

## Land at Abbotsmead Place, Caversham, Berkshire

### Archaeological Evaluation Report





**LAND AT ABBOTSMEAD PLACE, CAVERSHAM,  
BERKSHIRE**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

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SITE CODE	<b>79690</b>	ACCESSION CODE	<b>REDMG: 2011.621</b>	CLIENT CODE	
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CAVERSHAM, BERKSHIRE**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

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- Figure 1** Site location showing evaluation trenches  
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**LAND AT ABBOTSMEAD PLACE,  
CAVERSHAM, BERKSHIRE**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

**Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of McCarthy and Stone, to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Abbotsmead Place, Caversham, Berkshire and centred on National Grid Reference 47147 174690.

A desk-based assessment undertaken for the site identified a low archaeological potential and an earlier geotechnical investigation had indicated a high level of disturbance across the site. The Archaeological Officer at Berkshire Archaeology required an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken prior to construction of residential apartment blocks, to confirm the conclusions of the earlier studies, and to consider fully the archaeological potential of the area.

The evaluation consisted of a 5-6% sample of the development area and initially comprised the machine excavation of 3 trenches, each measuring 25m x 2m and a test pit measuring 2m<sup>2</sup>. Following the completion of the initial investigations, the Archaeological Officer requested that a contingency trench should be excavated to confirm the results of the evaluation.

No archaeological finds or features were identified during the evaluation. The stratigraphic sequence varied slightly across the site and in Trenches 1 & 2 comprised a silty sand deposit beneath the topsoil, whilst to the south (Trenches 3 & 4) a typical brickearth deposit was recorded. Modern finds within deposit **102** in Trench 1 confirm some disturbance in the northern part of the site had occurred and this accords with the results of the previous geotechnical investigations. The variation across the site is likely to be the result of ground levelling caused as a result of the construction and/or demolition of the former workshops in the north of the site but was not as extensive as the geotechnical report had suggested.

The fieldwork was carried out from 31<sup>st</sup> October to 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011.

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**LAND AT ABBOTSMEAD PLACE,  
CAVERSHAM, BERKSHIRE****Archaeological Evaluation Report****Acknowledgments**

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Duncan Hawkins from CgMs Consulting (the Client) on behalf of McCarthy and Stone for commissioning the evaluation. The advice and assistance provided by Mary Neale of Berkshire Archaeology, advisors to Reading Borough Council, who monitored the project on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, is duly acknowledged.

The evaluation was carried out by Oliver Good and Rob Scott. This report was prepared by Oliver Good with contributions on the geoarchaeology from Dave Norcott. The report illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth James. This project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.



## **LAND AT ABBOTSMEAD PLACE, CAVERSHAM, BERKSHIRE**

### **Archaeological Evaluation Report**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting (the Client) on behalf of McCarthy and Stone, to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Abbotsmead Place, Caversham, Berkshire (hereafter 'the Site'), centred on National Grid Reference 47147 174690 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 A desk-based assessment (CgMs, 2010) was undertaken for the Site which concluded there was low archaeological potential for prehistoric and Romano-British activity and low to moderate potential for evidence of Saxon and post-medieval activity.
- 1.1.3 Geotechnical investigations (Crossfield Consulting, 2009) indicated previous ground disturbance was extensive in the north of the Site, where former workshops were positioned and in the centre, east and south-western corner of the Site where the absence of brickearth was indicative of disturbance to the underlying stratigraphic sequence.
- 1.1.4 The Archaeological Officer at Berkshire Archaeology required an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken on the Site prior to construction of residential apartment blocks, to assess the archaeological potential of the area.
- 1.1.5 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2011) was prepared and forwarded to Berkshire Archaeology prior to works commencing. Due to a misunderstanding the document was not formally approved by the Local Planning Authority. The document detailed the strategy, methodology and standards to be employed during the archaeological fieldwork.

## **2 THE SITE**

### **2.1 Location, topography and geology**

- 2.1.1 The Site is located at Abbotsmead Place, Caversham, Berkshire. It is bounded to the west by School Lane, to the south by Abbotsmead Place to the east by housing fronting onto Wolsey Road and to the north by a function hall.
- 2.1.2 The Site is some 0.35ha in extent and lies approximately 38m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). It slopes gently from north to south from approximately 39m aOD to 38.17m aOD.
- 2.1.3 The underlying geology of the Site comprises shallow Quaternary deposits of the Langley Site formation (clayey and sandy silt brickearth) overlying deposits of upper chalk. Previous geotechnical investigations have confirmed the geological sequence, including the made ground or topsoil ranging in depth from 0.50m to 0.80m in depth overlying the natural soils.

The absence of brickearth deposits in the centre, east and south-west of the Site suggested some fairly extensive disturbance across the Site, possibly in relation to former quarrying.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Archaeological background**

- 3.1.1 A desk-based assessment (CgMs 2010) detailing the archaeological background to the Site was completed, the results of which are provided in summary form below.
- 3.1.2 Three Lower Palaeolithic hand axes were found in a small pit on Priest Hill, approximately 650m north-west of the Site. In addition several isolated finds of similar date were recovered in the area and although their exact location is unknown, it is likely to have been to the north of the Site, within the Black Park Gravels.
- 3.1.3 Isolated Mesolithic and Neolithic finds are recorded in the vicinity although again their precise locations are not known. Bronze Age artefacts have been dredged from the River Thames at Caversham. Furthermore, five struck flints were collected from Church Road, approximately 500m to the west of the Site. No evidence of Iron Age occupation has been discovered on or in close proximity to the Site.
- 3.1.4 Five Roman coins were discovered during remedial works on Caversham bridge, 300m to the south-west of the Site. In addition nearby a Romano-British axehead was found in the Thames.
- 3.1.5 A settlement known as *Cavesha* was established by the late Saxon period and is thought to have developed at Lower Caversham, approximately 1km east of the Site. Medieval pottery sherds were retrieved during an evaluation at Abbotsmead 250m west of the Site and residual sherds were identified at work undertaken at Church Road, approximately 500m to the west of the Site. It is likely the Site itself lay outside the medieval settlement area, in agricultural land, and as a result the desk-based assessment concluded a low to moderate potential, although evidence of agricultural activity could be represented.
- 3.1.6 Map regression demonstrated the Site remained undeveloped and within agricultural land until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, small piecemeal development in the form of workshops, greenhouses and garden plots have been recorded within the Site.
- 3.1.7 The assessment concluded the proposed development was unlikely to impact archaeological remains of anything other than local significance.

### **4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **4.1 Aims and Objectives**

- 4.1.1 The aims of the archaeological field evaluation were to:
- clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be impacted by development;



- identify, within the constraints of the fieldwork, the date, character, condition and depth of any surviving remains within the Site;
- assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits;
- produce a report which will present the project information in sufficient detail to allow interpretation without recourse to the project archive. This will facilitate judgements on the status of the archaeological resource and allow the formulation of an appropriate response to the impact of the proposed development on any surviving archaeological deposits, if required;
- to determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present;
- to assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape;
- to determine the implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity;
- to determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present;
- to determine the potential of the Site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.

## **5 METHOD STATEMENT**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 The following methodology was proposed in order to meet the aims and objectives of the fieldwork. All works were carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA, 2008) excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.

5.1.2 A 5-6% sample of the development area was investigated and initially comprised the excavation of 3 trenches, each measuring 25m x 2m and a test pit measuring 2m<sup>2</sup>. An additional contingency trench was requested by the Archaeological Officer at Berkshire Archaeology to confirm the negative results identified.

### **5.2 Fieldwork**

5.2.1 The trenches were laid out using a Global Positioning System (GPS) in general accordance with the pattern given in **Figure 1**. Minor adjustments to the layout were required because of Site constraints and the trench locations were then tied in to the Ordnance Survey.

5.2.2 Prior to machine excavation, trench locations were scanned by Wessex Archaeology using a proprietary cable avoidance tool (CAT).

5.2.3 All overburden (topsoil and subsoil) was carefully removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or natural geology, whichever was encountered first. All machine work was completed under constant archaeological supervision.

- 5.2.4 All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and recording system. A complete drawn record of the excavated trenches was compiled. A representative section, profile of each trench was drawn at 1:10 and an overall Site plan prepared.
- 5.2.5 A photographic record of the investigations and individual features was maintained, utilising digital images. The photographic record illustrated both the detail and general context of the archaeology revealed and the Site as a whole, including working shots.
- 5.2.6 Once the trenches were completed to the satisfaction of the Archaeological Officer they were backfilled and left level on completion using the excavated material. No other reinstatement or surface treatment was undertaken.

## **6 RESULTS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

- 6.1.1 The following section provides a summary of the results of the evaluation. No archaeological features or deposits were recorded in any of the excavated trenches (**Figure 1**) and no finds were retained.
- 6.1.2 Detailed trench descriptions and stratigraphic sequences encountered are presented below in **Appendix 1**.

### **6.2 Stratigraphic soil sequences**

- 6.2.1 The Site was sealed by a dark greyish silty clay loam topsoil which covered the underlying deposits and contained moderate amounts of modern demolition rubble. The topsoil in Trench 4 contained larger amounts of modern brick and concrete.
- 6.2.2 Below the topsoil, a fine grained mineralogenic deposit interpreted on Site as alluvial and containing quantities of flint gravel was recorded (**Plate 1**), however this changed in character from the north (Trenches 1 & 2) to the south (Trenches 3 & 4) of the Site.
- 6.2.3 In the northern part of the Site (Trenches 1 & 2) the deposit underlying the topsoil was greyish brown and slightly sandy, whilst to the south it became reddish brown and sand-free brickearth. This is likely to be a result of disturbance to the northern part of the Site as suggested in the geotechnical investigations (Crossfield 2008), as occasional modern finds were noted within the deposit in Trench 1.
- 6.2.4 River gravels of presumed Late Glacial date were recorded at varying depths across the Site, which reflects the undulating gravel highs and lows left by the braided channel systems which would have been present at the end of the Pleistocene.

## **7 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING**

### **7.1 Finds**

- 7.1.1 Modern finds comprising ceramic building material were identified within deposit **102** in Trench 1 but was not retained. No other artefacts were recovered.

## **7.2 Environmental Sampling**

7.2.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

8.1.1 The results of the archaeological evaluation are broadly consistent both with the results of the geotechnical investigation (*ibid.*) and the conclusions made in the earlier desk-based assessment (CgMs 2010). The latter considered that there was limited potential for important archaeological remains to be present and only remains of local significance were likely to be identified within the Site, whilst modern disturbance as indicated in Trench 1, and possibly also Trench 2, is consistent with the available geotechnical information for the Site.

8.1.2 The fieldwork has demonstrated no archaeological finds or features are present within the trenches excavated and it is considered that the potential for features of archaeological interest within the remainder of the Site is low.

## **9 ARCHIVE**

### **9.1 Preparation and Deposition**

9.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990). On completion of the project, the archive will be deposited with Reading Museum under the Site Code 76392 and accession number RE DMG:2011.621.

### **9.2 The Archive**

9.2.1 The evaluation project archive, consists of:

- One A4 file containing the paper records and drawings
- Digital data (Site photographs, survey data, word and pdf files)

9.2.2 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology (WA) in Salisbury under the WA report reference 79690.

## **10 REFERENCES**

CgMs 2010 *Archaeological desk based assessment, land at Abbotsmead Place, Caversham, Berkshire* Unpublished client report

Crossfield Consulting 2008 *Abbotsmead Place, Caversham Site Investigation Report*

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*.

Wessex Archaeology 2011, *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation at Land at Abbotsmead Place, Caversham*

## 11 APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Trench profiles

NGR = national grid reference; MaOD = metres above Ordnance Datum (Newlyn); BGL = below ground level

<b>Trench 1</b>	<b>NGR co-ords:</b> North: 471453.670 174712.378 South: 471467.616 174695.983	<b>MaOD:</b> 38.700m 38.500m
<b>Dimensions</b>	21m by 1.8m; 1.09 m maximum depth	
<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth BGL (m)</b>
101	Topsoil: Mid/Dark brownish grey silty clay loam. Inclusions: Common sub angular flint nodules (<0.10m), moderate manganese, sparse: modern disturbance.	0 – 0.30
102	Alluvial: Mid greyish brown sandy silty clay, inclusions common angular flint nodules (<0.07m) moderate manganese, moderate/sparse modern material.	0.30–0.43
103	Alluvial: Mid/Dark reddish brown silty sand clay, moderate sub rounded flint nodules (<0.07m)	0.43-1.09

<b>Trench 2</b>	<b>NGR co-ords:</b> North: 471470.455 174691.755 South: 471447.570 174683.770	<b>MaOD:</b> 38.400m 38.400m
<b>Dimensions</b>	25m by 1.8m; 0.84 m maximum depth	
<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth BGL (m)</b>
201	Topsoil: Dark brownish grey silty clay loam. Moderate sub angular flint nodules (<0.05m) Sparse chalk flecks, rare manganese and moderate modern material.	0 – 0.44
202	Alluvial: Mid greyish/reddish brown silty sandy clay. Inclusions: moderate sub rounded flint nodules (<0.07m)	0.44–0.84
203	Natural: Gravel	0.84+

<b>Trench 3</b>	<b>NGR co-ords:</b> North: 471444.035 174678.221 South: 471482.077 174662.311	<b>MaOD:</b> 38.400m 38.200m
<b>Dimensions</b>	25m by 1.8m; 0.89 m maximum depth	
<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth BGL (m)</b>
301	Topsoil: Dark grey silty clay loam. Moderate sub angular flint nodules (<0.07m) Rare chalk flecks, rare manganese and moderate modern material.	0 – 0.27
302	Alluvial: Mid reddish brown silty sandy clay. Inclusions: moderate sub rounded flint nodules (<0.07m)	0.27–0.89
303	Natural: Gravel	0.89+

<b>Trench 4</b>	<b>NGR co-ords:</b> North: 471468.784 174656.211 South: 471482.077 174641.615	<b>MaOD:</b> 38.150m 38.000m
<b>Dimensions</b>	25m by 1.8m; 0.90 m maximum depth	
<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth BGL (m)</b>
401	Topsoil: Dark grey silty clay loam. Moderate sub angular flint nodules (<0.07m) Rare chalk flecks, rare manganese and very common modern demolition rubble containing CBM and concrete.	0 – 0.46
402	Alluvial: Mid reddish brown with grey mottling silty sandy clay. Inclusions: moderate sub rounded flint nodules (<0.07m)	0.46–0.90
403	Natural: Gravel	0.90+

## Appendix 2: Oasis Record Form

### OASIS ID - wessexar1-113334

#### Versions

View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	Sue Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	8 November 2011

#### Completed sections in current version

Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
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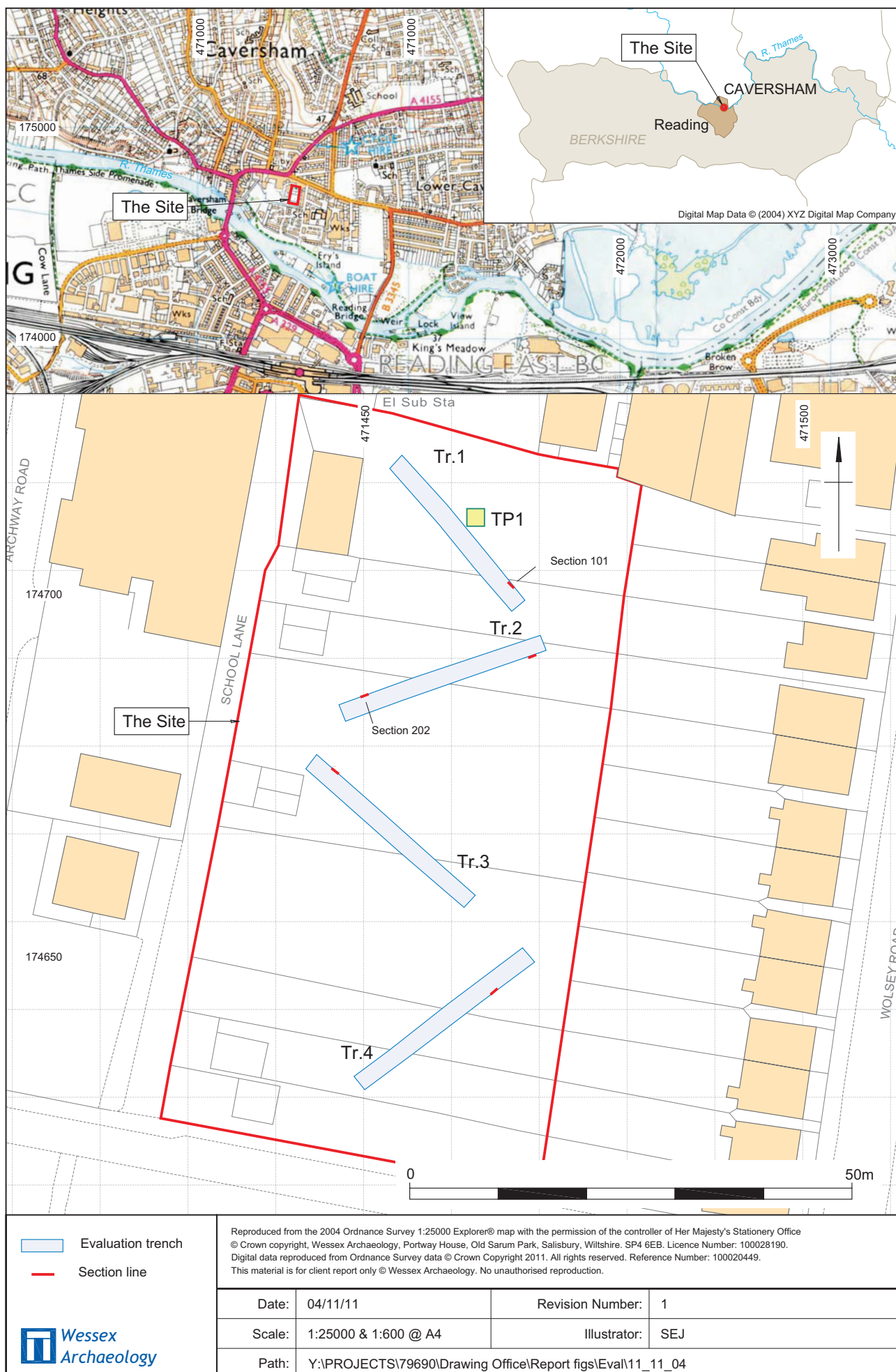
#### Validated sections in current version

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#### File submission and form progress

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Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s	
Boundary file submitted?	No	Boundary filename	
HER signed off?		NMR signed off?	





Site location showing evaluation trenches

Figure 1

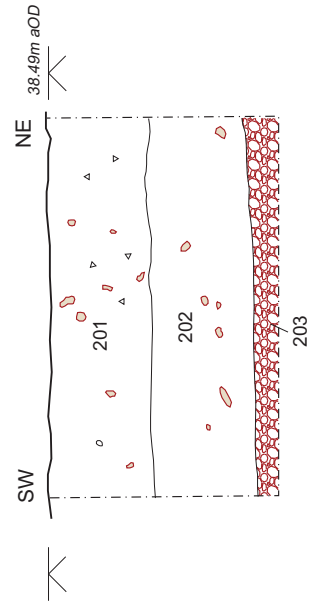
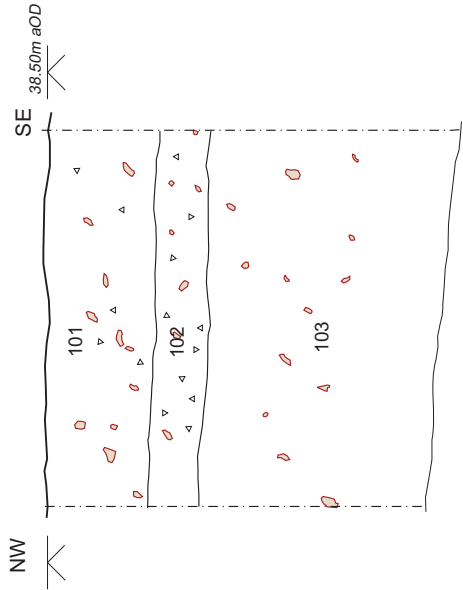




South-west facing section 101



South-east facing section 202



- Chalk
- Flint
- Manganese
- Gravel

			Date: 04/11/11	Revision Number: 0
	<small>This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.</small>		Scale: Sections @ 1:20	Illustrator: SEJ
	Representative sections 101 and 202		Path: Y:\PROJECTS\79690\Drawing Office\Report figs\Eval\11_11_04	

Figure 2





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