



Queens Drive, Swindon

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Prepared by: Robert McIntosh (Supervisor)
Checked by: Gerry Thacker (Senior Project Manager)
Edited by: Gerry Thacker (Senior Project Manager)
Approved for Issue by: David Score (Head of Fieldwork)
Signature:



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OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk

w. oxfordarchaeology.com

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Director and Chief Executive
Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCITA
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597
Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Queens Drive, Swindon

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Robert M^cIntosh and Gerry Thacker

With contributions from John Cotter and illustrations by Ben Brown

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Summary

In June 2019 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Willmott Dixon on behalf of Swindon Borough Council to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Queens Drive, Swindon. The site comprises approximately 1.4 hectares of land centered at National Grid Reference SU 16970 83487, on the eastern side of the A4259 approximately 1.6km to the south-east of Swindon town centre. The site is proposed as the location for 100 new apartments with associated landscape and storage.

The evaluation involved the excavation of six trenches, two measuring 20m by 1.8m, and four measuring 15m by 1.8m. The results of the evaluation showed no significant archaeological remains within the area of investigation. The northern three trenches, trenches 1, 2 and 6, indicate a high level of modern disturbance in this half of the site.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Jeny Shrestha, Kevin Busby and Marcus Piet of Willmott Dixon for commissioning this project, and for their help in facilitating the work. Thanks are also extended to Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger who monitored the work on behalf of Swindon Borough Council.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Gerry Thacker. The fieldwork was directed by Robert McIntosh, who was supported by Mike Donnelly, Camille Guezennec and Bernadetta Rzadek. Survey and digitising was carried out by Ben Brown. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the supervision of Geraldine Crann and prepared the archive under the supervision of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Willmott Dixon on behalf of Swindon Borough Council to undertake a trial trench evaluation at the site of a proposed development at Queen Drive in the east part of Swindon (Fig 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken to inform the Planning Authority in advance of a submission of a Planning Application. Although the Local Planning Authority had not set a brief for the work, discussions between Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Archaeological Advisor to Swindon Borough Council, and Gerry Thacker of Oxford Archaeology established the scope of work required, and a written scheme of investigation (OA 2019b) was agreed. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is formed of two adjacent parcels of land (Phases A and B – see Fig.1), situated on the eastern side of the A4259 (Queens Drive) approximately 1.6km to the south-east of Swindon town center. This document covers the southern land parcel (Phase B) only. The site measures 1.4 hectares and comprises the parcel of land to the south of Wolsely Avenue.
- 1.2.2 The Phase B area contains four blocks of flats built in the late 1950s or early 1960s which are currently part occupied. Phase B is enclosed by Wolsely Avenue to the north, Eaton Close and Grantley Close to the east, Berrington Road to the south and Queens Drive to the west.
- 1.2.3 The site is relatively flat and is situated at a height of 104m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as Kimmeridge Clay Formation and sedimentary mudstone bedrock formed between 157.3 and 152.1 million years ago during the Jurassic period (BGS, 2019).
- 1.2.4 Results from previous borehole samples suggested that topsoil was present across the Phase B area, with a thickness ranging between 0.1m and 0.3m. The geology below the topsoil consisting of gravelly and sandy clay (T & P, 2019).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (OA 2019a). The following summary provides a context relevant to the works.
- 1.3.2 Registered heritage assets are mainly concentrated in two areas situated on the curved north-west to south-east orientated Okus-Swindon ridge; Swindon historical town centre in the west and Broom Manor in the south. The site is located on a south-east to north-west orientated slope towards Dorcan Stream in the east. There are no previous known heritage assets in the proposed development area or in the immediate vicinity, with the exception of farmsteads established during post-medieval times.

- 1.3.3 The later medieval period introduced changes in the landscape setting. Swindon expanded westwards, and received market rights in the 13th century. Traces of medieval ridge and furrow are still visible on the slope east of the town. Broome Manor is mentioned in the 12th century when Henry I gave it to the priory of Marcigny I Loire, who held it until the dissolution in the 16th century (Dunning, et al., 1970).
- 1.3.4 During the post-medieval period the study area was largely characterized by fields enclosed sometime before the middle of the eighteenth century and dispersed farmsteads and outfarms. The nearest farmsteads, c 100m to the east of the site, were however established in the 19th century. The map of Coate and Walcot, likely published between 1710 and 1720, shows the site forming part of four fields in an area recorded as The Marsh's. The fields are located in Coate which formed part of the demesne of Liddington Manor and were owned and farmed by the Prince family which gave its name to Prince farm.
- 1.3.5 After the Second World War over 400 ha of land in the area was acquired for new housing, predominantly the farmlands of the Goddard estate. Between 1954 and 1960 over 1500 dwellings were constructed. The 1956 Ordnance Survey map shows some of the building work had started to the north of Church Farm and some initial proposals for roads to the north of the site. The Park North and Park South housing estates were constructed in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The 1977 Ordnance Survey map shows the extensive urbanization of the area including this site. The four apartment houses currently within Phase B are shown. The plan form of the site has remained unchanged to the present day.
- 1.3.6 A recent geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys 2019) was undertaken of the Phase B area. The survey was successfully completed and no anomalies were identified that are of probable or possible archaeological origin. The geophysical results recorded modern services and a historic field boundary; extensive magnetic disturbance from residential elements within and surrounding the survey area have limited the detection of weaker, more ephemeral anomalies across the east of the site.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains.
- iii. To ground test the results of the geophysical survey.
- iv. To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- v. To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- vi. To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- vii. To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- viii. To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive
- ix. To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status utility and social activity.
- x. To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A. Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found below (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

2.2.2 Site specific methodologies were as follows:

- i. The trenches were laid out as displayed in Figure 2.
- ii. Trenches and spoil heaps were contained with Heras anti-climb fencing to protect members of the public.
- iii. Trench locations were CAT scanned prior to a during excavation.
- iv. The trenches were excavated using an appropriately powered mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of an archaeologist.
- v. Spoil was stored adjacent to, but in a safe distance from trench edges.
- vi. Machining was continued in even spits down to the top of the undisturbed natural geology.
- vii. The exposed surface was sufficiently cleaned to establish the presence and absence of archaeological remains. A sample of each feature or deposit type, for example furrows, was excavated and recorded.
- viii. The trenches were backfilled after agreement with the Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger, Archaeological Advisor to Swindon Borough Council.

- 2.2.3 All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was in accordance with established best practice and the OA Field Manual. Bulk finds were collected by context.
- 2.2.4 Digital photos were taken of deposits, trenches and evaluation work in general, and will form part of the project archive.
- 2.2.5 Plans were drawn at an appropriate scale. Section drawings were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and 1m wide sample sections of stratigraphy was drawn at a scale of 1:10. All section drawings were located on the appropriate plans. The absolute height (m. OD) of all principal strata and features, and the section datum lines were calculated and indicated on the drawings.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of the trenches that contained archaeological remains. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A. Finds data and spot dates are tabulated in Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was uniform. The natural geology of yellow and grey clay was overlain by a greyish brown clayey silt subsoil, which in turn was overlain by dark greyish brown clayey silt topsoil.

3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally good, and the site remained dry throughout. Features, where present, were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 No archaeologically significant features were present within any of the trenches.

3.4 Trench 1

3.4.1 Trench 1 was 15m long, 1.8m in width and aligned north-west to south-east (Fig. 2). Both the top soil and sub soil were 0.1m in depth. The entire length of the trench contained a layer (103) of modern disturbance, 0.6m in depth, located beneath the subsoil.

3.5 Trench 2

3.5.1 Trench 2 was 15m long, 1.8m wide and aligned north-east to south-west (Fig. 2). The top soil was 0.18m in depth, and sealed 0.08m of subsoil. A 0.12m deep layer of light grey alluvium was located beneath the subsoil. Two small old service trenches which cut the subsoil were located at the south-west end of the trench, running south-east to north-west.

3.6 Trench 3

3.6.1 Trench 3 was 20m in length, 1.8m wide and aligned north-west to south-east (Fig. 2; Plate 2). The top soil was 0.22m in depth and overlay 0.18m of subsoil. This trench contained no features.

3.7 Trench 4

3.7.1 Trench 4 was 20m long, 1.8m wide and orientated north-west to south-east (Fig. 2; Plate 3). The topsoil was 0.15m in depth, overlying 0.18m of subsoil which in turn overlay 0.12m of light grey alluvium. The trench contained no features.

3.8 Trench 5

3.8.1 Trench 5 was 15m long, 1.8m wide and orientated east-west (Fig. 2; Plates 4 and 5). The topsoil was 0.16m and overlay 0.09m of subsoil. The trench contained two furrows running north-south, both sealed by the subsoil. The easternmost furrow (503) was 2.72m wide, 0.16m deep and had shallow sloping sides and a concave base. Its single fill, 504, was a soft, medium to dark grey-brown clay silt, it contained a short piece of late 17th to early 18th century clay pipe.

3.9 Trench 6

3.9.1 Trench 6 was 15m long, 1.8m in width and orientated north-east to south-west (Fig. 2; Plate 6). The topsoil was 0.2m in depth and overlay layer 605, a 0.05m thick layer of tile and brick, this overlay 0.2m of subsoil. The trench contained one linear feature (603) running east/west. Feature 603 contained both what appeared to be asbestos and a crisp packet dating to 1987.

3.10 Finds summary

3.10.1 The only archaeological find recovered was a short piece of very abraded clay pipe stem from fill 504 of furrow 503 in trench 5. It dated from the late 17th to the early 18th century (Appendix B).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The results of the investigation indicate a lack of archaeological features, or disturbance across the site. The weather conditions were good throughout the fieldwork and the soils were not waterlogged at all. The natural geology was a very distinct clay, easily identifiable from the overlying silty layers. The modern features that were present were very distinct, and easily visible within against the underlying natural geology. The lack of archaeological features seen in the trenches correlates well with the lack of geophysical anomalies.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

4.2.1 The evaluation has met the aims and objectives, in terms of establishing an absence of any surviving archaeological features and the presence of modern disturbance within the areas examined.

4.3 Interpretation

4.3.1 No archaeological features except for two plough furrows were present within any of the trenches in the investigation. The furrows in Trench 5 indicate that this part of the site is relatively undisturbed, but without any archaeology of significance present. The modern disturbances in Trenches 1, 2 and 6 seem to indicate that the northern half of the site was largely disturbed during the erection of the current buildings or during their subsequent maintenance. Trenches 3 and 4 in the south western part of the site were entirely blank.

APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

| Trench 1 | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | NW-SE |
| Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of clay. | | | | | Length (m) | 15 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.8 |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.20 |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date |
| 100 | Layer | - | 0.1 | Topsoil | - | - |
| 101 | Layer | - | 0.1 | Subsoil | - | - |
| 102 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - |
| 103 | Layer | - | 0.6 | Modern layer, grey clay and rubble | - | 20 th C. |

| Trench 2 | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | NE-SW |
| Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying alluvium and then natural geology of clay. The trench did contain two small parallel modern service trenches. | | | | | Length (m) | 15 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.8 |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.38 |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date |
| 200 | Layer | - | 0.18 | Topsoil | - | - |
| 201 | Layer | - | 0.08 | Subsoil | - | - |
| 202 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - |
| 203 | Layer | - | 0.12 | Alluvium. Light grey silt | - | - |

| Trench 3 | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | NW-SE |
| Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of clay. | | | | | Length (m) | 20 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.8 |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.4 |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date |
| 300 | Layer | - | 0.22 | Topsoil | - | - |
| 301 | Layer | - | 0.18 | Subsoil | - | - |
| 302 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - |

| Trench 4 | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | NW-SE |
| Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying alluvium and then natural geology of clay. | | | | | Length (m) | 20 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.8 |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.45 |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date |
| 400 | Layer | - | 0.15 | Topsoil | - | - |
| 401 | Layer | - | 0.18 | Subsoil | - | - |
| 402 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|---|------|----------|---|---|
| 403 | Layer | - | 0.12 | Alluvium | - | - |
|-----|-------|---|------|----------|---|---|

| Trench 5 | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|---|-----------------------|--|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | E-W |
| Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil and subsoil overlying natural geology of clay. The trench contained two furrows, one of which was excavated. | | | | | Length (m) | 15 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.8 |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.25 |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date |
| 500 | Layer | - | 0.16 | Topsoil | - | - |
| 501 | Layer | - | 0.09 | Subsoil | - | - |
| 502 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - |
| 503 | Cut | 2.72 | 0.16 | Furrow | - | - |
| 504 | Fill | 2/72 | 0.16 | Soft, medium to dark greyish brown clayey silt, rare small stones and frequent orangey lenses | Clay pipe | 17 th -18 th Century |

| Trench 6 | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| General description | | | | | Orientation | NE-SW |
| Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of topsoil overlying a layer of modern brick and tile, overlying subsoil which in turn overlay a natural geology of clay. | | | | | Length (m) | 15 |
| | | | | | Width (m) | 1.8 |
| | | | | | Avg. depth (m) | 0.45 |
| Context No. | Type | Width (m) | Depth (m) | Description | Finds | Date |
| 600 | Layer | - | 0.2 | Topsoil | - | - |
| 601 | Layer | - | 0.2 | Subsoil | - | - |
| 602 | Layer | - | - | Natural | - | - |
| 603 | Cut | 3 | - | Modern trench | - | - |
| 604 | Fill | 3 | - | Fill of 603 | Asbestos, 1980's rubbish | 20 th Century |
| 605 | Layer | - | 0.05 | Modern rubble | - | 20 th Century |

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Clay tobacco pipe

By John Cotter

| Context | Description | Date |
|---------|---|--|
| 504 | Short piece of very abraded clay pipe stem, possible mouthpiece, 2g | Late 17 th – early 18 th century |

APPENDIX C BIBLIOGRAPHY

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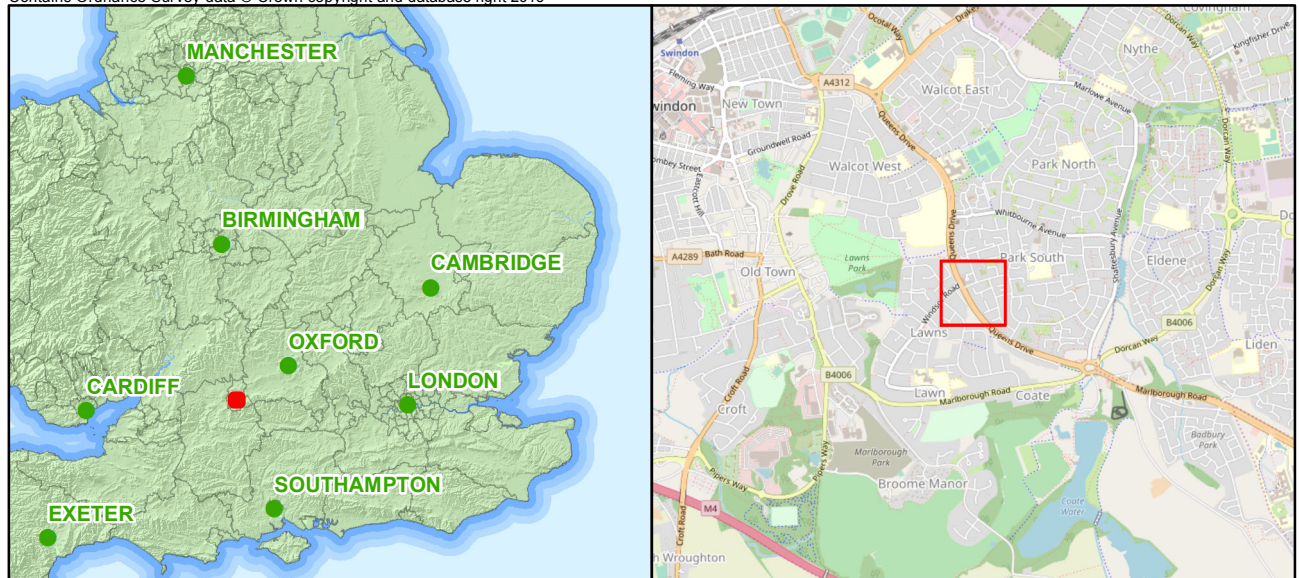
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APPENDIX D**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Site name: | Queens Drive, Swindon |
| Site code: | SWIMG:2019.33 |
| Grid Reference | SU 16970 83487 |
| Type: | Evaluation |
| Date and duration: | June 2019 |
| Area of Site | 1.4 Hectares |
| Location of archive: | The archive is currently held at OA South, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Swindon Museum & Art Gallery in due course, under the following accession number: SWIMG:2019.33. |
| Summary of Results: | <p>In June 2019 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Willmott Dixon on behalf of Swindon Borough Council to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Queens Drive, Swindon. The site comprises approximately 1.4 hectares of land centered at National Grid Reference SU 16970 83487, on the eastern side of the A4259 approximately 1.6km to the south-east of Swindon town centre. The site is proposed as the location for 100 new apartments with associated landscape and storage.</p> <p>The evaluation involved the excavation of six trenches, two measuring 20m by 1.8m, and four measuring 15m by 1.8m. The results of the evaluation showed no significant archaeological remains within the area of investigation. The northern three trenches, trenches 1, 2 and 6, indicate a high level of modern disturbance in this half of the site.</p> |



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Figure 1: Site location

X:\w\Wiltshire_Swindon_Queens Drive_EVAL\10\Geomatics\02 CAD\ISWQDEV Queens Drive 2019-06-18.dwg(Figure 2 (2019))\SWIMG2019\SWQDEV\Queens Drive_Swindon\benjamin.brown* 21 Jun 2019



0 75m
Scale at A4 1:1500

Figure 2: Trench locations



Plate 1: Working shot of machine supervision.



Plate 2: Trench 3, looking south-east



Plate 3: Trench 4, looking south-east



Plate 4: Trench 5, looking south-west



Plate 5: Trench 5 section 500 furrow 503, looking south-east



Plate 6: Trench 6, looking north-east



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX20ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



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