

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF ON LAND AT OXFORD HAWKS  
HOCKEY CLUB, BANBURY ROAD NORTH SPORTS  
PITCH, BANBURY ROAD, OXFORD**

**SP 5067 1076**

*On behalf of*

*Oxford Hawks Ltd*

**November 2010**

**REPORT FOR** JPPC Chartered Town Planners  
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On behalf of clients:

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**Site Code** OXHHP 10  
**JMHS Project No:** 2315  
**Archive Location** The archive is currently held by JMHS and will be deposited with Oxford Museum Services in due course with Accession Number: 2010.86

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## **Summary**

*A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during ground reduction in advance of a new all weather hockey pitch at Oxford Hawks Hockey Club, Banbury Rd North Sports Ground, Banbury Rd, Oxford (SP50671076). A total of eight site visits were made intermittently over the period from 9th to 19th November 2010. The monitored ground works involved initial topsoil stripping followed by further reduction to finished levels across the area of the new sports field. The surface of the natural geology was seen across most of the field and no archaeological features or finds were present at the site. A service trench was also monitored and did not reveal any features or finds.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site was located on the northern side of the historic town of Oxford (NGR centred: SP50671076). The underlying geology is Third (Wolvercote) Terrace River Gravels (BGS sheet 236), close to the junction of Oxford Clay, and the site lies at approximately 72m AOD. The new sports pitch is located at the eastern end of the sports club grounds.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission was granted by Oxford City Council for the formation of an artificially surfaced pitch (all weather hockey pitch). The permission also included relocation of tennis courts, revised parking layout and alterations to access arrangements and layout. A condition of the permission states that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out during the work.

The City Archaeologist for Oxford City Council (OCC) prepared a *Brief* for the archaeological work. Based on the brief A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by JMHS (JMHS 2010). This document outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

Planning Policy statements were highlighted in the Brief (OCC 2010) prepared by David Radford, archaeological officer for Oxford City.

- a. *PPS5 Policy HE12.3 states that where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate. Developers should publish this evidence and deposit copies of the reports with the relevant historic environment record. Local planning authorities should require any archive generated to be deposited with a local museum or other public depository willing to receive it. Local planning authorities should impose planning conditions or obligations to ensure such work is carried out in a timely manner and that the completion of the exercise is properly secured.*
- b. *Watching briefs should be undertaken in accordance with a "written scheme of investigation" which has been agreed in writing by the City Council Archaeologist prior to commencing fieldwork. The "written scheme of investigation" should comprise the brief combined with the archaeological contractor's project design. The project will be completed only when all fieldwork and post-excitation work has been undertaken, and the archive has been deposited and any required publication secured.*

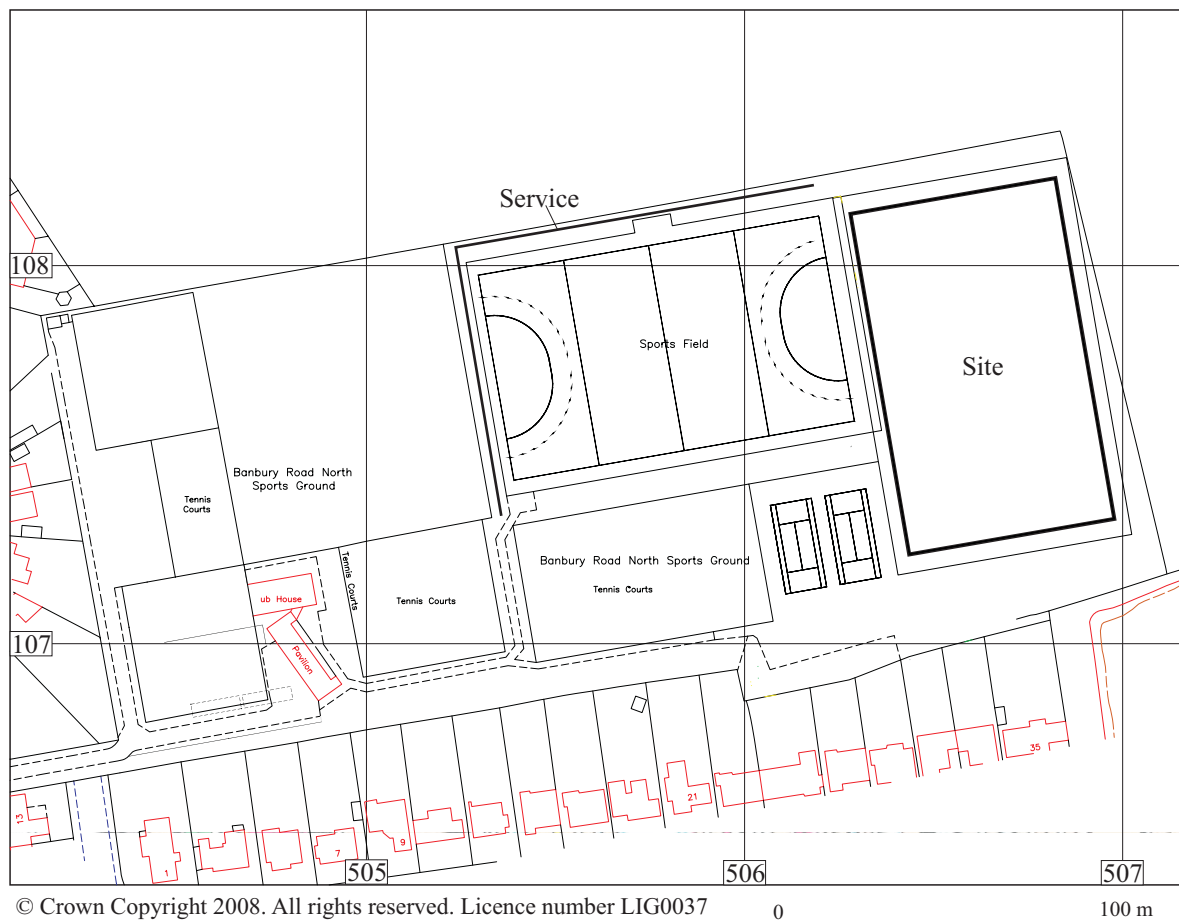
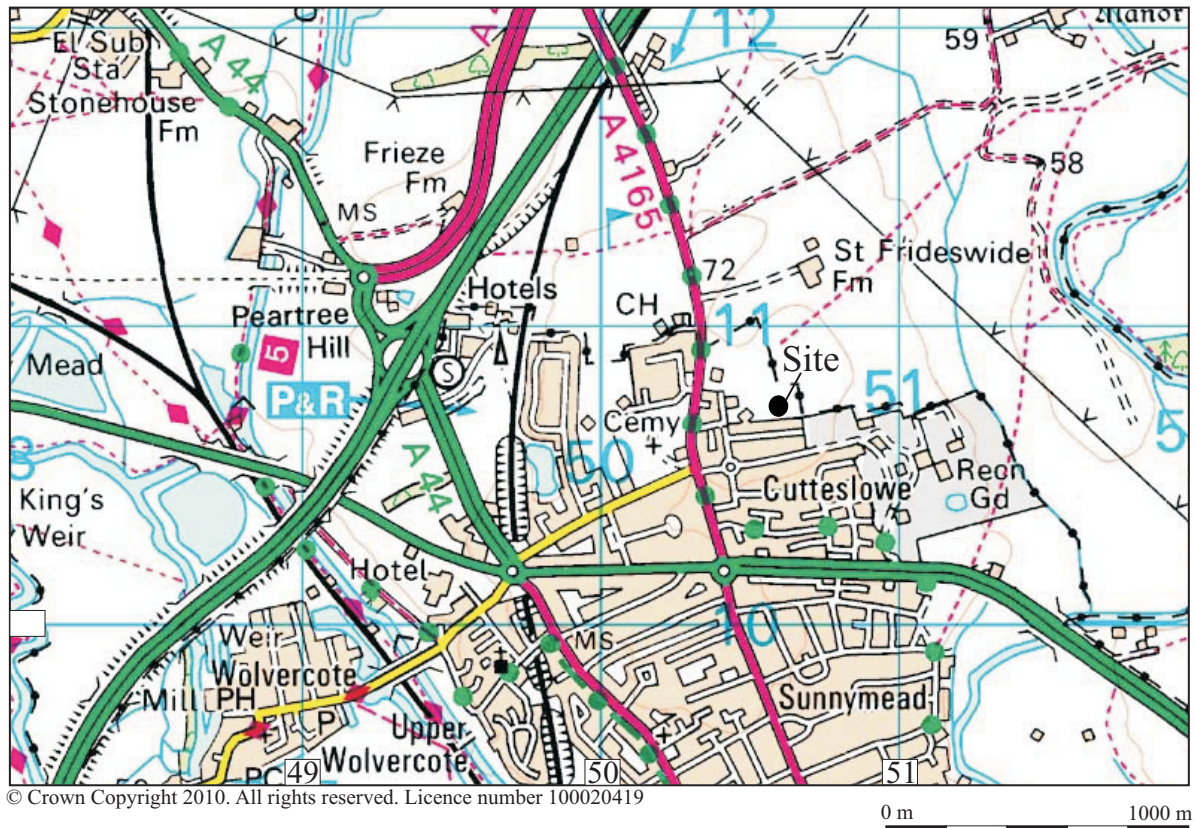


Figure 1. Site location

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site lies on the edge of the Wolvercote gravel terrace where potential for prehistoric and Roman remains were considered to be high. The Brief (OCC 2010) stated that 470m to the north of the site are two Bronze Age round barrows (HER No's 1354 & 1355). A Neolithic adze was also recovered from nearby at 16 Hayward Road (HER No 6163). The nearby Summertown - Radley gravel terrace has produced extensive evidence for late Neolithic-early Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments and also for dispersed Iron Age and Roman settlement recently evidenced at Walled Garden, Middle Way, Oxford (JMHS 2007). There is therefore general potential for funerary and settlement activity in this location.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The main and general project aim outlined in the Brief (OCC 2010) was to:

- Identify and record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the ground works, paying particular regard to the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains.

### **2.1 Project Objectives**

In addition to this more specific objectives were outlined in the Brief (ibid) at the start of the project. These were summarised as follows:

- A description of the proposed works and an assessment of their archaeological impact with an accompanying plan.
- Details of the methodology for implementing the watching brief indicating those works which are to be observed, the frequency of observation (permanent/daily visits etc) and any archaeological control over the developer's operating procedures.
- An assessment of the potential for, and possible nature of, any "unexpected discoveries" with details of contingency arrangements for salvage recording.
- Procedures for project management (to follow the principles set out in Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP) (English Heritage, 1991)).

This report sets out to fulfil these highlighted objectives along with the following aims stated in the Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2010) which were to

- To record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development.
- In particular to record the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994), the Oxford City Council (OCC) prepared *Brief* and John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2010).

## **3.2 Methodology**

An archaeologist was present on site during all ground reduction connected to the new all weather hockey pitch. All ground reduction was achieved using a combination of 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket and a flat blade attached to a bulldozer.

A journal, recorded on specially designed record sheets, was maintained which detailed times and durations of site visits as well as notes on areas monitored by the archaeologist. Deposits (overburden) were recorded on context recording sheets. A general photographic record of the work was kept and will form of the part site archive to be submitted to the Oxfordshire County Museum.

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Field Results**

Individual context numbers were assigned on site to deposits encountered during the ground reduction. Context numbers in () indicate deposits of material.

The lowest geological horizon attained was Oxford Clay. The clay consisted of light yellow thick clay with silty clay orange patches (03). The depth at which this horizon was attained varied slightly across the site but was generally around *c.* 0.30m from the current ground surface.

Overlying the natural was a layer of orange-brown sandy loam subsoil with numerous small rounded gravels of varying sizes and occasional sub-angular stones throughout (02). This deposit did not contain any significant archaeological material.

The topsoil (01) was *c.* 0.20m in thickness and consisted of a dark grey-brown silty loam. This was highly compacted in places with very low quantities of general finds usually expected from topsoil. No finds of archaeological interest were collected or retained from this deposit.

### **4.2 Service trench**

A service trench around the northern side of the existing sports pitch (Fig. 1) was monitored intermittently for any archaeological features or finds. The trench was inspected and revealed a simple sequence of natural clay (03) overlain by subsoil (02) and topsoil (01).

### **4.3 Reliability of Results**

The watching brief was carried out in wintry conditions with good co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks.

The methodology employed during groundworks was the 'best case scenario' which could be achieved from the time and resources available from the on site contractors.

Following the topsoil removal by bulldozer, a 21 tonne 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket was used to strip the subsoil to the very surface of the natural ground around all of the edges of the field (*c.* 10m-15m wide corridor). This enabled proper inspection of the natural horizon around all four sides of the playing field. As no linear features (or any features at all) could be seen extending into the centre of the field it was thought acceptable that the centre of the field could be reduced using the bulldozer. The use of the bulldozer to strip the site to natural ground was not ideal as the tracks of the machine ran over exposed surfaces

before they could be properly inspected, potentially tracking over any potential discrete or ephemeral archaeological features or finds.

Close inspection of the blade of the bulldozer was undertaken in an attempt to see any archaeological features should they become apparent. This methodology was not perfect for archaeological purposes but sufficient in the circumstances considering the lack of archaeology, artefacts and time pressures of the development.

After telephone consultation with David Radford the Oxford City Archaeologist it was decided that due to the lack of archaeological finds and features within the main sports pitch it was no longer necessary to monitor any other areas within the development site, such as the ground reduction for the new tennis courts or any further service trenching.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Finds**

No finds were recovered from the site.

### **5.2 Environmental Remains**

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The archaeological watching brief at Oxford Hawks Hockey Club, Banbury Road North Sports Ground was successful in proving that no archaeological features or finds existed at the site. The natural clay geology was seen across most of the area and no archaeological features were seen cut into it. The only visible features were field drains of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century date seen orientated across the field in an east west direction. These were cut by later field drains of a more recent date spaced at regular 5m intervals orientated on a north-south alignment, filled with only pea shingle.

The topsoil and subsoil were very sterile with no finds of archaeological significance present within either layer.

## **7 ARCHIVE**

### **Archive Contents**

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The drawn records	

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services.



## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

English Heritage 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*

Institute for Archaeologists, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* Revised 2008

JMHS 2007 *Archaeological intervention at Walled Garden, Middle Way, Oxford*. Unpub JMHS Report. Author Gwilym Williams MIFA

Oxford City Council, Planning Control and conservation 2010 *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief. Banbury Road North Sports Ground, Banbury Road* Unpub OCC Document. Author David Radford.

JMHS 2010 *Banbury Rd North Sports Ground, Banbury Rd, Oxford; Written Scheme of Investigation*. Unpub JMHS doc. Author Dave Gilbert MIFA.

<b>Site Name:</b>	
<b>Site Address:</b> Oxford Hawks Hockey Club, Banbury Rd North Sports Ground, Oxford, Oxfordshire	
<b>Summary:</b> A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during ground reduction of a new all weather hockey pitch at Oxford Hawks Hockey Club, Banbury Rd North Sports Ground, Banbury Rd, Oxford (SP50671076). A total of eight site visits were made intermittently over the period from 9th to 19th November 2010. The monitored ground works involved initial topsoil stripping followed by further reduction to finished levels across the area of the new sports field. The surface of the natural geology was seen across most of the field and no archaeological features or finds were present at the site. A service trench was also monitored and did not reveal any features or finds.	
<b>District/Unitary: Oxford City</b>	<b>Parish:</b>
<b>Period(s):</b> Modern	
<b>NGR (centre of site: 8 figures):</b> SP 5067 1076	
<b>Type of archaeological work (delete)</b> Watching Brief	
<b>Date of Recording:</b> 23 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	
<b>Unit undertaking recording:</b> JMHS	
<b>Geology:</b> Wolvercote Terrace Gravels	
<b>Title and author of accompanying report:</b> An Archaeological Watching Brief at Oxford Hawks Hockey Club, Banbury Rd North Sports Pitch, Banbury Rd, Oxford  Prepared by Paul Riccoboni BA (Hons) Arch AIFA	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)</b>  No archaeological features or finds.	
<b>Location of archive/finds:</b>	
<b>Contact at Unit: :</b> <i>Paul Riccoboni</i> <a href="mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk">info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</a>	<b>Date:</b> 23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2010