JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

DUNBAR, 41 HIGHFIELD LANE, MAIDENHEAD

NGR SU 86527954

On behalf of

Mrs Anne Wilkinson

NOVEMBER 2013

REPORT FOR	Mrs Anne Wilkinson Dunbar 41 Highfield Lane Maidenhead SL6 3AX
PREPARED BY	Wayne Perkins
ILLUSTRATION BY	Andrej Čelovský
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ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxford OX3 9UZ Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief on the 6th and 7th November 2013 at Dunbar, Highfield Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire. Planning consent had been granted by Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council for a single storey side extension to the existing house requiring the excavation, by mechanical digger, of a series of foundation trenches.

The trenches were dug to between 0.66m and 0.70m wide and to a depth of 1.10m, which was approximately the depth of the chalk. At the north end of the plot the ground had been disturbed to a depth of almost 1m by modern construction work for the existing house, whilst elsewhere a series of geological layers were recorded. No archaeological deposits were encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site, known as Dunbar, is located in a building plot on the south west side of Highfield Lane, Maidenhead (NGR SU 86527954). The site lies at about 34 OD and the underlying geology is Upper Chalk.

1.2 Planning Background

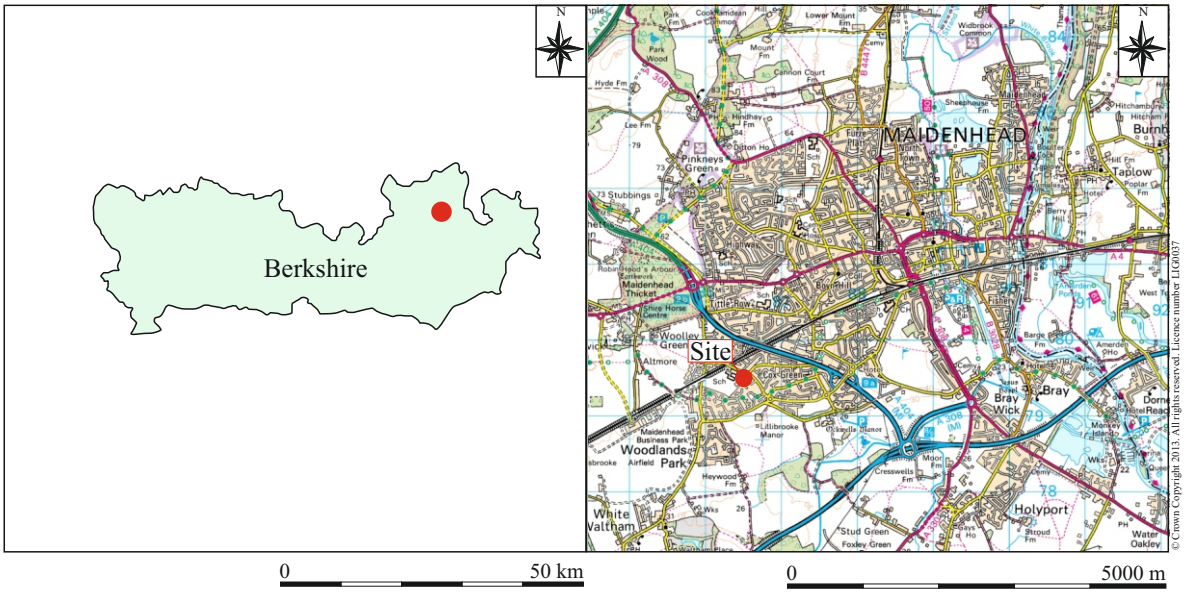
Planning consent had been granted by Winsdor and Maidenhead Borough Council for a single storey side extension (12/20708/FULL). A condition, had been attached to the permission, requiring an archaeological watching brief should be carried out during the work. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) formulated by JMHS outlined the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve, by record, any archaeological remains of significance encountered during the ground-works.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site is identified as being an area of archaeological potential on the Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record. Investigations at Cox Green School/former Holyport Manor Special School have identified the presence of Neolithic-Bronze Age activity (TVAS 2009). Geophysical investigations have demonstrated the presence of further 'below ground' features in the area. Further Prehistoric remains have been recorded approximately 250m south of the site, at Little Lowbrook Farm. Additionally Cox Green Roman Villa is located c.450m north-east of the site.

2 AIMS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

The aims as laid out in the WSI were:



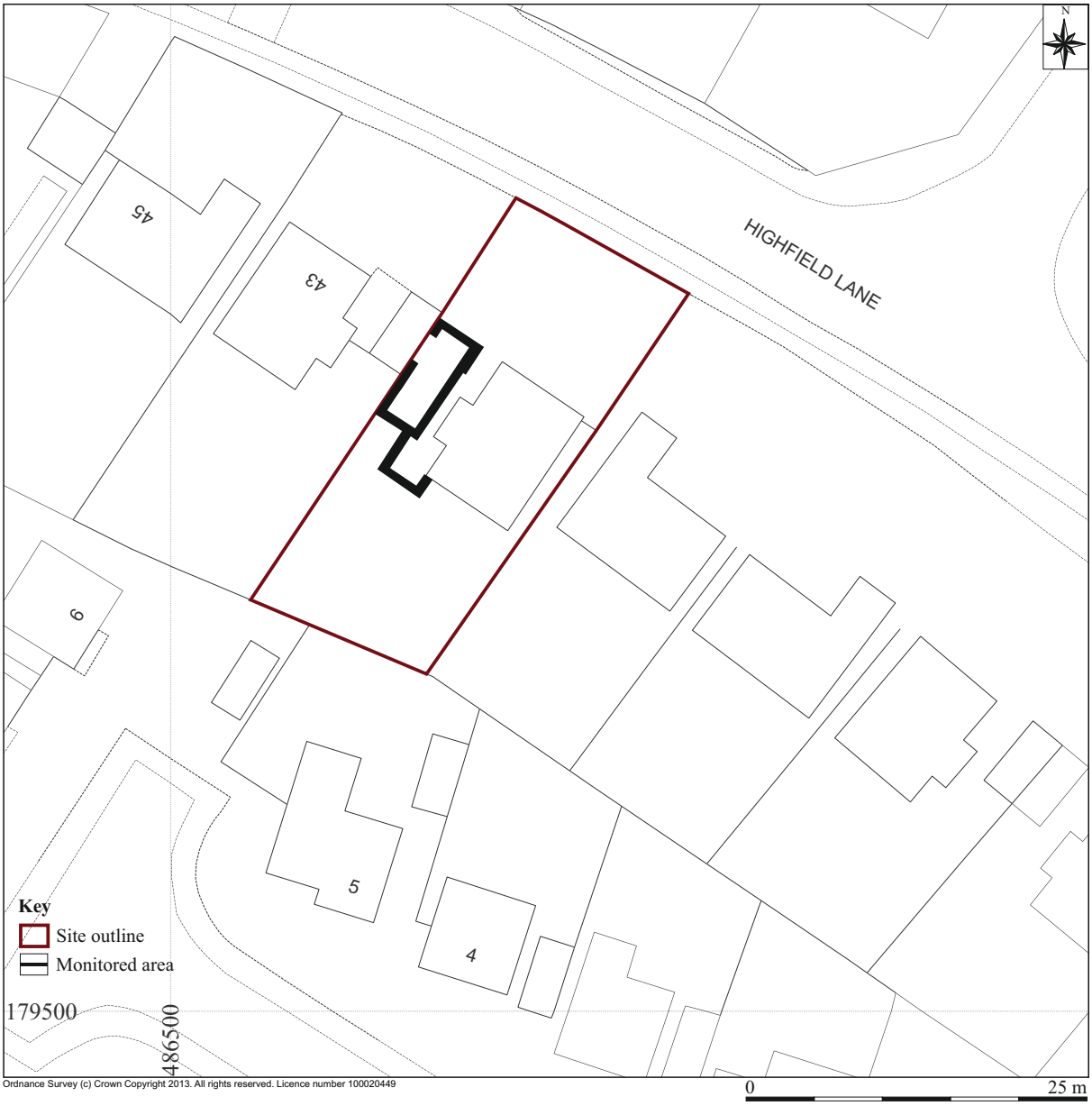


Figure 1: Site location

To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of the excavation of the foundation trenches that had the potential to disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular the watching brief wass intended to provide further evidence for the scale of the Prehistoric activity identified at Cox Green School/former Holyport Manor Special School.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Berkshire Archaeology. 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.

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.

The excavation of the foundation trenches were carried out using a mechanical digger under the supervision of the archaeologist. The layers were excavated incrementally allowing the archaeologist to record soil changes and/or the presence of archaeological features. The excavated trenches were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

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.

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.

4.2 The Foundation Trench

The excavation of the continuous foundation trench was begun against the south wall of the house revealing the house foundations with its concrete platform recorded at being to a depth of 0.82m below the current ground level. The new foundation

trenches were excavated another 0.29m in depth past these foundations to reach the solid bedrock.

The dark brown clayey-silt topsoil (101,) at 0.24m thick, overlay the subsoil (102) which was mid-brown-orangey sandy clay, which had the appearance of a 'brick earth.' As opposed to being a 'true' subsoil it could have been interpreted as a geological layer considering its make-up of pure, sandy clay. Near to the south wall of the house it was only 0.17m thick but it varied greatly across the site to up to 0.41m in depth in the centre of the plot. Furthermore, the base of the deposit undulated and dipped into the first layer of the natural geology (103) below. This same layer (102), was stripped but not described in the TVAS Archaeological Recording Action of 2009 but it may indeed be a Langley Silt Complex as it had many characteristics of that type of deposit. It was seen to have collapsed or run into a number of voids and undulations caused by bioturbation.

In some areas where this layer (102) dipped into the layer below, it was recorded as being a separate feature. Therefore, both 108 and 110 had the appearance, in section, of being possible archaeological features yet their attendant fills, (107) and (109) respectively, contained no finds, no flecks of charcoal nor any evidence for being anthropic in nature. Cut 110 was funnel-shape in profile but directly under a tree stump removed by the contractors - so it is safe to assume that it was the trace of the 'tap root' for that tree. The fill, (109) was a pure, sandy clay containing no other traces other than smaller roots. Lacking any kind of dating material or evidence for having been archaeological in nature, these features will have to be, for the moment, consigned to being variations in the geological layer.

Below (102) and next to be encountered was layer (103), the first, true layer of solid geology, which was a compacted, mid-beige chalky clay with a high sand content 0.24m thick. It overlay another band or layer of tenacious, dark beige sandy clay, characterised by pockets of mid brown clay (10%), heavily flecked with inclusions of degraded chalk (20%) and with a few nodules of flint (1%). The off-white chalk natural was reached at a depth of around 1m – 1.10m.

The foundation trenches ran for 12m south-west to north-east parallel to the existing house. In the northern portion, at around the half way mark, the sections revealed disturbance from modern building works, as well as service and drainage trenches obliterating most layers down to the chalk natural. A few additional variations in the natural were recorded.

5 FINDS

There were no archaeological deposits identified or finds recovered. The building rubble seen in the sections to the north of the site were not retained as they were of modern manufacture.

6 DISCUSSION

No evidence for prehistoric activity was detected and no worked flint apparent in the top and sub soils as recorded to the north at Holyport Manor Special School during an A.R.A. (TVAS 2009). In comparison, the A.R.A. was a (small scale) open area

excavation, methodically stripped by layer, whilst in this case the foundation trenches only allowed a restricted window for observation. Furthermore, the northern section of the land plot at Dunbar had been seriously disturbed during the building of the house. Nevertheless, the narrow foundation trenches allowed the identification of geological, if not archaeological, layers.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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