THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

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Gorse Ride South Regeneration, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire phase 2B

Archaeological Evaluation

by Beth Tucker and Anne-Michelle Huvig

Site Code: GRF21/162

(SU 7960 6500)

Gorse Ride South Regeneration, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire, Phase 2B

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Wokingham Borough Council

By Anne-Michelle Huvig and Beth Tucker

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GRF 21/162

October 2025

Summary

Site name: Gorse Ride South Regeneration, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7960 6500

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 6th to 7th October 2025

Project coordinator: David Sanchez

Site supervisor: Beth Tucker

Site code: GRF 21/162

Area of site: The site comprised an area of *c.* 5.2ha of which *c.* 4.6ha is to be re-developed with *c.* 0.6ha of existing open space retained.

Summary of results: This phase of the field evaluation revealed modern made ground and levelling for previous developments on the site. One of the nine proposed trenches could not be opened as it was in the location of an in use access road. Two shallow linear features were identified in trench 9 but suspected to be of relatively recent date. On the basis of these results this part of the site is considered to have a low archaeological potential.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate local Museum in due course and the digital records copied to the Archaeology Data Service.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 15.10.25 Steve Preston✓ 15.10.25

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Gorse Ride Regeneration, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire, Phase 2B
An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 21/162b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out within the central portion of Gorse Ride South Regeneration, south of Whittle Close and north of Billing Avenue, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire (SU 7960 6500). (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Neil Jones on behalf Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BN.

Planning consent has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for the demolition of existing houses on the site followed by the construction of 249 replacement houses together with associated access, parking, landscaping, public open space and drainage (Appln. 202133). The consent was subject to a condition (32) that required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site, a field evaluation has been requested by Wokingham Borough Council as advised by Berkshire Archaeology.

This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Linden Ellicott, Archaeology Officer at Berkshire Archaeology and adviser for the Borough Council. This report covers phase 2B of work. Initial work in the eastern half of the site has already been reported on (Ford 2022). The fieldwork was undertaken by Beth Tucker assisted by Camila Carvalho and Josiah Samuel between 6th and 7th October 2025 and the site code is GRF 21/162.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within Finchampstead parish but lies more than 1km north of the parish church and in effect lies on the southern outskirts of greater Wokingham (Fig. 1). It lies within an area of relatively modern housing of c. 1960's date on the north side of Nine Mile Ride (B3430). The site is flat and lies on level ground at a height of approximately 65m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology of most of the site is recorded as

Bagshot Beds (sands, clays, gravel) with some gravel head to the north (BGS 2000). A mixture of sands and silty sands with occasional gravel patches was observed in the trenches. This second phase of trenching took place in the central part of the overall development site.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site is of uncertain form with only a modest range of sites and finds recorded for the vicinity in the Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record (Ford 1987). The site lies on the heathland soils of East Berkshire and whilst these are not noteworthy for prolific sites and finds, recent investigations have recorded Iron Age and Roman settlement (eg Lowe 2013) and several upstanding Bronze Age round barrows are also recorded with a large example *c.* 500m to the south-west which is a Scheduled Monument. Both in the valley of the river Blackwater to the south and in the wider environs of the site, a number of Iron Age iron production sites are recorded (eg; Hardy *et al* 2019; Pine 2003; Platt 2013) with a number of unexcavated iron production sites represented by small slagheaps (Ford 1987, fig. 38).

The first phase of work (Ford 2022) consisted of 17 trenches (Fig. 2), with only modern deposits observed.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date, state of preservation and importance of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development.

Specific research aims of this project were to:

determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
determine if there are any deposits of Prehistoric date on the site;
determine if there are any Iron Age or Roman iron production sites on the site.

It was proposed to dig mechanically 36 trenches under constant archaeological supervision for the whole project, of which the first 17 trenches were to be dug as first phase (phase 1 and 2A; Ford 2022) and 9 trenches were to be dug as the second phase (phase 2B), reported here (Fig. 2). Trenches 9-15, 17 and 19, were each to be 25m long, and between 1.6m and 1.8m wide. A contingency of 40m extra was allowed if required to clarify any results. Any archaeological features or deposits exposed were to be hand cleaned and sufficiently sampled so as to satisfy the project's goals, to an agreed sampling fraction depending on the nature and significance of the feature. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds. 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. The relevant guidelines of the Chartered Institute for Archaeolgists (CIfA 2023a and b) were to be followed.

The potential and significance of any such deposits located was 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.

Results

The project used a JCB type excavator fitted with a 1.6m toothless bucket. The trenches were opened mainly as planned (Fig. 2), except for Trench 14, which was located across a road still in use for site access and could not be opened. Some trenches had to be moved slightly due to the manoeuvring of the machine (Trenches 10, 12 and 19). Trench 11 was relocated to the west from Trench 10 and Trench 17 was re-oriented slightly to avoid an existing service. Trench 9 was shortened.

The trenches ranged in length from 13.70m to 24.60m and in depth from 0.33m to 0.63m. All were 1.6m wide. A test slot was made in Trenches 10 and 11 to confirm interpretation of the natural geology. The spoilheaps were checked for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarised in Appendix 2. A metal detector was used in trenches and over spoilheaps but failed to produce any archaeological finds.

Trench 9 (Figs 2–4; Pls 6–8)

Trench 9 was aligned N-S and was 13.70m long and 0.63m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil (dark grey brown loam), over 0.18m of made ground (light yellow gravel and sand) on top of 0.15m of subsoil/buried topsoil itself overlying natural geology. One modern pit containing broken land drain pieces, and two linear features were seen in this trench. Gully terminus 1 (Pl. 8) and gully 2 were observed, both aligned NW-SE. with a shallow profile and concave base. Both features' edges were diffuse. Hand excavation showed that they had similar fills, respectively 52 and 53, a dark to mid brownish grey sandy silt. Their dimensions varied slightly between 0.36-0.48m wide and 0.05-0.08m deep. They contained no finds. The cut profiles and layout of the features suggest that they could be interpreted as possibly modern features. The trenches showed also other clear modern disturbances at a similar level.

Trench 10 (Fig. 2; Pl. 5)

Trench 10 was aligned N-S and was 21.90m long and 0.53m to 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy at the north end consisted of 0.13m of Tarmac over 0.19m of made ground, a light brownish white gravel and sand, on top of 0.28m of another made ground, a light yellow gravel and sand. The latter overlay natural geology, a reddish yellow sand and gravel with gravel patches. At the south end, the stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of car park surface over 0.13m of made ground, a light yellow gravel and sand overlying 0.25m of a buried topsoil on top of natural geology. A test slot was made at the north end of the trench to confirm the interpretation of the stratigraphy. There were no archaeological features or finds in this trench.

Trench 11 (Fig. 2)

Trench 11 was aligned S–N and was 19.90m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil over 0.14m of made ground, a light yellow gravel and sand overlying natural geology (same as in trench 10). A test slot was made at the north end of the trench to confirm interpretation of the stratigraphy. No archaeological features were recorded, although areas of modern disturbance were observed in the trench, especially at the north end.

Trench 12 (Fig. 2; Pl. 1)

Trench 12 was aligned almost W-E and was 21.80m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.51m of topsoil over 0.16m of subsoil overlying natural geology, a mid greyish brown silty sand. No features were observed and no finds were recovered although a modern service trench (between 5.5m to 8m from the west end) and other irregular modern disturbance were observed in the west part of the trench.

Trench 13 (Fig. 2; Pl. 2)

Trench 13 was aligned W-E and was 24.60m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.38m of topsoil over 0.16m of subsoil overlying natural geology (as in trench 12). No archaeological features were recorded, although a modern service trench was observed along the length of the trench and a modern disturbance at the east end of the trench.

Trench 15 (Figs 2 ; Pl. 3)

Trench 15 was aligned S-N and was 22.50m long and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.36m of topsoil and 0.10m of subsoil overlying natural geology (as in trench 12). No features were observed and no finds were recovered. At the south part of the trench, a rectangular modern disturbance was observed.

Trench 17 (Fig. 2; Pl. 4)

Trench 17 was aligned NNE–SSW and was 20.30m long and 0.43m to 52m deep. The stratigraphy at the NNE end consisted of 0.20m of made ground (dark brown grey silt with gravel) overlying 0.21m of a buried topsoil, above the natural geology. At the SW end, 0.43m of made ground (light yellow gravel and sand) lay above 0.09m of buried topsoil on top of the natural geology (as in trench 12). No features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 19

Trench 19 was aligned E-W and was 17m long and 0.42m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.42m of topsoil directly overlying natural geology, a light reddish brown silty sand. No features were observed and no finds were recovered, although a modern disturbance between 3.20m to 4.80m and a modern wall foundation, 10.80m to 11.60m from west end, were noted.

Finds

No finds were recovered.

Conclusion

Despite the potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site, no deposit nor finds of any archaeological interest were observed during the evaluation. Areas of modern disturbance, roots and land drain were seen especially at north end of trench 11-12 and 19. In trench 9, two possible gullies were observed and investigated but are considered more likely to be modern superficial features. This part of the site can be considered to have a low archaeological potential.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Orientation*	*Comment*
9	13.70	2.00	0.63	N-S	0–0.29m topsoil; 0.29-0.47m made ground; 0.47-0.62m subsoil/ buried topsoil; 0.62m+ natural geology. **[Pls 6–8]**, Features 1-2
10	21.90	2.00	0.60 at N, 0.53 at S	N-S	At North end, 0–0.13m tarmac; 0.13-0.32m made ground; 0.32-0.60m made ground; 0.60m+ natural geology. **[Pl. 5]** At South end, 0-0.10m carpark surface; 0.10-0.23m made ground; 0.23-0.48m buried topsoil, 0.48m+ natural geology.
11	19.90	2.00	0.33	S-N	0–0.15m topsoil; 0.15-0.29m made ground; 0.29m+ natural geology.
12	21.80	2.00	0.54	W-E	0–0.35m topsoil; 0.35-0.51m subsoil; 0-51m+ natural geology. **[Pl. 1]**
13	24.60	2.00	0.54	W-E	0–0.38m topsoil; 0.38-0.54m subsoil; 0-54m+ natural geology. **[Pl. 2]**
14					Not excavated
15	22.50	2.00	0.51	S-N	0–0.36m topsoil; 0.36-0.49m subsoil; 0-49m+ natural geology. **[Pl. 3]**
17	20.30	2.00	0.43 at NE, 0.52 at SW	NE-SW	At NE end, 0–0.20m made ground/levelling; 0.20-0.41m buried topsoil; 0-41m+ natural geology.**[Pl. 4]** At SW end, 0–0.43m made ground; 0.43-0.52m buried topsoil; 0-52m+ natural geology.
19	17.00	2.00	0.42	E-W	0–0.42m topsoil; 42m+ natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
All		50	Topsoil		
All		51	Subsoil		
9	1	52	Gully Terminus	undated	
9	2	53	Gully	undated	

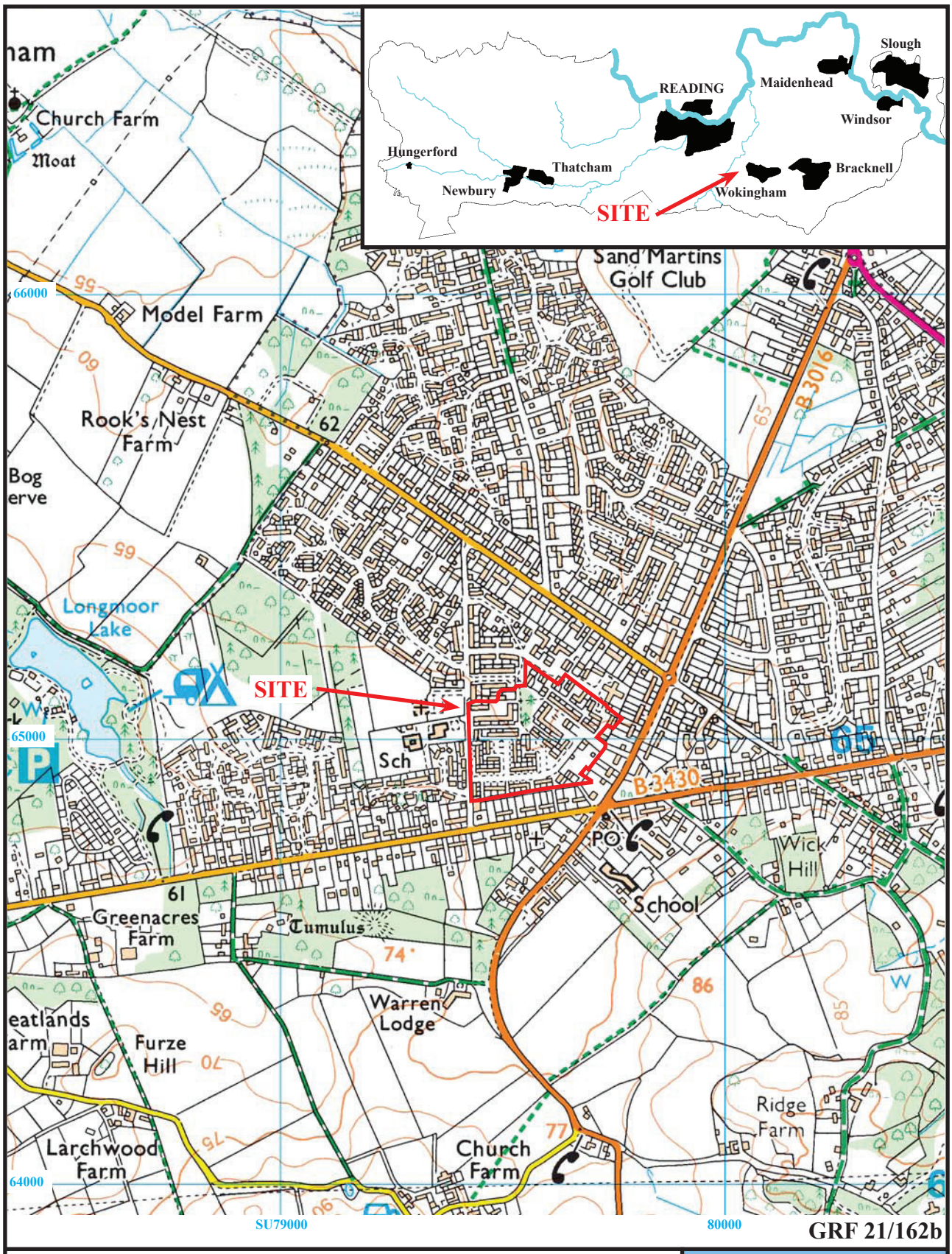

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Figure 1. Location of site within Finchampstead, Wokingham and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of previously excavated trenches (green), current phase of trenching (red).

0 100m

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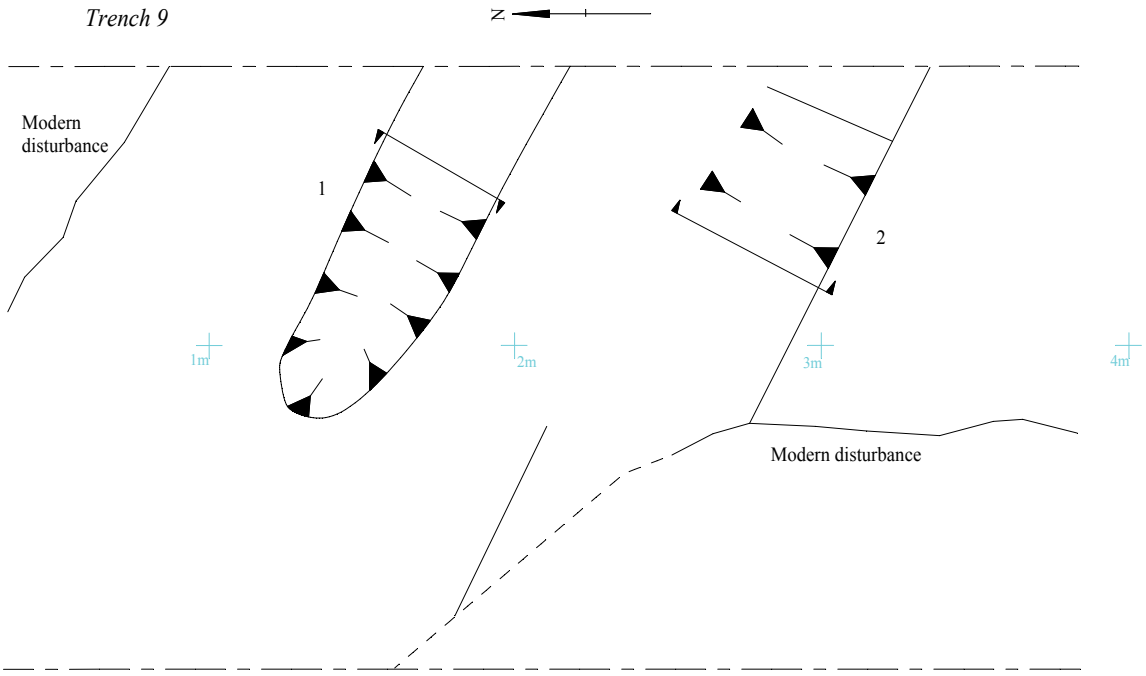

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Figure 3. Plan of trench 9

0 1m

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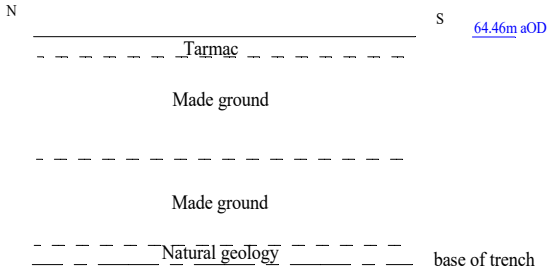
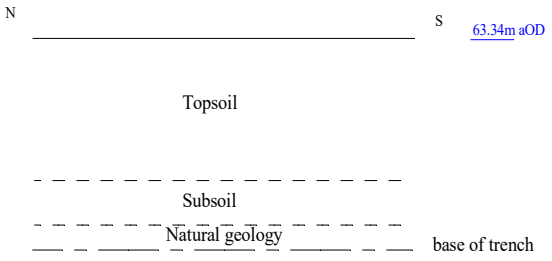
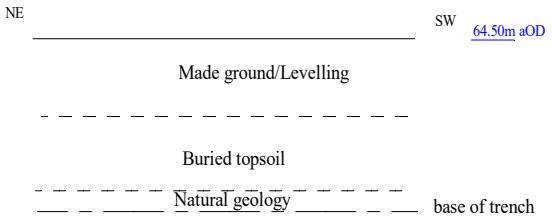
Representative section in trench 10



Representative section in trench 13



Representative section in trench 17



Gullies section in trench 9

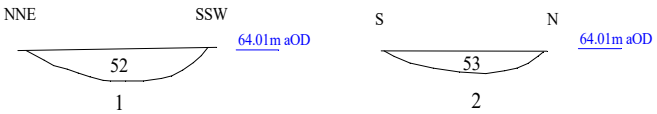


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Figure 4. Sections.

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Plate 1. Trench 12, looking north-west.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 2. Trench 13, looking east.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 3. Trench 15, looking north.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

Plate 4. Trench 17, looking south-west.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 10, looking north.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 6. Trench 9, looking south-west.
Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 7. Trench 9 section, looking west.
Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 8. Possible gully terminus 1, looking south-east.
Scale: 0.5m.

Gorse Ride South Regeneration, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire, Phase 2B, 2025
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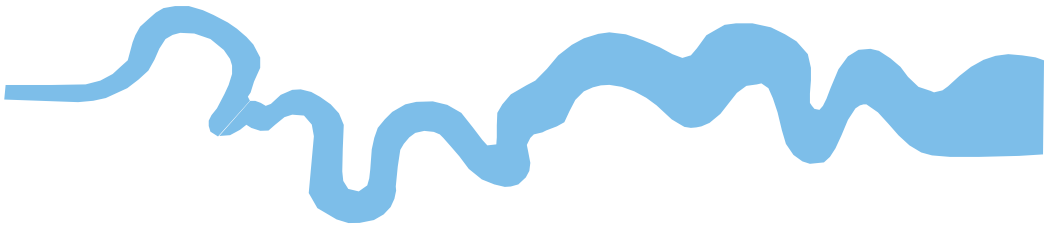
Plates 5 - 8.

THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern	AD 1901
Victorian	AD 1837
Post Medieval	AD 1500
Medieval	AD 1066
Saxon	AD 410
Roman	AD 43 AD 1/1 BC
Iron Age: Late	100 BC
Iron Age: Middle	400 BC
Iron Age: Early	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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