

# Archaeological evaluation at Norton Farm, 265, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*for Parkgate Services Ltd*

April 2019



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# NORTON FARM, 265, BIRMINGHAM ROAD, BROMSGROVE, WORCESTERSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name: Norton Farm, 265 Birmingham Road  
Local planning authority: Bromsgrove District Council  
Planning reference: 18/01173/FULL  
Central NGR: SO 9669 7214  
Commissioning client: Parkgate Services Ltd  
WA project number: P5578  
WA report number: 2684  
HER reference: WSM 71464  
Oasis reference: fieldsec1-346657

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### DOCUMENT CONTROL PANEL

Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	01/04/2019	Elsbeth Iliff	Draft for comment	Tom Vaughan

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# Archaeological evaluation at Norton Farm, 265, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

By Elspeth Iliff

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

## Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Norton Farm, 265, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9669 7214). It was commissioned by Troy Kidsley, Chartered Architect, on behalf of Parkgate Services Ltd, in advance of a proposed residential development, for which a planning application has been submitted.

The site is located to the north-east of Bromsgrove on the site of a former farm which has since been in use as a residential property before becoming derelict. Two trenches were excavated across the site, targeting the areas most directly affected by the proposed development. No archaeological features or artefacts were observed in the trenches, although modern terracing was identified at the northern end of the site. The potential for further archaeological activity to survive at this site is deemed to be very low. It is considered that the results of this evaluation provide an accurate characterisation of the site.

## Report

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in March 2019 at Norton Farm, 265, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (NGR SO 9669 7214). This comprised two evaluation trenches. The project was commissioned by Troy Kidsley, Chartered Architect, on behalf of Parkgate Services Ltd (the client), in advance of a proposed residential development. A planning application has been submitted to Bromsgrove District Council (planning reference 18/01173/FULL).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has the potential to impact upon possible heritage assets.

The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Planning Advisory Service of Worcestershire County Council (WAAS 2019). A WSI was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) and approved by the Planning Advisory Service. The evaluation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014) and the *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

#### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located c 1.5km north-east of the centre of Bromsgrove and is bounded by the Birmingham Road to the south-east and a recent housing development on all other sides. The site has an area of 0.319ha, consisting of a derelict former residential property and its associated garden which are currently disused. The site is situated on sloping ground dropping from 118.29m AOD in the north-east to 114.02m AOD in the south-west. The underlying geology is mapped as Helsby Sandstone Formation (BGS 2019).

### 2 Archaeological and historical background

#### 2.1 Introduction

Prior to fieldwork commencing, a search of the Worcestershire HER was completed, covering a search area of 1km radius around the site. Documentary sources at Worcestershire Archives, historic mapping and aerial photographs were also consulted. A summary of the results of this research are presented below.

Archaeological features spanning a wide time period are found within the survey area but none are recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site under investigation. The earliest record is of an early Bronze Age to early Iron Age burnt mound (WSN 48338), which is situated approximately 300m to the east of the house at a location noted as 'Southwest of Crow's Mill'. In close proximity to this is the possible alignment of the Roman road from Worcester to Lickey (WSM 30529) which runs north-east to south-west through the search area.

Around 50m south-east of the site sits the Grade II listed Townsend Mill (WSM 01097) and its associated millpond (WSM 30338). Shown in the 1843 Tithe map as Vales Mill (owned by John Knight), it was a 3-storey L-shaped building, of red brick construction with a slate roof. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map shows it as a corn mill and it was active until 1954 when John Bridgeman, the last miller, ceased grinding. The building, still with the machinery in situ, later fell into disrepair but the mill pond is extant.



The existing house on the study site first appears on the 1929 Ordnance Survey map (Sheet XV.SE), indicating that it was built sometime between 1903 and 1929, and is located just to the north of the original Norton Farm buildings, from which it took its name. Before this, the site only appears as a field from the 1884 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of the area until the inclusion of the house on the 1929 map. Norton Farm was just one of a number of historic farmsteads that existed within the search area, others including Townsend Farm, Outfarm and School Lane Farm, most of which no longer exist as working farms. The feature of most recent date is the US 123<sup>rd</sup> Station Hospital (WSM 45452), a Second World War military hospital for the US army, c 500m to the south-west of the site.

Although no previous archaeological work has been conducted on the site itself, an archaeological strip, map and sample was undertaken at the adjacent Norton Farm (Mann, 2014). This involved the excavation of three areas of identified geophysical anomalies. In the event, the anomalies were determined to relate to changes in the natural substrate and were not of archaeological origin. The only archaeological feature identified in the excavation was a possible field boundary.

### 3 Project aims

The aims and scope of the project are to undertake sufficient fieldwork to:

- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- Identify their location, nature, date and preservation;
- Assess their significance;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

The brief indicates that significant deposits may be defined as those likely to be of post-medieval date (WAAS 2019). The evaluation will only assess heritage assets which are of archaeological interest. This project will not include consideration of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas or historic hedgerows.

### 4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken on 21 March 2019.

Two trenches, amounting to c. 27m<sup>2</sup> in area, were excavated over the 0.319ha site, representing a sample of just under 1%. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were laid out in order to target the areas directly affected by the development and to provide a good overall sample of the site as a whole.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant 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) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

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

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at Worcestershire County Museum (as appropriate).

## 5 Archaeological results

### 5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figure 2. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

### 5.2 Phasing

#### 5.2.1 Natural deposits

Natural deposits were observed in both trenches consisting of red sand with occasional yellowish clay patches at between 0.60m and 0.78m below ground surface.

#### 5.2.2 Phase 1: Modern deposits

Topsoil deposits were seen in both trenches, consisting of a dark brown sandy silt measuring between 0.40m and 0.60m deep. No subsoil was identified in either trench but a greyish red silty sand layer was observed in Trench 2, identified as a possible imported natural deposit, although it could potentially have been a layer of colluvium.

The only feature of a modern date observed on the site was an area of garden terracing at the northern end of Trench 1.

## 6 Artefactual evidence

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

## 7 Environmental evidence

Environmental 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.

## 8 Discussion

No evidence of any archaeological activity was identified on site. The only evidence of previous use of the land was modern terracing. The potential for further, as yet unidentified, archaeological activity to survive at the site is deemed to be very low.

## 9 Conclusions

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Norton Farm, 265, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. Two trenches were excavated revealing no archaeological features or artefacts. Evidence of modern terracing was identified at the northern end of the site. The potential for further archaeological activity to survive at the site is deemed to be very low.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provide an accurate characterisation of the development site.

## 10 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah, ACIfA, assisted by Hazel Whitefoot.



The project was managed by Tom Vaughan, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Elspeth Iliff, PCIfA. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

## 11 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following: Troy Kidsley (Chartered Architect), Tom Drew (Parkgate Services Ltd), and Emma Hancox (Historic Environment Planning Advisor, Worcestershire County Council).

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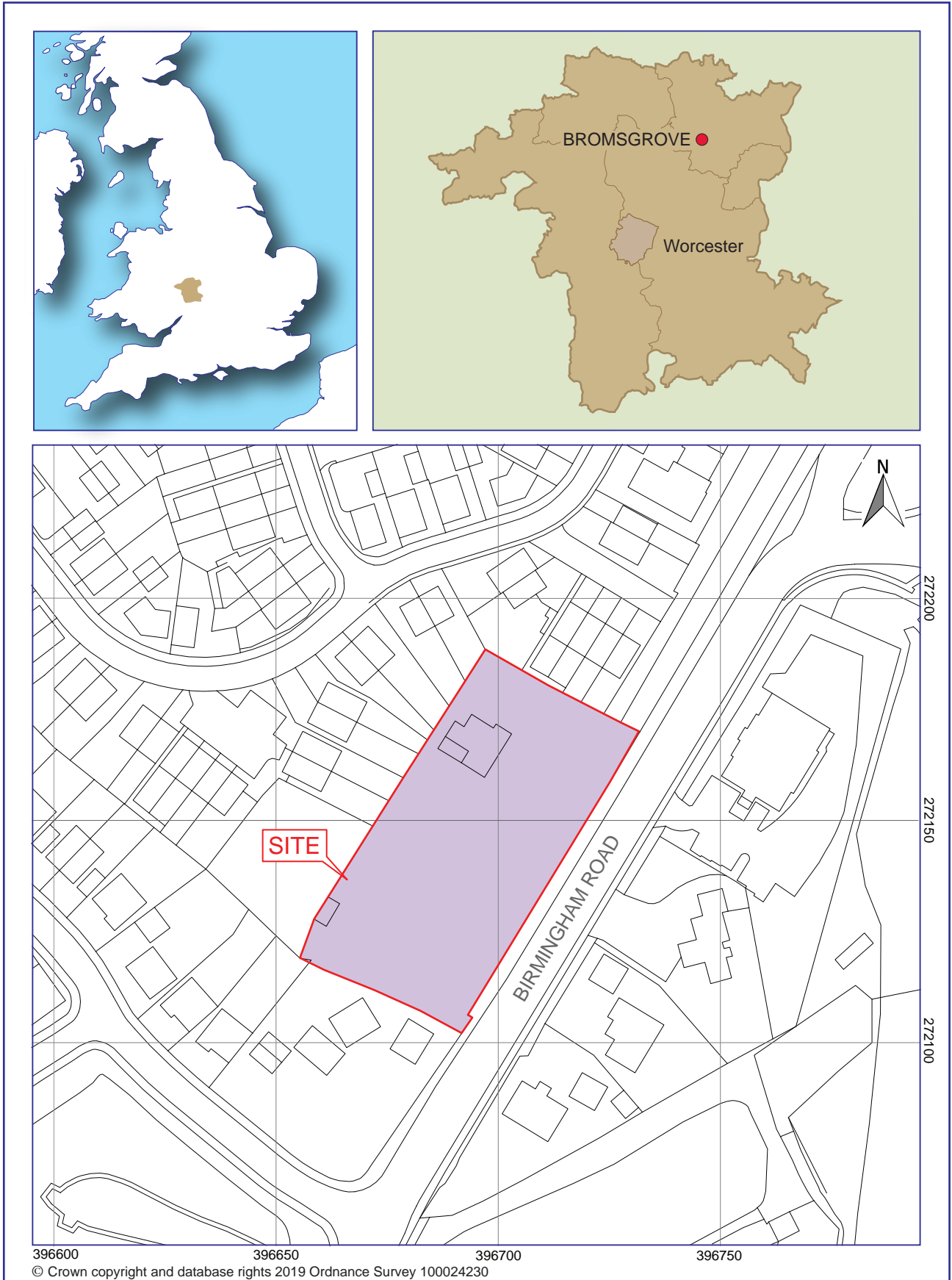
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## Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



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Trench location plan

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1: Trench 1 with evidence of modern terracing at the far end; 2x 1m scales (facing north-east)*





*Plate 2: Trench 2, 1m scale, (facing west)*

## Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

### Trench 1

Length: 15m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: North to South

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Depth	Deposit description
100	Layer	Topsoil	Topsoil	0.6m	Dark brown sandy silt
101	Layer	Natural	Natural		Moderately compact, mid reddish brown sand with yellowish patches

### Trench 2

Length: 15m

Width: 1.8m

Orientation: East to West

#### Context summary:

Context	Feature type	Context	Description	Depth	Deposit description
200	Layer	Topsoil	Topsoil	0.4m	Dark greyish brown sandy silt
201	Layer	Layer	Possible imported natural deposit, though may be colluvium.	0.38m	Mid greyish red silty sand
202	Layer	Natural	Natural		Compact red sand with yellowish clay patches



## Appendix 2: Summary of project archive (WSM 71464)

TYPE	DETAILS*
Paper	Context sheet, Correspondence, Diary (Field progress form), Report,
Digital	GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Spreadsheets, Survey, Text

\*OASIS terminology