Ock Street,
Abingdon,
Oxfordshire.

An Archaeological Watching Brief
for
Leadbitter Construction

Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire
Archaeological Watching Brief

Project 95/6

by Alan Ford

INTRODUCTION

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief commissioned by Mr. G.F.Ridley of Leadbitter Construction, Grange Mill, 33/35 Acre End Street, Eynsham, Oxfordshire. The site is located between the south side of Ock Street , Abingdon and the north bank of the River Ock. (centred on NGR SU 4900 9685) (Fig. 1 and 2).

The archaeological fieldwork was requested, in accordance with PPG 16, as part of planning consent for the building of 62 new dwellings upon the site.

The watching brief was carried out by Lucy Howell, Alan Ford and M John Saunders between 10th May and 18th July 1995. The site code is OSA WB 1995.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The application area slopes down from the north to the south and lies at a mean height of approximately 52.0 m. above O.D. The area is approximately 1.8 hectares bounded to the north by existing flats. The geology of the site is alluvium with first terrace gravel in the northern part of the site.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

There are no known significant archaeological features within the bounds of the application area. However the Ock Valley and the western bank of the Thames are known to contain significant and extensive archaeological features that cover the full spectrum of archaeological periods. The majority of these sites have been identified through means of aerial photgraphy. Whilst cropmarks are not discernable on the application site it was thought highly probable that archaeological features were present but masked by recent alluvial overburden.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the watching brief was to monitor the groundwork stages of the development - topsoil stripping/foundation trench digging etc. - to record any archaeological features revealed during this process and to recover any finds present.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Initial topsoil stripping of the area was carried out to a depth of approximately 0.5 m. revealing extensive made up ground of demolition rubble from pre-existing buildings on the site. To the north of the development area foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of approximately 1 m. revealing the made up ground to be between 0.4 and 0.8 m. in depth with blue/grey alluvial clay only appearing at the very bottom of the trenches. To the south of the area foundations were excavated to a depth of approximately 2 m. with ballast pilings sunk to a depth of 3 m. Monitoring of building plots 43-48 (fig. 3)in this area revealed made up ground of approximately 0.5 m. depth overlying a buried soil of 0.1-0.2 m. depth overlying blue/grey alluvial clay which was generally clean but with gravel lensing and organic staining apparent in the base of the foundation trenches at depths in excess of 1.8 m. In the south west corner of plot 43 peat was visible in the base of the foundation trench at a depth of approximately 2 m.

On no part of the development area were any archaeological features observed nor were any archaeological artefacts recovered.

CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief indicated that the site has been subjected to extensive modern disturbance and levelling and largely comprises made ground. It would therefore appear, on the basis of obsevations made, that the development has had no adverse impact on archaeological deposits.

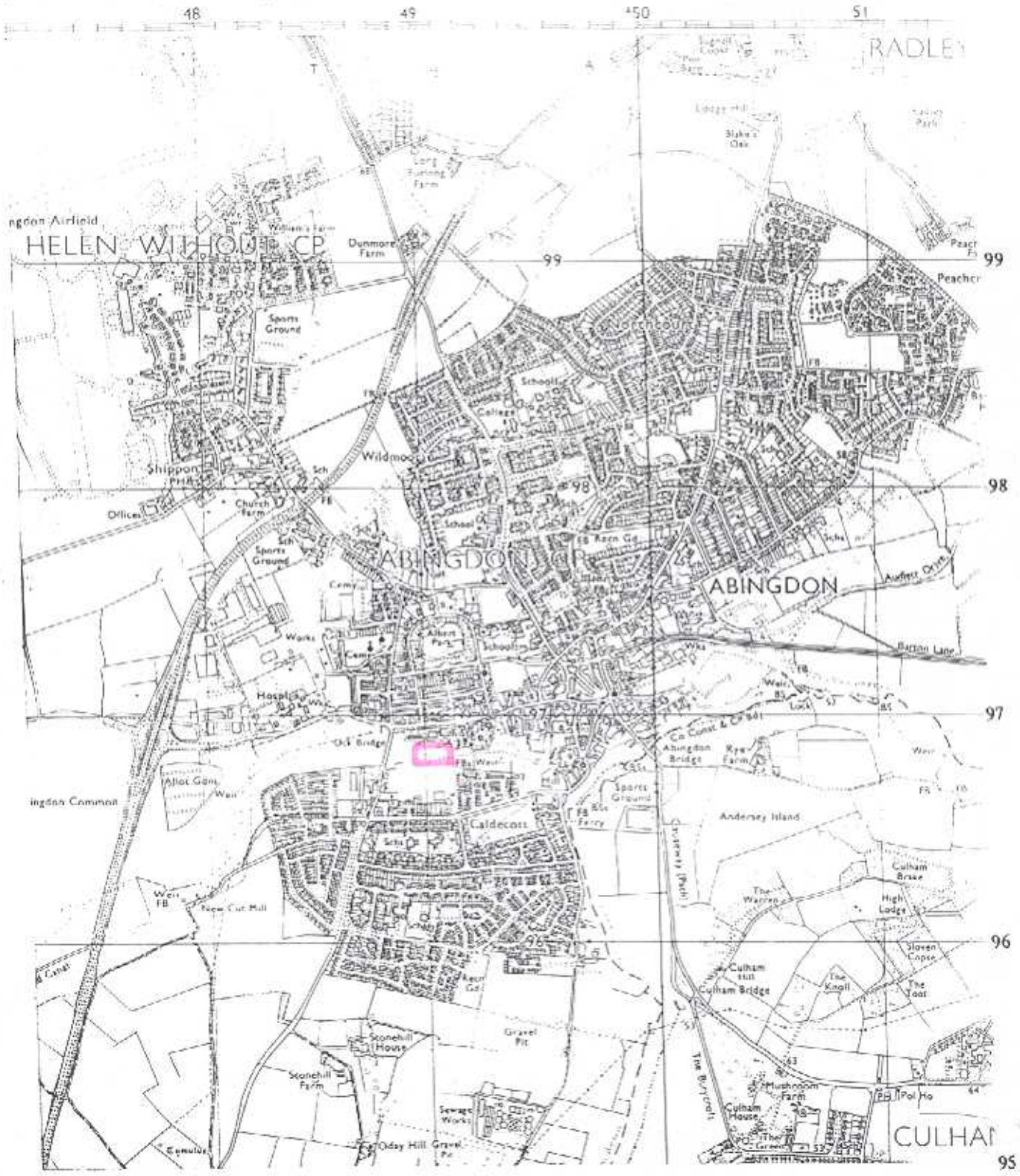

Figure 1. General location of site within Oxfordshire.

OSA WB 95

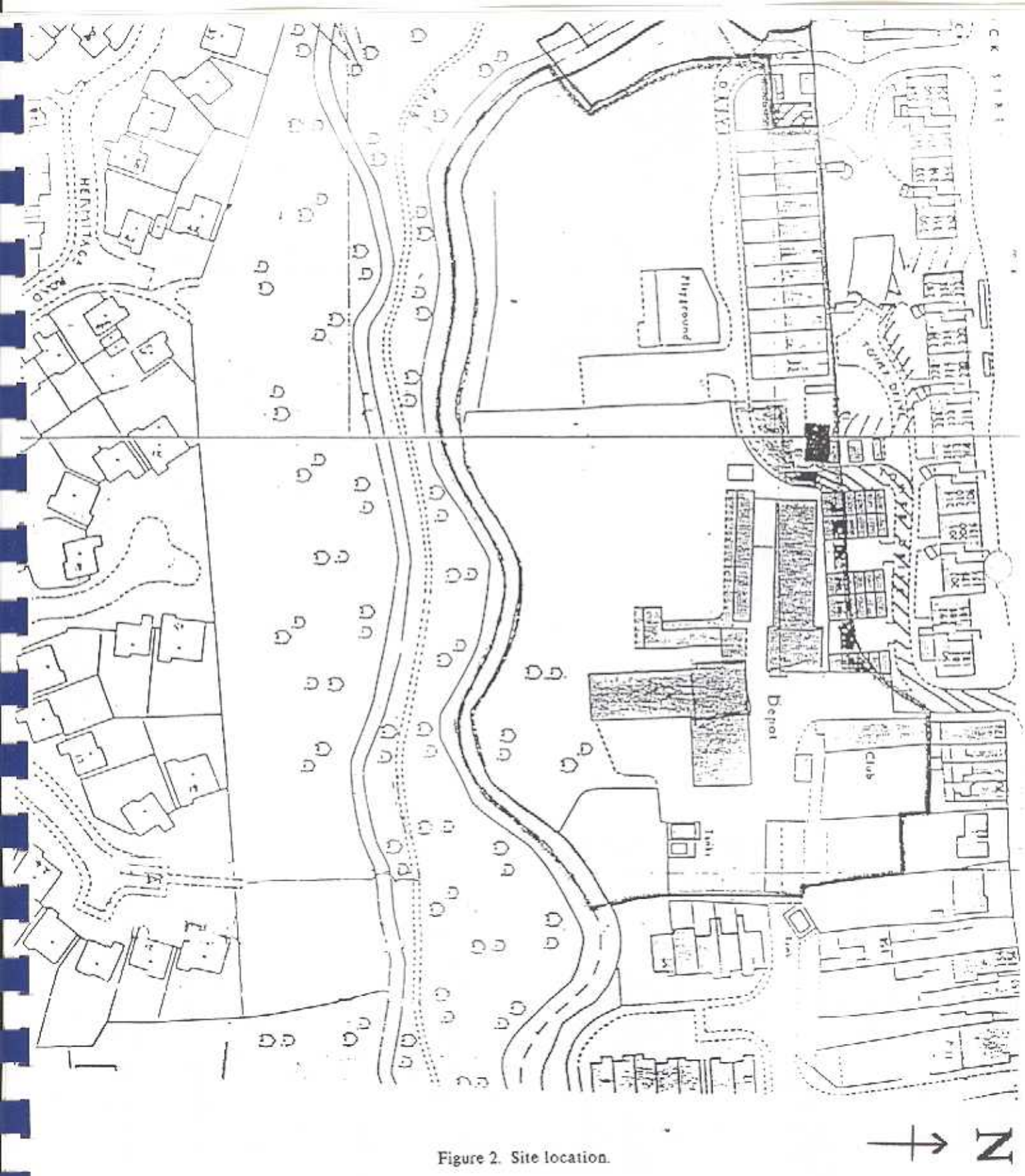

Figure 2. Site location.

Figure 3. Site plan.