

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

LAND ADJACENT SOMERLEA,

COURT ROAD,

MAIDENHEAD,

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

SU 9037 8319

On behalf of

Hyde Park Group Ltd.

June 2003

REPORT FOR Hyde Park Group Ltd.
36, Hyde Park Gate,
London.
SW7 5DW

PREPARED BY Diccon Hart

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ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Long White Cloud,
Waterperry Road,
Holton.
Oxfordshire.
O33 1PW

Telephone/Fax 01865 876637

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	1
3 STRATEGY	2
3.1 Research Design	2
3.2 Methodology	2
4 RESULTS	4
5 FINDS	4
6 DISCUSSION	4
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	6
APPENDICES	7
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site and trench location	3
Figure 2 Trench plan	5
Figure 3 Sample sections	6

Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services on 14thth May 2003 during the excavation of foundation trenches in advance of the redevelopment of the site. This trenching revealed natural terrace gravels at a maximum height of 22.61m OD, sloping down to the river to a height of 22.13m OD. A deposit of sand and pea grit marked the interface of the terrace gravels with the overlying subsoil, which was in turn sealed by a levelling layer of made ground. Topsoil sealed the entire sequence.

A large pit cut into the subsoil and backfilled with modern demolition material constituted the only cultural remains on the site and the archaeological potential of the site and its immediate environs is thus deemed to be very low.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located adjacent to Somerlea, Court Road, Maidenhead and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 9037 8319. The underlying geology is terrace gravels. The site was, until development, occupied by gardens and lies at approximately 24.25m above Ordnance Datum.

1.2 Planning Background

The Royal Borough of Maidenhead and Windsor had granted planning permission for the erection of a three storey block comprising six No. 2 bed flats with associated parking and access (01/37457). Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological deposits a condition was attached to the planning consent that required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the course of the groundworks in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance. Babbie Group, on behalf of Royal Borough of Maidenhead and Windsor, prepared a *Brief* for this work. In response to this brief, a Written Scheme of Investigation outlining a methodology that would satisfy the requirements of the document was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services (henceforth JMHS). This work comprised a watching brief

1.3 Archaeological Background

The application site lies on Thames gravels, on the riverbank, which is of high archaeological potential given the findings elsewhere along the Thames river valley.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- The results of the investigations will be made public.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by Babtie Group, a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and subsequently agreed with Babtie Group and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved the monitoring of all intrusive groundworks associated with the excavation of the foundation trenches.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

A site presence was maintained throughout the duration of the excavation of the foundation trenches. The area was initially reduced by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to a level of 23.69m OD. The subsequent excavation of the foundation trenches to 22.69m OD was undertaken using a two foot toothed bucket. Spoil was scanned for artefact retrieval and all exposed sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features. The excavation of the service trenches was not to be undertaken until a later date, though given the lack of features and artefacts, it was agreed with Babtie Group that monitoring of the excavation of these trenches was unnecessary.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trenches were backfilled after recording. The work was monitored by Mr. Kev Beachus of Babtie Group.

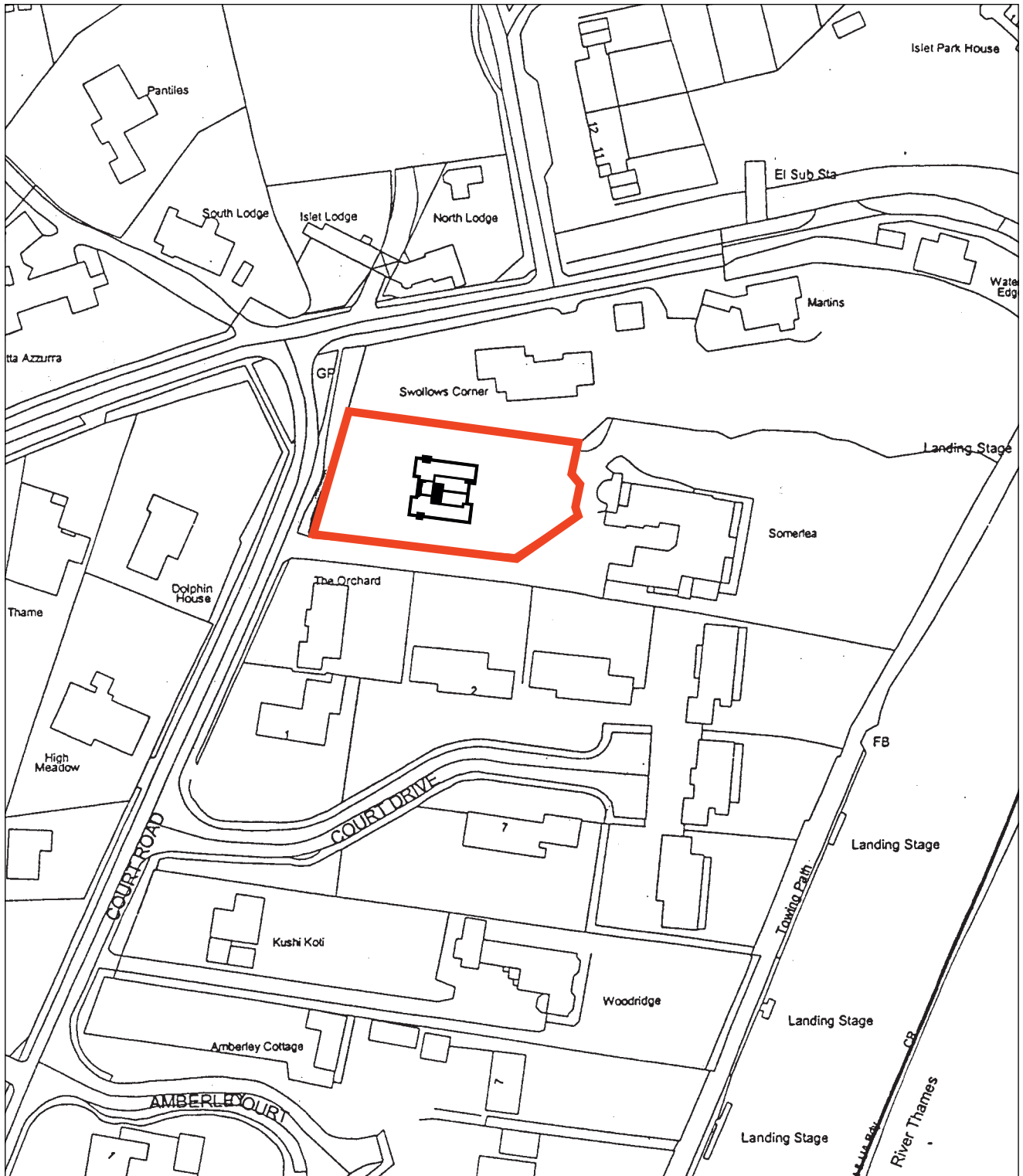


Figure 1. Site and trench location

0 m 50 m
1:1250

 The Site

4 RESULTS (Figs. 2 and 3)

The lowest recorded deposit comprised yellow terrace gravels and sand (05). This constituted the natural of the site and was seen to slope down towards the river Thames from a maximum height of 22.61m OD in the west to 22.13 to the east. This clean gravel was sealed by a layer of light yellow sand and pea grit (04) which formed an interface with the subsoil of the site – a deposit of mid brownish yellow sandy clay with frequent pebbles (03).

A large probably rectangular cut backfilled with modern demolition material (06) was noted at this level. It is possible that this represents the demolition of a cellared structure though no other evidence of a structure was seen on site and the material may well have been imported to fill an existing pit.

The subsoil (03) was in turn overlain by a substantial deposit of made ground (02), comprising dark yellowish brown silty sand with frequent lenses of clean gravel derived from the underlying natural. This made ground served to level the site and was sealed by dark brown sandy clayey silt topsoil (01). Much of the site showed evidence of intensive rooting at this level and some of this disturbance was seen to reach the level of the natural gravel (05) below.

5 FINDS

No finds were seen during the course of the fieldwork, other than modern demolition material which was not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

This area of the Thames Valley is rich in archaeological remains, particularly those of prehistoric date when the area was favoured for settlement. Yet despite this rich cultural heritage, the monitoring of these groundworks has not revealed any evidence of archaeological remains on the site. Indeed, the complete absence of any cultural material other than modern demolition material would seem to indicate that past human activity in the vicinity was minimal, to say the least.

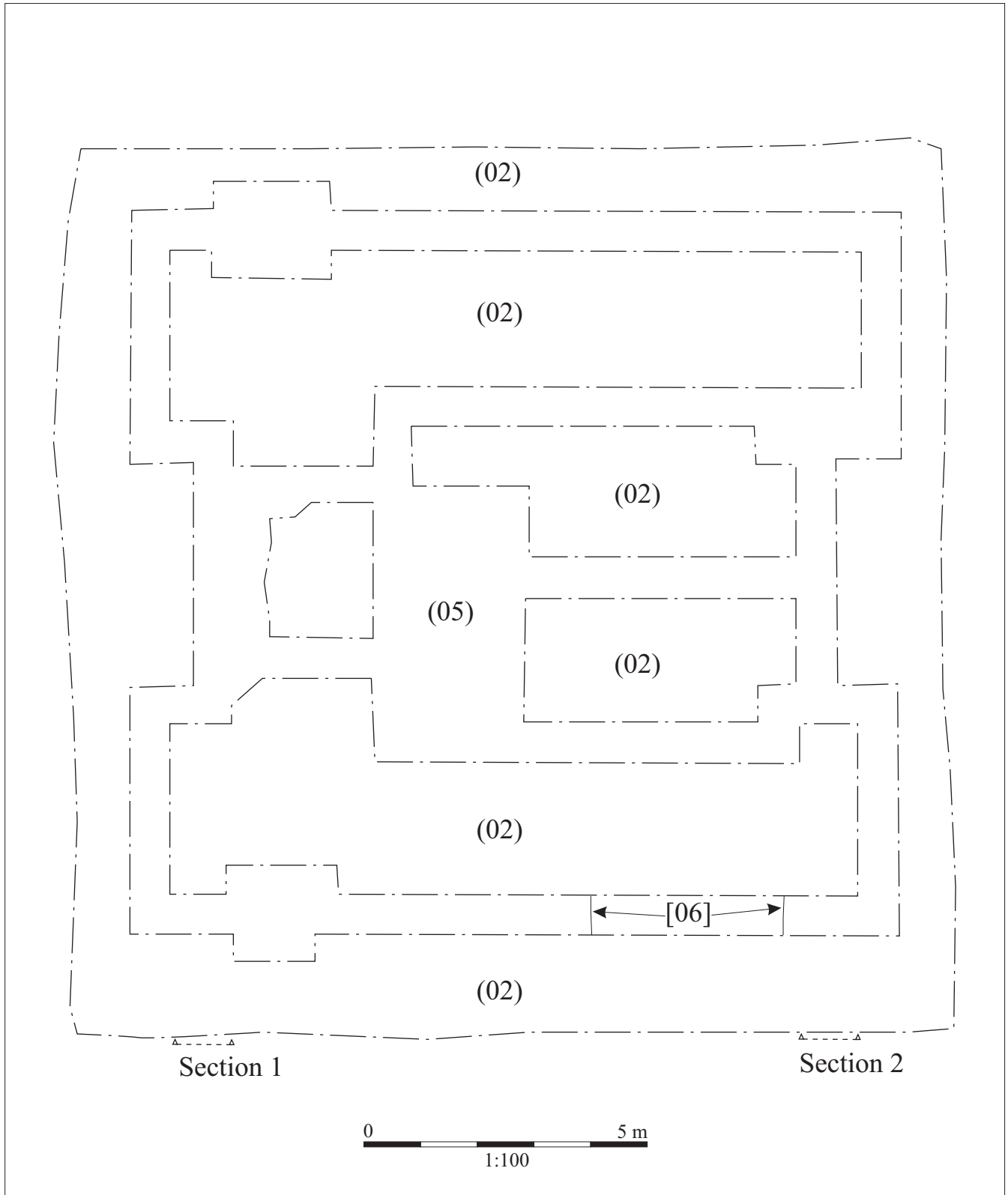


Figure 2: Trench plan

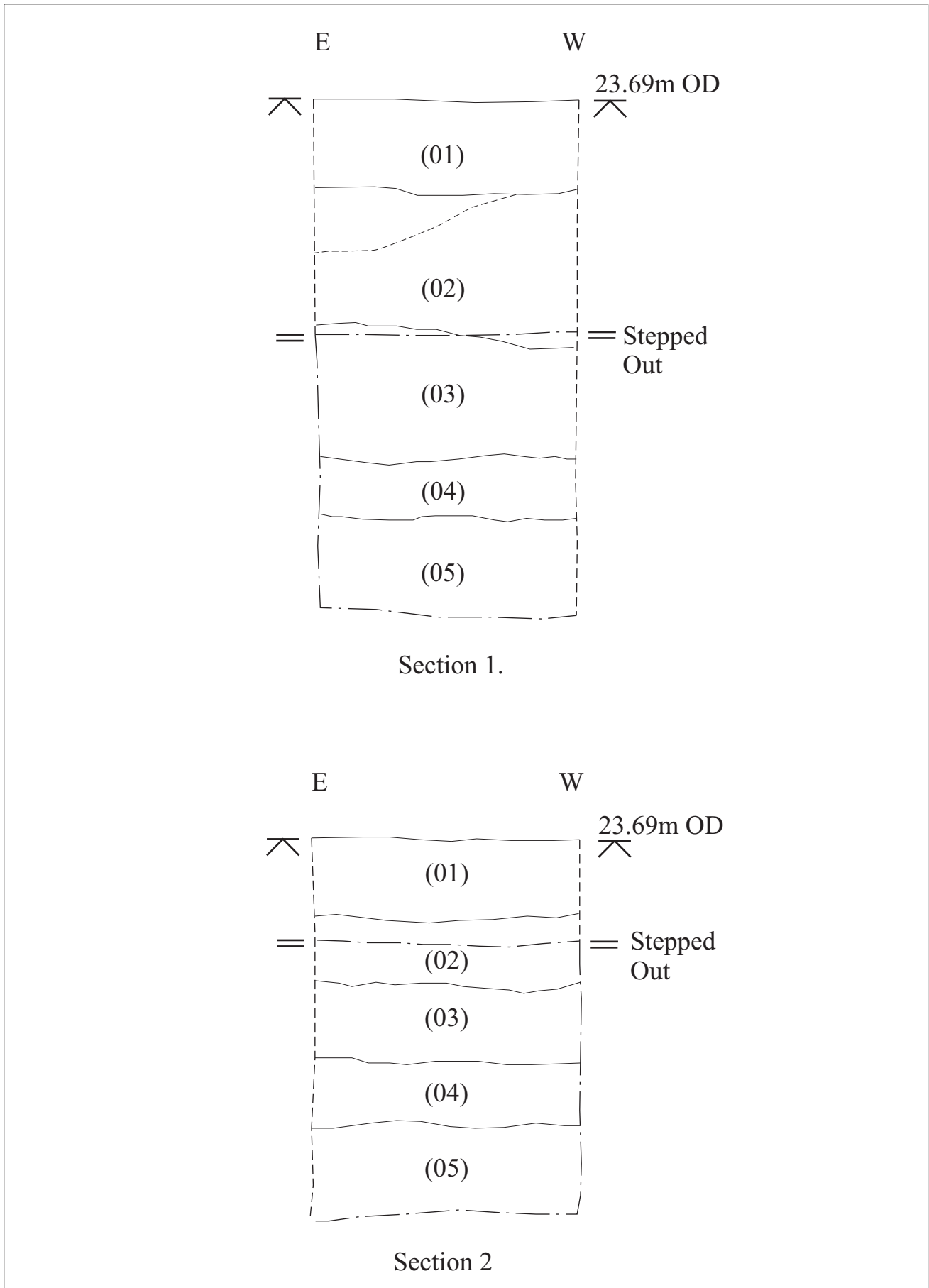


Figure 3: Sample sections

7 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*

John Moore Heritage Services 2003. *Land Adjacent Somerlea, Court Road, Maidenhead. Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation.*

Babtie Group, 2003. *Land Adjacent Somerlea, Court Road, Maidenhead: Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief.*

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
01	Layer	Topsoil	0.35	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
02	Layer	Made ground	0.30-0.50	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
03	Layer	Subsoil	0.30-0.50	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
04	Layer	Natural interface	0.20-0.25	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
05	Deposit	Natural gravel	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
06	Cut/fill	Pit cut and backfill	1.00	0.70	3.50	-	Modern