38 Milman Road, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Gilbert Homes Limited

by Simon Cass
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MRR 07/13

June 2007
Summary

Site name: 38 Milman Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7175 7215

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 13th–22nd March 2007

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Jennifer Lowe, Andrew Taylor

Site code: MRR 07/13

Summary of results: No finds or features of archaeological interest were noted 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 ✓ 12.06.07
                      Steve Preston ✓ xx.xx.06
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 38 Milman Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7175 7250) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Debbie Payne of By Plan Associates, 1st Floor, Providence House, Forest Road, Binfield, Berkshire, RG42 4HP on behalf of Gilbert Homes Limited, Index House, St Georges Road, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 7ET.

A planning consent (06/01235/FUL) was granted by Reading Borough Council to construct a new extension to the rear of 38 Milman Road, subject to a condition which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in this case 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 Borough’s policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Thomason, Archaeology Officer with Berkshire Archaeology, adviser to the Borough on matters of archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jennifer Lowe and Andrew Taylor between the 13th and 22nd March 2007 and the site code is MRR 07/13.

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 south of Reading town centre, at the end of the A33 (Fig. 2). Milman road runs along the top of a ridge overlooking the town centre and is quite flat, at an approximate height of 65m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is listed as Plateau Gravel (BGS 1946). The area is mainly residential, mostly terraced, housing. The new development lies to the rear (north) of 38 Milman Road in an area which is approximately 1m lower than surrounding land.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site is derived from its location within a general area known to contain sites and finds of prehistoric, Roman and medieval dates. Field evaluation to the south-west revealed prehistoric
struck flints and some pottery of Roman and medieval dates (Ford 1988). To the west, Iron Age pottery was located in a gravel working. On Milman Road itself is the recorded findspot of an Iron Age gold coin and Palaeolithic handaxes and Bronze Age burial urns are recorded to the east, again found during gravel extraction. A field evaluation carried out recently to the south-east of this site found no deposits or finds of archaeological relevance (Coles and Ford 2005).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular any ground reduction, and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs.

Results

The watching brief comprised two components of work; observation and recording of a section exposed by removal of a wall, and observation of holes dug for underpinning.

Removal of a northern retaining wall and steps down to the lower area of the site allowed examination of the strata behind (Fig. 3). This revealed 0.6m of modern made ground comprising a sandy silt with gravel and brick fragments, bottle glass, etc., above 0.3m of similar made ground (without the inclusions) above orange/brown gravel which was the natural geology and which was exposed for 0.1m (Fig. 4). It was clear therefore that the lower area of the site, although obscured by debris, lay at or about the surface of the natural geology.

Five underpinning holes were excavated by hand in the lower area of the site to a depth of approximately 0.5m. They were 1m long and 0.6m wide (Fig. 3). As expected from the main section (above), the stratigraphy revealed was wholly of natural gravel geology. No finds or archaeological deposits were noted.

Conclusion

The main area of the development lay within an area which had already been stripped of overburden to a level close to the surface of the natural geology in a previous phase of development. This was confirmed by observations in the underpinning holes. A section of a more complete sequence of the stratigraphy above the gravel was observed at the north end of the site. However, no deposits of archaeological interest were observed nor artefacts recovered.
References
Coles S and Ford, S, 2005, ‘George Palmer School, Basingstoke Road, Reading, Berkshire archaeological evaluation’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 05/08 Reading
Ford, S, 1988, ‘Elgar Road, Reading, archaeological evaluation’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 88/5 Reading
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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Milman Road.

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Figure 3. Detailed location of watching brief observations.

Scale: 1:100
Figure 4. Section of north side of plot visible after wall removal.

Made ground (sandy silt with gravel and brick fragments)

Gravel