

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT**

**WITTENHAM COURT, HIGH STREET,**

**LONG WITTENHAM, OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SU 5450 9386**

*On behalf of*

*CWD Architects*

**AUGUST 2012**

**REPORT FOR** CWD Architects  
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**Site Code** LWWC12  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services maintained an archaeological watching brief during ground works for a new extension (Planning Ref: P11/S0084) at Wittenham Court, High Street, Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire (SU 5450 9386). The ground works involved the excavation of wall footing trenches around the footprint of the new extension. No archaeological features or finds were observed.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location and Geology (Figure 1)**

The application area is located at Wittenham Court High Street Long Wittenham OX14 4QH (NGR centred SU 5450 9386). The site lies at about 51m OD and the underlying geology is First Terrace (Floodplain) Thames River Gravels with alluvium

### **1.2 Planning Background**

South Oxfordshire District Council had granted permission for a two storey rear extension at Wittenham Court, High Street, Long Wittenham, OX14 4QH (P11/S0084). Due to the potential disturbance of archaeological features a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken and maintained during the period of ground works. This was in line with NPPF and Local Plan policies. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* which outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance was agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS).

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The County Planning Archaeologist had noted that the building concerned lies within an area of some archaeological interest located within the historic core of the village. The site is also located in an area of high potential for archaeological deposits to survive from the prehistoric and Saxon periods. Iron Age pottery and possible 'mud foundations' have been recorded 150m NE of the site (PRN 2845), and Saxon through to medieval features have been recorded 300m SW of the application area (PRN 17140). An Anglo Saxon inhumation cemetery has been recorded 300m south of the site (PRN 2850) and an extensive range of cropmarks, including an Anglo Saxon 'Timber Hall' have been recorded to the south of the High Street (PRN 17217 & 15311).

The above information has been taken from the OCAS's advice and the WSI (JMHS 2012).

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

It was stated within the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012) that the aims of the archaeological watching brief were to:

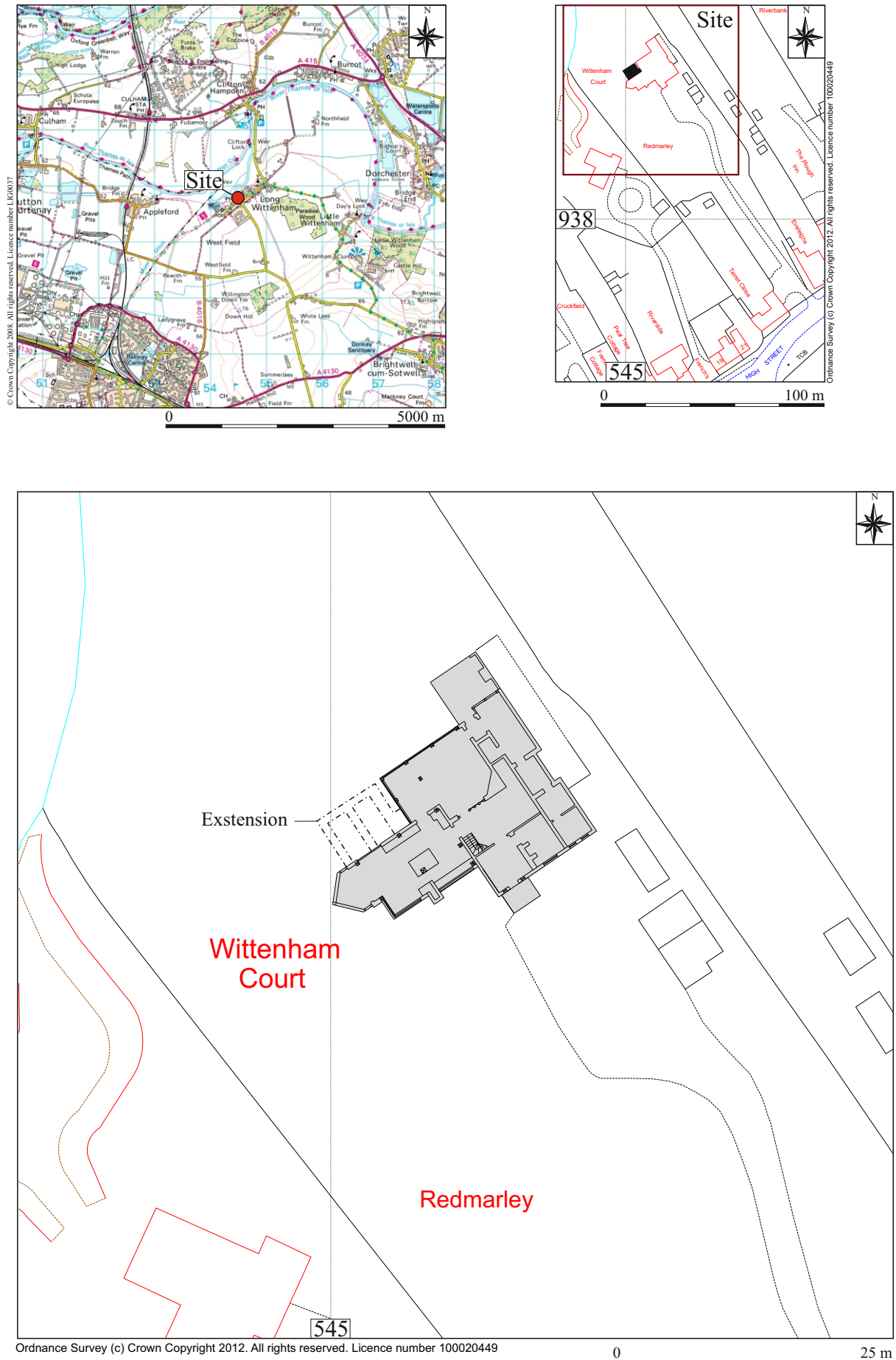


Figure 1. Site location

To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains and in particular to record any evidence relating to Anglo-Saxon activity in the area.

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

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 (1994) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The area of the footprint of the building was reduced, by 0.3m from previous ground level, to form a level surface during the site preparations. The foundation trenches were then excavated from this prepared surface by a tracked excavator fitted with a toothed ditching bucket.

The depths of the trenches were usually at *c.* 0.80m beneath the present ground level. The natural gravel was often reached at *c.* 0.40m beneath the present ground level. The monitored areas included all the new wall footing trenches. There were no new service trenches or soakaways needed at the site.

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 general photographic record was produced, which will form part of the site archive.

### **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.

#### **4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 2)**

The trenches were excavated to a general depth of *c.* 0.80m beneath the present ground surface. The lowest deposit noted within the trenches consisted of light gravels (102). Above the natural gravels was a *c.* 20-0.30m thick dark grey black silty clay topsoil (101).

Above (101) across the northern side of the new extension was *c.* 0.20m thick friable mid brownish grey silty clay (104) with gravels and modern concrete inclusions throughout. Across the southern side of the new extension above (101) was modern loose dark grey silty sand with black and brown soot and ash mottling (103). Both of these deposits were overlain by the previous paving slabs (100).

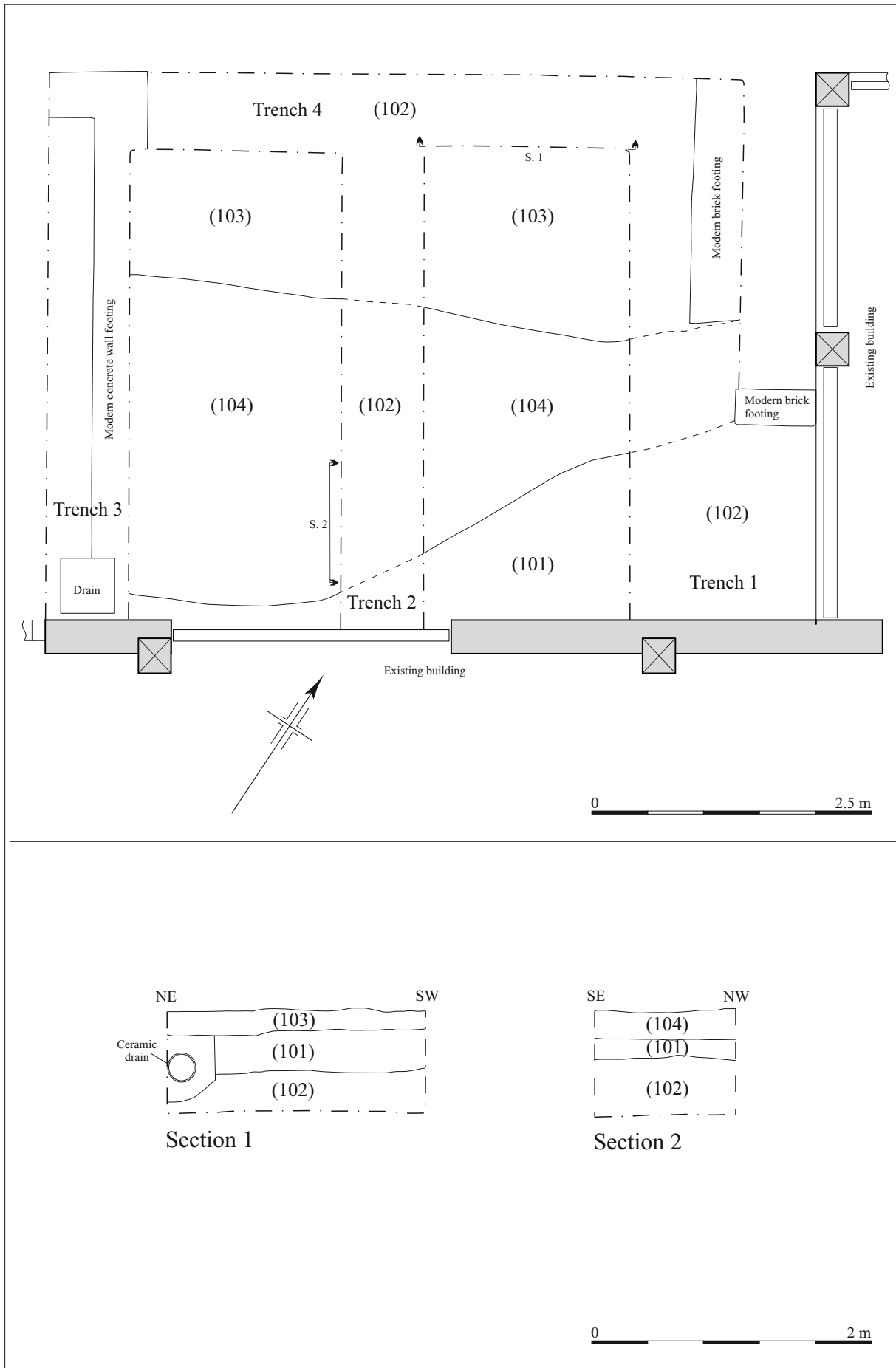


Figure 2. Plan and sections

There were no archaeological features, deposits or finds within the excavations.

#### **4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results**

The excavation of the trenches took place in favourable weather conditions. A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

### **5 FINDS**

There were no archaeological finds recovered from the excavations.

### **6 DISCUSSION**

The archaeological watching brief at the Wittenham Court, Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire provided a useful examination of the potential archaeological deposits across the area of the new extension. The depth of overburden was as expected and directly overlay the undisturbed River Terrace deposits. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

The primary aim at the outset of the investigation was to record any evidence which may relate to the Anglo-Saxon settlement at Long Wittenham. The lack of archaeological features and finds from this watching brief does not necessarily indicate a lack of archaeology within the grounds of the Wittenham Court. The area subject to investigation was very small and close to the river. Saxon settlement remains might be expected closer to the High Street.

As a result of the archaeological watching brief no further information regarding any Anglo-Saxon burials or settlement was ascertained.

### **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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JMHS 2012 P/11 PS008S4; *Wittenham Court, Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire; Written Scheme of Investigation.* Unpub JMHS Doc. 2703 Author Gilbert, D.



Figure 3; Showing Footing trench after excavation looking north (3m scale)



Figure 4; Showing Section of modern footing looking south (1m scale)

