

Archaeological watching brief at Persnore Road, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire



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Status: Version 1
Date: 31 October 2016
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Project reference: P4216
Report reference: 2390
HER reference: WSM68017
Oasis id: Field-sec 1265980

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Archaeological watching brief at Pershore Road, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire

Simon Woodiwiss

With contributions by Robert Hedge, Elizabeth Pearson

Illustrations by Laura Templeton

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Pershore Road, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 02160 42953). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting whose client (Bellway Homes) intends residential development for which a planning application has been approved by Wychavon District Council (reference W/12/02490, W/15/02705).

Within the area investigated there is nothing that would indicate there is an archaeological site of any considerable interest. The only artefacts recovered were a single sherd of post-medieval pottery and a hand-made nail of similar date. A sample taken for the extraction of carbonised plant remains is likely to be modern in date.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

A watching brief was undertaken at Pershore Road, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 02160 42953; Fig 1). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting whose client (Bellway Homes) intends residential development for which a planning application has been approved by Wychavon District Council (reference W/12/02490, W/15/02705).

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

The project conforms to a specification (CgMs 2013).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), and *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the Historic Environment Record is WSM68017.

2 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were

- To determine the presence, or otherwise, of buried remains of archaeological interest within the development area.
- To preserve by record any significant archaeological remains within the development area and to attempt a reconstruction of the history and use of the site.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was led and fieldwork undertaken by Simon Woodiwiss (BA; MCIfA). Illustrations were prepared by Laura Templeton (BA; PG Cert; MCIfA). Elizabeth Pearson (MSc; ACIfA) contributed the environmental report and Adrian Robins processed the sample, Robert Hedge (MA Cantab) contributed the finds report.

3.2 Documentary research

A desk-based assessment (Robson-Glyde 2010) included the area of the residential development. The assessment identified the evidence for ridge and furrow, within an area of archaeological potential (Robson-Glyde 2010, fig 7). The potential was expressed as moderate for deposits of significant deposits of Roman date and lower for deposits of prehistoric or Anglo-Saxon date (Robson-Glyde 2010, 7). A geophysical survey was also undertaken (Stephens 2012) and this identified that the area of the development was affected by magnetic disturbance perhaps associated with the deposition of nightsoil.

3.3 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2016). Fieldwork was undertaken between 26 and 28 September 2016. The site reference number used in the project archive is WSM 68017 and was issued by the Historic Environment Record for Worcestershire.

The watching brief focussed on house plots 107 (for house type S06), 108 (Ashbourne), 109 (Ashbourne), 110 (Buxton) and 111 (Bidford).

The foundation trenches were excavated using a 360° tracked 13 tonne 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). The clay soils did mean that the sides and base of the trench did tend to be smeared, but careful observation was made throughout trench excavation and selected areas cleaned where considered appropriate.

All foundation trenches were 0.6m wide and 0.5–0.9m deep.

Shortly after this watching brief was undertaken an evaluation was undertaken on the adjacent construction site to the north and south operated by Bloor Homes (Woodiwiss 2016). Individual reports were prepared for each client. Taken with the results from the evaluation of the Bloor site (grey/brown and medium brown clay), there is variation in the natural deposits across the development site.

3.4 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.

3.1 Artefact methodology, by Rob Hedge

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for finds work by ClfA (2014b), for archive creation by AAF (2011) and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

3.1.1 Recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2). Modern surface finds were not collected as preparatory groundworks had disturbed the area and there was a lot of construction debris at the surface.

3.1.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on *pro forma* sheets.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

3.1.3 Discard policy

The following categories/types of material will be discarded after a period of 6 months following the submission of this report, unless there is a specific request to retain them (and subject to the collection policy of the relevant depository):

- where unstratified,
- post-medieval material, and
- generally where material has been specifically assessed by an appropriate specialist as having no obvious grounds for retention.

See the environmental section for other discard where appropriate.

3.2 Environmental archaeology methodology, by Liz Pearson

3.2.1 Sampling policy

Samples were taken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (2014). A single sample of 1 litre was taken from a discreet feature (Table 1).

3.2.2 Processing and analysis

The samples were processed by flotation using a Siraf tank. The flots were collected on a 300µm sieve and the residue retained on a 1mm mesh. This allows for the recovery of items such as small animal bones, molluscs and seeds.

The residue was scanned by eye and the abundance of each category of environmental remains estimated. A magnet was also used to test for the presence of hammer scale. The flot was scanned using a low power MEIJI stereo light microscope and plant remains identified using modern reference collections maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology, and a seed identification manual (Cappers *et al* 2012). Nomenclature for the plant remains follows the *New flora of the British Isles* (Stace 2010).

3.2.3 Discard policy

Remaining sample material and scanned residues will be discarded after a period of 6 months following submission of this report unless there is a specific request to retain them.

3.3 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. The clay soils and tendency for surfaces to be smeared may have resulted in subtle differences that indicate the presence of archaeological deposits being missed but careful observation was maintained and especial care taken for indicators such as artefacts and charcoal (though the presence of manganese made the identification of charcoal less straightforward), which aimed to minimise missing anything of importance.

4 The application site

4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The geology of the site is interbedded mudstone and limestone of the Wilmcote Limestone member (BGS 2016). The soils consist of permeable clayey soils of the Evesham Association (Soil survey of England and Wales 1:50,000 map, sheet 150 and Ragg *et al* 1986).

4.2 Current land-use

The development site was formerly agricultural fields. The watching brief was undertaken well after construction had commenced and these were the last five plots to be built within this phase of development. The whole site had been subject to the removal of soils, which was understood to be aiming at removal of topsoil. The depth of soils removed was uncertain but the site manager reported this to be c 0.3 (Rob Gardiner pers comm).

5 Results

5.1 Structural analysis

The plots recorded are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1.

5.1.1 Natural

The observed natural consisted of a light brown clay (1072, 1082, 1092, 1102, 1111).

5.1.2 Post-medieval fields

Land drains (ceramic pipes) were observed in plots 110, 111 (1103 and 1112, external diameter 65–70mm, internal diameter 40–45mm) running approximately east to west.

The observed subsoils consisted of grey/brown clay, with moderate to frequent lias. Within plot 109 (eg Plate 1) the lias was frequent enough to suggest that this may have been part of a surface, however no edges could be identified that would lend confidence to this suggestion.

A darker, grey/brown clay, the remains of topsoil was observed in plot 107.

Within plot 111 a small patch of more frequent charcoal (300mm in width) within the clay was observed in section (Plate 2). Despite cleaning no cut for a pit was observed and a sample was taken.

5.1.3 Construction deposits

The upper level of the site consisted of subsoil mixed with construction related materials (hardcore, rubble etc).

5.2 Artefactual analysis, by Rob Hedge

The artefactual assemblage recovered was limited to two artefacts from plot 107.

- A corroded, hand-made iron nail (20g) from subsoil (1071), with square shank and rounded head indicating a pre-1800 date.
- A single abraded 61g base sherd of a large red sandy ware (fabric 78.1) pot from natural (1072), so likely to have been intrusive, with buff/red streaking in the fabric and a smooth, even glaze indicating a date in the latter part of the 17th–18th century range for this fabric.

Although it is difficult to determine a precise date for the nail, it is likely to be post-medieval. Both artefacts are therefore thought to comprise refuse incorporated into the site during 17th or 18th century agricultural or horticultural activity.

5.2.1 Discard and retention

The assemblage is not considered worthy of retention, although the final decision rests with Museums Worcestershire.

5.3 Environmental analysis, by Liz Pearson

The environmental evidence recovered is summarised in Tables 1–3.

| Context | Sample | Feature type | Fill of | Position of fill | Period | Sample volume (L) | Volume processed (L) | Residue assessed | Flot assessed |
|---------|--------|--------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 113 | 1 | Layer | N/A | N/A | undated | 1 | 1 | No | Yes |

Table 1: Bulk sample

| Context | Sample | Mollusc | Charcoal | Uncharred plant | Comments |
|---------|--------|---------|----------|-----------------|--|
| 113 | 1 | occ | abt | mod* | * = uncharred remains probably intrusive |

Table 2: Summary of environmental remains: occ = occasional; mod = moderate, abt = abundant

| Context | Sample | Preservation type | Species detail | Category remains | Quantity/diversity | Comment |
|---------|--------|-------------------|--|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 113 | 1 | ?wa* | <i>Avena sativa</i> grain & floret, Poaceae spp indet grain | grain | +/low | |
| 113 | 1 | ch | unidentified wood fragments | misc | +++/low | mostly tiny fragments |
| 113 | 1 | ?wa* | <i>Sonchus asper</i> | seed | +/low | |
| 113 | 1 | ?wa* | Cereal sp indet culm node, Poaceae sp indet stem frags | chaff | ++/low | |

Table 3: Plant remains from context 113

Key:

| Preservation | Quantity |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| ch = charred | + = 1 - 10 |
| min = mineralised | ++ = 11- 50 |
| wa = waterlogged | +++ = 51 - 100 |
| ?wa = waterlogged or uncharred | ++++ = 101+ |
| | * = probably intrusive |

Uncharred remains, consisting of mainly root fragments are assumed to be modern and intrusive as they are unlikely to have survived in the soils on site for long without charring or waterlogging. These include grain and florets of oat (*Avena* sp), grass/cereal culm nodes (straw fragments) and seeds of prickly sow thistle (*Sonchus asper*).

Only unidentified fragments of charcoal were potentially of any antiquity, although these were found in a context undated by artefacts, and are not suitable for radiocarbon dating. Occasional mollusc remains were recovered, but these were in poor condition and were not studied further. No further work is recommended on this material.

6 Synthesis

The condition and location of the finds suggests they were incorporated into the soils by agricultural or horticultural activity, probably relating to post-medieval settlement in nearby Hampton. Aside from the patch of charcoal and the land drains nothing of note was identified in the watching brief. Within the area investigated there is nothing that would indicate there is an archaeological site of any considerable interest.

7 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.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Pershore Road, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 02160 42953). It was commissioned by CgMs Consulting whose client (Bellway Homes) is constructing a residential development.

Within the area investigated there is nothing that would indicate there is an archaeological site of any considerable interest. The only artefacts recovered were a single sherd of post-medieval pottery and a hand-made nail of similar date.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Bellway Homes and particularly their staff and sub-contractors (Rob Gardiner site manager, and Pat the foreman), Paul Clark of CgMs, and Adrian Scruby of Worcestershire County Council.

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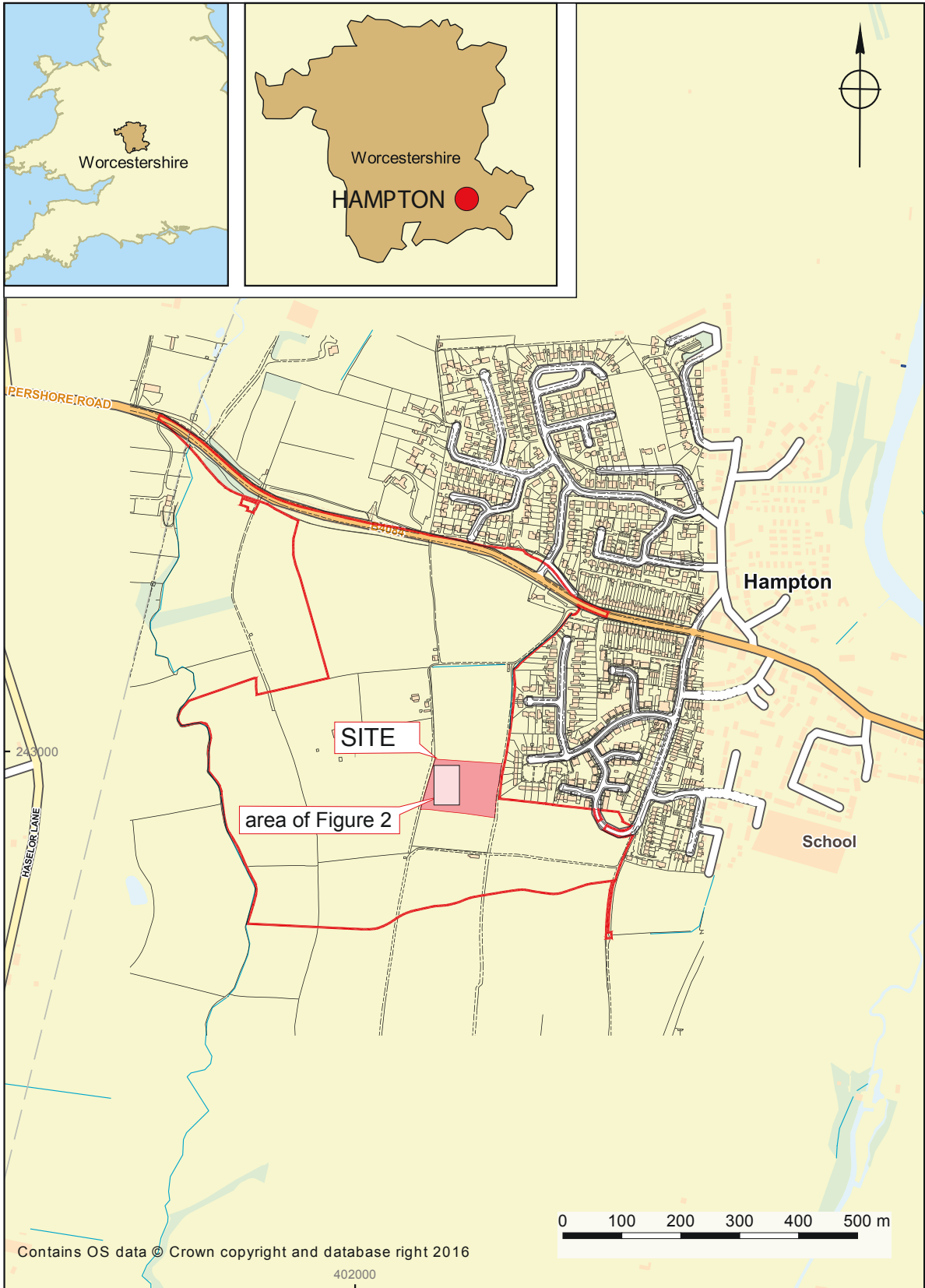
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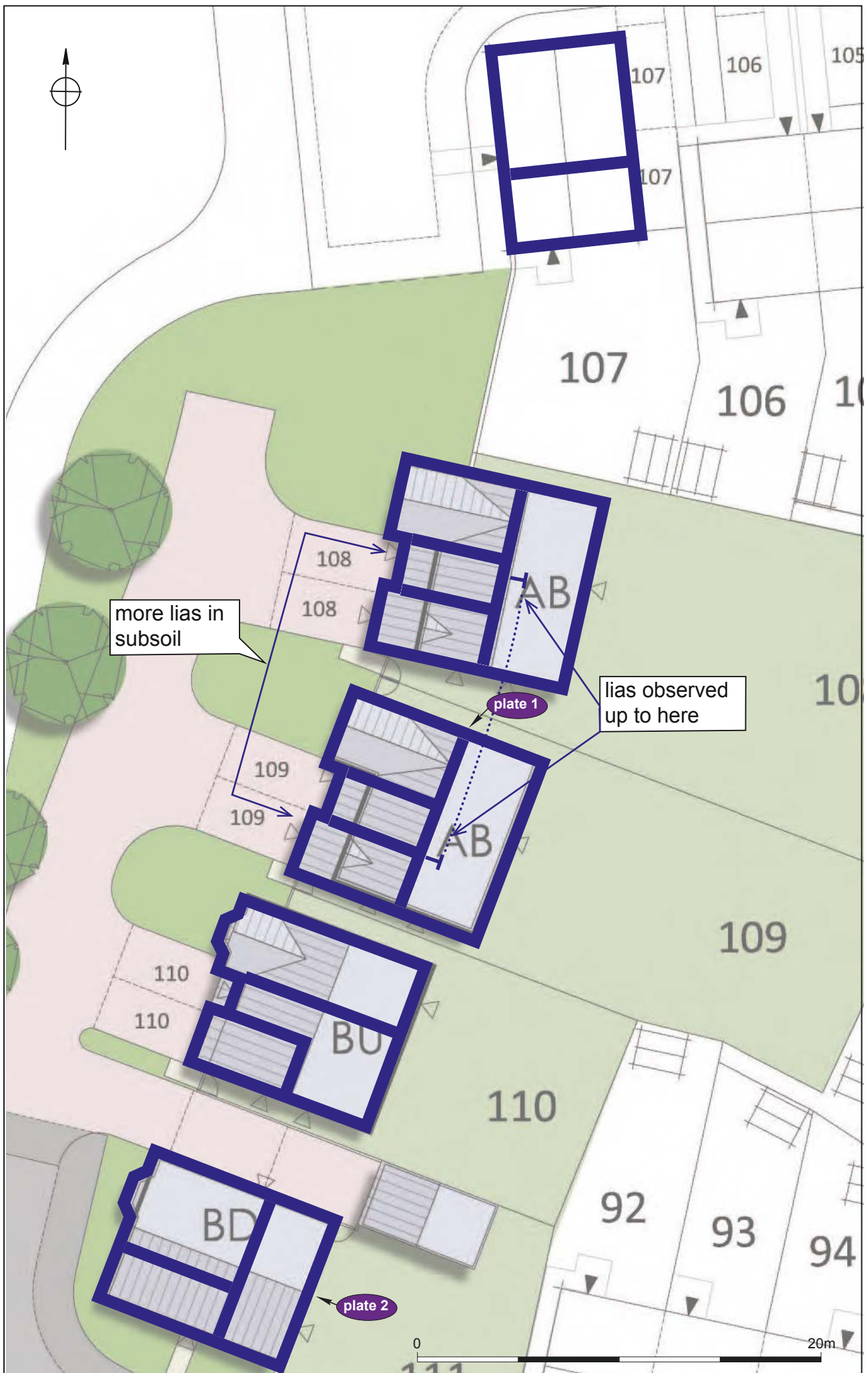
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



Trenches and observations

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1: Plot 109. Example of greater frequency of lias stones within subsoil, either natural variation or surface. Facing south-west

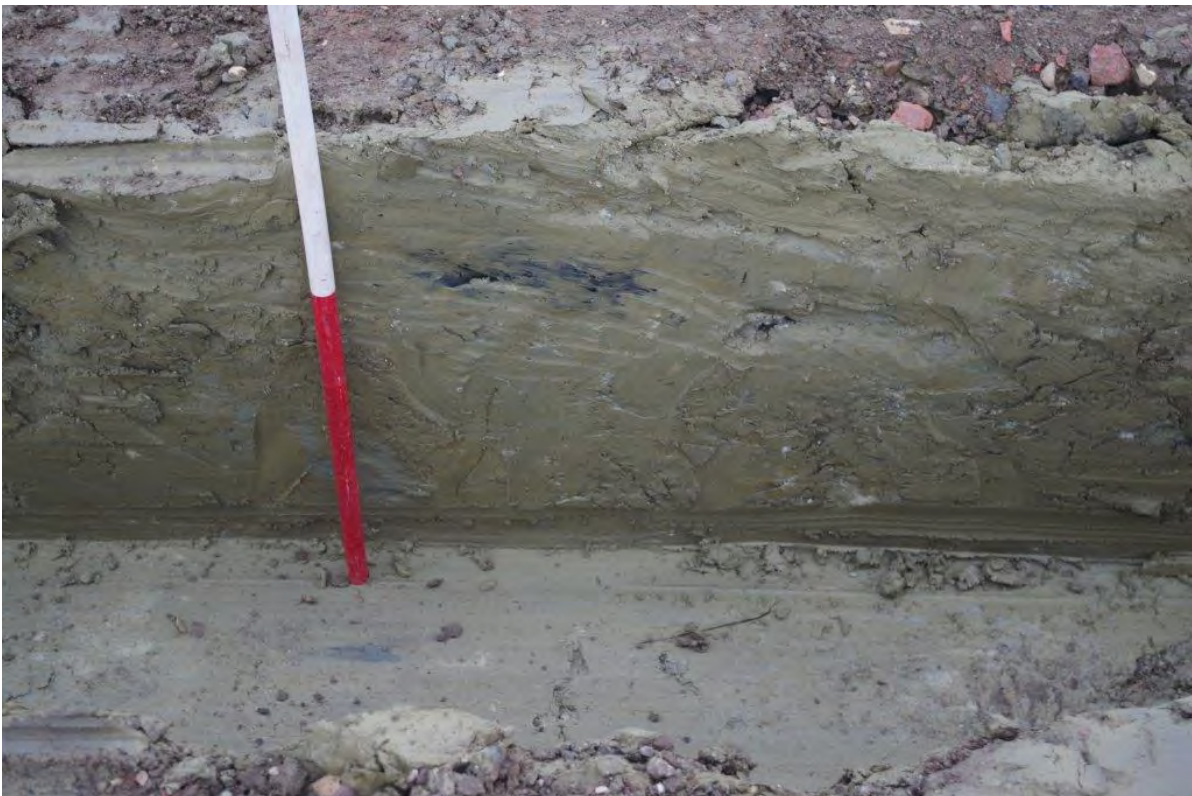


Plate 2: Plot 111. Patch of charcoal within subsoil. Facing west



Plate 3: Plot 107 (southern part of plot). Facing north-east



Plate 4: Plot 108 (western part of plot). Facing north-east



Plate 5: Plot 109 (western part of plot). Facing south-east



Plate 6: Plot 110 (eastern part of plot). Facing north-east



Plate 7: Plot 111 (eastern part of plot). Facing north

Appendix 1 Trench descriptions

Plot 107

Plot type: S06

Dimensions: Trench width: 600mm. Depth: 800mm

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 1071 | Subsoil | Grey/brown clay. Moderate stone. NB lighter grey/brown than other plots. Some of the darker topsoil appears at a high level. Iron nail. | 200-400mm |
| 1072 | Natural | Light brown clay. Occasional charcoal or manganese. | 400-800+mm |
| 1073 | Topsoil | Dark grey/brown clay. Moderate stone. | 0-200mm |

Plot 108

Plot type: Ashbourne

Dimensions: Trench width: 600mm. Depth: 500mm

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 1081 | Subsoil | Grey/brown clay. Frequent stone. NB Has a well-defined boundary with the natural, was observed to "peel off" natural. | 0-300mm |
| 1082 | Natural | Light brown clay. Occasional charcoal or manganese. | 300-500+mm |

Plot 109

Plot type: Ashbourne

Dimensions: Trench width: 600mm. Depth: 600mm

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 1091 | Subsoil | Grey/brown clay. From about 3m from south side this context has frequent stone (lias?) but difficult to define edges. | 0-400mm |
| 1072 | Natural | Light brown clay. Occasional charcoal or manganese. | 400-600+mm |

Plot 110

Plot type: Buxton

Dimensions: Trench width: 600mm. Depth: 900mm

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 1101 | Subsoil | Grey/brown clay. Charcoal/manganese flecks | 0-350mm |
| 1102 | Natural | Light brown clay. Occasional charcoal or manganese. | 350-900+mm |
| 1103 | | Occasional land drains as for plot 111 | |

Plot 111

Plot type: Bidford

Dimensions: Trench width: 600mm. Depth: 700mm

Main deposit description

| Context | Classification | Description | Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits |
|---------|----------------|--|---|
| 1111 | Natural | Light brown clay. Moderate stone. NB lighter grey/brown than other plots. Some of the darker topsoil appears at a high level. Iron nail. | 0-700+mm |
| 1112 | | Occasional land drains external diameter 65-70mm, internal diameter 40-45mm, aligned approx. east to west. | |
| 1113 | ?Feature fill | Small patch of charcoal. Cleaned up but could not identify a cut. Sample taken. | 100mm from surface, 300mm wide |

Appendix 2 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM68017)

The archive consists of:

- 2 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 23 Digital photographs
- 5 Trench record sheets AS41
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

Summary of data for Worcestershire HER WSM68017**Artefacts**

| Period - note 1 | Material class | Object specific type | Start date | End date | Count | Weight (g) | Specialist report? (note 2) | Key assemblage? (note 3) |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|--|---|
| Post- medieval | ceramic | pot | 1600 | 1800 | 1 | 61 | Y | N |
| Post- medieval | iron | nail | 1600 | 1800 | 1 | 20 | Y | N |
