Wescott Infants School, School Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, 2006

An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Wokingham District Council

by Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code: WSW06/68

September 2006
Summary

Site name: Wescott Infants School, School Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 8161 6857

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 22nd–31st July 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: WSW06/68

Summary of results: No deposits of archaeological interest were revealed.

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 Preston 28.09.06
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Wescott Infants School, School Road, Wokingham, Berkshire (SU 8161 6857) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Cole of Wokingham District Council, PO Box 151, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WN.

A planning consent (F/2005/5724) has been granted by Wokingham District Council to construct a new classroom extension to the School. This consent was subject to a condition relating to archaeology which required 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 David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford between 22nd and 31st July 2006 and the site code is WSW06/68.

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 the south side of Wokingham town centre in an area of 19th-century suburbs. It lies to the south-west of School Road and north-west of Goodchild Road (Fig. 2). The new extension is on the west side of the existing school buildings. The underlying geology is mapped as either Plateau Gravel or London Clay (BGS 1946) though it was London Clay which was revealed by the groundworks. The site lies at a height of c.65m above Ordnance Datum and slopes gently down to the south-east.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site is derived from its location on the fringe of the historic medieval and early post-medieval core of the town. Wokingham is thought to have Saxon origins (the place name is of Saxon derivation) but as yet no deposits of this period have been located. It is considered that the origins of the
settlement, if pre-medieval, will be located in the vicinity of the parish church, which is some 200m to the north. The town is thought to have been laid out as a planned new town in the late 12th or 13th century created by the Bishops of Salisbury (Astill 1978, fig. 29).

**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 all areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and services for structures as necessary.

**Results**

Prior to the excavation for the foundation trenches, the site area was stripped of overburden and levelled. Much of the site area was therefore exposed to the top of the natural geology (in this case, the archaeologically relevant horizon) but no deposits of archaeological interest were observed. Several modern (19th/20th century) areas of disturbance including pits and tree holes were noted. The levelling operation involved some truncation of the natural geology at the extreme western end of the site (Fig. 3).

The footings observed were dug using a small 360°-type machine and measured 0.75m wide and were 1.5m deep. At the margins of the stripped area the stratigraphy consisted of Tarmac and made ground to a depth of 0.35m above the natural clay (Fig. 4). Further areas of modern disturbance (drains and other small cut features) were noted but no deposits of archaeological interest observed.

No artefacts earlier than the late 19th or 20th centuries were noted (not retained).

**Conclusion**

Apart from areas of modern disturbance, presumably associated with the original construction of the school, no deposits nor finds of archaeological interest were revealed during the watching brief.

**References**

Astill, G G, 1978, Historic towns in Berkshire; an archaeological appraisal, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Publ Reading
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Figure 1. Location of site within Wokingham and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on School Road.

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Figure 3: Detail of areas observed: footings and areas stripped.

Scale 1:200
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Tarmac

Made ground

Naturi geology
(London Clay)

Base of trench

Figure 4: Representative section