



**FINAL**

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DESK-BASED  
ASSESSMENT**

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**55 Vastern Road,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**March 2019**

**Planning Authority:  
Reading Borough Council**

**Site centred at:  
SU 7516 7414**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The site of 55 Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire has been reviewed for its archaeological potential.

In terms of relevant designated heritage assets, no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefields, or Historic Wreck Sites, lie within the immediate proximity of the site.

The site is not located in an area of designated archaeological priority.

The site is considered likely to have a modest archaeological potential for below-ground geoarchaeological deposits associated with the mid-Prehistoric period. There is a low archaeological potential for all remaining periods.

Medieval and Post-Medieval agricultural activity is considered likely to have had a moderate, but widespread, negative impact on below ground archaeological deposits.

The construction, and subsequent demolition, of numerous buildings within the site from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, is considered likely to have had a severe, widespread, negative impact on below ground archaeological deposits.

Current development proposals comprise the demolition of existing buildings within the site, followed by the construction of residential development.

Due to the potential for geoarchaeological deposits associated with the mid-Prehistoric period, the archaeological advisor to Reading Borough Council is anticipated to require a staged programme of geoarchaeological investigation prior to development.

As remains of national significance are not anticipated, such investigation can follow the granting of planning consent secured by an appropriate condition.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF STUDY**

- 1.1 This below ground archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared by Chris Clarke of CgMs Heritage (part of RPS) on behalf of Berkeley Homes.
- 1.2 The subject of this Assessment comprises the site of 55 Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire. The site is centred at SU 7156 7414 within the Borough of Reading (see Figs. 1-2). The site is bounded by Vastern Road to the south, the River Thames towpath to the north, residential properties to the west, and an electrical substation and associated features to the east. Overall the site measures approximately 0.8ha in size.
- 1.3 In terms of designated heritage assets, no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck Sites lie within the vicinity of the site. The site is not located in a designated area of archaeological priority.
- 1.4 Accordingly, Berkeley Homes have commissioned CgMs Heritage to establish the archaeological potential of the site, and to provide guidance on ways to accommodate any heritage constraints identified.
- 1.5 In line with national and local policy and guidance, this desk-based assessment comprises an examination of evidence on the Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and other sources, including the Berkshire Record Office. The report also includes the results of a comprehensive map regression exercise and the results of a site visit. An external site inspection was conducted in February 2019.
- 1.6 The Assessment thus enables relevant parties to assess the heritage potential of various parts of the site and to consider the need for design, civil engineering, and archaeological solutions to the archaeological potential identified.

## **2.0 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK**

- 2.1 National legislation regarding archaeology, including scheduled monuments, is contained in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, amended by the National Heritage Act 1983 and 2002, and updated in April 2014.
- 2.2 In March 2012, the government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was later revised in July 2018. The NPPF is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which was published online 6th March 2014 and last updated 28 July 2017 ([http://planning\\_guidance.planningportal.gov.uk](http://planning_guidance.planningportal.gov.uk)).
- 2.3 The NPPF and NPPG are additionally supported by three Good Practice Advice (GPA) documents published by Historic England: GPA 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans; GPA 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (both published March 2015). The second edition of GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets was published in December 2017.

### **National Planning Policy**

- 2.4 Section 16 of the NPPF, entitled Conserving and enhancing the historic environment provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:
- Delivery of sustainable development;
  - Understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
  - Conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
  - Recognition that heritage makes to our knowledge and understanding of the past.
- 2.5 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. Paragraph 189 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset and that level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the

importance of the asset and should be no more than sufficient to review the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.

2.6 *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. They include designated heritage assets (as defined in the NPPF) and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process.

2.7 Annex 2 also defines *Archaeological Interest* as a heritage asset which holds or potentially could hold evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

2.8 A *Nationally Important Designated Heritage Asset* comprises a: World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area.

2.9 *Significance* is defined as: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

2.10 *Setting* is defined as: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

2.11 In short, government policy provides a framework for the planning process which:

- Requires appropriate consideration of Heritage Assets;
- also requires the appropriate consideration of settings to heritage assets;
- In circumstances where heritage assets are potentially to be adversely impacted by proposed development seeks adequate information (from desk based assessment and field evaluation where necessary) to enable informed planning decisions;
- Provides for the excavation and investigation of affected sites not significant enough to merit *in-situ* preservation.

- 2.12 The NPPG reiterates that the conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach. Furthermore, it highlights that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Importantly, the guidance states that if complete, or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified, the aim should then be to capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance, and make the interpretation publically available. Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. An important consideration should be whether the proposed works adversely affect a key contributor to a heritage asset's significance.
- 2.13 Additionally, it is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development, that is to be assessed. The level of 'substantial harm' is considered to be a high bar that may not arise in many cases. Essentially, whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the NPPF. Importantly, harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting. Setting is defined as the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may be more extensive than the curtilage. A thorough assessment of the impact of proposals upon setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.
- 2.14 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.
- 2.15 The Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy adopted January 2008 (updated 2015) contains the following Policy which relates to the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

**POLICY CS33: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

**HISTORIC FEATURES AND AREAS OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING THEIR SETTINGS, WILL BE PROTECTED AND WHERE APPROPRIATE ENHANCED.**

**THIS WILL INCLUDE: -**

- **LISTED BUILDINGS;**
- **CONSERVATION AREAS;**

- **OTHER FEATURES WITH LOCAL OR NATIONAL DESIGNATION, SUCH AS SITES AND FEATURES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE, AND HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS.**

**PLANNING PERMISSION WILL ONLY BE GRANTED WHERE DEVELOPMENT HAS NO ADVERSE IMPACT ON HISTORIC ASSETS AND THEIR SETTINGS. ALL PROPOSALS WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROTECT AND WHERE APPROPRIATE ENHANCE THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA IN WHICH THEY ARE LOCATED.**

2.16 The LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document was adopted in 2012 (updated 2015) and replaces the previous 'saved' policies. It contains a chapter on heritage assets which includes the following paragraph:

**9.1.9 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY PROVIDES AN APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK FOR CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT AFFECTS HISTORIC ASSETS IN READING AND IT IS NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO HAVE SPECIFIC DETAILED POLICIES WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT. ADDITIONALLY, THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IS ADDRESSED STRATEGICALLY BY POLICY CS33 (PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT) IN THE CORE STRATEGY.**

2.17 In terms of designated heritage assets as defined above in the NPPF, and as shown on Figure 2a, no World Heritage Sites, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck designations lie within, or in close proximity to, the 500m radius study area. The site is not located in a designated area of archaeological priority.

2.18 The Scheduled Monument of Reading Abbey (Clunic and Benedictine Monastery and Civil War earthwork) (DBF97, 1007932, SU 7171 7360) is located approximately 500m to the southeast of the site.

2.19 The Entrance Building to the right hand side of the site's Vastern Road frontage (DRM2842, SU 7154 7407) has been designated as a Locally Listed Building by Reading Borough Council. Potential development impacts to this non-designated heritage asset are assessment within a separate Heritage Statement (Built Heritage Consultancy 2019) and not addressed within this report.

2.20 In line with relevant planning policy and guidance, this desk-based assessment seeks to clarify the site's archaeological potential and the need or otherwise for additional mitigation measures.

### **3.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

#### **Geology**

- 3.1 The solid geology of the site is shown by the British Geological Society (BGS 2019) as Seaford Chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation, overlain by superficial Langley Silt Formation.
- 3.2 In 2018, a detailed programme of geotechnical investigation was undertaken across the site (Appendix 1). A review of the geotechnical logs recorded a consistent horizon of modern made ground, measuring in general between 1.5m and 1.9m thick, and exceeding over 2m in depth in several locations. In proximity to Vastern Road, alluvial deposits underlying the made ground measured approximately 0.7m thick, increasing in thickness to between 2.5m and 3.5m adjacent to the River Thames frontage. The only peat like deposits recorded by the geotechnical investigations consisted of a band of organic material located within borehole 1003E adjacent to the western boundary, 0.6m thick, at a depth of 2.7m below ground level. All alluvial deposits sealed Kempton Park Gravel.
- 3.3 The geoarchaeological monitoring of boreholes undertaken in association with the construction of the Reading Footbridge, immediately to the north of the site recorded a general profile consisting of made ground deposits between 0.60m and 1.20m thick, overlaying alluvial deposits forming a horizon between 0.65m and 2.50m thick. River Terrace Gravels were recorded underlying the alluvial deposits present (QUEST 2014).
- 3.4 Historic geotechnical investigation logs held by the British Geological Society for works undertaken on the opposite side of Vastern Road from the site record a profile consisting of made ground between 1.7m and 2.4m thick overlying alluvial deposits (BGS 2019).
- 3.5 An archaeological evaluation undertaken on Vastern Road, approximately 75m to the east of the site, recorded the presence of made ground deposits to a depth of 1.50m, overlying alluvium (ERM249, SU 71668 74046).

#### **Topography**

- 3.6 Within the wider topographic setting the study site is located on the Thames Valley floodplain. The ground surface within the study site is roughly level at approximately 38m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

3.7 The course of River Thames forms the northern boundary of the study site.

#### **4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND WITH ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

##### **Timescales used in this report:**

###### **Prehistoric**

Palaeolithic	900,000	-	12,000	BC
Mesolithic	12,000	-	4,000	BC
Neolithic	4,000	-	1,800	BC
Bronze Age	1,800	-	600	BC
Iron Age	600	-	AD 43	

###### **Historic**

Roman	AD	43	-	410
Saxon/Early Medieval	AD	410	-	1066
Medieval	AD	1066	-	1485
Post Medieval	AD	1486	-	1799
Modern	AD	1800	-	Present

###### **Introduction**

- 4.1 This chapter reviews the available archaeological evidence for the study site and the archaeological/historical background of the general area, and, in accordance with NPPF, considers the potential for any as yet to be discovered archaeological evidence on the study site.
- 4.2 What follows comprises a review of known archaeological assets within a 500m radius of the study site (Figs. 2a-2c), also referred to as the study area, held on the Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER), together with a historic map regression exercise charting the development of the study area from the nineteenth century onwards until the present day.
- 4.3 In terms of designated heritage assets, as defined above and as shown on Figure 2a, no designated World Heritage Sites, Wrecks or Historic Battlefields lie within the study area. The site is not located in a designated area of archaeological priority.

- 4.4 The Scheduled Monument of Reading Abbey (Clunio and Benedictine Monastery and Civil War earthwork) (DBF97, 1007932, SU 7171 7360) is located approximately 500m to the southeast of the site.
- 4.5 The Entrance Building to the right hand side of the site's Vastern Road frontage (DRM2842, SU 7154 7407) has been designated as a Locally Listed Building by Reading Borough Council. Potential development impacts to this heritage asset are assessment within a separate Heritage Statement (Built Heritage Consultancy 2019) and not addressed within this report.
- 4.6 In general the HER records within the study area are characterised by evidence for the development of the Late Medieval settlement at Reading to the south of the site, in addition to the recovery of artefacts from a range of periods from the River Thames.
- 4.7 The map regression exercise and a review of documentary evidence and secondary sources demonstrates that the site remained undeveloped up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, following which was subject to various phases of industrial/commercial development.
- 4.8 Chapter 5 subsequently considers the site conditions and whether the proposed development will impact the theoretical archaeological potential identified below.

### **Palaeolithic**

- 4.9 A Palaeolithic hand axe was found in a drainage trench at Station Road, Reading (MRD9049, SU 71500 73650). Its rolled condition suggests it was derived from the Taplow gravels c.370m to the south of the study site. In addition, an ovate Palaeolithic hand axe was found on Vachel Road, c500m southwest of the study site (MRD9047, SU 712 737). These artefacts probably derived from the Taplow gravels which outcrop to the south of the study site.
- 4.10 The alluvial deposits associated with the River Thames which underlie the site are of Holocene date. Therefore, these deposits are considered to have no potential for in-situ of Lower and Middle Palaeolithic date, any isolated artefacts would be *ex-situ* and of intrinsic interest only.
- 4.11 In the Upper Palaeolithic, hunter-gathers exploited valley floor locations. However, in view of the lack of evidence locally, a low potential for *in-situ* remains and lithics (worked and waste flint) is suggested. Even if present, any deposits would be buried at considerable depth within and beneath alluvium.

4.12 Accordingly, there is a low potential for Palaeolithic evidence on the site.

**Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age**

- 4.13 Geoarchaeological monitoring undertaken in 2014 during site investigation works associated with the construction of the Reading Pedestrian Bridge immediately to the north of the study site, identified in one borehole organic alluvial deposits. These deposits were thought to be located within a small channel at approximately 35m AOD, potentially dating to the Mesolithic or Neolithic period (QUEST 2014; ERM1552, SU 71639 74207).
- 4.14 In 1882, wooden piles were found associated with possible Mesolithic or Neolithic artefacts c.450m to the east of the site (MRD1303, SU 720 741). Due to the age and lack of detail regarding the discovery, it is difficult to establish the exact relationship between the piles and artefacts identified.
- 4.15 The Berkshire HER records a Mesolithic tranchet axe, pick and blade dredged from the River Thames in the vicinity of the study site (MRD11164, SU 717 741), while further artefacts from this period have been recovered from the river at Caversham (MRD11150, MRD11202, SU 71500 74400). The provenance of these artefacts is uncertain and they are, therefore, not considered relevant to an assessment of the site's archaeological potential.
- 4.16 A Neolithic flint axe was found in St Laurence's Churchyard (MRD11209, SU 71690 73580) c400m to the southeast of the site, with a second example found at Forbury c500m to the southeast (MRD11181, SU 71800 73600). A number of Neolithic axes were recovered during the dredging of the River Thames at Reading (MRD11185, SU 71700 74100), including a Neolithic or Bronze Age cup at Caversham (MRD11228, SU 71500 74400).
- 4.17 The HER records the discovery of a Bronze Age axe head from the foundations of Caversham Lock approximately 450m to the east of the site (MRD11253, SU 72060 74030). Bronze Age artefacts were also dredged from the River Thames at Reading (MRD11218), while a Bronze Age spearhead is recorded as being recovered from the river at Caversham (MRD11227). There are no other Bronze Age sites or finds recorded on the HER within a 500m radius of the study site and the lack of evidence locally suggests that the site may have been unattractive for settlement, as a result of seasonal flooding, throughout this period.

- 4.18 Geoarchaeological investigations at Forbury Road, approximately 450m southeast of the site, recorded a possible palaeochannel thought to be prehistoric in origin (MRD16767, SU 7191 7373).
- 4.19 Based on the existing evidence, there appears to be a low potential for evidence of human activity associated with the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age periods within the site, but a moderate to high potential for geoarchaeological deposits of this date to be present at depth within the site, where not impacted by later activity.

### **Roman & Iron Age**

- 4.20 Within Reading Borough there is little evidence for Iron Age settlement. Within the study area, the Berkshire HER has a single entry of Iron Age date, which records the discovery of an early Bronze brooch on Friar Street (MRD11254, SU 71500 73600) located c450m to the south of the site.
- 4.21 The significance of Reading in the Roman period is dwarfed by the Roman town of Calleva at Silchester, c.14km to the southwest. Indeed, Calleva was the focus of the Roman road system in the area, but many goods must have been transported by river and it is possible that Reading could have been a port serving Calleva.
- 4.22 Within the study area the HER records the discovery of Roman coins on Vastern Road approximately 125m to the east of the site (MRD11296, SU 7173 7406), and on Grey Friars Road (MRD11262, SU 71260 73690) approximately 500m to the southwest. In addition, Roman pottery was recovered during archaeological investigations at the rear of 1 Friar Street, c.450m south of the study site (MRD15735, SU 71690 73584).
- 4.23 In view of the limited number of Iron Age and Roman sites and finds locally, a low potential is identified for such activity within the study site.

### **Anglo-Saxon/Early Medieval**

- 4.24 In 871 the Anglo Saxon Chronicles record that the Danes entered Wessex at Reading. Sometime after this invasion, a rampart was built on the western edge of the settlement to defend, the side not protected by rivers. The line of the defences is thought to correspond with the north-south alignment of The Forbury (c.500m southeast of the study site) suggesting that the study site lay outside the limits of Danish settlement (MRD15633, SU 71690 73720).

- 4.25 The burial of a man and a horse was discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century near the engine sheds at Reading Station approximately 250m to the south of the study site (MRD3891, SU 71520 73900). A sword pommel found with the burial was dated to the 8th century, however its worn condition suggests the man was interred soon after 800 AD. The burial is believed to be Viking and from the Danish occupation of Reading. A further burials of this period was found near the Plummary Wall c.400m to the southeast of the site (MRD1388, SU 71770 73687).
- 4.26 A single sherd of pottery was recovered from a Post-Medieval pit during archaeological investigations at Shoemiths Court, c.450m south of the site (MRM16017, SU 71435 73659).
- 4.27 A spearhead of possible Anglo-Saxon origin was found in a garden at Wolsey Road, c.450m to the north of the site (MRD11321, SU 71480 74640).
- 4.28 Several Anglo-Saxon artefacts has been recovered from the River Thames at Reading (MRD11346, SU 717 741).
- 4.29 Due to the paucity of finds or features relating to this period found in proximity to the site, the potential for Anglo-Saxon remains to be present within the study site is considered to be low.

### **Medieval**

- 4.30 The Domesday survey of 1086 records two manors at Reading, one belonging to Battle Abbey and the other to the King. During this period the study site lay within the estate of Battle Abbey, which included a church (possibly on the site of St Mary's Church c.580m south of the study site), 29 dwellings and 12 acres of meadows.
- 4.31 The estate attached to Battle Abbey was recovered by Henry 1 in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century and in 1121 the King founded Reading Abbey on the newly acquired land. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Medieval settlement, which centred around St Mary's, grew along Broad Street and Friar Street c.500m to the south of the study site. Archaeological investigations at sites along Friar Street have recorded the remains of Medieval buildings and evidence of domestic activity (99-105 Friar Street: MRD15535-MRD15547, 25-26 Friar Street: MRM16016-16014, 1 Friar Street: MRD15734-15735, street repairs: MRM16784). Additional evidence in this area for Medieval occupation derives from near The Plummary Wall c.400m to the southeast of the site (MRD1386 & MRD1387, SU 71768 73687).

- 4.32 In 1233 a community of Friars were given a plot of land to the west of Caversham Road, c.400m northwest of the study site. Here, the Friars are recorded to have built a timber church, chapter house, dormitory and refectory. However, because of the sites location on the floodplain the Friar's found that they were often cut off by mud and water. In 1282-5 the Friars moved to the west end of New Street (HER MRD3938 at SU 71216 73588).
- 4.33 In 1121 the King founded Reading Abbey on behalf of the Clunic Order. By the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, control of the Abbey had passed to the Benedictine Order. Within a hundred years Reading Abbey had become one of the ten wealthiest Abbey's in the country, only to have been ransacked and the land sold off following the Dissolution in 1539. The majority of HER records listed within the Scheduled area (c.500m to the southeast of the site) relate to key buildings and structural elements associated with the Abbey identified during the extensive archaeological excavations which have taken place on site, including the Chancel, Treasury, Chapter House, Infirmary, Cloisters and Church (MRD15552, SU 72002 7359; MRD15561, SU 72008 73578; MRD15556, SU 72017 73604; MRD15553, SU 72020 73598; MRD15562, SU 72003 73548; MRD15565, SU 72104 73578; MRD15560, SU 71985 73555). There is no intervisibility between the Scheduled Monument and the study site, nor any associated significance.
- 4.34 Other contemporary religious institutions within Medieval Reading include St. Lawrence's Church and Hospitium of St. John the Baptist on Friars Street (MRD1398, SU 71710 73599; MRD15563, SU 71714 73609).
- 4.35 North of Gerrard Street the number of HER records attributed to the Medieval period declines considerable, consisting of a possible cut feature (MRM16558, SU 71329 73701), and recovery of a pilgrim bottle (MRD11398, SU 71120 73830) and pottery (MRD11371, SU 71480 73750), located c375m to the south and southwest of the site. This lack of evidence strongly implies that the study site lay at a distance beyond the Medieval settlement.
- 4.36 A Medieval arrowhead has been recovered from the River Thames at Reading (MRD11395, SU 71700 74100).
- 4.37 Later cartographic (1813 Plan of the Borough of Reading in J Man: not reproduced here) shows the study site occupied by meadow called '*Vastern*'. The name '*Vastern*' is thought to be an early Medieval word meaning a wilderness or wasteland.

4.38 During this period the study site lay outside the Medieval town, probably within water meadows. A low potential is identified for Medieval remains within the study site. However, the presence of contemporary field boundaries cannot be precluded.

**Post Medieval & Modern (including map regression exercise)**

4.39 During the majority of the Post-Medieval period, the site is likely to have remained within water meadows beyond the boundaries of the Post-Medieval town.

4.40 The earliest detailed depiction of the site derives from the 1807 Borough of Reading map (Fig. 3) showing the extent of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century settlement and surround environment. The location of the site falls within open ground presumed to be meadow or agricultural land.

4.41 The 1848 St. Lawrence Tithe map (Fig. 4) and associated Award record the site as being located within an extensive single filed plot recorded as meadow. Vastern Road is now forms the southern boundary of the site. The general layout of the site remains generally unaltered in 1864 (Fig. 5), although the Ordnance Survey plan does show field boundaries being present.

4.42 The Ordnance Survey map of 1879 (Fig. 6) provides a detailed view of the site confirming its use as meadow to the north of Vastern Road. The field boundaries shown on the map of 1864 are no longer present.

4.43 By 1899 (Fig. 7) the site and surrounding area has changed significantly. Land adjacent to Vastern Road has been developed consisting of a mix of both industrial and residential properties. The north part of the site is now occupied by a large '*Electrical Works*', supported by a small ancillary building closer to Vastern Road. A small square ancillary building is shown in the eastern part of the site adjacent to a boundary running at a right angle to the River Thames. It is suspected that the Electrical Works were constructed within a five year period prior to the depiction on the 1899 map (Built Heritage Consultancy 2019).

4.44 By 1912 (Fig. 8) the Electrical Works have expanded in size, although the small ancillary buildings previously noted are no longer shown. Fronting onto Vastern Road a '*Skating Rink*' is now marked, abutted by a small property to the southeast which forms part of the access into the Electrical Works yard. This small property is still extant on site and has been designated by the Borough of Reading as a Locally Listed Building. This building is the subject of a separate Heritage Statement (Built Heritage

Consultancy 2019) and will not be discussed further here. The layout of the site remained predominately unchanged in 1932 (Fig. 9).

- 4.45 By 1957 (Fig. 10) the Electrical Works has been demolished, and by 1973 (Fig. 11) the Skating Rink has changed function to an '*Electricity Depot*'. By 1979 (Fig. 12) new buildings have been constructed within the northern part of the site. The layout of site remains unaltered in 1993 (Fig. 13).
- 4.46 The aerial view of 2003 (Fig. 14) confirms that the latest buildings constructed in the northern part of the site have been demolished, and with the exception of the existing buildings adjacent to Vastern Road, the site is in use as a car park. The layout of the site remains unaltered up to the present (Fig. 15).
- 4.47 Overall the study site appears to have a low archaeological potential for the Post-Medieval and Modern periods. The former presence within the site of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Electrical Works is considered to be of historical interest only.

#### **Neutral/Negative Evidence**

- 4.48 Two archaeological evaluations have taken place in proximity to the study site, both of which were located adjacent to the River Thames. Neither produced significant evidence of archaeological activity. In 1995, an archaeological evaluation located approximately 75m to the east of the site and consisting of sixteen trenches, only identified a single late Post-Medieval ditch. Alluvial silty clays were encountered in all trenches at depths between 1.4m and 1.7m below ground level, sealed by a consistent horizon of made ground consisting of ash and cinders (ERM249, SU 71668 74046).
- 4.49 The evaluation undertaken at Brighton Road, c.200m to the west of the site, consisted of twelve trenches, with no archaeological features being recorded. Alluvial deposits were also identified which measured up to 2.5m thick adjacent to the river, sealed by made ground averaging 1.1m in depth (increasing to 1.7m deep in places) (ERD21, SU 71391 74248).

### **Assessment of Significance**

- 4.50 Existing national policy guidance for archaeology (the NPPF as referenced in section 2) enshrines the concept of the 'significance' of heritage assets. Significance as defined in the NPPF centres on the value of an archaeological or historic asset for its 'heritage interest' to this or future generations.
- 4.51 The Scheduled Monument of Reading Abbey (Clunic and Benedictine Monastery and Civil War earthwork) (DBF97, 1007932, SU 7171 7360) is located approximately 500m to the southeast of the site. Due to the status of the monument as a designated heritage asset, it is considered to be of national significance due to its archaeological and historic interest.
- 4.52 There are no known below-ground non-designated heritage assets within the study site. Based on current evidence, there is a moderate to high potential for localised geoarchaeological deposits dating to the mid-Prehistoric period at depth within the site, considered to be of local interest. There is a low potential for all other periods.

## **5.0 SITE CONDITIONS, THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSETS**

### **Site Conditions**

- 5.1 The study site contains several abutting two to three storey early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings fronting onto Vastern Road (Fig. 15, Plate 1), with the remaining area of the site occupied by a hard standing carpark (Fig. 15, Plate 2).
- 5.2 Agricultural activity from the Medieval period onwards is likely to have had a moderate, but widespread, negative impact on below ground archaeological deposits.
- 5.3 The construction, and subsequent demolition, of numerous buildings within the site from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, is likely to have had a severe, widespread, negative impact on below ground archaeological deposits.

### **Proposed Development**

- 5.4 The development proposals comprise the demolition of all existing buildings within the site, followed by the construction of residential development with associated access and landscaping.

### **Review of Potential Development Impacts on Archaeological Assets**

- 5.5 Due to the distance, lack of intervisibility and intervening urban environment between the study site and the Scheduled Monument of Reading Abbey, the proposed development will not have an impact on the setting of the heritage asset.
- 5.6 In view of the modest archaeological potential of the site, the proposed development is unlikely to have a widespread or substantial negative impact on below ground archaeological deposits.
- 5.7 However, due to the potential for localised geoarchaeological deposits dating to the mid-Prehistoric period of local significance within the study site, the archaeological advisor to Reading Borough Council is anticipated to require further archaeological mitigation measures prior to development. Initially, such mitigation is likely to consist of a programme of geoarchaeological evaluation.

## **6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The site of 55 Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire has been reviewed for its archaeological potential.
- 6.2 In accordance with central and local government planning policy and guidance, a desk based assessment has been undertaken to clarify the archaeological potential of the study area.
- 6.3 In terms of relevant designated heritage assets, no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefields, or Historic Wreck Sites, lie within the immediate proximity of the site.
- 6.4 The site is not located in an area of designated archaeological priority.
- 6.5 The site is considered likely to have a modest archaeological potential for below-ground geoarchaeological deposits associated with the mid-Prehistoric period. There is a low archaeological potential for all remaining periods.
- 6.6 Medieval and Post-Medieval agricultural activity is considered likely to have had a moderate, but widespread, negative impact on below ground archaeological deposits.
- 6.7 The construction, and subsequent demolition, of numerous buildings within the site from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, is considered likely to have had a severe, widespread, negative impact on below ground archaeological deposits.
- 6.8 Current development proposals comprise the demolition of existing buildings within the site, followed by the construction of residential development.
- 6.9 Due to the potential for geoarchaeological deposits associated with the mid-Prehistoric period, the archaeological advisor to Reading Borough Council is anticipated to require a programme of archaeological mitigation in advance of development. A stage programme of investigation likely to comprise:
- 1) Geoarchaeological monitoring of relevant geotechnical investigations (boreholes/trial holes), and/or a targeted programme of dedicated geoarchaeological boreholes;
  - 2) A targeted programme of archaeological evaluation trial trenching informed by the results of item 1 (if required);

- 3) A review of the results generated by items 1 and 2 to determine if further archaeological mitigation is required, to be informed by an assessment of the proposed development impacts.
- 6.10 As remains of national significance are not anticipated, such mitigation can follow the granting of planning consent secured by an appropriate condition.

## **SOURCES CONSULTED**

### **1. General**

British Library  
Berkshire Historic Environment Record  
Berkshire Record Office

### **2. Internet**

British Geological Survey –  
<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>  
British History Online – <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>  
Domesday Online – <http://www.domesdaybook.co.uk/>  
Historic England: The National Heritage List for England –  
<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

### **3. Bibliographic**

Built Heritage Consultancy *55 Vastern Road, Reading. Initial Heritage Statement 2019*

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Standard & Guidance for historic environment desk based assessment 2014, revised 2017

Department of Communities and Local Government *National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (revised July 2018)*

Department of Communities and Local Government/Department of Culture Media and Sport/English Heritage *PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide 2010*

Historic England *Archaeological Priority Area Guidelines July 2016 unpublished document*

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment 2008 (new draft 2017)

Historic England Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1 The Historic Environment in Local Plans July 2015 unpublished document

Historic England Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment July 2015 unpublished document

Historic England Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 The Setting of Heritage Assets December 2017 unpublished document

QUEST *Thames Pedestrian/Cycle Bridge, Reading, Berkshire. Geoarchaeological Fieldwork Report* 2014

#### **4. Cartographic**

1807 Borough of Reading Plan

1848 St Lawrence Tithe Map

1964 Ordnance Survey Plan

1879 Ordnance Survey

1899 Ordnance Survey

1912 Ordnance Survey

1932 Ordnance Survey

1957 Ordnance Survey

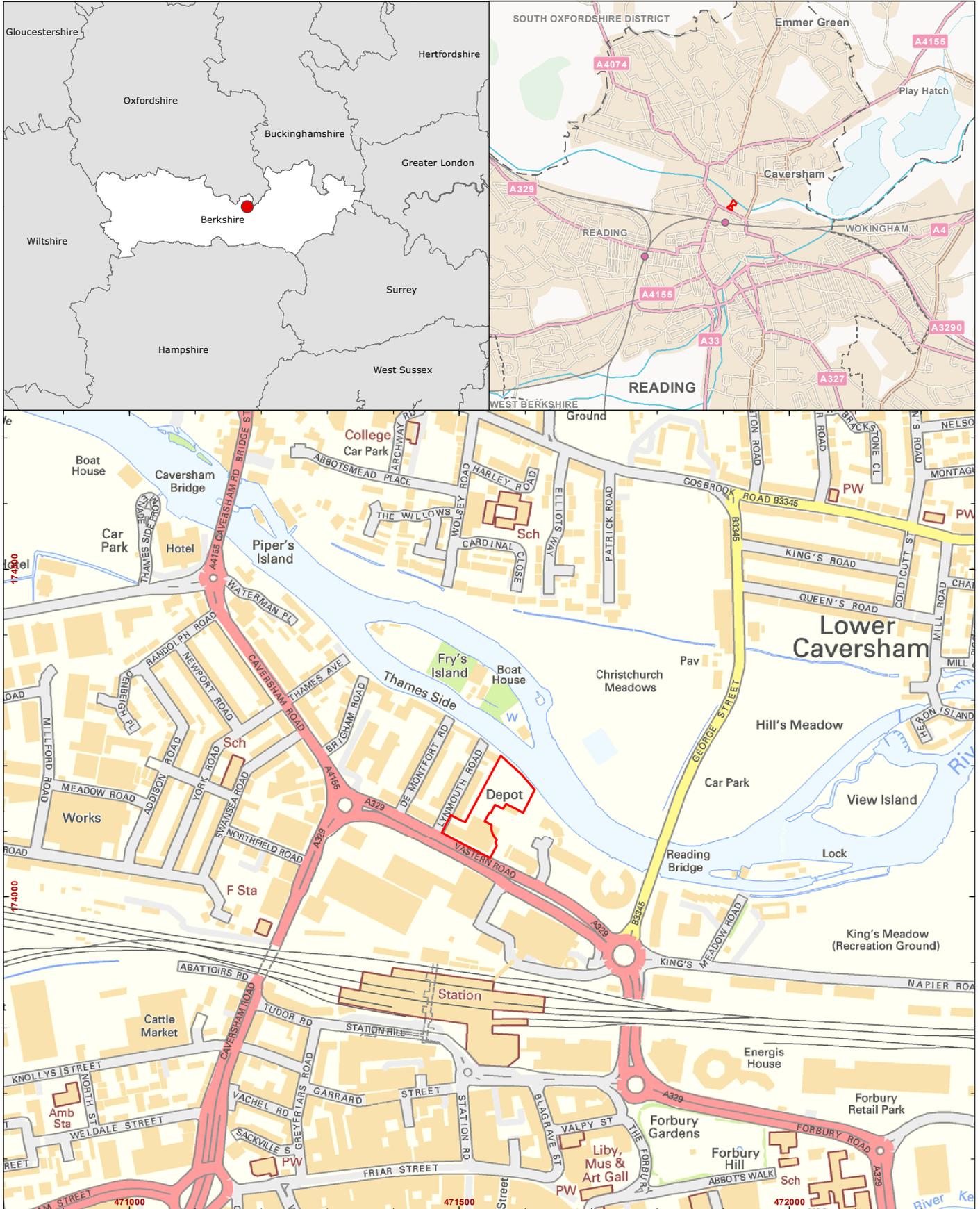
1973 Ordnance Survey

1979 Ordnance Survey

1993 Ordnance Survey

2003 Google Earth View

2018 Google Earth View

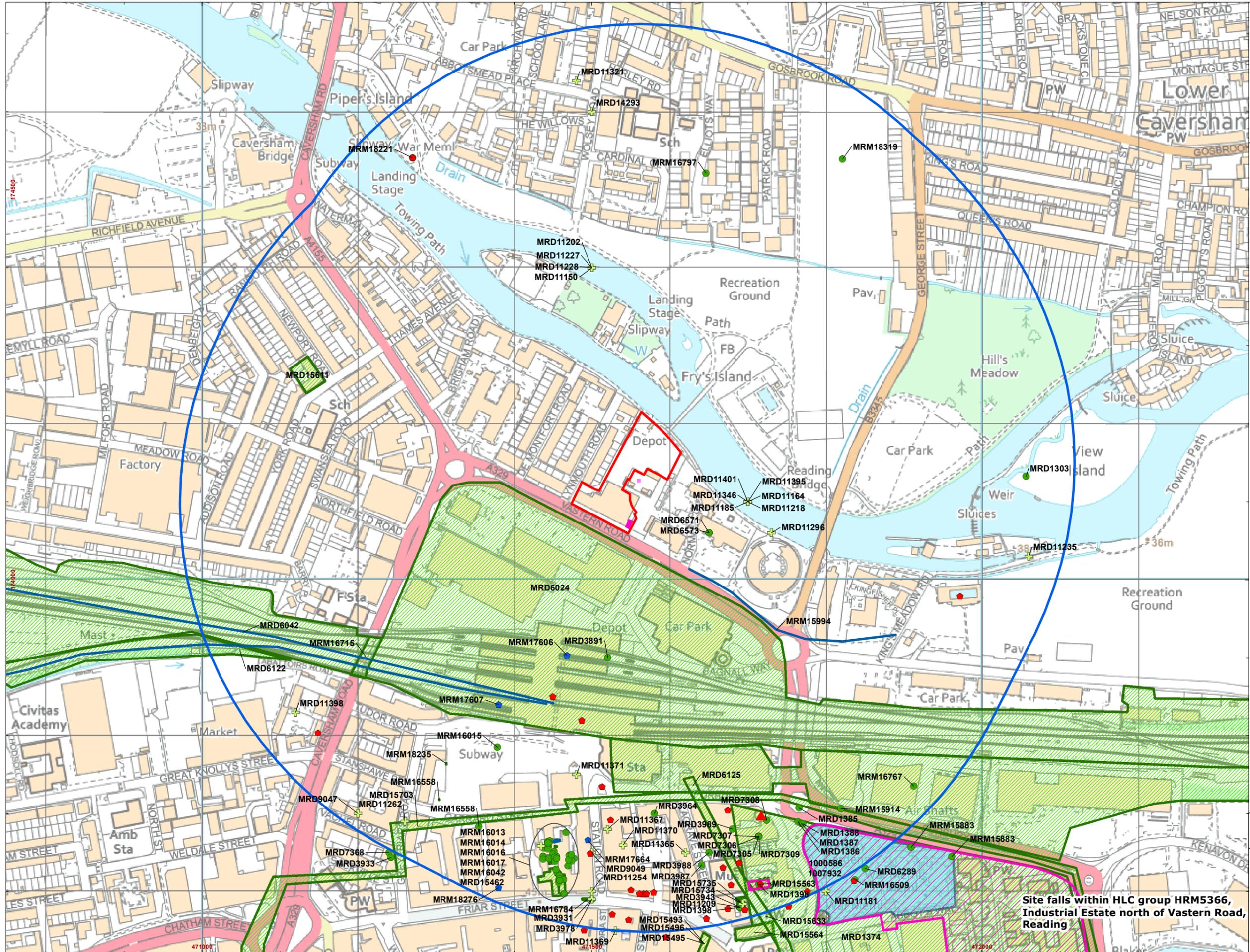


Site Boundary



Scale at A4: 1:8,000  
0 200m

Figure 1:  
Site Location



- Site Boundary
- 500m search radius
- Designated Heritage Assets:
  - Listed Buildings
  - Scheduled Monuments
  - Registered Parks and Gardens
- Non-Designated Heritage Assets:
  - HER Record (Point)
    - Monuments
    - Buildings
    - Find Spot
    - HER Monuments (Linear)
    - HER Record (Polygon)
  - Locally Listed Buildings (Point)
  - Locally listed buildings (Polygon)



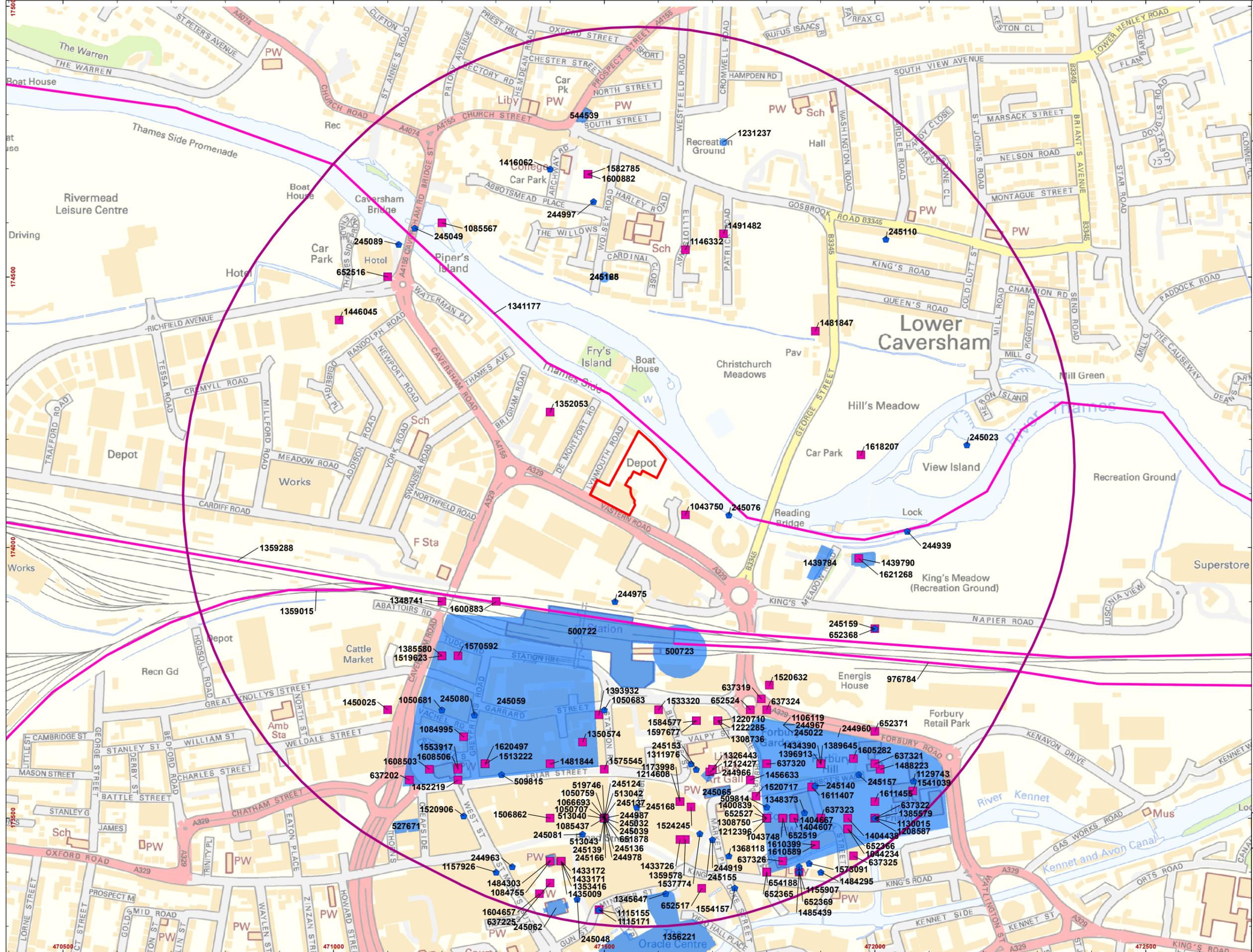
Scale at A3: 1:4,500  
0 150m

Site falls within HLC group HRM5366, Industrial Estate north of Vastem Road, Reading

Figure 2a: Summary of designated and non-designated heritage assets (Data from (Data from Berkshire HER)

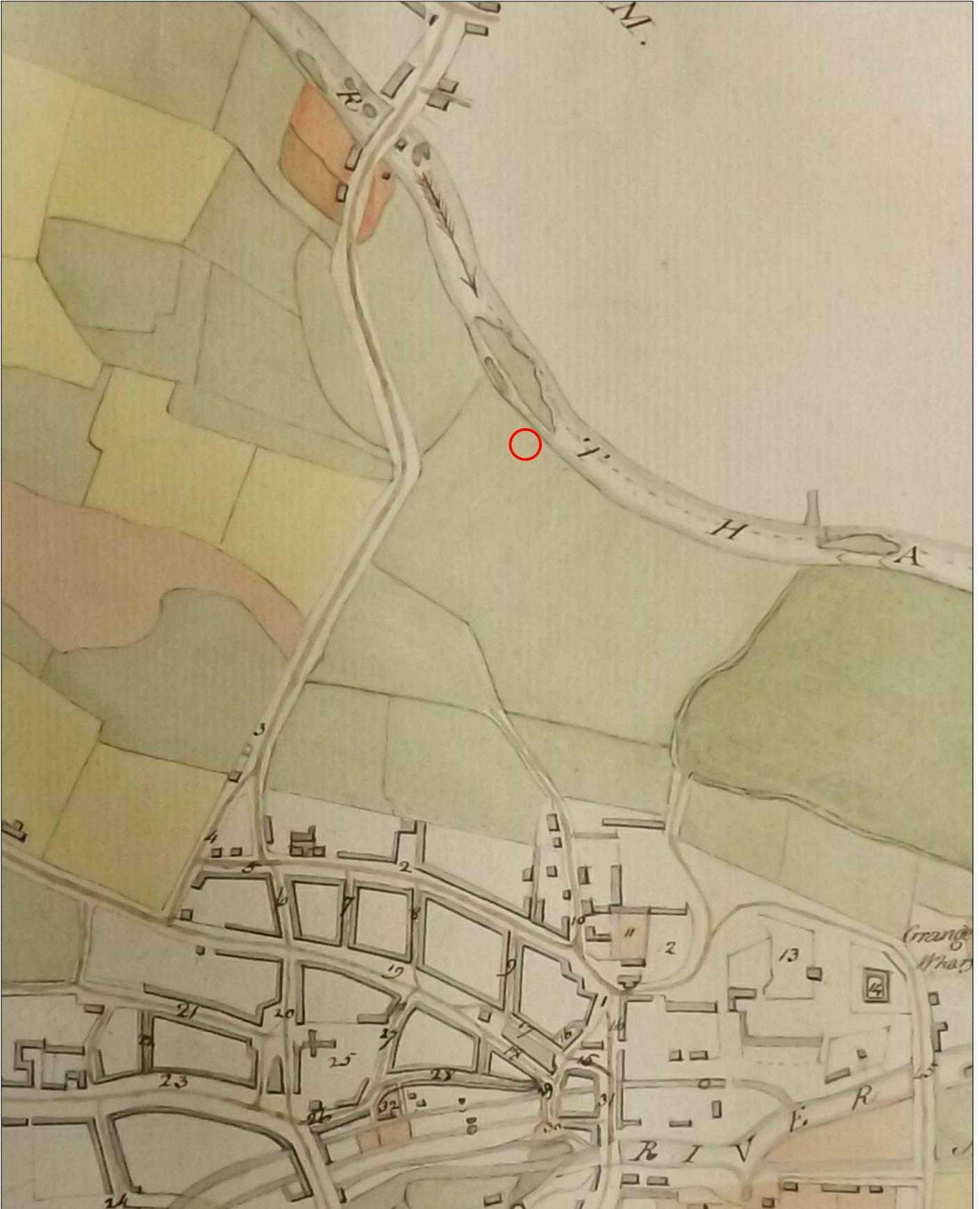


- Site Boundary
- Search Radius 750m
- HEA Events
- HEA Monuments Point
- HEA Monuments Line
- HEA Monuments Polygon



Scale at A3: 1:6,500  
0 200m

Figure 2x:  
HEA Data Plot

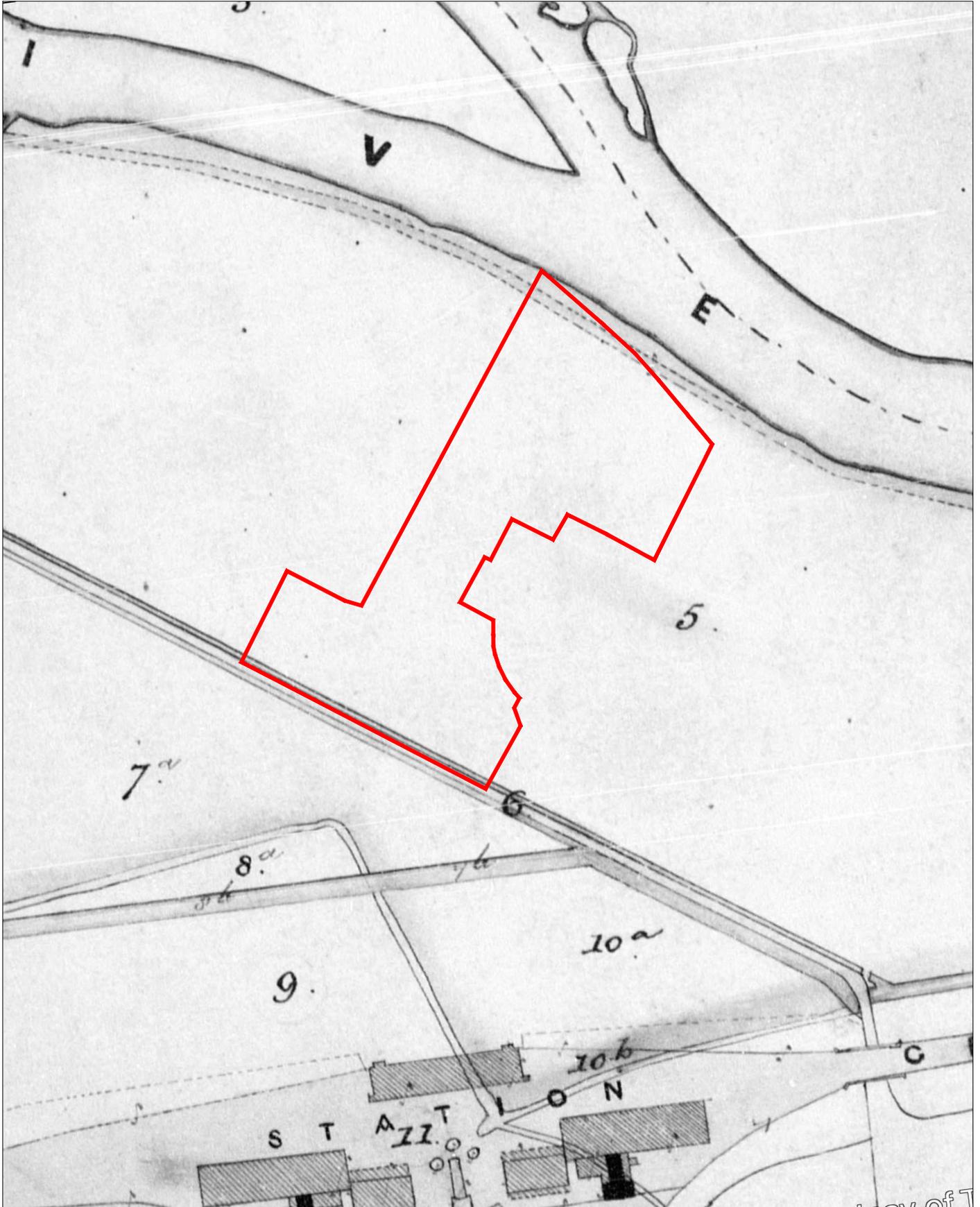


Approximate site location



Not to Scale:  
Illustrative Only

Figure 3:  
1807 Borough of Reading  
Plan



 Site Boundary



Not to Scale:  
Illustrative Only

Figure 4:  
1848 St Lawrence Tithe  
Map

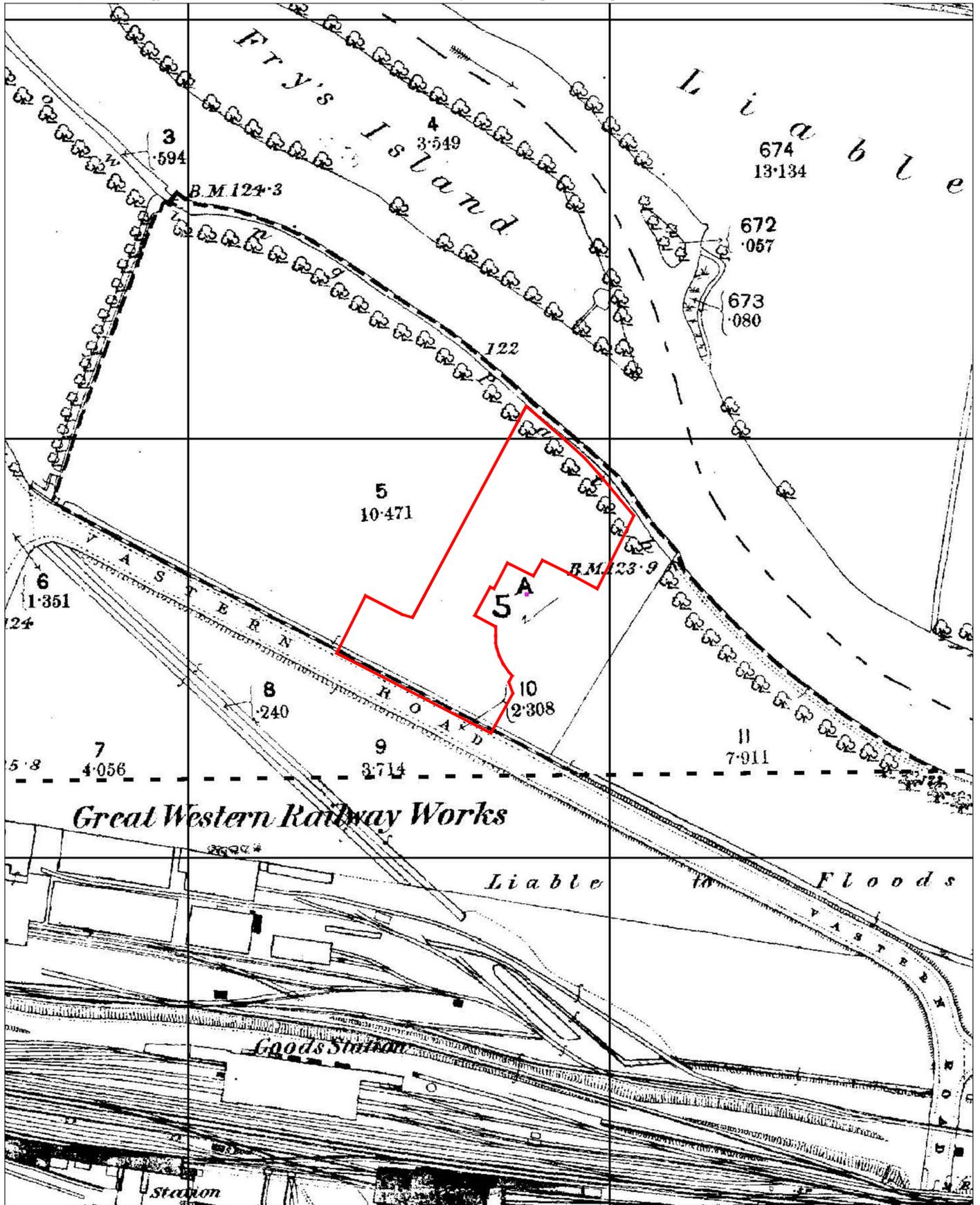


 Site Boundary



Not to Scale:  
Illustrative Only

Figure 5:  
1864 Ordnance Survey  
Plan

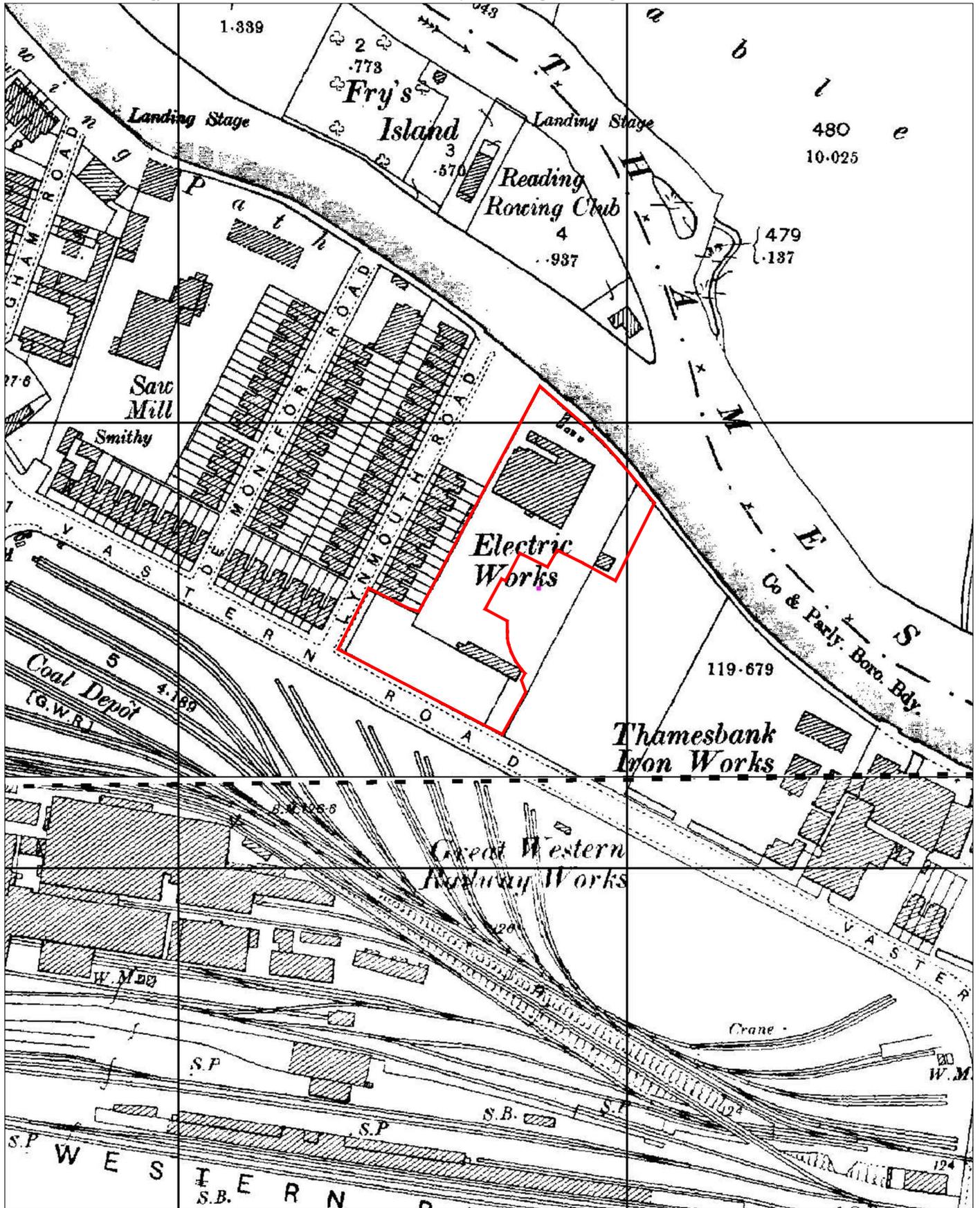


 Site Boundary



Not to Scale:  
Illustrative Only

Figure 6:  
1879 Ordnance Survey  
Map

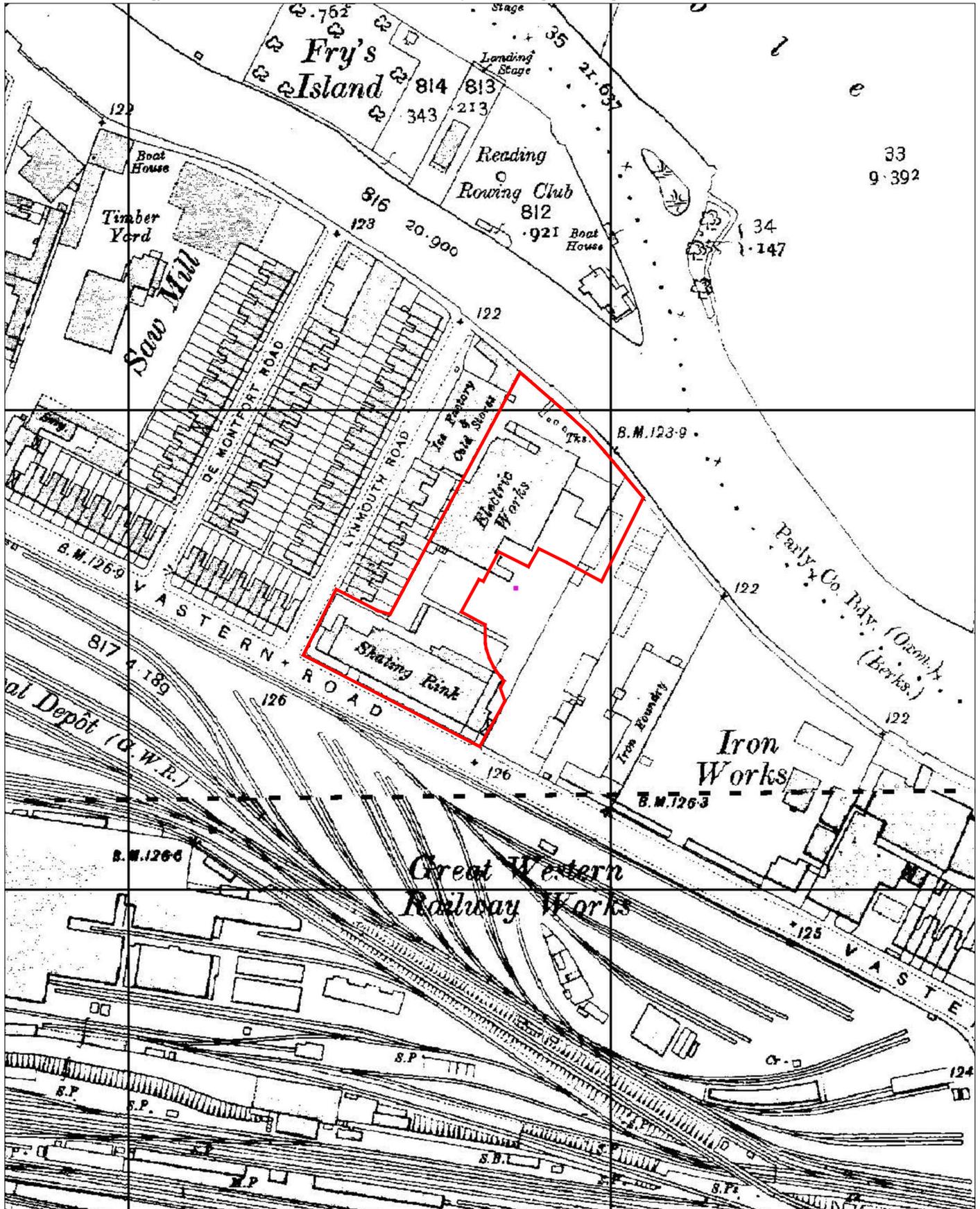


Site Boundary



Not to Scale:  
Illustrative Only

Figure 7:  
1899 Ordnance Survey  
Map

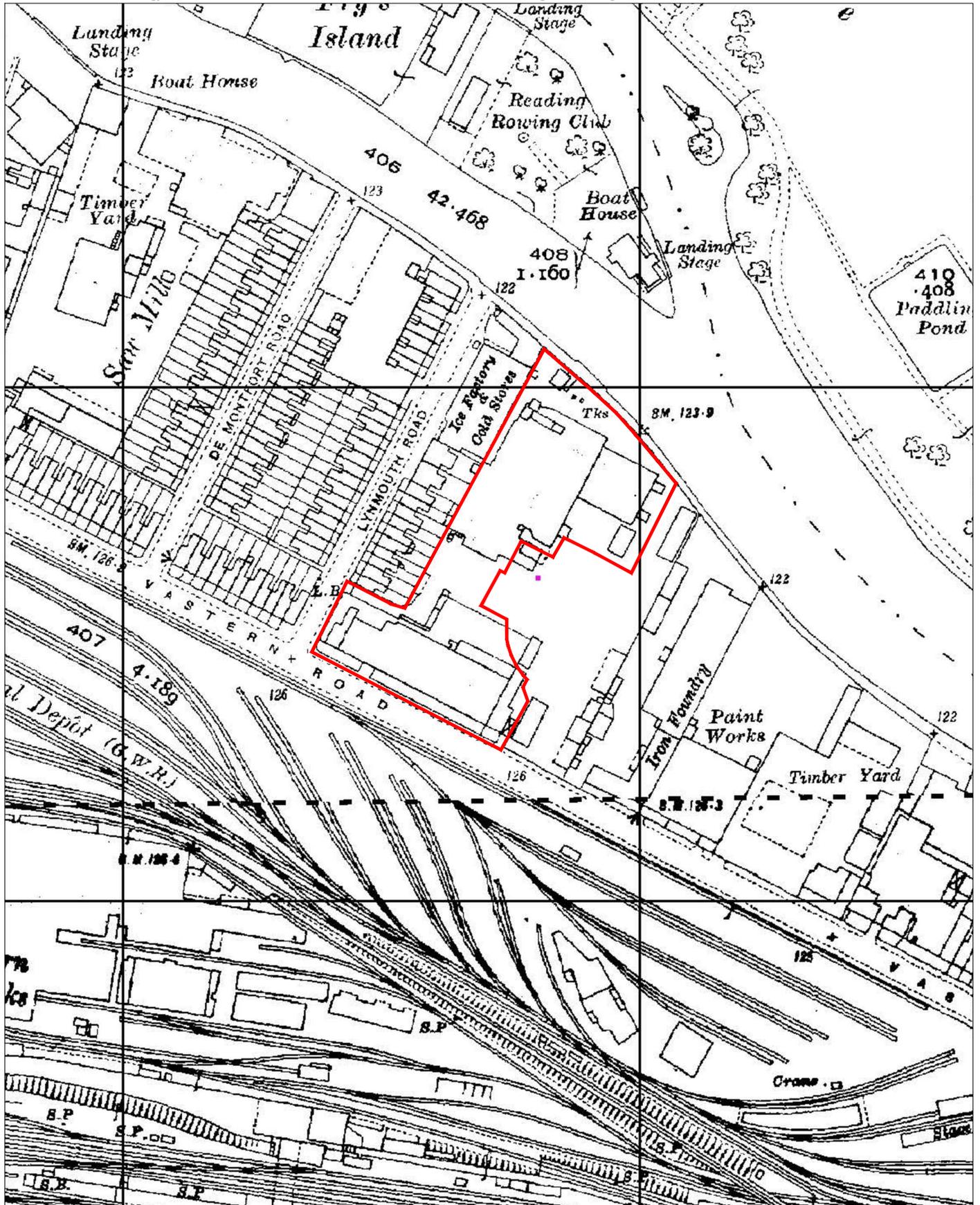


Site Boundary



Not to Scale:  
Illustrative Only

Figure 8:  
1921 Ordnance Survey  
Map



Site Boundary



Not to Scale:  
Illustrative Only

Figure 9:  
1932 Ordnance Survey  
Map