

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**350 Basingstoke Road,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Tim Dawson

Site Code: BRB14/230

(SU 7171 7097)

**350 Basingstoke Road,
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Manorview Properties Ltd**

by Tim Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BRB 14/230

January 2015

Summary

Site name: 350 Basingstoke Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7171 7097

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 15th-16th December 2014

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: BRB 14/230

Area of site: 1.16ha

Summary of results: None of the seven trenches identified any archaeological features or archaeologically relevant layers. The two easternmost (Trenches 1 and 2) found modern paving directly overlying the natural geology, with no archaeological deposits present. The southern- and westernmost trenches recorded a modern dump deposit which extended to a depth of between 1.38m and 2.16m+ below the current ground level. Evidence from the desk-based assessment shows the presence of clay pits to the northwest with the site lying within a 'brickfield' in the mid 19th century. The trenching evidence here suggests that this quarrying extended further into the site than anticipated and which will have removed any archaeological deposits that may have been present there. The site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 07.01.15 Steve Preston✓ 07.01.15
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350 Basingstoke Road, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

by Tim Dawson

Report 14/230

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 350 Basingstoke Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7171 7097) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jonathan Cuthbertson of K2 Consultancy Ltd, 3 City Place, Beehive Ring Road, Gatwick, West Sussex, RH6 0PA on behalf of Manorview Properties Ltd, Ground Floor, 30 City Road, London, EC1Y 2AB.

Planning consent is to be sought from Reading Borough Council to construct retail units with associated landscaping and access roads following the demolition of the existing buildings. A field evaluation was requested in order to provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to inform the planning process and provide information on which to base a scheme mitigate the effects of the development if required. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary, Archaeology Officer at Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the council on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson on 15th and 16th December 2014 and the site code is BRB 14/230. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located c.2km to the south of the centre of Reading, on the western edge of the suburb of Whitley. It lies on the eastern bank of the Kennet with the River Kennet itself flowing north-eastwards c.500m north-west of the site (Fig. 1). Basingstoke Road and Gillette Way form the site's eastern and western boundaries respectively with a supermarket to the north and a bingo hall to the south. Further modern office, industrial and retail units stand beyond to the north, south and west while the residential area of Whitley stretches eastwards up the valley side. The site itself is currently occupied by two two-storey modern office blocks with extensive block paving parking to the east and west (Fig. 2). The eastern side of the site stands at 45.7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), c.1m below the level of Basingstoke Road, it then rises to c.49m aOD in the area where the existing buildings

stand before 46.5m aOD around the western trenches and 45.6m aOD at the site's western boundary. The underlying geology is recorded as an interface between Lambeth Group clay, silt and sand in the north-west and London Clay Formation clay, silt and sand in the south-east (BGS 1971). The geology observed during the excavations consisted of a clay in the west, clayey sand in the north-east and sandy gravel with clay patches in the south-east.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Taylor 2013). In summary this potential stems from its location in an area where a modest range of prehistoric and Roman finds have been recorded in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record. In particular the unexplained monument known as Marshall's Hill, which lies a distance to the north of the site, is possibly a Late Bronze Age ringfort (high status enclosure?) (Bradley 1984). A possible Roman villa or farmstead was recorded to the north-west of the site in the Rose Kiln area in c.1949. Field evaluation nearby has located residual finds of Roman pottery, a medieval ditch and undated postholes (Ford and Pine 1998) and excavation at Northcourt Avenue (Milbank 2010) revealed an Early Roman occupation site. Iron Age pottery and Roman ditches were also recorded to the north (Carlsson 2010) and a Roman cremation burial to the north-west, but evaluation at Windermere Road to the north revealed nothing of interest (Ford 2010).

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 this site; and
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

It was proposed to excavate 7 trenches, each 1.60m wide and 10m long, spread to the east and west of the current buildings and within the footprint of the proposed development (Fig. 3). Each trench was marked out after first surveying the area with a CAT scanner in order to avoid any live electrical services. They were then dug using a JCB-type excavator, with a toothless ditching bucket being employed to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, with the entire process being carried out under the supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil heaps

were monitored for finds. Should potential archaeological deposits have been exposed they were to be hand-cleaned, excavated and recorded.

Results

Attempts were made to excavate all trenches in their intended positions. This was achieved successfully for all trenches except Trench 3, which was positioned such that it would obstruct access for the demolition crew that were on site during the excavations (Fig. 3). An attempt was made to move Trench 3 to the north-west, closer to the building, but this proved impossible due to the high density of services in that area. Of the remaining trenches, Trenches 1, 2 and 4 were stripped to their full length while Trenches 5, 6 and 7 were all shortened and became test pits due to the thick layer of modern fill that was uncovered just below the ground surface. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs. 3-4, Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was excavated in the block paving parking area in the north-eastern corner of the site (Pl. 1). It was aligned north-south and was 9.80m long and 0.62m deep with a 0.87m deep test pit at the northern end. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.07m of block paving, 0.03m of coarse sand bedding, a 0.12m thick levelling layer of mid blue-red sandy gravel and a 0.30m thick layer of dark green-grey clayey sand with patches of mid brown-red clayey sand, both containing modern finds such as wire and brick, all overlying the natural geology (Fig. 4). The natural geology consisted of a mid brown-yellow clayey sand. A cable which provided electricity to the adjacent street lamp was discovered in a plastic duct just beneath the gravel levelling layer crossing the trench between 2.20m and 3.90m from the southern end.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3, Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was positioned in the centre of the eastern half of the site in a block paving access road (Pl. 2). It was aligned north-south and was 10.40m long and 0.23m deep with a 0.71m deep test pit at the southern end. The stratigraphy through which the trench was dug consisted of 0.07m of block paving, 0.03m of coarse sand bedding and a 0.12m thick levelling layer of mid blue-red sandy gravel overlying the light brown-yellow sandy gravel with clay patches natural geology. Two modern service trenches were identified crossing the trench between 4.60m and 7.30m from the southern end. No finds were recovered.

Trench 3 (Fig. 3)

The proposed trench plan positioned Trench 3 in the centre of the access road to the northern building block which necessitated relocating it to the north and west, closer to the building and within a grass verge (Fig. 3). A dense network of gas and electric service runs was uncovered just 0.30m under the ground surface resulting in the excavation of the trench being aborted. Approximately 0.10m of topsoil was identified overlying what appeared to be made ground. No finds were recovered.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

The southern-most of the eastern trenches, Trench 4, was excavated in a raised block paving parking area in front of the southern building block. It was aligned north-south and was 10.40m long and 0.49m deep with a 1.48m deep test pit at the northern end. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.07m of block paving, 0.08m of coarse sand bedding, a 0.10m thick levelling layer of mid blue-red sandy gravel, 0.09m of light red-brown sandy gravel and 0.15m of mid brown-grey sandy gravel all overlying deposit 53 - a very compact dark black-grey sandy silt containing frequent mixed modern finds. The majority of the trench was excavated to the top of this deposit and a 2.7m long test pit was dug through it at the northern end to ascertain its thickness and the nature of underlying deposits. This showed that the deposit 53 was 0.89m thick and lies directly on top of clean light yellow-grey clayey sand natural geology, which was encountered at 1.38m below ground level. Finds identified in deposit 53 included a decomposing rubber wellington boot, not retained.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3, Pl. 3)

Trench 5, the northern-most of the western trenches, was excavated in the block paving parking area to the west of the buildings. It was aligned SE-NW, due to the presence of live electrical cables being detected by the CAT scanner. Having been dug after Trench 7, Trenches 5 and 6 took the form of test pits with the objective of mapping the extents of the modern dump deposits first identified in Trench 7 (deposit 50) and subsequently in Trench 4 (deposit 53). The modern paving and levelling layers (0.07m block paving, 0.03m coarse sand, 0.25m red-blue sandy gravel) were stripped off for a length of 2.90m to expose the top of the compact dark black-grey dump deposit with lenses of mid yellow-grey clay (51) at 0.35m below ground level, and a test pit was dug through it with a 0.80m wide toothed bucket. This showed that the modern dump had a thickness of 1.10m and lay on top of the dark grey-stained mid yellow-brown sandy gravel which appeared consistent for a further 0.41m, giving the test pit a total depth of 1.86m (Pl. 3). Of the many modern bottles, pottery sherds and other

refuse that were identified within deposit 51 a 2oz brown glass Marmite jar and green plastic Scalextric track support were retained to provide an approximate date of deposition (post 1958). These were then discarded.

Trench 6 (Figs. 3-4)

Trench 6 was excavated in a similar manner to Trench 5, having the aim of ascertaining the depth of the modern dump deposit. This was encountered beneath 0.07m of block paving, 0.03m coarse sand and 0.28m of red-blue sandy gravel at a depth of 0.38m below ground level (Fig. 4). The test pit dug through the dump deposit (52) for a further 1.74m, exposing the mid yellow-brown clay natural geology at a depth of 2.12m below ground level. As with previous trenches, several modern finds were identified within deposit 52 but none were retained. The trench was aligned ESE-WNW with a total length of 3.80m.

Trench 7 (Fig. 3, Pl. 4)

Trench 7 was the first to be excavated and was located in the block paving parking area in the south-western part of the site. It was moved south of its intended position due to the presence of a strong signal on the CAT scanner indicating the presence of live electric cables. The trench was aligned west-east with a total length of 7.60m. The stratigraphy exposed consisted of 0.07m of block paving, 0.03m of coarse sand and 0.23m of red-blue sandy gravel overlying the modern dump deposit (50). The eastern end of the trench was excavated down to the top of 50 a service run having been located crossing the trench diagonally from the north-west to south-east. To the west of the service trench a test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.50m before the compact nature of the dump deposit resulted in a 0.80m wide toothed bucket being used to continue to the test pit to a total depth of 2.16m along the northern edge of the trench. At this depth the test pit started filling with water and was abandoned (Pl. 4). Several modern finds were recovered from deposit 50 for dating purposes but were not retained beyond this point. These included a ceramic electrical fuse, the screw-top and neck of ceramic liquid container (complete with rubber seal), five fragments of china with transfer decoration, the twisted remains of a clockwork mechanism, a brown glass 1oz Marmite jar, a small clear glass bottle with plastic screw top embossed with the letters D. D. D. and a clear glass Shippam's fish paste jar.

Finds

A variety of finds were noted in the modern dump layer in Trenches 4, 5, 6 and 7 and a small number of items were retained for dating purposes before being disposed of. These included two brown glass Marmite jars (1oz

and 2oz), a clear glass Shippam's fish paste jar, a small clear glass bottle with a plastic cap and the letters D. D. D. embossed on one side and a green plastic triangular Scalextric track support, a fragment of ceramic fuse block and 5 sherds of modern china. The Shippam's jar and Scalextric track support dating to the 1960s while some of the other finds may date to the 1950s.

Conclusion

While several alterations had to be made to the proposed trench plan, six of the seven trenches were excavated to a level which provided information on the preservation of archaeologically relevant levels. Trenches 1 and 2 both identified natural geology although at a shallow depth beneath the modern ground surface and with no overburden, subsoil or buried topsoil between it and the modern paving. Trenches 4, 5, 6, and 7 all revealed a compact dark black-grey deposit, packed with modern finds which appear to broadly date to the 1950s and 1960s. This appears to vary in thickness between 0.89m and 1.83m+ with the deepest being in the south-western corner of the site. In the cases of all four of these trenches this modern dump deposit lies directly on top of the natural geology, suggesting that the area had been dug out and then backfilled in the mid 20th century. The desk-based assessment notes the presence of Rose Kilns brick and tile works and Whitley Kiln Brick Works a short distance to the north-west and north of the site respectively. It also highlights the 1840 tithe map and apportionment for the Parish of St Giles which record the location of the site being named Brickfield and owned by Sir George Rose. This would suggest that the site was subject to large-scale clay extraction for the local brick and tile industry before being backfilled with local refuse in the mid 20th century. The ground level dips down from Basingstoke Road to the east to the area where Trenches 1 and 2 are located before rising back up to Trench 4, which sits within the modern dump, suggesting that this eastern part of the site has also been reduced but, unlike the rest, not built up again. Both of these events would have had a negative impact on the preservation of archaeologically relevant levels, leaving the site with a low archaeological potential.

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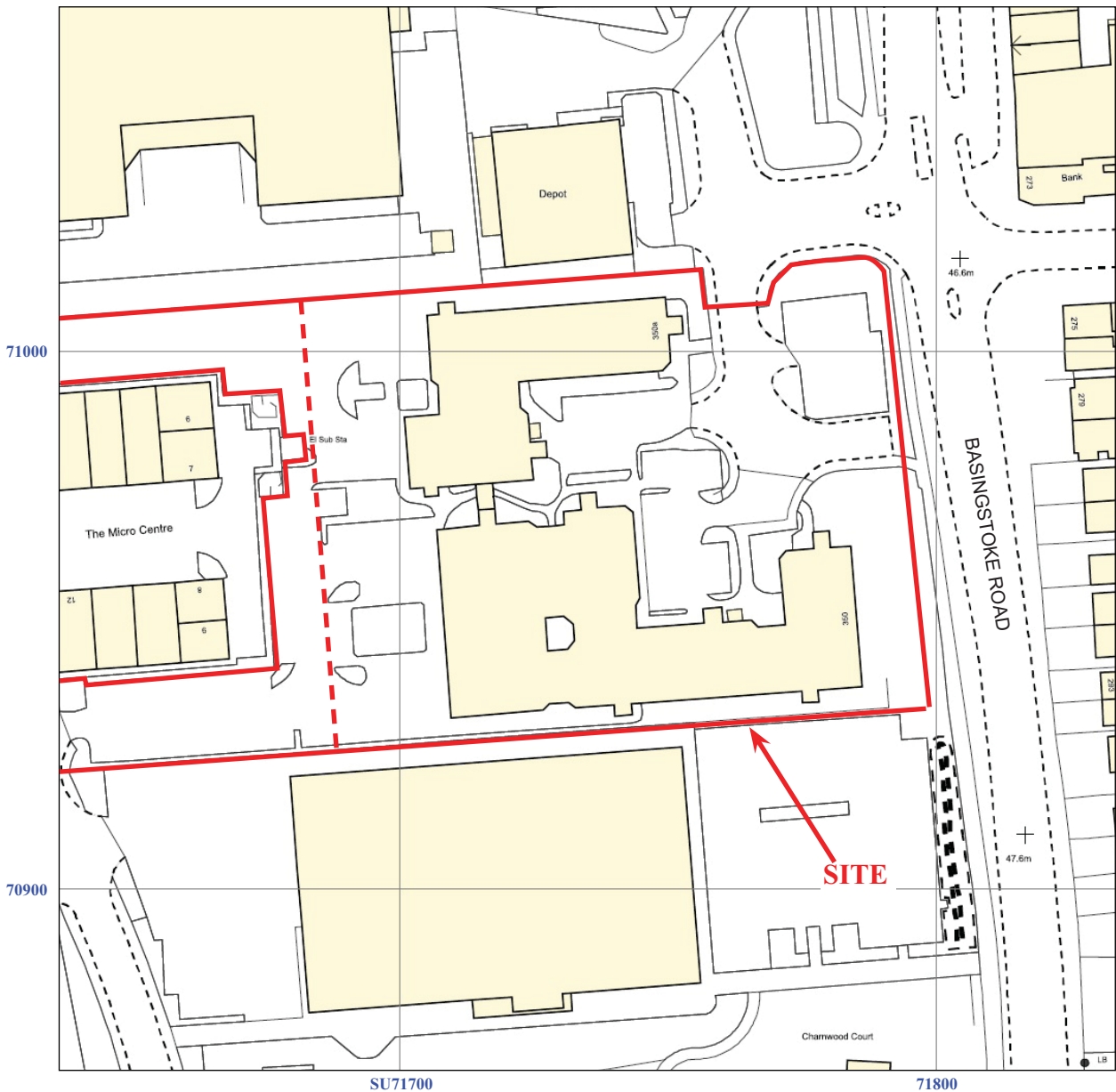
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at south, south-east or west end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	9.80	1.60	0.62/0.87 (test pit)	0-0.07 block paving, 0.07-0.18 coarse sand, 0.18-0.30 mid blue-red sandy gravel, 0.30-0.60 dark green-grey clayey sand, 0.60+ mid brown-yellow clayey sand geology. No features. [Pl. 1]
2	10.40	1.60	0.23/0.71 (test pit)	0-0.07 block paving, 0.07-0.10 coarse sand, 0.10-0.18 mid blue-red sandy gravel, 0.18+ light brown-yellow sandy gravel with clay patches geology. No features. [Pl. 2]
3	-	-	c.0.30m	0-0.10 topsoil, 0.10+ mixed subsoil/made ground. Trench abandoned due to density of services.
4	10.40	1.60/0.80 (test pit)	0.49/1.48 (test pit)	0-0.07 block paving, 0.07-0.15 coarse sand, 0.15-0.25 mid red-blue sandy gravel, 0.25-0.34 light red-brown sandy gravel, 0.34-0.49 mid brown-grey sandy gravel, 0.49-1.38 very compact dark black-grey sandy silt with lenses of mid yellow-grey clay (modern dump 53), 1.38+ light yellow-grey clayey sand geology. No features.
5	2.90	1.60/0.80 (test pit)	1.86 (test pit)	0-0.07 block paving, 0.07-0.10 coarse sand, 0.10-0.35 mid red-blue sandy gravel, 0.35-1.45 modern dump 51 , 1.45+ mid yellow-brown sandy gravel with dark grey staining geology. No features. [Pl. 3]
6	3.80	1.60/0.80 (test pit)	2.12 (test pit)	0-0.07 block paving, 0.07-0.10 coarse sand, 0.10-0.38 mid red-blue sandy gravel, 0.38-2.12 modern dump 52 , 2.12+ mid yellow-brown clay ?geology. No features.
7	7.60	1.60/0.80 (test pit)	2.16 (test pit)	0-0.70 block paving, 0.07-0.10 coarse sand, 0.10-0.33 mid red-blue sandy gravel, 0.33+ modern dump 50 . No features. [Pl. 4]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
4		53	dump deposit	20th century	Rubber wellington boot
5		51	dump deposit	1960s	Scalextric track support
6		52	dump deposit	20th century	Coated electrical wire
7		50	dump deposit	1950s/60s	Shippam's paste bottle



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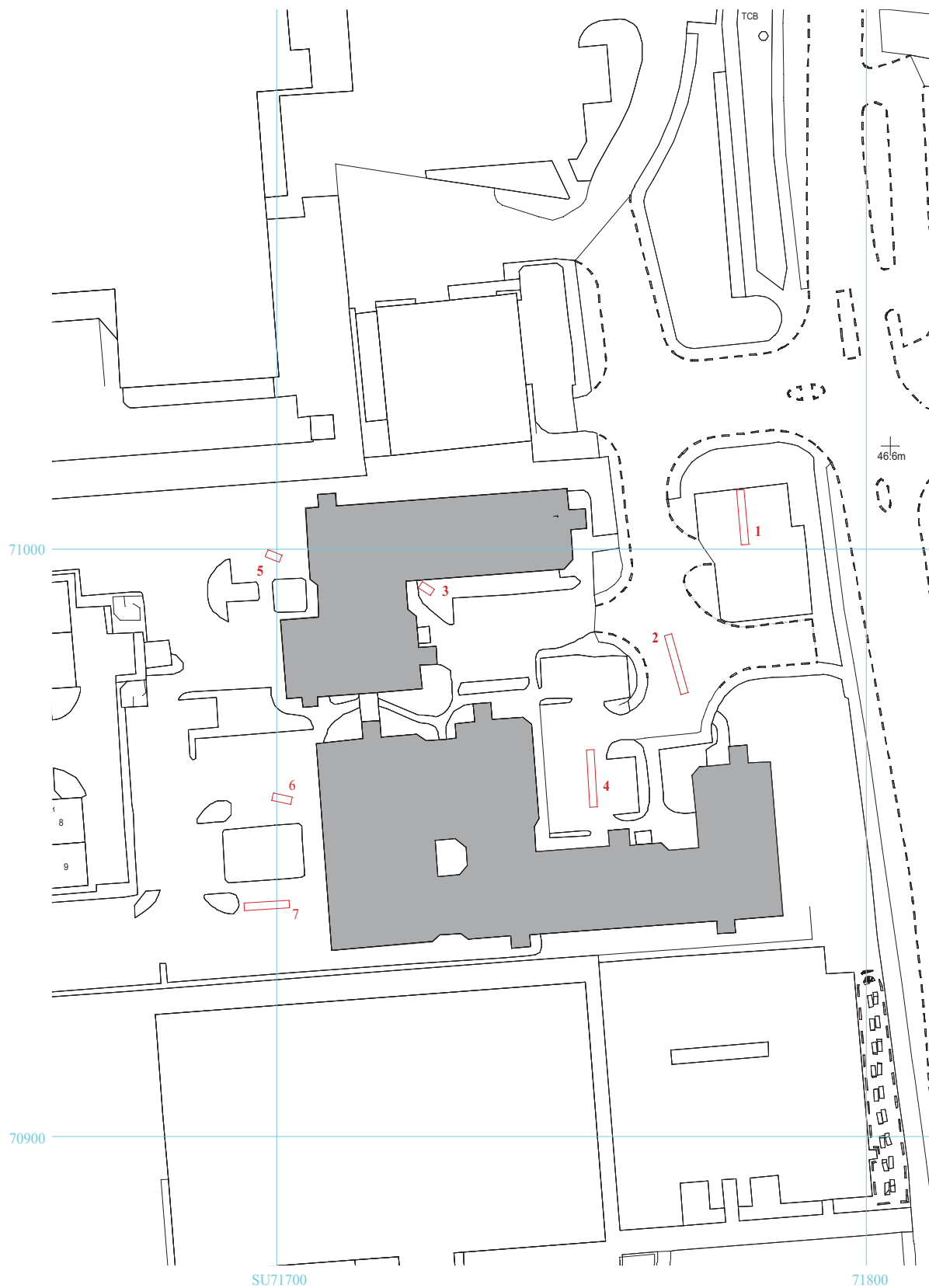


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off the Basingstoke Road.

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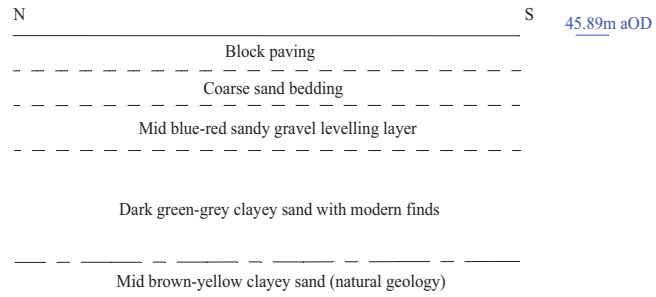
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

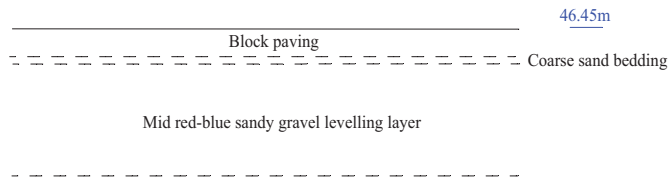


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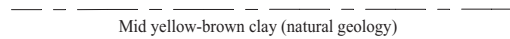
Trench 1



Trench 6



52
(Modern dump)



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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 5 section, looking north Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 7 section, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.

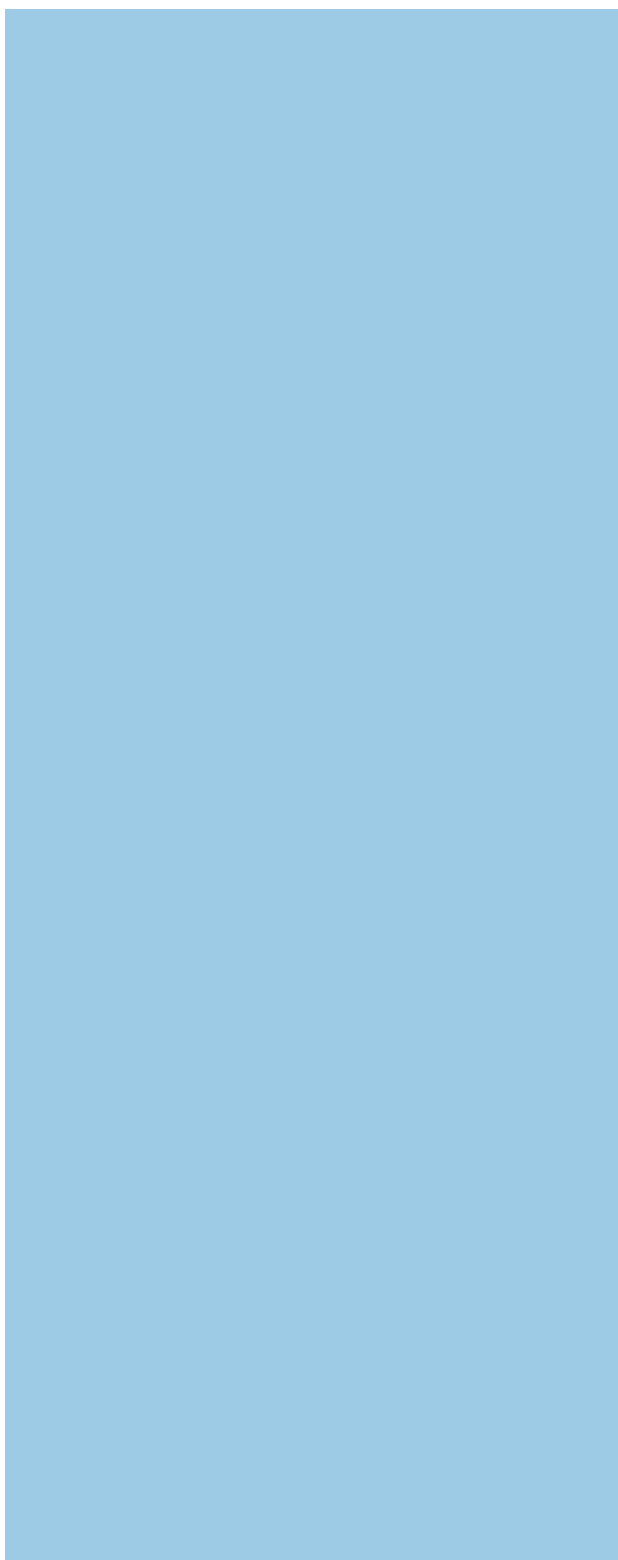
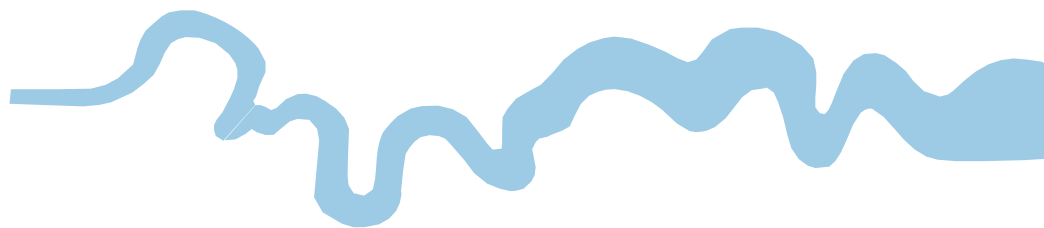
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Plates 3 - 4.

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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**