



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
on Land at Alcester Road,  
Stratford, Warwickshire  
SP 17243 55430**

**Steve Baker**



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**An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at  
Alcester Road, Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire**

**SP 17243 55430**

**Stephen Baker**

**For: AECOM**

Approved by:



**Signed**

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# **An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Alcester Road, Stratford, Warwickshire**

## ***Summary***

*University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at Alcester Road, Stratford, on 23rd – 24th February 2016. The work was undertaken in advance of a proposed residential development of the site by Taylor Wimpey. The archaeological work was handled on their behalf by AECOM.*

*The evaluation involved the excavation of 16 trenches to sample the development area. Evidence of undated agricultural field drains and possible traces of agricultural earthworks were identified but no remains or deposits of archaeological interest.*

*The archive will be held by the recipient Warwickshire County Council Museum Service under accession number T1542*

## **1. Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS between 23rd and 24th February 2016 on land at Alcester Road, Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire. The work was undertaken for AECOM acting on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, in connection with a planning application for residential development of the site.

The fieldwork was intended to provide initial indications of the nature, extent, date and significance of any archaeological deposits on the site in order that the potential impact of the development on such remains could be assessed by the Planning Authority.

The definition of archaeological field evaluation, taken from the Institute for Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2010) is a limited programme of non-intrusive and/ or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present, field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.

## **2. Site Description, Topography and Geology (Figure 1) (Figure 2)**

The 2.83ha development area lies north of Alcester Road on the western outskirts of the town of Stratford upon Avon and to the south of the A46 trunk road. It comprises a triangular piece of land at the eastern end of a larger agricultural field. From a height of approximately 65m OD to the east, the site undulates slightly and generally drops down to the west.



Figure 1: Site Location (from developer)

Planning permission has been granted for the development of the triangular parcel of land, the western end of a larger agricultural field. The planning condition stipulates that a sequential programme of archaeological investigation is required for the land which will follow the methods work proposed in the WSI (AECOM 2016). Warwickshire County Council, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority have requested a scheme of archaeological work, including exploratory trial trenches, to assess the location, extent, significance and character of any buried archaeological remains.

The site is located upon Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation undifferentiated mudstone with no superficial deposits recorded across the development area.



### **3. Archaeological and Historical Background (AECOM 2016)**

#### ***Prehistoric (500,000 BC – AD 43)***

Palaeolithic activity in the county has generally been recorded along the Avon Valley, in the Coventry area, and to the north of Alcester, and Mesolithic activity has been recorded along the Avon Valley and the Tame-Blythe basin.<sup>1</sup> The population began to grow in the Neolithic period, as the Avon Valley and Tame-Blythe basin were intensively farmed, and settlements spread into the Feldon and Arden plateau regions, to the north-west and east of the Stratford-on-Avon District respectively.<sup>2</sup> No Neolithic activity has been recorded in the study area, although some Neolithic artefacts have been found at Stratford-upon-Avon.<sup>3</sup>

Areas of significant Bronze Age settlement in the county are attested to by barrows (funerary mounds), found in a number of locations across the county, although none are located within the study area. The Iron Age settlement pattern was largely formed by dispersed enclosed farmsteads, with high concentrations of occupation along the freedraining gravels of the Avon Valley and Tame-Blyth basin.<sup>4</sup> During the Iron Age, Warwickshire was criss-crossed by a complex network of trackways, which facilitated trade and communication.<sup>5</sup> An east-west long-distance trackway crossed the Avon at Stratford, and may have been located along the same alignment as the Saltway, a Roman road described below.

No definite prehistoric activity has been recorded within the proposed development site or the 1km study area, although the aforementioned east-west prehistoric routeway may have crossed the ridgeline somewhere in the vicinity of the site or the study area.

#### ***Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)***

The Roman invasion of Britain was followed by a rapid implementation of centralised administration based on towns and cities, supported by a network of forts and a new network of well-constructed Roman roads. The nearest Roman urban settlements of any size were located at Alcester, 8km to the west of the proposed development site, and Tiddington 4km to the east. The rural settlement pattern was formed by Romanised villa sites (which are not common in Warwickshire<sup>6</sup>), and more ‘native’ farmsteads. No known urban or rural settlements sites are located within the study area.

A Roman road, known as ‘The Saltway’ was located immediately to the north of the proposed development site, on an east-west alignment. The road ran between Roman settlements located at what are now Ettington and Droitwich, via Alcester and Stratford. Droitwich was an important industrial town for the extraction of rock salt in the Roman period.

The HER records a findspot of a sherd of Roman pottery in a field to the south of the proposed development site. A watching brief on the Stour Valley Mains Replacement, the route of which passed to the west of the proposed development site, recorded a number of

sherds of pottery on Borden Hill, immediately to the south of the study area (Warwickshire County Council, 1996, p. 2). This watching brief did not record any surviving remains of the Roman road.

No Roman period activity is recorded within the proposed development site.

### ***Early Medieval (AD 410 – AD 1066)***

A monastery was founded at what would later become Stratford-upon-Avon, possibly in the late 7th century AD (Fogg 1986) The ecclesiastical community developed into a thriving estate and was granted, along with Shotton, to the Bishop of Worcester in the late 8th century.

An early medieval saltway, a trackway used for transporting rock salt (an important trade commodity), once passed along the south-eastern side of the proposed development site, on a south-west/north-east alignment, following the north side of the Avon Valley. The trackway would have originated at Droitwich, although the section within the study area has been recorded running between Bishopton and Salford. The trackway, recorded in documentary sources as ‘*Sealt Stret*’, would have aided in the distribution of Droitwich salt across the Midlands. It is uncertain whether the route was situated within the proposed development site, or immediately outside the south-eastern boundary. Either way, the hedgerow which forms the south-eastern boundary of the site is likely to have formed part of a boundary alongside the former routeway. No further early medieval activity is recorded within the study area or the proposed development site.

### ***Medieval (AD 1066 – 1539)***

Stratford-upon-Avon is recorded as a small but prosperous settlement in the Domesday Book of AD 1086, and by AD 1203 it had developed into a thriving market town. A 13th century documentary source records a tenant farmer holding land at Shotton (Fogg 1986) which was an outlying hamlet within the parish of Old Stratford. Stratford-upon-Avon became a hub of craftsmen and traders, who formed powerful guilds, which influenced much of the town’s urban and architectural development.

The HER records a number of areas of extant and former ridge and furrow earthworks, of medieval to post-medieval date, within the study area. Traces of ridge and furrow earthworks of medieval or post-medieval date were also recorded by the Stour Valley Mains watching brief in the vicinity of Borden Hill, at the southern edge of the study area. The site of the possible deserted medieval settlement of Drayton is located at the southwestern edge of the study area, and earthworks thought to represent an area of shrunken medieval settlement associated with Shotton are recorded at the south-eastern edge of the study area.

The HER also records ridge and furrow earthworks within the proposed development site. However, aerial photographic evidence appears to indicate that these earthworks have been destroyed. An aerial photograph of 1967, when the proposed development site was in use as pasture, shows that no above-ground remains of the ridge and furrow earthworks had survived, in contrast with the better-preserved remains in the field to the north-west.



An aerial photograph of 1993, taken following ploughing, shows faint soilmark traces of some of furrows associated with the former earthworks. No earthworks were observed at the time of the site visit, when the site was under crop. However, as shown by the aerial photographs, modern ploughing has removed any above-ground trace of the ridge and furrow earthworks.

### ***Post-medieval (AD 1539 – 1900)***

The town of Stratford-upon-Avon grew very little during the post-medieval period, apart from periodic rebuilding following devastating fires (Salzman 1945), although it remained an important regional trading centre. The town was the focus of fierce fighting during the Civil War, due to its strategic location at the junction of several roads and the Avon crossing (Salzman 1945)

Seven grade II listed buildings of post-medieval date are located within the study area. The grade II listed Drayton Manor is located approximately 900m to the south-west of the proposed development site, at a farmstead which may be the surviving antecessor of the medieval settlement of Drayton. At the south-eastern boundary of the study area is a group of five listed cottages at Hathaway Hamlet, and a further listed building, Burman's Farmhouse, is situated to the south-west of the hamlet.

In terms of non-designated assets, the route of the former Roman road immediately to the north of the proposed development site was reused as a toll road in the post-medieval period. The site of the former Bishopton Spa is located to the north-east of the proposed development site, and the Hall Garden, Shottery (including pleasure grounds and a kitchen garden) is located at the south-eastern edge of the study area.

The 1729 map of Barlichway Hundred records the area of the proposed development site, although it does not record the proposed development site in detail. It depicts the proposed development site as located between the settlement of Drayton to the west, and Shottery to the east. The map also appears to show that a section of *Sealt Stret* alongside the south-eastern boundary of the site may still have been in use as a trackway at this time.

A Parliamentary Enclosure Award was created for the Parish of Old Stratford and Drayton in 1785, although the accompanying map does not survive, and the parish does not possess a tithe map which records the area of the proposed development site. However, the proposed development site is recorded on an 1823 map of the Seymore Estate. This map records the proposed development site as comprising the eastern part of a larger field, as it does in the present day. The field name is recorded as Well's Cross. The 'Well' component could be a personal name or a reference to a nearby spring or well (Field 1989) and 'Cross' could refer to the fact that the proposed development site was historically located at the junction of the Roman/post-medieval toll road and the former *Sealt Stret* trackway, although no such trackway is recorded on this map.

The 1888 25" First Edition Ordnance Survey map, records no changes within the proposed development site, although it does provide more detail of the surrounding area. The toll road immediately to the north appears to be situated within a cutting, and a possible pond recorded at the western end of the field in which the site is located may represent a spring, from which the field name is derived. No remaining trace of *Sealt Stret* is recorded on this map.

### ***Modern (AD 1900 – present)***

The previously mentioned Bishopton Spa and Hall Garden continued in use into the modern period, although no further modern heritage assets are recorded within the proposed development site or the study area.

The 1905 25” Second Edition Ordnance Survey map does not record any changes within the proposed development site since the time of the 1888 map, nor does the 1914 25” Third Edition Ordnance Survey map. However, the latter map does record the construction of a house immediately to the east of the proposed development site (recently demolished).

The 1938 6” Ordnance Survey map records a short section of track and possible partial additional boundary in the eastern part of the proposed development site, which are likely to be related to agricultural activities. The contour lines shown on this map also give a good indication of the ridgeline position of the proposed development site.

The 1955, 1965 1971 and 1989 Ordnance Survey maps do not record any further changes within the proposed development site, apart from the removal of the section of farm track and boundary in the eastern area, which was no longer present by the time of the 1965 map.

### ***Undated***

A number of undated burials were discovered in the area of Bordon Hill in the 19th century. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they may have been early medieval in date, although this cannot be proved for certain.

## **4. Aims and Objectives**

The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- to target and investigate anomalies identified through geomagnetometry survey □ identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
- establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed quarry extension.
- produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed extension.

## **5. Magnetometry Survey**

A geophysical survey of the whole site was undertaken in February 2015, the resulting linear and discrete anomalies cautiously interpreted as representing probable medieval ploughing and/or more recent field drainage.

## 6. Methodology (Figure 3)

A total of 16 sample trenches, each 30m x 1.6m, were excavated across the planned development area as proposed. There were no unforeseen constraints to this or contingency required. The trenches were inspected for stability and access, as was the security to the site, at the end of the day

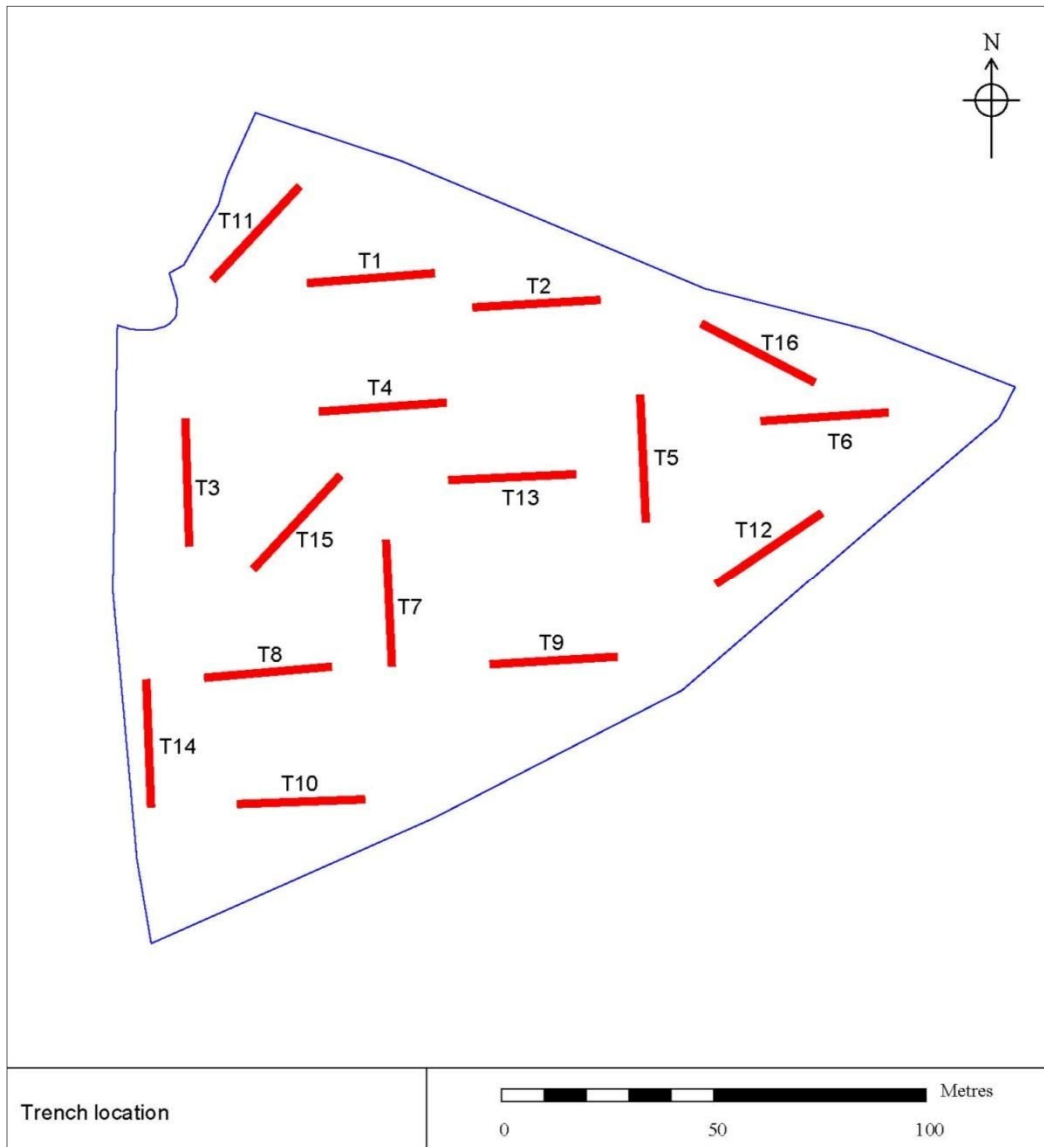


Figure 3: Trench location

Topsoil and overburden were removed carefully in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision using a 360° mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches were excavated down to the top of archaeological deposits or natural undisturbed ground, whichever was reached first. All excavation by machine and hand was undertaken with a view to avoid damage to archaeological deposits or features which appeared worthy of preservation in situ, or more detailed investigation than for the purposes of evaluation.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits were recorded using standard procedures as per the ULAS recording manual and outlined in the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation. Spoil heaps were investigated using a metal detector.



Figure 4: Machining Trench 4

### ***Constraints***

There were no major constraints to the fieldwork and no indication of unforeseen services across the development area.

### **7. Results (see table below)**

All trenches were excavated by removal of consistently mid-brown clayey loam topsoil, 0.10 – 0.30m thick and, where present, mid-brown silty clay subsoil 0.05 – 0.30m thick, above a relatively consistent substratum of mid-yellow/brown stoney clay overlying a mid-yellow brown mudstone.

The trenches were systematically distributed to provide an even sample across the site. Geophysical anomalies interpreted as representing cultivation earthworks and the identification of field drainage system explained this.

None of the trenches revealed any evidence for archaeological deposits.

TRENCH	ORIENTATION	LENGTH AND WIDTH (metres)	TOPSOIL THICKNESS (metres)	SUBSOIL THICKNESS (metres)	DESCRIPTION	TRENCH DEPTH (MIN-MAX metres)
1	E - W	30 x 1.6	0.15 - 0.25	0.1 - 0.12	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.38 - 0.44
2	NW - SE	30 x 1.6	0.2 - 0.28	0.1 - 0.18	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.38 - 0.50
3	N - S	30 x 1.6	0.15 - 0.28	N/A	No archaeological deposits, possible furrows	0.22 - 0.50
4	E - W	30 x 1.6	0.2 - 0.29	N/A	No archaeological deposits	0.36 - 0.46
5	NE - SW	30 x 1.6	0.2 - 0.25	0.05 - 0.2	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.35 - 0.61
6	E - W	30 x 1.6	0.18 - 0.25	0.05 - 0.1	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.34 - 0.40
7	NE - SW	30 x 1.6	0.17 - 0.30	0.10 - 0.11	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.36 - 0.58
8	NW - SE	30 x 1.6	0.13 - 0.26	0.10 - 0.15	No archaeological deposits, field drain	0.40 - 0.57
9	NW - SE	30 x 1.6	0.10 - 0.26	0.10 - 0.26	No archaeological deposits	0.38 - 0.60
10	NW - SE	30 x 1.6	0.18 - 0.22	0.05 - 0.12	No archaeological deposits	0.36 - 0.50
11	NE - SW	30 x 1.6	0.18 - 0.25	N/A	No archaeological deposits	0.28 - 0.43
12	NE - SW	30 x 1.6	0.15 - 0.30	0.15 - 0.30	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.40 - 0.60
13	NW - SE	30 x 1.6	0.20 - 0.28	0.15 - 0.20	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.49 - 0.60

14	NE - SW	30 x 1.6	0.15 – 0.24	0.05 – 0.10	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.30 – 0.55
15	NE - SW	30 x 1.6	0.20 – 0.29	N/A	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.40 – 0.50
16	NW - SE	30 x 1.6	0.20 – 0.27	0.08 – 0.10	No archaeological deposits, field drains	0.30 – 0.46

## 7. Conclusion

Although evidence for field drainage systems was observed in the many of the evaluation trenches excavated, none revealed any deposits or features of archaeological interest. There was some suggestion of ridge and furrow deposits although their identification within the trenches was somewhat tentative. There was also a dearth of archaeological finds, particularly in the topsoil/subsoil.

## 8. Archive

The completed archive will be deposited with ~Warwickshire County Museum Service under the accession no. T1542 and contains:

□

- 16 trench recording sheets
- 1 photographic recording sheet
- CD containing digital photographs and report
- 2x Thumbnail print of digital photographs

The report is listed on the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York, under ID: universi1-244431. Available at: <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

## 9. Bibliography

ACAO. 1993, *Model Briefs and Specifications for Archaeological Assessments and field evaluations*

AECOM. 2016, Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation, Alcester Road, Stratford

English Heritage 2006 Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment MoRPHE Project Managers Guide

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), 2008a, *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), 2008b, *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials*

## 10. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken for AECOM on behalf of the developer, Taylor Wimpey Midlands and was carried out by Stephen Baker and Nathan Flavell. Richard Buckley managed the project for ULAS and Nick Finch for AECOM.

## 11. Photographs



Trench 1, looking west



Trench 2, looking west



Trench 3, looking south





Trench 4, looking east



Trench 5, looking north-east



Trench 6, looking west



Trench 7, looking north



Trench 8, looking east



Trench 9, looking west



Trench 10, looking east



Trench 11, looking north



Trench 12, looking east



Trench 13, looking east



Trench 14, looking north



Trench 15, looking north-east



Trench 16, looking north-west

## 12. Oasis

ID	OASIS entry summary
Project Name	An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Alcester Road, Stratford, Warwickshire
Summary	<p><i>University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at Alcester Road, Stratford, on 23rd – 24th February 2016. The work was undertaken as a planning condition in advance of a residential development of the site by Taylor Wimpy. The archaeological work was handled on their behalf by AECOM</i></p> <p><i>The evaluation involved the excavation of 16 trenches to sample the development area. Evidence of undated agricultural field drains and possible traces of agricultural earthworks were identified but no remains or deposits of archaeological interest.</i></p> <p><i>The archive will be held by the recipient Warwickshire County Council Museum Service under accession number <b>XXXX</b></i></p>
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	Richard Buckley
Project Supervisor	Stephen Baker
Previous/Future work	Previous: geophysical survey 2015
Current Land Use	Agriculture
Development Type	Residential

Reason for Investigation	NPPF, Section 12
Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition
Site Co ordinates	SP 17243 55430
Height OD	65m OD
Start/end dates of field work	23 <sup>rd</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup> February 2016
Archive Recipient	Warwickshire County Council
Study Area	2.83ha
Associated project reference codes	Museum accession ID: ULAS15.722 OASIS form ID: universi1-244431

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