Diddenham Court, Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire, Phase 2

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Fenchurch Estates (Diddenham) Ltd

by Steve Hammond and Simon Cass

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code DCG06/44

May 2006
Summary

Site name: Diddenham Court, Grazeley, Reading

Grid reference: SU 6990 6655

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 9th and 10th May 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Hammond and Andy Taylor

Site code: DCG 06/44

Summary of results: No archaeological finds or features were observed during this watching brief.

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.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford 30.5.06
Steve Preston 31.05.06
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Diddenham Court, Grazeley, Reading (SU 6990 6655) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Harding of David Harding Associates Chartered Architects, 3 Midhurst Road, Fernhurst, Haslemere, Surrey, GU27 3EE on behalf of Fenchurch Estates (Diddenham) Ltd.

Planning consent (F/2005/6463) has been granted for a second phase of development at Diddenham Court, Grazeley by Wokingham District Council, which involves the construction of a new commercial unit. The planning consent is subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, specifically a watching brief during intrusive 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 David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Hammond and Andy Taylor on the 9th and 10th May 2006 and the site code is DCG 06/44.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at Diddenham Manor Farm, just to the south of the village of Grazeley. Grazeley itself is located to the south of Reading and west of the A33 (Fig. 2). The site was, prior to the phase 1 development, occupied by several farm buildings, which were demolished and replaced by residential properties. The underlying geology is valley gravel (BGS 1971) and the site lies at a height of c.45m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site is derived from its location on the margins of the Foudry Brook and the gravel terraces of the Kennet Valley (Lobb and Rose 1996). A range of sites and finds 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 to the north. The site itself may also have medieval origins, though a watching brief carried out during the phase 1 development failed to locate anything of archaeological interest (Taylor 2005).

**Objectives and methodology**

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

**Results**

Foundation trenches for the new development were observed during the course of the groundworks. The foundations were approximately 0.60m wide and 1.2m deep and the stratigraphy observed comprised 0.30m of topsoil overlying 0.15m of subsoil which in turn sealed the natural clay (London Clay). According to the BGS (1971) the natural geology is valley gravels, however, gravel was only observed in the north-east corner of the site. No archaeological finds or deposits were observed during the course of the watching brief.

**Finds**

No archaeological finds were recovered during the fieldwork.

**Conclusion**

No archaeological finds or features were recorded during the monitoring of the groundworks. The previous phase of work at Diddenham Court highlighted areas of disturbance on the site which may have affected archaeological deposits, however the second phase of works did not encounter the same stratigraphy. No disturbance or truncation was noted, which therefore suggests that no archaeological deposits existed on this portion of the site.

**References**


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Figure 1. Location of site within Grazeley and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping under licence.

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Figure 3. Plan showing location of footings.

Scale 1:1000
Figure 4. Representative section of foundation trench.