

**HEATH MEAD GARAGES, HEATH MEAD, PARKSIDE,
WIMBLEDON PARK,
LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

CONTENTS

		Page
1	Non-Technical Summary	2
2	Introduction	3
3	Historical and Archaeological Background	4
4	Strategy	7
5	Results	8
6	Finds	9
7	Conclusion	10
8	Publication	10
9	Archive Deposition	10
10	Bibliography	11

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1	Site Location
Figure 2	Detailed Site Location/Trench Location

APPENDIX A	Context Register
APPENDIX B	Trench Matrices

APPENDIX C OASIS Form

1 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group on the 16th and 17th October 2007 at the site of Heath Mead Garages, Wimbledon Park, on behalf of Fabric 8 Developments. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the proposed redevelopment on any surviving archaeological remains.

The evaluation comprised two machine excavated trenches, measuring 8m by 2m. Trench one had to be extended by one meter at the east end of trench, due to concrete covered services. The two trenches revealed that an undisturbed soil sequence survived on site, that and the presence of weathered London Clay indicates the area has always been open fields. The natural London Clay was observed in both trenches at a depth between 49.88m and 50.43mOD

No finds or features of archaeological significance were observed during the course of the evaluation.

2 INTRODUCTION

Site Location (Figures 1 & 2)

- 2.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 236 724, and is within land bounded by Heath Mead to the east and residential buildings to the north, south and west. The site is roughly rectangular in shape and measures 560m².

Planning Background

- 2.2 The local planning authority is the London Borough of Merton. Archaeological advice to the council is provided by Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS).
- 2.3 Planning permission to undertake the development has been granted under the Town & Country Planning Act (1990) (Ref No.:06/P1080), subject to conditions. The condition states that:

“No development shall take place until the applicant, their agent or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation that has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.”

This condition has been required in accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16) issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990 (DoE, 1990), and was recommended by the archaeology advisor to the London Borough of Merton.

- 2.4 AOC Archaeology Group Ltd was commissioned by Fabric 8 Developments LTD to carry out the field evaluation. Subsequently a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced (AOC 2007). This document details how the evaluation, comprising of two trenches, has been undertaken.
- 2.5 Prior to commencing work a unique code for the project was obtained from the Museum of London (**HDM 07**).
- 2.6 On site field work was undertaken on the 16th and 17th October 2007.

Geology and Topography

- 2.7 The British Geological Survey map (BGS Sheet 270), indicates that the site is situated upon High Level Terraces, overlying London Clay.
- 2.8 Geotechnical investigations were carried out by Site Analytical Services LTD (2007). The results indicate that the natural deposits are between 0.65m to 2.00m below ground level, the deeper areas being towards the centre of the site.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background.

- 3.1 The following background information has been drawn from the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2007).
- 3.2 The status of Wimbledon Common itself means that there has been relatively little archaeological work in this area, but stray/casual finds have demonstrated that evidence covering the whole prehistoric period may be anticipated to survive as buried remains. The Priority Zone Designation extends beyond the modern limits of the Common to include additional areas where archaeological evidence for prehistoric landscapes has been shown to survive. No previous archaeological investigations have occurred on the site.

3.3 Prehistoric (before c.AD 43)

- Prehistoric activity was identified during excavations at 56 Parkside, approximately 105m west of the current development (MLO63782). The excavations revealed Prehistoric gullies, one of which contained pottery dating to the 1st millennium B.C. Archaeological Investigations at 52 Parkside also uncovered a gully and a linear ditch (MLO65973). No dating evidence was recovered from these features but they are thought to be related to the Prehistoric gullies recorded at 56 Parkside (GLSMR, 2007)
- 3.4 Caesars Camp, an Iron Age Hill fort and Schedule Ancient Monument is located approximately 1.09km south east of the site. Probably built in the 5th century BC, this roughly circular fort was protected by a single rampart and ditch and enclosed 4.3ha. The earthwork was very strong, having originally a 4m deep ditch, backed by a rampart faced both front and back by strong timbers (*Caesars Camp*, 2007).
 - 3.5 A Neolithic flint fabricator was found in Wimbledon Park which is situated approximately 150m west of the proposed site. Unfortunately no further information about the lithic tool is known.

Roman (c. AD 43-410)

- 3.6 No Roman Archaeological remains have been recorded in the local area. No Roman activity is expected on site.

Anglo-Saxon (c. AD 451-1065)

- 3.7 No Saxon archaeological remains have been recorded in the local area. No Saxon remains are expected on site.

Medieval (c.1066 - 1485)

- 3.8 From 1328 until 1536 the Manor of Wimbledon was owned by the Archbishop of Canterbury (*Weinreb and Hibbert, 1995*). No archaeological remains have been recorded in the local area and no medieval remains are expected on site.

Post-medieval (1485 – modern)

- 3.9 After 1536 the land was owned by various members of the Royal family until it was given to Sit Thomas Cecil in 1589. The medieval village grew around the area of the current High Street at the top of a hill. The Rose and Crown Inn located on the High Street, dates to the mid 17th century and the land now occupied by the modern Dog and Fox was formerly occupied by Inn. The common remained relatively untouched during the post-medieval period other than occasional occupation by soldiers and armed volunteers for training (*Weinreb and Hibbert, 1995*).

4 STRATEGY

Aims of the Investigation

- 4.1 The aims of the Evaluation are defined as being:
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
 - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
 - To determine the extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
 - To enable the archaeological advisor to the London Borough of Merton to make an informed decision on the status of the condition on the planning permission, and any possible requirement for further work in order to satisfy that condition.

- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation in order to inform the mitigation strategy as part of the planning process.
- 4.2 The specific objectives of the Evaluation were to:
- Determine the presence of any remains of Prehistoric date.
- 4.3 The final aim was to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

Methodology

- 4.4 During the fieldwork trench one was altered slightly (one meter wider at the east end) due to the presence of a modern concrete covered drain. This was to allow the machine bucket to dig either side of the obstruction. The location and size (8m by 2m) of trench two remained unaltered.
- 4.5 Levels for each context were established relative to Ordnance Datum, taken from a survey station located north west of the site at number 63 Parkside, on the south west corner of the building and established at a value of 48.87m AOD.
- 4.6 The evaluation was conducted by Chris Clark under the overall management of Ron Humphrey. The site was monitored by Diane Walls of GLAAS, on behalf of the London Borough of Merton.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

- 5.1 Surface of Trench = 51.38m AOD

Level (OD)	Depth (BGL)	Context Number	Description
51.38-50.98m	0.00m	(1/001)	Made ground. Loose, light brown, CBM and concrete fragments in sandy matrix.
50.98-50.83m	0.55m	(1/002)	Tarmac and make up. mixed clayey sand
50.83-50.64m	0.74m	(1/005)	Buried topsoil. loose, dark brown, sandy silt, small sub angular stones
50.64-50.43m	0.95m	(1/008)	Subsoil. loose mid brown, silty clay, with small sub angular stones
50.43-50.13m	1.25m NFE	(1/009)	Natural. firm, orangey brown, sandy clay, with sub rounded stones
50.43-50.13m	1.25m NFE	(1/010)	Natural. firm dark bluish grey clayey sand

50.43- 50.13m	1.25m NFE	(1/011)	Natural. firm orange brown sandy clay with sub rounded pebbles
50.43- 50.13m	1.25m NFE	(1/012)	Natural. firm dark bluish grey clayey sand

- 5.2 Trench 1 was located adjacent to the west boundary of the site, orientated east-west. The earliest recorded deposit was an orange brown sandy clay (1/009) and (1/011) in between which, was a diagonal band (viewed in section) of bluish grey clayey sand (1/010). This was interpreted as a vein of fissure cracked weathered London Clay, caused when it is exposed to light and oxidizes. Another vein of this weathered blue grey clay was noted in the east of the trench (1/012). All four of these deposits were interpreted as natural, and at its highest was observed at 50.43m AOD.
- 5.3 Cut into these natural deposits was an irregular oval shaped shallow pit (1/014), filled with a loose mid brown silty clay (1/013). Due to root disturbance and the irregular shape this was recognised as a tree bole.
- 5.4 Overlying this was a layer of loose brown silty clay subsoil (1/008), with a sub square, steep sided and flat bottomed pit cut through it (1/007). This pit was filled with (1/006) a soft loose dark grey clay silt containing small pieces of pottery and glass. The pottery and glass were all post medieval 20th century and was identified as a rubbish pit. Sealing that was (1/005) a soft loose dark brown sandy silt buried topsoil. Two services truncated the trench, (1/004) ran north south and was a concrete capped drain. The other (1/003), also a drain, was above (1/004) and ran east west for three and a half meters before turning at a right angle north south and continuing into the baulk. Overlying them was a modern tarmac surface and its make up (1/002), and finally completing the sequence (1/001) a loose light brown sandy silt, with concrete and CBM fragments making a layer of made ground.
- 5.3 No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified in Trench 1.

Trench 2

- 5.4 Surface of Trench = 51.00m AOD

Level (OD)	Depth (BGL)	Context Number	Description
51.00- 50.85m	0.00m	(2/001)	Made Ground. loose, brown, CBM and concrete fragments in sandy matrix.
50.85- 50.54m	0.29m	(2/002)	Tarmac and. mixed clayey sand make up
50.54-	0.69m	(2/005)	Mixed topsoil. soft dark brownish grey clay silt.

50.14m			CBM fragments and domestic rubbish debris
50.14- 49.88m	0.95m	(2/006)	Subsoil. soft loose mid greyish brown clay sand, with sub rounded pebbles
49.88- 49.68m	1.15m	(2/007)	Natural. firm orange brown sandy clay with small rounded pebbles
49.88- 49.68m	1.15m	(2/008)	Natural. dark bluish grey sandy clay with sub rounded pebbles

- 5.5 Trench 2 was located near the centre of the site, orientated north south. The earliest recorded deposit was a firm orange brown sandy clay (2/007), but as in trench one, a vein of bluish grey weathered London Clay (2/008) was noted. These were interpreted as natural, and at its highest were observed at 49.88m AOD.
- 5.6 Sitting over the natural (2/006) was a layer of loose mid grey brown clay sand subsoil 0.26m thick. Overlying that was a layer of loose dark brown grey clay silt topsoil (2/005), this layer was slightly disturbed and contained domestic debris. Two services truncated the topsoil (2/004) and (2/003) both were drains and both ran east west through the trench and explain why the topsoil was slightly disturbed.
- 5.7 Sealing them was a modern tarmac surface and its make up (2/002), and finally a dump of loose brown sandy matrix containing CBM (2/001) made ground was used to level the area.
- 5.7 No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified in Trench 2.

6 FINDS

- 6.1 Finds were observed in a single context (2/005), comprising of 20th century pottery and glass fragments. These finds were not retained.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The evaluation successfully characterised both the stratigraphic sequence and archaeological potential of the site. Natural London Clay deposits were observed in both trenches, between a height of 49.88m and 50.43m AOD.
- 7.2 The sequence of deposits recorded in both trenches one and two demonstrate the presence of an undisturbed soil profile sealed by the modern tarmac surface. This suggests that the area has always been open ground. The presence of weathered London Clay supports this interpretation as it only occurs when the ground is dry enough to form cracks deep enough to expose the Clay.

7.3 No finds or features of archaeological significance were observed in either of the two trenches.

7.4 The evaluation met its primary objective: to establish the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is required to satisfy the archaeological planning condition on this site. However, the final decision regarding any further work will rest with the London Borough of Merton and its archaeology advisor, Diane Walls (GLAAS).

8 PUBLICATION

8.1 It is recommended that publication of the results is achieved by a summary in the London Archaeology Round-up and publication via the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) (Appendix C).

9 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

9.1 The archive, consisting of paper records, finds, and digital photographs, will be deposited with LAARC.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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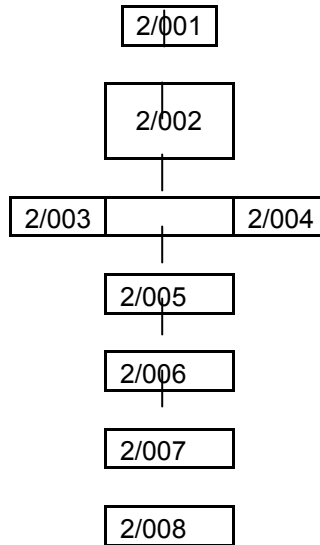
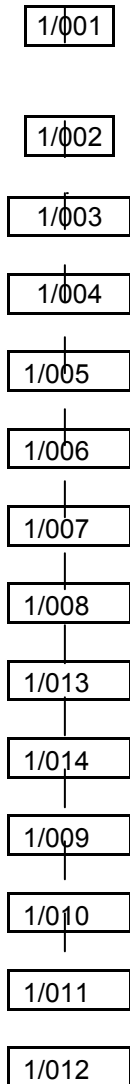
Figure 1

Figure 2

APPENDIX A – Context Register

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth
1/001	C20th made ground	8.00m	2.00m	0.40m
1/002	Tarmac and make up	8.00m	2.00m	0.15m
1/003	Concrete capped service	5.00m	1.70m	0.40m
1/004	Service and man hole	2.50m	1.25m	0.40m+
1/005	Buried topsoil	8.00m	2.00m	0.19m
1/006	Fill of C20th pit	1.00m	0.98m	0.15m
1/007	Cut of C20th pit	1.00m	0.98m	0.15m
1/008	Subsoil	8.00m	2.00m	0.21m
1/009	Natural	2.00m+	1.50m+	0.30m+
1/010	Natural	0.80m	0.50m	0.20m
1/011	Natural	7.00m+	2.00m+	0.30m+
1/012	Natural	0.80m+	0.40m+	0.20m+
1/013	Fill of tree bole	1.25m	0.85m	0.22m
1/014	Cut of tree bole	1.25m	0.85m	0.22m
2/001	C20th made ground	5.00m	2.00m	0.14m
2/002	Tarmac and make up	4.50m	2.00m	0.15m
2/003	Concrete capped service	2.00m	0.50m	0.40m
2/004	Service trench	2.00m	0.50m	0.40m
2/005	Mixed topsoil	8.00m	2.00m	0.40m
2/006	Subsoil	6.00m	2.00m	0.26m
2/007	Natural	5.40m	2.00m	0.20m
2/008	Natural	2.60m	2.00m	0.20m+

APPENDIX B- Trench Matrices



APPENDIX C – OASIS Form