

Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Land at Roselands, Sedlescombe, East Sussex



NGR: TQ 78013 18096

Site Code: ROSE/EV/16

(Planning Application: RR/2015/2248/P)

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1. Summary

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out an archaeological evaluation and assessment of land at Roselands, Sedlescombe, East Sussex. A Planning Application (RR/2015/2248/P) to develop this site for residential dwellings and associated landscaping and other works to Rother District 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 (SWAT Specification and the Standard Conditions for Archaeological Fieldwork in East Sussex (ESCC 2015)) and in discussion with the County Archaeological Heritage Officer, ESCC. The results of the excavation of 5 evaluation trenches revealed that no archaeological features were present within the trenches (Figure 2). The natural geology of Ashdown Formation-Clay, Gravel, Mudstone and Sandstone was reached at an average depth of between 1.35m and 1.40m below the modern ground surface.

The Archaeological Evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Archaeological Specification.

2. Introduction

Swale & Thames Survey Company (SWAT) 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 (SWAT 2016) and in discussion with Casper Johnson, County Archaeologist ESCC. The evaluation was carried out on the 31st August.

3. Site Description and Topography

The proposed development site is located on the western side of Sedlescombe Street, Sedlescombe, East Sussex. The site was developed with the Roselands building, a one and two storey 'T' shaped brick built former care home with associated landscaping, the southern wing constructed between 1961 and 1977 and the northern wing added in 1981. The site is generally flat at about 27.50m OD.

The underlying geology is mapped by the 1:50,000 British Geological Survey sheet 320/321, Solid and Drift edition, the BGS website (www.bgs.ac.uk) as Bedrock Geology of Ashdown Formation

comprising siltstone and mudstone. Deposits of Head are indicated close to the western boundary of the site and comprise variable deposits of impure clays, silts and sands.

4. Planning Background

Rother District Council gave planning permission on 15th April 2016 (RR/2015/2248/P) for the demolition and redevelopment of Roselands to provide 10 x1 bed old persons units and 5 x 2 bed and 2 x 3 bed houses with associated parking and refuse and bin stores. On the advice of the County Archaeologist ESCC a programme of archaeological works in the form of an initial archaeological evaluation was attached to the consent:

(Condition 3) No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. A written record of any archaeological works undertaken shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority within three months of the completion of any archaeological investigation unless an alternative timescale for submission of the report is first agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: This work is required pre-commencement on site to ensure that archaeology is not destroyed by the proposed development. The condition seeks to ensure that the archaeological and historical interest of the site is safeguarded and recorded to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 141 and Policy EN2 (vi) of the Rother Plan Core Strategy.

The results from this evaluation will be used to inform Rother District Council of any further archaeological mitigation measures that may be necessary in connection with the development proposals.

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

The application site lies within an area with known archaeology. A search of the ESHER and other sources (Allen Archaeology November 2014) of known archaeology in the immediate area has revealed evidence for activity dating from the prehistoric to modern periods, but dominated by activity of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date.

Prehistoric activity within and around Sedlescombe is sparse with only a single area producing finds of this era within the study area. A number of prehistoric artefacts were found during work for the Mountfield to Hastings pipeline, including a Mesolithic microlith, Neolithic flint tools and a Greek coin (from Ephesus) dating from 350BC. A prehistoric burial mound is also recorded just outside the study area at Petley Wood, which is an Archaeological Notification Area (ANA) (DES8965).

There is significant Roman activity in the study area, including two roads and evidence for substantial ironworking bloomeries. The Roman road linking Rochester, Maidstone and Hastings (Site 2) runs through the village past the proposed site along The Street. The second road (Site 3) is a likely branch from this road to the iron working site north of the village at Footlands, which may have Iron Age origins and is another ANA (DES9373). Although no trace of this road was found during investigations in 1951, recent geophysical survey recorded a road with side ditches. The Roman road from Ashford to Hastings may lie in the area and this has created an AFA within the village (DES9299).

Further details of previous discoveries and investigations within the immediate and wider area may be found in the East Sussex County Council Historic Environment Record. These records have been accessed by SWAT Archaeology from the Archaeological Desk based Assessment produced by Allen Archaeology in November 2014.

An archaeologist from SWAT Archaeology was on site from 20th May 2016 to watch the excavation of three trial pits, none of which revealed any archaeology. The geology revealed was Ashdown Formation, Clay, Gravel, Mudstone and Sandstone (Leap Environmental Report Ref: LP001 170).

6. Aims and Objectives

According to the SWAT Archaeological Specification, the aims and objectives for the archaeological evaluation were to ensure that:

- 1.1 The principle objective of the archaeological evaluation is to establish the presence or absence of any elements of the archaeological resource, both artefacts and ecofacts of archaeological interest across the area of the development.
- 1.2 To ascertain the extent, depth below ground surface, depth of deposit if possible, character, date and quality of any such archaeological remains by limited sample excavation.
- 1.3 To determine the state of preservation and importance of the archaeological resource if present and to assess the past impacts on the site and pay particular attention to the character, height/depth below ground level, condition, date and significance of any archaeological deposits.
- 1.4 The opportunity will also be taken during the course of the evaluation to place and assess any archaeology revealed within the context of other recent archaeological investigations in the immediate area and within the setting of the local landscape and topography. In general the

work is to ensure compliance with the archaeological planning condition and to publish the results either on-line, or through OASIS and/or in a local journal.

- 1.5 Should archaeological remains be found, further archaeological excavation may be required. This work will be covered by a separate specification and not form part of the present evaluation (WSI Roselands SWAT Archaeology 2016).

7. Methodology

The Archaeological Specification called for an evaluation by trial trenching comprising a first phase of 5 trenches within the footprint of the proposed housing development. This was amended to four in the final requirement because, as stated in the specification, there were many site restraints such as standing trees, demolished building and fences. This was exacerbated by the presence on the site of large mounds of crushed concrete in the western part of the site (see **Plates 12 & 13**) that precluded any evaluation of that area. In the event, due to these constraints, five evaluation trenches were cut, of which two (trenches 4 & 5) were conjoined in a rectangular arrangement (see **Fig. 2**). The total combined area of the evaluation trenches was 96m², this being approximately six per cent of the site less the footprint of the demolished building.

A 12.5 ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed ditching bucket was used to remove the topsoil and subsoil to expose the natural geology and/or the archaeological horizon. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the specification. A single context recording system was used to record the deposits, and context recording numbers were assigned to all deposits for recording purposes. All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with ESCC, SWAT and ClfA standards and guidance.

8. Monitoring

Curatorial monitoring was available during the course of the evaluation.

9. Results

The evaluation has identified no archaeological features within the 5 trenches (Figure 2).

Evaluation trench 1, in the western, lower part of the site, was approximately east-west aligned, exposed light yellow-brown, slightly orange-tinged clay of the Ashdown Formation (**Fig. 2, Plates 1, 2 & 3**) indicating that the ground in this area had been subject to substantial reduction and levelling, as the colour and general appearance of the natural clay was dissimilar to the surface of that exposed in the other trenches. This observation with the consistent terraced nature of the site, the terracing

presumably undertaken to accommodate the now-demolished building, which was built on a previously west-sloping gradient adjacent to a stream.

The exposed clay surface of Trench 1 underlay a 0.6m-thick band of mid-brown sandy humic soil, building rubble and domestic detritus, this sealed by a 0.25m-thick layer of mid-brown topsoil that was much disturbed by rooting.

Evaluation trench 2 (Fig. 2, Plates 4, 5 & 6) was west-north-west/east-south-east aligned and exposed a near-identical stratified sequence of truncated natural clay of the Ashdown Formation sealed by relatively recently deposited mid-brown sandy humus-rich sandy soil, in turn sealed by topsoil. However, significantly less building rubble was evident in the sandy humic soil here and there was little evidence of rooting in the topsoil, presumably because this trench was placed in an area adjacent to and previously occupied by the former building.

The exposed and truncated surface of the natural clay rose steeply in the eastern part of this trench, this rise being consistent with a commensurate rise in the ground level noted in the ground surface prior to the evaluation.

Evaluation trench 3 (Fig. 2, Plates 7 & 8) was approximately east-west aligned, situated on the higher ground to the east and also occupied an area adjacent to and previously occupied by the former building. Here, the exposed surface of the natural clay was covered only by the mid-brown humic-rich sandy soil of varying thickness (see **Plate 7**) containing building rubble, but no topsoil was present.

Evaluation trenches 4 & 5 (Fig. 2, Plates 9, 10 & 11) were approximately north-south and east-west aligned respectively and were located in the south-eastern corner of the development site. Here, on the eastern margin of the site, the surface of the natural clay immediately underlay natural topsoil (see **Plate 9**), indicating that this area had escaped the disturbance evident in the rest of the site. However, in their the north and west parts, the trenches exposed a 0.35m-thick layer of what was clearly the same mid-brown sandy humic soil event in all other trenches (see **Plate 10 & 11**), indicating the overall extent of disturbance to which the site has previously been subject.

10. Discussion

Excepting the south-eastern margin of the site, the evaluation exposed truncated natural clay underlying relatively recently deposited soil containing building rubble and for the most part sealed by topsoil. The site had clearly been subject to terracing and levelling, presumably prior to the construction of the now-demolished building and no significant archaeological features or deposits were observed. If any had existed, they would almost certainly have been destroyed by the terracing activity described above, and by the groundworks undertaken prior to the construction of the demolished building. On the basis of the results of the present evaluation, the proposed development can be judged to pose no threat to any significant archaeological remains.

11. Finds

No finds were found.

12. Conclusion

The evaluation trenches at the proposed development site revealed no archaeological features or artefacts.

The archaeological evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. Therefore, this evaluation has been successful in fulfilling the aims and objectives as set out in the Planning Condition and the Archaeological Specification.

13. Acknowledgements

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank the client, Chartway Group Ltd for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Casper Johnson County Archaeologist East Sussex County Council. Site survey and illustrations were produced by Bartek Cichy. The fieldwork was undertaken and the project was managed and report written by Tim Allen MCIfA and Dr Paul Wilkinson MCIfA.

Paul Wilkinson

04/10/2016

14. References

Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA), Rev (2014). *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*

ESCC and Historic England HER data 2016

SWAT Archaeology, 01/07/2016), *Specification for a Programme of Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of land at Roselands, Sedlescombe, East Sussex* (unpublished SWAT client report).

Standard Conditions for Archaeological Fieldwork in East Sussex (*ESCC 2015*)

East Sussex County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: Land at Roselands, Sedlescombe, East Sussex

SWAT Site Code: ROSE/EV/16

Site Address: As above

Summary:

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out Archaeological Evaluation on the development site above. The site has planning permission for housing whereby Rother District Council requested that Archaeological Evaluation be undertaken to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

The Archaeological Monitoring consisted of an Archaeological Evaluation which revealed no archaeology.

District/Unitary: Rother District Council

Period(s):

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) TQ 7802 1810

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Evaluation

Date of recording: August 2016

Unit undertaking recording: Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT. Archaeology)

Geology: Underlying geology is Ashdown Formation

Title and author of accompanying report: Wilkinson P. (2016) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Roselands, Sedlescombe, East Sussex

Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)

No archaeology found

Location of archive/finds: SWAT. Archaeology. Graveney Rd, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8UP

Contact at Unit: Paul Wilkinson

Date: 04/10/2016

OS Plan Colour

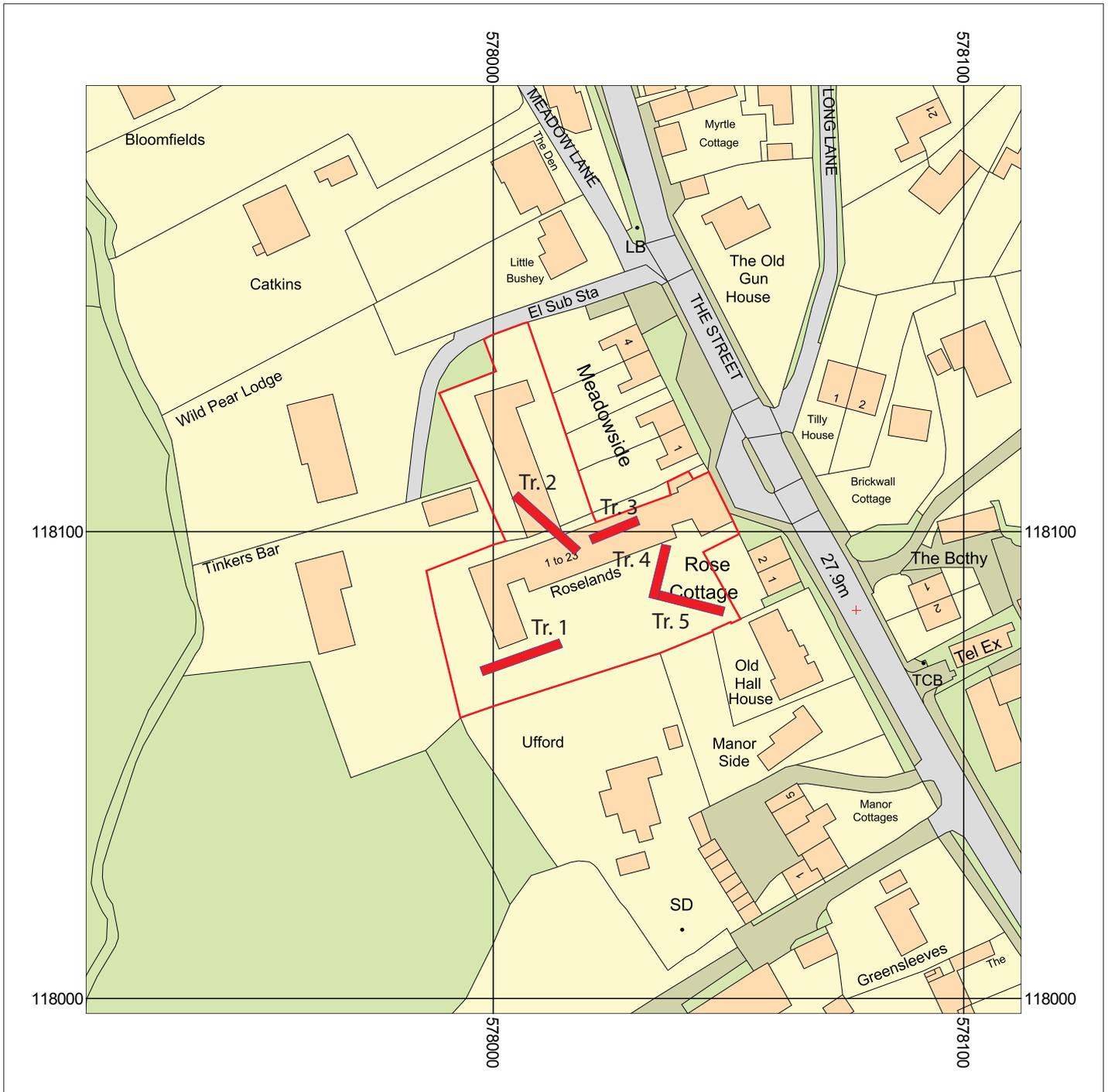


Figure 2: Trench location plan, scale 1:1250.



Plate 1. Trench 1 looking east (one-metre scale)



Plate 2. Trench 1 looking west (one-metre scale)



Plate 3. Typical section, in this case the southern section of the north end of Trench 1 (one-metre scale)



Plate 4. Trench 2 looking west (one-metre scale)



Plate 5. The western termination of Trench 2 (one-metre scale)



Plate 6. The eastern termination of Trench 2 (one-metre scale)



Plate 7. The southern end of Trench 3 (one-metre scale)



Plate 8. The northern end of Trench 3 (one-metre scale)



Plate 9. Trench 4 looking southeast (one-metre scale)



Plate 10. Trench 5 looking south showing conjoined Trench 4 (one-metre scale)



Plate 11. Trenches 5 (foreground) & 5 (background) looking southwest (one-metre scale)



Plate 12. The rubble-covered northern part of the site (looking northern)



Plate 13. The rubble pile in the centre of the site (looking east)