

REPORT ON

PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

AND POST-EXCAVATION ANALYSIS

AT

LAND NORTH OF LONGLEA,

FIFIELD ROAD, FIFIELD, BERKSHIRE

NGR SU 910772

On behalf of

Phoenix Gymnastics Club

OCTOBER 2016

REPORT FOR	Phoenix Gymnastics Club Unit 1 Windsor Road Water Oakley Windsor SL4 5UJ
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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation on land north of Longlea, Fifield Road, Fifield, Maidenhead, Berkshire. The work revealed a number of shallow negative features which may have been bioturbation or ephemeral in nature. Two pits were identified which contained burnt material. The larger and deeper of the two pits also contained burnt flint and charcoal. Following on from this a trench 25m x 25m was excavated around evaluation Trench 5 where one prehistoric pit and five natural hollows were identified. One small fragment of stuck flint and one small fragment of burnt flint were recovered from the otherwise un-dated prehistoric pit.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The development site is located north of Longlea on the east side of Fifield Road, Fifield (NGR SU 910772 centred). The site is currently part of a field and the underlying geology is London Clay (BGS 1981 sheet 269, Solid and Drift).

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for re-location of Phoenix gym club including building, access, car parking and landscaping. Condition 30 states:

No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (which may comprise more than one phase of work) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority.

Reason: The site lies within an area of archaeological potential, specifically there is a potential for prehistoric remains. The Condition will ensure the satisfactory mitigation of any impacts upon buried archaeological remains in accordance with national and local plan policy.

An archaeological evaluation has been carried out as a first stage of the programme of archaeological work. Due to findings of archaeological features further investigation was to be carried out.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site is located on the fringes of the Middle Thames Valley, an area rich in prehistoric, Roman and post-Roman remains. This is amply demonstrated by archaeological investigations and finds spots in the vicinity of Bray as recorded on the Berkshire Archaeology's Historic Environment Record. Most prominent of these are a number of Roman features and finds at Down Place, Water Oakley, to the north of the application site. Antiquarian investigation in the early 19th century recorded building foundations, inhumation burials and coins of Roman date. Further investigation in the early 1970s recorded 60 inhumation burials and evidence for metal working. The site is conjectured to represent a riverside Roman villa, although unfortunately most, if not probably all of this site, has been lost to gravel extraction.

In the wider area excavations have recorded a nationally important Mesolithic (12,000 – 4,000 BC) site at Moor Farm, Holyport, while excavations in the early 1990s and in the late 2000s at Weir Bank Stud Farm, Bray, and Bray Triangle recorded the remains of Mesolithic, Neolithic (4,000 – 1,800 BC), Bronze Age (1,800 – 700 BC) and Roman settlements and other deposits.

Although the application site lies on London Clay c. 1km from the River Thames, its archaeological potential is demonstrated by a crop mark complex, 600m to the west,

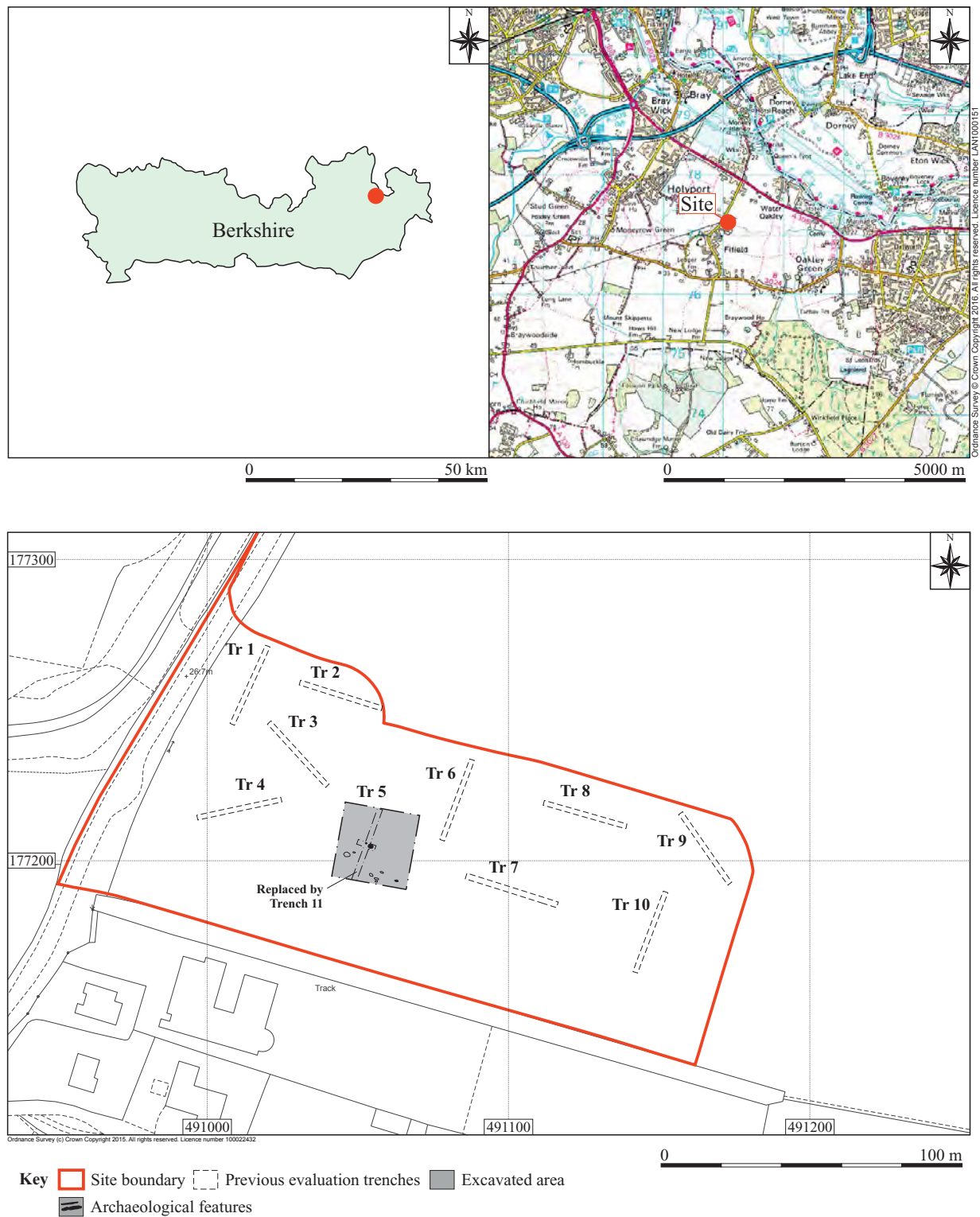


Figure 1: Site location

at Stroud Farm (and since lost to gravel extraction), and a further crop mark enclosure recorded in the field immediately to the west of Fifield Road, adjacent to the application site. This latter site was identified during survey for a water pipeline, which is understood to pass through the western portions of the application site. These crop marks almost certainly indicate the presence of buried archaeological remains.

A recent evaluation found two pits near the centre of the development. One was 1.5m – 1.8m in diameter and 0.5m deep. This contained occasional charcoal flecks and a quantity of burnt unworked flint. The other was 0.5m – 0.6m in diameter and 0.06m deep with charcoal flecks within its fill (JMHS 2016). These are presumed to be prehistoric in origin.

A large evaluation, conducted by JMHS recently, in the rest of the field to north and one to the east has revealed ditches, pits, postholes and cremations of late Iron Age to early Roman date.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) were:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

And in particular:

- To excavate and record the cropmark features and any other discrete features present.
- To investigate and record the exposed features in an attempt to securely date them and understand the human activity in this locality.
- To determine whether there are any surviving associated deposits with the pits.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In accordance with WSI (JMHS 2016) approved by the Berkshire Archaeology Planning Archaeologist, JMHS carried out the archaeological investigation of part of the development area. Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the WSI

An area 25m square centred on the two pits found in Evaluation Trench 5 was stripped down to natural, the level where the tops of the pits survive. This was 300mm-400mm below existing ground level. There was a contingency to extend this stripped area by no more than 10m within the development area, should there had been an archaeological reason to do so. This was not needed.

The Berkshire Archaeology Planning Archaeologist and JMHS agreed a suitable level of sampling for the archaeological remains exposed at this level.

3.2 Methodology

The archaeological investigation involved the mechanical excavation of one 25m square centred on the two pits found in Evaluation Trench 5

All potential archaeological features were hand cleaned and planned and were sample excavated:

An experienced archaeological Project Officer/Supervisor directed the archaeological site work with the assistance of two archaeologists. All work was under the overall direction of J Moore MCIFA.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results

All features were assigned with individual context number. Context numbers with no brackets indicate feature cuts, numbers in the round brackets () show feature fills or deposits of material and numbers in bold indicate any form of masonry.

During the archaeological investigations around the two pits previously identified in trench five, one pit, five natural hollows and one plough scar were identified in the area referred to as Trench 11 (Fig. 2).

Trench 11 consisted of a 0.3m-0.4m layer of a grey / brown silty clay (11/00) a ploughsoil that overlay the natural London clay (11/01). The clay was extensively truncated and disturbed by plough marks that were roughly orientated east / west.

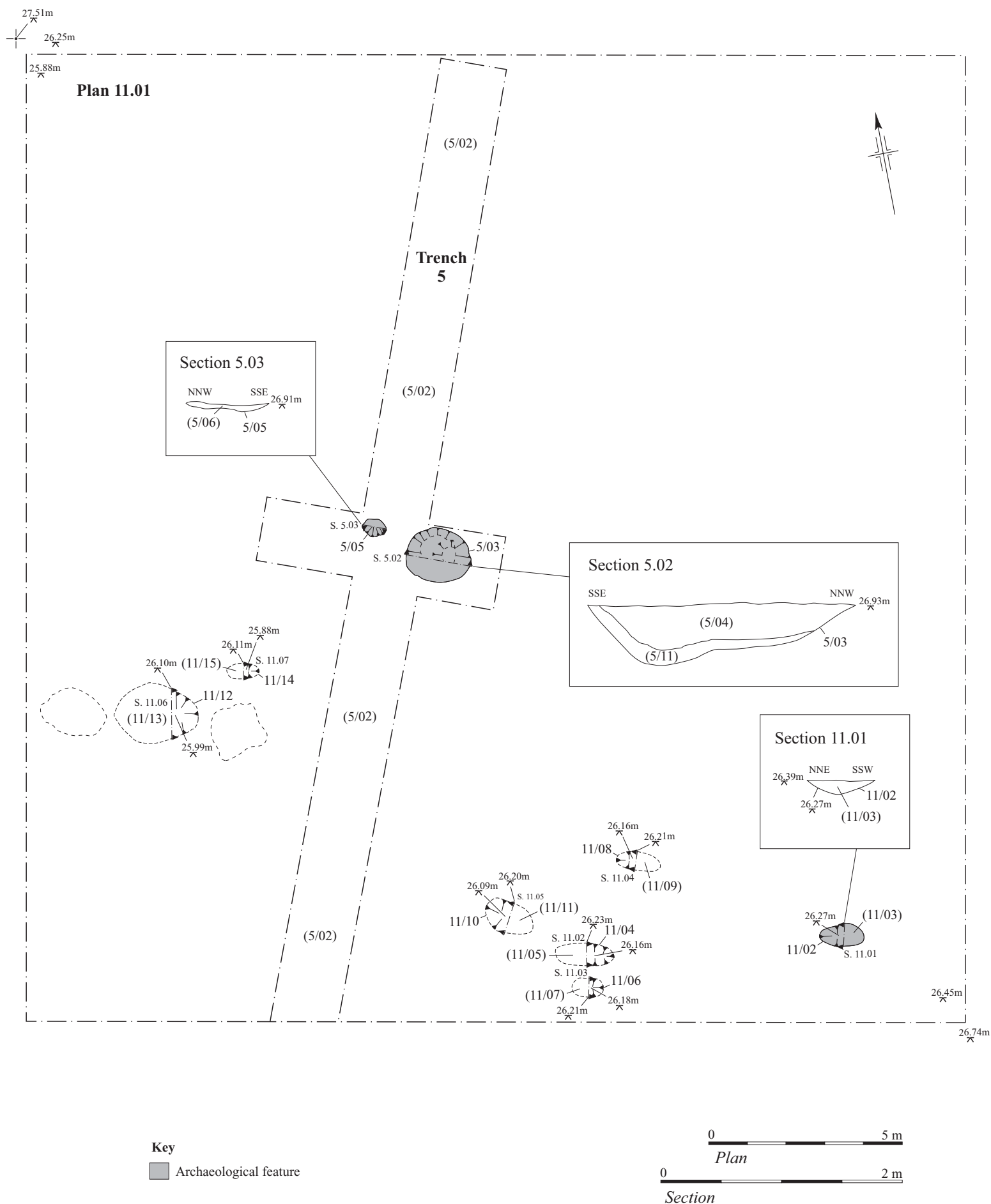
4.2 Natural features

Five shallow natural hollows were excavated within Trench 11 (Fig. 2). All these features were very shallow and devoid of any archaeological material and descriptions of these can be found in Table 1. Appendix 1 below.

4.3 Prehistoric features

One pit 11/02 was located 13m southeast of pit 5/03 (Fig. 2 & Plate. 1). It was sub-oval in shape, 0.52m wide, 1m long and 0.12m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill (11/03), a light yellowish / brown clay with rare stone inclusions and moderate amounts of charcoal flecks within the fill. The pit was undated but 100% excavation of the fill produced one very small flint flake and one very small piece of burnt flint.

Within evaluation Trench 5, previously excavated, was a large sub-rounded pit that was 1.5m by 1.8m across, 5/03. It had a gradual break of slope with slightly concave sides and an undulating base. The lowest fill was a firm 0.15m thick light brown yellow clay with occasional stone (5/11); the layer was identified as a primary fill and deposited above this was a 0.35m thick deposit of mid brown, grey and yellow mixed



silty clay (5/04). The fill had a moderate inclusion of pebbles and occasional charcoal inclusions. The fill also included a quantity of burnt flint.

Further to the west of this pit was small shallow sub-circular pit, 5/05. It was 0.6m by 0.5m wide and had a depth of 0.06m. It was filled by a mid grey-brown silty clay with orange patches and an inclusion of small stone and charcoal flecks.



Plate 1. Pit 11/02

4.4 Modern feature

One of the darker plough marks 11/14 (Fig. 2) was excavated to check it was not a feature, but turned out to be a plough scar

4.5 Reliability of results

The reliability of results is considered to be very good. The archaeological investigations took place in generally clement conditions with good light and visibility.

5 FINDS

5.1 Finds

The only finds recovered from the site was one small fragment of struck flint of indeterminate date and one small fragment of burnt flint from (11/03), the fill of pit 11/02, along with burnt flint from pit 5/03.

The struck flint fragment was 20mm long and 08mm wide and weighed 0.05g.
The burnt flint fragment from 11/03 was 10mm long and 0.7mm wide and weighed 0.05g.

A single soil sample weighing 26.8kg was collected from context (5/04), later fill of pit 5/03, and processed by flotation.

The sample produced 1260.5g of heavy fraction and 4g of light material. The latter was mainly composed of very small charcoal remains.

The heavy fraction contained 24 fragments of burnt flint, weighing 501g in total. 2.5g of carbonized material were also recovered through sorting. No carbonised seeds were present

6 DISCUSSION

Trench 11 was located centrally over the two pits 5/ 03 and 5/05 previously identified within evaluation Trench 5 (Fig. 2). The majority of features identified in Trench 11 were considered to be natural hollows. Pit 11/02 was located 13m southeast of pit 5/03 (Fig. 2 & Plate. 1) and contained a fill with charcoal and two small fragments of flint, one burnt. Pit 5/03 contained a quantity of burnt flint. A prehistoric date is suggested for the pits due to the presence of a small struck flint and the quantity of burnt flint.

Overall the three prehistoric pits identified during the investigations seem to be placed within the landscape at a distance from any settlement or on the edge of a settlement just to the south. They could represent temporary activities within the area at some time within the prehistoric period.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the appropriate accepting museum when one becomes available.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological excavation*

John Moore Heritage Services 2016, *An Archaeological Evaluation at Land North of Longlea, Fifield, Berkshire*. Unpublished client report

John Moore Heritage Services 2016, *Land North of Longlea, Fifield, Berkshire Programme of Archaeological Excavation, Post-Excavation and Report Production Written Scheme of Investigation* Unpublished client report

Appendix 1

Context	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 11								
11/00	Deposit	Mid grey / Brown silty clay	0.4m	25m	25m	-	Topsoil / Ploughsoil	Modern
11/01	Deposit	Orange / Brown / Yellow clay	-	25m	25m	-	Natural	-
11/02	Cut	Sub-oval feature	0.12m	0.52m	1m	-	Pit	Prehistoric ?
11/03	Deposit	Light yellowish / brown clay	0.12m	0.52m	1m	Flint	Pit fill	Prehistoric ?
11/04	Cut	Sub-Oval feature	0.08m	0.5m	1.54m	-	Natural hollow	-
11/05	Deposit	Light grey / brown clay	0.08m	0.5m	1.54m	-	Natural hollow fill	-
11/06	Cut	Sub-circular feature	0.06m	0.4m	0.6m	-	Natural hollow	-
11/07	Deposit	Light yellowish / brown clay	0.06m	0.4m	0.6m	-	Natural hollow fill	-
11/08	Cut	Sub-Oval feature	0.08m	0.58m	1.12m	-	Natural hollow	-
11/09	Deposit	Light yellowish / brown clay	0.08m	0.58m	1.12m	-	Natural hollow fill	-
11/10	Cut	Sub-Oval feature	0.09m	0.7m	1.18m	-	Natural hollow	-
11/11	Deposit	Light yellowish / brown clay	0.09m	0.7m	1.18m	-	Natural hollow fill	-
11/12	Cut	Sub-circular feature	0.07m	1.52m	2.1m	-	Natural hollow	-
11/13	Deposit	Light yellowish / brown clay	0.07m	1.52m	2.1m	-	Natural hollow fill	-
11/14	Cut	Sub-Oval feature	0.05m	0.4m	0.88m	-	Plough scar	Modern
11/15	Deposit	Mid grey / brown silty clay	0.05m	0.4m	0.88m	-	Plough scar fill	Modern

Table 1. Trench 11 context inventory