



**University of
Leicester**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
At Ridgeway Primary School
Market Harborough
Leicestershire
NGR: SP 7373 8825**

Roger Kipling



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**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Ridgeway Primary School, Market Harborough
Leicestershire
NGR: SP 7373 8825**

Roger Kipling

For: Leicestershire County Council

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in June 2012 by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The fieldwork was a pre-determination requirement on a proposed planning application for a new classroom block at Ridgeway Primary School, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority and an appropriate mitigation strategy put in place.

The evaluation work did not reveal any archaeological deposits or features with the exception of a possible medieval plough furrow. The site archive will be deposited with the Leicestershire County Council under the accession number X.A62.2012.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Ridgeway Primary School, Market Harborough, Leicestershire. The application site lies within an area of archaeological potential, as indicated by its close proximity to a probable Roman small town (HER ref:MLE1948).

In view of the potential impact of the development upon archaeological remains, in pursuance of Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) Policy HE6, and following recommendations by the Leicestershire County Council Planning Archaeologist, the planning authority required that evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken in order to provide preliminary indications of significance and extent of any heritage assets in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains may be assessed by the Planning Authority.

Fieldwork was carried out on 6th June 2012 and involved the machine excavation of a single trial trench in order to assess the archaeological potential of the development area.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5, Planning and the Historic Environment). All archaeological work was in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct (2010) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008). The LCC *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland* (1997) were also adhered to.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The proposed development (SP 7373 8825; centre) is located on the northern edge of Market Harborough north of The Ridgeway on a flat area of high ground. A new classroom block has been proposed to replace the existing mobile classrooms on a site currently occupied by a tarmac netball court.

The underlying geology of the area is shown by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain to likely consist of Dyrham Formation siltstone and mudstone overlain with mid Pleistocene Diamicton till. The site is flanked to the west by a grassed playing field and to the north by school buildings.

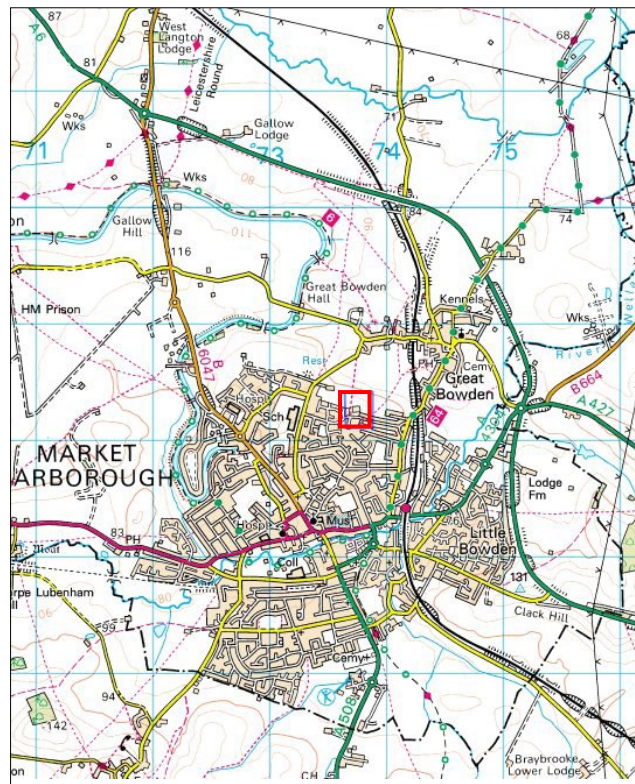


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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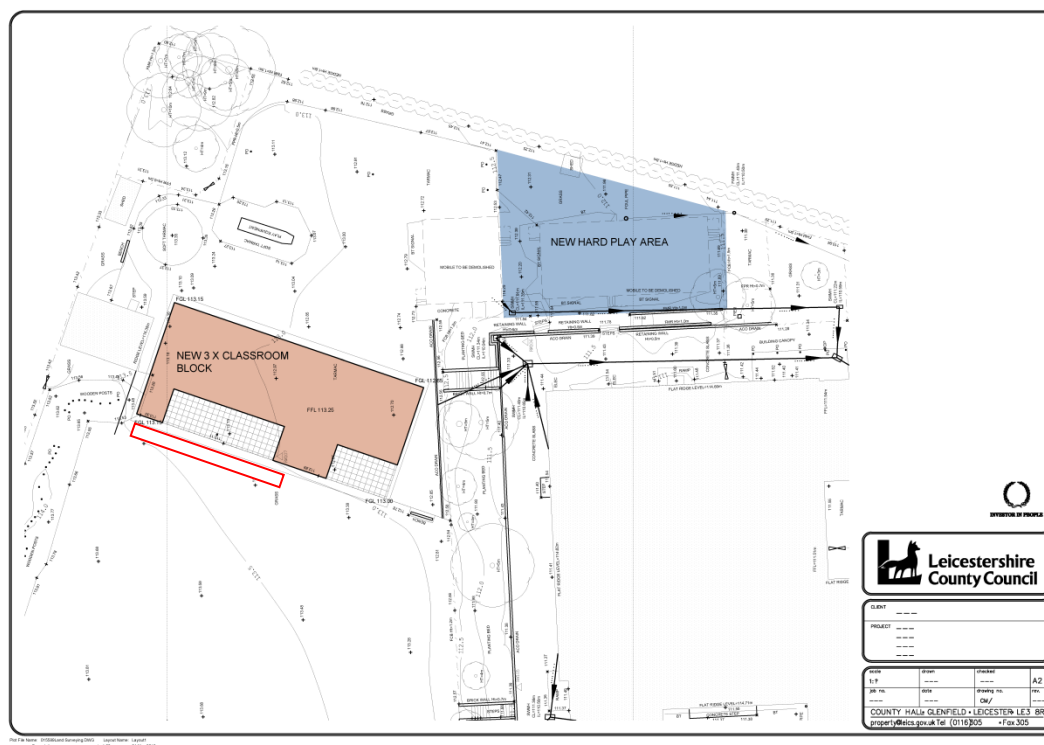


Figure 2: Plan of development area with evaluation trench location

Archaeological and Historical Background

The proposed works are located in close proximity to a probable Roman small town (HER ref: MLE1948). A large quantity of Roman artefacts including pottery, coins, tesserae and building material, have been recovered from the properties along The Ridgeway to the east of the School, indicating extensive settlement activity, likely to represent a small town. The boundaries of this activity are unclear and it is possible that it extends into the area of the proposed works. In addition, Iron Age pottery has also been found in the area, and an Iron Age settlement was recently discovered on land immediately to the west of the School (MLE19107), consisting of a number of Iron Age enclosures and possible roundhouse structures.

As it was deemed likely that the proposed development would have a damaging effect on any archaeological deposits, if present, within the application area, an archaeological evaluation was required by the planning authority following an approved written scheme of investigation (ULAS 2012). Consequently an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by ULAS in June 2012.

Aims and Methods

The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to:

1. Identify the presence/absence of any earlier building phases or archaeological deposits.

2. Establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by proposed ground-works.
3. Record any archaeological deposits to affected by the ground-works.
4. Produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the development. All work was recorded in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, the standard policy and practice of ULAS. The University of Leicester's Health and Safety policy was adhered to.

The programme of archaeological evaluation consisted of a single trial trench measuring 20m x 1.6m (c.32 sq m). The position of the trench as indicated in the provisional trench location plan was subject to slight modification in order to minimise damage and disruption to school facilities, resulting in repositioning of the trench a short distance west to the playing field and away from a tarmac netball court.

Excavation was undertaken using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

Results



Figure 3: Trench viewed south; 2m scales

The single evaluation trench, aligned broadly north-south, measured 20m long, 1.60m wide and between 0.45m and 0.75m deep. Mechanical removal of 0.15m-0.20m of

turf and dark grey clay loam topsoil and 0.30m-0.40m of pale grey/brown silty clay subsoil revealed compact, plastic pale dull orange/brown silty clay with *c.*30% limestone fragment content and sparse flint. The trench was devoid of archaeological features or artefacts with the sole exception of a probable plough furrow (Figure 5), observed traversing the trench on a broad northeast-southwest alignment around 1m south of the southern end of the trench. The heavily truncated feature measured 1.30m+ wide and 0.10m deep, its pale grey-brown clay silt fill producing three pottery sherds of probable 19th century date. The shallow nature of the feature suggests truncation of the area, either as a result of modern agricultural practice or during construction of the school.



Figure 4: Trench viewed north; 2m scales



Figure 5: Plough furrow [01] view southwest; 1m scale

Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation at Ridgeway School, Market Harborough, revealed little evidence for archaeological finds or features within the development site. Medieval agricultural activity in the vicinity of the development site was, however, suggested by a heavily-truncated, undated possible medieval plough furrow, the shallow character of which likely stemmed from landscaping works associated with construction of the school or else modern agricultural practice.

Archive and Publications

The site archive (X.A15.2012), consisting of paper and photographic records, will be housed with Leicestershire County Council.

The archive consists of:

- A trench recording sheet
- 11 digital photographs
- 6 monochrome (film) photographs
- A risk assessment form

Publication

A version of the excavation summary (see above) will appear in due course in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Roger Kipling of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The project was managed by Richard Buckley.

Bibliography

Clay, P. 2010 *Written scheme of investigation for archaeological work, Ridgeway School, Market Harborough, Leicestershire* ULAS Report 12/348

Oasis Information

Project Name	Ridgeway School, Market Harborough
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling

Previous/Future work	Construction
Current Land Use	Green open space
Development Type	School classrooms
Reason for Investigation	PPS5
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-determination requirement
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 7373 8825
Start/end dates of field work	6th June 2012
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council
Study Area	

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