Phase 2 Residential Development at Aristotle Lane, Oxford
Planning Ref: 98/1465/NOH and 00/1683/NF

NGR SP 5040 0793

Summary of Geotechnical pits
Watching Brief Archive Report

Oxford Archaeological Unit
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1 Introduction

1.1 As part of the planning permission for the construction of 125 residential units (Planning Ref: 98/1465/NOH) and means of access (Planning Ref: 00/1683/NF) at this site, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during he excavation of geotechnical trial pits by contractors. The archaeological condition was attached to the permission in line with PPG 16 and Oxford Local Plan Policies EN40/43. Laing Homes are developing the site.

1.2 The area of proposed development is located on the River Thames floodplain, just to the east of Port Meadow's eastern boundary and within the ancient parish of St Giles, which lies to the north of the historic centre of Oxford. The site is bounded to the north by marshy land, to the east by the Oxford Canal's towpath, by Aristotle Lane to the south, and to the west by rough, overgrown land with the railway c.100m further west. The site is approximately 2 hectares, and almost entirely covered with hard-standing and light industrial buildings, with undeveloped marshy land on its northern margins. The site is flat lying with ground levels at 57 – 58 m OD.

1.3 The geology for the area of proposed development is Flood Plain Drift Geology comprising River Thames alluvium overlying river terrace gravel deposits, which in turn overlies Oxford Clay (British Geological Survey 236). The site is situated just to the west of the eastern edge of the Summertown-Radley river gravel terrace. The geotechnical survey investigated the geology with 5 boreholes and 12 test pits. These found a significant thickness of made ground, 1m-1.5m thick, overlying peat up to 0.6m thick, to a depth of 1m-1.9m. The peat overlay fine alluvium up to 1.3m thick, to a depth of 0.3m-1.9m, which in turn overlay river terrace gravel deposits up to 2m thick, to a depth of 0.7m-2.7m. Oxford Clay was found to a depth of 3.5m-4.5m below the river terrace gravel deposits. The depth of the water table is expected to be less than 1m.

2 Archaeological background

2.1 The site has been the subject of a desk-based assessment (OAU 1999), the results of which are only summarised here. Therefore, this document should be read in conjunction with the desk-based assessment (DBA). The DBA indicated that the site is situated within an area of general archaeological potential. Though no archaeological artefacts have been recovered from the site itself, previous research of the surrounding area and similar floodplain sites within Oxfordshire show that there is a high potential for prehistoric and Romano-

British archaeology on, or sealed below the floodplain.

2.2 Port Meadow (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 12003) lies less than 500 m to the west of the development site. This Common was first mentioned in Domesday Book and contains features from several archaeological periods. These include cropmarks of Bronze Age and Iron Age ring-ditches, field systems and settlement. A number of prehistoric and Romano-British artefacts have been recovered from within 500 m of the development, including a Bronze Age flint found in an allotment on eastern fringe of Port Meadow and a Bronze Age hoard of bronze implements found in a field on the east side of Port Meadow in 1830. A Roman burial and associated coins were found c.1895 on Heyfield Road. Iron Age pottery and coins, pottery and an inhumation dating to the Roman period were found in the area of St Margaret's Road, Polstead Road and Kingston Road during the late C19th century.

2.3 There has been little or no development on the site prior to the construction of the works units first recorded on the *OS 1:2500 Map* (1952/57). The Oxford canal, situated to the immediate east of the site, was constructed in 1789. Part of the eastern edge of Port Meadow was sold for the construction of the Oxford to Banbury railway opened in 1850, situated c.100m west of the site. Licensed refuse sites and unlicensed dumping is known to have occurred in close proximity to the east and north of the site during the late 20th century.

3 Strategy

3.1 Geotechnical investigations were monitored which were designed to establish the level of contamination within the below ground deposits.

3.2 The excavation of four geotechnical test pits and the removal of the oil tank were monitored by an attending archaeologist. As detailed in the WSI, if the contamination on site was proved to be confined to the made ground and that remediation by excavation of the peat, alluvium and gravel prove unnecessary, then no further archaeological fieldwork would be undertaken.

4 Aims

4.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area.

4.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

4.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

5 Results

5.1 The oil tanks on the site were removed, the resulting `trench' became flooded and was contaminated with hydrocarbons. A photographic record of this operation was made by OAU.

5.2 The test pits were excavated by contractors. Each pit was 1.6 m deep and revealed mid-blue clay (alluvium) at the base to a depth of 0.6 m+. Above lay a former soil horizon that was undated to a depth of 0.3 m, in turn sealed by two distinct layers of made ground of recent origin with a combined depth of 0.7 m.

5.3 The City Archaeologist was made aware by photographic record of the nature of the site, and no further archaeological monitoring was made of this stage of the work.

OAU,
August 2001

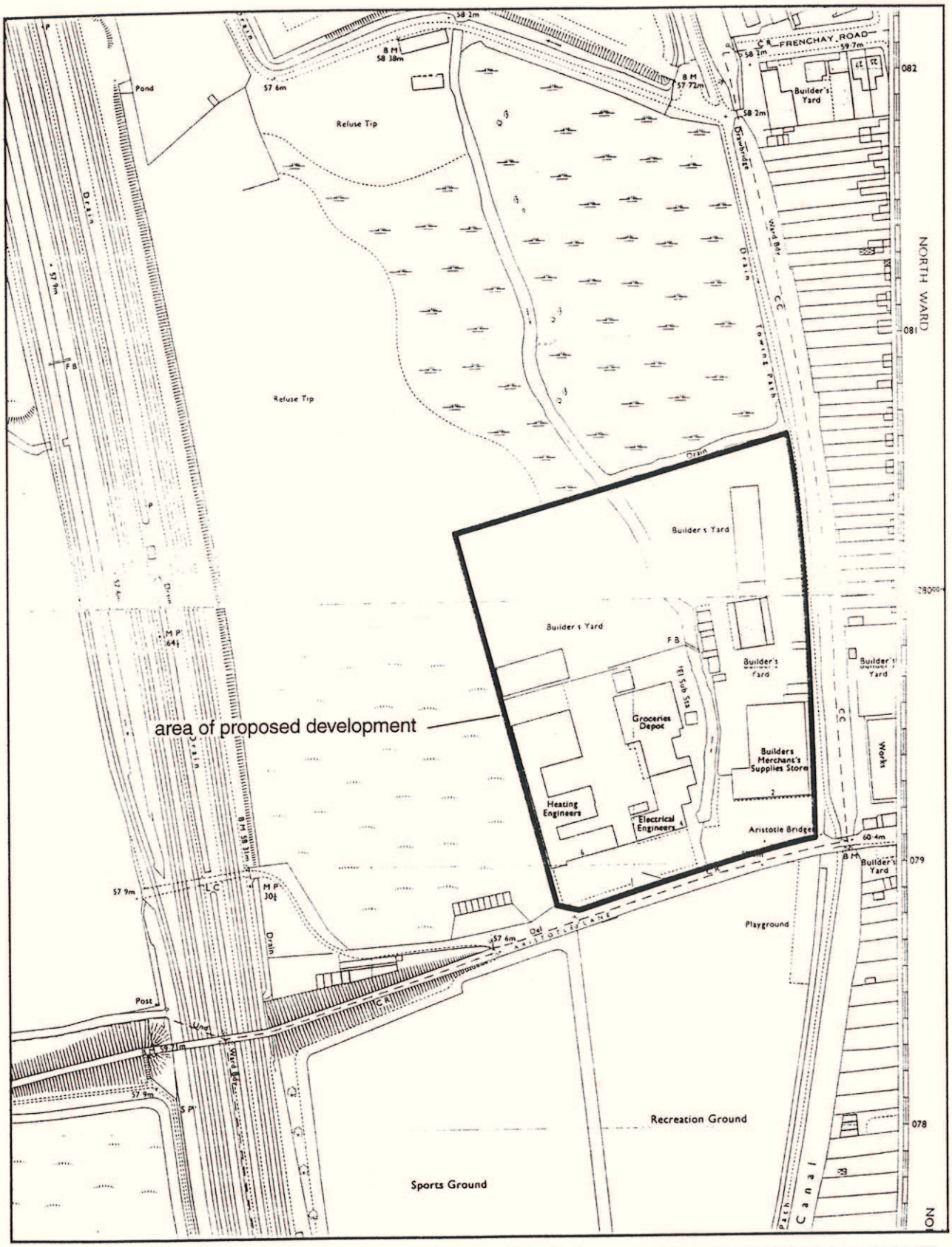


Figure 10: Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Map (1972)

ELIZA.

Archaeology Present?

Ye :

No. ✓

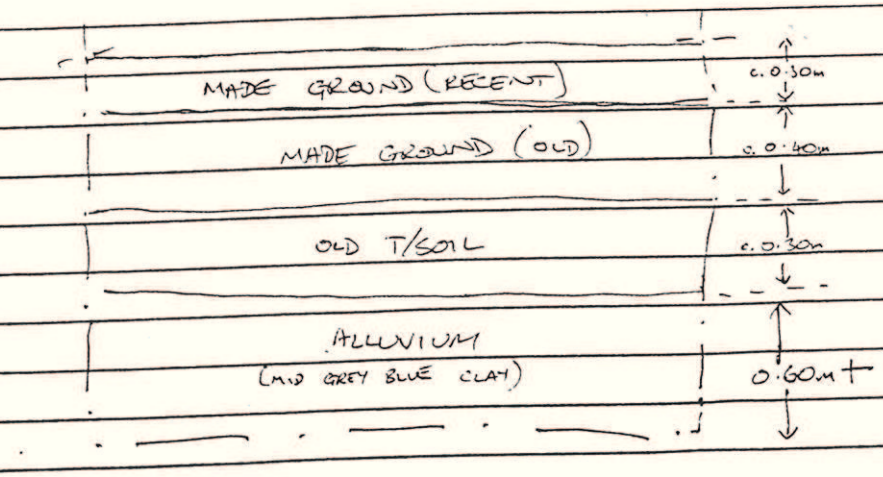
Un ated:

Ot..er:

CC MMENTS

TEST PITS DUG TO ESTABLISH LEVEL OF CONTAMINATION. WITHIN ALLUVIAL CLAY. INITIAL OBSERVATION BY ELIZA [SIC] SUGGESTS NO REMEDIATION NECESSARY - RESULTS TBA.

STRAT AS BELOW:-



ILM : 1+2 ; TP 1

2+3,4 ; TP 2

6+7 ; TP 3

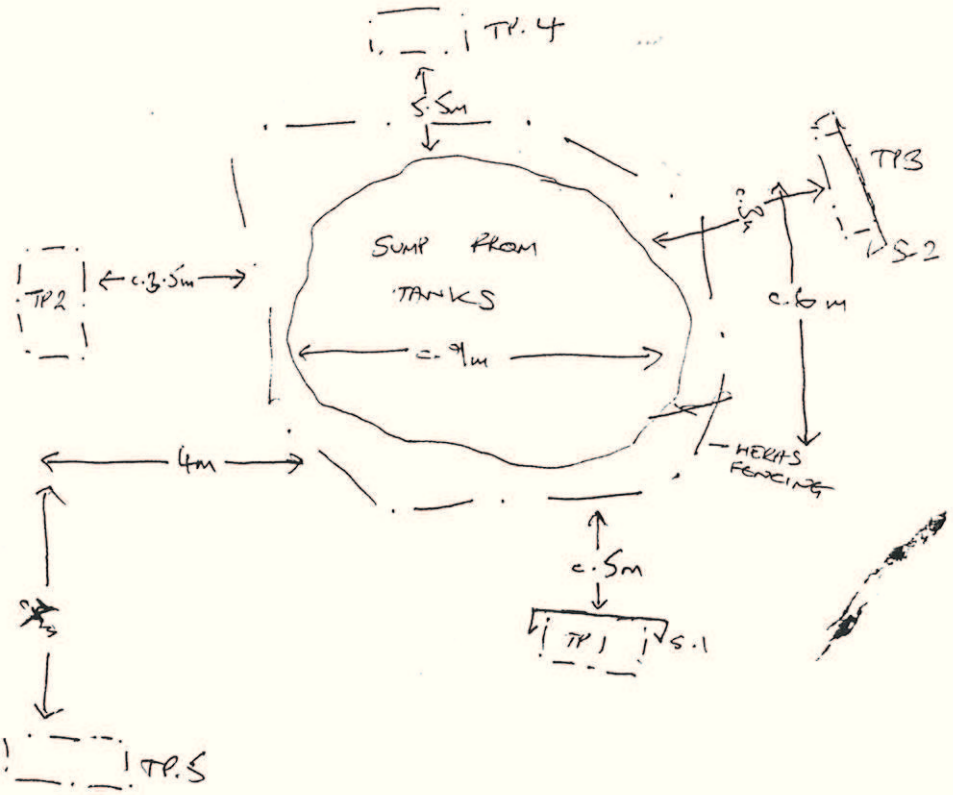
R cords? 8 ; OLD T/S

9+10 ; TP 4

11 ; ALL.

12+13 ; TP 5

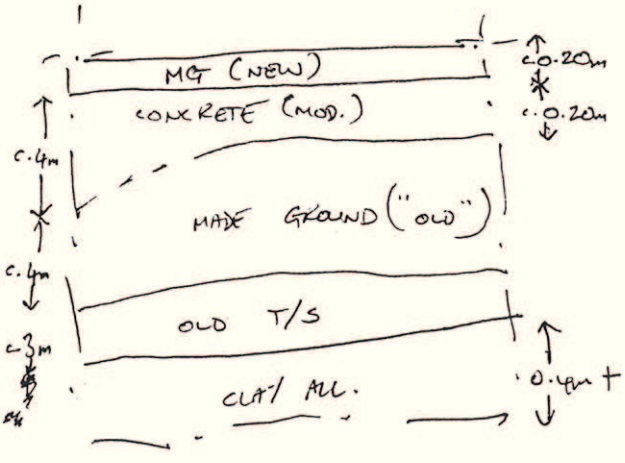
N?



TP's = 2m x 0.5m

TP.3 - CONCRETE

TP.5 - CONSIDERABLY MORE BUILDING DEBRIS. (BROKEN UP CONC. ETC.)



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