



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

MEADOW LARKINS, LARKINS LANE,

HEADINGTON, OXFORD

NGR SP 54598 07667

AUGUST 2020

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ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Pasture Farmhouse
Boarstall
Aylesbury
HP18 9UR



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CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	<i>iii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4 RESULTS	3
4.1 Trench 1	3
4.2 Trench 2	5
4.3 Reliability of Results	8
5 FINDS	8
5.1 Pottery	8
5.2 Ceramic Building Material	8
5.3 Animal Bone	8
5.4 Other Finds	8
6 DISCUSSION	9
7 ARCHIVE	10
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
APPENDIX 1 Context Inventory	11
APPENDIX 2 OASIS Report Form	13
FIGURES	
Figure 1. Site location	2
Figure 2. Trenches	4

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an evaluation at Meadow Larkins, Larkins Lane, Headington, Oxford (NGR SP 54598 07667). Two trenches 15m in length were excavated in areas of potential impact. No significant archaeological features were identified within Trench 1, located within the area of the proposed extension. Trench 2, sited within the proposed parking area, contained a series of archaeological features. These comprised a substantial stone wall foundation and four small gullies. The stone wall did not correspond to any identified through historic map regression; stone roof tile recovered from the fill of the wall's construction cut provided a broad date, from the medieval period onwards. The linear gullies present did not appear associated with the wall as they were on a different alignment; a single sherd of 13th - 14th century pottery was recovered from one of these features.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the eastern side of Larkins Lane, in the historic core of Headington (NGR SP 54598 07667). The site lies at approximately 100m AOD on a gentle north facing slope that runs from the higher limestone plateau to the south towards the Bayswater Brook and the A40.

The underlying geology is the Beckley Sand Member, a sedimentary sandstone bedrock formed approximately 156 to 161 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html).

1.2 Planning Background

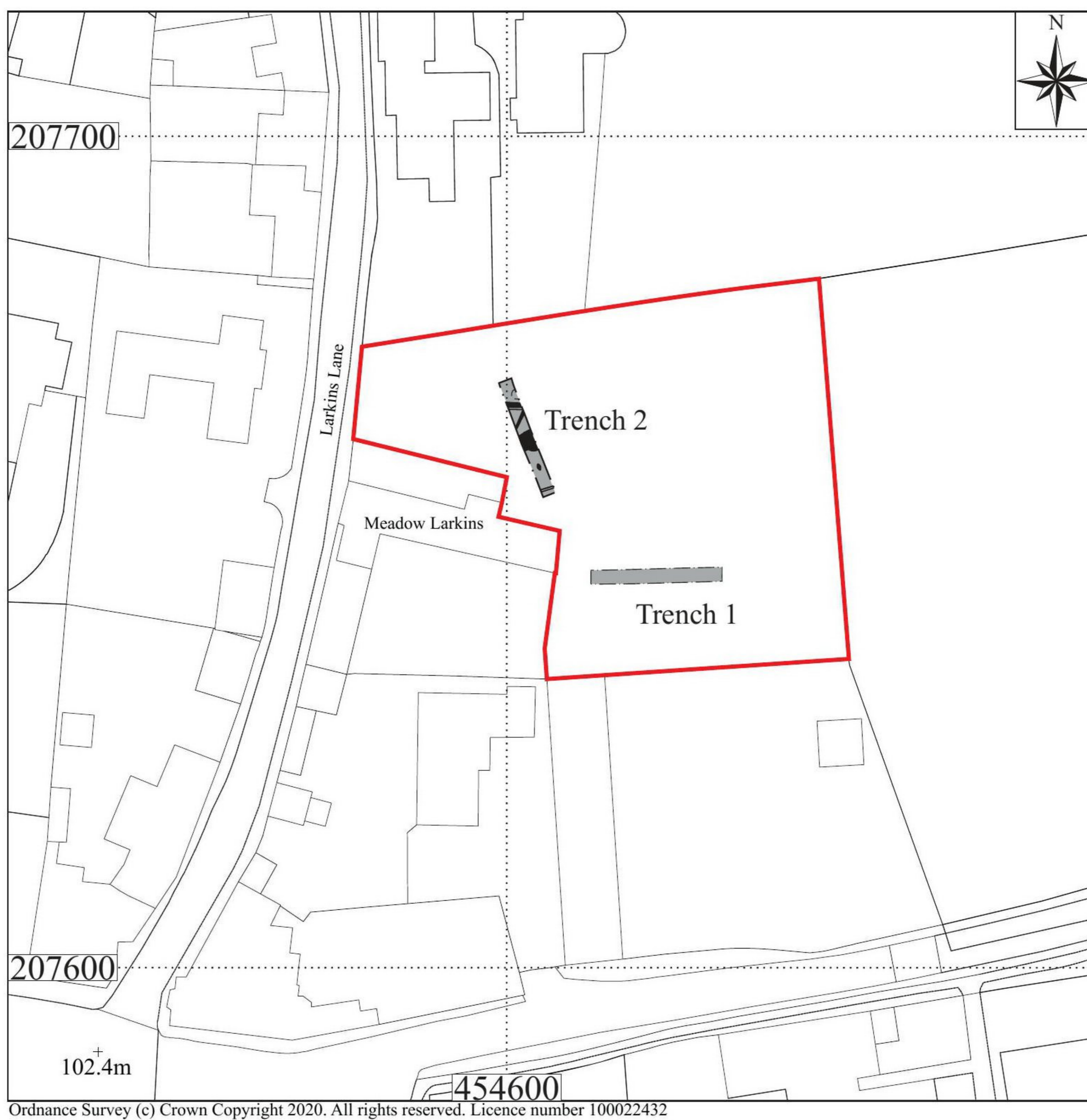
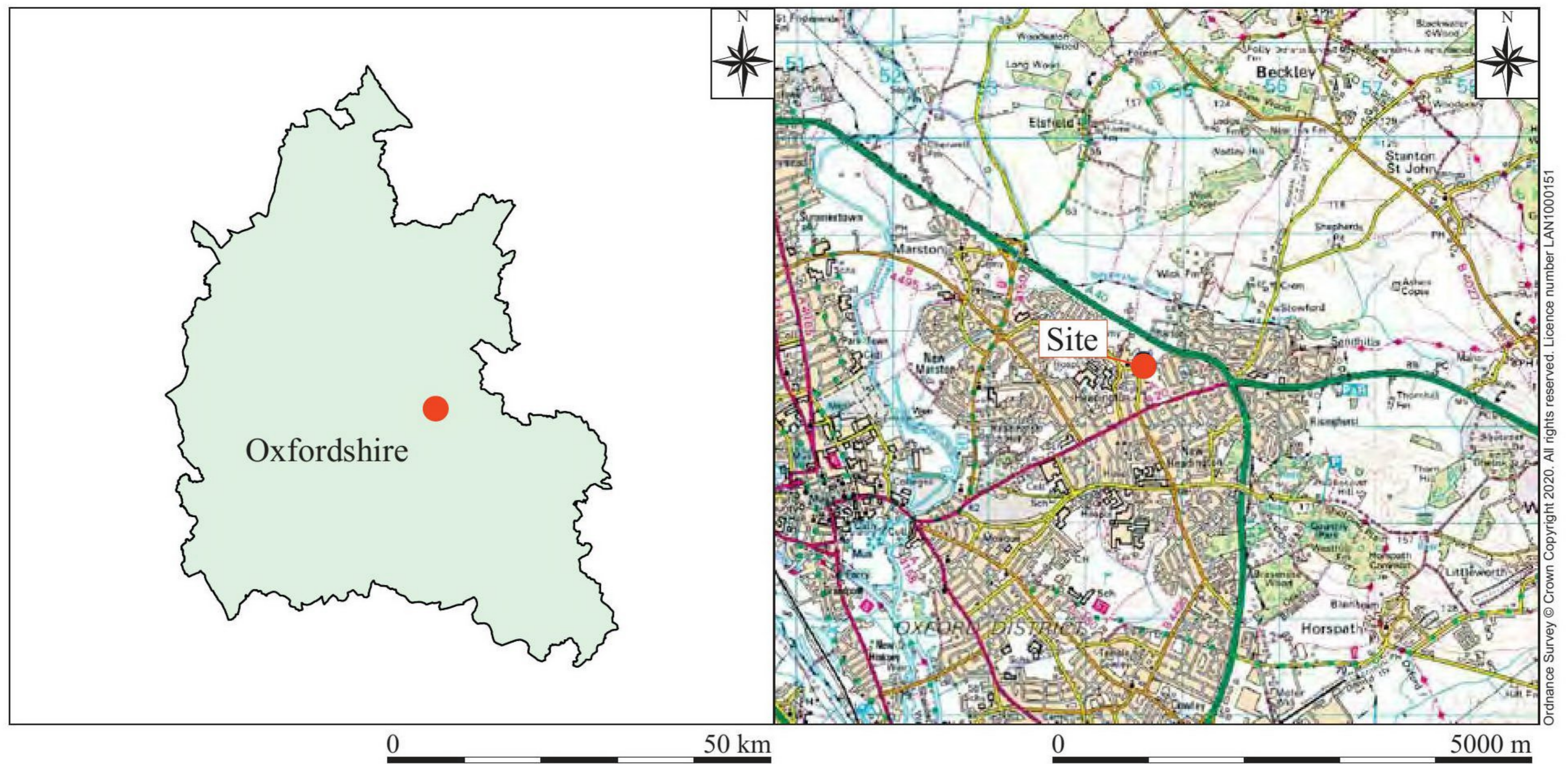
A pre-application has been made to Oxford City Council for the **Rehabilitation and extension of detached house. Alterations to entrance in listed boundary wall and addition of roof and minor amendments to listed boundary wall (20/01045/PAC)**. Due to the potential for Late Saxon and medieval remains in this location an archaeological evaluation was required to determine the presence/absence of archaeological remains.

1.3 Archaeological Background

This site is of interest because it is located within the historic core of Headington. During the Saxon and Norman periods Headington was the nucleus of a currently un-located royal manor. At the time of the Domesday Survey, the manor of Headington was a holding of the king, and the survey entry suggests that it was a wealthy estate at this time.

It is unclear whether the development site was located within the historic closes associated with the medieval village, the greatest extent of which might be anticipated around the 13th century. However Davis' County Map of 1797 map does suggest that the plot may have been located within closes laid out along Larkins Lane.

Some of the above has been taken from the City Archaeological Officer's Brief.



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Key Site boundary Evaluation trenches
 Archaeological features

0 50 m

Figure 1: Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To undertake an archaeological evaluation of the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains encountered.
- To determine the degree of complexity of any horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.

In particular:

- To establish the character and extent of any medieval or post-medieval activity.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the City Archaeological Officer, the archaeological advisor to Oxford City Council.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2020).

3.2 Methodology

Two evaluation trenches, each 15m in length by 1.65m in width were excavated across the proposal site. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

4.1 Trench 1

The lowest deposit encountered in Trench 1 was the geological horizon (1/03), a soft dark orange sand. This layer was truncated by two modern features; a waste water pipe trench and an area of disturbance, possibly a tree planting hole. These were overlain by subsoil (1/02) a loose mid brown silt 0.13m in thickness that contained frequent poorly sorted building rubble. This in turn was overlain by topsoil (1/01), a friable mid brown silt 0.2m in thickness.

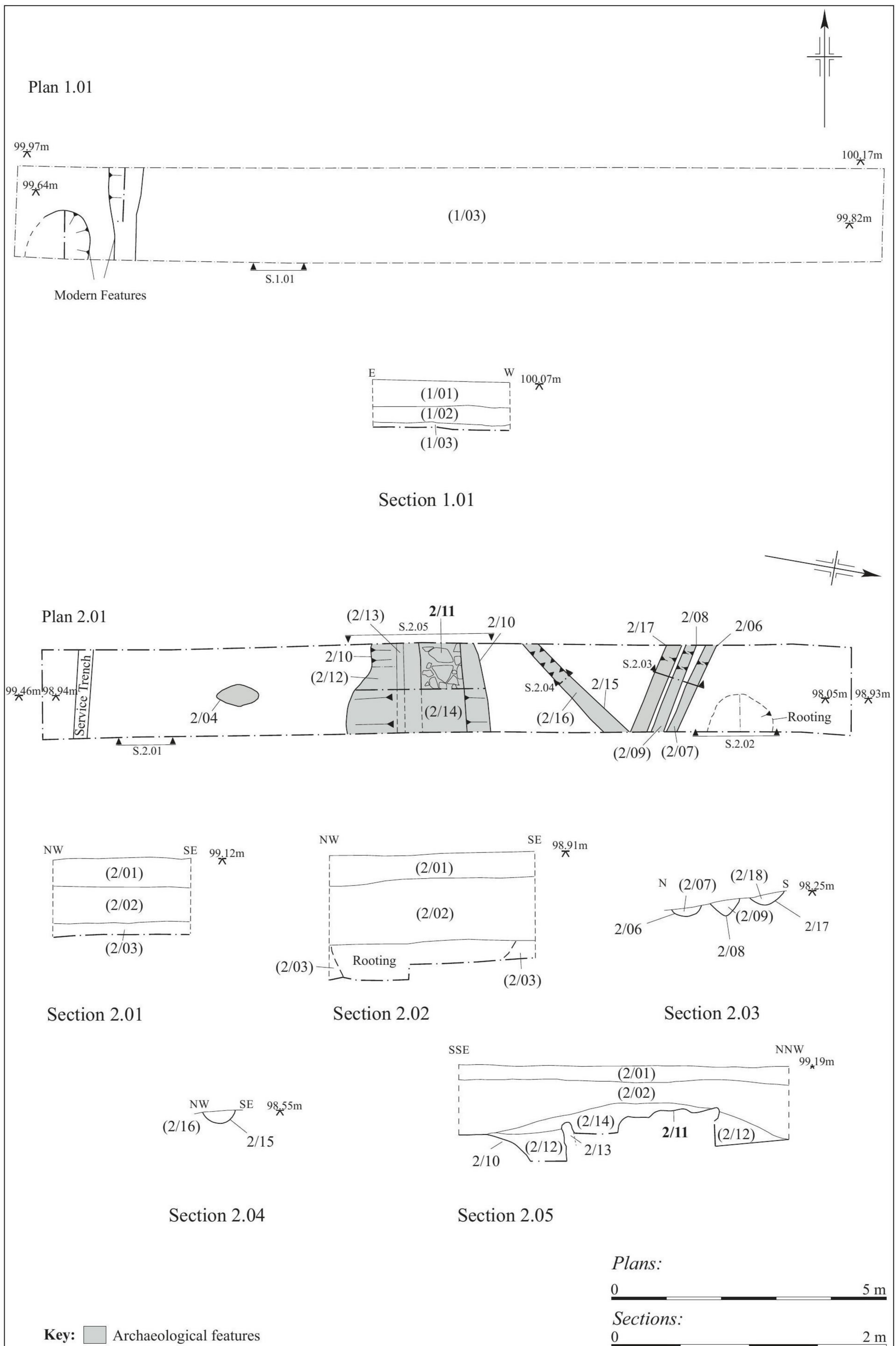


Figure 2: Plans and Sections



Plate 1: Trench 1, showing modern disturbance at western end. Looking east



Plate 2: Trench 2, pre-excavation. Looking north

4.2 Trench 2

The lowest deposit encountered in Trench 2 was natural geology (2/03), a soft dark orange sand. A series of archaeological features were identified within the trench, truncating geological horizon (2/03). Overlying these was subsoil (2/02), a friable mid brown silt with occasional small stone; this deposit increased in thickness from 0.25m

at the southern end to 0.45m at the north. Topsoil (1/01) was a friable mid brown silt 0.2m in thickness.

At the southern end of the trench was 2/04, an ovoid cut 0.78m in length by 0.36m in width. This contained the articulated remains of a dog and fill (2/05), a friable mid orange brown silty sand with occasional small stone.



Plate 3: Modern dog burial 2/04 and fill (2/05). Looking north east.

Located approximately 2m north of this feature was wall 2/11 (Figure 2; section 5). This was built within construction cut 2/10, measuring >1.6m in length by 2.6m in width and at least 0.2m in depth. The southern side of the cut was steep, while the northern was gently sloping. Within the cut, wall 2/11 measured >1.6m in length by 0.8m in width; the wall was composed of roughly hewn limestone blocks, ranging in size from 450mm x 300mm x 100mm to 150mm x 100mm x 50mm.



Plate 4: Wall 2/11. Looking north east.

The wall was bonded with a compact mid grey brown clayey silt; this deposit also filled construction cut 1/10, where it was recorded as (1/12). A packing deposit of small stones and stone roof tile (2/13), aligned vertically, ran parallel to the south side of the wall. The structure therefore appeared to form a composite foundation, part stone wall and part foundation trench for a wooden beam or posts. Wall 2/11 was wholly overlain by dumped deposit (2/14), a compact mid greyish brown silt with frequent mortar flecks, 0.2m in thickness. Ceramic roof tile and a fragment of coke were recovered from this deposit.

To the north of wall 2/11 were a series of small gullies; 2/06, 2/08, 2/15 and 2/17 (Figure 2; section 3, 4). 2/15, located approximately 1m north and aligned north east – south west, measured 2.2m in length by 0.25m in width and 0.09m in depth. The cut had steep sides, a concave base and was filled by (2/16), a friable mid brown sandy silt from which a sherd of 13th to 14th century pottery was recovered.



Plate 5: Gullies 2/06, 2/08 and 2/17. Looking east.

To the north, aligned perpendicular to 2/15, were three parallel gullies; 2/06, 2/08 and 2/17. 2/06 had steep sides and a concave base and measured >1.7m in length by 0.22m in width and 0.06m in depth. Fill (2/07) was a friable mid brown sandy clay. Gully 2/08 ran parallel to 2/06 and was similar in form, >1.7m in length, 0.2m in width and 0.1m in depth. Fill (2/09) was a friable mid brown sandy clay. Running parallel to the above gullies was 2/17, a linear feature >1.7m in length by 0.24m in width and 0.08m in depth, with steep slightly irregular sides and a concave base. Fill (2/18) was a friable mid grey silty sand with reddish brown mottling.

4.3 Reliability of Results

The evaluation was undertaken in fair conditions and the archaeological features encountered were suitably sampled. The evaluation was monitored by David Radford of Oxford City Council.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

A single sherd of pottery weighing 4g occurred in context 2/16. It is a fragment of a glazed jug in Brill/Boarstall Ware, fabric OXAM of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1994), and broadly dateable to the 13th – 14th century.

Such pottery is a very common find in the city and its environs. The sherd is somewhat abraded, and thus could conceivably be residual.

Context 2/05 (modern dog burial fill) produced a small fragment (2g) of highly vitrified clay material, possibly from a furnace lining or similar. It is undateable.

5.2 Ceramic Building Material by Simona Denis

One fragment of ceramic building material was found in dumped deposit (2/14); it weighed 84g and measured 105x62mm. Although the item did not preserve any of the complete dimensions, it appears to have originated from a roof tile.

Roof tiles are almost totally functional and their characteristics change very little over time; also, good quality roof tiles were often reused. Hand-made peg tiles were also commonly used until the 19th century, when machine-made tiles became popular. Consequently, the potential for dating evidence of plain roof tiles remains limited, and only a broad Post-Medieval date can be suggested.

The roof tile fragment is not recommended for retention, due to its limited potential for further analysis.

5.3 Animal Bone by Simona Denis

A single fragment of animal bone, weighing 1.2g, was collected from deposit (2/16). The item was tentatively identified as fragment cortex originated from a scapula or part of the pelvis of an undetermined mammal.

It is not recommended to retain the animal bone fragment due to its extremely limited potential for further analysis.

5.4 Other Finds by Simona Denis

Stone

Three fragments of stone slab, of a combined weight of 584g, were recovered from two different deposits. Despite being incomplete, the items were tentatively identified as roof tiles due to the presence of partial peg holes on two of the examples; their dating remains undetermined.

Context	No of Items	Weight (g)
2/12	2	336
2/14	1	248
Total	3	584

Table 1: Stone tile occurrence by context

It is not recommended to retain the stone roof tile fragments due to their very limited potential for further analysis.

Coke

One fragment of coke, weighing 3.5g, was hand-collected from dumped deposit (2/14). Derived from coal, coke is a fuel with high carbon content used in Britain from the Late Medieval period.

The coke fragment is not recommended for retention due to its very limited potential for further analysis.

Iron

Deposit (2/05), the fill of animal burial 2/04, contained a single iron nail, measuring 50mm in length and weighing 6.5g; its state of preservation was poor, showing severe oxidation. The object had a square cross-section shaft and a flat, square head; the point was missing. It was tentatively identified as an early machine cut nail, and dated to the post-medieval period.

The iron nail is not recommended for retention, due to its poor state of preservation and limited potential for further analysis.

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation was successful in meeting the aims laid out in the WSI. No significant archaeological features were identified within Trench 1, located within the area of the proposed extension. Trench 2, sited within the proposed parking area, contained a series of archaeological features. These comprised a substantial stone wall foundation and four small gullies. The wall appeared to be a composite foundation, comprising a wall foundation combined with a post or beam trench on its southern side. The alignment of the wall did not conform to any extant boundaries; similarly historic map regression did not reveal any structures to be present in this location. The wall is therefore likely to pre-date the current and historically documented configurations of the site, and is thus pre-19th century. The form of the feature is uncertain, however the absence of any nearby occupation deposits, surfaces or additional walls suggest it may have served as a boundary, rather than forming part of a building.

The linear gullies did not appear to respect the alignment of the nearby wall and due to the lack of dating their relationship remains uncertain. A single sherd of 13th -14th century pottery was recovered from one of these features.

In the evaluation trench there was a maximum of 280mm of overburden above the highest point of the wall revealed and 600mm above the gullies.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Museum Service under accession number OXCMS: 2020.58.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2020 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2020a *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*

Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217

Appendix 1: Context Inventory

Context	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Findings	Interpretation	Date
Trench 1								
1/01	Deposit	Friable mid brown silt with frequent rooting	0.2m	Whole trench	Whole trench	None	Topsoil	Undated
1/02	Deposit	Loose mid brown silt with frequent building rubble	0.13m	Whole trench	Whole trench	None	Subsoil	Undated
1/03	Deposit	Soft dark orange sand	N/A	Whole trench	Whole trench	None	Natural	Undated
Trench 2								
2/01	Deposit	Friable mid brown silt with frequent rooting	0.2m	Whole trench	Whole trench	None	Topsoil	Undated
2/02	Deposit	Loose mid brown silt with occasional small stones	0.25 – 0.45m	Whole trench	Whole trench	None	Subsoil	Undated
2/03	Deposit	Soft dark orange sand	N/A	Whole trench	Whole trench	None	Natural	Undated
2/04	Cut	Ovoid in plan. Unexcavated	N/A	0.36m	0.78m	N/A	Domestic animal (dog) burial	Post-med/modern
2/05	Fill	Friable mid orange brown silty sand	N/A	0.36m	0.78m	Animal bone – not retained	Fill of 2/04	Post-med/modern
2/06	Cut	Linear in plan, steep sides and a concave base. Aligned E-W	0.06m	0.22m	>1.7m	N/A	Small linear gully. Closely associated with 2/08, 2/15, 2/17	Undated
2/07	Fill	Friable mid brown sandy silt	0.06m	0.22m	>1.7m	None	Fill of small gully	Undated
2/08	Cut	Linear in plan, steep sides and a concave base. Aligned E-W	0.1m	0.2m	>1.7m	N/A	Small linear gully. Closely associated with 2/06, 2/15, 2/17	Undated
2/09	Fill	Friable mid brown sandy silt	0.1m	0.2m	>1.7m	None	Fill of small gully	Undated
2/10	Cut	Linear, sharp BoS at south, gradual at N. Steep south side, gently sloping north. Base unexcavated	>0.2m	2.3m	>1.6m	N/A	Linear construction cut for wall 2/11	Undated
2/11	Structure	Roughly hewn limestone blocks ranging in size from 450mm x 300mm x 100mm to 150mm x 100mm x 50mm. Compact silty clay bonding	>0.2m	1.3m	>1.6m	None	Wall foundation and possible beam trench	Undated
2/12	Fill	Compact mid grey clayey silt with frequent mortar fragments	>0.2m	1.3m	>1.6m	Stone roof slate	Fill of construction cut 2/10	Medieval/post-medieval
2/13	Deposit	Roughly hewn limestone and re-used	>0.2m	0.08m	>1.6m	None	Packing deposit	Undated

		roofing slate						
2/14	Deposit	Compact mid greyish brown silt with frequent mortar fragments	0.2m	0.7m	>1.6m	Stone roof tile, clay roof tile	Dump of material overlying wall 2/11	Undated
2/15	Cut	Linear in plan, steep sides and a concave base. Aligned N-S	0.09m	>2.2m	0.25m	N/A	Small linear gully. Closely associated with 2/06, 2/08, 2/17	Medieval?
2/16	Fill	Friable mid brown sandy silt	0.09m	>2.2m	0.25m	Pottery, animal bone	Fill of small gully	Medieval?
2/17	Cut	Linear in plan, steep sides and a concave base. Aligned E-W	0.08m	>1.7m	0.24m	N/A	Small linear gully. Closely associated with 2/06, 2/08, 2/15	Undated
2/18	Fill	Friable mid grey silty sand with reddish brown mottling.	0.08m	>1.7m	0.24m	None	Fill of small gully	Undated

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OASIS ID: johnmoor1-401855

Project details

Project name	AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT MEADOW LARKINS, LARKINS LANE, HEADINGTON, OXFORD
Short description of the project	John Moore Heritage Services carried out an evaluation at Meadow Larkins, Larkins Lane, Headington, Oxford (NGR SP 54598 07667). Two trenches 15m in length were excavated in areas of potential impact. No significant archaeological features were identified within trench 1, located within the area of the proposed extension. Trench 2, sited within the proposed parking area, contained a series of archaeological features. These comprised a substantial stone wall foundation and four small gullies. The stone wall did not correspond to any identified through historic map regression and did not align with Larkins Lane. The linear gullies present did not appear associated with the wall as they were on a different alignment; a single sherd of 13th -14th century pottery was recovered from one of these features.
Project dates	Start: 11-08-2020 End: 11-08-2020
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	OXLL 20 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	4277 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	FOUNDATION Uncertain
Monument type	DITCH Uncertain
Monument type	ANIMAL BURIAL Modern
Monument type	CONSTRUCTION TRENCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	ANIMAL REMAINS Uncertain
Significant Finds	SHERD Medieval
Significant Finds	ROOF TILE Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

Project location

Country England
 Site location OXFORDSHIRE OXFORD OXFORD Meadow Larkins, Larkins Lane, Headington
 Postcode OX3 9DW
 Study area 1600 Square metres
 Site coordinates SP 54598 07667 51.764565349215 -1.208758550998 51 45 52 N 001 12 31 W Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 98.05m Max: 99.82m

Project creators

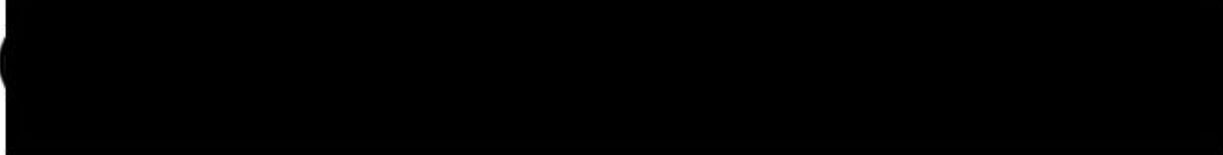
Name of Organisation John Moore Heritage Services
 Project brief originator Oxford City Council
 Project design originator JMHS
 Project director/manager John Moore
 Project supervisor Tom Rose-Jones
 Type of sponsor/funding body Client

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Oxfordshire County Museums Service
 Physical Archive ID OXCMS: 2020.59
 Physical Contents "Ceramics"
 Digital Archive recipient Oxfordshire County Museums Service
 Digital Archive ID OXCMS: 2020.59
 Digital Contents "Ceramics","Metal","Worked stone/lithics"
 Digital Media available "Geophysics","Images raster / digital photography","Images vector","Spreadsheets","Text"
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 Paper Media available "Context sheet","Microfilm","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section"

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