



Rosehill

4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire

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Historic environment desk based assessment

NGR: SP 08678 57416

Site code: ALC17

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HER ref: 17/183

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one ten archaeology

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Front cover: Rosehill, view to the south-west

SUMMARY

An historic environment desk based assessment was carried out during May and June 2017 at Rosehill, 4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire, to support an application for alterations and ancillary works at the premises.

The assessment concluded that there are a broad date-range of archaeological monuments and deposits close to the site including a high probability of Roman remains related to the C1-C2 extra -mural settlement to the south and west of the walled town.

The proposed development comprising the erection of a rear single-storey extension which may have an impact on deposits related to the Roman settlement, has already been carried out. An evaluation in the form of trial trenching around the perimeter of the existing extension was therefore recommended to assess the impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

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Fig.1; site location (circled in red)

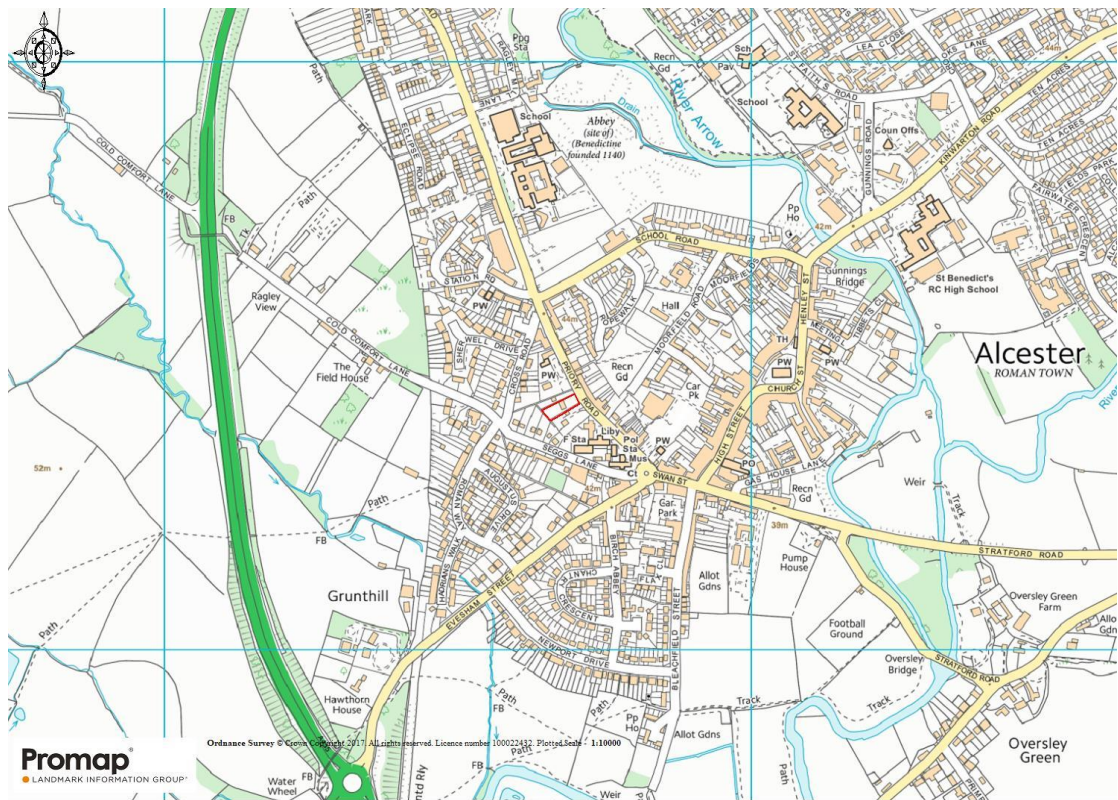


Fig. 2; study site (outlined in red)

INTRODUCTION

Location and scope of work (Figs. 1 & 2)

An application was submitted to Stratford District Council for alterations to the existing property at Rosehill, 4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire, B49 5DY. This document details the results of an historic environment desk based assessment carried out during May and June 2017 at the request of the owner Mr Plim. The assessment was required by the Planning Department of Stratford-upon-Avon District Council in response to an application for proposed alterations and reordering. It was recognised that the application site includes or has the potential to include heritage assets of archaeological interest.

Geology and topography

Alcester is a long, narrow parish extending to the south-western boundary of the county along the Ridgeway. The town is situated approximately 13km west of Stratford-upon-Avon, and 13km south of Redditch, close to the Worcestershire border, lying in the south-east corner near the junction of the Alne and the Arrow.

The main road from Stratford to Worcester enters the parish at Oversley bridge and continues through the town westward. The old town lies to the north of this road and High Street branches off from it and leading to the church.

Swan Street forks to the right to Priory Road and Birmingham and to the left to Evesham and Worcester, Seggs Lane continues in a straight line between the two branches and crosses the railway line to become Allimore Lane, leading to the Gorralls and Cold Comfort Farm. Two fields on the right of Priory Road mark the site of Alcester Abbey. Both bridges are on the sites of earlier structures.

The study site, which comprises a large rectangular plot of land (1280m²) situated at about 42.00m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), lies in the roughly triangular area sandwiched between the converging Seggs Lane and Priory Road and is bounded by the more recent Cross Road to the north-west.

Aims and objectives

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the

preservation and investigation of archaeological remains. The framework sets out the obligations placed on the local planning authority (Chapter 12, paragraphs 128 & 129) through the development and implementation of a local plan. The framework also sets out the need for the determining authority to ensure that they have sufficient information when making decisions on applications affecting the historic environment. In accordance with NPPF an application should be accompanied by an assessment of significance (DBA) to inform the application process to an extent necessary to understand the potential impact (positive or negative) of the proposal on the heritage asset and its setting.

'A desk-based assessment will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area, and the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment, or will identify the need for further evaluation to do so (CIfA, 2014).'

NPPF Chapter 12; Paragraph 128 states:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum, the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed, includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'

Summary of archaeological results

Numerous monument records and event records have been identified from the Historic Environment Record (HER) within a 500m search area centred on the site. A summary of the more significant localised information is outlined below.

Prehistoric

MWA10237; Organic deposits occur across entire site of ancient marsh and contained wood fragments including pieces up to 1.50m long. In two locations, several lay together possibly forming a platform and at another point a plank was held in place by vertical stakes. The area is sealed by Keuper marl containing a single flint, probably Bronze Age (Booth, 1979). Full excavation report supports above though downplaying the possible platform. A C14 date of 460 +/- 110 bc was obtained from one of the timbers and that the Keuper Marl layer has been dated by the work of Shotton to the late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition with a TPQ of c. 660 bc (calibrated dates would be earlier than these) (Hooke Ed, 1989) A marsh deposit was found in 2009, although not in the expected location. C14 dates were obtained and placed the deposit within the mesolithic period. It seems that at least part of the marsh was established at a much earlier date than previously thought (Gethin, 2010 & CBA West Midlands, 2010)

MWA8783; A burial, dating from the late Iron Age or early Roman period, was found to the north of Cold Comfort Lane, Alcester. Only the skull of the skeleton was uncovered, which lay in a coffin, outlined by at least four iron nails (Warwickshire Museum, 2000).

MWA7113; In 1995 trial trenching and a geophysical survey identified features of Iron Age and Romano British date which probably represents a small farmstead type settlement (Jones, 1995). Excavation in 1999 revealed further evidence of Romano-British settlement (Warwickshire Museum, 2000).

MWA9042; The site of an Iron Age/Roman settlement was found through excavation and geophysical survey to the north of Cold Comfort Lane in 1995 (Jones, G. 1995). The site lies well away from the Roman town and cemeteries so it seems most likely this is a discrete rural Roman settlement of unknown extent. Excavation in 1999 revealed further evidence of Romano-British settlement (Warwickshire Museum, 2000).

Roman

MWA12484; A large U-shaped pit or ditch was recorded during a watching brief at 5 Orchard Drive, which indicated the survival of deposits not directly affected by previous excavation or by the 1960s housing development (Greig, 2007).

MWA523; Excavation to the north of Seggs Lane found evidence of Roman occupation (Mahany, 1994).

MWA19166; Two Roman sub-oval pits or postholes containing mid C1-C2 pottery were recorded during an evaluation (EWA10203) at the former Police Station, Priory Road and probably relate to a series of timber buildings in this

area (Hughes, Griffin & Vaughan, 2007). The two postholes are comparable with the clusters identified to the east in 1938 (MWA488, Seaby, 1945), and interpreted as part of the building and re-building of timber structures in the mid C1-C2

MWA20521; A series of Roman alluvial layers, including waterlogged organic remains, were partly revealed, excavated and recorded off the north-eastern side of Priory Road, in February 2006. These layers were revealed as a series of dark brown-grey or grey-brown clays with varying amounts of gravels of differing sizes in all trenches except one. Roman artefacts were recovered from these layers including Samian ware bowls of Dragendorff 18/31 form of late C1 to early C2 date and other grey grogged coarse ware pottery. Several lead objects were also recovered including a loom weight. In one trench a north/south row of three waterlogged square and substantial wooden posts, were sealed by one of the dark clay layers and cut into another clay; these were temporary posts as no post holes were evident and the wood of poor quality (Hawtin, 2006).

MWA445; Roman Road. Ryknild Street. Ryknild Street which runs north from the Fosse Way at Bourton on the Water may have been an advanced section of the frontier line supposedly represented by the Fosse Way, and is likely to have developed piecemeal in the second half of the C1. Its route can be traced through the county, though topography suggests that the road may have run to the west of the present alignment between the river at Bidford and Wixford (Margary, 1955). Cropmarks show the alignment of the road north of Alcester (Aerial Photographs: Pickering J. 06/07/76. SP0858. SF 1446 - 22. SP0858/ A & 05/31/57. SP0858. P418. SP0858/M). It survives as a trackway between Wixford and Oversley Mill, but the crossing point has been obliterated by later changes to the river, and the course north of the river into Alcester is uncertain - there may be a pronounced kink. In Alcester, excavations have picked up the course of the road at several points and shown the presence of a sequence of surfaces (Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeology Society, 1988.). An observation in 2004 at Alcester Grammar School suggests it runs along Birmingham Road into Alcester. The road consisted of a wide, very hard surface of hard packed medium sized pebbles. A single ditch containing Roman pottery was found on the east side (west side not within excavation). The road had been resurfaced with a mix of soil and gravel, showing in section as a camber (Gethin,2005).

MWA7529; Findspot - various Roman artefacts were found at 55 Priory Road (Palmer, 1995).

MWA4480; Roman rubbish pits were excavated near Orchard Drive (PMB. WM).

MWA462; Findspot - Roman pottery was found in the area west of Moorfield Road (Seaby, map).

MWA488; The remains of a Roman building, Roman pottery and coins were found on the south side of Priory Road, Alcester. Some finds were made in 1925 and the area was excavated in 1938. It had been badly disturbed, but wall footings of unbonded sandstone were uncovered which measured 2.3m by 0.6m wide. Traces of a hearth associated with Samian and a nail were found. Pottery indicates Flavian-Trajanic occupation, a radiate coin and others of the house of Constantine. Pottery included Samian and coarse ware, mortaria, amphorae, a small ceramic human figure, a glass bottle or jar stamped O S ^ B II L, various other metal objects and fifteen coins (Seaby, 1945). Students of the Department of Archaeology, University of Birmingham, excavated part of the Cattle Market site adjacent to the garden excavated by Seaby (MWA488). Although the area had been much disturbed by recent pits, the site revealed post holes and beam slots dated by finds of pottery and coins of the late C1 and early C2 and occupied from the late C1 to the late C3 or early C4 with evidence of timber buildings, later replaced by stone buildings. Finds include a range of late C1 to late C3 pottery and coins of Nerva, Hadrian, Carausius and possibly Trajan

MWA489; Findspot - A trench cut by Hughes on the N side of Seggs Lane showed no sign of a previous road and a Samian sherd of a Dr 18/31 or 31 with a stamp PERPETVI, which has been identified by Mr B R Hartley as PERPETVS of Rheinzabern, mid-C2, was found here (Birmingham Archaeological Society, 1960).

Saxon/early medieval

Evidence for Saxon activity within the HER search area is absent (see *Discussion* below).

Medieval

MWA9126; Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation at Alcester Grammar School, Birmingham Road (Coutts, 2001). Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation located 100m west of the ruins of Alcester Abbey. Two medieval furrow markings uncovered during observation of ground works for a new teaching block. Numerous medieval furrows running roughly east-west across the site were recorded during trial trenching at Alcester Grammar School. The area appeared to have lain within the medieval open fields of Alcester from the late medieval period. These were overlain by a plough-soil from which Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered. It seemed likely that the area

was cultivated up until the creation of the school in the early 20th century (Coutts & Jones, 2004).

MWA10238; A medieval pit and several small post-holes containing medieval pottery were excavated east of Priory Road (Booth, 1979).

Post-medieval

MWA8726; Find-spot - various finds dating to the Imperial period and of modern date were excavated at Minerva Mews, Alcester (Jones, 1999).

Modern

MWA1877; Minerva Needle Works, c1880, situated near Priory Road, represents the last phase of needle manufacture in the Alcester/Studley area. (Falconer, 1980).

Undated

MWA12619; Two undated shallow gullies were found running east-west on Evesham Street (Hughes, 2008).

MWA9178; An undated wall line was exposed during a watching brief at 67 Priory Road, it was parallel to the street frontage, possibly indicating a medieval date, however the lack of medieval finds could suggest that it was Roman. (Gethin, 2001).

Events

EWA1978; Watching brief May/June 1985 produced topsoil overlying dark silty deposits, probably part of Moorfield Marsh. N.B. Source unlocatable. NGR from old mon (MWA4835).

EWA2834; Listed as site no. 12. Excavations by Birmingham University students under direction of R A Tomlinson. Immediately adjacent to Seaby's work, same building revealed, more detail of development (Mahany ed., 1994).

EWA5784; Excavation revealed a ditch 0.4m deep and 1.0m wide, pottery recovered from a later fill dates it to C2-C4 and suggests it is a recut of an earlier ditch on the same alignment with its south edge lying to the south. The Roman ditches were probably boundary features associated with a back garden or yard. A post hole was also found (Jones, 1993).

Development or other impact (Figs. 3 & 4)

The study site comprises an area of about 1280m² and situated near the middle is the existing dwelling, a 1970s bungalow. A single-storey rear extension has

already been constructed under Permitted Development, the proposed development comprising alterations and reordering of the existing building, however, required a desk based assessment.

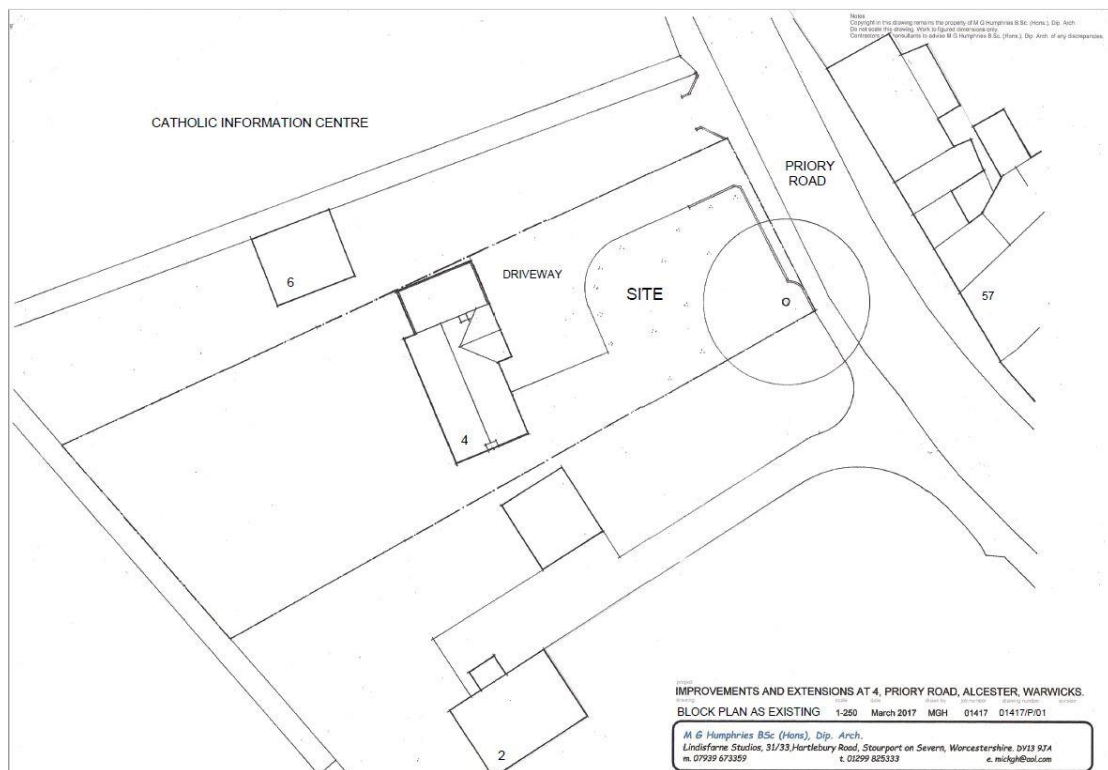


Fig. 3; 4 Priory Road, site as existing

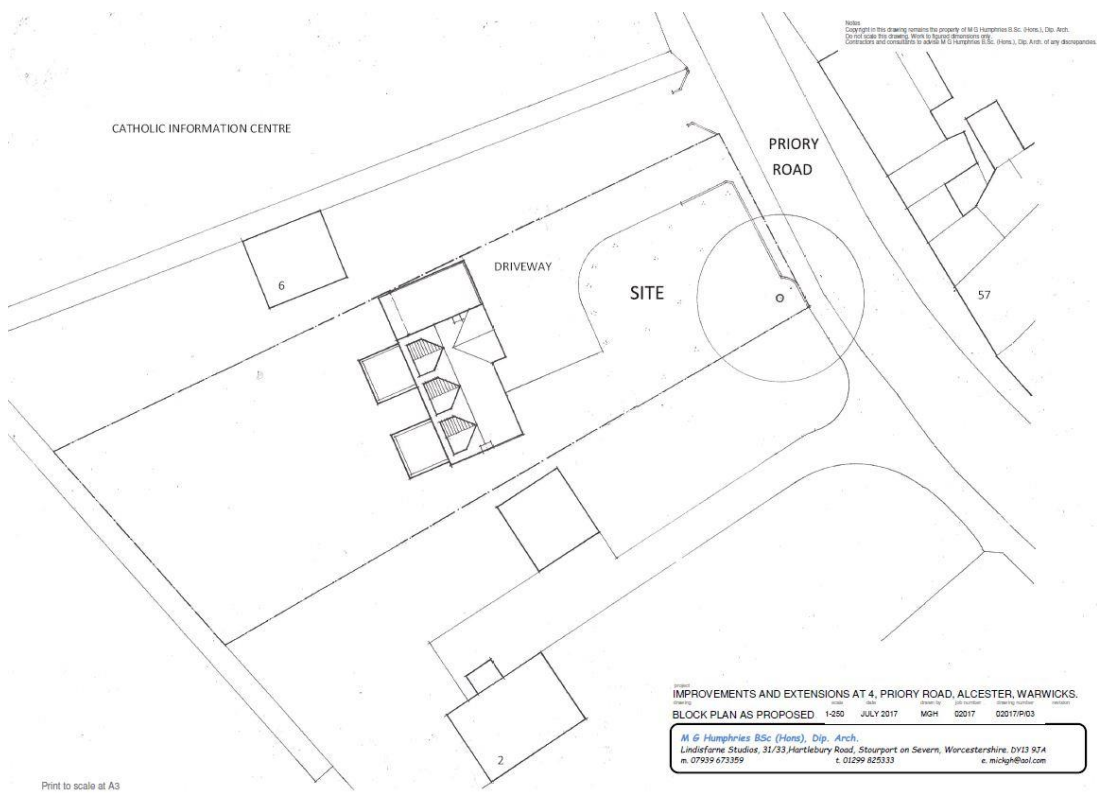


Fig. 4; 4 Priory Road, site as proposed

DISCUSSION (Fig. 5)

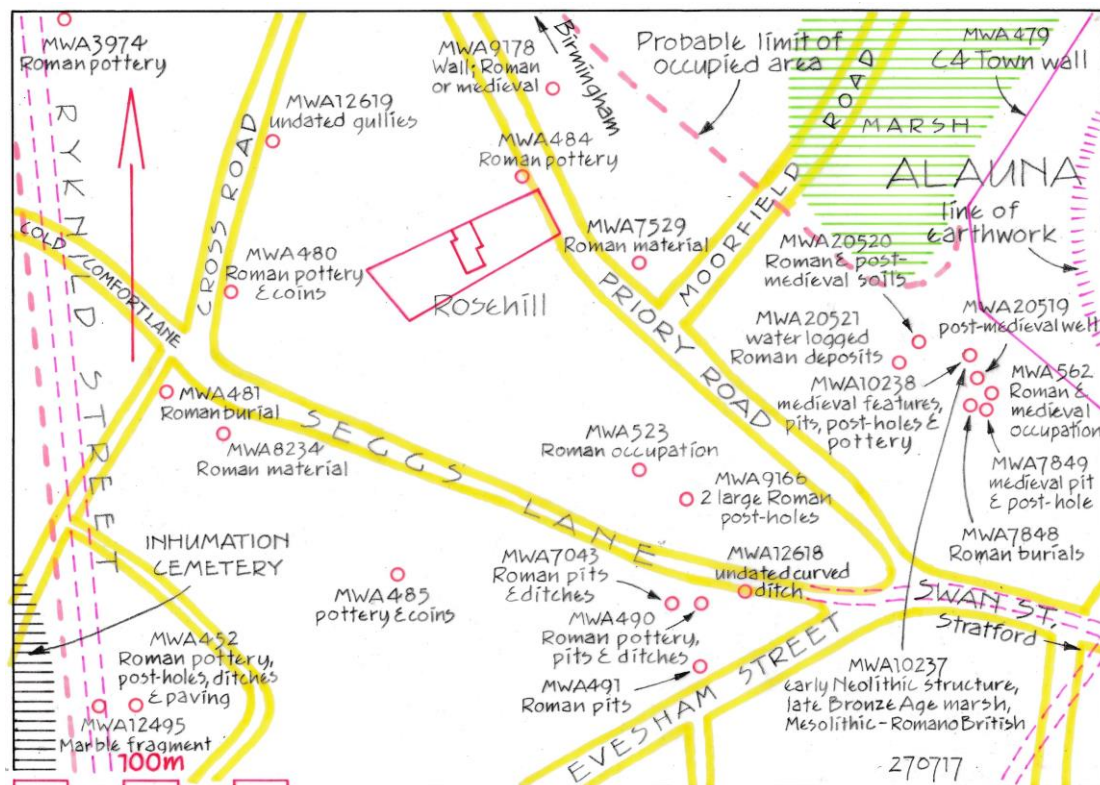


Fig. 5; Historic Environment plan showing nearby monuments.

Prehistoric

Evidence has been uncovered for an Iron Age settlement, probably a farmstead, to the west of the town north of Cold Comfort Lane, a burial has also been found nearby. There are no known prehistoric records within or near to the study site. The probability of prehistoric deposits being uncovered here is low.

Roman

Alcester was founded by the Romans, around AD 47, as a walled fort and the walled colonia named *Alauna* developed from the military camp. It was located on Icknield Street (or Ryknild Street), a Roman road that ran the length of *Britannia* from the north east near Hadrian's Wall to southwest England and just north of another important thoroughfare in Roman Britain; the Fosse Way. *Alauna*, which was a bustling market town, was within the commercial sphere of *Salinae* (Droitwich Spa), where rock salt and brine was extracted and processed. Archaeological investigations show the *colonia* had streets, temples and workshops. Recent excavations have shown that a substantial part of the Roman town developed beyond its defensive wall and main gate, to the south-west, in

the C3. The Priory Road site is located just west of the site of the gate and the surrounding area is rich with evidence of Roman occupation including both masonry and timber-framed structures, pottery; fine and coarse, small-finds and coins, all the way westward to Ryknild Street. A large cemetery lay beyond this major road, and a small piece of marble found nearby suggests a marble-clad funerary monument. The probability of Roman deposits being uncovered here is very high.

Anglo-Saxon/Early medieval

In the Saxon period, *Alencestre* had become a market town in the Kingdom of Mercia and it may be 'the celebrated place called Alne' where an ecclesiastical council was held c709 to consecrate the foundation of Evesham Abbey by Ecgwin, Bishop of Worcester. The manor of Alcester is not described in Domesday, but later evidence shows it to have been of the ancient demesne of the Crown. The probability of Anglo-Saxon/early medieval deposits being uncovered here is moderately low.

Medieval

Alcester Abbey, a Benedictine House to the north of the town was founded in 1138 and absorbed into Evesham Abbey in 1467. By 1515 it was in ruins because of neglect and was largely demolished at the Dissolution, much of the stone was used to rebuild Beauchamp Court.

The town features a fine collection of historic buildings illustrating the architectural story from medieval times to the present. The braces of no23 Henley St. suggest a C15 date, and The Old Malthouse, at the corner of Church Street and Malt Mill Lane, is a good example of close-studding c1500. The probability of medieval deposits being uncovered here is moderate.

Post-medieval

Numerous examples of timber-frames with small square panels survive from the later C16 and early C17, and late C17 brick buildings with casement windows. The early C17 Town Hall is timber-framed on an open ground-floor masonry colonnade. The C18 is well represented by flat-arches with keystones and late Georgian stuccoed buildings. The unusually positioned clock on C14 tower of St Nicholas Church, is visible from the High Street and the nave was rebuilt in 1729. During this period, the east side of Priory Road was developed and has examples of buildings dating back to the late C16/early C17, but the west side remained undeveloped. The 17th century witnessed a considerable

growth of prosperity in Alcester and the manufacture of needles from 1678 followed by malting were both important industries. The population was about 1,250 in c1670 rising to 1,625 by 1801, it increased a further 50% in the next 30 years by which time the town had greatly increased in size and appearance but during the following decade the population began a decline which continued into the C20. In common with many small country towns of its type, the coming of the railway probably deprived it of much of its former importance. The probability of post-medieval deposits being uncovered here is moderate.

Modern

By the beginning of the C20 a Cattle Market had been established to the south-east of the site and a church and school (RC) to the north. In the C19 there were already buildings along Evesham Road and Bleachfield but by 1971 this entire area from the railway in the west to Bleachfield in the east had been developed with housing as well as new industrial buildings focused around Bleachfield. The probability of modern deposits being uncovered here is low.

Conclusion & recommendation

The assessment concluded that there are a broad date-range of archaeological monuments and deposits close to the site including a high probability of Roman remains related to the C1-C2 extra-mural settlement to the south and west of the walled town.

The proposed development comprising the erection of a rear single-storey extension which may have an impact on deposits related to the Roman settlement, has already been carried out. An evaluation in the form of trial trenching around the perimeter of the existing extension is therefore recommended to assess the impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

Archive Location

The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) and an online form submitted to OASIS (Appendix 1).

Methodology

The assessment has been compiled in accordance with the Chartered Institute for

Archaeologist's Guidance and Standards for an historic environment desk based assessment (CIfA, 2014).

The Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted with a search carried out within a 500m radius centred on the site. No site specific geotechnical information was available at the time of the assessment.

A visit was made and the study site and surrounding area. Significant information from the HER and the historic maps is incorporated into the Historic environment plan.

Timescales used in this report:

Prehistoric BC450,000-AD43

Palaeolithic 450,000-12,000 BC

Mesolithic 12,000-4,000 BC

Neolithic 4,000-1,800 BC

Bronze Age 1,800-600 BC

Iron Age 600-AD43

Roman AD43-410

Saxon/early medieval AD410-1066

Medieval AD 1066-1530

Post-medieval AD 1531-1800

Modern AD 1800-present

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APPENDIX 1; OASIS

Project name	Rosehill, 4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire; historic environment desk based assessment
Project dates	Start: 19-05-2017 End: 26-07-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ALC17 – Site-code
Type of project	Desk based assessment
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Documentary Search","Visual Inspection"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Country	England
Site location	WARWICKSHIRE STRATFORD ON AVON ALCESTER Rosehill, Priory Road
Postcode	B49 5DY
Study area	1250 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 08678 57416 52.214491052508 -1.872971490091 52 12 52 N 001 52 22 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 43m Max: 43m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	one ten archaeology
Project director/manager	sean cook
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive Exists?	No
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Rosehill, 4 Priory road, Alcester, Warwickshire; historic

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Author(s)/Editor(s)	Atherton, J. and Cook, S.
Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	one ten archaeology
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