

**Woolhampton Village Hall, Bath Road,
Woolhampton, West Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For J. A. Pye (Oxford) Estates Ltd

by James Lewis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BRW 05/125

January 2008

Summary

Site name: Woolhampton Village Hall, Bath Road, Woolhampton, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 5715 6680

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: December 2005 to January 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: BRW 05/125

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits or artefacts were found. Neither of the phases of construction work (new hall, houses) required extensive or deeply invasive foundations, and topsoil stripping did not expose the archaeologically relevant levels.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

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Report 05/125

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Woolhampton Village Hall, Bath Road, Woolhampton, West Berkshire (SU 5715 6680) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stuart Wright of J. A. Pye (Oxford) Estates Limited, Langford Locks, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 1HZ.

Planning consents (03/02158 and 05/00274) have been granted by West Berkshire Council to demolish and replace the existing village hall and redevelop the site with a new hall and housing. Both consents are subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological works, in this instance taking the form of a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and West Berkshire Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer at West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor between December 2005 and January 2006 and the site code is BRW 05/125.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the edge of the gravel terrace overlooking the floodplain of River Kennet. Immediately to the north is the A4 (Bath Road) and this marks the beginning of a steep rise that forms the north side of the valley (Figs 1 and 2). To the south is the Great Western Railway and just beyond this flows the River Kennet itself. The underlying geology is Valley Gravel (BGS 1946) and the site lies at 60m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location close to the historic medieval core of Woolhampton. The parish church, similar to other settlements in the Kennet Valley, lies on higher ground to the north (Lobb and Rose 1996, 98). It is usually considered that the parish church is located towards the centre of a

medieval settlement and this possibly suggests a dispersed or dynamic settlement pattern for the earlier development of the village. More generally, the site lies within the Kennet Valley which is usually regarded as archaeologically rich with many sites visible from the air (Gates 1975).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This would involve the examination of areas affected by the new construction work for the proposed new garage, in particular ground reduction, landscaping and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs. Spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

The construction method for the new buildings was to comprise piles with ground beams. In order to facilitate this, piling a mat of crushed concrete was required. Following demolition of the existing building, the first activity therefore comprised removal of topsoil for the majority of the site area (Fig. 3). The topsoil removed was *c.* 0.25m deep and was removed using a machine fitted with a ditching bucket. However, this stripping was not sufficient to remove the subsoil on the site to expose the underlying natural geology and no archaeological deposits were visible.

The laying of the piling mat then took place and the piles were inserted. As the levels had been raised by the piling mat, the trenches for the groundbeams which were dug through this mat did not expose the natural geology. As such there were no archaeologically relevant levels exposed.

Finds

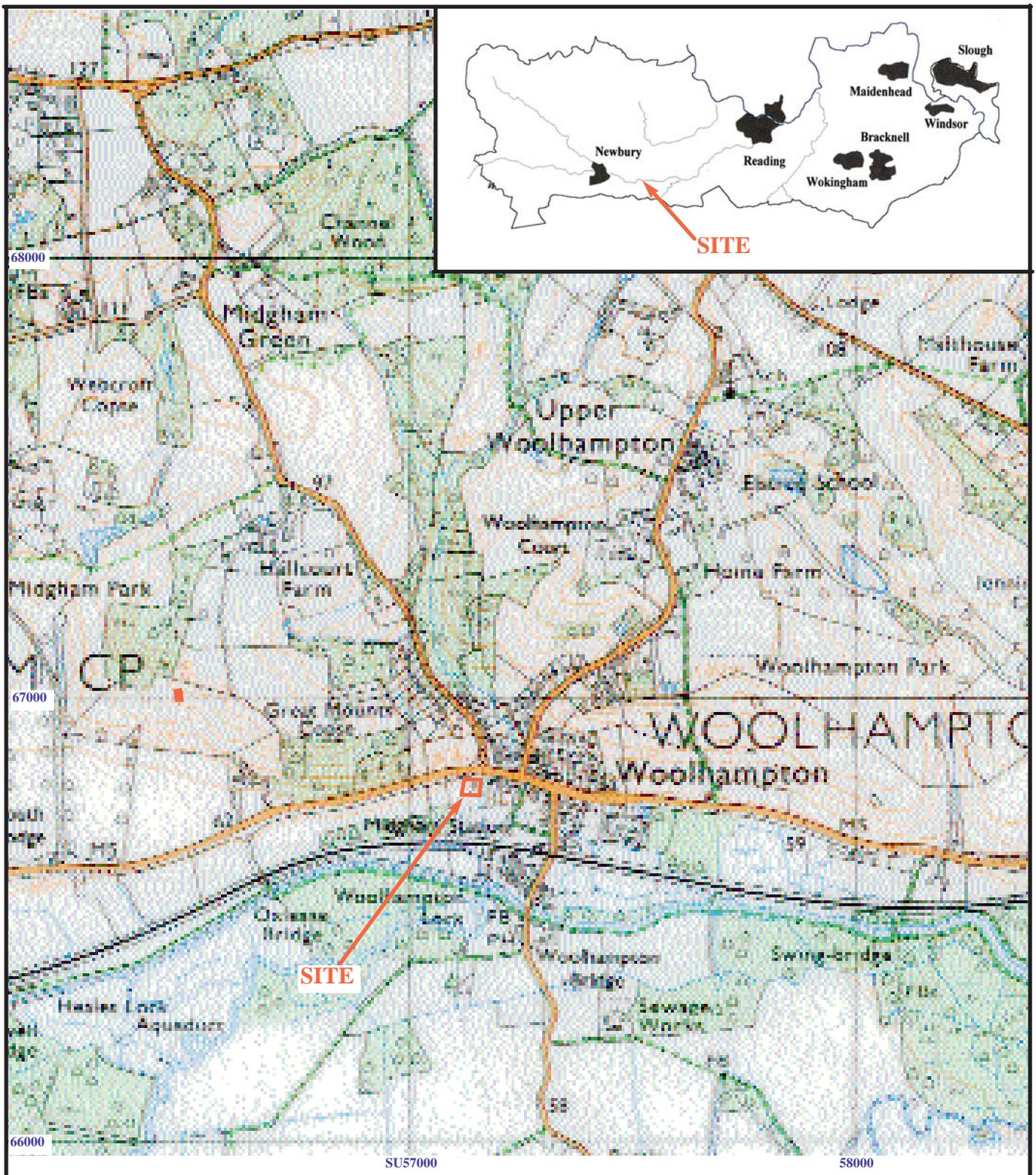
No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

Conclusion

Neither the removal of topsoil nor the construction method employed exposed the archaeologically relevant levels. As such no archaeological finds or deposits were recorded.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63,360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Gates, T, 1975, *The Thames Valley, An archaeological Survey of the River Gravels*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm
Pubn 1, Reading
- Lobb, S.J and Rose, P.G, 1996, *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*, Wessex Archaeol
Rep 9, Salisbury.
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO.



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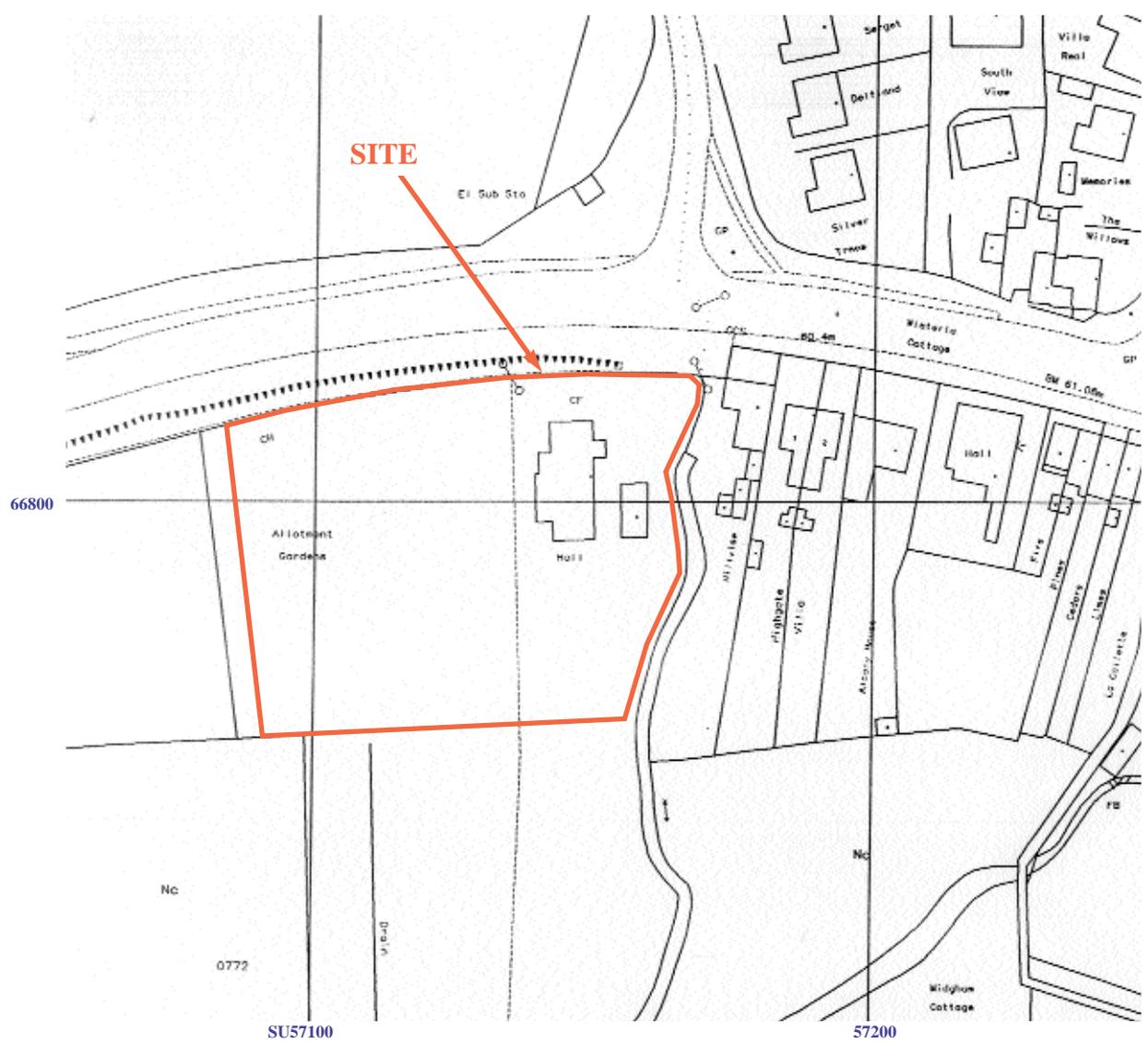
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Figure 1. Location of site within Woolhampton and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Bath Road.

Scale 1:1250

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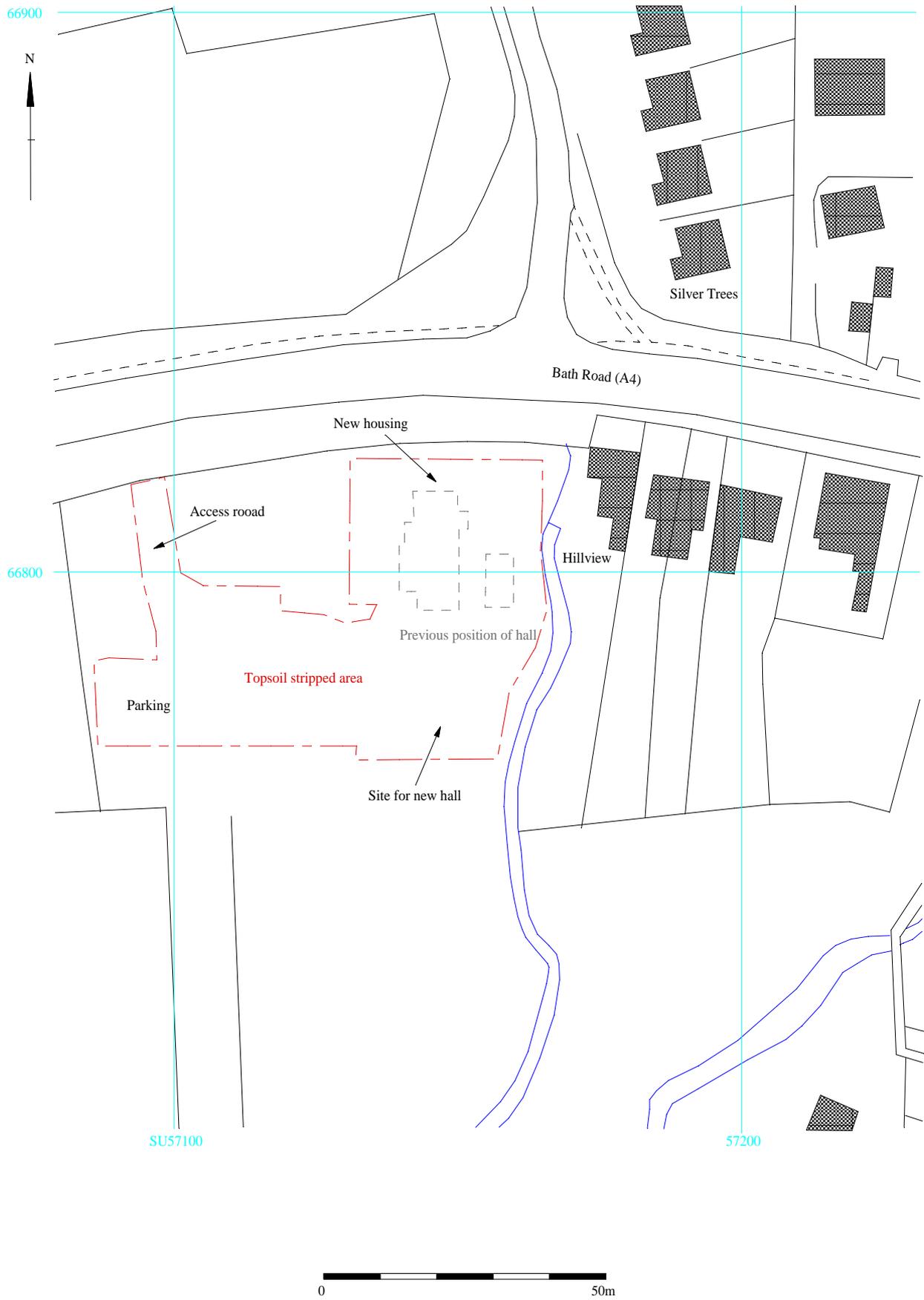


Figure 3. Location of areas observed during watching brief.