

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Wantage Tennis Club, Foliat Drive,
Wantage, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Tim Dawson

Site Code: WTC15/203

(SU 4033 8817)

**Wantage Tennis Club, Foliat Drive,
Wantage, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Donnington New Homes**

by Tim Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WTC 15/203

August 2015

Summary

Site name: Wantage Tennis Club, Foliat Drive, Wantage, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 4033 8817

Site activity: Archaeological evaluation

Date and duration of project: 26th August 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: WTC 15/203

Area of site: c.0.22ha

Summary of results: A single trench was opened immediately to the north of the current tennis courts. Two undated ditches were recorded, possibly running parallel to one another at a distance of c.10m apart.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 01.09.15 Steve Preston ✓ 01.09.15

Wantage Tennis Club, Foliat Drive, Wantage, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Tim Dawson

Report 15/203

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Wantage Tennis Club, Foliat Drive, Wantage, Oxfordshire (SU 4033 8817) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Philip Simmons of Donnington New Homes, New Warren Farm, Warren Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 6NH.

Planning permission (app. no. P15/V0474/FUL) has been granted by Vale of White Horse District Council to replace the tennis courts and associated pavilion and parking with six semi-detached houses. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, the consent is subject to two conditions requiring a programme of archaeological investigation. This is to involve, initially, a field evaluation by trial trenching, based on the results of which, further fieldwork might be required. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification prepared according to a brief issued by Ms Joanne Robinson, Assistant Archaeological Officer at Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Robinson 2015). The specification was approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Archaeology Team Leader at Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological advisers to the district. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson on 26th August 2015 and the site code is WTC 15/203. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in a modern suburb to the north-east of the centre of Wantage in southern Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). It is currently occupied by Wantage Tennis Club, which consists of three hard courts in the southern area and a wooden pavilion with associated areas of grass and gravel parking to the north (Fig. 2). Foliat Drive runs along the site's northern edge while the remaining three sides are bordered by housing. The courts themselves are flat, presumably built up on a platform to provide a level playing surface, but the ground slopes down in a short bank to the car park surface to the north, the entrance to which slopes down to the road on the northern boundary. The

site is at a height of c95m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is described as Upper Greensand Formation (BGS 1971) which was observed in the excavations as a fragmented bed of sandstone.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Joanne Robinson (Robinson 2015) formerly of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. In summary the site lies beyond the historic core of the settlement but several investigations nearby have revealed deposits and finds representing a range of periods in the vicinity, with medieval and Roman features recorded to the south and south-west along with Saxon, late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery. These hint at settlement, particularly of Saxon and medieval date, extending beyond the historic core of the town, north-eastwards into the area of the site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if any deposits of prehistoric Roman or Saxon date are present.

It was proposed to dig one trench, 30m long and 1.6m wide located immediately to the north of the tennis courts, along the edge of the gravel car park (Fig. 3). The trench was excavated under archaeological supervision using a JCB mechanical excavator with a 1.6m wide ditching bucket mounted on the back-hoe. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds and all potential archaeological deposits were hand-cleaned and excavated.

Results

Trench 1 was excavated in the intended position although it was necessary to make two alterations to its size in order to take two unforeseen factors into account. The first of these was ensuring access to the tennis court was retained as it was still in use during the excavations. This required leaving the Tarmac ramp that led up from the car park to the court gate *in situ*, therefore splitting the trench in two with a space of 2.35m between the two halves (Fig. 3). The second alteration was shortening the overall length of the trench due to the need to retain

access to the car park through the entrance in its north-western corner. The trench details are given in Appendix 1 while Appendix 2 summarizes the excavated features.

Trench 1 had a total length of 26.6m, split into a 16.50m long section to the west of the Tarmac tennis court access ramp and a 10.1m section to the east (Pls 1-2). The western half had a depth of 0.67m and the eastern was 0.45m deep. To the west, which lay within the car park area, the stratigraphy consisted of 0.08m gravel car park surface, 0.09m compressed gravel and chalk rubble, 0.16m of mixed patches of crushed Tarmac and other rubble used to level the ground surface, and 0.33m of clayey brown-grey subsoil overlying the natural greensand sandstone geology. The eastern section of trench was located within an area of grass and as such the stratigraphy is much simpler consisting of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.23m of subsoil overlying the natural greensand geology.

Two possible features were noted in the western part of the trench (Figs 4 and 5). These were both hand-excavated and found to be two sections of ditch which appeared to lie roughly parallel with *c.*10m separation between them. The western ditch was excavated as cut 1 and was found to be 1.30m wide and 0.30m deep, cut into the solid greensand geology. It was filled with a single mid to dark brown-grey sandy clay fill that contained no finds (Pl. 3). Cut 2, the eastern ditch, was both wider and deeper than the first, being 1.61m wide and 0.40m deep. It too was filled with a mid brown-grey sandy clay material that contained no finds (Pl. 4).

Finds

No finds were recovered from the excavated deposits or spoil heaps.

Conclusion

Despite the high potential of the area in which the development site lies the trial trench revealed only two undated features. Although only a small section of both ditches was exposed, they appear to run parallel to one another with a space of *c.*10m in between. If they represent two edges of an enclosure then it is possible that the ditch that links them is located to the south, underneath the current tennis court area. Based on these results it can be concluded that the site as a whole has low to moderate archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 253, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
Robinson, J, 2015, 'Wantage Tennis Club, Foliat Drive, Wantage: Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation', Oxford

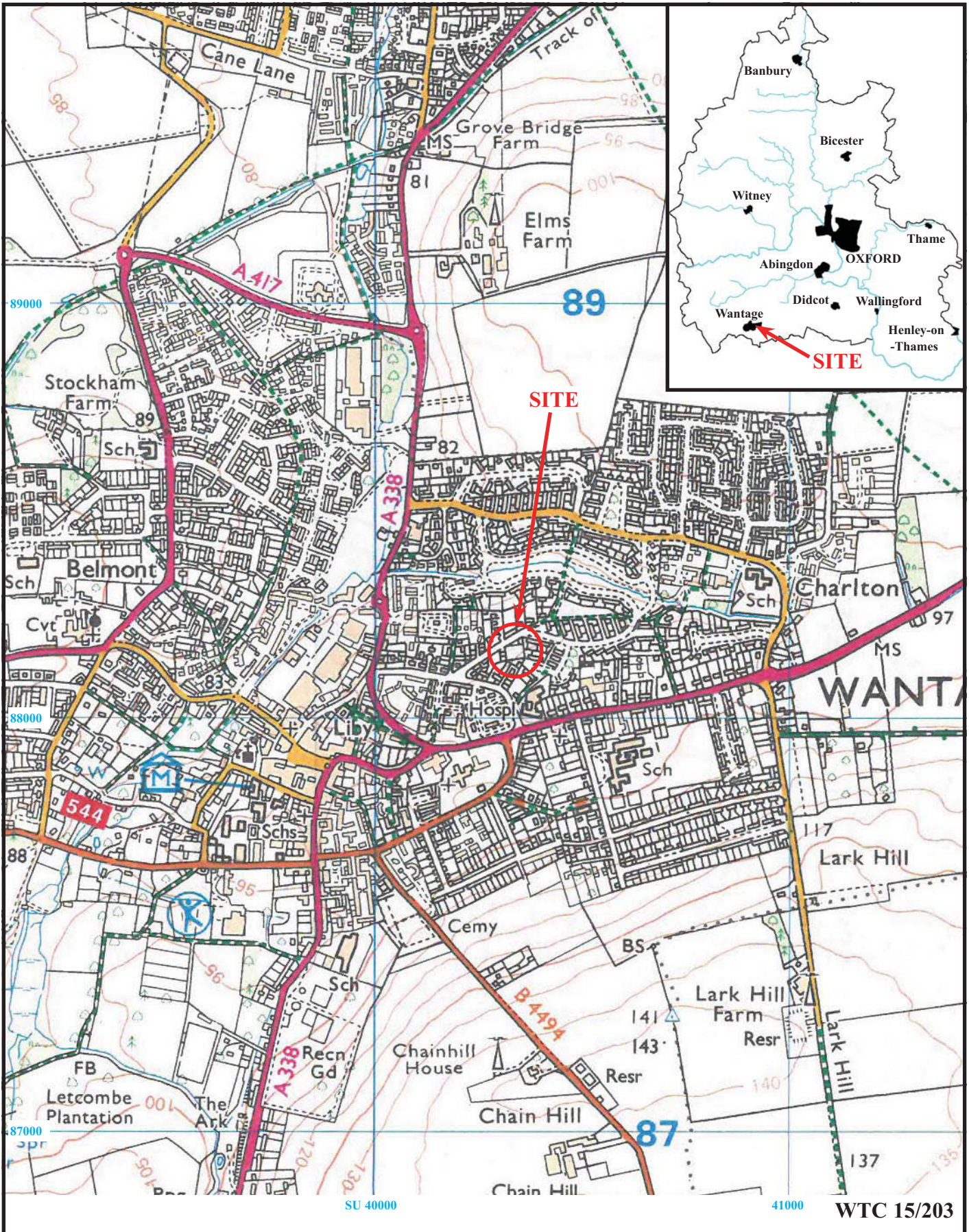
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at west end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1 (west)	16.50	1.60	0.67	0-0.08m car park gravel, 0.08-0.17m compressed gravel/chalk rubble, 0.17-0.33m levelling deposits (crushed Tarmac etc), 0.33-0.66m, clayey subsoil, 0.66m+ greensand natural geology. Ditches 1 and 2 .
1 (east)	10.13	1.60	0.45	0-0.18m topsoil, 0.18-0.41m subsoil, 0.41m+ greensand natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Ditch	Undated	(none)
1	2	53	Ditch	Undated	(none)

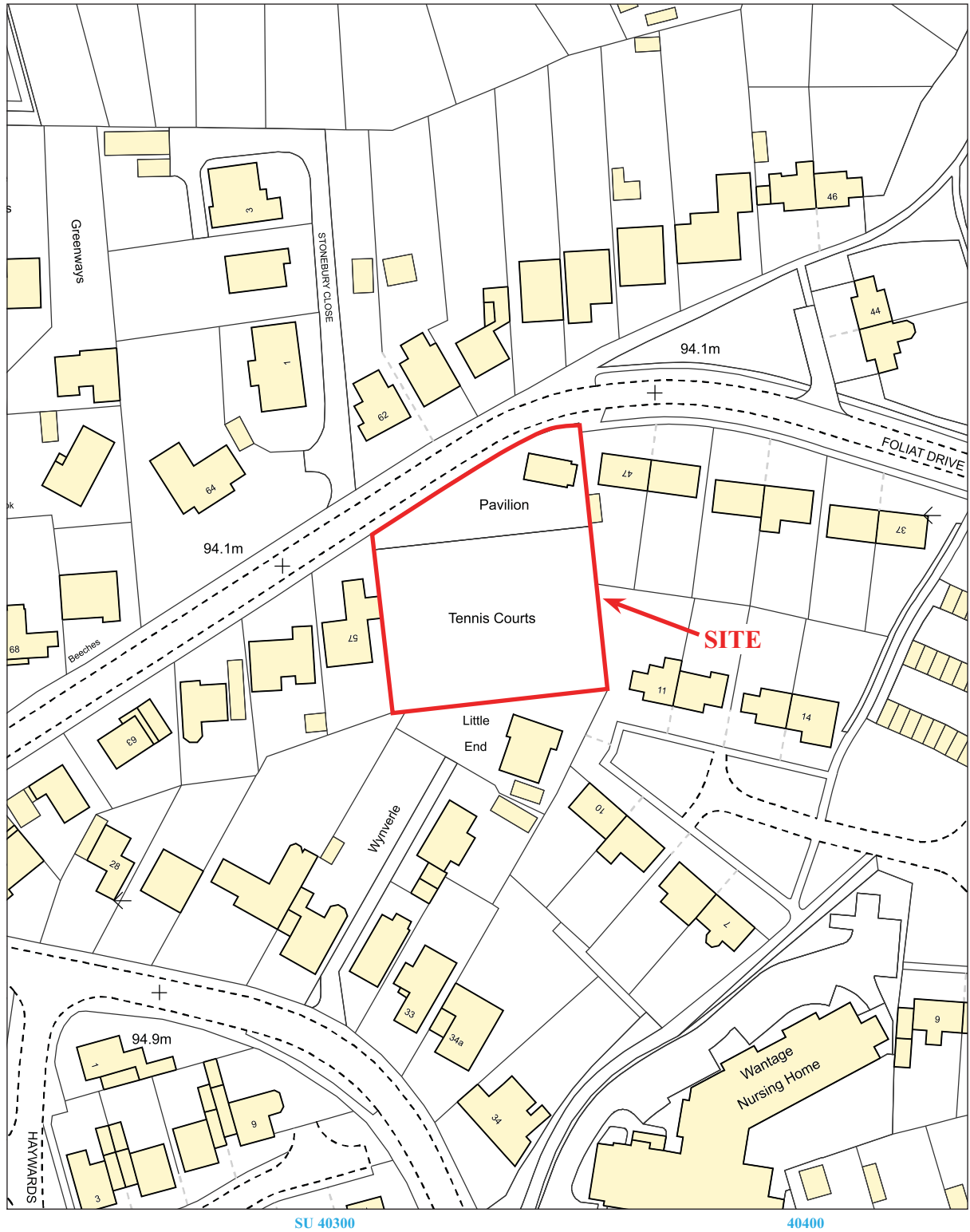


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Figure 1. Location of site within Wantage and Oxfordshire

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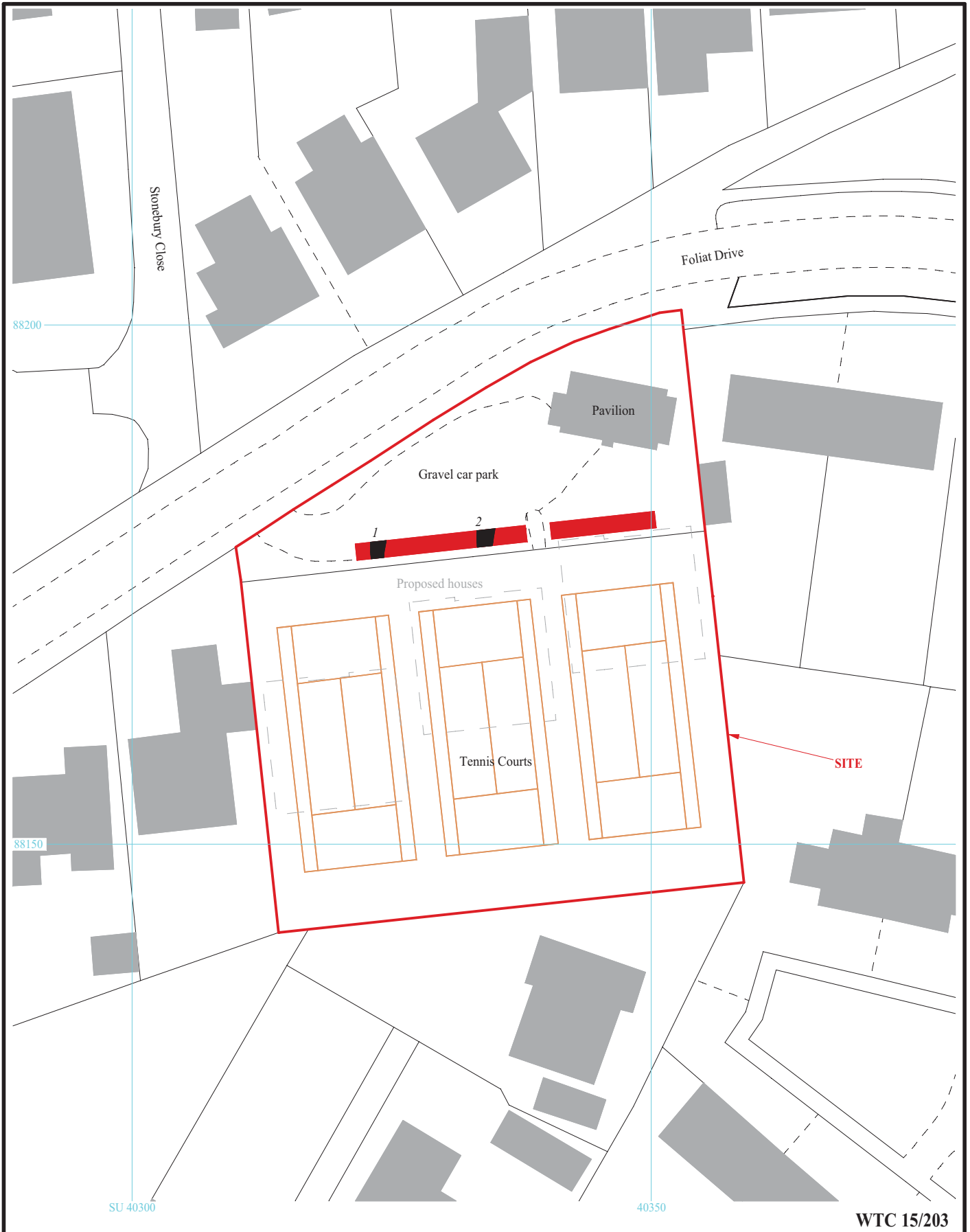


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Foliat Drive.

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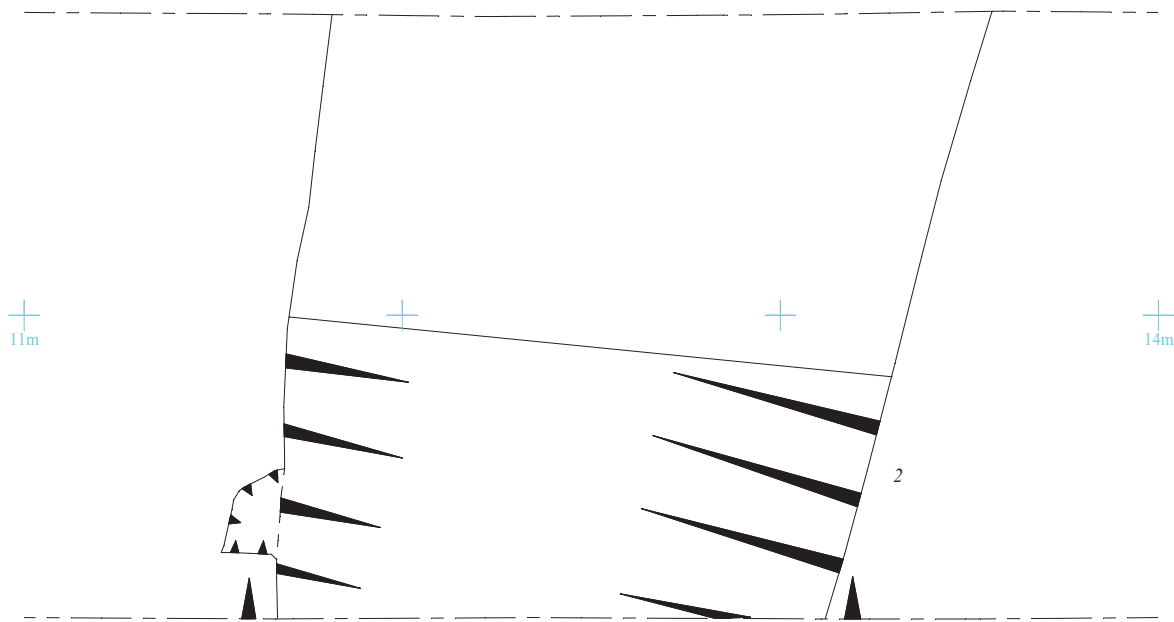
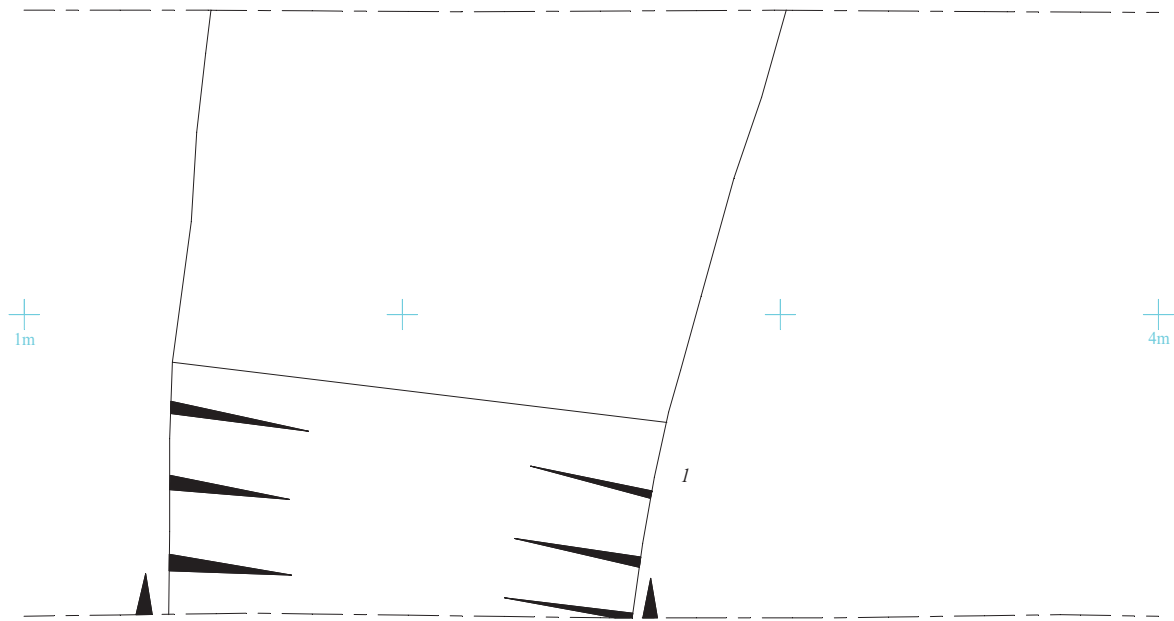




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Figure 3. Site layout showing trench location and proposed development.





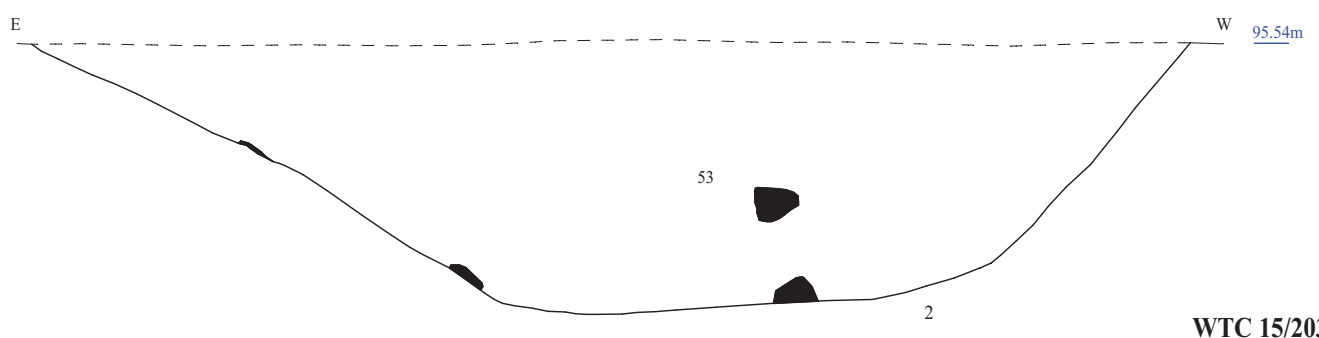
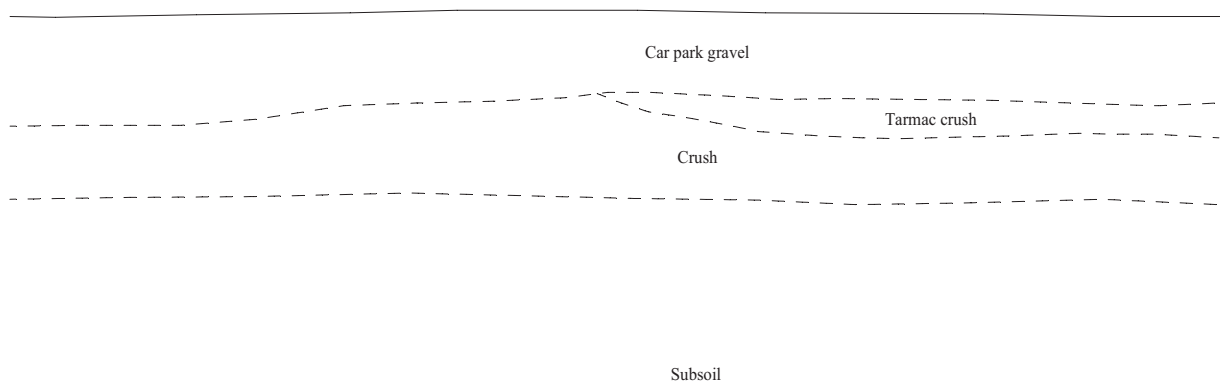
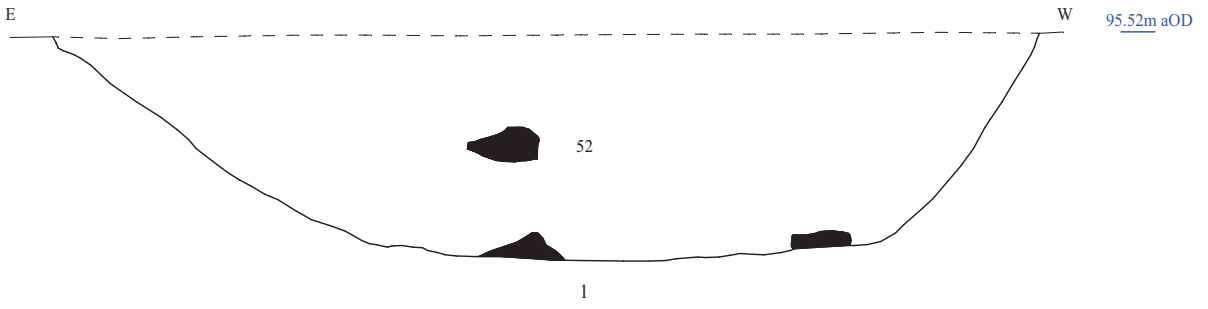
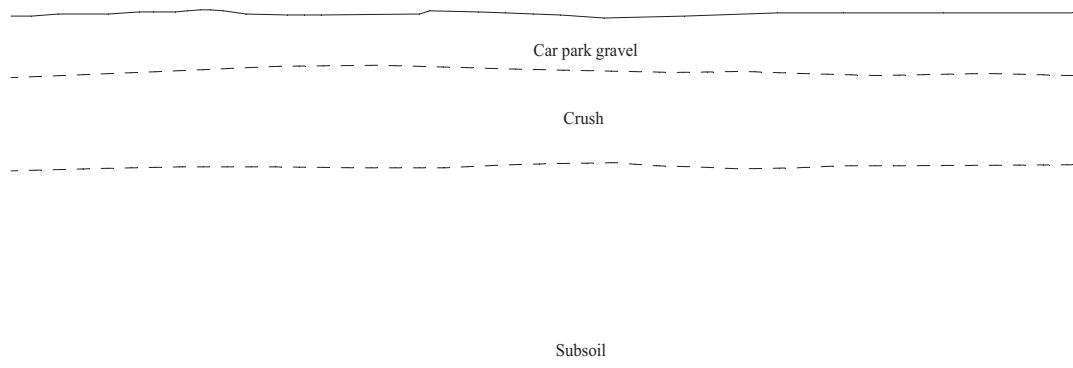
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Figure 4. Feature plans.



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1 (west), looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 1 (east), looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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**Wantage Tennis Club, Foliat Drive,
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Ditch 1, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Ditch 2, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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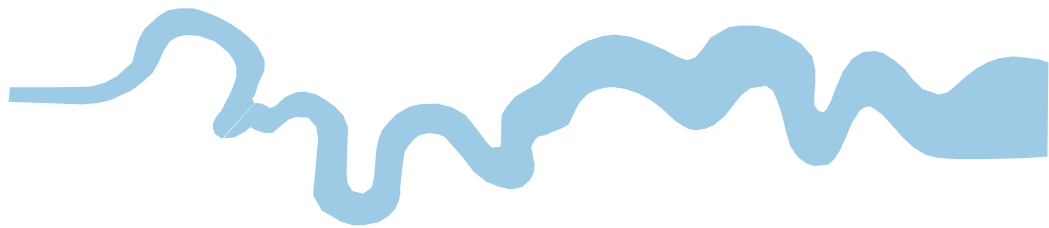
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Plates 3 - 4.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late -----	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle -----	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early -----	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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