

Thamesview School Gravesend Kent



Archaeological Evaluation Report

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**Thamesview School, Gravesend,
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NGR TQ 668 721

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SUMMARY

In August 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an eleven trench field evaluation at Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent (NGR TQ 668 721) on behalf of the construction contractor Kier Group plc and the developer, Kent County Council. The evaluation followed desk-based archaeological and development impact assessments of the site, which forms part of the ongoing BSF schools programme in Kent. No archaeological features were revealed in the trenches, and no significant artefacts were found. The site is in the north-east part of a former WWII airfield, and appears to have been levelled to a slight degree either during construction of the airfield, or subsequently to form the existing school playing fields.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In August 2008, as part of the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent (Fig. 1) on behalf of the construction contractor, Kier Group plc, and the developer, Kent County Council. The evaluation work was undertaken in accordance with an archaeological specification prepared by Oxford Archaeology, which incorporates standard requirements for archaeological evaluation trenching in Kent, issued by KCC. The present evaluation is one of a series of archaeological investigations being carried out in compliance with archaeological planning conditions attached to each of the Wave 3 BSF Schools.

1.1.2 The development site is centred on NGR TQ 668 721 and overall the school site is 8.4 hectares in area. The site is within the historic parish of Chalk, in the administrative area of Gravesham Borough Council. The planning application reference is GR/08/154

1.2 BSF schools project background

1.2.1 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 Communications Technology is being made to support the Government's educational reform agenda. Funds are intended to be devolved to local authorities and schools throughout England to spend on maintaining and improving their school buildings and in some cases for major rebuilding and remodelling projects.

1.2.2 Archaeological investigation in the form of trial trenching has been incorporated into this programme, in order to mitigate any impacts to the archaeological resource present at any of the schools currently under redevelopment.

1.3 Geology and topography

- 1.3.1 Thamesview School is divided into two areas (Sites A and B) which lie either side of Thong Lane. The evaluation took place on the main site (Site A) to the west of Thong Lane, which is c 5.1 hectares and currently comprises school buildings, recreation areas and a playing field. The redevelopment of the school will include construction of a new school building on playing fields to the west of the site, demolition of existing buildings, and associated landscaping works (see Figure 2).
- 1.3.2 The underlying geology of the site is Cretaceous Upper Chalk (GSGB, 1974, Sheet 271). The site is located at an approximate height of 55 m OD and slopes from the south to the north, though levelling has taken place within the school grounds.

1.4 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.4.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation 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 1-km 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).
- 1.4.2 Undated crop-marks in the south-east part of the 1-km study area (OA Nos. 41-42 and 44-52) may represent prehistoric or Roman activity. Within Site B a number of artefacts were discovered during levelling of the field, including late Iron Age pottery, animal and human bone, fragments of loom weights and iron slag (OA 2). It is suggested that there was an Iron Age settlement at or near this location. Excavations north of the site revealed an Iron Age settlement (OA 72). Five Roman miniature pots (OA 64, c 10 m south of the site) and three sherds of Roman pottery (OA 63, c 700 m north of the site) have been located in the vicinity.
- 1.4.3 Thamesview School lies in the north-east part of a former airfield (OA 1) established in 1932 as a civil airport. It was a RAF flying training school up to 1939 and was used during the Battle of Britain by 11 Group of Fighter Command. Later in the war the airbase was expanded for use by American squadrons. The landing strips were of grass, but by 1944 the airfield had some thirty hard-standing areas and a variety of hangars. The airfield remained in civilian use after the war, but by 1956 was closed and built over (NMR 1396012). No airfield or wartime structures are listed by the SMR on the site.

1.5 Impact assessment

- 1.5.1 The archaeological desktop assessment (OA/PB 2007) was supplemented by an Impact Assessment Report that assessed the potential effects of the development proposals on any archaeological deposits that may be present at Thamesview School.

OA was commissioned by Kier Group and Land Securities Trillium to carry out this work on behalf of KCC in March 2008 (OA 2008). The proposed development area is located in the western area of the site, to the west of the present school buildings.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 The principal objective of the evaluation was to determine the quality, character, date and extent of any archaeological remains present on the site, to supplement information gathered during the desk-based archaeological and impact assessments made of the site.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of eleven mechanically excavated trenches. These were each 20 m long and approximately 1.7 m wide. The trenches were targeted within the footprint of the proposed new building and where landscaping is proposed.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket working under close archaeological supervision. Excavation proceeded to the first archaeological horizon or to undisturbed natural geology, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were then cleaned by hand and any revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples.
- 3.2.2 All features and deposits encountered were issued a unique context number. A plan was drawn of each trench in which potential archaeological features were identified at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20. Each excavated feature was recorded in section at 1:10. Colour transparency and black-and-white photographs were taken of each feature, as well as more general shots of each trench. Digital photography was also used. All recording was conducted in accordance with the procedures detailed in the OA *Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

4 RESULTS

Trench summaries (Figs. 2 and 3)

- 4.1.1 Topsoil and overburden/ploughsoil was removed by machine in all trenches to the top of the underlying natural, which was a reddish/brown clay silt with frequent chalk and flint inclusions (contexts 103, 203, 303, 403, 503, 601, 703, 803, 903, 10003 and 1104). The British Geological Survey shows the underlying geology to be chalk. A sondage was therefore excavated at the south-west end of Trench 3 to investigate the natural. This demonstrated that chalk with flints (303) lies at least 1.8 m below the present ground surface.

- 4.1.2 Nine of the eleven trenches revealed chalk only. Two trenches (6 and 10) contained features that required further investigation, but these proved to be recent modern disturbances caused by tree roots (contexts 602-3) and undated cultivation marks (1005-8).
- 4.1.3 There was evidence in all the trenches for the area having been subject to a degree of disturbance caused by levelling. The soil sequence in the southernmost trench was truncated (Trench 6), while those to the north showed up to c. 0.5m of made ground. All of the trenches except Trench 6 appeared to have a buried soil horizon (102, 202, 302, 401, 501, 702, 802, 902, 1002 and 1103), although the presence of coke and clinker in this layer indicated that is of modern date.
- 4.1.4 A shallow dumped deposit of chalk (801, 901, 1001 and 1102) is present in the centre of the site and was encountered in Trenches 8, 9, 10 and 11, overlying the buried soil. This deposit was deepest in Trenches 8 and 9 (801 and 901) at c 0.25 m thickness tailing off to a thin band c 0.1 m thick to the north in Trench 11 (1101) and to the south in Trench 10 (1001).

4.2 Finds

- 4.2.1 No finds of archaeological significance were identified during the evaluation. Two live bullets (.22 and .303 calibre) were recovered from the topsoil in Trenches 1 and 6. Other metal pieces noted may have been fragments of shrapnel. The live ammunition was retained for safe disposal by a specialist technician from BACTEC. A single fragment of clay pipe was also noted within a buried soil in Trench 11.

4.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 4.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation.

5 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Archaeology

- 5.1.1 All of the trenches indicated that there has been significant modern disturbance over the area, although the presence of a buried soil horizon in several trenches suggests that the depth of disturbance is very limited, except perhaps at the southern edge of the playing fields (around Trench 6). The site appears to have been levelled slightly by moving soils from the south to the north, resulting in a build-up of deposits in the northern part of the existing playing fields. It is likely that the chalk deposit (801, 901, 1001 and 1101) encountered in Trenches 8 - 11 also results from this levelling episode.
- 5.1.2 The levelling of the area may be associated with the creation of part of an airfield on the site in 1932 and its subsequent expansion during World War II. The airfield is known to have been a grass airstrip that would have required little if any ground

preparation. The trenches do not coincide with the location of any of the hard-standings or perimeter tracks indicated on maps of the airfield. The site could alternatively have been levelled after WWII to create the school playing fields, during the construction of the school in the 1960s. The evaluation also indicated that the solid Upper Chalk in this area is overlain by at least 1.8 m of drift deposit - probably a Pleistocene Head deposit.

5.2 Potential impact of the development

5.2.1 No features or finds of archaeological importance were revealed during the evaluation trenching. The trench array provides good coverage of the new building footprint and areas of new hard-standing. The results are therefore a good indicator of the site's archaeological potential. Further groundworks in this area are considered highly unlikely to reveal significant remains of any period.

5.3 Recommendations for further work

5.3.1 No further archaeological work is recommended during construction at Thamesview School.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
001	100	Layer		0.38	Modern topsoil	.22 ammunition	Modern
	101	Layer		0.26	Made ground	None	Modern
	102	Layer		0.22	Made ground/buried soil	Clinker	Modern
	103	Layer			Natural.	None	
002	200	Layer		0.22	Topsoil	None	Modern
	201	Layer		0.16	Made ground/	None	Modern
	202	Layer		0.22	Made ground/buried soil	Clinker	Modern
	203	Layer			Natural	None	
003	300	Layer		0.28	Topsoil	None	Modern
	301	Layer		0.14	Made ground	None	Modern
	302	Layer		0.16	Made ground/buried soil	Clinker	Modern
	303	Layer			Natural (colluvium?)	None	
004	400	Layer		0.24	Made ground?	shotgun casing	Modern
	401	Layer		0.18	Buried topsoil?	None	Modern
	402	Layer		0.12	Subsoil	None	
	403	Layer			Natural	None	
005	500	Layer		0.18	Made ground?	None	Modern
	501	Layer		0.16	Buried topsoil?	Charcoal	Modern
	502	Layer		0.18	Subsoil	None	
	503	Layer			Natural	None	
006	600	Layer		0.18	Topsoil	shrapnel .303 round	Modern
	601	Layer			Natural	None	
	602	Fill	0.26	0.09	Probable root fill	None	Modern
	603	Cut	0.26	0.09	Probable root hollow	None	Modern
007	700	Layer		0.20	Topsoil	glass fragments	Modern
	701	Layer		0.10	Made ground	iron fragments	Modern
	702	Layer		0.20	Made ground/buried topsoil?	Modern coke/coal	Modern
	703	Layer			Natural	None	

008	800	Layer		0.28	Topsoil	None	Modern
	801	Layer		0.26	Made ground (chalk rubble)	None	Modern
	802	Layer		0.26	Buried topsoil?	Modern clinker	Modern
	803	Layer			Natural		
009	900	Layer		0.26	Topsoil	Modern	Modern
	901	Layer		0.10	Made ground (chalk rubble)	None	Modern
	902	Layer		0.26	Buried topsoil?	None	
	903	Layer			Natural	None	
010	1000	Layer		0.18	Topsoil	None	Modern
	1001	Layer		0.02	Made ground (chalk rubble)	None	Modern
	1002	Layer		0.10	Buried topsoil?	None	
	1003	Layer		0.08	Subsoil/natural interface	None	
	1004	Layer			Natural	None	
	1005	Cut	2.5 x 0.1	0.03	Modern plough scar/service run		Modern
	1006	Fill	2.5 x 0.1	0.03	Fill of modern feature 1005	None	Modern
	1007	Cut	0.7 x 0.1	0.03	Modern plough scar/service run		Modern
	1008	Fill	0.7 x 0.1	0.03	Fill of modern feature 1007	None	Modern
011	1100	Layer		0.20	Topsoil	None	Modern
	1101	Layer		0.24	Made ground?	None	Modern
	1102	Layer		0.10	Made Ground (chalk rubble)	None	Modern
	1103	Layer		0.34	Buried topsoil/sub-soil	Clay pipe	Post-medieval
	1104	Layer			Natural	None	

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

OAU 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edn. August 1992, Ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA 2007 *Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent. Archaeological Desktop Assessment.*
Unpublished Client Report, Oxford Archaeology

OA, 2008, *Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent: Archaeological Impact Assessment for Kier.* Unpublished Client Report, Oxford Archaeology.

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent

Site code: KS4GRA08

Grid reference: TQ 668 721

Type of evaluation: Eleven x 20 m by 1.65 m mechanically excavated trenches.

Date and duration of project: Fieldwork was carried out between 4th and 6th August 2008.

Area of site: 5.1 ha.

Summary of results: No archaeological features were encountered. Natural chalk and drift deposits were overlain by recently landscaped ground and soil layers. Finds included modern live ammunition and clay pipe and modern glass in overlying soil layers.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with an appropriate museum in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

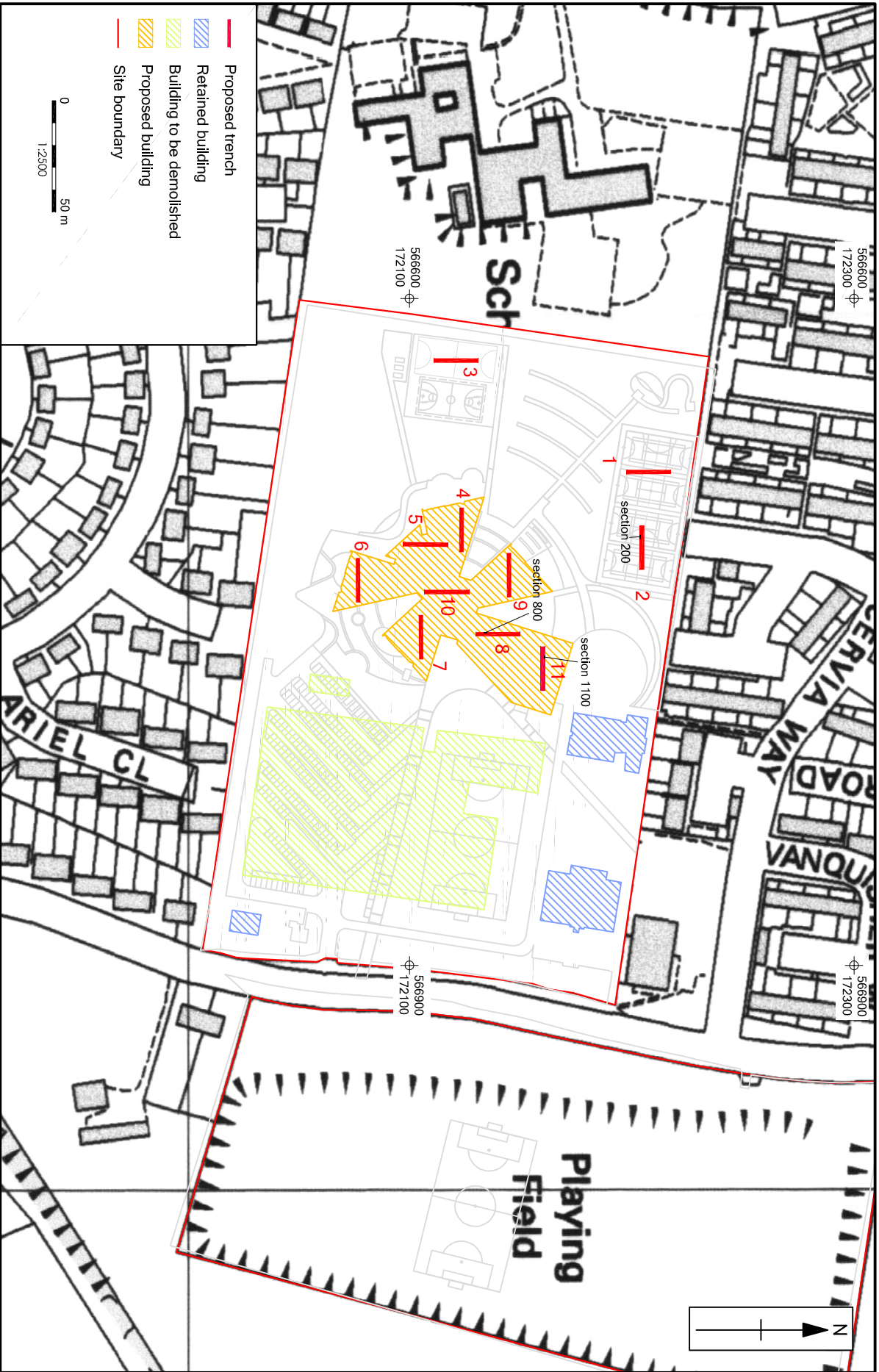
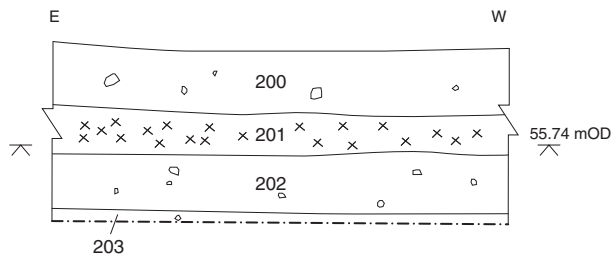


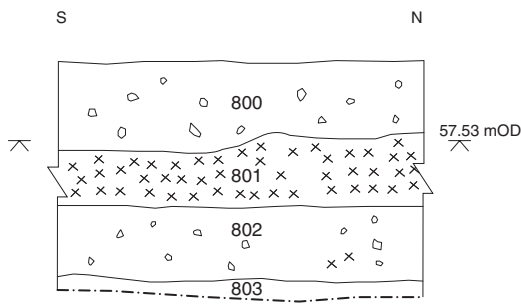
Figure 2: Trench layout



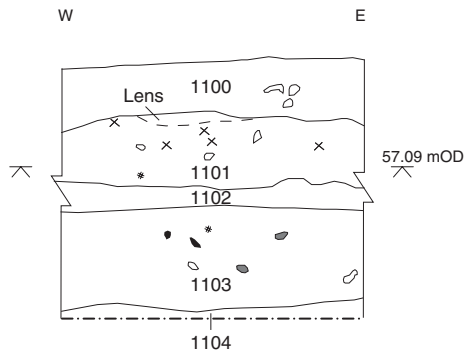
Trench 2 Section 200



Trench 8 Section 800



Trench 11 Section 1100



x	Chalk
□	Stone
■	CBM
■	Fe metal nail
*	Charcoal



Figure 3 : Sample sections - Trenches 2, 8 and 11



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