

Denham Garden Village, Denham Green, Buckinghamshire (Phase 2)

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Wilmott Dixon Housing

by Andrew Mundin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code DGV 03/87

June 2007

Summary

Site name: Denham Garden Village, Denham Green, Buckinghamshire phase 2

Grid reference: TQ 0395 8845

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 29th August – 16th September 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: DGV 03/87

Area of site: c. 2.5ha

Summary of results: No features or finds of archaeological interest were uncovered during this watching brief. Large proportions of the site had been disturbed and truncated by previous development.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course with accession number AYBCM.2003:189.

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| Report edited/checked by: | Steve Ford ✓ 25.06.07 |
| | Steve Preston ✓ 26.06.07 |

Denham Garden Village, Denham Green, Buckinghamshire, Phase 2 An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 03/87b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out for the second phase of redevelopment at Denham Garden Village, Denham Green, Buckinghamshire (TQ 0395 8845) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mark Thornhill of Willmott Dixon Housing, Hitchin Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5JS.

A planning consent (01/1316) has been granted by South Bucks District Council for redevelopment of the retirement village involving groundworks for various structures, road network and car parking facilities. This consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Sandy Kidd, Senior Archaeological Officer for Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford between 29th August and 16th September 2006. The archive is presently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course. The site code is DGV 03/87 and the museum accession number is AYBCM.2003:189.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies within Denham Green and to the north of Denham (Fig. 1), to the west of A412 North Orbital Road, (Fig. 2). The River Colne flows to the east. The underlying geology according to the British Geological Survey (BGS 1990) is glacial sand and gravel. The site slopes down from around 50m above Ordnance Datum in the north to 45m in the south and was previously extensively developed with terracing of the slope.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (Kidd 2003) and a desktop study which also included a geotechnical investigation (OA

2002). In summary, the site lies in an area of some importance for Lower Palaeolithic remains. Palaeolithic tools have been recovered from several locations at Denham, including a collection of almost 100 such artefacts from approximately 300m to the north of the site. The site of these finds is registered on the Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record (CAS 0820) and has been identified by the English Heritage sponsored English Rivers Project as of 'outstanding importance' (WA 1996), although the importance of Normer Hill (TQ039 889) is somewhat downgraded by Wymer (1999, 90).

However, although the lower Colne Valley is rich in the remains of earlier prehistory (Lacaille 1963; Lewis 1989; Holgate 1995) it is thought that the relevant geological substrata with which these deposits are associated do not extend to this site and that the potential for discoveries of national importance is probably low.

The watching brief maintained over the first phase of redevelopment encountered no archaeological features or deposits, and just two (post-glacial) prehistoric struck flint finds were recovered from this phase (Jenkins 2005). Much of that part of the site was truncated and disturbed by previous development including areas of deep truncation such as a swimming pool.

Objectives and methodology

The aim of the watching brief was to observe, excavate and record any archaeological deposits which would be damaged or destroyed by the new groundworks. The construction project is divided into three phases, of which Phase 1 is complete and the watching brief on that phase has been reported previously (Jenkins 2005). The demolition of the existing bungalows and nursing home, removal of existing road and leveling are all covered by the remit of this Phase 2 of the programme of works.

Specific objectives of this watching brief were to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on site and to determine if finds and deposits of Palaeolithic date were present in the area. A selection of areas were uncovered by machine and inspected during groundworks and wherever access was available. A substantial spoil was also present and was searched for artefacts.

Results

The watching brief in effect comprised two components: substantial areas stripped of overburden; and the digging of footing and service trenches.

Area strips

Area strips observed comprised three elements: a zone at the northern end of the site; a main north-south access road; and a curvilinear zone towards the south-west of the site (Fig. 3).

The northern zone

This zone had been stripped of overburden to reveal the natural gravel geology. It was clear that the northern extremes had been truncated by 1m or more for the previous development in this area, the disturbance reducing in depth to the south-east. It was unlikely therefore that post-glacial archaeological deposits would have survived in these areas. The most southerly part of this area was disturbed to even greater depth. The stripped surface and deeper footing trenches were searched for flint finds of Palaeolithic date without success.

The southern zone

This zone was stripped of overburden also to reveal previously truncated areas but also revealed vertical exposures of the natural geology. The stripped surface and deeper footing trenches were searched for flint finds of Palaeolithic date without success.

The access road

The access road corridor was stripped to approximately 0.9m below the previous Tarmac surface to expose a clayey gravel natural, but it was unclear where the archaeologically relevant levels lay, relative to the pre-development topography: the previous development had again truncated much of the area, although at the southern end of the road corridor, the stratigraphy appeared to indicate less truncation. A service trench along the centre of the road was dug to a further 0.7m depth but no cut features were exposed in either this or on the stripped surface. No Palaeolithic artefacts were found.

For the majority of areas during this phase of works, only the ground reduction and footing excavations could be observed in selected areas and some areas were inaccessible. Most of the ground where the previous structures had stood displayed much truncation, and the new footing trenching which exposed sand and gravel natural uncovered no finds of archaeological interest.

Footing and service trenches

A selection of footing trenches were observed across the site, some of which were located in previously truncated areas (Fig. 3). However, some plots towards the south-eastern portion of the site were located in previously undisturbed or untruncated areas. These are exemplified by examination of the footings in plots 127–128. This area was not stripped of overburden. The trenches were 0.6m wide and up to 1.7m deep (Fig. 4). The

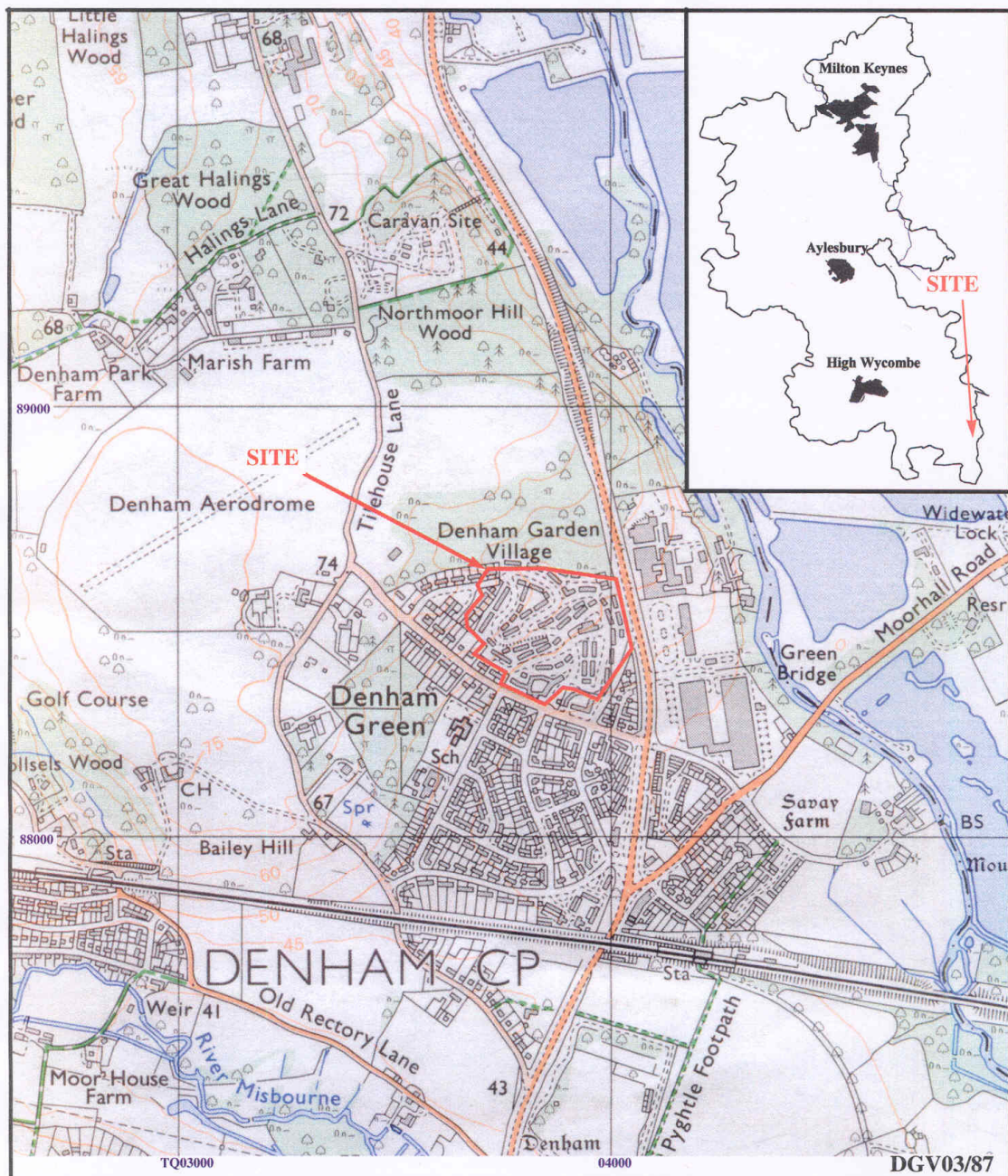
stratigraphy revealed comprised 0.25m of topsoil above 0.6m of silty, gravelly subsoil above gravel. The gravel undulated from a depth of 0.85m to 1.45m and overlay a brown clay beneath. No post-glacial archaeological finds or deposits were observed above the gravel horizon and no Palaeolithic finds were observed from within or beneath the gravel horizon.

Conclusion

As with Phase 1, the majority of the site had seen substantial disturbance of the natural geological deposits from the previous construction works including areas of truncation and terracing, thus limiting the survival of post-glacial archaeological deposits. Exposures of the deeper parts of the natural geology and spoil arising could be examined for Palaeolithic finds and remains. However no archaeologically relevant material was noted or recovered from any of the areas observed from the groundworks during this phase of work.

References

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Figure 1. Location of site within Denham and Buckinghamshire.

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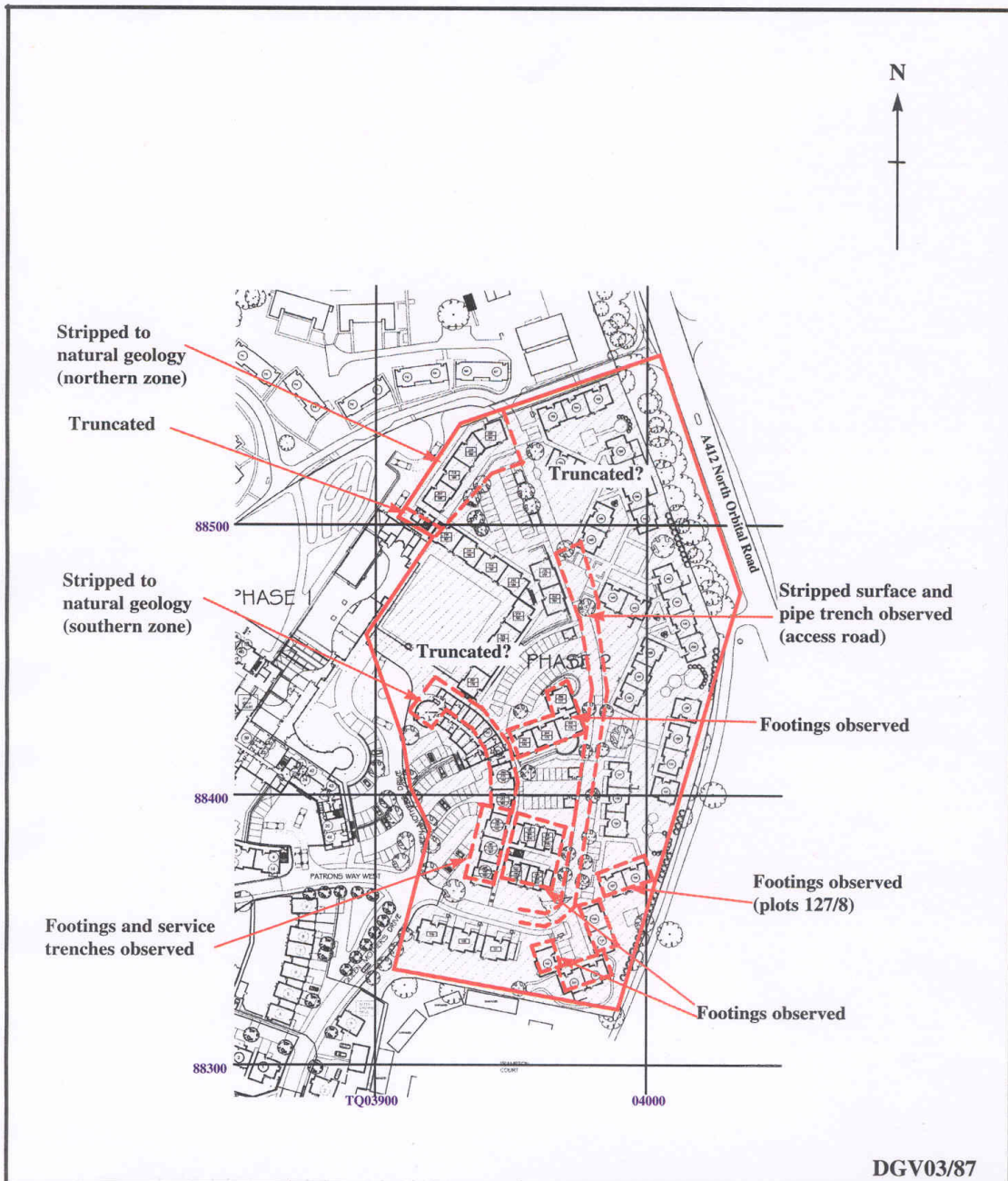
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site within Denham Garden Village.

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Figure 3. Location of watching brief observations.

Scale 1:2000

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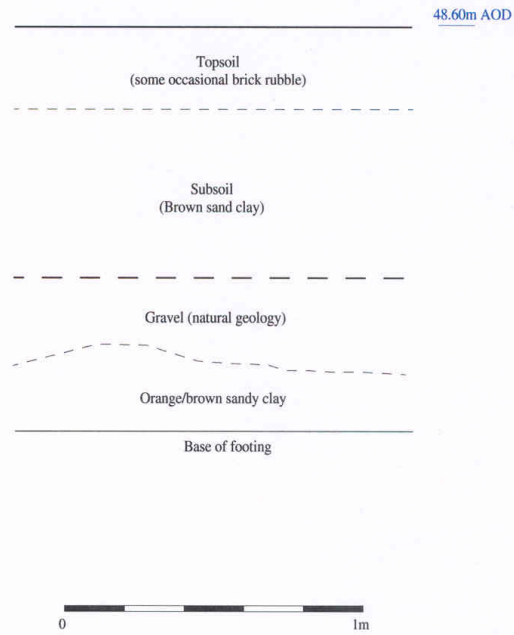


Figure 4. Representative section of footing trench in block 127/128.

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