

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

DONNINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL,

IFFLEY, OXFORD.

SP 5325 0440

On behalf of

Castleoak Care Partnerships Ltd.

NOVEMBER 2005

REPORT FOR	Castleoak Care Partnerships Ltd. Raglan House Greenwood Close Cardiff Gate Business Park Pontprennau Cardiff CF23 8RD
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Summary

An evaluation of this site was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services between the 26th and 31st October 2005. Open foundation trenches were inspected and a single evaluation trench excavated.

Archaeological deposits were limited. A single post-medieval ditch was recorded, that did not appear on the earliest map of the area.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The area between the school building and Cornwallis Road was formerly car park and lawns. The site is situated towards the west end of Cornwallis Road on the north side and close to the junction with Henley Avenue (NGR SP 5325 0440), and lies at approximately 58m OD. The southern part of the site lies on West Walton formation, characterised by dark grey silty mudstone. The former school building had a large basement.

1.2 Planning Background

Condition 6 attached to the planning consent for the redevelopment of the former Donnington Middle School with a 80-bed residential care home required the implementation of an archaeological evaluation of part of the site. The Archaeological Officer of Oxford City Council requested that the evaluation should be carried out by a 2% sample by trenching of the area between Cornwallis Road and the footprint of the former school.

1.3 Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment of the site was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS 2002). This concluded that there was a low to medium risk of Roman finds being present in the area, due to the proximity of known pottery production sites in the area.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.

- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

In particular

- To establish the presence or absence of Roman remains.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* issued by Oxford City Council a scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the Oxford City Council and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and because development of the site had already commenced it involved an examination of the foundation trenches on the east of the site and the excavation of a single trench in the west of the site (Figure 1).

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 of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

Due to the fact that development had already commenced in the eastern portion of the site the foundation trenches in the area were examined for the presence of archaeological remains. A single trench 18m long was then excavated in the west of the site.

This trench was 1.5 m wide and was excavated by a 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The resultant surfaces were cleaned by hand prior to limited hand excavation of any identified archaeological deposits.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced. The trench was backfilled after recording.

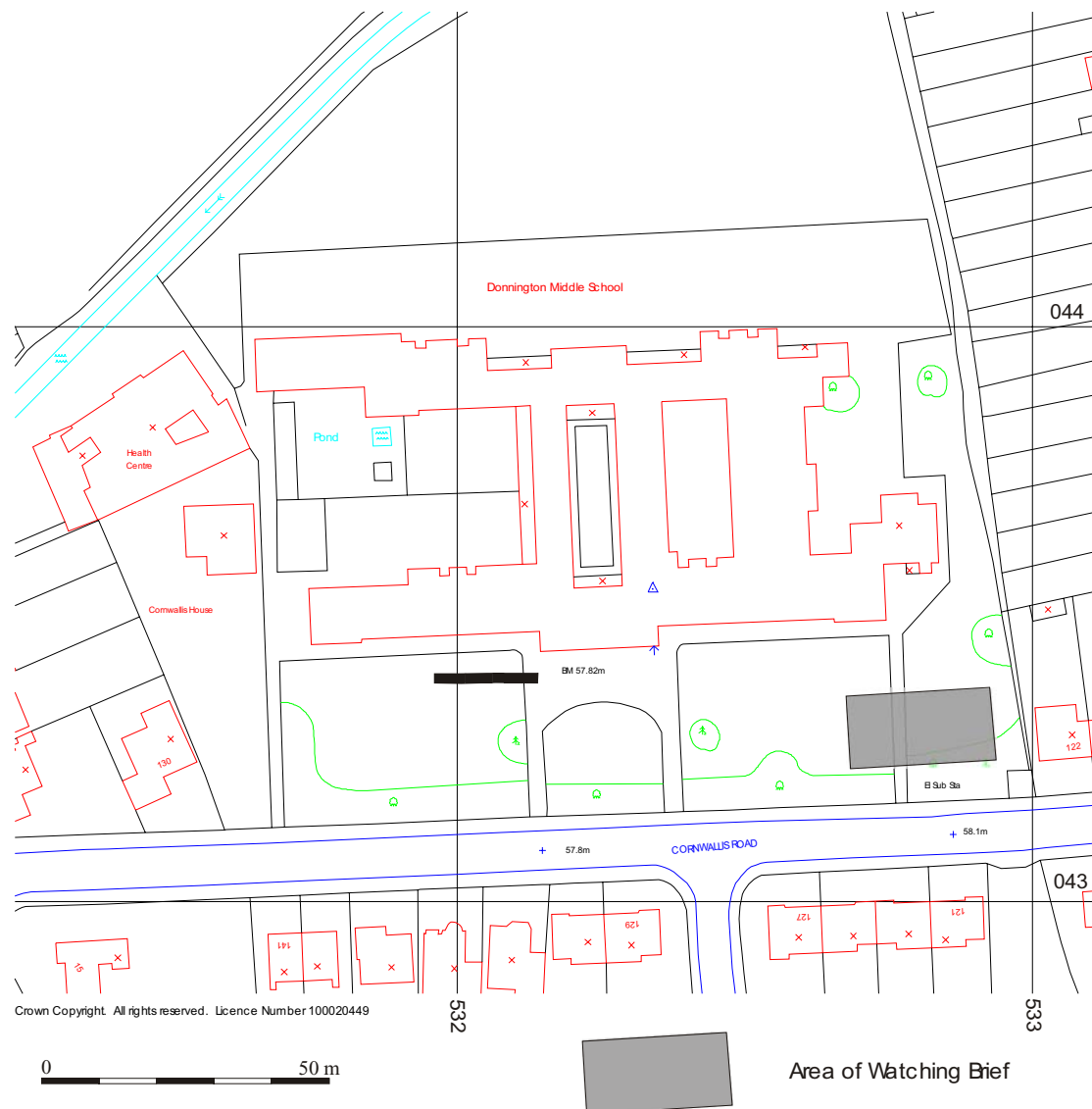


Figure 1. Site and trench location

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

Development of the site had already commenced. The site has been vibro-compacted. Some foundations at the west end of the site have been dug and filled with concrete. The upper trench sides were not clean enough to determine the presence/absence of archaeological remains. Trenches dug and partly filled with concrete were examined at the east end of the site. The amount of open trenching, four parallel trenches each c. 35m long and a further 10-11m long north-south trench, was sufficient to establish the absence of archaeological remains within the eastern third of the site between the former school building footprint and Cornwallis Road.

Trench 1 was excavated in the west of the site (figure 2). The uppermost layer was compacted hardcore (1) that was 0.35m thick laid as a piling mat. Below this was the remains of the school horizon with a 0.12m thick deposit of grey silty clay with pockets of sand at the east end of the trench and 0.25m thick car park sub-base of small stone in the west of the trench (2). Underlying this was a layer of dark grey clay (3), 0.12m thick. This was interpreted as a cultivation soil. The natural in the area was a grey-green clay (4).

Cut into the dark grey clay (3) at the east end of the trench was a linear ditch (5) running north to south. It was filled with a dark sandy-clay that contained a fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem. Limited hand sampling revealed that the sides of this ditch sloped inward at approximately 45°. The ditch was not fully excavated due to the high water level. This ditch was later truncated by modern services, leaving a width of only 1.1m undisturbed.

5 FINDS

The fill of the ditch (5) contained a piece of undiagnostic clay tobacco pipe stem and small glass fragment, neither of which were retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The ditch (5) located in trench 1 does not correspond to any features on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876, or to features on the later 1900 and 1921 Ordnance Survey maps. It was either too insignificant or already filled in by the time of the earliest survey.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The ditch appears to be an early post-medieval field boundary that was probably filled in prior to the mid 19th century.

Whilst any decision regarding further work on the site must rest with Oxford City Council, it is the opinion of John Moore Heritage Services that no further archaeological work needs to be conducted regarding the redevelopment of this site.

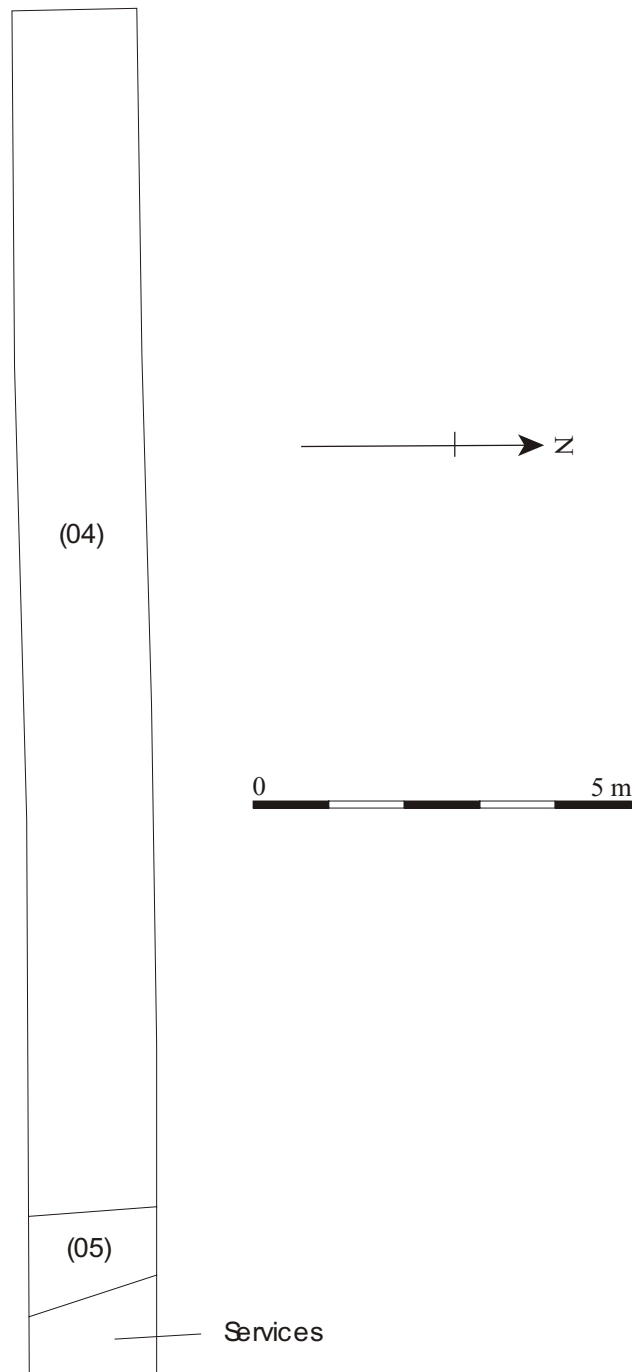


Figure 2. Trench 1 Plan

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Findings	Date
01	Deposit	Hardcore	0.35	Site	Site	-	Modern
02	Deposit	Grey silty clay w/ sand	0.12 - 0.25	Tr.	Tr.	-	Modern
03	Deposit	Dark grey clay	0.12	Tr.	Tr.	-	-
04	Deposit	Grey-green clay	-	Tr.	Tr.	-	Natural
05	Ditch	Linear Ditch	-	1.1+	Tr.	Clay pipe stem	Post Med.