University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Investigation at White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading, Berkshire. NGR: SU 7275 7089 centre

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ULAS Report No. 2012-063

An Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Investigation at White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading, Berkshire.

NGR: SU 7275 7089

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For: The Kingwood Trust

Approved by

Signed: 

Date: 13 April 2012

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Summary

An archaeological strip, map and sample investigation was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading. The work took place between the 4th and 9th of January 2012 and followed on from an earlier evaluation in August 2011. The work took place in advance of the construction of a proposed extension and redevelopment to the existing care home. The development site lies close to a number of prehistoric and early Roman sites hence the requirement for archaeological work. A series of sample excavations were made prior to ground reduction in order to assess the depth of the underlying natural substratum. The excavation of a new service trench was also observed. No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the course iof the work.

The fieldwork was carried out by A.R.Hyam. The archive will be deposited with Reading Museum Service under Accession Number REDMG:2011.446

Introduction

In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, Policy HE12.3 (DCLG 2010) this document forms the report for an archaeological strip, map and sample investigation at White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading, Berkshire. Under planning application number 10/02248/FUL it is proposed to extend the existing building with a large extension to the west and a smaller extension to the east. There will be additional hard and soft landscaping to the front (north) of the property and soft landscaping to the south. When considering the planning application, the Planning Archaeologist at Berkshire Archaeology, as advisor to the planning authority, recommended the requirement for a programme of archaeological work due to the site's location within an area of archaeological interest. In August 2011, a 14m long evaluation trench was excavated on the western side of the house which was then followed in January 2012 by a further strip map and sample investigation at the front of the house. The work has been commissioned by The Kingwood Trust.

Background

Cressingham Road lies towards the south of Reading town centre and to the south-west of Reading University (Fig. 1). The development site, known as White Barn 45 Cressingham Road, is centred on National Grid Reference SU 7275 7089 in the Church Ward of the city at a height of approximately 80m OD. The Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of England and Wales, Sheet number 268 indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Terrace Gravel and sand over London Clay.

The Planning Archaeologist identified a number of archaeological sites which are located within the immediate vicinity of White Barn. These are summarised in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work at *White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading* but of particular importance are a possible disc barrow, late Iron Age and Roman boundary ditches possibly associated with a field system, and fragments of a Romano-British cinerary urn which were all found within the immediate locality. Consequently, there was a likelihood that any surviving buried archaeological remains could be affected by the development. Because of this, the Planning Archaeologist recommended that an initial programme of archaeological trial trenching and recording be undertaken prior to the start of development with a contingency for further recording and detailed excavation if required. The trial trenching work took place on the 9th of August 2011. The evaluation trench, located on the western side of the house, was 14m in length and between 1.6 and 2m wide. With the exception of a shallow 1930s style pond, no archaeological features or deposits were observed. However, because of the potential for archaeological features and the relatively high level of potential disturbance created during the development work it was decided that a further strip, map and sample investigation should also take place at the front of the house during the initial phase of groundworks.

The site is located on the southern side of Cressingham Road and is approximately half way between the A327 Shinfield Road and Northumberland Avenue which run across each end of the road (Fig. 2). White Barn is a large detached house set back from the road (Fig. 3). It appears to be of 1920s or 1930s design with white painted rendered walls and a large catslide roof on the west side at the front. Two single-storey outhouses are attached to the north-east front corner and the eastern side of the house. Prior to the commencement of development the front garden had a mix of tarmac drives and grass with a large conifer tree in the centre. The rear garden slopes down to the south and appears to have had a number of shallow terraces cut into it to create flat areas behind the house. The conifer was felled at the beginning of January 2012. A number of additions will be added to the house but it was the groundworks to the front of the house which were considered to have the greatest potential to expose and/or disturb any surviving archaeology as shown in Figure 4 below.

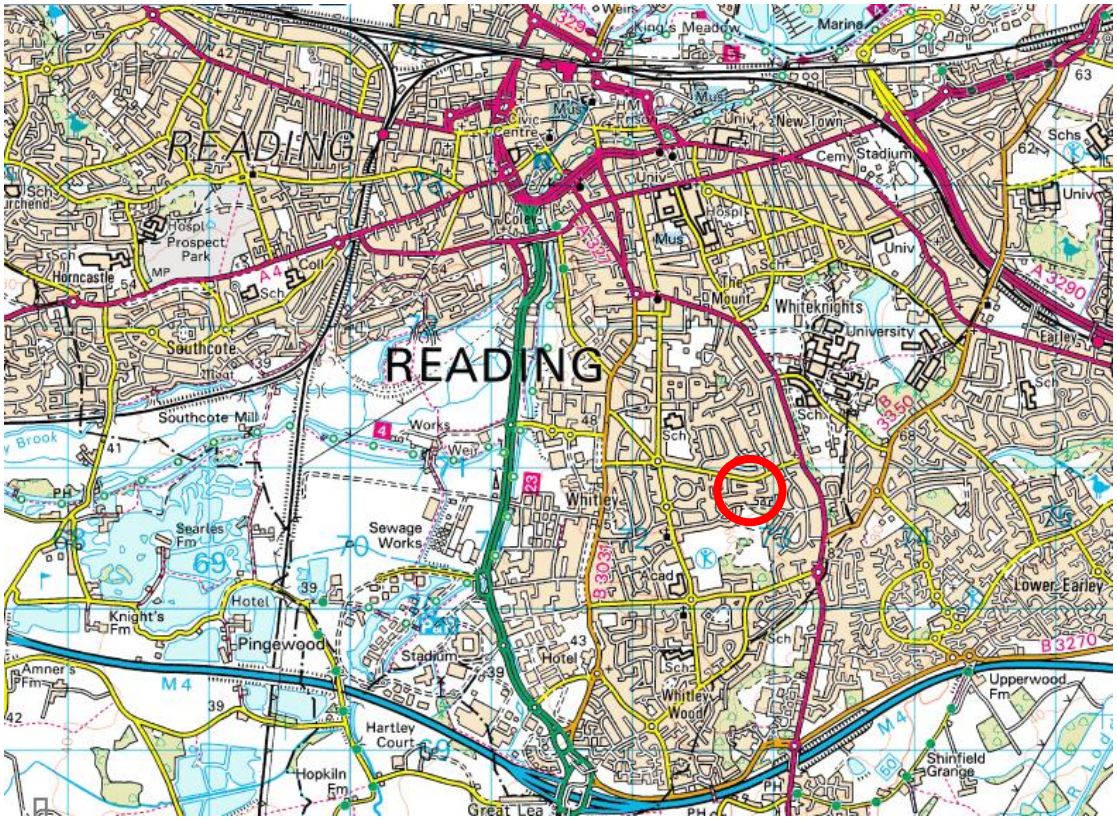

Figure 1. Cressingham Road location

Figure 2. White Barn location

Figure 3. White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road
Looking south. Photograph taken before commencement of work.

Objectives

The main objectives of the strip, map and sample investigation identified in the ULAS WSI were:

To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.

To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.

To produce an archive and report of any results.

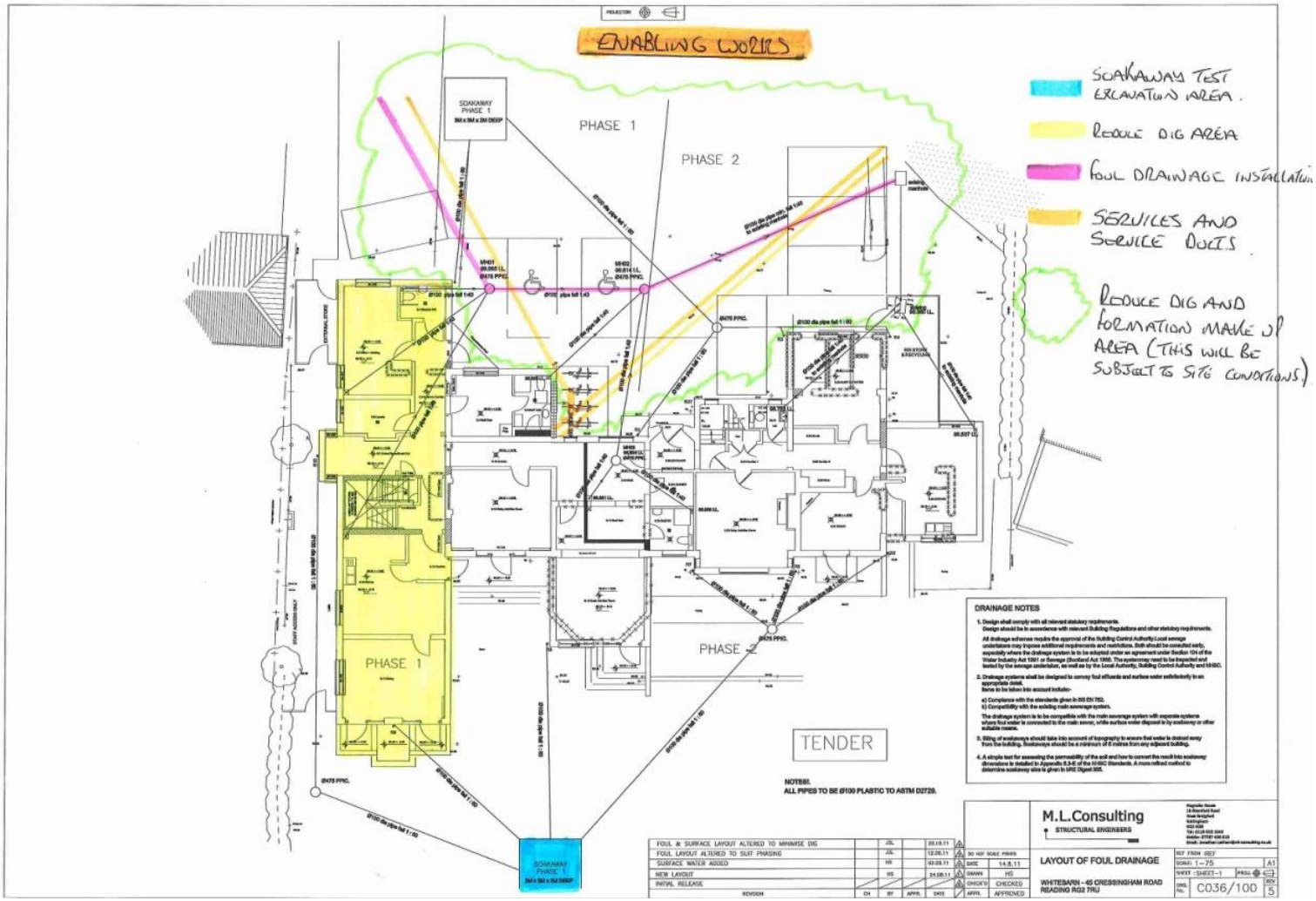

Figure 4. Proposed groundworks
Plan supplied by developer. North to top of plan

Methodology

A mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to excavate the series of sample excavations within the front garden and driveway area. Topsoil and/or modern overburden were removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits or to the undisturbed natural substratum. In a similar way the proposed line of a service trench was excavated in level spits down to surviving archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural. Grassed areas adjacent to the pavement were also stripped using a toothless ditching bucket. A 0.5m by 2m soakaway pit was also excavated by ground engineers in the rear garden (see Fig. 5 below). This was excavated using a toothless ditching bucket through the topsoil and subsoil down to natural and the cleaned surface was checked. After this a toothed bucket was used to excavate the remaining depths of the pit.

The excavations and service trench were examined by hand cleaning and any deposits located would be planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Sections of any excavated archaeological features would be drawn at an appropriate scale. The work was recorded on standard ULAS pro-forma watching brief sheets noting soil depths and descriptions. Any drawn sections of archaeological features would be levelled and tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum.

All deposits were recorded by notes, sketches and both digital colour and 35mm black and white photographs. The recording methodology followed that specified in the ULAS Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work for *White Barn,45 Cressingham Lane, Reading*. *Mitigation Strategy of Strip, Map and Sample Investigation*.

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct* (2006) and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2008).

Results

Initially Slots 1 – 4 (Fig. 5), with a range of sizes as described below, were excavated under archaeological supervision through the modern overburden down to 400mm, which is the contractor's formation level across the front of the site.

In the same manner, a long trench following the line of the proposed service trench was excavated from the north-east to south-west across the front car parking area.

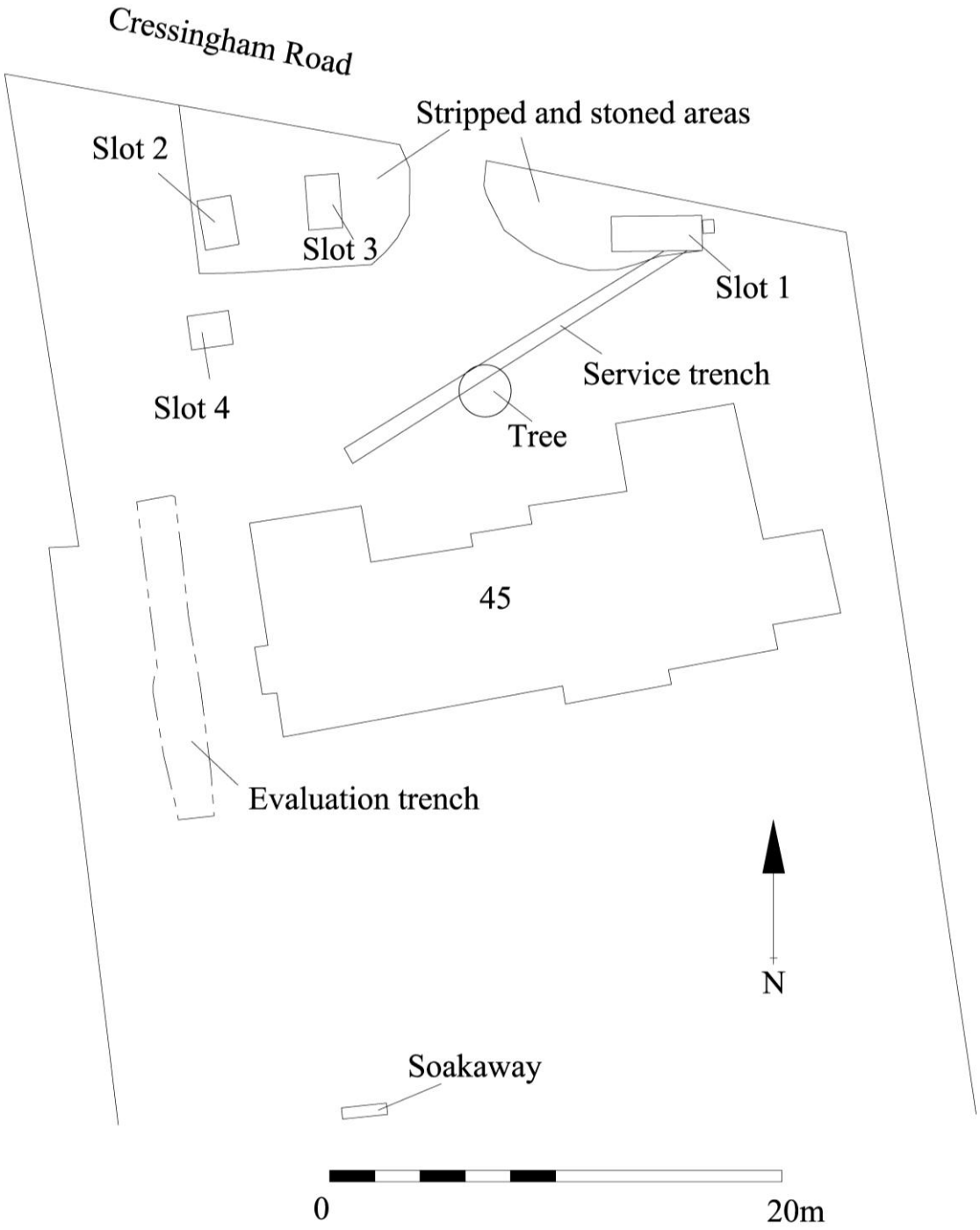

Figure 5. Location of evaluation slots and service trench cut

Slot 1

Slot 1 measured 1.55m wide by 4m long and was located in the front western corner of the driveway adjacent to a manhole cover. After removal of approximately 0.45m of mixed topsoil and subsoil a disturbed area of dirty yellow brown sandy clay and disturbed yellow brown clay was seen extending for 2.3m west of the manhole cover. Hand excavation showed this to be the backfilled trench for the existing north to south service pipes supplying the house. Beyond this cut, to the west, was a small triangle of

undisturbed natural yellow-brown clay substratum (Fig. 6). A further area of disturbance cut across the north-western corner of the trench. The fill of this disturbed area contained pieces of plastic sheet and was therefore relatively modern. Partial excavation of this area indicated that it continued downwards for at least 0.2m. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this slot.

Figure 6. Slot 1
Looking west. 1m scale.
The small area of natural substratum can be seen immediately in front of the north arrow

Slot 2

The second slot excavated measured 1.5m by 2.2m and was located on the western side of a small area of lawn laid out to the west of the main gateway. Initially 0.4m of topsoil and subsoil were removed in level spits down to 0.4m below current ground level. The distinction between topsoil and subsoil was quite difficult to assess with the subsoil having a slightly higher gravel content. This level represents the formation level for the proposed works. Further removal of another 0.2m of subsoil, giving a total depth of 0.6m, revealed an undisturbed natural substrate of yellow brown clay across the base of the slot. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this slot.

Slot 3

Time permitted another slot to be placed approximately 3m to the east of Slot 2 in the lawned area. Here a 1.5m by 2.4m slot was excavated which again revealed an undisturbed natural substrate 0.6m below current ground level. After this, all of the lawn area was stripped down by 0.3m and covered with geotextile membrane before being stoned over. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this slot.

Slot 4

A final test slot was placed approximately 2.6m to the south of Slot 2. A thin layer (0.08m) of tarmac covered 0.41m of disturbed dark grey brown silty clay. Removal of this layer exposed a layer of stone mill-waste with a ceramic land drain running from north to south along the western edge of the excavation (Fig. 7). No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this slot.

Figure 7. Slot 4

Looking west. Land drain partially exposed above 1m scale

Service Trench

A 0.5m wide service trench was excavated from the manhole adjacent to Slot 1 south-westwards towards the west corner of the house. An average thickness of 0.03m of tarmac was removed to expose a 0.1m thick bedding layer of sandy gravel and ash which was laid on a disturbed grey brown clay silt layer. The silty clay layer varied in thickness from 0.28m to 0.31m (Fig. 8 and cover photograph). At the base of this layer the natural substrate could be seen except where the large conifer tree roots had caused some disturbance. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this slot.

Figure 8. Service Trench
Looking south-west. 1m scale

Soakaway pit

A 0.5m by 2m soakaway pit was excavated for geotechnical reasons in the rear garden approximately 16.5m to the south of the house. Turf, topsoil and subsoil were excavated in controlled spits down to the natural substratum which was 0.7m below current ground level. Subsequently the pit was excavated beyond two metres in depth using a toothed bucket. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this slot.

Overall the depth of the surviving natural substratum across the site was as follows:

Slot 1 0.45m below current ground level (although this area is heavily disturbed)
Slot 2 0.60m below current ground level
Slot 3 0.60m below current ground level
Slot 4 Natural not seen – cut by drain but slot excavated to 0.5m

Service trench 0.41m to 0.44m below current ground level

Soakaway in rear garden 0.70m below current ground level

Discussion

All of the exploratory slots and the service trench at the front of the house indicate that the depth of the natural substratum will be well below the formation level of the proposed new courtyard. The existing tarmac surface is quite thin, as was suggested by the initial evaluation in 2011, and will not cause any disturbance when it is removed and replaced at the very end of the building work. In every case the exposed natural substratum either did not have any archaeological features or deposits or had been disturbed by service pipes and tree roots. The small geotechnical pit to the rear of the house also indicated a lack of archaeological features.

Overall, no archaeological features or deposits were observed during this period of archaeological work. When taken with the negative evaluation trench excavated last year it is clear that no archaeological features are present within the development site and that the development work will not cause any damage to the site.

Archive

The archive consists of:
This report,
3 pro-forma trench recording forms,
2 photo record sheets, 1 for colour digital and one for 35mm black and white,
1 contact sheet of 35mm black and white photographs,
1 contact sheet of digital photographs,
35mm black and white negatives,
1 cd of this report and the digital photographs.

Publication

A record of the project will be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken by A. Hyam. The project was managed by Richard Buckley. Thanks are also due to the staff at White Barn and Beard Construction.

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Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work. *White Barn,45 Cressingham Road, Reading.* 2011. ULAS

Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work. *Mitigation Strategy of Strip, Map and Sample Investigation. White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading.* 2012. ULAS

Appendix 1. OASIS Information

Project Name	White Barn, 45 Cressingham Road, Reading
Project Type	Strip, map and sample
Project Manager	R Buckley
Project Supervisor	A Hyam
Previous/Future work	Evaluation trenching in August 2011
Current Land Use	Residential care home
Development Type	Extension to existing building
Reason for Investigation	Archaeological potential
Position in the Planning Process	As a condition
Site Co ordinates	SU 7275 7089
Start/end dates of field work	4.1.2012 to 9.1.2012
Archive Recipient	Reading Museum
Study Area	Approx 2000m^2

Appendix 2. Digital photographs


Reading (1).jpg


Reading (2).jpg


Reading (3).jpg


Reading (4).jpg


Reading (5).jpg


Reading (6).jpg


Reading (7).jpg


Reading (8).jpg


Reading (9).jpg


Reading (10).jpg


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Reading (32).jpg


Reading (33).jpg

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