

**An Archaeological Field Evaluation
At Castle Rock High School,
Coalville, Leicestershire.
(SK 454 148).**

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For: Leicestershire County Council

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Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching for Leicestershire County Council Property Services at the site of Castle Rock High School, Coalville, Leicestershire in advance of the proposed construction of a new school, including car parking and play areas on the playing fields to the south of the existing school. The site lies in an area seen as having moderate archaeological potential. The evaluation revealed a number of small, undated pits or postholes and a larger linear feature, most likely a field boundary, which was also undated. No archaeological finds were recovered during the evaluation. The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services with accession number X.A184.2004.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching for Leicestershire County Council Property Services at the site of Castle Rock High School, Coalville, Leicestershire in advance of the development of a new school, including associated car parking and play areas, alongside new planting and landscaping. The current Castle Rock High School, which lies slightly to the southeast of the site, is to be demolished. This development would occupy land currently used by the school as playing fields, a tennis court and a small plantation of young trees (Figure. 3).

A desk-based assessment had been undertaken for the proposed development area (George 2004) which indicated that various prehistoric, Roman and medieval finds have been previously located in the vicinity. Finds of a Roman date and other undated sites have also been discovered in the wider area. Most of the proposed development area appears not to have been built on during the last century.

The Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services, as archaeological advisor to North West Leicestershire District Council, requested an archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site prior to construction. The work followed the Design Specification for Archaeological Work (Appendix: ULAS report number 04-189-01).

Site Location and Geology

The site lies on the eastern side of Meadow Lane close to the junction with Warren Hills Road, Coalville, Leicestershire (SK 454 148; Figure 1) and measures c.5.6 ha. The site consists mainly of playing fields with large and small tennis courts and a small plantation of young trees. King Edward VII School lies to the north of the

development site and a small drainage ditch runs north west to south east to the south across the area (Figure 3).

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 155 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Red Marl with beds of sandstone. The proposed development area lies at a height of between *c.*183m OD and *c.*173m OD sloping down toward the bottom of the playing fields.

White Young Green Environmental undertook ground characterisation investigation of the study area in early 2004 and identified topsoil in all exploratory holes to depths of between 0.2m and 0.4m, except in the hard play areas, which showed made ground to depths of 1m to 1.75m (WYG 2004; Report no. E04215/SI/FCS/MAR 04/V1).

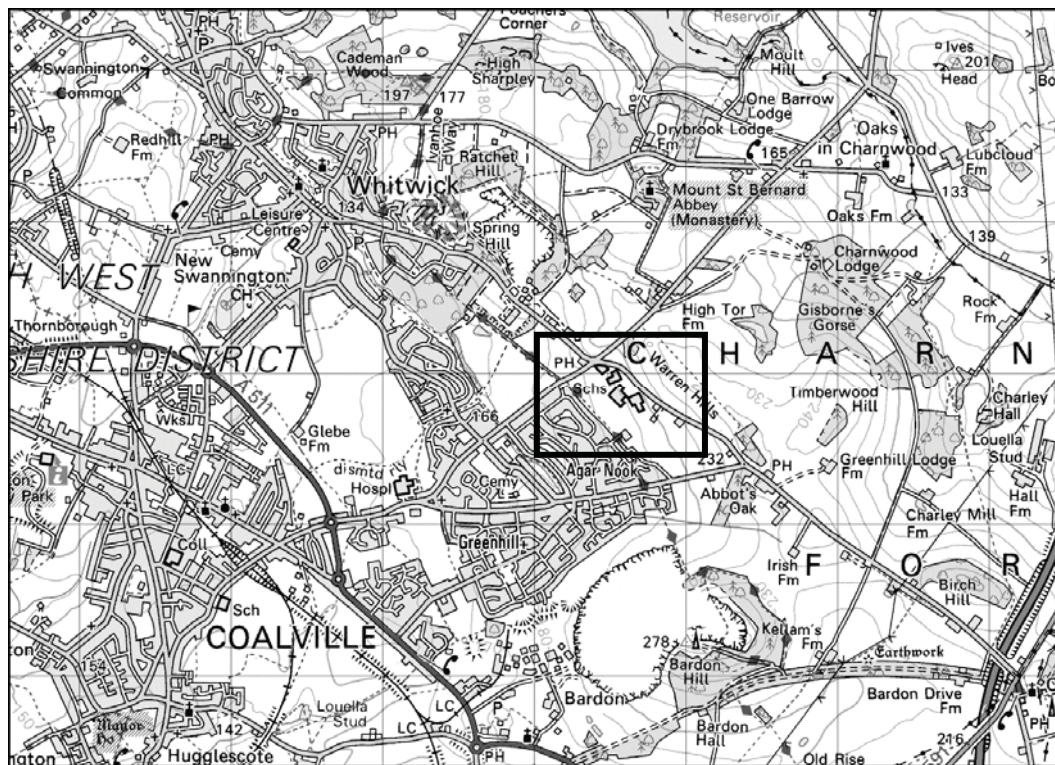


Figure 1: Site Location. Scale 1:50 000

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Aims and Methods

The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and, if present, determine their extent, character, date and quality of preservation. This would allow the Planning Archaeologist to assess the potential impact of the proposed development upon any archaeological remains.

All work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*. The evaluation adhered to the

Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Manager's (SCAUM) Health and Safety Manual and ULAS's Health and Safety Guidelines (2001) and Health and Safety Policy (2001). The recording followed the ULAS Field Recording Manual.

An design specification for evaluation was agreed between ULAS and the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services and proposed the examination of nine 30x1.6m trial trenches targeting areas of proposed drainage works, the new school building and hard play areas. Four trenches were sited on the upper area of the site close to the current schools, and five on the lower playing fields. An attempt was made to place the trenches to give the best coverage of the total site area, and to focus on the areas closest to the proposed school buildings and also avoid known services.

The trenches were excavated by a JCB 3CX using a toothless ditching bucket under the constant supervision of a member of ULAS. The trenches were excavated to the top of the natural geological substrata or to the top of archaeological deposits, whichever was encountered first.

During the work Leicestershire County Council, Property Services requested that the trenches be excavated to a deeper level in specified places and that two extra test pits be placed within the playing fields to the east of the proposed development area (Figure 4). Trenches 1 and 2 were taken down to a depth of 0.7m in two places, trenches 6-9 were taken down to 0.7m in three places and trench 5 was taken down to 0.7m in two places with an additional deeper section of 1.5m excavated into the trench's south western end. These deeper areas were placed in areas where no archaeological deposits were present, recorded and immediately backfilled.

Trench 2 had to be foreshortened from the proposed 30m to 25m to avoid a surface water drain. The 5m deficit was added to trench 3. Trench 3 was placed in an area consisting of made up ground, which could not be fully excavated down to the natural substratum throughout the whole of its length, due to the compaction of made ground layers and due to health and safety constraints. A large service trench also lay in the base of the trench. Therefore the trench was only fully excavated to the substratum along half of its full length.

The pond, which lies between the two current schools (Figure 4, detail), contains a colony of Great Crested Newts. These animals are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. As it was possible that the newts may well use the grass to the south west of the small tennis courts it was necessary to consult an ecologist.

As trenches 1 and 2 were to be placed within the area deemed likely to be used by the newts, the ecologist conducted a fingertip search of the area before work could commence. It was also necessary for the ecologist to observe the removal of the topsoil in trenches 1 and 2, therefore the topsoil in these two trenches was completely removed before the JCB excavated the lower levels of the trench. No newts were present in these areas and the trenching could proceed.

Historical and Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment of the proposed development area was prepared by ULAS (George 2004) and was summarised as follows:

The industrial town of Coalville is less than 200 years old and grew up around a colliery in Long Lane. The town grew rapidly throughout the nineteenth century. The date of establishment of Castle Rock High School is unclear, but appears to be mid twentieth century.

There are no enclosure or Tithe maps for Coalville, but the 1903 and 1929 maps of the area show the development area as enclosed fields (Figure 2). The SMR Landscape maps do not show any areas of crop marks or ridge and furrow within the proposed development area.

There are various prehistoric sites in the vicinity of the proposed development area. These include a late Neolithic stone axe quarry located 345m to the northeast (LE4470), other scatters of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint (LE6536 & LE7116) to the north and east and flint axes, scrapers and arrowheads (LE7289, LE9460 & LE9461).

A Roman coin was found close to the site (LE8038) and a Roman Road may lie along the present line of Warren Hills Road and Whitcroft Lane (LE9876). Many other undated archaeological sites are also recorded close to the development area.

Results

Trench 1

Interval	1m East	5m	10m	15m	25m	29.7m West	
Topsoil Depth	0.3m	0.35m	0.28m	0.34m	0.3m	0.3m	
Base of Trench*	0.42m	0.44m	0.3m	0.4m	0.3m	0.3m	

***Also corresponds to top of natural substratum. Trench was later taken down to 0.7m at 15m and 29.7m.**

This trench was 29.7m long, 1.6m wide and was orientated east-west. The topsoil consisted of 0.28m-0.34m of yellowish grey silt with some very small stones and frequent very large sub-angular stones of up to 0.5m. This was stripped down to the natural substratum, which was a greyish yellow boulder clay. Where the trench was excavated to 0.7m depth the natural substratum was an orangey brown boulder clay with some medium sized sub-angular stones. A field drain running northeast-southwest was encountered at 21m. A natural feature, most likely a tree-bole was revealed at 23m. No archaeological features or finds were discovered in this trench.

Trench 2

Contexts: (1),(2),(3),(4),[5],[6].

Top OD 183.80m

Base OD 183.37m

Interval	0m SE	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m NW
Topsoil Depth	0.3m	0.3m	0.3m	0.3m	0.2m	0.25m
Base of Trench*	0.3m	0.3m	0.35m	0.34m	0.23m	0.25m

***Also corresponds to top of natural substratum. Trench was later taken down to 0.7m at 15m and 25.5m.**

This trench was 25.5m long and 1.6m wide and was orientated southeast - northwest. The topsoil consisted of 0.2m-0.3m of yellowish grey silt with some very small stones and frequent very large sub-angular stones of up to 0.5m. This was stripped down to the natural substratum, which was a greyish yellow boulder clay. Where the trench was excavated to 0.7m the natural substratum was a orangey brown boulder clay with some medium sized sub-angular stones. A field drain running north-south and one running northeast-southwest were encountered at the south eastern end. A natural feature, most likely a tree-bole was revealed at 16m. A linear spread of silt was visible (4) at 19-21m, which was most likely a natural feature such as an ice wedge. Two small pits or postholes ((1)[5] and (3)[6]) were discovered at 13.6m and 19m (Figure 5). Feature [5] was a sub-oval pit approximately 0.4m in diameter and was 0.15m deep. The fill (1) was a mid-grey clayey silt with some stones. Feature [6] was a distended sub-oval pit, 0.6m deep and 0.2m deep with a dark grey clayey silt fill (3) with 5% small angular stones.

Trench 3

Interval	0m West	3m	5.4m	9m	12m	15m East
Topsoil depth	0.27m	0.33m	0.15m*	0.18m*	0.2m*	0.2m*
Subsoil depth			0.22m*	0.46m*	0.62m*	0.70m*
Base of trench	0.27m	0.33m	0.44m*	0.68m*	0.9m*	1m*

***These figures correspond to make up layer at eastern end of trench.**

This trench was 35m long and 1.6m wide and was initially excavated to a depth of 0.33m. However, at the western end of the trench, the initially orangey brown topsoil changed to the yellowish grey topsoil observed in the previous trenches. The decision was made to re-excavate the trench in the opposite direction. The deeper excavation revealed that the area had been made-up with 0.15m-0.2m of orangey brown topsoil, which overlay 0.4m-0.5m overburden burying the earlier grey topsoil. The

substratum consisted of greyish yellow boulder clay. The make-up layer became very deep at 16m and the machine struggled to excavate the trench further.

A large service trench running northeast - southwest at the edge of the trench was revealed along with a small tributary service trench running northwest - southeast. No archaeological features or finds were discovered in this trench.

Trench 4

Interval	0m SE	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m NW
Topsoil depth	0.24m	0.3m	0.32m	0.36m	0.3m	0.27m	0.27m
Subsoil Depth*	0.36m	0.36m	0.38m	0.4m		0.33m	0.3m
Base of trench	As above	As above	0.4m	0.41m	0.3m	0.4m	0.37m

*Subsoil not visible throughout entire length of trench

This trench was 30m long and 1.6m wide and was orientated southeast - northwest. The topsoil consisted of 0.24m-0.36m of yellowish grey silt with some very small stones and occasional very large sub-angular stones of up to 0.4m. Under this lay a compacted layer, or subsoil, around 0.1m deep. This wasn't visible throughout the entire length of the trench. This was stripped down to the natural substratum, which was a greyish yellow boulder clay, overlying a darker orangey brown boulder clay with large angular stones. A field drain running east - west across the trench was revealed. No archaeological features or finds were discovered in this trench.

Trench 5

Contexts (9), [10], (11), [12].

Top O.D: 177.39m

Base O.D: 177.09m

Interval	0m NE	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	26.6m SW
Topsoil depth	0.28m	0.28m	0.3m	0.3m	0.25m	0.32m	0.3m
Top of natural	0.4m			0.37m			0.58m
Base of trench	0.7m	0.3m	0.3m	0.7m	0.25m	0.32m	1.5m

This trench was 29.6m and 1.6m orientated northeast - southwest. The topsoil consisted of 0.25m-0.32m of yellowish grey silt with occasional very small stones. This overlay a greyish yellow boulder clay, which overlay a darker orangey brown boulder clay. At the south - west end of the trench lay a layer of grey silt, which at its deepest part, was 0.3m deep. Cut into this were two small pits or post-holes (9)[10]

and (11)[12]. Feature [10] was a steep sided post-hole with a fill (9) of dark brown silty loam with some small stones. Feature [12] was a shallower pit with a fill (11) of dark brown silt loam with lumps of orange clay (Feature 5). No dating evidence was retrieved from either feature. A smaller spread of silt was visible at 9m along with three other features, which turned out to be natural. A field drain running east - west was visible at 4m.

Trench 6

Interval	0m NW	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m SE
Topsoil depth	0.3m	0.28m	0.24m	0.23m	0.3m	0.25m	0.3m
Base of trench	0.7m	0.32m	0.32	0.27m	0.3m	0.25m	0.7m

This trench was 30m long and 1.6m wide and was orientated southeast - northwest. The topsoil consisted of 0.23m-0.30m of yellowish grey silt with some very small stones and frequent larger sub-angular stones of up to 0.2m. This was stripped down to the natural substratum, which was a greyish yellow boulder clay. Where the trench was excavated to 0.7m depth the natural substratum was an orangey brown boulder clay with some medium sized sub-angular stones. A field drain running east - west was encountered between 17m-27m. Two larger drains running northeast – southwest were encountered in the middle and south eastern end, which appeared later than the narrower field drain. No archaeological features or finds were discovered in this trench.

Trench 7

Contexts (7), [8]

Interval	0m NE	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	0.31m	0.3m	0.3m	0.25m	0.26m	0.3m	0.31m
Base of trench	0.7m	0.3m	0.3m	0.7m	0.28m	0.32m	0.7m

This trench was 30.1m long and 1.6m wide and was orientated northeast - southwest. The topsoil consisted of 0.25m-0.31m of yellowish grey silt with some very small stones. This was stripped down to the natural substratum, which was a greyish yellow boulder clay. Where the trench was excavated to 0.7m depth the natural substratum was an orangey brown boulder clay with some medium sized sub-angular stones. A linear feature (7)[8] running east-west across the trench at 21m was revealed. This appeared to be a section of a steep sided gully and contained modern brick, although it does appear to pre-date the laying of the turf for the playing fields. It lay *c.*0.68m below the topsoil and was *c.*0.46m wide.

Trench 8

Interval	0m SE	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m
Topsoil depth	0.3m	0.28m	0.28m	0.23m	0.3m	0.34m	0.26m
Base of trench	0.7m*	0.32m	0.34m	0.24m	0.7m*	0.34m	0.7m*

* The depth of the upper natural at these points is between 0.4m-0.46m.

This trench was 30.7m long and 1.6m wide and was orientated southeast - northwest. The topsoil consisted of 0.3m-0.34m of yellowish grey silt with some small stones. This was stripped down to the natural substratum, which was a greyish yellow boulder clay. Where the trench was excavated to 0.7m the natural substratum was an orangey brown boulder clay with some medium sized sub-angular stones. Four large field drains running northeast - southwest were encountered at 8m, 17.4m, 21m and 24m. No archaeological features or finds were discovered in this trench.

Trench 9

Interval	0m NE	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	29.5m
Topsoil depth	0.38m	0.43m	0.39m	0.35m	0.28m	0.32m	0.32m
Base of trench	0.7m*	0.43m	0.39m	0.7m*	0.28m	0.36m	0.7m*

* The depth of the upper natural at these points is between 0.4m-0.46m.

This trench was 29.5m long and 1.6m wide and was orientated northeast - southwest. The topsoil consisted of 0.28m-0.43m of yellowish grey silt with some small stones and occasional large stones. This was stripped down to the natural substratum, which was a greyish yellow boulder clay. Where the trench was excavated to 0.7m depth the natural substratum was an orangey brown boulder clay with some medium sized sub-angular stones. Two field drains running east-west were encountered at 11.3m, and 16m. At 2m a linear feature was revealed (Feature 5). This section of ditch [14] ran south-south-east to north-north-west and was steep sided along the east side with a shallower western side and had a slightly concave base. The fill (13) was a mid grey silty clay with orange mottles with a slightly humic content along its eastern edge. No archaeological finds were recovered.

Test Pits 1&2

Both test pits were taken down to a depth of 0.7m and revealed orangey brown boulder clay. Test pit 1 had to be repositioned slightly due to a ceramic service pipe running northwest - southeast. No archaeological features or finds were revealed during the excavation of these two test pits.

Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation revealed a few small probable archaeological features scattered across the proposed development area. The features did not indicate any concentrations of activity, nor was any dating evidence recovered. The pits or postholes in trench 2, (1)[5] and (3)[6], contained no dating evidence. The features in trench 5, (9)[10] and (11)[12], which are cut into the silty layer, are likely to be modern and the silt layer itself most likely an accumulation of material due to poor drainage in the past; the field is notoriously badly drained during wet weather even today.

The area appears to have remained unchanged since the time that the playing fields were used as agricultural land, and only the ditch feature (13)[14] in trench 9 gives us any evidence that earlier field boundaries may have existed. However, as its excavation uncovered no dating evidence, it is impossible to place this feature in context.

The uniformity of the silty grey topsoil over the entirety of the site suggests that at some time the site may well have been stripped and new turf laid. If the old land surface was excavated to some depth during the alteration of the land from agricultural to use as playing fields, archaeology, if present, may well have been lost during this work

The area around the larger tennis court, as revealed by trench 3, appears to consist of made up ground with topsoil that differs considerably to the topsoil over the rest of the site area. The lower compacted subsoil layer may derive from the excavation of the tennis courts themselves, or may represent imported levelling material from elsewhere.

Archive

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services with accession number X.A184.2004 and consists of the following:

- 9 Pro-forma trench sheets.
- 2 A3 Sheets of Perma-trace, with trench plans and sections.
- 7 Context sheets
- 2 Colour Slide Film
- 2 B&W Contact sheets
- 2 sets of B&W negatives.

Bibliography

George, S., 2004 *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for Castle Rock High School, Coalville, Leicestershire (SK 454 148)*. ULAS report no. 2004-066

Acknowledgements

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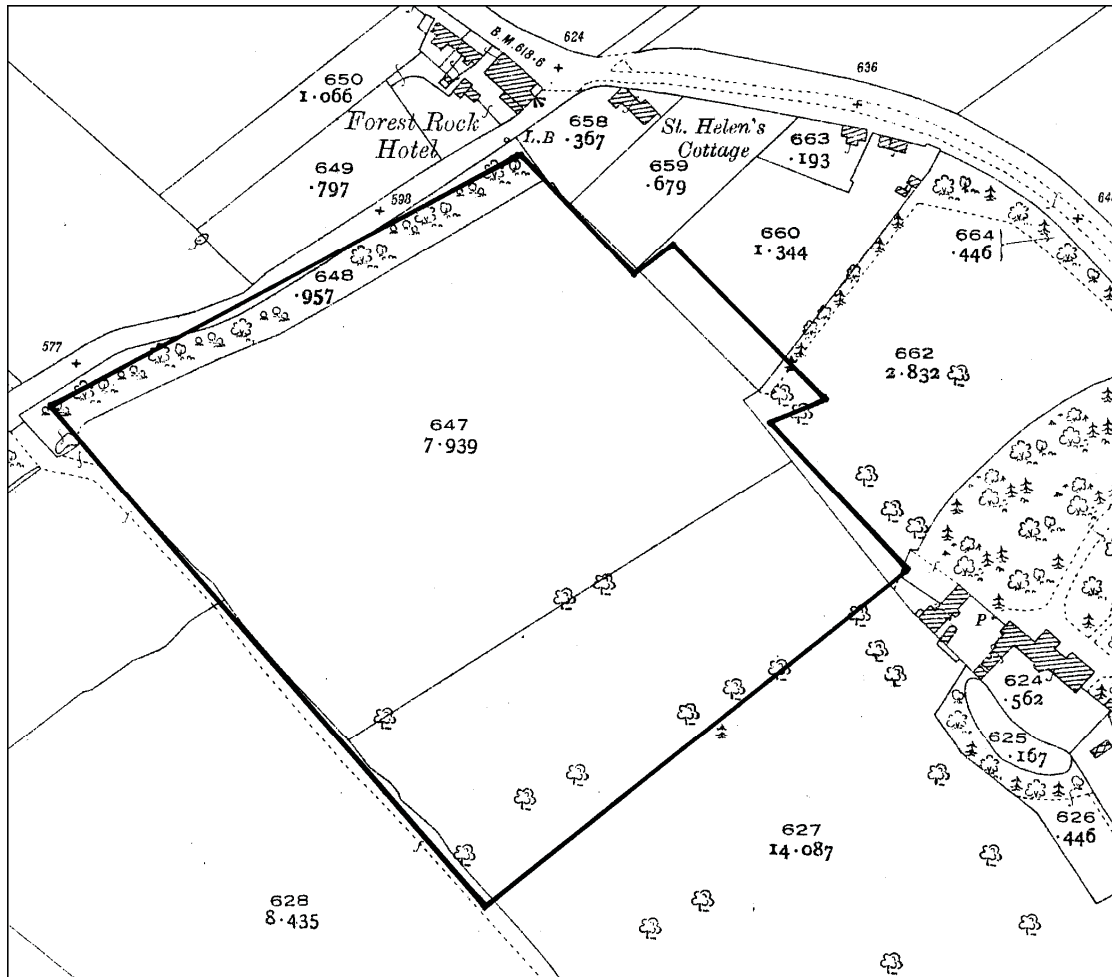
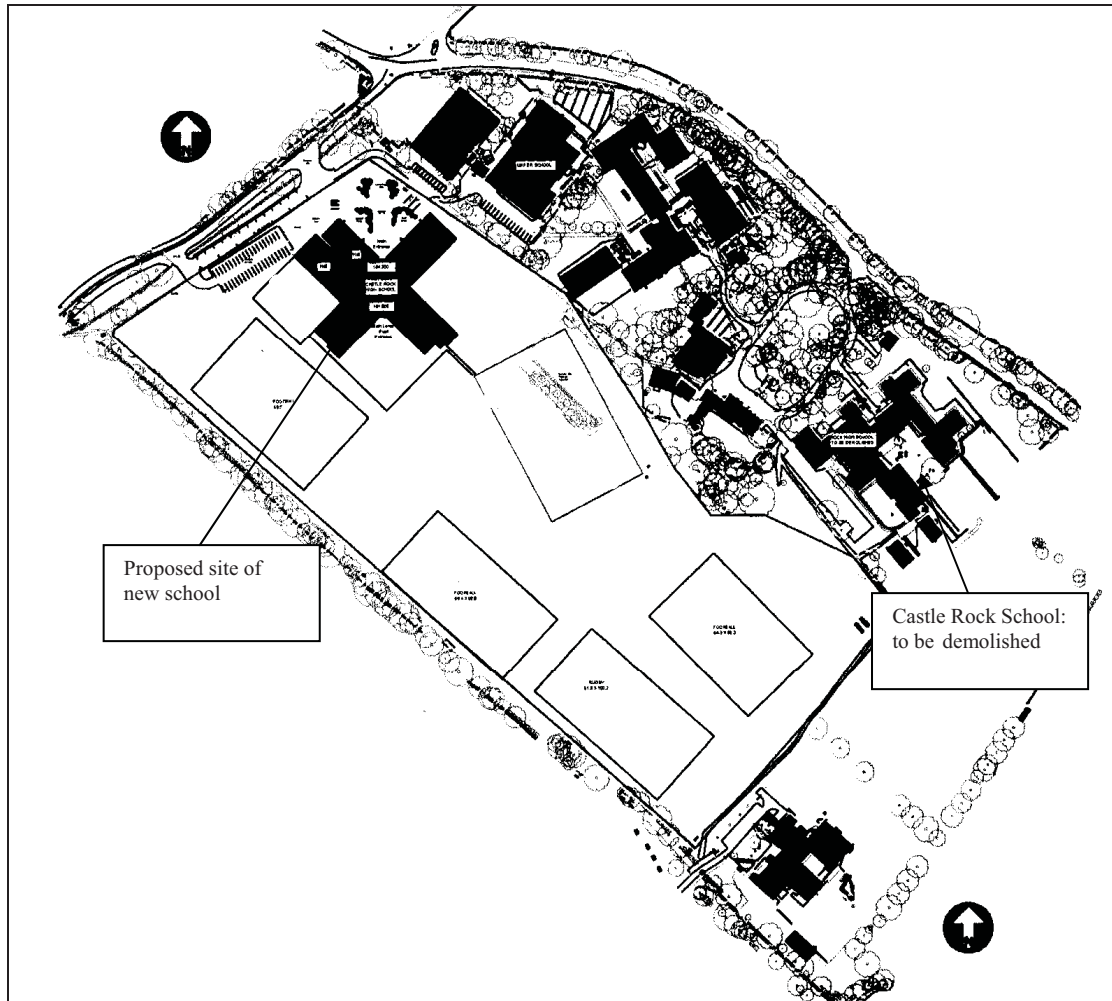
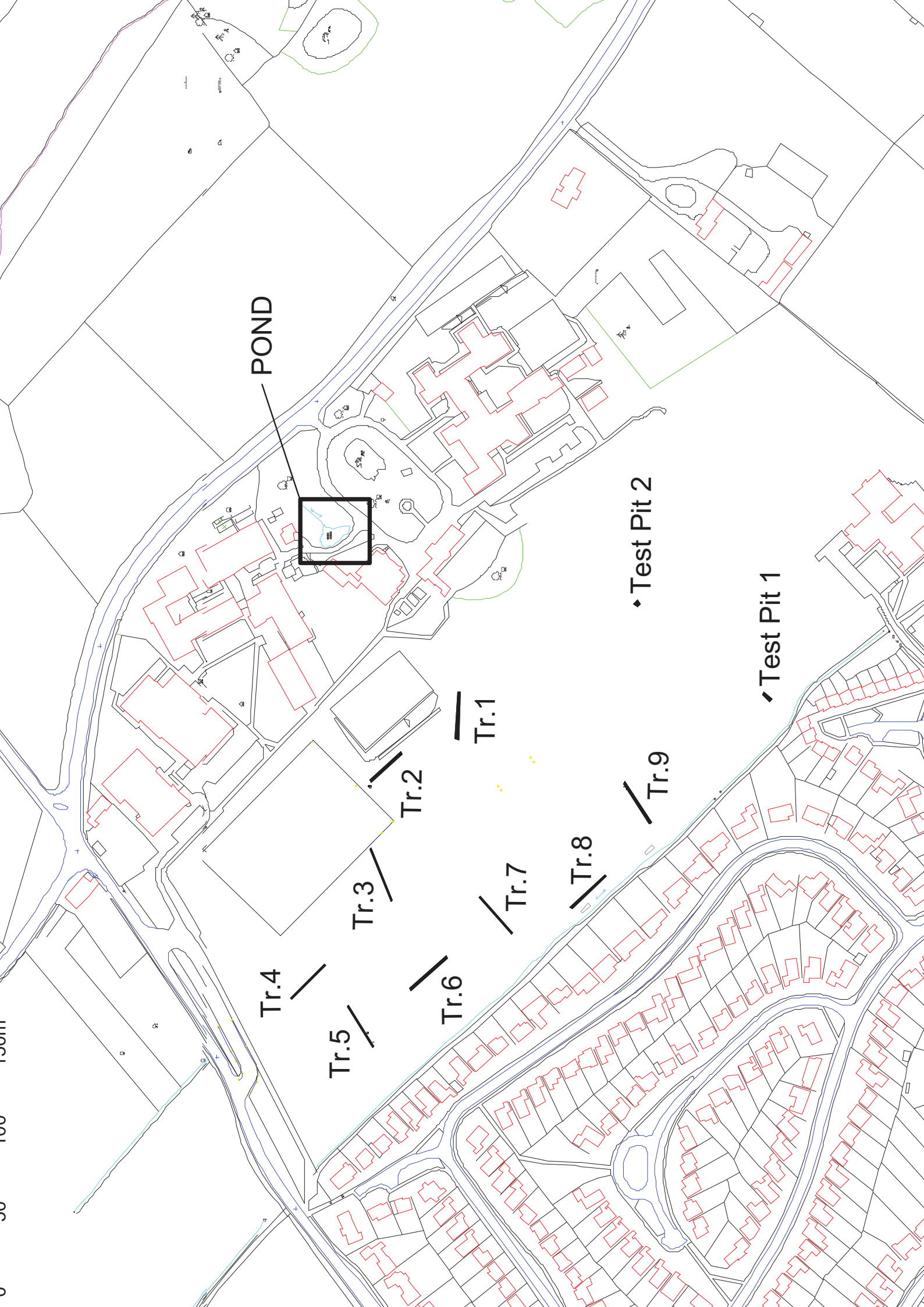


Figure. 2. 1929 Ordnance Survey map Leicestershire XXIV.1 with development area outlined (Scale 1:2500)



**Figure 3: Castle Rock site showing current schools and proposed development.
Scale 1:2500**



POND



◆ Test Pit 2

◀ Test Pit 1

Tr.1

Tr.2

Tr.9

Tr.3

Tr.8

Tr.4

Tr.7

Tr.5

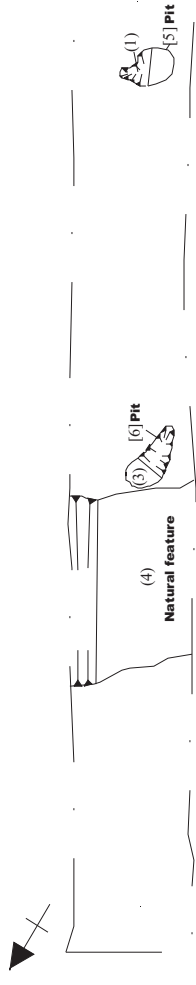
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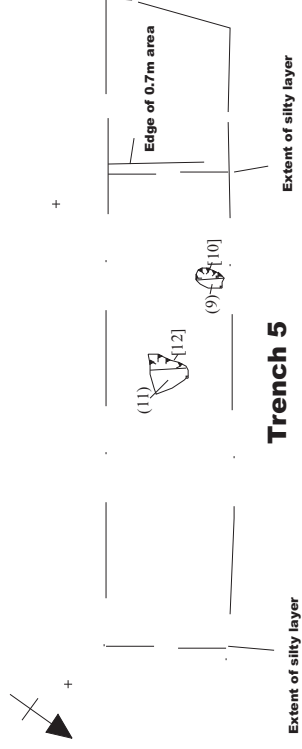
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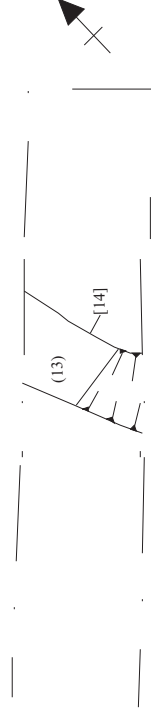
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Trench 2



Trench 5



Trench 9

Figure 5: Features within evaluation trenches. Scale 1:100