

Palmers Yard  
Cherwell Warf  
Lower Cherwell Street  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire



**Archaeological Watching Brief**



**Oxford Archaeology**

7th June 2002

**Client Name:**  
**Victor C Brown,**  
**Chartered Architect/  
A. Dodd & Son Construction Ltd.**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1

OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 1294

Planning Ref N<sup>o</sup>: 00/02477/F

NGR: SP 4600 4037

**Client Name:** Victor C Brown, Chartered Architect/A Dodd and Son  
(Construction ) Ltd

**Client Ref No:** VCB/cab/511

**Document Title:** Palmers Yard, Cherwell Wharf, Lower Cherwell Street,  
Banbury, Oxfordshire

**Document Type:** Watching Brief

**Issue Number:** 1

National Grid Reference: NGR SP 4600 4037  
Planning Reference: 00/02477/F

OA Job Number: 1294  
Site Code: BACWLC 02  
Invoice Code: BACHLCWB  
Museum Accession No: 2002.88

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Document File Location U:\OAU\wbREPORTS\Oxfordshire\BACWLC.doc  
Graphics File Location \\Server10\oaupubs1 AtoHVB  
codes\BACHLLWB\*Palmers Yard,Cherwell Wharf,  
Banbury\*AMD\*07.06.02

Illustrated by Anne Dunkley

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**Palmers Yard, Cherwell Wharf,  
Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury, Oxfordshire**

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT***

**CONTENTS**

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work .....	1
1.2 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 .....	3
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains .....	3
4 Discussion and Conclusions.....	3
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory .....	4
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references.....	4
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	4

**LIST OF FIGURES**

- Fig. 1 OS Site location map
- Fig. 2 Site Location
- Fig. 3 Plan of site and location of sections
- Fig. 4 Sections

## SUMMARY

*In May 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Palmer's Yard, Cherwell Wharf, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4600 4037). The work was commissioned by Victor Brown Chartered Architect on behalf of A Dodd and Son Construction Ltd. The watching brief took place in advance of the construction of 8 town houses and conversion of the old Town Hall to flats. The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits pre-dating the construction of the nearby Oxford Canal in 1790. A single brick-built structure was identified in section and partly in plan and represents the demolished remains of one of the wharf-side buildings constructed in the Victorian period. Ephemeral traces of other buildings were noted across the site.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In May 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Palmer's Yard, Cherwell Wharf, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury, Oxfordshire (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Victor Brown Chartered Architect on behalf of A Dodd and Son Construction Ltd, in respect of a planning application for construction of 8 town houses and conversion of the Old Town Hall to flats (Planning Application No. 00/02477/F).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Steven Weaver, Conservation Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2002).

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on Lower lias over Alluvium at 90 m above OD. The site is situated along the east side of Lower Cherwell St, adjacent to the Oxford Canal.

#### 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, 2002) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 Settlement at Banbury is suggested by its place name to have its origins in the Anglo Saxon period. The early settlement is thought to have been focused around the early Minster church, possibly dated to the 7th century, now the site of St. Mary's Church.
- 1.3.3 The medieval parish of Banbury appears to have been established before the 10th century when Banbury became the center of a large estate belonging to the Bishops of Dorchester and later of Lincoln after the see was removed there in 1072.

- 1.3.4 Alexander Bishop of Lincoln (1123-48) is known to have constructed the castle and to have laid out the town between the river and the older settlement. Modern Banbury has retained much of its medieval street pattern. The proposal area is situated to the east of the medieval settlement.
- 1.3.5 The development site is on an existing canal wharf (Fig. 2); the canal was constructed in 1790. Cherwell Wharf, formerly Salter's Wharf after a noted coal merchant, was known as Town Hall Wharf from 1860 when the town hall was relocated here. The site retains its Grade II Listed building status. Recent excavation at Tooleys Boatyard (SAM OX172), one of three wharves on the canal, revealed structural remains of the wharf.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The site had been cleared of its' previous use as a crane park. The foundations for the new buildings were excavated by a JCB using both 0.6 m and 0.9 m-wide ditching buckets. The foundations were excavated, inspected and then the concrete poured in sections aligned off the rear wall, which was excavated and concreted first.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film and a general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The trenches were 0.6 m–0.9 m wide and no deeper than 1.4 m (Fig. 3). The trenches revealed that the whole site was covered in concrete (1) overlying a build-up of crushed and compacted brick fragments (2 - Fig. 4, sections 1 and 2).
- 3.1.2 The layer of bricks sealed an earlier concrete surface (3), presumably that of a phase of the wharf that was bedded on a 0.15 m thick layer of compacted coal and cinder (4). This sealed a thick layer of dark brown silty clay (5) with a quantity of brick and stone rubble presumably deriving from a phase of building demolition (Fig. 4, sections 1 & 2).

- 3.1.3 To the west of the site layer 5 sealed the remains of a brick wall (8) which may represent the structural remains of one of the former wharf buildings on the site. The wall was 0.6 m wide with the lower courses of bricks offset by 0.1 m from the upper courses. The wall survived to an observed height of 0.9 m. The wall was trench-built (7) through a layer of light brown natural clay (6) that overlay a dark grey clay (10) - (Fig. 4, section 2). A 0.5 m thick layer of floor make-up (9) abutted the wall on its west face.
- 3.1.4 Traces of the wall were apparent to the west and north-west of the portion of walling recorded in Section 2, suggesting a ? rectangular structure some 4 m wide and extending on an approximate N-S alignment for c 5 m.
- 3.1.5 Traces of further brick structures were noted in other foundation trench sections, although these were normally oblique in the trench sides, which prevented detailed investigation and construction of a ground plan.

## 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered from the site. Victorian bricks were not retained for further analysis.

## 3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No environmental samples were taken during the watching brief.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits pre-dating the construction of the canal in 1790, and the subsequent location of the wharf site in the early Victorian period.
- 4.1.2 Traces of number of demolished brick buildings from the early 19th century must relate to the wharf site. These buildings were either demolished or in some cases converted in the 20th century for industrial use, until they in turn were levelled for the crane parking area made on the site, prior to the present development.
- 4.1.3 The absence of medieval remains on this development site could suggest that the site was low lying pasture and flood plain on the edge of the town until the construction of the canal brought development along its banks.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Layer				Concrete surface of Crane yard
2	Layer	0.25 m			Hard standing of crushed brick
3	Layer	0.05 m			Old concrete floor or surfaces
4	Layer	0.05 - .10 m			Surface of compacted coal and cinder
5	Layer	0.50 m			Demolition layer
6	Natural	-			Alluvium
7	Cut	0.5 m+			Foundation Trench
8	Structure	0.9 m	0.5 m	0.9 m	Brick Building
9	Fill	0.5 m			Floor make up of building
10	Natural	-			Dark grey Clay

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2002 *Palmers Yard, Cherwell Wharf, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury, Oxfordshire*  
Written Scheme of Investigation

D Wilkinson, 1992, *OAU Fieldwork Manual*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** Palmers yard, Cherwell Wharf, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury, Oxfordshire

**Site code:** BACWLC 02

**Grid reference:** NGR SP 4600 4037

**Type of watching brief:** Excavation of foundation trenches for new development

**Date and duration of project:** Two site visits on the 20/05/2002 and 23/05/2002

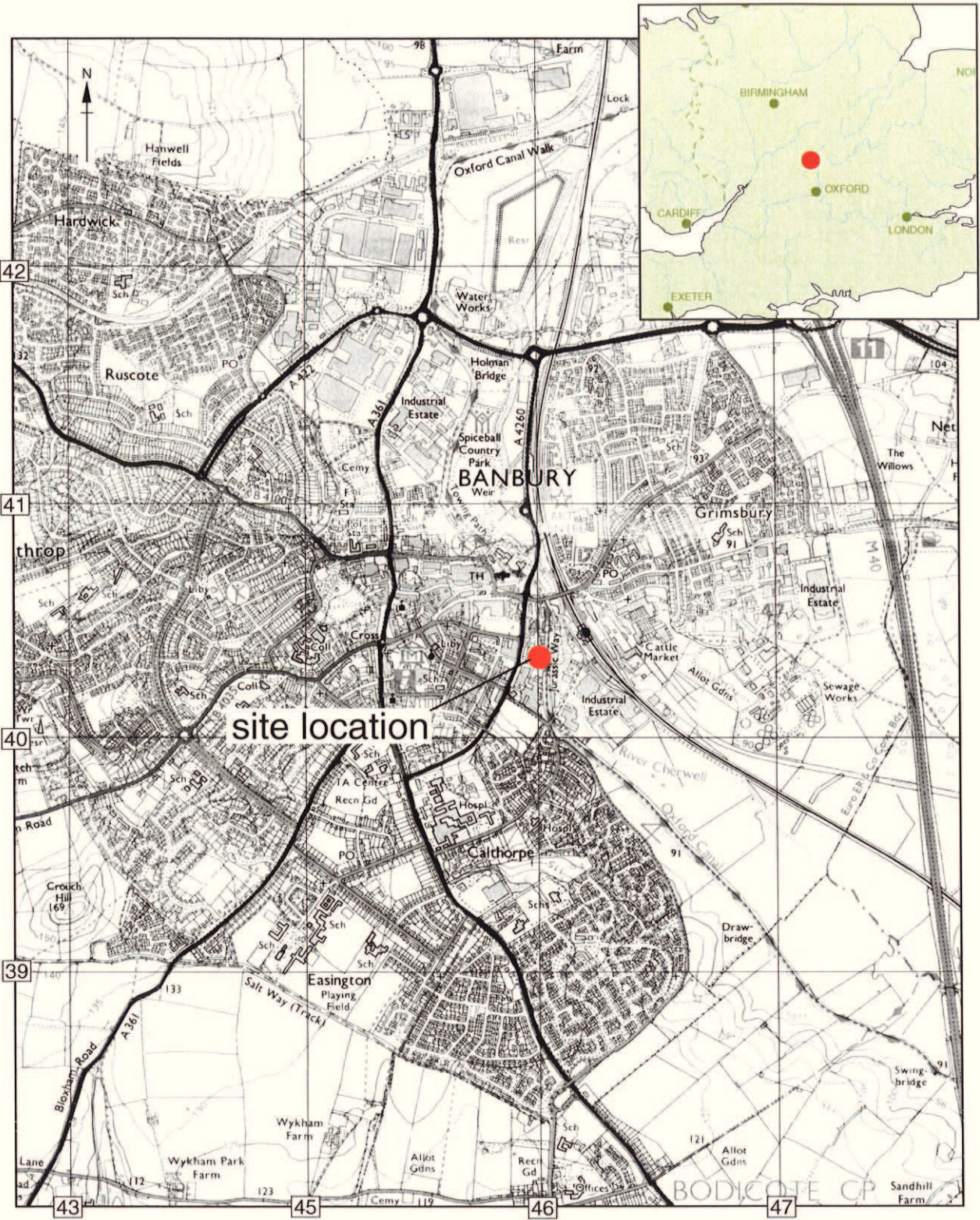
**Area of site:** 35 m x 40 m

**Summary of results:** No archaeological deposits pre dating the construction of the canal were uncovered. Traces of brick structures associated with the Victorian wharf were identified.

**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, under the following accession number: 2002.88



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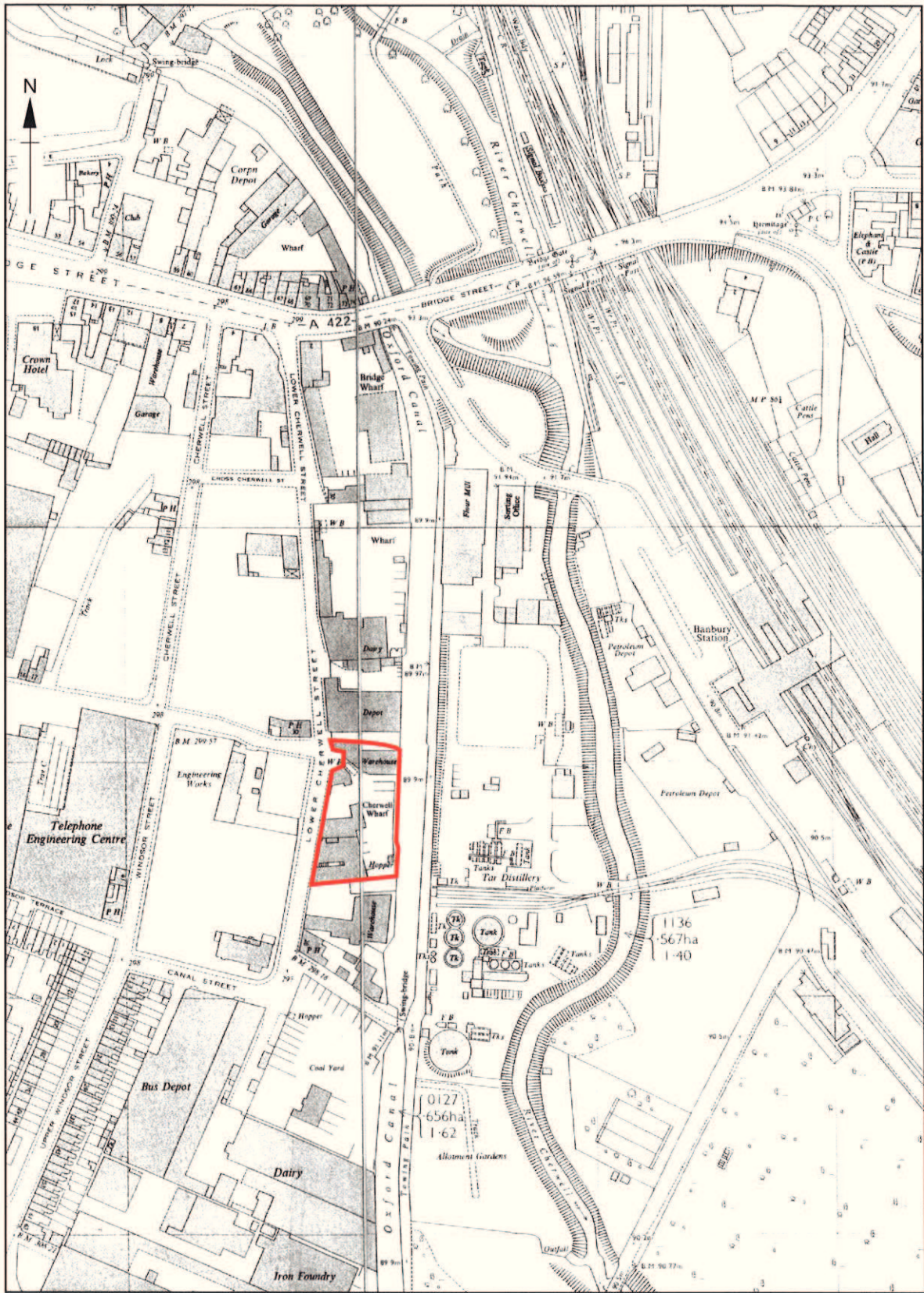


Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1 Site location.





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 Area of Development

Figure 2 Site location (detail)



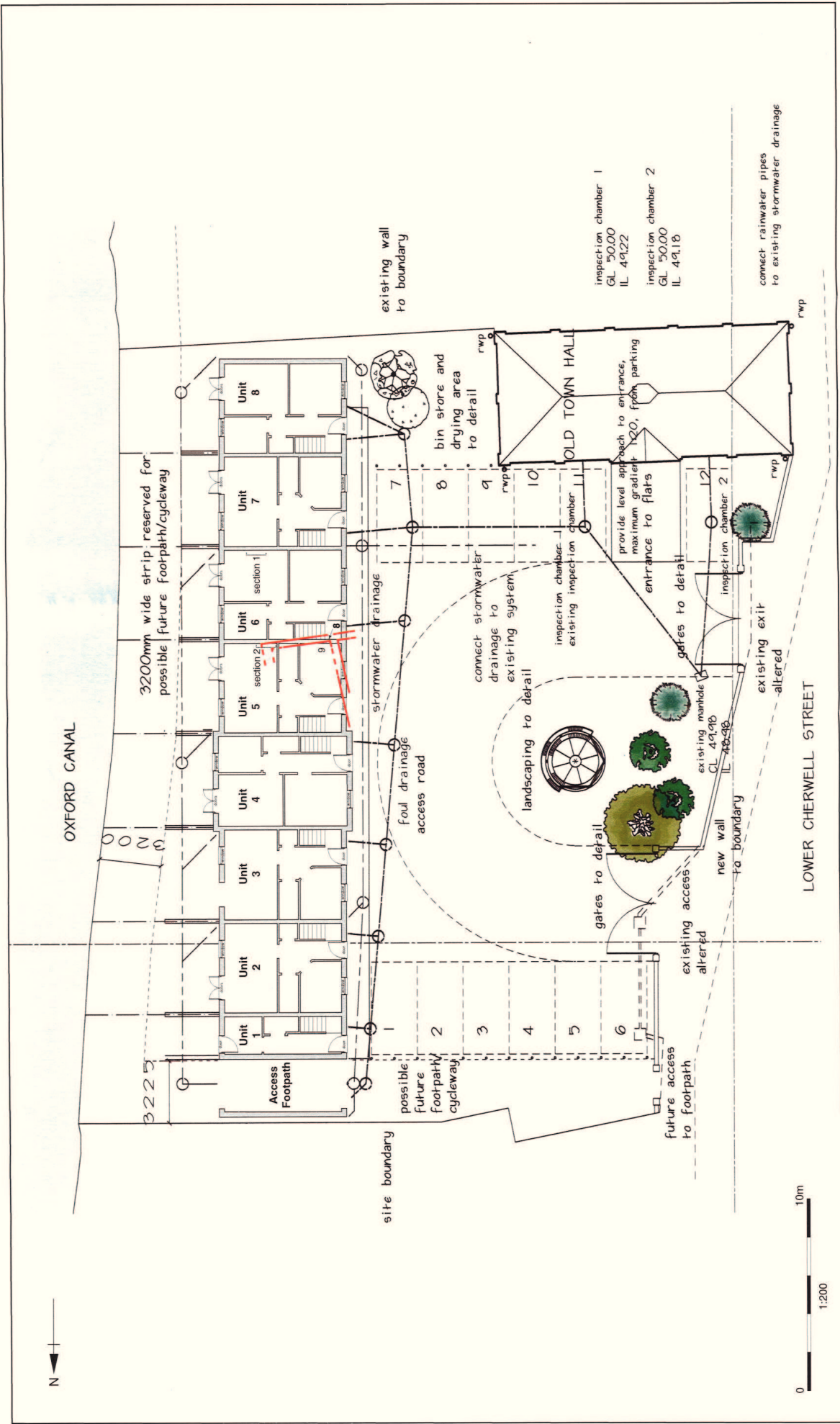
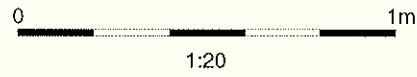
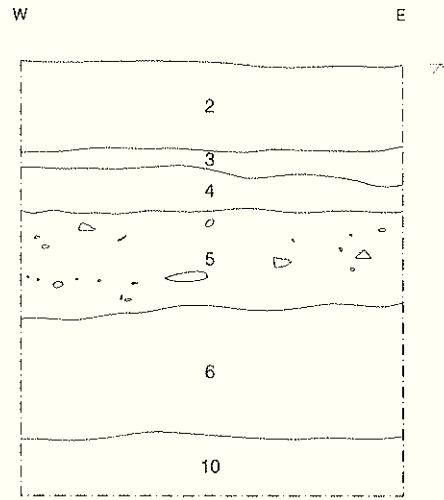


Figure 3 Plan of site and section locations

### Section 1



### Section 2

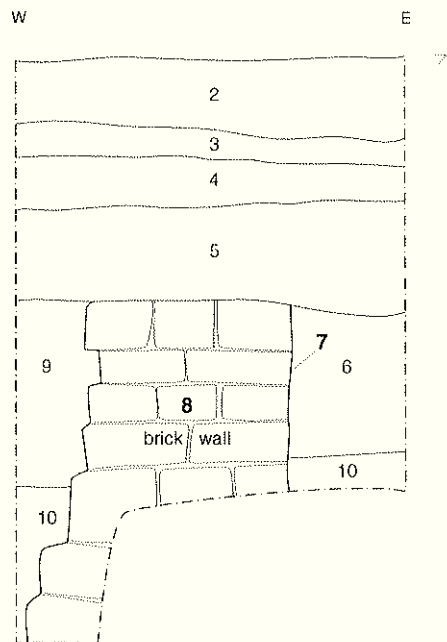


Figure 4 Sections



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