

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
conducted on land to the rear of
53-59 High Street, Whetstone,
Leicestershire (SP 556 975).**

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August 2007

Planning Application Ref: 06/1155/1/PX3

Checked by Project Manager

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) during groundworks for the construction of three dwellings on land to the rear of 53-59 High Street, Whetstone. The brief involved archaeological attendance for inspection and recording during any ground works on the site which may disturb areas of archaeological potential. There was considerable overburden, largely brick waste used as levelling. Excavation of the foundation trenches revealed a series of shallow pits cutting the natural sand. The back fill contained modern pottery and it appears that some quarrying of sand had occurred in recent times. No further features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified.

The archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record under the accession number X.A224.2007.

1. Introduction

The land subject to the watching brief was situated to the rear of redeveloped properties 53-59 High Street, Whetstone (SP 556 975).

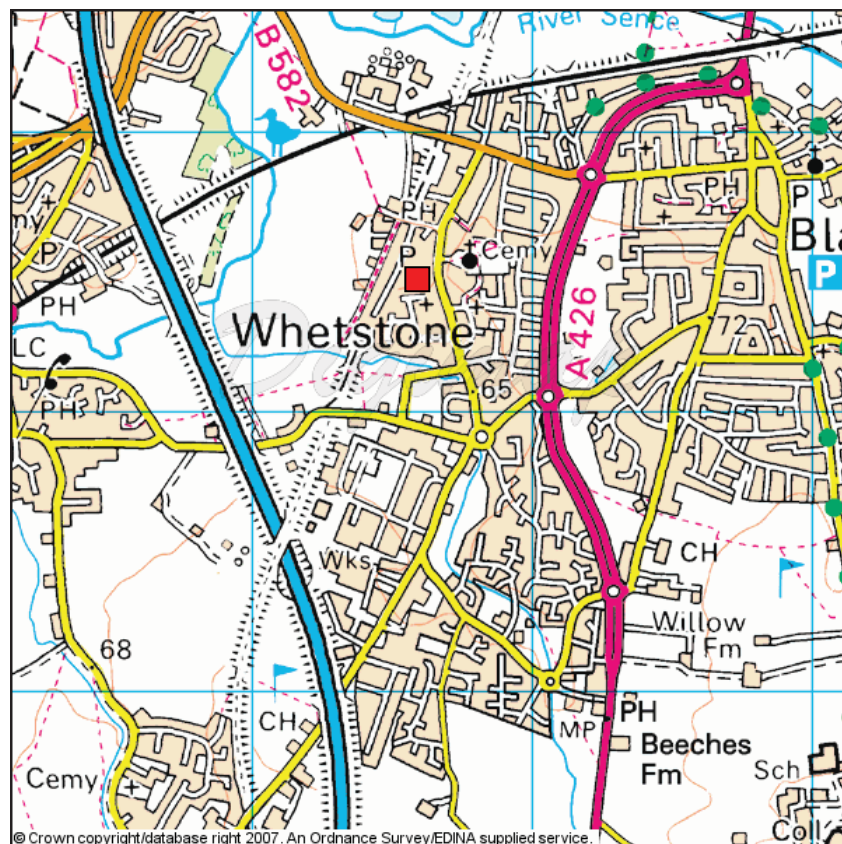


Figure 1 Site location, illustrated using the Ordnance Survey 1: 50,000 scale map.
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Planning permission had been granted for the construction of three further linked properties on the western half of the development plot. ULAS on behalf of the client Lowe builders and sons limited, implemented a watching brief to cover the proposed groundworks.

2. Geology and Topography

The bedrock in the region of the site is one of Mercia Mudstone and there are superficial deposits of sand and gravel relating to river terrace and glaciofluvial deposits. The land rises sharply to the rear of the development plot, this being bordered on this western edge by a disused siding.

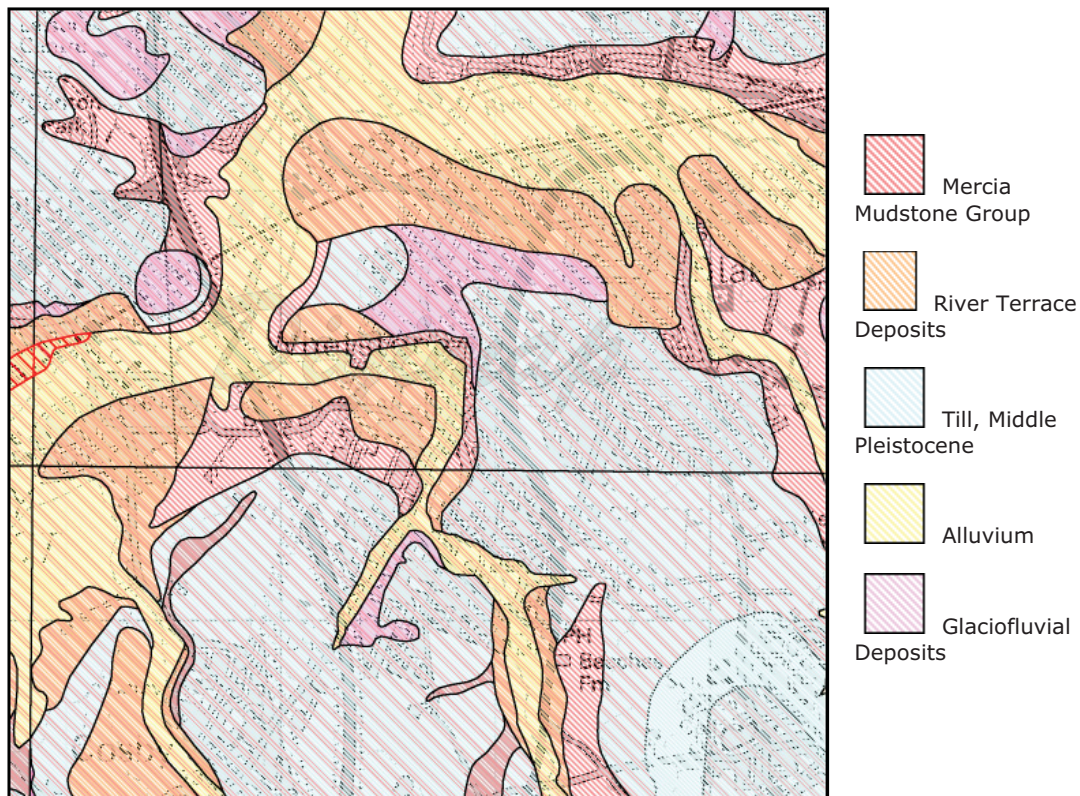


Figure 2. The geology in the region of the site, illustrated on a scale of 1: 50 000.

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3. Background

The site is located in the medieval and post-medieval core of the village of Whetstone (MLE 15731). The name 'Whetstone' has Old English origins and possibly relates to an outcrop of fine grained syenite suitable for whetstones (Bourne 2003). An archaeological evaluation to the south of the church revealed minimal archaeological activity and Roman pottery (MLE 16044) whilst an evaluation to the north revealed evidence of property boundaries (ELE 4454). Early Ordnance Survey maps show an undeveloped garden plot to the rear of a row of terraced cottages occupying the

present plot. A later map shows this plot foreshortened by the construction of a railway siding.

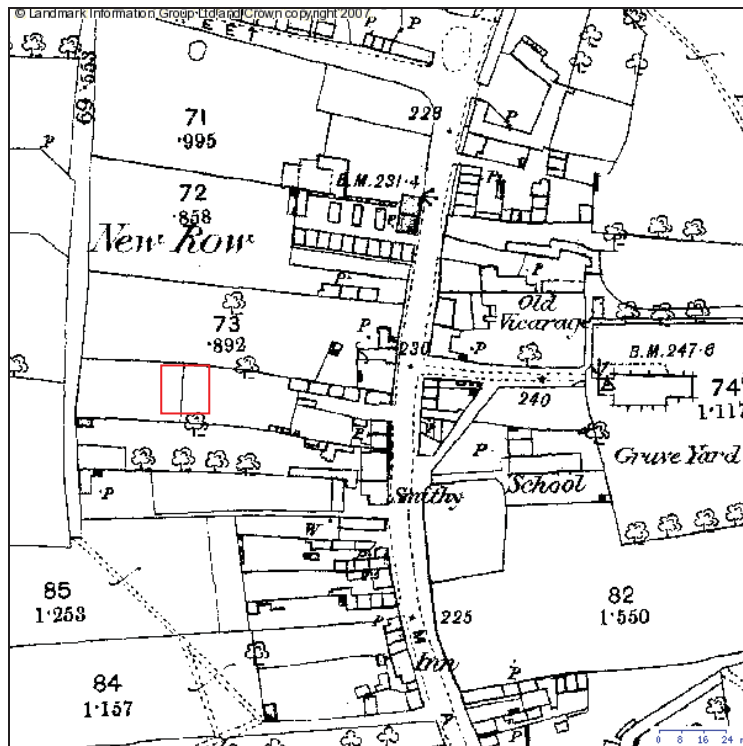


Figure 3. The Ordnance Survey map of 1886 drawn at a scale of 1:2500 showing undeveloped land to the rear of the current redeveloped properties.

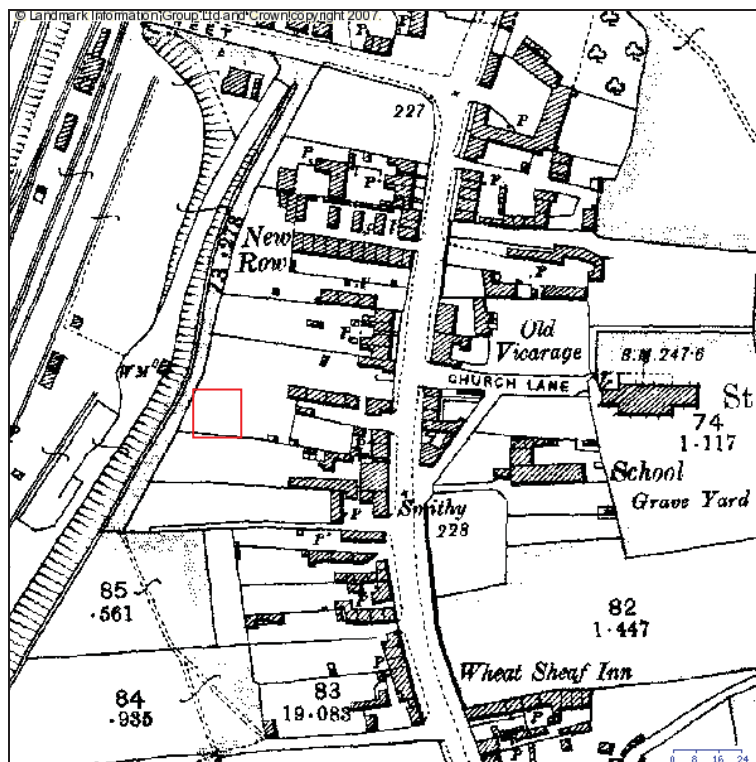


Figure 4. The Ordnance Survey map of 1904 showing the newly constructed siding alongside the undeveloped land.

4. Archaeological Objectives.

The main objectives of the watching brief were

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

5. Methodology.

The monitoring of groundworks was to include supervision of the stripping of overburden and the excavation of foundation trenches to the depth of 1.0 metre. Any archaeological deposits seen to be present were to be excavated and recorded as appropriate. Stripping was completed using a mini 360° excavator fitted with a 1.0 metre wide flat-bladed bucket and trenching with a 0.5 metre wide toothed ditching bucket. All work adhered 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)*.

6. Results.

The majority of overburden had been stripped prior to the watching brief and there remained an average of 0.5 metres of brick waste evident across the surface when trenching began. Local knowledge suggested that the plot was once a brick yard and that substantial levelling had occurred possibly in order to make the plot accessible from the rear. Foundation trenches were dug to a depth of 1.0 metre, on average, throughout. Below the brick waste, the trench sections revealed a layer of light orangey-brown silty sand which in places filled a series of pits of varying widths



Figure 5. A photograph of the trench section showing one of the pits cutting the natural sand.

and depths, but none deeper than the metre allowed for trenching. The pits were themselves cutting natural sand. The backfilling of the pits and levelling of the area with silty sand appeared to have occurred as one episode as the fills were in some places indistinguishable.

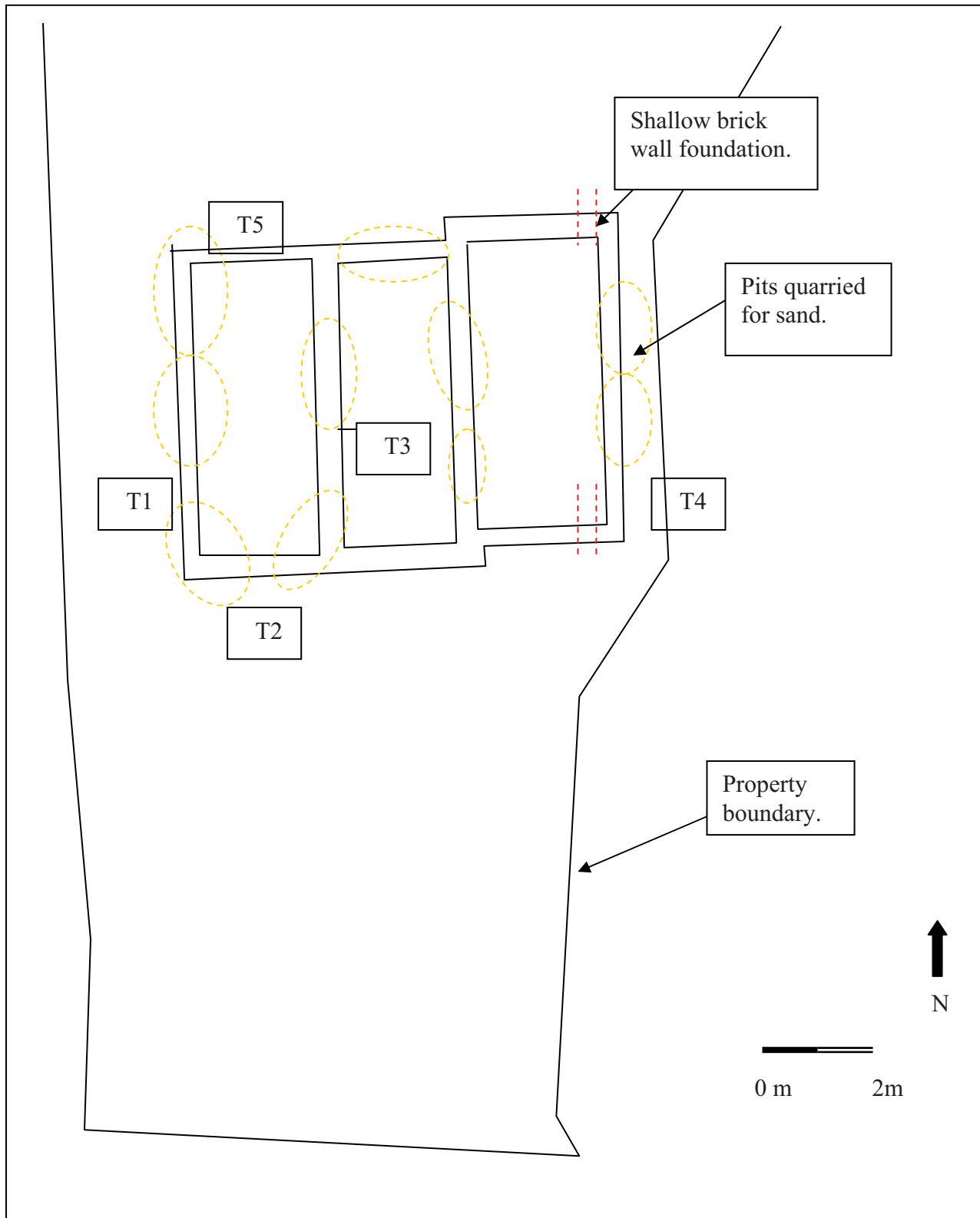


Figure 6. A plan drawn at a scale of 1:200, showing the excavated trenches and pits as identified.

Finds within the backfill included modern glazed pottery, clay pipe fragments and some animal bone. These finds were not retained. A shallow brick wall foundation ran north south and as it cut through the levelling layer, it can be assumed that this was either the wall to a later outbuilding or a later boundary wall.

7. Conclusion.

Monitoring of the groundworks at the rear of 53-59 High Street Whetstone revealed a series of pits of varying sizes cutting the natural sand and backfilled with modern material. It is likely that the sand was quarried for local use either at the time of the construction of the railway siding or in relation to the life of the nearby cottages. The area was more recently levelled, possibly to increase accessibility from Sidings Lane. There were no other features of archaeological significance.

8. Archive.

The archive consists of the report, one annotated drawing, one A4 sheet of site notes and 15 digital photographs on disc and as prints. These will be held by the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record under the accession number X.A224.2007.

9. Publication.

A summary of the work will be submitted to *The Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* for publication in due course.

10. References.

Bourne J. 2003. *Understanding Leicestershire and Rutland place names*. Heart of Albion Press. Loughborough.

11. Acknowledgements.

ULAS would like to thank Lowe Builders and Sons Limited for their assistance and co-operation in the completion of this project. The project was managed by Mr Richard Buckley and fieldwork completed by the author.

S.K Henderson
31.8.07

ULAS Report No. 2008-077

12. Appendices.

Appendix A.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for archaeological work

Land to rear of 53-59 High Street, Whetstone, Leicestershire

Planning Application: 06/1155/1/PX3

Development: erection of 3 dwellings with associated car parking and access

Planning Authority: Blaby District Council

For: Lowe Builders & sons Ltd

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 archaeological attendance for inspection and recording during any ground works on the site which may disturb areas of archaeological potential. The work addresses the requirements of the planning authority, as defined in a letter from their archaeological advisers in the Historic and Natural Environment Team, Leicestershire County Council (1/6/2007; Ref: CLE2619).
- 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 work involves professional archaeological attendance for inspection and recording during the groundworks for the proposed development, with contingency provision for emergency excavation and recording should this prove necessary. The requirements are detailed in the advice letter from LCC to HDC.

2.2 *Archaeological potential*

- 2.1 The site is located in the medieval and post-medieval core of the village of Whetstone (MLE 15731). An archaeological evaluation to the south of the church revealed minimal archaeological activity and Roman pottery (MLE 16044) whilst an evaluation to the north revealed evidence of property boundaries (ELE 4454).

3 *Objectives*

The main objectives of the watching brief will be:

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

4. Methodology

4.1 *General Methodology and Standards*

- 4.1.1 All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (1999) and *watching briefs*.
- 4.1.2 Staffing, recording systems, health and safety provisions and insurance details are included below.
- 4.1.3 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site by the project manager. These will ensure that project targets are met and professional standards are maintained. Provision will be made for external monitoring meetings with the Senior Planning Archaeologist, the Planning authority and the Client.
- 4.1.4 Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, a Leicestershire Museums Service accession number will be drawn and used to identify all finds and records.

4.2 *Archaeological Attendance*

- 4.2.1 The project will involve the presence on site of an experienced professional archaeologist during groundworks.
- 4.2.2 During these groundworks, if any archaeological deposits are seen to be present, the archaeologist will record areas of archaeological interest. In the event of significant archaeological deposits being located there may be the need for additional time and resources to record these.
- 4.2.3 The archaeologist will co-operate at all times with the contractors on site to ensure the minimum interruption to the work.
- 4.2.4 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.
- 4.2.5 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.
- 4.2.6 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.
- 4.2.7 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, Heritage Services and the coroner will be informed immediately on their discovery.
- 4.2.8 In the event of significant archaeological remains being located during the watching brief there may be the need for contingency time and finance to be provided to ensure adequate recording is undertaken. On the discovery of potentially significant remains the archaeologist will inform the developer, the Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services and the planning authority. If the archaeological remains are identified to be of significance additional contingent archaeological works will be required.

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 A 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 An accession number will be drawn prior to the commencement of the project (Brief 8.1). Following the fieldwork the on-line OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis> will be completed. A report on the investigation 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 Museum 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 normally within six months of the completion of analysis. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

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.
- 7.2 ULAS and the Leicestershire County SMR support the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. ULAS will complete the online OASIS form at <http://ads.ac.uk/project/oasis> on completion of the project and report if required. ULAS will contact Leicestershire County Council SMR prior to completing the form. Once a report has become a public document following its incorporation into Leicestershire County Council SMR it may be placed on a web-site. The Client should agree to this procedure in writing as part of the process of submitting the report to Leicestershire County Council SMR.

8 Timetable and Staffing

- 8.1 The investigation is scheduled to commence at the start of the contractors groundworks. An experienced archaeologist will be present during this work.

9 Health and Safety

- 9.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Statement of Safety Policy and uses the ULAS Health and Safety Manual (revised 2005) with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is in the Appendix. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate.

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 Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museums 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 Museum Archaeologists)

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08.08.2007

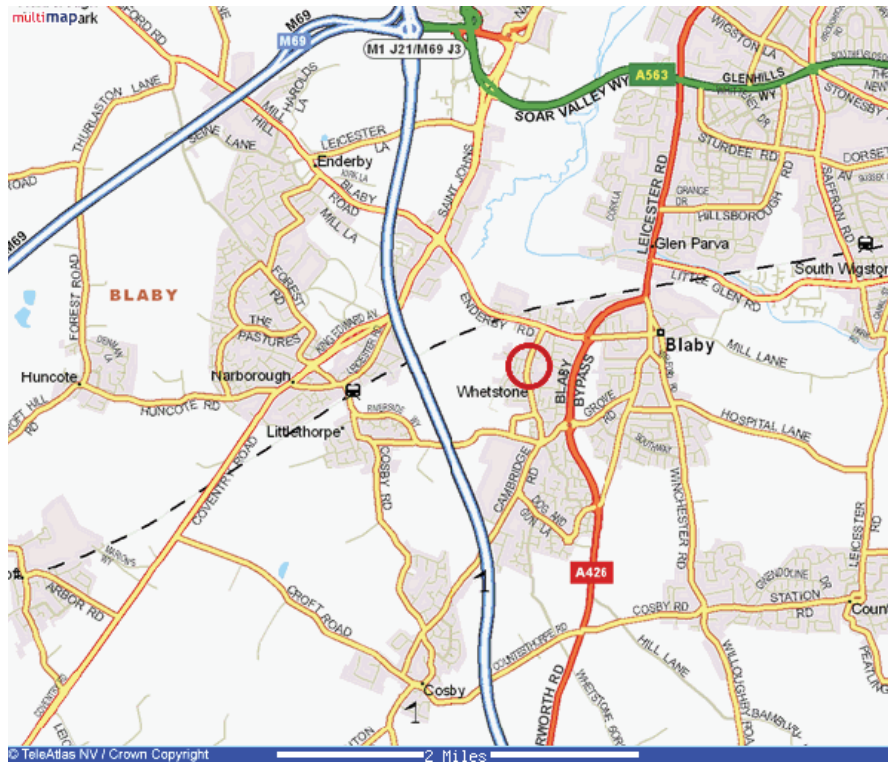


Fig 1 Location of Development

Draft Project Health and Safety Policy Statement

Land to rear of 53-59 High Street, Whetstone, Leicestershire

Planning Application: 06/1155/1/PX3

Planning Authority: Blaby District Council

For: Lowe Builders & sons Ltd

1. Nature of the work

1.1 This statement is for archaeological watching brief (strip plan and sample). It will be revised following the commencement of operations when the extent of risks can be assessed in full.

1.2 The work will involve overburden stripping by JCB 3C or similar during daylight hours and recording of any underlying archaeological deposits revealed. Overall depth is likely to be c. 1.0 – 1.2m. Following stripping the exposed deposits will be examined with hand tools (shovels, trowels etc) and archaeological features will be excavated. All work will adhere to the University of Leicester Health and Safety Policy and follow the guidance in the ULAS Health and safety and the Standing Committee of Archaeological Unit Managers manuals, together with the following relevant Health and Safety guidelines, including the following.

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

1.3 The Health and Safety policy on site will be reassessed during the evaluation. All work will adhere to the company's health and safety policy.

2 Risks Assessment

2.1 Working within an excavation.

Precautions. No work will be undertaken beneath section faces deeper than 1.2m. Loose spoil heaps will not be walked on. Protective footwear 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.

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 Weils 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.

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

5 August 2007