



Sunnybank, Itchen Abbas, Nr Winchester, Hampshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report Phase III





**SUNNYBANK, ITCHEN ABBAS, NR WINCHESTER,
HAMPSHIRE**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Figure 1 Site and trench location plan and section.

**SUNNYBANK, ITCHEN ABBAS,
WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE****Archaeological Evaluation Report****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Itchen Valley Homes to undertake a third phase of archaeological evaluation at Sunnybank, Itchen Abbas, Hampshire in advance of proposed development for residential use.

The work was required to establish the presence, density and character of any archaeological remains in the western extent of the Site and provide additional data to two previous evaluation exercises, comprising nine trenches, which had established the presence of a large circular feature thought to be a previously unrecognised pond barrow in the central part of the Site. This feature was associated with a number of satellite burials and pits of late Romano-British and Early Saxon date, forming part of an extensive cemetery which is known to extend north of the Site.

Two additional trenches were excavated in the Phase III evaluation which produced informative new evidence for the distribution of archaeological activity in the western part of the site, including the southern margins. This area had not been evaluated by previous trenching. The results confirmed the presence of archaeological features to the west of the probable pond barrow. An additional pit, which may mark the western limit of archaeological features at the site, was probably linked to an adjacent pit, found in the Phase I evaluation that produced Romano-British pottery. These features were related spatially with other pits and graves, also detected in the Phase I evaluation immediately to the west of the probable pond barrow.

The Phase III evaluation also revealed a previously unrecorded feature, likely to be a strip lynchet, at the lip of the south facing spur that dips to the valley of the River Itchen. The full extent and date of this lynchet is not known; however if, as seems more likely, the field system post-dated the construction of the pond barrow, the latter may not only have influenced the lay-out of the field system, but also have been filled in by the subsequent agricultural activity.

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Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by Itchen Valley Homes and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Peter Gird for his help and cooperation during the field work. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Stephen Appleby, Winchester Archaeologist for monitoring the work in the field and for helpful discussions on site.

The report was researched and compiled by Phil Harding, comments on the finds made by Lorraine Mephram and the graphics prepared by Elizabeth James. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

**SUNNYBANK, ITCHEN ABBAS,
WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE****Archaeological Evaluation Report****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Itchen Valley Homes to carry out a third phase (Phase III) of archaeological evaluation at Sunnybank, Itchen Abbas, Winchester, Hants, (NGR 453640 132920), hereafter 'the Site', in connection with proposals to develop the Site for housing.
- 1.1.2 An initial archaeological evaluation, Phase I (WA 2010), comprised four machine excavated trenches towards the western half of the Site. This work revealed archaeological features of Bronze Age, Romano-British and Saxon date. A substantial feature, interpreted as a possible Bronze Age pond barrow nearly 30m in diameter, was identified in all four trenches and a number of north-south aligned inhumation graves, one containing a cremation vessel, were found on the western side of the barrow and thought to be Romano-British in date.
- 1.1.3 A Phase II evaluation (WA 2011) was requested by the Historic Environment Officer (HEO) at Winchester City Council to establish the archaeological potential in the eastern half of the Site. The mechanical excavation of five trenches, each ten metres long, did not identify any archaeological features and confirmed that the extensive archaeological remains identified in the 2010 evaluation, did not extend to the eastern limits of the Site.
- 1.1.4 Following an on-site meeting between the HEO and Client, the prospect of development in the extreme western part of the Site was considered. Further evaluation was therefore requested to assess the archaeological potential of that area.
- 1.1.5 A Project Design (Wessex Archaeology Ref: 74952.01) setting out the methodology for the Phase III evaluation, here described under the headings Trenches 10 and 11, was prepared and approved by the HEO ahead of works commencing.

1.2 The Site, location and geology

- 1.2.1 The Site (**Figure 1**) covers approximately 0.5ha in total area and contains the house 'Sunnybank' in the southern part of the Site. A higher, rectangular open area measuring 120m by 25m is located to the north-west. The central and eastern parts of this area have also been subjected to archaeological evaluation (WA 2010 & WA 2011).
- 1.2.2 The B3047 road lies to the south of the Site and Little Hayes Lane to the east. To the north lie the playing field of Itchen Abbas Primary School and a meadow. The latter, thought to contain the greater part of the known Late Roman and Saxon cemetery, lies south of, and was excluded from, a housing development built in the 1990s, in order to preserve the cemetery.

- 1.2.3 The Site lies at c. 60m above Ordnance Datum on a spur of free draining Upper Cretaceous Chalk which drops steeply to the flood plain of the River Itchen to the south. The Site is currently open, grassed and unmanaged, with a belt of trees forming the northern boundary and scrub in other parts of the Site.

2 SOURCES

2.1 Historic environment record

- 2.1.1 The background research of the Site and its immediate environs has been studied in some detail and described both in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology Ref: 74952.01) and in results of previous evaluations, Phase 1 comprising Trenches 1-4 (Wessex Archaeology 2010) and Phase II covering Trenches 5-9 (Wessex Archaeology 2011). The principal points are summarised below.
- 2.1.2 The Site lies approximately 7km east of the City of Winchester, within the historic village of Itchen Abbas, which lies on the northern side of the River Itchen valley. The Site lies in an area of known archaeological and historic monuments, sites and findspots dating from the Prehistoric to the medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 2.1.3 The main focus of recorded archaeological activity relates to a cemetery, discovered in 1984, of probable Late Roman and Early Saxon date, occupying land to the north of the Site. Subsequent evaluation to develop the Little Hayes estate immediately east of the school playing field and north of the Site revealed over 60 graves and a small number of cremation burials. None were excavated.
- 2.1.4 Most significantly graves were recorded close to the southern boundary of the Site.

2.2 2010 evaluation

- 2.2.1 The Phase I evaluation at the Site (WA 2010) comprised four machine dug trenches which revealed archaeological features of Bronze Age, Romano-British and Saxon date.
- 2.2.2 A substantial feature, interpreted as a possible Bronze Age pond barrow nearly 30m in diameter, was recorded in all four trenches (**Figure 1**). This feature was partially investigated in order to characterise its form and deposits within it. Three north-south aligned inhumation graves, one containing a cremation vessel, and all almost certainly of Romano-British date, were found close to the western side of the barrow, in Trench 1. Also in Trench 1, three cut features were found inside the western edge of the barrow, all filled with coarse chalk rubble; these were not fully investigated, although there is a possibility that these are funerary in nature, given their location. A posthole was also recorded close to these features. One definite and two possible inhumation graves all probably aligned east west were found close to the southern side of the barrow, in Trench 2.
- 2.2.3 The cemetery is well preserved and an important archaeological monument comparable with others in the Itchen Valley containing burials apparently

spanning the period of transition between the late Roman and Saxon periods.

2.3 2011 evaluation

2.3.1 A Phase II archaeological evaluation at Sunnybank, in the eastern half of the Site failed to identify any archaeological features. The absence of features in this eastern area was consistent with the distribution of archaeological features revealed in the 1991 evaluation to the north of the Site and east of the Itchen Abbas Primary School and also in the 2010 Phase 1 evaluation.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and scope

3.1.1 The Phase III evaluation aimed to determine the location, extent, character, condition and potential significance of archaeological remains on the Site that may be impacted by the proposed development. In addition the evaluation results aimed to:

- Assess existing and proposed impacts on the archaeological potential of the Site;
- Inform decisions concerning the future treatment of the Site's archaeological potential in light of development proposals;
- Consider the results of the evaluation in light of the archaeological potential of the Site to contribute to current local, regional and wider archaeological research objectives

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Fieldwork

4.1.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of two trial trenches (Trenches 10 and 11) to establish if further archaeological features were present in the western extent of the Site (**Figure 1**). Trench 10 measured 10m x 1.8m and was aligned approximately NW-SE while Trench 11 measured 20m x 1.8m and was aligned N-S across this portion of the Site. In the event it became necessary to reduce the length of Trench 11 by approximately 2.5 m to avoid encroaching beneath the canopy of mature trees that form the northern boundary of the Site.

4.1.2 The trenches were opened using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket, under the supervision of Wessex Archaeology. Mechanical excavation continued in spits through topsoil and subsoil down to the uppermost archaeological features or natural deposits, whichever was highest. Upcast from the evaluation trenches was stored to the side of its respective trench, where it could be scanned for artefacts, at a minimum distance of 1.5m from the trench edge.

4.1.3 All archaeological features were investigated sufficient to establish their extent, function and, where possible, date. The terms of the WSI stipulated that investigation of all graves and cremations would be restricted to establishing their presence and definition.

- 4.1.4 Archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system and under the WINCM Site Code **AY 435**. Deposits and features were recorded on drawing film at an appropriate scale, generally planned at a scale of 1:20 with sections drawn at 1:10.
- 4.1.5 An overall Site plan, showing the extent of all features and locations of excavated sections was prepared and tied in to the Ordnance Survey national grid and Ordnance Survey Datum using a Leica GNSS GPS survey system. This has made it possible to append the results to those of previous phases of work at the Site.
- 4.1.6 A photographic record was compiled during the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels.
- 4.1.7 The methodology included contingency that in the event of the identification of exceptional or highly complex archaeological deposits, sample excavation would be restricted, sufficient only to resolve the principal aims of the evaluation.
- 4.1.8 No human burials would be excavated or removed, but would be defined and stratigraphic relationships established.
- 4.1.9 Spoil from the trenches was scanned routinely for artefacts.
- 4.1.10 Following all investigation, recording and monitoring by the HEO, the trenches were backfilled.

5 EVALUATION RESULTS

5.1 Trench 10

- 5.1.1 This trench was aligned approximately NW-SE at the extreme western end of the Site and measured 10m long by 1.80m wide. The sections showed a consistent cover of dark grey, heavily rooted silty clay topsoil (1001), 0.20m thick.
- 5.1.2 The topsoil overlay a layer of light grey/grey brown leached sub soil (1002). This deposit, which probably comprised a former plough soil, reached a maximum thickness of 0.33m at the NW end, where it formed a headland against the present hedge-line, but thinned to 0.15m thick to the SE.
- 5.1.3 This plough soil deposit lay on a clearly defined natural chalk bedrock surface. There were no archaeological features.

5.2 Trench 11

- 5.2.1 The second trench was designed to measure 20m long and 1.8m wide and aligned north-south across the Site; however the northern end of the trench extended beneath the canopy of mature trees, which formed the north boundary of the Site. The trench was therefore shortened by approximately 2.5m to avoid damage to the root systems.
- 5.2.2 The topsoil horizon (1101) was of identical composition to Trench 10, however the former plough soil/subsoil (1102), had thinned away from the

headland and was only present at the southern end of the trench. At the northern end of the excavation the topsoil lay directly on the truncated surface of the natural chalk.

- 5.2.3 Three archaeological features were identified in the trench.
- 5.2.4 An oval, slightly crescent-shaped feature [1103] was recorded towards the central part of the trench, aligned approximately SW-NE. This potentially 'grave-like' feature measured approximately 1.40m long and 0.65m wide. Excavation showed that it was 0.30m deep with vertical sides with a flat base.
- 5.2.5 It was filled with by an upper layer of fine rubbly chalk (1104) with a light grey, creamy matrix, which was approximately 0.10m thick and principally located to the west side of the feature. This deposit overlay a fill (1105) of light grey-brown silty clay with scattered flints and chalk lumps. There were no finds apart from a fragment of animal bone and it was concluded that this feature was most likely to represent a tree throw feature.
- 5.2.6 To the north of the tree throw a pit [1113] approximately 1.70m in diameter extended 0.65m from the east edge of the trench. A quadrant was sampled, to a depth of approximately 0.50m, sufficient to establish the profile of the feature, the composition of the upper fills and to eliminate the possibility that its primary function was a grave.
- 5.2.7 The tertiary fills (1114) comprised material that was indistinguishable from the subsoil horizon (1102) suggesting that the final phase of silting resulted from ploughing.
- 5.2.8 The colluvium overlay a layer of dark grey/black, charcoal rich silty clay (1115), which probably represents the final act of deposition within the pit.
- 5.2.9 The underlying secondary fills comprised a series of layers (1106, 1107, 1108, 1109), which tipped into the central weathering cone of the pit. All were distributed evenly around the pit quadrant, became progressively less compacted and were clean, except one (1108), which was restricted to the southern edge of the pit. This layer contained scattered charcoal fragments and may represent deliberate episodic refuse disposal. Artefacts were otherwise scarce.
- 5.2.10 Layer 1109 was only visible around the base of the pit and contained relatively large quantities of chalk rubble, probably derived from the pit sides, which suggested that this layer may represent the upper parts of the primary fills.
- 5.2.11 Following the removal of the topsoil an area of grey brown/dark brown silty clay (1111) was noted occupying the southern end of the trench. An initial hand-dug test pit to establish the depth and profile of the feature revealed that it [1110] dipped steeply down on the north side for approximately one metre.

- 5.2.12 Discussion with the Hampshire HEO, on site, determined that the most appropriate method of resolving the feature, sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the WSI, would be to excavate a slot by machine.
- 5.2.13 A slot, approximately 0.50m wide, was therefore dug against the west section of the trench. This restricted excavation demonstrated that the feature [1110] was approximately 1.2m deep from the present ground surface, and comprised a flat bottomed terrace, probably a lynchet, in the solid natural chalk.
- 5.2.14 The fill comprised homogeneous, heavily rooted, grey brown/dark brown silty clay (1111). Natural flint nodules increased in frequency towards the base of the deposit, probably due to natural sorting. Attention given to establishing the context of any artefacts from the fill demonstrated that worked flints were present throughout the fill.

6 FINDS

- 6.1.1 A very small quantity of finds was recovered from the third phase of evaluation, deriving from four contexts, all in Trench 11 (see Table 1, below).
- 6.1.2 No closely datable material was recovered. The worked flint comprises waste flakes and a core, in chalk flint and mostly patinated. Flake and core morphology (broad, squat flakes, and unsystematic core) and technology (hard hammer technique) suggest a Bronze Age date, but there are no chronologically distinctive tools or other utilised pieces.
- 6.1.3 The animal bone includes cattle, sheep/goat and cat (the latter represented by a few bones from a secondary fill (1106) of pit [1113]).
- 6.1.4 The fired clay and stone fragments from tertiary fill (1114) of pit [1113] all show signs of exposure to high temperatures; the fired clay is almost vitrified, and the stone (probably greensand, unworked) has surface deposits which also appear vitrified. Association with some pyrotechnical activity can be suggested, but the precise function and date remain uncertain.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

Context	Animal Bone	Fired Clay	Worked Flint	Stone
1105	1/26			
1106	9/3			
1111	2/109		7/568	
1114	8/16	2/20	3/20	2/192
TOTALS	20/154	2/20	10/588	2/192

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The third phase of archaeological evaluation at Sunnybank, Itchen Abbas was commissioned to establish the presence, density and character of any archaeological remains in the western extent of the Site. The results of this work would provide information on the possible impact of any proposed development in that part of the Site.

- 7.1.2 Phases I and II of the archaeological evaluation had established the presence of a large circular feature in the central part of the Site. This feature is regarded as probably representing a previously unrecorded pond barrow around which a number of satellite burials of late Romano-British and Early Saxon date have been added. These burials form part of an extensive cemetery which is known from previous campaigns of archaeological monitoring to extend north of the Site.
- 7.1.3 These accumulated archives have indicated that the density of archaeological features thinned dramatically to the east but were likely to extend into the western parts of the Site in the area examined by Phase III. This pattern to the east was confirmed by the results of Phase II of the evaluation at Sunnybank which revealed no archaeological features.
- 7.1.4 The Phase III work, included in this report, has confirmed that archaeological features are present to the west of the probable pond barrow and suggest that they can be related closely with the distribution of features revealed in Phase I.
- 7.1.5 Pit 1113 lay immediately adjacent to a series of archaeological features recorded in the Phase I evaluation (Wessex Archaeology Ref: 74950.02). These features comprised a Romano-British pit [121] and three graves or possible graves [115, 118 125] and a possible cremation burial [120]. These features all lay within 5m of pit 1113 and the western edge of the probable pond barrow.
- 7.1.6 Pit 1113 produced no datable artefacts, nevertheless it is likely that it is contemporary with Pit 121 of the Phase I evaluation.
- 7.1.7 Given the density of archaeological features immediately east of Pit 1113 it is possible, but not certain, that the apparent absence of features to the west of the pit, including Trench 10 which was barren, may mark the western limit of archaeological features at the Site. Given what is already known from the area it may be very likely that additional features lie to the north.
- 7.1.8 The combined results of the Phase I and III evaluations have produced consistent results from the south-west corner of the Site. Trench 4 of the Phase I evaluation produced only two tree throw features in the gap between the western edge of the probable pond barrow and the eastern edge of Trench 11 of the Phase III work.
- 7.1.9 The tree throw feature [1103] of Phase III continues the alignment of those features observed in Phase I and may be related to a previously unrecorded feature, likely to be a strip lynchet, at the lip of the south facing spur that dips to the valley of the River Itchen.
- 7.1.10 The full extent and date of this lynchet is not known; however the extrapolated radius of the probable pond barrow indicates that the two features intersect. It is entirely speculative but it seems more probable that the field system post dates the construction of the pond barrow, although the latter may have influenced the layout of the field system.

- 7.1.11 The Phase III evaluation has therefore provided the first assessment of archaeological activity at the southern margins of the Site and produced results that may have implications for the archaeological story across the remainder of the Site

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1.1 The Phase III evaluation has provided an assessment of the density, distribution and survival of archaeological features at the west end of the Site. It has shown that these features do survive, apparently in relatively low density, in this area of the Site, which are linked to the probable pond barrow complex.
- 8.1.2 In addition it has provided a hint of the possible chronological development of archaeological activity on the Site.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wessex Archaeology 2010: '*Sunnybank, Itchen Abbas, nr Winchester, Hampshire*' Client report Ref 74950.02

Wessex Archaeology 2011, '*Sunnybank, Itchen abbas, nr Winchester, Hampshire*', Client report Ref 72951.02

10 APPENDIX 1 – OASIS RECORD FORM

10.1 Sunnybank, Itchen Abbas, Winchester - Wessex Archaeology

OASIS ID - wessexar1-127862

Versions

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	S Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	1 June 2012

Completed sections in current version

Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
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Validated sections in current version

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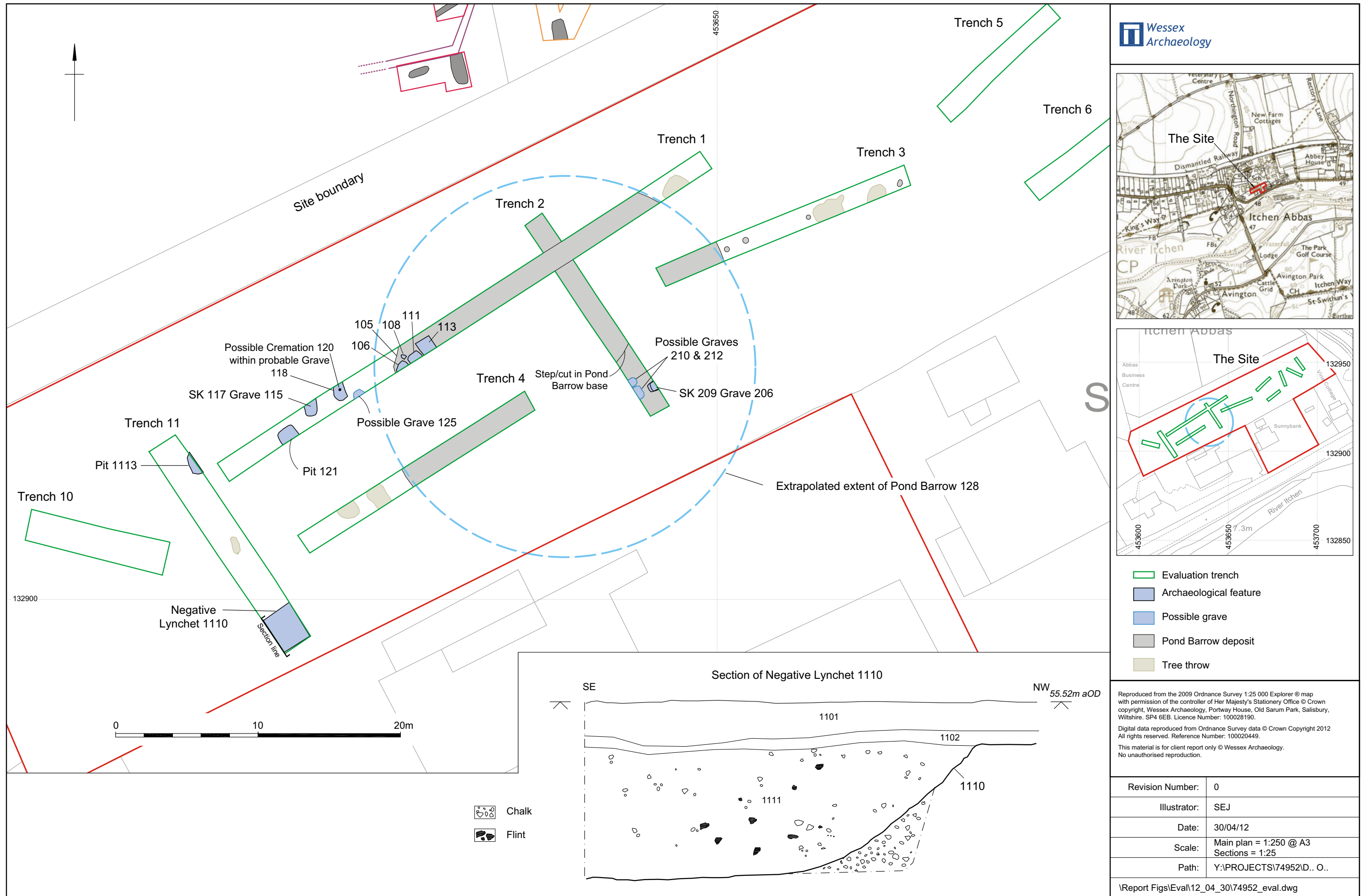
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Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s
Boundary file submitted?	No	Boundary filename
HER signed off?		NMR signed off?

11 APPENDIX 2 – TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

TRENCH 10			Type:	Machine Excavated
Dimensions: 10m by 2m		Max. depth: 0.53m	Ground level: c. 56 mOD	
Context	Description		Depth	
1001	<i>Topsoil</i>	Dark grey silty clay. Heavily rooted and reasonably well sorted. Very few inclusions, 10% flint grits, Semblance of poorly formed sorted horizon at the base.	0-0.20m	
1002	<i>Subsoil</i>	Light grey/grey brown leached silty clay subsoil. Former plough soil accumulation at NW end of trench marking former headland. Thins to 0.15 m thick at S end. Sits on well defined Chalk bedrock surface.	0.33m	

TRENCH 11			Type:	Machine Excavated
Dimensions: 17.5m by 2m		Max. depth: 0.40m	Ground level: c. 56.5-55 mOD	
Context	Description		Depth	
1101	<i>Topsoil</i>	Dark grey silty clay. Heavily rooted, reasonably well sorted. Very few inclusions <10% flint grits. Semblance of poorly formed sorted horizon but less well formed than in Trench 10.	0-0.20m	
1102	<i>Subsoil</i>	Light grey/grey brown leached silty clay subsoil. Former plough soil accumulation. Only significantly obvious at S end of trench.	Max 0.20 m at S end.	
1103	Tree throw	Oval, slightly crescent-shaped feature, 1.40 x 0.65 m, with vertical – steep sides and flat base	0.30 m	
1104	<i>Layer</i>	Light grey, cream silty clay with angular chalk lumps, c. 20mm with mixed pea chalk 80-90%	0.10 m	
1105	<i>Layer</i>	Light grey brown silty clay. Rare sub angular flints <10% with chalk lumps and pellets, poorly sorted, 40-50%. More concentrated on E side.	0.20 m	
1106	<i>Secondary pit fill</i>	Grey brown silty clay, sub angular chalk lumps, c.10mm (50%). One large flint steeply inclined in E section.	0.10 m	
1107	<i>Secondary pit fill</i>	Mid brown, silty clay. Generally stone free, occasional small <10mm chalk lumps (10-20%)	0.08 m	
1108	<i>Layer</i>	Dark brown silty clay with charcoal flecks. Thin lens only visible in E section.	0.02 m	
1109	<i>? Primary pit fill</i>	Grey brown silty clay. Rubbly loose, uncompacted fill. Chalk lumps c. 20mm (60-70%). Present around edges of pit. Possible weathered Chalk forming primary fill.	0.12 m	
1110	Negative lynchet	Chalk terrace feature with steep sloping edge and flat base. Cut into firm Chalk.	0.90 m	
1111	<i>Layer</i>	Grey brown/dark brown silty clay. Chalk lumps relatively scarce 30-40%. Flints present, more plentiful towards base.	0.90 m	
1112		Not used		
1113	Pit	Extends from trench edge, 1.70 x 0.65 m. Circular pit vertical sides, base not seen.	0.55 m as dug	
1114	<i>Tertiary pit fill</i>	Light grey/grey brown silty clay. Mixed chalk grits with sub angular flints 20-30 mm (<10%). As 1102.	c. 0.40 m	
1115	<i>Layer-dump</i>	Tip of dark grey/black silty clay with chalk pellets, 10-15 mm (20%) and charcoal. Heavily rooted. Occupies central weathering cone.	0.08 m	



Site and trench location plan and section

Figure 1



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