



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

ON

LAND ADJACENT TO A418,

THAME, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 6962 0620

On behalf of

Jeffrey Charles Emmett Planning Consultancy

MARCH 2010

REPORT FOR Jeffery Charles Emmett Planning Consultancy
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CONTENTS

	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Origins of the report	1
1.2 Planning Guidelines and Policies	1
1.2.1 Government Planning Policy Guidance	1
1.2.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011	3
1.2.3 Thame Conservation Area Management Plan	4
1.3 Desk-Based Assessment Aims and Objectives	4
1.4 Desk-Based Assessment Methodology	5
2 THE SITE	6
2.1 Location	6
2.2 Description	6
2.3 Topography	6
2.4 Geology	6
3 PROPOSED SCHEME	8
4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND	8
4.1 The Historical Development of Priestend Fields, Thame	8
4.2 Known Archaeological Sites	11
4.2.1 The Prehistoric to Roman Periods	11
4.2.2 The Saxon and Medieval Periods	11
4.2.3 The Post-Medieval Period	16
4.3 The Cartographic Evidence	16
5 DISCUSSION	22
5.1 The Archaeological Potential of the Site	22
5.2 The Impact of Previous Development on Potential Archaeological Remains	23
5.3 The Impact of the Proposal Area on Potential Archaeological Remains	23
6 CONCLUSIONS	23
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED	24
7.1 Books and Documents	24
7.2 Gazetteer of Historic Environment Records	25
7.3 Historic Maps	28

FIGURES

Figure 1	Proposal Area (Option F)	7
Figure 2	Roman & Prehistoric Historic Environment Records	12
Figure 3	Medieval Historic Environment Records	14
Figure 4	Post-Medieval Historic Environment Records	15
Figure 5	Saxton (1574) and Jeffreys (1767) maps	17
Figure 6	Davis (1797) and Bryant (1823) maps	18
Figure 7	Tracing of Inclosure Award Map (1826)	20
Figure 8	Ordnance Survey 1" to 1 mile (1886); Tracing of field boundaries from 1 st Edition overlaid	21

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the Report

This archaeological desk-based assessment was commissioned by Jeffrey Charles Emmett Planning Consultancy on behalf of Mr James Castle. It has been prepared for, and is intended to inform, any proposal under consideration within the defined area, Option F, of the Thame Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

1.2 Planning Guidelines and Policies

This report has been prepared in accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16) issued by the Department of the Environment (1990); and with the policies relevant to archaeology in the *South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011* (adopted 20 January 2006) and the *Thame Conservation Area Management Plan 2009* (adopted April 2006). In format and contents this report conforms to the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' guidance paper for desk-based assessments (IFA September 2001).

1.2.1 Government Planning Policy Guidance

PPG 16 (DOE 1990) provides Government guidance for the investigation, protection and preservation of archaeological remains affected by development. The document emphasises the importance of archaeology (Section A, Paragraph 6) and states that:

“Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite, and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.”

PPG 16 additionally stresses the importance of addressing archaeological issues at an early stage in the planning process (Paragraph 12):

“The key to informed and reasonable planning decisions, as emphasized in paragraphs 19 and 20, is for consideration to be given early, before formal planning applications are made, to the question of whether archaeological remains exist on a site where development is planned and the implications for the development proposal.”

The advice given recommends early consultation between developers and the planning authority to determine “whether the site is known or likely to contain archaeological remains” (Paragraph 19). As an initial stage, such consultations may lead to the developer commissioning an archaeological assessment, defined in the following manner in PPG 16 (Paragraph 20):

“Assessment normally involves desk-based evaluation of existing information: it can make effective use of records of previous discoveries, including any historic maps held by the County archive and local museums and record offices, or of geophysical survey techniques.”

If the desk-based assessment should indicate a high probability of the existence of important archaeological remains within the development area, then further stages of archaeological work are likely to be required. PPG 16 states that in such cases (Paragraph 21):

“it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. This sort of evaluation is quite distinct from full archaeological excavation. It is normally a rapid and inexpensive operation, involving ground survey and small-scale trial trenching, but it should be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or archaeologist.”

Additional guidance is provided if the results of an evaluation indicate that significant archaeological deposits survive within a development area. PPG 16 stresses the importance of preservation (Paragraphs 8 and 18):

“Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.”

“The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled.”

But acknowledges that (Paragraphs 24 and 25):

“the extent to which remains can or should be preserved will depend upon a number of factors, including the intrinsic importance of the remains. Where it is not feasible to preserve remains, an acceptable alternative may be to arrange prior excavation, during which the archaeological evidence is recorded.”

“Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation *in situ* of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the case and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy

itself before granting planning permission, that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of the remains. Such agreements should also provide for the subsequent publication of the results of the excavation.”

This level of work would involve the total excavation and recording of archaeological remains within the development area by a competent archaeological contractor prior to their destruction or damage.

1.2.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011

The South Oxfordshire Local Plan sets out in Policies 11, 12 and 13, the guiding principles afforded to the historic environment in the district. While scheduled monuments and sites of national importance are subject to specific conditions of protection, the unknown archaeological resource needs to be considered within the scope of any development.

“PPG16: Archaeology and Planning stresses that not all important archaeological remains meriting preservation enjoy the special protection provided to Scheduled Ancient Monuments.” (3.119)

“The archaeological heritage is a fragile and non-renewable resource and the Council is responsible for ensuring that archaeological remains are not needlessly damaged or destroyed. The archaeological resource has great social, economic, cultural and educational value for the community and this potential can be developed through suitable management and interpretation.” (3.116)

Management of such a resource will often take the form of assessment in areas of high archaeological potential. Such assessments will inform any further works. This may include evaluation of the archaeological potential to indicate the need for a recommendation of *in situ* preservation.

“The Council will need to make informed decisions on development proposals that adversely affect the character or setting of known or potential sites of archaeological interest. Where appropriate, therefore, the Council will require the applicant to provide further archaeological information as part of the application, in order that a reasoned and informed planning decision can be made.” (3.119)

Recording of archaeological features to be disturbed or removed as a consequence of development will usually be required.

“Where an archaeological constraint is identified through this process, the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate how the constraint will be accommodated within the development scheme.” (3.119)

Such works will be carried out with the advice and input of the County Archaeological Service in order to enable an appropriate response to the planning proposal.

“The County Archaeological Officer and the County Sites and Monument Record should be consulted at the earliest possible stage to facilitate this process.” (3.119)

1.2.3 Thame Conservation Area Management Plan 2006

The Thame Conservation Area Management Plan 2006, adapted from the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 deals primarily with the standing heritage in the centre of Thame. It does, however, reiterate South Oxfordshire District Council Policies Con 11, 12 and 13, as being guiding principles in planning decisions.

1.3 Desk-Based Assessment Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the desk-based assessment is to provide a professional appraisal of the archaeological potential of the site. This follows the Government guidance in PPG 16 by presenting a synthetic account of the available archaeological and historical data and its significance at an early stage in the planning process.

In accordance with PPG 16, the report presents a desk-based evaluation of existing information. It additionally follows the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard* definition of a desk-based assessment (IFA 2001). In brief, it seeks to identify and assess the known and potential archaeological resource within a specified area ('the site'), collating existing written and graphic information and taking full account of the likely character, extent, quantity and worth of that resource in a local, regional and national context. It also aims to define and comment on the likely impact of the proposed development scheme on the surviving archaeological resource.

The Institute for Archaeologists *Standard* states that the purpose of a desk-based assessment is to inform appropriate responses, which may consist of one or more of the following:

- The formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.
- The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- The formulation of a project design for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research

In accordance with PPG 16, the desk-based assessment forms the first stage in the planning process as regards archaeology as a material consideration. It is

intended to contribute to the formulation of an informed and appropriate mitigation strategy.

1.4 Desk-Based Assessment Methodology

The format and contents of this section of the report are an adaptation of the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' guidance paper for desk-based assessments (IFA 2001). The work has involved the consultation of the available documentary evidence, including records of previous discoveries and historical maps, and has been supplemented with a site walkover. The format of the report is adapted from an Institute for Archaeologists *Standard Guidance* paper (IFA 2001).

In summary, the work has involved:

- Identifying the client's objectives
- Identifying the cartographic and documentary sources available for consultation
- Assembling, consulting and examining those sources
- Identifying and collating the results of recent fieldwork
- Site walkover

The principal sources consulted in assessing this site were:

- The Oxfordshire County Historic Environment Record
- The Buckinghamshire County Historic Environment Record
- The National Monuments Record, Swindon
- The Oxfordshire County Archives

The National Monuments Record, Swindon, Oxfordshire County Historic Environment Record, and Buckinghamshire County Historic Environment Record hold details of known archaeological and historical sites in the vicinity of the proposal site. The information from these sources is cross-referenced in the gazetteer (Section 7.2).

There has been no archaeological work carried out at the proposal site. The assessment of its potential has, therefore, relied on predictive modelling based on the known distribution of remains within 500 metres of the perimeter of the site (from a central grid reference of SP 6962 0620). The information about standing historical and listed buildings within the same radius of the proposal area has also been collated. This has been noted, but no detailed examination of the buildings is reported.

The available evidence is derived from casual finds, archaeological investigations, standing buildings and historical records. It should be stressed that the distribution represents the extent of current knowledge and is the product of chance. For this reason, apparently blank zones should not be automatically regarded as being devoid of remains.

The assessment of the likely condition of any potential archaeological remains has relied upon a study of the available historical maps and observations made during the site walkover, which provide evidence for the impact of previous land-use on the site.

There have been no restrictions on reporting or access to the relevant records. The copyright to the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record is held by Oxfordshire County Council (Figures 2 to 4).

2 THE SITE

2.1 Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the outskirts of Thame, in the former liberty of Priestend, in South Oxfordshire District in the east of Oxfordshire. The proposal area is situated outside the historic centre of the town, between the old Oxford Road and the northern by-pass A418. It is approximately 13.4 hectares in extent and is centred on National Grid Reference SP 6962 0620.

2.2 Description (Figure 1)

The proposal site is in the form of an irregular triangle defined by the A418 to the north and Oxford Road to the south, the eastern end of the proposal area is bounded by a field giving onto the Cuttle Brook. Currently the land comprises a pig-farm at the southern end, and fallow, grazed by sheep and horses, at the eastern.

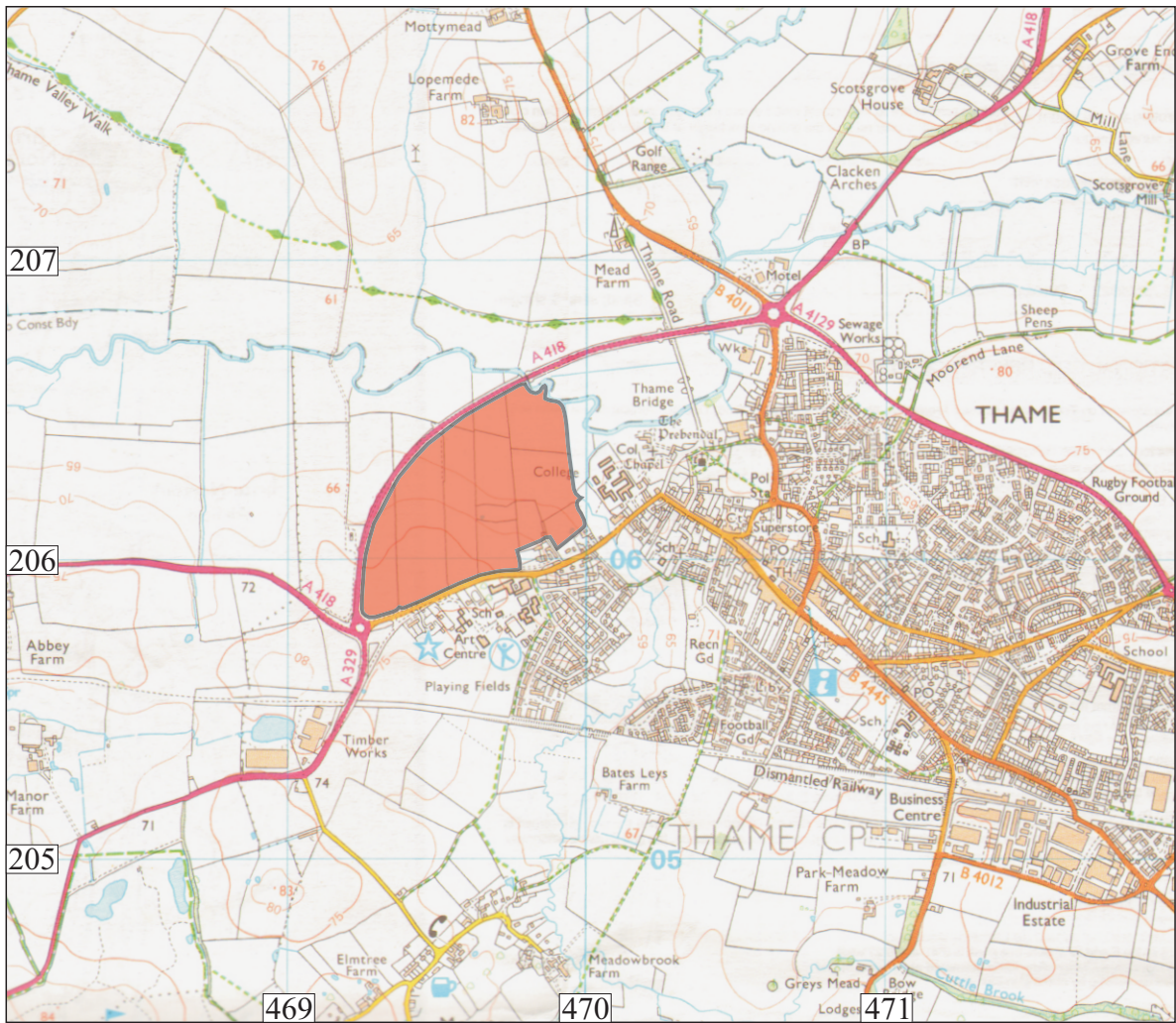
2.3 Topography

At the southern end of the proposal area the land is a gently undulating plateau at approximately 75m OD. To the southwest lies Christmas Hill. The pig-farm occupies this plateau and the upper slope dropping to the north and northeast, toward the Cuttle Brook and the Thame valley. The land here overlooks the medieval planned new town of Thame.

The land drops to the north and northeast to approximately 65m OD into the valleys of the Cuttle Brook and the Thame. This land was clearly cultivated during the medieval and possibly post-medieval period as ridge and furrow is clearly visible today.

2.4 Geology

The proposal site is situated on the Third to Fourth Terrace Gravels at the southwest end of the proposal area and First Terrace gravels and alluvium at the northeast end (Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) Sheet 237). The Third and Fourth Terrace Gravels overlie Kimmeridge Clay, and associated silts and sands, which outcrop across the site. Kimmeridge Clay is a fossiliferous marine clay of the Jurassic period, and which is approximately 151-156M years old. A band of Ampthill Clay Formation



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Figure 1. Proposal Area (Option F)

exists running east/west across the site, at the foot of the Kimmeridge Clay, parallel with the River Thame, which is overlain by the First Terrace Gravels and alluvium. Ampthill Clay Formation is a Mesozoic deposit laid down c. 155M years ago.

3 PROPOSED SCHEME (Figure 1)

The current desk-based assessment has been prepared as supporting documentation for the landscape assessment of any future development under consideration as Option F of the Thame Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Figures 2-8)

4.1 The Historical Development of Priestend Fields, Thame

Thame is located in the Hundred of Thame, formerly part of the Hundred of Dorchester at Domesday (Lobel 1962). The town and hundred take their name from the River Thame, which shares its pre-English name with the Thames and Taff, amongst others, meaning 'dark river' or 'dark waters', ultimately from the Sanskrit *támas*, meaning 'darkness' (Ekwall, 1960).

The town appears to have developed into a Saxon Burgh by around 635AD, which was located at the western end of the current High Street, at Priestend, along the roads surrounding the church. It was in the bishopric of Dorchester until AD 1070, when the See was transferred to Lincoln (Lobel 1962).

In 1086 there were 60 hides in the bishop's demesne manor of Thame, 37 of which he reserved for himself, the rest held of his knights. There was land for 34 ploughs. The bishop had 5 ploughs in demesne and 5 serfs, and his customary tenants, 24 *villani* and 26 bordars, had 19 ploughs. There was a mill, rendering 20s., and the meadowland, always highly prized in the rich Thame valley, was worth 60s., a tenth of the value of the whole manor. The pre-Conquest valuation of Thame was £20, but when received by Bishop Remigius the estate had so suffered that its value had fallen to £16. Of the 23 hides held by the bishop's knights, there were 10 ploughs in demesne, and that 16 *villani* with 21 bordars and 8 slaves had another 10 ploughs. These holdings were in an area that included North Weston, Moreton, Attington, and Tetsworth (Williams & Martin 1992; Lobel 1962).

The present market-town is medieval in origin laid out under the auspices of Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, in the 1140s as New Thame. At the same time, he gave episcopal land to the Cistercians, who founded an abbey to the south of the proposal site in what is now Thame Park and built the Prebendal in Old Thame. The result of this was a diminishment of the bishop's manor by these grants: first, Thame Abbey received 3 carucates on its refoundation in 1139 or 1140, when Bishop Alexander gave his park at Thame so that the Cistercian

monks of Ottley in Oddington might have a more favourable site; second, the new prebend of Thame was endowed with 4 carucates by Bishop Alexander by 1146, which was probably the prebendary land at Priestend; about this time an unknown portion of the bishop's demesne was set aside for the foundation of the *burgus* of New Thame. The remainder of the manor appears to have continued in demesne, administered by the bishop's servants, probably until 1509, when it was farmed to Geoffrey Dormer. Details, however, are lacking except for a few scattered notices (Lobel 1962).

Apart from an account of the sale of corn in 1181–2, entered on the pipe roll – the manor was in the king's hands during a vacancy – there is no further information until the detailed description given of the manor in the survey of the bishop's estates made after 1225. At this time, the bishop had 7 free tenants, 5 of whom were at Thame and 2 at North Weston, holding between them 14½ virgates and paying assised rents of 73s. 2d. The Thame tenants were also bound to do carrying services: Roger, son of Lete, for example, held 3 virgates for 18s. rent and carried the lord's writs and with the bailiff, the bishop's money (*ibid*).

Of the customary tenants of Thame, 10 held 10½ virgates, 21 half-virgates and 4 tofts; 16 were cottars. No comparison can profitably be made with the number of tenants in 1086, for the manor had been reduced in size. The account of the rents and services given illustrates the transitional period when the villein might be doing either week-work or paying a money rent and doing an agreed amount of boon-work, presumably according to the lord's needs (*ibid*).

The bishop had 5 plough-lands in demesne and could have 200 sheep and 20 cows. He drew some of his permanent as well as seasonal labour from his customary tenants. Two of the half-virgaters were to be the lord's ploughmen; two others were liable to keep the lord's cows and sheep; a cottar was the lord's gardener and all were quit of the services which other tenants owed. Another virgater was not liable for week-work, because he made the ironwork for 4 ploughs, providing the iron himself. Some of the tenants may have been *famuli*, who had been provided with some land, for 2 men who held tofts were called ploughmen (*carucarii*). Since the time of Bishop William (1203–6) the cottars had been allowed to rent a certain meadow for 3s. in lieu of the hay they used to receive from the bishop at mowing time. This meadow was presumably located at Priestend, the property of the prebend. All customary tenants paid dues to the bishop when they succeeded to a holding or married a daughter, and they paid fines for fornication and gave an 'aid' when the lord wished (*ibid*).

In 1219 the Bishop of Lincoln rerouted the Oxford to Aylesbury road, which had originally run through Old Thame, to the east of the proposal site, along Bell Lane (Airs *et al.* 1974), to the west end of the marketplace. Previously, the Aylesbury to Oxford road had run through Priestend. A survey carried out at the beginning of the 13th century recorded 63 burgesses in the town and that by middle of the century there were 78. The burgage plots along the High Street were field acre strips (*ibid*).

The hundredal inquest of 1279 reveals a number of developments on the bishop's manor and in its dependent hamlets. The bishop had 4 plough-lands in demesne with a mill and two weirs, and 38 recorded tenants as against 46 in the earlier survey. The tenants are identified as holding 4 acres each. No services are recorded and the whole entry is of the briefest kind, since the king had little interest in the bishop's manor. The amount of customary land under cultivation remained much the same. The holders of 1 virgate paid a rent of 5s. and their services were valued at 3s. As in the earlier survey some 50 years earlier, the bishop had 5 free tenants in Thame. Others holding of the bishop in Thame were the prebendary, who had 16 virgates in villeinage, and the abbey, which had 3 carucates in alms. The 4 carucates assigned to the church seems to be an error and simply a repetition of the prebendary's holding (Lobel 1962).

The early years of the 14th century as elsewhere seem to have been disastrous for the farming community at Thame. The abbey, more able than most to cope with adversity, was heavily in debt, perhaps owing to bad seasons and murrain among the sheep. The relative wealth of the hamlets in the 14th century is illustrated by the tax-assessment lists, in which New Thame and Old Thame with 67 and 50 tax payers respectively in 1327 easily take the lead yielding respectively £6 7s. 11d., £5 3s. 6d. Old Thame includes the liberty of Priestend. The other hamlets combined made up 63 taxpayers yielding £9 10s. 9d. The reassessment of 1334 led to a somewhat drastic change: the respective totals were then £9 2s. 8d. for New Thame, £3 7s. 9d. for Old Thame, and £2 14s. 6d. for North Weston, which had paid £3 2s. 11d., previously. Developments at Moreton and Attington cannot be gauged as they were taxed together in 1344. It is not clear whether these reductions are due to external economic conditions or a decline in production, or a consequence of Episcopal activities (*ibid*).

The poll tax of 1377 shows that at Priestend and Old Thame there were 211 tax payers and 325 at New Thame, Moreton had 69 whereas Attington and Weston had 27 and 49 taxpayers respectively (*ibid*).

The proposal area is located in the former liberty of Priestend, which although not mentioned in 1279, was, along with Attington, North Weston, and Moreton, one of several such liberties, or hamlets, in the parish. Priestend was also one of several manors in Thame, and had its own field system; it is believed that the prebendaries property was located here during the medieval period (*ibid*).

Contemporary evidence for the field system is slight, but it seems that the arable fields were divided into five groups, those of Priestend, Old Thame, North Weston, Moreton and Attington. Four of these sets of fields, those of Old Thame, North Weston, Moreton, and Attington are apparent from the account in the hundred rolls and references in the charters, but the first explicit mention of Priestend is in a document of 1412 which deals with 7 acres in 'the fields of Priestende called 'Lapersdon' (i.e. Lobbersdown). The Priestend fields lay between Moreton and Weston, from the Cuttle Brook on the east to

Lobbersdown Hill in the south-west corner of the parish, and probably originated in Bishop Alexander's grant of 4 carucates to the church in *c.* 1146. Remains of ridge and furrow are still visible at the Cuttle Brook end of the field system (*ibid*).

Unlike much of the rest of the parish, Priestend did not undergo the piecemeal inclosure which appears to have occurred in the other liberties, and which contributed to agrarian unrest during the latter part of the Middle Ages (*ibid*). When the Priestend Fields were inclosed, it appears to have been those to the south by Lobbersdown Hill, rather than those nearer Thame, which were first inclosed in the later medieval period.

By the 16th century some land had passed to the William, Lord Windsor, who held court here. By 1600 it had passed to the Norreys and their descendants, the earls of Abingdon, but remained a separate manor, with its own court and tenants. Although Priestend manor and 700 acres of land in the manor were sold in 1844 by the Earl of Abingdon, by the 1880s the earl was again the chief landowner in Priestend. By 1914 three-quarters of the farmland in the parish was permanent pasture (Lobel 1962).

The bridge at Priestend over the Cuttle Brook was an important routeway, and appears to have been kept up by the parish. It undertook its repair certainly in 1836 and widened its approaches, the county contributing £50. The proposal site lies to the west of Oxford Road, which was only a bridleway until the 1820s at the foot of Christmas Hill. Previously, the road to Oxford left Thame towards Milton and joined the London road at Milton Common (*ibid*).

4.2 Known Archaeological Sites (Figures 2-4)

4.2.1 The Prehistoric to Roman Periods (4000 BC to AD 410) (Fig. 2)

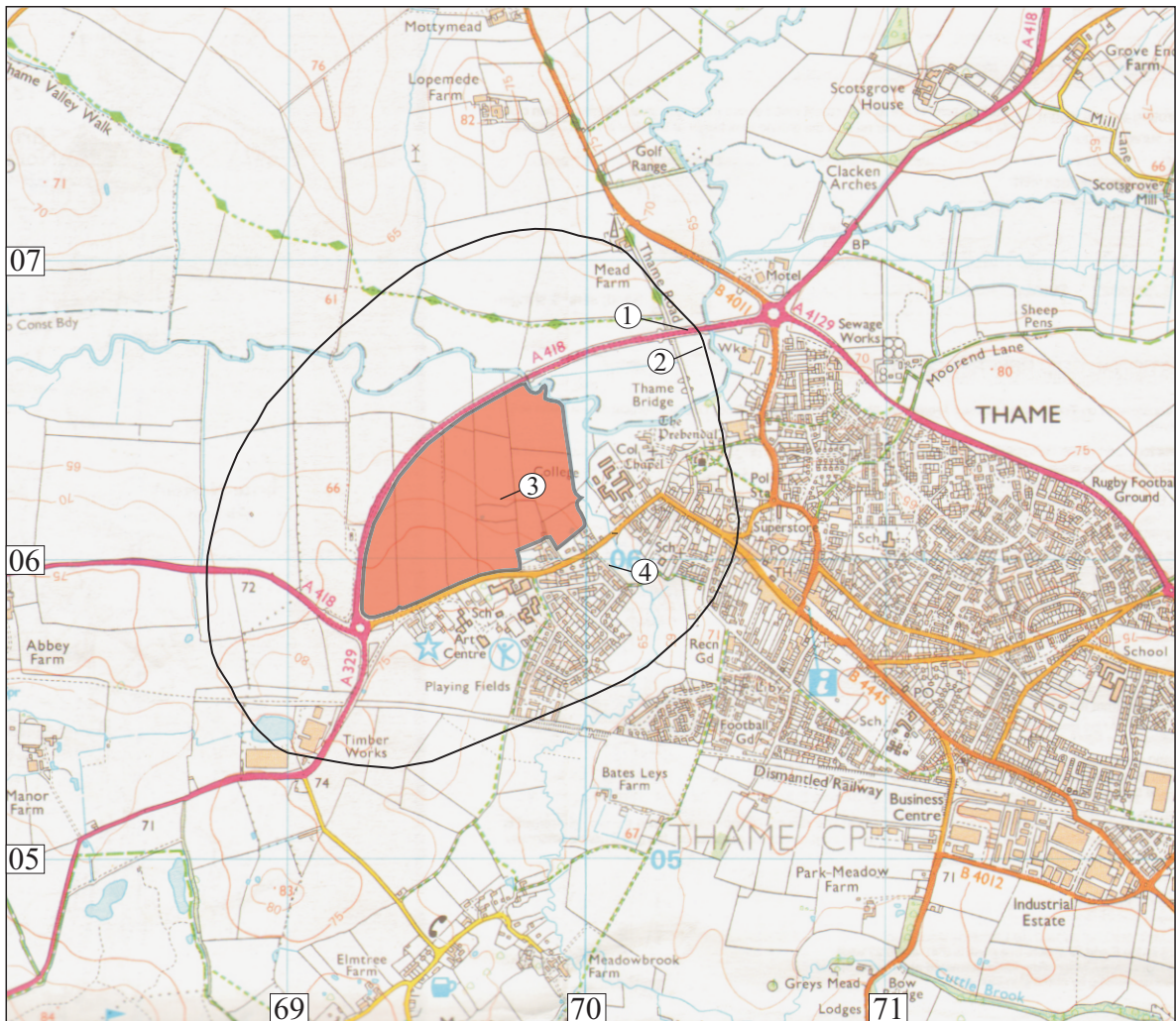
A Roman grey ware pot (JMHS 1) was dredged from the River Thame in 1978 on the Buckinghamshire side of the river. At the same time, the uppermost part of a human cranium (JMHS 2) was also dredged from the Buckinghamshire bank (Farley 1979, 193).

In the early 1960s James Chase found a small Late Iron Age Belgic pot (JMHS 3) on the proposal site. The pot, which may be from a funerary group, was found on the surface, and the grid reference is approximate (Benson & Brown 1966, 155). It was found before pig-farming started on the fields.

A Neolithic flint axe head (JMHS 4) was found 200m south of the proposal site (Salzman 1939, 266). It is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

4.2.2 The Saxon and Medieval Period (AD 410 to 1484) (Fig. 3)

At the east end of the proposal area a medieval hoard (JMHS 5) of ten silver coins and five rings from the 14th century was found in 1940 (Leeds 1940, 169).



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	Site
1-4	Prehistoric & Roman

Figure 2. Prehistoric and Roman Historic Environment Records

The current Prebendal (JMHS 6), a Grade II* listed structure, dates from the 13th century, although was probably in existence since the 1140s when Thame became a prebend – that is to say, part of the cathedral estate drawing revenue – of the See of Lincoln. It was further modified during the 14th or 15th centuries. The Victoria County History (Page 1907, 330) notes the existence of a three-sided moat at the prebendal chapel (JMHS 7). Professor Mick Aston notes in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record in 1971 that it was no longer visible. It was filled in at the beginning of the 20th century. Work at the Prebendal (JMHS 8) by Brian Durham of Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU 1990a) in 1989 revealed thin medieval floor layers and stone footings. The absence of ashy deposits or stone pier bases of an undercroft suggests that this was not the main hall, but rather a solar or antechamber.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin (JMHS 9) was built c. 1220 (Pevsner 7 Sherwood 1974, 806), following Thame becoming a prebend of the See of Lincoln with enlargements being carried out in the 14th and 15th centuries. The north wall of the north aisle was rebuilt in 1838 by George Wilkinson. It was restored in 1889-97 by J.O. Scott. It is Grade I listed. No evidence for a Saxon church, which was in all probability a minster, has yet been brought to light, despite work carried out by OAU (OAU 1990b, 27-8), which nonetheless did reveal burials as early as the 12th century, as well as late Saxon pottery. However, Wulfhere, king of Mercia, in the late 7th century, may well have endowed the bishopric of Dorchester with Thame when, as his charter says, he swore ‘on the altar’ at Thame (Lobel 1962).

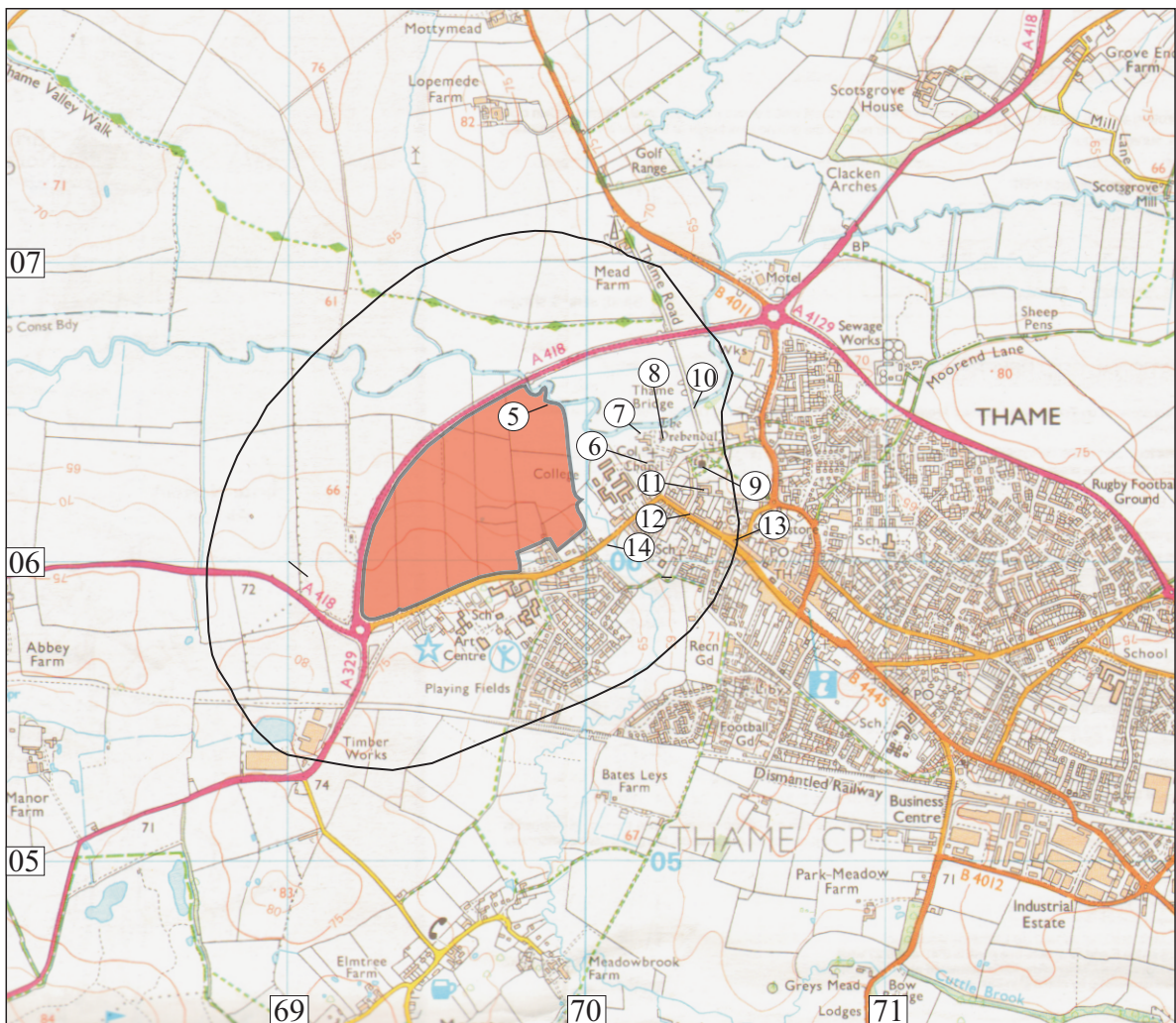
North of the church and leading from Priestend to Long Crendon is Thame Bridge (JMHS 10), first mentioned in 1309 in connection with repairs, the present bridge was rebuilt in 1896. It is not known how much of the original medieval fabric is extant.

To the southeast of the church is the site of the former Bishop’s Court Farm (JMHS 11), which was shown on historic maps, but which has since been demolished in 1891. The barn is still standing and is Grade II* listed. This building would originally have functioned as the administrative centre for the prebendal demesne, as well as the manorial court and residence for the Bishop of Lincoln’s representatives.

To the south of the church, on Church Road are Quatermain’s Almshouses, (JMHS 12) erected in 1550 by Sir John Williams, although the chantry endowment of St Christopher, which founded the almshouses originally, dates from 1447. The grammar school also benefited from the chantry endowment (Lobel 1962).

Work at the Cruck House (JMHS 13), a 14th-century timber-framed cottage, revealed that there were the remains of a cellar of mortared limestone rubble. The Cruck House is Grade II listed.

The Cuttle Brook is crossed by the Ford Bridge (JMHS 14), probably dating from the 14th century, “and appears to have been kept up by the parish. It undertook its repair certainly in 1836 and widened its approaches, the county

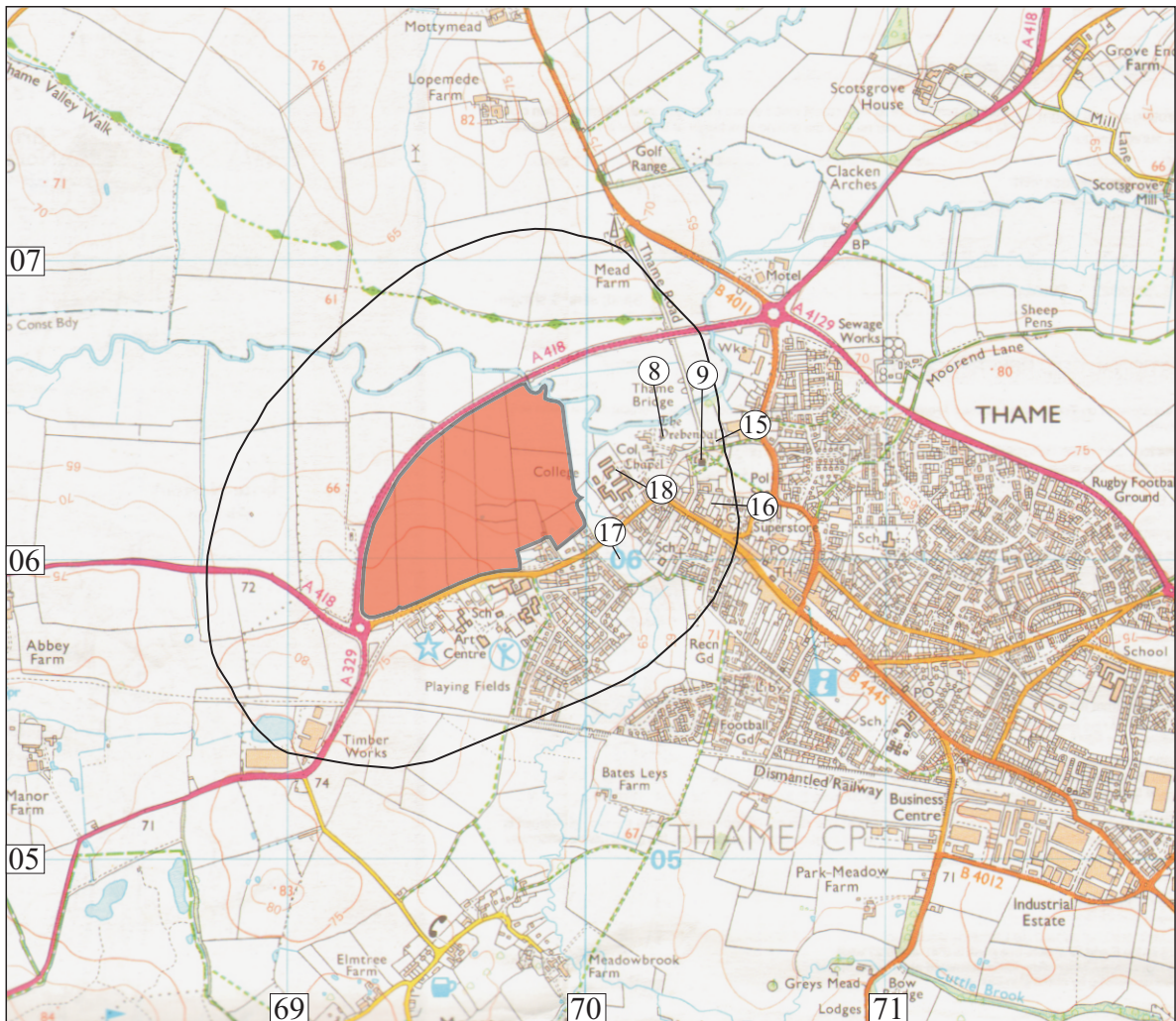


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	Site
5-14	Medieval Sites



Figure 3. Medieval Historic Environment Records



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	Site
	Post Medieval Sites

0 m 1000 m
1:25000

Figure 4. Post Medieval Historic Environment Records

contributing £50” (Lobel 1962). It should be noted that “as early as 1345 a stone causeway from Thame to Rycote had been begun at his own cost by a Thame merchant, Edward le Spicer” (Lobel 1962), which may well be the present Oxford Road.

4.2.3 The Post-Medieval Period (AD 1485 to 1900)

During the work undertaken by Oxford Archaeological Unit at the prebendal, Brian Durham exposed a concrete ornamental pond and an 18th century well (JMHS 8).

The Vicarage (JMHS 15) was built in 1842. It replaced an earlier, possibly 16th century, building.

The original Lord Williams’ Grammar School (JMHS 16) was located on Church Road. It is 16th century in origin and was restored after the War of the Three Kingdoms (The Civil War). It moved to its present location on Oxford Road in 1879 and the Grade II listed former school is now offices.

Charlie Chambers of OAU monitored work on a series of fishponds (JMHS 17) identified by the Thame Historic Society. Post-medieval soils and 18th century dumps of material were identified. It is not believed currently that the fishponds were medieval.

A watching brief carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services at Rycotewood College (JMHS 18) failed to reveal any archaeological remains (Pine 2007).

4.3 The Cartographic Evidence (Figs. 5 to 8)

The study of the historical maps has relied on the material held at the Oxfordshire Record Office. The work has focussed on the land coinciding with the proposal site and has been confined to those maps which show this area at a sufficient scale to provide specific details about its past character.

The earliest map of Thame by Saxton (1574) (Fig. 5) shows the approximate location of the proposal area, but in insufficient detail to enable characterisation of the area. This is true of all the other maps examined between the 17th and late 18th centuries: Saxton & Hole (1610); Speed (1611); Plot (1676); Morden (1695); Overton (1715); Cole (1715); and Kitchen (1760). While these maps show the Ford Bridge, and some detail, such as the present Oxford Road, no information is available on the field system at Priestend, and insufficient on the potential degree of occupation along the road, which might be associated with the hamlet.



Saxton 1574
Not to Scale

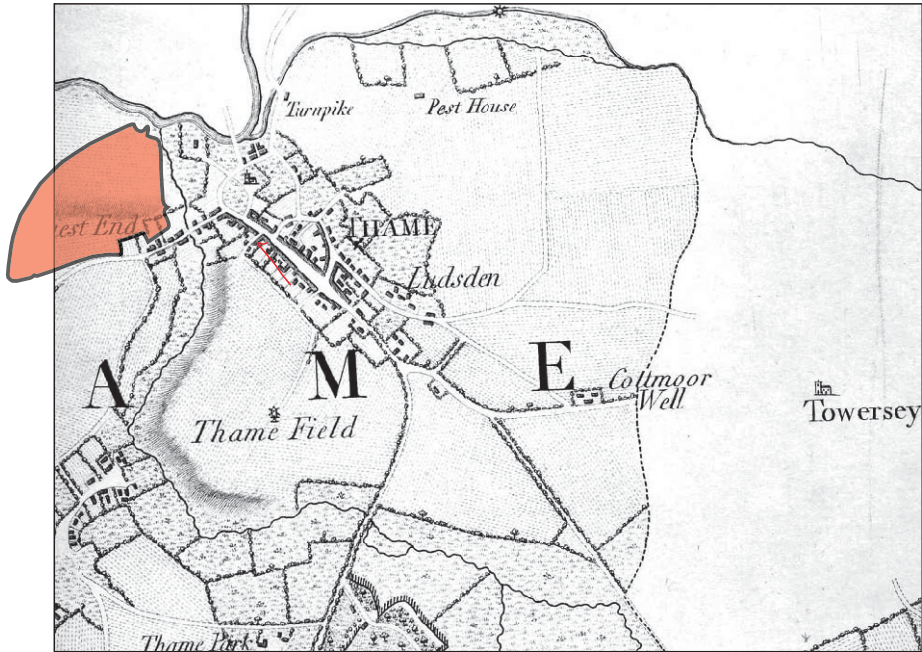
Approximate Location of Site



Jefferys 1767
Not to scale

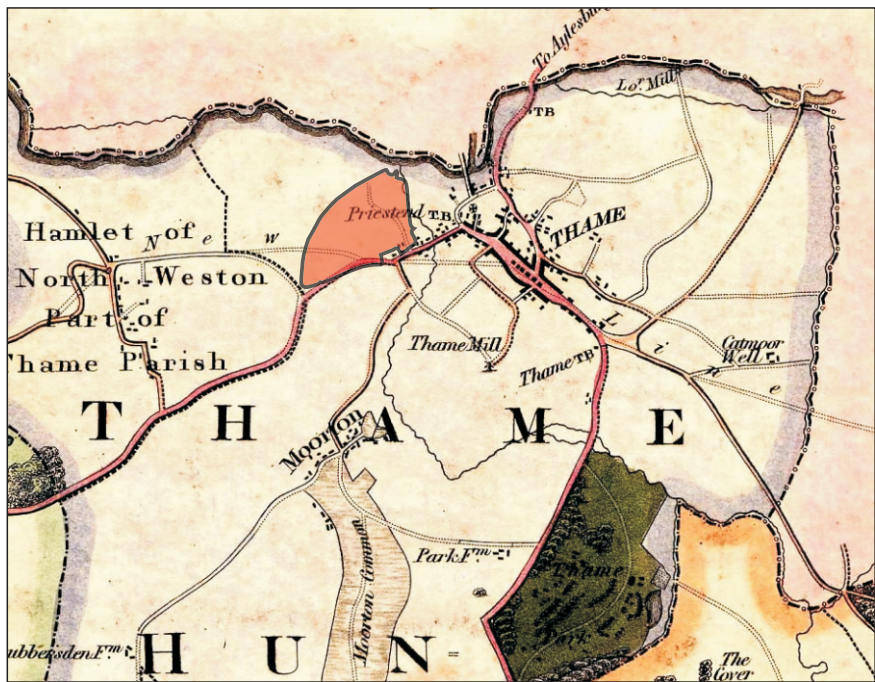
Approximate Location of Site

Figure 5. Saxton 1574 & Jefferys 1767



Davis 1797
Not to scale

Approximate Location of Site



Bryant 1823
Not to scale

Approximate Location of Site

The earliest relevant map is the Jeffreys' survey of Oxfordshire from 1767 (Fig. 5). This map shows Thame; the hamlet, or liberty, of Priestend extends to the southwest along the present Oxford Road, which is shown crossing the Cuttle Brook. Buildings are shown either side of the present Oxford Road. It is not possible to tell whether these are indeed properties, or as is not infrequently the case with early maps, merely schematic. The map shows the junction where the road split toward Milton and a bridleway towards North Weston. The proposal site is located north and northeast of this junction. The River Thame is shown to the north. No fields are illustrated.

Although Davis 1797 (Fig. 6) is incompletely illustrated, the map shows that the eastern end of the proposal area is in fields. There are several putative buildings and associated property illustrated lining the north side of the present Oxford Road, as well as a single close. The fields of Priestend appear to be still open fields.

Bryant's map of 1823 (Fig. 6) shows more buildings along the Oxford Road up to the junction splitting south to Milton and west to Weston. Whether these buildings are schematic or actually represent buildings along the Oxford Road is not clear. While they are on this and previous surveys, by 1826, they have disappeared. In addition, a dashed route leading north into the Priestend Fields from the present Oxford Road is shown. This is more than likely the private road shown on the Inclosure Award map of 1826. Equally, the present Oxford Road – previously referred to as Priestend Road – is now shown marked 'New', indicating that the bridleway was only recently metalled and made good for traffic to Oxford.

The Inclosure Award Map of 1826 (Fig. 7) is the first to show field shapes. The overall form of all the present fields is already in place, although some of the historic field boundaries have since disappeared. The site is currently bisected by a concrete road, which is one of two 'private roads' marked on the Inclosure Map. The southernmost of the two roads is no longer in evidence within the proposal area, although the 2001 OS 1:25000 shows the former road as a field boundary. The fields marked '108', '107' and '106' are now a single field, although both '106' and '108' have been split by the A418; similarly, those fields marked '97', '98', '99' and '100' are also now a single field. The field '93' is still a single field, whereas historic strip marked '91' on the Inclosure Map has since been divided into two fields, as has the adjacent field '88' to the north. The field '89' and the adjacent field to the east are now a single field, and field 90 was as is today.

The 1881 OS (Fig. 8) shows that the fields shown on the 1826 Inclosure Map had already been changed largely to their present sizes. The most notable difference is those fields immediately adjacent to the Thame have been created, where on the Inclosure Map the fields '105' (which is outside the study area), '91' and '88' previously extended to the river bank, and fields '92', '94', '101' and '102' have been made into a single field. It may not be coincidental that these east/west field boundaries are along the line of the outcrop of Amphthill Clay, at the foot of the Kimmeridge Clay, where it is then overlain by more recent First Terrace Gravels and alluvium. In addition, fields

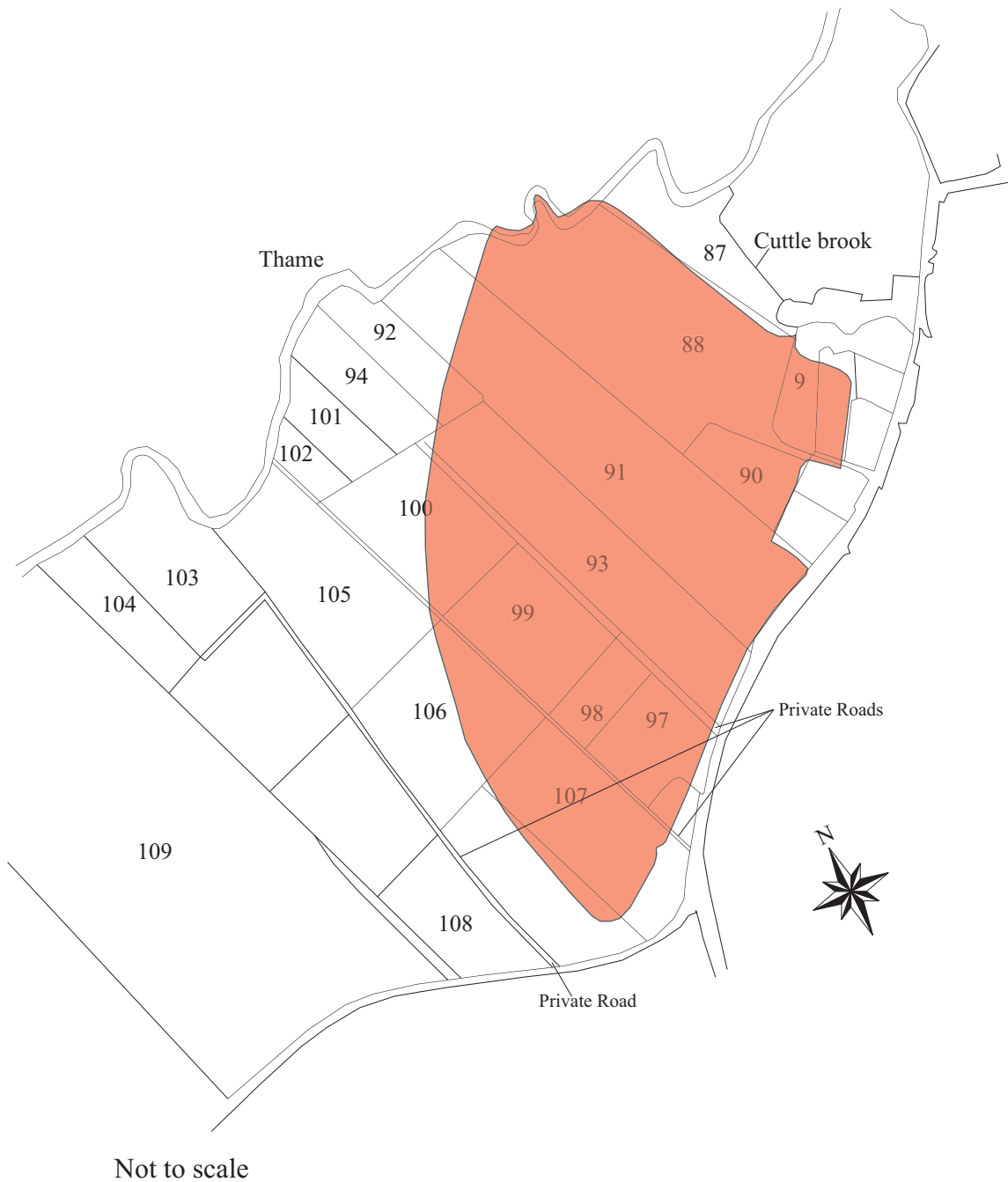
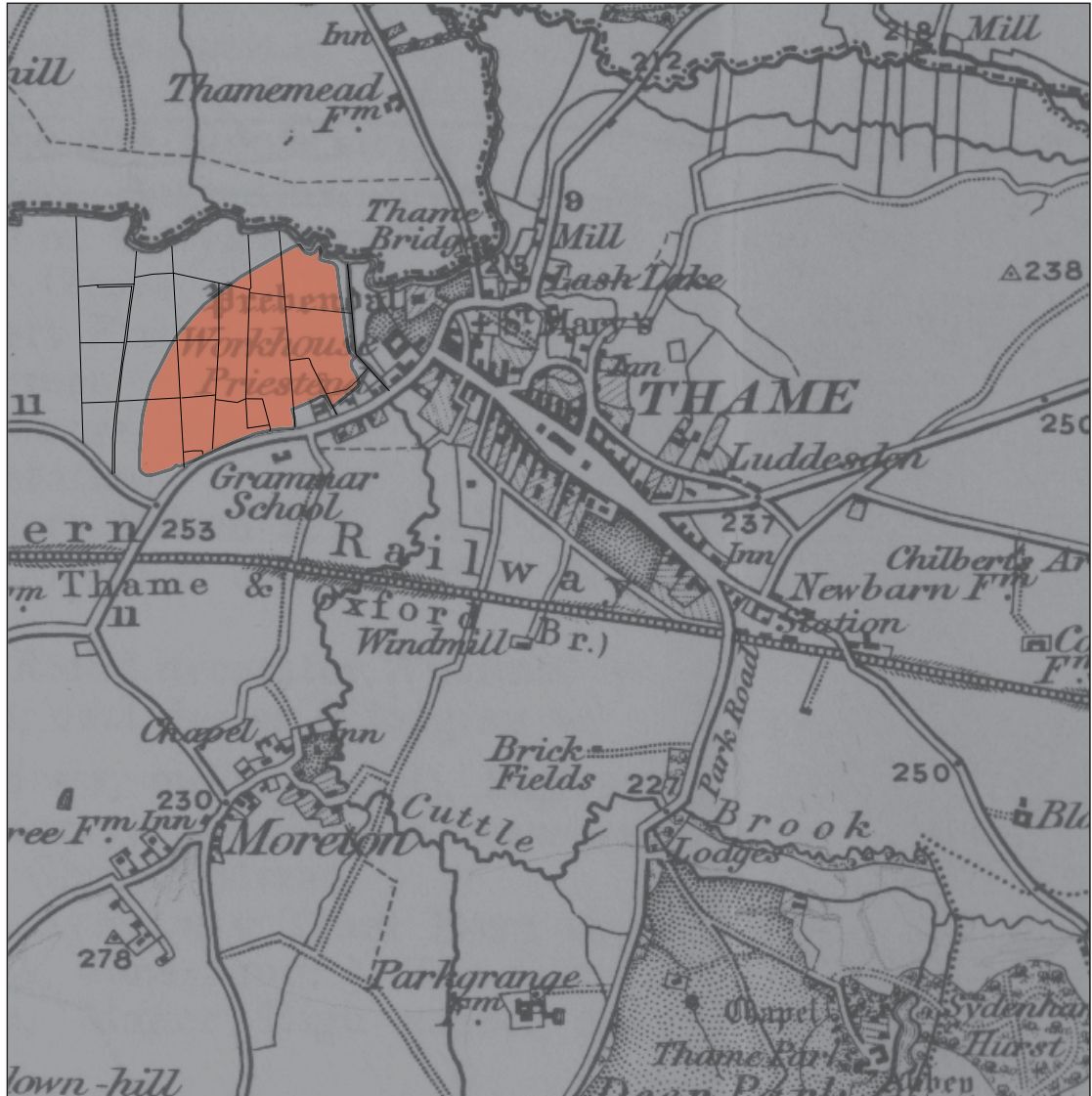


Figure 7. Tracing from 1826 Tithe map 20



1886 Ordnance Survey (scaled up from 1" to 1mile)
(Field boundaries transcribed from 1886 OS 6" to 1 mile)



Figure 8. 1886 Ordnance Survey

'98' and '97' have been made into a single field. A small close has been created in the southern end of field '91'. Lord Williams' School was relocated from Church Road in 1879, and features on the 1st Edition OS.

The 1898 2nd Edition and 1921/22 edition of the OS 6" maps (not illustrated) do not show any changes within the proposal area. The only change is between the 2nd Edition and the 1921/22 Edition, which shows the construction of Highfield on the south side of the Oxford Road.

Subsequent changes between the pre-war OS maps and the OS 2001 (Fig. 1) edition are limited to the building of the A418, which bisected the fields on the west side of the proposal area, and the removal of the east/west field boundaries within the proposal area.

Following discussion with the Planning Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service it was not deemed fruitful to consult air photographs for the proposal area, as coverage was limited and has previously not proved to be particularly successful at locating sites around Thame.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 The Archaeological Potential of the Site

There has been only a single archaeological event at the site (JMHS 3), a Late Iron Age Belgic pot, found in the early 1960s. This is believed to be from a group of burials, but no other pottery or finds have been recovered from the location since. A Neolithic axe head was also found 200m to the east of the proposal area (JMHS 4).

However, an evaluation carried out by JMHS to the east, southeast of the junction of the A418 and A4129 revealed Iron Age activity on similar high ground overlooking the River Thame. Subsequent excavation has revealed Neolithic pits with Grooved Ware, a ring ditch, which may be associated with a Bronze Age disc-barrow, and a number of Iron Age pits possibly forming an enclosure (Paul Smith, County Archaeologist, pers. comm.). The deposition of human remains in rivers in Britain has been long known to be a common practice during the latter part of the prehistoric period, from 1000BC until the Roman period. The presence of a human skull (JMHS 2) may be fortuitous, but equally, given the proximity of the putative disc-barrow and Iron Age pit enclosure, may indicate a degree of ritual activity in its deposition. Although the archaeological knowledge of the site is slight, the potential is low to moderate for the presence of prehistoric archaeological remains to be present on site.

During the medieval period the site was located in Priestend Fields – the property of the prebend, and probably the source of income for the prebendary at Thame. Such stipends were not unusual in the medieval church. There is clear evidence of ridge and furrow at the east end of the proposal area, where the ridge and furrow is still a positive archaeological feature. To the south,

arable land-use has resulted in some of it having been ploughed away, although it is still visible as grassmarks. Further to the south, as the land rises to the location of the pig-farm, there is no evidence at all. The potential for the presence of medieval or post-medieval archaeological remains is very low to low.

The absence of any investigative works at the proposal site means that it is not possible to accurately score the archaeological potential, and any such assessment is based on predictive modelling drawing on the historic map evidence and known archaeological remains.

5.2 The Impact of Previous Development on Potential Archaeological Remains

The proposal site is currently in use as a pig farm. The possible impact on any potential archaeological remains is not easily quantifiable. Pigs will root to a depth of c. 0.3m. As a consequence of decades of pig-farming on the site, the soil may not be suitable for all types of geophysical archaeological prospection.

5.3 The Impact of the Proposal Area on Potential Archaeological Remains

The proposal area extends from west to east between the junction of the A418 and the Oxford Road to the Cuttle Brook. The impact within the proposal area will be potentially extensive, as the undulating plateau will more than likely require some levelling. While this may entail the burying of some parts of the plateau, others areas will be stripped to create a level reduced ground level. Equally, those areas where ridge and furrow are currently preserved will be impacted upon by any development. Some of the historic field boundaries within the eastern part of the proposal area are drains carrying running water to the Cuttle Brook. Such boundaries may well be of some considerable antiquity.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The proposal area at Thame is located on the edge of a possible Saxon minster site, to which was attached a medieval new town to the east.

The proposal site itself seems to have been in cultivation since the medieval period, and continues to be farmed as a pig farm. There is little evidence for extensive medieval or post-medieval activity within the proposal area. The ridge and furrow does not feature on the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record at present.

There is a potential for prehistoric or Roman activity, although this appears to be low to moderate.

It is likely that any geophysical prospection techniques will entail a requirement for invasive investigation such as trial-trenching, in order to

ascertain the nature of the anomalies revealed. Whether such geophysical techniques will indeed produce sufficient data, due to the previous land-use as a pig-farm is not clear. A recommendation would be made for trial trenching of the area.

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7.2 Gazetteer of Historic Environment Records

PERIOD	JMHS ID	HER ID	NGR (SP)	DESCRIPTION
Prehistoric				
	1	CAS 0443800000	0443800000	Roman pot found dredged from River Thame; grey ware. Beaker base, possibly from Barbotine beaker. Blue Marks on sherd noted to be similar to those in neighbouring soil. Found by Miss M Stokes (Thame Historical Society) during field walking among dredgings from river Thame.
	2	NMR 869636	SP 7047 0663	Human cranium dredged from the river Thames. Undated. Complete top half of a human skull, much discoloured, presumably due to being in or near water for a long time. Skull is small & sutures not closed. Perhaps young female. A large bone, ?human, said to have been found nearby. Dredged from W bank of river Thame by Mr D A Chapman
	3	PRN 3915	SP 697 062	Small Iron Age Belgic jar. Jar is of pinky bluff, chalky fabric, irregularly thrown body. Intact, presumably from a burial group
	4	PRN 5248 NMR 342591	SP 7008 0598 or SP 7007 0597	Flint Axe, Undated in Ashmolean found 1949, Neolithic Flint axe, found in Bate's Leys; same as above; cf Salzman 1939 p266
Medieval				
	5	PRN 15938 NMR 918097	SP 6985 0652	Hoard findspot, post 14 th c Medieval coin hoard with five gold rings, 10 silver coins found in the river Thame in 1940. The coins are all groats struck between 1351 and 1457
	6	NMR 342558	SP 702 063 to SP 702 063	In 13 th c, Prebendal House consisted of first floor. South and West walls form part of the present 14 th -15 th c building. To the south of the house is the chapel. The moat has been completely destroyed and its site is now part of the ornamental gardens.
	7	PRN 1134	SP 702 064	Site of moat. (Page 1907 330) No evidence Mick Aston deleted 1971
	8	NMR 655662 NMR 655662	SP 702 064	Building. Evaluation of the site of the Prebendal of Lincoln Cathedral of 1234. Also present was Well and pond. Evaluation of the site of the Prebendal of Lincoln Cathedral of 1234. CBA Group 9. South Midlands archaeology newsletter 21/1991/93
	9	NMR 342574 NMR 655661 NMR 655913 NMR 1068233 NMR 1089797 NMR 1089797	SP 70 06 or SP 7036 0640 or SP 7037 0631	Saxon Church from time of Wulfhere (657-74), very probably a minster. The 13 th c St Mary The Virgins Church was built 1230-40 by Bishop Grossetete. Transepts and nave rebuilt in 15 th c. The building was resorted circa 1889 by JO Scott. CBA Group 9. South Midlands archaeology newsletter pages (s) 89 28/1998
	10	PRN 992	SP 7036 0650	Bridge. Mentioned & repaired from 1309, destroyed & rebuilt 1896 VCH 7 p163

PERIOD	JMHS ID	HER ID	NGR (SP)	DESCRIPTION
	11	PRN 999	SP 7038 0625	Court Farm. On 19 th C maps, demolished 1891, on site of Bishop's Court House (Med.) 1 st Ed OS 25" 1881; VCH 7 166
	12	PRN 995 NMR 1346879	SP 7034 0616	Quatermain Hospital on site of almshouses built in 1550 VCH 7 p165-6. Founded by Richard Quatermain and wife in connection with guild of St Christopher founded in 1447
	13	NMR 654107	SP 7050 0606	Cruck framed house, 14 th c. Foundations revealed a cellar mortared with limestone rubble.
	14	PRN 993	SP 7008 0606	Ford Bridge, possibly since 14 th C VCH 7 163
Post-medieval				
	8	NMR 655662	SP 702 064	Well and pond. Evaluation of the site of the Prebendal of Lincoln Cathedral of 1234. CBA Group 9. South Midlands archaeology newsletter 21/1991/93
	9	NMR 1089797	SP 7037 0631	Church. CBA Group 9. South Midlands archaeology newsletter pages (s) 89 28/1998
	15	PRN 997	SP 7042 0637	Site of old vicarage prob 16 th C near present vicarage built 1842
	16	NMR 342563 NMR 342563	SP 7040 0619	16 th C used as grammar school, founded by Lord William of Thame, allegedly in 1575
	17	PRN 653688 PRN 653688 PRN 655688	SP 7010 0600 Or SP 70 06	OAU (Chambers) excavation showed that previously believed to be Med were out of use by 18 th C Domestic refuse dumped in them. The Post Medieval remains consisted of a well, a wall and Post Medieval soil deposits
	18	NMR 11871	SP 7010 0630	Monitoring of development groundwork recorded no significant archaeology

7.3 Historic Maps

1574	Saxton
1610	Saxton & Hole
1611	Speed
1676	Plot
1695	Morden
1715	Overton
1715	Cole
1760	Kitchen
1767	Jeffreys
1797	Davis
1805	Cary
1820	Greenwood
1823	Bryant
1826	Inclosure Award Map
1881	Ordnance Survey 1 st Edition 6" to 1 mile
1898	Ordnance Survey 2 nd Edition 6" to 1 mile
1921/22	Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile
2001	Ordnance Survey 1:25000