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Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation at MAB4
Building, MIRA, Higham on the Hill
Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 36821 69192

Nathan Flavell



ULAS Report No. 2016-037

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**An archaeological evaluation at MAB4 Building, MIRA, Higham on
the Hill, Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 36821 96192

Nathan Flavell

For: MIRA Ltd

Checked by:

Signed:



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An archaeological evaluation at MAB4 Building, MIRA, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire (SP 36821 96192)

Nathan Flavell

Summary

An archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out at MAB4 Building, MIRA, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire (SP 36821 96192) by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 9-10 February 2016. The work was carried out on behalf of MIRA Ltd in advance of the expansion of the business/technology campus. The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A23.2016. No archaeological features were found.

Introduction

This document constitutes the report for an archaeological investigation carried out on land at MAB4 Building, MIRA, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire (SP 36821 96192). The work was carried out on behalf of MIRA Ltd by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on 9-10 February 2016.

The site lies within the MIRA Proving Ground Area, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire, where further development of the business/technology campus at MIRA Technology Park, Watling Street, CV10 0TU (PAP/2011/02595) is in progress. A new building, MAB4, is proposed within the west area of the expansion zone (Fig. 2).

University of Leicester Archaeological Services has undertaken an assessment of the archaeology and cultural heritage potential within the proposed overall development area, the results of which are relevant to the current proposal for the MIRA MAB4 Building. This included an initial desk-based assessment (Hunt and Speed 2010), historic buildings surveys (Richards 2011; Hyam 2012), fieldwalking survey (Coward 2011), geophysical surveys (Austrams 2011), metal detector survey (Mackinder 2011) and trial trench evaluations (Thomas 2011; Baker 2014a; Baker 2014b; Higgins 2014; Jarvis 2014; Morris 2015), which have been undertaken to assess the likely impact of the development on the archaeology and cultural heritage.

The desk-based archaeological assessment confirmed that there are known sites of archaeological interest within the locality of the proposed MIRA MAB4 Building, including the Watling Street Roman Road (Hunt 2011). The site is close to an enclosure cropmark, ring ditch cropmark, Rowden medieval hamlet and Lindley deserted medieval village (DMV).

Mitigation in the form of archaeological attendance was required in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. The work followed the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) as laid out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation for Evaluation* (Gonzalez-Rodriguez 2016).

Geology and Topography

The site lies 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 (Fig. 1). It is bordered by the A5 (Roman Watling Street) to the south, which is also the border with Warwickshire. The dismantled Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway ran 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 Mercia Mudstone Group. The site lies at a height of approximately 100m aOD.

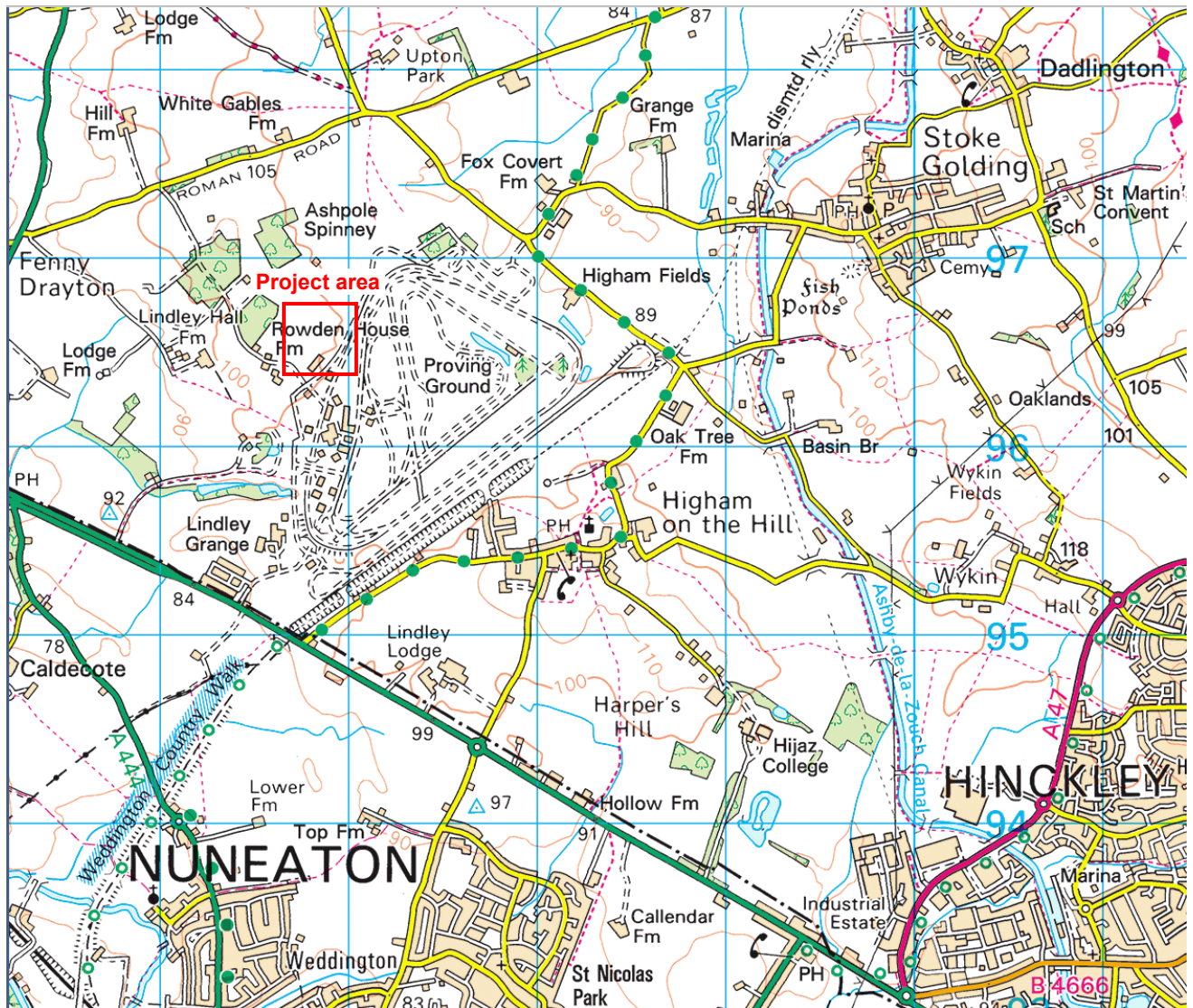


Figure 1: Site Location (Scale 1:50 000)

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Historical and Archaeological Background

The parish of Higham-on-the-Hill contains the village of Higham plus the two deserted hamlets of Lindley and Rowden. The assessment area lies across all three areas, with the main race track covering the whole of what was once Rowden.

The name Higham is Anglo-Saxon in origin and simply means 'the high farm or enclosure' (Mills 2003), situated as it is on the highest point in the area. The village of Higham does not

appear in the Domesday survey of 1086, although the lost village of Lindley is mentioned. St Peter's Church was built between 1130 and 1180 and the Norman (Romanesque) tower remains. Other parts of the present church were added in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Plague reached Leicestershire in 1348 killing probably a third of the population. It was a contributory cause to the desertion of Lindley, along with the enclosure of the open fields for sheep rearing in the 16th century (Cox 2002). A directory of 1863 shows a large variety of trades and professions within the village including 2 bakers, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, 2 millers, 2 carpenters, 4 shoemakers, 2 tailors and 3 other shops.

MIRA (Motor Industry Research Association) was set up in 1945 but the company dates back to the foundation of the Cycle Engineers' Institute (CEI) in 1898, which became the Incorporated Institution of Automobile Engineers (IAE) in 1906. The IAE became the Automotive Branch of the IMechE in 1946. The proving ground was built on the old Lindley Airfield, in operation from 1943. The farm at Lindley has the fame of being the geographical centre of England, according to the Ordnance Survey.

The development site is situated in a wide area of archaeological potential as indicated by the Leicestershire & Rutland and Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER). Enclosures possibly dating to the Iron Age are located adjacent to the site (MLE9578) and other prehistoric sites are located nearby (MLE8245, MLE6080 and Warks. HER 4420 & 4501). The southern part of the site lies adjacent to the A5 Watling Street, a former 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 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 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). A Level 2 Historic Building Survey was carried out by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services at the airfield's former watch office building (Hyam 2012).

University of Leicester Archaeological Services has carried out archaeological evaluations at MIRA during the various phases of groundworks. The evaluation of the southern border of the development, adjacent to the A5 (Watling Street) located at least two distinct areas of Roman roadside occupation characterised by linear boundaries that probably demarcated plots adjacent to Watling Street. Material evidence from these features included pottery, quernstones and roof tile, indicating domestic occupation on the site between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD (Thomas 2011; Flavell 2014). Further activity, consisting of a boundary ditch and small pit, was recorded approximately 150m from the A5/Watling Street (ibid.). Trial trenches were excavated within the Phase I of the proposed Business Technology Campus development revealed one discrete area of Roman roadside occupation, consisting of a refuse pit which contained Roman pottery, and boundary ditches (Higgins 2014). The evaluations on the location of Building 4 (Sixpack) revealed medieval plough furrows, but no archaeological features or artefacts were recovered (Baker 2014b; Jarvis 2014) and the archaeological investigation prior the erection of Building MAB3 revealed further evidence of furrows but no archaeological features (Morris 2015).

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the archaeological work 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.



Figure 2: Location plan with proposed MAB4 building in red (provided by client)

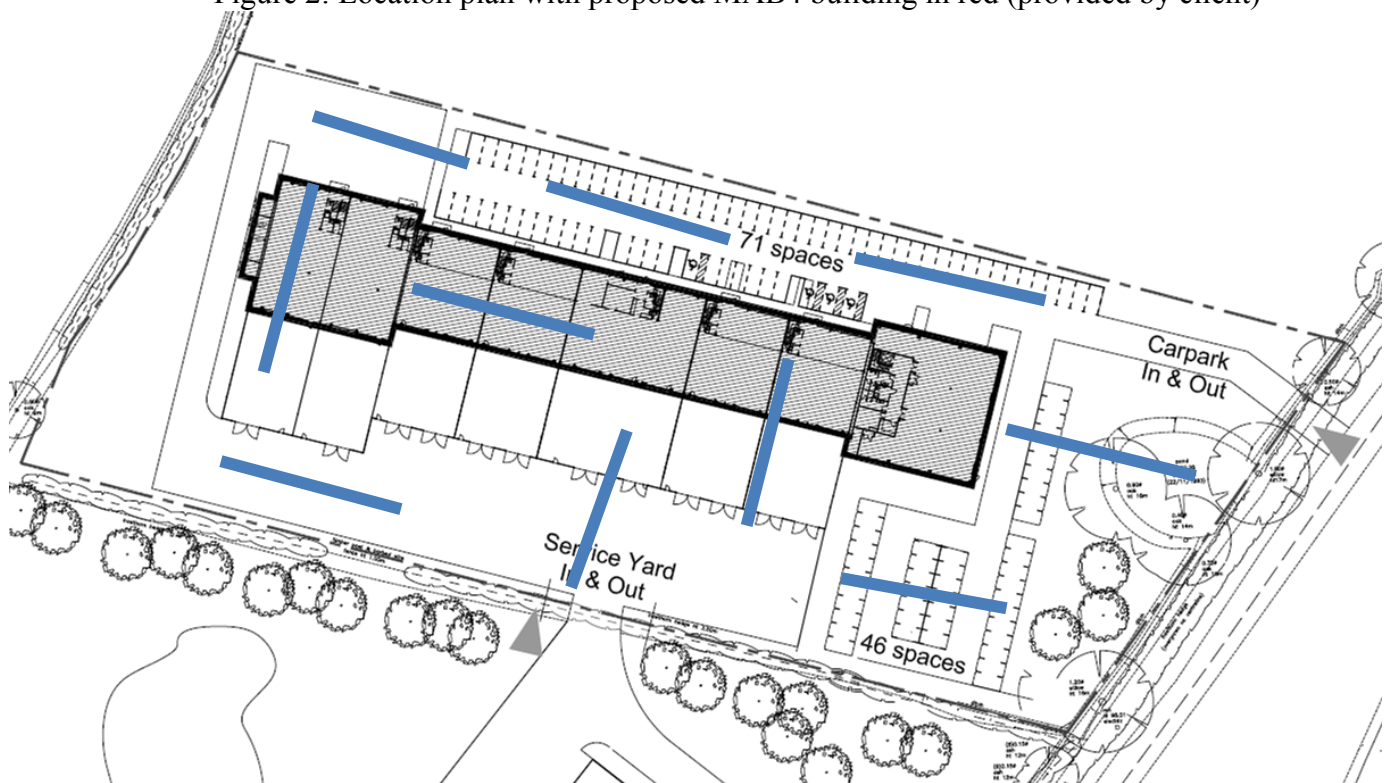


Figure 3: Proposed trench plan in relation to the proposed MAB4 building

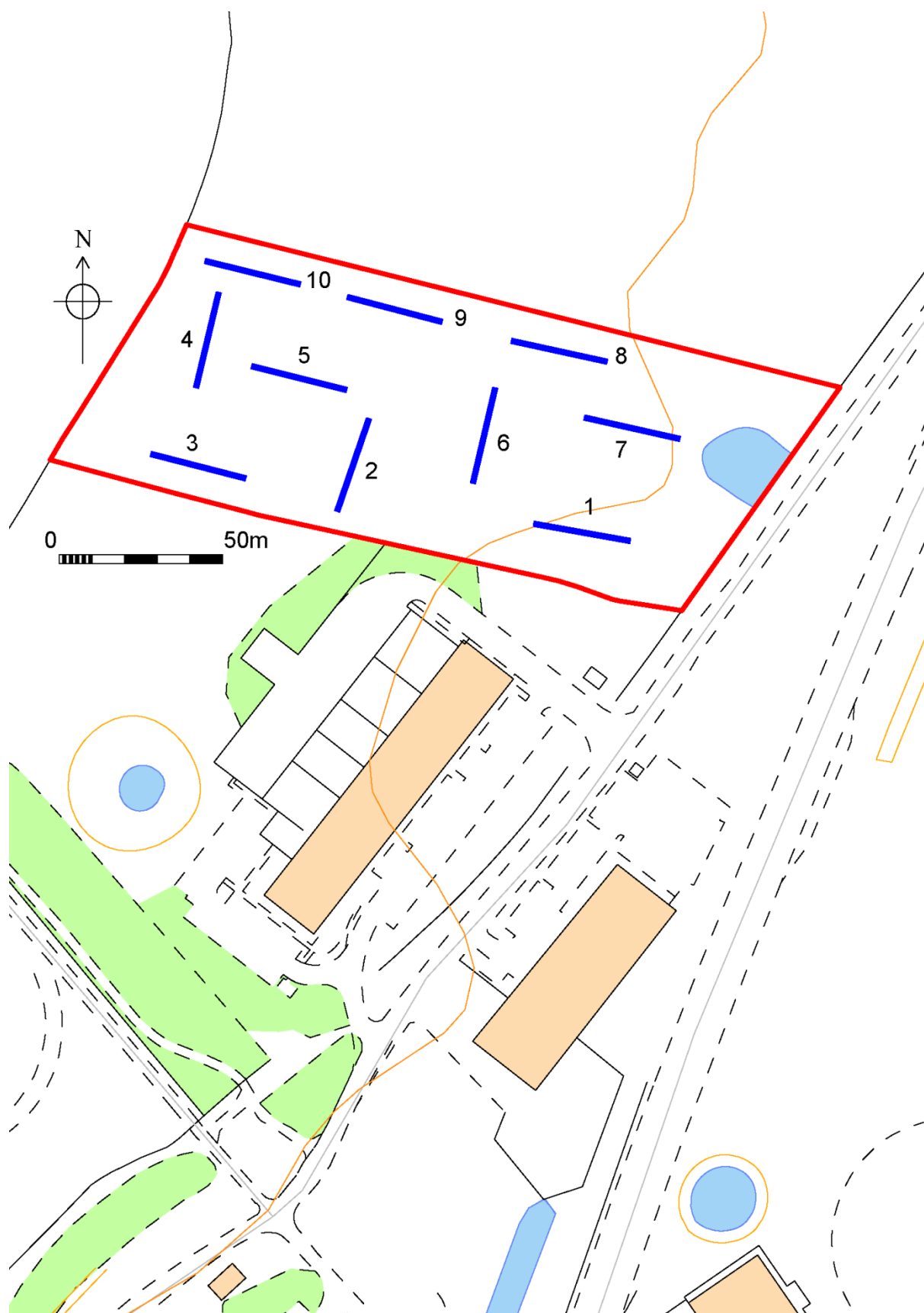


Figure 4: Trench plan

Methodology

In total of ten trenches were excavated, generally measuring 30m x 1.6m (Fig. 4). Natural substratum varied between pink-red clay with orange sand streaks and yellow-brown clay with pebbles, mostly around 0.3m deep. No subsoil was encountered. Topsoil was dark brown clay loam varying between 0.24m and 0.38m thick.

The sections and existing spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds. If present, archaeological features were hand cleaned, planned, photographed and sample excavated as detailed in the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological field evaluations* (2014).

Results

A number of furrows were observed in all trenches apart from trench 3. Generally they were aligned east-west and were c. 1m-1.5m wide. No other features were observed.

Trench 1	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NW-SE	29		1.6		46.4		0.32		0.4		No
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10	15	20	25	29				
Topsoil depth	0.3	0.3	0.26	0.3	0.29	0.28	0.28				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.3	0.3	0.26	0.3	0.29	0.28	0.28				
Base of trench	0.34	0.38	0.32	0.32	0.33	0.4	0.38				

Trench 2	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NE-SW	30.2		1.6		48.32		0.3		0.41		No
Interval (m) from southwest end	0	5	10	15	20	25	30.2				
Topsoil depth	0.36	0.38	0.31	0.3	0.29	0.29	0.32				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.36	0.38	0.31	0.3	0.29	0.29	0.32				
Base of trench	0.38	0.41		0.38	0.32	0.3	0.38				

Trench 3	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NW-SE	29.6		1.6		47.36		0.28		0.38		No
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10	15	20	25	29.6				
Topsoil depth	0.29	0.32	0.31	0.33	0.32	0.28	0.23				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.29	0.32	0.31	0.33	0.32	0.28	0.23				
Base of trench	0.32	0.33	0.33	0.38	0.33	0.29	0.28				

Trench 4	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NE-SW	29.1		1.6		46.56		0.3		0.35		No
Interval (m) from southwest end	0	5	10	15	20	25	29.1				
Topsoil depth	0.3	0.31	0.28	0.24	0.28	0.29	0.28				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.3	0.31	0.28	0.24	0.28	0.29	0.28				
Base of trench	0.33	0.35	0.34	0.3	0.31	0.31	0.32				

Trench 5	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NW-SE	30		1.6		48		0.3		0.34		No
Interval (m) from northwest end	0	5	10	15	20	25	30				
Topsoil depth	0.29	0.3	0.25	0.3	0.29	0.31	0.3				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.29	0.3	0.25	0.3	0.29	0.31	0.3				
Base of trench	0.33	0.34	0.27	0.31	0.3	0.32	0.33				

Trench 6	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NE-SW	30.1		1.6		48.16		0.26		0.33		No
Interval (m) from southwest end	0	5	10	15	20	25	30.1				
Topsoil depth	0.24	0.27	0.3	0.24	0.3	0.25	0.24				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.24	0.27	0.3	0.24	0.3	0.25	0.24				
Base of trench	0.29	0.31	0.31	0.26	0.33	0.3	0.28				

Trench 7	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NW-SE	29.6		1.6		47.36		0.31		0.38		No
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10	15	20	25	29.6				
Topsoil depth	0.29	0.28	0.32	0.3	0.31	0.29	0.3				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.29	0.28	0.32	0.3	0.31	0.29	0.3				
Base of trench	0.33	0.31	0.37	0.33	0.38	0.31	0.36				

Trench 8	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NW-SE	30		1.6		48		0.32		0.41		No
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10	15	20	25	30				
Topsoil depth	0.35	0.3	0.29	0.28	0.32	0.3	0.29				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.35	0.3	0.29	0.28	0.32	0.3	0.29				
Base of trench	0.41	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.36	0.33	0.32				

Trench 9	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NW-SE	30.5		1.6		48.8		0.31		0.4		No
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10	15	20	25	30.5				
Topsoil depth	0.3	0.28	0.33	0.34	0.3	0.28	0.31				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.3	0.28	0.33	0.34	0.3	0.28	0.31				
Base of trench	0.33	0.31	0.38	0.4	0.33	0.31	0.38				

Trench 10	Length (m)		Width (m)		Area (sq. m)		Min. depth (m)		Max. depth (m)		Archaeology?
NW-SE	31		1.6		49.6		0.3		0.39		No
Interval (m) from southeast end	0	5	10	15	20	25	30				
Topsoil depth	0.31	0.29	0.27	0.3	0.28	0.3	0.34				
Subsoil depth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
Top of natural substratum	0.31	0.29	0.27	0.3	0.28	0.3	0.34				
Base of trench	0.36	0.33	0.3	0.33	0.34	0.32	0.39				



Figure 5: trench 4 looking north-east



Figure 6: Trench 8 looking north-east

Discussion

There were no archaeological features encountered within the trenches. It would appear that the land had been used for farming using ridge a furrow ploughing before it was levelled. This seems to correlate with results from the evaluation in the field directly to the south-west (Baker 2014b).

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Archive

The site archive consists of: 10 A4 trial trench sheets, 1 A4 photo index sheet, and 48 digital photographs.

The site archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Museum Services under the accession number X.A23.2016.

Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York. A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

OASIS no.	
Project Name	MAB4, MIRA, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Patrick Clay
Project Supervisor	Nathan Flavell
Previous/Future work	ULAS reports: 2011-023, 2011-047, 2011-148, 2012-113, 2013-192, 2013-213, 2014-050, 2014-052, 2014-104, 2014-178, 2014-206, 2015-102
Current Land Use	Pasture
Development Type	Commercial
Reason for Investigation	NPPF
Position in the Planning Process	Condition
Site Co ordinates	SP 36821 96192
Start/end dates of field work	09/02/16-10/02/16
Archive recipient	Leicestershire
Study Area	478.5 square metres

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Fieldwork was undertaken by Nathan Flavell; the report was written by Nathan Flavell and the project was managed for ULAS by Patrick Clay.

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