



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT THE WESTGATE SCHOOL

CIPPENHAM LANE,

SLOUGH

NGR SU 95409 80367

On behalf of

Architects Design Partnership LLP

NOVEMBER 2009

REPORT FOR c/o Mr P Bollini
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FIELDWORK 26th October – 16th November 2009

REPORT ISSUED 30th November 2009

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Site Code SLCL 09
JMHS Project No: 2153
Archive Location The archive will be deposited with Reading Museum
Service in due course with the accession code 2009:
602.

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services at the The Westgate School, Cippenham Lane, Slough during stripping for the works compound, removal of footings of the previous school building and excavation of footings for the new school building. A deposit of brickearth was observed extending from east to west across the site, but no archaeological remains were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The area of the development is located within Westgate School, which is situated south of the A4 Bath Road, to the east of properties fronting onto Oakfield Avenue, to the north of Cippenham Lane and west of properties fronting onto Egremont Gardens and Fotheringay Gardens. The site is located at NGR SU 95409 80367 and lies at *c.* 30m OD. The school itself lies at a level which is approximately 500mm below the ground level of the rest of the site, suggesting a reasonable level of truncation and landscaping of this. The geology is Taplow Gravel which has deposits of brickearth overlying it in areas to the north.

1.2 Planning Background

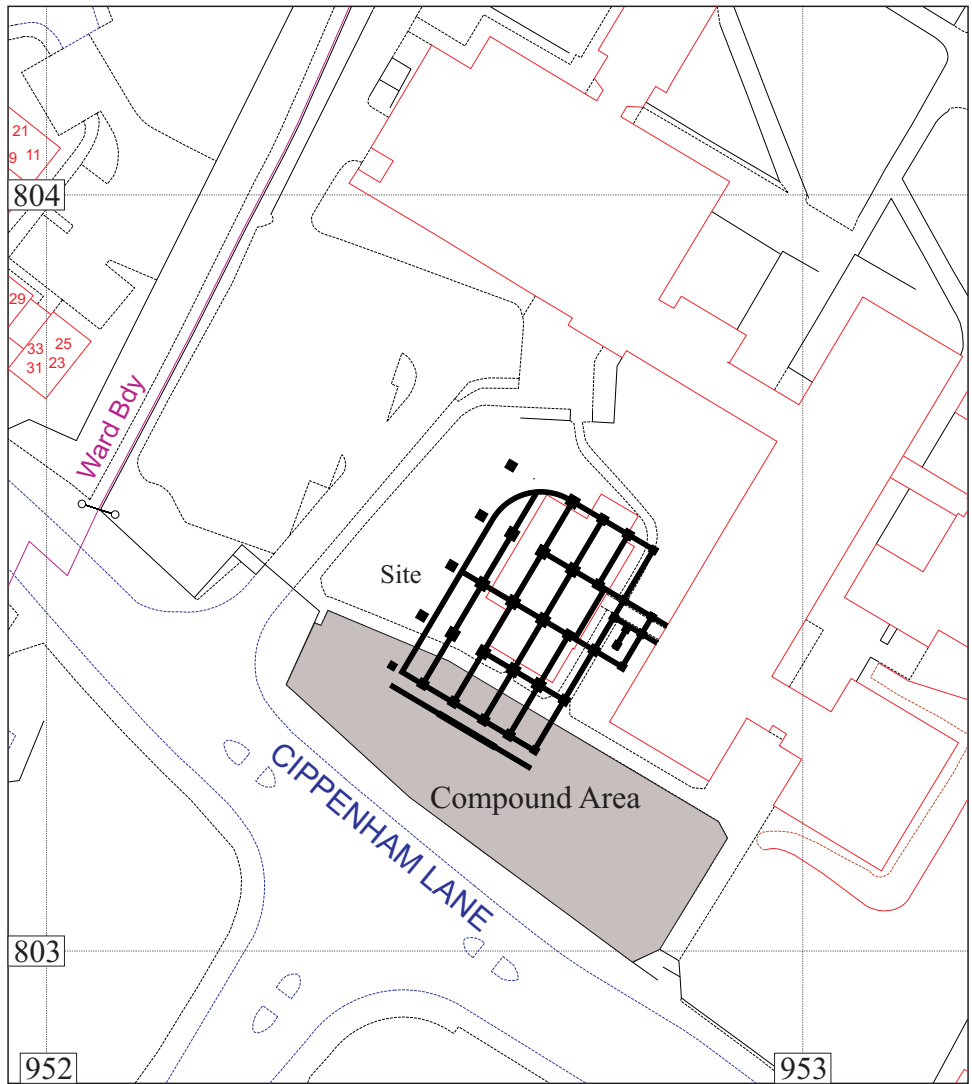
Slough Borough Council granted planning consent for the demolition of the former technology block and the construction of a two-storey teaching block with two additional parking spaces (P/03977/022). Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological deposits a condition was attached requiring that during the period of groundworks the applicant would be responsible for the undertaking of a programme of archaeological work. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* submitted by John Moore Heritage Services detailed how the work would be carried out to Berkshire Archaeology's usual requirements.

1.3 Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment (DBA) was prepared by Gifford (2009) on behalf of ADP Architects. Although there are no known archaeological remains at the proposed development site, within the wider area a number of archaeological discoveries have been made. These are detailed in the DBA.

Locally the evidence for Palaeolithic occupation and Mesolithic activity is limited. Possible Neolithic activity has been identified by archaeological investigations at the Burnham Sewage Works to the southwest of the site. More definite activity in the form of a pit containing Neolithic pottery is identified at Wood Lane (ESL 21). Further Neolithic activity has been identified at Brook Farm (MSL 15521) *c.* 300m WNW of the development site.

Significant evidence for Bronze Age activity has been found at the Cippenham Sector, including a ring ditch and associated field system, and evidence for cremation burials



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Figure 1. Site Location

(ERM 689, MRM 1680) 650m SW, and activity also at Wood Lane (MSL 154) c. 275m SW, and at 225 Bath Road (MSL 662, ESL 24) c. 400m NW.

Iron Age activity has been found also at 225 Bath Lane (ESL 24, ESL 25). Iron Age features have also been identified to the southwest during the Cippenham Sector excavations (ERM 689, MRM 16161), which included a Late Iron Age trapezoidal enclosure and associated field system.

The Late Iron Age enclosures at Cippenham Sector continued in use into the early Roman period (ERM 689, MRM 16161, with an associated field system (MRM 16182). Roman features and finds were also identified at 225 Bath Road (MSL 662, MSL 155) and Wood Lane (MSL 154, and Brook Farm (MSL 15521).

There was possible Saxon activity in the area at Brook farm (MSL 15520).

Archaeological evidence for medieval activity in the local area is relatively limited with features including a moat and timber structure recorded at Cippenham Place (MSL 356, MSL 358) and one of two listed barns associated with Cippenham Court Farm is thought to be of medieval origin. Medieval features and findspots have been identified at Brook Farm and 225 Bath road (MSL 15520, MSL 662).

The cartographic evidence indicates that the development site was rural in character from the earliest recorded period.. The site has been exploited by agriculture since at least the late 18th century.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The main objective as laid out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* was as follows:

- To make a record of any archaeological remains present. This included sufficient investigation and sampling of remains to determine the following:

In particular:

- To define the depositional and background environment of the site.
 - To clarify the extent and nature of any remains both within the site and within the context of the wider prehistoric and Roman landscape.
 - To date adequately the remains through artefact dating or by carbon dating.
- The results of the investigations will be made public through appropriate publication.

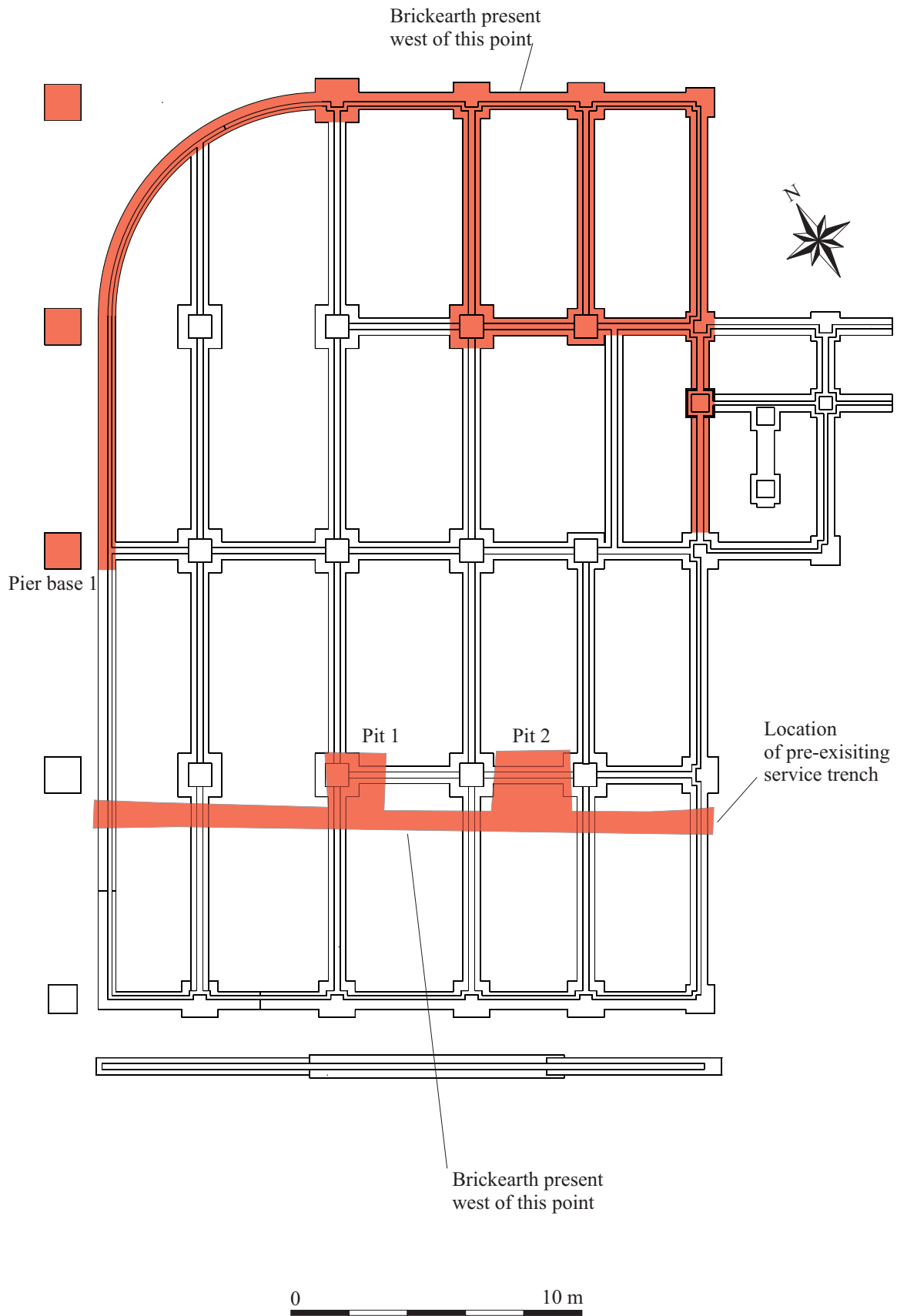


Figure 2. Areas of footing trenches monitored

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Berkshire Archaeology. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record throughout, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

3.2 Methodology

The extent of groundworks comprised three phases, which drove the carrying out of the archaeological work. The first phase was the compound strip north of the Cippenham Lane frontage. However, due to the presence of materials on the stripped area the compound was mechanically re-cleaned and monitored by archaeologists during the demolition of the former school building, a technology block. The second phase, which entailed the grubbing out of foundations of the former technology block was then also monitored. Subsequently, the final phase of excavation of the new foundations and some service runs was monitored over several days by an archaeologist.

Following monitoring of the excavation of footings over the course of six days the Archaeology Officer, Mary O'Donoghue, of Berkshire Archaeology, was consulted and it was agreed that no further works were to be monitored.

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

4 RESULTS (Fig 2)

4.1 Field Results

All archaeological features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () show deposits of material. A general description of the deposits is given.

Natural gravel (2) was observed across the site. At the east end of the site this was estimated to have been between 0.15m and 0.3m below ground level. This was exposed during the compound strip and the possibility of localised truncation was noted. Certainly truncation occurred beneath the former school building as no topsoil or subsoil was observed to overlie the gravel on the eastern side of the former technology block.

From approximately 6m west of the eastern wall of the former technology block a deposit of orange to red brown slightly clay silt (8) was observed which became increasingly thick to the west. Its maximum observed thickness – in the pile base 1 – was c. 1.4m thick. Within the excavated footings trench it was c. 0.7m thick. No finds were recovered from this deposit.

South of pier base 1 within the footprint of the new building a trench was opened to expose services. In pit 1, dark grey brown silty clay with 15-20% gravel (7) was observed measuring 0.1m thick, which was a buried soil horizon. The buried soil (7) was overlain by topsoil (1), measuring 0.25m thick, and mixed rubble (5), which measured up to 0.45m thick. To the south where the compound strip was carried out the buried soil was also overlain by pale yellow grey silty clay with gravel (6), which was redeposited natural. The redeposited gravel (6) was overlain by topsoil (1) and rubble (5). Pit 2 revealed only natural gravel (2) and rubble (5).

To the east which had been mechanically stripped prior to the arrival of an archaeologist on site the compound was re-cleaned. A number of modern pits – probably tree-planting pits were observed. The presence of coal in the fills indicated their recent date. These were planned and following sampling were not investigated further.

4.2 Reliability of results and methodologies

Conditions were generally good during the watching brief, although some monitoring was undertaken after machining had been carried out. This however was remedied with the assistance of Rok and it is felt that the results obtained during the watching brief fully reflect the archaeological record.

5 FINDS

5.1 Artefactual Remains

No artefactual remains were recovered during the watching brief.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken during the watching brief.

6 DISCUSSION

Within the area of the compound only modern features of no archaeological significance were observed.

The external footings trench on the east side of the new teaching block revealed heavy truncation associated with the former school building, and in the southern part of the trench, several service runs. The sequence comprised demolition overlying gravels, which were up to c. 2m deep.

On the north side, the land dropped to the west, and the truncation was less the further to the west with the result that a buried soil horizon was observed which overlay a deposit of brickearth. The maximum depth of the brickearth observed in the northern part of the site was c. 0.7m, with a further maximum 0.2m of buried soil horizon, overlain by up to 0.5m of demolition.

In the external footings trench on the west side of the new build the brickearth was present to a depth of 0.7m with 0.25m of buried soil overlying it. Approximately 0.45m of mixed material and demolition overlay the buried soil horizon. Three pads were excavated for supporting pillars west of the footings trench, and here the brickearth was present to a maximum depth of 2.1m below modern ground level.

Two pits to investigate services were excavated outside the footprint of the former school building in line with the present block fronting onto Cippenham Lane. The easternmost pit was heavily truncated with only gravels present; the western pit indicated that the brickearth was present, although only the top was visible - a trench has subsequently been excavated to the west of this pit and the top of the brickearth is visible in the wall of the trench. This trench was south of the pads observed above.

It is clear that the easternmost wall of the new build was straight onto natural gravel and no potential for archaeological remains was present. No archaeological features were observed under the former school building, which was within the footprint of the new build. Brickearth was observed beneath the former technology block but no features were present. No archaeological finds of any date were recovered during the monitoring despite examination of the spoilheaps and appropriate cleaning of the trench walls.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project report

Written Scheme of Investigation

The primary site records

The archive has been given an accession number REDMG : 2009.602 by Reading Museum Service, where it will be deposited.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*. Revised 1999