



Castle Quay, Banbury, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Excavation Report

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Archaeological Excavation Report

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Summary

Between 28th May and 4th June 2019, Oxford Archaeology undertook archaeological recording of a lift shaft pit and a service trench test pit at Castle Quay, Banbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4568 4087). This identified significant levels of truncation and modern made ground relating to the previous development of the site. It also established that the current development impact levels were set within the modern made ground and that any potential underlying undisturbed horizons were likely to be truncated and fragmented or not significantly affected by this development.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank McLaren Group for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Richard Oram, who monitored the work on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council, for his advice and guidance.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Steve Lawrence. The fieldwork was undertaken by Lee Sparks and Rachael Daniel. Thanks are also extended to the team of OA staff that prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by McLaren Construction (part of the McLaren Group) to undertake archaeological recording and reporting of the site of the Castle Quay redevelopment in the centre of Banbury.

1.1.2 The archaeological work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning refs: 13/01601/OUT and 16/02366/OUT (following a section 73 application for variation)). The conditions to the planning permission relevant to the archaeological remains state (s. 73 variation numbers in brackets):

10 (9) Prior to any demolition on the site and the commencement of the development a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the local Planning Authority shall prepare a first stage archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation, relating to the application area, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To safeguard the recording of archaeological matters within the site in accordance with the NPPF (2012)

11 (10) Prior to any intrusive works taking place for the first and successive phases of the site and following the approval of the first stage Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in condition 10 (9), a programme of archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording of that part of the application area shall be carried out by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved first stage Written Scheme of Investigation.

Reason - In order to determine the extent, character and significance of the surviving remains of archaeological interest and to safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological importance on the site in accordance with NPPF (2012).

12 (11) Prior to any intrusive works taking place for the first and successive phases of the site and following completion of the evaluation referred to in condition 11 (10), if necessary, a second written scheme of investigation for archaeological mitigation will be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To safeguard the recording of archaeological matters within the site in accordance with NPPF (2012).

13 (12) Prior to any intrusive works taking place for the first and successive phases of the site and following approval of the written scheme of investigation referred to in condition 12 (11), if necessary, the further phase of archaeological mitigation shall be carried out in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.

Reason - To safeguard the recording of archaeological matters within the site in accordance with the NPPF (2012).

1.1.3 Trial trench evaluation was undertaken at the site in accordance with, and to fulfil, conditions 10 and 11 (TVAS 2016a; 2016b). Subsequently OA produced a written scheme of investigation (WSI) fulfilling the requirement of condition 12 and outlining

how OA would undertake the archaeological recording and reporting at the site to fulfil condition 13 of the planning permission (OA 2019). A detailed site-specific brief was not issued, although the area of archaeological potential was identified by the planning archaeologist for the local planning authority following the results of the evaluation. The scope of works required to fulfil the remaining conditions were also discussed directly between OA and Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). This report outlines how OA implemented the agreed scope of works and the results of the investigation.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

1.2.1 The site lies to the south of the Oxford Canal and Cherwell River in Banbury and is centred on national grid reference SP 4568 4087 (Fig. 1). The Oxford Canal borders the north-eastern side of the mitigation area with the existing multi-storey car park to the immediate south-west. Cherwell Drive is to the north-west with Castle Quay shopping centre to the south-east.

1.2.2 The area of development consists of hard standing of the former car park with a relatively level surface at approximately 92.3m aOD. This rises at the south-eastern end by approximately 1m where the ground is raised to access the waterfront area of Castle Quay shopping centre. The mitigation boundary encloses approximately 0.1ha.

1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as Charmouth Mudstone Formation on the British Geological Survey website. The overlying superficial geology is recorded as Alluvium - Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel (BGS 2019).

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 (TVAS 2013). A summary of the archaeological and historical background was produced in the evaluation report (TVAS 2016b). The following (paragraphs 1.3.2 to 1.3.7) is a verbatim reproduction of part of that summary.

1.3.2 The castle site lies at the heart of the historic core of urban Banbury, which was an early medieval administrative centre, but was not mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086 (Munby *et al.* 1975). A major excavation of Banbury's historic core was undertaken in 1973-4 (Rodwell 1976), with later small-scale assessment during the construction of Castle Quay shopping centre between 1995-7 (Cuttler 1996; Litherland 1997; Litherland *et al.* 1997; Litherland and Nichol 1999).

1.3.3 These works strengthen evidence from the previous excavation of a moated castle site just to the north of the market plane. The documented histories are suggestive of a timber motte and palisaded bailey, probably built for the Bishop of Lincoln in 1135, with any earlier settlement controlled by the See of Dorchester-on-Thames from 1070 (Litherland and Nichol 1999). Though Banbury Castle would have been involved during the 'Rebellion' and was confiscated by Stephen from the Bishop during the 12th century civil war, it was later returned. It was strengthened by King John in the later 12th century.

- 1.3.4 Archaeological evidence showed a major rebuild inside the castle took place in the 13th century. The main keep was rebuilt in stone, and pentagonal in shape (Rodwell 1976). Its theoretical layout was interpreted based on limited excavation, uncovering the south-western part of an outer castle ditch and a minimal part of the location of the proposed motte. It has been compared with Beaumaris, and other Welsh Marches castles, mostly by its form and from the location protecting a probable market, and less so a detached settlement, which could have grown and serviced the castle from outside of its walls.
- 1.3.5 During the English Civil War from 1642 the castle was held by the Parliamentarians and was rapidly strengthened. After the Battle of Edgehill, near the northern Oxon-Northants border to the north-west, the castle was forced to surrender to Charles I before being retaken by the Parliamentary forces. After the war, it was systematically dismantled to prevent its further use, and became a ready source for stone for construction in the town (Rodwell 1976).
- 1.3.6 The Oxford Canal, built in the later 18th century, would not have respected the castle's location and was surmised to cut through the north-eastern corner of the outer earthwork (Litherland and Nichol 1999).
- 1.3.7 In the 1990s, when the Castle Quay shopping centre was being built, a series of geotechnical-type investigations including boreholes and test pits aimed to establish the limits of the castle (Litherland *et al.* 1997). They were successful in as much as this work outlined phases of development patterns in the now lost parts of post-medieval and Victorian Banbury namely Castle Street, Mill Street and Market Place (Litherland and Nichol 1999). It also identified areas of deep made ground, and therefore a potential for older remains surviving below (Litherland and Nichol 1999).
- 1.3.8 The most recent evaluation largely confirmed that significant depths of made ground were present across much of the development area. The single evaluation trench excavated within the current mitigation area was inconclusive with regards to identifying the presence or absence of the castle ditch.

2 EXCAVATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The general aim of the investigation was to identify and record the archaeological deposits within the targeted areas that will be impacted or destroyed by the development. To do this the excavation was to:

- i. confirm the presence/absence of any remains within the defined mitigation area within the constraints of the construction impact,
- ii. confirm the character of any remains present,
- iii. determine the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise,
- iv. recover geo-archaeological and palaeo-environmental remains where present and where these have the potential to address specific research aims,
- v. recover suitable materials for scientific dating where appropriate,
- vi. produce a factual report, full archive and HER data submission,
- vii. publish the results of the investigation at a level appropriate to their importance.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives were to determine:

- viii. the level of truncation across the mitigation area and the potential for undisturbed deposits to survive,
- ix. the presence or absence of the castle ditch within the mitigation area.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The current development building design utilises piling, pile caps and ground beams to form the foundation of the structures. This design and potential impact depths were reviewed in detail as part of the project planning and formed the basis for the methodology outlined in the WSI. This established the presence of known truncation to 4m deep across the north-eastern part of the site along the line of the existing drainage, a requirement to reduce the slab area to approximately 91m aOD and a lift pit excavation area to an impact depth of approximately 89.9m aOD. The existing car park surface was at approximately 92.3m aOD. The modern made ground was known to exist to depths greater than 2m from the current ground level.

2.3.2 In the first instance the lift shaft pit (see Fig. 2) was excavated in spits using a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket and operating under archaeological supervision. No archaeological deposits were encountered so the pit was excavated to the full impact depth of the lift shaft. A test pit was also excavated to establish the presence of the existing drainage and the truncation of deposits caused by this. The lift pit provided a section through the deposits that would be impacted by the development.

2.3.3 Following recording of the two pits from surface level the site was visited by Richard Oram to view the results and to establish the scope of further recording. This visit confirmed that the site offered little potential for the survival of any archaeological

deposits within the impact of the development and no further monitoring or stripping under archaeological control was required. The pits were backfilled immediately after the site visit.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the investigation are presented below. Details of all deposits, dimensions and depths can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 Excavation results

3.2.1 The natural geology of silty clay was revealed at the base of the lift pit shaft. This was overlain by a sequence of modern made ground deposits relating to the existing development. The existing car park hardstanding overlay the uppermost layer of made ground.

3.2.2 A large concrete drainage pipe was revealed at the base of the test pit trench excavated to locate this service. This confirmed extensive truncation to depths of approximately 4m below the current ground level with the service trench infilled with aggregate and capped by the existing car park surface. Undisturbed or natural deposits were not encountered within this trench.

3.2.3 No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered within either excavation area.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The conditions on site were generally good and all deposits were clearly identifiable.

4.2 Excavation objectives and results

4.2.1 The key objective of this investigation was to assess the level of truncation across the mitigation area and the potential for undisturbed deposits to survive within this, specifically the presence or absence of the castle ditch. No archaeology was encountered in any part of the excavation and the primary investigation areas established that the development would not significantly impact below the existing made ground deposits.

APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

General description					Orientation	NW-SE
The trial pit and lift shaft pit were both devoid of archaeology. Deposits comprise tarmac and made ground overlying natural geology of silty clay.					Length (m)	-
					Width (m)	-
					Avg. depth (m)	-
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1000	Layer	-	0.1	Tarmac – modern.	-	-
1001	Layer	-	2.15	Made ground – moderately soft mid reddish brown mixed silty clay, very frequent (>75%) inclusions of crushed concrete and modern brick, sub-angular stones.	-	-
1002	Layer	-	-	Natural – firm pale bluish grey slightly silty clay with infrequent mid brownish orange mottling.	-	-
1003	Layer	-	0.2	Made ground – compact, mid orangey brown crushed gravel.	-	-
1004	Layer	-	>0.21	Made ground – compact dark greyish brown slightly silty clay, moderately frequent broken red brick and concrete pieces.	-	-

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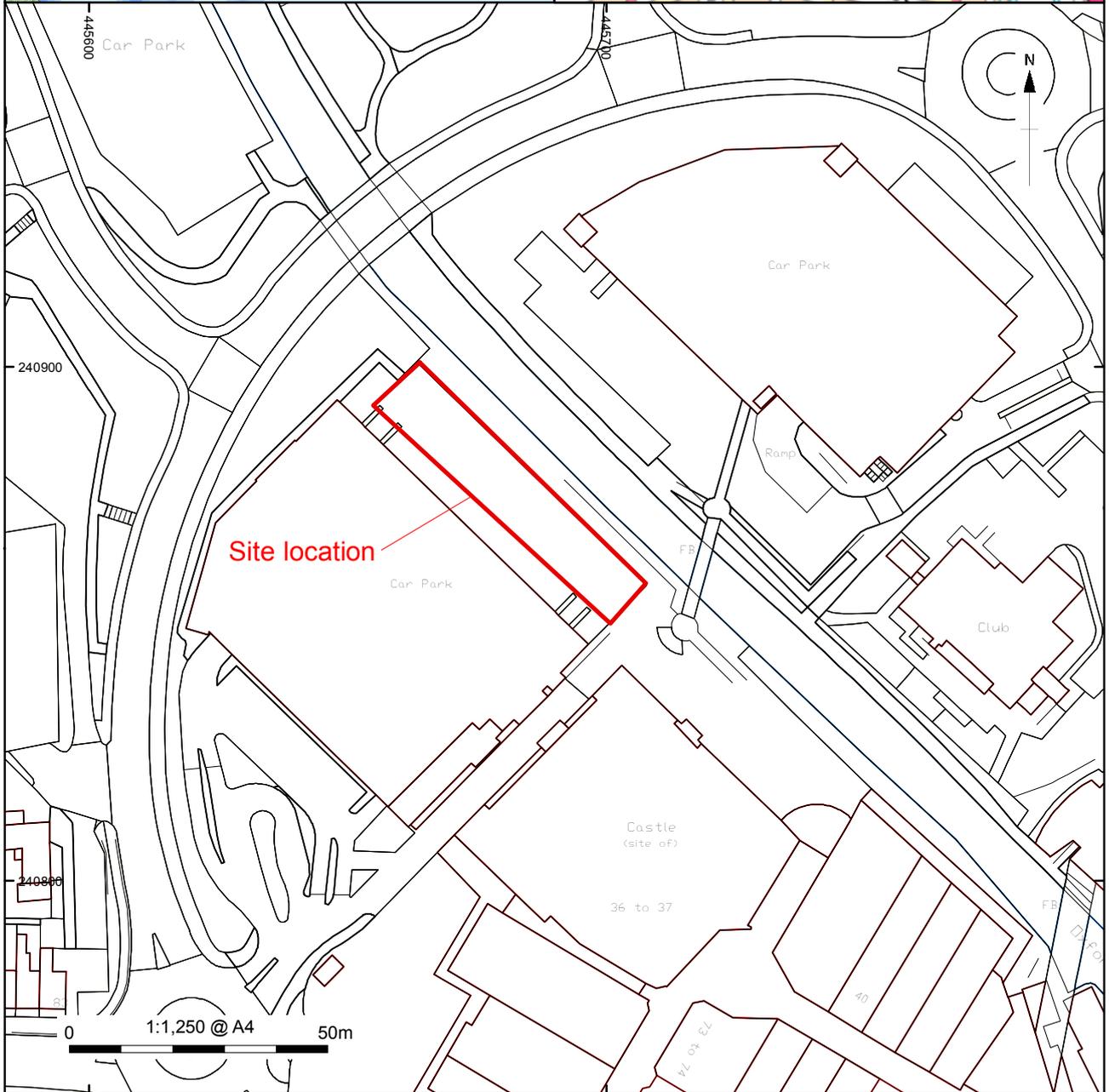
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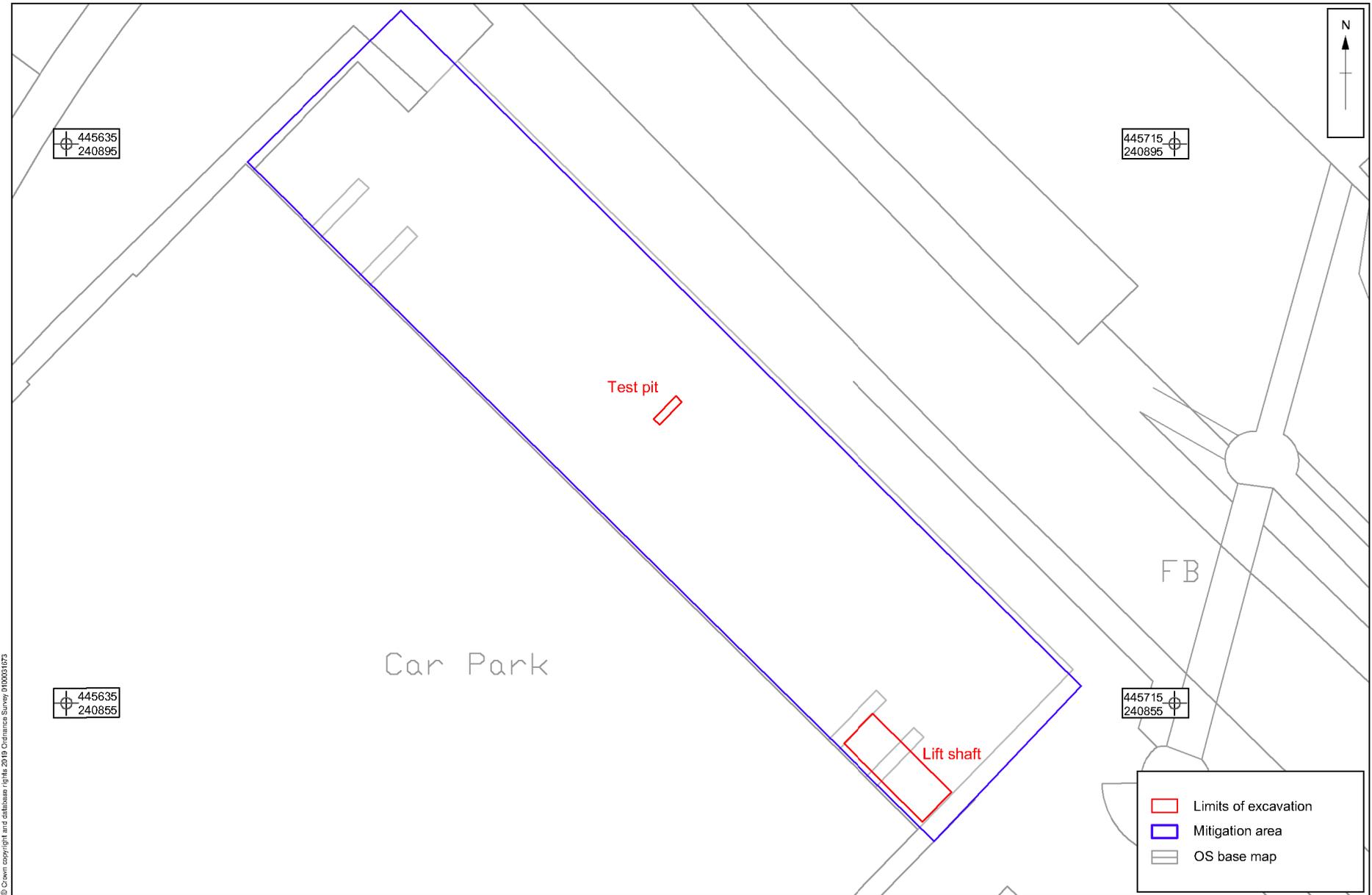
APPENDIX C SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Castle Quay, Banbury, Oxfordshire
Site code:	BANC 19
Grid Reference	SP 4568 4087
Type:	Excavation
Date and duration:	28th May to 4th June 2019
Area of Site	0.1ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at the stores of Oxford Archaeology, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, Oxon OX2 0ES. This will be collated and deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course under the accession number OXCMS:2019.49.
Summary of Results:	Between 28th May and 4th June 2019, Oxford Archaeology undertook archaeological recording of a lift shaft pit and a service trench test pit at Castle Quay, Banbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4568 4087). This identified significant levels of truncation and modern made ground relating to the previous development of the site. It also established that the current development impact levels were set within the modern made ground and that any potential underlying undisturbed horizons were likely to be truncated and fragmented or not significantly affected by this development.



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Figure 1: Site location



0 20m
Scale at A4 1:400

Figure 2: Location of lift shaft pit and service trench test pit



Plate 1: Lift shaft pit excavation, looking south-west



Plate 2: Lift shaft pit excavation, looking west



Plate 3: Test pit, looking north-west



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