

**Oxford Bus Company Depot,
Cowley Road, Oxford**

**An Archaeological Evaluation (Stage 2)
for Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd**

by Jo Pine

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GAG 00/32

October 2004

Summary

Site name: Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley Road, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 5380 0500

Site activity: Evaluation (stage 2)

Date and duration of project: 7th October 2004

Project manager: Jo Pine

Site supervisor: Jo Pine

Site code: GAG 00/32

Area of site: Phase 2 c.2.22 ha (car park c.0.3 ha)

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were located.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is currently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR. It is anticipated that the complete archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service, given that permission is received to deposit the artefacts.

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Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley, Oxford An Archaeological Evaluation- stage 2

by Jo Pine

Report 00/32c

Introduction

This report documents the results of the second stage of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley Road, Oxford (SP 5380 0500) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jon Neville, Regional Planning Manager, Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Limited, Berkeley House, Abingdon Science Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3NB.

Oxford City Council has granted planning permission (00/02326/NOY) for the demolition of existing structures on the site and redevelopment for housing. This planning consent includes a condition (31), which relates to archaeology requiring a programme of investigation on the site. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the City's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Brian Durham, Oxford City Archaeological Officer.

Redevelopment of the site was to take place in two phases, with the former playing fields to the north comprising Phase 1 of the development and the remainder of the bus depot to be Phase 2. The agreed scheme for the archaeological evaluation was to examine areas in both phases of the redevelopment. The evaluation of the Phase 1 playing field area took place during October 2002. No archaeological deposits were encountered (Hindmarch 2002).

The Phase 2 development area included the extensive buildings of the bus depot and a carpark to the rear of these structures. It was considered that construction of the bus depot buildings had substantially disturbed or truncated archaeological deposits if they had existed on the site in this location and therefore the evaluation was restricted to the areas of the former car park. This stage of the fieldwork was undertaken by Jo Pine and Jennifer Lowe on the 7th October 2004 and the site code is GAG00/32. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site under investigation lies to the rear of the disused bus depot and was an abandoned Tarmac surfaced car park. It lies at a height of approximately 63m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology, as mapped, is

Oxford clay (West Walton formation, dark grey silty mudstone) (BGS 1994) which was encountered within the trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desktop study of the area (Hall 2000). It concluded that the site lies within an area where a number of Roman finds provide evidence for both occupation and pottery production. The site lies 2km to the west of the Dorchester-Alchester Roman road and in an area known for substantial pottery production dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. Following this period of industrial activity, the area remained largely undeveloped until the 19th century. The main use of the area at this time appears to be as a cricket ground for various Oxford colleges up until the 1920s, when a bus depot was first built on part of the site, with the land at the rear being kept as playing fields. There is no record of archaeological deposits being encountered during the construction of the bus depot.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the Phase 2 area of the development. To this end, three trenches, 20m in length and 1.6m wide, were to be excavated within the disused carpark. However, due to the size of the machine bucket available, which was 1.8m wide rather than 1.6m, the three trenches were slightly shortened but still observed the agreed sampling percentage of the project (Fig. 2).

Prior to the trenching the Tarmac was removed wholesale across the car park area by a 360° type machine using a toothed bucket. The trenches were then excavated and remainder of the overburden removed by the machine using a toothless ditching bucket. This operation was carried out under direct and continuous archaeological supervision. The overburden was removed until archaeologically significant deposits or the natural geology was reached. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1

Results

Three trenches excavated were between 18.30m and 19.50m in length and 1.8m wide (Fig. 2). The stratigraphy of the trenches, which includes the Tarmac already removed, was consistent in all three trenches and comprised

Tarmac onto bedding sand, onto made ground (limestone rubble) onto natural clay (Pls 1 and 2). None of the trenches contained archaeological deposits and no finds were recovered during this part of the project.

Conclusion

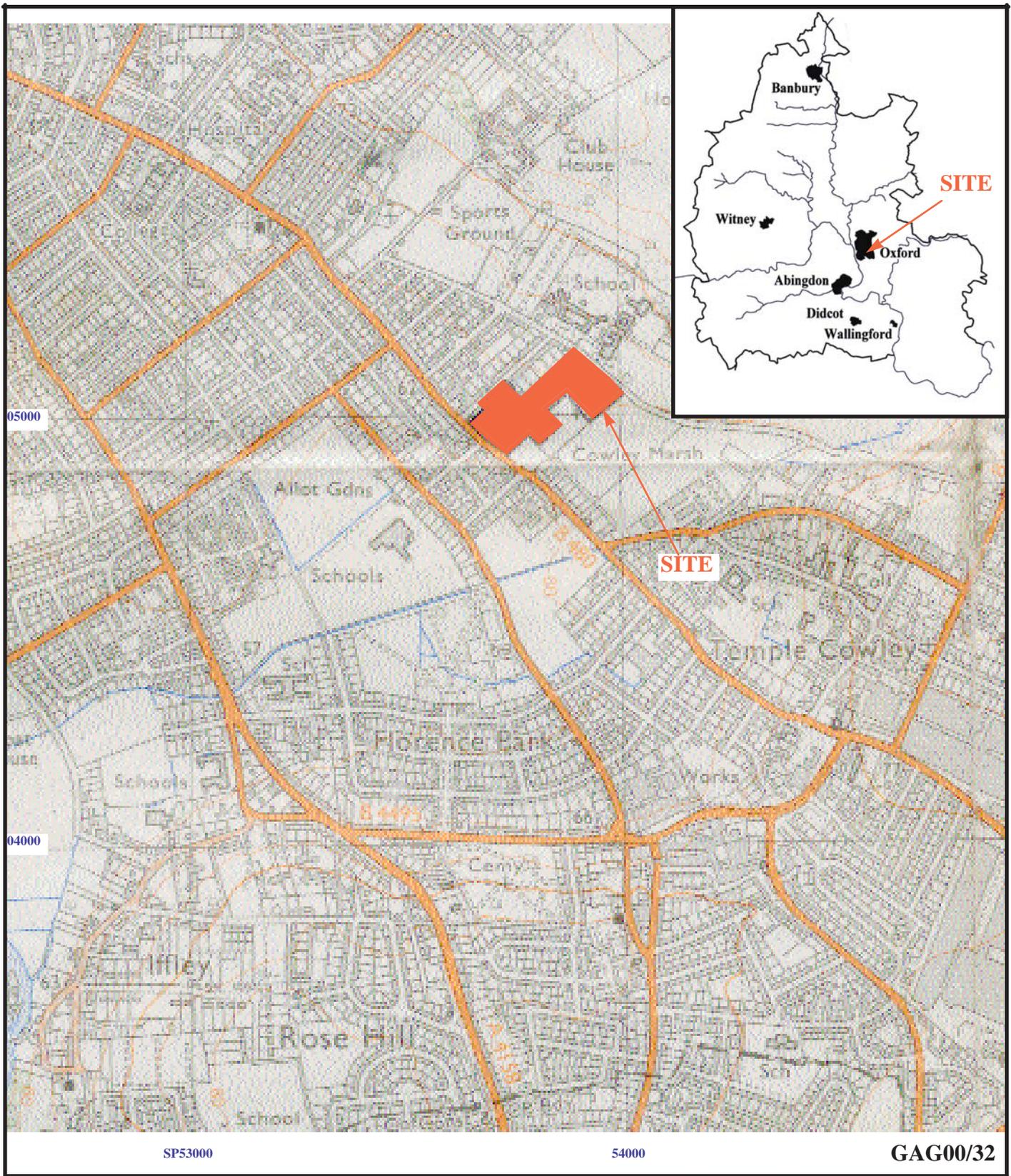
No archaeological deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were found in the evaluation trenches. It is interesting to note the lack of top- and subsoil in these trenches, which was observed in the first stage evaluation, suggesting that the car park area has been truncated to some extent, probably when the car park was constructed. It is possible that the natural geology was also truncated during this operation though whether this was sufficiently invasive to have removed traces of all archaeological deposits, if any had at one time existed on the site, is not entirely clear. This part of the site therefore is now considered to have very low archaeological potential.

References

- BGS, 1994, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 237, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Hall, M, 2000, 'Go Ahead Bus Garage, Cowley Road, Oxford, An Archaeological desk based assessment', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 00/32, Reading
- Hindmarch, E, 2002, 'Oxford Bus Company, Cowley Road, Oxford, An Archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 00/32b, Reading
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
 0m at south or west end

<i>Trench No.</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
13	18.30	1.8	Including Tarmac SW=0.52 NE=0.32	Tarmac 0.06m onto bedding sand 0.04m onto made ground between 0.20 and 0.40m deep onto grey brown clay with grey blue clay patches and occasional fossil shell
14	18.50	1.8	Including Tarmac WNW=0.42 ESE=0.55	Tarmac 0.06m onto bedding sand 0.04m onto made ground c.0.32m deep onto grey brown clay with grey blue clay patches and occasional fossil shell
15	19.50	1.8	Including Tarmac S=0.35 N=0.35	Tarmac 0.06m onto bedding sand 0.04m onto made ground c. 0.20 deep onto grey brown clay with grey blue clay patches and occasional fossil shell



**Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley Road,
Oxford 2004. Archaeological Evaluation
(Stage 2)**

Figure 1. Location of site within Cowley and Oxfordshire.

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Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley Road, Oxford, 2004

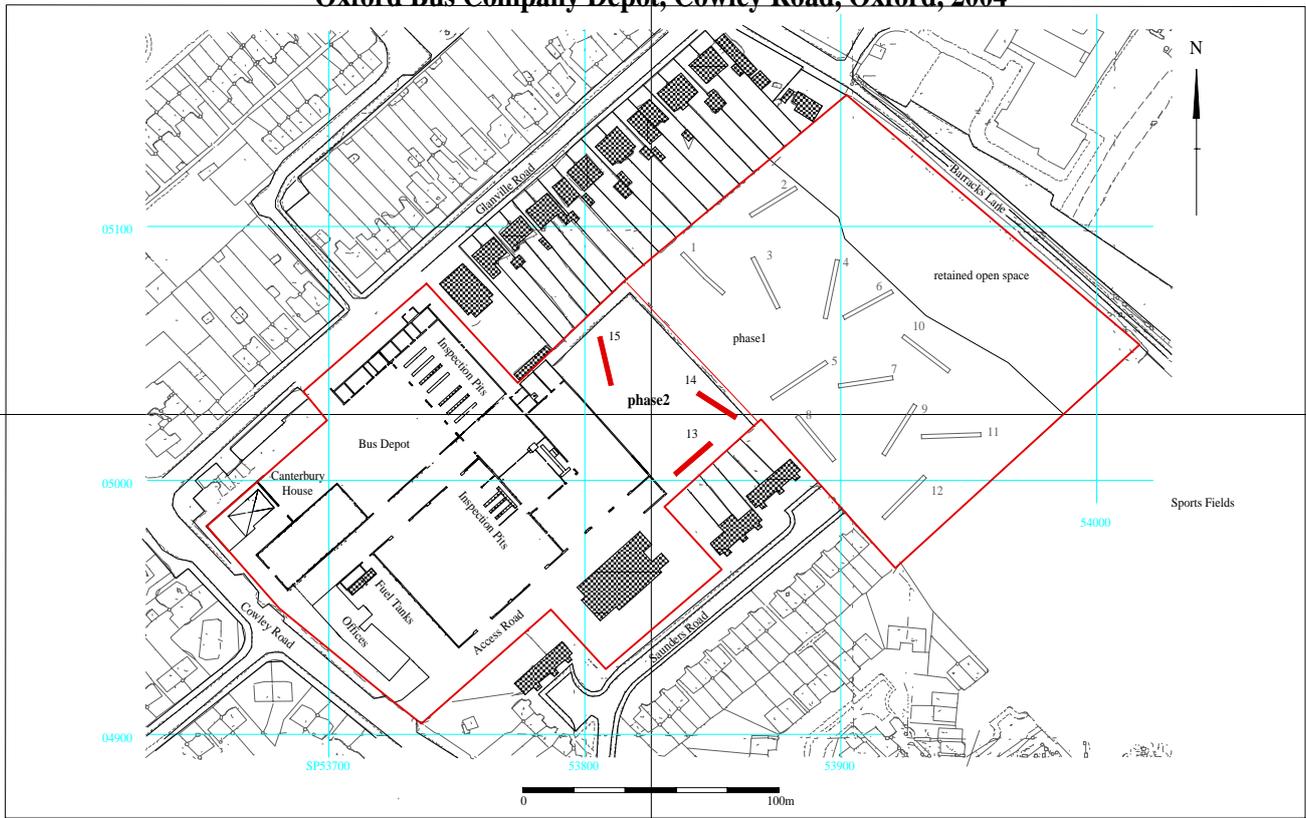


Figure 2. Location of site showing Phase 2 trenches.

Oxford Bus Company Depot, Cowley Road, Oxford, 2004

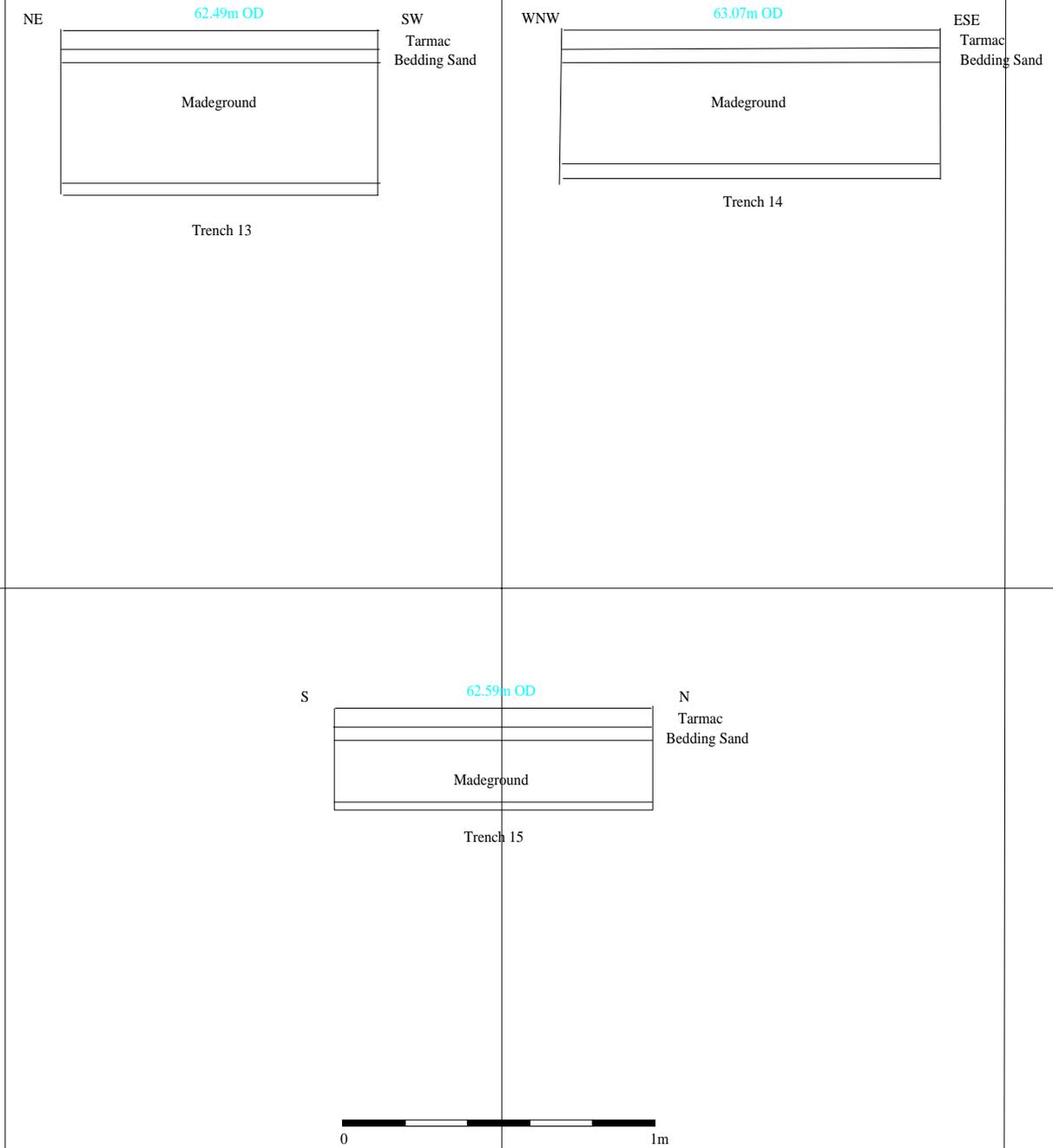


Figure 3. Representative sections



Plate 1. Trench 13, looking south-west, scale 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 15, looking south, scale 2m.