



St Catherine's College, Manor Road, Oxford

Archaeological watching-brief report

June 2020

Client: Buckingham Group

Issue No: 1

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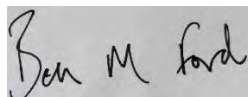


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St Catherine's College, Manor Road, Oxford

Archaeological watching-brief report

Elizabeth Kennard

with illustrations by Caroline Souday and Charles Rousseaux

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Buckingham Group on behalf of St Catherine's College to undertake a watching brief during the clearance of leaf mould from a drainage ditch to the south of a possibly Saxon earthen bank. The watching brief set out to ensure that the profile of the ditch remained unaffected by the works.

The works were conducted over six days with the clearance being done in sections according to site access. During the clearance, modern infilling consisting of tarram, sand and aggregate was cleared from the southern end of the ditch, and gardening waste from the northern end. A thin layer of leaf mould was cleaned along its full extent onto clean deposits.

No archaeology was impacted during the works.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank St Catherine's College for commissioning this project, and the staff of Buckingham Group for practical assistance on site. Thanks are also extended to David Radford who monitored the work on behalf of Oxford City Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Ben Ford MCIfA and the fieldwork was directed by Elizabeth Kennard. Thanks are extended to the teams of OA staff that prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Buckingham Group on behalf of St Catherine's College to undertake an archaeological watching brief at St Catherine's College, Manor Road, Oxford.
- 1.1.2 Prior to development, an earthen bank and ditch, potentially of Saxon or earlier origin, were covered by a protective textile (tarram) and filled with sand and Type-1 aggregate at its southern end to provide a level construction surface. The northern end of the trench had been filled with green gardening waste. A watching brief was maintained during the development for the reinstatement of these archaeological features due to their potential national importance.
- 1.1.3 The work was undertaken as a condition of planning permission (condition 25 of planning application number: 17/00758/FUL). An advice note was issued by David Radford of Oxford City Council (OCC), which details the local authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition. This document outlines how OA implemented those requirements.
- 1.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies. The planning background is outlined in a desk-based assessment (DBA) undertaken by OA (2017).

1.2 Location and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located at the northern end of St Catherine's College grounds (Fig. 1), to the north-east of the Oxford city centre. It lies in the former parish of either Holywell or St Cross. Holywell Mill Stream, a branch of the River Cherwell, flows southwards to the west of the site and converges with the river to the south at Magdalen Bridge. The site lies on a floodplain between these watercourses on alluvium overlying river gravels.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in the DBA (OA 2017) and will not be reproduced here.

1.4 Archaeological potential

- 1.4.1 The following text is largely reproduced from the advice note issued by OCC.
- 1.4.2 This application is of interest because it involves ground works close to the line of an earthwork bank that is undated but continues the line of a linear defensive bank that has recently been shown to be of likely late Saxon or earlier origin. Further west, this bank was later partially incorporated into the Royalist defenses of Oxford during the Civil War.
- 1.4.3 A previous archaeological investigation into the bank at St Catherine's College in 2003 (OA 2003) failed to provide any firm dating evidence, although it did demonstrate that it was not constructed in a similar manner to either the late Saxon bank (shown to be

made from redeposited loam) or other sections of the civil war defences (shown to be made of layers of tipped gravel). The St Catherine's bank is rather large to be a simple field bank and it has been suggested that it may be a medieval causeway to Marston that could have been integrated into the later Civil War defences (OA 2017).

- 1.4.4 The bank therefore has the potential to be of significant archaeological interest, noting that both the late Saxon defensive line and the Civil War earthworks can be assessed as assets of national importance.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Archaeological mitigation took place intermittently as a watching brief between October and November 2019.
- 2.2.2 The watching brief was maintained while the instalment and clearance of leaf mould from the ditch was removed to ensure that the profile of the ditch and its fills and bank were not impacted.
- 2.2.3 The modern fills were excavated using a five-tonne mechanical excavator with bladed ditching buckets and hand excavation took place when required.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the watching brief are presented below. No archaeological deposits of significance were excavated during the watching brief.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 Ground conditions were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout.

3.2.2 The northern extent of the ditch had been infilled with green waste that also contained modern refuse. The southern extent of the ditch was lined with tarram and filled with sand and type-1 aggregate. The modern fills were removed down to the top of topsoil.

3.2.3 No archaeological fills were excavated due to the minimal impact of the works and the existing profile of the ditch prior to development was preserved (Figure 2 and Plates 1-2).

3.3 Significance

3.3.1 The watching brief was undertaken in an area that contained potentially significant archaeological deposits relating to the possible Saxon or earlier ditch and bank located within St Catherine's College grounds. However, due to the minimal impact from the development, no archaeological deposits were excavated allowing for the profile of the ditch and bank to be undisturbed. Deposits that were excavated during the works were relatively modern and of no archaeological significance.

APPENDIX A BIBLIOGRAPHY

OA, 2003 *St Catherine's College, Manor Road, Oxford, student and teaching accommodation: archaeological evaluation report*, Oxford Archaeology unpublished client report

OA, 2017 *Accommodation Pavilions and MCR, St Catherine's College, Oxford: archaeological desk-based assessment*, Oxford Archaeology unpublished client report

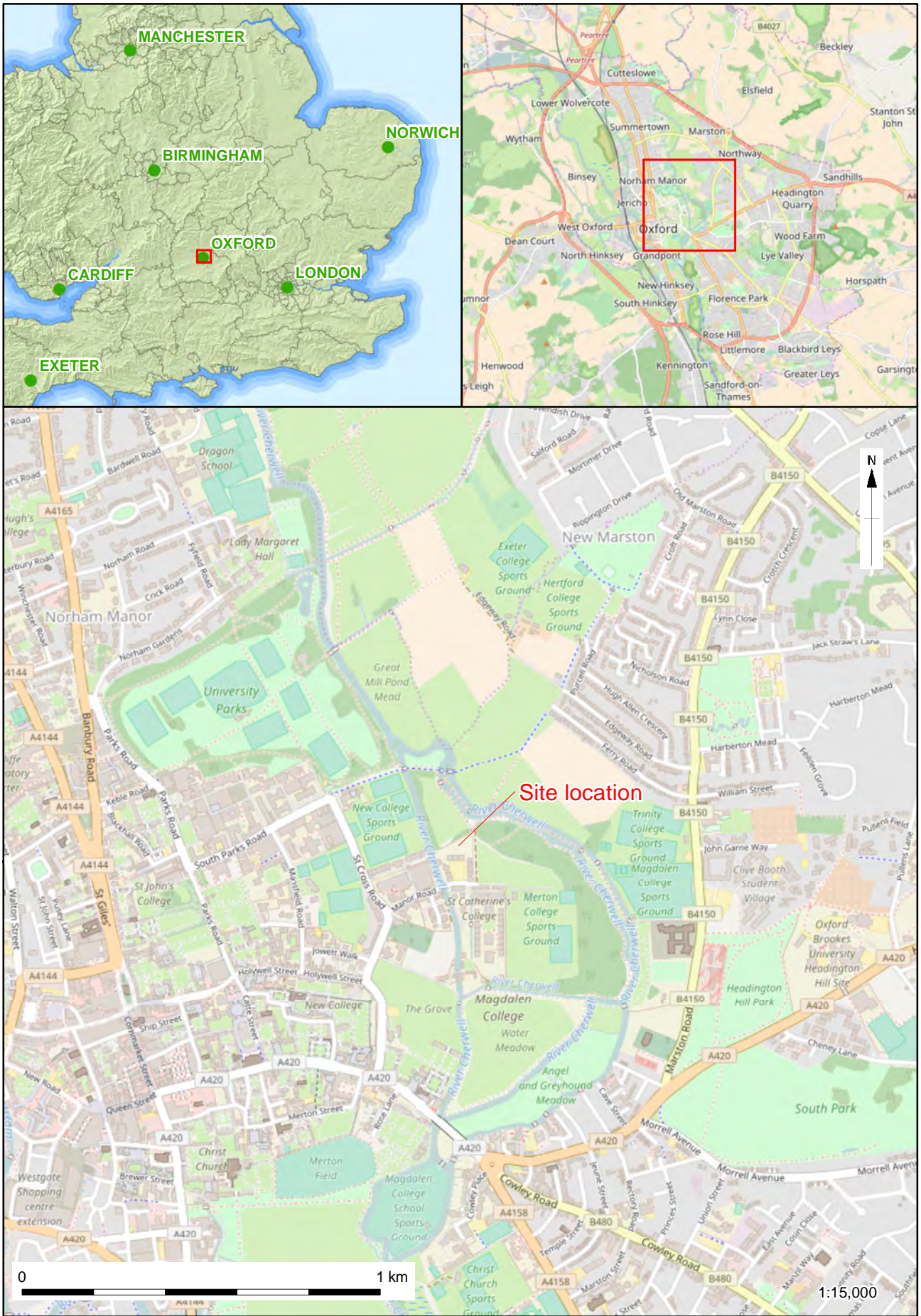
APPENDIX B**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS / OASIS REPORT FORM**

Site name: St Catherine's College, Manor Road, Oxford
Site code: OXCPAM18
Grid Reference SP 522 069
Type: Watching brief
Date and duration: October and November 2019 (six days)

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA South, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Services in due course. The museum accession number is still to be confirmed.

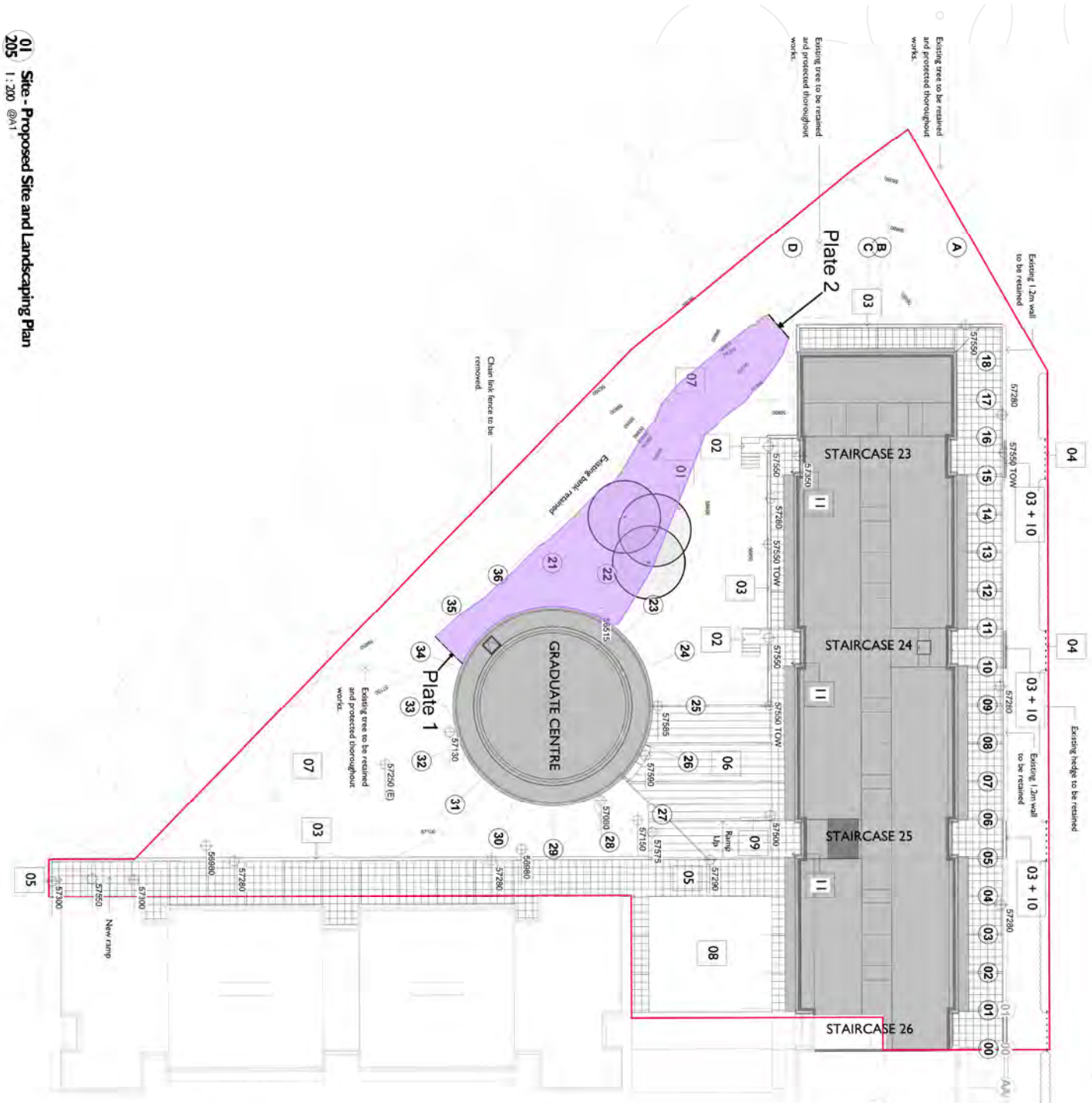
Summary of Results: Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Buckingham Group on behalf of St Catherine's College to undertake a watching brief during the clearance of leaf mould from a possible Saxon ditch to ensure that the profile of the ditch remained unaffected by the works.

The works were conducted over six days. During the clearance, modern infilling consisting of tarram, sand and aggregate were cleared from the southern end of the ditch, and gardeners' waste (grass cuttings, etc.) from the northern end. A thin layer of leaf mould was cleaned along its full extent. No archaeology was impacted during the works.



X:\Oxford St Catherine's College 2017 student accommodation\GIS\Figure 1_SiteLocation.mxd\tohy.martin*16/02/2017

Figure 1: Site location



01 Site - Proposed Site and Landscaping Plan
205 1:200 @A1

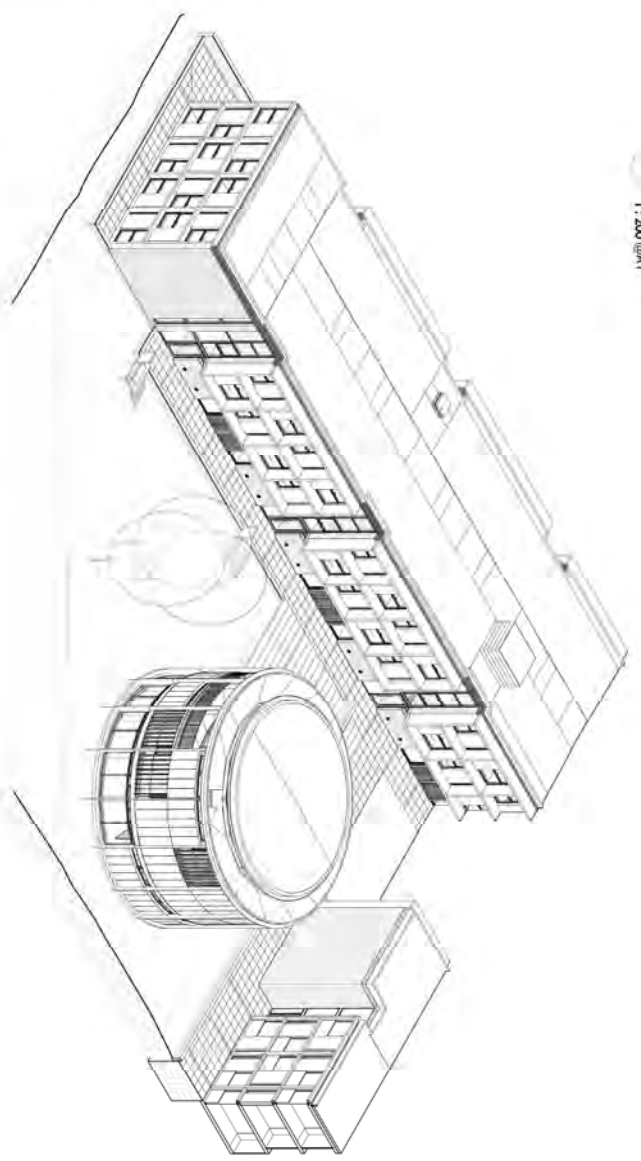
Notes:
Drawings are based on survey data and may not accurately represent what is physically present.
Do not scale from this drawing. All dimensions are to be verified on site before proceeding with the work.
All dimensions are in millimeters unless noted otherwise.
Purcell shall be notified in writing of any discrepancies.



DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION
18/01/2020	IS	TRIGGER ISSUE
15/01/2020	HR	CHECKED

Site Plan Key
1:200 @A1

01	3m New Trees - <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> 'Imperialis', 35-40cm girth, feathered.
02	Pre-cast concrete steps/seal - See drawing 410 for detail.
03	Brick retaining wall - See drawing 410 for detail.
04	1.8m high powder coated steel fence to match existing.
05	600x600mm concrete paving slabs to match existing. Setting out to carefully match existing rationale.
06	In situ slab to SE specification. Expressed joint lines to be set out by Architect. Concrete specification to include exposed aggregate finish.
07	Species rich grassland - Species to be based on adjacent lowland/flood meadow species
08	Formal lawn.
09	1.2m high brick free standing wall to match existing.
10	1.2m high powder coated steel fence to match existing.
11	Approx 0.9m high brushed stainless steel bollard with rubber door stops to match existing.



02 3D - Site
205 1:200 @A1

CLIENT	St Catherine's College Oxford
PROJECT	New Accommodation Block and Graduate Centre
DRAWING TITLE	Site - Proposed Site Plan
SIZE & SCALE	(A1) 1:200
DRAWING STATUS	ISSUED FOR TENDER
JOB NUMBER	227504
DRAWING NO.	205
REVISION	1.01



Figure 2: Site Plan

CHECKED BY:



Plate 1: North-East view along ditch



Plate 2: South-West view along ditch



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