

# South Farm, Shifford, Oxfordshire

## SUMMARY

*In September 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at South Farm, Shifford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 3742 0290). This work was commissioned by PCA Architects in advance of the demolition of existing outbuildings and barns, and the construction of three new barns. The watching brief revealed an earlier layer of ploughsoil overlying natural gravel deposits. No significant archaeology was encountered.*

## 1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.1 In September 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at South Farm, Shifford, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 3742 0290). The work was commissioned by PCA Architects in advance of the demolition of existing outbuildings and barns and the construction of three new barns (Planning Reference 07/2040/P/FP). The watching brief covered the excavation of the foundations for the second of the proposed barns.
- 1.2 The development area was located on the northern edge of the farmyard, adjacent to a previously built new barn at a level of approximately 66.5 m above OD (Fig. 1). The underlying geology is Second Terrace Gravels (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet no 236). The site was previously covered by an earlier barn which had been demolished prior to excavation of the new foundations.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer representing West Oxfordshire County Council produced a *Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief* setting out the requirement and standards for the archaeological work (OCAS 2008). OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2009).
- 2.2 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during the excavation of the foundations. These works consisted of the topsoil strip of an area measuring 50 m long by 30 m wide, and the subsequent excavation of 44 foundation pits measuring on average 1.5 m x 0.6 m by 1.3 m deep. The material was removed using a mechanical excavator.

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF DEPOSITS

- 3.1 Following the demolition of the existing buildings a topsoil strip was conducted across the development area, removing approximately 0.35 m of a dark grey-brown silt loam, exposing the underlying subsoil, an orange-brown silt clay.
- 3.2 The stratigraphy exposed within the foundation pits was similar across the site and a general description can be applied throughout. A layer of light yellow sand was encountered at a depth of between 1 m and 1.15 m below the reduced level. This was overlaid by a layer of orange-yellow mixed sand and small gravel, measuring between 0.65 m and 0.8 m in depth. Overlying this was the subsoil, an orange-brown clay silt 0.35 m deep. Fragments of hand moulded brick and creamware pottery dating to the 19th and 20th century were recovered from the topsoil. These were recorded on site but were not retained.

### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The sands and gravel observed are indicative of the underlying geology of the area. The layer of subsoil probably represents an earlier layer of worked (plough) soil. Its relatively even and level depth suggests that ridge and furrow working was not practiced within this area. The topsoil is associated with the current use of the farmyard. No evidence for the presence of Romano-British activity, such as residual finds or truncated features, was encountered during the course of the watching brief.

### 5 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OCAS, 2008 South Farm, Shifford, Oxfordshire, Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief

IFA, 2008 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2009 South Farm, Shifford, Oxfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief (*Unpublished client report*)

OAU, 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson) (*Unpublished client report*)



Figure 1: Site location