

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Minchery Farm Allotments,
Priory Road, Littlemore, Oxford**

Archaeological Evaluation

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Site Code: MFA14/23

(SP 5443 0260)

Minchery Farm Allotments, Littlemore, Priory Road, Oxford

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Bouygues UK

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MFA 14/23

February 2014

Summary

Site name: Minchery Farm Allotments, Priory Road, Littlemore, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 5443 0260

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 11th and 12th February 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James McNicoll-Norbury

Site code: MFA 14/23

Area of site: 1.4ha

Summary of results: A single wide flat-based feature containing two sherds of pottery of Early/Middle Saxon date was recorded but some contamination from a modern plastic bag was also observed. No other finds nor deposits were recorded in the evaluation.

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

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 25.02.14
	Steve Preston✓ 25.02.14

Minchery Farm, Allotments, Priory Road, Littlemore, Oxford An Archaeological Evaluation

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Report 14/23

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Minchery Farm Allotments, Priory Road, Oxford (SP 5443 0260) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Philip Clint of Bouygues, Grange Court, Abingdon Science Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3ND.

Planning permission (13/01610/CT3) has been gained from Oxford City Council for the construction of 48 new residential units and as a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by development, a field evaluation has been requested by the Oxford City Archaeological Officer.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the City Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeological Officer for Oxford City Council and based on a brief prepared by him (Radford 2013). The fieldwork was undertaken by James McNicoll-Norbury and Dan Strachan between 11th and 12th February and the site code is MFA 14/23. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south of the Minchery Farm Estate in Littlemore, Oxford in allotments adjacent to Priory Road (Fig. 2). Immediately to the south of the site is a freight railway line and further to the south lies Littlemore Brook. The site was formerly used as allotments and is generally flat with a slight slope from east to west and the underlying geology is described as Beckley Sand Member (Sandstone) (BGS 1993) which was observed on site. The site lies between 61.0-65.0m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Mr David Radford, the Oxford City Archaeological Officer (Radford 2013), drawing on the results of a desk-based archaeological assessment (CgMs 2013). In summary, the site lies in a zone around the south and east sides of Oxford where a large number of Roman pottery kilns have been recorded, whose products were traded widely over southern England for much of the Roman period (Young 1977; Henig and Booth 2000). The kilns are also accompanied by contemporary occupation sites. One such site lies c. 300m to the north of the site with Roman pottery and coins recorded 250m to the west. A test pit dug in the site itself by the East Oxford Archaeology and History Project located a few fragments of Roman pottery.

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 development.

The specific research aims of this project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present on the site;
- to determine if there is any evidence for Roman occupation or pottery production present on the site, if so what was its character and extent; and
- to determine if kilns are present, if so what are their date, size and condition? Can residual pottery indicate what wares are being produced and over what approximate date range?

The potential and significance of any such deposits located were to be assessed according to the research priorities such as set out in English Heritage Research Agenda (English Heritage 2005) or any more local or thematic research priorities as necessary such as the emerging Solent Thames Research Agenda and the draft Oxford Archaeology plan (OCC2011) and Oxford Archaeology Action Plan (2013).

Eight trenches were to be dug each 20m long and 1.6m wide using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. Any archaeological features were to be hand excavated and spoilheaps monitored for finds.

Results

The trenches were dug as intended and ranged in length from 19.2–22.0m and varied considerably in depth from 0.39–0.70m; due to the conditions of the site some of the trench locations were slightly adjusted (Fig. 3). In general, the stratigraphy comprised topsoil up to 0.40m in depth and subsoil up to 0.31m in depth overlying

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

Trench 1(Fig. 3 Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned W - E and was 20.4m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of dark brown silty sand topsoil above 0.23m grey brown silty sand subsoil overlying natural geology consisting of orange brown sands with sandstone.

Trench 2(Fig. 3)

Trench 2 was aligned NW - SE and was 22m long and 0.61m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil above 0.31m of subsoil overlying natural geology.

Trench 3(Fig. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned N- S and was 19.4m long and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.36m of topsoil above 0.24m of subsoil overlying natural geology.

Trench 4(Fig. 3)

Trench 4 was aligned WSW- ENE and was 19.95m long and 0.39m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.26m of topsoil above 0.09m of subsoil overlying natural geology.

Trench 5(Fig. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned SW- NE and was 20.0m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.36m of topsoil above 0.04m of subsoil overlying natural geology.

Trench 6 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 3)

Trench 6 was aligned W - E and was 22m long and 0.46m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of dark brown silty sand topsoil and 0.20m grey brown silty sand subsoil overlying natural geology consisting of orange brown sands with sandstone. A wide shallow pit (1) was recorded at the east end of the trench, against the south baulk, which was 2.1m wide and 0.18m deep and filled with a brown silty sand (52). Two sherds of Early Saxon pottery were recovered from the surface and the base of the pit. However, remains of a modern plastic bag were also found within the deposit suggesting some disturbance. The size and shape of the feature bears comparison with that of sunken featured buildings of generally early Saxon date.

Trench 7(Fig. 3)

Trench 7 was aligned SW- NE and was 20.25m long and 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil above 0.12m of subsoil overlying natural geology.

Trench 8(Fig. 3; Pl. 2)

Trench 8 was aligned NE - SW and was 20.0m long and 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil above 0.21m of subsoil overlying natural geology.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 2 sherds with a total weight of 96g. They are both of early/middle Anglo-Saxon date, and occurred in the same context, 52. They are from different vessels, but in a similar fabric, which is fine and sandy, with sparse sub-rounded quartz up to 2mm and rare organic voids.

One sherd is from the base angle of a fairly large vessel (base diameter = 240mm), and the other from the base-pad of a pot of a similarly large size. They cannot be closely dated other than to within the broad early-middle Anglo-Saxon period (c AD450 – 850).

The fabric of the sherds is very similar to that of some of the pottery from the Early Anglo-Saxon settlement at Littlemore Science Park (Blinkhorn 2001, 189), and it is entirely possible that they are broadly contemporary.

Conclusion

The site is located in a known area of Roman settlement as shown by previous discovery of Roman pottery kilns in the area and indeed Roman pottery was previously recovered during the digging of a test pit on the site itself. Across the site a small amount of subsoil was observed in all of the trenches which would suggest that the site has not been extensively truncated in the past or during its use as allotments. A single archaeological feature was recorded that contained two sherds of Early or Middle Saxon pottery, but with some modern plastic contamination. It is considered that the feature could be a sunken featured building (SFB) typical of this period.

References

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- BGS, 1993, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 237, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- CgMs, 2013, 'East Minchery Allotments, Littlemore, Oxford', CgMs Consulting report SD/14823, London
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- Radford, D, 2013, 'Brief for Archaeological Excavation: Former East Minchery Farm Allotments, Oxford', Oxford City Council
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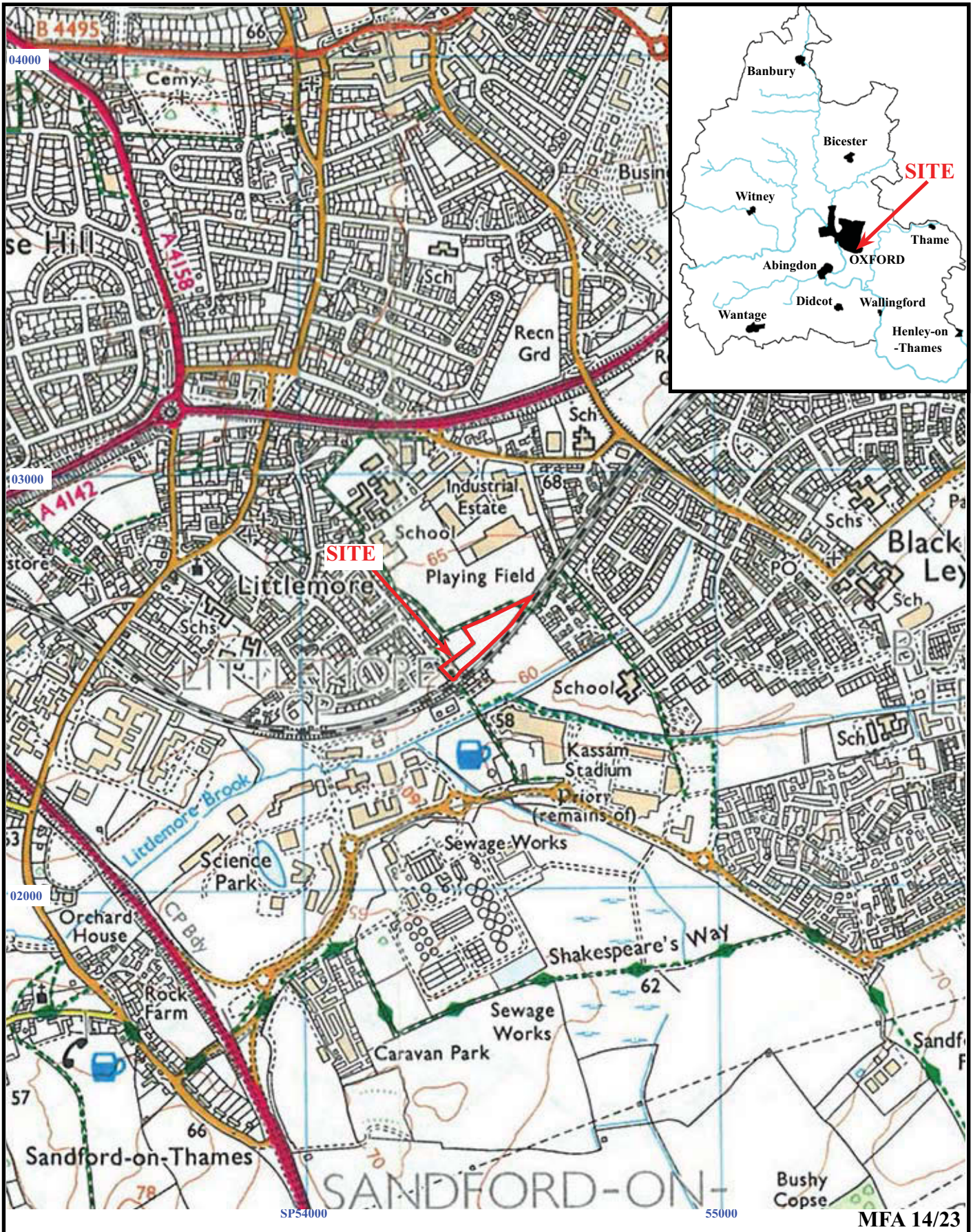
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at W, SE or SW end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.4	1.6	0.43	0–0.40m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.40-0.43m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.43m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands and sandstone. No archaeology [Pl. 1]
2	22.0	1.6	0.61	0–0.24m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.24-0.55m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.55m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands and sandstone. No archaeology
3	19.4	1.6	0.70	0–0.36m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.36-0.60m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.60m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands. No archaeology
4	19.95	1.6	0.39	0–0.26m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.26-0.35m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.35m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands and sandstone. No archaeology
5	20.0	1.6	0.40	0–0.36m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.36-0.40m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.40m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands and sandstone. No archaeology
6	22.0	1.6	0.43	0–0.23m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.23-0.43m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.43m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands and sandstone. Feature 1 [Pl. 3]
7	20.25	1.6	0.46	0–0.30m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.30-0.42m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.42m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands and sandstone. No archaeology
8	20.0	1.6	0.56	0–0.29m dark brown silty sand (topsoil), 0.29-0.50m grey brown silty sand (subsoil), 0.50m+ natural geology consisting of orange brown sands and sandstone. No archaeology [Pl. 2]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
6	1	52	Pit (or sunken featured building?)	Saxon?	Pottery

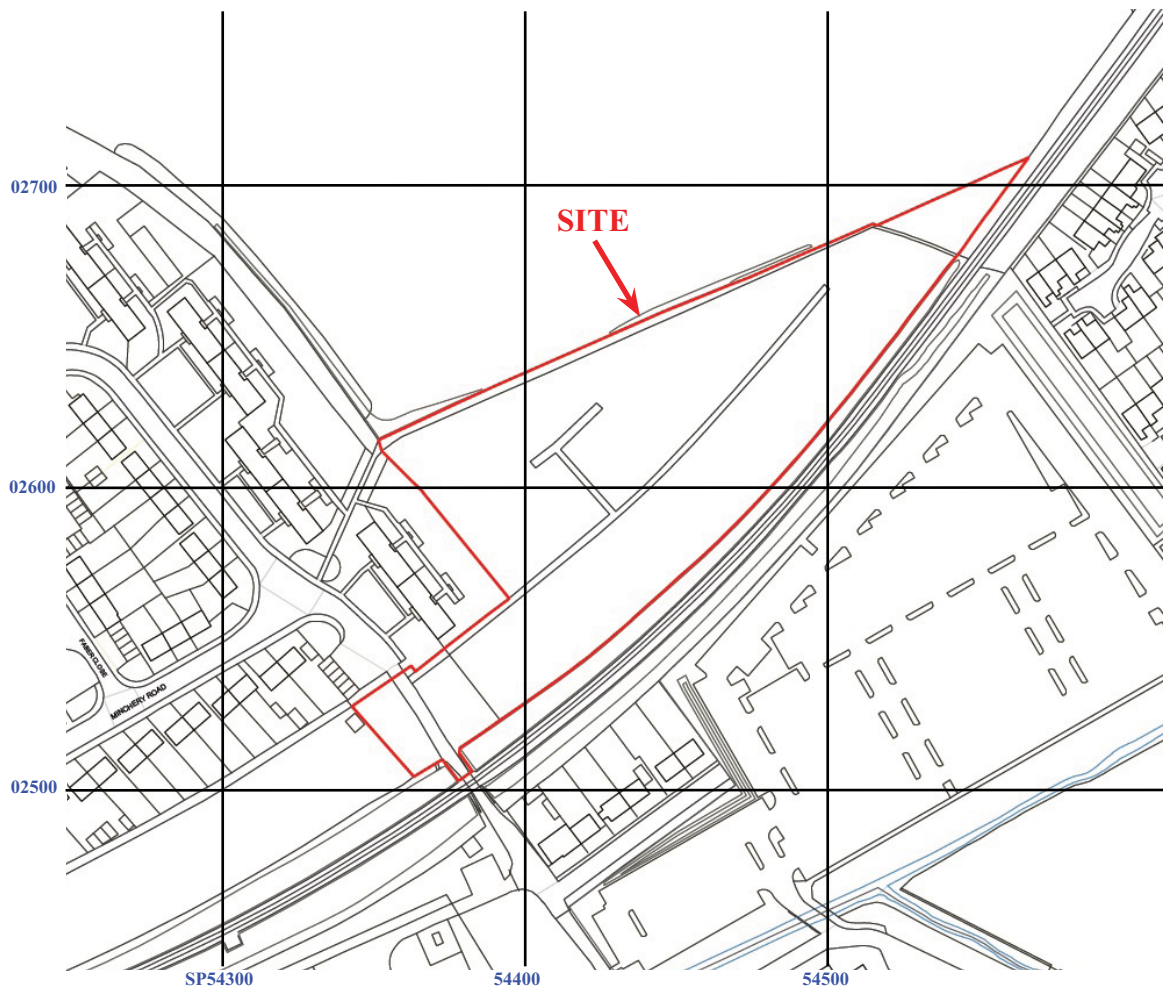


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Figure 1. Location of site within Oxford and Oxfordshire

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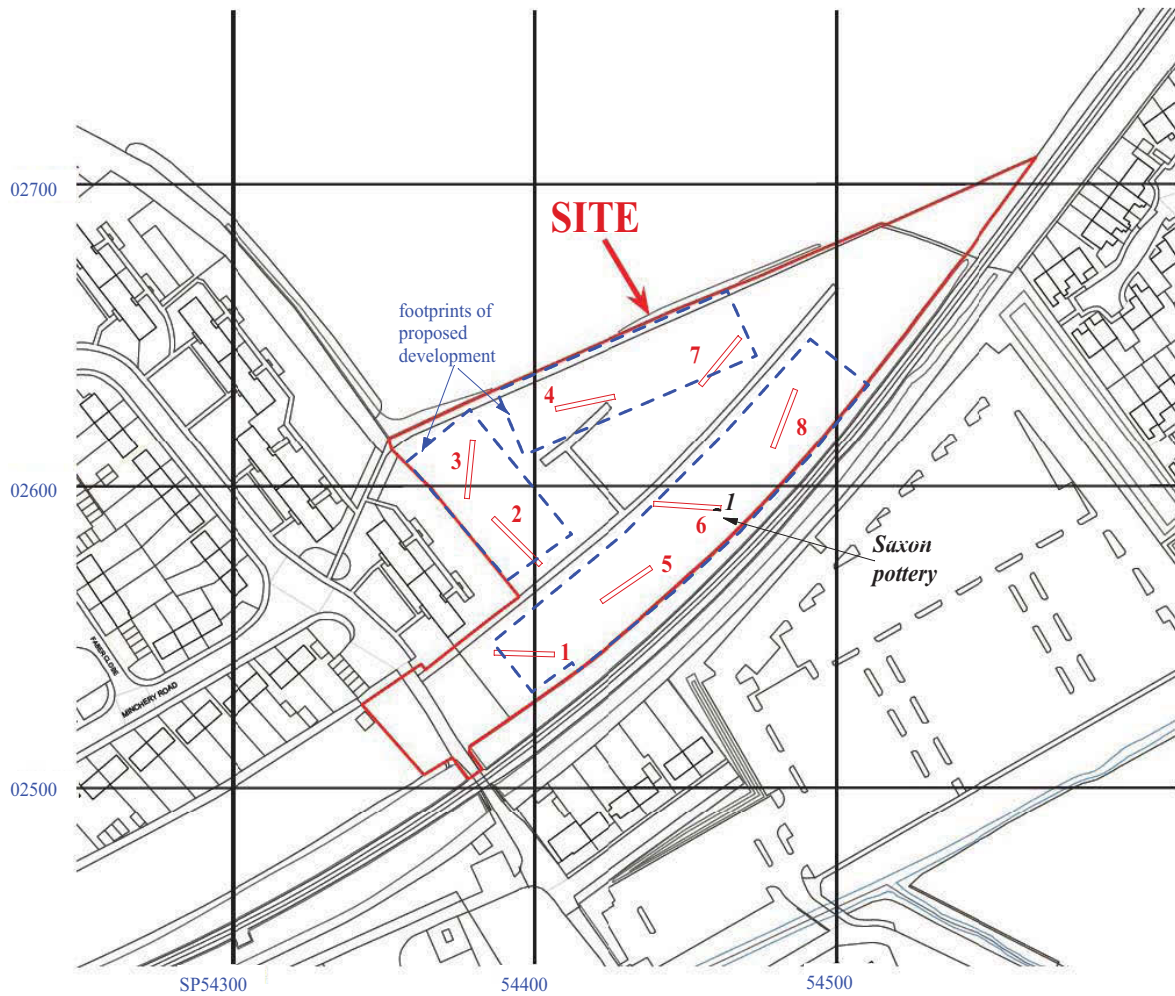
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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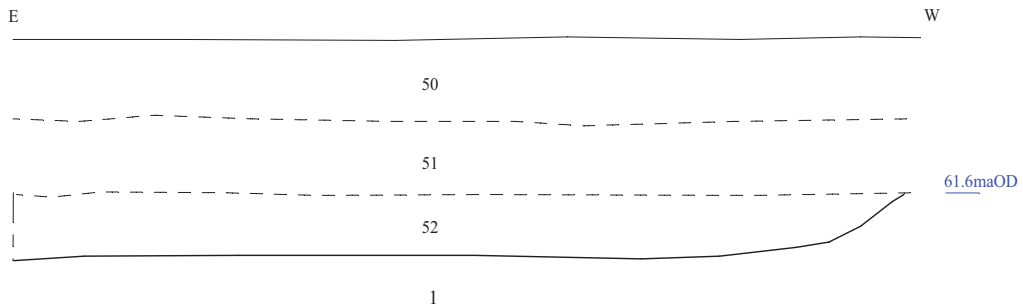
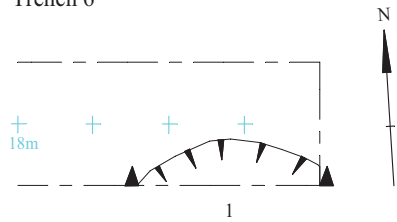
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Figure 3. Location of trenches and development areas



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Trench 6



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Figure 4. Detail of trench 6.



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



Plate 2. Trench 8, looking south east,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 3. Trench 6, section of cut 1, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

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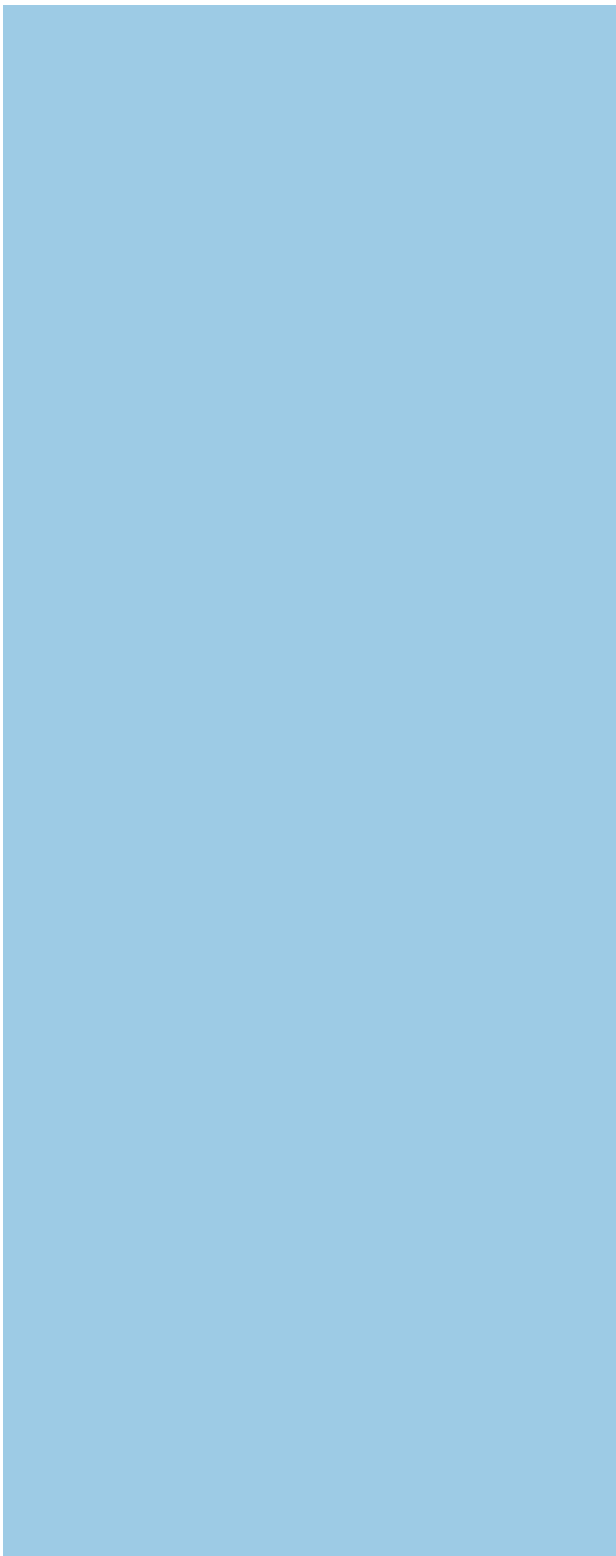
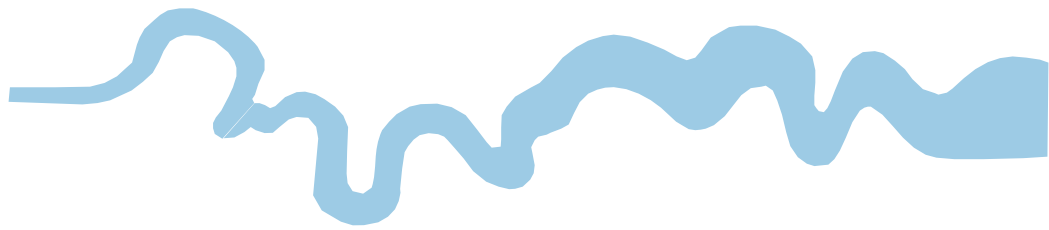
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Plates 1 - 3.

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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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