

Bicester Village Phase 4



Archaeological Watching Brief Report

oxfordarchaeology

southsouthsouth
December 2016

Client: Value Retail

Issue No: 1
NGR: SP 579 219



Client Name: Value Retail PLC
Client Ref No: BV4
Document Title: Bicester Village 4
Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Issue/Version Number: v.1
Grid Reference: SP 579 219
Planning Reference: 16/00258/DISC
Invoice Code: BIC4VWB
OA Job Number: 6471
Site Code: BIC4VWB
Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire Museum Service
Museum Accession No.: OXCMS:2016.110
Event No.: -

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Edited by	Approved for issue by	Signature
1	Adam Fellingham, Supervisor, Rebecca Peacock, Project Officer	Gerry Thacker, Senior Project Manager	Leo Webley, Head of Post-Excavation	David Score Head of Fieldwork	

Document File Location: X:\b\Bicester Village 4\Report
Graphics File Location: \\samba\Projects\b\Bicester Village 4\Report\Figures
Illustrated by: Marcus Dylewski and Ben Brown

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

© Oxford Archaeology Ltd 2016

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: +44 (0) 1865 263800

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk



f: +44 (0) 1865 793496

w: oxfordarchaeology.com

Oxford Archaeology Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627



Bicester Village 4

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Adam Fellingham and Rebecca Peacock

and illustrated by Markus Dylewski and Ben Brown

Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
1 Introduction.....	3
1.1 Scope of work.....	3
1.2 Location, geology and topography.....	3
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	3
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	6
2.1 Aims.....	6
2.2 Methodology.....	6
3 Results.....	6
3.1 Description of deposits.....	6
3.2 Finds and environmental remains.....	7
4 Discussion and Conclusions.....	7
Appendix A. Archaeological Context Inventory.....	8
Appendix B. Bibliography and References.....	9
Appendix C. Summary of Site Details.....	10



List of Figures

Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Site plan of watching brief area

Fig. 3 Watching brief locations of footings for foundations

Fig. 4 Section 1 Showing profile of tree throw 4

Fig. 5 Section 3 representative section

List of Plates

Plate 1 Section 1 of tree throw 4 looking East

Plate 2 Section 3 looking North

Summary

Between 31st August and 23rd September 2016, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief, on behalf of Value Retail, on the footings and a service trench for a retail development at Bicester Village 4. Archaeological deposits were scarce, with a tree throw hole the only cut feature to be encountered. The deposits encountered were mainly truncated alluvial clays sealing a limestone natural. It was evident through the excavation of the footings that any potential archaeological remains would have been removed during the construction of the previous building, prior to the current phase of construction. No finds or environmental material were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 OA were commissioned by Value Retail to undertake an archaeological watching brief of the site of the phase 4 development of Bicester Village, Bicester, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: 16/00258/DISC and Condition 19 of 15/00082/F). Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) established the scope of works required. OA produced a written scheme of investigation (WSI; OA 2016), agreed with OCC, which outlined how OA would implement the scope of works.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site (SP 579 219) lies to the immediate south of Bicester, and is bounded by Pingle Drive and the Pingle Recreation Ground to the north, the existing Bicester Village to the east and the A41 and the new Tesco superstore to the south (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development currently consists of the site of the former Tesco superstore which includes the old superstore building, the adjacent car park and garage (Fig. 2).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is formed of Kellaway Clay Member Mudstone, part of the Kellaway formation (BGS sheet 219).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background has been partially reproduced from ADAS Ltd's Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment for an adjacent site (ADAS 2012) and is summarised below.

Palaeolithic to Mesolithic (650,000-8,500 BC)

- 1.3.2 Flint scatters and other settlement activity associated with early hunter-gatherers utilising the prehistoric riverbanks in this area may be preserved in alluvial deposits in the vicinity of watercourses, such as the Pingle Stream. The upper portion of a Palaeolithic hand axe was recovered from a field boundary ditch during recent excavations on land at Whitelands Farm south-west of Bicester. This find extends the

known distribution of Palaeolithic material in Oxfordshire, which previously had been confined to the river valleys some distance to the south-west of Bicester.

- 1.3.3 A flint scatter was found during archaeological investigations of the Bicester Office Park (HER). This flint scatter is likely to relate to seasonal Mesolithic settlement activity along the banks of the marshy banks of the Pingle Stream close to the confluence with the prehistoric River Bure. Evidence from investigations at Bicester Fields Farm and Slade House Farm suggests that both the alluvial area of the floodplain and the edge of the limestone uplands were in use at this time.

Neolithic (4,000-2,400 BC)

- 1.3.4 Prior to excavations at Whitelands Farm, evidence for late Neolithic or early Bronze Age activity in the immediate area was fairly sparse, although a scattering of features from this era as well as residual finds of Beaker pottery and flint were recorded during excavation of the extramural settlement north of Alchester. Neolithic and Bronze Age utilisation of the landscape at the Whiteland Farm site was largely represented by funerary monuments and burials and was restricted to two plough-damaged barrows, a cremation burial, and a Beaker burial. The excavation found no evidence for settlement from this period, although the discovery of some Neolithic and Bronze Age flint suggests there was some sporadic activity in the area.
- 1.3.5 In the wider landscape the find spot of a Neolithic stone axe has also been recorded in the vicinity of Alchester.

Bronze Age (2,400-700 BC)

- 1.3.6 The presence of recorded round barrows near Bicester reflects the settlement of the landscape during the Bronze Age, and the flint assemblage recovered from archaeological investigations, such as Bicester Fields Farm and Whitelands Farm, suggests limited, sporadic use of the floodplain at this time. In the wider landscape the find spot of a palstave is recorded in the vicinity of Alchester.

Iron Age (700 BC- AD 43)

- 1.3.7 Evidence of a late Iron Age phase of a low-status rural farmstead has been identified by excavation near the Oxford Road. Aerial photography shows an extensive field system in the immediate area that was thought to be contemporary with this Iron Age farmstead. Features associated with later prehistoric settlement phases have also been uncovered at Bicester Park and Priory Road. Excavations at the Oxford Road and Whiteland Farm sites found evidence to support the theory that there was increasing agricultural intensification and utilisation of marginal land in the Iron Age in the Thames Valley region.

Romano-British (AD 43-410)

- 1.3.8 The focal points of rural Roman farmsteads and other settlement activity have been uncovered by archaeological investigations at several locations around Bicester. Features of Roman date were concentrated close to the Roman road and two large contemporary quarry pits, and the earlier phases of Romano-British land use may have been connected with the construction of this route way. Although a high-status structure such as a villa has yet to be identified in Bicester, residual Roman material uncovered in later deposits throughout the town may indicate the presence of such a site in the Bicester area. Finds of Roman artefacts including coins and pottery have been recovered in the wider landscape to the south, around the Roman settlement at

Alchester. There is evidence for a military presence in the environs of Alchester as early as AD 44. The remains of a large temporary camp and a later possible parade ground have been identified south-east of the settlement. Roman funerary activity within the wider landscape is reflected by the discovery of a cremation and pot near Alchester.

- 1.3.9 The main Roman road between the Roman settlements of Dorchester and Alchester followed the course of the present B4030. This road was investigated during an evaluation carried out in 2010. Further sections of Roman roads have been identified to the south and north of Bicester. A possible Roman ditch identified adjacent to the Pingle Stream west of the Roman road testifies to the efforts to manage drainage in the floodplain in the Roman period. In the wider landscape, the presence of a known regular aggregate field system to the south indicates that the land use around Bicester was predominantly agricultural at this time. It is thought that the land in this area was primarily used for pasture in the Roman period, given the high water table at the time. Pottery analysis from the Whitelands Farm excavations appears to show that Romano-British activity decreased significantly by the early 3rd century, and that the site had largely fallen into disuse by the beginning of the 4th century AD.

Early medieval (AD 410-1066)

- 1.3.10 There is evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement uncovered by archaeological investigations to the rear of the King's Arms, at Manor Farm, at 61 Priory Road and at the Causeway. To date, evidence for three 6th- or 7th-century sunken featured buildings have been discovered, as well as late Anglo-Saxon timber-framed halls in the vicinity of Chapel Street. A section of ditch dating to the early medieval period has also been uncovered at Chapel Street, and a single sherd of middle Anglo-Saxon pottery was found residually at Proctor's Yard. The late Roman inhumation cemetery uncovered at the Church of the Immaculate Conception may also have continued to be used into the early medieval period. The parish church of St Edburg is known to be early medieval, and documentary evidence indicates a minster church here from at least as early as the later Anglo-Saxon period, possibly as early as the late 7th century AD. The archaeological settlement evidence suggests that this minster church served a small village in the early medieval period centred around Chapel Street.

Medieval (AD 1066-1499)

- 1.3.11 Extensive ecclesiastical and monastic remains of medieval date have been identified including the remains of the Augustinian Priory Church, founded between AD 1182 and 1185. The monastic house was modest but supported a prior and eleven canons until suppressed in 1536. A Benedictine house was located to the north-west of this. The Manor of King's End was granted to the Benedictine nuns of Markyate Priory by the 12th century at the latest. The location of a churchyard cross in the vicinity of these sites has also been identified as well as an inhumation of medieval date. Buildings which are thought to have surviving architectural elements of medieval date include the Old Vicarage and the Old Priory and the attached walls and garden.
- 1.3.12 The Causeway is thought to have been created by the 14th century and linked the Market Square to the Church of St Edburga. It provided the primary link across the River Bure between the manors of Market End and King's End. The presence of this causeway indicates that the area was prone to flooding.
- 1.3.13 Bicester is listed in Domesday as 'Bernecestre' and according to tradition the original town was on the site of King's End and was destroyed by the Danes. The place-name Bury End (now Market End) also suggests a Saxon fortification (burh). The Domesday

Book refers to two manors covering 15½ hides and supporting 22 ploughs, with two mills and a small amount of woodland and meadow. The medieval development seems to have drawn on a number of separate focal points. A medieval shrunken settlement is recorded at King's End, and extensive medieval settlement features and artefacts have been identified by archaeological investigations. Evidence of local economic activity is provided by the site of a stone quarry and two locations of fish ponds. It is thought that flooding in the immediate vicinity of the Bure and the Pingle may have made the low-lying marshy land between King's End and Market End generally unsuited to settlement in the medieval period.

Post-medieval to modern (AD 1500-1900)

- 1.3.14 The earliest available map of Bicester is Saxton's map of 1574, but in general the early post-medieval maps which show Bicester up until the middle of the 18th century show the town in great detail. Seventeenth-century maps such as Moredon's map of 1695 do suggest that the town had probably not developed beyond the present historic core.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The general aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief were:
- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains within the site, and to mitigate the construction impacts on any revealed remains;
 - To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was maintained on the footings and service trench over a total of 15 days, and as specified in the written scheme of investigation (WSI; OA, 2016), during any works which had the potential to have an impact upon any surviving archaeological deposits.
- 2.2.2 Where archaeology was encountered a trench number was given and a full set of records were produced under OA's general approach to excavation and recording, Appendix A of the written scheme of investigation (WSI; OA, 2016). A series of section drawings were produced to show the presence and/or absence of archaeological remains (Figs. 4 and 5 and Plate 2).
- 2.2.3 After the 68 out of 140 of the construction impacts had been observed, and no significant archaeological features or deposits identified, the watching brief was suspended after consultation with Richard Oram of OCC.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The trench footings varied in width from 1.20m to 4.0m, with depths of between 1m to 1.5m below the current ground level. The service trench had a depth between 2m to 3m. The excavation for the new road surface did not have a deep enough impact to disturb any potential surviving archaeological deposits (Fig. 3). The natural limestone bedrock, 3, was sealed by a mid grey-blue clay, 2, thought to be of alluvial origin, and



which survived to a depth of between 0.4 and 0.6m. This was sealed by a layer of modern crush material (1).

- 3.1.2 The only revealed feature was interpreted as a tree throw hole, with irregular base and sides (feature 4). The tree throw contained a single fill, 5, a mid yellowish-brown clay silt, which contained no dating evidence (Fig. 4 and Plate 1). Feature 4 cut the alluvial clay, 2.

3.2 Finds and environmental remains

- 3.2.1 No archaeological material was retrieved during the archaeological watching brief. No deposits suitable for environmental samples were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 It was noted during the watching brief that any potential archaeological deposits or features are likely to have been removed during the ground-works for the previous building, prior to the current phase of construction. The single tree throw identified may be of recent origin.



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Measurements	Comment	Soil Description
1	Deposit	Throughout site	Modern Crush	
2	Deposit	Throughout site	Alluvial Clay	Mid greyish blue silty clay with mottles of mid brownish yellow
3	Deposit	Throughout site	Limestone natural	Mid brownish orange silty sand, limestone brash
4	Cut	N/S:1.30m E/W:0.76m D:0.70m	Tree Throw cut	Irregular negative feature
5	Fill	N/S:1.30m E/W:0.76m D:0.70m	Tree Throw Fill	Mid yellowish brown clayey silt



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

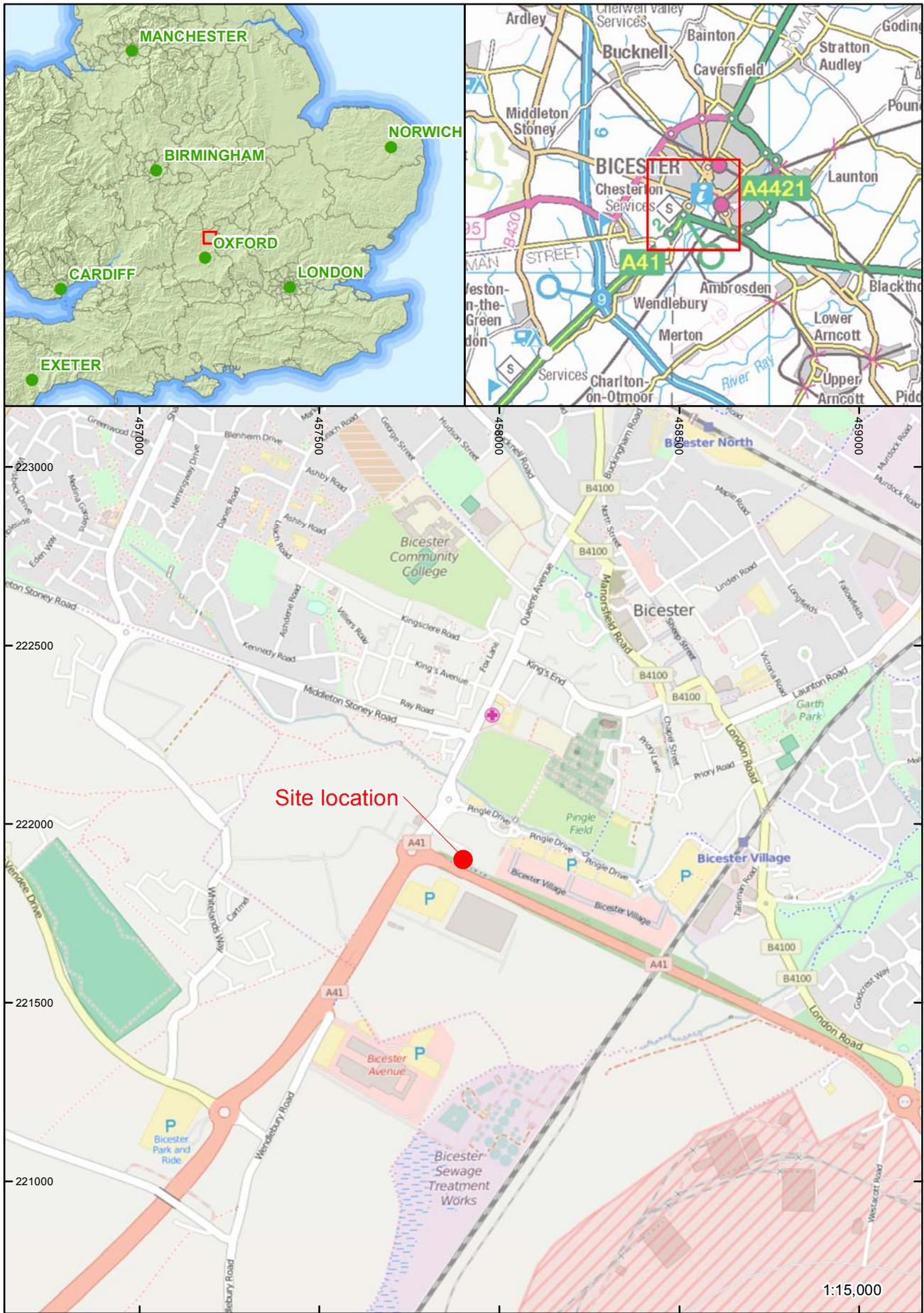
Adas 2012. Historic environment desk-based assessment Bicester sub-station, Bicester, Oxfordshire.

OA, 2016, Bicester Village Phase 4. Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief.



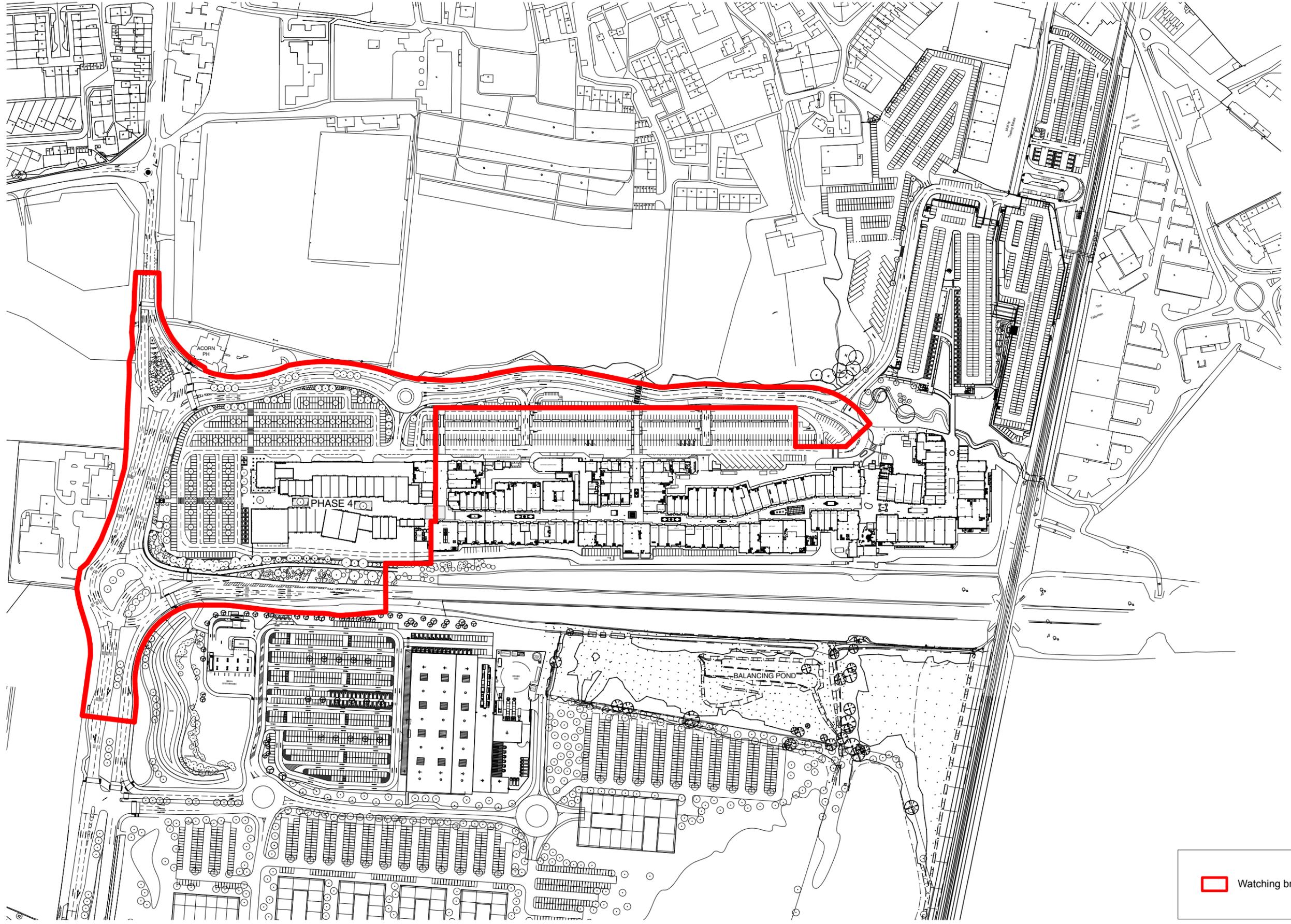
APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Bicester Village 4
Site code:	BIC4VWB
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 579 219
Type of watching brief:	Observation of drainage ditches and footings for new retail building.
Date and duration of project:	31st August to 23rd September 2016
Area of site:	6.6 hectares
Summary of results:	Between 31st August and 23rd September 2016, Oxford Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief, on behalf of Value Retail, on the footings and a service trench for a retail development at Bicester Village 4. Archaeological deposits were scarce, with a tree throw hole the only cut feature to be encountered. The deposits encountered were mainly truncated alluvial clays sealing a limestone natural. It was evident through the excavation of the footings that any potential archaeological remains would have been removed during the construction of the previous building, prior to the current phase of construction. No finds or environmental material were present.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently located at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. It will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Council Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2016.110



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2014
(c) OpenStreetMap and contributors, Creative Commons-Share Alike License (CC-BY-SA)

Figure 1: Site location



0 50m
1:1250

 Watching brief area

Figure 2: Site plan of watching brief area

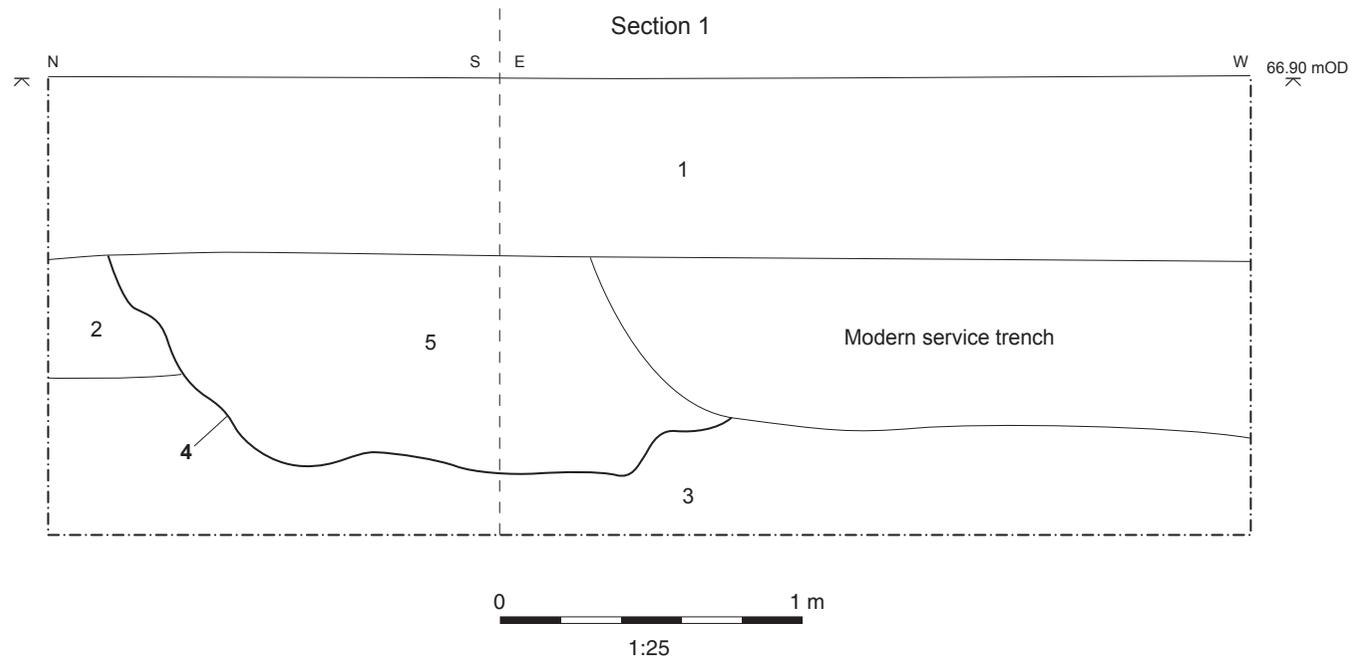


Figure 4: Section 1, showing profile of tree throw [4]

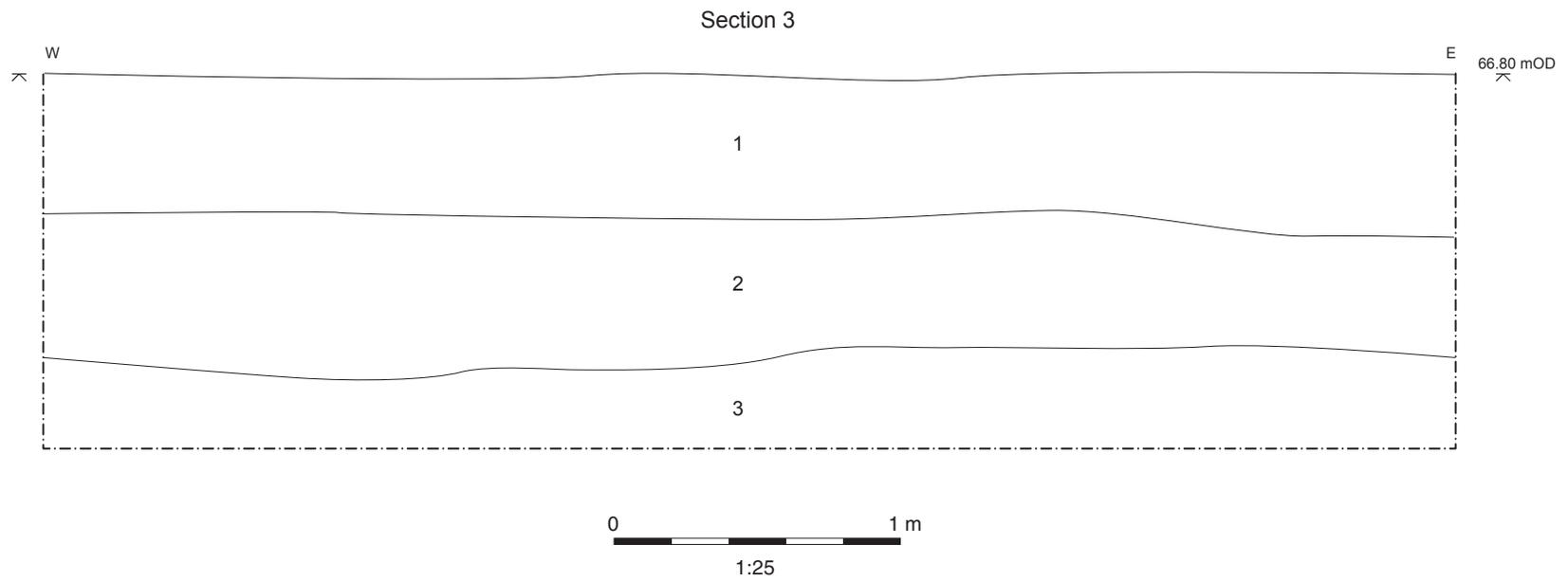


Figure 5: Section 3, representative section



Plate 1: Section 1 of tree throw [4] looking East



Plate 2: Section 3 looking North



Head Office/Registered Office/ OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCifA
*Oxford Archaeology Ltd is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627*