



# University of Leicester

## Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Strip, plan and sample excavation  
for MIRA Building 2 (Aston Martin) at MIRA Ltd,  
Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire. NGR: SP 370 965**



**Stephen Baker**

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**An Archaeological Strip, plan and sample excavation  
for MIRA Building 2 (Aston Martin) at  
MIRA Ltd, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire  
NGR: SP 370 965**

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**For: MIRA Ltd  
Planning Authority: Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council**

Approved by:

**Signed:**



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## **An Archaeological Strip, plan and sample excavation for MIRA Building 2 (Aston Martin) at MIRA Ltd, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire**

**NGR: SP 370 965**

**Stephen Baker**

### ***Summary***

*An archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation was carried out at MIRA Ltd, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between 11th-12th March 2014. Work was undertaken on behalf of MIRA Ltd prior to the erection of an extension of a new Aston Martin building (MIRA Building 3). A machine excavated area strip of the building footprint and car park was undertaken but no archaeological features, deposits or finds were observed and the result of the investigation proved negative. The archive will be held by Leicester County Council, subject to their confirmation, under the accession number XA1-2014.*

### **Introduction**

During March 2014 University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological strip, plan and sample excavation at MIRA Ltd, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire. The work was undertaken on behalf of MIRA Ltd in advance of the construction of a new Aston Martin building. This report presents the final results of the archaeological investigation.

### **Site Location, Geology and Topography**

The site lies within 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 to the south 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 northwest and north-east lie fields and local roads. The British Geological Survey of England and Wales, sheet 169 (Coventry) shows that the underlying geology over most of the site is likely to be Wolston Clay. The site lies at a height of around 100m above OD. The current phase of work is for two new buildings, MIRA Buildings 1 and 3 (Clay 2013a; 2013b), part of a larger scheme of four buildings (including the 'Flatpack' and 'Sixpack' buildings) 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 investigation by area stripping of the building footprint be undertaken in order to ascertain whether any archaeological remains are present and, if so, to excavate and record as appropriate.

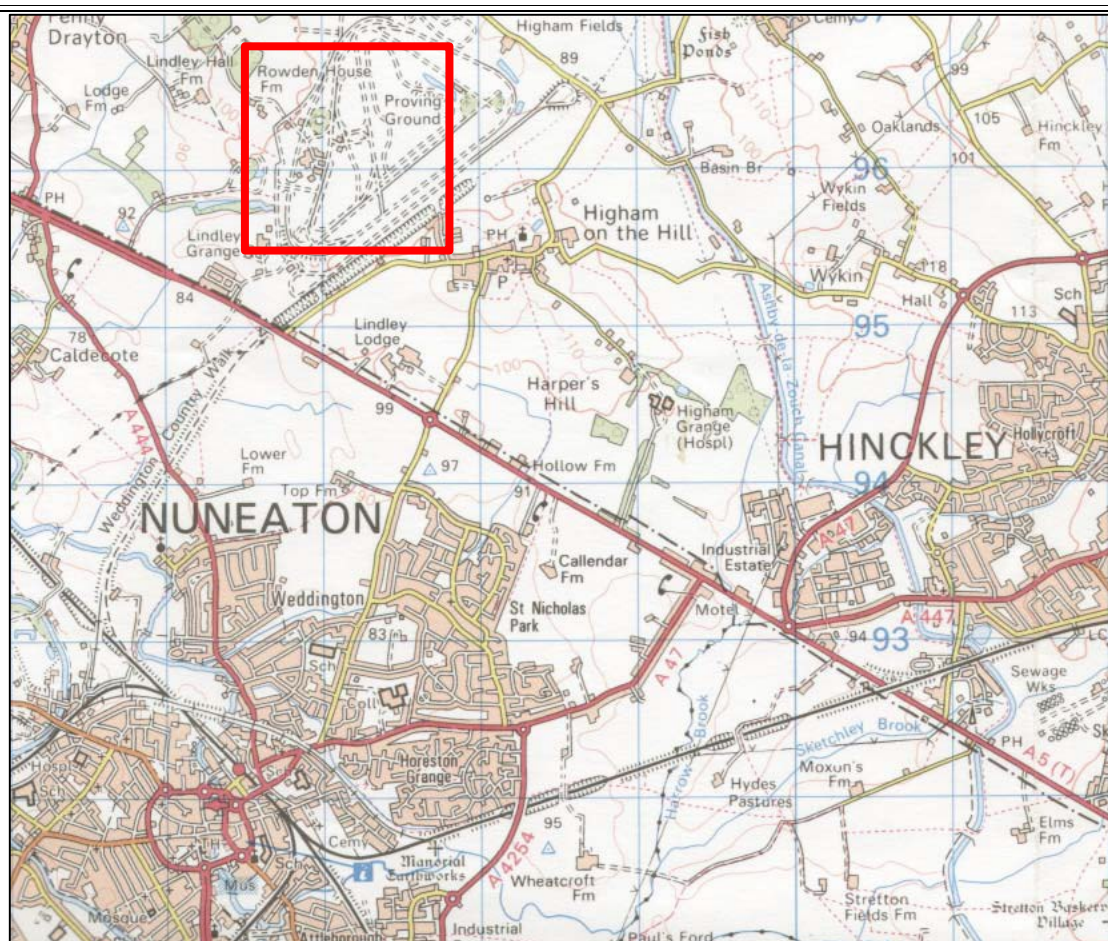


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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## 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 excavation has been undertaken for Buildings 1 and 3 (Jarvis 2014). Archaeological deposits were revealed within one of the trenches in the application area for Building 3.

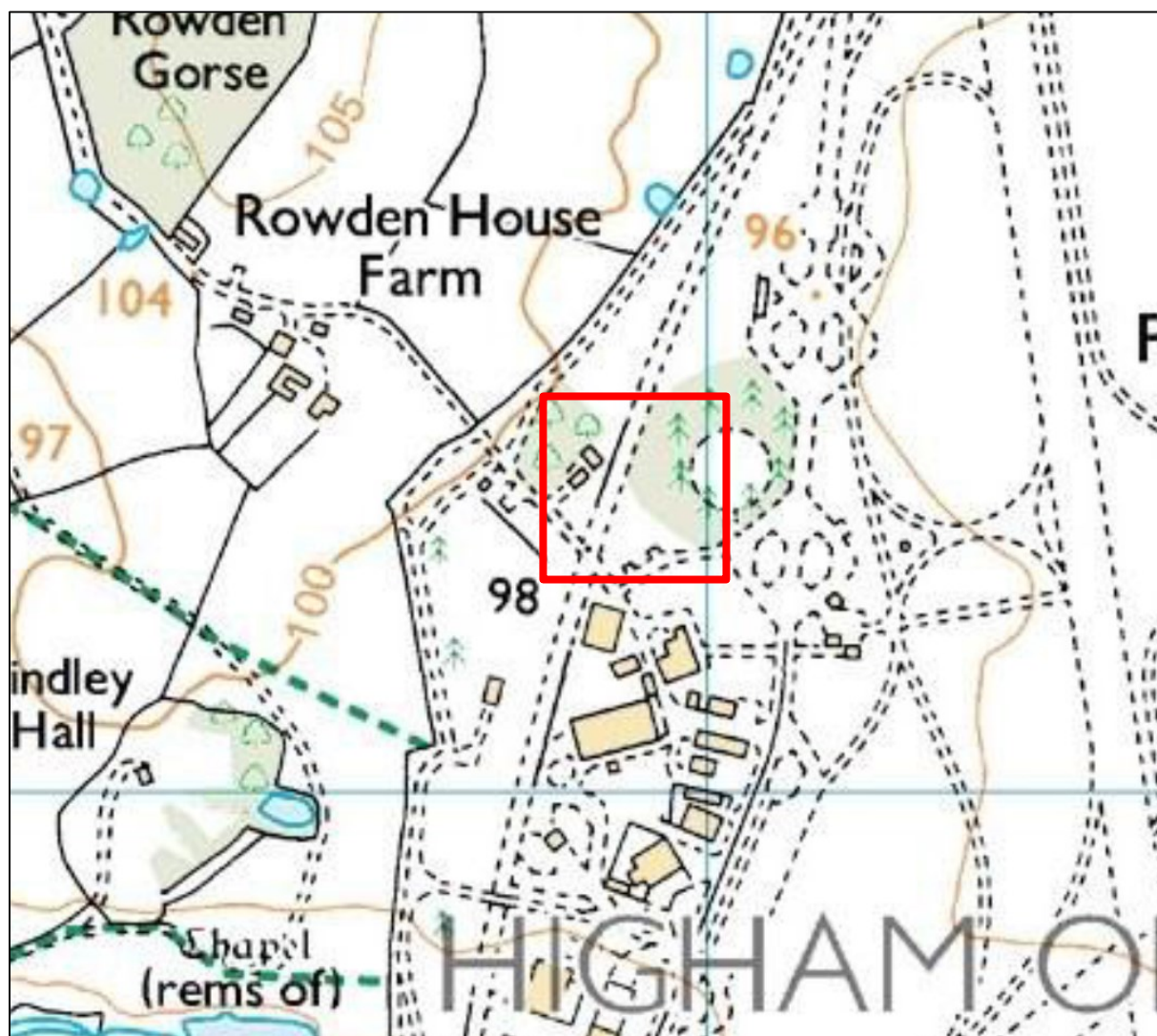


Figure 2: Proposed development area

### Aims and Objectives

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

The general aims of the strip map and sample excavation 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.

## Methodology

An archaeological strip, map and sample excavation was carried out between 11th March until 12th March 2014. The project involved the control of the machine stripping of the area to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits

This was carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator with a c.1.8m wide ditching bucket. The stripped surface was examined and any archaeological deposits were to be hand cleaned, planned, photographed, and sample excavated and recorded as appropriate to addressing the objectives of the strip, plan and sample excavation. Field notes were recorded on pro-forma ULAS strip, plan and sample excavation record forms.

All work followed the approved written scheme of investigation (Clay 2013) and the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (2008) and the *Guidelines for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* (LMARS).

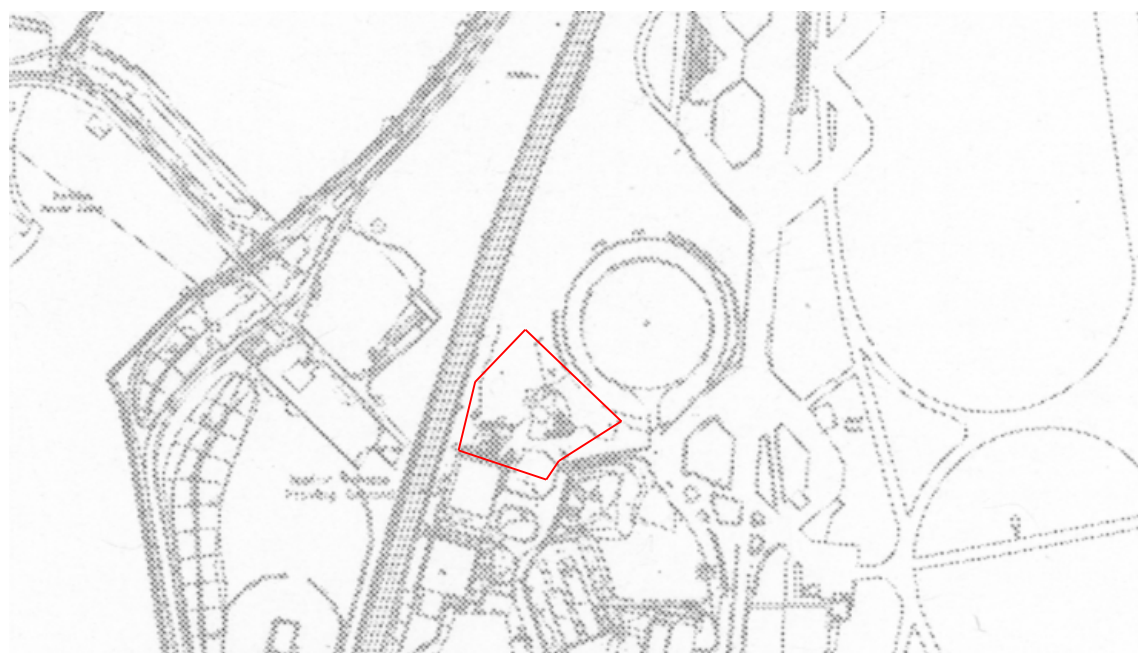


Figure 3: Location of area of strip, map and sample excavation outlined in red.

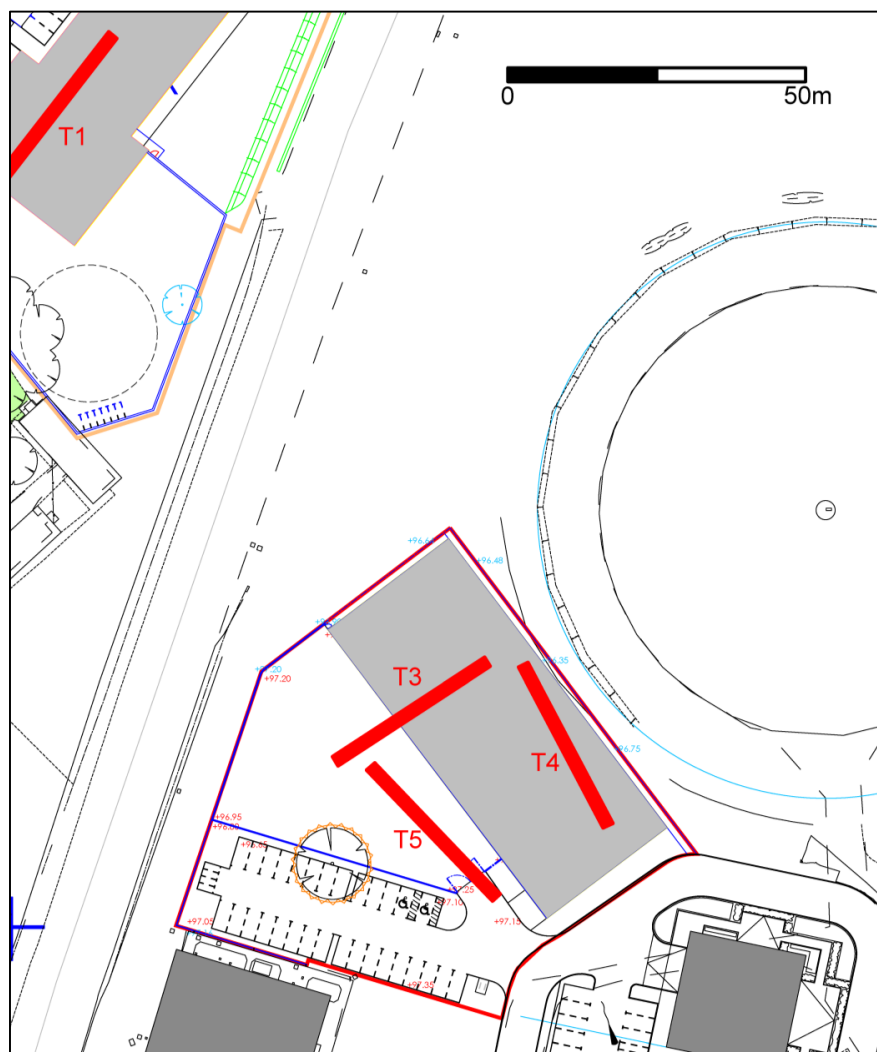


Figure 4: Detail of building footprint with previous evaluation trench locations. Area of strip, map and sample excavation outlines in red.

## Results

The deposits overlying the area of the proposed building's footprint stripped during the strip, plan and sample excavation consisted of made ground extending approximately 5m from the south-east limit and to a depth of 1.3m. Any archaeological deposits here were likely to have been truncated. The remainder of the footprint area was overlain by dark brown grey silt-loam topsoil (max depth 0.15) and lighter grey brown subsoil (max depth 0.20). Natural geology of purple and yellow brown clay was observed at a depth of 1.3m to the south-east and 0.30m at the north-west of the footprint area. Remains of modern services ran across the area including land drainage and an electricity cable possibly related to the previous land use of the site as an airfield. No deposits of archaeological origin were observed in any of the areas subject to machine stripping and ground works.

## Discussion

The strip, plan and sample excavation did not reveal any archaeological features or finds other than demolition material contained within made ground and finds/services of modern date. The archaeological features identified in trenches 3 and 5 were not re-located. The small size of the minor features in trench 3 may have made them more difficult to re-locate. However the larger



linear feature identified in Trench 5 as a former field boundary should have been visible. However it is likely in view of the location of the modern services that this had been disturbed of its location masked.

## Archive

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council with accession number XA1-2014. The archive contains:

- 2 strip, plan and sample excavation recording sheets
- 1 photographic record sheet
- Thumbnail prints of digital photographs
- CD containing digital photographs
- An unbound copy of this report, 2014-043
- The report is listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. Available at <http://oasis.ac.uk/>
- Publication
- Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the University of York (see Table 1).



Figure 5: Machine stripping of building footprint, looking north

Table 1: Summary of OASIS information

<b>Project OASIS no.</b>	universi1-14650
<b>Project Name</b>	MIRA Ltd, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire
<b>Project Type</b>	Strip, plan and sample excavation
<b>Project Manager</b>	Patrick Clay
<b>Project Supervisor</b>	Stephen Baker
<b>Previous/Future work</b>	Evaluation, December 2013
<b>Current Land Use</b>	Commercial
<b>Development Type</b>	Commercial
<b>Reason for Investigation</b>	NPPF
<b>Position in the Planning Process</b>	Pre- Planning condition
<b>Site Co-ordinates</b>	SP 370 965
<b>Start/end dates of field work</b>	11/03/2014-12/03/2014
<b>Archive Recipient</b>	Leicester County Council
<b>Study Area</b>	c. 20,000sq. m (total area)

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in the local archaeological journal, the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, in due course.

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### **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork was undertaken on behalf of MIRA Ltd and was carried out by Stephen Baker. I am grateful to the contractors for their co-operation on site. Dr Patrick Clay managed the project.

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