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CDSNR

**Archaeological
Evaluation: Land
south of
Island Road,
Westbere**

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**PLANNING REPORT : ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION : LAND SOUTH OF
ISLAND ROAD, WESTBERE.**

Application Reference: CA/98/0330/WES

erection of a building for use as a motor sales showroom, servicing and workshop

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 George Wilson Developments Limited are considering the development of part of a large agricultural field situated 120m north-east of Hersden, abutting the south side of the Island Road. The proposed development is for the erection of a building for use as a motor sales showroom, servicing and workshop.

1.2 The proposed development is currently the subject of a planning application (CA/98/0330/WES) submitted to Canterbury City Council as Planning Authority. The application has not been determined.

1.3 In mitigation of the potential impact that such a development may have on the buried archaeological resource the developer's agents, Tyler Hill Partnership, commissioned the Canterbury Archaeological Trust Limited to carry out an archaeological field evaluation of the proposed development site.

1.4 The evaluation was completed between the 8 June and 10 July 1998 in accordance with a written scheme of investigation compiled on behalf of Canterbury City Council by Canterbury Archaeological Trust Limited, submitted to the Planning Department on 5 May 1998 and accepted by the developer's agent, Tyler Hill Partnership.

1.5 The original planning application (Plan TP.548.02A dated March 1998) was subsequently amended on 12 May 1998, re-siting the proposed building (Plan TP.548.07 dated 11 May 1998). In anticipation of these changes to the application site the specification called for the evaluation of an area encompassing both the original application site and the amended location (Figure 1).

1.6 The following report endeavours to present a interim statement on the results of the field evaluation, provide a brief description of the archaeology recorded, assess the importance of the same and provide recommendations for further archaeological fieldwork.

1.7 A full archaeological report will be made available as specialist reports become available.

2 The Archaeological Potential

2.1 The proposed development site abuts the south side of the Island Road which marks the former alignment of the Roman road route connecting Canterbury (*Durovernum Cantiacorum*) with the port and late Roman shore fort at Richborough (*Rutupae*).

2.2 Previous archaeological discoveries both north and south of this route demonstrate that the road was flanked by early-mid Roman cremation and later Roman inhumation cemeteries. The pattern of these cemeteries is imperfectly understood, although on present evidence an extensive inhumation cemetery was located at the junction of two Roman road routes, now represented by the line of Island Road at the junction with Babs Oak Hill Road at the foot and to the west of Staines Hill. Other evidence demonstrates, however, that both small earthen burial mound cemeteries as well as single isolated earthen burial mounds were also sited in proximity to the Roman road alignment. Examples have been recorded north of the road route west of Staines Hill, to the south of the road east of Staines Hill and to the south of the road at Hersden some 500m south-west of the proposed development site. Many of the finds from these cemeteries are preserved in the collections of Canterbury City Museums.

2.3 Air photographic evidence also indicates the presence of a complex pattern of rural settlement located in proximity to the Roman road alignment. Enclosures, a branch road and burial mounds have been noted 1100m to the north-east immediately west of Westbere. Another branch road and part of a field system has likewise been noted 100m and immediately to the north of the Island Road and the proposed development site. The full extent and form of this settlement is unclear, representing either nucleated settlement consisting of single or small groups of farmstead or linear roadside settlements.

(Recorded during a watching brief (CAT Site Code: SGM94; CAT Archive Number: 435; CAT Report 1994/34) maintained during excavation of service trenches for a new gas main between February and April 1994. An interim report is published in: Rady, J. *Fieldwork : I Canterbury Sites : 12 Sturry Gas Main Canterbury Archaeological Trust 18th Annual Report 1993-94, 1995, 19*)

3 Summary of Results

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 The specification for the archaeological evaluation called for the excavation of 440m of machine-cut linear trenches arranged in a regular pattern of 4 linear west-east transects across the proposed development site (Figure 1). Transect 1 was to be excavated as a continuous trench of 170m length. Transects 2-4 were to consist of an intermittent series of 15 west-east trenches (PT3-7, PT14-18 and PT25-29). Each trench was to be either 10m or 20m long and 1.7m wide, giving a sample evaluation area of approximately 4.4% across an estimated impact area of 1.7ha (17000sqm).

3.1.2 The regular trench plan along four linear transects was adhered to during the course of the evaluation. Archaeological considerations, however, required the cutting of additional trenches giving a total of 527m. With the revised location of the application site this represented an evaluation area of approximately 4.2% across an estimated impact area of 2.1ha (21000sqm).

3.1.3 Archaeological features were recorded in all of the evaluation trenches. With one exception (Trench 18) features were sampled excavated to characterize the archaeology exposed. Finds recovered from excavated contexts consisted largely of pottery which has been subject to preliminary study to provide dating evidence.

3.2 Description (Figure 2)

Every trench revealed the presence of a buried soil layer (context 99), immediately under the modern topsoil. This deposit varied considerably in depth, but was generally thicker towards Island Road, where it attained a thickness of c. 0.5 m.. At the southern part of the area investigated, the level was attenuated to between c. 0.05 and 0.2 m. in depth. The deposit was of fairly uniform composition in all the trenches, though some differential colouration was noted and consisted of a compact mid to light greyish yellow or orange yellow silty clay. Artefacts, mostly ceramic, were recovered from this level, and consisted of pottery dating from the Iron Age and Roman periods.

After the mechanical removal of this level, significant archaeological features were revealed in every trench. These consisted of ditches, pits, post- and stake-holes, quarries, probably for clay extraction, a metalled road, and one burial. At least one other potential burial was left unexcavated. Because of the density and complex intercutting nature of many of these features, only a minority were sample excavated. Of those features that were sampled, many survived to depths of a metre or more.

X Of particular interest was the metalled road, which is clearly of Roman date. This rare survival, aligned north-west/south-east, was located in Trenches 0, 4, 14 and 26. The road, about 6m. wide, was formed of a thin layer of rammed gravel and flanked by drains, from which Roman material was recovered.

Y The single burial, located close to Island Road (Trench O), was an inhumation, aligned north-east/south-west. The skeleton was badly preserved, but enough remained to determine that it was supine and extended, with the head to the west. There were no associated grave goods, and the one recovered Iron Age sherd from the grave backfill was probably residual. These factors suggest that the burial probably dates to the late Roman period.

Stratified finds from the features were again mainly ceramic, though Roman roofing tile and Roman bricks, burnt clay and daub, metalworking slag and burnt flint were also recovered. A relatively large corpus of animal bone was also retrieved.

3.3 Conclusion

A definitive understanding of this settlement is not possible at this stage, due to the small sample size. In addition, post-excavation analysis of the results is incomplete and still in progress, and the following conclusions are of an interim nature only. However it is clear that components of an extensive multi-period settlement, partially examined over an area of about 14000 square metres, has been located on this site.

Ceramic evidence suggests that the earliest occupation dates to the early Iron Age (c. 550-350 B.C.). The finds distribution from the trenches indicates that this occupation phase is concentrated to the eastern side of the examined area, and would appear to be largely confined within an enclosure or series of enclosures defined by ditches. These large V-shaped profile features, probably defensive in conception, were aligned north-east/south-west and located in Trenches 27 and 17. Post-holes situated within these postulated enclosures, mostly in Trench 28 and to some extent in Trench 29, almost certainly relate to structures, perhaps round houses, the dominant form of domestic building at this time.

The recovered pottery of this period is of some interest, consisting mainly of rusticated coareswares and a regionally new type of decorated coarseware jar, which has parallels in north-east France and the Pas-de-Calais area.

There would seem to be a break in occupation during the mid Iron Age (c. 350-150 B.C.), but a considerable quantity of possibly late Iron Age and definite pre-Roman 'Belgic' material was recovered. This corpus suggests that occupation of the site re-commenced from perhaps c. 150/100 B.C. and certainly that the area was inhabited by the mid first century B.C.. Material of this date was recovered from virtually the entire area, though structurally, the period is at present not well defined. A considerable number of the linear features would appear to be part of an extensive field system, and it is possible that these date from this period. Although therefore, the occupation focus at this time, may be elsewhere (though almost certainly fairly close by), the quantity of pottery recovered would indicate *in situ* occupation.

The greatest concentration of features was at the south-western part of the examined area. The position of the Roman road and the recovered finds, suggest that this part of the site was on the margins of a substantial Roman settlement. The Roman road, undoubtable joined the main Roman thoroughfare to the north, and extended southwards, curving slightly to the east. A large Roman ditch, located in Trenches 14, 15, 15A and 15B and aligned approximately east-north-east/west-south-west, seems to form part of an large enclosure, into which the road extended, just south of Trench 14. Although the full disposition of this feature has not been determined, the enclosure was probably rectangular in plan and possibly about 200 m. or more wide, east to west. The bulk of this enclosure lies to the south of the examined area.

Finds from the site as a whole are predominantly Roman period in date and were concentrated from features within this enclosure, the enclosure ditch and the road side drains. Nearly 6000 sherds of pottery were recovered, a very high quantity for an evaluation of this size. This material indicates that the settlement was very long lived, and suggests continuity of occupation from the first century B.C. to the mid-fourth century A.D., or about 400 years.

In summation, it is clear that the evaluation has revealed, albeit in a fragmentary manner, elements of a succession of settlements, dating from the middle of the first millennium B.C., and extending right through to the later Roman period. Although the full extent of this occupation has not been determined, it is probably extensive, potentially covering an area of several hectares.

4 Impact Description, Assessment and Mitigation

4.1 Description

4.1.1 The proposed development plan (TP.548.07 dated 11 May 1998) deposited with the planning application indicates four impact areas (Figure 1) comprising (i) an earth bund to be constructed abutting and screening the development from the Island Road (ii) a new roundabout and access roads (iii) areas of hard standing for car parking and access (iv) erection of an industrial building.

4.1.2 In addition the whole of the proposed development site is to be stripped of topsoil prior to road, car park and building construction.

4.1.3 Additional impacts may occur during the cutting of service trenches. Details of the locations and depths of these excavations is not known.

4.2 Assessment

4.2.1 The elements of the multi-period settlements recorded during the evaluation may be ranked of regional importance and significance in understanding the type, morphology, evolution and distribution of rural settlement, and the relationship between town and countryside during the Roman period.

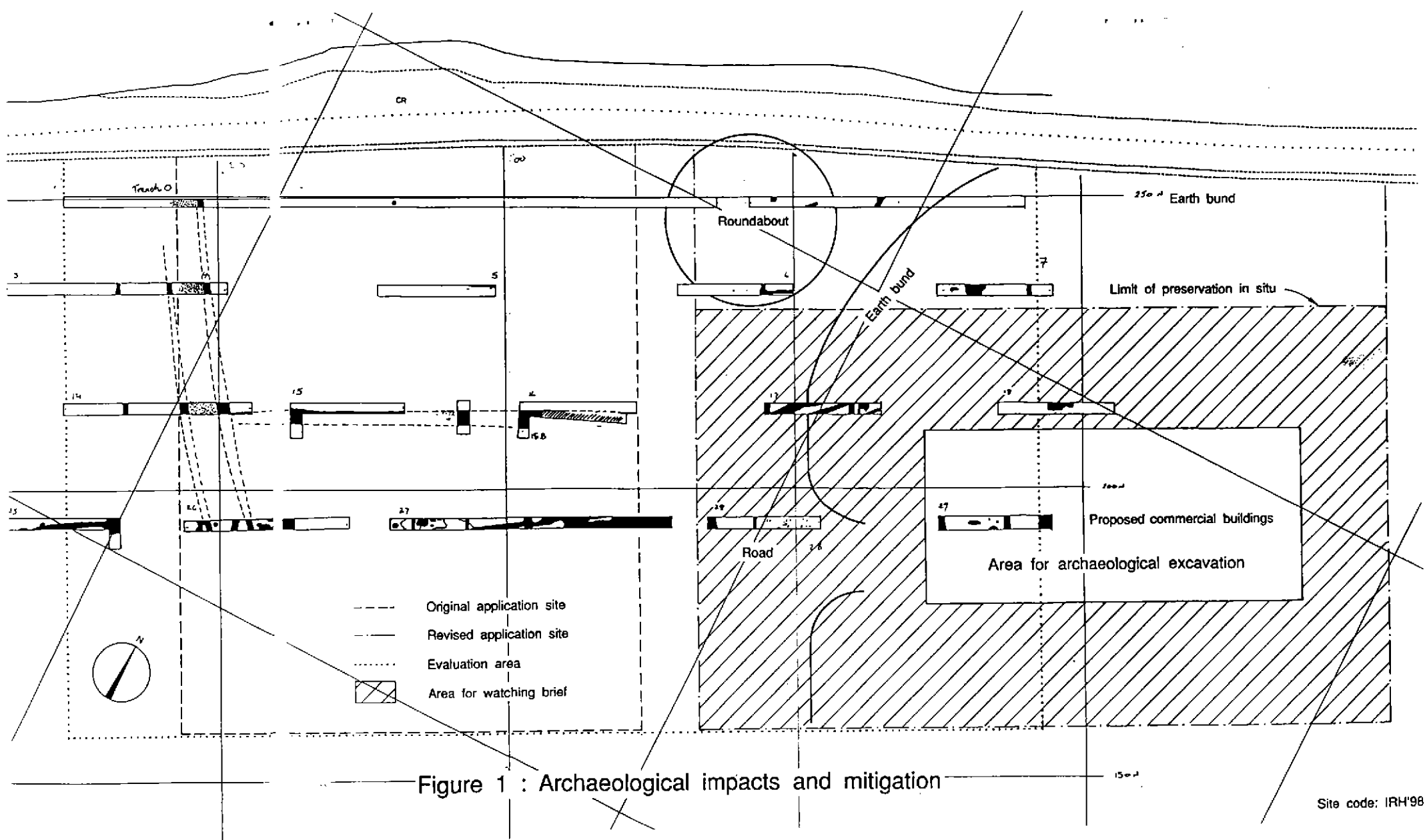
4.2.2 The settlement may be considered to be of sufficient importance to merit scheduling under the Ancient Monuments & Areas Archaeological Act 1979. Further advice on this may be sought from Dr John Williams, Head of Heritage Conservation Section, Strategic Planning Directorate, Kent County Council whose office acts on behalf of the Monuments Protection Programme, English Heritage in assessing potential sites for inclusion on the schedule.

4.2.3 The evaluation has shown that along a strip of ground abutting the south side of the Island Road up to 0.5m of re-deposited brickearth soils cap buried archaeological features. This depth of deposit decreases to the south. At a point 25m south of the Island Road archaeological features are capped by 0.35-0.40m of re-deposited brickearth soils, and at 60m are overlying only by a thin layer of 10-20cm of topsoil.

4.2.4 From a point 25m south of the Island Road topsoil stripping will expose archaeological deposits which are known to be fragile and vulnerable to damage by machinery. There is a potential for loss of the archaeological resource, particularly across the southern boundaries of the proposed development site.

4.2.6 A potential for loss of the archaeological resource may also occur across the same area during subsequent road construction and the laying of hard standing for car parking.

4.2.7 There is likely to be a direct loss of the archaeological resource during the initial stages of construction of the commercial building.



4.3 Mitigation

4.3.1 The principal objectives of the archaeological evaluation were to establish the presence or absence of any elements of the archaeological resource across the proposed development site and to ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit, character, date and quality of any such archaeological remains.

4.3.2 The results of the evaluation demonstrate that the objectives set out in the specification of works were attained. Given the results of the evaluation, however, a further 60m of trenching is required across the southern boundary of the proposed development site to determine (i) the presence/absence of archaeological remains (ii) the state of preservation of the resource (iii) to obtain information on the extent of the settlement.

4.2.3 The depth of the overlying re-deposited brickearth soils across a corridor extending to a depth of 25m from the southern edge of the Island Road is likely to preserve *in situ* any buried archaeological features and deposits. No further archaeological works are required along this corridor.

4.2.4 In the absence of detailed construction data being made available to enable alternative mitigation options to be considered, and presuming that the archaeological resource is not considered important enough to merit scheduling, the following archaeological mitigation options are suggested.

4.2.5 Preservation *in situ* of the archaeological resource can be achieved during topsoil stripping, road and car park construction and during the cutting of service trenches by careful site management during the initial construction phases. A continuous watching and recording brief should be maintained during these works which should be covered by a full specification setting out the objectives, methods and standards to be attained. The specification should provide for a programme of topsoil stripping under archaeological supervision, induction of machine operatives and adequate time for archaeological recording as required.

4.2.6 Preservation by record of the archaeological resource is the appropriate mitigation in the area of the proposed commercial building. The impact area extends to approximately 65m x 30m (1950sqm). Archaeological excavation of the impact area should be covered by a full specification setting out the objectives, methods and standards to be attained. Provision should be made for the post-excavation processing and analysis of artefacts recovered and subsequent analysis of the results of the excavation to publication standard. The excavation should be carried out in distinct phases, commencing with topsoil stripping by machine, cleaning and planning of the archaeological features exposed, followed by assessment and excavation. Full details of the methodologies to be used during the various phases should be included in the specification. The estimated duration of the excavation phase is six weeks.

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31 July 1998