



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An archaeological evaluation at
55-57, Sycamore Street, Blaby,
Leicestershire
(SP 568 977)

Leon Hunt



ULAS Report No 2010-135
©2010

**An archaeological evaluation at
55-57, Sycamore Street, Blaby,
Leicestershire
(SP 568 977)**

Leon Hunt

for:

Stokes Evans Development Ltd

Checked by

Signed:



Date: 19.07.2010.

Name: ...Patrick Clay

University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH

Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

ULAS Report Number 2010-135

Accession Number: X.A127.2010

©2010

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Site Location, Geology and Topography	1
Archaeological Background.....	2
Archaeological Objectives	3
Methodology	3
Results.....	5
Conclusion	5
Archive.....	5
Appendix I: Design Specification for archaeological work.....	8
Appendix II: OASIS Information	16

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location.....	2
Figure 2: Plan of development area. Plan provided by developer.	3
Figure 3: Trench location plan.....	4

PLATES

Plate 1: The site prior to excavation, looking south.....	6
Plate 2: Work in progress, looking north-west	6
Plate 3: Evaluation trench, post-excavation, looking west	7

An archaeological evaluation at 55-57, Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire (SP 568 977)

Leon Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at 55-57 Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire (SP 568 977) in advance of a new development on the site.

The site lies within the historic settlement core of Blaby and there was some possibility of medieval or post-medieval remains on the site.

The trial trench was placed within the southern area of the site, which had recently been cleared of hard standing. The northern part of the site had contained a building and therefore had low potential for archaeology.

The removal of the hard standing had left little of the upper soils and so the trench was very shallow. The excavation revealed 200mm of subsoil overlying the natural sub-stratum of clay, sand and gravel.

No archaeological features were discovered during the evaluation. The archive for the project deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services with accession number X.A127.2010.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services at 55-57 Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 568 977) in advance of a new development on the site, which currently consists of a rectangular piece of land, which had been recently cleared of hard standing.

This work was in accordance with DOE Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5: Planning and the Historic Environment) and was intended to provide preliminary indications of the character and extent of any archaeological remains that may have been present on the site, so that the Planning Authority could assess the potential impact of the proposed development on such remains.

Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority had requested a field evaluation to identify and locate any archaeological remains of significance and proposed suitable treatment to avoid or minimise damage by the development.

This is detailed in their 'Brief for Archaeological Investigation at Land at 55-57 Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire. NGR SP 568 977' (LCC 6-7-2010: hereinafter the 'brief') (see Appendix I).

The evaluation was to consist of one 8m trench placed within the footprint of the proposed car park where ground reduction was proposed.

Site Location, Geology and Topography

The site lies on the western side of Sycamore Street, to the rear of the new Aldi food outlet that fronts Lutterworth Road and just north of the junction of Sycamore Street and Welford Road (Figure 1).

The underlying geology is mapped as Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156, Leicester). The site was covered in hard standing until recently. At the time of the evaluation this had been removed.

The site measures 0.09 hectares and lies at a height of around 66.1m aOD.



Figure 1: Site location

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2010
All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495.

Archaeological Background

The site is situated within the historic settlement core of Blaby (HER Ref: **MLE 9336**), where there is a likelihood for medieval and post-medieval remains. Numerous remains are known from within the grounds of Blaby Hall (**MLE 19**) and the Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing of 1814 appears to show structures on or at least close to the site on Sycamore Street. However, since the site has been previously developed any remains present are likely to have been disturbed.

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation 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 produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site 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 presence of archaeological deposits that may exist within the area.

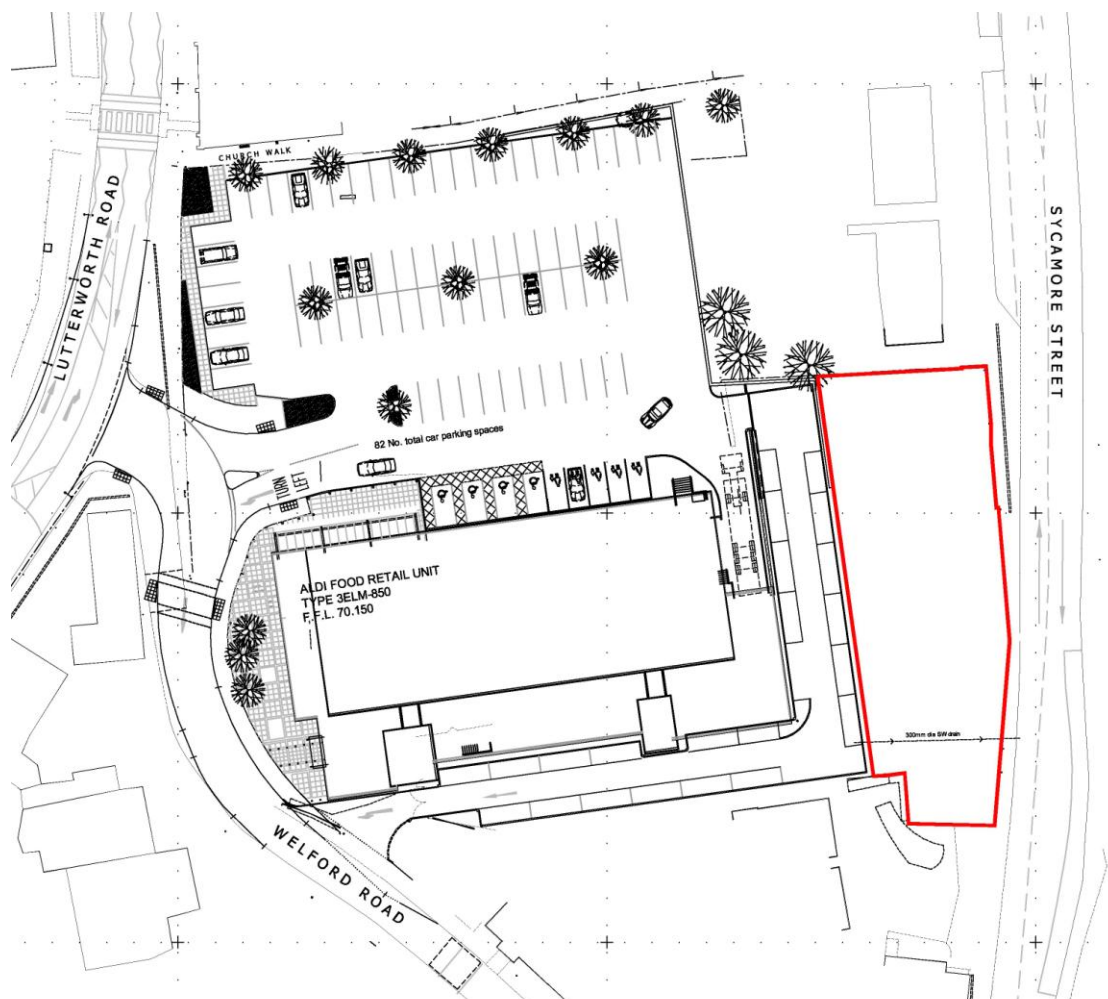


Figure 2: Plan of development area. Plan provided by developer.
Scale Approx. 1: 1000

Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

(2008). The archaeological work followed the Design Specification for Archaeological Work prepared by ULAS (Appendix II).

The brief has requested a minimum of 10.5 sq metres targeting the area of proposed car parking where the ground level is to be reduced ('Brief' 6.2).

Trenches were to be excavated to a width of 1.6m and down to the top of archaeological deposits. The area of the trenches will be protected by barrier fencing.

Topsoil/modern overburden was to be removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by JCB 3C or equivalent using a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were to be backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.

One 8m x 1.6m trenches totaling *c.* 12.8 sq m was proposed in the design specification (Appendix II). The exact location of the trench was only to be modified if there were constraints on site.

The trench was excavated by a JCB 3CX backactor fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket.

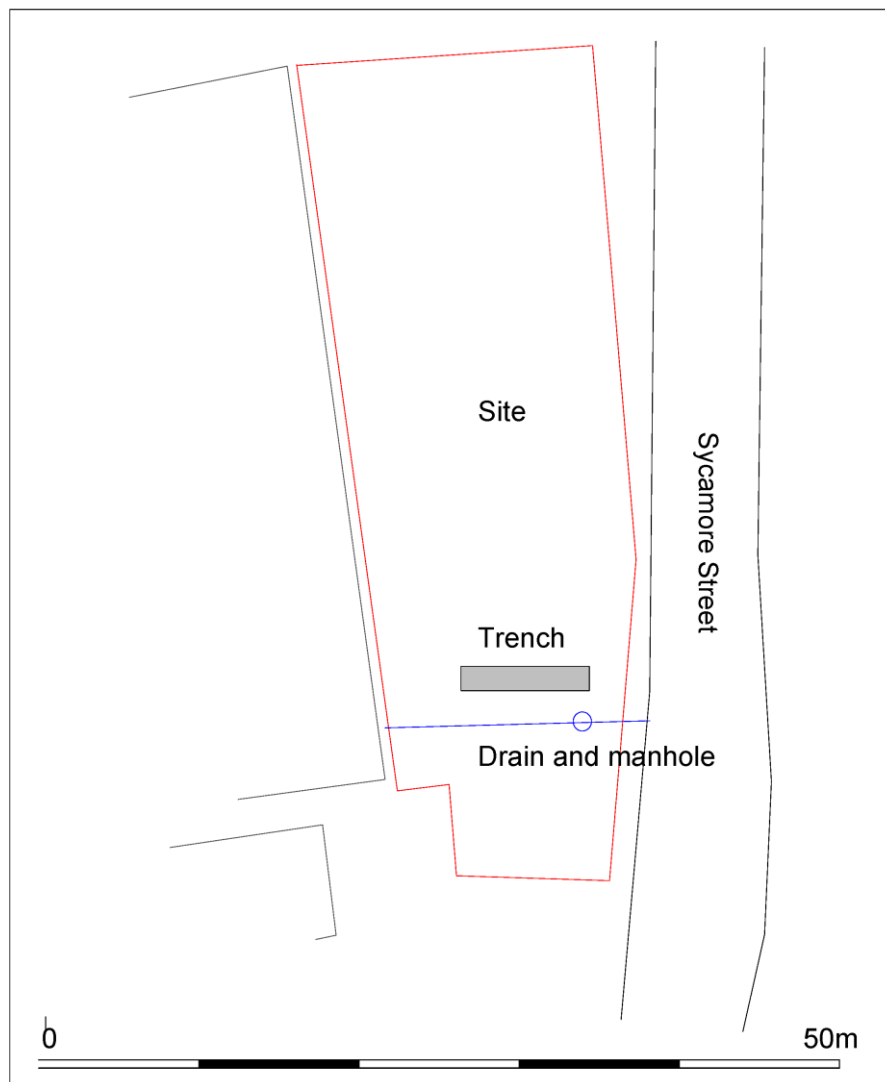


Figure 3: Trench location plan

Results

The hard standing that had stood on the site until recently had been removed prior to the evaluation. This had left a thin layer of reddish brown subsoil and patches of the visible natural clay sub-stratum.

The trench was oriented east-west within the development area approximately 2m from the drain that crosses the site from east-west and around 4m from the kerb along the footpath of Sycamore Street.

The excavator removed around 60mm of reddish brown subsoil to reveal the natural sub-stratum, which consisted of Mercia Mudstone Group red clay with bands of orange sand and gravel. The substratum was excavated into in order to check that no archaeological features were present; the final depth of the trench was between 0.12-0.20m.

Conclusion

Most of the upper soils on the site had been removed either prior to or during the removal of the hard standing that had previously covered the site, leaving only a thin layer of subsoil above the natural sub-stratum.

No archaeological features or finds associated with archaeological features were discovered during this evaluation.

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank Rhys Evans of Stokes Evans Development his co-operation with this evaluation. Thanks is also due to Andy Houghton, the driver for his help and assistance with the work.

The evaluation was carried out by the author and Patrick Clay managed the project.

Archive

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services, with accession number X.A127.2010.

It will consist of an unbound copy of this report (2010-135), a trench recording sheet, a photo record sheet, a CD of digital photographs and contact sheet of monochrome photographs and a set of negatives.

Leon Hunt

ULAS

University of Leicester

University Road

Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel: 0116 252 2848

Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: lh90@le.ac.uk

19-07-2010



Plate 1: The site prior to excavation, looking south



Plate 2: Work in progress, looking north-west



Plate 3: Evaluation trench, post-excavation, looking west

Appendix I: Design Specification for archaeological work

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for archaeological work

Job title: 55-57, Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire (SP 568 977)

Client: Stokes Evans Developments Ltd

Planning Authority: Blaby District Council

P. A 10/0272/1/PX

1 Introduction

1.1 Definition and scope of the specification

1.1.1 This document is a design specification for an initial phase of archaeological field evaluation (AFE) at the above site, in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5, Planning and the Historic environment DCLG March 2010).

1.1.2 The definition of archaeological field evaluation, taken from the Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidance: for Archaeological Field Evaluation (IfA S&G: AFE) is a limited programme of non-intrusive and/ or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.

2. Background

2.1 Context of the Project

2.1.1 The site is located east of 55-57, Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire.

2.1.2 Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET) as archaeological advisors to the planning authority have requested an evaluation by trial trenching to identify and locate any archaeological remains of significance and propose suitable treatment to avoid or minimise damage by the development. This is detailed in their *Brief for Archaeological Investigation at Land at 55-57 Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire. NGR SP 568 977* (LCC 6.7.2010 hereinafter the 'brief').

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.2.1 The site is situated within the historic settlement core of Blaby (HER Ref: MLE 9336), where there is a likelihood for medieval and post-medieval remains. Numerous remains are known from within the grounds of Blaby Hall (MLE 19) and the Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing of 1814 appears to show structures on or at least close to the site on Sycamore Street. Since the site has been previously developed any remains present are likely to have been disturbed and are therefore unlikely to prevent an obstacle to development of the site.

2.2.2 As part of the proposed development, there will be significant ground reduction in the part of the site that will be car parking. As such, a trial trench is required to confirm the absence or presence of archaeological remains and to propose a suitable mitigation strategy. The underlying geology is mapped as Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156, Leicester). The site is presently hard standing.

3. Archaeological Objectives

3.1 The main objectives of the evaluation 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 produce an archive and report of any results.

3.2 Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

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

4. Methodology

4.1 General Methodology and Standards

4.1.1 All work will follow the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008).

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.

4.2 Trial Trenching Methodology

4.2.1 The brief has requested a minimum of 10.5 sq metres targeting the area of proposed car parking where the ground level is to be reduced ('Brief' 6.2).

4.2.2 Trenches will be excavated to a width of 1.6m and down to the top of archaeological deposits. The area of the trenches will be protected by barrier fencing.

4.2.3 Topsoil/modern overburden will be removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by JCB 3C or equivalent using a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches will be backfilled and levelled at the end of the evaluation.

4.2.4 The minimum requirement detailed in the 'brief' ('Brief' 9.2.1) is the equivalent of one 8m x 1.6m trenches totaling c. 12.8 sq m. (Fig. 2). The exact location of the trench may need to be modified depending on constraints on site.

4.2.5 Trenches will be examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located will be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans will be tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights will be taken as appropriate.

4.2.6 Sections of any excavated archaeological features will be drawn at an appropriate scale. At least one longitudinal face of each trench will be recorded. All sections will be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum, or a permanent fixed bench mark.

4.2.7 Trench locations will be recorded using an electronic distance measurer. These will then be tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

- 4.2.8 Any human remains will initially be left *in situ* and will only be removed if necessary for their protection, under Ministry of Justice guidelines and in compliance with relevant environmental health regulations.

4.3 Recording Systems

- 4.3.1 The ULAS recording manual will be used as a guide for all recording.
- 4.3.2 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto pro-forma recording sheets.
- 4.3.3 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 trench plan at appropriate scale, which will show the location of the areas investigated in relationship to the investigation area and OS grid.
- 4.3.4 A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered will be made. Sections including the half-sections of individual layers of features will be drawn as necessary, typically at a scale of 1:10. The OD height of all principal strata and features will be recorded.
- 4.3.5 A photographic record of the investigations will be prepared 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.
- 4.3.6 This record will be compiled and checked during the course of the excavations.

5. Finds and Samples

- 5.1 The IfA *Guidelines for Finds Work* will be adhered to.
- 5.2 Before commencing work on the site, a Site code/Accession number will be agreed with the Planning Archaeologist that will be used to identify all records and finds from the site.
- 5.3 During the fieldwork, different sampling strategies may be employed according to the perceived importance of the strata under investigation. Close attention will always be given to sampling for date, structure and environment. If significant archaeological features are sample excavated, the environmental sampling strategy is likely to include the following:
- i. A range of features to represent all feature types, areas and phases will be selected on a judgmental basis. The criteria for selection will be that deposits are datable, well sealed and with little intrusive or residual material.
 - ii. Any buried soils or well sealed deposits with concentrations of carbonised material present will be intensively sampled taking a known proportion of the deposit.
 - iii. Spot samples will be taken where concentrations of environmental remains are located.
 - iv. Waterlogged remains, if present, will be sampled for pollen, plant macrofossils, insect remains and radiocarbon dating provided that they are uncontaminated and datable. Consultation with the specialist will be undertaken.
- 5.4 All identified finds and artefacts are to be retained, although certain classes of building material will, in some circumstances, be discarded after recording with the approval of the Senior Planning Archaeologist. The IfA *Guidelines for Finds Work* will be adhered to.
- 5.5 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner. Where appropriate they will be cleaned, marked and receive remedial conservation in accordance with recognised best-practice. This will include the site code number, finds number and context number. Bulk finds will be bagged in clear self sealing plastic bags, again marked with site code, finds and

context numbers and boxed by material in standard storage boxes (340mm x 270mm x 195mm). All materials will be fully labelled, catalogued and stored in appropriate containers.

6. Report and Archive

6.1 The full report in A4 format will usually follow within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork and copies will be dispatched to the Client, Senior Planning Archaeologist; HER and Local Planning Authority.

6.2 The report will include consideration of:-

- The aims and methods adopted in the course of the evaluation.
- The nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any structural, artefactual and environmental material uncovered.
- The anticipated degree of survival of archaeological deposits.
- The anticipated archaeological impact of the current proposals.
- Appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs.
- Summary.
- The location and size of the archive.
- A quantitative and qualitative assessment of the potential of the archive for further analysis leading to full publication, following guidelines laid down in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage).

6.3 A full copy of the archive as defined in the *IfA Standard and Guidance for archaeological archives* (Brown 2008) will normally be presented to Leicestershire County Council within six months of the completion of fieldwork. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken.

7 Publication and Dissemination of Results

7.1 A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

8. Acknowledgement and Publicity

8.1 ULAS shall acknowledge the contribution of the Client in any displays, broadcasts or publications relating to the site or in which the report may be included.

8.2 ULAS and the Client shall each ensure that a senior employee shall be responsible for dealing with any enquiries received from press, television and any other broadcasting media and members of the public. All enquiries made to ULAS shall be directed to the Client for comment.

9. Copyright

9.1 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.

10. Timetable

10.1 The evaluation start is proposed for 19 July 2010 initially with one member staff. Further staff will be added if archaeological remains are discovered.

10.2 The on-site director/supervisor will carry out the post-excavation work, with time allocated within the costing of the project for analysis of any artefacts found on the site by the relevant in-house specialists at ULAS.

11. Health and Safety

- 11.1 ULAS is covered by and adheres to the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety manual with appropriate risks assessments for all archaeological work. A draft Health and Safety statement for this project is attached as Appendix 1. The relevant Health and Safety Executive guidelines will be adhered to as appropriate. The HSE has determined that archaeological investigations are exempt from CDM regulations.

- 11.2 A Risks assessment will be completed prior to work commencing on-site, and updated as necessary during the site works.

12. Insurance

- 12.1 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.

13. Monitoring arrangements

- 13.1 Unlimited access to monitor the project will be available to both the Client and his representatives and Planning Archaeologist subject to the health and safety requirements of the site. At least one weeks notice will be given to the LCCHS Senior Planning Archaeologist before the commencement of the archaeological evaluation in order that monitoring arrangements can be made.
- 13.2 All monitoring shall be carried out in accordance with the IfA *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*.
- 13.3 Internal monitoring will be carried out by the ULAS project manager.

14. Contingencies and unforeseen circumstances

- 14.1 In the event that unforeseen archaeological discoveries are made during the project, ULAS shall inform the site agent/project manager, Client and the Planning Archaeologist and Planning Authority and prepare a short written statement with plan detailing the archaeological evidence. Following assessment of the archaeological remains by the Planning Archaeologist, ULAS shall, if required, implement an amended scheme of investigation on behalf of the client as appropriate.

15. Bibliography

Brown, D., 2008 *Standard and guidance for the preparation of Archaeological Archives* (Institute for Archaeologists)

Patrick Clay
Director

ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614

Email: pnc3@le.ac.uk

© ULAS 12/07/2010

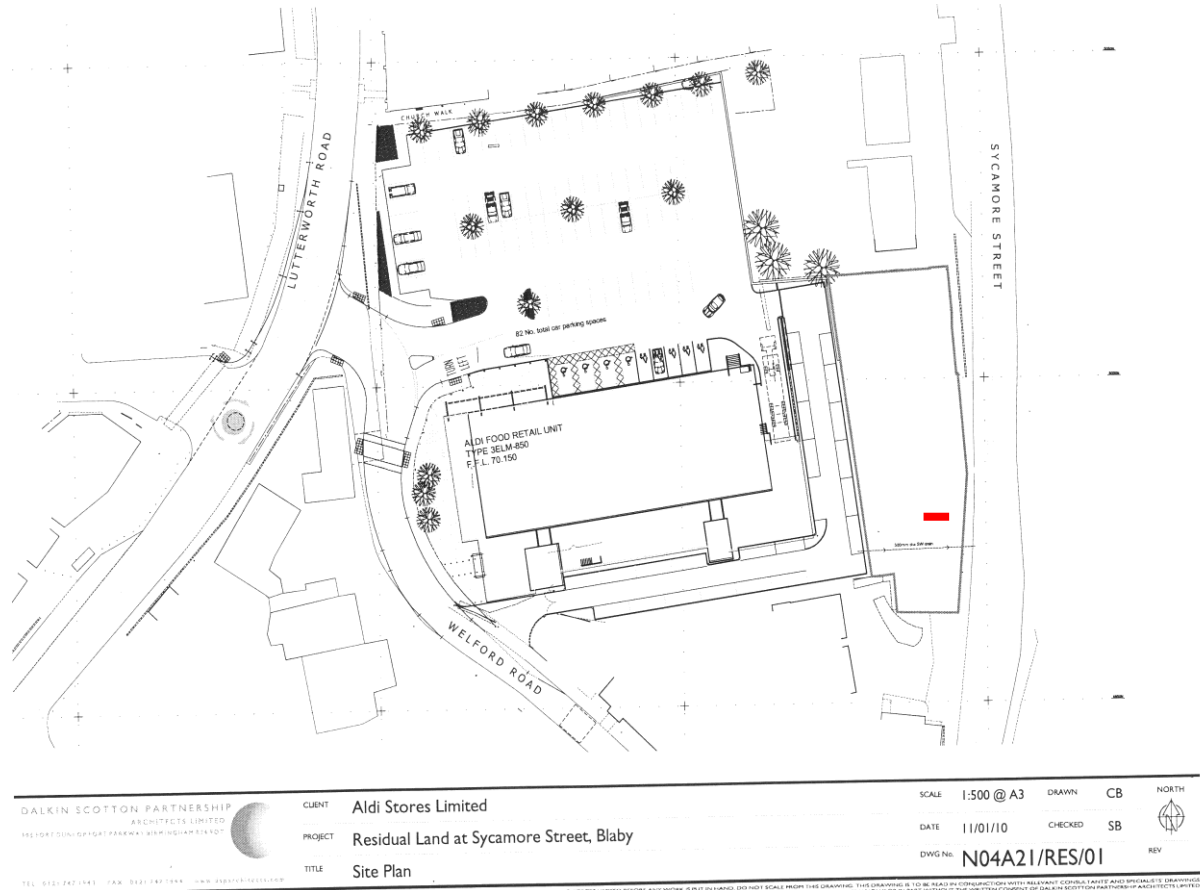


Figure 1 Location of development area with suggested trench location in red.

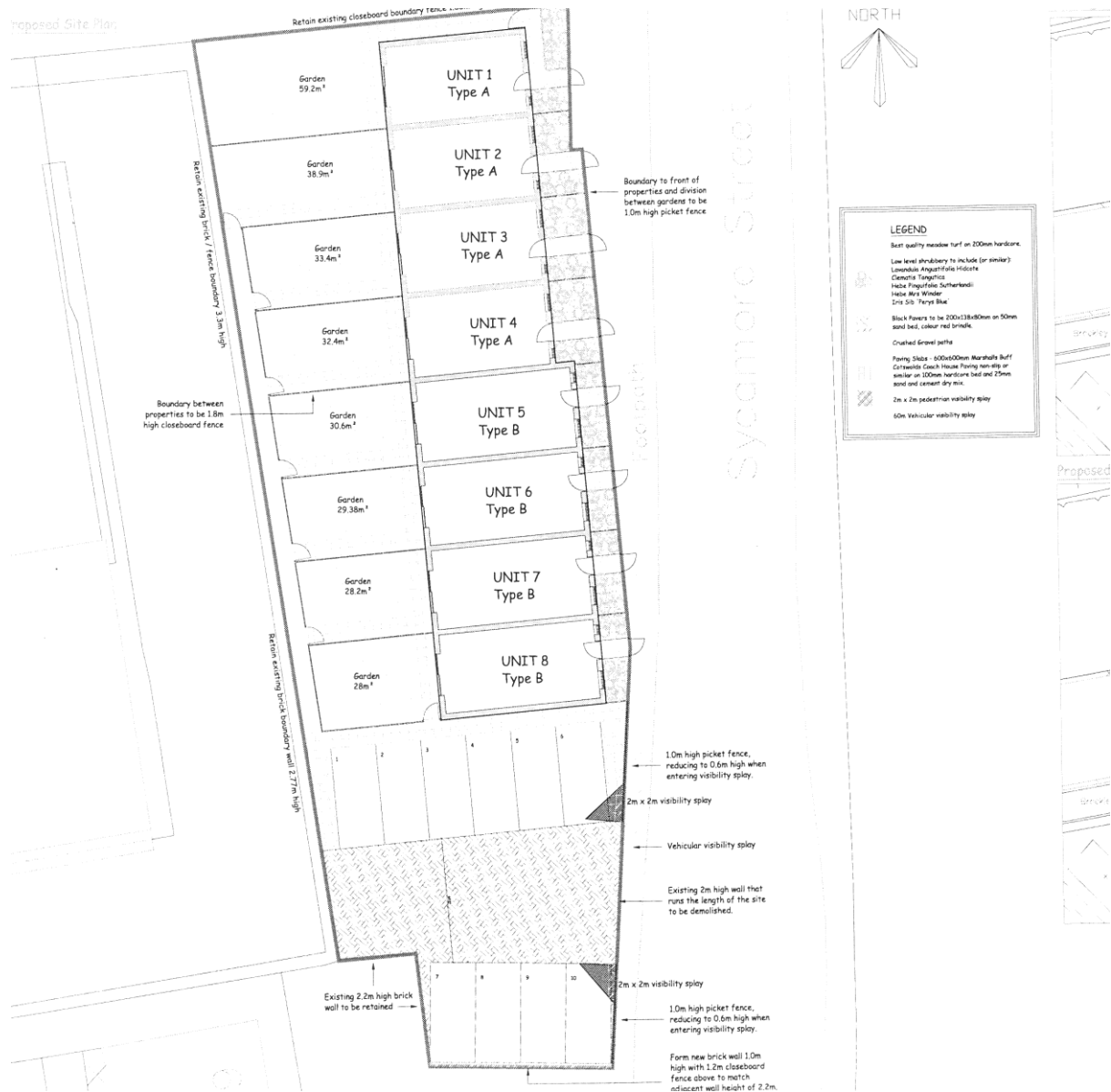


Figure 2 Proposed site layout

Draft Project Health and Safety Policy Statement

A risks assessment will be produced by on-site staff, which will be updated and amended during the course of the evaluation.

1. Nature of the work

1.1 Brief description of the work involved e.g.

The work will involve machine excavation by JCB 3C or equivalent during daylight hours to reveal underlying archaeological deposits. Overall depth is likely to be c. 0.5 m with possible features excavated to a depth of another 1m. Trenches will not be excavated to a depth exceeding 1.2m. Spoil will be stockpiled no less than 1.5 m from the edge of the excavation, the topsoil and subsoil being kept separate. Remaining works will involve the examination of the exposed surface with hand tools (shovels, trowels etc) and excavation of archaeological features. Deeper features will be fenced with lamp irons and hazard tape. Three staff will be used on the evaluation.

2 Risks Assessment

2.1 *Working on an excavation site.*

Precautions. Trenches to not be excavated to a depth exceeding 1.2m. Spoil will be kept 1.5m away from the edge of the excavated area to prevent falls of loose debris. Loose spoil heaps will not be walked on. Protective footwear will be worn at all times. Hard hats will be worn when working in deeper sections or with plant. First aid kit to be kept in site accommodation/vehicle. Vehicle and mobile phone to be kept on site in case of emergency.

2.2 *Working with plant.*

Precautions. Archaeologists experienced in working with machines will supervise topsoil stripping at all times. Hard hats, protective footwear and hazard jackets will be worn at all times. Machine driver to be suitably qualified and insured. If services or wells are encountered machining will be halted until extent has been established by hand excavation or areas where it is safe to machine have been established.

2.3 *Working within areas prone to waterlogging.*

If waterlogging occurs on site preventing work continuing it is proposed to excavate a sump, suitably fenced and clearly marked to enable the water to drain away. If this is insufficient a pump will be used. The sump will be covered when not in use and backfilled if no longer required. 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.

Appendix II: OASIS Information

Project Name	An archaeological evaluation at 55-57, Sycamore Street, Blaby, Leicestershire (SP 568 977)
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	P. Clay
Project Supervisor	L Hunt
Previous/Future work	Trench evaluation
Current Land Use	Brownfield site
Development Type	New dwellings
Reason for Investigation	Planning condition
Position in the Planning Process	Post-determination
Site Co ordinates	SK 568 977
Start/end dates of field work	19-07-2010
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services
Study Area	0.09 hectares

Contact Details

Richard Buckley or Patrick Clay
University of Leicester Archaeological
Services (ULAS)
University of Leicester,
University Road,
Leicester LE1 7RH

T: +44 (0)116 252 2848

F: +44 (0)116 252 2614

E: ulas@le.ac.uk

w: www.le.ac.uk/ulas



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2008/9