Knowle Croft, Shoppenhangers Road
Maidenhead, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Charles Church Southern

by Simon Cass
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code KSM 05/89

November 2005
Summary

Site name: Knowle Croft, Shoppenhangers Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8848 8026

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 27th October to 1st November 2005

Project manager: Joanna Pine

Site supervisor: Simon Cass

Site code: KSM 05/89

Area of site: 0.24 ha

Summary of results: 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 Reading Museum in due course.

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Report 05/89

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Knowle Croft, Shoppenhangers Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire (SU 8848 8026) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Alan Mullen of Charles Church Southern, Charles Church House, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3TQ.

A planning consent (app no 04/00962) has been granted on appeal by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to demolish an existing house and erect a new block of apartments on the site subject to a condition which requires a watching brief to be undertaken during groundworks due to the possibility of damage or destruction of archaeological deposits. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Royal Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona MacDonald, Principal Archaeologist for Berkshire Archaeology, archaeological advisers to the Royal Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Cass and Sean Wallis between 27th October and 1st November 2005 and the site code is KSM 05/89.

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 on a rectangular area of land covering c. 0.24 ha towards the north-western end of Shoppenhangers Road. It lies on the eastern side of the road and was previously occupied by a detached house and garden (Fig. 2). The site is flat at a height of 43.40m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology of the site is soft chalk with the possibility of river gravel (BGS 1990). A mixture of sand and gravel was observed on site at the base of the foundation trenches.

Archaeological background

In summary, this site has been identified as having archaeological potential from its position in an area of eastern Berkshire which is relatively rich in finds of prehistoric and Roman date (Ford 1987) as is reflected in the
number of archaeological entries noted for this area on the Berkshire Sites and Monuments Record. A rectangular enclosure (and possible earthwork) was identified a short way to the west through aerial photography, and the existence of a Roman villa has been suggested in the near vicinity. Roman pottery and a Neolithic axe have been reported as being recovered from the school grounds just to the west, but the circumstances of these finds are unclear. At the northern end of Shoppenhangers Road (some 400m to the north), pits have been excavated containing Iron Age pottery and worked flint. An archaeological evaluation carried out just to the south at Old Orchard (Hammond 2004) found nothing of archaeological relevance.

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 examination of areas of topsoil stripping and digging of trenches for foundations, a lift shaft and services.

Results
Demolition and ground clearance work on the site removed 0.10–0.15m of topsoil from the footprint of the foundation trenches. No archaeology was observed at this level nor was the natural geology exposed.

The foundation trenches were generally dug to between 0.85m–1.05m deep and at widths of between 0.55m – 0.75m (Figs 3 and 4). In two areas the depth exceeded this. The lift shaft was 1.40m deep and the northern bay at the front of the property went to 1.30m but the level at which natural geology (mid yellow/orangy brown sand and gravel) was encountered was consistently around 0.4m–0.5m depth. Where this was occasionally found not to be the case this was a result of recent disturbance.

The foundation trenches typically had demolition rubble 0.20m deep, overlying a made ground layer containing modern brick fragments which was typically 0.2–0.5m deep. This overlay a mid orange brown sandy clay, 0.20m–0.30m deep onto the natural geology. However some of the trenches in the southern end of the plot, along with the lift pit showed the made ground lying directly above the natural geology with no subsoil deposit present. This suggests some truncation in that area of the site.

Finds
No finds except modern demolition material were noted. Modern material was not retained.
Conclusion

Despite the archaeological potential of this area in general, this watching brief has not revealed any archaeological features in the area occupied by the footings for the new building. Similarly no finds of archaeological interest were recovered. It is perhaps worth noting the relatively shallow depth at which the natural was encountered, suggesting that if there is any archaeology in the area it is quite likely to be affected by even the shallowest of intrusive groundworks.

References
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Figure 1. Location of site within Maidenhead and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Shoppenhangers Road.

Scale: 1:1250
Figure 3. Areas observed in watching brief

Scale: 1:400
Made ground

Subsoil (orange brown silty sand)

Gravel

Base of trench

0 1

Figure 4. Representative sections of trenches.