30m (S)</b>
<b>Topsoil Depth</b>	0.18m	0.17m	0.13m	0.20m	0.19m	0.20m	0.25m
<b>Subsoil Depth</b>	0.24m	0.20m	0.28m	0.16m	0.22m	0.25m	0.28m
<b>Top of Natural</b>	0.42m	0.37m	0.41m	0.36m	0.41m	0.45m	0.53m
<b>Base of Trench</b>	0.54m	0.46m	0.58m	0.48m	0.46m	0.56m	0.58m



Figure 5: Trench 1. Looking north.

### ***Trench 2***

Trench 2 was oriented east-west below the southern extent of trench one, and located to target the access road to plots one and two and, part of the building footprint of plot 2. Excavation of the trench revealed the remains of two furrows running diagonally across the trench. The

easternmost extent of the trench was situated on the slope present across the eastern boundary of the development site, and revealed that the slope was likely the result of upcast from the adjacent railway cutting and comprised what appeared to be a large quantity of subsoil. A previous geotechnical pit was also identified in this area of the trench.

OD Height	0m (E)	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m (W)
<b>Topsoil Depth</b>	0.18m	0.23m	0.18m	0.23m	0.26m	0.20m	0.26m
<b>Subsoil Depth</b>	0.82m	0.50m	0.26m	0.34m	0.40m	0.40m	0.35m
<b>Top of Natural</b>	–	0.73m	0.44m	0.57m	0.66m	0.60m	0.61m
<b>Base of Trench</b>	1.0m	0.86m	0.56m	0.68m	0.80m	0.78m	0.74m



Figure 6: Trench 2. Looking west.

### ***Trench 3***

Trench 3 was located to target the footprints of plots three and four and was oriented northwest-southeast on the same alignment as Trench 1. At ground level approximately half way along the length of the trench a bank was visible at ground level. Upon excavation it was shown to be unremarkable in section and is likely the remains of a probable headland or field boundary associated with the ridge and furrow remains present in the northern portion of the development site. A modern land drain was identified running east-west within this trench. Natural

substratum was only reached at the north end in this trench due to the presence of a thick colluvial soil or possibly redeposition deposits from the railway. The base of the trench was excavated up to a depth of 1.10m in the centre of the trench in an attempt to locate the natural substratum however due to the depths excavation was stopped in order to maintain a safe working environment.

OD Height 70.74m	0m (N)	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m (S)
<b>Topsoil Depth</b>	0.118m	0.26m	0.22m	0.26m	0.29m	0.28m	0.29m
<b>Subsoil Depth</b>	0.50m	0.60m	0.60m	0.49m	0.50m	0.52m	0.53m
<b>Top of Colluvium</b>	0.68m	0.86m	0.82m	0.75m	0.79m	0.80m	0.82m
<b>Base of Trench</b>	0.90m	1.0m	1.10m	1.0m	1.0m	1.0m	1.0m



Figure 7: Trench 3. Looking north.

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

Trench 4 is the southernmost trench in the development site, oriented west-east and positioned to target and possible disturbance from plot five and the access road serving plots five, four and three. The bank visible at surface level that was investigated by Trench 3 was also recorded by this trench, with identical results. A field drain and an old geotechnical pit were identified



within this trench, and as was the case in Trench 3, the natural substratum was not reached due to the presence of a thick colluvial/redeposited soil as in Trench 3. No features of archaeological interest were identified in this trench.

OD Height	0m (W)	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m (E)
<b>Topsoil Depth</b>	0.26m	0.35m	0.20m	0.23m	0.25m	0.29m	0.24m
<b>Subsoil Depth</b>	0.39m	0.47m	0.50m	0.42m	0.30m	0.61m	0.48m
<b>Top of Colluvium</b>	0.65m	0.82m	0.80m	0.65m	0.55m	0.81m	0.72m
<b>Base of Trench</b>	0.77m	1.02m	0.94m	0.75m	0.68m	1.05m	0.86m



Figure 8: Trench 4. Looking south.

## Discussion and Conclusion

At the time of evaluation the development site comprised a triangular parcel of land under pasture, bordered by trees to the east, Main Street to the west and residential properties to the south. Topsoil and subsoil were reasonably consistent across the site, however a colluvial deposit underlying the subsoil was present in Trenches 3 and 4. These trenches were positioned along the incline present in the south-eastern corner of the development site and the deposit probably represents hill-wash of deposits from the top of the slope to the bottom.

Trenches 1 and 2 revealed the remains of furrows that corresponded with ridges visible at ground level, representing the remains of medieval and post-medieval plough systems. The eastern extent of Trench 2 was situated on a slight slope that upon excavation was revealed to comprise a comprised upcast from the adjacent railway cut beyond the development site boundary to the east.

A visible bank was present in the southern extent of the site and was cut by Trenches 3 and 4. Upon excavation it was shown to be unremarkable in section and likely the remains of a headland or field boundary associated with the ridge and furrow plough system visible in the northern corner of the development site.

No areas of archaeological activity were identified within any of the trenches and no residual pottery or other artefacts were identified in any of the trenches or deposits excavated.

## Archive and publication

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A116.2020 and consists of the following:

- 1 Unbound copy of this report (ULAS Report No. 2021-004).
- 4 Trench recording sheets.
- 1 Photo Record sheet.
- 4 Contact sheets 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 to thank RSJ New Homes Ltd. for their help and co-operation with the project. Georgia Day and Christopher Naisbitt carried out the trial trenching for ULAS. The project was managed by Vicki Score. The excavator was sourced by the client, and provided and driven by Luke Finney.

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Georgia Day  
ULAS  
University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH  
Tel: 0116 252 2848  
Fax: 0116 252 2614  
Email: [gd165@le.ac.uk](mailto:gd165@le.ac.uk)  
06/01/2021



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

## Archaeological Services

University of Leicester  
University Road  
Leicester LE1 7RH  
UK

Directors

**Dr Richard Buckley** OBE BA PhD FSA MCifA

**e:** [rjb16@le.ac.uk](mailto:rjb16@le.ac.uk)

**t:** +44 (0)116 252 2848

**f:** +44 (0)116 252 2614

**e:** [ulas@le.ac.uk](mailto:ulas@le.ac.uk)

