

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

28 NORHAM ROAD, OXFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 51400 07710

*On behalf of
Riach Architects*

FEBRUARY 2018

REPORT FOR Riach Architects
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Summary

This document represents an investigation of the potential for archaeological remains to be found during groundworks at 28 Norham Road, Oxford, (NGR SP 51400 7710). The work revealed a single pit of probable 19th century date.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The development site (see Figure 1) is located at 28 Norham Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 51400 07710).

The property is a domestic dwelling and garden, and lies at approximately 66.6m OD. The underlying geology is 2nd (Summertown-Radley) Terrace Deposits.

1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council granted planning permission for the demolition of existing side extension and erection of part two storey, part five storey, rear and side extension, plus formation of lower ground floor (13/02640/FUL). A condition attached to the planning permission is:

8) No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority.

1.3 Archaeological Background

This site was of interest because evidence from aerial photographs and archaeological excavations nearby have demonstrated the presence of an extensive prehistoric ritual and funerary landscape across this part of the Oxford gravel terrace. A number of potential late Neolithic / early Bronze Age barrows have been identified from parchmarks in the nearby University Parks. The parchmarks and nearby excavation also indicate the presence of extensive Iron Age /Roman agricultural field systems and subsequent Saxon settlement in the locality. Park Town, Norham Road and Crick Road have previously produced evidence for Bronze Age and early Saxon burials and also for Iron Age activity. However, a watching brief at 21 Norham Road, on the opposite side of the road to this site, did not find any evidence of archaeological activity.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To identify and record any archaeological remains revealed by the ground works, paying particular attention to the potential for prehistoric and early Saxon remains.

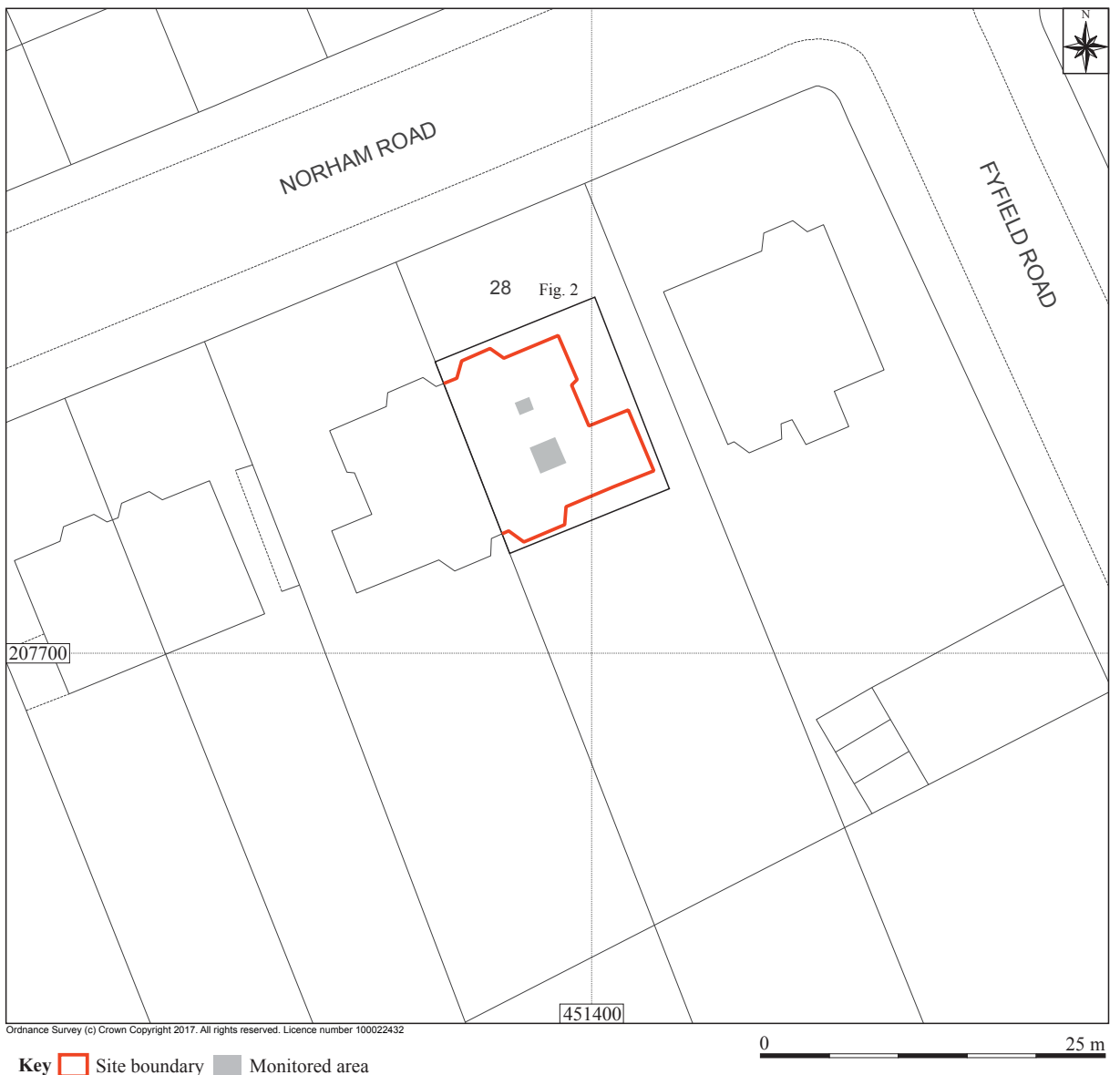
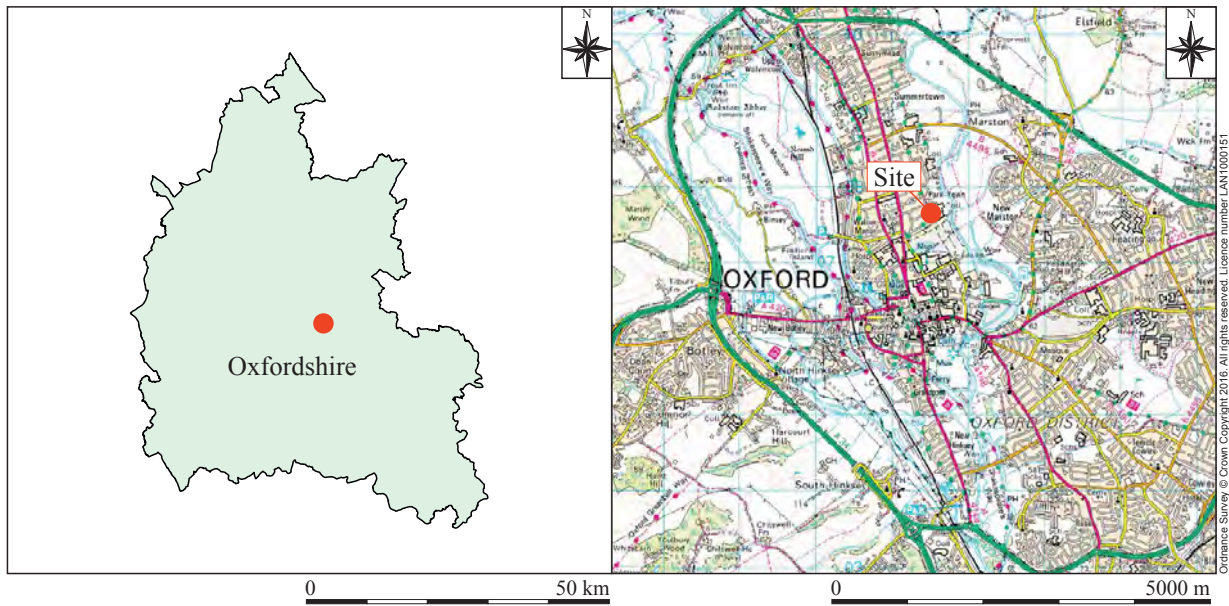


Figure 1: Site location

- Any such remains should be interpreted with reference to the known archaeology of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace.
- Where applicable the report will refer to the city, county and regional period based resource assessments and research agendas.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxford Archaeological Officer, the archaeological advisors to Oxford City Council.

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

3.2 Methodology

Fieldwork commenced with the ground reduction of the lower ground floor with a compact mechanical tracked excavator with a grading bucket, under archaeological supervision.



Plate 1: General view of lower ground floor area. West facing

Floor layers were removed from the entire lower ground floor area within the building.

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 prehistoric and early Saxon remains.

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.

The natural geology (06) remained consistent throughout the site and comprised a light brown/yellow sandy gravel. The natural was sealed by a redeposited natural made ground deposit (04) with a maximum thickness of 0.8m across the site. This was derived from shallow grading of the area for the construction of the house. The brick walls of the building **09** were constructed directly on top of this.



Plate 2: Representative section or general deposits. North East facing

Undated features

Cut into deposit (08) pit 12 was isolated in the north east room of the lower ground floor (Fig. 2, Section 4). It was of an irregular square shape with straight steep sides with and a flat base (Plate 2). It measured 0.92m wide and 0.55m deep. Its fill (13) was of a dark brown/grey friable sandy silt which contained occasional slate tile fragments. Fill (13) represented a disuse deliberate backfill of former garden soil.

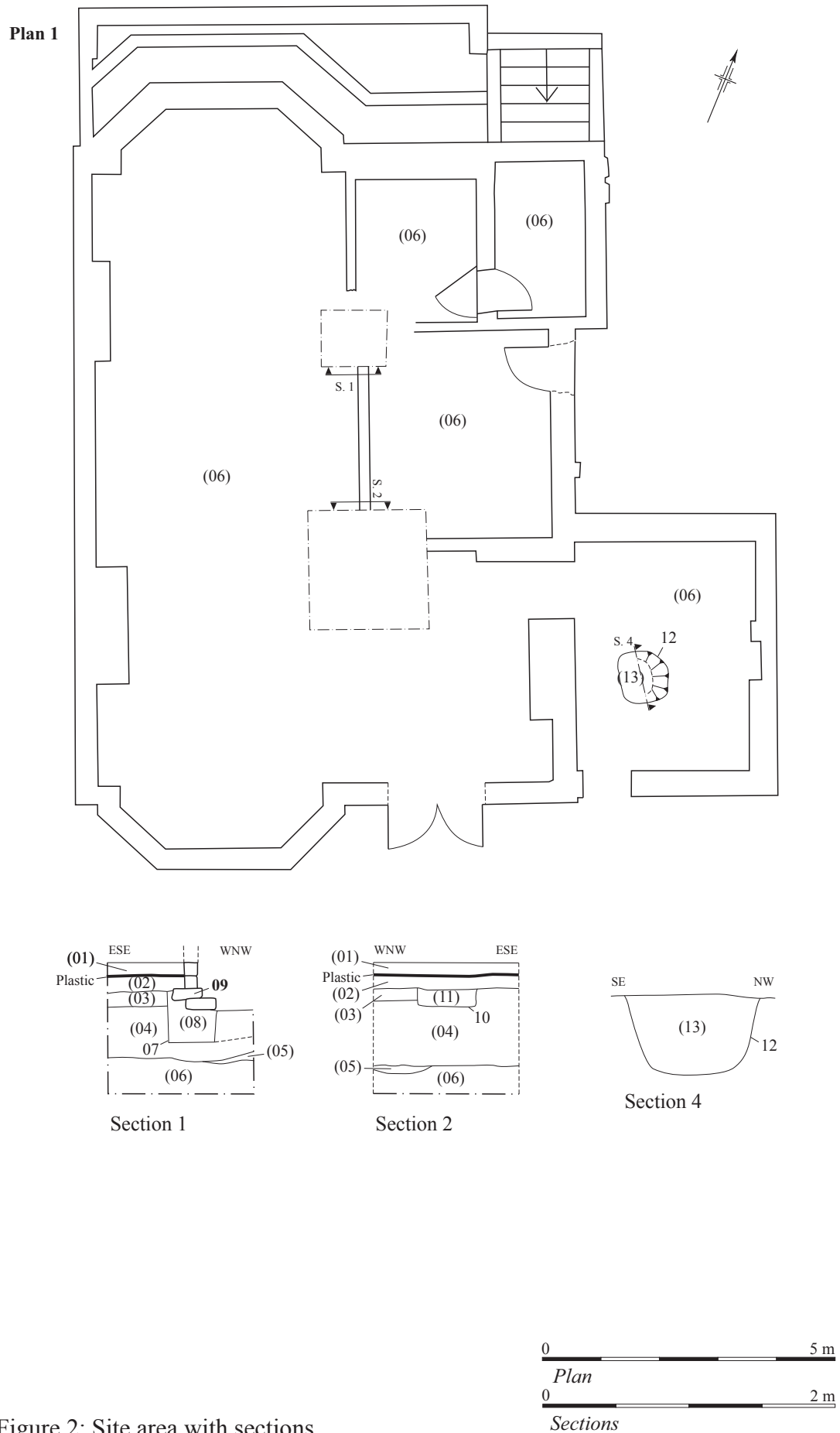


Figure 2: Site area with sections



Plate 3: North East facing section of pit 12

Foundations for the house were set in construction cuts (i.e. 07 & 10 - Fig. 2, Sections 1 & 2). The foundations and walls 9 were constructed of bricks measuring 7.5cm x 22cm x 9.5cm with silty gravel around the foundations (i.e. 08 & 11). The make-up layer for the existing floors (prior to the development) was a mid-grey-brown silty sand (03) overlaid by gravel and hardcore (02) topped with a plastic sheet with concrete laid on top (01).

5 FINDS

No finds other than slate roof tile fragments were recovered from the site.

6 DISCUSSION

The profile of pit 12 highlights its potential as a large post hole. The presence of a former garden soil and slate roof tile fragments within it secures a probable 19th century date during the construction of the house. No former structures to the house are visible on mid – late 19th century OS maps. This indicates that pit 12 is likely associated with the construction of the house representing a scaffolding post hole.

The absence of any significant archaeological evidence on the site is potentially due to the grading process in the late 19th century which would have truncated any shallow *in situ* evidence.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Services with accession number OXCMS: 2015.88Oxfordshire Museums.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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