

A406 North Circular Road

East of Falloden Way - Main Works

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

February 1996

**A406 NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD,
EAST OF FALLODEN WAY-MAIN WORKS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
(NCR 93)**

**TQ 258899
TO
TQ 266908**

**MARK ROBERTS
OAU**

ABSTRACT

Following an archaeological evaluation (Roberts OAU 1993) a watching brief was carried out in 9 areas of construction for improvements to the A406. No significant archaeological deposits were located that were dated to before the 19th century. The construction of the North Circular Road seems to have involved large area topsoil stripping followed, in places, by landscaping including the dumping of thick deposits of modern rubbish.

INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by Gifford Graham and Partners, Consulting Engineers, on behalf of the Department of Transport in advance of road widening scheme. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidance papers for work in London.

It should be noted that archaeological constraints were not part of the planning process at the time that permission was granted to the scheme. The archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated during the advance works for the project and the watching brief was carried out over the topsoil movement on the rest of the route.

Archaeological background (figs 1 and 2)

The principal reasons for commissioning the work were:

area 3 (evaluation area 1)

- i) To locate the medieval course of East End Road.
- ii) To detect any prehistoric crest top occupation/activity.

area 9 (evaluation area 2)

- iii) To detect any medieval activity on the roadside edge of historic Glebeland.
- iv) To detect any traces of prehistoric streamside activity.

All areas

- v) To determine as far as possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains.

Area 1 lies at the foot of the hill E of Falloden Way. Area 2 is the road, in a cutting, and school playing field on the slope leading to area 3. This lies on the crest of high ground at a height of 90 m OD and has magnificent views over the valley. East End Road crosses the A406 at this point and a new junction had been built. Area 4 is on the reverse slope leading to area 5 the embankment for the railway bridge. Area 6 is the gentle slope from Long Lane to area 7 a new slip road from the A1000 Finchley High Road to the A406. Area 7 is the new dual carriageway linking to the existing A406. Area 9 is just to the N of Strawberry Vale Brook at the E tail of the crest at a height of 68-69 m OD (see cover for 1st edition Ordnance Survey map).

The London Clay on which the sites lie has been regarded as archaeologically sparsely populated; there are few sites recorded on the Greater London Sites and

Monuments Record on the Clay near the road line. However, recent work in other parts of the country suggest that occupation on clay soils was more widespread than previously supposed.

Struck flints and a Roman potsherd have been found by the Mutton Brook at the foot of the slope to the W of area 3. To the E of East End Road lies East End Manor. This is a moated site which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (see Fig. 1 and cover). At this point East End Road made a significant right-angle onto the lane which became the North Circular Road which may have been to avoid a property.

Finchley High Road, which runs through area 9, is a medieval road. The earliest map of the area, by John Rocque in 1754, shows a building called 'Baker's Well' which may have been a tavern SE of the junction of Finchley High Road and the A406. On the 1st edition O.S. map a building(s) called Brown's Well can be seen at this spot.

As no significant archaeology was found no further background work was undertaken.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY (Fig. 2)

The total surface area of the site which was investigated was approximately 75% of the length of the road scheme but generally only on one side of the road. Attention was concentrated at the points of most impact; at the road junctions. The sample was determined by observations of the advance works and by the nature of the particular ground works to be inspected. In total 17 visits were made from August 1993 to March 1994.

area 1 Topsoil strip and drainage work monitored.

area 2 Topsoil strip and drainage work monitored. On the S side of the road in the school playing field the area of topsoil stripping was 'fieldwalked'.

area 3 The roundabout area was evaluated; no features but a layer of old (but recent) ploughsoil noted. Temporary road bed excavation was monitored.

area 4 BT advance work was observed. Observation over the topsoil strip was attempted prior to the cutting excavation.

area 5 As the area is covered by an embankment for a bridge over the underground there is no archaeological potential.

area 6 Drainage and fence erection was observed on the N side of the road from Long Lane to Finchley High Road. The S side of the road has been left as a terrace- subsoils survived until topsoil stripping which were observed.

area 7 New slip road was built. The deturfed topsoil and some advance works were

observed and topsoil movements observed.

area 8 Tree and fence clearance was observed. Drainage work was monitored.
Observations of the road bed excavations.

area 9 Area evaluated; No archaeological potential.

No environmental samples were taken. There were no features which were deemed suitable for environmental analysis.

DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

No significant archaeological features were found in the watching brief areas.

area 1 Modern landscaping/ disturbance.

area 2 Most of the present road is in a modern landscaped cutting. The S side of the road in the school playing field has not been disturbed before but no features were observed. The strip left areas of an old ploughsoil which contained 20th-century pottery and obscured modern field drains. (Pottery identified by L Whittingham. Two sherds of 20th-century pottery were recovered from the topsoil strip of area 2. One sherd was Transfer Printed Ware TPW and one was a bottle EMST.) There may have been archaeological features undetected but no further stripping took place. (Observations of drainage work on other road routes has been unproductive). The excavation of the cutting for the underpass beneath East End Road crossing was not monitored.

area 3 The roundabout area was evaluated; no features were seen but a layer of old (but recent) ploughsoil was noted. Temporary road bed excavation was observed but was not deep enough to reveal old ploughsoil.

area 4 Modern topsoil and clay subsoil was observed in advance BT work. The degree (if any) of truncation is unclear. Further observation over the topsoil strip prior to the cutting was not possible due to bad weather during the stripping, and to machine disturbance. A temporary road was also built for machine access which obscured the stripped surface.

area 5 Embankment for bridge over underground. No archaeological potential.

area 6 Drainage and fence erection observations revealed that the N side of the road from Long Lane to Finchley High Road has been landscaped. The S side of the road had been left as a terrace- subsoils survived. Topsoil movements were observed but no features were recorded.

area 7 New slip road was built. The deturfed topsoil and some advance works were observed. Topsoil movements for the new carriageway were observed but no archaeological deposits or finds were seen.

area 8 Tree and fence clearance, drainage work and area stripping revealed disturbance similar to area 9 at the W end of area 8 next to the road.

area 9 Area evaluated- no archaeological potential.

DEPOSIT SURVEY

DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

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DEPOSIT SURVEY

The evaluation showed landscaping of the area around the A406. The extent of the truncation was not fully understood from the trenches but the watching brief has confirmed its extent. In area 3, to the W of the roundabout the level of the road and the land to the N and S of the road showed uneven contours which suggest dumping (as shown by the deep dumps in trenches 1 and 4). In area 9 the land between the Finchley High Road and the North Circular also shows uneven contours; the trenches and observations of the shafts showed deep layers of modern dumping.

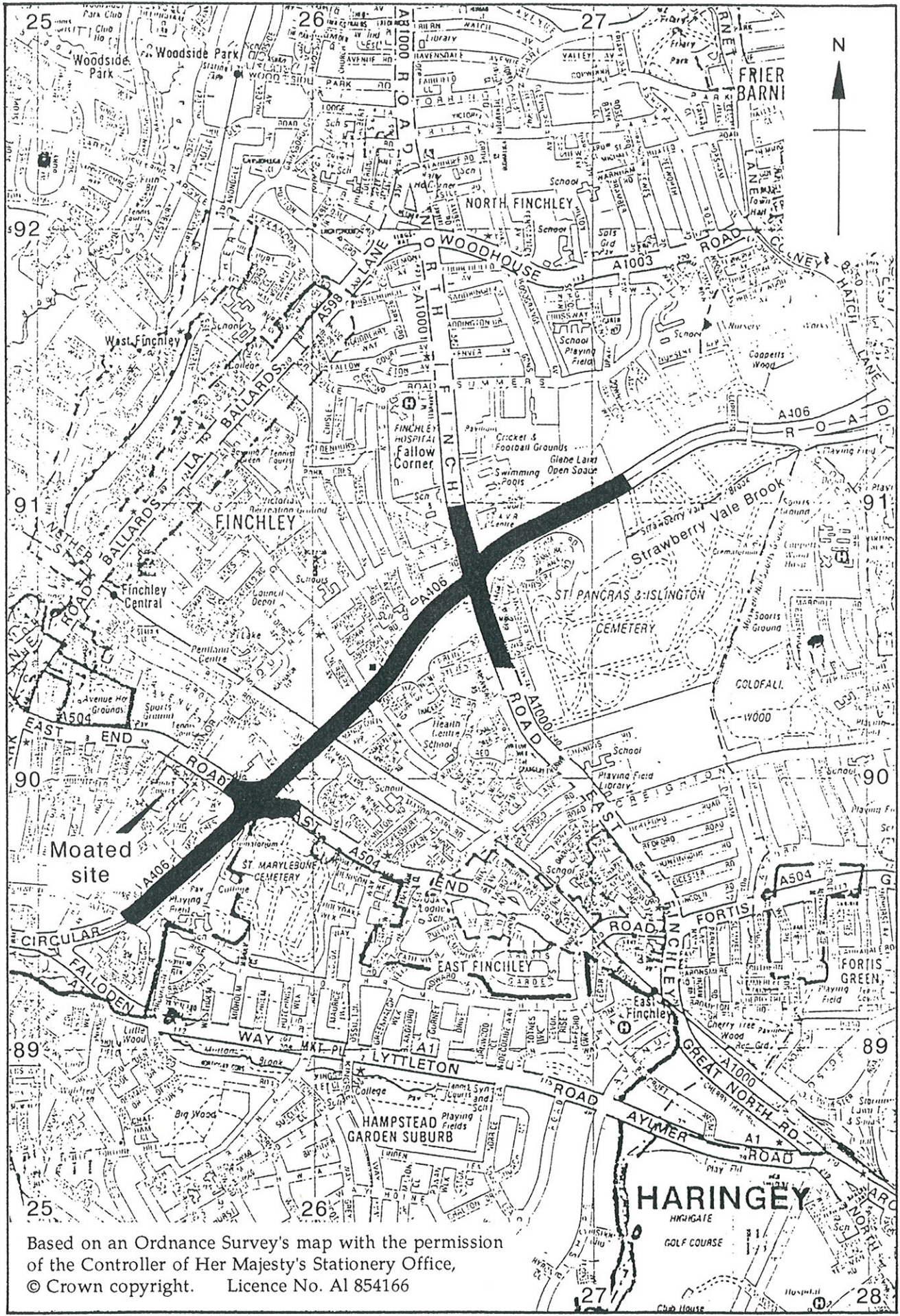
The cutting for the road in areas 1, 2 and 3 and the flyover only affected areas already disturbed by road building or small areas of old (but recent) ploughsoils. In areas 6, 7 and 8 the flyover for Finchley High Road and the slip roads for the junction also only affected areas already disturbed by road building or small areas of old (but recent) ploughsoils.

CONCLUSIONS

No significant archaeological remains were uncovered. Given the limited nature of the work the character of deposits was determined.

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


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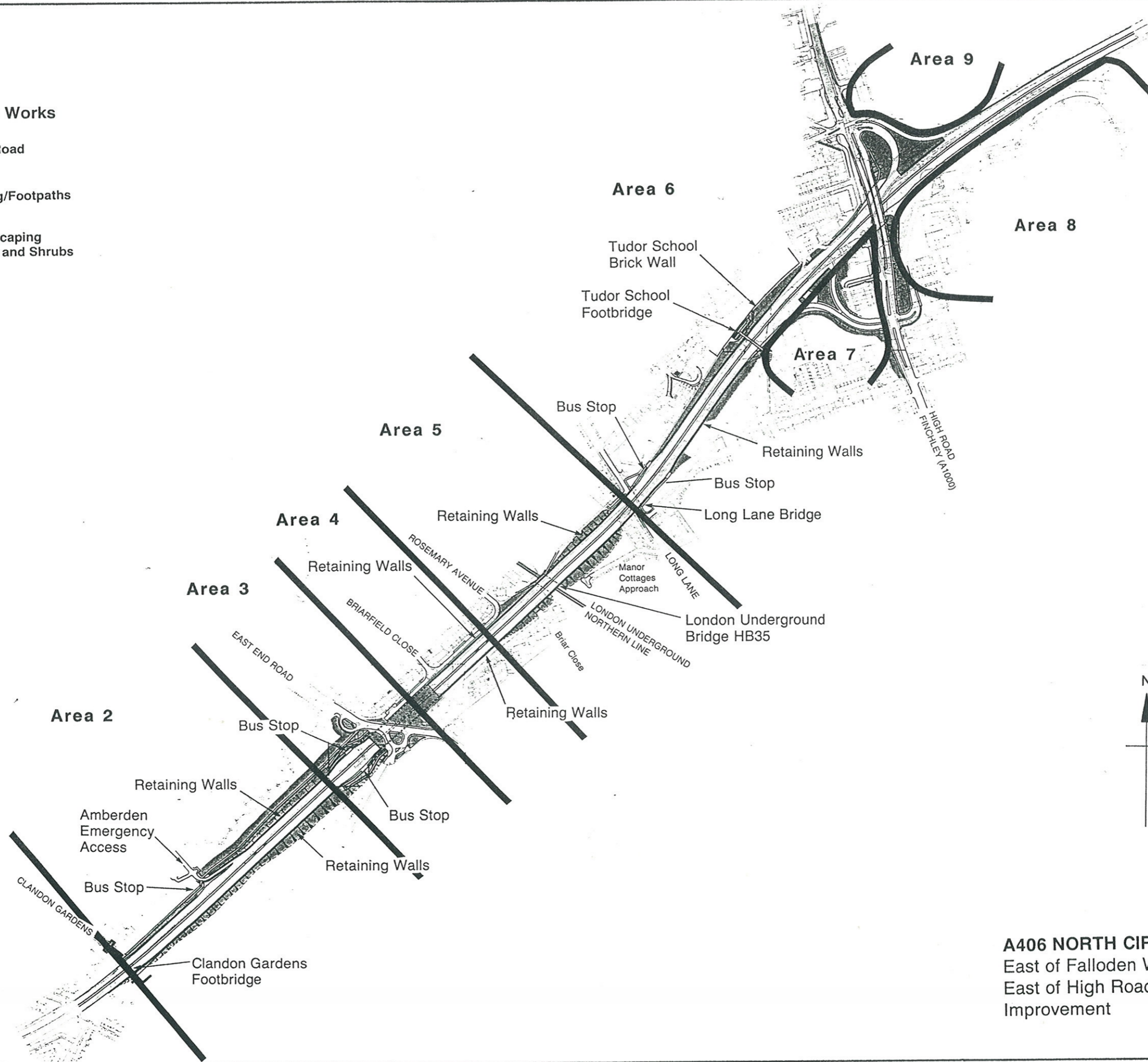


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figure 1

Key to New Works

-  New Road
-  Paving/Footpaths
-  Landscaping
Grass and Shrubs



A406 NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD
 East of Falloden Way to
 East of High Road
 Improvement



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford, OX1 2EP
Head Office Tel: 01865 243888 Fax: 01865 793496
Post-Excavation Tel: 01865 204642 Fax: 01865 204637



Director: David Miles B.A., F.S.A., M.I.F.A.

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