

New Telecommunication Mast, Holybrook Farm, Burghfield Road, Southcote, Reading, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For SSE Telecommunications Limited**

By Stephen Hammond
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code: BRS 04/36

December 2006

Summary

Site name: New Telecommunication Mast, Holybrook Farm, Burghfield Road, Southcote, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6822 7130

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 29th November 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Stephen Hammond

Site code: BRS 04/36

Summary of results: No deposits of archaeological interest were revealed.

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 Preston ✓ 11.12.06 Steve Ford ✓ 11.12.06

**New Telecommunications Mast, Holybrook Farm, Burghfield Road, Southcote,
Reading, Berkshire, 2006
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Stephen Hammond

Report 04/36

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land designated for the positioning of a new telecommunications mast at Holybrook Farm, adjacent to Burghfield Road, Southcote, Reading, Berkshire (SU 6822 7130) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Jenny Emmett, Senior Archaeologist for Wardell Armstrong LLP on behalf of SSE Telecommunications Ltd, 55 Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8BU.

As a condition on the granting of planning consent (Appeal ref. APP/E0345/A/05/1183889), a watching brief has been requested during the groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Stephen Hammond on the 29th November 2006 and the site code is BRS 04/36.

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 on land at an electricity sub-station on the west side of Burghfield Road immediately south of the railway line from Reading to the West Country, and south of the Holy Brook on the southern outskirts of Reading (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is mapped as alluvium (BGS 1946). This was revealed in the watching brief overlying flint gravel. The site lies at a height of c.40m above Ordnance Datum on level ground.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the floodplain of the River Kennet. Such areas were preferred locations for early prehistoric (Mesolithic) occupation as for example evidenced in other parts of

the Kennet Valley in the Newbury area. Settlements of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age date are also well evidenced from surrounding areas.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This was to involve the excavation of a trench 3.6m square for a concrete foundation and any additional trenches for new service runs as necessary.

Results

Prior to the excavation of the main foundation trench, the site area (5.6m by 6.6m) was stripped down by approximately 0.15m and levelled using a 360° type tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket (Fig. 3). Inspecting this revealed that only a dark grey/ brown clay/silt made ground had been partially removed. This was found to contain brick inclusions as well as plastic bags and packaging and other modern debris.

The main foundation trench was 3.6m by 3.6m and was approximately 1.5m deep. The stratigraphy revealed within the trench following the initial strip showed a continuation of the dark grey/brown clay/silt made ground for a further 0.30m. This overlay a dark grey/brown clay/silt (possibly a buried topsoil) with occasional charcoal flecking 0.30m thick which in turn covered 0.10m of brown silty clay with occasional organic matter. Below this, 0.60m of light grey alluvium was noted sealing flint gravel which continued to the base of the trench (Fig. 4). Due to the rapid ingress of water (the water table being reached at an approximate depth of 1.00m), it became very difficult to inspect the trench below this level for archaeology. However, all the resulting spoil heaps failed to produce any finds of an archaeological nature.

A cut with a width of approximately 0.50m was noted in both the eastern and southern sections. Both appeared to be cut from the surface with very straight sides which continued approximately 1.00m before being concealed by the water. It is thought that the two are likely to be linked, perhaps to form the corner of a service trench or some other fairly recent work. Close inspection was not possible because of the unstable nature of the sections.

No artefacts earlier than the 20th century were noted (not retained).

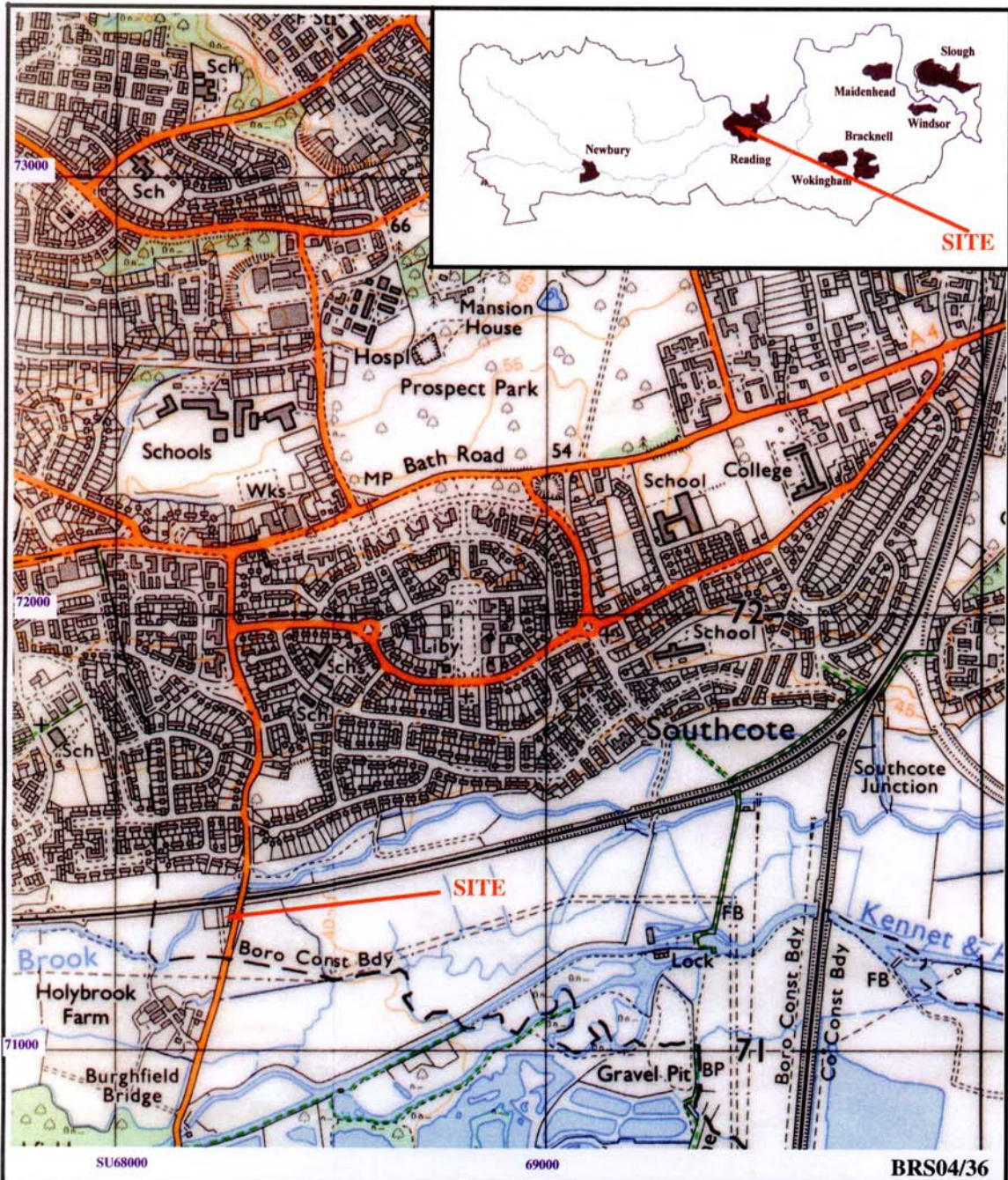
Conclusion

Only artefacts and a feature of 20th century date revealed during the watching brief. No archaeological finds or features were observed or were affected by the groundworks.

References

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63,360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth

PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning* Dept Environment Planning Policy Guidance **16**, HMSO



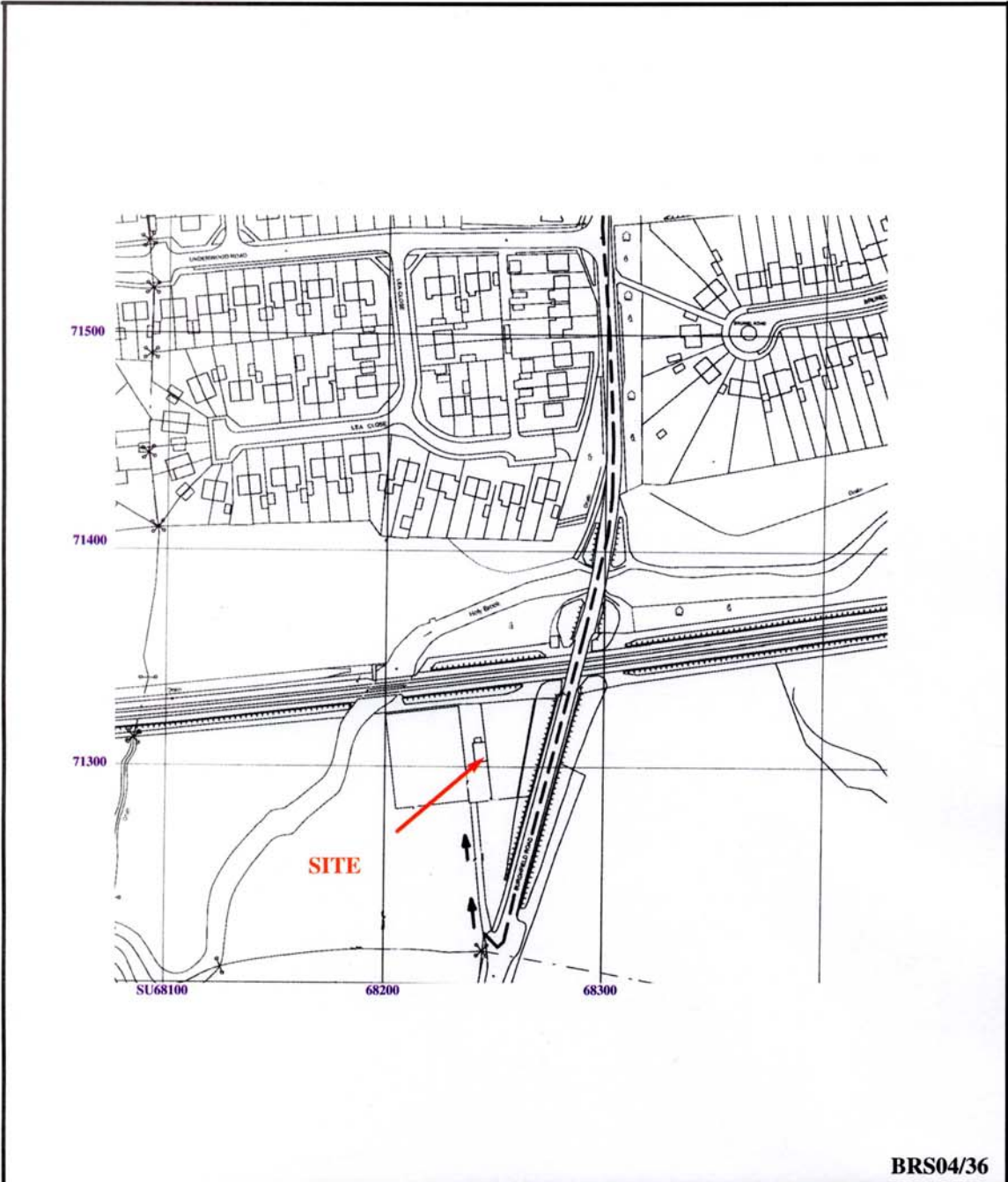
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Figure 1. Location of site within Southcote
and Berkshire.

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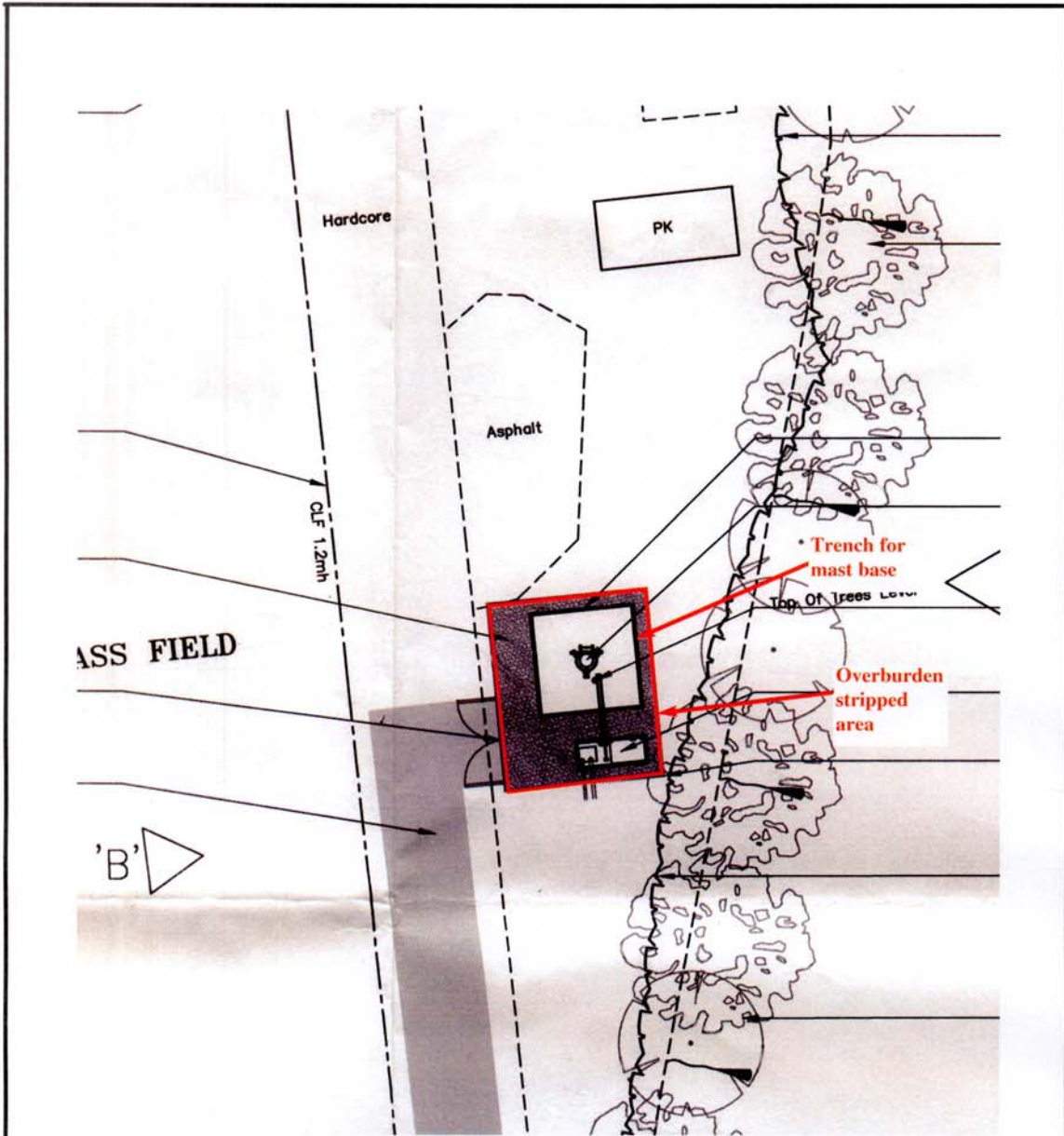
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Burghfield Road.

Scale: 1:2500

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Figure 3. Detailed location of mast.

Scale 1:200

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 A R C H A E O L O G I C A L
 S E R V I C E S

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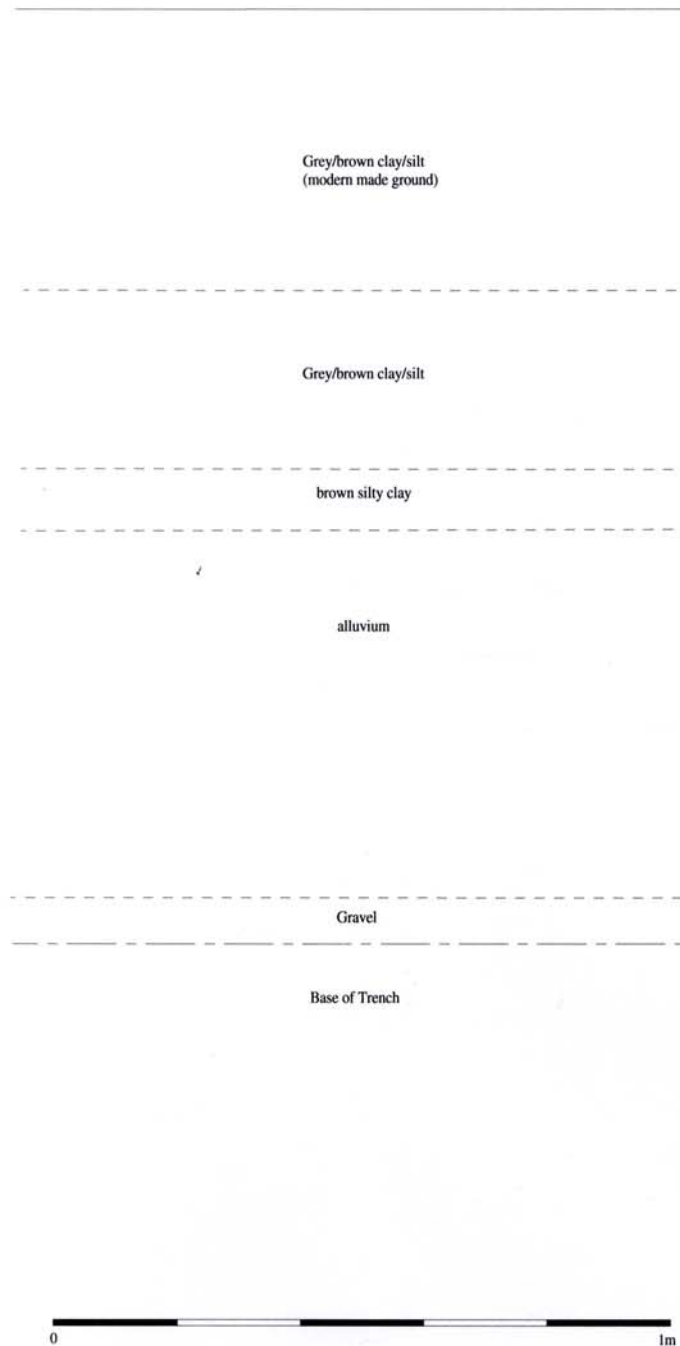


Figure 4: Representative Section

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