

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue,
Woodley, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Maisie Foster

Site Code: BLC18/24

(SU 7539 7317)

**Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue,
Woodley, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Pellikaan Construction Ltd

by Maisie Foster

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BLC 18/24

June 2019

Summary

Site name: Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue, Woodley, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7539 7317

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 10th January-27th February 2019

Project coordinator: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Maisie Foster and Andy Taylor

Site code: BLC 18/24

Area of site: c.3ha

Summary of results: A watching brief was carried out during groundworks for those parts of the site thought to have been least disturbed by the previous leisure centre development. In effect this comprised monitoring of the excavation of a new swimming pool. This did not lead to the recording of any features of archaeological interest but noted that the natural geology in the area even beyond the footprint of the original building had been heavily truncated by service trenches and foundations to a depth of 1.4m.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum willing to accept archive material.

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:
www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 18.06.19
	Steve Preston✓ 18.06.19

Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Maisie Foster

Report 18/24b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 3EU. (SU 7539 7316) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr. Joost van Dijk of Pellikaan Construction Ltd, 38 Graemesdyke Avenue, East Sheen London, SW14 7BJ.

Planning permission (180828) has been granted by Wokingham Borough Council for the construction of a replacement leisure centre that includes a swimming pool, sports hall, café and associated access, car parking and landscaping. The consent is subject to a condition (8) that requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by Berkshire Archaeology.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2018). It was determined that the work should take the form of a watching brief, a written scheme of investigation for which was approved by Mr Roland Smith of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Maisie Foster and Andy Taylor between the 10th January and 27th February 2019 and the site code is BLC 18/24.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at a local museum willing to accept archive material.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the western extent of Woodley on the eastern outskirts of Reading, on the north side of Woodlands Avenue. It is an irregular parcel of land covering an area of approximately 3ha. The site is bordered by the Bulmershe School to the north, an access road to the east, Woodlands Avenue to the south and Addington School to the west (Fig 2). The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay (BGS 2000). The site lies at a height of approximately 58m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site was highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Baljkas 2018). In summary, this generalized potential stems from its location on the margins of the Loddon Valley, part of the wider,

archaeologically rich, Thames Valley. The general area has been subject to several local and regional surveys such as (Ford 1987; 1997) and fieldwork as part of the planning process (Barnes *et al.* 1997; Preston 2003) has produced many finds. A search of the Berkshire Archaeology historic environment record (HER) for the area also contained a modest number of entries which included Iron Age and Roman settlement however, there are no known heritage assets within the site boundaries. The map regression exercise revealed that Bulmershe Farm was mapped in this location from at least the mid-18th century (Baljkas 2018).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks associated with the new development. This was expected to involve monitoring the removal of any remaining hardstanding and subsurface structures associated with the previous building and monitoring the excavation of pile caps, foundations, swimming pools and other intrusive ground works, such as the excavation of service trenches and overburden removal.

It was anticipated that the previous development would have led to some truncation and disturbance of the archaeologically relevant levels but that marginal areas to the east, such as those used for car parking may well have been much less disturbed.

Results (Figs 3 and 4; Pls. 1 and 2)

Prior to the development of the previous leisure centre had been demolished.

A 360°-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket was used to excavate the area for the new swimming pool and teaching pool and reduce the surrounding area on the southern side of the site (Fig. 2) by 0.30-0.50m, to remove the majority of the remaining construction material and Tarmac. This exposed an area of made ground, a dark grey clayey silt with a high concentration of modern ceramic building material (CBM) and gravel. At the northern end of the site, the deeper end of the swimming pool was excavated to a depth of 1.5m before being raised up to a depth of approximately 0.8m. The stratigraphy present was 0.3m of the remaining construction material, above 0.2m of made ground, overlying a mid yellow orange clayey gravel natural geology. All stratigraphic layers showed heavy truncation from service trenches. Six services were observed in this area.

The removed spoil after monitoring has been repurposed and used to increase the height of the site on the northern side. All recording and photography was done from ground level.

No finds or potential archaeological features were observed.

The teaching pool was excavated to a depth of 1.4m. The stratigraphy present was 0.3m of remaining construction material, directly overlying the natural geology which had been truncated to a depth of between 0.4-1.0m. The truncation was filled with a dark black silty clay which had a high concentration of modern brick/tile, concrete blocks and a series of old service pipes. No finds or potential archaeological features were observed in this area.

Finds

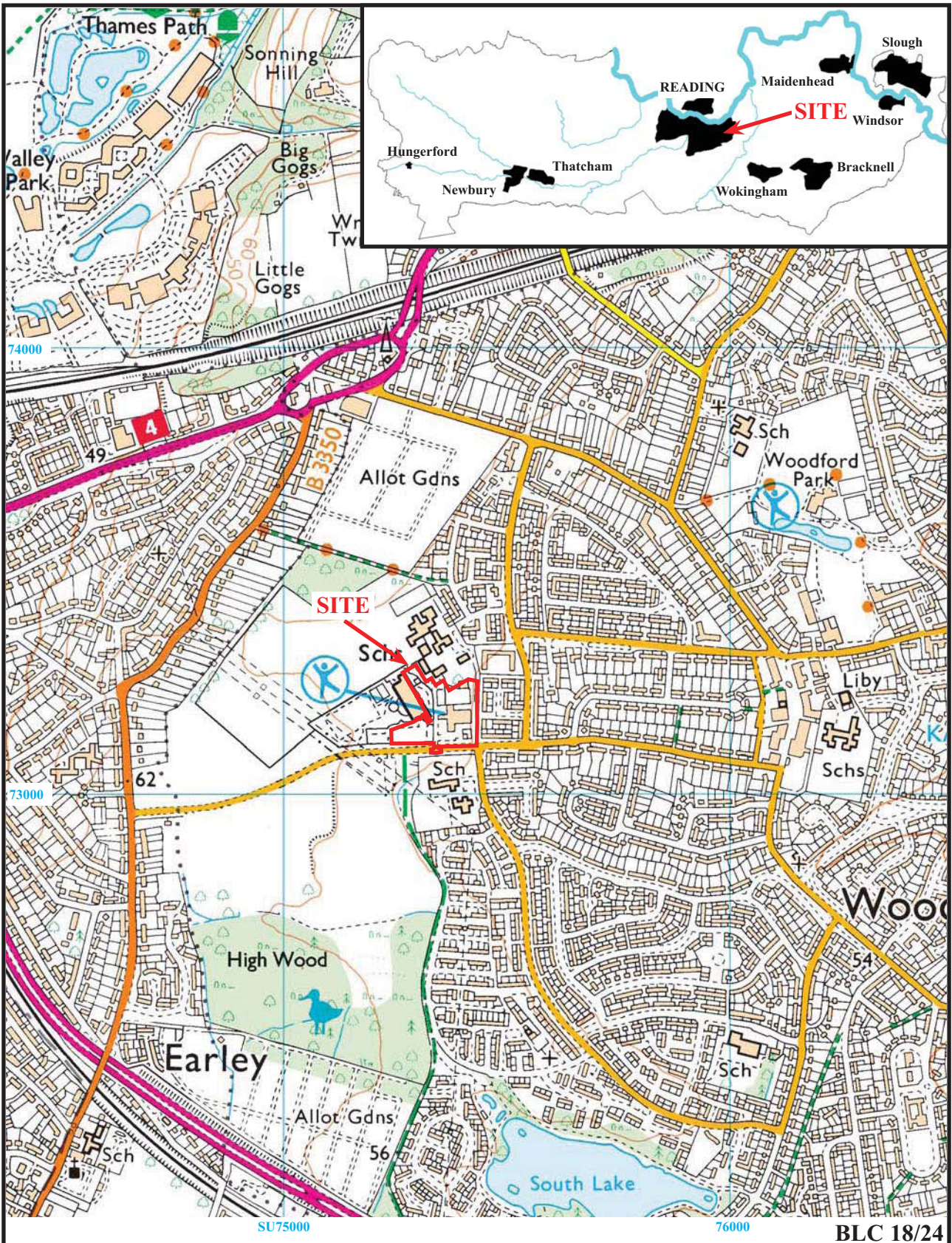
No finds were recovered from the works, modern bricks and other modern items were the only observed inclusions throughout the observed deposits.

Conclusion

No features or finds of archaeological significance were identified. The area had been subject to heavy truncation from services and the foundations of the previous leisure centre.

References

- Baljkas, G, 2018, 'Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue, Woodley, Berkshire, Archaeological Desk-based Assessment', TVAS unpubl rep **18/24**, Reading
- Barnes, I, Butterworth, C A, Hawkes, J W and Smith, L, 1997, *Excavations at Thames Valley Park, Reading, Berkshire, 1986-88*, Wessex Archaeol Rep **14**, Salisbury
- BGS, 2000, British Geological Survey, 1:50,000 Sheet 268, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Ford, S, 1987, *East Berkshire Archaeological Survey Department of Highways and Planning*, Berkshire County Occas Pap **1**, Reading
- Ford, S, 1997, 'Loddon Valley (Berkshire) fieldwalking survey', *Berkshire Archaeol J* **75** (for 1994-7), 11-33
- NPPF, 2018, *National Planning Policy Framework* (revised), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London
- Preston, S (ed), 2003, *Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon sites in Eastern Berkshire, Excavations 1989-1997*, TVAS Monogr **2**, Reading

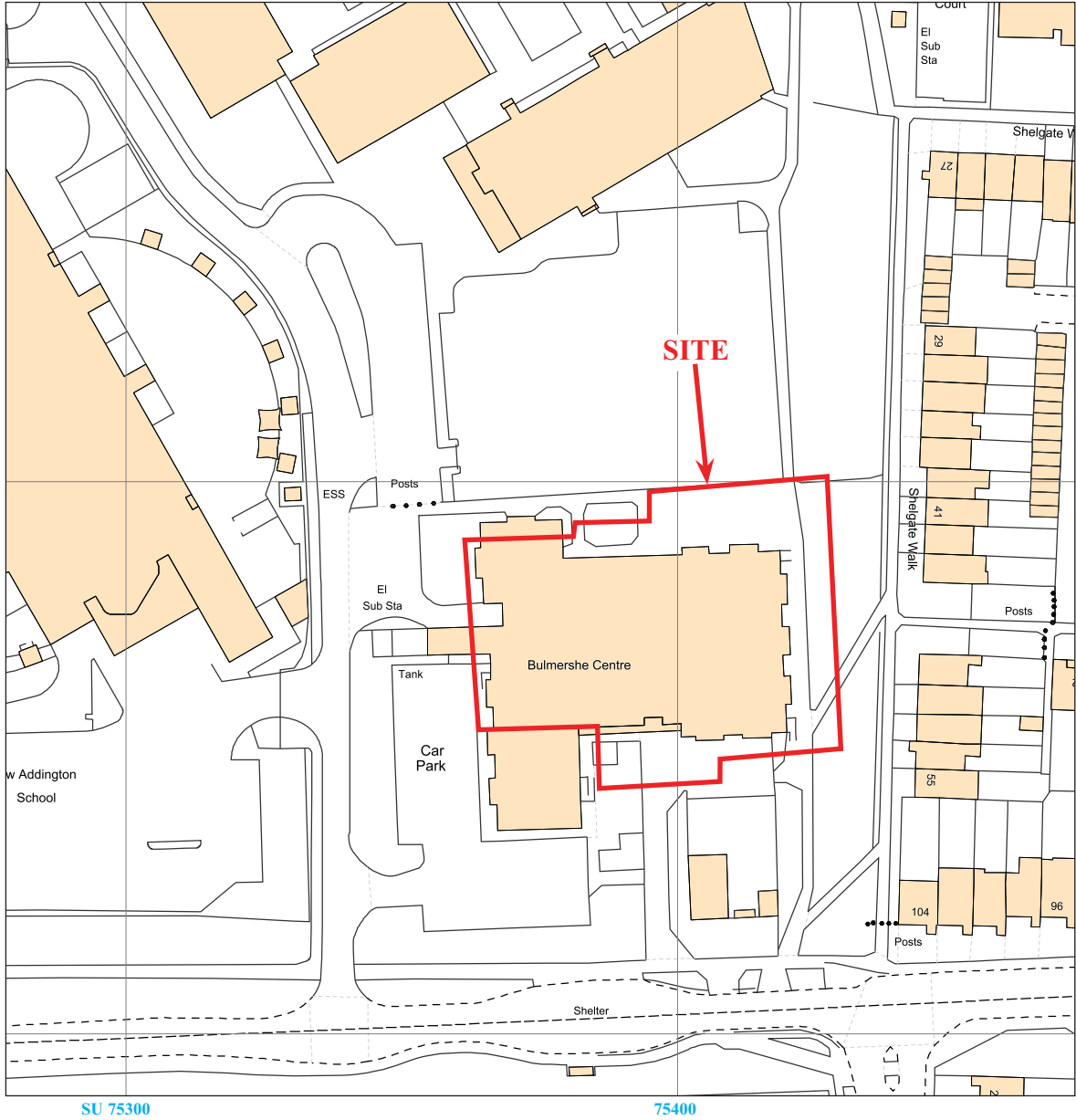


**Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue,
Woodley, Berkshire, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Woodley and Berkshire.

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



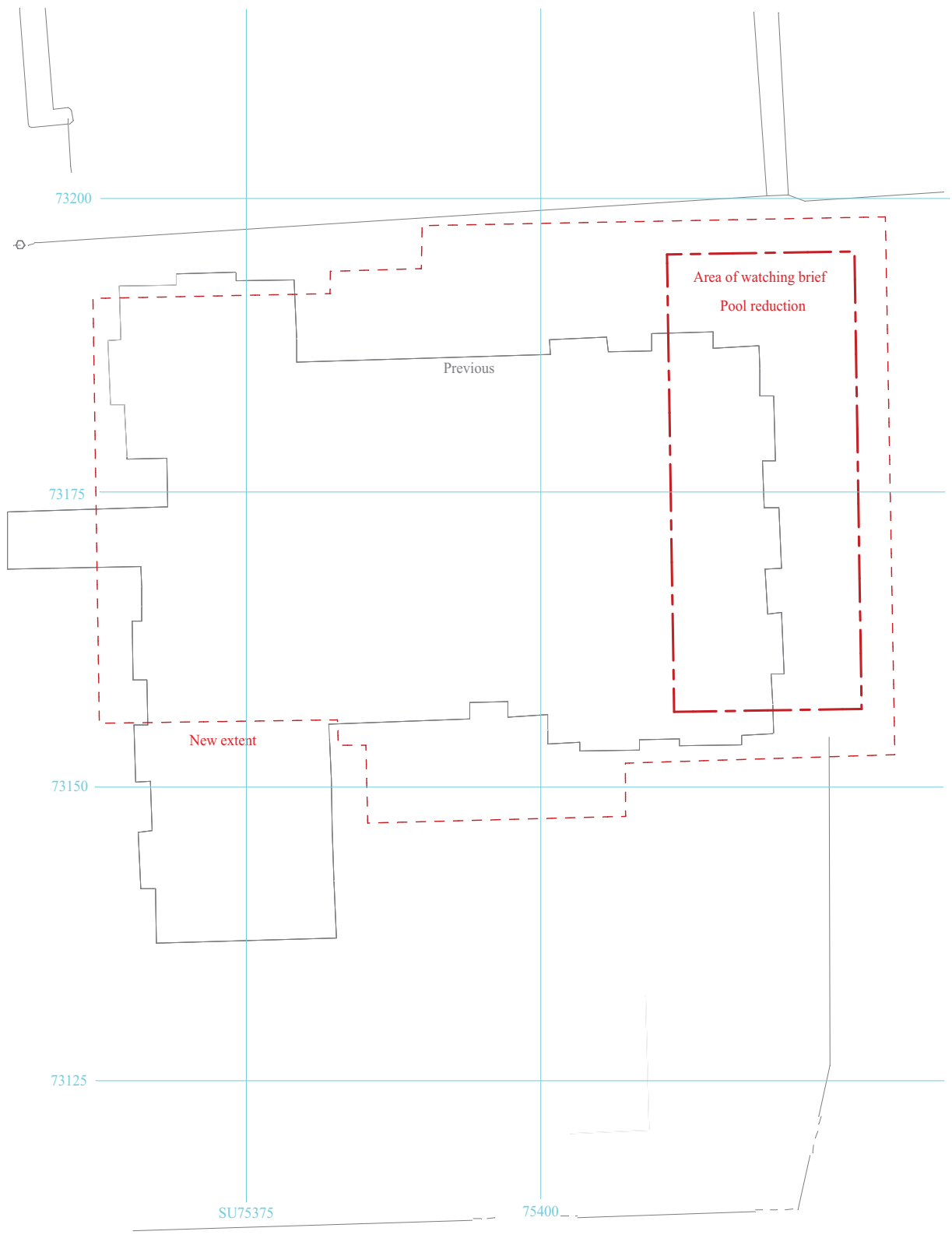
BLC 18/24



**Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue,
Woodley, Berkshire, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief**
Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Woodlands Avenue.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence.
Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:1250





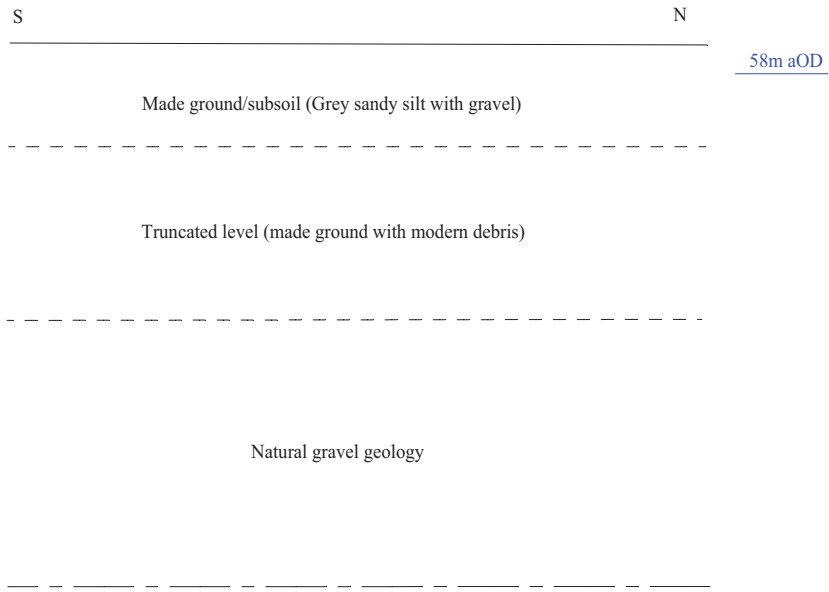
BLC 18/24

**Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue,
Woodley, Berkshire, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Previous building and areas of new development.



Northern section



BLC 18/24

**Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue,
Woodley, Berkshire, 2019
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Representative section of pool reduction area.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



Plate 1. Reduced level in the swimming pool area, looking northwest.



Plate 2. Typical section, looking northeast.

BLC 18/24

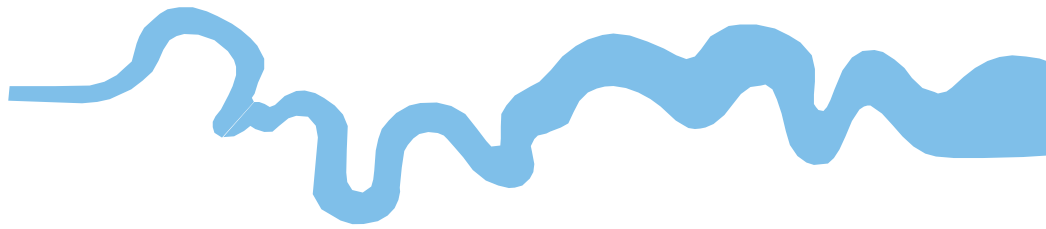
**Bulmershe Leisure Centre, Woodlands Avenue,
Woodley, Berkshire, 2019**
Watching Brief
Plates 1 and 2.

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

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)***