

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

3 HIGH STREET, ASTON,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 3392 0302

On behalf of

Jack James Homes Ltd

JANUARY 2015

REPORT FOR Jack James Homes Ltd
colingoodgame@hotmail.co.uk

PREPARED BY Mark Woodley

ILLUSTRATION BY Autumn Robson

FIELDWORK 21st October – 5th November 2014

REPORT ISSUED 8th January 2015

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

Tel: 01865 358300
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

Site Code: ANHS14
JMHS Project No: 3142
Archive Location: The archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum
Services
Accession No: Awaited

CONTENTS

<i>SUMMARY</i>	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	1
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4 RESULTS	3
4.1 Field Results	3
5 FINDS	6
5.1 Pottery	6
5.2 Animal Bone	7
5.3 Coins	7
6 DISCUSSION	8
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	8
PLATES	
Plate 1 View of the Wall Foundation 114	4
Plate 2 View to west of ditches 115, 122 & 124	4
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site location	2
Figure 2 Plans and sections	5

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services undertook an archaeological watching brief during the initial construction phase of development on this site between 21st October and 5th November 2014. The foundations of a c.17th century wall and three early period medieval ditches were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the north side of the High Street between the junctions with Ham Lane and Back Lane (NGR SP33920302). It is situated at about 69m OD and the underlying geology is sand and gravel overlying Oxford Clay. The site currently contains 3 High Street within a small garden with shrubs and trees.

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission for erection of a two storey extension to the existing dwelling and erection of an attached dwelling with associated parking (14/1082/P/FP). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits planning conditions have been attached to the permission requiring the implementation of an archaeological watching brief.

1.3 Archaeological Background

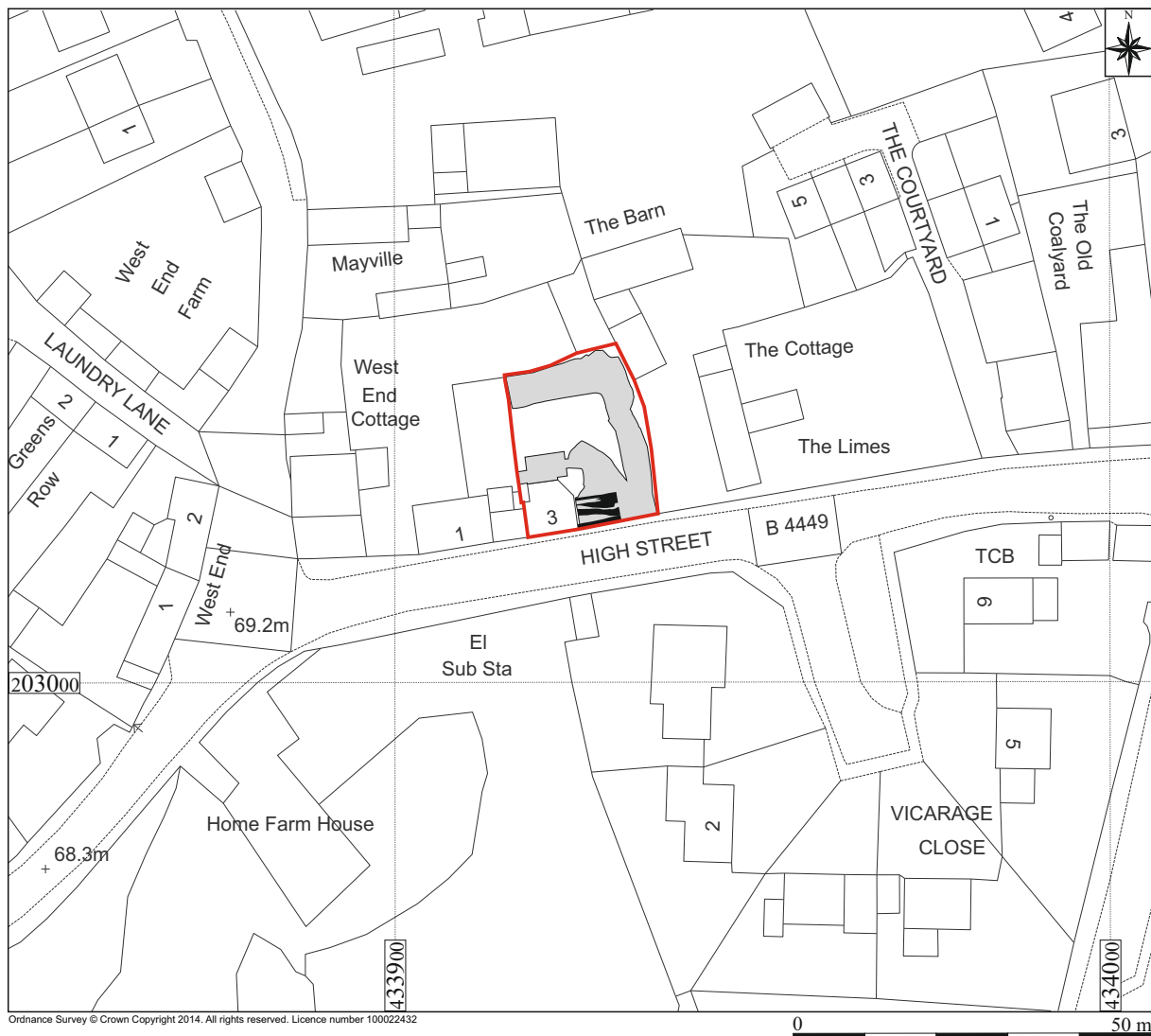
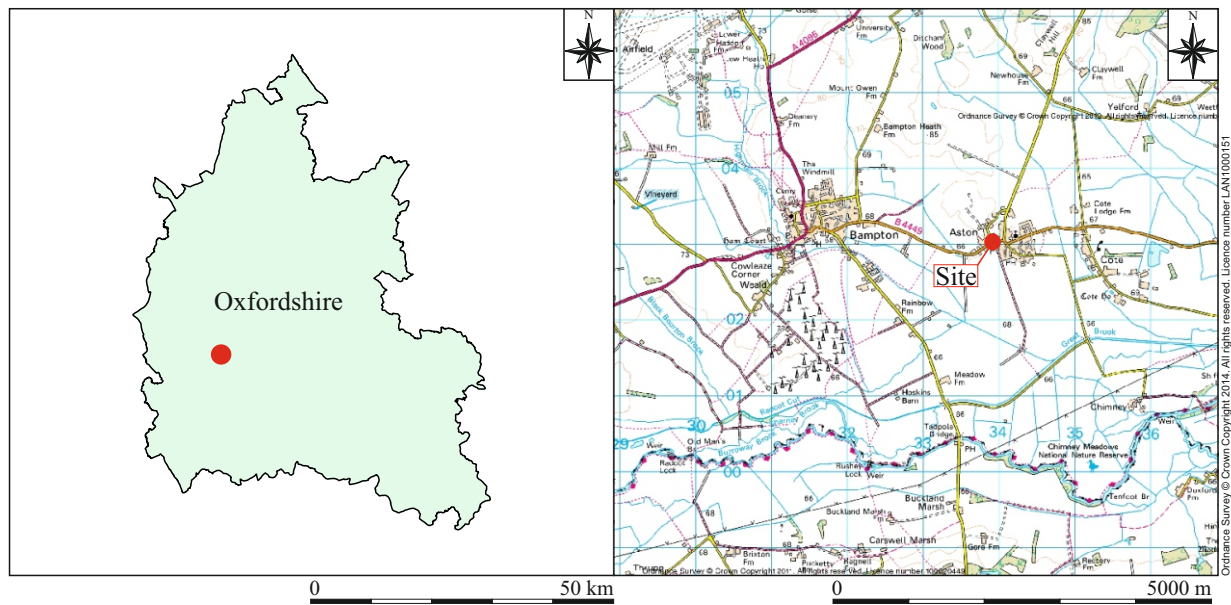
The proposed development lies within an area of considerable archaeological potential. The settlement of Aston dates to at least the later Anglo Saxon period when it is mentioned in Charters of 958 and 984 when King Aethelred granted two cassati there to Aelfwine. In the earlier medieval period it was obviously a thriving settlement with fifty-five households in 1279.

There are extensive earthworks to the north and south of the development site. These appear to form part of the original medieval settlement with evidence of trackways and house platforms. Also to the northwest there is evidence of Romano British activity and these may underlie the later medieval features.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the work as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were:

- 2.1** To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- 2.2** In particular to record any evidence relating to known Roman British and medieval remains in the area.



Key Site boundary Monitored area Archaeological features

Figure 1: Site location

3 STRATAGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET). 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 all groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This was for ground reduction, excavation for new foundations and services, and all other significant invasive groundwork.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. These numbers covered both the feature cut and the fill for one distinct ditch. Context numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Field Results

Ground reduction across the site mostly removed topsoil approximately 0.30m thick (100) and overburden, related to 19th – 20th century construction, which sealed the natural geological layer (102). The overburden was characterised across the site as deposits of sandy soils roughly 0.25-0.35m thick, which contained an abundance of tile and brick, fragments of porcelain, plastic and clear glass. These dumps were noted as (105), (108), (110), (111) and (112). Twentieth century garage and shed plots with concrete based foundation were removed in addition to the ground reduction. Other modern features included a broken concrete path in the northeast of site, 107, and a small trench, 103, in-filled with modern waste (104).

Within the southernmost area of the development four features of archaeological significance were uncovered, investigated and recorded.

At the southern fringe of the site were the remains of a wall foundation (114). This was aligned in an E-W direction, abutting the street to the south and the current existing building to the west. This ran for 6.00m in length, was 0.80m wide and cut into the natural geology to a depth of 0.40m from the present ground surface. It had been constructed with large sandstone blocks (Fig. 2, Sections 2 & 4, Plate 1). A coin of George III was found un-stratified in the area of this wall, SF001.

Just north of this wall were the remains of three intercutting ditches (Plate 2). All three ran parallel to each other in a WNW-ESE direction and ran across the site for 7.00m.



Plate 1 – *View of the Wall foundation 114*

Ditch 124 was first in the sequence. This ditch was potentially 2.00m wide originally and approximately 0.90m deep. This had two stages of infilling (Fig. 2, Sections 4 & 5). A re-deposited natural consisting of gravels and silt were noted within the section on the eastern side of the side (122). This was overlain by a compact dark brown sand-



Plate 2 – *View to west of ditches 115, 122 & 124*

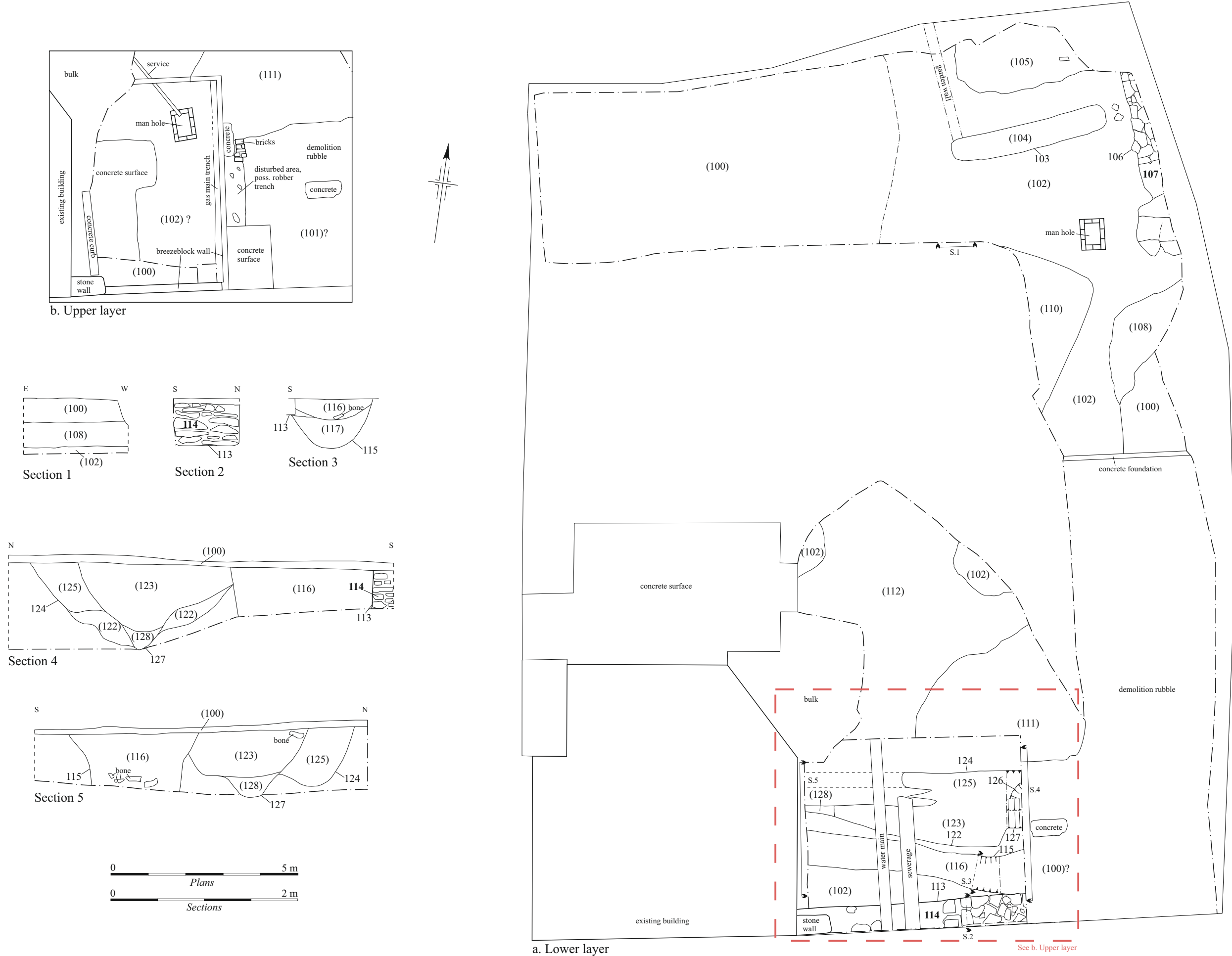


Figure 2: Plans and sections

silt with abundant gravel inclusions and rare charcoal flecking (125). It was heavily truncated during machine reduction especially on the west side of the site.

This ditch had been cut on its south by a second ditch 127. This re-cutting seems to be around 1.50m wide x 0.92m deep. Two fills were noted. The first was a dark grey-brown silt-sand with occasional gravel inclusions 0.18m thick (128). Above this was a dark brown sand-silt with rare charcoal and gravel inclusions (123).

A later third ditch was cut to the south. Ditch 115 was 0.80m wide and 0.50m deep from present ground surface. Two stages of in-filling were noted. The initial fill was a dark grey sand-silt with occasional gravel inclusions approximately 0.30m thick (117). Above this was a further stage consisting of grey-brown sand-silt 0.20m thick (116). Mid-late 11th century pottery and animal bone were recovered from this fill.

5 FINDS

A general collection of white and blue & white porcelain, stoneware bottles, glass bottles and other 19th – 20th century domestic waste was noted from the contexts 104-111, which are general overburden contexts from across the site. The modern pottery was briefly examined, but not retained.

5.1 Pottery

Context	Quantity	Weight (g)	Date
104	2	35	c.19 th -20 th Century
105	2	26	c.19 th -20 th Century
108	4	142	c.19 th -20 th Century
110	9	129	c.19 th -20 th Century
111	6	33	c.19 th -20 th Century
116	10	67	c.M-L 11 th Century

Table 1. Pottery quantities and weights by context

The pottery from context 116 was analysed by Paul Blinkhorn.

The pottery assemblage from context (116) comprised 10 sherds with a total weight of 67g. It was recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1994), as follows:

OXR:	St. Neots Ware.	c AD850-1200.	1 sherd	3g.
OXAC:	Cotswold-type ware.	AD975-1350.	1 sherd	4g.
OXBF:	North-East Wiltshire Ware.	AD1050 – 1400.	8 sherds	60g.

The wares are all well-known in the region, and suggest a date of the mid-late 11th century for the group. The sherd of St. Neots Ware is of Saxo-Norman (11th – 12th

century) date, being a typical example of Denham's T1(2) fabric type (ibid. 1985). All the sherds of OXBF are from the same vessel. Generally, the sherds are all in good condition, and appear reliably stratified.

5.2 Animal Bone

Animal bone was recovered from two contexts from across the site, totalling 46 fragments with a combined weight of 1374g. The majority of fragments come from context (116) and are bovine ribs, vertebrae and mandible remains which show no signs of butchery. The single long bone from context (123) shows butchery marks on one end.

Context	Quantity	Weight (g)	Features
116	45	1260	Bovine, ribs, lower mandible, vertebrae
123	1	114	Long bone, Butchery marks

Table 2. Bone quantities and weights by context

5.3 Coins

Two small copper coins were discovered from the site. Both were recovered from unstratified contexts.

SF 001

George III Halfpenny 27mm in diameter 1775

- *Obv.* Fair impression. Leg ~ GEORGIVS. III. REX. laureate and cuirassed bust right
- *Rev.* Corroded and worn. Leg ~ BRIT[AN_NIA.] 1[77]5 in exergue

The corrosion and wear on the reverse has obscured the image so it is uncertain if this is a specimen of the "skeletal" type (an 18th century forgery for use in North America) in which Britannia's drapery would be rather fragmentary in appearance. This coin was found near the area of wall, 114.

SF002

George V Halfpenny 25mm in diameter c.1910-1936

- *Obv.* Corroded and worn. Leg ~ [GEOR]GIV[S V DE]I [GRA:BRITT:OM]N:REX
FID:DEF:IND:IMP: Bust facing left (not clear)
- *Rev.* Highly corroded no impression visible

6 DISCUSSION

Across the majority of the development area there were no significant or important archaeological remains. No prehistoric or Romano-British period remains were noted, however, medieval and later remains did exist within the southern part of the investigation area.

The ditches probably relate to the mid to late 11th– 13th century settlement which was thriving by 1279 and might be a boundary which has been redefined over time. The construction cut for the wall 114, is cut into the upper fill of the final ditch in the sequence thus making this a later feature and may well have been the frontage to a cottage that would have been the original end to the surviving terrace. The George III halfpenny, found un-stratified in the area of the wall foundation, may be indicative of a construction date of the cottages of around the 18th century, although this is pure speculation.

Overall, it does not appear that this development has had any adverse effect on anything archaeological which might be considered potentially very important.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute for Archaeologists 2008 *Standards and Guidance for Watching Briefs*.

Denham, V, 1985 The Pottery in JH Williams, M Shaw and V Denham *Middle Saxon Palaces at Northampton* Northampton Development Corporation Monog Ser 4, 46-64

Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* 59, 17-217