

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark, Archway,  
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Andrew Taylor**

**Site Code: DHW10/66**

**(SU 8635 9335)**

**Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark,  
Archway, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Whitbread Property**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCodeDHW10/66

**July 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark, Archway, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SU 8635 9335

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 19th–21st July 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Andy Taylor

**Site code:** DHW 10/66

**Area of site:** c.0.18 hectares

**Summary of results:** Archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site buried beneath a considerable thickness of modern made ground. However, the archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low with just a single undated gully observed. The soils buried by the modern made ground are of a humic and peaty nature and it is possible that these are suitable for a reconstruction of the vegetational history and environment of the site. Bulk and column samples of this deposit have been taken and retained for future study if required, without a need for further fieldwork.

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

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 30.07.10 Steve Preston✓ 30.07.10
---

**Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark,  
Archway, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

by Andy Taylor

**Report 10/66**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark, Archway, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (SU 8635 9335) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr James Haynes of Jones Lang LaSalle Ltd, 25 Bank Street, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5EG on behalf of Whitbread Property, Whitbread Court, Houghton Hall Business Park, Porz Avenue, Dunstable, LU5 5XE.

Planning permission is to be sought from Wycombe District Council to construct a new hotel complex and restaurant with associated access roads on the site. The results of archaeological field evaluation will accompany the application, so as to inform the planning process with regard to any heritage assets that might be affected by the proposal.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer with Buckinghamshire County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor, Aiji Castle and James Earley between 19th–21st July 2010 and the site code is DHW 10/66. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire Museum Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located on a c.0.18 hectare plot of land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 2). The site is currently occupied by a former car park and is bounded by a large supermarket and car park to the south-west with a railway line to the north and the main road (Archway) to the east. The underlying geology comprises alluvium (BGS 2005), although flint gravel was observed across all trenches with only a small amount of alluvium evident in Trenches 1 and 2 overlying gravel. The site lies at a height of 71.30m above ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location close to the historic (medieval) core of High Wycombe. More generally, the site lies in the valley of the river Wye which is generally rich in archaeology of many periods. For example, two Roman sites are recorded nearby, a villa at Wycombe Mead just to the east of the town centre and a substantial settlement also possibly of villa status at West Wycombe (Zeepvat and Radford 2010, 83; Cass 2007). In particular, there is a record in the county's Historic Environment Record for the site of a possible medieval or early post-medieval tannery suggested by observations of dumps of animal horn cores made during the digging of a sewer trench just to the east of the site. Tanneries are typically located on the margins of historic towns. It is possible that further deposits of a tannery are present on the proposal site.

## **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 the area of development.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine whether archaeological deposits relating to late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval settlement are present; and
- to determine whether archaeological deposits relating to a medieval or later tannery or associated facilities are present on the site.

Five trenches were to be dug, each measuring 8m in length and 2.1m wide at base, though it was anticipated that due to the presence of deep made ground the tops of the trenches would need to be wider to facilitate safe access. The trenches were dug using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

## **Results**

The trenches were dug as intended (Fig. 3) and measured 2.10m wide at the base and between 5.50m and 13.30m in length. The presence of buried tanks and a sewer pipe resulted in the shortening of some trenches, but this was compensated for by extending Trench 1. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. A list of excavated features forms Appendix 2.

#### Trench 1 (Pl.1)

This trench measured 13.30m in length and was 2m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.08m of Tarmac overlying 0.43m of scalpings overlying 0.6m of brick rubble made ground. This overlay 0.93m of a dark grey/brown silty clay/ peat, considered to be a buried top and subsoil, overlying sandy gravel natural geology. A column of the soil deposit was taken from the northern end of the trench along with a bulk sample (20L). The uppermost parts of this deposit were found to contain animal bone fragments as well as pieces of post-medieval tile but it is unclear if they were worked into an active topsoil or pressed in subsequently.

#### Trench 2 (Pl. 2)

This trench measured 8.0m in length and was 2m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.13m of Tarmac overlying 0.3m of scalpings overlying 0.8m of brick rubble made ground. This overlay 0.5m of a dark grey/brown silty clay (buried soil) which was peaty at its northern end, overlying 0.27m of light blue/grey alluvial clay overlying sandy gravel natural geology. No archaeological deposits were recorded.

#### Trench 3

This trench measured 8.10m in length and 2m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.06m of Tarmac overlying 0.83m of scalpings, overlying 0.51m of brick rubble made ground. This overlay 0.6m of a dark grey/brown silty clay (buried soil) overlying sandy gravel natural geology. No archaeological deposits were recorded. A brick wall was partially observed aligned east-west within the higher step of the northern section of this trench, just beyond the deep part. It was two bricks wide, lime mortared and of Victorian or later date.

#### Trench 4

This trench measured 5.50m in length and was 1.9m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.1m of Tarmac overlying 0.57m of scalpings, overlying 0.43m of brick rubble made ground. This overlay 0.8m of a dark grey/brown silty clay overlying yellow/grey silty clay. However, a large concrete sewer pipe had been inserted along the long axis of the trench and the pipe itself was encountered at the base. Its presence did not permit the underlying natural gravel to be exposed though it is most likely, for a pipe of this size, that the gravel here had been truncated by the pipe trench. No archaeological deposits were recorded.

#### Trench 5 (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 3 and 4)

This trench measured 6.10m in length and was 2.1m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.06m of Tarmac overlying 0.56m of scalpins, overlying 0.13m of concrete overlying 0.6m of brick rubble made ground. This overlay 0.75m of a dark grey/brown silty clay (buried soil) overlying sandy gravel natural geology. A linear feature was located at the south western end of the trench. A slot (1) was dug across it measuring 1.00m in length and revealed the feature to be 0.65m wide and 0.20m deep with a bowl-shaped profile. A 40L sample of the fill of its dark grey black silty gravel fill (50), was wet sieved for charred plant remains and artefacts. No charred plant remains nor datable material was recovered but 9 pieces of burnt flint were found.

A circular brick structure was evident on the south-eastern side of this trench. It had been capped off with concrete and showed evidence of a pipe entering at one side. This is most likely a former manhole and/or soakaway of Victorian or later date.

## **Finds**

### *Brick by Danielle Milbank*

The soakaway encountered in trench 5 was constructed of machine-made bricks (Harley type 6) measuring 225mm long, 105mm wide and 65mm thick, which were laid to an English bond (a course of headers onto a course of stretchers, repeated). As encountered, half-exposed at the east side of the trench, it was 14 courses (1.40m) high and c.1.60m in diameter. Soakaways for drainage dating to the Victorian period or earlier are commonly constructed entirely of brick, with a domed top. The size and the substantial (0.15m thick) concrete capping suggest it dates to the late 19th or, more likely, the early 20th century.

Although the wall encountered in Trench 3 was not fully exposed, it was possible to remove several brick samples. Overall, the bricks were very uniform, and measured 225mm long, 105mm wide and 65mm thick. A grey-white lime mortar was present (up to 10mm thick) on all sides of the bricks, showing that the wall was at least 2 bricks wide (not a single skin wall). They were examined under x10 magnification and the fabric was hard and evenly fired, with no visible inclusions. The colour was dark orange red and the form of the bricks was unfrogged, with sharp corners. They are late 19th or 20th century machine-made bricks, categorized as Harley type 6. The lack of a 'frog' indentation on later bricks is not uncommon, and is often associated with structures of an industrial nature (Harley 1974).

## *Burnt Flint* by Andy Taylor

Nine pieces of unworked burnt flint were recovered from a sample of linear feature 1 weighing a total of 9g.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the potential for evidence of medieval or post-medieval tanning deposits, or other remains, no such archaeological deposits or finds were identified during the evaluation. The trenches were largely devoid of deposits of archaeological interest and one trench (3) had been truncated by a large drain. A considerable thickness of modern made ground had been dumped on the site and which appeared to have been placed directly on top of the original in-situ ground surface present in the 19th century or even early 20th century.

A single linear feature in Trench 5 was observed although no dating evidence was obtained. This feature lay below the buried soil deposit, which for this part of the site, was not peaty, unlike for the northern end of the site. As such its stratigraphic relationship provides no guide to its date. The buried soil in the trenches at the northern end of the site has a peaty component and it is likely that the deposit may contain material suitable for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction. However, as the deposit is not especially thick and its uppermost parts were live topsoil in Victorian or later times, there is some doubt as to whether it is a fast-forming deposit of late post-medieval date of no significance to most of the archaeological timespan. Secondly, there is a possibility that the deposit has been disturbed by ploughing or during the made ground dumping though fragments of tile and animal bone were only observed for the uppermost part of the sequence.

The site appears to have little archaeological potential. Samples of the palaeoenvironmental deposits have been retained for future study if required.

### **References**

- BGS, 2005, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 255, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Cass, S, 2007, 473 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 07/154, Reading
- Harley, L S, 1974, 'A Typology of Brick; with numerical coding of brick characteristics', *J Brit Archaeol Assoc* 3rd ser **37**, 63–87
- PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich
- Zeevat, B and Radford, D, 2010, 'Roman Buckinghamshire, AD43–410', in M Farley (ed), *An Illustrated History of Early Buckinghamshire*, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc, Aylesbury, 75–108



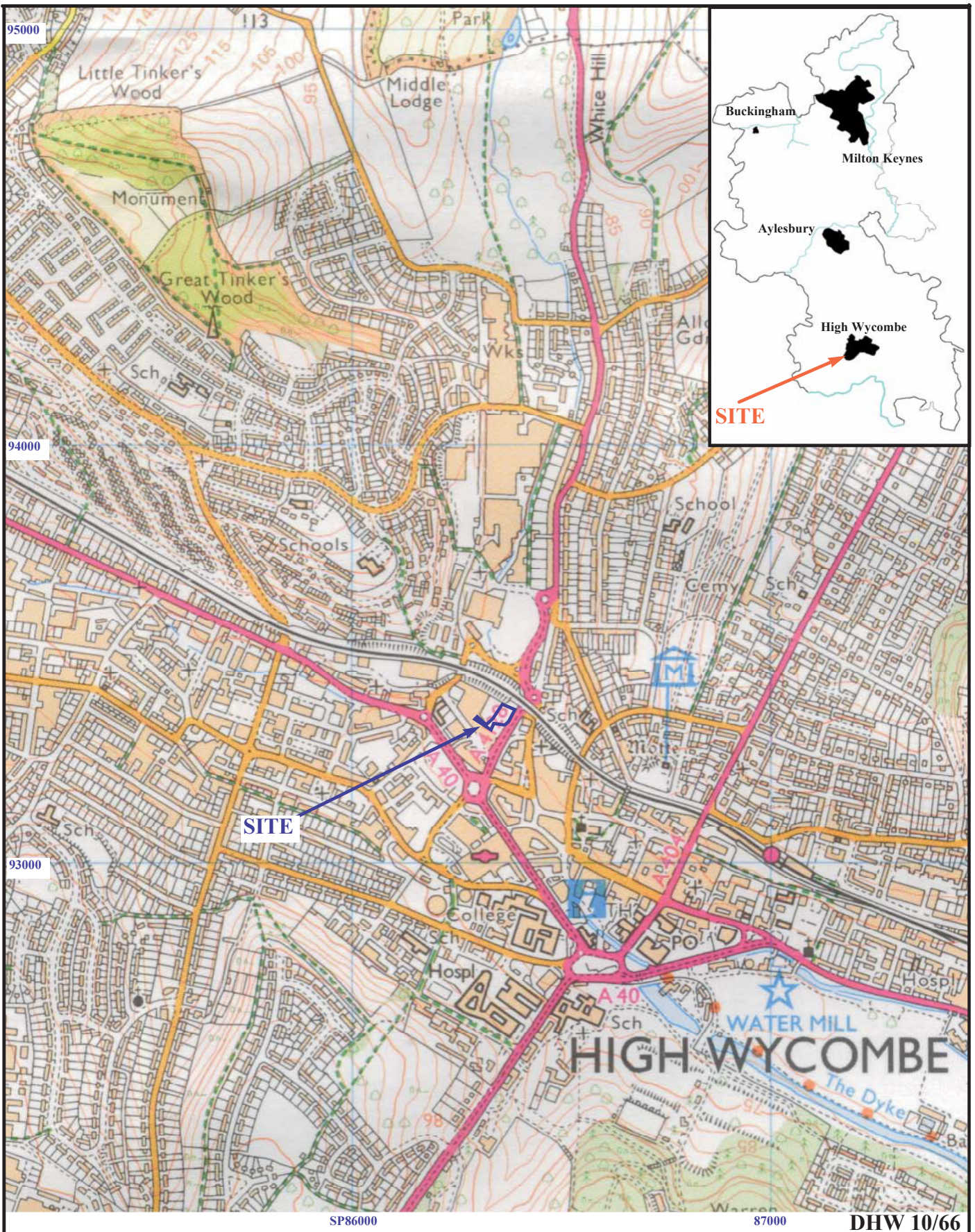
**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

0m at S or W end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	13.30	2.10	2.02	0.00m-0.08m Tarmac; 0.08m-0.51m scalpings; 0.51-1.11 brick rubble made ground; 1.11m-2.02m dark grey brown silty peaty clay; 2.02m+ gravel natural geology <b>[Plate 1]</b>
2	8.00	2.10	2.00	0.00m-0.13m Tarmac; 0.13m-0.43m scalpings; 0.43m-1.23m brick rubble made ground; 1.23m-1.73m dark grey brown silty clay; 1.73m-2.00m light blue grey alluvial clay; 2.00m+ sandy gravel natural geology. <b>[Plate 2]</b>
3	8.10	2.10	2.00	0.00m-0.06m Tarmac; 0.06m-0.89m scalpings; 0.89m-1.40m brick rubble made ground; 1.40m-2.00m dark grey brown silty clay; 2.00m+ sandy gravel natural geology.
4	5.50	2.10	1.90	0.00m-0.10m Tarmac; 0.10m-0.67m scalpings; 0.67m-1.10m brick rubble made ground; 1.10m-1.90m dark grey brown silty clay; 1.90m+ yellow grey silty sandy clay. Concrete sewer
5	6.10	2.10	2.10	0.00m-0.06m Tarmac; 0.06m-0.62m scalpings; 0.62m-0.75m concrete; 0.75m-1.35m brick rubble made ground; 1.35m-2.10m mid grey brown silty clay; 2.10m+ gravel natural geology. Gully 1 <b>[Plates 3 and 4]</b>

**APPENDIX 2:** Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
5	1	50	Ditch	Unknown	None

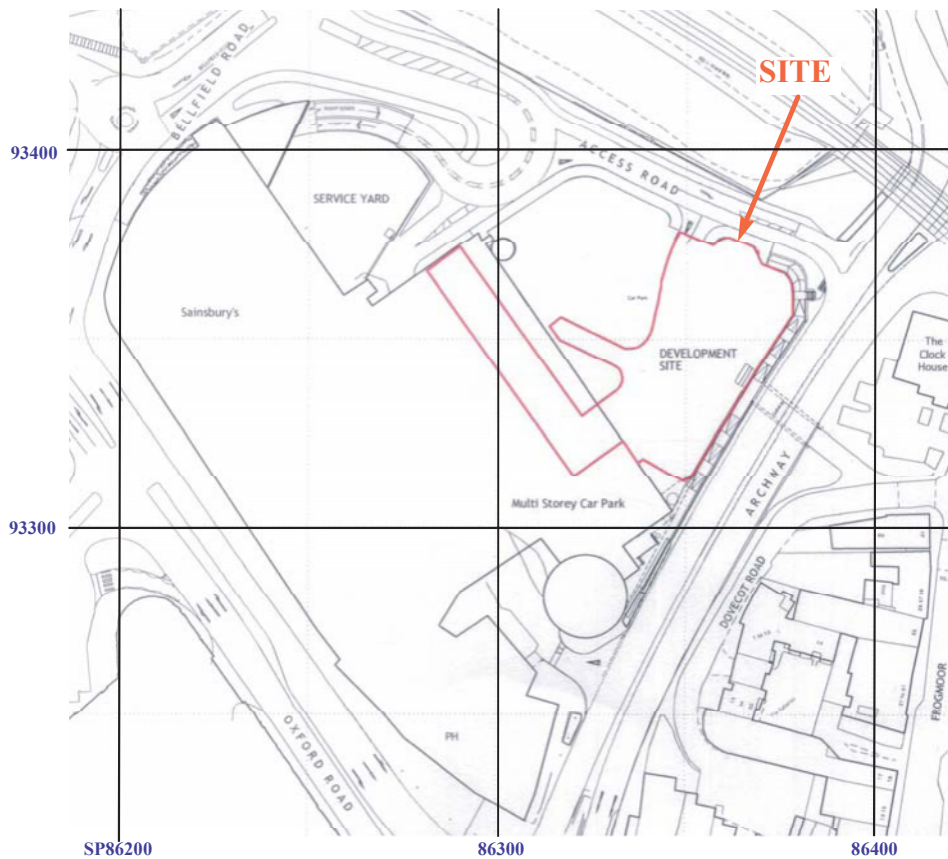


**Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-Storey Car park, Archway,  
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 2010  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within High Wycombe and Buckinghamshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer 172 at 1:12500  
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



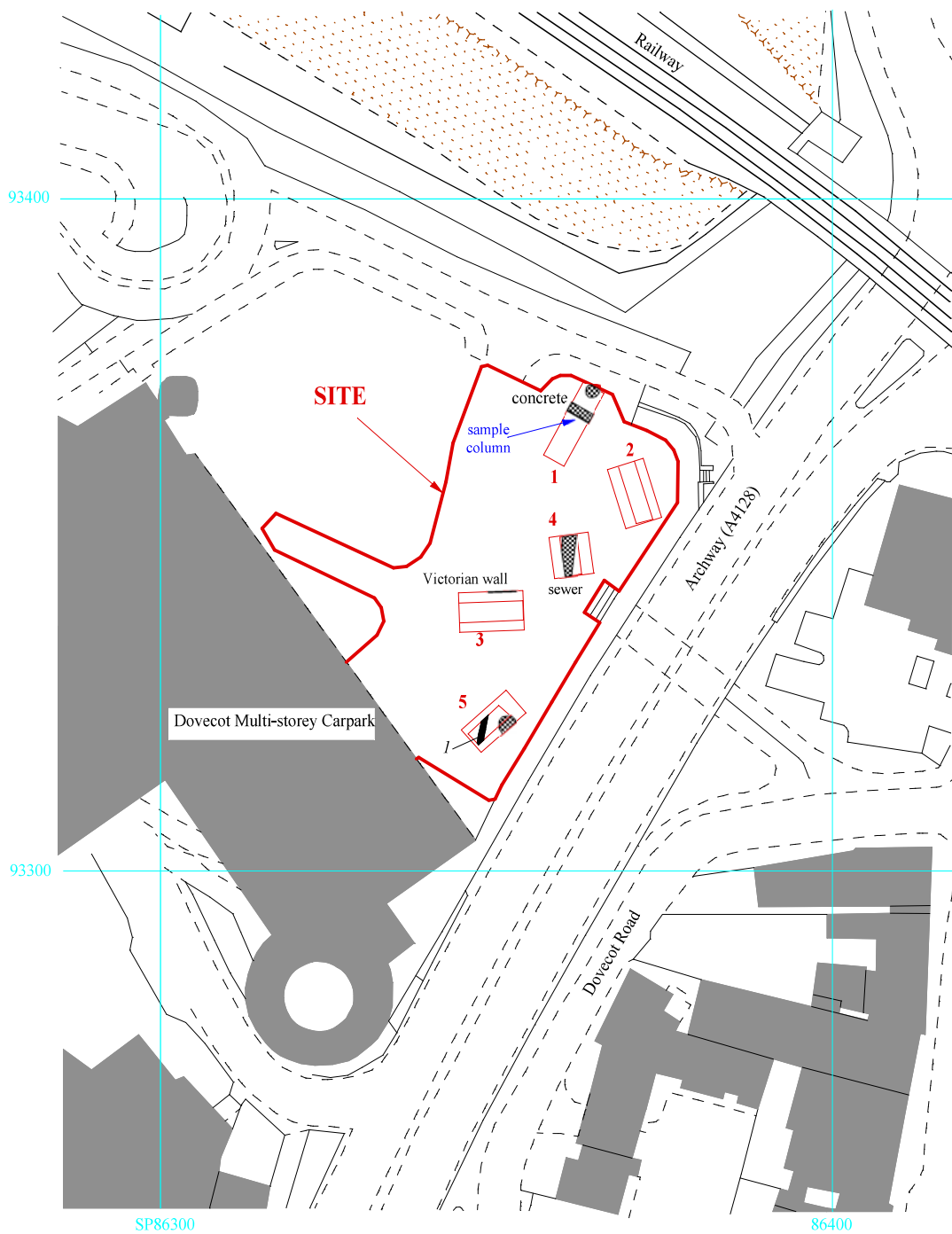
DHW 10/66

**Land adjacent Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark, Archway,  
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 2010  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Crown copyright reserved. Scale: 1:2000

THAMES VALLEY  
  
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
 SERVICES



DHW 10/66

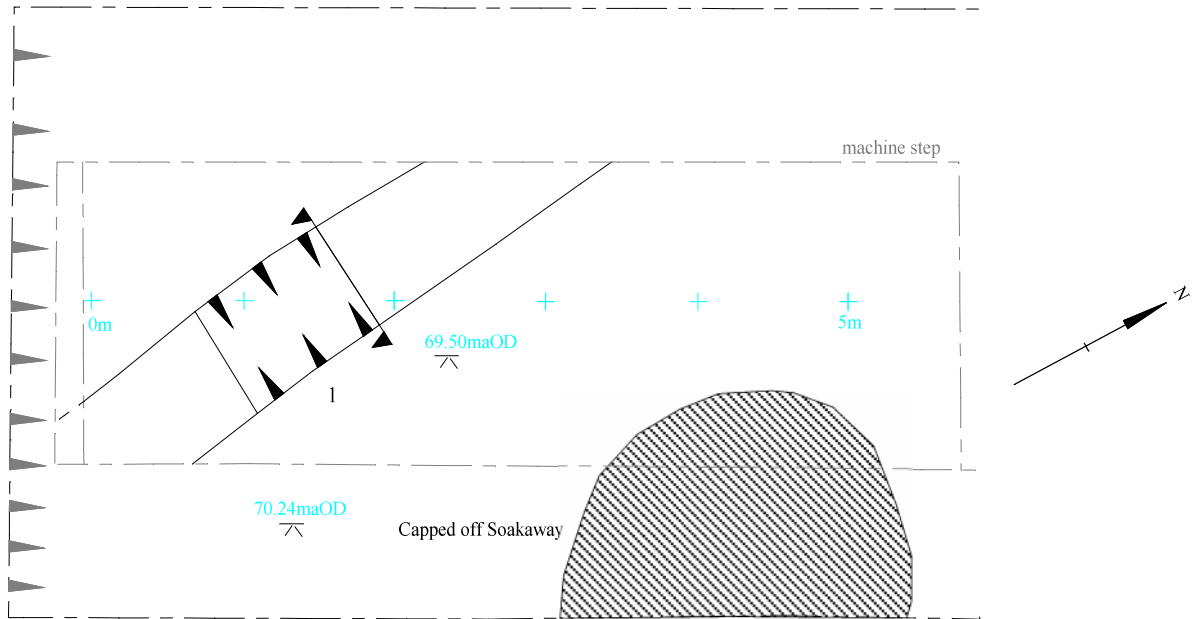
**Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark,  
Archway, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 2010  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 3. Location of trenches.



THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

Trench 5

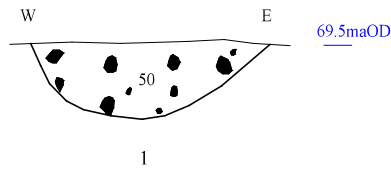


DHW 10/66

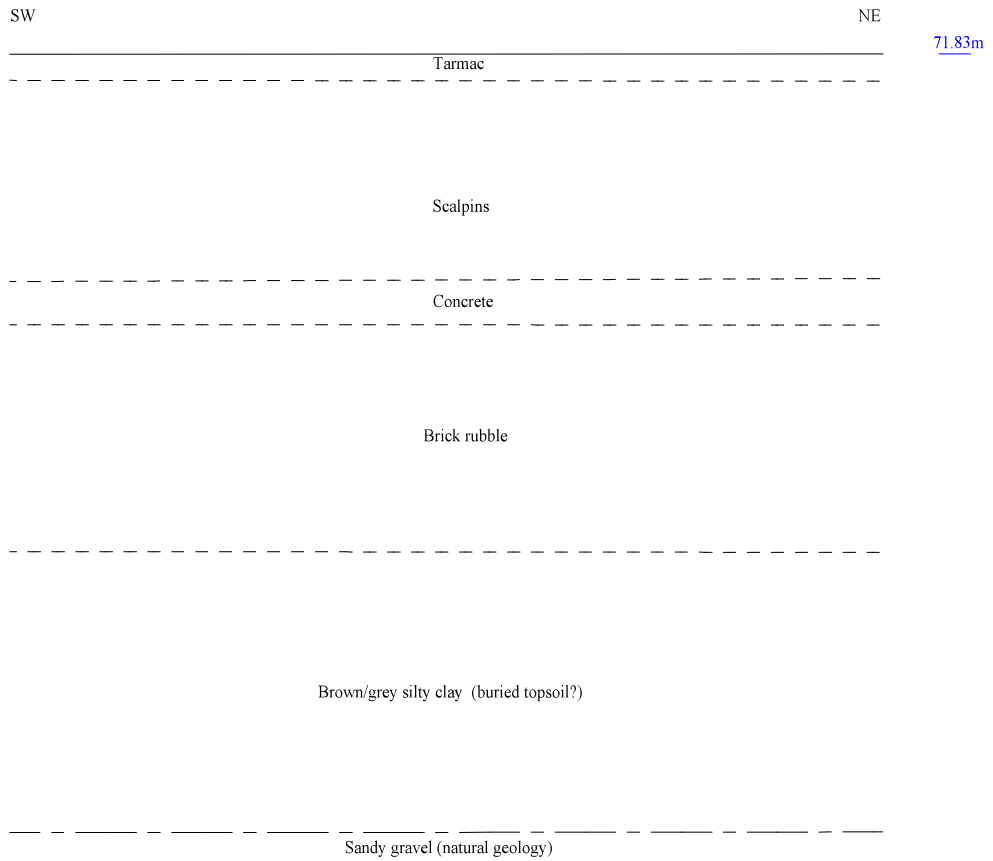
Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark,  
Archway, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 2010  
Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 4. Detail of Trench 5.





**Trench 5**



DHW 10/66

**Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark,  
Archway, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 2010  
Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 5. Sections from Trench 5.





Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north east, scales; horizontal 1m, vertical 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north west, scales; horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 1m.

DHW 10/66

**Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark, Archway,  
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 2010**  
Archaeological Evaluation  
Plates 1 and 2

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES





Plate 3. Trench 5, looking north east, scales; horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 1m.

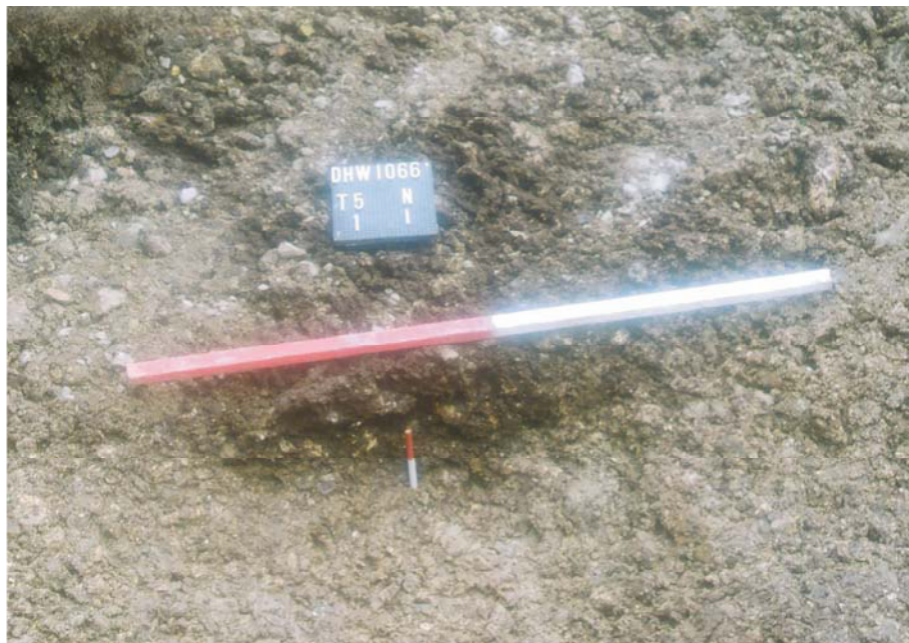


Plate 4. Trench 5, linear feature 1, scales; 1m and 0.1m.

DHW 10/66

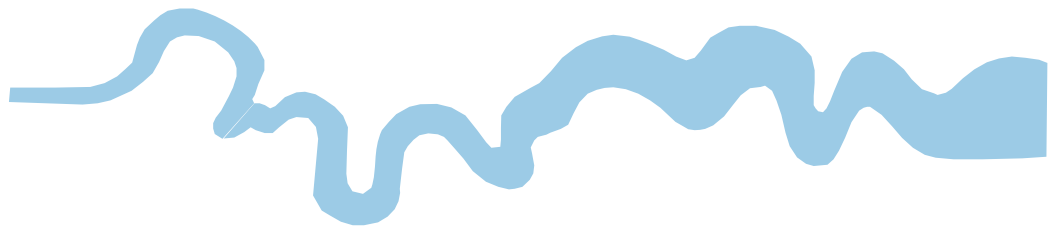
Land adjacent to Dovecot Multi-storey Carpark, Archway,  
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, 2010  
Archaeological Evaluation  
Plates 3 and 4

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,  
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Fax: 0118 9260553  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**