



making sense of heritage

# Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Planning Ref: Wokingham Borough Council F/2014/0940  
Ref: 103412.03  
April 2016



**Willow Tree Works,  
Swallowfield, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

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## Quality Assurance

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

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# Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Figure 1: Location of Site and watching brief area

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Plate 1: South facing representative section, eastern spur road drainage works

Plate 2: North-west facing representative section, drainage works eastern edge of Site

Plate 3: Stripping main access road, southern part of the Site, view from the north-west

Plate 4: East facing representative section, drainage works main access road

**Front Cover** View of drainage works, eastern part of the Site



## **Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

#### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Bellway Homes Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during initial groundworks on land at the former Winkworth Machinery Ltd, Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield (National Grid Reference 472397 164986).

The watching brief consisted of monitoring of the initial groundworks, primarily concerning the new access roads and the house plot foundations and was undertaken on an intermittent basis between 3 November 2015 and 23 March 2016.

The previous desk-based assessment had established that the majority of impacts to any potential archaeological remains had occurred within the eastern part of the site, which was the site of a former factory. This conclusion was borne out by observations made during the watching brief. However, with the exception of ponds within the north-western part of the Site (partially observed during the evaluation phase) there were no substantial impacts from the construction works in this area.

No evidence for any archaeological features deposits or finds was found during the course of the watching brief. The majority of the eastern part of the Site was covered by heavily mixed and contaminated made ground deposits, up to 0.90 m in depth and which sealed the underlying natural gravel deposits. This area appears to have been subjected to substantial previous truncation which is likely to have removed any archaeological potential.

Within the western half of the Site, which appears to have been relatively unimpacted by previous activity, additional stripping to the top of the gravels, at a depth of between 0.35 m to 0.40 m, found no archaeological features or finds.



# **Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire**

## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

### **Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Bellway Homes Ltd and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Evan Holland in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Ellie Leary (Berkshire Archaeology) for monitoring the archaeological works and her help and assistance during the course of the project.

The watching brief was undertaken by Piotr Orczewski, Matt Kendall, Steve Thompson and Phil Harding. The report was written and compiled by Naomi Brennan with illustrations by Karen Nichols and Nancy Dixon. Andy Manning managed the project on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.

# Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Bellway Homes Ltd. (hereafter “the Client”), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during initial groundworks on land at the former Winkworth Machinery Ltd, Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield, centred on at National Grid Reference (NGR) 472397 164986 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 In April 2014 a planning application was submitted for the residential development of the Site, 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, which had 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 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*
- 1.1.5 A trial trench evaluation of the Site was undertaken in August 2015 (Wessex Archaeology 2015). The evaluation quickly discovered that the eastern half of the Site (the former factory area) contained widespread subsoil/made ground deposits which were heavily contaminated by fuel oil. This restricted the scope of the evaluation. In addition, access to an area of proposed ponds due for assessment was unavailable.
- 1.1.6 Although a number of trenches were partially excavated (**Figure 1**), with no evidence for archaeological remains, the area investigated was small. Subsequent consultation with Berkshire Archaeology, who act as advisors to the Local Planning Authority, advised that a watching brief should be maintained, at least for the initial parts of the groundworks, to continue to assess and, if present record, the actual archaeological potential within the Site.



- 1.1.7 The watching brief consisted of monitoring initial groundworks, primarily concerning the stripping of the new access roads, house plot foundations and stripping of a pond area within the western half of the Site.
- 1.1.8 The watching brief was undertaken on an intermittent basis between 3 November 2015 and 23 March 2016.

## **1.2 The Site**

- 1.2.1 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.
- 1.2.2 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).
- 1.2.3 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 44m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the northern extent on the site, decreasing to 43m (aOD) at the southern extent of the Site.
- 1.2.4 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 Sheet 268 - Reading).
- 1.2.5 The initial evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2015) identified that much of the proposed housing area was covered with made ground of between 0.20 m to 0.90 m in depth, which sealed the gravel natural.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was assessed in detail within the desk based assessment (Wessex Archaeology 2015a) which considered the recorded historic environment resource within a 1 km Study Area around the Site in order to place the site within its historical and archaeological context. The results of this assessment and relevant Berkshire Historic Environmental Records (BHER) and entries from the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) are summarised below.

### **2.2 Previous investigations**

- 2.2.1 Prior to the recent evaluation, no previous archaeological investigations had been undertaken within the Site. However, a desk based assessment has previously been conducted for the Site (John Moore Heritage Services 2003) and at the nearby Sheepbridge Cottage (Cotswold Archaeology 2013), which were summarised in an updated desk based assessment submitted with the planning application (Wessex Archaeology 2014).
- 2.2.2 The Sheepbridge Cottage desk based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2013) 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, as part of an aerial photographic assessment of evidence for Later Prehistoric and Romano-British settlements to the south of Reading.

- 2.2.3 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken 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.
- 2.2.4 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.
- 2.2.5 In 1996, during works on a cable replacement, Wessex Archaeology (1997) undertook a watching brief on the Scheduled moated site (list entry 1013336) 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.
- 2.2.6 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.
- 2.2.7 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.
- 2.2.8 The trial trench evaluation was able to cut only four of the 12 proposed trenches. Although no archaeological features or finds were found, where the top of gravel natural was encountered, it appears to have been heavily truncated during construction of the factory.

## 2.3 Archaeological and historical context

### *Prehistoric and Romano-British*

- 2.3.1 The position of the Site within the landscape, between the confluence of the River Loddon and Blackwater River, may have offered a favourable location for occupation during the prehistoric period. Several finds spots of prehistoric date are recorded within the wider area including material of Mesolithic and Neolithic date.
- 2.3.2 The nearest large Romano-British centres to the Site are *Calleva Atrebatum* (near Silchester), approximately 10 km to the south-west of the Site, and an unnamed settlement at Caversham, a suburb of Reading 10 km to the north. The putative route of the Roman *Calleva Atrebatum* to London road is also thought to be situated approximately 2 km to the south of the Site.
- 2.3.3 There is limited confirmed evidence relating to Romano-British activity recorded within the immediate area, with the exception of the find of a sherd of Roman pottery (BHER MWK15367) and a single fragment of tile (BHER MWK8599). A cropmark complex (BHER MWK1160-7) of probable Iron Age or Romano-British date has also been identified approximately 520 m to the south-east of the Site. Whilst no invasive archaeological investigations have found any supporting evidence, it remains possible that Swallowfield

was occupied during this period, due to its proximity to emerging administrative centres and regional transport network.

#### *Anglo Saxon and medieval*

- 2.3.4 The name Swallowfield derives from the Old English '*feld*' meaning open country, usually referring to an area of deforested or unencumbered level ground and '*Swalewe*' of unknown origin, thought to refer to the name of a river (University of Nottingham 2013).
- 2.3.5 Listed in the Domesday Book under three separate manors, there appears to have been multiple settlements in the area, though their precise location is unknown. It is probable that one of the largest of the settlements may have been focused around the Grade I Listed Church of All Saints (NHLE 1118061), a 12th century parish church situated in Swallowfield Park at the eastern extent of the contemporary settlement.
- 2.3.6 The moated medieval Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1013336) at Sheepbridge court, north of the River Loddon may have formed the foci for a secondary settlement.
- 2.3.7 The medieval landscape would have been dominated by the Swallowfield Deer Park (NHLE 1000537), established in 1354. The parks boundary would have prevented any eastward expansion of the medieval settlement of Swallowfield.

#### *Post-medieval to modern*

- 2.3.8 The location of the Site and wider area seems to have remained essentially agricultural throughout the post-medieval period.
- 2.3.9 The first edition of Ordnance Survey mapping produced in 1872 shows the site to be agrarian, divided into approximately three medium to large enclosures, with a small strip enclosure at the southern extent. A small copse of trees also appears at the southern extent.
- 2.3.10 The Site appears to have remained undeveloped into the early 20th century, however, by 1968 the Site had undergone partial development, with industrial structures erected at the central and eastern extent of the Site and former field boundaries adapted as drainage for the Site. The final footprint for the Site appears to have been completed during the late 20th century and early 21st century, with the 1990 OS showing little development since the 1970s.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Project Aims**

- 3.1.1 Within the Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2015b) the following aims were identified:
- *To locate, identify and to investigate and record the presence/absence of archaeological features or deposits;*
  - *The watching brief, 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 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 watching brief.

### 3.2 Watching brief methodology

- 3.2.1 The watching brief consisted of initial monitoring of overburden stripping along the access roads and excavation for foundation trenches and drainage. All works were carried out in accordance with the ClfA's *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a).
- 3.2.2 Monitoring visits were intermittent and designed to coincide with times when groundworks would have the greatest potential to expose archaeological remains.
- 3.2.3 Watching brief attendance observed (**Figure 1**):
- Stripping of the new road line
  - Foundation excavations within plots **01-11** (north house plots), plots **12-18** and **22-24** (eastern house plots) and plots **26-30** (western house plots)
  - Northern pond area (western Site area)
- 3.2.4 In consultation with Berkshire Archaeology archaeologist, who advises the Local Planning Authority, it was concluded that given the absence of archaeological remains, there was an evident low archaeological potential and the watching brief ceased at this stage with the approval of the Berkshire Archaeology archaeologist.
- 3.2.5 Investigations were recorded commensurate with the archaeological results using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system and a comprehensive day book. Recording also included written, drawn and photographic elements as conditions determined.
- 3.2.6 A full photographic record was compiled using digital images. The record illustrated both the detail and the general context of the Site as a whole. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process that has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure the long term accessibility of the image set. A unique code 103412 was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.
- 3.2.7 Monitored works were referenced to client plans and Ordnance Survey National Grid.

### 3.3 Health and safety

- 3.3.1 Health and safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices override 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.

## 4 RESULTS

- 4.1.1 The general stratigraphic sequence (**Appendix 1**) encountered along the spur road was between 0.5–0.8 m of modern made ground (104) overlying the natural gravels (103) (**Plate 1**). At the eastern edge of Site a slightly more complex sequence of two made ground deposits (104, 106) and around 0.4 m of contamination ground (105) were found

to overlay the natural gravels (103) (**Plate 2**), which here were at a depth of around 0.9 m below ground level.

- 4.1.2 Monitoring of stripping (**Plate 3**) and drainage works at the western end of the spur road and along the southern part of the main access road established much less contamination and disturbance. Here the general stratigraphic sequence (**Appendix 1**) was around 0.35 m of topsoil (101) overlying up to 0.4 m of subsoil (102), which in turn overlay the natural gravels and clay (103) (**Plate 4**). Although little previous disturbance was present in this area, no archaeological features or deposits were observed.
- 4.1.3 Observations during the excavation of foundation trenches for the main block of houses in the northern and eastern part of the Site (plots **01-18** and **22-24**) confirmed the presence of modern made ground and considerable disturbance. No archaeological features or deposits were identified. This supports the information from the evaluation where up to 1.1 m of concrete and modern made ground was found to overlie the natural gravels.
- 4.1.4 Monitoring of stripping along the road near the northern edge of the Site confirmed the natural soil sequence as observed in the western part of the Site, however no archaeological features or deposits were observed. An evaluation trench a little to the south of this, where an office building and car park were formerly situated, could not be fully excavated due to the presence of made ground. This would suggest that this area of minimal previous disturbance is restricted to the northern edge of the Site only.
- 4.1.5 Map regression identified at large pond occupying the south-eastern part of the Site. This was considered likely to have substantially truncated any earlier remains in this area. As a result construction works in this area were not monitored. The evaluation trench excavated just to the north of this identified up to 0.7 m of modern hard-core overlying contaminated ground.

## **5 ARTEFACTUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

- 5.1.1 No artefactual material was recovered during the project.
- 5.1.2 Due to the absence of any features or dated deposits no environmental samples were taken.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1.1 The desk-based assessment (Wessex Archaeology 2014) had established that the majority of impacts to any potential archaeological remains had occurred within the eastern part of the Site. This conclusion was borne out by observations made during the watching brief, which confirmed substantial truncation and contamination and which is considered to have largely negated any archaeological potential in these areas. However, with the exception of ponds within the north-western part of the Site (partially observed during the evaluation phase) there were no substantial impacts from the construction works in this area.
- 6.1.2 Observation of groundworks along the main access road did not identify any archaeological features or deposits.
- 6.1.3 The greater part of the development impacts occurred in the eastern part of the Site where map regression and trial trench evaluation had already identified considerable impacts from the 20th and 21st century industrial use of the Site. Monitoring in these

areas confirmed substantial truncation and contamination which is considered to have largely negated any archaeological potential in these areas.

## **7 STORAGE AND CURATION**

### **7.1 Museum**

7.1.1 There is currently no suitable store or repository that can receive archaeological archives generated within the boroughs of Slough, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead.

7.1.2 It would be intended that until a final deposition can be agreed, that the site archive/finds will be stored at the offices of WA Southern Region in Salisbury. Final deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

### **7.2 Archive**

7.2.1 The complete Site archive, using the project number **103412**, 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 appropriate Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; Brown 2011; ADS 2013; ClfA 2014b).

### **7.3 Copyright**

7.3.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights regulations* 2003.

7.3.2 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

### **7.4 Security Copy**

7.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), a security copy of relevant written records has been 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.

## **8 REFERENCES**

### **8.1 Bibliography**

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## 9 APPENDIX 1: STRATIGRAPHIC SUMMARY

bgl= below ground level

Context	Description	Depth (m)
101	<i>Topsoil</i> Dark to mid brown silt clay loam. Some bioturbation. Only present on western side of the Site. Overlies 102.	0.00-0.35 bgl
102	<i>Subsoil</i> Mid to pale brown-grey silt clay. Only present on western side of the Site, where no truncation present. Overlies 103.	0.35-0.85 bgl
103	<i>Natural geology</i> Mid brown-yellow grey silt clay and gravels. Sparse manganese flecks. Gravels predominant within the eastern part of the Site.	0.50-0.85 bgl
104	<i>Made ground/ demolition</i> Dark black silty clay. Frequent brick rubble. Overlies 106.	0.00-0.80 bgl
105	<i>Contaminated ground</i> Blue grey-black sandy clay and clay. Occasional sub-angular gravel. More prevalent in the eastern part of the Site. Overlies 103.	0.53-0.90 bgl
106	<i>Made ground</i> Mid brown silty clay. Occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular gravel. Overlies 105.	0.25-0.53 bgl





## 10 APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

**OASIS ID: wessexar1-249351**

### Project details

Project name	Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned Bellway Homes Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during initial groundworks on land at the former Winkworth Machinery Ltd, Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield (National Grid Reference 472397 164986). The watching brief consisted of monitoring initial groundworks, primarily concerning the new access roads and the house plot foundations and was undertaken on an intermittent basis between 3 November 2015 and 23 March 2016. The previous desk-based assessment had established that the majority of impacts to any potential archaeological remains had occurred within the eastern part of the site. This conclusion was borne out by observations made during the watching brief. However, with the exception of ponds within the north-western part of the Site (partially observed during the evaluation phase) there were no substantial impacts from the construction works in this area. The greater part of the development impacts occurred in the eastern part of the site where map regression and trial trench evaluation had already identified considerable impacts from the 20th and 21st century industrial use of the Site. Monitoring in these areas confirmed substantial truncation and contamination which is considered to have largely negated any archaeological potential in these areas. No archaeological features or deposits were found.
Project dates	Start: 03-11-2015 End: 23-03-2016
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	103412 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 3 - Despoiled land (contaminated derelict and ?brownfield? sites)
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	BERKSHIRE WOKINGHAM SWALLOWFIELD Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire
Postcode	RG7 1QZ
Study area	3 Hectares
Site coordinates	SU 72397 64986 51.37880479681 -0.959651187146 51 22 43 N 000 57 34 W



Point  
Height OD / Depth      Min: 43m Max: 44m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation      Wessex Archaeology  
Project brief originator      Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body  
Project design originator      Wessex Archaeology  
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Project supervisor      Steve Thompson  
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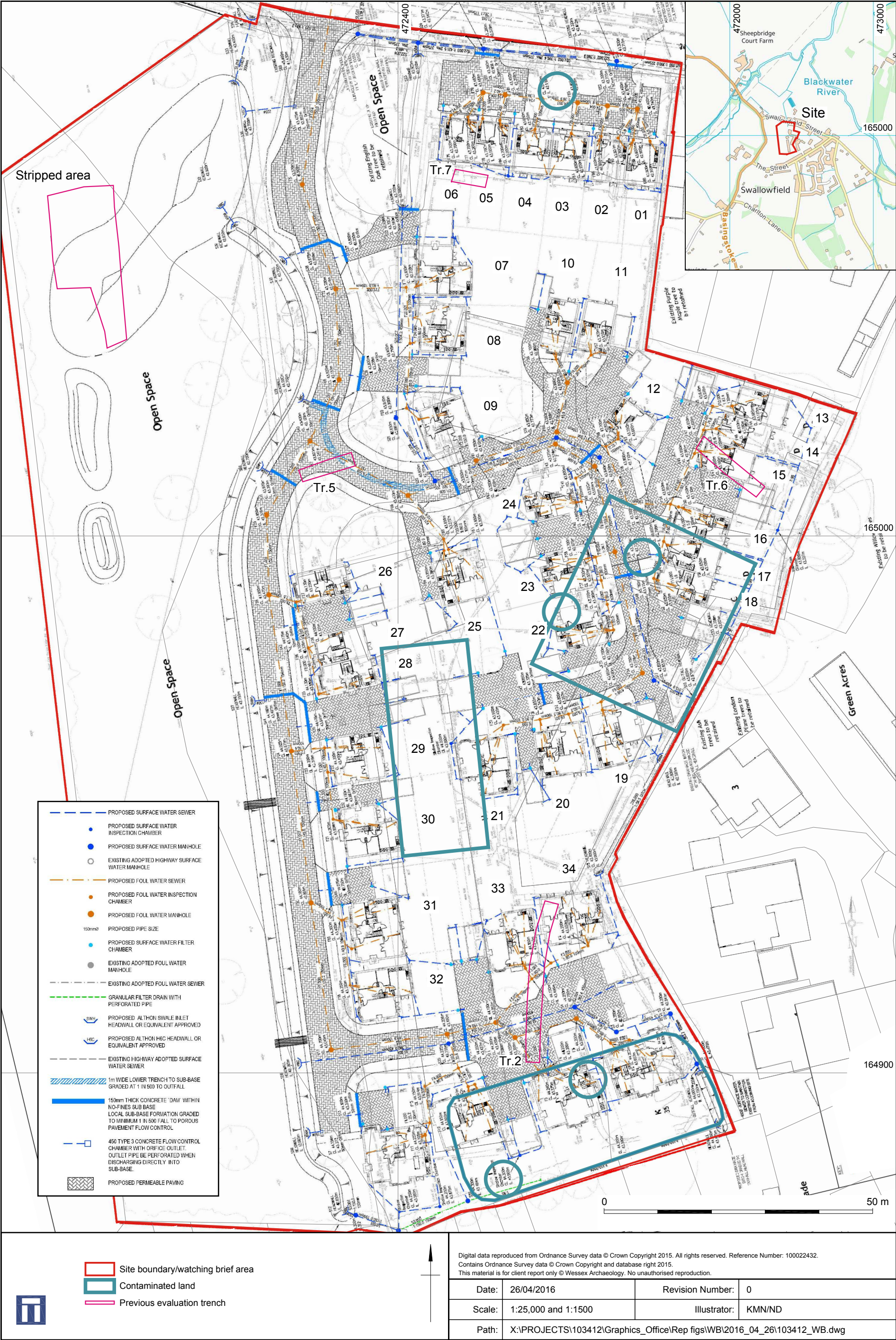
### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?      No  
Digital Archive recipient      Unknown  
Digital Media available      "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"  
Paper Archive recipient      Unknown  
Paper Media available      "Context sheet", "Diary", "Report"

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type      Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
Title      Willow Tree Works, Swallowfield, Berkshire: Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
Author(s)/Editor(s)      Brennan, N.  
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Location of Site and watching brief area

Figure 1





Plate 1: South facing representative section, eastern spur road drainage works



Plate 2: North-west facing representative section, drainage works eastern edge of Site


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Plate 3: Stripping main access road, southern part of the Site, view from the north-west



Plate 4: East facing representative section, drainage works main access road

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