



# Land Adjacent to Homebase Horspath Driftway, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Ref: 115200.01  
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**Land Adjacent to Homebase, Horspath Driftway,  
Oxford, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation Report**

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# Land Adjacent to Homebase, Horspath Driftway, Oxford, Oxfordshire

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Figure 1: Site and Trench Location.



# **Land Adjacent to Homebase, Horspath Driftway, Oxford, Oxfordshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Report**

### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Colliers International to undertake an archaeological evaluation ahead of the proposed construction of a single-storey coffee shop unit on land adjacent to Homebase, Headington Retail Park, Horspath Driftway, Oxford centred on NGR 455518, 204927. The fieldwork was undertaken on 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

This evaluation comprised a single trench measuring 12m by 1.8m within the centre of the proposed development area. A broadly consistent stratigraphic sequence was recorded, comprising modern tarmac overlying gravel and hard core levelling deposits. These overlay the limestone natural geology. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered within the trench.



# **Land Adjacent to Homebase, Horspath Driftway, Oxford, Oxfordshire**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Report**

### **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Colliers International, and in particular Leigh Thomas, for commissioning the report, and for their assistance throughout. We are also grateful to David Radford, Oxford City Council Archaeologist for providing curatorial advice, and additional information regarding the geology of the area.

The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andy Crockett. The fieldwork was undertaken by Matt Kendal and Alistair Zochowski. This report was written by Alistair Zochowski. The illustrations were prepared by Will Foster.



# Land Adjacent to Homebase, Horspath Driftway, Oxford, Oxfordshire

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Colliers International (the Client), to undertake an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land adjacent to Homebase, Headington Retail Park, Horspath Driftway, Oxford (hereafter 'the Site', **Figure 1**), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 455518 204927.
- 1.1.2 The Site was the subject of a planning application (16/02586/FUL) for the erection of a single-storey coffee shop unit with associated drive-thru facility, car parking, landscaping and associated works.
- 1.1.3 In response to the application the City Council Archaeologist at Oxford City Council (OCC) recommended that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken to establish the character and extent of any significant archaeological deposits that may be impacted by the proposed development.
- 1.1.4 A written scheme of investigation (WSI), setting out the fieldwork strategy, the methodology for the evaluation and the reporting of the results, was submitted to and approved by the Archaeologist at OCC (WA 2017).

#### 1.2 Site location, land-use, geology and topography.

- 1.2.1 The Site forms a semi-rectangular parcel of land of approximately 1200m<sup>2</sup>, located on the eastern edge of Oxford, within the Cowley area, and some 1.6km to the west of the village of Horspath (**Figure 1**).
- 1.2.2 The Site is bordered to the east by the A4142 ring road and to the west and north by retail units. The development area is currently the southern end of the retail units' car park.
- 1.2.3 The Site is largely level and lies at an elevation of approximately 87m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying bedrock geology throughout the Site is mapped as the Wheatley Limestone Member, with no superficial deposits recorded (British Geological Survey, Geology of Britain Viewer).

#### 1.3 Archaeological Background

- 1.3.1 No previous intrusive archaeological investigation has been conducted on the site. Investigations within the vicinity have uncovered evidence for archaeological activity dating from the Bronze Age to the Roman period and the paragraphs below highlight some of those previous investigations. A detailed description of the archaeological background can be found in the WSI (WA 2017).

- 1.3.2 An archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation was undertaken immediately to the south-east of the Site (Challis 2006). This located an Iron Age pit, as well as residual Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery. An early Romano-British field system comprising two gullies and a possible roundhouse drip gully may also reflect Iron Age activity. A rectilinear enclosure dating to the 3rd and 4th century was also identified. Finds recovered from the Site suggest nearby Romano-British occupation.
- 1.3.3 An evaluation to the immediately south-west of the Site, prior to redevelopment; demonstrated that this area had been severely landscaped, probably during the construction of the Brasenose Centre in the 1970s, destroying any archaeological deposits, except for an undated, possible posthole.
- 1.3.4 A watching brief to the north of the Site, within the grounds of the former Slade Hospital, recovered significant quantities of Roman-British pottery and slag considered to be suggestive of nearby pottery manufacture and metal working. Later watching briefs just to the north-west of this area and to the south-west did not locate any archaeological finds or features.
- 1.3.5 An evaluation at the post-medieval Brasenose Farm, to the east of the Site, did not locate any archaeological features.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aims and objectives**

2.1.1 The general aims of the archaeological evaluation were:

- *To locate, identify and to investigate and record the presence/absence of archaeological features or deposits;*
- *To confirm where possible, the extent, date, character, relationship, condition and significance of archaeological features, artefacts and deposits, including natural deposits within the site;*
- *To inform the scope and nature of any requirements for any potential further fieldwork, whether additional watching brief, excavation or post-excavation work.*

2.1.2 A specific aim of the evaluation was to establish whether significant Bronze Age, Late Iron Age and Early Roman settlement remains are present on the site, due to the nearby enclosure identified during the evaluation and subsequent excavation conducted to the south-east in 2006 (Challis 2006).

### **2.2 Fieldwork methodology**

2.2.1 The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the WSI (WA 2017). A single trench was opened in the centre of the site, aligned approximately east-west (**Figure 1**). A trench, measuring 12m by 1.8m, was excavated by a mechanical 360° tracked excavator equipped with a toothless trenching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision.

2.2.2 The overburden was removed in 0.2m spits and ceased at the natural geology. The deposits were recorded using WA's standard methods and pro forma recording system, with all being assigned unique context numbers. Soil descriptions were based on the Soil Science Handbook, and Munsell colour charts.

2.2.3 A drawn record was made of, comprising sketch plans, and sections drawn at 1:10 and tied to the OS British National Grid. The OD heights of all principal deposits and levels were



calculated and sections annotated. A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. This illustrated both the detail and general context of the principal deposits and the site as a whole.

### **3 RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Trench**

3.1.1 A summary of the recorded deposits is given in Appendix 1

3.1.2 The earliest deposit consisted of the natural underlying geology, consisting of a mid brownish yellow clay silt with limestone boulders (105) encountered at a depth of 1.05m below ground level (bgl) (**Plates 1 & 2**).

3.1.3 Layer (105) was overlain by a thin mixed layer of dark brown clay and yellow gravel (104). This layer had a maximum thickness of 0.30m and has been interpreted as make up or levelling deposit, laid down prior to the construction of the car park.

3.1.4 Overlying layer (104) were a series of bedding deposits consisting of a yellow hard core layer (103) and a mottled red brown gravel layer (102) and finally the tarmac surface (101) (**Plate 1 & 2**).

#### **3.2 Artefactual Evidence**

3.2.1 No artefactual evidence was recovered from any of the layers encountered within the trench.

#### **3.3 Environmental evidence**

3.3.1 No layers were encountered within the trench that warranted environmental investigation.

#### **3.4 Conclusion**

3.4.1 No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the evaluation conducted on Land Adjacent to Homebase, Horspath Driftway, Oxford. It is likely that the site was deliberately levelled prior to the construction of the retail park and associated car park and that this truncated any archaeology that may have been present within the confines of the site boundary.

### **4 STORAGE AND CURATION**

#### **4.1 Museum**

4.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the evaluation be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museums Service, (accession code to be confirmed).

#### **4.2 Preparation of archive**

4.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and digital data, will be prepared following the nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; Brown 2011; ADS 2013; ClfA 2014b). A full-colour paper copy of the entire report will also be included with the archive.

4.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the site/accession code, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:

- *1 file/document case of paper records.*

### 4.3 OASIS

- 4.3.1 An OASIS online record <http://ads.adhs.ac.uk/projects/oasis/> has been initiated for the archaeological evaluation works.

### 4.4 Security copy

- 4.4.1 In line with current best practise (eg, 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.

### 4.5 Copyright

- 4.5.1 WA shall retain full copyright of the commissioned report, under the *Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved; excepting that it will provide an exclusive licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters relating to the project as described in the WSI (WA 2017).
- 4.5.2 WA will assign copyright to the client upon written request but retains the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports as defined in the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* (Chapter IV, s.79).
- 4.5.3 WA will also grant a licence to the relevant museum for the use of the Trust's archives. In addition, WA hereby grants permission for Oxford City Council to freely copy the report for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process, without reference to WA.

## 5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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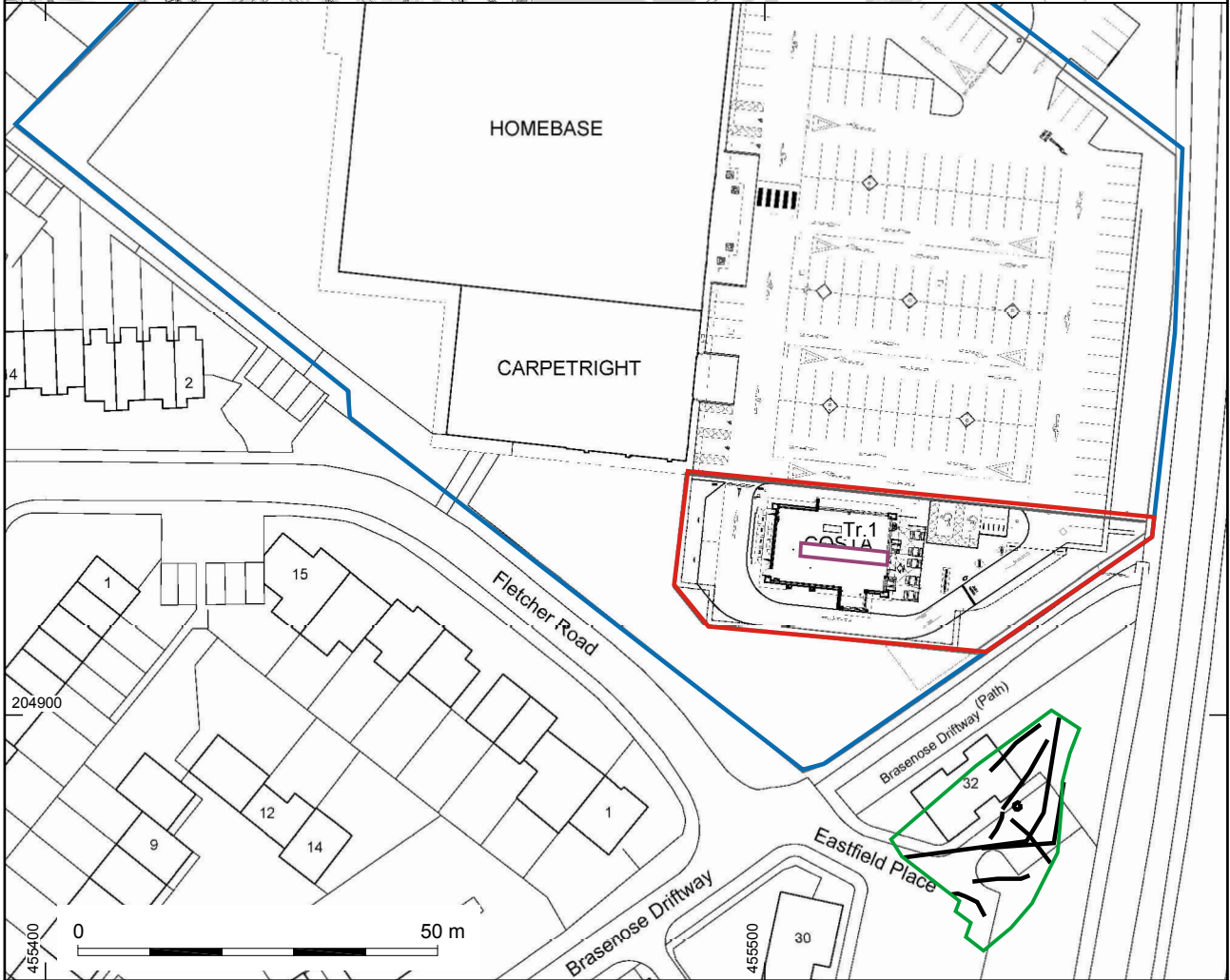
*Wessex Archaeology 2017 Land Adjacent to Homebase Horspath Driftway, Oxford:  
Written scheme of investigation for an Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation.  
Unpublished client report, ref. 115200.1*




## 6 APPENDICES

### 6.1 Appendix 1: Trench summary tables

Trench 1	12m x 1.8m, max depth 1.05m	NGR: (E end) 455505 204923 (W end) 455517 204920	87.8m OD
Context	Description		Depth bgl (m)
101	Tarmac		0-0.10
102	Mottled pinkish brown – grey gravel, bedding layer for tarmac		0.10-0.48
103	Hard core layer. Yellow angular stones		0.48-0.85
104	Mixed deposit, dark brown clay, yellow gravel. Made ground		0.85-1.05
105	Natural: Mid yellowish brown clay silt with limestone boulders		1.05+



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: blue;">—</span> Retail park</li> <li><span style="color: red;">—</span> Site boundary</li> <li><span style="color: magenta;">—</span> Evaluation trench</li> <li><span style="color: green;">—</span> 2003 excavation</li> <li><span style="color: black;">—</span> 2003 archaeological feature</li> </ul>  <p>Coordinate system: OSGB36 (OSTN15/OSGM15)</p>	<p>Digital data (supplied by client) reproduced from Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright 2015. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2016. This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.</p>		
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Site and trench location


Figure 1



Plate 1: Trench 1 viewed from the east. (1x2m, 1x1m)



Plate 2: North facing representative section of Trench 1. (1x1m, 1x0.5m)

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