

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**New Department Block, Crosfields School,
Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Jamie Williams

**Site Code: CSR20/21
(SU 7322 6984)**

**New Department Block, Crosfields School,
Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief
for Crosfields School**

by Jamie Williams

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CSR20/21

July 2020

Summary

Site name: New Department Block, Crosfields School, Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7322 6984

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation and watching brief

Date and duration of project: 30th June – 15th July 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Jamie Williams

Site code: CSR 20/21

Area of site: 0.35ha

Summary of results: The archaeological evaluation successfully investigated those parts of the site which will be most affected by the proposed development. Three trenches revealed features of archaeological interest, all of which could be dated to the late Iron Age, with a further trench exposing a series of post-medieval wall foundations. The watching brief during construction of the temporary access road recorded minimal ground disturbance with removal of turf/topsoil only and no removal of the subsoil. On the basis of these findings, the site is considered to have high archaeological potential within the area of the proposed compound, but low potential for the area of the proposed development.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated museum or repository in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 29.07.20
	Steve Preston ✓ 29.07.20

New Department Block, Crosfields School, Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief

by Jamie Williams

Report 20/21

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out for a new department block at , Crosfields School, Shinfield Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU7322 6984) (Fig. 1.). The work was commissioned by Mr. Oliver Rose of Madlins LLP, Nova Scotia House, 70 Goldsworth Road, Woking, GU21 6LQ on behalf of the school.

Planning permission (191655) has been gained from Wokingham Council for the construction of a new department block. The permission is subject to a condition (14) relating to archaeology. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which might be damaged or destroyed by the works, two components of archaeological work (a field evaluation and a watching brief) had been requested by Wokingham Council as advised by Berkshire Archaeology. This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Roland Smith, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological advisers to the Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Jamie Williams, Richard Dewhurst, Maisie Foster and Camila Carvalho, between 30th June and 15th July 2020 and the site code is CSR 20/21. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on land at Crosfields School, Shinfield Road to the south of central Reading (Fig. 1). The overall site covers two areas: ,a contractors compound and the area for the new building itself (Fig. 2). The compound comprises a near rectangular parcel of land located between the northern and southern playing fields and the building area is an irregular parcel of land within a parking area. A narrow temporary access road was

also stripped during the watching brief and is located along the southern border of the school's northern playing field.

The compound is bounded by existing school buildings to the east, and playing fields to the south, north and west. The building area is bounded by existing school buildings. The overall site lies at an average height of 80m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The compound and access road are grassed playing fields and the building area is in the Tarmacadamed car park. The underlying geology is Sixth River Terrace (Sand and Gravel) which was identified in all trenches (BGS 2000).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the plateau margin overlooking the valley of the Kennet Valley/Foudry Brook. This is a location from which several sites and finds have now been recorded, and fieldwork, particularly in recent years, is showing that this appears to be an area of preferred settlement in prehistoric and Roman times. In summary, there have been field evaluations carried out to the north of the site, which located residual Roman pottery, a medieval ditch, undated postholes (Ford and Pine 1998), and Iron Age pottery and Roman ditches (Carlsson 2010). To the north-west, a Roman cremation burial was discovered. Around 1km to the north, at 68-72 Northcourt Avenue, an Early Roman occupation site was revealed (Milbank 2010) with some Bronze Age occupation also recently recorded at 74 Northcourt Avenue (Ford 2018). Recent excavation at Ridgeway School has also revealed Middle/Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and Early Roman occupation (Ford 2017). Fieldwork at Crosfields School site itself comprising evaluation followed by excavation at the southern end of the school complex (Fig. 6) revealed occupation deposits of Late Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age date with the latter also showing small-scale iron production. Roman field ditches were also recorded (Taylor and Ford 2019).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation and watching brief was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if there are any deposits of Prehistoric or Roman date on the site

Seven trenches were intended to be dug using a 360°-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and any other overburden was to be removed to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. Where archaeological features are certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of any feature that might warrant preservation *in situ* or be better investigated under the conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds and scanned with a metal detector.

Results

Watching Brief

The watching brief (Fig. 3; Pl. 1) component of this site was undertaken on 30th June and oversaw the stripping of the temporary access road using a ditching bucket 2.1m in width. The stripping was carried out as expected and only reduced the area by 0.15m along the whole route of the road. Due to the shallowness of the strip only the top of the subsoil was reached. Cuts for land drains were noted throughout the strip but the drains themselves were not reached, and the area around an active water pipe was left slightly higher. As expected, no archaeological finds or features were encountered at this depth.

Evaluation

All of the trenches within the area of the compound had to be moved to avoid the presence of potentially live services and to fit into the proposed area (Fig. 3). Three of the four trenches achieved the proposed length, with the fourth trench being split into two smaller trenches (Trenches 4 and 5), due to the presence of a service, to maintain the intended sample fraction. The fifth trench was not excavated to the level of natural geology due to a considerable build-up of modern made ground which exceeded 0.8m in depth, whereas the proposed compound was only going to a depth of 0.15m in the area. Due to this, Trench 1 was extended by 3m to trace the continuation of a gully and to cover the area lost on Trench 5. The trenches ranged from 3m to 17.8m in length and 0.5m to 0.8m in depth.

All of the trenches within the proposed building area were dug as intended with only slight adjustments to orientation to avoid live services (Fig. 3). The trenches in this area ranged from 10.6m to 13.4m in length and 0.84m to 1.15m in depth.

A complete list of the trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pl. 2)

Trench 1 was aligned roughly E - W and was 17.8m long and 0.66m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of mid grey-brown sandy silt topsoil and 0.22m of light grey-brown sandy silt subsoil overlying mid orange-brown sandy silt natural geology. At the east end of the trench, gully 103 was recorded on a roughly N-S alignment, which was 0.33m wide and 0.17m deep and filled with a mid grey-brown silty sand fill (156). Pottery and a fragment of burnt clay were recovered, providing a date of late Iron Age for the feature.

In addition to this, a curving gully (Pl. 4) was also found at the east end of the trench, terminating just short of gully 103, perhaps respecting it. This gully was examined by two slots (100, 102). It was 0.33–0.34m wide and between 0.17m and 0.22m deep, and was filled with a mid grey-brown silty sand fill (150, 155). Pottery was again recovered, giving a late Iron Age date of the feature.

Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4)

Trench 2 was aligned E - W and was 14.4m long and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy was the same as seen in Trench 1 and consisted of 0.28m of topsoil and 0.23m of subsoil overlying natural geology. At the west end of the trench, ditch (101) (Pl. 5) was recorded which was 1.3m wide and 0.39m deep and contained two fills (151, 152). It was aligned north-south. A sherd of possible early Roman pottery was recovered from the secondary fill of the ditch with a sherd of late Iron Age pottery from the primary fill. Again, a late Iron Age date for the feature is most likely.

Trench 3 (Figs 3, 4 and 5)

Trench 3 was aligned N - S and was 15.1m long and 0.5m deep. The stratigraphy was the same as seen in Trench 1 and 2 and consisted of 0.27m of topsoil and 0.23m of subsoil overlying natural geology. At the south end of the trench, possible ditch (107) aligned east-west was recorded but not excavated. Late Iron Age pottery was recovered from the surface of the ditch, along with a tiny fragment of iron slag, giving a plausible, if not securely confirmed, date for the feature.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3)

Trench 4 was aligned NE - SW and was 7m long and 0.69m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.36m of mid grey-brown sandy silt topsoil and 0.08m of mid grey-brown clay, possibly a made ground deposit, and 0.25m of

light grey-brown sandy-silt subsoil overlying natural geology. The clay layer seen in the section is believed to have been the edge of the made ground found in Trench 5. No features or finds were present within this trench.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned N - S and was 3m long and 0.8m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.31m of topsoil overlying 0.49m of made ground comprised of a mid grey-brown silty clay and a light brown-orange silty clay deposit. The trench did not reach natural geology as the proposed compound works were to be fairly shallow and any archaeological features that might be present would be protected by this considerable depth of made ground deposit revealed .

Trench 6 (Figs 3 and 5)

Trench 6 was aligned N - S and was 13.4m long and 0.84m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil, 0.2m of a light yellow brown silty sand made ground and 0.23m of mid black brown sandy silt made ground overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered nor features observed.

Trench 7 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pl. 3)

Trench 7 was aligned N - S and was 10.6m in length and ranged from 0.89-1.15m south to north in depth. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.07m of Tarmac, 0.09m of a gravel levelling deposit, 0.34m of a light yellow brown silty sand made ground and 0.38m of mid black brown sandy silt made ground overlying natural geology. Three post-medieval wall foundation cuts (104, 105 (Pl. 6) and 106) all aligned roughly east-west with remaining brick walls were uncovered, though other than the bricks themselves, no associated finds were recovered.

Trench 8 (Fig. 3)

Trench 8 was aligned NE - SW and was 11.3m in length and ranged in depth from 0.95m in the south west to -1.05m in the north-east. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.12m of Tarmac, set on 0.2m of a gravel levelling deposit, above 0.44-0.54m of a mid grey clay made ground overlying natural geology. No finds were recovered nor features observed.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 14 sherds of pottery, weighing 137g, most or all of which appears to date to the later Iron Age-early Roman period (Appendix 3). The sherds were sorted into fabric types and coded according to the main constituents present following PCRG (1997) guidelines. The assemblage was quantified by sherd count, weight and estimated vessel equivalents (rim) (Orton *et al.* 1993). The material is quite fragmented with an overall average sherd size of 9.8 g and only contained one featured sherd.

The assemblage comprises a mixture of grog (GR), flint (FL) and sandy (SA) wares some made in iron-rich (FE) clays. Most of the sherds were one-off examples although there are six flint-tempered wares and two handmade sandy wares. The only featured sherd is from a lid-seated globular jar from ditch 101 in an iron-rich mixed grog and flint-tempered ware. One of the sandy wares from the surface of ditch 107 is from a handmade cordoned jar or bowl. Three freshly broken but worn sherds in a grog-tempered ware from gully 103 have split laterally showing an incised lattice in the body of the wall suggesting that clay was added to the vessel either because the wall was too thin or to attach a handle or similar. A single wheel-made grey sandy ware recovered from ditch 101 (151) may be Roman or possibly later.

Most of the sherds suggest a late Iron Age/pre-Conquest date on analogy with material from Silchester but this may not preclude a continuation of activity into the early Roman period particularly for rural sites.

Slag

A single piece of probable slag accompanied pottery from the surface of ditch 107 (166) but is not securely stratified.

Macrobotanical remains by Jo Pine

A total of five samples were processed from the deposits encountered during the evaluation. The samples were wet sieved to .25mm and air dried. The flots were examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x10 and x40. Charcoal was present in very small quantities and very small pieces, none of which is likely to permit the fracturing necessary for species identification. Other charred plant remains were entirely absent.

Conclusion

The evaluation has successfully investigated the site with some minor alterations to the location of the trenches due to live underground services. Of the eight trenches excavated, half contained possible archaeological finds and features. The trenches which were of interest were concentrated in the compound area of site, with only post medieval walls being uncovered in the area of the proposed new building. The features investigated all provided pottery which readily dated the features to the late Iron Age/early Roman period, with most of the assemblage belonging to the pre-Conquest period (1st century BC or early 1st century AD). This suggests an addition to the growing body of evidence for occupation of this ridge in this period.

The watching brief for the haul road was carried out as expected, however, with the works only excavating to a depth of 0.15m, only the top of the subsoil was observed with no finds or features of archaeological interest exposed.

On the basis of these results, the site is considered to have high archaeological potential within the area of the compound, and a low potential for the proposed construction area.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at E, W, S, NE, N end

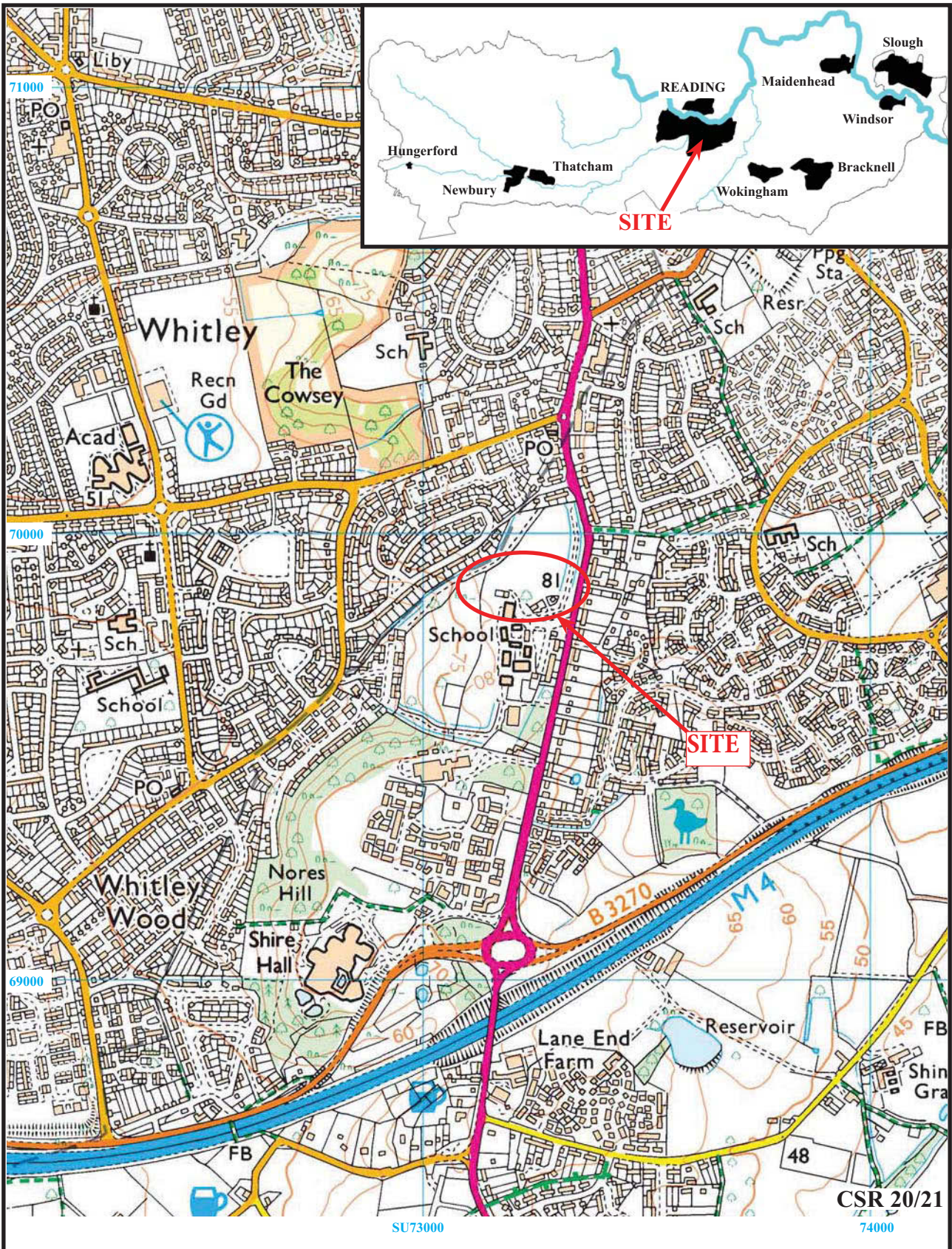
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	17.8	2	0.66	0-0.3m topsoil; 0.3-0.52m light beige brown, sandy silt with rare flint and CBM inclusions; 0.5m+ mid orange brown silty sand with flint gravel patches (natural geology). [Pls 2 and 4]
2	14.4	2	0.51	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28-0.51m 52m light beige brown, sandy silt with rare flint and CBM inclusions; 0.51m+ mid orange brown silty sand with flint gravel patches (natural geology). [Pl. 5]
3	15.1	2	0.5	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27-0.5m 52m light beige brown, sandy silt with rare flint and CBM inclusions; 0.5m+ light brown grey silty sand with light beige brown sand patches (natural geology).
4	7.0	2	0.69	0-0.36m topsoil; 0.36-0.44m; mid beige brown compact clay with rare flint inclusions; 0.44-0.69m; light grey brown, sandy silt with rare flint and CBM inclusions; 0.69m+ light beige brown with grey gravel sand patches and orange blue clay patches (natural geology)
5	3.0	2	0.8	0-0.31m topsoil; 0.31-0.73m mid grey brown silty clay with rare flint and CBM inclusions; 0.73-0.8m light brown orange silty clay with rare flint and CBM inclusions. Natural Geology not reached.
6	13.4	2	0.84	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28-0.48m light yellow brown silty sand with rare flint and CBM inclusions; 0.48-0.71m mid black brown sandy silt made ground; 0.71m+ mid brown orange silty sand with mid blue grey silt patches (natural geology)
7	10.6	2	S: 0.89 N: 1.15	0-0.07m Tarmac; 0.07-0.16m orange gravel levelling deposit; 0.16-0.5m mid orange brown silty sand with moderate flint and gravel inclusions; 0.5-0.88m mid red brown silty clay with frequent CBM inclusions; 0.88m+ mid brown silty sand with flint mid blue grey silt patches (natural geology) [Pls 3 and 6]
8	11.3	2	SW: 0.95 NE: 1.05	0-0.12m Tarmac; 0.12-0.42m orange gravel levelling deposit; 0.42-0.86/95m a dark grey silty clay with rare CBM inclusions; 0.86m+ mid grey green sandy silt with gravel patches (natural geology).

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	100	150	Gully	Late Iron Age	Pottery
2	101	151-2	Ditch	Late Iron Age	Pottery
1	102	155	Gully Terminus	Late Iron Age	Pottery
1	103	156	Gully	Late Iron Age	Pottery
7	104	160-1	Wall	Post-Medieval	Brick samples
7	105	162	Wall	Post-Medieval	Brick samples
7	106	163	Wall	Post-Medieval	Brick samples
3	107	166	Ditch	Late Iron Age	Pottery

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of pottery by context

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Date</i>
2	101	151	ditch	GYSA		1	42	wheelmade	Roman?
2	101	152	ditch	GRFLFE	lid-seated jar	1	17	Rim	LIA
1	102	155	gully	GRSA		1	31	Handmade	LIA
1	102	155	gully	FL3		1	5	Handmade	LIA
1	103	156	gully	GR		1	6	3 joining sherds - added clay over lattice	LIA
1	103	156	gully	GR/FE		1	16	Handmade	LIA
3	107	166	Ditch	SA		2	14	cordoned jar/bowl	LIA
3	107	166	Ditch	FL3		6	6		LIA

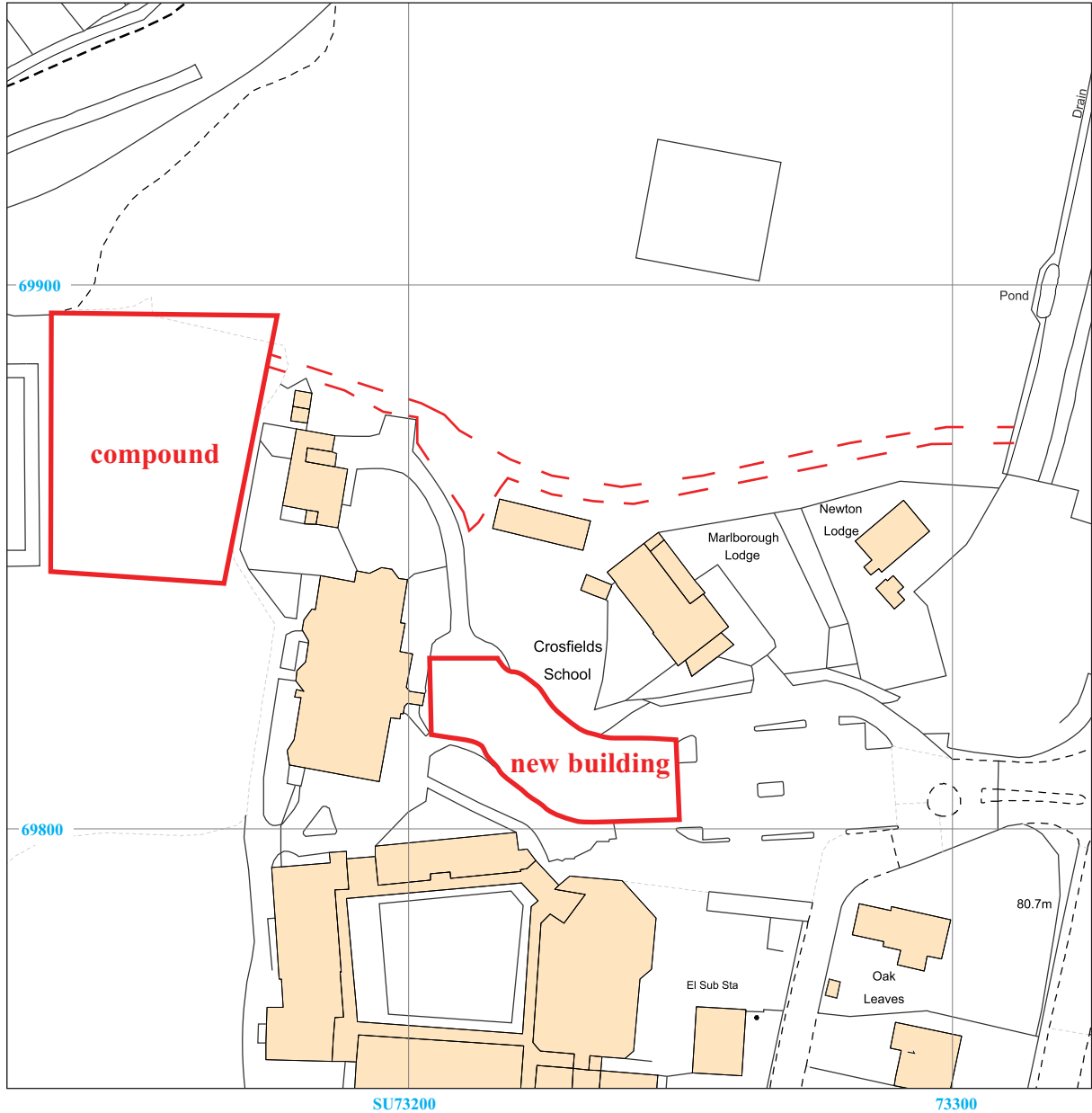


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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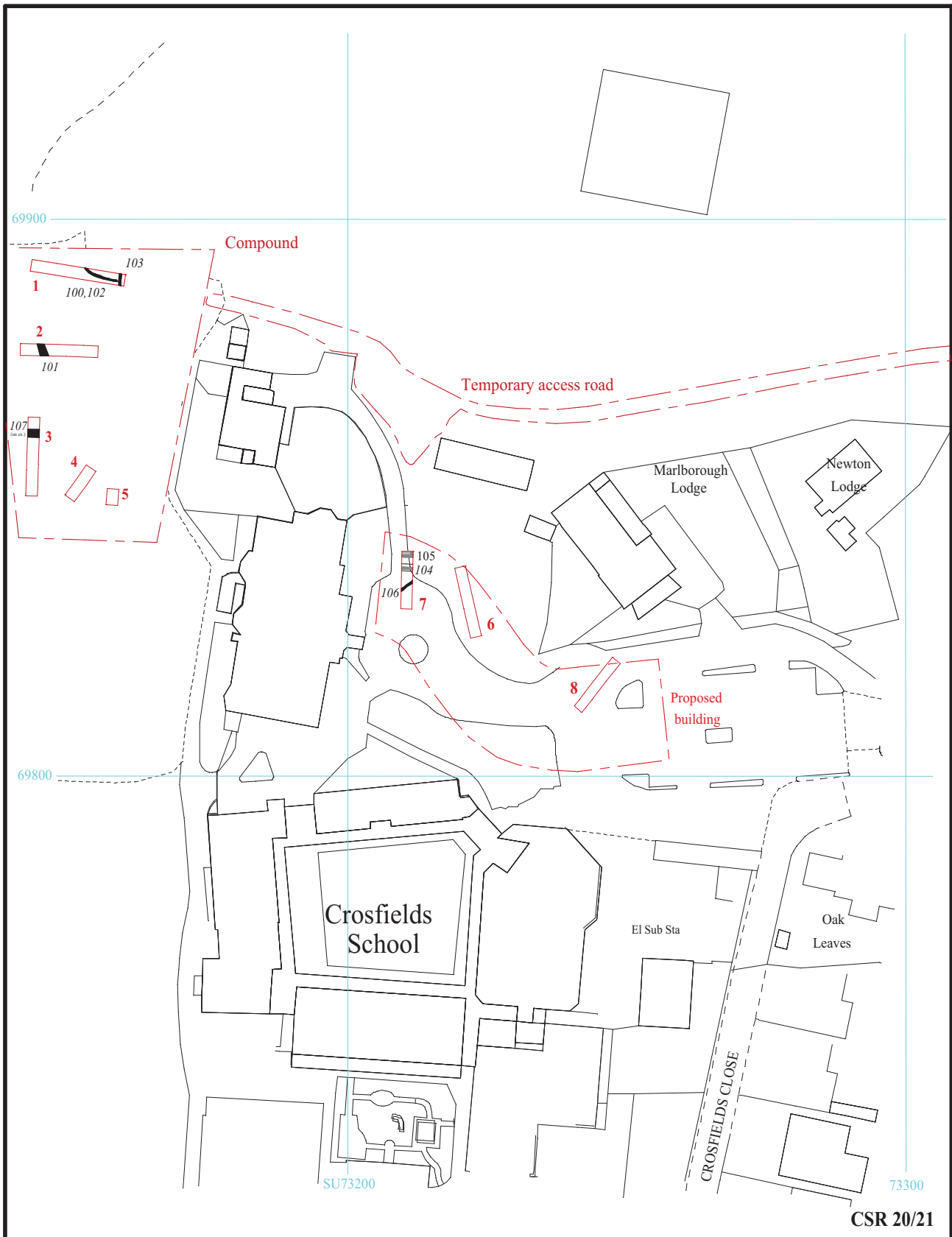


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Figure 2. Detailed location of areas of development within the site.

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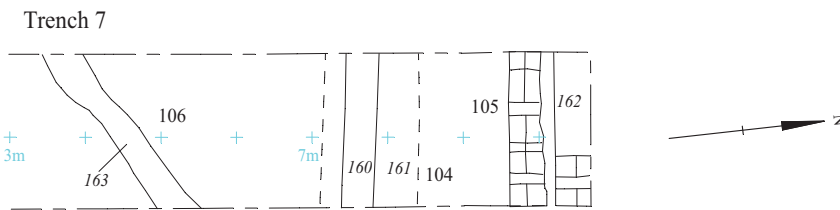
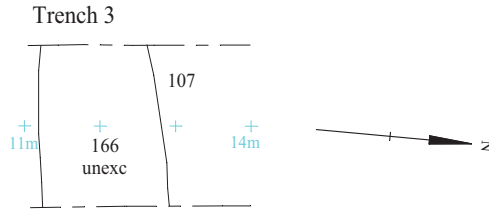
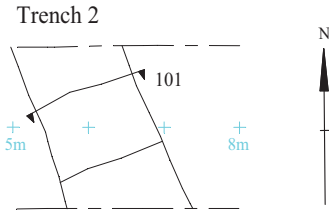
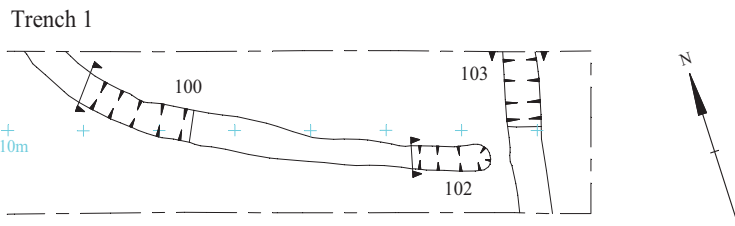
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.





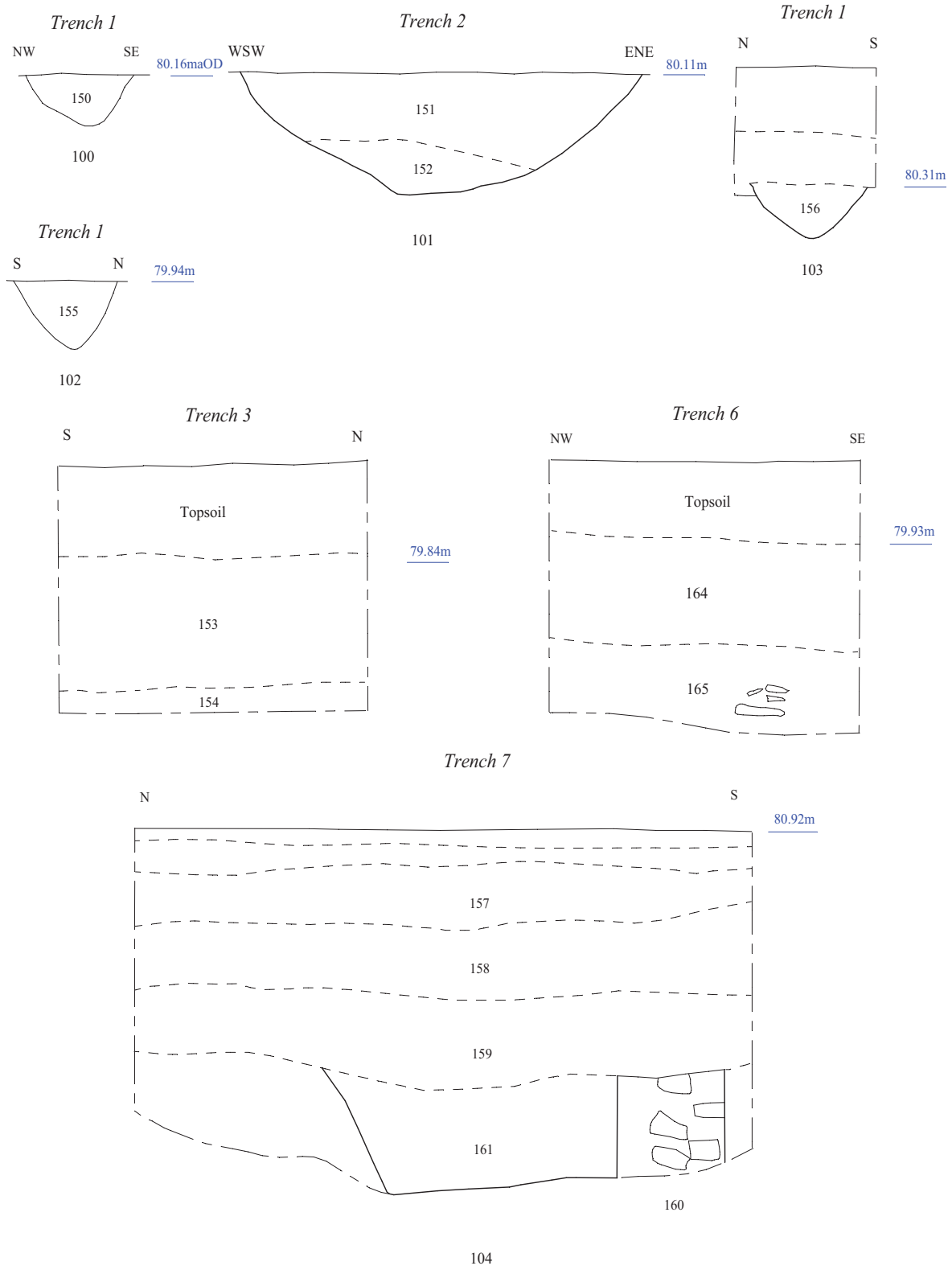
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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



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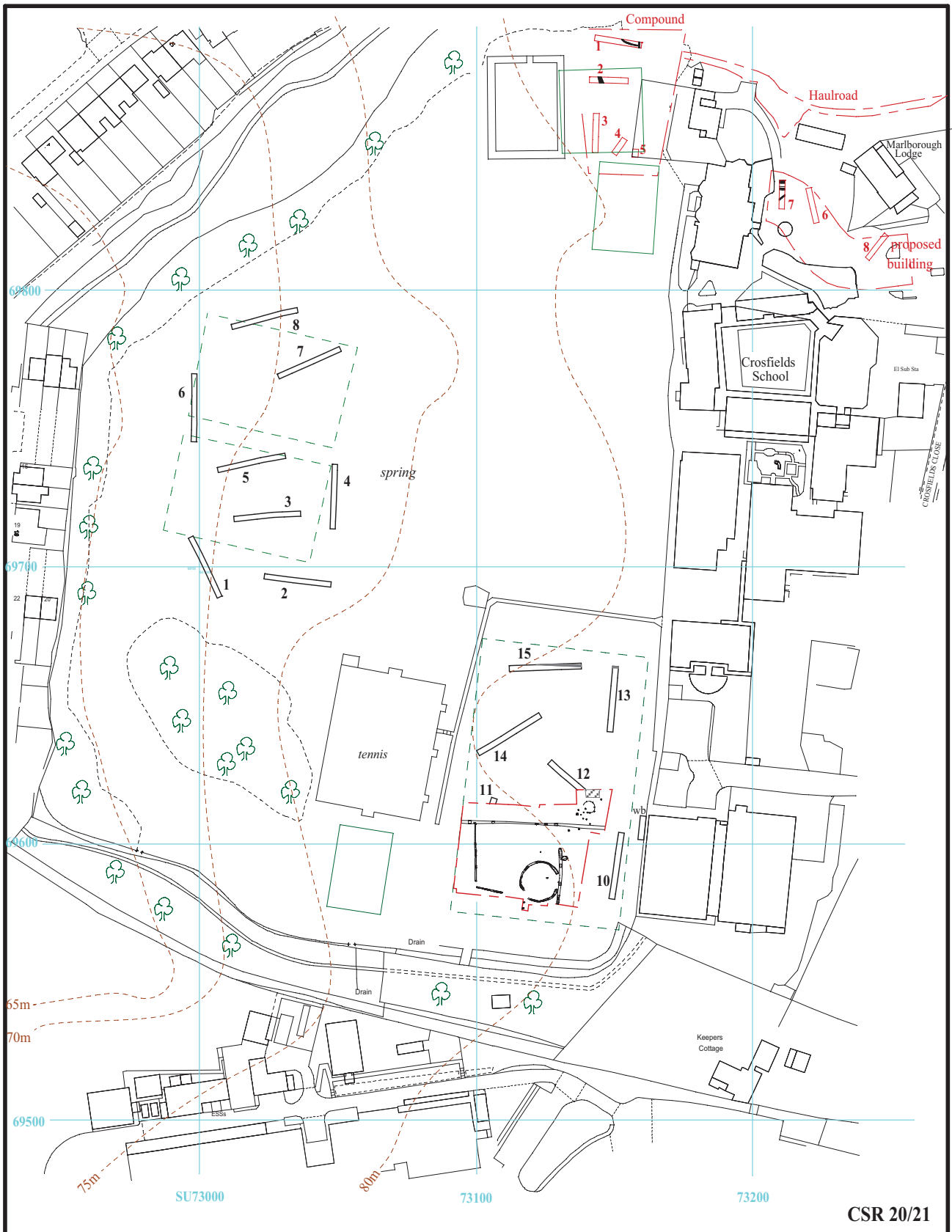


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Figure 5. Sections.





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Figure 6. Location of current works in relation to previous evaluation and excavation at the School



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Plate 1. Haul road strip, looking E.



Plate 2. Trench 1, looking W, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 7, looking NNE, Scales; horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 1, gully 100, looking NW, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.

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Plates 3 and 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 2, ditch 102, looking NNW, Scales; horizontal 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 6. Trench 7, wall 105, looking E, Scales: 1m, 0.5m and 0.3m.

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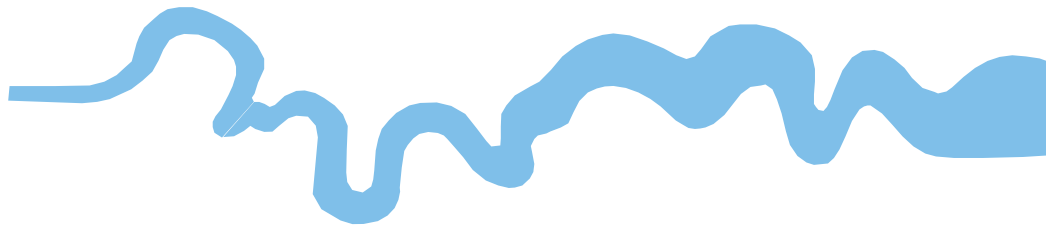
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Plates 5 and 6.**

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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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