

**Silwood Farm, Silwood Park, Cheapside Road,  
Ascot, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
For Imperial College London**

by Tim Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code SFA 09/10

**April 2009**

## Summary

**Site name:** Silwood Farm, Silwood Park, Cheapside Road, Ascot, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 9425 6929

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 26<sup>th</sup> March - 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Tim Dawson

**Site code:** SFA 09/10

**Area of site:** c.0.3ha

**Summary of results:** No archaeological deposits nor artefacts were identified

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 15.04.09 Steve Preston✓ 15.04.09
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# Silwood Farm, Silwood Park, Cheapside Road, Ascot, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Tim Dawson

Report 09/10

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Silwood Farm, Cheapside Road, Ascot, Berkshire (9425 6929) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Justyn Turnbull, of Corrigan, Soundy and Kilaiditi Chartered Architects, 93A High Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 6AF, on behalf of Imperial College London, Silwood Park, Buckhurst Road, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 7PY.

Planning permission (07/01802) for the construction of an extension to the northern end of the farmhouse at Silwood Farm has been approved by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, which in this case was determined should take the form of a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary O'Donoghue, Archaeological Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson between 26th March and 3rd April 2009 and the site code is SFA 09/10.

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 at the northern end of Silwood Park, an area of experimental woodland belonging to Imperial College London, which is bordered to the west by Ascot, to the south by Sunninghill and to the north by the village of Cheapside (Fig. 1). The farmhouse itself is located c. 50m north of Silwood Lake (Fig. 2). It is built on a hillside, which slopes downwards from Cheapside in the north-west towards the lake in the south-east, in a woodland clearing. The site lies at a height of c. 50m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is Bagshot Beds (BGS 1981).

## **Archaeological background**

The site of Silwood Farm is located within an area containing a modest range of recorded archaeological deposits (Ford 1987), possibly as a result of relatively few opportunities for the discovery of archaeological material in this former heathland-dominated landscape. Records show a number of Bronze Age round barrows in the wider general area of the site and contemporary occupation is also likely to be present but has not yet been identified. Roman archaeology is also present in the wider area, as the road from Silchester to London passed the site several kilometres to the south-east. At least one villa-type site was discovered during construction of the railway where it intersected the Roman road (Hughes 1890).

The historic building report (Corrigan *et al* 2007) describes the farmhouse as being 17<sup>th</sup>-century in origin and as having been altered in the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-centuries. The section of the building that has been demolished closest to the existing 17<sup>th</sup>-century house was reconstructed on the location of the original north end in the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century using a mixture of original and new materials. The northernmost end of the farmhouse, also now demolished, was an additional extension built using modern brick and non-structural timbers in the 1950s (Wright Ward Partnership 2007).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits threatened by the digging of the groundworks. This involved the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular the ground reduction and the digging of foundation trenches for the new extension.

## **Results**

All intrusive groundworks were observed, specifically the reduction of the ground of approximately two thirds of the site and the digging of foundation trenches in the remaining third (Fig. 3).

### *Ground Reduction*

The north-western end of the area in which the extension is to be built is terraced into the hillside and therefore required the ground to be reduced to a maximum depth of 1.29m. The area, approximately 22m by 14m, was excavated using a mini-digger with a ditching bucket. The stratigraphy comprised 0.50m of topsoil and subsoil with major root disturbance, overlying natural yellow/orange sand below 0.50m. No archaeological features were revealed, only the brick foundations of the northern end of the farmhouse that was demolished in

preparation for the extension, piping associated with the house and a land drain. Other isolated bricks present in the topsoil are likely to be a result of the demolition work. All of the brickwork that was uncovered consisted of modern machine-made bricks.

### *Foundation Trenches*

The foundation trenches were dug using a mini-digger with a toothless bucket to a depth of 0.80m and with a width of 0.50m. At the time of their digging, the site had been levelled with a layer of crushed rubble c. 0.10m thick. The trenches were dug through this and then c.0.43m of a mixture of topsoil and made-ground, which contained fragments of brick, tile and pipe, and then into the natural sand, to a depth of 0.80m. As with the ground reduction, digging of the foundations only revealed a variety of pipes associated with the farmhouse, and the brick foundations from the demolished 1950s extension of the house. No features of archaeological interest were identified.

### **Finds**

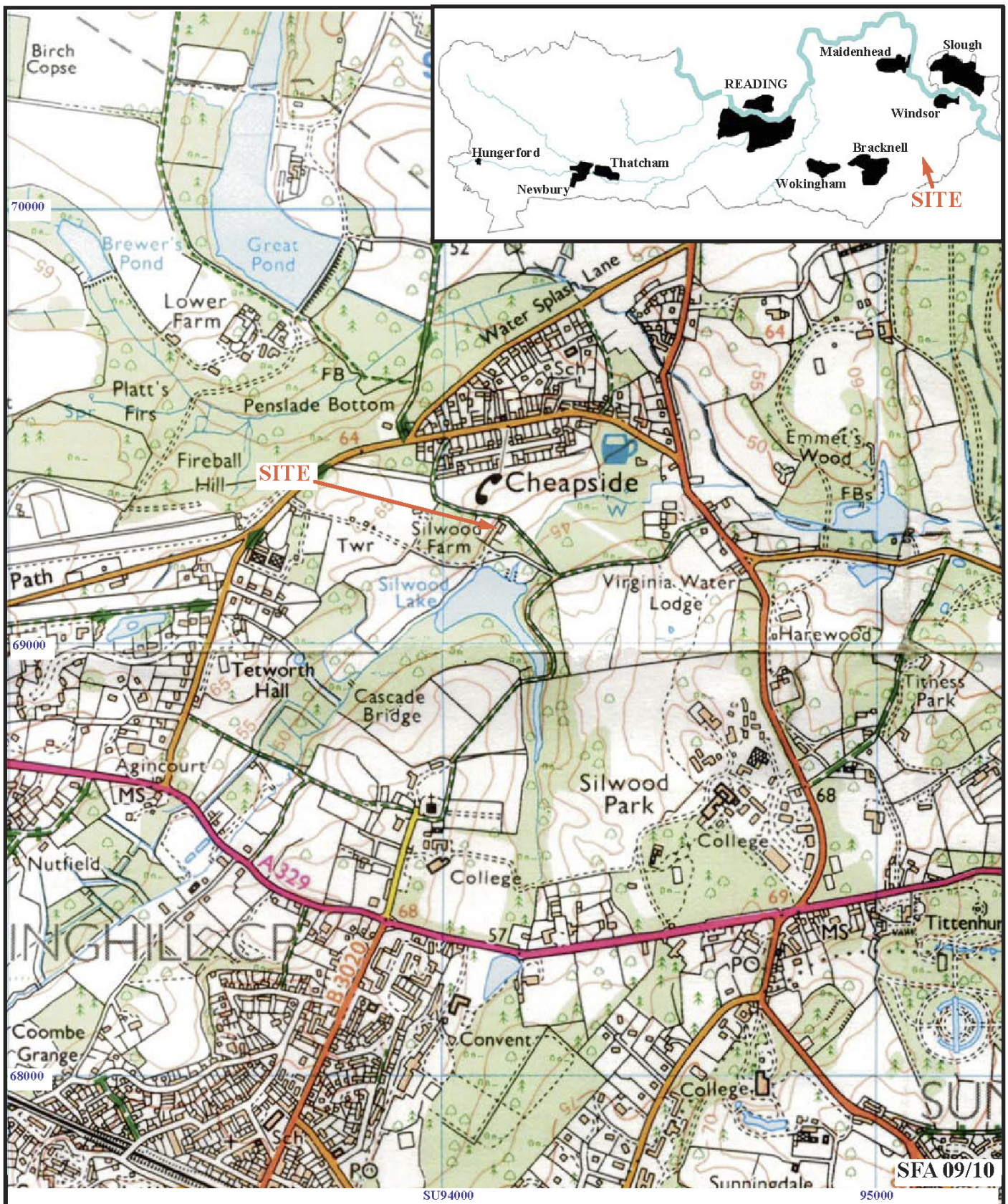
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

### **Conclusion**

The levelling of the site and excavation of foundation trenches were observed but no features nor finds of archaeological interest were identified.

### **References**

- BGS, 1981, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 269, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth  
Corrigan, Soundy, Kilaiditi Architects, 2007, *Silwood Farm, Silwood Park, Ascot: Historic Building Report*  
Ford, S, 1987, East Berkshire Archaeological Survey, *Berkshire County Council Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap I, Reading*  
Hughes, G M, 1890, *History of Windsor Forest and Sunninghill and the Great Park*  
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO  
Wright Ward Partnership, 2007, *Report on Condition of Silwood Farmhouse and Barns*

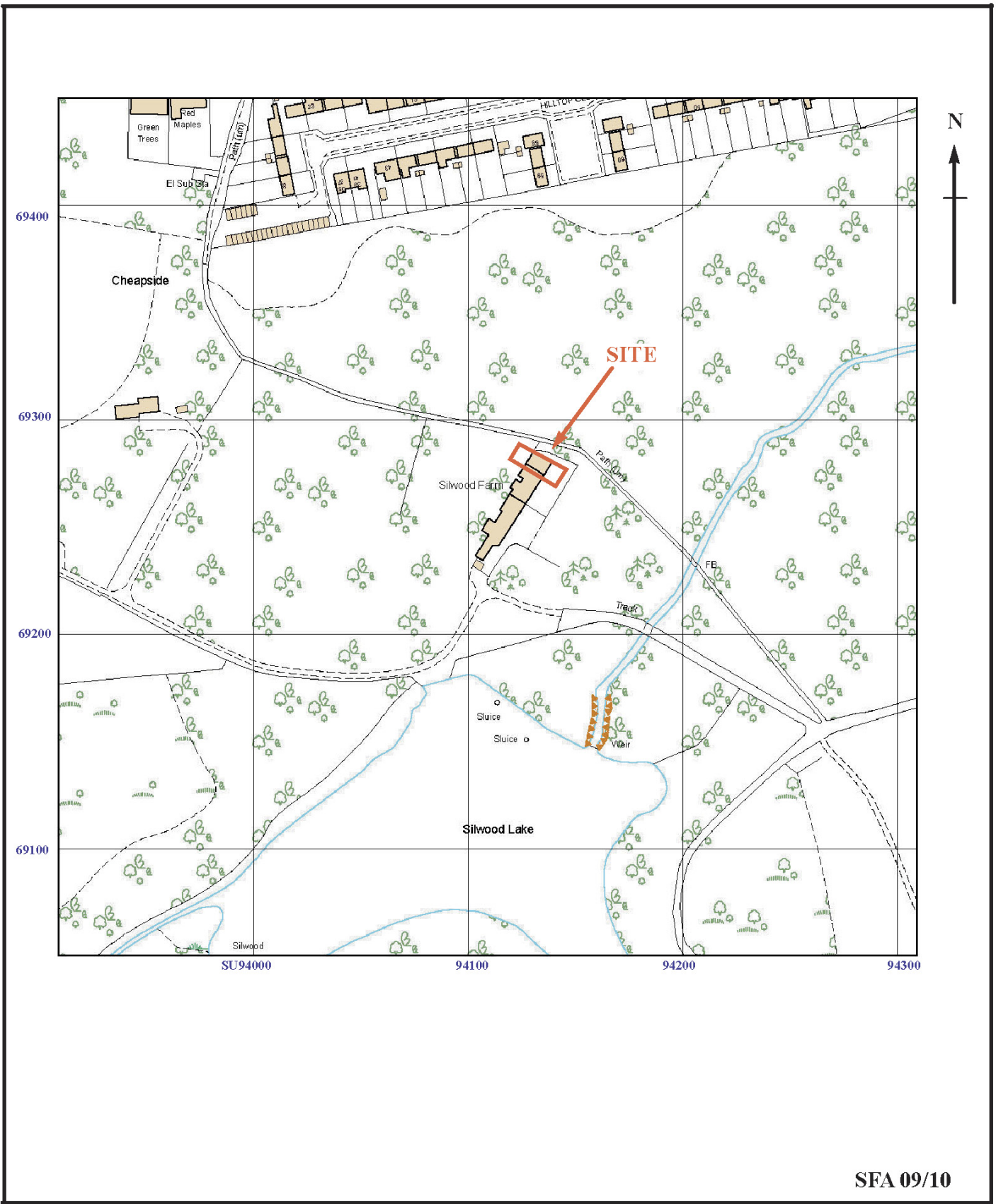


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Figure 1. Location of site within Cheapside and Berkshire.

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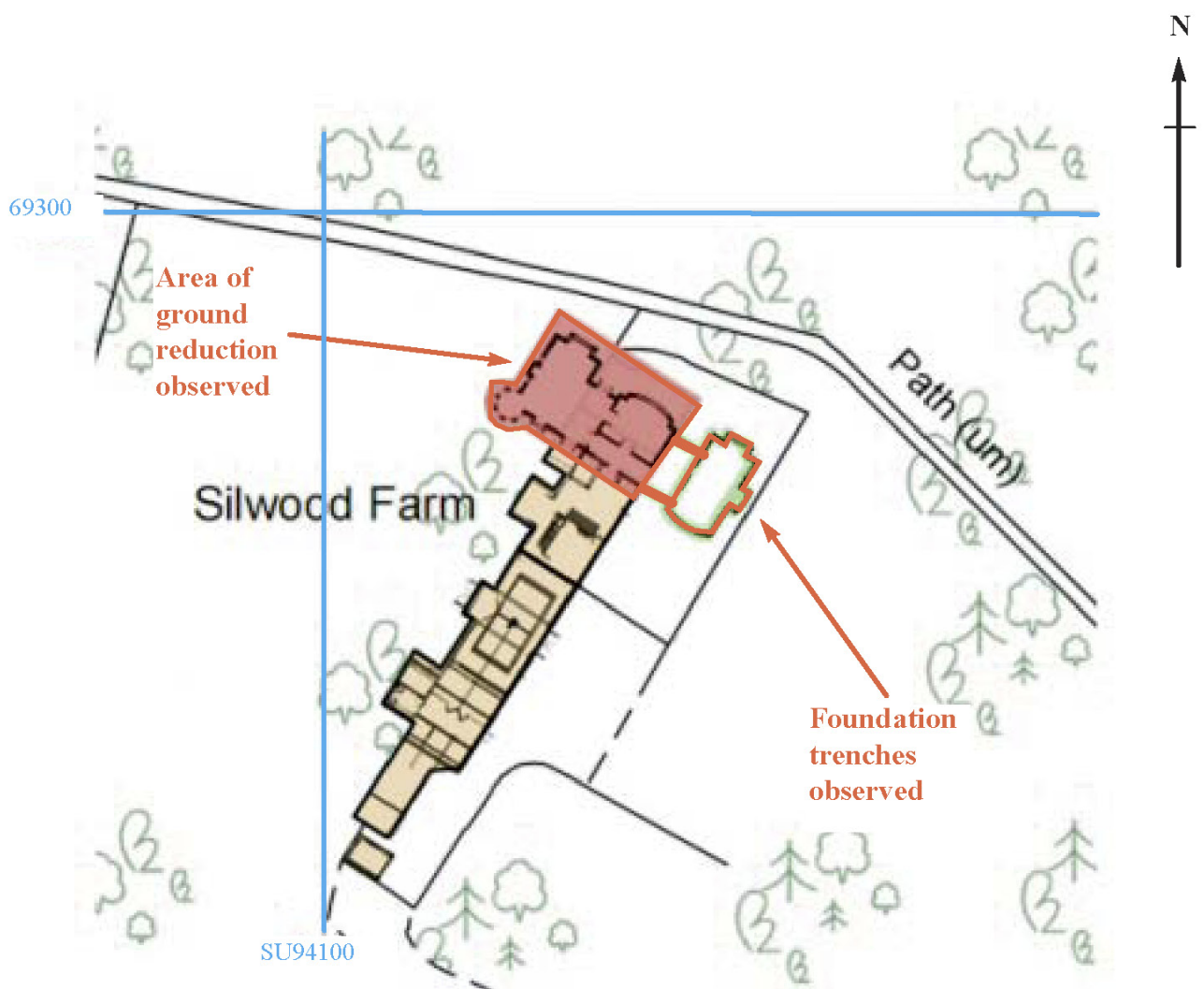
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site in Silwood Park.

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Figure 3. Areas observed.

Scale: 1:1000

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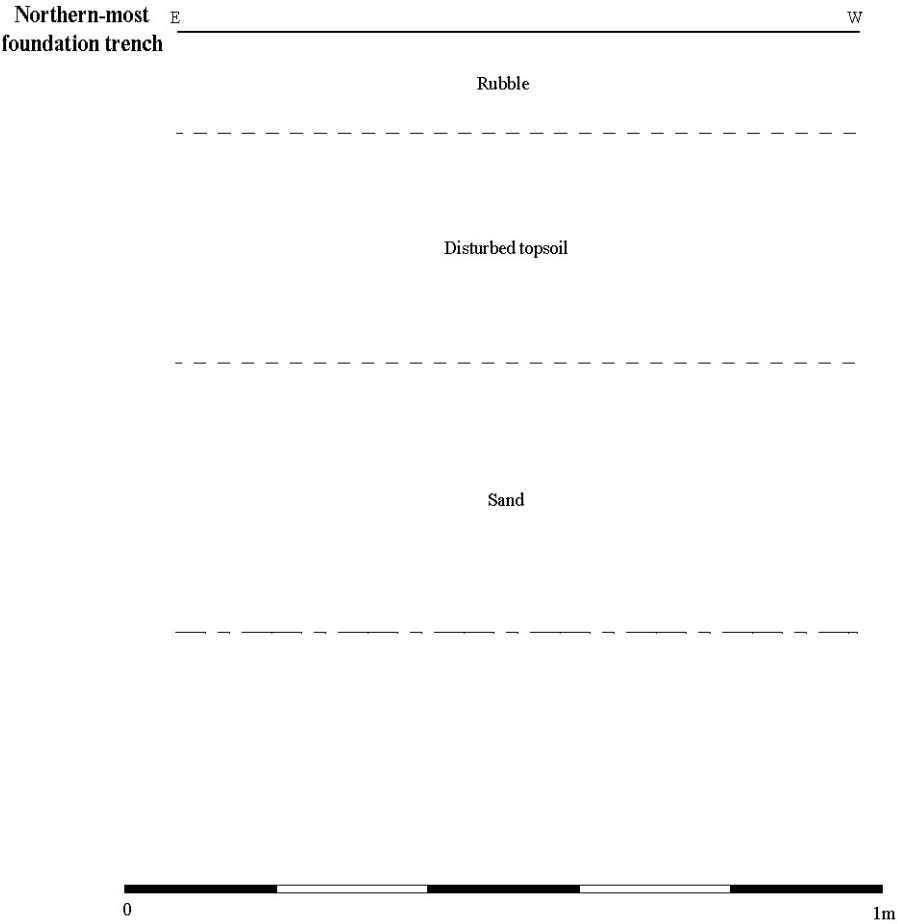


Figure 4. Representative section