

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**ON**

**LAND WEST OF JORDANS CLOSE,**

**RAMSDEN, OXFORDSHIRE**

**SP 3541 1511**

*On behalf of*

*Leadbitter*

**MARCH 2009**

**REPORT FOR** Leadbitter  
Grange Court  
Abingdon Science Park  
Abingdon  
OX14 3NU

**PREPARED BY** John Moore

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief during initial groundworks for a housing development on the site. The lack of artefacts, other than of late post-medieval or early modern date, indicated that no significant remains were present within the field. A small infilled roadside ditch was present. This was not dated.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site is located immediately to the west of Jordans Close in Ramsden (NGR SP 3541 1511). The underlying geology is Forest Marble and Cornbrash and the site lies at approximately 140m OD. The site was formerly rough grassland.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the construction of five dwellings, in two blocks, with associated car parking. Due to the potential for archaeological remains a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of groundworks. This was in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work, which was carried out to a *Written Scheme of Investigation* that was approved by OCAS.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The development site lies immediately north of Akeman Street, the Roman road that ran from Verulamium to Corinium and formed the early limes of the province after the invasion. It was considered possible that features associated with the road, for instance the agger and ditch may survive. Elsewhere in the region, at Wilcote, Asthall and Sansons Platt roadside settlement is located either side of the road and the presence of structural features was also a possibility.

## **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 remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record any evidence relating to, or associated with, Akeman Street

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the archaeological watching brief to a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with OCAS.

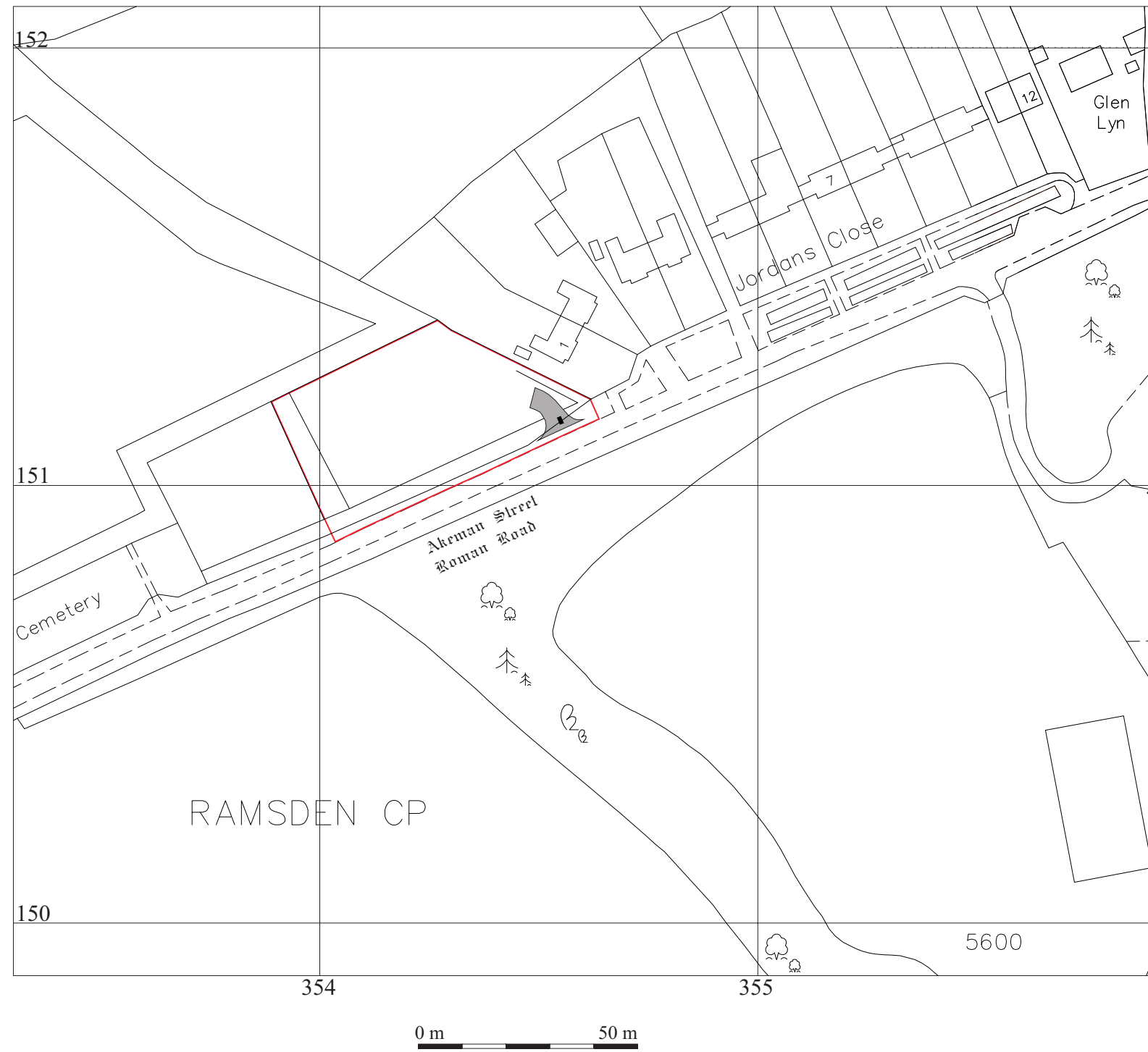


Figure 1. Site Location



The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

### **3.2 Methodology**

The removal of topsoil over the area was monitored by an archaeologist along with the excavation for the access at the north-east end of the site (Fig 1, light shaded area).

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate.

## **4 RESULTS (Figure 2)**

The natural geological deposit consisted of brown-orange clay with 1-2% medium sized pebbles 180-280mm thick (05) overlying Cornbrash (06). Above the natural clay was a 300mm thick deposit of grey-brown clay with 1-2% medium sized pebbles (02). This was an old ploughsoil. The uppermost deposit was topsoil (01) which was 150mm thick near the roadside increasing to 200mm in the field.

No artefacts other than two finds of late post-medieval or early modern date, from the topsoil, were seen during the topsoil strip.

During excavation for the entrance a small ditch was seen. This was adjacent and parallel to the road and in the verge. A section through it was mechanically excavated (Fig. 2). The cut 04 was estimated to be 1300mm wide and 520mm deep. The top of the north-west side was *c.* 45<sup>0</sup>, decreasing to 30<sup>0</sup>. The base was rounded and the south-east side was probably at 60<sup>0</sup>. The fill of the ditch was mid orange-brown (slightly grey in places) clay with 20% medium pebbles.

## **5 FINDS**

No artefacts other than a sherd of white glazed ceramic ware and a piece of late post-medieval or early modern bottle glass were seen. These were both within the topsoil.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

No artefacts were seen in the top of the old ploughsoil or during its removal for the entrance. It was therefore considered highly unlikely that there was any evidence for Roman activity on the site and it was agreed with OCAS that the watching brief could be curtailed except at the entrance.

Whether the ditch is a Roman roadside ditch is unknown. A small open ditch exists on the same side of the road some 400m along the road to the south-west. The presence of the high percentage of pebbles in the fill suggests erosion of a road surface into the ditch. This could either be from the surface of the Roman road or a later re-surfacing.

## 7 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

English Heritage, 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*. Revised Sept 1999