

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 Watching Brief

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: KMR 14/191

(SU 7182 7386)

Former Cooper BMW site, Kings Meadow, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Lochailort Reading Ltd

by Andy Taylor

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: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 25th June-26th November 2018

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson, Steve Ford, Maisie Foster, Andy Taylor and Benedikt Tebbitt

Site code: KMR 14/191

Area of site: 0.45 hectares

Summary of results: No deposits or finds of an archaeological nature were observed during the watching brief.

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.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 17.12.18 Steve Preston ✓ 17.12.18

Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 14/191c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief 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, Planning Director with 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. The consent is subject to a condition (15) relating to archaeology. 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. A field evaluation (Manisse and Taylor 2018) had failed to provide sufficient information to characterize the archaeological resource present on the site (or its absence) and so a watching brief was required to be maintained in order to mitigate the effects on the development on any archaeological remains that might be present. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary, then Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson, Steve Ford, Maisie Foster, Andy Taylor and Benedikt Tebbitt between the 25th June and 26th November 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 the Reading Bridge with the River Thames flowing opposite. It is an approximately rectangular lot of land and occupies an 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 (aOD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site had 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 its 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. Evaluation trenching undertaken on site during demolition exposed made ground and upper levels of alluvial deposits but did not identify any finds or features of archaeological interest (Manisse and Taylor 2018); various constraints prevented the trenches being taken deep enough to rule out the possibility that archaeological deposits might be present at greater depth.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks associated with the demolition and removal of existing structures as well as those for the new development. This was expected to involve monitoring of grubbing out of existing foundations and hardstanding, foundation trench digging and other intrusive groundworks such as the excavation of service trenches and overburden removal.

Results

Several test pits and areas of excavation associated with ground remediation and construction works were observed across the site (Fig. 3, Pls 1–4) post-demolition of the existing car park building. The deepest of these were dug through alluvium to expose the gravel natural geology. The stratigraphy was consistent across all of the areas observed. This consisted of *c.*1.50m of brick/concrete rubble made ground overlying between 1m and 1.50m of alluvial clay, overlying the red-yellow sandy gravel. The levels for the surfaces of these deposits are very approximately 35.8m aOD for the alluvium and 34.3m aOD for the underlying gravel. Due to the depths (*c.*3m) of the construction-related excavations it was not possible to enter the areas where the gravel had been

exposed and, as such, no detailed observations or measurements could be made beyond those possible from the existing ground surface. The levels above have been calculated using surface levels taken during the evaluation trenching (Manisse and Taylor 2018) and as such should be considered as very imprecise due to changes in level of the ground surface between the evaluation and the watching brief. No finds or features were identified in any of the areas of excavation either within the alluvial clay or the gravel.

Finds

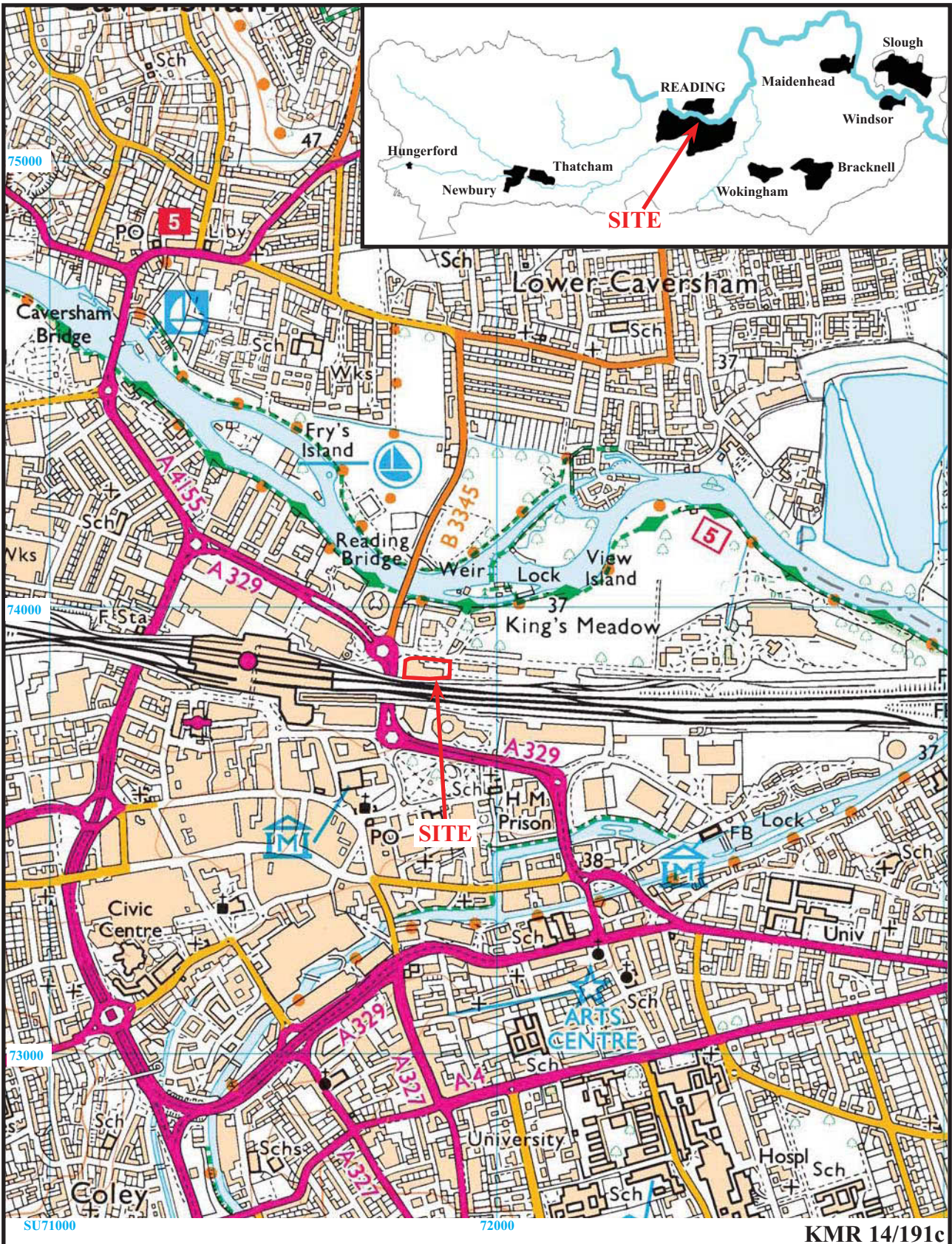
No finds of any archaeological interest were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

Conclusion

Despite the potential for archaeology to be present on the site no evidence of deposits or finds were observed during the course of the watching brief. Although only a limited amount of the site was observed, in the form of test pits and larger areas of deep excavation, no disturbance of the alluvium was noted (below modern made ground levels), with the exception of the area around the known culvert crossing the site N-S.

References

- BGS, 2000, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet **268**, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Booth, P, Dodd, A, Robinson, M and Smith, A, 2007, *The Thames through Time: The Archaeology of the Gravel Terraces of the Upper and Middle Thames: The early historical period AD1–1000*, Oxford Archaeology Thames Valley Landscapes Monogr **27**, Oxford
- Elliott, G, 2014, 'Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, Berkshire: Archaeological desk-based assessment', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report **14/191**, Reading
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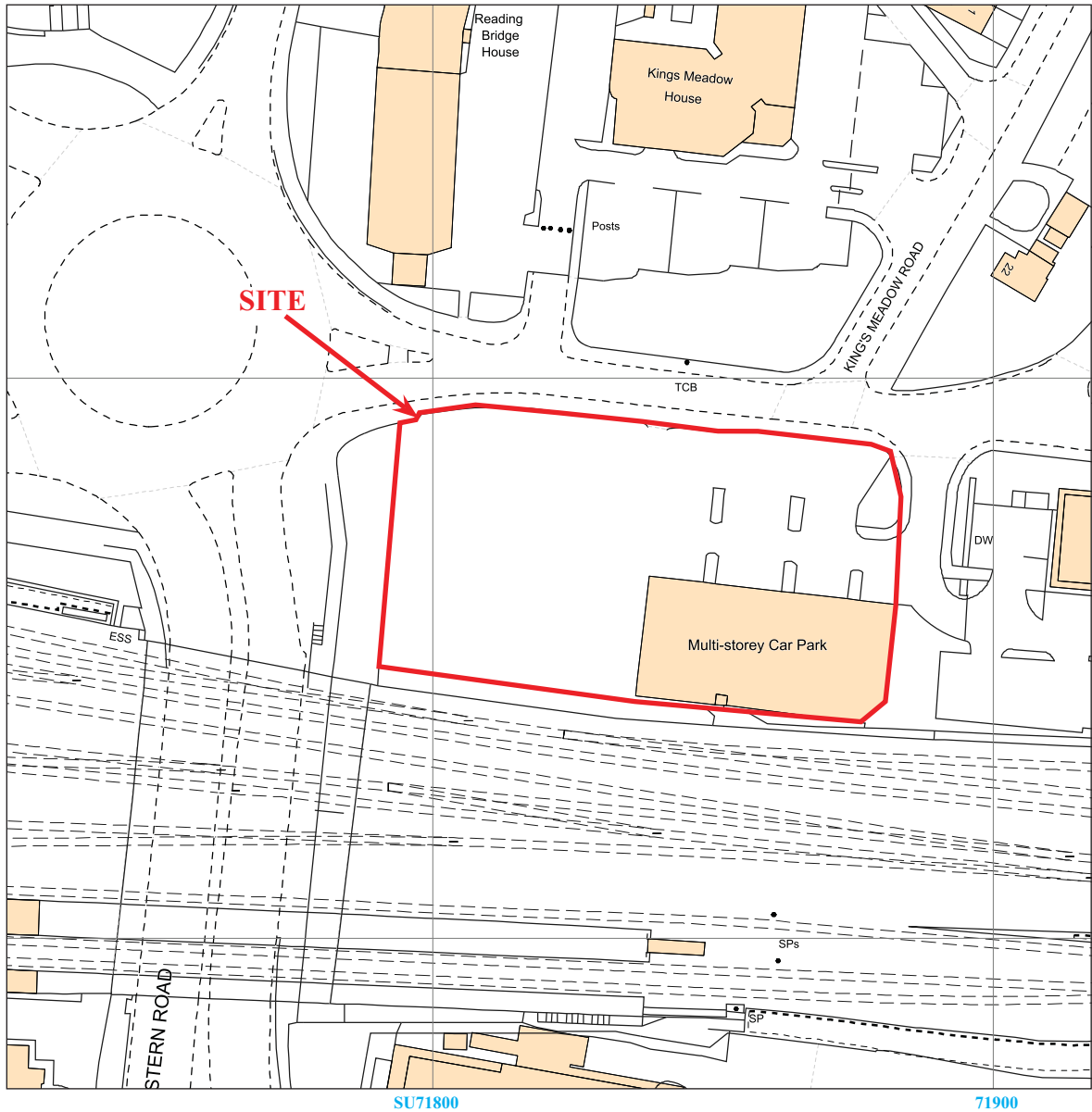


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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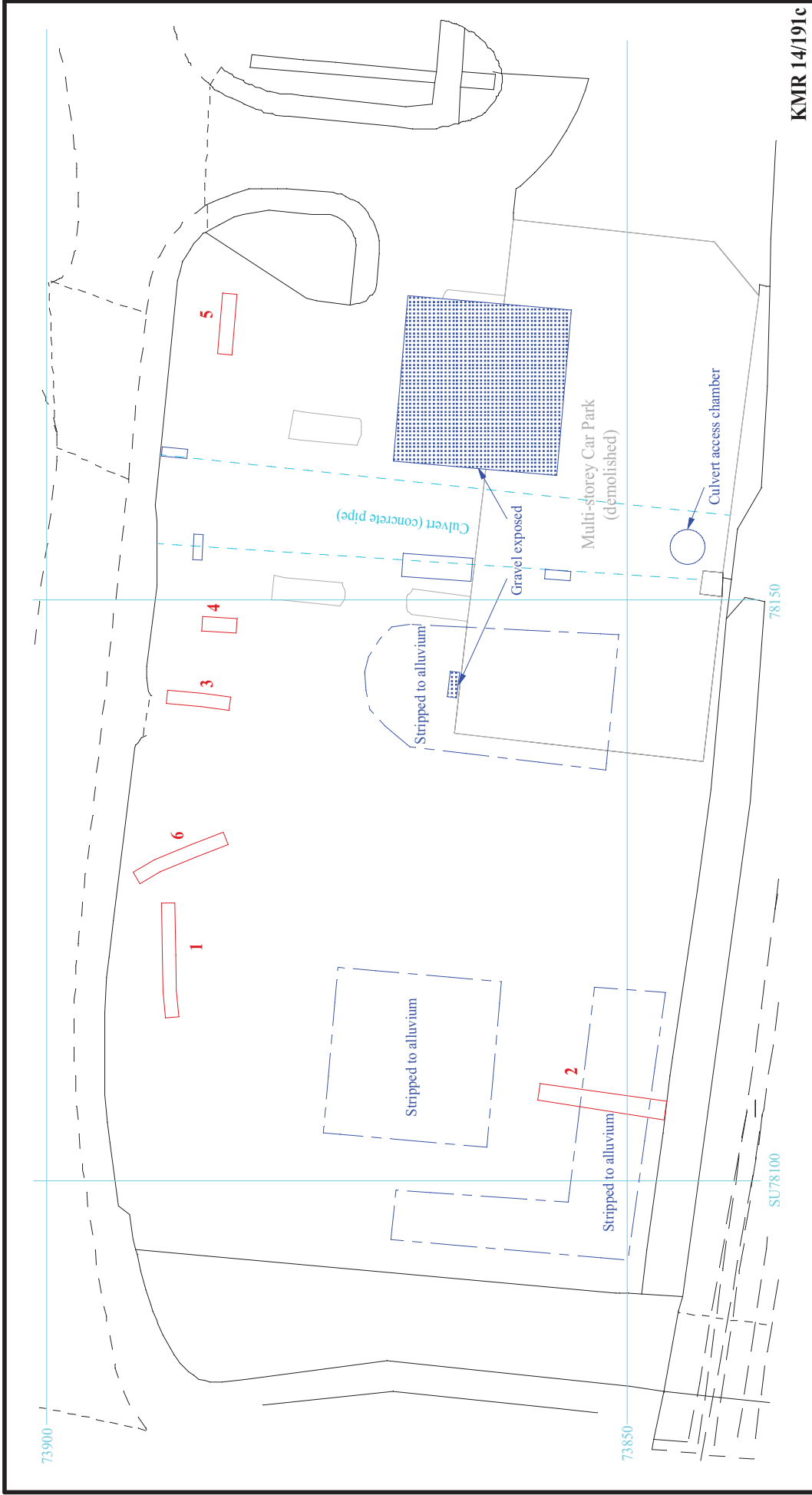
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 Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Kings Meadow Road.

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Figure 3. Location of evaluation trenches (red) and watching brief areas (blue).

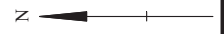




Plate 1. The surface of the alluvial clay exposed during remediation work in the centre of the site, looking north-west.



Plate 2. The western core excavation, showing alluvial deposits and groundwater, looking south-east.



Plate 3. Excavations at the western end of the site showing layers of made ground overlying the alluvial clay, looking west.



Plate 4. The eastern core excavation, showing gravel deposits, looking south-west.

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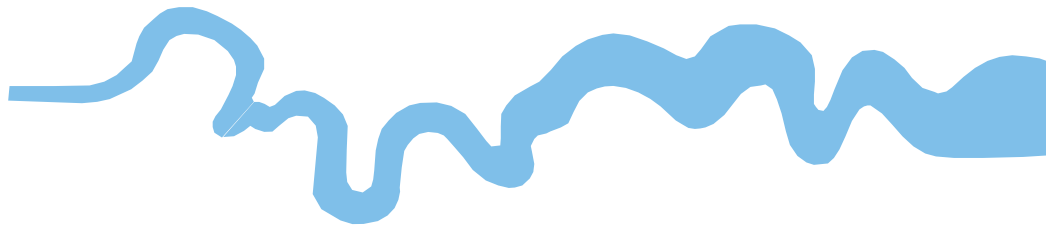
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Plates 1 to 4.**

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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 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)*