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RE: Site of Former Police Station, Gravesend (Planning Application No. 20260131) – Archaeology

This note has been prepared in response to comments received from the Senior Archaeology Officer at Kent County Council in relation to the application for development at the Former Police Station, Gravesend (Planning Ref 20260131). The scheme consists of 67 Retirement Living Apartments for older people (comprising 67 no. 1 bedrooms) including communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping.

The comments relate to a request for a condition to be attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of an archaeological watching brief to observe groundworks during construction. The reasoning provided surrounds the remains of a World War II Civil Defence Control Centre (CDCC) which occupied the site prior to the construction of the former Police Station. The stated intention of the watching brief is to assess areas of the site that a previous watching brief undertaken in 2024 did not monitor.

Works Undertaken

In June 2024 a Watching Brief was undertaken on the site by Ecus Ltd (now Cura Terra) on behalf of Churchill Retirement Living. The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Senior Archaeology Officer.

The fieldwork involved the monitoring of the demolition works on the site. This included the removal of the concrete slab, alongside ground reduction to a depth of c. 2.5m below ground level (bgl) with further machine slots at depths of approximately 6m and 4m bgl. The demolition also included the removal of all foundations and brickwork on site relating to the former Police Station. The demolition and ground reduction was undertaken across the entire site, as shown on Figure 2 of the report (reproduced here).



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The watching brief successfully located remains of the CDCC basement which was cross referenced to the original blue prints. It was noted that later concrete foundations and piles across the northern half of the site, almost completely truncated any earlier remains that may have existed. Most of the remains survived only as fragments of foundations, and none of the upstanding walls survived to their full height.

No evidence for earlier activity on the site was recorded.

Recommendations

The 2024 watching brief involved a comprehensive investigation of the site. The entire site was excavated down to superficial geology (to a depth of 2.5m). The attached figure shows the extent and results of the fieldwork.

The aim of the fieldwork was successfully achieved and the location and survival of the remains of the CDCC established. The fieldwork also highlighted the extent of truncation as a result of the construction of the former Police Station.

The reasoning given by the Senior Archaeology Officer for a further watching brief is to address concerns that *‘the proposed development may impact upon areas of the site that the previous archaeological watching brief did not monitor, and further remains of the structures and deposits seen during the monitoring of the demolition works may be present’*. It is considered that these aims have already been achieved through the previous fieldwork. The watching brief successfully monitored all areas of the site and located the surviving remains of the CDCC.

On this basis we would suggest that archaeology no longer presents a constraint on the site and request that the proposed condition is not attached to any planning consent.



133 Windmill Street, Gravesend: recorded features overlain on basement plan

Figure 2