



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**Archaeological Attendance and
Recording (Watching Brief) at
The Limes, Main Street, Congerstone,
CV13 6LX**

NGR: SK 36754 05623

Richard Huxley



**ULAS Report No. 2022-083
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Site Name: The Limes, Main Street, Congerstone, CV13 6LX

Grid Ref: SK 36754 05623

Author: Richard Huxley

Client: Craig Vincent & Graham Hinds

Planning Authority: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

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Cover photo: Groundwork in progress (looking north).

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OASIS RECORD

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	Previous/Future Work	No		
	Project Type	Watching Brief		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Private garden		
	Monument Type/Period	Ditch -Medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery-Medieval		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Post-determination		
	Planning Ref.	21/00661/FUL		
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	Study Area	0.25 ha		
	Site Coordinates	SK 36754 05623		
	Height OD	90m		
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An Archaeological Attendance and Recording (Watching Brief) at The Limes, Main Street, Congerstone

Richard Huxley

Summary

This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at The Limes, Main Street, Congerstone. The work was undertaken in April and May 2022 on behalf of Craig Vincent and Graham Hinds in advance of the construction of two dwellings located on the northern edge of Congerstone.

The Watching Brief involved the stripping of topsoil within the building footprints and the excavation of footings. The northern building contained two north-west to south-east orientated ditches and a gully. A spread of stones was found covering one of these and another was found in the driveway to the west. Medieval pottery dating to the 12th-14th centuries was found in one of the ditches and both of the stone layers.

The southern building footprint contained several shallow gullies and pits. Another layer of stones was found along the eastern edge of the area. One gully was modern however medieval pottery dated 12th-14th century was found in many of the features. The shallow gullies and ditches may relate to field boundaries and farming occurring during the medieval period. The site lies within the medieval Congerstone manor, the remains being evidence of the medieval field boundaries in this part of the estate.

The archive will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under the accession number X.A.15.2022.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (MHCLG 2021) this document forms the report for archaeological attendance and recording (a watching brief) at The Limes, Main Street, Congerstone (Figs 1-2).

The work was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Craig Vincent and Graham Hinds.

Planning permission has been granted for the construction of two dwellings and a garage (Ref: 21/00661/FUL (Fig. 3)). Due to the archaeological potential, the Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire as advisor to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council has requested archaeological attendance for inspection and recording (watching brief) during any groundworks for the proposed development in order to record any archaeological remains that may be present and mitigate the impacts of the scheme.

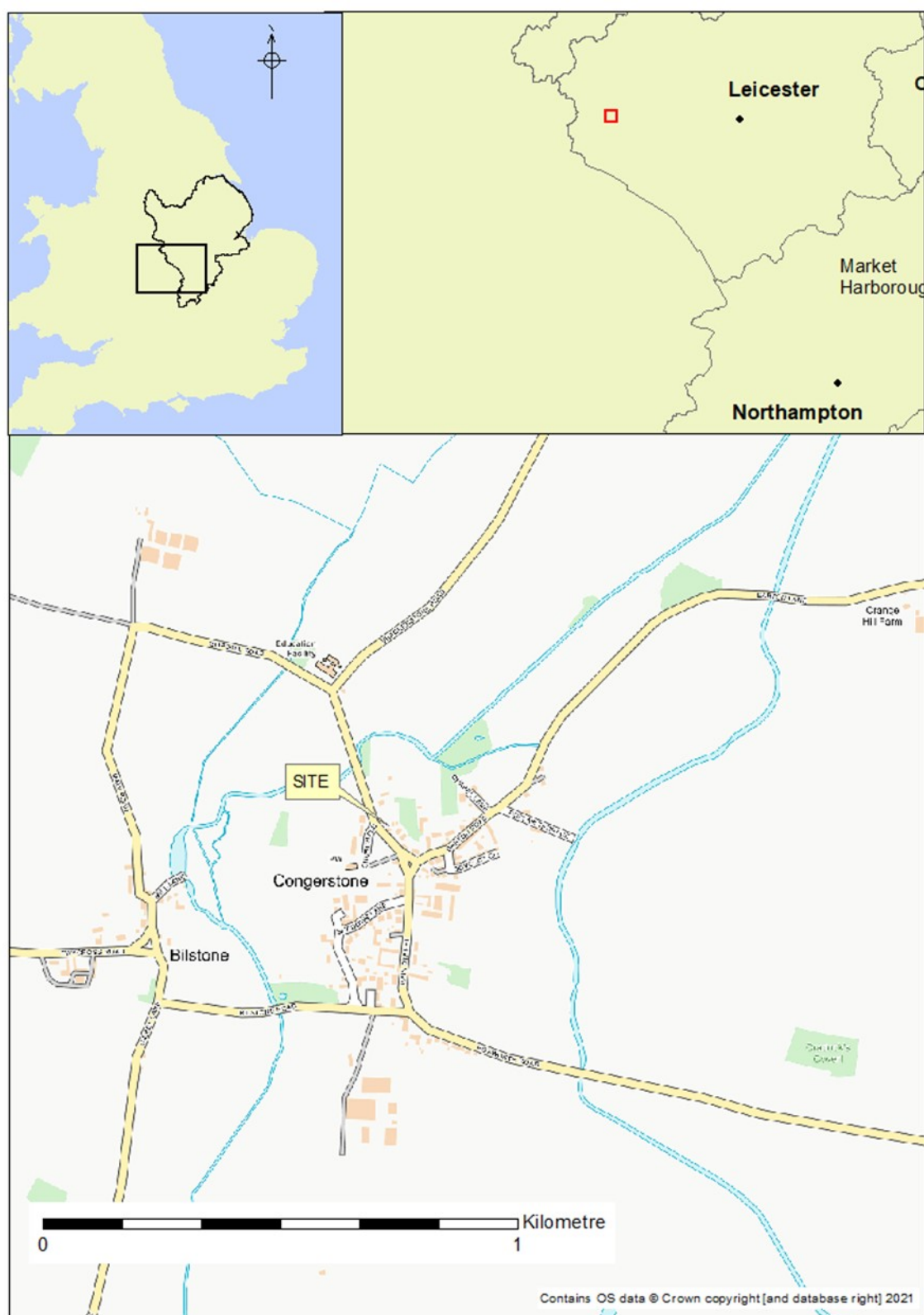


Figure 1: Location of the site (red).
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Location, Topography and Geology

The village of Congerstone lies to the northwest of Market Bosworth in the county of Leicestershire. The application site is located on the northern edge of the village (SK 36754 05623) on the eastern side of Shackerstone road. The site is within the Congerstone Conservation Area and covers approximately 250 square meters which is slightly sloping to the north. It comprised a residential garden with a range of former outbuildings that were originally a poultry shed, mushroom shed and garaging. These were substantial buildings being constructed of red brick under a timber trussed roof with concrete floors. In addition, there was a glass house and range of garden structures.

The proposed area and is located within the Congerstone Conservation Area, and within the grounds of the Limes. The British Geological Society state that the areas underlying bedrock is comprised of Triassic (undifferentiated) mudstone, silts and sandstone. With the superficial deposits of Lacustrine clay, silt and sand. The site is approximately 90m above OD.

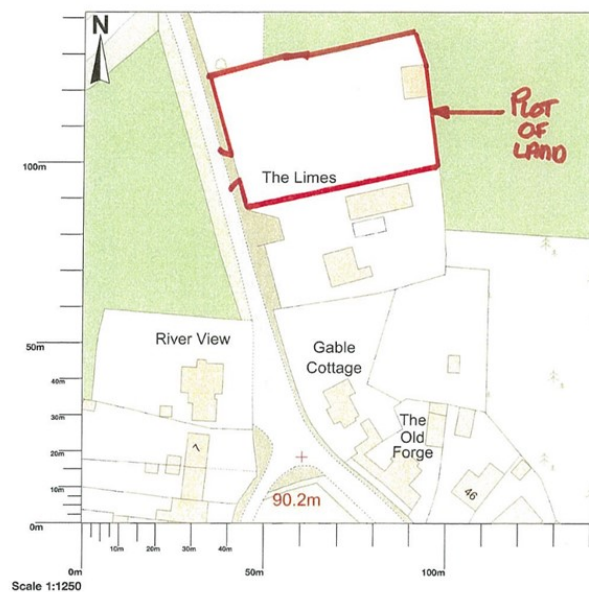


Figure 2: Detailed site plan (provided by client).

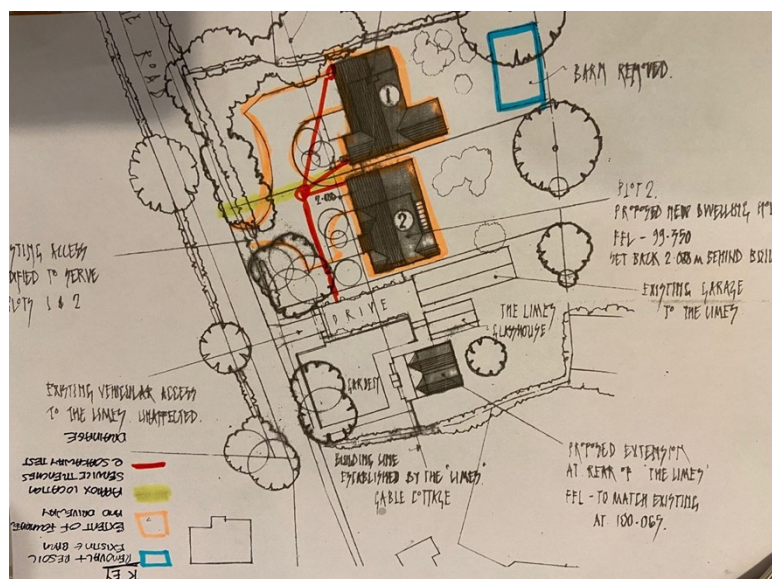


Figure 3: Plan of the proposed development (provided by client).

Archaeological and Historical Background

The name Congerstone is believed to derive from the Old English *cyning-tun* meaning farm or settlement of a king. The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that the application site lies within an area of good archaeological potential, within the historic medieval and post-medieval settlement core and designated Conservation Area of Congerstone village (**MLE3155**). Just to the west of the application area are visible earthworks believed to represent the remains of the shrunken medieval village (**MLE3140**), in addition to an enclosed rectangular area and fishpond which may have formed the gardens to a vanished manor house (**MLE22785**); there is evidence of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing in the area. The Grade II parish church of St Mary the Virgin dates back to 1179, with the majority of the current building being of 16th century date, with re-modelling in the 19th century.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leicester records no known archaeological remains within the site itself. Archaeological investigations have been carried out within the village in the past and are listed below (taken from ADS):

- 99 Barston Rd (former Fox and Hounds Inn), Congerstone – cobbled layer of uncertain date and building survey.
- The Rectory, 2 Shadows Lane, Congerstone – ditch.
- Bilstone Road & Shadows Lane – undated gullies.
- Shrunken medieval village to the northwest of the village consisting of 6 house platforms. (Historic England Inventory).

Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work 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 record any archaeological deposits and produce an archive and report of any results.

Research Objectives

The site had the potential to add to research objectives from the medieval through to the Post-medieval period, 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), and updated here: <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/>:

The proximity of the medieval earthworks indicated a potential for archaeology relating to the medieval village and could contribute to the following Research Objective: *Medieval*, 7E investigate the morphology of rural settlements. This research aim was re-assessed during the course of the fieldwork.

Methodology

All work followed the procedures set out in the approved *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) for the project (Reeds 2022).

All work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (updated 2020) and adhered to their *Code of Conduct* (updated 2021). The accession number X.A.15.2022 was used to identify all records and artefacts.

The watching brief involved the observation during groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist. Excavation was carried out by the client's contractor with a machine appropriate for the work. The machine did not track over any surfaces until the archaeologist had inspected and cleared the area.

Any archaeological deposits revealed were investigated and recorded using standard ULAS procedures. Sufficient proportions of any archaeological features or deposits were hand excavated in order to provide the stratigraphic and chronological sequence of deposits.

A record of the full extent in plan of all archaeological deposits encountered were made using an appropriate system related to the OS grid. Measured drawings of all archaeological features were prepared and tied into the overall site plan. Relevant heights were taken as appropriate and the OD height calculated.



Figure 4: Stripping the topsoil from the southern building plot (looking north).

Results

The topsoil was stripped from both building plots and a series of shallow features were revealed and a layer of stones. The stripping was not deep enough to expose the features in the northern area and additional monitoring of the foundation trenches was performed. The topsoil (context (01)) was composed of soft friable dark greyish brown coloured sandy silt which occasionally contained stones. The topsoil increased in thickness to the north, but on average measured 0.3m deep.

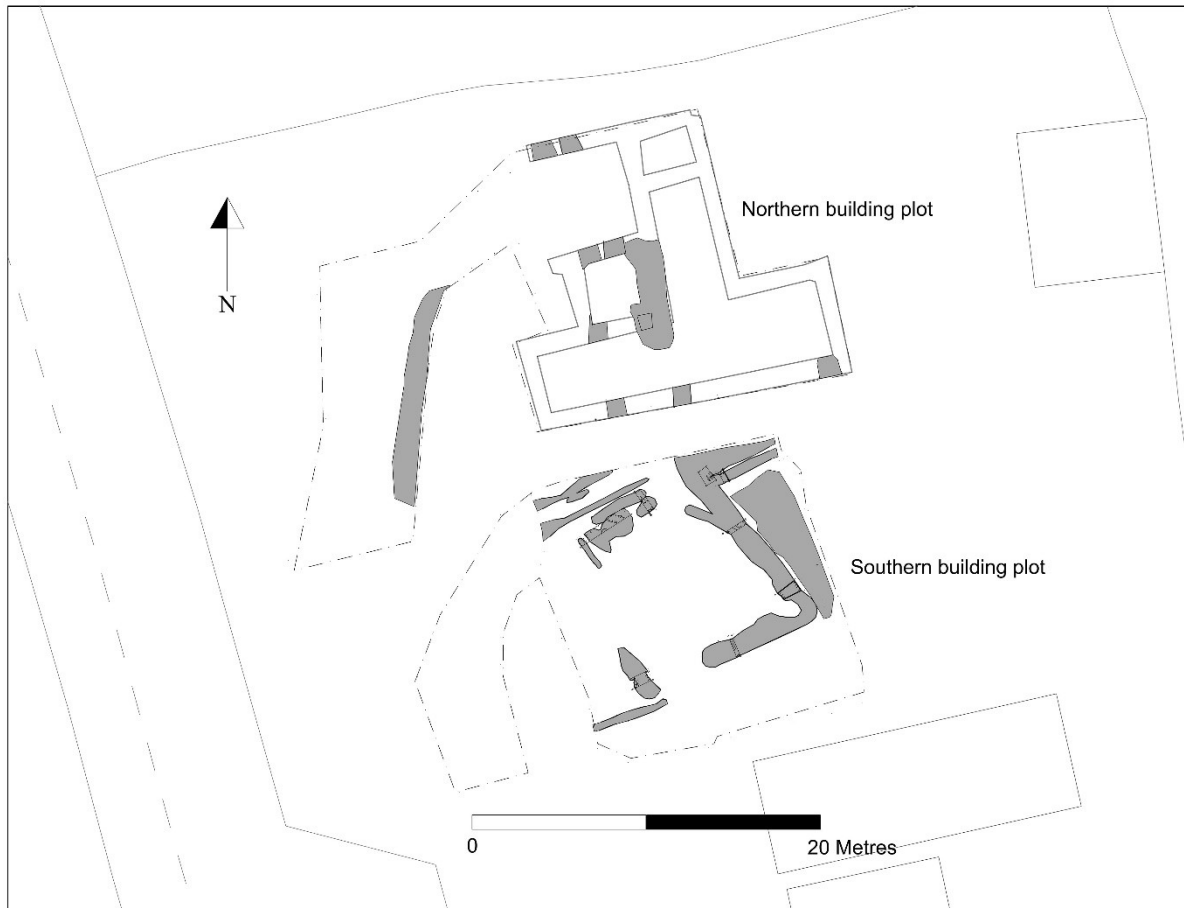


Figure 5: Plan of all archaeological features in the two building plots.

Northern Building Plot

During the stripping of the topsoil, pottery dating to the mid-13th century was recovered. The pottery was found close to a layer of stones (context (03)) located in the centre of the building plot. The layer appeared to be on a rough north to south alignment measuring more than 6.2m long, over 2.13m wide and 0.18m deep. The stones were small to medium sized rounded pebbles and cobbles that were in a matrix of dark brownish grey sandy silt. Medieval pottery dating to the 12th century were found within the stones and the cleaning of the deposit (context (02)) mostly produced pottery dating 13th-15th century, along with a single sherd of 16th century pottery.



Figure 6: Plan of the features within the northern building plot.

A small hand-dug sondage was excavated into the layer of stones (see Section 1.07), along with a machine-dug section during the excavation of the new building footings. This revealed the layer of stones to be below the topsoil. To the north in Section 2.03 the stones were disturbed, hence the appearance of the stones overlying the topsoil in the section. The stone surface overlay ditch [49]. The ditch ([41] and [49]) measured over 16.5m long, 1.2m wide, 0.38-0.45m deep and was orientated north-west to south-east. It had moderately sloping convex sides, a concave base and was filled with mid greyish brown sandy silt (contexts (42) and (50)). The ditch frequently contained cobbles and small stones, and pottery dating to the 12th century was found within it.

Another larger ditch ([38] and [53]) was found to the west and was orientated north to south. This ditch measured more than 16.5m long, 1.5m wide, 0.75m deep, and had moderately sloping concave sides and a concave base. The ditch contained several deposits, the lower (contexts (39) and (50)) was composed of mid brownish grey silty clay. It frequently contained cobbles and small stones and measured 0.3-0.4m thick. A layer of mid greyish brown silty clay (contexts (40) and (55)) measuring 0.26-0.45m thick was found above this. Cobbles were occasionally found within this along with small stones. No pottery was found within this ditch.

A smaller ditch ([45] and [51], Section 2.01 & 2.03) likely measuring over 5m long, 0.54-0.75m wide and 0.4m deep was found between the two larger ditches. It was cut by ditch [53]. The ditch had moderately sloping concave and convex sides with a concave base. It was filled with mid brownish grey silty clay with flecks of charcoal, small stones and patches of yellow clay (contexts (46) and (52)). In the southernmost foundation trench the ditch was truncated by a shallow feature [56] (perhaps a re-cut) measuring 1.75m wide, 0.4m deep. It had moderately

sloping sides, a concave base and was filled with mid greyish brown silty clay (context (57) which occasionally contained small stones.

Several other features were visible only in the side of the southernmost trench (Section 2.01). A pit [43] measuring 3.1m wide and 0.25m deep was found to the east of the ditches. The pit had shallow concave sides and a slightly undulating base. It was filled with mid greyish brown friable silty sand (context (44)) which occasionally contained small stones. The feature may be a continuation of a wide shallow pit [36] which was found in the north-eastern corner of the southern building plot. Another feature [47] was found close to the south-eastern corner of the northern building plot. It had moderately sloping concave sides, a concave base and was filled with dark greyish brown friable, loamy sandy silt (context (48)), which frequently contained silt and small stones. This could be a pit or ditch terminus.

No other features were found in the northern foundation trenches however during the stripping of the driveway another layer of stones (context (16)) was found beneath the topsoil. The layer was found along the eastern edge of the driveway and measured approximately 11m long and more than 1.5m wide. The deposit was composed of small and medium sized rounded stones and cobbles in a matrix of mid greyish brown sandy silt. Pottery dating to the 12th century was found within the stones.

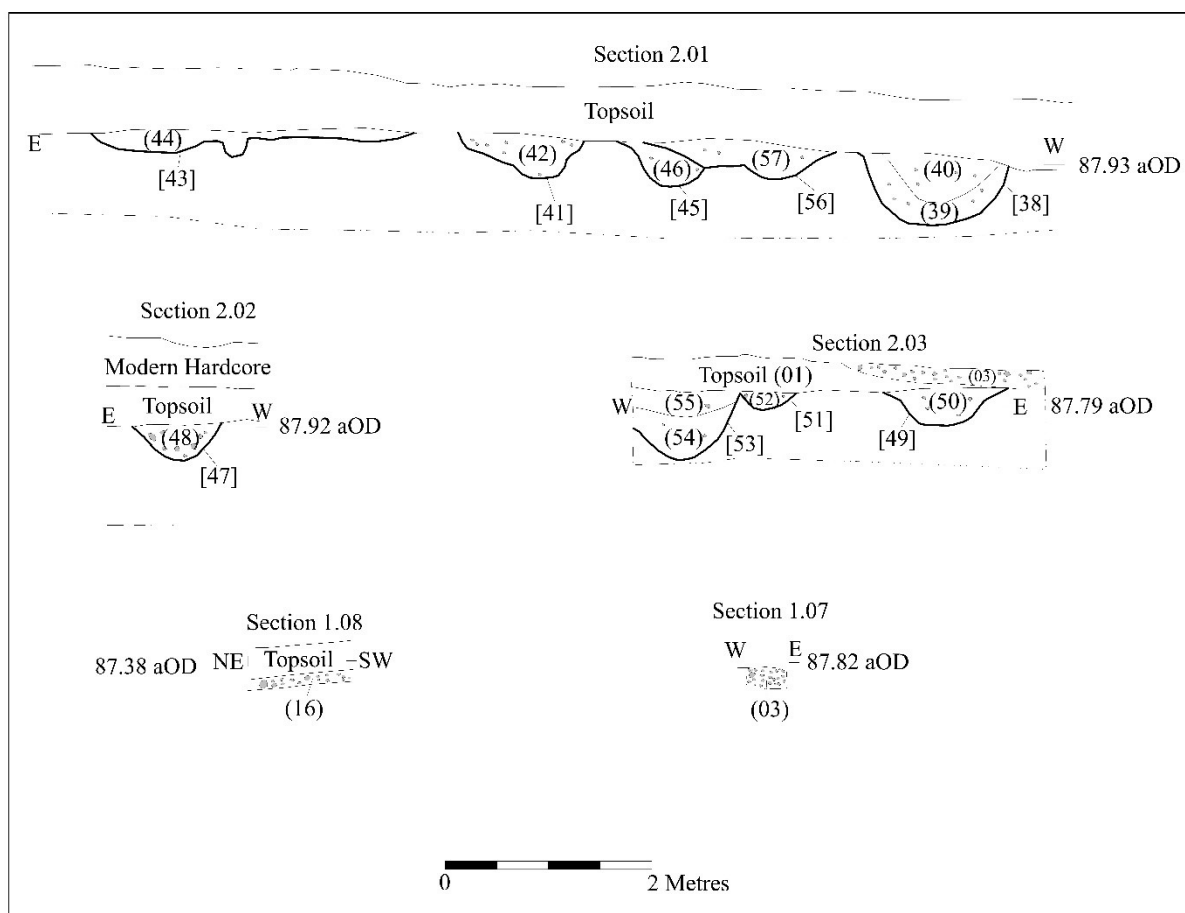


Figure 7: Sections of the features in the northern building plot.



Figure 8: Ditch [38] in the southern foundation trench.



Figure 9: Stone layer (16) in the driveway.

Southern Building Plot

The stripping of the topsoil in the southern building plot revealed a series of shallow features and because they had been sufficiently revealed there was no need to monitor the excavation of the foundation trenches. Two modern gullies orientated north-east to south west were found in the northern and southern parts of the area. The southern gully [30] measured 4m long, 0.28m wide and 0.05m deep. It was filled with dark greyish brown sandy silt (context (31)) which occasionally contained stones, modern earthenware pottery, ceramic building material (CBM) and glass. The northern gully was not excavated, but was clearly cut through the topsoil and was filled with dark greyish black silty clay.

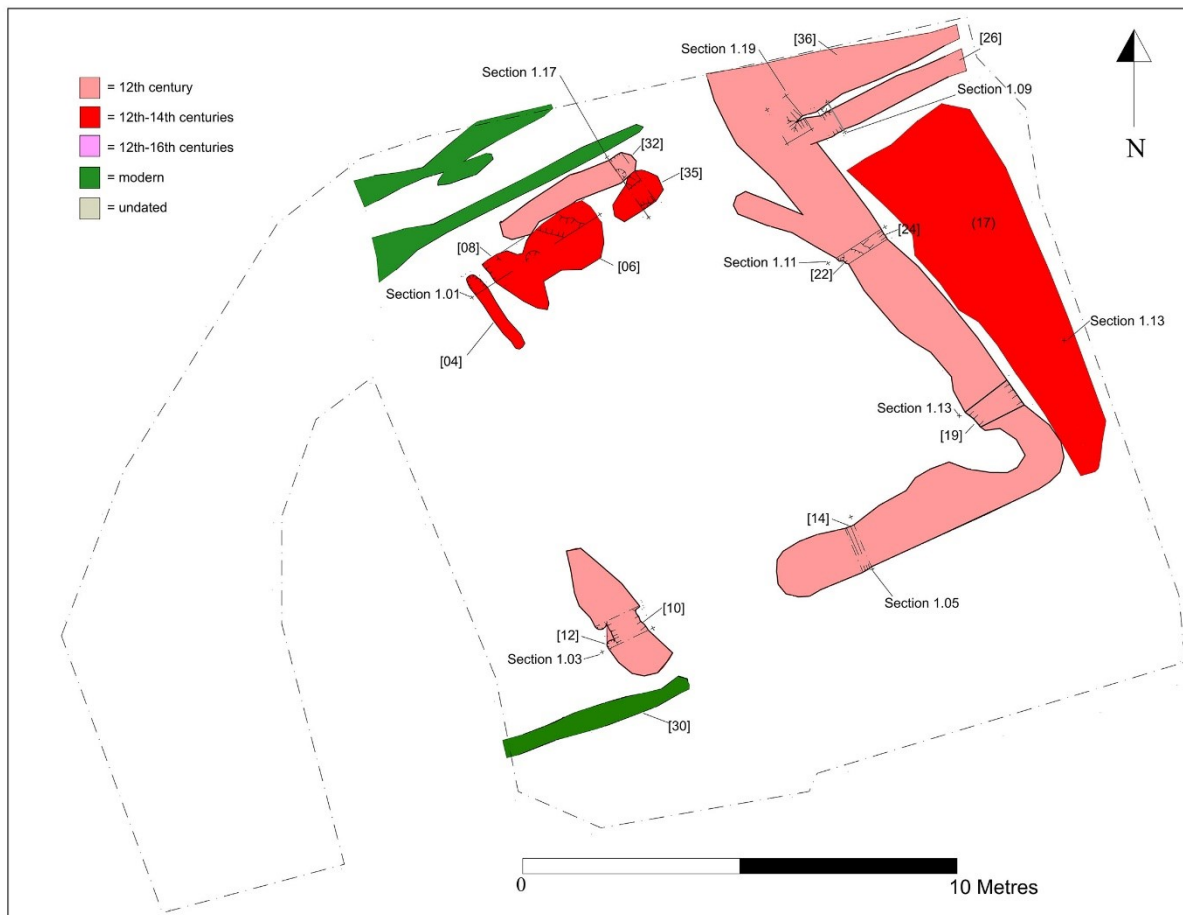


Figure 10: Plan of the features within the southern building plot.

To the south of the modern gully was a north-east to south-west orientated gully **[32]** measuring 3.44m long, 0.7m wide and 0.14m deep had moderately sloping sides, a concave base and was filled with dark greyish brown loamy sandy silt (context (33)). This gully truncated a shallow pit **[35]** which measured 1.18m long, 0.7m wide and 0.05m deep. It was filled with a hard, friable mid greyish brown sandy silt (context (36)) with frequent stones and pottery dated to the 12th century.

Several small intercutting features were found to the west of the pit which were either elongated pits or the partial remains of shallow gullies (Section 1.01). Features **[06]** and **[08]** were orientated north-west to south-east and measured 1.7m long, 0.8-1.4m wide and 0.14m deep. They both had shallow or moderately sloping sides and were filled with soft friable mid brownish grey loamy sandy silt (contexts (07) and (09)). Pottery dating to the 12th-14th century were found in both features. Another gully **[04]** measuring 2.1m long, 0.35m wide and 0.05m deep was found to the west. It had moderately sloping sides, a flat base and was filled with soft friable mid brownish grey loamy sandy silt (context (06)). Pottery dated to the 14th century was found in the feature.

In the south-western part of the site another shallow gully **[10]** was found. It was orientated north-west to south-east and measured 3.3m long, 0.8m wide and 0.15m deep. The gully had shallow sloping concave sides, a concave base and was filled with soft friable mid brownish grey loamy sandy silt (context (11)) which contained 12th century pottery. A small depression was found next to the gully which could be the base of a post hole **[12]**. The feature measured

0.32m long, 0.22m wide, 0.08m deep and was filled with mid brownish grey loamy sandy silt containing 12th century pottery.

A small ditch [14] orientated north-east to south-west was found in the south-eastern corner of the site. It measured 6m long, 1.1m wide and 0.35m deep. The southern edge was steep, but the northern was shallow and was truncated. It was filled with soft friable mid brownish grey loamy sandy silt (context (15)), which contained 12th century pottery. The eastern end of the feature either turned or merged with another small ditch ([19] and [22]) orientated north-west to south-east.

The ditch became increasingly shallow to the north and measured 11.7m long, 0.5-0.7m wide and 0.08-0.3m deep. The northern part contained a single fill composed of soft friable mid brownish grey loamy sandy silt (context (23)) containing 12th century pottery. The southern part was deeper and filled with several deposits. The upper fill (context (21)) had the same composition as the shallower northern part of the ditch and contained 14th century pottery. Beneath this was a layer of redeposited natural clay tipping in from the western side of the ditch. The lower fill was a dark greyish brown sandy silt (context (20)) containing frequent cobbles, pebbles and patches of yellow sand.

A layer of pebbles and cobbles (context (17)) measuring 8.7m long, 3m wide and 0.16m thick was found along the eastern side of the ditch. The stones were in a matrix of mid orangey brown sandy silt and the deposit appeared to be a layer of redeposited natural. The cleaning of the deposit (context (18)) produced pottery dated to the 14th century.

A gully [26] orientated north-east to south-west was found to the north of the cobbles. It measured 4m long, 0.62m wide, 0.14m deep and had moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled with dark greyish brown compact clay sand (context (27)) containing cobbles and 12th century pottery. The western side of the feature merged with ditch [22] and had an unclear relationship with it. A large pit [36] measuring 4m long, more than 1.25m wide and 0.14m deep was found in the north-eastern corner of the site. It truncated ditch [22] and was filled with mid greyish brown friable silty sand (context (37)) which contained 12th century pottery.

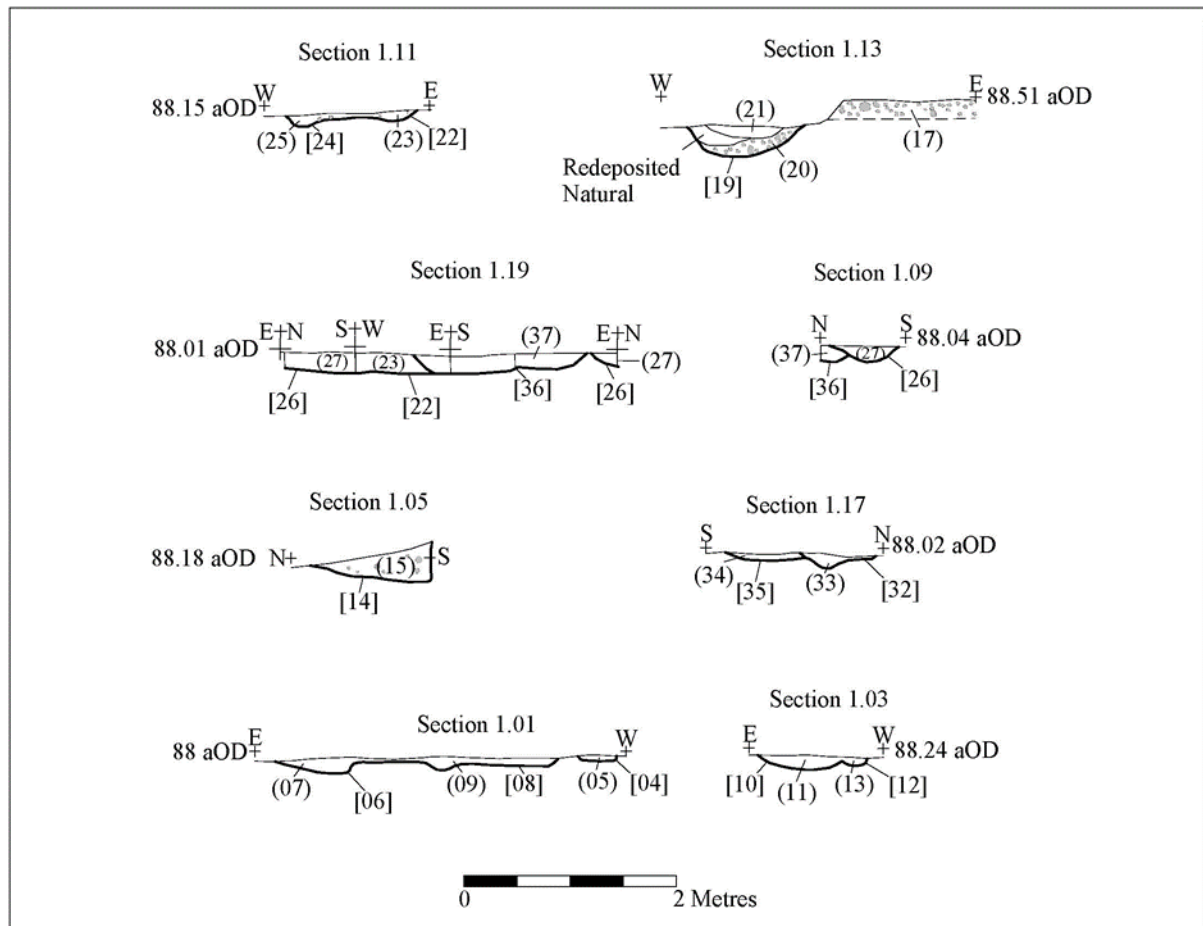


Figure 11: Sections of the features in the southern building plot.



Figure 12: Shallow gully [10] and post hole [12].



Figure 13: Stone layer (17) in the east of the southern building plot.



Figure 14: Gully [26] and pit [36] merging with shallow ditch [22].



Figure 15: Structure from Motion photogrammetric image of stone layer (17). Scale 0.3m.

Post-Roman Pottery

Paul Blinkhorn

The post-Roman pottery assemblage comprised 65 sherds with a total weight of 553g. It was almost entirely medieval, and of 12th – mid/late 14th century date. It was recorded using the conventions of the Leicestershire County type-series (Sawday 1994), as follows:

CC1: Chilvers Coton ‘A’ Ware, AD1250-1400. 3 sherds, 28g.

CC2: Chilvers Coton ‘C’ Ware, 1300-1475. 8 sherds, 58g.

CC5: Chilvers Coton ‘B’ Ware, AD1250-1300. 3 sherds, 28g.

EA10: Modern Earthenwares, 1800+. 2 sherds, 3g.

MB: Midland Blackware, 1550-1750. 1 sherd, 7g.

MS: Medieval Sandy Ware, 1100-1400. 37 sherds, 283g.

PM: Potter’s Marston Ware, 1100-1300. 11 sherds, 156g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1.

Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of contemporary sites in the region, and suggests that the medieval activity dates entirely to the 12th – mid/late 14th century, as common Saxo-Norman Wares such as Stamford

Ware are entirely absent, as are well-attested late medieval pottery such as Midland Purple Ware and late Chilvers Coton Wares. The medieval material is typical of the period, consisting mostly of fragments of unglazed jars along with a few sherds from glazed jugs.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	PM		MS		CC5		CC1		CC2		MB		EA10		
Context	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
1	3	26	4	59			2	11							M13thC
2			8	37			1	17	1	12	1	7			M16thC
3	3	17	5	46											12thC
5			1	1	1	13			1	2					14thC
7			1	2	1	5			2	13					14thC
9			1	6											12thC
11	1	3	3	12											12thC
13			1	2											12thC
15			2	17											12thC
16			1	4											12thC
18									1	9					14thC
21	1	1			1	10			2	14					14thC
23			1	5											12thC
27	1	7	1	13											12thC
28	1	8	1	7											12thC
29													2	3	MOD
34			1	6					1	8					14thC
37			1	2											12thC
42			5	64											12thC
50	1	94													12thC
Total	11	156	37	283	3	28	3	28	8	58	1	7	2	3	

Discussion

The Watching Brief during the groundworks at The Limes produced a range of features in both the new building plots and driveway. In the northern building plot two ditches and a gully orientated north-west to south-east were found along with a range of shallow pits along the southern edge of the foundation trench. A spread of cobbles was found in the base of the topsoil overlaying the east ditch. Another layer of cobbles was found in the new driveway to the west of the new building. Pottery indicates the east ditch was in use in the 12th century. The west ditch was undated, but cut the smaller gully of 12th century date.

The features in the southern building plot consisted of the continuation of the east ditch seen in the northern plot, along with shallow pits and slightly irregular gullies. These were mostly orientated north-west to south-east however some were orientated north-east to south-west. A shallow ditch or gully was found along the eastern side of the area and the southern end appeared to turn to the south-west. The ditch contained 12th century pottery, with 14th century material retrieved from the upper fills, indicating a date for its disuse. Another layer of stones was found to the east and pottery dated 12th-14th century was found associated with this. Modern gullies / scrapes into the topsoil were found in the north-west and south-west areas.

The archaeology in the southern building plot was shallow and may have been truncated. In contrast the features found in the northern building plot were deeper and better preserved, but only partially exposed during the groundwork. Since the ditches in the northern building plot had a similar orientation it is possible they relate to medieval field boundaries.

Several layers of stones were also found at the site and these appear to represent contemporary activity. No features were found beneath the other layers however 12th-14th century pottery was recovered from all of them. It is possible these are the remains of crude surfaces or trackways to provide access into the fields. The stone layer in the north plot overlay a ditch, it contained pottery from the 12th to 16th centuries, and may have been deliberately added to consolidate the backfilled ditch.

The site lies on the northern edge of the village of Congerstone, and on the northern edge of land controlled by Congerstone manor after 1066 until the 17th century (Matthews 2019), the edge formed by the river to the north. Most of the open fields associated with the manor lie to the east of the village. LIDAR data shows ridge and furrow orientated north to south in the field to the north and east. No ridge and furrow is visible within the site from LIDAR data, or observed during the watching brief.

A conjectural plan is offered showing the likely alignments of the ditches discovered (Figure 16). The undated ditch is aligned perpendicular to Shackerstone Road, and likely formed the eastern side of a small field, or sub-division of the larger field (and current site). The other ditch, dated to the 12-14th centuries, may have pre-dated this, and again appears to form part of the same alignment of fields. These small enclosures discovered here, therefore may have functioned as livestock enclosures, and / or as entrances into the agricultural fields to the north and east.



Figure 16: Results of the watching brief, and conjectural positioning of the ditches



Figure 17: LIDAR data showing the site and ridge and furrow visible to the north and east (Environment Agency, 2m DTM 2020 elevation)

Conclusion

The archaeology discovered during the watching brief at The Limes consisted of an undated ditch aligned perpendicular to Shackerstone Road, likely forming the eastern and southern sides of a small field. The other ditch, dated to the 12-14th centuries, respects this (or vice versa), and again appears to form part of the same alignment of fields. Layers of compacted stones found on the site appear to represent contemporary activity, and may be the remains of trackways to provide access into the fields.

Archive and Publication

The site archive consists of:

- X1 Context index
- X1 Photograph index
- X1 Drawing sheet index
- X1 Drawing Index
- X1 Drawing sheet
- X55 Context sheets
- X122 Digital photographs
- X1 Watching Brief Recording Sheets

The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Service under the accession number X.A15.2022.

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

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/>) ref universi1-507040.

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