

Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Sean Wallis

Site Code KPM06/10

(SI) 8875 8142)

Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief For The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

by Sean Wallis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code KPM 06/10

March 2006

Summary

Site name: Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8875 8142

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 2nd March 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Sean Wallis

Site code: KPM 06/10

Summary of results: No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 06.03.06 Steve Preston ✓ 03.03.06
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Report 06/10

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8875 8142) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Deborah James, Landscape Officer for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, SL6 1RF. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead plans to continue refurbishment of Kidwells Park, including the planting of new trees, alteration of the footpath network and a number of new amenities (Fig. 4). The layout is considered to affect a possible Roman road whose projected line crosses the park (Fig. 2).

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald, of Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Sean Wallis on the 2nd March 2006 and the site code is KPM 06/10.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the centre of Maidenhead just to the north of the town centre with the A4 (Bad Goodsberg Way) on its southern boundary and Cookham Road to the east (Fig. 2). The site consists of a park with associated facilities such as tennis courts. The underlying geology consists of flood plain terrace river gravels (BGS 1990), and this was encountered in approximately half of the tree pits observed. The site lies at a height of c.25m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

In summary the archaeological potential of the site, as highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Ms Fiona MacDonald of Berkshire Archaeology, is derived from the possible course of a Roman road indicated on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899 and repeated in a map by Silver drawn in 1907 purporting to represent the town in 1830. The structure shows as a broad linear earthwork in the park aligned roughly north-south. The significance and destination of this road, if it exists, are unclear and it is not documented by Margary

(1955; 1973) nor the Viatores (1964), nor is it shown in the *Tabula Imperii Romani* (TIR 1983). The area of the site is shown as arable farmland on Rocque's map of 1760 (Fig. 3). None of these omissions are proof that the road does not exist, but they do at least cast some doubt on it. Although a geophysical survey carried out in 2005 confirmed the presence of the earthwork, it did not reveal any details about its structure and possible date (MT 2005). An archaeological watching brief carried out during phase of the refurbishment located a gravel layer corresponding with the earthwork, but similarly failed to confirm that it was a Roman road (Taylor 2005).

The site lies within an area of East Berkshire which is relatively rich in archaeological finds of prehistoric and Roman date (Ford 1987) although little is recorded for the locality of the park itself.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new planting. This was to involve examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping and the digging of holes for the new plants as necessary.

Results

A total of seven circular tree pits were hand dug, varying from 0.6m to 0.8m in diameter, along the projected course of the Roman road and its immediate vicinity (Fig. 5). The pits varied in depth from 0.44m to 0.55m, and the typical stratigraphy consisted of turf and topsoil onto greyish brown sandy silt subsoil onto sand and gravel, which probably represents the underlying natural geology. The sand and gravel was not observed in all the pits however, and it is interesting to note that in the three of the deepest pits (A, D and E) the subsoil layer, which contained fragments of brick, tile and late post-medieval pottery (not retained), was relatively thick. Where the sand and gravels were exposed, no archaeological finds or features were present. Tree pit D was positioned directly on the course of the proposed Roman road, and topsoil and subsoil were observed to a depth of 0.52m. Based on these results from the tree pits, it was decided not to monitor the proposed shrub beds as the depth of ground disturbance was likely to be minimal in comparison.

Finds

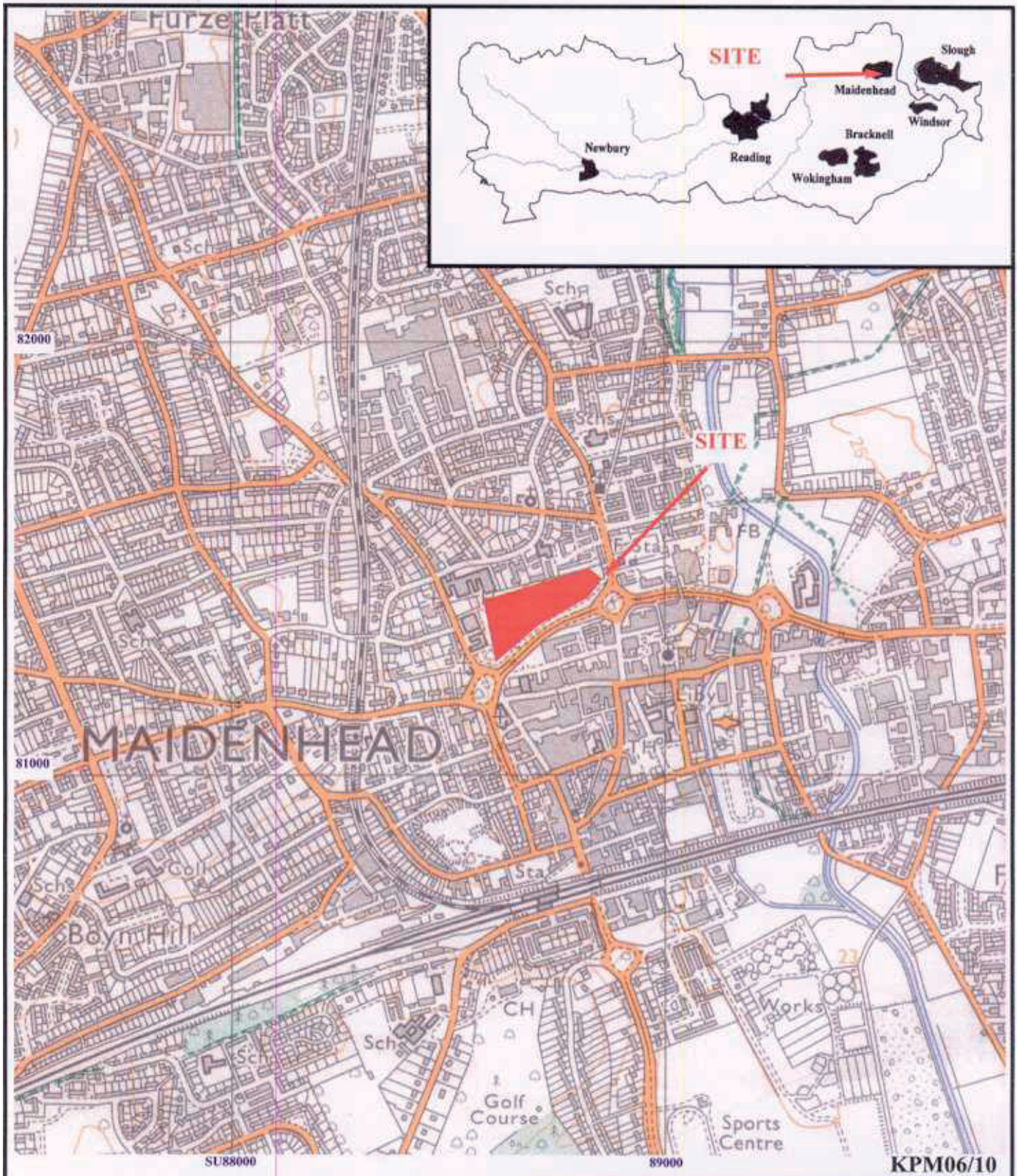
No finds of an archaeological nature were retrieved.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the various tree pits which were recorded during this watching brief it would appear that, if the earthwork does relate to a Roman road, it is possible that archaeological deposits are still present beneath the subsoil on the site. However, work carried out during the previous phase of refurbishment suggested that the structure may be of relatively modern date and may be, for example, no more than a local farm track (Taylor 2005). As considered in the archaeological background (above), the presence of a Roman road here is not considered by the leading authorities on the subject and an examination of historic maps shows that the projected course of this route is across undefined arable land in the 18th century (Fig. 3). It appears to correspond with field boundaries by the late 19th century and this suggests that this is an over-enthusiastic interpretation of the historic landscape on the part of the Ordnance Survey surveyors at that time. The case for the presence of a Roman road has not been proven.

References

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- Ford, S, 1987, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*, Berkshire County Council Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap 1, Reading
- Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain*, London
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- MT 2005, 'Maidenhead, Kidwells Park, report of ground and resistivity survey over possible Roman road', Minas Tirith Ltd (Archaeological Survey), Marlow
- Taylor, A, 2005, 'Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 05/13, Reading
- TIR, 1983, *Tabula Imperii Romani: Condate–Glevvum–Londinivm–Lvtetia*, London
- Viatores, The, 1964, *Roman Roads in the South East Midlands*, London



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An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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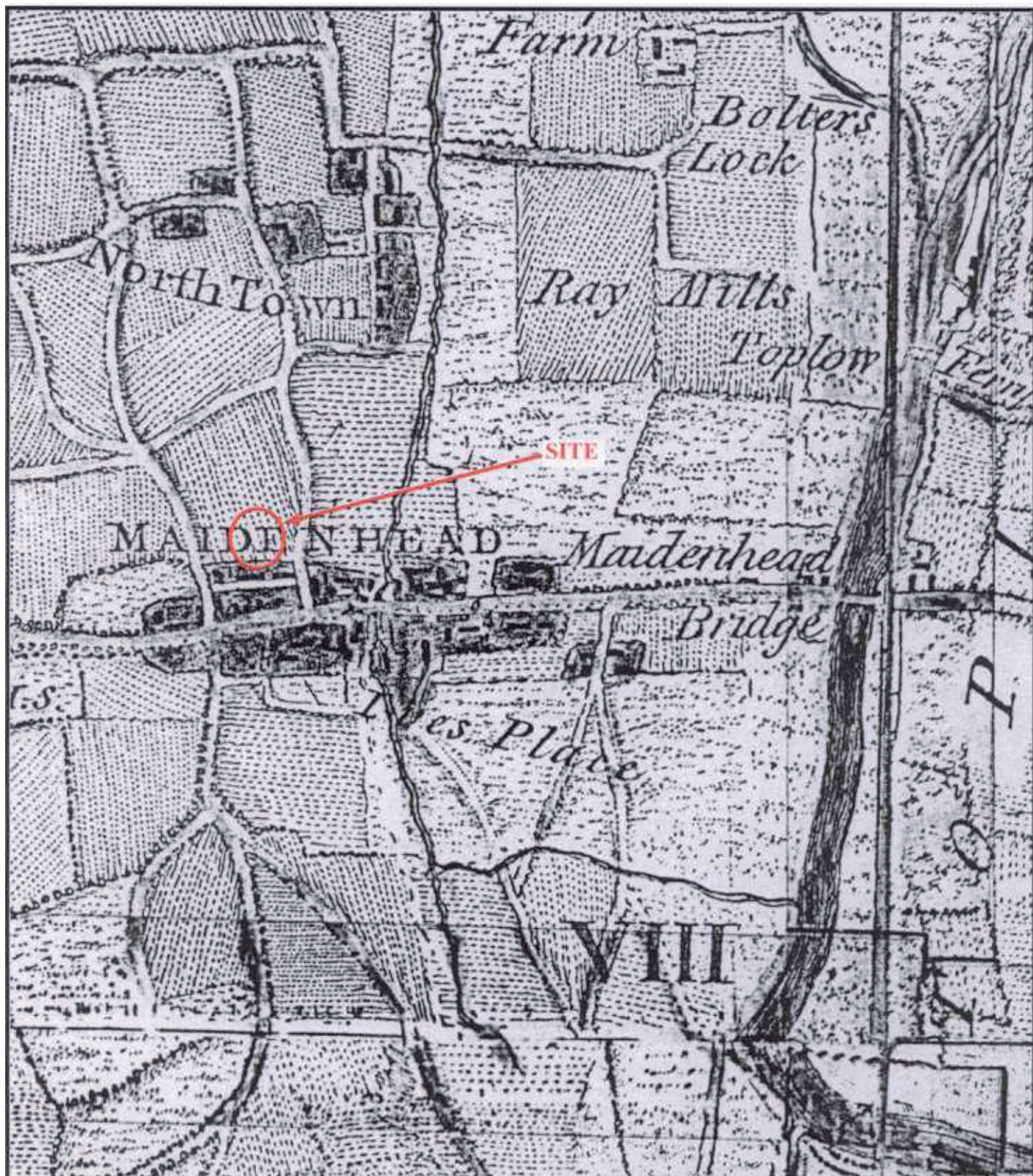
KPM 06/10

**Kidwells Park, Maidenhead, Berkshire, 2006
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 2. Location of site within Kidwells Park.

Scale: 1:2500

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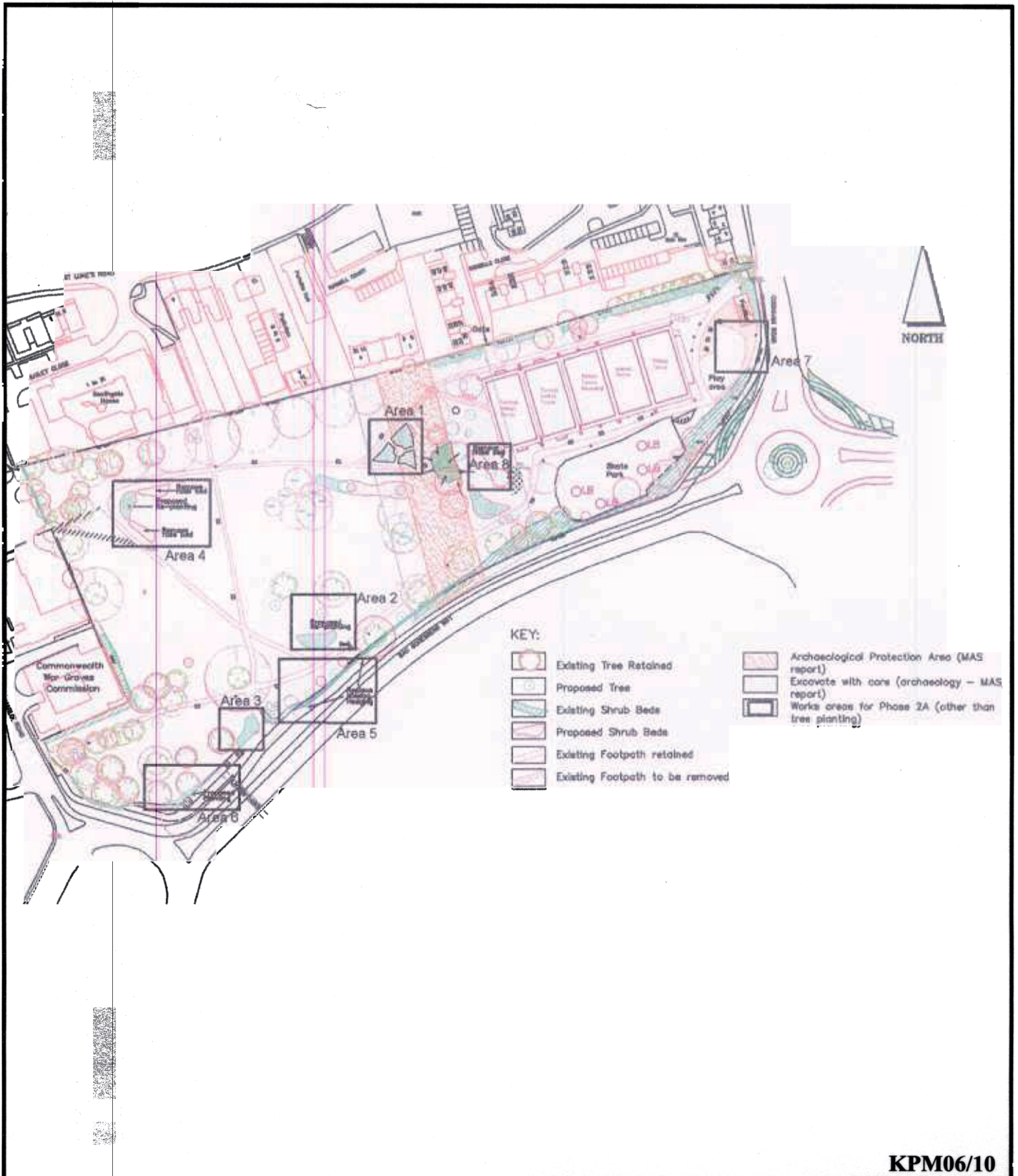


KPM06/10

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An Archaeological Watching Brief.

Figure 3. Rocque's Map of Berkshire 1760

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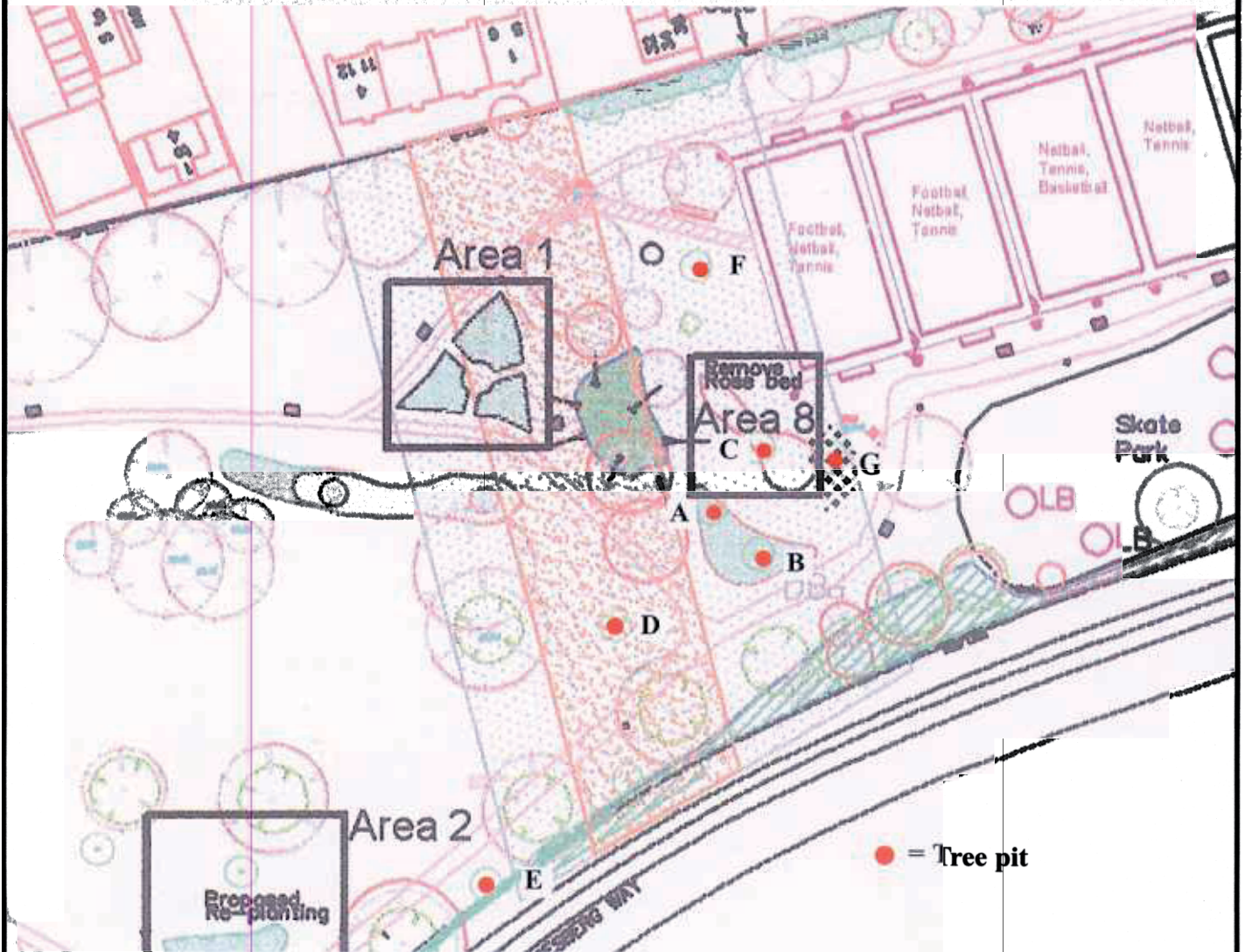
KPM06/10

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An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Map of Kidwells Park, showing details of planned refurbishment.

Scale : 1:1400

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KPM06/10

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An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 5. Detailed location showing tree pits observed.

Scale : 1:560

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