

**Land to the Rear of 5 Old Road, Branston,  
Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire.**

**Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief.**



Site topography prior to invasive groundworks

**Archaeological Research Services**  
**Report No. 2010/14**  
March 2010

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*Executive Summary*

*In February 2010 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Fairgrove Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at 5 Old Road, Branston, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire.*

*The work had been requested by the Planning Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council and required an archaeologist from Archaeological Research Services Ltd to be on site to observe ground works to ensure preservation by record of any archaeological deposits discovered.*

*Monitoring of groundworks was carried out during removal of contaminated ground and the excavation of deep soakaways. This confirmed that the site had been the location of an extraction pit for sand and gravel that had removed any surviving archaeological features and now consisted of made ground.*

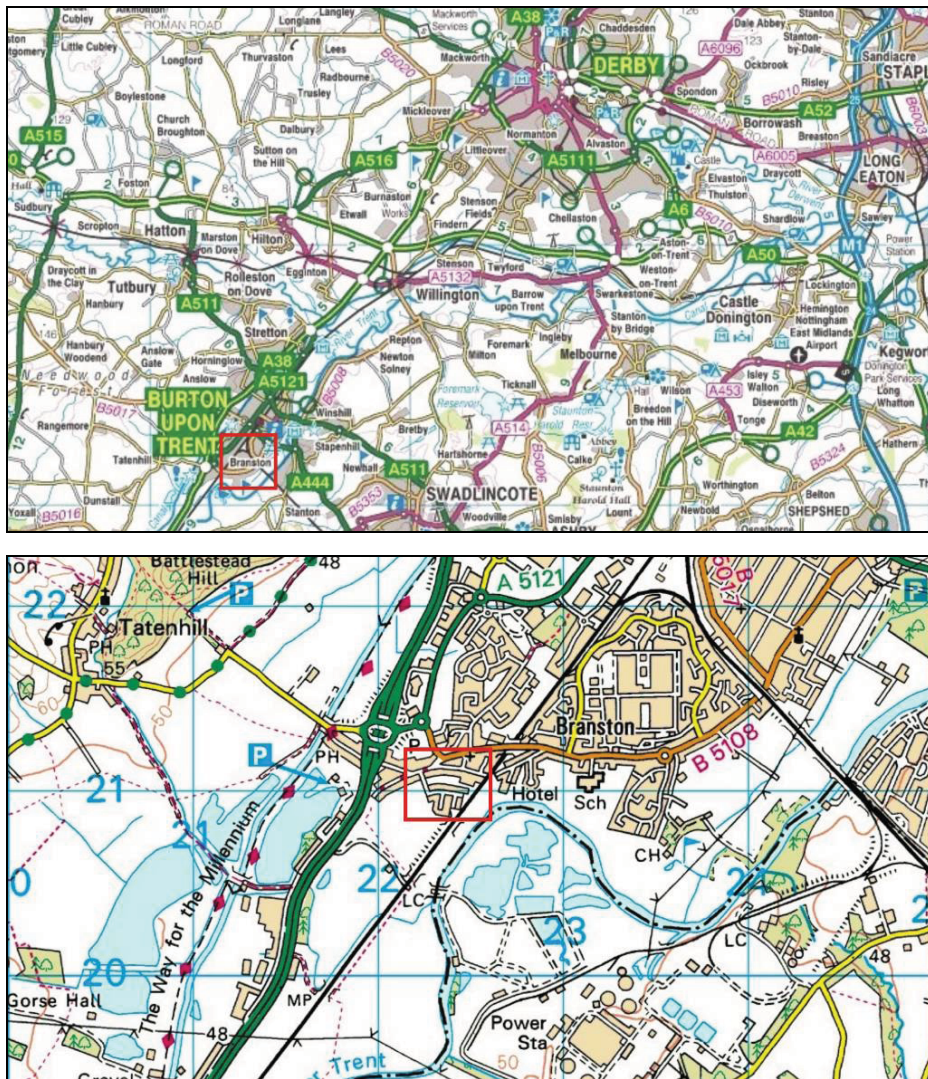
*The watching brief did not identify any significant archaeological features, deposits, buried land surfaces or small finds within the extent of excavation.*

1. Introduction

In February 2010 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Fairgroves Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land located behind 5 Old Road, Branston, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire. The watching brief had been requested in response to an archaeological condition placed upon the planning application by the Planning Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council. The work was carried out during several phases of groundworks which included the removal of heavy metal contaminated ground and the excavation of deep soakaway trenches.

2. Location and Geology

The site at 5 Old Road consists of a parcel of land 0.4ha in area located in Branston a suburb to the west of Burton-upon-Trent, 0.5km from A38 junction and 20km west of Derby, NGR SK22352106 (Fig. 1).



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Fig. 1: Location Maps of the Development Site

- 2.2 The site was bounded by modern housing to the north and south, private gardens to the east and a small wooded area to the west and consisted of scrub land with building debris and a small plot of coniferous trees at the central southern extent. The topography of the site was mainly level ground which rises gently to the south.
- 2.3 The geology of the site consisted of bedrock from the Mercia Mudstone Group overlain by a superficial alluvium of clay, silt, sand and gravel (BGS 2010).

### **3. Background**

The Historic Environment Record (HER) indicated that part of the Ryknield Street Roman Road (PRN 05155) may have extended across the western region of the site and that the remains of a medieval moated site (PRN 02080) may have been present immediately to the east.

A large number of Prehistoric sites have been identified within the River Trent valley and the Branston area. Therefore, there was the potential for unrecorded Prehistoric remains to have been present within the development area.

### **4. Aims of the Project**

The project was an archaeological watching brief and the aims of the project were as follows:

- To observe all groundworks for the presence of archaeological remains.
- To alert all interested parties to the possible destruction of archaeological features.
- To fully record and excavate any archaeological features encountered.

### **5. Method Statement**

- 5.1 All machine excavation on the site was undertaken using toothless buckets and observed by an archaeologist to ensure that no archaeological remains were disturbed. Any features or structures were to be fully cleaned and recorded in accordance with the standards stipulated by the Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA) and the guidance provided in 'Archaeological Science at PPG16 Interventions' (English Heritage 2003).
- 5.2 Any features or structures were to be photographed, recorded and, where possible, fully-excavated. All contexts were recorded on pro-forma sheets and a context register was maintained.
- 5.3 Photographs were taken using a 35mm SLR camera with black and white print film, and colour transparency, as well as with a digital camera (7.1 megapixel resolution).

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Site Code: 5 OLD RD  
Drawing Ref: 26-02-2010  
Date: BM  
Drawn: BM  
Scale: 1:500 at A4

Figure 2. Site Plan



- Key:
- Site Boundary
  - Soakaways Excavated
  - Area excavated comprising heavy metal contamination

Notes:

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## **6. Summary of Results**

- 6.1.1 Phase one of the groundworks commenced within an area of heavy metal contamination to the south of the site which measured approximately 90m in length with a maximum width of 15m (Fig. 2). The removal of the contaminated material was undertaken to a depth of 0.6m from current ground level, this equated to an ordnance datum level (OD) of 47.4m.
- 6.1.2 The site stratigraphy revealed two contexts. An imported surface deposit of dark brown sandy clay topsoil (001) with a maximum depth of 0.4m overlaid made ground (002), this consisted of numerous lenses of mixed material, red/grey sandy clay, building debris of brick and concrete, fly ash and other coal fired waste; which extended to the limit of excavation for this phase (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Exposed stratigraphy Facing South, scale 1m.





Fig. 4 made ground in the northern area of the development site. Facing West, scale 1m & 2m.

- 6.2.1 Further excavations across the northern extent of the site confirmed the presence of made ground across the site (Fig.4)
- 6.2.2 At the western extent of the site approximately 0.3m below ground level a context of sand and gravel was encountered (003) which was identified as natural ground. The natural ground dropped at approximately a 45° angle towards the east and continued below the water table (Figs 5 & 6). The cut into the natural deposit of sand and gravel suggested the limits of a pit formed by the extraction of sand and gravel on the site as proposed by local knowledge.



Fig. 5: Natural ground to the west and level of the water table. Facing East, scale 1m & 2m.



Fig. 6: South facing section revealing natural ground. Scale 1m horizontal & 2m vertical.

- 6.3.1 Soakaways 1 and 2 situated in the south-west corner of the site and soakaway 3 situated in the south-east corner were excavated a further 1.3m into an already reduced level of made ground, this equated to 1.9m to 2m below site ground level. The trenches were excavated into made ground to the limit of excavation (Figs. 7 & 8).

6.3.2 Soakaways 4 and 5 were situated at the northern boundary of the site, on ground slightly lower than that in the south. These were excavated in an area unaffected by the present groundworks. Soakaway 4 measured 11m x 2.8m and soakaway 5 measured 8.5m x 2.1m. Both were excavated until they reached the water table at a depth of 1.9m. In both trenches (001) overlay made ground (002) of imported red clay, rubble and fly ash (Fig. 9).



Fig. 7: Post excavation of soakaways 1 & 2. Facing West, scale 2m



Fig. 8: Post excavation of soakaway 3 Facing East, scale 2m



Fig. 9: Post excavation of soakaway 4, made ground of clay/rubble and fly ash. Facing East, Scale 2m

**7. Discussion**

Large areas to the south and west of Branston have been heavily worked during sand and gravel extraction in the past, local knowledge suggests this happened on the development site, and was then in-filled with waste from the coal fired plant of Drakelow Power Station.

A Map regression identifies the development of the site from open ground (1849-99), to extraction pits (1948-76) and finally enclosed on three sides by housing development (2009) (Figs. 10-13). The projected route of Rykniel Street Roman Road is shown to run north of the site in figures 12 and 13, crossing the modern access road leading to a junction of the A38.



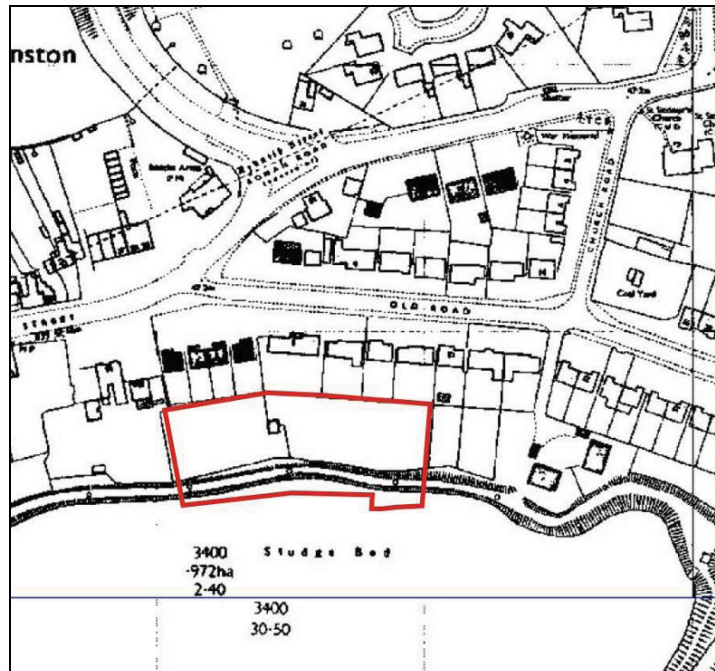
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Fig. 10: 1<sup>st</sup> Edition County Series map 1:10560, 1849 – 1899.  
Development site seen as open marshy ground



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Fig. 11: National Grid map series 1:10560, 1948 – 1976.  
Development site seen in an area of possible pits. Post dating the construction of the A38 junction, but prior to the construction of early 1960s housing.



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Fig. 12: National Grid map series 1:2500, 1943 – 1995  
Development site seen after the construction of housing on Old Road, with its southern extent overlapping an area of sludge beds. Projected course of Ryknield Roman Road to the north.



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Fig. 13: OS 1:2500 map, 2009.

Development site seen with private housing developed to three sides and open ground to the west. Projected course of Ryknield Roman Road to the north.

## 8. Conclusions

Groundworks undertaken on the site revealed an area predominantly of made ground, formed after the extraction of sand and gravel deposits. Any archaeological remains which may have survived on this site would have been removed by this process.

The watching brief did not produce any significant archaeological features, deposits, buried land surfaces or small finds.

## 9. Archive Statement

As specified within the brief for this project, the archive, which will be a copy of the report, shall be deposited with the relevant museum, which in this case is:

### **Potteries Museum and Art Gallery**

Hanley  
Stoke-on-trent

## 10. Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright

Any publicity will be handled by the client.

Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

**11. Statement of Indemnity**

All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

**12. Acknowledgements**

Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved with the smooth running of the project, especially Stephen Dean the Staffordshire Archaeology Planning Officer, Steve Midgeley at Fairgrove Homes Ltd and Rob and Steve the ground personnel from QDS Environments Ltd.

## **12. References**

Dean, S. 2010. *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. Unpublished

English Heritage, *Archaeological Science at PPG16 interventions: Best Practice Guidance for Curators and Commissioning Archaeologists*. 2003 updated November 2006

IfA, *Code of Conduct*, Revised edition, October 2009

IfA, *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, Revised edition, September 2008

## **Websites**

British Geological Survey [www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm)



Appendix One: Context Register

<b>Feature Number</b>	<b>Description</b>
001	An imported surface deposit of dark brown sandy clay topsoil across the site. At various depths across the site 0.15m-0.4m.
002	Made ground consisting of numerous lenses of mixed material, red/grey sandy clay, building debris of brick and concrete, fly ash and other coal fired waste. This deposit extended to the limit of excavation and across the entire site.
003	Natural deposit of sand and gravel only observed in the north-west corner of the site.