

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land between 138 and 142 Southcote Lane,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Site Code: SLR09/121

(SU 6935 7215)

**Land between 138 and 142 Southcote Lane,
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Brick Construction Ltd**

by James McNicoll-Norbury
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code SLR 09/121

January 2010

Summary

Site name: Land between 138 and 142 Southcote Lane, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6935 7215

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 12th–14th January 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James McNicoll-Norbury

Site code: SLR 09/121

Area of site: *c.* 0.1ha

Summary of results: No deposits nor finds of archaeological interest were observed. A modern ditch was noted. Parts of the site appear to have been disturbed by quarrying in the relatively recent past.

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 ✓ 19.01.10
	Steve Preston ✓ 19.01.10

Land between 138 and 142 Southcote Lane, Southcote, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by James McNicoll-Norbury

Report 09/121

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land between 138 and 142 Southcote Lane, Reading, Berkshire (SU 6935 7215) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Malcolm Collisson of Brick Construction Limited, Hilltop Orchard's Hill, Windlesham, Surrey, GU20 6DB.

Planning permission (App. No. 07/00027) has been granted by Reading Borough Council to redevelop the site for housing with the construction of four houses with associated parking and landscaping. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology.

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, Archaeological Officer of Berkshire Archaeology, the Borough Council's archaeological advisers. The fieldwork was undertaken by James McNicoll-Norbury and Rob Skinner between 12th–14th January 2010 and the site code is SLR09/121. 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 on the south-facing slope of the River Kennet valley (Fig. 1). Reading town centre is to the north-east of the site, with the suburbs of Tilehurst to the north-west. The site itself slopes down gently from east to west and is around 55m above Ordnance Datum. The site is bounded to the north by Aldworth Close, to the east and west by housing and gardens and to the south by Southcote Lane (Fig. 2). The site is currently under shrubs and trees. The underlying geology is gravel (Lynch Hill terrace) close to the boundary with Reading Beds (BGS 1946; Wymer 1999): a mixture of both was observed within the trenches on site.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location in the Kennet Valley which is rich in archaeological finds and sites (Lobb and Rose 1996). Most of the archaeological discoveries for the area have come about from quarrying but an Iron Age occupation site was located when housing was constructed at Southcote to the west in the 1930s (Piggott and Seaby 1937) and an early Saxon burial urn, less than 30m to the south-east of the site. The medieval manor of Southcote lies some way to the east. The quarry excavations are notable for the recovery of lower Palaeolithic material from within and beneath the gravel (Wymer 1968). Denton's Pit which lies just to the east of the proposal site was quarried in the 1930s and led to the recovery of both Palaeolithic material and a further middle Iron Age occupation 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. The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if there are later prehistoric (Iron Age) deposits on the site;
- to determine if Saxon deposits survive on the site; and
- to determine if the site has deposits of potential for paleoenvironmental reconstruction.

Eight trenches were proposed to be dug, each 7m long and 1.6m wide (approximating an 8% sample of the proposal site by area). The trenches were targeted in the areas of the proposed new buildings and car park and were to be dug using a JCB-type machine using a ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels under constant archaeological supervision.

Results

The trenches were dug as intended although due to space restrictions and the nature of the slope on the site some of the trenches were shortened. To compensate for this, others were extended to preserve the total trench length (Fig. 3). A metal detector was used across the spoil heaps. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned NW–SE and was 7.4m long and between 0.34 and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.20m of topsoil overlying up to 0.30m of grey silty clay subsoil which in turn overlay sand natural geology. No archaeological features were identified.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned roughly W–E and was 5.15m long and 0.95m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.30m of topsoil overlying 0.60m of subsoil which in turn overlay gravel natural geology. No archaeological features were identified.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned SE–NW and was 8.5m long and between 0.41 and 0.69m deep. The stratigraphy comprised up to 0.31m topsoil overlying up to 0.30m subsoil which in turn overlay sand natural geology. No archaeological features were identified.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned SE–NW and was 5.8m long and between 0.79–1.05m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.40m of topsoil overlying up to 0.60m subsoil which in turn overlay gravel natural geology. No archaeological features were identified.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was aligned SE–NW and was 7.5m long and 0.71m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.2m of topsoil overlying 0.41m of subsoil which in turn overlay a mixture of sand and gravel natural geology. A very shallow bowl-shaped linear feature (1) was investigated but is considered likely to be of agricultural origin (furrow) and of no great age. A second circular patch of subsoil (2) was also investigated and found to be very shallow (<0.05m) and also likely to be of natural or agricultural origin.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned roughly S–N and was 7.1m long and 0.66m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.15m of topsoil overlying 0.39m of subsoil which in turn overlay gravel natural geology. A ditch (3) aligned west–east was identified at the northern end of the trench. Excavation of this recovered fragments of modern china and tile.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was aligned WNW–ESE and was 5.95m long and 1.33m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.32m of topsoil which overlay layers of redeposited gravel with burnt patches above the gravel natural geology (only partially observed due to collapse). No archaeological features were identified.

Trench 8 (Pl. 2)

Trench 8 was aligned roughly E–W and was 7.7m long and between 0.43 and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy comprised up to 0.26m of topsoil overlying up to 0.40m of subsoil which in turn overlay gravel natural geology (Fig. 8). Another very shallow bowl-shaped linear feature (4) at the eastern end of the trench was investigated and is considered likely to be of agricultural origin (furrow). No archaeological features were identified.

Finds

Two small pieces of mass-produced modern white china were recovered from ditch 3. These were retained on site.

Conclusion

The evaluation has not revealed any finds nor deposits of archaeological interest though a late post medieval or early modern ditch was summarily recorded. Whilst it seems that some of the archaeologically relevant levels have survived, it was noted that there was a difference in levels across the site. This would suggest that parts of the site had previously been disturbed significantly in the past, possibly by quarrying, especially on the western side of the site.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Lobb, S J and Rose, P G, 1996, *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*, Wessex Archaeol Rep **9**, Salisbury
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Piggott, C M and Seaby, W A, 1937, 'Early Iron Age site at Southcote, Reading', *Proc Prehist Soc* **3**, pt 1, 43–57
- Wymer, J, 1968, *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain*, London
- Wymer, J J, 1999, *The Lower Palaeolithic occupation of Britain*, Salisbury

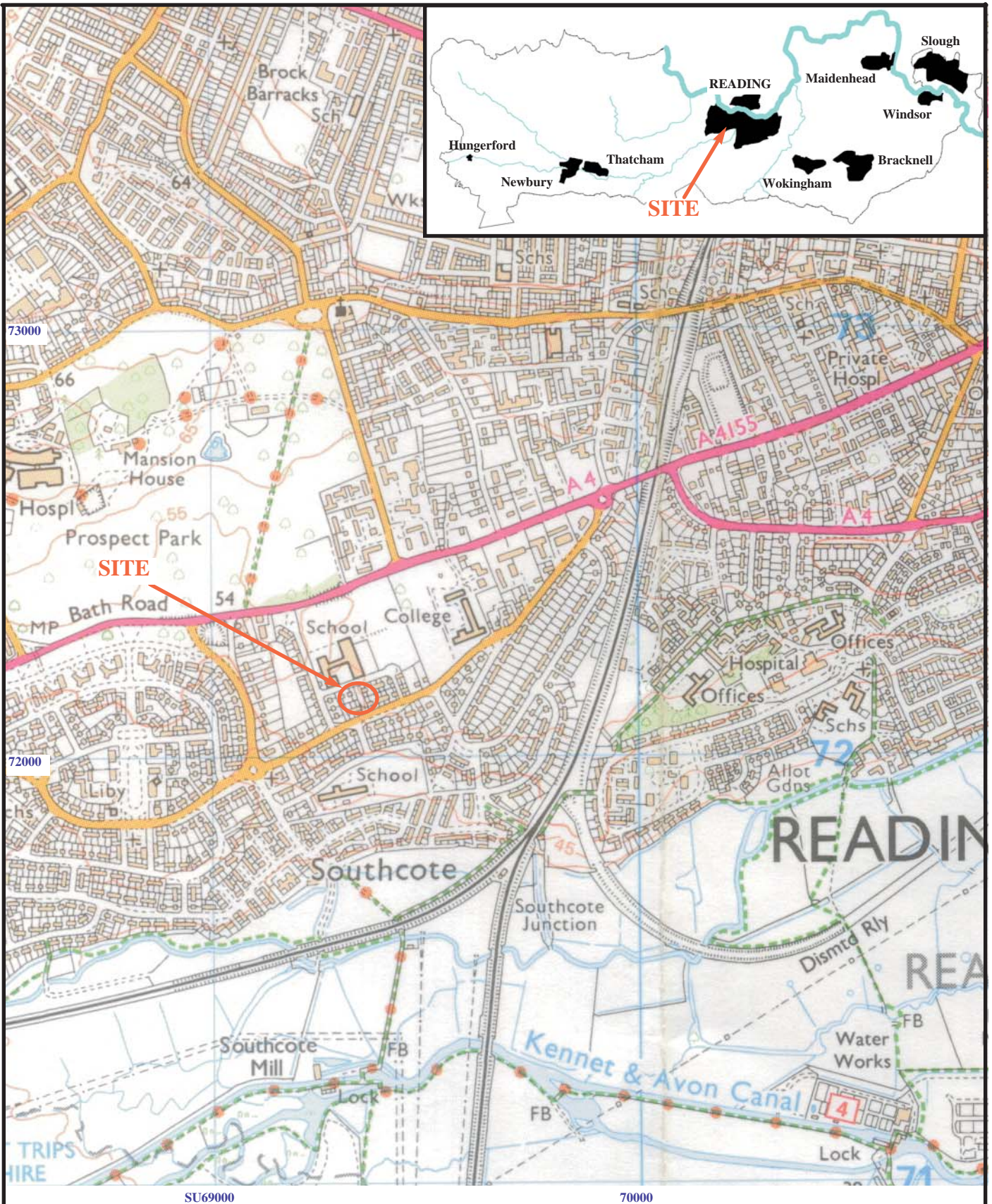
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or NW end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	7.4	1.6	0.51	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.50m grey silty clay subsoil; 0.50m+ yellow brown sands (natural geology). [Plate 1]
2	5.15	1.6	0.95	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.90m subsoil; 0.90m+ orange brown gravels (natural geology).
3	8.5	1.6	0.69	0-0.31m topsoil; 0.31-0.61m subsoil; 0.61m+ yellow brown sands.
4	5.8	1.6	1.05	0-0.40m topsoil; 0.40-1.00m subsoil; 1.00m+ orange brown gravels.
5	7.85	1.6	0.71	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.61m subsoil; 0.61m+ natural geology. Furrow 1 and subsoil patch 2.
6	7.1	1.6	0.66	0-0.15m topsoil; 0.15-0.54m subsoil; 0.54m+ natural geology. Modern ditch 3.
7	5.95	1.6	1.33	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32m-1.33m banded layers of redeposited gravels.
8	7.7	1.6	0.58	0-0.26m; 0.26-0.54m subsoil; 0.54m+ natural geology. Furrow 4 [Plate 2]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
5	1	50	Furrow?	(post-medieval?)	-
5	2	51	Subsoil patch?	-	-
6	3	52	Ditch	Modern	Pottery
8	4	53	Furrow?	(post-medieval?)	-



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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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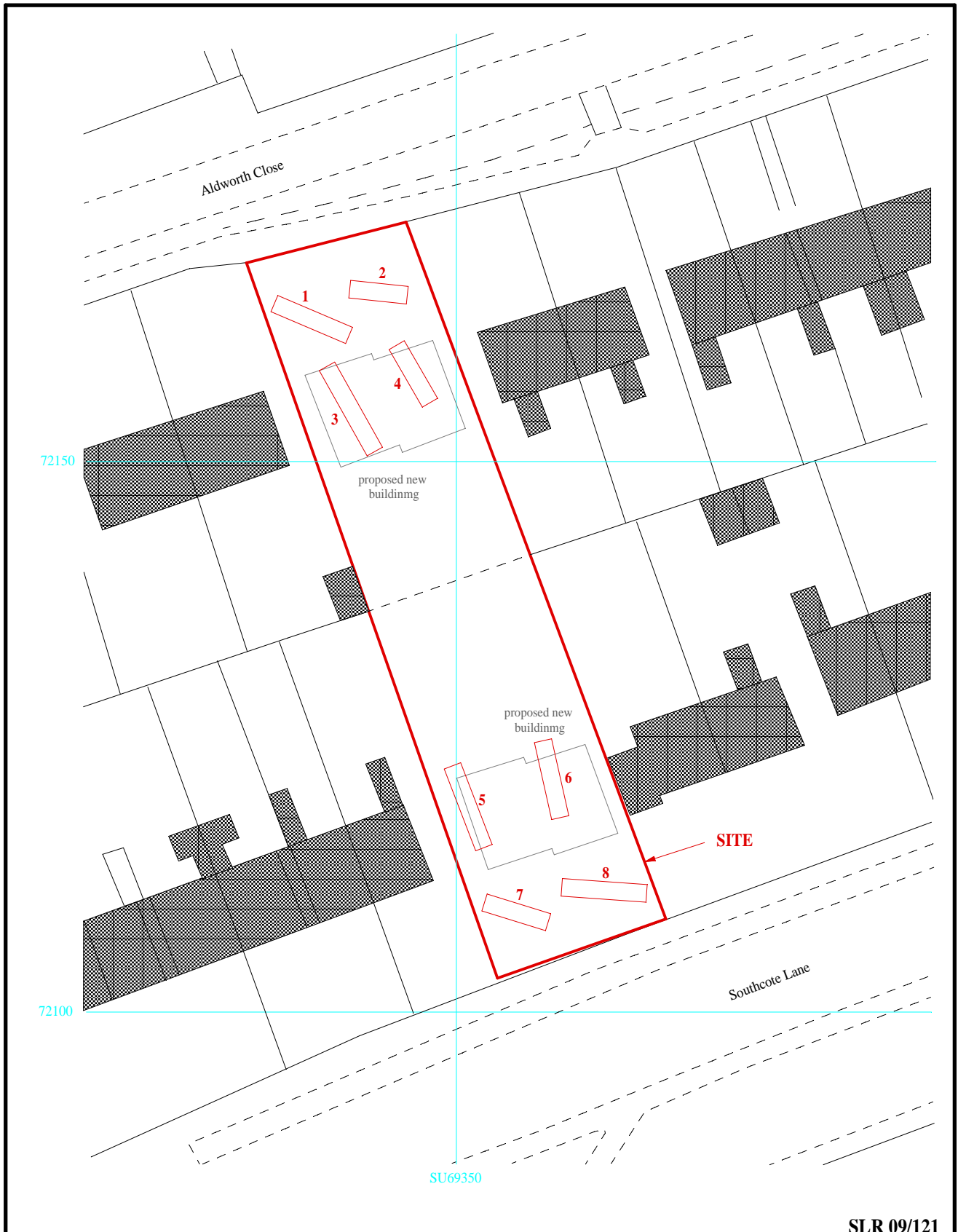
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Figure 2. Location of site off Southcote Lane and
Aldworth Close.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



Trench 8

W _____ E 55.2m AOD

Topsoil

Subsoil

Natural Yellow Brown Gravels

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Figure 4. Representative section.

0 _____ 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north-west. Scales 1m and 2m



Plate 2. Trench 8, looking East. Scales 1m and 2m

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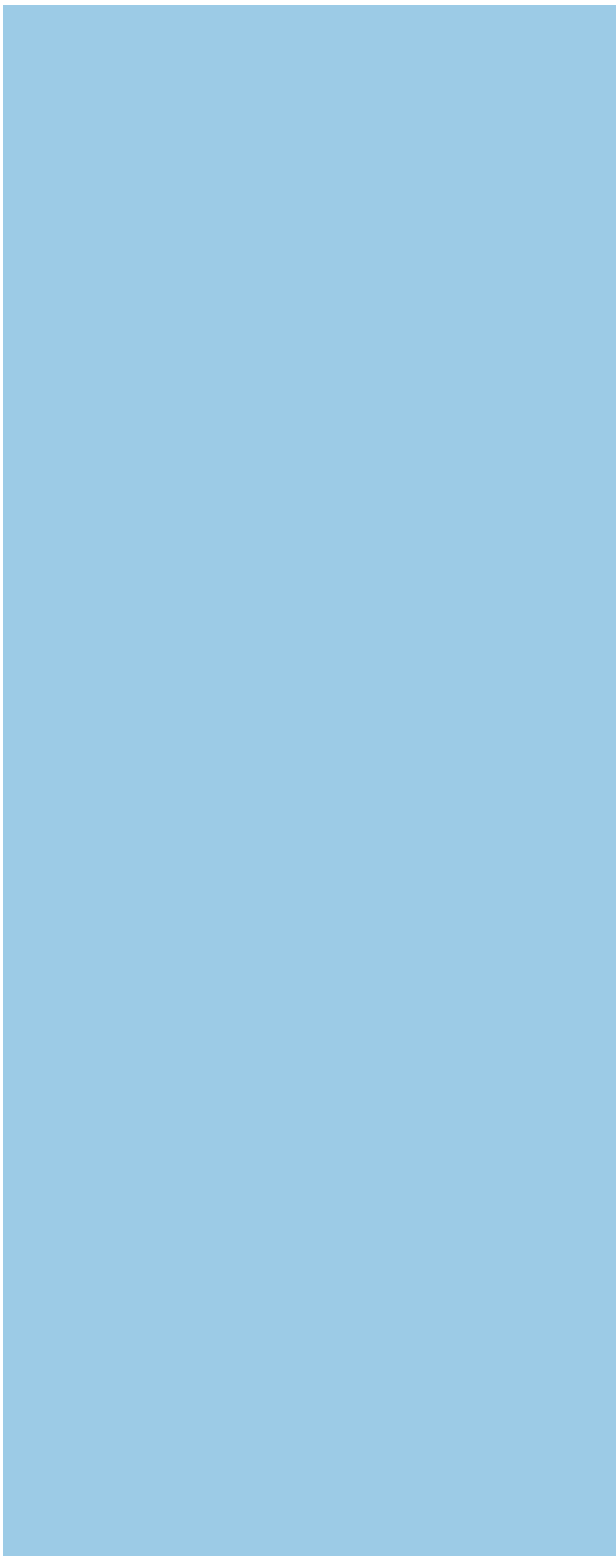
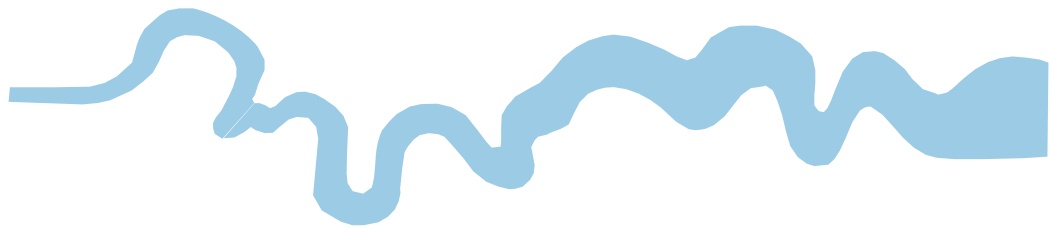
Land between 138 and 142 Southcote Lane, Southcote,
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Plates 1 & 2

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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





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