



Land at Ashridge Farm Wokingham Berkshire (Phase 2)

Archaeological Evaluation



for:
Barret David Wilson Southern
Counties

CA Project: AN0292 CA Report: AN0292_2

December 2021



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SUMMARY

Project name: Land at Ashridge Farm (Phase 2)

Location: Wokingham, Berkshire

NGR: 481327 169764

Type: Evaluation

Date: 22-24 November 2021

Planning reference: 201515

Location of Archive: Physical archive to be retained by Cotswold Archaeology; digital

copy to be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

Site Code: ARGF 21

In November 2021, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation at Ashridge Farm, Wokingham, Berkshire. Phase 2 consisted of six trenches.

Despite the archaeological potential of the area, no archaeological features or remains were discovered in any of the trenches.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In November 2021, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Ashridge Farm, Wokingham, Berkshire (centred at NGR: 481327 169764; Fig. 1). This evaluation was undertaken for Barratt David Wilson Southern Counties and is defined as Phase 2 of the evaluation trenching works. Phase 1 was undertaken in March 2021 and forms the basis of a separate report (CA 2021b).
- 1.2. The evaluation results will inform a planning application for residential development of the site, which has been made to Wokingham Borough Council (App Ref. 201515).
- 1.3. The scope of this evaluation was defined by Mathew Saywood of Berkshire Archaeology, advisors to Wokingham Borough Council. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CA (2021a) and approved by Mathew Saywood.
- 1.4. The evaluation was also in line with Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020), Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation (Historic England 2015) and Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide (Historic England 2015).

The site

- 1.5. The proposed wider development site is approximately 4.56ha in extent. At the time of the Phase 2 evaluation, the site comprised a levelled area where the recently demolished structures of Ashridge Farm once stood. The site retained a single large barn structure and was occupied by a construction contractor working on behalf of the client. The temporary works compound established within the site included portable cabins, vehicle parking areas, stored materials and access routes. The site is bounded to the north by paddocks (understood to comprise part of the wider current development area of Ashridge Farm) and a sewage treatment plant, to the west by Bell Foundry Lane, the south by Warren House Road and to the east by further paddocks. The site lies at approximately 49m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 1.6. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as London Clay Formation Clay, Silt and Sand (BGS 2021). Alluvial deposits are mapped alongside a

watercourse within the eastern part of the site with clay, silt, sand and gravel Head deposits mapped within the centre and north of the site and likely extending beneath the alluvium. No superficial deposits are mapped within the western part of the site.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The archaeological desk-based assessment (SWAT 2019) provides an archaeological and historical background of the site, a succinct summary of which is provided below. Further detail has been added by the results of archaeological evaluation and excavation at Kentwood Farm (CA 2017a & 2017b, respectively), undertaken to the immediate north-east of the site; evaluation undertaken to the immediate north (CA 2019), within part of Ashridge Farm (under different ownership to the site examined by this report), and the Phase 1 evaluation undertaken to the immediate east and north-east (CA 2021b; Figure 2).

Recent archaeological investigations

- 2.2. The results of the previous evaluation and excavation at Kentwood Farm are detailed further within this section, discussed by archaeological period. An evaluation undertaken to the immediate north and further north-east of the site, comprising ten trenches, encountered no archaeological features, deposits or artefacts (CA 2019).
- 2.3. The Phase 1 evaluation comprised 23 trenches laid out to the east and north-east of the Phase 2 trenches. A single, possible posthole was encountered, of dubious archaeological origin, and no residual or further archaeological remains were recorded (CA 2021b).

Early prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic & Bronze Age)

2.4. A quantity of residual Mesolithic worked flint was recovered during archaeological excavation at Kentwood Farm, to the immediate east of the site. A further residual Mesolithic flint flake was encountered near the south of the site.

Iron Age

2.5. The Historic Environment Record (HER) has six records attributed to the Iron Age within the vicinity of the site. A Late Iron Age farmstead was identified at Kentwood Farm, which continued in use into the Roman period. A further area of Iron Age occupation was identified at Matthewsgreen Farm, close to the west of the site. To

the south of the site, two Portable Antiquities Scheme findspots were broadly attributed to a grid square, relating to a gold quarter stater and a copper alloy strap fitting, both attributed to the Iron Age.

2.6. A further ten HER records within the vicinity of the site relate to residual finds of prehistoric flint and pottery sherds. Although the area was likely forested, restricting widespread settlement, the encountering of the Iron Age farmstead at Kentwood Farm, on the eastern side of Ashridge Stream (flowing through the eastern part of the site), suggests that the area held some attraction during the Iron Age.

Roman

2.7. The HER has six records from this period within the vicinity of the site, in addition to the Iron Age/Early Roman features and artefacts identified at Kentwood Farm and Matthewsgreen Farm. Roman ditches at Kentwood Farm are likely associated with the farmstead and it is possible that such features may extend westwards into the site. Roman settlement at Matthewsgreen Farm included hearths or ovens, occupational pits and gullies, along with a significant coin hoard. The main Roman road from Silchester to London (Margary 1973; road 4a) passed to the south of Wokingham, c. 5.7km to the south of the site, and therefore likely had little bearing upon the Roman activity identified nearby.

Early medieval

2.8. The HER has one record from this period within the vicinity of the site, comprising charcoal clamps found at Matthewsgreen Farm. Alternatively, these features may date to the later medieval period. There is no suggestion of early medieval activity in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Medieval

- 2.9. The HER has 37 records from this period within the vicinity of the site, principally relating to central Wokingham, known from documentary and archaeological evidence to have medieval origins. The remaining records relate to scattered surface finds of medieval pottery sherds.
- 2.10. During the 11-12th centuries, the site and the surrounding landscape likely lay within the Great Windsor Forest, known for its royal hunting grounds. By the 13th century, it formed part of the Ashridge estate and deer park. Deer parks of this period were usually bounded by elements comprising ditches, banks and fencing, usually laid out on curving lines. Maps from the post-medieval period illustrate a

peculiar curving boundary within the south-east corner of the site, suggestive of a relict element of the former deer park.

Post-medieval

- 2.11. The HER has 53 records from this period within the vicinity of the site, principally relating to the centre of Wokingham. By this period, there had been increased clearance of the wood allowing for scattered farmsteads to establish on the hinterland of Wokingham, such as Kentwood Farm, Matthewsgreen Farm and Dowlesgreen Farm.
- 2.12. During the early post-medieval period, however, the site and surrounding land was still in use for hunting and Ashridge Farmhouse, adjacent to the site, is understood to have been built as a hunting lodge for Elizabeth I before becoming a farmstead in the late 17th century.
- 2.13. Excluding the far western field, the remainder of the site belonged to Ashridge Farm throughout its recorded history and cartographic evidence shows that the overall fieldscape of the site has changed little since its enclosure in the early 19th century.
- 2.14. Early to mid-19th century maps identified a large building within the site, to the immediate north-west of the farmhouse, which was no longer extant by the 1883 1st edition Ordnance Survey, possibly replaced by a smaller structure further north; itself no longer illustrated by the 1900 2nd edition Ordnance Survey.

Modern

2.15. The site was, until recently, part of a working farm consisting of several modern farm buildings of various, size and construction, and agricultural fields. Cartographic evidence suggests that the extant farm buildings within the site were constructed throughout the 20th century, although one structure, within the south-west corner, may comprise elements of two late 19th century outbuildings.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. The general objective of the evaluation was to provide further information on the likely archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date and state of preservation. This information will enable Wokingham Borough Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any archaeological heritage assets within the site, consider the impact of the

proposed development upon that significance and, if appropriate, develop strategies to avoid or minimise conflict between heritage asset conservation and the development proposals, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (MHCLG 2019).

3.2. The specific objective of the evaluation was to investigate the potential for Iron Age and/or Roman archaeological remains associated with those encountered at Kentwood Farm to be present further south and south-west.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. Phase 2 of the evaluation fieldwork comprised the excavation of six trenches (Figures 2 and 3). All trenches were shortened and relocated to avoid unanticipated on-site constraints (see Appendix A). The trenches were located to test the archaeological potential of the development area in a general array. Changes in location were made with the approval of Dr Edward Peveler, Berkshire Archaeology.
- 4.2. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS. Overburden was stripped from the trenches by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. All machining was conducted under archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate that was the level at which archaeological features were first encountered during Phase 1 (CA 2021b).
- 4.3. Records were maintained in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.4. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential and no deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.5. CA will retain the archive until a suitable museum will be available. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The archives will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CIfA 2014; updated October 2020).
- 4.6. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A.
- 5.2. The natural geology was encountered at depths of 0.15-1m below ground level (bgl) and consisted of a light to mid yellow/orange, sandy/silty clay (Figs. 4-9). This was generally overlain by one or more layers of made ground which sealed the trenches. The exceptions to this pattern were noticed within **Trench 30**, where the natural substrate was sealed by 0.15m of mid brownish-grey, silty clay topsoil, and within **Trench 28**, where the natural substrate was overlain by a 0.4m thick mid brownish-grey, silty clay, buried soil, which was sealed in turn by a sequence of two made ground deposits.
- 5.3. Features were identified within **Trenches 25**, **26** and **28** (Figures. 4, 5 and 7, respectively) and attributed to the modern period by the inclusions of modern debris and material within their fills. All such features were not excavated. No significant archaeological features or artefacts were identified.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. Despite the archaeological potential suggested by the desk-based assessment and investigation results from the nearby Kentwood Farm, the results of this most recent phase of investigation suggest that any prehistoric or historic activity within the site has left a minimal and undetectable imprint, in line with the two previous phases of evaluation at Ashridge Farm.
- 6.2. The presence of recently demolished agricultural structures and areas of hardstanding within the site suggest that the upper geological units, including possibly the stratum bearing archaeological evidence, may have experienced significant impacts throughout the post-medieval and modern periods. Further impacts are likely to have been experienced through further agricultural activity, predating the construction of the farm buildings and yards. This cumulative activity may feasibly have impacted upon archaeological features, truncating or wholly removing them.

6.3. Alternatively, the paucity of archaeological evidence within the site may illustrate minimal to no detectable activity within this area prior to post-medieval/modern farming.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

7.1. Fieldwork of Phase 2 was undertaken by Francesco Catanzaro, assisted by Annabel McWinnie and Rebecca Avery. This report was written by Francesco Catanzaro. The report illustrations were prepared by Krissy Moore. The project archive has been compiled by Richard Paxford. The project was managed for CA by Tony Brown.

8. REFERENCES

- British Geological Survey. 2021. *Geology of Britain Viewer* https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewer/ Accessed 9 November 2021.
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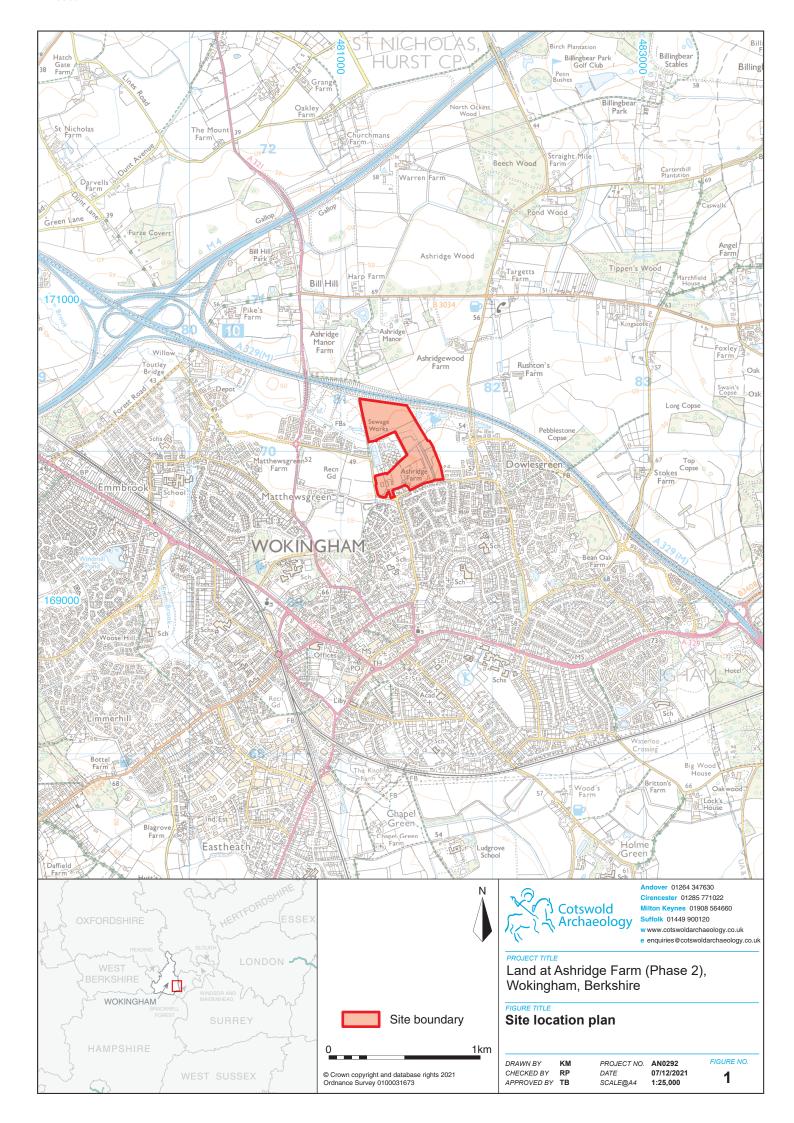
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

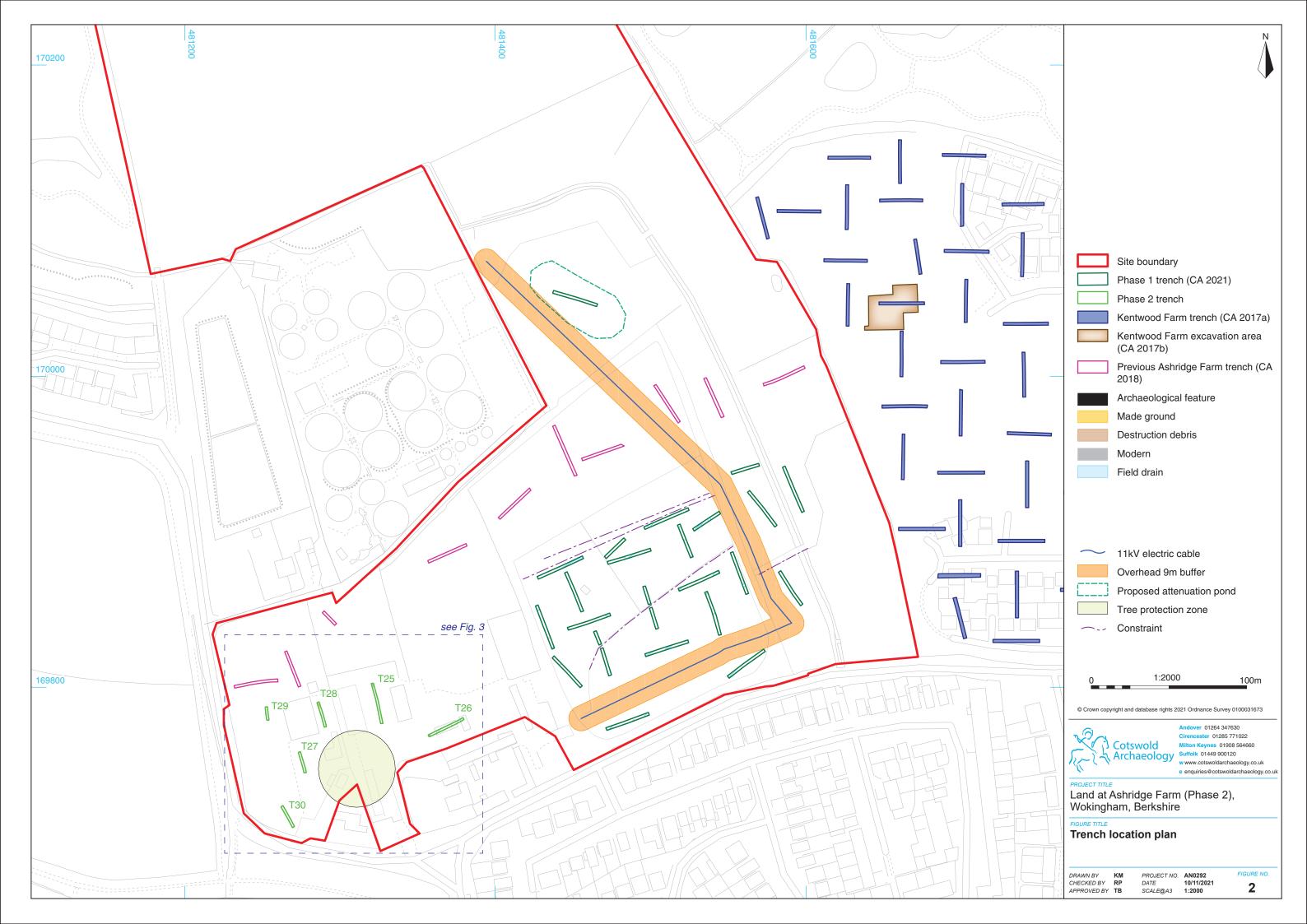
Trench	Context No.	Туре	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (bgl)
25	2500	layer		Made ground	Mid grey brown silty clay with occasional stone and modern rubble	27	1.6	0-0.06
25	2501	layer		Made ground	Mix of concrete and chalk	27	1.6	0.06-0.2
25	2502	layer		Made ground	Mix of yellow sand and rubble	27	1.6	0.2-0.43
25	2503	layer		Made ground	Mix of dark green brown sand and modern debris	27	1.6	0.43-1
25	2504	layer		Natural	Mid orange brown silty clay with blue silt mottling and frequent Mn flecks	27	1.6	1+
26	2600`	layer		Made ground	Mix of dark grey silty clay and brick rubble	26	1.6	0-0.13
26	2601	layer		Made ground	Mid blue grey silty clay with rare modern debris.	26	1.6	0.13-0.41
26	2602	layer		natural	Mid orange brown silty clay with blue silt mottling and frequent Mn flecks	26	1.6	0.41+
26	2603	Cut		Linear	Modern feature; not excavated	1.6	0.9	0.51
26	2604	fill	2603	Upper fill	Mid blue yellow silty clay with occasional modern debris; not excavated	1.6	0.9	0.51
26	2605	Cut		Linear	Curvilinear feature; not excavated	1.6	0.15	n/a
26	2606	fill	2605	Upper fill	Mix of mid blue clay and modern bricks rubble; not excavated	1.6	0.15	n/a
26	2607	Cut		discrete	Modern pit/post hole, with still wood post inside; not excavated	0.53	0.42	n/a
26	2608	fill	2607	Upper fill	Mid grey clay; not excavated	0.53	0.42	n/a
27	2700	layer		Made ground	Mix of gravel and dark grey silty sand	15	1.6	0-0.14
27	2701	layer		Made ground	Light yellow grey sandy clay with occasional modern debris and stones	15	1.6	0.14-0.36
27	2702	layer		natural	Light orange brown sandy clay with occasional stones, mottling of blue silt and frequent Mn flecks	15	1.6	0.36+
28	2800	layer		Made ground	Mix of gravel and dark grey silty sand	17.8	1.6	0-0.16
28	2801	layer		Made ground	Dark grey brown silty clay and modern debris occasional flecks of charcoal	17.8	1.6	0.16-0.34
28	2802	layer		Buried soil	Mid brown grey silty clay with occasional sub-rounded stones	17.8	1.6	0.34-0.74
28	2803	layer		natural	Light orange brown sandy clay with occasional stones, mottling of blue silt and frequent Mn flecks	17.8	1.6	0.74+
29	2900	layer		Made ground	Mix of dark grey brown clay silt and modern debris	12	1.6	0-0.66
29	2901	layer		natural	Light orange brown sandy clay with occasional flint, mottling of blue silt, frequent Mn flecks	12	1.6	0.66+
30	3000	layer		topsoil	Mid brown grey silty clay with occasional sub-rounded stones	16.3	1.6	0-0.15
30	3001	layer		natural	Light orange brown sandy clay with occasional flint, mottling of blue silt, frequent Mn flecks	16.3	1.6	0.15+

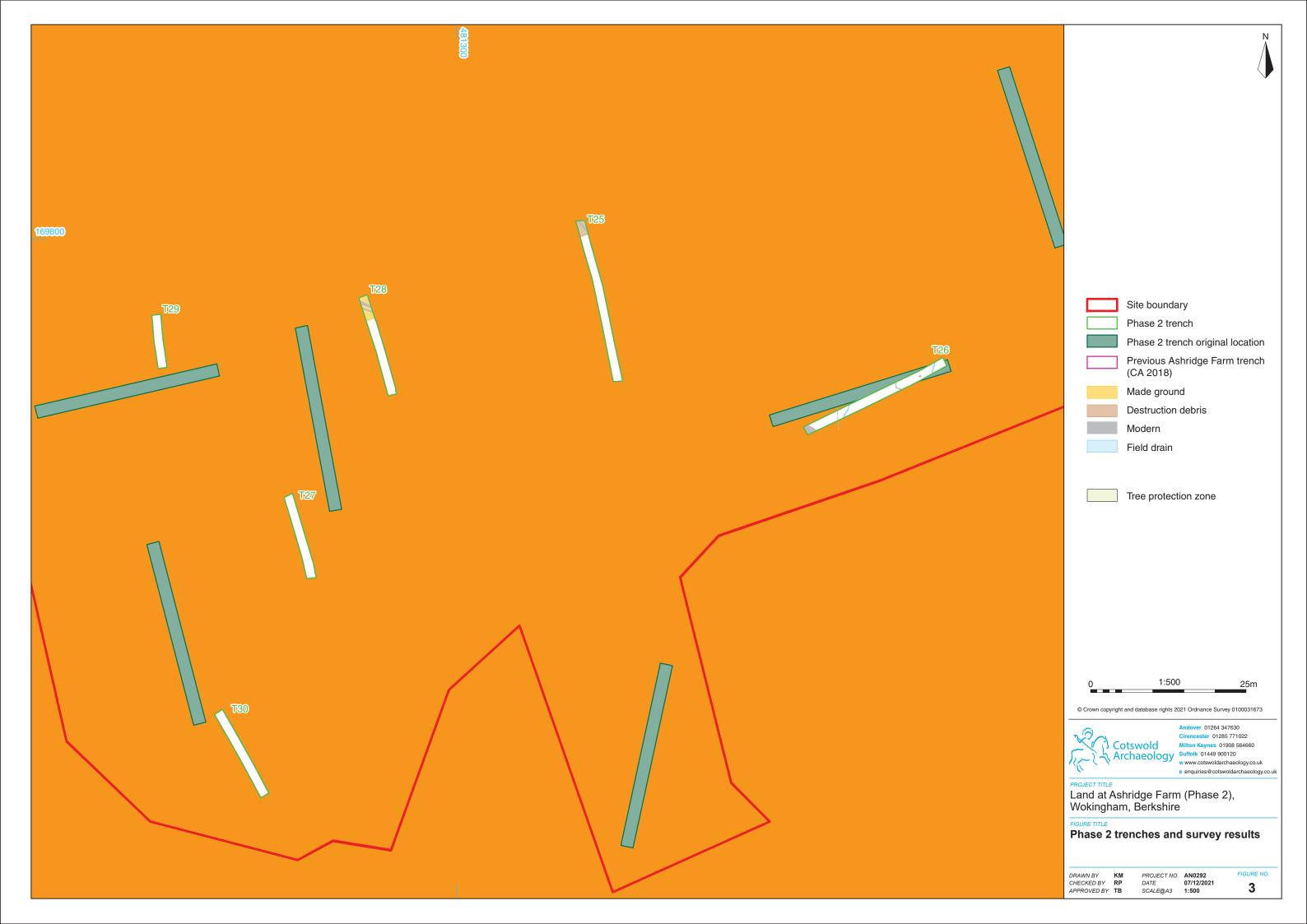
APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS						
Project name	Land at Ashridge Farm, Wokingham, B	Berkshire (Phase 2)				
Short description	In November 2021, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation at Ashridge Farm, Wokingham, Berkshire. Phase 2 consisted of six trenches.					
	Despite the archaeological potential of the area, no archaeological potential of the area archaeological potential of the area archaeological potential of the archaeological potential potentia					
Project dates	22 – 24 November					
Project type	Evaluation					
Previous work	Desk-based assessment (SWAT 2019) Evaluation (CA 2021)	Desk-based assessment (SWAT 2019) Evaluation (CA 2021)				
Future work	Unknown					
PROJECT LOCATION	<u> </u>					
Site location	Ashridge Farm, Wokingham, Berkshire)				
Study area (m²/ha)	4.56ha					
Site co-ordinates						
PROJECT CREATORS						
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology					
Project brief originator	N/A					
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	Cotswold Archaeology				
Project Manager	Tony Brown					
Project Supervisor						
MONUMENT TYPE	None					
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None					
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)				
Physical	N/A	N/A				
Paper	Cotswold Archaeology, Andover	Context sheets, registers				
Digital	ADS	Database, digital photos, Digital Recording System data				
BIBLIOGRAPHY						
	Ashridge Farm, Wokingham, Berkshire (Phase	e 2): Archaeological				
Evaluation. CA typescript report AN02	92_2					

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Trench 25, looking north-west (scales 1m)



Trench 27, looking north-west (scales 1m)



Trench 26, looking north-east (scales 1m)



Trench 28, looking north-west (scales 1m)



Land at Ashridge Farm (Phase 2), Wokingham, Berkshire

FIGURE TITLE
Photographs

DRAWN BY KM CHECKED BY RP APPROVED BY TB

PROJECT NO. AN0292
DATE 07/12/2021
SCALE@A3 NA

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Trench 29, looking north-west (scales 1m)



Trench 30, looking south-east (scales 1m)



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Land at Ashridge Farm (Phase 2), Wokingham, Berkshire

FIGURE TITLE Photographs

DRAWN BY KM
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 NA

8 & 9



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