

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land
At Main Street, Skeffington,
Leicestershire (SK 740 025)**

Greg Farnworth-Jones

**For Mr. and Mrs. P. Doleman
Planning Application No.06/00995/3**

Planning Authority Leicestershire County Council

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1. Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on land at Main Street Skeffington, Leicestershire (SK 740 025), on the 22nd and the 26th January 2007 in advance of residential development. This work was carried out on behalf of Mr and Mrs P. Doleman by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). The results of this investigation were negative as no archaeological finds or deposits were observed during this work. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, accession number X.A38.2007.

2. Introduction

2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) during the ground works for residential development on land at Main Street, Skeffington, Leicestershire (SK 740 025).

2.2 The Senior Planning Archaeologist of the Historic and Natural Environment Team of Leicestershire County Council, in his capacity as archaeological adviser to the planning authority, requested that an archaeological watching brief assessment of the site area be carried out during the ground-works.

2.3 The University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) was then commissioned to carry out the watching brief on behalf of the clients, Mr and Mrs P. Doleman. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by ULAS on the 22nd and 26th of January 2007. The work involved archaeological observation during excavation of foundation trenches for the residential development.

3. Site Background

3.1 The site lies within the medieval village core of Skeffington close to the medieval church and other Listed buildings. The name of the village comes from the Saxon word for 'scaft' which means sheep. The village dates back to before the Norman Conquest and for the majority of this time has been owned by the occupants of Skeffington Hall.

3.2 The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 156 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Lower Lias.

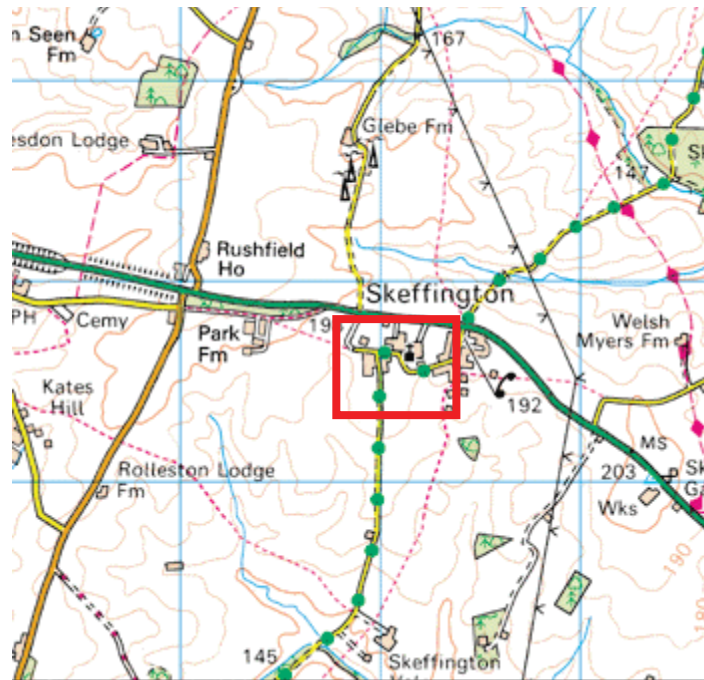


Fig. 1 Site location Scale 1:50000

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4 Methodology

4.1 All archaeological 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). The work followed the approved design specification (Appendix).

4.2 The archaeological watching brief involved the control and supervision of ground disturbance to identify any deposits of archaeological importance.

4.3 The main objectives of the watching brief, through archaeological supervision of existing overburden stripping and ground works by the client's contractors were:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
4. To produce an archive and report of any results.

4.4 Any archaeological deposits located were to be hand cleaned and planned as appropriate. Samples of any archaeological deposits located would be hand excavated and measured drawings of all archaeological features prepared at a scale of 1:20 and tied into an overall site plan of 1:100.

4.5 Archaeological deposits would 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 was paid to the potential for buried palaeosoils and waterlogged deposits in consultation with ULAS's environmental officer.

4.5 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.

5 Results

5.1 The topsoil consisted of a very dark grey loam, with minor root disturbance, to a depth of *c.* 0.4m.

The subsoil consisted of mid brown sandy clay with occasional pebbles, at a depth of *c.* 0.4m and the natural substratum consisted of orange clay gravels.

5.2 The same sequence of soil horizons was observed in all of the foundation trenches.

5.3 Demolition material from the foundations of a modern garage was observed on the eastern edge of the site. The rest of the site consisted of undisturbed soil.

5.4 No archaeological finds or deposits were located within the machine-excavated foundations or from an examination of the spoil.

6 Conclusion

6.1 No archaeological deposits, features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered during the watching brief.

6.2 Although within the village core close to the church the application area appears to have only seen use as agricultural and garden land, suggesting that the site may have been used as orchard or garden land, possibly in connection with the church.

7 Archive

7.1 The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services Section, accession number X.A38.2007. It consists of two watching brief recording forms and digital photographs.

8 Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the clients, Mr and Mrs P. Doleman, for their assistance and co-operation. Patrick Clay managed the project, and the fieldwork was carried out by the author, both of ULAS.

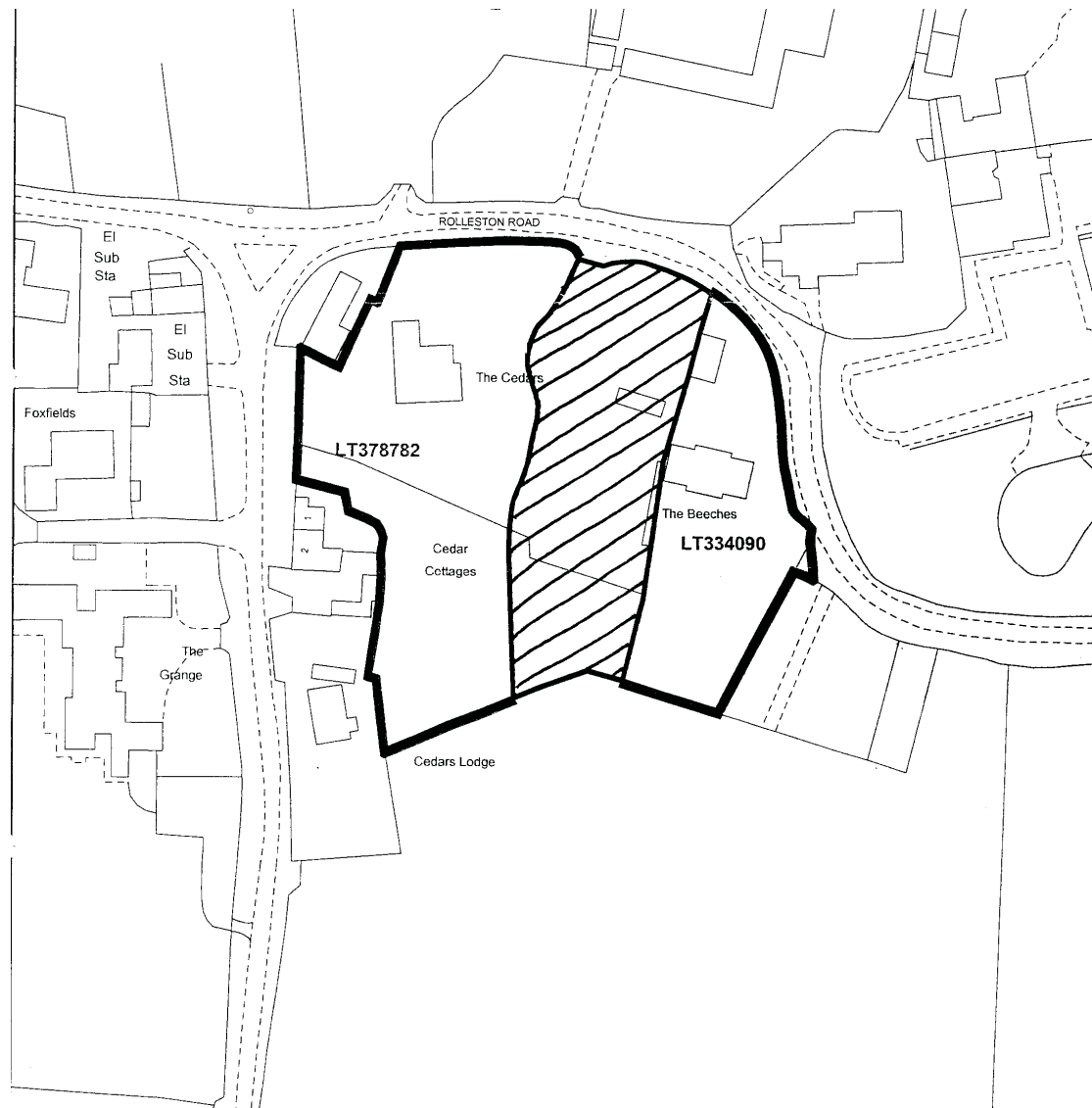


Figure 2 Location plan

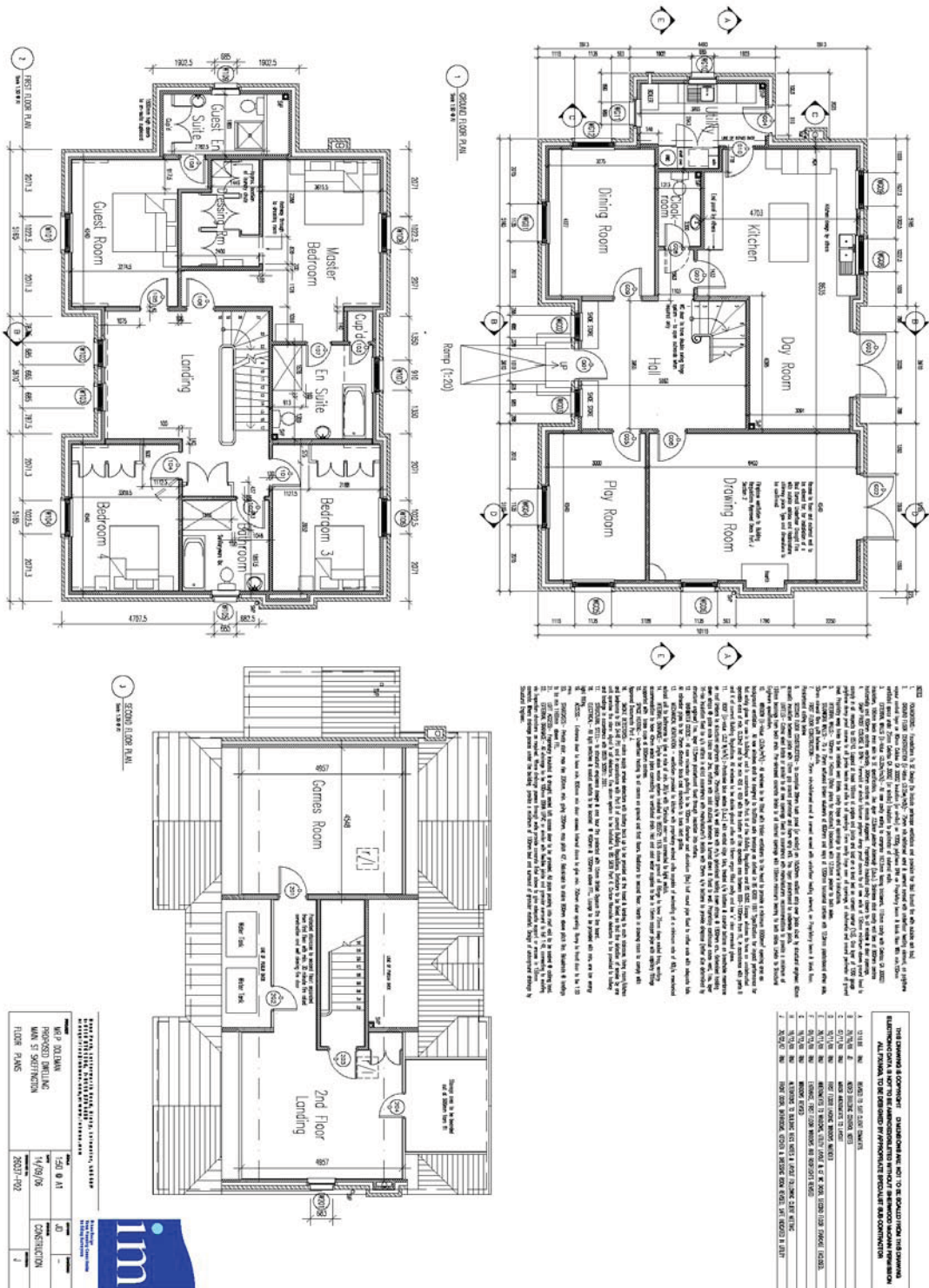


Figure 3. Plan of Proposed Development

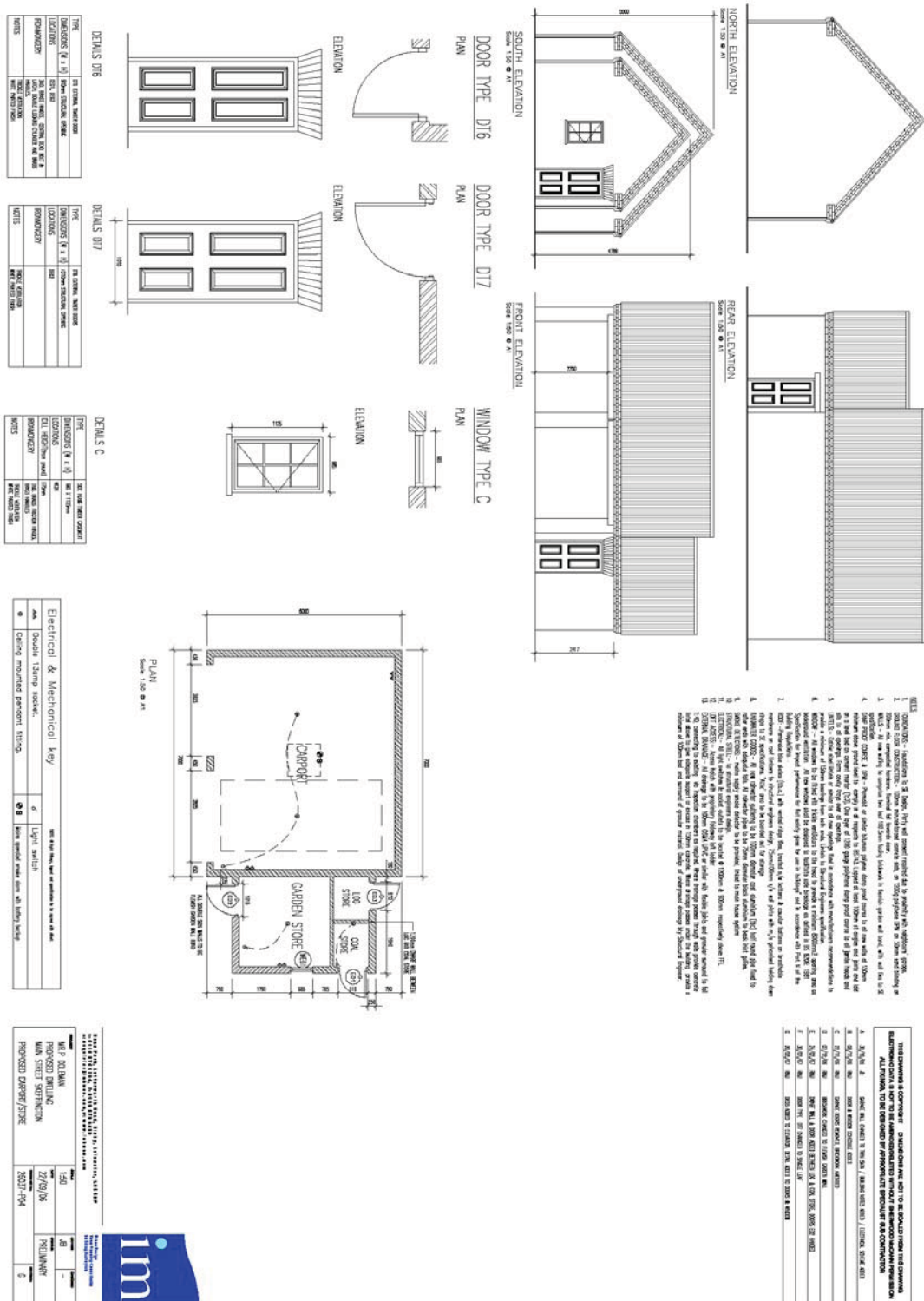


Figure 4 Elevation of Proposed Development



Figure 5. Excavated Foundation Trench Looking South



Figure 6. Excavated Foundation Trench Looking West.

9 Bibliography

Clay, P., 2006 *Design Specification for archaeological work on land at Main Street, Skeffington, Leicestershire, (SK 740 025)* ULAS Ref.07/524

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10 Appendix Design Specification

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for archaeological work

Main Street, Skeffington, Leicestershire SK 740 025

Planning Application: 06/00995/3

For: Mr and Mrs P. Doleman

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, including control and supervision of ground works, as required by the Planning Authority, of any ground works on the site which may disturb areas of archaeological potential in connection with a planning application for residential development at Main Street, Skeffington, Leicestershire SK 740 025 (Planning Application: 06/00995/3) for: Mr and Mrs P. Doleman

1.2 It addresses the requirements detailed in the letter of 10.08.2006 from Leicestershire County Council, to Harborough District Council. It forms part of a scheme of work to fulfil planning condition 16 required by Harborough District Council.

1.3 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 watching brief involves attendance for inspection and recording during ground disturbance to identify any deposits of archaeological importance.

2.2 Archaeological potential

2.2.1 The site lies within the medieval core of Skeffington close to the medieval church and Listed buildings.

3 Aims

3.1 Through archaeological supervision of existing overburden stripping and groundworks by the client's contractors:

1. To identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.
2. To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
3. To record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
4. To produce an archive and report of any results.

4 Methods

4.1 The project will involve the supervision of overburden and other groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist during the works specified above. During these ground works, if any archaeological deposits are seen to be present, the archaeologist will record areas of archaeological interest.

4.2 The archaeologist will co-operate at all times with the contractors on site to ensure the minimum interruption to the work.

4.3 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 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.

4.5 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 developer, Leicestershire County Council, Heritage Services and the coroner will be informed immediately on their discovery.

4.6 Internal monitoring procedures will be undertaken including visits to the site from the project manager. These will ensure that professional standards are being maintained. Provision will be made for monitoring visits with representatives of the owners, Leicestershire County Council and Harborough District Council.

4.7 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 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 before the commencement of groundworks. A report on the watching brief will be provided following the groundworks. Following the fieldwork the work will be entered on to the OASIS project database.

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.

8 Timetable and Staffing

8.1 The watching brief is scheduled to commence at the inception of the contractors groundworks. An experienced archaeologist will be present during this work. It is proposed to watch all works, as specified above, with appropriately timed visits during the work in consultation with the contractors.

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 (2001) 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 Gerling Insurance

Services Policy No. 62/99094/D, Risk Reference LT 35101 while the Professional Indemnity Insurance is with Sun Alliance Insurance Policy No. 03A/5A 001 05978, Risk Reference LT 27229.

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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Appendix

Draft Project Health and Safety Policy Statement

Main Street, Skeffington, Leicestershire SK 740 025

Planning Application: 06/00995/3

For: Mr and Mrs P. Doleman

1 Nature of the work

1.1 This statement is for an archaeological watching brief.

1.2 The work will involve observation of groundworks during daylight hours and recording of any underlying archaeological deposits revealed. Overall depth is likely to be c. 0.2-0.5m. This will involve the examination of the exposed surface with hand tools (shovels, trowels etc) and excavation of archaeological features. All work will adhere to the University of Leicester Health and Safety Policy and follow the guidance in the ULAS Health and Safety Manual (2001) together with the following relevant Health and Safety guidelines.

1.3 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

1.4 The Health and Safety policy on site will be reassessed during the evaluation .

1.5 All work will adhere to the contractors' health and safety policy.

2 Risks Assessment

2.1 Working within a building site

Precautions. No work will be undertaken beneath section faces. Loose spoil heaps will not be walked on. Protective footwear will be worn at all times. Hard hats 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. Liaison will be maintained with the contractors to ensure programme of machine movement is understood.

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 Vialls 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.

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

Patrick Clay
28.09.2006