

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Land to the rear of 27 Station Road,  
Cholsey, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Daniel Bray**

**Site Code: STC11/102**

**(SU 5872 8639)**

**Land to the rear of 27 Station Road, Cholsey,  
Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Hicks Developments Ltd**

by DanielBray  
ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices  
Ltd

SiteCodeSTC11/102

**January 2012**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land to the rear of 27 Station Road, Cholsey, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 5872 8639

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 17th January 2012

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Daniel Bray

**Site code:** STC 11/102

**Area of site:** c. 156sq m

**Summary of results:** The footprint of new building was stripped to chalk natural to reveal a shallow ditch, two gullies and a posthole which were excavated and recorded. The sparse dating evidence comprising a few sherds of possible probable medieval pottery and a little brick/tile suggests the ditch and other features are of medieval or later date.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 20.01.12 Steve Preston✓ 20.01.12
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# Land to the rear of 27 Station Road, Cholsey, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Daniel Bray

Report 11/102

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at on land to the rear of 27 Station Road, Cholsey, Oxfordshire (SU 5872 8639) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Creek, of Hicks Developments Limited, 15 Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4JB.

Planning permission (P11/W0453) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the erection of a new house on the site. This is an extension of the Doveside development which consists of five houses at 25 Station Road, immediately north of the present site. Due to the potential disturbance of below-ground archaeological features a condition has been attached to the planning permission requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of ground works. An evaluation of the adjacent site to the north (Taylor 2010) identified several features of archaeological interest and this site was therefore considered to have moderate archaeological potential.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, and based on a brief supplied by him (Oram 2011). The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Bray and Chris Crabb on 17th January 2012. The site code is STC 11/102.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the village of Cholsey, on land east of Station Road (Fig. 2). Cholsey itself lies *c.*3km south-west of Wallingford. At the time of the watching brief, the turf and topsoil had been removed across the area. The underlying geology is Lower Chalk, a porous poorly-bonded calcareous silt (BGS 1980). The site lies at a height of 47–48m above Ordnance Datum, (aOD) slightly higher than Station Road, with a slight slope on the access track from the previous development, but is generally flat across the area, at 47.8m aOD



## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential for the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2011) drawing on the results of an earlier evaluation and watching brief on the adjacent site (Fig. 3) (Taylor 2010; MUNDIN 2011). In summary, the area in which the site lies is a modern extension of the village. It lies at some distance south-east of the parish church, which is usually considered to be at the historic focus of a settlement, and various medieval deposits have been recorded close by the church (Coles 2005). Cholsey has late Saxon origins and was an important centre at that time, with St Mary's Church thought to be associated with King Æthelred from AD986 (Blair 1994, 114; Brigg *et al.* 1986). The village is mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086 (Williams and Martin 2002) and a Benedictine Abbey was founded in 986. Remains of this lie at a distance to the south-west of the site. However a recent watching brief at The Elms, to the immediate west of the abbey earthworks revealed no archaeological deposits or finds (Dawson 2009).

Of more immediate relevance to the current development is that the site lies not far to the west of the projected line of the Roman road from Dorchester to Silchester (Margary 1973; Henig and Booth 2000). A variety of Roman coins have been recorded from several locations within a 200m radius. The evaluation of the plot to the north revealed a number of linear features, mostly without dating evidence, but as a small quantity of Roman pottery was recovered, they have been tentatively interpreted as field boundaries dating to that period (Taylor 2010). A subsequent watching brief on that site revealed nothing of archaeological significance as the works in the main did not penetrate to the relevant depth (MUNDIN 2011). A watching brief on a site on Honey Lane to the east revealed only modern deposits (Bennett 2007).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This was to involve the examination of all areas affected by intrusive groundworks. In this case it involved a ground reduction to the level of natural chalk and area encompassing the footprint of the new building.

## **Results**

The supervised ground reduction beneath the topsoil was undertaken by mechanical excavator with a bladed bucket on to the chalk natural at a depth of 0.85m (Pls 1 and 2). The almost-square area excavated covered the full footprint of the new building (an area of 156 sq m). The stratigraphy observed across the excavated site

comprised a dark brown humic topsoil, over a dark brown clayey silt subsoil above a dark grey calcareous clay subsoil above chalk

The area examined revealed a small number of features, all sealed by the lower subsoil and directly cutting the natural chalk (Figs 4 and 5). Ditch 1=4 was aligned E-W and measured 1.76m wide and had a depth of 0.16m, filled with (53). This produced two sherds of pottery, possibly medieval in date and an undated piece of ceramic building material. This ditch had been cut by a later gully (3=5=7) aligned NE-SW. Section 7 revealed this gully to be 0.83m wide and to a depth of 0.34m, although it was much shallower further south. It was filled with (59 and 60) which produced small fragments of animal bone. This feature produced no datable finds but has to be medieval or later. It appeared to terminate at the point where it cut into ditch 1. Parallel to ditch 1 was a shallow gully (6=8) which measured 0.41m wide and 0.09m in depth. Its relationship with gully 5 was unclear and it produced no finds.

In the south-west corner of the site a small pit or posthole (2) was fully excavated (0.65m diameter, 0.17m deep), but its single fill (54) produced only a small piece of undatable ceramic building material.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Jane Timby*

The archaeological watching brief resulted in the recovery of four sherds of pottery and one piece of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 25g from two defined features. The pieces are all small bodysherds, although with quite fresh edges. Two sherds show a fresh break.

The two sherds from ditch 1 (fill 53) are probably of medieval date. They are plain with quite thin walls and a sandy fabric. Accompanying these is a larger fragment with flat grey-black surfaces and red-brown core which is probably a piece of CBM but not datable. The only ceramic fragment from pit 2 is a very small oxidized chip contained rounded quartz sand which is probably pottery rather than CBM but cannot be dated.

This is a small group of pottery which appears to document activity at the site in the medieval period.

### Catalogue

1. One bodysherd, thin-walled sandy ware. Weight: 3g. Date: ? medieval. Ditch 1 (53).
2. Two small joining bodysherds (fresh break). Brown sandy ware. Weight: 4g. Date: ? medieval. Ditch 1 (53).
3. One fragment of ceramic building material (CBM). Hard sandy fabric. Weight: 18g. Undated but probably medieval or post-medieval Ditch 1 (53)
4. One small chip of pottery or CBM. Weight: 0.25g. Undated. Post hole 2 (54)

### *Animal Bone* by Ceri Falys

A very small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from two contexts: just 17 pieces of bone were present, weighing 12g (Appendix 2). The preservation of the remains was poor, with a high degree of fragmentation and cortical exfoliation, which greatly hindered identification. It was not possible to identify any of the fragments to species. The single piece of bone from pit/posthole 2 (54) was from a medium-sized animal (sheep/goat or pig) and several of the 16 small fragments from gully context (60) refit into a portion of skull from a medium to large sized animal. No further information could be derived from these poorly preserved remains.

### *Charred plant remains* by Joanna Pine

Two soil samples of 10L each were recovered from posthole 2 and gully slot 7. The samples were wet sieved and the flots recovered using a 0.25mm mesh. Apart from a few unidentified wood charcoal fragments, no charred plant remains were recovered. A small fragment of brick or tile came from posthole 2.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief identified a small number of linear boundaries across the site. The features are tentatively dated to the medieval period, or later on the basis of ditch 1 producing two small fragments of pottery. Due to the small quantity and the abraded nature of the pottery, it can not be regarded as securely dating the feature and could be residual sherds in a post-medieval feature. The other two gullies were not dateable although gully 3 appeared to cut the ditch giving a small stratigraphic sequence. The presence of these features could indicate medieval or later field systems. They do not relate to the alignments of the boundaries revealed directly to the north which were tentatively dated to the Roman period. The fills of the Roman features were lighter and more leached than those observed in the current site, which were dark, and, it might therefore be suggested, relatively more recent. It is noted that these boundaries are on the same alignment as extant boundaries in the area though whether this implies a modern origin or that some of the extant boundaries are respecting earlier land division, is not entirely clear. A small pit or posthole found in the SW corner of the site was undated except that it contained a small fragment of brick or tile.

## **References**

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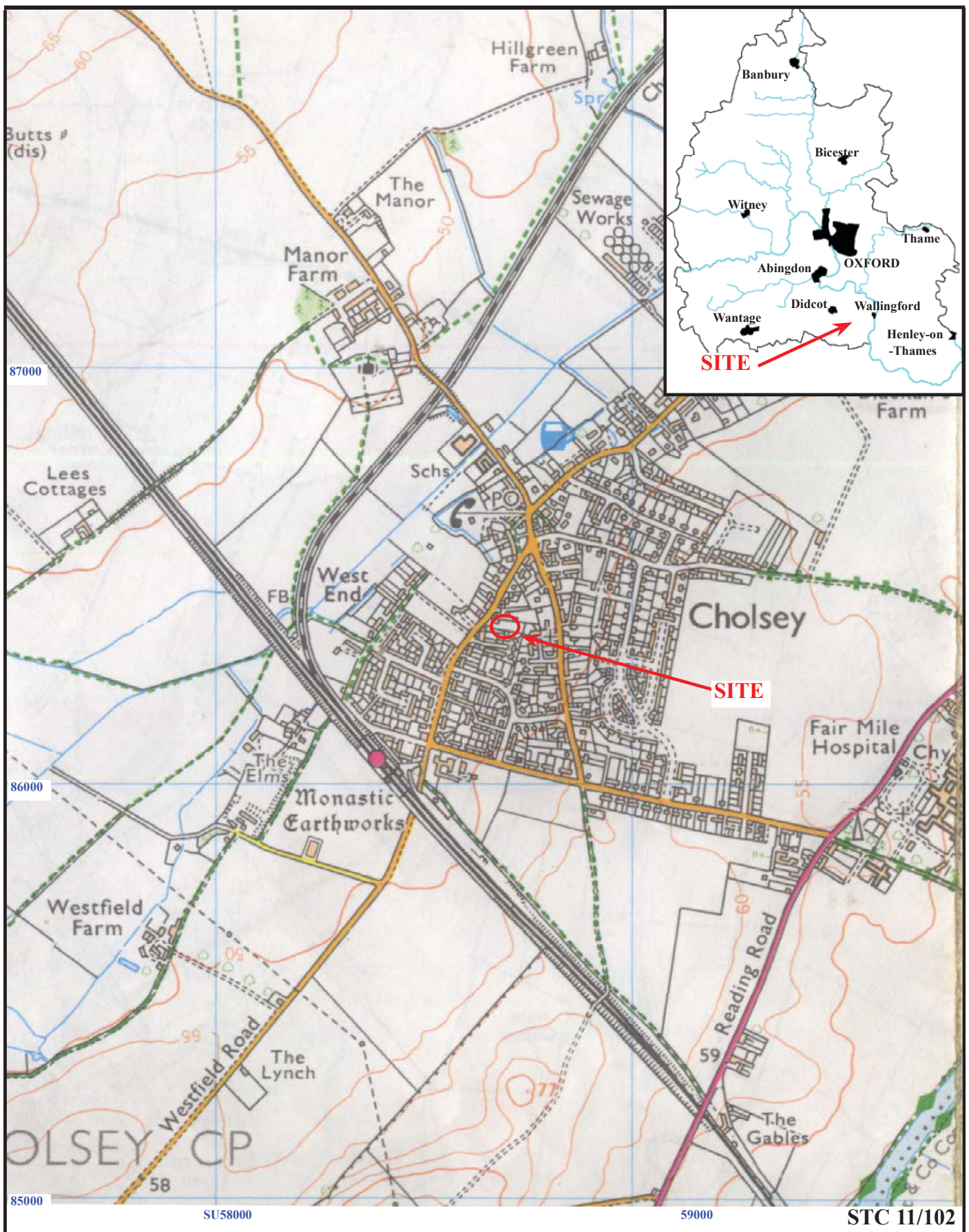
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## Appendix 1: Feature details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit(s)</i>	<i>Feature type</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Date</i>
	50	Topsoil		
	51	subsoil		
	52	subsoil		
1	53	Ditch	Same as 4	Medieval?
2	54	Pit/posthole	Fully excavated	Roman or later
3	55	Gully	Cuts [4]; same as 5, 7	Medieval or later?
4	56	Gully	Same as 1; Cut by [3]	Medieval?
5	57	Gully	Relationship uncertain with [6]; same as 3, 7	Medieval or later?
6	58	Gully	Relationship uncertain with [5]; same as 8	
7	59, 60	Gully	Same as 3, 5	Medieval or later?
8	61	Gully	Same as 6	

## Appendix 2: Inventory of animal bone

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>No. Frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Small</i>	<i>Unidentified</i>
2	54			-	1	-	-
7	60	16	11		16	-	-
Total		17	12	-	-	-	-



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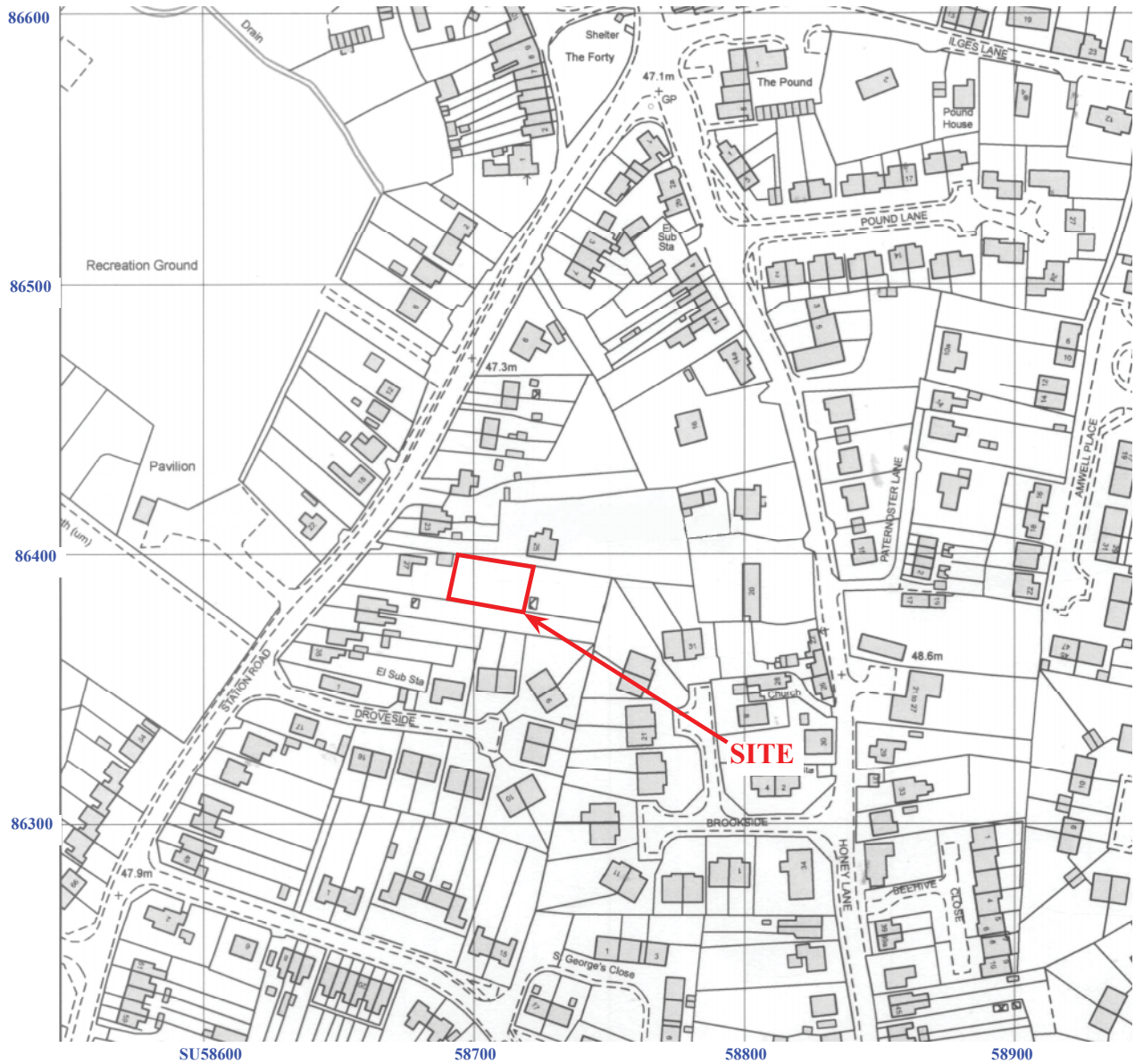
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Figure 1. Location of site within Cholsey and Oxfordshire.

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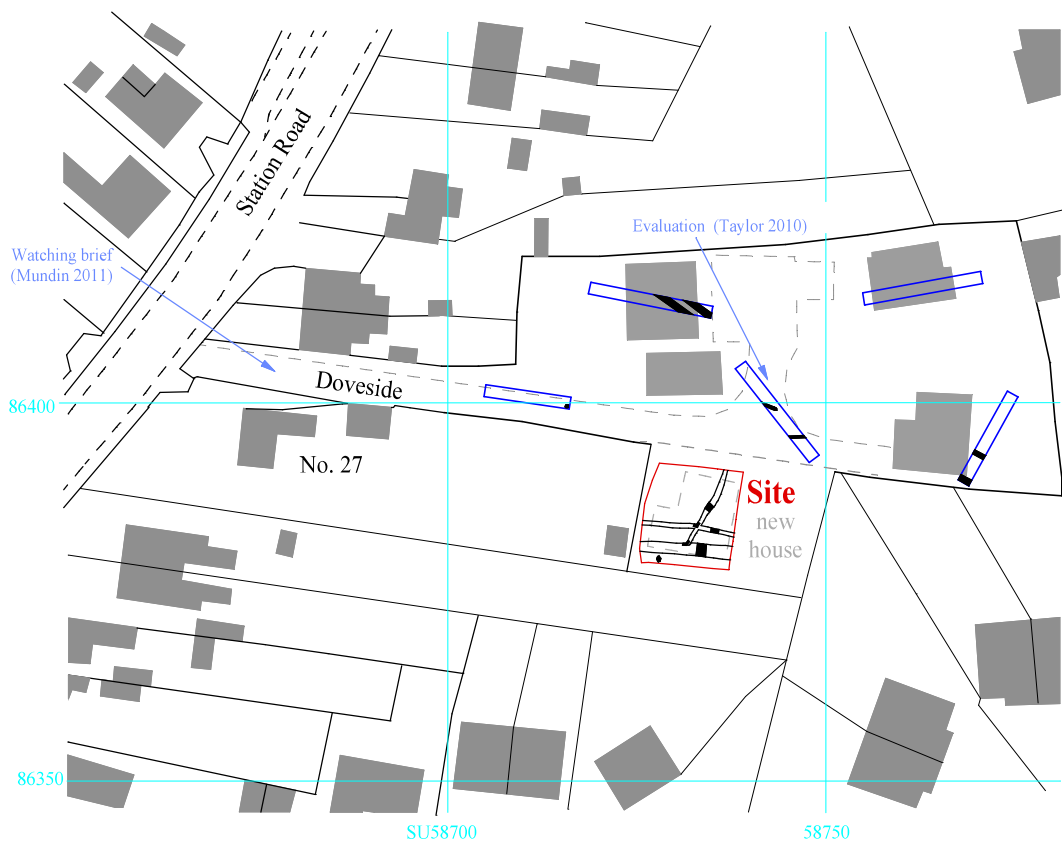
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Station Road, prior to recent redevelopment.

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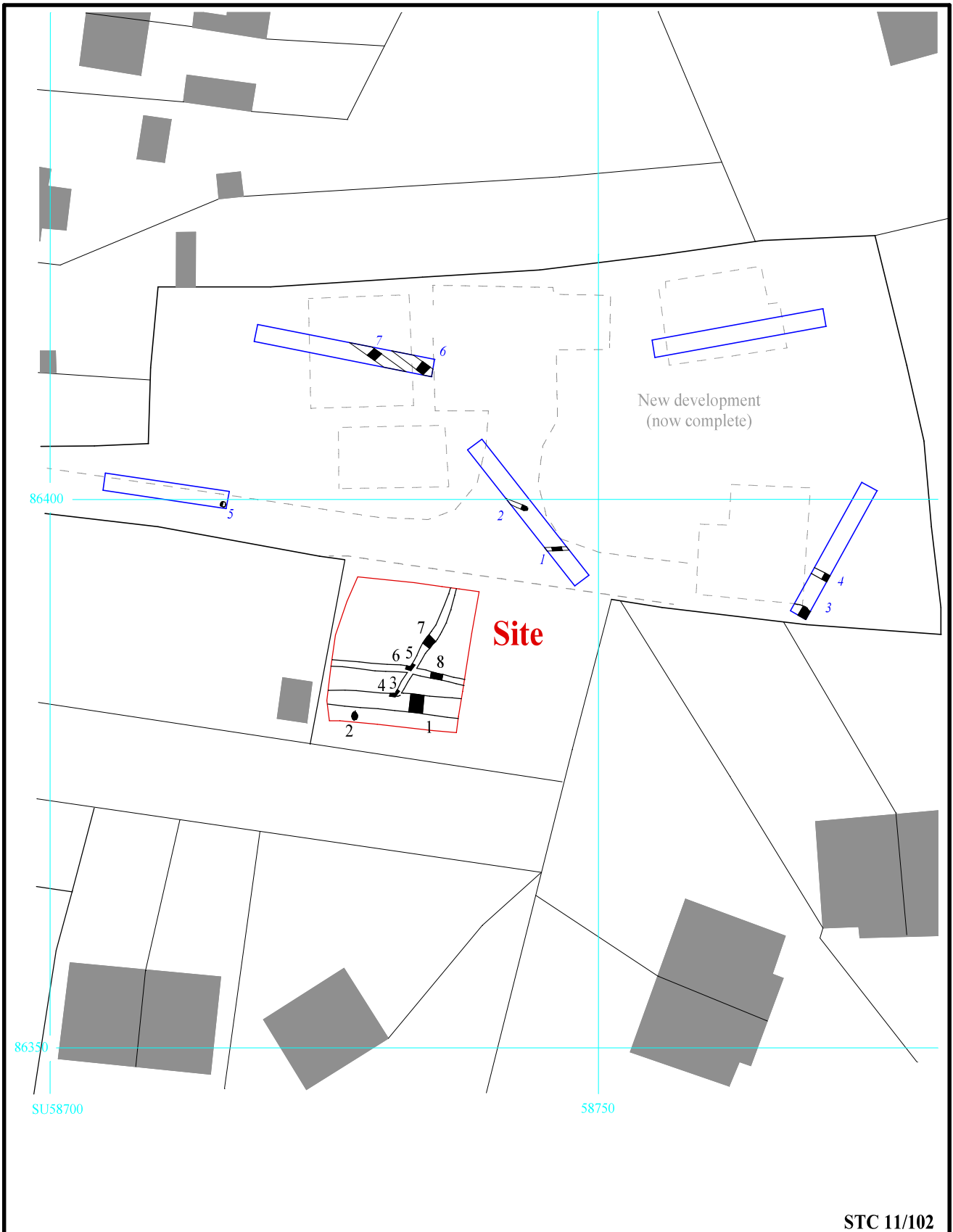
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Figure 3. Areas observed as groundworks.



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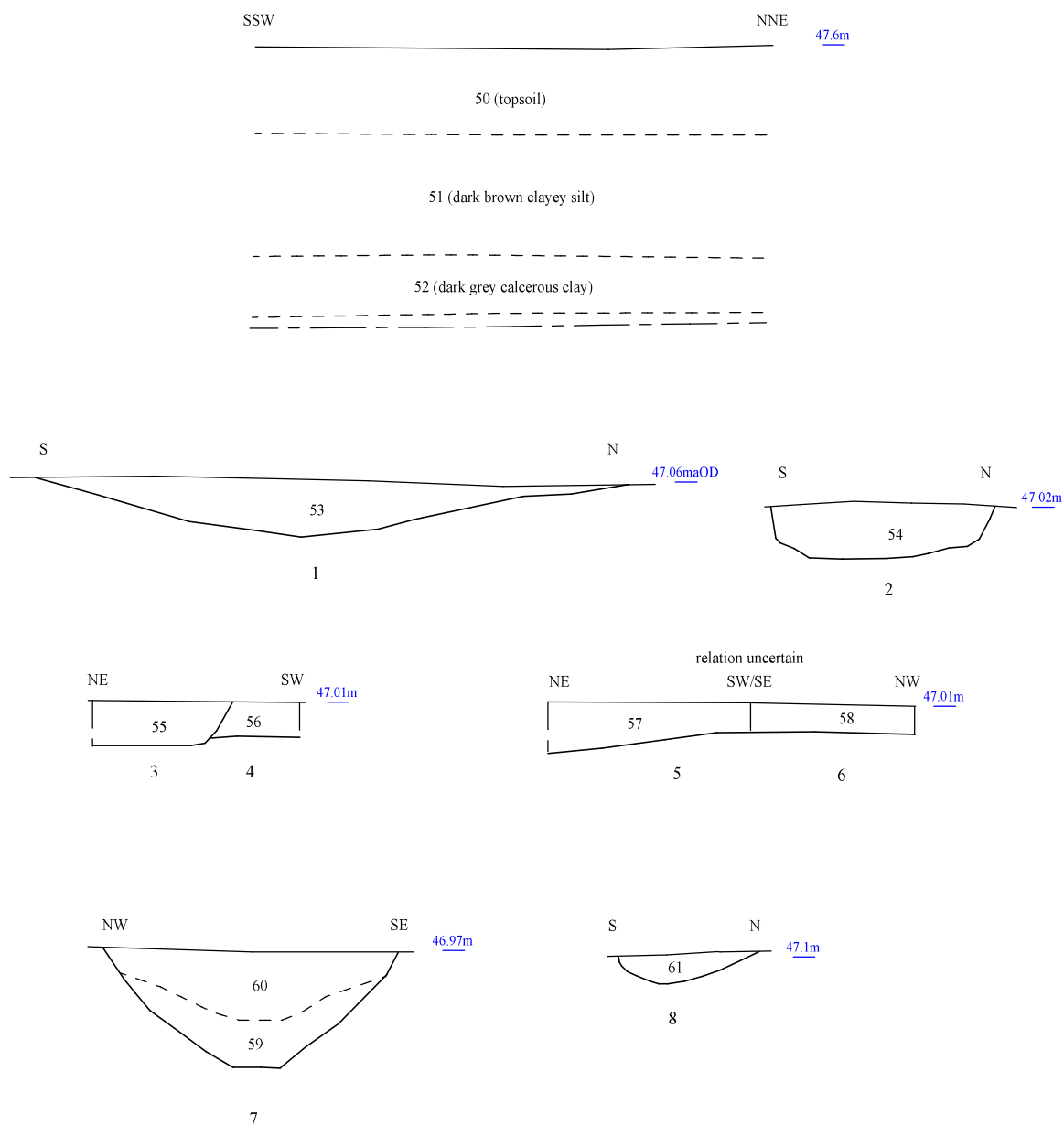
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Figure 4. Detailed plan of features identified.



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### Site stratigraphy



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Figure 5. Sections.



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Plate 1. General view, looking west across slot 1 and slot 3/4.



Plate 2. Ditch section (slot 1), looking west, Scales: 2m and 0.1m.

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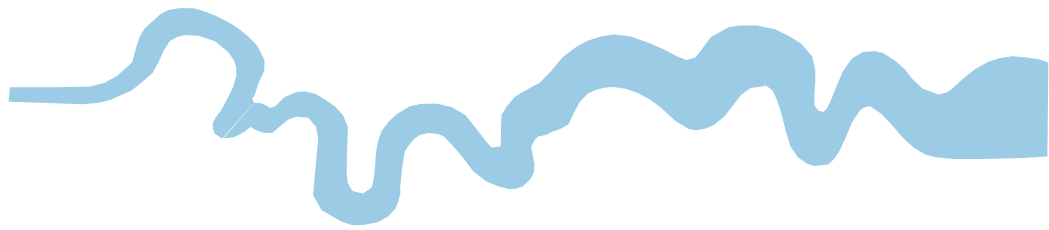
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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