An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
for Oaklands College

by Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code OCH04/82D

October 2004
Summary

Site name: Welwyn Garden City Campus, Oaklands College, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

Grid reference: TL 2390 1340

Site activity: Desk-based assessment

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: OCH 04/82D

Area of site: Approximately 2.4ha

Summary of results: The study revealed no finds or deposits of archaeological interest on or very close to the site and noted that the site does not lie close to any historic centres. It is concluded that the site has very low archaeological potential.

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Steve Preston 7.10.04
Introduction

This desk-based study is an assessment of the archaeological potential of an irregular plot of land located on The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire (Fig. 1) (TL 2390 1340). The project was commissioned by Mr Piers Cartwright-Taylor of GVA Grimley, 10 Stratton Street, London, W1J 8JR on behalf of Oaklands College 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.

Site description, location and geology

The site is located on the northern margins of the city centre (Fig. 2). During a site visit on the 28th September 2004, it was noted that the site was located on gently sloping south-east facing land. The site is bounded by The Campus to the south, Digswell Road to the west, College Way and a public car park to the east and a former railway cutting to the north. Digswell Road is ramped for access to the bridge across the railway cutting. The site is occupied by several permanent structures interspersed with areas of Tamaced car parking, lawns and courtyards. The northern portion of the site includes the former railway cutting which is now an area of mature woodland. Some of the structures appear to be terraced slightly into the slope but with other areas raised relative to the roads which may indicate the presence of made ground. The underlying geology is Boulder Clay, with Reading Beds and Upper Chalk just to the north-west (BGS 1978). At the western end the site lies at a height of approximately 100m above Ordnance Datum, and the eastern end approximately 93m above OD.

Planning background and development proposals

Planning permission is to be sought from Welwyn Hatfield District Council to redevelop the site. Currently there are no further details for the development proposal.

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...’

Paragraph 18 states:

‘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.

Paragraph 25 states:

‘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.’

Further guidance is provided by the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991–2011, which lists

vii) Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological remains of both national and more
local importance, and their setting;

viii) Listed buildings and their settings and other buildings of architectural, archaeological or
historic merit; and

ix) Conservation Areas

as ‘Critical Capital’ which will be given appropriate protection.

The Welwyn Hatfield District Local Plan (WHDLP 2002) takes a similar stance.

Policy R27 states:

Where a proposal for development may affect remains of archaeological significance, or may be
sitied 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 and 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.

When 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.

The site does not lie within an Area of Archaeological Significance defined within the District.

**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 Sites and Monuments Record, geological maps and any relevant publications or reports.

**Archaeological background**

*General background*

The site lies on a geological outcrop (boulder clay) which is not noted for its rich archaeological heritage, though this is likely to be due largely to the lack of responsiveness of the soil in the formation of cropmarks visible from the air. Recent overviews consider that for the earlier Iron Age in Hertfordshire at least, there is an expansion of the settled area onto the margins of the boulder clay (Bryant 1997, 25). Systematic surveys of large areas, such as within the city of Milton Keynes almost routinely locate Iron Age settlement on similar clay land areas (Williams 1993; Zeepvat 1991).

Welwyn Garden City is the site of one of the richest Iron Age burials in Britain, and others of similar wealth were recorded at Welwyn itself, from where this type of grave takes its name (Smith 1912; Stead 1967). Iron Age sites, including settlements and (probably) cemeteries (certainly individual graves), abound on the plateau between the rivers Lea and Mimram in the Welwyn Garden City area (Bryant and Niblett 1997, 275) which must have been a focus of some importance in the 1st centuries BC and AD.
A search of the Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Records (SMR) was made on the 10th September 2004, covering a 500m radius around the site. This revealed 13 entries within the study area. No entries clearly lay within the development area itself. The results from this search are listed in Appendix 1, and summarized below, with the locations plotted on Figure 1.

All of the entries are of Roman or later date with the majority relating to the modern development of the garden city.

**Roman**

A single coin, an antoninianus of the emperor Gordian who reigned briefly in AD238 (no fewer than 6 emperors, including three Gordions, issued coins in this turbulent year) was found to the north of the site [Fig. 1: 13].

**Medieval?/early Post-Medieval**

Two entries relate to this period. Digswell Lodge was a farmhouse built in 1656 which replaced an earlier farmhouse that was documented in 1599 [9]. It was subsequently enlarged in the 1960s. It is a listed building. Another timber-framed cottage dates from the 17th century (said to be 1604) and is also listed [8].

**Modern**

The remaining entries are all of 19th or 20th century date. Three entries relate to road bridges built in the 19th century [1, 2, 5] and one entry relates to the site of a saw mill [11] present from the late 19th century. The other entries relate to the Garden City [6], construction of which commenced in 1920. These comprise the site of the workmen’s camp [12 and Fig. 8], a temporary station [7] and a brickworks and pit [10]. It is possible that elements of the workmen’s camp lay just within the western margins of the site.

Two entries relate to the World War II defence of Britain and refer to the site of an anti-tank obstacle [3] and a defensive wall at the John Lewis store in the city which had armoured loopholes [4].

**Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments located within the boundaries of the site or within the immediate environs of the site.
**Cartographic and documentary sources**

A range of Ordnance Survey and other historical maps of the area were consulted at Hertfordshire 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 map of Hertfordshire, 1577 (Fig. 3). For this small scale map few details are present and the location of the site can be identified only approximately. Other small scale county maps by Seller (1676), Oliver (1695) and Warburton (1749), similarly provide no detail for the area of the site with Digswell the nearest place indicated.

Dury and Andrews’ map of Hertfordshire, 1766 (Fig. 4) provides much detail for the environs of the site though the precise location still cannot be identified. The site lies within an area of farmland with few landmarks recognisable on modern maps with which to pinpoint the site.

The tithe map of Hatfield in 1838 (Fig. 5) shows that the site might have lain on three plots of land though again there are few landmarks with which to pinpoint the site. Two of the fields were scrub or woodland with the third in arable use. They were farmed by a Mrs Hern and owned by Earl Cowper.

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1898 (Fig. 6) shows the environs of the site in detail. The railway branch line to Hatfield which forms the northern boundary of the site is now shown with the remainder of the site not defined. The majority of the site lies within woodland traversed by some tracks and old field boundaries. By 1923, construction of the new city had begun and is named as such on the map but with modest development yet present (Fig. 7). The site of the workmen’s camp lies just to the west of the site. The parish council offices are present to the south of the site along with the Cherry Tree Restaurant. Bridge Road is also shown. By the time of the 1938 Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 8) the main part of The Campus has been laid out with formal gardens along with Digswell Road and the bridge over the branch line forming the western and southern boundaries of the site. However, the site itself is still woodland. By 1972 (Fig. 9) the site and its environs are much like the site today with the Mid-Herts College of Further Education having been constructed and College Road (confusingly also called The Campus) forming the south-eastern boundary. All the principal structures then are present today except that the railway line is no longer in use.

**Documentary Sources**

The city was newly created in 1920 and was not located to include an existing historic settlement.
**Listed buildings**

There are no listed buildings on the site. Two listed buildings, both grade II are recorded for the study area (Appendix 1) but well away from the site itself.

**Registered Parks and Gardens; Registered Battlefields**

There are no registered battlefields located within the close vicinity of the site. The city, by definition is a garden city and the site lies on the margins of the formal gardens to the south of The Campus.

**Aerial Photographs**

The site areas lies within an urban area which has been either wooded or developed since before the advent of aerial photography. No 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 proposed development.

The cartographic evidence indicates that the site does not lie within or close to any historic centres of population nor close to any known medieval or early post-medieval structures. It was not until post-war times in the 1960s that the site became developed with construction of the college facilities.

The Sites and Monuments Record reveals little of archaeological interest in the study area. A single Roman coin is recorded to the north and two listed buildings, one of which might have medieval ancestry, are present, but not close to the site. The main entries relate to the development of the garden city from the 1920s onwards, but only one of these, the workmen’s camp, lies close to the margins of the site.

The site lies on slightly sloping which may indicate that some of the current college structures will have been terraced into the slope to a greater or lesser extent leading to at least some truncation of the archaeologically relevant levels, in addition to the effects of the foundations themselves.

Statistically, there is a chance of archaeological deposits being present on almost any site, and absence of prior evidence, such as would be revealed by a desktop study, is not conclusive. The larger the site, the greater the chance of encountering an unsuspected archaeological site. The proposal site here at 2.4ha although relatively large for an urban setting, occupies a relatively modest area in terms of enhancing the chance of
archaeological deposits being present. Consequently, it falls some way short of a threshold (generally considered to be 10ha) where the random chance of a site containing archaeological deposits becomes statistically significant. It is considered therefore that this site has low archaeological potential.

References
Smith, R A, 1912, ‘On Late-Celtic antiquities discovered at Welwyn, Herts’, Archaeologia, 63, 1–30
Williams, R J, 1993, Pennylands and Hartigans, Two Iron Age and Saxon Sites in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc Monogr 4 (Aylesbury)
# APPENDIX 1: Sites and Monuments Records within a 500m search radius of the development site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>SMR No</th>
<th>NGR (TL)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5108</td>
<td>2405 1310</td>
<td>Road bridge</td>
<td>Modern 19th C</td>
<td>Built in 1850 and rebuilt in 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5109</td>
<td>2420 1374</td>
<td>Road bridge</td>
<td>Modern 19th C</td>
<td>Built in 1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6631</td>
<td>2374 1348</td>
<td>Anti tank obstacle</td>
<td>Modern 20th C</td>
<td>Site of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6632</td>
<td>2370 1320</td>
<td>Defensive wall</td>
<td>Modern 20th C</td>
<td>Site of wall with armoured loopholes at John Lewis’ store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7152</td>
<td>2374 1348</td>
<td>Road bridge</td>
<td>Modern 19th C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9599</td>
<td>237 134</td>
<td>Garden City</td>
<td>Modern 20th C</td>
<td>The worlds second Garden City created in 1920 by Ebenezer Howard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9824</td>
<td>2403 1315</td>
<td>Railway Station</td>
<td>Modern 20th C</td>
<td>Site of temporary station during building of City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10873</td>
<td>2343 1328</td>
<td>Cottage</td>
<td>Post-Medieval 17th C</td>
<td>Cottage Built in 1604?, Listed Grade II 39 Bridge Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10875</td>
<td>2402 1376</td>
<td>Farm and house</td>
<td>Post-medieval 16th C and 17th C</td>
<td>A farmhouse was present in 1599 but the present structure now known as Digswell Lodge was built in the 17th century (1656). Listed Grade II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10933</td>
<td>2343 1348</td>
<td>Brickworks</td>
<td>Modern 20th C</td>
<td>Site of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10934</td>
<td>2345 1335</td>
<td>Sawmills</td>
<td>Modern 19th C</td>
<td>Site of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>10935</td>
<td>2369 1336</td>
<td>Workmen’s Camp</td>
<td>Modern 20th C</td>
<td>Site of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11763</td>
<td>2406 1373</td>
<td>Coin</td>
<td>Roman (3rd C)</td>
<td>An antoninianus of Gordion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: Historic and modern maps consulted

1577 Saxton’s map of Hertfordshire (Fig. 3)
1676 Seller’s map of Hertfordshire
1695 Oliver’s map of Hertfordshire
1749 Warburton’s map of Hertfordshire
1766 Dury and Andrews’ map of Hertfordshire (Fig. 4)
1838 Hatfield Tithe map (Fig. 5)
1898 Second Edition Ordnance Survey XXVIII.II 25” (Fig. 6)
1923 Ordnance Survey XXVIII.II 25” (Fig. 7)
1938 Ordnance Survey XXVIII.II 25” (Fig. 8)
1972 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 (Fig 9)
Welwyn Garden City Campus, Oaklands College, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire 2004
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Figure 1. Location of site within Welwyn Garden City and Hertfordshire showing SMR entries

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Figure 2. Site Plan
Figure 3. Saxton’s map of Hertfordshire, 1577
Approximate location of site

Figure 4. Dury and Andrews’ map of Hertfordshire, 1766
Welwyn Garden City Campus, Oaklands College,
The Campus, Welwyn Garden City,
Hertfordshire 2004
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 5. Hatfield Tithe map, 1838
Figure 6. Second Edition Ordnance Survey, 1898
Welwyn Garden City Campus, Oaklands College, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire 2004 Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Figure 7. 1923 Ordnance Survey map
Figure 8. 1938 Ordnance Survey map
Welwyn Garden City Campus, Oaklands College, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire 2004
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Figure 9. 1972 Ordnance Survey map