

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

ST JOHN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, ST JOHN'S ROAD,

WALLINGFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 6037 8910

On behalf of

St John's Primary School

August 2013

REPORT FOR St John's Primary School
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief during the ground reduction and excavation of foundation trenches within the footprint of a new extension at St John's Primary School, St John's Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire. No archaeological material or features were discovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

St John's Primary School (NGR SU 6037 8910) is located on St John's Road, Wallingford. The site is located in an area of considerable archaeological potential immediately south of the Saxon walled Town (SM 234) and adjacent to a known early Saxon cemetery (PRN 7791). The proposed extension is on the North East of the building.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission for a new extension to the school (P13/S1326/FUL). Due to the potential presence of significant archaeological remains a condition for an archaeological watching brief during ground works has been attached to the permission as advised by the County Historic and Natural Environment Team (HaNET).

1.3 Archaeological Background

Ten or eleven Saxon burials were recorded during the development of the school in 1910 on the south side of St John's Road and a further three infant burials were recorded during a small excavation for an extension to the school in 2004 (County Historic Environment Record EOX 1803). Two of these burials were located just 4m away from the walls of the school suggesting that the 1910 investigations did not record and recover all of the burials on the site. The burials were found at a depth of 0.6m and therefore any excavations on the site could encounter further human remains.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains, paying particular attention to the location of the early Saxon cemetery.

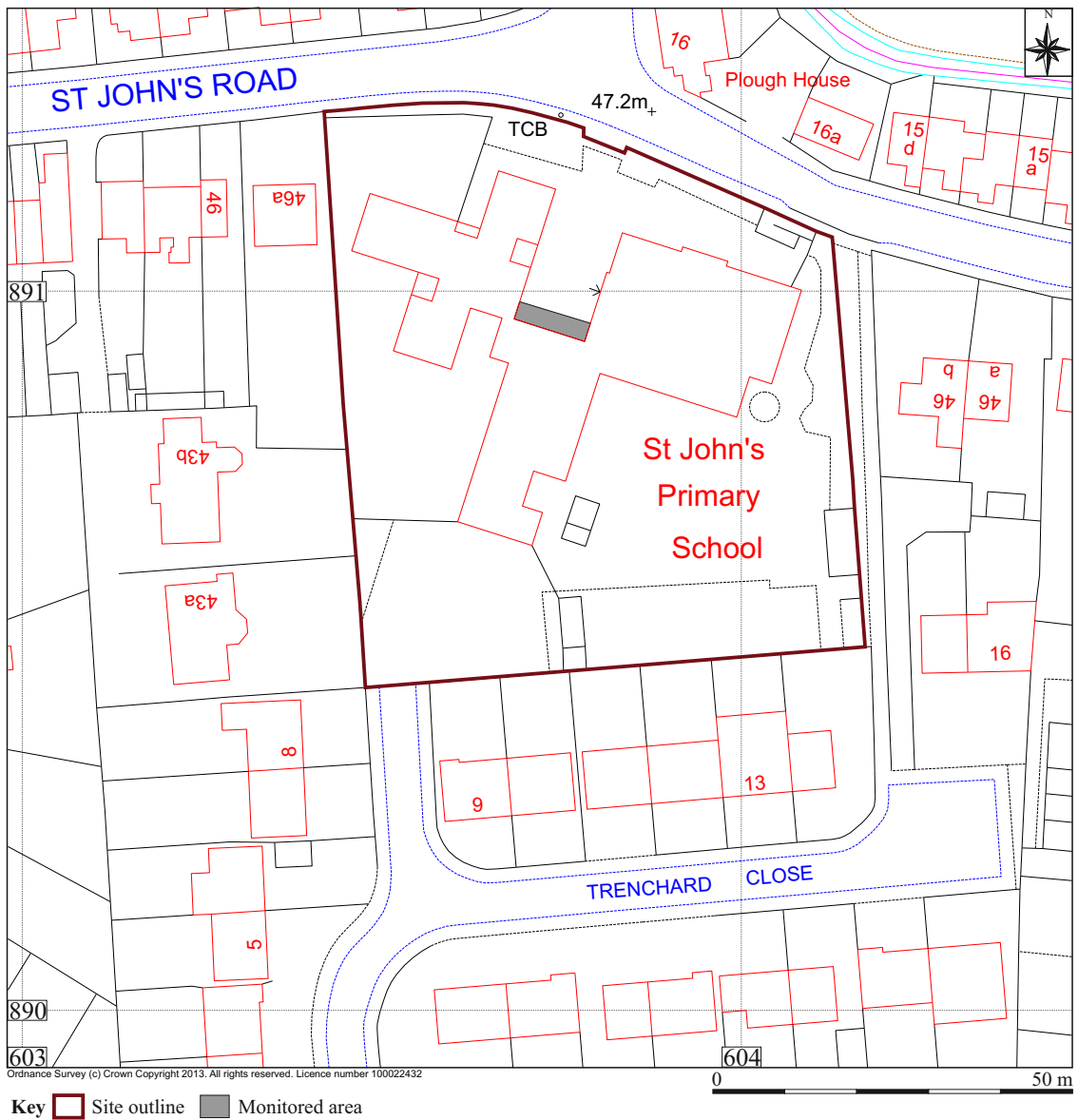
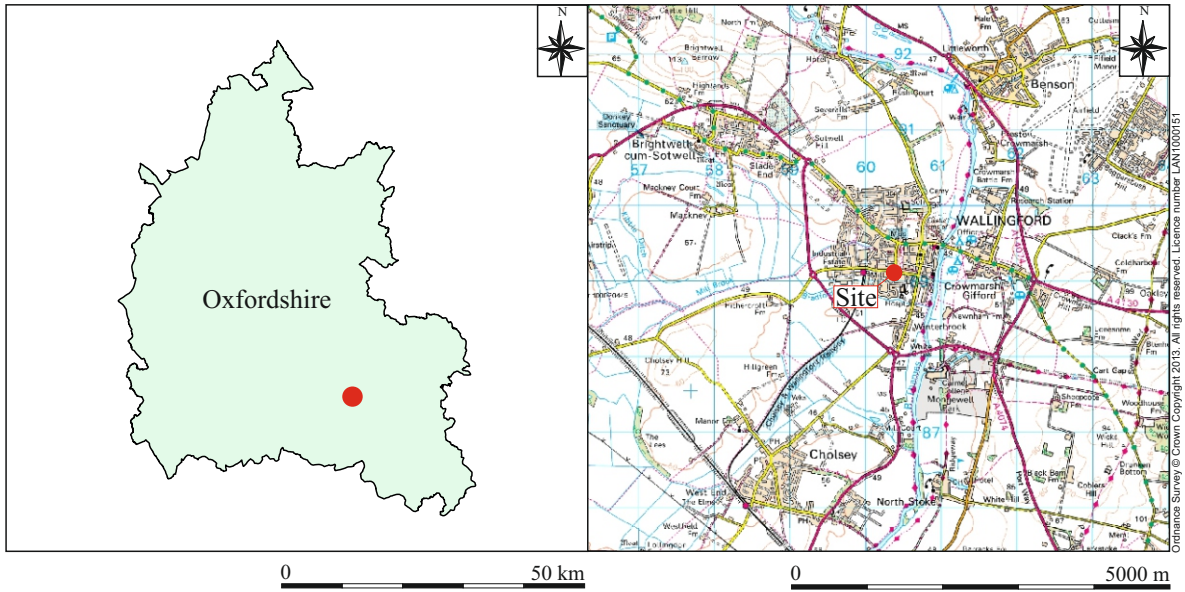


Figure 1: Site location

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with HaNET. 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 compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological or historic building remains. This included the ground reduction below hard surface and make-up material, and excavation for new foundations.

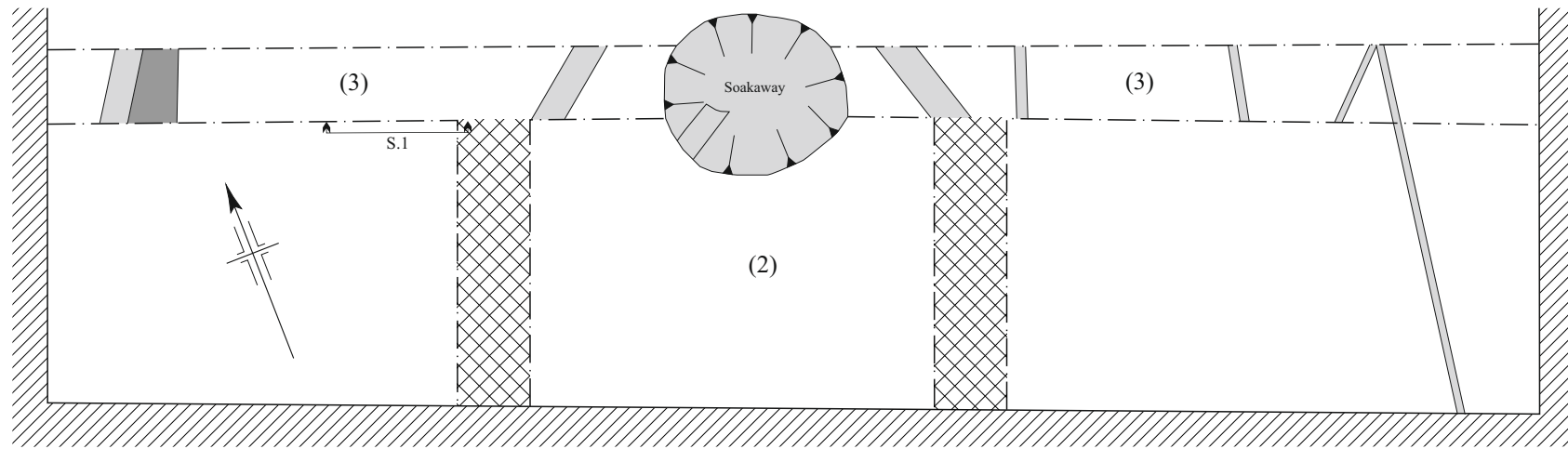
Further excavation of two short foundation trenches (see figure 2) were not monitored due to the results of the first day of excavation (see results, page 3-5). An archaeologist remained on call during day two in the unlikely event that any archaeology would be revealed. This method was prior agreed with the County Planning Archaeologist

The excavated area was recorded by written, drawn and photographic record.

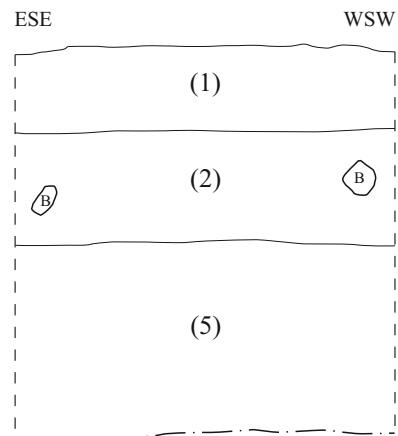
4 RESULTS

Most of context 4, the tarmac and concrete surface, had been removed prior to the site being watched. This removal revealed a 200mm thick, loose, dark grey, humic sandy silty topsoil, context 1 (Figure 2 section; Plate 1). This layer also contained a small amount of angular limestone pebbles, brick fragments and tarmac from the removal of the yard surface. The excavation of the foundation trench in the area of an entrance door to the north west of the area revealed context 3, a 100 to 400 mm thick layer of sand, gravel and rubble hardcore below context 4. Further excavation of the foundations showed contexts 1 and 3 to be deposited above context 2, a mid-brown, slightly orange, slightly loamy, sandy subsoil containing a small amount of brick fragments towards the upper part of the deposit (Figure 2 section; Plate 1). Context 2 was 300 mm to 400 mm deep and lay above context 5, the natural orange sand, which was cut though to a thickness of around 500 mm (Figure 2 section; Plate 1).

The excavation of the foundation trench revealed a large number of service pipes and service pipe trenches (Figure 2). Four of these pipes were cut into, or were laid onto the natural. In the central area of the foundation trench there was a large, rubble filled soakaway that had been capped by a thick concrete lid. The soakaway was greater than a



Plan



Section 1

Key

- Limit of excavation
- Services
- Concrete
- Not monitored
- Existing building
- Brick fargments
- Section line



Figure 2: Plan and section

1m in diameter and cut through the natural sand.

Reduction of the platform inside the area of the new build went down 300 to 400 mm. This reduction went towards the bottom of context 2 and revealed the natural sand in places (Plate 2).

No archaeological features or finds were revealed during this reduction.

Due to the level of disturbance and the direction of the pipe trenches it was not considered necessary for an archaeologist to be present during the excavation of the two remaining small foundation trenches as these would cut through modern disturbance.

5 FINDS

There were no finds recovered during this watching brief.



Plate 1. Section 1 showing layers



Plate 2. Reduction of platform inside foundation trenches

6 DISCUSSION

The potential for the survival of any archaeological remains in the area of the extension was small given the amount of disturbance from service pipes at all levels and due to the space taken by the large brick filled soak-away at the centre of the excavated area. Whilst there may still be potential for the survival of archaeology outside the area of the foundation trenches, as this area was only reduced by 300 to 400 mm, the run of the service pipes would make survival less likely. In conclusion it is possible that archaeology may still survive below the excavated area, where service pipes have not disturbed it, but this is a very small area. No archaeology was found in any of the

foundation trench seen and it is probable that any archaeology in this area had either been removed previously or that there had never been any surviving archaeology in the area of the extension to begin with.

7 ARCHIVE

Due to the negative results and in agreement with the County Archaeological Services no archive has been created for this project.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*