

Archaeological watching brief at 29, Dowling Drive, Pershore, Worcestershire

26 September 2018



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Local planning authority:	Wychavon District Council
Planning reference:	18/00703/HP
Central NGR:	SO 93619 45339
Commissioning client:	Alison Scott and Olaf Twiehaus
Client project reference:	
WA project reference:	P5380
WA report reference:	2584
HER reference:	WSM 70499
Oasis reference:	fieldsec1-324372

Issue	Date	Status	Details/prepared by	Checked by
1	24/09/2018		Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan	Tom Vaughan
2	26/09/2018	Rev1	References revised; Tom Vaughan	Tom Vaughan

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Archaeological watching brief at 29, Dowling Drive, Pershore, Worcestershire

Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan

With contributions by Carolyn Hunt

Background information

<i>Client</i>	Alison Scott and Olaf Twiehaus
<i>National Grid reference</i>	SO 93619 45339
<i>Historic Environment Record event reference</i>	WSM 70499
<i>Planning authority</i>	Wychavon District Council
<i>Reference</i>	18/00703/HP
<i>Brief</i>	WCC 2014
<i>Project design</i>	WA 2018
<i>Project parameters</i>	ClfA 2014

Topography, geology and current land-use

The site is located to the south-west of Pershore, on a terrace above the north bank of the valley formed by the River Avon. The site area itself is flat, at c 29m AOD, but to the immediate west the ground slopes steeply upwards to 50m AOD and to the east it gradually slopes down to around 20m AOD along Three Springs/Defford Road.

Geologically, the site is situated on bedrock geology of the Charmouth Mudstone Formation (BGS 2000). The soil type across the site is defined as clayey with some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey and fine loamy or fine silty soils over clay of the Evesham 2 Soil Association.

Previous archaeological work on site

The previous residential development of the site was subject of archaeological evaluation, followed by a scheme of excavation in some areas prior to construction (Wainwright, 2011; Mann *et al* 2013). The phase of development that this property is within was only subject to archaeological evaluation, which found extensive Roman activity to the north-east of the current site (Trench 1 on Figure 4) and a series of drove way ditches (Trench 6) in the area of this property (Bradley 2013; WSM 48209). However, no further archaeological works took place prior to the construction phase, so this new planning application was subject to archaeological conditions.

Previous archaeological work on associated sites

The following is taken from the report on the evaluation undertaken by WA to the immediate west of the present site (Bradley 2013):

The site is outside of the main settlement of Pershore, which has Roman foundations and later contained a Benedictine abbey of Anglo-Saxon origin. The town is documented as a relatively prosperous medieval market centre before the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century. Historic mapping indicates that the site is likely to have been used as arable or pasture farmland outside of the settlement, located adjacent to the ancient woodland of Tiddesley Wood (WSM 31613) and a series of orchard plantations.

Archaeologically, the immediate surrounds of the site have been well explored in recent years, although the site itself has not been subject to previous archaeological work. A geophysical survey (Austrums 2009; WSM 41495) in the field directly to the south-east

and adjacent to the cemetery demonstrated a series of curved and linear anomalies interpreted as part of a group of ditched enclosures. These were investigated and shown to be accurate during a small evaluation of eleven trenches (Hughes and Vaughan 2009; WSM 40600), where up to forty linear and discrete features were identified which suggested the survival of an enclosed Late Iron Age or Early Roman rural settlement continuing in use until the 3rd century AD. This corresponded with known discoveries of Roman pottery and a brooch, mainly of early Roman date, from the adjacent cemetery during excavation of graves which had indicated a possible settlement location (WSM 38433 and 38434).

A further archaeological evaluation of twenty-five trenches was undertaken in late 2009 across fields to the north-east in advance of the housing development which forms the northern boundary of the current site (Wainwright 2010; WSM 41765). This revealed a number of ditch, gully and pit features of Late Iron Age to Roman date which probably represented ancillary activity associated with the settlement identified in the earlier work. A number of medieval and post-medieval furrows were also observed. The evaluation led to the commencement of an open-area excavation across the site in order to improve understanding of the archaeological deposits encountered (Sworn 2011; WSM 44967). The excavation recorded a driveway with adjacent enclosure ditches of Late Iron and Roman date as well as undated pits and post holes, but no structural evidence. This work supported the initial conclusions of the evaluation and suggested that these remains were likely to be of an auxiliary nature alongside the identified occupation site nearby.

Within the wider landscape, Iron Age and Romano-British settlements have been recorded along the Avon Valley at Defford to the south (NMR 1053752) and at Allesborough to the north (WSM 20060). The former is defined by enclosures and trackways seen as cropmarks, the latter has been partially excavated and identified as an area of Iron Age activity with clear evidence for continued occupation into the Roman period (Hurst et al 1993). To the south-east of the site, across Defford Road, a cropmark suggested to represent an enclosure has been identified from an aerial photograph and is potentially Iron Age or Roman in date (WSM 40861).

It has also been noted that there is evidence for medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow visible in the surrounds of the site, aligned north-west to south-east (WSM 02685) and an unstratified find of an 11th century Viking iron axe head was made around 480m to the south in 2001.

Two Grade II listed buildings exist in the vicinity of the site, one being the Victorian gothic revival cemetery chapel, the other a 17th century timber framed cottage. No designated heritage assets are present on the site itself. (Bradley 2013, 4-5).

More recently, the area to the south of the current works, adjacent to Pershore Cemetery, which was subject to geophysical survey in 2009 (WSM 41495) was archaeologically monitored during groundworks for a car park (Arnold 2015; WSM 67184). A topsoil strip and services were excavated with residual Roman and medieval finds from the topsoil, but no significant archaeological deposits, finds or features observed during the works. A plan of all the significant previous archaeological works that have occurred around the site is provided in Figure 4.

Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible, within the constraints of the client's groundworks.

Methods

General specification for fieldwork

WA 2012

Sources consulted

HER

Sources cited by the HER - see the Bibliography section

Date(s) of fieldwork

17 July 2018

Dimensions of excavated areas observed –

Soil strip and foundations length 6.00m
 width 4.50m
 depth 0.25-1.70m

Access to or visibility of deposits

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, although any less clear may have not been identified. Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons.

Statement of confidence

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

Deposit description

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
100	Modern surfacing	Patio slabs, concrete and turf, humic topsoil and yellow type 1 gravels, hardcore	0.00 – 0.25m
101	Made ground	Light greyish brown silty clay and Redeposited mixed yellow clay and rubble, containing brick, mortar and debris from construction	0.25 – 0.90m
102	Made Ground	Dark bluish grey clay, redeposited disturbed material from construction with modern debris	0.90 – 1.10m
103	Natural	Compact yellow clay with orange sand and gravel lenses at 1.50m depth onwards	1.10 – 1.70m+
104	Fill of drain	Plastic storm drain pipe backfilled with pea gravel and redeposited natural	0.25 – 0.50m
105	Cut of drain	0.30m wide storm drain from house and garage orientated north-south	0.25 – 0.50m

The current ground level around was recorded at 29.35m AOD. All deposits exposed were modern made ground from the construction of the present development, including modern services and surfacing. The natural strata of yellow clay with orange sand and gravel lenses was recorded at 1.10m below ground level (28.25 m AOD) and had previously been impacted by the initial house construction. No artefacts predating the modern period were recovered.

Photographs of the general works and sample sections showing the modern stratigraphy can be seen in Plates 1 – 7. The trench location and plan can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.

Conclusions

No evidence of the surrounding Roman and Iron Age settlement located to the south and west of the site was seen. No significant archaeological features, structures, deposits, layers or horizons were observed, not artefacts recovered. Modern made ground was observed directly over the undisturbed natural geology. There was no surviving undisturbed soil profile. Any archaeological deposits which may have been present previously would have been disturbed by the landscaping and groundworks that were undertaken. This suggests that no significant archaeology is likely to survive within the majority of this modern residential area.

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 on behalf of Alison Scott and Olaf Twiehaus, at 29, Dowling Drive, Pershore, Worcestershire (NGR SO 93619 45339; WSM 70499), during excavation of foundations for a residential extension. Previous investigations had identified Late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement in the immediate vicinity, comprising a rural settlement and driveway ditches to the south, east and west. All groundworks associated with the current development were monitored and recorded. No significant archaeological deposits, finds or features were exposed. Modern made ground lay directly over the natural strata of sands, gravels and clays. There was no surviving undisturbed soil profile, which indicates that the previous residential development involved landscaping which removed any potential archaeological deposits.

Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Alison Scott and Olaf Twiehaus (the clients), and Aidan Smyth (Archaeology and Planning Advisor, Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Councils).

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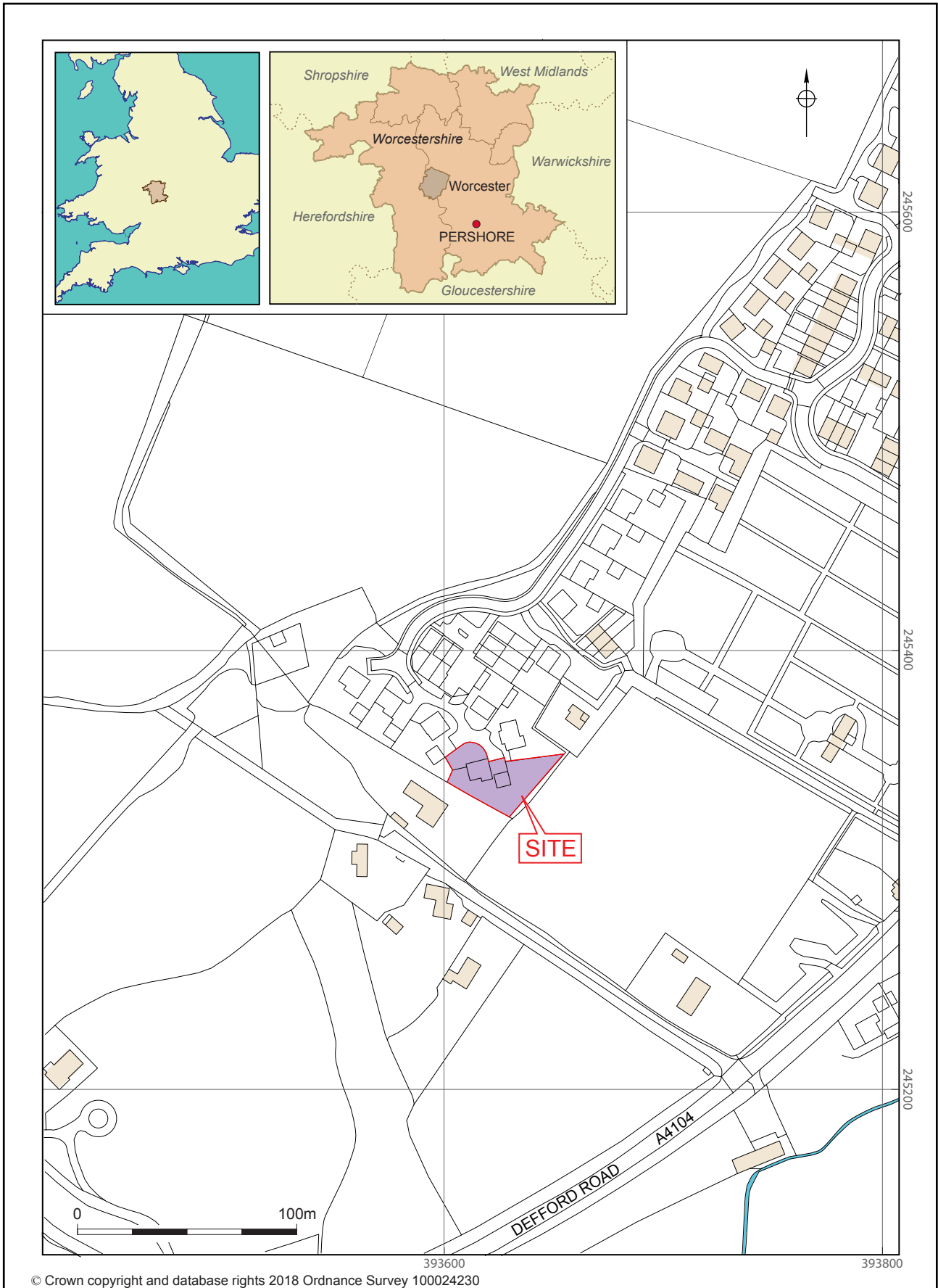
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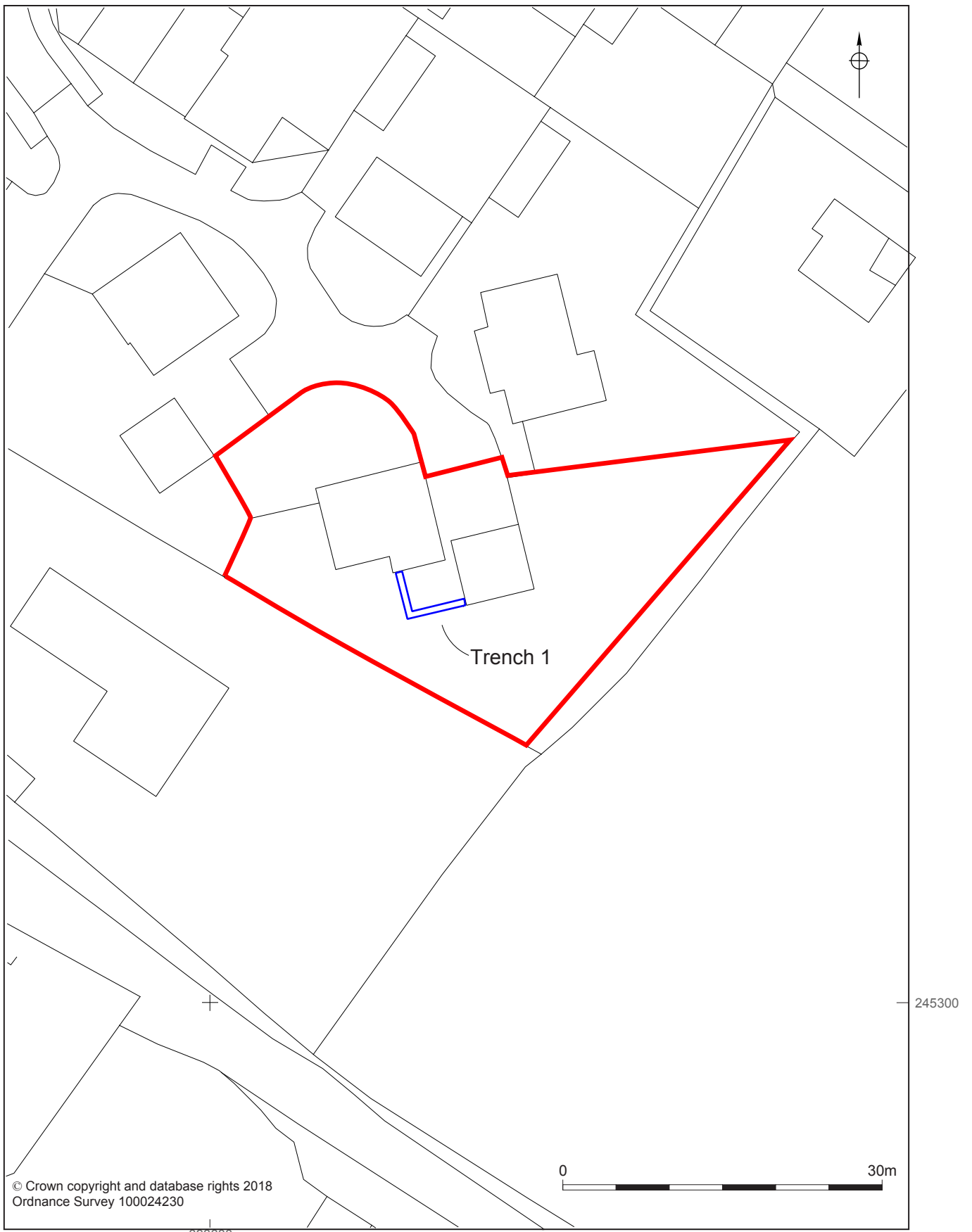
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Figures



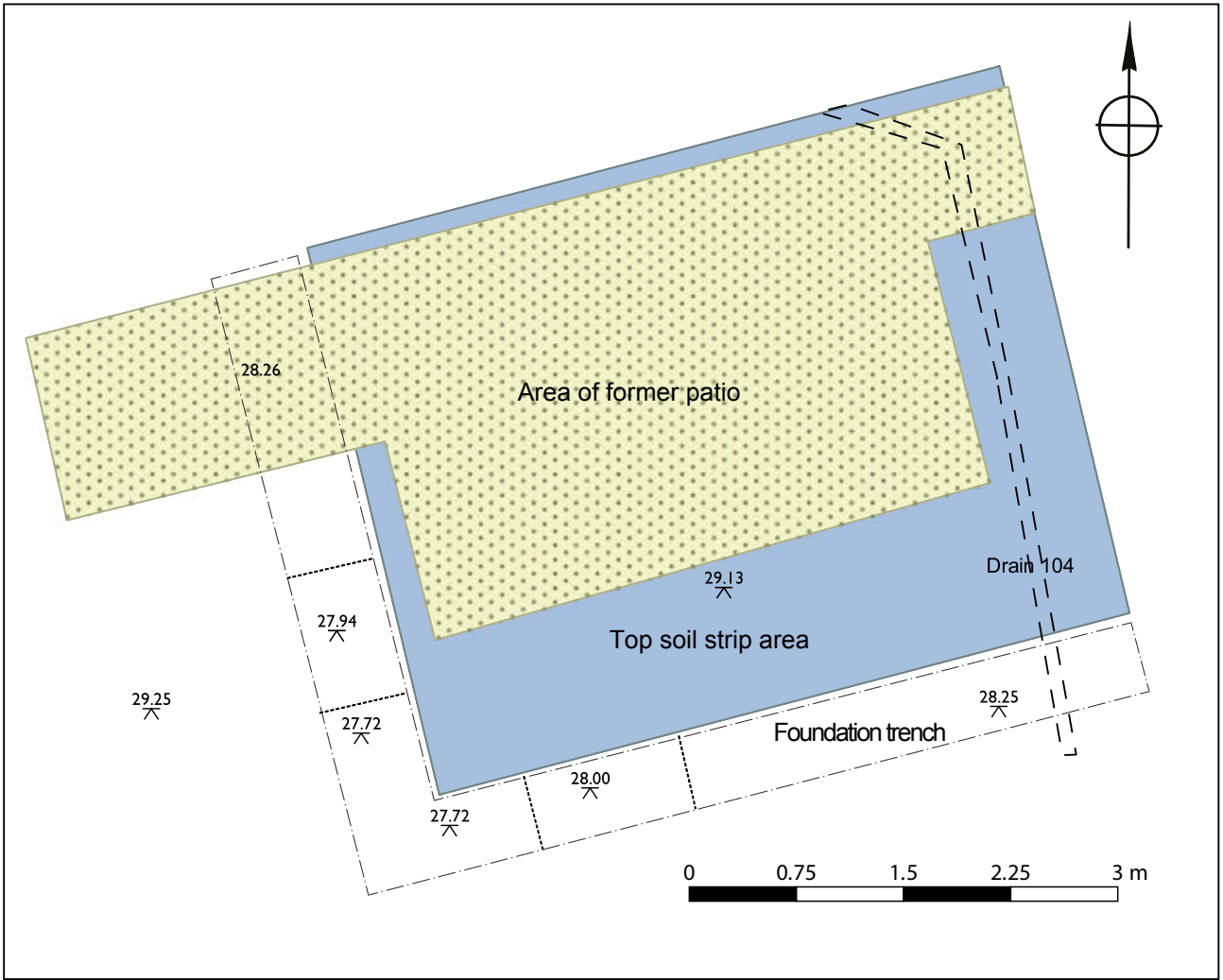
Location of the site

Figure 1



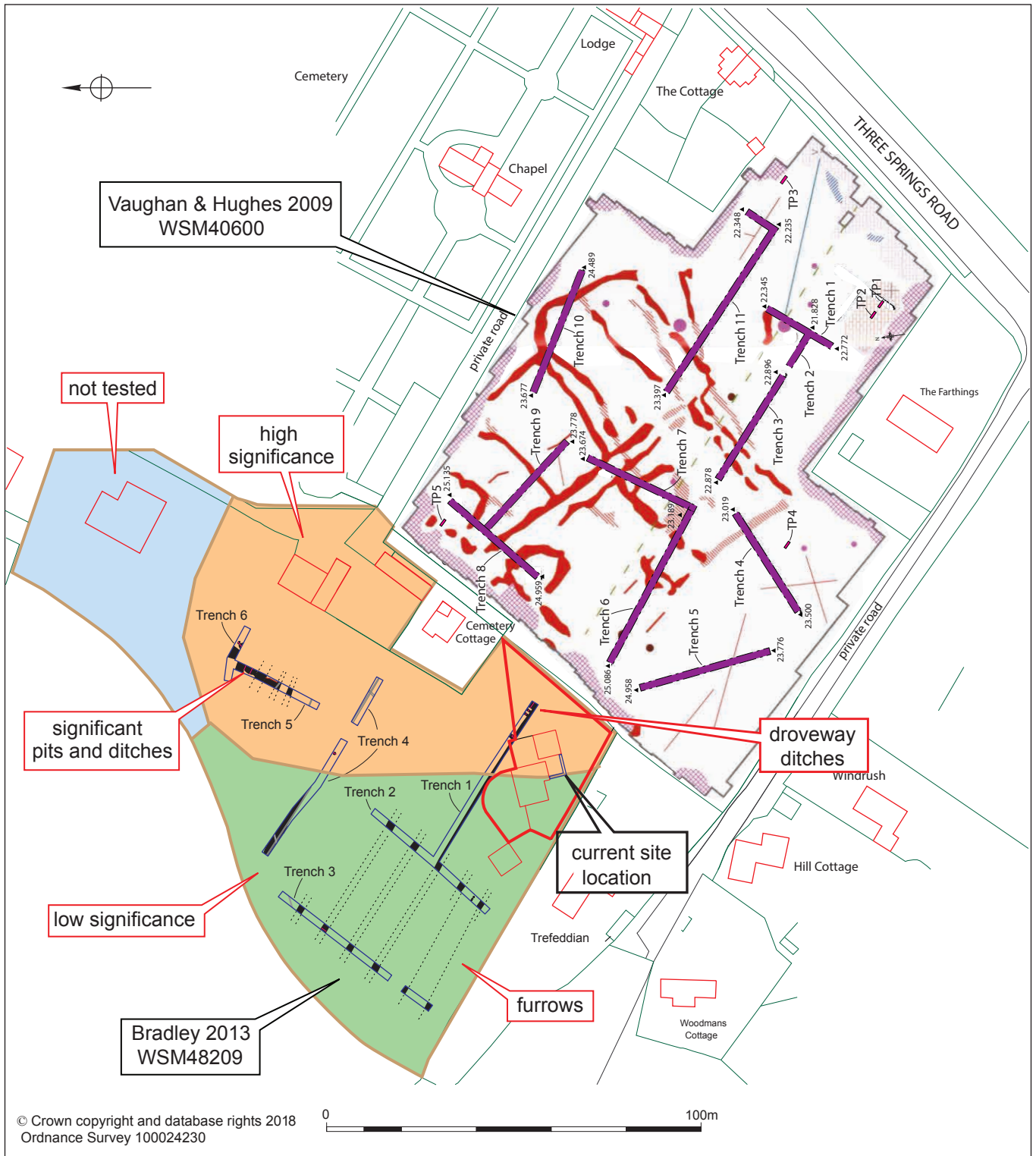
Trench location plan

Figure 2



Trench plan

Figure 3



Previous archaeological works surrounding the site and suggested zones of significance

Figure 4

Plates



Plate 1 The house frontage at 29, Dowling Drive, view south



Plate 2 The location of the extension prior to excavations taking place, view east, 2x 1m scales



Plate 3 Ground reduction and foundation trenches, view north-west, 2x 1m scales



Plate 4 Sample section looking south-west showing made ground deposits, 2x 1m scales



Plate 5 Sample section down to the natural geology, view south-west, 2x 1m scales



Plate 6 The north-east facing section, view west, 2x 1m scales



Plate 7 The north-west facing section, view east, made ground and modern drains, 2x 1m scales

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM 70499)

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 1 Photographic records AS3
- 22 Digital photographs
- 1 Trench record sheets AS41
- 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

A copy of the report will be deposited with the appropriate Historic Environment Record (HER).