

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

21 NORHAM ROAD,

OXFORD

NGR SP 51377 07758

On behalf of

Riach Architects

JANUARY 2012

REPORT FOR Riach Architects
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FIELDWORK 25th October, 10th-11th November 2011
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief on ground works at 21 Norham Road, Oxford on the 25th October and the 10th-11th November 2011, during the construction of a rear extension and associated cellar to an existing residential building. No archaeological deposits or features were identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The groundwork took place on land (hereafter referred to as ‘the Site’) to the rear of 21 Norham Road, Oxford; just to the east of Banbury Road to the north of the centre of the City of Oxford (NGR SP 51377 07758; Figure 1). The underlying geology consists of Summertown-Radley gravel terrace deposits, and the Site is situated at approximately 61m OD. The Site is a residential property with an associated rear garden. The building work involved extensive renovation of the existing building and its cellar, the removal of old concrete sheet piling, the excavation of an extension to the current cellar and the insertion of new concrete shuttering to support this.

1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council granted planning permission in 2011 for the construction of a single storey lower ground rear extension at 21 Norham Road, Oxford (10/01485/FUL). Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological remains, however, a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission by the Oxford City Archaeologist, who also prepared a Design Brief for the archaeological work programme. The *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2281/01) was prepared in response to the Design Brief, and outlined the methodology by which the watching brief was carried out.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The Site is situated north of Oxford city centre, where there has previously been evidence for prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon occupation found just 100m to the west (HER 3592, 3591 and 6048). In addition, it was also thought possible that the Summertown-Radley river gravel terrace deposits may possibly contain Pleistocene artefacts or faunal material.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation indicated in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development;
- In particular to record the potential for prehistoric, Roman and Saxon remains.

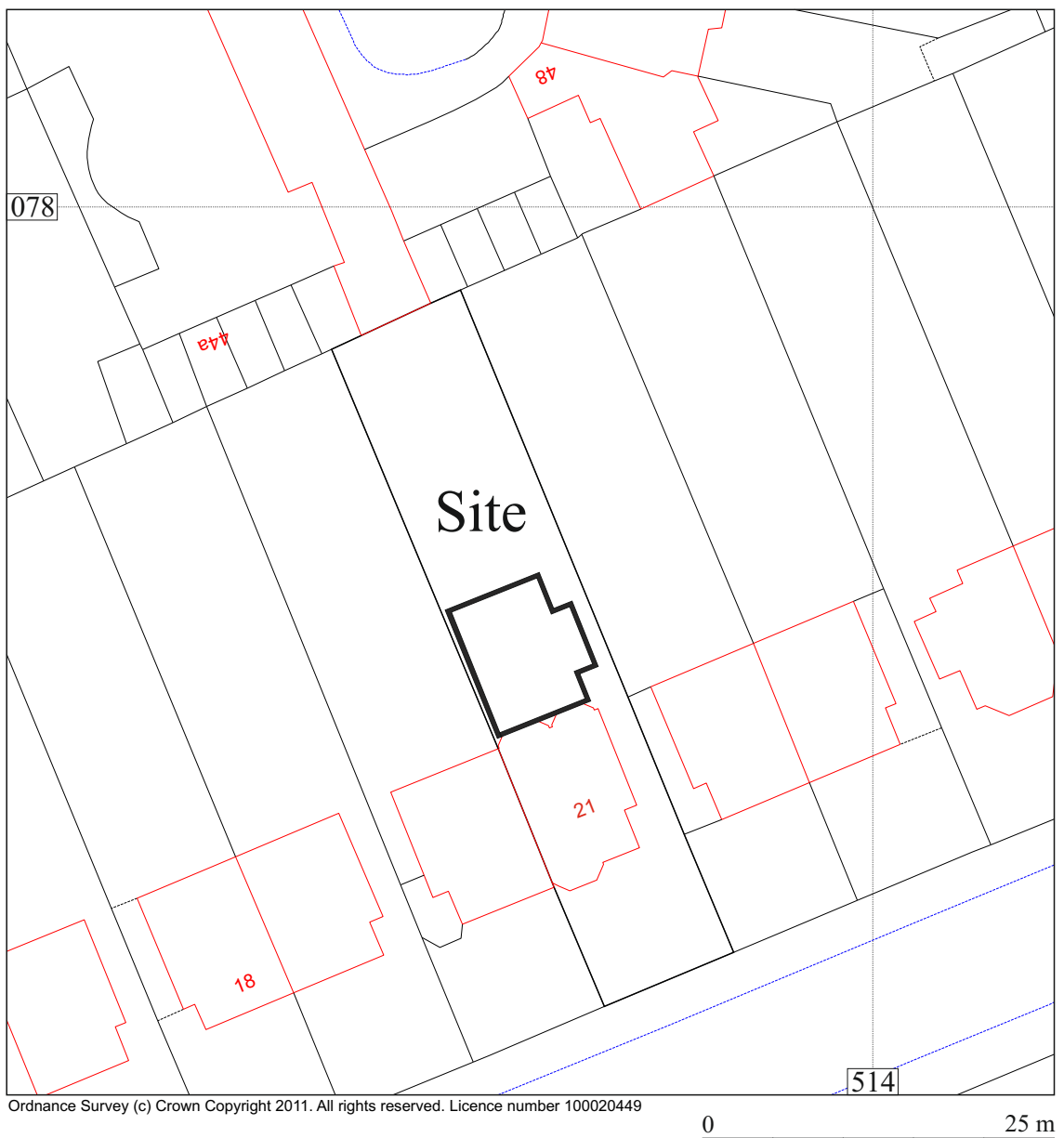
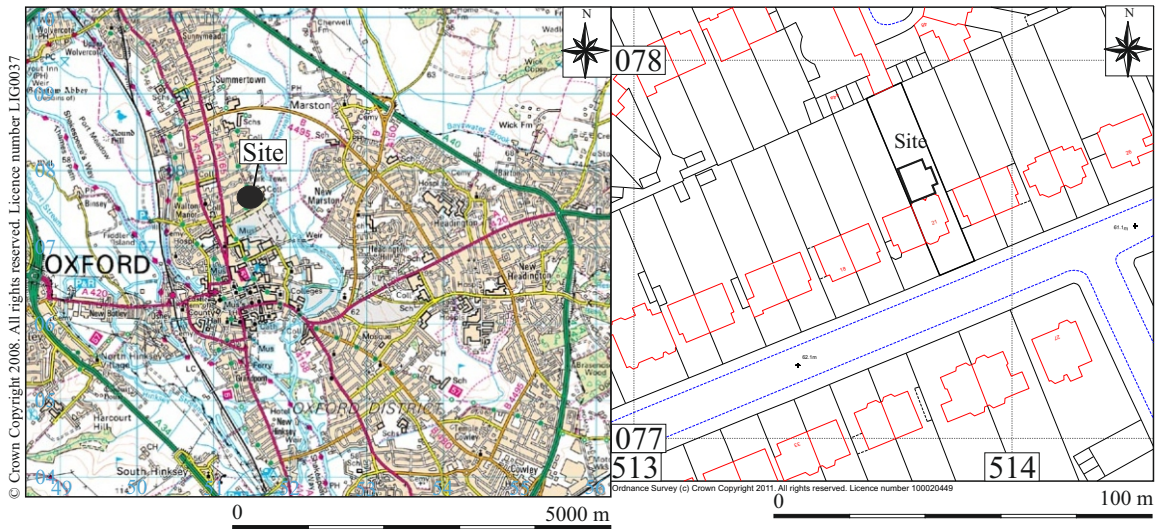


Figure 1. Site location

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

An archaeologist would be present on Site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains, including any reduction in ground level, excavations for foundations and services and any additional intrusive works.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed would be cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features or other archaeological remains such as a concentration of artefacts would have written, drawn and photographic records made of them. Where archaeological features were exposed during any reduction in ground level but were otherwise unaffected, these would only be recorded through written descriptions and plans, whilst any surface finds would be retained. Where archaeological features or remains would be impacted by any groundwork, they would be sample excavated. Any variations to this would be agreed with the Oxford City Archaeologist.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored all the invasive groundwork; and all resulting surfaces were then inspected for any significant archaeological features.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings produced where appropriate.

4 RESULTS

No archaeological features or deposits were identified in the rectangular cellar excavations at the rear of the existing property, which was up to 2.00m deep. The topsoil was 0.15-0.20m thick, and this overlay a layer of reddish-brown sand that was up to 0.40m thick. This appeared to be undisturbed natural subsoil. Below this was light yellow and yellow-orange sand, with some lenses of light yellow and off-white mineralised material within it. No obvious palaeochannels or periglacial features were identified within the river terrace sand deposits, nor any Pleistocene artefacts or faunal remains. No other artefacts were observed, apart from a few sherds of early modern (late 19th or early 20th century) pottery as unstratified finds within the topsoil.

5 DISCUSSION

No significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were recorded during the watching brief.



Figure 2. The initial phases of excavation of an extension to the current cellar at the rear of the existing building

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute for Archaeologists 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

John Moore Heritage Services 2011. Written Scheme of Investigation: 21 Norham Road, Oxford. JMHS 2381/01.