Proposed Development, Riverway, Stafford, Staffordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief
Project Design

Oxford Archaeology North

October 2013

Capita Property and Infrastructure

OA North Ref: t16198
NGR (centred): SJ 92921 23016
Planning ref: S.13/18
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Capita Property and Infrastructure, on behalf of their client, has requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring during groundworks associated with the construction of an office building on land to the west of Riverway, Stafford, Staffordshire (NGR SJ 92921 23016). The Local Planning Authority (LPA), during initial consultation, has been advised by the Principal Archaeologist for Staffordshire County Council (SCC) that a watching brief will be required as a condition to the anticipated planning approval (S.13/18).

1.1.2 The site is positioned to the east of the medieval core of Stafford, on the road to Weston and Uttoxeter. The Principal Archaeologist (SCC) has advised that there are no designated or undesignated heritage assets within the outlined development site boundary or on the periphery, but in the surrounding area archaeological investigations have uncovered remains that suggests there is a potential for, as yet, unknown remains or deposits to be encountered or impacted upon during the development. Generally, deep waterlogged deposits are known be present in and around Stafford (Bartley and Morgan 1990, Leah et al 1998). Late eighteenth and nineteenth century water meadows have been recorded in the low-lying area to the south of the proposed development and on the southern side of the River Sow. Work on the Asda site to the west recovered palaeoenvironmental evidence dating back to 10,000 years, including waterlogged worked timber posts thought to date to the Iron Age, and possibly the evidence for a causeway along Lammascote Road to the north. Recent archaeological work during the construction of the new leisure centre recovered evidence for medieval flax retting within peat deposits along Lammascote Road, whilst results from the most recent Tipping Street excavation has revealed possible evidence for Iron Age settlement on higher land within Stafford. Consequently, the evidence suggests that this area was a focus of activity during the late prehistoric period, with potential for good survival of palaeoenvironmental remains, particularly in waterlogged and peat deposits, as well as the potential for evidence of the medieval industrial production.

1.1.3 It is intended that the archaeological monitoring will also be informed by the results of forthcoming SI boreholing/intrusive works, and by the proposed construction details to assess the level of impact. The following project design has been prepared in accordance with an informal brief issued by the Principal Archaeologist (SCC).

1.2 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.2.1 Oxford Archaeology North has considerable experience of excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past 30 years. Evaluations, assessments, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the planning process and according to any statutory constraints, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.
1.2.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) registered organisation, registration number 17, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IfA Code of Conduct (2012).
2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The following programme has been designed to identify any surviving archaeological deposits or features, and provide for accurate recording of any archaeological remains that are disturbed during the groundworks. The work will be carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines, including English Heritage (2006) and IfA (2008a, b and 2012), and in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 141 (DCLG 2012).

2.2 Watching brief: to carry out a permanent presence watching brief during the groundworks, to identify, investigate and record any archaeological remains.

2.3 Report and Archive: a draft report will be produced for approval by the client within six to eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (2006) and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage (UKIC 1990).
3 METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.1.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Company Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). OA North will liaise with the client to ensure all health and safety regulations are met. A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works.

3.1.2 Any known contamination issues or any specific health and safety requirements on site should be made known to OA North by the client or Site Contractor ahead of the fieldwork commencing to ensure all procedures can be met, and that the risk is dealt with appropriately. Should any presently unknown contamination be discovered during excavation, it may be necessary to halt the works and reassess the risk assessment. Should it be necessary to supply additional PPE or other contamination avoidance equipment this will be costed as a variation.

3.1.3 OA North staff will be wearing appropriate PPE, including steel toe-capped boots, hi-visibility vest or coat, and a hard hat. All project staff will be CSCS qualified, proof of which can be provided in the form of CSCS cards.

3.1.4 It is assumed that the client or Site Contractor will provide all necessary welfare facilities.

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF

3.2.1 Methodology: a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within the proposed ground disturbance, which includes topsoil stripping, excavation of foundation or service trenches and any other earth moving activities Excavation of any ground surfaces should be carried out using a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision (toothed buckets inhibit observation of archaeological features and their recording). Any approach to the excavator will be made from the front of the machine (i.e. facing the driver) after signalling to the driver and being acknowledged.

3.2.2 The work will comprise observation during the groundworks, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation. The excavation area will only be entered by OA North staff if it is considered safe to do so.

3.2.3 Discovery of archaeological remains will require stoppage of the excavation. Areas of potential archaeological remains will require fencing-off from any construction works, preferably with netlon-type fencing, to allow OA North archaeologists sufficient time to undertake adequate recording under safe conditions. This will be carried out as efficiently as possible in order to minimise disruption. Depending on the deposits revealed, it is anticipated that
the average time for the suspension of works will be approximately 2-4 hours. Clearance will be given for excavation to proceed once the archaeologist is satisfied that either no remains are present, or that they have been adequately recorded, or that the level of impact will not disturb any deeper remains that can be preserved in situ.

3.2.4 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand using trowels and, where appropriate, sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (i.e. selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).

3.2.5 Recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate), with a plan produced of the areas of groundworks showing the position and extent of the ground disturbance. Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the client.

3.2.6 A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously of features and finds, and of general working shots. This will entail high resolution digital SLR photographs.

3.2.7 **Contingency plan:** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with the client and the Principal Archaeologist (SCC), as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design.

3.3 **GENERAL PROCEDURES**

3.3.1 **Environmental Sampling:** bulk samples of 40 litres volume (or 100%, if smaller), will be collected from stratified undisturbed deposits, and will particularly target negative features (gullies, pits and ditches), for the assessment and potential analysis of charred and waterlogged plant remains and other biological indicators. If peat or other waterlogged deposits, such as palaeochannels, are encountered during the groundworks these will be sampled either by coring or monolith samples taken from an exposed section, and recorded and assessed following the Geoarchaeology and Environmental Archaeology Guidelines (Ayala et al 2007; IfA 2008; Campbell et al 2011). The location of all samples will be recorded on drawings and sections with heights OD etc. These will be returned to OA North’s offices for processing.

3.3.2 Deposits of particular interest may incur additional sampling, on advice from the appropriate in-house specialist.

3.3.3 Between 50%-100% of bulk samples shall be selected for processing, based on the advice from OA North’s in-house environmental manager. These will be processed and assessed following the English Heritage Environmental Archaeology Guidelines and IfA guidelines (IfA 2008; Campbell et al 2011),
specifically processing for charred plant remains, charcoal, molluscs and the selection of material suitable for scientific dating. If conditions are anoxic, leading to preservation by waterlogging, the samples will be processed for waterlogged plant remains and insects. All processed samples will be assessed as to their potential for the further analysis of the remains and the results included in the site report.

3.3.4 The cores or monolith samples will be processed and assessed for a number of different biological indicators, including pollen, fungal spores and other indicators depending on the type of deposits identified. The sampling of such deposits and their assessment will follow consultation with the client, the Principal Archaeologist (SCC), and possibly the English Heritage Regional Scientific Advisor. Such work may require a separate environmental project design outlining methodologies and a variation will be agreed.

3.3.5 It may be required to obtain dating evidence through radiocarbon dating, dendrochronological or other such techniques. This would only be undertaken in consultation with the client and, the Principal Archaeologist (SCC).

3.3.6 **Human remains:** should evidence of burials be identified, the Principal Archaeologist (SCC) and the local Coroner will be informed immediately. All work will cease until the proper authorities were satisfied before the burials are able to be removed. In normal circumstances, field recording will also include a continual process of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of the data, in order to establish the necessity for any further more detailed recording that may prove essential. The grave cut and/or coffin and contents will be recorded in plan at 1:20. Significant details of any grave goods, should they be discovered, will be planned at 1:10. Photography will be used to provide a further detailed record of the skeleton. The removal of such remains will be carried out with due care and sensitivity.

3.3.7 **Finds:** all finds recovered during the watching brief will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) guidelines.

3.3.8 Finds recovery and sampling programmes will be in accordance with best practice (current IfA guidelines) and subject to expert advice. Neither artefacts nor ecofacts will be collected systematically during the mechanical excavation of the topsoil unless significant deposits are encountered. In such an eventuality, material will be sampled in such a manner as to provide data to enhance present knowledge of the production and dating of such artefacts. Other finds recovered during the removal of overburden will be retained only if of significance to the dating and/or interpretation of the site. It is not anticipated that ecofacts (e.g. unmodified animal bone) will be collected during this procedure.

3.3.9 All finds will be treated in accordance with OA standard practice, which is cognisant of IfA and UKIC Guidelines. In general this will mean that (where appropriate or safe to do so) finds are washed, dried, marked, bagged and packed in stable conditions; no attempt at conservation will be made unless
special circumstances require prompt action. In such case guidance will be sought from OA North’s consultant conservator.

3.3.10 All waterlogged finds will be treated as appropriate. In the case of large deposits of waterlogged environmental material (e.g. unmodified wood), advice will be sought with the OA North consultant with regard to an appropriate sampling strategy.

3.3.11 Where possible, spot dates will be obtained on pottery and other finds recovered from the site. Artefacts will be examined and commented upon by OA North in-house specialists. Initial artefact dating shall be integrated into the site matrix.

3.3.12 Any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.

3.4 REPORT

3.4.1 The results of the fieldwork will culminate in a draft report to be submitted to the client for approval within four to six weeks of completion of the fieldwork (subject to any specialist reports outstanding). Once comments have been received these will be incorporated into the finalised version of the report which will be issued as a pdf (hard copies can be made available on request). The information will be finally disseminated through the deposition of the archive with the relevant museum in due course, and a copy of the report to the County Historic Environment Record (HER) Office. The report will include:

- a site location plan related to the national grid;
- a front cover to include the planning application number and the NGR;
- the dates on which the work was undertaken;
- a concise, non-technical summary of the results;
- an explanation to any agreed variations to this project design, including any justification for any analyses not undertaken;
- a description of the methodology employed, work undertaken and results obtained;
- plans and sections at an appropriate scale showing the location and position of deposits and finds located;
- photographs as appropriate;
- a list of and dates for any finds recovered and a description and interpretation of the deposits identified;
• a description of any environmental or other specialist work undertaken and the results obtained;

• a summary of the impact of the development on any archaeological remains and, where possible, a model of potential archaeological deposits within as-yet unexplored areas of the development site;

• the report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived;

• a summary of the archive.

3.5 Archive

3.5.1 The results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991). The project archive will include summary processing and analysis of all features, finds, or palaeoenvironmental data recovered during fieldwork, which will be catalogued by context.

3.5.2 The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is essential and archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the Staffordshire Historic Environment Records (HER; the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects with the appropriate Record Office (in this instance, that at Stafford).

3.5.3 All artefacts will be processed to MAP2 standards and will be assessed by our in-house finds specialists. The deposition and disposal of any artefacts recovered in the evaluation will be agreed with the legal owner and an appropriate recipient museum, in this case the Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent. Discussion regarding the museum’s requirement for the transfer and storage of finds will be conducted prior to the commencement of the project, and SCC will be notified of the arrangements made.

3.5.4 OASIS: an OASIS form will be completed as part of the works.

3.5.5 Confidentiality: all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.
4 OTHER MATTERS

4.1 PROJECT MONITORING

4.1.1 Whilst the work is undertaken for the client, monitoring of this project will be undertaken by the Principal Archaeologist (SCC) as advisor to the LPA.

4.2 WORK TIMETABLE

4.2.1 The duration of the archaeological presence for the watching brief will be dictated by the client’s schedule of groundworks.

4.2.2 The client report will be completed within approximately six to eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

4.3 STAFFING

4.3.1 The project will be under the direct management of Emily Mercer (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

4.3.2 The watching brief and any subsequent excavation will be supervised in the field by an OA North member of staff experienced in this type of work.

4.3.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North’s in-house finds specialist Chris Howard-Davis (OA North project officer). Chris acts as OA North’s in-house finds specialist and has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England.

4.3.4 The processing, assessment and analysis of any environmental samples would be undertaken under the auspices of Elizabeth Huckerby (OA North Environmental Manager), who has unparalleled experience of the environmental archaeology of the North and West, and by Denise Druce (OA North Environmental Project Officer) who analysed the charred plant remains and charcoal for the Tipping Street excavation site, Stafford (see para 1.1.2, above) on behalf of OA South.

4.4 INSURANCE

4.4.1 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.
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