

Land Adjacent to 75 Barrow Hill Crescent, Shirehampton

Report on Archaeological Watching Brief
14/05584/F
17/04617/COND



On Behalf of Mr. T. M. Lalu

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Avon Archaeology Limited
Bristol: May 2018



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Shirehampton,
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OS NGR ST 52465 77153.

BRSMG 2018/



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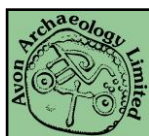
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Abstract

Avon Archaeology Limited were commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording (Archaeological Watching Brief) during ground works associated with the construction of three new terraced homes to adjoin an existing property, number 75 Barrow Hill Crescent.

There is a considerable amount of archaeological activity recorded within the vicinity of Shirehampton: most notable is the evidence of Romano British activity such as the Lawrence Weston Roman Villa 1km to the east; but there is also some evidence which points to activity in prehistoric times. The name 'Barrow' suggests the presence of a burial mound of possible prehistoric date and a small evaluation carried out on a site adjacent to the current project site discovered a number of post-hole features, which are likely to be of pre Roman activity.

The potential for archaeological deposits and features at the current project site was possible; however, the work produced a negative result. A simple stratigraphy of topsoil, subsoil and natural was disturbed only by modern features associated with the existing building.



Notes

Whereas Avon Archaeology Limited has taken all care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

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Abbreviations

AAL	Avon Archaeology Limited
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum
HER	Historic Environment Record
NGR	National Grid Reference
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



1 Introduction

Avon Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Mr Mathew Lalu to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring (Archaeological Watching Brief) on land adjacent to the north-west side of number 75 Barrow Hill Crescent, Shirehampton, Bristol (**Figures 1 & 2**). The site is centred on NGR ST 52465 77153.

Planning consent had been granted (references; 14/05584/F and 17/04617/COND with amendments) to construct three terraced homes, complete with garage facilities and parking, however a condition was placed within the consent by the Bristol City Archaeological Officer:

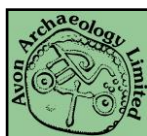
'To secure the conduct of a watching brief during development groundworks.

The applicant/developer shall ensure that all groundworks, including geotechnical works, are monitored and recorded by an archaeologist or an archaeological organisation to be approved by the council and in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 3.

Reason: To record remains of archaeological interest before destruction.'

A WSI was subsequently written (Corcos, 2017) and approved by the City Archaeological Officer. Archaeological monitoring took place on the 27th and 28th of February by Rachel Heaton and on the 24th of April by Sarah Newns. Rachel Heaton of Avon Archaeology Ltd managed the project and has subsequently written this document.

An OASIS record has been opened for this project and an Accession Number has been requested from the depositing museum, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.



2 Site Location, Topography and Geology

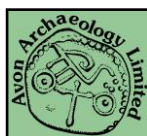
Barrow Hill Crescent is situated on the north-west side of the area of Greater Bristol known as Shirehampton. The River Avon curves round the western edge of Shirehampton, before joining the River Severn at Avonmouth less than 2 miles to the north-west. The area can be described as urban, with a mixture of residential and industrial activity.

Barrow Hill Crescent, as its name suggests, is built around a small hill, which may or may not be a prehistoric barrow mound. The row of terraced homes are built along the north/western side of the crescent shaped road; the south side of the road is fronted by the rear gardens of homes on adjacent streets.

In terms of its elevation, the site lies just below (ie to the north-east of), a small but locally prominent little knoll, which is Barrow Hill itself, which attains a height of 29m aOD, with the site itself at about 20m aOD, and with a moderate slope to the north-east.

The site itself is an extension of the garden of number 75, which encompasses an area of roughly 400m². From the road, access to the front door of number 75 is gained up the steeply sloping garden, via a set of steps (this is the same for each house on the crescent). Ground floor level of the buildings is approximately 2m above the level of the road. The elevated ground levels off and is relatively flat. While the majority of the garden area is laid to lawn, with a line of evergreen trees and occasional fruit trees, the northern-most part of the site is heavily overgrown with brambles.

A garage associated with the property is accessed at road level, the structure essentially built in to the hillside. The garage will be removed to make way for the proposed development.



Topographically, Shirehampton sits mostly on uneven ground, with occasional steep though short, rises. Barrow Hill has a wide perspective across the River Avon, out to Avonmouth and north across to Lawrence Weston and beyond.

The British Geological Survey online viewer (BGS) records the underlying geology of the site as Mercia Mudstone, deposited throughout the Triassic period between 250 and 200 million years ago. This is a highly variable sequence of deposits, the main physical characteristics of which are described by the BGS as:

Dominantly red, less commonly green-grey, mudstones and subordinate siltstones with thick halite-bearing units in some basinal areas. Thin beds of gypsum/anhydrite widespread; sandstones are also present.

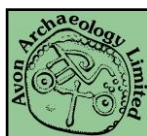


3 Archaeological and Historical Background

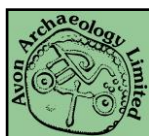
3.1 The site has never been subjected to any level of archaeological investigation, of whatever kind. The site was in use as agricultural land until the modern period, with Barrow Hill Crescent itself being established in the late 1920s. Historic maps show that Barrow Hill Farm, in existence before the 1840s, lay immediately to the west of modern Fairford Road, about 160m to the south of the site. However, although all its ancillary buildings were swept away in the course of the development of this area in the period between the two world wars, the farmhouse itself appears to survive, fronting onto Grove Leaze (BHER 2781M). It is not, however, a listed building. In the late 19th century, a small clay pit, described as 'old' on the First Edition OS map, lay about 120m to the west of the site. More importantly, the name 'barrow' itself suggests the presence of a burial mound, perhaps, but not necessarily, of Bronze Age date, and finds of prehistoric date are known from all over the Shirehampton area. There is also a considerable concentration of activity and occupation of Romano-British date in the vicinity.

An army Remount Centre was established very close to this site at the start of the First World War, acting as temporary stabling for horses and mules arriving at Avonmouth Docks from Ireland, America and Canada. The centre also acted as a training facility, and had its own railhead for animals. At its height, this was an extremely extensive facility, but its buildings were ephemeral, and after its closure at the end of WW1, the site fell into disuse, apart from a short phase when some of the buildings were used by Bristol City Council as temporary housing. The HER notes that, even today,

The precise location and extent of the depot has not yet been established (BHER 2819M).



A watching brief was undertaken in 2005 at No. 1 Barrow Hill Crescent, exactly opposite the present site, and only about 75m away, on the other (ie western) side of the terrace, but it was entirely negative. However, in 1993, very close to the north of the present site, at a distance of literally 40m or so, an evaluation revealed what may have been part of an arc of post-holes, possibly indicating the presence of a round house of about 5m diameter, although no dating evidence from the sockets was recovered. A watching brief in the following year on the same site, however, proved almost entirely archaeologically negative.



4 Aims and Methodology

4.1 Aims

The aims of the archaeological Watching Brief were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological features encountered
- To determine the extent of previous truncations of any archaeological deposits
- To enable the archaeological officer at Bristol City Council to make an informed decision on the basis of the results of the monitoring, of the extent and condition of any archaeology revealed, and if necessary to add any requirements for further work in order to satisfy the planning conditions
- To make available to all interested parties the results of the investigation.

4.2 Methodology

The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Corcus, 2017) previously approved by the Bristol City Council Archaeological Officer.

Excavation was carried out by the contractor, using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator with grading bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist.

A written, drawn, and photographic record of all significant archaeological deposits was compiled.

A digital colour photographic record of all significant stratigraphic units was also compiled in addition to a representative photographic record of the progress and circumstances of the archaeological work.



5 The Monitoring

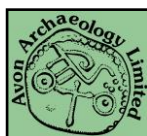
The groundworks commenced with the removal of an existing garage associated with number 75, which lay within the footprint of the proposed development (**Figure 3**). A large, rectangular cut was created from road level into the hillside upon removal of the former garage which provided fairly substantial sections through the site stratigraphy of up to 2m high (**Plates 1,2 & 3**). The ground level was then reduced gradually to either side, down to road level prior to the construction of the proposed driveway and garages. Topsoil/vegetation strip was carried out on the higher land to the rear (south-west) of the garage area, prior to excavation of foundation trenches.

The natural strata, context (103) could be seen in all three sections left by the removal of the former garage structure. From the road level and base of the former garage, the natural almost mirrors the surface gradients, rising steeply before levelling out. The upper horizon is dark red orange becoming lighter pinky/yellow, firm clay. It contains occasional lenses of pale blue clay throughout. The top of the natural was reached on average at between 0.2m and 0.3m below the current ground surface.

The natural was cut by a drainage pipe trench, context (105) which extended from a man hole to the rear of number 75. The trench was approximately 0.3m wide and was backfilled with re-deposited natural, context (104) (**Plate 7**).

In the north-west facing section exposed by the removal of the original garage, a band of mid brown, friable silty deposit, context (102), was recorded. This context was a maximum of 0.15m thick, tapering off towards the brow of the slope. It was seen clearly below a roughly constructed garden wall, context (101) (**Plate 4**).

The garden wall, context 101, was built up against the former garage wall. A real mix of stones and brick, with no real mortar bonding aligned north–east by south-west it formed a boundary at the side of the house. This structure had not been maintained and was greatly affected by root disturbance and topsoil, with which it was partially sealed.



Topsoil, context (100) formed the surface of the majority of the site sealing the other deposits and features mentioned above, with the exception of the former garage. It was generally a thicker deposit towards the front/road side, and where vegetation had been left to overgrow. The topsoil was no thicker than 0.2m at the brow of the steeply sloping ground.

Table of contexts

Context	Type	Description
100	Topsoil	Modern topsoil, very dark brown sandy silt, with high humic content. Variable thickness from 0.3m thick at the top of the hill (back of the site), increasing to 0.6m thick towards the front of the site.
101	Structure	Garden wall, roughly constructed from a mixture of brick and stone, was built up against the south side of the garage wall. The base is not level, and follows the line of the hill slope. It has been sealed and overgrown with vegetation.
102	Subsoil	Mid brown, firm sandy silt. 0.1m-0.2m thick
103	Natural	Upper horizon is dark red orange becoming lighter pinky/yellow, firm clay. It contains occasional lenses of pale blue clay throughout.
104	Fill	Re-deposited natural, backfill of 105, contains modern drainage pipe
105	Cut	Linear cut, approximately 0.3m wide, extends from a manhole at the rear of number 75, sloping down to the road frontage where it will join mains drainage.

7 Conclusions

The archaeological watching brief carried out at land adjacent to number 75, Barrow Hill Crescent revealed nothing of archaeological significance. Removal of the existing garage showed that it had been built well into the natural ground. Topsoil stripping and ground reduction within the footprint of the proposed structures showed that natural was reached a relatively shallow depths.

No archaeological features were found and only a simple stratigraphy recorded.



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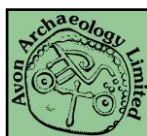
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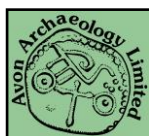


Figure 1

Location of the Site

The Site 

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Figure 2

Site location plan showing red line boundary

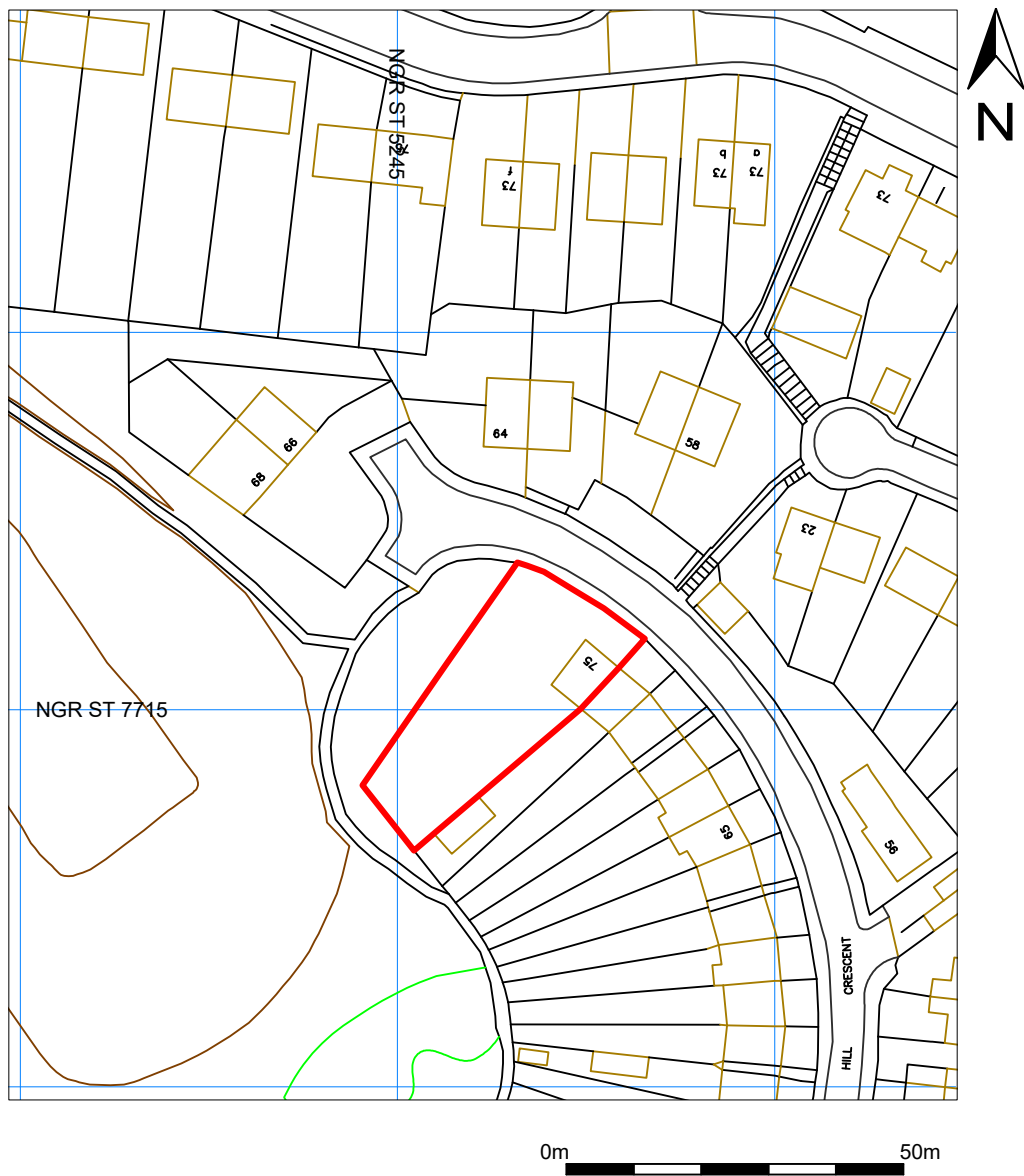
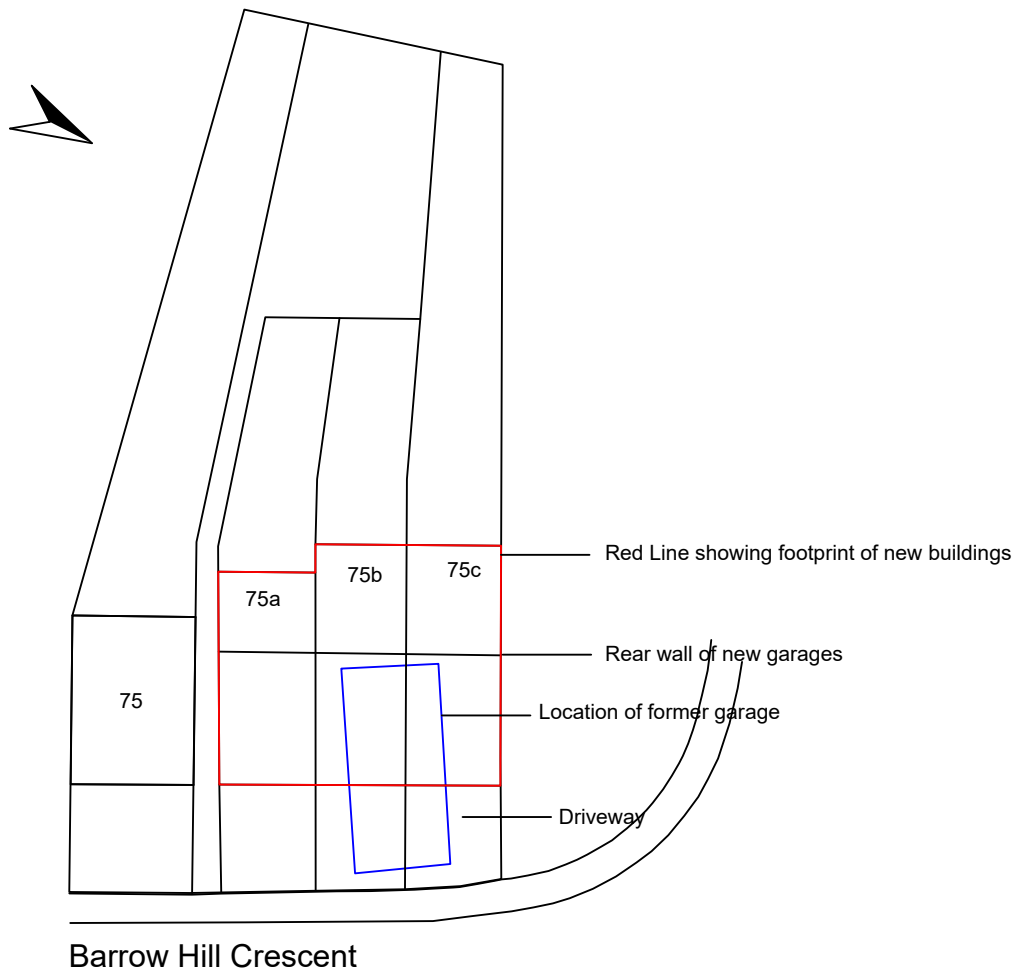
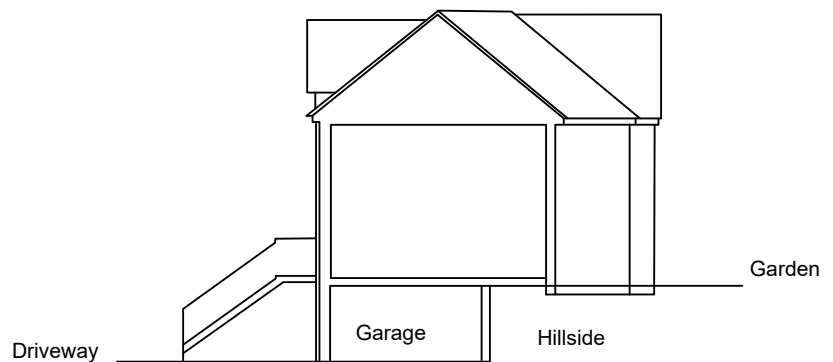


Figure 3

Plan showing the footprint of the new development



Cross section through new build



0m 10m





Plate 1: Panorama of north facing section through the hillside on removal of original garage.



Plate 2: Panorama of south facing section through the hillside on removal of original garage.



Plate 3: View of the space left by removal of the garage. The machine in the photo providing an idea of the scale.



Plate 4: Detailed view of the north-west facing section exposed during the removal of the garage.



Plate 5: Topsoil strip of development footprint, looking east towards the side of number 75.



Plate 6: Topsoil stripping to the rear of new garages, exposing sterile natural ground.



Plate 7: Ground reduction directly adjacent to number 75, exposing sterile natural ground below topsoil, cut by a modern drainage pipe [105].



Plate 8: Foundation trenches cut through natural ground.