

# Archaeological Watching Brief at Land to the north of Taylors Lane, Worcester, Worcestershire



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## **Archaeological Watching brief at Land north of Taylors Lane, Worcester, Worcestershire**

Graham Arnold

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

### **Summary**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at land north of Taylors Lane, Worcester, Worcestershire (NGR SO 86031 51807; WSM 69685). It was undertaken on behalf of Susana Parker, Waterman Group, whose client St Modwen Homes intend to develop the site for residential and mixed usage for which planning permission has been approved, subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

The site lies to the South of Worcester, bounded to the north by Broomhall Way (A4440) and to the south by Taylors Lane. Early prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman and Medieval heritage assets are recorded within 1km of the site.

Initial works on the site were required the excavation of Site Investigation pits. Liaison with Aidan Smyth of Malvern District Council confirmed that a watching brief was required. A Written Scheme of Investigation for the works was produced by Waterman Group and approved by Mr Smyth.

In total 45 trial pits, each 0.60m x 3.00m and at least 2.00m deep, were excavated over the site area of 19.2ha.

All recorded deposits were related to natural processes, with residual finds of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic pottery and ceramic building material recovered from the topsoil and subsoil, and rooting from hedgerows and the former orchard. The assemblage is typical of background scatter introduced to the site through a mixture of agricultural activity and casual domestic waste disposal, and no significant archaeology was recorded during the works. No evidence relating to the Iron Age and Roman settlement to the north of the site, or any later settlement activity was present during the works.

## Report

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Taylors Lane, Worcester (Centred on NGR SO 86031 51807). It was commissioned by Susana Parker, Waterman Group, whose client St Modwen Homes intends to develop the land for residential use for which a planning application has been submitted to Malvern Hills District Council (reference 13/01617/OUT), and approved subject to conditions including a programme of archaeological works.

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

A Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief was produced by (Waterman 2017 Group and approved by Aidan Smyth of Malvern District Council.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a).

### 2 Aims

The Written Scheme of Investigation stated that:

In general, the aims of the watching brief were:

- To record the nature of the main stratigraphic units encountered in terms of their physical composition (stone, sand, gravel, organic materials, etc.) and their archaeological formation (primary deposits, secondary deposits, etc.);
- To assess the overall presence and survival of structural remains relating to the main periods of occupation revealed and the potential for the recovery of additional structural information given the nature of the deposits encountered (e.g. extent of later disturbance, etc.);
- To assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of artefactual evidence (including pottery, brick, tile, stone, glass, metal, bone, small finds, industrial residues, etc.), its condition, given the nature of the deposits encountered; and
- To assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of ecofactual and environmental evidence (including animal bone, human bone, plant remains, pollen, charcoal, molluscs, soils, etc.), its condition and potential, given the nature of the deposits encountered.

More specific aims of the project were:

- To investigate the potential for assets dating from the Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval and post-medieval periods to exist beneath the ridge and furrow in the eastern field to be the subject of the ground investigation; and
- To investigate the potential for assets dating from the Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval and post-medieval periods to exist beneath the alluvium in the western field to be the subject of the ground investigation.

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## **3 Methods**

### **3.1 Personnel**

The project was led by Graham Arnold (BA (hons.), MSc), who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2009 and has been practicing archaeology since 2002. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA). Rob Hedge (MCant ) contributed the finds report.

### **3.2 Documentary research**

An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken by EDP (EDP 2012) on behalf of St Modwen Homes. This followed a geophysical survey (Archaeophysica 2013) which highlighted orchard bank earthworks, and an Environmental Impact Statement (Atkins 2013).

### **3.3 Fieldwork strategy**

Fieldwork was undertaken between 5 December 2017 and 7 December 2017. The site reference number used by the Historic Environment Record to record archaeological "events", and site code used in the archive is WSM 69635.

In total 45 Site Investigations Trial Pits, each 0.60m x 3.00m and at least 2.00m deep, were excavated over the site area of 19.2ha. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. 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).

### **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.

### **3.5 Artefact methodology**

#### **3.5.1 Artefact recovery policy**

Recovery of artefacts was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no artefacts pre-dating the modern period were identified. Residual material from the topsoil and subsoil related to agricultural cultivation of the site and the use of the eastern field as an orchard in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Ceramic land drains and undiagnostic ceramic building material were also noted from the subsoil.

### **3.6 Environmental archaeology methodology**

#### **3.6.1 Sampling policy**

Sampling was undertaken according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event no deposits were identified which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

### **3.7 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. No significant archaeology was observed in any of the site investigations.

## 4 The application site

### 4.1 Topography, geology and archaeological context

The topography, geology and archaeological context of the site is referred to in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the site (Waterman 2017). This is referred to below:

The underlying solid geology comprises Mercian Mudstone of the Sidmouth and Branscombe formations with superficial alluvial deposits in the western edge of the site.

A small watercourse runs adjacent to the western boundary of the site, with ponds located in the north-east of the site and also north east of Upper Broomhall Farm [MWR16568]. The site sits on relatively flat ground at 28 metres (m) Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the east, sloping gradually to approximately 25m AOD in the west where the watercourse runs. A topographical survey of the site was undertaken by the client prior to works (Waterman 2017).

The Site lies within 1 km of the River Severn corridor at Worcester. This corridor is characterised as having high potential for the survival of below ground features with Prehistoric and Romano-British settlements on the river terraces, and having a largely intact medieval settlement pattern.

The following archaeological and historical background, taken from the Environmental Statement (Atkins 2013) is summarised below:

- Prehistoric activity including a Mesolithic hunting camp ([MWR26120]. The site at Bath Road was active through the Late Iron Age with probable small to medium sized rural farmsteads identified through excavation [MWR27319] and the site carried on into the Roman period. A Roman road [MWR6553 & MWR26482], aligned north to south lies c.100 m west of the Site.
- Upper Broomhall Farm, immediately to the south of the site, may have Medieval origins, although the extant buildings are of post-Medieval date. The ridge and furrow within the Site [MWR8789], and that to the south of the farmstead [MWR8790], are closely associated with Upper Broomhall Farm, and testify to the longevity of farming at this location. There is some speculation, however, that the asset to the south of the farm may not be composed of features relating to medieval agriculture and could relate to the planting of an orchard in the 1920s to 30s.
- The first skirmish of the English Civil War took place on September 23rd 1642 at the site of Powick Bridge [MWR5627] c.1 km to the north-west of the Site. A small Parliamentary force failed in its attempt to raid a Royalist treasure caravan. Worcester eventually saw the English Civil War come full circle with the final battle taking place in 1651 to the north / north-west of the Site, on the north side of Broomhall Way [DWR6158]. This is now a Registered Battlefield. The area of the battlefield immediately to the north of the Site has already been developed. Other evidence associated with the battle is recorded at the sites of important river crossings [MWR-5628, 25361, & 25362].
- There are two undated assets recorded in the study area, an enclosure east of Middle Broomhall Farm [MWR531], and an enclosure and associated ridge and furrow north of Lower Broomhall Farm [MWR3141].

### 4.2 Current land-use

Both fields are currently under agricultural use. The eastern field was a former orchard, with earthwork banks from the rows of trees still visible, running north to south and some trees still on site. These are recorded on the magnetometer survey by Archaeophysica (Archaeophysica 2013). The western field was under pasture and previously sweetcorn crop, with former ponds in the north-west (TP40-42) and south-east (TP43-45) corners of site. An active badger sett was also noted in the northern part of the western field, and a sufficient boundary was observed regarding placement of trial holes under advice from the appointed ecological consultant.



## 5 Results

### 5.1 Structural analysis

The trenches and features recorded are shown in Figure 2. The ground level of each Trial Hole is also recorded in m AOD. Plates 1-8 show the site ground conditions and examples of the stratigraphy on site. The results of the structural analysis are presented below.

Maximum dimensions of trial holes: Length: 3.00m Width: 0.60m Depth: 2.00- 2.60m

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
.01	Topsoil	Friable dark greyish brown humic clayey silt with occasional small rounded pebbles and frequent rooting	0.00-0.30m
.02	Subsoil	Moderately compact light yellowish brown silty clay with frequent sub-rounded pebbles and moderate charcoal flecks from cultivation and rooting, occasional cbm and pottery. Occasional manganese mottling.	0.20 – 0.70m
.03	Natural	Compact dark red clay marl with mottled blue grey silt.	0.30 – 1.20m
.04	Geology	Compact reddish orange Weathered Mercian Mudstone with bands of blue grey siltstone becoming solid Mercian Mudstone with depth	0.90 – 2.60m +

The stratigraphy was constant throughout, with some variation in depths and deeper subsoil with more rooting in the former orchard in the eastern field. Rooting patches were noted but related to the use of the site as an orchard or nearby hedgerows.

#### 5.1.1 Phase 1: Natural deposits

Dark red mottled clay marl, weathered Mercian Mudstone was recorded consistently at between 0.30m and 0.70m below ground level.

#### 5.1.2 Phase 2: Post medieval and modern deposits

A yellowish orange brown subsoil and humic topsoil were recorded throughout the site, with thicker subsoil in the orchard and some areas of the western field, related to cultivation of the land and use as an orchard. Charcoal and rooting was noted in the subsoil thought to be the residue of former orchard trees.

Finds recovered from the topsoil and subsoil are thought to be residual, and relate to manuring of the field in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and later orchard. Ceramic land drains were also noted running across both fields, cut through the topsoil and subsoil onto the clay marl natural.

### 5.2 Artefact analysis, by Rob Hedge

A small assemblage of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic pottery and ceramic building material was recovered including, plain stone china (fabric 85) from the topsoil, small fragments of post-medieval brick from the topsoil and subsoil, 18<sup>th</sup> century redware (fabric 78) and fragments of late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century land drain from the subsoil. The assemblage is typical of background scatter introduced to the site through a mixture of agricultural activity and casual domestic waste disposal.

## **6 Synthesis**

No significant archaeology was recorded during the monitoring works. All deposits related to natural processes, with residual finds from the topsoil and subsoil and rooting from hedgerows and the former orchard.

## **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.

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## **8 Acknowledgements**

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project; Susana Parker, Waterman Group, Ella Moss and Daniel Cox of E3P, Andrew Watson, St Modwen Homes and Aidan Smyth, Archaeology and Planning Officer for Malvern Hills District Councils.

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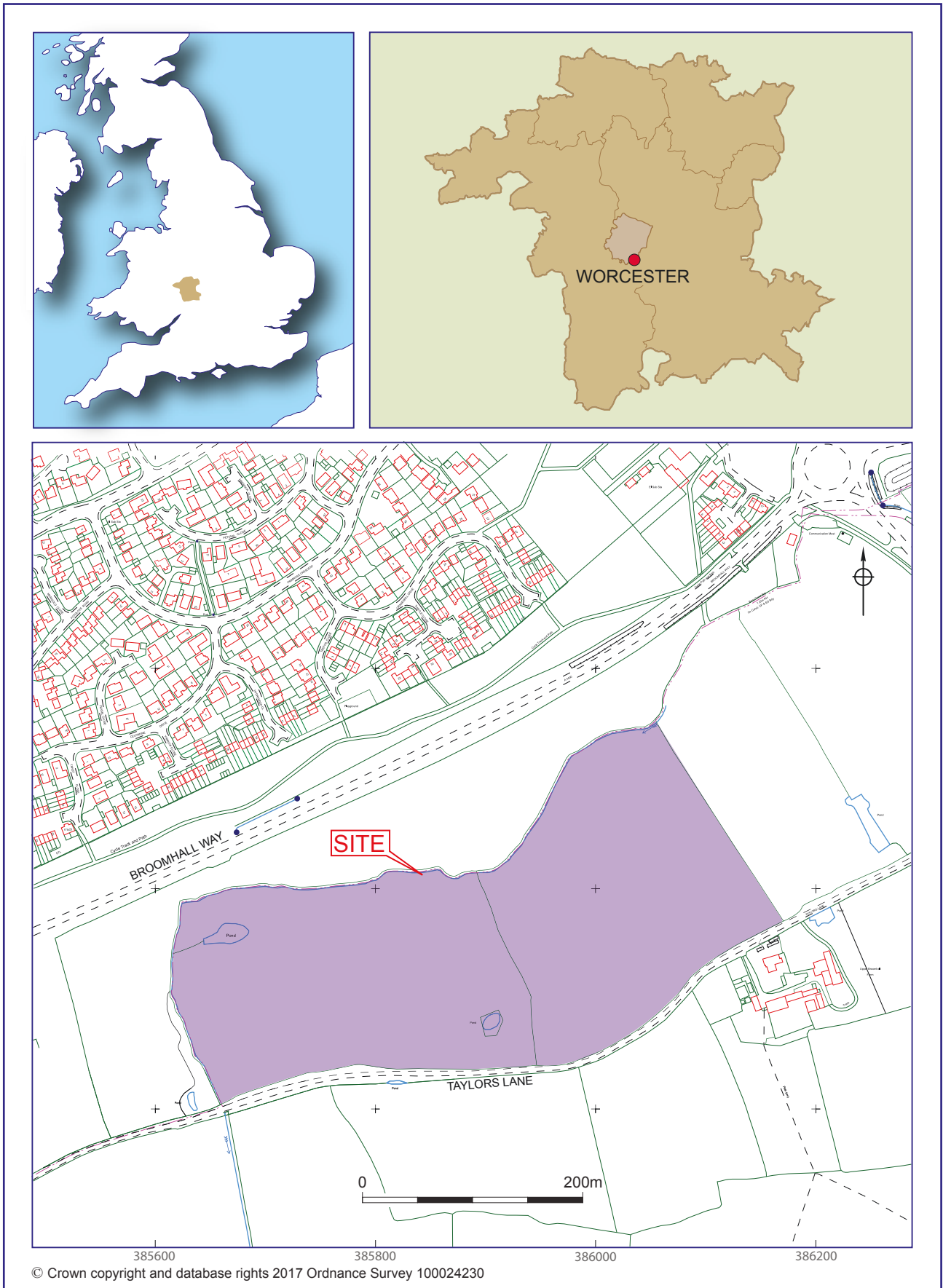
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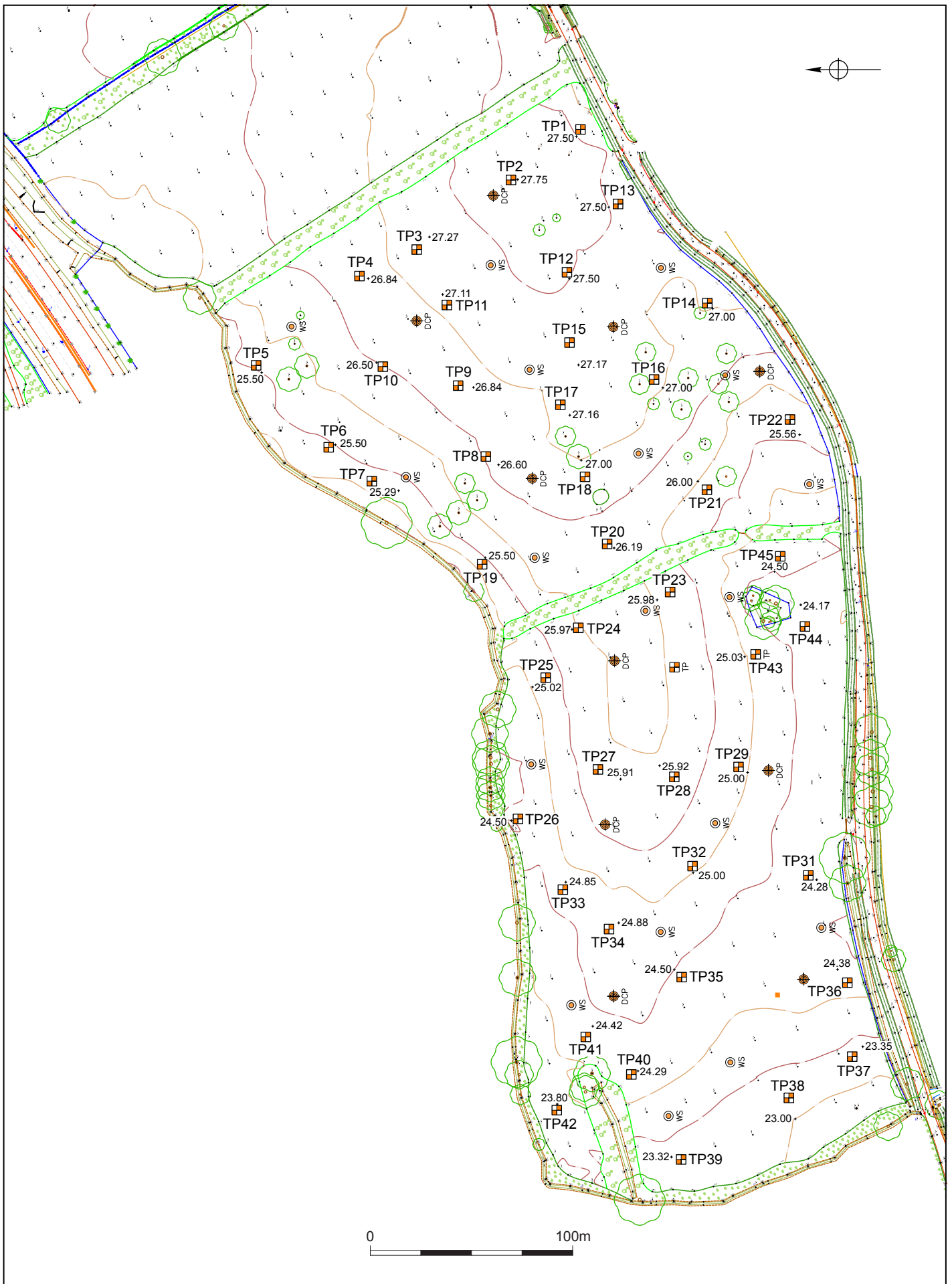


# Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Location of Test Pits (based upon e3p Drg. No. 002)

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1 The eastern field prior to works, looking north.*



*Plate 2 Example of stratigraphy in Trial Pit 4, view west in eastern field*

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*Plate 3 TP 20 in western field showing orchard bank*



*Plate 4 Example of excavation of Trial Pit 23 into deeper Mercian Mudstone geology.*



*Plate 5 The eastern field before works looking west towards former pond in southwest corner of site.*



*Plate 6 Stratigraphy of topsoil, subsoil and natural clay marl with ceramic land drain and slate in bottom right hand corner of TP38.*

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*Plate 7 Trial Hole 40 stratigraphy view south*



*Plate 8 Deeper excavation of TP44 south of former pond.*

## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive (site code: WSM 69685)**

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 2 Photographic records AS3
- 174 Digital photographs
- 45 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:

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

A copy of the report will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Monuments Record (NMR) as appropriate.

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