Archaeology South-East



ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

EDUCATION & VISITORS CENTRE RAF UXBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON

NGR: TQ 0654 8355

ASE Project No: 161006 Site Code: HDN16 ASE Report No: 2017347



August 2017

Archaeological Watching Brief

Education and Visitor Centre Site, RAF Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon

NGR: TQ 0654 8355

Planning Ref. 585/APP/2014/3910

ASE Project No: 161006 Site Code: HDN16

ASE Report No: 2017347 OASIS id: 294059

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With contribution by

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Date of Issue:	August 2017	
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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at RAF Uxbridge, during construction groundworks for an education and visitor centre.

Structural archaeological remains associated with early 20th century military buildings known to have formerly occupied the area of site currently under development were exposed. These remains are almost certainly part of the foundations and underground services of the Royal Flying Corps School of Aerial Gunnery Building 76, constructed in 1917/18.

All recorded deposit sequences related to the 20th century development of the site as the School of Aerial Gunnery or else its subsequent operation as RAF Uxbridge.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief on construction enabling works at RAF Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon, UB10, 0RX.
- 1.1.2 Groundworks for the construction of Battle of Britain Education and Visitor Centre, with exhibition space, auditorium, meeting rooms, library, café and shop and associated parking area and associated landscaping were monitored. Specifically, these works comprised the opening of underground operations bunker to the public, the demolition of Building 76 to make way for the new visitor centre and the retention of the Cold War Uniter Bunker.

1.2 Location, topography and Geology

- 1.2.1 RAF Uxbridge is located in the London Borough of Hillingdon, west London (TQ 0654 8355). It compromises the grounds of the historic Hillingdon House, which was purchased by the war office in 1917.
- 1.2.2 The current development site occupies a c.1-hectare irregular parcel of land in the south-eastern corner of this c. 79-hectare estate, adjacent to the boundary with Hillingdon Golf Course (Figure 1). It is bounded by woodland to the west and extends over the main access road, to the east, to include a war memorial and one further building.
- 1.2.3 Hillingdon House extends either side of the River Pinn, which dictates the wider topography of the site. It rises from 32.5m AOD along the river to 52.0m AOD in the north-west corner of the site and 53.4m AOD in the east.
- 1.2.4 RAF Uxbridge overlies London Clay Formation of clay, sand and silt with alluvium deposits in the vicinity of the River Pinn (BGS 2017).

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Planning permission was granted (planning ref. 585/APP/2014/3910) for the construction of a Battle of Britain Education and Visitor Centre with associated facilities and access. This consent included an archaeological condition which stated that:

A) No development, except demolition, shall take place until the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority in writing.

B) No development shall take place other that in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (A).

C) The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (A), and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured.

REASON

Heritage assets of archaeological interest are expected to survive on the site. The planning authority wishes to secure the provision of appropriate archaeological investigation, including the publication of results.

- 1.3.2 Following this, a heritage statement was produced for the site (Paul Francis 2014) and Building 76 was subject to a Historic Building Record (Paul Francis 2015). Additionally, Archaeology South-East conducted a Military Archaeology Assessment (ASE 2016a).
- 1.3.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced for these monitoring works (ASE 2016b) and was approved prior to their commencement.

1.4 Scope of Report

- 1.4.1 This document describes and assesses the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out during groundworks for the construction of the Battle of Britain Visitor Centre at RAF Uxbridge.
- 1.4.2 The fieldwork was undertaken by Craig Carvey and Rob Cullum (ASE archaeologists) from 09 January to 22 June 2017, and project managed by Andy Leonard.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 What follows is a summary of the most pertinent information presented in the WSI and drawn from the heritage statement and Military Archaeology Assessment produced for the site (ASE 2016a; Paul Francis 2014).
- 2.1.2 Prior to the acquisition of the site by the War Office in 1917, the land lay within the grounds of Hillingdon House. The general archaeological potential is unknown as the area has been within a military estate and therefore not available for archaeological investigation. Recent evaluation work to the west of the River Pinn (i.e. to the west and north-west of the site), prior to residential and commercial development, revealed no evidence for any significant archaeological potential pre-dating 20th century military use, although much of this may be due to extensive truncation and landscaping during the construction of modern facilities (Collings 2013).

2.2 Post-Medieval and Modern

- 2.2.1 The Hillingdon Estate was first laid out in 1717 as a hunting lodge; with the house in its present form being rebuilt in 1844. A map of 1914, shortly before it was used by the Canadian Red Cross as the Canadian Convalescent Hospital, shows the site as open parkland south of the house, interspersed with clumps of trees, above the river. The estate was purchased by the War Office in November 1917 to establish the Royal Flying Corps Central School of Aerial Gunnery.
- 2.2.2 As part of the School of Aerial Gunnery, Building 76 was constructed as a brickbuilt cadet officers' mess within the Education and Visitor Centre site (Fig. 2). This building comprised three main wings (of which only the southern now survives) arranged around three sides of a rectangular enclosure, with further structures built within the space to form a complex of internal corridors and rooms. The building was built with brick piers and half-brick infill, and was surrounded on the western and northern sides by a blast wall. Lines of timber huts were laid out to the north and south, possibly including former hospital structures (built with piles driven into the ground); these are shown in maps produced by the Air Ministry in 1918 and 1926 (reproduced in Francis 2014 and ASE 2016a, Figs 5 and 6).
- 2.2.3 RAF Uxbridge was administered from Hillingdon House itself. As well as the formation of Bomber Command there in 1936, one of the most significant events in the history of the site was the creation, in the same year, of No.11 (Fighter) Group and the construction in 1938 of the underground bunker known as 11 Group Operations Room (Building 80) immediately to the south of Building 76 (shown in a plan of 1940; ASE 2016a, Figure 7). This underground operations room went on to play a role of fundamental importance in the economic marshalling of air defence which sustained victory in the Battle of Britain and in other key actions of the Second World War. Its cut-and-cover construction involved the removal of all the timber huts south of Building 76. A large and unusual pillbox was constructed above its western end, next to the rear entrance door.

- 2.2.4 Other structures had been built by 1940, although the only one shown within the site is the generator house (ASE 2016a, Figure 7). A plan of c.1969 shows a pillbox located at the top of the existing steps leading down to the north-eastern corner of Building 76 (ASE 2016a, Figure 8).
- 2.2.5 Building 76 was used for a variety of purposes between 1920 and 1987, when it was demolished with the exception of the southern wing.

2.3 Previous Archaeological Investigation

- 2.3.1 A Historic Building Survey has been undertaken on the extant part of Building 76 (Francis 2015).
- 2.3.2 A Military Archaeological Assessment was prepared in April 2016 (ASE 2016a). The report concluded that whilst it is unlikely that the proposed development will have a significant archaeological impact, it is likely to expose buried elements of the demolished wings of Building 76 and the pillbox. Consequently, and following discussions between the GLAAS officer at Historic England and CgMs Consulting, a watching brief during the proposed groundworks where they impact these areas would be appropriate mitigation in this instance.

2.7 Project Aims and Objectives

- 2.7.1 The general aims of the watching brief, as specified in the WSI, were:
 - To define, insofar as possible, the date, character, form and function of any archaeological features observed on site.
 - To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed development and to preserve by record any such remains
 - To determine the survival, extent and minimum depth below modern ground level of any such remains
 - To determine the nature and significance of any archaeological deposits
- 2.7.2 The specific aims, as specified in the WSI, were:
 - Where exposed record the footings/ground plan of the former Building 76
 - Where exposed record the footings/ground plan of the former pillbox
 - To establish the presence, nature and extent of the any previous buildings associated with the military use of the site.
- 2.7.3 A further specific research aim was identified with reference to the *Research Framework for London Archaeology* (2002):

TD5 Framework objective

• Understanding the cultural and symbolic roles played by London's defences through the ages as reflections of power and political security or imposition and dominance (MOLA 2002, 79).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 The methodology specified for the archaeological work can be found in full in the WSI (ASE 2016). What follows is a summary of this and a description of any changes made during the watching brief.
- 3.1.2 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of groundworks associated with the construction of the car parking area and access road between the existing building footprint and the Uniter Building and the new paved forecourt leading up to the entrance to the proposed new visitor centre (Figure 2).
- 3.1.3 All machine excavation was undertaken using a back-acting mechanical excavator equipped with a flat bladed ditching bucket. The stripping of site overburden was carried out in spits of no more than 0.25m until archaeological, or else natural, deposits were reached.
- 3.1.4 Standard ASE excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout, with all work carried out in accordance with the CIFA (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) Code of Conduct (CIFA 2014a), Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation (CIFA 2014b) and in compliance with Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (CIFA 2014c).
- 3.2.5 All stratigraphy was recorded using the ASE context recording system, with all exposed archaeological features and deposits cleaned, recorded and excavated, except obviously modern features and disturbances.
- 3.2.6 Where required, a 50% sample of all contained features was excavated. Postmedieval and modern features were excavated as necessary in order to establish their date and significance. Features were excavated using hand tools, planned using digital survey equipment (GPS) and sections drawn at 1:10 scale on drawing film sheets. A full digital photographic record was compiled.
- 3.2.7 All artefacts were collected from excavated features and deposits and retained for processing and specialist identification and study.

3.2 Site Archive

3.2.1 The archive generated by this project is currently held at the ASE offices. Permission will be sought from the landowner to deposit the archive with the LAARC.

3.2.2 The contents of the site archive are quantified below, in Table 1.

Context sheets	13
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0 (digital plan only)
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	23
Context register	0
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	3

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

No finds were collected and retained from the monitored areas of the site.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Part of the site was cleared and prepared for construction works prior to the commencement of the watching brief. Three separate groundworks were therefore observed – an area of soil stripping and two associated drainage runs.

4.2 Area 1 Soil Strip (09/01/2017)

- 4.2.2 Groundworks were monitored within a rectangular area measuring approximately 14m x 18m, located at the northwest corner of the main Area 1 area of investigation, directly to the rear of the extant Uniter Building (Fig. 2; Fig. 3a). Deposits were removed by machine to a depth of c.1.0m from the exiting ground surface.
- 4.2.2 The geological sequence was comprised of a natural mid-brownish yellow gravelly sand [1/002], overlain by a deposit of made-ground [1/001] comprised of gravel, sand and demolition material, overlain by topsoil. This measured 0.35-0.75m in thickness.
- 4.2.3 Structure 1 was a roughly square brick-built manhole [1/004], measuring 1.06m by 0.90m, with pipes extending to the north and south (Fig. 3b-c. It was constructed of regular, hard, mid-pinkish red and yellow stock bricks measuring 240 x 10 x 10mm. The bonding was a rough, hard, mid-yellow mortar. The manhole sat within construction cut [1/003], measuring 1.25m by 1.10m. The construction cut fill (1/005) was a loose, mid brown gravelly sand.
- 4.2.4 Structure 2 was a substantial concrete foundation [1/006] that extended beyond northwest corner of the excavated area (Fig. 3d). As exposed, it measured 3.70+m long by 1.10+m wide and 1m+ deep, its base intruding into the geological deposit. No construction cut and fill was visible.
- 4.2.5 Both structures 1 and 2 underlay made-ground [1/001] and are believed to be earlier 20th century.

Context	Туре	Interpretation	Length x width	Depth/ Thickness
1/001	Layer	Made-ground	-	0.35-0.75m
1/002	Layer	Natural	-	-
1/003	Cut	Structure 1 construction cut	1.25m x 1.10m	1m+
1/004	construction	Structure 1	1.06m x 0.90m	1m+
1/005	Fill	Fill of [1/003]	1.25m x 1.10m	1m+
1/006	construction	Structure 2	3.70+m x 1.10+m	1m+

Table 2: List of recorded contexts - Area 1

- 4.2.6 No artefacts of archaeological significance were retrieved during the monitoring of this area.
- **4.3 Drainage Trench Monitoring** (02/06/2017 and 22/06/2017)

4.3.1 The excavation of two drainage trenches, both located in the east of Area 1 (Fig. 2), was monitored on separate site visits. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered in either trench. The exposed deposit sequences are described below with detail of recorded contexts presented in Table 4.

Drainage Trench 1

4.3.2 The excavation of Trench 1 was monitored on 02/06/2017. It was on a northeast/south-west alignment and measured 9.2m x 0.65m and 1.10m deep (Fig. 3e). Natural mid-orange-brown sand-clay [1/004] was overlain by a 0.05mthick made-ground deposit of sandy gravel [1/003] probably associated with construction works in the early 20th century. This was in turn overlain by a layer of geogrid textile [1/002] and a 0.17m-thickness of hardstanding [1/001] laid in preparation of current groundworks.

Drainage Trench 2

- 4.3.3 The excavation of Trench 2 was monitored on 22/06/2017. It was on an east/west alignment and measured 11.2m x 0.5m and 0.90m deep (Fig. 3f). Natural mid orange-brown silt-sand [2/003] was overlain by a 0.60m-thick deposit of light orange-brown sandy gravel [2/002] and 0.20m of hardstanding [2/001] laid in preparation of current groundworks.
- 4.3.4 No artefacts of archaeological significance were collected from deposits recorded in either drainage trench.

Context	Туре	Interpretation	Length x width	Depth / Thickness
1/001	Layer	Hardstanding	9.2m x 0.65m	0.17m
1/002	Layer	Geogrid	9.2m x 0.65m	N/A
1/003	Layer	Deposit	9.2m x 0.65m	0.05m
1/004	Layer	Natural	9.2m x 0.65m	0.88m
2/001	Layer	Hardstanding	11.2 x 0.50m	0.20m
2/002	Layer	Natural	11.2m x 0.50m	0.60m
2/003	Layer	Natural	11.2m x 0.50m	0.10m

Table 4: List of recorded contexts in trenches 1 and 2

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

- 5.1.1 A deposit sequence of hardstanding and geogrid overlying natural geology was observed. The hardstanding was between 0.17m and 0.20m thick and a shallow deposit of modern material, perhaps of earlier 20th century date, was encountered in some areas, measuring only 0.05m thick.
- 5.1.2 Where present, archaeological remains were found below made-ground / hardstanding layers and cut directly into the natural deposit.

5.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

- 5.2.1 Subsequent activity in the latter half of the 20th century appears to have had little impact on the two structures uncovered within the boundaries of Area 1. This said, all encountered remains were of 20th century date.
- 5.2.2 The integrity of the natural horizon in both Areas 1 and 2 appears to be intact, with groundwork focusing on building-up, rather than reducing and truncating, the surface level.

5.3 Discussion of archaeological remains by period

- 5.3.1 The watching brief has demonstrated an absence of archaeological remains predating the 20th century within the monitored areas.
- 5.3.2 Structures 1 and 2, although lacking datable finds, can be confidently be dated to the early 20th century by their component materials. It is highly probable that concrete structure 2 forms part of the foundations of the western wing of Building 76, seen on the Air Ministry Map of 1918 and noted in section 2.2.2. Manhole Structure 1 possibly was probably part of the waste drain services to the original building, judging by its positioning within the rectangular enclosure that the three wings surrounded, and its yellow stock brick construction.
- 5.3.3 The deposit sequences surrounding Structures 1 and 2, and recorded in Drainage Trenches 1 and 2, appear to wholly relate to the 20th century construction of the RAF Uxbridge complex.

5.4 Consideration of research aims

- 5.5.1 The watching brief was successful in regard to achieving the general aims set out in section 2.7.1 establishing the survival of structural features relating to early 20th century military activity on the site.
- 5.5.2 The watching brief was partially successful in addressing the site specific aims stated in section 2.7.2. Structural footings and services were recorded within the original footprint of Building 76 seen in the Air Ministry Map 1918, though these were only partially exposed. No evidence for the former pillbox was observed within the extents of the monitored areas of the site.

5.6 Conclusions

- 5.6.1 The watching brief has demonstrated an absence of archaeological remains predating the 20th century within the monitored areas.
- 5.6.2 The watching brief recorded the presence of archaeological remains associated with early 20th century military structures known to have formerly occupied the area of site currently under development. These remains are almost certainly part of the footings and foundations of the Royal Flying Corps School of Aerial Gunnery Building 76, constructed in 1917/18.
- 5.6.3 All recorded deposit sequences relate to the 20th century development of the site as the School of Aerial Gunnery or else its subsequent operation as RAF Uxbridge.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology South-East thanks CgMs for commissioning the monitoring works on behalf of their client. The monitoring was undertaken by Craig Carvey and Rob Cullum. The fieldwork was project managed by Andrew Leonard and the post-excavation work by Mark Atkinson.

Appendix 1: HER Summary

Site name/Address: Education & Visitor Ce	entre site, RAF Uxbridge, LB of Hillingdon
Parish: Uxbridge	District: LB Hillingdon
NGR: TQ 0654 8355	Site Code: HDN16
<i>Type of Work:</i> Archaeological watching brief	Site Director/Group: R. Cullum & C. Carvey, Archaeology South-East
Date of Work: 09/01/2017 and 21-22/06/2017	Size of Area Investigated: c.257sq m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: LAARC	Funding source: Landowner/developer
Further Seasons Anticipated?: no	Related HER Nos:
Final Report: Grey lit client rep.	OASIS No: 294059
Deriede Depresented: Madara	

Periods Represented: Modern

SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at RAF Uxbridge, during construction groundworks for an education and visitor centre.

The watching brief demonstrated an absence of archaeological remains predating the 20th century.

Structural archaeological remains associated with early 20th century military buildings known to have formerly occupied the area of site currently under development were exposed. These remains are almost certainly part of the foundations and underground services of the Royal Flying Corps School of Aerial Gunnery Building 76, constructed in 1917/18.

All recorded deposit sequences related to the 20th century development of the site as the School of Aerial Gunnery or else its subsequent operation as RAF Uxbridge.

Previous Summaries/Reports: None

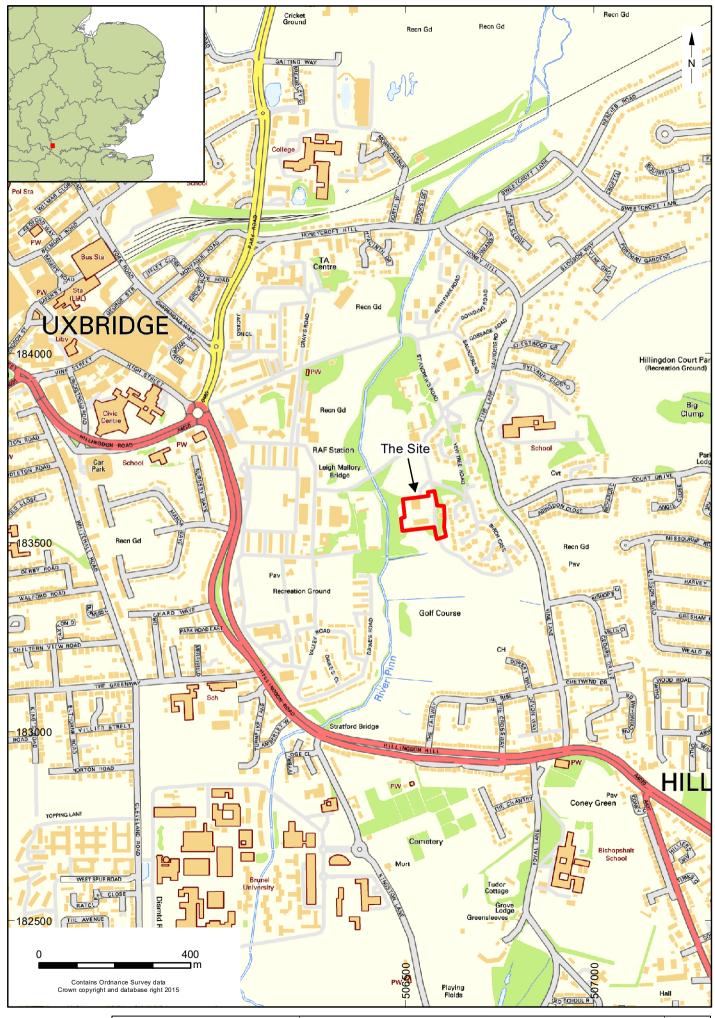
Author of Summary: Mark Atkinson

Date of Summary: August 2017

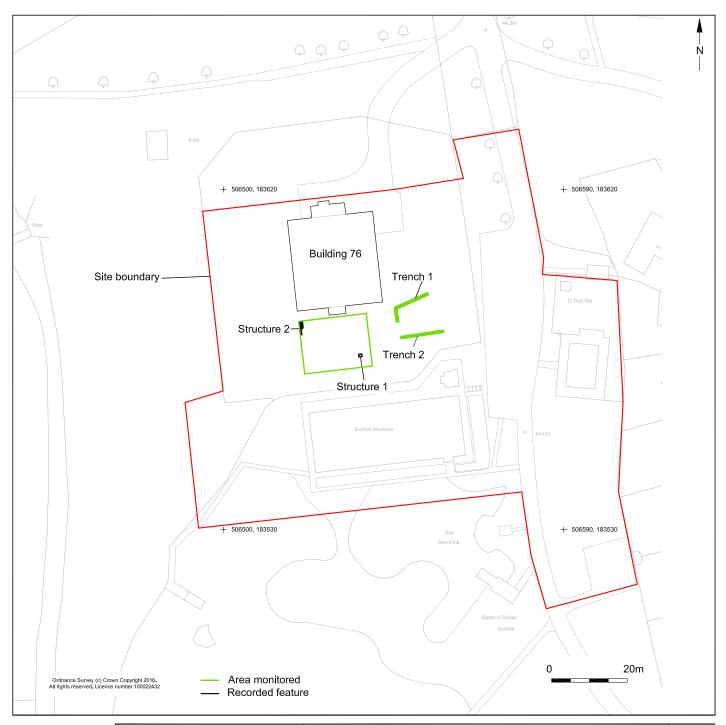
Appendix 2: OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6	-294059
Project details	
Project name	Education and Visitors Centre, RAF Uxbridge
Short description of the project	Watching brief was undertaken during construction groundworks for an education and visitor centre. The watching brief demonstrated an absence of archaeological remains predating the 20th century. Structural archaeological remains associated with early 20th century military buildings known to have formerly occupied the area of site currently under development were exposed. These remains are almost certainly part of the foundations and underground services of the Royal Flying Corps School of Aerial Gunnery Building 76, constructed in 1917/18. All recorded deposit sequences related to the 20th century development of the site as the School of Aerial Gunnery or else its subsequent operation as RAF Uxbridge.
Project dates	Start: 09-01-2017 End: 22-06-2017
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	161006 - Contracting Unit No. HDN16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 2 - Other transport infrastructure
Monument type	DRAIN Modern FOUNDATION Modern
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HILLINGDON UXBRIDGE Education and Visitor Centre, RAF Uxbridge
Postcode	UB10 0RX
Study area	257 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 0654 8355 51.540295944751 -0.463578626186 51 32 25 N 000 27 48 W Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Craig Carvey
Project supervisor	Rob Cullum

Type of sponsor/funding body	consultant
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Plan","Report"
Project bibliography	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Watching Brief. Education and Visitor Centre Site, RAF Uxbridge, London Borough of Hillingdon
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Carvey, C. Cullum, R.
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Entered on	30 August 2017

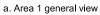


Orchaeology South-East Orchaeology Orcha		RAF Uxbridge	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 161006	Aug 2017	Site location	
Report No: 2017347	Drawn by: APL	Site location	



© Archaeology South-East		RAF Uxbridge	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 161006	Aug 2017	Location of monitored errors	1 19. 2
Report Ref: 2017347	Drawn by: APL	Location of monitored areas	







b. Manhole 1/004 plan









e. Drainage Trench 1

© Archaeology South-East		RAF Uxbridge	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 161006	Aug 2017	Selected photographs	1 lg. 5
Report Ref: 2017347	Drawn by: APL	Selected photographs	

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