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Willow Tree Works Swallowfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Ref: 103411.01
August 2015



**Willow Tree Works,
Swallowfield, Berkshire**

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation Report

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August 2015

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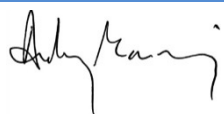
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Planning Application: Wokingham Borough Council F/2014/0940



Quality Assurance

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File:					

* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

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Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation Report

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Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation Report

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley Division) to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on the site of the former Winkworth Machinery Ltd., Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire. The evaluation was undertaken in advance of a proposed development and the associated landscaping and infrastructure works. The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 472397 164986.

Planning permission had been granted for the proposed scheme, with this initial evaluation forming part of the archaeological mitigation associated with the consent prior to construction. The development works comprise of the demolition of the extant buildings in the eastern part of the Site prior to the construction of 38 dwellings with hard and soft landscaping, open space, parking provision and associated infrastructure.

The evaluation was unable to confirm the presence or absence of archaeological remains. The initial trenching revealed that land within a large area of the eastern half of the Site was heavily contaminated with fuel oil and heavily disturbed by the previous works on the Site.

The western part of the Site is largely unaffected by the proposed development although a proposed pond area had already been stripped. Investigation in this area was restricted due to the presence of newts in this area. Limited hand excavation was able to ascertain the nature of the deposits within this area.



Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley Division), and particularly Evan Holland for his help and assistance during the course of the works. Thanks are also due to Penny Plant demolition crew, particularly David Ford, for their help and cooperation. Thanks are also offered to Ellie Leary, Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology for her interest and support.

The evaluation was undertaken by Benjamin Cullen and Rachel Williams. The report was written and compiled by Rachel Williams. The illustrations were prepared by Karen Nichols. The Project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andrew Manning.



Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley Division) to carry out archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at the former Winkworth Machinery Ltd, Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield, Berkshire. (Figure 1), hereafter 'the Site' (centred on NGR 472397 164986).
- 1.1.2 The Client submitted a planning application in April 2014 for residential development comprising 38 dwellings, hard and soft landscaping, open space, parking provision and associated infrastructure (Wokingham Borough Council F/2014/0940).
- 1.1.3 An archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) (Wessex Archaeology 2014) was submitted with the application and established that there was the potential for buried archaeological remains within the Site. This potential was defined as high for modern remains, medium for post-medieval and 19th-century features and unknown for remains of a Prehistoric, Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon and medieval date.
- 1.1.4 Since the Site has never been the subject of intrusive archaeological fieldwork, the advice of the Berkshire Archaeology archaeologist advising the Local Planning Authority (LPA) was that an archaeological planning condition should be attached to any successful planning approval. This condition would require that an initial trial trench evaluation of the Site and subsequent mitigation, as appropriate, should be undertaken.
- 1.1.5 Subsequently, the planning application was approved in April 2015 with an archaeological planning condition attached (Condition 16, F/2014/0940) requiring that:
- No development shall commence until a programme of archaeological work (which may comprise more than one phase of work) has been implemented in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation, which has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*
- Reason: The Site lies in an area of archaeological potential: Relevant policy: NPPF.MDD Policy TB25*
- 1.1.6 Subsequently, Wessex Archaeology prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for trenched evaluation which was submitted to, and approved by Berkshire Archaeology before the commencement of the fieldwork (WA 2015).



2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Location, topography and geology

- 2.1.1 The Site is situated off Swallowfield Street at the western periphery of the village of Swallowfield, approximately 8km to the south of the centre of the town of Reading.
- 2.1.2 The entire Site covers an area of approximately 3 ha, although the development is largely focused with the eastern half of the Site which was occupied by the warehouses and structures of the former Winkworth Machinery Ltd (1.6 ha). The western extent of the Site consists of a grass enclosure (1.4 ha).
- 2.1.3 The Site is bound by pasture to the west, residential housing to the south and east and by Swallowfield Street to the north. Situated on a gently sloping plot, the Site is at 44 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the northern extent on the site, decreasing to 43 m (aOD) at the southern extent of the Site.
- 2.1.4 The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay Formation, sedimentary bedrock of clay, silt and sand with superficial river terrace deposits of sand and gravel (British Geological Survey).

2.2 Archaeological and historical background

- 2.2.1 While no previous archaeological investigation has been undertaken within the Site, the DBA noted that a desk-based assessment has previously been conducted for the Site (WA 2014) and nearby area, John Moore Heritage Services (2003) and the nearby Sheepbridge Cottage Cotswold Archaeology (2013). The Sheepbridge Cottage identified a high potential for archaeologically significant remains within the area, as indicated by the cropmarks of a probable settlement complex, which had previously been identified by Wessex Archaeology (1999), as part of an aerial photographic assessment of evidence for Later Prehistoric and Romano-British settlements to the south of Reading.
- 2.2.2 An archaeological evaluation by Wessex Archaeology in 1982 (Berkshire Archaeological Society 1991) at a multi-period cropmark complex, situated at Riseley Farm approximately 970m to the south-east of the Site. This identified a double-ditched rectangular enclosure, a curvilinear enclosure ditch and a ring-ditch dating from the early-middle Bronze Age to the first century AD.
- 2.2.3 The Loddon Valley field walking survey, undertaken between 1990 and 1991 (Ford 1997), aimed to increase archaeological evidence and understanding within the region as part of a long term development strategy. The survey revealed numerous sites and find spots ranging between the Mesolithic and Medieval periods across the county of Berkshire, with two sherds of undated pottery found within the Site.
- 2.2.4 In 1996, during works on a cable replacement, Wessex Archaeology (1997) undertook a watching brief on the Scheduled circular moated site (WA25) at Sheepbridge Court, to the north of the Site. The presence of a dump deposit laying on the outer edge of the moat was uncovered, possibly the remnants of a bank, although, no datable artefacts were recovered from this material. Additional works at Sheepbridge Court by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (2005) did not reveal any archaeological deposits or finds.
- 2.2.5 Approximately 145 m south of the Site at Trowes Lane, Foundations Archaeology (1999) conducted an archaeological evaluation, which identified no finds or features. Further work off Trowes Lane by John Moore Heritage Services (2010) revealed a demolition layer, containing 19th and 20th century pottery.



2.2.6 A watching brief by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (2003) at Lambs Farm revealed no archaeological deposits or finds, in spite of a scatter of medieval pottery having previously been identified in the immediate vicinity. Later investigations at Lambs Farm by John Moore Heritage Services (2004 and 2007) revealed a further absence of archaeological features on site.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General

3.1.1 The general aims and objectives of the archaeological trial trench evaluation were to

- *To locate, identify and to investigate and record the presence/absence of archaeological features or deposits;*
- *The evaluation, where possible, would confirm the extent, date, character, relationship, condition and significance of archaeological features, artefacts and deposits within the proposed development area;*
- *To inform the scope and nature of any requirements for any potential further fieldwork, whether additional watching brief, excavation or post-excavation work; and*
- *To enable the preservation by record of any archaeological features or deposits uncovered.*
- *To place any identified archaeological remains within their historical context, and*
- *To prepare a report on the results of the evaluation.*

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in the agreed WSI (WA 2015) and comprised of the excavation of seven machine-excavated trial trenches measuring between 15 to 30 m in length and 2 m wide and the cleaning by machine or hand to the top of the gravel, as appropriate, the area around the ponds and proposed pond. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's *Standards and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014a).

3.2.2 The trenches were excavated using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator employing a toothless ditching bucket, under the constant supervision by an experienced archaeologist. Machine levels were determined by the presence of contamination or the natural horizon.

3.2.3 The spoil from the trenches was scanned for artefacts.

3.2.4 Where it was deemed safe to do so all deposits were recorded using WA's *pro forma* record sheets with a unique numbering system for individual contexts.

3.2.5 A full photographic record was maintained during the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. The record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the principal features, finds excavated, and the site as a whole. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and ensures the long term accessibility of the image set.



3.2.6 The survey was carried out with a Leica Viva series GNSS unit, using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Grid coordinate system. A unique site code 104311 was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

3.3 Health and safety

3.3.1 Health and safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices overrode archaeological considerations at all times.

3.3.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

3.3.3 Initial trenching quickly confirmed wide spread fuel oil contamination with some asbestos (in places) across the main proposed housing area. The presence of contaminated ground limited both the number of trenches that were able to be opened and the final depth to which trenches were able to be investigated to. **Plates 1-3** demonstrate the extent and nature of the contamination and made ground that exists across the Site.

3.3.4 Trenches 1, 3 and 4 were unable to be fully opened as health and safety considerations deemed them unsafe both from contaminated spoil and the presence of two deep water sumps in trench 4.

3.3.5 Health and safety considerations also overrode the ability of the archaeologist to fully record trenches 2, 5 and 6 with contamination and rising contaminated ground water making the trenches inaccessible.

3.3.6 Trench 7 was only partially opened due to contamination.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following section provides a summary description of the results of the archaeological trial trench evaluation. Details of individual contexts are retained within the project archive.

4.2 Natural deposits and soil sequences

4.2.1 The stratigraphy across the Site varied from compacted gravels in the north-western area to clays in the western part of the Site. Within the eastern half of the Site, the natural gravel and clay deposits were overlain by modern made ground deposits between 0.3 m to 1.1 m in depth and which in turn lay immediately below the concrete hardstanding. In the western half of the Site, the sequence of deposits was that the natural gravel and clay deposits were overlain by topsoil and subsoil overburden up to a maximum of 0.3 m in depth.

4.2.2 In the eastern part of the Site, two of the trenches were excavated down to the top of natural clays (**Plates 4 – 7**). Both these trenches comprised of concrete capping hard-core overlaying clays in to which contaminants had leached. The degree to which the trenches were contaminated varied but both were excavated to approximately 1.1 m-1.2 m before a clean layer of clay was clearly defined. As this depth lay below the level of the natural water table both trenches began to flood before they could be fully recorded.

4.2.3 The only part of the Site in which a clear stratigraphic matrix could be comprehensively ascertained was in the north-western pond area, which had been partial stripped. Here the



stratigraphic sequence comprised of 0.1 m of dark-grey sandy loam topsoil overlaying a subsoil of mid-grey sandy silt, up to 0.2 m in depth. The natural comprised of light-brown sandy silt clay with common sub-sounded and sub-angular flint inclusions. The pond area had previously been stripped, although not under archaeological supervision, to the very top of the natural. The pond area had been opened for some time and had been subjected to vehicular activities which may have masked any discreet archaeological deposits within the area. This area did not appear to contain any substantial archaeological remains. (Plate 8 – 9).

5 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

5.1.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered during this evaluation.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1.1 No material suitable for environmental analysis was present within the monitored areas, accordingly no samples were taken.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1.1 The assessment of the results from the trial trenching has been heavily restricted by the on-site ecological and contamination issues, which has affected the overall scope and depth of the initially proposed trenching. However, where fieldwork has been possible, no evidence for archaeological features, deposits or finds has been identified.

7.1.2 Within the main focus of the proposed housing within the eastern half of the Site, shallow made ground deposits have been identified immediately below the current hardstanding and which directly overlie the natural gravel and clay. No evidence for any buried ground levels or soils has been seen, where deeper evaluation was possible, suggesting that this area is likely to have been heavily truncated during the development of the former factory, with the potential removal of all but the deepest archaeological features which may have been present. However, due to the restricted scope of the evaluation, the complete removal of archaeological remains can not be confirmed, although the potential for archaeological remains within this area is low.

7.1.3 The western area of the Site has largely remained unimpacted by the development of the former factory immediately to the east. No trenching was possible for ecological reasons within this area. An initial investigation of the stripped pond area, indicated that the depth of the previous stripping had been close to the top of gravels, and although no evidence was found for any large archaeological features, deposits or finds, there was still the potential for the survival of small discrete features in this area, although the archaeological potential would appear to be low. While the western area of the Site is not scheduled to be heavily impacted by the development, further landscaping associated with the creation of ponds could still impact on any potential archaeology.

7.1.4 Given the restrictive scope of the evaluation works, which can not confirm the absence of archaeologically significant features, subsequent archaeological mitigation during groundworks may be required, although the full scope and nature of any required programme of archaeological works would need to be agreed and approved by Berkshire Archaeology.



8 STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

8.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with West Berkshire Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project, recorded under the Wessex Archaeology project code 104311 with the accession code to be subsequently confirmed. Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

8.2 Preparation of archive

8.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the West Berkshire Museum and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014b; Brown 2011; ADS 2013). An OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creator Forms. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the Berkshire HER. A copy of the OASIS entry form has been included in this report (**Appendix 2**).

8.3 Discard policy

8.3.1 WA follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.

8.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2011)

8.4 Security copy

8.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

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10 APPENDIX 1: STRATIGRAPHIC SUMMARIES

Context	Description	Depth (m)
201	Layer Gravel hard-core	0.0 - 0.7 bgl
202	Layer Intermittent patches of black contaminated clay.	0.7 + bgl
501	Layer Gravel hard-core	0.0 - 0.1 bgl
502	Layer Made ground consisting of gravels and sands	0.1 - 0.2 bgl
503	Layer Made/ contaminated ground consisting of mid-brown to dark-grey sandy clay, cut by two modern pipes and evidence of a land drain.	0.2 - 1 bgl
504	Layer Natural. Mid brown clay with patches of sparse sub rounded gravels.	1 + bgl
601	Layer Concrete	0.0 – 0.2 bgl
602	Layer Hard-core	0.2 – 0.3 bgl
603	Layer Made/ contaminated ground. Black clay contaminated with fuel oils.	0.3 – 1.1 bgl
604	Layer Natural. Mid grey with lenses of light brown clay, rare patches of coarse sub rounded gravel	1.1 + bgl
701	Layer Concrete	0.0 – 0.2 bgl
702	Layer Hard-core	0.2 – 0.3 bgl
703	Layer Made/ contaminated ground. Black clay contaminated with fuel oils.	0.3 + bgl
801	Layer Top soil. Dark grey sandy loam with rare sub rounded flint coarse gravel, poorly sorted. Turf covered and finely rooted throughout, moderately loose and with a diffuse horizon.	0.0 – 0.1 bgl
802	Layer Sub soil. Mid grey sandy silt with rare sub rounded and sub angular flint coarse gravel, poorly sorted with diffuse horizons and moderately compacted.	0.1 – 0.3 bgl
803	Layer Natural. Light brown silty sand with common sub rounded and sub angular flint cobbles and gravels, lenses of iron ore. Very compact	0.3 + bgl



APPENDIX 2: OASIS DATA

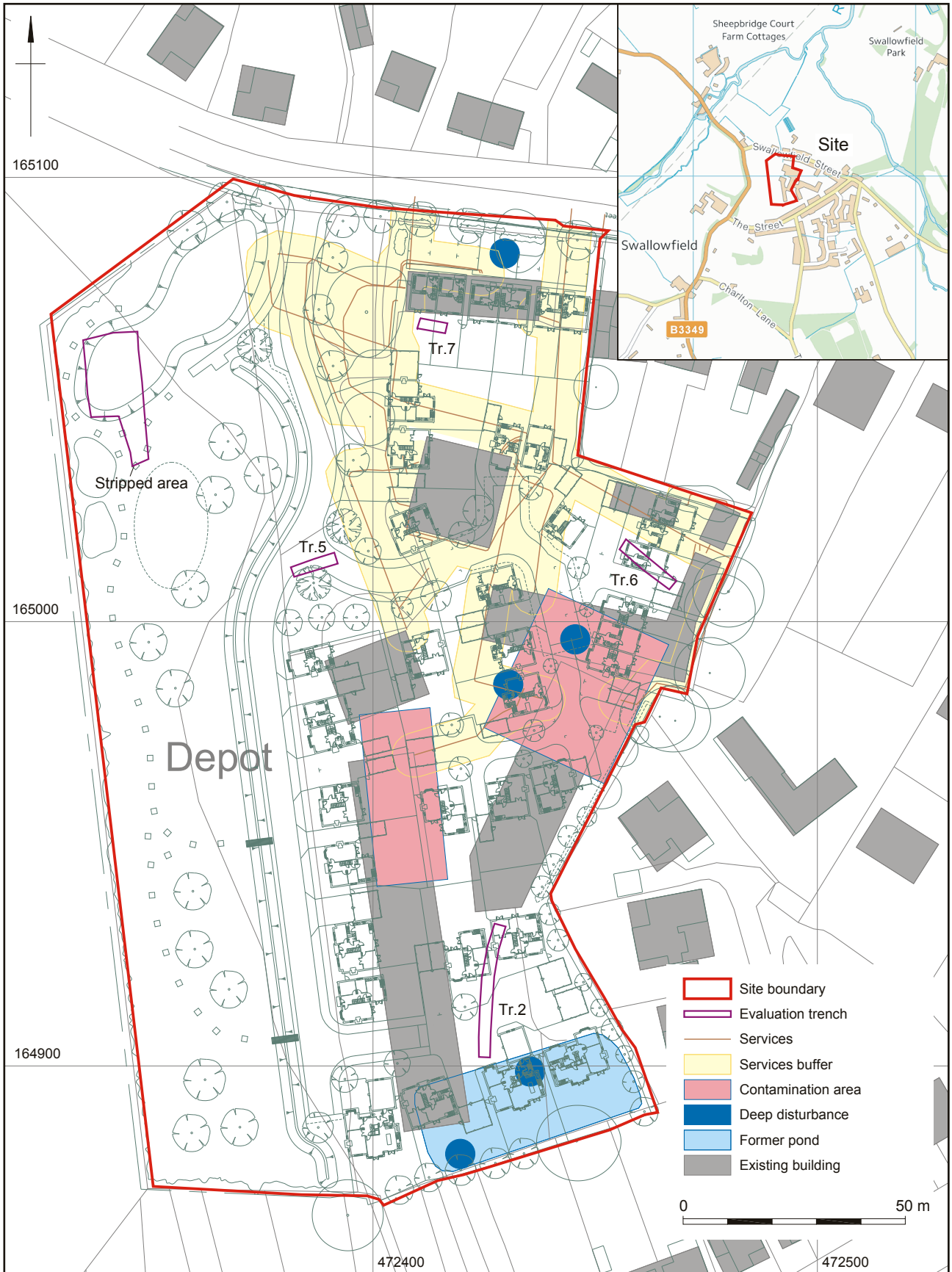
OASIS ID: wessexar1-220640

Project details

Project name	Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley Division) to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on the site of the former Winkworth Machinery Ltd., Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire. The evaluation was undertaken in advance of a proposed development of 38 dwellings with their associated landscaping and infrastructure. The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 472397 164986. This evaluation highlighted the extent to which the former machine works have contaminated and truncated the eastern area of the Site and the potential for archaeological remains within this area is low. The western area of the Site has not suffered from modern disturbance and there is some potential for archaeological remains although no substantial archaeological remains were discovered on the pond area.
Project dates	Start: 10-08-2015 End: 11-08-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	103410 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	180334 - OASIS form ID
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 3 - Despoiled land (contaminated derelict and ?brownfield? sites)
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	BERKSHIRE WOKINGHAM SWALLOWFIELD Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berks.
Postcode	RG7 1QZ
Study area	3.00 Hectares
Site coordinates	SU 472397 164986 50.9454396858 -1.32749890672 50 56 43 N 001 19 39 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 43.00m Max: 44.00m



Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Bellway Homes (Thames Valley) Ltd
Project design originator	Wessex Archaeology
Project director/manager	A Manning
Project supervisor	Ben Cullen
Project supervisor	Rachel Williams
Type of sponsor/funding body	construction company
Name of sponsor/funding body	Bellway Homes (Thames Valley) Ltd.
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	West Berkshire Museum, Newbury
Digital Archive recipient	West Berkshire Museum, Newbury
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Spreadsheets", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	West Berkshire Museum, Newbury
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey"
Project bibliography	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Williams, R
Other bibliographic details	103411.03
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Issuer or publisher	Wessex Archaeology
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Description	Standard short illustrated evaluation report, soft back report of approximately 14 pages
Entered by	Andy Manning (a.manning@wessexarch.co.uk)
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Location of evaluation trenches and compound area over proposed development

Figure 1



Plate 1: Trench 7 opened as far as the contamination would allow


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Plate 2: Trench 3 demonstrating the made ground and patches of contamination in the southern part of the Site



Plate 3: Area opened by the contractors to allow for the removal of deep contamination


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Plate 4: Trench 6



Plate 5: Uncleaned section from trench 6


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Plate 6: Trench 5



Plate 7: Uncleaned section in from trench 5



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Plate 8: Compound area viewed from the north



Plate 9: Section recorded in the compound area

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