

CHURCHEND PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Usk Road  
Tilehurst  
Reading

Royal County of Berkshire

An archaeological watching brief report

March 2007



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

CHURCHEND PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Usk Road  
Tilehurst  
Reading

Royal County of Berkshire

An archaeological watching brief report

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## **Summary (non-technical)**

This report has been commissioned from the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) by Reading Borough Council in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at Churchend Primary School, Usk Road, Tilehurst, Reading.

The excavation of eleven geotechnical trial pits was monitored on 16th of February 2007. No archaeological deposits were recorded. Natural ground was observed between 0.30m and 0.60m below surface. The approximate ground surface is at 93m OD.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at Churchend Primary School, Usk Road, Tilehurst, Reading, hereafter called 'the site'. The site comprises a number of separate buildings, and school fields, which make up the Infant and Junior School. The school grounds are bounded by gardens of residential properties fronting onto Usk Road to the south, Routh Lane to the west, and Wye Close to the east, and by fields of Meadway School to the north (see Fig 1). The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference: 467598 172879. Modern ground level immediately adjacent to the site is *c.*93mAOD. The site code is BR-CPU07.

A written scheme of investigation was prepared prior to the outset of the fieldwork, which covers the whole area of the site (MoLAS, 2007). The *Method Statement* document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial assessment of its archaeological potential.

An archaeological watching brief was subsequently carried out on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2007.

## 1.2 The planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Method Statement* which formed the project design for the watching brief (see Section 1.2, MoLAS, 2007).

## 1.3 Planning background

The evaluation was undertaken in response to a condition placed on planning permission by the local planning authority.

## 1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Reading Borough Council and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether archaeological remains or features were present on the site and, if so, to record the nature and extent of such remains.

The purpose of the present report is to analyse the results of the excavation against the original research aims, and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

### **1.5 Aims and objectives**

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the watching brief (Section 2.2):

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography?*
- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*
- *What are the latest deposits identified?*

The results of observations obtained by the watching brief exercise outlined in Section 1.5 will be used to gauge the extent and importance of archaeological survival. This information will be used in future stages of building design and construction programming and to inform a decision on an application for planning consent.



## **2 Topographical and historical background**

The site lies at *c* 93.0mAOD. The underlying geology is Plateau Gravel (BGS 1971).

The potential of the site has been highlighted by David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology. The site is located close to or within what is thought to be the historic medieval core of the village of Tilehurst. The parish church of St Michael, which contains 13th-century elements, is located *c*150m to the west of the proposal site. Finds from the associated churchyard include artefacts of Roman date, such as building material, pottery, coins and fragmentary querns. Medieval artefacts have also been recorded from the area. Tilehurst means ‘wooded hill’ and although not mentioned in Domesday Book it is documented from AD1167.

Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation at the Meadway School site to the immediate north of the Churchend School site in the summer of 2006. Late post-medieval and modern intrusions were noted across the site and ‘severe’ landscaping was also recorded. No features of archaeological significance were encountered despite the sites proximity to the historic core of Tilehurst village.



### 3 The watching brief

#### 3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and recording during the watching brief was done in accordance with the *Method Statement* (MoLAS, 2007) and the MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual (MoLAS, 1994).

Geotechnical trial pits were excavated by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of the trial pits were recorded by offsetting from adjacent standing walls and fence lines detailed in the development survey (Drg. No. E1164-106 Hampshire County Council). This information was then plotted onto the OS grid by MoLAS Geomatics.

The heights of observations were recorded relative to a site approximate height of 93.0m Ordnance Datum.

The site has produced: 1 trial pit location plan, 11 trench sheets and 11 digital photographs.

The site records can be found under the site code BR-CPU07. The site archive will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

#### 3.2 Results of the watching brief

In total, 11 geotechnical trial pits were proposed by the construction engineers in order to examine the underlying deposits, and nature of the existing building foundations. These have been numbered 1-11 consecutively. There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded.

For all trial pit locations see Fig 2

Trial pit 1	
Location	Grass verge by lane, south of site
Dimensions	0.30m by 0.30m by 1.20m depth
Modern ground level	93m AOD
Base of modern fill	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	91.80m AOD
Natural observed	92.40m AOD

Topsoil of 0.25m depth overlay subsoil of 0.35m depth which overlay a light grey with brown mottle sandy clay, with frequent small flint, of greater than 0.60m depth. In this case the lowest deposit has a similar composition to more defined alluvium identified in other trial pits, however the limited area of this pit prevents a secure interpretation.

Trial pit 2	
Location	Western building corner
Dimensions	0.50m by 0.38m by 1.00m depth
Modern ground level	93.0m AOD
Base of modern fill	92.5m AOD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	92.0 m AOD
Natural observed	92.5m AOD

Tarmac and made ground were recorded to a depth of 0.50m. This overlay a light grey clay deposit with brown mottle, possibly alluvium, of greater than 0.50m depth.

Trial pit 3	
Location	Central building corner
Dimensions	0.55m by 0.40m by 1.00m depth
Modern ground level	93.0m AOD
Base of modern fill	92.6m AOD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	92.0 m AOD
Natural observed	?92.6m AOD

Tarmac and made ground were recorded to a depth of 0.40m which overlay a light grey with brown mottle clay, possibly alluvium, of greater than 0.60m depth.

Trial pit 4	
Location	Eastern open space
Dimensions	0.30m by 0.30m by 1.10m depth
Modern ground level	93.0m AOD
Base of modern fill/slab	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	91.9 m AOD
Natural observed	?92.6m AOD

Topsoil of 0.10m depth overlay subsoil of 0.30m depth which overlay a light grey with brown mottle sandy clay of greater than 0.70m depth. In this case the lowest deposit has a similar composition to more defined natural identified in other trial pits, however the limited area of this pit prevents a secure interpretation.

Trial pit 5	
Location	Eastern open space
Dimensions	1.10m by 0.70m by 2.00m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	93.0m AOD
Base of modern fill/slab	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	91.0m AOD
Natural observed	92.6m AOD

Topsoil of 0.25m depth overlay subsoil of 0.15m depth which overlay a light grey with brown mottle sandy clay alluvium of greater than 1.60m depth.

Trial pit 6	
Location	South-eastern corner of yard
Dimensions	1.10m by 0.60m by 2.10m depth
Modern ground level	93.0m AOD
Base of modern fill	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	90.9m AOD
Natural observed	92.7m AOD

Topsoil of 0.20 to 0.30m depth with a negligible subsoil overlay a light grey with brown mottle sandy clay alluvium, with occasional flint, of greater than 1.80m depth.

Trial pit 7	
Location	North-western corner of yard
Dimensions	1.30m by 0.60m by 1.60m depth
Modern ground level	93.0m AOD
Base of modern fill	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	91.4m AOD
Natural observed	92.7m AOD

Topsoil of 0.20m depth overlay subsoil of 0.20m depth which overlay a light brown clayey sand changing to flint gravel at base of pit, of greater than 1.20m depth.

Trial pit 8	
Location	South-western corner of yard
Dimensions	1.10m by 0.70m by 0.80m depth
Modern ground level	93.0mAOD
Base of modern fill	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	92.2mAOD
Natural observed	92.6mAOD

Topsoil of 0.40m depth with a negligible subsoil overlay a light grey with brown mottle sandy clay alluvium with frequent flint, of greater than 0.40m depth.

Trial pit 9	
Location	South-eastern corner of playing field
Dimensions	1.10m by 0.60m by 0.20m depth
Modern ground level	93.0mAOD
Base of modern fill	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	92.8mAOD
Natural observed	N/A

Topsoil was recorded to a depth of 0.20m.

Trial pit 10	
Location	North centre of playing field
Dimensions	1.00m by 0.60m by 0.30m depth
Modern ground level	93.0mAOD
Base of modern fill	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	92.8mAOD
Natural observed	N/A

Topsoil was recorded to a depth of 0.30m.

Trial pit 11	
Location	South-eastern corner of playing field
Dimensions	1.00m by 0.60m by 0.25m depth
Modern ground level	93.0mAOD
Base of modern fill	N/A
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	92.8mAOD
Natural observed	N/A

Topsoil was recorded to a depth of 0.25m.

## 4 Potential of archaeology

### 4.1 Original research aims

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography?*

Alluvium comprising a light grey with brown mottle sandy clay, including a varying component of small flint, was recorded in the majority of the trial pits at between 92.40mAOD and 92.7mAOD.

- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*

No datable deposits were identified.

- *What are the latest deposits identified?*

No datable deposits were identified.

## **5 Publication and archiving**

Information on the results of the watching brief will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic researches into the development of London.

The site archive containing original records will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Method Statement* (MoLAS, 2007) with the Reading Museum within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

## **6 Conclusions**

Although the site is located in the vicinity of the medieval village of Tilehurst and the site of the 13th-century church of St Michael's no archaeological deposits or finds were observed during the watching brief.

The geotechnical trial pits were excavated for engineering purposes, and not for purely archaeological reasons, and those trial pits located within the close proximity to the existing buildings were designed to look at existing structural foundations. Unsurprisingly in these areas the trial pits revealed only disturbed ground over natural deposits.

However, in those trial pits located further away from the school buildings, in the area of the playing field to the northwest, evidence for relatively undisturbed natural deposits was revealed. As to whether the area of the playing fields had undergone truncation in the past could not be ascertained at this stage. It is therefore recommended that a limited programme of archaeological evaluation be undertaken in this area prior to redevelopment.

## **7 Acknowledgements**

Thank you to Robert Banham who commissioned this report on behalf of Reading Borough Council, and David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology for providing guidance and background information for the project.



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*Engineering/Architects drawings*

Hampshire County Council. Drg. No. E1164-106.

## 9 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

**OASIS ID: molas1-25180**

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### Project details

Project name	Churchend Primary School, Usk Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4HP
Short description of the project	The excavation of eleven geotechnical trial pits was monitored. No archaeological deposits were recorded. Natural ground was observed between 0.30m and 0.60m below surface. The approximate ground surface is at 93m OD.
Project dates	Start: 16-02-2007 End: 16-02-2007
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	BR-CPU07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

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### Project location

Country	England
Site location	BERKSHIRE READING READING Churchend Primary School, Usk Road, Tilehurst
Postcode	RG30 4HP
Study area	22500.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SU 67598 72879 51.4503656927 -1.02709664348 51 27 01 N 001 01 37 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 92.40m Max: 92.70m

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### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Molas
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Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	MoLAS
Project director/manager	Stewart Hoad
Project supervisor	Simon Gannon
Type of sponsor/funding body	Local Authority
Name of sponsor/funding body	Reading Borough Council

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### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Reading Museum
Digital Archive ID	REDMG:2007.98
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Reading Museum
Paper Archive ID	REDMG:2007.98
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Paper Media available	"Plan","Report"

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### Project bibliography

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Churchend Primary School, Usk Road, Tilehurst, Reading: An archaeological watching brief report
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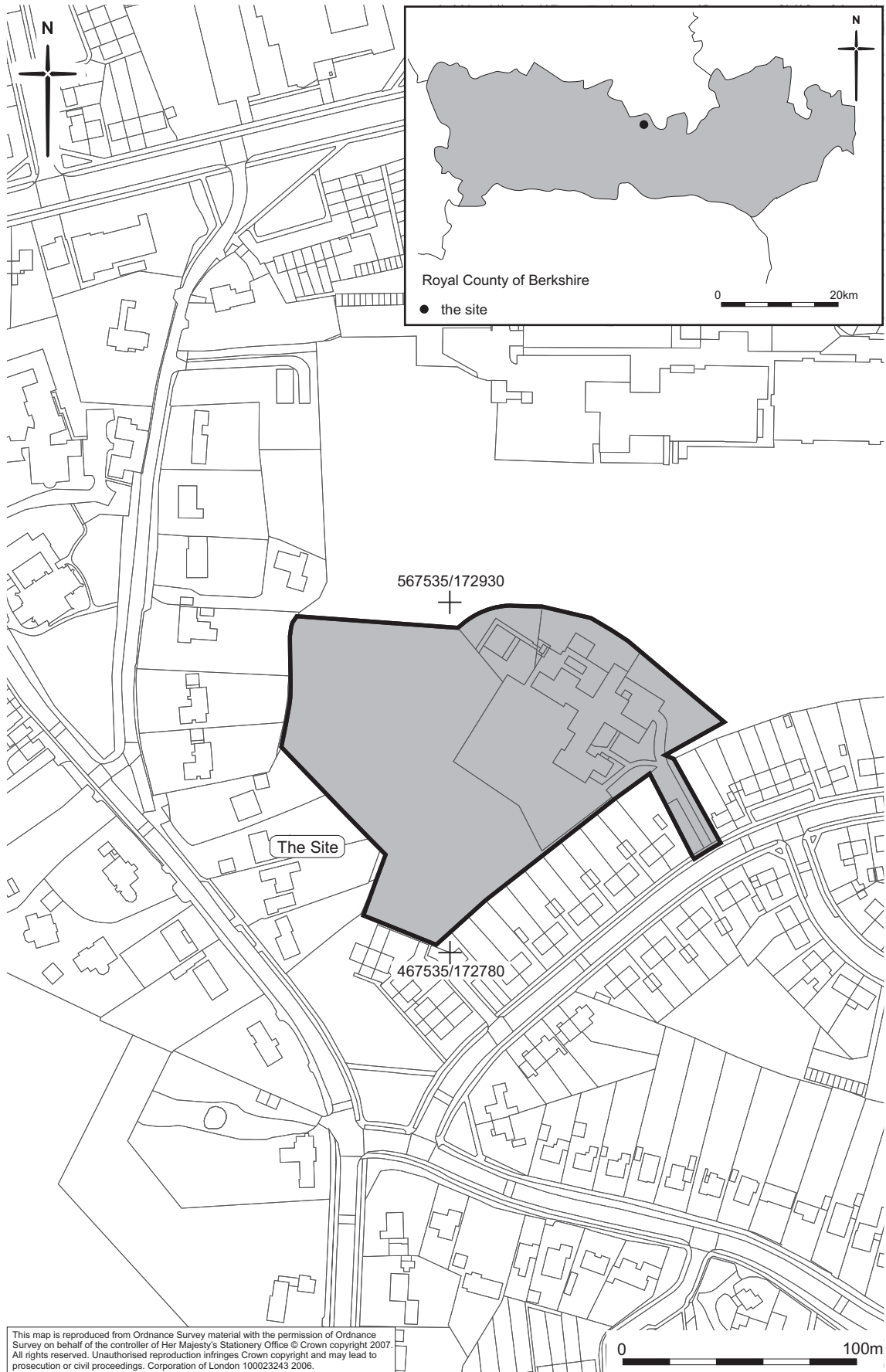


Fig 1 Site location

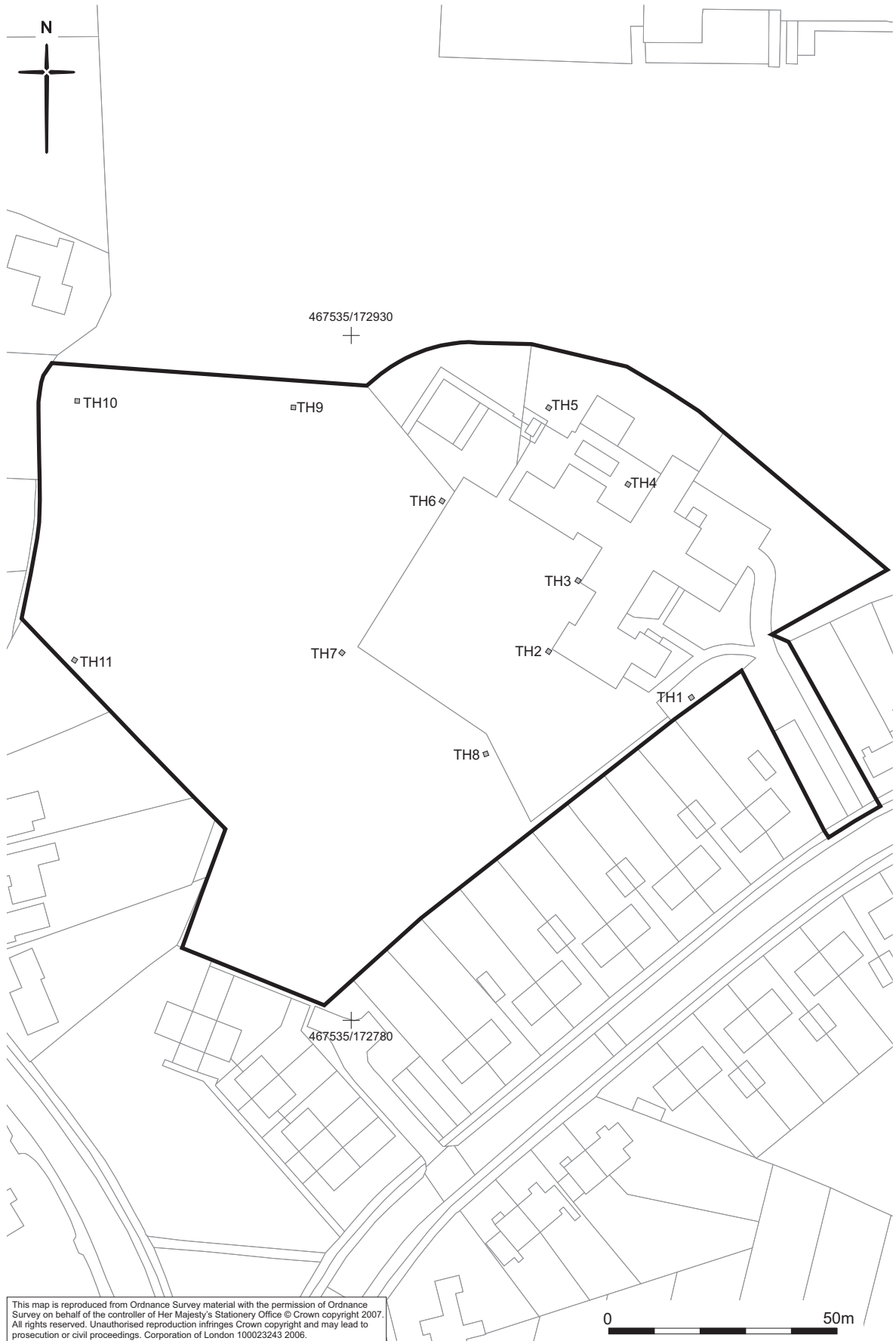


Fig 2 Locations of Trial pits