

# Archaeological Watching Brief at Gads Hill School, Higham, Kent

**NGR: TQ 7102 7084  
Site Code GAD-WB-11**



**Report for  
The Fulker Consultancy Ltd  
Planning Reference No. GR/07/1088  
2011-12-29**

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# Archaeological Watching Brief at Gads Hill School, Higham ME3 7PA, Kent

NGR TQ 7102 7084

Site Code: GADS-WB-10

## **1.0 SUMMARY**

*From March to September 2011, Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on the site of Gads Hill School during the ground works associated with a new-build school and associated car parking in the grounds of Gads Hill, formally owned by Charles Dickens. The works were carried out on behalf of The Fulker Consultancy Ltd. Planning Application Number: GR/07/1088).*

*The Watching Brief revealed no archaeological features.*

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 Planning Background**

A planning application (PAN:GR/07/1088) for the construction of a new school and associated car parking, soft and hard landscaping was submitted to Gravesham Council. Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation (KCCHC), on behalf of Gravesham Council requested that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken in order to record any archaeological remains uncovered during associated groundworks. The following condition was attached to the planning consent:

*No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a written programme and specification, which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

### **2.2 Schedule of Visits**

An experienced archaeologist attended the site and monitored excavation works from March to September during Phase 1A- construction of car park and Phase 1B ground works associated with the build of the school. In addition a watch was kept on garden improvements and meter box and cable runs.

### **2.3 Aims and Objectives**

The purpose of the monitoring and recording, as specified by Kent County Council was to:

*‘contribute to the heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks’. (KCC 2010:3.1)*

### **2.4 Proposed Groundworks**

The ground works involved area strip of topsoil both of the car park and junior school areas (Figure 2). Subsequently strip foundations for the junior school build were watched plus drain and service runs (Plate 1). No archaeology was revealed.

### **2.5 Confidence Rating**

No factors hindered the recognition of archaeological and geological deposits during the monitoring and recording exercise.

## **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The underlying geology at the site according to the British Geological Survey map is of Upper Chalk with flints and covered by Thanet Beds of Sand (see Plate 1).

Topographically the site slopes down to the south-east. The west boundary along Crutches Lane is at 76.50aOD whilst the east boundary of the site slopes down to the school playing fields at 74.50aOD.

The archaeological potential is based on the proximity of archaeological remains recorded in the KCC HER. These include:

Worked flints found in the immediate area which may suggest a possible flint-working site (HER TQ 77 SW 16)

There a number of cropmarks in the surrounding area which have been interpreted as prehistoric features:

A possible Bronze Age ring ditch (HER TQ 77 SW 25)

A possible Bronze Age single-circuit ring ditch (HER TQ 77 Sw 28)

Two probable Bronze Age ring ditches seen as cropmarks (HER TQ 77 SE 31)

Romano-British cremations were discovered close to the development site at Peartree Lane, Shorne at NGR TQ 6987 7051 (HER TQ 67 SE 21)

Charles Dickens resided at Gads Hill from 1856 to 1870 and improved and extended the property. Much time was spent on improving the gardens with “orchard, croquet

lawn, flowerbeds, steps, gravel paths, tennis courts, and terracing”, all of which may have survived in the archaeological record.

#### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

The Watching Brief was conducted in accordance with the specification compiled by Kent County Council Heritage and Conservation and it also complied with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (1999). The works comprised the observation of all groundworks, including the inspection of subsoil and natural deposits for archaeological features and finds.

#### **5.0 RESULTS**

##### **5.1 General**

Reduction of the surface in Phase 1A to construct a car park and again the groundworks in Phase 1B revealed an extensive area of natural geology (Plates 1, 2). No archaeological features were recorded.

#### **6.0 FINDS**

No archaeological features were found and no finds were retrieved.

#### **7.0 DISCUSSION**

The Archaeological Watching Brief carried out at Gads Hill School revealed that no archaeological features were present.

#### **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The Archaeological Watching Brief has fulfilled the primary aims and objectives of the Specification. No buried archaeological features have been affected as a result of the development.

#### **9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

SWAT Archaeology would like to thank the Fulker Consultancy Ltd for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Heritage and Conservation (Kent County Council).

Paul Wilkinson  
Dec 2011

## **REFERENCES**

IFA (1999) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Kent County Council (2010) *Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief at Gads Hill School, Higham, Kent*

Kent Archaeological Projects (2007) Gads Hill School. An Archaeological Assessment.

**APPENDIX 1 Kent County Council SMR summary form**

<b>Site Name:</b> Gads Hill School, Higham, Kent	
<b>Site Code:</b> GADS-WB-11	
<b>Site Address:</b>	
As above.	
<b>Summary:</b>	
<p>On 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Dec 2011 Swale and Thames Archaeological Survey Company (SWAT Archaeology) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief at the above address. The works were carried out on behalf of the Fulker Consultancy Ltd in advance of the construction of a school and car parking (Planning Application Number: GR/07/1088).</p> <p>The Watching Brief revealed no archaeological features.</p>	
<b>District/Unitary:</b> Rochester	<b>Parish:</b> Rochester
<b>Period(s):</b> N/A.	
<b>NGR (centre of site : 8 figures):</b> NGR TQ 7102 7084 <b>(NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs)</b>	
<b>Type of archaeological work (delete)</b>	
Watching Brief	
<b>Date of Recording:</b> March-September 2011	
<b>Unit undertaking recording:</b> Swale & Thames Archaeological Survey Co. (SWAT)	
<b>Geology:</b> Thanet Beds on Upper Chalk	
<b>Title and author of accompanying report:</b>	
Wilkinson, P. (2011) <i>Archaeological Watching Brief at Gads Hill School, Higham, Kent (SWAT Archaeology)</i>	
<b>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)</b>	
As above.	
<b>Location of archive/finds:</b> SWAT Archaeology	
<b>Contact at Unit:</b> Dr P. Wilkinson	<b>Date:</b> Dec2011

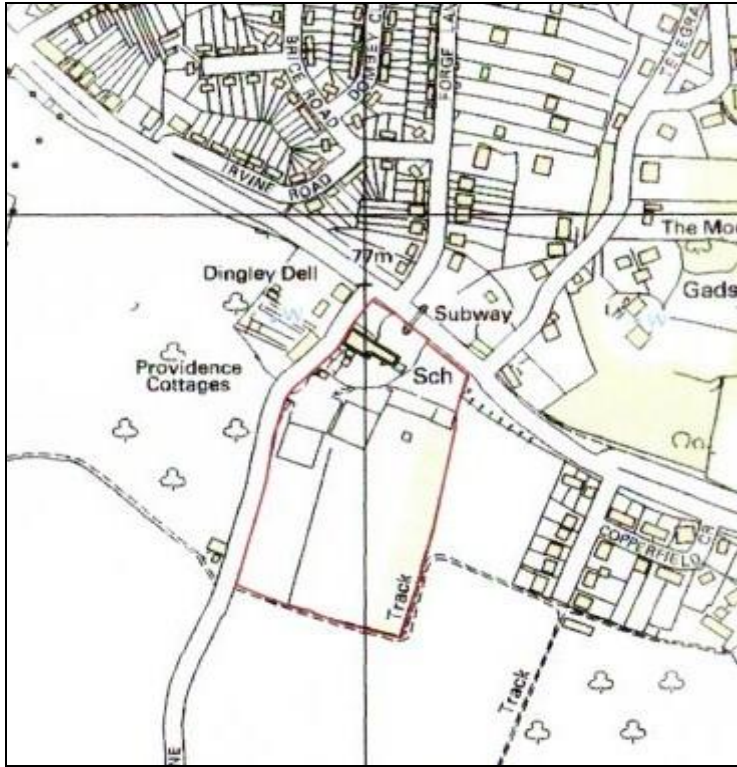


Figure 1. Site Location at TQ 7102 7084





Figure 2. Indicative plan of the two phases of construction

PLATES



Plate 1. Showing natural geology and foundation trenches for new school





Plate 2. Showing topsoil strip prior to construction of car park (facing north)