

Land west of Park Lane, Charvil, Wokingham, Berkshire

Project specification for an archaeological excavation

**26th November 2025
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Proposal for an archaeological excavation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Outline planning permission (232704) has been gained from Wokingham Borough Council for the redevelopment of the site for up to 75 new homes, with associated landscaping, access and open space. The consent is subject to a condition (39) relating to archaeology that requires a programme of archaeological investigation to be carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) approved beforehand by the local authority.

2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EXCAVATION

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a planning consultation document by Ms Linden Ellicott of Berkshire Archaeology, and a desk-based assessment produced to support the original application (Smith 2023). These draw heavily on archaeological fieldwork undertaken within the development site and immediately adjacent prior to the Canberra Lake Way development. Generally, the archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Loddon Vally, near its confluence with the Thames, with a wealth of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded for the area (Ford 1987, Gates 1975; Dils and Yates 2013). More specifically, the site has been subject to evaluation by trial trenching (Langton 1996) and an open area excavation prior to the development of the housing just to the north-east (Taylor 2022). The former identified several features of possible archaeological interest along with those of more doubtful provenance. Overall, the features were not well dated, however the evidence that was recovered included a small selection of pottery from the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman periods. Further finds from the Neolithic through to the post-medieval periods were collected from the subsoil, suggesting that the area had been occupied for a broader timespan than indicated by the cut features identified in the trenches.
- 2.1.2 The field in which the proposal site is located underwent further investigation in 2018 with an open-area excavation being undertaken in the north-eastern corner (Taylor 2022). This revealed a range of deposits representing Middle and Late Bronze Age occupation and Roman and post-medieval land division. The Bronze Age features consisted of a small group of pits, one of which produced a radiocarbon date of 946-832 cal BC (UBA-39418). No Roman occupation deposits were revealed but pottery and field boundary ditches of this date provided evidence of an organised landscape, presumably belonging to a nearby farm complex. A series of post-medieval field boundaries were also recorded, indicating later phases of land division.
- 2.1.3 The underlying geology is recorded as Seaford Chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation in the eastern half of the site and Lambeth Group clay, silt and sand in the western. Superficial deposits of River Terrace Deposits 4 sand and gravel are recorded across the majority of the site area with just the eastern corner remaining without any superficial covering (BGS 2000). Only the river terrace gravels were observed during the previous excavations (Taylor 2022).

2.2 General objectives

- 2.2.1 The general objectives of the project are to:
- 2.2.1.1 Record and, if necessary, excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the proposed development.
- 2.2.1.2 Produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site.
- 2.2.1.3 Establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc.
- 2.2.1.4 Produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

2.3 Specific research objectives

2.3.1 The specific research objectives of the project are to:

2.3.1.1 What is the date, nature and extent of the Bronze Age and other prehistoric deposits on site?

2.3.1.2 Are there additional archaeological deposits of the same or other dates present on the site?

2.3.1.3 If these deposits are settlement related, are they part of an enclosed or unenclosed settlement?

2.3.1.4 Are the occupation deposits isolated or are they part of a wider settlement complex?

2.3.1.5 What is the nature of Roman use of the site?

2.3.1.6 What is the significance of undated or isolated features revealed by the evaluation?

2.3.1.7 What are the palaeoenvironmental settings of the area?

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Site clearance and topsoil removal

3.1.1 The two areas proposed for excavation are shown on Fig. 2. These target the proposed housing construction in the west (Area A) and the balancing pond in the east (Area B). These areas will be stripped of overburden, down to the top of the archaeologically relevant level, here expected to be the top of the natural geology, under constant archaeological supervision.

3.1.2 A contingency to extend these areas is included in the proposal, where practicable, up to 10m from the last discrete feature recorded.

3.1.3 Topsoil will be removed under continuous archaeological supervision by a 360°-type tracked excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to expose the uppermost surface of archaeological deposits. Spoil will be side dumped where possible or moved to an appropriate part of the site depending on the clients needs/wishes.

3.1.4 Where appropriate and necessary, hand cleaning of the stripped surface will take place.

3.2 Excavation methodology

3.2.1 All archaeological features will be planned and sectioned as a minimum objective.

3.2.2 Isolated, discrete features such as pits and postholes not belonging to structures or activities discussed in para 3.2.4 (below) will be half-sectioned as a minimum. Full excavation will take place if half sectioning fails to provide sufficient artefactual dating evidence.

3.2.3 Sampling of linear features such as ditches and gullies relating to agricultural activity will be up to 20% of their length with a minimum of 10m of each ditch being dug. The linear features will be excavated in 1-3 m. wide slots. All termini and intersections will be examined. Linear features unambiguously of post-medieval date will be sampled at 1% of their length. Should any areas of unexpected complexity or interest be encountered, the level of sampling may be increased to 20%. This will be implemented in consultation with the archaeological advisor to Wokingham Borough Council (Berkshire Archaeology).

3.2.4 Any deposits relating to funerary/ritual activities such as burials and cremation deposits and domestic/industrial activity such as walls, postholes floors, middens, walls, hearths, ring gullies) will be fully excavated. Discrete features such as cremation deposits will be 100% sampled for subsequent analysis.

3.2.5 Area deposits such as buried soils will be hand excavated to a minimum of 5%. Subsequent excavation by machine will be considered in consultation with Berkshire Archaeology.

- 3.2.6 Area deposits such as large, artefact-rich, prehistoric middens will be hand excavated to a minimum of 50%. Subsequent excavation by machine will be considered in consultation with Berkshire Archaeology.
- 3.2.7 Discovery of any human remains will be reported to the coroner and will be excavated following guidelines issued by the Ministry of Justice. Recovery and recording methodologies for human remains follow standard procedures identified by Mitchell and Roberts (2017) and TVAS Field Recording Manual (9th edition 2021). Any human bone recovered of archaeological significance will be deposited with an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority) and will not be reinterred in earth.
- 3.2.8 A proportion (up to 5% of the total) of what may be considered to be tree holes will be examined to confirm this interpretation.
- 3.3 Recording Methodology
- 3.3.1 A single context recording system will be used in accordance with the TVAS Field Recording Manual (9th edition 2021). Descriptions of individual deposits and features will be recorded on pro-forma context recording sheets.
- 3.3.2 Plans and sections will be drawn in pencil on drafting film, normally at scales of 1:100, 1:20 and 1:10 respectively. Digital (GPS) planning will be employed using survey-grade Trimble GNSS loggers with centimetre-accuracy. Where appropriate, e.g. for the recording of inhumations, more detailed plans will be drawn at a scale of 1:10. Plans and sections will be accurately located in relation to the National Grid. Overall plans at 1:100 will also be used.
- 3.3.3 Heights above OD will be taken and recorded on all plans and sections.
- 3.3.4 A Harris matrix stratification diagram will be employed to record all stratigraphic relationships.
- 3.3.5 The photographic record will consist of digital images. It will record the principal features and finds discovered, both in detail and in their general context. The photographic record will also include 'working shots' to illustrate the nature of the archaeological fieldwork programme and those suitable for publication. Digital images are taken on Canon EOS 4000D cameras with APS-C sensors taking 16-megapixel images.
- 3.4 Finds Retrieval
- 3.4.1 In general, all identified finds and artefacts pre-dating 1750 will be retained. Samples of later material may be retained if of intrinsic interest or significant for dating purposes. All but a sample of most classes of building material will be discarded after recording but the specific guidance of the recipient museum collecting policy will be followed.
- 3.4.2 Metal detectors will be used to enhance the recovery of metal finds. It is proposed that this work will either be carried out by in-house staff and with no removal of finds without reference to contextual information. No title will be assumed by the finder. Gold, silver prehistoric base metal or other treasure will be reported to the Coroner and county finds liaison officer and kept in a secure place as required by the Treasure Act (1996) and its subsequent amendments.
- 3.4.3 Finds recovered from fills of cut features will be recorded under the appropriate context number.
- 3.4.4 All finds discovered in layers and surfaces will be recorded in two horizontal dimensions. This spatial distribution will generally be within a 1m grid square but for particularly sensitive areas a grid of 0.1m will be used. Three-dimensional recording will be used for significant finds such as chronologically distinctive metalwork.
- 3.4.5 According to our standard practice, features will be spot-dated by their finds on-site, so that any appropriate adjustment can be made to excavation or retrieval strategies in order to maximise the information available to answer the research aims of the project.

- 3.4.6 Conservation on site will follow guidelines in First Aid for Finds with any other specialist conservation work sub-contracted to the project conservator.
- 3.5 Environmental sampling and scientific dating
 - 3.5.1 Well-defined, closely-dated contexts will be bulk sampled for the recovery of carbonised botanical remains (HE 2015b)
 - 3.5.2 Sieving will take place to enhance the recovery of small bones and artefacts as advised by our faunal remains specialist. Provision is made for sampling 30-50 deposits. Up to 40 litres of their fill will be wet-sieved using a 2mm mesh. Charred plant remains will be recovered using floatation and a 0.25mm sieve. In addition, unusual and rich contexts will be sieved in a similar manner.
 - 3.5.3 Bulk samples from dry contexts will be in the order of 40 litres except in cases where the volume of the features is below this threshold. Deposits of earlier prehistoric date (Neolithic/Bronze Age) will be sampled at 40 litres or above. Variations to sample volumes and collection strategies will be discussed on site with our palaeobotanical specialist and Berkshire Archaeology as necessary.
 - 3.5.4 The presence of waterlogged deposits is unlikely and is only possible in very deep or large features. Should these be encountered the sampling strategy will be discussed with our environmental specialists and Berkshire Archaeology as necessary.
 - 3.5.5 Samples for pollen analysis and micromorphology will be taken under the guidance of the appropriate specialists on-site if appropriate.
 - 3.5.6 Where appropriate, samples will be taken for radiocarbon dating, dendrochronology, thermoluminescence, archaeomagnetic dating or for any other less common scientific analyses as necessary.
 - 3.5.7 Provision is made for three radiocarbon determinations should Saxon or prehistoric deposits be encountered.

4.0 POST-FIELDWORK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Following the ordering of the site archive, a short summary will be prepared giving a preliminary account of the excavation findings and brief outlines of the artefactual and environmental data collected, as set out in MoRPHE (HE 2015a). Post-fieldwork will be completed according to TVAS post-fieldwork manual (6th edition 2013).
- 4.2 Discussion will take place between all specialist members of the Project Team (see 8.0 below), to assess the quality, character, and significance of the various data collected, and the degree to which it will enable the research aims to be addressed.
- 4.3 At this stage it may be possible to identify classes of material which will not fulfil their potential for information retrieval and allow resources to be re-allocated where they will be most beneficial.
- 4.4 Formal post-excavation assessment documents or interim reports will be produced following completion of the fieldwork depending on the scale of any findings made.
- 4.5 A digital (PDF) version of the report and GIS shapefiles of the area and features will be supplied to Berkshire HER on the understanding that they can be copied for *bona fide* research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. Non-published report(s) will be made available for inspection or download on the TVAS website.
- 4.6 A digital version of the report will be provided to the OASIS project.

5.0 POST-EXCAVATION ANALYSIS AND ARCHIVE PREPARATION

- 5.1 Finds processing, sieving of bulk samples (including flotation and the sorting of residues) and analysis will commence immediately following the completion of the fieldwork in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015a), and TVAS post-excavation procedures (6th edition 2013).
- 5.2 The aims of the post-fieldwork phase of the project are to:
 - 5.2.1 Prepare an orderly archive of the records of the fieldwork.
 - 5.2.2 Clean, conserve and prepare artefacts/ecofacts for long term museum storage.
 - 5.2.3 Prepare specialist reports on the artefacts recovered. Particular attention will be paid to tying in the pottery recovered to the local or regional fabric sequences that are available. Metal finds will be x-rayed where appropriate to aid identification.
 - 5.2.4 Prepare specialist reports on environmental studies.
 - 5.2.5 Prepare a report describing the basic nature of the archaeological deposits discovered.
 - 5.2.6 Draw together the information in sections 5.3-5.7 to place the site in its local, regional and national setting as appropriate.
- 5.3 The finds and site archive will be prepared in accordance with guidelines in MoRPHE (HE 2015a), CIfA guidance (CIfA 2020a), TVAS Digital Recording Policy (2021) and after consultation with the recipient museum. Guidance produced by the Museum and Galleries Commission's Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (1992), the Society of Museum Archaeologist's Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections (1993) and the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage (1990) will be followed.
- 5.4 The site and finds archive will be deposited with an approved local museum willing to accept archive material and the digital archive copied to the Archaeology Data Service in due course. As there is currently no receiving museum for Wokingham Borough the site and finds archive will be stored at TVAS premises until the situation is resolved.
- 5.5 An electronic security copy of the field records will be made shortly after completion of the fieldwork.
- 5.6 A selection of digital images showing the site location and principal features will be provided to Berkshire Archaeology for educational and planning purposes if requested.

6. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION

- 6.1 Within 12-15 months of the completion of all fieldwork a comprehensive report to publication standard will be produced. This will comprise a descriptive text and illustrations of the stratigraphic sequence with its interpretation, catalogues, specialist reports, distribution plans of the finds, and any available environmental information followed by a discussion and interpretation of the results.
- 6.2 The findings will be published in an appropriate journal such as *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* or the TVAS monograph/occasional series.
- 6.3 A sum will be allocated within the resourcing of the project for full editing and publication costs.

7.0 PROJECT TEAM

Project Management
Fieldwork director

Dr. Steve Ford, Mr Andy Taylor or Mr David Sanchez
(from)(one of) Mr Andrew Taylor, Mr Jamie Williams, Dr Pierre
Manisse, Ms Beth Tucker

Pottery Specialist	Dr. Jane Timby, Ms Sue Anderson, Ms Lorraine Mephram, Mr Luke Barber, Ms Rachel Hall, Dr. Barbara McNee (consultants) or Dr. Cristina Mateos-Leal (TVAS)
Struck Flint Specialist	Dr. Steve Ford (TVAS)
Stone Specialist	Dr. Kevin Haywood (Consultant)
Metalwork Specialist	Ms Sophie Peng (TVAS) or Dr. Robin Taylor (consultant)
Carbonised Plant Remains	Professor Mark Robinson (University of Oxford) or Ms Rosalind McKenna (consultant)
Mollusc Remains	Professor Mark Robinson, (University of Oxford)
Faunal Remains	Dr. Matilda Holmes (consultants)
Human Remains	Dr. Ceri Falys (TVAS)
Pollen Remains	Quest, (Reading University)
Soil Micromorphology	Quest, (Reading University)
Radiocarbon dating	Queens University, Belfast
Archaeomagnetic dating	Bradford University
Conservation	Wiltshire County Council Conservation Centre

8.0 GENERAL ITEMS

8.1 Health and Safety

- 8.1.1 All site operations will be carried out in a safe manner in accordance with TVAS health and safety policy and current Health and Safety legislation. A risk assessment will be prepared before commencement on site.

8.2 Professional standards

- 8.2.1 The project will be carried out in accordance with the CIfA Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation (2023a; 2023b) and Code of Conduct (2025), the Berkshire Archaeology General Standards for Historic Environment Projects (2021), and the quality control mechanisms set out in the TVAS fieldwork and post-fieldwork manuals.

8.3 Insurance Cover

- 8.3.1 Insurance cover comprises £10m for public liability, £10m for employee liability, cover for any hired-in plant and professional indemnity cover for £5m.

8.4 Press Release and Outreach

- 8.4.1 Should any significant archaeological deposits be located, a press release will be prepared in consultation with Berkshire Archaeology and the client. Members of local archaeological and historical societies will be invited to visit.

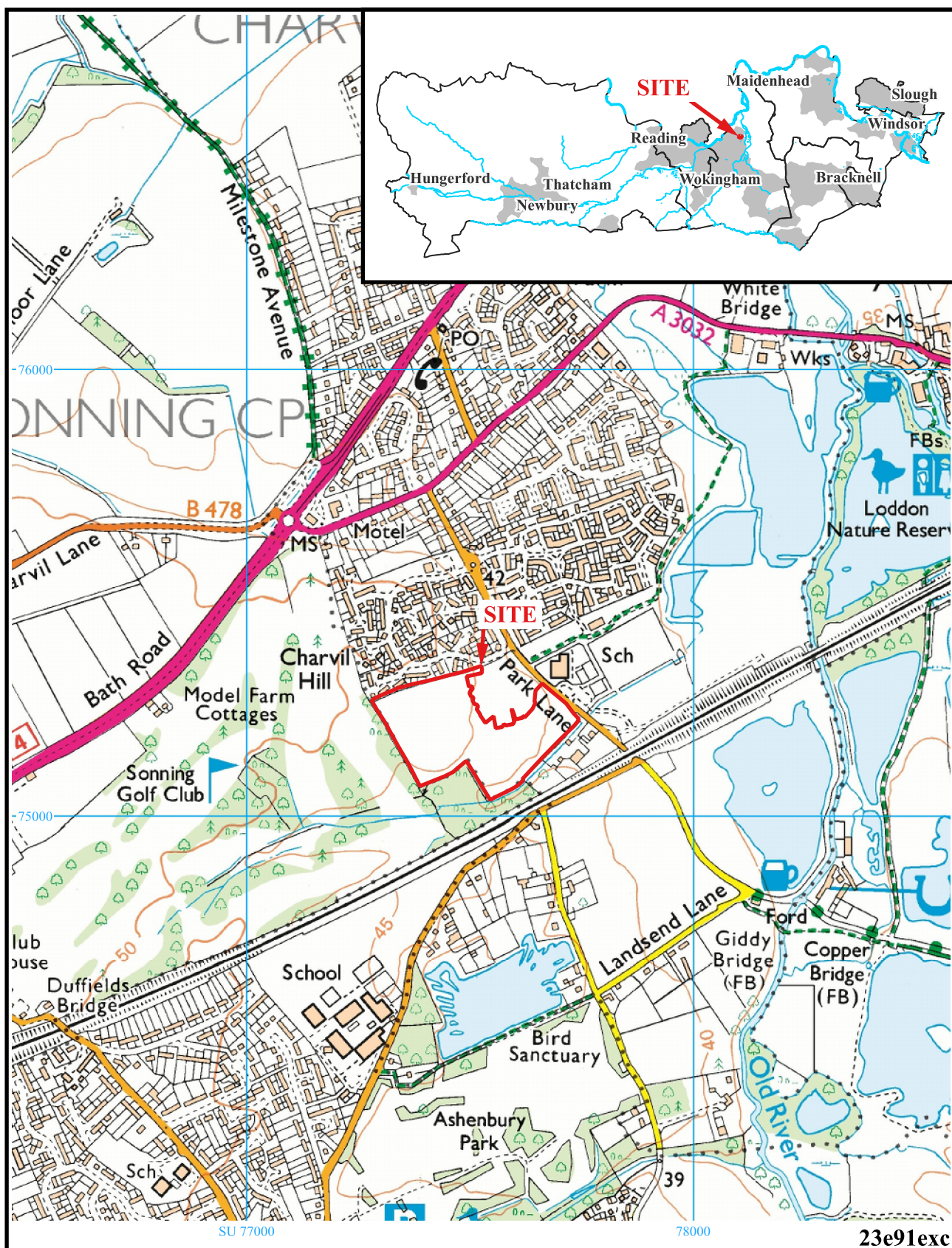
8.5 Monitoring

- 8.5.1 The fieldwork and post-fieldwork will be monitored by Berkshire Archaeology and all reasonable access will be provided to the works. The archaeological advisor to the Council will be contacted both prior to work commencing on site, and during the excavation itself, to arrange a site monitoring visit or remote monitoring.

9.0 REFERENCES

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Proposal for an archaeological excavation

Figure 1. Location of site within Charvil and Berkshire.

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