



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**  
**AT**  
**BICESTER COMMUNITY HOSPITAL,**  
**KINGS END, BICESTER, OXFORDSHIRE OX26 6DU**

**NGR SP 579 223**

*On behalf of*  
*HIM Property Holdings Ltd*

**APRIL 2016**

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at the former site of Bicester Community Hospital (NGR SP 579 223). The northern extent of the site was heavily disturbed by the remains of the former hospital and no archaeological features were observed. Within the southern extent of the site two undated ditches and two undated pits were observed.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site is bordered by Kings End to the west, two health centres to the north, and community building to the east and south (NGR SP579223). The site is located on a solid geology of Middle Jurassic Cornbrash, a rubbly limestone. An alluvial channel of the River Bure is located c 50m to the south of the Site (BGS Sheet 219, Solid and Drift 1:50,000).

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Cherwell District Council granted planning permission for demolition of existing community hospital and redevelopment of site to provide a new community hospital and 14 residential units (12/00809/F). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits a condition (3b) has been attached to the permission requiring the submission and approval of a Written Scheme of Investigation and a condition (4b) requiring the implementation of a full archaeological watching brief during the period of construction works. This is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) had advised on the need for this.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The development area lies in an area of considerable archaeological interest. A desk-based assessment of the site has been carried out by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2010). To the north is the site of Kings End Shrunken Settlement which may date back to the 12th/13th century, associated with the Grange of Markgate Mins. Immediately to the south west of the proposed site a large area was investigated in May 2002 through geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation by Oxford Archaeology which identified an area of Roman activity possibly relating to a farmstead. Evidence of late Iron Age and Anglo Saxon activity was also found. An evaluation was undertaken on the eastern side of the site itself which recorded a ditch, possibly of Roman date, which runs across the proposed site roughly east - west. This may relate to the possible Roman Farmstead known to the south west of the proposed site. It is likely that further archaeological deposits will be disturbed during groundworks of the proposed development.

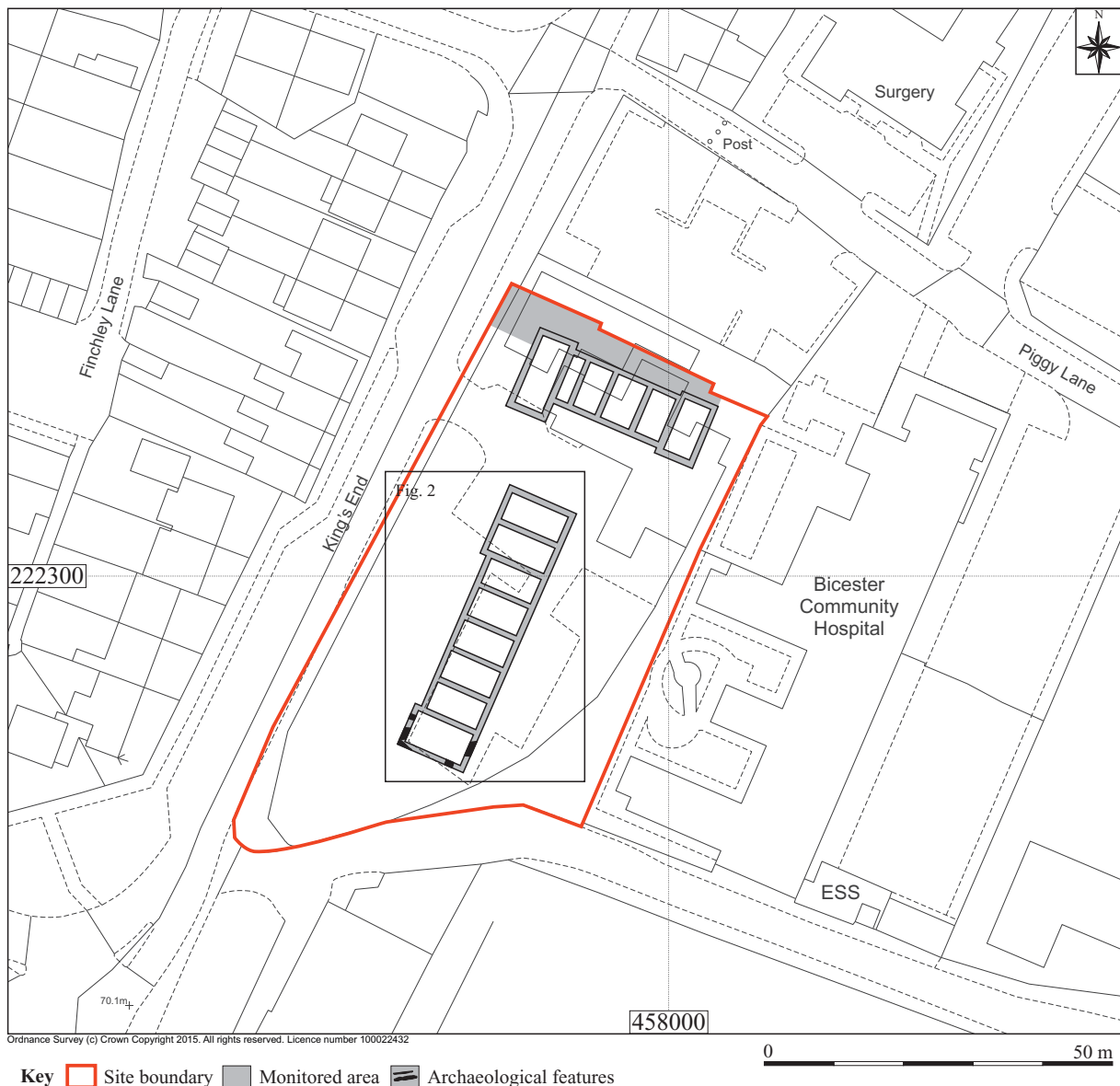
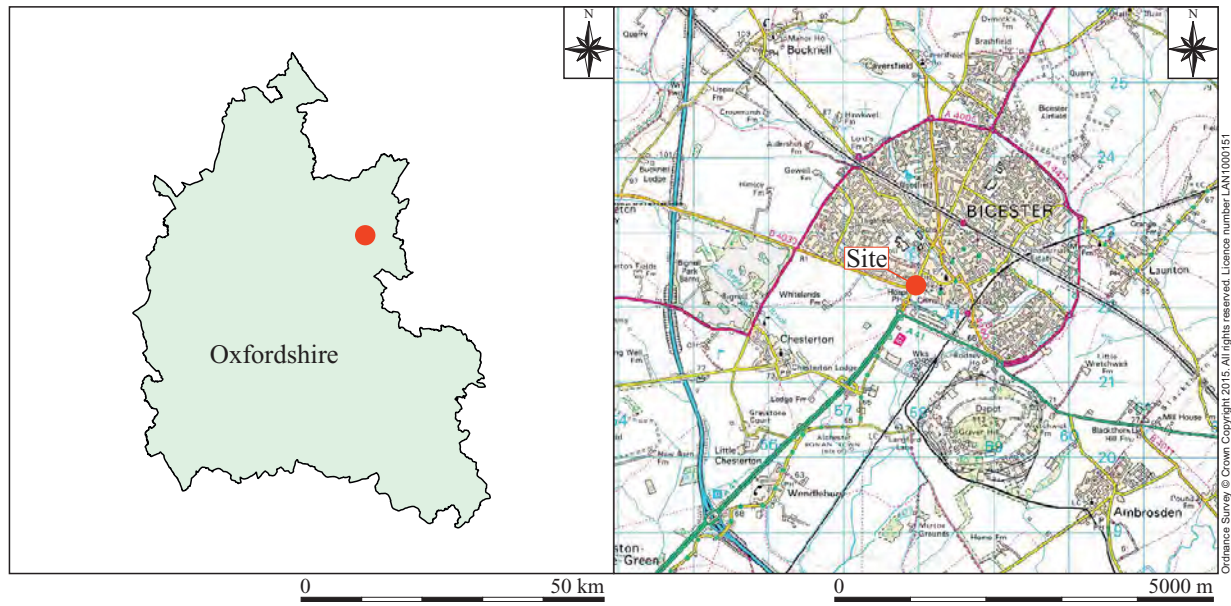


Figure 1: Site location

## **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.

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to the known Iron Age, Roman, Anglo Saxon, medieval and post-medieval activity in the area.

## **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, the archaeological advisors to Cherwell District Council.

### **3.2 Methodology**

Where archaeological horizons were encountered they were cleaned by hand and excavated appropriately. 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 resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to all periods from the Prehistoric to the Post-Medieval.

The watching brief involved the monitoring of initial groundworks that involved clearing the ground of the site and ground reduction down to the natural limestone of a 2m wide strip along the northern extent of site (Fig. 1). Work then proceeded to excavate the foundation trenches for the northern block of housing situated over the demolished remains of the former hospital (Fig. 1). The foundation trenches for the southern block of housing were then excavated in the old car parking area of the hospital (Fig. 1).

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

## **4 RESULTS**

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

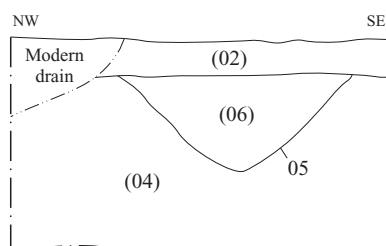
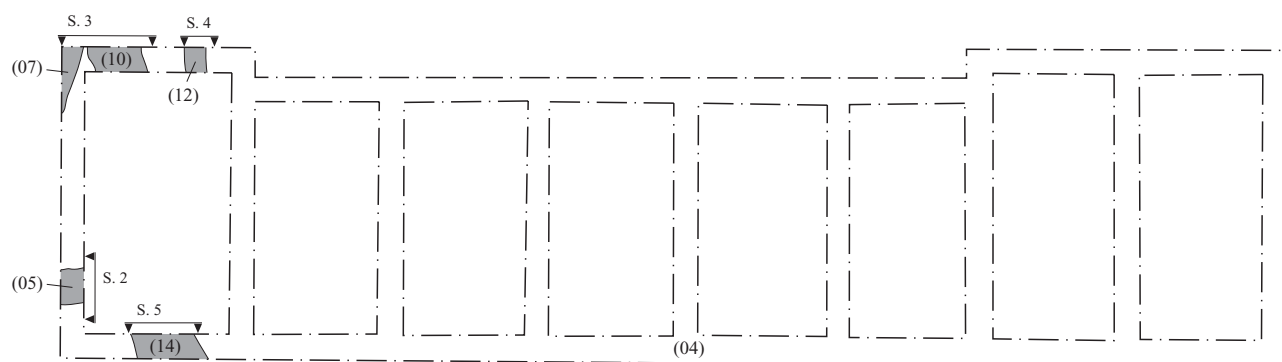




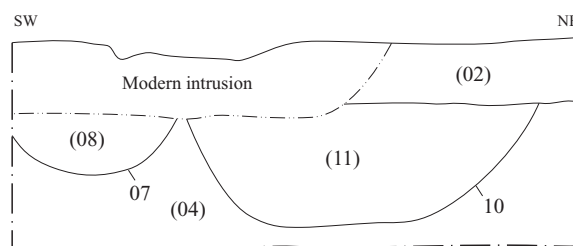
Plate 1. Ditches 7 and 10 looking northwest



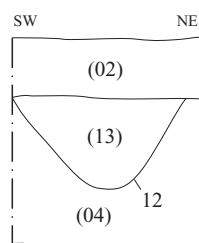
Plate 2. Ditch 14 looking northwest

**Plan 2**

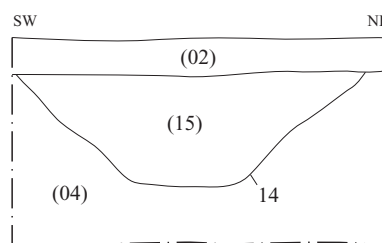
Section 2



Section 3



Section 4



Section 5

**Key**

- Limit of excavation
- Archaeological features

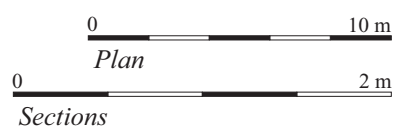


Figure 2: Plan and sections



Located within the southwestern extent of the site the foundation trench for the southern block of housing truncated two linear ditches and two possible pits (Fig. 2). These were cut into the natural limestone (04) and overlain by a 0.35m thick layer of a reddish brown silt (02), an alluvial subsoil.

Feature 05 (a possible pit) was only partially exposed and had straight sides, 1.2m wide, 0.8m long and 0.5m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill of a reddish brown silty clay (06) that was devoid of artefacts.

Ditch 07 (Plate 1) was orientated northwest / southeast, 0.85m wide, 2m long and 0.3m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill of a reddish brown silty clay (08) that was devoid of artefacts.

Ditch 10 (Plate 1) was orientated northeast / southwest, 1.9m wide, 0.8m long and 0.6m deep with moderately sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill of a reddish brown silty clay (11) that was devoid of artefacts.

Feature 12 (a possible pit) was only partially exposed and had straight sides, 0.9m wide, 0.8m long and 0.5m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill of a reddish brown silty clay (13) that was devoid of artefacts.

Ditch 14 (Plate 2) was orientated northeast / southwest, 1.8m wide, 0.8m long and 0.6m deep with moderately sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill of a reddish brown silty clay (15) that was devoid of artefacts. This ditch was the same as ditch 10 situated c.9m away to the west-northwest.

## **5 FINDS**

No finds were recovered from any of the features encountered.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The northern extent of site was heavily truncated by the remains of the former hospital and no archaeological features were observed. Within the southwestern extent of the site two ditches and two features (possible pits) were present within the foundation trench of the southern block of housing. These were all undated. Ditch 10 / 14 that was orientated west-northwest / east-southeast is not the same possible Roman or later ditch identified in the TVAS (2003) evaluation in the adjoining field to the east of the site. The features identified within this watching brief possibly represent a continuation of a field system extending up to the Roman road running into Bicester or be associated activity on the edge of such a system. Alternatively they could relate to later activity in the area.

## **7 ARCHIVE**

### **Archive Contents**

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

The project brief

The project brief

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Resource Centre under accession number OXCMS: 2015.159.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey of England and Wales 1:50,000 (1974) *Solid and Drift Geology Map*, Buckingham sheet no. 219

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

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