



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation
Land off Western Road, Leicester,
Leicestershire
NGR: SK 5783 0369 centre

Tim Higgins



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**An Archaeological Evaluation
Land off Western Road, Leicester
Leicestershire**

NGR: SK 5783 0369

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For: CgMs Consulting

Approved by

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An Archaeological Evaluation on land off Western Road, Leicester (SK 5783 0369)

Tim Higgins

Summary

An archaeological field evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken at Western Road, Leicester by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in response to development proposals for retail on the ground floor and flats above in July 2010. An evaluation trench was excavated in an area of archaeological potential as it was located within an area known Roman, Saxon and medieval remains. The single evaluation trench revealed no archaeological features or deposits. The site archive will be held with Leicester Museum Service, under the accession code: [A11.2010].

1. Introduction

An archaeological field evaluation (AFE) was undertaken as part of the requirements identified by the City Archaeologist Leicester City Council as archaeological advisor to planning authority following Planning Policy Statement 5, Planning for the Historic Environment (DCLG 2010).

The AFE was originally required by the Local Planning Authority as a pre-commencement exercise. However, as construction had already progressed, CgMs, at the instruction of GVA Grimley and their client, has been in negotiation with Chris Wardle, Planning Archaeologist for Leicester City Council to agree a post-determination trial trenching exercise to verify the potential of the area. A Written Scheme of Information (WSI) has been prepared by CgMs (Patrick 2010).

This report presents the results of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching, addressing the requirements of the WSI carried out in July 2010 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS).

2. Site Description, Topography and Geology

The development comprised accommodation and retail units constructed on the corner of Western Road and Briton Street, Leicester (Site centred on NGR SK 5783 0369). The site had previously been occupied by 19th and 20th century buildings. The area comprises c.0.1ha and lies at a height of c.57.00m OD. The site was located close to the Old River Soar, and was raised above the level of the river. The site was underlain by alluvium associated with the River Soar (OS Geological Survey Sheet 156).

The current new building occupying this development has a service yard located at the southern end of the development. A programme of test trenching within the service yard had been requested by Planning Archaeologist in order to clarify the archaeological potential of the site.



Figure 1 Location of the proposed development
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3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The Site lies within an area of known archaeological potential. It lies outside the walled Roman and medieval town, in the south-western suburb close to known remains of a Roman and Saxon cemetery, along with possible medieval activity. The site lies within close proximity to the River Soar, which suggests that it may have potential for environmental deposits associated with earlier palaeochannels.

The site lies relatively close to the Fosse Way and late 19th - early 20th century observations suggest the presence of a Roman cemetery in Saxon Street, Roman Street and Western Road Area (HER ref: MLC 515), with the finds comprising urns, coffins and grave goods. Human remains were also found north of Western Road in 1935 (MLC 520). Saxon finds, comprising floor tiles (MLC 517) and a coin (MLC 518) were recovered from Saxon Street. In addition, Saxon burials and grave goods were found near to Roman Street and Saxon Street (MLC 516) and Saxon swords were found in the Western Road area (MLC 1005). During the medieval period, the site lay within the town's west field and medieval pottery has been recorded from Celt Street (MLC 521).

John Speed's map of 1610 shows no western suburb, and this was reflected in Stukeley's map of 1722, Robert's map of 1741 and a map of Leicester dating to 1828 which shows fields along the western bank of the River Soar

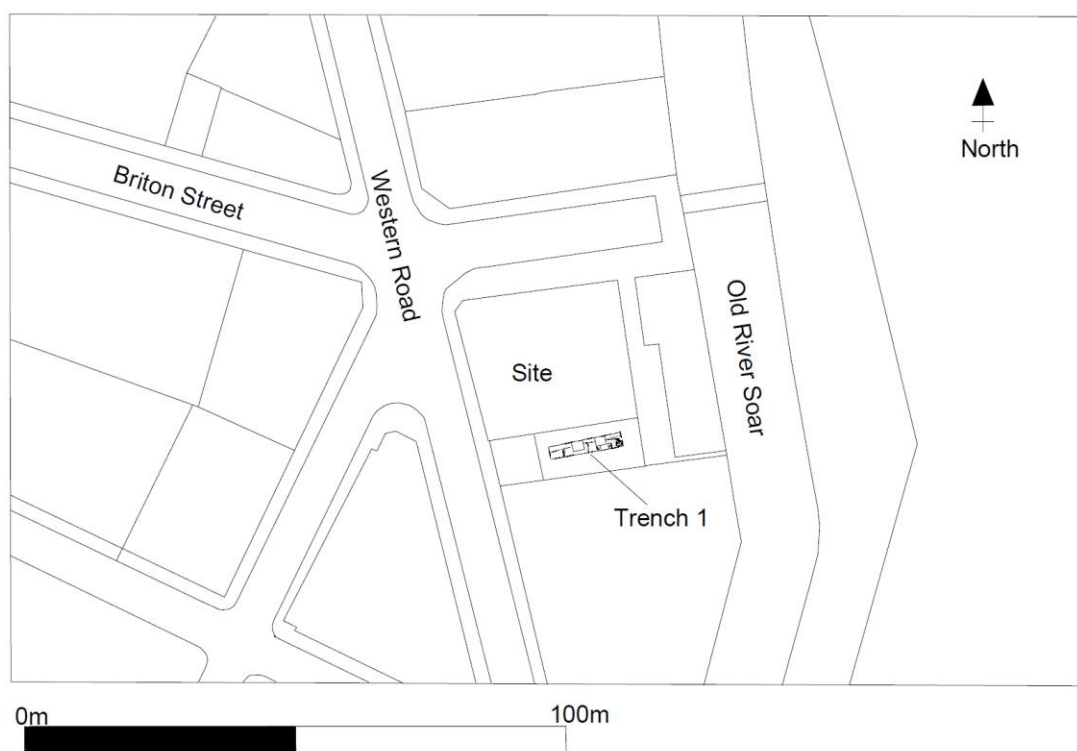


Figure 2 Location of development site and evaluation trench

4. Aims and Objectives

As specified in the WSI (Patrick 2010), the specific aims and objectives of the project were to:

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

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 redevelopment.

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

5. Methodology

The *WSI*, agreed with the City Archaeologist at Leicester City Council, proposed that the investigation would comprise the excavation of two trenches. The trenches were to be located to provide a north-east to south-west aligned section across the site, running from Western Road frontage towards the Old River Soar. Trench 1 was to be 10m in length by 1.60m in width with Trench 2, 10m in length by 1.60m in width.

The initial location of both test trenches were subject to a services plan survey and a CAT scan to locate any live services. The survey and CAT scan detected live services located towards the Western Road frontage. The position and length of the trenches within the service yard was further restricted at the Western Road frontage as it lies within an access gate area with an accommodation block constructed above. As a result the proposed location and length of trenches had to be altered. The trial trenching would now comprise one trench 13.00m long x 1.6m wide located within the service yard running north-east to south-west.

The bases of the trenches were to be cleaned in areas where potential archaeological deposits were observed. If archaeological remains were identified, they were to be planned to scale and recorded. Limited excavation would also be undertaken in order to determine the character and date of any remains.

All sections were to be recorded and drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 scale, levelled and tied into Ordnance Survey datum. Spot heights were to be taken as appropriate. The trenches were located using a Leica EDM and the final plans completed with the aid of TurboCad v.11 design software.

All the work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*, and the *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicester* (Leicester City Council).

6. Results

Trench 1 (*Figures 3 and 4*)

Trench 1	
Length	13.00m
Width	1.60m
Depth	1.51m to 1.61m
Top of Modern	56.76m OD
Top of Archaeology	No archaeological deposits or features found
Natural Substratum reached	55.25m OD

This trench was located towards the east side of the service yard, running north-east to south-west for 13.50m (Figure 2). The natural substratum was found at the west end of the trench at a depth of 1.51m below the present ground surface at 56.76m OD and comprised clean reddish-brown clay. The natural substratum was reached at depth of 1.61m below the ground surface 56.74m OD at east end of the trench.

The natural substratum appeared to be sealed by layers of made up ground that measured between 0.70m and 1.00m deep. The layers made up ground comprised of context (1) dark greyish blue sandy clay mixed occasional brick fragment, and were found at the eastern of the trench. Towards the west end of the trench the layer changed to a reddish brown clay context (13) and was mixed with occasional modern brick fragment. These layers sealed the natural substratum below and are possibly associated with the raising of the ground levels for canalisation of the Old River Soar

The trench revealed three large modern intrusive features cutting into the layers of made up ground. They are believed to be former foundations and a drain associated with former 19th and 20th century buildings that occupied this site.

The old services and foundations were sealed by a series of compacted modern layers and spreads contexts (2), (3), (4), (7), (8), (9), (14), (15) and (16), which had a combined depth of between 0.45m and 0.55m. The spreads or layers comprised either reddish brown clays mixed with crushed mortar, a greyish blue sandy-clay mixed with crushed mortar or dark reddish brown clay mixed with brick fragments and charcoal flecks. These spreads and layers were very compacted and are thought to be a bedding layer supporting stone cobbled or brick yard surfaces. These yard surfaces are probably associated with former 19th and 20th century buildings that occupied this site.

Two large modern rectangular concrete pads were found to be cutting the old yard surfaces. The concrete pads measured 1.75m long, 1.50m wide and 0.15m deep.

Sealing the concrete pads and old yard surfaces were modern layers and spreads contexts (6), (10), (11) (12), (17), (18), (19) and (20), which comprised layers or spreads of crushed brick and mortar, stone gravel or compacted crushed concrete and granite stone. These deposits had a combined depth of 0.40m and are probably associated with the construction of the new buildings.

7. Discussion

Despite its location within an area where there was potential for the remains of a Roman and Saxon cemetery, along with possible medieval activity, nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered during the course of the archaeological work.

The inspection of the evaluation trench revealed that the natural horizons appeared to have been levelled at 55.09m to 55.25m OD at some point in the past. The topsoil and subsoil had been removed and replaced with mixed layers of re-deposited natural soil used to raise the ground levels and were sealed under yard surfaces. Any potential archaeological deposits that may have been located within this area are

likely to have been disturbed by this work. All the finds found associated with the layers of made-up ground indicated that probably date to modern period and are perhaps associated with canalisation of the of the Old River Soar.

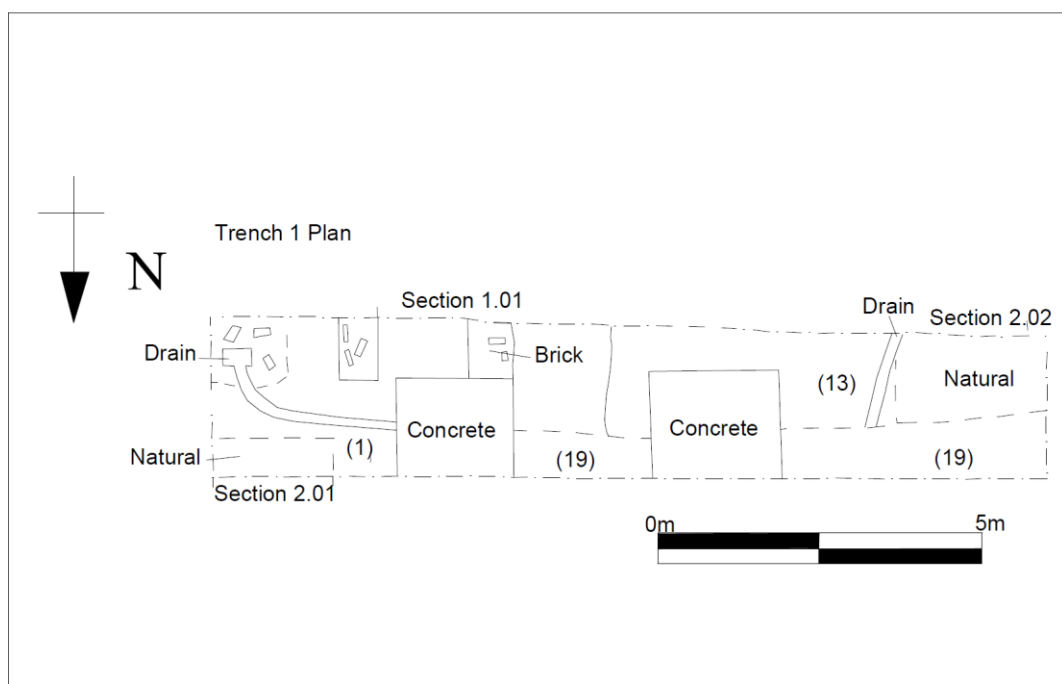


Figure 3 Trench 1 Plan

8. Archive

A full copy of the archive as defined in Brown (2008) will be presented within six months of the completion of the fieldwork. This archive will include all written, drawn and photographic records relating to the investigations undertaken.

The archive consists of:

A copy of the report,

Indices

One trench recording sheet

20 context sheets

2 plan and section drawing sheets

Digital and B+W photos with contact prints, photographic index

All the finds comprised of modern pottery, and brick and all were examined on site and then discarded

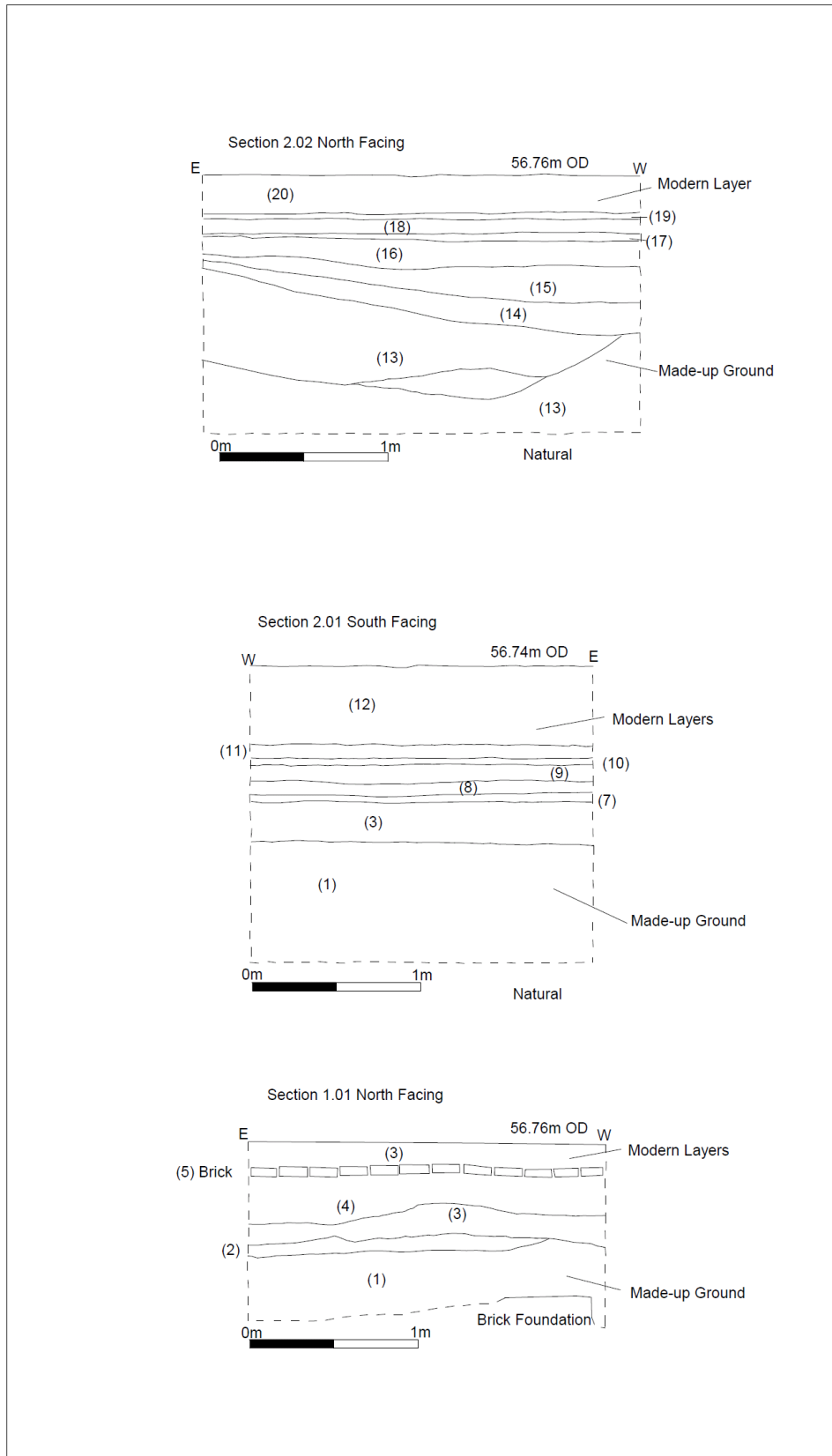


Figure 4: Sections 2.01(north-facing), 2.10 (south-facing) and 1.01 (north-facing)



Plate 1 Evaluation Trench looking west

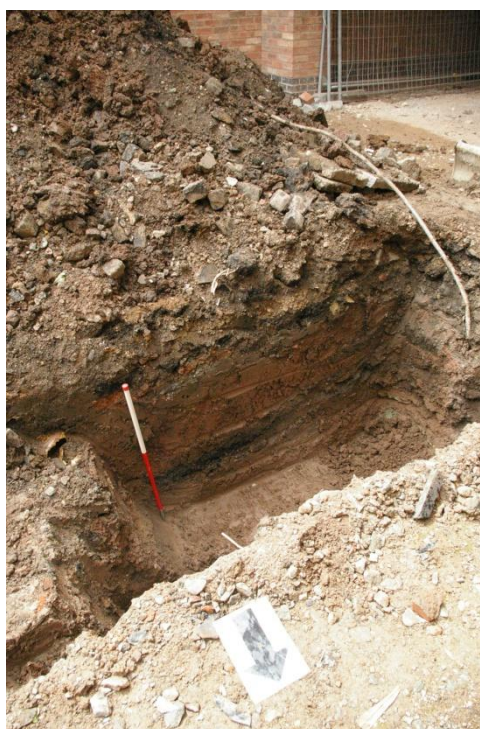


Plate 2 Section 2.02 north-facing

The site archive will be held by Leicester Museum Services under the accession number A11.2010

A summary of the work will be published in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

9. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank CgMs Consulting and GVA Grimley for their help and co-operation on site. The project was managed by Richard Buckley and the fieldwork was carried out by the author, Tim Higgins and Siobhan Brocklehurst.

10. Bibliography

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29.07.2010

Oasis Record

INFORMATION REQUIRED	
Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation by Test Trench Western Road
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Tim Higgins
Previous/Future work	Previous work: none
Current Land Use	Retail/accommodation
Development Type	Retail/accommodation

Reason for Investigation	Planning Policy Statement 5, Planning for the Historical Environment
Position in the Planning Process	Requirements planning permission
Site Co ordinates	NGR: SK 5783 0369
Start/end dates of field work	14 th to 15 th July 2010
Archive Recipient	Leicester Museum Service
Study Area	<i>c.</i> 0.1 hectares

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