

Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent.



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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SUMMARY

During January 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Thamesview School, Gravesend in Kent. Kent County Council commissioned the work in advance of works carried out by Kier Group Plc. The watching brief formed the last phase of archaeological investigations at the site during part of Wave 3 of the Kent Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and revealed no archaeological features.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In January 2009 as part of the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, OA carried out a watching brief at Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent on behalf of the construction contractor, Kier Group Plc and the developer, Kent County Council. The watching brief took place in accordance with an archaeological specification prepared by OA, which incorporates standard requirements for archaeological watching briefs in Kent, issued by KCC. The present watching brief is the last stage of the fieldwork and is one of a series carried out in compliance with archaeological planning conditions attached to each of the Wave 3 BSF Schools (Planning Application No. GR/08/154).
- 1.1.2 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 Communication Technology is being made to support the Government's education reform agenda. Funds are intended to be devolved to local authorities and schools throughout England to spend on maintaining and improving their schools buildings and in some cases for major rebuilding and remodelling projects. The redevelopment at Thamesview 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.
- 1.1.3 The proposed development site is centred on NGR TQ 668 721 and encompasses *c* 8.4 hectares currently comprising school buildings, recreation areas and playing fields. It is located within the historic parish of Chalk, in the administrative area of Gravesham Borough Council.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Thamesview School is divided into two areas (Sites A and B) which lie either side of Thong Lane. Site A is the focus of redevelopment. It is *c* 5.1 hectares and comprises school buildings, recreation areas and a playing field. Site B consists of playing fields currently not scheduled for redevelopment.

1.2.2 The area of redevelopment is located at an approximate height of 55 m OD and slopes gently from the south to north. Some levelling has taken place within the school grounds.

1.2.3 The underlying geology is Cretaceous Upper Chalk (GSGB, 1974, Sheet 271).

1.3 **Archaeological and historical background**

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief 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). The results are summarised below.

1.3.2 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.

1.3.3 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.

1.3.4 An Impact Assessment Report that assessed the potential effects of the development proposals on any archaeological deposits that may be present at Thamesview School supplemented the archaeological desktop assessment (OA/PB 2007). 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.

1.3.5 In April 2008, a rapid assessment survey and photographic record of the existing school buildings was carried out. The survey was carried out as part of a wider programme of assessment of eleven Kent BSF Schools (OA 2008). The buildings are considered to be of no particular architectural merit, but may have some local interest

from a social historical point of view. No further building recording work is recommended.

- 1.3.6 In August 2008 OA carried out a field evaluation on the Thamesview School site. The evaluation recorded no evidence for significant archaeological remains in the investigated area. There was also little sign of extensive modern disturbance in any of the trenches, but there has clearly been some truncation caused by landscaping in the recent past. There were signs that the slope has been levelled slightly, probably during formation of the existing playing field, or the preceding WWII air field. The resulting soil sequence consists of very shallow topsoil overlying chalk in trenches in the southern part of the site. The topsoil and subsoil thickens to the north (downslope) to a maximum of 0.78m, presumably redeposited from the south of the site.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims 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.
- 2.1.2 No further building recording work is recommended at Thamesview School, and none has been requested by KCC Heritage Conservation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief monitored the excavations for the groundwork comprising foundations for the proposed new school buildings and associated works including access, service and landscaping. The groundworks were monitored regularly during the initial excavation of the building footprint and then periodically throughout the construction process.
- 2.2.2 Excavation was undertaken by a mechanical 360 degree excavator using a flat bladed bucket to reveal any archaeological remains. If possible archaeological remains were encountered, machine excavation was to cease to allow the remains to be investigated further.
- 2.2.3 The archaeologist on site inspected the surfaces revealed. Any archaeological structures or features revealed were to be recorded in plan and section as appropriate to Section 6 of KCCs Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief Part B.
- 2.2.4 A general photographic record of the work was maintained and any excavated features would be photographed using colour slide and black and white print. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 Three deposits were recorded during the watching brief. A layer of dark brown topsoil typically 0.30 m thick overlies an orange brown clay silt of 0.50 m in thickness. Below this was the underlying chalk geology. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 No archaeological finds were recovered from the site.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits were encountered which were considered suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The groundworks monitored during the watching brief did not reveal any archaeological features.

4.1.2 Due to the absence of any archaeological remains with the construction footprint, it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required in relation to this planning application.

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
100	Layer	-	-	0.30	Topsoil - dark brown silty clay	No
101	Layer		-	0.50	Subsoil - orange brown silty clay	No
102	Layer	-	-	-	Chalk with occasional flints	No

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

OA 2007 *Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent. Archaeological Desktop Assessment..*

OA 2008 *Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent. Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief. Part A*

OA 2008 *Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent. Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief. Part B*

OA 2008 *Kent Schools BSF Programme. Historic Buildings Assessment and Recording.*

OA 2008 *Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent. Archaeological Evaluation Report.*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Thamesview School, Gravesend, Kent.

Site code: KS4GRA 08

Grid reference: NGR TQ 668 721

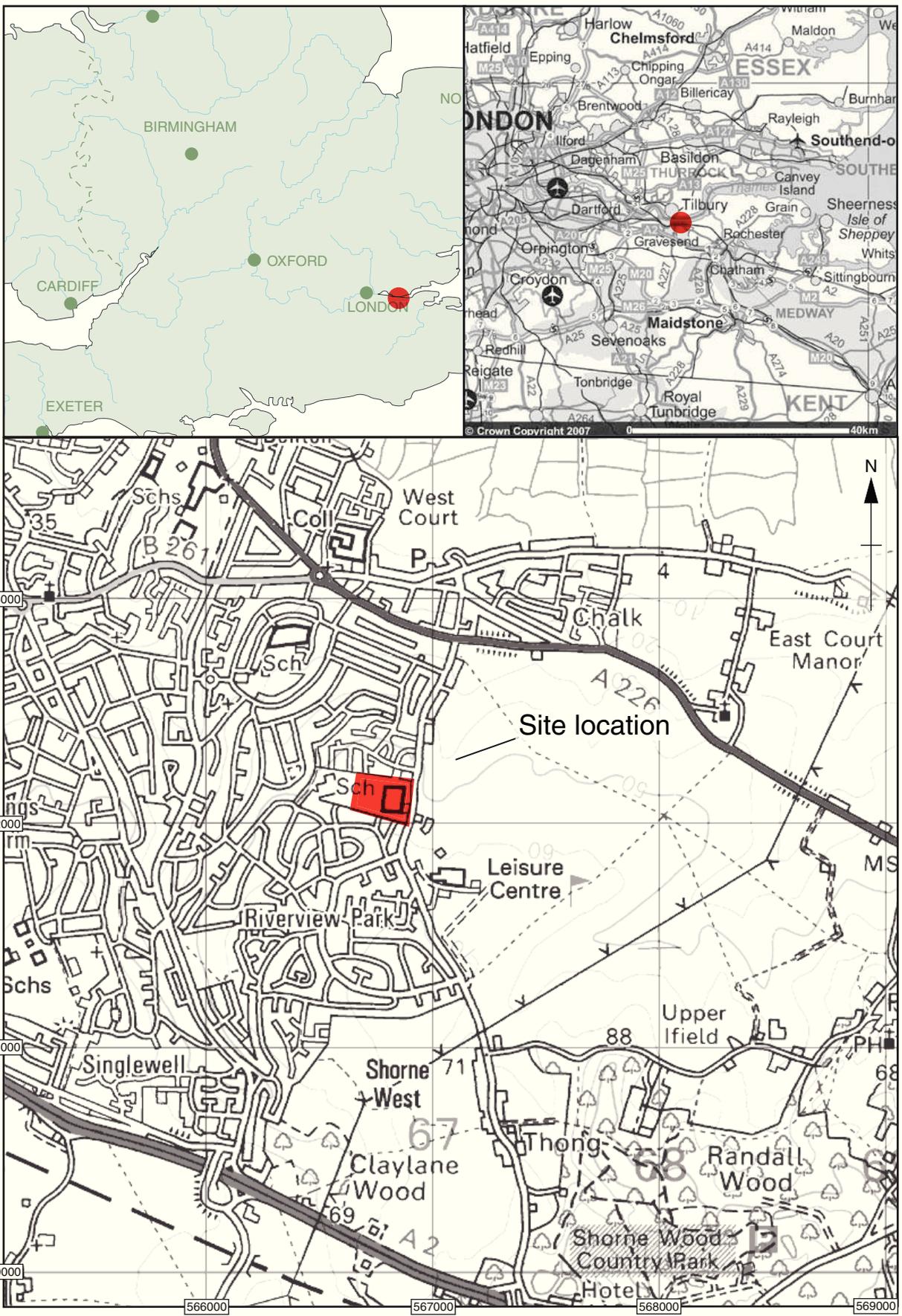
Type of watching brief: General Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: January 2009.

Area of site: 8.4 hectares

Summary of results: The watching brief identified no archaeological remains.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with [REDACTED] in due course, under the following accession number:



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Figure 1: Site location



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