Burford Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

oxfordarchaeology south

December 2014

Client: CgMs Consulting

Issue No: 1
OA Job No: 5940
NGR: SP 0294 0213

Archaeological Watching Brief

Client Name: CgMs Consulting

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Burford Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Issue/Version Number: 1

Grid Reference: SP 0294 0213

Planning Reference:

Invoice Code: CIBUROWB

OA Job Number: 5940

Site Code: CIBURO14

Receiving Museum: Corinium Museum

Museum Accession No.:

Event No.:

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
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Document File Location: X:\c\Cirencester_Burford Road\WB_Report
Graphics File Location: \\Samba-1\invoice codes a thru h\C_invoice codes\CIBUROWB
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Burford Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake a watching brief during highway improvement works on the A429 Burford Road east of Cirencester Town Centre. The watching brief was carried out in June and July 2014.

Existing exposures through the natural bedrock were recorded and a low mound adjacent to Burford Road was investigated. The mound proved to be of geological origin. The presence of a mature tree on the mound has undoubtedly protected the mound from more recent truncation.

An area of ground reduction on the approach to Grove Lane Roundabout was monitored which revealed that the geological sequence had been truncated, probably by previous road construction works. No archaeological deposits or features were present.

In addition, the widening of an existing footpath to the north-east was monitored, revealing the footing of a dry stone wall which had flanked the existing road. No other archaeological deposits or features were revealed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake a watching brief during highway improvement works on the A429 Burford Road to the east of Cirencester town centre (Fig. 1). The works included the upgrading of the approach to the Grove Lane roundabout and the widening of the footpath along Burford Road to provide a new cycleway (Fig. 2).

1.1.2 Although not the subject of a planning condition, the work was undertaken at the request of Charles Parry, the planning archaeologist at Gloucestershire County Council. The Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, but discussions with Charles Parry established the scope of work required. OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (Oxford Archaeology 2014) which outlined how those requirements would be implemented.

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' '*Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*' (revised 2008) and with local and national planning policies.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies adjacent to Burford Road, Cirencester (NGR: SP 0294 0213).

1.2.2 The area of development consisted of the verge of the existing Burford Road. A drystone wall runs parallel to the wall and is flanked by a hedgerow containing mature trees.

1.2.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is mudstone of the Forest Marble Formation (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site lies just outside the line of the walls of Roman *Corinium,* and Burford Road follows the approximate alignment of the Fosse Way before it enters the city via the *Verulamium* gate.

1.3.2 Tar Barrows, a Scheduled Monument, lies some 400m to the north-east of the site. The site is believed to be of late Iron Age or Roman origin. Geophysical anomalies and cropmarks indicate the presence of a wider ceremonial area dating to the Roman, and perhaps later Iron Age, period.

1.3.3 During an inspection of the site, following commencement of construction works, it was noted by the planning archaeologist for Gloucestershire County Council that the ground works had cut through a low mound, topped by a mature oak, on the northern side of Burford Road and close to the Grove Lane roundabout. While the character and date of the mound could not be determined, the possibility of a prehistoric or Roman origin could not be ruled out.

1.4 Potential

1.4.1 Given the site's location between the Roman town of *Corinium* and the probable Roman ceremonial site at Tar Barrows, the site had the potential to contain significant archaeological deposits of this date.

1.4.2 The low mound alongside Burford Road had the potential to be a barrow, or burial mound, of prehistoric or Roman origin.

2 Project Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aims of the watching brief were:

(i) To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of any archaeological remains in the areas affected by the works;

(ii) To make available the results of the investigation.

2.1.2 The specific aims and objectives of the watching brief, as set-out in the WSI (Oxford Archaeology 2014) were:

(iii) To carry out selective cleaning and recording of the previously exposed soil profile at the approach to the Grove Lane roundabout, paying particular attention to the exposed mound;

(iv) To monitor the remaining ground works at the approach to the Grove Lane roundabout;

(v) To monitor the construction of a new cycleway running north-east to the junction of Burford Road with the A419.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Several sample sections of existing exposures of the soil profile were cleaned and recorded by a geoarchaeologist. Particular attention was paid to the investigation and recording of the exposure through the mound.

2.2.2 Further site visits were undertaken during those periods when ground works at the approach to the Grove Lane roundabout were undertaken. The frequency and duration of such visits was determined by the main contractor's programme.

2.2.3 The subsequent widening of the foot path to the north-east of the junction by about 1m was monitored at a reduced frequency with intermittent site visits.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken in three distinct phases:

- Recording previously exposed soil profiles and the mound section (Fig. 2);
- Monitoring of remaining ground works at the approach to the Grove Lane roundabout (Fig. 2);
- Intermittent site visits during the construction of a new cycleway (Fig. 2, inset).

3.1.2 The observations made during the various phases of monitoring are described separately below, followed by an overall discussion and conclusion.

3.2 Previously exposed soil profiles and the mound section

3.2.1 The soil profiles exposed in the south-east facing section of the excavations displayed a sequence of bedrock units of the Forest Marble Formation dating to the Upper Jurassic (Fig. 3, sections 2 and 3. Plates 1 and 2). The bedrock units (contexts 3, 4 and 5 in section 2 and contexts 20, 21 and 22 in section 4) varied slightly in colour and stoniness, but generally displayed a horizontal structure. The weathered upper bedrock horizons were overlain by a subsoil (contexts 2 and 19) composed of brown or olive sandy silt. which in turn was overlain by the modern topsoil (context 1). The topsoil was in places overlain by an organic leaf litter layer (context 18)

3.2.2 The exposed section through the mound (Fig. 3, section 1, Plate 3) consisted, at its base, of 1.35 to 1.55m of Upper Jurassic bedrock in several superimposed beds (contexts 7, 8, 9 and 10). The geological beds had slightly wavy contacts. At the south-west side of the mound, the geological beds formed a small local fold. The top bed of the fold (context 8) consisted of light grey angular mudstone clasts which clearly displayed the bend in the fold.

3.2.3 Overlying the weathered bedrock was the subsoil (context 6), 0.2 to 0.35m thick. This layer produced a sherd of pottery of post-medieval date and a small brick fragment.

3.2.4 The top of the mound sequence was formed by a dark brown topsoil (context 1), 0.5m thick.

3.2.5 Particular care was taken to establish whether any evidence of ditches flanking the mound was present. No such evidence was present to the south-west of the mound. To the north-east, an irregularly shaped depression (context 12), up to 0.35m deep and 3.05m wide, was present, cut from immediately beneath the topsoil. It was filled with a mixed deposit, largely comprised of topsoil (13).

3.3 Ground works at the approach to the Grove Lane roundabout

3.3.1 The remaining excavations in the main ground works area were monitored (Fig. 2).

3.3.2 The ground reduction exposed a number of service trenches cut into geological deposits. The geological sequence had been truncated across much of the width of the new works, presumably by earlier road construction.

3.3.3 The soil profiles exposed in the area were recorded in several sample sections These displayed a similar stratigraphy as recorded further to the south-west (see above).

3.3.4 No archaeological features or deposits were present

3.4 Construction of new cycleway

3.4.1 No features other than the exposed footing of the flanking dry stone wall were observed.

3.5 Finds

3.5.1 A small number of artefacts were recovered from context 6, a subsoil, and these are quantified below.

Context	Description	Date
6	Pottery – 2 refitting body sherds post medieval red ware (PMR), 14g	Late 16th – 18th century
6	2 refitting brick sherds, 11g	17th – 19th century

3.6 Environmental remains

3.6.1 No deposits with potential for environmental analysis were encountered and no environmental samples were taken.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

4.1.1 No archaeological deposits where encountered during the watching brief.

4.1.2 The soil profiles recorded in the main working area show a stratigraphy of weathered Upper Jurassic bedrock with a silty subsoil and dark brown topsoil, which is consistent over the entire area.

4.1.3 The mound at the north-west side of the road is built up from this local geological stratigraphy. The steeper south-west side of the mound section is caused by the firm brittle bedrock unit which forms part of a small local tectonic fold. The irregularly shaped feature at the north-east side of the mound section was filled by a mixed sediment, partially derived from topsoil and likely to be of recent origin. The presence of the mature tree on top of the mound has undoubtedly protected the mound from truncation during more recent road construction works.

4.1.4 The area of earthworks which were monitored revealed a number of service trenches cut into weathered and truncated Upper Jurassic bedrock.

4.1.5 No archaeological features were present in the area of footpath widening other than the footing of a dry stone wall which had flanked the existing road.

APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
1	Layer	0.15m		>20m	Dark brown clayey silt. Topsoil	-	
2	Layer	0.22m		>10m	Brown silt. Subsoil	-	
3	Layer	0.14m		>10m	Olive grey clay with common flat quartzite pebbles		
4	Layer	0.44m		>10m	Brownish yellow, structured clayey silt, rare mud-stone pebbles		
5	Layer	0.50m		>10mk	Light olive brown silty clay, common quartzite pebbles		
6	Layer	0.34m		6m	Subsoil. Brownish grey silt with common pebbles	yes	Late 16th-19th century
7	Layer	0.38		5.9m	Light greyish brown clayey silt, common mud-stone pebbles		
8	Layer	0.85m		5.45m	Brittle, stratified light grey clayey silt. Weathered Folded Bedrock		
9	Layer	1.05m		17.6m	Light yellowish brown clayey silt, mud-stone pebbles common		
10	Layer	>0.6m		17.55m	Stiff olive grey silty clay with occasional lenses of grey clay.		
11	Layer	0.15m		>1.15m	Massive brown silt with rare pebbles and cobbles of mud-stone. Subsoil.		
12	Cut	0.3m		3.05m	Irregular cut, modern ground disturbance		
13	Fill	0.3m		3.05m	Dark brown clayey gravelly silt mixed with yellowish brown silt.		
14	Cut	0.42		1.55	Irregular cut. Modern disturbance		
15	Fill	0.44		1.55	Mixed brown and yellowish brown silty clay, few quartzite pebbles. Modern fill		
16	Layer	0.47		2m	Yellowish olive silty clay, common small mud-stone pebbles.		
17	Layer	0.18m		1.8m	Olive grey mottled clayey silt.		
18	Layer				Friable grey silt, abundant coarse organic detritus. Leave detritus horizon		

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
19	Layer	0.25		>10m	Yellowish olive sandy silt. Subsoil		
20	Layer	0.42		>10m	Hard pale yellow clay with abundant quartzite pebbles and cobbles.		
21	Layer	0.28		>10m	Yellowish brown mottled silty clay, common quartzite pebbles		
22	Layer	>0.05m		>10m	Stiff olive grey clayey silt, common small mud-stone pebbles.		

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Oxford Archaeology 2014 Burford Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire. Written Scheme of investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

Appendix C. Summary of Site Details

Site name:	Burford Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire
Site code:	CIBURO14
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR SP 0294 0213
Type of watching brief:	Record of existing exposures, ground reduction
Date and duration of project:	Between June 2014 and July 2014
Area of site:	Approximately 0.2ha
Summary of results:	Existing exposures through the natural bedrock were recorded and a low mound adjacent to Burford Road was investigated. The mound proved to be of geological origin. An area of ground reduction on the approach to Grove Lane Roundabout was monitored which revealed that the geological sequence had been truncated, probably by previous road construction works. No archaeological deposits or features were present. In addition, the widening of an existing footpath to the north-east was monitored revealing the footing of a dry stone wall which had flanked the existing road. No other archaeological deposits or features were revealed.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Corinium Museum in due course.

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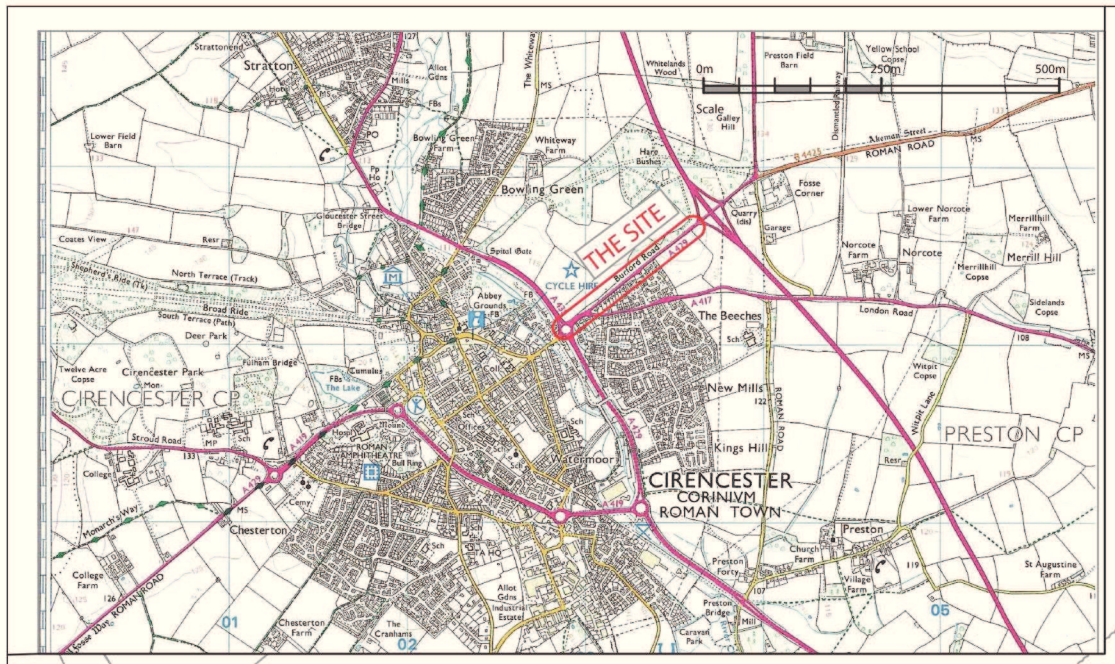
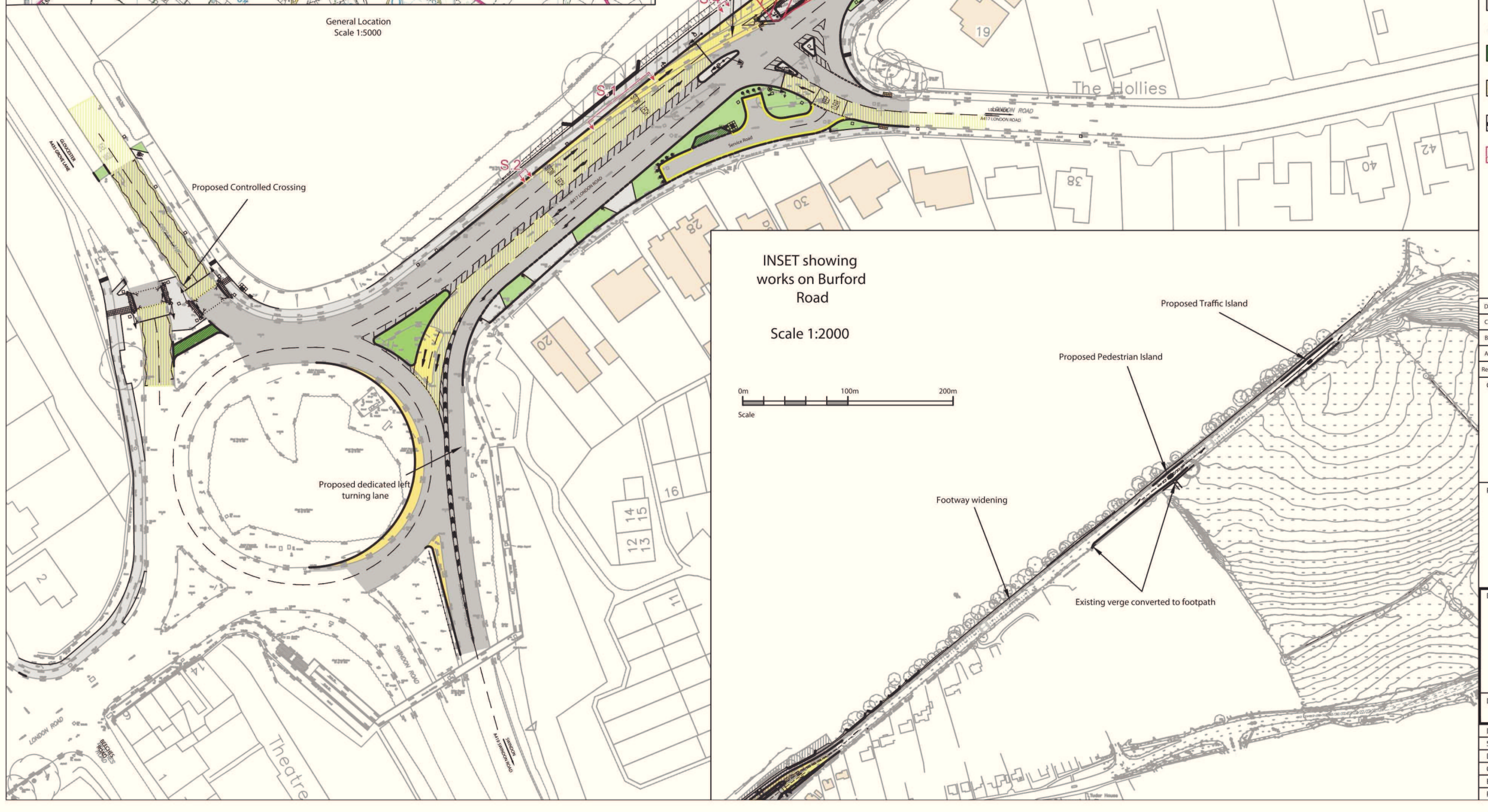
Figure 1: Site location



General Location
Scale 1:5000



INSET showing works on Burford Road

Scale 1:2000

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KEY:

- New / Modified sections of footway, traffic island, vehicular access or footway/cycleway
- Areas of existing carriageway converted to highway verge or traffic island
- New or resurfaced carriageway construction
- Signal heads
- Reinforced grass paving
- High Friction Surfacing
- Log wall (see drawing number H289/23 for detail)
- Area of earthworks monitoring
- Illustrated sections

Rev	Date	Description	Initials
D	04/03/14	Log wall opposite No.19 Burford Road extended following site clearance and survey works.	CS
C	30/07/13	Plan updated in accordance with stage 2 Road Safety Audit comments (July 2013).	CS
B	07/06/13	Junction Layout Updated	ATBD
A	01/05/12	Additional Road Markings Added	TLH

Client

Robert Hitchins Ltd.

Project

London Road and Burford Road Junction, Cirencester

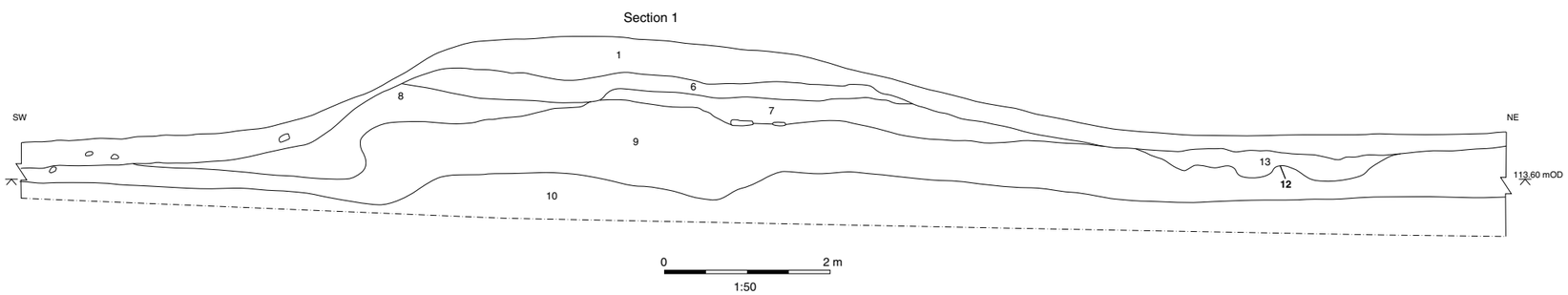
Drawing Title

Overall Scheme Layout

Drawing No. H289/40 Rev D

Date	April 2012
Scale	1:500 @ A1
Drawn By	AJM / TLH
Checked By	PLSF
E-Mail	pfinlayson@pfaplc.com
File Ref.	H289/Drawings/H289_40.dwg

Figure 2: Site plan



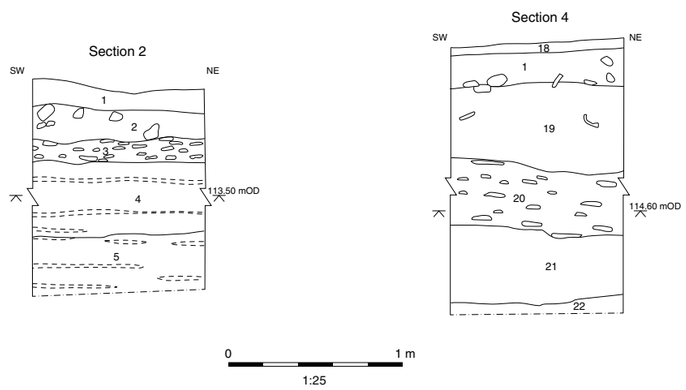


Figure 3: Sections

Plate 1: Section 2

Plate 2: Section 4

Plate 3: Section through mound

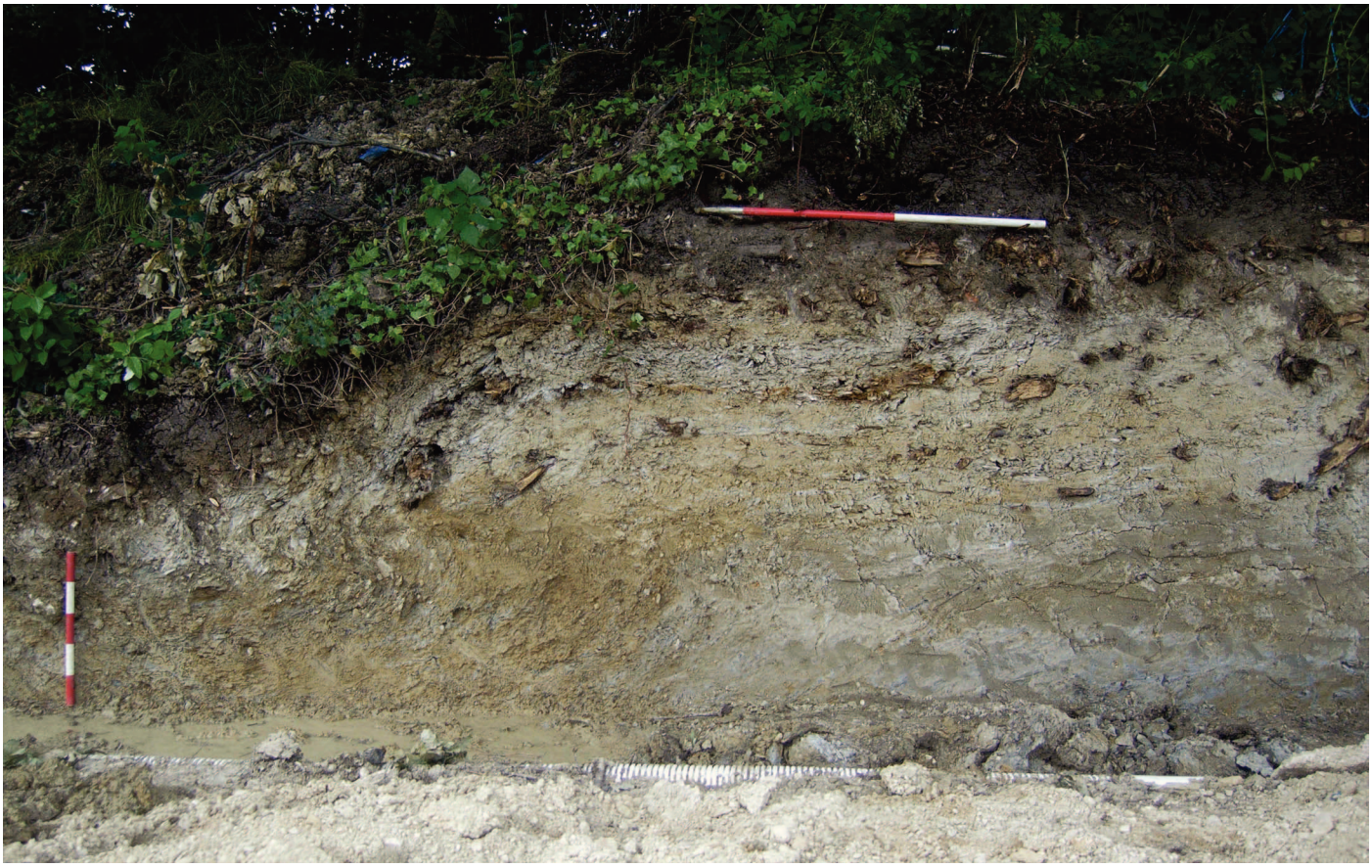


Plate 4: Geological fold

Plate 5: Feature 12

Plate 6: General view of ground reduction

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