

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**WAYSIDE, 8 GREEN LANE, WARBOROUGH,**

**OXFORDSHIRE**

*On behalf of*

*The Rev and Mrs Godfrey*

**OCTOBER 2013**

**REPORT FOR** The Rev and Mrs Godfrey  
c/o The Anderson Orr Partnership Ltd  
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**REPORT ISSUED** 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013

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**JMHS Project No:** 2887  
**Site Code** WBGL 13  
**Accession No.** OXCMS: 2013.101

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## **Summary**

*A watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services over four separate days between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2013. A series of foundation trenches for a new house and garage within the building plot on Green Lane were excavated by the building contractors using a mechanical digger.*

*Although the trenches themselves were comparatively narrow, a number of alluvial layers associated with the nearby River Thames were identified although no archaeological features were found.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development is located at 8 Green Lane, Warborough, Oxfordshire (SP 5972 9338). The underlying geology is shown as 1<sup>st</sup> (1b Flood Plain) Terrace Deposits (BGS 254).

### **1.2 Planning Background**

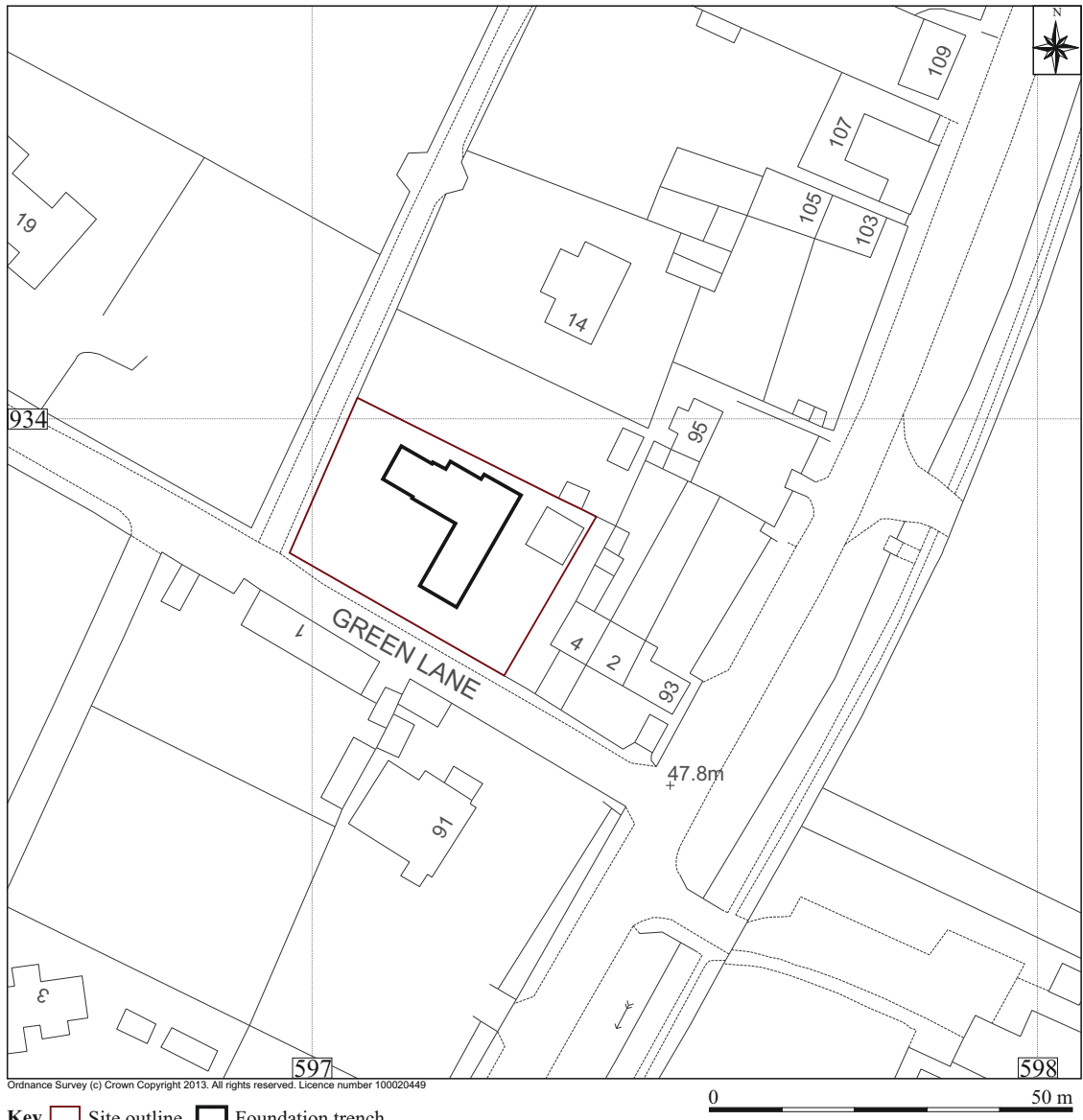
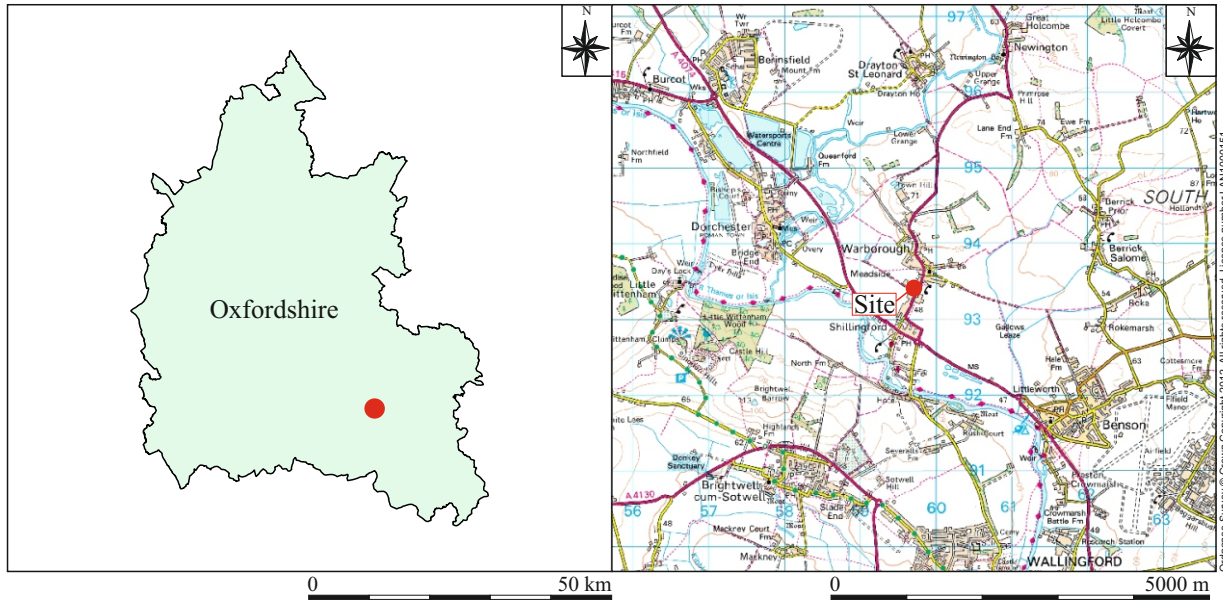
Planning permission had been granted for the demolition of an existing bungalow and its replacement with a new dwelling and detached garage (P13/0653/FUL). Due to the potential disturbance of archaeological features it had been recommended that a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief was undertaken and maintained during the period of ground-works. This is in line with NPPF and Local Plan policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) has been consulted for such archaeological work.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site is located in an area of considerable archaeological potential to the south of the historic core of the village. The Scheduled Ancient Monument of Warborough Ring Ditch, Cursus, Enclosures and Settlement site (SM 114) is located just 380m to the east of the proposal site. Another Scheduled Ancient Monument of a Romano-British Settlement site is located 900m to the south east of the site (SM 31432). These two sites are known from cropmarks, seen from aerial photography. Further cropmarks 180m west of the proposal site have been interpreted as a further, undated, settlement site consisting of enclosures and trackways (PRN 12306). A number of these trackways head towards the proposal area and it was considered likely that they would continue into the site.

## **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.
- In particular: to record any evidence of archaeological remains relating to Prehistoric and Roman activity.



Key  Site outline  Foundation trench

Figure 1: Site location

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of the ground-works that were considered to have the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains which in this case included the removal of the present house foundations.

Any archaeological deposits and features discovered were to have been cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Any archaeological features or other remains i.e. concentrations of artefacts, were to be recorded by means of written, drawn and photographic record. Where archaeological features were to be exposed during any ground reduction (but which remained unaffected) were to be recorded only in plan and a written description made with any surface finds collected. Where remains were to be impacted upon then they were to be sample excavated. Any variation to this would had to have been agreed with the County Archaeological Services, on behalf of the local planning authority.

An experienced archaeological Supervisor undertook the site monitoring and recording under the overall direction of D Gilbert MifA.

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The first phase consisted of topsoil stripping and a general tidying of the site following the demolition and removal of the earlier residence.

The second phase was the excavation by mechanical digger with a toothed bucket 66cm wide of the foundation trenches for the proposed new dwelling, undertaken whilst 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.

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 trenches were filled with concrete after recording.

### **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.

During the topsoil stripping phase the outline and foundation trenches of the demolished building were visible 'in plan' but no other features were observed.

During the excavation of the foundation trenches a consistent sequence of layers were observed across the site with very little variation following surveillance of the trench digging.

The removal of the topsoil (101) at around 11cm in depth revealed the subsoil (102) 0.23m thick which was identified as being alluvial in nature as it appeared as a band of dark brown-greyish sandy clay. It was considered that any historic features would have to be cut into this layer whilst any prehistoric features would probably have been sealed underneath. Layer (102) had a high sand /mica content and was probably derived from the River Thames, and is likely to be evidence for a series of flooding/inundation events on the Thames floodplain.

This alluvium sealed a possible relict land surface layer (103) 0.27m thick, as it possessed a far siltier property than (102) and was recorded as a dark grey sandy-silt. This was considered to possess the best potential for providing evidence of prehistoric activity, specifically the potential for flint scatters and/or isolated knapped flint(s).

A number of variations were noted in (103), mainly the presence of lines or rivulets of dark blue clay which seem to be associated with bioturbation and the presence of tree roots. One linear (although meandering) feature was investigated with the excavation of a small slot and was found to contain a dark-grey-bluish clay fill (106) c.0.29m deep. The channel's profile [107] was inconsistent with it being a man made feature and therefore was considered to be either a natural water channel or root tunnel.

Layer (103) sat upon the underlying sand and gravel geology (referred to as the 'natural') recorded in two distinct layers but which themselves contained numerous, finer layers. Firstly, layer (104) c.0.39m thick, was a mid-brown orangey clay-sand which contained the characteristic 'sandwich' effect of clay laminations (suggestive of clays laid down in 'low energy' environments) interspersed with fine sand and gravel layers (suggestive of deposits laid down in 'high energy' environments such as flooding or inundations) which accord with the expected dynamics of a site within the River Thames meander corridor and floodplain. Below this a beige coloured, fine sand and gravel layer (105) was encountered at around 1m where excavation was stopped in accord with the building specifications.

No anthropic features were observed but a geological log was excavated on the south facing wall of the north trench to illustrate the layers that represented the make-up of the site.

## **5 FINDS**

No finds were made during the watching brief.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The observations made during the course of the works confirmed that the site was close enough to the river to have been affected by its annual floods and inundations in the past. In turn, the resulting alluvial silts and clays were capable of 'masking' potential prehistoric activity in the area.

The combined area exposed by the foundations trenches was itself small by comparison to the open area excavations necessary for the detection and

understanding of most prehistoric sites. However, the layers had been closely monitored and sampled during their excavation and in this case no archaeological remains were revealed nor finds discovered.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	Date
101	Layer	Dark grey brownish sandy silt	0.00 - 0.11	tr.	tr.	-	Modern
102	Layer	Dark brown greyish Sandy Clay	0.11 – 0.34	tr.	Tr.	-	-
103	Layer	Dark grey Sandy Silt	0.34- 61	tr.	Tr.	-	-
104	Layer	Mid Brown Orangey Clay Sand	0.61-1.00	tr.	tr.	-	-
105	Layer	Soft Beige Fine Sand & Gravel (mm)	1.00-1.10	tr.	tr.	-	-
106	Fill	Tenacious Dark Grey Blueish Clay	0.29	0.35	0.60	-	-
107	Cut	Channel or Natural Gully	0.29	0.35	0.60	-	-