

Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by John Roberts Architects to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in advance of the construction of three dwellings on land at Elmdene, Main Street in Cotesbach, Leicestershire.
- The site is situated in an area of archaeological interest, close to the historic medieval core of the village, with finds of prehistoric, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon date recovered in the wider landscape
- Three 10m long trenches were excavated, one within the footprint of each of the proposed dwellings. No archaeological finds or features of significance were identified during the works.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by John Roberts Architects on behalf of Mr Malcolm Cashmore to undertake a programme of trial trench investigations in advance of the construction of three dwellings on land at Elmdene, Main Street in Cotesbach, Leicestershire.
- 1.2 The excavating, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (IfA 1999, revised 2001 and 2008), and the English Heritage document '*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*' (English Heritage 2006). All appropriate English Heritage guidance on archaeological practice was also followed (www.helm.org/server/show/nav.7740). The works also followed guidelines in the specification prepared by this company (AAL 2010).

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Cotesbach is located in the administrative district of Harborough District Council, approximately 2km south of Lutterworth, and 22km south-south-west of central Leicester. The proposed development is situated in the historic core of the settlement, on the north side of Main Street, and centres on NGR SP 5365 8240.
- 2.2 The local geological sequence comprises a superficial geology of Shawell sand and gravel, overlying a solid geology of Charmouth Mudstone (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html?Accordion1=1#maps>)

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted in September 2008 for 'Demolition of existing building and erection of 3 dwellings' on land at Elmdene, Main Street, Cotesbach (Planning Application Reference 09/01271/FUL). The application was granted in November 2008, subject to conditions, including a programme of archaeological investigation and reporting to characterise the nature of the archaeological resource in the proposed development area. This approach is consistent with the guidelines that are set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).
- 3.2 The initial phase of reporting comprised a summary statement on the results of the trial trenching (AAL 2011), submitted in March 2011, to allow the Senior Planning Archaeologist at Leicestershire County Council to determine an appropriate level of final mitigation. Due to the lack of archaeological finds or features of interest, it was agreed that the final mitigation would comprise the preparation of a full report on the results of the trial trenching.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 Evidence for prehistoric activity in the area is limited although fieldwalking in the parish, c. 1.5km to the west-south-west recovered a small scatter of Mesolithic to Bronze Age flint implements (Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (hereafter LHER) Reference MLE7471). A Bronze Age palstave was also found in the parish during the 19th century, the exact provenance of which is unknown (National Monuments Record Reference 340443).
- 4.2 Romano-British activity is also represented by eight pottery sherds found during fieldwalking at the same location as above (LHER Reference MLE7180). A Roman road is believed to run south from Leicester to the town of Tripontium, c.3km south of Cotesbach (LHER Reference MLE1902).
- 4.3 A possible Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been recorded in the parish, c.1.6km to the south-west of the site. It was originally identified in 1824, when inhumations and one urned cremation were noted, along with finds including shield bosses, spears and jewellery. Further finds have been made since, although the area has not been subject to controlled excavation (LHER Reference MLE1414).
- 4.4 The village appears in the Domesday Book as Cotesbece, an Old English name meaning ‘Cott’s valley, stream’ (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~aezins/kepnp.php>). At this time the principal landowner was Hugh de Grandmesnil, and the estate included a mill (Williams and Martin 2002).
- 4.5 The site is close to the historic core of the village, approximately 250m west of the parish church of St. Mary. The church has some surviving 14th and 15th century elements, although was rebuilt extensively in 1700 with further 19th century alterations. It is a Grade II* Listed Building (Reference 191406).
- 4.6 Historic map evidence suggests that the site was open agricultural land from at least the later 19th century, until the construction of the existing dwelling at Elmdene, which is first shown on the 1964 Ordnance Survey map.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The trial trenching methodology entailed the excavation of three 10m long trenches, one within the footprint of each of the proposed dwellings. The trenches were located on site with a Magellan Promark 3 GPS system using an on site base station and mobile rover unit. Rinex data provided from Ordnance Survey remote base stations was used for processing the results to provide millimetre accuracy.
- 5.2 The fieldwork was carried out on Friday 25th February 2011. In each trench topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed by a JCB 3CX excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket in spits no greater than 0.1m in depth. The process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. All further excavation was then by hand.
- 5.3 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was made on standard Allen Archaeology Limited context recording sheets. All deposits were drawn to an appropriate scale, in plan and or section with Ordnance Datum heights being displayed on each class of drawing. Photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy. All photographs incorporated scales, an identification board and directional arrow as appropriate. A selection of these images has been included in Appendix 1.

- 5.4 Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a unique three-digit identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 2. Three digit numbers within square brackets reflect cut features (e.g. pit [205]).

6.0 Results

6.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

- 6.1.1 In Trench 1 the topsoil 100 was a 0.4m thick friable greyish brown silt and sealed 101, a dumped deposit of moderately compact mid yellowish grey clay with moderate gravel, which extended to a depth of c.1.15m below the existing ground surface, and was similar to layer 201 in Trench 2 (see Section 6.2.1 below).
- 6.1.2 Sondages were excavated by machine at each end of the trench through layer 101 to expose 102, a grey clay layer containing occasional fragments of broken tarmac. This in turn sealed a further modern dumping layer of mottled blue-grey and orange clay, 103 which contained frequent modern refuse (rubber liner, brick fragments and metal for example), and extended to a depth of approximately 2.1m below the existing ground surface.
- 6.1.3 These dumping layers sealed a deposit of black silt 104, which was only exposed in the sondage at the south end of the trench, where it was c.0.35m thick. The next layer in the sequence was 105, a brown silt layer, thought to represent a continuation of 203 in Trench 2 (See Section 2.2 below). It overlay the natural geology, 106, a yellow/brown sand with occasional gravel, which was exposed at between 2.5m and 2.8m below the modern ground surface.

6.2 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

- 6.2.1 In Trench the topsoil or garden soil 200, was again 0.4m thick and was a greyish brown silt. It sealed a dumped deposit of moderately compact dirty yellowish grey clay with occasional gravel and modern brick fragments, 201. This was approximately 0.6m thick throughout the majority of the trench, although to the east it thinned to c.0.2m thick and was seen to overlie a made ground of brownish grey sandy silt, 208.
- 6.2.2 At the west end of the trench 201 was cut by a possible modern garden feature, [205], with a primary fill of redeposited topsoil, 206, and a secondary fill of yellow/brown silt, 207.
- 6.2.3 A sondage excavated by machine at the west end of the trench showed that here 201 sealed a second made ground layer of grey clay with occasional modern brick fragments, 202, which in turn sealed a brown silt layer, 203, also thought to represent made ground. This deposit sealed the natural geology of yellow/brown sand with occasional gravel at a depth of approximately 2m below the modern ground surface.

6.3 Trench 3 (Figure 5)

- 6.3.1 In Trench 3 the topsoil layer 300 was approximately 0.65m thick and was cut at the south end of the trench by a large modern pit, [302] extending beyond the limit of excavation to the south, west and east. This contained a primary fill of redeposited topsoil, 303, sealed by a secondary backfill of blue grey clay, 304. Throughout the remainder of the trench the topsoil sealed the local superficial geology; a mid to light yellow gravelly sand with occasional irregularly spaced,

sub-circular solution holes filled with brownish red silt, one of which was sample excavated to confirm its natural origin.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 No archaeological finds or features of significance were identified during the trial trenching. The stratigraphic sequence was shallowest in Trench 3, where approximately 0.65m of topsoil sealed the natural geology. The topsoil was cut by a large pit or pond at the south end of the trench. The feature was undated but was clearly of recent date as it cut the existing topsoil.
- 7.2 In Trenches 1 and 2 a deep sequence of modern dumped deposits was recorded, sealing the natural at a depth of between 2m (in Trench 2) and 2.8m (in Trench 3). These deposits may represent dumped material associated with the construction of the existing dwelling on the site, although it was noted that the field to the north was very uneven and may have been used in recent years as a site for the dumping of waste soil and demolition material. It was also notable that there were no buried soil horizons between the natural geology and the dumped deposits, suggesting that there had been significant truncation of the deposits prior to the dumping taking place. Some of this ground raising and levelling is likely to have been occasioned by the construction of the existing dwelling at Elmdene in the later 20th century.
- 7.3 Only a single modern feature was recorded in Trench 2, comprising a probable former garden feature cut through modern dumped deposit 201.
- 7.4 The lack of archaeological finds or features of note, and the depth of modern made ground suggest a negligible archaeological potential for the proposed development area, and that the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological will also be minimal.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The archaeological evaluation methodology was appropriate in that it has provided sufficient information to enhance the understanding of the archaeological resource within the footprint of the residential development. The works have identified that any remains have been truncated and/or sealed beneath a significant build-up of modern material.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank John Roberts Architects and their client Mr Malcolm Cashmore for this commission.

10.0 References

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Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: Sondage at south end of Trench 1, looking east. Scale 1m



Plate 2: Sondage at west end of Trench 2, looking north. Scale 1m



Plate 3: Representative section in Trench 3, looking east, showing sample excavated solution hollow. Scales 1m x 2 and 0.2m

Appendix 2: Context Summary List

Trench 1

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Deposit	Friable greyish mid brown silt with abundant tree roots. Seals 101	Topsoil
101	Deposit	Friable mid to light yellow gravelly sand with occasional solution holes filled with brownish red silt. Sealed by 100	Natural geology
102	Cut	Broad shallow cut with a moderately sloping north edge extending beyond the limit of excavation to the south, west and east. Contains 103 and 104	Modern pit
103	Fill	Moderately compact greyish mid brown silt. Sealed by 104	Primary redeposited topsoil backfill of modern pit [102]
104	Fill	Moderately compact Mid blue grey clay. Seals 103	Secondary backfill of pit [102]

Trench 2

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
200	Deposit	Friable greyish mid brown silt with abundant grass roots. Seals 201	Topsoil
201	Deposit	Moderately compact dirty yellowish grey to light grey clay with occasional gravel and red brick fragments, thinning to the east. Sealed by 200, seals 202 and 208	Dumped made ground, possibly the same as 301. Modern
202	Deposit	Compact dirty mid grey clayey silt with occasional gravel and red brick fragments, thinning to the east. Sealed by 201, seals 203	Dumped made ground, possibly the same as 302. Modern
203	Deposit	Loose fine brownish grey sandy silt. Sealed by 202, seals 204	Made ground, similar to 208 possibly the same as 305
204	Deposit	Friable orangey yellow sand with occasional gravel	Natural geology
205	Cut	Cut with a moderately sloping east edge to a flat base extending beyond the limit of excavation to the north, south and west. Contains 206 and 207	Modern cut. Possible garden feature
206	Fill	Friable grey brown silt. Sealed by 207	Primary redeposited topsoil backfill of modern pit [205]
207	Fill	Friable to loose mid to light, slightly yellowish brown silt. Sealed by 200	Secondary backfill of possible garden feature [205]
208	Deposit	Loose to friable brownish grey sandy silt. Sealed by 201	Made ground, similar to 203

Trench 3

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
300	Deposit	Friable greyish mid brown silt with abundant grass roots and occasional tree roots. Seals 301	Topsoil
301	Deposit	Moderately compact dirty yellowish grey to light grey clay with moderate gravel. Sealed by 300	Dumped made ground, possibly the same as 201. Modern
302	Deposit	Moderate to compact dirty mid grey clayey silt with occasional broken tarmac fragments. Thinning to the east. Sealed by 301, seals 303	Dumped made ground, possibly the same as 202. Modern
303	Deposit	Compact mixed, mottled blue-grey and orange clay with modern refuse (rubber liner, brick fragments and metal). Sealed by 302, seals 304	Dumped made ground. Modern
304	Deposit	Moderately compact black silt. Sealed by 303, seals 305	Made ground
305	Deposit	Loose fine brownish grey sandy silt. Sealed by 202, seals 204	Made ground, possibly the same as 203
306	Deposit	Friable orangey yellow sand with occasional gravel	Natural geology