

Sainsbury's Store Belgrave Road Leicester

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
Indigo Planning

CA Project: 660257
CA Report: 15195

April 2015



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Leicester

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SUMMARY

Project Name:	Sainsbury's Store
Location:	Belgrave Road, Leicester
NGR:	SK 5938 0566
Type:	Watching Brief
Date:	4 July to 21 December 2014 (intermittent)
Planning Reference:	20120415
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Leicester City Council Museums Service
Site Code:	SBL 14

Between July and December 2014, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an intermittent archaeological watching brief at Belgrave Road, Leicester. The watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with alterations to Belgrave Road.

Although the watching brief site lay outside of Roman and medieval Leicester, Belgrave Road preserves the line of the Fosse Way, which was a major Roman thoroughfare.

The watching brief recorded no significant archaeological features or deposits. The observed groundworks did not generally penetrate lower than 19th/20th-century ground disturbance/made ground layers associated with the construction of Belgrave Road and the Belgrave Flyover. There was evidence for extensive ground disturbance associated with the modern road. The remains of a late 19th/earlier 20th-century tramway were recorded.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between July and December 2014, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an intermittent archaeological watching brief for Indigo Planning at Belgrave Road, Leicester (centred on NGR: SK 5938 0566; Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to planning consent granted by Leicester City Council (LCC; the local planning authority) for the demolition of existing retail units and a petrol station, changes to the road network, and mixed use development of the site (planning ref: 20120415; Condition 21). The scope of the watching brief was defined by Chris Wardle, the Leicester City Archaeologist.
- 1.3 The watching brief was carried out in line with a detailed written scheme of investigation (WSI) produced by CA (2014a) and approved by LCC, acting on the advice of Chris Wardle. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014), *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (English Heritage 2006).

The site

- 1.4 The site lies on the north-eastern outskirts of Leicester City Centre, on the line of Belgrave Road (the A607). It is located to the immediate north of Willow Brook, with the Grand Union Canal and the River Soar lying some 200m and 500m west of the site, respectively. In total, the site is approximately 7.1ha in extent and, pre-development, included a supermarket, adjoining retail units, a petrol station and a car park, as well as part of Belgrave Road itself and the Belgrave Flyover.
- 1.5 The site lies at approximately 65m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), on fairly level ground. The underlying solid geology of the site is mapped as Branscombe Mudstone Formation of the Triassic era. This is overlain in the southern half of the site by Quaternary alluvium (clays, silts, sands and gravels) associated with Willow Brook, with further alluvium present to the east alongside the River Soar (BGS 2014).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A heritage desk-based assessment (DBA) of the site has been produced by CA (2012). The following section is summarised from this document.
- 2.2 Leicester originated in the 1st century BC as an Iron Age settlement on the western bank of the River Soar. This settlement later became a Roman town (*Ratae Corieltavorum*). The watching brief site lies outside of the north-eastern limits of the Roman town.
- 2.3 The Fosse Way was a major Roman road which ran through Leicester, connecting the legionary fortresses built on the sites of present-day Lincoln and Exeter. Belgrave Road lies on the projected line of the Fosse Way, although the exact alignment of the Roman road in this area has not been confirmed through excavation. There was considered to be some limited potential for elements of the Roman road to survive beneath the modern thoroughfare, although it was thought likely that modern modifications to Belgrave Road would have had an extensive negative impact on any below-ground archaeological deposits.
- 2.4 The projected line of the Fosse Way crosses Willow Brook, and as such there would likely have been a ford or bridge in place at this point. Such a structure may have been a focus for extramural Roman settlement or other activity. There is, however, no known archaeological evidence for such a crossing or any associated activity.
- 2.5 The site lay outside of medieval Leicester. Historic documents indicate that a bridge ("Lady Bridge") carried the medieval successor to the Roman Fosse Way over Willow Brook, but again, there is no known archaeological evidence for this structure.
- 2.6 A map depicting the town during the Civil War of 1642–5 shows that the site still lay outside of Leicester at that time, within an extra-mural rural landscape. Early 19th century cartographic sources document the development of two small collections of buildings within the site boundary, on the eastern side of the Fosse Way. These may have been a farm and a small mill on the banks of Willow Creek.
- 2.7 The First Edition OS map (published 1885) shows that the suburbs of the city had extended northwards beyond the site, with back-to-back housing laid out along new

streets extending east and west from Belgrave Road. Some of this housing lay within the site boundary. The remainder of the site was largely within the terminus of the Marefield and Leicester Branch Railway, which opened in 1883 as a branch of the Great Northern Railway. The terminus included the Great Northern Station (later called Belgrave Road Station), a goods shed and the rail tracks themselves.

- 2.8 The back-to-back housing within the site was demolished in the late 1960s/early 1970s. The Great Northern Station was closed in 1962, but the terminus/station buildings were retained until demolition in the late 1970s/early 1980s.
- 2.9 The Belgrave Flyover was built 1973/74 and was demolished as part of the present works. CA carried out a building recording survey of the flyover prior to demolition (CA 2014b).
- 2.10 The DBA concluded that the archaeological potential of the watching brief site would have been significantly compromised by ground disturbance associated with the construction and demolition of the railway terminus and the back-to-back-housing, as well as disturbance associated with Belgrave Road itself and the Belgrave Flyover. It was also anticipated that the construction of the present supermarket and associated structures would have had a severe negative impact upon any below-ground archaeological remains at the site.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:
- to monitor all groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed by those groundworks; and
 - to produce an integrated project archive at the conclusion of the project and a report setting out the watching brief results and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.



4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2014). An intermittent watching brief was maintained during intrusive groundworks (Fig. 2). The terminology employed for the individual watching brief areas (Areas 2–4) follows that employed on the developer's groundworks plans.
- 4.2 Written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 The archive from the evaluation will be deposited with Leicester City Museum. A summary of information from this project, as set out within Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the watching brief results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix A.

Area 2

- 5.2 The earliest-encountered deposit was gravel layer 115, which was exposed at a depth of 0.3m below the pre-development ground level (BGL). Bedded onto 115 was a north-east/south-west orientated section of iron rail (109; Fig. 5). Rail 109 was directly overlain by the modern road surface (101) and its associated bedding layer (102).

Area 2a

- 5.3 The earliest-encountered deposit was loose orange-yellow sand 112. This was encountered at an average depth of c. 0.6m BGL and may represent the disturbed upper surface of the natural substrate. Sand 112 was overlain by 0.3m of silty layer 111, which contained concrete and brick fragments. Layer 111 was overlain in turn by a further silty deposit (110), which contained abundant brick and concrete rubble. The sequence in Area 2a was sealed by the modern ground surface (116) and its associated bedding layer (117).

Area 3

- 5.4 Located at the western extent of the area was a small section of north-west/south-east-aligned wall (113; Fig. 6). This was constructed of red brick, bonded by a soft, cream-coloured lime mortar. Wall 113 was revealed in section only and survived to a height of 0.75m. It was butted by a 3.1m-long section of north-east/south-west-orientated wall (118), which survived to a height of 0.55m and was of similar construction to wall 113. Both walls were fragmentary.
- 5.5 Sandy made ground deposit 105 abutted and overlay walls 113 and 118. This deposit was cut by modern services 107 and 108, as well as by concrete piles 100, which were the remains of supports for the Belgrave Flyover (constructed 1973/74). The piles were overlain/abutted by various bedding/levelling layers and surfaces (101, 102 and 106).

Area 4

- 5.6 Sandy gravel layer 114 was exposed intermittently across Area 4 at a depth of 0.65m BGL. Towards the southern end of the area, layer 114 was cut by wall 103 (Fig. 7). This structure was orientated north/south, with an east/west return. It was constructed of red brick, bonded by a hard cement mortar. Wall 103 and layer 114 were overlain by modern road surface 101 and associated bedding layer 102.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 No artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see *Archaeological background*, above), no significant archaeological features or deposits were exposed during the monitored groundworks.
- 7.2 The observed groundworks did not generally penetrate lower than 19th/20th-century ground disturbance/made ground layers associated with the construction of Belgrave Road and the Belgrave Flyover. The exception is Area 2a, where the

possible disturbed upper surface of the natural substrate (context 112) was exposed at an average depth of c. 0.6m BGL. Deposit 112 was directly overlain by a layer containing concrete and brick fragments (context 111), indicating that the ground level has been extensively truncated in Area 2a (and presumably in the other monitored areas as well). This truncation is likely to have removed any archaeological remains or deposits which may formerly have been present along the line of the road. There are no records of archaeological remains having been found during the flyover construction works, although planning regulations at the time would not have necessitated archaeological monitoring (CA 2012).

- 7.3 Nineteenth and earlier 20th-century OS maps depict tram lines running along the centre of Belgrave Road. The first tramways in Leicester began service in 1874 and were operated by the Leicester Tramways Company. The service closed at some point between 1933 and 1949 (CA 2012). The iron rail (context 109) observed in Area 2 is presumably part of the Belgrave Road tramway. The red brick structures recorded in Areas 3 and 4 (walls 103, 113 and 118) lie on the course of the tramway, and presumably represent associated structures. All three of these walls are in locations where the historic mapping shows a widening of the tramlines, possibly representing tram stops.

8. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Caoimhín O Coileain and Peter James. This report was written by Stuart Joyce and Derek Evans. The illustrations were prepared by Dan Bashford. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Derek Evans.

9. REFERENCES

- BGS (British Geological Survey) 2014 *Geology of Britain Viewer* http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geology_viewer_google/googleviewer.html Accessed 14 April 2014

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2012 *Land at Belgrave Road, Leicester: Heritage Desk-Based Assessment* CA Typescript Report No. **12110**

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014a *Sainsbury's Store, Belgrave Road Leicester: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2014b *Belgrave Flyover, Belgrave Road, Leicester: Historic Building Recording Survey* CA Typescript Report No. **14136**



APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context No.	Type	Context interpretation	Description	Thickness/ height (m)
100	Structure	Concrete	Reinforced concrete, forming pillars and associated features relating to demolished Belgrave Flyover	
101	Deposit	Modern ground surface	Tarmac	0.1–0.4
102	Deposit	Bedding layer	Bedding layer for tarmac 101	0.2–0.25
103	Structure	Wall	Red-brick wall, concrete cement bonded	
104	Void			
105	Deposit	Made ground	Mid grey sandy clay with brick and cement rubble	0.8
106	Layer	Made ground	Mid yellow-brown sandy clay	0.1
107	Cut	Pipe trench	Machine-cut pipe trench	
108	Structure	Cement pipe	Modern cement pipe and backfill	
109	Structure	Tram rail	Iron tram rail	
110	Deposit	Made ground	Mid grey brown clayey silt with frequent concrete and rubble inclusions	
111	Deposit	Made ground	Mid brown-grey silty clay with abundant brick and concrete rubble	0.3
112	Layer	?Disturbed natural	Orange-yellow loose sand	
113	Structure	Wall	Red-brick wall, soft lime mortar bonding	0.75
114	Deposit	Made ground	Sandy gravel	
115	Deposit	Made ground/ bedding layer	Gravel	
116	Deposit	Modern ground surface	Asphalt	0.1
117	Deposit	Bedding layer	Bedding layer for asphalt 116	0.2
118	Structure	Wall	Red-brick wall, soft lime mortar bonding with integral salt glaze pipes	0.55

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Sainsbury's Store, Belgrave Road, Leicester	
Short description	<p>Between July and December 2014, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an intermittent archaeological watching brief at Belgrave Road, Leicester. The watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with alterations to Belgrave Road.</p> <p>Although the watching brief site lay outside of Roman and medieval Leicester, Belgrave Road preserves the line of the Fosse Way, which was a major Roman thoroughfare.</p> <p>The watching brief recorded no significant archaeological features or deposits. The observed groundworks did not generally penetrate lower than 19th/20th-century ground disturbance/made ground layers associated with the construction of Belgrave Road and the Belgrave Flyover. There was evidence for extensive ground disturbance associated with the modern road. The remains of a late 19th/earlier 20th-century tramway were recorded.</p>	
Project dates	4 July to 21 December 2014 (intermittent)	
Project type	Watching brief	
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (CA 2012) Building recording survey (CA 2014)	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	Sainsbury's Store, Belgrave Road, Leicester	
Study area (M ² /ha)	7.1ha	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	SK 5938 0566	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	N/A	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Derek Evans	
Project Supervisor	Caoimhín O Coileain and Peter James	
MONUMENT TYPE		
None		
SIGNIFICANT FINDS		
None		
PROJECT ARCHIVES		
	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	N/A	None
Paper	Leicester City Council Museums Service	Registers, recording forms.
Digital	Leicester City Council Museums Service	Digital photographs, digital survey data
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Cotswold Archaeology 2015 <i>Sainsbury's Store, Belgrave Road, Leicester: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> CA typescript report 15195		

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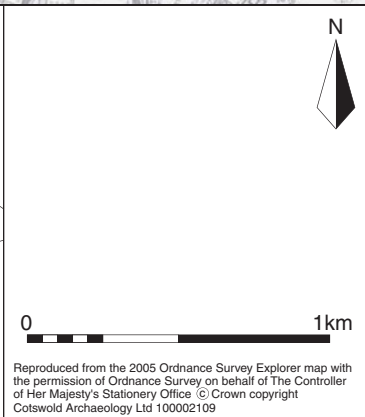
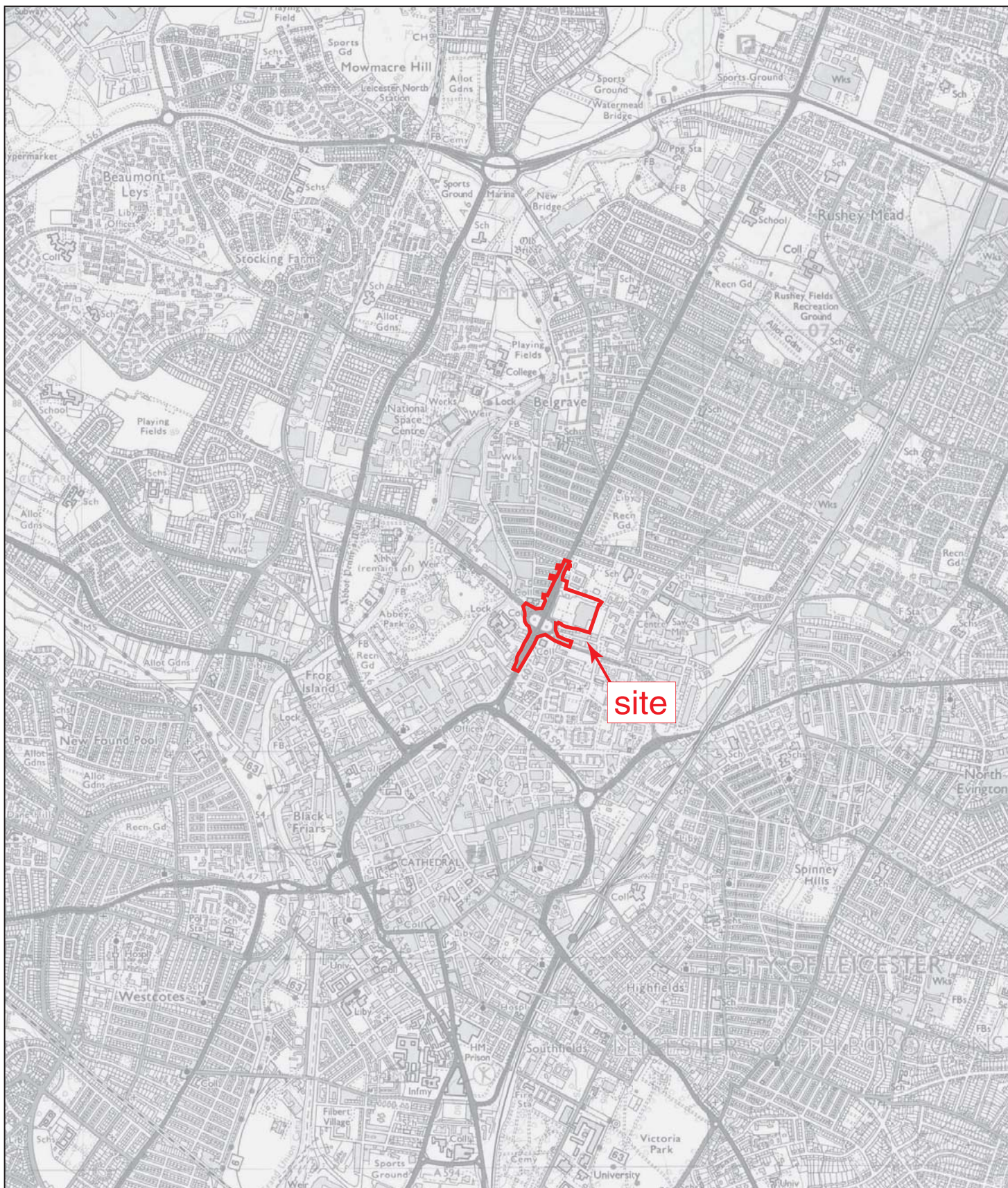
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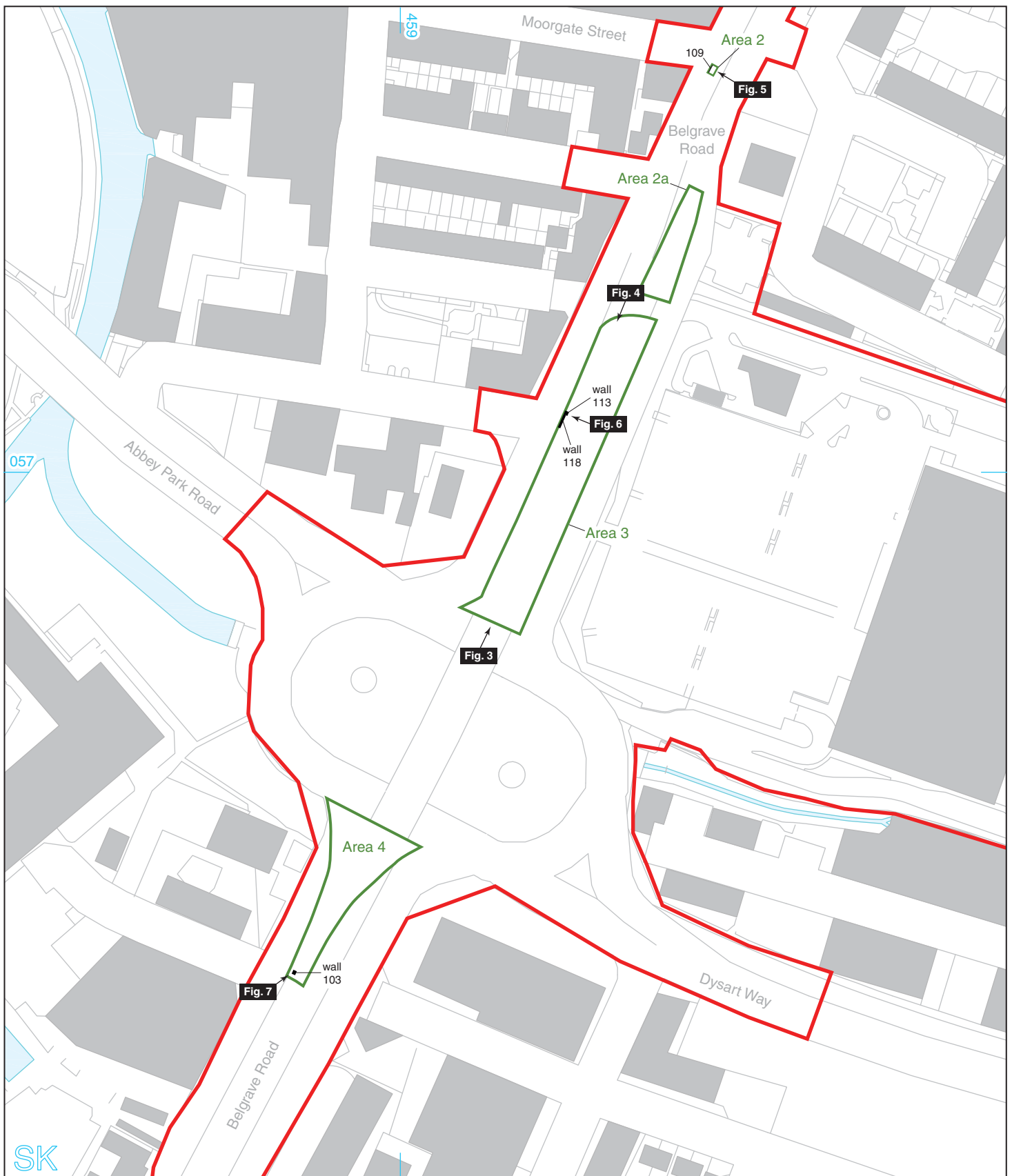

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PROJECT TITLE
 Sainsbury's Store, Belgrave Road
 Leicester

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

DRAWN BY	DJB	PROJECT NO.	660257	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	JB	DATE	22-04-2015	
APPROVED BY	SJ	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	1

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- site boundary
- observed groundworks
- archaeological feature
- Fig. 7 ↗ direction of photograph



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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

The site, showing location of
monitored groundworks

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FIGURE NO.
2



3



4

3 Site, looking north-east

4 Site, looking south-west



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Sainsbury's Store, Belgrave Road
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FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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FIGURE NO.
3 & 4



5

5 Tram rail 109, looking north-west (scale 1m)



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Sainsbury's Store, Belgrave Road
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FIGURE TITLE

Photograph

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FIGURE NO.

5



6



7

6 Walls 113 and 118, looking north-west (scale 1m)

7 Wall 103, looking east (scales 1m)



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PROJECT TITLE

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FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

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FIGURE NO.
6 & 7