



Former Magistrates Court, Pewsham Way, Chippenham

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Pewsham Way, Chippenham

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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With illustrations by Charles Rousseaux and Aidan Farnan

Contents

List of Figures	v
List of Plates	v
Summary	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Scope of work	1
1.2 Location, topography and geology	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
1.4 Aims and Methodology.....	5
2 METHODOLOGY	5
2.1 Scope of Works.....	5
2.2 Recording.....	6
3 RESULTS	7
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results.....	7
3.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	7
3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits	7
3.4 Trench 5.....	7
3.5 Trench 6.....	7
3.6 Finds summary.....	7
4 DISCUSSION	8
4.1 Reliability of field investigation.....	8
4.2 Evaluation objectives and results.....	8
4.3 Interpretation	8
4.4 Significance.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY	9
APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY	12
APPENDIX C SITE SUMMARY DETAILS	13

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 Trench locations and services
- Fig. 3 Section of Ditch 503
- Fig. 4 1981 Aerial Photograph

List of Plates

- Plate 1. Overall shot of trench 5
- Plate 2. Section 500 Ditch 503
- Plate 3. Overall shot of trench 4
- Plate 4. Overall shot of trench 6

Summary

Between 8th December and 11th December 2020 Oxford Archaeology carried out a trial trench evaluation ahead of the construction of a proposed new supermarket and associated car park.

A single ditch was identified within the trenches. No artefactual evidence was recovered from the feature but it is believed to be one of a series of drainage ditches associated with a post-medieval water meadow present on an aerial photograph from the 1980s.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Matthew Morgan of EDP for commissioning the project on behalf of Lidl UK. Thanks are also extended to Michal Cepak who monitored the work on behalf of Wiltshire County Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Gerry Thacker. The fieldwork was directed by Ashley Strutt, who was supported by Elanor Stanley, Louie Parfitt. Survey was carried out by Ashley Strutt and digitising was carried out by Aidan Farnan. Thanks are also extended to the team of OA staff prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicky Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by EDP on behalf of Lidl UK to undertake a trial trench evaluation of the site of a proposed new supermarket and associated car park.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref:19/11732/FUL). Subsequent to the production and review of an archaeological desk-based assessment (EDP 2020), the requirement for a trial trench evaluation was agreed between the representatives of EDP (on behalf of Lidl UK) and the Wiltshire County Council Assistant County Archaeologist, Michal Cepak. Oxford Archaeology produced a written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2020) which was approved by Michal Cepak prior to work commencing.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies including Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Guidance (2014 revised 2020).

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the on the south-eastern edge of Chippenham, Wiltshire and is centred on the National Grid Reference (NGR) 392377, 172645, (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The site is occupied by the late 20th century Magistrate Court building (which was undergoing demolition), car parking, an access road and areas of green space. It is bounded to the north by the Avenue La Fleche, to the west by Pewsham Way, to the south by modern housing and to the east by further housing fronting onto Wood Lane (Fig 1). The site is broadly flat at c. 55m above Ordnance Datum.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Kellsway Formation with no superficial deposits present (BGS Online).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in an Archaeological Assessment (EDP 2020), which looked at all recorded archaeological events and finds within a 500m study area centered on the site. The results of the Assessment are summarised below.

Prehistoric

- 1.3.2 There are no records for previously identified prehistoric archaeology within the site and only one within the study area. This relates to an assemblage of Neolithic flint tools, which were found c. 420m to the south-east.

Romano-British

- 1.3.3 There are no records relating to Roman archaeology within the site, but there are three records in the study area. A watching brief undertaken in c. 2000 during the construction of the housing estate to the south of the site identified evidence for a

Roman building. This HER 'point' is an estimated location for the discovery and no fieldwork report exists. Further information received from the investigator provides some detail on the location and character of the buildings. During construction activity for the housing estate, several finds of Roman date were recorded by a metal detectorist and reported to the Chippenham Museum. Subsequently, a site visit by Mr. Stone identified five areas "showing...both features and archaeological material". Of the five areas located, in situ Roman archaeology and/or artefacts were identified in three, comprising:

- Area 1: topsoil stripping in this location identified two ditches and areas of "clay-floors", covering an area of approximately 11m by 9m and "facing south-west". This was interpreted as a possible Roman building. A "considerable amount of Roman material" was recovered, including tegulae or brick ceramic building material, stone roof tiles, two coins, a bronze stud and pottery from the 1st to 4th centuries. Much of the later was identified as Savernake/Oare ceramics (a type of pottery derived from several locations around Wiltshire).
- Area 2: a range of Roman, post-medieval and modern pottery sherds that, from the descriptions provided, were probably unstratified; and
- Area 4: unstratified Roman pottery, but 'no archaeological features were noted'.

1.3.4 As such, it appears that in situ archaeological features from the Roman period were identified c. 40m to the south of the site, with the remaining areas of investigation only producing unstratified material. It is recognized that the watching brief investigation may not have had opportunity to identify whether the in situ features were present in Areas 2 and 4.

1.3.5 A second Roman building dating to the 1st-2nd century AD has been found during archaeological works between 2015-2018 at Chippenham museum, c 460m to the north. The remains comprised of a wall and two internal post holes, with some remains of a floor surface made of crushed limestone and slabs of limestone.

Early Medieval

1.3.6 There are no records of previously identified early medieval archaeology within the site and only one in the study area: residual Saxo-Norman pottery sherds found during an evaluation between 2015 and 2018, c. 460m to the north.

Medieval

1.3.7 There are no records for previously identified medieval archaeology within the site, but there are a number in the wider study area. The recorded medieval remains are clustered to the north-west of the site within the extent of Chippenham's historic settlement core.

1.3.8 Two medieval or late medieval pits, three possible post holes and two parallel ditches, which were found during an excavation in 2005, c. 490m to the north-west.

1.3.9 Wall foundations and a shallow ditch containing 13th-14th century pottery were found during an excavation in 1996 c. 430m to the north.

- 1.3.10 A 12th/13th century basement and part of a cemetery boundary wall were found during a watching brief in 2004, c. 490m to the north.
- 1.3.11 A ditch, gully and building foundations were found during an evaluation in 2003, c. 460m to the north-east.
- 1.3.12 Three ditches which were found during an excavation in 2014, c. 340m to the north-west.
- 1.3.13 Pits of medieval and post medieval date which were found in 2014, c. 450m to the north.
- 1.3.14 A stone floor surface and post holes possibly related to a medieval building were found during evaluation works in 2015 and 2016, c. 430m to the north. The floor surface was found to be overlying an 'infilled structure' and pottery from the 11th to 16th century was recovered.
- 1.3.15 A number of records for ridge and furrow are identified across the study area demonstrating the wider agricultural use of the landscape during this period.

Post-Medieval to Modern

- 1.3.16 There is single record for previously identified post-medieval or later archaeology within the site, and there are a number in the wider study area. The extent of a post-medieval water meadow overlaps with the site, again suggesting that this area lay beyond the limits of urban Chippenham until recently (see Fig. 4).
- 1.3.17 The watching brief during the construction of the housing estate to the south of the site, which is discussed above, also identified some post-medieval and modern artefacts, comprising a range of post-medieval and modern pottery sherds that were probably unstratified. It is reported that a metal detectorist had "recovered a large amount of lead shot, lead objects and six lead tokens of the 16th/17th century, along with medieval and post medieval pottery". This is suggested as possibly relating to "Civil War encampment which shelled the nearby Rowden Manor", which is located c. 650m to the south-west of the area investigated and was besieged in 1645. However, an alternative location for the encampment has previously been identified as an undated man-made mound on high ground overlooking Rowden Manor c. 840m to the south-west of the site and c. 300m to the south-east of the Manor.

Previous archaeological and ground investigation

- 1.3.18 The site has not been subject to any previous archaeological investigation although some ground investigation work has been undertaken, comprising 14 window slots spread evenly across the area. These identified deposits of made ground in all but one window slot, the composition of which was inconsistent, including grey-brown clayey gravelly cobble rich sand to greenish-grey mottled brown gravelly clay. Some brick, concrete and plastic inclusions were noted in the made ground.
- 1.3.19 The made ground most often reached a depth of 0.6m+ in depth, with the greatest recorded depth being 1.8m. Unsurprisingly, the deepest deposits were mostly recorded around the Magistrates Court building and car parking in the centre and west

of the site, with the shallowest depths mostly being within the landscaped eastern area of site.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims and objectives

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains,
- iii. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means,
- iv. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains,
- v. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy,
- vi. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive,
- vii. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- viii. To determine the presence or absence of Roman structures and features within the site.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of four 30m x 1.8m trenches and two 15m x 1.8m trenches (Fig. 2). The site contained numerous buried services, which greatly constrained the trench locations, a 2m buffer was maintained from these for safety reasons (see Fig. 2). Given that it was unlikely for archaeological remains to survive below the Magistrates Court, the footprint of the structure was excluded from the evaluation works.

2.2.2 Specific site methodologies were as follows: the trenches were laid out as shown in Figure 2 using a GPS with sub-15mm accuracy.

Trench excavation

2.2.3 The trenches were excavated using an appropriately powered mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but at a safe distance from the trench edges.

2.2.4 Machining continued in spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology. The exposed surface was sufficiently clean to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains.

2.2.5 The trenches were backfilled after agreement with Michal Cepak, Assistant County Archaeologist for Wiltshire County Council.

Recording

- 2.2.6 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording were carried out in accordance with established best practice and the OA Field Manual.
- 2.2.7 Digital photographs were taken of the archaeological features, deposits, trenches and evaluation work in general.
- 2.2.8 Plans were produced at an appropriate scale (normally 1:50 or 1:100) with larger scale plans produced as necessary. Sections of features were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All section drawings were located on the plan/s. The absolute height (m OD) of all principle strata and features, and the section datum lines, was calculated and indicated on the drawings.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits is tabulated in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates can be found in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 Some variation in the underlying soil sequences was noted across the site. In general the natural geology of mid yellowish-brown clay was overlain by a layer of made ground consisting of demolition or building waste of varying depths. Within Trenches 1 and 5 made ground directly overlay the natural geology. Within Trenches 2 and 4 recently imported topsoil sealed made ground, which in Trench 4 sealed a buried topsoil and subsoil. In Trench 3 made ground sealed a buried subsoil and in Trench 6 the original topsoil and subsoil remained.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were good, and the site remained dry throughout. Archaeological features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 Archaeological features were encountered within Trenches 5 and 6, comprising a ditch and a stone land drain.

3.4 Trench 5

3.4.1 Trench 5 was located in the south-east corner of the site and contained a NE-SW aligned ditch, 503. The ditch measured 1.6m wide and 0.55m deep (Figs 2 and 3; Plate 2). The lower fill, 502, was a dark blue-grey soft silty clay. The upper fill, 504, was a mid greenish-blue clay. Despite additional hand excavation beyond that required to record the ditch profile, no datable material was recovered.

3.5 Trench 6

3.5.1 Trench 6 was located in the south-west corner of the site. A stone lined land drain was observed cutting the top of the natural geology. Although of minimal interest as an archaeological feature, it does suggest that there had been less disturbance in this part of site, albeit regardless no other remains of interest were present.

3.6 Finds summary

3.6.1 No finds were recovered during the course of the evaluation.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The evaluation was carried out in reasonable weather conditions and any archaeological features present would have been easily noted against the pale underlying clay geology.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 In summary, the aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological features or deposits and, if present, determine their character, date range and significance. No significant remains were present, and no finds were recovered.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 The results from the evaluation and the Archaeology Assessment (EDP 2020) suggests that the site was located within an area previously used for agriculture, as noted in the HER (MWD174024). The ditch within Trench 5 was a good match with a ditch of post-medieval / modern date forming part of the drainage for the water meadow that formerly occupied the site, and shown on an aerial photograph from 1981 (Fig. 4). The lack of finds within the ditch fills also suggest that it had an agricultural function, some distance from any associated settlement.

4.3.2 The base of Trench 5, where the top of ditch 503 was located, sat at around 1m below current ground level (c. 54m aOD). With the exception of Trench 4, which was deeper (at 1.36m below ground level), the other trenches were of similar depth or shallower. This suggests that archaeological features would have survived within most of the trenches had they been present.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground overlying a natural of clay					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	1.0
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	1.0	Made ground, a mix of light brown to dark blue firm coarse grained sandy clay, c.60% construction debris	-	-
101	Layer	-	-	Natural: mottled mid yellowish brown clay with some blue mottling.	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and made ground overlying a clay natural.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.65
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.19	Topsoil: mid greyish brown silty clay.	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.65	Made Ground: A mix of Black-greyish brown-greyish blue sandy clay with c.65% building debris.	-	-
202	Layer	-	-	Natural: light yellowish brown clay.	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground/ demolition material, a layer of subsoil was present at the western end of the trench over a clay natural.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.20
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.20	Subsoil: mid yellow-brown clay.	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.35	Made ground/ demolition material	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural: light brownish yellow clay	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying building debris, and a natural of light brownish clay. A buried topsoil and subsoil was observed eastern part of the trench.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	1.0
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.27	Topsoil: mid greyish brown clayey silt.	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.40	Subsoil: mid orangish brown clayey silt	-	-
402	Layer	-	-	Buried topsoil mid yellowish brown sandy silty clay, no inclusions	-	-
403	Layer	-	0.69	Natural: mixture of colours with Blues, greens, browns and yellows, mostly clay with 15% silty sand and sand	-	-
404	layer			Natural: light brownish yellow with patched of light grey clay.	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Trench contained part of a NE-SW aligned linear. Consists of made ground overlying a clay natural.					Length (m)	30
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	0.75
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.75	Made ground: construction debris in a variety of colours.	-	-
501	Layer	-	-	Natural: mid greenish yellow clay	-	-
502	Fill	1.4	0.25	Fill of Ditch: soft dark blue-grey silty clay	-	-
503	Cut	1.6	1.8	Ditch: NE-SW aligned ditch (cut visible higher so may be modern)	-	-
504	Fill	1.6	0.46	Top fill of ditch: mid greenish-blue clay	-	-

Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of a layer of topsoil, over a subsoil which overlay a clay natural.					Length (m)	15
					Width (m)	1.8
					Avg. depth (m)	1
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date

600	Layer	-	0.5	Topsoil: mid greyish brown sandy, clayey silt	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.40	Subsoil: mid orange brown sandy silty clay with occasional stones	-	-
602	Layer	-	-	Natural: mid yellow brown clay	-	-

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS Online. British Geological Survey
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

CIfA 2014 Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation 2014 revised 2020
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. Reading

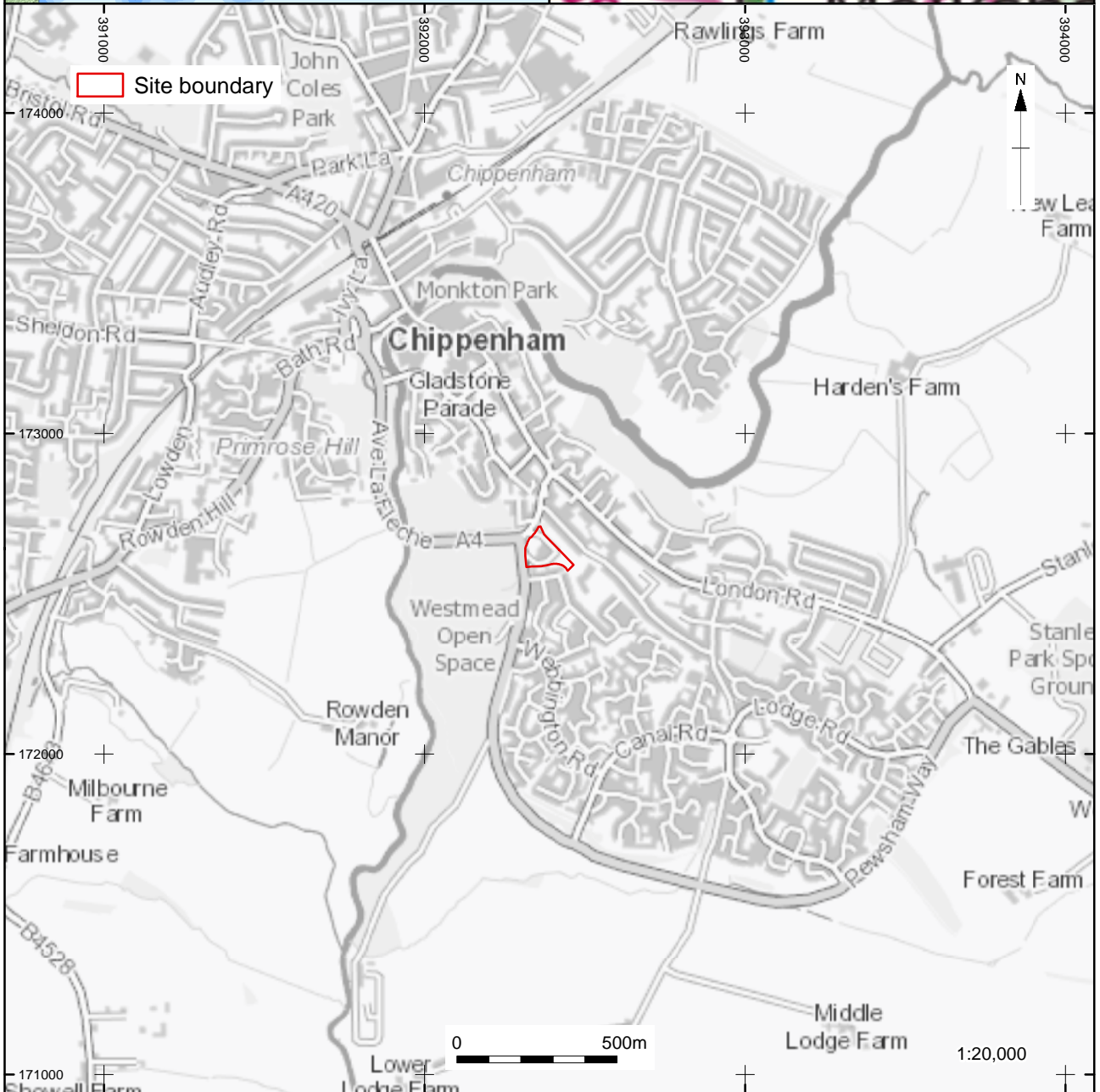
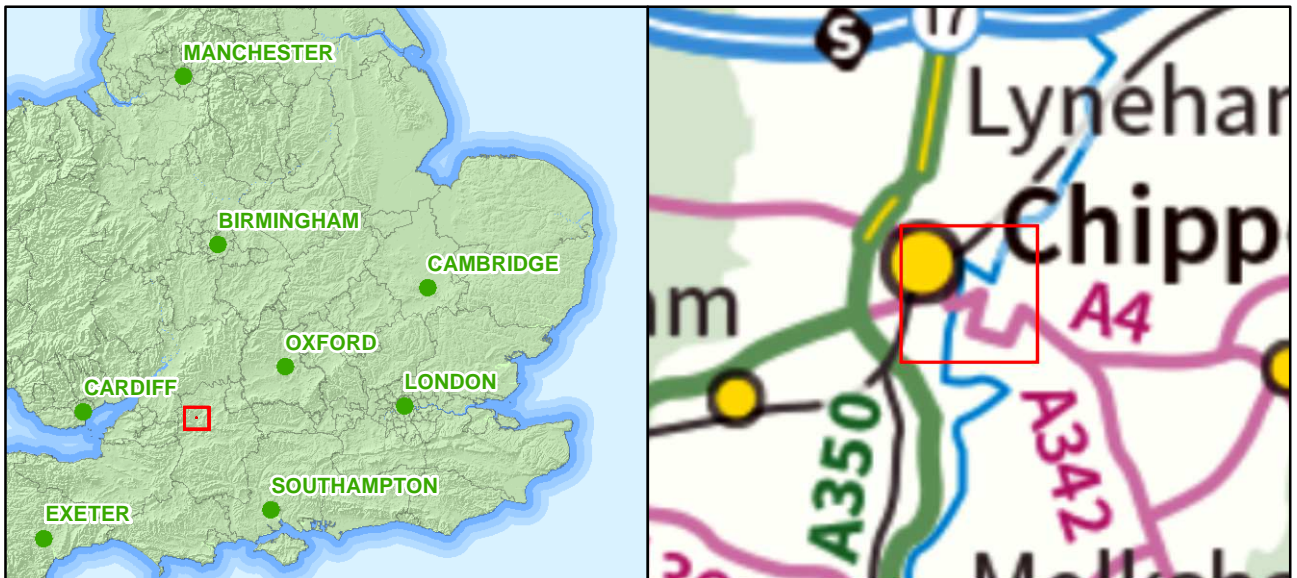
EDP 2020 Pewsham Way, Chippenham. Archaeological Assessment. Environmental
Dimension Partnership unpublished client document

OA 2020 Pewsham Way, Chippenham. Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological
Evaluation. Oxford Archaeology unpublished client document.

APPENDIX C

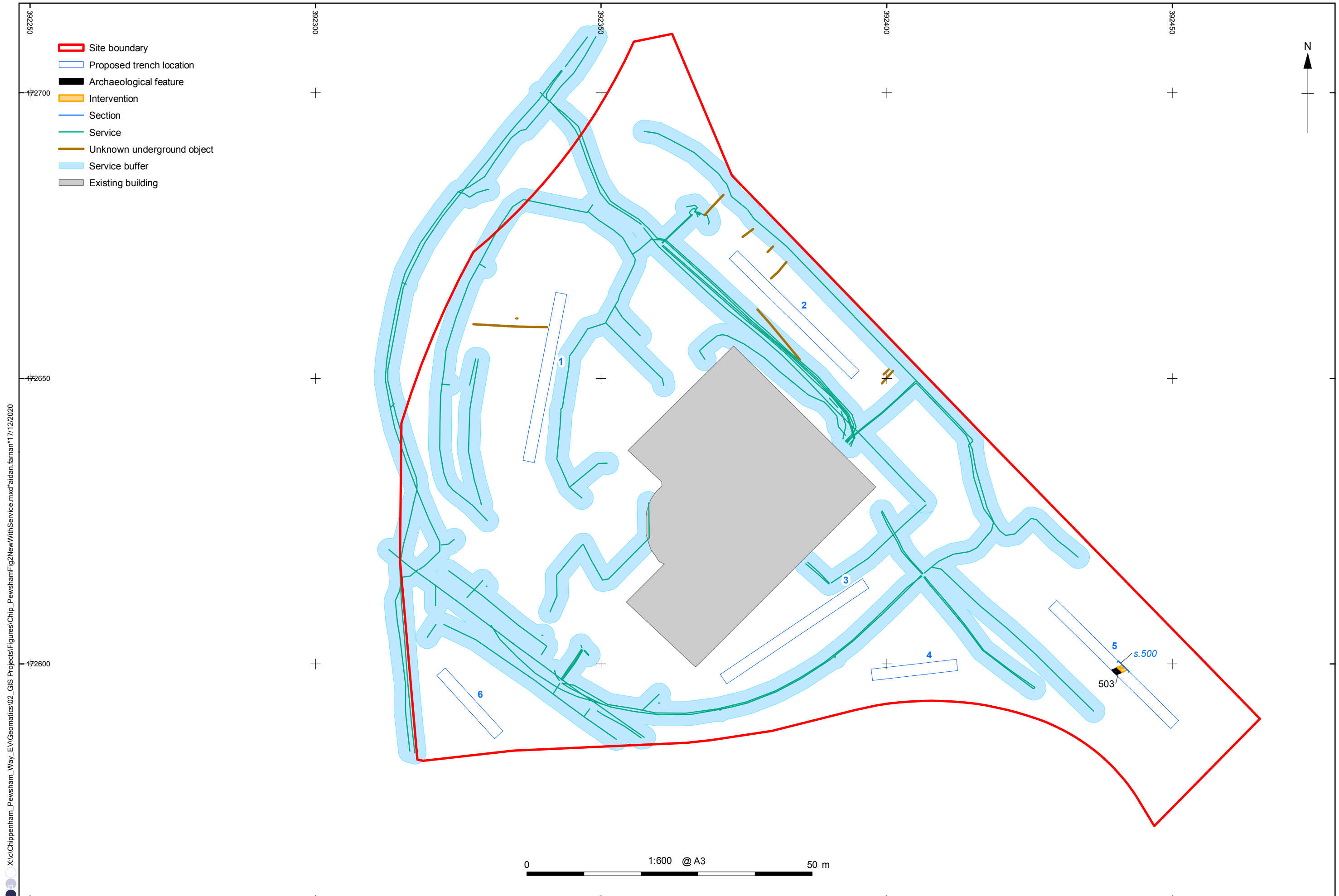
SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Pewsham Way, Chippenham
Site code:	CHPW20
Grid Reference	NGR 392377 172645
Type:	Evaluation
Date and duration:	11 th December 2020, 3 days
Area of Site	1 hectare
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Oxford, and will be deposited with Chippenham Museum in due course, under the following accession number: TBC.
Summary of Results:	<p>Between 8th December and 11th December 2020 Oxford Archaeology carried out a trial trench evaluation ahead of the construction of a proposed new supermarket and associated car park.</p> <p>A single ditch was identified within the trenches. No artefactual evidence was recovered from the feature but it is believed to be one of a series of drainage ditches associated with a post-medieval water meadow depicted on an aerial photograph from the 1980s.</p>



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Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: Trench locations and services.

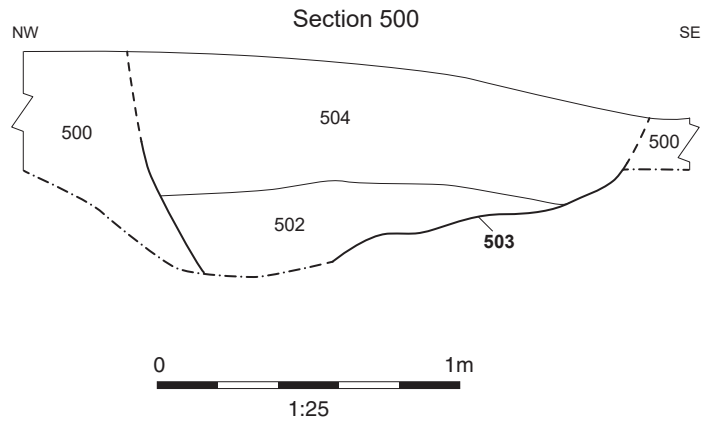


Figure 3: Section of Ditch 503



Figure 4. 1981
Aerial Photograph

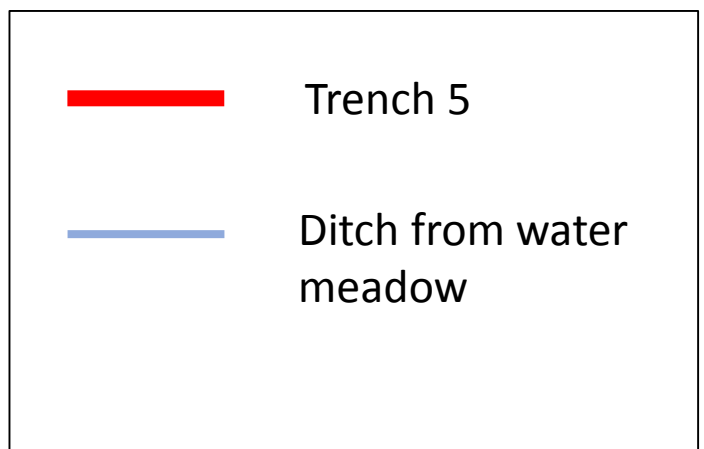




Plate 1: Overall shot of Trench 5

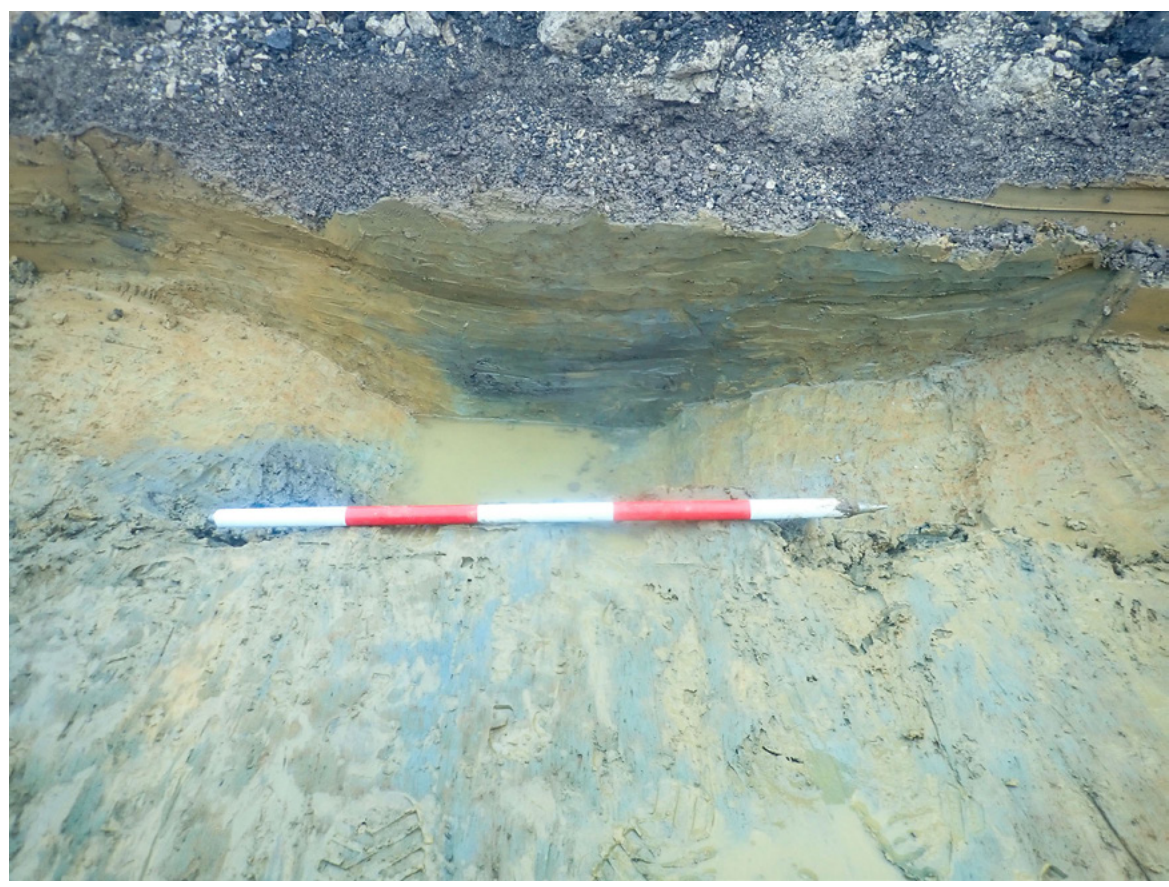


Plate 2: Section 500 ditch 503



Plate 3: Overall shot of Trench 4



Plate 4: Overall shot of Trench 6



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