

Weald Manor Farm, Bampton, Oxfordshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report




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Weald Manor Farm, Bampton, Oxfordshire

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology undertook an evaluation within the former farm yard area of Weald Manor Farm, Bampton, in March 2016. Three trenches were excavated. No archaeological deposits or features were present. Contamination that had stained the clayey geology was evident within each trench. This related to the use of the former farm buildings. A modern ditch and pit were recorded in Trenches 1 and 3.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background and scope

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the Trustees of the John Colville Will Trust to undertake an evaluation of the site of a proposed development of six domestic dwellings replacing former agricultural structures to the rear of Weald Manor Farm, Bampton, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken to inform the West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Authority in advance of determination of a Planning Application (15/02150/FUL). Prior to the works a detailed brief was not issued, although discussions with the Planning Archaeologist for West Oxfordshire within Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) established the requirement and scope for the field evaluation. OA produced and issued a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) based upon these discussions detailing how the works would be undertaken (OA 2016). This was approved ahead of the fieldwork by Hugh Coddington, Planning Archaeologist for OCC.
- 1.1.3 The site boundary encloses approximately 3,300m². The evaluation scope comprised a 4% sample of this area equating to two trenches measuring approximately 30m by 1.6m and one trench measuring 22m by 1.6m (Fig. 2). The trenches were arranged to cover the main impacts of the proposed new building footprints whilst avoiding an existing overhead power line and the remaining hard standing surfaces.
- 1.1.4 The field evaluation was completed 14th-15th March 2016. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2014), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF Para 128) and OCC specifications for field evaluation.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 Weald Manor Farm is located on the western side of Weald Street, within the rural countryside to the south-west of the small market town of Bampton. The evaluation area is located to the rear of Weald Manor Farm and set within the former yard and barn area centred on SP 3105 0257 (Figs 1 and 2). Three barns dating from the 19th and 20th centuries were demolished, along with the removal of the associated hard surfaces, in advance of the evaluation. A single small 20th-century barn remained, along with a hard standing access. The site is bounded by grass fields, trees and Weald Street and lies at approximately 70m aOD (above Ordnance Datum).
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is Oxford Clay Formation And West Walton Formation consisting of mudstone, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 156 to 165 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (bgs.ac.uk). To the east of this, the core of

Bampton lies on a limestone gravel terrace which forms the north bank of the Upper Thames.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The Bampton area has been the subject of a series of historical and archaeological investigations, carried out by Professor John Blair of the Queen's College, Oxford (Blair in Tiller and Darkes 2010, 30-31) and by Oxford Archaeology. The relevant information is summarised here and is reproduced from the WSI.
- 1.3.2 Bampton has its origins as an Anglo-Saxon religious community with royal connections, whose importance continued into the medieval period (Blair 1994). It is mentioned in documentary sources as early as AD 614, and later the presence of a minster is mentioned in AD 956-8 and again in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when it appears to be one of the richest settlements in the county.
- 1.3.3 The original layout of Bampton is centred on two points. The triangular market place, with three converging streets, fronting a network of lanes to the rear, and the church of St Mary that stands on the site of the Saxon Minster Church. The Minster Church stood within a large precinct defined by a substantial boundary ditch, the northern part of which has been reasonably well defined, and is still echoed by the line of some roads, particularly Landells. The boundary between Bampton and Weald ran, in the 18th and 19th centuries, up Cheapside from the Talbot Inn in the market place, along Church Street, and around the west side of the churchyard, bringing the Deanery, Churchgate House (the former south vicarage house), and much of the south-west part of the town into Weald, but leaving the church, Bampton Manor House, and all of Broad Street in Bampton.

Prehistoric Period

- 1.3.4 A large Bronze Age ring ditch or barrow lay west of the church, and the Deanery was constructed within its limits (Blair 1992, 55). Two trenches excavated in 1997 in Bampton churchyard, revealed a ring ditch directly underlying the south transept (CBA 1997; Church Archaeology 1999). Three superimposed burials of Saxon date overlay the inner lip of the Bronze Age ditch. The ring ditch is a smaller version of the one previously found to surround the Deanery, and it now appears likely that the Church and Deanery Chapel were laid out in relation to a line of barrows.
- 1.3.5 A pit and a ditch of the Earliest Iron Age (800-600 BC) were found in excavations west of Church View (Mayes *et al.* 2000).

Roman Period

- 1.3.6 Roman activity is suggested by finds from the Ashton Road area around Calais Farm where there may have been continuous settlement from Iron Age to AD 4th century, with Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon inhumations also found. Roman pottery, animal bones, and coins were found in 1893-4 in pits during gravel-working opposite Calais Farm (HER 1531). A Roman wayside altar and possible settlement located south of Bampton Knaps Farm were found in 1985-87 (OAU 1988)

Saxon Period

- 1.3.7 Radiocarbon dating of skulls in a roadside ditch adjacent to the churchyard gave one date in the mid-9th century, evidence of mid-Saxon burial adjacent to a 'minster' known to have existed from documentary evidence by AD1069. Early or middle Saxon sherds

were recovered from the excavations west of Church View some 170m south of the church, as well as sherds of imported pottery (North French Blackware) of 8th-9th century date (Mayes *et al.* 2000, 280-283). The presence of high status pottery is further evidence for a mid-Saxon minster.

- 1.3.8 A large boundary ditch, believed to have surrounded the minster, was excavated at the north-west corner of the churchyard and is believed to have run north beneath the road just west of Cobb House. Pottery was of late 11th century date, suggesting that it was infilled by around AD1100, but also included earlier sherds (Blair 1988, 89-90). This ditch indicates that Cobb House lay within the late Saxon minster enclosure.
- 1.3.9 A gully, ditch and large pit of late Saxon date were also found at the excavations west of Church View, 250m south of the site (Mayes *et al.* 2000).
- 1.3.10 A market is mentioned in Domesday Book at Bampton, and a royal centre was present, probably west of the Highmoor Brook (Blair in Tiller and Darkes 2010, 30-31).

Saxo-Norman Period

- 1.3.11 St Mary's church probably dates from as early as AD1070, and is believed to overlie a late Saxon predecessor (Blair 1992, 56). The Deanery is of late 11th or early 12th century origin, and it is suggested that the church enclosure was enlarged when the Deanery was built, hence the infilling of the earlier western boundary ditch (Blair 1988, 89-91). Known dates for undisturbed burials in the churchyard start in the late 12th century.
- 1.3.12 Excavations in 1997 (CBA 1998) on Church Street revealed a small rectangular sunken building of two phases, flanked on its west side by the terminal of a north-south ditch of 11th century date. Similarly late Saxon and medieval features were found during an evaluation on land at the rear of the Eagle in 1999 (Poore and Hardy 1999).
- 1.3.13 Further ditches and pits of the 11th-13th century were found west of Church View to the south (Mayes *et al.* 2000), confirming the extensive nature of occupation of the area at this time.
- 1.3.14 Below Londis in the Market Square, a 2005 watching brief recorded medieval and post-medieval pits, and possible 11th century structural remains (Moore 2005).
- 1.3.15 Archaeological investigations at Cobb House in 2014 revealed an area of densely intercutting features, including two pits of the late Saxon period; a range of medieval pits, mostly of later 13th or 14th century date, a concentration of features and activity of the later 18th century; and a Victorian sewer truncating all earlier deposits. The character of the finds is of domestic waste, such as might be expected in a tenement at the centre of the settlement. The late Saxon remains included non-local pottery from St Neots in Cambridgeshire and a probable harness buckle. The medieval remains included a stylus, while the post-medieval finds include a hinged spur and a sherd of North Devon ware, which had been traded well beyond its normal range.

Medieval Period

- 1.3.16 In the early 14th century a castle was built west of the Highmoor Brook, probably overlying the earlier royal centre (Blair 1988, 91-3), and it appears that the northern church enclosure boundary was recut and reinforced at this time (*ibid.*, 89-90). Although the site west of Church View was given over to quarries at this time, the Cobb House site lay within the church enclosure at the heart of the settlement throughout the medieval period.

Post-medieval Period

- 1.3.17 Activity is likely to have continued during the early post-medieval period, as the adjacent ecclesiastical buildings remained in use. At the excavation on land west of Church View, a late 15th or 16th century barn was found (Mayes *et al.* 2000, 271-6).
- 1.3.18 There are a number of listed buildings within Bampton which reflect its later rebuilding and development. Further afield, two farmhouses along Weald Street are designated Grade II listed, Back House dates to the late C18/early C19 (Listed Building 1053541, Historic Environment Record HER 25126) and The Old Farmhouse originating in early/mid C17 has later alterations and extensions (Listed Building 1199033, HER 25128). Weald Manor at the junction of Weald Street and Clanfield Road is Grade II* listed with origins in the 17th century or earlier with a complicated history of alterations and additions through to the early 20th century.
- 1.3.19 From the 1830s and 1840s there were a few outlying farmhouses and cottages, and some existing farmhouses were rebuilt, among them Weald Manor Farm in 1884 according to a documented date stone (Baggs *et al.* 1996, 17-21).

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aim of the evaluation was to identify the presence and/or absence of archaeological remains at the site that will be impacted by the development. To do this the individual aims were to:

- (i) identify and characterise any archaeological remains (if present) or deposits that the proposed development may remove or impact during future works,
- (ii) establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains,
- (iii) determine and confirm the character of any remains present, without compromising any deposits that may merit detailed investigation,
- (iv) determine or estimate the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise,
- (v) characterise any underlying archaeological strata down to undisturbed geology without significantly impacting upon significant younger (overlying) deposits where possible,
- (vi) determine the geo-archaeological and palaeo-environmental potential of any archaeological deposits encountered,
- (vii) establish what archaeological remains/deposits maybe affected by any proposed development,
- (viii) make available the results of the investigation to inform subsequent mitigation strategies,
- (ix) produce a factual report, full archive and HER data submission,
- (x) disseminate the results of the investigation at a level appropriate to their importance.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The three trenches were surveyed and marked out using GPS prior to the excavation of the trenches. During the setting out it became clear that Trenches 2 and 3 were obstructed by the existing hard standing and a stock pile of crush material from the demolition. Therefore, these trenches were moved slightly remaining as close to the original locations but avoiding the obstructions.

2.2.2 Excavation of the trenches was undertaken using a JCB Sitemaster machine to remove the non-archaeological overburden material to the top of archaeological horizon or, in the absence of this, the surface of the natural geology. The trenches were then investigated and recorded following standard OA practices. Hugh Coddington visited the site and inspected the trenches and confirmed the results prior to backfilling.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 Detailed trench descriptions are given below in section 3.4. A tabulated list of individual contexts and dimensions is presented by trench in Appendix A.

3.2 General ground conditions

- 3.2.1 In advance of the fieldwork a site visit established that the ground was reasonably dry and suitable for machine works. However, five days previous to the fieldwork a considerable amount of rain fell, resulting in saturated ground leaving standing water across much of the site. Although this hampered the evaluation, much of the water was sufficiently removed off site using a pump, allowing adequate visibility and access to the trenches.

3.3 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 No archaeological features or deposits pre-dating the 19th century were encountered within the evaluation trenches.

3.4 Trench descriptions

Trench 1

- 3.4.1 A light brown silty clay natural (102) was exposed across the extent of the trench approximately 0.36m below the current ground level. This was stained to a greenish blue hue coinciding with the location of the former agricultural building. Directly overlying 102 was a mid brown silty clay subsoil (101) below a dark brown silty clay loam topsoil (101).
- 3.4.2 Two modern features were recorded cut from the surface level into the topsoil. Ditch 105 was recorded partially exposed in the southern end of the trench. This was also recorded in Trench 3 (304) and was clearly visible as an earthwork leading into a functioning boundary and drainage ditch to the east. Only the top of the sloping north edge was exposed and it was backfilled with late 20th century debris mixed within a humic soil (106). In the middle of the trench a 3.6m wide cut (103) was recorded. This had been cut through the topsoil and subsoil and was backfilled with topsoil mixed with demolition debris (104). This debris also sealed the topsoil horizon as a 0.10m thick layer beyond the extent of the trench. This feature and deposit derived from the demolition and removal of the former agricultural building.

Trench 2

- 3.4.3 A light brown silty clay natural (203) was exposed across the extent of the trench approximately 0.46m below the current ground level. Along the majority of the trench this was stained to a greenish blue hue coinciding with the location of the former agricultural building. Directly overlying this was a mid brown silty clay subsoil (202) overlain by a dark brown silty clay topsoil (201).
- 3.4.4 Two modern 'features' (203 and 205) resulting from the demolition of the former agricultural structure were present within the SW end of the trench are likely to have been foundation bases that were removed and backfilled with debris from the demolition. These and the topsoil layer (201) were sealed below a 0.15m thick layer of

dark grey brown silty clay with crushed concrete and brick that was spread over the area resulting from the demolition.

Trench 3

- 3.4.5 A light brown silty clay natural with gravel patches (303) was exposed across the extent of the trench up to 0.5m below the current ground level. This was overlain by a mid brown silty clay subsoil (302) below a dark brown silty clay topsoil (301).
- 3.4.6 Three modern features, a pit (306), a post hole (308) and a ditch (304), were cut into the topsoil horizon. The ditch (304) formed the southern boundary of the old farm yard with steep sloping sides and was only seen within the east end of the trench. It had been filled in with modern building material and soil. Part of the trench at the eastern end was not excavated due to the presence of sheet asbestos containing material within the backfill of this ditch. This ditch is the same as that recorded in Trench 1 (105) and continues to the east towards Weald Street as an active boundary and drainage ditch.
- 3.4.7 The post hole (308) was filled with stone and demolition material (309). The pit (306) was a large, possibly circular, feature at least 4m in diameter partially exposed within the western end of the trench. Due to the obvious presence of modern artefacts this was not hand excavated beyond the levels exposed by the machine excavation. The pit was filled with a dark grey brown silty clay (307) with glass bottles, pottery and metal suggesting a late 19th – 20th century date. The distinction between this deposit and the topsoil layer (301) was rather indistinct. A layer of mixed topsoil and demolition debris (300) resulting from the removal of the former agricultural buildings sealed the topsoil horizon (301) the pit.

3.5 Finds summary

- 3.5.1 A sample range of 19th and 20th century artefacts was recovered from the deposits encountered in Trench 3 to confirm the modern origin of the features and layers. A detailed list and identification of these is presented in Appendix B.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation and discussion

- 4.1.1 No archaeological remains were present within the excavated evaluation trenches. With the exception of areas of staining, little truncation or disturbance of the underlying natural geology was evident. This suggests that the negative results area a good indicator for the absence of archaeological remains within the footprints of the former buildings and the proposed new structures.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	SE-NW
No archaeology present. Topsoil and subsoil overlay natural silty clay. Modern backfilled boundary ditch and demolition debris present over the footprint of the former farm building.					Avg. depth (m)	0.35m
					Width (m)	1.60m
					Length (m)	22m
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
103	Cut	3.60	0.35	Foundation/demolition cut of building	-	-
104	Fill	-	-	Backfill of demolished building	-	-
105	Cut	1.2m	0.35	Boundary ditch	-	-
106	Fill	-	-	Backfill of boundary ditch	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
No archaeology present. Topsoil and subsoil overlay natural silty clay. The natural was stained within the footprint of the former farm building and two sub rectangular features related to this building were exposed. A mixed layer of demolition debris and topsoil capped the topsoil horizon.					Avg. depth (m)	0.47m
					Width (m)	1.60m
					Length (m)	28m
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.20	Modern Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.13	Topsoil	-	-
202	Layer	-	0.14	Subsoil	-	-
203	Cut	0.40	0.47	Modern feature	-	-
204	Fill	-	-	Fill of modern feature	-	-
205	Cut	0.40	0.47	Modern feature	-	-
206	Fill	-	-	Fill of modern feature	-	-
207	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 3						
General description				Orientation	E-W	
No archaeology present. Topsoil and subsoil overlay a silty clay natural. A modern boundary ditch and pit were both cut through the topsoil. A layer of mixed demolition debris and soil overlay the topsoil.				Avg. depth (m)	0.50	
				Width (m)	1.60	
				Length (m)	26m	
Contexts						
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Findings	Date
300	Layer	-	0.15	Modern Topsoil	Pottery	19 th and 20 th C
301	Layer	-	0.20	Topsoil	Pottery	19 th and 20 th C
302	Layer	-	0.15	Subsoil	-	-
303	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-
304	Cut	1.2m	0.35	Boundary ditch	-	-
305	Fill	-	-	Backfill of boundary ditch	-	-
306	Cut	4m	0.50	Modern pit	-	-
307	Fill	-	-	Fill of modern pit	Pottery, CBM, Glass, Iron	19 th and 20 th C
308	Cut	0.30	0.50	Modern post hole	-	-
309	Fill	-	-	Fill of post hole	CBM, Iron	19 th and 20 th C

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

Identified by John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
301	4 sherds transfer printed ware (TPW); 1 cup sherd refined white earthenware (REFW).	1850 – 1900
302	1 brown salt glazed English stone ware (ENGS) blacking bottle rim sherd.	1820 - 1900
307	1 large teapot rim sherd English porcelain (ENPO); 1 large English stone ware (ENGS BRST) cylindrical storage jar rim sherd.	1850 – 1900

B.2 Ceramic building material

Identified by John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
307	1 fragment mortar with 2 brick impressions.	1850 – 1900
309	2 small scraps wall/floor tile corner.	1850 – 1900

B.3 Glass

Identified by Ian Scott

Context	Description	Date
307	Small vaseline jar 'Cheeseborough Manufacturing Corp Ltd., London'; Bottle 'Maurice Blake of Eynsham'; Large machine moulded bottle.	20 th century

B.4 Iron

Identified by Ian Scott

Context	Description	Date
307	Small length of structural steel tubing.	20 th century
309	Tin can base and lip fragments.	20 th century

APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

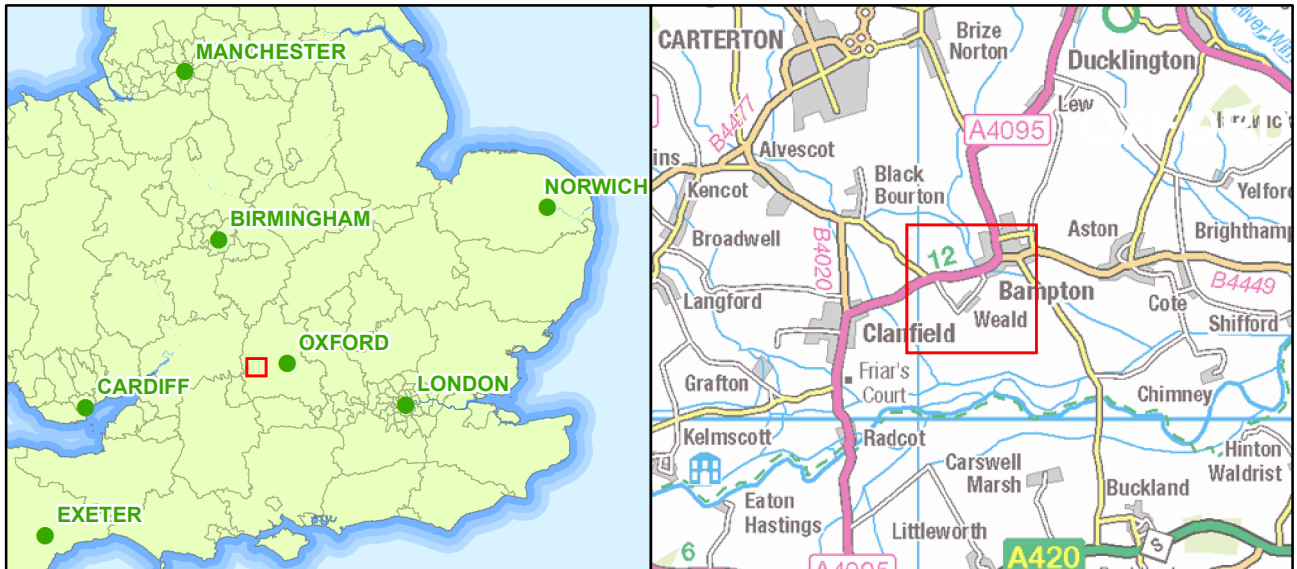
Site name:	Weald Manor Farm, Bampton, Oxfordshire
Site code:	BAWMF 16
Grid reference:	SP 3105 0257
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	14th and 15th March 2016
Area of site :	Site area approximately 3,300m ² Evaluation comprised 2 x 30m trenches and 1 x 20m trench

Summary of results:

Oxford Archaeology undertook an evaluation within the former farm yard area of Weald Manor Farm, Bampton, in March 2016. Three trenches were excavated. No archaeological deposits or features were present. Contamination that had stained the clayey geology was evident within each trench. This related to the use of the former farm buildings. A modern ditch and pit were recorded in Trenches 1 and 3.

Location of archive:

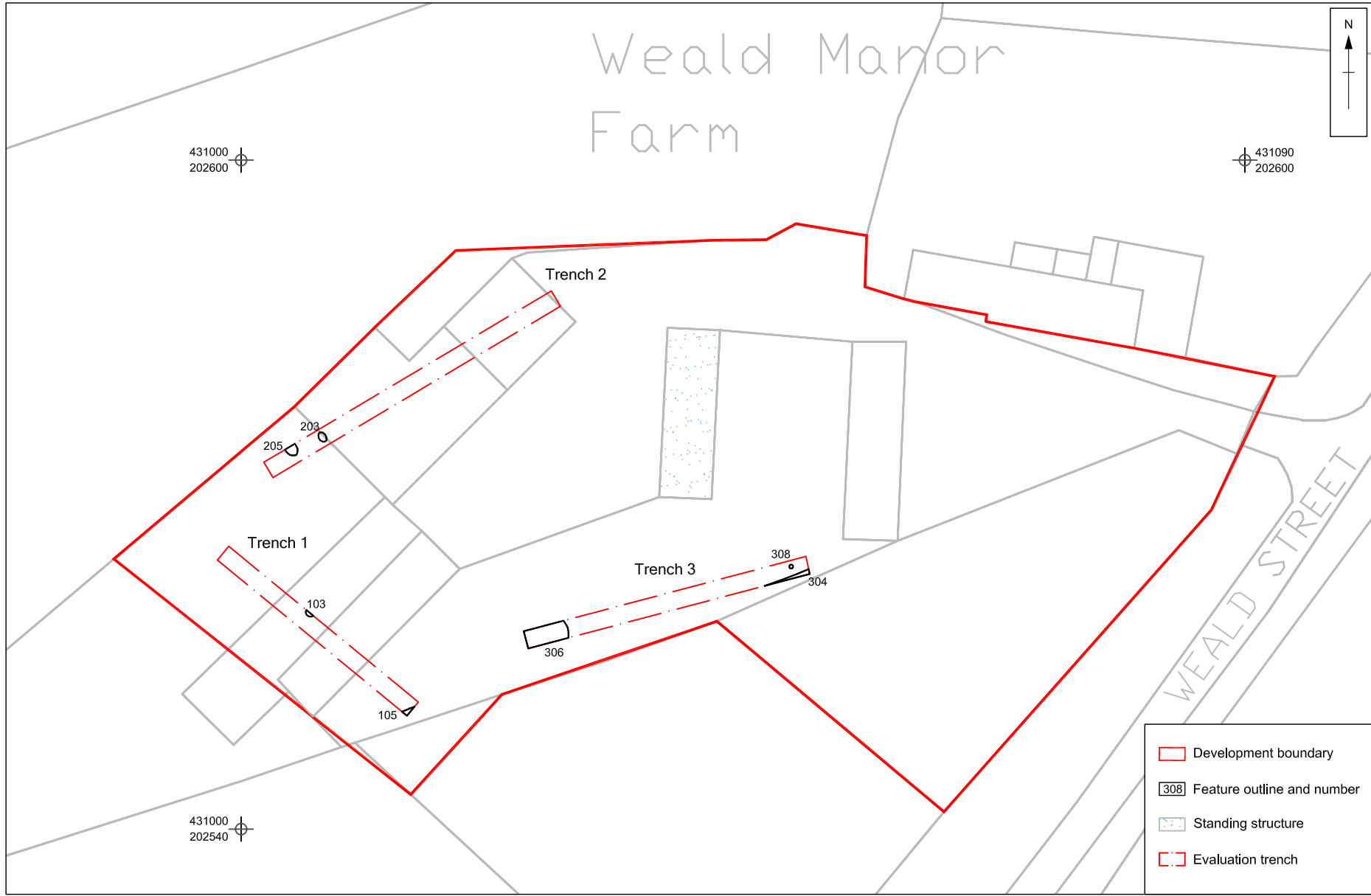
The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum in due course under the accession number OXCMS 2016.42.



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Figure 1: Site location



0 20 m
Scale at A4 1:500

Figure 2: Trench layout and results



Plate 1: Trench 1 typical soil profile



Plate 2: Trench 3 general view west



Plate 3: Trench 3 eastern end section and ditch 304



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