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Archaeological Evaluation Report



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

On the 6th and 7th of June 2012, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Chamberlain Hall and adjacent land within the grounds of Bassett House, part of the Glen Eyre complex of the University of Southampton. The work was commissioned by Ramboll UK Ltd on behalf of the University.

A total of six trenches was excavated, four within the grounds of Chamberlain House and a further two trenches within the grounds of Bassett House.

Although several trenches revealed landscaping deposits relating to the construction of Bassett House in the late 19th century and Chamberlain Hall in 1959, no archaeological features or deposits pre-dating the late post-medieval period were encountered during the course of the evaluation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 6th and 7th of June 2012, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Chamberlain Hall and Bassett House, part of the Glen Eyre complex of the University of Southampton. The evaluation was commissioned by Ramboll UK Ltd. on behalf of the University of Southampton.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as part of the proposal by the University of Southampton to redevelop the Chamberlain Hall building. The proposed new building encompasses the footprint of the existing Chamberlain Hall and also incorporates some of the surrounding grounds of Chamberlain Hall.
- 1.1.3 A broader proposal for re-development of this part of the University Campus also incorporates Bassett House to the north-west of Chamberlain Hall. Consideration is being given to proposals for the demolition of this building and the re-use of this site.
- 1.1.4 Although a brief was not set, discussions between Ramboll UK Ltd. and Stephen Appleby, Planning Archaeologist for Southampton City Council, determined the scope of work required to inform the planning process. OA produced a written scheme of investigation, approved by Stephen Appleby, detailing how it intended to conduct the work (OA 2012). Six trial trenches, ranging from 9m to 22m in length, were proposed. The trenches were situated within the proposed development footprint where possible and were sited to avoid known modern services and protected trees.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Chamberlain Hall and Bassett House are situated to the south-east of Glen Eyre Road, Southampton. Bassett House is also bordered by Chetwynd Road to the north. The development area is centered at NGR: SU 42027 15968 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The underlying solid geology of the site is the Wittering formation, part of the Bracklesham Group of banded clays and sands. The north-western edge of the site, particularly at Bassett House, may be at the edge of River Terrace Deposits, in this case Terrace 9 which is mainly gravel (British Geological Survey, Sheet 315, 1987)
- 1.2.3 The site slopes from a high point of 71m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the north to approximately 58m AOD to the south.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been described in detail in a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) produced by Ramboll UK Ltd (Ramboll 2012). An abridged version is reproduced below.

Palaeolithic Period

- 1.3.2 Within the 1km Study Area defined in the DBA, there have been four findspots of Palaeolithic artefacts, including a number of Palaeolithic flint tools recovered only c 318m to the north of the development site. A significant number of other Palaeolithic flint artefacts have been found within 1km of the site, although many of them were recovered in the early 20th century and consequently their provenance and dating are less certain.
- 1.3.3 The development site lies within a zone noted for its extraordinary wealth of Palaeolithic sites. However, the results of geoarchaeological monitoring undertaken by the University of Reading during previous site investigation works indicated that the underlying gravels are too early to be of archaeological interest. As the gravels at Chamberlain Hall are derived from Terrace 9, dated to MIS 22, they are considerably older than the Boxgrove site (MIS 13), which lies on the oldest terrace to have evidence of human activity along the south coast.

Mesolithic Period

- 1.3.4 Only two findspots of Mesolithic date have been found within the study area covered by the DBA. Flint tools were found 760m from the site at Red Lodge in Bassett at the Civic Sports Centre and also 1km to the south in the garden of 21 University Road.

Neolithic Period

- 1.3.5 Three findspots of Neolithic material are recorded within the study area covered by the DBA, the closest being 700m-800m from the site. These comprise flint tools found in the sports ground to the west of the site, a polished Neolithic axe, and a flint knife.

Bronze Age

- 1.3.6 Only one Bronze Age find – a flint dagger – is recorded within the study area, some 650m to the south.
- 1.3.7 The lack of associated sites of the Neolithic period and the Bronze Age may simply reflect the dearth of archaeological work undertaken in the area, as opposed to a low potential for such remains.

Iron Age

- 1.3.8 Only one findspot dating from the Iron Age has been recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) covering the 1km search area of the DBA. A single Iron Age gold stater coin was found in the garden of 122 Violet Road in Bassett, although this is believed to have been imported with a delivery of garden topsoil.

Roman Period

- 1.3.9 There is no known evidence for Roman occupation or industry in the proposed development site. One Roman coin of Constantius was found on Southampton Common at Highfield in 1949 some 760m to the south.

Early Medieval

- 1.3.10 Five sites dating to the early medieval period are located within the study area, the majority of which are related to land boundary markers and thoroughfares. It is likely that the site of the Cutted Thorn or Cutthorn Cross, a boundary marker at the junction of The Avenue and Burgess Road, dates from the early medieval period. The cross seems to have gone by the 16th century, although the place name has survived. The Burlestone Cross was another boundary marker that once stood on the southern verge of Burgess Road, and is known from historic maps and documents. The origins of Southampton Common probably extend back to the early Anglo-Saxon settlement of the late 5th or early 6th century AD.
- 1.3.11 An earthwork known as the Cutted Thorn or Cutthorn is located on Southampton Common just south-east of the Avenue and Burgess Road junction. This earthwork is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 1001914) and may date from the early medieval period, when it was used as a court leet or meeting place. However, its origins are by no means certain. Another land boundary known as Hill Lane is likely to date from the Saxon period and formed the western boundary of the Borough of Southampton in 1846. It was first mentioned in 956AD as a major land boundary, but the precise line of the Saxon and medieval lane is not known.

Medieval Period

- 1.3.12 Three sites of medieval date are located within the 1km search area, but none lies within the proposed development site itself. A large boundary stone by the side of Burgess Road is considered to be of medieval date, and may have once been the site of a cross, although there is no direct evidence to prove this. Burgess Road itself is medieval, but may have originally been a Roman road. It was known as Burger's Strete or Burgess Street, and was one of the few made roads outside the medieval town of Southampton.
- 1.3.13 The banks and boundary ditches of Southampton Common may be medieval in origin, and were perhaps part of the enclosure of 1577.

Post-medieval period

- 1.3.14 There are 50 sites within the 1km study area that belong to the post-medieval period or the earliest part of the modern period. The majority of these sites are 19th-century dwellings. Only the 19th-century building of Bassett House is located on the site itself.
- 1.3.15 Additionally, evidence of brickearth digging was observed during an archaeological watching brief in 1998 at 35 Bassett Crescent East, and a 19th-century clay pipe bowl was found at 142 Bassett Green Road.

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA would like to thank Jacek Gruszczynski of Ramboll UK and Stephen Appleby of Southampton City Council. The fieldwork was managed for OA by Katrina Anker and conducted by Dan Sykes with the assistance of Chris Richardson and Ian Cook.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

General

2.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to:

- establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site area;
- determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present;
- establish the significance of the archaeological remains;
- establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features;
- assess the nature and extent of any existing disturbance on the site and comment on the potential for archaeological deposits to survive across the site of the proposed works;
- make available the results of the investigation through dissemination of a grey literature report.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Six trenches were excavated across the development area using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket (Fig. 2). Site specific methodologies were as follows:

- i. All trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation.
- ii. Trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under close archaeological supervision.
- iii. A representative section was cleaned and photographed within each trench. All trenches were photographed with black and white 35 mm film. A digital photographic record was also maintained. All trenches had Ordnance Datum levels recorded at ground level at both ends and at three points along the base.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the evaluation works with the exception of 19th- and 20th-century landscaping deposits relating to the construction of both Bassett House and Chamberlain Hall.

3.1.2 Descriptions of all deposits and details of trenches are tabulated in Appendix 1.

3.1.3 Photographs of the excavated trenches are presented in Plates 1-6.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 Five of the six trenches (Trenches 1-3, 5 and 6) were dug in areas of lawn. In four of these (Trenches 1-3 and 6) the topsoil overlay a levelling deposit that comprised orange-brown clay and sands or gravels (contexts 101, 201, 301, 601), most likely derived from the locality, and associated with the construction of the surrounding extant buildings (Plates 7-10). No evidence for a landscaping / levelling deposit was observed in Trench 5, situated to the south west of Bassett House. In addition to landscaping deposits, Trenches 1 and 2 also revealed a buried topsoil (contexts 102 and 202) beneath the landscaping, suggesting that the ground had been slightly raised to the south west of Chamberlain Hall and Bassett House.

3.2.2 Trench 4 was dug through a tarmac surface that had been laid over a combination of concrete slab and made ground overlying the natural clay.

3.3 Finds summary

3.3.1 Two pottery sherds were found, one in landscaping deposit (101) and the other in modern topsoil (500). Both were clearly identified as body-sherds of 19th- to 20th-century date. These were not retained.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.4.1 No deposits considered suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 Ground conditions were reasonable. Persistent rain did result in some pooling within the trenches, particularly Trench 4, although the bases of all trenches were visible in plan prior to any flooding and any archaeological features present would have been identified.

4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 No archaeological remains were encountered in any of the trenches. Five out of the six trenches excavated (Trenches 1-4 and 6) exhibited evidence of modern landscaping relating to the extant structures and modern landscaping. Trench 2 also contained a modern service, which was left *in situ*.

4.2.2 In Trench 4, the modern carpark surface sits directly on the natural geology and has completely truncated away any previous land surface.

- 4.2.3 The presence of a buried soil in Trenches 1 and 2 and the absence of any landscaping deposit in Trench 5 suggest that there has been little truncation of the earlier soil sequence in the west of the site.
- 4.2.4 The results of the evaluation demonstrate that although previous landscaping has occurred across the site, this has been of minimal impact to the west of both Chamberlain Hall and Bassett House. The landscaping layer was, however, very similar to the natural, perhaps indicating truncation in another part of the site. The presence of buried topsoil suggests that any previously existing archaeological features, and certainly those of any depth, would have survived the construction of these buildings within the western part of the development area.
- 4.2.5 The absence of any stray finds within the buried topsoil or landscaped layers, together with the absence of observed archaeological features within the trenches, may suggest a general lack of archaeological remains within the area rather than the removal of earlier activity by truncation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Consists of a buried subsoil and topsoil overlain by a modern landscaping deposit and present topsoil.					Avg. depth (m)	0.9
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	13
Contexts						
Context No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
100	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	-	0.25	Redeposited orange brown natural clay – landscaping deposit	Pottery	19th-20th C
102	Layer	-	0.26	Buried topsoil. Friable dark brown sandy clay with gravels	-	-
103	Layer	-	0.1	Subsoil / dirty natural – a disturbed interface between natural and old plough soil	-	-
104	Layer	-	-	Natural – orange brown clay with patches of gravel	-	-

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	NW-SE
Trench devoid of archaeological remains. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural deposit of silty sand.					Depth (m)	0.5-1.0
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	15
Contexts						
Context No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
200	Layer	-	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	-	0.36	Redeposited yellow orange natural clay – landscaping deposit	-	-

202	Layer	-	0.36	Buried topsoil. Tenacious dark brown silty clay with gravels	-	-
203	Layer	-	-	Natural - yellow orange clay	-	-

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	NE-SW
Consists of topsoil and a landscaping deposit overlying the natural clay.					Avg. depth (m)	0.6
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	22
Contexts						
Context No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
300	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	-	0.45	Mixed grey sand and ash-rich gravel with orange clay – landscaping deposit	-	-
302	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Trench devoid of archaeological remains. Consists of modern tarmac and concrete overlying a natural orange clay with gravel patches. Concrete beam present within the trench. This beam is likely to be associated with the foundations of Chamberlain Hall.					Avg. depth (m)	0.35
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	17
Contexts						
Context No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
400	Layer	-	0.1	Tarmac	-	-
401	Layer	-	0.25	Made ground	-	-
402	Layer	-	0.22	Reinforced concrete	-	-
403	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

Trench 5						
General description					Orientation	NNW-SSE
No archaeological remains present.					Avg. depth (m)	0.6
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	9
Contexts						
Context No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
500	Layer	-	0.35	Topsoil - mid grey brown silty clay	Pottery	19th century
501	Layer	-	0.26	Subsoil - tenacious mixed yellow brown clay with mixed mid grey brown clay. Heavily root disturbed.	-	-
502	Layer	-	-	Natural – tenacious orange brown with grey mottles and clayey outcrops of poorly sorted gravel	-	-

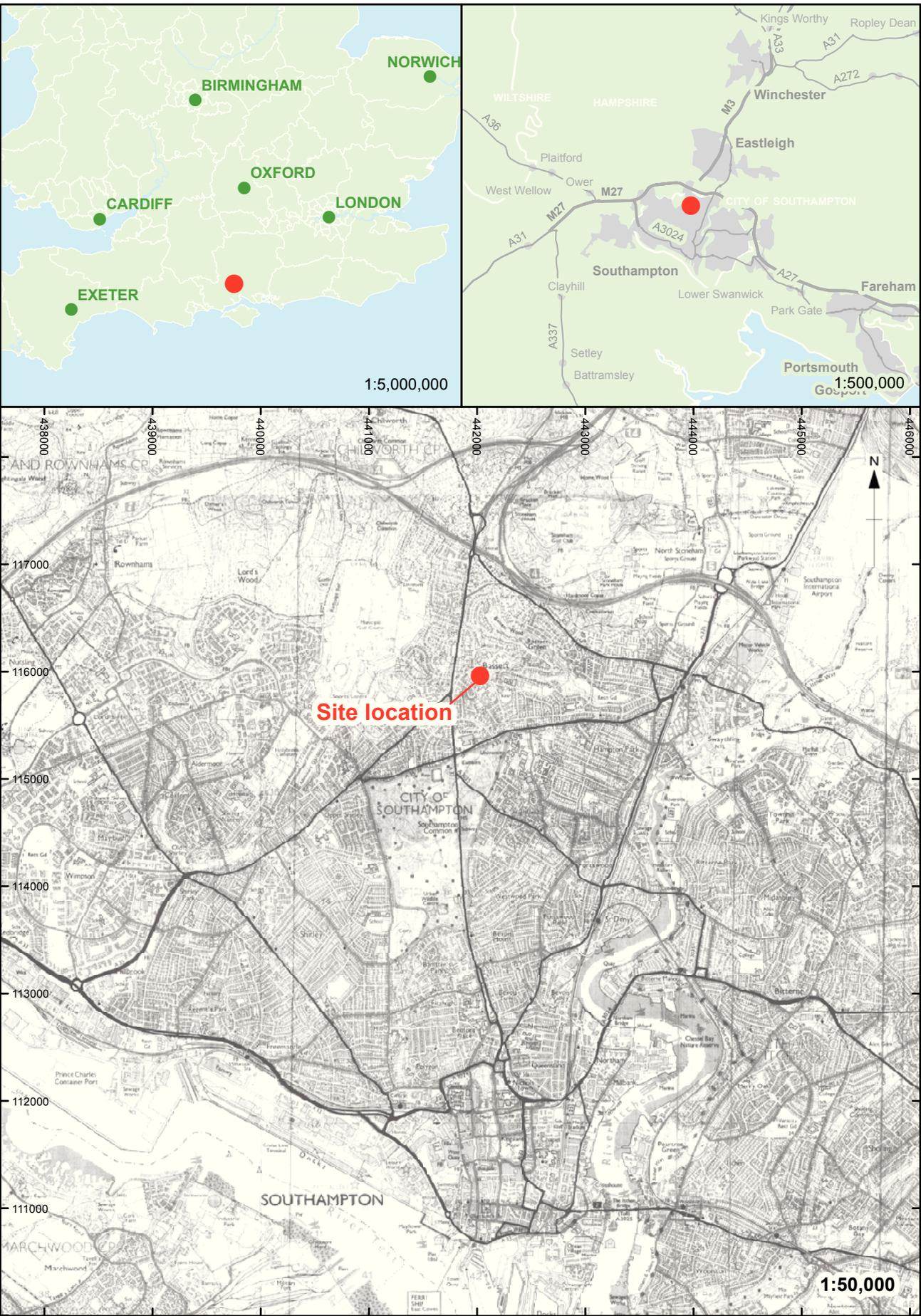
Trench 6						
General description					Orientation	ENE-WSW
No archaeological remains. Some evidence of made ground likely associated with 19th-century landscaping associated with Bassett House.					Avg. depth (m)	0.6
					Width (m)	1.6
					Length (m)	18
Contexts						
Context No	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date
600	Layer	-	0.28	Topsoil – friable mid brown sandy clay	-	-
601	Layer	-	0.5	Made ground – friable light grey silty sand with poorly sorted gravel and lenses of grey ashy gravel	-	-
602	Layer	-	-	Natural – orange /light grey sandy gravel.	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2012 Archaeological Evaluation at Chamberlain Hall, University of Southampton. Written Scheme of Investigation. Oxford Archaeology

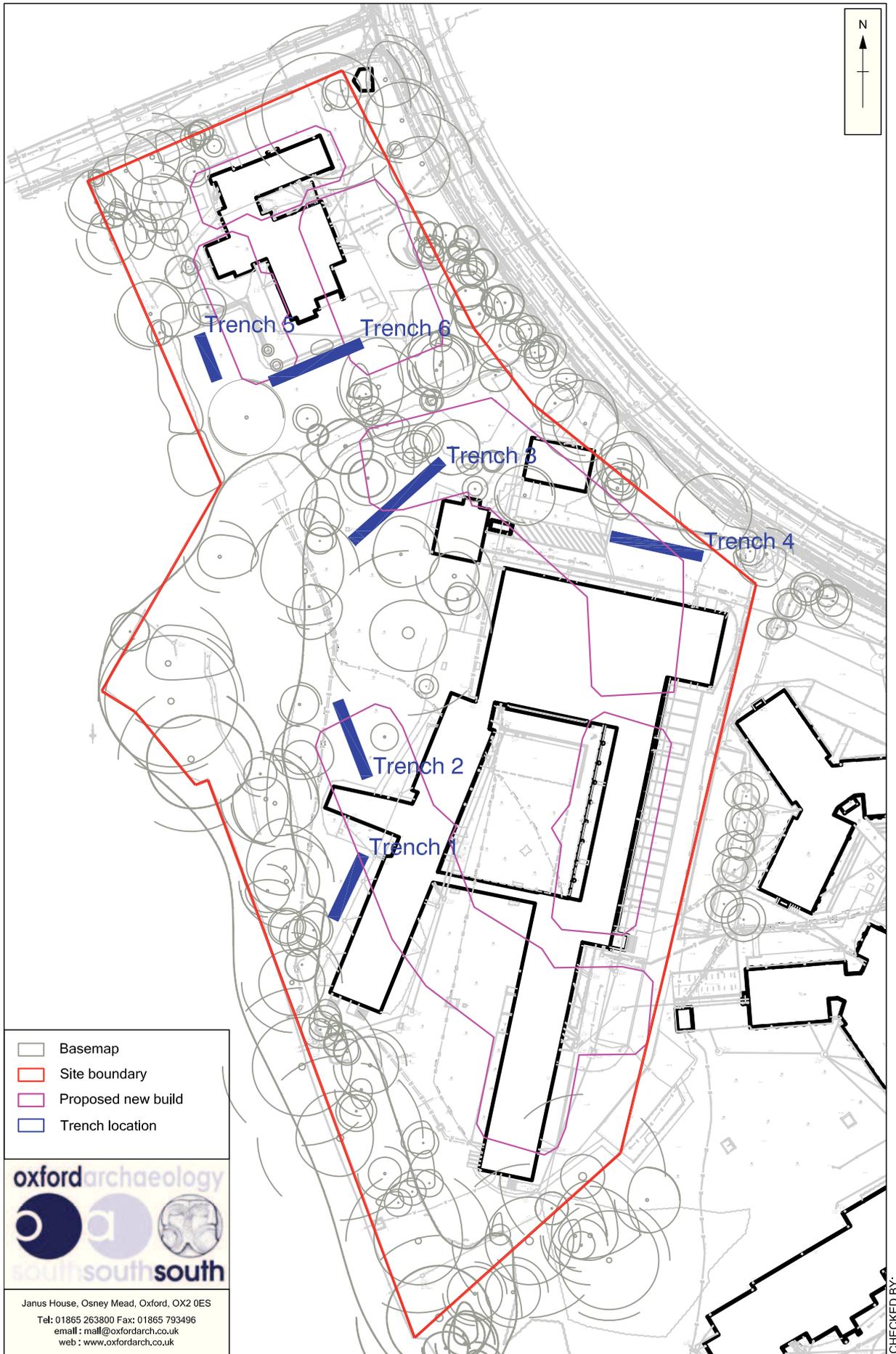
Ramboll, 2012 Redevelopment of Chamberlain Hall and Bassett House, University of Southampton. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**Site name:** Chamberlain Hall, University of Southampton**Site code:** SOU 1597**Grid reference:** 42027, 15968**Type:** Evaluation**Date and duration of project:** 6th – 7th June 2012.**Area of site:** 3077.80m²**Summary of results:** Five of the six trenches revealed deposits relating to the extant buildings and their associated landscaping during the late-19th and mid-20th century. No earlier archaeological remains were encountered.**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES. It has been offered to Southampton Museum, where it will be deposited subject to their acceptance.



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Figure 1: Site location



X:\Chamberlain Hall, Southampton \Evaluation trench layout - draft-2.dwg(A4 portrait)****katrina.anker 13 Jun 2012

Figure 2. Trench location plan



Plate 1: Trench 1



Plate 2: Trench 2



Plate 3: Trench 3



Plate 4: Trench 4



Plate 5: Trench 5



Plate 6: Trench 6



Plate 7: Trench 1 showing modern landscaping deposit overlying buried topsoil



Plate 8: Trench 2 showing modern landscaping deposit overlying buried topsoil



Plate 9: Trench 3 showing landscaping deposit



Plate 10: Trench 6 showing landscaping deposit



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