



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Archaeological Services

**Archaeological Attendance
on land at Hilary Bevins Close,
Higham on the Hill,
Leicestershire**

NGR: SP 379 957

Andrew Hyam



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For: David Wilson Homes East Midlands Limited

Approved by:

Signed: ...



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Summary

Archaeological attendance during groundworks was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 21st of March 2016 in advance of the construction of a balancing pond associated with a new residential development built to the east of Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire. The development site and proposed balancing pond lie outside the village core but are within fields containing preserved medieval ridge and furrow. Five negative evaluation trenches had been excavated within the area of the new houses in 2012 (Hyam 2012). At the time of the archaeological attendance the area of the balancing pond had been heavily disturbed resulting in the loss of most topsoil and subsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were located within the area of the pond.

The report will be archived under accession number X.A114.2012 under the same code as the 2012 evaluation.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document forms the report for an archaeological watching brief on land at Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire, NGR: SP 379 957. The work was carried out in advance of the construction of a balancing pond associated with a small residential development.

As a previously submitted geophysical survey had identified a possible archaeological feature in the vicinity, the Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to the planning authority had requested Archaeological Attendance during groundworks associated with the balancing pond. The work has been commissioned by David Wilson Homes East Midlands Limited and followed that specified in the 2016 ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Attendance at Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire* (hereinafter the WSI).

Background

The village of Higham on the Hill is located approximately 3km to the north-east of Nuneaton and 4km to the north-west of Hinckley, close to the Leicestershire-Warwickshire border (Fig. 1). The proposed site of the balancing pond is located in between the disused Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway Line and Main Street, on the eastern side of Station Road, adjacent to Hilary Bevins Close (Fig. 2). The pond site is centred on SP 379 957 and has recently been used as the building site compound and topsoil storage area. Prior to the commencement of the development the area was pasture land and had a system of low ridge and furrow earthworks running from south-

west to north-east. The site is still surrounded by a variety of hedges, fences and trees with access from the eastern end of Hilary Bevins Close in the south-east. The site slopes down to the north from a height of approximately 108m OD following the general slope leading down from the village centre towards the former railway line. A geophysical survey was undertaken by Stratascan (Smalley 2012) which identified a linear anomaly probably of a former field boundary but the pond area was otherwise relatively negative (Fig. 3).

At the time of this archaeological work most of the houses had been built on the new housing estate. The new estate is built on a slope and it is intended that the positioning of the balancing pond will prevent flash flooding of the land further down the slope. The pond is located at the northern edge of the development.



Figure 1 Higham on the Hill location

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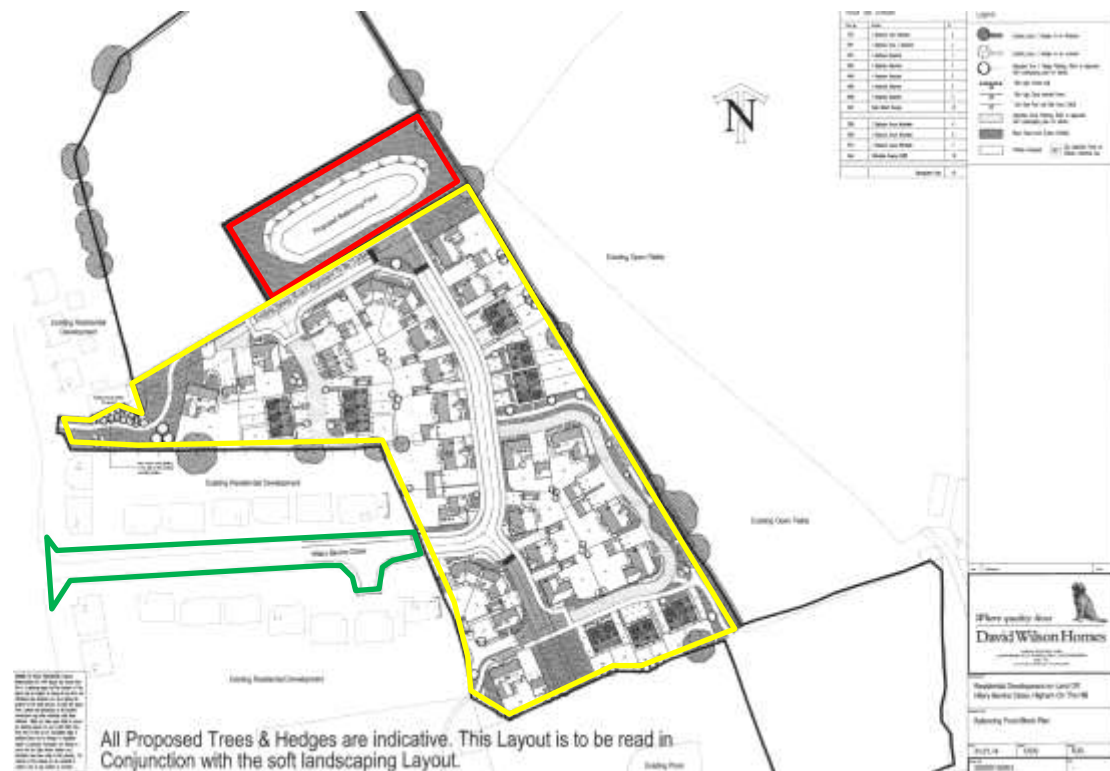


Figure 2 Development site and balancing pond location
Balancing pond outlined in red, new development in yellow and Hilary Bevins Close in green. Plan supplied by client.

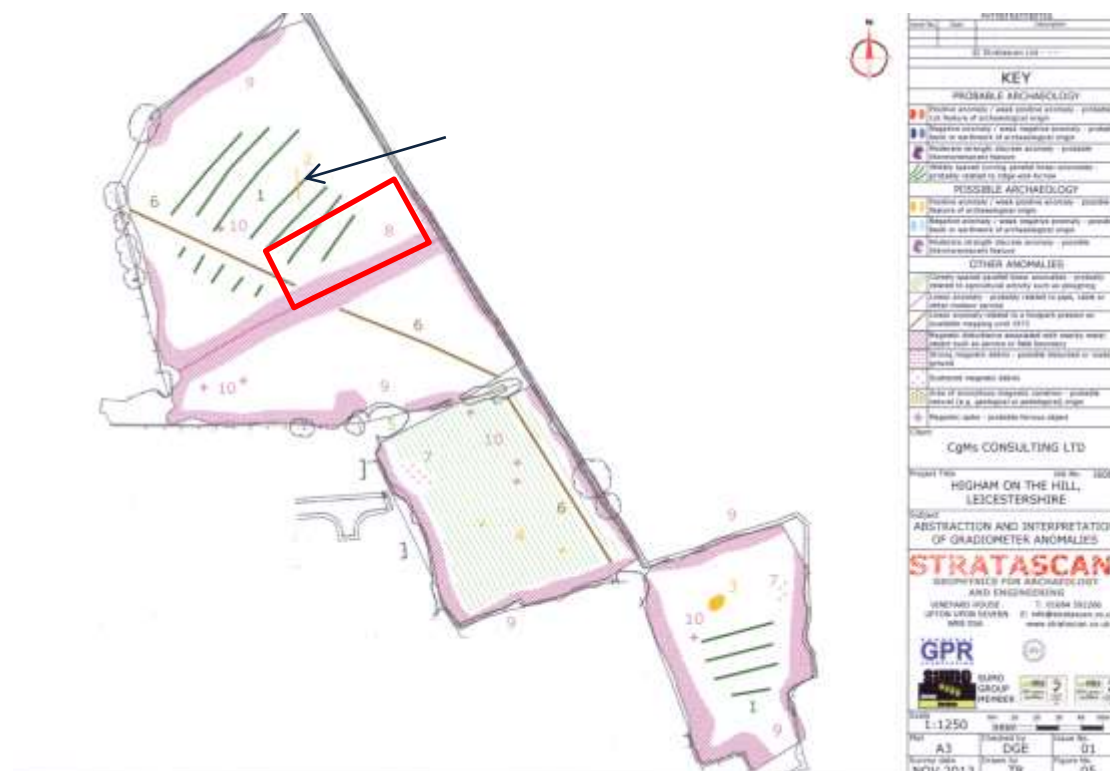


Figure 3 Geophysical survey of the site
Approximate location of pond highlighted. Possible anomaly which may be affected by the pond is arrowed. From Richardson 2013

Objectives

The objectives are as laid out in the ULAS WSI. However the purpose of the archaeological work may be summarised as follows:

- 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 record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the ground works.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Methodology

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2012) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008).

The project involved archaeological attendance during groundworks by an experienced professional archaeologist. During these groundworks, if any archaeological deposits were identified as being present, the archaeologist would record the areas of archaeological interest.

Results

At the time of the archaeological attendance the area around the balancing pond had been used as a topsoil bank and vehicle movement area (Fig. 4). At the eastern end of the area proposed for the pond the ground had already been partially excavated to create an oval hole approximately 15m long (east to west) and 5m wide (north to south) (Fig. 5). The hole covered much of the location of the eastern end of the proposed balancing pond and had been excavated into the undisturbed natural mid yellowish brown clay substratum. The hole cut approximately 1m into the natural substratum on its western edge dropping down to around 2m in the east. The edges of this excavation revealed that very little topsoil or subsoil were present in this area.

Because of the disturbed nature of the area it was decided to excavate a 1.8m wide by 12m long strip from the edge of the hole westwards to the edge of the proposed balancing pond. This would help assess the potential disturbance or possible preservation of the pond area. The 2012 geophysical survey revealed the possible presence of a linear feature to the north of the proposed pond location (Figure 3). The linear anomaly appears to run from north to south. If it continues southwards into the pond area the excavated strip should have picked it up. The strip removed a heavily disturbed layer of dark grey silty-clay with building materials, plastic and metal debris and other foreign objects mixed throughout. This layer, which varied in depth from 0.2m to 0.6m, sat directly on top of the natural substratum (Fig. 6). Because of the disturbed overburden the natural substratum also varied in height below current ground level with a pronounced step being noted close to the edge of the existing hole.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed in the exposed substratum and no archaeological material was seen in the excavated spoil. No evidence of the geophysical linear anomaly or any surviving ridge and furrow was located. The 1.8m wide strip

revealed how badly disturbed the pond area was and that no archaeological deposits would be identified by stripping the rest of the pond area.



Figure 4 Balancing pond location at commencement of watching brief
Looking south-east. Approximate pond area highlighted



Figure 5 Existing hole at eastern end of proposed balancing pond location
Looking south



Figure 6 Excavated strip running from the edge of the hole to the western edge of the pond
Looking north-east. 1m scale

Discussion

No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the archaeological attendance. The activity and excavation work which had taken place before the archaeological attendance in and around the proposed area of the balancing pond has disturbed the ground to a high degree so that no topsoil or subsoil has survived intact. Similarly it would appear that an unknown depth of natural substratum has also been removed. No evidence of the linear geophysical anomaly was identified which suggests that it may have been limited in size to the length recorded during the 2012 survey (Smalley 2012).

Archive

The archive for this phase of work consists of:

This report,

1 ULAS pro-forma watching brief recording form,

1 ULAS pro-forma photo record sheet.

13 digital photographs in jpeg and tiff format,

1 DVD of the digital photographs.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the

project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

Bibliography

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Appendix 1 OASIS Information

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universil-xxxx		
	Project Name	Archaeological Attendance on Land off Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill		
	Start/end dates of field work	23-03-2016		
	Previous/Future Work	Yes, evaluation / None		
	Project Type	Watching Brief		
	Site Status	None		
	Current Land Use	Cultivated Land		
	Monument Type/Period	None/none		
	Significant Finds/Period	None/none		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	14/00097/FUL		
	Planning Ref.	14/00097/FUL		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Land off Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill		
	Study Area	0.6ha		
	Site Coordinates	SK 379 957		
	Height OD	108m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Dr Patrick Clay		
	Project Director/Supervisor	A Hyam		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Developer /David Wilson Homes East Midlands Ltd		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	NA	LCC MusService	LCCMusService
	ID (Acc. No.)		XA114.2012	XA114.2012
	Contents		Photos	Watching brief records Field Notes
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	An archaeological watching brief on land at Hilary Bevins Close, Higham on the Hill, Leicestershire		
	Author	A Hyam		
	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report No 2016-064		
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