

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION:
1 THE AVENUE
WORMINGHALL
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

on behalf of Mr N. Boyles



by

Calli Rouse BA PIFA

September 2006

ASC: 836/WTA/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	WTA	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	836
<i>Accession No:</i>			
<i>County:</i>	Buckinghamshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Worminghall		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Worminghall		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 6414 0849		
<i>Present use:</i>	House and garden		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of two detached houses and single garages		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	06/1319/APP		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Aylesbury Vale District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	30 th August 2006		
<i>Client:</i>	Mr N. Boyles Kirtland Farm Oakley Road Worminghall Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP18 9UN		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Mr N. Boyles		
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Internal Quality Check

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Cover: Working shot, looking north west

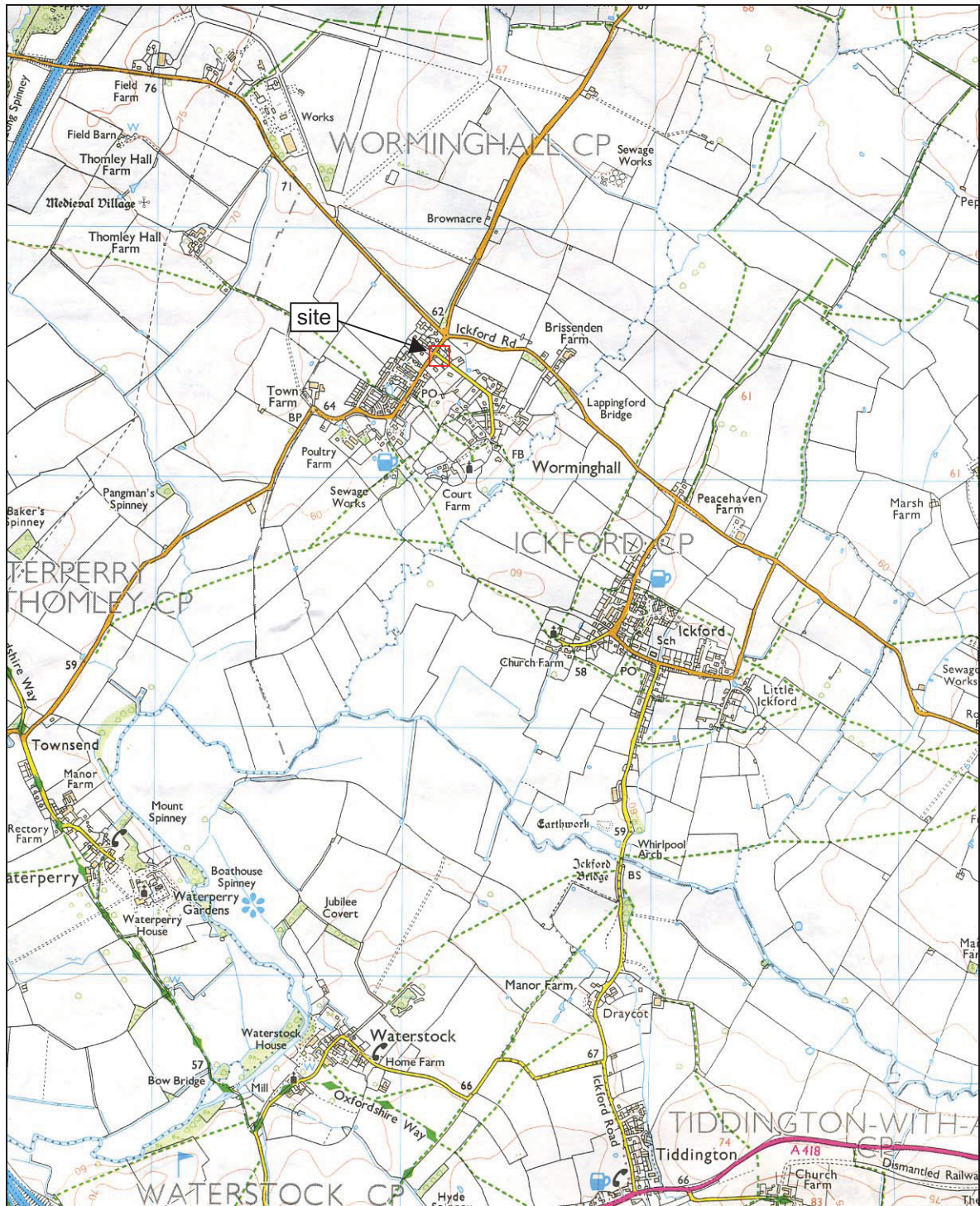


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In August 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) undertook an archaeological evaluation at 1 The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire, in advance of the construction of two detached houses and a garage. The site is on the periphery of the medieval settlement of Worminghall and significant archaeological remains have been found elsewhere on The Avenue. Accordingly the site was considered to have the potential to reveal archaeological remains. Four evaluation trenches were excavated, which revealed only modern features. No archaeological features were observed. While the occasional survival of isolated archaeological features, away from the trenches, cannot be entirely excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of significant archaeological remains are present on the site.

1 Introduction

1.1 In August 2006 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC)* carried out an evaluation at 1 The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 6414 0849: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Mr N. Boyles, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (Fell 2006), and a *brief* (Radford 2006) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Aylesbury Vale District Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), *Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service*. The relevant planning application reference is 06/1319/APP.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16)*, in response to proposals for the construction of two detached houses and single garages.

1.3 *Location & Description*

The site is situated in the village of Worminghall in the administrative district of Aylesbury Vale, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 1). It comprises a rectangular plot of land, towards the north side of the village, at the junction of Clifden Road and The Avenue and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SP 6414 0849 (Fig. 2).

1.4 *Geology & Topography*

The soils of the area are of the *Evesham 1 Association*. These are defined as ‘*Slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils associated with shallow well drained brashy calcareous soils over limestone. Landslips and associated irregular terrain locally*’. The underlying geology is characterised as *Jurassic clay and limestone* (Soil Survey 1983). The site is essentially flat and lies at an elevation of c.61m AOD.

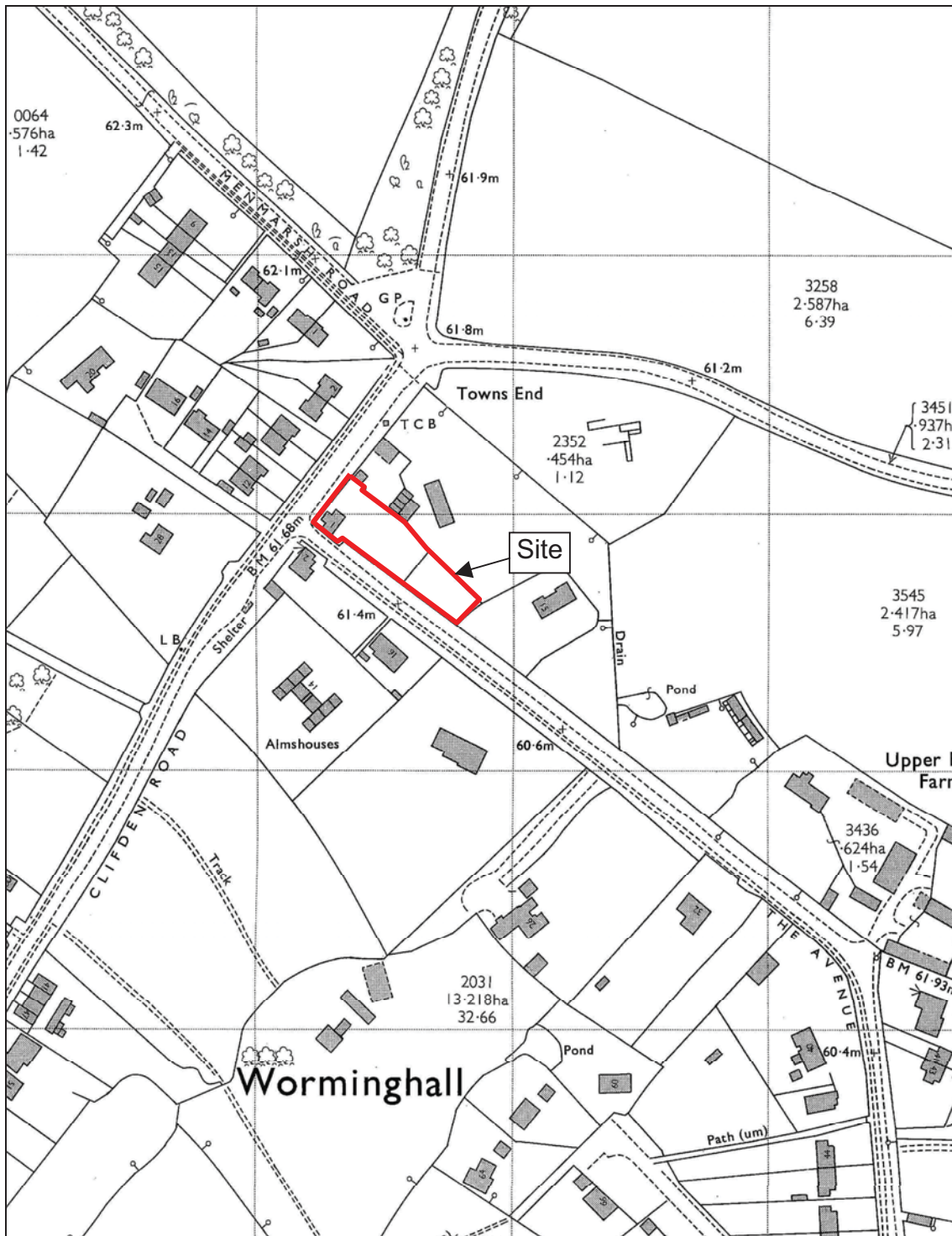


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:2,500)

2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the *brief* (Section 6), the aims of the evaluation were:

- To gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of important archaeological remains within the area of study.
- To identify and characterise any evidence for Roman or Saxon activity
- To identify and characterise any evidence for medieval occupation and to identify the potential for deposits to contribute to the understanding of how Worminghall developed as a village and the hypothesis that Worminghall represents a ‘failed town’.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the *brief*, project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists’ *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), and to the relevant sections of ASC’s own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the *brief* (Section 8aii), which required:

- The excavation of four 10m trial trenches across the site. The location of the trenches is shown on Fig. 3.

2.4 Constraints

Two significant constraints were encountered, which required minor adjustment to the trench locations:

- The presence of a greenhouse in the northern part of the site, necessitated the movement of Trench 4 *c.*2m to the south east
- Restricted space for machine manoeuvrability in the southwest part of the site required the rotation of Trench 1 through 90 °.

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

SMR = Sites and Monuments Record

3.1 Prehistoric - Roman (before 600BC – c.AD 450)

Little is known of the area during the prehistoric and Roman periods. During the Roman period it is likely that Worminghall was distant from the main centres of settlement, which were focused at Alcester, Fleet Marston and Dorchester. Very limited evidence for Roman activity is known in the village, notably to the southeast of the site at The Old Rectory, where a Roman gully/ditch has been identified (SMR 8040; Taylor 2003).

3.2 Saxon (c.450-1066)

The Saxon and early medieval settlement pattern in the area is not well understood. A variety of earthworks of possible Saxon and medieval dates are known in the area, but detailed archaeological work into the settlement pattern of the area has not been undertaken. The present village of Worminghall (SMR 9394) may have originated during the Saxon period. The village was included in the Domesday survey (1086), where it referred to as *Wermelle*. The land was held by the *Bishop of Coutances* and was valued at £7 (Morris 1978).

3.3 Medieval (1066-1500)

The medieval village may have been more extensive than the present settlement and a number of earthworks, including house platforms, hollow ways and fishponds have been identified. These include a variety of features adjacent to the church (SMR 2041) and a complex of tracks and house platforms to the east of the site, near Upper Brook Farm (SMR 1445). The existence of these features suggests that the settlement may have contracted, and that Worminghall may be an example of a medieval '*failed town*'.

3.4 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The origin of The Avenue is not known, but archaeological work at The Old Rectory has revealed evidence for medieval pits (Taylor 2003) and the road is shown on Jeffreys' map of Buckinghamshire, compiled in 1770. It is possible that this may be the original medieval route to the church, and accordingly further settlement evidence may be expected from The Avenue and the surrounding area. The parish church (SMR 4148) occupies a now slightly isolated position, on the eastern periphery of the village. The church contains a Norman doorway, and later elements date from the 14th century (Pevsner & Williamson 2000, 760). A number of late medieval and post-medieval buildings are situated adjacent to the church. These include the almshouses (DoE 1985, 7/150) which were founded 1675 by John King, in memory of his father, Henry King, bishop of Chichester (Pevsner & Williamson 2000, 761). Court Farm (DoE 1985, 7/154; SMR 227) is a significant building situated southwest of the church, which has a 16th-century chimney shaft, but much of the building was rebuilt in the 18th or 19th centuries. A number of other listed buildings are situated along The Avenue, including no. 55 (DoE 1985 7/149) and nos. 38-42 (*ibid*, 7/151).

4 Results and Conclusions

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section provides a summary of the results of the evaluation trenches and provides an interpretation. Full descriptions and dimensions, in tabulated form, are provided in Appendix 1.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 General

Four trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed houses and their associated garages. The topsoil in Trenches 1 and 4 was c.0.3m thick while that in Trenches 2 and 3 was c.0.2m. It comprised uniform dark brownish grey silty clay, which frequently contained charcoal and small fragments of brick and slate. The natural subsoil comprised mid brown silty clay and significant root action was observed in Trench 2.

4.2.2 Trench 1

A pit [102] was present close to the west end of Trench 1. It was oval in shape, was filled with red/orange silty clay (101), which contained obviously modern debris. This feature is 20th century in date and is not archaeologically significant.

4.2.3 Trench 2

A land drain [202] was present at the northwest end of Trench 2. It was orientated from northeast to south west and was c.0.25m wide and c.0.1m deep and was filled with dark greyish brown silty clay (201). A 19th century pottery sherd and brick fragment were present, but discarded after examination. The drain is modern and is not archaeologically significant.

4.2.4 Trench 3

A small pit [302] was present in the central part of Trench 3. It was oval in shape, with dimensions of c.0.8 and 0.3m. It was filled with mid greyish brown silty clay (301) and contained the articulated skeleton of cat or small dog. These remains are modern and are not of archaeological significance.

4.2.5 Trench 4

No archaeological remains were present in Trench 4. With the exception of modern artefacts mixed in the topsoil, no artefacts or remains were present.

4.3 Conclusions

4.3.1 No archaeologically significant finds or features were identified during the evaluation. Those features identified in Trenches 1-3 are interpreted as modern intrusions, generally on the basis of the inclusion of modern material within their fills.

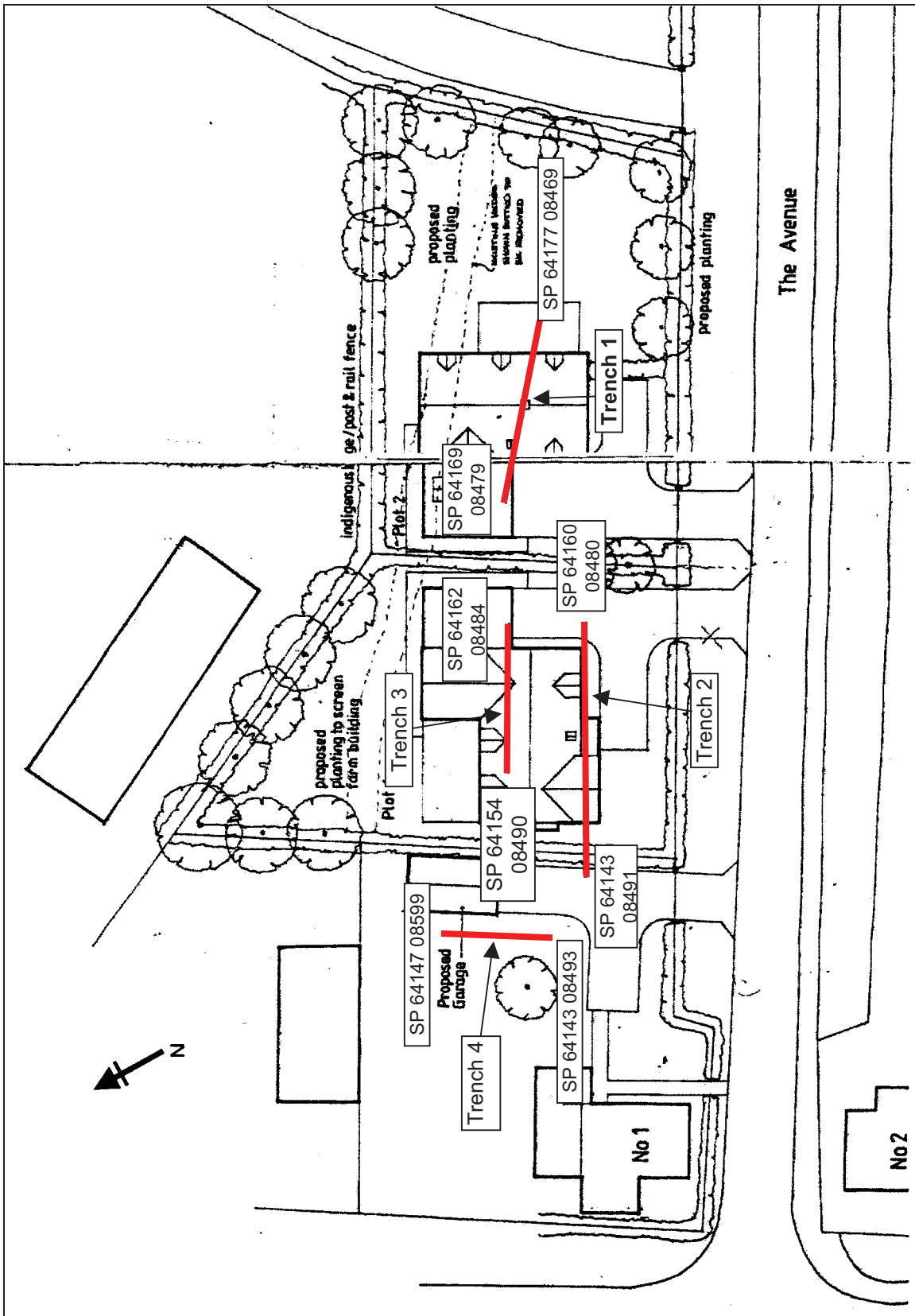


Figure 3: Proposed development showing trench locations (scale 1:400)

- 4.3.2 The topsoil in the centre of the site (Trenches 2 and 3) was marginally shallower than that in Trenches 1 and 4. The central area of the site was, until recently, used for the growing of vegetables and the topsoil may have been truncated or modified, due to the continued use of a rotavator (N Boyles, *pers comm.*). It is likely that any archaeological remains that were present in this area may have been truncated during to this activity.
- 4.3.3 The absence of archaeological features in the trenches probably indicates that the site is away from the main area of medieval or earlier settlement. The historic pattern of settlement in Worminghall is not well understood, but medieval features have been recorded closer to the church, on the southeast side of The Avenue. It is possible that the northwest end of The Avenue was at the limit of the medieval settlement, which may have been centred further to the southwest and focused on the church.
- 4.3.4 *Confidence Rating*

The fieldwork was carried out in dry and slightly overcast weather conditions. Full cooperation was received from both the machine operator and client and a high confidence rating is attached to the results of the evaluation.

5. Acknowledgements

- 5.1 The writer is grateful to Mr N Boyles for commissioning the project, and for driving the mechanical excavator. Access to the Sites and Monuments was provided by Ms Julia Wise of the *Buckinghamshire County Council Archaeology Service* (BCAS). Mr David Radford of BCAS acted as curatorial monitor.
- 5.2 The fieldwork was carried out on behalf of *ASC Ltd* by David Fell MA MIFA and Alastair Hancock BSc PGDip. The report was prepared by Calli Rouse BA PIFA, and edited by David Fell.

6. Archive

- 6.1 The project archive will comprise:
1. Brief
 2. Project Design
 3. Initial Report
 4. Client's site plans
 5. Site records
 6. Site record drawings
 7. List of photographs
 8. B&W photographs and negatives
 9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 6.2 The archive will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum. An accession number has been requested.

7. References


Standards & Specifications


- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition*. English Heritage (London).
- Fell D 2006 *Project Design for An Archaeological Evaluation at 1 The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire* ASC 836/WTA/1
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- Radford D 2006 *Brief for an Archaeological Field Evaluation (Trial Trenching). 1 The Avenue, Worminghall*. Buckinghamshire County Archaeology Service


Secondary Sources


- DoE 1985 *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest. District of Aylesbury Vale*. Department of the Environment
- Morris J 1978 *The Domesday Book: Buckinghamshire*. History through the Sources. Phillimore
- Pevsner N & Williamson E 2000 *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*. Penguin
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Taylor A 2003 *The Old Rectory, The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire*. Thames Valley Archaeological Services. Unpublished report

Appendix 1: Trench Summary Tables

Trench 1						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	12	Width	1.6	Depth	0.3
	Levels					
	Trench base east		60.61m OD			
	Trench top east		60.85m OD			
	Trench base west		60.59m OD			
	Trench top west		60.93m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	SP 64177 08469		W	SP 64169 08479	
	Orientation			NNW-SSE		
Reason for Trench			Testing footprint of proposed house			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
100	Layer	Dark brownish grey topsoil with frequent inclusions of charcoal and small fragments of brick and slate. Topsoil	-	300	-	
101	Fill	Fill of pit [102] – red orange silty clay containing white porcelain and a large number of battery cells	-	-	300	
102	Cut	Cut of oval pit, filled by (101) – not excavated	-	-	300	
103	Layer	Mid brown silty clay. Natural subsoil		-	300	

Trench 2						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	20	Width	1.6	Depth	0.3
	Levels					
	Trench base east			60.72m OD		
	Trench top east			60.92m OD		
	Trench base west			60.71m OD		
	Trench top west			61.05m OD		
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	E	SP 64160 08480		W	SP 64143 08491	
	Orientation			NW-SE		
Reason for Trench			Testing footprint of proposed house			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
200	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey silt with frequent inclusions of charcoal and small fragments of brick and slate. Topsoil	-	200	-	
201	Fill	Dark greyish brown silty clay containing C19 pottery sherds and brick fragments Fill of land drain [202]	250	100	300	
202	Cut	Construction cut of modern land drain filled by (201)	250	100	300	
203	Layer	Mid brown silty clay with root action. Natural subsoil	-	-	300	

Trench 3						
	Max Dimensions (m)					
	Length	10	Width	1.6	Depth	0.3
	Levels					
	Trench base west		60.79m OD			
	Trench top west		61.15m OD			
	Trench base east		60.68m OD			
	Trench top east		61.00m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates					
	W	SP 64154 08490		E	SP 64162 08484	
	Orientation			NW-SE		
Reason for Trench			Testing footprint of proposed house			
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation	Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)	
300	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey silt with frequent inclusions of charcoal and small fragments of brick and slate. Topsoil	-	200	-	
301	Fill	Dark brownish grey silty clay containing the bones of a cat small dog. Fill of pit [302]	300	800	300	
302	Cut	Cut of pit excavated for animal burial	300	800	300	
303	Layer	Mid brown silty clay. Natural subsoil		-	300	

Trench 4							
	Max Dimensions (m)						
	Length	7	Width	1.6	Depth	0.3	
	Levels						
	Trench base north			60.87m OD			
	Trench top north			61.09m OD			
	Trench base south			60.85m OD			
	Trench top south			61.16m OD			
	NGR Co-ordinates						
	E	SP 64147 08599		W	SP 64143 08493		
	Orientation			NE-SW			
Reason for Trench			Testing west end of area of proposed development.				
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation			Max Width (mm)	Max Thckn (mm)	Depth BGL (mm)
400	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey silt with frequent inclusions of charcoal and small fragments of brick and slate. Topsoil			-	300	-
401	Layer	Mid brown silty clay. Natural subsoil				-	300

Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: 1 The Avenue, Worminghall				SITE NO/CODE: WTA
Shot	B&W	Slide	Digital	Subject
1			X	General view looking NE
2			X	General view looking NW
3	X		X	Trench 2 looking NW
4	X		X	Trench 4 looking NE
5	X		X	Trench 3 looking NW
6			X	Machining of Trench 1 looking NW
7			X	Machining of Trench 1 looking NW
8	X		X	Trench 1 looking NW
9			X	Trench 4. Modern drain, looking NE
10			X	Trench 3. Modern animal burial
11			X	Trench 1. Modern intrusion, looking NE
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Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS						
Project Name:	1 The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire					
Short Description:	<i>In August 2006 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) undertook an archaeological evaluation at 1 The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire, in advance of the construction of two detached houses and a garage. The site is on the periphery of the medieval settlement of Worminghall and significant archaeological remains have been found elsewhere on The Avenue. Accordingly the site was considered to have the potential to reveal archaeological remains. Four evaluation trenches were excavated, which revealed only modern features. No archaeological features were observed. While the occasional survival of isolated archaeological features, away from the trenches, cannot be entirely excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of significant archaeological remains are present on the site.</i>					
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	DBA	FW	Geophys	Survey	Bldg Rec	Post-Exc
	WB	Strip&Rec	<u>Trenching</u>	Test pits	Exc	Other
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	None		Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)		None	
Current land use:	House and garden		Future work: (yes / no / unknown)		No	
Monument type:	-		Monument period:		-	
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	-					
PROJECT LOCATION						
County:	Buckinghamshire		OS reference: (to at least 8 figures)		SP 6414 0849	
Site address: (with postcode if known)	1 The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire					
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	-		Height OD: (metres)		c.61	
PROJECT CREATORS						
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd					
Project brief originator:	David Radford		Project design originator:		David Fell	
Project Manager:	David Fell		Director/Supervisor:		David Fell	
Sponsor / funding body:	Mr N. Boyles					
PROJECT DATE						
Start date:	30/08/06		End date:		30/08/06	
PROJECT ARCHIVES						
	Location (Accession no.)		Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)			
Physical:	Buckinghamshire County Museum (TBC)		No finds			
Paper:			Site records, plans, sections, project design, fieldwork report			
Digital:			CD with all digital files			
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)						
Title:	An Archaeological Evaluation at 1 The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire					

Serial title & volume:	ASC/836/WTA/2		
Author(s):	Calli Rouse BA PIFA		
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