

Abbey Barn Farm
Abbey Barn Lane
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire



**Archaeological
Watching Brief Report**



Oxford Archaeology

August 2005

Client: Carter Jonas LLP

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 2541

Planning Ref N^o: 03/5572

NGR: SU 879 911

Client Name: Carter Jonas LLP

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Abbey Barn Farm, Abbey Barn Lane, High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: SU 879 911

Planning Reference: 03/5572

OA Job Number: 2541

Site Code: HWABF 04

Invoice Code: HWABFWB

Receiving Museum: Buckinghamshire Museum Service


Museum Accession No: TBC

Prepared by: Mike Sims
Position: SWD Project Supervisor
Date: 29th July 2005

Checked by: Dan Dodds
Position: SWD Project Manager
Date: 29th July 2005

Approved by: Paul Booth
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 5th August 2005

Signed.....



Document File Location H:\PROJECTS\Buckinghamshire BU\Wycombe
WY\5570 Abbey Barn Farm, Proposed Offices
WB\wbREP.doc

Graphics File Location Server
10:/oaupubs1 _AtoH*HWABEWB*HWABE05*Abbey
Barn Farm*jm*01.08.05

Illustrated by Julia Moxham

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

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2005

Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800

f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

Abbey Barn Farm, Abbey Barn Lane, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

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

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Site plan, showing areas of groundwork
Fig. 3 Sections

SUMMARY

Between December 2004 and June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Abbey Barn Farm, Abbey Barn Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SU 879 911). The work was commissioned by Carter Jonas LLP in advance of change of use of the farm buildings, demolition of outbuildings and construction of a new access road. The watching brief revealed evidence of 18th century terracing and construction of the standing farm buildings, and their later use, but no evidence for any earlier activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between December 2004 and June 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Abbey Barn Farm, Abbey Barn Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SU 879 911). The work was commissioned by Carter Jonas LLP in respect of a planning application for the demolition of outbuildings, change of use of farm buildings to B12 usage, construction of a new access road and a new farmhouse garage (Planning Application No. 03/5572).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by David Radford, the Planning Archaeologist for Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Services (BCAS), representing Wycombe District Council. This required that a Watching Brief be maintained during the period of intrusive ground works (BCAS 2004).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2004).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located at Abbey Barn Farm, approximately 800 m south-west of High Wycombe and 900 m north-west of the village of Flackwell Heath (Fig. 1). The farm is sited at the top of a north-east facing slope which leads down to the River Wye valley roughly 90 m below. The site occupies an area of roughly 1.2 hectares and lies at approximately 137 m OD. The underlying geology is soft chalk with flints (Institute of British Geological Sciences ed. 1979, Sheet 255).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2004) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The site comprises a Grade II listed farmhouse (CAS13178) dating from the 17th to early 18th century and a further three Grade II listed barns (CAS1317801, CAS1317802, CAS1317803) and associated out buildings.

1.3.3 The land around the Abbey Barn Farm complex is described as being within an area of pre-18th century enclosure. The Chilterns have long been settled since prehistoric times (e.g. Hepple and Doggett 1999 Lewis et al 2001). First cleared of forest during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, this area would have seen many hunting and later sedentary communities established across the ridges and valleys. Farmed since the Bronze Age period, many later farm complexes used the fertile land for crops and livestock. Abbey Barn Farm may well contain evidence of earlier structures and occupation activity prior to the 17th century. The development therefore has the potential to affect archaeological remains within the site complex.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that may be truncated or disturbed during intrusive ground works.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of periodic visits to examine intrusive works and excavations as development work proceeded. These works included ground reduction, excavation of a new access road and reduction of floor levels within certain buildings. The excavated areas were closely examined for any features and the spoil was examined in order to collect dating evidence.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the extent of any excavations was maintained (Fig. 2) at a scale of 1:100 and sections of exposed features and sample sections showing the stratigraphy were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 Within the deeper excavations the underlying natural chalk (7) was encountered. Towards the southern, higher, area of the site this was overlaid by a layer of orange-brown natural silt clay (16) in excess of 0.2 m deep. This was sealed by a 0.15 m deep layer of dark orange-brown silt clay (15), a layer of subsoil, possibly a colluvium. This was overlaid by a 0.2 m thick layer of dark brown clay loam (18), the

present day topsoil. Immediately to the south of the farmhouse the topsoil had been stripped within a 4 m wide easement and a modern hardcore farm track (14) had been constructed (Fig. 3, section 1).

- 3.1.2 During general ground reduction along the north-western edge of the site, within the area of Unit 4, the natural chalk 7 was encountered. This had been cut by a 0.4 m wide by 0.3 m deep foundation trench (17), containing the truncated remains of wall (8), which consisted of 2 courses of a red brick laid on top of a course of roughly dressed flint nodules (Fig. 3, section 2). The bricks were identical in size and appearance to those within the standing buildings suggesting a contemporary date. These footings were sealed by a 0.2 m thick layer of demolition debris (6), which was composed of a mixture of silt containing many fragments of bricks similar to those in the footings, many flints and areas of lime mortar and charcoal. This composition suggests that the building had been demolished (possibly as the result of a fire ?) and the reusable material salvaged. This demolition layer was sealed by an accumulation of modern soil (5) lying 0.2 m deep above the area. During this phase of ground reduction it could be seen that outside the area of the footings, the present day topsoil 18 directly overlaid the natural chalk 7 suggesting that any subsoil or colluvium had been stripped within this area, possibly as part of the same phase of work as construction of the footings.
- 3.1.3 During the reduction of the floor level within the north-east range of farm buildings (Unit 2) the natural chalk 7 was encountered at a depth of 0.65 m below the floor level (Fig. 3, section 3). This was sealed by 0.3 m thick layer of brown clay silt (9), which contained many brick fragments, chalk flecking and flint fragments and represents a layer of made ground or possibly a mixture of soils and construction debris. This layer is cut by the foundation trench for the building's main wall suggesting that it was in place prior to construction of the building. Overlying this was a 0.2 m thick layer of redeposited chalk (11), a probable original floor layer. This was sealed by a 0.15 m deep modern concrete floor.
- 3.1.4 When the floor level within the former farm building to the south-east of Unit 2 was reduced a layer of orange-brown silt sand (12) was reached at a depth of 0.7 m below the floor level (Fig. 3, section 4) This layer contained many small sub-angular flints and probably represents a layer of colluvium. Sealing this was a 0.2 m deep layer of dark orange-brown clay silt which produced much chalk flecking (10), a second layer of colluvium. Overlying layer 10 was a 0.3 m thick layer of dark brown silt loam (13) which produced charcoal flecking and is a probable layer of buried topsoil. This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of brown clay silt, a continuation of layer 9. As in Unit 2 this had been overlaid by a 0.15 m thick modern concrete floor.
- 3.1.5 As part of the building work, the partially collapsed building (4), to the east of the farmhouse, was demolished and the materials salvaged. This was an open fronted building composed of 3 walls, (1), (2), and (3) all constructed of an identical fashion with brick stringers and columns infilled with panels of roughly dressed flints. This

method of construction and the bricks used are similar to those of the standing eastern range of buildings and suggests that this building was part of the same phase of construction.

3.1.6 The present day topsoil 18 butts up to this building while the foundations were observed to cut the subsoil 15.

3.1.7 During the excavation for the septic tank and service trenches within the central area of the site (Fig. 4, section 5), the natural chalk 7, was encountered at between 0.4 and 0.7 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.2 m deep layer of orange-brown sandy silt (10), a probable layer of colluvium, which in turn was overlaid with a 0.3 m thick layer of dark brown silt loam (18), the present day topsoil.

3.2 **Finds**

3.2.1 All the finds recovered were post-medieval in date and ranged from the 18th to 20th centuries. These finds included pottery, window and bottle glass and brick and tile fragments. A representative sample of these were retained for the archive with the remainder evaluated on site but not retained.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

4.1.1 All the deposits, features and structures observed during the course of the watching brief relate to the construction and use of the standing farm buildings and farmhouse and date from the 17th/18th century or later. No deposits, structures or artefacts relating to earlier activity on this site were encountered.

4.1.2 There is a possibility that the construction of the southern area of the farmyard, including the farmhouse, may have truncated any earlier features, however the absence of earlier residual finds or of the presence of the bases of deep features would mitigate against this.

4.1.3 The deposition of made ground 9, forming a terrace within the northern half of the farmyard has the potential to have sealed earlier archaeological features or deposits. The original stratigraphy has survived within the eastern corner of unit 2, although no significant archaeological features or deposits were observed when the floor reduction went down to the surface of the underlying colluvium. However evidence from the ground reduction at the north-western edge of the site within the area of units 1 and 4 suggests that both the topsoil and subsoil had been stripped from this area prior to deposition of the terrace material, greatly reducing the chance of any but the deeper features surviving.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth/ Height</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Structure	2.2 m	0.4 m	Brick and flint wall, part of structure 4	Brick	C 18th
2	Structure	1.4 m	0.4 m	Brick and flint wall, part of structure 4	Brick	C 18th
3	Structure	2.6m	0.4 m	Brick and flint wall, part of structure 4	Brick	C 18th
4	Structure	2.6 m	5.6 m	3 sided brick and flint structure with probable white washed walls, cow byre?	Brick	C 18th
5	Layer	0.2 m	-	Accumulated topsoil and silts	Pottery, glass, brick	C19th - C20th
6	Layer	0.2 m	-	Demolition debris, some evidence for burning	Pottery, glass, brick	C19th - C20th
7	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Natural chalk	-	-
8	Structure	0.3 m	6 m	Truncated footings for demolished building	Brick	C18th
9	Layer	0.3 m	-	Made ground, part of terrace	Brick	C18th
10	Layer	0.2 m	-	Buried soil, possible colluvium	-	-
11	Layer	0.2 m	-	Layer of redeposited chalk, possible floor ?	-	C18th
12	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Natural sand	-	-
13	Layer	0.3 m	-	Silt loam, buried topsoil	-	-
14	Layer	0.25 m	4 m	Hardcore, modern farm track	Brick, tile, glass, metal	C20th
15	Layer	0.15 m	-	Silt clay subsoil	-	-
16	Layer	> 0.2 m	-	Natural clay	-	-
17	Cut	0.3 m	6m	Construction cut for footings 8	-	C18th
18	Layer	0.3 m	-	Modern topsoil	Pottery, glass, brick	C18th - C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BCAS, 2004 *Abbey Barn Farm, Abbey Barn Lane, High Wycombe: Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Hepple, L W and Doggett, A M, 1999 *The Chilterns* Chichester

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Lewis, C, Michell-Fox, P and Dyer, C, 2001 *Village, Hamlet and Field: Changing Medieval Settlements in Central England* Manchester

OA 2004 *Abbey Barn Farm, Abbey Barn Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

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

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Abbey Barn Farm, Abbey Barn Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

Site code: HWABF 04

Grid reference: SU 879 911

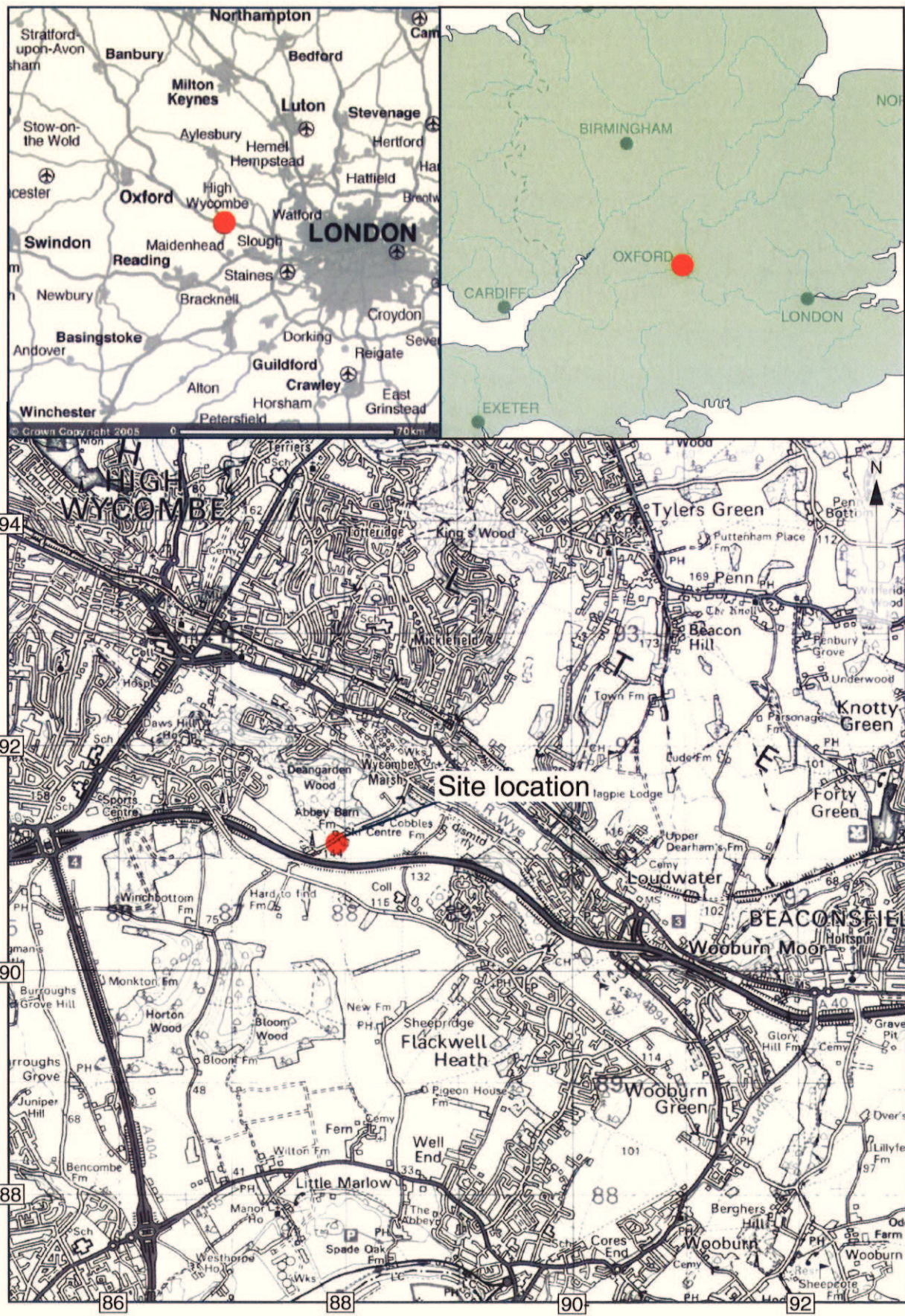
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of service trenches, roadways and ground reduction

Date and duration of project: Between December 2004 and June 2005, 7 Months

Area of site: 1.2 hectares

Summary of results: All deposits and features encountered relate to the 18th century construction of the standing farm buildings and the farmhouse and their later use. No evidence for earlier activity was encountered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course, under the following accession number: AYBCM.2004.178



Reproduced from the Landranger 1:50,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
© Crown Copyright 1999. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100005569

Figure 1: Site location

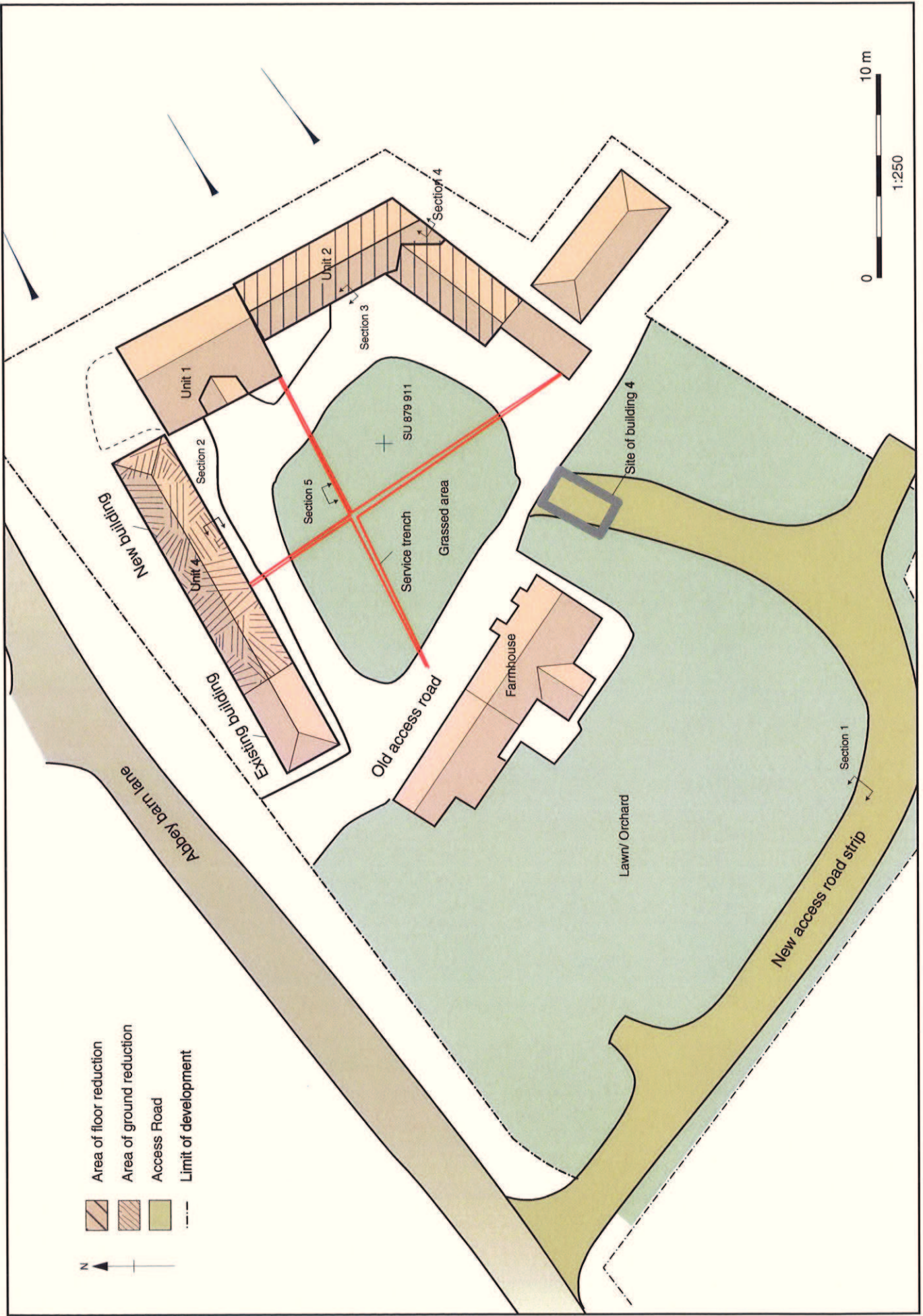


Figure 2: Site plan, showing areas of groundworks

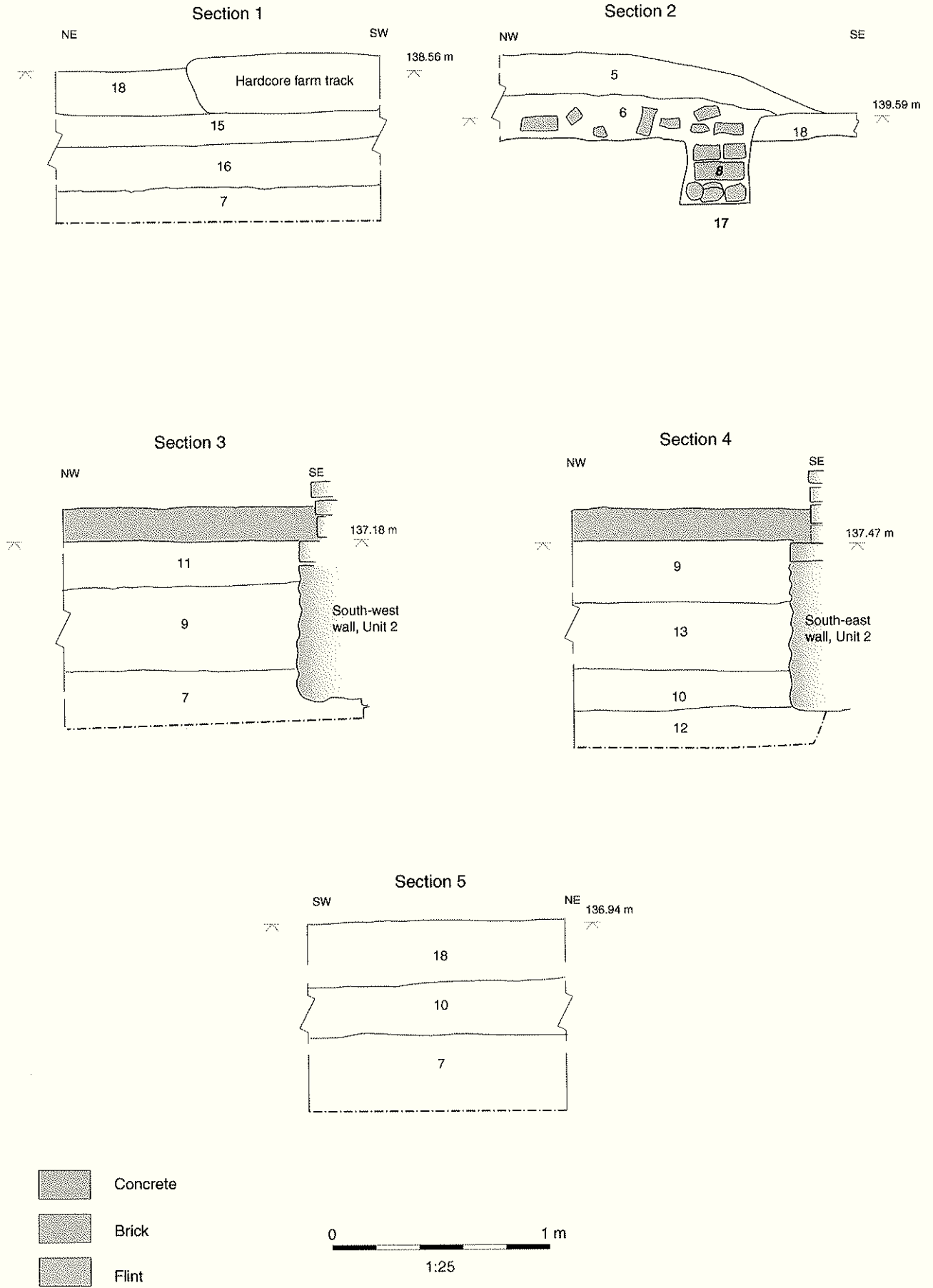


Figure 3: Sections



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

Oxford Archaeological Unit is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627

Registered Office:

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES