1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origin and Scope of the Report

This report was commissioned from AOC Archaeology Group by Hornglade Projects Ltd, for their client Merton College and relates to the Merton College site, at Central Road, Morden, in the London Borough of Merton. The present buildings are not listed and there are no entries within the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record for within the development boundaries. The site is not within an Archaeological Priority Zone, as defined by the London Borough of Merton, This desk-based report is intended as an assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposed scheme. It will provide the information necessary for the preparation and implementation of a strategy to mitigate the effects of the development on any archaeological material identified.

The approach adopted follows the *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16)* issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990 (DoE, 1990). In PPG 16's definition, *Assessment* 'normally involves desk-based evaluation of existing information: it can make effective use of records of previous discoveries, including historic maps held by the County archive and local museums and record offices, or of geophysical survey techniques' (DoE, 1990, Para. 20). The next stage may be *Field Evaluation* 'where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer's own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. This sort of evaluation is quite distinct from full archaeological excavation. It is normally a rapid and inexpensive operation, involving ground survey and small-scale trenching.....' DoE, 1990, Para. 21).

The Institute of Field Archaeologists has published various *Standard and Guidance* papers seeking to amplify the guidance in PPG 16, and clearly differentiates between 'Desk-based Assessments' and 'Field Evaluations' (IFA, 1994a, and IFA 1994b).

1.2 Aims and Objectives

In accordance with the IFA *Standard* definition of a Desk-based Assessment (IFA, 1994a), this report seeks to identify and assess the known and potential archaeological resource within a specified area ('the Site'), collating existing written and graphic information and taking full account of the likely nature and extent of previous impacts on the Site, in order to identify the likely character, extent, quantity and worth of that resource in a regional and national context as appropriate.

A further objective is to define and comment on the likely impact of works (e.g.: site clearance, ground reduction, construction, infrastructure, etc.)

resulting from the proposed redevelopment scheme on the surviving archaeological resource.

The IFA *Standard* states that the purpose of a desk-based assessment is so that appropriate responses can be made, which may consist of one or more of the following:

> the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
> the formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised
> the formulation of a project design for further archaeological investigation within a program of research

PPG 16 emphasises that early consultation about the results of archaeological assessment and consideration of the implications for a development proposal is the key to informed and reasonable planning decisions. An aim of this report is to facilitate that process, and to propose a strategy by which the impact of the development on any archaeological resource might be mitigated.

In accordance with PPG 16, the desk-based assessment forms the first stage in the planning process as regards archaeology as a material consideration and, if the archaeological potential warrants, may lead to evaluation by fieldwork within the defined development area.

1.3 Methodology

The format of the report is adapted from an Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard Guidance* paper (IFA, 1994) and an English Heritage *Model Brief* (EH, 1993).

In summary, the work has involved:

- identifying the client's objectives
- identifying the documentary sources available for consultation
- assembling, consulting and examining those sources
- consulting specialists as appropriate

The principal sources consulted during the research were as follows:

- Greater London Sites and Monuments Record
- Surrey Historic Centre, Woking
- Merton Local Studies Library
- Guildhall Library

Individual sources consulted are listed in the Bibliography.

The extent to which archaeological remains are likely to survive in the development area will depend on the previous land use. The destructive effect

of the previous and existing buildings/infrastructure/activity on the Site is therefore assessed from a study of available plans, ground investigation reports and other specialist sources.

So that the appropriate archaeological response/s can be identified, consideration is given to the need for further assessment and evaluation by fieldwork, in order to identify and locate surviving archaeological deposits/remains on the Site.

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2 THE SITE

2.1 Site Location (Figures 1 and 2)

The site is located along Central Road, Morden, in the London Borough of Merton. Central Road runs in a north-east to south-westerly direction and is located to the north-west of the site. The site is bounded to the north by a number of terraced residential houses along Bristol Road, to the east again by terraced houses along Canterbury Road, to the south/south-east by more housing along Combermere Road and to the south/south-west by Farm Road and houses along Willows Avenue. The site is centred upon National Grid Reference (NGR) 525950 167730 and slopes upwards towards the south from approximately 34.3m Ordnance Datum (OD) to the south of the site along Farm Road to 23.5m along Central Road to the north. The site is currently occupied by Phoenix College and Petit Enfant Day Nursery and Playing Fields.

There are no Greater London Sites and Monuments Record entries from within the site boundaries, although there are several such references in the vicinity of the site. The present buildings on the site are not Listed.

The site does not lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone as defined by the local Council and the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, English Heritage.

2.2 Site Description

The site is currently occupied by five main buildings and associated ancillary buildings of Phoenix College, the Petit Enfant Day Nursery and a Playing Field with Tennis Courts. Main access to the site is from Central Road, with additional access from Canterbury Road. The buildings on the site are located within the northern portion. The site is relatively open and slopes up towards the south (see section 2.1).

3 PROPOSED SCHEME OF DEVELOPMENT

The Proposed scheme of any future development is unknown at this stage.

4 GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL PLANNING PROCEDURES

4.1 Planning Policy Guidance

Archaeology is a material consideration in the planning process, and government guidance stresses the important role that Local Planning Authorities have in safeguarding the archaeological heritage through the development control process.

Planning Policy guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) sets out the Secretary of State's policy on archaeological remains on land, and provides recommendations, many of which have been integrated into local development plans. The key points in PPG16 (DoE, 1990) can be summarised as follows:

Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, and in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by a proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation. These remains are assessed in terms of the Secretary of State's Criteria for Scheduling Ancient Monuments: Period, Rarity, Documentation, Group Value, Survival/Condition, Fragility/Vulnerability, Diversity and Potential.

The key to informed and reasonable planning decisions is for consideration to be given, before formal planning applications are made, to the question of whether archaeological remains are known to exist on a site where development is planned and the implications for the development proposal.

When important remains are known to exist, or when archaeologists have good reason to believe that important remains exist, developers will be able to help by preparing sympathetic designs using, for example, foundations which avoid disturbing the remains altogether, or which minimise damage by raising ground levels under a proposed new structure, or by careful siting of landscaped or open areas. There are techniques available for sealing archaeological remains underneath buildings or landscaping, thus securing their preservation for the future even though they remain inaccessible for the time being.

If physical preservation *in situ* is not feasible, an archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record' may be an acceptable alternative. From an archaeological point of view, this should be regarded as a second best option.

Agreements should also provide for the subsequent publication of the results of any excavation programme.

Development plans should reconcile the need for development with the interests of conservation - including archaeology. Detailed development plans should include policies for the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological interest, and their settings.

Decisions by planning authorities, in the face of proposed development, on whether to preserve archaeological remains *in situ*, have to be taken on merit, taking account of development plan policies and all other material considerations - including the importance of the remains - and weighing these against the need for development.

Planning authorities, when they propose to allow development which is damaging to archaeological remains, must ensure that the developer has satisfactorily provided for excavation and recording, either through voluntary agreement with the archaeologists or, in the absence of agreement, by imposing an appropriate condition on the planning permission.

4.2 London Borough of Merton Unitary Development Plan

The London Borough of Merton has also issued guidance on archaeological remains and the protection thereof. The relevant sections appear in the Council's Unitary Development Plan, adopted in April 1996, as follows:

POLICY EB15 – ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRIORITY ZONES

The Council will promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage of the Borough and its interpretation to the public. Where development in proposed within an Archaeological Priority Zone as shown on the Proposals map, the Council may require a preliminary archaeological site evaluation before proposals are considered. The requirement may also be applied to sites outside the Archaeological Priority Zones, especially where they are over 0.6 ha and/or have proven or known archaeological potential.

POLICY EB16 – ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROTECTION

The Council will encourage co-operation between landowners, developers and archaeological organisations in accordance with the principles of the British Archaeologists and Developers Liaison Group Code of Practice. Where desirable and feasible, the most important archaeological remains shall be preserved in situ and made accessible to the public. In cases where sites do not require permanent preservation, the Council will require provision for an appropriate level of archaeological investigation, excavation, processing of finds, analysis and publication by a recognised archaeological organisation, before development begins.

5 GEOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

Geological formations, natural topography and flora and fauna have always influenced the pattern of human settlement. These factors must not be assumed to have been constant, and, therefore, to have had a predictable influence at all times in the past. The influence of these factors on land use is a major element in determining the nature of the archaeological deposits (stratification) formed on sites. There follows a selective and simplified account of some of the main aspects of the geological sequence in the Thames valley.

5.2 Solid Geology

The site lies within a major geological formation called the London Basin (also known as the Thames Basin) formed about 70 million years ago. The basin is a depression in the Cretaceous chalk and its rims are formed by the North Downs and the Chiltern Hills. About 60 million years ago, the chalk was covered by marine sands, gravels and clays (eg Thanet Sands and the Woolwich and Reading Beds) and some 5 million years ago the London Clay was formed above. Some 3 million years ago, a forerunner of the Thames followed a course some distance to the north of its present course.

5.3 Drift Geology

The 'drift' or 'superficial' deposits were laid down relatively recently in geological terms, during the Ice Age which began about 500,000 years ago. These include boulder clay and gravels in north London marking the furthest southerly extent of the ice-sheet and a series of river gravel terraces along the Thames and its tributaries (Merriman, 1990). The forerunner of the Thames was blocked by ice-sheets moving towards the London area from the north and diverted southwards into the area of its present course (c. 500,000 to 440,000 BC).

In Britain, major ice-sheet advances occurred around 450,000 years ago and this was followed by at least two cycles of warmer and then colder periods, until the final retreat of the glaciers around 10,000 years ago. Variations in the river flow caused by fluctuations in the rate at which the ice-sheets melted resulted in the Thames varying in width and the deposition of alluvium over a wide area (the floodplain is some 4 km wide at Southwark Bridge). About 300,000 years ago the climate had cooled again and another glacial period began which lasted until about 135,000 years ago. One of the main geological results of this period in the Thames valley was the formation of a series of river terraces on either side of the main channel caused by cycles of deposition and erosion influenced by the upward 'tilt' of southern Britain (isostatic readjustment).

At least six major river terraces have been identified in the Thames valley in the London area and within these broad divisions localised river terrace horizons have been – and continue to be – identified. The most recent of the major terraces is known as the Floodplain Terrace formed during the final cold period about 110,000-10,000 years ago. The Floodplain Terrace forms the present banks of the Thames and the floor of its valley.

5.4 The Site and Vicinity

The Geological Survey of Great Britain Map indicates that the site is situated in an area of London Clay. It lies a short distance from the alluvial deposits associated with the River Wandle to the east of the site.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

6.1 Introduction

To date, there have been no previous archaeological investigations on the subject site. There are no Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) entries for archaeological features or chance finds within the boundaries of the site, although there are a number of entries surrounding the site. These nearby archaeological finds and deposits must be taken into consideration when assessing the archaeological significance of the subject site. It should also be noted that the paucity of archaeological information directly related to the subject site is not necessarily a reflection of a lack of human activity on the site. It is possible that archaeological remains have not yet been discovered or recorded, or that any remains that once existed have been truncated and possibly removed by later development.

Earliest available cartographic evidence for the area occurs in the sixteenth century and continues into the present day in the form of Ordnance Survey maps. Cartographic evidence provides contemporary information regarding land usage, but prior to the eighteenth century it is necessary to rely on historical documentation, such as ancient charters and surveys, which detail human activity in the area. These various sources combine to provide a representative picture of the earlier historic and prehistoric human activity in the general area.

When the above sources and records have been compiled, there is clear indication that there has been continuous human activity in the area over an extended period of time. The local area and landscape would have been attractive to settlers from Roman times onwards, and land usage on the site itself is documented in historical and cartographic records from the Medieval period to the present day.

The archaeological and historical remains recorded in the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) within a 500m radius of the site (the study area) are depicted in figure 5, Appendix A. These are identified in the report by unique numbers in square brackets **[1]**.

6.2 Prehistoric (to c. 43 BC)

In the Thames basin it is usual that areas of prehistoric settlement are concentrated in gravel eyots or ridges that were naturally created through geological activity, and in the marshy ground lying between the gravel features. As the underlying geology of the site is London Clay, it is not considered to be in an area of high prehistoric activity.

The lack of SMR entries within the study area support this assumption. Only one entry is made for the prehistoric era. This refers to some reported Palaeolithic elephant remains **[1]**. A reference to these appears upon a

Geological Survey Map of 1893. However, there is no suggestion of human involvement with the remains.

Goodman writes that "settlement and cultivation were late here, because, except on the gravels, drainage was poor and the heavy clay could not be worked properly before the introduction of the improved Saxon plough" (1995).

6.3 Roman (43 BC – 450 AD)

There are no Sites and Monuments Record entries for the Roman period within a 500m radius of the site. However, the Roman road Stane Street, leading from London to Chichester ran through Morden but would not have reached across the proposed development site, which would have been located to the east. Goodman describes that the road "enters Morden at Stonecot Hill, where modern and ancient road coincide briefly, and then cuts through part of Morden Park, where its course has been picked up at a few points. Between them and Colliers Wood High Street its precise route is still conjectural, though its Wandle crossing is likely to have been at or near the present point, for late in the 19th century masonry was said to have been found in the fabric of the bridge. There was probably a 'mansio' or staging station in Merton or Morden" (1995).

6.4 Saxon (450 – 1066)

There is only one SMR entry for this period. It is recorded that at the time of the Domesday survey Morden had one mill **[2]**.

Documentary sources from the Saxon period indicate that the Battle of Meretun took place in the borough in 871, resulting in the death of King Ethelred (Bruce and Mason, 1993). The name Merton (meaning 'farmstead by the pool') is first recorded in 967 (Mills, 1991). Little is known of settlement in the Morden area throughout the Saxon period, although it is likely that the fertile grounds near to the Wandle were used for agricultural purposes, particularly with the advent of the Saxon plough.

6.5 Medieval (1066 – 1485)

There are no SMR entries for the Medieval period within an approximate 500m radius of the proposed development site.

Merton (Meretone / Meretune), located in historic Surrey, belonged to Earl Harold and, with the Norman conquest of 1066, became the property of William the Conqueror. Morden (Mordure / Mordore) meaning 'hill in a swampy place' remained the property of Westminster Abbey. At the time of the Domesday Book the presence of a mill was recorded but there was no mention of a church (Goodman, 1995; VCH).

6.6 Post-medieval (1485 – modern)

There are eight SMR entries for the Post-Medieval period within a 500m radius of the proposed development site.

An excavation by MHS in 1972 along Central Road uncovered 17th and 18th century pottery sherds **[3]**. Evidence from the excavation suggested that a 17th century building was likely to have been present **[4]**. A Grade II listed building dating from the 18th century is now present in the same location **[5]**. It is a remodelling of an earlier building and now retains very few original period features. Outbuildings were also discovered which dated to the 19th century **[6]**. A 19th century brick built barrel topped drain was also uncovered during the excavations **[7]**.

An evaluation undertaken by MoLAS in 1992 uncovered a series of timber revetments that probably ran along the north bank of the River Wandle **[8]**. An 18th century culvert, which was brick-lined and vaulted, was also found that was likely to have controlled subterranean waterflow beneath a building **[9]**. The building under which it was constructed to flow may have been a predecessor to the current Ravensbury Mill, which is a Grade II Listed water mill from the 18th/19th century **[10]**. It is notable for the presence of two iron undershot waterwheels of the 'Poncelot' type invented in 1824.

Cartographic evidence reveals that in 1579, as shown on Saxton's map (Figure 4), a settlement named 'Mordon' was situated to the south of 'Merten' and to the west of the River Wandle. It had a church at this time. Speed's Map of 1610 shows 'Moredon' present (Figure 5). Seller's Map of 1690 (Figure 6) shows both an Upper Morden and Lower Morden. Upper Morden appears to be the settlement that became what is now known as Morden.

The first map to show a more detailed representation of the area of the proposed development site was Rocque's Map of 1768 (Figure 7). It shows the precursor of what is now Central Road to have been in use. The area of the sites was mainly fields and had not been developed. There are a few buildings along the line of the road on both the north and south side (the site is situated to the south). It is possible that one of these buildings could have been present on the proposed development site but this does not appear to be the case. There is a snuff mill nearby along the River Wandle.

By 1793, as shown on Lindley and Crosley's Map (Figure 8), As well as Central Road being present a further road has been built with a junction onto this road. It is likely that the new road is the present Farm Road, which runs to the immediate south/south-west of the site. There appear to be no buildings upon the proposed development site. The Ordnance Survey Old Series Map of 1811 (Figure 9) reveals that the immediate vicinity of the site remains unaltered at this point.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1865 (Figure 10) reveals the proposed development site to be comprised entirely of fields. In 1913 (Figure 11) the layout of the site remains the same.

By 1935, however, the site had taken on a character that is very similar to that of today. The terraced housing that bounds the site had been constructed by this time. Two large buildings are present in the northern portion of the site that are marked 'School'. The southern portion of the site is now a sports ground. The same degree of development is present upon the site in 1953 (Figure 13). Further buildings have been built by 2001 (see Figure 2) but are on the same alignment as the earlier buildings, which appear to have formed the basis for the current structures.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

There has been no previous archaeological work carried out on the subject site, nor are there any Greater London Sites and Monuments Record entries within the confines of the site. The site is not located within an Archaeological Priority Zone. Although, the lack of recorded archaeological features and finds within the site is not necessarily an indication that the site is barren of archaeology it is clear from documentary, cartographic and archaeological sources that the area of the site was not situated in an area of high archaeological activity.

Prehistoric

There is only one GLSMR entry within an approximate 500m radius of the proposed development site for the prehistoric period. However, even this single entry does not relate to human activity. Furthermore, the geology of the site, London Clay, is not generally conducive to areas of occupation, and the probability of prehistoric remains underlying the present site is thus considered to be low.

Roman

There are no GLSMR entries within the study area for the Roman period. The most significant Roman feature known to exist in the area of the site is Stane Street, the major road running from London to Chichester. It was common Roman practice for settlements to grow alongside major roads, but the distance of the road from the subject site is such that the likelihood of archaeological deposits relating to a settlement is low. Additionally, the geology of the area would not have been conducive to settlement using Roman technology. The probability of finding Roman remains on the development site is low.

Saxon

The only Saxon feature within the study area is the mill mentioned in the Domesday Book. Although settlement in the vicinity of Morden is likely to have occurred at this time, there is no further evidence of Saxon activity on, or near, the area of the site. It is likely to have been comprised of fields and may have been in use as agricultural land or left fallow during this period. The archaeological potential for the Saxon period is low.

Medieval

There are no GLSMR entries for the Medieval period within a 500m radius of the site. As for the Saxon period, although settlement at Morden is likely at this time there are no suggestions that the area of the proposed development site was anything other than fields. Therefore, the level of archaeological potential for this period is low.

Post-Medieval

There are eight GLSMR entries within a 500m radius of the site for this period. However, most of these refer to one site with a succession of Post-Medieval features present. The site was not located within a primary

settlement locus. Cartographic evidence does not clearly demonstrate the presence of any former buildings upon the site. Therefore, although the Post-Medieval period is the era most likely to yield remains, the relative archaeological potential can be considered to be low.

8 IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Previous Impact

The available evidence indicates that the site has not definitely been built upon until the early to mid 20th century.

Modern developments on the site appear to have been large but structurally light buildings, with significant areas of open space within the buildings themselves. It is not thought that any of the 20th century structures on the site, the above mentioned school buildings, have had basements.

8.2 Potential Impact of Proposed Development

There are no definitive development plans at this stage and no schemes have been formalised.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed development site, on Central Road, Morden, in the London Borough of Merton, demonstrates a low degree of archaeological potential for all periods. The site does not lie within an Archaeological Priority Zone. There are no GLSMR entries from within the site boundaries, and only a few from the surrounding area.

Given the above, AOC recommends that no further archaeological investigations are deemed necessary. The final decision, however, will rest with the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service advisor for the area.

Acknowledgments

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