

Oxford City Council Heritage and Specialist Services Team

Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief

Project: 09/02820/FUL Removal of existing roof structure and extension to provide third floor student accommodation comprising 10 student rooms and 1 fellows accommodation. Extension of basement for provision of lift and ancillary storage facilities.

Description: Oriel College, Oriel Square, Oxford

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1. SUMMARY

This brief sets out the requirement for an archaeological watching brief during significant ground works at this site (lift pit construction and new service trenching). The work is required to record any significant archaeological deposits revealed by development bearing in mind the potential for medieval and post-medieval remains in this location associated with previous medieval tenements fronting onto the High Street and Magpie Lane.

2. DEFINITION

The definition of an Archaeological Watching Brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on landor underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive. (IFA, 1999)

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application involves the insertion of a lift within the east wing of the Rhodes Building and limited new service trenching within St Mary's Quad. The Rhodes Building at Oriel College, Oxford, is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 451614 206232. The Rhodes Building is a Grade II Listed (built between 1908-1911).

4. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- a. This brief relates to Planning Application No 09/02820/FUL to Oxford City Council.
- b. The National Planning Policy Framework states that where appropriate local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.
- c. Watching briefs should undertaken in accordance with a "written scheme of investigation" which has been agreed in writing by the City Council Archaeologist prior to commencing fieldwork. The "written scheme of investigation" should comprise this brief combined with the archaeological contractor's project design

(see below). The project will be completed only when all fieldwork and post-excavation work has been undertaken, the archive has been deposited and any required publication secured.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- a. An archaeological desk based assessment has been produced for this site by Wessex Archaeology (2010). The site is of interest because it is located within the historic core of Oxford, close to the suggested defensive line of the primary Saxon burh and on the site of St Mary's Hall, one of Oxford University's medieval academic halls. The hall was appropriated by Oriel College in 1326, but in the 16th century it developed a separate identity as St Mary's Society, which continued until 1902 when it returned to Oriel. The original building probably survived into the 17th century and its former site is now occupied by part of the Rhodes Building. Various medieval finds have been recovered from the vicinity of the Rhodes Building during building work in the late 19th and early 20th century (UAD Event No's 1228, 1148 and 1243).
- b. An archaeological evaluation has been undertaken at this site by Wessex Archaeology (2011). Two test pits were excavated within the basement of the east wing of the Rhodes Building and one against the external, south wall of the east wing. The evaluation recorded masonry and brickwork structural remains of medieval/early post-medieval and 18th-20th century date, associated with possible medieval cellars and later recorded structures including the 'Doll's House' (built 1743) and the Rhodes Building itself. No artefactual, structural or stratigraphic evidence of pre-medieval date was recorded (Wessex 2011).
- c. In the vicinity of the proposed lift base 19th century brick cellar walls were recorded, with a light-well facing Magpie Lane. A well-preserved flagstone floor was partially exposed, lying directly on the natural gravel geology (at 59.15m AOD). Artefactual evidence from the cellar infilling, undertaken prior to the Rhodes Building construction, included 11th–13th and 16th–20th century pottery and many large masonry rubble blocks, suggesting the demolition of a medieval (11th–15th century) or early post-medieval (16th–17th century) cellared structure at this location, probably associated with shops fronting the High Street to the north (Wessex 2011).
- d. In the south part of the east wing the test pitting identified a substantial masonry wall lying on the west side of Magpie Lane, along with a poorly-built masonry wall perpendicular to it, both on a slightly different alignment to 19th century brick walls built over them, indicate possible medieval structural remains.

6. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the ground works, paying particular regard to the potential for medieval and post-medieval remains associated with structures previously fronting onto the High Street and Magpie Lane.

7. PROCEDURE AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Archaeological Watching Briefs must be undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs* published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999). Each watching brief must be governed by a project design which has been agreed in writing by the City Council Archaeologist. The project design should be based on a thorough study of all relevant background information. It should conform to the requirements set out in paragraph 3.2.12 of the IFA guidelines and should in particular include:

- The project's objectives.
- A description of the proposed works and an assessment of their archaeological impact with an accompanying plan.
- Details of the methodology for implementing the watching brief indicating those works which are to be observed, the frequency of observation (permanent/daily visits etc) and any archaeological control over the developer's operating procedures.
- An assessment of the potential for, and possible nature of, any "unexpected discoveries"¹ with details of contingency arrangements for salvage recording.
- Procedures for project management (to follow the principles set out in Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP) (English Heritage, 1991)).
- The expertise of the project team. The project manager should be a named Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (MIfA) who is adequately qualified to manage the required archaeological work in line with the guidance set out in the IFA code of conduct. The composition and experience of the project team should be described. Specialists should be identified where required (e.g. for finds and environmental work). In some cases it will also be necessary to identify academic advisors. CVs should be supplied outlining the relevant qualifications and experience of key personnel - where relevant this should include specific reference to knowledge of particular periods and local/regional traditions. *Note: Specialists should be able to demonstrate a relevant qualification and track record of at least 3 years continuous relevant work (or equivalent) and appropriate publication. In appropriate circumstances, less experienced staff may conduct work under the supervision of well-established and widely recognised specialists.*
- An outline of the proposed timetable and staff resources - this must be non-binding and presented "for information only"
- Reporting and Archiving arrangements.

8. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

¹ The term "unexpected discovery" covers features whose existence and/or significance was unknown at the outset of the watching brief but subsequently prove to be potentially of county or national importance.

a. Procedure

Watching briefs require that the archaeologist(s) are present on site during works in the following circumstances: comprehensive/detailed (present during all works which may affect archaeological remains); intensive (present during specified sensitive works); intermittent (viewing immediately after each specified phase of works). **In this case an intermittent watching brief should be undertaken during the removal of the Rhodes Building cellar backfill (for lift pit construction) followed by a targeted/detailed watching brief to record any exposed walls, historic floor surfaces at the anticipated depth and any other significant in situ remains. Furthermore a detailed watching brief should be undertaken during significant ground works for new service runs within St Mary's Quad.**

The presence/absence of archaeological features should be noted. If features are identified then sufficient work should be done to date, characterise and record the remains in accordance with the project objectives. An adequate contingency should be provided to cover the eventuality that features exposed in the section of the trench can be adequately recorded.

If an "unexpected discovery" is made then the City Council Archaeologist should be informed as soon as possible. Initially consideration should be given to preservation in-situ but if this is not practical then such discoveries may give rise to a salvage excavation funded from the contingency (see below).

b. Recording

In principle, recording standards should be the same as for formal excavations but the particular practical difficulties and constraints of watching brief recording are acknowledged. Features should be recorded in plan at an appropriate scale and accurately located in relation to the National Grid. Each context should be recorded on pro-forma records which should include the following minimum details: character; contextual relationships; detailed description (dimensions and shape; soil components, colour, texture and consistency); associated finds; interpretation and phasing as well as cross-references to the drawn, photographic and finds registers. Normally each context should be recorded on an individual record. Sections should be drawn through all significant cut features and levelled to ordnance datum.

A black and white photographic record should be maintained including photos of all significant features and overall photos of each watching brief area. Selected colour transparencies should also be taken.

c. Artefact and Ecofact collection and recording

All stratified finds should be collected by context or, where appropriate, individually recorded in 3 dimensions. Unstratified finds should only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest. Finds of "treasure" must be reported to the Coroner in accordance with the Treasure Act procedures.

Collection policies for structural remains and industrial residues have been set out by the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA, 1993). The presence of such materials within a context should always be recorded and, where they are considered to be of importance, the watching brief should aim to quantify their occurrence, even where comprehensive retention is not considered appropriate.

d. Contingency and salvage excavation

Contingency arrangements must be specified in the project design and should take account of the nature of possible "unexpected discoveries" and the likely impact of the development upon them. Arrangements should include the demarcation of the area for excavation, the period of temporary cessation of development works within this area and the resources (expressed in person-days, specialist input etc.) available to undertake the excavation.

In the event of discovery of any human remains the archaeological contractor should inform the client, the City Council Archaeologist, the Coroner, the Police and the Ministry of Justice via the submission of an application form for the 'Archaeological/Accidental/Site Investigation Licence regarding the disturbance of human remains'. The Human remains should be left in-situ, covered and protected. Where a licence for their excavation is issued by the Ministry of Justice, the requirements of that licence should be followed. Where the Ministry of Justice is unable to issue a licence and it is reasonably determined that the remains are likely to be subject to further unavoidable disturbance or deterioration the archaeological contractor should inform the client and Ministry of Justice of their intention to excavate the remains with due decency and in accordance with the general conditions formerly attached to licences issued for excavation of human remains under similar circumstances.

The only exception is where excavations are being undertaken in a churchyard under a faculty issued by the Chancellor of Oxford Diocese (in such cases the faculty requirements should be followed). Human remains should be treated in accordance with IFA guidelines (IFA, 2004) and the advice set out in *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* (English Heritage, 2005).

Provision should be made within the contingency for: conservation (lifting and treatment) of fragile objects and the collection and analysis of environmental and scientific (including dating) samples. Sampling is to be carried out in accordance with a strategy which is related to the project objectives and has been agreed with English Heritage's Regional Adviser in Archaeological Science.

9. POST-EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

- a. For most watching briefs it will be sufficient to complete an archive report for the UAD, publish a summary note and deposit the archive (see below).
- b. .

10. PUBLICATION

- a. For all projects, a summary report (including illustrations where appropriate) should be sent to the editors of *South Midlands Archaeology* not later than three months after the end of the calendar year in which the work is undertaken.
- b. For projects which have produced results of significant county, regional or national importance, an illustrated final report which meets the guidelines set out in MAP Appendix 7 and is suitable for publication in an approved archaeological journal should be provided to the City Council Archaeologist within one year of the completion of fieldwork (unless a longer time period has been agreed in the updated project design). The overall content of the report should be agreed with the City Council Archaeologist. The report should be clearly referenced in all respects to all work on the site. It should place the site in its local archaeological, historical and topographical context and include a clear location map. Each plan included should clearly relate to some other included plan of an appropriate scale and should normally include national grid references.
- c. Two bound offprints of the final publication and a digital copy of the text, in PDF format, must be supplied to the City UAD and one to the HER. A copy of any specialist papers relating to the site should also be supplied. A further offprint should accompany the archive.
- d. A publication grant should be provided to the publishers of the report in accordance with their requirements.

11. OASIS

Once the final report has been accepted contractors taking part in the OASIS scheme should complete an OASIS fieldwork summary form and submit it to the Archaeology Data Service. Contributors not yet formally participating are also encouraged to submit data. The form and guidance for its completion can be found at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/first.html>.

12. ARCHIVING

- a. The archaeological contractor should endeavour to ensure that the site archive (including any artefacts recovered) are deposited in an acceptable condition with a museum which is registered with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and approved for the storage of archaeological archives. The preferred archive for Oxfordshire is the County Museum. The procedures and requirements which must be followed for the deposit of archaeological archives with Oxfordshire County Museum are available from the Collections and Information Manager. A storage grant should be provided to the museum in accordance with their requirements.
- b. The archaeological contractor should arrange for the archive to be copied on microfiche to the standard required by the National Monuments Record and copy should be deposited with the NMR.

13. MONITORING

- a. Monitoring is carried out by the City Council Archaeologist to ensure that projects are being carried out in accordance with the brief and approved project design, to enable the need for modifications to the project to be independently considered and validated and to control and validate the use of available contingencies.
- b. A programme of monitoring should be agreed with the City Council Archaeologist prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The archaeological contractor should keep the CCA regularly informed of the project's progress and facilitate the monitoring of the project at each stage, including post-excavation. In particular, there should be no substantial modification of the approved brief and project design without the prior consent of the CCA and no fieldwork should be carried out without the service's knowledge and approval.
- c. All monitoring visits will be documented by the CCA and the archaeological contractor will be informed of any perceived deficiencies.
- d. The CCA should be informed at the earliest opportunity of any unexpected discoveries, especially where there may be a need to vary the project design. The archaeological contractor should carry out such reasonable contingency works as requested by the CCA within the resources defined in the project design.

14. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and Safety must take priority over archaeological requirements. It is essential that all projects are carried out in accordance with safe working practices and under a defined Health and Safety Policy. **Risk Assessments must be carried out for every field project.** If the risk assessment indicates it is necessary, the requirements of the brief can be varied in the interests of health and safety (the City Council Archaeologist must be consulted and the proposed changes agreed in such cases). The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (CDM) will apply to archaeological work undertaken on many construction (and demolition) projects.

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- IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching brief.*
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CONTACTS

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