

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**LAND AT CORAL SPRINGS, THORNEY LEYS,  
WITNEY, OXFORDSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**NGR SP 3390 0900**

*On behalf of*

*CgMs Consulting*

**August 2014**

**REPORT FOR** CgMs Consulting  
Burlington House  
Lypiatt Road  
Cheltenham  
GL50 2SY

**PREPARED BY** Gavin Davis

**EDITED BY** John Moore

**ILLUSTRATION BY** Gavin Davis

**FIELDWORK** 7<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014

**REPORT ISSUED** 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014

**ENQUIRES TO** John Moore Heritage Services  
Hill View  
Woodperry Road  
Beckley  
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ

Tel/Fax 01865 358300  
Email: [info@jmheritageservices.co.uk](mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk)

**Site Code** WYTL 14  
**JMHS Project No:** 3005

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
<b>2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 STRATEGY</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
<b>4 RESULTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5 FINDS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>5</b>
 <b>FIGURES</b>	
Figure 1. Site location	2
Plate 1            Section 1	4
Plate 2            Section 2	4
Plate 3            Section 3	4

## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at Coral Springs, Thorney Leys, Witney. The observed area was a large basement that was excavated to a depth of 2m to 3m though deep layers of dumping from the Deer Park and Thorney Leys developments. Monitoring of the excavation took place once the original ploughsoil had been identified. The excavation revealed natural clay below the subsoil which was deposited above limestone. No archaeological features or finds were identified.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The proposal site is located west of Curbridge Road and south of Thorney Leys in Witney (SP 3390 0900). The geology is the junction of Head over Forest Marble, Cornbrash and Oxford Clay. It is rough pasture and the field has been used for landfill from material arising from the Deer Park and Thorney Leys developments.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

West Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission for erection of retirement community comprising sixty care bedrooms, forty-six care suites and seventy-nine care apartments at Land at Coral Springs, Thorney Way, Witney (12/1037/P/FP). A condition for an archaeological watching brief has been attached in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

In 1974-5 work on the Witney by-pass uncovered a Romano British settlement and cemetery. The Oxford Archaeological Unit undertook an excavation of part of it (Chambers 1976). The settlement appears to have been established during the first century AD and there was no evidence of later Iron Age activity. The limited excavation revealed pits, ditches, post-holes and buildings. The buildings had stone foundations supporting timber framed buildings and stood adjacent to cobbled areas. The full extent of the settlement was not established.

During the fourth century AD the settlement was abandoned and after a period of time the site was used as a cemetery. Thirty burials were identified and they appear to date to the end of the Romano British period. Three graves contained supine beheaded inhumations with the heads laid near the feet. This practice is found during the late Roman and more frequently in the early Anglo Saxon period. The abandonment of the settlement and the establishment of a cemetery suggest the presence nearby of a late Roman settlement which perhaps was still functioning during the early Anglo Saxon period.

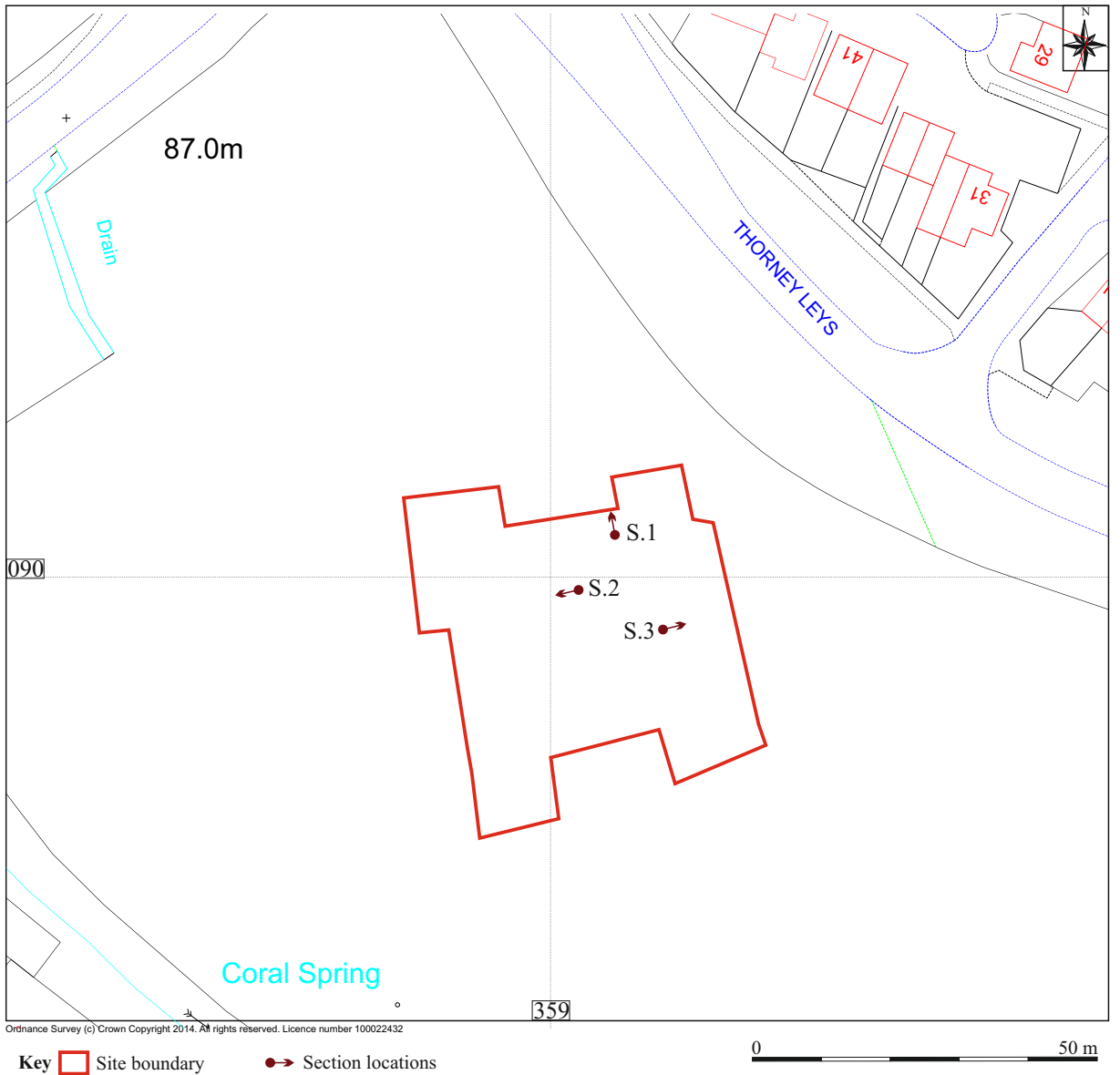
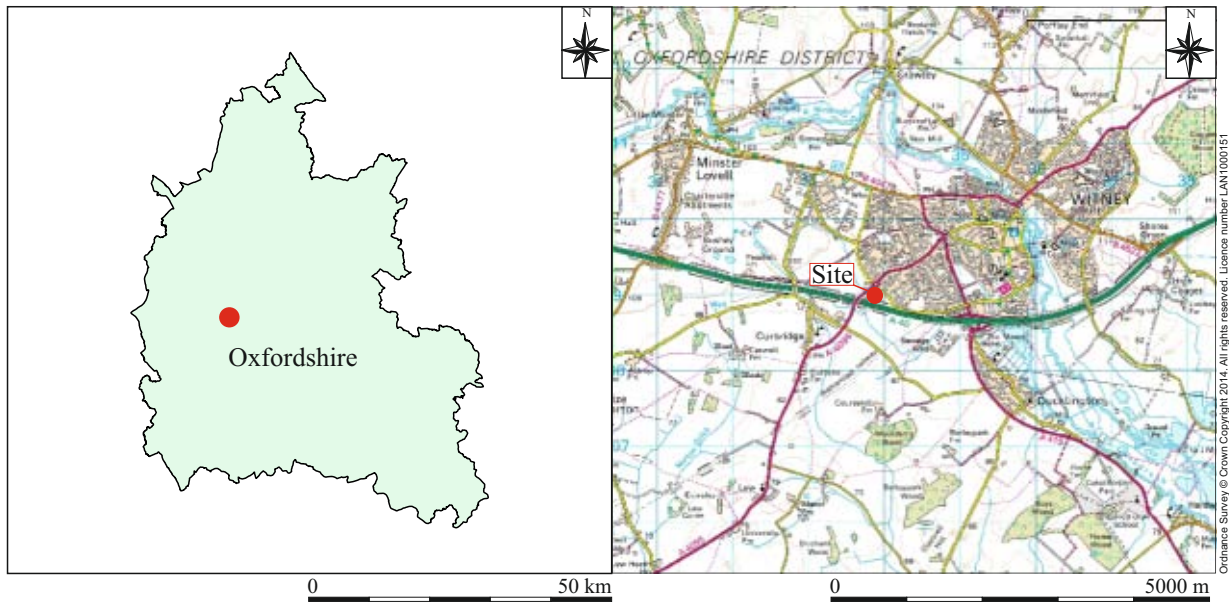


Figure 1: Site location

## **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 remains of the known Romano British settlement and cemetery known to the south that may extend into the site.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with photographs, 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 groundworks that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This was for the ground reduction for the basement construction.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed were to be 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 written, drawn and photographic record.

## **4 RESULTS**

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

Deep layers of landfill from the nearby Deer Park and Thorney Leys developments covered the site and it was established that all ground works except for the basement excavations would not penetrate the original soil horizons below the landfill. The excavation for the basement covered an area of around 50m by 45m. The overburden was made up of six or more layers of dumped earth rubble and rubbish and was in excess 2m to 3m in places (Plate 1, see Fig. 1 for location). Once these layers were removed down to the original ploughsoil the remaining excavations were carried out under archaeological supervision in an east to west direction. The lowest layer on the site was a layer of broken orange limestone (10) identified during geotechnical test pitting. Deposited above this was a layer of blue grey clay (09) that was between 0.4

and 0.6m deep and was identified as a natural layer (Plate 2). Above context (09) was a subsoil of mid yellow brown sandy clay loam (08) that was between 0.1 and 0.07m thick. Deposited above this was a dark brown humic sandy soil with black smears (07). This was identified as the original ploughsoil horizon. Context (07) was 0.08m thick and had been mostly removed from the east side of the excavation. On the east side of the site (Plate 3) deposited above the natural clay (09) was a firm mid to dark grey clay loam with a crumbly appearance, context (12). Context (12) was 0.08m thick and contained very rare burnt flecks. Deposited above (12) was context (11) a friable mid brown sandy loam that was 0.13m thick and contained a moderate amount of small stone.

There were no archaeological features present and the only cut features were stone filled field drains.



Plate 1. Section 1



Plate 2. Section 2



Plate 3. Section 3

## **5 FINDS**

All finds were later 20<sup>th</sup> century and were not retained.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

No finds or features were identified across any part other than modern field drains and modern material.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Chambers, R,A, 1976 A Romano-British Settlement at Curbridge, *Oxoniensia* **41**, 38-55

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