

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**153 Bath Road, Reading,
Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Lizzi Lewins and Danielle Milbank

Site Code: BRR16/231

(SU 6909 7229)

**153 Bath Road, Reading,
Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Alexander James Ltd**

by Lizzi Lewins and Danielle Milbank
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BRR16/231

July 2017

Summary

Site name: 153 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6909 7229

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 3rd July 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Lizzi Lewins

Site code: BRR16/231

Area of site: c. 0.18 ha

Summary of results: One possible undated feature was identified during the course of the evaluation. The site is therefore considered to have low archaeological potential.

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

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 14.07.17 Steve Preston ✓ 14.07.17

153 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Lizzi Lewins and Danielle Milbank

Report 16/231

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 153 Bath Road, Reading (SU 6909 7229) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Stephen Kearney on behalf of Alexander James Contracts, 1 Wesley House, 1-7 Wesley Avenue, London, NW10 7BZ.

Planning consent (141363) has been gained from Reading Borough Council to construct new housing on land at 153 Bath Road, Reading. The consent is subject to an condition (4) relating to archaeology. As a possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by the groundworks, a field evaluation has been required. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012, para. 128), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms. Ellie Leary, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological advisers to the Borough Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Lizzi Lewins and Danielle Milbank, on 3rd July 2017 and the site code is BRR16/231. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the south side of Bath Road (the A4), to the west of the centre of Reading (Fig. 1). The site comprises a former garden, and is bounded by the Bath Road at the north, with residential plots to the south and east, and a Circuit Lane to the west (Fig. 2). It is approximately T shaped, with the east portion fairly flat, and the western part steeply sloping from the plateau down to Circuit Lane. The lowest point of the site at the west lies at approximately 50m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) with the east at 54m aOD, and the underlying geology is mapped as Lynch Hill Gravel at the east, and Lambeth group (clay, sand and silt) to the west (BGS 2000). This geology was observed in all trenches as light reddish yellow clay.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location to the west of the location of Iron Age deposits found during early 20th-century quarrying. Recent evaluation and follow-up fieldwork at the former Elvian School to the east has revealed extensive Middle Iron Age deposits (Taylor 2016; Taylor in prep). A modest range of other sites and finds are present in nearby areas, including findspots of Lower Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Bronze Age flint tools within a 40m radius of the site, and further Prehistoric and Roman finds in the wider area. In general the site lies within the archaeologically rich Thames/Lower Kennet Valley with a wealth of sites and finds from both prehistoric and later periods (Dils and Yates 2013). The gravel terraces of the Thames Valley are particularly noteworthy for the presence of Palaeolithic flint and stone tools, representing the earliest known human occupation in the British Isles (Wymer 1968) and a few handaxe findspots are recorded in the vicinity. However, very rare *in-situ* Palaeolithic deposits are only likely to be present beneath or within the lower levels of gravel which would be unaffected by the relatively shallow foundations of this development proposal.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the evaluation *were* to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental 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;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to collect information with which to prepare a mitigation strategy if necessary.

Four trenches were to be dug, each measuring 14m in length and 1.6m wide. These were to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless bucket, and under constant archaeological supervision, either down to the natural geology or until archaeological features were encountered. All archaeological deposits were to be hand cleaned, excavated and recorded, except where such remains might warrant preservation *in situ* or might better be investigated under the conditions appertaining to full excavation. All spoil heaps were to be monitored for artefacts and metal-detected to allow analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts. Environmental samples were to be taken from any suitable deposits.

Results

All four trenches were dug as intended, with the position of trench 1 altered very slightly from the original plan due to restrictions on the placement of the JCB in the limited space (Fig. 3). The trenches ranged in length from

13.70m to 16m, in depth from 0.44m to 0.69m, and were 1.6m wide. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned roughly S-N and was 13.70m long and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.32m of topsoil, which overlay orange brown sandy silt subsoil 0.20m thick, in turn overlying the natural geology, which comprised brown orange silty sand with moderate small and medium flint gravel. A test pit was excavated at the north end to a depth of 0.70m, to verify the nature of the geology. No finds or features of archaeological significance were recovered.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3; Pls 2 and 5)

Trench 2 was aligned north-south and was 16.00m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.23m thick, which overlay orange brown sandy silt subsoil 0.22m thick, which in turn overlay the natural mottled orange grey clay geology at the south end, and orange sand and flint gravel geology at the north end. Two possible features were identified, which were excavated and proved to be geological in origin. A third possible feature, between 6m and 9m from the south end of the trench, was investigated and recorded (slot 1), though it is possibly also geological in origin. This possible feature varied between 0.6m to 0.7m wide and was just 0.10m deep, with a concave but very uneven sides and base. It was infilled with a grey brown sandy silt (53) which contained occasional small subangular flint, from which no finds were recovered.

Trench 3 (Fig. 3; Pl. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned roughly East-West and was 14.60m long and 0.44 to 0.64m deep. The stratigraphy consisted along the northern side of made ground (hardcore crushed concrete) 0.40m thick which overlay the natural geology. Along the southern side of the trench, the stratigraphy comprised topsoil 0.18m thick which overlay orange brown sandy silt subsoil 0.18m thick, which in turn overlay orange sand and flint gravel natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological significance were recovered.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3; Pl. 4)

Trench 4 was aligned roughly E-W and was 14.30m long and 0.69m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil, which overlay orange brown sandy silt subsoil 0.36m thick, which in turn overlay the natural brown orange silty sand with moderate small and medium flint gravel geology. No finds or features of archaeological significance were present.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the site was carried out as intended. It was established that despite the significant change in height across the topography of the site, the natural geology was intact in all four trenches and there was

potential for archaeological deposits to have survived in all the areas examined. Modern truncation was minimal, and was limited to the subsoil and upper few centimetres of the natural geology along the northern side of trench 3 where a road had been formed for recent site clearance.

One linear feature of possible archaeological origin was recorded, though the uneven profile of the feature indicates it could equally be of natural origin. No finds were recovered and the feature should be regarded as dubious at best.

On the basis of these results the site is considered to have very low archaeological potential.

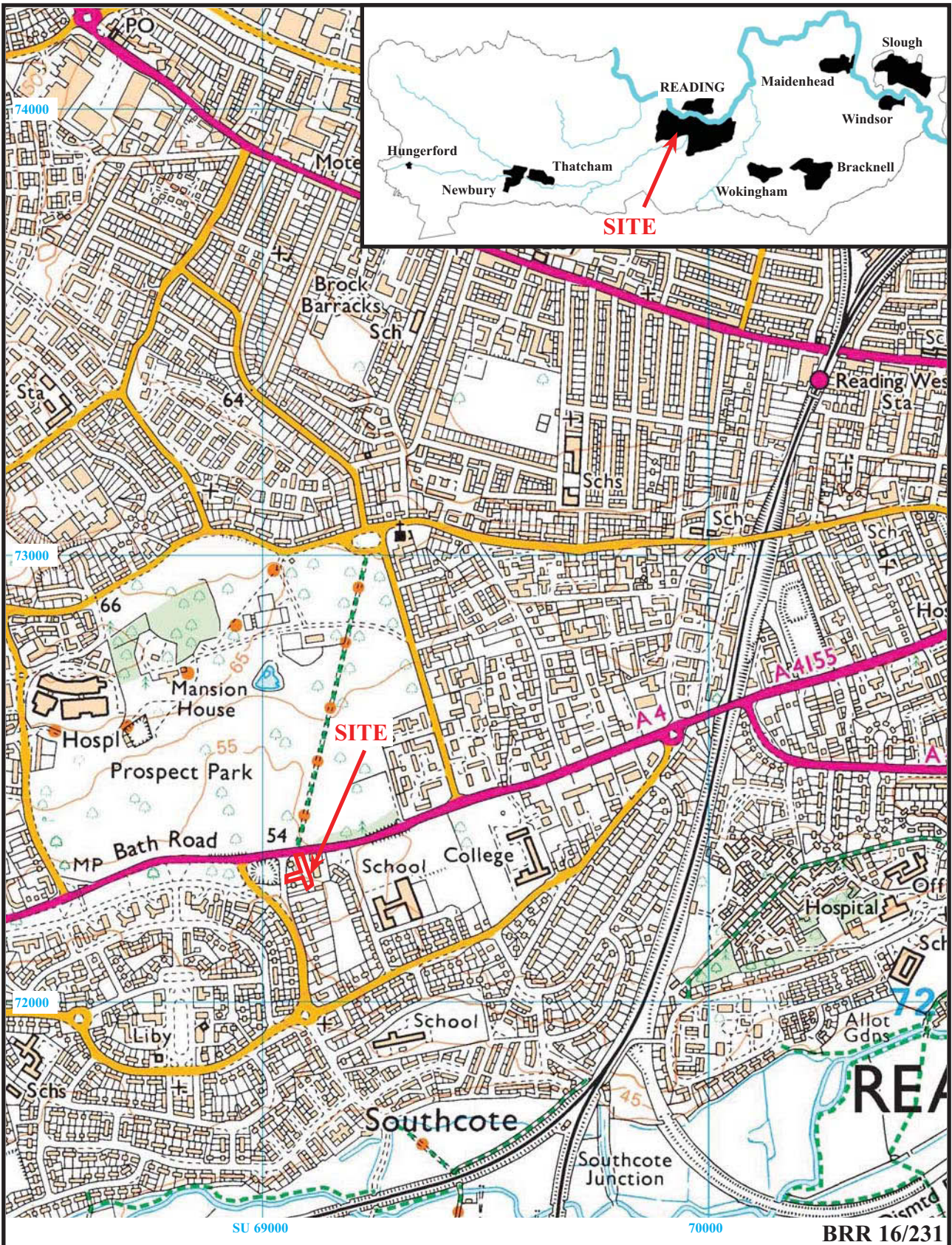
References

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- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at SE, SW or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	13.70	1.6	0.58	0–0.32m topsoil; 0.32-0.52m orange brown sandy silt subsoil; 0.52m+ brown orange silty sand natural geology with moderate small and medium flint gravel. [Pl. 1]
2	16.00	1.6	0.50	0–0.23m topsoil; 0.23-0.45m orange brown sandy silt subsoil; 0.45m+ south end: brown orange silty sand natural geology with moderate small and medium flint gravel, north end: mottled orange grey clay natural geology. Ditch 1 [Pls 2 and 5]
3	14.60	1.6	0.44-0.64	North side: 0–0.40m hardcore; 0.40m+ brown orange silty sand natural geology with frequent small and medium flint gravel. South side: 0–0.18m topsoil; 0.18m- 0.35m orange brown sandy silt subsoil; 0.35m+ brown orange silty sand natural geology with frequent small and medium flint gravel [Pl. 3]
4	14.30	1.6	0.25-0.69	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.61m orange brown sandy silt subsoil; 0.61m+ brown orange silty sand natural geology with moderate small and medium flint gravel. [Pl. 4]



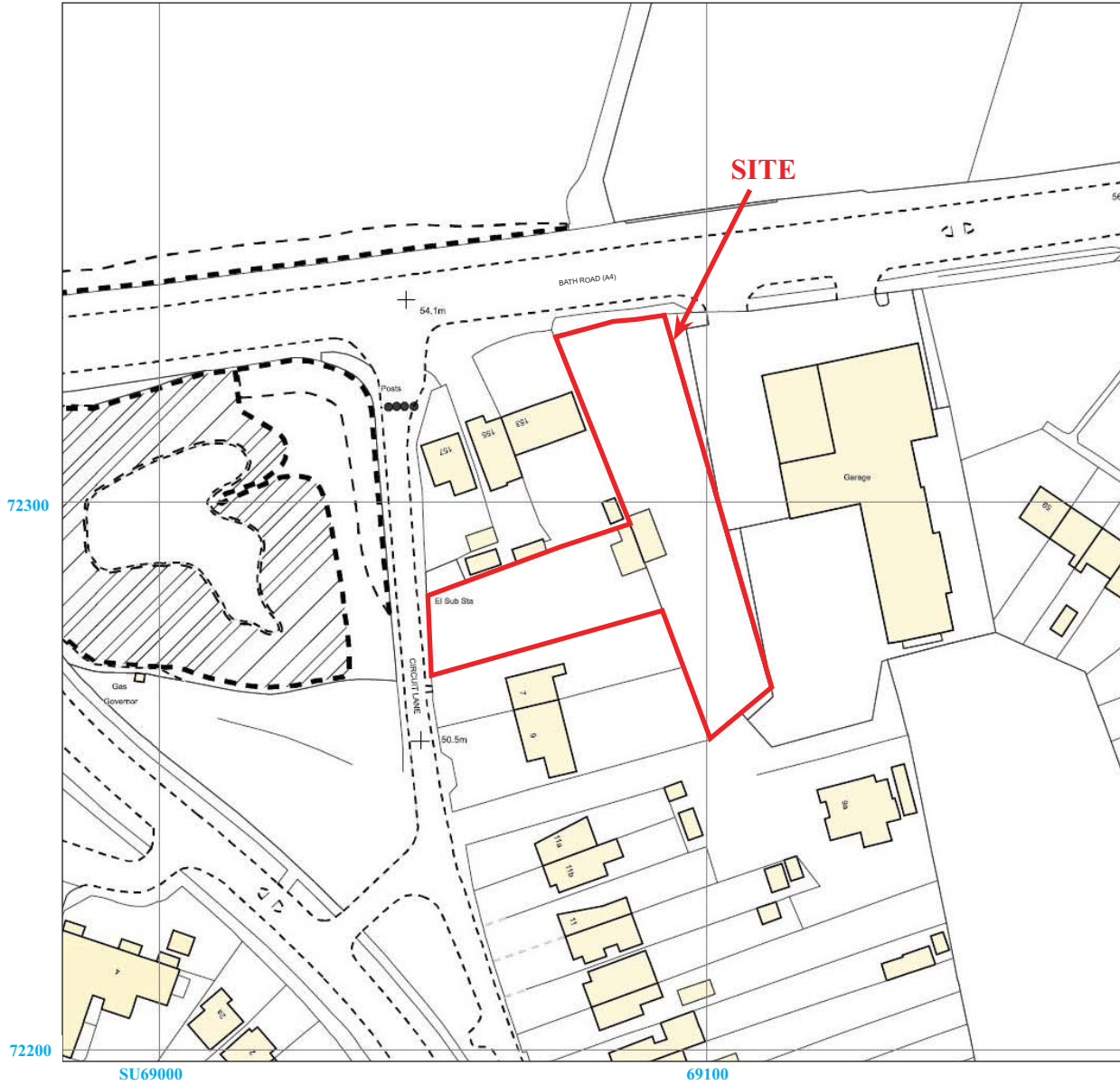
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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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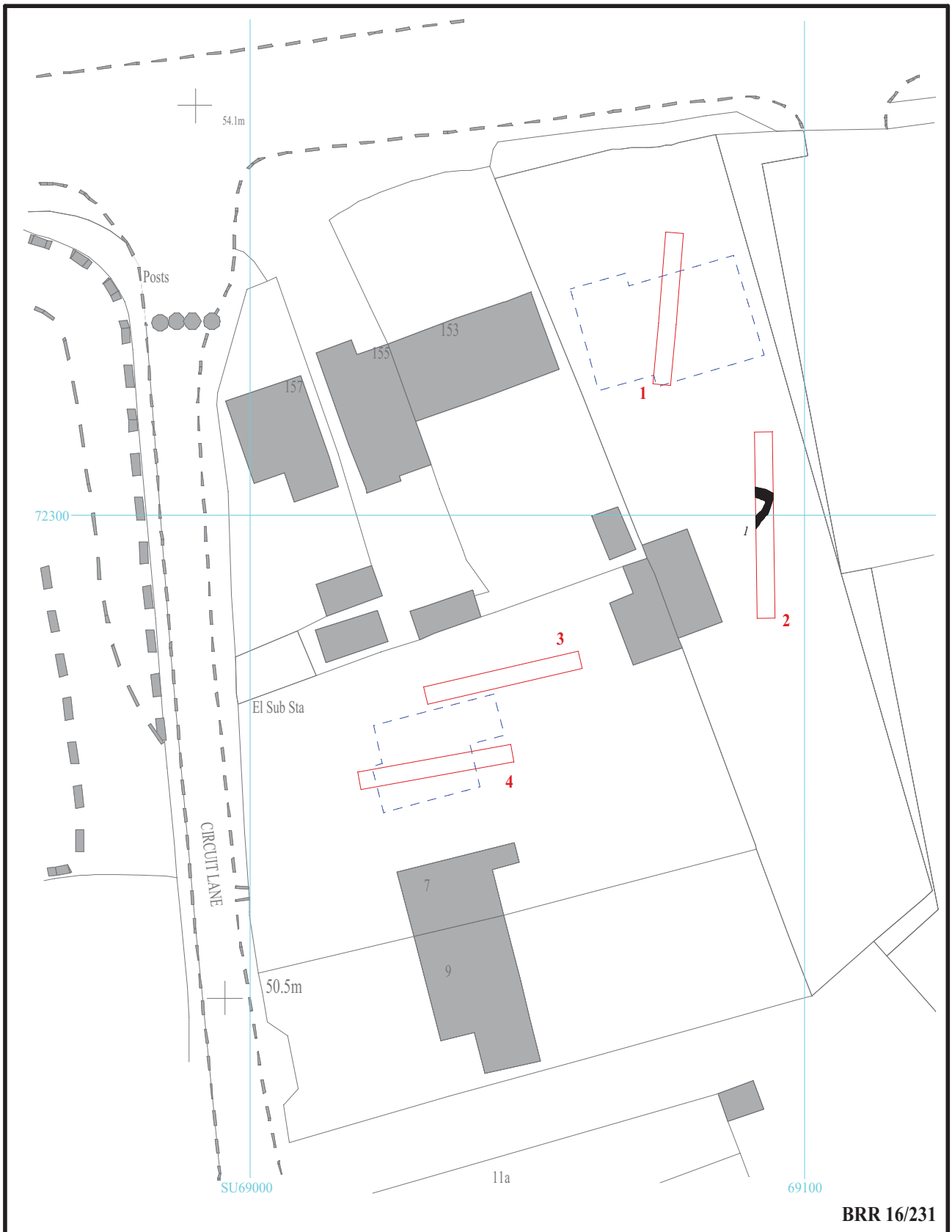
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Bath Road (A4).

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Figure 3. Location of trenches, related to proposed developments.





Plate 1. Trench 1, looking south,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking south,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 3, looking east,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 4, looking east,
Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 5. Trench 2, gully 1, looking north east,
Scale: 0.3m.

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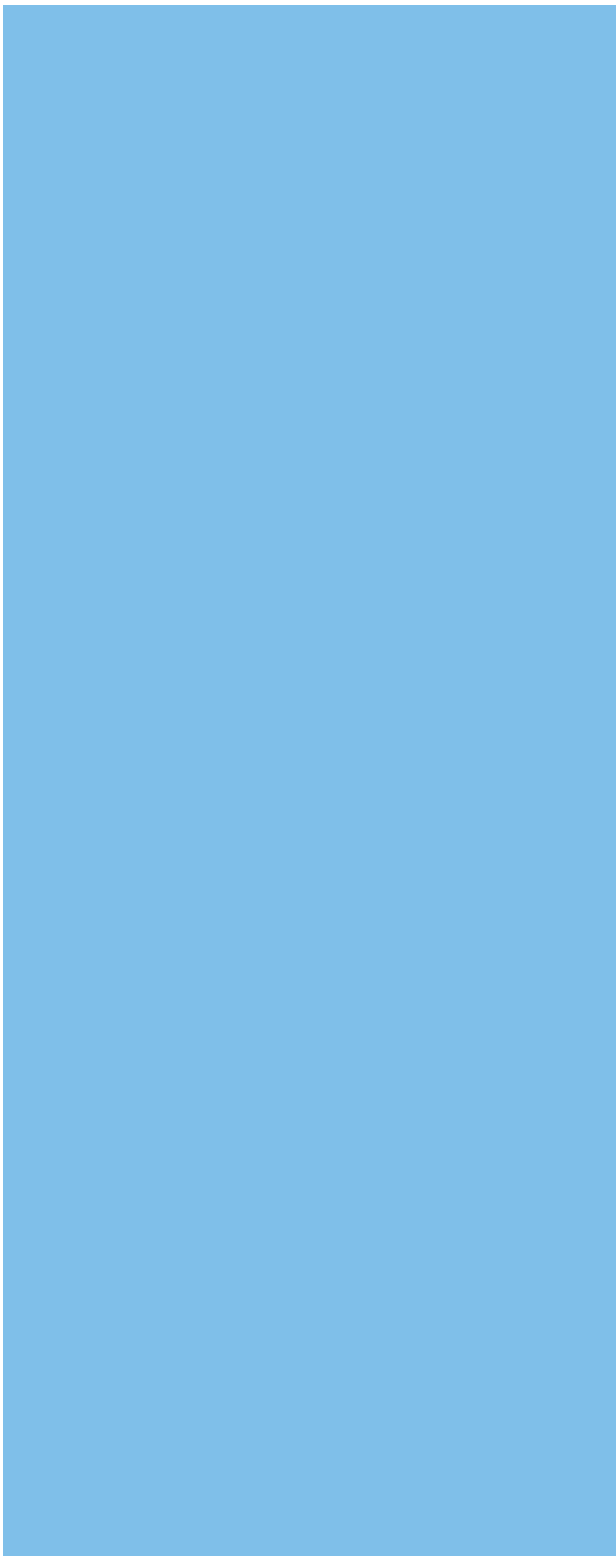
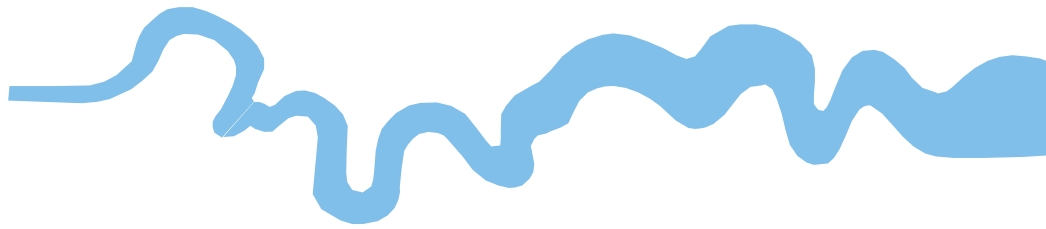
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Plates 3 - 5.**

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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 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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 RG1 5NR**

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

***Offices in:
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent and Ennis (Ireland)***