



University Science Waste Area Oxford University Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



January 2015

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University Science Waste Area

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Mike Sims

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Summary

Between the 5th and 7th of January 2015, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks associated with the construction of a new University Science Waste Store sited adjacent to the Old Observatory and Observation Tower and abutting University Parks (NGR: SP 516 071).

The watching brief observed that the area of the proposed development and associated works was sited on a terrace of modern made ground, possibly arising from the construction of the buildings immediately to the south. The depth of impact was such that archaeologically significant layers were not exposed.

1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was commissioned by the Estates Services, Oxford University to undertake an archaeological watching brief of groundworks associated with the construction of a new waste store located adjacent and to the north of the Old Observatory and observation tower.
- 1.1.2 This work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (14/00081/FUL; 24 April 2014). A brief set by David Radford, Planning Archaeologist for Oxford City Council, details the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition (D. Radford, 2014), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by OA outlines how necessary requirements will be met (OA, 2014).
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies (Communities and Local Government 2010).
- 1.1.4 The site is located within the grounds of the university science area and is accessed via Darlington link off South Parks Road. The site is centred upon NGR SP 516 071 (Fig. 1). The area of proposed development consisted of tarmac hardstanding and bicycle racks located to the north of the Old Observatory and south of University Parks (Fig. 2).
- 1.1.5 The proposed site was an area of level ground raised between 0.6m and 0.7m above the level of the University Parks Nursery to the north and the croquet lawns to the east. The site is located on a geological boundary of Northmoor sand and gravels and alluvium silt and clay (Geology of Britain viewer, <http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer/>).

Archaeological and Historic Background

- 1.1.6 This site is of interest because it is located within an extensive prehistoric landscape of middle Neolithic and early Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments. A double ring ditch was excavated at the Rex Richards Building in 1993, 16m to the south east of the application site (Parkinson et al. 1996; UAD Event Nos 306, 307, 308). A further ring ditch located over a likely earlier flat grave was partly excavated at the Gene Function Centre site in 2002, 10m to the south-west of the application site (Boston et al. 2003; UAD Event No 437). The site is also located within a landscape of Iron Age and Roman rural settlement and associated field systems

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during groundworks that had the potential to impact upon archaeological deposits. These operations included the diversion of existing services, excavation of new service trenches and ground reduction.

3 DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITS

- 3.1.1 The majority of the groundworks consisted of the removal of the tarmac hardstanding (6) and the upper 0.1m of the underlying stone hardcore (7), in order to expose pre-existing concrete pads. No archaeologically significant deposits were encountered.
- 3.1.2 In addition to the above works two service trenches, one each for the water and electric connections were dug in order to connect the new building with existing services. To the north of the site, a trench measuring 0.25m wide and up to 0.7m was dug connecting with an existing water pipe (Fig.2, Fig. 3, Sections 1 and 2).
- 3.1.3 At the northern end of the trench within the University Parks Nursery, a layer of reddish yellow-brown clayey silt mixed with small gravels (3) was observed at the base of the trench. This was overlaid by a 0.25m deep layer of yellowish grey-brown clayey silt (2) which produced fragments of modern frogged bricks. This was sealed by a compact layer of grey-brown clayey loam, 0.12m in depth (5). Laid directly over layer 5 was a 0.05m deep layer of gravel ballast (4) forming a bed for the gravel nursery yard surface (1).
- 3.1.4 At the southern end of the trench a layer of yellowish grey-brown clayey silt (9) producing fragments of modern frogged bricks was exposed in the base of the trench. This is a probable continuation of layer 2. Above this was a 0.4m deep layer of dark orange brown clayey loam (8). This also produced fragments of bricks. The stone base 7 for the tarmac 8, had been laid directly over this deposit.
- 3.1.5 A trench for an electric cable was excavated from the east side of the new build, before turning south and connecting to a distribution panel in a nearby building (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, Sections 3 and 4).
- 3.1.6 At the western extent of this trench, the stratigraphy exposed was similar to that within section 2 observed at the northern end of the site. Fragments of plastic were found. As the cable trench turned south it was wholly contained within an existing raised bed bordering the croquet lawns. Only two contexts were recorded, continuations of layers 8 and 9. Lenses of disturbed gravel ballast were observed within the base of Layer 9 within this length of trenching.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The composition of the contexts recorded, together with the dating evidence recovered and observations of the difference in levels between the development area and the surrounding parkland suggest that the area has been raised forming a level terrace abutting the modern building developments to the south, east and west. The dating of the material recovered, brick, plastic and metal artefacts dating to the last half of the 20th century, from within layers 2, 8 and 9, suggest that this terracing may be contemporary with these buildings and the deposits may represent material resulting from the excavation of their sub-basements.
- 4.1.2 It is probable that layer 3 exposed within the Nursery trench may represent the top of the underlying archaeological deposits, however its composition suggests that it has been worked and it may represent an earlier phase of the University Parks, rather than an archaeologically significant layer.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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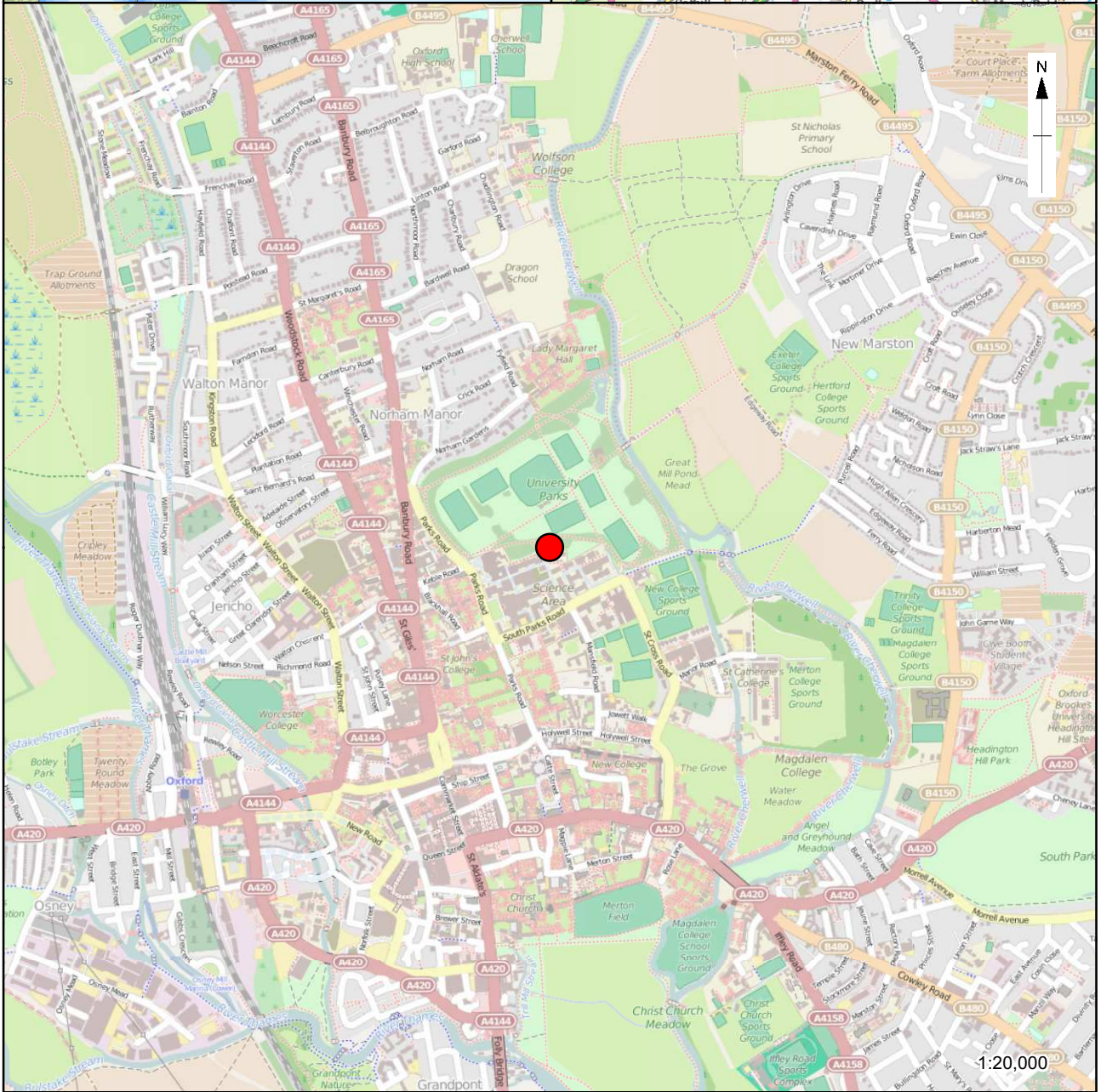
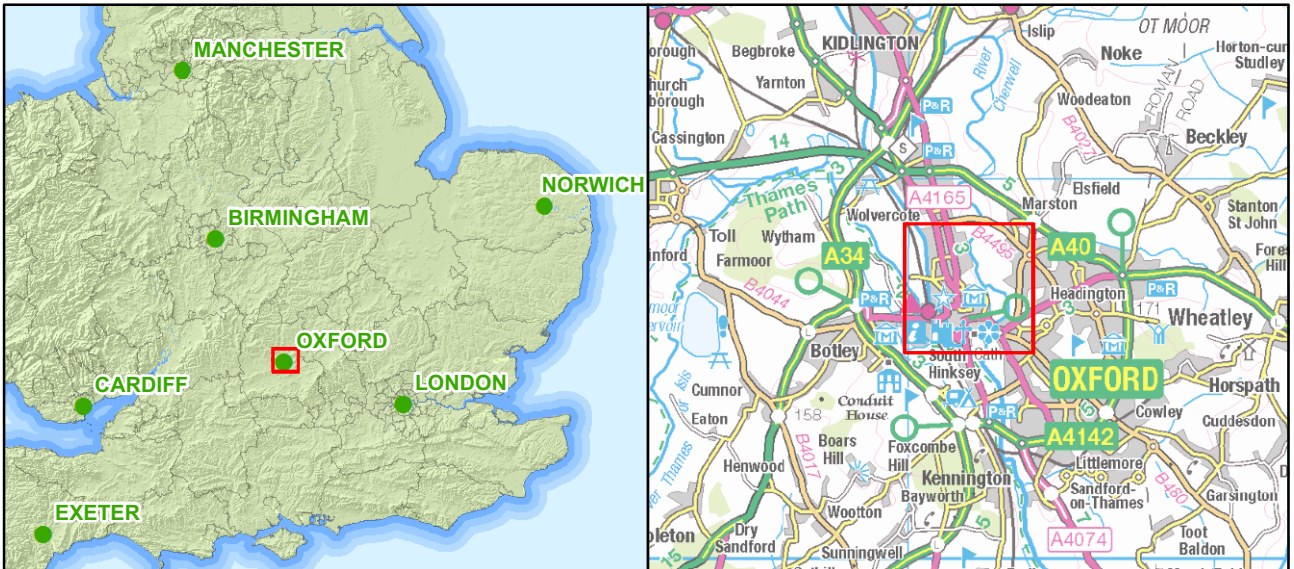
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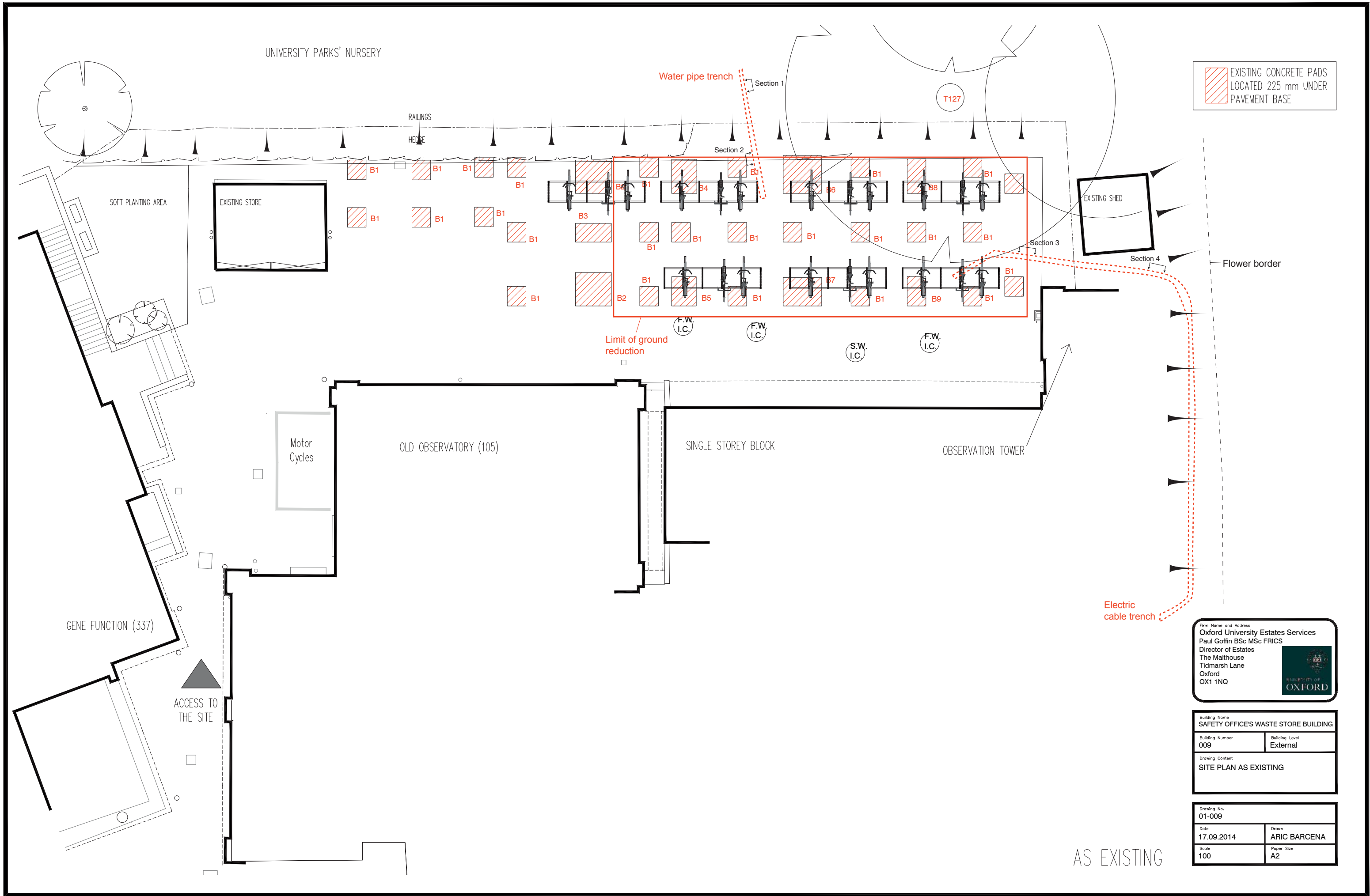
OA, 2014 University Science Waste Store, Oxford University, Oxford: Written Scheme
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Figure 1: Site location



AS EXISTING

Firm Name and Address
Oxford University Estates Services
 Paul Goffin BSc MSc FRICS
 Director of Estates
 The Malthouse
 Tidmarsh Lane
 Oxford
 OX1 1NQ



Building Name SAFETY OFFICE'S WASTE STORE BUILDING	
Building Number 009	Building Level External
Drawing Content SITE PLAN AS EXISTING	

Drawing No. 01-009	
Date 17.09.2014	Drawn ARIC BARCENA
Scale 100	Paper Size A2

Figure 2: Site plan

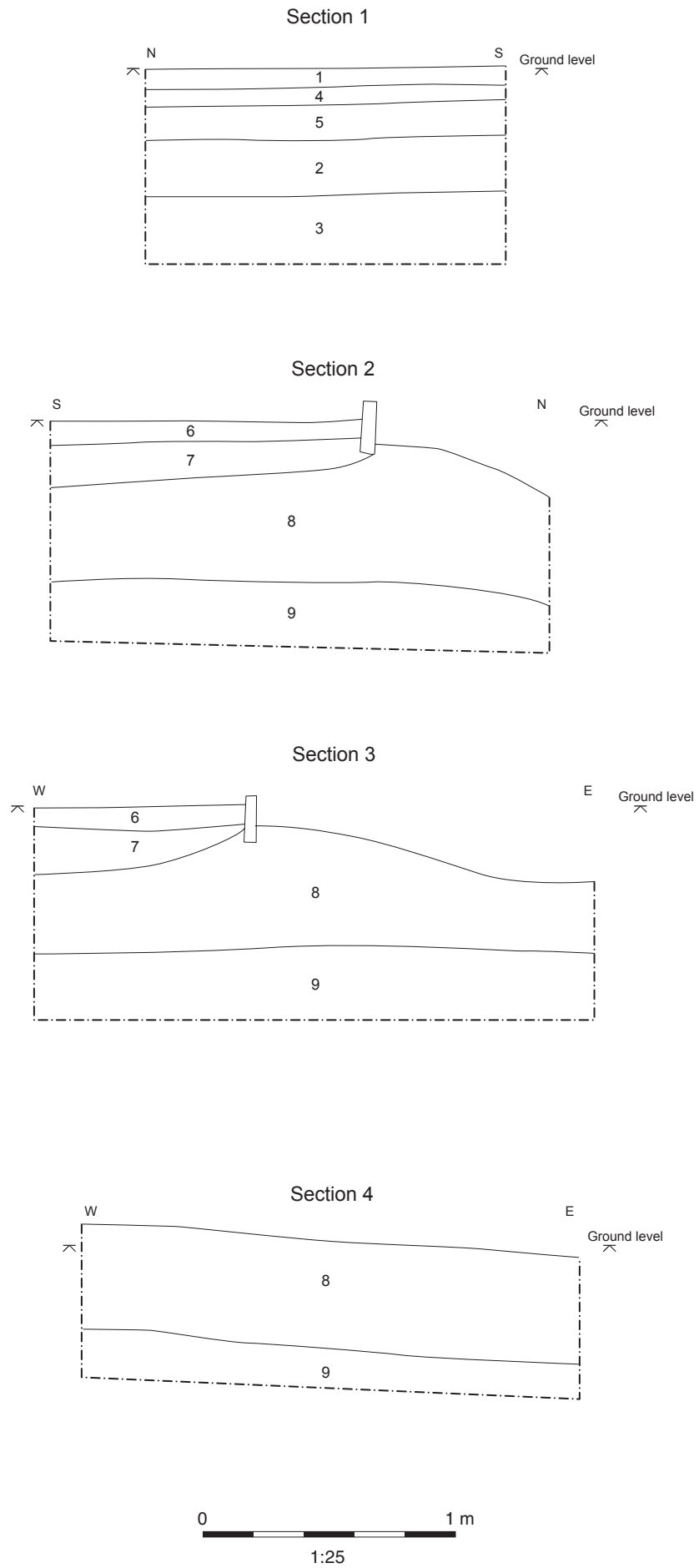


Figure 3: Sections



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