

# Land to the rear of the Bridge Inn Watling Street Fenny Stratford

## *Archaeological Watching Brief*



for  
City Renovations Ltd

CA Project: 660739  
CA Report: 17370  
HER reference: EMK1299  
Accession No: AYBCM 2016.93

June 2017



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Watling Street  
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## Summary

<b>Project Name:</b>	Land to the rear of the Bridge Inn
<b>Location:</b>	Watling Street, Fenny Stratford, Buckinghamshire
<b>NGR:</b>	SP 88342 34097
<b>Type:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>Date:</b>	6 February – 8 May 2017
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	16/00785/FUL
<b>Location of Archive:</b>	Buckinghamshire County Museum
<b>Accession Number:</b>	AYBCM 2016.93
<b>Site Code:</b>	RBI16
<b>HER reference:</b>	EMK1299

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology, for City Renovations Ltd on land to the rear of the Bridge Inn (centred on NGR: SP 88342 34097; Fig. 1). This took place during groundworks prior to the erection of four houses with associated car parking, refuse store, cycle store and amenity space over the course of eight days between February and May 2017.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February and May 2017 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for City Renovations Ltd at land to the rear of the Bridge Inn (centred on NGR: SP 488342 234097; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for the erection of four houses with associated car parking, refuse store, cycle store and amenity space (Planning ref: 16/00785/FUL).

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Cotswold Archaeology (CA) 2016 and approved by Milton Keynes Council acting on the advice of Nick Crank. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (ClfA 2014). It was monitored by Nick Crank.

### ***The site***

1.3 The proposed development area is approximately 750m<sup>2</sup>, and comprised formal car-parking for the Bridge Inn (Figures 1 and 2). The site is bounded on its eastern side by the Grand Union Canal, which runs approximately north – south at this location. The southern boundary is formed by Watling Street, which is orientated on a broadly north-west – south-east alignment. The site is bounded to the west by an access route to properties and car parking to the rear of the site, as well as properties fronting onto Watling Street. The site lies at approximately 79m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

1.4 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mapped as mudstones of the Oxford Clay Formation formed in the Jurassic Period, with superficial deposits of till, narrow bands of alluvium and terrace gravels following the River Ouse (Buckinghamshire County Council 2009) and (BGS 2017).

1.5 Prior to the principal development groundworks the surface of the car park was removed, as was the wall to the north-west, formerly separating the access lane from the lower car park. This created a 1.05m section across the northern boundary of the site through the tarmac and modern made ground (see Photograph 1, Figure 3).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 No desk-based assessment for the site has been undertaken, however, a discussion of the archaeological evidence and history of the local area has been presented in Buckinghamshire County Council's *Bletchley and Fenny Stratford: Buckinghamshire Historic Towns Assessment Report* (2009), from which the following is drawn.

### **Prehistoric period**

- 2.2 Very few prehistoric sites have to date been recorded in the Fenny Stratford / Bletchley area; however, several Iron Age occupation sites have been recorded at the wider parish level. Fenny Lock demonstrated evidence of occupation along the River Ouse in the Middle Bronze Age into the Early Iron Age with a possible gradual de-population of the site into the Mid/Late Iron Age. Excavations in 1996 also recorded pottery of the Neolithic period and Bronze Age as well as structural evidence of the late Bronze Age and Iron Age. Several Palaeolithic hand-axes have been recorded at Fenny Stratford and a number of arrowheads and other worked flints have been found in the wider area.

### **Roman period**

- 2.3 There is considerable evidence for settlement in the Roman period in the wider area. Fenny Stratford has the potential for the presence of archaeological evidence from the period, especially given its location as a crossing point of the River Great Ouse and its proximity to the former settlement of *Magiovinium*. The earliest known routes in Bletchley include several Roman roads, of which, Watling Street is the principal route way; connecting the major Roman towns of St Albans (*Verulamium*) to Towcester (*Lactodorum*) via the settlement of *Magiovinium*. Some Roman period finds in the wider area include evidence of burials and a lead-working site and it is likely many of such sites have Iron Age predecessors and are indicative of a continuation of settlement into the Roman period. A concentration of finds and features dating to the late Iron Age through to the 4th century AD have been recorded at Bletchley Park including the remains of two stone buildings of the 4th century AD and parts of one of 2nd century AD origin. The latter had fallen out of use by the 4th century. This building is thought to have represented the remains of a former villa site; associated with evidence of glass, mosaic work, painted wall plaster and bath-house flue tiles.

### **Early Medieval and Medieval periods**

- 2.4 The name Bletchley derives from *Blaecca's leah*, *Blaecca* a 7th century personal name, while *leah* means clearing. The settlement stood on the edge of Whaddon Chase and may have been part of the Saxon hunting forest. The name Fenny Stratford probably derived from the Old English word that means a marshy ford on the (Roman) road. Fenny Stratford and Bletchley along with Church Bletchley and Water Eaton are recorded together in Domesday and the manor of Eaton at this time was under the ownership of the Bishop of Coutances. Archaeological remains recovered from excavations for the early medieval to medieval period are limited but distributed across the parish. There is some evidence in the form of Saxo-Norman pottery and a single spearhead in the parish and, more substantially, the discovery prior to the construction of a Tesco store in Fenny Stratford, of the remains of a number of sunken floor buildings and post structures.
- 2.5 Archaeological evidence for medieval activity around the Bletchley settlements is sparse, perhaps principally due to relatively limited development within the core of these settlements. Fenny Stratford grew somewhat more rapidly through the period and it is thought the settlement essentially formed along the junction of the two main roads. The settlement achieved market town status as a borough in the 14th century. Evidence of the medieval period comprises examples of land boundaries, ditches and an occupation layer.

### **Post-medieval and Modern periods**

- 2.6 The post-medieval period saw little expansion of the settlements at Bletchley or Fenny Stratford; however, there were some improvements to the communications network with the turnpiking of Watling Street in 1706, the arrival of the Grand Union Canal in 1800 and the construction of the London and North Western Railway, along with Bletchley station, in 1838. Much of the surrounding landscape was enclosed in the 19th century and the resulting agricultural activity along with extensive clay extraction and more modern development have removed almost all traces of medieval field systems in Bletchley parish and its surrounding areas. Fenny Stratford underwent some re-fronting and rebuilding along Watling Street. Post-war Bletchley grew with the creation of large new estates and an influx of new residents from bomb damaged areas of London.





### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:

- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks; and
- at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2016). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks, which consisted of a single trench approximately 25m long, 1.3m wide and up to 2.05m deep from ground level (as present on arrival), with four returning trenches running east – west of roughly 5m in length. The bulk of this work was carried out during February 2017. The excavation of service runs to link the residential development to the mains was monitored during May 2017.

4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.

4.3 The resultant archive is currently held by CA at its offices in Milton Keynes. A summary of information from this project is set out within Appendix B and will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

### 5. RESULTS (FIGS. 3 & 5)

5.1 The same broad stratigraphic sequence was observed during the monitoring of all phases of intrusive works. The earliest deposit (103), recorded at a depth of a little more than 2m below present ground level (bpgl), comprised a mid to dark grey, chalky clay and appears to have been disturbed natural deposit rather than an *in situ* natural deposit. Given the nature and date of overlying deposits, it is likely that disturbance occurred in the relatively recent past.





- 5.2 The disturbed natural deposit was overlain by up to 0.6m of a more markedly grey chalky clay containing large quantities of modern demolition rubble (102). The horizon between the disturbed natural deposit and overlying material was somewhat blurred across the site, small occasional fragments of brick and charcoal being visible in section towards the surface of the lower deposit. It is possible these materials may have been moved by bioturbation, or indeed have been dragged down by the action of the excavator.
- 5.3 Above layer 102 was a further 0.4m of mixed modern made ground (101), recorded at an upper elevation of 1.05m bpgl. This was overlain by more extensive deposits of mixed modern demolition material (100), together forming a layer of modern made ground more than 1.0m thick. The stratigraphic sequence was capped, prior to the initial strip, by the modern asphalt surface car park.
- 5.3 Modern drains were evident cutting through the layers below the modern surface, however no features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during groundworks and, despite visual scanning of spoil, no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.

## 6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Despite the wider archaeological potential of the application area (see archaeological background above); the watching brief identified no archaeological remains pre-dating the modern period within the area of observed groundworks. The absence of archaeological deposits may be due to disturbance, truncation or removal during more recent phases of site development in the 19th and 20th centuries, or alternatively remains of earlier period may never have been present. Given the narrowness of the construction trenches, it was unclear whether the mixed layers of redeposited natural material and demolition rubble purely represented levelling for the modern car park or if earlier phases of activity on the site were also represented. Due to the presence of the modern made ground deposits it is likely that the earliest evident layer represented redeposited natural material which had probably been dumped and redistributed there during the excavation of the nearby canal. A clean natural substrate was not recognised in large part again because of the narrowness and depth of trenches, and it was not possible to identify whether or not the earliest element of deposit 103 were undisturbed.

## 7. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Martyn Cooper and Timothy Lewis. The report was written by Peter Boyer, Martyn Cooper and Timothy Lewis. The illustrations were prepared by Charlotte Patman. The archive has been compiled by Emily Evans, and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Mark Hewson.

## 8. REFERENCES

BGS (British Geological Survey) 2015 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 5 May 2017

Buckinghamshire County Council 2009 *Bletchley and Fenny Stratford: Buckinghamshire Historic Towns Assessment Report.*

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2016 *Land to the rear of the Bridge Inn, Bletchley, Buckinghamshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief.*

CIfA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) 2014 *Standard and guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief.*



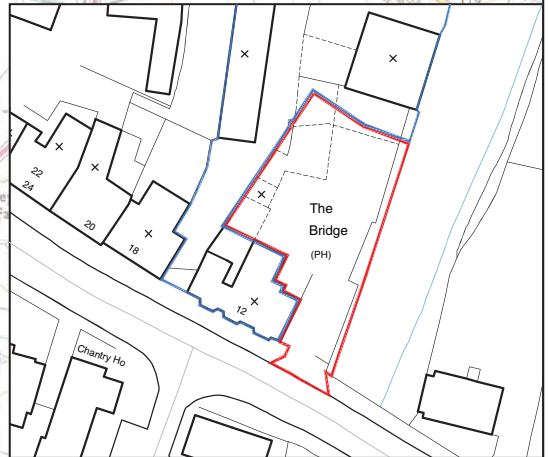
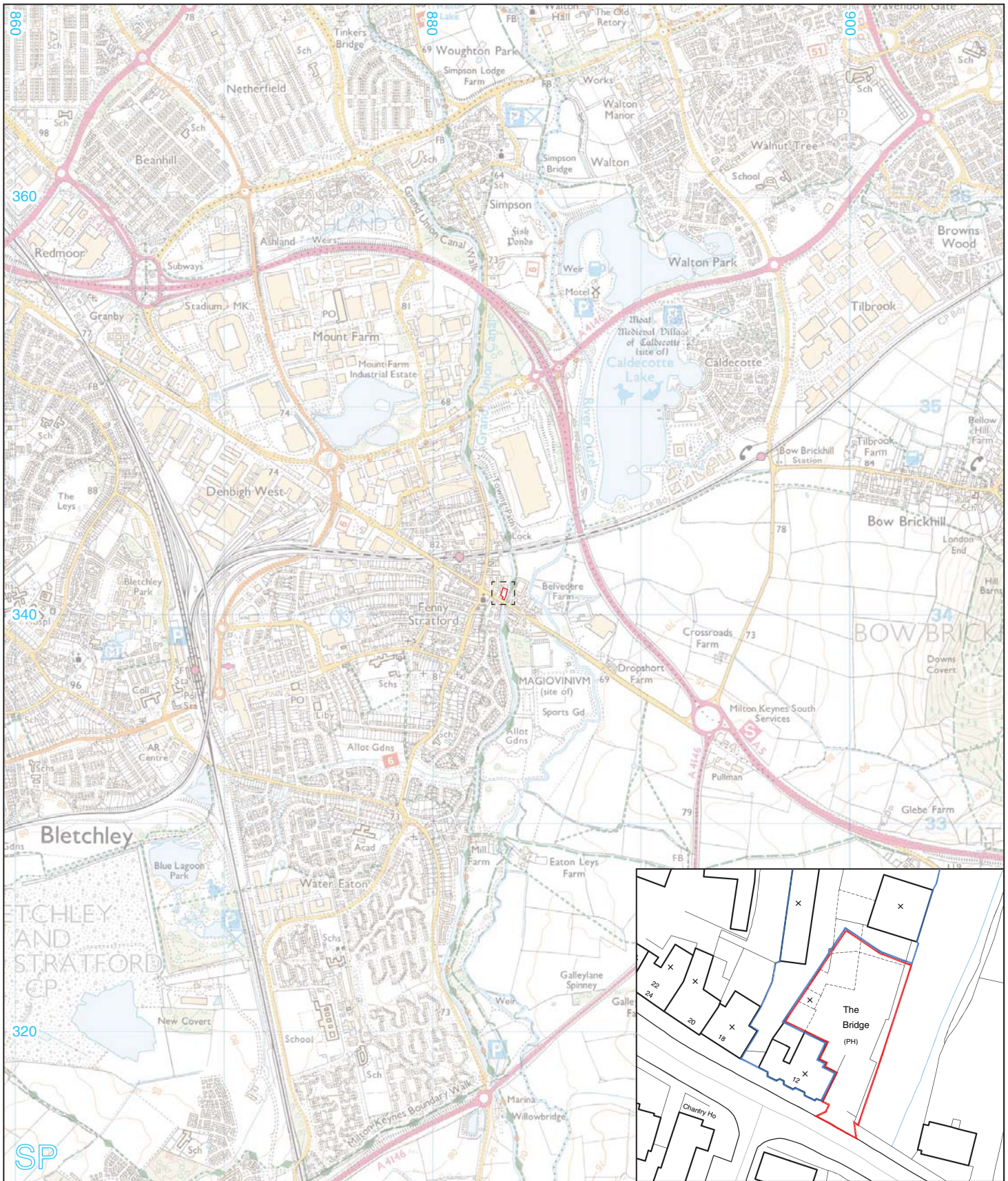
**APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**

Trench No.	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Context interpretation	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	100	Layer	-	Made ground	Mixed modern layers	25	1.3	1.05	Modern
1	101	Layer	-	Made ground	Mixed modern layer in trench	25	1.3	0.4	Modern
1	102	Layer	-	Made ground	Interface layer	25	1.3	0.6	Modern
1	103	Layer	-	Redeposited Natural substrate	Dark grey chalky clay	25	1.3	0.4	

**APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Land to the rear of the Bridge Inn, Bletchley, Buckinghamshire	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology, for City Renovations Ltd on land to the rear of the Bridge Inn (centred on NGR: SP 488342 234097; Fig. 1). This took place during groundworks prior to the erection of four houses with associated car parking, refuse store, cycle store and amenity space over the course of eight days between February and May 2017. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during groundworks, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.	
Project dates	05/02/17 – 08/05/17	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	No	
Future work	No	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	Land to the rear of the Bridge Inn, Bletchley, Buckinghamshire	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)		
Site co-ordinates	SP 488342 234097	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Nick Crank	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Mark Hewson	
Project Supervisor	Martyn Cooper, Timothy Lewis	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>	none	
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>	none	
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive (AYBCM 2016.93)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	n/a	None
Paper	Buckinghamshire County Museum	Context sheets and all site records
Digital	Buckinghamshire County Museum	Digital photos
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2017 <i>Land to the rear of the Bridge Inn, Bletchley, Buckinghamshire: Archaeological Watching Brief</i> . CA typescript report <b>17370</b>		





N

Site boundary  
 Ownership boundary

0  1km

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*PROJECT TITLE*

**Land to the Rear of the Bridge Inn, Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes**

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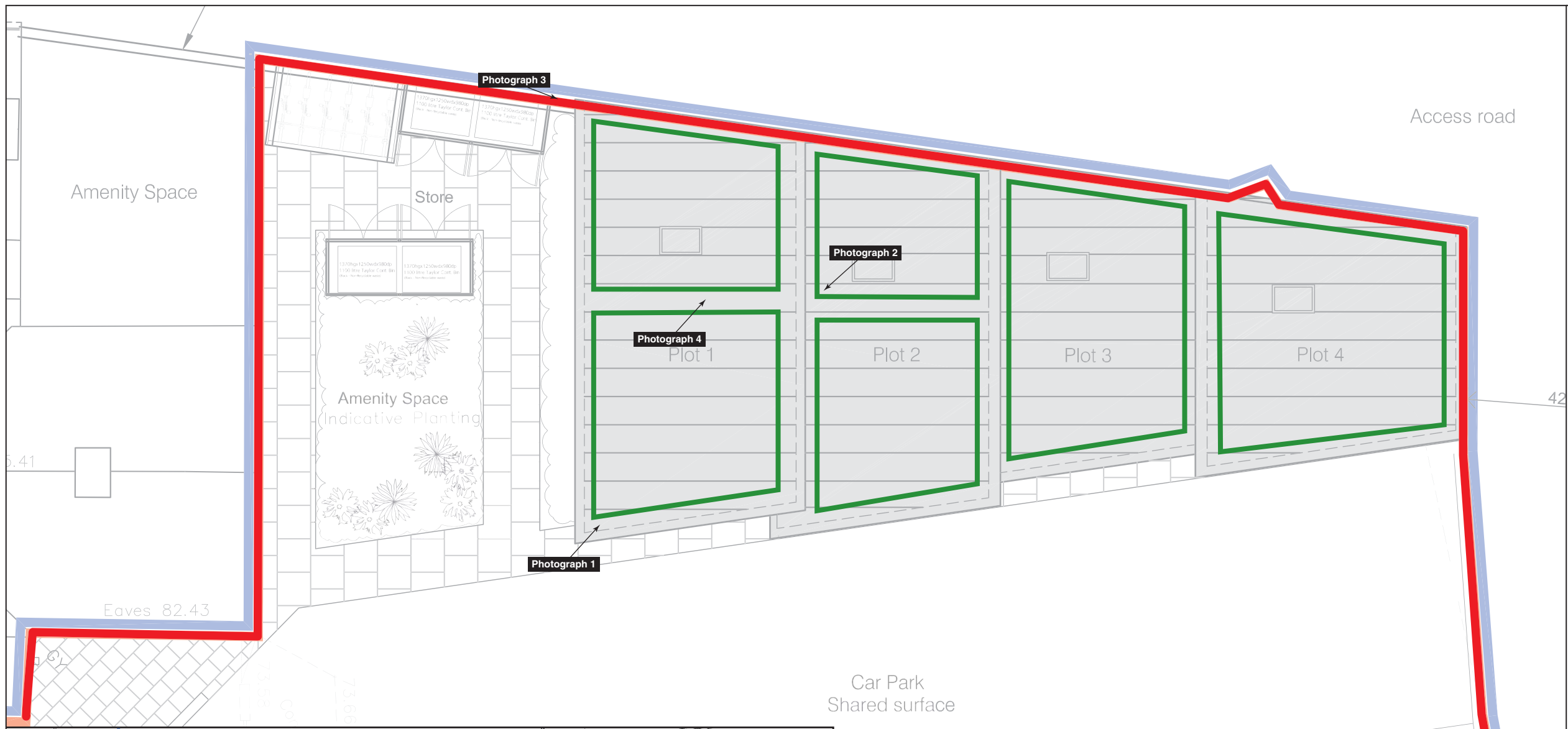
*FIGURE TITLE*

**Site location plan**

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DRAWN BY	EE	PROJECT NO.	660739	<i>FIGURE NO.</i>
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	14/03/2017	
APPROVED BY	MH	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	<b>1</b>





- Site boundary
- Monitored groundworks
- Photograph 2 Photograph directions



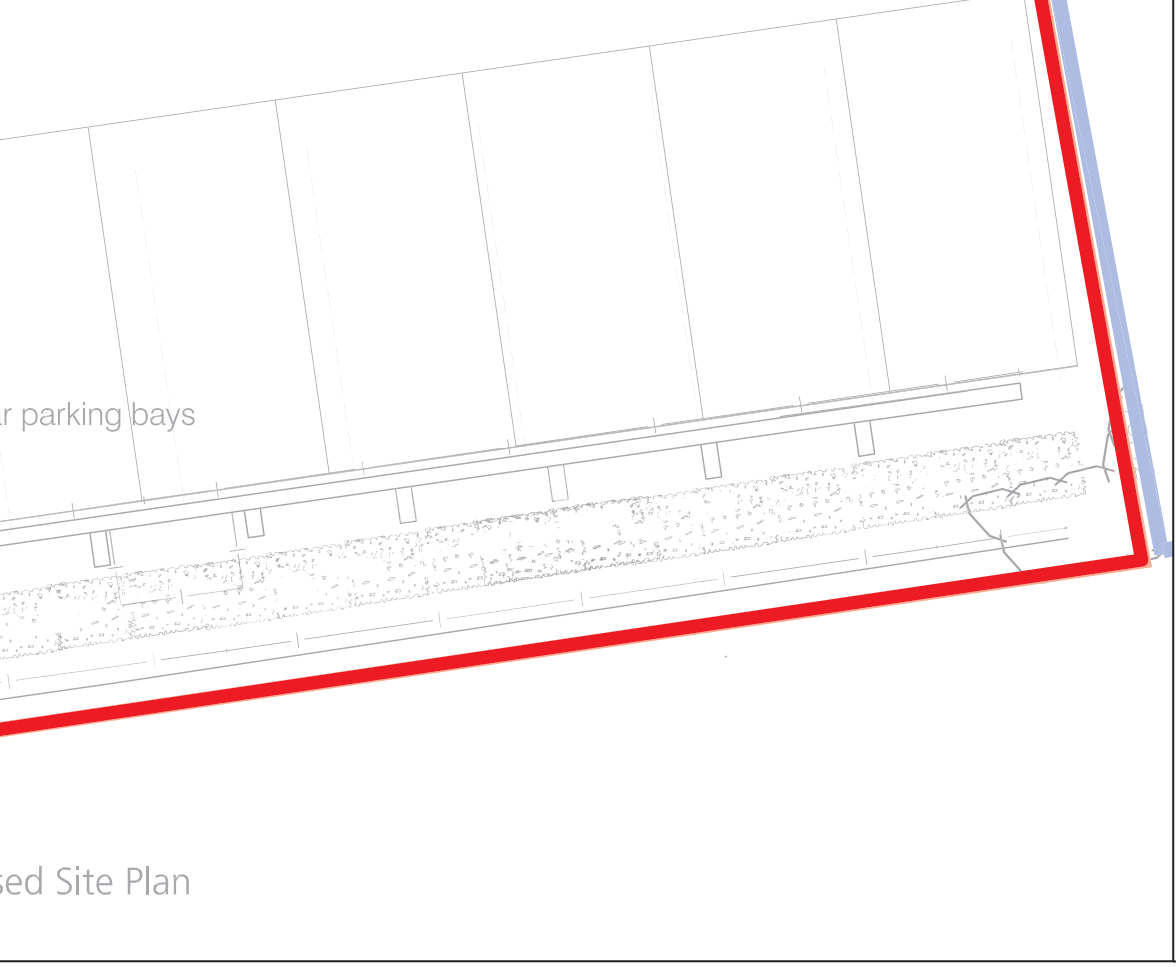
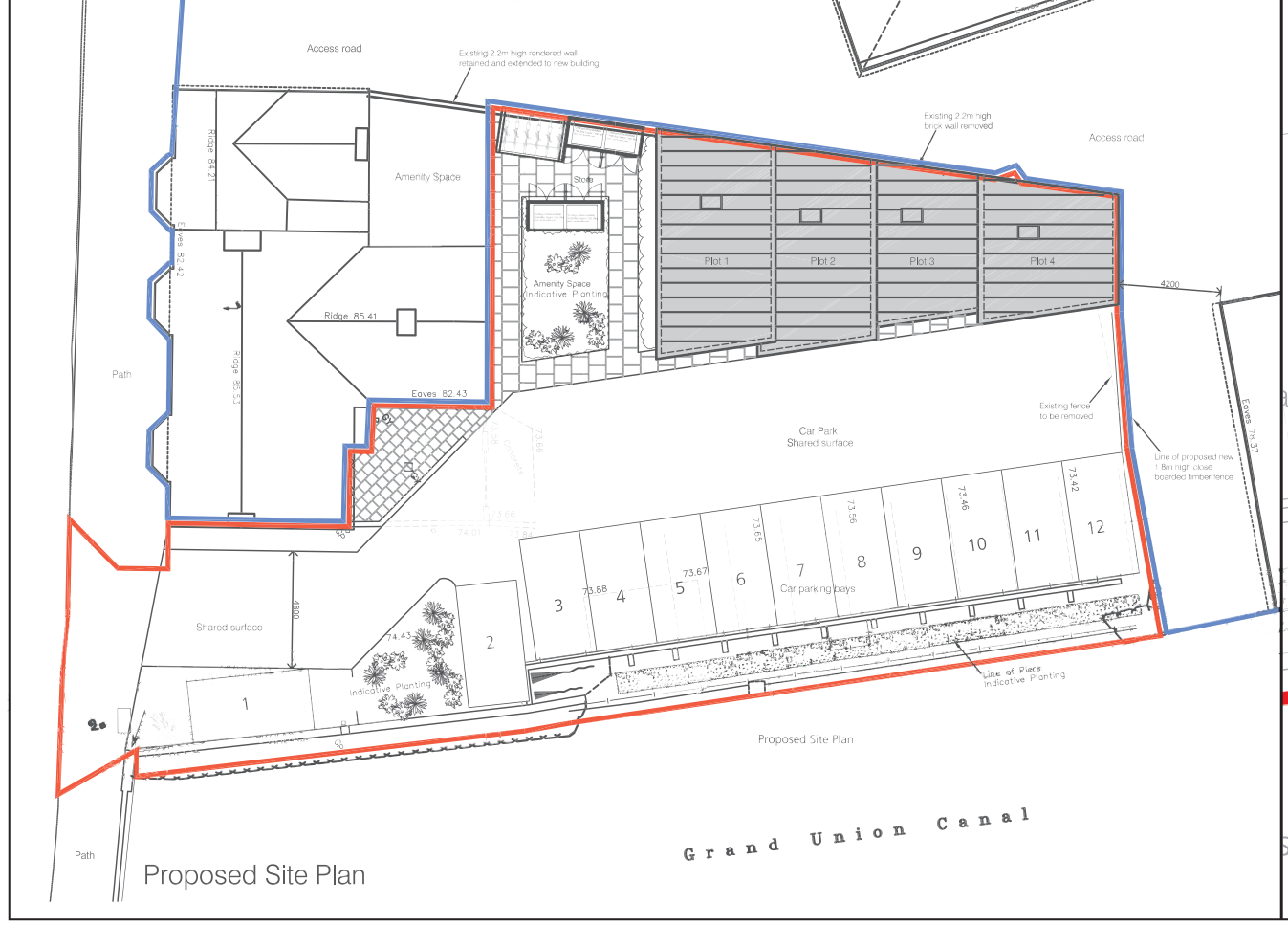
Based on a plan by CMI ARCHITECTURE LTD, 25 Walker avenue, Stratford Office Village, Wolverton Mill East, Milton Keynes, MK12 5TW.

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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Land to the Rear of the Bridge Inn,  
 Fenny Stratford, Milton Keynes

**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Plan of excavated areas

**DRAWN BY** EE **PROJECT NO.** 660739 **FIGURE NO.**  
**CHECKED BY** DJB **DATE** 14/03/2017 **2**  
**APPROVED BY** MH **SCALE@A3** 1:100



Grand Union Canal



Photograph 1 : working shot looking north-west to modern section



Photograph 2 : post-excavation photo illustrating stratigraphy looking south-east (1m scale)



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PROJECT TITLE

Land to the Rear of the Bridge Inn,  
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FIGURE TITLE

**Photographs 1 and 2**

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Photograph 3: Western foundation trench, looking north-east (scale 1m)



Photograph 4: Central foundation trench, south-east facing section (scale 1m)





Photograph 5: Service trench excavation, looking south-east (scale 1m)



Photograph 6: Service trench, south-west facing section

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