Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hatfield, Hertfordshire

An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

for Millgate Homes

by Steve Preston

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BPE06/34

March 2006
Summary

Site name: Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hatfield, Hertfordshire

Grid reference: TL 2766 0745

Site activity: Desk-based assessment

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Preston

Site code: BPE06/34

Area of site: 7.25ha

Summary of results: The proposed development occupies the site of a medieval manor house and deer park. Extensive landscaping has taken place almost throughout the site’s history which may have caused considerable damage to any archaeology present, but there exists a strong possibility of encountering significant medieval remains, and even if nothing remains of the medieval manor, the development also threatens, while offering opportunity to explore, the archaeology of the post-medieval and Victorian park and gardens.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford 18.04.06
Introduction

This desk-based study is an assessment of the archaeological potential of some 7.25ha of land located at Bedwell Park, south of Essendon in Hertfordshire (TL 2766 0745) (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Mr Greg Meier, of Millgate Homes, Ruscombe Lane, Ruscombe, Twyford, Berkshire RG10 9JY and comprises the first stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains which may be affected by redevelopment of the area.

Planning permission (S6/2003/941/FP) has been granted by Welwyn Hatfield Council for the conversion and refurbishment of the former golf clubhouse and ancillary buildings to residential use and demolition of modern extensions, and for the construction of new dwellings. Listed building consent (S6/2003/942/LB) has also been granted, as the main building is listed Grade II. Both consents are conditional upon the provision of a programme of archaeological works to mitigate the impact of the development on the heritage.

Site description, location and geology

The site currently consists of an intensely developed area comprising a range of small and large buildings with landscaped gardens and car parking areas (Figs 8 and 9). The complex is currently used as golf course club house. The main range of buildings lies towards the north end of the site with the main building representing the former main house, aligned approximately NW–SE. To the north of this lies a winged extension with a courtyard to its west and various smaller free-standing buildings. The latter represent various workers’ cottages, stable blocks, etc., now with alternative uses relating to the golf course activities. To the east of the main building lies a terraced lawn and to the west is the main entrance accessed via a drive aligned SW–NE. Further to the west is a large expanse of Tarmac car park.

The southern portion of the site is occupied by gardens and other facilities which have, variously, been terraced into the slope. Two areas are occupied by tennis courts and a further area is a patio. An area towards the west is set out as a formal garden. It is unclear if a mounded area between the tennis courts is an original garden feature or is spoil left over from the tennis court construction.
Further to the south is a walled garden with a Pulhamite Rockery on its northern wall. The walled garden contains a number of shrubs, and small outbuildings and is accessed by north–south and east–west paths. Further to the south is an area of woodland and a pond.

The development area is centred on NGR, TL 2770 0750. The site is located on Pebble gravel geology, over London Clay, with just a possibility of Boulder clay at the southern extreme of the area (BGS 1978). It is at a height of approximately 110m above Ordnance Datum on a watershed ridge with fairly steep drops down to streams to both east and west. The river Lea flows to the north of Essendon, and is fed by the Essendon Brook (less than 1km west of the site) and another stream which is less than 1km east from the site.

**Planning background and development proposals**

Planning permission has been granted for the conversion of existing buildings on the site to residential use and the construction of further dwellings.

*Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990) provides guidance relating to archaeology within the planning process. It points out that where a desk-based assessment has shown that there is a strong possibility of significant archaeological deposits in a development area it is reasonable to provide more detailed information from a field evaluation so that an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on archaeology can be devised:

Paragraph 21 states:

‘Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer’s own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out...’

Should the presence of archaeological deposits be confirmed further guidance is provided. *Archaeology and Planning* stresses preservation *in situ* of archaeological deposits as a first consideration as in paragraphs 8 and 18.

Paragraph 8 states:

‘...Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation...’
The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled...

However, for archaeological deposits that are not of such significance it is appropriate for them to be ‘preserved by record’ (i.e., fully excavated and recorded by a competent archaeological contractor) prior to their destruction or damage.

Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation in situ of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the development and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself ... that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains.

In this case, due to the presence of a listed building on site, Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15, 1994) must also be considered, which offers guidance on the protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment.

Paragraph 2.15 of Planning and the Historic Environment advises that:

'Some historic buildings are scheduled ancient monuments, and many which are not scheduled are either of intrinsic archaeological interest or stand on ground which contains archaeological remains. It is important in such cases that there should be appropriate assessment of the archaeological implications of development proposals before applications are determined; and that where permission is to be granted, authorities should consider whether adequate arrangements have been made for recording remains that would be lost in the course of works for which permission is being sought. ‘

In addition the locality of the building must be considered and whether the proposed development is likely to impact on the surrounding and setting of the listed building. Paragraph 2.17 points out that:
‘...authorities considering applications for planning permission or listed building consent for works which affect a listed building to have special regard to certain matters, including the desirability of preserving the setting of the building.

The Hertfordshire County Structure Plan also recognizes the importance of archaeological remains. Approved Structure Plan Policy 14 (Archaeology) states:

‘The local planning authorities and other agencies will make full use of all appropriate powers to conserve and enhance important archaeological remains throughout the County. Planning permission will normally be refused for any development that would adversely affect such sites or their setting. Areas of archaeological significance will be defined and included in district local plans. Where, exceptionally, development within these areas is allowed, access to sites will be required in order to record archaeological remains in advance of and, where necessary, during development.’

The site does not fall within a defined area of archaeological significance (AAS), although the medieval village of Essendon itself is an AAS.

The Structure Plan review (adopted 1998) accepts PPG16 as the basis for county policy. It states:

‘Some archaeological sites are afforded statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), however, the majority of archaeological remains, many of which are of national importance, are not scheduled and require protection and management by other means, including the planning process. PPG16 ‘Archaeology and Planning’ sets out guidance on the protection of this aspect of the historic environment and… advocates a hierarchical approach to the conservation of remains according to their degree of importance.’

With regard to listed buildings, The Structure Plan Review adopts PPG 15 for the protection of historic buildings, with specific provision for agricultural buildings and country houses.

Welwyn Hatfield Council’s District plan also acknowledges the importance of archaeological remains, whether Scheduled or not, and defines a number of Areas of Archaeological Significance. Policy R29 - Archaeology:

‘Where a proposal for development may affect remains of archaeological significance, or may be sited in an area of archaeological potential, developers will be required to undertake an
archaeological assessment, if necessary with a field evaluation, and to submit a report on the findings to the Local Planning Authority, before an application is determined.

‘Planning permission will not be granted for development which adversely affects the site or setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments or other nationally important sites or monuments.

‘Where development proposals affect sites and monuments of less than national importance, the Council will seek preservation in situ of remains. In cases where this is neither feasible nor merited, planning permission may be granted subject to conditions requiring adequate provision being made for excavation and recording.

‘Where planning permission is granted for development that would affect archaeological remains, taking into account the importance of the remains, conditions will be imposed to ensure that the remains are properly recorded, the results analysed and published and where practicable, the management and presentation of archaeological sites and their settings is enhanced.’

With regard to listed buildings, even more detailed guidance is given, whose general effect is to reinforce the national guidance set out in PPG15 (see above).

Bedwell Park is also on the local list of Historic Parks and Gardens (although not on the national register). The District plan advises that for sites which are not registered but are of local significance, ‘the Council will seek to preserve their character and setting’, and thus Policy R28, Historic Parks and Gardens includes the following:

‘Proposals for development in any unregistered historic parks and gardens listed in Appendix 3 will be considered in terms of their contribution to the quality and character of the historic environment.

‘The Council will work with the County Council, the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust and the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust to promote the preservation and maintenance of this resource.’

Bedwell Park is named in Appendix 3 to the District plan.

**Methodology**

The assessment of the site was carried out by the examination of pre-existing information from a number of sources recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists paper ‘Standards in British Archaeology’ covering desk-based studies. These sources include historic and modern maps, the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record, geological maps and any relevant publications or reports. The project archive will be deposited with Welwyn and Hatfield Museum Service.
Archaeological background

General background

The broader area is not noted generally for its rich archaeological record, but this is almost certainly due to a lack of systematic investigation. The gravels of major river valleys have long had a reputation as areas preferentially settled in early prehistoric times. The Lea catchment (including its tributaries) in particular is important for Mesolithic remains and seems to have been especially favoured for settlement (Austin 1997, 9) and there is an established body of evidence for extensive prehistoric settlement on the gravels (broadly within the region, Bryant 1997; Brown and Murphy 1997). It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that this picture is at least to some degree distorted by the concentration of research on gravels, and areas of (say) boulder clay can also often now be seen to have been densely used in the past. Nonetheless, an indication of the potential of the area for prehistoric studies is the recent instigation of a Thames Northern Tributaries Survey aimed at identifying archaeologically sensitive alluvial deposits in the Lea Valley (Glazebrook 2000, 61).

There is little indication that this area was particularly prominent in late Iron Age and Roman times, with the focus falling more on Verulamium (St Albans), Baldock and Braughing. However an Iron Age metal hoard including swords and over 250 coins has been found at Essendon (Bryant and Niblett 1997).

Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

A search was made on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) on 7th March 2006 for an area within a 500m radius centred on the site. This revealed only eight entries; these are listed in Appendix 1 and their locations are plotted on Figure 1.

Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon

There are no entries from these periods within the search radius. The undated cropmark (below) could perhaps represent prehistoric features.

Medieval

The two entries relating to the medieval period both refer to documentary sources, for the manor [Fig. 1: 1] and the deerpark [2].
Post-Medieval
Most of the HER entries refer to post-medieval buildings, including Bedwell Park [1, 3], farm buildings [4], a timber-framed brick barn [5] that predates 1896, and an ice-house [6] that is thought to be contemporary with the 1840 or 1860 alterations to Bedwell Park.

Modern, undated
One entry records the presence of the base of a City of London lamp-post, re-sited [6]. A record of cropmarks visible from the air [7] offers no interpretation or date except that these might be three linear earthworks.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments
There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the vicinity of the site.

Cartographic and documentary sources
Essendon is first recorded in the 11th century as Eslingadene, and the name is of Old English (Anglo-Saxon) origin, meaning ‘the valley of the followers (or family) of Esla’ (Mills 1991). The personal name Esla is otherwise attested only in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, as the grandfather of the 6th-century king Cerdic of Mercia (Swanton 2000); there is no automatic connection, a completely different but unknown Esla could be represented in the placename. There is no entry for Essendon in Domesday Book (AD 1086) (Williams and Martin 2002), when it appears to have been included in the royal manor of Bayford (VCH 1912, 459). It appears to have been granted to the monks of St Albans in the 10th century.

Bedwell does not appear as a separate manor until 1388. In 1406 John Norbury was granted permission to enclose a substantial area as a deer park and by 1543 deer were being supplied to the royal hunting park at Waltham. Charcoal from Bedwell (and other sources) was being sold, perhaps as far afield as London, in 1475 (VCH 1914, 245) and at the same date, a tile kiln at Bedwell was producing ‘tiles called Breks’ (VCH 1914, 265), probably used in building the manor house. Bedwell was one of 34 former deer parks in the county listed as no longer a park by 1881 (VCH 1914, 277).

A range of Ordnance Survey and other historical maps of the area were consulted at Hertford Record Office in order to ascertain what activity had been taking place throughout the site’s later history and whether this may have affected any possible archaeological deposits within the proposal area (see Appendix 2).
The earliest map available of the area is Saxton’s county map of 1577 (Fig. 2). This map, albeit schematic and at a large scale, shows Essendon (Easonden) and Bedwell park, the latter clearly emparked. No detail can reliably be taken from this depiction, however. An estate map of 1765 showing Bedwell (information from HER) was not available for viewing. The tithe map of 1838 shows the area in considerable detail (Fig. 3). The broad outlines have taken on very close to their modern form already. The site occupies plots 399 and 404 and parts of 400 and 403. The main range of buildings is shown, and according to the accompanying award, consists of a mansion, offices and ‘pleasure grounds’. Plot 399 is listed as a plantation, 400 as meadow and 403 as lodge and gardens, with a pond. Features depicted in the plantation area resemble those seen on later maps, and may be ornamental.

Another early 19th-century map (D/P37/29/9), unfortunately undated, shows only the outlines of fields and other boundaries, north of the site, with no buildings or other details (not illustrated).

The Ordnance Survey First Edition (1880) shows the buildings and grounds in detail (Fig. 4). The area previously noted as plantation is now a formal walled garden, and almost the whole of the rest of the grounds are wooded, with the exception of the final stretch of the approach to the main entrance from the west. The visitor taking this approach is led on a slight curve, the view of the house obscured by trees, until reaching the cleared area which would have been designed to provide an impressive, and surprising, epiphany. Extensive landscaping is indicated to the rear of the main range. Although unclear on this map, later depictions confirm that this involves two terraces leading down to the extensive view towards the boating lake; a similar feature is also shown to the south-west of the house. Within the grounds are a number of small buildings and several large greenhouses. Buildings to the north of the main residence appear to be ancillary structures, probably stores, stables, and estate office.

Other than a change in cartographic style, little has changed by the Second Edition of 1898 (Fig. 5). One additional building has been added at the north-west of the site. Nothing much has changed between this and the 1924 revision (Fig. 6), although the latter clarifies the nature of the landscaping for the eastward view from the house, clearly shown as two terraces, with steps; the rendering of the terrace feature to the south-west of the house gives the impression that it is smaller than on the First Edition. Details of the garden arrangements in this area have changed, with more flowing lines compared to the rather angular earlier design. The greenhouses at the south of the site have been expanded, and there has been a slight extension to the building close to the west edge of the site.
The 1925 Ordnance Survey (1:10,560) does not show any change in the layout, nor does that of 1960. By 1971 (Fig. 7) there has been only a minor remodelling of the ancillary buildings at the extreme north of the site, including demolition of the structure first shown in 1898, and much of the greenhousing at the southern end has been removed. Tennis courts occupy much of the garden south-west of the main range. A cattle grid has been added to the drive, and it appears that trees have been removed from some areas and thinned across most of the site, although this might only be a stylistic change. The copse that covered the view of the approach to the house has also disappeared; to compensate, it appears, the drive has been newly tree-lined. If this is a real decrease in the tree cover, it might possibly have been related to the outbreak of Dutch Elm disease (a new strain of which hit Britain from around 1967 onwards).

No further changes are discernible on maps from 1974 to 1993 except that Bedwell Park is annotated as London Hatfield Country Club on the latter and the area east of the site has become a golf course.

**Listed buildings**

Bedwell Park is a Grade II Listed Building. The first mention of the manor house dates from 1466 but this almost certainly refers to a rebuilding or alteration. Extensive modifications were made between 1651 and 1701, probably a complete rebuilding. The extant house is late 17th-century with significant alterations from c. 1840 and 1860. The exterior of this ‘rambling building’ is ‘now Tudor’ (Cherry and Pevsner 1977, 141), gabled with diapered brickwork, with an embattled tower dating from 1861; the ensemble does not engage Pevsner’s attention for long. The early 17th-century staircase is not regarded by Pevsner as original but may have been brought in. The building housed the Royal Victoria Patriotic School during part of the 20th century.

**Registered Parks and Gardens; Registered Battlefields**

There are no statutorily registered parks and gardens or registered battlefields within close proximity of the site. Bedwell Park, however, is listed as an historic park in the District Plan.

**Historic Hedgerows**

There are no hedgerows, historic or otherwise, on the site.
Aerial Photographs

The entire site areas has been built over, landscaped, or lain under tree cover since before the advent of aerial photography. No air photographic collections have therefore been consulted.

Discussion

In considering the archaeological potential of the study area, various factors must be taken into account, including previously recorded archaeological sites, previous land-use and disturbance and future land-use including the permitted development.

The Hertfordshire HER includes no record of any archaeological investigation within the search radius of 500m. It is therefore unsurprising that it does not include any known archaeological finds. This cannot, however, be taken to indicate there is no archaeology in the area. The area is not generally thought to be prolific in archaeology, but this may be for lack of investigation. This general lack, however, ignores the fact that the medieval manor is reasonably certainly known to have been located on or very close to the site even if no physical trace of it has been recorded, and it may be reasonable to expect subsurface remains to have survived in some form. Furthermore the extant buildings, park and gardens are in themselves a significant local heritage resource.

What remains to be established is the extent to which subsurface heritage resources on the site have already been destroyed, given its extensive reworking and landscaping, and the impact on these which the permitted development might entail (Figs. 8 and 9). The major impacts will be in the northern part of the site, historically occupied by estate buildings in several different configurations; the area in front of the main house to the west, and north of the drive, previously open space; and to the south of the main building range, in areas previously landscaped as formal gardens. It is unclear to what extent these areas have been truncated in the past, or whether structures predating the early maps might be present.

It will be necessary to provide further information about the potential of the site from field observations in order to draw up a scheme to mitigate the impact of development on any below-ground archaeological deposits if necessary. A scheme for this evaluation will need to be drawn up and approved by the archaeological advisers to the Council and implemented by a competent archaeological contractor, such as an organization registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists. It should clearly include elements of building recording and provision for garden archaeology. This has already been agreed and planning permission has already been granted and listed building consent approved.
References

Glazebrook, J (ed), 2000, Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern counties, 2: research agenda and strategy, E Anglian Archaeol Occas Pap 8, Norwich
WHDC 2005, Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Welwyn Hatfield District Council
APPENDIX 1: Sites and Monuments Records within a 500m search radius of the development site

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>SMR Ref</th>
<th>Grid Ref (TL)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Comment________________________________________________________________________</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11513</td>
<td>2765 0765</td>
<td>Documentary and Listed Buildings</td>
<td>Medieval, post-medieval</td>
<td>Manor of Bedwell Park, references from 1388 onwards, most referring to the 16th- and 17th-century buildings. Much rebuilt in 1860s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9558</td>
<td>276 077</td>
<td>Historic Park</td>
<td>Medieval, post-medieval</td>
<td>Bedwell Park deerpark; emparked in 1406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12761</td>
<td>2774 0765</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Painting and map of 18th century Bedwell Park Manor House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10962</td>
<td>274 074</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Farm buildings</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10960</td>
<td>278 070</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Timber framed brick barn, predates 1896</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1338</td>
<td>2740 0755</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Post-medieval</td>
<td>Ice house probably dates from 1840–60</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>11548</td>
<td>2761 0731</td>
<td>Monument</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Base of City of London lamp post, re-sited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10195</td>
<td>2722 0749</td>
<td>Cropmarks</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Three linear earthworks</td>
</tr>
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APPENDIX 2: Historic and modern maps consulted

1577 Saxton, County Map (Fig. 2)
1765 Bedwell Park Estate map not available
1838 Tithe map (Fig. 3)
Early 19th century ‘A map of three fields’
1880 Ordnance Survey First Edition 4 inch edition (Fig. 4)
1883 Ordnance Survey First Edition 1 inch edition
1898 Ordnance Survey Second Edition 4 inch edition (Fig. 5)
1899 Ordnance Survey Second Edition 1 inch edition
1924 Ordnance Survey Revision 1:2500 (Fig. 6)
1925 Ordnance Survey 1: 10560
1960 Ordnance Survey 1: 10560
1971 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 (Fig. 7)
1974 Ordnance Survey 1:10000
1993 Ordnance Survey 1:2500
1999 Ordnance Survey 1:10000
Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hertfordshire, 2006
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 1. Location of site within Essendon and Hertfordshire showing Historic Environment Record entries.

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Figure 2. Saxton’s county map, 1577.
Figure 3. Tithe map, 1843.
Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hertfordshire, 2006
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 4. First Edition Ordnance Survey, 1880
Not to scale.
Figure 5. Second Edition Ordnance Survey, 1898
Not to scale.
Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hertfordshire, 2006
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 6. 1924 Ordnance Survey
Not to scale.
Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hertfordshire, 2006
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 7. 1971 Ordnance Survey
Not to scale.
Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hertfordshire, 2006
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 8. Development plans (north)
Not to scale.
Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hertfordshire, 2006
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 9. Development plans (south)
Not to scale.