

**69-75 Armour Hill, Tilehurst,
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Heronsbrook Ltd**

by Stephen Hammond
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code AHT 05/76

August 2005

Summary

Site name: 69-75 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6705 7447

Site activity: Field evaluation

Date and duration of project: 28th-29th July 2005

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Stephen Hammond

Site code: AHT 05/76

Area of site: c. 2510 sq m

Summary of results: No finds or archaeological features were identified.

Monuments identified: None

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Jennifer Lowe✓ 17.08.05
	Steve Preston✓ 17.08.05

69-75 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

By Stephen Hammond

Report 05/76

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out to the rear of properties 69–75 on Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading (SU 6705 7447) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Lee Atkins of Heronsbrook Ltd, Hall Grove Farm, Bagshot, Surrey, GU19 5HP.

Outline planning permission (05/00286/OUT) has been granted by Reading Borough Council for the demolition of an existing property on the site and the erection of eight new houses with garages and associated parking. Due to the possibility of archaeological remains being damaged or destroyed during construction work, the consent is subject to a condition (15) relating to archaeology which requires the site to be investigated prior to groundworks commencing.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Thomason, Archaeology Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Stephen Hammond with the assistance of Simon Cass on the 28th and 29th July 2005 and the site code is AHT 05/76. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on land to the rear of properties 69-75 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, close to the west side of Larissa Close and to the south of Arthur Newbery Park (Fig. 1). The site is currently occupied by an existing house and also includes neighbouring gardens (Fig. 2). The site is relatively flat with a large part of the plot occupied by scrub and trees, and covers around 2510 sq m, at an approximate height of 80m above Ordnance Datum. According to maps (BGS 1971) the underlying geology consists of Plateau Gravel, close to a boundary with Reading Beds. Both sandy gravel and brickearth were observed during the evaluation.

Archaeological background

The site is located within the Thames Valley, an archaeologically rich area, which is relatively well known from a variety of sources (Ford 1987) with many of the archaeological sites of the valley being recorded from the air (Gates 1975). Several stray finds of Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Roman dates are recorded in the Reading Sites and Monuments Record within close proximity to the site and there is a possibility that occupation sites of these periods are present within the proposal area. The first record of a settlement at Tilehurst is in 1167, where it is recorded as *Tigelhurst* meaning 'wooded hill where tiles are made' (Mills 1998). A linear earthwork located 650m to the north-east of the site, possibly of Iron Age or Saxon date, has recently been investigated and recorded but without conclusive evidence of its date (Taylor 2005).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. The work was designed to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation *in situ* or might be better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation. The specific aims of the project were:

To determine if archaeologically relevant levels survived on this site.

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

In order to achieve these objectives, six trenches were to be excavated using a JCB type excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Four of these trenches would be 20m long and two would be 10m long, all with a width of 1.6m (c. 6% of the site area). These trenches were designed to be located within the proposed footprints of the new house plots. However, it was agreed that a certain amount of flexibility might be required should any restrictions become apparent. All resulting spoilheaps would be monitored for finds.

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

Results

Six trenches were dug ranging in length from 10.50m to 20.70m. Due to the presence of the existing building and associated out buildings it was not possible to place a trench over the proposed house plot closest to Armour Hill. Instead this trench was moved further northwards but kept as close to the plot as was practicable.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

Aligned approximately north east-south west, this trench was 20.70m long with a maximum depth of 0.65m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of mid grey brown sandy silt topsoil covering 0.30m of pale yellow brown silty sand which in turn covered the first natural geological horizon consisting of mid orange/brown sandy gravel (Fig. 4). No archaeological finds or features were discovered in this trench.

Trench 2

This trench was 19.00m long on an approximate east-west alignment with a maximum depth of 0.80m. Typically the stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of mid grey brown sandy silty topsoil covering 0.50m of pale yellow brown silty sand which in turn covered a mid orange gravelly sand natural. Towards the eastern end of the trench, the stratigraphy changed to that of 0.30m of topsoil overlying mid brown orange gravelly sand natural. Tree root disturbance was noted throughout this trench particularly towards the eastern end. No finds or archaeological features were uncovered.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 20.00m in length and aligned approximately north-south. The depth varied from 0.40m at the southern end to 1.00m towards the north. The stratigraphy noted at the southern end consisted of 0.15m mid grey brown sandy silty topsoil covering 0.10m of pale yellow brown silty sand which in turn covered a mid orange silty sand natural. The stratigraphy at the northern end of the trench was 0.50m of disturbed topsoil (containing modern debris) onto 0.40m of pale yellow brown silty sand. This in turn overlay a mid orange sand natural. A modern rubbish pit and a treebole were observed in the trench.

Trench 4

This trench was aligned approximately east-west and was 11.50m long and a maximum of 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of mid grey brown sand silt topsoil covering 0.15m of light grey white silty

sandy gravel which in turn sealed a mid orange sandy gravel. No finds or archaeological features were observed in this trench.

Trench 5

Aligned approximately north–south this trench was 20.20m in length and 0.70m in depth. The stratigraphy noted varied throughout the trench largely due to the area being heavily disturbed by tree root movement. Towards the south 0.20m of mid grey brown sandy silty topsoil was seen to cover 0.50m of light yellow brown silty sand which in turn covered a mid orange sandy gravel natural. The northern end however consisted of 0.40m of topsoil overlying 0.20m of light brown yellow silty sand which in turn covered the natural sandy gravel. No finds or archaeological deposits were revealed.

Trench 6 (Plate 2)

Trench 6 was 10.50m long with a depth of between 0.60m and 0.70m on an approximate north west–south east alignment. From observations made from the section it could be seen that 0.30m of mid grey brown sandy silt topsoil overlay 0.20m of light greyish white silty sandy gravel. This in turn covered a mid yellow orange sandy gravel natural. Tree root disturbance was also noted throughout the trench. No finds or archaeological deposits were revealed.

Finds

No archaeological finds were recovered during the evaluation.

Conclusion

The evaluation was unsuccessful in locating any archaeological features or finds despite the presence of a possible Iron Age/Saxon extant earthwork close by to the north-east and the nearby recovery of a number of artefacts ranging from Palaeolithic to Roman in date. On the basis of this evaluation it is unlikely that the proposed building work would threaten any archaeological deposits.

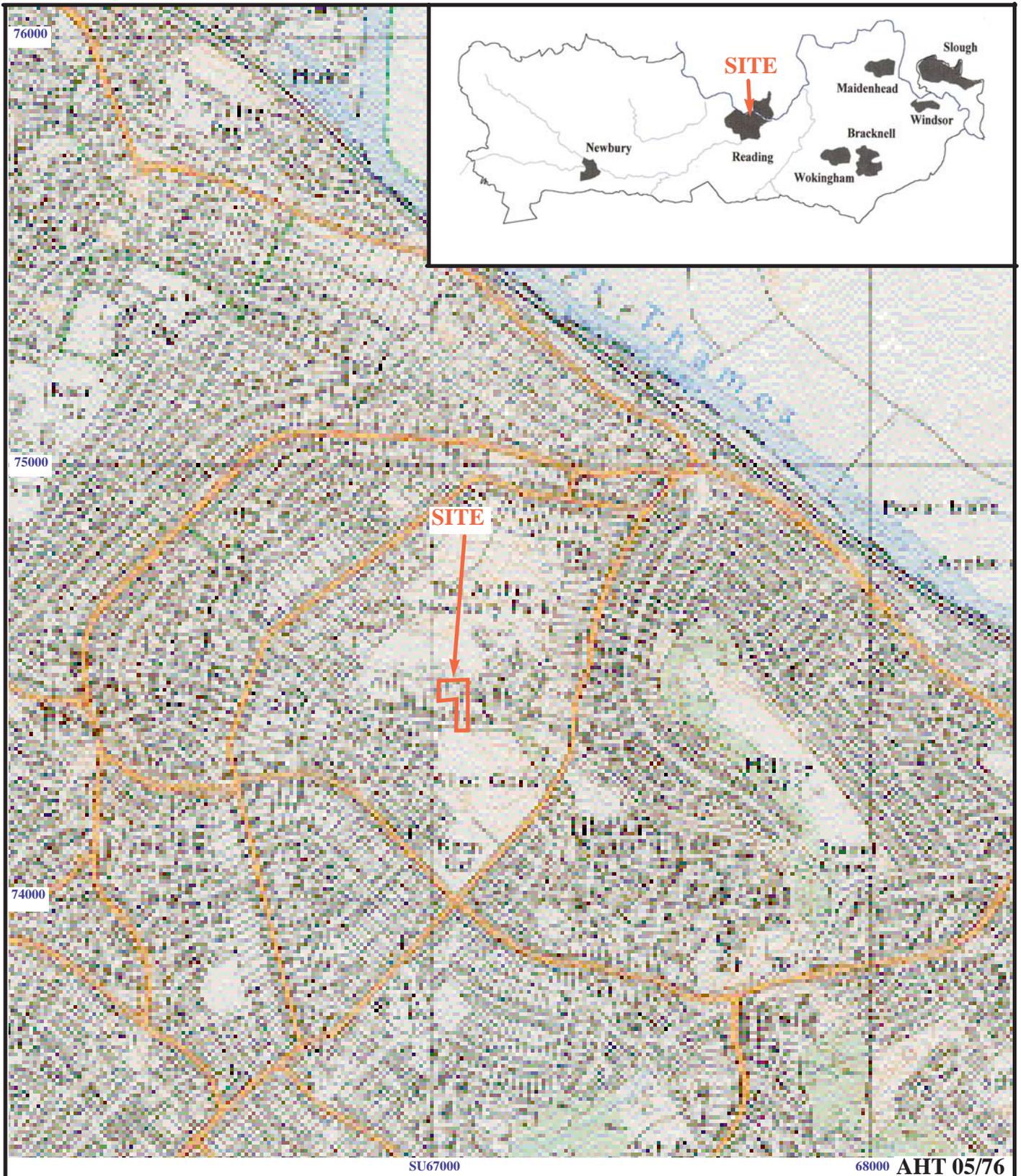
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S/W end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	20.70	1.6	0.60-0.65	0-0.25m of mid grey brown sandy silt topsoil. 0.25-0.55m pale yellow brown silty sand. 0.55m+ mid orange brown sandy gravel natural.
2	19.00	1.6	0.80	Typically 0-0.20m mid grey/brown sandy silty topsoil. 0.20-0.70m pale yellow brown silty sand. 0.70m+ mid orange gravelly sand natural. Towards the eastern end of the trench, the stratigraphy changed to that of 0-0.30m of topsoil overlying mid brown orange gravelly sand natural. Tree root disturbance was noted throughout this trench particularly towards the eastern end.
3	20.00	1.6	0.40-1.00	The stratigraphy at the southern end consisted of 0-0.15m mid grey brown sandy silty topsoil covering 0.15-0.25m of pale yellow brown silty sand over a mid orange silty sand natural. The stratigraphy at the northern end of the trench was 0-0.50m of disturbed topsoil onto 0.50-0.90m of pale yellow brown silty sand over a mid orange sand natural. A modern rubbish pit and a treebole were observed in the trench.
4	11.50	1.6	0.50	0-0.20m mid grey brown sand silt topsoil. 0.20-0.35m light grey white silty sandy gravel. 0.35m+ mid orange sandy gravel natural.
5	20.20	1.6	0.60-0.70	The stratigraphy at the south end comprised 0-0.20m mid grey brown sandy silty topsoil. 0.20-0.70m light yellow brown silty sand. 0.70m + mid orange sandy gravel natural. At the north end 0-0.40m of topsoil overlay 0.40-0.60m light brown yellow silty sand. 0.60m+ natural sandy gravel. Trench noted to have been disturbed by tree root action.
6	10.50	1.6	0.60-0.70	0-0.30m mid grey brown sandy silt topsoil. 0.20-0.50m light greyish white silty sandy gravel. 0.50m+ mid yellow orange sandy gravel. Trench noted to have been disturbed by tree root action.

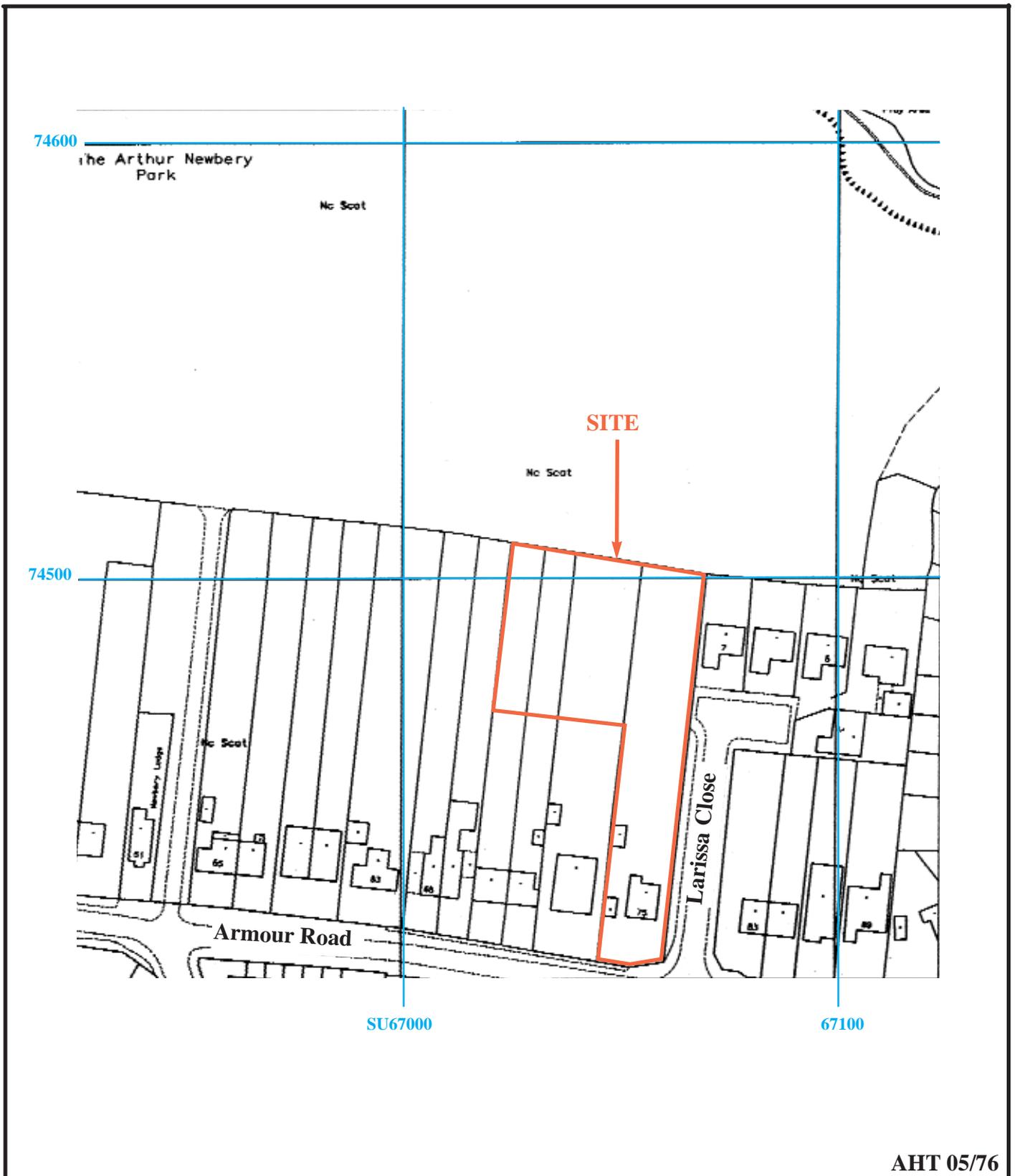


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Figure 1. Location of site within Tilehurst
and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site within Tilehurst

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69-75 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, 2005

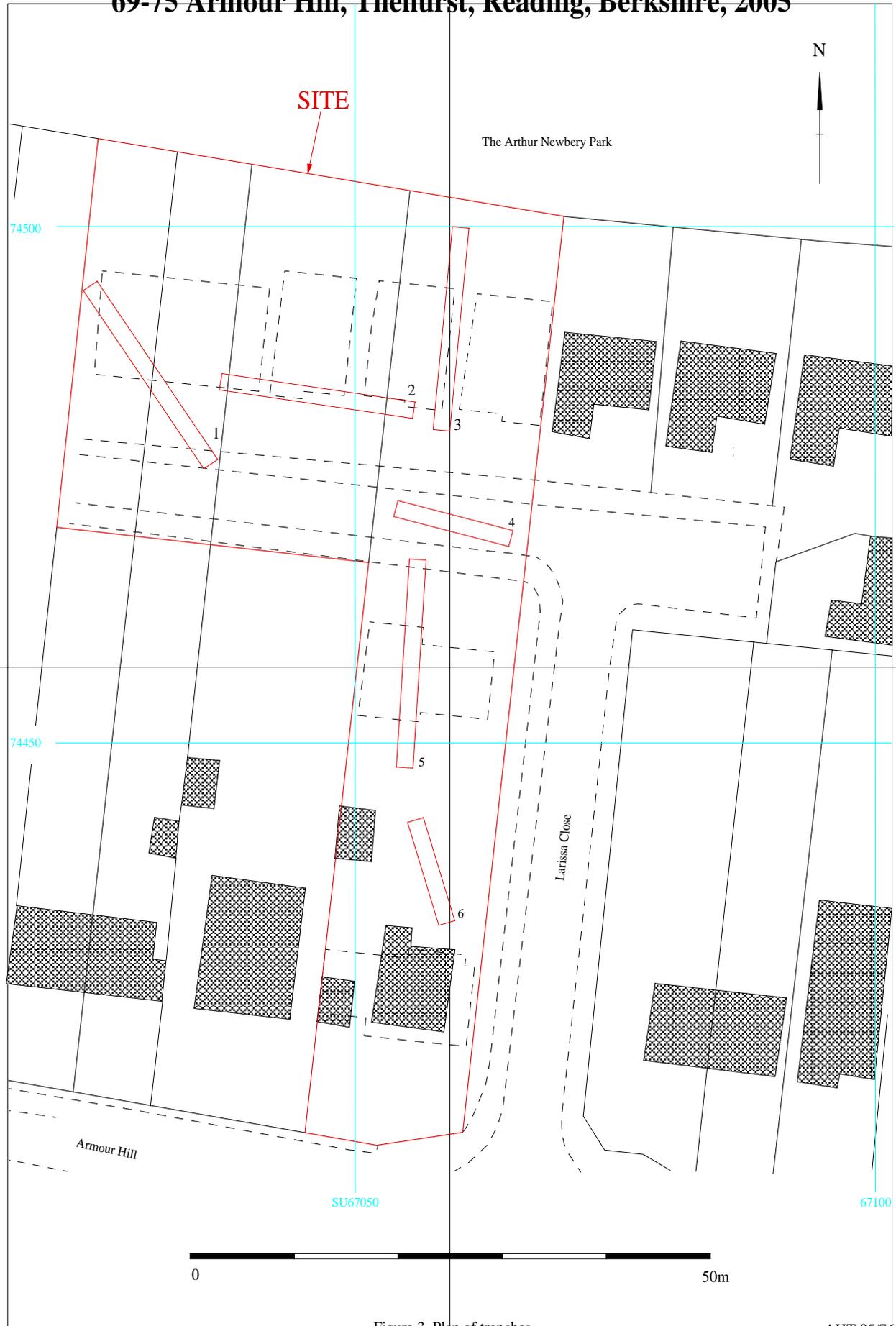


Figure 3. Plan of trenches

69-75 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, 2005

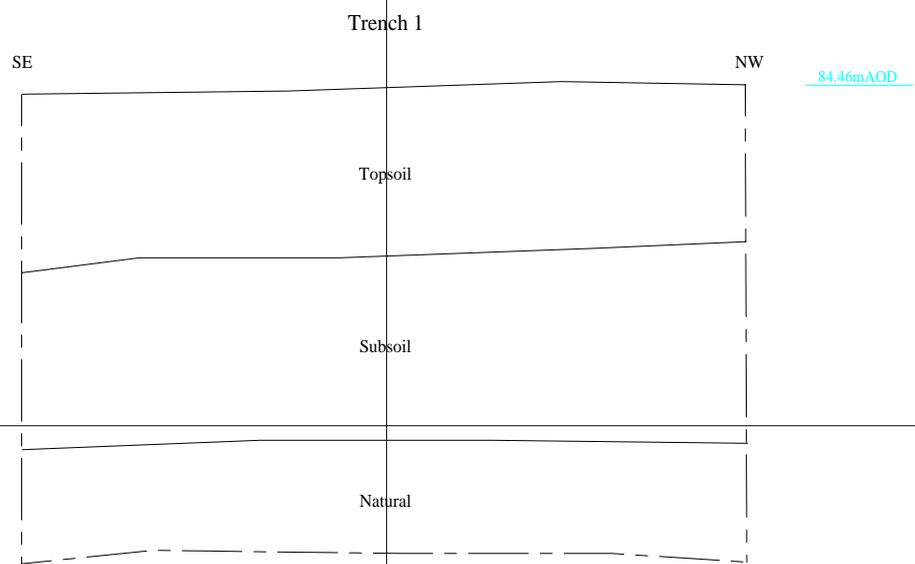


Figure 4. Representative section



Plate 1. Trench 1, Looking north west, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 6 looking south east, horizontal scale 0.5m, vertical scale 2m.