THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

SOUTH

Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex

Archaeological Evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Site Code: NWBBHF12

(TL 4854 0855)

Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Vera Acquisition Ltd

by SeanWallis

ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices

Ltd

SiteCodeNWBBHF12

November 2012

Summary

Site name: Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex

Grid reference: TL 4854 0855

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 6th–7th November 2012

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: NWBBHF12

Area of site: *c*. 0.6 ha

Summary of results: Although the site had been affected by recent industrial activity, topsoil and subsoil survived across much of the area, sometimes buried beneath Tarmac or made ground. Despite this, no archaeological finds or features were recorded during the evaluation.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 12.11.12 Steve Preston✓ 12.11.12

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Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex
An archaeological evaluation

by Sean Wallis

Report 12/181

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex (Fig. 1) (TL 4854 0855). The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Cooke of Dovetail Architects, on behalf of Vera Acquisition Ltd, PO Box 49608, Suite 1905, Indigo Icon, Jumeriah Lakes Towers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Planning permission (PL/EPF/1370/10) has been gained from Epping Forest District Council to demolish the existing structures on the site and construct eight new residential houses, along with associated garages, access roads and car parking areas. The permission is subject to a standard condition (2) relating to archaeology, which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work prior to the commencement of groundworks. Ms Laura Belton, of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Team, has indicated that this should take the form of a field evaluation, by means of trial trenching, in the first instance. Based on the results of this evaluation, further mitigation might be required.

As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits which could be damaged or destroyed by the proposed re-development of the area, a field evaluation was undertaken to determine the archaeological potential of the site, and to help formulate a mitigation strategy as necessary. This is in accordance with *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5, 2010), and the District Council's policies on archaeology, although it is acknowledged that PPS5 has been superseded by the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012).

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Laura Belton of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Team, who act as advisers to the District Council on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Felicity Howell and Sean Wallis on the 6th and 7th November 2012, and the site code is NWBBHF12. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Epping Forest Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies on the south side of Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex, and is accessed via a track which runs south from the road known as Harlow Common (western end) or Foster Street (eastern end). The site is located on the south-eastern outskirts of Harlow, about 4km from the historic core of Old Harlow, and less than 200m

east of the M11 motorway. All the structures on the site had been demolished before the start of the project and, as a result, the site consisted of an irregular shaped parcel of land, large parts of which were covered in Tarmac. The site is relatively flat and lies at a height of approximately 96m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Boulder Clay, and this was confirmed in all the evaluation trenches as a mid yellow brown clay with occasional gravel inclusions (BGS 1981).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Ms Laura Belton of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Team (ECCHET 2012). In summary, the potential stems from the discovery of several medieval kilns been found in the surrounding area (known as Potter Street), and it is possible that similar evidence of pottery manufacture may survive on the site. Kilns have been identified to the west of Brent House Farm, at Hoggs Farm, to the north of Harlow Common, and to the north-west of Church Langley. Church Langley has also produced prehistoric finds and a small Roman cremation cemetery. There is also documentary evidence regarding a cemetery close to Foster Street. More broadly, Harlow is noted as the site of a Late Iron Age and Roman temple, and the town has Saxon roots. The site is, however, at a substantial distance from the medieval core of the town.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. The work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to a full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

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

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

to determine if archaeological deposits associated with medieval pottery production are present; and

to determine if archaeological deposits associated with the documented cemetery on Foster Street are present.

It was proposed to dig nine 20m long trenches in those parts of the site which will be most affected by the new development. All the trenches were to be 1.6m wide, and excavated by a 360°-type machine fitted with a

toothless ditching bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Machine excavation was to be taken down to the top of the natural geology or the top of the relevant archaeological level. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

All nine trenches were excavated, although it was necessary to move some of them slightly from their proposed positions due to the presence of a telephone pole and several geotechnical test pits which had been left open (Fig. 3). The trenches varied between 19.70m and 20.60m in length, and were between 0.45m and 0.85m deep. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. Numerous service trenches, land drains and areas of modern disturbance were noted during the evaluation, but were not recorded in detail.

Trench 1

This trench was orientated approximately WSW–ENE, and was 20m long and up to 0.75m deep. Up to 0.27m of modern made ground lay above a buried topsoil horizon (50) which was about 0.22m thick. A subsoil deposit of mid greyish brown silty clay (51), up to 0.2m thick, was recorded beneath the buried soil. The subsoil lay directly above the natural geology. Two service trenches were noted within the trench, but there were no archaeological finds or features.

Trench 2 (Pl. 1)

Trench 2 was aligned approximately N–S, and was 20.30m long and up to 0.74m deep. The trench was positioned in an area which appeared to have been previously used as a dump and, as a result, there was up to 0.52m of modern made ground above the buried topsoil horizon (50). The topsoil was only 0.13m thick, and lay above 0.05m of subsoil (51). The natural clay geology was recorded immediately beneath the subsoil. No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the trench which contained a land drain and a small area of modern truncation.

Trench 3

This trench was 19.70m long and up to 0.85m deep, and was aligned approximately SW–NE. A thick (0.60m) layer of modern made ground lay above the buried topsoil horizon (50), which was 0.2m thick. This lay above 0.05m of subsoil (51), which in turn lay directly above the natural clay geology (Fig. 4). Two areas of modern disturbance were observed, along with four service trenches or land drains. The trench contained no archaeological finds or features.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned W–E, and was 20.50m long and up to 0.76m deep. Up to 0.43m of modern made ground was recorded immediately above the buried topsoil horizon (50). The topsoil was 0.21m thick and lay above 0.10m of subsoil (51). The natural clay geology was observed immediately beneath the subsoil layer. One area of modern truncation was noted within the trench, along with a land drain. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Trench 5

This trench was orientated approximately WSW–ENE, and was 20.20m long and up to 0.80m deep. The topsoil horizon (50) was buried below up to 0.30m of modern made ground. The topsoil was 0.30m thick, and lay above 0.14m of subsoil (51). The natural clay geology was encountered immediately beneath the subsoil. Two land drains were observed in the trench, along with an area of modern truncation. No archaeological finds of features were recorded.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned approximately WSW–ENE, and was 19.80m long and 0.70m deep. Along most of the trench the stratigraphy consisted of 0.36m of modern made ground and Tarmac above 0.2m of buried topsoil (50), which lay above 0.10m of subsoil (51). The subsoil lay directly above the natural clay geology, patches of which had been stained greenish grey, presumably by hydrocarbons leaching down from the Tarmac. However, the south-western end of the trench had obviously been truncated in the past, and the made ground lay immediately above the natural clay. Two large areas of modern truncation were noted within the trench, which contained no archaeological finds or features.

Trench 7

This trench was 20.60m long and up to 0.45m deep, and was orientated approximately NNW–SSE. This trench was excavated an area which had formerly been occupied by one of the industrial buildings which previously stood on the site. Some concrete footings associated with this building were noted within the trench, and the whole area had been severely truncated to the extent that made ground and demolition rubble (0.34m thick) lay directly above the natural clay (Fig. 4). Areas of the natural geology had been stained greenish grey by contamination. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was orientated approximately NNW–SSE, and was 20.20m long and 0.52m deep. Modern made ground and Tarmac, up to 0.42m thick, lay directly above the natural clay geology. Areas of the clay had been stained greenish grey by contamination, particularly at the northern end of the trench. One land drain was noted within the trench, which contained no archaeological finds or features.

Trench 9 (Pl. 2)

This trench was aligned approximately NW–SE, and was 20.20m long and 0.52m deep. Up to 0.20m of Tarmac and modern made ground lay above a buried topsoil layer (50) which was about 0.17m thick. The topsoil lay above 0.10m of subsoil (51), which in turn lay above the natural clay geology. The natural in the southern part of the trench had been heavily stained by contamination. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Finds

No archaeological finds were recovered during the evaluation as all the material observed within the trenches was clearly modern in date.

Conclusion

The evaluation at Brent House Farm successfully investigated those parts of the site which will be most affected by the re-development. Whilst there had been some truncation and disturbance resulting from the previous activity on the site, particularly in the western part, in most places the original topsoil and subsoil horizons had largely survived intact, albeit buried beneath Tarmac and / or made ground. Despite this, no archaeological features were recorded, and no finds recovered. On the basis of these results, the site is considered to have negligible archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 1981, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 240, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth

ECCHET, 2012, 'Archaeological Evaluation at Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald', Essex County Council Historic Environment Team brief, Chelmsford

PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, Planning Policy Statement 5, London (TSO)

NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department of Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	20.00	1.60	0.75	0-0.27m made ground, 0.27-0.49m buried topsoil (50), 0.49-0.69m, subsoil (51); 0.69m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).
2	20.30	1.60	0.74	0-0.52m made ground, 0.52-0.65m buried topsoil (50), 0.65-0.70m, subsoil (51); 0.70m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology). **[Pl. 1]**
3	19.70	1.60	0.85	0-0.60m made ground, 0.60-0.80m buried topsoil (50), 0.80-0.85m, subsoil (51); 0.85m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).
4	20.50	1.60	0.76	0-0.43m made ground, 0.43-0.64m buried topsoil (50), 0.64-0.74m, subsoil (51); 0.74m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).
5	20.20	1.60	0.80	0-0.30m made ground, 0.30-0.60m buried topsoil (50), 0.60-0.74m, subsoil (51); 0.74m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).
6	19.80	1.60	0.70	0-0.36m Tarmac and made ground, 0.36-0.56m buried topsoil (50), 0.56-0.66m, subsoil (51); 0.66m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).
7	20.60	1.60	0.45	0-0.34m made ground; 0.34m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).
8	20.20	1.60	0.52	0-0.42m Tarmac and made ground; 0.42m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).
9	20.20	1.60	0.52	0-0.20m Tarmac and made ground, 0.20-0.37m buried topsoil (50), 0.37-0.47m, subsoil (51); 0.47m+ mid yellow brown clay (natural geology).**[Pl. 2]**

ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD/ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

SUMMARY SHEET

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Site name/Address: Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex</td></tr>
<tr><td>Parish: North Weald Bassett</td><td>District: Epping Forest</td></tr>
<tr><td>NGR: TL 4854 0855</td><td>Site Code: NWBBHF12</td></tr>
<tr><td>Type of Work: Evaluation</td><td>Site Director/Group: Sean Wallis, TVAS South</td></tr>
<tr><td>Date of Work: 6th–7th November 2012</td><td>Size of Area Investigated: 0.6 ha</td></tr>
<tr><td>Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Epping</td><td>Funding source: Developer (Vera Acquisition Ltd)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Further Seasons Anticipated?: No</td><td>Related HER Nos</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Final Report: Wallis, S, 2012, ‘Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, North Weald, Essex: an archaeological evaluation’, TVAS South report 12/181, Brighton</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Periods Represented: None</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:
Although the site had been affected by recent industrial activity, topsoil and subsoil survived across much of the area, sometimes buried beneath Tarmac or made ground. Despite this, no archaeological finds or features were recorded during the evaluation.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Previous Summaries/Reports: None</td></tr>
<tr><td>Author of Summary: S Wallis</td><td>Date of Summary: 09/11/2012</td></tr>
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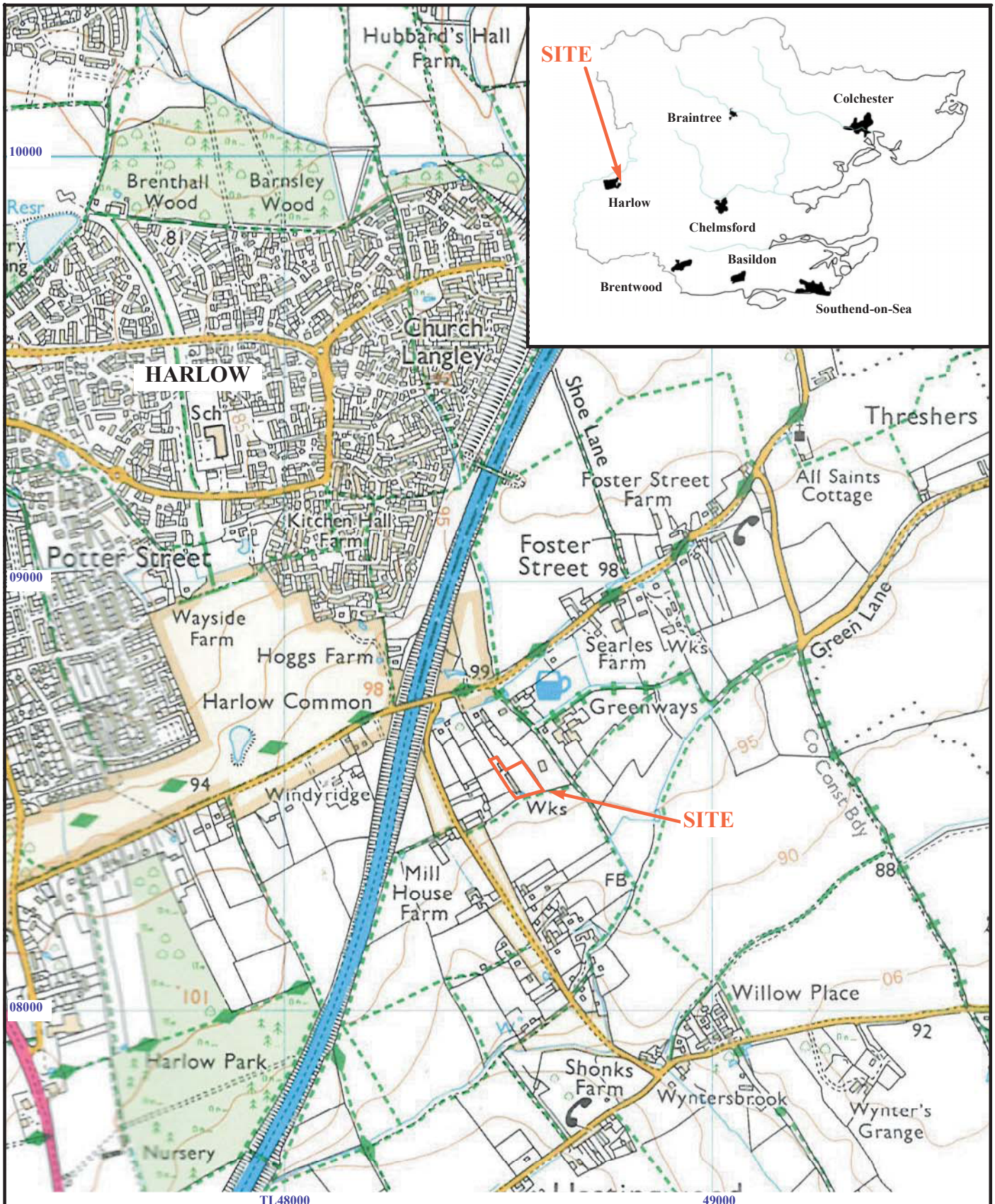

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Figure 1. Location of site within Harlow and Essex.

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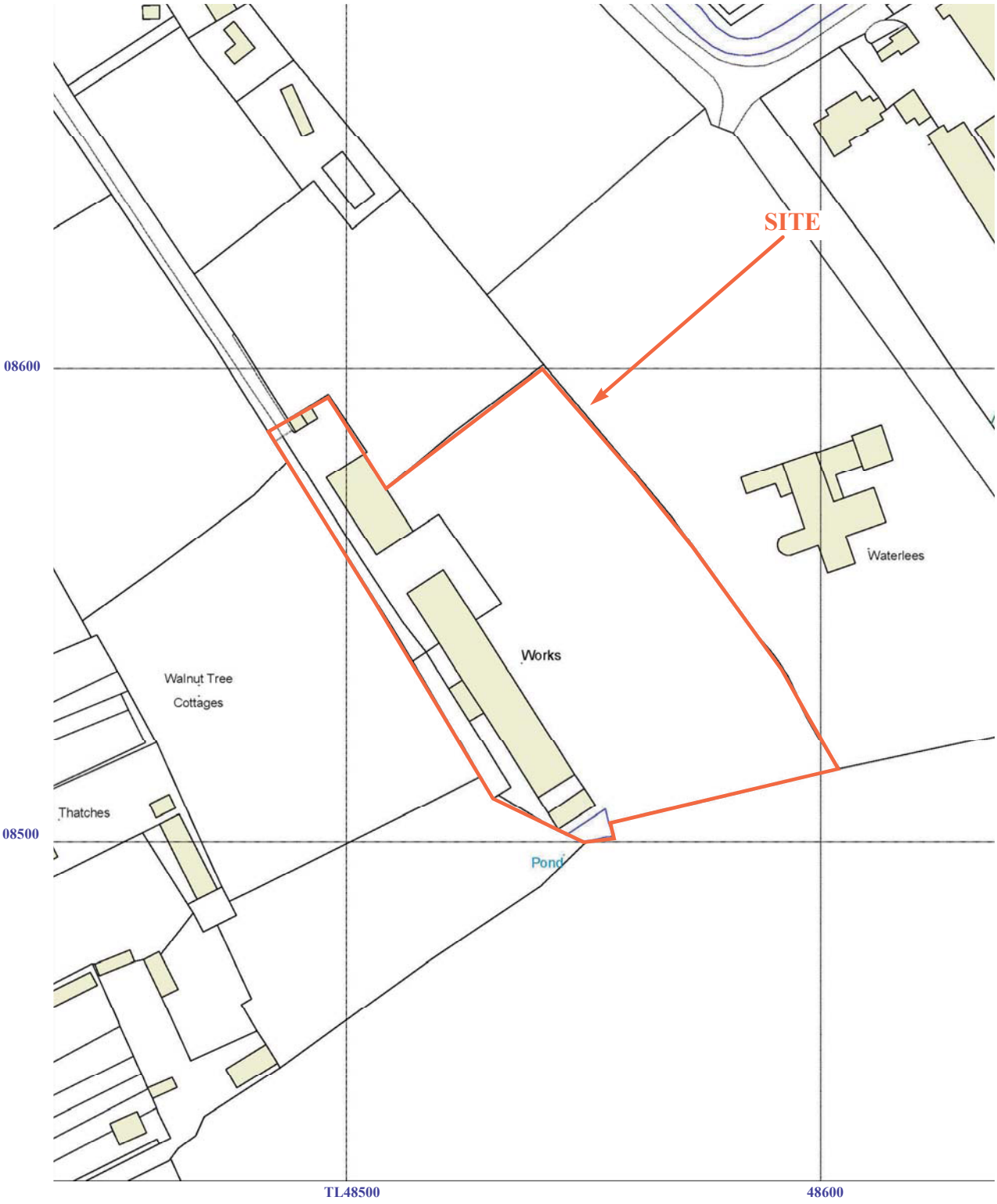

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping at 1:1250

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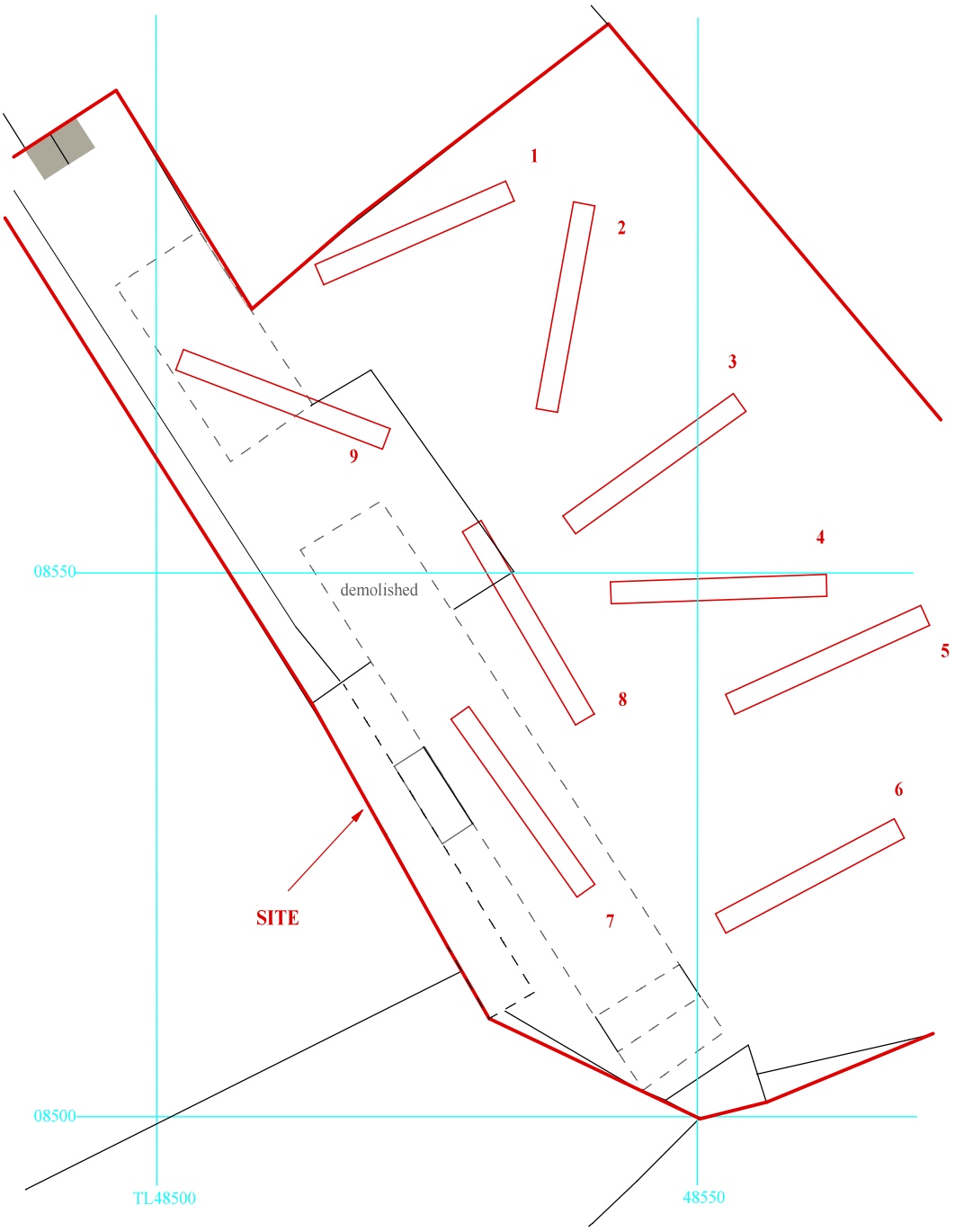

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 25m

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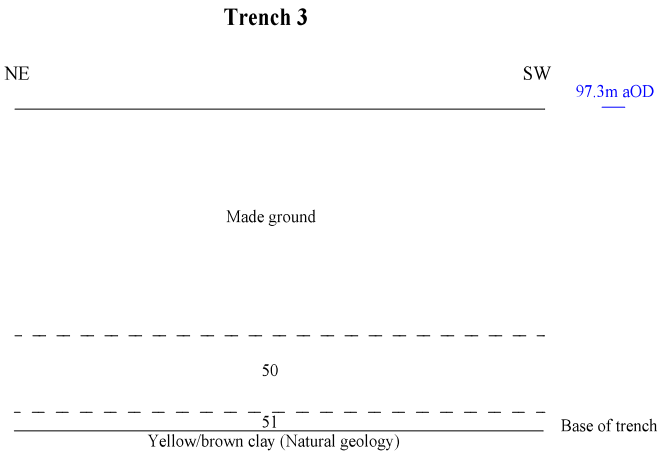

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Figure 4. Representative Sections.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 2, looking south, Scales: horizontal, 2m and 1m, vertical, 0.5m.

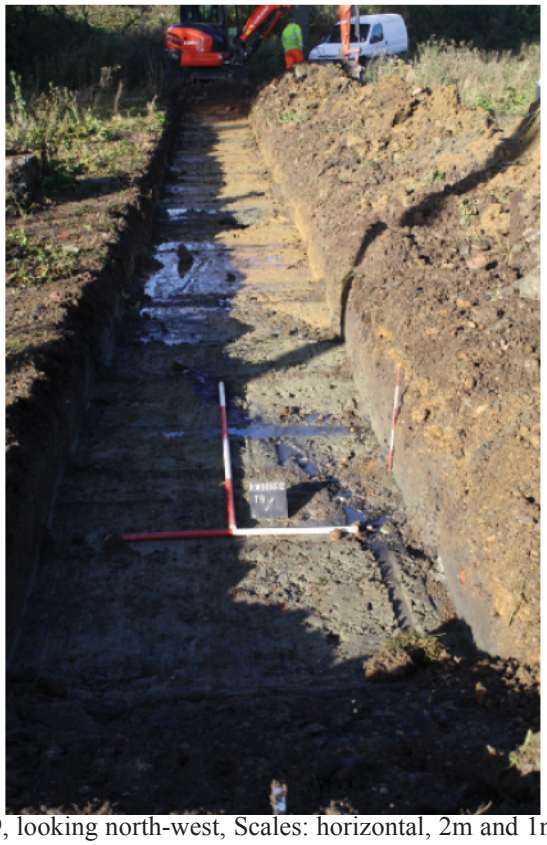

Plate 2. Trench 9, looking north-west, Scales: horizontal, 2m and 1m, vertical, 0.5m.

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Brent House Farm, Harlow Common, Essex, 2012
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Plates 1 and 2.

THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES SOUTH

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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