



University of
Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
at St Nicholas Place, Leicester
(NGR SK 583 044)**

A Gnanaratnam




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**For
Leicester City Council**

Checked by


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An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Nicholas Place, Leicester (NGR SK 583 044)

Summary

Between the 12th May and the 8th June 2009 an archaeological watching brief was carried out by ULAS, at St Nicholas Place for Leicester City Council. The watching brief was carried out on the street works undertaken as part of the Park and Ride scheme. The watching brief revealed three wall fragments, in the southern part of the site, which may have been of post-medieval date. A stone-built cellar was glimpsed in section in the northeast of the site, and a further fragment of stone-built wall was seen in the south east of the site. These both may have been of post-medieval date. Horizontal deposits were glimpsed in the northern part of the site. These were just below the formation level and so were unaffected by the development.

The archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums Services with accession number A9.2009.

Introduction

Between the 12th May and the 8th June 2009 an archaeological watching brief was carried out by ULAS on behalf of Leicester City Council at St Nicholas Place, Leicester (SK 583 044) during the street works undertaken as part of the Park and Ride Scheme.

The watching brief was required by the Leicester City Archaeologist in his role as archaeological advisor to the planning authority as detailed in the *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief at St Nicholas' Place, Leicester* (Leicester City Council March 2009).

The work was carried out by ULAS following the design specification agreed with the City Archaeologist (Appendix). The archive is to be deposited with Leicester City Museums Service with accession number A9.2009.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief, through archaeological monitoring of groundworks, 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.

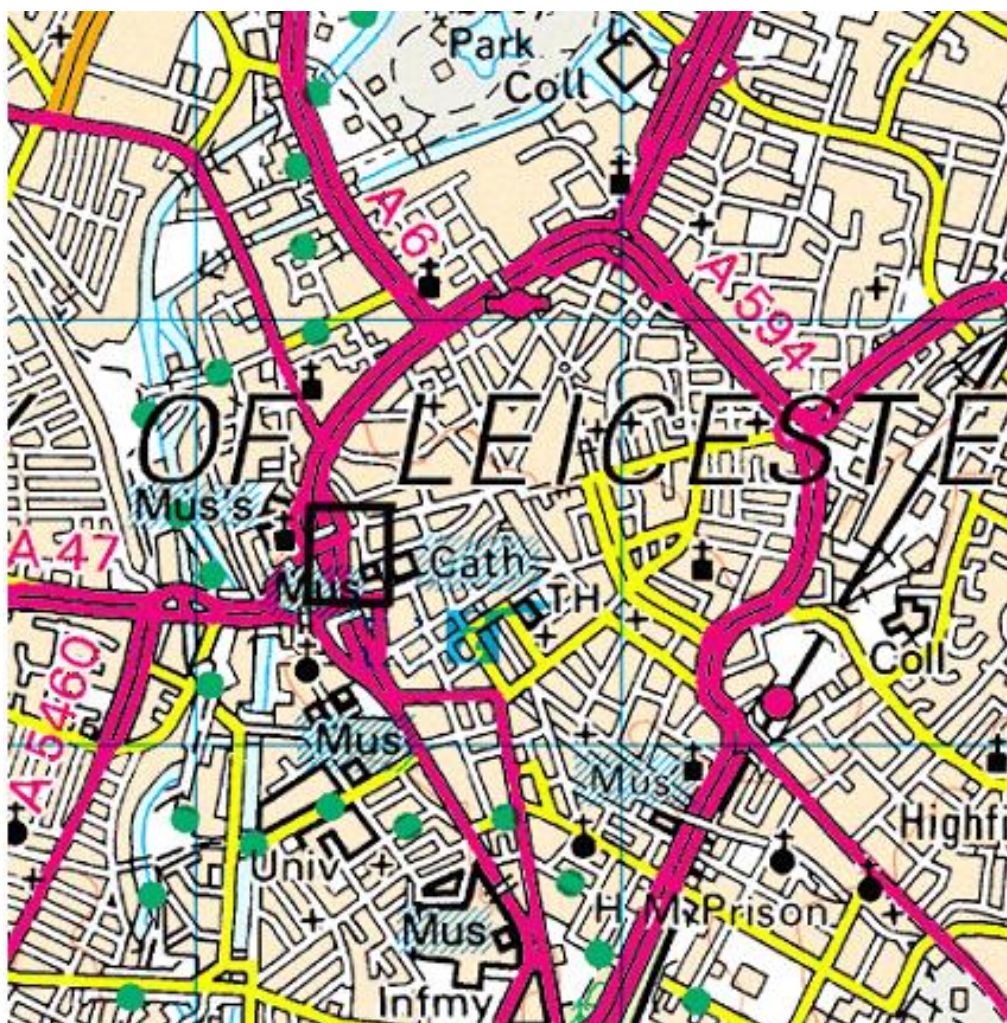


Figure 1: Site Location (1000m grid squares)

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Methods

The watching brief was intended to record to an acceptable level those archaeological deposits which might be affected by the current development. The project involved the supervision of the stripping 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 was to record areas of archaeological interest

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*. The watching brief adhered to the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Manager's (SCAUM) Health and Safety Manual and ULAS's Health and Safety Guidelines (2007) and Health and Safety Policy (2007). The recording followed the ULAS Field Recording Manual.

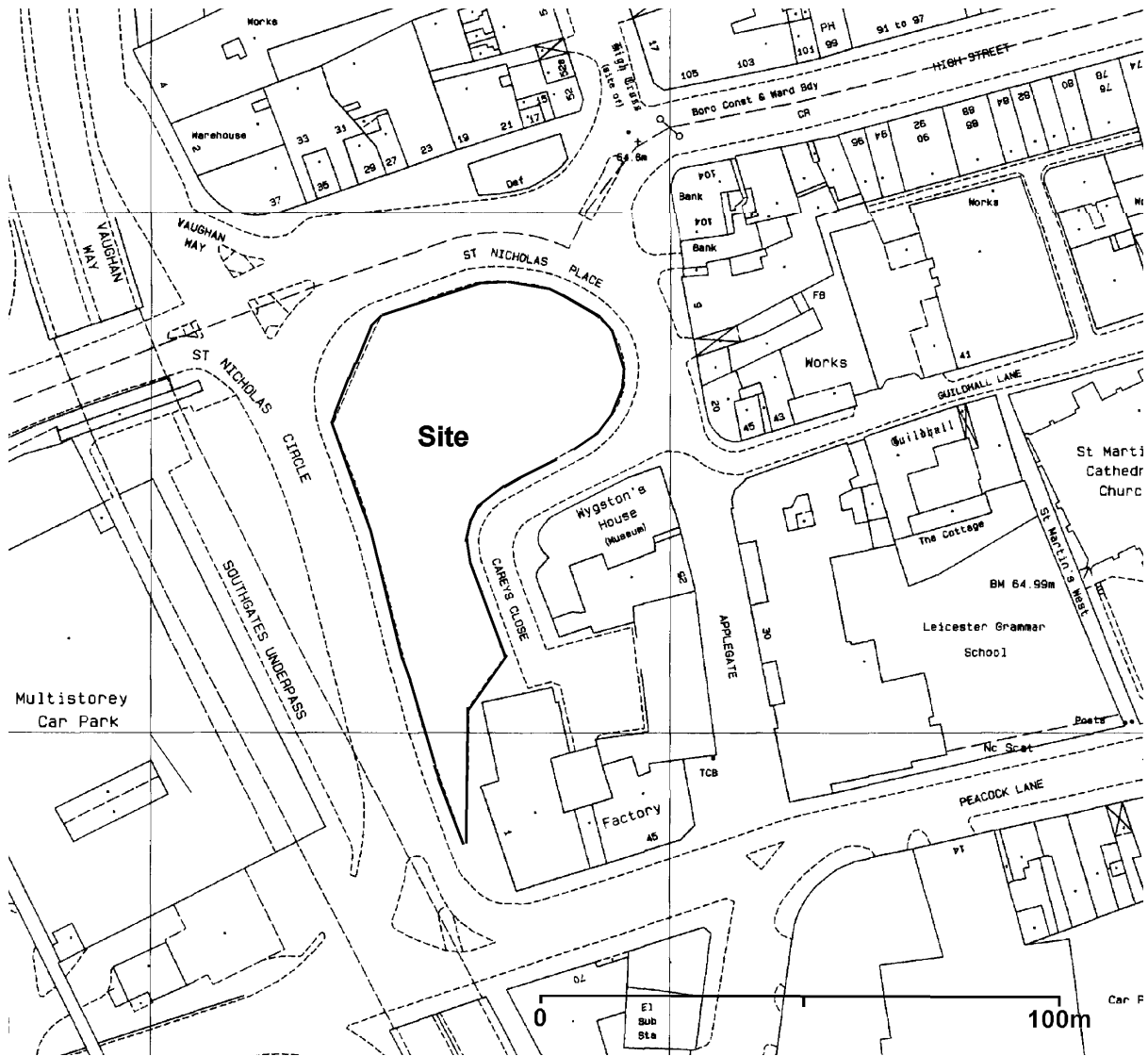


Figure 2 - The site location.

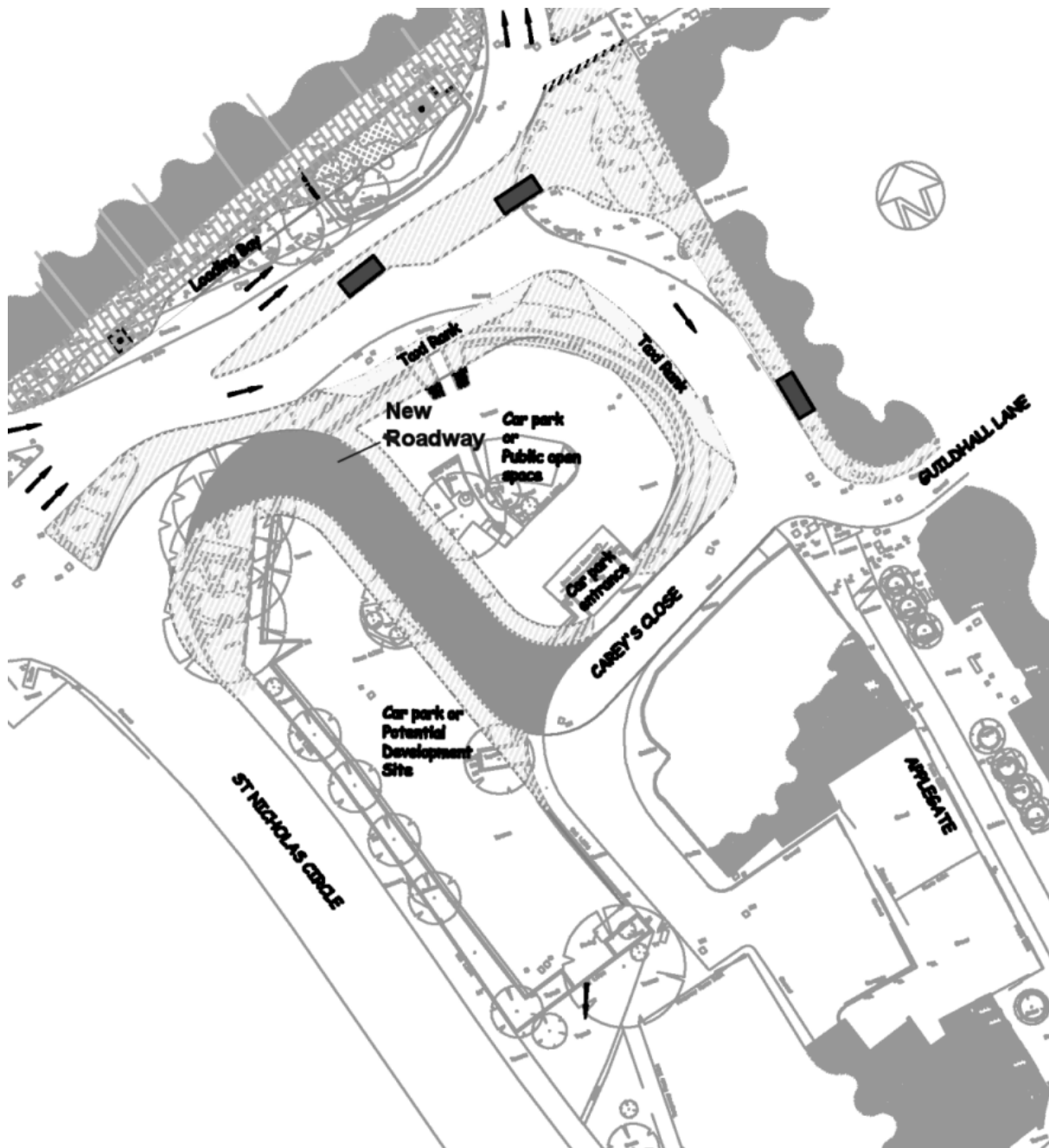


Figure 3 - The new roadway, from plan supplied by Leicester City Council, Regeneration and Culture Dept, SK/AH/2008/005

The Historical and Archaeological Background

Leicester was a Civitas Capital between to 2nd & 4th centuries AD and was an important administrative centre throughout the medieval period. The area now known as St Nicholas' Place lay at the heart of both the Roman and medieval towns and that the north-south street of which the modern Applegate formed a part was the main thoroughfare in the medieval town and in Roman times. The medieval High Cross, which lay just to the north-east of St Nicholas' Place, was the focus of the main midweek market. In the late 1960s/early 1970s archaeological fieldwork established that St. Nicholas' Place is on the site of the south-east corner of the Roman forum. Moreover, fieldwork in the late 1990s established that important archaeological remains lie close to the surface in parts of both St Nicholas' Place and Applegate. The St Nicholas Place car park has been subject to archaeological evaluation

(Meek 2000) while to the north excavations have been undertaken of medieval deposits at 9 St. Nicholas Place (Kipling 2009).

Prior to the evaluation by trial trenching undertaken in 1999, an archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (Marsden and Buckley 1997) for a proposed development.

The report concluded that

“...the site includes unexcavated parts of the southern wing of the Roman forum, including the main entrance area. The building plays a crucial role in any attempt to evaluate the wealth and status of the town and the community which it served and the fluctuations of these factors throughout the period of Roman occupation. Also included is part of the Fosse Way and possible buildings in the Applegate frontage area. Therefore the area has immense archaeological potential for the understanding of Roman Leicester and any earlier occupation.

The development may destroy post-Roman dark-earths, which are poorly understood in Leicester and vital to increasing understanding of the post-Roman period.

In addition, the development would affect likely medieval buildings on the frontages of the High Street, Thornton Lane and St Nicholas Street together with their backyards. A medieval frontage area has never been fully excavated before in Leicester.

The development would have a destructive impact on any surviving archaeological deposits which may be well preserved assuming there are not significant numbers of deep post-medieval cellars.” (Marsden and Buckley 1997, Section 7)

Roman. The St. Nicholas Place car park lies above parts of the south and east ranges of the forum and extends across Roman Leicester’s main east-west street, the route of the Fosse Way through the town. The Applegate car park lies within an adjacent insula of undocumented archaeological potential, but possibly of high status in view of its position opposite the main entrance to the forum and on the Fosse Way. Over the past forty years, the forum has been examined in a number of small trenches allowing a plan to be extrapolated. Excavations prior to 1971 have been published (Hebditch and Mellor 1973), whilst later projects have undergone partial analysis and are to be subject to further assessment.

Saxon. The site lies in an area where post-Roman dark earths, perhaps of the 5th-6th centuries AD have been encountered (site A302.1971) and in an area postulated as the focus of late Saxon and early Norman occupation (Courtney 1998).

Medieval and post-medieval. The project area lies within the historic core of medieval and post-medieval Leicester, and has potential for evidence of structures and associated backyards for the medieval High Street (now Highcross Street/Applegate) and Hotgate (now Thornton Lane). The medieval Wygston’s House lies close to the site, and nearby there is evidence for a 12th century undercroft on Guildhall lane. The excavations within the project area in 1971 (A302.1971) exhibited good preservation of medieval and

post medieval levels, and suggested that the topography of the area varied considerably in level in the post-Roman period, perhaps as a result of extensive quarrying of the forum.

Three trenches excavated during the 1999 evaluation were of relevance to the watching brief. Trench 1 revealed evidence for the medieval and later Thornton Lane, together with contemporary building remains. In the south of the trench remnants of a Roman road were revealed.

Trench 2 in the north of the site revealed little significant archaeological deposits. However, it did demonstrate that there was a considerable depth of modern deposits in this part of the site.

Trench 3 revealed the backs of properties of medieval and post-medieval date fronting onto Highcross Street. These were well preserved and included medieval stone built buildings and cellars. At the north of the trench was a wall 313 which coincided with the boundary of St Martin's and St Nicholas' parish. To the north of this wall was a considerable depth of soil similar to that seen in trench 2.

The Mitigation Strategy

The nature of the development, joining two roads and the regulations involved in building or re-instating roadways meant that there was relatively little to avoid an impact on any underlying archaeological levels within the 'footprint' of the roadway. The positioning of the roadway and related excavations and structures did allow areas of known significant and shallow archaeological deposits to be subject to minimal disturbance or avoided. Alongside this, a watching brief was required to record any levels which might be affected by the development.

The Results

There were three main components to the watching brief:

- 1) Phase 1 roadway – the initial strip allowing a northern site access
- 2) Phase 2 roadway – the excavation of the northern part of the roadway, following Phase 1
- 3) The cable diversion.

In view of the shallow depth of most of the groundworks the results of the watching brief were limited to exposure of short lengths of walling (Figure 4). Due to the nature of the work with very limited exposure of structural evidence, the positions of walls were recorded to an accuracy of *c.* 1m and alignments to *c.* 2°.

The excavation of the phase 1 roadway revealed three fragments of walling (Walls 1-3). Wall 1 (context 3) measured 2.60m length and 0.35m wide and survived to 0.60m in height. This was aligned roughly east-west on Carey's Close (the former Redcross Street). It was built of coursed granite rubble with Swithland slate levelling and bonded with a light yellow brown sandy lime mortar.

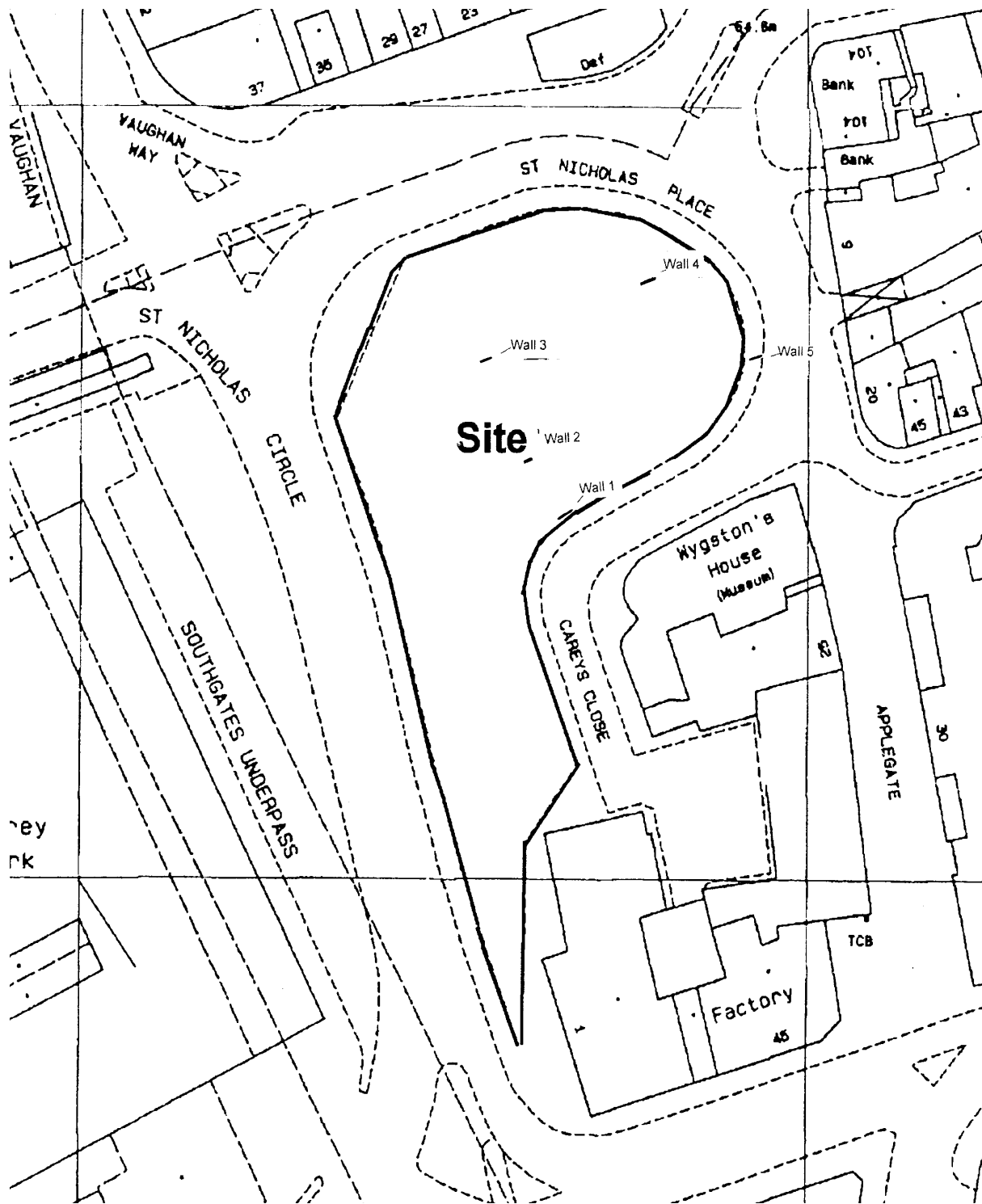


Figure 4 Site location showing the position of the observations. Grid = 100m

The wall was located against the edge of site but on the south of the wall was a mid greenish 'garden soil' and on the north were late, probably Victorian soils. The base of the wall was not exposed.

Wall 2 (context 4) was a short fragment of coursed granite rubble however this was bonded in a hard grey mortar, probably gypsum containing charcoal fragments. However, this again

was merely the top of a wall, the rest of the wall going below Reduced Level Dig. This was on the same alignment as Wall 1.



Figure 5 - Wall 1, looking south

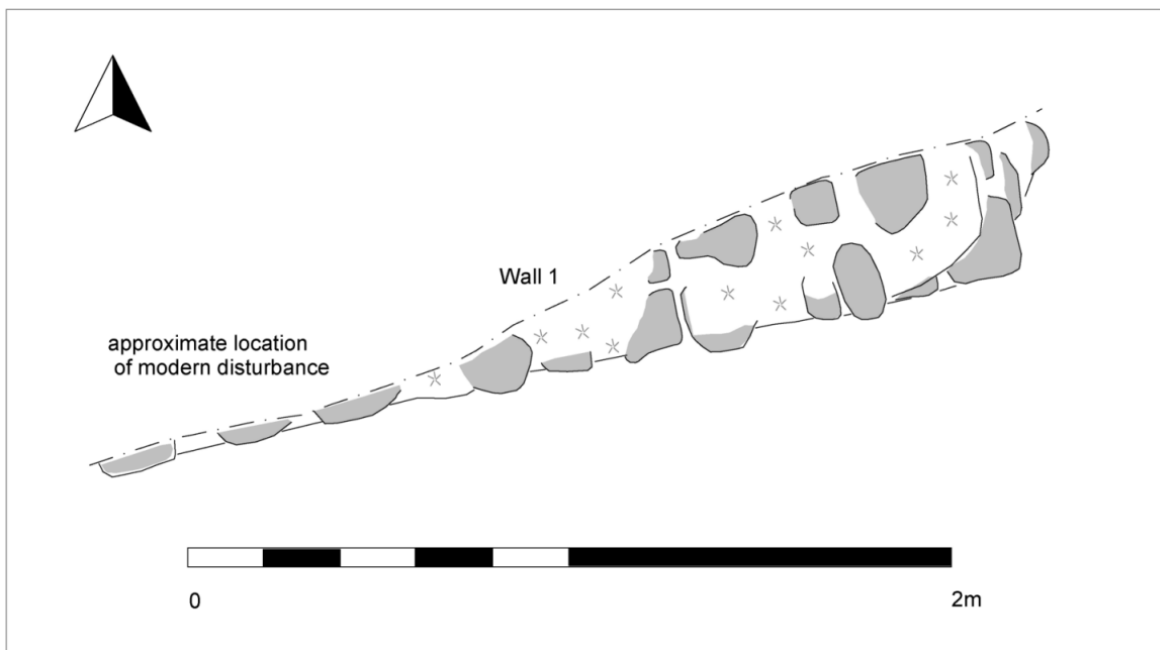


Figure 6 - Plan of Wall 1



Figure 7 - Wall 2, looking south

Wall 3 (context 5) was similar to wall 2 although the mortar had been smeared across the wall to give a crude render (smear render), on the southern side. Again only the top of the wall was seen. This again appeared to be on the same alignment as Wall 1.

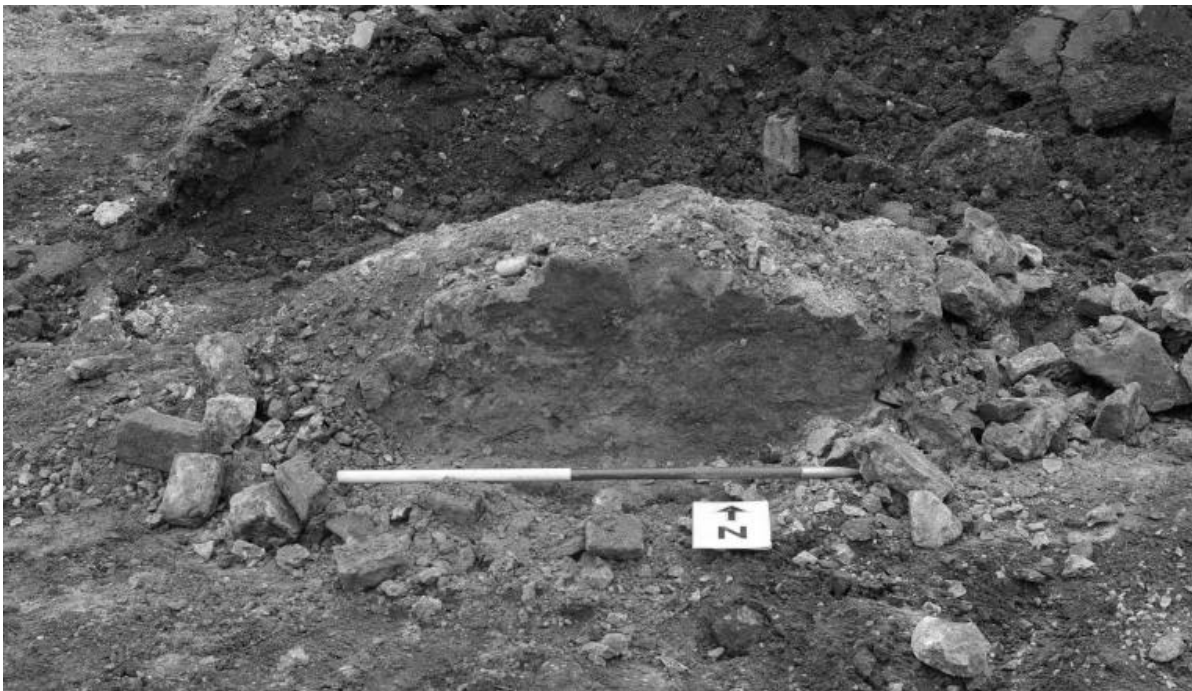


Figure 8 - Wall 3, looking north



Figure 9 - Stone Built cellar, (Wall 4) with vertical plaster strip visible, looking south-west

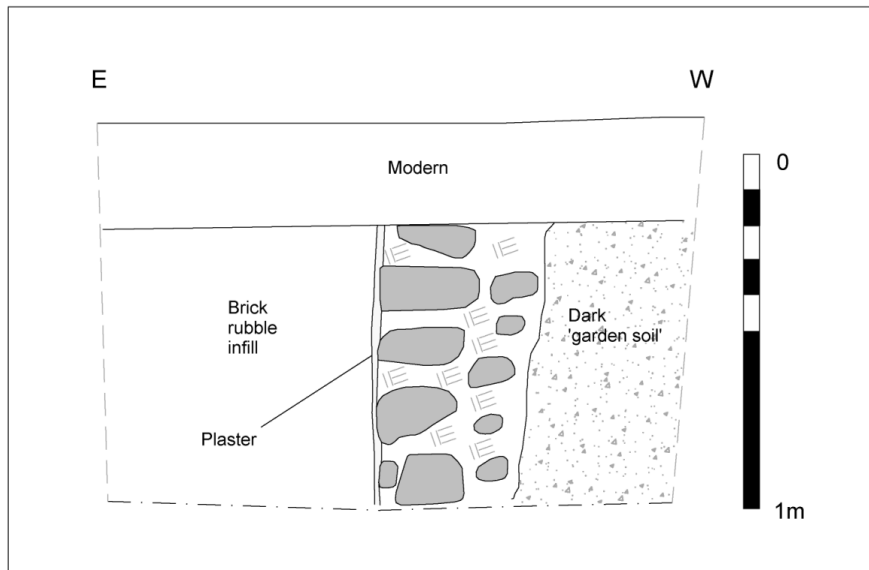


Figure 10 - Section of Stone-built cellar (Wall 4)



Figure 4 - Wall 5, looking west



Figure 5 – Location of Walls 1-5 overlaid on 1st edition OS map.

Only the tops of these walls were observed and no associated floors levels were observed. It is possible that these were garden walls or that floor layers survived at a greater depth, or they could have had a more complex history. These walls could not be dated. They did not contain any materials such as brick or Welsh slate typical of the 19th century, nor did they contain Roman material such as tile. Given their shallow depth, however a post-medieval date is feasible.

In the phase 2 excavations, no archaeological remains were recorded. However at a depth of *c.*750mm, traces of clean greenish silts were observed. No structural remains of stone buildings nor any clay were observed. It seems that fairly disturbed 19th and 20th century deposits continued down to around 750mm from ground level. Any undisturbed archaeological horizons would be below this and thus just below the formation levels.

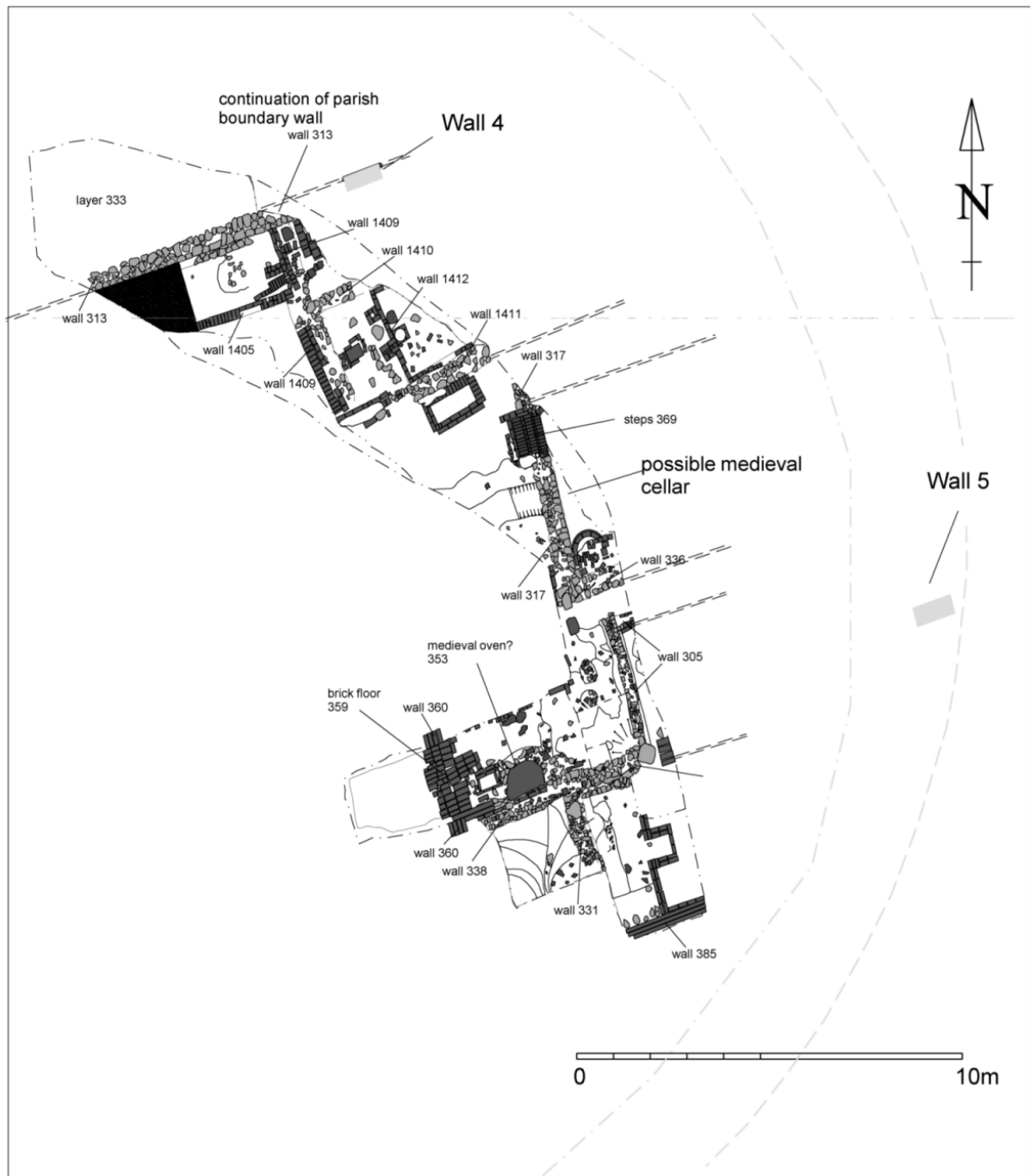


Figure 6 - Walls 4 and 5 in relation to Evaluation trench 3, from Meek 2000

The cable diversion, although roughly 1.00m deep did not penetrate any obvious significant archaeological levels, but did expose disturbed 19th and 20th century deposits.

However by the cable jointing bay, part of a stone built cellar (wall 4, context 8) was observed. Only a short fragment was visible due to later truncation. A 0.50m high fragment of walling survived, constructed of granite and Dane Hills sandstone, bonded with mid-red sandy silt with charcoal fragments. This was built against a dark grey brown silty clay soil (context 10) to the west. To the east the wall had a white washed internal face (context 9). The infill of the cellar was composed of brick rubble, mortar and ceiling plaster with lath impressions (context 11), presumably deriving from the superstructure.

A final observation was made during the re-laying of the kerbing. A continuous watching brief was not maintained over this due to the very shallow depth of the excavations (300m). On the east side of the site, the top of a stone-built wall (wall 5, context 12) was revealed. This was constructed of granite and Dane Hills sandstone in a light yellow brown sandy mortar. There was some brickwork adjoining the stone fragment indicating either re-use or survival into the post-medieval or modern period.

Discussion

The nature of the watching brief meant that in most cases only deposits lying at a relatively shallow depth were visible. This mainly comprised of wall fragments. These could not be confidently dated or, with the exception of Wall 5, could not be tied to any single structure. However Wall 5 was likely to have been the northern wall of the building immediately north of the Golden Lion public house. It is likely to have been of medieval or post-medieval date.

Other walls observed were on the same alignment as walls recorded on the Ordnance survey 1st edition map (Figure 11) and, bearing in the mind the accuracy of that map, Walls 1 and 2 may be represented on the map. Walls 3 and 4 in contrast are likely to be earlier as they show no close correspondence with those on the map. Wall 4 formed part of a cellar and is likely to be of 18th century or earlier date. Of note is the alignment of walls 4 and 5 with other structures located during the earlier evaluation at St Nicholas Place (Figure 12; Meek 2000). Wall 4 is almost certainly the continuation of a parish boundary wall located in trench 3 of the evaluation (Meek 2000, 22). This is recorded on the Goad Insurance Plans (1923) and OS 1st edition.

Wall 5 may be a continuation of one of the walls associated with the Golden Lion public House, the former 30, Highcross Street, again recorded on Goad Insurance Plans and the OS 1st edition map (Figure 11). This was one of a series of properties including the public house, three dwellings, a shop and a building associated with a saw mill (Meek 2000, 19).¹

Conclusions

Despite being within an area of known archaeological potential the watching brief located relatively few archaeological deposits or features. Any archaeological deposits present are likely to have survived intact below the formation level, of *c.*700mm below current ground level. The fragments of wall that did survive, were likely to have been of post-medieval date. Whilst Wall 5 is likely to have been part of a building, the others were less clear. The date of the Wall 4 cellar is unknown, although being stone built it could be of 18th century date, or earlier.

Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank, Aaron Hall of Leicester City Council, Steven McTighe (Project Manager) and Peter O'Brien of Jackson Civil Engineering for their help in this project. The fieldwork was carried out by Tim Higgins, Martin Shore and the writer and the project was managed by Richard Buckley of ULAS.

The Archive

The Archive will be deposited with Leicester City Museums Services with accession number A9.2009, and consists of the following :

A copy of this report
2 x films B\W – negatives and contact sheets
1 x CD disc with 29 digital images of the site
2 x A3 permagraph plan and section sheets
12 x pro-forma ULAS context recording sheets
Appropriate indices

Bibliography

Courtney, P., 1998 'Saxon and medieval Leicester. The making of an urban landscape', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 72, 110-145.

Goad Insurance Plans, 1923 Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office DE4702.

Hebditch, M., and Mellor, J.E., 1971 'The Forum and Basilica of Roman Leicester', *Britannia* 4, 1-82.

Kipling, R. 2009 *An Archaeological Excavation at 9 St. Nicholas Place, Castle, Leicester (NGR: SK 5840 0448 centre)*. ULAS Report 2009-110

Marsden, P., and Buckley, R.J., 1997 *An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment for Land at St. Nicholas Place and Applegate, Leicester* ULAS Report 1997-086

Meek J., 2000 *An Archaeological Evaluation of Land at St Nicholas Place and Applegate, Leicester (SK 5836 0446 and 5840 0441)* ULAS Report 2000-015

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Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Design Specification for archaeological work

St. Nicholas Place, Leicester

NGR: SK 583 044

Planning Authority: Leicester City Council

For: Leicester City Council

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 groundworks on the site which may disturb areas of archaeological potential. The work is to be undertaken to satisfy a planning condition placed on permission to prepare a Park and Ride car park site. It addresses the requirements of the '*Brief for An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Nicholas' Place, Leicester* (Leicester City Council March 2009).

1.2 All archaeological work will adhere to the Institute for Archaeologist's (IfA) *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicester* (LCC).

2 Background

2.1 Requirement for archaeological work

2.1.1 Various street-works are proposed in St Nicholas' Place (SK 583 044), Leicester as a part of the Park and Ride scheme. The archaeological work involves attendance for inspection and recording during groundworks in order to identify, excavate and record any deposits of archaeological significance.

2.2 Archaeological potential

Leicester was a Civitas Capital between 2nd & 4th centuries AD and was an important administrative centre throughout the medieval period. The area now known as St Nicholas' Place lay at the heart of both the Roman and medieval towns and that the north-south street of which the modern Applegate formed a part was the main thoroughfare in the medieval town and in Roman times. The medieval High Cross, which lay just to the north-east of St Nicholas' Place, was the focus of the main midweek market. In the late 1960s/early 1970s archaeological fieldwork established that St. Nicholas' Place is on the site of the south-east corner of the Roman forum. Moreover, fieldwork in the late 1990s established that important archaeological remains lie close to the surface in parts of both St Nicholas' Place and Applegate.

3 Aims

3.1 Through archaeological monitoring of groundworks:

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 the stripping 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, Leicester City Council, 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 Leicester City 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 Leicester City Council Archaeologist 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 in monochrome and colour, 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 Leicester City Council, 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 investigation is scheduled to commence at the start of the contractors groundworks, currently scheduled for 27.04.2009. 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 2007) 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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Draft Project Health and Safety Policy Statement

Design Specification for archaeological work

St. Nicholas Place, Leicester

NGR: SK 583 044

Planning Authority: Leicester City Council

For: Leicester City Council

1. Nature of the work

1.1 This statement is for archaeological observation of contractors groundworks. 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.

17/04/2009

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