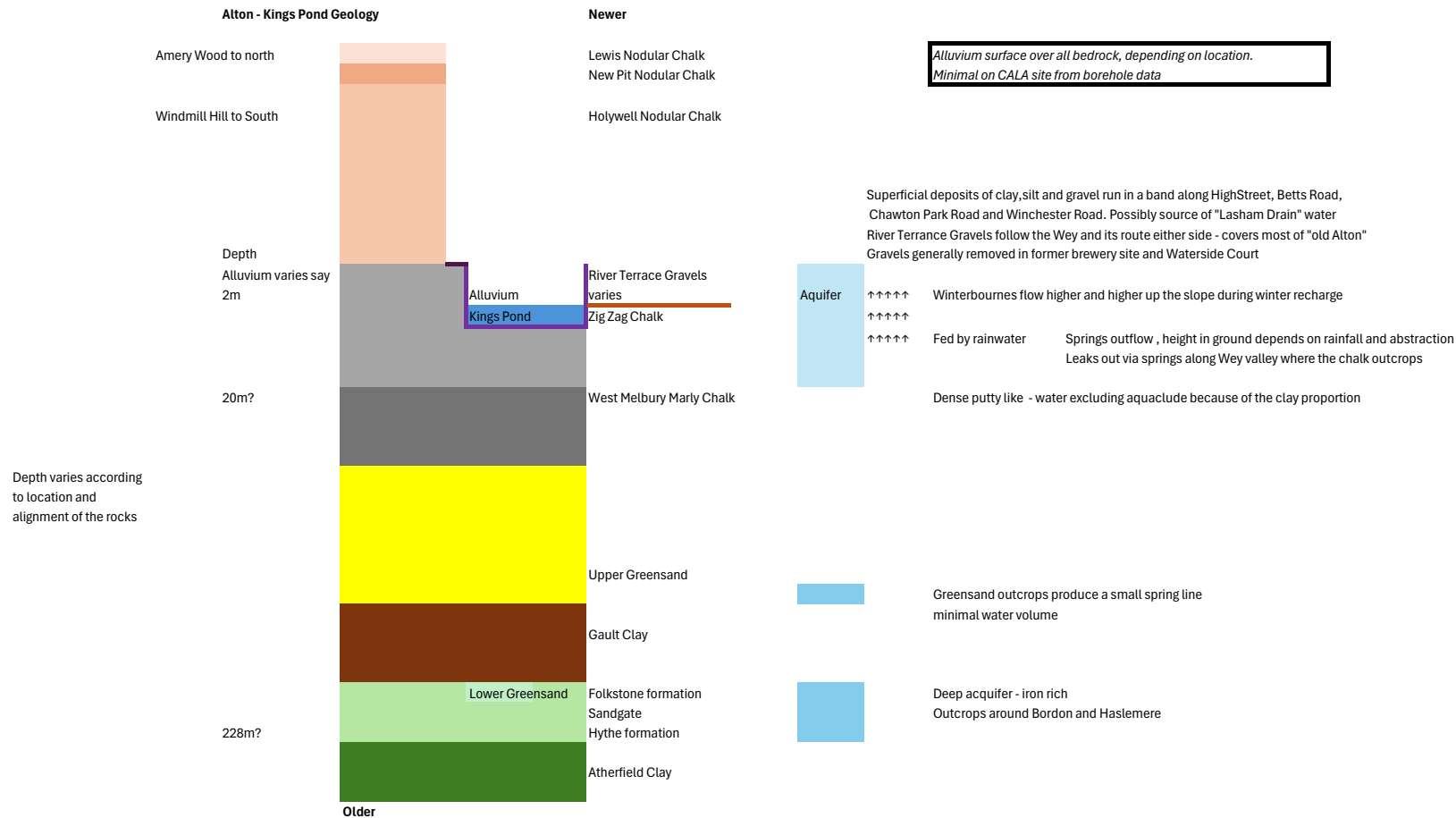




Aquifers are nature's underground reservoirs—porous rock or sediment layers that store and transmit groundwater. They function much like a sponge, soaking up rain and snowmelt and then releasing it where wells tap into them or where springs emerge. Two critical properties define an aquifer: porosity, the proportion of void space available to hold water, and permeability, the connectivity of those voids that allows water to travel freely