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Guideposts Associates Ltd

Roosevelt Drive, Headington, Oxford

NGR SP 541 061

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. 96/244/NF

Oxford Archaeological Unit

November 1999

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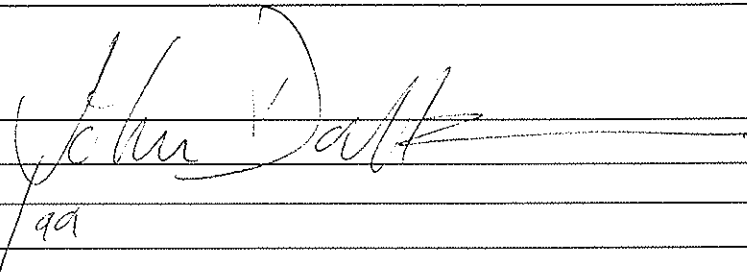
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. No. 96/244/NF

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Checked by:



Date: 8/11/99

Approved by:

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HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date:

8/11/1999

Oxford Archaeological Unit

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Summary

During 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Roosevelt Drive, Headington, Oxford (SP 541 061) during the development of a Teaching Nursing Home at the site. Although archaeological activity is known within the area, no significant archaeological deposits were revealed.

1 Introduction

The development proposal (planning application no. 96/244/NF) comprised the construction of a Teaching Nursing Home in grounds which formerly were part of the Warneford Hospital. The watching brief was commissioned by Guideposts Associates and undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the Oxford City Archaeologist.

2 Background

The proposal lies in an area of archaeological potential. A trackway of possible prehistoric origin lies 200 m to the north (following the line of Old Road). Romano-British activity is known at Churchill Hospital *c.* 600 m to the south-east and at Oxford School, 750 m to the south. These sites include kilns and other occupation evidence (pottery, coins and structures). St. Bartholomew's Church and Hospital lie *c.* 800 m to the south-south-west. Civil War defences run north-east to south-west *c.* 600 m to the west. Two watching briefs carried out to the immediate north of the site (Wellcome Trust Centre and Little Oxford development) revealed no archaeological deposits.

The underlying geology of the site is Beckley sands over Oxford Clays, sloping gradually towards the south and east. The land previously was occupied by Nissen huts, constructed during the Second World War, and recent activity includes substantial quantities of dumped demolition material in the western and central areas of the site.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposal area; to date, phase and produce a plan of the archaeological remains, where present; to recover artefactual, environmental and stratigraphic information that may lead to a better understanding of the area. Any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, would be recorded to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record, and the results of the investigation made available.

4 Methodology

A number of separate visits were made to the site by an archaeological supervisor during the initial topsoil stripping for the new access road, roundabout and building footprints. Intrusive groundworks also were monitored. Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits and features exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome

print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results

The excavation of 4 test pits (using a JCB) to a depth of *c.* 0.50 m, revealed a mid brown, loose, sandy clay loam topsoil (1) to a depth of *c.* 0.25 m overlying a light brown/buff sandy subsoil (2). Area stripping for the main building footprints removed both these layers down to a brick and concrete foundation and demolition spread over the NW area (3). A number of defunct services were encountered, and amorphous features filled by (2) were examined but a lack of regular profiles and no finds suggests they probably represented tree root and animal disturbance.

Further area stripping revealed a number of tenuous concrete foundations with associated corrugated iron shuttering; it is though probable that both derive from the Nissen huts which previously occupied the site.

6 Finds

Apart from sherds of modern pottery observed in the topsoil and subsoil, which were examined on site but not retained, no archaeological finds were recovered.

7 Environmental results

Due to the absence of any significant archaeology, no environmental soil samples were taken.

8 Discussion

Previous episodes of construction and demolition on the site, together with dumping of debris derived from elsewhere, has both obscured and truncated natural deposits. However these activities were neither sufficiently invasive nor widespread to remove archaeology across the entirety of the site. The fact that no archaeology was identified during the course of the watching brief is thought likely to indicate that none was present initially, tallying with the results from the Wellcome Trust Centre and Little Oxford Development watching briefs.

References.

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).

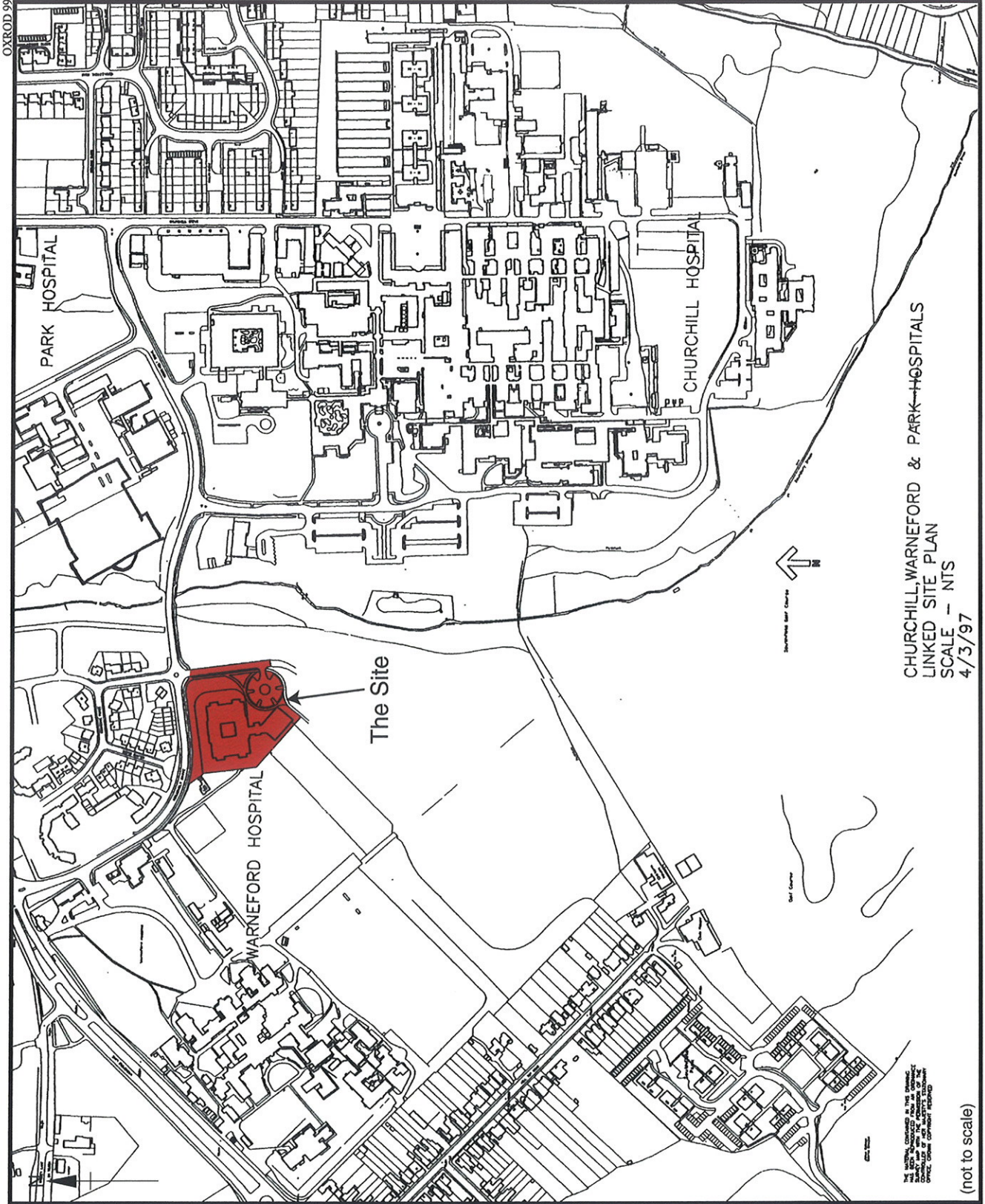


Figure 1: site location



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