

# Archaeological Monitoring of Land at Mill Yard, West Malling, Kent

Site Code MILL/WB/16



Report for Baxter Homes SE Ltd  
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## **SWAT ARCHAEOLOGY**

Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company  
The Office, School Farm Oast, Graveney Road  
Faversham, Kent ME13 8UP

Tel; 01795 532548 or 07885 700 112

info@swatarchaeology.co.uk [www.swatarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.swatarchaeology.co.uk)

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Aerial view of site (red target) showing the site prior to development.

(Google Earth 20/04/2016: Eye altitude 270m).

## **1.0 Summary**

1.1. From the 7<sup>th</sup> September to the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016 Swale and Thames Archaeological Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out a programme of continuous Archaeological Monitoring on ground works involved in the build of four houses at Mill Yard, West Malling in Kent. (Fig. 1 & Plates 1-10).

1.2. The works was carried out on behalf of Baxter Homes SE Ltd.

1.3. Archaeological Monitoring of the two phases of work was kept during the machine reduction of plots 1-4 (Phase 1) and additional reduction of the ring beams slots- Phase 2 (Plates 1-10 and Figures 1-3).

1.4. The Archaeological Monitoring was to watch for any signs of archaeological activity. In particular, any evidence of archaeological activity associated with the known medieval remains uncovered during the previous investigation of the site by SWAT Archaeology. This phase of work was part of the detailed mitigation phase as outlined in the KCC WSI and was a programme of monitoring to ensure that the known archaeology on site was not impacted on by the development.

1.5. The Planning Application Number for the development is TM/13/01952 and additional details including a revised Construction Management Plan (TM/15/02739, TM/15/03597).

1.6. Although the archaeological potential has been highlighted by the SWAT Archaeology evaluation, the Archaeological Monitoring revealed no buried archaeological features, and no archaeological finds were retrieved. The known archaeology of the site is deeper than the current development works and has been preserved in situ.

## **2.0 Introduction**

### **2.1 Planning Background**

On the advice of the Archaeological Officer for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, a programme of archaeological works in the form of an initial archaeological evaluation was attached to the consent (Condition 6):

*No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of*

- (i) archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a specification and written timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and*
- (ii) following on from the evaluation, any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and*

*recording in accordance with a specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority*

*Reason: To ensure appropriate assessment of the archaeological Implications of any development proposals and the subsequent mitigation of adverse impacts through preservation in situ or by record.*

The results from this field evaluation were used to allow SWAT Archaeology to inform the architects that a revised foundation design that did not impact on the exposed archaeology would be the appropriate mitigation and an appropriate Archaeological Specification was issued by Wendy Rogers Senior Archaeological Officer KCC.

### **3.0 Schedule of Visits**

Archaeologists suitably experienced attended the site (Tim Allen MCIfA, Faye Wills BA, and occasionally Paul Wilkinson MCIfA, all SWAT Archaeology) and monitored the excavation works from 7<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016. The day log is itemised below:

#### **Day 1 – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 1)**

- Reduction of the site started on the area designated for the housing. No archaeology was revealed and it was clear that the footings were still in place from the previous development of the site.
- The topsoil was black and approximately 0.5m in depth; it contained oyster shell, pottery and animal bone. These inclusions were also found on the reduction level. No archaeological features were revealed.
- Lots of modern inclusions throughout the site, indicating that this was not the natural level, including brick, concrete and white porcelain.
- Severe contamination with building material down to the reduction level, including significant root action.

#### **Day 2 – 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 1)**

- Reduction continued; no archaeological features revealed, level severely contaminated with previous builds.
- Some former footings penetrated approximately 0.5m below ground level – no archaeology in this area.

#### **Day 3 – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 1)**

- Reduction was halted in order to chase back three service pipes and cables – water, gas and electric.
- Further haymaking of the spoil revealed more footings from previous development of the site, which were partially demolished prior to the end of the day.

#### **Day 4 – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 1)**

- Reduction continued and former footings fully removed.

**Day 5 – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 1)**

- Reduction was completed.
- It was discovered that the plans for the buildings were misaligned, with a retaining wall situated beneath the parking bays on land belonging to the council. Work on the toe beam foundation trenches was postponed until this issue could be resolved.

**Day 6 – 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 2)**

- Plan was not resolved fully but some toe beam foundation trenches for the toe beam were marked out and digging began.
- No archaeology was identified.

**Day 7 – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 2)**

- More toe beam foundation trenches were dug and battered; no archaeology revealed.
- A deeper trench was inserted along the edge of the site, aligned with and against a modern wall built atop a modern ragstone foundation. The ragstone is brittle but remains standing. This trench was reduced in spits to the natural at 60cm; no archaeology was present.

-

**Day 8 – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016 (Phase 2)**

- Final toe beam foundation trenches were cut; again in closely watched spits- no further archaeology revealed.
- Plans are still not completely finalised as parking bays are still sat on top of part of the proposed development. Remaining trenches cannot be cut until these plans have been sorted.

**Day 9 – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016 (Phase 2)**

- Type 1 was delivered to fill the foundation trenches that have already been opened.
- Discussions with the site manager indicated that the plans have still not been rectified. This means that the monitoring brief will have to be put on hold until such times as Baxter Homes contact SWAT directly to inform them of the renewed works.

**Day 10 – 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (Phase 2)**

- More type 1 was delivered ready to fill trenches that had already been cut and cleared.
- Four further toe beam foundation trenches were cut; again in spits closely watched- no archaeology was uncovered.

- It was agreed that until the issue with the parking bays had been resolved, there would be no further digging, meaning that an archaeological presence was not necessary on site until contacted by Baxter Homes.
- In the meantime, the groundworkers will install drainage and cable coverings in the trenches that are already open.

#### **Day 11 – 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016 (Phase 2)**

- On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September, the plans were changed so that the wall in question did not require the removal of the parking bays as previously discussed; it had been changed by 100mm to ensure it will remain on the current site of works.
- The final toe beam foundation trenches were therefore cut in spits and revealed no archaeology; the reduction of the site is now complete.

### **4.0 Aims and Objectives**

4.1. The reason for the monitoring and recording as itemised in the KCC WSI, were to:

- Monitor construction groundworks and ensure archaeological remains are not encountered;
- If archaeological remains are encountered, the remains will be recorded and related to the existing understanding of the Medieval and Post Medieval activity in this area, especially if associated with the Abbey, Medieval market town activity, or evidence of a fire;
- Contribute to our understanding of the early medieval, medieval and post medieval development of West Malling as a settlement and market town. (KCC 2016).

4.2. The ground works were to excavate the footprint of the four residential dwellings to enable a ring beam construction to be built. The proposed depth of the excavation from ground level was to be 200mm for the concrete slab and 300mm for the toe beam. The archaeological horizon had been shown in the archaeological evaluation to be from 1.02m (Trench 1), 0.93m (Trench 2), 1.16m (Trench 3), 1.55m (Trench 5) from the ground level of 44.70m aOD (Plates 2-6). The revised foundation design of 30-50cm would allow any archaeology exposed in the archaeological evaluation to be preserved in situ.

4.3. A full programme of proposed works by the contractor were made available to SWAT Archaeology before the on-site monitoring took place.

4.4. Confidence Rating

No factors hindered the recognition of archaeological deposits during the monitoring and recording exercise.

### **5.0 Archaeological and Geological Background**

5.1. The underlying geology at the site according to the British Geological Survey map is Bedrock geology of Lower Greensand. The only geology revealed on site was the deeper

boundary wall trench which in places exposed a mid brown sandy silty soil. The rest of the site exposed on site reduction was made up ground of dumps of soil intermixed with brick rubble and lumps of stone (Plate 4).

5.2. The application site consisted of an area set to the rear of High Street and Swan Street. The site itself is generally level at a height of about 44.70m aOD.

5.3. The development site is situated in West Malling, a town of medieval origin located within the chartland of the River Medway. The site itself lies to the rear of buildings fronting onto the High Street and Swan Street to the west and north of the site with a large (Tesco) car park situated to the south of the site. To the east the site is bounded by the remains of the medieval St Mary's Abbey which was founded in c.1090 for Benedictine nuns (TQ 65 NE 40). The site is an irregular plot of land (Fig. 1) covering an area of about 0.0865ha.

5.4. The application site lies within the historic core of West Malling which may be of early medieval origins but certainly flourished in the medieval period with the establishment of the Abbey. West Malling is one of the medieval market towns covered by the Historic Towns Survey for Kent (KCC/English Heritage) and understanding its historic development is a key issue.

The KCC HER data has records of a Roman coins and a gold ring have been found in the Abbey grounds (TQ 65 NE 10) and the Canterbury Archaeological Trust DBA reports that there may be a Roman road that could pass through the proposed development site (PDA).

Although charter evidence of AD 965 suggests an Anglo-Saxon origin for West Malling (*Meallingas*) no finds are recorded in the vicinity of the PDA.

The PDA is located within an important medieval landscape, and is adjacent to one of the boundary walls of the Abbey (TQ 65 NE 40), close to stone buildings associated with the Abbey. The PDA is also located in plots to the rear of the medieval buildings fronting on to the adjacent High Street (Nos 69, 71, 73, 75 and 77).

In the post-Medieval period the PDA occupied land used by Swan Mill which was in use from c.1800 and included storehouses on the site of the PDA which may suggest post-medieval industrial activity may be found on the site.

## **6.0 Methodology**

6.1. The Archaeological Monitoring was conducted in accordance with the Archaeological Specification compiled by KCC and it also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (ClfA: Dec 2014).



- 6.2. The works comprised the continuous observation of all ground works, including the inspection of the revealed made-up ground for archaeological features and finds.
- 6.3. The monitoring was carried out in two phases according to the needs of the building contractors from 7<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016
- 6.4. Excavation of the area was carried out by contractors using a 360 degree machine equipped with a bucket necessary to remove the soil and to reduce the levels (Plates 2-10).
- 6.5. All excavation was carried out under the constant supervision of experienced archaeologists (Tim Allen MCifA and Faye Wills BA).
- 6.6. Where possible the areas of excavation were subsequently hand-cleaned with the intention of revealing any observed features in plan and section.
- 6.7. If found archaeological features under threat were to be excavated to enable sufficient information about form, development date and stratigraphic relationships to be recorded without prejudice to more extensive investigations, should these prove to be necessary.
- 6.8. The archaeological monitoring was carried out in accordance with current IfA Standards and Guidance, (CifA: 2014), and methodology discussed with the Senior Archaeological Officer KCC.

## **7.0 Results**

### **7.1 General**

No archaeological features or finds were revealed or recovered. The subsoil encountered across the site was made up ground of dumped deposits overlaid by concrete pavoids and tarmac. The only natural revealed (and the archaeological horizon) was in trenching for the eastern boundary wall (Fig. 3). No archaeological features were revealed in the deposits and no archaeological finds retrieved. The known archaeology has been preserved in situ and is deeper than the present development. However, of interest was the exposure of the east boundary wall built of brick in Flemish bond with burnt brick headers and dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and sitting on a substantial Kentish ragstone wall set with lime mortar in a random pattern. The ragstone wall cannot be dated with certainty and may be reuse of medieval stone or may be a medieval boundary wall rebuilt in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 8)

### **8.0 Finds**

No finds were retrieved.

## **9.0 Discussion**

The development site is in an area of archaeological potential. However, no archaeology was revealed on the development site apart from the brick boundary wall on the east side of the development site (Plate 8 & Figure 3). With the change of design from traditional strip foundations to a ring beam reinforced concrete pad it enabled the known archaeology to be preserved in situ under the present development.

## **10.0 Conclusion**

The Archaeological Monitoring has fulfilled the primary aims and objectives of the KCC Archaeological Specification. As far as it is known no buried archaeological features have been affected as a result of the development.

## **11.0 Acknowledgments**

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank Baxter Homes for commissioning the project. Fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Allen and Faye Wills and report written by Paul Wilkinson.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Wilkinson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a white rectangular box.

Dr Paul Wilkinson, BA (Hons), PhD., FRSA., MCIfA.

## **References**

CAT (Sept 2010) Desk based Assessment of Mill Yard, West Malling, Kent

CIfA (2014) Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

HER data (KCC 2016)

KCC Archaeological Watching Brief (June 2016)

SWAT Archaeology (2014) Archaeological Evaluation of Land at Mill Yard, West Malling, Kent

## **Appendix 1**

### **Kent County Council HER Summary Form**

**Site Name:** Development of land at Mill Yard, West Malling, Kent

**SWAT Site Code:** MILL/WB/16

**Site Address:** As above

#### **Summary:**

Swale and Thames Survey Company (SWAT) carried out Archaeological Monitoring on the development site above. The site has planning permission for new houses whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC) requested that Archaeological Monitoring be undertaken to determine the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

The Archaeological Monitoring consisted of a continuous presence on site which encountered no buried archaeological features or artefacts.

**District/Unitary:** Tonbridge and Malling District Council

**Period(s):**

**NGR (centre of site to eight figures) 568099 157761**

**Type of Archaeological work:** Archaeological Monitoring

**Date of recording:** Sept/ Oct 2016

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

**Geology:** Underlying geology is Folkestone Beds Formation

**Title and author of accompanying report:** Wilkinson P. (2016) Archaeological Monitoring at Land at Mill Yard, West Malling, Kent

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

See above

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

**Contact at Unit:** Paul Wilkinson

**Date:** 10/10/2016