



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

CROFT VILLAS, WALLINGFORD,

OXFORDSHIRE

SU 6027 8940

*On behalf of
St Mirren Group of Companies*

OCTOBER 2010

REPORT FOR St Mirren Group of Companies
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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of foundation trenches and other groundwork associated with the construction of new housing at Croft Villas, Wallingford. The ground had been seriously disturbed in parts by previous levelling activity and compaction associated with use of the site as a train yard and by numerous modern services. A single modern pit was present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

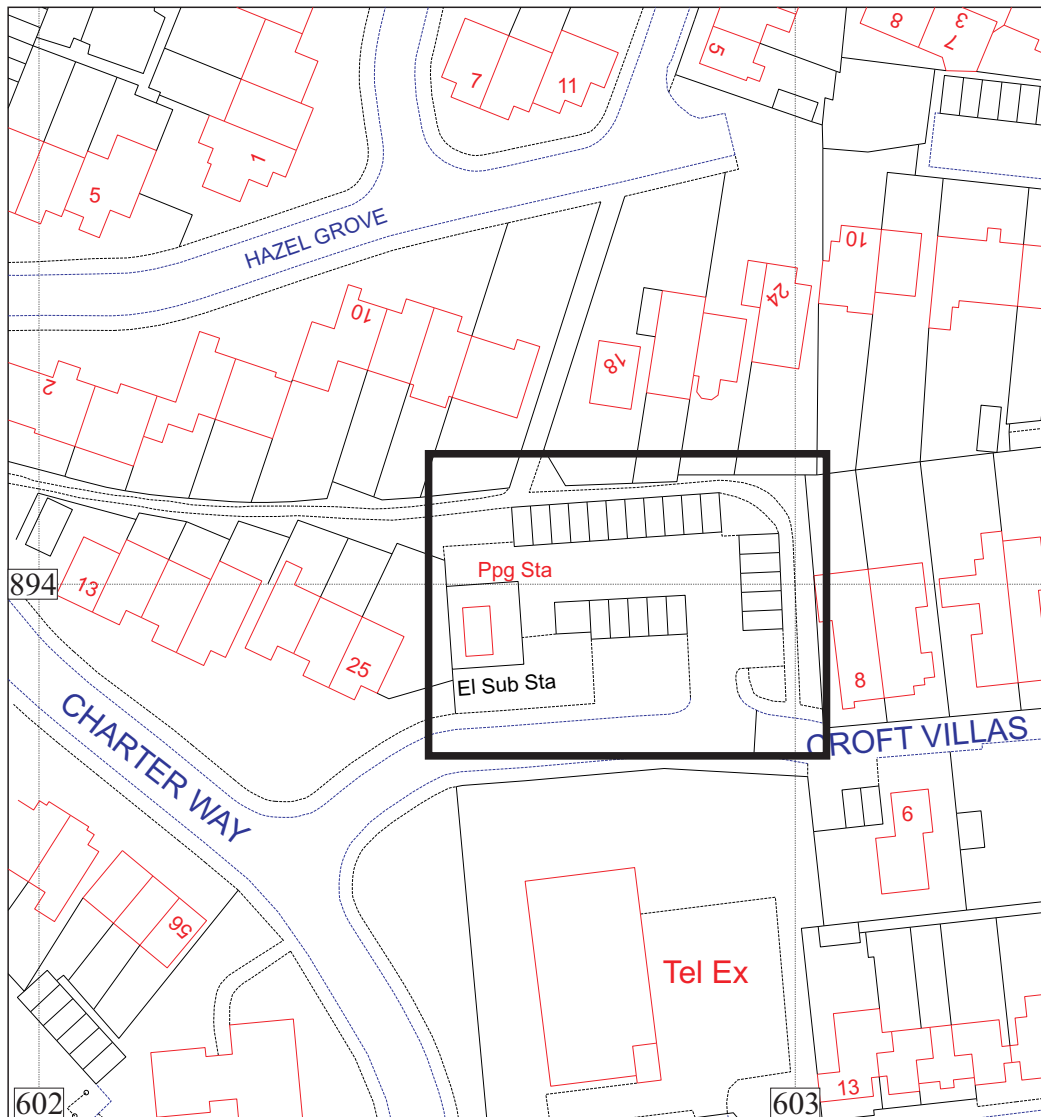
The development site was located on the western side of the historic town, east of the Hithercroft Industrial Estate (SU 6027 8940). The underlying geology is River Terrace Gravels and the site lies at approximately 50m OD. The site was previously in use as a block of garages.

1.2 Planning Background

Planning permission was sought from South Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of existing garages and the erection of a block of 10 flats under the planning reference number P07/W0388. This was granted in August 2007. A subsequent application was made for a similar scheme in September 2007 under the planning reference number P07/W1060. This was also granted in November 2007. An application for the construction of a three storey care home under the application number P07/W1458 was withdrawn in January 2008 and an application for a smaller care home was submitted under the reference number P08/W0360 in April 2008 which was refused in July 2008. Planning permission has been granted for the erection of a block of 12 flats under the planning reference number P09/W0092. This was in line with PPS5 and Local Plan policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by JMHS. This outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site was located within an area of archaeological potential 130m to the west of the scheduled Saxon defences of the town. Archaeological investigations in the area around the site had revealed its potential. A number of Iron Age pits and a ditch were recorded 124m to the west of the site (PRN 3901) along with a number of inter-cutting post-medieval pits. Further medieval and post medieval pits were recorded during a watching brief 170m to the south west of the site (PRN16094) and evidence of medieval settlement had been recorded 120m to the south west of the site (PRN 10595). Whilst there has been some truncation on site due to services the plot appeared, on the early OS maps, to have been undeveloped until the fairly recent past.



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0 50 m

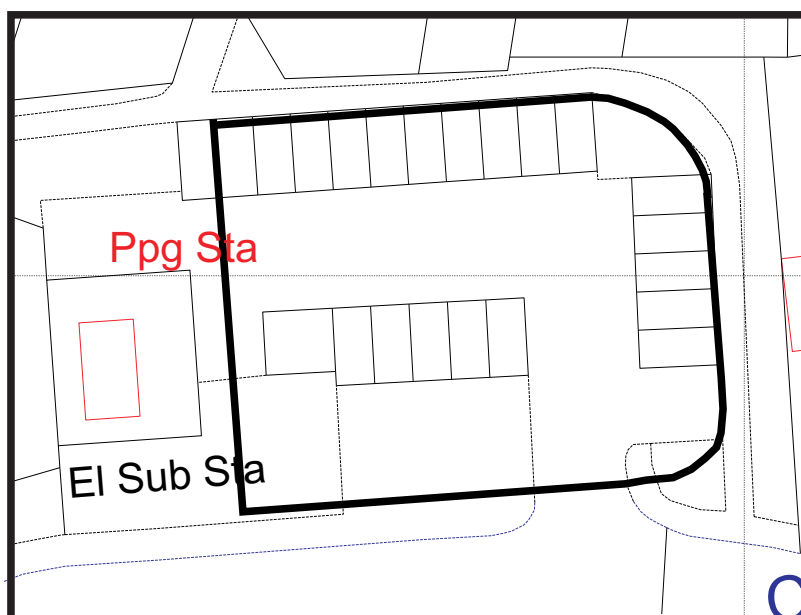


Figure 1. Location

2

0 25 m

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 of Saxon and medieval settlement occupation of the town.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for the work, which John Moore Heritage Services carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation. The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the excavation of foundation and service trenches and the stripping of overburden.

Any archaeological features revealed were cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated. Any archaeological features were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record. All artefacts were collected and retained.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results

All features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () indicate feature fills or deposits of material.

The lowest geological horizon attained was the underlying natural River Terrace Gravels (003). These were light yellow-brown in colour and consisted of friable sub-angular stone and sandy gravels to a thickness of <0.30m. The depth at which this horizon was attained varied throughout the site.

Sealing this was a layer of orange-brown sandy loam containing numerous small rounded pebbles and sub-angular stones throughout, though to be a ploughsoil (002). This varied from 0.30m to 0.55m in thickness and was thicker towards the east.

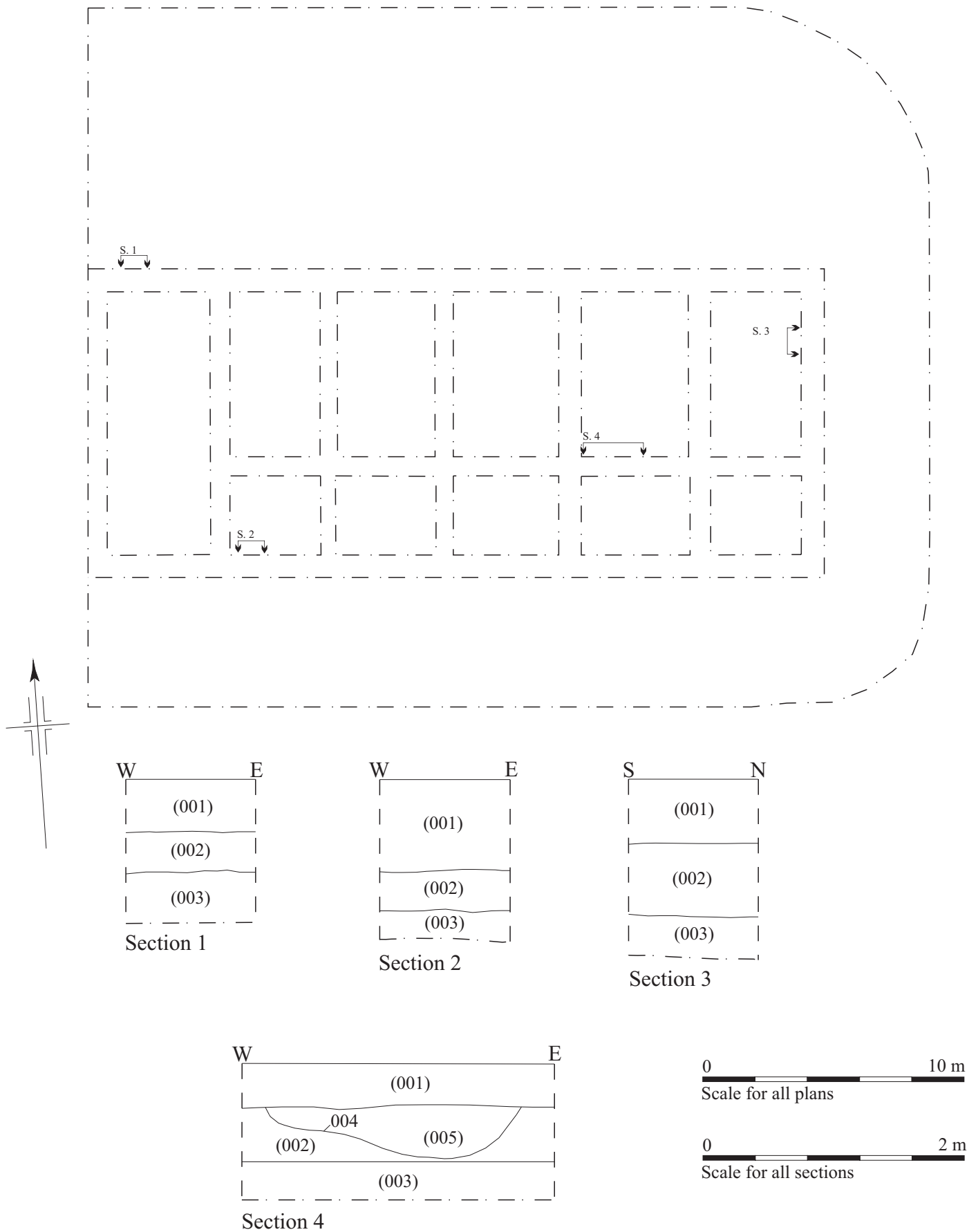


Figure 2. Plan and Sections

Cut into ploughsoil (002) in the east of the site was a pit 004. This pit 004 had a gradual break of top slope, with inward sloping concave sides to an uneven, rounded base. It contained a single fill (005) consisting of dark grey-black silty loam with a maximum thickness of 0.35m. Fill (005) also contained ceramic building material (CBM) flecking and pieces of blue metal and asphalt.

Ploughsoil (002) and pit 004 were sealed by topsoil (001). This was <0.40m in thickness and consisted of a dark grey-brown compacted silty loam. This was highly compacted in places and dark grey/black in colour. It contained numerous fragments of charcoal, modern and post medieval building/demolition material (such as slate, tile, plastic piping, corroded metal and CBM pieces and flecking) and numerous sub-angular gravels throughout the deposit.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out in clement conditions with good co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks and the results are felt to be representative.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

Sherds of 19th – 20th century Mass-produced White Earthenwares (WHEW: Mellor 1984; 1994) were noted from the topsoil (001). These were not retained.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

6 DISCUSSION

The only feature observed at Croft Villas was pit 004, located in the eastern part of the site. It is probably of modern date, based on the asphalt and blue metal contained within its fill (005). In addition, the location of this pit below the topsoil layer (001), cutting subsoil (002), suggests the area has undergone levelling activity, or some other disturbance, at some point in the recent past. The topsoil was highly disturbed and contained numerous unstratified fragments of modern and Victorian ceramic and building material. In some places modern service trenches for electrical wiring and drains had truncated the top and sub soils. The topsoil was highly compacted in some areas, most likely from the previous use of the site as a train yard and, most recently, as a concreted surface and garages.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

The project brief
Written Scheme of Investigation
The drawn records

The project report
The primary site records

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to Oxfordshire Museums Service under accession number 2010.79.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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