

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road,
Highworth, Wiltshire**

Archaeological Excavation

by David Sánchez

Site Code: LRH17/95

(SU 2022 9377)

Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Wiltshire

Archaeological excavation

For Aldi Stores Limited

by David Sánchez

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LRH 17/95

April 2022

Summary

Site name: Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Wiltshire

Grid reference: SU 2022 9377

Site activity: Archaeological excavation

Date and duration of project: 31st January to 4th March 2022

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: David Sánchez

Site code: LRH 17/95

Area of site: 0.81ha

Summary of results: Only two features of archaeological interest were recorded during the course of the archaeological investigation: one shallow ditch of Post-Medieval date and one isolated pit of Iron Age date, most likely connected with the Iron Age and Early Roman farmstead recorded to the west.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Swindon Museum in due course.

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website: www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 19.04.22 Steve Preston✓ 19.04.22

Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Wiltshire Archaeological excavation

by David Sánchez

Report 17/95e

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological strip, map and sample excavation carried out at a parcel of land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Wiltshire. (SU 2022 9377) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Alan Williams, of Planning Potential, 13-14 Orchard Street, Bristol BS1 5EH, on behalf of Aldi Stores Ltd.

Planning permission (S/17/1771/SASM) has been gained from Swindon Borough Council to construct a new supermarket complex on a parcel of land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Wiltshire. This permission is subject to a condition (15) which requires a programme of archaeological investigation be undertaken in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation. This was in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Borough's policies on archaeology. Previous investigations (Beaverstock 2018a–c) having demonstrated that the site has some potential, this area was required to be subject to excavation.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, County Archaeologist for Wiltshire Council, the archaeological adviser to the Borough. This phase of the fieldwork was undertaken by David Sánchez and Will Attard, between 31st January and 4th March 2022 and the site code is LRH 17/95. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Swindon Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the northern margins of Highworth which is approximately 5km north-east of Swindon's north-eastern outskirts (Fig. 1). The site itself is located on the western side of Lechlade Road and to the north of Blackworth Road. It comprises the eastern portion of a roughly rectangular parcel of land with a total extent of approximately 6ha, of which 0.81ha comprises the area subject to the archaeological investigation described in this report. The site consisted of an open field previously under pasture with a small percentage of its area covered by trees and scrub along its southern and eastern edges. It lies at a height of *c.* 81m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is mapped as Oxford Clay Formation, Mudstone (BGS 1974)

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site was initially highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Tabor 2017) and briefing notes prepared by the archaeological adviser to Swindon Borough Council. In summary, this potential stems from the site's locations in an area with Roman occupation to the south-east and finds of prehistoric flintwork from other locations nearby. This potential was confirmed by a geophysical survey (Beaverstock 2018a, 2018b) and subsequent evaluation trenching (Beaverstock 2018c) undertaken across the site and the rest of the field to the west. These identified features indicating the presence of a late Iron Age and Roman farmstead just to the west of the proposed development site. While the geophysical survey data suggested that there may be remains within the site itself, trenches excavated to test these found nothing of archaeological interest.

Objectives and methodology

The general objectives of the project are to:

- Excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the proposed development.

- Produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site.

- Establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc.

- Produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

Specific research objectives for the project were to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature and date of any landscape features (e.g. fields, boundary features, large enclosures) and what is their spatial organisation?

- Are there any occupied areas within the proposal site?

- How do landscape features and occupied areas interact?

The excavation area was stripped of topsoil and other overburden using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless bucket to uncover the top of the natural geology (Pl. 1). Due to extremely wet ground conditions, to avoid deep disturbance caused by movement of machinery, and following agreement with the County Archaeologist, the excavation was undertaken in three stages with spoilheaps placed in areas already investigated and signed off in order to minimize machine movement across site (Pl. 2).

All archaeological features were planned and sectioned. The pit was fully excavated following recording in half-section. A ditch was investigated by a single slot.

Results (Figs 2 and 3).

Pit 200 was located towards the eastern edge of excavation. It was 0.4m in diameter, and just 0.14m deep, with a markedly deeper central portion which suggests it may have held a post-setting (Pl. 3). Its fill of mid greyish-yellow silty clay (250) also contained two large stone fragments which might also have been post-packing. Thirteen sherds of Iron Age pottery all in the same fabric and perhaps from a single vessel, were recovered from this fill.

Crossing the excavation area's north-west corner was a single ditch aligned NE–SW. A slot excavated across this (201) showed it to be 0.76m wide but just 0.07m deep (Pl. 4) with a single fill 9251). A sherd of post-medieval redware provides the dating evidence. This feature corresponds with a geophysical anomaly in this area, likely to be a field boundary, but as was the case with the evaluation trenches, none of the other geophysical anomalies corresponded to archaeological cut features.

Towards the south of the site two clearly modern ditches carrying service pipes (still visible in the field to the west) were recorded but not excavated.

Finds

Pottery by Cristina Mateos Leal

A small assemblage of 15 sherds of pottery weighing 206g was recovered. The assemblage dates to the Iron Age accompanied by a single sherd of post-medieval date. The pottery was recorded using the recommendations outlined in *Pottery Standards* (2016). To this end it was examined macroscopically and sorted into fabrics based on inclusions present, the frequency and grade of the inclusions and the firing colour. The sorted fabrics were quantified by sherd count and weigh by recorded context. The fabric codes followed the scheme used by Timby (2017) in the evaluation report for the site. The material is well preserved with large pieces, but no featured shreds were present.

The Iron Age pottery mainly comes from pit 200 apart from one sherd from the topsoil stripping. It is all in one fabric, fossil shell and limestone-tempered handmade (SHLI).

One sherd of post-medieval glazed red earthenware was found in ditch slot 201.

This small assemblage corresponds well with the pottery found during the evaluation, except that no Roman pottery was recovered. The pit belongs to the middle to late Iron Age.

Conclusion

The archaeological investigation in this parcel of land to the west of Lechlade Road in Highworth recorded a very low volume of features of archaeological interest. Other than a large modern trench across the access road and the ditch defining the existing edge of the field only two other features were encountered which have some archaeological interest.

A single pit at the eastern area of the site is considered to relate to the substantial site identified by geophysical survey and evaluation trenching some 100m to the west (Fig. 4). A small group of pottery sherds recovered from its excavation provide a date of Middle to Late Iron Age to this feature, contemporary to those identified immediately to the west.

One shallow ditch uncovered at the north-west corner of the site fitting with a linear anomaly recorded during the course of the geophysical survey may be part of a Post-Medieval field boundary or perhaps a side ditch of a trackway across the field considering the presence of a second anomaly following the same alignment but some 5m to the north-west. This second anomaly falls mostly beyond the western limit of the current development and therefore could not be investigated.

References

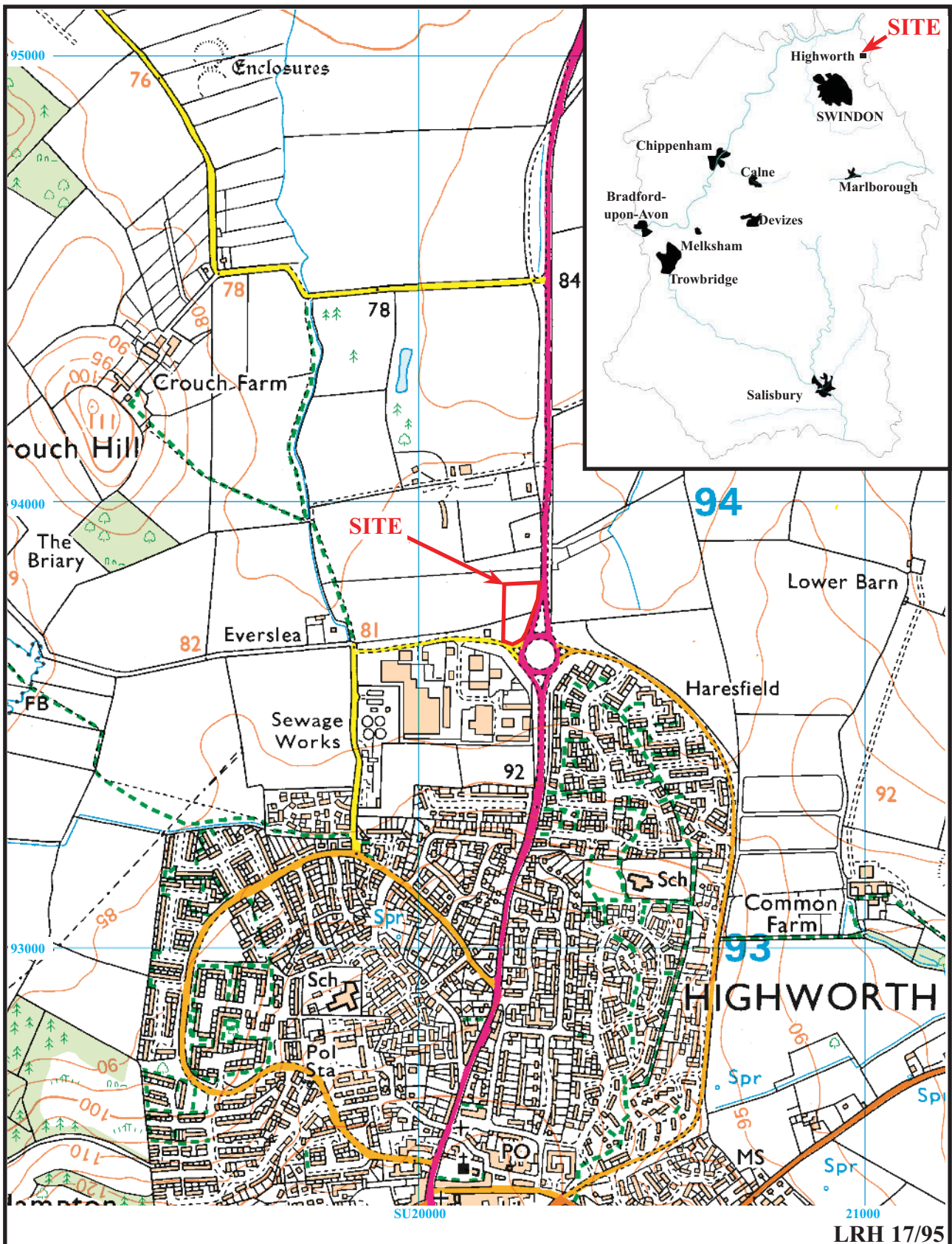
- Beaverstock, K, 2018a, 'Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Swindon: Geophysical survey (magnetic)', Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) rep **17/95b**, Reading
- Beaverstock, K, 2018b, 'Land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire: Geophysical survey (magnetic)', TVAS rep **17/95c**, Reading
- Beaverstock, K, 2018c, 'Land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire: An archaeological evaluation', TVAS rep **17/95d**, Reading
- BGS, 1974, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 252, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Brickley, M and McKinley, J (eds), 2004, *Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains*, IFA Pap **7**
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)
- Pottery Standards 2016= PCRG/SGRP/MPRG, 2016, *A standard for pottery studies in archaeology*, Historic England
- Tabor, R, 2017, 'Land west of Lechlade Road, Highworth, Wiltshire: An archaeological desk-based assessment', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **17/95**, Reading
- Timby, J, 2018, 'Pottery' in K Beaverstock, 'Land at Lechlade Road, Highworth, Wiltshire, an archaeological evaluation', TVAS unpubl rep **17/95d**, Reading, 8–9

Appendix 1: Feature details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
200	250	Pit	Iron Age	Pottery
201	251	Ditch	Post- medieval	Pottery

Appendix 2: Pottery catalogue by context

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Period</i>
	50	stripping	SHLI	1	15	Iron Age
200	250	Pit	SHLI	13	190	Iron Age
201	251	Ditch	PMRE	1	1	Post- medieval

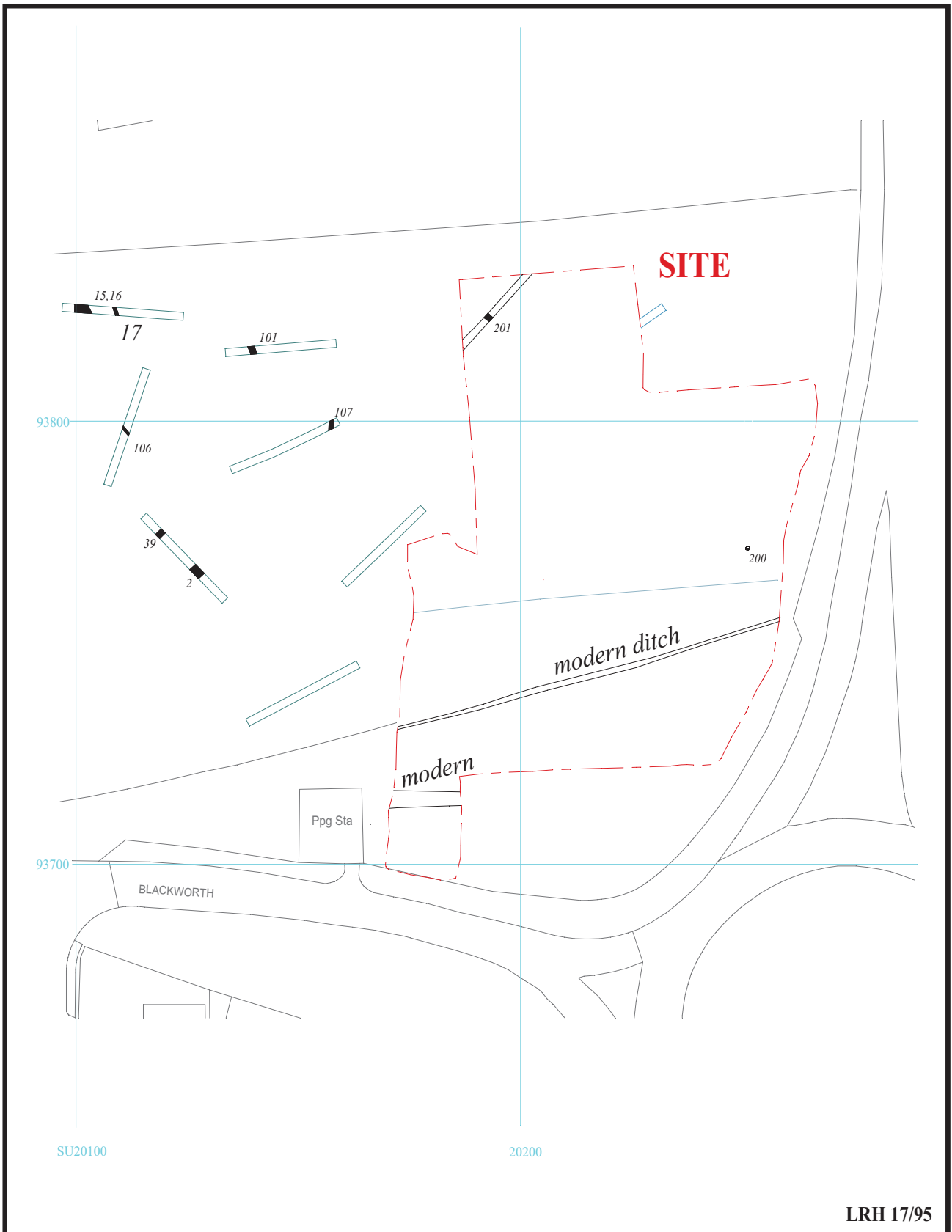


**Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road,
Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire, 2022
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Highworth and Wiltshire.

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



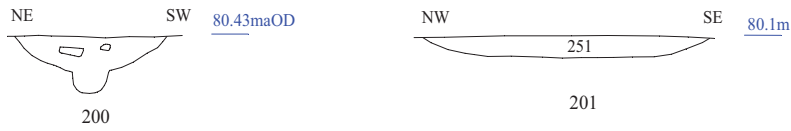
LRH 17/95

**Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road,
Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire, 2022
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 2. Excavation area.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



LRH 17/95

**Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechlade Road,
Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire, 2022
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 3. Sections.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



**Land west of Lechlade Road,
 Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire, 2022
 Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 4. Location of site relative to previous evaluation and geophysical results

LRH 17/95c



Plate 1. Access, modern ditch looking North West,



Plate 2. Site, general view.



Plate 3. Pit 200, looking South East,
Scales: horizontal 0.3m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 4. Ditch slot 201, looking North East,
Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 0.1m.

LRH 17/95

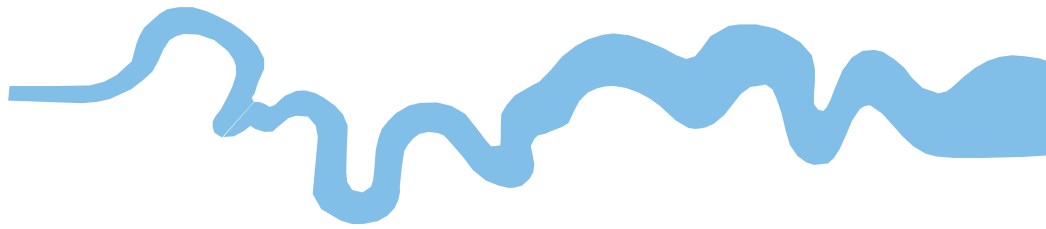
**Proposed Aldi, Land west of Lechade Road,
Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire, 2022
Archaeological Excavation
Plates 1 to 4.**

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**

***Offices in:
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent, Wellingborough
and Ennis (Ireland)***