

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT
OF
COMMON SIDE,
ASTLEY CROSS,
STOURPORT,
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Desk-based assessment of Common Side, Astley Cross, Stourport, Worcestershire

Fiona Keith-Lucas

Summary

A desk-based assessment has been undertaken of Common Side, Astley Cross, Stourport, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SO 802 693). It was requested by Taylor Wimpey (Midlands) who wish to develop the site and require an archaeological desk-based assessment to form part of the planning application.

This report describes and assesses the significance of the known, and potential, heritage assets that may be affected by the development of this land. The potential impact of the application, and the need for further on-site evaluation, is assessed.

The site occupies a triangular parcel of land at the junction between Pearl Lane (the B4194) and Areley Common (the B4196), from which no previous archaeological activity has yet been recorded. Nevertheless, investigations in the vicinity reveal the site to lie within a complex prehistoric landscape utilised from the Mesolithic, and into the Romano-British period. A palaeochannel marks the course of a small stream which once flowed across the site from its source in the north-east corner towards a pool at Longmore Hill Farm; the nearby site of a finds-rich late Neolithic pit. This stream follows a valley between rolling hills upon which a Bronze Age round barrow, and Iron Age and Romano-British settlement and enclosure have been identified and excavated. The stream is thought likely to have attracted activity from these communities; each of which may have left its mark in the archaeological record.

Whilst Redstone Road to the north, and the B4194, are known to have been important roads during the medieval period, no associated archaeological evidence is expected within the study site as the settlement focus and medieval Priory were located some distance away at Astley. The site lay within a larger common field system during the medieval and post-medieval periods, enclosed only in 1811 by a Parliamentary Act. Since this time the site has been subject to arable farming which is thought to have had minimal impact upon the potential underlying archaeology.

Report

1. Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

The Field Section of the Historic Environment and Archaeology Service has been requested to undertake a desk-based assessment of Common Side, Astley Cross, Stourport, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SO 802 693). It was undertaken on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (Midlands) who wish to develop the site and require an archaeological desk-based assessment to form part of the planning application.

The proposed development site is considered likely to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest, the significance of which would be affected by the application.

The project conforms to a proposal and detailed specification produced by HEAS (2011). The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment* (IfA 2008) and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (HEAS 2008).

The event reference for this desk-based assessment (issued by the HER) is WSM 45753.

1.2 Aims

The general aims of this desk-based assessment are to:

- describe and assesses the significance of known heritage assets within the vicinity of the application site;
- combine this with further relevant information to assess the archaeological potential of the proposed development area;
- assess the impact of the proposed development on these archaeological remains;
- recommend mitigation measures to offset detrimental effects of the development.

1.3 Methods

1.3.1 Documentary research

All relevant information on the history of the site and past land-use was collected and assessed. Records of known archaeological sites and monuments were obtained from Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER). Historic maps, published sources and archives were consulted at the Worcestershire County Record Office (CRO).

1.3.2 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- 1840, Astley Tithe plan and award, ref. f/s760:22, BA 1572
- 1st edition, 1884, Ordnance Survey, 25":1 mile
- 1904, Ordnance Survey, 25":1 mile
- 1927, Ordnance Survey, 25":1 mile
- 1995, Ordnance Survey, Pathfinder Series; Sheet 974, 1:25,000
- 2011, Ordnance Survey

Aerial photographs

- AS 46 (WSM 08074)
- AS 47 (WSM 08072)

- AS 50 (WSM 08072)
- AS 52 (WSM 08072)
- AS 55 (WSM 08070)
- Google Maps, <http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?hl=en&tab=w> website accessed 12 May 2011
- UK Aerial Photos, <http://www.ukaerialphotos.com/viewer.asp?x=380200&y=269250> website accessed 12 May 2011

Documentary sources

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- Green, C, 1961 A Round Barrow at Astley, Worcestershire, *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeology Society*, **38**, 1-8, WR1920
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- Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 Midland and Western England, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*
- VCH IV, Page, W and Willis-Bund, J W, (eds) 1924 *Victoria History of the County of Worcestershire*, **IV**
- Walker, C I, 1958 Excavations on a Romano-British site at Astley 1956-58 *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeology Society*, **35**, 29-57, WR1971
- Walker, C I, 1959 Excavations on a second Romano-British site at Astley and reports from the first site 1958-59, *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeology Society*, **36**, 52-59, WR6618
- Williamson, T, 2002 *The Transformation of Rural England: farming and the landscape 1700 – 1870*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press

The following sources have also been cited in this assessment.

- DCLG 2010 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the historic environment*, Department for Communities and Local Government

- DCLG/DCMS/EH 2010 *PPS5 Planning for the historic environment: historic environment planning practice guide*, Department for Communities and Local Government/Department for Culture, Media and Sport/English Heritage
- IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for archaeological desk-based assessment*, Institute for Archaeologists
- HEAS 2011 *Proposal for a desk-based assessment of Land at Astley Cross, Stourport, Worcestershire*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished document dated 21 April 2011, **P3688**

Archives (held by Worcestershire CRO)

- ref. 850: Astley, BA 9813 *Notes on the History of Astley*, S A Comley
- ref. 705:550, BA 4600/708 *An Act for Inclosing Lands in the Parish of Astley in the County of Worcestershire, Royal Assent, Tues 14 May, 1811*

1.4 **Other methods**

A site visit was undertaken on 10 May 2011. The site and surrounding area were inspected on foot in dry, bright weather conditions. Notes and digital photographs were taken to inform the compilation of this report.

1.5 **Hedgerows**

The consideration of the application of the *Hedgerows Regulations 1997* is intended to be indicative rather than definitive. Searches relating to the information necessary for the regulations are restricted to those that are readily available. For instance, the Service will not usually have undertaken exhaustive searches of documents (particularly textual documents) held by a Records Office. Wildlife and landscape criteria are also beyond the scope of this archaeological project and have not been considered.

1.6 **Results**

The results of the HER search are mapped on Figure 2. The details of individual features of the historic environment are given in Appendix 1. Records categorised as an 'Event' may repeat information held under another Record Type, but in this instance they have been incorporated since they prove useful in subdividing the findings of the Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct salvage recording. HER references have been used throughout this assessment.

2. **The application site**

2.1 **Location**

Figure 1 shows the location of the application site. Heritage assets have been considered within 500m of the site in order to provide a broader understanding of the local context and to encompass the settings of any Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings (Fig 2).

2.2 **Topography, geology and soils**

The study area comprises two adjoining fields within a triangular parcel of land at the junction between Pearl Lane (the B4194) and Areley Common (the B4196), bounded to the north by Malvern Edge Court and modern housing. The site is centred on NGR SO 802 693 and totals *c* 3.8 hectares in area (Fig 1).

The predominant soils of the area belong to the Bridgnorth Soil Association (551a), comprising well-drained, sandy and coarse loamy soils over soft sandstone. These are at risk of water and wind erosion and occasionally form deeper soils. The underlying geology is Permo-Triassic and Carboniferous reddish sandstone (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983) which forms undulating hills that rise westwards from the third gravel terrace of the River Severn, which flows southwards, approximately 800m to the east.

The site slopes from a high of approximately 38m AOD at the north-west, down to approximately 29m AOD to the south. A small dry valley starts its course at the very north-eastern corner of the site, reaching south to meet the B4194 close to the milestone (Fig 3; Plates 1 to 3). This once would have channelled a stream, via two small ponds evident on the Tithe Plan of 1840, into the larger pond at Longmore Hill Farm to the south-east of the study site (Fig 4). The action of the stream does not appear to have resulted in alluvial deposition (beyond perhaps a very localised course).

2.3 **Current land-use**

The northern of the two fields is currently under wheat cultivation, although its north-eastern corner is left as grassland. The smaller field to the south is scrub grassland (Plate 4). The fields are divided by a thin hedgerow of laid hawthorn. Two small buildings lie within the study area; in the north-west corner of the north field stands a fairly large corrugated iron structure, whilst a derelict shed lies at the north-eastern corner of the south field. The small parcel of land which lies at the fork in the roads is not included within the planning application. It contains semi-mature woodland, predominantly chestnut with pine. All three plots are bounded by thin, patchy hedgerows of elder and hawthorn.

3. **Archaeological and architectural interest of the application site**

3.1 **Terms and definitions**

In accordance with new planning guidance (DCLG 2010), the term 'heritage asset' is applied to elements of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest. Heritage assets include designated assets such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings, and undesignated assets that may be of equal significance. The term 'potential heritage asset' is used to denote undesignated assets that may exist in the form of archaeological deposits.

3.2 **Designated heritage assets**

The site itself contains no designated heritage assets. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM), Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields within the HER search area.

There are two Listed Buildings within the search area; both at Longmore Hill Farm, 400m to the south-east of the study site. Here stands the Grade II listed 17th century timber-framed farmhouse (listed building number 152289), with its 19th century stables, dovecote and cowhouse, also Grade II listed (152290).

3.3 **Previously undesignated heritage assets**

3.3.1 **Palaeochannel**

It is evident from the topography that a palaeochannel (dry former stream course), crosses the study site. The channel issues in the north-east corner of the site, from whence it drained to the south, but a deep ditch has been dug to divert the water from the field to alongside the road (Plate 1). This suggests that the earlier channel may have flowed until the post-medieval period. This seasonal watercourse, now diverted, once fed a pond at Longmore Hill Farm; the 'long mere' from which the place-name undoubtedly originated (Hemmingway and Dinn 1992). The point at which it crossed the B4194 on the south-west side of the site is indicated by an extant depression in the road (Plate 3). Two small pools are evident on the Tithe plan (Fig 4) just south of the road junction, indicating the point at which the watercourse once ran.

The palaeochannel shows up clearly on aerial photographs (for instance Google Earth and UK Aerial Photos) as vigorous crop growth along the watercourse, but also as a lack of crop at the centre of the streambed and at its source, caused by excessive seasonal waterlogging and localised flooding. A wide cropmark on a post WWII aerial photograph (UK Aerial Photograph 2011) may be related to the palaeochannel or perhaps a geological phenomenon.

3.3.2 Prehistoric

Archaeological salvage recording was conducted along the route of the Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct in 1991, and again in 1994 on the Astley to Worcester Aqueduct (WSM 29962 and 30019). Figure 2 shows the route of these works, and the fields within which archaeological artefacts were recovered. The fields shaded in purple indicate the presence of prehistoric artefacts (Appendix 1). Struck flints were recovered from west and north-west of the study site, with burnt flint also from a separate watching brief to the south (WSM 35968). Record was also made of undated pottery which, to err on the side of caution, is presumed as prehistoric, given its association with prehistoric flints.

Archaeological excavation was undertaken at Longmore Hill Farm in 1991 (WSM 11093 and 34780). A late Neolithic pit and two associated possible postholes were found on the western bank of the seasonal watercourse that feeds from the study site, only 200m away. The pit was broad (2.4m by 1.6m), but only 0.3m deep and contained a large assemblage of pottery, burnt and struck flint, and a hammerstone. Charcoal-rich sandy fills incorporated the burnt remains of hazelnut shells, grain (emmer), and small fragments of animal bone (Hemmingway and Dinn 1992).

A potentially contemporary Neolithic flint axe or pick (WSM 02217) from the south of the HER search was found within an ornamental pond setting and cannot be assumed to have originated locally.

Larford Farm, to the north-east of the study area (Fig 2; WSM 34721), saw excavations from 1956 to 1958 prior to gravel extraction. Archaeological remains were known to exist here, having been previously identified on aerial photographs (WSM 08071; AS 46, 47, 50 and 52). A round barrow dating from the Bronze Age was excavated in 1958 (Green 1961). Iron Age occupation was also found, including a circular building platform with evidence for a turf-built hut. Fire pits were excavated, with one carefully laid example preserving a pot still resting on the stones.

Between the Larford site and Astley Cross are undulating arable fields that have revealed cropmarks, including a double ditched trackway of unknown, but probable prehistoric date (WSM 15928).

3.3.3 Romano-British

Larford Farm was also the site of Romano-British settlement. Four phases of enclosure were identified (Walker 1958 and 1959) with a large pottery assemblage from more than 600 vessels. Most remarkably, a well more than 22m deep and dating from the late 4th century was excavated, recovering a wide range of waterlogged finds. The settlement appeared to be a small, low status farming community constructed of timber framed buildings. Further cropmarks nearby (WSM 08070) are thought to represent an enclosure and two buildings dating from the Roman period, approximately 200m from the study site.

A cropmark was observed within the proposed development area towards the west of the larger field (Plate 5). Aligned roughly north-west to south-east, it may form part of a wider network of Romano-British field systems, although this dating is of course speculative.

3.3.4 Medieval

No events or monuments attributable to the medieval period have yet been identified within the study area. This does not, however, preclude human activity here at this time. The site of Astley Priory lies only 1.5km to the south-west and is surrounded by a small cluster of medieval and post-medieval heritage assets. The B4194 is the old road from Bewdley to Worcester; two important medieval centres, and to the north of the study area, Redstone Road leads to an historically important crossing point of the Severn; close to sandstone caves that once served as hermitages.

The HER search did include finds of a medieval stirrup terminal and medieval coins (WSM38451 and WSM40480), but their origin is recorded as non-specific within the Parish of Stourport.

3.3.5 **Post-medieval and modern**

Post-medieval pottery has been recorded from many of the fields around the site (Appendix 1; WSM 20801 and 39585). Several post-medieval buildings are also listed, including the site of the pound (WSM 34524), and The King's Arms (WSM 34635) and Astley Cross (WSM 34864) public houses, both dating from the 19th century. Two 19th century churches are also noted; the 'tin tabernacle' Astley Methodist church (WSM 15041) and the site of St Luke's Church, adjacent to the study site, which had a short life span from its construction in 1900 to its demolition in the 1980s (WSM 05436).

Milestone

The milestone marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884 (and current edition) still stands (Fig 3; Plate 6; AHA 003). It marks 11 miles to Worcester Cross, on the Bewdley to Worcester road. From 1767, milestones were compulsory on all turnpikes (The Milestone Society 2011), and as such the monument signifies an historically important route which has become somewhat marginalised in recent years.

Enclosure

The site formed part of a larger common field system during the medieval and post-medieval periods. The B4196 along this stretch is called Areley Common, and the two fields within the site were recorded as Syntley Common Piece (Field 421; to the north) and Sintley (sic) Common Field (Field 422; to the south) on the Tithe Plan of 1840 (Fig 4). Syntley Farm still exists 750m to the southwest of the site; shown as a large farm complex on the Tithe Plan.

The cartographic evidence indicates that the majority of the surrounding area was subject to enclosure up to and including the 18th century. The slightly sinuous boundaries of, for instance, Bentley's Pool Piece (Field 377, Figure 4), are typical of this piecemeal enclosure of open field or strip farming. The fields of the study site, however, were subject to Parliamentary enclosure in 1811; reflecting a national peak during the Napoleonic War years (Williamson 2002, 108). At this time, the land was referred to as Astley Common; incorporating several fields beyond the triangular plot in question. The rights of 'several commons, or waste lands, were... suspended and extinguished' by the Inclosure Act for Astley (CRO ref. 705:550, BA 4600/708), including Astley Common and land at Longmore Hill.

Post-medieval settlement

The site was surrounded by scattered agrarian settlement towards the end of the post-medieval period, as evident on the Tithe plan of 1840 (Fig 4). Three historic farms in the area, including Peacock Farm to the west of the site, are noted within the HER Historic Farmsteads Project but remain as undesignated heritage assets. The smithy was located close to a source of water from the small ponds highlighted on Figure 4; where the palaeochannel was crossed by the road. To the north of the site, a cluster of houses and gardens along Kings Arms Lane formed the precursor for the development of this area in the latter part of the 20th century. Throughout these periods, no settlement appears to have encroached onto the proposed site.

3.4 **Potential heritage assets**

The above evidence provides a basis for inferring whether heritage assets in the form of archaeological deposits may exist on the site.

Prehistoric settlement and activity are widely distributed across this landscape. The nearby gravel terraces reveal cropmarks more readily than sandstone geology, and are also more likely to have been subject to archaeological investigation due to quarrying. Nevertheless the rolling hills that rise from the third gravel terrace in this area saw wide activity from the Mesolithic into the Romano-British period (pers comm Robin Jackson). The likelihood of prehistoric remains existing is increased by the presence of the palaeochannel that runs through the middle of the site and would naturally have attracted human activity. The Neolithic pit at Longmore Hill Farm was on the bank of the same stream (Plate 8), and perhaps gives the clearest indication of the likelihood for archaeological deposits within the study site.

The potential for finding prehistoric archaeology on this site is therefore considered to be high. A wide date range of prehistoric archaeological remains is also quite possible since the site occupies an intermediate zone between steep slopes to the west which were more heavily utilised during the Mesolithic into the Neolithic periods, while the well-drained gravel terraces to the east saw increased activity as farming practices took over and settlement became more permanent during later prehistory and onwards.

The potential for finding archaeological remains dating from the Romano-British period is also thought to be high, given the nearby evidence for enclosures and settlement dating from this period.

The potential for finding archaeological deposits post-dating the Romano-British period is thought to be low. The land appears to have stood as common grazing throughout the medieval period, and has seen no significant development since. The position of the site on a relatively important historic road may have brought about some isolated roadside activity or deposition, but thought to be of limited significance if present.

4. Summary of significance

4.1 Designated heritage assets

There are no designated heritage assets within the proposed development area. There are, however, two Grade II listed buildings at Longmore Hill Farm, 400m southeast of the site.

4.2 Assessment of significance

The desk-based assessment has provided evidence that the application site lies within an area of archaeological interest. As a result, an assessment of the significance of this landscape can be made in terms of the nature, importance and extent of the archaeological interest. Elements of the landscape form part of the intrinsic character and heritage of a region. Characterisation projects go some way to identify these, but it is only through targeted work such as this that details of the landscape can realistically be considered, and previously unidentified heritage assets be noted.

Nature of the archaeological interest in the site

It has already been noted that the potential for prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology on this site is considered to be **high**. Any such features are likely to have survived well since there appears to have been little activity in the intervening years to disturb them. Although similarly subject to modern ploughing, the fields at Longmore Hill Farm yielded *in situ* archaeological deposits. It is reasonable to presume similar levels of preservation at the proposed development site.

It is thought likely that the site will reveal a **low to medium density** of isolated cut features such as pits and postholes, whilst a cropmark observed during the site visit (Plate 5) is perhaps indicative of a ditch. A substantial east-west aligned cropmark on a Post WWII aerial photograph (UK Aerial Photograph, 2011) may possibly indicate a significant archaeological feature. Less likely, but more significant, is the potential for uncovering an early prehistoric, perhaps Mesolithic, flint scatter; not unreasonable given the presence of Mesolithic activity around these hills. It is also quite possible that Bronze Age burnt mounds may be found; a feature characterised by large concentrations of burnt stone, left waste after the heating of water. These are typically found in association with palaeochannels such as that which exists on the present site.

The archaeological deposits at Longmore Hill Farm were sand-rich and un-waterlogged; signifying an acidic and well drained environment in which bone and organic material seldom survive. Nevertheless, pottery and burnt material (including palaeoenvironmental remains) did survive, aiding the dating and analysis of archaeological features. Alluvium does not appear to have been widely deposited by the stream which, close to its source, would have flowed at a gradient and energy not conducive to flood-plain deposition. During the site visit, a large upturned tree was observed directly in the course of the palaeochannel. The soil attached to the root bole was a fine sandy silt, supporting this assertion.

It is relevant for any future archaeological work that Hemmingway and Dinn (1992) commented on how the site at Longmore Hill Farm 'would not have been discovered if the fieldwork strategy had not involved the frequent revisiting of stripped areas to take advantage of the optimum conditions'; indicating the deposits to be hard to discern without suitable 'weathering'.

Relative importance of the archaeological interest in the site

Of all the prehistoric periods that have the potential of being represented on this site, the Mesolithic holds the most compelling case for importance and research. In a recent publication outlining frameworks for archaeological research in the West Midlands, Garwood (2011) highlights the Mesolithic as perhaps the least understood of the earlier prehistoric periods, affording it clear research priorities.

Excavations at Longmore Hill Farm confirmed the presence of late Neolithic activity in the immediate vicinity. Many research objectives regarding the later Neolithic concern the ceremonial landscapes and monumentality of this period; however this site does not appear to have the potential for such remains. Lower status evidence, such as the pit seen at Longmore, is considered more likely. Garwood (2011, 59) suggests that in the absence of a monumental focus, pits are perhaps *the* defining feature of the Neolithic. He states that, 'detailed contextual and comparative analyses of pits and their landscape settings should be undertaken with great care wherever such evidence is encountered'. These unassuming features are relatively rare and hold the potential for landscape and environmental research, allowing insight into the changing nature of settlement and the impact of late Neolithic communities on their environment via increasingly widespread and sustained woodland clearance and cereal cultivation.

A Bronze Age barrow was excavated at nearby Larford Farm in 1958. Any further evidence of Bronze Age activity from the study site would add to the wider understanding of the landscape in which this monument was constructed. It was suggested above that this site appears typical for the situation of a Bronze Age burnt mound. A distribution map of such features in the West Midlands, by Hurst (2011), depicts markedly fewer burnt mounds in Worcestershire than in all the surrounding counties, highlighting the rarity of this potential heritage asset.

The relatively low status Iron Age and Romano-British enclosure and settlement at Larford Farm was well characterised during its excavation in the 1950s. Further evidence from the study site is likely to be on a par, however recent research frameworks (Hurst 2011; Esmonde Cleary 2011) particularly highlight the need for more environmental research, and it is perhaps in this regard that any Iron Age and Romano-British archaeological remains hold the more importance.

This site has the potential for archaeology from all periods of prehistory (except from the highly unlikely but unpredictable Palaeolithic). These various periods, including also the Romano-British, hold the potential for archaeology of **moderate** or perhaps even **high** importance. If several of these periods were to be represented, the site itself would hold further significance for its window on changing land-use. Unfortunately, until the true nature of the archaeological deposits is known through further investigation, there can be comparatively little certainty about the importance of the site.

Physical extent of the archaeological interest in the site

None of the surrounding archaeological sites have revealed a dense concentration of features, and it is thought that the concentration here will be a **low** to **moderate** coverage of prehistoric and Romano-British deposits. The archaeological interest in the area expands beyond the site boundaries comprising the entire landscape which, having been largely untouched throughout recorded history, has the potential to reveal a well preserved and understood landscape. The survival of archaeological deposits is expected to be good. It is not certain at what depth significant deposits have been preserved, although it is conjectured that they are thinly buried beneath the ground surface. It is also possible that they will be masked by colluvial (hill wash) deposits.

4.3 **Hedgerows**

The hedgerows within and around the two fields in the proposed development are not classified as 'Important' according to the archaeological and historical criteria set out by the *Hedgerow Regulations* 1997. The criteria state that the hedgerow should have existed for more than 30 years, but also that they hold further heritage interest through having been, for example, a parish boundary pre-1850.

The thin, straight, well-laid, mature hawthorn hedge that divides the two fields (Fig 1; Plate 7) is typical of planned parliamentary enclosure, and could almost have inspired Rackham's (1976, 17) description of the same. Although having stood for more than 30 years, neither this, nor the rather patchy hawthorn and elder hedgerow that marks the perimeter of the site, fulfil any of the further criteria of the *Hedgerow Regulations* (1997).

5. **The potential impact of the application**

The study site is being considered for residential development. At present the layout is unknown, so the full impact is hard to assess. Nevertheless, there is high potential here for heritage assets in the form of archaeological deposits, and these may be only a shallow depth beneath the current ground surface. It is therefore considered that any intrusive groundworks have the potential to impact detrimentally on archaeological deposits.

As an additional note, the milestone (which is not strictly within the study area) may be threatened by large scale development in close proximity, and should be protected during these works to ensure its preservation.

6. **Recommendation for further on-site evaluation**

The desk-based assessment has achieved a better understanding of this site; identifying the potential for heritage assets of an archaeological nature and indicating that these are likely to be affected by development. There is, however, insufficient knowledge of these deposits to properly assess the archaeological interest in the site, or to confidently predict the impact of any development upon them. Planning Policy Statement 5 (DCLG, 2010; Policy HE6.1) states that in this instance, a field evaluation would be required by the planning authority before an application is approved.

In the recently published frameworks for archaeological research in the West Midlands, Hurst (2011, 120) recommends a 6 to 10% sample area for suspected prehistoric sites. Ideally, given Hemmingway and Dinn's (1992) observations at Longmore Hill Farm, these trenches would also be afforded some days to weather before concluding the results of the evaluation. An evaluation may lead to appropriate mitigation of the archaeological resource, such as an excavation or watching brief. The scope and specification of mitigation works should be agreed with the Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council. Any required archaeological investigations would be concluded by the production of an archaeological report to be deposited for public consultation with the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER), a project archive to be deposited at a local museum, and appropriate publication potentially within an archaeological journal.

7. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service 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.

A desk-based assessment was undertaken on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (Midland) of Common Side, Astley Cross, Stourport, Worcestershire (centred on NGR SO 802 693; HER ref WSM 45753)

The site occupies a triangular parcel of land at the junction between Pearl Lane (the B4194) and Areley Common (the B4196), from which no archaeological activity has yet been recorded. Nevertheless, excavations in the immediate vicinity reveal the site to lie within a

complex prehistoric landscape utilised from the Mesolithic to the Romano-British period. A palaeochannel marks the course of a small stream which once flowed across the site from its source in the north-east corner towards a pool at Longmore Hill Farm, the nearby site of a finds-rich late Neolithic pit. This stream follows a valley between rolling hills upon which a Bronze Age round barrow, and Iron Age and Romano-British settlement and enclosure have been identified and excavated. The stream is thought likely to have attracted activity from these communities, each of which may have left its mark in the archaeological record.

Whilst Redstone Road to the north, and the B4194, are known to have been important roads during the medieval period, no associated archaeological evidence is expected within the study site as the settlement focus and medieval priory were located some distance away at Astley. The site lay within a larger common field system during the medieval and post medieval periods, enclosed only in 1811 by a Parliamentary Act. Since this time, the site has been subject to arable farming which is thought to have had minimal impact upon the potential underlying archaeology.

8. **Acknowledgements**

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Alan Jarvis (Taylor Wimpey, Midlands) and Mike Glyde (Historic Environment Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council).

9. **Personnel**

The assessment was undertaken by Fiona Keith-Lucas. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Vaughan. Illustrations were prepared by Laura Templeton and Carolyn Hunt.

Appendix 1

Heritage assets registered with the Historic Environment Record

(Negative results have not been included on Figure 2 but are included in the table below)

HER No. (+ legal status)	Site name	NGR (SO)	Record type	Date	Description
WSM 02217	Flint axe / pick at 2 Ridleys Cross, Astley	80179 68701	Find spot	-4000 to -2351	Not in situ. Provenance unknown
WSM 05436	St Luke's Church	80300 69290	Monument	1900 to 1999	Church, now demolished
WSM 05438	Longmore Hill Farm	80512 68795	Building	1600 -	Extant 17 th century timber-framed farmhouse, Grade II listed # 152289.
WSM 08070	Enclosure and buildings, Larford	80382 69706	Monument	43 to 410	Enclosure and two buildings on aerial photograph; AS 55
WSM 08071	Romano-British Farmstead, Larford	80836 69585	Monument	43 to 410	Crop mark and excavation of Romano-British farm; AS 46, 47, 50, 52
WSM 08072	Iron Age Occupation, Larford, Astley	80744 69625	Occupation site	-800 to 42	Excavations found limited Iron Age activity
WSM 11087	Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct (1991)	79650 69800	Event	-10000 to -801	6 flaked stone with undated pot, slag, iron
WSM 11088	Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct (1991)	79661 69478	Event	-10000 to -801	1 flaked stone with 3 pieces of undated pot
WSM 11089	Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct (1991)	79850 69400	Event	-10000 to -801	Stone flake
WSM 11090	Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct (1991)	79918 69220	Event	undated	Single pottery sherd
WSM 11092	Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct (1991)	80057 69072	Event	undated	Two pottery sherds
WSM 11093 (also WSM 34780)	Late Neolithic to Bronze Age occupation site	80459 68814	Monument	-2700 to -1601	Single late neolithic pit + 2 possible postholes. Large pottery & flint assemblage
WSM 11094	Astley Waterworks	80337 68744	Negative result	N/A	N/A
WSM 15041	Church, Areley Common	80171 69705	Building	1540 to 1900	19 th century Methodist church of corrugated iron
WSM 15928	Cropmarks, SE of Astley Cross	80400 69500	Trackway	undated	Double ditch line with associated features
WSM 20800	Astley to Worcester Aqueduct (1994)	80330 68733	Negative result	N/A	N/A

HER No. (+ legal status)	Site name	NGR (SO)	Record type	Date	Description
WSM 20801	Astley to Worcester Aqueduct (1994)	80501 68668	Find spot	1540 to 1899	Small quantity of post medieval pottery
WSM 23369	Stables, Longmore Hill Farm, Astley	80507 68841	Building	1800 -	Dovecote, cowhouse and stables, Grade II listed # 152290.
WSM 29099	Evaluation in 1997 at Redstone Lane	80581 69849	Plough marks	1800 to 1899	10 trenches, all finds post-1800
WSM 29696	Astley Pumping Station (1995)	80364 68771	Negative result	N/A	N/A
WSM 29962	Blackstone to Astley Aqueduct (1991)	79341 71630	N/A	N/A	Generic reference no for all 1991 work
WSM 30019	Astley to Worcester Aqueduct (1994)	84971 60976	N/A	N/A	Generic reference no for all 1994 work
WSM 30337	General parish information	81118 71623	N/A	1880 to 1999	Photographs of Stourport and brief history
WSM 30039	Evaluation in 1999 at Little Heath Cottage	80306 68840	Find spot	1700 to 1799	Two sherds of post medieval pottery
WSM 32579 (also WSM 32583)	Unstratified finds at the Orchard (2003)	79981 68757	Event	1540 to 1899	Large collection of surface finds. Slip and black glazed wares
WSM 34524	Site of pound, Astley	80342 69780	Monument	1540 to 1900	Site of village pound. Conjectural dates given.
WSM 34635	Kings Arms Public House, Astley	80029 69621	Building	1840 -	Pub on OS 1 st Edition
WSM 34721 (includes WSM 08071 WSM 08072 WSM 08073)	Excavations in 1956-58, Larford Farm	80744 69625	Monument	-800 to 410	Romano-British farmstead, round barrow, Iron Age occupation. Deep Roman well, good finds assemblage
WSM 34780	Excavation west of Longmore Hill Farm	80459 68814	Pit	-2700 to -801	Single late Neolithic pit + 2 possible postholes. Large pottery & flint assemblage
WSM 34864	Astley Cross Inn	80146 69669	Building	1840 -	Pub of 1840, first called The Cross
WSM 35968	Watching brief at Redacre House, 2006	80235 68767	Event	-4000 to -2351	Single burnt stone
WSM 38451	Portable Antiquities Scheme, Astley	79305 68902	Event	-4000 to -2351; 1066 to 1539	Unstratified knapped flint flake; unstratified medieval stirrup terminal.
WSM 39585	Portable Antiquities Scheme, Astley	81118 71623	Event	1540 to 1899	Assemblage of slip ware pottery

HER No. (+ legal status)	Site name	NGR (SO)	Record type	Date	Description
WSM 40480	Unlocated finds from parish of Stourport	81118 71623	Find	1216 to 1272; 1558 to 1603	Henry III cut silver halfpenny; Elizabeth I silver 3d. Also 2 copper jetons from Nuremburg
WSM 40808	Watching brief, 2009, Longmore Hill Farm	80451 68673	Negative result	N/A	N/A
WSM 41588	General parish info	79305 68902	Event	1540 to 1899	Mick Aston archive; Notes on the history of Astley
WSM 42346	General parish info	79305 68902	Find spot	1540 to 1899	Gold inscribed mourning ring

Appendix 2 Additional heritage assets identified by the desk-based assessment (Fig 3)

Additional heritage asset	Site name	NGR (SO)	Source	Date	Description
AHA 001	Common Side, Astley Cross	8023 6938	Site visit	undated	Palaeochannel, aligned north-east to south-west
AHA 002	Common Side, Astley Cross	8017 6930	Site visit	undated	Linear cropmark, aligned north-west to south-east
AHA 003	B4194, Astley Cross	8016 6912	Site visit	18-19 th C	Milestone

Plates



Plate 1: View across the study site looking south-west from the north-east corner. The palaeochannel shows as a line through the wheat, with the bramble-filled ditch into which the stream has been diverted evident in the foreground.



Plate 2: Grassland and a corrugated iron shed in the lower field, looking east. The different vegetation in the foreground signifies the lower, more waterlogged, course of the palaeochannel.



Plate 3: A dip in the B4194 shows the course of the palaeochannel, looking north



Plate 4: Grass and wheat grown on the rolling hills of the site, looking north.



Plate 5: Linear cropmark, on the west side of the north field, looking north-east.



Plate 6: The overgrown milestone on the B4194

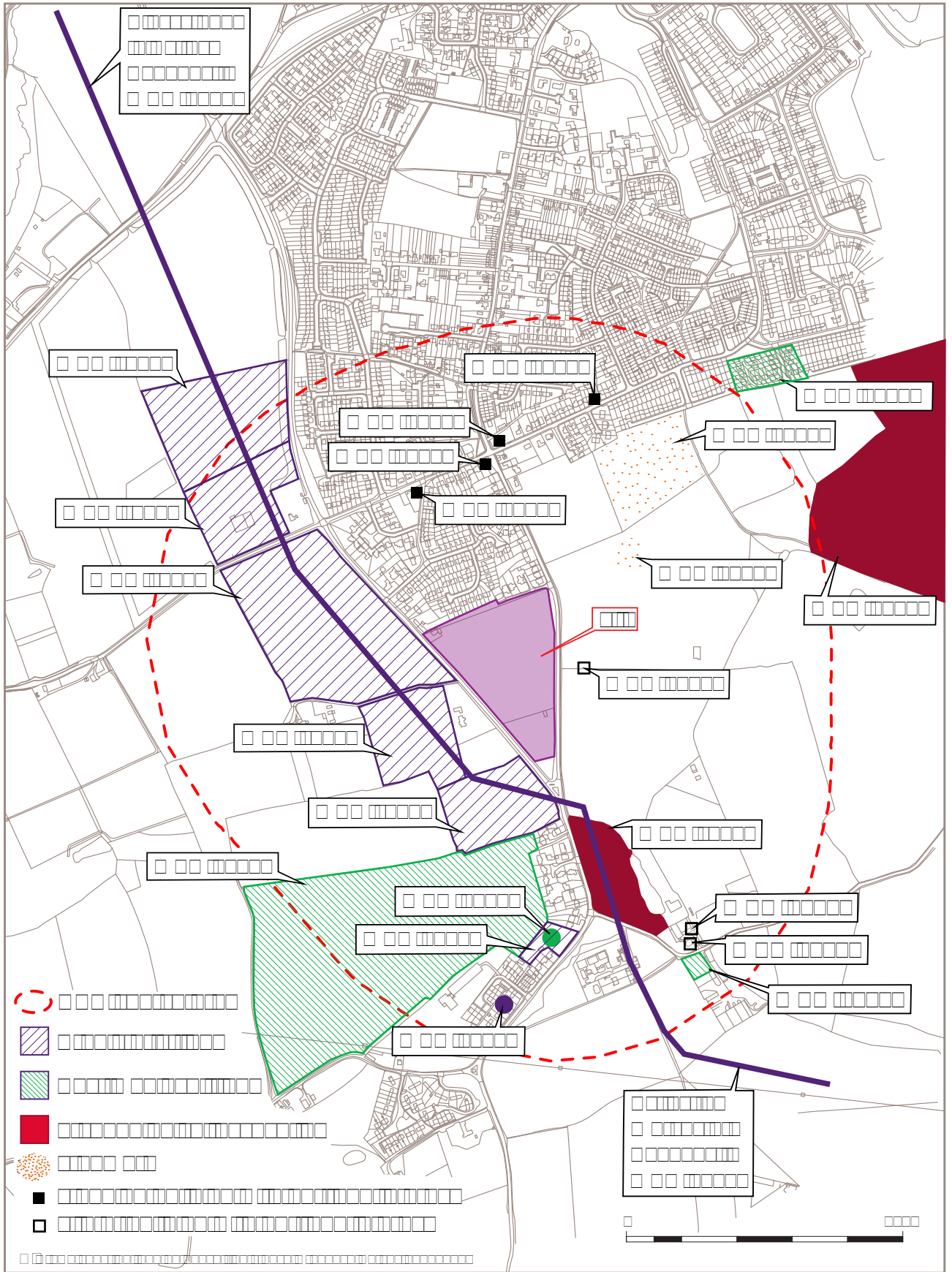


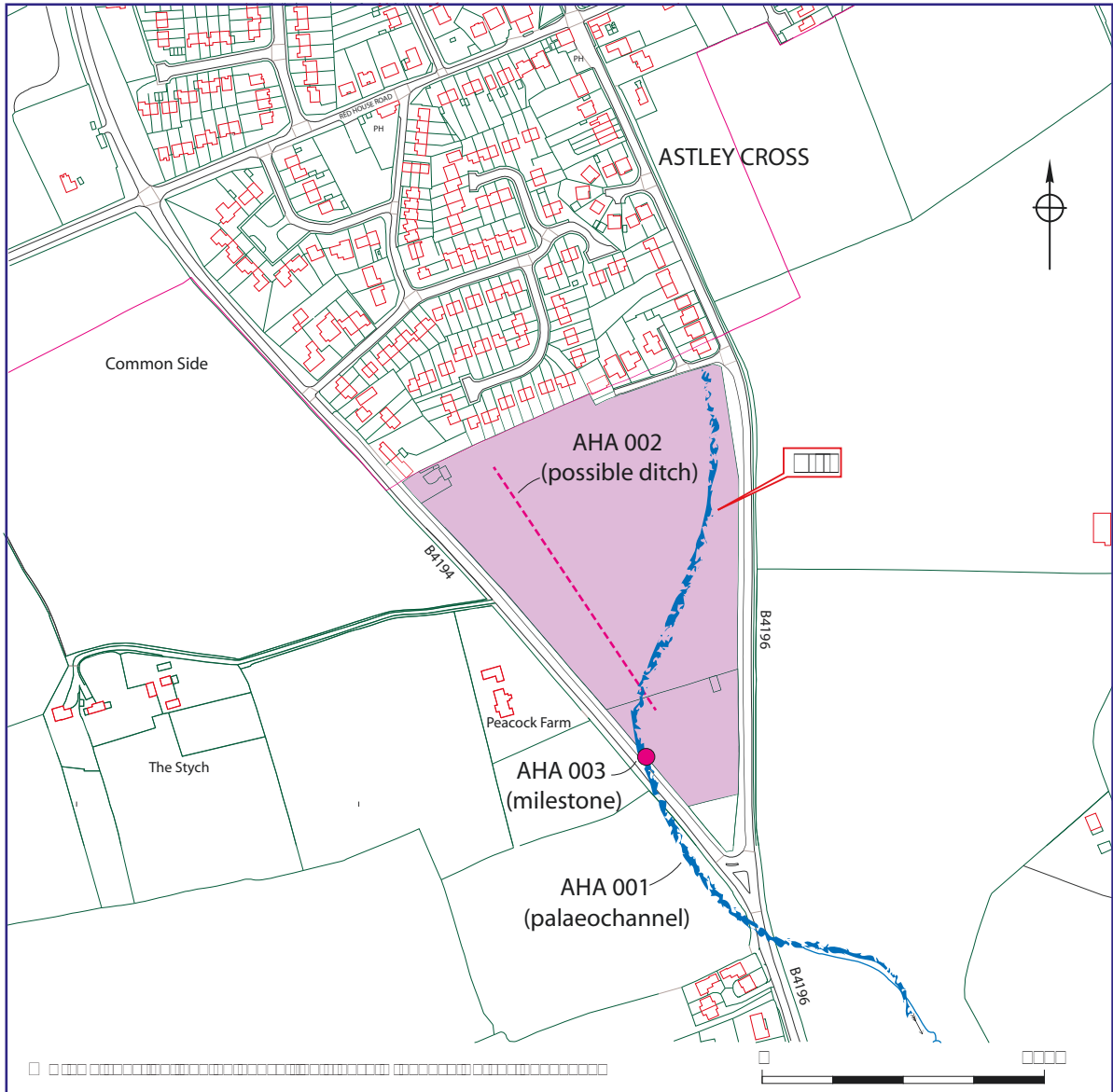
Plate 7: The thin hawthorn hedgerow typical of Parliamentary enclosure, looking east from the south of the upper field.



Plate 8: View from the location of the late Neolithic pit at Longmore Hill Farm, looking north towards the road junction.

Figures







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