

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

**ON**

**LAND ADJACENT TO SPEEN HOLT WEST,**

**SPEEN LANE, SPEEN**

**WEST BERKSHIRE**

*SU 4568 6784*

*On behalf of*

*Mrs C Piddington*

**JULY 2010**

<b>REPORT FOR</b>	Mrs C Piddington C/o DLA Ltd. Mead Cottage Axford Marlborough Wiltshire SN8 2EX
<b>PREPARED BY</b>	Christer Carlsson
<b>ILLUSTRATION BY</b>	Eoin Fitzsimons
<b>EDITED BY</b>	David Gilbert
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<b>ENQUIRES TO</b>	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: <a href="mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk">info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</a>
<b>Site Code</b>	SPSL10
<b>JMHS Project No:</b>	2281
<b>Archive Location</b>	The archive is currently held by JMHS and will be deposited with West Berkshire Museum.

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological field evaluation was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services at Speen Holt West, Speen Lane, Speen, West Berkshire. The area appears to have been landscaped at some point from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, this has removed all but the most recent archaeological features.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site is located at Speen Lane in Speen, West Berkshire. The site is centred NGR SU 4568 6784. The geology is on the border of the Seaford Chalk and the Lambeth Group clay formations (BGS sheet 267). The site is currently laid to lawn or cultivated as part of the garden.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission has been sought to erect a new dwelling on land adjacent to Speen Holt West, Speen Lane, Speen (10/01253/FULD). Due to the potential presence of archaeological remains a predetermination field evaluation has been recommended by West Berkshire Council Archaeological Service (WBCAS). This is in line with PPS5. WBCAS has prepared a Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The proposed development is located in an area of high archaeological potential. Speen is a village with a long history. The settlement was first recorded in AD821 when it was known as Spene. The presence of a significant Saxon settlement in this location is of very great interest. By the time of the Domesday Book (AD1086) the settlement was known as Spone and it clearly continued to grow in importance as by 1281 it was granted market status, usually preserved for urban centres. The settlement did not prosper in competition with its nearby rival Newbury.

It would appear that the early (Saxon and Norman) settlement was concentrated round the church and the 'Ladywell'. The 'Ladywell' is a natural spring that appears to have had religious significance. With the growth in importance of the Bath-London Road as a strategic route the settlement shifted away from its original location to take advantage of the economic opportunities the road offered.

Unfortunately little archaeological work has been undertaken in the area of the original settlement to determine its character or extent. However, the current site does lie within the postulated area of the early activity and has the potential to impact upon important archaeological deposits. Archaeological works on a site on the opposite side of Church Lane in 2006 (Berkshire Archaeological Services) produced evidence for early settlement activity.

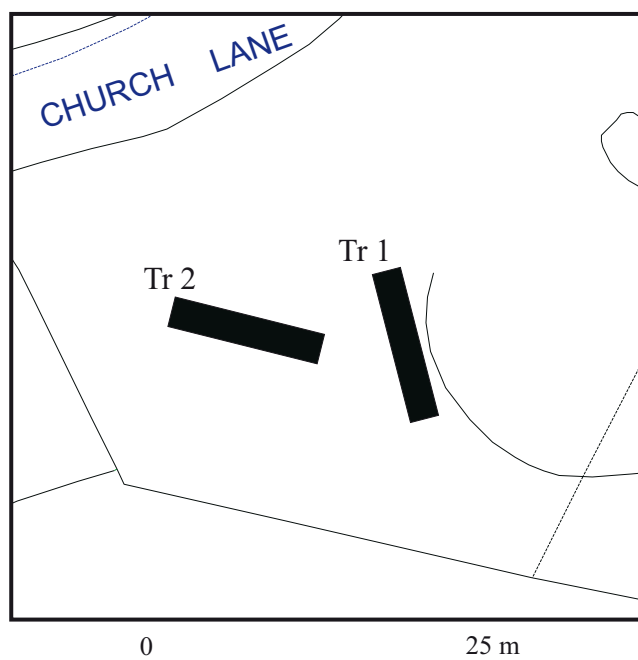
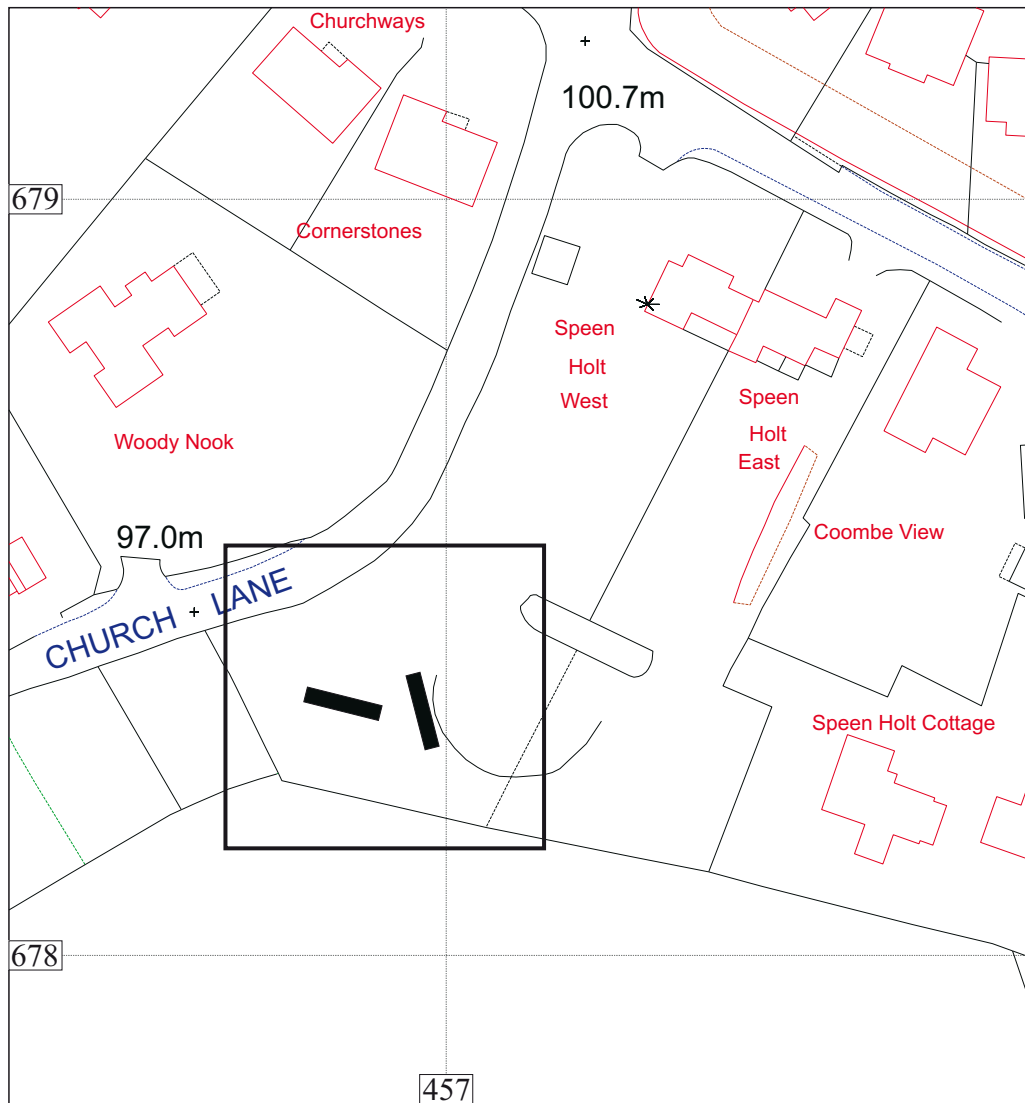


Figure 1. Site location

## 2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.

In particular to answer the following questions;

- Is there evidence relating to the Saxon/Norman settlement in the area?
- Does evidence relating to the later medieval occupation of the site survive on the site?
- Are there any deposits or features revealed in the work that enable an understanding of the scale and character of the early medieval activity?
- Is there any evidence for the status of the medieval site?

## 3 STRATEGY

### 3.1 Research Design

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout the investigation, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

### 3.2 Methodology

The investigation involved the mechanical excavation of two trenches supplemented by limited hand investigation of the archaeological deposits. Each trench was 10m long and 1.2m wide. The excavation was carried out by a 3 tonne excavator equipped with a ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation was taken down to the uppermost archaeological horizon or geological horizon under direct archaeological supervision. The machine excavation was used only for the removal of non-archaeologically significant material. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale

plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording.

Mr Duncan Coe (West Berkshire Council Archaeological Service) monitored the work.

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Field Results**

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in ( ) indicate fills or deposits of material whilst numbers referring to features themselves are shown without brackets.

The lower deposit encountered in both Trenches was the natural yellow grey silty clay (01/07) and (02/03) related to the Lambeth Group formations.

#### **Trench 1**

Cut into the natural (01/07) were two postholes 01/03 and 01/05. The first posthole 01/03 was 0.45m in diameter and 0.2 m deep. The fill (01/04) consisted of soft dark grey brown silt with frequent of CBM inclusions. The second posthole 01/05 was 0.37m in diameter and 0.15m deep. The fill (01/06) consisted of soft dark grey brown silt with frequent of CBM inclusions and was very similar to the fill (01/04).

The brick in the postholes had most likely been put in the hole in order to stabilize the former post. The two features are most likely from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards and could have formed part of the same construction, maybe a garden fence.

The two postholes were sealed by the 0.12m thick and brown yellow silty clay subsoil (01/02). This subsoil contained some flint, charcoal and pieces of bricks. The uppermost was the 0.25m thick topsoil of grey brown sandy loam (01/01) that contained pieces of brick, flint and charcoal.

#### **Trench 2**

Trench 2 contained no features of archaeological interest, but in the middle of the trench was a concentration of roots from a former tree. Directly above the natural (02/03) was the 0.12m thick subsoil of brown yellow silty clay (02/02). The subsoil contained some flint and pieces of charcoal and brick. The uppermost deposit was the 0.25m thick topsoil of grey brown sandy loam (02/01) that contained pieces of brick, flint and charcoal.

### **4.2 Reliability of Results**

The archaeological evaluation was carried out in good conditions with sunny and dry weather. The results are therefore felt to be representative of the extant archaeology.

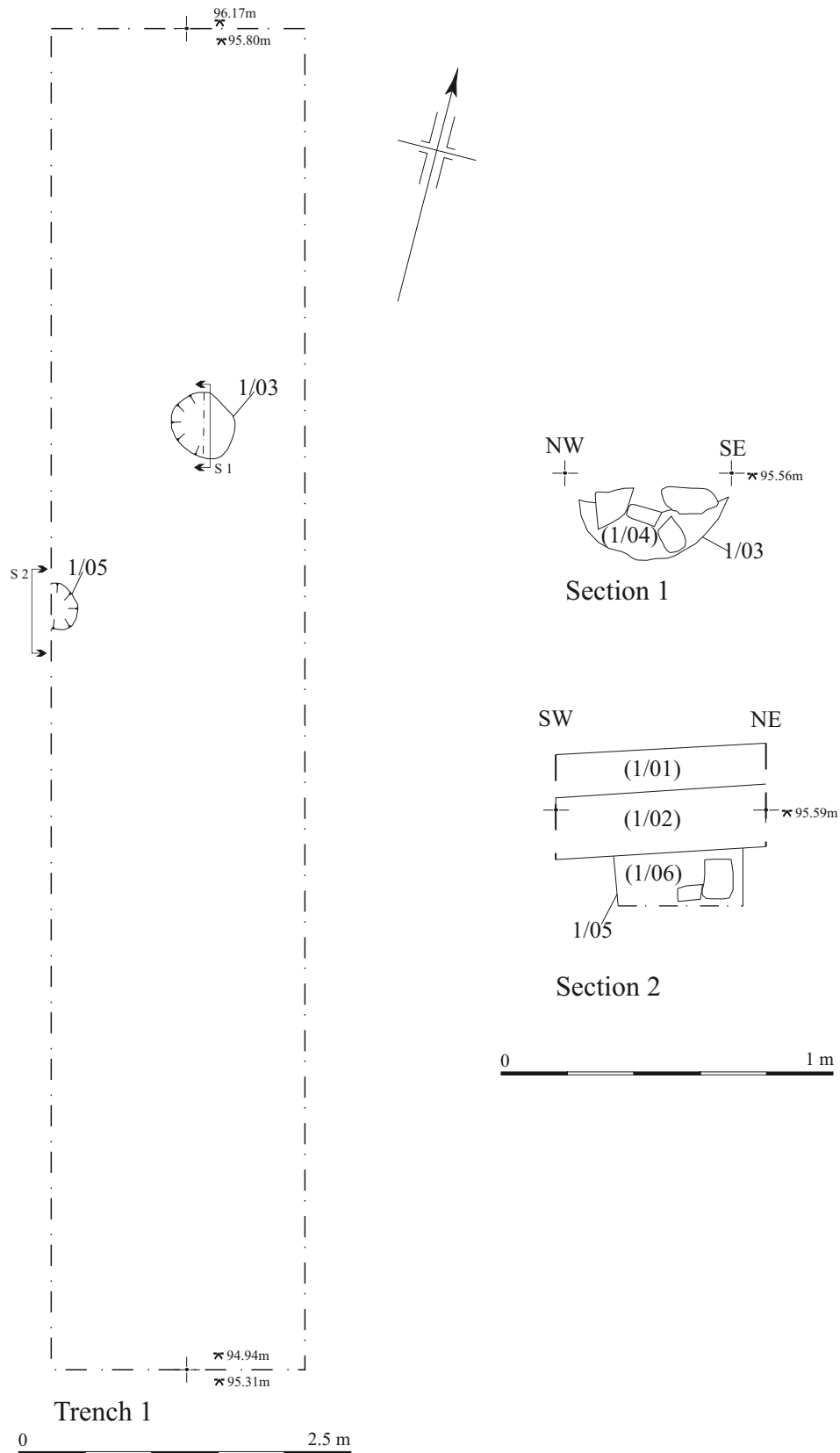


Figure 2. Trench 1 Plan and Sections



## **5 FINDS**

No artefacts or environmental samples were collected during the evaluation.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

There was no evidence on site of any earthworks similar to those present at the nearby Sextons Cottage site 40m to the north-west (BAS 2006). The garden soils were also devoid of archaeological material.

Here there was also evidence for late 18<sup>th</sup> century garden soils, layers (01/02) and (02/02) are likely to be related. The semi-circular garden bank feature may represent Victorian landscaping. The area where the trenching took place is significantly lower than the level of the rest of the garden to the north of this bank. It would seem likely that such landscaping has destroyed any archaeological remains in this area.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Berkshire Archaeological Services 2006 *An Archaeological Evaluation on Land Adjacent to Sextons Cottage, Church Lane, Speen, West Berkshire*

Institute for Archaeologists 1994 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation* (Revised 2008).

**APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Finds</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Trench 1</b>							
01/01	Topsoil	Grey brown sandy loam	0.25	Tr.	Tr.		
01/02	Subsoil	Brown yellow silty clay	0.12	Tr.	Tr.		Late C18 <sup>th</sup> +
01/03	Cut	Posthole	0.2	0.45	0.45		Late C18 <sup>th</sup> +
01/04	Fill	Soft dark grey brown silt	0.2	0.45	0.45	Brick	Late C18 <sup>th</sup> +
01/05	Cut	Posthole	0.15	0.37	0.37		Late C18 <sup>th</sup> +
01/06	Fill	Soft dark grey brown silt	0.15	0.37	0.37	Brick	Late C18 <sup>th</sup> +
01/07	Natural	Yellow grey silty clay	?	Tr.	Tr.		
<b>Trench 2</b>							
02/01	Topsoil	Grey brown sandy loam	0.25	Tr.	Tr.		
02/02	Subsoil	Brown yellow silty clay	0.12	Tr.	Tr.		Late C18 <sup>th</sup> +
02/03	Natural	Yellow grey silty clay	?	Tr.	Tr.		