



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
MIRA Building 4 (Six Pack),  
Higham on the Hill,  
Leicestershire (SP 368 964)**

**Stephen Baker**




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MIRA Building 4 (Six Pack),  
Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire  
(SP 368 964)**

**Stephen Baker**

**For: MIRA Ltd.**

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**An Archaeological Evaluation at  
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Leicestershire**

**[NGR: SP 368 964]**

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**Summary**

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken in March 2014 on land at MIRA, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire, by University of Leicester Archaeological Services on behalf of MIRA Ltd. The fieldwork was undertaken as part of a pre-planning enquiry in response to an application for a new building and following a desk-based assessment and a geophysical survey in order to assess the potential impact of the development on any archaeological remains that may be present.*

*The archaeological evaluation comprised the excavation of three 30m by 1.6m trenches targeting the locations of the proposed MIRA Building 4 (Sixpack building). These revealed medieval plough furrows but no definite features of archaeological significance were present. No artefacts were recovered during the work.*

*The site archive will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under the accession number XA1.2014.*

**Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land at MIRA Ltd, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire. A desk-based assessment (Hunt and Speed 2010) had established that the assessment area was in the vicinity of a number of sites including the Watling Street Roman road.

The Senior Planning Archaeologist (SPA), Historic & Natural Environment Team (HNET), Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the planning authority, recommended the need for a phase of archaeological 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. The agreed scheme was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; ULAS 2014).

The fieldwork specified was intended to provide further 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 three trial trenches in order to provide a sample of the development area requested by the Leicestershire County Council Senior Planning Archaeologist as advisor to the planning authority.

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 followed 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 Location, Geology, Topography, and Description**

The site lies immediately to the north-west of the MIRA Proving ground area, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire. New buildings are proposed within the north-west area (Figure 1; Clay 2013a; 2013b). The site is within the parish of Higham-on-the-Hill, in the District of Hinckley and Bosworth, Leicestershire, around 5 miles north-west of Hinckley and 5 miles south-east of Atherstone (Figure 1). It is bordered by the A5 (Roman Watling Street) to the south, which is the boundary with Warwickshire. The dismantled Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway runs to the south-east of the site and to the north-west and north-east lie fields and local roads. The British Geological Survey of England and Wales, sheet 169 (Coventry) shows that the underlying geology is likely to be Wolston Clay and alluvial deposits. The site lies at a height of c. 100m above OD.

The current phase of work is for MIRA Buildings 4 ('Sixpack' building) for which planning permission is being sought within the MIRA complex (Figures 1-2). Following National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment the planning authority require that evaluation by trial trenching be undertaken in order to ascertain whether any archaeological remains are present and, if so, to ascertain their character, extent and significance.

### **Archaeological and Historical Background**

A desk-based assessment has been undertaken for the area (Hunt and Speed 2010) and Heritage statements for Buildings 1 and 3 (Clay 2013a; 2013b). The Leicestershire & Rutland and Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER) for the area shows that there are no known archaeological sites in the assessment area itself. However, there are a few archaeological sites in the vicinity of the assessment area most significantly the Watling Street Roman road. The development site is in fact situated in a wide area of archaeological potential as indicated by the HER. Enclosures possibly dating to the Iron Age are located adjacent to the MIRA site (**MLE9578**) and other prehistoric sites are located nearby (**MLE8245**, **MLE6080** and Warks HER Nos. **4420** & **4501**). The southern part of the site lies on the line of the modern A5, the former Watling Street Roman Road (**MLE1388**) and the Mancetter Roman Road has been projected to run to the north of the site (**MLE3019**). Roman pottery has been found within the former Lindley parish at the edge of the assessment area (**MLE8503**) and a large assemblage has been found further to the south (Warks HER No. **7439**). Roman coins have also been retrieved from two hoards to the south of the site (Warks HER No. **5141**) and near Harper's Hill, around 800m south-east of the site (Warks

HER No. **1653**). The development area lies within the deserted parish of Rowden (**MLE2795**) and adjacent to earthworks associated with the abandoned medieval village of Lindley (**MLE2792**). The area was also the site of the old Lindley Airfield (**MLE15973**). Fieldwalking and geophysical surveys have also been undertaken within the MIRA site area (Coward 2011; Austrums 2011). The fieldwalking and geophysical surveys did not locate significant material or anomalies. Two areas that were subject to detailed gradiometry revealed anomalies with possible archaeological origins, while a thin scatter of medieval and post-medieval pottery from the fieldwalking was interpreted as a product of manuring. Recent evaluations adjacent to the line of the Roman road identified Roman activity including structural evidence, and 150m from this further ditches and a pit were identified of probable late Iron Age or Roman date (Thomas 2011). An archaeological trial trench evaluation has been undertaken for Buildings 1 and 3 to the south-east (Jarvis 2014). Archaeological deposits were revealed within one of the trenches in the application area for Building 3 although no further archaeological deposits were revealed during a subsequent strip, map and sample excavation (Baker 2014).

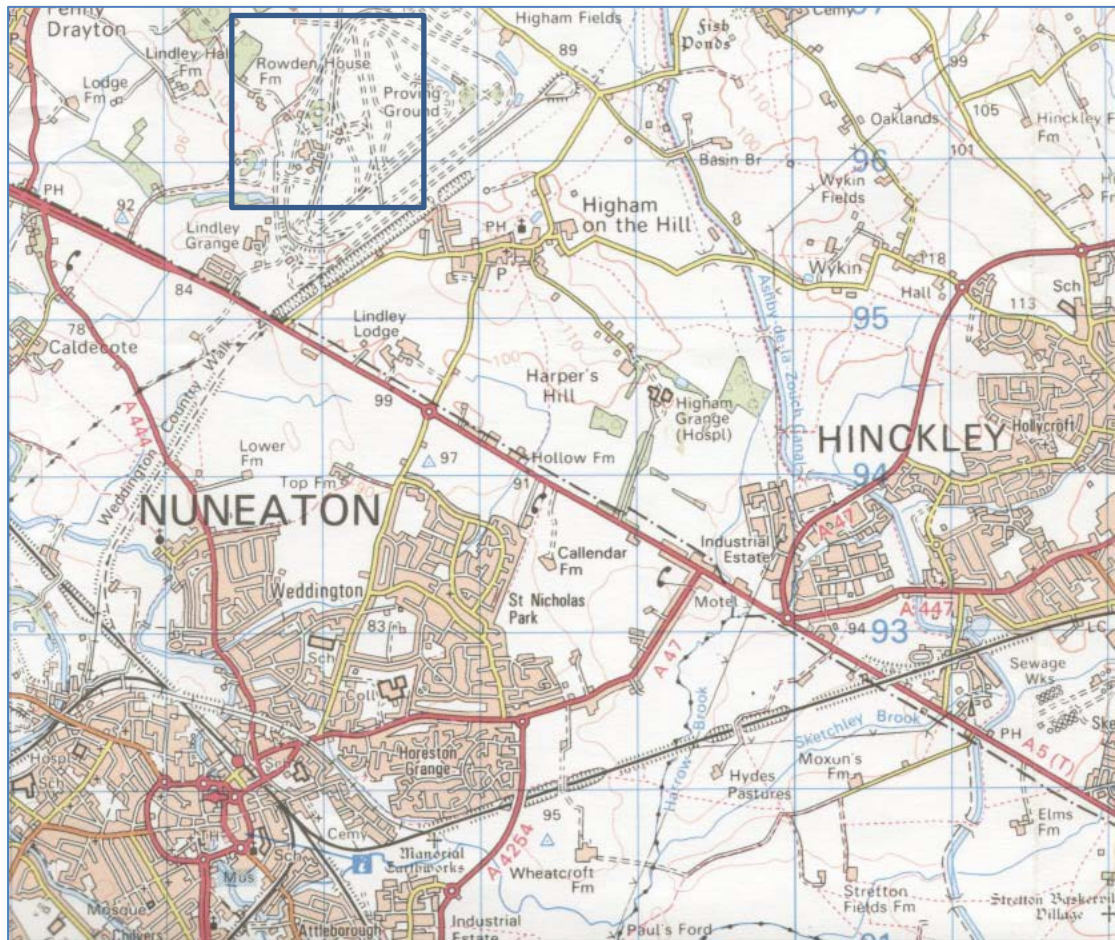


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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## Aims and Objectives

In view of the proximity to known Roman sites the archaeological evaluation was identified as having the potential to contribute to research into settlement and land-use during this period (Knight et al 2013; English Heritage 2012; Taylor 2006).

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.

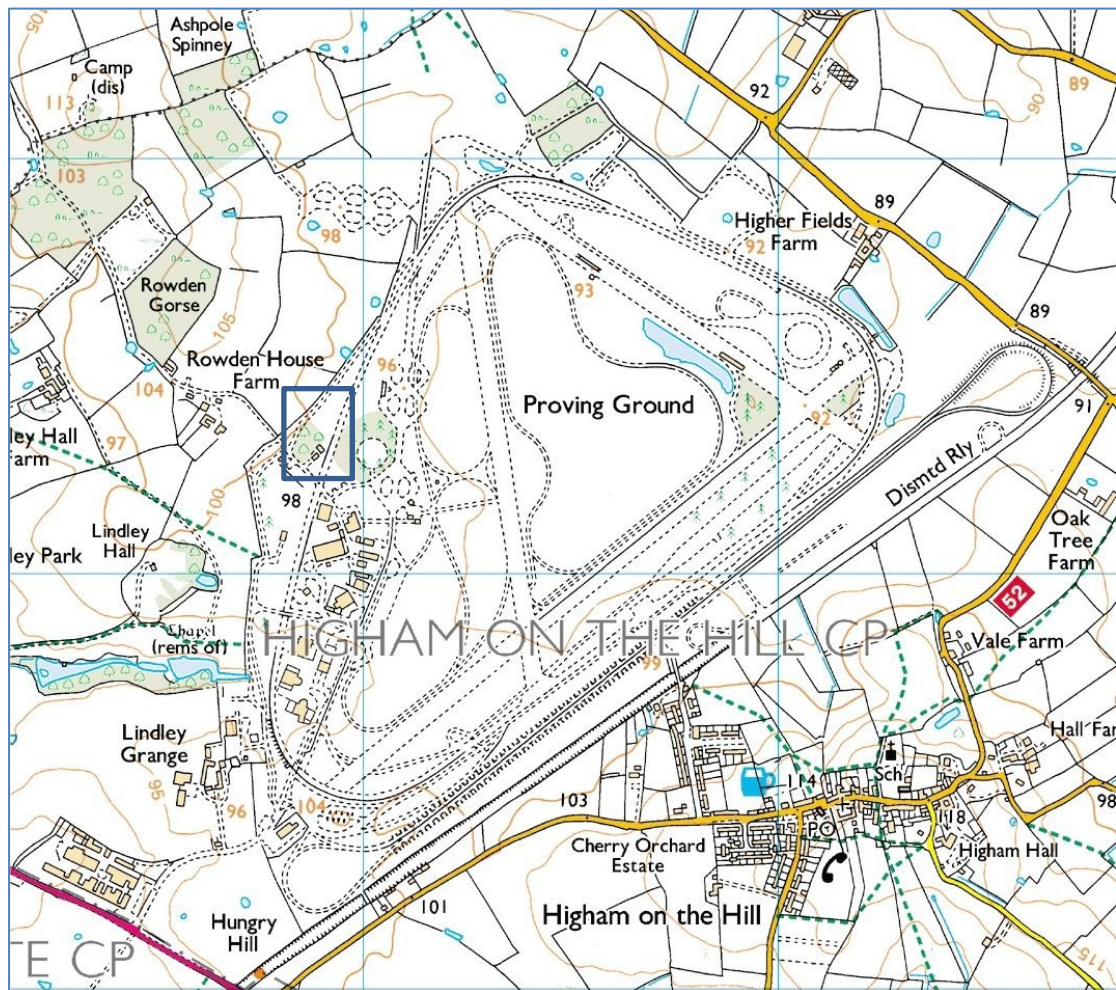


Figure 2: MIRA Site and development location

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 a Leicestershire County Council Museums Accession Code was obtained and the required archive deposition forms completed. An OASIS online record was initiated and the key fields completed.

Following recommendations from the Planning Authority, a programme of evaluation trenching was undertaken. A 10% sample of the proposed area would be evaluated in the form of a series of 30m trial trenches in the area of the building.

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket (*c.*1.6m 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 features exposed. General site works were not photographed due to security restrictions.

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



## Results

Table 1 Details of the trenches

Trench No.	Length/Width	Min. Depth (m)	Max Depth (m)	Features	Notes
1	29 x 1.6	0.27	0.39	-	NW-SE Furrows and modern land drains
2	30 x 1.6	0.28	0.45	-	NW-SE furrows and modern land drains
3	30 x 1.6	0.35	0.45	-	NW-SE furrows and modern land drains



Figure 3 Location of trenches. Scale bar 50m.

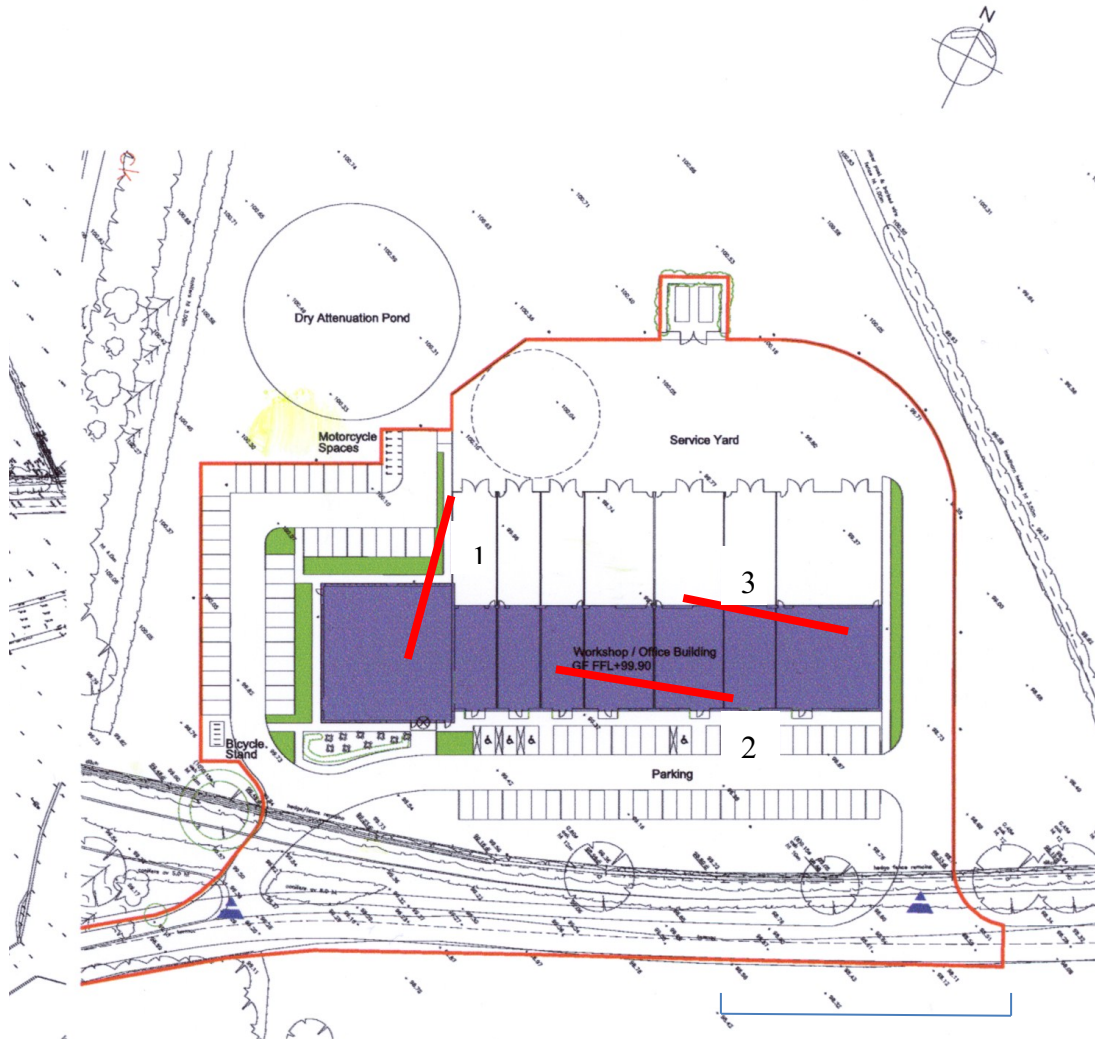


Figure 4 Trench location in relation to the proposed development. Scale bar 50m

### ***Trench 1***

Trench 1, aligned north-south, was located in the south-west of the proposed development area (MIRA Building 4; ‘Sixpack’ building) and was negative of finds and features, with ridge and furrow and modern field drainage surviving, cutting the natural substratum at the base of the trench.

### ***Trench 2***

Trench 2, aligned east-west, was located in the central area of the proposed building and was negative of finds and features, with ridge and furrow and modern field drainage surviving, cutting the natural substratum at the base of the trench.

### ***Trench 3***

Trench 3, aligned east-west, was located in the north-west part of the development area and was negative of finds and features, with modern field drainage surviving, cutting the natural substratum at the base of the trench.

## Discussion

No archaeological deposits or artefacts were located during the trial trench evaluation. The trenches were shallow with only *c.* 0.4m of topsoil overlying the natural clay substratum which may suggest plough erosion of the ridge top..



Figure 5: Trench 1, looking north-west



Figure 6: Trench 2, looking north-east



Figure 7: Trench 3, looking north-east

### **Archive and Publications**

The site archive XA1-2014 consisting of paper and photographic records, will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council.

The archive consists of:

- 3 trench recording sheets
- Photographic record indices
- Monochrome photo negatives & contact prints
- Digital photographs

## 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

Stephen Baker of ULAS undertook the archaeological evaluation on behalf of MIRA Ltd, with assistance from Nathan Flavell. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

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## Oasis Information

Project Name	MIRA, Higham on the Hill
Project Type	Archaeological evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Stephen Baker
Previous/Future work	Development
Current Land Use	Agricultural
Development Type	Business development
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Pre-planning enquiry
Site Co ordinates	NGR SP 368 964
Start/end dates of field work	March 2014
Archive Recipient	Leicestershire County Council Museums Service
Study Area	144 sq. m. (total area)

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