The Old Vicarage, The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

for Rectory Homes Ltd

by Stephen Hammond and
Steve Ford
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ORW 03/27A

February 2004
Summary

Site name: The Old Vicarage, The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 6425 0838

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 20th November 2003 to 29th January 2004

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Stephen Hammond

Site code: ORW 03/27A

Area of site: 1,130 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were encountered

Monuments identified: none

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at The Old Vicarage (mistakenly called the Old Rectory in previous reports), The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire (SP 6425 0838) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr David Ullathorne of Rectory Homes Ltd, Thame House, Thame Road, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP17 8DA.

Planning consent (03/01663/APP) has been granted by Aylesbury Vale District Council for the construction of a house and a garage on the site. As a condition (11) of the planning permission and in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and the District’s policies on archaeology, an archaeological watching brief was to take place during groundworks. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeological Officer with Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service who advise the District Council on archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken Stephen Hammond, Steve Ford, Sian Anthony and Sarah Coles between the 20th November 2003 and 29th January 2004. The site code is ORW 03/27A.

A desktop assessment and evaluation (Moore 2003; Taylor 2003) had previously been carried out on the site. In summary, the site lies within the historic core of the village and the evaluation located a small number of gullies and pits of possibly Roman and medieval date. A small amount of iron slag recovered possibly indicates the presence of a smithy nearby.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading RG1 5NR, and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a rectangular parcel of land covering c.1,130sq m, is currently rough pasture with mature trees on the south-western boundary. The site borders The Avenue with a stone wall and slopes up from the road. The river Thame flows to the south of the site (Fig. 1). The site lies at approximately 60m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is Oakley member comprising marl and limestone (BGS 1994), which was observed in the evaluation and watching brief.
Archaeological background

The site lies within the historic, medieval core of the village, which was first mentioned in Domesday Book (1086). The potential of the site was highlighted in a desk–based assessment which identified a number of finds and archaeological deposits from the surrounding area (Moore 2003). To the north of the site were two Roman finds, a coin of Constantine and a scatter of pottery. A number of medieval earthworks lie close to the parish church which may indicate some of the remains of the medieval village and which may show a significant shrinkage or re-organization of the village during the medieval or early post-medieval periods. The church itself dates from the 12th century. It was considered that the settlement might represent part of a medieval planned town but which ultimately failed to become an urban centre.

There are also a number of Grade II Listed Buildings in the village including The Clifden Arms pub and Pond Farmhouse.

An evaluation consisting of two trenches on the site revealed a small number of gullies and pits of possibly Roman and medieval date (Taylor 2003).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits that would be damaged or destroyed by the groundworks associated with the building of the new house, garage and access road. This would involve the examination of areas stripped of topsoil/overburden, and the excavation of foundation, drain and service trenches where appropriate. If features were identified then sufficient work would be done to date, characterize and record the remains in accordance with the project objectives.

Results

The invasive groundworks comprised the stripping of topsoil from the site and the digging of foundations for the house footprint and garage (Fig. 2).

The building footprint and access road were stripped of topsoil to a depth of c. 0.2m prior to construction. This was not of sufficient depth to expose the archaeologically relevant levels.

The footing trenches for both the house and garage were 0.7m wide and 1.4m deep. This revealed a stratigraphy comprising remnant topsoil (0–0.1m) overlying a brown clayey subsoil (0.1–0.35m). Below this the natural geology comprised an orange clay (0.35m–0.6m) above a grey clay.
None of the foundations for these structures revealed any archaeological deposits. No finds were located, other than the occasional modern item (not retained) from the remnant topsoil. It was noted that the small number of archaeological deposits revealed within the evaluation either did not coincide with the foundation trenches or were in areas not stripped of overburden (the site access road).

Conclusions

No deposits of archaeological interest were revealed and no finds were recovered during this phase of fieldwork despite the known presence of some archaeological deposits located during the earlier evaluation on the site. This suggests that this area of the village was only lightly used during medieval and later times.

References

Moore, H, 2003, ‘The Old Rectory, The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire, an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment’, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 03/27A-a Reading,
The Old Vicarage, The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire, 2004
Archaeological Watching brief

Figure 1. Location of the site within Worminghall and Buckinghamshire.

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The Old Vicarage, The Avenue, Worminghall, Buckinghamshire

Figure 2. Location of watching brief, and evaluation trenches. ORW03/27

pond

The Avenue

SITE

Upper Brook Farm

08400 08300

SP64200 64300

50m0

1 2 4 2 3 1

garage