

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden Wood,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Susan Porter

Site Code: HWH15/155

(SU 7569 8048)

Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Craig Newman

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HWH 15/155

August 2015

Summary

Site name: Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 7569 8048

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 30th July 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: HWH 15/155

Area of site: c. 50 sq m

Summary of results: Foundations were excavated around the north facing facade of the eastern wing of the existing building. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 04.09.15 Steve Preston ✓ 04.09.15

Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden Wood, Harpsden, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Susan Porter

Report 15/155

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire SU 7569 8048 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Craig Newman of Harpsden Wood House, Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 4AF.

Planning permission (P15/S1513/HH) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new extension. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features, an archaeological watching brief was to be maintained during the period of ground works.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter on 30th July 2015 and the site code is HWH 15/155.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at some distance to the south west of the the small village of Harpsden, two miles south of Henley-on-Thames (Figs 1 and 2). The site is currently occupied by an existing detached house and grounds. The site lies at a height of 80m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is recorded as Clay with Flints and Loam overlying chalk, (BGS 1971).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site is due to it's relative proximity to that of a Roman villa located to the south recorded in the county historic environment record. The villa and its bath house have been investigated a few times during the 20th century and in addition to Roman deposits, Iron Age gold coins, perhaps from a hoard have been retrieved suggestive earlier occupation in the area also. The villa may be the centre of a substantial estate with ancillary sites in neighbouring areas, such as the proposal site. However a watching brief at nearby

Beechwood Cottage, found nothing of archaeological interest (Mundin 2012). Recent fieldwork at the villa has identified a number of flint foundations (Nicholls, 2015).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve monitoring of all areas of intrusive groundworks and include observation of surface stripping, the excavating of foundations and service trenches, landscaping works and all other invasive works as necessary. Archaeological deposits which were exposed by the groundworks were to be recorded but not further excavated unless threatened by the groundworks. Sufficient time was to be allowed to carry this out within the groundworkers schedule. A metal detector was to be used to enhance finds recovery.

Results

The foundation design for the development of the extension to the east wing of the house was changed immediately prior to archaeological monitoring. The larger portion of the new development was to be constructed using pile rather than traditional strip foundation trenches. As such the only excavated groundworks observed during this process of archaeological monitoring were the foundations around the existing facade of the north facing side of the existing eastern wing of the building.

The foundation trenches

These were dug using a small Kubota-type machine equipped with toothed bucket under constant archaeological supervision (Figs. 3 and 4; Pls 1-4).

Foundation A was excavated along the western facing wall of the northern facade (Pl. 1). The trench was 0.50m wide and 1.70m in length (to the end of the northern facade). It was excavated to a depth of 1.40m and revealed a stratigraphy comprising 1.40m of made ground with lumps of mid red brown clay forming backfill of the foundation trench for the existing wall. Natural geology was not exposed.

Foundation B was 1.10m wide extending to the north from the north western corner of the existing building face (Pl. 2). It was 3.20m long and 2.34m in depth. The stratigraphy comprised 0.53m made ground, overlying the natural geology which was dug into for a further 1.69m and comprised a mid orange brown clay and gravel with large flint inclusions and pockets of chalk.

Foundation C was oriented broadly east-west across the northern face of the existing building (Fig.3, Pl 3), it was 1.60m wide and 9m long with a depth of 2.40m. The stratigraphy was the same as that observed in foundation B but with two gas pipes and a Victorian drain observed.

Foundation D was 0.50m wide, 3.20m long and 2.39m in depth with a stratigraphy identical to the of foundations B and C (Pl. 4). A modern drain was observed 1m from the facing wall of the existing building.

No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered in any of the foundation trenches

The piled area

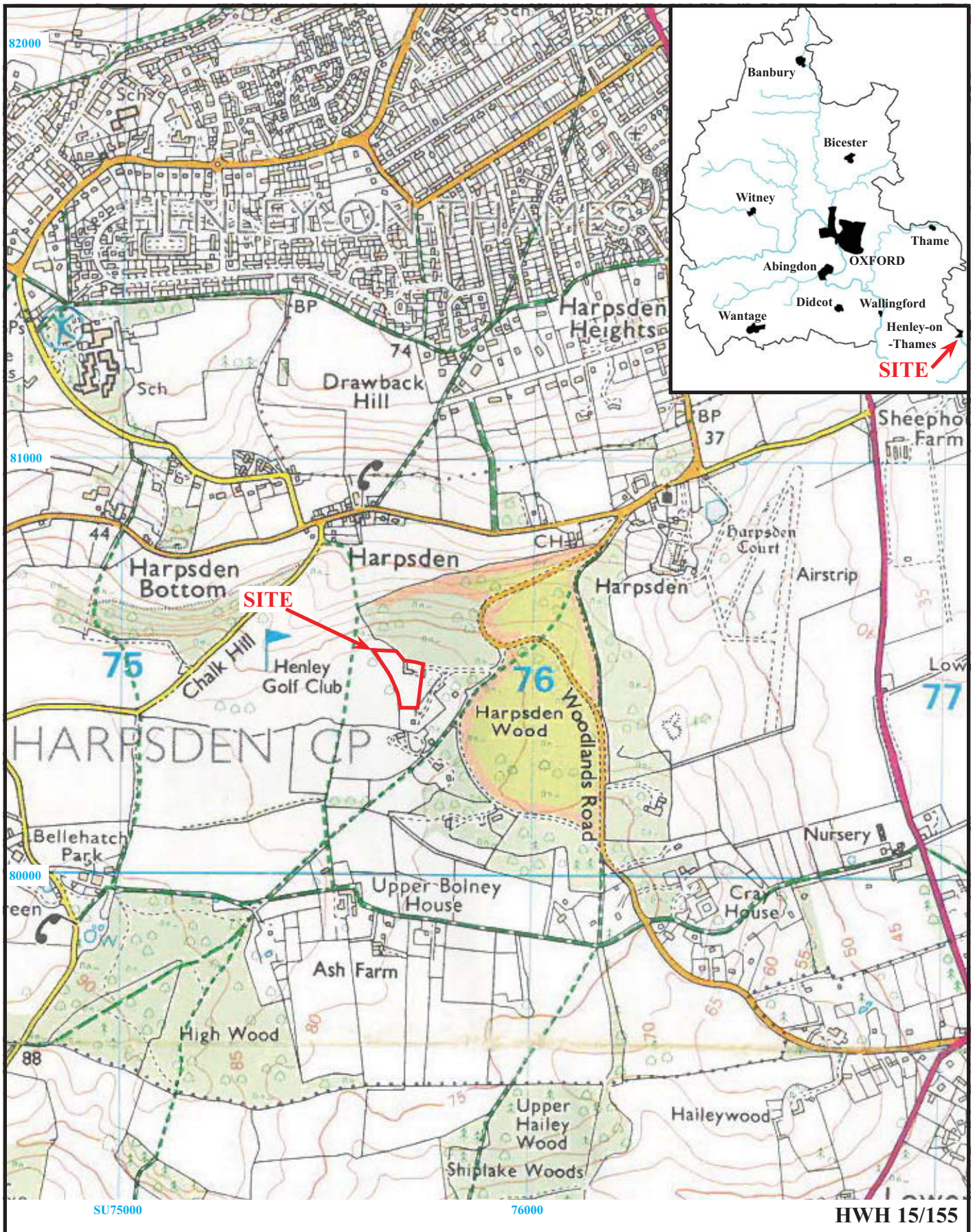
No ground reduction took place in the area of the extension to have piled foundations and the natural geology was not exposed there.

Conclusion

The foundations around the facade of the building were excavated as planned under constant archaeological supervision. No deposits of archaeological interest were encountered and no finds were recovered.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Nicholls, D, 2015, High Wood, Harpsden, SOAG Messenger, South Oxfordshire Archaeology Group, newsletter, **360**, 3-4
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Mundin, A, 2012, Beechwood Cottage, Harpsden Woods, Harpsden, Oxfordshire, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **12/72**, Reading

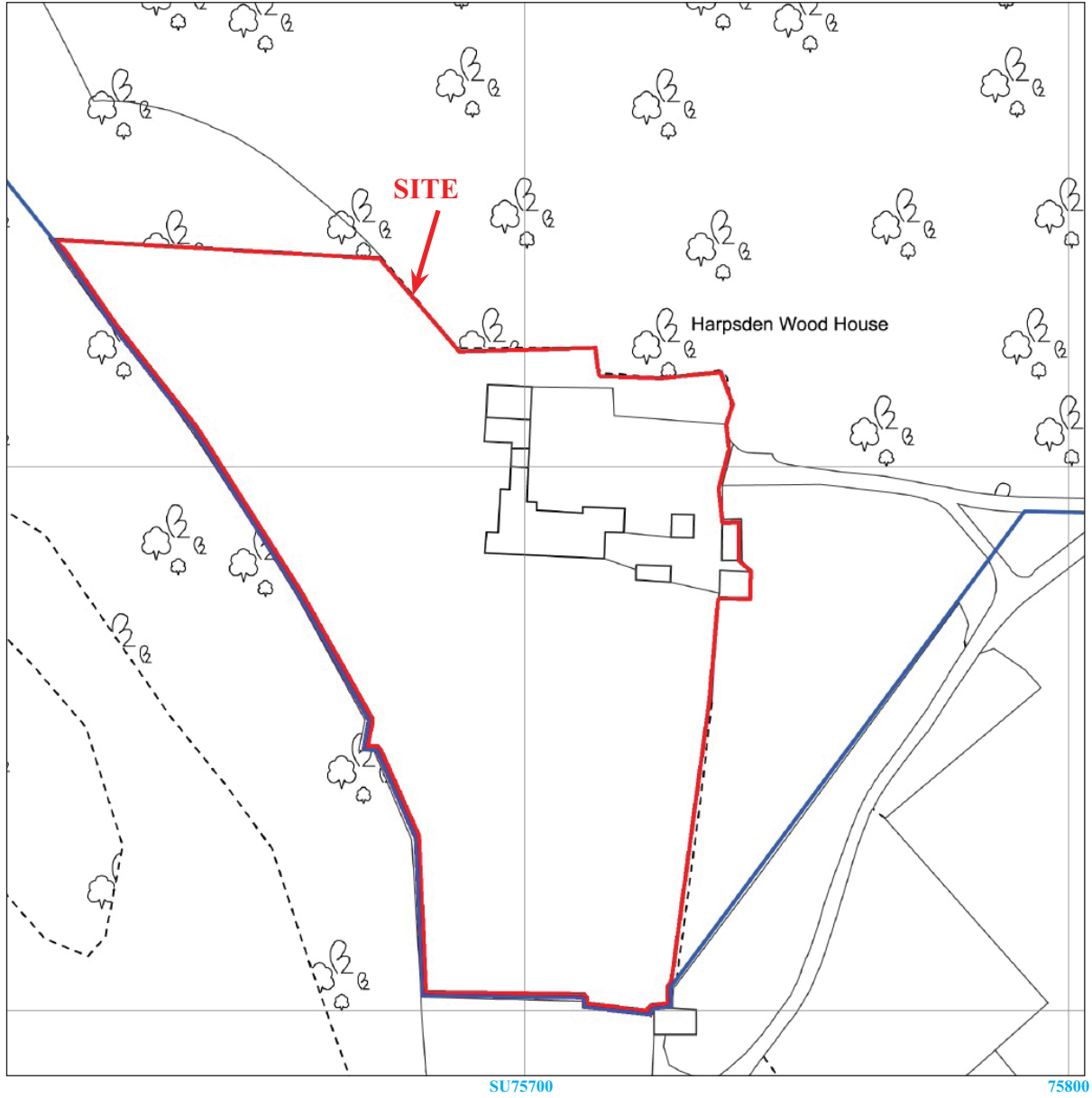


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Figure 1. Location of site within Harpsden and Oxfordshire.

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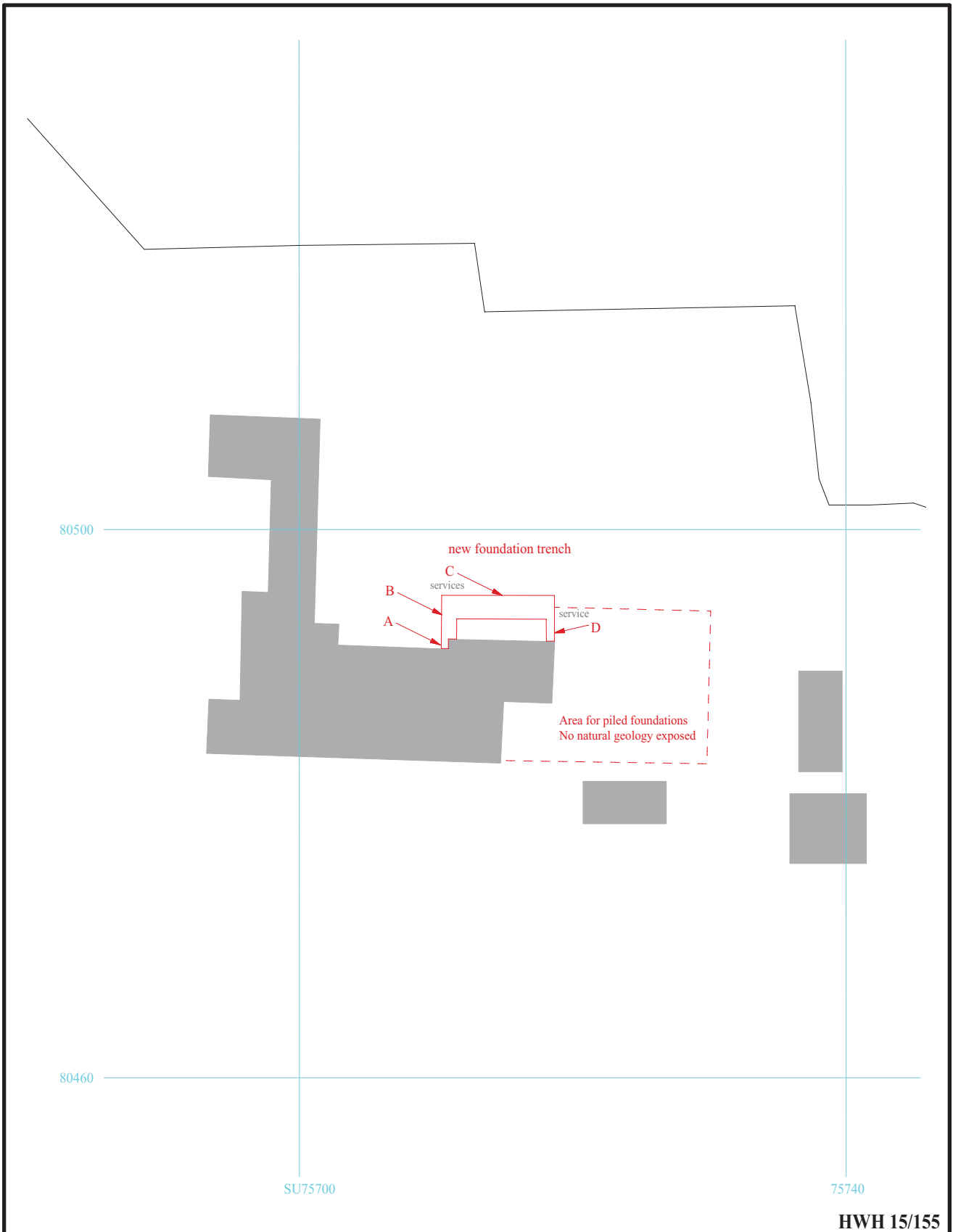


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed area.



W E 80maOD

Made ground

Natural geology (clay with flints)

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Figure 4. Representative section of foundation trench.

0  1m

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Plate 1. Foundation of house wall A, looking east, Scale: 2m.



Plate 2. Trenches A and B, looking south, Scale: 2m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench C looking east, Scale: 2m.



Plate 4. Trench D, looking south east, Scale: 2m.

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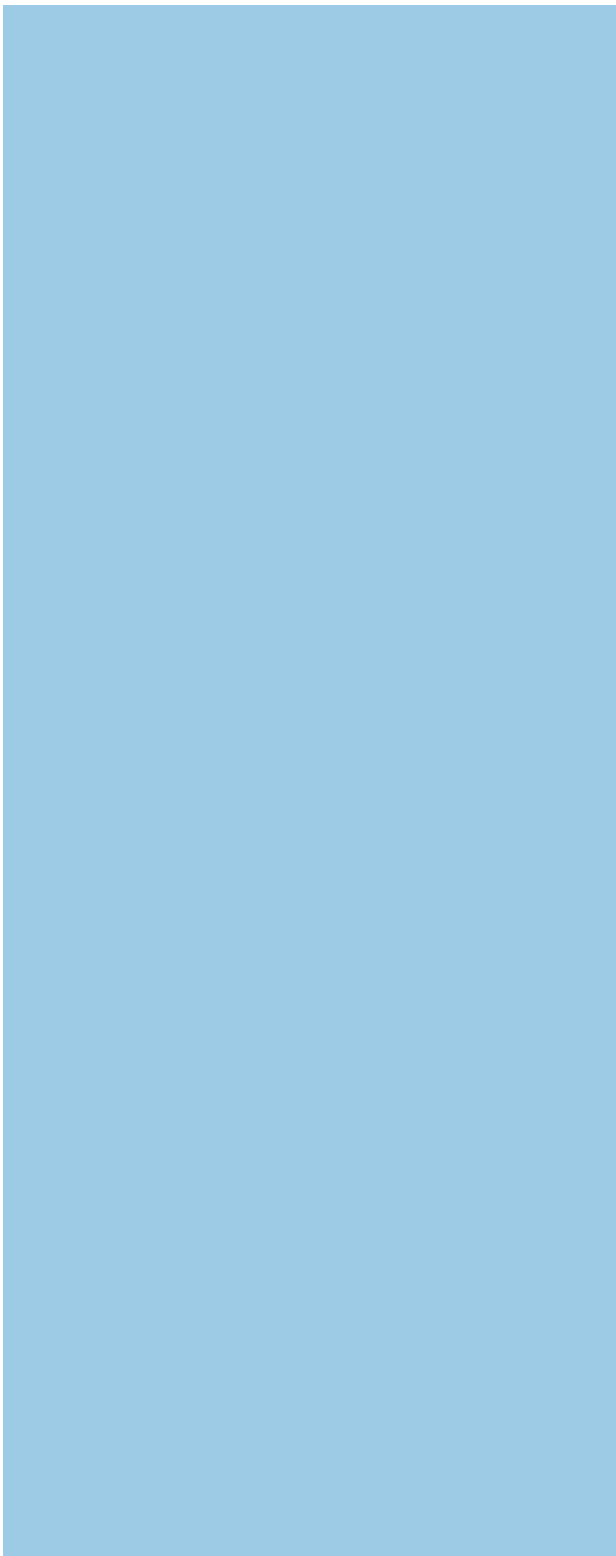
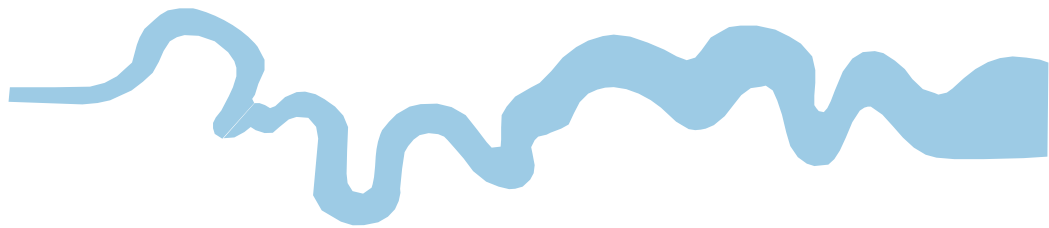
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Plates 3- 4.

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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





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