Diddenham Court, Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Fenchurch Estates Ltd

by Andy Taylor
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code DCG 04/24

June 2005
Summary

Site name: Diddenham Court, Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6990 6655

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 13th July 2004–6th June 2005

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: DCG 04/24

Area of site: c.8500 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeological features or finds were observed during the ground works

Monuments identified: None

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, under the accession code REDMG:2004.42

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Report edited/checked by: Jennifer Lowe 30.06.05
Steve Preston 30.06.05
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Diddenham Court, Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 6990 6655) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Harding of David Harding Associates, 3 Midhurst Road, Haslemere, Surrey, GU 27 3EE on behalf of Fenchurch Estates Ltd.

A planning application (F/2003/0744) has been submitted to Wokingham District Council to demolish some existing, redundant, buildings on the site and rebuild some of them. A previous draft planning consent (F/2002/7347) was subject to a condition (13) relating to archaeology, which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Kev Beachus, Senior Archaeologist with Babtie Group who (then) advised the council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford, Stephen Hammond and Jennifer Lowe, between 13th July 2004 and 6th June 2005 and the site code is DCG04/24.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course, under the accession code REDMG2004.42.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located Diddenham Manor Farm, which is just to the south of Grazeley, and to the south of Reading (Fig. 1). Prior to work commencing the site was occupied by several farm buildings most of which were demolished before the ground works began. The underlying geology is valley gravel (BGS 1971) and the site lies at height of c.45m AOD.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area stems from its position close to the Foudry Brook and the gravel terraces of the Kennet Valley (Lobb and Rose 1996). A range of sites have been recorded, many from the air, in areas to the north (Gates 1975) with more recent coverage locating further enclosures and field systems to the east of the.
site. Field evaluation in the latter area revealed ditches of Roman date. A possible Neolithic causewayed enclosure is recorded in an area to the north. The site may also have medieval origins.

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

Typically the trenches observed for the footings of the house plots were 0.80m wide and excavated to a depth of between 0.70–1.20m. The stratigraphy encountered was generally consistent throughout the site, with made ground, varying in depth from 0.40m–0.70m across the site, overlying the natural geology, which was a mix of gravel and clay deposits. In the area of house plot 1 a backfilled pond was observed. This feature was filled with a humic deposit which also contained fragments of modern brick.

Three underpinning holes were observed to the north of the site adjacent to one of the retained buildings. These were all 2m by 1.2m in plan and 2m in depth and consisted of made ground overlying clay natural.

No archaeological finds or features were observed during the ground works.

Finds

No archaeological finds were recorded during the fieldwork

Conclusion

No archaeological finds or features were recorded throughout the duration of the fieldwork. The stratigraphy observed was very similar across the site with made ground overlying natural clay/gravel deposits suggesting some level of disturbance had occurred in its more recent history.

References

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Figure 1. Location of site within Grazeley and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

Scale 1:2500
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Figure 3. Plan showing location of footings.

Scale 1:1000
Plot 7

NE

Made Ground

Natural

SW