

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**West Way Shopping Centre,  
Botley, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andrew Muddin**

**Site Code: WWSO18/139**

**(SP 4860 0605)**

# **West Way Shopping Centre, Botley, Oxfordshire (Phase 1)**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
For The Botley Development Company Ltd**

by Andrew Munding

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code WWSO 18/139

**March 2019**

## Summary

**Site name:** West Way Shopping Centre, Botley, Oxfordshire (phase1)

**Grid reference:** SP 4860 0605

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 14th August to 3rd December 2018

**Project coordinator:** Tim Dawson

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Muddin

**Site code:** WWSO 18/139

**Area of site:** 2.17ha

**Summary of results:** Observation was undertaken on areas where a farm, thought at least to be of Post-Medieval date had existed in the centre of the site before it had been developed in the 1960's. No archaeological deposits nor finds were encountered of archaeological interest.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service or Archaeology Data Service in due course.

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:  
[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 15.03.19
	Steve Preston✓ 13.03.19

# West Way Shopping Centre, Botley, Oxfordshire (Phase 1) An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 18/139

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at on land south of West Way Oxford (B4044), formerly the West Way Shopping Centre, Botley, Oxfordshire, OX2 9LP (SP 4860 0605) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Luke Martin of Ridge and Partners LLP (Oxford), The Cowyards, Blenheim Park, Oxford Road, Woodstock, OX20 1QR, on behalf of their client, The Botley Development Company Ltd, The White House, 2 Meadow, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 2HN

Planning permission (16/V0246/FUL) has been gained from Vale of the White Horse District Council for redevelopment of the West Way shopping arcade. The permission is subject to two conditions (26 and 27) requiring archaeological observation during groundworks. This was in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification based on a brief prepared by Hugh Coddington, Archaeology Team Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, the archaeological adviser to the District (Coddington 2016).

The current report details observations during phase 1 demolition and construction, with more work to follow, which will be the subject of a subsequent report. The fieldwork was supervised by Andrew Muddin from 14th August to 3rd December 2018. The site code is WWSO 18/139. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service or Archaeology Data Service in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located in Botley, a satellite settlement west of Oxford City. The Western bypass (A34), Botley Road (A420; from the east) and West Way (B4044; leading west) meet at Seacourt junction, which is 250m east of the site. West Way is an extension of Botley Road linking as a through road of the settlement, west towards Cumnor. West Way Shopping Centre was a small precinct of shops, mostly serving the local area. Elms Parade fronts West Way, and is a community hub serviced by shops, but also provides other amenities, such as the Baptist Hall, private office space and the local council library (Fig. 2). The bedrock geology is Oxford Clay (BGS

Geoindex; BGS 1982). The site lies at height of *c.*65m above Ordnance Datum (OD) close to the valley floor where the Thames braids into several streams. The valley sides rise steeply beyond the site to the west.

## **Archaeological background**

Situated in Berkshire until the reorganisation in 1974, Botley became a suburb of Oxford in the 20th century (Tyack *et al.* 2010, 178). A number of the settlements west of Oxford existed since the 10th century and Botley is a roadside settlement linked to Cumnor and Eynsham (Bruce-Mitford 1939, 33). These and other sites such as a deserted medieval village, at Seacourt (Bruce-Mitford 1940; Biddle 1961) are thought to have been important components of the estate of Abingdon Abbey (Bond 1986, 147). and excavated sites such as Dean Court, Cumnor were notable for their granaries (Allen 1994). Neither ‘Old’ Botley nor nearby Hinksey (North or South) are mentioned at the time of Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002).

First recorded on Rocque’s Berkshire map of 1761 (Yeates 2014, 11), Elms Farm seemed detached from ‘Old’ Botley to its west, later identified as working as a dairy farm in 1938, at the time Elm Parade was constructed (Doggett and Allen 2013, 7). Documentary evidence of a farm is recorded in Botley during Medieval times, called ‘Nutbeams’, paying tax to the manor of Cumnor in 1327 (Hanson 1995, 44). Due to its traditional shape, Elms Farm is assumed to have been an established farmstead before it is shown on 18th century mapping (Yeates and Dowling 2014, 13).

The earliest building on the site currently is Elms Parade, built from 1938 after the site was bought from Lord Abingdon and his creditors in the 1920’s by Stephen Howse of Yarnton (Doggett and Allen 2013, 6). All physical traces of the farm have been lost from redevelopment since 1968 (Hanson 1995, 45).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits or finds affected by the new ground works. This involved monitoring of areas of intrusive groundworks on the area of the former Elms Farm in particular, and the excavation of foundations and service trenches. Since the desk-based assessment in 2014, the scope of the works had been reduced, excluding Elms Parade and in the north-west, Field House, while the neighbouring modern Church of SS Peter and Paul was already excluded.

Machine reduction was undertaken by a large 360° excavator, fitted with a toothed bucket, but utilised a grading bucket to level the base of excavated areas. Other areas required, such as remediation and excavation of crane bases were also to be observed.

## **Results**

Five areas of proposed buildings comprised the phase 1 works (Fig. 3, B-F; Pl. 1). For the areas containing each block, demolition, was followed immediately by ground reduction.

### *Demolition/ground reduction*

#### Block B

The previous church on the area of Block B occupied a relatively modest area of this zone of the site with the potential for the archaeologically relevant levels on adjacent areas to have survived. However, during ground reduction no deposits of archaeological interest were revealed.

#### Blocks C, D and E

Observations of the ground reduction in the central area of the site (blocks C -E) revealed that truncation of the archaeologically relevant areas had take place to a depth of 1.7m below recent ground level in places. An exposed section recorded on the southern edge of the site demonstrates the extent of this truncation (Pl. 2). This showed 0.25m of overburden present over the natural clay geology continuing beyond the base of excavation. The measured section was 1.55m deep. The top layer of overburden was a remnant of turf and topsoil, mixed with concrete. The depth of the previous footings would have been cut though natural clay.

#### Block F

The ground area for this block was generally reduced less than elsewhere on the site, down to c. 1m with little reduction of the archaeologically relevant horizons beyond the modern foundation areas (Pl. 4). However, no archaeological deposits were revealed.

No archaeological deposits nor finds were present, and this section is presumed to show that landscape for the previous development of the site involved extensive levelling at least onto if not into the natural geology. This would have coincided with previous development of the site after the 1960's and up to the 1980's.

## Construction

After ground reduction the ground was reinstated by *c.*1m including with a piling matt. No observation took place on those areas of the site where deep truncation had taken place and the relevant levels already removed.

Observation was undertaken during groundworks of Buildings C and D (Fig. 3). A crane base was dug to the north of Block D, and was 5m x 5m and *c.*1m. However, this was found to have been excavated though recently disturbed, backfilled clay to the base of excavation. Ground beam trenches for Block C were also examined but again were found to have been dug through recently redeposited clay fill.

Foundation (groundbeam) trenches for Block F were monitored as ground reduction had been less extensive in that location (Pl. 4). However, no finds nor deposits of archaeological interest were recorded.

## Finds

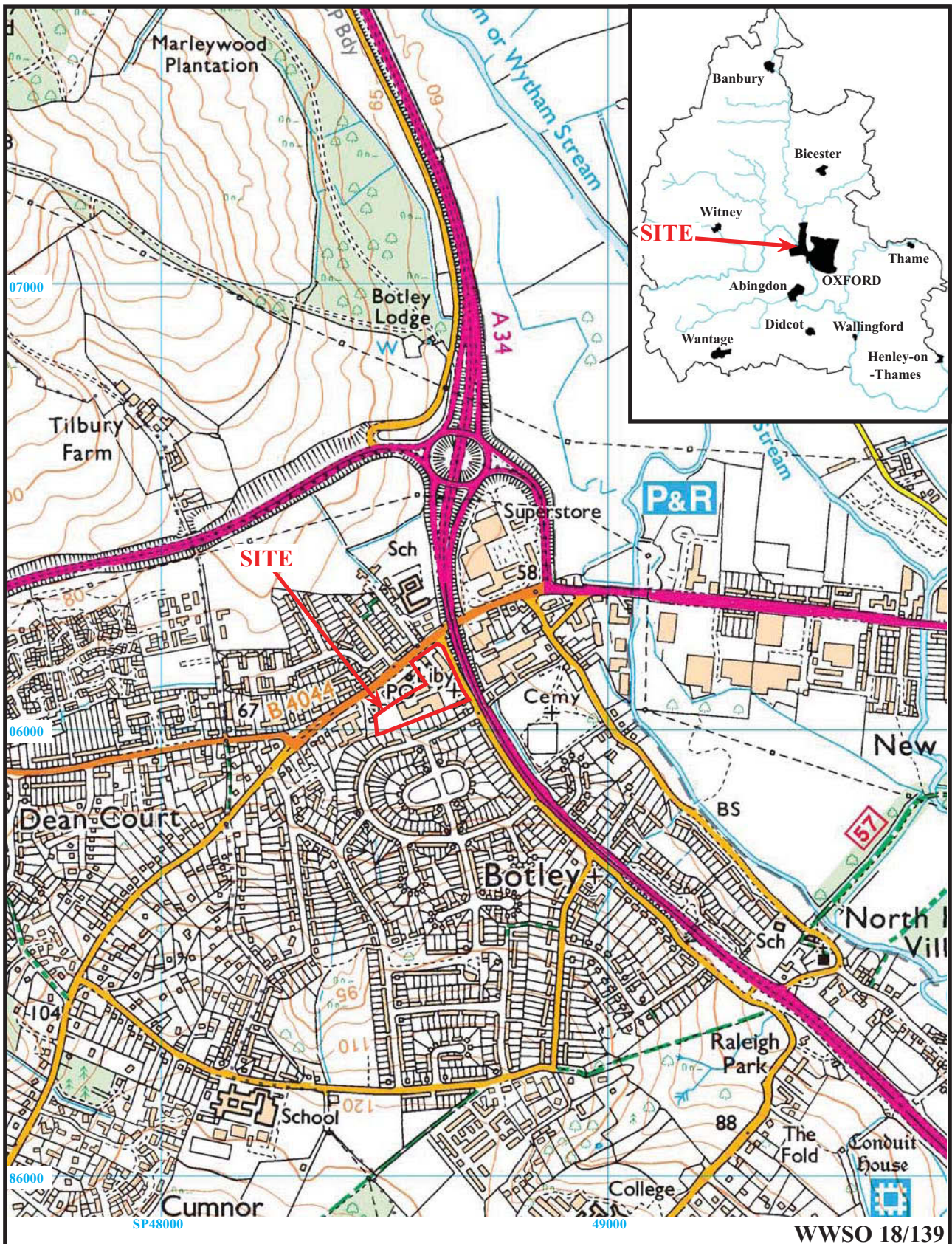
No finds of archaeological interest were encountered.

## Conclusion

No archaeological deposits nor finds were encountered during this phase of the development. The previous development had led to extensive truncation of the archaeologically relevant levels across the site yet the areas of less disturbance that were monitored, nothing of archaeological interest was noted.

## References

- Allen, T, 1994, 'A Medieval Grange of Abingdon Abbey at Dean Court Farm, Cumnor, Oxon', *Oxoniensia*, **59**, 219–448
- Bond, J, 1986, 'The Oxford Region in the Middle Ages', in G Briggs, J Cook and T Rowley (eds), *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region*, Oxford Univ Dept External Stud, Oxford
- BGS, 1982, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet **236** (Witney), Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Bruce-Mitford, R L S, 1940, 'The Excavations at Seacourt, Berks, 1939; an interim report', *Oxoniensia*, **5**, 31–41
- Biddle, M, 1961, 'The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berkshire', *Oxoniensia*, **26**, 70-201
- Coddington, H, 2016, 'Botley Centre, West Way, Botley: Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service brief', Oxford
- Doggett, N and Allen, S, 2013, 'Heritage Audit and Statement of Significance, in respect of West Way, Botley Redevelopment Scheme, Botley, Oxfordshire', Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd unpubl rep **ND/9183**, Oxford
- Hanson, J, 1995, *The Changing faces of Botley and North Hinksey*, Witney
- Tyack, G, Bradley, S and Pevsner, N, 2010, *The Buildings of England: Berkshire*, London
- Yeates, S and Dowling, K, 2014, 'Archaeological desk-based assessment on West Way, Botley Redevelopment Scheme, Botley, Oxfordshire', John Moore Heritage Service unpubl rep **2972** (JHMS), Beckley, Oxford
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London



WWSO 18/139

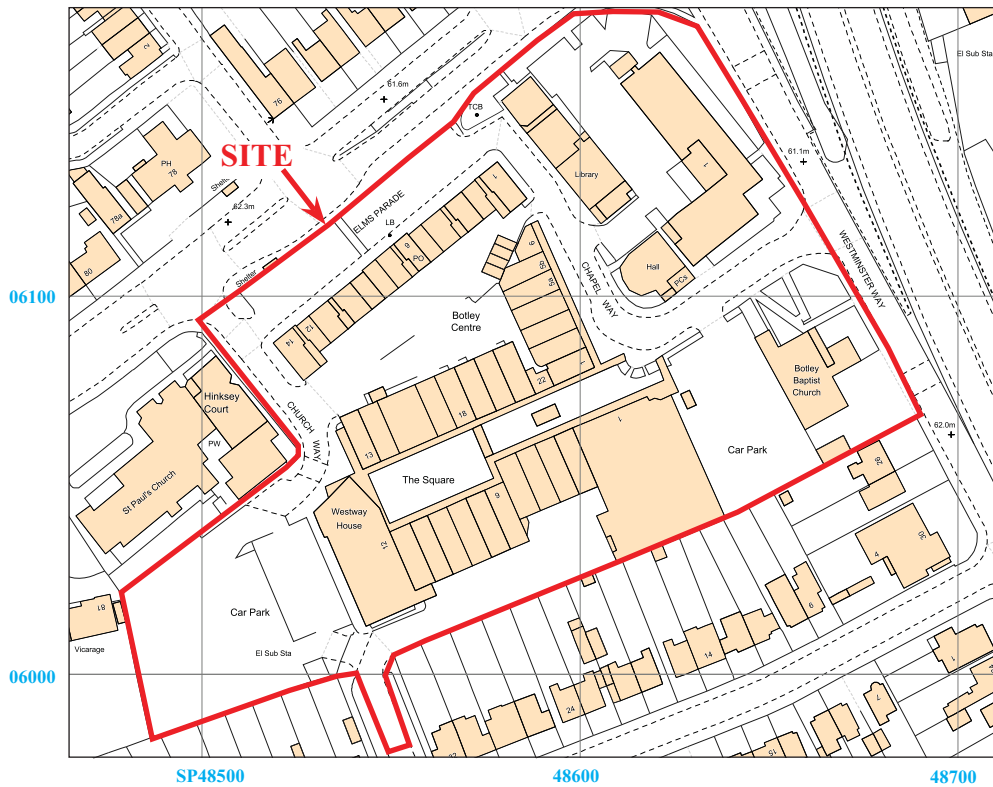
**West Way Shopping Centre,  
Botley, Oxfordshire, 2018  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Botley and Oxfordshire.

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500  
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**  
SERVICES





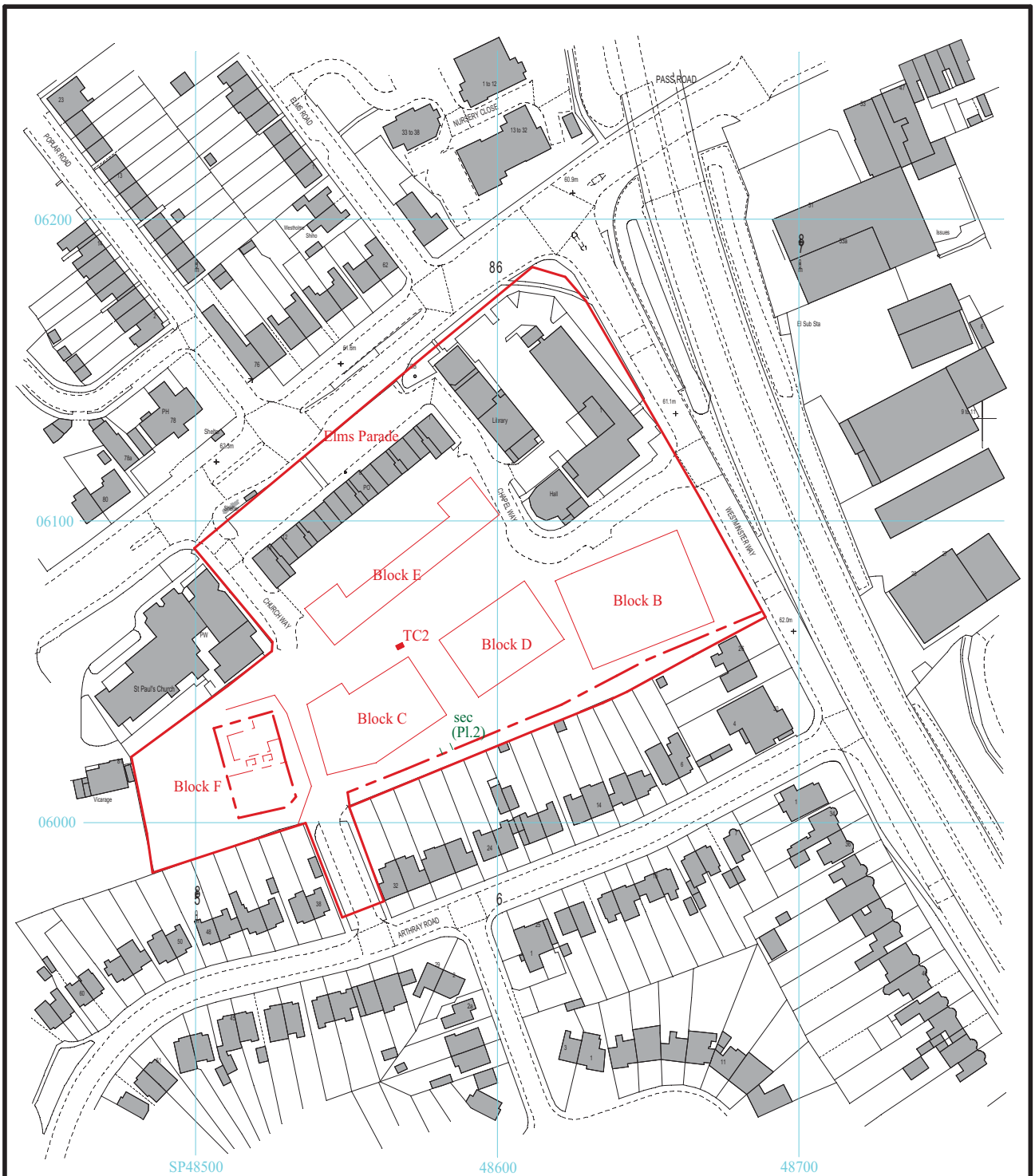
WWSO 18/139



**West Way Shopping Centre,  
Botley, Oxfordshire, 2018  
Archaeological Watching Brief**  
Figure 2. Detail of development area.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence.  
Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:2000

THAMES VALLEY  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**  
SERVICES



WWSO 18/139

**West Way Shopping Centre,  
Botley, Oxfordshire, 2018  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Detail of development areas.



THAMES VALLEY  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**  
SERVICES



Plate 1. Area C and D, Levelling and inclusion of piling mat, looking north east.



Plate 2. South of Area C, southern section, reduction, looking south,  
Scales: 0.5m.

WWSO 18/139

**West Way Shopping Centre, ,  
Botley, Oxfordshire, 2018  
Archaeological Watching Brief  
Plates 1 and 2.**

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES



Plate 3. Area F, Excavated footings, looking south south west.



Plate 4. Area F, excavated footings, looking south west.

WWSO 18/139

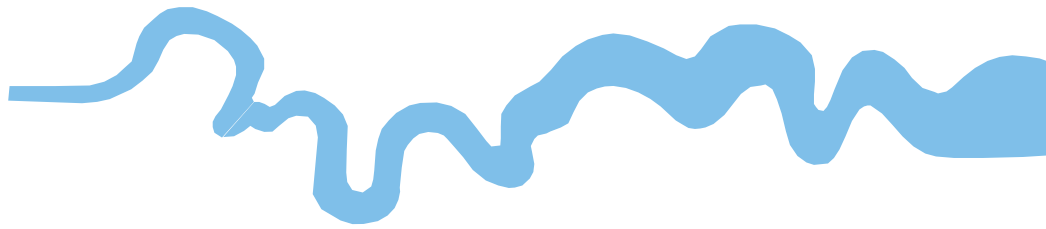
**West Way Shopping Centre, ,  
Botley, Oxfordshire, 2018  
Archaeological Watching Brief  
Plates 3 and 4.**

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,  
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**

***Offices in:  
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent and Ennis (Ireland)***