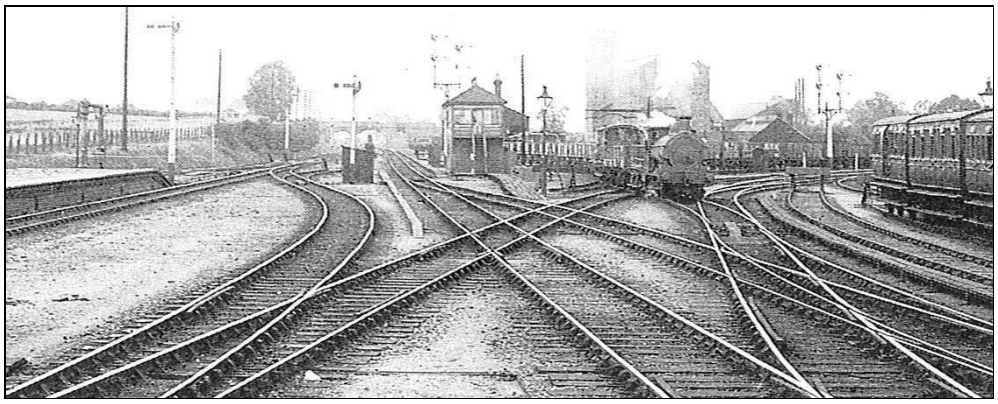
Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT:
DIDCOT PARKWAY RAILWAY STATION
DIDCOT
OXFORDSHIRE

NGR: SU 5225 9070

on behalf of Tony Gee and Partners LLP



David Fell BA MA MIFA

April 2008

ASC: 1055/DCT/1

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REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

Site Data

ASC site code:	DCT	*Project no:*	1055
OASIS ref:		*Event/Accession no:*	N/A

County:	Oxfordshire
Village/Town:	Didcot
Civil Parish:	Didcot
NGR (to 8 figs):	SU 5225 9070
Extent of site:	*c.*4,500 sq m
Present use:	Car park
Planning proposal:	Construction of multi-storey car park
Planning application ref/date:	Permitted development
Local Planning Authority:	South Oxfordshire District Council
Date of assessment:	April 2008
Commissioned by:	Tony Gee and Partners LLP Prudence House Proctor Way Luton LU2 9PE
Contact name:	Mr Simon Fraser

Internal Quality Check

Primary Author:	David Fell BA MA MIFA	*Date:*	24th April 2008

Revisions:		*Date:*	

Edited/Checked By:		*Date:*	

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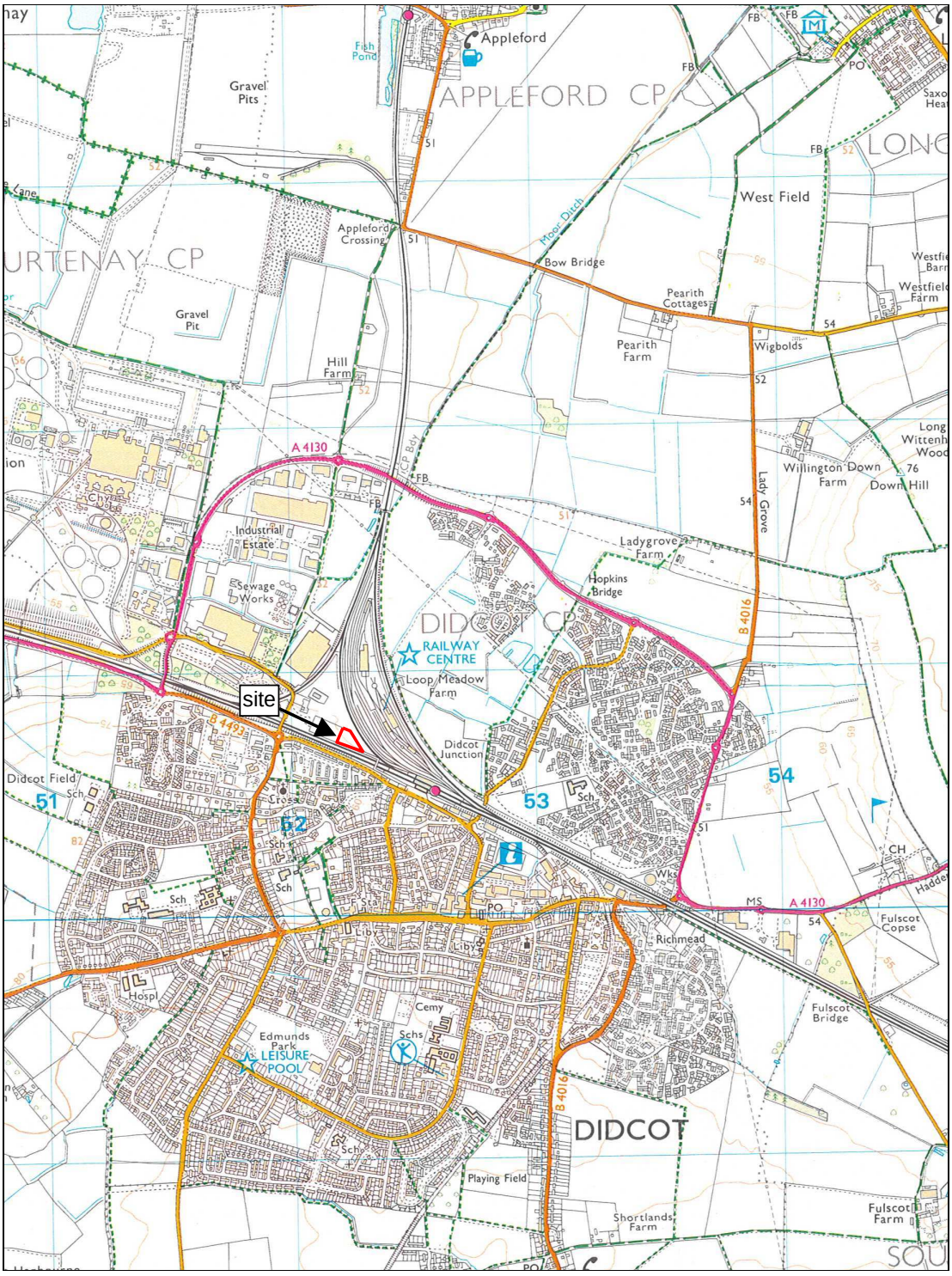

Figure 1: General location *(Scale 1:25,000)*

Summary

During March and April 2008 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd compiled an archaeological assessment of a site at Didcot Parkway Railway Station, in order to inform proposals for the construction of a new multi-storey car park. No archaeological remains are known from the site, which probably comprised open land, until the construction of railway sidings and a reservoir during the 19th century. Any archaeological remains which may have been present are likely to have been damaged or destroyed during these works. While the occasional survival of individual isolated remains cannot be entirely excluded, it is unlikely that large quantities of archaeological remains or artefacts survive and the site is considered to offer low archaeological potential.

1. Introduction

1.1 In March and April 2008 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of a site adjacent to the railway station at Didcot, Oxfordshire, in order to inform development proposals for the site. The project was commissioned by Mr Simon Fraser, of *Tony Gee and Partners LLP*, following consultation with the archaeological advisor (AA) of *Oxfordshire County Council*, who provides archaeological advice to *South Oxfordshire District Council*. It was carried out according to ASC's standard Method Statement, which conforms to current professional standards.

1.2 ***Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd***

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (ASC) is an independent practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.3 ***Management***

1.3.1 The assessment was managed by **Karin Semmelmann** BA MA AIFA, and was carried out under the overall direction of **Bob Zeepvat** BA MIFA.

1.4 ***The Site***

1.4.1 *Location and Description*
The site is situated in Didcot, in the administrative district of South Oxfordshire (Figure 1). It comprises a triangular area of land, beyond the west end of Didcot Railway Station, adjacent to the Great Western Main Line, and is centred on Ordnance Survey national Grid Reference SU 5225 9070 (Figure 2).

The site currently forms part of a car park and a detailed description is provided in Section 4 of this report.

1.4.2 *Geology and Topography*

The site is in an urban area and has been subject to extensive ground disturbance (below, section 3.2.5) and the natural soils may not survive. Any surviving undisturbed soil is likely to comprise the *Fladbury 1 Association*, namely stoneless clayey soils over river alluvium (Soil Survey 1983, 813b). The underlying drift geology comprises Coombe Deposits of the Pleistocene period, overlying Gault Clay (BGS, sheet 253).

1.4.3 *Proposed Development*

The development proposal is for the construction of a new multi-storey car park (Figure 3).

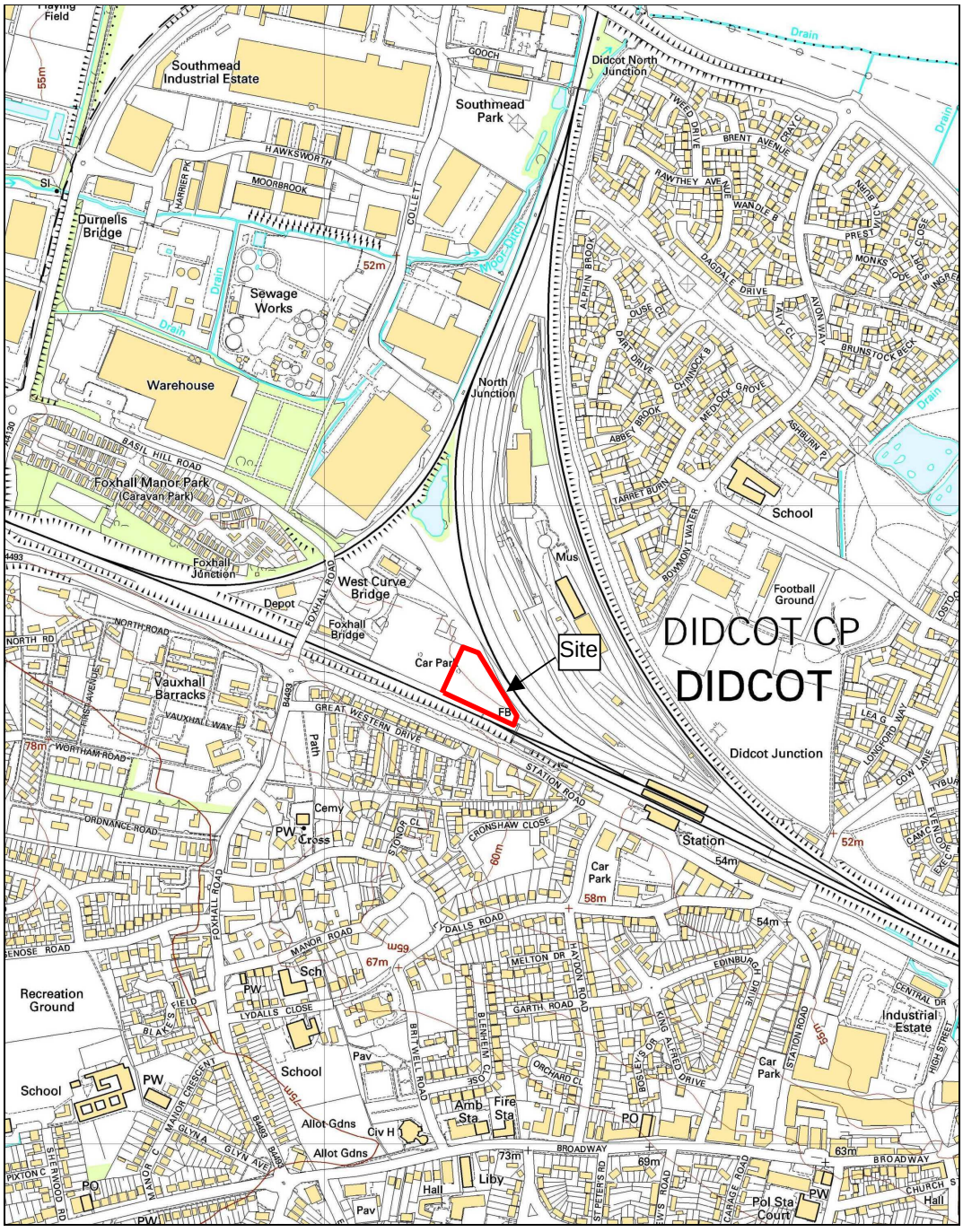

Figure 2: Site location *(Scale 1:10,000)*

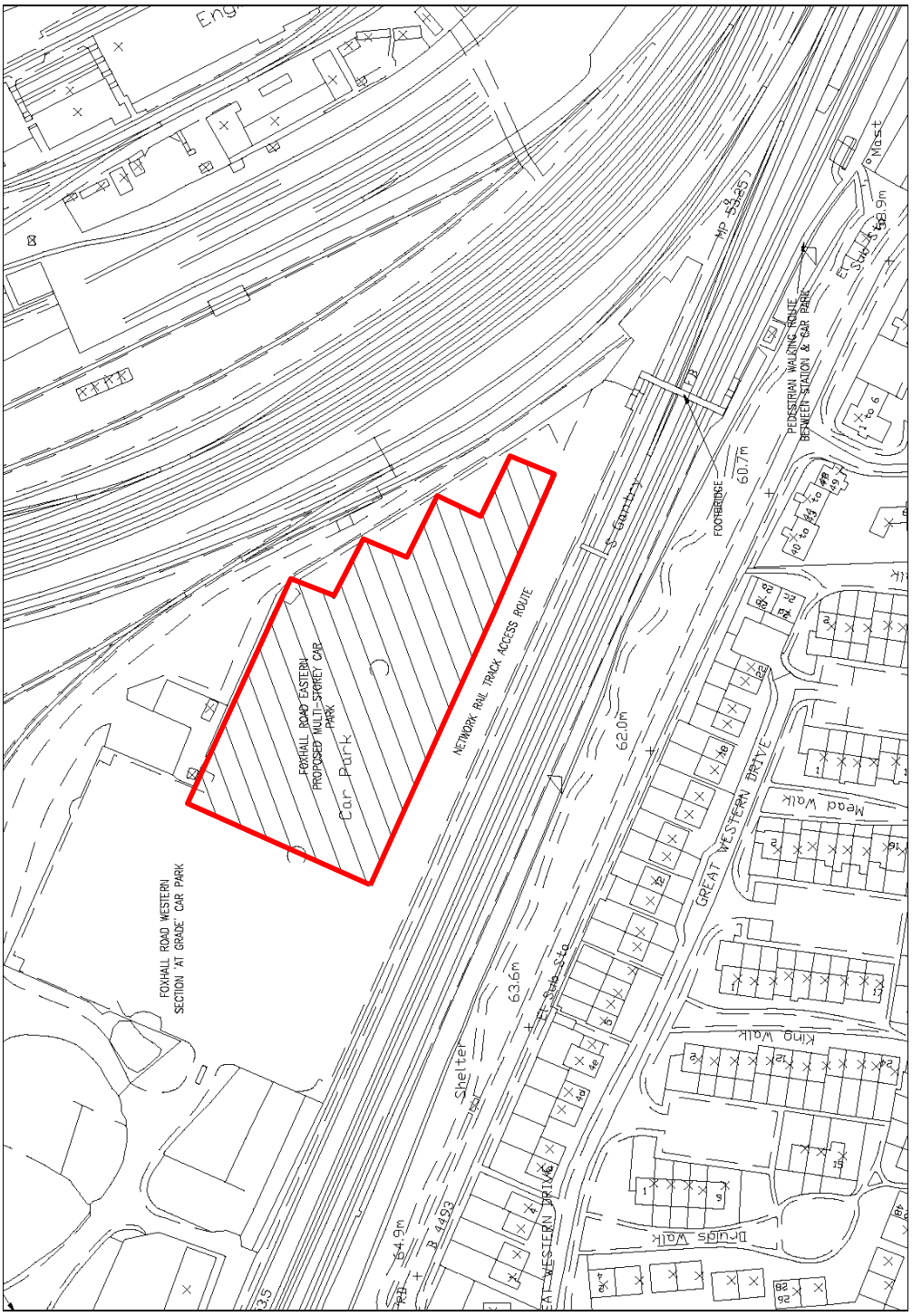

Figure 3: Plan of the proposed development *(Scale = 1: 2,500)*

2. Aims and Methods

2.1 'Archaeological desk-based assessment is an assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area, consisting of a collation of existing information in order to identify the likely extent, character and quality of the known or potential archaeological resource, in order that appropriate measures might be considered' (IFA 2000).

2.2 The assessment was carried out according to the ASC method sstatement, and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 2001).

2.3 The following readily available sources of information were consulted for the desk-based assessment:

2.3.1 *Archaeological Databases*

Archaeological databases represent the standard references to the known archaeology of an area. The principal source consulted was the *Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record* (HER). The study area employed in the HER search includes the site itself, and a surrounding study area of approximately 1km radius.

2.3.2 *Historic Documents*

Documentary research provides an overview of the history of a site and its environs, suggesting the effects of settlement and land-use patterns. The principal source consulted was the *Oxfordshire County Records Office* (CRO).

2.3.3 *Cartographic & Pictorial Documents*

Old maps and illustrations are normally a very productive area of research. The principal source consulted was the *Centre for Oxfordshire Studies.*

2.3.4 *Geotechnical Information*

A description of the topography and solid and surface geology of the site and its environs was compiled, so as to appreciate the potential condition of any archaeological remains, to assess the hydrological conditions, and to appraise the potential for the survival of buried waterlogged archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits.

2.3.6 *Secondary & Statutory Sources*

The principal sources consulted were the *Oxford Central Library*, the *Sackler Library, Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford and ASC's own in-house library.

2.4 ***Walkover Survey***

As part of the assessment a walkover survey of the site was undertaken on 17th March 2008, with the following aims:

- To examine any areas of archaeological potential identified during research for the assessment, in particular with a view to gauging the possible survival or condition of any remains present.
- To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.
- To assess the present site use and ground conditions, with a view to the appropriate deployment of fieldwork techniques, if required by the AA.

3. Archaeological and Historical Evidence

3.1 *Introduction*

3.1.1 The local and regional settings of archaeological sites are factors that are taken into consideration when assessing the planning implications of development proposals. The following sections provide a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs.

3.1.2 The study area lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest. The location of known archaeological and historical sites recorded in the HER is shown in Figure 3, and details appear in Section 8.

3.1.3 In comparison with other towns in the area, relatively little is known of the early development of Didcot. No large scale archaeological work has taken place in the historic core of the village and this is reflected in the small number of entries in the HER. Archaeological interest in the area often concentrated on the gravel terraces of the river Thames, which lie two to three kilometres north of the site (*e.g.* Benson and Miles 1974; Booth *et al* 2007; Hinchcliffe and Thomas 1980). The recent expansion of Didcot has provided the opportunity to undertake rescue excavations in advance of development (*eg* Ruben and Ford 1992: Anon 2001) and, where relevant to the assessment, these results are included in the following sections.

3.2 ***Archaeological & Historical Background to the Study Area***

3.2.1 *Prehistoric (before 43AD)*

There is currently only limited evidence for prehistoric activity in the area. Recent excavations *c.*1km southeast of the site, on the south side of Wallingford Road, produced a small number of Mesolithic flints and an enclosure system of mid Bronze Age date (Ruben and Ford 1992).

Work on the north side of Wallingford Road, on the Ladygrove Estate *c.*1km southeast of the site, produced further evidence of prehistoric activity, including ditches, gullys and pits, which had been sealed by alluvium (Anon 2000). Further evidence has been recorded *c.*0.8m northeast of the site where a number of Neolithic and Bronze Age pits were present, along with two tree boles with evidence of burning. The burnt tree boles were interpreted as evidence of land clearance and a layer of alluvium subsequently developed on the site (Anon, 1994; HER 16146).

Bronze Age flint and pottery has also been recovered west of All Saints Church *c.*300m southeast of the site (HER 12696; Chambers 1993). The site was also occupied during the Iron Age and enclosure ditches and domestic debris was recorded

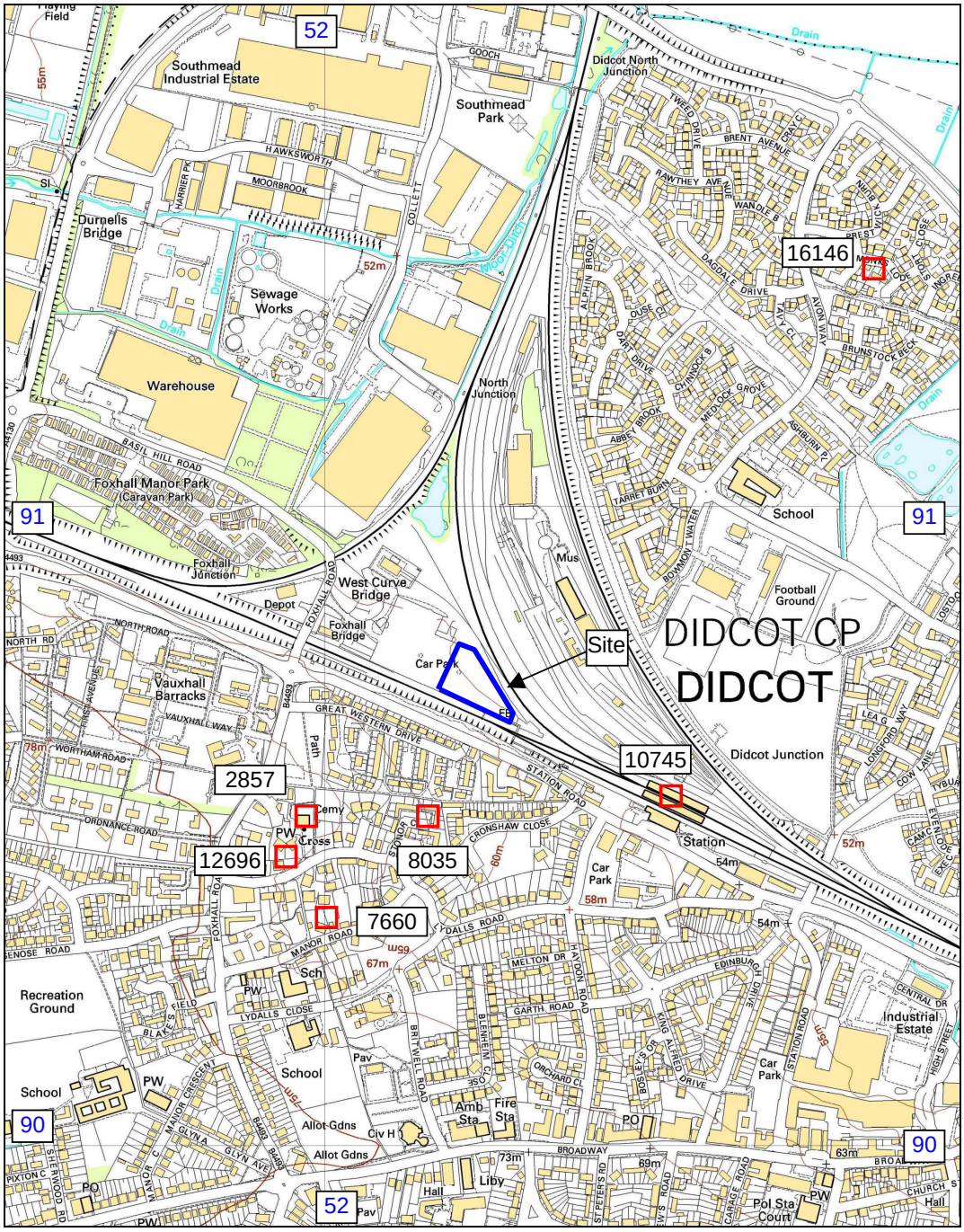

Figure 4: Archaeological sites in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record.
(National Grid shown in blue; Scale = 1: 10,000)

3.2.2 *Roman* *(AD43-c.450)*

The nature of the settlement pattern during the Roman period is not well understood, but a number of sites of this period have been identified in the area. Perhaps the most significant is a hoard of 126 gold aurei (coins), dated to *c.*160AD, which was found west of Slade Road *c.*1.5km west of the site (Booth *et al* 2007, fig. 6.1; Bland and Orna-Ornstein 1997). Subsequent work in the same area has led to the identification of a Roman enclosure and the presence of hypocaust and flue tiles which suggests the presence of a villa in this area (RPS 2001).

The extent of the Roman settlement is not understood but further evidence, comprising gullies and ditches sealed by alluvium has been recorded on the Ladygrove site *c.*1km southeast of the site (Duncan and Jones 2004). Roman period material has been identified at a number of locations within the medieval village of Didcot, suggesting occupation to the south of the site. Roman pottery and domestic debris was also recorded on the site west of the church (HER 12696) and further sherds were recorded during development at Blagrave Farm *c.*300m south of the site. (HER 8035).

The area around All saints church may have been in use during the Roman period, as a Roman lead coffin and pottery fragments have been recorded in the churchyard (HER 2857). Further sherds have been recorded in an adjacent field (Rutland & Greenaway 1969, 38). Roman cremations have been found west of the church (HER 12696) and the *Victoria County History* volume refers to other burials, on the west side of the church (Page 1923).

3.2.3 *Saxon* *(c.450-1066)*

The settlement at Didcot may have originated during the Saxon period. Little is known in detail of the area during this period but the presence of a small inhumation cemetery to the west of the site, at Didcot Power station indicates the likely presence of a settlement nearby. The cemetery was in use during the 7th century and seventeen inhumation burials were excavated (Boyle *et al*, 1995).

The location of the Saxon settlement is not known and the HER does not contain references to Saxon period sites or artefacts.

3.2.4 *Medieval* *(1066-1500)*

Didcot is not named in the Domesday survey (1086) and the status and extent of the settlement in the 11th century is not known. The area may have been included with Wittenham which is referred to in the survey as *Wibalditone*. The landholding comprised four hides and one virgate and was held by *Henry de Ferrers*.

The later medieval settlement was probably centred on the church of All Saints (HER 2857), which is situated *c.*0.4km southwest of the site. (Pevsner 2002,

127-8). The building dates from the 12th century church, but has many 14th century and later additions. It is a Grade II* listed building.

The medieval settlement was referred to as *'Dudcot'*. It appears in the 13th century as *'Dudcote'* and in the 16th century as '*Dudcott*' (Page 1923, 471). The site is situated north of the medieval settlement and a small assemblage of medieval pottery was recorded during development at Hospital Field *c.*1.5km southwest of the site (HER 11868; Chambers 1980, 174).

3.2.5 *Post-Medieval (1500-1900)*

The earliest readily available map to show the site and its environs is the first edition one inch scale Ordnance Survey map, which was published in 1830 (Figure 5). This shows the extent of the medieval village, which was set back from the Harwell to Wallingford road (the modern A4130). A separate settlement, or group of rectangular enclosures named *Vauxhall* is shown northwest of the site, on a minor road linking Didcot with Appleford.

The layout and appearance of the area was radically altered in the late 1830s, when the railway line was constructed. The line was opened by the *Great Western Railway* (GWR) in 1840 (Page 1923, 471) and linked London with Bristol.

The significance of the area increased considerably in 1844, when the branch line to Oxford was constructed and Didcot railway station was built to serve the new branch. The station opened on 12 June 1844 and the station buildings and platforms are immediately to the east of the site (Waters 1986, 9). The original station building, which was partially destroyed by fire in 1885, was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and featured an overall roof across the track (HER 10745).

The first large scale Ordnance Survey map of the area was published in 1876 and an extract is shown as Figure 6. The map shows the layout of the medieval village in considerable detail. The enclosures shown on the 1830 map had been modified and are shown on the 1876 map as *'Vauxhall Farm'*. The latter was situated immediately west of the site. The map also shows the extent of the railway infrastructure. The site is situated at the junction of the *Great Western Main Line* with the branch to Oxford and the station, including the original Brunel designed overall roof, is shown immediately to the east. A rectangular building, probably a goods shed, is shown immediately south of the site and the importance of the area is indicated by the proliferations of hotels and public houses, at the station entrance.

The Ordnance Survey map was revised in 1899 and illustrates the changes that had taken place in the late 19th century (Figure 7). Perhaps the most significant development to the west of the site was the construction of the *'Provender Store'*. Access to the store was via a line, partially with in the site, on the north side of the goods shed and the building had been constructed in 1884 as a central depository for the storage of oats, maize and fodder for horses used by

the GWR (Hale 1985). The layout of the medieval village is also shown and at this time remained a separate settlement, to the south of the railway complex.

3.2.6 *Modern (1900-present)*

Figure 8 comprises an extract from the 1933 Ordnance Survey map and shows the layout of the area prior to the Second World War. Considerable expansion had taken place to the west of the site, where extensions to the *Provender Store* had encroached onto Vauxhall Farm. Additional sidings to serve the store had been constructed, parts of which were situated in the southwest part of the site. Developments had also taken place to the east of the site, where a new engine shed is shown. The latter was opened in 1932 (Hawkins and Reeve 1987, 287) and survives in preservation with the *Great Western Railway Preservation Society*, who now own the site.

Relatively little development took place during the early 20th century to the south of the railway. The medieval settlement is still shown separated from the railway complex by open fields, but a new road (the current Station Road) is shown on the 1933, linking the station with Foxhall Road.

The Ordnance Survey map was revised in 1967 and shows that the area developed considerably during the mid 20th century (Figure 10). A large warehouse had been constructed on the south side of the station and the land on the south side of Station Road was occupied by a camp. This may have been constructed during the Second World War and the map states that it was disused. Further to the south, the fields separating the medieval village from the station had been developed as Cronshaw Close and Lydalls Road.

The 1981 edition map (Figure 11) indicates that significant changes had taken place to the west of the site. The *Provender Store* and most of the sidings had been removed and the area comprised open land while to the south of Station Road Great, Western Drive, Stonor Close and a number of other residential streets had been laid out.

The existing park and ride car park was provided during the early 1980s and is shown on the 1989 edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 12). All traces of the former sidings and *Provender Store* had been removed and the car park and access road had been laid out. The footbridge linking the railway station with the car park is also shown. The warehouse on the south side of Station Road had also been removed, and replaced by a residential street named All Saints Court.

Extracts from the 1991 and 1995 edition maps are included as Figures 13 and 14 but show little change from the 1989 edition map. The contemporary layout is shown on Figure 2. This shows a number of developments to the west and north of the site, notably the installation of new sidings to serve a building adjacent to West Curve Bridge. Beyond the west side of the site, Foxhall House had been demolished and the area redeveloped.

3.3 *The Known Archaeology & History of the Site*

3.3.1 *Early Prehistoric (before 600BC)*

Early prehistoric remains are not known from the site.

3.3.2 *Iron Age (600BC-AD43)*

No Iron Age remains are known from the site.

3.3.3 *Roman (AD43-c.450)*

There is no evidence for Roman period remains on the site.

3.3.4 *Saxon (c.450-1066)*

Saxon remains are not known from the site.

3.3.5 *Medieval (1066-1500)*

No medieval remains are known from the site.

3.3.6 *Post-Medieval (1500-1900)*

The layout of the site in the early 19th century is shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, which was published in 1830 (Figure 5). It shows the site as open land, to the north of the medieval village and south of Vauxhall.

The main line railway, which follows the south boundary of the site was opened in 1840 (above, section 3.2.5). The layout of the site in 1876 is shown on Figure 6 and the site was occupied by a reservoir (parcel 82). The south and west sides of the site follow the edges of the reservoir. Little is known of the reservoir in detail, but it may have provided water to the engine shed. A pumping engine is shown on the map, to the north of the site and a mid 20th century track layout diagram states that it had an approximate capacity of 3,326,000 gallons (Figure 6).

The construction of the *Provender Store* in 1884 (above, section 3.2.5) led to the infilling of part of the reservoir, in order to provide access to the store (Figure 7). The southwest corner of the reservoir was backfilled and three railway sidings constructed, in order to serve the store. Additional sidings were added during the early 20th century (Figure 8).

3.3.7 *Modern (1900-present)*

The layout of the site in 1946 is shown in a track layout diagram (Figure 9). The layout of the sidings is shown in detail and a weighbridge and office had been constructed to the south of the sidings. The sidings and weighbridge remained in place until the 1960s and are shown on the 1967 edition map (Figure 10).

The 1982 edition map (Figure 11) shows that, following the demolition of the *Provender Store*, the majority of the sidings in the southwest part of the site

had been removed. The remainder of the reservoir remained open, and covered an area of 0.567 hectares.

The reservoir was probably backfilled during the mid 1980s and the site was laid out as part of the Didcot Park and Ride Car park. The 1989 and 1991 edition map (Figures 12 and 13) show the extent of the car park and the contemporary layout is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 5: Extract from the 1830 edition one inch to the mile scale map *(shown at 1:50,000)*

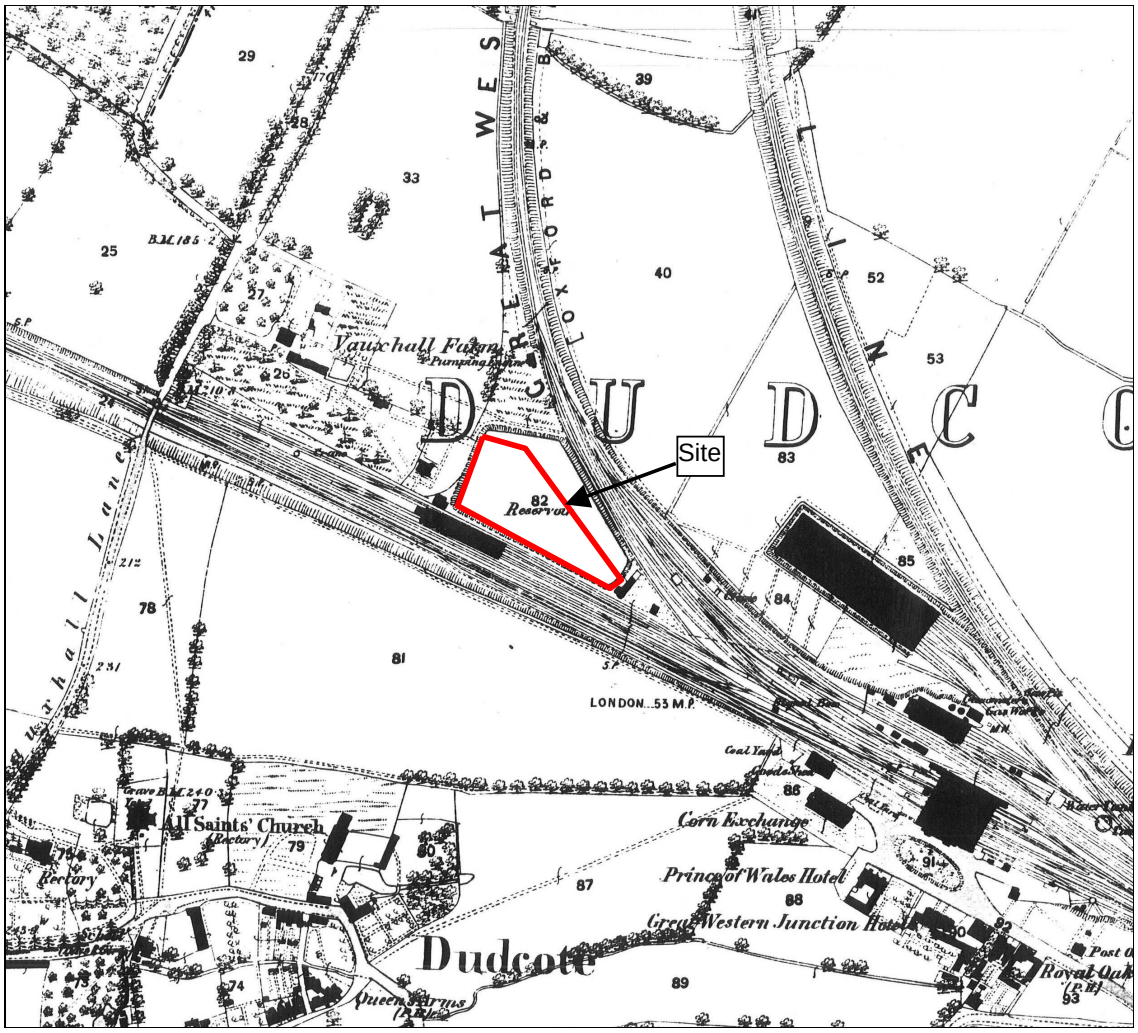

Figure 6: Extract from the 1876 edition 1: 2,500 scale map (reproduced at 1: 5,000)

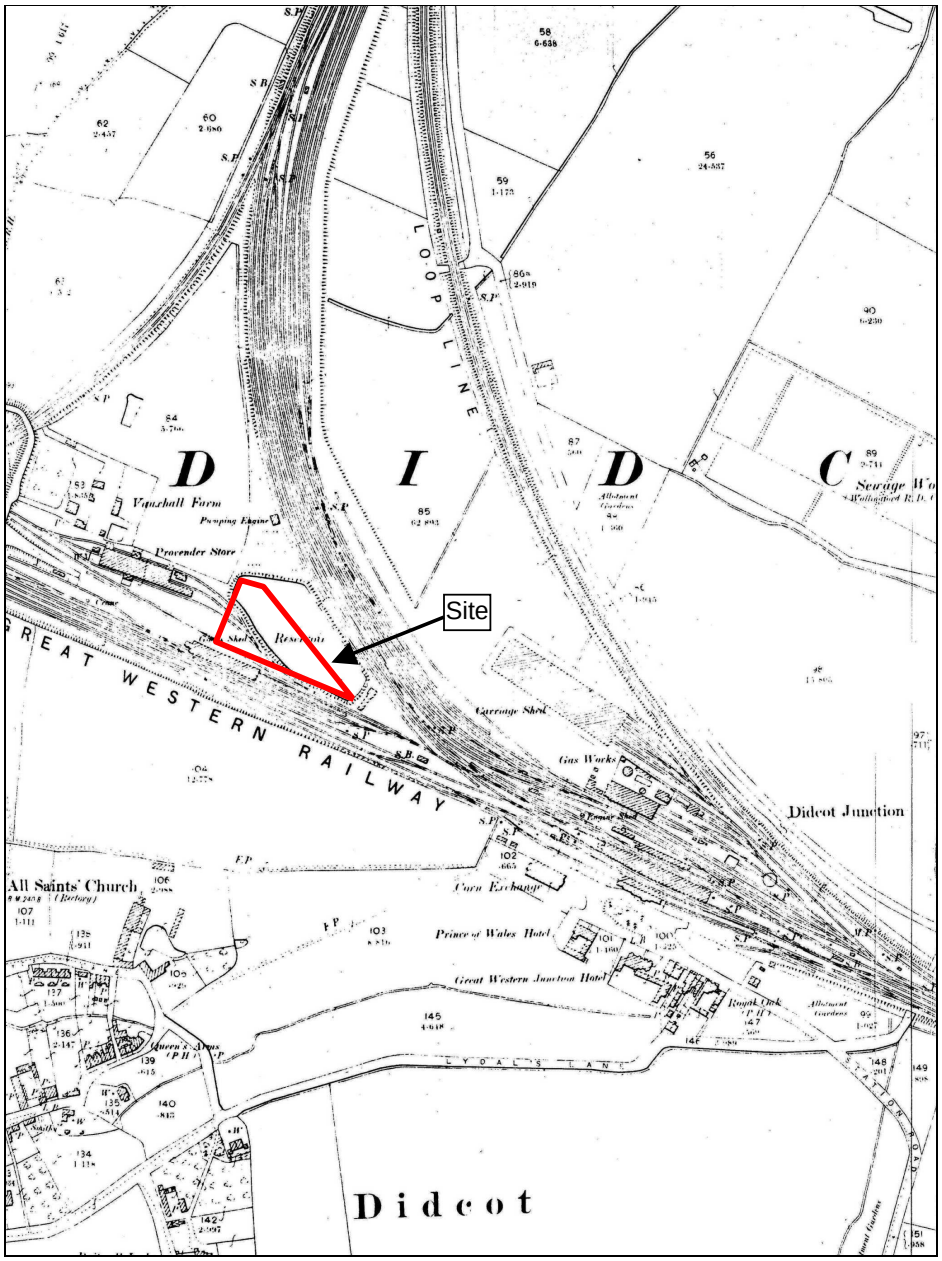

Figure 7: Extract from the 1899 edition 1: 2,500 scale map (reproduced at 1: 5,000)

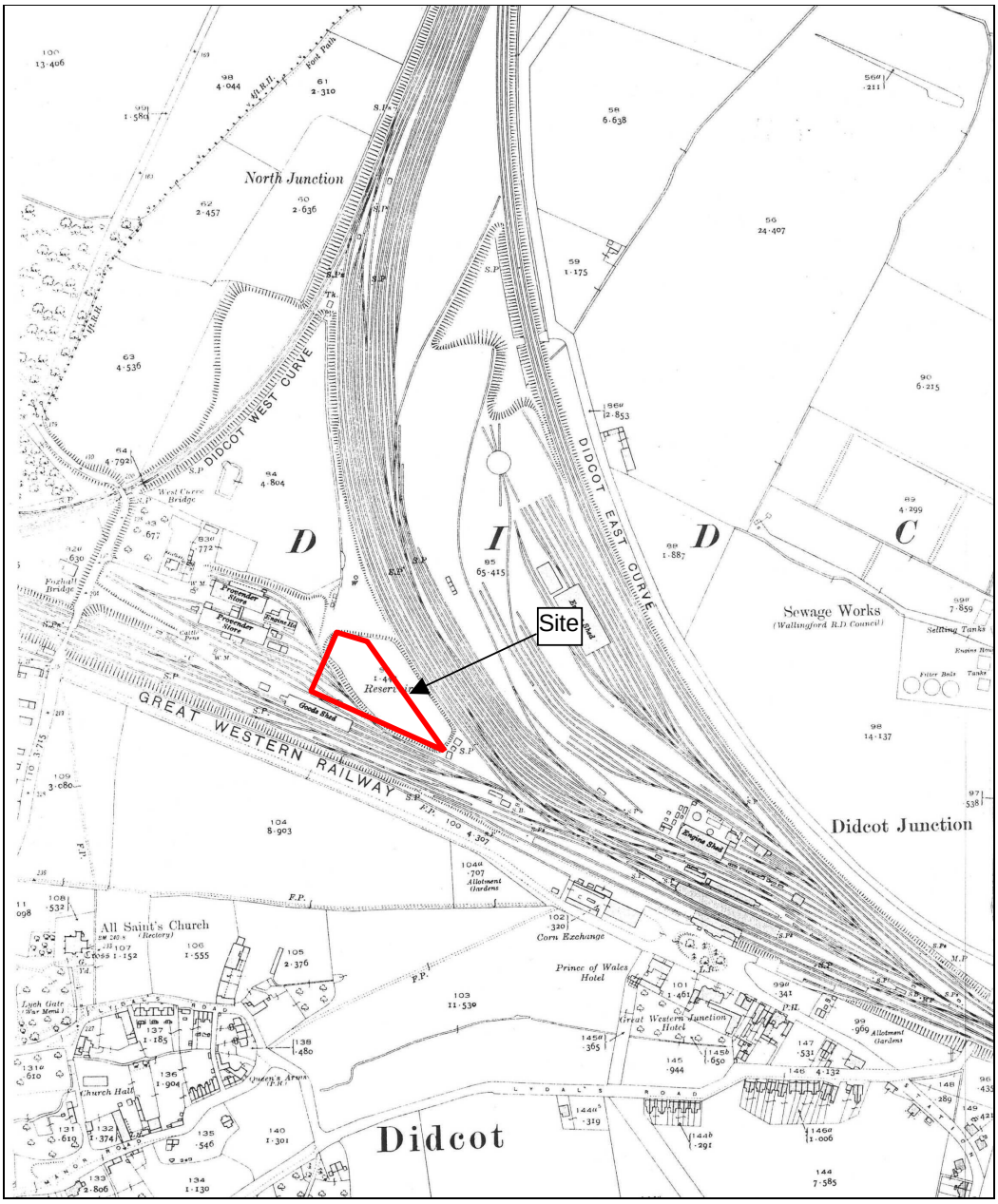

Figure 8: Extract from the 1933 edition 1: 2,500 scale map (reproduced at 1: 5,000)

Figure 9: Layout diagram 1946 *(not to scale)*

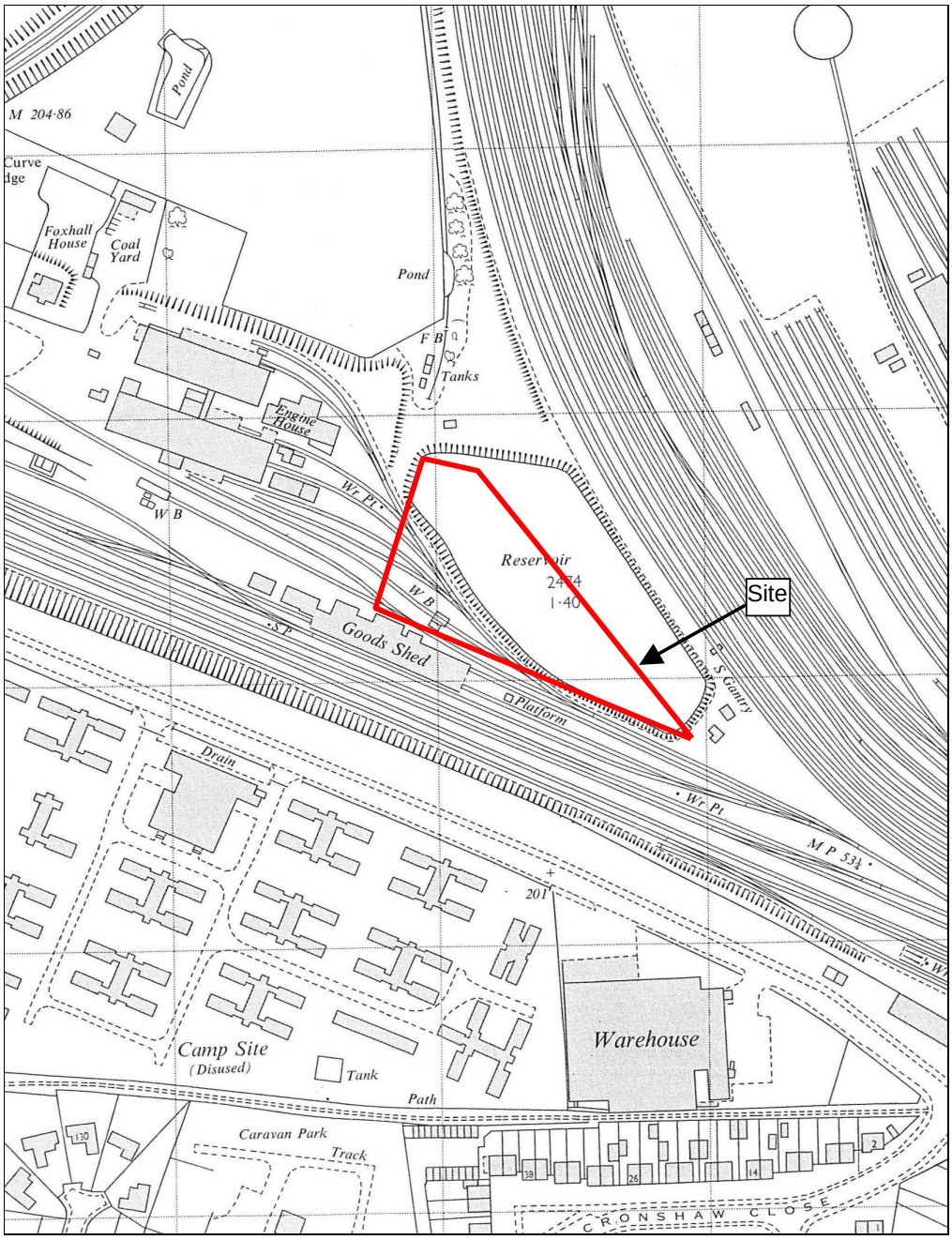

Figure 10: Extract from the 1967 edition 1: 2,500 scale map

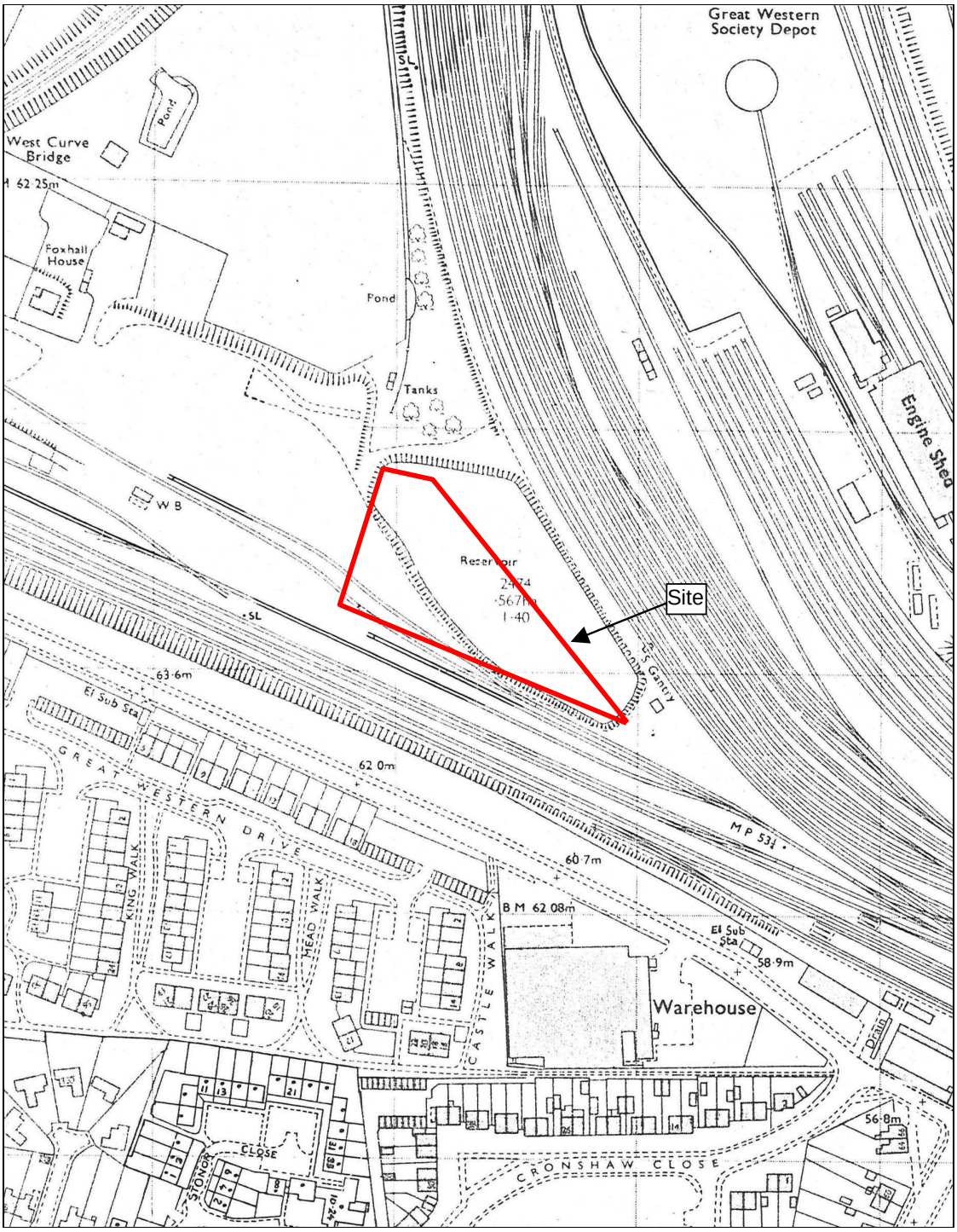

Figure 11: Extract from the 1982 edition 1: 2,500 scale map

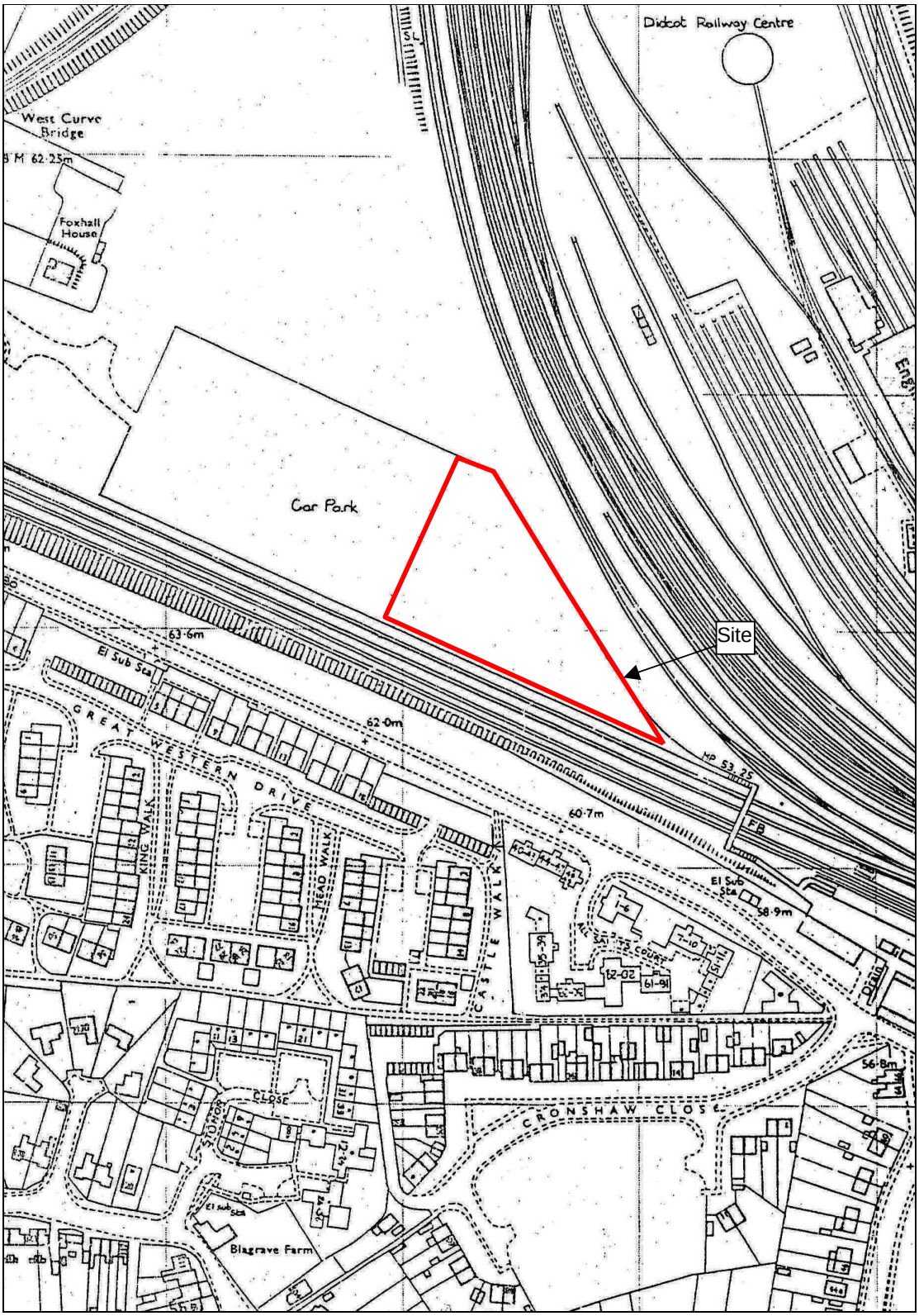

Figure 12: Extract from the 1989 edition 1: 2,500 scale map

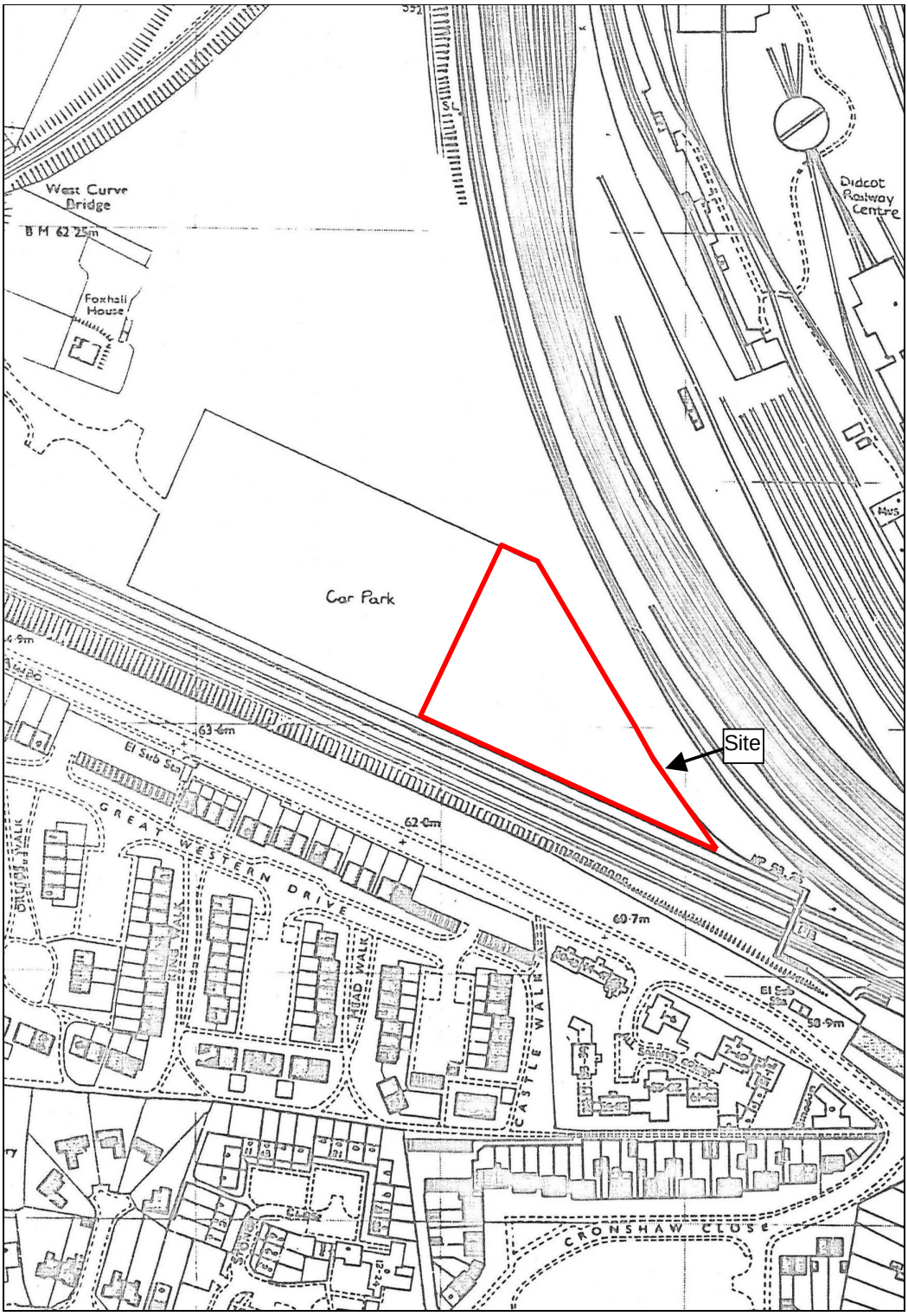

Figure 13: Extract from the 1991 edition 1: 2,500 scale map

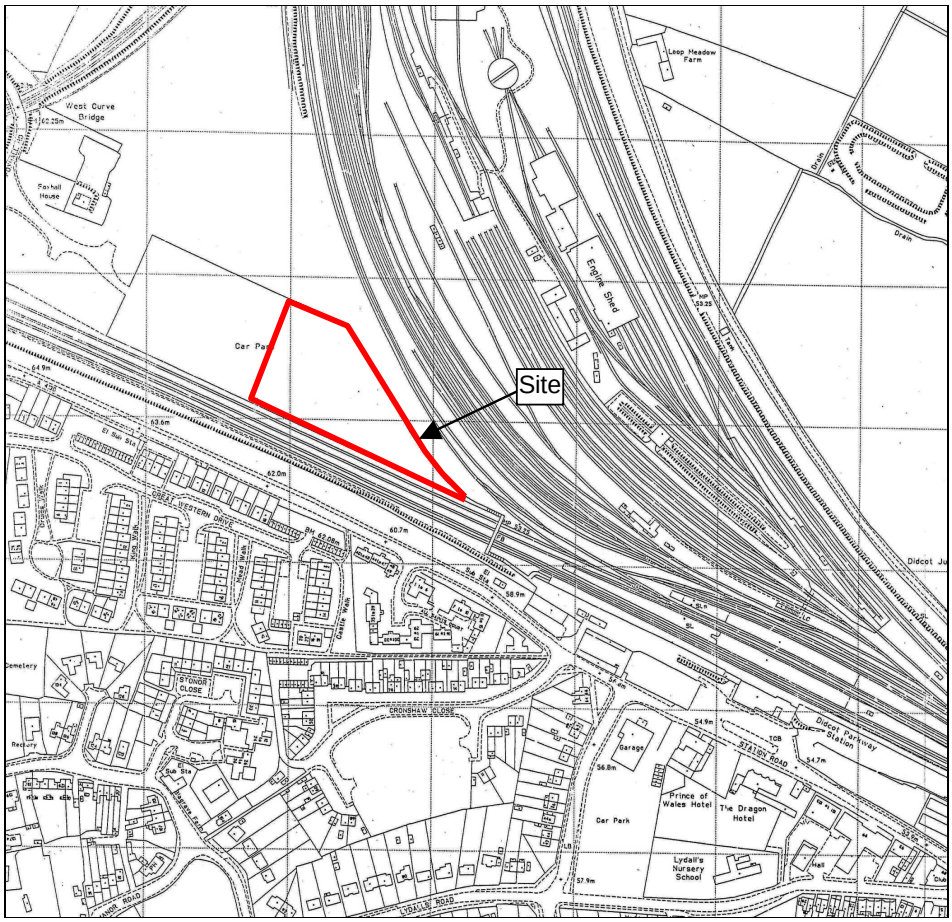

Figure 14: Extract from the 1995 edition 1: 2,500 scale map *(reproduced at 1: 5,000)*

4. Walkover Survey

4.1 ***Extent, Access & Present Use*** (Plates 1 – 3)

4.1.1 The site comprises an area of land immediately beyond the west end of the railway station. It is triangular in shape and is situated in the gap, where the railway to Appleford and Oxford diverges from the main line. Vehicular access is from the west, off Foxhall Road and pedestrian access directly from the station is available via a bridge over the main line, at the east end of the site.

4.1.2 The site currently forms part of a car park. It is flat, surfaced with tarmac and was probably levelled during the construction of the railway sidings and reservoir during the 19th century (above, section 3.2.5).

4.2 ***Buildings***

No buildings are present, but a number of flood lights, miscellaneous items of street furniture and trees are present on the site.

4.3 ***Services***

A number of service runs were noted, but a detailed service survey was not undertaken for the purposes of this assessment.

Plate 1: View of the site from the footbridge, looking northwest

Plate 2: View of the site, looking east

Plate 3: View of the site, looking north

5. Archaeological Constraints on Development

5.1 A range of planning constraints are in place in the area of the site. These constraints relate both to the area as a whole, and to individual buildings and sites. These constraints are taken into consideration when assessing the implications of planning and other proposals made to the local authority and to other local and national bodies.

5.2 ***Scheduled Ancient Monuments***

No scheduled ancient monuments are located within the site

5.3 ***Archaeological Sites in the Historic Environment Record***

The site does not contain any archaeological sites listed in the Oxfordshire *Historic Environment Record*

5.4 ***Listed Buildings***

The site does not contain any listed buildings

6. Conclusions

6.1 The desk-based assessment has revealed that the site offers low archaeological potential. While it is possible that archaeological remains may have been present on the site, any such remains are likely to have been destroyed or severely disturbed during the construction of the railway sidings and reservoir. While the occasional survival of individual isolated remains cannot be entirely excluded, it is unlikely that large quantities of archaeological remains or artefacts survive on the site.

6.2 ***Archaeological Potential of the Site***

6.2.1 Archaeological remains are not known on the site and the site is considered to offer low archaeological potential.

6.2.2 A number of prehistoric and Roman sites have been identified in the surrounding area, but none are known from the site. The site is situated to the north of the medieval settlement of *Dudcot* and probably remained open ground, until the construction of the reservoir and railway sidings during the 19th century. Any archaeological remains which may have been present are likely to have been disturbed or destroyed at this time.

6.3 The framework for the management of archaeological issues in the planning system is currently set out in the document PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning*. Decisions relating to archaeological matters within the area of the site are taken by the local planning authority, acting on the advice of the Planning Archaeologist of *Oxfordshire County Council*.

7. Acknowledgements

ASC Ltd is grateful to Mr Simon Fraser for commissioning this assessment on behalf of *Tony Gee and Partners LLP*. Thanks are also due to Ms Susan Lisk BA MA MIFA, Sites and Monuments Record Officer of *Oxfordshire County Council* for providing access to the Historic Environment Record data. The assistance of the staff of the *Centre for Oxfordshire Studies* and the *Sackler Library* is also gratefully acknowledged.

The research for the assessment, and the walkover survey, were undertaken for *ASC Ltd* by David Fell BA MA MIFA. The report was prepared by David Fell and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA and Karin Semmelmann BA AIFA.

8. Historic Environmental Record Data

Sites listed below are those within the study area, *i.e.* the site and a surrounding radius of *c.*1km

HER no	NGR	Period	Description	Proximity to site (m)
2857	SU 5197 9050	Roman & medieval	Church of All Saints. 12th century with 14th and 15th century additions (Pevsner 2002, 127-8). A Roman lead coffin and pottery fragments found in the churchyard.	350
7660	SU 5200 9050	Roman	Find of a Romano-British pot	450
8035	SU 5125 9051	Roman & later	Roman and later pottery found during a watching brief at Blagrave Farm (Chambers 1980, 174)	200
10745	SU 5255 9053	19th century	The original Great Western Railway station, built in 1844 by I K Brunel. Burnt down in 1885	350
11868	SU 5122 8975	Medieval	Medieval pottery found during trial excavation (Chambers 1980, 174)	1.3km
12696	SU 5193 9046	Bronze Age & Iron Age	Bronze Age & Iron Age pottery, Iron Age ditches & Roman cremations found during excavation (Chambers 1993). Circular feature on aerial photos- possibly windmill mound	400
16146	SU 5286 9136	Neolithic & Bronze Age	Alluvium over Neolithic and Bronze Age pits. Two burnt tree boles, interpreted as sign of land clearance (Anon, 1994)	1km
16768	?		No data	

9. References

Standards & Specifications

ASC 2008 *Method Statement for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment: Didcot Parkway Station*

IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct.*

IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.

IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards & Guidance* documents *(Desk-Based Assessments, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings).*

Secondary Sources

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10. Cartographic Sources

The following maps and plans were consulted in the course of this assessment:

Date	Reference	Description
1830	-	Ordnance Survey 1: 63,360 map (first edition)
1876	Berks XV.7	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. County Series
1899	Berks XV.7	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. County Series
1933	Berks XV.7	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. County Series
1946	Berks XV.7	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. County Series
1967	SU 5290	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. National Grid Series
1982	SU 5290	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. National Grid Series
1989	SU 5290	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. National Grid Series
1991	SU 5290	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. National Grid Series
1995	SU 5290	Ordnance Survey 1: 2,500 scale mapping. National Grid Series
1999	Explorer Series, sheet no. 170	Ordnance Survey Explorer series mapping (scale 1:25,000)
2008	-	Ordnance Survey Landplan data (scale 1:5,000)

