COLLIER AND CATLEY

52-94 HORSPATH ROAD, OXFORD

NGR SP 555048

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Oxford Archaeological Unit

June 2001

COLLIER AND CATLEY

52-94 HORSPATH ROAD, OXFORD

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Prepared by: Robin Bashford	
Date: July 2001	
Checked by:	
Date: 13.7.01	
Approved by: R. Williams	Assistant Director
Date: 13/7/2001	

Oxford Archaeological Unit

June 2001

A number finds of Roman coins and pottery are also recorded in the area, and most significantly, immediately to the north east of the junction of Horspath Road and the Eastern Bypass (A4142).

The location of the site fronting Horspath Road is also significant in that it forms a relatively straight alignment (together with Barracks Lane) which links many of these sites. Indeed, burials recorded along the length of Horspath Road (three to the east of the Eastern Bypass and one on the junction of Horspath Road and Hollow Way) suggest that Horspath Road / Barracks Lane may have been a significant Roman thoroughfare. If this is the case then the junction between Roman Way and Horspath Road, to the east of the site, may be significant.

The development will affect a substantial length of the frontage of Horspath Road and may have justified a trenched evaluation. However, there is a strong likelihood that previous housing will have at least partially disturbed any archaeological remains within the development site. Consequently a condition for an archaeological watching brief has been attached to the permission in order to establish the presence and condition of any archaeological remains which may survive

4 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

5 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits; all digging was undertaken by hand.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits 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 utilised standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

6 Results (Fig. 2)

The watching brief monitored the overall site reduction and the subsequent excavation of the strip foundations for the new buildings. The site reduction revealed a deposit of made ground approximately 0.45 m deep across the majority of the site which directly overlay the natural geology.

The northern extent of the made ground was marked by a bank running parallel to Horspath Road, the top of which was 1.30 m above the top of the made ground observed across the rest of the site. A number of the north-south

Summary

In May 2001, Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at 52-94 Horspath Road, Oxford. No archaeological deposits or features were observed during the groundwork.

1 Introduction

Permission has been granted by Oxford City Council to erect 5x2 bedroom and 7x3 bedroom terrace houses with 12 curtilage parking spaces at 52-94 Horspath Road, Oxford (Planning Ref: 00/01851/NF). Provision has also been made to revise the existing access to St Francis School. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits, a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission in line with PPG16 and local plan policy.

2 Historical and Archaeological Background

The site is located to the north-west of the former Rover car works (Fig. 1) and lies at approximately 83 m OD. The underlying geology is Beckley Sand Member, which comprises sand and calcerous limestone of the Upper Jurrasic Corallian Formations. The overlying drift geology is typically clay and clay-over-sand.

The archaeological potential of this area of Oxford, particularly in relation to the nationally important Roman pottery industry, is clear and has been evident for some time. The industry is thought to lie within an extensive pattern of rural settlement, although at present this pattern is not clearly understood. Evidence of Roman kilns has been found to the north-east of the site (south of Brasenose Wood) and in Temple Cowley to the south-west. Evidence for intensive pottery production in the area was also discovered during an evaluation in Blackbird Leys by Tempus Reparatum in 1995. Although this is approximately 1.5 km to the south of the site, it attests to the scale of the activity within the area. An important Iron Age settlement, possibly with Bronze Age origins, was also discovered on the Blackbird Leys development site.

Roman Way, the road from Alchester to Dorchester, runs on a north-south alignment to the east of the site and numerous, predominantly Roman, sites have been identified over the last 100 years in close proximity to the road - many of them inhumations. Although none of the burials are well documented or securely located, they are clearly associated with the line of the Roman Road and may represent an extra-mural cemetery. Indeed, it is suggested in a desk-based assessment produced by OAU in 1999, that the discovery of Roman burials some distance to the west of Roman Way suggests that the cemetery may have extended at least 1 km to the west (it may also continue to the east of Roman Way).

aligned trenches were excavated into the bank and revealed a 0.74 m thick layer of topsoil over natural geology.

The strip foundation trenches were excavated to an average depth of 0.60 m below reduced ground level (brgl). No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the strip foundation trenches, although the concrete footings of the buildings which previously occupied the site were observed across the site. A manhole in the north-east corner of the site necessitated a deeper excavation *c* 2 m brgl but otherwise the depth of the foundation trenches was relatively consistent (with the exception of the trenches which incurred into the bank - the deepest of which was 1.90 m below the top of the bank).

7 Finds

A number of 20th century finds were apparent within the made ground but were not retained.

8 Environmental results

Although full consideration was given to various sampling strategies, due to the absence of any suitable deposits no environmental soil samples were taken.

9 Discussion

No significant archaeological remains were observed during the watching brief. The depth of the natural geology at the top of the bank was 0.56 m above that observed across the rest of the site, suggesting that the site had been levelled prior to the construction of the buildings whose foundations were observed during the watching brief. It seems likely that any archaeological remains which may have existed have been destroyed during this process.

References.

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

Tempus Reparatum (1995) *Archaeological Evaluation (Stage 2) Site D and Site D Extension, Blackbird Leys, Oxford.* (Including outline post-excavation proposals by OAU).

OAU (February 1999) *Rover Group Car Works, Cowley, Oxford. Impact Assessment on Potential Archaeology.*

Scale 1:25,000

Figure 1: Site location.

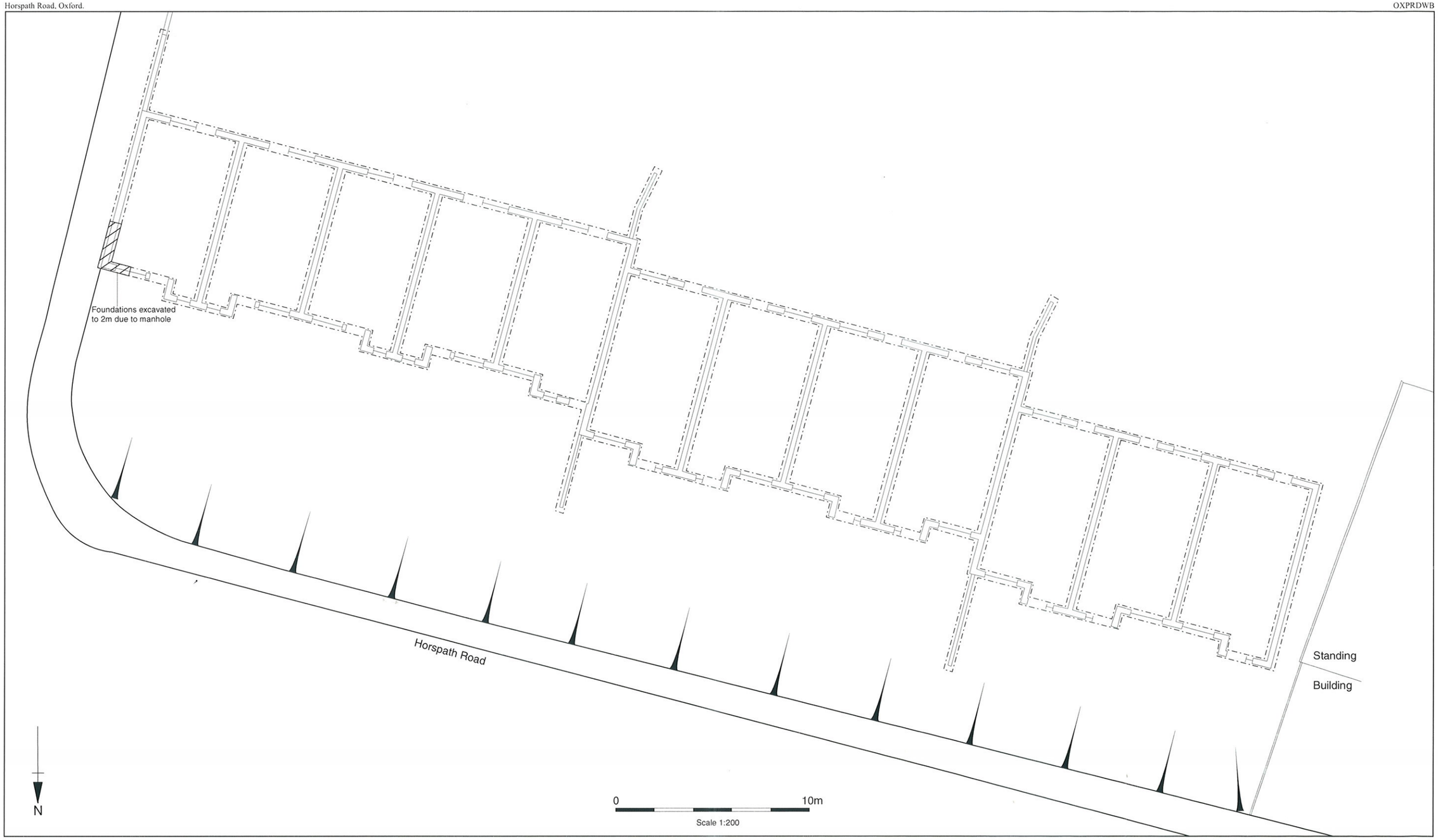

Figure 2 : Site plan.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES

Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496

email: postmaster@oau-oxford.com www.oau-oxford.com

Director and Chief Executive: David Jennings B.A., M.I.F.A. Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited.
Private Limited Company Number: 1618597 Registered Charity Number: 285627.
Registered Office: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES