



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological watching brief at Sketchley Brook Hinckley, Leicestershire February-August 2012



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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: 133556	
Project title	Archaeological watching brief at Sketchley Brook, Hinckley, Leicestershire		
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 'Area A' and 'Area D' at Sketchley Brook, Hinckley Leicestershire prior to the planned development on the site. Modern disturbance was noted throughout Area D and on the western edge of Area A, adjacent to the Ashby de-la-Zouch canal. No archaeological features or artefacts were observed.		
Project type	Watching brief		
Previous work	Geophysical survey and fieldwalking (Butler 2009 and Kajewski 2009), trial trenching (Foard-Colby 2011) and further trial trenching (Jones 2012)		
Current land use	Arable and derelict ground		
Future work	-		
Monument type and period	Prehistoric pit, gully, medieval and post-medieval boundary ditches		
Significant finds	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Leicestershire		
Site address	Land at Sketchley Brook, Hinckley		
OS co-ordinates	SP 4200 9286		
Area (sq m/ha)	18.1ha		
Height aOD	92-103m		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)		
Project brief originator	Leicestershire County Council		
Project Design originator	NA		
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones		
Project Manager	Steve Parry		
Sponsor or funding body	Volker Fitzpatrick / Goodman Logistic Development Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	02/12		
End date	09/12		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	X.A11.2012	None	
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)			
Title	Archaeological watching brief at Sketchley Brook, Hinckley, Leicestershire, February to August 2012		
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Front cover: Excavation of drainage trench, looking south

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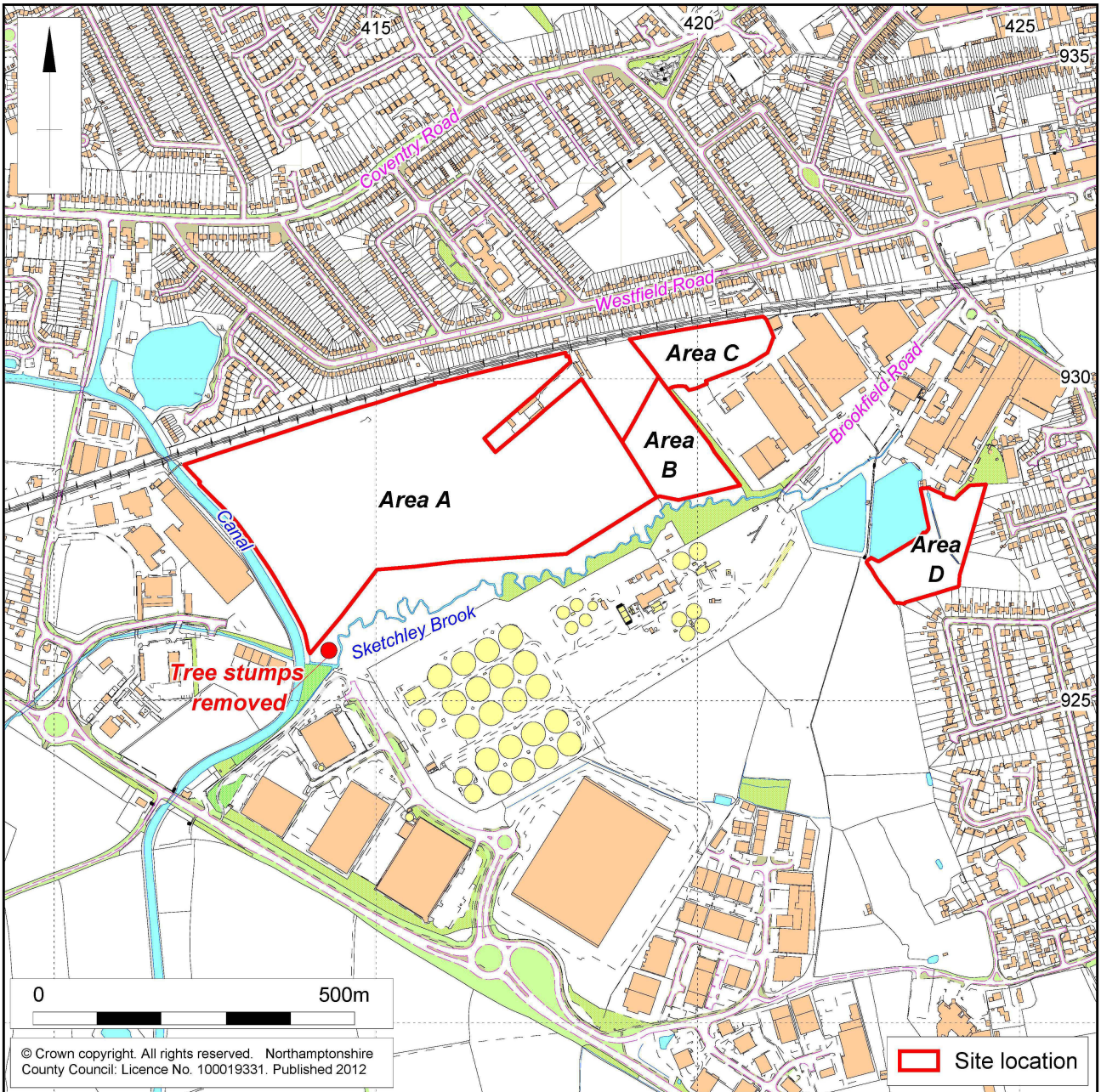
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Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
SKETCHLEY BROOK, HINCKLEY
LEICESTERSHIRE
FEBRUARY-AUGUST 2012
ACCESSION No X.A11.2012**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in 'Area A' and 'Area D' at Sketchley Brook, Hinckley Leicestershire prior to the planned development on the site.

Modern disturbance was noted throughout Area D and on the western edge of Area A adjacent to the Ashby de-la-Zouch canal. No archaeological features or artefacts were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Between February to August 2012, an intensive archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land at Sketchley Brook, Hinckley, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 4200 9286; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Volker Fitzpatrick / Goodman Logistic Development (UK) Ltd and was undertaken to fulfil Conditions 22 and 23 of planning consent (10/00518/OUT) for the planned development of the land for retail and residential use.

The scope of works was outlined in the brief issued by Leicestershire County Council's Senior Planning Archaeologist (Clark 2012a and b) and detailed in the written scheme of investigation prepared by NA (NA 2012). The archaeological investigation took place within 'Area A' and 'Area D' on land at Sketchley Brook, Hinckley. The accession number is X.A11.2012.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008) and the English Heritage procedural document MoRPHE (EH 2006), as well as the Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work in Leicestershire (LCC 1997).

The specified groundworks within the development area were continuously monitored by a qualified and experienced archaeologist. This included:

- Assessing the archaeological significance in 'Area A' and 'Area D' of any archaeological deposits encountered during the watching brief;
- Determining and recording the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- The excavation of the foundation trenches;
- Observation of any groundworks associated with the installation of services,

landscaping etc;

- Creating a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The national framework for research is set out by English Heritage (1997). The broad research frameworks for the East Midlands are set out by Cooper (2006), and now Knight *et al* (2012). The Research Aims set out in these documents will be addressed by the project.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Topography and geology

The proposed development is immediately adjacent to and south of the main railway line through the town of Hinckley (Fig 1). The line divides Hinckley from its southern suburb village of Burbage and the satellite hamlet of Sketchley to the south-west. Sketchley Brook runs approximately 320m south of the railway, on a north-north east to south-south-west orientation. The western, larger, portion of the site is situated in arable fields north of a sewage works, at the eastern bank of the Ashby de-la-Zouch canal and west of demolished industrial works. There is a gentle slope downwards to the south-west. Jericho Farm is located within the arable field.

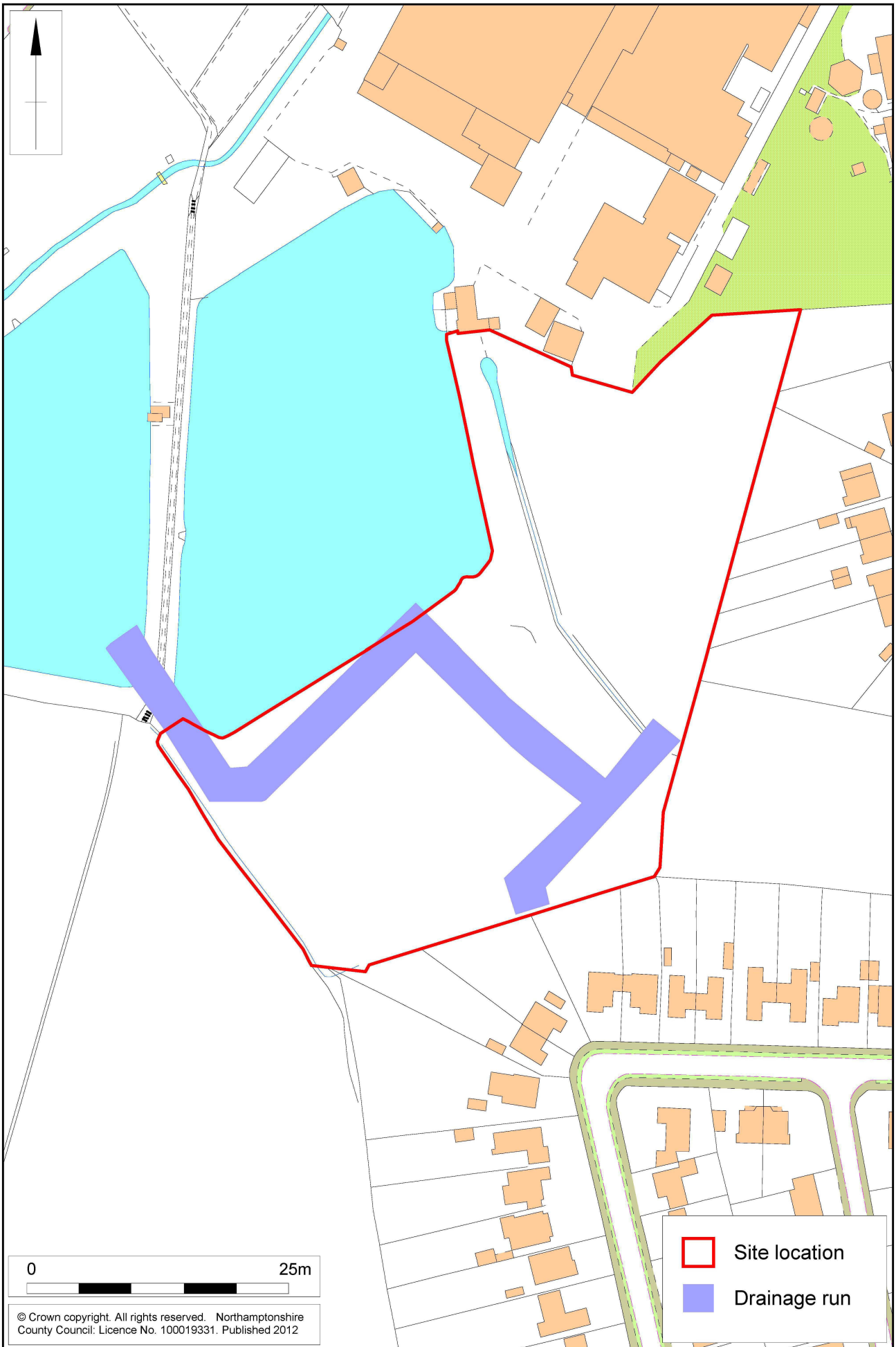
The proposed development lies over a drift geology substrate of Glaciolacustrine deposits of clay and silt with alluvium close to the brook. A deposit of Till intrudes into the area on the eastern side of Jericho Farm (BGS Sheet 169). The site lies between 95m – 100m aOD rising gradually to the east.

3.2 Historical and archaeological background

Leicestershire Historic Environment Record indicates that finds of all periods have been discovered in the local area. A Neolithic polished stone axe head (MLE7236) was recovered to the south-west of the site and a middle Bronze Age spearhead (MLE6351) to the east. A settlement site of middle Iron Age date was excavated by NA, south of Coventry Road 500m west of Area A (Chapman 2004).

The Watling Street Roman Road (MLE1388) is situated approximately 300m south of the site, ditches, postholes and a cobbled surface were found 200m south-west (MLE9164). Romano-British period features were also found at the Coventry Road Iron Age settlement (MLE8919). No finds of Anglo-Saxon date have been made in the area, although the settlement of Hinckley is known have pre-conquest origins (Mills 2008, 12). Locally, Sketchley (MLE2847) is a medieval settlement with a 13th-century chapel (MLE2835). Ridge and furrow cultivation remains are known from the area (Butler 2009). The open fields are known to have been subject to enclosure in 1759 (Mills 2008, 12-13).

The Ashby de-la-Zouch canal was constructed in the early 18th century. Hinckley's hosiery industry developed during the post-medieval period and by the mid-18th century had become a local centre. The 19th century saw the construction of the London and Western Railway through Hinckley in 1864 and development of Hinckley Sewage Works to the south of Sketchley Brook (Mills 2008, 14).



Scale 1:1,500 (A4)

Area D drainage Fig 2

Dye Works were erected adjacent to the west of the B4109 Rugby Road in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These expanded through the 1920s to form a large complex, now much demolished (Mills 2008, 15).

3.3 Previous fieldwork at Sketchley Brook

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned in 2009 by Under Construction Archaeology, on behalf of Goodman Logistic Development (UK) Ltd, to conduct fieldwalking and geophysical surveys as part of a non-intrusive archaeological evaluation of parts of the development area in order to provide sufficient information to determine the planning application (Kajewski 2009 and Butler 2009).

The fieldwalking (c15ha) recovered a very low concentration of Roman and medieval pottery, with an increased number of manure scattered early post-medieval finds. Most (95%) of the pottery and other finds were dated to the 18th-20th centuries. This is consistent with the construction of the canal and railway line that borders the fields. Three fields, 19.9ha in area, were successfully surveyed by gradiometer, revealing a former landscape of enclosed ridge and furrow fields in the large western field. A small group of ditches and a pit detected may constitute evidence of earlier archaeology in that area. To the east a recreation ground was prospected revealing many modern features, but the survey also identified the likely route of the underground channelling of the Sketchley Brook to the north-east.

Subsequent trial excavation was undertaken in four fields (Foard Colby 2011). A small pit containing Bronze Age/early Iron Age pottery was found in Trench 10, Area A. Adjacent to the pit was an undated gully. A further small undated pit was also present in Trench 11 to the south. Five post-medieval boundary ditches were also present in Area A. The remains of a brick-built field barn were present in Trench 22. In Area D the remains of a modern hearth lined with fire bricks was found in Trench 47. The hearth may date to an earlier stage of factory building (Foard Colby 2011). No archaeological remains were found in Areas B and C.

As part of the planning consent for the site there were two conditions relating to archaeology within Areas A and D. The initial works in Area A were undertaken and comprised further archaeological trial trench excavation, which was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Jones 2012). Five trenches were excavated around Trench 10 from the previous evaluation, where a small pit containing prehistoric pottery and a small quantity of burnt bone was identified. No archaeological features or artefacts were present. This report concerns the subsequent watching brief which was carried out in Areas A and D.

4 EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

All deposits encountered during the course of the investigation were monitored and recorded by an experienced archaeologist. Recording followed standard Northamptonshire procedures. All deposits were given individual context numbers and described on *pro-forma* context record sheets, to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation (NA 2006, revised 2011).

If archaeological remains of greater significance been encountered, advice would have been sought from the Planning Archaeologists, Leicestershire County Council,

and in consultation with the client, an appropriate methodology for dealing with the remains agreed.

A photographic record was kept of the excavation, comprising black and white negatives and colour slides with supporting digital photographs. The field data will be compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the *IfA Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2008) and the *Code of conduct* of the Institute for Archaeologists (1985, revised 2000).

5 EXCAVATION RESULTS

5.1 Area D

Preliminary preparation of Area D comprised removing a total of 43 tree stumps. The majority of the stump roots lay entirely within the topsoil. The deeper roots intruded into made-ground which contained lumps of concrete, bricks and sand. Modern made-ground was observed to a depth of at least 0.8m. No archaeological features were encountered.

A sewer pipe trench was excavated from the existing pond at the north towards the south-east of the site (Fig 2). The trench was up to 1.10m wide and between 1.00m and 3.00m deep, becoming deeper to the south-east.

The natural substrate in Area D at the east side of the development was an orange sand clay, with the ground level sloping sharply to the north down to the existing pond. The natural substratum was encountered approximately 0.80m below present ground surface at the north end of the trench and at the south it was located at 2-3m below the current ground level. Above the natural was a mixed horizon of light grey-orange topsoil containing modern material including brick, glass and metal. A dump of asbestos was also observed. No archaeological features or finds were encountered.



The general stratigraphic sequence in the sewer pipe trench Fig 3

Further groundworks were conducted without archaeological supervision, but it is considered that from what was observed during initial trial trenching (Foard-Colby 2009), from what was observed previously during the watching brief and also during a site visit on 2nd August 2012 that Area D has been extensively disturbed by modern industrial activity.



Metal shuttering in the deepest part of the sewer trench, looking south Fig 4

5.2 Area A

Two tree stumps were removed south of Area A (Figs 1 and 5). No archaeological finds or features were encountered. The natural substrate in 'Area A' at the far south-west side of the development, close to the Sketchley Brook, was a gravel river terrace mixed with bands of mid yellow-brown clay, and was encountered at 0.30m below the modern ground surface. No subsoil was present. The fields had been deep ploughed resulting in the mixing up of both subsoil and topsoil, and plough scars were visible in the natural. The topsoil was dark greyish-brown slightly clayey loam and up to 0.30m deep.



Removal of tree stumps in Area A, looking south-west Fig 5

The ground level of Area A was subsequently raised using imported material by about 1m, thereby protecting any archaeological remains.

A series of balancing ponds were created along the south-western edge of the site by stripping topsoil and natural substratum to a depth c 0.60m below ground level. Modern disturbance was noted adjacent to the western boundary, possibly associated with the construction of the canal immediately to the west. No archaeological finds or features were noted.



Balancing pond and raised ground in Area A, looking south-west Fig 6

6 THE ARCHIVE

The watching brief has generated a small archive of photographs and paperwork, which will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums under the accession number X.A11.2012

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	5
Colour slides	39
Black and white contacts and negatives	39
Digital photographs	39

There are no artefacts from the site.

7 DISCUSSION

No archaeological features were encountered in the two areas of investigation. The former industrial use of Area D, as part of the Dye Works, has destroyed remains of any earlier activity in this part of the site. No *in situ* remains of industrial features were observed during the watching brief; the area has been comprehensively disturbed, as part of the demolition of the buildings.

No archaeological features were observed during the removal of tree stumps just to the south of Area A. The ground level of much of Area A has been raised by c 1m; there will be minimal impact upon any archaeological features by subsequent development. The building of the Ashby de-la-Zouch canal could have destroyed any archaeological remains in the west side of Area A.

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