LAND AT BEXLEY COLLEGE, TOWER ROAD, ERITH, KENT DA8 1RX

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

PLANNING REF: 12/00334/FULM

SITE CODE: TOE15

PCA REPORT NUMBER: R12224

SEPTEMBER 2015

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

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Land At Bexley College, Tower Road, Erith, Kent DA8 1RX

An Archaeological Watching Brief

Local Planning Authority:	**London Borough of Bexley**
Planning Application Reference:	**12/00334/FULM**
Site Code:	**TOE15**
Central National Grid Reference:	**TQ 5034 7857**
Written by:	**Bruce Ferguson** **Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited**
Project Manager:	**Chris Mayo**
Commissioning Client:	**CgMs Consulting**
On behalf of:	**Ward Homes**

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September 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Ward Homes to undertake an archaeological watching brief at land at Bexley College, Tower Road, Erith, Kent DA17 6JA. The site is located within the London Borough of Bexley and is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 5034 7857. The site is bounded on the east, southeast and south by residential houses that front Erith Road, Pembroke Road and Bramble Croft.

1.2 Planning permission has been granted by the London Borough of Bexley for the demolition of the existing college buildings and the comprehensive redevelopment of the site for new housing (application number 12/00334/FULM). The site, approximately 3.2 hectares, occupies a markedly sloping topographic position which fell from approximately 41.00m OD at the northern end of the site to 24.00m OD at the southern end. The previous college buildings had sat on artificially created plateaus which had clearly been terraced into the hillside at the point of construction in the 1960's and 1970's.

1.3 The archaeological and historical background to the site had been researched in an Archaeological Impact Assessment prepared by the client's archaeological consultant, Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting. That document (2014) concluded that "*Due to past land forming and development, it is considered most improbable that any archaeological remains pre-dating 1964 will survive in situ on the site, with the possible exception of, on the north east, east and south east. However, these parts of the site slope significantly and are unlikely to have been a focus of past human activity*" (page 16).

1.4 The planning consent included an archaeological condition (number 22). Consultation between Mr Hawkins and the Archaeology Advisor to the London Borough of Bexley, Mr Mark Stevenson of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), Historic England, resulted in the requirement for an archaeological watching brief to form a suitable mitigation strategy, focussing on the initial site strip construction works on the north east, east and south east. PCA were appointed to undertake the watching brief and accordingly prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (Mayo 2014) which was approved by GLAAS.

1.5 During a single site visit on 17th May 2015, PCA monitored the excavation of a single curving linear trench excavated along the northeast boundary of the development for the construction of a retaining wall. The visit was conducted by Bruce Ferguson and the work project managed by Chris Mayo, both of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited.

1.6 The archaeological site archive was identified using unique site code TOE15 issued by the Museum of London. The completed archive comprising written and photographic records from the fieldwork will be deposited at the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The archaeological watching brief was carried out in accordance with approved Written Scheme Of Investigation (Mayo 2014). A single visit to site was made on the 17th May 2015.

2.2 The excavation of a construction trench (archaeological Trench 1) for a revetment wall was recorded in the northeast corner of the site. The trench was set out by the client's groundworkers and excavated using tracked 360-type excavator fitted with a flat bladed bucket. The trench measured approximately 30.0m by 1.9m wide, and was around 1.4m deep.

2.3 The attending archaeologist inspected the base of the trench and sections where possible to look for potential deep cut features, the presence of shallow cut features and the survival of ancient ground surfaces. However, no archaeological deposits were found within the trench.

2.4 A section of the trench edge was chosen to best demonstrate the surviving soil sequence and a 1.00m wide area (see Plate 2) was cleaned by hand and recorded.

2.5 A topographic survey of the site provided by CgMs Consulting (Hawkins 2014, Figure 11) was used to estimate ground heights in the area of Trench 1. For the purposes of site records the ground level in the location of Trench 1 was estimated to be approximately 33.00m OD.

2.6 The watching brief produced three context records; one section drawing at a scale of 1:10 and a series of digital photographs recording working shots and record shots of the trench where also produced. The site produced no finds.

3 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

3.1 Phase 1: Natural

3.1.1 The lowest deposit observed was a single layer of soft mottled greenish yellow and brownish orange clayey sand [3]. Other than evidence of root action the deposit was devoid of any inclusions. This layer was visible across the extent of the trench. It was at least 0.55m thick, and was recorded at approximately 32.00m OD.

3.2 Phase 2: Dumped Deposit/Disturbed Natural

3.2.1 Above the natural was recorded a layer [2] which was identical in compaction, colour and composition to [3], however it contained bands of re-deposited brown sandy clay mixed with frequent small rounded and angular flints, modern intrusions (plastic, glass and metal) and extensively disturbed by root action [2]. It was undeterminable if this was a layer of disturbed/re-deposited natural or an extensive dumped deposit. The layer was extremely disturbed by bioturbation.

3.2.2 Towards the southern end of the trench the layer was between 0.45m and 0.55m thick petering out as it extended to the east. It was recorded at around 32.50m OD.

Plate 1: Surviving soil sequence (natural [1], disturbed ground [2], topsoil [3]) at the southern end of Trench 1 (view: southeast)

3.3 Phase 3: Modern Ground Level

3.3.1 The next layer [1] comprised of firm brown sandy clay with frequent small to medium rounded flints [1] (see Plate 2) and formed the current modern ground level. Seen across the extent of the trench, its average thickness was 0.50m diminishing towards the eastern extent were it directly overlaid the natural. It sat at an elevation of around 33.00m OD.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The watching brief revealed three distinct soil horizons within Trench 1, comprising of natural defined as Thanet Formation Sand overlain, in the southern half of the trench, by a layer of disturbed/re-deposited natural; sealing this deposit and directly overlaying the natural at the eastern end of the trench was a top soil forming the current ground level.

4.2 The substantial amount of disturbance from disturbed/re-deposited natural suggests the original formation level has been truncated by terracing of the surrounding area. This disturbance of the natural indicates that original sub soils have been truncated as a result, particularly towards the eastern extent of the trench. The likelihood of horizontal archaeology surviving in this area is severely limited and the survival of shallow cut features is even less likely.

4.3 Observations on site would appear to confirm the Desk-Based Assessment's conclusions that land-forming during the 19th and 20th centuries have eliminated all archaeological potential.

5 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

5.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd and the author would like to thank CgMs Consulting on behalf of the client Ward Homes for commissioning the work, and the Archaeology Advisor to the London Borough of Bexley, Mr Mark Stevenson of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), Historic England for monitoring the project.

5.2 The author would also like to thank the project managers of Ward Homes and their sub-contractors for their time and co-operation during the excavation work. Thanks also to Chris Mayo for his project management of the watching brief and editing this report.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Figure 1: Site Location

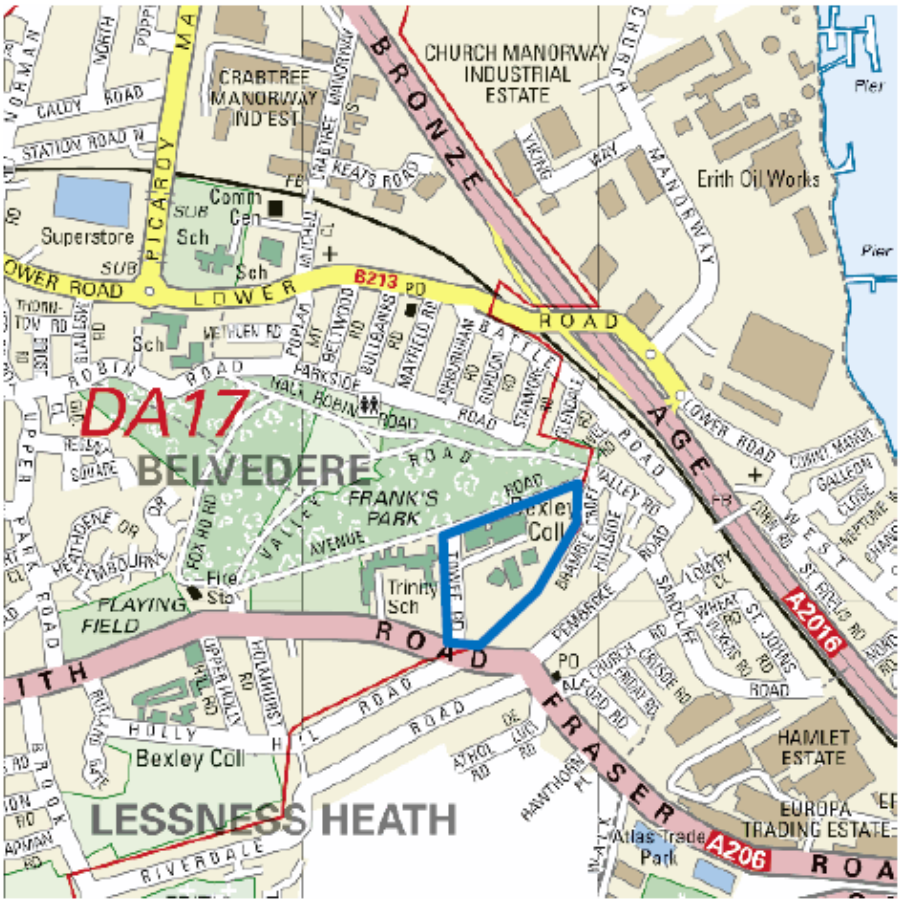

Figure 2: Trench Location

Figure 3: Section

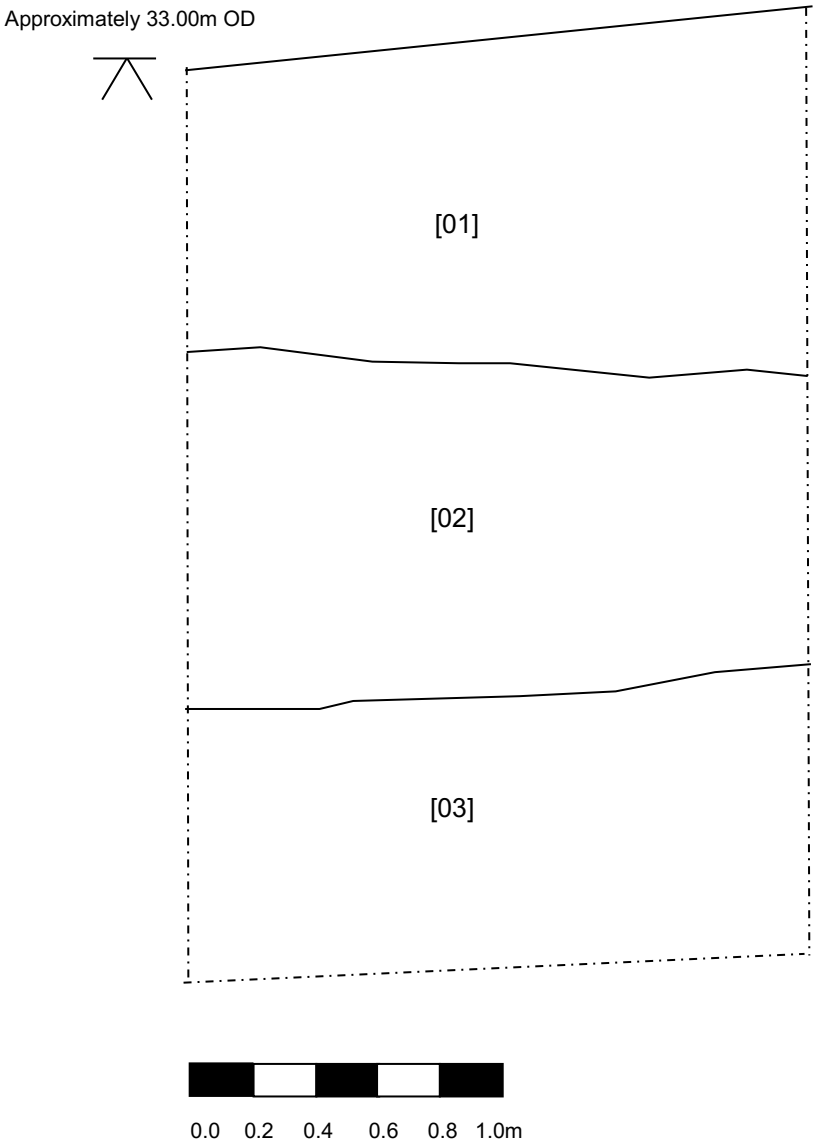

Figure 3: Section 1, Trench 1, northwest facing (scale 1:10 at A4)

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Type	Trench	Description
001	Layer	1	Top Soil
002	Layer	1	Disturbed or redeposited Natural
003	Layer	1	Natural

APPENDIX 2: OASIS REPORT FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-218585

Project details	
Project name	Land At Bexley College: An Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description of the project	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Ward Homes to undertake an archaeological watching brief at land at Bexley College, Tower Road, Erith, Kent DA17 6JA. The site occupies a markedly sloping topographic position which fell from approximately 41.00m OD at the northern end of the site to 24.00m OD at the southern end. The previous college buildings had sat on artificially created plateaus which had clearly been terraced into the hillside at the point of construction in the 1960's and 1970's. During a single site visit PCA monitored the excavation of a single curving linear trench excavated along the northeast boundary of the development for the construction of a retaining wall. The watching brief revealed three distinct soil horizons comprising of natural defined as Thanet Formation Sand overlain, in the southern half of the trench, by a layer of disturbed/re-deposited natural; sealing this deposit and directly overlaying the natural at the eastern end of the trench was a top soil forming the current ground level. The substantial amount of disturbance from disturbed/re-deposited natural suggests the original formation level has been truncated by terracing of the surrounding area. This disturbance of the natural indicates that original sub soils have been truncated as a result, particularly towards the eastern extent of the trench. The likelihood of horizontal archaeology surviving in this area is severely limited and the survival of shallow cut features is even less likely.
Project dates	Start: 17-05-2015 End: 17-05-2015
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	TOE15 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	12/00334/FULM - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'"Watching Brief"'
PromptPlanning condition	

Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON BEXLEY ERITH Land At Bexley College
Postcode	DA8 1RX
Study area	3.2 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 5034 7857 51.485558762703 0.16552582196 51 29 08 N 000 09 55 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 32m Max: 32m

Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting
Project design originator	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Bruce Ferguson
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Ward Homes

Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	TOE15
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Spreadsheets","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	TOE15
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Plan","Section"

Project bibliography 1	
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