THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Sandford Farm, Mohawk Way, Woodley
Reading, Berkshire

An archaeological evaluation

by James Lewis

Site Code SWB11/101

(SU 7810 7380)

Sandford Farm, Mohawk Way, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Taylor Wimpey West London

by James Lewis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SWB 11/101

November 2011

Summary

Site name: Sandford Farm, Mohawk Way, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7810 7380

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 1st–3rd November 2011

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James Lewis

Site code: SWB 11/101

Area of site: 2.4 ha within overal 18 ha development area

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed that unextracted areas of the former gravel pit were present on the site of the former processing area, buried beneath modern made ground. However, no archaeological deposits were identified and this area of the proposal site can also be considered to have no archaeological potential along with the rest of the former gravel pit site.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a museum willing to accept the archive in due course.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 11.11.11 Steve Preston✓ 11.11.11

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Sandford Farm, Mohawk Way, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire
An Archaeological Evaluation

By James Lewis

Report 11/101

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Sandford Farm, Mohawk Way, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7810 7380) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Geoff Armstrong, of DDP, West One, 63-67 Bromham Road, Bedford, MK40 2FG on behalf of Taylor Wimpey West London, Stratfield House, Station Road, Hook, RG27 9PQ.

Planning permission (app F/2011/1278) has been sought from Wokingham Borough Council to redevelop the site for housing and a country park. An archaeological evaluation has been requested in order to determine the archaeological potential of the site in order to inform the planning process.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and Wokingham Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification submitted to Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by James Lewis and James Earley from 1st to 3rd November 2011 and the site code is SWB 11/101. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a museum willing to accept the archive.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the eastern edge of Woodley, a suburb of Reading, and is presently an open brown field site. The part of the site intended for residential use is largely a worked out gravel pit subsequently used for landfill. It lies on the western side of the Loddon River valley and is bounded to the west by residential properties and the east by the north-south flowing Old River which joins the River Loddon just beyond the southern end of the site. To the north is the Loddon nature reserve and the south the Dinton pastures country park: both of these are old gravel workings which have since been turned into lakes. The site lies at approximately 35–40m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is Valley Gravel (BGS 1946).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Loddon Valley with a range of prehistoric and later archaeological finds recorded for the area in general (Ford 1997, Gates 1975). Two excavations have taken place relatively close to the site at Whistley Green to the east where a Mesolithic site (Harding and Richards 1993) and Roman site (Barnes and Hawkes 1993) have been observed during gravel extraction at Lea Farm to the southeast of the site (Berkshire HER).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of proposed residential development, where extraction had not previously taken place, namely the site of the former processing plant and marginal stand off areas occupied by service runs.

Specific aims of the evaluation were:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and

to provide sufficient information in order to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy for the site.

It was proposed that 17 trenches were to be excavated across the site in the two zones of interest. The trenches were to be excavated using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were identified these were to be hand cleaned, investigated and recorded. Spoilheaps were to be monitored and metal detected.

Results

When the extent of previous truncation became clear and new information concerning the location of landfill cells was obtained it was agreed in consultation with Ms Mary Neale of Berkshire Archaeology to reduce the sample fraction. As a result, thirteen trenches (1-10, 12, 17 and 18) were dug and these measured between 4–25m long, and 0.4–1.92m deep and all of them were 1.6m wide (Fig. 3).

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 24m long and 0.4m deep. The stratigraphy comprised of 0.2m of topsoil, above 0.09m of subsoil, 0.09m overlying gravel natural geology. A modern pit was observed continuing beyond the south end of the trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 22m long and 1m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.32m of topsoil, above made ground which comprised of a number of lenses re-deposited gravels, 0.63m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology.

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 25m long and 1.1m deep. The stratigraphy comprised of 0.2m of topsoil, above a layer of made ground, 0.8m thick. Underneath the made ground was the grave natural geology.

Trench 4

Trench 4 measured 25m long and 0.9m deep. The stratigraphy comprised of 0.24m of topsoil, above 0.17m of subsoil. Below this was a layer of made ground 0.49m thick which overlay the gravel natural geology. An *in situ* large concrete block from which a large metal pipe extended was observed cutting the gravel.

Trench 5

Trench 5 measured 23m long and 1.13m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.36m of topsoil above a thick layer of made ground comprising of a number of re-deposited gravel layers, 0.73m thick. Underneath this was the grave natural geology.

Trench 6

Trench 6 measured 8m long and 1.85m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil, above a layer of made ground, 0.55m thick. Underneath this was a grey alluvial clay, 1.1m thick which overlay the natural gravel geology.

Trench 7

Trench 7 measured 16m long and 1.67m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.38m of topsoil, above made ground consisting of soil and modern rubble, 1.22m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology.

Trench 8

Trench 8 measured 24m long and 1.1m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.1m of topsoil, above a layer of made ground comprising re-deposited gravels, red bricks and modern waste, 1m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology.

Trench 9 (Fig. 4 and Pl. 1)

Trench 9 measured 25m long and 1.4m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil, above a layer of made ground comprising re-deposited gravels, red bricks and modern waste, 1.2m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology. A large modern pit was observed in the base of the trench.

Trench 10

Trench 10 measured 10m long and 1.1m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil, above made ground comprising re-deposited gravels, 0.8m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology.

Trench 12

Trench 12 measured 5m long and 0.8m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil, above made ground comprising several layers of re-deposited gravels with red brick, metal and glass inclusions, 0.6m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology.

Trench 13

Trench 13 measured 4m long and 1.22m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil, above a layer of made ground comprising re-deposited gravels, red bricks and modern waste, 0.9m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology.

Trench 17

Trench 17 measured 24m long and 1m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.1m of topsoil, above a layer of made ground comprising re-deposited gravels, red bricks and modern waste, 0.8m thick. Underneath the made ground was the gravel natural geology. A large modern pit was observed in the base of the trench.

Trench 18 (Fig. 4 and Pl. 2)

Trench 18 measured 13m long and 1.92m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.38m of topsoil, above a layer of made ground comprising of a re-deposited gravels, red bricks and modern waste, 0.41m thick. Underneath the made ground was a layer of grey alluvial clay 1.02m thick which lay above the gravel natural geology.

Finds

Only modern artefacts were observed; these were not retained.

Conclusion

It was clear from the results of the trenching exercise that, as expected from the geotechnical and gravel pit records, gravel from the processing plant area had not been extracted. This was particularly evident in trenches 6 and 18 where *in situ* alluvial clay was observed overlying the gravel. In most trenches, made ground had been dumped directly on top of the gravel with no topsoil or subsoil present and it is not known if some truncation of the top of the gravel had taken place in these areas. However, no archaeological deposits were identified and this unextracted area of the proposal site can also be considered to have no archaeological potential.

References

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Ford, S, 1997, 'Loddon Valley (Berkshire) fieldwalking survey', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **75** (for 1994–7), 11–33

Gates, T, 1975, *The Thames Valley; an archaeological survey of the River Gravels,* Berkshire Archaeol Comn Publ **1**, Reading

Harding, P and Richards, J C, 1993, 'Sample excavation of a Mesolithic flint scatter at Whistley Court Farm', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **74** (for 1991–3), 145

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at SW end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	24	1.6	0.4	0–0.2m topsoil, 0.2–0.29m subsoil, 0.09m+ gravel natural geology
2	22	1.6	1	0–0.32m topsoil, 0.32–0.95m made ground, 0.95m+ gravel natural geology
3	25	1.6	1.1	0–0.2m topsoil, 0.2–1m made ground, 1m+ gravel natural geology
4	25	1.6	0.9	0–0.24m topsoil, 0.24–0.41m subsoil 0.41–0.9m made ground, 0.9m+ gravel natural geology
5	23	1.6	1.13	0–0.36m topsoil, 0.36–1.09m made ground, 1.09m+ gravel natural geology
6	8	1.6	1.85	0–0.2m topsoil, 0.2–0.75m made ground, 0.75–1.85m alluvial clay 1.85m+ gravel natural geology
7	16	1.6	1.67	0–0.38m topsoil, 0.38–1.6m made ground, 1.6m+ gravel natural geology
8	24	1.6	1.1	0–0.1m topsoil, 0.1–1m made ground, 1m+ gravel natural geology
9	25	1.6	1.4	0–0.2m topsoil, 0.2–1.4m made ground, 1.4m+ gravel natural geology **[Pl. 1]**
10	10	1.6	1.1	0–0.2m topsoil, 0.2–1m made ground, 1m+ gravel natural geology
11				Not dug
12	5	1.6	0.8	0–0.2m topsoil, 0.2–0.8m made grounds 0.8m+ gravel natural geology
13	4	1.6	1.22	0–0.2m topsoil, 0.2–1.1m made ground, 1.1m+ gravel natural geology
14				Not dug
15				Not dug
16				Not dug
17	24	1.6	1	0–0.1m topsoil, 0.1–0.9m made ground, 0.9m+ gravel natural geology
18	13	1.6	1.92	0–0.38m topsoil, 0.38–0.79m made ground, 0.79-1.81m alluvial clay, 1.81m+ gravel natural geology **[Pl. 2]**

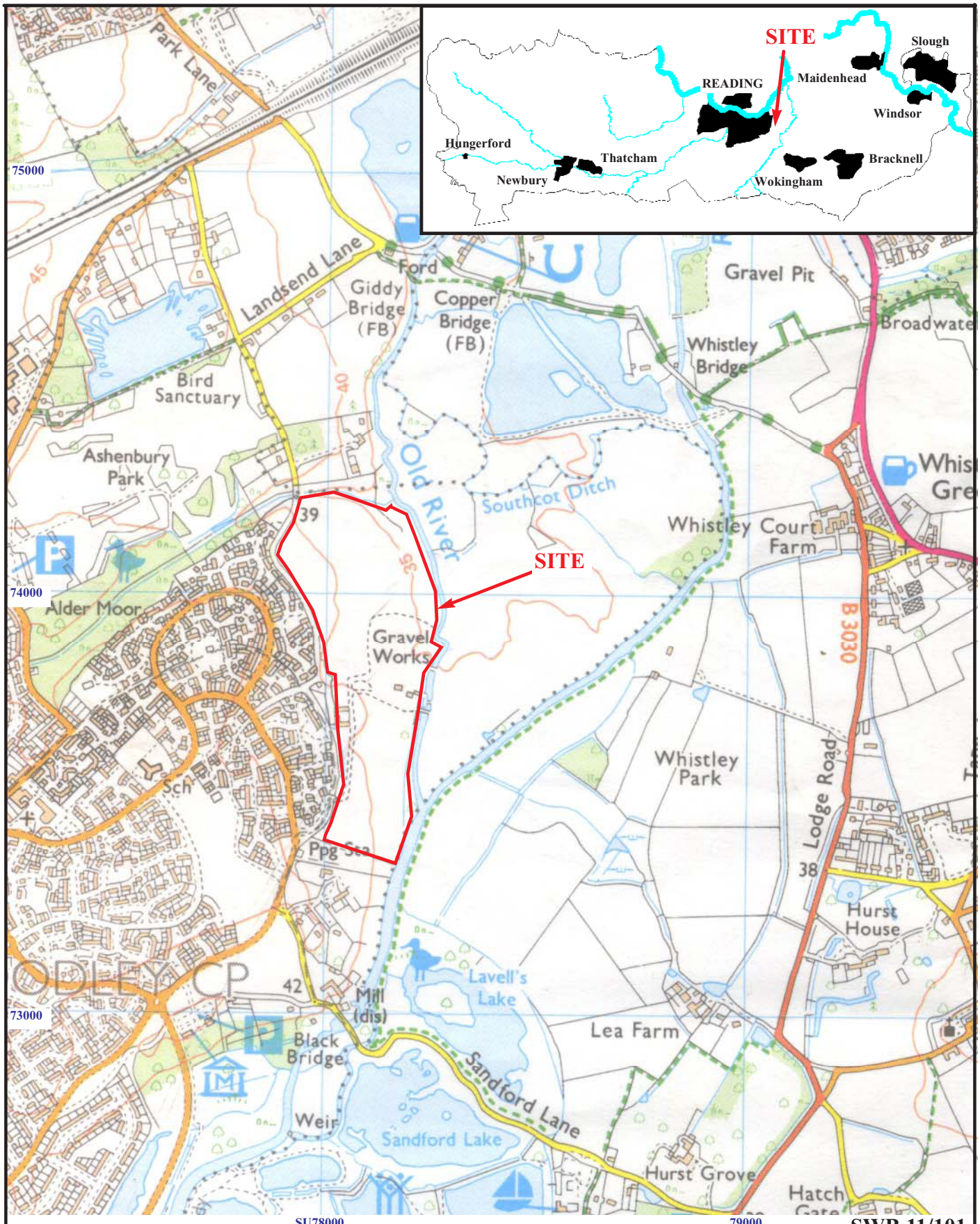

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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Reading and Berkshire.

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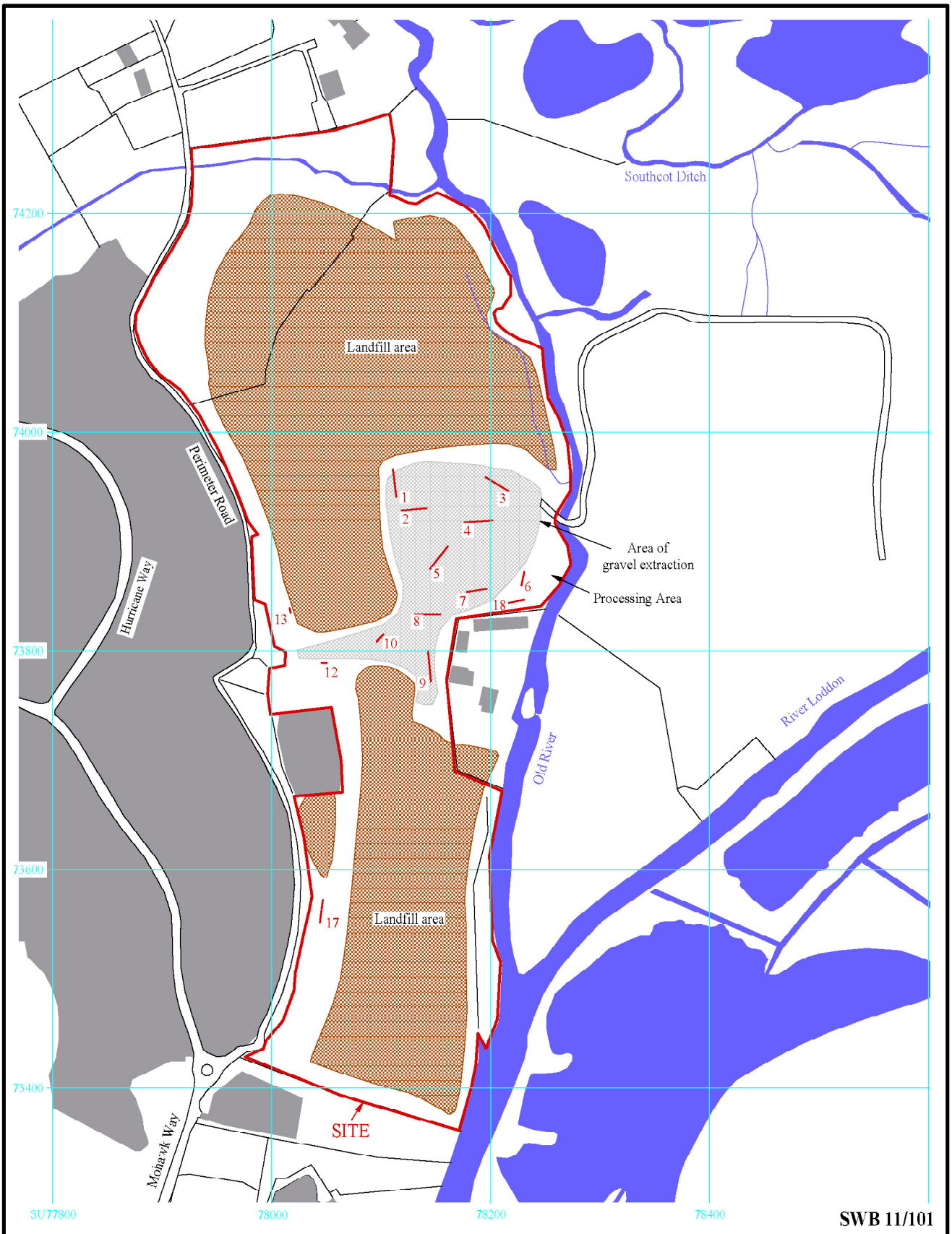

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Figure 2. Plan of the site showing trench locations.

0 250m

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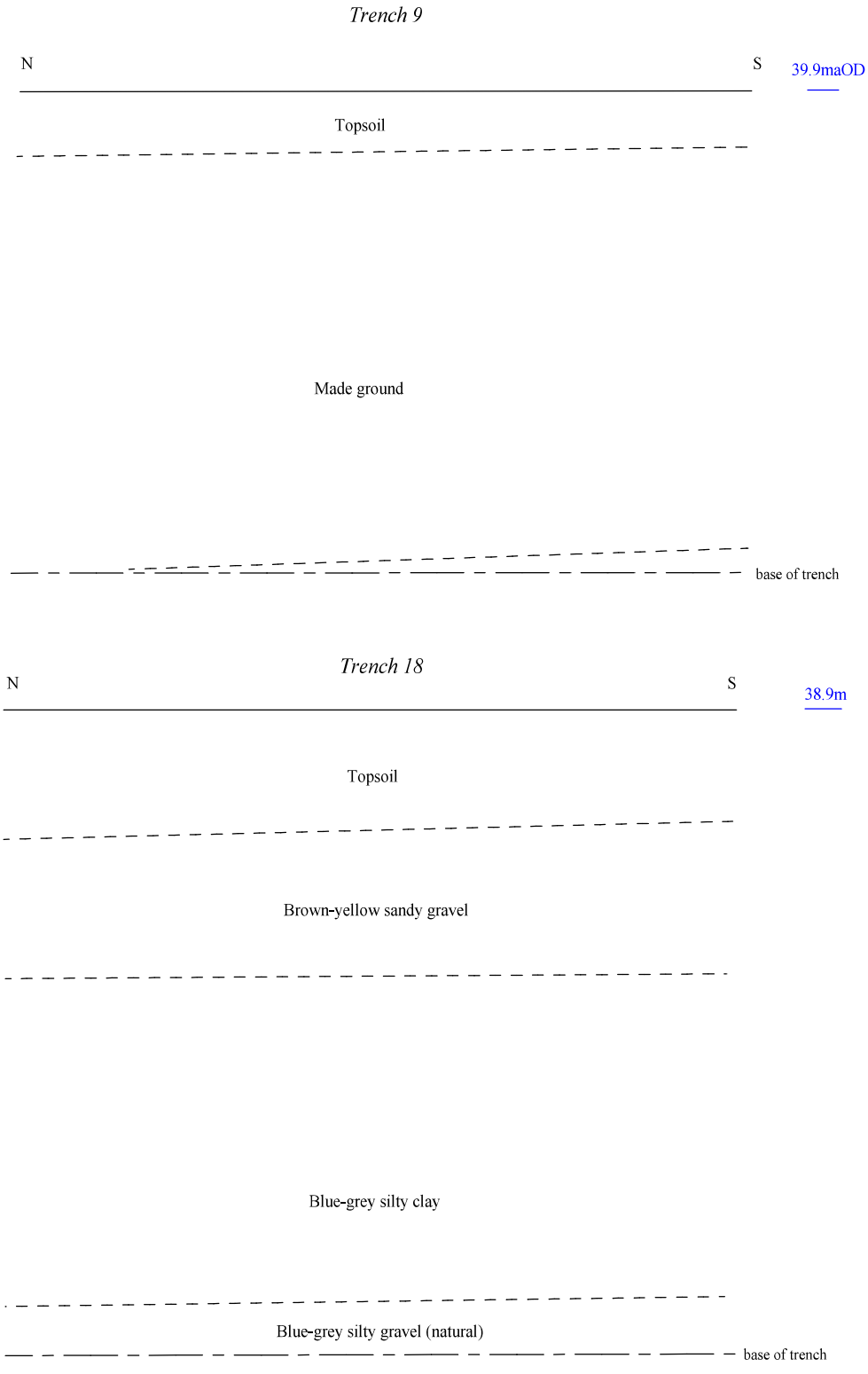

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Figure 4. Representative sections.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 9, looking north. Scales: 2m, 1m, 0.5m.

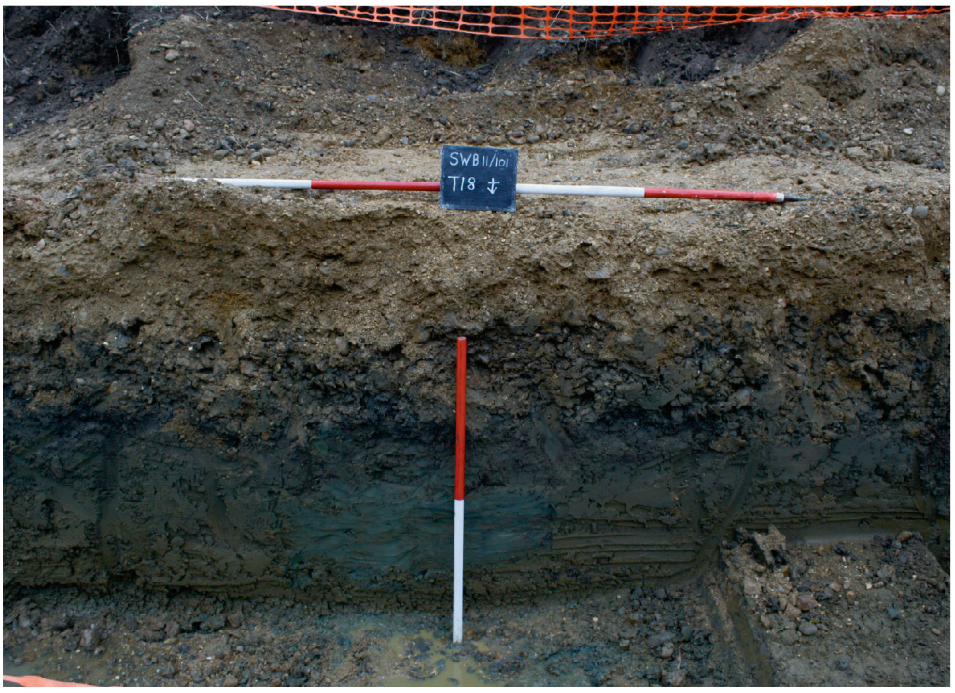

Plate 2. Trench 18 section, looking south, Scales: 2m, 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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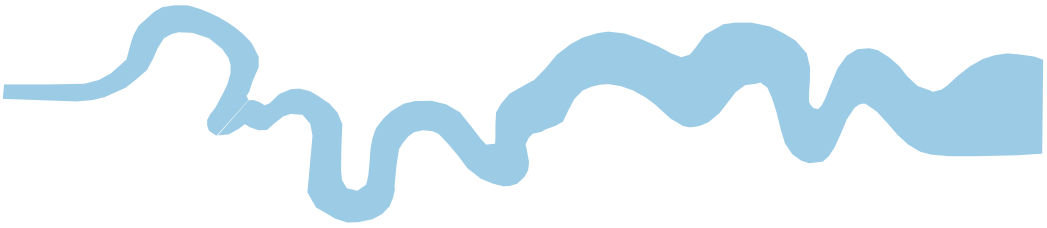
TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern	AD 1901
Victorian	AD 1837
Post Medieval	AD 1500
Medieval	AD 1066
Saxon	AD 410
Roman	AD 43
Iron Age	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC



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