



**WOODRIDGE HOUSE  
SUNNINGDALE, BERKSHIRE**  
Archaeological Evaluation Report



**WOODRIDGE HOUSE, SUNNINGDALE, BERKSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

Prepared for  
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## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1.1 Scope of Document.....</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1.2 Site Description .....</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>1.3 Planning Background .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>2.1 Desk-based assessment .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>2.2 Prehistoric.....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>2.3 Romano-British .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>2.4 Post-medieval.....</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>2.5 Summary of potential .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>EVALUATION METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>3.1 Health and Safety .....</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>3.2 Fieldwork .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>RESULTS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>4.1 Trench .....</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>4.2 Geotechnical Pits .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>FINDS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>ARCHIVE .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>8</b>

## Figures

- 1 Site location map and Trench plan**
- 2 Representative Section**
- 3 Colour Plates**

# **WOODRIDGE HOUSE, SUNNINGDALE, BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

## **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Herring Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land proposed for redevelopment at Woodridge House, Sunningdale, Berkshire (the Site). The Site is centred on NGR 493800 166450 (**Figure 1**).

The evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trench, measuring 27m long by 2m wide and 1.2m deep. The object of the evaluation was to establish the location, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological remains on the Site, in particular the presence or absence of the Roman road known as the Devil's Highway.

No features of archaeological significance were detected in any part of the trench, with the ground in this area appearing to consist of made ground deposits to a depth in excess of 1.2m.

## **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Andrew Herring of Herring Homes Ltd for commissioning the work, and also to thank Fiona Macdonald, Principal Archaeological Advisor to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for monitoring the work. Cornelius Barton carried out the fieldwork with the assistance of Herring Homes staff. Lawrence Pontin managed the project for Wessex Archaeology in London. Cornelius Barton prepared the report with illustrations by Mark Roughley.

# WOODRIDGE HOUSE, SUNNINGDALE, BERKSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Scope of Document

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (London) was commissioned by Andrew Herring of Herring Homes Ltd (the Client) to undertake the archaeological excavation of a single trial trench to identify the location of a Roman road and possible associated features at Woodridge House, Sunningdale (the Site).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was carried out during November 2005.
- 1.1.3 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with a Project Design prepared by Wessex Archaeology (London) (2005.2).

#### 1.2 Site Description

- 1.2.1 The Site, centred on NGR 493800 166450, comprises an approximately rectangular parcel of land of *c.* 0.4 hectares, on the southwest edge of the town of Sunningdale (**Fig. 1**). It is bounded on the northeast side by Fireball Hill, and on the southeast by a lane leading southwest off that road.
- 1.2.2 The Site lies at *c*98m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) on a south-facing slope. At the northeast the ground is almost level, but falls steeply at the rear of the house, on a line corresponding approximately to the northeastern boundary of former brickworks at the southwest (as well as to the edge of the Metropolitan Green Belt). The lower part of the Site is occupied by a large landscaped pond.
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology consists of sands and gravels of the Bracklesham Beds with a localised area of Barton Beds to the northwest. There is Floodplain Gravel in the valley bottom to the southwest and deposits of Plateau Gravel to the east and north (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1:50,000 Solid and Drift Series, Sheet 269 – Windsor). Although the drift geology and the areas free-draining sandy soils create a relatively ‘dry’ landscape with no named watercourses, the underlying London Clay impedes drainage and results in a number of meres, such as Old Windsor Bog to the immediate south of the Site.
- 1.2.4 The infertile soils have directly influenced the natural vegetation and landuse, being unproductive for sustained agriculture, and much of the surrounding landscape, formerly part of Windsor Forest, remains wooded interspersed with small early 19th century fields. The Site was one of a number of properties established in former agricultural land in the early 20th century, remaining wooded until the present house was built in the late 20th century.
- 1.2.5 The Site falls within the Sunninghill landscape character area of the Forested Sands landscape type, as defined within the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants 2003).

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 It is proposed to demolish the existing house and to build a replacement dwelling in its place. The ongoing programme of archaeological work is intended to inform the future planning application.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Desk-based Assessment**

- 2.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Herring Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of Woodridge House, Fireball Hill, Sunningdale, Berkshire. The desk-based assessment set out the archaeological and historical background of the surrounding area and the archaeological potential of the Site itself in detail; it is not proposed to repeat those results here, but a brief summary follows.

### **2.2 Prehistoric (to AD 43)**

- 2.2.1 There are no known prehistoric sites or findspots within the Study Area.

### **2.3 Roman-British (AD 43-410)**

- 2.3.1 The Roman road between London (*Londinium*) and Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*) passed through the Site. Its line has been identified from earthworks at a number of locations, and is preserved in the line of a woodland ride and a length of the Berkshire/Surrey county boundary, as well as in the short length of Fireball Hill that runs from Devenish Road to Woodbridge.

### **2.4 Saxon and medieval (AD 410-1500)**

- 2.4.1 There are no known sites or finds of Saxon or medieval date within the Study Area.

### **2.5 Post-medieval and modern**

- 2.5.1 By 1872-6, the whole landscape had been inclosed. A brickworks, the Fireball Brick Field, comprising a number of buildings, kilns and wells, stood where the southwestern part of the Site now lies. By 1900, the brickworks had disappeared, the only remaining features being two adjacent ponds which survive, landscaped, within the southern end of the Site. The area was redeveloped on several times subsequently, with the present house being built in the latter part of the 20th century.

## **2.6 Summary of potential**

- 2.6.1 The main potential for archaeology within the Site relates to the Roman period, although the undated linear features visible in air photographs could indicate late prehistoric activity. The course of the Roman road is well established at a number of nearby locations from both earthworks and air photographs and indicates that it passes through the Site (see **Fig 1**). The lack of any visible earthworks within the Site may be due to ground levelling and landscaping both during the period of use of the 19th century brickworks and at the time when the present Woodridge House was built.

## **3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Health and Safety**

- 3.1.1 All works were carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992 and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation and regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.
- 3.1.2 Prior to the commencement of the works a risk assessment was carried out and staff were briefed about site health and safety requirements. Copies of the risk assessment and health and safety method statement were supplied to the client for approval.

### **3.2 Fieldwork**

- 3.2.1 All works were conducted in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (1994, revised 2001) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2005 Ref **61251.1**) submitted prior to commencement of the work and approved by the Principal Archaeological Advisor to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 3.2.2 The evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trench measuring 27m by 2m by 1.2m. The trench was located perpendicular to the projected line of the Roman road in order to ensure as far as possible that this feature was located within the Site if present.
- 3.2.3 The trench was excavated to maximum safe depth by a mechanical excavator using a toothless (ditching) bucket under constant archaeological supervision.
- 3.2.4 The trench was located on the ground by tape measurements from boundaries and buildings present on large scale Ordnance Survey maps.
- 3.2.5 All spoil from the excavation was scanned visually for artefacts.
- 3.2.6 A plan and representative section of the trench was recorded by means of drawings at a scale of 1:20 for the plan and 1:10 for sections (**Figure 3**).



- 3.2.7 A digital photographic record of the trench was made.
- 3.2.8 The trench was backfilled at the end of work following consultation with Fiona Macdonald, Principal Archaeological Advisor to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

## **4 RESULTS**

- 4.1.1 No significant archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered from the trench. The mound on which the house stands appears to consist of made-ground deposits to a depth in excess of 1.2m. This material had clearly been imported for landscaping purposes, to fill in the hollows left by the construction and demolition of the brickworks.
- 4.1.2 There were no surviving traces of the Roman road.

### **4.2 Geotechnical pits**

- 4.2.1 Two geotechnical pits were dug in the trench base under the supervision of an archaeologist and a photographic record was made of them. No archaeological remains were present in either pit (see **plate 2**). Both pits were excavated to a depth in excess of 4.5m, but bedrock was not encountered in either pit.

## **5 FINDS**

- 5.1.1 The only artefacts recovered on the Site were of modern origin. These were noted but not retained.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

- 6.1.1 Due to the absence of any suitable deposits, no samples were taken for environmental analysis.

## **7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1.1 No archaeological features were detected by the evaluation. It appears that any archaeological remains on the Site have been destroyed or deeply buried by quarrying and landscaping activities. If any traces of the road survive they must be more than 1.2m below the surface.
- 7.1.2 It was therefore recommended by Fiona Macdonald of RBWM that an archaeological watching brief be conducted on the excavations for foundation pads.

## **8 ARCHIVE**

- 8.1.1 The project archive, consisting of an A4 lever-arch file and a collection of photographs, is currently being held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology at

Unit 113, The Chandlery 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London, under the project number 61251. In due course the archive will be deposited with the appropriate museum.

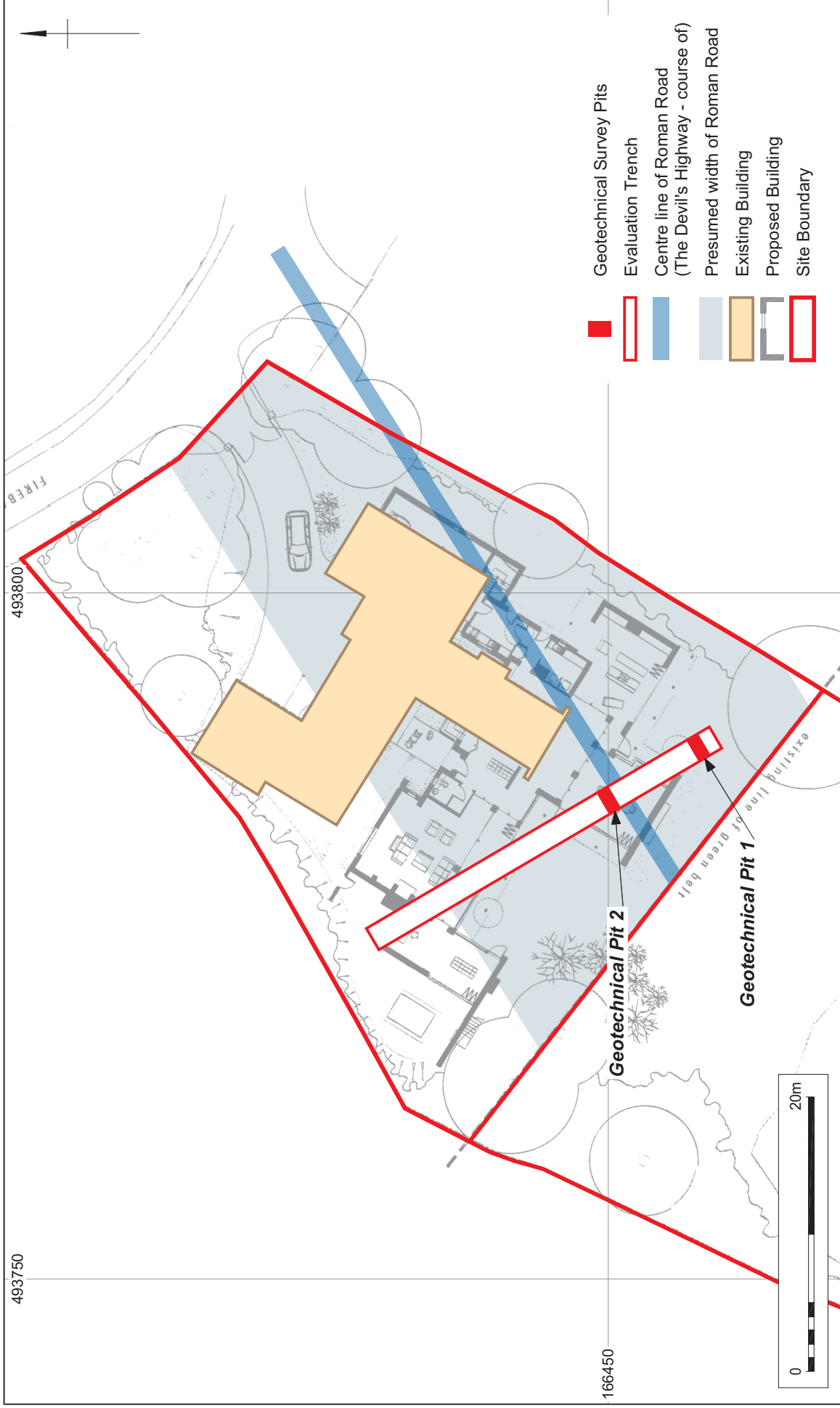
## 9 REFERENCES


Land Use Consultants, 2003, *Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment*, prepared for Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit (October 2003)

Wessex Archaeology 2005.1 *Woodridge Hall, Berkshire: Desk-Based Assessment* Unpublished

Wessex Archaeology 2005.2 *Woodridge Hall, Berkshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation* Unpublished





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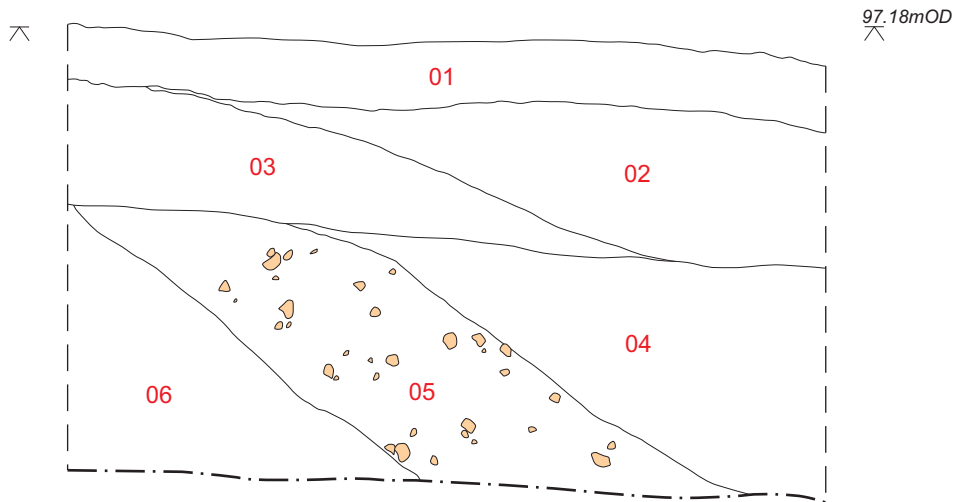
Site Plan showing location of Evaluation Trench & Geotechnical Survey Pits

Figure 2

**Section**

NW

SE



 Sand & Gravel



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Representative section from Evaluation Trench

Figure 3



Plate 1: General view of site, taken from south



Plate 2: Geotechnical Survey Pit 2, taken from north



Plate 3: Illustrated section (Figure 3) from Evaluation Trench, taken from southwest



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