

# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT THE PADDOCKS BENTLEY HEATH SOLIHULL



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## **An archaeological evaluation of Land at the Paddocks, Bentley Heath, Solihull**

Andrew Walsh

### **Summary**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Land at the Paddocks, Bentley Heath (NGR SP 16298 76040). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their client who have been granted planning permission for the for the construction of a retirement home development by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works. A number of archaeological sites have been recorded from the wider vicinity of the proposed development site, including several enclosures visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs.

Six trenches were excavated, identifying three postholes or possible postholes cutting the natural substrate. The sterility of the material filling these features suggests that they are agricultural in origin and not associated with any settlement or other more intensive forms of activity and they are likely to be post-medieval or recent in origin. No evidence of any datable archaeological activity was identified and no finds were recovered during the evaluation.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Land at the Paddocks, Bentley Heath (NGR SP 16298 76040; Figure 1). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their client who have been granted planning permission for the construction of a retirement home development by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (reference S11/01403/FUL) subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

The proposed development site is considered to include potential heritage assets, the significance of which may be affected by the application.

The project conforms to the brief issued by Anna Stocks, Planning Archaeologist for Warwickshire County Council (WCC 2014) and for which a written scheme of investigation was produced (WA 2014). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2009). The Worcestershire Archaeology event reference for this project is P4308.

### 2 Aims

The aims of this evaluation were:

- to describe and assess the significance of the heritage asset with archaeological interest;
- to establish the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological site.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Personnel

The fieldwork was led by Andrew Walsh BSc MSc FSA Scot AlfA who joined WA in 2013 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004. He was assisted in the field by Pete Lovett BSc. The report preparation was led by Andrew Walsh and the project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers BA MSc. Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt BSc MifA.

#### 3.2 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed written scheme of investigation was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2014). Fieldwork was undertaken between 10 and 11 March 2014. The site reference number and site code is P4308.

Six trenches, amounting to around 324m<sup>2</sup>, were excavated over the site area of 1.1ha, representing a sample c.4%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed using a 180° mechanical excavator, employing a toothless bucket and under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

#### 3.3 Structural analysis

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was effected through a combination of structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

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### **3.4 Artefact methodology**

#### **3.4.1 Recovery policy**

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard WA practice (2012; appendix 2). In the event, no finds were recovered.

### **3.5 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.5.1 Sampling policy**

The sampling policy conformed to standard WA practice (2012). In the event no deposits were revealed which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

### **3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results**

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

## **4 The application site**

### **4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context**

The proposed development site occupies a roughly rectangular-shaped field. The site is bounded by Four Ashes Road to the north-west, residential properties to the north-east and south-west, and Bentley Heath allotments to the south-east. The field is flat, lying at a height of 130m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is mapped as Mercia Mudstone Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of glaciofluvial sand and gravel (BGS 2014).

The following information is taken from the brief issued by Warwickshire County Council (WCC 2014); A number of archaeological sites have been recorded from the wider vicinity of the proposed development site, including several enclosures (MSI 9752, MSI 8783, MSI 8790) visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs to the west, southwest and south of this site. Although few other relevant archaeological sites have been previously recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site, this may be due to a lack of previous archaeological investigations across this area, rather than an absence of activity.

### **4.2 Current land-use**

The site is currently grass.

## **5 Structural analysis**

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. A detailed plan of Trench 5 and sections are illustrated in Figure 3. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

### **5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits**

The underlying natural deposit in all the trenches was a yellowy orange, clayey sand with frequent cobbles and pebbles (Plate 1).

### **5.1.2 Phase 2: Undated deposits**

In Trench 5 the natural strata was cut by a posthole (504) and two possible postholes or small pits (506 and 507), located close together (Plate 2) towards the southern end of the trench.

Posthole 504 measured 0.26m in diameter and 0.19m in depth. It had vertical sides and a flattish base, and was filled by a light greyish brown silty sand (503) with occasional pebbles. Features 506 and 508 were oval shaped in plan measuring 0.32m and 0.50m in length, and both measured

about 0.1m in depth. They were both filled by a similar light greyish brown silty sand as posthole 504. All three features were 100% excavated. No finds were recovered.

No other potential archaeological features were identified in the evaluation although tree throws were identified in Trenches 2 and 6.

### **5.1.3 Phase 3: Modern deposits**

The features and natural deposits in all the trenches were sealed by a mixed grey brown orangey yellow sandy silt interface or subsoil layer which measured between 0.10 and 0.17m in depth. This was overlaid by a dark greyish brown sandy silt topsoil. No finds were recovered from the site.

## **6 Synthesis**

The evaluation exposed a small number of features in Trench 5. The sterility of the material filling these features would indicate they are agricultural in origin and not associated with any settlement or other, more intensive forms of activity and they are likely to be post-medieval or recent in origin. No evidence of any datable archaeological activity was identified and no finds were recovered during the evaluation.

## **7 Significance**

The features recorded within the site comprised of a posthole and two possible postholes or small pits. All the features appear to be of agricultural origin. No artefacts were recovered from the site and it is concluded that the site is of low archaeological potential.

## **8 Publication summary**

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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*Six trenches were excavated, identifying three postholes or possible postholes cutting the natural substrate. The sterility of the material filling these features suggests that they are agricultural in origin and not associated with any settlement or other more intensive forms of activity and they are likely to be post-medieval or recent in origin. No evidence of any datable archaeological activity was identified and no finds were recovered during the evaluation.*

## **9 Acknowledgements**

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project: Cathy Patrick (CgMs Consulting) and Anna Stocks (Warwickshire County Council).

## **10 Bibliography**

BGS 2014 *Geology of Britain Viewer*, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> , British Geological Survey, accessed 12 March 2014

IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological evaluation*, Institute for Archaeologists



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WA 2012 Manual of service practice, recording manual, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, report **1842**

WA 2014 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological evaluation at Land at the Paddocks, Bentley Heath, Solihull*, Worcestershire Archaeology, Worcestershire County Council, document dated 28 February 2014, P4308

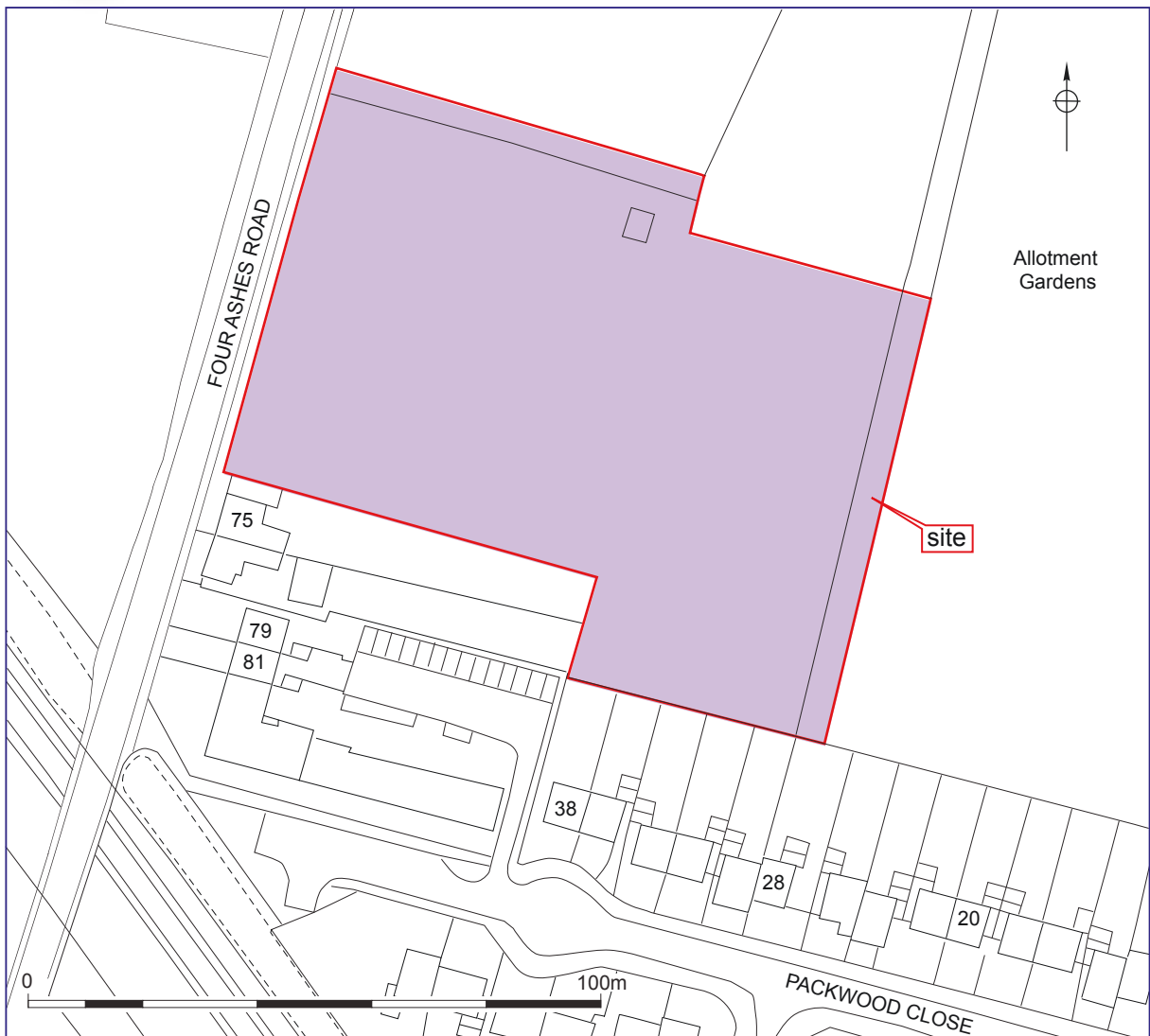
WCC 2014 *Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation: Land at the Paddocks, Bentley Heath, Solihull*, Warwickshire County Council, document dated 27 January 2014





**Figures**

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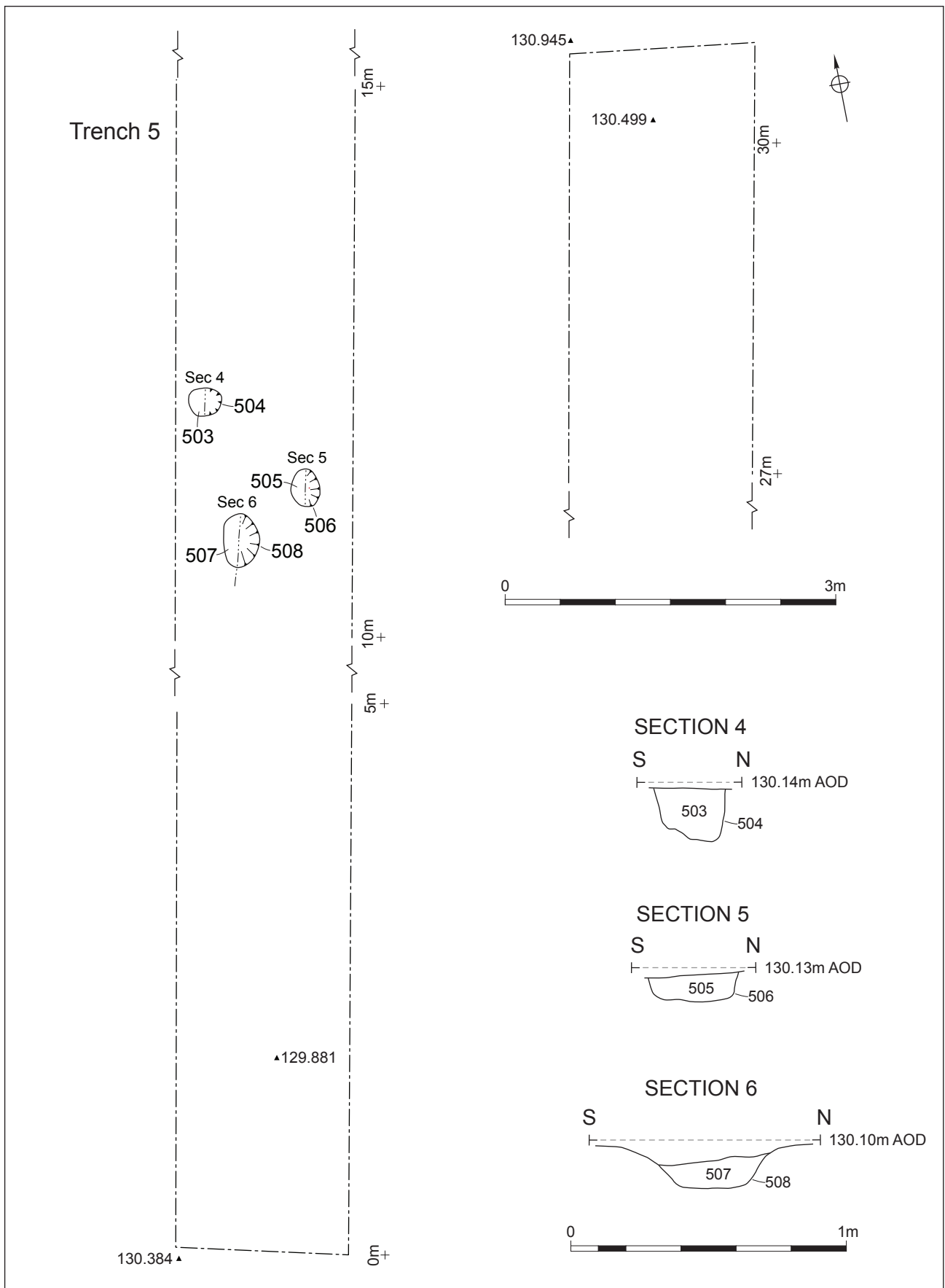
*Location of the site*

*Figure 1*



Trench location plan

Figure 2



Plan and sections of Trench 5 features

Figure 3

## Plates



*Plate 1. Trench 1, showing the natural deposits below the subsoil and topsoil*



*Plate 2. Posthole 504 is visible in the upper right of the photo. Features 506 (lower centre) and 508 (left) are also visible*



## Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Length 30.1 Width 1.6

#### Context summary

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ Depth	Interpretation
100	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.28	
101	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.10	
102	Natural	Layer	Loose light yellowish orange sand		

### Trench 2

Length 30.5 Width 1.6

#### Context summary

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ Depth	Interpretation
200	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.34	
201	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.16	
202	Natural	Layer	Loose light yellowish orange sand		
203	Tree bowl	Fill	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.28	Fill of tree throw 204
204	Tree bowl	Cut		0.28	Tree throw

### Trench 3

Length 29.8 Width 1.6

#### Context summary

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ Depth	Interpretation
300	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.23	
301	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.15	
302	Natural	Layer	Loose mid orangey yellow sandy clay		

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**Trench 4****Length** 30.7 **Width** 1.6**Context summary**

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ Depth	Interpretation
400	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.26	
401	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.17	
402	Natural	Layer	Loose mid orangey yellow clayey sand		

**Trench 5****Length** 30.8 **Width** 1.6**Context summary**

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ Depth	Interpretation
500	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.26	
501	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.10	
502	Natural	Layer	Loose mid yellowish orange clayey sand		
503	Posthole	Fill	Soft light greyish brown silty sand	0.19	Fill of posthole 504
504	Posthole	Cut		0.19	Posthole
505	Posthole	Fill	Soft light greyish brown silty sand	0.10	Fill of ?posthole/pit 506
506	Posthole	Cut		0.10	Posthole/pit?
507	Posthole	Fill	Soft light greyish brown silty sand	0.11	Fill of ?posthole/pit 508
508	Posthole	Cut		0.11	Posthole/pit?

**Trench 6**

**Length** 30.2      **Width** 1.6

**Context summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Height/ Depth</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
600	Topsoil	Layer	Soft dark greyish brown sandy silt	0.28	
601	Subsoil	Layer	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.12	
602	Natural	Layer	Loose mid orangey yellow clayey sand		
603	Tree bowl	Fill	Soft mid greyish brown sandy silt	0.20	Fill of tree throw 604
604	Tree bowl	Cut		0.20	Tree throw

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## **Appendix 2 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: P4308)**

The archive consists of:

39	Photographic records AS3
54	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
1	Permatrace scale drawings AS34
6	Trench record sheets AS41
1	CD-Rom/DVDs
1	Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Warwickshire Museum

The Butts

Warwick

CV34 4SS

Tel. Warwick (01926) 412500

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