



# Land at Wisloe Slimbridge/Cambridge Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief



for: Gloucestershire County Council and The Ernest Cook Trust

> CA Project: CR1524 CA Report: CR1524\_1

> > October 2023



## Land at Wisloe Slimbridge/Cambridge Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Document Control Grid						
Revision	Date	Author	Checked by	Status	Reasons for revision	Approved by
А	4 October 2023	Christopher Leonard	Monica Fombellida	Draft	_	Alex Thomson

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## **SUMMARY**

Project name:	Land at Wisloe	
Location:	Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire	
NGR:	374661 202894	
Туре:	Watching brief	
Date:	4-6 September 2023	
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Museum in the Park, Stroud and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS)	
Site Code:	CAWGS23	

In September 2023, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with a borehole ground investigation survey on land at Wisloe, Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire.

Possible alluvial deposits and an extensive area of made ground, likely associated with the construction of the Bristol to Birmingham railway line or the M5 motorway, were identified in the south-western part of the site.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed, and no artefactual material was recovered.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In September 2023, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at Wisloe, Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire (centred at NGR: 374661 202894; Fig. 1). This watching brief was undertaken for Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and The Ernest Cook Trust.
- 1.2. The archaeological works have been recommended by Rachel Foster, Archaeologist, Gloucestershire County Council, the archaeological advisor to Stroud District Council (SDC). The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) prepared by CA (2023) and approved by Rachel Foster.
- 1.3. The watching brief was also undertaken in line with Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020), Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation (Historic England 2015) and Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide (Historic England 2015).

#### The site

- 1.4. The site comprises four parcels of land with a combined area of *c*. 77ha, used as agricultural land, horse stables and paddocks. It is located on the southern outskirts of Slimbridge and Cambridge, with the A38 forming the western boundary of the site, the M5 forming the eastern boundary, the Cross Country Railway line forming the southern boundary, and Cambridge and the river Cam forming the northern boundary. The site lies on undulating ground and gently slopes from 28m AOD in the south to 17m AOD in the northern fields, adjacent to Cambridge and the river Cam.
- 1.5. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone Formation, sedimentary rock which formed in the Triassic and Jurassic periods (BGS 2023). This is overlain by Cheltenham Sand and Gravel, sedimentary superficial deposits which formed during the Quaternary period (ibid.). Orange sand and gravel deposits were identified as the natural substrate in all of the monitored boreholes.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The site has previously been the subject of a Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (CA 2019). What follows is a summary of the results of this assessment.

#### Prehistoric

- 2.2. A findspot of a stone axe of Neolithic date is recorded by the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record HER in a land parcel located towards the centre of the site, to the north of the A4135 road.
- 2.3. A small feature, filled with charcoal-rich material of probable Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date, was recorded during a previous archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Hillhouse Solar Farm, located *c*. 700m to the north of the site. Further evidence of Neolithic settlement activity was recorded on land located *c*. 900mto the south of the site.
- 2.4. Ring-ditches tentatively dated to the Broze Age are recorded via crop-marks on land c. 200 to the south of site; further ring ditches are recorded on land immediately to the north of the site.
- 2.5. A series of small enclosures were recorded on the western edge of the floodplain of the River Cam and on the higher ground to the east of the river, *c*. 1.3km to the south of the site, predominantly on gravel terraces; these date to the Late Iron Age to early Roman periods.

#### Roman

- 2.6. It is believed that the route of the former Roman road between Gloucester and Sea Mills broadly follows the present A38 road, located immediately to the west of the site. A series of cropmarks have been identified either side of the road by the National Mapping Programme (NMP), and these include a possible roadside camp within the southern fields on the site and possibles enclosures and a trackway in the northwestern fields of the site. Further cropmarks in the form of enclosures, ring ditches and linear were observed on historical aerial photographs within the fields located towards the north-west of the site.
- 2.7. Within the surrounding landscape, further cropmarks interpreted as enclosures and trackways have been recorded on land immediately north-west of the site.

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#### Medieval

- 2.8. Saxon settlement activity was recorded during an archaeological evaluation of land at Slimbridge, located *c*. 300m to the north of the site and comprised a curvilinear feature from which pottery, dated to the 5th century AD, was recovered.
- 2.9. A possible former grange is recorded on land immediately to the west of the site. This includes rectangular earthworks and an enclosure, along with a possible fishpond.
- 2.10. During this period, it is most likely that the site formed part of the agricultural hinterland of the deserted settlements or the grange, identified from cropmarks on aerial photographs. Evidence of ridge and furrow cultivation, also recorded from aerial photograph, supports this interpretation.

#### **Post-Medieval**

- 2.11. Evidence for possible late post-medieval extraction activities is recorded within the fields located towards the west of the site; however, as this has not been investigated, an earlier date cannot be ruled out.
- 2.12. The 1803 Inclosure map of Slimbridge depicts the layout of the site mostly in the form of irregular enclosed fields. By the First Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1884, the land within the site was mostly amalgamated into larger parcels. No significant changes were made in the subsequent OS mapping until the OS map of 1955, on which stables are depicted towards the centre of the site. Further agricultural buildings were added in this area in the following 20 years. In summary, the land of the site has maintained its agricultural use since the beginning of the 19th century.

## 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objectives of the watching brief were:
  - to monitor the ground investigation works, and to identify, investigate and record any significant buried archaeological deposits/features thus revealed;
  - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated project archive and a report setting out the watching brief results and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.
- 3.2. The specific objective of the watching brief was to investigate and record any remains associated with the cropmarks of possible Roman date (see *Archaeological Background* above).

## 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The watching brief comprised the observation by a competent archaeologist of the excavation of ground investigation boreholes, and the recovery of any finds from the excavated boreholes. Cores were drilled in the locations shown on Fig. 2 and records were made of the stratigraphic deposits identified. The arisings from the cores were then examined for finds recovery.
- 4.2. Records were maintained in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual.
- 4.3. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites, but no deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.4. CA will make arrangements with Museum in the Park, Stroud for the deposition of the project archive. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The archives (museum and digital) will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (CIfA 2014; updated October 2020).
- 4.5. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

## 5. **RESULTS**

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the watching brief results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A.
- 5.2. The natural geological substrate comprised orange sand and gravel and was typically revealed at depths of between 0.2m and 0.4m below present ground level (bpgl). In Boreholes 2 and 4 a 0.2m thick deposit of orange-brown clay silt, probably of alluvial origin, was identified overlying the natural substrate. In Borehole 6, a 1.4m thick deposit of redeposited natural, comprising mixed sand, gravel and blue clay was identified.

- 5.3. Generally, the natural substrate was overlain by a thin subsoil deposit, although this was not recorded in all of the boreholes. This subsoil deposit was particularly noticeable in Boreholes 15-20, which were located in land currently used as horse paddocks and which may not have been extensively ploughed. It should be noted that due to the methodology employed, it was not always possible to distinguish topsoil and subsoil deposits unless there was a marked difference in colour.
- 5.4. The most recent deposits recorded in each borehole were modern topsoil deposits, which comprised agricultural ploughsoil in Boreholes 1-14 and 21-40, typically measuring between 0.2m and 0.3m in thickness, and turf in Boreholes 15-20, which measured up to 0.5m in thickness.
- **5.5.** No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed, and no artefactual material was recovered.

## 6. **DISCUSSION**

- 6.1. Despite the archaeological potential of the application area (see *Archaeological background*, above), the watching brief identified no archaeological remains within the area of observed ground investigation works. The absence of archaeological deposits was likely due to the narrow scope of the groundworks undertaken during the ground investigation, and therefore any interpretations of the identified deposits are tentative at this stage.
- 6.2. Alluvial deposits at the south-west of the site may indicate the presence of former streams, possibly tributaries of the River Cam.
- 6.3. Borehole 6, containing a 1.4m thick made ground deposit was located at the southwest of the site, close to the Bristol to Birmingham railway and the M5 motorway. The made ground comprised a mixture of the gravel and underlying clay naturals and was likely used to raise the ground level of this part of the field as part of the construction of either the railway or the motorway.

## 7. CA PROJECT TEAM

7.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Christopher Leonard and Josh Nowlan. This report was written by Christopher Leonard. The report illustrations were prepared by Helena Munoz-Mojado. The project archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Monica Fombellida.

## 8. **REFERENCES**

- BGS (British Geological Survey) 2023 BGS Geology Viewer https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer/ Accessed September 2023
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2019 31-36 Land at Wisloe, Slimbridge/Cambridge, Glouestershire: Heritage Assessment. CA Report CR0173\_1
- CA 2023 Land at Wisloe, Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

#### **APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**

Borehole	Context	Туре	Interpretation	Description	Thickness (m)
1	100	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.3
1	101	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
2	200	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.3
2	201	Layer	Alluvial Layer	Mid orange brown clay silt	0.2
2	202	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
3	300	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.3
3	301	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
4	400	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.3
4	401	Layer	Alluvial Layer	Mid orange brown clay silt	0.2
4	402	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
5	500	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
5	501	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
6	600	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
6	601	Layer	Made ground	Mixed redeposited sand, gravel and clay	1.4
6	602	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
7	700	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
7	701	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
8	800	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.3
8	801	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
9	900	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.3
9	901	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
10	1000	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
10	1001	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
11	1100	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.7
11	1101	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
12	1200	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.4
12	1201	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
13	1300	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	
13	1301	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
14	1400	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	
14	1401	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
15	1500	Layer	Topsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.5
15	1501	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
16	1600	Layer	Topsoil	Dark orange brown sandy silt	0.15
16	1601	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
17	1700	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.1
17	1701	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown sandy silt	0.15
17	1702	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
18	1800	Layer	Topsoil	Dark brown grey sandy silt	0.15
18	1801	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown sandy silt	0.25
18	1802	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
19	1900	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	
19	1901	Layer	Subsoil	Mid grey brown sandy silt	
19	1902	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
20	2000	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	
20	2001	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange grey sandy silt	
20	2002	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
21	2100	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2

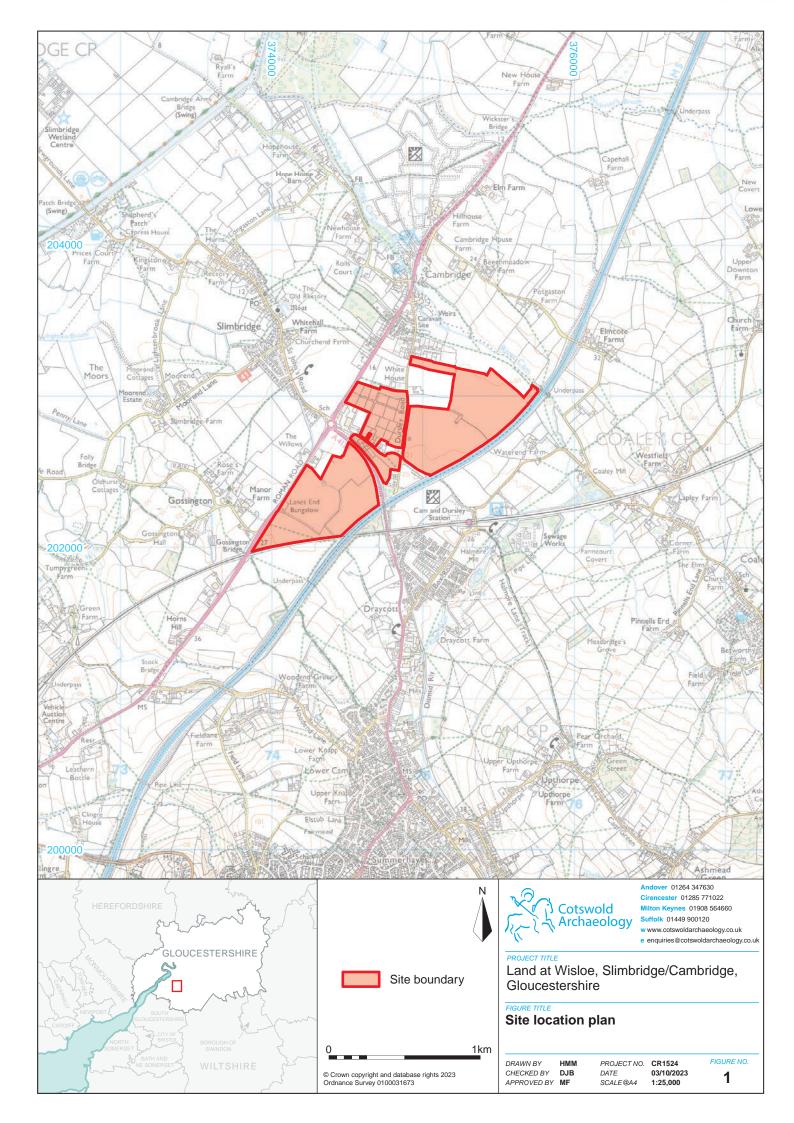
Borehole	Context	Туре	Interpretation	Description	Thickness (m)
21	2101	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
22	2200	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
22	2201	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
23	2300	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.35
23	2301	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
24	2400	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.25
24	2401	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown silty sand	0.1
24	2402	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
25	2500	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
25	2501	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown silty sand	0.15
25	2502	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
26	2600	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
26	2601	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown silty sand	0.15
26	2602	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
27	2700	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.15
27	2701	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown silty sand	0.1
27	2702	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
28	2800	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
28	2801	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown silty sand	0.15
28	2802	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
29	2900	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.15
29	2901	Layer	Subsoil	Mid orange brown silty sand	0.05
29	2902	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
30	3000	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
30	3001	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.15
30	3002	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
31	3100	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
31	3101	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.1
31	3102	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
32	3200	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.1
32	3201	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.15
32	3202	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
33	3300	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.15
33	3301	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.1
33	3302	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
34	3400	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.15
34	3401	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
35	3500	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.2
35	3501	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.1
35	3502	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
36	3600	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.15
36	3601	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.05
36	3602	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
37	3700	Layer	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	0.1
37	3701	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.1
37	3701	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
38	3800	Layer	Topsoil		
38	3801	Layer	Subsoil	Mid yellow brown sandy silt	0.2
38	3802	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	0.1
39	3900	Layer	Topsoil	Dark yellow brown sandy silt	0.25

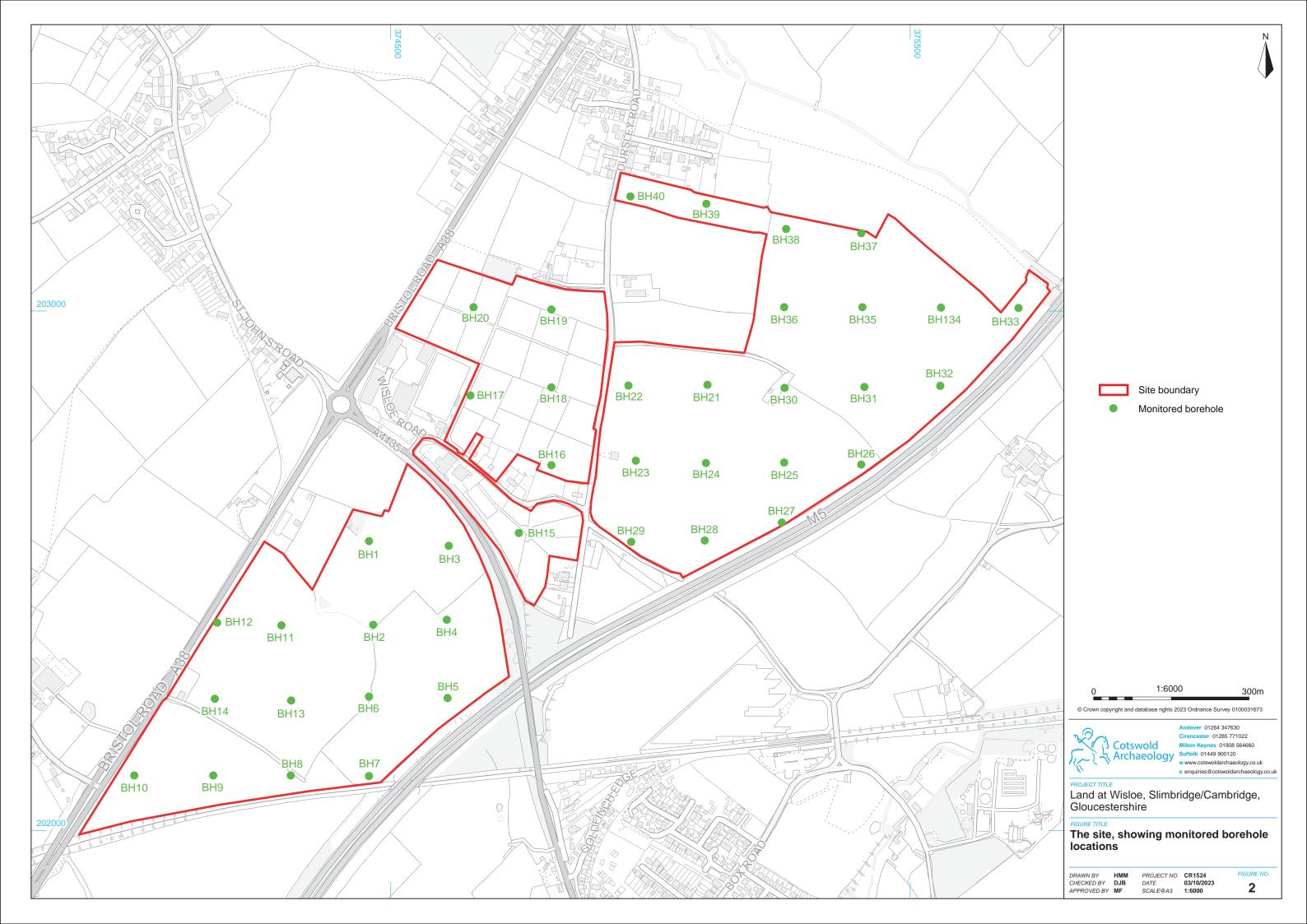
Borehole	Context	Туре	Interpretation	Description	Thickness (m)
39	3901	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	
40	4000	Layer	Topsoil	Dark yellow brown sandy silt	0.2
40	4001	Layer	Natural	Orange sand and gravel	

#### **APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM**

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Land at Wisloe			
	In September 2023, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with a borehole ground investigation survey on land at Wisloe, Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire.			
Short description	Possible alluvial deposits and an extensive area of made ground, likely associated with the construction of the Bristol to Birmingham railway line or the M5 motorway, were identified in the south-western part of the site. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were observed, and no artefactual material pre-dating the modern period was recovered.			
Project dates	dates 4-6 September 2023			
Project type	Watching brief			
Previous work	Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (CA	Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (CA 2019)		
Future work	Unknown			
PROJECT LOCATION				
Site location	Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire			
Study area (m²/ha)	77 ha			
Site co-ordinates	374661 202894			
PROJECT CREATORS				
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology			
Project brief originator	N/A			
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology			
Project Manager	Monica Fombellida			
Project Supervisor	Christopher Leonard and Josh Nowlan			
MONUMENT TYPE	None			
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	None		
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)		
Paper	Museum in the Park, Stroud	Trench recording sheets		
Digital	Museum in the Park, Stroud Archaeology Data Service (ADS)	Digital photos, shapefiles		
BIBLIOGRAPHY				

Cotswold Archaeology 2023 Land at Wisloe, Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Watching Brief CA Report CR1524\_1







Core taken from Borehole 15



Core taken from Borehole 20



Arisings from core of Borehole 18



Core taken from Borehole 39





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Land at Wisloe, Slimbridge/Cambridge, Gloucestershire

# FIGURE TITLE Photographs

DRAWN BY HMM CHECKED BY DJB APPROVED BY MF

 PROJECT NO.
 CR1524

 DATE
 03/10/2023

 SCALE@A3
 NA

FIGURE NO. 3



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