

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Hillview House, West Street,
Newbury, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Aiji Castle

Site Code: WSN10/01

(SU 4700 6740)

Hillview House, West Street Newbury, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For CgMs Consulting

by Aiji Castle

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WSN 10/01

November 2013

Summary

Site name: Hillview House, West Street, Newbury, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4700 6740

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 22nd October - 11th November 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Platt

Site code: WSN 10/01

Area of site: approx. 0.21ha

Summary of results: The watching brief confirmed that the majority of the foundations for the new building were relatively shallow and were located within modern made ground on the site. No archaeological features were observed during the watching brief and neither the archaeologically relevant horizon nor the natural geology was reached.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 28.11.13

Hillview House, West Street, Newbury, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 10/01b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Hillview House, West Street, Newbury, West Berkshire (SU 4700 6740) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sally Dicks of CgMs Consulting, 140 London Wall, London EC2Y 5DN, on behalf of Bewley Homes plc, Inhurst House, Brimpton Road, Baughurst, Hampshire RG26 5JJ.

Planning permission (APP/W0340/A/12/2184470) has been granted from West Berkshire Council at appeal for the construction of 42 residential units on the site with additional associated access and car parking. The consent is subject to a condition (14) requiring a programme of archaeological investigation prior to development. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) and the Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sarah Orr, Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Kyle Beaverstock between the 20th October and 11th November 2013 and the site code is WSN 10/01. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the northern end of Newbury town centre, near the old boundary between Newbury and the suburb of Speenhamland, on an irregular parcel of land (0.21ha) to the south of West Street (Figs 1 and 2). The site is bounded to the south by a car park and to the north by residential buildings and West Street. To the west lies a construction site and to the east light industrial buildings. The site is generally flat at around 77m above Ordnance Datum. The natural geology in the area is mapped as alluvium above gravel (BGS 1971) which was not observed or reached during the digging of building foundations.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area stems from the location of the site on the fringes of the historic core of medieval and post-medieval Newbury and an area of dense prehistoric occupation on the floor of the Kennet

Valley (WBAS 2006). This location has been demonstrated as being prolific in the presence of Mesolithic occupation sites and stray finds (Froom 1971; 2012) with material recovered from relatively close by (Sheridan *et al.*

1967). Peat and alluvial deposits including a peat-filled river palaeochannel were observed at Northcroft Lane c.100m to the south-west (Ford 2002).

Newbury, or the 'new market town' is not mentioned in Domesday Book (AD1086) but is mentioned in a grant dating to c. 1080 (Astill 1978), and may have been preceded by a large Saxon manor (*Ulvritone*). The location and extent of the pre-Norman settlement has not been ascertained. The town prospered in Medieval and early post-medieval times (Astill 1978) largely based on the wool trade. Evaluation at 53 Northbrook Street, c. 100m to the north, uncovered two pits, one dated to the Medieval period, and a structure consisting of a wall and floor of unknown date. Post-medieval landfill was also noted overlying waterlogged deposits and a possible channel (Hammond 2007). Recent excavations in the Parkway revealed medieval property boundaries and back-land settlement activity. These included a ditch and fence boundaries dating from the late 12th century, and leather tanning pits of later medieval date. These were sealed by 1.5m of soil, which was dumped to raise the ground above what was considered a wet, low-lying area.

The development site lies on what is thought to be the margins of the medieval town, close to the boundary with the separate historic parish/settlement of Speenhamland. The line of the Speenhamland ditch, one of the main historic drainage features, could run across the site, and waterlogged deposits might be present.

An evaluation on the site in 2010 (Pine and Weale, 2010) revealed numerous pits and ditches of medieval date cut into waterlogged deposits, sealed by large deposits of made ground. In other areas of the development deep post-medieval cellars on site were seen to truncate medieval archaeology. The evaluation also revealed a complex sequence of alluvial deposition and the presence of a likely peat-filled relict channel with high potential for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction (Pine 2010).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to monitor, record and retrieve any archaeological remains that were revealed during the piling and machine trenching of the building foundations and services. All groundworks were to be excavated by a machine fitted with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. Where archaeological remains were encountered sufficient time will be allowed within the groundworkers schedules to allow for careful investigation and recording of these features.

Results

The groundbeam trenches monitored were typically 0.80m wide and 0.80m deep but occasionally wider (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy revealed consisted of 0.10m of Tarmac overlying 0.15m of scalpings which in turn overlay dark grey brown made ground to the base of the trench (Fig. 4; Pls 1 and 2). No natural geology, alluvial deposits nor archaeological deposits were revealed.

Finds

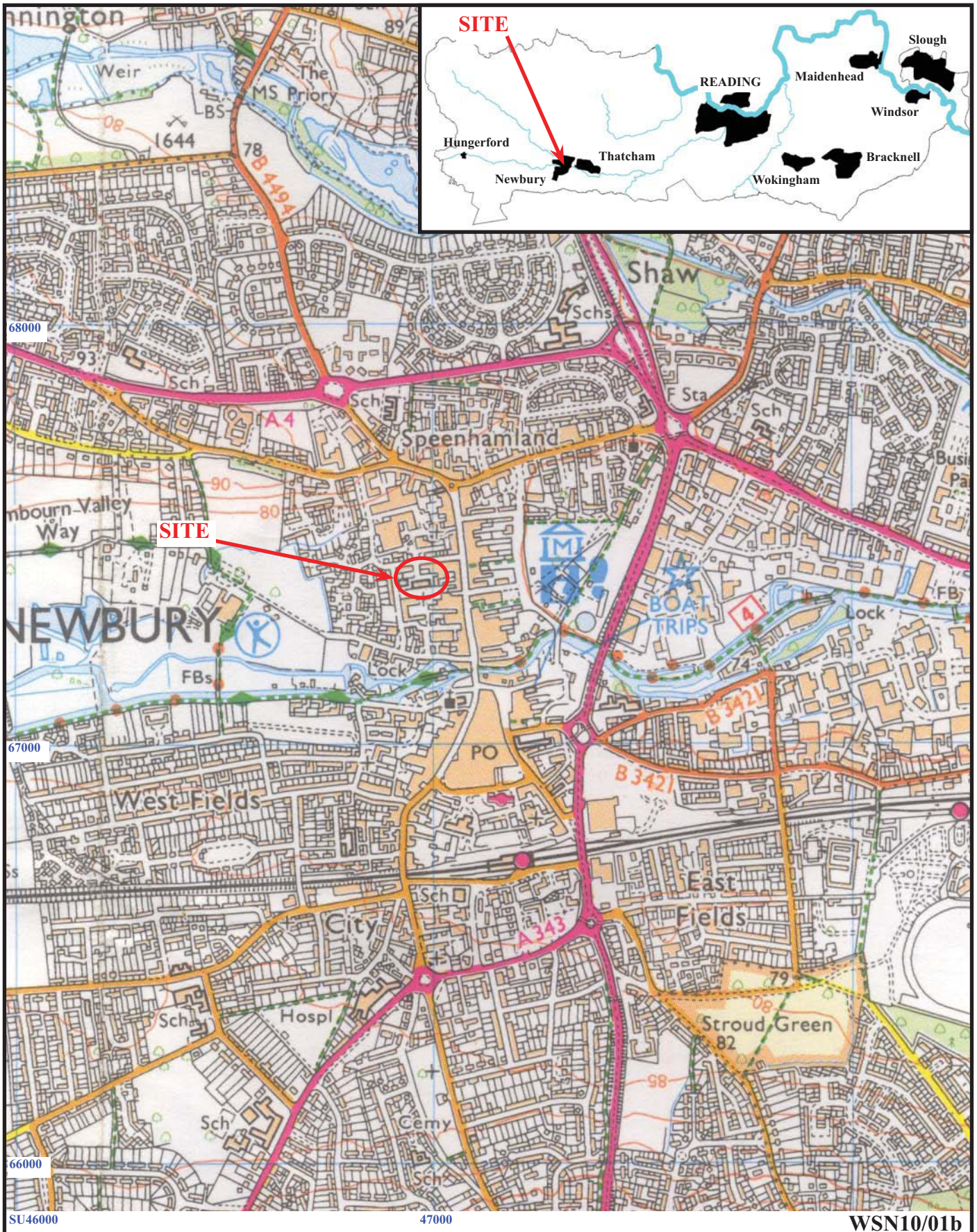
No finds or artefacts were recovered from the watching brief.

Conclusion

No finds or features or deposits of archaeological interest were seen during this watching brief phase of works. This lack of discovery is consistent with that expected from the results of the earlier evaluation which had revealed thick layers of made ground 1.2m or more deep across the site (Pine and Weale, 2010). The trenches dug for the groundbeams were only 0.80m deep.

References

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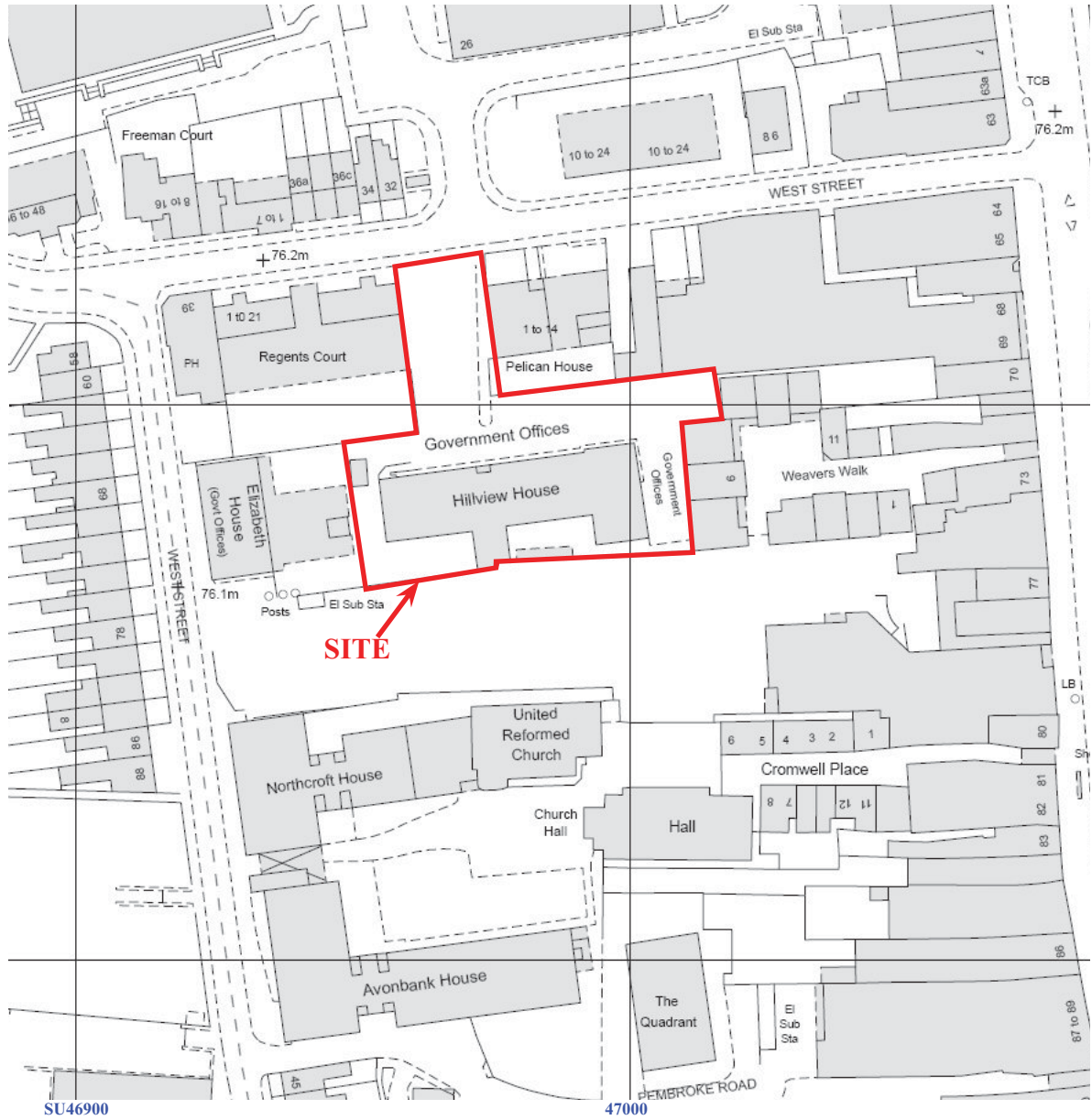


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Figure 1. Location of site within Newbury and Berkshire.

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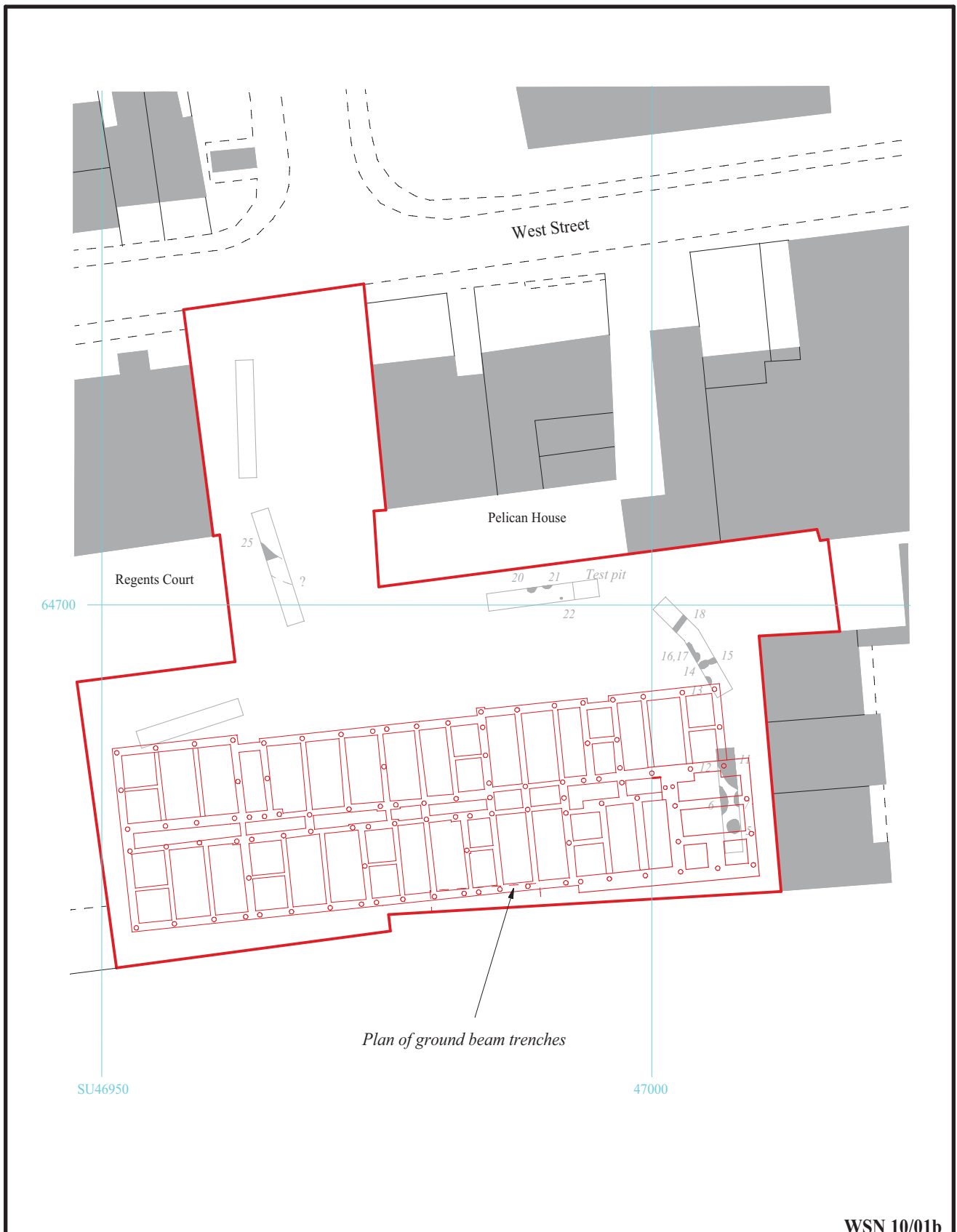
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on West Street.

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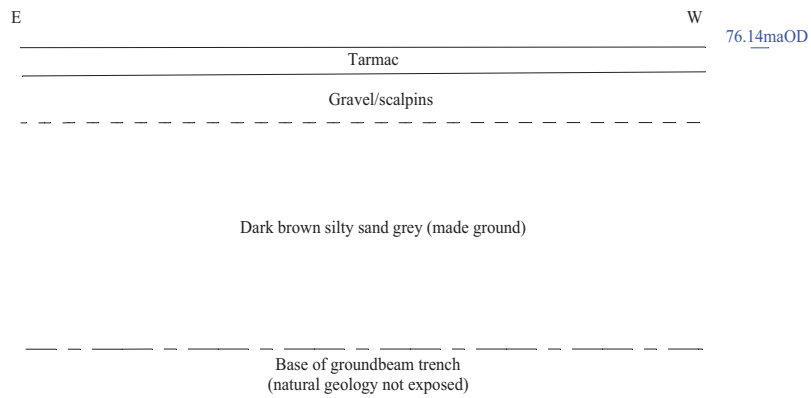
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Figure 3. Plan of watching brief area and showing evaluation trenches.



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Figure 4. Representative section of groundbeam trench.



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Plate 1. Eastern foundation trenches, looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Concreted western aspect of foundation, looking south east.

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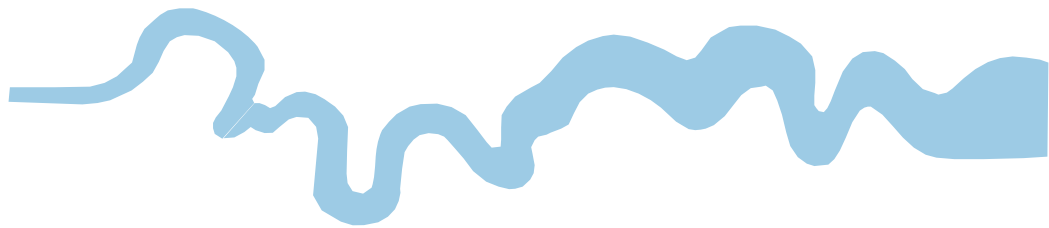
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Fax: 0118 9260553
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**