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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation
on Land at Main Street,
Higham on the Hill,
Leicestershire
(SP 379 955)**




Roger Kipling

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Leicestershire
(SP 379 955)**

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For: Foregreen Ltd.

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Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in March 2014 at Main Street, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire, by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of Foregreen Ltd. The fieldwork was undertaken in response to a pre-planning enquiry for a residential development in order to assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains as may have been present.

The archaeological evaluation at Main Street, Higham on the Hill, produced no indications of archaeological deposits, with the exception of traces of medieval plough furrows along the eastern site boundary.

The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under accession reference number X.A44.2014.

Introduction

A desk-based assessment had previously been undertaken for an adjacent area to the north and east (Clarke 2012). The Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the application area is located outside the historic core of the medieval village of Higham. An extensive programme of archaeological fieldwalking undertaken to the south of the area in 2003-2004 recorded scatters of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flint. The same fieldwalking exercise also provided good evidence for Roman occupation in the vicinity, with dense scatters of pottery, mortaria, ceramic building material and glass (*ibid*: 4).

A geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation of the field immediately to the north proved negative (Smalley 2012; Hyam 2013).

In consequence Leicestershire County Council, Historic and Natural Environment Team (LCCHNET), as archaeological advisors to the planning authority, recommended the need for a programme of evaluation trenching. The investigation was required in order to provide an adequate sample of the development area and to assess the likely archaeological impact of the development proposals, consisting of the construction of buildings, access routes and ponds. The agreed scheme was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; ULAS 2014).

The fieldwork specified was intended to provide indications of the character and extent of any buried archaeological remains in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains might be assessed. Fieldwork was carried out in March 2014 and involved the machine excavation of eight trial trenches in order to provide a 5% sample of the development area.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG March 2012). 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) was also adhered to.

Site Description, Topography and Geology

The proposed development comprises land located to the north of the Oddfellows public house on Main Street, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire. The proposed development area consists of rough pasture with a small central fishing lake. The British Geological Survey notes that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Wolston Sands and Gravel overlying Mercia Mudstone (http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html). The assessment area consists of c.0.6ha of land lying at a height of c.110m O.D. on land sloping gently to the north.



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

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Archaeological and Historical Background

The Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire and Rutland indicates that the assessment area is located just to the north of the historic village core of Higham. No archaeological sites have been recorded within the assessment area, although no archaeological investigation has previously been undertaken. There are a number of known sites in the vicinity, which are summarised below (Clarke 2012).

Prehistoric

Between 2003-2004, a programme of fieldwalking undertaken by the Hinckley Fieldwalking Group revealed scatters of flint over several fields located just to the south of the village core, located approximately 350m to the south-west of the assessment area, providing evidence of occupation from the Late Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age periods.

Roman

The same fieldwalking exercise in 2003-2004 revealed traces of Roman occupation in the vicinity, with dense scatters of material found, including pottery, mortaria, ceramic building material and glass. In 2008, two sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from a test-pit dug at 29, Nuneaton Lane, located approximately 300m to the south of the assessment area. Further sherds of pottery were recovered from another test-pit dug at Elms Farm, located approximately 200m to the south-east of the assessment area.

Medieval

Various medieval village earthworks were recorded in the 1980s by RF Hartley, including fishponds, a hollow way and house platforms, to the north and west of the

12th century Church of St. Peter, east of the assessment area. Large quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered by the Hinckley Fieldwalking Group in 2003-2004.

Aims and Objectives

The archaeological evaluation was deemed to have the potential to contribute to the following research aims.

Neolithic and Early Middle Bronze Age (Clay 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2010)

There is evidence of Neolithic-Bronze Age activity from lithic assemblages located by fieldwalking in the vicinity. Palaeoenvironmental evidence had the potential to provide information on agricultural practices and land use.

The Roman Period (Taylor 2006; Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2012)

There are Roman sites within the study area including enclosures and a Roman road. The evaluation had the potential to contribute to knowledge on Iron Age – Roman transitions in rural settlement, landscape and society. Artefacts may identify trade links and economy.

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.
- Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is 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 proposed development.
- Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

The Medieval period (Lewis 2006, Knight et al 2012; English Heritage 2012)

The evaluation had the potential to contribute towards research into the origins and development of medieval settlement, landscape and society. Environmental evidence could provide information on local environmental conditions as well as settlement activity, craft, industry and land use. Artefacts might assist in the development of a type series within the region and provide evidence for evidence for craft, industry and exchange across broad landscape areas. The evaluation had the potential to contribute to Research Agenda topics 7.1.2, 7.1.4, 7.2.1-7.2.4, 7.3.1-7.3.5, 7.5.4, 7.6.1-2, 7.7.1-7.7.5 and Research Objective 7E - *Investigate the morphology of rural settlements.*

The general aims of the evaluation were as follows:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the development site
- To assess vulnerability/sensitivity of any exposed remains

- To provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to enable the archaeological implications of the proposed development to be assessed
- To assess the impact of previous land use on the site
- To inform a strategy to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed development on surviving archaeological remains
- To produce a site archive for deposition with an appropriate museum and to provide information for accession to the Leicestershire HER.

Specific evaluation aims were to:-

- Seek to establish the nature of the geophysical anomalies and to determine if they are of archaeological significance

The evaluation was undertaken in order to enable reasoned and informed recommendations to be made to the local planning authority and, if appropriate, a suitable mitigation strategy for the proposed development to be formulated.

The design specification conforms to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). It has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice and the appropriate national standards and guidelines including:

- *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991);
- *Model Briefs and Specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations* (Association of County Archaeological Officers, 1994);
- *Code of Conduct* (Institute for Archaeologists, 2010);
- *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Institute for Archaeologists, 2010);
- *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Association of Local Government Officers, 2003);
- *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicestershire County Council 1997)

Methodology

Archaeological Trial Trenches

Prior to the commencement of works an Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed on Details, Location and Creator forms.

Following recommendations from the Planning Archaeologist, a programme of evaluation trenching was undertaken. A 5% sample of the area of development was excavated, comprising 256m² of eight trenches measuring 20m x 1.60m. Trench locations were in accordance with plans set out in the brief, providing a comprehensive assessment of the assessment area. It was not, however, possible to obtain permission to excavate a trench in the grassed area adjacent to the public house car park. Consequently this trench (8) was relocated to the paddock north of the public house (Figure 2).

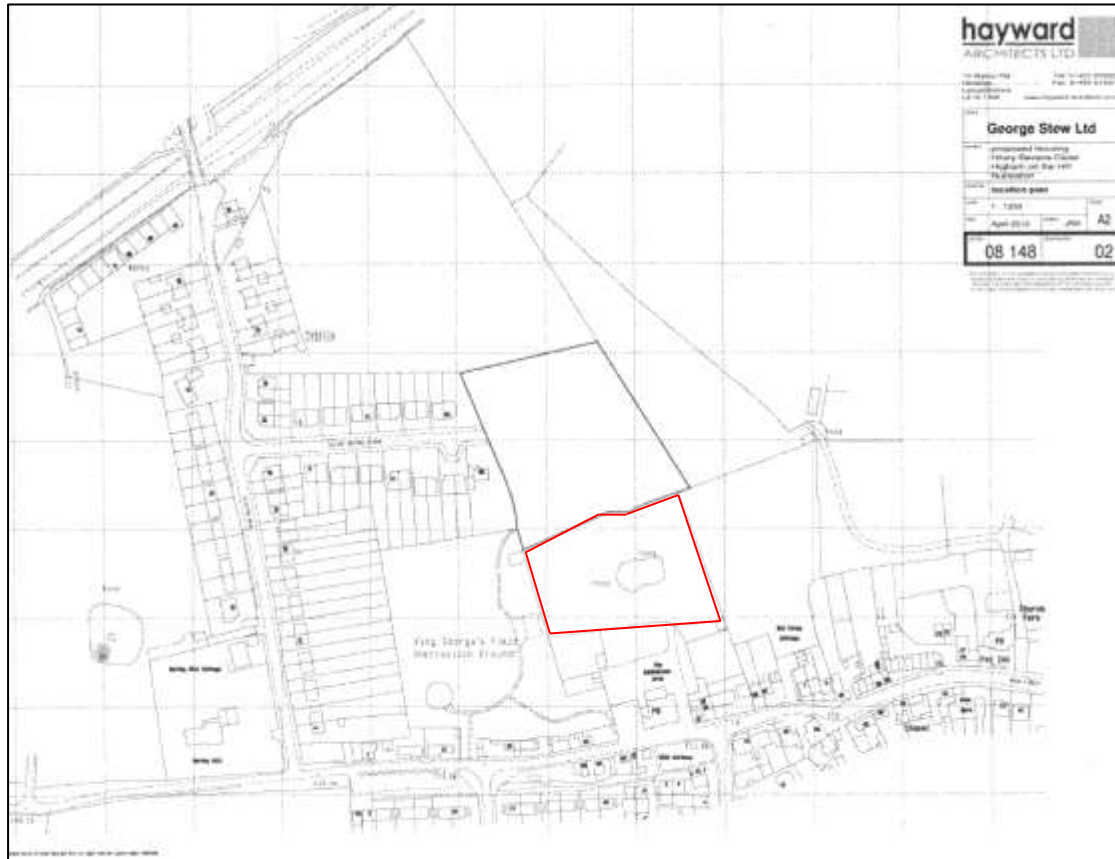


Figure 2: Site location

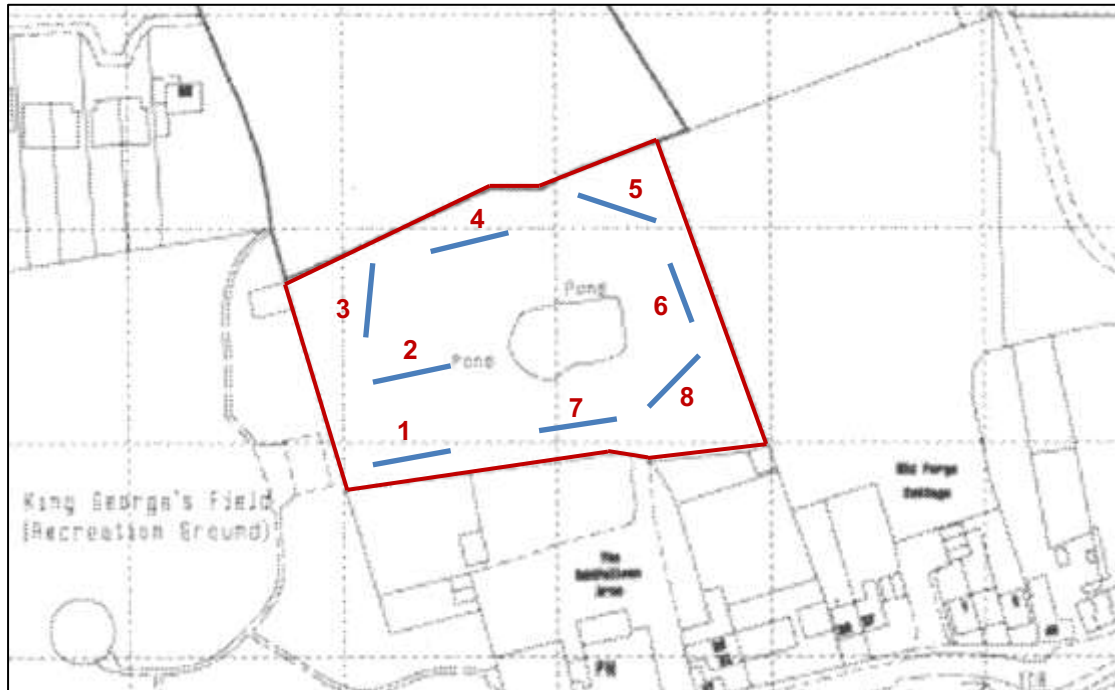


Figure 3: Application area with trench locations. 50m grid

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (c.2.1m wide), under archaeological supervision. The spoil generated during the evaluation was mounded away from the edges of each trench. Topsoil and subsoil was stored separately. Mechanical excavation ceased at undisturbed natural deposits.

The trenches were recorded at an appropriate scale by measured drawing and photography and were located to Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record, utilising black and white negative film, supplemented by high resolution digital data capture, was maintained during the course of the fieldwork and included:

- the site prior to commencement of fieldwork;
- the site during work, showing specific stages of fieldwork;

Upon completion of the evaluation trenching, the excavated trenches were backfilled and loosely compacted.

Results

A 5% sample of the area of development was excavated, comprising 256m² of eight trenches measuring between 20m x 1.60m. Trenches were positioned in accordance with plans set out in the WSI, with the single exception of the relocated Trench 8, in order to provide a comprehensive survey of the assessment area.

Excavation was undertaken using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket, with topsoil and overburden removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision.

Trenches 1-4

(Figure 4)

Trenches 1-4 were located in the lower, western part of the development area, west of the pond. Ground conditions were extremely wet, in part due to water runoff from the pond. Machining revealed a 0.05m-0.50m mottled mid grey-brown clay loam topsoil deposit overlying 0.16m-0.56m of mid grey and mid reddish-brown clay silt subsoil and a pale orange-brown natural clay. None revealed any indications of archaeological deposits.

Trenches 5-8

(Figures 5-7)

The remaining four trenches were located on the drier, higher ground to the east and south of the pond. All were characterised by a 0.10m-0.36m thick sandy mid-grey clay loam topsoil and a 0.06m-0.65m thick underlying dull orange and grey mottled sandy clay silt subsoil. The natural substratum varied from a mottled pale blue-grey and pale brown sandy clay (Trenches 5 & 6) to a coarse reddish-brown sand (Trenches 7 & 8).

Trench 6 (Figure 6) provided the sole indications of archaeological deposits from the evaluation, with several c.4m wide medieval furrows visible crossing the trench on a

south-west to north-east alignment and representing the ploughed-out continuation of standing ridge and furrow visible on the adjacent paddock to the east.



Figure 4: Trench 3; general view looking south-west (1m scale)



Figure 5: Trench 5; general view looking south (1m scale)



Figure 6: Trench 6; general view looking south (1m scale)



Figure 7: Trench 8; general view looking north-east (1m scale)

The archaeological evaluation at High Street, Higham on the Hill, produced few indications of archaeology, restricted to remnants of medieval plough furrows visible on the eastern edge of the assessment area. As such this reflects the findings of the desk-based archaeological for the absence of archaeological evidence within the assessment area.

TRENCH	ORIENTATION	LENGTH AND WIDTH (metres)	DESCRIPTION	DEPTH (MIN-MAX metres)
1	E-W	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.12-0.18m, subsoil 0.13-0.50m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.25-0.65
2	E-W	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.10-0.22m, subsoil 0.25-0.35m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.37-0.57
3	NE-SW	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.05-0.20m, subsoil 0.16-0.40m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.26-0.50
4	E-W	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.10-0.40m, subsoil 0.35-0.56m. No archaeological finds or features.	0.65-0.92
5	NE-SW	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.18-0.32m, subsoil 0.15-0.30m. No archaeological finds or deposits.	0.36-0.74
6	NNW-SSE	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.27-0.36m, subsoil 0.06-0.24m. No archaeological finds or deposits.	0.42-0.58
7	E-W	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.10-0.18m, subsoil 0.50-0.65m. No archaeological finds or deposits.	0.75-0.98
8	SW-NE	20 x 1.60	Topsoil 0.10-0.20m, subsoil 0.12-0.38m. No archaeological finds or deposits.	0.32-0.48

Figure 8: Trench table

Archive and Publications

The site archive, consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums Service under Accession Reference Number X.A44.2014.

The archive consists of:

- 8 trench recording sheets
- Photographic record index
- 9 digital 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 and Rutland Archaeological and Historical Society*.

Acknowledgements

Roger Kipling of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of Foregreen Ltd. The project was managed by Dr. Patrick Clay.

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Oasis Information

Project Name	Land at High Street, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Roger Kipling
Previous/Future work	Development
Current Land Use	Agricultural
Development Type	Residential
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-application
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 379 955
Start/end dates of field work	24 th -25 th March 2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire Museums Service
Study Area	

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