JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

THE WHITE HART, GODSTOW ROAD,

WOLVERCOTE, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 48860 09703

2019

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The White Hart is located at a T-junction on the north side of Godstow Road, Wolvercote (NGR SP 48860 09703).

Topographically the site appears to be located on the Thames floodplain, at a height above sea level of 58m Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is an Oxford Clay and West Walton Formation, which is a sedimentary mudstone formed 156 to 165 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html). In this area the clay is capped by the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member, a series of sand and gravel deposits that were laid down in the Quaternary Period

1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council granted planning permission for *Change of use from public house (Use Class A4) to 1 x 5 bedroom dwellinghouse (Use Class C3). Erection of first floor extension; replacement of rear ground floor extension; insertion of 1No rear dormer window; insertion of roof lights and doors. Formation of patio area; provision of private amenity space, car parking spaces, bin and cycle storage* (16/00129/FUL). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area condition 10 was attached to the permission. This stated:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has 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 planning authority. All works shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

It was recommended that the scope of the work should require that an:

archaeological investigation should take the form of an intermittent watching brief during significant fabric interventions, opening up works and any significant ground works required externally (services, sub base for parking etc).

Reason: Because the development may have a damaging effect on known or suspected elements of the historic environment of the people of Oxford and their visitors, including medieval and post-medieval remains in accordance with Policy HE2 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The building dates to the 17th century and has undergone various alterations and extensions in the subsequent centuries. To the rear are a collection of projections of varying ages, including a one-and-a-half storey extension and a linear single-storey range on the east side, and a single-storey linear wing on the west side all with pitched tiled roofs and gable ends. In between these is a flat roofed infill extension.

Figure 1. Site Location

There is an area of parking to the rear, accessed to the side of the property, and a large garden (See attached existing plan).

The site may have been a bakehouse with a blacksmiths to the rear in the late 17th century. The building was a pub from the 18th century, recorded as The Blue Boy, later becoming The Green Man and finally The White Hart in 1782. The submitted historic building assessment (Yeates 2016) notes that the building is probably of transitional type between the earlier two up and two down and the double pile plan of the 17th century. The report notes the interest of the two spiral staircases within the structure as rare features in terms of contemporary domestic buildings. The potential for earlier features to be preserved behind later features and coverings is noted (for example the area of low ceiling to the east of the current bar, behind covered fireplaces, the presumed principal truss behind the central wall of the attic, the potential for traces of an original cross passage to be preserved behind modern bar fittings etc.).

Fuller details on the archaeological and historical background on the site are given in Yeates (2016).

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 significant archaeological and historic building fabric remains during the proposed development works above and below ground
- Record any historic fabric, fixtures, finds or features revealed during significant fabric interventions and opening up works.

In particular:

- To record any information relevant to the historical development of the building, the site and its environs.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

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

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

3.2 Methodology

Monitored work comprised:
Stripping of roof tile and interior plaster to expose the roof fabric prior to the insertion of a new dormer window.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Dormer window (Figure 2)

An area measuring approximately 2.4m in length by 2m in width was stripped of roof tiles; upon removal the stripped roof tiles were identified as modern replacements. Removal of the roof tiles revealed a central truss, flanked by rafters. The truss measured 95mm in width by 75mm in depth. Internally the upper floor of the building, into which the dormer window was to be inserted, is divided into two rooms; this division occurs in the position of the truss. On either side of the truss the ceilings of the two rooms are of different heights. In the eastern room the ceiling was seen to extend to the height of the purlins, however in the western room the ceiling was located approximately 0.2m below the purlins.

A collar beam associated with the central truss was visible in the area of the western room due to the lower ceiling heights; laths were present below the level of the collar beam and purlins. This perhaps indicates that the ceiling height in the eastern room is original, while the ceiling has been lowered in the western room.

Plate **: internal lath partition visible below collar beam in western room.

Two phases of rafter were evident: The earlier rafters (phase 1) measured 70 to 75mm in width and 85 to 100mm in depth; inserted into these at regular intervals were square iron nails that had evidently previously been used to secure laths to hold the rooftiles. The rafters were saw cut, though did not have the same regularity in form as the later phase, likely due to age related warping. Secured to the earlier rafters were a second, later phase (Phase 2). These measured 55mm in width by 75mm in depth, saw cut and more regular in form than the phase a rafters. Attached to these were thin timber laths, measuring 25mm in width by 4mm in depth, to which the rooftiles were secured. The laths were attached using round, flat headed steel nails. The weight of the roof therefore being carried predominantly by the later rafters.

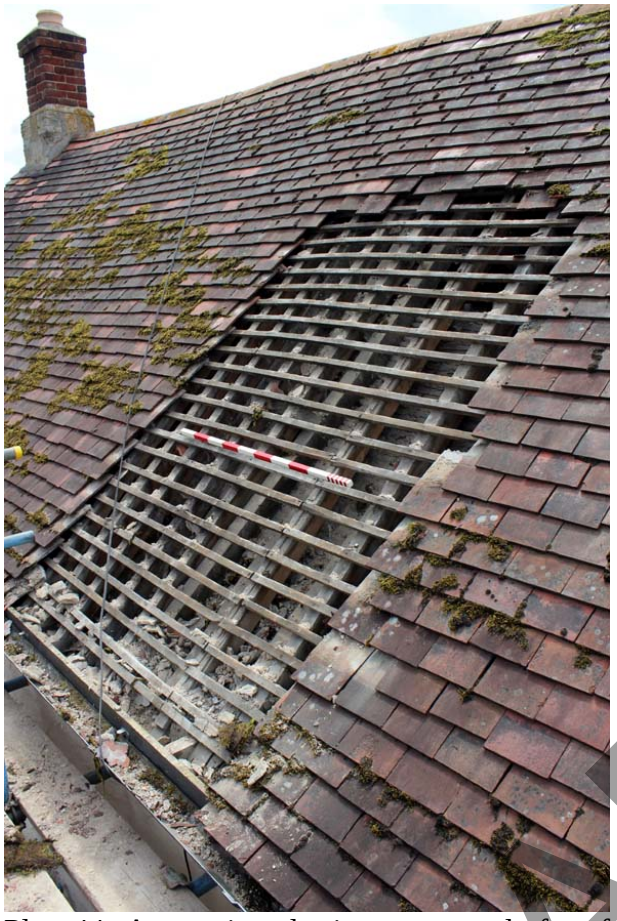

Plate **: Area stripped prior to removal of roof fabric and dormer window insertion

When plaster was removed internally the plaster and laths, to which the plaster was attached, were found to be modern replacements. The laths were regular in size and were attached to modern machine cut timbers, which in turn were attached to the earlier phase of rafters. Both the laths and the supporting timbers were held using flat headed steel wire roofing nails of late 19th or 20th century date.

Plate **: Internal laths and plaster

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

Yeates, S, 2016 *Historic Building Assessment on The White Hart, Godstow Road, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8PQ*. JMHS. Unpublished