



Kennetholme Farm, Brimpton Road, Midgham, West Berkshire

Interim Statement of Results: Phase 1



**KENNETHOLME FARM, BRIMPTON ROAD,
MIDGHAM, WEST BERKSHIRE**

INTERIM STATEMENT OF RESULTS: PHASE 1

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was appointed by Grundons Waste Management Ltd, to undertake a phased programme of archaeological strip, map and recording on land that has been granted planning permission (05/00152/MINMAJ) by West Berkshire Council for the extraction of sand and gravel on land at Kennetholme Farm, Brimpton Road, Midgham, West Berkshire (hereafter “the Site”) centred on National Grid Reference 454571 166111 (**Figure 1**).

This report covers the results of archaeological fieldwork covering an area of 3.7 hectares which lies within the western half of the Site (hereafter “Phase 1”). A further programme of archaeological fieldwork will need to be undertaken in advance of further extraction to the east of Phase 1.

This phase of fieldwork revealed a series of multi-period ditches and gullies ranging in date from the prehistoric to modern period. Of note were a small number of gullies forming an enclosure, which was overlain by peat and tufaceous deposits. These peats and tufaceous layers, commonly associated with floodplain meadows, were proven to pre-date the Roman period. Of particular significance though was the line of the Roman Road from Silchester to Cirencester (**Figure 2**), flanked on either side by a re-cut ditch (**Plate 3**) running north-west to south-east across the eastern side of the Site. An undated remnant of field system, possibly of medieval date, aligned roughly north to south was located on the raised gravel terrace at the western end of the Site. A small number of undated features, including a cluster of pits, postholes and other isolated features were also encountered.

Evidence was recorded from the Site that could suggest that the prehistoric environmental landscape may have been divided into three distinct habitats. The north of the Site was characterised by a raised gravel terrace, suitable for farming. This overlooked an area of floodplain meadow overlying a broad palaeochannel running from east to west across the Site. To the south of the floodplain meadow a deposition of riverine sandbank, of probable holocene date, demarcates an earlier course followed by the River Kennet which currently flows west to east immediately to the south of Site.

This recent fieldwork also identified evidence of a pre-Roman division of the landscape on the northern raised gravel terrace. A Roman road was then cut through the peat and tufa. The final phase of activity on the Site comprised an undated field system probably of a medieval date which exploited the fertile ground adjacent to the floodplain meadow.

The monitoring and excavation works were carried out between May and August 2009.

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Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Stewart Mitchell of S Grundon (Ewelme) for his co-operation and assistance in the successful completion of this project. Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Heritage Service monitored the fieldwork and his help during the course of the fieldwork is gratefully acknowledged.

The project was managed by Caroline Budd on behalf of Wessex Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jonathan Smith, Steve Thompson, Neil Fitzpatrick, Mark Stewart, Chloe Hunnisett, Andy Sole, Tom Wells, Catrin Matthews, Piotr Brozyna, Ben Cullen, John Cullen and Chris Johnson. The report was compiled by Jonathan Smith with the illustrations prepared by Linda Coleman and Will Foster. The monolith samples were processed by David Norcott and the wood was examined by Catherine Barnett. Finds were assessed by Lorraine Mephram.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by S Grundon (Ewelme) Ltd to conduct an archaeological strip, map and record work on land at Kennetholme Farm, Brimpton Road, Midgham, West Berkshire, National Grid Reference 454571 166111, hereafter referred to as 'the Site' (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 It was agreed in consultation with Duncan Coe of West Berkshire County Council that a programme of archaeologically monitored strip, map and record was required on the areas to the west of Brimpton Road, including Phase 1.

1.1.3 The methodology used in the archaeological fieldwork is set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation and Recording (Wessex Archaeology 2009), which was approved by the West Berkshire Heritage Service, prior to the commencement of the first stage of works.

1.1.4 This report presents the interim results of the final strip and record fieldwork, which was carried out on Phase 1, due for extraction. This comprises approximately 3.7 hectares all of which lie within the western section of the Site. The fieldwork was carried out between May and August 2009.

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 The area designated as Phase 1 was located to the east of the existing quarrying activity. It lies to the west of the 2002 evaluation and in the western half of the 1988 evaluation, see (**Figure 1**).

1.2.2 The investigated area measured approximately 3.7ha, which lay at a maximum height 63.656m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). Phase 1 is bounded to the north by the Kennet and Avon Canal and to the east by Brimpton Road. The western boundary of Phase 1 is formed by Aldershot Water, which connects the River Kennet to the Kennet and Avon Canal. The River Kennet forms the southern boundary of the Phase 1 area.

1.2.3 The land in Phase 1 slopes gently from the north down toward the edge of a palaeochannel running from east to west across the Phase 1 area. This channel has shallow sloping edges at the western boundary of Site which become increasingly steeply defined toward the centre and eastern boundary of the Phase 1 area. South of the Palaeochannel is characterised by a raised bank of sand indicating an earlier course of the River Kennet. Gravel was evident across the whole of the Phase 1 area.

- 1.2.4 Another smaller palaeochannel ran from the northern boundary down to the south to meet the larger east west palaeochannel. This was extracted down to the gravels by machine under archaeological supervision.
- 1.2.5 The underlying geology of gravels, palaeochannels (earlier river courses) which were overlain by varying depths of alluvial, tufaceous and peat deposits. Peat deposits were also identified within the old river channels, which are known to cross the Site (Wessex Archaeology, 1988).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The Kennet Valley in the vicinity of Newbury is renowned for Mesolithic remains. A number of Mesolithic sites have been investigated in the area in recent years including those at Thatcham, Chamberhouse Farm and Greenham Farm/ Faraday Road, Newbury (Healy *et al*, 1992; Lobb and Rose 1996; Ellis *et al* 2003).
- 2.1.2 The location of these sites appears to be linked to small clearings in the woods on the edge of gravel terraces overlooking the floodplains and it has been suggested that the area may have acted as a natural route way to the chalklands in the west and to the East Anglian and Wealden sites (Wessex Archaeology 1996). Such sites represent either semi-permanent settlements or seasonal camps of people exploiting the rich resources of the river valley.
- 2.1.3 The West Berkshire Historic Environment Record records the finding of Mesolithic flints in Aldershot Water on the western edge of the Site. Mesolithic material has also been found in the fields to the east of the Site as chance finds during earlier gravel extraction. Mesolithic material comprising a small concentration of burnt and worked flint on the edge of the gravel terrace was revealed during an archaeological evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 1986) to the east of the Site (**Figure 1**). The evidence suggested that this may be the location of a Mesolithic site (**Figure 1**). Further evaluation of the area to the east of the Site was undertaken in 2002 (WA 2002), but this was unable to identify any Mesolithic material or evidence. The evaluation was only able to identify a total of twenty three linear features and a brick lined soak away all of modern origin.
- 2.1.4 An archaeological evaluation of the Site was undertaken by Wessex Archaeology in 1988 (Wessex Archaeology 1988). The evaluation comprised the excavation of 24 trenches of between 10m and 20m in length (**Trenches A to Z: Figure 1**).
- 2.1.5 The trenches showed the area to contain basically two types of soil profile. A profile containing a number of riverine or wetland deposits predominated over most of the area. In the north-east corner of the Phase 1 area, a profile of topsoil overlying gravel was found. The depths of soil overlying gravel varied from 0.25m to 0.35m in the eastern part of the Site (Trenches U – W) to over 1m on the floodplain near to the River Kennet.

- 2.1.6 In the area of the evaluation directly relevant to this stage of Phase 1 work (Trenches G to Q) topsoil up to 25 cm in depth was seen to overlie a layer of granular tufa c.10cm to 25cm thick. In all cases the base of the tufa was marked by a thin band of mineral-stained black clay. Below this was dark grey clayey alluvial silt with some admixture of gravel in its lower levels. In trenches excavated into old streams or river courses, deposits of dark brown peat were found between the black clay and the basal layer of the alluvium. The peat ranged in depth from c.4cm in Trench H to c.54cm in Trench L.
- 2.1.7 Only two features were recorded within these trenches. In Trench H a shallow 0.25m deep gully, directly below the topsoil, contained no artefactual material. In Trench P the possible remains of the Roman road were identified.
- 2.1.8 Later prehistoric and Roman material is known from the area around Midgham Bridge. An Iron Age shale bracelet was found in Midgham marsh to the north of the railway and evidence of both Iron Age and Roman occupation has been recorded in a gravel pit to the south of the River Kennet.
- 2.1.9 The Roman road from Silchester to Cirencester was known to cross the Site (**Figure 1**) and is clearly identifiable on aerial photographs. A number of trenches (Trenches B, F and P) in the 1988 evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 1988) were able to identify the Roman road. The road consisted of a bank of loose pale sandy gravel, directly below the topsoil, nearly 14m wide and up to 0.44m thick resting directly in Trench F on the peaty fill of an old river channel and in Trench P directly on the natural gravel. In none of the trenches were found any features which may have been the flanking ditches although slight depressions were recorded on at least one side of the bank.
- 2.1.10 A comprehensive survey of the archaeological sites of the Lower Kennet Valley was carried out by Wessex Archaeology (Lobb and Rose,1996), which identified the area as having the potential to contain an abundance of archaeological sites. The potential was considered to be highest for sites of Mesolithic and Iron Age / Romano-British date. The survey also highlighted the lack of understanding of the nature and use of the water meadow throughout the region.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The aim of the fieldwork was to determine as far as possible the significance and quantity of any surviving archaeological remains within the proposed quarry area and to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource by ensuring its preservation by record.
- 3.1.2 All areas of investigation were stripped of topsoil using 360°-tracked mechanical excavators under archaeological supervision. All features, archaeological or otherwise were recorded in plan using a Leica GPS 1200 and tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

- 3.1.3 All fieldwork was conducted in compliance with the methodology set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation and Recording (Wessex Archaeology 2009) and standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations*, and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2009).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Deposits

- 4.1.1 The upper deposits varied slightly across the Phase 1 area. The whole Phase 1 area was covered in dark Greyish brown loam topsoil (deposit **1**). This varied in depth from 0.33m to 0.49m.
- 4.1.2 Beneath the topsoil a layer of tufa (deposit **6, 10, 53, 58, 167, 168** and **170**) covered the whole of Phase 1, excluding an area in the north-west adjacent to the access point. Here modern farming and machinery had truncated all deposits beneath the modern topsoil down to the natural gravels (deposit **2**). Likewise an area of silty sand deposit **235**, following the southern limit of Phase 1, had eroded the peat and tufa deposits away as the sand was deposited by the River Kennet in an earlier channel, probably during the Holocene period. The thickness of the deposit of tufa varied greatly across the Site ranging from 0.19m to 0.67m being most concentrated over the palaeochannel running across Phase 1 from east to west.
- 4.1.3 Below the tufa a layer of very dark reddish brown peat was observed (deposit **11, 59** and **171**). This was between 0.09m and 0.27m thick.
- 4.1.4 Over the palaeochannel, running east to west across Phase 1, a second layer of peat was observed (deposit **12**). It was reddish brown in colour and between 0.25m to 0.58m in thickness.
- 4.1.5 A patch of brick earth was observed beneath the peat and tufa and overlying the natural gravels. It is of note that this lay exclusively under a patch of the Romano-British road deposit **242**, although this could have been coincidental.
- 4.1.6 As well as the aforementioned palaeochannel running east to west across Phase 1, a smaller palaeochannel was encountered aligned roughly north to south. This ran from the centre of the northern limit of site running south for some 53m and was approximately 27m at its widest extent, tapering down to a point. This was extracted under archaeological supervision down to the natural gravels **2** due to its relatively shallow nature.

4.1.7 Along the southern edge of the Phase 1 area, a bank of light yellow brown silty sand (deposit **85**) demarcated an earlier route of the River Kennet. This had an irregular edge but in places extended some 21m north from the southern boundary of Phase 1. It lay immediately below the topsoil and an intervention through it ascertained that it was 0.59m thick and lay on top of natural gravels (**2**).

4.1.8 The natural geology (deposit **2**) comprised moderately sorted sub-angular and rounded gravels measuring from 25mm to 85mm.

4.2 General

4.2.1 The fieldwork identified a number of ditches and gullies mostly dated as post Romano-British. A small selection could be dated as prehistoric including a small series of gullies forming an enclosure. A Romano-British road flanked by ditches was also encountered. Further to these a small number of undated features, including a cluster of pits, postholes and other isolated features, were identified.

4.2.2 During the Phase 1 fieldwork 31 features were identified which comprised ditches and gullies, a Romano-British road, pits, postholes and tree throw holes (**Figure 2**). A further five features were investigated all of which proved to be modern in date or of natural origin. The gullies were all prehistoric as were two of the postholes. The road and its two flanking re-cut ditches were Romano-British. The pits and remaining ditches were all undated but a medieval date seems probable given their scale, alignment and the nature of the ditch deposits. None of the tree throw holes were dated. These features can be quantified as follows:

- Six prehistoric gullies, (features **38, 39, 186, 189, 219** and **238**).
- Two prehistoric postholes, (features **117** and **193**).
- One possible pit dated as prehistoric (feature **119 (Plate 2)**).
- One Romano-British road layer, (feature **242**) flanked either side by Romano-British re-cut ditches (features **223 (Plate 3)** and **227**).
- Two Undated ditches forming a field system possibly of a medieval date (features **42** and **37**).
- Four pits, all undated but possibly medieval and related to the field system (features **23, 25, 27** and **29**).
- Two postholes undated but also possibly medieval and related to the field system (features **21** and **51**).

- Fourteen undated tree throw holes (features **33, 45, 47, 49, 68, 70, 99, 101, 121, 129, 154, 212, 214, 216**).
- Five features of modern or natural origin (features **66, 123, 137, 207, 221**).

4.3 Prehistoric

- 4.3.1 At the north-western limit of Phase 1 two gullies (**38** and **39**) were aligned roughly east-west, curving slightly to the north, with a gap of approximately 6.80m between them. Both were about 0.20m to 0.30m in width and 0.07m to 0.08m in depth. Gully **38** was around 8m in length, whilst **39** was about 12m long. Both were underlying the tufa and peat, indicating a prehistoric date. A small feature running from north-east to south-west in-between **38** and **39** was investigated and found to be geological in origin.
- 4.3.2 Approximately 76m to the east-north-east of **38**, was gully **219**, aligned north-east to south-west. It was approximately 0.30m wide and 0.18m to 0.20m in depth. It measured 7.25m in length and was overlain by the peat and tufa. Given the similarity in dimensions and alignment to the other gullies overlain by the same deposits it is possible that they were contemporary. Similarly posthole **117**, 0.12m to the north of the north-eastern terminus of gully **219**, is considered to be related to the gullies given that it underlies the peat and is situated in close proximity to **219**.
- 4.3.3 Located approximately 40m to the east-north-east of gully **219** a small enclosure defined by three gullies was partially obscured by the northern limit of the Phase 1 area. Gully **189** protruded some 3.35m from the baulk in a north-west to south-east alignment and was 0.52m wide with a depth of 0.18m. Some 3.5m to the south-east of **189**, gully **186** ran east to west for 4.65m. It was 0.55m wide and had a depth of 0.26m. Gully 238, 0.55m north-east of **186**, (**Section 1, Figure 3**) ran north-east to south-west for 5.35m at which point it was obscured by the northern edge of the Site. Approximately 0.15m east of gully terminus **189** an elongated posthole (feature **193**) measuring 0.40m long, with a width of 0.25m and a depth of 0.10m was also recorded. All of these features were also covered by the peat and tufa. These deposits are cut by the Romano-British features discussed below and so should probably be considered as prehistoric.
- 4.3.4 A shallow pit was identified in an isolated position approximately 45m south-west of enclosure gully **186**. It appeared to lie under the peat and tufa and contained a fill which was not derived from the surrounding peat. It contained object **2**(**Plate 2**), which comprised a series of large wood fragments, which may have originally formed one long, plank-like piece (total 0.82m x 0.28m). A mature branch piece with the heel of attachment still present was also observed. No signs of working were found on either piece of wood, although it should be noted that the outer surfaces of the wooden objects were soft, abraded and showed signs of insect and root penetration. Both the main body and the branch piece were identified as *Salix* sp. (willow). Whilst it is possible that this feature and its contents are natural, it is also feasible that the wood functioned as part of a path / causeway although

this remains unclear due to the level of truncation on the raised gravel terrace.

4.4 Romano-British

- 4.4.1 A remnant of Romano-British road deposit was identified (**242**) stretching intermittently across the Phase 1 area. It was first detected in the baulk of the northern edge of the Site overlying the peat and tufa deposits. In this oblique section, where it was most clearly visible, it had a maximum depth of 0.15m and a width of 13.80m. However, due to the angle of the intervention this measurement is of limited value. A second intervention through **242** (**Section 2, Figures 2 and 3**) gave a far more accurate insight into the width of the road surface where it measured 8.90m. Although it should be noted that the edges of the deposit at this point were extremely diffuse. The edges from which the maximum depth of the deposit of 0.21m was measured were also very diffuse. A third intervention through **242** was attempted at the eastern edge of Phase 1 but at this point the truncation was so bad and the edges of the road so diffuse that the depth of the deposit was 0.11m and the full width of the deposit, although visible in plan at approximately 5m was not fully captured in section, appearing only as lenses covering a width of 5.92m. (**Section 2, Figure 3**).
- 4.4.2 The Romano-British road deposit **242** was flanked on either side by parallel ditches **223** and **227**. Both of these clearly cut the peat and tufa deposits and both had been re-cut.
- 4.4.3 The southern flanking ditch **223** (**Plate 3**) appeared to be segmented due to truncation but stretched intermittently across Phase 1. It ran from the centre of the northern edge of Phase 1, on a north-west to south-east alignment, covering a distance of approximately 195m before exiting at the eastern limit of the Phase 1 area. Its width was approximately 1.30m to 1.48m and the depth was approximately 0.26m to 0.35m. Its re-cut **225** was visible in all the interventions and was approximately 0.54m to 1.03m in width and 0.13m to 0.28m in depth. Ditch fill **174** contained six sherds of Romano-British coarse greyware pottery, probably from a single jar of 1st or 2nd century AD date.
- 4.4.4 The northern flanking ditch **227** was significantly more truncated than its southern counterpart. As a result it was even more segmented and the re-cut had, in places, been completely lost to truncation. Although segmented by modern farming it was clear that like **223**, **227** had in antiquity been a single continuous ditch. It had run parallel with Romano-British road deposit **242** across the north-eastern edge of the Phase 1 area covering a distance of approximately 117m. Its width was approximately 2.98m and the depth was approximately 0.15m. Its re-cut **229** only survived in two interventions and was approximately 1.20m to 1.30m wide and 0.09 to 0.12m in depth.

4.5 Medieval

- 4.5.1** Upon the raised gravel terrace at the north-western end of the Phase 1 area, the remnants of a field system were identified. This consisted of two ditches (features **37** and **42**) with a possible third (feature **33**) which was found, upon further investigation and further stripping, to be a tree throw hole.
- 4.5.2** Ditch **37** ran north-east to south-west for 12.85m. It seems likely that it originally stretched further but given the level of truncation by modern farming much of this ditch seems likely to have been lost. It was approximately 0.88m to 1.08m wide and 0.10m to 0.18 deep.
- 4.5.3** Approximately 23m to the south-east, Ditch **42** was identified. This also ran north-east to south-west for some 13.45m before turning at a right-angle and running approximately 2m north-west. Like Ditch **37**, this feature appears to have been truncated away rather than there having been a terminal here. It was approximately 1.22m to 1.60m wide and 0.12m to 0.19m deep.
- 4.5.4** Two postholes (features **21** and **51**) may have been related to the field system given the nature of their fills, which were similar to those in **37** and **42**, and their locations. Posthole **21** was situated approximately 4.5m west of Ditch **37** and was elongated roughly north-east to south-west. It was 0.92m long, 0.50m wide and 0.20m deep. Posthole **51** is situated 0.44m west of ditch **42**. It had a diameter of 0.42m and was 0.09m deep.
- 4.5.5** A cluster of pits (features **23**, **25**, **27** and **29**) should also be considered as contemporary with the field system given their similar fills and close proximity to Ditches **37** and **42**. They were both approximately 1m to 1.5m in diameter and 0.13m to 0.26m in depth.
- 4.5.6** It is important to note that other than the residual flint in fill **44** (fill of field system Ditch **42**), no datable evidence was retrieved from any of the features discussed as being of probable medieval date. The proposed dating is based solely upon the dimensions of the ditches and the nature of the fills all of which are more in keeping with medieval methods of farming than modern day agriculture. A post-medieval/modern date is however also possible.

4.6 Post-medieval/modern

- 4.6.1** At the southern limit of the Phase 1 area cutting the riverine sandbank deposit **235** which demarcated an earlier course of the River Kennet, an undated Ditch **203** was observed to cut shallow pit **207** (group feature **231**). Given the ditch's course into the existing river, its steep sided nature and the sterile fills in **207**, it seems most likely that this is a modern soak-away.

4.7 Undated

- 4.7.1 Fourteen undated tree throw holes were excavated as a sample of the 88 identified on the Site (features **33, 45, 47, 49, 68, 70, 99, 101, 121, 129, 154, 212, 214, 216**). These were generally focused from north to south across the centre of the Phase 1 area and across the probable medieval field system in the north western corner. The more elongated of these features ranged in size from 1.05m to 2.90m in length and 0.88m to 1.82m in width. Their depth was between 0.14m and 0.40m. Others were more circular in plan. Their size ranged from 1.40m to 2.50m in diameter and 0.29m to 0.60m in depth. No anthropogenic evidence was retrieved from any of the tree throw holes, nor was there any evidence of burning.
- 4.7.2 Three of these features (**212, 214** and **216**), were initially difficult to interpret in plan, **216** in particular being interpreted as a possible penannular structure and so all three were excavated accordingly. Further investigation revealed that they were in fact just tree throw holes; an interpretation supported their shallow nature, sterile mixed deposits, the lack of any anthropogenic components and their diffuse edges which exhibited extensive evidence of bioturbation.
- 4.7.3 Five other features (**66, 123, 137, 217** and **221**,) were investigated which were initially interpreted in plan as being potentially archaeological in nature. However, further investigation revealed they were natural or geological features which were probably created by water activity in the floodplain meadows or palaeochannels.

5 FINDS

- 5.1.1 A very few finds were recovered during the fieldwork, comprising a single prehistoric flint flake; a small, abraded fragment of animal bone, unidentifiable to species; six sherds of Romano-British coarse greyware pottery, probably from a single jar of 1st or 2nd century AD date; and a modern roof tile (of 'double Roman' type), stamped with the maker's mark of Majors of Bridgwater. These finds are summarised in Table 1.
- 5.1.2 Given the small quantity of finds, retention for long-term curation is not warranted, and the assemblage could be targeted for discard prior to archive deposition.

Table 1: All finds by context (number / weight in grammes)

CBM = ceramic building material)

CONTEXT	ANIMAL BONE	CBM	FLINT	POTTERY
044			1/11	
174	1/2			6/76
UNSTRAT.		1/338		
TOTAL	1/2	1/338	1/11	6/76

6 PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

6.1 Sediments

- 6.1.1 Three monolith samples were taken from three sequences on the Phase 1 area. All were through alluvial or fluvial sequences, two through peat and tufaceous deposits and one through fluvial sands and gravels (see **Table 2**).
- 6.1.2 A desktop review of the samples has been undertaken, which involved examination of the section drawings, photographs and sample sheets
- 6.1.3 Monolith <1> sampled a pale yellowish tufaceous layer (c.0.2m) which overlay a thin (0.05m) humified organic peaty layer. This in turn overlay a greyish brown clay which may represent a buried land surface. The whole sequence directly underlies the modern soil and is likely to be disturbed by rooting and other bioturbation.
- 6.1.4 Monolith <2> sampled a much thicker tufa / peat sequence, with c.0.6m of tufaceous material overlying an apparently well preserved peat of up to 0.3m thickness. This directly overlay gravels of probable Pleistocene date.
- 6.1.5 Monolith <3> sampled a sandy gravel sequence directly underlying modern topsoil. This likely end-Pleistocene fluvial deposit represents a gravel eyot or high-point; a raised area in the underlying inherited Devensian topography.
- 6.1.6 Despite their relatively shallow depth it is possible that the sequences in samples <1> and <2> may be of considerable antiquity, possibly Early Holocene, as are similar (albeit deeper) sequences from other sites known from the Kennet Valley (Chisham 2004).

Table 2: Sediment Profile Summary

MONOLITH/ CORE SAMPLE NO.	DEPTH	CONTEXT	UNIT OR SUMMARY DESCRIPTION
1	0.5m	1, 6, 7, 9	Tufa / peat sequence
2	1m	53, 58, 59	Tufa / peat sequence
3	1m	1, 2, 85	Fluvial sands / gravels

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The archaeological strip, map and record of the Phase 1 area comprised three phases of activity. A number of prehistoric gullies were focused in the north-east of the Site. A Romano-British road flanked by re-cut ditches ran north-west to south-east across the north-east of the Site. Remnants of an undated field system, possibly of medieval date survived at the western end of the raised gravel terrace. Multiple undated tree throw holes covered Phase 1 but were focused from north to south across the centre and also around the field system.

- 7.1.2 However, excluding the tree throw holes, the features had been badly truncated by previous modern activity, particularly those features cutting the peat and tufaceous layers, such as the Romano-British road and probable medieval field system. As a result the features in Phase 1 were consistently shallow, rarely more than 0.30m in depth. Therefore, they are likely to represent only a small fraction of the archaeological resource which originally existed. No firm evidence of any surviving structures was identified during the Phase 1 works.
- 7.1.3 Thus, the recent fieldwork has demonstrated that a low level of prehistoric activity occurred alongside the River Kennet at this point. Also the Roman Road passed through on the route anticipated. Due to the heavy truncation neither the gullies beneath the peat and tufa, or the field system cutting it, can be accurately dated. The heavy truncation and scarcity of artefactual data make interpretation of the archaeology problematic.
- 7.1.4 The field boundaries uncovered are not securely dated and are probably medieval or later; the single flint flake in ditch deposit **44** is undoubtedly residual. Such a field system is to be expected alongside fertile floodplain meadows.

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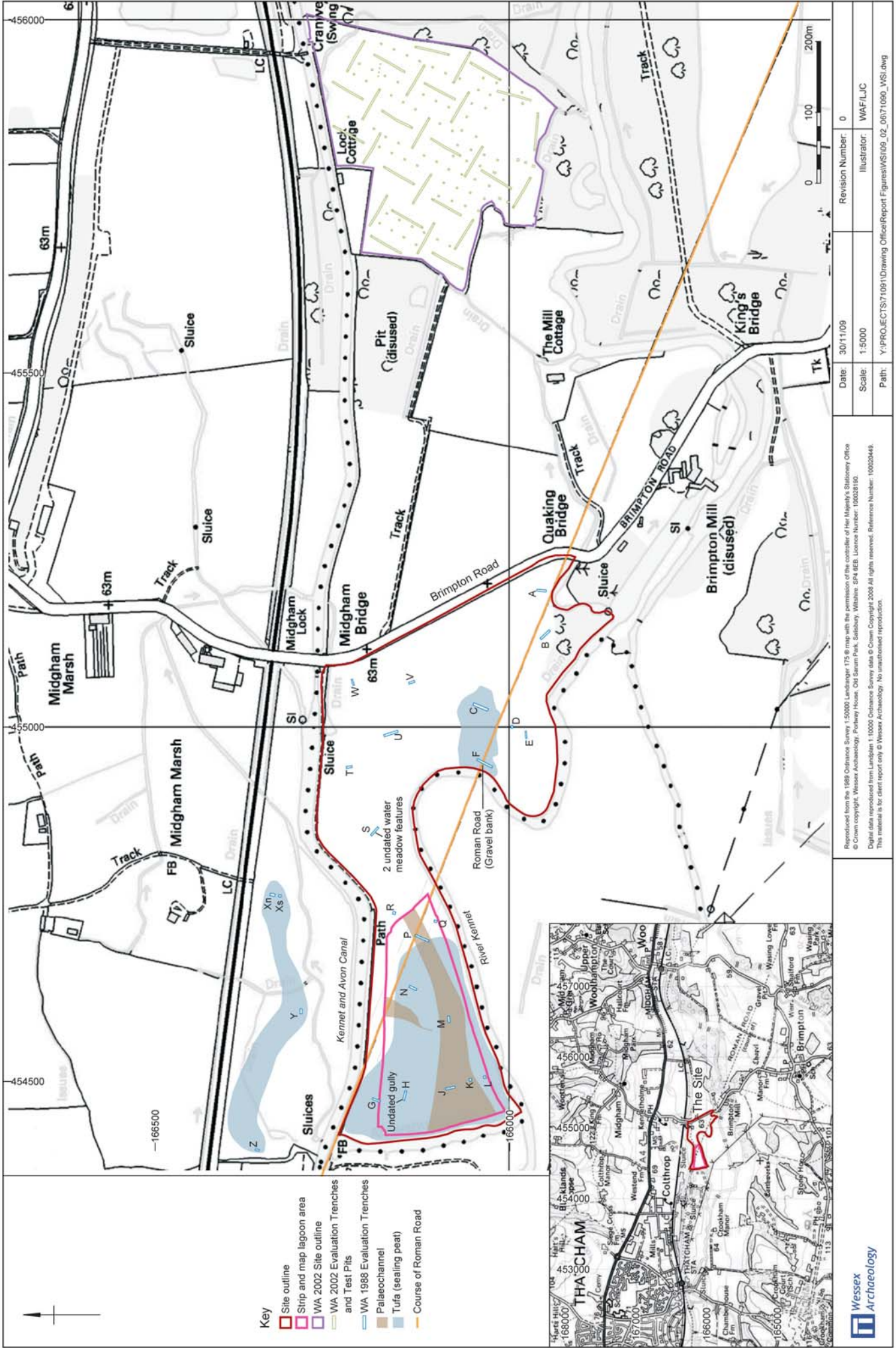
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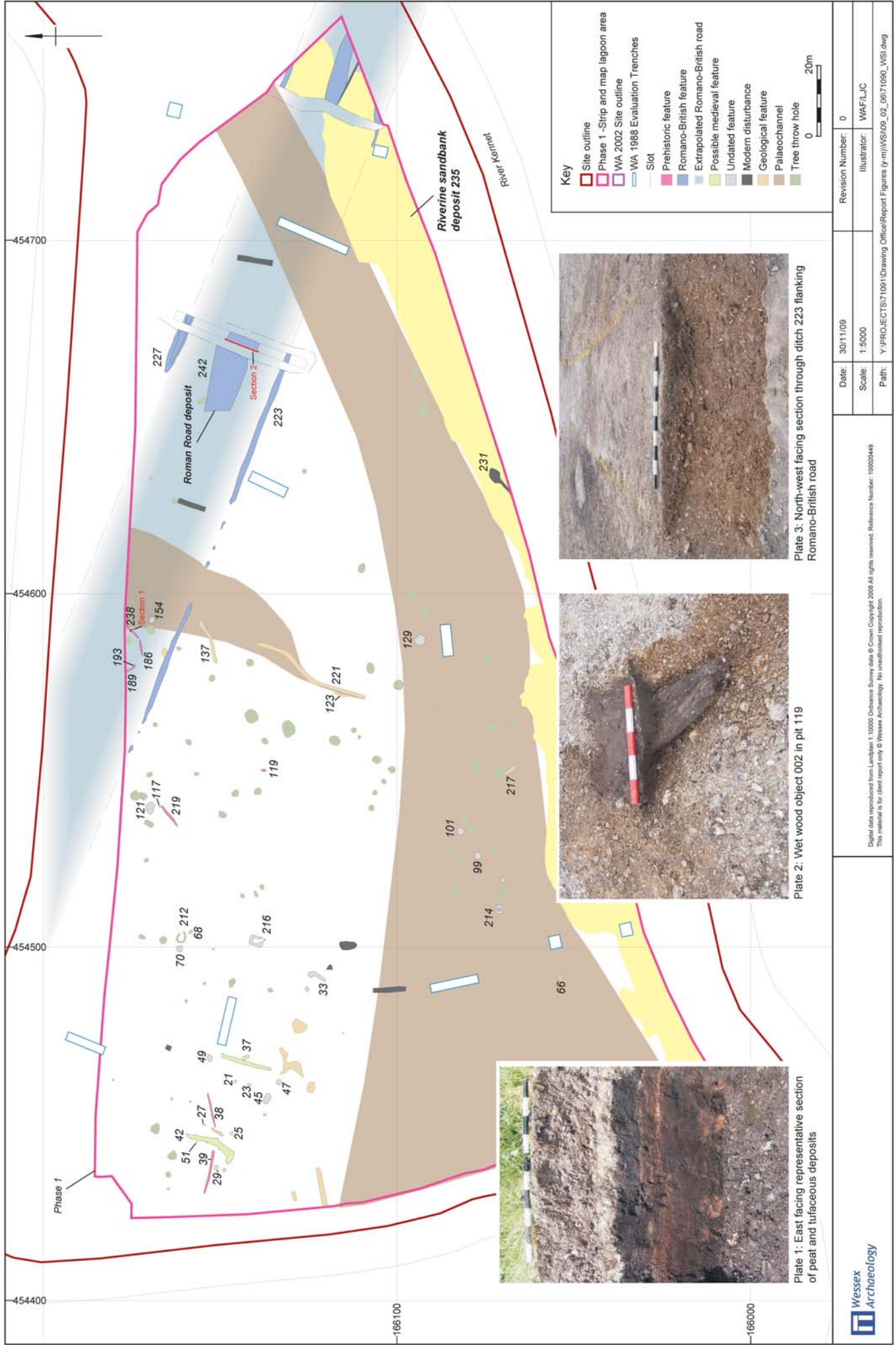
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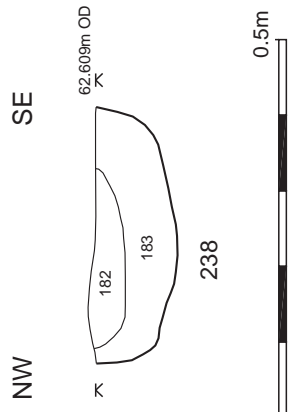


Site location plan showing previous works and Phase 1 strip and map area



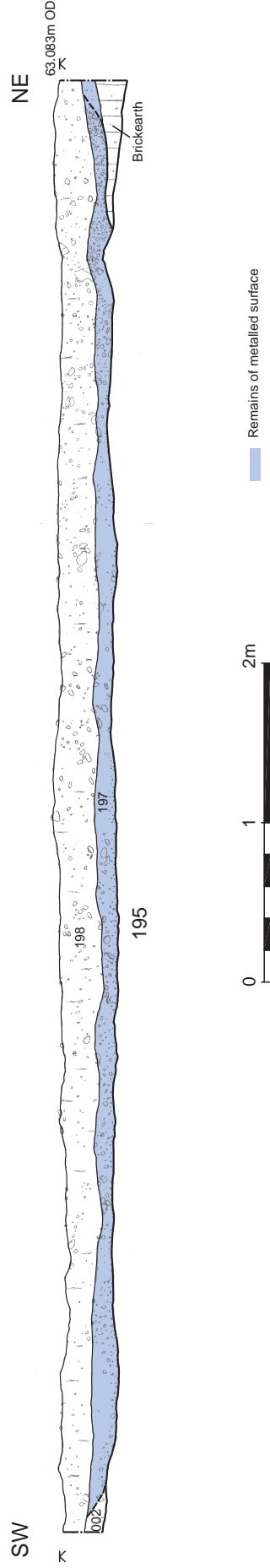
Site plan showing features and preliminary archaeological phasing Figure 2

Section 1



South-west facing section of prehistoric gully

Section 2



South-east facing section of Romano-British road group 242

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