LAND OFF RUSSLEY GREEN, BAYDON, WILTSHIRE

(NGR SU 27986 78188)

Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

Wiltshire Council planning reference PL/2023/09493

Devizes Museum accession number: DZSWS:38-2024

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
Hannick Homes

Report No: ACA0185/2/1

Date: December 2024

AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2024 on land off Russley Green, Baydon, Wiltshire (NGR SU 27986 78188). The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of five trenches, each 15m long and 1.6m wide. They were positioned to target anomalies identified from a previous geophysical survey, as well as testing 'blank' area to confirm the effectiveness of the survey.

The evaluation did not identify any archaeological features or deposits. In all the trenches a simple sequence comprising subsoil and topsoil was exposed over the natural subsoil. A small number of late post-medieval to modern finds were recovered from topsoil.

1. INTRODUCTION *(Fig. 1; Plate 1)*

1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2024 on land off Russley Green, Baydon, Wiltshire (NGR SU 27986 78188; Fig. 1). The work was required by Wiltshire Council to provide supporting information for planning application reference PL/2023/09493, following consultation with the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist.

1.2 The site comprises what is currently a single pasture plot measuring c.0.35 hectares and located on the current northwest extent of Baydon (Fig. 1). It is bounded by a farm access track to the northeast, an agricultural plot to the northwest, and elsewhere by residential properties. The site is situated at around 231m above Ordnance Datum on ground with a gentle trench downwards to the east. The underlying solid geology comprises Cretaceous chalk of the Seaford Chalk Formation, which is beneath superficial deposits of Neogene and Quaternary clay, silt, sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2024).

1.3 The development proposals comprise the construction of up to nine dwellings, open spaces, landscaping and associated engineering works,

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 As part of the current application the site has been the subject to a geophysical survey (Donaldson and Sabin 2023) and a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (Bedford and Winterburn 2023). The geophysical survey identified a number of small zones of magnetic enhancement, which were interpreted as potentially representing natural variation in the depth of soil. Also depicted were linear anomalies that were considered to represent ridge and furrow cultivation. It was noted that these corresponded with low earthworks depicted on LiDAR data (Donaldson and Sabin 2023; Bedford and Winterburn 2023). The historic environment desk-based assessment has reviewed the records held by the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record by period, which have been summarised below.

Prehistoric

2.2 The settlement of Baydon is surrounded by prehistoric field systems, which are clearly visible on the LiDAR data for the area. The closest of these to the site is located approximately 200m west. Located 600m northwest of the site is a record for an Iron Age Settlement, which comprises 500 pits, 21 postholes, seven gullies and a

probable inhumantion. During the excavation a number of Mesolithic flints were also recovered (Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record ref. MWI19074).

Roman

2.3 The site is located 50m north of the putative route of the Roman road known as Ermine Street (MWI19118). Excavations along the route of the road were undertaken in 1909 and 1969, however, the precise location of these excavation are not known (Bedford and Winterburn 2023).

2.4 There are a number of records within the wider study area that are of Romano-British date. The closest of these comprises a probable field system or property boundary ditch, recorded during an evaluation in 2003 and located approximately 300m south of the site (MWI19145). Two find spots are recorded on the historic environment record consisting of a scatter of Romano-British pottery fragments (MWI19137), and a buckle depicting confronting dolphins and buckle plate with openwork arcading (MWI19136). During the construction of the M4 some 750m east of the site, a settlement was identified at Finches Farm, which included the remains of a crop processing oven, ditches and evidence for timber structures. Finds recovered included bronze and iron objects, pottery and denarii (MWI19116).

Medieval and post-medieval

2.5 The settlement of Baydon has likely medieval origins (MWI19156), with the Church of St Nicholas known to have origins in the 12th century (MWI19160). Saxon pottery has been recovered within the grounds of the church (MWI19154). During the post-medieval period the site likely remained an area of rural agricultural land on the edge of the settlement of Baydon. Aerial photographs taken in 1945 depict a number of structures, likely pig styes, within the site. The geophysical survey and LiDAR data have identified weak anomalies with corresponding low earthworks, interpreted as ridge and furrow.

3. AIM

3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, date and significance of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, with particular reference for the potential for remains dating to the prehistoric and Romano-British periods. The results of the work will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by AC archaeology (Vinnels 2024) and with refrerence to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' documents *Standard for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2023) and *Universal Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2023). It comprised the machine excavation of five trenches totalling 75m in length, with each measuring 1.6m wide. They were positioned to target anomalies identified from the geophysical survey, as well as testing 'blank' area to confirm the effectiveness of the survey (Fig. 1).

4.2 The trenches were located using a Leica Netrover GPS with sub 10mm accuracy. The removal of overlying soils within the trenches was undertaken in 20cm spits

(maximum) under the control and direction of the site archaeologist. Stripping by mechanical excavator ceased at the level at which natural subsoil was exposed.

4.3 All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012). Detailed sections and plans were produced at a scale of 1:20, while all site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS *(Fig. 1; Plates 2-3)*

5.1 No archaeological features or deposits were exposed in any of the trenches. Natural subsoil, comprising light reddish brown silty clay loam was exposed across the site at a depth of between 0.21m and 0.45m below the ground surface. This was overlain by a consistent simple soil sequence consisting of mid reddish brown silty loam subsoil beneath mid brown silty loam topsoil. Tabulated context descriptions for each trench are set out in Appendix 1.

5.2 A small quantity of late post-medieval to modern finds was recovered from the topsoil in two trenches. The finds comprise two pieces of pottery (7g) and a clear glass bottle base (21g) from a square-sectioned condiment bottle. One piece of pottery is a rim from a creamware plate and the other, a fluted body sherd of Staffordshire-type white ware. The former sherd could be as early as c. 1740 and the latter is 19th century in date.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The evaluation did not identify any archaeological features or deposits within any of the trenches and no pre-modern finds were recovered. In all the trenches a simple sequence comprising subsoil and topsoil was exposed over the natural subsoil. The targeted linear trends as shown on the interpreted geophysical survey results were not encountered as corresponding features.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

7.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of **ACA0185** and the Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes ref. **DZSWS:43-2024**. It will be held until it is known if any further archaeological work is required.

7.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **529194**, which will include a digital copy of the final report.

8. SOURCES CONSULTED

AC archaeology, revised 2012, *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*.

Bedford, W. and Winterburn, C., 2023, *Land off Russley Green, Baydon: Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment*. Unpublished Landgage Heritage report ref. **PR0185**.

British Geological Survey online viewer, accessed December 2024, https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, www.archaeologists.net/reporting toolkit/using-the-advisory-checklist.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2023, *Standard for Archaeological Field Evaluation.*

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Donaldson, K. and Sabin, D., 2023, *Land off Russley Green, Baydon, Wiltshire: Magnetometer Survey Report*. Unpublished Archaeological Surveys report ref. **J979**.

Vinnels, L. 2024:*Land off Rusley Green, Baydon, Wiltshire: Project design for an archaeological trial trench evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. ACD0185/1/0

Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record, accessed December 2024, https://services.wiltshire.gov.uk/HistoryEnvRecord/Home/Index.

Key

Site boundary

Excavated trial trenches

Geophysical interpretation

Positive Anomaly

Ferrous

Ridge and Furrow

Trench 1

Trench 2

Trench 3

Trench 4

Trench 5

RUSSLEY GREEN

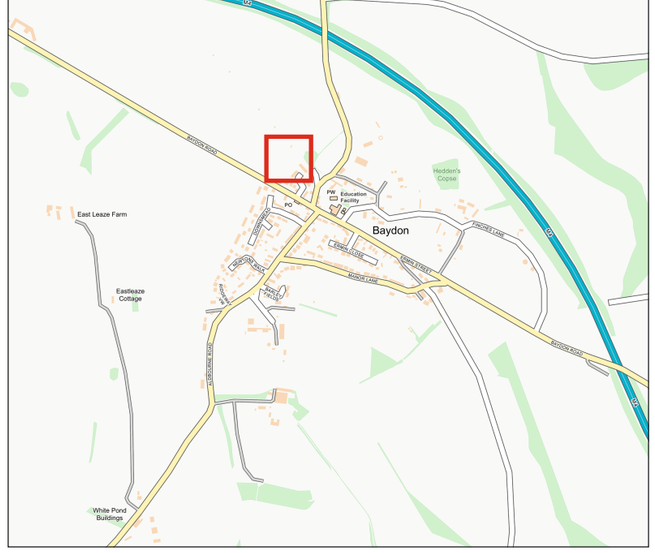
N

0 25m

Scale 1:500@A3

Based on drawing prepared by Landgage Heritage





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PROJECT

Land off Russley Green, Baydon, Wiltshire

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site and trial trenches in relation to geophysical survey results

AC archaeology



Plate 1: General view of site with Trench 1 in foreground. Looking north



Plate 2: General view of Trench 5, looking northwest (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 4, representative section, view to south (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated context descriptions by trench

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		**Length** 15m	**Width** 1.6m	**Alignment** NW-SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth b.g.s.**	**Interpretation**	
100	Mid brown silt loam with rare subangular gravel and subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0-0.21m	Topsoil	
101	Mid reddish brown silt loam with occasional subangular gravel and pebbles, and occasional subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.21-0.35m	Subsoil	
102	Light reddish brown silty clay loam with common subangular gravel and pebbles, and common subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.35m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 2		**Length** 15m	**Width** 1.6m	**Alignment** NW-SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth b.g.s.**	**Interpretation**	
200	Mid brown silt loam with rare subangular gravel and subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0-0.22m	Topsoil	
201	Mid reddish brown silt loam with occasional subangular gravel and pebbles, and occasional subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.22-0.38m	Subsoil	
202	Light reddish brown silty clay loam with common subangular gravel and pebbles, and common subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.38m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		**Length** 15m	**Width** 1.6m	**Alignment** NW-SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth b.g.s.**	**Interpretation**	
300	Mid brown silt loam with rare subangular gravel and subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0-0.24m	Topsoil	
301	Mid reddish brown silt loam with occasional subangular gravel and pebbles, and occasional subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.24-0.45m	Subsoil	
302	Light reddish brown silty clay loam with common subangular gravel and pebbles, and common subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.45m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		**Length** 15m	**Width** 1.6m	**Alignment** E-W
Context	**Description**	**Depth b.g.s.**	**Interpretation**	
400	Mid brown silt loam with rare subangular gravel and subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0-0.24m	Topsoil	
401	Mid reddish brown silt loam with occasional subangular gravel and pebbles, and occasional subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.24-0.45m	Subsoil	
402	Light reddish brown silty clay loam with common subangular gravel and pebbles, and common subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.45m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 5		**Length** 15m	**Width** 1.6m	**Alignment** NW-SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth b.g.s.**	**Interpretation**	
500	Mid brown silt loam with rare subangular gravel and subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0-0.23m	Topsoil	
501	Mid reddish brown silt loam with occasional subangular gravel and pebbles, and occasional subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.23-0.43m	Subsoil	
502	Light reddish brown silty clay loam with common subangular gravel and pebbles, and common subangular to subrounded flint nodules	0.43m+	Natural subsoil	

b.g.s. = below ground surface

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