



**Land at Madley Vale,
Prescott Road,
Baschurch**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**

PN 16-04

Project No. P16-04

[03/2017]

Land at Madely Vale, Prescott Road

Baschurch,

Shropshire,


SY4 2DR

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

By

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Land at Madley Vale, Prescott Road, Baschurch

Archaeological Watching Brief, 03/2017

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Land at Madley Vale, Prescott Road, Baschurch

Archaeological Watching Brief, 01/2017

SUMMARY

The Centre of Archaeology was commissioned by Cameron Homes to undertake an archaeological watching brief in respect of a proposed residential housing development at Madley Vale, Prescott Road, Baschurch (NGR SJ 41647 21254).. The site was located nine miles north-west of Shrewsbury on open agricultural fields south of the village centre. The watching brief was undertaken on five separate days between December 2016 and February 2017

The site appears to have been used as an area of open agricultural land throughout its history. No features of archaeological significance had survived in the area of the watching brief.

Land at Madley Vale, Prescott Road, Baschurch

Archaeological Watching Brief, 01/2017

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Centre of Archaeology, based at Staffordshire University, was commissioned by Cameron Homes to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks. These groundworks were required prior to the construction of a residential housing development at Madley Vale, Prescott Road, Baschurch (hereinafter referred to as the site. Planning Application reference number 14/04174/OUT). The work consisted of machine excavation of the topsoil and the foundation trenches for the house plots and services.
- 1.2 This report outlines the results of the watching brief carried out on the 6th, 7th and 12th December 2016, the 24th January 2017 and the 13th February 2017 and has been prepared in accordance a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI, Centre of Archaeology 2016) which was approved by the Local Planning Authority (Shropshire County Council) prior to implementation. The project conformed to standards and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014) and was in accordance with government guidelines contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The site was located at Madley Vale, off Shrewsbury Road, Prescott, Baschurch, Shropshire, SY4 2DR and was centred on NGR SJ 41647 21254 (Figure 1). The development site covered an approximate total area of 13,100 square metres or 1.31 hectares. It consisted of machine excavation of the topsoil and the foundation trenches for the house plots and services (Figure 2).
- 2.2 Baschurch lies at a height of between 80m and 90m OD in a shallow valley feeding into the river Perry to the south west. The soils are deep well drained coarse typical brown earths of the Wick 1 association overlying glaciofluvial drift (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984). Meres and mosses, formed as hollows in this drift, still exist in the parish despite past drainage works. The underlying geology consists of Triassic Reddish brown mudstone rocks (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52°NO 4°W).

- 2.3 The present character of the site comprises of open agricultural fields. Adjacent to the western edge of site, along the Shrewsbury Road are detached residential properties with their associated gardens and yards.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The principal aim of the watching brief was to identify, excavate and record any archaeological features, structures, deposits, or horizons encountered during the course of intrusive groundworks associated with the development.

More specific aims were to:

- Identify and assess the survival of potential below ground remains.
- Provide information which may enhance historical and archaeological knowledge of the region.
- Contribute information which may answer regionally and nationally important research questions.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 No specific archaeological evidence is known from the confines of the site boundary.
- 4.2 A detailed desk-based assessment of Baschurch was completed as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux at el 1994). The results for Baschurch is briefly outlined below. The report concluded that the historic core of Baschurch had low to moderate potential for the presence of buried archaeological deposits.
- 4.3 Baschurch is reputed to be the burial place of the early 7th century British hero Cynddylan, but the evidence for this is debatable (Gelling 1992, 75). A church may have existed in the middle Anglo-Saxon period; by the late Anglo-Saxon period a collegiate church is known to have existed. A church at Baschurch is mentioned in the Domesday Book. By 1086 the manor of Baschurch had been given by Roger de Montgomery to the Abbey of Shrewsbury. The church seems to have declined in importance and ceased to be a rectory by the end of the 12th century.

- 4.4 The location of the village recorded in 1086 is not known, but it was probably close to the church of All Saints. In the 13th century a borough, Newtown, was founded by the Abbot of Shrewsbury. Beresford (1988) suggests that this was just to the east of the church at a crossroads.
- 4.5 The 14th century saw the decline of many small towns and villages and town desertion in the Welsh border appears to have occurred at a considerably higher level than elsewhere in the country
- 4.6 Little is known of the post-medieval history of Baschurch. The surviving buildings suggest that the settlement may have contracted and focussed around the church in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and then expanded again into the Newtown in the 18th century. In the 19th century the Shrewsbury and Chester Section of the Great Western Railway passed just to the north east of the village and Baschurch station was built where the line crossed the old road to Marton (outside the study area).
- 4.7 No archaeological evidence is known from within the site boundary.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 Groundworks comprised the stripping of the topsoil across the site, followed by the excavation of the foundation trenches for the house plots and service trenches. This was undertaken by mechanical excavator and was monitored by an archaeologist and complemented with the salvage recording of the existing deposits. The proposed development area covered approximately 13,100 square metres or 1.31 hectares. Adequate time was allowed for observation and recording of exposed stratigraphic sequences. After the archaeological observation of approximately 40% of the total development area was completed and no archaeological evidence was identified, discussion with the Shropshire County Council Planning Archaeological Advisor resulted in the decision to terminate the watching brief.
- 5.2 All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. A comprehensive written record was maintained using a continuous numbered context system on pro-forma cards. Written records and scale plans were supplemented by photographs using digital photography.

- 5.3 The full site archive has been prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The paper archive will be deposited with Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery subject to permission from the landowner.

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 The ground across the watching brief site remained undisturbed and free from any archaeological features. Towards the western side of site, regularly spaced modern plough marks were present, these had cut into the natural geology beneath (Plate 4). The few associated sherds of pottery observed suggested that these plough marks were 19th to 20th century in origin.

6.2 Natural geology (Plates 1 to 4)

The natural ground encountered across the site was a mid-orangey brown, gravelly-sand (**002**). The gravels were small (10mm-20mm) and accounted for around 30% of the total soil matrix. The result was that the ground was free draining and suitable for an agricultural purpose. The ground sloped from east to west, towards the main settlement of Baschurch.

- 6.3 The natural subsoil was overlain and sealed by a mid-dark brown, sandy-silt topsoil and turf layer (**001**). Excavation across the site suggested that the site had been used for an agricultural purpose throughout its lifetime. It was likely to have been used for grazing and previously for arable farming, although this was never intensive in nature.

Finds

- 6.4 No finds were recovered from site.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The watching brief on the site failed to reveal any features of archaeological interest. No features or deposits of archaeological significance had survived within the areas monitored during the watching

brief. The existence of plough lines was observed and there were very few occasional residual finds identified in the topsoil, these were not recovered.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The project was commissioned by Cameron Homes. Thanks are also due to Shropshire County Council Historic Environment Manager and Planning Archaeological Advisor Dr Andy Wigley who monitored the project on behalf of Shropshire County Council. The watching brief was undertaken by William Mitchell who also produced the written report, and was edited Kevin Colls who also monitored the project for the Centre of Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

Brown, D. 2007. *Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation*. Archaeological Archives Forum and Institute for Field Archaeologists.

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Watkinson, D. and Neal, V. 1998 *First Aid for Finds* (3rd edition), RESCUE and the Archaeology Section of the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation.

PLATES



Plate 1: General view of construction area showing depth and extent of subsoil. 6th December 2016. Looking south-east.



Plate 2: Detail of site compound excavation. 7th December 2016. Looking south.



Plate 3: General view of construction area. 24th January 2017. Facing south.



Plate 4: General view of construction area. Plough lines can be seen on the right of the stripped area. 13th February 2017. Looking north.

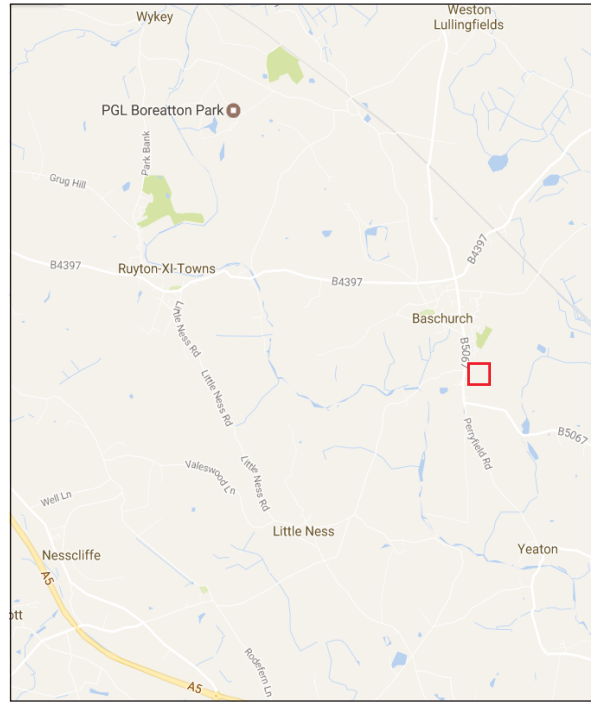
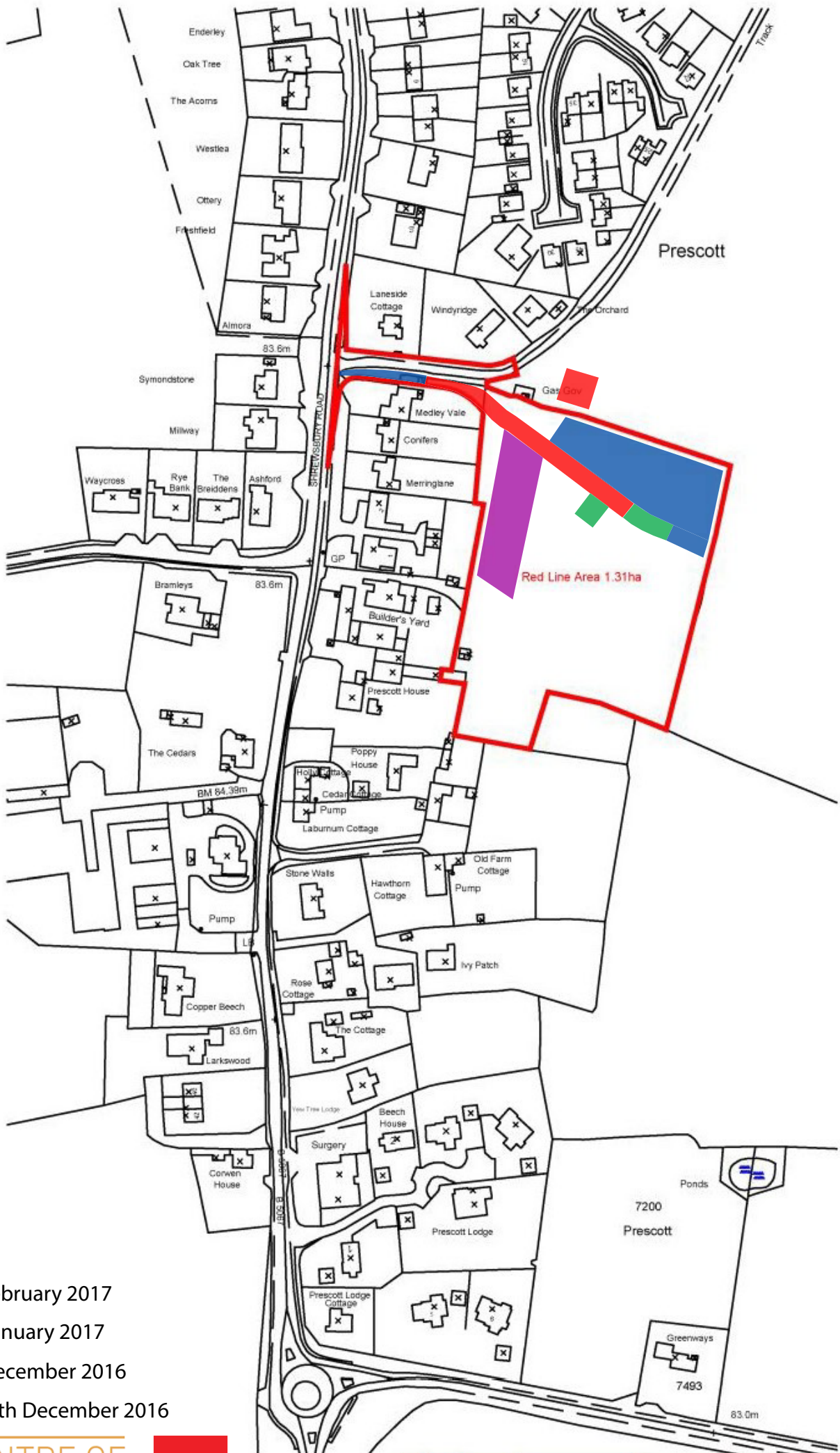


Figure 1 - Location plan (reproduced from Google open sources)



- 13th February 2017
- 24th January 2017
- 12th December 2016
- 6th & 7th December 2016

Land at Medley Vale, Prescott Road, Baschurch, SY4 2DR
Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief
Shropshire Council
Archaeological Contractor: Centre of Archaeology, Staffordshire University
Archaeological Project Manager: Kevin Colls
Client: Cameron Homes

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document describes the programme of work required to undertake an archaeological investigation at the above site. Any variation in the scope of work would be agreed with the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council, before implementation.
- 1.2 An application for outline planning permission (Planning reference no. 14/04174/OUT) has been submitted to Shropshire Council for the proposed residential development of land at Medley Vale, Prescott Road, Shropshire. As the proposed development site is of possible archaeological significance an archaeological watching brief is recommended during all groundworks. This is in accordance with government advice contained with NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework; Department for Communities and Local Government 2012).

2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is located off Shrewsbury Road, Prescott, Baschurch, Shropshire and is centred on NGR SJ 41647 21254. It lies 9 miles north-west of Shrewsbury. The development site is located to the south of the village centre (Figure 1).
- 2.2 Baschurch lies at a height of between 80m and 90m OD in a shallow valley feeding into the river Perry to the south west. The soils are deep well drained coarse typical brown earths of the Wick 1 association overlying glaciofluvial drift (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Ragg *et al* 1984). Meres and mosses, formed as hollows in this drift, still exist in the parish despite past drainage works. The underlying geology consists of Triassic Reddish brown mudstone rocks (British Geological Survey 1:250,000, sheet 52°NO 4°W).
- 2.3 The present character of the site comprises of open agricultural fields.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A detailed desk-based assessment of Baschurch was completed as part of the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey (Buteux *et al* 1994). The results for Baschurch is briefly outlined below. The report concluded that the historic core of Baschurch had low to moderate potential for the presence of buried archaeological deposits.

- 3.2 Baschurch is reputed to be the burial place of the early 7th century British hero Cynddylan, but the evidence for this is debatable (Gelling 1992, 75). A church may have existed in the middle Anglo-Saxon period; by the late Anglo-Saxon period a collegiate church is known to have existed. A church at Baschurch is mentioned in the Domesday Book. By 1086 the manor of Baschurch had been given by Roger de Montgomery to the Abbey of Shrewsbury. The church seems to have declined in importance and ceased to be a rectory by the end of the 12th century.
- 3.3 The location of the village recorded in 1086 is not known, but it was probably close to the church of All Saints. In the 13th century a borough, *Newtown*, was founded by the Abbot of Shrewsbury. Beresford (1988) suggests that this was just to the east of the church at a crossroads.
- 3.4 The 14th century saw the decline of many small towns and villages and town desertion in the Welsh border appears to have occurred at a considerably higher level than elsewhere in the country
- 3.5 Little is known of the post-medieval history of Baschurch. The surviving buildings suggest that the settlement may have contracted and focussed around the church in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and then expanded again into the Newtown in the 18th century. In the 19th century the Shrewsbury and Chester Section of the Great Western Railway passed just to the north east of the village and Baschurch station was built where the line crossed the old road to Marton (outside the study area).
- 3.6 No archaeological evidence is known from the proposed site boundary.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The principal aim of the watching brief is to identify, excavate and record any archaeological remains that are encountered during the course of intrusive groundworks associated with the development.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 An appropriately skilled and qualified archaeologist will be on site to observe all provisional groundworks for the development, including topsoil stripping, the excavation of foundation trenches, and infrastructure and service work such as roads and drainage. Adequate time will be allowed for observation, excavation and recording to take place and a suitable ditching bucket will be recommended for all mechanical excavation.
- 5.2 All stratigraphic sequences will be recorded, even where no archaeology is present. Features will be planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50, and sections drawn of all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. A comprehensive written record will be maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma*

cards. Written records and scale plans will be supplemented by photographs using high resolution digital photography.

- 5.3 Buried soils and sediment sequences will be inspected and recorded on site where appropriate. Examination of soil sediments conformed to guidelines set out in *Geoarchaeology: using earth sciences to understand the archaeological record* (English Heritage 2007).
- 5.4 Deposits may be sampled for the retrieval and assessment of the preservation conditions and the potential for analysis of biological remains. The environmental sampling policy follows the guidelines contained in the Centre of Archaeology Fieldwork Manual and *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011). Sampling strategies for wooden structures conformed to guidelines set out in *Waterlogged wood: Guidelines on the recording, sampling, conservation and curation of waterlogged wood*. (Brunning 1996).
- 5.5 Where suitable deposits existed they will be sampled for dendrochronological dating evidence in line with *Dendrochronology: guidelines on producing and interpreting dendrochronological data* (English Heritage 2004a).
- 5.6 Where there was evidence for industrial activity, samples will be taken to identify macroscopic technological residues in accordance with *Archaeometallurgy* (Historic England 2015) and *Science for Historic Industries* (English Heritage 2006).
- 5.7 Recovered finds will be cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds conforms to guidance contained within the Centre of Archaeology Fieldwork Manual and *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 1998).
- 5.8 If human burials are encountered, lifting of human skeletal remains will be avoided unless it is deemed impossible to do so. In the event that human remains need to be removed this will be carried out under the terms of a Ministry of Justice Licence and adhering to relevant environmental health regulations. Burials will be recorded in situ and should the need arise, lifted, washed, marked and packed to standards compatible with *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed human remains* (McKinley and Roberts 1993). Excavation of human remains confirms with advice provided in *Church Archaeology: its care and management* (Council for the Care of Churches 1999), *Human bones from Archaeological Sites* (English Heritage 2004) and in *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* (English Heritage 2005). Any human remains encountered will be initially left *in situ* and covered.
- 5.9 All finds which may constitute 'treasure' under the Treasure Act, 1997 will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner. If removal is not possible on the same

working day as discovery, appropriate security arrangements will be provided to keep the finds safe from theft.

- 5.10 The full site archive will include all artefactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991), the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (UKIC, 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). The paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository subject to permission from the landowner.

6 STAFFING

- 6.1 The project will be managed and directed for the Centre of Archaeology by Kevin Colls MIFA and supervised in the field by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeological supervisor.
- 6.2 Specialist staff will be, where appropriate:

Prehistoric pottery	David Mullins	Freelance Specialist
Prehistoric flint	Barry Bishop	Freelance Specialist
Roman pottery	Jane Evans	Freelance pottery specialist
Roman pottery	Jane Timby	Freelance pottery specialist
Samian pottery	Felicity Wild	Freelance pottery specialist
Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery	Stephanie Rátkai	Honorary Research Associate and Finds Researcher, University of Birmingham
Medieval and post-medieval pottery	Chris Cumberpatch	Freelance
Post-medieval pottery and glass	Leigh Dodd	Freelance
Ceramic building material (CBM), tile	Phil Mills	Leicester University
Vessel glass	Cecily Cropper	Freelance specialist
Clay tobacco pipe	Dr David Higgins	Freelance Specialist
Coins, brooches	Dr Roger White	University of Birmingham
Iron, leather	Quita Mould	Freelance finds specialist
General finds General finds	Erica Macey-Bracken Jon Goodwin	Freelance finds specialist Finds specialist, Senior Planning Officer, Stoke On Trent City Council
Animal bone	Matilda Holmes	Freelance archaeozoologist
Human bone	Dr Caroline Sturdy	Staffordshire University

	Colls	
Archaeo-geomorphology	Dr Andrew Howard	Freelance specialist
Palynology	MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
Archaeobotany	MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
Entymology	Dr David Smith	University of Birmingham
	Dr Emma Tetlow	University of Edinburgh
Charcoal and wood	Rowena Gale	Freelance Specialist
Dendrochronology	Dr Robert Howard	Nottingham Tree Ring Dating Laboratory
Archaeometallurgy	Anthony Swiss	Freelance specialist
	Rod MacKenzie	Freelance specialist
	Jane Cowgill	Freelance specialist
Glass residues	Dr David Dungworthy	English Heritage

7 REPORT

7.1 A report will be produced for the project. On completion of the fieldwork post-excavation work will commence including finds processing/ conservation, analysis and additional primary research. A site archive will be compiled and an illustrated report will be prepared.

7.2

7.3 This report would be in the format required by the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2006, 2008) guidelines as appropriate, to include:

- 1) Summary
- 2) Description of the archaeological background
- 3) Method
- 4) A narrative description of the results and discussion of the evidence, set in their local, regional and national research context, supported by appropriate plans, sections and photographs
- 5) Summary of the finds and environmental evidence
- 6) Specialist assessments of the finds and environmental evidence
- 7) Impact assessment and recommended mitigation strategy.

7.4 The written report will be made publicly accessible, as part of the Shropshire Historic Environment Record within three months of completion. Two copies of the report will be lodged with Shropshire Council. A digital copy (Adobe Acrobat PDF format) will be submitted to the Shropshire Historic Environment Record if requested. A summary report may be submitted for inclusion in a local archaeological journal or similar. If the results are considered of regional or national importance it may be appropriate to publish the report in

a regional or national archaeological journal or other suitable publication outlet including digital online reports.

- 7.5 On completion of the report the appropriate OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations) form will be completed and the report will be submitted to OASIS.

8 ARCHIVING

- 8.1 The full site archive will include all artefactual and/or ecofactual remains recovered from the site. Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery subject to permission from the landowner.
- 8.2 Preparation and deposition of the site archive, from both evaluation and excavation will be undertaken with reference to the Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery guidelines and to *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage* (Walker 1990) and *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2007).

9 TIMETABLE

- 9.1 At least one week's notice of the start of fieldwork will be given to the Historic Environment Team, Shropshire Council. Review/ monitoring meetings will be arranged during the fieldwork.
- 9.2 A timetable of the start of works has not been agreed at present.

10 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- 10.1 All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. The project will follow the requirements set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief and Field Evaluation* (CIfA revised 2013).

11 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 11.1 A detailed risk assessment (and method statement when appropriate) will be prepared prior to the commencement of fieldwork.
- 11.2 All current health and safety legislation, regulations and guidance will be complied with. The excavation will conform to the *Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992*, *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*, and *Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007* and any other health and safety legislation where appropriate. Work will be carried out in accordance with guidelines laid out in the

Staffordshire University health and Safety Manual and Health & Safety in Field Archaeology Manual (SCAUM 2007).

12 REFERENCES

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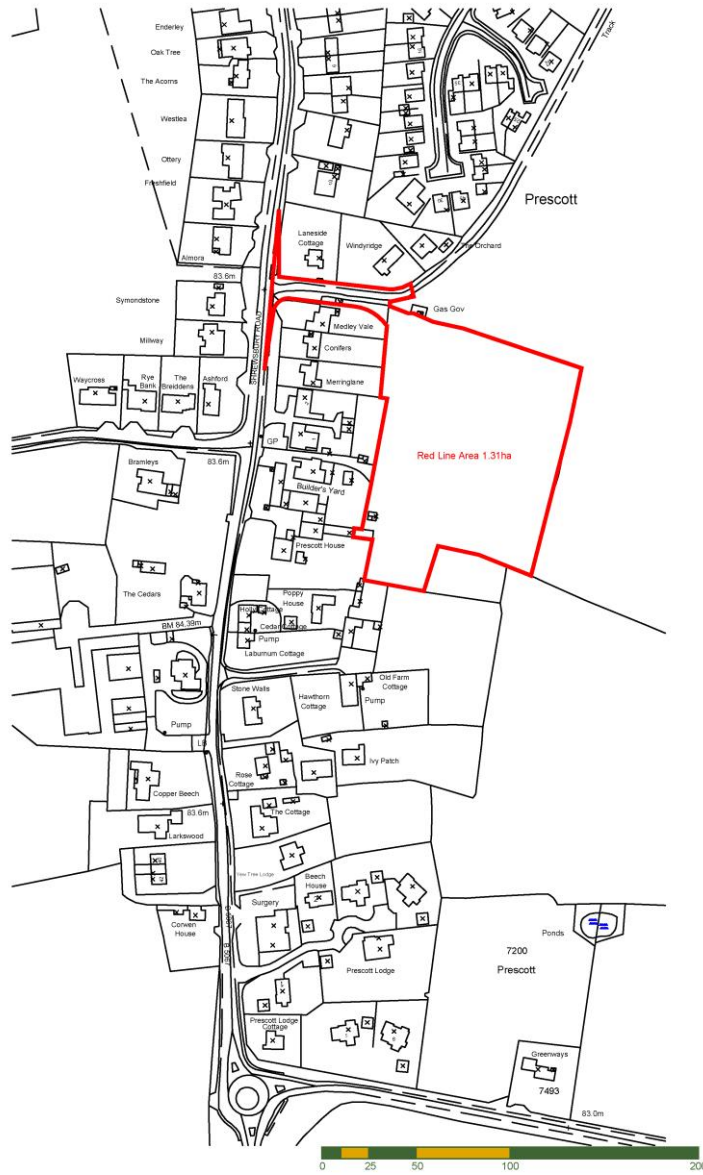
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Location Plan 1:2500

Figure 1 – Location of the proposed development area