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Report of an Archaeological Watching Brief at;
White Gate House, Whitegates, Sherburn,
North Yorkshire

Site: White Gate House, Whitegates, Sherburn, North Yorkshire

Site Codes: GLS 12

County: North Yorkshire

NGR: SE 495880 476515

Planning Application No: *Client Job No. 1334*

Development: Alteration and extension at the rear of White Gate House

Date of Issue: 11/11/12

Site Dates: 25th September 2012

Project by: Landscape Research Centre

Client: Alan Campbell Architect

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Summary

A program of archaeological observation, investigation and recording at White Gate House, Whitegates, Sherburn, North Yorkshire was undertaken during the ground works associated with the alterations and extension of the property. At first all the topsoil was removed within the area of the new extension, then a total of five foundation trenches were excavated, and no archaeological features or deposits were found within the impacted area.

Introduction

L S Archaeology was commissioned by Landscape Research Centre, to undertake an archaeological program of observation, investigation and recording, requested by the building Contractor in accordance with the planning conditions set by the North Yorkshire County Council dated July 2012. It complies with the guidance from Archaeology and Planning (PPS5), and Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief Institute for Field Archaeologists (1994, revised 2001).



Figure 1: White Gate House, location (copy from Streetmap.co.uk).

This report serves as a short report on the result of the monitoring of all ground works at White Gate House, Gate Lane, Sherburn North Yorkshire, related to the area impacted by the new extension to be built at the rear of the property.

The archaeological evaluation was carried out in order to characterize the archaeological potential of the development areas in accordance with the criteria set out within PPS5. The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) Produced by Professor Dominic Powlesland from The Landscape Research Centre.

PPS5(Planning Policy Statement 5) states that:

"Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost..." (PPS5, HE 12.3).



Figure 2: Site location, investigated area in red (picture from Google Earth)

White Gate House is situated c.0.275km south of the A64, to the west of Whitegates. The site lies at approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum (Figure 1).

The geology comprises; of *Speeton Clay Formation - Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 99 to 142 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas/shallow seas. Settings; these rocks were formed in shallow seas with mainly siliciclastic sediments (comprising of fragments or clasts of silicate minerals) deposited as mud, silt, sand and gravel.* (British Geological Survey).

Archaeological Background

The Landscape Research Centre has been engaged in archaeological research in the area for nearly 35 years, and has conducted extensive aerial and geophysical surveys around the village. The permanent pasture fields which lie to the north and west of the proposed development have been examined by geophysical survey and indicate the presence of buried rig and furrow fields which we believe may have been established as early as the eighth century AD. No other obvious features were observed in this area nor have any features in the immediate area been observed from the air. It is likely that the area lies within the zone of blown sands, which have afforded high degree of preservation to the buried archaeology and are acknowledged to be of European importance.

It should be noted that very early prehistoric features are very rarely susceptible to recording through geophysical survey and thus the lack of visible features in the areas examined cannot be taken as a guaranteed reflection that there is no archaeology there. However, domestic activities from the Late Iron Age to Post Roman periods are well documented within the local area.

Aims and Objectives

Given the absence of demonstrable archaeological features or recorded material, the aim of the archaeological investigation was to characterize and record deposits and features within the area of the proposed development. Specifically the evaluation sought to recover information revealing that:

- there could have been features within the area that were undetected by geophysical survey
- there could have been densities of material culture evidence such as flint scatters reflecting activity in the area that can only be identified through excavation
- there may have been archaeological deposits that are undetectable protected beneath a layer of blown sand.

Methodology

The objectives were met by monitoring; firstly the stripping of top-soil within the development footprint and secondly by monitoring the excavation of the foundation for the new extension. The whole operation was done by using a machine with a back-actor and straight edged ditching blade/bucket.

The ground surface consisted of a flat grass land, occupied by small shrubs and garden bushes.

The work was undertaken on the 25th September 2012.

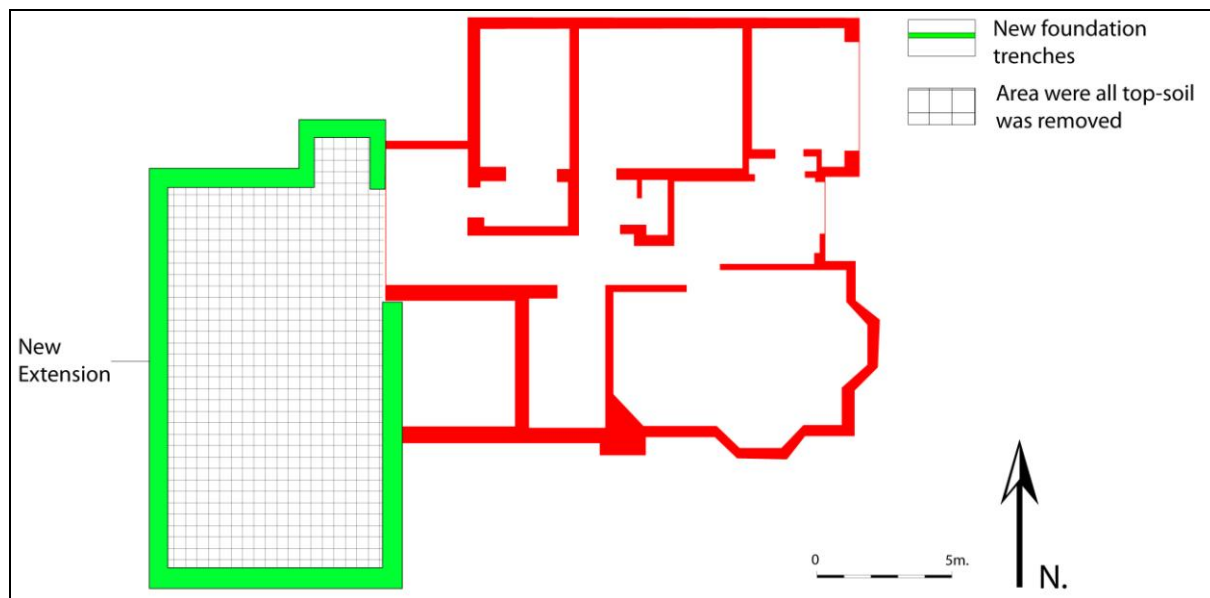


Figure 3: plan of White Gate House and location of the new extension

The evaluated area measures 11m in length and 6m in width covering a total of 66m². The foundation of the new extension consisted of a total of seven trenches (Figure 3). These trenches were excavated to an average depth of 0.90m from ground level.

Results

The removal of topsoil (100), a 0.40m deep dark brown silty sand deposit, with occasional small gravel inclusion and small fragments of ceramic building material, revealed the presence of a 0.50m thick orange brown sandy deposit (101) interpreted as the wind blown sand deposit.

The natural ground deposit which consisted of undisturbed sterile yellow sand was reached at a depth of 0.90m (from ground surface).

No archaeological deposits were recorded in all areas.

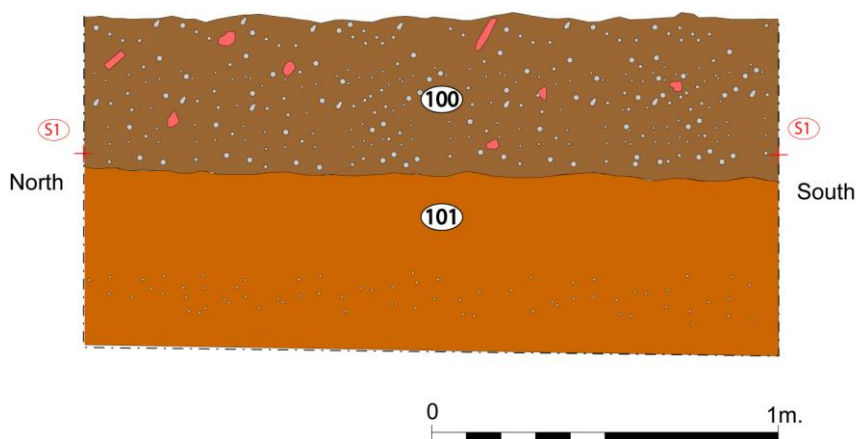


Figure 4; west facing section of the west foundation trench



Figure 5; west facing section looking east



Figure 6: west foundation trench looking south

Discussion

With a total investigated area of 66m², only the presence of a wind blown sand deposit was recorded within the new development area.

From the evidence recorded in the area the ground does not appear to have been occupied at any stage of the past.

Conclusion

The archaeological evaluation has recorded no archaeological deposits or features within any of the foundation trenches. More significantly the investigation has recorded that the deposit buried below the topsoil appears to be clean and undisturbed, wind blown sand.

On the basis of the results of the monitoring, the stripping of topsoil and foundation trenching alone, in these areas of the site no archaeological features were encountered. The presence of blown sands in this area is important as it indicates that although no features were identified in the limited areas exposed here if areas of past activity do lie nearby they may include relatively well preserved archaeological deposits.

G. Signorelli
Landscape Research Centre
November 2012

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Appendix A:

Contents of the Site Archive

The archive consists of digital photographs and paper records limited to the descriptions of the topsoil, blown sand and undisturbed natural sand.

Contest No	Type	Area	Description
100	Deposit	All	100 comprised of a very dark brown sandy silt deposit 0.40m deep, identified as topsoil
101	Deposit	All	101 comprised of an orange brown sandy deposit. Identified as the wind blown sand.
102	Natural	All	102 yellow sand natural deposit

Table 1: List of contexts