Lewes Police Station, West Street, Lewes, East Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Felicity Howell

Site Code: LPS11/30

(TQ 4150 1028)
Lewes Police Station, West Street, Lewes, East Sussex

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Firefold Ltd

by Felicity Howell
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LPS 11/30

February 2012
Summary

Site name: Lewes Police Station, West Street, Lewes, East Sussex

Grid reference: TQ 4150 1028

Planning reference: LW/10/0689

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 23rd February 2012

Project manager: Sean Wallis

Site supervisor: Felicity Howell

Site code: LPS 11/30

Area of site: c.0.11 ha

Summary of results: Apart from features clearly dating from the early 20th century, no archaeological finds or features were observed during the watching brief. The service trenches were not dug deep enough to expose the natural geology.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Sussex Archaeological Society, Barbican House, Lewes.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 29.02.12
Sean Wallis ✓ 29.02.12
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Lewes Police Station, West Street, Lewes, East Sussex (TQ 4150 1028) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Barry Field of Barry Field Architects, 7 Queen Square, Brighton, BN1 3FD on behalf of Firefold Ltd.

Planning permission (LW/10/0689) has been gained from Lewes District Council to convert the present building into residential dwellings. The permission is subject to a condition (6) relating to archaeology, which requires that an archaeological watching brief should take place during groundworks to mitigate the possibility of damage or destruction of archaeological deposits. This is in accordance with Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5, 2010), and the County Council’s policies on archaeology. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Archaeological Officer to East Sussex County Council, Mr Greg Chuter. The fieldwork was undertaken by Felicity Howell on 23rd February 2012, and the site code is LPS 11/30. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Sussex Archaeological Society at Barbican house, Lewes in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is centred on TQ 4150 1028, and is located on the north side of West Street, Lewes, close to the town centre (Fig 1.). It is bounded by Sun Street to the west, St John’s Street to the east, and by housing to the north (Fig 2). The site is occupied by the former police station building, which is roughly L-shaped in plan, with a Tarmac car park to the rear. Most of the building has a basement level, but due to the topography of the surrounding land, which generally slopes down towards the north, the upper part of the basement is visible along St John’s Street, to the point where it is fully above ground at the northern end. The car park is relatively flat and has obviously been built up slightly, particularly in the north-west corner. The height of the car park is approximately 25m above Ordnance Datum. According to the British Geological Survey, the underlying geology consists of Upper and Middle Chalk (BGS 1979).
Archaeological background

The archaeological potential has been summarised in a desk based assessment (Wallis 2011). In summary, the site is located in an area of high archaeological potential, due to its position close to the historic core of Lewes, which had developed into a major town by the late Saxon period. There is evidence of earlier activity within the town, during the prehistoric and Roman periods, although much of this is based on stray finds. The castle was built soon after the Norman Conquest, and the northern defences are less than 100m away from the site. Lewes prospered during the medieval and post-medieval periods, and this is reflected in the amount of archaeological material recovered during archaeological work within the town.

A photographic record of the former police station was carried out prior to refurbishment. The structure is mainly late 19th century but with a part being slightly earlier (Wallis 2011b).

Objectives and methodology

Whilst most of the conversion work was concerned with the interior of the building, the purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks in the car parking area to the rear. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, including foundation trenches for cycle stores and trenches for services. Sufficient time was to be allowed within the developer’s and groundworker’s schedules to record any archaeological features revealed.

Results

The service trenches located in the car park to the rear of the building were monitored over the course of the watching brief (Fig. 3; Pls 1 and 2). These trenches were 0.50m wide and up to 0.75m deep and the stratigraphy generally consisted of made ground deposits beneath the Tarmac or concrete surface, and their associated bedding layers (Fig. 4). The made ground contained modern brick rubble and chalk fragments, but these were not retained. A number of walls were observed (Fig. 3; Pl. 1) which clearly relate to a structure that is first depicted on the 1910 Ordnance Survey, and which appears to have been demolished at some time after the early 1960s. These were not recorded in detail. No other archaeological features were observed.

Due to the depth of made ground deposits on the site, it became apparent that the rest of the planned building work would not impact upon any potential archaeological deposits, and this work was not monitored.
Finds

No archaeological finds were recovered during the watching brief.

Conclusion

The watching brief has examined small an area of the site which required invasive groundworks, namely the digging of service trenches. Apart from the buried remains of early 20th century walls, no archaeological features were recorded in the trenches. The presence of made ground deposits indicates that the area has been significantly built up in the past, and this seems to be confirmed by cartographic evidence. However, the groundworks were not of a sufficient depth to disturb any deposits which may have survived on the site beneath the made ground.

References

PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, Department of Communities and Local Government
Planning Policy Statement 5, London (TSO)
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Figure 1. Location of site within Lewes and East Sussex.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site within Lewes, at 1:500.
Figure 3. Location of areas monitored.

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Figure 3. Location of areas monitored.
North east section of service trench

ESE

- - - - - - -

Tarmac

- - - - - - -

Hardcore bedding layer

- - - - - - -

Made ground
(containing chalk and brick rubble)

WNW

25.00m AOD

Base of trench

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Figure 4. Section of service trench.
Plate 1. Service trench, looking south east, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

Plate 2. Service trench looking west.

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Plates 1 and 2.
**TIME CHART**

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