Borland Road and Stuart Road, Nunhead, London Borough of Southwark

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

for St James Homes Ltd

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Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BRSR02/33

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Introduction

This desk-based study is an assessment of the archaeological potential of two parcels of land within Nunhead, London Borough of Southwark. The first of these sites is located on Borland Road (TQ 3550 7520) and the second on Stuart Road (TQ 3530 7510) (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Mr Bill Luck of St James Homes Ltd, Marlborough House, 298 Regents Park Road, Finchley, London, N3 2UA. It comprises the first stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains that may be affected by redevelopment of the area.

Site description, location and geology

The Borland Road site comprises a rectangular plot of land of 0.54ha bounded by the Brockley footpath and Nunhead Cemetery to the east, allotment gardens to the north and west and Borland Road and residential development to the south. Access to the site is gained via Borland Road. The site lies on London Clay at a height of approximately 41.51m AOD in the south-eastern corner (BGS 1981).

The Stuart Road site comprises an irregular parcel of land with an area of 0.18ha. The site is bounded to the north by allotment gardens, the east and west by residential development and to the south by Stuart Road. Access to the site is gained via Stuart Road. The site lies on London Clay (BGS 1981) at approximately 42.18m AOD.

A site visit was made to each site on 23rd April 2002. This revealed that the Borland Road site comprises a large area of hard standing and the central area is occupied by a large structure. The remainder of the site contains rubbish and a number of temporary cabins. The site slopes gently up to the north-west, and appears to have been slightly terraced along the boundary with the allotment gardens.

The Stuart Road site is currently occupied by two terraced houses, which have been boarded up, but are occupied by squatters. The site slopes down from the north towards Stuart Road. The road, which might have been terraced, is lower than the entrance to the site. The front of the property is occupied by overgrown garden beds and a pathway. To the east of the eastern house is a car port and a vacant block of land, comprises a hard-
standing surface. Along the western boundary of the site is a narrow pathway which leads to the rear of this property and the rear of properties along Elland Road. The northern portion of the site contains the remnants of a rear garden, with some terracing to form a patio area behind No. 1 Stuart Road.

**Planning background and development proposals**

Planning permission is to be sought for the redevelopment of each site for residential use. It is proposed that redevelopment of each site will involve the demolition of existing structures and the construction of residential units of three and four storeys.

*Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) provides guidance relating to archaeology within the planning process. It points out that, where a desk-based assessment has shown that there is a strong possibility of significant archaeological deposits in a development area, it is reasonable to provide more detailed information from a field evaluation so that an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on archaeology can be devised:

Paragraph 21 states:

‘Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer’s own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out...’

Should the presence of archaeological deposits be confirmed further guidance is provided. *Archaeology and Planning* stresses preservation *in situ* of archaeological deposits as a first consideration as in paragraphs 8 and 18.

Paragraph 8 states:

‘...Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation...’

Paragraph 18 states:

‘The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its’ setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled...’

However, for archaeological deposits that are not of such significance it is appropriate for them to be ‘preserved by record’ (i.e. fully excavated and recorded by a competent archaeological contractor) prior to their destruction or damage.

Paragraph 25 states:
‘Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation *in situ* of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the development and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself ... that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains.’

Further guidance is provided by the London Borough of Southwark’s Unitary Development Plan (1997).

Objective E.5 is ‘To ensure the preservation, protection, investigation, recording and display of the archaeological heritage.’ Policy E.5.1 states:

‘The council will seek to conserve and protect the Borough’s archaeological heritage and to enhance the knowledge of its historical development. The policy will apply to sites of potential archaeological importance where ancient remains are threatened by development.

i) The Council will expect the applicant to provide information to enable an assessment of the impact of a proposed development on the potential archaeology of the site. This would usually be desk-based information and would be expected prior to the determination of a planning application.

ii) Where there is potential for important remains on a site, which may merit preservation *in situ*, then the results of an archaeological field evaluation will, if feasible, be required prior to the determination of a planning application.

iii) Where the evaluation reveals important remains their protection and preservation will be the primary objective. This can be achieved by redesigning the proposed development and by foundation modification.

iv) Where important archaeological remains cannot be preserved, or where remains do not merit preservation, then the Council will use planning conditions to ensure excavation and recording of the remains prior to redevelopment i.e. preservation by record.

v) Archaeological investigations are to be undertaken by a recognised archaeological field unit to a written specification. These will need to be approved by the Council prior to the commencement of any work.’

**Methodology**

The assessment of the site was carried out by the examination of pre-existing information from a number of sources recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists paper ‘*Standards in British Archaeology*’ covering desk-based studies. These sources include historic and modern maps, the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record, geological maps and any relevant publications or reports.

**Boreholes**

No results from geotechnical investigations were available.

**Archaeological background**

*General archaeological background for the Southwark and Nunhead area*

The study area is located on geology which is based on London Clay, which is thought to have been thinly settled in prehistoric times, and isolated finds from this geological area are thought to represent casual losses during hunting expeditions (Needham 1987). For example, most Mesolithic and Neolithic finds have been
located on river gravels, alluvium and Lower Greensand, and especially at the junction of the chalklands with the Greensand, such as at Carshalton, to the south west of the study area (Bird and Bird 1987). In the Bronze Age, small occupation sites are recorded as at Epsom, to the south-west (Saunders 2000), but these are few and far between. However, field surveys and more recent evaluations and excavations on similar geology to the west in East Berkshire, have shown a persistent, but low density use of London Clay outcrops in the Mesolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages (Ford 1987). This may suggest that the absence of such a record in this region is more likely to be a reflection of archaeological work, rather than the archaeological record itself.

Greater London Sites and Monuments Record

A search was made of the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) on April 18th 2002 for a radius of 500m around the proposal site. A total of 7 entries were recorded for the area, ranging in date from Palaeolithic to the post-medieval periods. The results of this search are summarized in Appendix 1, and their locations represented in Figure 1.

Palaeolithic

One record within the search area was attributed to the Palaeolithic period [Fig. 1: 3]. This is a marbled Levalloisian flake found within the Nunhead Cemetery, although the exact provenance of this find is unknown.

Roman

To the west of the proposal sites is the proposed alignment of a Roman road, the route of which has been extrapolated from partial excavations in other areas [1].

Post-medieval

The majority of records within the search area relate to post-medieval structures and sites. The first of these is the Nunhead Cemetery itself [4]. The Cemetery was consecrated in 1840, and comprises c. 20 hectares, which is now a Registered Park and Garden Grade 2. Along the northern boundary of the cemetery are the 19th-century gate, pier and wall [5] and the Gate Lodge [6], all of which are Listed Grade 2. Within the cemetery itself is the Anglican mortuary chapel, also Listed Grade 2 [7].

Negative

One entry in the GLSMR for the search area related to a watching brief undertaken to the south-east of the proposal sites, in the grounds of the John Steiner School. The watching brief failed to find any archaeological finds or features (Philp 1996).
Historical background

Nunhead lies within the ancient parish of St Giles and Camberwell in the Hundred of Brixton, and belonged to the Manors of Peckham, Bredinghurst and Camberwell Fryern. The first mention of Nunhead is in a document dated to the late 17th century. By the 18th century, the hamlet comprised a few dwellings beside a tavern called the Nun’s Head, that was reputedly licensed during the reign of Henry VIII. It is believed that the tavern stands on the site of a priory, although this has never been substantiated (VCH 1967; Woollacott 1995). Another account claims that the name originated from a nunnery on the site of the later pub, originating in the beheading of the Mother Superior who opposed Henry VIII’s anti-monastic plans. Her severed head was then placed on a pike for public display at Nunhead Green (Beasley 1994).

By the early 19th century the hamlet was surrounded by arable fields, meadows and market gardens. The main concentration of houses was along the main thoroughfare to Peckham Rye. The area surrounding and including Nunhead Hill (130 acres, 52 ha) was owned by local landowners Walters and Edmonds, who sold the land to the London Cemetery Company in 1839. Fifty-two acres (21 ha) of the land was used for a cemetery and the remainder was sold to Henry Ewbank. The Nunhead Cemetery consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester in 1840. Between this time and 1890 the population expanded from 200 to 10,000. However by 1900 the upper class land-owners moved away from the area and the higher density housing boom began (VCH 1967; Woollacott 1995).

The Southwark and Vauxhall Water Company acquired 14 acres (5.67ha) of land from Ewbank in 1854 following the Metropolitan Water Act of 1852, which called for the constant supply of fresh water in the Metropolitan area. By the 1870s, four reservoirs had been constructed in the Nunhead Hill area (Beasley 1999).

Borland Road was named in 1863 after John Borland, a local figure who served on the Camberwell Vestry in 1870 and was Director of the Peckham Pension Society. Stuart Road was so named in 1901 after the construction of the Stuart Villas in Rye Hill Park (Beasley 1994).

Cartographic and documentary sources

A range of Ordnance Survey and other historical maps of the area were consulted at Southwark Local Studies Library in order to ascertain what activity had been taking place throughout the site’s later history and whether this may have affected any possible archaeological deposits within the proposal area (Appendix 2).

The earliest map consulted was Speed’s Map of Surrey dated 1611 (Fig. 2). The scale of the map meant that the exact location of the site could not be determined, however, Peckham Rye is indicated. Seller’s map of
1693 (not illustrated) is similar to that of Speed, however, it is interesting to note that this map places Peckham Rye to the south east of Dulwich.

Senex’s map of 1729 (Fig. 3) shows Peckham Rye. Topographic features are shown and Nunhead Hill is discernible. The area of the proposal sites is shown as open space. Rocque’s map of 1766 (Fig. 4) is the first to show the village of Nunhead, although it is named None-Head. Field boundaries on the map are similar in alignment to the modern roads, and it would appear that each of the proposal sites is located within fields.

Greenwood’s map of 1823 (Fig. 5) shows the main road between Nunhead Hill and Peckham Rye. Peckham Rye is shown as open space, with some houses to the south along what is now Brenchley Gardens. The vicinity of the proposal sites is shown as open space at the foot of Nunhead Hill.

Dewhurst’s map of the area in 1842 (Fig. 6) shows Nunhead Cemetery and field boundaries in the area. Again the proposal sites are shown as undeveloped farmland.

The first site-specific map consulted was the First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1873 (Fig. 7). Borland Road is shown as Arnold Road, which is only a portion of the current road. Some development has taken place in the areas around the sites, and main roads have been established, but both sites are still shown as open space.

By 1894, there are some changes to the area (Fig. 8). The Southwark and Vauxhall Water Works has been established to the north of the proposal sites. The Stuart Road area is considerably developed, although the proposal site in this area is still vacant land. Arnold Road has been extended, and the area of the proposal site here is shown as part of a cricket ground. There appears to be a small area marked on the eastern boundary of the site, which may represent a small building, possibly associated with the cricket ground. By 1914 (Fig. 9) the only major change is the conversion of the open space to the north of the sites to Ryehill Park. Another significant change is the name change from Arnold Road to Borland Road.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1950 and 1960 (Fig. 10) shows that Ryehill Park is now used as allotment gardens. The Borland Road site has now been developed with a large structure in the centre. The Stuart Road site is now divided into three parcels of land, two of which are occupied by a semi-detached structure, as at present. The western portion is labelled ‘Killearn’, and the other is called ‘Linden Lee’. Each has an out building, and Killearn has a greenhouse. The third block in the eastern portion of the site is vacant land. The Ordnance Survey of 1971 (not illustrated) shows no changes to either site, however, the structure on the Borland Road site is labelled as a ‘Depot’.
The Ordnance Survey of 1995 (Fig. 11) shows both sites in their current configurations. The Stuart Road site has had an additional structure added to the central block (the carport observed during the site visit). The Borland Road site shows the addition of ramps and outbuildings since the prior Ordnance Survey.

**Listed buildings**

There are no listed buildings on the site.

**Discussion**

There are two issues that need consideration in recommending a suitable course of action for this proposal: the likelihood of the original presence of deposits of archaeological interest on the proposal site(s) and whether these are likely to have survived later disturbance; and the impact of the proposed new development on relevant archaeological levels.

Neither proposal site is particularly large, with the Borland Road site occupying an area of 0.54 ha and the Stuart Road site, an area of 0.18 ha. In some areas, the Local Planning Authority specifies that field investigation is required on sites covering an area above a certain threshold, for example the Kingston Upon Thames Unitary Development Plan stipulates an area of 0.4ha. While Southwark does not specify such a condition, site area alone is not of such a magnitude to automatically trigger the need for a field investigation.

Cartographic and historical records for the Post-medieval period indicate that the area has been relatively undisturbed until the early 20th century. The Borland Road site has been relatively undeveloped with the exception of the large store building on site. The Stuart Road site may have been more disturbed, with the construction of the semi-detached house, but this is confined to the footprint of the house, and some minor terracing in the rear gardens of Nos 1 and 3 Stuart Road, which may not necessarily have intruded on archaeologically relevant layers. This may be taken to indicate that any archaeologically relevant layers that may exist within either site are relatively undisturbed.

The Nunhead area has not been previously identified as an area of high archaeological potential and this is reflected in the relatively low number of sites recorded in the vicinity of the proposal sites. Discounting the entries for the Nunhead Cemetery and relatively recent Listed structures, only two entries related to positive archaeological sites or finds (and one of those was merely speculative), and one for the negative result of a watching brief. The nature of the evidence does not indicate that the site lies within, or close to, any extensive and intensively occupied area prior to the 17th century.
While this report has determined that the proposal site has the potential to contain subsurface archaeological deposits, on balance it is considered that both proposal sites have low archaeological potential.

Should further investigation, in the form of a field evaluation be required by the Local Planning Authority to confirm this opinion, this work should be undertaken by a competent archaeological contractor, such as an organization registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists, according to a written scheme of investigation agreed by the archaeological adviser to the Local Planning Authority.

References
Bird, J and Bird, D G (eds), 1987, The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540, Guildford
Needham, S, 1987, ‘Bronze Age’, in J Bird and DG Bird (eds), The Archaeology of Surrey to 1540, 130
Philp, B, 1996, ‘Watching Brief at John Steiner School, St Asaph Road, Nunhead’, SELAU Report
Saunders, M J, 2000, ‘Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age settlement evidence from Manor Hospital, Epsom’
   Surrey Archaeol Collect 87, 175-8
### APPENDIX 1: Sites and Monuments Record entries within a 500m search radius of the proposal site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>SMR</th>
<th>NGR (TQ)</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>70556</td>
<td>354 763 – 359 752 – 3735 7125</td>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Road</td>
<td>Projected alignment based on partial excavation and hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>71777</td>
<td>360 750</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Negative Ev.</td>
<td>Watching brief 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>90715</td>
<td>355 755</td>
<td>Paleolithic</td>
<td>Find</td>
<td>Levalloisian flake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>213161</td>
<td>355 755</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>19th century. Registered Park and Garden Grade 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>213161-1</td>
<td>35300 75689 – 35368 75762</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Listed Grade 2 gate, pier and wall</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>213161-2</td>
<td>35340 75598 – 35366 75624</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Listed Grade 2 Gate Lodge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>213161-3</td>
<td>35480 75590</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Listed Grade 2 Mortuary Chapel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: Historic and modern maps consulted

1611  Speed’s Map of the County of Surrey (Fig. 2)
1693  Seller’s Map of the County of Surrey
1729  Senex’s Map of the County of Surrey (Fig. 3)
1766  Rocque’s Map of the County of Surrey (Fig. 4)
1823  Greenwood’s Map of the County of Surrey (Fig. 5)
1842  Dewhurst’s Map of the Parish of St Giles and Camberwell (Fig. 6)
1873  First Edition Ordnance Survey Sheet H5 (Fig. 7)
1894  Ordnance Survey Sheet H5 (Fig. 8)
1914  Ordnance Survey Sheet H5 (Fig. 9)
1950  Ordnance Survey Sheet TQ 3575SE (Fig. 10)
1960  Ordnance Survey Sheet TQ 3575SW (Fig. 10)
1971  Ordnance Survey Sheet TQ 3575SW
1971  Ordnance Survey Sheet TQ 3575SE
1995  Ordnance Survey Sheet TQ 3575SE (Fig. 11)
1995  Ordnance Survey Sheet TQ 3575SW (Fig. 11)
Figure 1. Location of site within Nunhead and London, showing SMR entries.
Borland Road and Stuart Road, Nunhead, London Borough of Southwark, 2002

Figure 4. Rocque, 1766.
Figure 5. Greenwood, 1823.
Approximate location of sites

Borland Road and Stuart Road, Nunhead, London Borough of Southwark, 2002

Figure 6. Dewhurst, 1842.
Borland Road and Stuart Road, Nunhead, London Borough of Southwark, 2002

Figure 7. 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, 1873.
Borland Road and Stuart Road, Nunhead, London Borough of Southwark, 2002

Figure 9. Ordnance Survey, 1914.
Borland Road and Stuart Road, Nunhead, London Borough of Southwark, 2002

Figure 10. Ordnance Survey, 1950/1960.