

**60 St Peter's Avenue, Caversham  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Heronsbrook Homes Ltd**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PAR 08/02

**April 2008**

## Summary

**Site name:** 60 St Peters Avenue, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7049 7518

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 21st January - 27th March 2008

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Steve Ford

**Site code:** PAR08/02

**Summary of results:** No archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered. A small number of areas of 19th- or 20th-century disturbance were noted.

**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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# 60 St Peters Avenue, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Steve Ford

Report 08/02

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 60 St Peters Avenue, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7049 7518) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Sidley of Heronsbrook Homes Limited, Hall Grove Farm, Bagshot, Surrey, GU19 5HP.

A planning consent (07/00479/FUL/AS1) was granted by Reading Borough Council to construct a new block of flats and associated carparking areas following the demolition of an existing structure at the site. This consent was subject to a condition (12) which requires the implementation of an archaeological investigation, which in this case was determined required a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

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 Mike Hall, Acting Archaeological Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, adviser to the Borough on archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by James Earley, Steve Ford, David Platt and Andrew Weale between 21st January and 27th March 2008 and the site code is PAR 08/02.

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 just to the north of the River Thames, and south of the A4074 on the edge of Caversham Heights, north of Reading (Figs 1 and 2). The area is currently residential and the site lies at a height of approximately 70m above Ordnance Datum on the side of the hill. The underlying geology is shown as Plateau Gravel (BGS 1946) but is now regarded as being a part of the Boyn Hill terrace (Wymer 1968).

## Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site stems in the main from its location on one of the old gravel terraces of the River Thames (Boyn Hill terrace) from which a number of Palaeolithic finds have been recovered. Several findspots have been recorded for St Peters Hill, with a cluster of material from an old gravel pit just to the north

east of the site (Wymer 1968, 142). It is therefore thought possible that further finds from this period may be recorded close by, though *in-situ* material is only to be expected at the base of the gravel sequence. In general, the site also lies within the Thames Valley, an archaeologically rich area with a diverse range of sites and finds from many periods.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This was to include any areas of ground reduction, excavation of trenches for foundations, services and soakaways.

## **Results**

The watching brief comprised observation of several components of ground-disturbing activity.

### *Topsoil stripping/piling mat*

Following demolition of the existing building, topsoil was stripped prior to laying a piling mat. The topsoil was removed from the northern and western portions of the site (Fig. 3). To the west the depth was to *c.* 0.3m, and revealed only a brown silty subsoil. To the north, the stripping was slightly deeper, down to 0.36m and part of the underlying natural geology was exposed. Areas of disturbance (a former swimming pool and pond) were noted at the extreme north-eastern end of the site. The spoilheap was searched for archaeological finds but none were recovered.

### *Groundbeam trenches*

Following insertion of the piles, the ground beam trenches were excavated. These varied in width from 0.8m to 1.8m. To the west (Plot A) they were 1.1m deep and revealed a stratigraphy comprising 0.4m of made ground (piling mat) with, in places, a thin lens of former topsoil remaining, above 0.45m of orange brown sandy gravel above an orange sand (Fig. 4). Several periglacial convolutions with clayey fill were observed in the gravel and sand. To the east (Plot B) the trenches were shallower (0.8m) with 0.2m of piling mat overlying 0.1m of remnant topsoil above gravel.

Several pits and other areas of disturbance were noted cutting the gravel natural geology, but all were unambiguously of late 19th- or 20th-century date, containing modern pottery, flower pots, coal/clinker and including areas representing the recent demolition activity.

### *Soakaway and Services*

A soakaway was dug towards the north-east end of the site (Fig. 3). The pit was 3.5m long, 2.0m wide and 1.7m deep. The stratigraphy revealed comprised 0.48m of topsoil above 0.32m of brown sandy subsoil above 0.5m of modern made ground above 0.3m of reddish yellow gravel and sand above 0.1m of chalk (Fig. 4). The lack of a thickness of gravel and the presence of the made ground suggests that this area of the site had been previously disturbed and corresponds with the position of the former swimming pool. Again, no archaeological finds or deposits were recovered.

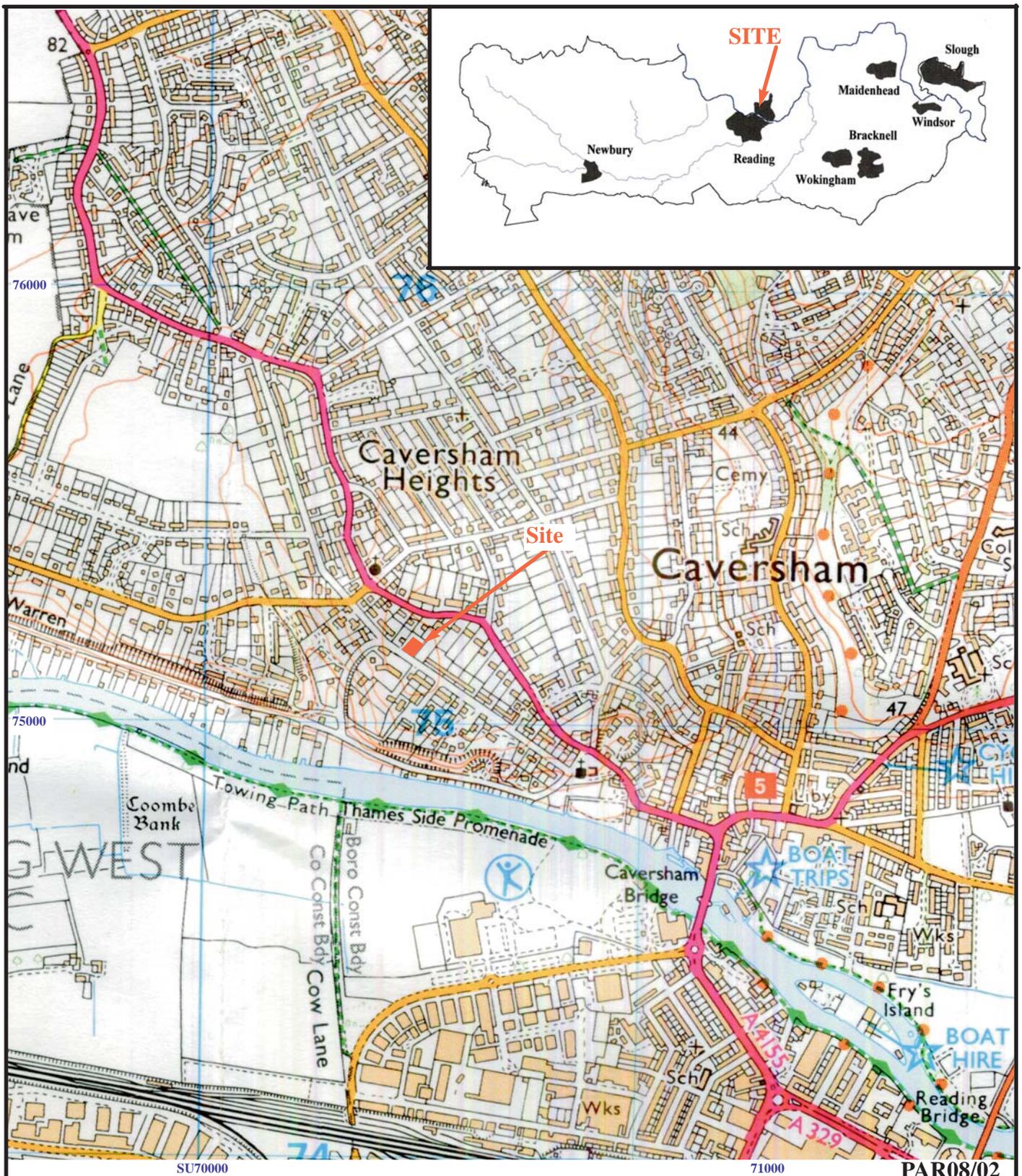
Other service runs were to be dug in shallow trenches, 0.3m deep and within the made ground or remaining topsoil on the site. These were not observed.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief carried out on the various components of the ground disturbing activities did not reveal any finds nor deposits of archaeological interest. A number of areas of disturbance, some associated with the previous structures on the site were observed.

## **References**

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Solid and Edition, Keyworth  
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO  
Wymer, J, 1968, *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain*, London

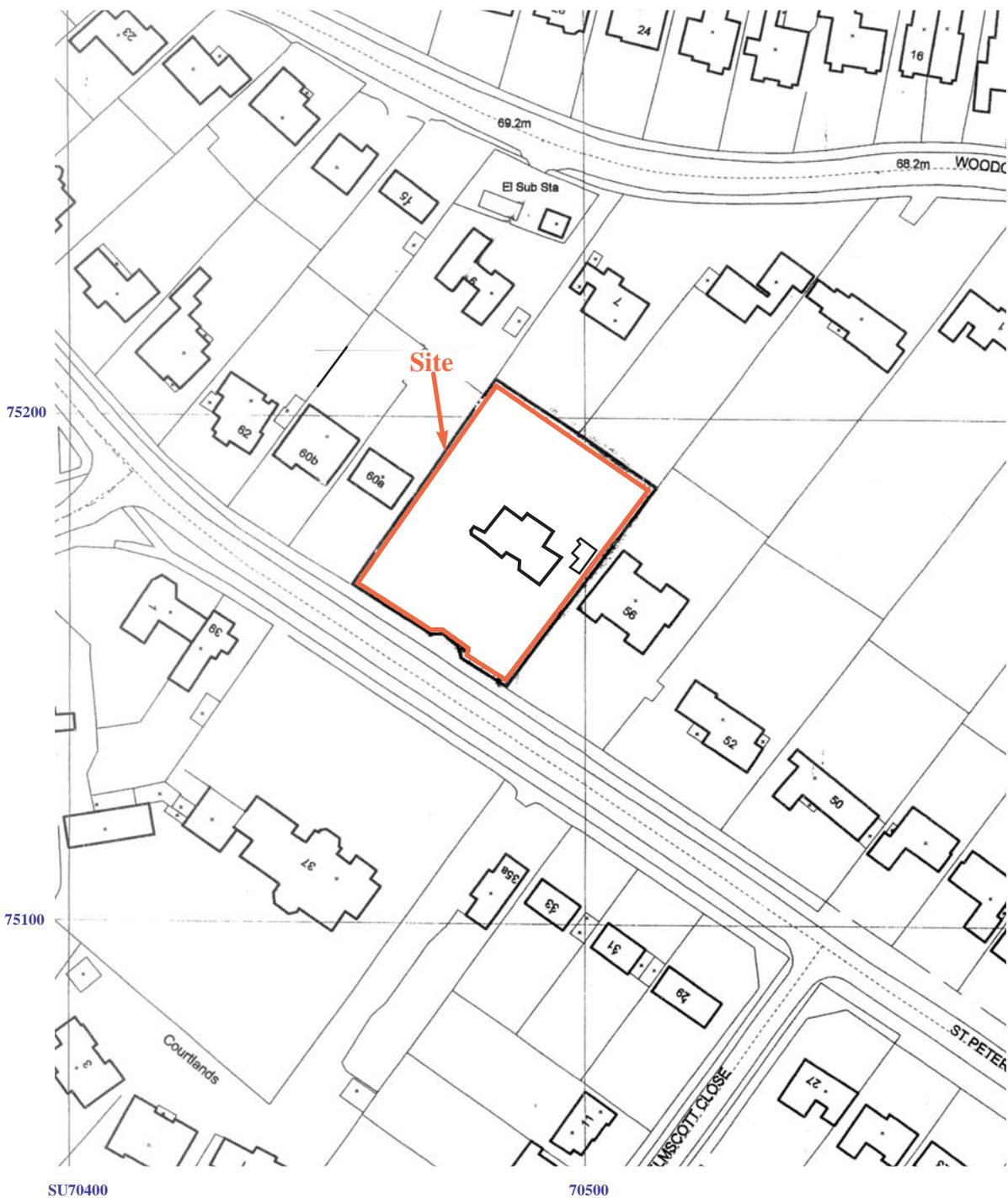


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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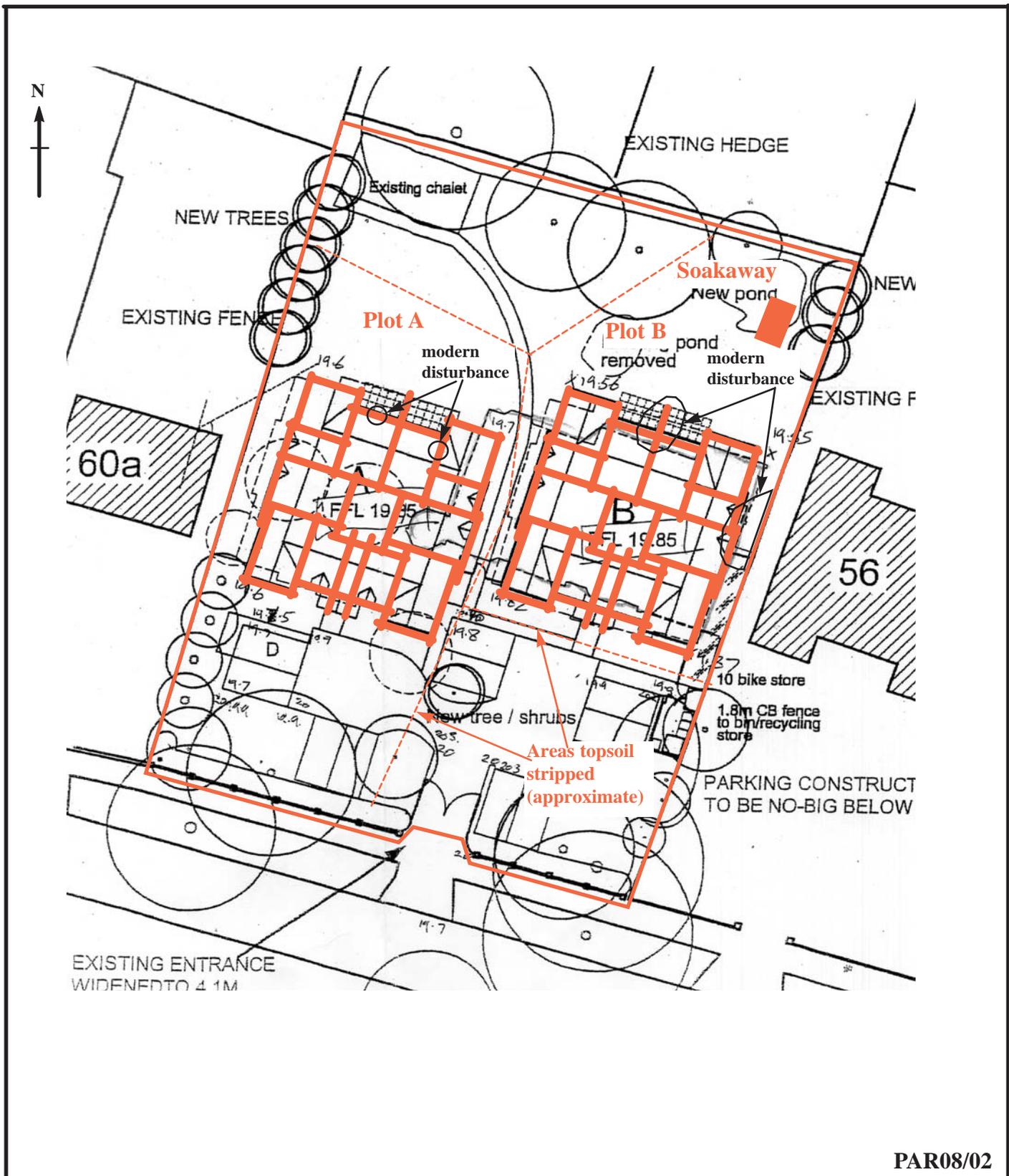
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on St Peters Avenue

Scale 1:1250.

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Figure 3. Location of areas observed

Scale 1:250.

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

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Trenches  
(Plot A)

69.2m

Soakaway

69.1m AOD

Made ground  
(piling mat)

Topsoil

-----Subsoil-----

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Orange gravel  
(natural geology)

Subsoil  
(brown sandy gravel)

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Orange sand  
(natural geology)

Made ground

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Base of trench

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Red/yellow sandy gravel  
(natural geology)

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Chalk  
(natural geology)

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Base of trench

0 1m

Figure 4. Representative sections

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