

Reading GreenPark Village Clembins geotechnical works monitoring



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



August 2007

**Client: Tom Hassall
on behalf of St Edward Homes**

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Prepared by: Robin Bashford
Position: Project Officer
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Checked by: Richard Brown
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: August 2007

Approved by: Richard Brown
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: August 2007

Signed 

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Oxford Archaeology

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Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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**READING GREENPARK VILLAGE, ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF A GEOTECHNICAL
INVESTIGATION AT CLEMBIN'S SITE. READING, BERKSHIRE.***WATCHING BRIEF***CONTENTS**

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Fig. 1: Test Pit location map

SUMMARY

In June 2007, Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the excavation of 12 geotechnical test pits in advance of Phase III Construction at GreenPark Village, Reading. The area covered by the test pits is the Clembins Site and was defined by Kirton's Farm Road to the south; the Reading and Basingstoke railway line to the west; a former gravel quarry pit (now a lake) to the east; and a field boundary to the north.

The deposits encountered within the test pits indicated that across the area natural gravels had been significantly truncated. Some truncation is clearly due to modern activity (borrow pits for the construction of the railway, and impacts related to the Clembins remediation site). Some evidence of truncation was undated and may represent archaeological feature fills.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In June 2007 OA carried out a watching brief at Reading GreenPark Village - Clembins Site, Berkshire. The Watching Brief was commissioned by Tom Hassall on behalf of St Edwards Homes. A planning application is currently under submission for development of the site as part of the GreenPark Village. St Edwards Homes has commissioned Oxford Archaeology (OA), to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA - OA 2007) to assess the cultural heritage implications of the proposed GreenPark Village (also known as Green Park Phase 3) development. This has been completed.

1.1.2 The archaeological Watching Brief on geotechnical test pit investigations has been carried out as 'best practice' in order to continue to obtain information on the potential for archaeological remains where the investigations of other disciplines related to the development proposal offers the opportunity.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The investigation site area is located within the ancient parish of Shinfield, c. 2.5 km south of Reading city centre and c. 1 km south of the River Kennet. The site is bounded by the Basingstoke to Reading railway line on its western side. The road from Small Mead Farm running east-west to Kirton Farm Cottages forms the southern boundary, the western part of which also demarcates the parish boundary between Shinfield and Burghfield. The existing Phase 1 and 2 Green Park developments defines the rest of its southern extent. The northern boundary is formed by a hedged field boundary which tapers to meet the southern boundary to the east. The M4 motorway lies c. 500 m to the south.

1.2.2 The area of proposed development is situated on the southern edge of the River Kennet floodplain at c. 38 m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The Site is flat. The geology is Valley Gravel (BGS Sheet 268). Extensive OA excavations immediately east and south east of the site (Moore and Jennings 1992, Brossler et al 2004, Brossler et al forthcoming) have revealed that the natural gravel is capped in places by red/brown fine-grained loam (Moore and Jennings 1992, 4). Evaluation just to the south of the site (OA 2001) has demonstrated some potential for alluvium, in places capped with redeposited gravels. The gravel is overlain by soils of the Loddon series that consist of poorly drained gley soils (Jarvis 1968, 67-69). The geology map of the area (BGS 268) shows a broad east-west band of alluvial deposits associated with the floodplain of the River Kennet immediately north of the site. The area is prone to flooding in winter due to active streams in the area (Moore and Jennings 1992, 4-5).

1.2.3 Much of the of the site has been quarried for gravel, represented by a large lake.

1.3 **Archaeological and historical background**

1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been the subject of a separate detailed desk study, the results of which are presented in OA 2007. This is not repeated in this report.

2 **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

2.1 **Scope of fieldwork**

2.1.1 The monitoring consisted of observing and recording twelve geotechnical test pits across the site. Test pit locations are shown on Fig.1.

2.2 **Finds**

2.2.1 No finds were recovered during the monitoring. Modern finds were noted as evidence of the recent date of deposits but were not retained.

3 **RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS**

3.1 **Description of Deposits**

3.1.1 Deposits have been banded into six basic stratigraphic units and are presented in table form related to each test pit and described in detail below.

- Deposit 1: Possible alluvium - pale brownish grey sandy clay with orange brown mottling.
- Deposit 2: Organic deposit underlying Deposit 3 - mid brown silty clay (organic material throughout).
- Deposit 3: Feature fill?? - predominantly mid-dark grey silty clay with an average of 10-15% gravel inclusions.
- Deposit 4: Organic deposit underlying Deposit 5 - mid-dark brown silty clay (organic material throughout).
- Deposit 5: Probable 19th century landfill - similar in composition to Deposit 3 but with occasional brick fragments, timbers and metal objects.
- Deposit 6: 20th century landfill - very mixed, 20th century material throughout.

Table showing deposits present in Test pits (locations shown on Fig.1)

TEST PIT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G1	H	I	J	K	L
	<i>depth (in metres) below ground level to top of deposit (if present)</i>											
Deposit 6 - 20th century	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Deposit 5 19th century			1.60				1.10					
Deposit 4 19th (?) century			2.50				2.45					
Deposit 3 Undated fill material	0.65	1.40			0.80	1.10		0.60				0.80
Deposit 2 Undated fill material					2.00			2.00				
Deposit 1 Undated alluvium				1.40								
Gravel	1.60	3.20	2.70	2.90	2.30		2.75	2.30				
Lambeth Group Clay						3.30			4.30+	4.20	4.30	3.40

4 TEST PIT INTERPRETATION

- 4.1.1 Test Pits C and G: The nineteenth century gravel terrace truncation and deposition recorded in Test Pits C and G is likely to be evidence of in-filled borrow pits for the construction of the Great Western Railway and Kirton Farm Road railway bridge. The construction of this section of railway dates to sometime between 1835 and 1867 when the 1st edition OS map shows the railway to be constructed and indicates 'marshland' in areas adjacent to the railway and bridge embankment. These correspond to the locations of test pits C and G.
- 4.1.2 Test Pits I, J and K: These Test Pits evidenced bulk infilling of a modern quarry/lake. Between 1961 and 1976 a large quarry appears in the north-western part of the site (OA 2007). Comparison of the 1991 Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Scale Map (Fig.1) and recent aerial photos (OA 2007, Fig.8) show that in recent years the north-west corner of this quarry/lake has been filled in. This corresponds to the location of Test Pits I, J and K.
- 4.1.3 Test Pits A, B, E, F, H and L: Deposits in these Test Pits represent gravel truncation and infilling. However the deposits contained no identifiable modern artefacts and were not visually clearly recent depositions (i.e very mixed or loose). The deposits are reminiscent of feature (large pit/waterhole) fills recorded in the Bronze Age sites

to the south and south east (*pers comm.* R.Brown and Brossler et al 2004/5) and should be regarded as potentially of archaeological significance.

5 GENERAL INTERPRETATION

5.1.1 The observations have shown that although some significant modern impacts are likely to have removed the potential for surviving archaeological deposits, these are not uniform across the area. Localised fill deposits identified during the watching brief were not dated and are not proven as modern.

APPENDICES

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Reading GreenPark Village - Geotechnical Investigation Monitoring

Site code:REGCBG07

Grid reference:

Type of evaluation: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: June 2007 - 3 days

Area of site: N/A

Summary of results: Watching brief during the excavation of 12 geotechnical test pits in advance construction at GreenPark Village, Reading. The deposits encountered within the test pits indicated that across the area natural gravels had been significantly truncated. Some truncation is clearly due to modern activity (borrow pits for the construction of the railway, and impacts related to the Clembins remediation site). Some evidence of truncation was undated and may represent archaeological feature fills.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Museum of Reading in due course, under an agreed accession number:



Plate 1
Test pit E showing undated, possibly archaeological fills



Plate 2
Test Pit I showing deep modern dumped deposits

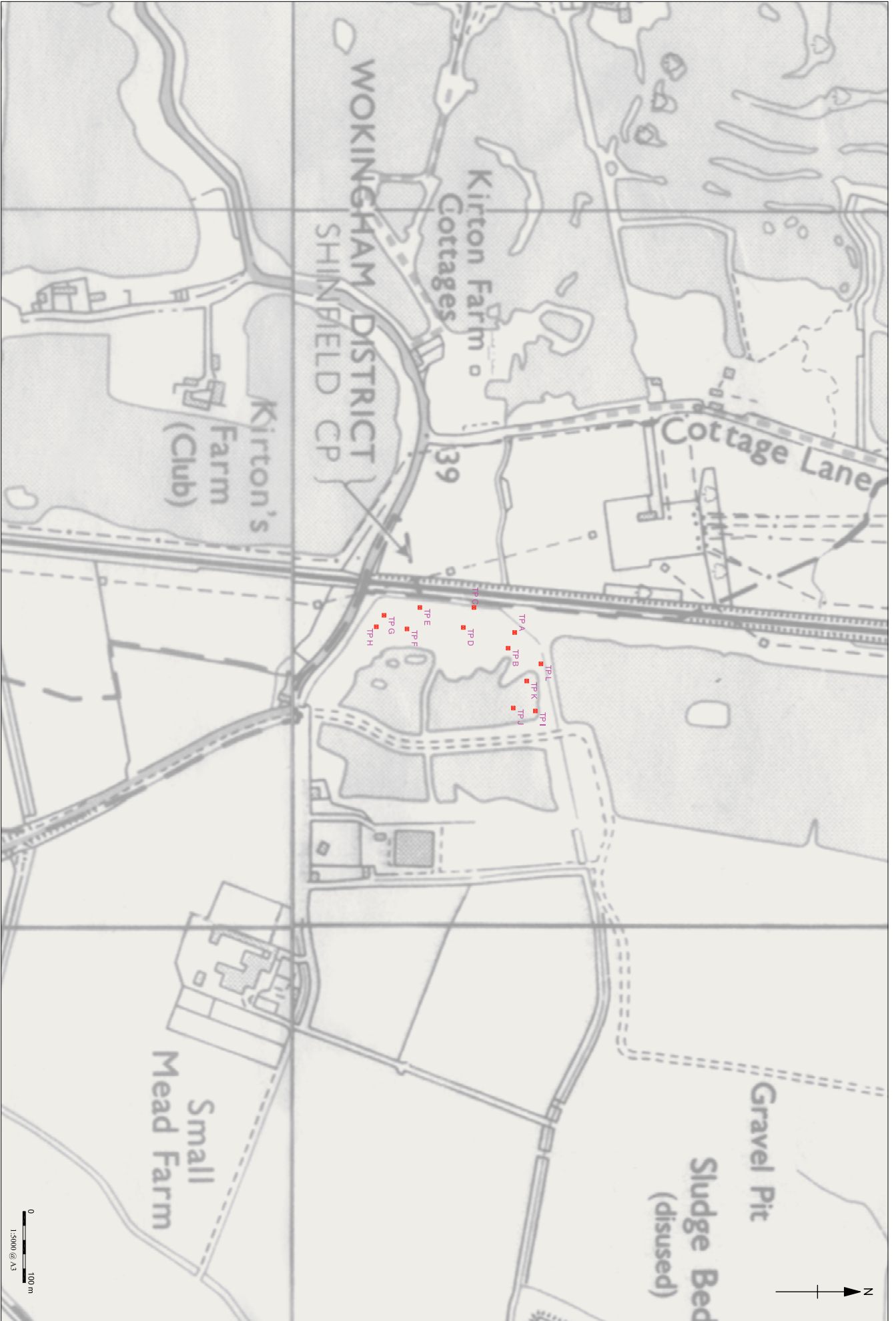


Fig 1: Test Pit Location Plan