

**A Strip, Map and Sample Excavation & Watching Brief at
The Bulls Head Public House
88 Main Street, Nailstone
Leicestershire, CV13 0QB**

SK 4154 0709

Nathan Flavell and Donald Clark



Site Name: Bulls Head, Nailstone, Leicestershire CV13 0QB

Grid Ref: SK 4154 0709

Author: Nathan Flavell

Client: Long Brothers Ltd/Arden Developments Ltd

Planning Authority: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

Planning Ref. 18/01288/FUL

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Cover photo: View of the stripped area

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OASIS RECORD

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-512487		
	Project Name	The Bulls Head, Nailstone, Leicestershire CV13 0QB		
	Start/end dates	19/04/2021 to 23/04/2021, 17/10/2022 to 21/10/2022, 25/10/2022		
	Previous/Future Work	Evaluation/ Not known		
	Project Type	Strip, map and sample excavation (watching brief)		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Rear plot & ménage		
	Monument Type/Period	Ditch/ medieval; Pit/ medieval; Gully; medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery/ medieval		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
PROJECT LOCATION	Planning Ref.	18/01288/FUL		
	County	Leicestershire		
	Site Address/Postcode	The Bulls Head, 88 Main Street, Nailstone, Leicestershire CV13 0QB		
	Study Area	0.3 ha		
	Site Coordinates	SK 4154 0709		
PROJECT CREATORS	Height OD	140m OD		
	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority: Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	John Thomas		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Nathan Flavell and Donald Clark		
PROJECT ARCHIVE	Sponsor/Funding Body	Long Brothers Ltd/Arden Developments Ltd		
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An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation & Watching Brief at The Bulls Head Public House, 88 Main Street, Nailstone, Leicestershire.

Nathan Flavell and Donald Clark

Summary

This report details the results of an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation and watching brief carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at The Bulls Head, 88 Main Street, Nailstone, Leicestershire CV13 0QB (NGR: SK 4154 0709). The strip, map and sample excavation took place in April 2021 and the watching brief in November 2022. The work was carried out on behalf of Long Brothers Ltd/Arden Developments Ltd during groundworks associated with the construction of a new housing development.

The archaeological work revealed three medieval ditches and gullies, plus several medieval pits and post-holes. Pottery from the 12th-14th centuries was retrieved from several of the features. Post-medieval pottery was retrieved from a layer of made ground lying across much of the site.

The archive for the project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service with accession number X.A39.2021.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (MHCLG 2019) this document forms the report for a strip, map and sample excavation at The Bulls Head, 88 Main Street, Nailstone, Leicestershire CV13 0QB (NGR: SP 4154 0709).

The work was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Long Brothers Ltd/Arden Developments Ltd.

Planning permission has been granted for a proposed residential development of five new properties on the site (18/01288/FUL) and the permission includes a condition for archaeological work.

The application site lies within the historic settlement core of Nailstone. The Bulls Head Public House lies within the Conservation Area, although the proposed development area is outside the Conservation Area.

The archaeological work (Strip, Plan and Sample excavation) carried on from two earlier phases of archaeological work on the site (Planning Application No. 15/01202/FUL), which consisted of two small trial trench evaluations covering Plots 1-3, within two parcels and a strip of land to the north of the public house, and Plots 4-5 on a former manège further to the north-west (Finn 2017a and 2017b). Archaeological features dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods were revealed in all five trenches.

The Planning Archaeologist recommended mitigation by excavation and recording (preservation by record), to record any archaeological deposits which may be impacted by development prior to development commencing.

Site Location, Geology and Topography

Nailstone is a village and civil parish in the Hinckley & Bosworth district of Leicestershire, lying approximately 12 miles (16 km) west of Leicester and 3 miles (5 km) north-north-east of Market Bosworth (Fig.1).



Figure 1: Site Location.

The Bulls Head Public House is located on the north side of Main Street, Nailstone (Fig. 2). Planning permission has been obtained for the proposed residential development of five new dwellings on the site (18/01288/FUL). The proposed new dwellings will occupy land to the north-west of the public house (Fig. 3). The total site area, including the public house, which is to be renovated, is approximately 0.30 hectares.

The proposed development area consists of small paddocks and an animal exercise area (manège) to the rear of the public house. The land is relatively flat at an average height of 140m aOD.

The British Geological Survey mapping indicates that the solid geology of the area is Gunthorpe Member Mudstone overlain by Glaciofluvial deposits of Sand and Gravel.

The soilscape website defines the soil at the site as slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (Soilscape type 18).



Figure 2: Detail of site location. Plan provided by client

Historical and Archaeological Background

Archaeological discoveries suggesting a Romano-British farmstead provide the first evidence of a settlement in the current location of the village. The majority of other archaeological remains in the area lie outside the core of the village. A small chapel is likely to have been built on the top of the rise at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, now the location of All Saints church. Development of the village is then likely to have been located around the open space surrounding the church then creeping westwards towards the turnpike from Hinckley to Ibstock.

There is debate as to whether Nailstone is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 but it seems likely that it is recorded as either Neulebi or Neluestone. The manorial rights were first held by Ernald under Hugo de Grantmesnil, one of King William I key lieutenants.

The agricultural origins of the settlement were established around several working farmsteads under control of the Manor. When Gopsall Hall was constructed in 1750, Nailstone became part of the estate. The Earls Howe, owners of the estate, funded the construction of many properties in the village as it developed as a functioning social unit. Therefore, the village contains several buildings of special interest and unique characteristics which are particular to the Gopsall Estate villages.

During the 19th century agriculture was gradually replaced by coal mining as the principle source of employment within Nailstone and the surrounding district. Nailstone Wood Colliery was sunk in 1864, located two miles north-east of the village (Nailstone Parish Council Website).

The Bulls Head Public House, built in the early 19th century, is identified in the Nailstone Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as one of several 'Key Unlisted Buildings' that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that the application site is in an area of archaeological interest, within the medieval and post-medieval historic settlement core of Nailstone (HER ref: **MLE2968**).

Little intrusive archaeological investigation within the historic village core is recorded on the HER, although trial trenching in 2000 at 57 Main Street, east of the present application site, located a medieval gully and an undated pit (**MLE9364**).

A survey by R.F. Hartley identified earthworks indicating the former extent of the village (Hartley 2008, 37: Figure 29).

Two phases of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching were carried out on the current site in February and May 2017 by Archaeology and Built Heritage (A&BH). The first phase (Trenches 1-3) were carried out in the paddock areas and revealed a series of shallow ditches/gullies representing plot boundary and/or drainage features. Most of these were undated, though two ditches contained sherds of medieval pottery and a third contained a sherd of post-medieval pottery. An undated pit and a possible post-hole were also found (Finn 2017a).

The second phase (Trenches 4 & 5) on the manège area also revealed a substantial ditch on a north-east to south-west alignment, forming part of the same boundary feature previously recorded as an earthwork by R.F. Hartley (see above). The ditch was re-cut at least once and there was possible evidence for the former existence of a hedgerow on its north-west side. This is likely to have been a croft boundary ditch separating medieval properties fronting onto the north side of Main Street from open fields beyond. Finds recovered from the fills indicate a

date in the later medieval period for the infilling of this ditch, around the 14th or 15th century (Finn 2017b).

A second ditch, aligned north-west to south-east corresponded with a ditch recorded in the earlier Trench 3 of Phase 1. This may have been a property boundary ditch separating two adjacent medieval plots, or possibly an internal plot division. Finds suggest a 12th century date for this feature. A post-hole adjacent to this ditch may have been associated with a boundary fence. A single sherd of Anglo-Saxon pottery, of late 5th or 6th century date, occurred as a residual find in a medieval ditch. (Finn 2017b).

Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the strip, map and sample excavation were defined as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.
- To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features encountered.
- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to assess the impact of the proposed development on cultural heritage and to help formulate a mitigation strategy
- To record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

Research Objectives

The historic and archaeological background for the area, along with the recent trial trenching suggests that there is potential for excavation to reveal heritage assets with an archaeological interest. On this basis it is possible to determine some initial objectives identified within The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13, (ed. Cooper 2006) and East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (ed. Knight et al 2012).

Excavations may contribute to knowledge on rural settlement, landscape and society. Information on the sequence and chronology of boundaries and their relationship to settlements may be recovered and palaeoenvironmental evidence could provide information on agricultural practices and land use. Artefacts can provide evidence for evidence for craft industry and exchange across broad landscape areas.

The archaeological work could contribute towards the questions in sections 6, 7, and 8 of the Updated Research Agenda and in particular could contribute to Research Objectives:

6. *EARLY MEDIEVAL (c. AD 410–1066):*

6.4.3: Can spatial and temporal variations in the morphology, functions and status of settlements be defined more precisely?

7. HIGH MEDIEVAL (1066–1485)

7.2.1: How can we elucidate further the development of nucleated villages, and in particular the contribution of the Danelaw to changes in village morphology?

7.3.2: How did the medieval manor and manorial estates develop from the Anglo-Saxon period, and what was the impact of the Danelaw?

7.7.1: Can we shed further light upon the origins and development of the open-field system and its impact upon agricultural practices?

8. POST-MEDIEVAL (1485–1750):

8.1.2: How were towns organised and planned, and how did population growth impact upon their internal spatial organisation?

8.3.1: How can we improve our understanding of the early landscapes of enclosure and improvement and the interrelationship between arable, pasture, woodland, commons and waste?

Methodology

All work followed the procedures set out in the approved *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) for the project (ULAS 2021).

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Briefs*, (updated 2020), *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Excavation* (updated 2020) and adhered to their *Code of Conduct* (updated 2021). The accession number X.A39.2021 was used to identify all records and artefacts.

Fieldwork was carried out by ULAS between 19/04/2021 to 23/04/2021 and 17/10/2022 to 21/10/2022 and 25/10/2022 and was followed by post-excavation and reporting.

The designated area for strip, map and sample is the footprint Plots 5 and 6. The watching brief consisted of motoring foundation trenches for Plots 1-4 and associated garages (see Fig 3 below).

The area was stripped using a tracked excavator fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket. The work involved the removal of overburden under the supervision of an experienced professional archaeologist to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. Due to computer issues and a transition to working from home due to COVID measures no photographs of stripped area could be recovered.

Monitoring

Internal monitoring procedures were undertaken with the project manager, to ensure that project targets were met and professional standards maintained. Provision was made for external monitoring meetings with the Planning Archaeologist and the Client, if required.

The Planning Archaeologist was not able to visit the site but was sent photographs and kept apprised of progress throughout the project.



Figure 3: Plan of the development showing the location of the excavation area in yellow (provided by client)

Results

Strip, Map & Sample

Between the 19th and 23rd April 2021 ULAS undertook the excavation of the area assigned for plots 5 and 6 (see Fig. 3, area in yellow). The excavation area measured 7m x 10m. A previous evaluation trench had identified the survival of archaeological features in the area.

The topsoil consisted of a dark grey brown plough soil which contained a quantity of building rubble and waste material from previous buildings that had existed on or near the site. Approximately 0.5m of topsoil was removed revealing a layer of subsoil which consisted of mid-orange grey sandy clay. The subsoil was approximately 0.40m deep and this was removed to reveal the surviving natural ground which had been cut by a variety of archaeological features.

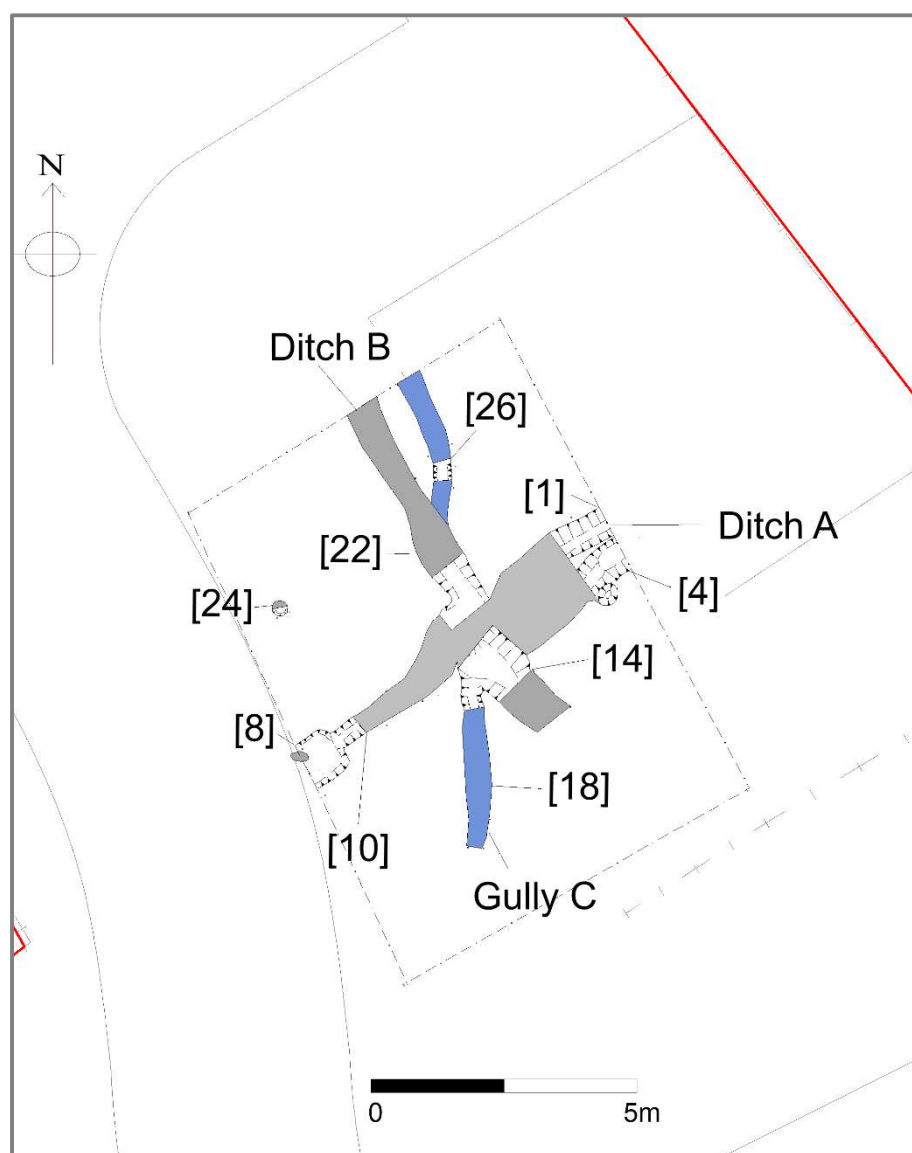


Figure 4: Plan of stripped area

The archaeology consisted of NE-SW ditch A, which runs parallel with Main Street. This was hand excavated at two sections, cuts [1] and [10]. This is most likely a property boundary ditch and had evidence of re-cutting. Cut [4], on the eastern edge of the excavation, may have been an earlier version of the ditch and cut [8], on the western edge of excavation, may have been a re-cutting of the ditch or a pit.

Perpendicular to boundary ditch A was shallower ditch B, this was hand excavated at two sections, cut [14] and [22]. Ditch B probably formed division of the land between two plots.

Aligned N-S was a narrow shallow gully which appeared to be truncated by ditches A and B and was possibly a earlier phase, though no dating evidence was recovered. The gully was excavated at two sections, cuts [18] and [26]

A single posthole, cut [24], was also hand excavated.

Ditch A

Orientated NE-SW and situated across the middle of the site, Ditch A measured 6.48m long, between 0.41m wide and 0.12m deep at cut [10] and 0.73m wide and 0.37m deep at cut [1].

Cut [1] was V-shaped in profile with medium sloping sides and a concave base. It contained two fills, primary fill (2) consisted of an orange brown sandy clay and secondary fill (3) consisted of a dark reddish brown silty sand with variable sized angular stone inclusions. No dating evidence was recovered. An environmental bulk sample was taken, but no charred plant remains or other artefacts were found.

Cut [4] was an earlier feature, it was concave in profile with medium sloping sides and concave base. It was 0.65m wide and 0.24m deep and had been truncated by cut [1]. The fill (5) consisted of a light grey brown silty sand with rounded pebble inclusions. No dating evidence was recovered.

Cut [10] had medium sloping sides and a concave base. The fill, (11), consisted of an orange brown sandy clay, similar to fill (2), but contained small angular stone inclusions. No dating evidence was recovered.

Cut [8] was situated at the western edge of the excavated area and may have been a pit or a re-worked addition to Ditch A. It had steep sloping sides, a flat base and was 0.94m wide and 0.33m deep. The fill, (9), consisted of a dark reddish brown silty sand containing one large boulder and variable sized rounded pebbles. No dating evidence was recovered. An environmental bulk sample was taken, but no charred plant remains or other artefacts were found.

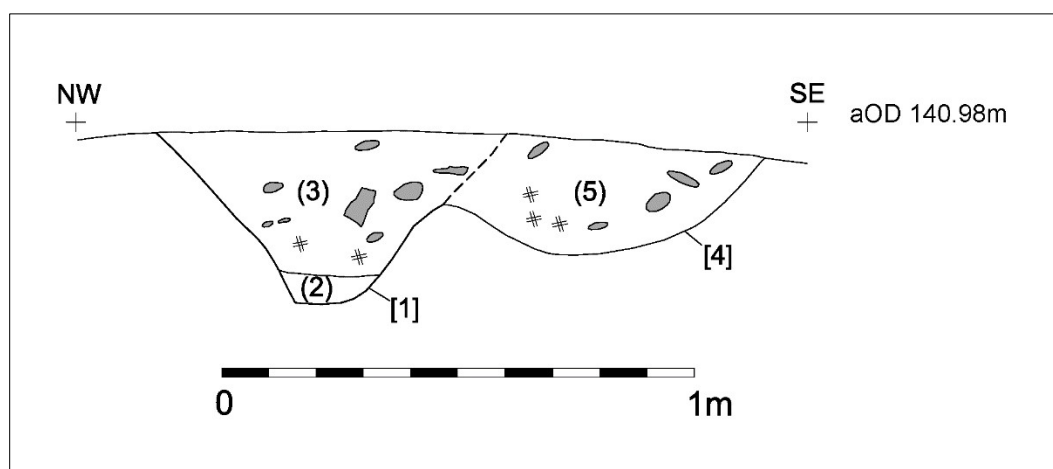


Figure 5: Section drawing of Ditch A at cuts [1] and [4], looking north-east

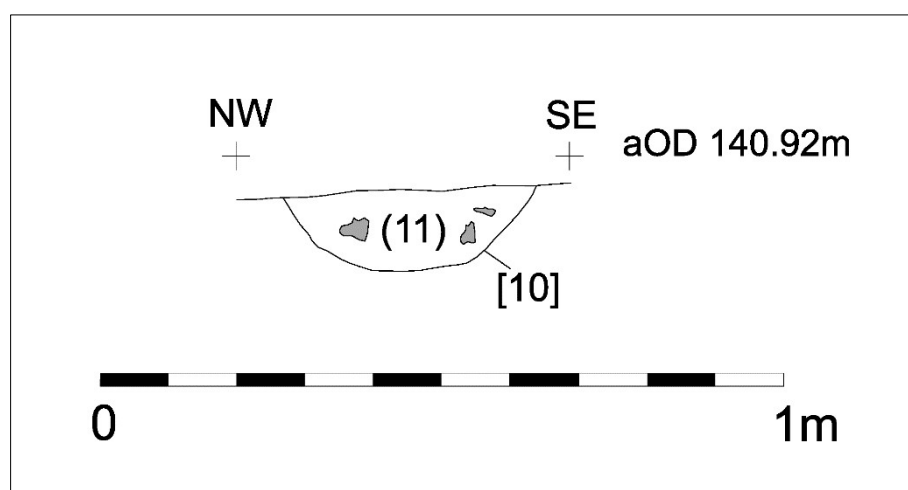


Figure 6: Section drawing of Ditch A at cut [10], looking north-east

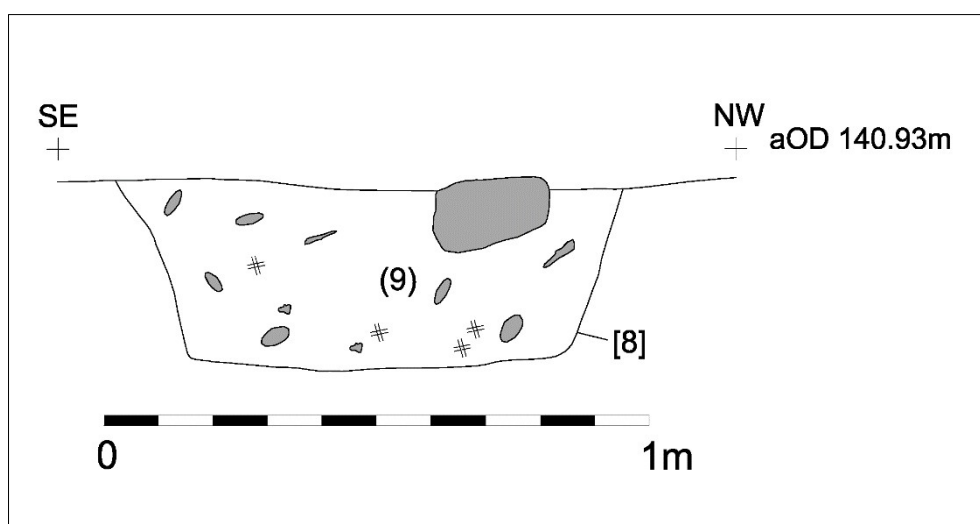


Figure 7: Section drawing of cut [8] looking south-west, possible pit or reworking of Ditch A

Ditch B

Orientated NW-SE and situated along the middle of the site, Ditch B measured 6.96m long, and between 0.46m and 0.88m wide. It had been excavated on the northern edge of the excavation during evaluation trenching (Finn 2017). The ditch was truncated sharply at the south, but it wasn't clear what had caused the truncation. The ditch was hand excavated at 2 sections, cuts [14] and [22], where it intercut Ditch A, however no relationship was clear at either section.

Cut [14] was situated to the south of the Ditch A intersection and had a shallow V-shaped profile. It was 0.81m wide and 0.26m deep. The fill, (15), consisted of mid-reddish brown silty sand and variable sized rounded pebble inclusions. No dating evidence was recovered.

Cut [22] was situated to the north of the Ditch A intersection and had irregular sloping sides and a flat base. It was 0.81m wide and 0.26m deep. The fill, (15), consisted of mid-reddish brown silty sand and variable sized rounded pebble inclusions. No dating evidence was recovered.

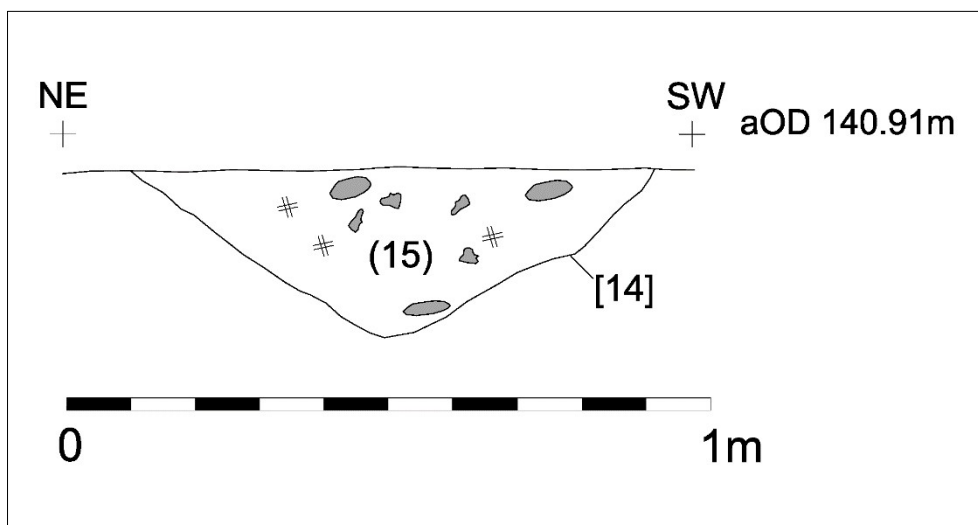


Figure 8: Section drawing of Ditch B at cut [14], looking south-east

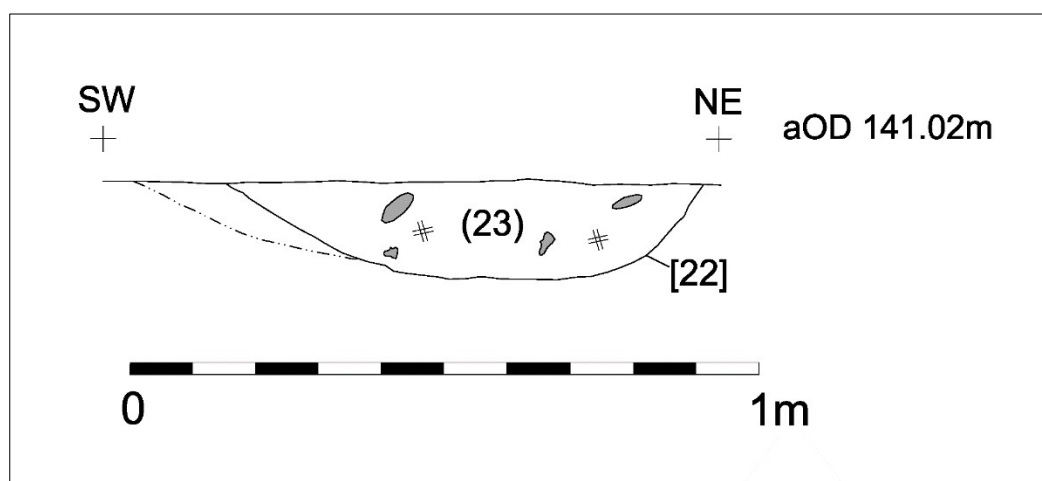


Figure 9: Section drawing of Ditch B at cut [22], looking north-west

Gully C

Orientated N-S and situated along the middle of the site, the gully measured 9.10m long, and between 0.48m and 0.52m wide. It had been excavated on the northern edge of the excavation during evaluation trenching (Finn 2017). The gully was truncated sharply at the south, but it was unclear what had caused the truncation. The gully was hand excavated at two sections, cut [18], where it intercut Ditch B, however no relationship was clear at this section, and cut [26]. Cut [18] was situated to the south of the Ditch B intersection and had a shallow irregular concave profile. It was 0.36m wide and 0.11m deep. The fill, (19), consisted of mid-reddish brown silty sand. No dating evidence was recovered.

Cut [26] was situated towards the north of the site of the Ditch B intersection and had a shallow irregular concave profile. It was 0.37m wide and 0.11m deep. The fill, (27), consisted of mid-reddish brown silty sand. No dating evidence was recovered.

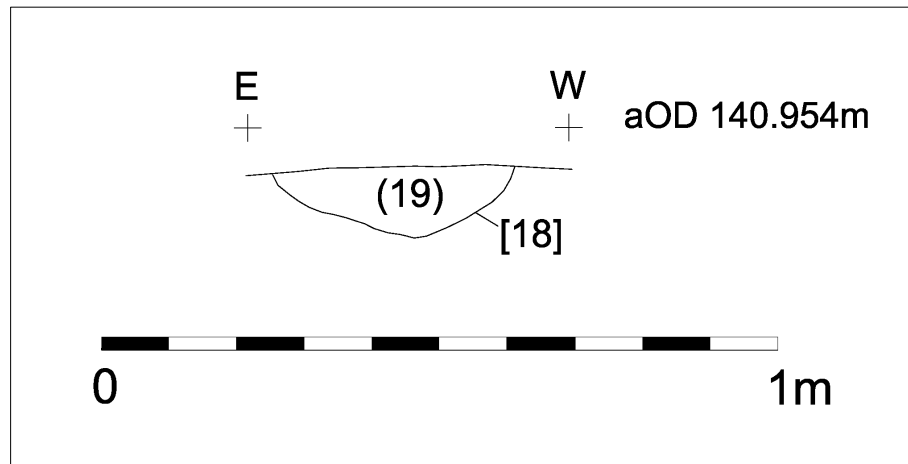


Figure 10: Section drawing of Gully C at cut [18], looking south

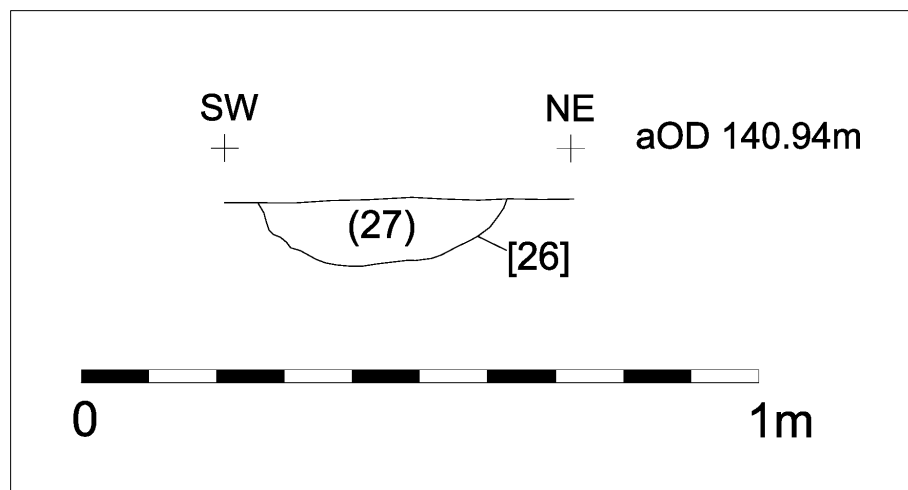


Figure 11: Section drawing of Gully C at cut [26], looking north-west

Post hole

A single post hole, cut [24], was excavated in the north-west are of the site. It was round in plan with vertical sides and a flat base and was 0.28m in diameter and 0.14m deep. The fill, (25), was a mid-reddish brown silty sand. No dating evidence was recovered.

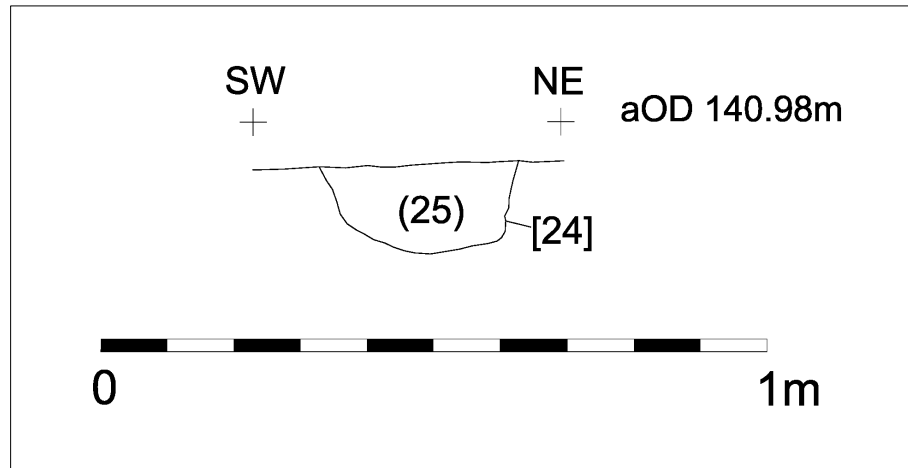


Figure 12: Section drawing of post hole cut [24], looking north-west

Discussion

The strip, map and sample excavation followed evaluation trenching which had picked up a ditch and a gully at the north of the excavated area. These features continued, and due to the area being stripped it was possible to reveal further features. Although no material was found to help date these features, pottery found during the evaluation and subsequent watching brief (see below) indicates a time of activity in the medieval and post-medieval period. It is clear that these ditches form part of a more extensive system of plot boundary features presumably delineating space at the rear of a former plot (Figure 13).

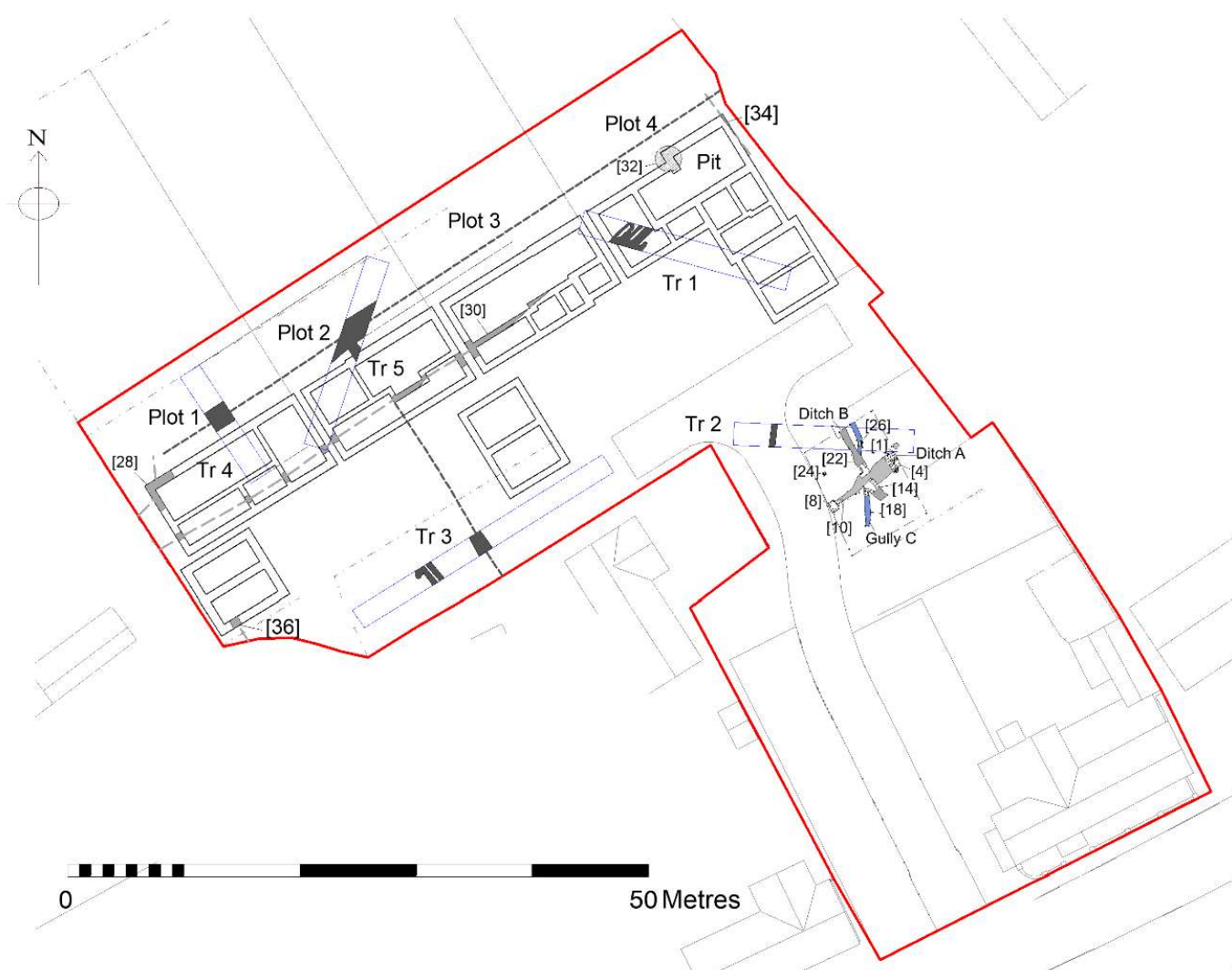


Figure 13: Plan of house plot foundation with stripped area with overlay of trial trenching

Watching brief

The watching brief consisted of archaeological monitoring and recording during the excavation of the foundation trenches of plots 1-4 and associated garages. This revealed a north-east to south-west aligned gully and a possibly corner of the northern boundary ditch found in the trenching phase (Fig. 13).

The natural geology was a mixed orange-red sandy gravels and mixed clay at c.0.5m deep. The subsoil was a mid-brown sandy clay with frequent pebble inclusions. Topsoil; overlay this consisting of a grey sandy loam, with a very dark modern soil as the very top layer. The width of the trenches varied between 0.45m and 1m, and the depth varied between 0.7m and 1.5m.

Under the area that was the menage, the topsoil and subsoil had been removed and replaced with a compacted dark grey clay overlain by a gravel topped with sand.

In the northwest corner of plot 1 a possible large ditch or pit was observed cut into the natural geology [28] (Figs 14-18). It appeared to be filled by a dark grey clay silt (27). The full extent could not be ascertained due to its position. This could be a change in direction of the northern plot boundary ditch as found during the evaluation phase in trenches 4 and 5.



Figure 14: North-eastern ditch [28] along north-west foundation trench looking north-east



Figure 15: North-eastern ditch [28] along north-west foundation trench partially excavated looking north-west



Figure 16: North-eastern ditch [28] along north-eastern foundation trench



Figure 17: North-eastern ditch [28] looking north



Figure 18: North-eastern ditch [28] fully excavated looking east

A north-east to south-west aligned gully [30] was noted across the middle of Plots 1 and 2, and ending in Plot 3. Where encountered it varied in width between 0.6 and 1.3m wide filled by a mid to dark brown clay sand (Figs 19-27). It appeared to terminate in the middle north-west to south-east foundation trench, sealed by subsoil (Fig. 28 & 29).



Figure 19: Gully [30] in Plot 1 north-western foundation trench looking north-east



Figure 20: Gully [30] in Plot 1 north-eastern foundation trench looking north-east



Figure 21: Gully [30] in Plot 2 north-western foundation trench looking south-west



Figure 22: Gully [30] in Plot 2 middle foundation trench showing section looking north



Figure 23: Gully [30] in Plot 2 middle foundation trench showing section looking south-west



Figure 24: Gully [30] in Plot 2 middle foundation trench showing longitudinal section looking north-west



Figure 25: Gully [30] in Plot 2 north-eastern foundation trench looking north-west



Figure 26: Gully [30] in Plot 3 north-west foundation trench looking south-west



Figure 27: Gully [30] in Plot 3 across north-west foundation trench showing profile section



Figure 28: Gully [30] in Plot 3 middle north-west to south-east foundation trench looking north



Figure 29: Possible termination of gully [30] in Plot 3 middle north-west to south-east foundation trench

The north-west to south-east aligned gully did not reappear within the foundation trenches of Plot 4. In the northern corner of the plot a possible boundary ditch [34] was observed, though the ditch did not continue through the north-west to south-east foundation trench due to the angle (Fig. 30). It was filled by (33) a mid brown clay sand.



Figure 30: Possible boundary ditch [34] in northern corner of Plot 4, looking east

Within the north-east to south-west foundation trench a post medieval pit [32] was observed truncating the subsoil (Figs.31 & 32). It was most likely circular with a diameter of approx. 2.25m, and 1.3m deep. It was filled by (31), mid brown-grey sandy clay similar to the subsoil. Within the fill were two early 20th Century glass bottles (one HP Sauce).



Figure 31: Post-medieval pit [32] in Plot 4 north-east to south-west foundation trench looking north-east



Figure 32: Post-medieval pit [32] in Plot 4 north-east to south-west foundation trench looking west

In the southern north-east to south-west foundation trench for the garage for Plot 1 a north-west to south-east ditch [36] was observed (Fig. 33). It appeared to have a steep profile, at least 0.8m wide and at least 0.8m deep. It was filled by (35) dark grey sandy clay. The garages for the middle plots and Plot 4 did not reveal any archaeology.



Figure 33: Ditch [36] in plot 1 garage looking south-east

The Environmental Samples by *Adam Santer*

Introduction

Two bulk soil samples which were taken during an archaeological excavation at Nailstone, Leicestershire were processed and analysed for the presence of charred plant remains. Sample 1 was taken from the fill (3) of ditch [1] whereas sample 2 was taken from the fill (9) of pit [8].

Methodology

The samples mid to dark reddish brown sandy silt and were processed in a York tank using a 0.5mm mesh with flotation into a 0.3mm sieve. The flotation fractions (flots) were sorted for the presence of charred plant remains and other artefacts under an x10-40 stereo microscope. The residues were air dried and sorted by eye.

Results and potential

Neither of the samples contained any charred plant remains. The lack of charred plant remains in all of the samples presents no potential for further analysis. However, if further sampling is carried out then a suitable sampling strategy should be implemented.

Conclusion

The strip, map and sample excavation and subsequent watching brief confirmed survival of archaeological remains across the development area. In places these features survived approx. 1m below the current ground level. These features are the remains of medieval and post-medieval property boundaries and are orientated in a similar way to Main Street.

Archive and Publication

Unfortunately digital photographs of the excavated sections were lost.

The archive for the project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A39.2021. The archive consists of the following:

- 1 unbound copy of this report (2023-004)
- 2 A4 sheets of notes
- 1 context record sheet
- 21 context sheets
- 1 permatrace sheet of primary drawings
- 1 drawing record
- 1 photographic record
- 1 CD of digital photographs

A summary of this report will appear in due course in the Transactions the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

The University of Leicester Archaeological Services supports the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The online OASIS data entry has been completed detailing the results of the project and will be digitally accessible through The Archaeological Data Services (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>).

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