

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT 1, SAND PATH,**

**BECKLEY, OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SP 5649 1091**

*On behalf of*

*Louisa Cohn*

**NOVEMBER 2012**

**REPORT FOR** Louisa Cohn  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief on groundworks at 1 Sand Path, Beckley. No archaeological remains were present.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site location (Figure 1)**

The proposed development site was located on the eastern side of Sand Lane, which is on the south side of Beckley (SP 5649 1091). The site lay at approximately 132m and the underlying geology was Beckley Sand Member. The site was previously in residential use.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission (P10/W1723) for the demolition of the existing house and the erection of a new house, was granted by South Oxfordshire District Council. A condition of the permission required an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during the work. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief. A *Written Scheme of Investigation*, which proposed a suitable methodology to satisfy the requirements of the Brief, was submitted to and accepted by the County Archaeological Services.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The building concerned lay within an area of some archaeological interest located immediately adjacent to the line of the Roman Road from Alchester to Dorchester. An earthen embankment exists on the western side of this route but it is uncertain if this dates from the Roman or Medieval periods (PRN 4832). Three large stone blocks were recorded during the construction of the current houses in the vicinity of the site which are thought likely to date to the Roman Road period. The site is also 113m SW of the location where a number of medieval pottery sherds were recorded (PRN 12498).

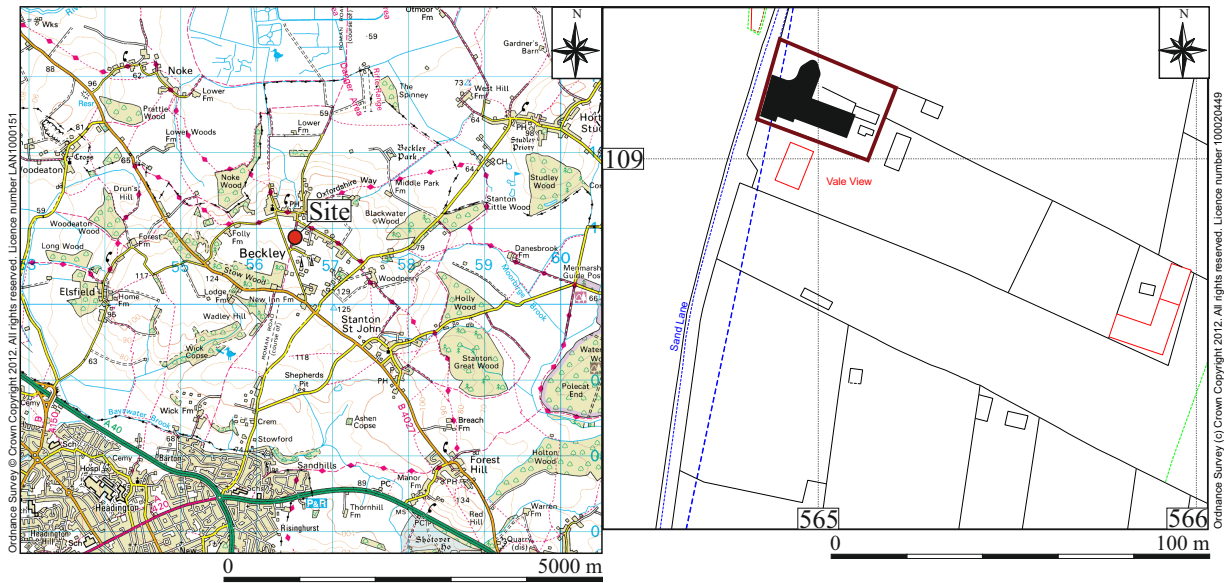
It was therefore considered possible that the development could reveal archaeological deposits related to the Roman Road or to the medieval development of Beckley.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular to record any evidence associated with the former Roman activity and medieval settlement.



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Key  Site outline  Limit of excavation

Figure 1. Site location

### 3 STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

In response to a *Brief* from OCAS a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and agreed with OCAS.

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 (2008) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

#### 3.2 Methodology

Excavation of the proposal area was carried out by the contractor with a 21-tonne 360° under archaeological supervision.

### 4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.



Figure 2. Ground reduction over area of new build

#### 4.1 Field Results

The proposal area for the new build was initially reduced by *c* 300mm (Figs 2 & 3) beneath the previous house. This was monitored across the area. Further excavation was carried out at the front of the property where the ground, which within the property rose in excess of 1.2m to the east, was reduced, under archaeological control to the level of Sand Path (Figs 3 & 4).



Figure 3. Ground reduction beneath former house; excavation to right.

Natural bright yellow sand (3) was attained. Some bedded stone was noted to be occasionally present within the Beckley Sand Member (Fig. 4).

Sealing the natural was a layer of pale orange brown silt sand loam (2), a buried soil horizon undoubtedly representing a former cultivation soil. A number of modern services associated with the previous building were cut into this deposit.

Sealing the buried soil horizon was a layer of dark brown sandy silt loam (1), a garden soil.

#### 4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The watching brief took place during clement conditions between October 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, with excellent cooperation from the on-site contractors.

## 5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

### 5.1 Finds

No finds were recovered during the watching brief.



Figure 4. Investigation area following excavation

### 5.2 Environmental Remains

No palaeoenvironmental samples were taken as the potential was not felt to be sufficient.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief carried out at 1 Sand Path revealed no evidence of earlier activity. Neither the Roman road, nor evidence for medieval activity, was present within the area of the new build. It is possible that the stone previously observed, believed to be part of a Roman road, may well be the stone bedding observed within the Beckley Sand Member.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*