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Land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Planning Ref: S/2012/0521/FULL
Ref: 85721.02
July 2014



**Land adjacent to the Portway,
Old Sarum, Wiltshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Prepared for:

Stepnell House,
Lawford Road,
Rugby,
Warwickshire,
CV21 2UU

Prepared by:

Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
SALISBURY
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

www.wessexarch.co.uk



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Quality Assurance

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Land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Contents

Summary	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Project background	1
1.2 Site location, topography and geology.....	1
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	2
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Designated sites.....	2
2.3 Previous investigations.....	2
3 METHODOLOGY.....	2
3.1 Project aim and objectives.....	2
3.2 Fieldwork methodology	3
3.3 Watching brief	3
3.4 Health and safety	3
4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS.....	3
4.1 Introduction	3
4.2 Site-wide stratigraphy.....	3
4.3 Discussion.....	4
5 STORAGE AND CURATION	4
5.1 Museum	4
5.2 Preparation of archive	4
5.3 Discard policy.....	4
5.4 Security copy.....	4
6 REFERENCES.....	5
6.1 Bibliography	5
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARIES.....	6
APPENDIX 2: OASIS RECORD FORM.....	6
6.2 Land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire - Wessex Archaeology.....	6
OASIS ID - wessexar1-186299	6

Figures



Figure 1: Site & location plan

- Plate 1 Stripping of site
- Plate 2 Stripping of site
- Plate 3 Make up to formation
- Plate 4 Machining through made up ground
- Plate 5 Tree throw **101**
- Plate 6 Tree throw **107**



Land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Stepnell Ltd (the Client), to undertake an archaeological watching brief at land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire, centred on NGR 414685 133395, hereafter referred to as 'the Site'.

Planning permission (S/2012/0521/FULL) has been granted by Wiltshire Council for the construction of a three storey, 120 bedroom care home including associated site works, landscaping and car parks, on condition (Condition 8) that a programme of archaeological work is undertaken.

An Archaeological Statement was submitted with the planning application which confirmed the potential for buried archaeological remains within the Site. As a result of the archaeological potential, the Wiltshire Assistant County Archaeologist advised an archaeological watching brief was maintained during construction, to record any archaeological features within the development area.

The watching brief was maintained intermittently between May and July 2014, during the soil strip and groundwork excavations. Two anomalies were investigated and confirmed to be natural in origin. No archaeological features, finds or deposits were observed during the watching brief.

Prior to the completion of the groundwork on site, and in consultation with the Wiltshire Council Archaeologist, it was agreed a sufficient sample of the development area had been monitored and the archaeological watching brief on site was concluded.



Land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Stepnell Ltd and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Nick Child and Matthew Sargent in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Clare King, Wiltshire Council Archaeologist, for her help and advice during the course of the project.

The watching brief was undertaken by Mike Dinwiddy, Phil Harding, Natalia Hunt, Matt Kendall and Piotr Orczewski. This report was written and compiled by Mike Dinwiddy. The report illustrations were prepared by Nancy Dixon. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.



Land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Stepnell Ltd (the Client), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during development at land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire, centred on NGR 414685 133395, hereafter referred to as 'the Site' (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 Planning permission (S/2012/0521/FULL) was granted by Wiltshire Council for the construction of a three storey, 120 bedroom care home including associated site works, landscaping and car parks, on condition (Condition 8) that a programme of archaeological work was undertaken.
- 1.1.3 An Archaeological Statement (WA 2012) was submitted with the planning application which confirmed the Site lies 850m north-east of the extent of the Old Sarum Scheduled Monument; a large Iron Age hillfort, which also contains the remains of a medieval motte and bailey castle, a cathedral and a bishop's palace. The document outlined the potential for buried archaeological remains within the Site, and as a result of the archaeological potential, the Wiltshire Assistant County Archaeologist requested an archaeological watching brief was maintained during construction, to record any archaeological features within the development area.
- 1.1.4 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2013), which required the presence of an experienced archaeologist to monitor groundworks made beneath the present ground surfaces, including the excavation of foundations, services and landscaping.

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The Site comprises a broadly rectangular parcel of land measuring c. 2.5ha, located at the south-western extent of the Portway, between the Beehive Park and Ride Terminal and areas of new residential development.
- 1.2.2 The Site was located on slightly undulating ground at a height of c. 74m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), on the top of a low ridge between the River Bourne valley to the east and a dry valley, running towards the River Avon, to the north-west.
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology of the Site is Upper Chalk which gives rise to shallow, well-drained silty soils of the Andover soil association.



2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was detailed in an Archaeological Statement (WA 2012), submitted with the planning application. In addition the archaeological potential of the Site was considered in an archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (WA 2003) which was completed for the wider mixed-use development area, and is not repeated here.

2.1.2 Subsequently the wider site area has been subject to several archaeological surveys to inform an Environmental Statement for the mixed-use development area.

2.2 Designated sites

2.2.1 No designated sites are known within the development area.

2.2.2 The Site lies some 850m north-east of the Old Sarum Scheduled Monument, which comprises a number of elements, but is dominated by a large Iron Age hillfort. The monument also contains the remains of a medieval motte and bailey castle, a cathedral and a bishop's palace. Both the castle remains and the cathedral remains are Grade I Listed.

2.2.3 In addition, the Site is adjacent to a Roman Road, (the Portway) and close to its intersection with two others.

2.3 Previous investigations

2.3.1 A geophysical survey was undertaken across the wider development site in October 2003 (GSB 2003). This comprised a magnetometer scan which was followed by detailed magnetometer survey of 16 separate areas covering a total of 8 hectares. One of the detailed survey areas was located within the Site and identified some 'pit-like' anomalies of possible archaeological interest.

2.3.2 Elsewhere the geophysical survey identified two distinct areas of archaeology which comprised a group of ring ditches, probably representing the ploughed out remains of Bronze Age barrows and a double linear ditch with an adjacent double ring ditch and single ring ditch to the east.

2.3.3 A subsequent archaeological evaluation (WA 2003) was undertaken; a single trench (Trench 8) was positioned within the Site and targeted on two anomalies identified. No archaeological features were noted. A dark reddish brown plough soil measuring up to 0.25m in depth was recorded overlying the natural chalk geology.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Project aim and objectives

3.1.1 With due regard to the IfA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008), the generic aims of the watching brief were:

- to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and had remains been present, to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;



- to confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;
- to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;
- to determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains;
- to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present;
- to prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2013) and is summarised below:

3.3 Watching brief

3.3.1 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundwork beneath the present ground surface, and included observing the excavation for foundations, services and structural platforms. This was undertaken by an experienced archaeologist subject to the number of site operations at any one time. The mechanical excavation where possible, was undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket and under constant supervision.

3.3.2 Initially the topsoil and majority of the subsoil was removed using a toothless ditching bucket, leaving a thin layer of subsoil over the natural chalk (**Plate 1 & 2**). Chalk was then brought in to the Site and deposited/compacted in order to raise the ground level to the required formation level (**Plate 3**). Further machine excavation through the redeposited layer was then undertaken into the natural chalk (**Plate 4**).

3.3.3 When potential archaeological features were revealed, they were identified and recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system meeting the aims of the watching brief. Recording included written, drawn, and photographic elements as conditions allowed.

3.3.4 A unique site code **85721** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

3.4 Health and safety

3.4.1 Health and Safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices overrode archaeological considerations at all times.

3.4.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following summary details the results of the watching brief undertaken. Details of the individual excavated contexts of features and deposits are retained in the project archive. Summaries of the excavated sequences can be found in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 Site-wide stratigraphy

4.2.1 The stratigraphic sequence encountered was generally consistent and comprised approximately 0.15m of modern topsoil overlying a 0.10m deep subsoil. Beneath this the natural Upper Chalk geology was recorded.



4.2.2 Two anomalies with archaeological potential were sample excavated. Both 'features' (**101** and **107**) were interpreted as tree throws (**Plates 5 & 6**).

4.2.3 In discussion with Wiltshire Council Assistant Archaeologist, it was agreed that a sufficient area of the Site had been observed, and subsequent groundwork could continue without further archaeological monitoring being undertaken.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1.1 The watching brief has investigated a parcel of land adjacent to the Portway, and given the close proximity of significant archaeology it is somewhat surprising no archaeological finds or features were recorded during the investigation.

6 STORAGE AND CURATION

6.1 Museum

6.1.1 The project archive resulting from the evaluation will be deposited with the Wiltshire Heritage Museum.

6.1.2 If/when available, deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

6.2 Preparation of archive

6.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the local museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; IfA 2009; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).

6.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the Site code **85721**, and a full index will be prepared.

6.2.3 The archive of all records and finds will be consistent with the principles of *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE; English Heritage 2006).

6.3 Discard policy

6.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.

6.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2002).

6.4 Security copy

6.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.



7 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARIES

bgl = below ground level

Tree Throw 101			
Dimensions: 2.76 x 1.45m			
Max. depth: 0.45m			
Context	Description		Depth (m)
101	<i>Cut</i>	Oval in plan, irregular steep sides and a concave base. Tree throw	0.00-0.64 bgl
102	<i>Primary fill</i>	A mid yellowy grey chalky silt.	0.00-0.64 bgl
103	<i>Secondary fill</i>	A dark yellowish brown silty clay loam, sparse to moderate coarse flint nodules, moderated chalk nodules	0.00-0.64 bgl

Tree Throw 107			
Dimensions: 60m			
Max. depth: 0.40m			
Context	Description		Depth (m)
107	<i>Cut</i>	Straight sided slope with concave base	0.00- 0.40bgl
108	<i>Secondary fill</i>	Orange brown silty clay, with occasional sub angular flint.	0.00- 0.37bgl
109	<i>Secondary fill</i>	Orange brownish white silty chalk	0.00-0.37 bgl

APPENDIX 2: OASIS RECORD FORM

7.2 Land adjacent to the Portway, Old Sarum, Wiltshire - Wessex Archaeology

OASIS ID - wessexar1-186299

Versions

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	Sue Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	31 July 2014

Completed sections in current version

Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1/1

Validated sections in current version

Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
No	No	No	No	0/1

File submission and form progress

Grey literature report submitted?	No	Grey literature report filename/s
Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s
Boundary file submitted?	No	Boundary filename
HER signed off?		NMR signed off?



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Site location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Stripping of site



Plate 2: Stripping of site


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Plate 3: Make up to formation



Plate 4: Machining through made up ground



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Plate 5: Tree throw **101**



Plate 6: Tree throw **107**

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Wessex Archaeology Ltd registered office Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB
Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk



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