

Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation Regarding

Development of Land for Equestrian Use Middlefield House Lower Whitehill Tackley Oxfordshire
OS Grid Reference Sp 4767 1908

Planning application reference 21/01582/FUL

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For

Amanda Geday Middlefield House

October 1st. 2021



Fig. 1 Site looking west before commencement of works.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Commissioning

1.1.1 This document comprises the written scheme of investigation (WSI) for archaeological investigation and recording associated with works to develop a plot of land for equestrian use to the north of Middlefield House, Tackley. (Fig. 1). It was drawn up following planning conditions from West Oxfordshire District Council: 'Condition 7 requires that a written scheme of investigation (WSI) is approved in advance of the development commencing. Condition 8 requires the archaeological mitigation is undertaken in accordance with the WSI approved under Condition 7.' and in the light of a brief provided by Richard Oram, Archaeology Lead, County Archaeological Services.

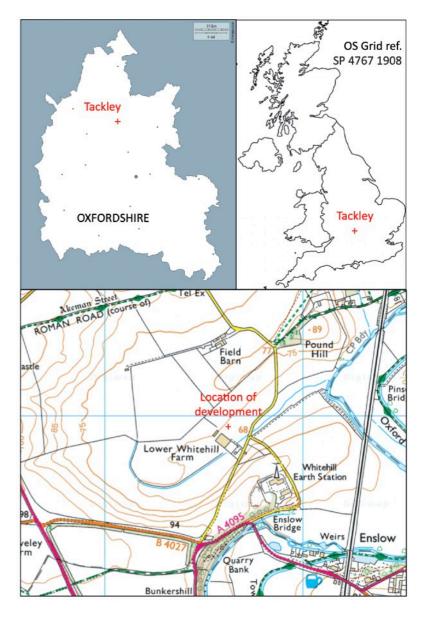


Fig. 2 Location Maps © Crown copyright and database rights [2017] OS 0100042840

1.1.2 Project Context and Scope. The client explains that, 'the proposal is for us to change the use of agricultural land to equestrian so we can keep our horses at home. We are also asking for permission to build a barn to contain stables, a second barn to house the tractor, related farm equipment and a small flock of sheep at lambing time, and an outdoor arena to give us a surface to exercise our horses.' This involves the levelling and surfacing of an area for an outdoor exercise arena around 60m by 20m and up to a maximum depth of 700mm. The adjacent small development of a barn and tractor shed are not covered by this WSI as levels of disturbance were considered to be minimal and were excluded from the planning condition. Around 60m to the south east a wildlife pond, roughly 20m by 40m, is proposed to be dug out to a maximum depth of 1500mm.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Topography and geology. The site of the proposed development lies close to the 70m contour within a shallow basin that drains towards the north east into the River Cherwell. (Fig. 2) The VCH notes that, 'In Whitehill the land slopes from high ground at 105 m. on the north, west, and south into the centre of the township at 68 m., forming a great bowl, the 'bent hill' from which the township takes its name'. 1 The topography suggests it may have been formed by a relict meander of the Cherwell possibly associated with the Pleistocene Hanborough gravels seen to the east around Kirtlington.² The underlying geology is a Jurassic White Limestone below superficial deposits of Quaternary sand and gravel. 3

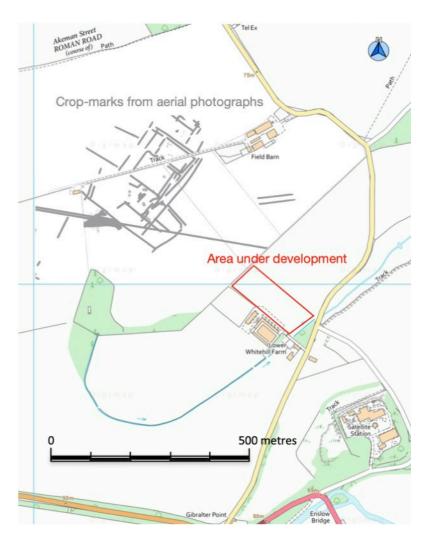


Fig. 3 Area plan with crop-marks after Cullen and Hancocks 2007 © Crown copyright and database rights [2017] OS 0100042840

1.2.2 Archaeology and early history.

Large quantities of flints from the Neolithic period were found to the north of Tackley village ⁴, whilst two pieces of worked flint were discovered by field walking around 400m to the north west ⁵ with further debris from flint working collected to the south. ⁶ A possible Neolithic cursus was identified by aerial photography over a kilometre to the north west, ⁷ whilst a Bronze Age round barrow was similarly picked up a little further north ⁸ and a circular cropmark identified from aerial photos 630m west of the site is likely to be a Bronze Age barrow. ⁹The Roman Akeman Street (Margary Road 16b) runs roughly east to west, from Cirencester to Alchester just over 700m to the north of the site and was probably constructed by the army in the late 1st century. ¹⁰ The Oxford to Banbury road, around a kilometre to the west, known as 'Port Street', may be an early ridgeway possibly adapted in Roman times and later used as a route along the western side of the Cherwell valley in the early medieval period. ¹¹ Just over 400m to the north west is the site of a Roman settlement based on a series of rectilinear enclosures with material recovered by field walking mainly from the 3rd. and 4th. centuries. ¹²

A drawing of these crop-marks based on aerial photographs was published by Cullen and Hancocks although no geophysics or additional excavation was undertaken in the area (Fig. 3). ¹³ Excavations at Street Farm in the centre of Tackley village by TVAS uncovered, in addition to early Neolithic features, 'a large stone-built Roman building which consisted of several rooms, one of which was floored by a red and white mosaic with a geometric design. The building appears to have sat in the north-eastern corner of a larger walled compound which extended beyond the site boundary to the west and south. To the south of the main structure is a smaller stone-built one which may have been an ancillary building such as a bathhouse.' ¹⁴ Further finds including coins of the fourth century and a brooch were made by detectorists in a field on the high ground to the south west beyond the B4027. ¹⁵ Tackley, whose church contains Anglo-Saxon work, was presumably the earliest and largest settlement in the parish. There were townships at Whitehill in 1004, and Weaveley to the south west was recorded in 1005. Whilst the deserted medieval settlement at Whitehill exists as earthworks some 800m to the north east, ¹⁶ the site of Weaveley, on the high ground around 1.5km to the south west and deserted some time between 1350 and 1450, has not been securely located. ¹⁷ In 1605 the township of Whitehill was divided into four fields, East, West, Middle, and South with a final act of inclosure as late as 1873.

1.2.3 Lower Whitehill Farm. The grade II listed farm house and associated buildings were constructed on land owned by the the Duke of Marlborough some time after 1844 as they do not appear in the tithe map dated to that year. ¹⁸ The listing entry notes that the agricultural buildings, built round a courtyard to the north west of the farmhouse are, 'a good example of the methods of high farming in Victorian England, allying science and careful planning in the service of improved agricultural efficiency.'

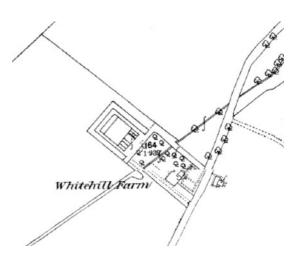


Fig. 4 The farm as shown on the OS 6 inch map from the 1880s.

1.2.4 Recent Archaeology. Apart from the investigations on the line of the Angelinos to Ardley pipeline and the major excavation of the Roman villa at Street Farm, Tackley, mentioned above there has been little archaeological activity in the area. The landowner reports on a survey undertaken by metal detectorists in the field proposed for development that found, '3 musket balls, a Georgian shoe buckle, a metal button, and a couple of tractor springs'. It is also reported that a geophysics survey was undertaken with no significant anomalies being noted.

1.2.5 Conclusions. There are significant remains from all periods in the area but it is notable that they are clustered on the higher ground to the south, west and north. The likelihood is that the site under consideration, as being in a notably low lying basin, was probably difficult to access and cultivate until effective drainage was brought in. As far as can be determined the ground has been subject to agricultural use since at least the middle ages.

2. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH AIMS

- 2.1 Objectives and aims are developed in the light of the *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas*. ¹⁹ It is possible that relevant data may be recovered regarding paleo-channels for an earlier course of the River Cherwell (Ch. 2, An introduction to the geo-archaeology, palaeo-environmental and archaeological science, River Valleys, p. 19). Whilst there may be some residual materials from prehistoric and Roman settlement the main interest is likely to lie in the use of the area as agricultural land with potential insights into a, ' better understanding of the process of agricultural intensification in the mid to late Saxon period and the origins of open field system' (Ch. 14, The early Medieval Period, Landscape and land use, p. 229) and later the impact of, 'the agricultural revolution on the landscape' and 'the development of settlements, including relationships with outlying farms and hamlets'. (Ch. 18 The Post-Medieval and Modern Period, Landscape and land use, p. 288).
- 2.2 In the light of these research priorities the more specific aims will be:
 - To establish the presence or absence of items of archaeological interest in the ground and features in the immediate surrounding landscape affected by the development.
 - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any features
 encountered and through further study place them in the context of the development of
 agriculture in the area and in particular the impact of the nineteenth-century farm and its
 buildings.
 - To establish where possible the dating and sequence of features identified on site.
 - To determine the relationship between archaeological and any documentary evidence as relating to the site.
 - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.
 - To compile and deposit a site archive.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Ground works.

In accordance with the project brief, 'Prior to development the area of the proposed arena and pond will be stripped of overburden under archaeological supervision to either the archaeological horizon or the maximum depth of the proposed ground disturbance, including any drainage required. The area will be cleaned, and all features will be recorded on plan.' The whole area of both of the proposed sites will be progressively stripped across their full extent to each archaeologically relevant layer. Specifically, all machining will be carried out under direct archaeological control, using a

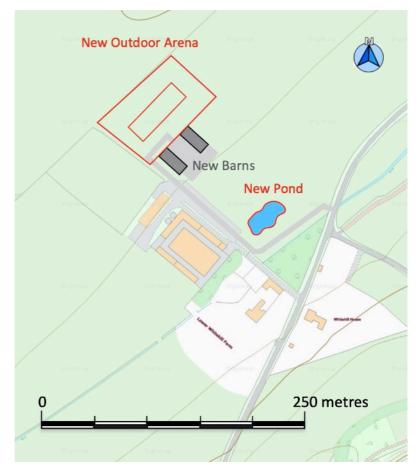


Fig. 5 Site Plan, © Crown copyright and database rights [2017] OS 0100042840

mechanical excavator equipped with an appropriately sized toothless ditching/grading bucket. Machining will proceed in spits, and will cease if archaeological deposits are exposed in order to allow those deposits to be examined, excavated if necessary and recorded. Archaeological observations will cease at the point when archaeological horizons have been fully removed and the natural fully encountered or the limit of the proposed ground reduction is reached.

- 3.2 Where it is safe to do so, meeting the relevant health and safety legislation, the archaeologists will enter the areas being cleared for the purpose of undertaking hand cleaning for the better definition of any archaeological features or deposits present and to complete the sampling and recording needed. No deposits will be excavated by machine unless agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeology Services.
- 3.3 All stratigraphic sequences will be recorded, even where no archaeology is present and all excavated deposits fully recorded by detailed written context records on digital pro-forma sheets giving details of their location, composition, dimensions, shape, any relationships, finds and samples, with

standardised descriptions following Soil Survey soil texture terminology and Munsell colour descriptions. The records will be cross referenced to any other relevant contexts.

- 3.4 Sampling. Archaeological data will be recovered on the basis of the following sampling strategy:
 - All structural features or those relating to a specialised activity will be subject to a 100% sample.
 - All post and stake holes that relate to specialised activities will be subject to a 100% sample. Others will be subject to a 50% sample.
 - A 50% sample of all pits will be undertaken.
 - A minimum of 20% or 10 metres, whichever is greater, of all linear features will be sampled.

These proportions may be varied following consultation with Oxfordshire County Archaeology Services.

- 3.5 All features will be recorded on at least one plan, normally at 1:10 scale and at least one section drawing of a feature, normally at 1:10 scale (1:20 if necessary due to size). A complete post excavation plan of the area will be prepared at an appropriate scale and incorporated in an overall site plan produced with suitable GIS software. All drawings will include co-ordinate data as is necessary for the accurate location of the area planned or the section drawn and spot-heights related to the Ordnance Survey Datum. Written records and scale plans will be supplemented by photographs using high definition digital photography in RAW format.
- 3.6 All artefacts remain initially the property of the landowner but where appropriate may be retained for processing and analysis by appropriately qualified and competent staff. Cleaning of objects may take place on site, or upon removal as is deemed appropriate. All recording, cleaning, storage and conservation of finds must be in accordance with the relevant standards. ²⁰
- 3.7 Environmental Sampling Strategy. For all secure deposits that have the potential to provide environmental data, a minimum of 40L of sample will be taken, or 100% of the sample if smaller. In the case of waterlogged or anaerobic deposits a minimum sample size of 20L will be taken. Should a sequence of superimposed deposits be present column sampling may be considered. In all instances strategies will be in accordance with guidelines issued by Historic England and will be targeted in order to explore the levels and types of preservation present. ²¹ Should other types of environmental deposits be encountered, appropriate specialist advice will be sought and an appropriate sampling strategy devised. A final environmental sampling strategy will be agreed between the environmental

specialist andOxfordshire County Archaeology Services once the fieldwork is underway and samples will be assessed by a suitable specialist with provision for further analysis as required. Advice from the Historic England Scientific Advisor will be taken as appropriate.

- 3.8 In the unlikely event of human remains being encountered the client and Oxfordshire County Archaeology Services will be informed immediately and work suspended. The excavation and lifting of any human remains will only be undertaken under licence from the Ministry of Justice, complying with the requirements of the 1857 Burial Act and environmental health regulations. Provision will be made for a specialist report on any remains by a recognised osteo-archaeologist.
- 3.9 Artefacts classified as Treasure under the Treasure Act (1996) will be reported on in accordance with the requirements of the Act. Any such finds will be notified to the client and Oxfordshire County Archaeology Services, removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner as required by the procedures as laid down in the Treasure Act Code of Practice 2002. ²² Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery, suitable security measures will be taken to protect the material from theft.
- 3.10 The lead archaeologist will be responsible for liaising with the contractor in respect of all operations where an archaeological interest exists. All work will be carried out in accordance with the appropriate standards and guidance as published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. ²³
- 3.11 No parts of the excavation areas will be handed back to the developer until written confirmation that they have been signed off is obtained from County Archaeological Services.
- 3.12 Specialist Advisors. Any retained artefacts will be cleaned, conserved, marked and packaged in accordance with relevant guidance ²⁴. Such artefacts will be processed by suitably qualified and experienced staff. The potential for further analysis of artefacts should be assessed and if deemed necessary individuals from the following list of specialists will be consulted:

Animal bone	Oxford Archaeology (01865 980 700)
Artefact conservation	York Conservation Trust (01904 651 880)
Flint	Rebecca Devaney (0118 9414920)
Human remains	Oxford Archaeology (01865 980 700)
Palaeo-environmental analysis	Val Fryer (01508 520235)
Production process residues	Dr Roderick Mackenzie (0779 198542)
Prehistoric pottery and other ceramic material	Sarah Percival (01603 626189)
Roman pottery and other ceramic material	Dr Phil Mills (01162 355159)
Post-Roman pottery and other ceramic material	Luke Barber (07913 539783)
	Sue Anderson (01603 616264)
Wood	York Conservation Trust (01904 651 880)

4. CONTINGENCIES AND UNEXPECTEDLY SIGNIFICANT OR COMPLEX DISCOVERIES

4.1 Although this is a full excavation rather than a watching brief, should unexpectedly extensive remains of previously unrecorded archaeology be uncovered the scope of this programme will be reviewed to determine priorities for the excavation in conjunction with the client and Oxfordshire County Archaeology Services.

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 5.1 Health and safety will take priority over archaeological matters. All archaeologists undertaking fieldwork must comply with all current Health and Safety Legislation. A Construction Design Management Designers Risk Assessment will be completed prior to work beginning.
- 5.2 All personnel will comply with rules and procedures established by the principal ground work contractor and be given appropriate health and safety briefings. All personnel will wear full PPE: hard hats, safety boots and badged high-visibility clothing on site. It is likely that archaeologists will be working close to heavy plant and equipment and the risk assessments and related procedures will reflect this.
- 5.3 The archaeological contractor will carry appropriate insurance cover.

6. PROFESSIONAL MATTERS

- 6.1 Personnel. The lead archaeologist will be well qualified and appropriately experienced in carrying out and supervising groundwork preferably with some expertise in historic landscapes and post-medieval material. From time to time, depending on need, extra staff may be brought in who should be qualified and trained to an appropriate level.
- 6.2 Timetable and Monitoring. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services officers will be invited to monitor progress and standards throughout the project. To facilitate this, a full project timetable with staffing details will be provided and at least two weeks notification of the start date given.
- 6.3 Public Engagement. It is unlikely that major discoveries of public interest will be made but contacts will be established with the very active Tackley History Group and local schools with talks or exhibitions being offered if appropriate.
- 6.4 CPD. Where possible opportunities should be taken to advance continuing professional development for all staff involved.

7. REPORTING

- 7.1 Introduction. All post excavation/site archive work shall be carried out according to the standards and procedures defined in MoRPHE. ²⁵ The developer shall be responsible for all processing, research, analysis, and investigative/stabilising conservation necessary to prepare the site archive for preservation and storage in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication. All conservation shall be carried out to U.K.I.C. Guideline Standards, ²⁶ and the site archive will be prepared according to the procedures specified by Oxfordshire Museums Service.²⁷
- 7.2 Oxfordshire Museums Service will be contacted before the site work begins and an accession number obtained at least one month in advance of fieldwork commencing. They will be informed of the expected time limits for deposition of the archive.
- 7.3 The lead archaeologist will provide progress reports via email to the client, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services and any other interested parties deemed necessary at the end of each period on site. Should unexpectedly significant archaeological remains be encountered the client and Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services will be informed soon as possible.
- 7.4 A first draft of the written report will be supplied to the client and Oxfordshire County

Archaeological Services to allow time for verification and assessment within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork. A further four weeks may be allowed for any amendments or further research prior to the publication of the final report.

7.5 A Post Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design shall be sent to County Archaeological Service for verification and comments unless otherwise agreed in advance with County Archaeology Service. The final report shall be prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists guidelines ²⁸ and will take into account the scale of the project, the overall importance of the site based on Historic England guidance, and its status within local and regional research strategies. It should also be commensurate with the level of results obtained. It will contain the following information:

- a title page, with the name of the project and author(s) of the report, the title of the report and date of the report and grid reference.
- a non-technical summary or abstract of the findings.
- a description of and a background to the nature of the works, including dates of fieldwork.
- a brief description of the site location (including grid references) and any previously known archaeology in the survey area.
- a summary of the key findings from the archaeological section in the heritage statement
- description of the methodology employed and explanation of any agreed variations to the brief and justification for any analyses not undertaken.
- appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs.
- photographs of key views needed to illustrate the text of the report, including diagrams indicating the direction/location from which the photographs were taken.
- description and interpretation of all structures recorded. The report will propose an
 interpretation for the phasing, dating and development of such structures on the basis of the
 information gathered during the work.
- the results of any excavations including post—excavation analysis of the stratigraphic and other written, drawn and photographic records.
- a catalogue and brief post—excavation analysis of any artefacts recovered during the work, including the potential for further analysis.
- discussion of the results including any site phasing and interpretation and discussion of the results within the local and regional context.
- a summary of the contents of the project archive and its location.
- references and bibliography of all sources used.
- an appendix containing a list and summary descriptions of all contexts recorded.

 an acknowledgement of the curatorial role played in the project by Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services and also acknowledge any provision of information from the County Historic Environment Record .

In addition GIS (shape) files of the final phased excavated site plan will be provided to the office of the County Archaeological Officer.

7.6 Should significant archaeology be uncovered full publication will be undertaken in a recognised academic journal appropriate to the period, and with regard to local and regional research strategies, in online, journal or monograph form as appropriate. In addition, a summary of the project with, if appropriate, selected drawings, illustrations and photographs will be prepared for publication in South Midlands Archaeology. Additional popular articles may also be produced for local and/or national magazines as appropriate. The final form of the publication is to be agreed with the OCAS Planning Archaeologist and the client dependent on the results of the fieldwork.

7.7 The final report will be circulated as a PDF and where necessary as hard copy to the following agencies:

The client

Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology Services

West Oxfordshire District Council

Oxfordshire County Council HER

Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society

Tackley History Group

Whilst summaries will be prepared for:

South Midlands Archaeology, published by the CBA South Midlands.

Oxfordshire County Records Office.

8. ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

8.1 The site archive will contain all the data collected during the investigations, including records, finds and samples. It will be quantified, ordered, indexed and internally consistent. Adequate resources will be provided during fieldwork to ensure that all records are checked and internally consistent. All records must be checked, cross—referenced and indexed as necessary.

8.2 Any artefacts selected for retention will be prepared and packaged according to the procedures specified by The County Museums Service. ²⁹ The client will be informed of the costs, procedures and

issues around the transfer of title to Oxfordshire County Council. Deposited archives from developer-

led archaeological work will be accompanied by funding equivalent to the current English Heritage Box

Storage Grant. Archaeological organisations shall therefore include an estimate of the costs of

deposition for this project in their tender. The estimated cost will be clearly shown and shall be

calculated in accordance with established procedures. 30

8.3 A Transfer of Title form will be signed by the land owner and the report will indicate whether or

not this has been done. In the event of the legal owner resolving to retain all or part of the site

archive, they shall be responsible for the future preservation and maintenance of any material element

of that archive. That part of the site archive in question, shall be transferred to the legal owner only

after; all necessary processing, research, analysis and investigative/stabilising conservation and correct

packing necessary to prepare the archive for preservation and in a usable, accessible form, and to

produce a full report for publication, has been completed. The owner shall ensure that all necessary

provision is made for the long-term preservation of the archive in a satisfactory environment, and that

it is accessible for future research. The contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that a proper

record of material is kept by the landowner shall be included in the written archive and public record.

The explicit (written) permission of the owner shall be obtained for the latter in order that the Data

Protection Act 1984 is not contravened.

8.4 Most recording on site will be done digitally and so the archiving of all digital data arising from the

project will be undertaken in a manner consistent with current professional standards and guidance. 31

Polyolbion Archaeology will be responsible for ensuring that all digital data generated by the excavation

is archived with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) and an OASIS record (Online Access to the Index

of archaeological investigations) created.

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13

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- ² Philip Powell, The Geology of Oxfordshire (Wimborne 2005), p. 82
- ³ http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html [accessed 30.9.21]
- ⁴ Oxon. HER no. 4001
- ⁵ PAS unique ID BERK-432090
- ⁶ PAS unique ID BERK-B20712
- ⁷ Oxon. HER no. 4152
- 8 Oxon. HER no. 5319
- 9 PRN26315
- ¹⁰ McWhirr, A. (1986) Roman Gloucestershire, Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, p. 130
- ¹¹ Oxon. HER no. 8861
- ¹² Oxon. HER no. 5318
- ¹³ Kate Cullen and Annette Hancocks, *Angelinos Pumping Station to Ardley Reservoir, Oxfordshire: Mains Pipeline Reinforcement*, (Cotswold Archaeology, 2007), Figure 2
- ¹⁴ See Excavation of the Roman Villa at Street Farm, Tackley, Oxfordshire TVAS Ltd. (2021)
- ¹⁵ For example Roman Trumpet Broach PAS unique ID WAW-73F66B and A copper-alloy nummus of the House of Valentinian dating to the period AD 364 to 378 PAS unique ID BH-9C4053
- ¹⁶ Oxon. HER no. 1106
- ¹⁷ Oxon. HER no. 1107
- ¹⁸ English Heritage Listing, https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101474158-courtyard-buildings-at-lower-whitehill-farm-west-oxfordshire#.YVa4QS8w0vB. [accessed 1.10.21]
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