

Development at Museum Road Lincoln College Oxford



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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Development at Museum Road Lincoln College, Oxford

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In January and February 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on a development for Lincoln College at Museum Road, Oxford. The work was commissioned by ADP Architects in advance of the building of a new science centre. The watching brief revealed a series of post-medieval quarrying pits and 20th century made ground.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between 22nd January and 3rd February 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief behind 1-23 Museum Road, Oxford. The work was commissioned by ADP Architects in respect of a planning application for the construction of a new sports centre (Planning Ref: N:02/01425/FUL EPA).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by OA was agreed with Oxford City Council's Archaeologist, Brian Durham (OA 2003).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is roughly flat with a gentle slope toward the west and lies at approximately 63 m OD and is 0.21 of a hectare in area. The underlying geology is 2nd Summertown-Radley Gravel Terrace (BGS Sheet 236).
- 1.2.2 The development area is located in an area to the rear of, and partially within, the private gardens of a terrace of Victorian houses positioned along Museum Road. The development also encompasses a two-storey squash court building to the rear of these gardens (NGR: SP 5135 0680).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background of the development site has previously been produced in a desktop report by OA and is included below (OA 2001).
- 1.3.2 Several archaeological investigations have been carried out in the vicinity of the proposed development site since 1913. These investigations produced little evidence of archaeological features, although significant numbers of artefacts have been recovered from these, dating from the Neolithic through to the Post-medieval period.
- 1.3.3 In 1992, archaeological excavations c. 15 m to the south revealed 17th-century deposits to a depth of 2 m below modern ground, possibly resulting from quarrying activity not represented in documentary sources and which may be associated with the Civil War defences to the north-east (Kemp, A. 1977).

Prehistoric period (500,000 BP - 43BC)

- 1.3.4 There are no known sites/finds located within the proposed development site., although Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age features and finds have been discovered within 250 m of the development and provides a clear indication of the presence of prehistoric activity in the area. In particular a number of archaeological cropmarks have been identified just outside the study area, in the University Parks, c. 450 m north-west of the site. The cropmarks show a several ring-ditches (the probable ploughed-out remains of Bronze Age barrows) and rectilinear features of possible prehistoric/Roman field systems.

Roman period (43BC - AD410)

- 1.3.5 Again there are no known sites or finds dated to the Roman period within the development site. However evidence of Roman activity is evident in the area of the University Parks and the area immediately to the north of development site and includes both ditch features and pottery.

Early medieval period (AD410 - 1066)

- 1.3.6 Oxford can probably date its foundation to the early 10th century. Traditionally, St. Frideswide founded a monastery in Oxford at the beginning of the 8th century. The monastery, with its location beside an important river crossing on a natural communication route between Southampton and the Midlands, is likely to have provided a focus for settlement.
- 1.3.7 Edward the Elder founded a planned town and fortified *burh* (borough) at Oxford as part of a line of defences protecting Wessex from the Vikings. By the late Saxon period, Oxford was a major town. The area of proposed development would have been located north of the *burh*'s defensive walls and probably lay within fields used for arable cultivation or pasture.

Later medieval period (AD1066-1550)

- 1.3.8 As with the earlier medieval period, the proposed development site probably lay within open fields to the north of the medieval town. The suburban development to the north of the town grew up along the main road of St Giles, which headed towards the town's north gate, c. 150 m to the west of the proposed development site. St Giles' church, located at the north end of St Giles, dates to the 12th century and is likely to have formed a focus for settlement at that time though there is no evidence that the development site was developed at this time.

Post-medieval period (AD1550+)

- 1.3.9 With the great rise in the fortunes of Oxford due to the growth of the University, the suburbs outside the city, including the parish of St Giles, saw considerable growth in domestic dwellings from the late 16th century and throughout the 17th century as a

result of rising population St John's college, immediately to the south of the proposed development site, was founded at this time, in surviving medieval monastic college buildings.

- 1.3.10 The growth of Oxford in the post-medieval period is reflected in the historic mapping. The area of proposed development is located just off the north edge of the earliest map consulted, Agas' map of 1578. The map shows St Giles with domestic buildings and St Johns College fronting the road, with gardens and open fields to the rear. The omission of the proposed development site from the map suggests that it would have been located in open fields on the edge of the suburbs and was not developed.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the development may remove or damage during the excavation of the basement area.
- 2.1.2 To signal, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of a significant archaeological find, for which the resources allocated are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 All works relating to the excavation of the basement area for the new sports centre were observed.
- 2.2.2 All features and deposits encountered were issued with unique context numbers, and recorded in accordance with the established OA *Field Manual* (OAU 1992).
- 2.2.3 Colour transparency and black and white negative photographs were taken of any archaeological features revealed during intrusive works.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Natural gravel (1002) of the Radley gravel terrace was encountered at a depth of 61.5 m OD. This was overlain by a thin layer of reddish brown sand (1001) through which a number of pits cut (1003 and 1005). Pit 1003 measured 2.2 m wide by 4.6 m long and was filled with a dark grey silty clay loam containing oyster shell, post-medieval pottery, tile, brick and clay pipe. Pit 1005 measured 4.0 m wide by 9.0 m long and was filled with the same material as pit 1003. All pits were sealed by layer a dark grey silty clay with a high quantity of 20th-century destruction debris (1000). Neither pit was fully excavated by the remediation works.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A quantity of late post-medieval material was examined which consisted of oyster shell, clay pipe, tile, brick and pottery. The tile and pottery was dated to 18th to 19th century and the clay pipe stem fragments were dated to the late 18th and early 19th-century.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits of palaeo-environmental significance were revealed during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The pits (see 1003 and 1005) seen cutting both natural layers 1001 and 1002 were former quarry pits used for gravel extraction. The fill of these pits contained sufficient quantities of late post-medieval waste to indicate they had a secondary use as rubbish pits. The site proved to contain few archaeological remains and of those revealed, supported the interpretation from Aga's Map of 1578 that this area had been within open fields, which were often used for the digging of gravel.
- 4.1.2 More features may have survived within the site save for the modern made ground, which would have truncated all but the deeper features like those recorded here. No significant archaeology was therefore encountered during the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1000	Layer	0.56m	Made Ground	Brick	C20th
1001	Layer		Natural sand	-	-
1002	Layer	0.4 m - 0.7 m	Radley gravel terrace natural	-	-
1003	Cut		Quarry pit	-	-
1004	Fill		Quarry fill	Oyster shell, clay pipe, brick, tile	Post-medieval
1005	Cut		Quarry pit	-	-
1006	Fill		Quarry fill	Oyster, brick, clay pipe, tile, pottery	Post-medieval

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Kemp, A 1977 *The Fortification of Oxford During the Civil War*. Oxoniensia, 42 p.237-246

OA, 2001 *Museum Road, Oxford*. Desktop Assessment

OA, 2003 *Development at Museum Road, Lincoln College, Oxford. Written Scheme of Investigation*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson)

RCHME, 1939 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford*. London, HMSO 161

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Development at Museum Road, Lincoln College, Oxford

Site code: OXMULI 03

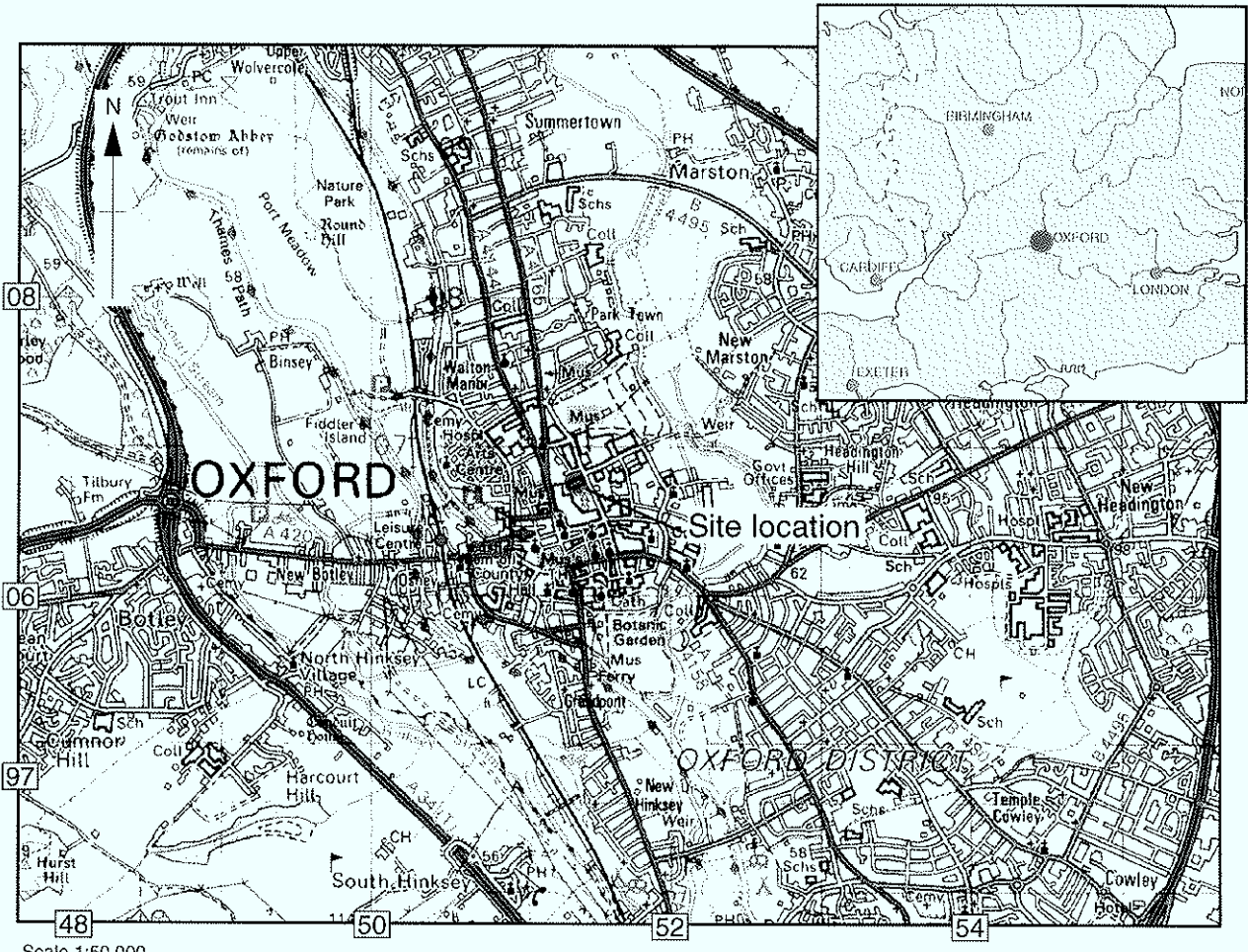
National Grid Reference: SP 5135 0680

Date and duration of project: 22/2/04-3/3/04

Area of site: 0.21 of hectare

Summary of results: Post-medieval quarrying and rubbish pits.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.



Scale 1:50,000

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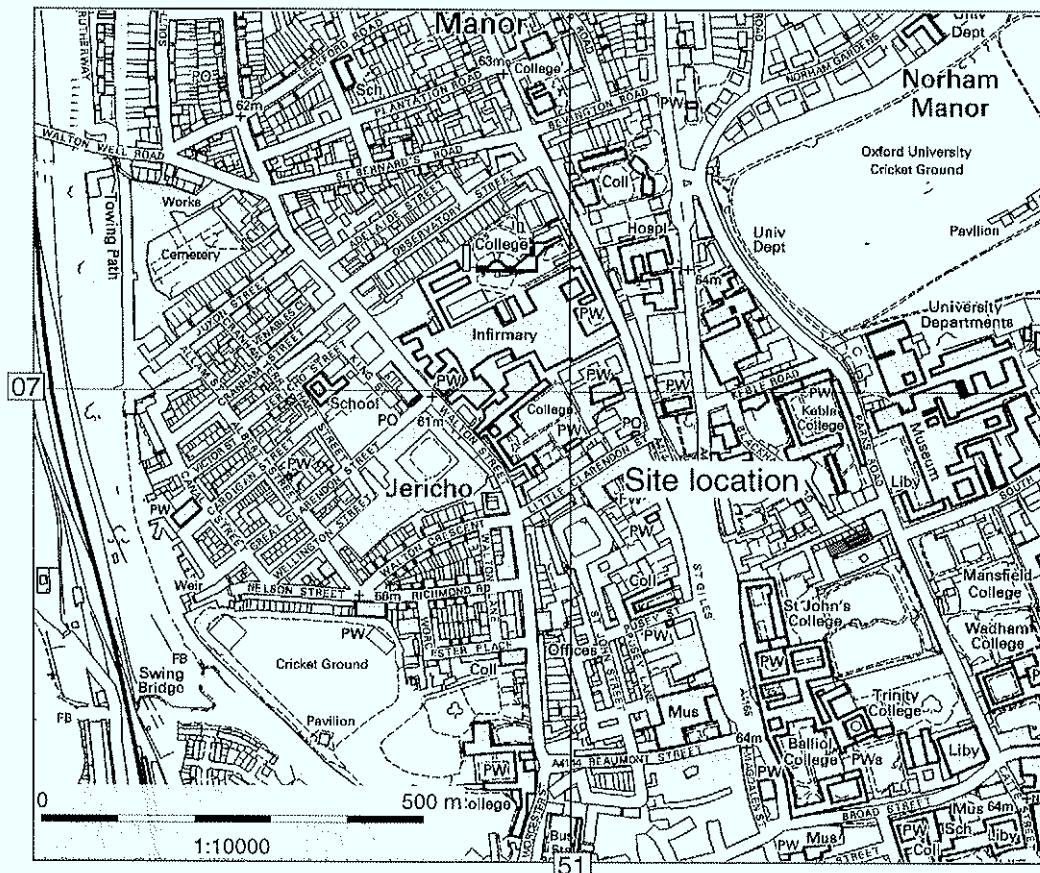


Figure 1: Site location

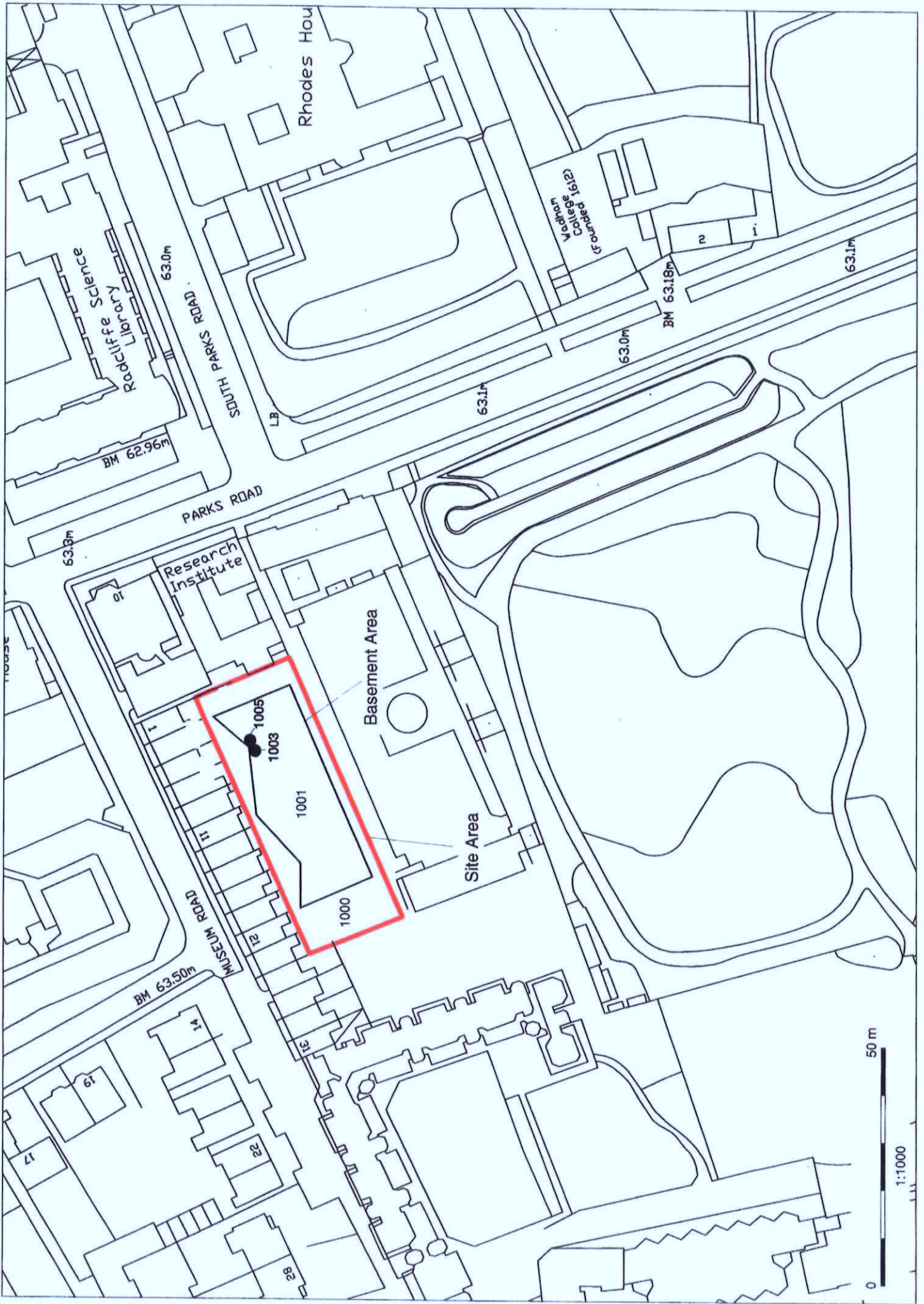


Figure 2: Plan of watching brief area



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