

Archaeological Evaluation at Land off Common Road, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook, Kent



Planning Application 12/02590/TW
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SWAT. ARCHAEOLOGY

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Plate 1. Aerial view of the site

Archaeological Evaluation at Land off Common Road, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook, Kent

NGR 579110/137790

Site Code: SISS-EV-12

SUMMARY

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land north of Sissinghurst, Cranbrook and west of Common Road within the parish of Cranbrook (Fig. 1). Planning application (12/02590/TW) for the erection of residential dwellings and vehicular access was submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council whereby the Council requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2013) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation was focused on the impact the development may have on archaeological remains associated with the known Roman road

The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of three trenches which encountered no archaeological features. The Archaeological Evaluation has therefore been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification.

INTRODUCTION

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) was commissioned by Chartway Group Ltd to carry out an archaeological evaluation at the above site. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2013) and in discussion with the Archaeological Heritage Officer, Kent County Council. The evaluation was carried on from 22nd-25th April 2013.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located on the northern edge of the village of Sissinghurst. The site is generally level and surrounded by arable fields to the north and north-east and to the west and south by modern development. According to the British Geological Survey (BGS 1: 50.000) the site lies on a bedrock geology comprising Tunbridge Wells Sand. No superficial deposits are recorded by BGS but the evaluation investigation revealed a brown sandy silt subsoil with occasional gravel overlaying the Tunbridge Wells Sand (Plates 5-6).

PLANNING BACKGROUND

Planning consent (12/02590/TW) for the erection of nine houses and two bungalows for affordable local needs, construction of vehicular access with associated car parking and landscaping was approved by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The Council requested that an archaeological

evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of development on any archaeological remains. The Local Planning Authority (DDC) placed the following condition on the planning consent:

'No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successor(s) in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.'

Requirements for the archaeological evaluation comprised trial trenching targeting a representative 4% sample of the impact area with three trenches (Fig. 2) designed to establish whether there were any archaeological deposits at the site that may be affected by the proposed development. The results from this evaluation will be used to inform KCC of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed site lies within an area of archaeological potential. Common Road which bounds the site on the east side is considered to follow the alignment of a Roman road. Recent archaeological investigations in Sissinghurst may have revealed evidence of the road and similar remains may be revealed in this site.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Assess the extent of any archaeological deposits
- Assess the depth below ground surface of any archaeological deposits
- Establishing the depth, character, significance and condition of any archaeological deposits

METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching was carried out on 22nd April 2013 with the excavation of three 15m trenches. Trench location for three trenches was agreed prior to the excavation between KCC and SWAT. Excavation was carried out using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, removing the overburden to the top of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, or natural (003), under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. All trenches measured between 15m in length and 1.8m wide. All trenches exposed made-up ground from many years of dumping with the natural Tunbridge Sands revealed at about 1.20m below ground level. A blue piped water main ran parallel to Common Road which curtailed investigations close to Common Road. No archaeological features were exposed. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the specification issued by KCC. A single context recording system was used to record the deposits, and context recording numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes. These are used in the report and

shown in bold. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with KCC and IFA standards and guidance.

MONITORING

Due to the lack of extensive archaeological remains, curatorial monitoring was not carried out during the course of the evaluation, but email contact was maintained throughout the fieldwork.

RESULTS

The natural geology of Tunbridge Wells Sand was revealed in Trenches 1-3 at depths between 1.12m-1.20m overlaid by dumping of rubbish and soil (Fig. 5). No archaeological features were exposed in any of the trenches.

Trench 1

(15m x 1.70m x <1.18m)

Trench 1 was placed along the north-east edge of the site, and was positioned almost south-west/north-east and was machined to a depth of 1.18m where the natural geology (**102**) was encountered. The overburden over the natural was entirely dumped material comprising a dark band of subsoil mixed with rubbish overlaid by more dumped rubbish (**101**) covered by a thin layer of topsoil (**100**). No archaeological features were observed (Plate 3).

Trench 2

(15m x 1.70m x <1.20m)

Trench 2 was situated in the east area of the site and was aligned north-east/south-west. Dark subsoil (**202**) overlaid the natural sand (**203**). The dark subsoil was mixed with tarmac and brick fragments which overlaid further dumped material (**201**). Overlying the dumped material was a layer of topsoil (**200**). No archaeological features were exposed (Plate 4).

Trench 3

(15m x 1.70m x <1.10m)

Trench 3 was located at the mid south area of the site and was aligned north-east/south-west. The trench was machined to a depth of 1.10m exposing the Tunbridge Wells Sand (**303**), which was sealed by a thick deposit of dark subsoil mixed with dumped material (**302**) that was covered by a layer of further rubbish (**301**) covered by a thin layer of topsoil mixed with demolition rubble and rubbish (**300**). No archaeological features were present in this trench (Plate 6).

FINDS

No finds were retrieved.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation of land off Common Road, Sissinghurst revealed no archaeology. The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. A common stratigraphic sequence was recognised across the site of the local geology of Tunbridge

Wells Sand (102, 203, 303). Dark subsoil with dumped material inclusions (202, 302) was covered by layers of further dumped material (101, 201, 302) which in turn was sealed by a layer of topsoil (100, 200, 301).

Conclusions

The evaluation has, therefore, assessed the archaeological potential of land intended for development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank Chartway Group Ltd for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Wendy Rogers, Senior Heritage Officer, Kent County Council for her advice and assistance.

Paul Wilkinson supervised the fieldwork, assisted in the field by Marcus Headifen. Illustrations were produced by James Madden for *Digitise This*. The project was managed by Paul Wilkinson.

Dr Paul Wilkinson MifA

May 2013

REFERENCES

Bibliography

Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA), Rev (2008) *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*.

Kent County Council (KCC), (2013) *Specification for Plot 0582 land off Common Road, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook Kent*

Maps

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition (1871-1890)

Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition (1897-1900)

Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition (1907-1923)

Ordnance Survey 4th Edition (1929-1952)

Websites

Exploring Kent's Past <http://www.extranet7.krnt.gov.uk/ExploringKentsPast/>

Kent Landscape Information System <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm>

Old Maps Online <http://www.oldmapsonline.org/>

APPENDIX 1 – Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: <i>Land off Common Road, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook Kent</i>	
SWAT Site Code: <i>SNC-EV-13</i>	
Site Address: <i>As above</i>	
Summary: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at Common Road. A planning application (12/02590/TW) for the erection of 11 dwellings and construction of vehicular access was lodged with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of the LPA requested that an Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken in order to determine the possible impact of development on any archaeological remains. The work was carried out in accordance with the requirements set out within an Archaeological Specification (KCC 2013) and in discussion with the Senior Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council.</i> <i>The Archaeological Evaluation consisted of three trenches which encountered no archaeological features.</i>	
District/Unitary: <i>Cranbrook</i>	Parish: <i>Cranbrook</i>
Period(s): Tentative:	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs): <i>NGR 579110/137790</i>	
Type of archaeological work (delete) <i>Evaluation</i>	
Date of Recording: <i>April 2013</i>	
Unit undertaking recording: <i>Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT)</i>	
Geology: <i>Dumped material overlaying Tunbridge Wells Sand</i>	
Title and author of accompanying report: <i>Wilkinson P. An Archaeological Evaluation at Land off Common Road, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook Kent</i>	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) <i>As above</i> <p style="text-align: right;">(cont. on attached sheet)</p>	
Location of archive/finds: <i>SWAT</i>	
Contact at Unit: <i>Paul Wilkinson</i>	Date: <i>May 2013</i>



Plate 2. View of site looking west



Plate 3. Trench 1 looking east



Plate 4. Trench 2 looking south-east



Plate 5. Trench 2 representative section



Plate 6. Trench 3 sondage-looking south-east