

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor and Pierre Manisse

Site Code: KMR 14/191

(SU 7182 7386)

Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Lochailort Reading Ltd**

by Andy Taylor and Pierre Manisse
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code KMR 14/191

December 2018

Summary

Site name: Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7182 7386

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 12th February 2018, 18th-19th June 2018

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor, Pierre Manisse

Site code: KMR 14/191

Area of site: c.0.45 hectares

Summary of results: The evaluation encountered serious constraints and no trenches satisfactorily explored the full depth of deposits above natural geology (alluvium/gravel). However, the evaluation did confirm that the relevant archaeological levels, if surviving on the site, were buried by deep made ground and in a number of places had been truncated away. No deposits not artefacts of archaeological interest were observed during this project.

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

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

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Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor and Pierre Manisse

Report 14/191b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7182 7386) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr James Croucher, of Lochailort Reading Ltd, Cassini House, 57 St James' Street, London, SW1A 1LD.

Planning consent (162166/FUL) has been gained from Reading Borough Council to construct a new apartment block on the site. The consent is subject to a condition (15) relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological investigation. 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. It was determined that this should take the form, initially, of field evaluation by means of trial trenching. Based on the results of this exercise, further fieldwork might be required to mitigate the impact of the development on archaeological remains. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary, (formerly) Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor on 12th February 2018 and completed by Pierre-Damien Manisse and Anne-Michelle Huvig between the 18th and 19th June 2018. The site code is KMR 14/191. 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 to the east of Reading town centre at the junction with the A329 and Kings Meadow Road, immediately south-east of Reading Bridge with the River Thames flowing opposite. It is an approximately rectangular plot of land and occupies an overall area of *c.* 4500 sq m. It is bounded to the west by the A329 Vastern Road, to the south by the main line into Reading railway station and to the east by Napier Court business park. The site is occupied by a single large structure with associated forecourt and car parking. The underlying geology is mapped as alluvium overlying Kempton Park Gravel (BGS 2000) and it lies at a height of approximately 36m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a briefing document produced by Ms Kathelen Leary of Berkshire Archaeology drawing on desk-based assessment (Elliott 2014). In summary this potential stems from the site's location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley (Booth *et al.* 2007; Lambrick *et al.* 2009), though the immediate location of the proposal site has few sites or finds recorded in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record. At least three Saxon burials were recorded to the south-west and a Roman coin was found to the west. The site lies to the north-east of the historic (Saxon and medieval) core of Reading and south of the medieval Reading Abbey.

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.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if and Medieval deposits are present relating to the nearby Abbey complex; and
- to collect information with which to provide a mitigation strategy if necessary.

Five trenches were proposed to be dug which were to measure 1.60m wide and between 5m and 10m long. A sufficient sample of any archaeological deposits was to be investigated to satisfy the aims outlined above. Due to the anticipated depth of these trenches they would have to be stepped at 1m intervals.

Results

It was not possible to implement the evaluation as intended due to unforeseen ground conditions including contamination and deep obstructions as well as off-record service corridors. Three trenches were dug under TVAS direct control with a further three small trenches excavated by the site contractor where typical trenches could not be employed. A list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

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

This trench was aligned E–W (slightly bending at the west end towards the south) and measured 10m long and 1.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of Tarmac overlying a preparatory layer made of light brown sand with common coarse gravels, 0.10-0.15m thick. Below this was another made ground composed of poorly sorted sub-angular stones in a sandy clay matrix, 0.70-0.75m thick. Underneath this lay a 0.12m thick layer of chalk fragments. The deepest layer encountered over most of the trench was a mid to dark brown sandy clay, with a thickness of at least 0.20m, and presenting traces of recent activity (coal). To the west a possibly less disturbed mid grey clay was reached but the trench layout offered only a limited view of it and could as well possibly be another deliberate deposit. (Contaminated) water ingress prevented any further excavation.

No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed at this level.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

This trench was aligned roughly S-N and measured 11m long to a recorded maximum depth of 1.30m and a width of 1.80m. This trench was started in February but due to a massive water influx, progress was stopped and the limited open portion backfilled. When archaeological work resumed, water was still present at 1.30m and hindered any in-depth enquiry. Up to that depth only made ground was observed. The trench butted against the south boundary wall of the site. At the south end steel-reinforced concrete made it impossible to reach the desired depth. Then from top to bottom, deposits consisted of a thin Tarmacadam layer, some associated preparation deposit as in Trench 1 and then the mixed made ground (firm dark brown clay with very frequent coarse gravels).

Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 4)

As this trench initial position was over the new site access it had to be moved further north (demolition was ongoing to the south). But previously opened slots by contractors, spoil heap and sand stockpile made it impossible to open any new trench. Thus instead, an existing contractors trench in this location was reworked. This trench was aligned S-N, measured 5.10m long, 0.60 to 0.70m wide and 0.85m deep. It was at the limit between Tarmac and brick pavement as a superficial cover. Below was the usual levelling sandy bed. Then various made ground layers occurred: modern concrete, mid reddish brown clayey silt with occasional gravels, coarse angular pebbles and small stones in a grey silty clay matrix. At 0.80-0.85m deep was a massive concrete slab protecting sewer services and no further digging was possible.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

Due to ground contamination, the original trench had to be cancelled. A small N-S slot, 2.80m x 1m for a depth of 0.80m was located to the east of Trench 3. The same stratigraphy and deeply buried service was observed.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3; Pl. 2)

Here again the positioning of the trench had to be reconsidered. It was dug towards the north-east corner of the site and was 5m long. Its orientation was approximately W-E. The width varied between 1m and 1.30m. A depth of 1.50m was attained. Safety reasons and proximity of the access path dictated a stop at that level. The deepest layer seen was 0.20m thick and consisted of a clay or silty clay deposit with varied colours: mid greenish grey/grey at north, rather mid brown at south and west. It was unclear if this change could be due to human intervention, contamination or just natural alteration. Above it lay a crushed chalk deposit, also seen in Trench 1. It was 0.12m thick. The upper layers were a firm mixed made ground, mostly dark brown sandy clay or silty clay but with part incorporating more coarse gravels. It was topped with a yellowish sandy gravel (0.15m thick), bedding for the brick block paving (0.05m thick).

Trench 6 (Fig. 3)

A sixth trench was additional to those anticipated in the written scheme of investigation. This trench reached a depth of 1.30m at one end and thus could provide some information. It was aligned SSE-NNW for 8.60m, between Trenches 1 and 3. Its width was 0.67m. Through the first 7m this did not reach much depth, stopping at the large concrete layer (as in Trenches 3-4) and active electrical services, its more northerly section, below the usual chalk bits, reached a dark brown sandy silt or sandy clay deposit, whose thickness could not be estimated.

Finds

No finds were collected.

Conclusion

This evaluation encountered a number of unexpectedly serious constraints that limited its effectiveness. It has not provided any insight regarding the absolute presence or absence of archaeological remains on the site, as it was never quite clear if the likely relevant levels had been reached in any trench or if these levels had been truncated. However, it is quite clear that some, perhaps extensive portions of the site had been disturbed to a

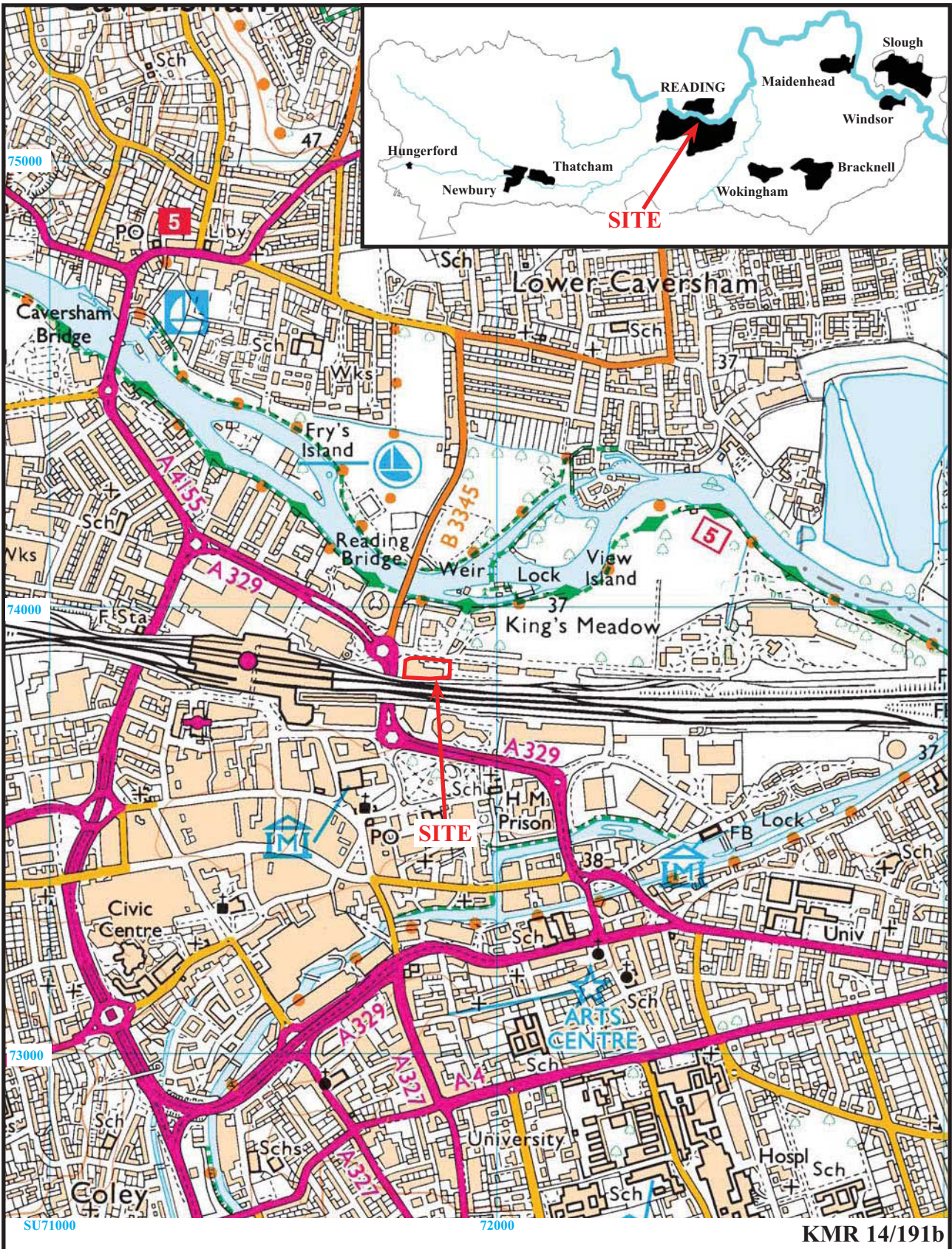
great depth (main sewer pipes for example) and probably well below any archaeologically relevant horizon. It was also clear that there was a considerable thickness of made ground across the whole site and the relevant horizons, if not extensively compromised, are deeply buried.

References

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- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	10	1-1.50	1.30	0-0.10m Tarmac; 0.10m-0.20m/0.25m light brown sandy gravels; 0.25m-1m mixed made-ground; 1m-1.12m crushed chalk; 1.12m->1.30m mid to dark brown sandy clay at east/mid grey clay towards west [Pl. 1]
2	11	1.80	1.30	0-0.07m Tarmac; 0.07m->1.30m mixed made ground
3	5.10	0.60-0.70	0.85	0-0.06m brick pavement; 0.06m-0.10m whiteish coarse sand; 0.10m-0.80m mixed made ground; >0.80m concrete
4	2.80	1	0.80	0-0.06m brick pavement; 0.06m-0.10m whiteish coarse sand; 0.10m-0.80m mixed made ground; >0.80m concrete
5	5	1-1.30	1.50	0-0.06m brick pavement; 0.06m-0.20m yellowish sandy gravel; 0.20m-1.35m mixed made ground; 1.35m->1.50m mid grey/greenish grey or mid brown clay/silty clay [Pl. 2]
6	8.60	0.67	1.30	0-0.20m Tarmac and levelling layer; 0.20m-1.30m various made grounds



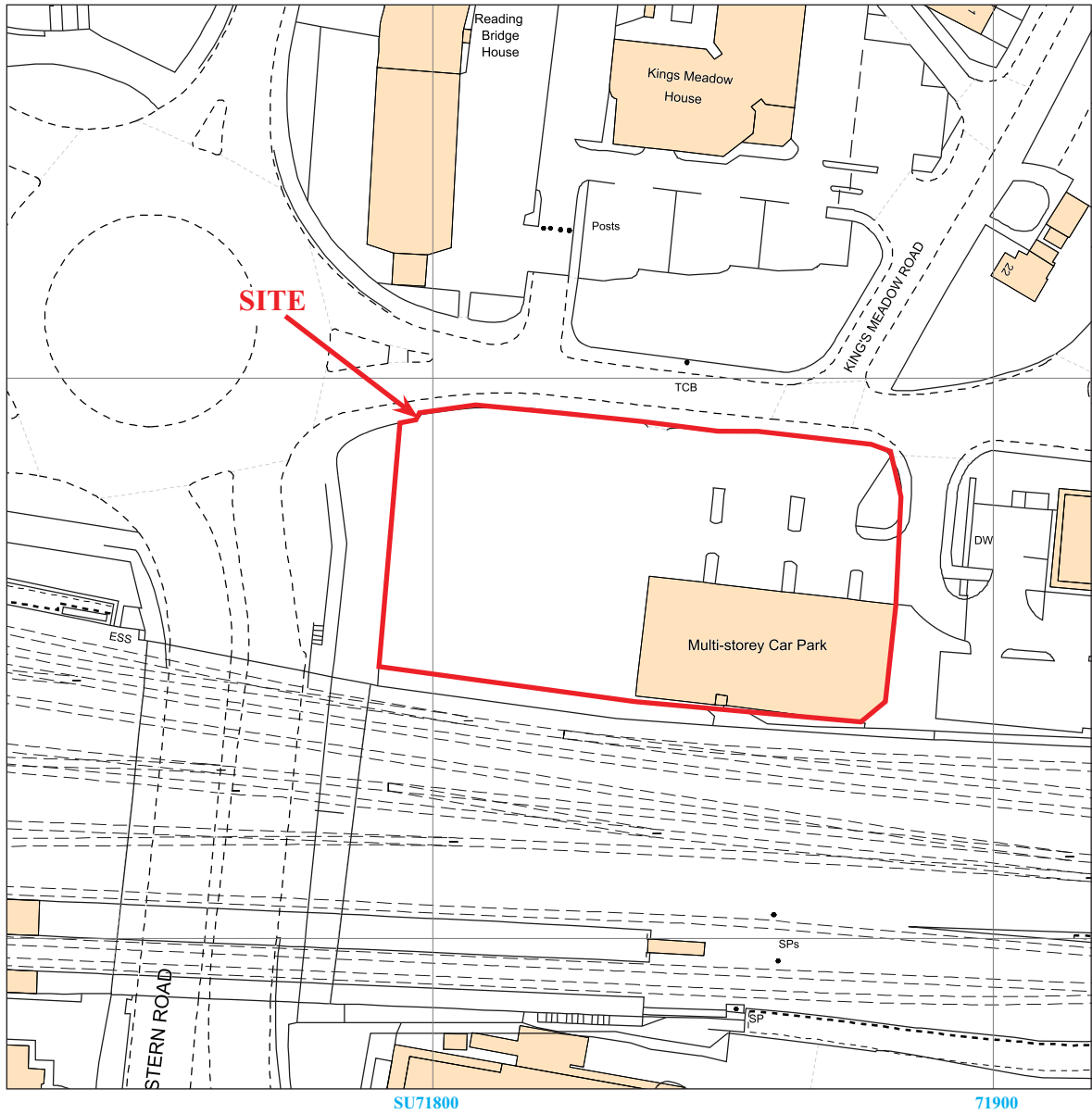
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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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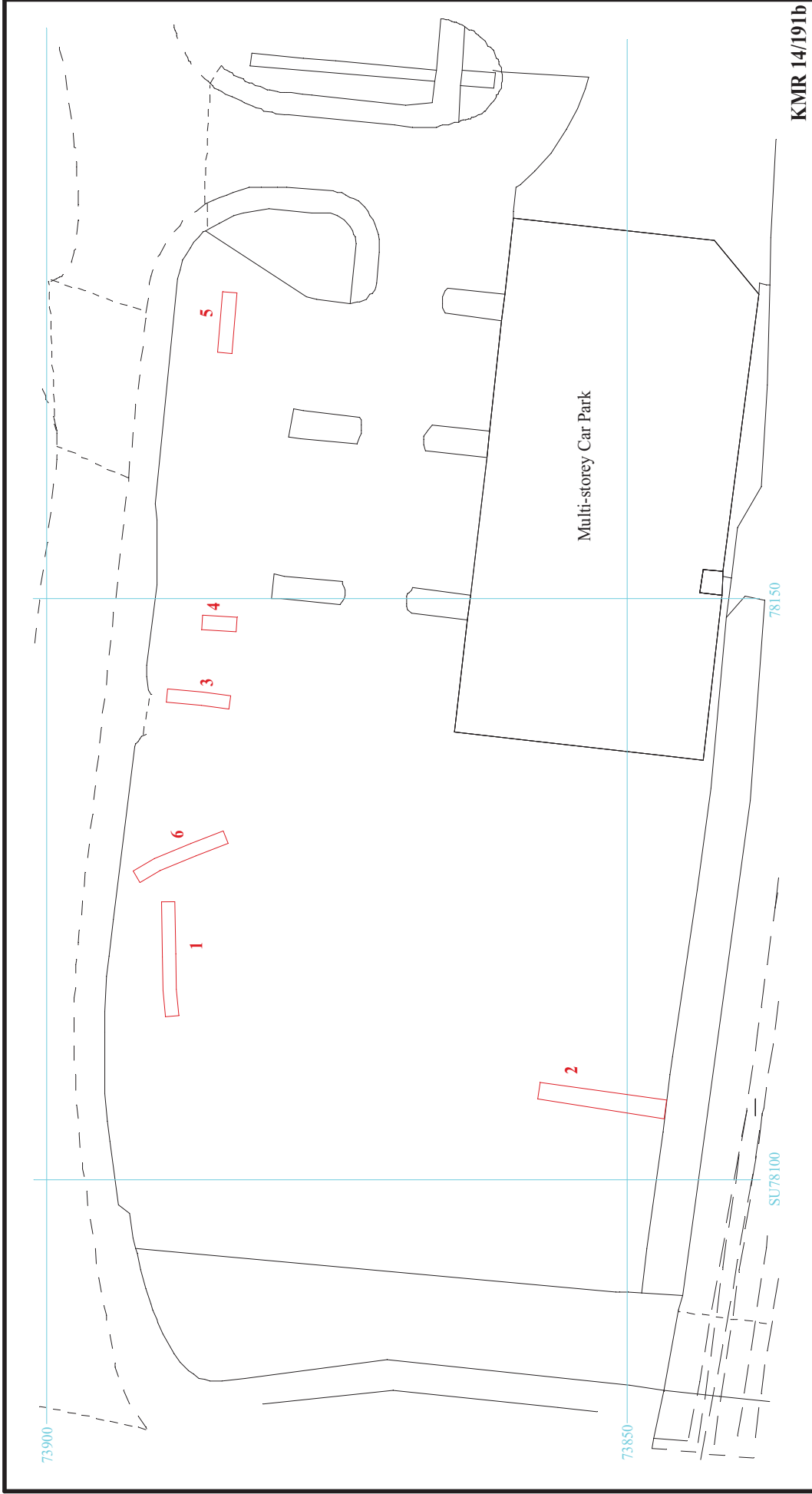
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Kings Meadow Road.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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W *Trench 1* E 37.89m aOD

Tarmac
Light brown coarse gravel

Brown sandy clay with stone/brick/chalk fragments (made ground)

Dark grey-brown sandy clay

base of trench

Trench 3

SSW NNE
Brick pavers 37.57m

White coarse sand and concrete

Brown clayey silt with gravel

Coarse angular pebbles in grey sandy silt

Concrete over sewer base of trench

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Figure 4. Representative sections



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



Plate 2. Trench 5, looking east, Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 1m.

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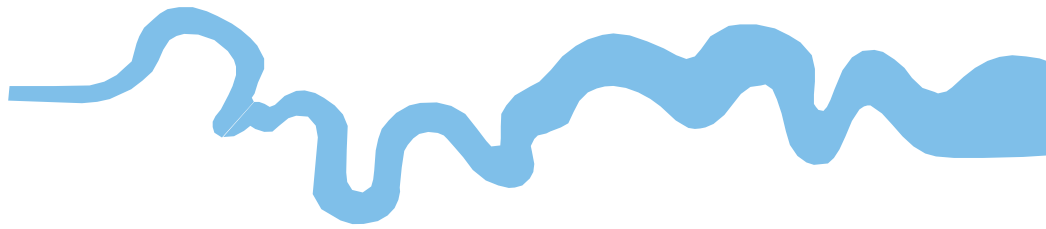
**Former Coopers BMW, Kings Meadow Road,
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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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





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