

Oxford City Council Urban Heritage and Team
Brief for Archaeological Field Survey and Excavation

Project: North Oxford (Northern Gateway) Land Adjacent To A44, A40, A34 and Wolvercote Roundabout

Description: (i) Outline application (with all matters reserved save for "access"), for the erection of up to 87,300 m² (GIA) of employment space (Use Class B1), up to 550 m² (GIA) of community space (Use Class D1), up to 2,500 m² (GIA) of Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 floorspace, up to a 180 bedroom hotel (Use Class C1) and up to 480 residential units (Use Class C3), installation of an energy sharing loop, main vehicle access points from A40 and A44, link road between A40 and A44 through the site, pedestrian and cycle access points and routes, car and cycle parking, open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure works. Works to the A40 and A44 in the vicinity of the site.

and

(ii) Full application for part of Phase 1A comprising 15,850 m² (GIA) of employment space (Use Class B1), installation of an energy sharing loop, access junctions from the A40 and A44 (temporary junction design on A44), construction of a link road between the A40 and A44, open space, landscaping, temporary car parking (for limited period), installation of cycle parking (some temporary for limited period), foul and surface water drainage, pedestrian and cycle links (some temporary for limited period) along with associated infrastructure works. Works to the A40 and A44 in the vicinity of the site.

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1. SUMMARY

*This brief sets out the requirement for archaeological field survey and excavation at this site (excluding the phase 1 area which has already been subject to sufficient evaluation/ recording), comprising of **Stage 1:** digital contour survey of the remnant ridge and furrow in the eastern field, **Stage 2:** archaeological test pits and trial trenching and **Stage 3**) targeted excavation if required. The purpose of this work is to record any significant deposits affected by development. The investigation has been required because of the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains and the presence of locally significant ridge and furrow earthworks.*

2. DEFINITION

The definition of archaeological excavation is a programme of controlled, intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features and structures and, as appropriate, retrieves artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within a specified area or site The records made and objects gathered during fieldwork are studied and the results of that study published in detail appropriate to the Project Design." (CifA, 2014a)¹

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

¹ An excavation project may be supplemented by non-destructive means of investigation such as geophysical, earthwork, fieldwalking, geochemical and building survey and also by a watching brief during development.

The site is comprised of a series of fields north of Oxford that include pasture (with remnant ridge and furrow) and rough pasture.

4. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- a. The brief relates to planning application no 18/02065/OUTFUL 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. Requirements for excavation are normally secured by means of a "negative condition" (or, more rarely, through a legal agreement) and must be specified in a "written scheme of investigation" which has been agreed in writing by Oxford City Council prior to commencing fieldwork. The "written scheme of investigation" should comprise this brief combined with the archaeological contractor's project design (see below). Archaeological planning conditions will not be discharged until all fieldwork and post-excavation work has been completed, the archive has been deposited and publication secured.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- a. This brief sets out the requirements for archaeological excavation at this site which will comprise of digital contour survey of the ridge and furrow in the eastern field (Stage 1) trial trenching (Stage 2) followed by a third stage of work if required.
- b. The archaeological interest of this extensive site can be summarised as follows: 1) the site lies in close proximity to a nationally important Lower Palaeolithic remains recorded in the nearby Wolvercote Quarry Pit (now a water feature on the other side of the railway) 2) the general potential for prehistoric activity because of its location above and adjacent to the Thames floodplain and wider contextual patterns, 3) the general potential for Roman activity because of its location above and adjacent to Thames floodplain and wider contextual patterns and recorded Roman activity at Wolvercote Viaduct to the north, 4) Some speculative potential for early medieval activity adjacent to the historic Woodstock Road, 5) surviving medieval ridge and furrow earthworks and later field boundaries within the site.
- c. A Desk Based Assessment for the eastern part of the site was produced in 2003 (Oxford Archaeology), this was followed by a Heritage Assessment for the whole site in 2014 (Museum of London 2014). Subsequently a phased geophysical survey was undertaken across accessible parts of the site in 2014 and 2015 (MoLA 2014b, MoLA 2014c, MoLA 2015a, MoLA 2015b) and this was followed by phased evaluation (MOLA 2015c, Oxford Archaeology 2017) that targeted:
 - the potential for Palaeolithic Wolvercote Channel to enter the site from the east.

- the potential for the Roman settlement at Wolvercote Viaduct to extend into the site from the north.
 - the central area covered by the Phase 1a footprint.
 - the potential for alluvial deposits on the western fringe of the site.
- d. The geophysical survey did not identify any clearly archaeological anomalies and the field evaluation did not record any significant archaeological features, seemingly confirming the geophysical survey results. The evaluation clarified that there is very low potential for the nearby Wolvercote palaeo-channel (which has produced important faunal and flint assemblage) to cross into the site and failed to identify any significant archaeology in the phase 1a area.
- e. The remaining site is largely clay and alluvium surface geology and therefore a less attractive option for prehistoric settlement, however the size of the development and proximity of the site to known activity areas leaves open the potential for archaeological remains.
- f. Godstow Abbey had owned the parish of Wolvercote until the Dissolution. After being sold by the crown the parish changed hands a number of times and parts of it, including the area of proposed development, were sold to Worcester College in 1742. Documentary sources explain how in 1636 the arable open fields of Upper Wolvercote were divided into four fields. The area of best preserved ridge and furrow is located within one of these called Blindwell, the bulk of the remainder of the site lay within Cowhill Field where the ridge and furrow has been heavily denuded (MoLA 2014). The eastern field in the development site (Blindwell) contains well preserved ridges on two alignments and is one of the few remaining areas of well-preserved ridge and furrow from the Upper Wolvercote open fields.
- *The project design should refer to the city and regional resource assessments and research agendas available on the web:*
http://thehumanjourney.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=277
<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/OxfordArchaeologicalPlan.htm>

6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- a. **Stage 1** Produce an accurate contour survey of the extant ridge and furrow in the eastern field (south of Peartree Park and Ride).
- b. **Stage 2** trial trenching should aim to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of important archaeological remains within the area of study. In this case the following specific objectives have been identified:
- Establish the character and extent of any prehistoric, Roman activity.
 - Whilst dating the formation and evolution of ridge and furrow earthworks by excavation has proved to be a problematical exercise because of the frequency of poor or indeterminate results in this instance targeted recording of extant ridges is considered to be warranted because 1) well preserved ridges are

present of two orientations 2) this is one of the few remaining fields of the Upper Wolvercote open field system. Test pitting should therefore employ spit recording to see if any manuring scatter sequence can be identified. The results should be considered alongside the survey data and subsequent trenching data to establish whether any complexity can be identified (i.e. realignment etc.) (See Hall 2011, 2011).

- c. **Stage 3** (if this is required) should, subject to the results of the trial trenching seek to establish, as far as is practical, the chronology, plan form and function of archaeological features affected by development and interpret the results in terms of the documented history and historical topography of North Oxford.

7. PROCEDURE AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- a. Archaeological Excavations must be undertaken in accordance with the Standard and Guidance for archaeological excavation published by the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (CifA, 2014a). The project should meet the standard set out in the *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CifA, 2014b)
- b. Each excavation must be governed by a project design which has been agreed in writing by Oxford City Council. The project design should be based on a thorough study of all relevant background information (especially any assessment or evaluation reports or, in their absence, data held or referenced in the HER). The project design should conform to the guidelines set out in paragraph 3.2.17 of the IFA guidelines and should in particular specify:
 - The project's research objectives.
 - The site and area(s) to be investigated by each method (to be shown on a plan).
 - Procedures for project management (to follow the principles set out in the Historic England Guidance [Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment](#) (Morphe 2015)). Key monitoring milestones should be identified.
 - 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.

- Proposals for public and/or media involvement.
- Reporting and Archiving arrangements.
- An outline of the proposed timetable and staff resources - this must be non-binding and presented "for information only"
- Contingency arrangements.

8. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

a. Surveying

- Accurate and precise surveying is essential. At the commencement of each fieldwork project a site grid should be carefully laid out by an experienced surveyor and related to the national grid (the accuracy of any previously surveyed grids should also be checked). All subsequent fieldwork should use the site grid. The grid should be established using semi-permanent survey stations or by relating the survey to equivalent fixed points. Excavation and survey area boundaries should be plotted to within $\pm 1\text{m}$ relative to the national grid. Within an excavation or survey area internal grid points should be located to within an error of no more than $\pm 0.1\text{m}$ relative to the site grid. On most sites the use of an EDM or theodolite will be essential to set out site grids. All levels should be recorded relative to an Ordnance Survey datum level.

b. Ridge and furrow contour survey

- Stage 1: An earthwork survey of the eastern field (south of Peartree Park and Ride) should be completed to Level II standard (Historic England 2017, *Understanding the Archaeology of Landscapes: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (Second Edition)) including the creation of a measured plan of the ridge and furrow at 1:500 and the examination of the wider context with reference to aerial photographic evidence reproduced at 1:2500. Attention should be paid to the recognition and recording of distinctive features e.g. turning heads, double ridges etc.
- For further information on the historic ridge and furrow of the Midlands see Hall (2001; 2014) and Gloucestershire County Council (2012).

c. Machine stripping

- Machinery may be used to remove topsoil and overburden to reveal the significant archaeological deposits. Such excavation should be undertaken in level spits using an appropriate machine using a toothless bucket and working under archaeological supervision. **Archaeological deposits should not be removed by machine except where such a procedure has been sanctioned**

by the City Council Archaeologist. Particular care should be taken when controlling machining in situations where vertical stratigraphy is to be expected or where it is considered that significant archaeological deposits may be vulnerable to damage - in such circumstances machining should be controlled by experienced senior staff. Potentially significant deposits should not be removed by machine before their character is reasonably understood.

- **Stage 2.**
- Six 1x 1m test pits should be hand excavated in 10cm spits (to natural) through four separate ridges (of ridge and furrow). Three on the NW-SE ridge orientation and three on the NE-SW ridge orientation. **N.B. Test pits should avoid the area that may be included in open space (see illustration below).**
- Also 950m of 1.6m wide (or equivalent) trenching should be excavated targeted on proposed building footprints in previously un-sampled parts of the site. *A contingency for an additional 20m of trenching should be allowed for.* An indicative trench location plan is provided below (black lines, not to scale, 19 x 50m trenches) however contractors may wish to suggest alternative trench dimensions/locations (N.B. the rectification has moved the trenches to the east slightly off the building footprints and would need correcting).



- **Stage 3.** Subject to the results of Stage 1, targeted excavation of the new development footprint may be required if appropriate. *The scope of any second stage mitigation will be set out in an addendum to this brief once the stage 2 results are known.*

d. Cleaning and Recording in plan-form

- Each excavation area should be cleaned by hand sufficiently to allow the identification and planning of archaeological features and scanned with a metal-detector. Where archaeological features appear to be absent sufficient work should be done to demonstrate this. The excavation area should be planned at an appropriate scale (normally 1:20 where complex deposits are present or 1:50 or 1:100 in areas of lesser complexity). Spot levels should be taken as appropriate.

e. Sampling

- **Stage 2:** Sufficient features should be sampled by hand excavation to achieve the Stage 2 objectives. For discrete features such as pits and postholes this will normally involve half-sectioning a representative sample. Linear features should be sectioned. If deeply stratified deposits are encountered it may be appropriate to excavate sample boxes and/or examine the stratigraphy revealed in the section of excavated cut features.
- A contingency should be identified for more intensive sampling. The use of the contingency should be agreed with the City Council Archaeologist prior to implementation.
- **Stage 3 Targeted excavation:** To be subject to an addendum to this brief if required.

f. Context recording

- 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. Trench and excavation sides should also be drawn in section where they contain significant archaeological information.
- A black and white photographic record should be maintained including photos of all significant features and overall photos of each area or trench. Digital photographs should not be taken instead of 35mm film. Where selected digital photographs are taken to supplement 35mm film they should adhere to the National Monuments Record's Digital Imaging Guidelines which requires that only cameras of ten mega pixel specification (or greater) should be used.

Digital Image capture and file storage should be compliant with Historic England's guidelines (2015c).

g. 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. Provision should be made for on-site conservation advice for the lifting and treatment of fragile objects and investigative conservation. 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 excavation strategy should aim to quantify their occurrence, even where comprehensive retention is not considered appropriate.
- Contractors should, where relevant, follow the guidelines for handling Post Roman Ceramics produced by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (Slowikowski, Nenck & Pearce, 2001). This specifies that all ceramic finds must be collected, washed, marked, bagged, boxed and assessed with regard to the project aims and objectives. Where a sampling procedure is employed this should be undertaken in consultation with a ceramic specialist.
- Finds recording should be carried out in a manner compatible with existing typological series for the City of Oxford.
- Contractors should refer to Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods from sampling and recovery to post excavation (English Heritage, 2011) as a guide to best practice in this field.
- Environmental samples should be collected according to a specified systematic sampling strategy which is related to the project objectives and for **Stage 3**: has been prepared in consultation with English Heritage's Regional Adviser in Archaeological Science.
- Animal bones should be collected and assessed in accordance with national guidance (Historic England 2019).
- Waterlogged wood should be recorded, sampled and conserved in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (Historic England 2010)
- In the event of discovery of any human remains the archaeological contractor should inform the client, the City 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). In certain situations special arrangements may be required for the recovery of samples for DNA analysis. Human remains should be treated in accordance with CIfA 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).

- In certain situations special arrangements may be required for the recovery of samples for DNA analysis.
- Human remains should be treated in accordance with CIfA guidelines and the advice set out in *Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England* (Historic England 2017).
- Specialist reports should employ the appropriate keywords as set out in ‘*Guidelines for the addition of Archaeological Science data to the Historic Environment Record* (English Heritage, 2007)’
- ***A contingency should be allowed for scientific date and appropriate provision made for the selection and recovery of samples.***
- During **stage 2** an initial assessment of the site's palaeo-environmental potential should be made by the project manager in consultation with the City Council Archaeologist. If the site has significant potential it may be necessary to obtain specialist advice and undertake sampling in accordance with a programme agreed with English Heritage's Adviser in Archaeological Science. A contingency should be allowed for this.

h. Metal Detecting

- Whenever private individuals or subcontractors are engaged to undertake metal detecting as part of an archaeological fieldwork project they should be asked to sign a formal agreement in which the right to claim Treasure is waived. Please refer to the revised Treasure Act Code of Practice (2003, paragraph 81). A suggested clause is:-
- “In the process of working on the archaeological/ excavation at [location of site] between the dates of [insert dates], [name of person contributing to the project] has been working under the direction or permission of [name of archaeological organisation or responsible individual archaeologist] and

hereby waives all rights to rewards for objects discovered that could be otherwise payable under the Treasure Act 1996.”

- Contracts should ensure that investigations are covered by a written agreement with the owner & occupier regarding rewards which may be payable.

i. Public Archaeology

- In Oxford the public are encouraged to visit archaeological work in progress where safe and practicable. The project design should therefore consider provision for appropriate public access and/or publicity which has been agreed with the client. Acknowledgement should be made to the role of the local planning authority in facilitating the work.

9. POST-EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

- a. A brief preliminary statement of the results and assessment of the site's significance should be provided within one month of the completion of fieldwork. This preliminary assessment should be agreed by the City Council Archaeologist.
- b. For projects which have been agreed to be of purely local significance it will be sufficient to complete an archive report for the HER, publish a summary and deposit the archive (see below).
- c. For projects which have been agreed to be of more than local significance an illustrated interim report together with a post-excavation assessment and updated project design (Morphe) should be submitted by the archaeological contractor and approved by the City Council Archaeologist within 6 months of the completion of fieldwork. Post-excavation analysis and report preparation should proceed in accordance with the agreed updated project design unless subsequent variations are agreed by the City Council Archaeologist.

10. PUBLICATION

- a. 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. If appropriate an illustrated final report which meets the guidelines set out in the Morphe Guidance and is suitable for publication in an approved archaeological journal (normally *Oxeniensia* or an equivalent publication) should be provided to the Oxford 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 Oxford City Council Archaeologist. The report should be clearly referenced in all respects to all work on the site, evaluation, excavation, watching briefs, building recording, background research including aerial photography etc, in order that a coherent picture may be presented. 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. A bound offprint of the final report/publication and a digital copy of the text in PDF format must be supplied to the Oxford Urban Archaeological Database. A further report/offprint should accompany the archive and another should be supplied to the County Historic Environment Record. A copy of any specialist papers relating to the site should also be supplied to the Oxford City Archaeologist.
- d. A publication grant should be provided to the publishers of the report in accordance with their requirements.
- e. Contractors should complete an OASIS fieldwork summary form and submit it to the Archaeology Data Service.

11. 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 that is registered with the Arts Council and approved for the storage of archaeological archives.
- b. The preferred archive for in this instance is the County Museum (unless the site falls within the collection policy of the Ashmolean Museum). Contractors should refer to the County Museum Service for the procedures and requirements which must be followed for the deposit of archaeological archives.
- c. A storage grant should be provided to the museum in accordance with their requirements. The archive should be prepared and deposited in accordance with the guidelines set out in 'Archaeological Archives: A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation' (AAF, 2007) and the Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives (CIFA 2014b).
- d. The archive report should include copies of specialist reports.
- e. The preferred repository for the digital archive in Oxford is the Archaeology Data Service. The guidelines for depositing with the ADS can be found on their website.
- f. Where the archive has been identified as of national importance the contracting unit should liaise with Oxford City Council Archaeologist and Museum curator to agree any necessary requirements for long term DIGITAL storage. A contingency for DIGITAL storage should be included within the project design.

12. MONITORING

- a. Monitoring is carried out by the Oxford City Council Archaeologist, normally acting on behalf of the local planning authority, 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 Oxford City Council Archaeologist prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The archaeological contractor should keep the City Archaeologist 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 City Archaeologist and no fieldwork should be carried out without the service's knowledge and approval - the service should always be afforded the opportunity to observe archaeological excavations.
- c. All monitoring visits will be documented by the Oxford City Council Archaeologist and the archaeological contractor will be informed of any perceived deficiencies.
- d. The Oxford City Council Archaeologist 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 City Archaeologist within the resources defined in the project design.

13. HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER CONSTRAINTS

- a. **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.
- b. It is the responsibility of the archaeological contractor and their client to ensure that other constraints (e.g. SSSI's or protected trees) are identified and properly safeguarded.
- c. Approval for proposed changes to the project design must be obtained from the Oxford City Council Archaeologist.

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Oxford Historic Environment Record

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