

**Brackenhale School, Rectory Lane, Easthampstead,
Bracknell, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Limited**

by Andrew Weale and Heather Hopkins
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BSB 09/19

October 2009

Summary

Site name: Brackenhale School, Rectory Lane, Easthampstead, Bracknell, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8692 6810

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 23rd–25th September 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: BSB 09/19

Area of site: *c.* 0.75 ha

Summary of results: No deposits of archaeological interest were observed, nor artefacts recovered. The site had been significantly disturbed through terracing and levelling to form the modern playing field. The site is considered to have no archaeological potential

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✓ 07.10.09 Steve Preston✓ 07.10.09

Brackenhale School, Rectory Lane, Easthampstead, Bracknell, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 09/19

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at Brackenhale School, Rectory Lane, Easthampstead, Bracknell, Berkshire (SU 8692 6810) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Cliff Buddery of Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Limited, Berkeley House, Abingdon Science Park, Barton Lane, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3NB.

Outline planning permission has been granted by Bracknell Forest Borough Council (application number 07/01259/OUT) for the erection of 63 dwellings with associated parking and landscaped public open space with access from Rectory Lane. The planning permission was subject to a condition (12) relating to archaeology, requiring a phased programme of archaeological work in advance of development. A desk-based assessment indicated the need for an evaluation by trial trenching on the southern part of the site, a zone which had not obviously been subject to truncation or disturbance during construction of the school (Wallis and Hopkins 2009).

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 Mary O'Donoghue, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Daniel Bray from 23rd-25th September 2009 and the site code is BSB09/19. 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 within the modern suburban development of Bracknell (Fig. 1). It is adjacent, to the south and west, to the Easthampstead conservation area which encompasses the Grade II listed 1960s development of Point Royal. The site is the former playing fields of Brackenhale School and is still within the grounds (Fig. 2). The site has been levelled and terraced to create the playing fields of the school and now slopes gently to the south east. It is approximately 75m above Ordnance Datum. The site is situated on Quaternary Bagshot Beds with a protrusion of Tertiary London Clay (BGS 1981).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Wallis and Hopkins 2009). The archaeological potential for the site lies in its location in an area containing earlier prehistoric remains (Ford 1987, Lowe 2008). To the north, on Bill Hill, is the site of a Bronze Age round barrow (a scheduled ancient monument). In the areas surrounding the monument, there is an expectation for contemporary occupation deposits to be present. However an evaluation directly to the south of the site, at Glendower on Crowthorne Road, did not reveal any deposits of archaeological interest (Wallis 2006). At more distance, extensive excavations to the north-east at the former RAF Staff College revealed Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation along with a post-medieval lime kiln (Lowe 2008).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within those areas of the development site that had not clearly previously disturbed or truncated.

The specific research aims of the project were;

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site given the previous development on the site and terracing of the slope to create playing fields;

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and

To determine if any deposits representing prehistoric occupation are present, especially those possibly contemporary with the nearby Bronze Age burial mound.

It was proposed to excavate thirteen trenches, all 20m long and 1.6m wide . They were to be located to sample the whole of the playing field area. The topsoil and subsoil within the trenches were removed by a JCB-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket under archaeological supervision.

Where archaeological features were thought to exist the stripped areas were to be hand cleaned and sufficient of the features were to be excavated by hand to satisfy the aims of the project. All the spoil heaps were to be monitored for artefacts.

Results

Thirteen trenches were excavated as intended, in the locations shown in Figure 3. The area had been previously terraced and levelled to form a playing field for the school and this was reflected in the observed geology in the trenches. Trenches 1-12 contained scalpins to a depth of 0.1 – 0.35m. In trenches 1 – 5 this was directly above the natural geology and in trenches 6 – 12 it was above made ground. No features are recorded except modern field drains in trenches 1-5. Trenches 5 – 13 contained made ground above a layer of buried soil. The trenches ranged in depth between 0.3m and 2.6m and each revealed natural geology of blue grey sandy clay. The trenches to the south of the site were considerably deeper as this area had been built up during the levelling to form the playing fields.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 20.8m long, aligned north–south, and a maximum of 0.3m deep. The scalpins present were 0.2m deep, directly above clay natural geology. No topsoil or subsoil remained. A modern field drain was encountered, but no other finds or features were found.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 20.7m long, aligned NNW–SSE, and had a maximum depth of 0.4m. The scalpins in this trench were present to a depth of 0.3m above sandy clay natural geology. Two modern field drains were encountered but no other finds or features were discovered. No topsoil or subsoil remained after the earlier levelling.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 20.2m in length, 0.4m deep and aligned WNW – SSE. There were scalpins to a depth of 0.3m straight onto the sandy clay natural geology, a remnant of the earlier terracing and levelling that had removed topsoil and subsoil. Three modern field drains were discovered, but no other finds or features were encountered.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was 20.4m in length, 0.4m deep and SW – NE aligned. Scalpins were present to a depth of 0.3m beneath which there was sandy gravel clay natural geology containing blue clay with frequent stone inclusions. A single modern field drain was encountered, but no finds or features of archaeological interest were discovered. Neither topsoil nor subsoil had survived the levelling of this part of the site.

Trench 5 (Fig. 4 and Pp. 1)

Trench 5 was 20.1m long, 0.45m deep and aligned NW – SE. the area had been previously terraced and scalpins were present to a depth of 0.35m. Topsoil and subsoil had been previously removed and the bluish grey sandy clay natural geology began directly below the scalpins. No finds or features were encountered except for three modern field drains.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was 19.4m long, aligned NNW – SSE and 1.2m deep. Following the previous levelling to form playing fields no topsoil or subsoil remained, instead the layer of scalpins 0.3m thick rested directly onto a layer of made ground of 0.3m depth, itself above a layer of buried soil of 0.4m deep. Beneath this was the natural geology comprising a blue/grey sandy clay . No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was 21m long, aligned SW – NE and varied in depth from 0.6m at the northern end to 0.9m at the southern end. No topsoil or subsoil had remained following earlier levelling. Scalpins occupied to a depth of 0.2m from the surface and , below this was 0.25m of made ground. Below this for the length of the trench was a 0.3m depth of buried soil. This overlay blue/grey sand natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was 21.2m in length, aligned SW – NE and varied in depth from 0.5m at the northern end to 1m at the southern end. A 0.3m deep layer of scalpins lay above a 0.25m deep layer of made ground. In turn this overlay a 0.25m deep layer of buried soil for the length of the trench. This overlay blue/grey sand natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered and the topsoil and subsoil had been removed through earlier levelling and terracing. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was 20.9m long, SW – NE aligned and varied in depth between 1.1m at the northern end and 2.6m at the southern end. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered. The topsoil and subsoil had been removed previously through levelling and terracing. The layer of scalpins extended from the surface to a depth of 0.2m, above a 2.1m deep layer of made ground beneath this. Beneath this was a layer of buried soil to a

depth of 0.3m extending the length of the trench. This overlies the natural geology which was a blue/grey sandy clay. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 10 (plate 2)

Trench 10 was 21m long, WSW – ENE aligned and varied in depth between 2.8m at the NE end and 3m at the SW end. The layer of scalpings extended 0.2m below the surface, below which was 2.4m of made ground and buried soil for a depth of 0.4m. The buried soil continued the full length of the trench. The blue grey sandy natural geology lay below this. No features or finds of archaeological interest were encountered and the topsoil and subsoil had been previously removed through levelling and terracing. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was 21m long, and varied in depth between 2.6m at the southern end and 1.1m at the northern end. It was aligned SW – NE. The topsoil and subsoil had been previously removed through terracing and levelling. A layer of scalpings extended from the surface to a depth of 0.1m, below which was a layer of made ground extending to a depth of 2.2m. A layer of buried soil continued below this for a depth of 0.3m along the length of the trench. The blue grey sandy clay natural geology lay beneath this. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 12

Trench 12 was 20m long, varying in depth between 1.15m at the NW end and 1.75m at the SE end. The trench was aligned NW – SE. The area has been previously terraced and levelled, removing any topsoil and subsoil. A layer of scalpings extended below the surface for a depth of 0.2m. Below this were a layer of made ground 1.45m thick above a buried soil that was 0.1m thick and extended along the length of the trench. The natural geology below this was blue/grey sandy clay. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Trench 13 (Fig. 4)

Trench 13 was 21.4m in length, varying in depth between 1m deep at the SW end and 0.9m at the NE end. The trench is aligned WSW – ENE. Beneath a thin layer of turf there were two layers of made ground to a depth of 1m below the surface. This overlies a blue/grey sandy clay which was the natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

Conclusion

No features or artefacts of archaeological interest were present in the evaluation trenches. The ground had been significantly disturbed during the terracing and levelling of the site to form the playing fields for the school. No pre-modern artefacts were recovered from any of the spoil heaps of topsoil or subsoil. On the basis of these results, the site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

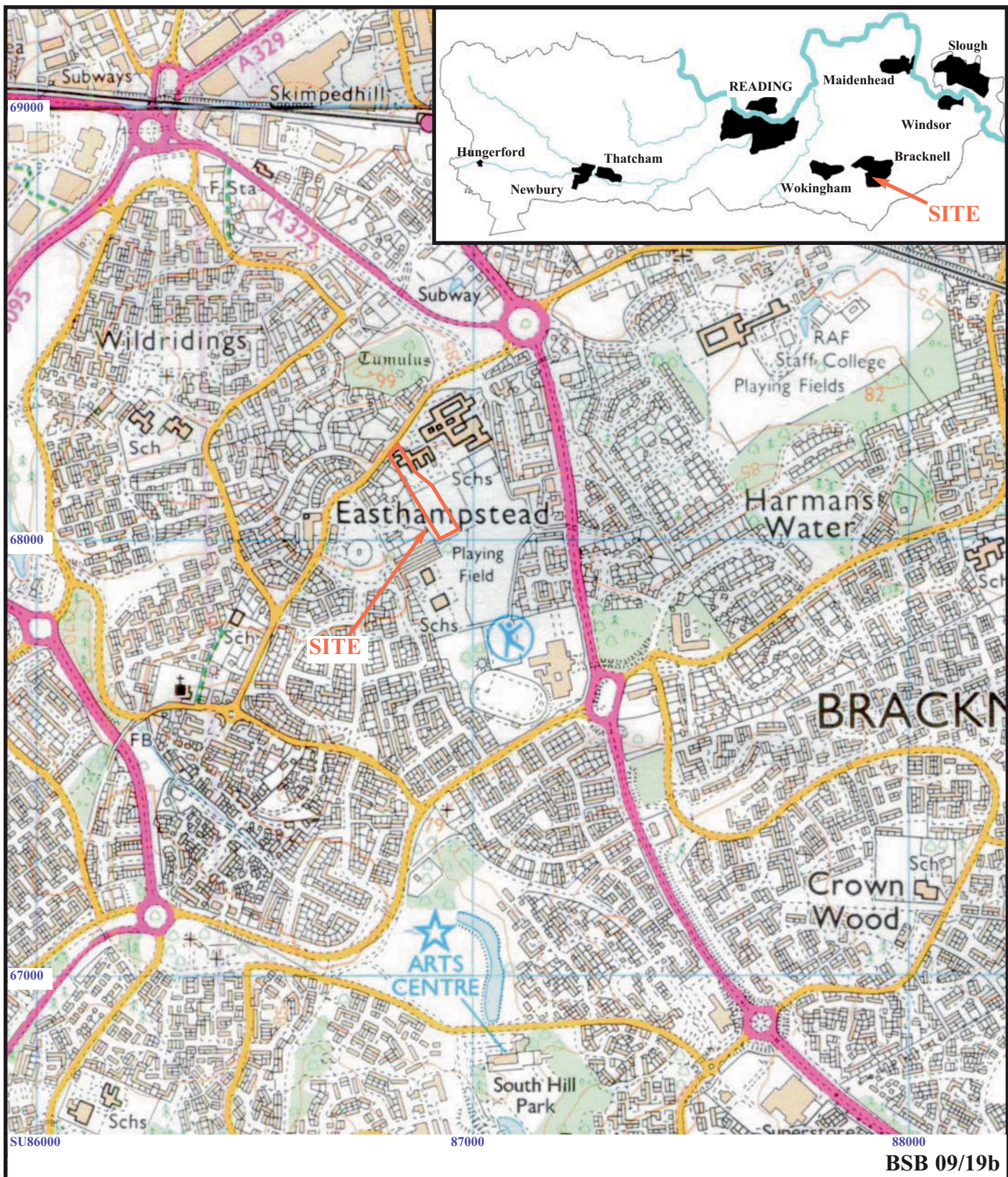
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.8	1.6	0.3	0-0.2m Scalpins 0.2m+ orange/blue clay natural geology. Field drain.
2	20.7	1.6	0.4	0-0.3m Scalpins; 0.3m+ clay natural geology. Two field drains.
3	20.2	1.6	0.4	0-0.4m Scalpins; 0.4m+ sandy clay natural geology. Three field drains
4	20.4	1.6	0.4	0-0.4m Scalpins; 0.4m+ sandy gravel clay, blue clay with frequent stones natural geology. Field drain.
5	20.1	1.6	0.45	0-0.35m Scalpins; 0.35m+ blue/grey sandy clay. Three field drains. [Pl. 1]
6	19.4	1.6	0.3 – 1.2	0-0.3m Scalpins; 0.3m-0.6m made ground; 0.6-1m buried soil; 1m+ blue/grey sand natural geology.
7	21	1.6	0.6 – 0.9	0-0.2m Scalpins; 0.2-0.45m made ground; 0.45-0.7m buried soil; 0.7m+ blue/grey sand natural geology.
8	21.2	1.6	0.5 – 1	0-0.3m Scalpins; 0.3-0.55m made ground; 0.55-0.8m buried soil; 0.8m+ blue/grey sand natural geology.
9	20.9	1.6	1.1 – 2.6	0-0.2m Scalpins; 0.2-2.1m made ground; 2.1-2.4m buried soil; 2.4m+ blue/grey sandy clay natural geology.
10	20.3	1.6	2.8 – 3	0-0.2m Scalpins; 0.2-2.6m made ground; 2.6-3m; buried soil; 3m+ blue/grey sandy clay natural geology. [Pl. 2]
11	21	1.6	1.1 – 2.6	0-0.1m Scalpins; 0.1-2.3m made ground; 2.3-2.6m buried soil; 2.6m+ blue/grey sandy clay natural geology.
12	20	1.6	1.15 – 1.75	0-0.2m Scalpins 0.2-1.65m made ground; 1.65-1.75m buried soil; 1.75m+ blue/grey sandy clay natural geology.
13	21.4	1.6	0.9 – 1	0-0.68m Made ground; 0.68-1m buried soil; 1m+ blue/grey sandy clay natural geology.



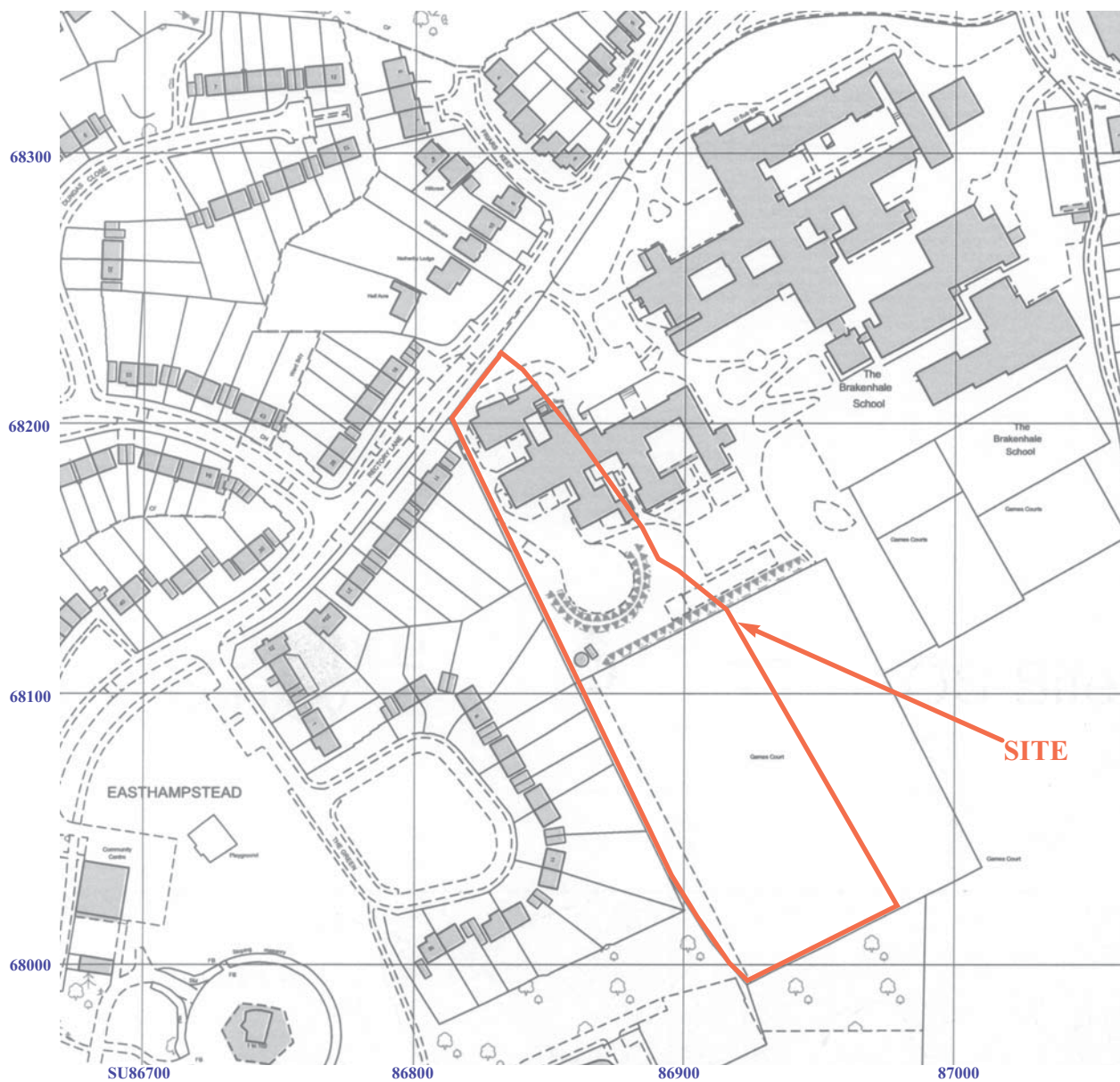
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Figure 1. Location of site within Bracknell and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Rectory Lane.

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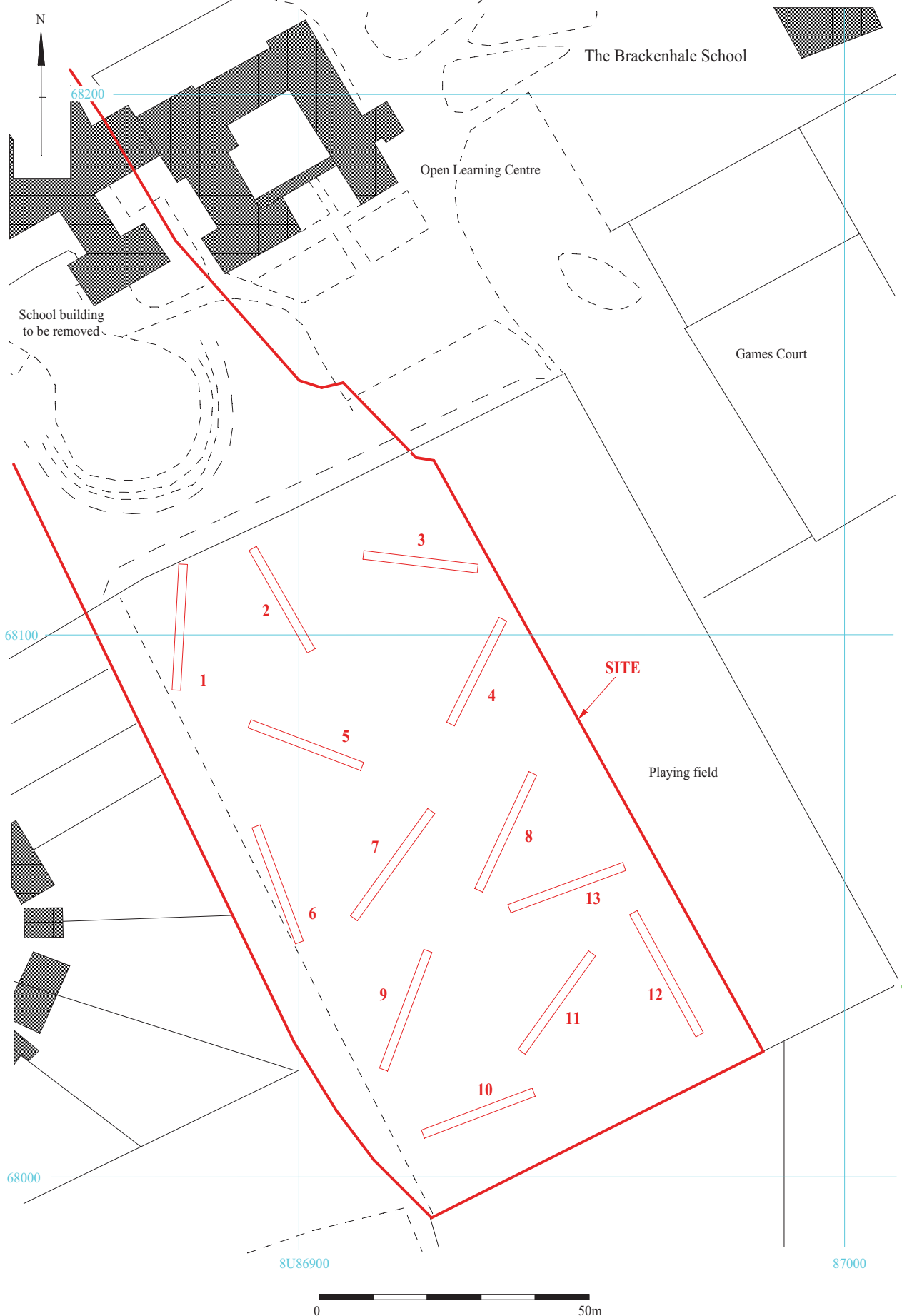


Figure 3. Location of trenches.

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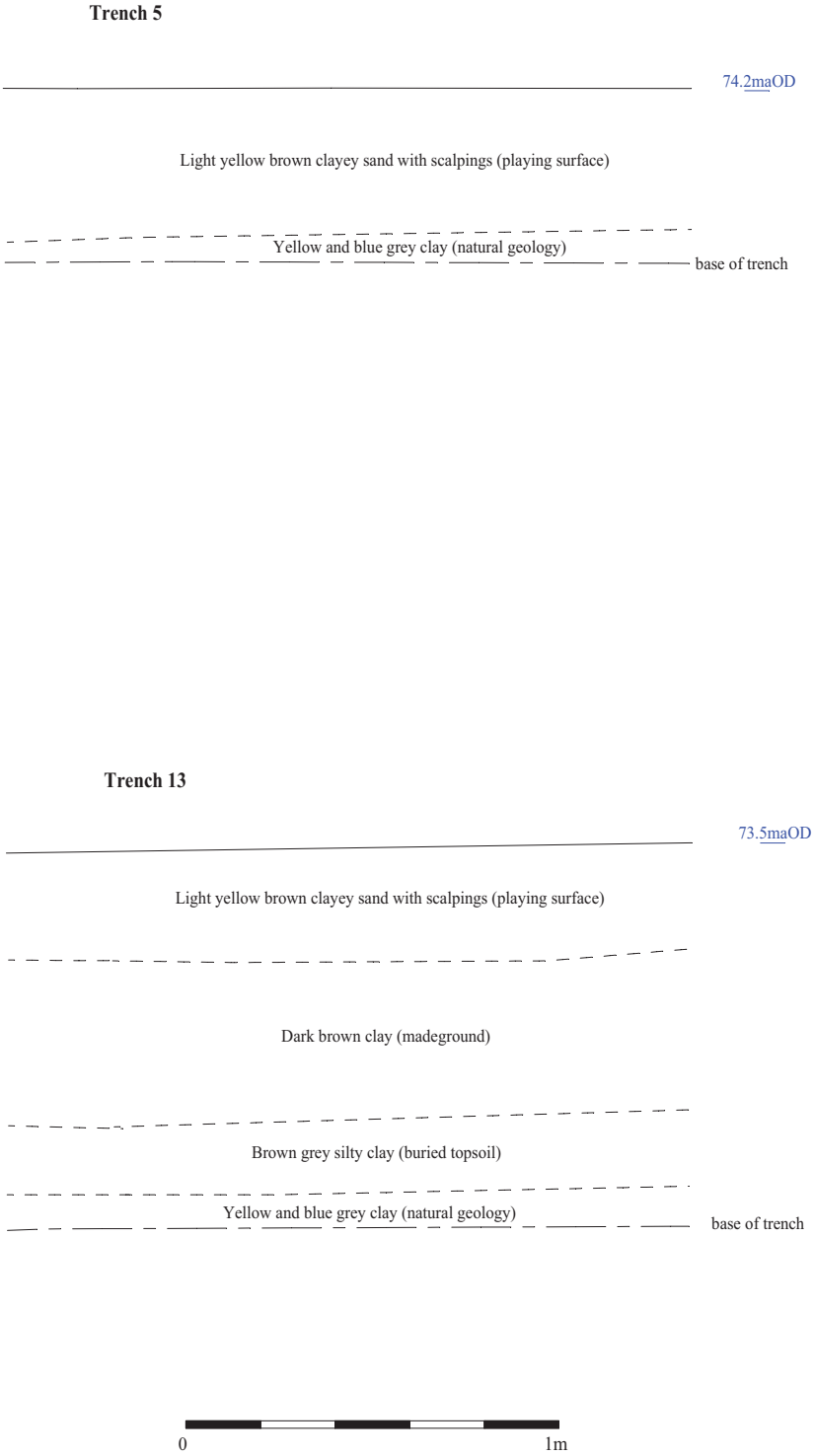


Figure 4. Representative section of Trench 5 and Trench 13.