

# Archaeological watching brief at Stratford Park, Birmingham Road, Bishopton, Stratford upon Avon

Worcestershire Archaeology  
*For Henry Morrison,  
Morrison Mobile Homes*

February 2021



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# STRATFORD PARK BIRMINGHAM ROAD, BISHOPTON STRATFORD UPON AVON

Archaeological watching brief report

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## SITE INFORMATION

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Site name: Stratford Park

Site code: -

Local planning authority: Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Planning reference: 19/00696/FUL (previously16/00790/FUL)

Central NGR: SP 1878 5743

Commissioning client: Henry Morrison (Morrison Mobile Homes)

Client project reference: -

WA project number: P5588

WA report number: 2891

HER reference: -

Oasis reference: Fieldsec1-414011

Museum accession number: -

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Version	Date	Author	Details	Approved by
1	11/02/2021	Graham Arnold	Copy for client	Robin Jackson

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# An archaeological watching brief at Stratford Park, Bishopton, Stratford upon Avon

By Graham Arnold

Illustrations by Graham Arnold

## Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Stratford Park, Birmingham Road, Bishopton, Stratford-upon-Avon (NGR SP 1878 5743). It was commissioned by the land owner Henry Morrison of Morrison Mobile Homes, in advance of a proposed extension of an existing caravan park for the siting of four caravans and associated infrastructure works. Planning permission had been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works.

An archaeological evaluation was originally proposed in the initial planning, however, production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the project, incorporated a search of the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record (HER), covering a search area of 1km around the site. The results of this search indicated only low levels of archaeological remains in the vicinity of the proposed development and none within the area of impact. It was therefore considered that there was only a low potential for archaeological remains to be impacted by the proposed development and that any present were unlikely to be of anything more than local to regional interest. The WSI therefore recommended that a watching brief should be carried out on the groundworks as an alternative mitigation to evaluation. This was approved by the Stratford-upon-Avon District Planning Department.

The topsoil strip of the site was monitored, with a natural firm orangey brown clay observed all over the site, heavily truncated by modern services and disturbed by modern development activity such as hardstanding areas and roads. There was no visible subsoil, suggesting that the area had previously been subject to previous ground reductions when temporary roads were installed some years previously and as a result of land-use in the mid-20th century.

The ground conditions were similar across the entire site. There were no significant archaeological deposits, finds or features present. These results complement the earlier assessment that the site was of low archaeological potential.

## Report

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) on 26 January 2021 at Stratford Park, Birmingham Road, Bishopton, Stratford-upon-Avon (NGR SP 1878 5743; Figure 1). This comprised observation of the excavation of the topsoil across the entire site concurrent with construction works. The project was commissioned by Henry Morrison of Morrison Mobile Homes, in advance of a proposed extension of an existing caravan park for the siting of four caravans and associated infrastructure works. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (planning reference 19/00696/FUL).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019) and approved by Stratford District Council Planning Department. This established, following an Historic Environment Record (HER) search, that given the low potential for significant archaeology on site that a watching brief be carried out. The watching brief conformed to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the *Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014).

#### 1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north-east side of the hamlet of Bishopton, c. 2km to the north of Stratford-upon-Avon town centre.

The site is just over 5,500m<sup>2</sup> in area and is bounded to the north by a road to Langley Farm and pasture fields, to the east by a lorry park and to the west by further pasture fields and the A3400 Birmingham road, adjacent to a car dealership.

Prior to these works, the site comprised rough ground with temporary type 1 stoned roads, one single static caravan, serviced by an electric cable with a substation in the north-east corner of the site and a pumping station in the south-west corner. The remaining area was covered in rough undulating scrub and topsoil. The site is situated on sloping ground, at approximately 49m AOD on the roadside in the north, dropping down to around 48m AOD on the southern site boundary.

The geology of the site comprises bedrock of Mercia Mudstone Group formation, with no known superficial deposits (BGS 2021). It is close to a geological boundary with Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation (undifferentiated) to the west, which also has no known superficial deposits (BGS 2021).

### 2 Archaeological and historical background

An archaeological evaluation of the site was originally proposed in the initial planning advice, however, production of the WSI for the site, incorporated a search of the Warwickshire HER, covering a search area of 1km around the site. The results of the HER search indicated only low levels of archaeological remains in the vicinity of the proposed development and none within the area of impact. These were primarily of medieval or later date and indicated that settlement at this time was focussed away from the development area which is liable to have lain within agricultural land. The two earlier finds, a flint and a Roman coin were suggested to probably represent stray losses rather than settlement or other activity of these dates.

It was therefore considered that there was only a low potential for archaeological remains to be impacted by the proposed development and that any present were unlikely to be of anything more than local to regional interest. The WSI therefore recommended that a watching brief should be carried out on the groundworks as an alternative mitigation. This was approved by the Stratford-upon-Avon District Planning Department.

The historical background is summarised below.

*Within the study area, apart from spot finds of a prehistoric flint and a Roman coin, there is no evidence of activity prior to the early medieval period. A trackway dating to this period, known as a 'grenan weg' (greenway) in an 11th century charter, lies c.1km to the north of the development site. Some 420m to the south lies Sealt Stret, an early medieval part of the saltway from Droitwich.*

*The deserted settlement near Burton Farm c.430m south-west of the development site is still visible as earthwork features. This is thought to have seen progressive abandonment from the medieval into the post-medieval period. Ridge and furrow is present in a number of fields surrounding both the deserted settlement at Burton Farm, and the development site. An area of managed woodland c.700m to the north-east of the development site, known as Clopton Grove, is of at least medieval origin. The site of Royal Victoria Spa is located 760m to the south of the site. This was a complex of buildings built in the 1830s including a surviving pump house and grounds. It had failed as a business by the 1870s.*

*An undated enclosure seen as a crop mark in aerial photographs to the east of Burton Farm is thought to be of geological origin. Evaluations and a geophysical survey undertaken c.500-750m south of the development site revealed no archaeological features (WSI 2019, 2).*

### 3 Project aims

The aims of the watching brief were 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.

Analysis of available data derived from the HER indicated that any significant deposits present were most likely to be of medieval date.

### 4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2019). Fieldwork was undertaken on 27 January 2021.

The topsoil in the development area, amounting to 5,500m<sup>2</sup> in area, was excavated across the site. The location of the groundworks and modern features is indicated in Figure 2.

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

Observation of excavated areas was undertaken during and after machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and the groundwork locations were tied into scaled plans provided by developer and georeferenced in QGIS.

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

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. A copy of the report will be deposited with ADS OASIS for validation with the Shropshire HER in order to disseminate the results. Due to the negative results of the project no further archiving will take place.

## 5 Archaeological results

The monitored groundworks on the site and areas of modern truncation identified are highlighted in Figure 2. General shots of the topsoil strip of the site are shown in Plates 1 - 8.

A natural firm orangey brown clay was observed all over the site, heavily truncated by modern services and disturbed by modern development activity such as hardstanding areas and roads. Service trenches were backfilled with redeposited natural yellowish orange clay (Plate 5).

There was no visible subsoil on site, suggesting that the area had previously been subject to ground reductions when the temporary roads had been installed and as a result of land-use in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The ground conditions were similar across the entire site. There were no significant archaeological deposits, finds or features.

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
100	Made ground / Topsoil	0.20	0.00	Friable dark greyish brown humic silty clay with frequent rooting and occasional brick rubble.
101	Disturbed natural	-	0.20	Firm orangey-brown clay. Mercian mudstone geology. Cut by modern services and 20 <sup>th</sup> Century truncations such as services drainage and areas of hardstanding. Service and drainage trenches filled by redeposited natural clays.

Table 1: Summary context descriptions

## 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 retention or analysis. All artefacts found on site related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century activity at the site.

## 7 Environmental evidence

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

## 8 Discussion and conclusions

The archaeological watching brief demonstrated that there was no visible subsoil on site, suggesting that the area had previously been subject to ground reductions, when the temporary roads had been installed and as a result of landuse in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The ground conditions were similar across the entire site. There were no significant archaeological deposits, finds or features on the site. This complements the earlier assessment that the site was of low archaeological potential.

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/areas to identify the presence or absence of



archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the development site as a whole.

## 9 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Graham Arnold, PCIfA.

The project was managed by Robin Jackson, MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Graham Arnold.

## 10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of this project: Henry Morrison (Morrison Mobile Homes) and Stratford District Council Planning Department.

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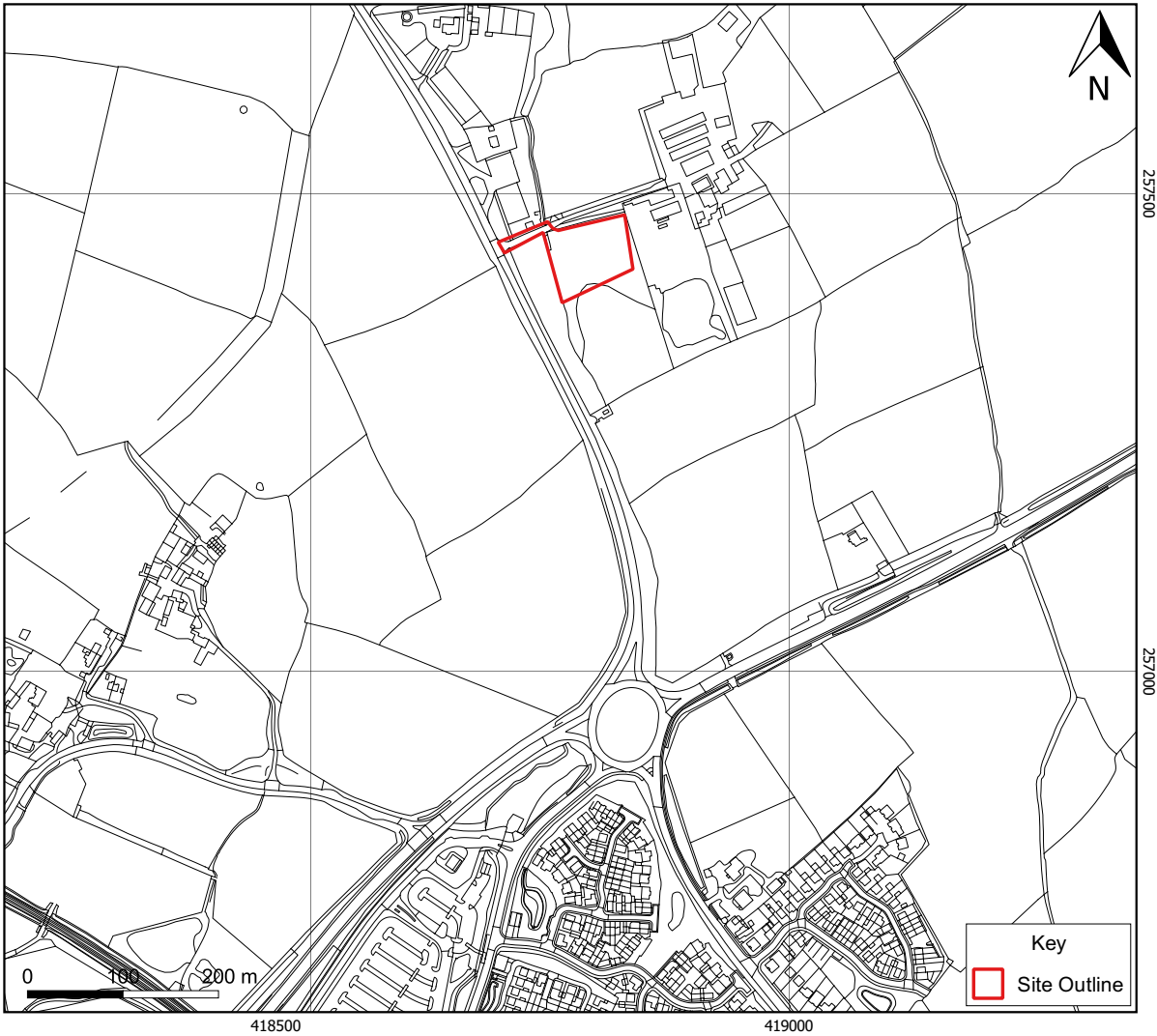
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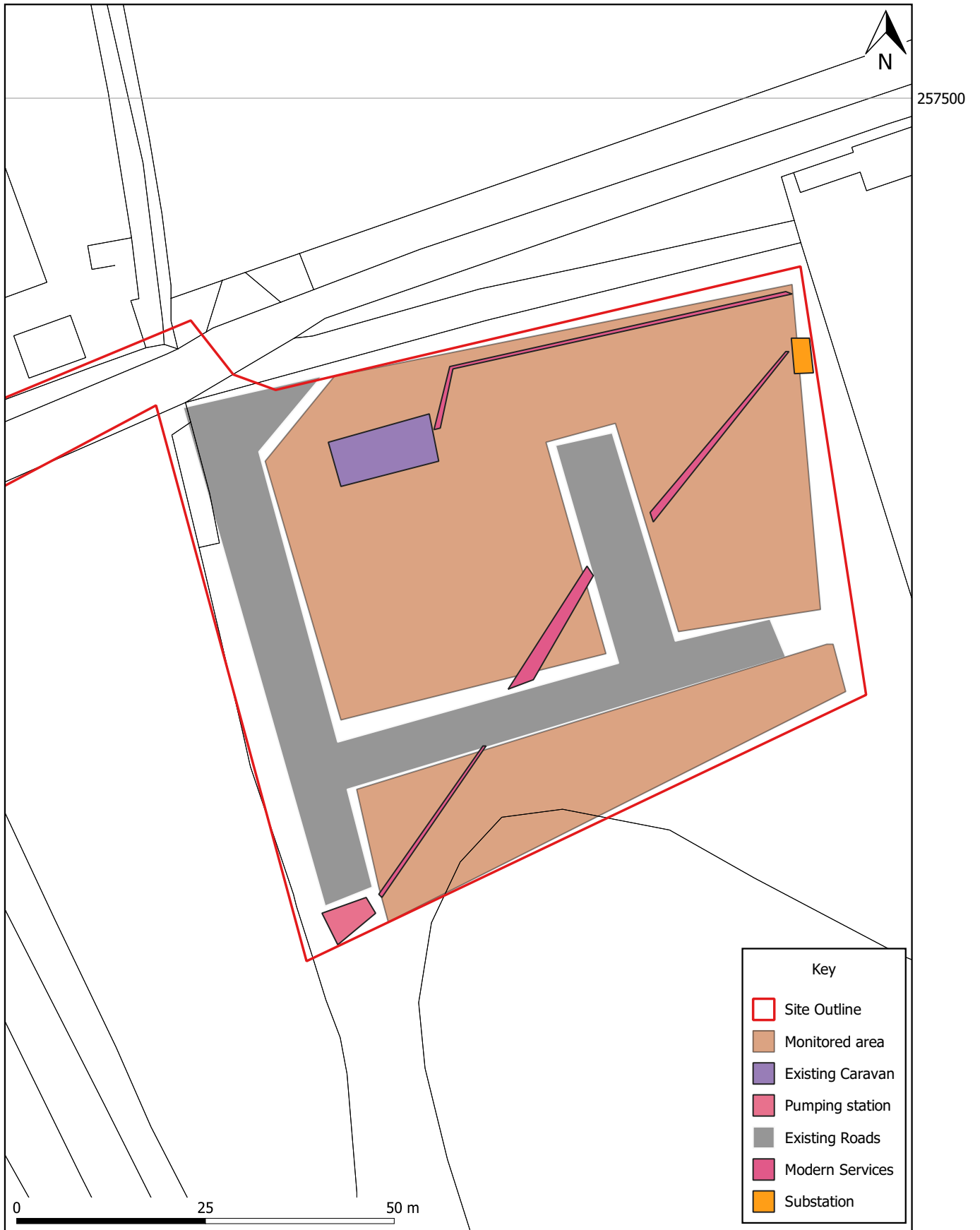
## Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



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Archaeological monitoring on site

Figure 2

## Plates



*Plate 1: The site at the beginning of the works, showing the existing temporary road and static caravan, looking north with 1m scales*



*Plate 2: Site topsoil strip in southern limit of the site. 1m scales looking east*



*Plate 3: The central part of the site with topsoil removed. Looking east with 1m scales*



*Plate 4: The northern boundary of the site stripped of topsoil. 1m scales looking east*



*Plate 5: An electric cable service trench showing as a pale band of fill running towards the substation. 1m scales looking east.*



*Plate 6: Topsoil stripped over northern limit the site, looking west with 1m scales*



*Plate 7: Topsoil stripped over the eastern side of the site, looking south with 1m scales*



*Plate 8: Topsoil strip complete at the centre of the site, looking east with 1m scales*



## Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	None
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form)
Digital	GIS, Images raster/digital photography, Text

\*OASIS terminology

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology.

A copy of the report will be deposited with ADS OASIS for validation with the Shropshire HER, to disseminate the results. Due to the negative results of the project no further archiving will take place.

## **Appendix 2: Summary of data for HER**

No significant finds or environmental samples found on site.