

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

KIRKLEY HOUSE, 10a MAYFIELD ROAD, OXFORD.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

(NGR SP 509090)

On behalf of

Riach Architects

NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT FOR Riach Architects
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Riach Architects as part of a planning condition (15/01252/FUL-Condition 15) for the erection of three houses, and including provision for car parking, bin and cycle storage.

The evaluation was carried out on the 2nd November 2015 and comprised excavation of two 20m x 2.1m trenches within the footprint of the development.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified. A fire waste pit and a planting hole of late 19th-early 20th century was recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and Geology (Fig.1)

The site is located at 10a Mayfield Rd (NGR SP509090) at *c.* 63m AOD. The underlying geology consists of the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace Gravels.

1.2 Planning Background

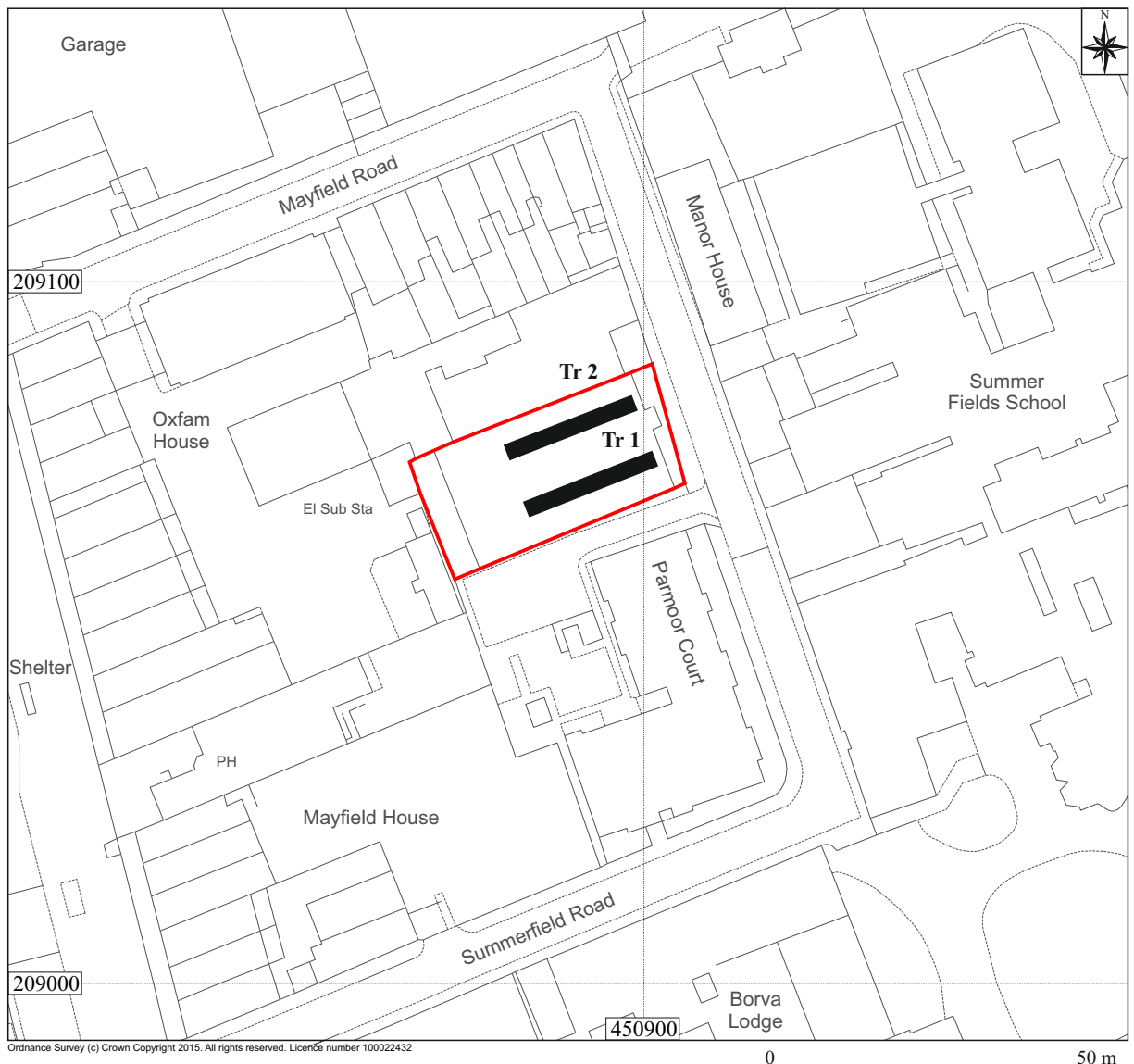
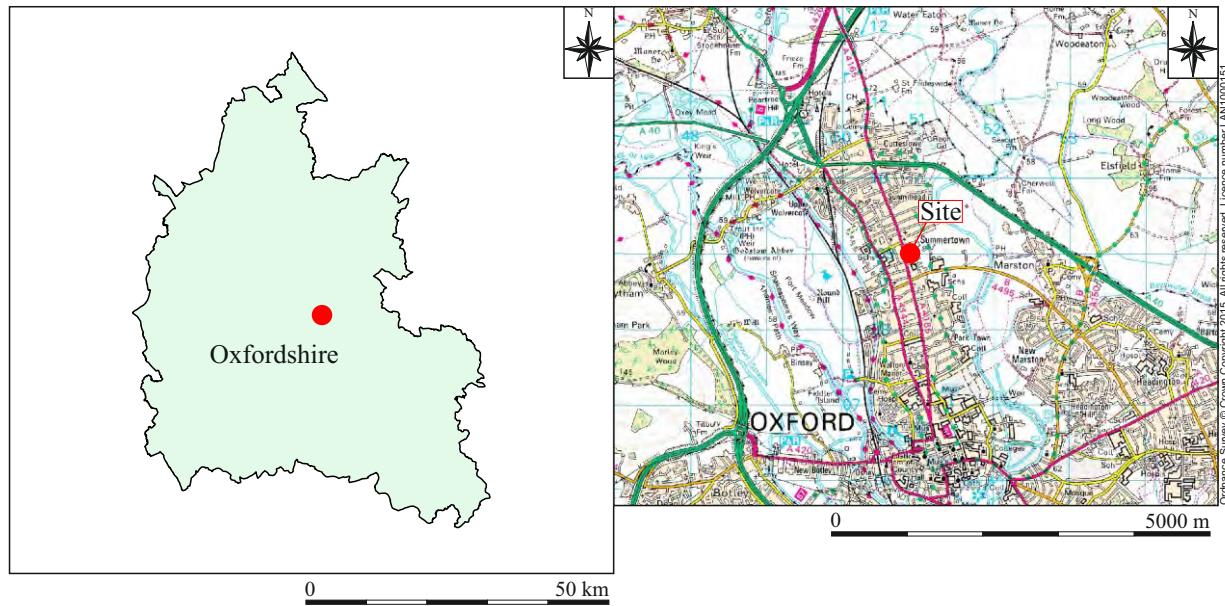
Oxford City Council has granted planning permission (15/01252/FUL) for the demolition of existing three storey building. Erection of 3 x 5 bedroom dwelling houses (Use Class C3). Provision of car parking, bin and cycle storage and amenity space. Condition (15) of the permission states: No development shall proceed until the developer has: 1. carried out an archaeological evaluation of the site in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved in writing by the planning authority and; 2. secured the implementation of a scheme of mitigation of any significant archaeological impact, which may be achieved by redesign, or by archaeological recording action in accordance with a supplementary written scheme of investigation, to be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

1.3 Archaeological Background

This site is of interest because it is located close to a find spot that suggests the presence of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in the vicinity and is located next to a stone and brick built coach house of likely early 20th century date that is of some character and interest.

The extent of the likely cemetery is not known. An Anglo Saxon grave group comprising shield boss, shield grip, knife and spear was found at time of building Summer Fields School in 1898. An Anglo Saxon lance or spearhead was also found during the digging of foundations for a new school wing near a former orchard in 1882. Furthermore human bones were found in 1850 when digging a trench in a garden on the east side of the Banbury Road, along with a knife, disc brooch and a string of 23 beads (County HER No 6218). More recently human remains were recorded at nearby Summer Fields School during servicing works (Warwickshire Archaeology, forthcoming).

Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemeteries (5th-7th centuries) can vary in size from one burial to several hundred. In 1991 there were 1000 recorded sites of inhumation burials in England, but only 100-150 of these were cemeteries known to have contained more than 50 burials. Burials were usually placed in grave cuts, although sometimes a wooden coffin or chamber enclosed the body. Bodies were usually extended or loosely flexed, they can be accompanied with grave goods (weapons, belt buckles and jewellery etc.). Many inhumation cemeteries are associated with cremation burials (mixed cemeteries). Cremations can be buried in ceramic, glass or metal containers or with no container; they can also be accompanied with grave goods (food offerings, jewellery).



Key Site boundary Evaluation trenches

Figure 1: Site location

Anglo-Saxon cemeteries can be concentrated or dispersed. For example at Dinton (Bucks) a later 5th-6th century part of a compact inhumation cemetery of twenty burials (18 with grave goods) was excavated within an area of 15x25m. At Tring roundabout (Bucks) an extensive dispersed inhumation cemetery was excavated. Here 18 inhumations were recorded, mainly orientated south-north, spread out over area 90x170m. Two Anglo-Saxon burials recorded at Stephens Road, Headington, Oxford, have been recorded over the last 10 years and are likely to be part of a dispersed cemetery. The spacing of the 19th century observations in and near Summer Fields School also suggests the presence of dispersed burials.

Evidence from aerial photographs and archaeological excavations indicates the presence of an extensive prehistoric ritual and agricultural landscape across the Oxford gravel terrace to the south of the development, involving Middle Neolithic – Early Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments, Iron Age /Roman agricultural field systems and subsequent Saxon rural settlement. An extensive cropmark complex recorded in the University Parks to the south incorporates a possible Neolithic/Bronze Age linear barrow cemetery and later Iron Age/Roman agricultural enclosures. A Neolithic/Bronze Age henge monument and three Bronze Age ring ditches belonging to this complex have recently been excavated at Queen Elizabeth House, St Giles and at the Radcliffe Infirmary site.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site by means of two 20m mechanically excavated trenches.
- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the site and the depth of soil deposits that overlie these remains.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the prehistoric landscape.
- To determine the implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits. The forms in which such evidence may be present will be determined in accordance with the guidelines set out in English Heritage's

- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.
- To inform the need for, and scope of, further phases of work to mitigate the impact of the development under consideration.
- To produce an evaluation report presenting a digest of information on the character and significance of the deposits under review and to form the basis of any proposals for appropriate further action

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2015) agreed with the Oxford City Archaeological Officer.

3.2 Methodology

A trenching sample equivalent to two 20m x 2.1m trenches was excavated within the footprint of the proposed development.

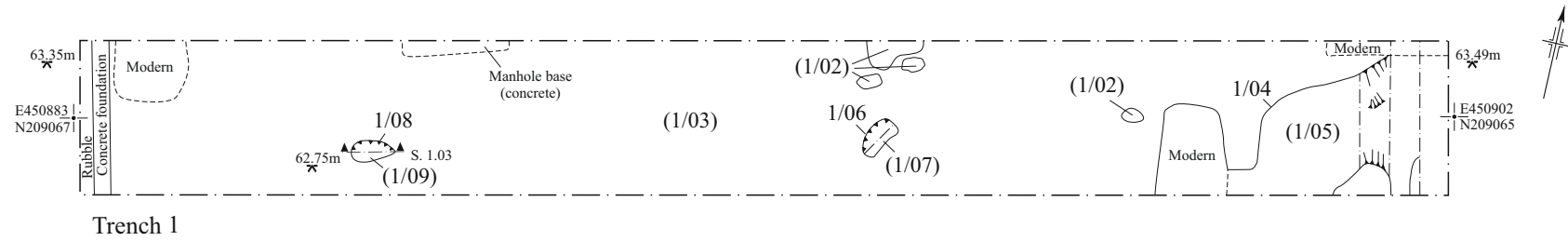
4 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1 (Figure 2)

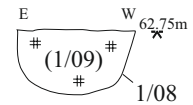
The geological horizon (1/03) was encountered at a general depth of 0.7m (62.6m AOD) and generally consisted of moderately loose mixed sandy gravels with lenses of mid yellow sand. Overlying the geological horizon was a subsoil (1/02) comprising mid reddish brown silt with very occasional gravel. The subsoil undulated somewhat but was generally 0.25m thick. The subsoil 1/02 filled slight undulations in the gravel geology to form irregular features, Three of which were investigated (1/04, 1/06 and 1/02). The subsoil was interpreted as a loess deposit or post glacial soil horizon (B horizon).

A single archaeological feature (1/08) was identified cutting the geological horizon. This was ovoid in plan, measuring 0.64m x 0.4m and 0.36m in depth. It had near vertical sides, sharply breaking from the surface and gently breaking to a rounded base. It was filled with a moderately compact mid reddish brown sandy silt with occasional lenses of charcoal rich mid grey sandy silt (1/09). The feature probably represents a hole for a small plant or post, although no root disturbance was noted. This feature produced a single corroded nail and a fragment of late 19th-early 20th century china.

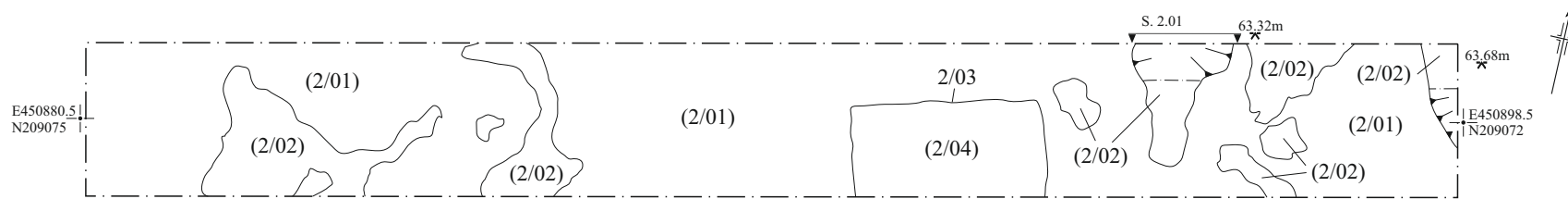
Three modern features were also identified. The modern features were not recorded, although have been noted on the figure for Trench 1 (Fig. 2).



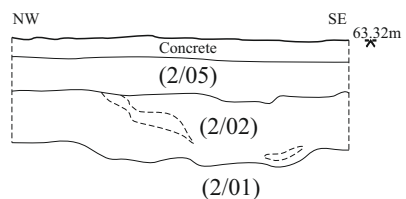
Trench 1



Section 1.03



Trench 2



Section 2.01

Key Charcoal

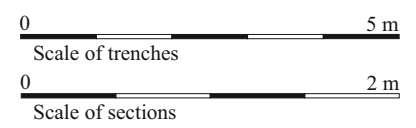


Figure 2: Trenches 1-2 plans and sections



Trench 1. View to west.

4.2 Trench 2 (Figure 2)

The geological horizon (2/01) was encountered at a general depth of 0.6m (62.6m AOD), and generally consisted of moderately loose mixed sandy gravels with lenses of mid yellow sand. Overlying the geological horizon was a subsoil (2/02) comprised mid reddish brown silt with very occasional gravel up to. As in Trench 1 the subsoil 2/02 filled slight undulations in the gravel geology to form irregular features, one of which was excavated. The subsoil was mechanically removed in spits to ensure subtle features, such as graves, were identified.

A single feature (2/03) was identified cutting the geological horizon. This was a largish pit, sub rectangular in plan, and measuring 1.1m (E-W) x 0.56m (southern extent beyond the limit of excavation). It was filled with moderately compact, very dark grey sandy silt, with up to 30% charcoal fragments. The pit also contained a



Trench 2. View to west.

moderate quantity of brick, tile and china dated to the late 19th - early 20th century.

5 FINDS

No finds were retained during the course of the evaluation. Finds of late 19th and early 20th century were noted from 1/07 and 1/04, although not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation did not identify any significant archaeological features or deposits. The site conditions were good and the geological horizon was clearly established. A significant proportion of the site has been truncated by a basement, pillar foundations and other modern intrusive features, therefore, in conjunction with the results of the evaluation there is very little potential for archaeological remains to be present within the footprint of the development.

The Anglo Saxon lance or spearhead and grave group discovered during construction of Summer Fields School in the late 19th century, and the recent discovery of human remains within the grounds appear to indicate the presence of a dispersed cemetery. At least one possible Bronze Age ring ditch, amongst other probable prehistoric features, have been identified from crop marks to the east of Summer Fields School, c. 200m to the east of the site (Archaeology Warwickshire, 2014). It has been suggested that the probable Anglo Saxon cemetery represents the re-use of a prehistoric funerary landscape (Archaeology Warwickshire, 2014, par 7.5). A further Anglo Saxon grave (HER No 6218) has been recorded on the east side of Banbury Road, c. 100m to the NNE. Although the evidence is limited, it could suggest the possibility of an extensive dispersed Anglo Saxon cemetery focused around prehistoric funerary monuments. In conclusion, the negative evidence from the evaluation probably indicates that the cemetery does not extend to the west of the school.

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APPENDIX A

Context Table

Trench 1								
Summary- Length: 19.1m Average depth: 0.7m. Aligned: NE-SW.								
Cntxt	Type	Description	Length	Width	Depth	Findings	Interpretation	Date
1/01	Layer	Demolition Rubble			0.16m	-	Modern deposit	20 th C
1/02	Layer	Subsoil			0.28m	-	Loess	-
1/03	Layer	Sandy gravel				-	Terrace Gravels	-
1/04	Cut	Irregular roundish	2.75m	1.4m		-	Geological feature	-
1/05	Fill	Fill of 1/04				-	Fill	-
1/06	Cut	Irregular cut	0.5m	0.36m		-	Geological feature	-
1/07	Fill	Fill of 1/06				-	Fill of 1/06	-
1/08	Cut	Ovoid cut				-	Fill	-
1/09	Fill	Fill of 1/08				-	Fill	-

Trench 2								
Summary- Length: 19.5m Average depth: 0.65m. Aligned: NE-SW.								
Cntxt	Type	Description	Length	Width	Depth	Findings	Interpretation	Date
2/01	Layer	Sandy gravel			-	-	Terrace Gravels	
2/02	Layer	Subsoil			0.28m	-	Loess	-
2/03	Cut	Rectangular pit	1.1m	0.5m	-	-	Pit	19 th /20 th C
2/04	Fill	Dark grey sandy silt				-	Fill of pit	19 th /20 th C
2/05	Layer	Sandy silt			0.19m	-	Disturbed 1/02	20 th C