



Rosehill

4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire

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Archaeological evaluation

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one ten archaeology

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Front cover; overall view of the study site to the south-west

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out during January 2018 at Rosehill, 4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire to support an application for alterations and ancillary works at the premises including the construction of two rear extensions. The work was carried out following a desk based assessment which demonstrated a high probability of Roman remains related to the C1-C2 AD extra-mural settlement to the south and west of the walled town of Alcester being located within the site. Deposits associated with C1-C2 Roman occupation, some possibly structural in nature, were recorded and observed extending into the area of the existing property. The orientation of these remains suggests a pattern of settlement possibly influenced by an undated, but probable gravel yard or road surface situated on a similar north-east to south-west alignment within the centre of the study site. A lack of later finds suggests that occupation did not continue after the C1-C2 AD. Instead Roman deposits are sealed by a thick homogenous layer of relict subsoil probably accumulated by continued manuring associated with cultivation activities during the medieval and post-medieval periods.



Fig.1; site location (circled in red)

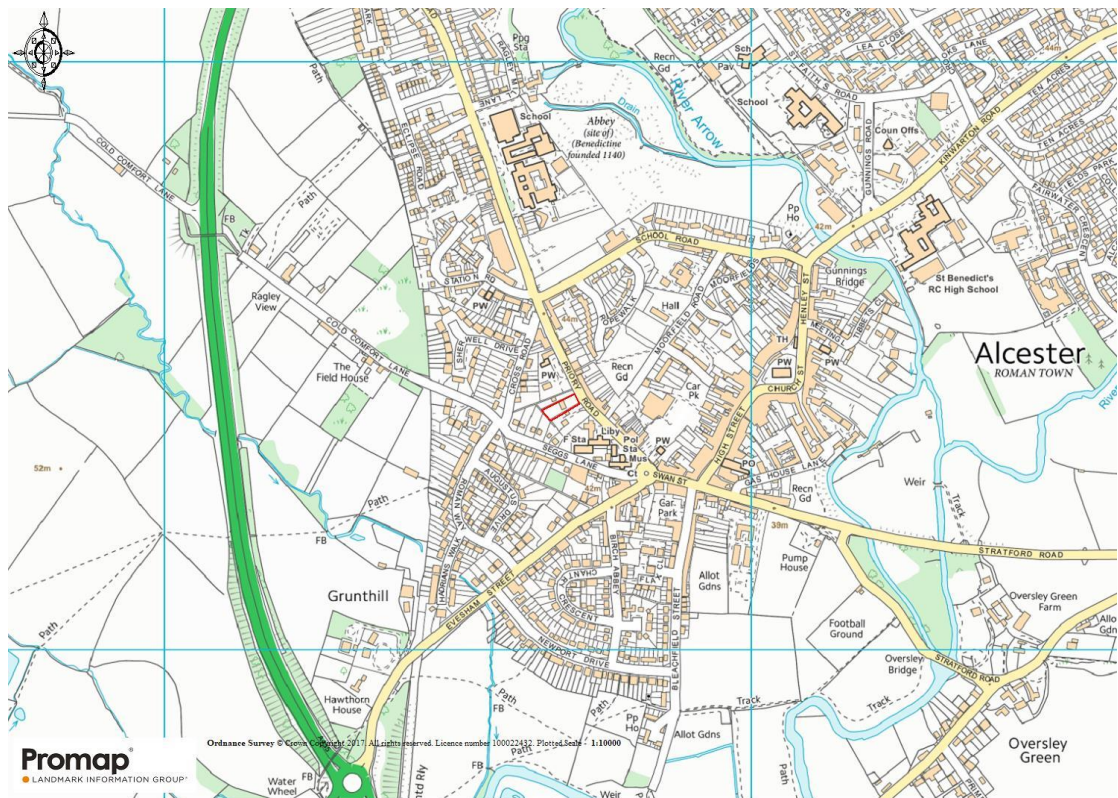


Fig. 2; study site (outlined in red)

INTRODUCTION

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

This document details the results of an archaeological evaluation during 3rd January 2018 at Rosehill, 4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire, B49 5DY. An application was submitted to Stratford District Council for alterations to the existing property. It was recognised that the application site includes or has the potential to include heritage assets of archaeological interest and in line with the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) an archaeological desk-based assessment was required. The assessment (Cook & Atherton, 2017) demonstrated that there is a high probability of Roman remains related to the C1-C2 extra-mural settlement to the south and west of the walled town of Alcester. In view of this an evaluation in the form of trial trenching was recommended to form the basis of a mitigation strategy.

In the event, two rear single-storey extensions were constructed before completion of the assessment which meant that these areas, which marked the focus of impact, could not be appropriately investigated. In view of this, it was recommended that sample excavation around the outer perimeter of the extensions should be carried out to assess the impact of the development on any archaeological remains that may have been present. This would be particularly relevant to linear features such as ditches, gullies, walls etc.

Geology and topography

The study site, which comprises a large rectangular plot of land (1,280m²) 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. Situated near the middle of the site is the existing dwelling, a 1960s 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.

Archaeological and historical background

The archaeological and historical background of the site is recorded in an assessment carried out prior to the evaluation (Cook & Atherton, 2017). This demonstrated that there are a broad date-range of archaeological monuments and deposits recorded close to the site including a high probability of Roman remains related to the C1-C2 extra-mural settlement situated to the south and west of the walled town of Alcester.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

Aims of the work

The objective of the trial trenching was to determine the date, character, quality, survival and extent of any archaeological deposits within the site that may have been impacted on during excavation of the foundation trenches associated with the construction of the two rear extensions. Should significant finds or features be identified, these would be recorded and reported on, the information used to assess the impact of the development on these deposits. Should further ground disturbance associated with the development then mitigation in the form of a 'watching brief' should be carried out as a condition of planning permission to record any further archaeological deposits.

Sample size and scope of fieldwork

The evaluation comprised two L-shaped trenches approx. 1m wide, each located around the edge of the two extensions to investigate the impact of their foundations on the underlying deposits. Both trenches were about 8m long and excavated to a depth of about 0.80m below the existing ground level.

Fieldwork methods and recording

The archaeological field work and post-excavation was carried out in accordance with standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2014). All deposits were excavated removing the overburden under close archaeological supervision and investigated for archaeological features. A plan and sample sections of the trenches were made and recorded during excavation.

RESULTS: GENERAL (Fig.3)

Soil and ground conditions

Conditions were generally dry during excavation, the deposits showing some moisture retention. Excavation was relatively smooth throughout most of the trenching being made through alternate stratified layers of made ground and underlying subsoils leaving a clean and visible surface within the natural substrate.

Reliability of field investigation

Little evidence of more recent truncation of the underlying deposits was observed and stratified deposits appear to survive relatively intact across the site. The trenches themselves were positioned along the rear and sides of the new extensions to investigate the potential for linear features to have been impacted on during excavation of the foundations for the new extensions. Based on usual practice these are likely to have been machine excavated strip trenches, approx. 1m deep and 0.60m wide.

Distribution of archaeological deposits

Significant archaeological deposits associated with the extra-mural Roman settlement to the south-west of the walled town were recorded within the evaluation trenches. These comprised two shallow linear gully-like features (contexts 107 & 205) aligned north-east to south-west, one of which produced Roman pottery, the other a single fragment of animal bone. The edge of a thick similarly aligned gravel deposit (208), although undated, is probably Roman. A single, almost square shaped feature (105) appears later, but a single sherd of Roman pottery was excavated from the base of the fill.

Presentation of results

The results of the excavation (below) are described from the earliest to the latest deposits. The trench was attributed context numbers with a numerical value equivalent to the number of the trench.

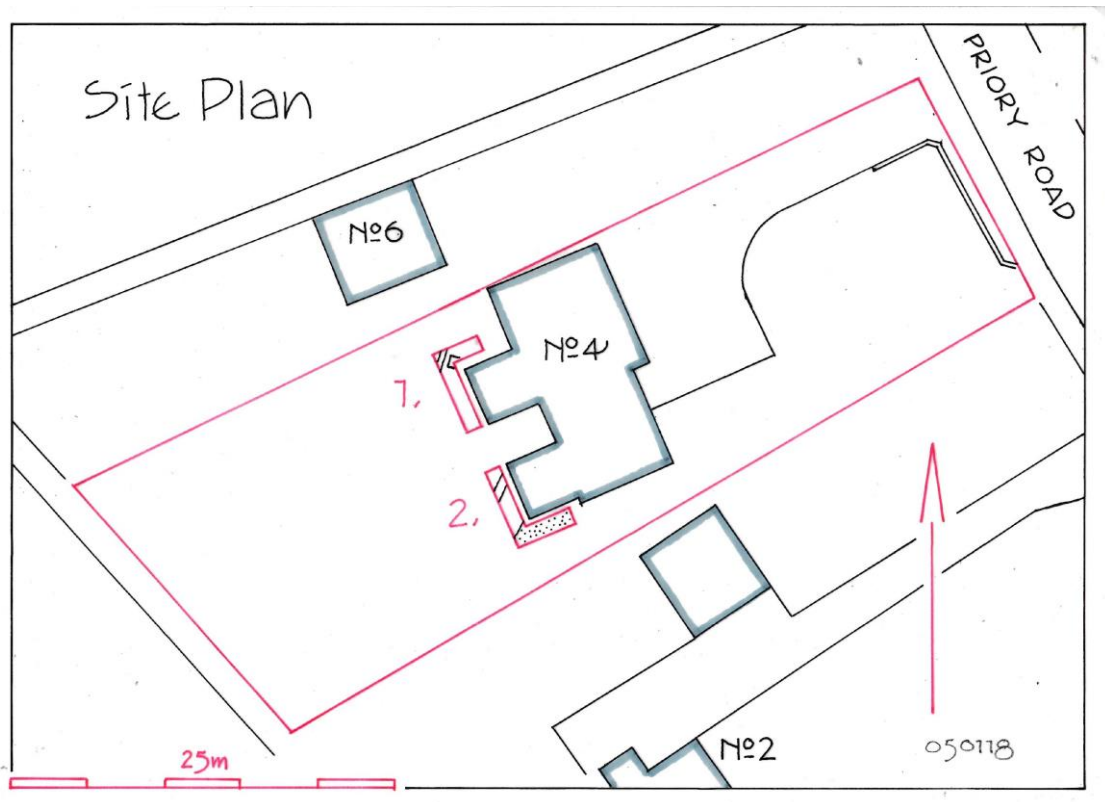


Fig. 3; site plan with trench locations & main archaeological features.

RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS (Figs. 4 & 5)

TRENCH 1

The surface of the natural substrate (103), comprising a clay with a component of small to large rounded pebbles varied in colour between a light yellowish-brown and reddish-brown. This was exposed throughout the trench at a level height of approx. 42.90m AOD. Two cut features (105 & 107) were observed within the surface of the exposed clay, although one of these (105) was constructed from within the overlying layer 102 which consisted of mid-greyish, yellowish-brown clayey-silt and sealing the natural clay throughout the trench to a depth of about 0.10m. Feature 107 was 0.50m wide and 0.25m deep with a flat base and steep sides. It was filled by a single deposit (106) comprising a mid-greyish-brown, clayey-silt with a component of small rounded pebbles. Sample excavation produced a single fragment of animal bone.

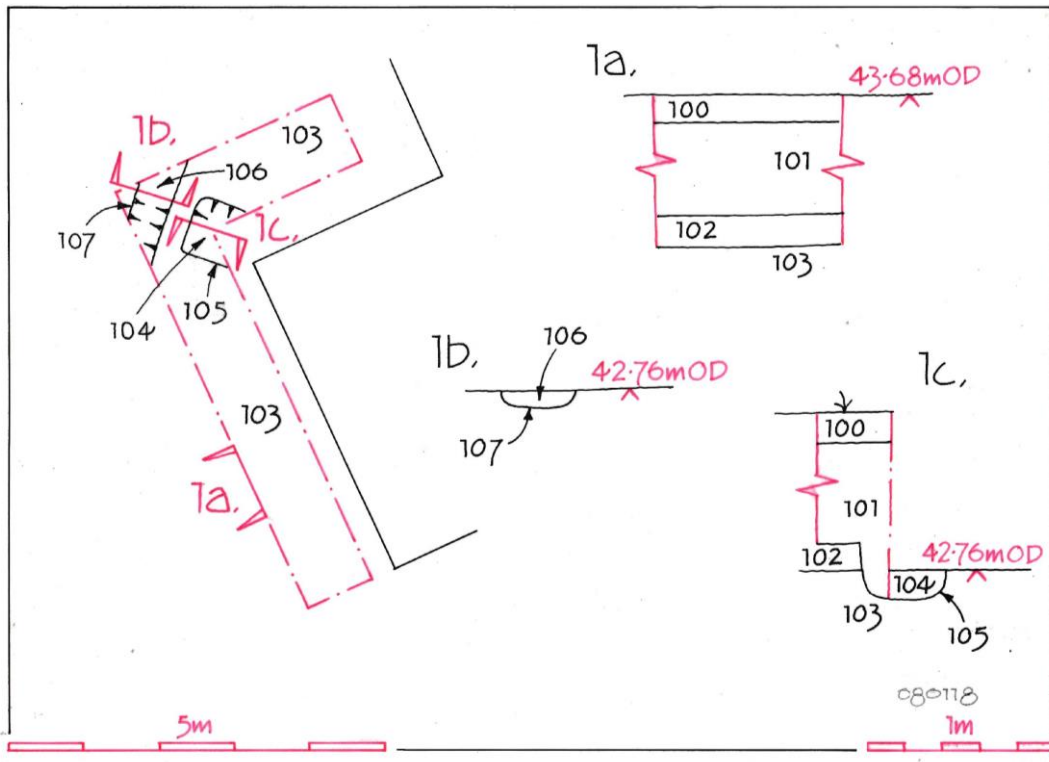


Fig. 4; trench 1, plan & sections

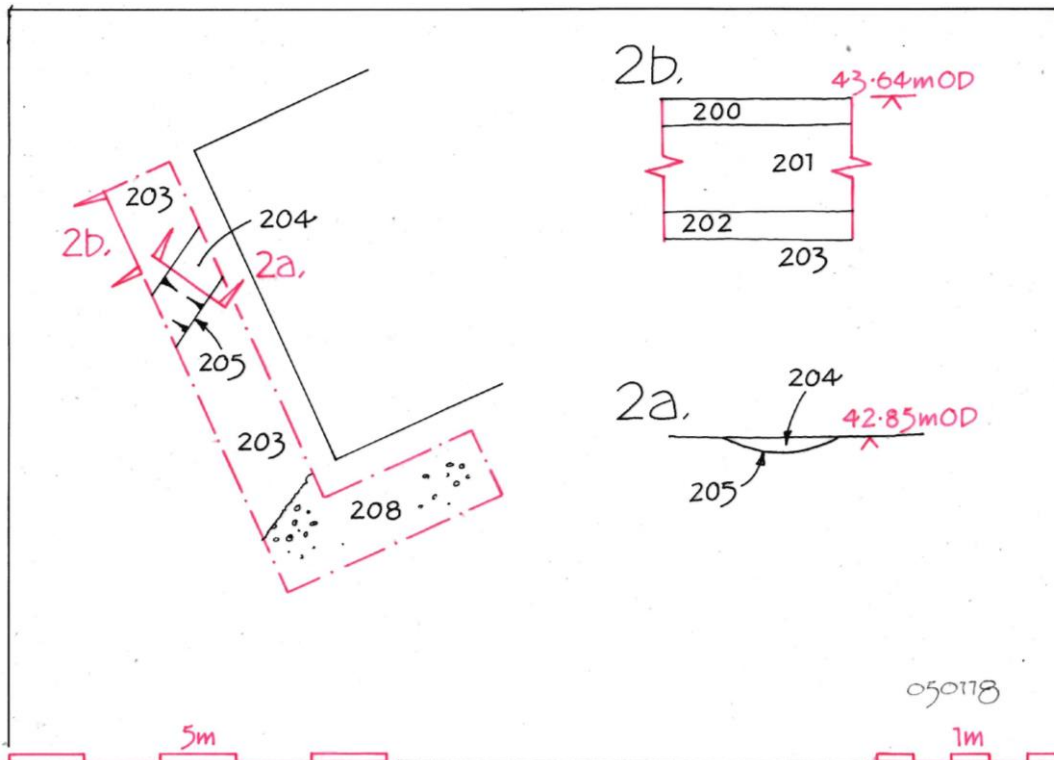


Fig. 5; trench 2, plan & sections

Feature 105 consisted of a seemingly square vertical sided trench. This was only partially exposed, the remainder continuing beyond the edge of the trench. It was filled by a single deposit (101) Sample excavation revealed a flat base, with slightly rounded corners and produced a single sherd of Roman pottery from the bottom of the fill deposit. Layer 102 was overlain by a 0.45m thick layer (101) of mid-dark greyish-brown clayey-silt with a large component of small to medium sized rounded pebbles. This was in turn overlain by a 0.15m thick layer of modern gravel associated with the proposed patio area to the rear of the new extensions.

TRENCH 2

The surface of the natural substrate (203), equivalent with context 103 in trench 1, was only partially exposed, mainly within the longer trench arm and was also situated at a level height of approx. 42.90m AOD. A single cut linear feature (205) was observed within the surface of the clay. It was aligned north-east to south-west, about 0.65m wide and 0.08m deep with a relatively flat base. It was filled by a single deposit (204) consisting of a dark greyish-brown clayey-silt with a pebble component and sample excavation produced a handful of Roman pottery sherds.

Overlying the natural clay at the east end of the trench was spread of compacted gravel (108) comprising small to large rounded pebbles and which sloped down gradually from the north-east. An edge to this deposit, which is similarly aligned with the linear Roman feature 205, suggests it is contemporary. Sealing the gravel deposit 208 was the layer 202, equivalent with layer 102 in trench 1. This layer produced a single sherd of Roman pottery. This layer was in turn overlain by a 0.45m thick layer (201) of mid-dark greyish-brown clayey-silt equivalent with layer 101 in trench 1 and was similarly sealed by a deposit of modern gravel.

FINDS

Pottery by Phil Mills

Introduction

There were 7 sherds of pottery sent for study, weighing 149g and with 1 rim sherd. Each sherd was recorded using the Warwickshire fabric series. Pottery was

recorded by sherd families based on fabric by context with number of sherds, NoSh, weight in grams, Wt, rim diameter in cm, RD, and rim equivalent as a percentage of rim remaining, RE, recorded as appropriate. The full catalogue is presented below.

The Catalogue

- 104 1 Body sherd in E21 from a thick-walled vessel Wt = 18g; Date AD 1 - 70
- 202 1 Body sherd in E21 from a thick-walled jar Wt = 63g; Date: AD 1 to 70
- 204 2 Body sherds in O22, Wt = 17g; Date: Roman
 - 1 Body sherd in O23, Wt = 11g; Date: Roman
 - 1 Body sherd in R52, Wt = 6g; Date: Early Roman, Probably c. AD 70 -120
 - 1 Rim sherd in R52 from a waisted jar with a straight everted triangular in section rim, as Ferguson 2001 Fig 128no 119 Wt = 34g; RD = 19cm; RE = 13%; Date: AD 70 to 120

Fabric Descriptions

E21A reduced fabric with common sand temper c 0.3-4mm some red brown grog inclusions c 0.3-3mm and some organic voids up to 2mm.

O22 Severn Valley ware; often with grey core and oxidised margins, with common brown ironstone inclusions c.0.5-2mm and sometimes occasional grog.

O23 Severn Valley ware; abundant very fine sand temper c.0.1mm.

R52 A reduced fabric with some moderate sand temper, occasional-some organic temper voids c0.3-1mm, and some grey grog inclusions c1-3mm, and sometimes and some rounded white inclusions c0.1-0.2 mm.

Discussion

This is a small group of transitional and early Roman material from Alcester. Contexts (104 and (202) only contain Aylesford – Swarling tradition wheel made grog and quartz tempered sherds, possibly from a storage jar, with a date range in the early 1st century to c. AD 70. Context (205) has some Severn Valley ware sherds (Tomber and Dore 1998 SVW OX) and early grey ware sherds, including the rim from a waisted jar, of Flavian – Trajanic date (AD 70 -120)

The group is too small to say anything further about the site, and no further work is recommended on this group.

Environmental data

Palaeo-environmental evidence

None of the deposits exposed during the excavation proved suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation confirmed the findings of the earlier desk based assessment (Cook & Atherton, 2017) which demonstrated a high probability of Roman remains related to the C1-C2 AD extra-mural settlement to the south and west of the walled town of Alcester being located within the site. Deposits associated with C1-C2 Roman occupation, possibly structural in nature, were recorded and observed extending into the area of the existing property.

Two gully-like features (107 & 205) were recorded, and although only one of these produced C1-C2 Roman pottery, both shared a similar north-east to south-west alignment and are probably contemporary. They appear ditch-like in nature, perhaps functioning as drainage/boundary ditches, but their appearance, displaying a shallow, narrow profile and flat wide bases, suggests that they could be structural ie 'beam-slots', construction trenches containing the remains of horizontal foundations associated with a former timber-framed structure. The absence of any walled remains or fragments of limestone within the fills of the features (106 & 204) would suggest a structure without any form of masonry foundation, such as a dwarf wall.

Similarly aligned north-east to south-west was the one edge of a compacted gravel spread (208) observed sloping down gradually from the north-east. Its appearance and form suggest perhaps a yard area or road surface and although undated, possibly contemporary with the Roman feature 205. It was sealed by deposit 202, a layer which also extends throughout the remainder of the trench and the more north-westerly trench where it is recorded as the equivalent deposit 102. This layer, relatively thin by comparison with the overlying layer and which appears to represent a post-Roman soil, produced a single sherd of residual Roman pottery. The layer was truncated by square trench-like pit feature (105), which produced a single, possibly intrusive, sherd of Roman pottery.

The orientation of these remains suggests a pattern of settlement possibly influenced by the undated, but probable gravel yard or road surface situated on a similar north-east to south-west alignment. A lack of later finds suggests that occupation did not continue after the C1-C2 AD.

The majority of overlying soil within the two trenches comprised a thick homogenous layer of relict subsoil (101 & 201) lying beneath the existing topsoil and although undated, was probably accumulated by continued manuring associated with cultivation activities during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Summary of results

Trial trenching confirmed the results of a preliminary archaeological assessment of the site which indicated a high probability of significant archaeological deposits related to the C1-C2 AD extra-mural settlement to the south and west of the walled town of Alcester (Cook & Atherton, 2017). Archaeological deposits comprising linear gullies and a square pit produced pottery indicating an early Roman date. A similarly aligned gravel spread, which may form part of a yard or road surface is likely to be contemporary. A lack of later finds suggests that occupation did not continue after the C1-C2 AD. Instead Roman deposits are sealed by a thick homogenous layer of relict subsoil probably accumulated by continued manuring associated with cultivation activities during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Significance

The results of the evaluation show that the study site, clearly forms part of the C1-C2 AD extra-mural settlement to the south and west of the walled Roman town of Alcester and features identified within the vicinity of the existing building, are indicative of this occupation. The orientation of these remains suggests a pattern of settlement possibly influenced by a contemporary gravel yard or road surface situated on a north-east to south-west alignment within the centre of the study site. A lack of later finds suggests that occupation did not continue after the C1-C2 AD.

Impact of development

The evaluation has demonstrated that during excavation of the foundations for the two extensions, Roman deposits comprising a linear ditch-like feature (205) and a linear gravel deposit (208) appear to have been partly impacted on by the more southerly extension. Another linear feature (107), although undated, is likely to be Roman, but its alignment shows that it lay outside the area of impact.

Feature 105, if square in shape, would have also been situated just outside the area of impact. There was no evidence to indicate the presence of pitting within the area of investigation.

Recommendation

The evaluation enabled an assessment and record of the impact on the underlying deposits of the existing extensions which comprised strip foundations 0.60m wide and approx. 1m deep. The effect of these will therefore have been limited, only partly truncating Roman deposits extending north-east from within trench 1. The remainder of the deposits will have survived intact beneath an appropriate buffer of soil left unexcavated within the existing floor area. The results from trench 2 suggest that archaeological deposits lie outside the area of impact associated with the foundations of the more westerly extension. Construction of the existing internal floor area is equally unlikely to have had any impact on underlying deposits. No further groundworks are proposed beyond those already carried out and therefore no further mitigation is recommended.

Archive Location

The archaeological archive arising from the work will be appropriately conserved and deposited with the Warwickshire County Museum. The digital archive arising from the work will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Plate 1; trench 1, overall view to the north-west



Plate 2; fill deposits 104 & 106, view north-east



Plate 3; cut feature 105, view south



Plate 4; cut feature 107



Plate 5; trench 2, overall view to the north-west



Plate 6; cut feature 205 & fill deposit 204, view north-east



Plate 7; deposit 108, view north-east

APPENDIX 1 OASIS

Project name	Rosehill, 4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire; archaeological evaluation
Project dates	Start: 03-12-2018 End: 03-12-2018
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ALC17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	LINEAR GULLY Roman
Monument type	LINEAR GULLY Roman
Monument type	GRAVEL SURFACE Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Small-scale extensions (e.g. garages, porches, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	Pre-application
Country	England
Site location	WARWICKSHIRE STRATFORD ON AVON ALCESTER Rosehill, 4 Priory Road
Postcode	B49 5DY
Study area	1280 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 08678 57416 52.214491052508 -1.872971490091 52 12 52 N 001 52 22 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 42.85m Max: 42.85m
Name of Organisation	one ten archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project supervisor	sean cook
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Physical Archive recipient	county museum
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	OASIS
Paper Archive recipient	county museum
Paper Media available	"Plan","Report","Section"
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title	Rosehill, 4 Priory Road, Alcester, Warwickshire; archaeological evaluation
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