

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Copper Beeches, Altwood Close,
Maidenhead, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by David Sánchez

Site Code: ACM21/142

(SU 8690 8020)

Copper Beeches, Altwood Close, Maidenhead, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
for Mr and Mrs Newman**

by David Sánchez

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ACM21/142

July 2021

Summary

Site name: Copper Beeches, Altwood Close, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8690 8020

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 30th June 2021

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: David Sánchez

Site code: ACM 21/142

Summary of results: The archaeological watching brief monitored the excavation of footing trenches for the extension of the existing house recording only made ground deposits of modern date and buried subsoil overlying the natural geology. No features of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with a local museum or repository prepared to accept the material in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 12.07.21
	Steve Preston ✓ 12.07.21

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An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 21/142

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Copper Beeches, Altwood Close, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8690 8020) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Eric Rolfe, Director of Associated Structural Design Ltd, River View Lodge, Ray Mead Road, Maidenhead SL6 8NJ, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Newman, Copper Beeches, Altwood Close, Maidenhead SL6 4PP.

Planning permission (ref. 20/00291/FUL) has being gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of a new extension with new chimney and rear balcony. The consent is subject to a condition (3) relating to archaeology which requires that a watching brief be carried out during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Matt Saywood, Archaeology Officer of Berkshire Archaeology, the archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Sánchez on 30th June 2021 and the site code is ACM 21/142. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with a local museum or repository prepared to accept the material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the residential area of Altwood in the south-west margins of Maidenhead, Berkshire (Fig. 1). The site itself comprises an extension to an existing house on its south and south-west part, immediately to the east of the driveway of the property which joined Altwood Close (Fig. 2). The area affected by the redevelopment consisted of a garden of the existing house including a shallow pond, and was located on relatively flat ground at a height of *c.* 43m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is recorded as Upper Chalk with Reading Beds (clay) to the east (BGS 1981) which was observed in the foundation trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site had been highlighted in a briefing document prepared by Mr Matt Saywood of Berkshire Archaeology. In summary, the site lies within an area of eastern Berkshire which is relatively rich in finds of prehistoric and Roman date (Ford 1987; Dils 2012) as is reflected in the number of archaeological entries noted for this area in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record. Various Roman finds including pottery and an oven have been found during construction work during the 1930's at Altwood Close to the west of the site though more recent watching briefs carried out at Altwood Close did not reveal any archaeological deposits (Dawson *et al.* 2012; McNicoll-Norbury 2013; Porter 2015).

Three undated human burials were found during construction of a tennis court nearby in 1936 (Underhill 1937, 37). The existence of a Roman villa has been suggested in the near vicinity at the site of County Boys School at Shoppenhanger Road to the east. Roman pottery and a Neolithic axe were found in the school grounds but the circumstances of these finds are unclear. A rectangular enclosure (and possible earthwork) was identified a short way to the west through aerial photography. At the northern end of Shoppenhanger Road, pits have been excavated containing Iron Age pottery and worked flint. At Altwood Bailey fieldwork recorded a posthole and a ditch tentatively dated to the Saxon period (Coles 2005). A Roman villa site lies 300m north of the site.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was expected to involve monitoring of foundation trench digging and other intrusive groundworks such as the excavation of service trenches and overburden removal.

Archaeological deposits which were threatened by development were to be excavated and recorded.

Results

The watching brief consisted of monitoring the excavation of foundation trenches on the south and south-west of the existing house covering an area of 21.50m by 6.50m maximum dimensions (Fig. 3). No additional trenches for services were dug and no ground reduction or other excavation was undertaken during the course of the redevelopment of the site.

Foundation trenches were dug using a 360° mini digger machine fitted with a toothless bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Trenches reached a depth between 1m and 1.25m ranging in width between

0.65m and 0.80m. The stratigraphy observed in all the trenches was very similar with minor variations resulting from the presence of areas of concrete slab in the proximity of the house at its south west corner along with a shallow pond in the same area, and heavily rooted areas and tree throws following the southern trenches of the extension. Typically the stratigraphy consisted of between 0.20m and 0.30m of topsoil (garden soil), in some areas directly covered by 0.15m of concrete slab, between 0.18m and 0.25m of mid brownish grey clay silt (made ground) with frequent small and medium-size gravel and chalk inclusions along with modern brick and tile fragments, sherds of 'china' pottery and modern glass fragments, above 0.20–0.28m of light greyish brown clay silt with occasional small chalk inclusions (buried soil), and between 0.28m and 0.39m of a mid reddish brown silty clay natural deposit (Reading Beds superficial deposit) overlying natural chalk.

One service trench for a drainage pipe of the existing house was uncovered in two trenches at the north-west of the new extension, on a SW-NE alignment cutting the buried soil and natural geology but overlain by the modern made ground deposit described above. It was covered by a concrete cap with a thickness of 0.16m and reached a maximum depth of 0.55m.

No features of archaeological interest were uncovered in the trenches during the course of the archaeological watching brief.

Finds

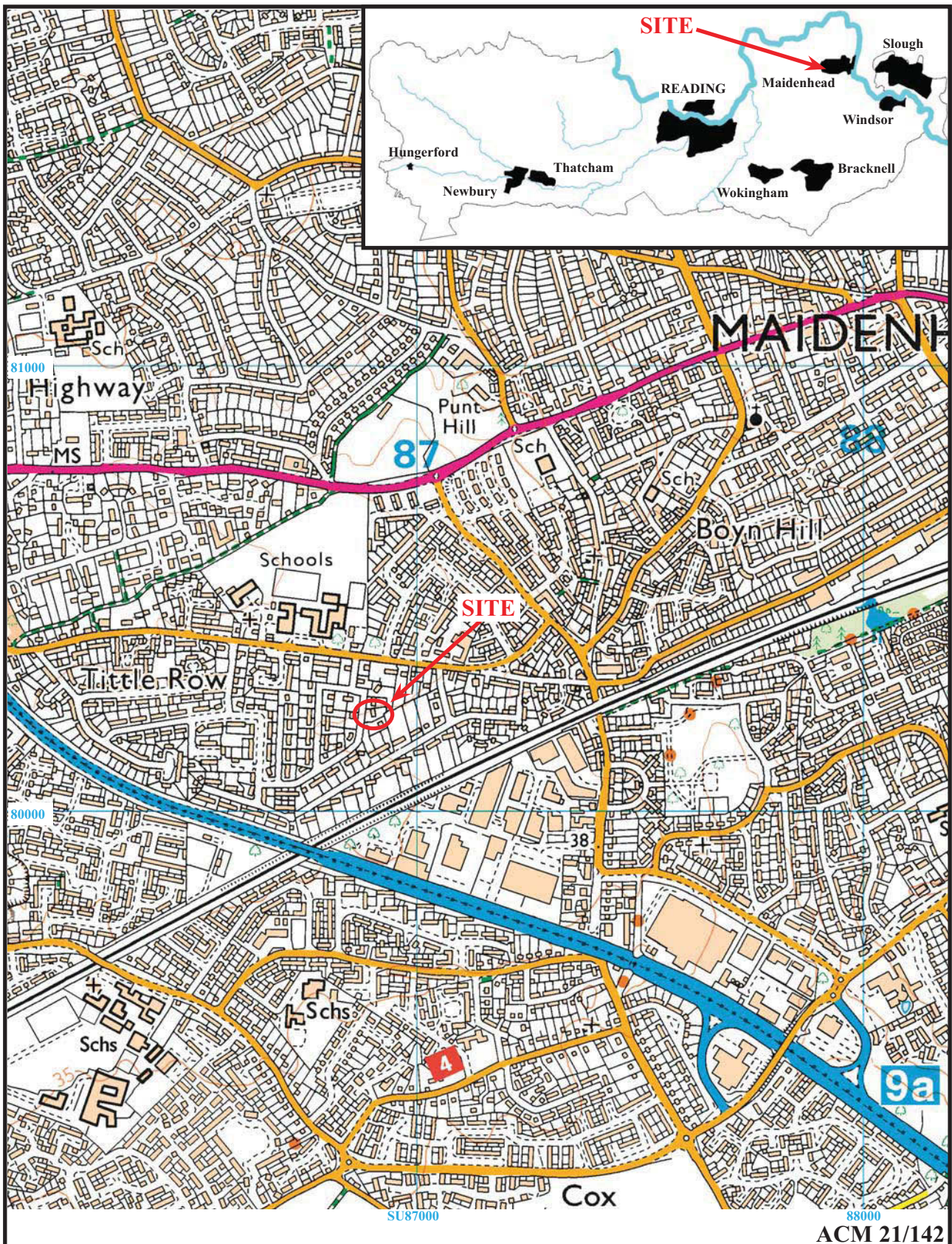
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered during the course of the watching brief. The presence of modern brick and tile fragments, 'china' pottery and glass was recorded for dating purposes during the excavation of the foundation trenches and these finds were retained on site.

Conclusion

The archaeological watching brief at Copper Beeches successfully monitored the excavation of the foundation trenches for a new extension of the existing house revealing a relatively simple stratigraphy with a modern made ground deposit overlying buried subsoil. Tree throws and one modern service trench were the only features which reached enough depth to truncate the natural geology and no features of archaeological interest were uncovered during the excavation of the trenches. Only modern finds were encountered and these were retained on site.

References

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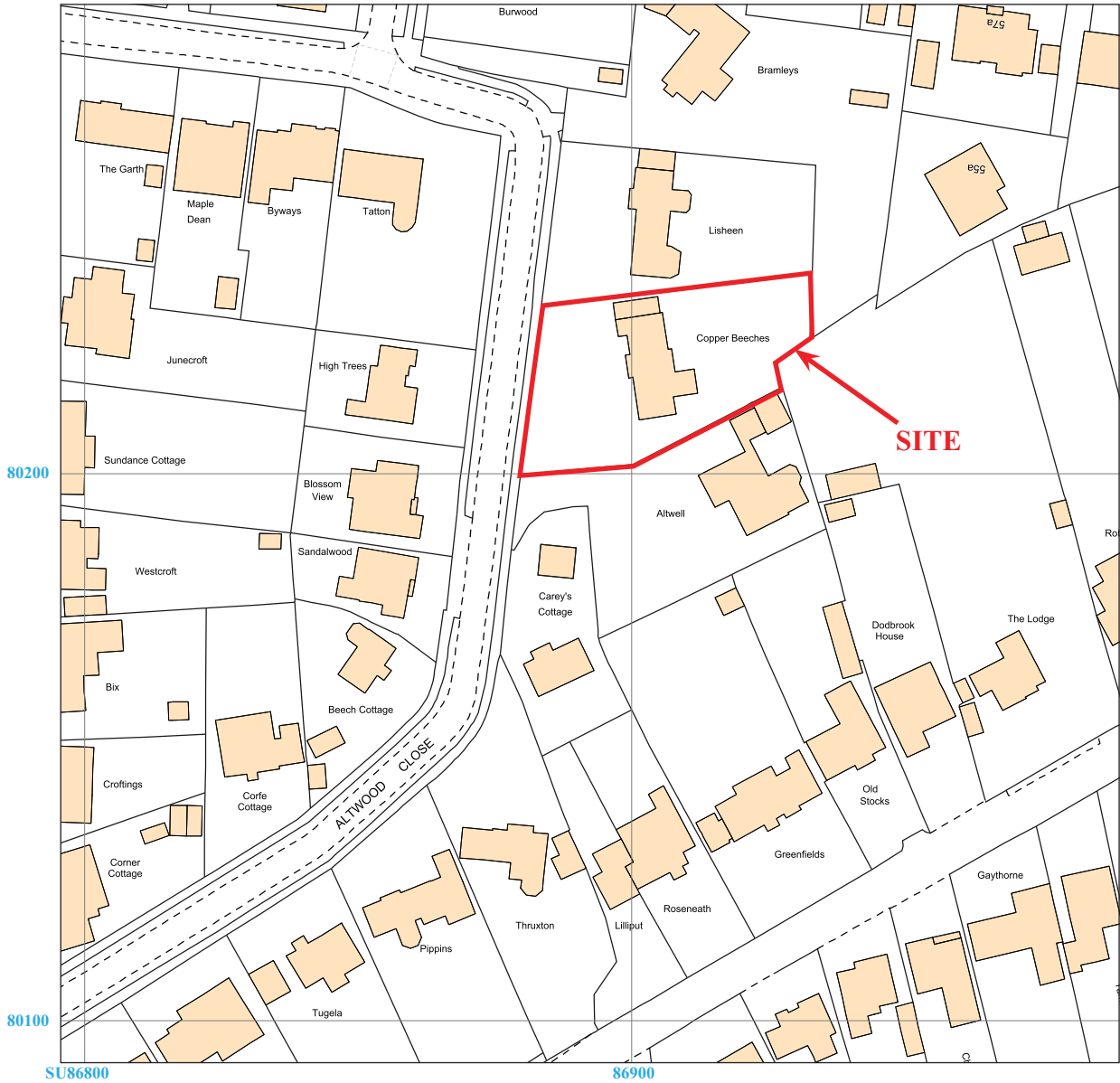


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Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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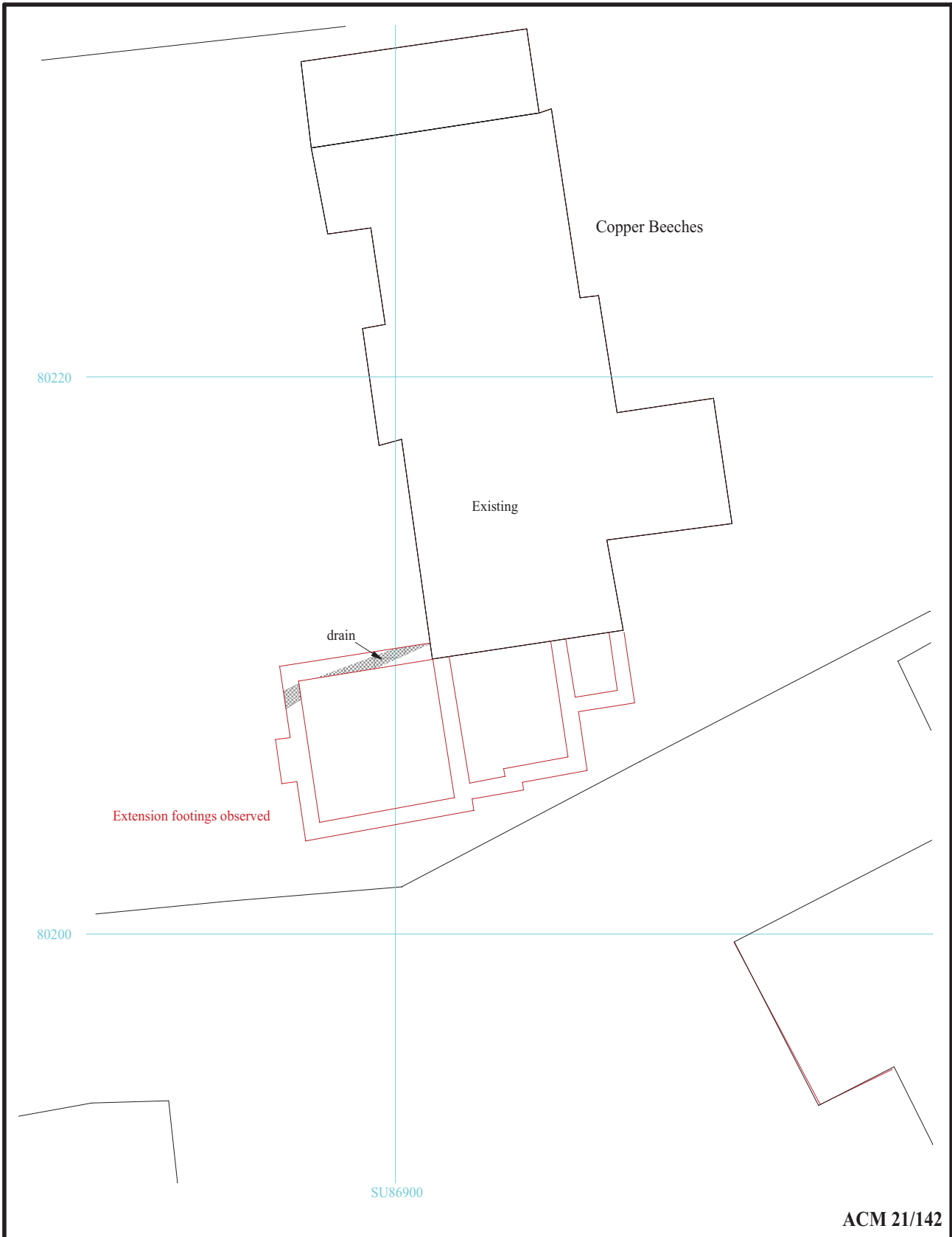
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Altwood Close.

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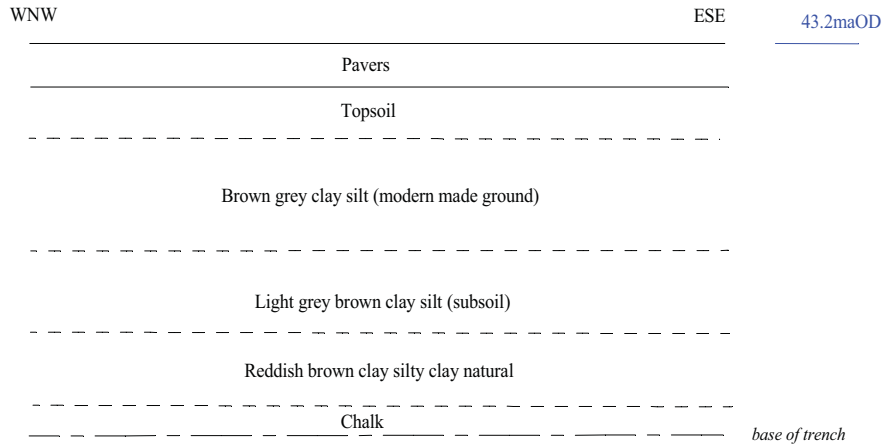
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.





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Figure 4. Representative section.





Plate 1. Foundation trenches under excavation, looking west.



Plate 2. Foundation trench at eastern area of extension, looking north east,
Scales: 2m and 0.5m.

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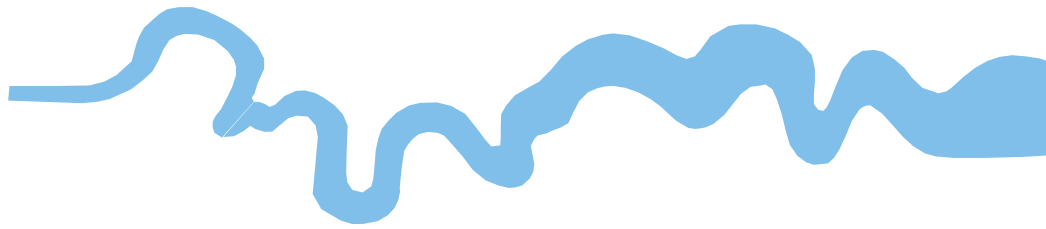
**Copper Beeches, Altwood Close,
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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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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