

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road,
Woolhampton, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by David Sanchez

Site Code: BRW16/142

(SU 5755 6681)

**Land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road,
Woolhampton, West Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Westbuild Homes Ltd

by David Sánchez

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BRW 16/142

September 2018

Summary

Site name: Land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road, Woolhampton, West Berkshire.

Grid reference: SU 5755 6681

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 3rd - 6th September 2018

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Sánchez

Site code: BRW 16/142

Area of site: 1.58ha

Summary of results: Fifty trenches were dug during the course of the field evaluation. Although a few sherds of prehistoric (later Bronze Age?) pottery and one broken flint blade were recovered from subsoil, no features nor deposits of archaeological interest were uncovered. The site is therefore considered to have low archaeological potential.

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

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 17.09.16 Steve Preston✓ 17.09.18

Land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road, Woolhampton, West Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by David Sánchez

Report 16/142b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on a parcel of land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road, West Berkshire (SU 5755 6681) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Guy West of Westbuild Homes Ltd., Hunters Lodge, Rectory Road, Padworth Common, Berkshire, RG7 4JB.

Planning permission (16/0160/OUTMAJ) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the development of a parcel of land for housing. As a consequence of the possible presence of archaeological deposits within the area of the development, a field evaluation has been required in order to provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to facilitate the preparation of a scheme to mitigate the effects of the development. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sarah Orr, Senior Archaeologist (Planning and Management Advice) at West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Sánchez and Ashley Kruger between 3rd and 6th September 2018 and the site code is BRW 16/142. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the eastern margins of the village of Woolhampton, in West Berkshire (Fig. 1), to the west of Reading and east of Newbury. The site itself is a parcel of land of 1.58ha located on a valley slope to the north of Bath Road and 270m to the north of the river Kennet, with residential houses to the west and Woolhampton Garage to the east. Only the southern half of the parcel is included in the development with farming land farther to the north (Fig. 2). The site lies at a maximum height of *c.*66m above Ordnance Datum sloping down to *c.*57m aOD at the edge of the road in the south (Pl. 6). The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay (BGS 2000) and the geology observed in the trenches consisted of brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles inclusions.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Baljkas 2016). In summary, the site lies in the Kennet Valley, an area generally considered to have a rich and varied archaeological background that ranges from Mesolithic domestic sites to medieval villages (Gates 1975; Lobb and Rose 1996; Featherby 2013). A stretch of the valley to the west between Thatcham and Hungerford is renowned for the presence of Mesolithic and some upper Palaeolithic sites (eg Froom 2012; Healy *et al.* 1992; Wymer 1962). Predictive mapping for Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic archaeological potential within the study area suggests that the southern section of the proposal site has some potential for these periods (WBC 2016). Despite a relatively high level of investigation, Neolithic activity in the valley is poorly represented (Ford 2013a) whereas the subsequent Bronze Age witnesses a dramatic increase (Ford 2013b) with major excavations as at Thatcham (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1995; Pine 2010) and Aldermaston (Bradley *et al.* 1980). Subsequently, the Iron Age, Roman and Saxon periods are much less well represented in the archaeological record, though there are exceptions and several higher status sites have been recorded (Cowell *et al.* 1978; Manning 1974). Post-medieval industrial activity is represented by watermills and by transport networks: the Kennet and Avon Canal and the Great Western railway.

Objectives and methodology

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

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if any deposits or artefacts of Mesolithic date were present; and
- to provide information with which to draw up a mitigation strategy if necessary.

In order to increase the chance of locating small Mesolithic sites, the sampling strategy was designed to have many sample points (reducing the 'standard error') by digging many short trenches rather than conventional longer trenches. Fifty trenches were to be dug, each 10m long and 1.6m wide (5% of the available area). A contingency for the equivalent of an additional 40m length of trenching was included within the proposal, but this was not required. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed by a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. The excavation was to be undertaken in

spits, to enable the recovery of artefactual and ecofactual remains from individual layers, and spoil heaps were to be searched for finds. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably exposed the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief.

Results

The fifty trenches were dug. Most of the trenches were dug as intended and some of them had to be slightly relocated as a consequence of the presence of trees and disturbed areas affected by environmental test pits (Fig. 3). The trenches ranged in length from 8.90m to 11.80m and in depth from 0.23m to 1.15m. In general trenches in the north of the site were shallower, between 0.23 and 0.50m, growing deeper at the south edge of the field with thicker deposits of soil overlying the natural geology.

Only those trenches where deposits of possible archaeological interest were investigated, or trenches from which archaeological finds were recovered, are described below in detail. A complete list of all the trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

Trench 2 was aligned SSE - NNW and was 11.80m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.12m of topsoil and 0.20m subsoil overlying mid brownish red clay silt natural geology. One possible linear feature was investigated at 5.20m from the SSE end of the trench showing this to be consequence of rooting. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered and no finds were recovered from this trench.

Trench 3 (Fig. 3; Pl. 1)

Trench 3 was aligned SSW - NNE and was 9.50m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil and 0.24m subsoil overlying mid brownish red clay silt natural geology. One possible feature was investigated at the NNE end of the trench showing this to be a variation of the natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered and no finds were recovered from this trench.

Trench 9 (Figs 3 and 4)

Trench 9 was aligned SW - NE and was 11.20m long and 0.63m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.41m of topsoil and 0.22m subsoil overlying light brownish red clay silt natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered but a single sherd of prehistoric pottery was recovered from subsoil.

Trench 12 (Fig. 3)

Trench 12 was aligned roughly W–E and was 9.80m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.13m subsoil overlying light brownish red clay silt natural geology. One possible linear feature was investigated at 3m from the west end of the trench showing this to be a variation of the natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered and no finds were recovered from this trench.

Trench 14 (Fig. 3)

Trench 14 was aligned SW - NE and was 10.30m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.31m of topsoil and 0.21m subsoil overlying light brownish red clay silt natural geology. One linear feature was investigated at the NE end of the trench but was a modern services trench. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered and no finds were recovered from this trench.

Trench 46 (Fig. 3)

Trench 46 was aligned WNW - ESE and was 10.20m long and 0.72m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.49m subsoil overlying mid brownish red clay silt natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered but two sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered from subsoil.

Trench 50 (Fig. 3)

Trench 50 was aligned NW - SE and was 10.20m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.21m subsoil overlying mid brownish red clay silt natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered but one broken flint blade was recovered from subsoil.

Finds

Pottery by Steve Ford

Three sherds of pottery were recovered, one each from the subsoil of trenches 9 and 46. That from trench 9 weighed 13.5g and was 9mm thick. It was tempered with medium density of fine calcined flint mostly less than 1mm across.. The outer surfaces were brown with a black core. One sherd (3=1) from trench 46 was very similar and weighted 6g. The other sherd from this trench weighed 5.5g. It had the same fabric as the others but was fired a uniform brown.

The sherds have no diagnostic decoration nor form but are probably of later Bronze Age or earlier Iron Age date.

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A single struck flint was recovered from the subsoil of trench 50. It was a broken blade (narrow flake). It is probable that the piece is of Mesolithic date.

Conclusion

Fifty trenches were completed on the site during the course of the field evaluation, none of which showed any evidence of features nor deposits of archaeological interest. The recovery of prehistoric pottery and one broken blade of flint from the subsoil may indicate the presence of archaeological deposits in the surrounding area, most likely to the north (upslope) towards a small plateau overlooking the river Kennet. The site is therefore considered to have low archaeological potential.

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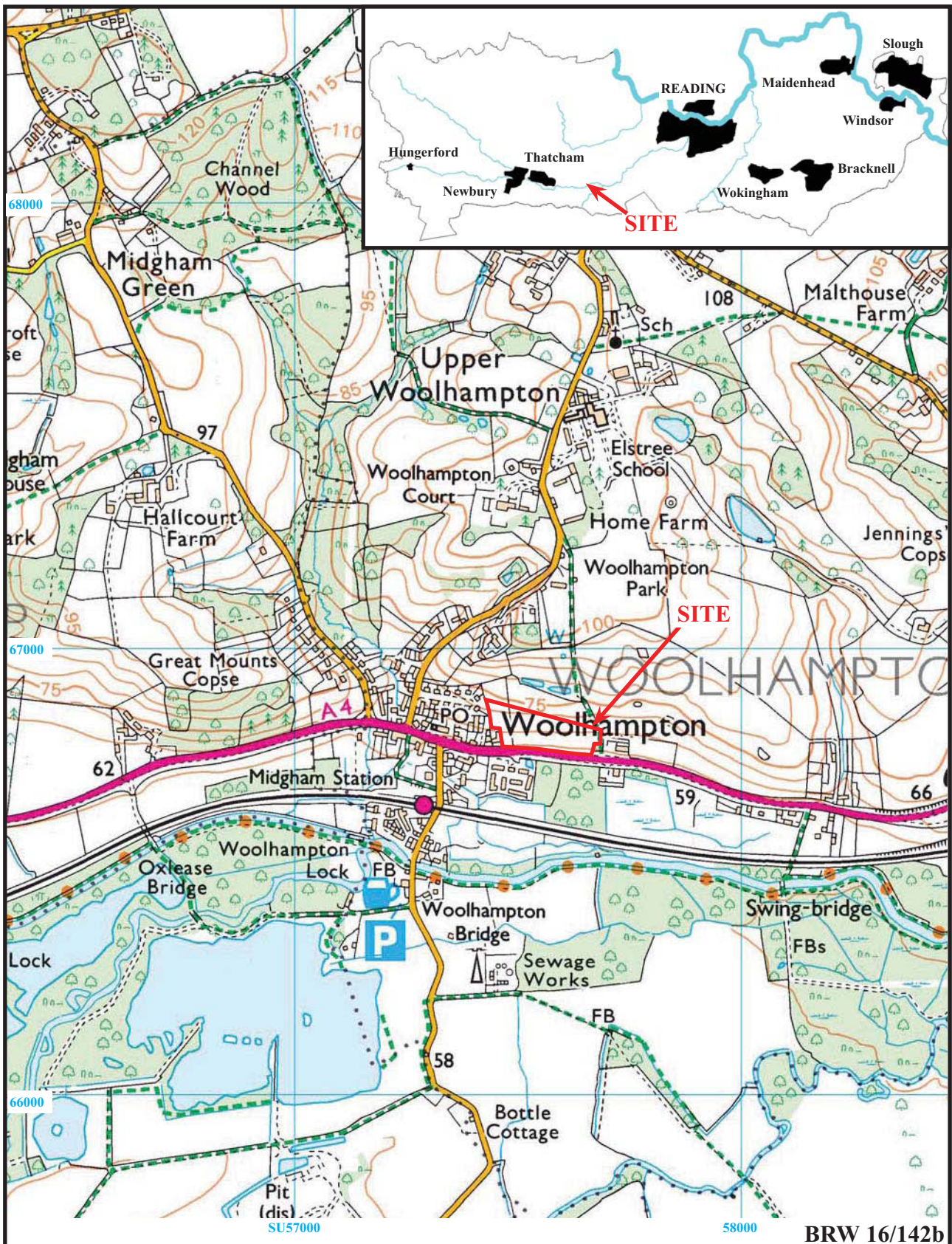
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	11.00	1.60	0.34	0–0.23m topsoil, 0.23-0.34m subsoil, 0.34m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
2	11.80	1.60	0.34	0–0.12m topsoil, 0.12-0.34m subsoil, 0.34m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
3	9.50	1.60	0.45	0–0.21m topsoil, 0.21-0.45m subsoil, 0.45m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology [PI. 1].
4	10.10	1.60	0.54	0–0.24m topsoil, 0.24-0.54m subsoil, 0.54m+ light orange brown clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
5	10.30	1.60	0.37	0–0.17m topsoil, 0.17-0.37m subsoil, 0.37m+ light brownish orange clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
6	9.60	1.60	0.35	0–0.21m topsoil, 0.21-0.35m subsoil, 0.35m+ light brownish orange clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
7	10.30	1.60	0.44	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.44m subsoil, 0.44m+ light brownish orange clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology [PI. 2].
8	10.20	1.60	0.51	0–0.31m topsoil, 0.31-0.51m subsoil, 0.51m+ light brownish orange clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
9	11.20	1.60	0.63	0–0.41m topsoil, 0.41-0.63m subsoil, 0.63m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
10	10.10	1.60	0.58	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.58m subsoil, 0.58m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
11	11.20	1.60	0.64	0–0.33m topsoil, 0.33-0.64m subsoil, 0.64m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology [PI. 3].
12	9.80	1.60	0.33	0–0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.33m subsoil, 0.33m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
13	10.20	1.60	0.61	0–0.29m topsoil, 0.29-0.61m subsoil, 0.61m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
14	10.30	1.60	0.52	0–0.31m topsoil, 0.31-0.52m subsoil, 0.52m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
15	9.80	1.60	0.48	0–0.19m topsoil, 0.19-0.48m subsoil, 0.48m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
16	10.40	1.60	0.55	0–0.19m topsoil, 0.19-0.55m subsoil, 0.55m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
17	10.30	1.60	0.60	0–0.31m topsoil, 0.31-0.60m subsoil, 0.60m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
18	10.80	1.60	0.58	0–0.30m topsoil, 0.30-0.58m subsoil, 0.58m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
19	9.90	1.60	0.44	0–0.21m topsoil, 0.21-0.44m subsoil, 0.44m+ dark reddish brown clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
20	10.30	1.60	0.91	0–0.34m topsoil, 0.34-0.91m subsoil, 0.91m+ light greyish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology [PI. 4].
21	10.10	1.60	1.15	0–0.35m topsoil, 0.35-1.15m subsoil, 0.1.15m+ light brownish red silty clay with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
22	9.80	1.60	0.85	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.85m subsoil, 0.85m+ light brownish red silty clay with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
23	9.20	1.60	0.43	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.43m subsoil, 0.43m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
24	10.30	1.60	0.45	0–0.20m topsoil, 0.20-0.45m subsoil, 0.45m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology [PI. 5].
25	10.90	1.60	0.57	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.57m subsoil, 0.57m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
26	10.00	1.60	0.41	0–0.18m topsoil, 0.18-0.41m subsoil, 0.41m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
27	10.90	1.60	0.48	0–0.23m topsoil, 0.23-0.48m subsoil, 0.48m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
28	10.50	1.60	0.47	0–0.22m topsoil, 0.22-0.47m subsoil, 0.47m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
29	9.80	1.60	0.72	0–0.33m topsoil, 0.33-0.72m subsoil, 0.72m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
30	9.90	1.60	0.47	0–0.17m topsoil, 0.17-0.47m subsoil, 0.47m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
31	10.00	1.60	0.57	0–0.26m topsoil, 0.26-0.57m subsoil, 0.57m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
32	10.50	1.60	0.35	0–0.17m topsoil, 0.17-0.35m subsoil, 0.35m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
33	10.10	1.60	0.49	0–0.31m topsoil, 0.31-0.49m subsoil, 0.49m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
34	10.70	1.60	0.45	0–0.24m topsoil, 0.24-0.45m subsoil, 0.45m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
35	10.20	1.60	0.74	0–0.31m topsoil, 0.31-0.74m subsoil, 0.74m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
36	8.90	1.60	0.63	0–0.24m topsoil, 0.24-0.63m subsoil, 0.63m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
37	10.20	1.60	0.54	0–0.17m topsoil, 0.17-0.54m subsoil, 0.54m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
38	10.40	1.60	0.49	0–0.26m topsoil, 0.26-0.49m subsoil, 0.49m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
39	9.80	1.60	0.48	0–0.23m topsoil, 0.23-0.48m subsoil, 0.48m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
40	10.10	1.60	0.50	0–0.21m topsoil, 0.21-0.50m subsoil, 0.50m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
41	10.10	1.60	0.56	0–0.23m topsoil, 0.23-0.56m subsoil, 0.56m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
42	9.80	1.60	0.57	0–0.29m topsoil, 0.29-0.57m subsoil, 0.57m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
43	11.20	1.60	0.55	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25-0.50m subsoil, 0.50m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
44	9.70	1.60	0.58	0–0.22m topsoil, 0.22-0.58m subsoil, 0.58m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
45	11.20	1.60	0.72	0–0.21m topsoil, 0.21-0.72m subsoil, 0.72m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
46	10.20	1.60	0.72	0–0.23m topsoil, 0.23-0.72m subsoil, 0.72m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
47	10.20	1.60	0.47	0–0.16m topsoil, 0.16-0.47m subsoil, 0.47m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
48	10.40	1.60	0.46	0–0.18m topsoil, 0.18-0.46m subsoil, 0.46m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
49	9.70	1.60	0.57	0–0.23m topsoil, 0.23-0.57m subsoil, 0.57m+ light brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.
50	10.20	1.60	0.43	0–0.22m topsoil, 0.22-0.43m subsoil, 0.43m+ mid brownish red clay silt with occasional flint pebbles natural geology.

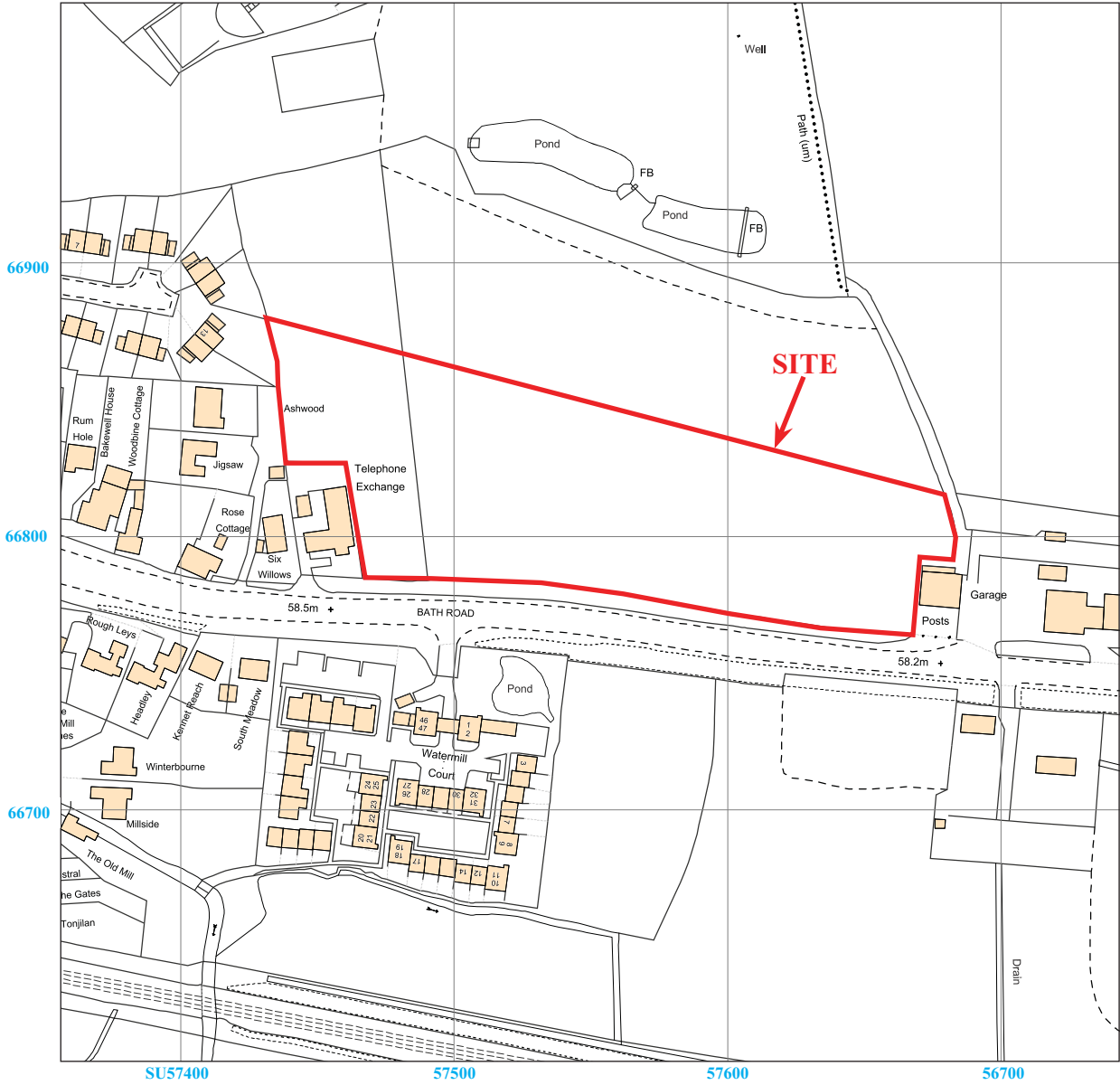


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Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Woolhampton and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Bath Road.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Trench 9

SW

NE

Topsoil (Brown silt loam)

Subsoil (Light reddish brown clayey silt)

58.98maOD

Natural geology (Light brown-red clay with gravel)

Trench 19

SW

NE

Topsoil (Brown silt loam)

Subsoil (Light reddish brown clayey silt)

59.95m

Natural geology (Light brown-red clay silt)

Trench 27

SW

NE

Topsoil (Brown silt loam)

Subsoil (Light reddish brown clayey silt)

62.02m

Natural geology (Brown-red clay silt)

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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 3, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 7, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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**Land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road,
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 11, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 20, looking north east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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**Land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road,
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 24, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 6. General view of site, looking south west.

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**Land adjacent to Telephone Exchange, Bath Road,
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Plates 5 and 6.**

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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 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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