

**69 OLD WATFORD ROAD,
BRICKET WOODS,
HERTFORDSHIRE**

NGR REF: TL 12225 02468



ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
(OASIS ID: independ1-261531)

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Independent Archaeology Consultants for the construction of a new dwelling at 69 Old Watford Road, Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire. During the fieldworks no features or finds of archaeological interest were discovered in any of the trenches for the new footings.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site was located at 69 Old Watford Road, Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL 12225 02468) (Figure 1-3). The project was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), as well as discussions with Simon West, District Archaeologist at St Albans City and District Council. The project was based on a WSI, which complies with the principles of NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework 2012).
- 1.2 Independent Archaeology Consultants is an archaeological consultancy company based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. The company subscribes to the Code of Conduct issued by the CIfA. All relevant CIfA Codes of Practice were adhered to throughout the course of the project.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning Permission has been granted (5/16/0156) for a new development at 69 Watford Road, Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire. The development comprised the construction of a new first floor extension with flat roof dormers, single storey rear extension and alterations to openings.
- 2.2 The development site was located in the central parts of the village of Bricket Wood. It enclosed an area of some 400m² at an average height of 75m AOD. The site was within an area of former agricultural land, and was surrounded by existing properties in north and south. In the west there was the Old Watford Road and in the east there was a hill with remains of a Roman pottery kiln. The geology of the site comprised Kesgrave Catchment Subgroup Sand and Gravel over Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formations (British Geological Survey).
- 2.3 The site was situated within an area of archaeological potential, as defined by Hertfordshire HER (ID 879 and others). Therefore, a watching brief followed by full documentation was required prior to the proposed construction works. This condition was mentioned in the Planning Permission granted by St Albans City and District Council, and was in line with standards described in *NPPF* (2012).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The proposed development site was located within area of archaeological interest. However, few archaeological features were known from the closer area. Within 1 km radius from the site there were only 20 records, and most of these records derive from old observations and small scale field walking when the motorway M25 was planned.
- 3.2 There was also a scatter of Prehistoric and Roman flint and pottery finds across the area, which is not surprising as the site was located within a more general area of settlements from these periods. The Black Boy Roman tile kiln from the 2nd century was also located some 30m east of the site.
- 3.3 In 1932, during gravel quarrying, a 2nd century Romano-British tile kiln was discovered and excavated in the Black Boy Gravel Pit. A kiln of rectangular, updraught type; its plan was complete apart from some of the main flue. It was used for firing roof, wall and flue tiles; only two vessel fragments were found (Article in serial: Davey, Norman. 1932). There was a potential for further surviving evidence for this kiln or others in the area, and it was important that any such remains were properly recorded.

4 AIMS

- 4.1 The aims of the watching brief were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- * to establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site;
 - * to establish the relationship of any remains found in the surrounding contemporary landscape;
 - * to recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
 - * to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation;
 - * to inform a strategy for the recording, preservation and/or management of the identified assets;
 - * to inform proposals for further archaeological investigations (namely targeted area excavations) within the ongoing programme of research;
 - * to define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains;

- 4.2 The watching brief also considered the general investigative themes outlined by: Brown, N. and Glazebrook, J. (eds) 2000, *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 8, Glazebrook, J. (ed) 1997, *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties. 1. Resource Assessment*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 3, Medlycott, M. and Brown, N. 2008, Revised East Anglian Archaeological Research Frameworks www.eaareports/algaoee, Medlycott, M. (ed) 2011, *Research and Archaeology revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24.



Figure 1. The location of Bricket Wood in England.



Figure 2. Site Location.

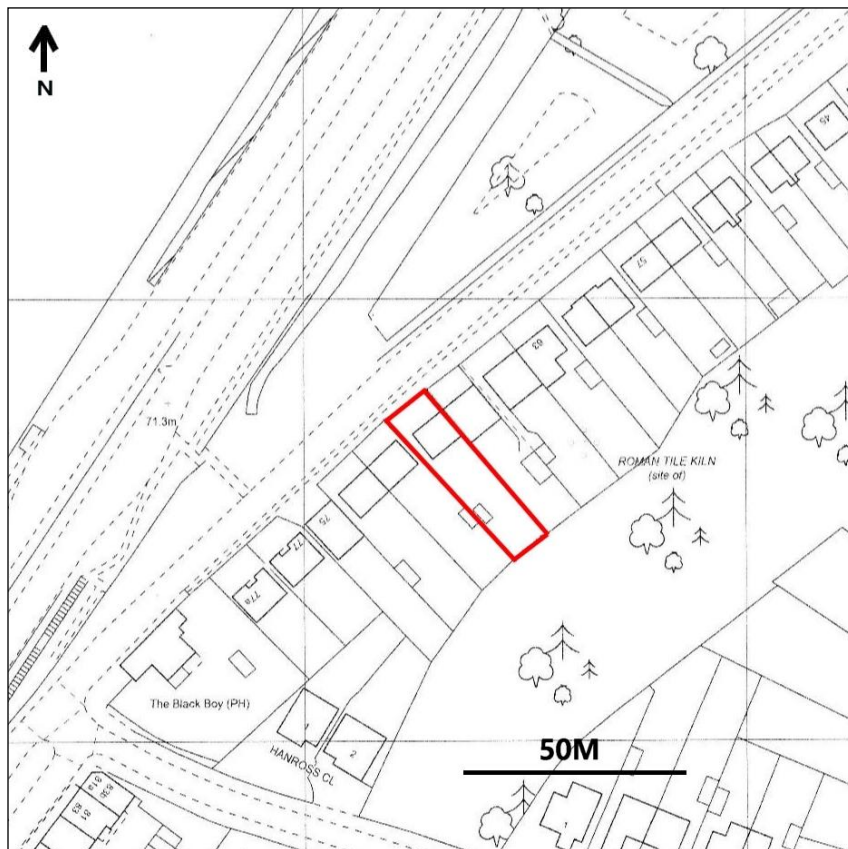


Figure 3. Site Outline.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Watching Brief

Any intrusive groundworks within the site were made under constant archaeological supervision, using a flat bladed ditching bucket. This included the excavation of the footings for the new extension, as well as any associated service trenches including any new drainage and soakaways.

The groundworks took into consideration potential above- and below-ground constraints and/or hazards, such as trees, utility trenches, overhead cables and areas of modern disturbance.

The ground was excavated to the upper interface of secure archaeological deposits or, where these were not present, to the upper interface of natural deposits. Thereafter, hand-excavation was required to sample any features exposed (see section 5.3).

5.2 Metal Detecting

Thorough metal detector sweeps of exposed features and spoil heaps were carried out in advance of, and during, the excavation process. Deeply buried signals were investigated only if agreed as part of the hand excavation programme.

5.3 Hand Excavation

All man-made features were investigated. Apparently natural features (such as tree throws) were sampled sufficiently to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity. Hand excavation and feature sampling were sufficient to establish the date and character, and to allow appropriate levels of recording.

Deposits and layers (including buried horizons of top- and subsoils) were sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features. Thereafter, mechanical removal and visual scanning for artefacts were acceptable.

The watching brief provided a representative sample of the site's stratigraphy at no significant cost to the value or integrity of archaeological remains. The developer was informed that provision must be made for delays caused by the need for archaeological recording, or if contingency allowance must be made for more detailed recording of exceptional finds.

5.4 Recording

A numbered single context-based recording system, written on suitable forms and indexed appropriately, was used for all elements of the archaeological recording programme.

Measured plans were produced that show all exposed features (including natural features, modern features, etc.) and excavated areas. Individual measured plans and sections in the scales 1:20 and 1:50 were produced for all excavated features and deposits. These were accurately tied in to trench plans/trench location plans, that in turn were accurately related to the Ordnance Survey grid and to suitably mapped local features (boundaries, buildings, roads, etc.). All sections and plans were related accurately to Ordnance Datum.

A photographic record comprising digital photos formed part of the excavation record. A selection of digital photographs was also used in this report (maximum of two photographs per A4 sheet). The photographic record followed CIfA standards for site photographs.

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 The watching brief started by monitoring the excavation of the footings for the proposed extension at the rear of the property. Prior to the excavation the ground level was reduced by 200mm (0.20m), except at the north-east end of the footing trench where the scaffold was placed.
- 6.2 The footing trench for the new build on the north-east side was deeper at 1.7m due to scaffolding. The rest of the footings was measured from the reduced level and went down to a depth of just over one 1m. The width of all footings was 0.60m. Due to access restrictions parts of the trenches had to be dug by hand.
- 6.3 The topsoil at the north-east side had a maximum depth of 0.46m, but was reduced to 0.30m further to the west. The subsoil had a maximum thickness of 1m over the underlying natural deposits.
- 6.4 No surviving evidence of the 2nd century Romano-British tile kiln discovered in 1932 was made. The wooded area bounding the property in the east would probably originally have been on an inclined dropping west towards the road. Much of the incline would, therefore, have been truncated during the development of Old Watford Road in the 1950's. This may be the reason why no archaeology was found within the site.
- 6.5 The lowest deposit encountered was the natural deposits consisting of light yellow Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formations. No archaeological features or finds could be seen anywhere in the natural deposits.
- 6.6 Overlying the natural was the subsoil (102) of mid-orange brown, soft gravely sandy clay with frequent rounded, sub-rounded, angular and sub-angular gravels, occasional tile fragments and flint. The depth of the subsoil was up to 1m at the northern and about 0.80m across the rest of the trench.

- 6.7 The uppermost deposit was the up to 0.46m thick topsoil (101) of mid-grey brown, soft sandy clay with frequent rounded, sub-rounded, angular and sub-angular gravels and moderate inclusions of large brick fragments.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The watching brief carried out at 69 Old Watford Road, Bricket Wood, Hertfordshire uncovered no features or finds of archaeological interest within the development area. This negative result may, however, be a result of the extensive road works along the Old Watford Road, which took place in the 1950's. The site is nevertheless located in an area of archaeological potential and future investigations in the vicinity may still expose remains of archaeological interest.



Figure 4. Footings in the east. The natural deposits in the trench showed no traces of archaeological remains. North facing photo.

8 ARCHIVE

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The photographic and drawn records	

The archive is currently maintained by Independent Archaeology Consultants.
The archive will be transferred to:

The Archaeological Collections at St Albans Museum.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDICES

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context nr	Depth (m)	Description	Younger than	Older than
(101)	0.46	Topsoil of mid-grey brown, soft sandy clay with frequent rounded, sub-rounded, angular and sub-angular gravels and moderate inclusions of large brick fragments.	-	(102)
(102)	1	Subsoil of mid-orange brown, soft gravely sandy clay with frequent rounded, sub-rounded, angular and sub-angular gravels, occasional tile fragments and flint.	Natural	(101)
Natural	-	Natural deposits of light yellow Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formations.	-	(102)

