Summary

Site name: 21 Courthouse Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8710 8105

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 15th July - 9th August 2005

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Pamela Jenkins

Site code: CRM 05/59

Area of site: c. 0.5ha

Summary of results: Footing trenches for the new building were observed. No archaeological finds or deposits were observed. Much of the site had been truncated by previous developments on the site.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Jennifer Lowe✓ 04.10.05
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Introduction
This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 21 Courthouse Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8710 8105) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Rod Short of Castleoak Care Partnerships Limited, Raglan House, Greenwood Close, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff, CF23 8RD.

Planning consent (05/00368) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to construct a new residential care home on the site following demolition of the existing structure. The consent was subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires a programme of archaeological works in the form of a watching brief.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the Borough policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald of Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological advisors to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Pamela Jenkins between 15th July and 9th August 2005 and the site code is CRM 05/59.

The archive is presently held at Thames ValleyArchaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology
The site is located in the western suburbs of Maidenhead on the west side of Courthouse Road at its junction with Allenby Road. An area of open space lies to the west. The site is located on level ground and comprises an irregular area of c. 0.5ha (Fig. 2) It lies at approximately 60. m above Ordnance Datum. The geology is terrace gravel (Boyn Hill terrace) (BGS 1974) as was observed on site.

Archaeological background
The site lies within an area of East Berkshire which is relatively rich in archaeological finds of prehistoric and Roman date (Ford 1987; Lobb 1980). A brief for the project prepared by Ms Fiona Macdonald of Berkshire
Archaeology highlights the potential of the environs of the site. In summary various finds of Roman coins and Palaeolithic stone tools are recorded from the vicinity (Wymer 1999). Of more significance is the possibility that medieval occupation could extend into the proposal area, as a building platform and an associated holloway, of possible medieval date, were observed to the west of the proposal site.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. This was to involve the examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and services.

Results (Figs. 3 and 4)

The previous structure on the site (Boyn Grove) had been demolished and a thickness of demolition rubble overlay much of the site. The area to the extreme west (plots 6-10), however, was still overlain by the original turf. The watching brief only monitored the digging of the foundation trenches as service trenches were to be placed in shallow slots and were all located in areas with deep made ground.

The foundation trenches were 0.60m wide and were dug to variable depths (1.20m-3.00m) with the greatest depths to the east and south east due to the presence of a considerable thickness of made ground.

In the west wing, (plots 6-10), the stratigraphy comprised 0.20m of turf above 0.20m of a rooty subsoil containing post-medieval brick and tile. This overlay the natural gravel which was only 0.80m to 1.00m thick and rested on a greenish grey clay.

The stratigraphy in the vicinity of plots 4/5 and 11-15 comprised 1m of demolition debris above natural gravel. The gravel here was only 0.5m thick above a blue/grey clay.

Trenches further to the east towards Courthouse Road and in the south wing were deeper (c. 3m) and up to 2m of demolition rubble overlay the greenish clay natural. In these latter areas severe truncation had taken place with removal of the gravel and hence the archaeologically relevant levels (top of the gravel).

Conclusion

The watching brief has examined foundation trenches dug for the buildings. In one small area the trenches were shallow and revealed a typical undisturbed stratigraphy with topsoil and subsoil overlying natural gravel. No archaeology was observed and no finds were recovered in these trenches. Elsewhere deeper trenches revealed
modern demolition debris either overlying the gravel or overlying the clay which lies beneath the gravel. As such these latter areas have probably and certainly been truncated, perhaps by cellaring for the previous building and the archaeologically relevant levels removed.

References
Ford, S, 1987, East Berkshire Archaeological Survey, Berkshire County Coune Dept Highways and Planning Occas Pap 1, Reading
Wymer, J J, 1999, The Lower Palaeolithic occupation of Britain, Salisbury
21 Courthouse Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, 2005
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Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Courthouse Road

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Figure 3. Detailed location of site and observations made.
Figure 4: Representative section of footing trench where undisturbed ground was observed.