

An Archaeological Watching Brief
on land adjacent to
The Green and Pasture Lane,
Hathern, Leicestershire
NGR SK 504 224

Mathew Morris

For: *Waldron Property Developments*

Planning Application P/07/0410/2

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on land adjacent to The Green and Pasture Lane, Hathern, Leicestershire (SK 504 224) on the 30th October 2007 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services. The work was carried out on behalf of Waldron Property Developments in advance of the construction of seven new dwellings. The work involved observation of previously machine-stripped surfaces and the excavation of foundation trenches of the first dwelling for any indication of archaeological activity. The results of the investigation were negative. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A.228.2007.

1. Introduction

This report provides details of the results of the first stage of a programme of archaeological investigation on land adjacent to The Green and Pasture Lane, Hathern, Leicestershire (SK 504 224). The work was undertaken on behalf of Waldron Property Developments by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on 30th October 2007.

The proposed development of four 2.5-storey and three 2-storey dwellings (Planning Application Number P/07/0410/2) was located on a plot of land, approximately 0.12 hectares, at the junction of The Green and Pasture Lane in Hathern – located off the A6 approximately 4.2km north-west of Loughborough town centre (*figure 1*). This watching-brief was concerned with the construction of the first dwelling, located in the site's eastern corner. Construction of the remaining dwellings is scheduled to commence in 2008.

The watching brief was requested by Leicestershire County Council's Historic and Natural Environment Team in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority as specified in their *Brief for archaeological attendance for inspection and recording (a watching brief) at land to the rear of The Green and Pasture Lane, Hathern, Leicestershire.*

2. Geology

The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 141 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of polymictic deposits of sand, gravel and clay overlying Ladinian mudstone (Gunthorpe Formation) with alluvial deposits to the north-east and further sands and gravels to the north and west. The site lies at a height of c.35m above Ordnance Datum.

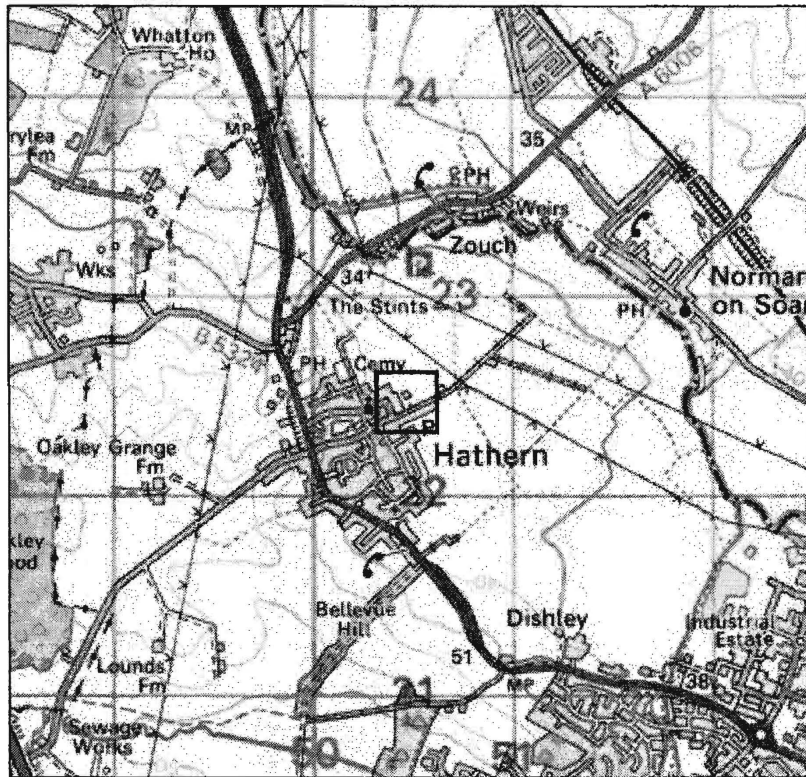


Figure 1: Location plan with development area outlined (Scale 1:50,000)

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3. Archaeological Background

The Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that the proposed development lies in an area of archaeological interest, being within the historic settlement core of the medieval and post-medieval village of Hathern (HER ref: MLE582), and within 100m of the medieval parish church of St Peter & Paul (MLE13473). Consequently, buried archaeological evidence covering the period from the earliest evolution of the village to its more recent past could be affected by the development.

Ordnance Survey maps from the mid 19th to mid 20th centuries show the development area to be consistently field along Pasture Lane with properties at the west end fronting onto The Green. Maps of the late 20th century to present show a single property (now the proposed development area) varyingly labelled 'Builders Yard' or 'Works'.

4. Archaeological Objectives

The principle objectives of the watching brief were:

- To identify the presence or 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 excavate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

5. Methodology

The project required a professional archaeologist to supervise all stripping and groundwork likely to impact upon any archaeological remains.

The work involved the observation of excavation of foundation trenches by a JCB 3C mechanical excavator using a 0.5m wide toothed bucket on the back actor.

Previously stripped areas and existing spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds.

All work followed the *Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

6. Results (figures 2, 3 and 4)

The area impacted by current development was located in the site's eastern corner. It covered an area 16.47m x 6.46m running lengthways, parallel with Pasture Lane. The footings were set back from the road-kerb by 1.84m and excavated to a width of 0.5m, with two transecting trenches isolating three plinths of soil, 4.8m x 5.46m, within the dwelling's footprint. Depths of trenches varied with the shallowest, at 1.4m relative to ground surface, located along the south-east side and the deepest, at 2m, along the north-west. The footings covering the south-western third of the development generally stepped down to 1.6m. This was to account for the site's natural slope down from the north to the south. The three interior plinths had been levelled to match the adjacent road surface to the south, generating a drop in height along the northern extent of approximately 0.5m.

Machine stripping and excavation of foundations had already begun prior to arrival. This had removed concrete hardcore and modern demolition layers from the surface of the site down to a depth of c.0.5m in the north-west and c.0.2m in the south-east. Beneath this was uncovered c.0.4m of loose very dark greyish-brown sandy topsoil containing large quantities of broken brick and concrete impressed into its surface and significant disturbance from vegetation, particularly along the south-eastern edge. This sealed thick deposits of coarse mottled pale-mid greyish orange silty sand subsoil, c.1.2m thick, containing scattered small pebbles and grit. In the north-west corner, these deposits became an increasingly darker sandy silt containing more gravel-like inclusions. In the trenches transecting the development, this appeared to run beneath the paler sands to the south-east with banding within the deposits suggesting a down slope of approximately 20° from north to south. At the base of the deeper foundation trenches in the south-western third, a mixed mid yellowish-orange sandy gravel and pale greyish-yellow sand with small inclusions of bluish-grey clay appearing in the north-west appeared beneath the sub-soil. This was presumed to be the local natural.

Similar sequences of soil deposition were observed in all foundation trenches and no archaeological deposits or finds were located within the machine-excavated foundation trenches and no archaeological deposits were visible in section.

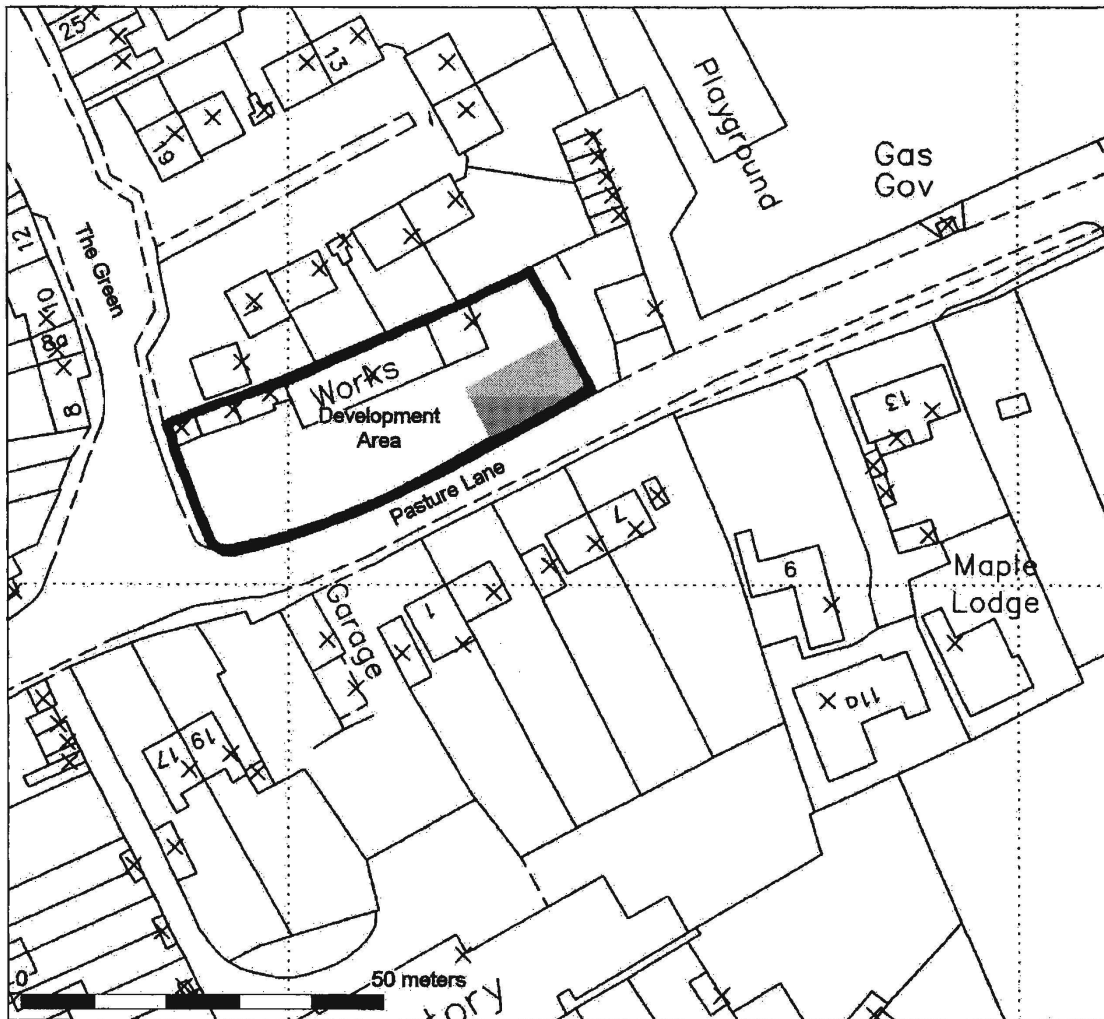


Figure 2: Location of development area with area directly impacted by excavation of footings shaded.
Figure adapted from image provided by client.



Figure 3: Working shot of site, looking west, showing excavated footings.

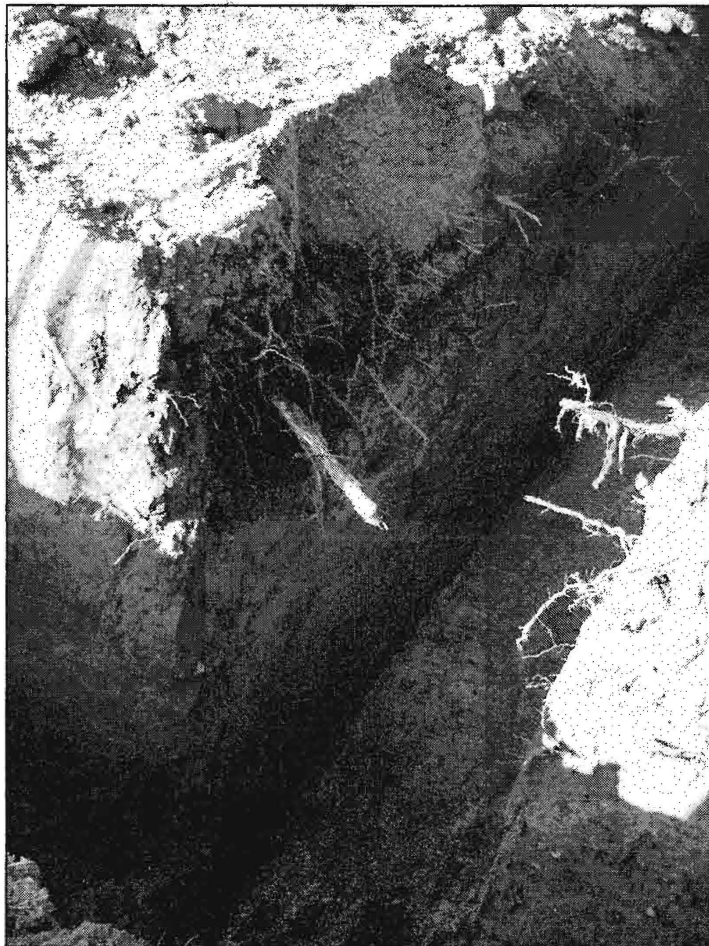


Figure 4: Exposed section within footings showing sequence of topsoil, subsoil and natural (in base of trench).

7. Discussion

Although the development area was identified as an area of archaeological interest, no archaeological deposits were encountered. Sub-soils observed appeared to have accumulated through hill-wash or soil-creep moving south down the low ridge running through the site from the east to the west. This conforms to local geology and the cartographic evidence which indicates this area to have been open, presumably pasture, at least as far back as the mid 19th century. The surface rubble and concrete hardcore presumably dates to the site's occupation as a builders yard. If archaeological deposits on the site exist they are more likely to be located further west where cartographic evidence shows properties fronting onto The Green.

8. Archive

The site archive consists of 10 digital photographs and a watching brief recording form. The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A.228.2007.

9. Acknowledgments

Thanks to the contractors, Waldron Property Development Ltd., for their co-operation and assistance on site. Fieldwork was undertaken by Mathew Morris. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

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