

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Limited

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT PLOT 2, 5 OAKHILL ROAD,
SHENLEY CHURCH END,
MILTON KEYNES**

Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA



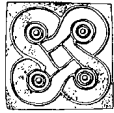
August 1999

ASC/M/ORS99/2

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Archaeological Services & Consultancy Limited

LOCATION

County:	Buckinghamshire
Town/District:	Milton Keynes
Grid Square:	Shenley Church End
Parish	Shenley Church End CP
NGR:	SP 8310 3652
Extent of site:	0.26 hectares
Area of watching brief:	c.400 sq. m.
Land use:	pasture
Planning proposal:	erection of single detached house
Planning application:	99/00559/MK
ASC Site Code:	ORS99
Desk-based assessment:	none required
Developer:	Richard Onslow (architect) The Old School, High Road Soulbury, Leighton Buzzard Beds LU7 0BX
Contact:	-
Telephone/ Facsimile:	
Clients:	Mr & Mrs R Halliday

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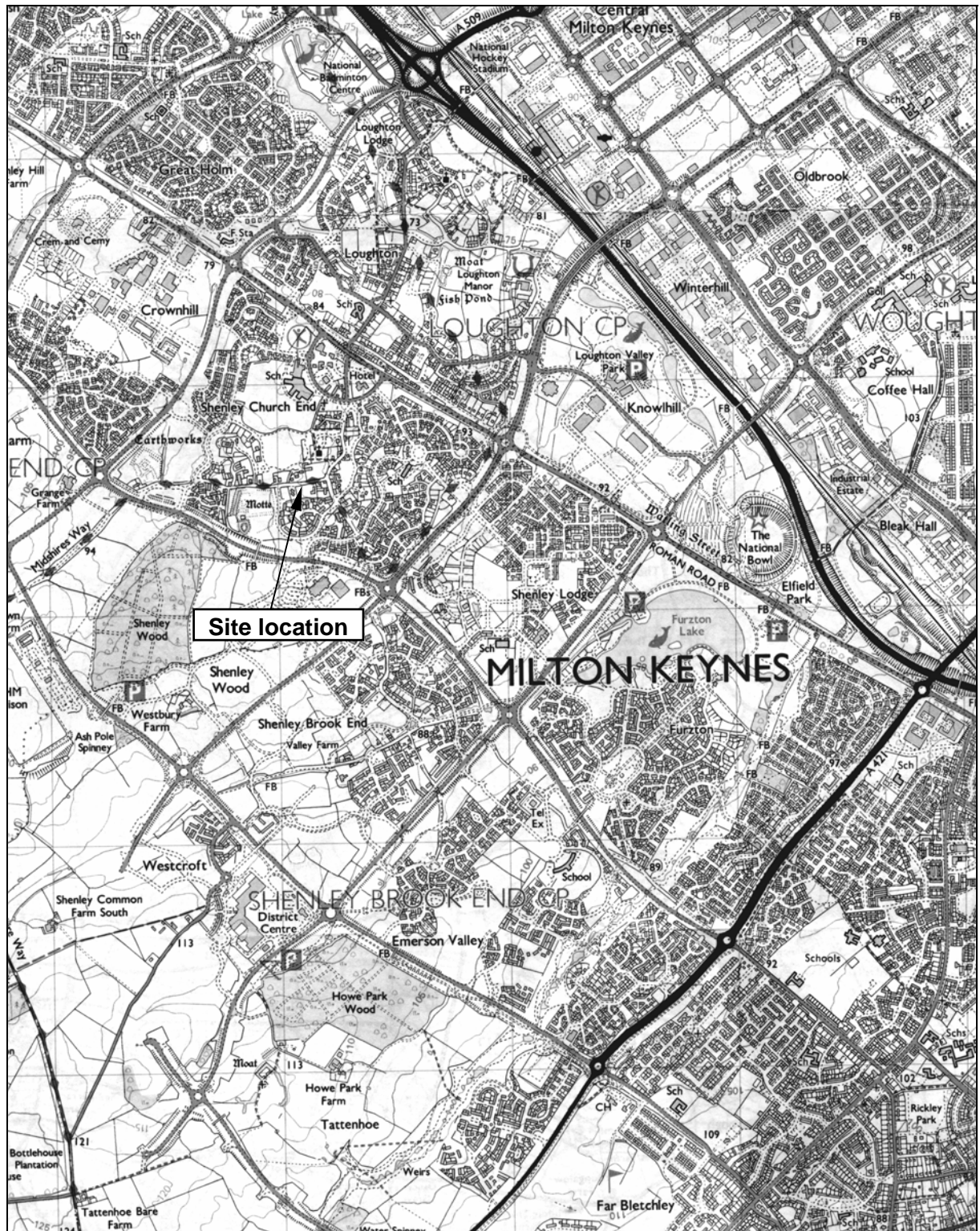
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Figure 1: General location (*scale 1:25,000*)

Summary

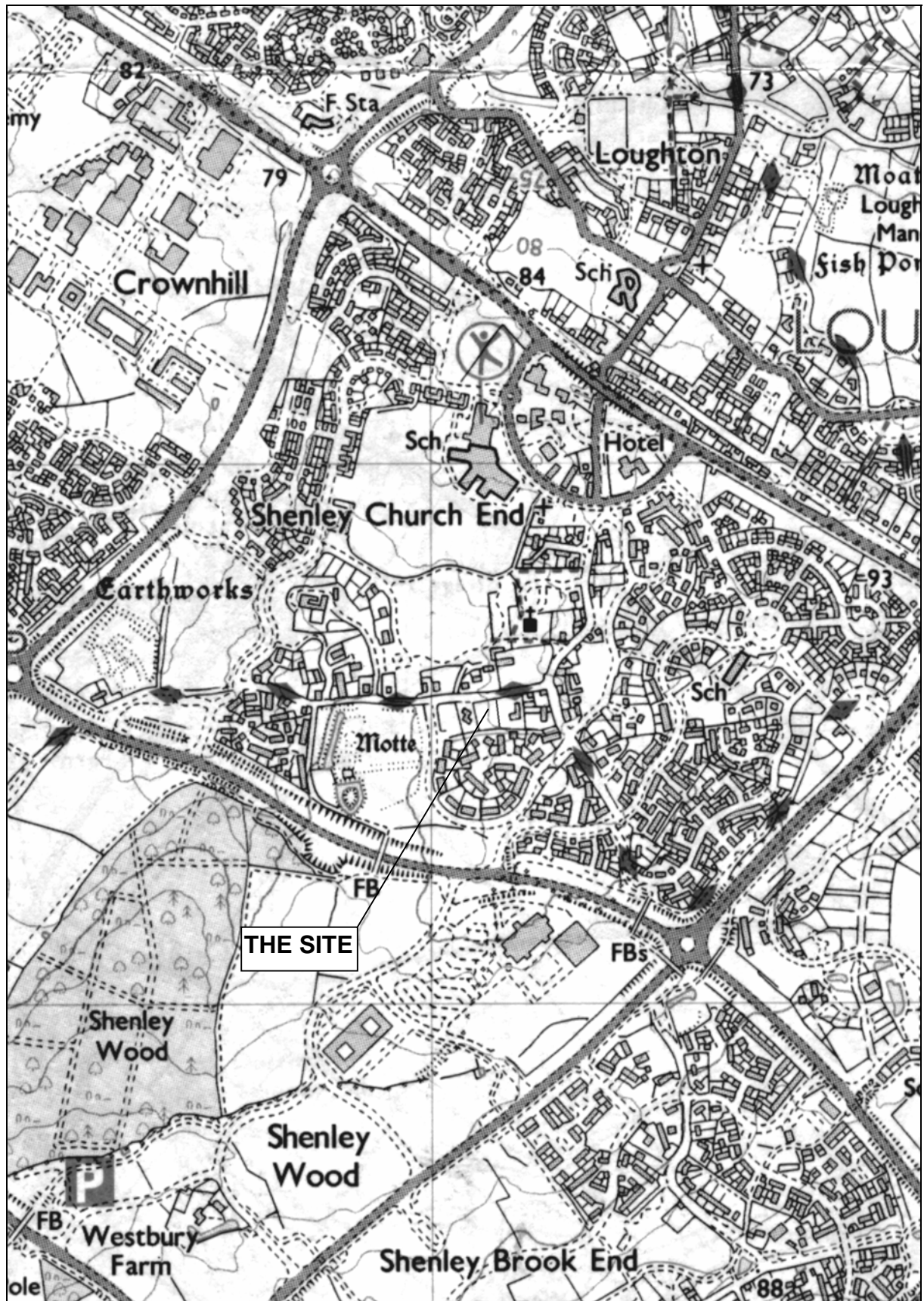
In July 1999 a watching brief was carried out during groundworks for the construction of a detached house on Plot 2, Oakhill Road, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes. Apart from two sherds of medieval pottery, no archaeological features or finds suggesting occupation of the site were recorded.

1 Introduction

During July 1999 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief on a site at Plot 2, 5 Oakhill Road, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes (NGR SP 8310 3652: Fig. 1). The watching brief was commissioned by the architect, Richard Onslow, on behalf of the site owners, Mr & Mrs R Halliday, and was carried out according to a specification (ASC/M/ORS99/1, dated 13th July 1999) prepared by ASC and approved by the Archaeological Officer, Milton Keynes Council.

2 Setting

- 2.1 The site (Fig. 2) occupies a roughly rectangular area of some 0.26 hectares on the south side of Oakhill Road, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes, 180m south-west of the parish church. In relation to the new city, the site lies to the south of the centre of the Shenley Brook End grid square.
- 2.2 The elevation of the site, which slopes slightly downhill to the north, is 95m OD. Soils in the area belong to the Hanslope association (Soil Survey 1983), being 'slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils' overlying Boulder clay. The site is bordered by high hedges, mostly 'ancient' plantings: to the north is Oakhill Road, and to the east, south and west are modern housing developments. The motte-and-bailey castle known as *Shenley Toot* lies just over 100m west of the site. Prior to development, the site was part of a rectangular paddock, which has been subdivided and gradually sold off for residential development.



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Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:10,000)

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 Examination of the available sources of information reveals little evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the evaluation site, or indeed in the parish of Shenley Brook End as a whole (Croft & Mynard 1993, 131). Most prehistoric finds from this part of Milton Keynes have consisted of occasional flint implements or Bronze Age artefacts recovered during excavations of sites of a more recent date. However, as development of this area did not really begin in earnest until the final years of the former Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit (MKAU), it never received the degree of attention given to other parts of the new city, so the picture of prehistoric activity here is far from clear. The only pre-Roman site of any size examined in this area was an early Iron Age settlement at North Furzton, 2km south-east of Oakhill Road (Williams & Hart, forthcoming.)
- 3.2 In contrast, numerous finds of Roman coins and artefacts have been made throughout Shenley, mostly by metal detectorists. A concentration of finds recovered from around Winterhill Prison, 1.5km to the south-east, suggests the existence of a site there, and evidence of a long-lived Roman field system was recorded during the MKAU excavation of the deserted medieval village of Westbury-by-Shenley, 0.8km south of the site. Roman finds and structural evidence were noted during the construction of the Loughton bypass in the 1960s, 0.6km to the north of the site, and at Dovecote Farm, 0.9km to the south-east, building work during the 19th century is reported to have uncovered mosaic pavements, indicating the presence of a possible villa, though no further evidence of this site has since been found (Ivens *et al* 1995).
- 3.3 The centuries between the end of the Roman period (*c.* AD 450) and the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) are generally poorly represented in the archaeological record of Shenley. A number of Saxon artefacts have been recovered by metal detectorists from fields around Shenley Church End: clusters of objects have also been located around the Westbury-by-Shenley village site, and from Shenley Brook End. Excavations adjacent to Westbury Farm, 1.0km SSE of the site, revealed a group of 7th-century Saxon burials, and two wells of the same period (Ivens, *op. cit.*).

- 3.4 The site is located on Oakhill Road, which was formerly the road from Shenley to Nash. Originally, the two modern civil parishes of Shenley Church End and Shenley Brook End formed the single ecclesiastical parish of Shenley. Church End has always been the main settlement in the parish, centred on the parish church. The greatest extent of the village is not known: the earliest surviving buildings are 17th-century in date, and the earthworks survey of the village carried out by MKAU (Fig. 3) suggests the possibility that house plots could have existed on the south side of Oakhill Road, between Shenley Road and the Toot, which was constructed by the Earl of Chester in the 12th century, and was subsequently landscaped as a garden, probably in the 17th century.

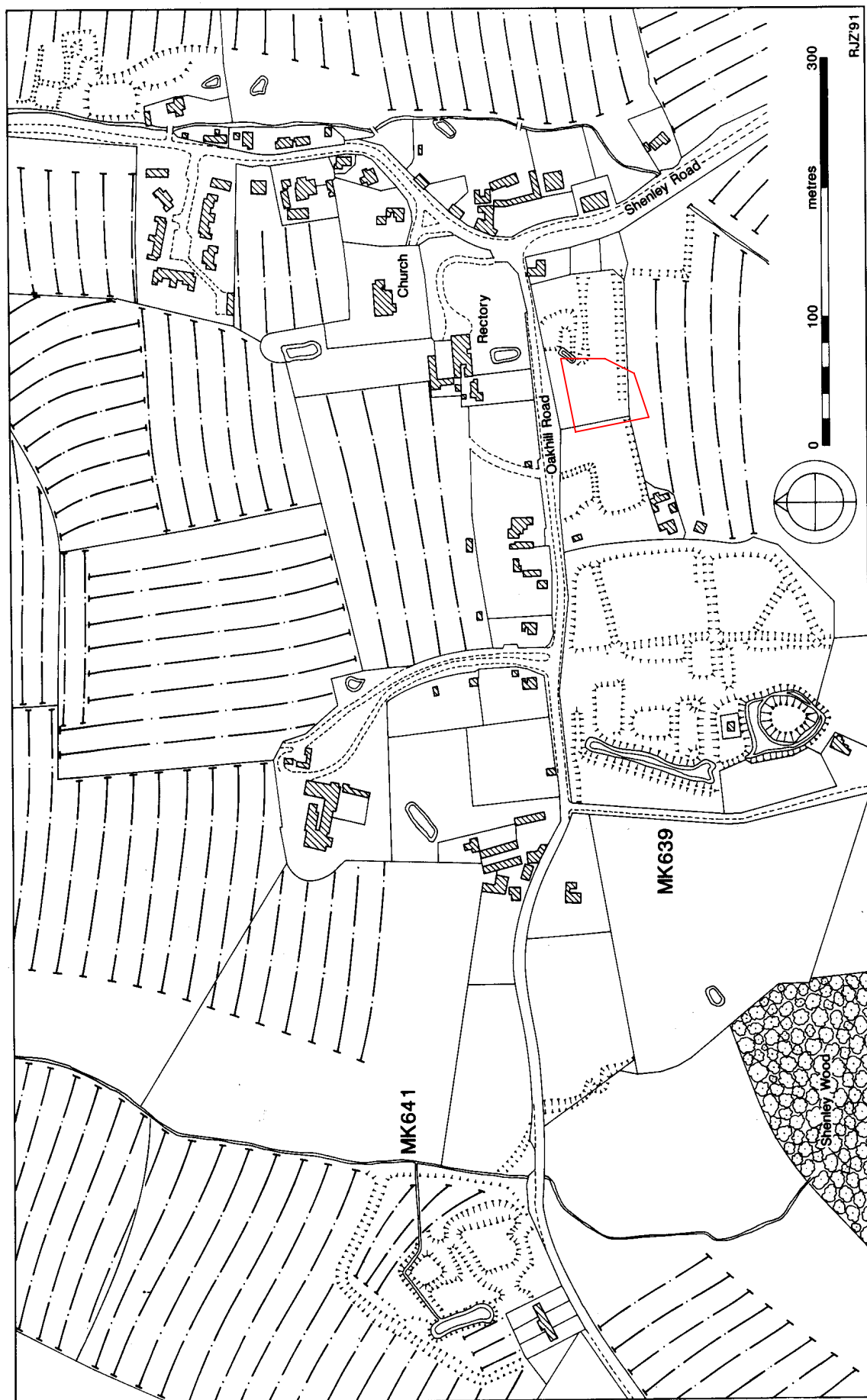


Figure 3: Shenley Church End earthworks survey

4 Aims & Methods

- 4.1 An Archaeological Watching Brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons within a specified area or site where there is the possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.
- 4.2 In the absence of a detailed brief from the Archaeology Officer, Milton Keynes Council, the following general aims were set out in the project specification:
- within the resources available, to allow the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
 - to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.
- 4.3 In the absence of a detailed brief from the Archaeology Officer, Milton Keynes Council, the methods detailed in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* were adopted. These are set out in the project specification (Section 4).
- 4.4 Each site visit was recorded on ASC's *Site Monitoring Sheets* (Appendix 1). A photographic record (B&W prints, colour slides) was also maintained throughout the watching brief. A plan of the development provided by the client (Fig. 4) was used as the basis for recording the location of archaeological features and finds.

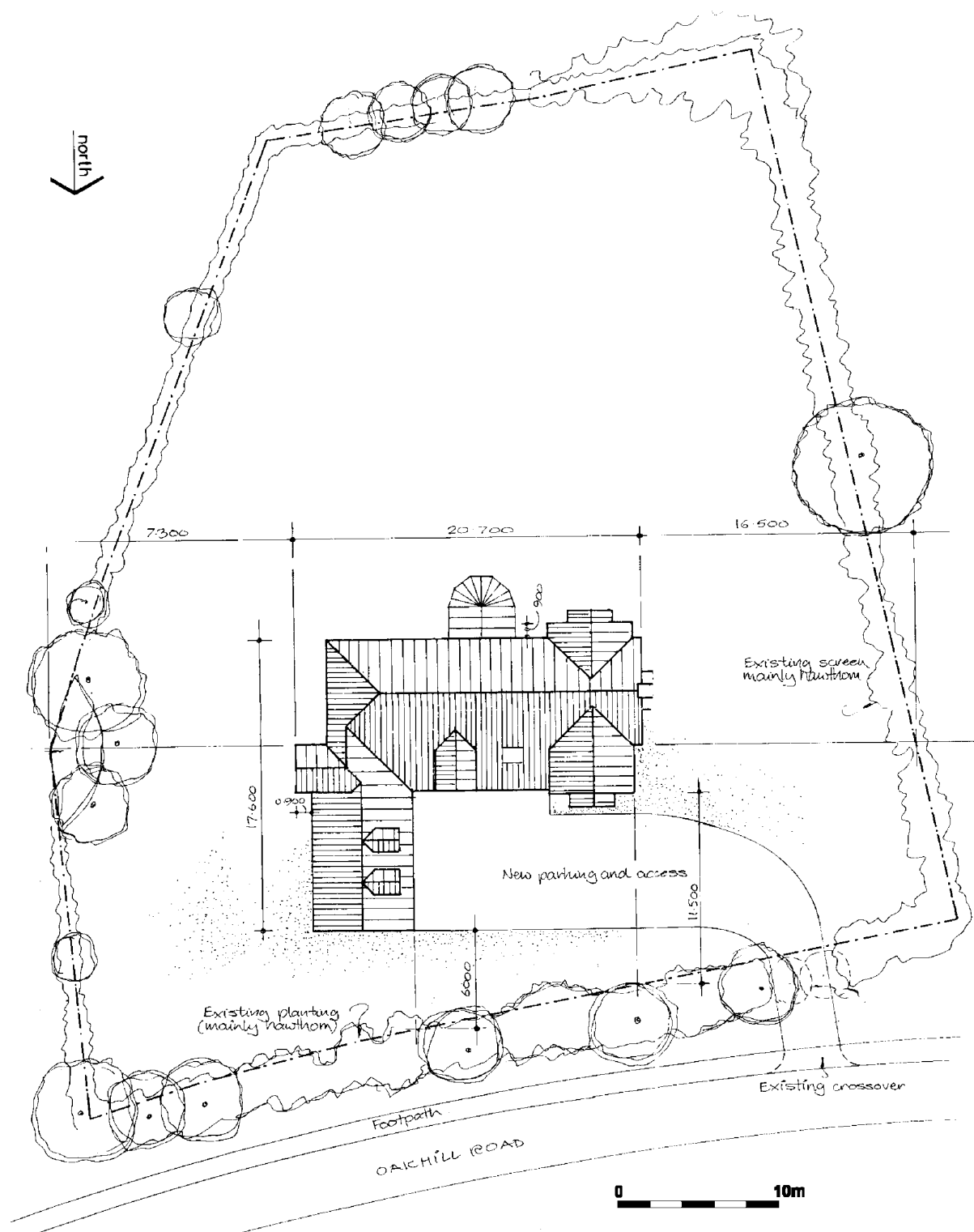


Figure 4: Plan of development.

5 Results

5.1 Three visits were made to the site, during which the following groundworks operations were observed:

- removal of topsoil and overburden from the area of the house, garage and drive.
- excavation of footings for the house and garage.

5.2 Topsoil and turf proved to be about 0.3m deep, overlying undisturbed yellow-brown Boulder clay subsoil. No archaeological features were observed in the subsoil, and the only finds recovered consisted of two sherds of a calcite gritted St Neot's-type ware, equating to Fabric SNC1 in the MKAU Medieval Pottery Type Series (Mynard & Zeepvat 1992, 249), and a post-medieval horseshoe.

5.3 Excavation of the footing trenches, to a depth of c.1.5m, revealed only undisturbed Boulder clay subsoil.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Observation of groundworks on the site revealed no evidence of occupation or other activity of any period.

6.2 This site was the last of this group on the south side of Oakhill Road to be developed. As far as the writer is aware, none of the adjoining plots contained evidence of occupation. Therefore, the village of Shenley Church End did not extend along this side of Oakhill Road as far as the Toot. From the absence of occupation, and the presence of a pond on the east side of the site, it seems likely that the site and adjoining enclosures have been paddocks for some time.



Plate 1: General view of footing trenches



Plate 2: Detail of footing trench

7 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to the architect, Richard Onslow, for commissioning this watching brief, and to the owners, Mr and Mrs R Halliday, for funding it. Thanks are also due to the Archaeological Officer, Milton Keynes Council, and the groundworks contractor, John McFadden, for their assistance.

8 Bibliography

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- Soil Survey 1983 *Soils of England & Wales: Sheet 4, Eastern England: 1:250,000 map and legend (Harpenden)*.
- Williams, R.J. and Hart, P.J., forthcoming 'A late Iron Age site at Furzton, Milton Keynes', *Rec. Buckinghamshire* **00**, 000.

Appendix 1

A.S.A.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD			
Project name: 5 OAKHILL RD		Project Code: ORS 99		Date 19/7/99.	
Location: SHENLEY CHURCH END, MK					
Client/Developer MR + MRS R HOLLIDAY.					
Architect: RICHARD ONSLOW					
Site Manager/Farmer: JOHN McFADDEN. Phone:					
Development Type RES.					
Foundations	Services	Levelling	Roads	Quarrying	Other
Weather (Site conditions) DRY.					
Observations made: (i.e. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil description)					
INITIAL STRIPPING OF HOUSE/GARAGE/ DRIVE AREA					
TOPSOIL/OVERBURDEN c 300mm, ONTO CLAY.					
NO ARCH FEATURES VISIBLE.					
Comments: —					
For sketch plan use reverse					

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A.S.A.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD			
Project name: 5 OAKHILL RD		Project Code: ORS 99		Date 20/7/99	
Location: SHENLEY CHURCH END, MK.					
Client/Developer: M. + Mrs R. HAZARD.					
Architect: RICHARD ONSLOW					
Site Manager/Farmer: JOHN HUFADEN. Phone:					
Development Type					
Foundations	Services	Levelling	Roads	Quarrying	Other
Weather (Site conditions)					
Dry.					
Observations made: (i.e. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil description)					
① COMPLETED STRIP OF HOUSE/GARAGE/DRIVE.					
② SOILS AS PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED					
③ NO ARCH FEATURES.					
④ PICKED UP 2 SHARDS CALCITR-GLAZED MED POT - BODY SHEARDS (ST NEOTS? - CHURCH).					
⑤ J MCF FOUND POST-MED HORSESHOE - IN TOPSOIL - NOTED + CHUCKED.					
Comments:					
FOOTINGS THURS/FRI?					
For sketch plan use reverse					

ASACFM26, revised 1999

A.S.A.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD			
Project name: 5 OAKHILL RD		Project Code: OPS 99		Date: 23/7/99	
Location: SHENLEY CHURCH END					
Client/Developer: Mr + Mrs R HALLIDAY					
Architect: RICHARD ONSLOW					
Site Manager/Farmer: JOHN McFADDEN				Phone:	
Development Type: RES.					
Foundations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Levelling	Roads	Quarrying	Other
Weather (Site conditions): SLIGHTLY DAMP					
Observations made: (i.e. length of trench/foundation; depth/width; soil description)					
FOOTING TRENCHES FOR MOST OF HOUSE +					
GARAGE, c 1.5m DEEP. CUT INTO UNDISTURBED					
CLAY - NO ARCH FEATURES PRESENT					
Comments:					
WILL LINK BG TO INFORM SITE IS ARCH. BARREN.					
For sketch plan use reverse					

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