

**Land to the rear of 125 Upper Woodcote Road,
Reading, Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

For Argyll Homes

by Danielle Milbank

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code UWR 07/31

October 2007

Summary

Site name: 125 Upper Woodcote Road, Reading Berkshire.

Grid reference: SU 6991 7588

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 9th September–29th October 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Danielle Milbank

Site code: UWR 07/31

Area of site: c. 0.25ha

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

Monuments identified: None

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 ✓ xx.xx.06
	Steve Preston ✓ 31.10.07

By Danielle Milbank

Report 07/31

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land tot the rear of 121–127 Upper Woodcote Road, Reading, Berkshire, (SU 6991 7588) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Simon Seymour of Argyll Homes South Ltd, Highway House, 17 London End, Beaconsfield Old Town, Buckingham, HP9 2HN.

A planning application (06/01238/OUT) has been gained by Argyll Homes from Reading Borough Council, for the construction of new housing on the site. The consent is subject to a condition (21) which requires a programme of archaeological work to be carried out before groundworks commence. This was to take the form, initially, of field evaluation (trial trenching), based on the results of which, an appropriate mitigation strategy could be designed if required. A brief for an archaeological evaluation provided by Mr David Thomason, Archaeological Officer of Berkshire Archaeology, who advise Reading Borough Council on archacological matters, has highlighted the archaeological potential of the site.

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 Mr David Thomason of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Milbank and Kayleigh Harrison between 4th September and 29th October 2007 and the site code is UWR07/31. 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 southern side of Upper Woodcote Road, which lies in the Caversham Heights area, c.1.5km to the north of the centre of Reading (Fig. 1). The site comprises the plot of 125 Upper Woodcote Road, and land to the rear of nos. 121, 123 and 127, and is irregularly shaped (Fig. 2). No. 125 has been demolished and the site is currently occupied by its plot and the gardens of 121, 123 and 127, which are made up of lawn areas and trees. The site slopes slightly down to the south, with the street front at 71m above Ordnance Datum, and the rear boundary of the gardens at 69.5m AOD. The site is located on Plateau Gravel (BGS 1971), and orange sandy clay and flint gravel were encountered in all trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a summary note prepared by Berkshire Archaeology (Thomason 2007). In summary, the site lies adjacent to an area containing what may be the site of a Roman villa, certainly an occupation site with stone-walled structures. Other findspots of Roman coins and pottery are recorded nearby, as is the findspot of a Palaeolithic stone tool. Further to the west is the location of a medieval occupation site (Hull 1997).

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 work was 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 be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific aims of the evaluation were;

- to determine if archaeological relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if any Roman deposits have survived on the site.

Four 20m long trenches were to be excavated prior to groundworks, generally targeting the footprints of the proposed housing, distributed across the garden areas and the area formerly occupied by no. 125. The topsoil and overburden were removed by JCB-type machine fitted with 1.6m wide ditching bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist, and all spoil heaps were monitored. A sondage was excavated in Trench 3 in order to examine the underlying geology.

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

Results (Figs. 3 and 4)

Trench 1 (Plate 1)

Trench 1 was 20.50m long, 1.6m wide, 0.75m deep at the south end and 0.60m at the north. It was aligned roughly north-south. The stratigraphy encountered was topsoil which was 0.30m thick, which overlay 0.10m of

red brown sandy silt subsoil, with moderate flint gravel inclusions. This in turn overlay the natural geology which was an orange clay sand with flint gravel patches. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Trench 2

This trench was 21.10m long, 1.6m wide and 0.60m deep at the south-west end and 0.40m deep at the north-west end, and was aligned SW-NE. Here, topsoil 0.23m thick overlay subsoil (as above) 0.09m thick. This in turn overlay orange clay sand with occasional flint gravel which comprised the natural geology. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Trench 3 (Plate 2)

Trench 3 was aligned SW-NE, was 20.20m long, 1.6m wide and 0.78m deep. A test pit was excavated to 0.98m deep at the south-west end to verify the natural geology. Topsoil 0.30m thick overlay subsoil (as above) which was 0.31m thick. This in turn overlay the natural orange clay sand with flint gravel patches. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Trench 4

This trench was aligned roughly north-south and was 20.60m long, 1.6m wide and 0.46m deep (Fig. 4). Topsoil 0.25m thick overlay subsoil (as above) which was 0.11m thick. This overlay the orange clay sand with flint gravel inclusions. No archaeological finds or deposits were encountered.

Conclusion

Although the potential of the site was considered to be high, no archaeological deposits were encountered. The subsoil and underlying geology appeared to be completely undisturbed in the area to be developed. This would therefore provide ideal conditions for archaeological features to be identified, had any been present, but none were observed. Based on these results, the site has no archaeological potential.

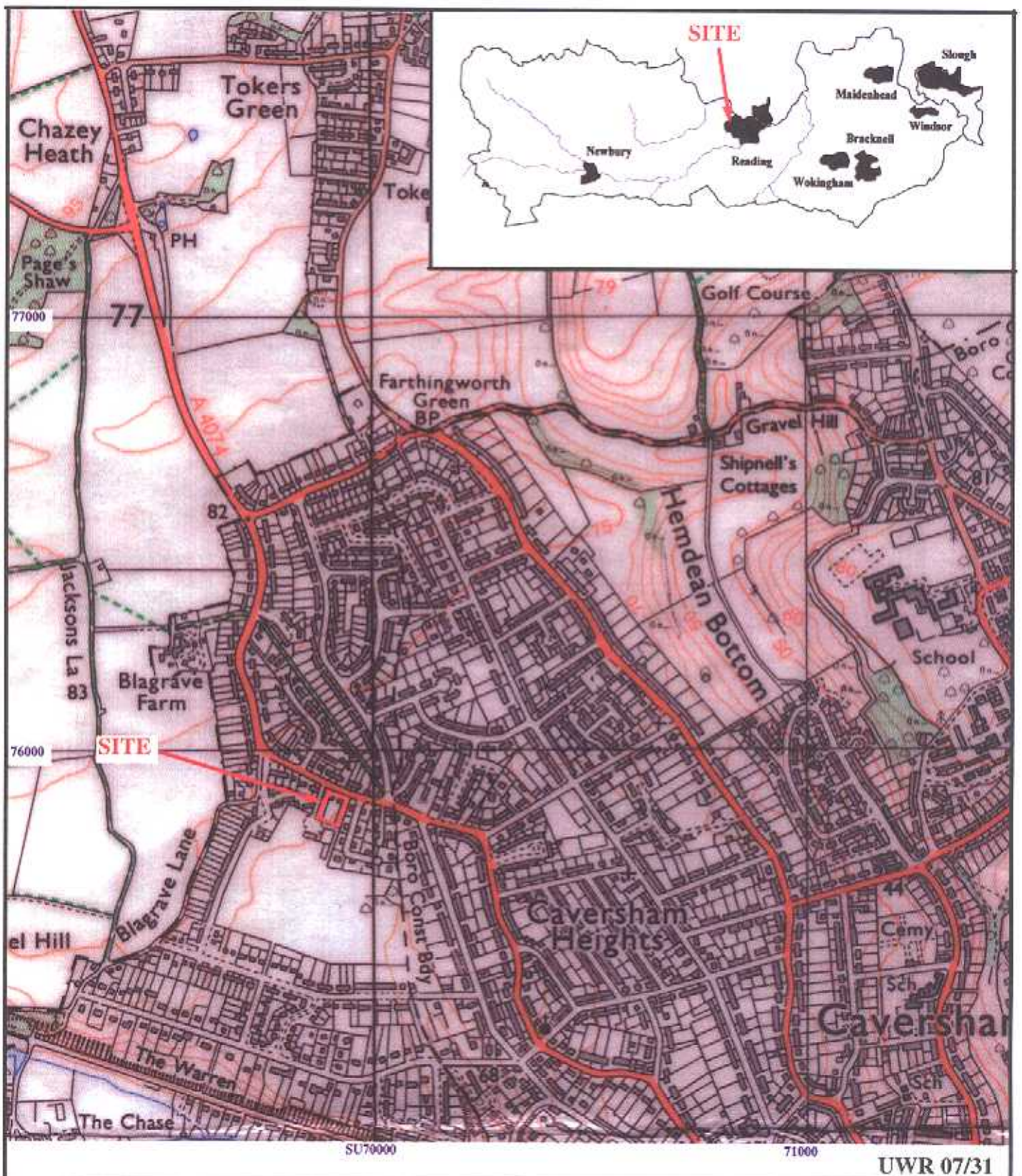
References

- BCS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Hull, G, 1997, Caversham Heath Golf Course, (Mapledurham Golf Course-2, South Course), South Oxfordshire, an archaeological evaluation, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 97/82h, Reading
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or SW end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	20.50	1.6	0.75m at S 0.60m at N	Topsoil 0.30m thick onto red brown sandy silt subsoil 0.10m thick onto orange clay sand and flint gravel geology [Plate 1]
2	21.10	1.6	0.60m SW 0.40m NE	Topsoil 0.23m thick onto red brown sandy silt subsoil 0.09m thick onto orange clay sand and flint gravel geology
3	20.20	1.6	0.78m	Topsoil 0.30m thick onto red brown sandy silt subsoil 0.31m thick onto orange clay sand and flint gravel geology [Plate 2]
4	20.60	1.6	0.46m	Topsoil 0.25m thick onto red brown sandy silt subsoil 0.11m thick onto orange clay sand and flint gravel geology



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Land to rear of 121-7 Upper Woodcote Road,
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Archaeological evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Reading
and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Upper Woodcote Road.

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Land to rear of 121-7 Upper Woodcote Road, Caversham,
Reading, Berkshire, 2007

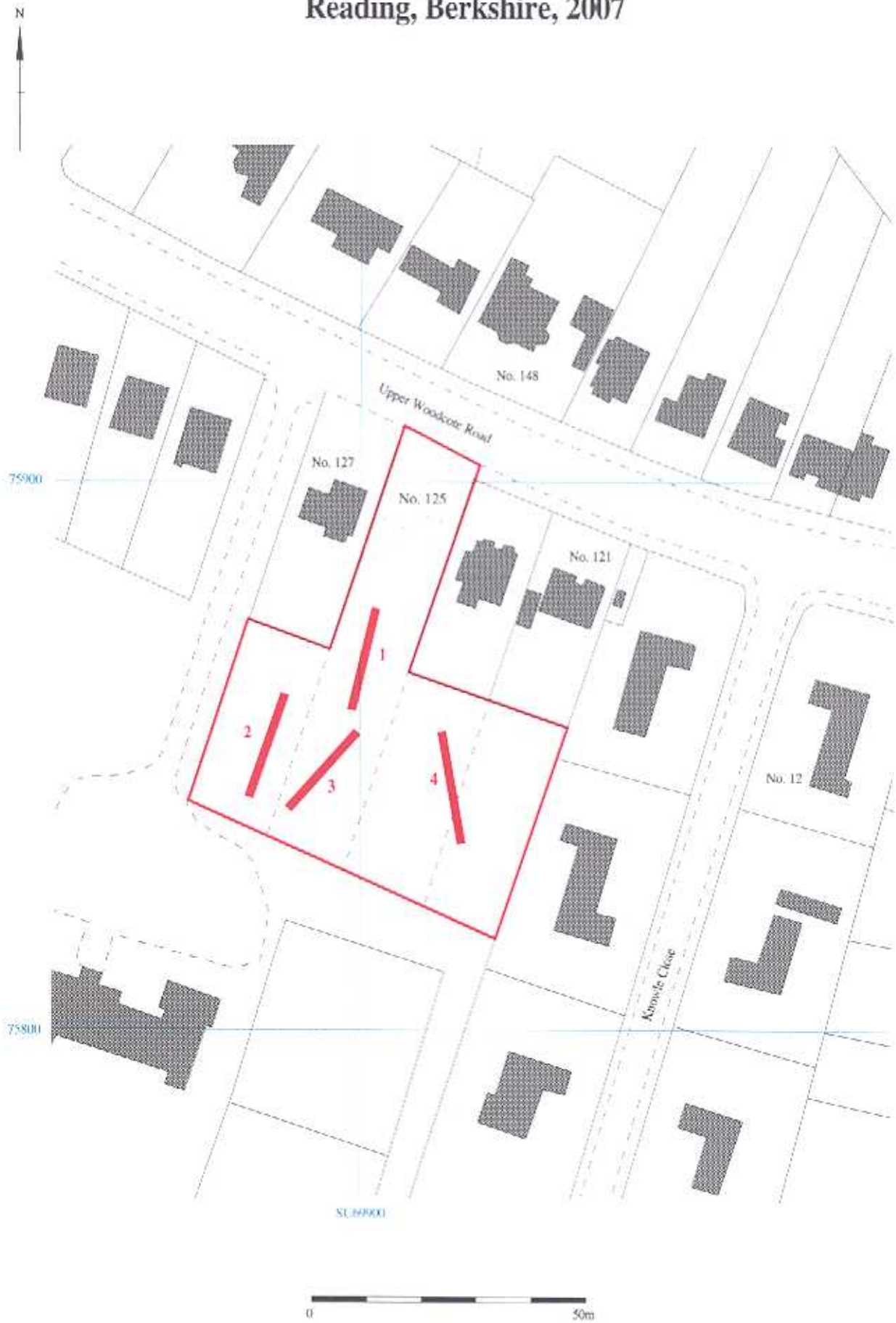


Figure 3. Location of trenches.

121-127 Upper Woodcote Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, 2007

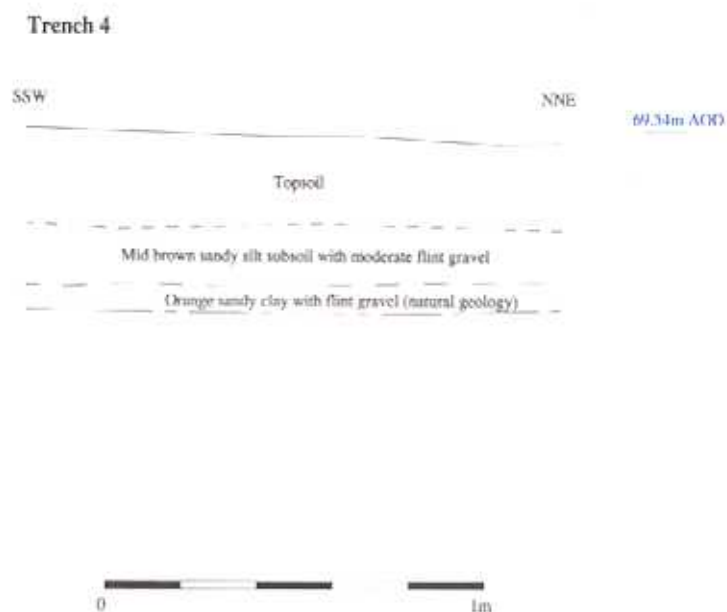


Figure 4. Representative section of Trench 4.



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking north-northeast; scales 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking south-southwest; scales 2m and 1m.