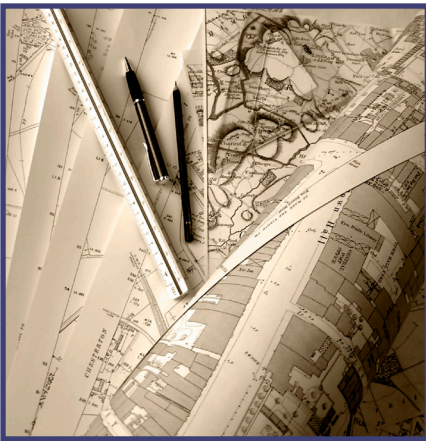


St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School Gravesend Kent



Archaeological
Watching Brief Report

oxfordarchaeology



southsouthsouth

March 2012

Client: Kier PLC

Issue No: Final Report 1

OA Job No: 4278

NGR: TQ 659 733

Client Name: Kier Group PLC

Client Ref No:

Document Title: St John's Roman Comprehensive School, Gravesend,
Kent. Archaeological Watching Brief Report.

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: Final Report (1)

National Grid Reference: TQ 659 733
Planning Reference: GR/08/121

OA Job Number:
Site Code: KS5GRJ 08
Invoice Code: KS5GRJ WB
Receiving Museum: None available
Museum Accession No:

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Date: 25th March 2009

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Date: 14 March 2012

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Position:
Date:

Document File Location X:\Kent_BSF_Schools_Wave3\Fieldwork_Watching
brief\Kier Group\St Johns RC Comp, Gravesend\Report
Graphics File Location Servergo/1 to Q/KS5GRJEV
Illustrated by Amy Hemingway and Leo Heatley

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St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School

Gravesend

Kent

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

During January and February 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend in Kent. Kent County Council commissioned the work in advance of works carried out by Kier Group PLC. The watching brief formed the last phase of archaeological investigations at the site during part of Wave 3 of the Kent Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and revealed no archaeological features.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between January and February 2009 as part of the Labour Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, OA carried out a watching brief at St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend, Kent on behalf of the construction contractor, Kier Group PLC and the developer, Kent County Council (KCC). The watching brief took place in accordance with an archaeological specification prepared by OA, which incorporates standard requirements for archaeological watching briefs in Kent, issued by KCC. The present watching brief is the last stage of the fieldwork and is one of a series carried out in compliance with archaeological planning conditions attached to each of the Wave 3 BSF Schools (Planning Application No. GR/08/121).
- 1.1.2 The Wave 3 BSF programme includes redevelopment of 11 schools in the County of Kent. Through the BSF programme, significant investment in buildings and in Information and Communication Technology is being made to support the Government's education reform agenda. Funds are intended to be devolved to local authorities and schools throughout England to spend on maintaining and improving their schools buildings and in some cases for major rebuilding and remodelling projects. The redevelopment at St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School comprises replacement of existing school buildings with a new two storey school building with associated works including an extended multi-use games area, 150 car parking spaces, hard surfacing and landscaping and the demolition of all the old secondary school accommodation on site.
- 1.1.3 The proposed development site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 659 733 and encompasses *c* 8.6 hectares currently comprising school buildings, recreation areas and playing fields. It is located within the parish of Milton and in the administrative area of Gravesham Borough Council.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The underlying geology of the site is mainly Palaeocene Upper Chalk although the south west area of the school grounds lies on Palaeocene Thanet Beds (sands)

(GSGB, 1974, Sheet 271). It is located on an area which has been levelled in places, the lowest point being the north eastern area at an approximate height of 10m OD and the highest being the south western area at an approximate height of 30m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief has been the subject of a separate archaeological desktop study. OA was commissioned to undertake the desktop assessment on behalf of KCC in 2007. A walkover survey of the development area formed part of the assessment strategy. The archaeological assessment examined a study area of 1km radius around the school and included a gazetteer of known archaeological findspots/investigations and historic buildings in the vicinity of the development. Each of these was allocated an OA gazetteer number in the assessment document (OA/PB 2007). The results are summarised below.
- 1.3.2 No Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Historic Battlefields or Listed Buildings were identified on the site. No archaeological investigations have previously been undertaken on the site.
- 1.3.3 The desktop study suggested that the Denton area can demonstrate some, but not substantial, levels of prehistoric, Roman and medieval activity.
- 1.3.4 Map regression has shown that prior to the construction of the school, the majority of the site had been parkland for at least 100 years, and prior to that arable land. A collection of buildings were shown on the Tithe Map of 1845, but may well have been built earlier as we have no detailed maps pre dating the Tithe Map, whilst 20th century Ordnance Survey maps show the Milton Dairy buildings within the site. The foundations of these buildings may still be present beneath ground level.
- 1.3.5 In April 2008, a rapid assessment survey and photographic record of the existing school buildings was carried out. The survey was carried out as part of a wider programme of assessment of 11 Kent BSF Schools (OA 2008). The buildings are considered to be of no particular architectural merit, but may have some local interest from a social historical point of view. No further building recording work is recommended.
- 1.3.6 In August 2008, OA carried out a field evaluation on the St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, examining the new building footprint. The evaluation recorded no evidence for significant archaeological remains in the investigated area. There has clearly been extensive landscaping in the recent past, where the natural slope has been leveled to form the existing sports pitch terrace. The resulting soil sequence consists of very shallow topsoil overlying chalk in the trial trenches in the south eastern part of the site. The made ground thickens substantially to the north, presumably having been redeposited from the south of the site. It is likely that most archaeological features will have been removed entirely from the southern, where the terrace cuts into the slope, but could potentially be preserved beneath made ground to the north.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief are to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks. Particular attention will be made to the character, height below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.
- 2.1.2 No further building recording work is recommended at St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, and none has been requested by KCC Heritage Conservation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief monitored the excavations for the groundwork comprising foundations for the proposed new school buildings and associated works including access, service and landscaping. The groundworks were monitored regularly during the initial excavation of the building footprint and then periodically throughout the construction process.
- 2.2.2 Excavation was undertaken by a mechanical 360 degree excavator using a flat bladed bucket to reveal any archaeological remains. If possible archaeological remains were encountered, machine excavation was to cease to allow the remains to be investigated further.
- 2.2.3 The archaeologist on site inspected the surfaces revealed. Any archaeological structures or features revealed were to be recorded in plan and section as appropriate to Section 6 of KCCs Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief Part B.
- 2.2.4 A general photographic record of the work was maintained and any excavated features would be photographed using colour slide and black and white print. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 No archaeological deposits were observed during the watching brief. See Appendix 1 for a description of the natural deposits encountered.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No archaeological finds were recovered from the site.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits were encountered which were considered suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The groundworks monitored during the watching brief did not reveal any archaeological features.

4.1.2 Due to the absence of any archaeological remains with the construction footprint, it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required in relation to this planning application.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Height (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
100	Layer			0.5	Modern Topsoil	-
101	Layer			0.46	Carpark tarmac and hardcore	-
102	Layer			0.25	Redeposited subsoil/topsoil	-
103	Layer			0.50	Brickearth. Slightly pinkish brown silty loam.	-
104	Layer			0.48	Brownish orange sandy silt. Natural	-
105	Layer			0.90	Brownish orange sandy silt and gravelly stone. Natural.	-
106	Layer				Orange silty sand. Natural.	-
107	Layer				Chalk. Natural.	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2007, St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend, Kent.
Archaeological Desktop Assessment

OA, 2008, St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend, Kent. Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief. Part A

OA, 2008, St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend, Kent. Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief. Part B

OA, 2008, Kent Schools BSF Programme. Historic Buildings Assessment and Recording.

OA, 2008, St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend, Kent.
Archaeological Evaluation Report

Wilkinson, D (ed.), 1992, OAU Fieldwork Manual, Oxford Archaeological Field Unit

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School, Gravesend, Kent.

Site code: KS5GRJ 08

Grid reference: NGR TQ 659 733

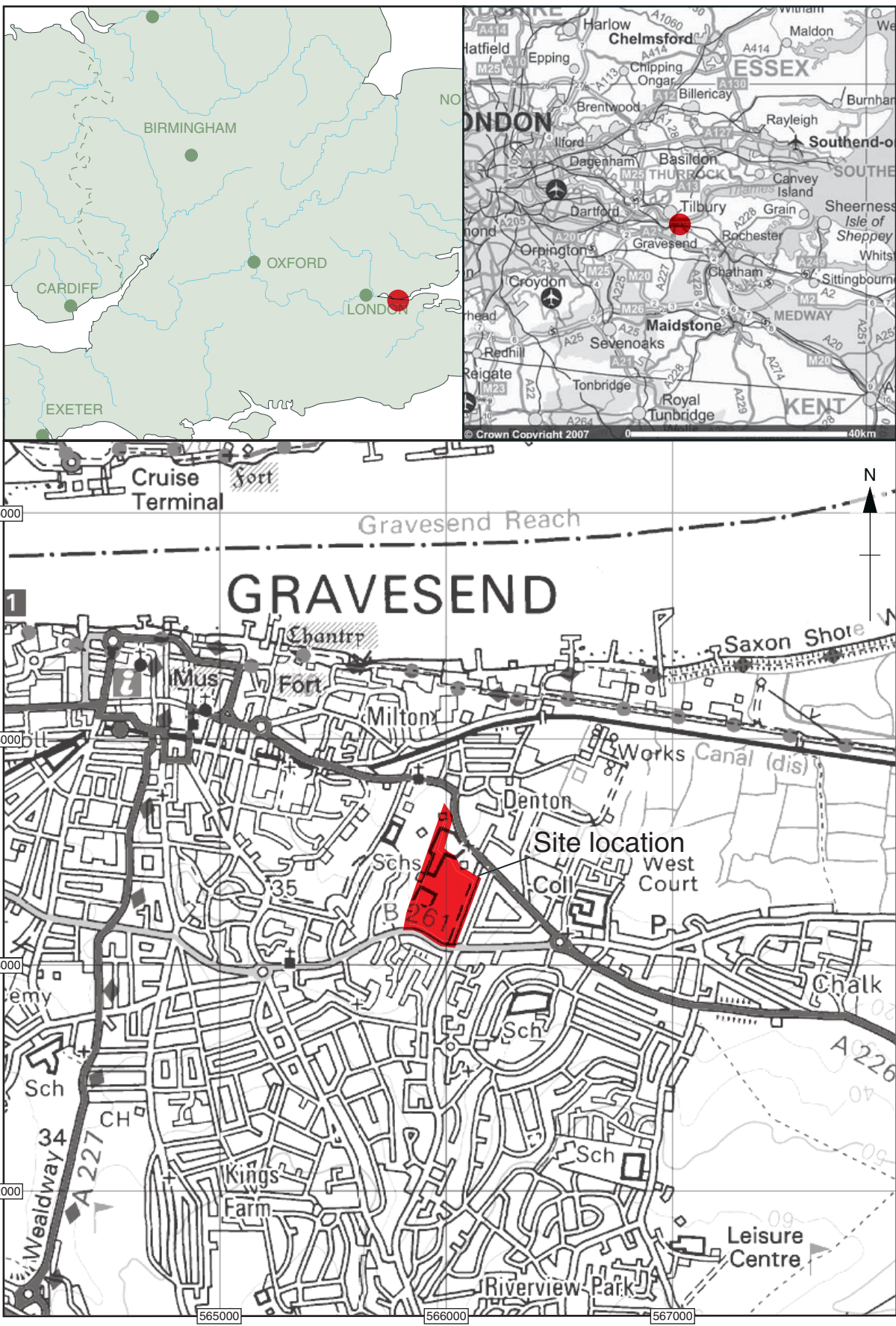
Type of watching brief: General Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: December 2008 - March 2009.

Area of site: 8.6 hectares

Summary of results: The watching brief identified no archaeological remains.

Location of archive: As no receiving museum is currently available, the archive will temporarily be held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.



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Figure 1: Site location



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