

Green Park Reading 400 Longwater Avenue

Archaeological Statement on Development Proposal

Produced by: Richard Brown. MCIfA, Senior Project Manager, Oxford Archaeology

Date: 22/10/13

Revised in relation to new red line area and building design: 02/02/16

Figures

Figure 1 Development Location Plan

Figure 2 Development Proposal overlain on previous archaeological investigations plan

Figure 3 Google Earth Image 2005 (showing landscaping and scouring has occurred on the site)

Figure 4 Reading Borough Council - The Reading Business Park - Section 106 agreements, Areas of Archaeological Investigations 1991

Attachment - The Evolution of Green Park

Introduction

The following statement was produced on 22/10/13 in regard to development proposals for 400 Longwater Avenue. Subsequently the redline area of proposed development and buildings/car park have been revised. Drawings attached to this statement have been updated and this statement has been verified to ensure it is still accurate and pertinent to the revised development proposal in regard to potential archaeological remains on the site.

RB 02/02/ 2016

In 2013 Tuffin Ferraby Taylor LLP acting on behalf of Oxford Properties asked Oxford Archaeology to produce an archaeological Desk Top Assessment in relation to a proposal of development at 400 Longwater Avenue Reading, Berkshire. The site is located within a larger developmental area formerly known as Reading Business Park, now Green Park, which has a long and complex history of planning and development led archaeological investigation and mitigation.

Discussions with Paul Falcini, Archaeology; Officer for Berkshire Archaeology concluded that given the sites background a Desk Top Assessment would duplicate information already synthesised and disseminated in the public realm via three publications which document the site. It was further agreed that a more useful form of archaeological supporting information for the planning application would be a statement outlining the sites archaeological history, its potential to contain archaeological remains, an assessment of the below ground impact the development may have on any potential archaeological remains and suggested mitigation of any such impact.

Archaeology and Planning at Reading Business Park/Green Park

The archaeological mitigation for 'Reading Business Park' (the later area defined on Reading Borough Council 'Plan 15' 1991) was conceived between 1986-1988 under a Section 106 planning agreement (Reading Business Park Axiom 4) produced firstly by the Trust for Wessex Archaeology, later amended by Oxford Archaeological Unit and approved by Berkshire Department of Highways and Planning. The agreement was agreed prior to the use of PPG16 to define archaeological conditions within the planning process.

Figure 4 shows the requirements of the Section 106 agreement in 1991 prior to the Phase 2 and 3 excavations, although these are anticipated in the drawing.

The Reading Business Park area has been assessed for archaeological remains through the production of desktop assessments, fieldwalking, test pitting and trench evaluation which has culminated in mitigation through area excavation (see Fig 2). The results of these investigations have been published in:

- Reading Business Park - a Bronze Age Landscape (Moore and Jennings 1992)
- Green Park Phase 2 Excavations 1995 (Brossler et al 2004)

A third publication has been produced in which excavations on the Reading Business Park/Green Park Site are analysed in the context of other local excavations:

- Prehistoric Settlement in the Lower Kennet Valley: Excavations at Green Park (Reading Business Park) Phase 3 and Moores Farm, Burghfield (Brossler et al 2013)

The excavations and publications document the presence of a substantial Late Bronze Age settlement focussed within a rural Neolithic, Early- mid Bronze Age and Roman landscape.

Previous Archaeological Works at 400 Longwater Avenue

The eastern part of the proposed development plot has been subject to full excavation (Areas 3100 and 300B) - see Fig 2. These were the areas containing the Late Bronze Age settlement. The focus of this settlement was located to the south eastern part of these excavation areas. Trenches within the west within and to the west of the proposed development area did not reveal significant archaeological remains. Evidence to date therefore records that the western half does not contain significant archaeological remains and those excavated in the eastern half have now been removed and mitigated by archaeological recording.

Previous Impacts

It should also be noted that landscaping and significant groundworks have occurred on the site during the many years subsequent to the completion of the phased programme of archaeological excavations (Area 3000B was completed in 1995). The extent of this ground disturbance can be seen on Figure 3 and in The Evolution of Green Park and has been undertaken without the archaeological watching brief that is an ongoing requirement of the Section 106. If archaeological remains existed here these would have been adversely affected by this disturbance. This has been flagged as an unresolved condition at Reading Borough Council and would appear to be the case for all developed plots along Longwater Avenue.

Proposal

The development proposal comprises two office blocks in the eastern half of the site (where the majority of archaeology has been removed) with associated car parking and landscaping within the west of the proposal area (where any archaeology is unlikely to be significant).

Detailed drawings of foundations, drainage and utility are not currently available to specify the depth of below ground impact of the development.

Statement

The proposal area has been subject to a raft of archaeological investigations culminating in excavations and publications which form the mitigation of the impact to these archaeological remains.

There is a small potential that archaeological remains exist within the western side of the proposal area, outside the excavation areas defined by evaluation as the focus of archaeological activity. Any such features would need to be deep enough to have survived the post archaeological landscaping carried out on the site. It is debatable as to whether any such remains would usefully add to the archaeological record. In addition, given that only landscaping and car parking are proposed in this western half, the proposed development impacts are unlikely to extend to this depth to affect such remains.

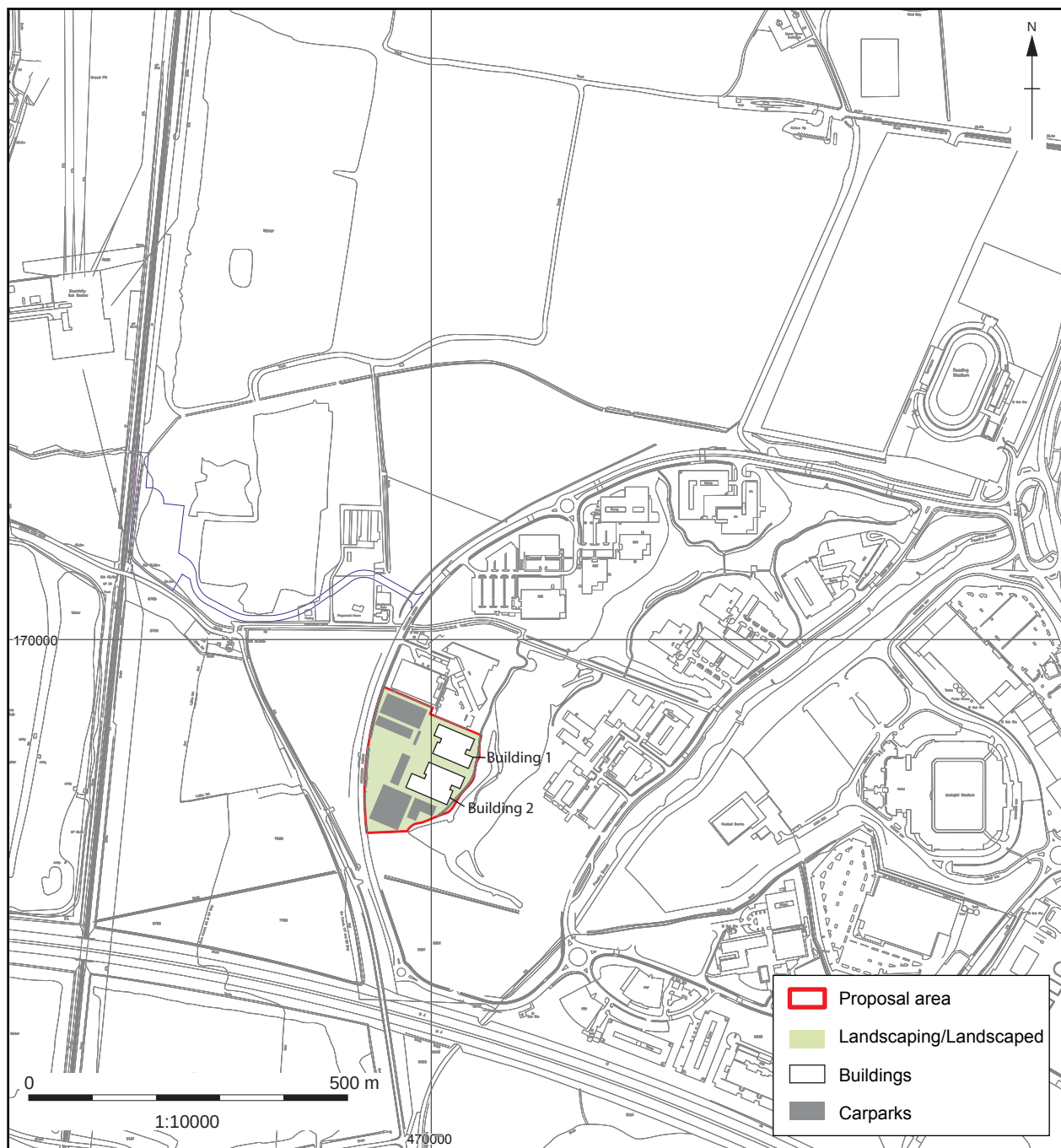


Figure 1: Development proposal plan

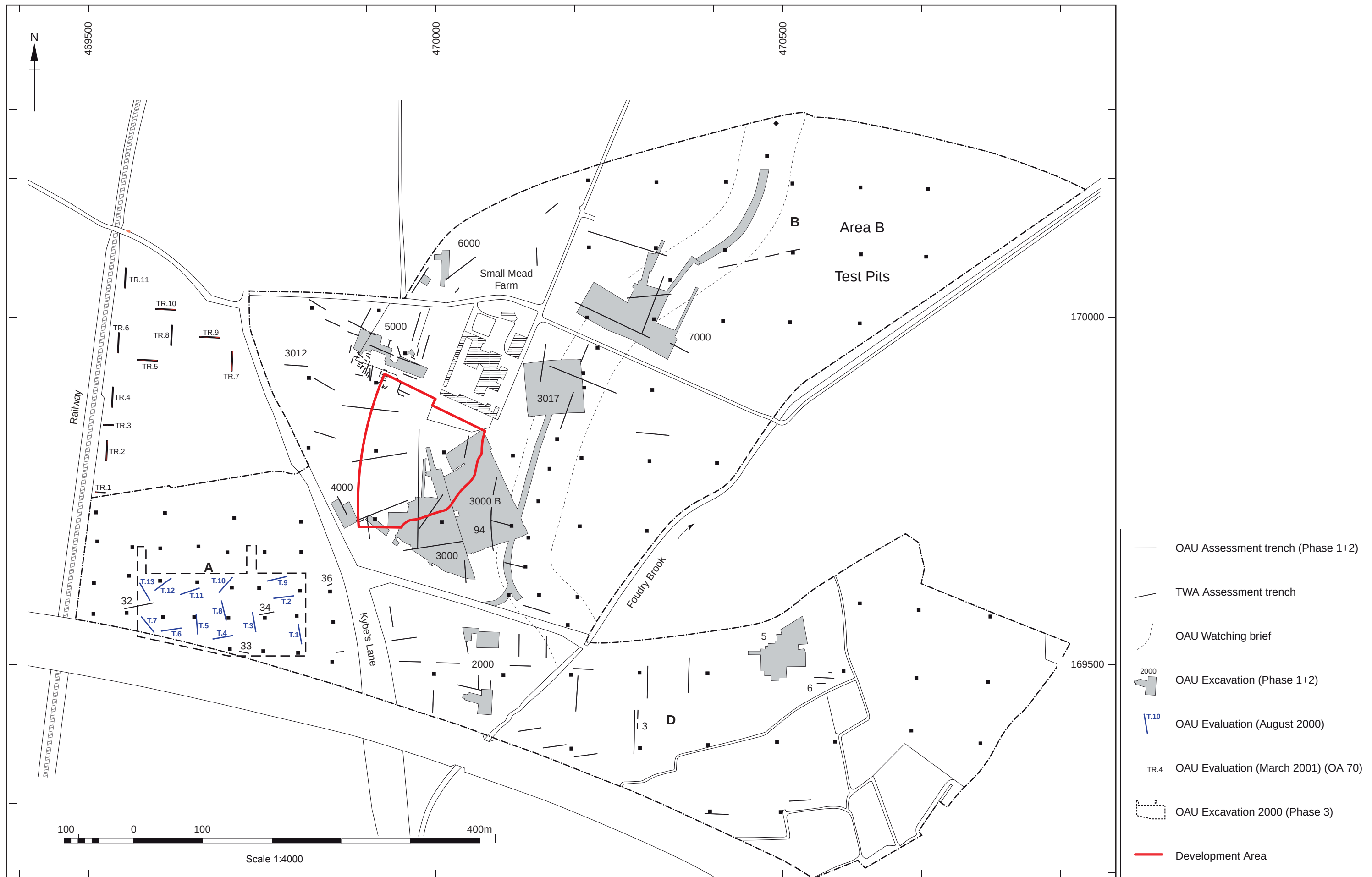


Figure 2: Development proposal overlay on previous archaeological investigations plan



Figure 3: Google Earth Image 2005



Introduction to Green Park



The Green Park site viewed from the south during investigative works.

Green Park has transformed what was once an area of low lying poor quality agricultural land into a business park with international appeal. At the same time a major new landscape has been created with a diverse range of habitats.

This has been achieved without damage to any protected landscapes or designated conservation areas. All proposals were developed and agreed in consultation with the UK Environment Agency to ensure that conservation issues involving both land and water have been fully considered.

The area was also designated for employment uses and was fully supported by the three Local Planning Authorities within which the 73 ha (180 acre) site is situated.



The formation of development platforms in 1996 above flood levels



Longwater and first buildings including 100 Longwater Avenue, with the Madjeski Stadium under construction



The Principle Objectives of the Landscape Design



Masterplan developing at 2005.
Plot 600-900 in foreground with park development beyond

- To create an attractive working environment.
- To design a scheme appropriate to the site conditions.
- To create a strong and coherent identity derived from the lake which sets the character of the park with a variety of habitats.
- To provide visual amenity and recreation opportunities.
- To screen surrounding sites where appropriate.





Longwater maturing in the centre of the site



The initial works to form Longwater



Soil preparation mixing BioGran with site soil



Mature tree planting in selected locations



Mature trees are heavy



Selecting trees in nurseries in the UK and Europe

A33 Relief Road Reading



Green Park was dependent upon the new A33 Relief Road which provided a new highway link to its entrance from a remodelled J11 roundabout.

The site was also crossed by a number of public footpaths which had to be re-routed within the scheme.

The national Sustrans cycle path is also incorporated within the park and provides dedicated links to areas of interest outside of the park, such as the tow path along the Kennet and Avon Canal and Thames Path



The site is well served by public transport



Cycles parked at 100 Longwater Avenue

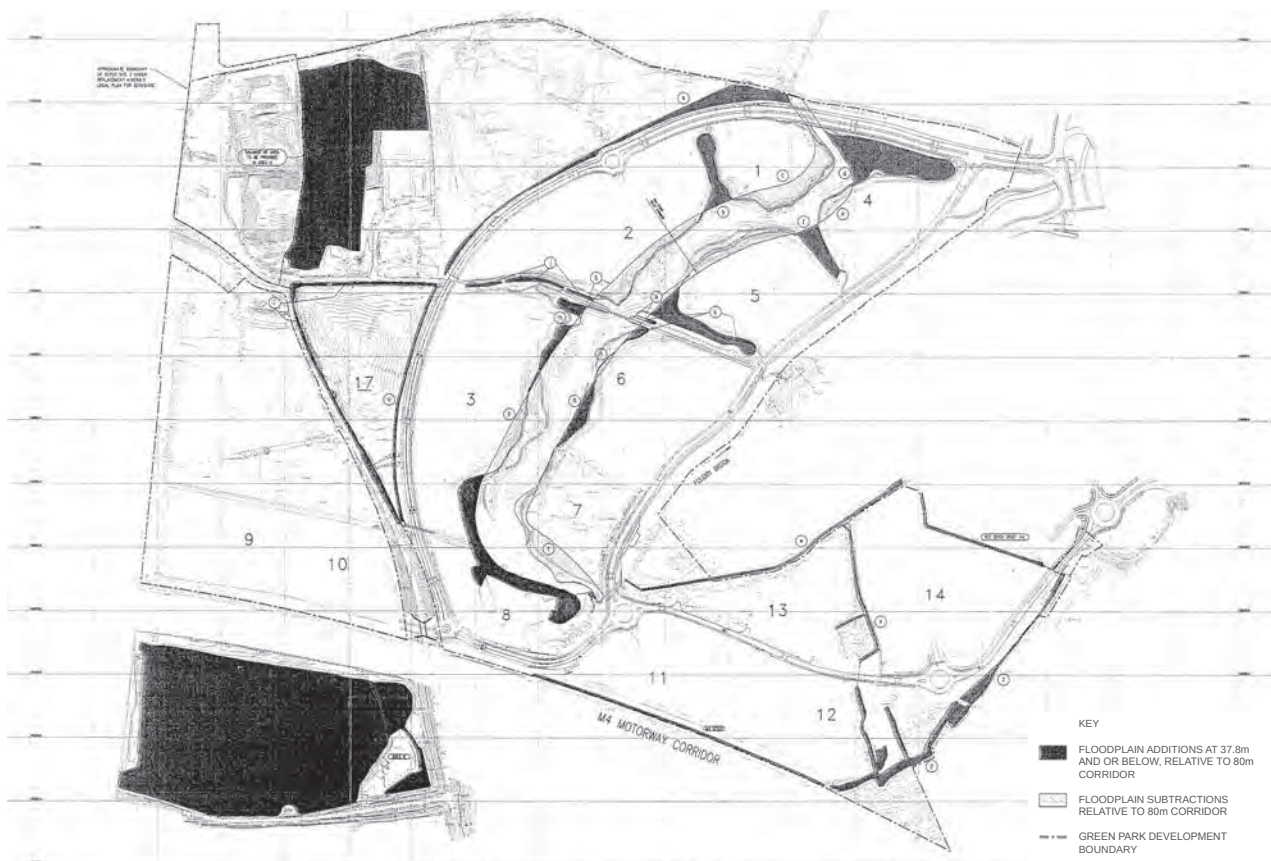


Path links to adjoining areas



Footpath and cycle links within the park

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN PARK 1997- TO DATE



The park has a detailed flood strategy allowing for both conveyance of flood waters and on site storage. Longwater encompasses an 80m flood channel.

The landscape design at Green Park is based on the expectation of seasonal flooding with planting designs capable of resisting the natural difficulties such conditions create.

The design has been reviewed by the Environment Agency, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the local county Wildlife Trust and others. It therefore makes the transition from a robust and naturalist landscape to a more controlled landscape in close proximity to the buildings.



In extreme high conditions water even bridges may go under water



A summer view to 250 Brook Drive



The same view in winter



Retained willows in midst of development platform construction



Initial formation of Longwater to allow flood waters to pass through site



Flooding had to be anticipated during construction



View to developments though retained and pollarded willows



View along willow walk before stadium construction



View along willow walk following construction



Pollarded site willows shortly after transplanting

Indigenous Crack Willows (*Salix fragilis*) have been both managed in situ and transplanted.

The line of willows siting opposite 200 Longwater Avenue were lifted and transported from their position across Longwater and lined out ready for re-use elsewhere on the site.

Retained willows, protected by Tree Preservation Orders have been pollarded to retain their traditional shape.



Transplanted willows leafing out showing successful establishment



The original line of willows retained between the development platforms with one in three cut back each 24 months to a traditional form



The concept model of the scheme with 100 Longwater Avenue top right



View to 100 Longwater from entrance before lake filling



100 Longwater in course of construction



Evening view after lake filling



100 Longwater in emerging landscape context

Development Quality

Diverse development proposals on each plot have been overseen by a design panel to ensure proposals meet investment, architecture and landscape criteria.

This has ensured a consistency of character throughout Green Park.



View towards 300 Brook Drive



View towards 550 South Oak Way



View towards 100 Brook Drive



View towards 400 South Oak Way



View towards 350 Longwater Avenue

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN PARK 1997- TO DATE

GreenPark

OXFORD
PROPERTIES

PLACE
Design+Planning



The wind turbine emerging from the landscape from one view

The wind turbine was not part of the original design of the park. It was felt some form of landmark would be beneficial on the M4 and the concept evolved for a wind turbine provided by Ecotricity which would also reflect the schemes commitment to sustainability.

The turbine was completed in 2005 and has a visitor centre at its base. Around the base of the turbine is also a newly established water vole habitat. The turbine won a Mention in the 2008 Civic Trust Awards noting that it "acts as a functional sculpture"



The wind turbine in the context of development



School children on their first visit



Opening of the visitor centre



The visitor centre meeting educational needs



Maturing landscape looking east toward new stadium in background



Marginal vegetation maturing and supporting increased diversity of wildlife



Forming channel to south of the site as part of enhanced water vole habitat



View along water margin at site entrance



The park is now host to a diverse range of wildlife. There has been the first sighting of an otter in 2013



Community Activities in Green Park



The park has become a host for a variety of community activities. The Reading half marathon and the Reading triathlon take place at the Park.

In addition fishing on Longwater is a popular past time. The park's paths are popular for jogging and for people enjoying a walk or cycle through an attractive landscape.



Fishing is a popular activity



Lime Square hosting a Spanish weekend with food and dancing



The park hosting the Reading Triathlon



Triathlon swimming in Longwater



The Reading half marathon setting off from Longwater Avenue



The events attract huge numbers of competitors



View from the deck of Longwater Avenue in 1999



Similar view in 2010 showing maturing landscape



Lime Square providing amenity and facilities for park users



The park provides attractive surroundings for exercise



Lake setting of 100 Brook Drive

Landscape Maintenance



The landscape of the park is evolving over time. This requires constant management to control the natural processes in the landscape. This ranges from grass cutting and removing unwanted colonising trees, and managing the growth of maturing trees to allow views across the park.



Proposed Developments Beyond Green Park



Kennet Valley Park - a community of 7500 homes

Kennet Valley Park, a major design proposal to the west of Green Park has been prepared, but does not form part of current planning policy.

This remodels a major area degraded by gravel extraction to provide 7500 homes, a country park and additional support facilities to serve a new community



Green Park Village providing 750 homes and Green Park station have planning consent

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN PARK
1997- TO DATE

GreenPark

OxFLORD
PROPERTIES

PLACE
Design+Planning