

13 Lower Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief for Millgate Homes

by Pamela Jenkins and Andrew Muddin
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LCRM 02/71

September 2002

Summary

Site name: 13 Lower Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9020 8258

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 12th August–11th September 2002

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Pamela Jenkins and Andrew Muddin

Site code: LCRM 02/71

Area of site: c.2100 sq m

Summary of results: A pit or ditch was seen, containing a sherd of Neolithic or Bronze Age flint-gritted pottery and four flint flakes, indicating some prehistoric activity in the area.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 16.09.02
	Steve Preston✓ 17.09.02

13 Lower Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 02/71

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 13, Lower Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 9020 8258) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Greg Meier of Millgate Homes, Millgate Court, Terrace Road North, Binfield, Berkshire, RG42 5HZ.

Planning permission (01/37807) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for demolition of the existing house on the site and its replacement with a block of four town houses and a block of five flats with parking and access. This permission was conditional and subject to the implementation of a programme of archaeological monitoring in the form of a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Kev Beachus, Senior Archaeologist with Bactie Environmental, archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The fieldwork was undertaken by Pamela Jenkins and Andrew Muddin between 12th August and 11th September 2002 and the site code is LCRM 02/71. The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR, and will be deposited with Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a rectangular plot of land on the west side of Lower Cookham Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, on the west bank of the River Thames (Figs 1 and 2). The underlying geology is mapped as Flood Plain Terrace river gravels (BGS 1974). This was observed during the watching brief, and in the southern part of the site was seen to be underlying a layer of compact chalk and limestone with angular flint approximately 0.10–0.15m thick. The site lies at a height of c.25m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The site lies close to the River Thames on the floor of the Thames Valley. This area is generally considered rich in archaeological deposits of many periods. The presence of occupation sites on or close to the banks of the Thames has been indicated by the large number of prehistoric stone tools and metal items discovered during dredging of this stretch of the river (Ford 1987). Prehistoric occupation has been recorded nearby at Sheephouse Farm (Fig. 1), where a dense cluster of later Neolithic or Bronze Age struck flint was recorded (Bowden *et al.* 1982).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to:

1. Observe and record all archaeological deposits within areas of ground disturbance associated with the groundworks.
2. Excavate and record any archaeological deposits which would be damaged or disturbed during the groundworks.
3. Produce, where possible, relative and absolute dating and phasing for the features on the site.
4. Provide, if possible, information on the economy and the local environment of the site.
5. Establish the character of the deposits, in order to define functional areas and produce a settlement history of the site.

Foundation trenches for Plots 1–4 and 5 (Fig. 3) were observed. Those in Plot 1–4 were all dug to a depth of *c.* 1m and were 0.90m wide. Foundation trenches for Plot 5 were also 0.90 wide and 1m deep, except in an area where a seam of sand was encountered. At this point, the trenches were stepped down a further 0.40m in order to reach the underlying natural gravel. An area within Plot 5, as indicated on Fig. 3, was inaccessible due to the sandy collapsible nature of the ground. Road 2 and part of Road 1, indicated on Fig 3, were observed to the depth of excavation, which was 0.6m. All spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

Results

The site had been stripped of trees before groundworks began. The excavation of Plots 1–4 involved the removal of topsoil and subsoil down to the natural sandy gravel at a depth of *c.* 1m. In the north-west corner of Plot 4 one feature (1), was seen in both the north- and south-facing sections between the subsoil and natural at 0.65m depth (Fig. 4, sections 1 and 2). This contained three flint flakes and one piece of prehistoric pottery. This was a very shallow feature, and in plan the edges were unclear, in particular the western edge which appeared to be root-disturbed. The single sherd of modern pottery was retrieved from this disturbed area of the feature. The feature

did not appear within any other excavated area of Plot 4. A feature, that on excavation proved to be a tree bole, was seen in section in the north-east corner of plot 4.

Monitoring of the excavation of the foundations of Plot 5 revealed 0.50m of topsoil above 0.45m subsoil on the westernmost side. Towards the centre of the plot a large seam of sand was encountered below the topsoil, which made it necessary to increase the depth of excavations to approximately 1.5m in order to reach the underlying natural sandy gravels. On the east side of Plot 5 the topsoil and subsoil were seen to lie above a loose dark greyish brown slightly silty sand layer containing frequent chalk lumps and small-medium subangular gravel which varied between 0.20m and 0.60m thick. Below this layer was a band of naturally occurring creamy coloured sandy lime, crumbly in nature with very frequent angular flint and chalk lumps lying above the natural sandy gravel. Between these two layers a feature (2) was seen which, upon excavation, was shown to be a tree bole.

Along with the foundation trenches, a service trench 0.65m wide was observed. This was shallow and only excavated to a depth of 0.60m. No archaeological deposits were observed in this trench.

The formation of the access roads (Roads 1 and 2, Fig. 3) was also observed. This involved excavation to a depth of 0.70m, which removed a strip of topsoil and made ground to expose loose, fine grey-brown sandy gravel subsoil. The made ground contained finds such as modern glass, brick and tile (not retained). At the junction of Roads 1 and 2, the made ground extended through the subsoil deeper than the limit of excavation into the natural strata. This made ground was derived from the demolition of the previous building.

Approximately 3m from the north-east corner of Plot 4, a modern brick-built waste-tank was uncovered. This was c.1.6m deep, 5.50m long and 2.3m wide. Finally, no archaeological deposits were observed in a modern soakaway (Fig 3).

Finds

Struck flint by Steve Ford

Four flint flakes were recovered during the watching brief, three from a pit or ditch 1 (52) and one from subsoil at the north-east corner of Plot 1. None of the flakes is chronologically distinctive and they can only be broadly dated from the Mesolithic through to the later Bronze Age periods.

Pottery by Steve Ford

Three sherds of pottery were recovered. One of these came from tree hole 2 (53) and comprised a rim sherd of post-medieval red ware. The other two pieces came from pit or ditch 1 (52). One of the latter comprised a tiny sherd with a friable flint-gritted fabric which is of earlier prehistoric date (Neolithic to Bronze Age) date. The other small sherd was post-medieval red ware and was probably a fragment of 19th or 20th century plant pot.

Burnt flint by Steve Ford

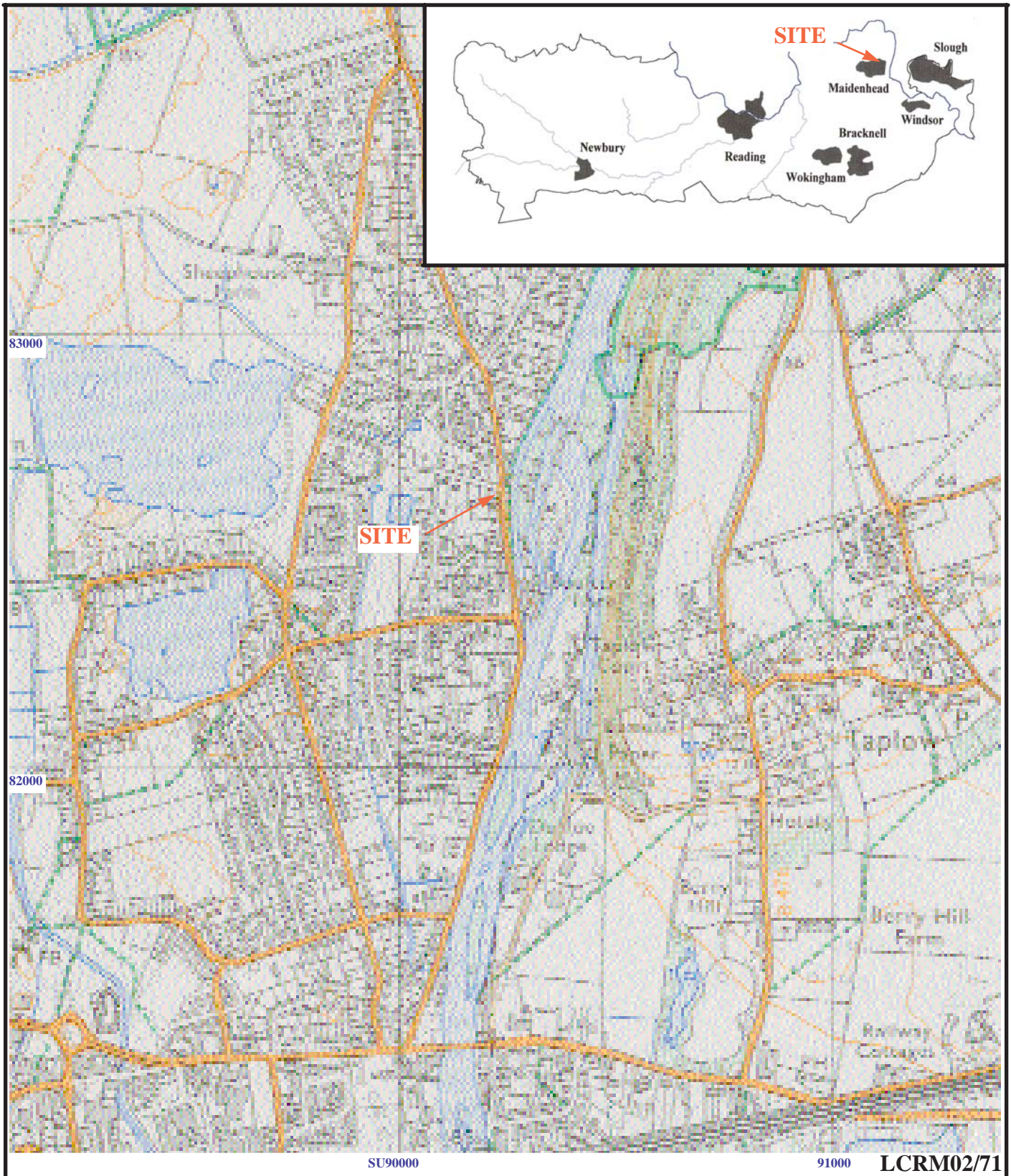
Four fragments (80g) of burnt flint were recovered from pit or ditch 1 (52).

Conclusion

A prehistoric feature, possibly a pit or ditch of Neolithic or Bronze Age date was observed, containing finds of prehistoric pottery and struck flints, indicating the presence of some prehistoric activity in this area.

References

- BGS, 1974, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 255, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Bowden, M, Ford, S and Mead, B, 1982, 'The excavation of a flint scatter at Sheephouse Farm, Maidenhead', *Berkshire Archaeol J*, **71**, 90-2
- Ford, S, 1987, *The East Berkshire Archaeological Survey*, Berkshire County Council Dept Highways and Planning, Occas Pap 1, Reading
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO



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2002**

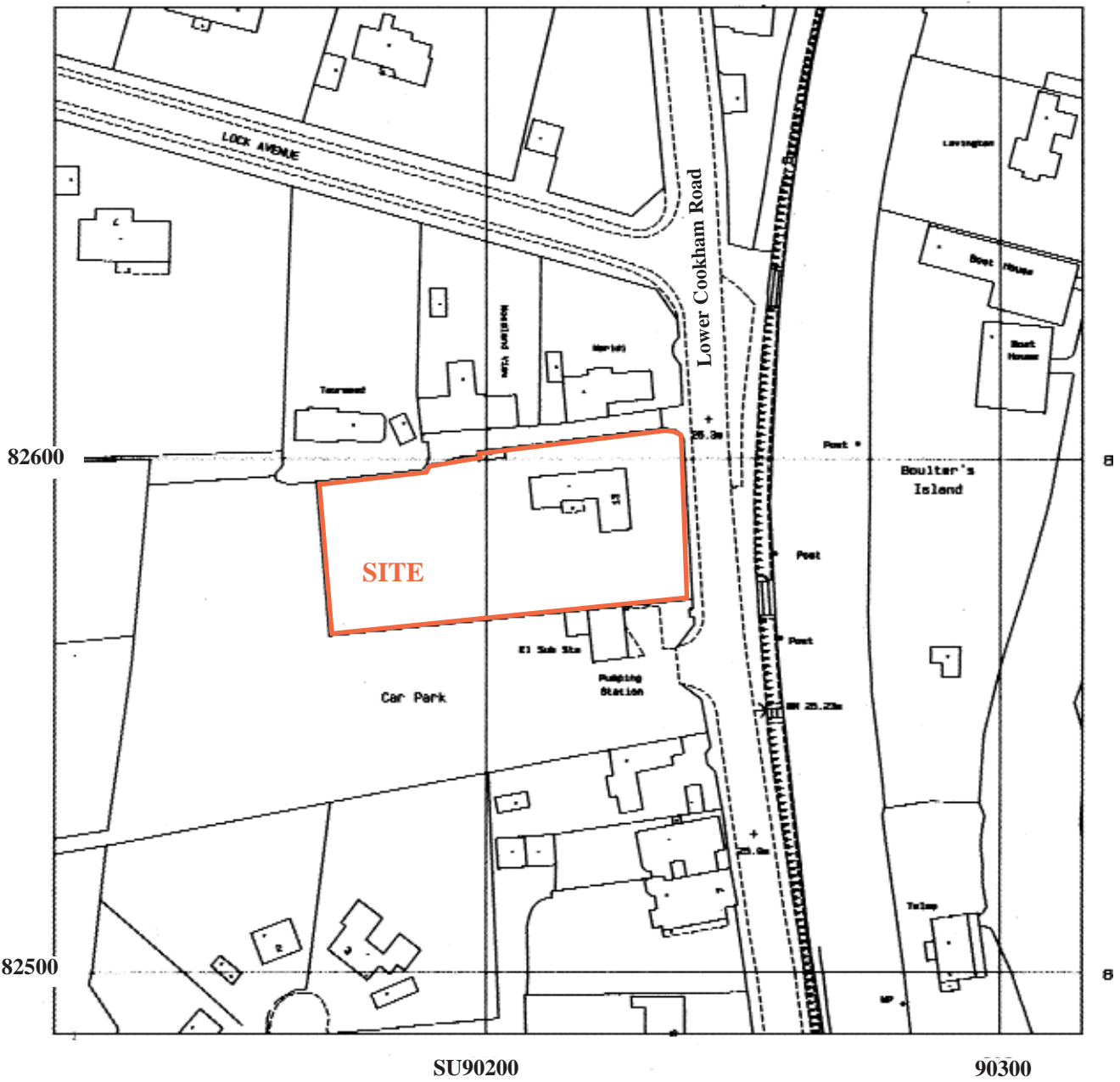
Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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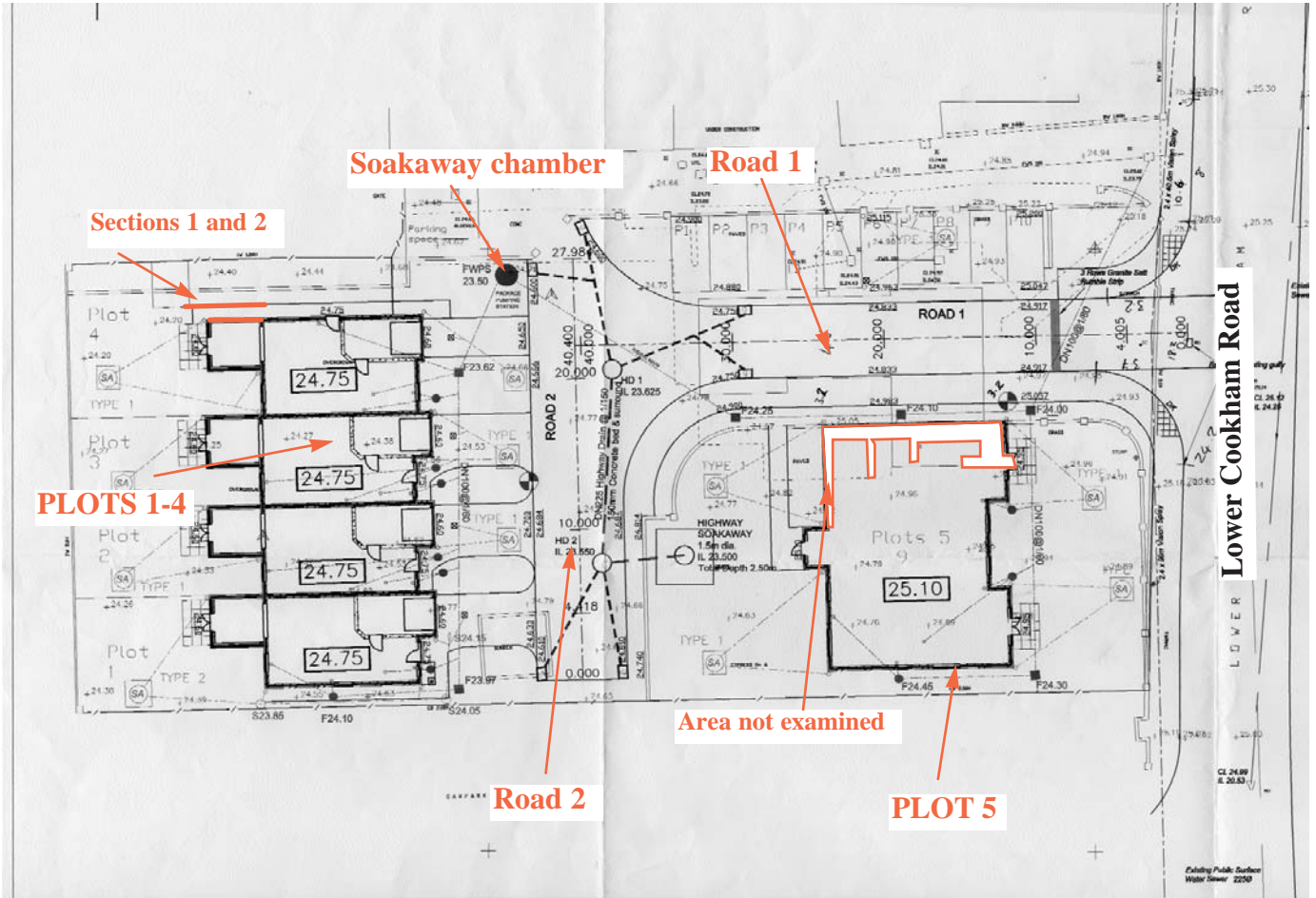


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Figure 2. Location of site on Lower Cookham Road

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Figure 3. Detailed location of watching brief areas.



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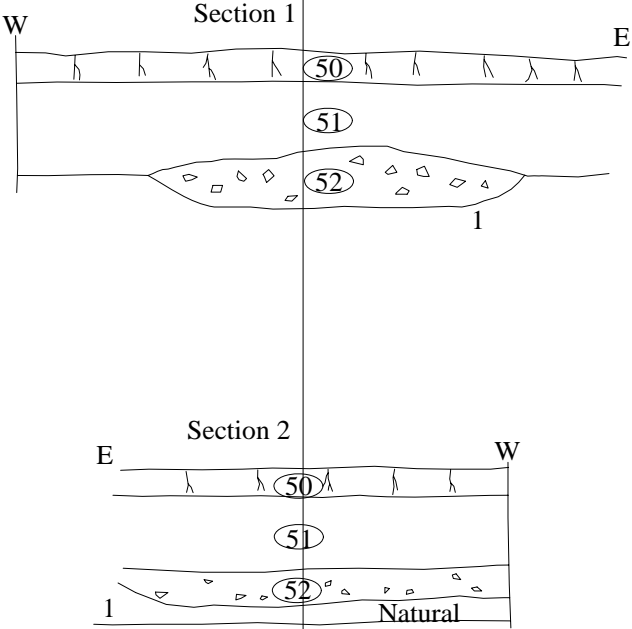


Figure 4. Sections showing Feature 1.