



**WEST COURT SANG, WEST COURT, THE DEVIL'S
HIGHWAY
Finchampstead,
Borough of Wokingham RG40 4AX**

County of Berkshire

Report on archaeological evaluation

August 2026



**West Court SANG
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The Devil's Highway,
Finchampstead,
Borough of Wokingham
RG40 4AX**

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Report on archaeological evaluation

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Graphics: Juan Jose Fuldain Gonzalez

© MOLA
46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED tel 0207 410 2200
Unit 2, Chineham Point, Crockford Lane, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 8NA, tel: 01256 587320
email hello@mola.org.uk

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with company registration number 07751831 and charity registration number 1143574.
Registered office: Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED

Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by MOLA at West Court SANG, West Court, The Devils Highway, Finchhampstead, Borough of Wokingham. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Crest Nicholson.

The site comprises West Court, a Grade II listed former manor house with a 17th core set in 26ha of open gardens. The archaeological works were carried out in advance of the proposed change of the use of the site as suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) including fencing, a new car park and a pond.

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2024) four evaluation Trenches 1-4 were excavated in two phases of work between the 08/04/2025 and 30/06/2026. Two trenches (Trench 1 and Trench 2) were located in the area of the proposed pond whilst the other two trenches (Trench 3 and Trench 4) were in the area of the new car park.

In Trench 1 and Trench 2 subsoil was observed overlying the natural substrate. In Trench 3 subsoil overlay the natural substrate and was in turn overlain by modern deposits. In Trench 4 the same sequence was present but part of an undated cut feature was also observed.

The report concludes that on the evidence of the results of the evaluation the archaeological impact of the development in the two evaluated areas is likely to be minimal.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out by MOLA at West Court SANG, West Court, The Devils Highway, Finchhampstead, Borough of Wokingham ('the site'). The work was carried out in two phases between 08/04/2025 and 30/06/2026. This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 The site comprises West Court, a Grade II listed former manor house with a 17th century core and substantial additions, set in 26ha of open gardens (see Fig 1). The site is bounded by open fields to the north and east; Park Lane to the south; and open fields and Reading Road to the west.
- 1.1.3 The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 477212 163875. The planning application for the site details proposed change of use of land as suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) including fencing. The proposals include the construction of a new car park to the west of the main building and a pond to the south.
- 1.1.4 An Archaeological Heritage Statement for the wider development of the whole site (Arborfield Garrison) was initially prepared by MOLA in 2014 (MOLA 2014a).
- 1.1.5 An Historic Environment Assessment for the development of the whole site was subsequently prepared (MOLA 2014b). This divided the site into two areas, Area A (primarily the residential and commercial development of the site) and Area B (West Court SANGS). This document presented an initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site and should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and an initial interpretation of the archaeological potential (Section 2).
- 1.1.6 In 2023 MOLA issued a Heritage Statement for West Court Sang (MOLA 2023) which was more specific to the current phase of development.

1.2 Planning background

- 1.2.1 The legislative and Planning framework in which the evaluation took place was fully set out in the Archaeological Heritage Assessment (MOLA 2014, Section 10).
- 1.2.2 In brief, as set out in Section 1 of the WSI (MOLA 2024) the development received outline planning permission (Ref: O/2014/2280) in April 2015 and included Archaeology Condition No 69:

Archaeology in the SANG

80. Prior to the commencement of development in each SANG, or any works of laying out or planting in that SANG, a programme of archaeological work (which may comprise more than one phase) shall be carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has first been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority

Prior to the commencement of development in each SANG, or any works of laying out or planting in that SANG, the results of the archaeological evaluation and an impact assessment document to explore the anticipated impact of the detailed SANG works on any archaeological features or deposits identified, and mitigation measures proposed, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The results should provide for the in-situ preservation of any archaeological remains of national or regional importance should they occur on the site and the archaeological investigation, recording and analysis of remains of lesser

importance. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: *To ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated and recorded or preserved in situ in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the borough in accordance with the NPPF, Core Strategy Policy CP3, and Policy TB25 of the Managing Development Delivery Document.*

- 1.2.3 Details of the consented development are available at <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-application/search-planning-applications/>
- 1.2.4 The potential archaeological interest on the site is survival of rural landscape features, such as ditches, pits, settlement and iron working/smelting (Middle Iron Age to mid-3rd century AD) recorded on a number sites excavated to the north as part of the wider redevelopment of Arborfield Garrison (Parcels T, F, G, SC2, S1, H, I, J and S2). West Court sits atop the Roman road, known as the Devil's Highway which linked Silchester and Staines and there is a potential for the road and roadside structures/features on the site.

1.3 Scope of the evaluation

- 1.3.1 Evaluation is defined by Historic England as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:
- formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or
 - formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research
- 1.3.2 An archaeological evaluation is a limited fieldwork exercise designed to test the conclusions of the preliminary desk based work. It is not the same as full excavation.
- 1.3.3 The evaluation comprised the excavation of four evaluation trenches on the site. The trenches were positioned where groundworks were most likely to impact underlying deposits. This equated to a 5% sample of the site area.
- 1.3.4 The proposed impacts on the site comprise a new car park to the west of the main building and a new pond to the south. The trench layout was selected to provide coverage across these two areas, avoiding known service runs and standing buildings.
- 1.3.5 The evaluation was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for evaluation specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2023).
- 1.3.6 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation (MOLA 2024)

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 West Court is located at c52.64m OD with the ground level sloping down to the west to 51.11m OD, rising in the east to 54.30m OD. The ground slopes gently from c59m OD in the north down to c51m OD in the south.
- 2.1.2 The British Geographical Survey indicates that the natural deposits comprise London Clay capped by a mixture of made ground, subsoil and a topsoil (BGS 268).

2.2 Archaeology

- 2.2.1 The following baseline assessment of the archaeological and historical background to the site is summarised from the Heritage Statement (MOLA 2023 Section 3) and the Historic Environment Assessment (MOLA 2014), HER numbers (in brackets) and Scheduled Monument (SM) numbers are taken from the Historic Environment Assessment (Table in Section 9 and HEA Fig 2). For the purposes of the HEA the site was divided into two areas Area A referred to below as 'the wider development site' and Area B West Court referred to below as 'the Site' (HEA Fig 1).

Prehistoric

- 2.2.2 The is located in an area which archaeologically attests to occupation going as far back as the Bronze Age. Bronze Age evidence includes field systems located c.1km to the east of the wider development site at Barkham Ride which were identified by a gophysical survey by JHMS in 2020 (ERM277) as well as numerous finds spots. A late Bronze Age burnt mound was excavated by TVAS c.380m east of the wider development Area in 2002 (EWK205). The excavation, after a chance find during a watching brief on sewer works, identified significant quantities of burnt flint was found.
- 2.2.3 Evidence of Iron Age agriculture is relatively widespread. Intercutting gullies of Iron Age or Roman date were found at Sheerland Road, c.100m to the west of the wider development site, during an archaeological evaluation by AOC in 2000 (EWK108). Several possible Iron Age enclosures have been noted within the area notably at Whitehall Brick and Tile Works, c25m to the west of the wider site, during evaluation and excavation by TVAS in 1998 (EWK82, EWK83). This site produced 8330 sherds of Middle/Late Iron Age and Roman pottery and a significant amount of metalworking debris. An Iron Age roundhouse which may have been part of a specialist iron smelting site was previously excavated at Baird Road, c.200m to the west of the wider dedevelopment site during a series of evaluations and excavations by TVAS in 2001 to 2002 (EWK115, EWK101, EWK203)

Roman

- 2.2.4 There is a conjectured Roman road (The Devils Highway) (MWK1733, MWK1741, MWK1745, MWK1753) running east to west through the site and matching up with the existing drive westwards from West Court. Parts of the road have been designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments but none are located within the site boundary. Archaeological investigations in the past have attempted to locate the Roman road, with varying degrees of success. The metallised surface of the road, alongside sherds of Roman pottery were located during excavations in Wheatlands Cottage field, c.470m east of the site by Bulmershe College of Further Education in 1975 (MWK1745, MWK1752).
- 2.2.5 The most extensive Roman remains in the study area were found during the

aforementioned excavations at the former Whitehall Brick and Tile works c.125m west of the wider development site (EWK82, EWK83). The first phase of this site, described above, dated to the late Iron Age, but occupation continued until the 3rd century AD. Numerous ditches, pits and post holes were found as well as a considerable quantity of Roman pottery. Pottery finds included kiln wasters or seconds indicating that some pottery production was taking place there.

Saxon

- 2.2.6 During the Saxon period the site appears to have been part of the parish of Finchampstead, which lay within the Hundred1 of Charlton and was part of the forest of Windsor (Ditchfield and Page 1923, 237). Finchampstead was in the property of Earl Harold prior to the Norman Invasion. Barkham was held by Ælmer on behalf of the King, Edward the Confessor. Domesday Book (AD 1086) indicates that the parish were largely rural and made up of woodland, arable and pasture land (Williams and Martin 2002, 238–247).
- 2.2.7 The centre of Barkham lies c.900m east of the wider development site and was a village in the early and later medieval periods. The first written record of Barkham dates to AD 952, from a Saxon charter for an area of land. The charter refers to the settlement as 'Beorchamme' meaning 'birch tree meadow', presumably referring to a cleared area within the woodland which covered much of the land in the vicinity of the site in the early medieval period (French and Firth 2000, 3, 12). The historic centre of Finchampstead village lies c.1.8km east of the site and it is likely that this was also a focal point for settlement in the parish in at least the latter part of this period.
- 2.2.8 Other than isolated finds there is little evidence for the Saxon period from the site or surrounding area. While lying within the parish, the site is likely to have been farmland with the closest settlement (Finchampstead) located some distance away.

Medieval

- 2.2.9 The site lies within two historic parishes, Barkham and Finchampstead. The parish and manor of Barkham were centred on the village of Barkham c.1km east of the wider development site. The moated site of the manor house is a scheduled monument (MWK1313 Scheduled Monument No 1013181). The medieval settlement of Barkham was clustered around this site (MWK1315-MWK1317).
- 2.2.10 Finchampstead was divided into two manorial estates in the late 13th century named East and West Court. West Court was centred on a manor house that is surrounded by but not included in the site. The present Grade II listed building (SM 1118093) dates to the 17th century. The building is likely to have been the site of the earlier medieval manor house (Ditchfield and Page 1923, 238–247). The grounds of the estate would probably have included the land of the site.
- 2.2.11 The previously mentioned Geophysical Survey at Barkham Ride revealed a number of shallow linear features thought to be the remains of a ridge and furrow field system (ERM277).
- 2.2.12 A post-medieval mill, located c 985m south-west of the site is thought to have 15th century origins (MWK5377).
- 2.2.13 The HER records a number of cropmarks of linear features to the south of the area, which formed part of field systems, ditches and enclosures of unknown possibly medieval date (MWK1899, MWK1901, MWK1902 and (MWK1903).

Post-medieval

- 2.2.14 Throughout the post-medieval period settlement was largely concentrated around Barkham, but with small scattered farmsteads across the area. Higher status

residences would have been the two moated sites (SM 1009886 and SM 1013181), and the moated manor house at West Court (SM 1118093) see below . An early 16th century hall house, Westwood Cottage, now a Grade II listed building, located c 85m south of Area A (SM 1319144) would also have been at least a moderately high status building.

- 2.2.15 The present Grade II listed building dates to the 17th century but is recorded to have had a moat prior to enlargement in the 19th century, indicating that it is likely to have been the site of the earlier manor house (Ditchfield and Page 1923, 238–247).
- 2.2.16 The agricultural nature and use of the site is likely to have persisted throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. Rocque's map of 1761 (Heritage Statement 2014 Figure 3) shows built up areas, main roads, land use and general topography. It shows that the majority of the site lay within fields or parkland by the second part of the 18th century. A number of roads divided the area, including Biggs Lane and Sheerlands Road, which are still in use. Faint lines indicate arable use of the fields. The site was mostly within the grounds of West Court, which is shown as a small cluster of buildings with a long avenue approach across the southern part of the site. Fields formed the eastern and northern parts of the area.
- 2.2.17 The Ordnance Survey 1":mile County Series map of 1816–17 (Heritage Statement Figure 4) is a small scale map that shows a similar level of detail as Rocque. The site was mostly part of the grounds of West Court, although fields were located in the north-eastern part of the area. West Court is shown as a number of buildings within a walled area, with gardens and the lake occupying the remainder of the area.
- 2.2.18 Both parts of the site were subsequently owned by the Reverend Henry Ellis St John. There are Tithe maps from Finchampstead parish dating from the middle of the 19th century. The site is covered by the Finchampstead Tithe map of 1846 (Heritage Statement 2014 Figure 5). All the land within the site was owned and occupied by Henry St John, who was also a major landowner. The land at this time was a mixture of grass or tree covered parkland surrounding West Court, or arable land.

3 Evaluation methodology

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 The methodology for the site was fully set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) MOLA 2024 (Section 3).
- 3.1.2 Four evaluation trenches of c.15m by 2m were excavated across the pond and car park areas of the site.
- 3.1.3 All archaeological evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (MOLA 2024) and in general compliance with ClfA standards and guidance (ClfA 2023).
- 3.1.4 Initial location of the trenches was set out by MOLA Surveyors using a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS).
- 3.1.5 The slab/ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision. Excavation of the trenches was carried out by machine by contractors using a 360 degree tracked excavator with a flat bladed ditching bucket. All machine work was monitored continually by a suitably qualified MOLA archaeologist.
- 3.1.6 For all trenches topsoil and subsoil were stored separately.
- 3.1.7 Each of the trenches were excavated by machine down to the upper surface of archaeological deposits or the upper horizon of the natural substrate, whichever was applicable.
- 3.1.8 Thereafter excavation continued by hand with any surviving features and deposits hand cleaned, examined and recorded both in plan and section. The percentage sample of each feature and deposit type followed the general excavation strategy outlined in the WSI (MOLA 2024, Section 3) . Excavation of features was carried out sufficiently so as to establish the nature and character of the archaeology. In this case only one feature was identified which was half sectioned.
- 3.1.9 Following the completion of each evaluation trench the trench was backfilled under supervision in the reverse order of excavation.

3.2 Recording methodology

- 3.2.1 A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2024).
- 3.2.2 The evaluation was principally recorded on MOLA pro forma Trench record sheets.
- 3.2.3 MOLA pro forma contexts sheets were used for the description of individual contexts.
- 3.2.4 For Trench 3 and Trench 4 three sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10.
- 3.2.5 A digital photographic record was maintained throughout the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 16 megapixels. The digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image.
- 3.2.6 Trench location information was prepared on British National Grid coordinates (OS) and set out on site with Leica dGNSS equipment using a smartnet correction service to accuracies of +/- 8mm horizontally and +/-15mm vertically. Completed trenches and archaeological features were surveyed using the same equipment in 3D BNG

coordinates.

3.2.7 The site code for all records was BR-WCG23.

3.2.8 The recording system was fully compatible with those most widely used in Berkshire.

3.3 Reporting and archiving

3.3.1 A short summary of the results of the evaluation will be submitted to the Berkshire HER and NAR.

3.3.2 Details of the project have been submitted to the online database maintained by the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) Project (Section 13).

3.3.3 A digital copy of the site archive will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS)

3.4 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	4
Number of overall location plans	GPS
Number of Context (SU) sheets	10
Number of photographs	9
Number of Plan sheets	GPS
Number of Sections	3

4 Results of the evaluation

For all trench locations see Fig 2.

4.1 Trench 1

Location	Pond
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 0.65m depth
Modern ground level	52.11m OD
Base of modern topsoil	51.71m OD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	Subsoil 0.25m deep
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	NA
Top of surviving natural observed at	51.46 mOD
Level of base of trench	51.46 mOD

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 (Photo 1) was located in the area of the proposed pond.
- 4.1.2 Natural yellow orange clay was observed at 0.65m below the top of the trench.
- 4.1.3 Modern subsoil was recorded as 0.25m depth of pale yellowish-brown silty. The subsoil was overlain by 0.4m depth of modern topsoil. This comprised mid blackish brown silty clay overlain by turf.
- 4.1.4 No archaeological features or deposits were observed in the trench and no finds were recovered.



Photo 1: Trench 1 looking north-west (1m and 0.5m scales)

4.2 Trench 2

Location	Pond
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 0.7m deep
Modern ground level	52.17 mOD
Base of modern topsoil	51.82 m OD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	Subsoil 0.25-0.35m deep
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	NA
Top of surviving natural observed at	51.47 mOD
Level of base of trench	51.47 mOD

- 4.2.1 Trench 2 (Photo 2) was located in the area of the proposed pond.
- 4.2.2 Natural yellow orange clay was observed at 0.7m below the top of the trench.
- 4.2.3 The natural clay was overlain by 0.25 to 0.35m depth of undated subsoil, which comprised pale yellowish-brown silty clay (Photo 3).
- 4.2.4 In the top of the trench the modern topsoil comprised 0.35m depth of mid blackish brown clay silty clay.
- 4.2.5 No archaeological features were observed in the trench and no finds were recovered.



Photo 2: Trench 2 looking north-east (1m and 0.5m scale)



Photo 3: Trench 3, Topsoil overlying subsoil looking north-west (0.5m scale)

4.3 Trench 3

Location	Car park, east end
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 1.22m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	51.73 to 51.55m OD sloping southwards
Base of modern fill/slab	51.17m OD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	Subsoil 0.34m deep
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	NA
Top of surviving natural observed at	50.52m OD
Level of base of trench	50.47m OD

- 4.3.1 Trench 3 (Photo 4, Photo 5) was located at the east end of the car park area.
- 4.3.2 Natural geology comprising yellow-orange clay was recorded at 50.52m OD.
- 4.3.3 The natural geology was overlain by 0.34m thickness of thin mid yellowish brown fine silty clay subsoil with occasional organic patches and small stones.
- 4.3.4 The subsoil was overlain by a 0.31m thick, dark, organic clay deposit [301], which contained the remains of a modern wooden fence and other construction material. This deposit was interpreted as the result of modern landscaping.
- 4.3.5 Recent works for the construction of the car park had truncated the above horizontally and covered it with a 0.55m thick layer of loose Type 1 and the compacted surface of the car park itself.



Photo 4 Trench 3, looking east (1m scale).



Photo 5; The side of Trench 3 looking north (1m scale)

4.4 Trench 4

Location	Car park, western end
Dimensions	15m by 2m by 1.06m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	52.05m OD, sloping northwards
Base of modern fill/slab	51.53m OD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	50.95m OD
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	50.80m OD
Top of surviving natural observed at	51m OD
Level of base of trench	50.84m OD

- 4.4.1 Trench 4 (Fig 3, Photo 6 and Photo 7) was located at the western end of the car park. The trench was moved westwards from the original location as set out in the WSI to allow for the continued use of the car park entrance.
- 4.4.2 Natural yellow orange clay was recorded at 51m OD.
- 4.4.3 A single feature [403] (Photo 7) was observed within the trench. This was a a shallow cut with a squared edge at the west . This feature was only 0.15m deep and filled by soft organic clayey silt [402]. The base of the feature was recorded at 50.80m OD. No finds were recovered from the feature. Given its location below modern truncation occupying the middle section of the trench, this feature could potentially have resulted from recent landscaping activity.
- 4.4.4 Otherwise Subsoil covered the natural geology to a depth of 0.23m.
- 4.4.5 The same organic deposit containing modern material as seen in Trench 3 was recorded here as [401]. which was 0.3m thick.
- 4.4.6 Layers associated with the construction of the current car park extended to a depth of 0.4m.



Photo 6 Trench 4, looking north-west (1m scale)



Photo 7 Feature [403] in trench 4, looking north-west. 0.5m scale

4.5 The finds

- 4.5.1 No finds were recovered during the evaluation.

4.6 The site as a whole

- 4.6.1 Four trenches were excavated across the site of which Trench 1 and Trench 2 were located in the area of the proposed pond and Trench 3 and Trench 4 were located in the area of the car park.
- 4.6.2 In the pond area the top of Trench 1 was recorded at 52.11m OD, whilst the top of Trench 2 was recorded at 52.17m OD. Trench 1 was excavated to a depth of 0.65m, whilst Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of 0.7m. In the car park area the top of Trench 3 was recorded at 51.17m OD, whilst the top of Trench 4 was recorded at 52.05m OD. Trench 3 was excavated to a depth of 1.22m whilst Trench 4 was excavated to a depth of 1.06mm.
- 4.6.3 Across all of the trenches natural pale yellow clay was overlain by subsoil to depths of between 0.23m (Trench 4) and 0.35m (Trench 2).
- 4.6.4 Only one feature was identified during the evaluation. This was the undated feature identified in Trench 4.
- 4.6.5 The level of modern truncation was greatest in Trench 3 and Trench 4 where subsoil was overlain by 0.3m thickness of modern deposits, beneath surfacing of the car park to depths of up to 0.55m.

- 4.6.6 In summary given the levels of truncation archaeological potential was probably greatest in the pond area, but there was no evidence of any activity in terms of archaeological features in this area, whilst the car park area was more truncated, but contained one undated feature.
- 4.6.7 As a whole no finds were recovered and the results have no potential for further study.

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims and site specific objectives

- 5.1.1 The primary objective of the evaluation was to confirm the extent, nature and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits or structures in the areas of the pond and car park on the site.
- 5.1.2 A small number of broad research aims and objectives were set out in Section 2.2 of the WSI (MOLA 2024). These are addressed below:
- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
- 5.1.3 The natural subsoil was recorded as pale yellow orange clay throughout. In the area of the pond (Trench 1 and Trench 2) this was recorded at an upper horizon of between 51.46m OD and 51.47m OD. In the area of the car park (Trench 3 and Trench 4) the upper horizon of the natural was recorded at between 50.52m and 51.0m OD, although there was a greater level of horizontal truncation in this area.
- What are the earliest deposits identified.
- 5.1.4 Earliest deposits comprised subsoil and potentially the fill of a shallow cut observed in Trench 4. No dating evidence was recovered from any of these deposits.
- Is there any evidence of field systems, occupation or iron working/smeltering activity relating to the Middle Iron Age features previously excavated to the north of the site, as depicted on the earlier Historic Environment Assessment?
- 5.1.5 No evidence was found for any Iron Age features.
- Is there any evidence of Roman British occupation or activity?
- 5.1.6 No evidence was found for any Romano British occupation or activity.
- Is there any surviving evidence for the Roman road and associated roadside features/structures?
- 5.1.7 No evidence was found for the Roman road or associated features.
- Is there evidence associated with the late/post-medieval activity associated with the occupation of the moated site of West Court?
- 5.1.8 Neither the subsoil or the single feature found during the evaluation were dated. No evidence from the evaluation is able to be directly linked with late/post-medieval activity.
- Is there any evidence for early landscaping and garden features on the site?
- 5.1.9 No evidence was found for early landscaping and garden features on the site. The only feature identified on the site was undated. The only landscaping identified on the site was modern and probably associated with landscaping as part of the construction of the existing car park.

5.2 Research agendas

- 5.2.1 The assessment of the significance of the remains was undertaken in the context of wider archaeological research priorities established in the Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment (Hey and Hind 2014).
- 5.2.2 The results of the evaluation were too limited to address any of the research priorities in the framework.

5.3 General discussion of potential

- 5.3.1 The evaluation has shown very little potential for the survival of any deposits of archaeological significance. In the area of the pond (Trench 1 and Trench 2) the natural substrate was overlain by undated subsoil deposits beneath topsoil. In the area of the car park the subsoil was sealed by modern landscaping deposits probably associated with the construction of the car park. A single undated feature was identified in this area but this is unlikely to be of archaeological significance.

5.4 Significance

- 5.4.1 The archaeological remains are of very limited local significance in terms of primarily negative evidence for the two areas investigated.

5.5 Assessment of the evaluation

- 5.5.1 MOLA is confident that the results of the evaluation has provided a reasonable assessment of the archaeological potential of the pond and car park areas.

6 Proposed development impact and conclusions

- 6.1.1 No evidence was found for the survival of any features or deposits of proven archaeological significance.
- 6.1.2 Of the two areas the area of the pond was least truncated. However, no archaeological features were found in this area. The only deposit identified being subsoil deposits overlying the natural substrate.
- 6.1.3 In the area of the car park the car park and associated modern landscaping were observed to a depth of c.0.7m. Some survival of subsoil was recorded as well as a single undated feature.
- 6.1.4 The proposed redevelopment at the site involves a proposed change of use of land as a suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) including fencing. The proposals include the construction of a new car park to the west of the main building and a pond to the south.
- 6.1.5 In the absence of detailed plans on the nature of the groundworks the impact of this on any surviving archaeological deposits would appear to be minimal.
- 6.1.6 The decision on the appropriate archaeological mitigation to the deposits revealed rests with the Local Planning Authority.

7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 The author would like to thank Crest Nicholson for commissioning the report, particularly Chris Dykes and David Digby for their support. The fieldwork was carried out by Domenica Pate and Stephen Turner. MOLA project management was carried out by Claudia Tomassino.

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9 Figures

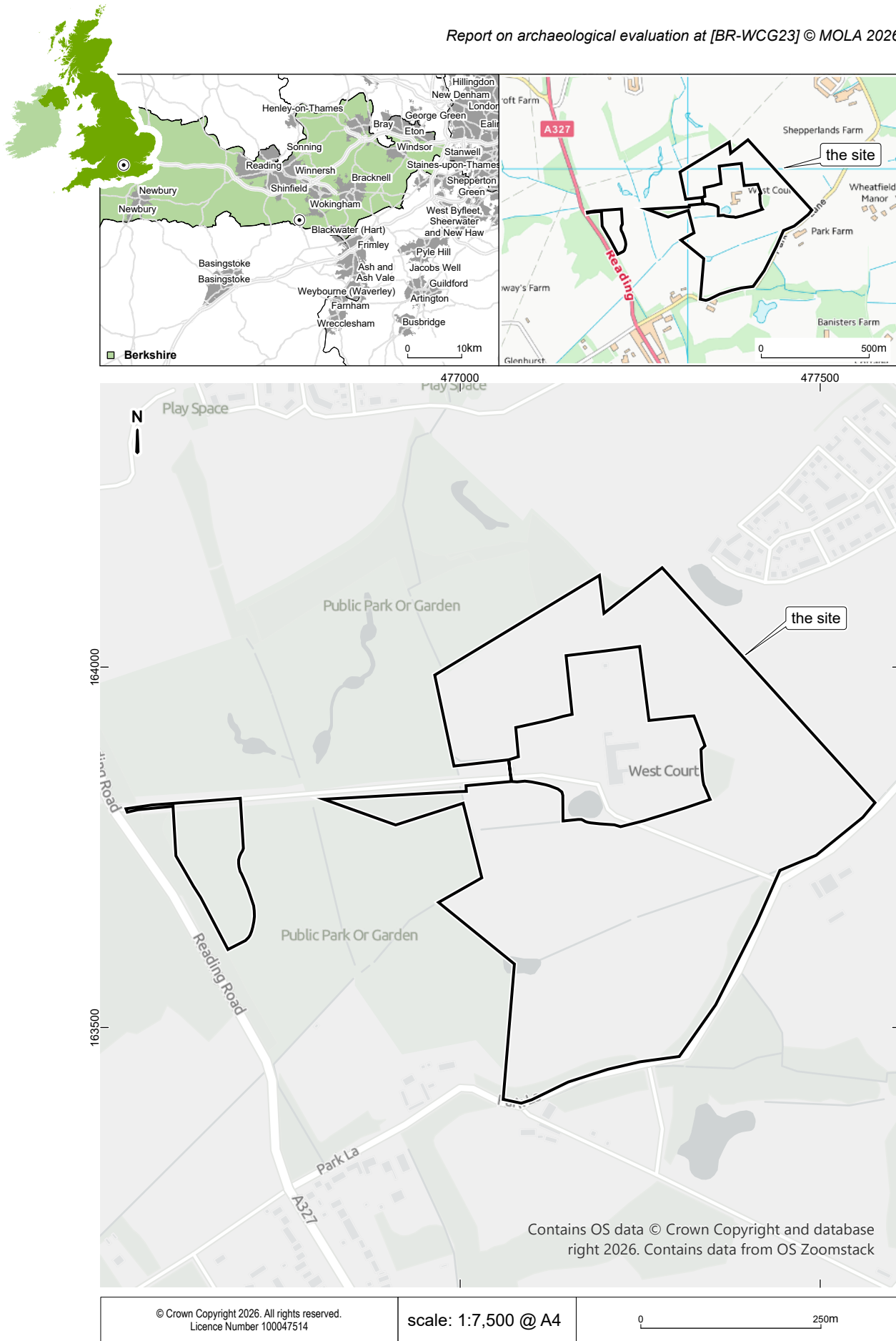


Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Trench locations

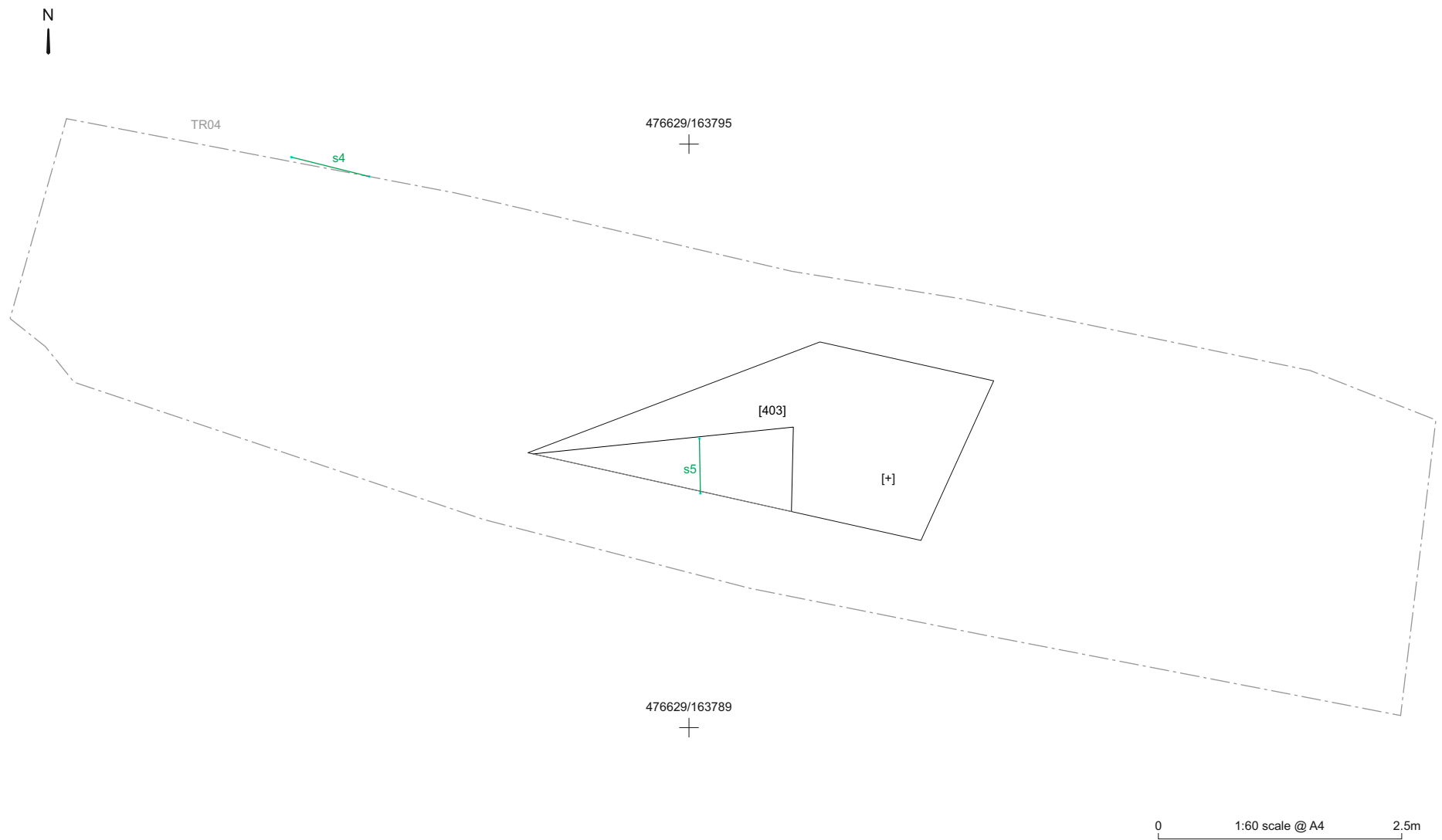


Fig 3 Plan of Trench 4

10 OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID (UID)	molas1-544155
Project Name	Evaluation at West Court SANG West Court, The Devil's Highway, Finchampstead, Borough of Wokingham
Sitename	West Court SANG West Court, The Devil's Highway, Finchampstead, Borough of Wokingham
Sitecode	BR-WCG23
Project Identifier(s)	BR-WCG23
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	O/2014/2280
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	MOLA
Project Dates	08-May-2025 - 30-Jun-2026
Location	West Court SANG West Court, The Devil's Highway, Finchampstead, Borough of Wokingham NGR: SU 77212 63875 LL: 51.36869707747152, -0.892228332262552 12 Fig: 477212,163875
Administrative Areas	Country: England County/Local Authority: Wokingham Local Authority District: Wokingham Parish: Finchampstead
Project Methodology	The archaeological evaluation comprised four evaluation trenches of 15m x 2m excavated in the area of a proposed pond and new car park. The site comprises West Court, a Grade II listed former manor house with a 17th century core and substantial additions, set in 26ha of open gardens. The planning application for the site details a proposed change of use of land as suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) including fencing. The work was undertaken further to a planning condition.
Project Results	Four trenches were excavated. In all trenches subsoil was observed as overlying the natural substrate. One trench in the area of a proposed new car park contained an identified feature, but this was undated. No finds were recovered from any of the deposits on the site.
Funder	Private or public corporation Crest Nicholson
HER	Berkshire Archaeology HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Claudia Tommasino
HER Identifiers	NA