

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**LAWN UPTON HOUSE, SANDFORD ROAD,**

**LITTLEMORE, OXFORD**

**NGR SP 5374 0263**

*On behalf of*

*Vanderbilt Homes*

**FEBRUARY 2014**

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<b>REPORT FOR</b>	Vanderbilt Homes The Old Rectory Windsor End Beaconsfield Buckinghamshire HP9 2JW
<b>PREPARED BY</b>	Gavin Davis
<b>ILLUSTRATION BY</b>	Gavin Davis
<b>EDITED BY</b>	John Moore
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<b>ENQUIRES TO</b>	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ  Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: <a href="mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk">info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</a>
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief during ground reduction and the excavation of foundation trenches at Lawn Upton House, Littlemore. The excavations revealed layers of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural sand and isolated layers of stone. The only identified feature was modern and none of the building material recovered from the site was considered to be any earlier than the Victorian period.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site is located at Lawn Upton House, Sandford Road, Littlemore, Oxford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP53740263). The site comprises the grounds of Lawn Upton House, consisting of outbuildings, lawn, drive and mounded garden feature, the latter which is to be retained.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Oxford City Council granted planning permission for the erection of 22 residential units consisting of 5 x 1-bed, 9 x 2-bed and 8 x 3-bed flats, provision for 29 car parking spaces, cycle parking and landscaping at Lawn Upton House, Sandford Road, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 4PU. A condition of the permission stated that a programme of archaeological work would be implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site is of interest because it lies within a landscape of extensive and dispersed Roman manufacturing activity related to the nationally important local Roman pottery industry. In 1995 an archaeological evaluation by Thames Valley Archaeological Services identified two small pits and a ditch along with a small amount of residual 12th – 15th century pottery and a piece of possible kiln daub (TVAS 1995). These features were located 56m north of the maintenance depot site. Trenches directly north of the depot did not identify any significant features in this area. Subsequently a watching brief by Oxford Archaeology in 1996 failed to identify any further features (OA 1996).

A watching brief was also undertaken during the construction of buildings for John Henry Newman Primary School directly east of the site by Tempus Reparatum in 1994. No significant features were identified (Tempus Reparatum 1994). John Moore Heritage Services undertook a two-phase archaeological evaluation at nearby Speedwell First School in 2002 and 2005 (JMHS 2002; JMHS 2005). Here a small amount of Roman pottery was discovered along with two undated gullies 30m south west of the maintenance depot site.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims were to record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks, paying particular regard to the potential for Roman and medieval activity.

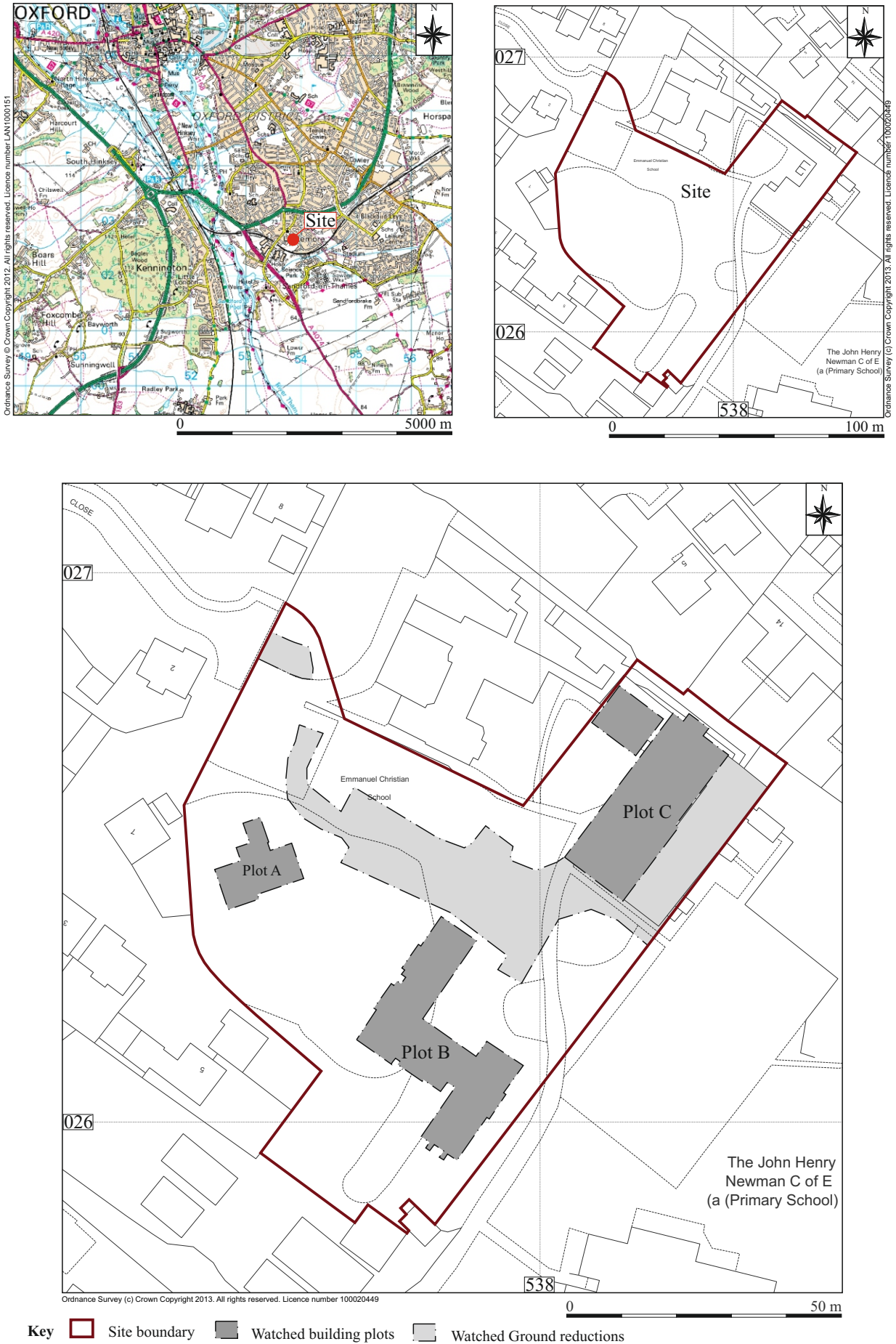


Figure 1: Site location

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxford City Council. 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**

A detailed watching brief was undertaken during the course of groundworks that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This occurred during ground reduction below the level of topsoil that had the potential to reveal the archaeological horizon, and during the excavation for new foundations. The excavation of the service trenches were not monitored due to the absence of archaeological remains in the earlier groundworks. This was agreed with the Oxford City Archaeological Officer. An archaeologist maintained a continuous presence on site during the course of all work that would potentially reveal, disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

Any archaeological features or other remains i.e. concentrations of artefacts, were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record.

### **4 RESULTS**

Excavation on the site started with the stripping of an area prior to the laying of the site road and parking areas (Fig. 1). The highest layer, context (01) was very loose, dark brown, sandy silt. This layer was between 0.2m and 0.3m deep and contained fragments of brick and tile. Below this layer was context (02) which was a soft mid orange brown loamy sand. This layer was only excavated through by around 0.1m. Running north east across the centre of this area were the remains of modern service trenches but no archaeology was identified.

During the excavation of the foundations for Plot A several soil layers were identified but no archaeology was discovered (Fig. 2 plan and section). The highest layer (100) was described as garden landscaping and was between 0.65m and 0.8m thick. This had been deposited above context (101) described as a friable, dark brown sandy silt. This context featured moderate to rare flecks of degraded stone and very rare flecks of charcoal. Context (101) was identified as the original topsoil layer lying below recent landscaping. Below context (101), context (102) was a natural compact, mid-orange brown, silty sand. The layer contained a very small amount of small rounded pebbles of a centimetre or less in size and, in thin bands, a small amount of degraded stone. The layer was described as undulating between 0.2m and 0.4m thick. Context (102) lay above (103) which was identified as a layer of greyish white

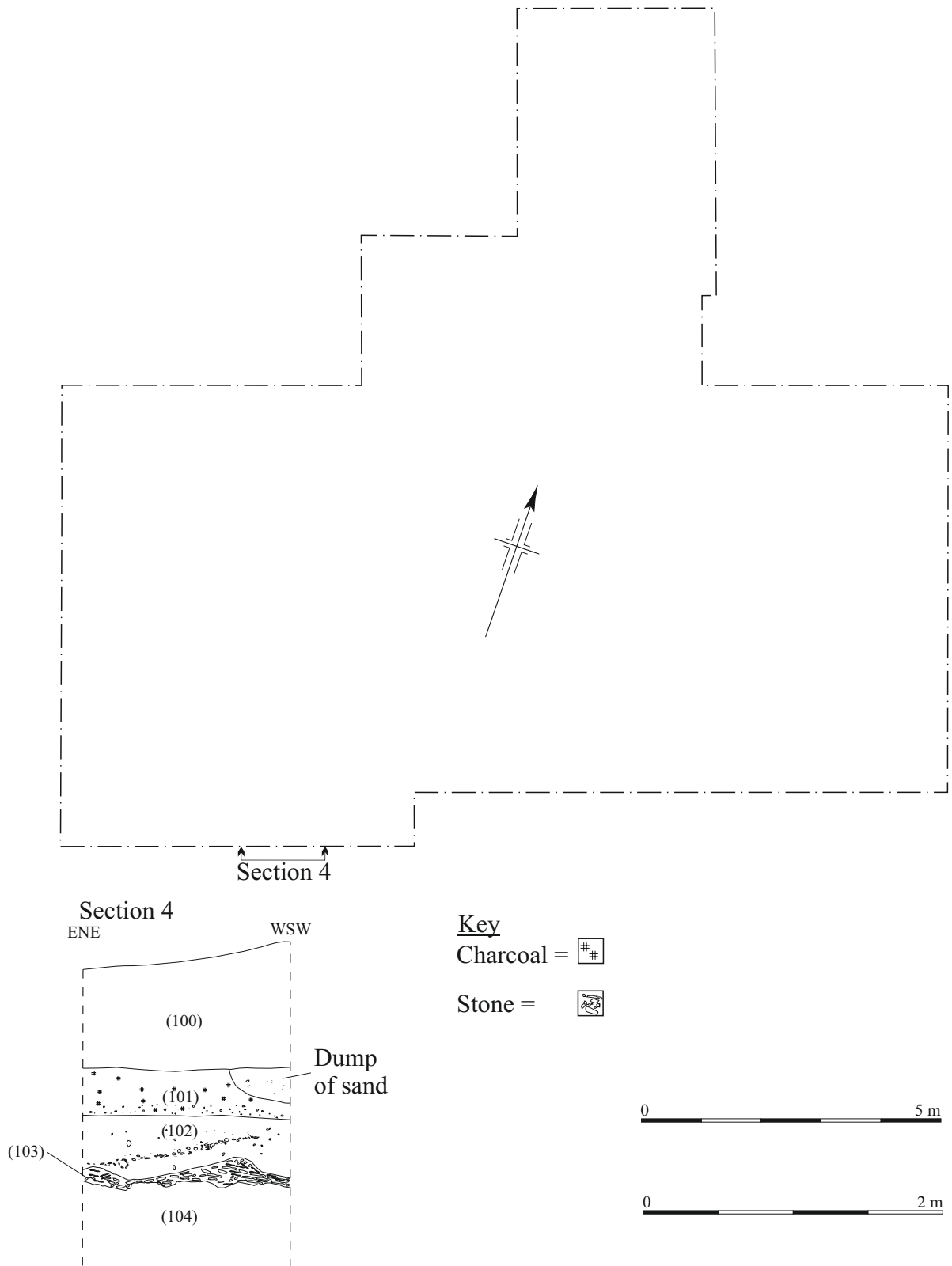


Figure 2: Plot A Excavated Area Plan and Section 4

stone in broken and undulating horizontal layers. Context 103 had sand inclusions at around 20 per cent and varied in thickness between 0.2 and 0.03m. The lowest excavated layer was a friable mid yellow fine natural sand. The layer was excavated though to a thickness of 0.57m.

The area of Plot C was excavated but no apparent pre-Victorian remains were identified.

The excavation of Area B only revealed modern remains (Fig. 3, plan and sections, Plate 1). The highest layer, context (03) was a loose dark brown, silty sandy soil with a large amount of humus. This layer was between 0.1 and 0.3m thick and was probably the same as context (01) and possibly the same as context (101). Below (03) was a slightly loamy mid to dark-brown sand, context (04) which was between 0.4 and 0.6m thick. Below context (04) was a layer of natural dark orange brown sand, context (05) which was 0.4m deep. Context (05) lay above context (06) which was a natural greyish white layer of stone, and context (07) which was a layer of light orange yellow natural sand. Context (06) was a fragmentary band which appeared more chalky in places and greyer and more stony in other places (Fig. 3, section 2 & 3, plate 2 & 3). Context (06) was between 0.1m and 0.3m in thickness. It was not a continuous layer and was probably of the same nature as context (103) from the excavation for Plot A. Context (06) was identified as being another natural deposit which sat above the lowest seen natural layer, context (07).

Cut into context (04) was context 08. Context 08 was rectangular in plan and was around 11m in length and 1.2m in depth. The revealed side of the cut in section was concave and shallow for the first 0.6 m then dropping to a very steep almost vertical angle to the base of the cut. Context 08 was filled by context (09) a friable layer of dark brown sandy silty loam with a high humus content. Context (09) contained a moderate to sparse inclusion of brick and tile fragments and a sparse amount of stone. Below (09) was context (10) a layer of rounded pebbles in a degraded concrete which was 0.1 to 0.2m thick. Context (10) was deposited above and was part of the construction of context (11) which was a concrete base. Context (11) was 100 to 300mm thick and was revealed to a width of 2.6m and a length of 11m. It was not clear if context 08 was the foundation cut to context (11) or if it was part of a more recent excavation and infilling of this feature (figure 3 plan, section 1). It was described by workmen on the site as being a filled-in pool but maps show that it was part of a foundation for one of the prefabricated school buildings that stood on the site.

Towards the north east part of Plot B the stratigraphy was less diverse. The natural sand of context (07) was overlaid by natural context (05) and the fragmentary layer (06) in places. These layers were overlain by context (03) (Fig. 3, section 2, plate 2).

## **5 FINDS**

There were no finds recovered during the watching brief.





Figure 3: Plot B excavated area plan and Sections 1-3



Plate 1. Section 1



Plate 2. Section 2



Plate 3. Section 3

## 6 DISCUSSION

The excavations revealed no archaeology on the site. Most material identified was Victorian at the earliest and was brick and tile. The only feature identified was a concrete base which was related to a prefabricated school building that existed on the site.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper record

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site records

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to Oxfordshire Museum Service with accession number OXCMS:2013.148

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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