

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Johnson Drive, Finchampstead,
Wokingham, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Site Code: JDF24/132

(SU 8059 6515)

Land at Johnson Drive, Finchampsptead, Wokingham, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Palatine Homes**

by Pierre-Damien Manisse
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code JDF 24/132

January 2025

Summary

Site name: Land at Johnson Drive, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8059 6515

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 27th – 29th January 2025

Project coordinator: David Sanchez

Site supervisor: Pierre-Damien Manisse

Site code: JDF 24/132

Area of site: c. 1.1ha.

Summary of results: The intended 13 trenches were opened successfully, with slight adjustments compared to their proposed location, on account of site constraints. Only a single undated gully was observed in trench 2, likely running off into the existing drainage ditch at west of the property. No finds of archaeological interest were recovered. The site's archaeological potential is considered low.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

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Land at Johnson Drive, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Report 24/132

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at the rear of 6 Johnson Drive, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 3NW (NGR SU 8059 6515) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jon Furneaux, on behalf of Palatine Homes, Woodlands Court, Burnham Road, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, HP9 2SF.

Planning permission (app 233086) is being sought from Wokingham Borough Council for the erection of 8 new dwellings, following removal of existing buildings. A previous application (app 223592) for development on the site had been granted subject a condition attached relating to archaeology. In anticipation of a similar condition being attached should the present application be granted, an archaeological evaluation was carried out at the request of Wokingham Borough Council, as advised by Berkshire Archaeology. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2023), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Linden Ellicott of Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological adviser to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Pierre-Damien Manisse, assisted by Luke O'Callaghan, between 27th and 29th January 2025 and the site code is JDF 24/132.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a 1.1ha plot of land at the rear of 6 Johnson Drive, on the south-east side of Finchampstead, south of Wokingham in Berkshire (Fig. 1). The site is currently used as indoor and outdoor builders' storage, partly garden and stables. It is bordered to the west and south by residential properties while the north and east are covered by woodland. The site is flat and lies at *c.* 65m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology as shown on maps (BGS 2000) is Bagshot Formation (mainly sand). The geology encountered during the evaluation trenching matches in that it is fine to medium grained sand with silt and clay laminae.

Archaeological background

The site lies in an area with relatively little known archaeology, having been much less explored than nearby regions, and the Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record notes only a very modest range of sites and finds (Ford 1987). The potential stems mainly from its general location, on the heathland soils of East Berkshire, which have recently revealed Iron Age and Roman settlement (e.g. Lowe 2013). Along the Nine Mile Ride road, several upstanding Bronze Age round barrows are recorded. A recent investigation was that of a Bronze Age burnt mound at the former Road Transport Laboratory (Chittock *et al.* 2021), adding to a small corpus of such sites nearby (Ford 2017). Moreover, iron production sites of Iron Age date are recorded in a wider environment and in the valley of the river Blackwater to the south (e. g. Hardy *et al* 2019; Pine 2003; Platt 2013; Ford 2019) with a number of other unexcavated similar sites represented by small slagheaps (Ford 1987, fig. 38).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. More specifically the project aims to:

- determine of archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and to
- provide information in order to draw up a mitigation strategy if necessary.

It was proposed to mechanically dig 13 trenches, each 25m long and 1.8-2.0m wide, targeting 5% of the site, with an additional 5m of trench as contingency to clarify results if needed. Topsoil and other overburden were to be removed by a JCB-type or 360° machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision, to the first archaeologically relevant horizon, or to the level of the natural geology. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy outlined above. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoilheaps were to be searched for finds including use of a metal detector.

The potential and significance of any such deposits located were to be assessed according to research priorities such as those set out in Historic England's *Research Agenda* (HE 2017) or any more local or thematic research priorities such as the Solent Thames Research Agenda (Hey and Hind 2014) as necessary.

Work was conducted following the standards and guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2023a and b) and of Berkshire Archaeology (BA 2021).

Results (Fig. 2-4; Pls 1-8)

The trenches were opened by an excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, 1.6m wide. The trenches ranged in length from 23.90m to 27m and in depth from 0.28m to 0.57m. They were overall in their original intended locations with minor adjustments due to site constraints (flooded area, building material stored on site). As the site was still being used by builders, the access road was to be preserved and therefore trench 4's orientation was changed. Trench locations were investigated by a CAT Scan before being opened.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1 and the excavated feature, with dating evidence, is summarized in Appendix 2.

The stratigraphy encountered was consistent throughout the site, except for occasional modern made ground under turf in certain trenches as noted below. Topsoil was a brown to dark grey sandy silt or silty sand with rare to occasional gravels, fine to medium subangular to rounded. It was gradually transitioning into natural geology with local yellow sandy patches in its lower half. The geological horizon was a fine pale yellow to orange sand, with rare gravels, occasional local patches of gravel and local bands of yellow clay in places.

Trench 1 (Fig. 2; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned SSW-NNE and was 23.90m long. It was 0.50m deep at the south end and 0.57m deep at north. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.50m of topsoil overlying natural geology. No features were observed and no finds recovered.

Trench 2 (Figs 2-4; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned almost W-E and was 26.40m long and was 0.40-0.50m deep. It was shifted slightly to the west to avoid stored materials. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.45m of topsoil overlying natural geology. The very eastern end of the trench was disturbed by a buried tree stump. At 9.90m and 12m from the east end, 2 postholes against the southern baulk were investigated but proved to be of modern date. At 25m a plastic pipe

crossed the trench. Before that, at 18m, and orientated SE-NW, a gully, 1, was recorded. It was 0.50m wide and 0.20m deep with steep sides and a concave base. No finds were recovered from it or from the rest of the trench. The gully is likely to join an extant drainage ditch present along the western boundary of the site and so a relatively recent date is most probably to be assigned to it.

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 4)

Trench 3 was aligned S-N and was 25.60m long. It was 0.38m deep at the south end and 0.43m deep at the north. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of turf overlying 0.05m of pinkish angular gravel made ground, above a buried topsoil, 0.30m thick, directly overlying the natural geology. At 3m from the northern end, a tree stump was disturbing the east baulk. On the same side, at 10m, was a gravel deposit indicative of a drain. No archaeological features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 4 (Fig. 2; Pl. 3)

Trench 4 was aligned ESE-WNW and was 25.80m long. It was 0.28m deep at its WNW and 0.47m deep in the ESE. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of the same made ground under turf as in trench 3, overlying up to 0.36m of buried topsoil on top of the natural geology. At 18m from the ESE, the geology's level rises up. No features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 5 (Figs 2 and 4)

Trench 5 was aligned SSW-NNE and was 26.40m long. It was 0.36-0.38m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of the same made ground under turf as in trench 3, overlying 0.28m of topsoil on top of the natural geology. The overburden was present only the first 3m from NNE, and again after 16.50m until the SSW end. No features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 6 (Fig. 2; Pl. 4)

Trench 6 was aligned SE-NW and was 25.30m long. It was 0.36m deep at the NW end and 0.40m deep at the SE. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of topsoil on top of the natural geology, with rare occurrences of the pinkish gravel deposit. No features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 7 (Figs 2 and 4; Pl. 5)

Trench 7 was aligned almost E-W and was 27m long. It was 0.30m deep in the west and 0.45m deep to the east. The stratigraphy consisted of up to 0.45m of topsoil overlying the natural geology. No features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 8 (Fig. 2)

Trench 8 was aligned NE-SW and was 26.5m long and 0.36m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of topsoil overlying the natural geology. No features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 9 (Fig. 2; Pl. 6)

Trench 9 was aligned SE-NW and was 26.20m long and 0.42m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.40m of topsoil overlying the natural geology. At 14.30m from the north-west end of the trench, there was a small oval pit with modern pottery. No other features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 10 (Fig. 2)

Trench 10 was aligned SE-NW and was 21m long, 0.42m deep at NW and 0.52m deep at SE. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.42 to 0.50m of topsoil overlaying the natural geology. No features were observed and no finds were recovered. The trench had to be shortened due to site constraints (contractor and horse paddock fences), limiting the accessible range. A land drain was crossing the trench.

Trench 11 (Fig. 2; Pl. 7)

Trench 11 was aligned WSW-ENE and was 25m long and 0.48-0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.48m of topsoil overlying the natural geology, very patchy due to the presence of trees next to the trench. No features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 12 (Fig. 2; Pl. 8)

Trench 12 was aligned SSE-NNW and was 25.80m long, 0.33m deep at the N and 0.60m deep at the S. The trench had to be slightly bent to avoid fences. Towards the southern end there was an artificial mound, created for a bamboo plantation. The stratigraphy there consisted of 0.30m of made ground, a fine yellow sand, lying on top of 0.30m of topsoil, directly on top of the natural geology. No features were observed and no finds were recovered. A disconnected copper-clad aluminium cable was located at the south end.

Trench 13 (Fig. 2)

Trench 13 was aligned almost S–N and was 22.40m long and 0.40–0.50m deep. At its deepest, the stratigraphy consisted of 0.50m of topsoil above the natural geology. The trench was reduced in length due to a new fence set up by the contractor limiting the machine’s manoeuvrability. No features were observed nor finds recovered.

Finds

Only modern evidence (glass, pottery) was discovered when investigating some features and was not considered for retention.

Conclusion

The 13 trenches were dug on site as intended, with minor modifications to the proposed layout, to take into account of site constraints. Most of the trenches proved blank with only an undated gully found in trench 2. In light of this, the archaeological potential of the site can be considered to be very low.

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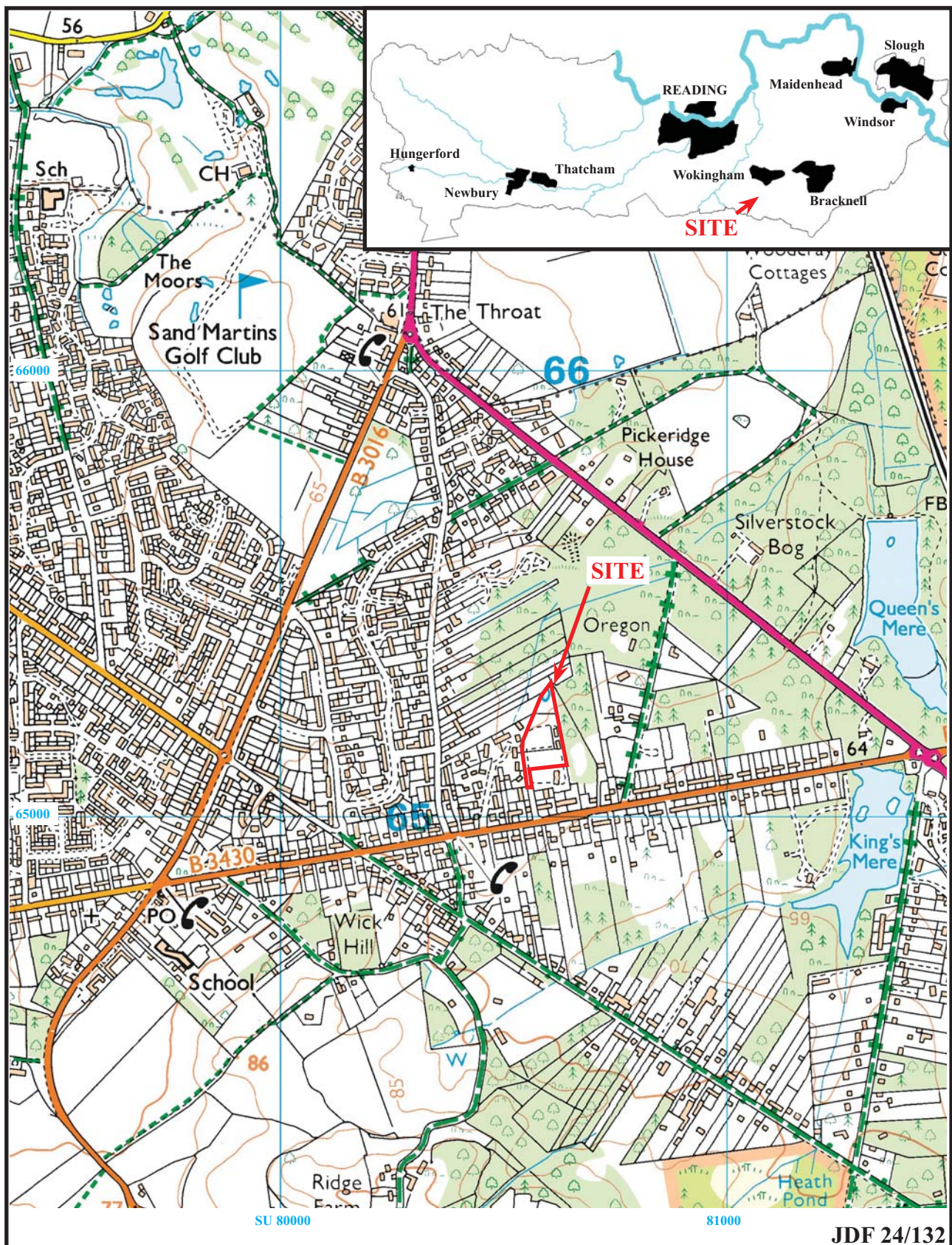
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S, SE, SW or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	23.9	1.56	0.50-0.57	0–0.50m topsoil (from brown to dark grey silty sand, soft, with rare to common gravels); 0.50m+ natural geology (yellow to orange sand with patches of clay or gravels). [Pl. 1]
2	26.4	1.56	0.40-0.45	0–0.45m topsoil; 0.45m+ natural geology. Gully 1 [Pl. 2]
3	25.6	1.56	0.38-0.43	0–0.05m turf; 0.05-0.10m made ground (pinkish subangular gravels); 0.10-0.40m topsoil; 0.40m+ natural geology.
4	25.8	1.56	0.28-0.47	0–0.05m turf; 0.05-0.10m made ground; 0.10-0.47m topsoil; 0.47m+ natural geology. [Pl. 3]
5	26.4	1.56	0.36-0.38	0–0.05m turf; 0.05-0.10m made ground; 0.10-0.38m topsoil; 0.38m+ natural geology.
6	25.3	1.56	0.36-0.40	0–0.35m topsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology. [Pl. 4]
7	27.0	1.56	0.30-0.45	0–0.45m topsoil; 0.45m+ natural geology. [Pl. 5]
8	26.5	1.56	0.36	0–0.35m topsoil; 0.35m+ natural geology.
9	26.2	1.56	0.40-0.42	0–0.40m topsoil; 0.40m+ natural geology. [Pl. 6]
10	21.0	1.56	0.42-0.52	0–0.50m topsoil; 0.50m+ natural geology.
11	25.0	1.56	0.48-0.50	0–0.48m topsoil; 0.48m+ natural geology. [Pl. 7]
12	25.8	1.56	0.33-0.60	0–0.30m made ground (yellow fine sand); 0.30-0.60m topsoil; 0.60m+ natural geology. [Pl.8]
13	22.4	1.56	0.40-0.50	0–0.50m topsoil; 0.50m+ natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	52	gully	undated	



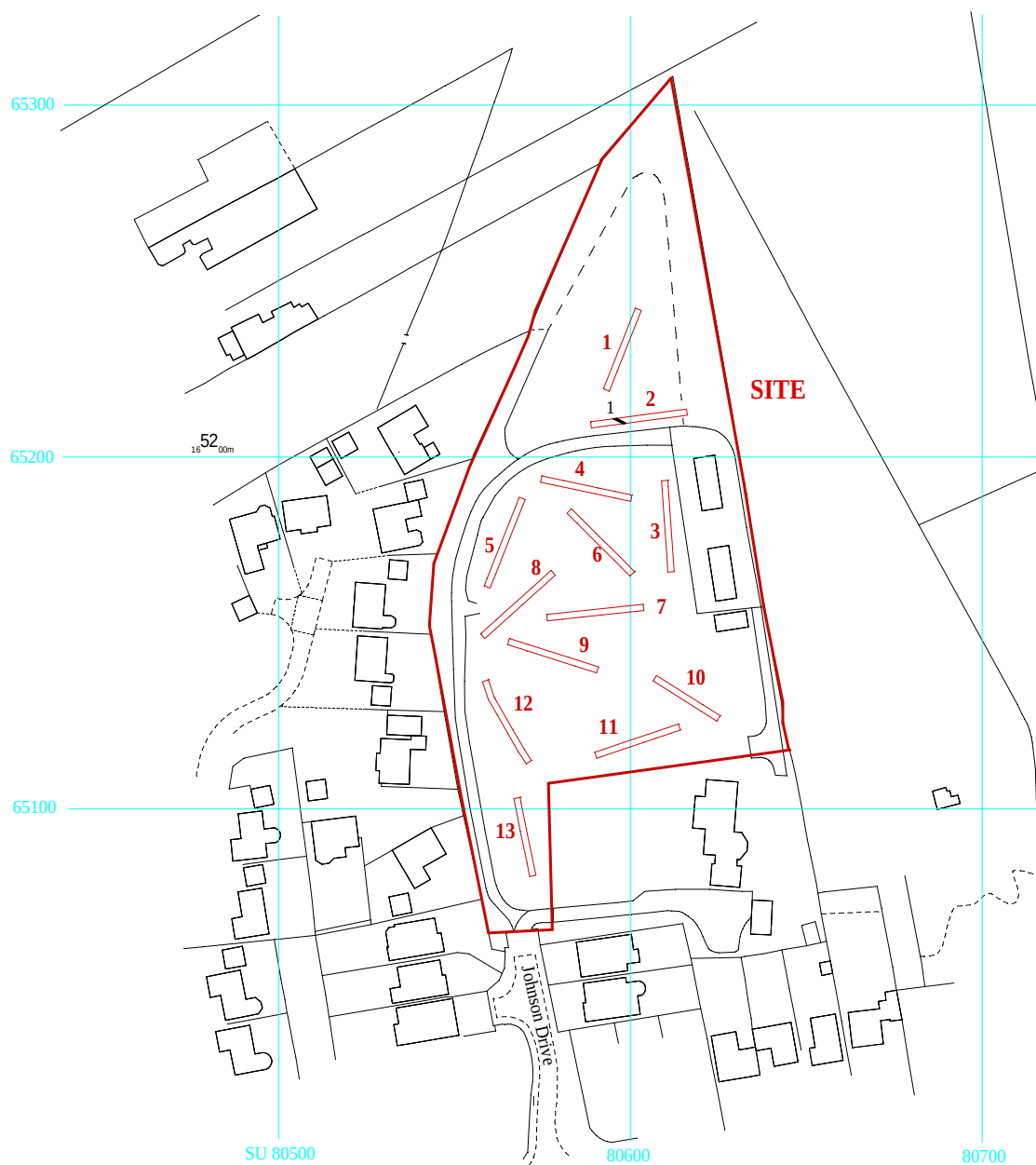
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**Land at Johnson Drive, Finchampstead,
Wokingham, Berkshire
Archaeological Evaluation**

**Figure 1. Location of site within Finchampstead and
Berkshire.**

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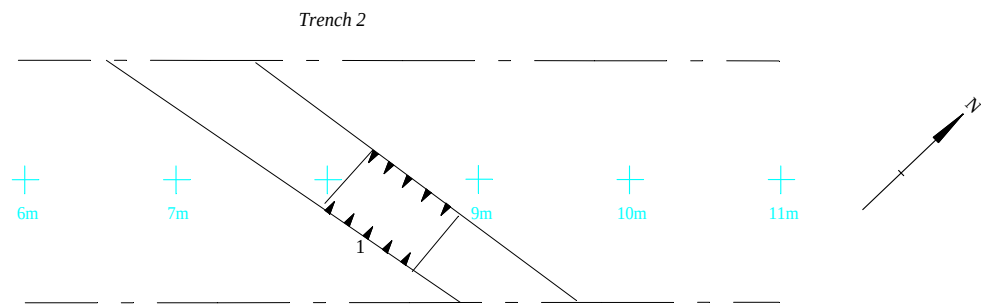
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Figure 2. Location of trenches.

0 100m

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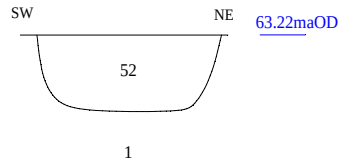
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Figure 3. Feature plan

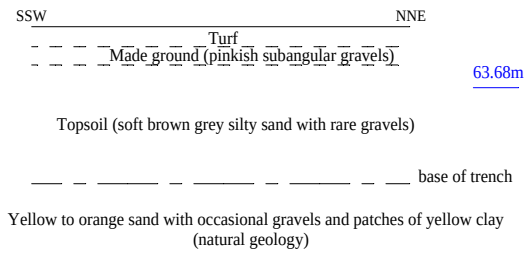


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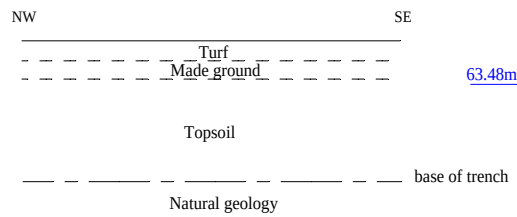
Trench 2



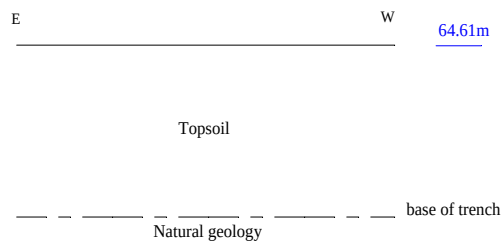
Trench 3



Trench 5



Trench 7



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Figure 4. Feature section in Trench 4 and trench representative sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking South West,
Scales: horizontal 2x 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, Gully 1, looking North West,
Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 0.2m.



Plate 3. Trench 4, trench section,
looking North East, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 6, looking South East,
Scales: horizontal 2 x1m, vertical 0.3m.

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Plates 1 - 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 7, representative section, looking S,
Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 6. Trench 9, looking SE,
Scales: 2x1m and 0.3m.



Plate 7. Trench 11, looking SW,
Scales: 2x1m and 0.5m.



Plate 8. Trench 12, looking NW,
Scales: 2x1m and 0.5m.

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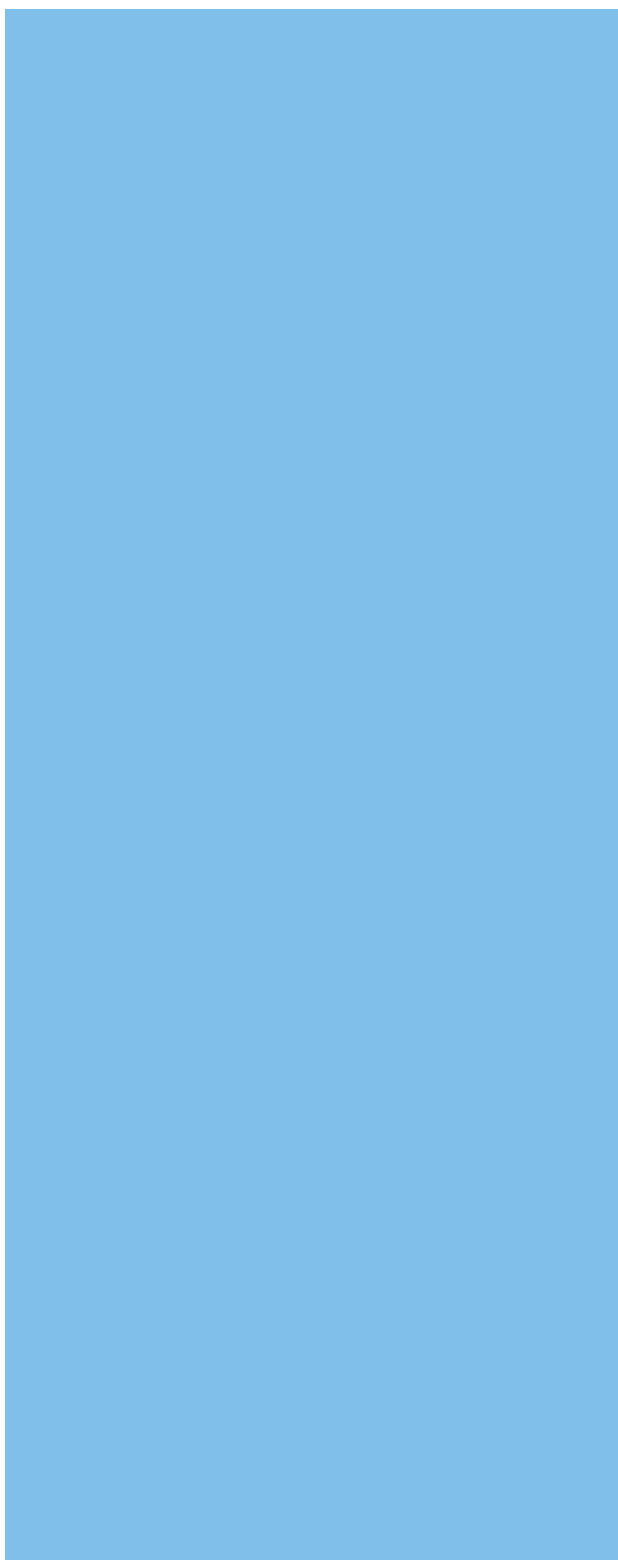
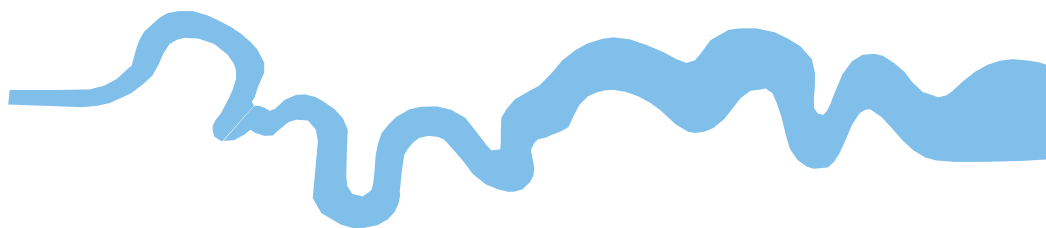
**Land at Johnson Drive, Finchampstead, Wokingham,
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Plates 5 - 8.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
	AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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