



Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme Old Abingdon Road, Oxford

Report on archaeological investigations



Planning Ref: 15/03703/FUL
Accession Number: OXCMS: 2016.65
Ref: 112950.04
October 2016



**Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme
Old Abingdon Road, Oxford**

Report on Archaeological Investigations

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October 2016

**Report Ref: 112950.04
Planning Application Ref: 15/03703/FUL
Accession Code: OXCMS:2016.65**



Quality Assurance

Project Code	112950	Accession Code	OXCMS: 2016.65	Client Ref.	
Planning Application Ref.	15/03703/FUL	Ordnance Survey (OS) national grid reference (NGR)	451667 203956		

Version	Status*	Prepared by	Checked and Approved By	Approver's Signature	Date
v01	E	<i>P Olsen</i>	<i>RAP</i>	<i>Naves</i>	18/10/2016
File:	\\projectserver\wessex\Projects\112950\ Reports				
v02	F	<i>P Olsen</i>	<i>A D Crockett</i>	<i>A. D. Crockett</i>	28/10/2016
File:	\\projectserver\wessex\Projects\112950\ Reports\Submitted				
File:					
File:					
File:					

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

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Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme Old Abingdon Road, Oxford

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Contents

Summary	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Project background	1
1.2 Scope of document	2
2 THE SITE.....	2
3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	2
3.1 Introduction	2
<i>Prehistoric</i>	2
<i>Romano-British (AD43 – AD410)</i>	3
<i>Saxon (AD 410 – 1066), medieval (AD1066 – 1500) and post-medieval (AD1500 – 1600)</i>	3
3.2 Recent investigations in the area.....	3
4 METHODOLOGY.....	3
4.1 Aims and objectives	3
4.2 Fieldwork methodology	4
<i>Excavation methodology</i>	4
<i>Watching brief methodology</i>	4
4.3 Recording.....	5
4.4 Specialist strategies	5
5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS.....	5
5.1 Introduction	5
5.2 Archaeological Excavation Results.....	5
5.3 Archaeological Watching Brief Results.....	5
5.4 Soil sequence and natural deposits.....	5
6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE	6
6.1 Introduction	6
7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE	6
7.1 Introduction	6



8	DISCUSSION	6
8.1	Summary.....	6
8.2	Conclusions.....	6
9	STORAGE AND CURATION	6
9.1	Museum.....	6
9.2	Archive.....	6
9.3	Discard policy.....	7
9.4	OASIS record.....	7
9.5	Copyright.....	7
9.6	Security copy.....	7
10	REFERENCES	7
10.1	Bibliography.....	7
11	APPENDICES	9
11.1	Appendix 1: Trench and context summaries from the archaeological excavation.....	9
11.2	Appendix 2: OASIS form.....	10

Figures

Figure 1: Site and excavation area location

Plates:

- Plate 1: View of the excavation area during concrete removal, view from the south-east
Plate 2: North facing representative section showing deposit sequence (2m scale)
Plate 3: View from the south-east of completed excavated area with groundwater infilling central sondage
Plate 4: Working shot during watching brief
Plate 5: North west facing representative section showing deposit sequence (1 m scale)
Plate 6: Working shot of piling during watching brief



Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme Old Abingdon Road, Oxford

Report on Archaeological Investigations

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Network Rail, to undertake archaeological investigations comprising an archaeological excavation and a watching brief on land at the Müller Milk dairy depot, Old Abingdon Road, Oxford (NGR 451667 203956).

The archaeological investigations were required in advance of construction of a proposed new culvert under the railway between Hinksey Drain and Hinksey Stream. A planning application (ref: 15/03703/FUL) was approved by Oxford City Council on 6th May 2016, subject to the condition that the construction of the permitted development shall be undertaken in accordance with the specifications in the approved plans and documents, one of which was the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the described archaeological works.

The archaeological excavation conducted within the footprint of the proposed new culvert during April 2016 did not identify any archaeological features or deposits. There was no evidence of the in-filled remains of a bypass channel associated with a nearby former mill, or any other associated water management features, or any evidence of palaeo-environmental and archaeological remains dating from the prehistoric or any other period. Similarly, the subsequent watching brief undertaken between June to August 2016 did not identify any archaeological remains.



Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme Old Abingdon Road, Oxford

Report on Archaeological Investigations

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Network Rail for commissioning the work, in particular Edward John is acknowledged for his help and assistance throughout the project. David Radford is thanked for his advice and for monitoring the archaeological investigations for Oxford City Council.

The archaeological investigations were undertaken by Richard Payne, Tom Burt, Piotr Orczewski and Matt Kendall. This report was written by Phoebe Olsen. Nancy Dixon and Karen Nichols prepared the report graphics. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Ruth Panes.



Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme Old Abingdon Road, Oxford

Report on Archaeological Investigations

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Network Rail (the Client), to undertake archaeological investigations comprising an archaeological excavation and watching brief on land at the Müller Milk dairy depot, Old Abingdon Road, Oxford, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 451667 203956 (hereafter 'the Site', **Figure 1**).

1.1.2 The work is required in relation to a proposed new culvert under the railway between Hinksey Drain and Hinksey Stream (Planning Reference 15/03703/FUL). The main built elements of the proposed development will consist of a twin box culvert with a headwall in the Hinksey Stream at the eastern terminus of the culverts.

1.1.3 Planning permission was approved by Oxford City Council on 6th May 2016, subject to conditions, including condition 2 which related to archaeological investigation:

2. The development permitted shall be constructed in complete accordance with the specifications in the application and approved plans and documents listed below, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority [only those relating to the archaeological investigations are listed here]:

-Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Works [AECOM 2016]

-Method Statement for archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief (Wessex Archaeology 2016)

1.1.4 During initial consultations with the Oxford City Council Archaeologist, acting as advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), had advised that a scheme of archaeological investigation and mitigation be undertaken in relation to the development and recommended that:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority. All works shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority

1.1.5 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the archaeological investigations was undertaken in March 2016 (AECOM 2016). The WSI stated that the investigations would comprise three stages:

1. A single geoarchaeological borehole
2. The controlled archaeological excavation of a section of the twin box culvert



3. The archaeological monitoring and recording, in the form of a watching brief, during construction of the eastern head wall of the culvert and scour protection works by the Principal Contractor.

1.1.6 WA was commissioned by Network Rail to undertake the second and third stage of the above archaeological investigations, comprising the excavation and the watching brief.

1.2 Scope of document

1.2.1 This report presents the results of the archaeological excavation that took place over two days (18th and 19th April 2016) and the results of the watching brief which was carried out over ten days between the 27th June and the 17th August 2016.

1.2.2 All works were carried out in accordance with the WSI (AECOM 2016). Wessex Archaeology also undertook a Method Statement as a supporting document to outline how precisely the work would be carried out, in compliance with the WSI (WA 2016).

2 THE SITE

2.1.1 The Site is located adjacent to the local authority boundary of the Oxford City Council area and the Vale of the White Horse District Council. The Site comprises a paved parking area at the rear of the dairy depot and part of the Hinksey Stream, including the bank on the eastern side. It is bounded to the west by the Didcot to Chester railway line and to the south by modern dairy depot buildings. The Site boundaries are fenced to the west, north and east.

2.1.2 The Hinksey Stream passes through the central part of the Site on a north-west/south-east course, with the River Thames further to the east. Another channel known as Weirs Mill Stream lies between the two, and flows into the Hinksey Stream south of the A34. The Site and the wider Study Area are low-lying, and bisected by numerous smaller watercourses, leats and drainage channels. The land rises in the south-west of the Study Area towards Hinksey Hill and the historic Bagley Wood.

2.1.3 The British Geological Survey records that the geology of the Site is on the Oxford Clay Formation and West Walton Formation (undifferentiated) Mudstone, which formed 156-165 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. This is overlain by superficial deposits of Alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel), which formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The following information is summarised from the WSI (AECOM 2016). No previous archaeological investigations are known to have been undertaken within the Site, although immediately to the south a series of investigations were undertaken in relation to flood defence improvement (see section 3.1.9 below).

3.1.2 Although the Site lies within a wider landscape containing plentiful remains from the prehistoric periods, the local defined Study Area contains comparatively few, although the Bronze Age is the best represented. There is evidence of water management in the vicinity from medieval times and into the post-medieval period, largely associated with local mills.

Prehistoric

3.1.3 No Palaeolithic, Mesolithic or Neolithic activity is recorded within the Site or Study Area. In the wider area: Palaeolithic finds are known from river gravels; Mesolithic finds are often

associated with alluvium and peat sequences; and Neolithic causewayed enclosures, a mortuary enclosure and barrows are known in the area around Abingdon.

- 3.1.4 Cropmarks of a group of five probable Bronze Age ring ditches are recorded 400 m west of the Site, and attest to the occupation of the river valley at the time. No Bronze Age activity is recorded within the Site. A Middle Bronze Age settlement is recorded at Abingdon to the south-west of the Study Area, and an extensive Bronze Age to Iron Age settlement is located at Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common, approximately 3.8 km to the north-west, adjacent to the River Thames. The latter site includes a large number of enclosures, ring ditches and barrows.
- 3.1.5 No Iron Age settlements are known within the Study Area, although a gold coin was found 500 m south-west of the Site.

Romano-British (AD43 – AD410)

- 3.1.6 No Roman activity is recorded within the Site, although there is evidence for arable agricultural practises in the Study Area, and industrial activity in the form of pottery production in the wider region beyond.

Saxon (AD 410 – 1066), medieval (AD1066 – 1500) and post-medieval (AD1500 –1600)

- 3.1.7 Little evidence has been found of post-Roman activity in the region, although an Anglo-Saxon spearhead was recovered from the Thames 500 m east of the Site and a 5th-century burial has been recorded at Abingdon. A peat deposit discovered during test pitting adjacent to the Thames (700 m north-east of the Site) has been dated to the 7th-8th centuries AD.
- 3.1.8 The Site lies approximately 800 m east of the medieval village of South Hinksey. This has a church with early 13th century features and was a *vill* in its own right by 1316. The site of a water mill (Langford Mill) is documented in the vicinity from the 12th century. There are also a number of historic post-medieval houses and farmhouses, some timber-framed, within the village. A scatter of post-medieval pottery has also been recorded to the south-east.
- 3.1.9 Investigations undertaken in 2006 in advance of flood defence improvement revealed a medieval timber revetment on the island between the eastern bypass channel and the Hinksey Stream, presumed to be associated with the medieval Langford Mill. They also recorded sequences of medieval alluvium on the island, and brick structures associated with the 19th-century phase of Towles Mill (the successor to Langford Mill).

3.2 Recent investigations in the area

- 3.2.1 Two window samples have been recovered within the Site, one (WS04 - AECOM 2015) within the footprint of the proposed culvert. The deposit sequence confirmed a stratigraphy comprising the modern concrete slab, made ground and alluvium overlying natural terrace gravels at depth of 2.10 m below ground level (bgl), with groundwater encountered from 1.75 m bgl.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Aims and objectives

- 4.1.1 Specific objectives defined in the WSI (AECOM 2016) were:

- *To identify and record any evidence for water management features associated with the Hinksey stream and associated leats/by-pass channels;*

- To identify and record any evidence for structures or features associated with the medieval Langford Mill or post-medieval Towles water mill;
- To identify and record any evidence for prehistoric occupation of the terrace gravels and floodplain of the Hinksey Stream;
- To preserve by record (where possible) the nature, depth, extent, character and date of archaeological deposits or features encountered in order to successfully fulfil the research aims of the project;
- To report the result of the investigations and if appropriate to disseminate the results of the archaeological mitigation works by publication in a suitable popular or academic paper or journal; and
- To record the condition or state of preservation of any archaeological deposits or feature encountered in order to successfully fulfil the research aims of the project

4.2 Fieldwork methodology

4.2.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out within the WSI (AECOM 2016) and supporting Method Statement (WA 2016).

Excavation methodology

4.2.2 The archaeological excavation consisted of a single machine-excavated trench (surface measurement: 7.4 m x 9 m x 9.6 m x 11.6 m) which was excavated along the centre line of the proposed twin box culvert location (**Figure 1**). In order to attempt to safely access potential archaeological levels, the trench was stepped in at approximately 0.7 m below ground surface to a 4 m by 6.3 m by 5.5 m by 7.3 m, within which a smaller 3 m by 2 m sondage was excavated down to the top of the gravels.

4.2.3 The trench was excavated using a 13 tonne 360° tracked excavator equipped with a toothless bucket and under the constant supervision of an archaeologist. The excavation proceeded in spits, approx. 50-200 mm and was reduced as the surface of the alluvium was approached. The made ground deposit (where it was not forming part of the stepped trench) was removed in its entirety prior to any excavation of the alluvium. Hand cleaning and investigation was undertaken to record the uncovered deposit.

Watching brief methodology

4.2.4 The following methodology was proposed in order to meet the aims and objectives of the watching brief at the Site. All works were carried out in accordance with the ClfA's *Standard and guidance: archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014b), excepting where superseded by statements made below.

4.2.5 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundwork and ground reduction, including service runs, through previously undisturbed soils.

4.2.6 The watching brief was undertaken by one experienced archaeologist at one time. The mechanical excavation was, where possible, undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket and under constant supervision by WA. Machine excavation proceeded to the required construction levels or the top of archaeological levels whichever was the higher. Where practicable and without causing unreasonable delay to the groundwork programme, groundwork was temporarily halted whilst investigations were carried out by WA staff.

4.2.7 The watching brief was maintained throughout initial excavations and was concluded when it was clear that the potential for archaeological remains to be exposed had been exhausted.



4.2.8 WA staff investigated archaeological deposits and features by excavation and recording commensurate with the scale of work and using WA's pro forma recording system. Recording included written, drawn, and photographic elements as conditions allow.

4.2.9 Archaeological features and deposits were surveyed using a GPS and related to Ordnance Survey.

4.3 Recording

4.3.1 All exposed archaeological deposits if encountered were to be recorded using WA's *pro forma* recording system. A representative section of the overlying deposits recorded within the trench was recorded and drawn.

4.3.2 A photographic record was maintained during the investigation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images will be subject to managed quality control and curation processes which will embed appropriate metadata within the image and ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

4.4 Specialist strategies

4.4.1 Any recovered finds and environmental samples were processed and assessed in line with procedures laid out in the WSI and Method Statement.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 No archaeological deposits were recorded during any of the stages of the archaeological investigations.

5.2 Archaeological Excavation Results

5.2.1 The excavated area (**Figure 1**) was necessarily reduced from that proposed in the WSI (AECOM 2016) because an access road had to be maintained within the present car park and for health and safety reasons the trench had to be stepped, leaving little room for manoeuvrability of plant (**Plate 1**). The excavation area was successfully located in the footprint of the proposed twin box culvert, as originally designed in the WSI.

5.2.2 Even though groundwater quickly infilled the central sondage of the excavation area (**Plate 3**), Wessex Archaeology confidently established that no archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the excavation.

5.2.3 Details of individually excavated contexts from the archaeological excavation are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

5.3 Archaeological Watching Brief Results

5.3.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken in two areas to the east and west of the excavation area as indicated within **Figure 1**. No archaeological remains were observed.

5.4 Soil sequence and natural deposits

5.4.1 The overlying deposits were uniform across the Site (**Plate 2**) comprising: concrete over made ground up to 1.03 m in depth (**1001** and **1002**), over alluvium. The alluvial deposits were comprised of a black grey sandy clay with abundant twigs and plant matter forming the upper surface up to 0.15m thick (**1003**) over a blue grey alluvial clay (**1004**), which in turn overlay natural sands and gravels (**1005**) of the Northmoor sand and gravel member.



6 ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Only one find was recovered during the archaeological excavation: a complete 20th century glass mineral water bottle with 'Kinmore & Co' on the side was retrieved from alluvial deposit **1003**.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified and therefore no samples were taken.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Summary

- 8.1.1 No archaeological deposits were recorded during any of the stages of the archaeological works undertaken.

8.2 Conclusions

- 8.2.1 The archaeological excavation conducted within the footprint of the proposed new culvert did not identify any archaeological features or deposits. There was no evidence of the in-filled remains of a bypass channel associated with a nearby former mill, or any other associated water management features, or any evidence of palaeo-environmental and archaeological remains dating from the prehistoric or any other period.
- 8.2.2 Similarly, the subsequent watching brief undertaken between June and August 2016 did not identify any archaeological features or deposits.

9 STORAGE AND CURATION

9.1 Museum

- 9.1.1 The designated receiving museum will be Oxford County museum. The Curator of Archaeology has been contacted for an accession number and to obtain information regarding specific archive preparation requirements.
- 9.1.2 Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner. In the interim the archive will be held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology at Old Sarum, Salisbury, Wiltshire under the project code **112950**.

9.2 Archive

- 9.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the local museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 9.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the project code **112950** and a full index will be prepared.



9.3 Discard policy

- 9.3.1 WA follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 9.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2011).
- 9.3.3 The modern glass bottle find recovered during this excavation will therefore be discarded, which is also in accordance with artefact recovery procedures outlined in the WSI (AECOM 2016).

9.4 OASIS record

- 9.4.1 Following the completion of both stages of the archaeological investigation, an OASIS online record <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators Forms. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the Wiltshire historic environment record (HER). This will include an uploaded pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive).

9.5 Copyright

- 9.5.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms with the *Copyright and Related Rights regulations 2003*.

9.6 Security copy

- 9.6.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

10 REFERENCES

10.1 Bibliography

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Society of Museum Archaeologists [SMA] 1995 *Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive*, Society of Museum Archaeologists

United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) 2001 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage*

Wessex Archaeology 2016, Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief, Unpublished report ref: 112950.02



11 APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1: Trench and context summaries from the archaeological excavation

Trench 800	Dimensions :	7.4m by 9m by 9.6m by 11.6m	Ground surface level:	55.64m aOD
	Centre line Coordinates (NGR):	504269.29, 185450.00 504273.78, 185421.96		
Context	Category	Description	Depth (bgl)	
1001	Layer	<u>Made ground</u> . Concrete of car park forming present ground surface.	0 -0.25m	
1002	Layer	<u>Made ground</u> . Mixed deposit of rubble and redeposited soil.	0.25 – 1.03m	
1003	Layer	<u>Alluvial deposit</u> . Black grey sandy clay, no visible structure, heavily bioturbated. Upper surface of deposits contains common organic inclusions in the form of twigs and plant matter forming upper surface of alluvium prior to burial by overlying made ground deposits.	1.03 – 1.18m	
1004	Layer	<u>Alluvial deposit</u> . Mid blue grey soft to firm clay, no visible primary structure, the deposit showed evidence of bioturbation	1.18 – 2.04m	
1005	Layer	<u>Pleistocene sands and gravels</u> (Northmoor sand and gravel member). Yellow grey sandy gravel	2.04m+	



11.2 Appendix 2: OASIS form

OASIS ID: wessexar1-266368

Project details

Project name	Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme
Short description of the project	Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Network Rail, to undertake archaeological investigations comprising an archaeological excavation and a watching brief on land at the Müller Milk dairy depot, Old Abingdon Road, Oxford (NGR 451667 203956). The archaeological investigations were required in advance of construction of a proposed new culvert under the railway between Hinksey Drain and Hinksey Stream. A planning application (ref: 15/03703/FUL) was approved by Oxford City Council on 6th May 2016, subject to the condition that the construction of the permitted development shall be undertaken in accordance with the specifications in the approved plans and documents, one of which was the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the described archaeological works. The archaeological excavation conducted within the footprint of the proposed new culvert during April 2016 did not identify any archaeological features or deposits. There was no evidence of the in-filled remains of a bypass channel associated with a nearby former mill, or any other associated water management features, or any evidence of palaeo-environmental and archaeological remains dating from the prehistoric or any other period. Similarly, the subsequent watching brief undertaken between June to August 2016 did not identify any archaeological remains.
Project dates	Start: 18-04-2016 End: 17-08-2016
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	112950 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	NONE None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Part Excavation","Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	OXFORDSHIRE OXFORD OXFORD Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme
Postcode	OX1 4XP
Site coordinates	SP 451667 203956 51.879854282167 -1.343766766402 51 52 47 N 001 20 37 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 55m Max: 56m

Project creators



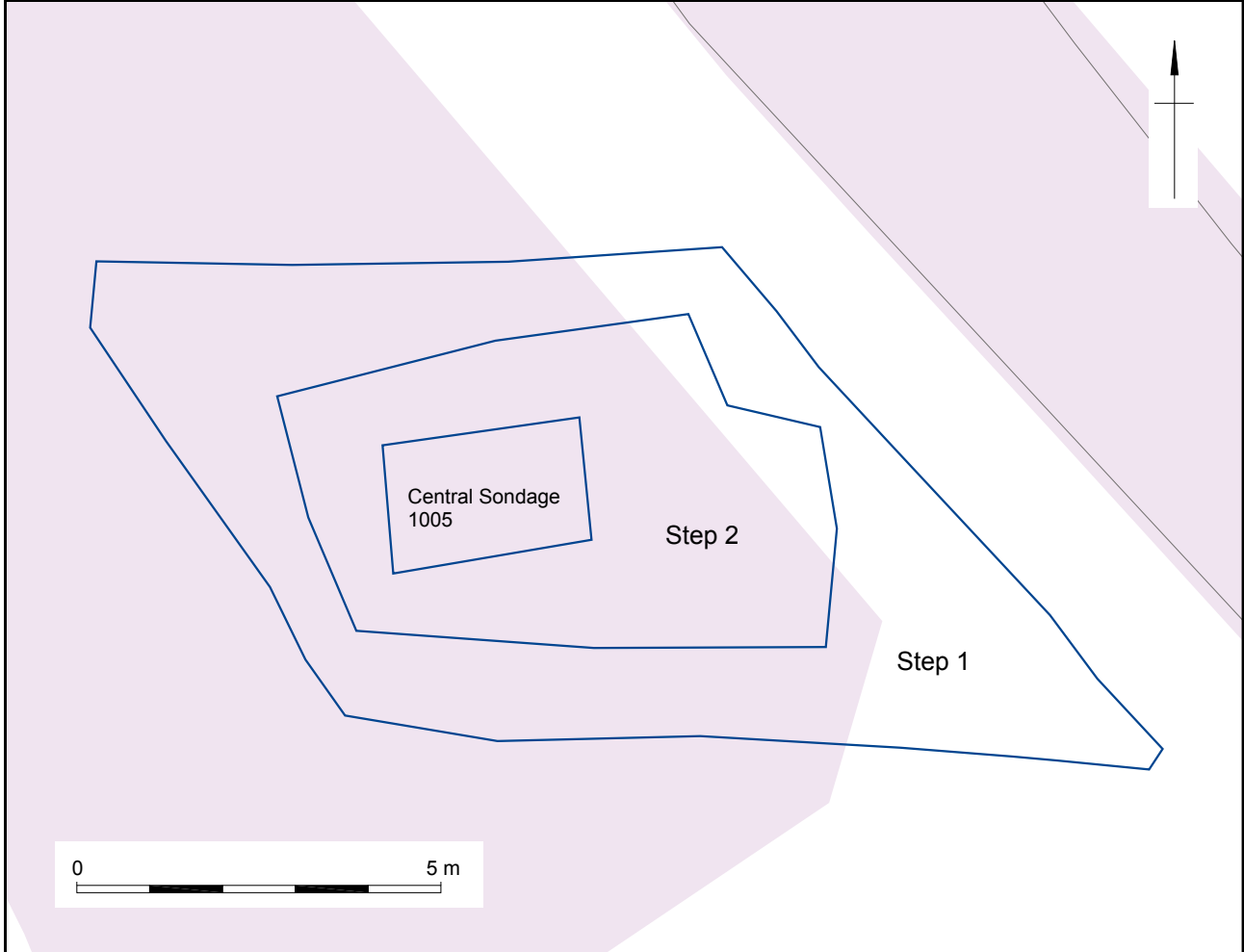
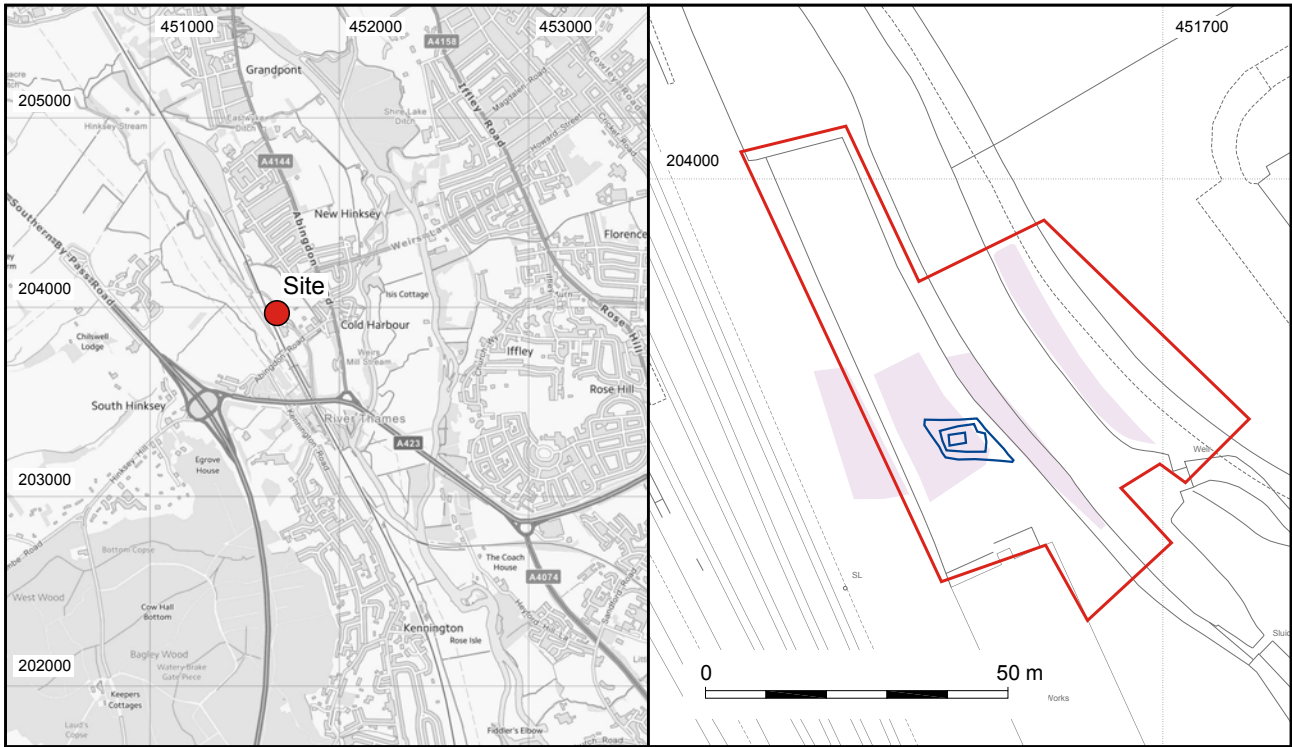
Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	AECOM
Project director/manager	Ruth Panes
Project supervisor	Richard Payne
Type of sponsor/funding body	Network Rail

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Oxford County Museum Service
Digital Archive ID	OXCMS:2016:65
Digital Contents	"Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Oxford County Museums Service
Paper Archive ID	OXCMS:2016:65
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Map", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Hinksey Flood Alleviation Scheme, Old Abingdon Road, Oxford: Report on Archaeological Investigations
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Wessex Archaeology
Other bibliographic details	112950
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	Wessex Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Wessex Archaeology - Salisbury
Description	A4 bound client report
URL	www.oasis.ac.uk



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	Scale:	1:40,000; 1:1250; 1:100 at A4	Illustrator:	KMN/ND
	Path:	X:\PROJECTS\112950\Graphics_Office\Rep figs\WB\2016_10_10\112950_WB.dwg		

Site location and excavation area

Figure 1



Plate 1: Working shot of machining the excavation area



Plate 2: North facing representative section showing deposit sequence (2m scale)


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Plate 3: View from the south-east of completed excavated area with groundwater infilling central sondage



Plate 4: Working shot during watching brief



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Plate 5: North west facing representative section of excavated area



Plate 6: Working shot of piling during watching brief

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