

# **Land off Luton Road, Farley Hill, Luton, Bedfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for 3Sixty Construction Ltd**

by Andrew Mundin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LRL 08/82

**August 2008**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land off Luton Road, Farley Hill, Luton, Bedfordshire

**Grid reference:** TL 0779 1987

**Site activity:** Archaeological evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 28th July – 6th August 2008

**Project manager:** Jennifer Lowe

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Muddin

**Site code:** LRL 08/82

**Area of site:** 0.977ha

**Summary of results:** Two test pits and six trenches were excavated across the site. No archaeological features nor deposits were revealed. A large depth of modern made ground had been dumped on the site.

**Monuments identified:** None

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 13.08.08
	Steve Preston ✓ 08.08.08

# Land off Luton Road, Farley Hill, Luton, Bedfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Muddin

Report 08/82

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land to the north of Luton Road, Farley Hill, Luton, Bedfordshire (TL 0779 1987) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Shaun Geggus, of 3Sixty Construction Ltd, 2nd floor, 25 Warley Hill, Brentwood, Essex, CM14 5HR.

Planning permission (DCJML-08/00193/FUL) has been granted by Luton Borough Council to redevelop the site for residential purposes. Three blocks of flats are intended, two of which will have associated basements. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological materials or features surviving on the site, a trenching evaluation has been requested to determine the archaeological potential of the site.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16, 1990), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Lesley-Anne Mather, Archaeological Officer of Bedfordshire County Council Heritage Section, advisers to the Borough Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin, with assistance from Jen Lowe between the 5th and 6th August 2008. The test pitting section of the work was carried out on 28th July 2008 by Simon Cass. The site code is LRL08/82. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Luton Museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The development area lies on the south western edge of Luton, on the south side of the area known as Farley Hill. The site is an irregular shaped plot of land to the north of Luton Road, which becomes Caddington Road to the west as it passes under the M1 motorway. Leyhill Drive meets the north edge of the site with a college playing field bounding the north-western part of the site (Fig. 2). Geotechnical boreholes recorded that the ground has been substantially raised from its original contour with a steep fall of the present day ground down to the road to the south. Varied levels were recorded across the site from north to south with Luton Road recorded at 153m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), and the northern fence boundaries on the site recorded at 158m to 160m AOD. The underlying geology is grey-brown silts of the Batcombe Association, over clay with flints (BGS

1992) though Upper Chalk exists below this. At the time of the evaluation fieldwork, the ground was in the process of being reduced to the podium level for the new construction, and previously had been abandoned scrub.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological background has been highlighted in a brief prepared for this site (Mather 2008). In summary, the site lies within an archaeologically sensitive area, indicated by previous findspots in the local area. The site is situated in an area of likely medieval occupation noted in the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), denoted by find scatters of medieval pottery found within Farley Green (HER 15858) on the southern side of Luton Road, opposite the site. Neolithic/Bronze Age struck flint has also been noted on this side of Luton Road (HER 16059). Further south, fieldwalking carried out to the west of the M1 corridor between Woodside Road and the M1 has uncovered medieval pottery and Neolithic and Bronze Age flint scatters. During works for the proposed M1 widening near Junction 10, non-intrusive evaluation identified an area of Neolithic flints and Roman pottery (HER 16067) to the east of Woodside. Apart from these findspots, no intrusive archaeological work has been carried out in Farley Hill.

Historic mapping of the area shows that prior to the build up of ground in the mid 20th century (presumably from deposition of spoil arising from construction of the M1), the ground was farmland in the late 19th century. The Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1880 (Fig. 3), shows that a footpath crossed the site, but no structures were present immediately in the development area. A building is recorded just beyond the site boundary to the south.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. The work was to be carried out in such a way that would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which could later be investigated during ground reduction for the basement excavations.

The specific research aims of the project were to:

- determine if archaeologically relevant levels survived on this site;
- determine if archaeology of any period are present;

establish where there is evidence/potential for prehistoric occupation, notably Neolithic/Bronze Age in date. This would include sampling any deposits which would contain preservation of ecofacts for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction; and establish whether there is evidence of medieval occupation on site.

It was proposed that six trenches were to be excavated mainly concentrated on the ground to be truncated by basement excavation or general deep disturbance from the new development. All trenches had a contingency to allow for deep excavation and, where needed, stepping to facilitate safe access. All trenching was to be 2m wide at the base. Four trenches were to be 25m in length and two trenches 15m in length. All trenches were to be excavated with a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket.

## **Results**

### *Test pits*

Prior to the evaluation, 2 test pits were dug and archaeologically monitored to confirm the presence of made ground across the site and, if correct, to allow for relatively superficial groundworks to commence in parts of the site away from the basement zones (Fig. 4). Test Pit 1 was 4m long and 1.8m wide and revealed 1.9m of made ground above the orange clay with flint natural geology, whereas Test Pit 2 which was 5.5m long and 1.8m wide revealed at least 5m of made ground with the natural geology not being encountered.

### *Trenches*

Most of the trenching was dug in the locations intended but the trench lengths varied due to steps in the ground levels, and existing compound and access restrictions.(Fig 4). The trenching took place after some modern overburden had been removed. A description of the trenches is presented in Appendix 1.

#### Trench 1

This trench was aligned WNW–ESE and was 18.9m long and 1.9m deep. The stratigraphy comprised a mixed chalk and grey silty clay; a generally mixed overburden layer 0.3m thick, which overlay redeposited dump of chalk, 0.24m thick. In turn this overlay a brown silt, 0.22m thick above a brown-orange clay with brick rubble 0.44m thick. Below this was an orange clay 0.54m thick of uncertain interpretation above a light orange clay with flints which was the natural geology (Fig. 5).

The orange clay and underlying orange clay and clay with flints were disturbed by a rubble pit in the western end of the trench. Apart from this modern cut no other features cut the natural in this trench, which was eventually no deeper than 1.9m. The top of the natural geology was at 156.2mAOD.

#### Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned SW–NE and was 22.8m long and 1.47m deep. The stratigraphy was broadly the same as in Trench 1 with various layers of made ground above orange clay and then orange clay with flints natural geology. at a height of 155.7m AOD. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered in the trench.

#### Trench 3

This trench was aligned roughly SE–NW and was 17.5m long and 1.32m deep (Plate 1). The stratigraphy was again broadly the same as in Trench 1 with various layers of made ground above orange clay and then orange clay with flints natural geology. The natural geology in this trench was noted at 154.9m to 155.3m AOD.

#### Trench 4

This trench was aligned west-east and was 7.4m long and 0.9m deep. This trench was repositioned away from its original position investigating the road access, as this had already been levelled and was in use as a haul road. The stratigraphy was broadly the same as in Trench 1 with various layers of made ground above orange clay and then orange clay with flints natural geology. The only disturbance of the natural geology observed was the presence of an electric cable. The height of the natural geology noted at 156.5m AOD.

#### Trench 5

This trench was aligned SE–NW and was 17.4m long and 3.3m deep. The stratigraphy was broadly the same as in Trench 1 with various layers of made ground above orange clay and then orange clay with flints natural geology. It was fully excavated to the top of the natural geology for c.11m of its length. The whole extent of the trench was dug to the top of redeposited chalk observed elsewhere on the site throughout its 17.4m length. This chalk was noted to bottom out at 1.4m below the top of the formation level of the new construction. A modern grey silt filled feature was noted cutting the base of the trench but no other features of archaeological interest were observed. The natural geology was noted at a height of 156.8 m AOD.

## Trench 6

This trench was aligned NW-SE and was 24m long and 1.05m deep. The stratigraphy was broadly the same as in Trench 1 with various layers of made ground above orange clay and then orange clay with flints natural geology. This trench was not located on a basement excavation, but covered an area of a new construction in the north-west. No intrusive features cut the natural geological deposits. The natural geology was at a height of 159.2m AOD.

## **Finds**

No archaeological finds were recovered from the trenching or test pit monitoring.

## **Conclusion**

The trenches were positioned to give a general coverage of the site, but primarily were positioned on areas of proposed deep truncation from the new development. A considerable thickness of modern made ground was recorded in all trenches but no deposits nor artefacts of archaeological interest were noted in the evaluation. On the basis of these results, the site is considered to have very low archaeological potential.

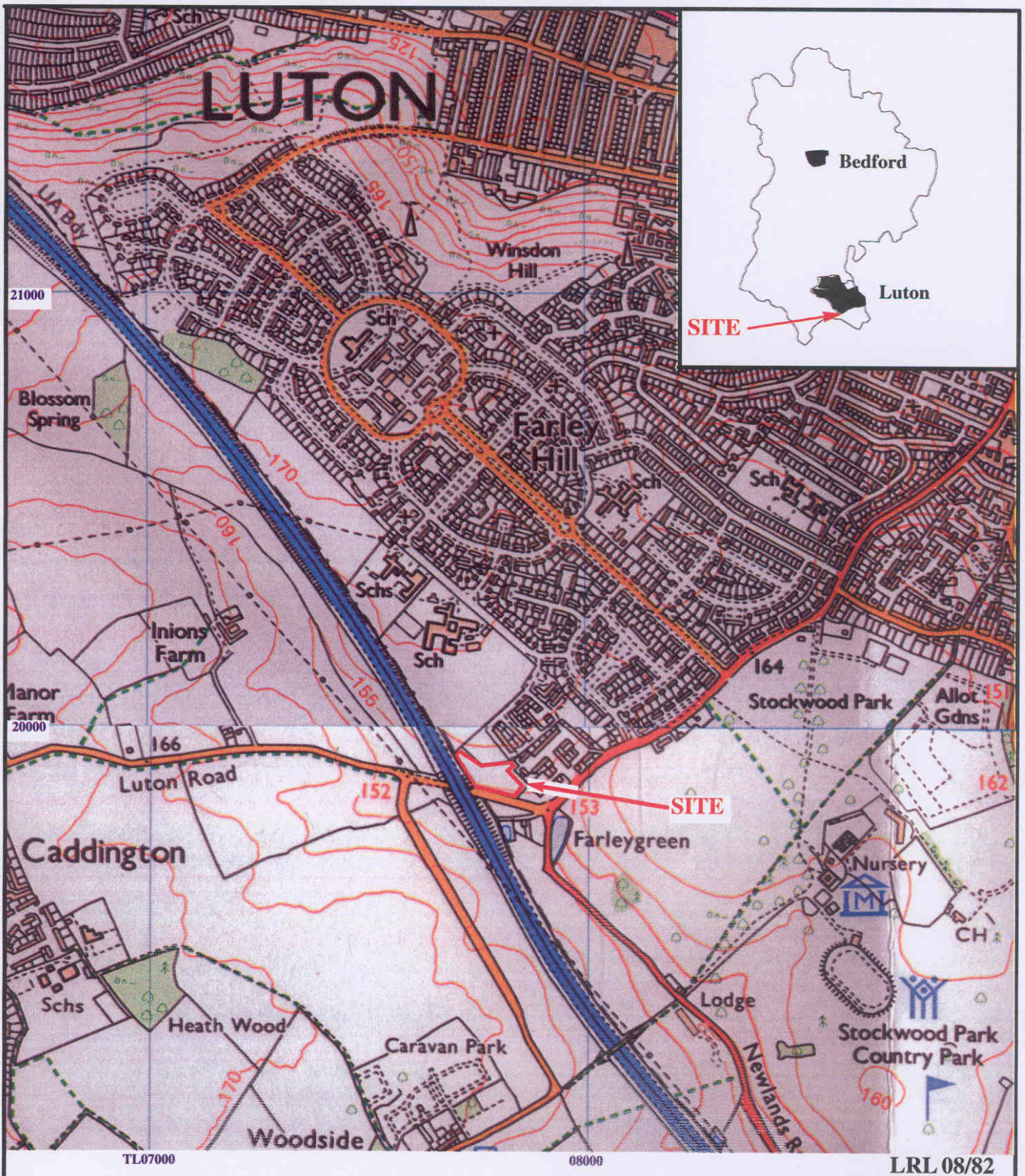
## **References**

BGS, 1992, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 220, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth  
Mather, L, 2008, 'Brief for the archaeological evaluation of land off Caddington Road, Bedfordshire', Bedford  
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	18.9	3.2 (2 at base)	1.9	0.00-0.3m mixed chalk and grey silty clay; 0.3-0.62m redeposited dumped chalk; 0.62-0.75m brown silt; 0.75-1.2m mixed brown-orange clay & modern brick rubble; 1.2-1.62m brown silty clay made ground; 1.62-1.8m orange clay; 1.8m+ light orange clay with flint natural geology.
2	22.8	3.3 (2 at base)	1.47	0.00-0.4m mixed chalk and grey silty clay; 0.4-0.98m grey silty clay & modern brick rubble made ground; 0.98-1.01m dark grey brown slit lens; 1.01-1.1m grey silt; 1.1-1.4m orange clay; 1.4m+ clay with flint natural geology.
3	17.5	3.2 (2 at base)	1.32	0.00-0.22m mixed brick rubble and yellow grey silty clay; 0.22-0.44m dark grey clay silt made ground; 0.44-0.59m light grey clayey silt made ground; 0.59-1.07m light orange clay silt; 1.07-1.3m orange clay; 1.3m+ clay with flint natural geology. <b>[Plate 1]</b>
4	7.4	2	0.98	0.00-0.54m mixed brick rubble and grey clayey silt; 0.54-0.94m orange clay; 0.94m+ clay with flint natural geology.
5	17.4; 11 to base	3.4 (2 at base)	3.3	0.00-0.7m mixed chalk and yellow clay; 0.7-1.4m compacted dumped chalk; 1.4-2.7m loose grey clay silt & modern brick rubble made ground; 2.7-3.3m orange-brown clay; 3.3m+ clay with flint natural geology. <b>[Plate 2]</b>
6	24.0	2	1.05	0.00-0.3m mixed chalk and yellow clay; 0.3-0.7m grey brown silty clay; 0.7-1.05m orange clay; 1.05m+ clay with flint natural geology.



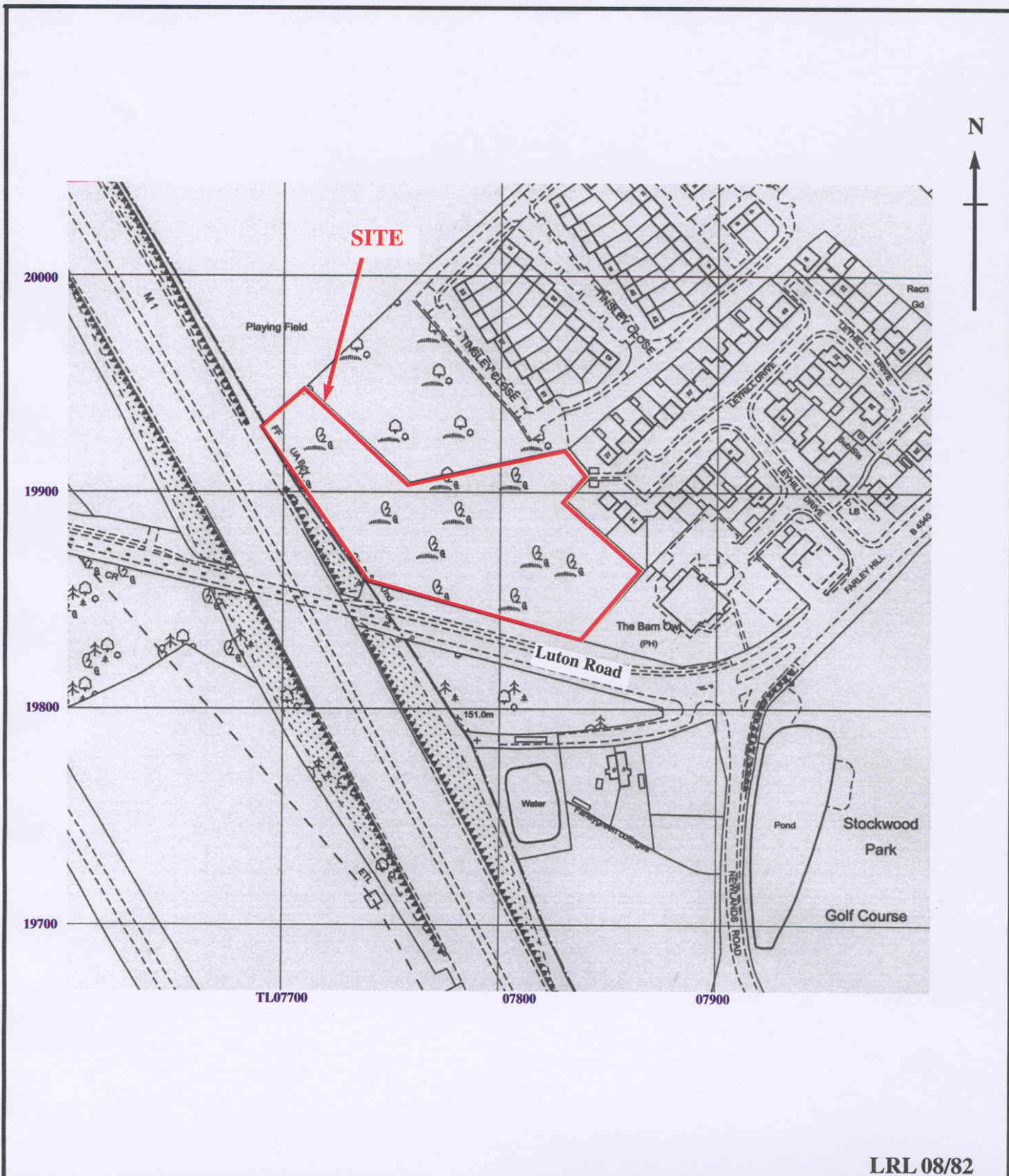


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Figure 1. Location of site within Luton and Bedfordshire.

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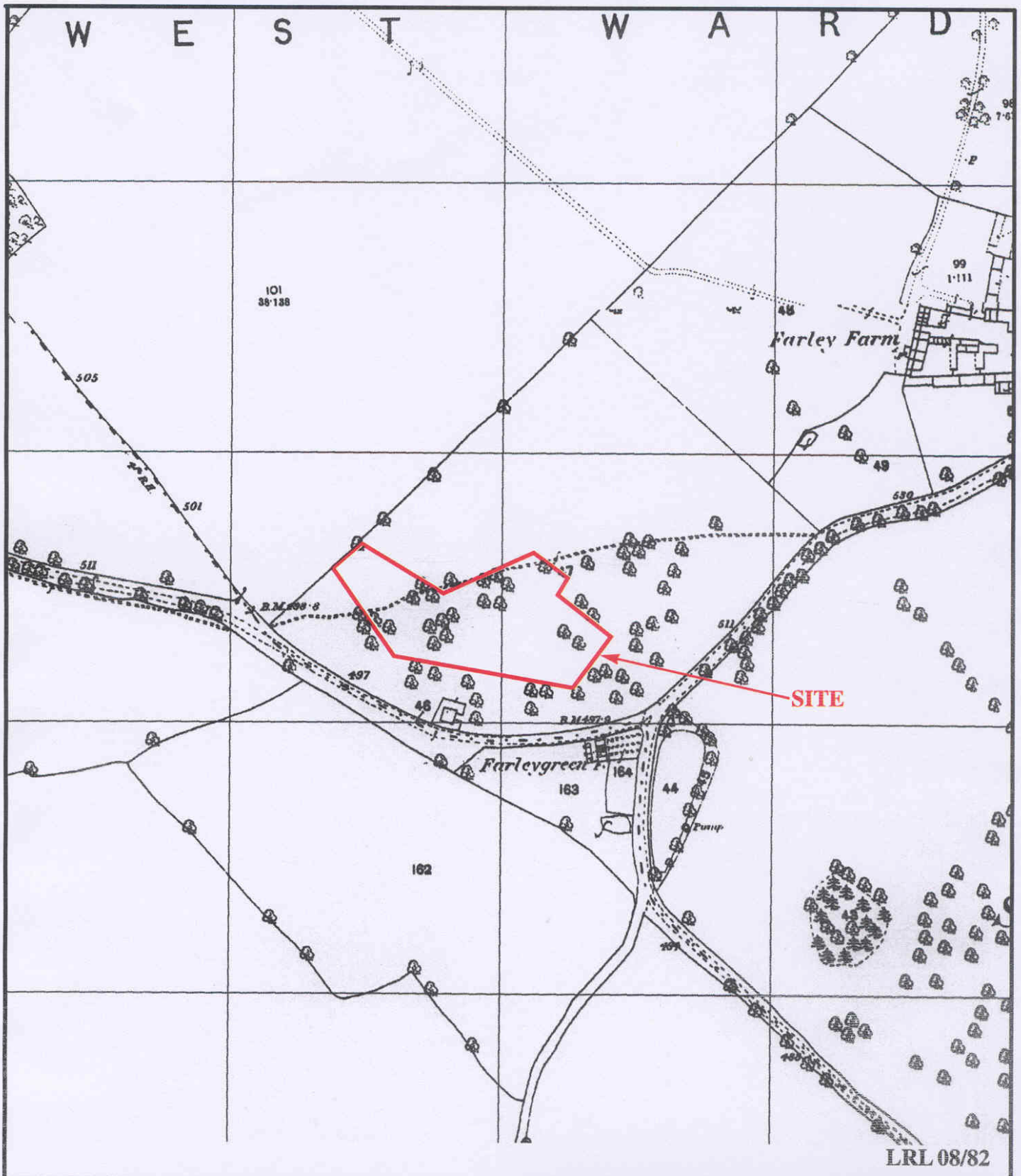
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Figure 2. Detailed location off Luton Road.

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Figure 3. Location of site in relation to the First edition Ordnance Survey map, 1880.

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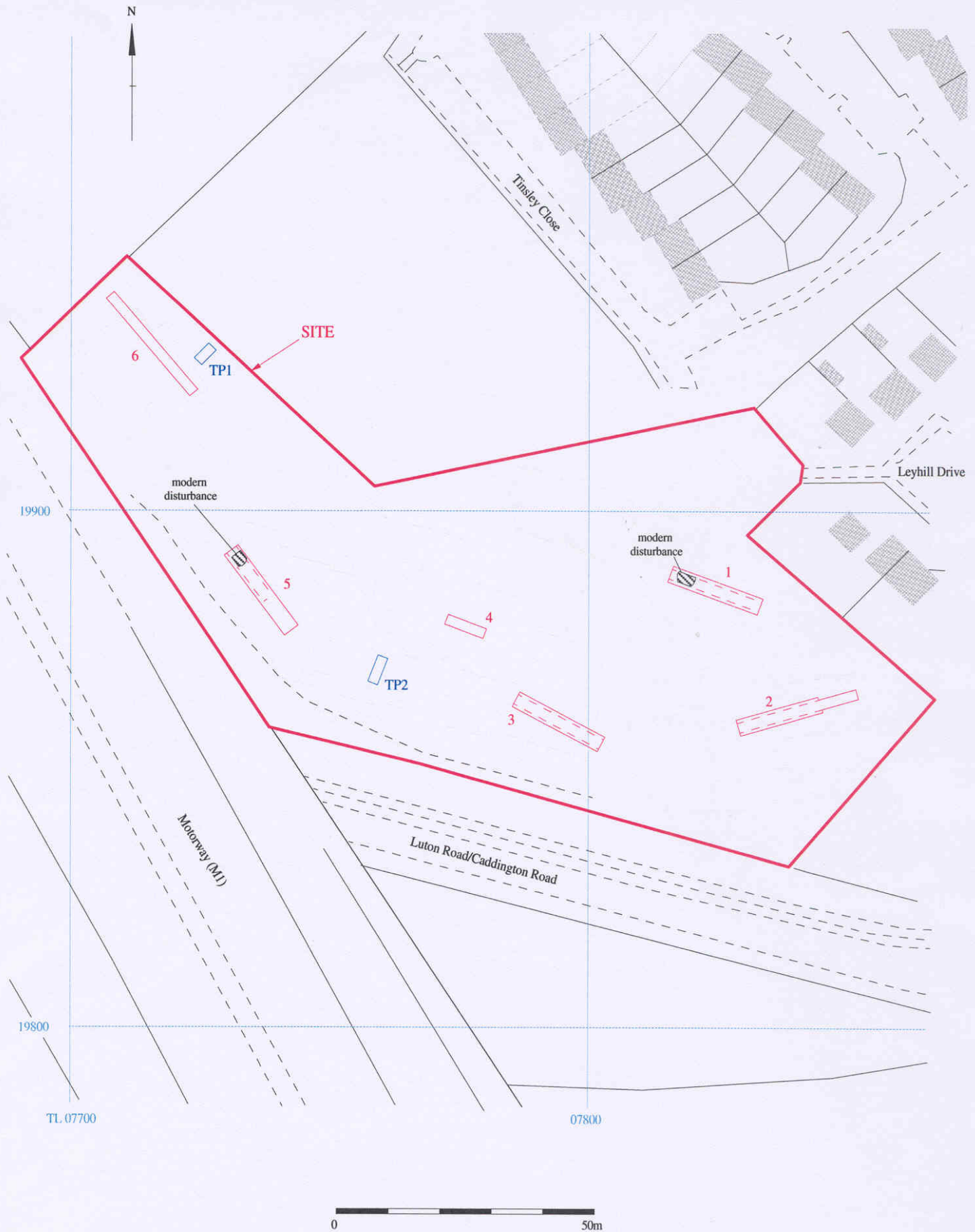


Figure 4. Location of trenches and test pits.

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Figure 5. Representative sections.



Plate 1. Trench 3, looking, south east; horizontal scale 1m, vertical scale 0.5m.



Plate 2. Representative section, Trench 5, looking north east, scale 0.5m.