

Archaeological Watching Brief at Smiths Hall, Lower Road, West Farleigh, Kent

Site Code LOW/WB/23



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Plates 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8. General view of site excavations

Figure 1. Site plan and location of archaeological investigation area

AP 1. View of site 2019 (Google Earth)

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Smiths Hall, Lower Road, West Farleigh, Kent ME15 0PE

NGR 571406 152742



View 1. View of site of the area for foundations of the extension

1.0 Abstract

1.1. From the 20th-26th April 2023 Dr Paul Wilkinson of Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief of ground works involved in laying an underground electrical cable and the erection of a solar array at Smiths Hall, West Farleigh in Kent (Figure 1, AP 1, View 1 and Plates 1-8).

1.2. An Archaeological watching brief presence was kept during the excavations for the electric cable run and placement of the solar array (Plates 1-8).

1.3. The archaeological work was undertaken in two phases:

Phase 1: Watching the removal of the topsoil and subsoil for electric cable run (20th-23rd April 2023).

Phase 2: Excavation of the turf for solar array placement (25th April 2023).

1.4. The Archaeological Watching Brief were to determine whether any significant archaeological remains had survived within the footprint of the proposed groundworks. In particular, any evidence of archaeological activity associated with the known archaeological sites in the area included on the KCCHER data and highlighted in the SWAT Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation Specification.

1.5. The Planning Application Number for the development is Maidstone Borough Council (22/505929/FULL & 22/505930/LBC).

1.6. Although the archaeological potential has been highlighted by the SWAT Archaeology WSI Specification the Archaeological Watching Brief revealed no buried archaeological features and no archaeological finds were retrieved.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The site is located to the north of Smiths Hall and to the west of Lower Road and north of Ewell Lane. The NGR to the centre of the site is NGR 571406 152742.

2.2 Planning Background

The proposed development is for the change of use of agricultural land for the erection of a solar array, to serve Smiths Hall via an underground electrical cable (Maidstone Borough Council Planning 22/505929/FULL & 22/505930/LBC).

The following Condition (3) requiring a programme of archaeological monitoring was attached to the planning consent:

22/505929/FULL & 22/505930/LBC and it was: (3) Prior to commencement of development the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, will secure the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a written programme and specification which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: In the interests of archaeology.

3.0 Schedule of Visits

An archaeologist suitably experienced attended the site (Dr Paul Wilkinson FRSA., SWAT Archaeology) and closely monitored the excavation works on the 20th-26th April 2023.

4.0 Aims and Objectives

4.1. The specific aims of the archaeological work were to:

The objectives 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.

4.2. Proposed Groundworks.

The ground works were to excavate the ground for the placing of an electric cable and removal of turf for location of solar panels.

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 and 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 shows that the site is set on bedrock geology of Hythe Formation- Sandstone and Limestone interbedded. Superficial Deposits are not recorded. The NGR to centre of site is NGR 571406 152742 and the OD height is about 39m aOD.

5.2 A search of the KCCHER data shows that the site is about 25m from a K6 Telephone Kiosk (TQ 75 SW 221) and about 35m to the west is the Tickled Trout Public House (TQ 75 SW 201). About 30m to the south the wall enclosing the gardens of West Farleigh Hall (TQ 75 SW 208) and further south West Farleigh Hall itself (TQ 75 SW 38). (Figure 3)

6.0 Methodology

6.1. The Archaeological Investigations were conducted in accordance with the Archaeological Specification compiled by SWAT Archaeology 'Specification For An Archaeological Watching Brief of Land at Smiths Hall, Lower Road, West Farleigh, Kent'

6.2. The works comprised the close monitoring and supervision of all ground works, including the inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features and finds.

6.3. Excavations within the area was carried out by contractors using a 360 degree machine equipped with a smooth bucket necessary to remove the topsoil and subsoil down to the required level (Plates 1-8).

6.5. All excavation was carried out under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist from SWAT Archaeology.

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 investigation work was carried out in accordance with current ClfA Standards and Guidance, (ClfA: 2017), and methodology discussed on a number of occasions with the Senior Archaeological Officer KCC.

7.0 Results

7.1 No archaeological features or finds were revealed or recovered. The subsoil encountered across the site was deposits of Hythe Formation. No archaeological features were revealed in the natural geology and no archaeological finds retrieved from the site.

7.2 The site produced no archaeological features or deposits or finds and no environmental potential was recognised on site.

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.

10.0 Conclusion

The Archaeological Investigation has fulfilled the primary aims and objectives of the SWAT 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 the landowner/developer for commissioning the project. Fieldwork was undertaken by Dr Paul Wilkinson and report written by Dr Paul Wilkinson FRSA., MCIfA.

Appendix 1

Kent County Council HER Summary Form

Site Name: Development at Smiths Hall, Lower Road, West Farleigh, Kent

SWAT Site Code: SMITH/WB/23

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 the change of use of agricultural land for the erection of a solar array, to serve Smiths Hall via an underground electrical cable (Maidstone Borough Council Planning 22/505929/FULL & 22/505930/LBC). Whereby Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC) requested that Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken to closely monitor the possible impact of the development on any archaeological remains.

The Archaeological Monitoring consisted of site attendance and supervision which encountered no buried archaeological features or artefacts.

District/Unitary: Tonbridge and Malling District Council

Period(s):

NGR (centre of site to eight figures) 560293, 153541

Type of Archaeological work: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date of recording: 3 & 12th August 2021

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

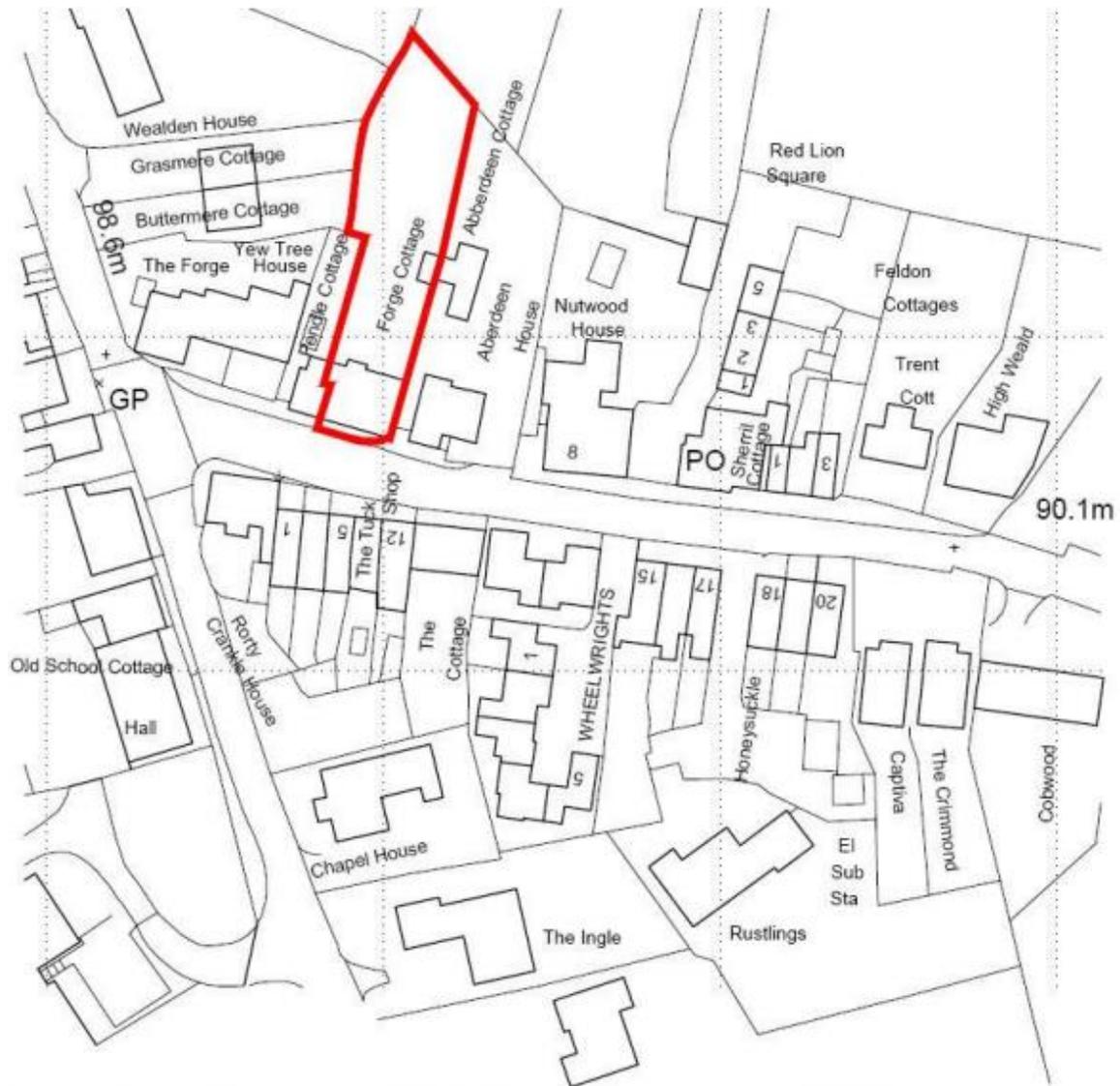
Geology: Bedrock geology is Hythe Formation- Sandstone and Limestone interbedded. Superficial Deposits are not recorded

Title and author of accompanying report: Parr R. (2021) Archaeological Watching Brief at Forge Cottage, The Street, Plaxtol, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0QE

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



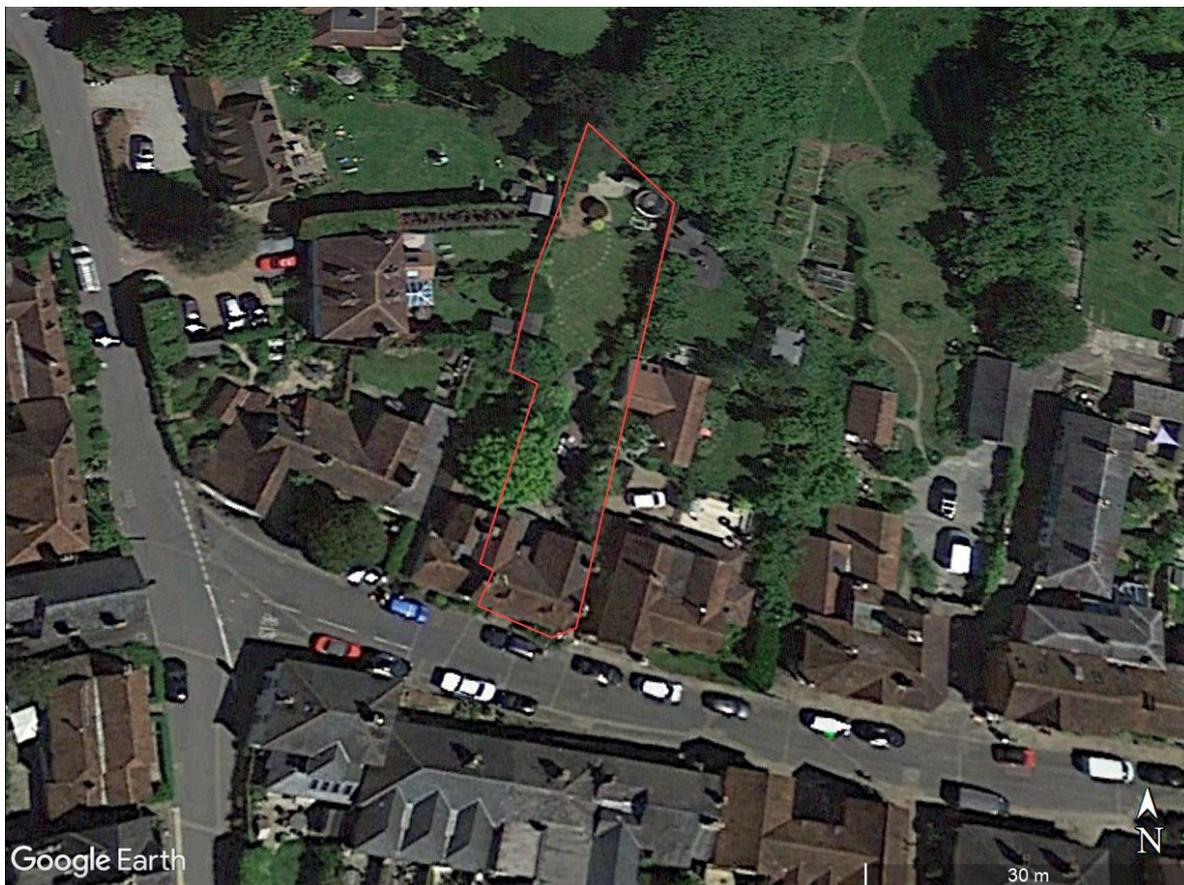
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Site Location Plan - Scale 1:1250



Metres

Figure 1: Location Plan



AP 1. View of site 2021 (Google Earth)



Plate 1. View of the site after Phase 1, clearance of the topsoil (looking NW)



Plate 2. View of the section (looking NE)



Plate 3. View of extension foundations (looking ENE)



Plate 4. View of the extension foundation (looking SE)



Plate 5. View of eastern foundation section (facing SSW)



Plate 6. Foundation trench (looking SE)



Plate 7. View of the northern foundation trench (facing ESE)



Plate 8: drainage works. (facing E)