



## Land to the West of Sainsbury's Store Bath Road, Melksham, Wiltshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**Land to the West of Sainsbury's Store,  
Bath Road, Melksham,  
Wiltshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

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**Watching Brief Report**

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**QUALITY ASSURANCE**

<b>SITE CODE</b>	<b>72031</b>	<b>ACCESSION CODE</b>		<b>CLIENT CODE</b>	
<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REF.</b>	<b>APP/Y3940/A/10 /2133463</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>390195 163888</b>		

VERSION	STATUS*	PREPARED BY	APPROVED BY	APPROVER'S SIGNATURE	DATE	FILE
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2	E	SF	RAC		20/12/11	X:\PROJECTS\72031\REPORT\72031.V2.DOC

**I= Internal Draft E= External Draft F= Final**

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**Watching Brief Report**

**Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was appointed by ISG Pearce, to carry out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with flood alleviation on land at Bath Road, Melksham, Wiltshire, centred on NGR 390195 163888.

The watching brief was a requirement of the planning consent granted by Wiltshire Council on appeal (Planning Ref APP/Y3940/A/10/2133463, condition 19), for the extension to an existing Sainsbury's store and associated works, including landscaping, car parking and flood alleviation works.

The watching brief monitored groundworks associated primarily with the proposed flood alleviation works on the Site. Heavily disturbed modern material was recorded overlying alluvial deposits related to the River Avon which bounds the Site to the north and west. No archaeological features or material was found during the watching brief.

The fieldwork was carried out between 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

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**Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by ISG Pearce Ltd on behalf of J Sainsbury's PLC, and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to them in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank David Vaughan who advised on the project on behalf of Wiltshire Council.

The fieldwork was carried out Oliver Good. This report was compiled by Sian Reynolds and illustrations were produced by Kenneth Lymer. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.

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**Watching Brief Report**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology has been appointed by ISG Pearce Ltd on behalf of J Sainsbury's PLC (the 'Client'), to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land off Bath Road, Melksham, Wiltshire, in advance of an extension to the current Sainsbury's Store, hereafter 'the Site', centred on NGR 390195 163888 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 A proposal to extend and improve the existing Sainsbury's store, with associated works including landscaping, car parking and flood alleviation, was submitted to Wiltshire Council and granted on appeal (Planning Ref APP/Y3940/A/10/2133463) with the attached archaeological condition:

Condition 19:

*No development shall commence within the site area until:*

*(a) a written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the LPA; and*

*(b) the approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (GK Heritage 2010) covering the scope and methodology of the watching brief was submitted to, and approved by, Wiltshire Council prior to works commencing.

1.1.4 The fieldwork was undertaken between 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

### **1.2 Site location, topography and geology**

1.2.1 Extending to some 3.6ha in size, the Sainsbury's store is located to the immediate west of Bath Road, in the northern area of Melksham Town Centre and centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 390195 163888. The Site includes the application store and existing car park, vacant land to the immediate south-east and an area of landscaped land to the south-west.

1.2.2 The specific area within the Site, that was the focus of this watching brief, is that marked as 'Area 3' on **Figure 1**. This is the area that was identified through trial trenching (WA 2009), to have potential for archaeological remains, as discussed below (see section 2 below).

1.2.3 The Site is bounded to the north and west by the River Avon. A variety of town and residential uses are located to its south and east including the

graveyard of St. Michael's church. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust operates the Conygre Mead nature reserve to the south-west of the Site (WYG, 2009, 1).

- 1.2.4 The underlying geology comprises alluvial silts associated with the River Avon and drift First River Terrace Gravels (BGS Sheet 265). A borehole survey identified silt rich Flandrian alluvium overlying the Pleistocene gravels (CAT, 1994, 5).

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1.1 The following archaeological background to the Site was set out in the WSI (GK Heritage 2010) and was mostly derived from the Wiltshire and Swindon Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held at Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Cocklebury Rd, Chippenham.

- 2.1.2 A number of multi-period finds have been made close to the River Avon in the vicinity of the Site, including a single palaeolith from the river gravels, whose fresh condition suggests that it lay *in situ* prior to discovery. Other finds include sherds of Neolithic Peterborough Ware pottery, an assemblage of Bronze Age metalwork comprising three bronze phalerae (discs), three bronze socketed spearheads, a dirk blade, two spearheads and Romano-British pottery from the vicinity of Bypass Bridge (ST96SW301; ST96SW100, ST06SW150 and ST96SW551).

- 2.1.3 The Site itself lies on that of the former Ark Cloth factory, in existence between c.1751 to c.1865, when it was demolished (WCC, 2004, COM9).

### **2.2 Previous archaeological work**

#### **Borehole survey**

- 2.2.1 A borehole survey of the area was undertaken in 1994 by the Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CAT, 1994) which identified a possible palaeochannel to the south of the current course of the Avon. Transect 1, containing boreholes 1-6 (*ibid* Fig 3) was aligned north-west to south-east running from the eastern edge of the Avon floodplain through Area 3 up the slope towards the graveyard of St. Michael's Church to the east.

- 2.2.2 There was a marked difference in the morphological character of the deposits observed within boreholes 3 and 4. A thick humic silt rich alluvium was identified in borehole 4 and was interpreted as having been deposited in low energy fluvial conditions and the result of vegetative decay, but the distinct differing nature to that found within borehole 3 inferred some form of barrier, potentially man-made (revetment, wall, dyke) or something natural such as a gravel bank or sand bar. The presence of a sand bar or natural barrier would suggest a palaeochannel in this area.

#### **Archaeological evaluation**

- 2.2.3 In July 2009, an archaeological evaluation comprising 10 machine excavated trenches was carried out at the Site (WA 2009). These were distributed across three defined 'areas', as shown in **Figure 1**.

- 2.2.4 No archaeological remains were exposed in Areas 1 and 2 (Trenches 1-7) and only natural water borne geological deposits and modern make-up layers were recorded. The modern deposits, indicative of extensive earthmoving and recent landscaping activity are likely to be associated with



a former works compound utilised during the construction of the existing Sainsbury's store.

2.2.5 Area 3 (Trenches 8-10) revealed evidence of a possible palaeochannel or natural river terrace, although, the nature and form of the feature could not be confirmed. A possible disturbed ground surface or occupation layer containing Saxon pottery was recorded which was cut through by a post-medieval or modern water culvert. Several other undated features were also recorded.

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

3.1.1 The generic aims of the project were to;

- Monitor the programme of works to locate, identify and to investigate and record the presence/absence of archaeological features or deposits, including palaeoenvironmental deposits
- Establish, where possible, the extent, date, character, relationship, condition and significance of these features and deposits within the area impacted, and
- Inform the scope and nature of any requirements for potential future mitigation, if appropriate.

### **4 METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Proposed Works**

4.1.1 The Site was divided into 3 areas (Area 1 – 3, **Figure 1**).

4.1.2 No further archaeological work was proposed in Area 1. Trenches 1-5 in the aforementioned evaluation (WA, 2009) had shown a low archaeological potential for this area, and, as a result, the archaeological watching brief did not extend into this area.

4.1.3 Due to Site constraints at the time of the evaluation, only 2 trenches (Tr 6 & Tr 7) were excavated within Area 2. Nevertheless, proposed groundworks in this area were limited as the area was being raised as part of the flood alleviation proposals.

4.1.4 The watching brief was maintained in Area 3, although in consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist at Wiltshire Council, a small area was not monitored due to the proven low archaeological potential recorded within the Site. Proposed wildlife areas around Area 3 were not subject to any earthmoving.

#### **4.2 Fieldwork Methodology**

4.2.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out within the WSI. All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008).

4.2.2 Works comprised archaeological monitoring by at least one experienced archaeologist of topsoil/subsoil removal and ground reduction during

groundworks. The watching brief was maintained throughout the initial stripping and concluded when, in consultation with the Assistant County Archaeologist, it was clear that the potential for archaeological remains to be exposed had been exhausted.

- 4.2.3 The groundwork was carried out, under constant archaeological supervision, using a 360 excavator with a toothless bucket. The mechanical excavation proceeded in spits to the desired level.
- 4.2.4 All potential archaeological features and deposits were subsequently hand cleaned and sample excavated as per the methodology set out in the WSI (GK Heritage 2010). Features and deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* record sheets and a unique numbering system for individual contexts, and were planned at a scale of 1:20. Sections were drawn at 1:10. All principal strata and features were related to the Ordnance Survey datum. The monitored areas were located using a Leica GPS survey system. Following all investigation and recording, the areas were then backfilled.
- 4.2.5 A photographic record of the watching brief was maintained through digital images. The photographic record illustrated both the detail and general context of the archaeological remains revealed, and the Site as a whole.

## **5 FIELDWORK RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 The following sections provide a summary of the information held in the Site archive.

### **5.2 Depositional Sequence**

- 5.2.1 Area 3 had been subject to heavy post-medieval and modern landscaping, and thick deposits of made ground overlying blue-grey alluvial silts and terraces of river gravels were noted (**Plate 1**).
- 5.2.2 The made ground deposits contained a mix of modern brick, glass and concrete, all of which was of unquestionably modern date and not retained.
- 5.2.3 As noted in the results of the previous field evaluation (WA 2009), fluvial action had caused widely varying depths of the natural deposits encountered during this watching brief, with gravel islands located amongst the alluvium.
- 5.2.4 This natural alluvium was revealed across Area 3 and contained patches of gleyed material (an indication of the changes in water content of the deposit).

### **5.3 Archaeological Features**

- 5.3.1 No archaeological features were identified during the watching brief.

## **6 FINDS**

- 6.1.1 Only modern material was noted during the watching brief and was not retained.

## 7 ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

- 7.1.1 No material suitable for environmental analysis was present within the monitored areas.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1.1 The watching brief did not identify any archaeological remains within the Site.
- 8.1.2 With the benefit of a larger stripped area it is clear the material identified from the possible buried land surface was residual in nature, collecting partly within post-medieval/modern disturbance or undulating elements of the natural gravel terrace.
- 8.1.3 The watching brief confirmed the findings of the trial trench evaluation, recording deep layers of made ground lying directly above alluvial silts and river terraces. It is possible that heavy landscaping had already removed any archaeological material, and that the artefacts recovered during the previous phase were strictly residual in nature.

## 9 ARCHIVE

### 9.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 9.1.1 The archive is currently held at Wessex Archaeology's office building under the site code **72031**. The complete archaeological project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (AAF 2007).
- 9.1.2 At a later date, the archive will be deposited with Wiltshire County Council. The archive will be prepared in accordance with the Museum's archive preparation standards.

### 9.2 The Archive

- 9.2.1 The project archive was prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (UKIC 1990). It comprises a ring-bound file containing a watching brief attendance form, site 'day book', trench record sheets, photographic register and *Written Scheme of Investigation*.

### 9.3 Copyright

- 9.3.1 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report.

## 10 REFERENCES

BGS, Sheet 265, Bath Solid and Drift 1:63,360

Cotswolds Archaeological Trust, 1994, The Hurn Site, Melksham, CAT Job: 0416, CAT Report: 94202

GK Heritage Solutions, 2010 Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation for Sainsbury Supermarkets Ltd

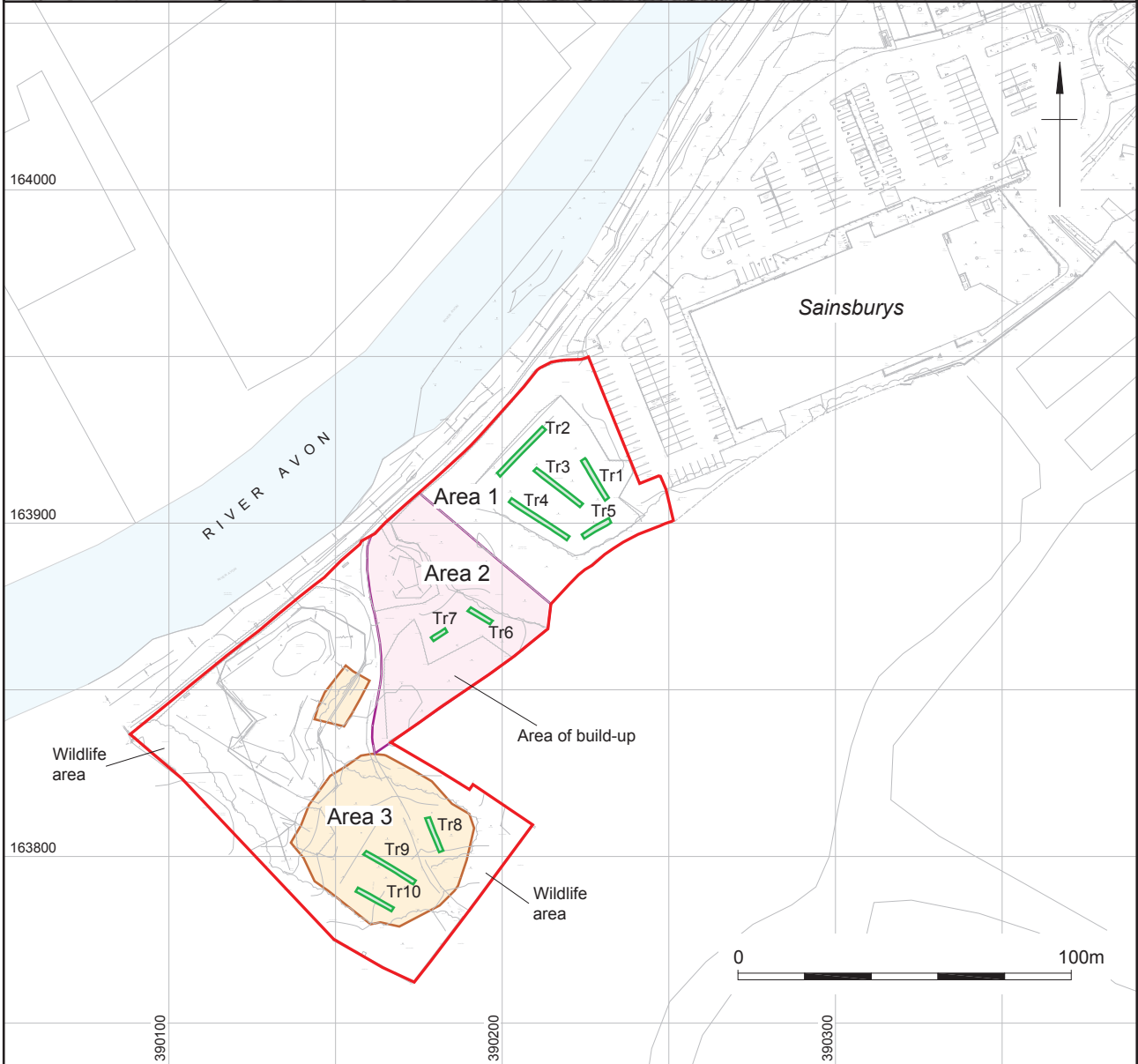
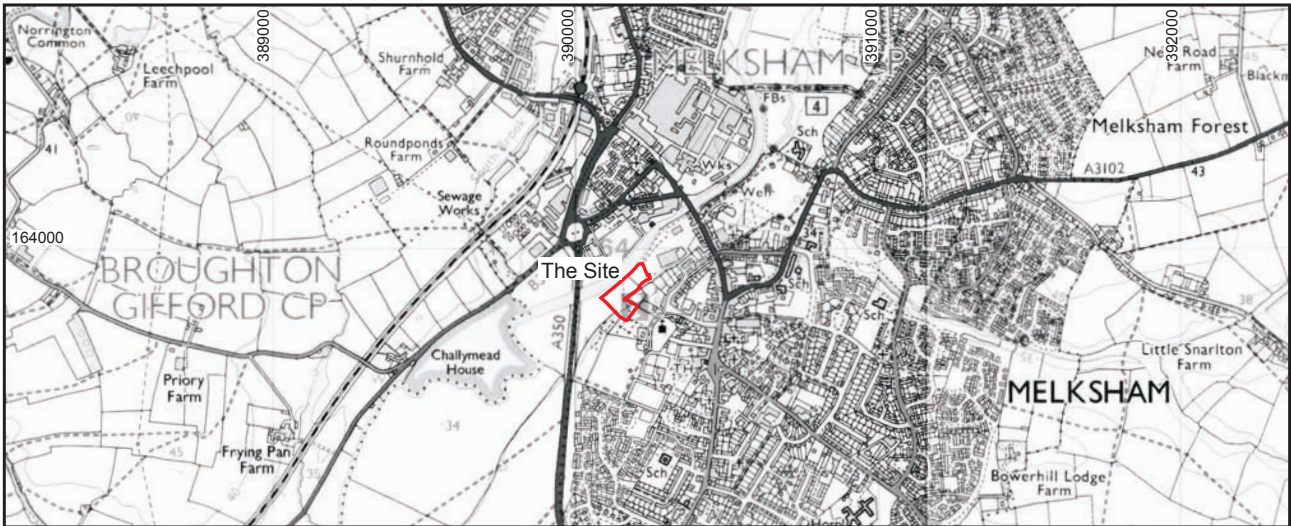
Wessex Archaeology, 2009, Land to the West of Sainsbury's Store, Bath Road, Melksham, Evaluation Report. Unpublished Client Report No. 72030.

WYG, 2009, Archaeological Trial Trenching, Sainsbury's Store, Bath Road, Melksham, Written Scheme of Investigation June 2009

## APPENDIX 1: OASIS RECORD FORM

### OASIS ID - wessexar1-116126

Versions				
View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	S Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	20 December 2011
Completed sections in current version				
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1/1
Validated sections in current version				
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
No	No	No	No	0/1
File submission and form progress				
Grey literature report submitted?	No	Grey literature report filename/s		
Images submitted?	No	Image filename/s		
Boundary file submitted?	No	Boundary filename		
HER signed off?		NMR signed off?		



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	Scale:	1:25000 & 1:2000 at A4	Illustrator:	KL
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Site and trench location plan

Figure 1



Plate 1: Representative section in Area 3



Plate 2: Area 3 following machine excavation

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