

3a Eastern Avenue Reading Berkshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



August 2007

Client: Mr A. Tier

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Planning Ref N^o: 07/00121
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between the 11th and 13th of July 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 3a Eastern Avenue, Reading, Berkshire (NGR: SU 733 731). The work was commissioned by Mr A. Tier in advance of the construction of a new dwelling on the plot. The watching brief revealed deep deposits of colluvium overlying the site, but no significant archaeology was encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 11th and 13th of July 2007, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 3a Eastern Avenue, Reading, Berkshire (NGR: SU 733 731). The work was commissioned by Mr A. Tier in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new dwelling (Planning Application No. 07/00121)
- 1.1.2 A project brief was agreed with Berkshire Archaeology stating that an archaeological watching brief should be conducted during the course of any intrusive groundworks.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2007).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the eastern side of Reading within the centre of a residential area (Fig. 1). The development site was roughly level at a height of 48 m above OD and occupied an area of approximately 450 m². The underlying geology was alluvium overlying valley gravel (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet no. 268).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2007) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The following background was produced following discussions with Berkshire Archaeology.
- 1.3.3 The site has been identified as being of archaeological potential, due to a number of sites in the vicinity which are recorded on the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record for this area.
- 1.3.4 Evaluation, excavation and watching brief works carried out at 209-223 Kings Road, some 90 m to the north-west of this application, revealed ditches and pit features from the prehistoric periods through to the medieval period. Evidence also suggests a cemetery in this area. It is possible that similar remains will be encountered on Eastern Avenue.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To determine or confirm the approximate date or range of any such archaeology, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- 2.1.3 To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- 2.1.4 To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape, economy, status, utility and social activity.
- 2.1.5 To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.
- 2.1.6 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The site was topsoil stripped by a mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket prior to the excavation of the foundation trenches. These were undertaken using a 0.6 m wide bucket while under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 A plan showing the extent of the excavations was maintained at a scale of 1:50 and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and recorded sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D. Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 At the south-western end of the excavations a layer of orange-brown silty sand (8) was encountered at a depth of 1.3 m below the current ground level (Fig. 2, Section 2). This deposit sloped steeply downwards towards the south and represents a layer of colluvium. This was overlaid by a 0.4 m deep layer of orange-brown clay silt (7), which contained quantities of small sub-angular gravel. This deposit followed the inclination of Layer 8 and also represents a layer of colluvium. Sealing this deposit was a 0.4 m deep layer of red-brown clay silt (6) which contained many large sub-angular flint nodules. Overlying this was a 0.4 m deep layer of red-brown clay silt (5). Both layers 5 and 6 follow the same inclination as the previous layers and also represent layers of colluvium. Layer 5 was sealed by a 0.18 m deep layer of grey-brown silt loam (1), a layer of worked garden soil, possibly redeposited in origin.

3.1.2 At the northern end of the site (Fig. 2, Section 1), a layer of red-brown clay (4) was encountered at a depth of 0.8 m below the current ground level. This deposit sloped down southwards similarly to those recorded within section 2 and also represents a layer of colluvium. Overlying this was a 0.4 m deep layer of dark red-brown clay silt (3), this contained many small sub-angular gravels. This was overlain a 0.4 m deep layer of orange-brown silt clay (2). Both these layers follow the general southwards slope and also represent layers of colluvium. This section was also completed by a 0.18 m deep layer of grey-brown silt loam (1), the worked garden soil.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Fragments of modern construction debris, modern pottery and modern bottle glass were encountered within the topsoil (1). The presence of these artefacts was noted but they were not retained. No other dating evidence was encountered.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The layer of modern worked soil (1) was encountered lying directly above the layers of colluvium with no intervening layers of subsoil or earlier worked soil. There is the probability that the area of the development site has been truncated and the topsoil reinstated in the past, possibly during construction of the adjacent properties.

4.1.2 A second possibility is that this area has never been subject to occupation or intensive agriculture, which may account for the absence of any significant archaeology and the absence of any earlier soil horizons.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.18 m	-	Worked garden soil	Bricks, pottery, bottle glass	C19th/ C20th
2	Layer	0.4 m	-	Layer of colluvium	-	-
3	Layer	0.4 m	-	Layer of colluvium	-	-
4	Layer	> 0.3 m	-	Layer of colluvium	-	-
5	Layer	0.4 m	-	Layer of colluvium	-	-
6	Layer	0.4 m	-	Layer of colluvium	-	-
7	Layer	0.4 m	-	Layer of colluvium	-	-
8	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Layer of colluvium	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

OA, 2007 3a Eastern Avenue, Reading, Berkshire: Written scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

OAU, 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 3a Eastern Avenue, reading, Berkshire

Site code: REAST 07

Grid reference: SU 732 729

Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of building foundations

Date and duration of project: 11th to 13th of July 2007, 3 days

Area of site: 450 m²

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed deep deposits of colluvium throughout the site. No significant archaeology was encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Reading Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number:

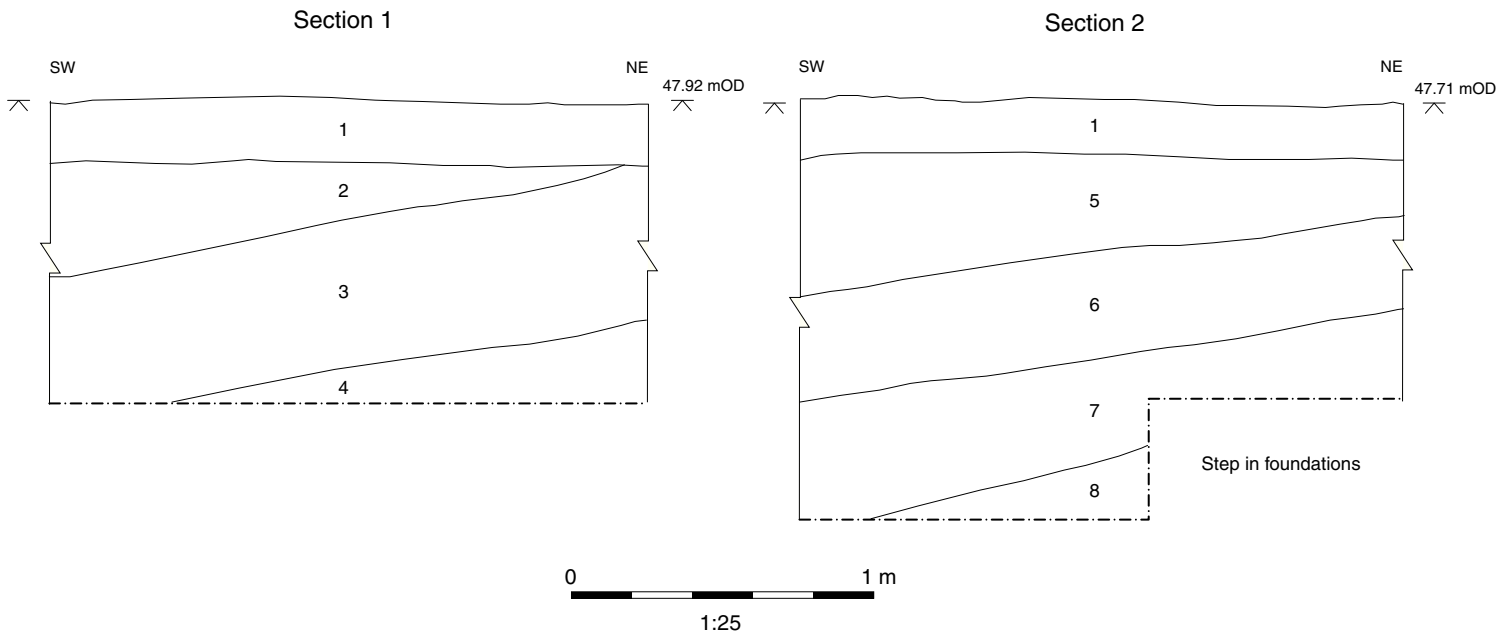
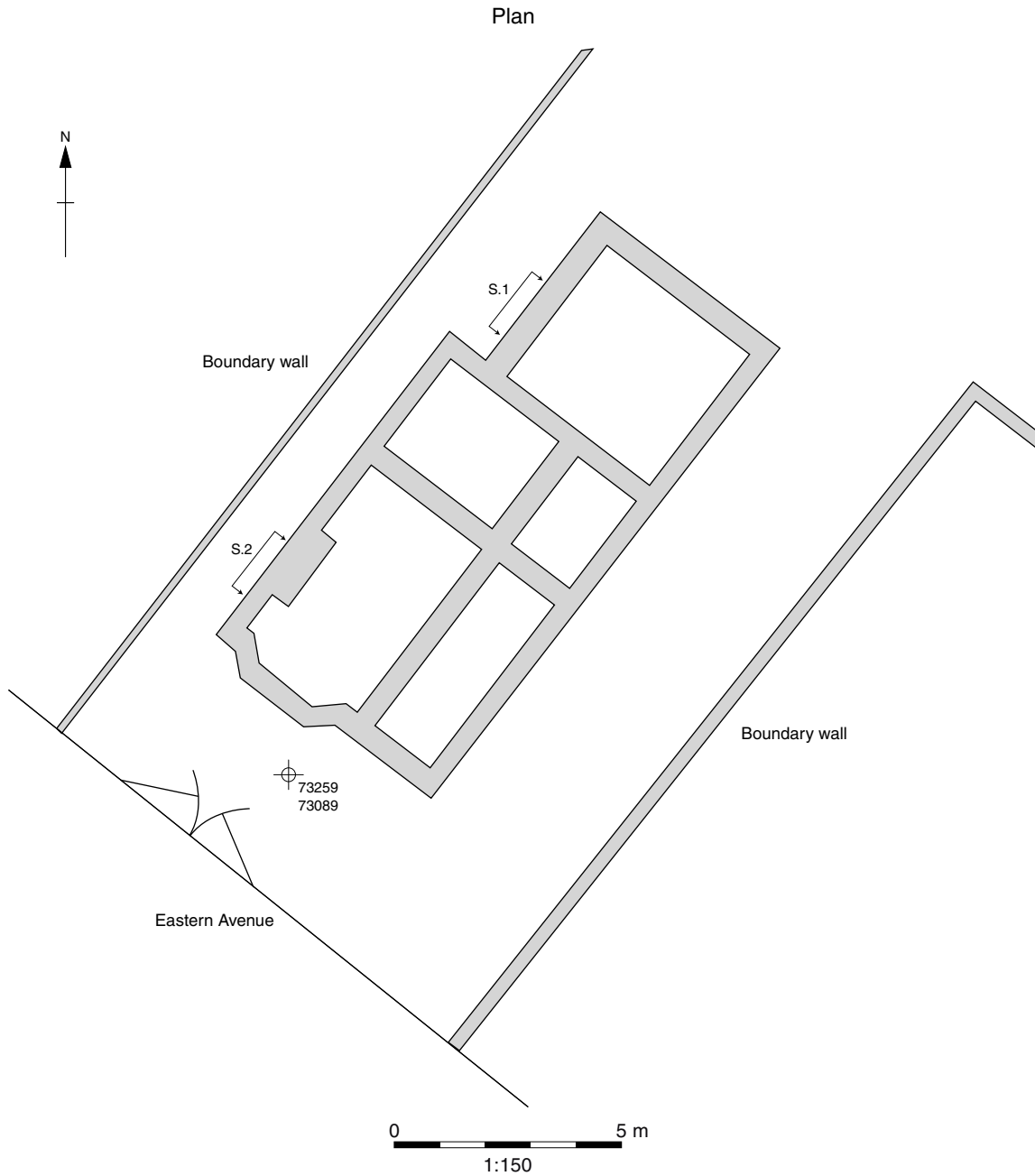
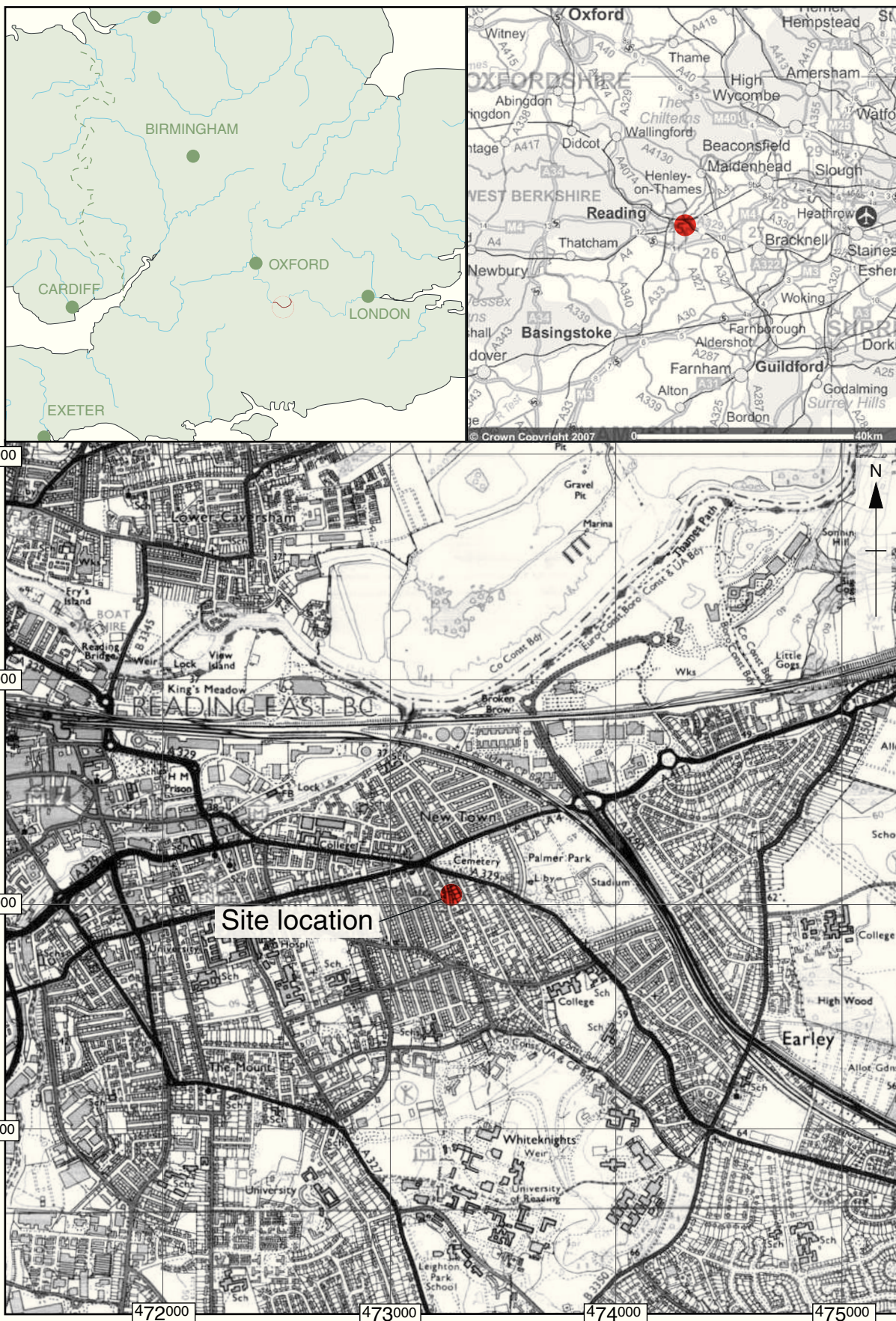


Figure 2: Site plan and sections



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Figure 1: Site location

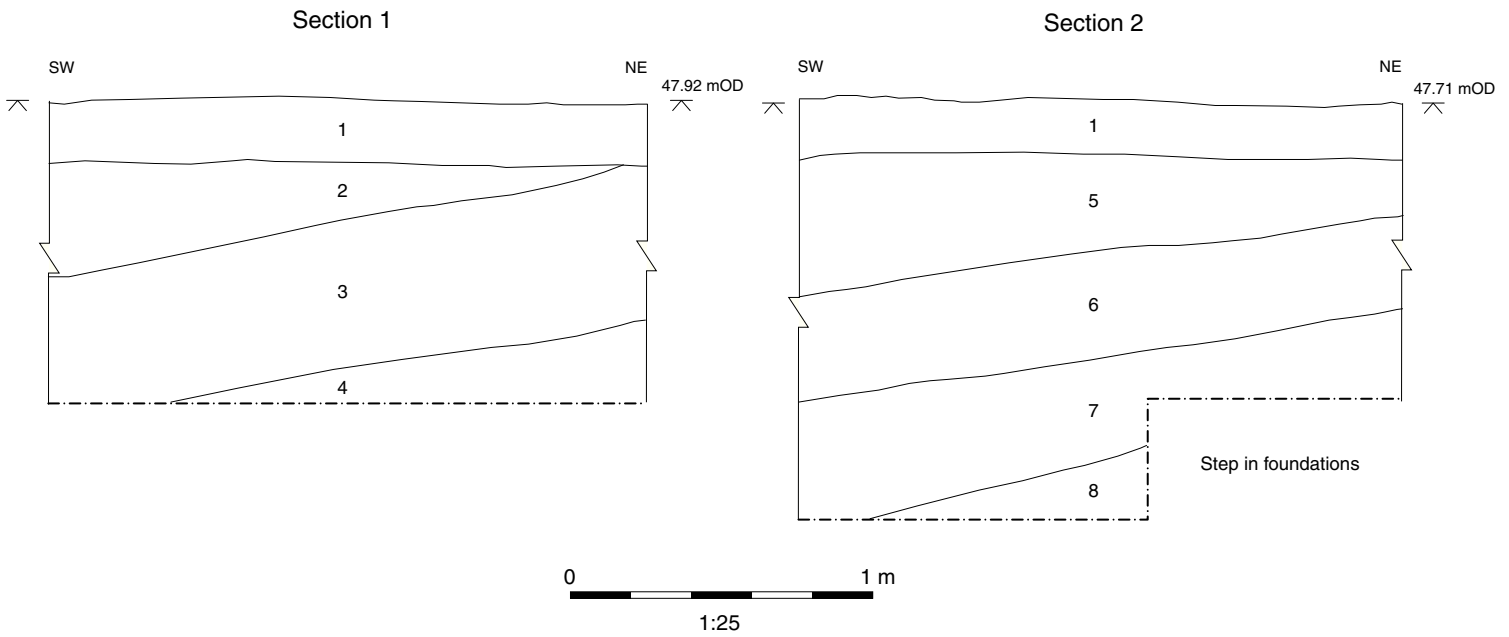
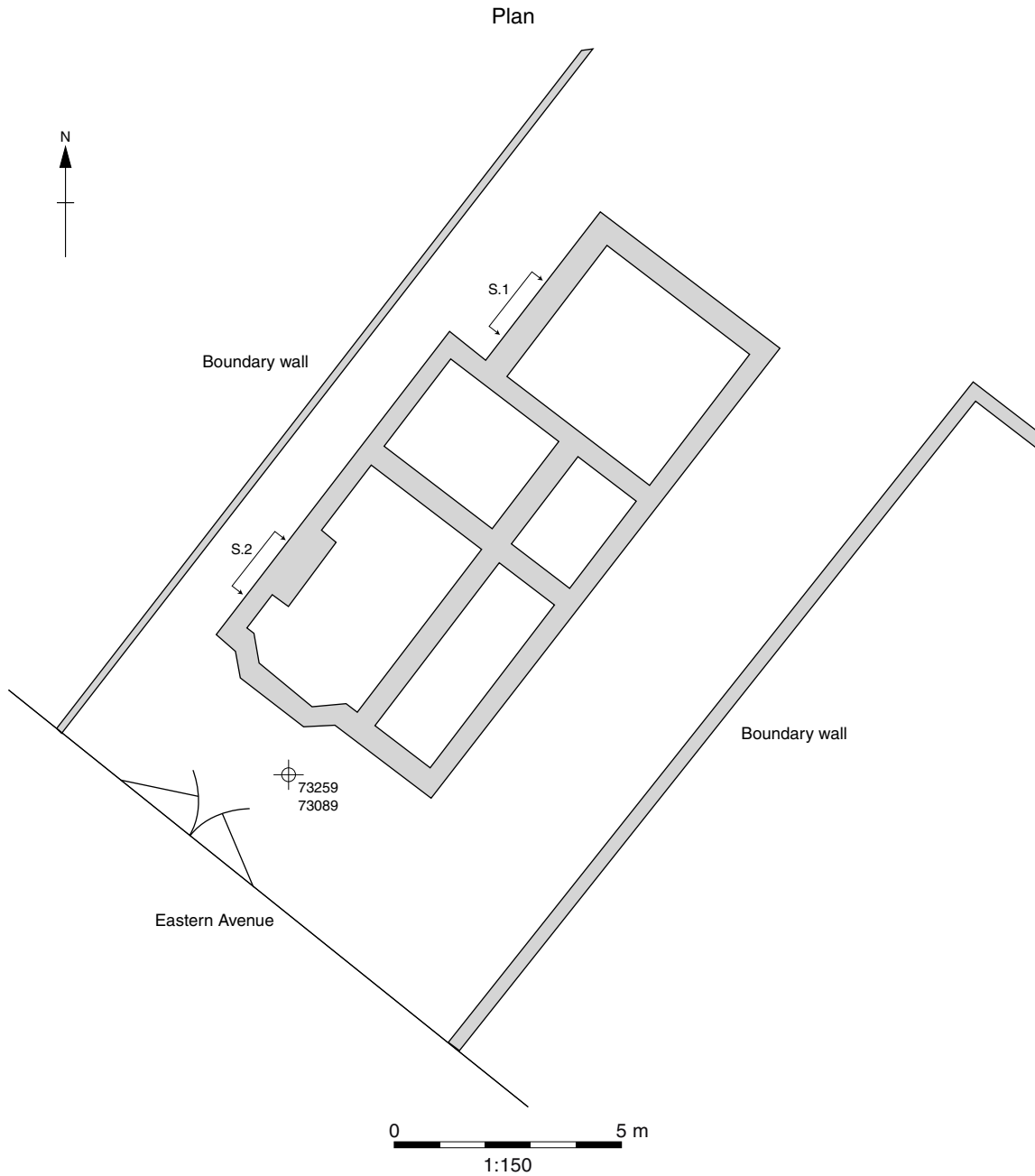


Figure 2: Site plan and sections



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