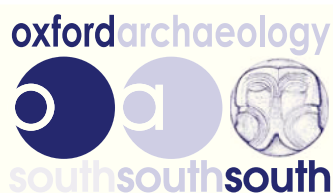


Dee Park Tilehurst Reading



Archaeological Evaluation Report



February 2011

Client: Willmott Dixon Housing Ltd

Grid Reference: SU 68352 73475

Planning Reference: 09/01514/FUL

OA Job Number: 4936



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Dee Park, Tilehurst, Reading Phase 1b (Areas 4 and 12)

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Paul Murray

Illustrated by Sarah Lucas

Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
1 Introduction.....	4
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	4
1.2 Geology and topography.....	4
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	4
1.4 Methodology.....	6
2 Results.....	6
2.1 Introduction and presentation of results.....	6
2.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	6
2.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits.....	6
2.4 Test Pit Descriptions.....	6
3 Discussion.....	8
3.1 Reliability of field investigation.....	8
3.2 Evaluation Results.....	8
3.3 Interpretation.....	8
3.4 Significance.....	8
Appendix A. Trench Descriptions and Context Inventory.....	9
Appendix B. Bibliography and References.....	11
Appendix C. Summary of Site Details.....	12



List of Figures

Fig. 1 Site location map

Fig. 2 Test Pit locations



Summary

Between 25th January and 27st January, Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Housing Ltd to undertake an evaluation at Dee Park, Tilehurst, Reading. The evaluation was carried out on the site of the proposed Phase 1b construction of the new residential units and associated infrastructure. The evaluation comprised 6 test pits measuring 2m x 2m. Five of the test pits were within the grounds of Ranikets School and one was within an area of open grassland adjacent to Deveron Drive. The evaluation identified modern landscaping deposits probably associated with the construction of the current school grounds and housing estate.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 During the period of 25th January to 27th January, Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Housing Ltd to undertake an evaluation at Dee Park, Tilehurst, Reading. The evaluation was carried out on the site of the proposed Phase 1b construction of the new residential units and associated infrastructure (planning Application No. 09/01514/FUL). The evaluation comprised 6 test pits measuring 2m x 2m. Five of the test pits were within the grounds of Ranikets School and one was within an area of open grassland adjacent to Deveron Drive.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on an area of higher ground which broadly slopes from the NW at c 75 m OD down to the SE where it flattens out at c 70m OD, at NGR SU 68352 73475. The river Thames lies c 600m to the north and the river Kennet c 3km to the south.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development Phase 1b: Areas 3a, 4 and 12 (the site) currently consists of recreational facilities (including playing fields), landscaped areas, car park and residential properties and gardens, with associated paths and carriageways, with a broadly sub-urban character between the A4 and A329 in Tilehurst, Reading (Fig. 2).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is plateau gravel of Late Anglian date on the highest ground with a mixture of London Clay, Reading Beds and Upper Chalk apparent on the slopes (British Geological Survey, 2000).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA), (TVAS, 2005), and will only be summarised here.

Palaeolithic

- 1.3.2 A number of finds of lower Palaeolithic date are recorded within the area. These comprise stray finds of hand axes and flint flakes. Of particular note is a large group of sixteen hand axes (SMR Ref: 1730) discovered c750m south west of the evaluation area. Also, c1Km south east of the site prolific finds of hand axes, flakes, scrappers, cores and cleavers (SMR Ref: 1740) were discovered which can be regarded as an occupation site.

Neolithic

- 1.3.3 The Neolithic period is represented solely by stray finds of polished and unpolished axes/adzes, tools and flakes, some of which could be of a Neolithic or Bronze Age date. Of note is a polished flint axe (SMR Ref: 1706) found c150m to the north and a flint axe (SMR Ref: 1697) discovered c375m to the south east of the evaluation area.

Bronze Age

- 1.3.4 The only Bronze Age evidence noted is the discovery of six pottery urns (SMR Ref: 1739) during quarry working c1Km to the south east of the evaluation area.



Iron Age

- 1.3.5 The iron Age is represented by a large linear earthwork (SMR Ref: 1741) c750m north east of the evaluation area. Although limited excavation did not produce clear evidence dating its construction it is likely to be a boundary feature that may relate to others which are recorded further up the valley.

Late Iron Age/Roman

- 1.3.6 The two main sites of Iron Age/Roman date (SMR Ref's: 2, 5), both discovered during quarrying. Both sites indicated occupation in the form of hearths, pottery and cut features. These lie c1Km to the south and south east of the evaluation area.

Medieval

- 1.3.7 Just c125m to the north east of the evaluation area is Norcot or Norcot Farm documented from AD 1327 (Gelling 1973. 177) and shown on Rocque's map of 1767.

Post-medieval

- 1.3.8 The medieval settlement complex at Norcot (Norcot Farm) continued in use into post-medieval times.

Potential

- 1.3.9 The DBA (TVAS, 2005) states that 'the vast majority of the overall development area has been previously developed and any archaeological deposits present are likely to have been damaged or even removed altogether', and that survival will probably be fragmentary. The geotechnical report (Listers, March 2010), indicates that natural geology has been encountered between areas of significant truncation (Fig. 2).

1.3.10 Evaluation Aims and Methodology

1.3.11 Aims

- (xii) To determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains which may survive between areas of known truncation, namely previous quarrying of the site to depths between 1.5 - 2 m b.g.l (Fig. 2). Should remains be found to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard.
- (i) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains
- (ii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- (iii) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- (iv) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- (v) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vi) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- (vii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- (viii) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artifactual evidence present.



1.4 Methodology

- 1.4.1 Phase 1b of the site has been subdivided into three areas that are relevant to these works, these are numbered 3a, 4 and 12. A total of six archaeological test pits, each measuring 2 m by 2 m were excavated.
- 1.4.2 Areas 4 and 12 were investigated with three Test Pits each (Nos 4, 5, 6 and 1, 2, 3 respectively). Area 3a was not subject to archaeological works at this stage.
- 1.4.3 Test Pits 1-5 were machine excavated to the first significant horizon under close archaeological supervision by a 1.5T mini digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Test Pit 1 was excavated by hand with a 1m wide sondage.

2 RESULTS

2.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 2.1.1 A general description of the soils, ground conditions, the stratigraphic sequences and distribution of archaeological deposits is given below followed by a brief description of results.

2.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 2.2.1 The area of the evaluation has undergone significant landscaping during construction of the school and current housing estate, characterised by car parks, residential properties and gardens, with associated paths and carriageways .
- 2.2.2 Test pits 2-6 were located on landscaped ground to the north, east and west of the schools sports pitch. The sports pitch is a flat level area which is up to an estimated 2m lower than the surrounding grassed area on which the evaluation was carried out.
- 2.2.3 Test pit 1 was located adjacent to a pedestrian footpath on grassland that sloped relatively steeply to the south.
- 2.2.4 All of the test pits identified mixed deposits of redeposited geology, typically comprising of bands of clay, sandy gravels and brick-earth. This was overlain by the turf and topsoil typically 0.25m thick.
- 2.2.5 The sondage in Test Pit 6 slowly filled with water during the short time it was open. It was unclear if this is due to a localised high water table.

2.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 2.3.1 No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

2.4 Test Pit Descriptions

Test Pit 1

- 2.4.1 This test pit was relocated slightly to avoid evident disturbance from previous works and services. The geological horizon was encountered at a depth of 1.2m (59.61mOD).
- 2.4.2 The geology (102) consisted of a light brown sandy gravel that distinctly sloped to the south east.
- 2.4.3 The test pit identified 0.95m of made ground (101) consisting of a firm, mid brown sandy silt with bands of clay and gravel. This was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil.



- 2.4.4 Modern finds were noted (but not retained) throughout this deposit, typically consisting of CBM and bits of wire.

Test Pit 2

- 2.4.5 The test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.2m (57.28mOD). The geological horizon was not reached.
- 2.4.6 The test pit identified made ground that was 0.95m thick, consisting of bands of clay , gravel and brick-earth of a recent modern date. This was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil.

Test Pit 3

- 2.4.7 The test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.2m (56.48mOD). The geological horizon was not reached. This was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil.
- 2.4.8 The test pit identified made ground that was 0.95m thick, consisting of bands of clay , gravel and brick-earth of a recent modern date.

Test Pit 4

- 2.4.9 The geological horizon was encountered at a depth of 1.2m (57.5mOD).
- 2.4.10 The test pit identified made ground that was 0.95m thick, consisting of bands of clay , gravel and brick-earth of a recent modern date. This was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil.

Test Pit 5

- 2.4.11 The geological horizon was encountered at a depth of 1.2m (57.77mOD).
- 2.4.12 The test pit identified made ground that 0.95m thick, consisting of bands of clay , gravel and brick-earth of a recent modern date. This was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil.

Test Pit 6

- 2.4.13 The geological horizon was encountered at a depth of 1.2m (57.71mOD) within a hand excavated sondage.
- 2.4.14 The geology consisted of a grey brown silty sand.
- 2.4.15 The test pit identified 0.95m of made ground, consisting of a mid brown sandy silt with bands of clay and gravel. This was overlain by 0.25m of topsoil.

Finds summary

- 2.4.16 No finds were retained from the evaluation although frequent CBM and other modern artefacts were noted.



3 DISCUSSION

3.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 3.1.1 The geological horizon was clearly established within test pits 1 and 6.

3.2 Evaluation Results

Results

- 3.2.1 The evaluation has determined the absence of archaeological remains within Test Pits 6 and 1, where the geological horizon was reached. The remaining Test Pits (2-5) identified made ground to a depth of 1.2m below ground level. Although it did not establish if truncation of the geological horizon had been carried out during past activity, such as quarrying at this site or from the construction of the current housing estate. The lack of any surviving subsoils or buried soil horizons suggests truncation has occurred.

3.3 Interpretation

- 3.3.1 The results of the evaluation indicate significant landscaping has been carried out throughout the evaluation area, with the current ground level raised by at least 1.2m. The landscaping is almost certainly associated with the current housing estate, this is supported by the very modern nature of the finds noted.
- 3.3.2 It was not possible to definitively ascertain whether the geological horizon had been truncated during construction of the current housing estate or past activity, such as quarrying. The lack of any buried soil horizons or surviving subsoils does suggest some truncation has occurred.

3.4 Significance

- 3.4.1 The evaluation has established that the geological horizon survives in at least two locations and that the current ground level has been built up by at least 1.2m. Although not proven the area has likely to have undergone a certain amount of truncation prior to being built up, either from quarrying, or more likely during construction of the current housing estate.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Test Pit 1							
General description					Orientation		
Machine excavated test pit.					Avg. depth (m)		1.2m
					Width (m)		2m
					Length (m)		2m
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
100	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-	
101	Layer	-	0.95	Made ground	-	Modern	
102	Geology			Sandy gravel	-	-	

Test Pit 2							
General description					Orientation		
Machine excavated test pit.					Avg. depth (m)		1.2m
					Width (m)		2m
					Length (m)		2m
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
200	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-	
201	Layer	-	0.95	Made ground	-	Modern	

Test Pit 3							
General description					Orientation		
Machine excavated test pit.					Avg. depth (m)		1.2m
					Width (m)		2m
					Length (m)		2m
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
300	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-	
301	Layer	-	0.95	Made ground	-	Modern	



Test Pit 4							
General description					Orientation		
Machine excavated test pit.					Avg. depth (m)		1.2m
					Width (m)		2m
					Length (m)		2m
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
400	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-	
401	Layer	-	0.95	Made ground	-	Modern	

Test Pit 5							
General description					Orientation		
Machine excavated test pit.					Avg. depth (m)		1.2m
					Width (m)		2m
					Length (m)		2m
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
500	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-	
501	Layer	-	0.95	Made ground	-	Modern	

Test Pit 6							
General description					Orientation		
Hand excavated sondage.					Avg. depth (m)		1.2m
					Width (m)		2m
					Length (m)		2m
Contexts							
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date	
600	Layer	-	0.25	Topsoil	-	-	
601	Layer	-	0.95	Made ground	-	Modern	
602	Geology			Silty sand	-	-	



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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Listers Geotech Consultants, 2010, *Supplementary Ground Investigation. Phase 1a, Dee Park Regeneration (Sites 1, 6A, 14 and 15), Tilehurst, Reading* (Client report for Willmott Dixon Housing, No. 08-03-014b)

TVAS, (Thames Valley Archaeological Services), 2005, *Dee Park, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire. An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment* (Client Report No 05/98)



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Dee Park reading

Site code: REDEP 10

Grid reference: SU 68352 73475

Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: Jan 26th-28th 2011

Area of site: 4.85ha

Summary of results: Modern made ground landscaping deposits to depths of 1- 1.2m observed, overlying truncated natural geology with no observable archaeological features, or finds recovered.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Reading County Museum in due course, under the following accession number: REDMG:2010.179



Figure 1: Site Location





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