

**Oxford Options Resource Centre, Horspath Driftway,
Headington, Oxford**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Oxfordshire County Council**

by Tim Dawson and Heather Hopkins
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code OOH 09/77

September 2009

Summary

Site name: Oxford Options Resource Centre, Horspath Driftway, Headington, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 5544 0520

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th–8th September 2009

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson and Andrew Muddin

Site code: OOH 09/77

Summary of results: No finds or features of archaeological interest were discovered.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 30.09.09
	Steve Preston ✓ 30.09.09

Oxford Options Resource Centre, Horspath Driftway, Headington, Oxford **An Archaeological Watching Brief**

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Report 09/77

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Oxford Options Resource Centre, Horspath Driftway, Headington, Oxford (SP 5544 0520 (Fig. 1)). The work was commissioned by Mr Declan O’Leary of Mouchel, Stratton Court, Kimber Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1SG on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

Planning consent (O.06/08) has been gained from Oxfordshire County Council for the construction of extensions to the existing structure with new paving and replacement tree planting. The consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the County’s policies on archaeology. The archaeological potential of the area was highlighted by a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeology (Smith 2009). The field investigation was carried out to a written scheme of investigation approved by Paul Smith of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. The field work was undertaken by Tim Dawson and Andrew Munding between 7th-8th September 2009. The site code is OOH 09/77.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north side of Horspath Driftway, Headington, in the eastern suburbs of Oxford inside the ring road (Fig. 2). The site comprises an existing building, constructed in the 1970s, and its grounds. The site is approximately 90m above Ordnance Datum. The site is mapped as being located on Upper Jurassic Ampthill Clay Formation (mudstone) in the north and east of the site with Wheatley Limestone in the south and west (BGS 1994). A silty clay above limestone was observed in the footing trenches.

Archaeological background

The brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeology (Smith 2009) highlights that the site lies in an area of archaeological potential with the expectation of the presence of Roman deposits. The areas to the south and east of Oxford City are notable for the large numbers of Roman kiln sites whose products were traded widely across southern England in Roman times (Briggs 1986; Young 1977; Dodd 2003). Excavations just to the south-east revealed late Roman deposits with a high density of pottery predominantly of one specialist type (*mortaria*) suggesting the presence of a kiln site nearby. However, evaluation to the north produced negative results, suggesting that the margins of the Roman settlement lie somewhere in the vicinity of the proposal site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the development. This involved the monitoring and examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular any ground reduction, the digging of foundation trenches and the digging of service runs and soakaways as necessary.

Results

The southern extension

The southern extension initially involved a strip of overburden from an area of c. 192 sq m (Fig. 3). This took place using a machine fitted with a toothless bucket. The stratigraphy revealed 0.08m of topsoil above 0.11m of orange brown silty clay subsoil and into the orange silty clay natural geology (Fig. 4). The final total depth was c. 0.80m. The foundations of the new extension which were 0.6m wide were dug down from this stripped level. Several former drain runs were observed and adjacent to the south wall of the existing building was a kerb of building rubble. A 1m square test pit located against the southern side of the existing building was dug to a depth of 1.05m and showed limestone underlying the clay at a depth of 0.85m. No archaeological finds nor deposits were recorded.

The northern extension

For the northern extension, footing trenches were dug, 0.60m wide and 0.8m deep. The stratigraphy revealed comprised paved hardstanding and hoggin deposits to a depth of 0.17m which directly overlay the natural silty

clay geology with no subsoil present. Several modern service runs were observed but no deposits of archaeological interest.

Drain trench

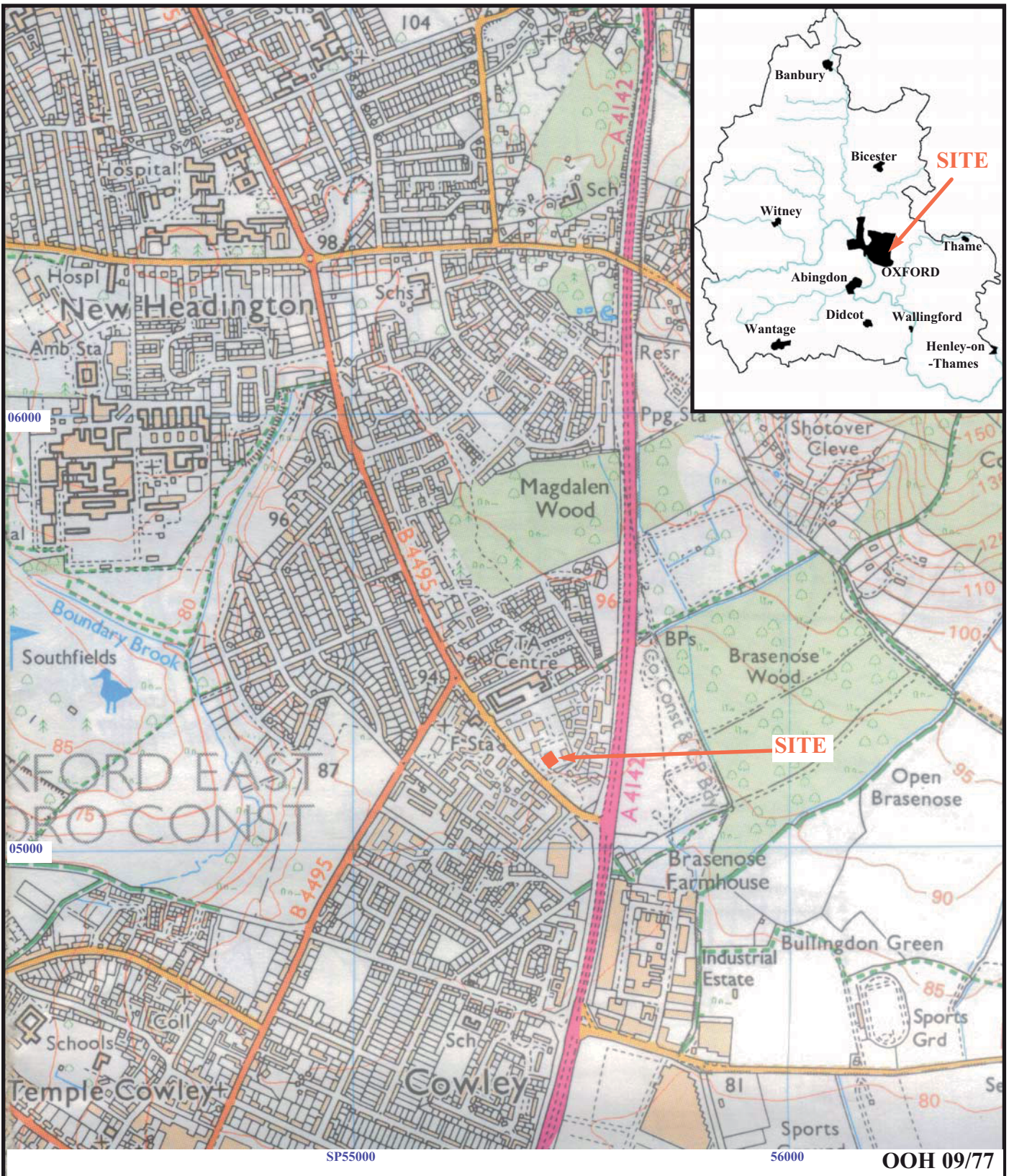
A drainage trench dug along the western side of the boundary was too shallow to impact upon the archaeologically relevant levels.

Conclusion

Despite a relatively large area excavation for one of the extension locations, no finds nor features of archaeological interest were noted in any of the groundworks observed.

References

- BGS, 1994, *British Geological Survey*, 1: 50,000, Sheet 237, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Briggs, G, Cook, J and Rowley, T (eds), 1986, *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region*, Oxford Univ Dept External Stud
- Dodd, A (ed), 2003, *Oxford before the University*, Oxford Archaeology Thames Valley Landscapes Monogr 17, Oxford
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Smith, P, 2009, 'Oxford Options Resource Centre, Horspath Driftway, Headington, Oxford: Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief', Oxfordshire County Archaeology, July 2009
- Young, C J, 1977, *The Roman Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region*, BAR Brit Ser 43, Oxford

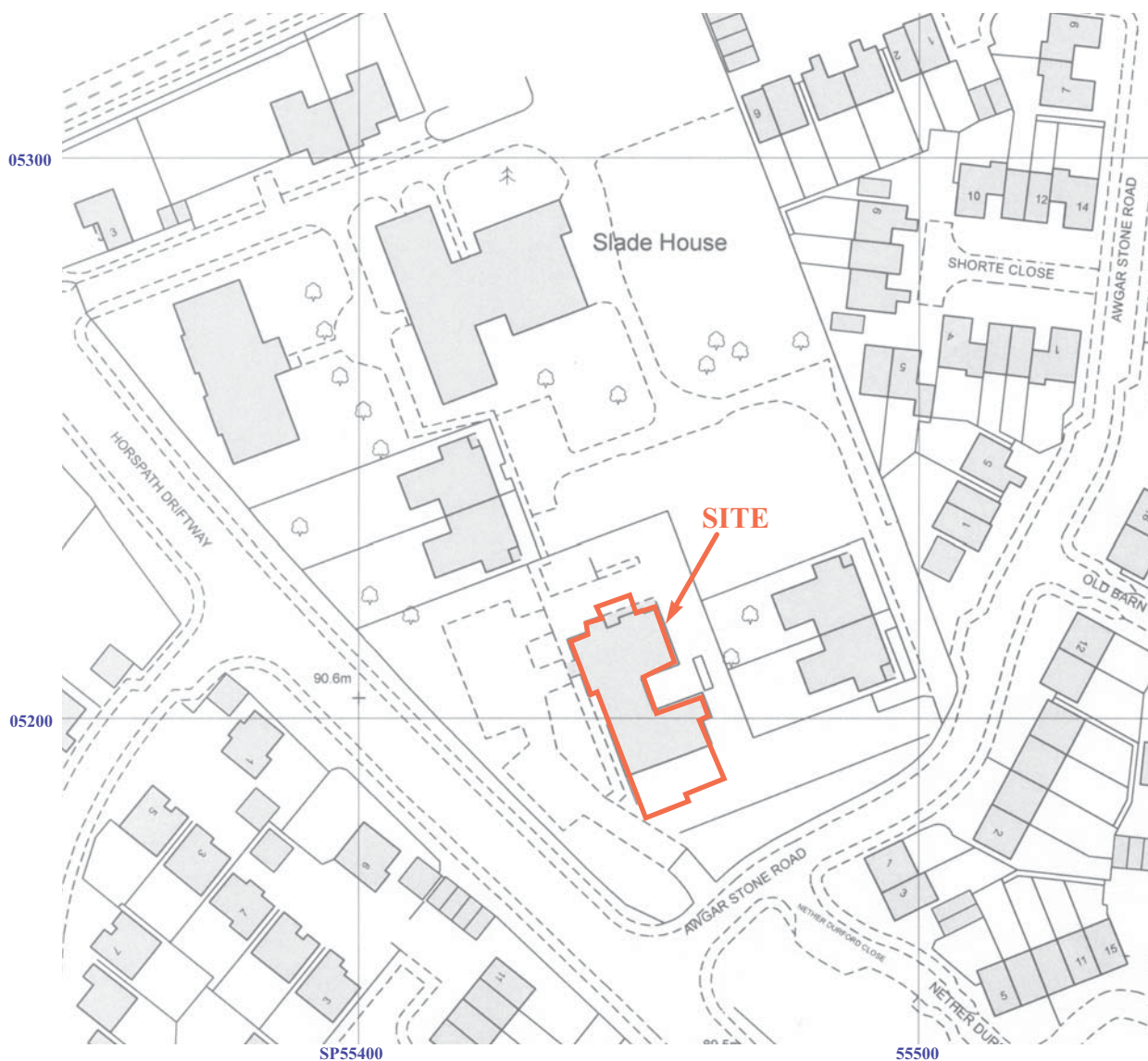


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Figure 1. Location of site within Oxford and Oxfordshire.

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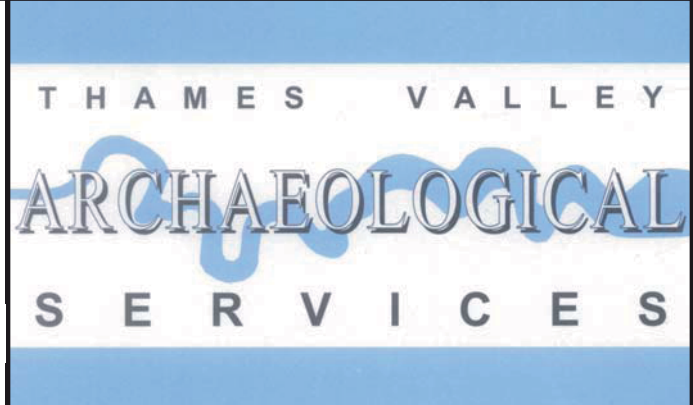


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Horspath Driftway.

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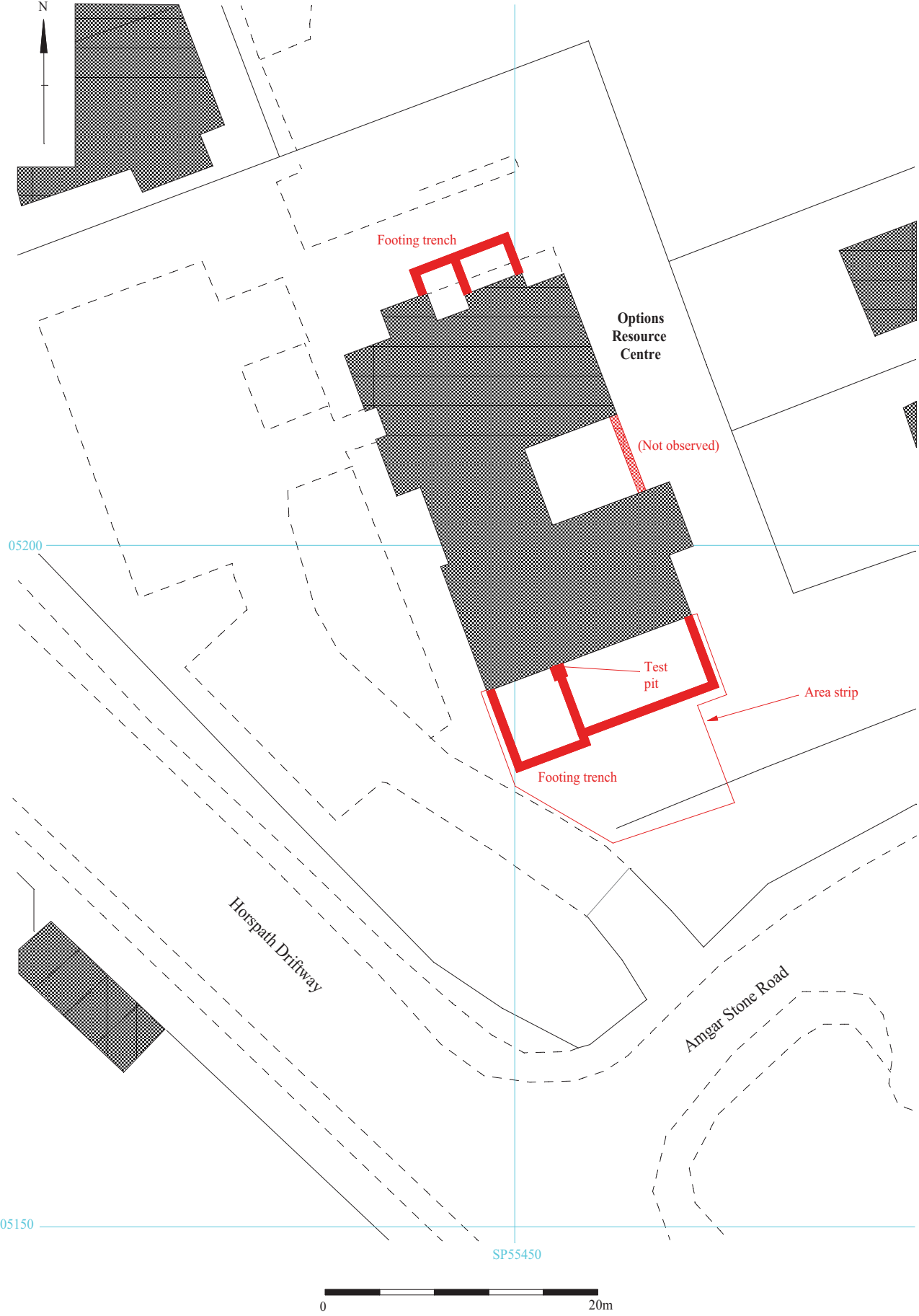


Figure 3. Location of areas observed during watching brief.

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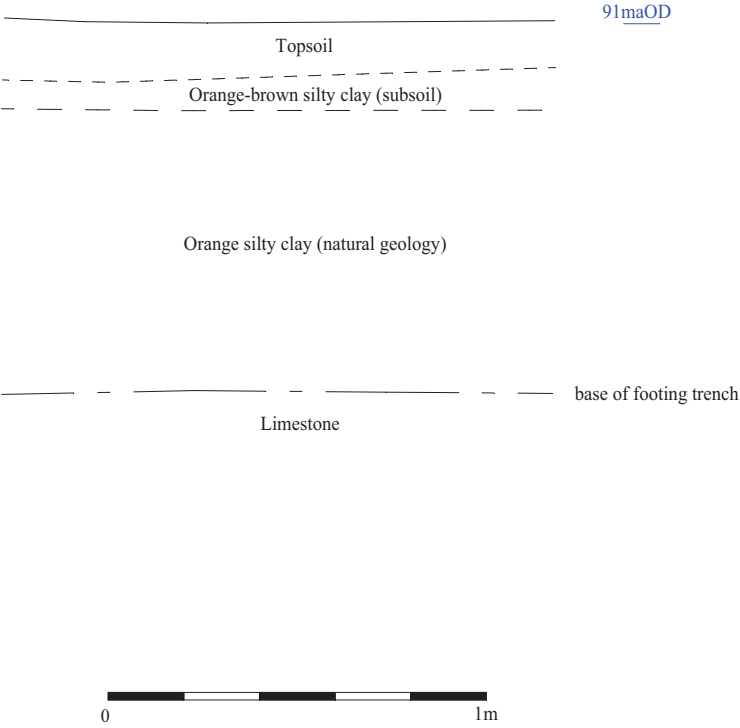


Figure 4. Representative section.