Land adjacent to the Comfort Inn, Bath Road, Padworth, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for

Crownbay Developments

by Jennifer Lowe
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CBP04/46

May 2004
Summary

Site name: Land adjacent to the Comfort Inn, Bath Road, Padworth, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6080 6804

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 11th–17th May 2004

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Jennifer Lowe

Site code: CBP 04/46

Area of site: c.0.46ha

Summary of results: The site appears to have undergone some degree of truncation. No archaeological finds or features were encountered

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum Service in due course

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 20/05/04
                            Steve Preston ✓ 20/05/04
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land adjacent to the Comfort Inn, Bath Road, Padworth, West Berkshire (SU 6080 6804) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Lewis, JLA Architects, Kings House, 30 Station Way, Cheam, Surrey, SM3 8SQ on behalf of Crownbay Developments, c/o Quality Hotel Heathrow, London Road, Brands Hill, Slough, SL3 8QB.

Planning applications (03/01968 and 04/00503) have been submitted to West Berkshire Council to add an extension to the existing Comfort Inn and to construct thirteen residential properties towards the south-western end of the site. In order to gain planning permission an archaeological evaluation is required to be undertaken to assess whether archaeological deposits were present on the site. This would enable a plan to be formulated to mitigate the effects of development upon any surviving archaeology prior to groundworks being undertaken. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and West Berkshire Council’s policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Cass, Jennifer Lowe and Jo Pine between the 11th–16th May 2004 and the site code is CBP04/46. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located immediately to the south-west of the Comfort Inn on the northern side of the Bath Road to the north of the village of Padworth. The site lies roughly 1.7m–1.8m below the level of Bath Road, and a bank forms the north western edge of the site separating it from the road. Similarly a bank also forms the south-eastern end of the site dividing the development area from the railway line, beyond which are the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Kennet. A disused building is located in the south-western corner of the site with a shelter-type structure close to it. The south western edge of site is largely covered with reinforced concrete and slopes upwards towards the south-western boundary. The underlying geology is Valley Gravel (BGS 1946).
Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted by a previous archaeological desk based assessment (BAS 2004) which concluded the site was located within an area of archaeological potential. The site is located within the Kennet Valley, which is known to be an archaeologically rich area (Gates 1975; Lobb and Rose 1996). A Late Bronze age site has been recorded to the north west at Aldermaston Wharf. This site proved important in defining the nature of the Late Bronze Age (Bradley et al. 1980). In addition, close to Aldermaston Wharf, Roman activity has also been recorded in the form of a bath house (Cowell et al. 1978).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project were;

a) To determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site.
b) To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.
c) To determine if further Late Bronze Age or Roman deposits are present on the proposal site.

Eight trenches were excavated across the site in order to cover the intended positions of the proposed development. The location of several trenches were moved slightly to accommodate areas of thick overgrowth and tree belts as well as an overhead power cable at the south-eastern end of the site. All trenches were excavated using a JCB-type machine, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, and supervised by an archaeologist at all times. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results (Figs 2-3)

Trench 1(Plate 1)

This trench was aligned NE–SW and was located close to the north-western edge of the site. Approximately 0.30m of dark grey brown loamy topsoil was removed which overlay 0.20m of mid orange grey sandy silt subsoil. This in turn lay immediately above the natural gravels. No archaeological finds or features were observed.
Trench 2
Aligned NE-SW, this trench was 20.80m in length. At the north-eastern end the trench was 0.70m in depth and the stratigraphy consisted of a topsoil overlying 0.10–0.15m of modern dumped material. Below this was a layer of buried topsoil, approximately 0.30m thick, which lay immediately over the natural gravels. The south-western end of the trench was only 0.20m deep, and revealed topsoil lying immediately over the natural gravels. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Trench 3
This trench measured 16.40m and was aligned roughly NNE–SSW. No topsoil survived in this area of the site, the stratigraphy composed of a thick layer of dumped material, containing modern building material. This sealed a layer of buried topsoil, approximately 0.25–0.30m thick, immediately over the natural gravels. The trench was 0.90m deep at the north end and 0.50m at the south end. A modern pit, containing brick and concrete was encountered at the northern end of the trench. No other finds or features were recorded.

Trench 4
This trench was 18.10m long, aligned north-south. The majority of this trench was composed of a thin layer of topsoil, approximately 0.15m thick, overlying the natural gravels. At the northern end of the trench a layer of modern dumping was encountered, 0.30m thick, which overlay the topsoil; this only extended approximately 3m along the trench. A test pit was excavated at the southern end to a depth of 0.75m. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.

Trench 5
This trench was aligned NE–SW and measured 17.30m long. The trench was composed of approximately 0.25m of topsoil overlying the natural gravels. A test pit was excavated at the north eastern end to a depth of 0.80m. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Trench 6 (Plate 2)
Aligned NW–SE, this trench was 0.28m deep and 20.80m long. Stratigraphically this trench was very similar to Trench 5, with a thin band of topsoil overlying the natural gravels. A band of grey orange sandy silt subsoil was
recorded extending from the southern end of the trench, for approximately 14m. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Trench 7
This trench measured 21.30m and was orientated NE–SW. The south-western end was 0.70m deep and was composed of modern dumping material over natural gravels. The north-eastern end of the trench was much shallower and was composed of 0.28m of topsoil overlying the natural gravels. A modern service trench was recorded 9m from the south-west end. A test pit was excavated at the north-eastern end of the trench to a depth of approximately 1m. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Trench 8
This trench was aligned roughly NW–SE and was 6.5m in length. Stratigraphically 0.20m of reinforced concrete overlay 0.80m of made ground which overlie the natural gravels. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

Finds
No finds were retrieved during the fieldwork

Conclusion
The evaluation has revealed that some degree of truncation has occurred across. In several of the trenches no subsoil was encountered and only a thin band of topsoil lay immediately over the gravels, suggesting some truncation of the site in the past. Towards the north-eastern end of the site an episode of dumping had occurred, with modern building debris encountered in several of the trenches. No archaeological finds or features were encountered.

Within the accepted parameters of archaeological sampling theory (Orton 2000, Champion et al. 1995) the negative results from the evaluation trenches can be extended to the site as a whole with reasonable confidence.

References
BAS 2004, ‘An archaeological desktop assessment of land adjacent to the Comfort Inn and Kennet works, Bath Road, Lower Padworth,’ Berkshire Archaeological Services, Wasing
Gates, T, 1975, *The Thames Valley; An archaeological survey of the river gravels*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm, Pubn 1, Reading
**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**  
0m at SW/S end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench No.</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Breadth (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.80</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.00-0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.50m mid grey orange sandy silt subsoil;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.50m+ natural gravels. <strong>Plate 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.80</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.00-0.20m topsoil; 0.20-0.30m modern dumping layer; 0.30-0.60m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>buried topsoil; 0.60+ natural gravels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.90 NNE</td>
<td>0.00-0.60m modern dumping layer; 0.60-0.90m buried topsoil; 0.90m+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.50 SSW</td>
<td>natural gravels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.10</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.20 S</td>
<td>0.00-0.15 topsoil; 0.015+ natural gravels south end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45N</td>
<td>0.00-0.30m modern dumping; 0.30-0.45m topsoil; 0.45+ natural gravels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Test pit at south end excavated to a depth of 0.75m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.30m</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.27m</td>
<td>0.00-0.27m topsoil; 0.27m+ natural gravels. Test pit dug at north east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>end to depth of 0.80m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.80m</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.00-0.10m topsoil; 0.10-0.28m subsoil; 0.28+ natural gravels. <strong>Plate 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.30m</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.30NE</td>
<td>0.00-0.28m topsoil; 0.28m+ natural gravels north east end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.70SW</td>
<td>0.00-0.70m modern dumping south west end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00-0.20m concrete; 0.20-0.80m made ground; 0.80+ natural gravels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comfort Inn, Bath Road, Padworth, West Berkshire, 2004
An Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Padworth and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Trench Location plan.
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Figure 3: Representative sections
Plate 1. Trench 1 looking north east. Scales: 1m and 2m.

Plate 2. Trench 6 looking north. Scales: 1m and 2m.