

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

1 SIDINGS ROAD, CHURCHILL,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP28002439

*On behalf of
Nicola Mahoney*

SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT FOR Nicola Mahoney
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Site Code: CLSR 15

CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2. AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	2
3. STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4. RESULTS	3
5. FINDS	5
5.1 Pottery	5
6. DISCUSSION	5
7. ARCHIVE	5
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	5

FIGURES

Figure 1.	Site Location	2
Figure 2.	Plan and Sections	4

SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at 1 Sidings Road, Churchill, Oxfordshire, during the excavation of foundations for a new dwelling. The excavations revealed several layers of natural deposits and a large soakaway which was located towards the south east of the site. This was positioned to take water runoff directed from Sidings Road. No archaeological finds or features were identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site lies at the junction of Sidings Road and Hastings Hill, Churchill, OX7 6NB (NGR SP28002439). The geology is Whitby Mudstone overlain by Head Deposits and the site is at approximately 145m AOD. The proposal site is within a domestic garden.

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the erection of a detached dwelling with vehicular access adjacent to 1 Sidings Road (14/0839/FUL). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits a condition was attached to the permission requiring the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during groundworks. This was in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

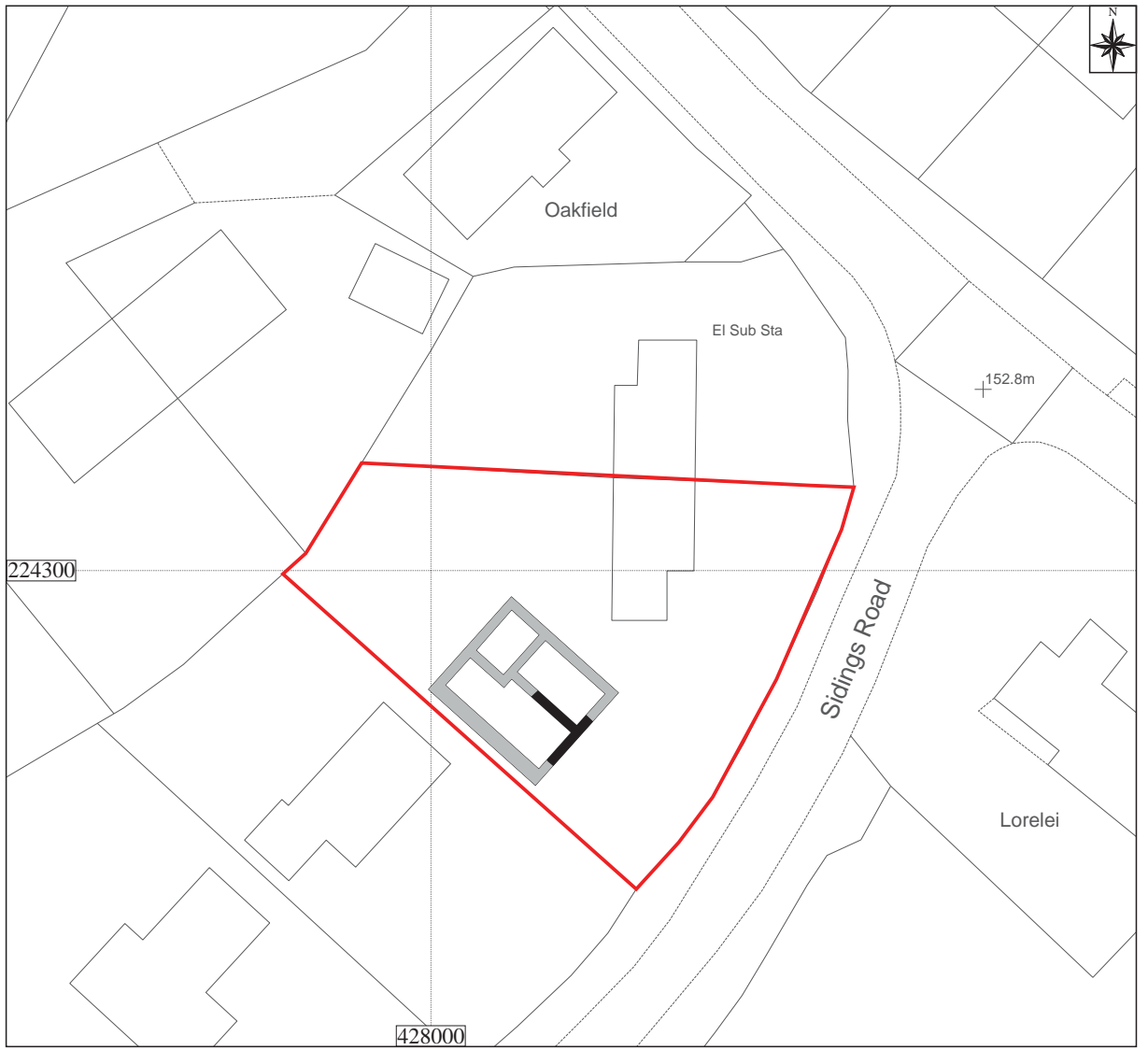
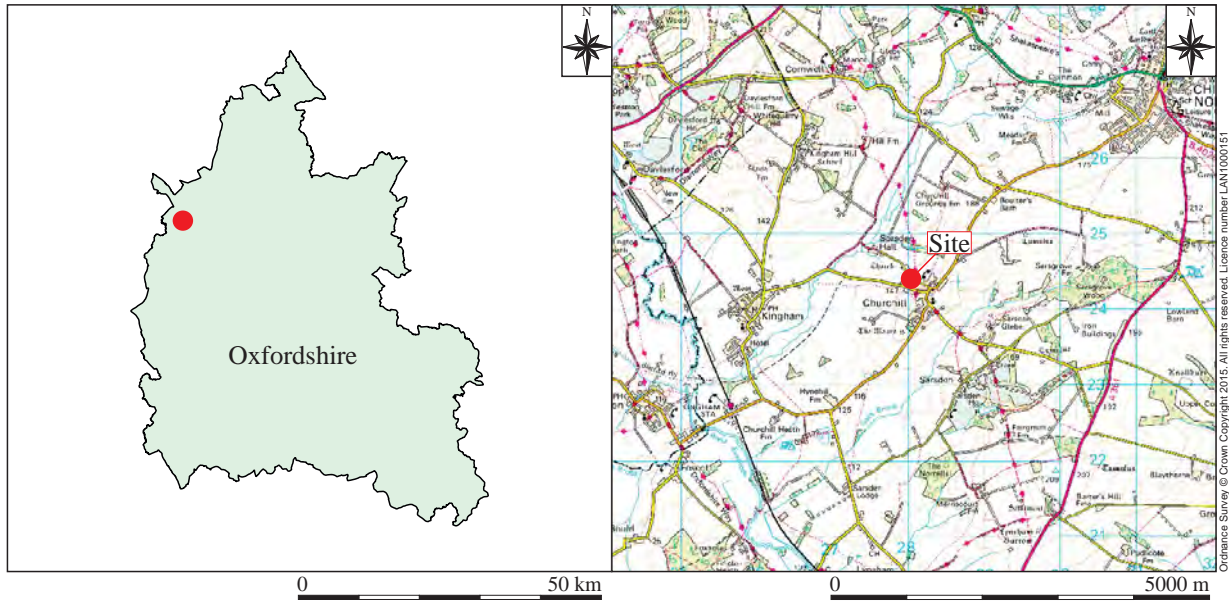
1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lay in an area of considerable archaeological potential, immediately south east of Scheduled Ancient Monument 160; an impressive and substantial shrunken medieval village. Very clear earthworks can be seen which include house platforms and holloways, a prominent boundary bank and areas of ridge and furrow. Further features relating to the medieval village were found to the south east of the site, outside of the scheduling boundary, during housing construction. As the extent of this site is known to reach beyond the scheduled area, it was thought possible that related features extended into the proposed development site.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.



Key Site boundary Monitored area Archaeological features

Figure 1: Site location

In particular

- to be aware of the possibility of finding remains relating to the shrunken medieval village.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2015) agreed with Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) the archaeological advisors to West Oxfordshire District Council.

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was to be present on site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains.

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. Where archaeological features were exposed during any ground reduction but otherwise would remain unaffected they were recorded only by plan and written description. Where remains would be impacted on then they would be sample excavated. Any variation to this was to be agreed with the County Archaeological Services, on behalf of the local planning authority. All artefacts would be collected and retained except for concentrations of building material where a representative sample will be kept.

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. A photographic record was also produced.

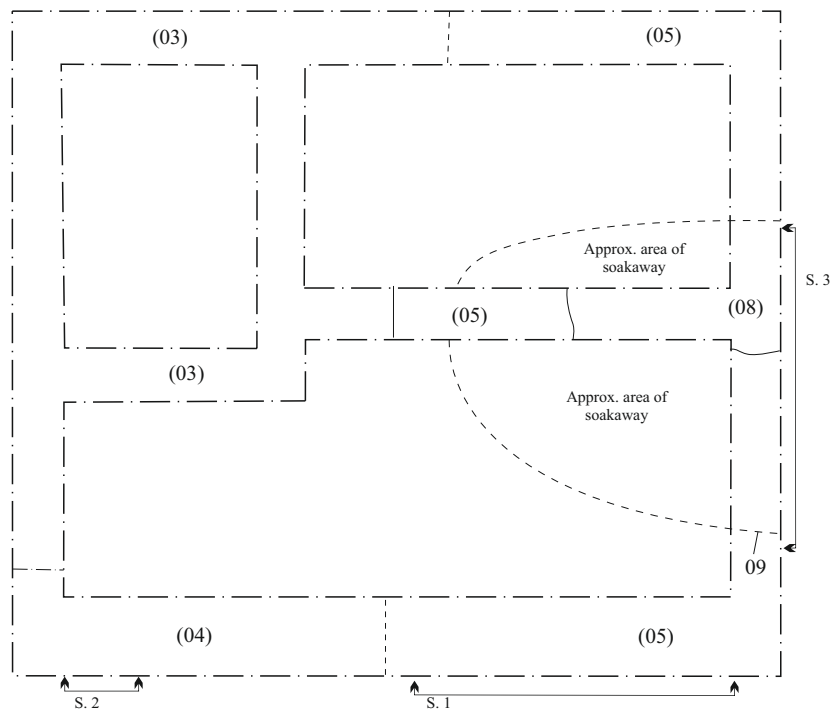
The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

4 RESULTS

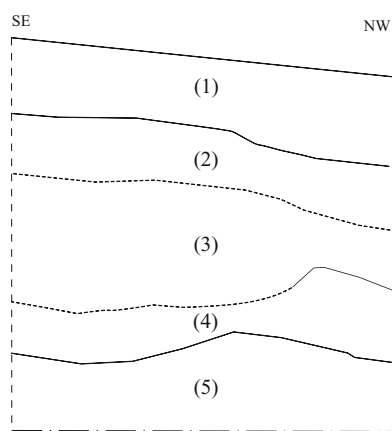
All features and deposits were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers with no brackets indicate feature cuts, numbers in round brackets () show feature fills or deposits of material.

The foundation trenches were excavated under the supervision of the archaeologist (Fig. 2). The SW foundation trench was excavated down to a depth of 2m from the existing ground level and other trenches were excavated down 0.8m from ground level.

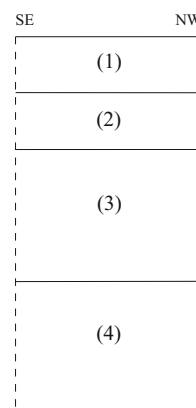
Plan 1



Section 1



Section 2



Section 3

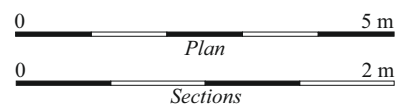
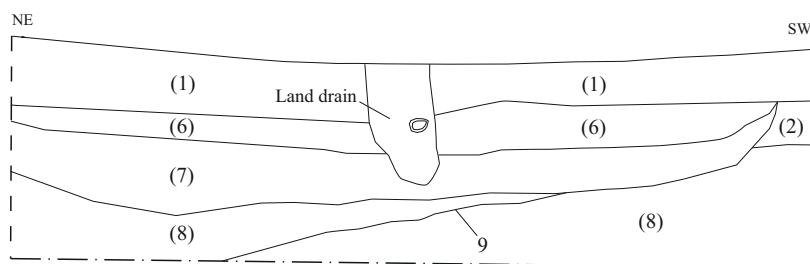


Figure 2: Plan & Sections

The lowest layer was a yellowish grey and greyish white clay layer (05). This was greater than 0.8m thick and was identified as a natural layer (Fig. 2, section 1). The layer was only revealed in the SE half of the excavated foundations due to the slope of the land. Deposited above this was a 0.8m thick layer of clay and stone (04). The layer was dark reddish brown and purple (Fig. 2, sections 1 & 2). It contained flattish angular stone and had a ferruginous appearance. The layer was mostly evident in the SW foundation and was more apparent in the NW half of the foundation trench. The layer was sterile and was identified as a natural deposit. Above this layer was a 0.7m thick layer of orange clay (03) (Fig. 2, sections 1 & 2). This layer was also identified mostly towards the NW half of the excavated area becoming more diffuse towards the NE. It was also mixed in its upper horizon towards the NE with the above layer (02). The layer contained no finds, evidence of burning, organic material, or signs of human activity and thus was considered to be a natural deposit. Deposited above this was a layer of light yellowish grey, slightly loamy, silty sand (02) (Fig. 2, sections 1 & 2). It had rare traces of burnt material and rare inclusions of undiagnostic ceramic building material. Cut into this layer in the centre of the excavated area and toward the SE was a large soakaway, 09 (fig 2, plan 1, section 3). It was approximately 4m wide by greater than 4.5m and greater than 0.8m deep. The lowest fill was a mid to dark orange brown clay that was greater than 0.1m thick and contained a frequent inclusion of stone (08). Deposited above this was a fill that was 0.18m thick (07). It had a very dominant inclusion of angular limestone and light grey clay. This was overlain by a light greyish brown loamy soil that was similar to layer (02). Above this was a 0.3m thick layer of mid grey, slightly loamy silt that was the garden soil found across the site.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

Three fragments of pottery that were Victorian or later were recovered from the topsoil but were not removed from site.

6 DISCUSSION

The excavations revealed an organic garden soil over an anthropogenic subsoil layer. These layers lay above three natural clay layers. The absence of the lowest clay layer (05) in the section profiles towards the NW of the excavated area would indicate that this layer was sloping down deeper than the excavations at this point and would reflect the direction of slope NW down into the valley. No evidence was found relating to the shrunken medieval village and no finds of medieval date were recovered. The only feature found was a large soakaway that was positioned to take water directed downhill from Sidings Road.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014a. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

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