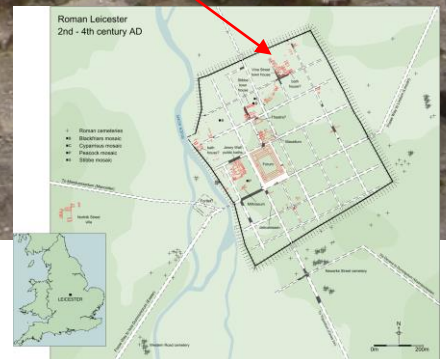


# Reconstructing the Vine Street House, Leicester

## Stage 1: Excavation





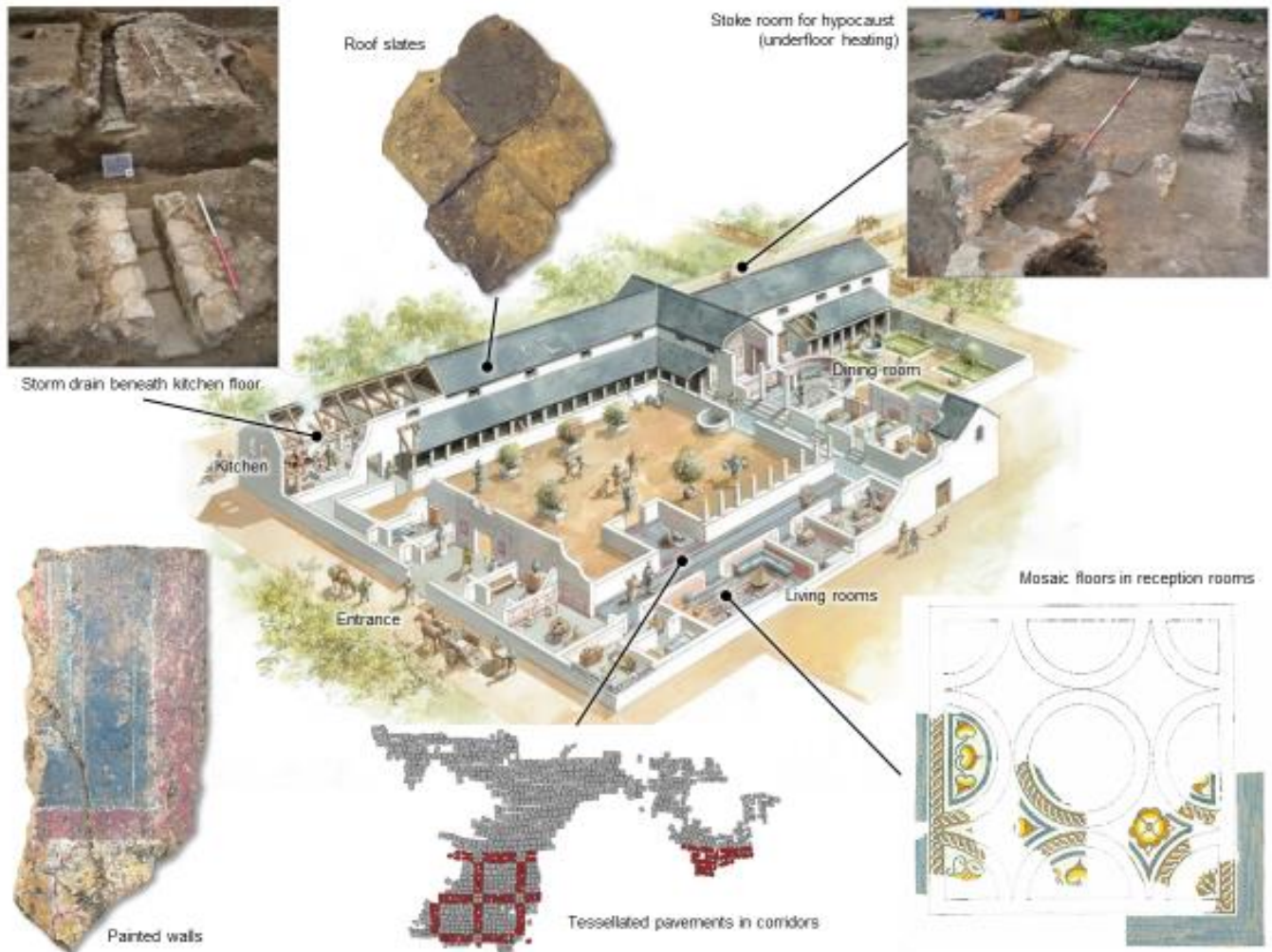
## Reconstructing the Vine Street House, Leicester Stage 2: Recording the plan



Credit: ULAS

# Reconstructing the Vine Street House, Leicester

## Stage 3: Piecing together the evidence



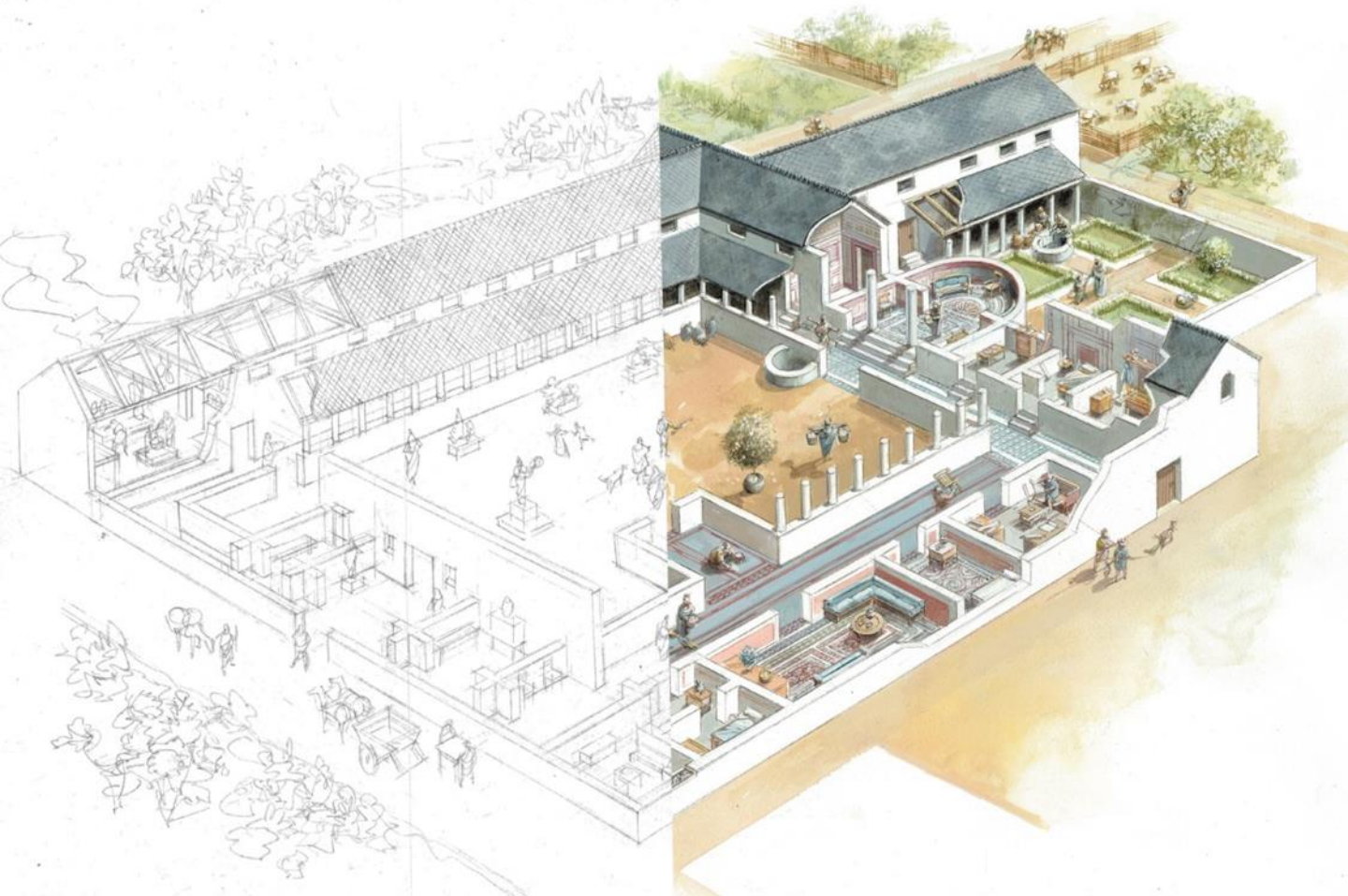
This is one of the largest town houses found in Leicester, and the only house in the town where the complete floor plan is known. Built in the early 3rd century, this spacious and luxurious home measured 40 by 40 m, with four ranges of rooms linked by corridors surrounding a central courtyard. The house was stone built and roofed with diamond-shaped slates; it had at least 26 rooms, many of which were furnished with painted walls and concrete floors or mosaic pavements. Some rooms were heated under the floor through hypocausts (a central heating system which allowed hot air to circulate below the floor of a room).

The reception rooms faced the entrance and were surrounded by everyday living spaces and smaller service rooms. In one corner of the building was a kitchen, and other rooms would have been used as dining rooms, sitting rooms, bedrooms and offices. Just like our houses today, rooms often had more than one function. The large and impressive courtyard could be viewed from all sides and contained an ornamental pool; land behind the house may have been laid out as a garden.



# Reconstructing the Vine Street House, Leicester

## Stage 4: The Vine Street household



Credit: ULAS

The occupants were wealthy. At one point, one of the owners may have been a high-ranking military officer who had moved or retired to Leicester, perhaps from another part of the empire. As well as the family, the household would have included servants and slaves, some of whom probably also came from outside of Britain. Finds from late 3rd-century waste pits behind the house produced an extraordinary quantity of evidence for their lifestyle. In addition to staple foods such as wheat, their diet included a wide variety of local fruits, fish and meat. Game was served at table, and the occupants could afford imported fruits such as figs, sea fish and oysters. At one meal, a large freshwater fish known as a barbel, nearly half a metre in length, had been served.

Food and drink were stored and prepared in a wide range of bowls and jars including amphorae and mortaria (mixing bowls), before being served in fine-quality glass and pottery vessels and dishes. Many of the broken cooking pots still showed evidence of soot on their exterior and limescale or other food remains on their interior. The occupants kept dogs, although whether they were pets or guard or hunting dogs is not known. They also owned a diverse array of personal possessions, many dropped and lost, or broken and thrown away—jewellery including brooches, bracelets, hair-pins and finger-rings; toiletry items such as tweezers, nail cleaners and mirrors; as well as household equipment and recreational items, pins, needles, knives, spoons, spindle whorls, keys, gaming counters, figurines of household gods, ivory boxes and much more.