



**Gore Green Farm,
Gore Green Road,
Higham
Kent
ME3 7LT**

Archaeological Watching Brief Final report

Project Code: WB GGFGGRH20
Planning Ref: 20180380 (planning consent)
20180381(listed building consent)
NGR: TQ 17968 73127 (centred)
Archive No.: 4790
CAT Ref.: 2020/160

March 2022

Document Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Version	Prepared by	Position	Approved by	Date
01	Andrew Linklater	Project Manager		15/03/22

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF – FINAL SITE REPORT

COUNTY: Kent	TOWN/PARISH: Higham	DATE(S): 19 – 21/12/20
RECORDING BODY: Canterbury Archaeological Trust		Individual(s): A. Linklater
SITE NAME: Gore Green Farm, Gore Green Road, Higham, Kent ME3 7LT. CODE: WB GGFGGRH20		Archive Number: 2020/160 CAT Ref: 4790 PLAN Ref: 2018/0380 (planning consent) 2018/0381(listed building consent)
NGR: TQ 17968 73127 (centred)		ELEVATION: Approx. 5.5m O.D.
TOPOGRAPHY: The position of the proposed new development was located across the north-eastern side of the former farmyard group of Gore Green Farm, Higham. Extending across the entire end of the former farmyard, its footprint was formerly occupied by a semi-derelict farm building constructed largely of simple dwarf walls supporting a timber-frame enclosed in timber weatherboarding. Have been neglected for many years, this building was regarded as be derelict and thus was suitable for demolition and subsequent construction of a new structure utilising period features and detail to mimic the previous structure. Generally, the site of the proposed new development could be regarded as fairly level, however, a slight fall towards the northeast was discernible. Extending north-westwards from the northwest corner of a semi-derelict timber-framed barn, this was to be subjected to a separate scheme of restoration and conversion as part of the overall improvements to the former farm group.		NATURAL: <i>(defined by the British Geological Survey BGS)</i> Bedrock: Lambeth Group – Sand, Silt and Clay. <i>(Approx. 148 – 59 million years ago).</i> Superficial: None recorded
FORMER LAND USE: A collection of former farm building, consisting of a farmhouse, barn, stable, cart shed and other lesser structures		FUTURE LAND USE: Application for listed building consent for the proposed conversion of and alterations to listed timber-framed barn into a four

making the remnants of the previous centrally courtyarded Gore Green Farm, Higham.	bedroom dwelling; conversion/rebuilding of stables into a three bedroom dwelling, with carports and store and including linked addition at the rear for kitchen/diner and living room; demolition and removal of out buildings, structures and paraphernalia and replacement of cart shed with outbuildings for use as carports and bin store; new boundary treatments, landscaping and other ancillary works including provision of parking spaces; and provision of new access arrangements to Black Cottage. (Planning Ref: Gravesham Borough Council 20180380 & 20180381)
APPLICANT: St John's College, Cambridge	TENANT: N/A
TYPE OF EXCAVATION: A continuous archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundwork foundation excavations associated with the proposed construction of a moderate sized dwelling across the former footprint of a semi-derelict former agricultural building. Situated across the north-eastern side of the former Gore Green Farm, Higham, most of the evidence of this former farm building, which was probably a series of animal stock buildings, cart lodges and storage structures, were largely eradicated during initial site clearance. All monitored groundworks were excavated using the same small sized tracked machine 360degree machine utilising a moderate wide toothed bucket. All excavated soils from the open strip foundations of the proposed new dwelling were discarded to be disposed away from the site.	
EXTENT OF EXCAVATION (Sizes): Following overall general site clearance and preparation, a series of interlinking open strip foundation trenches, following the principal structural footprint of the proposed new dwelling, were excavated into the upper surface of the underlying natural geology. Measuring approximately 450mm wide, each trench was cut to a depth of roughly 900mm below the site prepared surface. Following the main external wall lines of the proposed new dwelling, which largely mimicked the former agricultural building's footprint, the new foundations encompassed a total area of approximately 474.5m square surrounding a proposed new building measuring roughly 30m long (northwest – southeast) by 6.5m wide (northeast – southwest). In total, approximately 195m of open strip foundation trenching was closely inspected during this scheme of archaeological monitoring. See attached Fig. 1 for the site location plan showing the position of the proposed new development within the former farmyard plan and both former, and present, water features in relation to the surrounding rural landscape.	

NATURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION:

Groundwork monitoring, through a scheme of an archaeological watching brief, was continuously undertaken during the machining excavation of a series of interlinking formal open strip foundation trenching associated with the construction of a new detached dwelling across the footprint of the former agricultural buildings within the former farmstead group of Gore Green Farm, Higham.

Following similar dimensions to the original structures outer wall lines, these were subdivided by further lateral foundation trenches sub-dividing the overall footprint into small spaces demarking structural divisions across the building's footprint.

This archaeological monitoring methodology enabled an inspection of all the strip foundation excavations to be made across the area of the proposed new development. This procedure enabled any archaeological finds, features or deposits that may be encountered across the footprint of the proposed new development to be systematically identified, exposed, and recorded prior to the formation of the formal concrete foundations associated with the proposed new development.

Though these works were a condition of formal planning consent, the position of the proposed development, being located within the curtilage of the former Gore Green Farm meant that it fell within an area of archaeological potential as identified by consultation with the Kent Historic Environment Record (KHER), a publicly accessible digital databases containing information regarding known archaeological sites, casual discoveries, listed buildings and other archaeological/historical details. Because of this, it was regarded prudent to have all groundworks monitoring under these strict archaeological conditions.

GENERAL SOIL SEQUENCE:

The earliest deposit encountered along the line of each of the newly excavated open strip foundations comprised of the upper surviving extent to the underlying natural geology. Consisting of a near level surface of firm, pale, mottled greenish/grey, brown fine grained silty sandy clay, this conformed to that recorded by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as being part of the Lambeth Group. Typically, heavily mottled due to its method of deposition as part of a riverine landscape associated with the early course and formation of the Thames Valley and estuary between 148 and 49 million years ago. Recorded as underlying the entire proposed development area at a depth of approximately 820mm below the undisturbed site ground surface, this deposit clearly extended beyond the immediate area of the proposed buildings footprint to form the underlying bedrock geology of the surrounding area.

Closer examination of the upper surface to this deposit suggested that some time in the past it had been scoured level. Possibly associated with the initial formation of the formal farmyard, several small fragments of broken bottle glass and glazed pottery of late eighteenth – mid nineteenth century date were identified, but not retained. This may be reflective of the date of the former farm buildings construction associated with the creation of the typical enclosed courtyard farm. However, the suggestion that the timber-framed barn to the southeast is potentially of sixteenth century date may suggest its construction was within an immediate landscape of

slight undulations, later to be scoured level in advance of the later farmyard's construction. Further examination of the deposits cut through by the open strip foundation trench along the development's main northeast side revealed an area of discolouration to the upper surface of the natural geology. Being a mid – dark bluey grey in colour, its overall texture was almost identical to that of the natural geology beneath, with no clearly definable interface between the two separate-coloured deposits. This suggests the difference was caused through staining associated with standing water and may be associated with the end of a former water channel known to have almost extending to the development site's central area. Shown on the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey (c.1871), this appears to have been infilled prior to the 2nd Edition map (c.1898). Possibly relating to an earlier arrangement of wet ditched enclosures, these had been subsequently altered by their enlargement in the mid twentieth century.

Sealing the upper surface of the underlying natural geology, as well as the discoloured area, was a roughly 450mm depth of compacted crushed chalk and irregular flint nodule rubble. Extending across the entire footprint of the proposed new development, and extending beyond its outer limits, the upper surface to this deposit was more finely compacted with a possible trampled level surface. Clearly representing a dump deposit of chalk rubble spread across the immediate landscape, it is suggested this material was utilised to raise the site of the farmyard due to flooding issues associated with the adjacent marshland to the northeast. However, whilst the underlying natural geology is of the Lambeth Group of sandy, silty, clays, the nearest exposure of chalk is roughly ½ mile to the south. Almost certainly imported to the site, this chalk rich rubble material would also have possessed antibacterial properties with the neutralising of acids in animal urine. This would suggest the use of the chalk rubble would have possessed a double use by raising the ground level cheaply, but also forming a self-regulating, durable surface needed for use with farm animals.

The compressed upper surface to this chalk raising deposit was subsequently sealed with a roughly 300mm depth deposit of heavily compacted pale creamy grey finely crushed mixed silty chalky clay. Identified extending across the development sites footprint and extending to the northeast, it is assumed this deposit originally extended to the southwest also. However, initial site preparatory groundworks, and the demolition of the former farm building had largely removed its south-westward extent. As with the previous chalk dump deposit beneath, this deposit appeared to represent a separate campaign of ground raising through the dumping of further chalk rich material across at least the former farmyard's northeast side. Several small plain reddish-brown sherds of simple unglazed domestic pottery recovered, but not retained, from this deposit suggests a date of early – late nineteenth century for its deposition.

Across the footprint of the proposed new development this deposit had been largely removed to the upper surface of the chalk rubble deposit beneath, this surface being the current site ground surface. Beyond the north-eastern limit of the proposed development's northeast side wall line the upper silty clay deposit was sealed by the remnants of a loose mixed mid – dark grey, fine silty, sandy clay topsoil, which had been heavily truncated by machine associated with the overall site clearance.

FINDS AND NOTES:

Throughout the entire archaeological monitoring process, only limited finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered consisting mainly with the underlying geology or the later use of the site. Despite falling beneath the footprint of one of the former historic farm building ranges, known to have been in place since at least the mid nineteenth century, evidence of this structure had been virtually removed during its demolition and the whole area of the proposed new development scoured level. Despite this, evidence of the overall raising of the immediate topography prior to this farm structure's construction was revealed in the form of a moderate depth deposit of crushed flint and chalk rubble laid directly over the upper surface of the underlying natural geology. The action of raising the surrounding ground surface may have been in response to the site of Gore Green Farm falling immediately against a previous water inlet, now drained marshland, all of which may have been subjected to seasonal water level rises, which threatened the farm. Indeed, evidence from the earliest maps of the Ordnance Survey (c.1871) clearly shows a series of roughly E-shaped regular water filled ditches, possibly forming water filled enclosure boundaries, or even a pseudo moat. However, as the century progressed some of these water filled channels became infilled, whilst others survived until the early – mid twentieth century. Sadly, these surviving features were largely obliterated during the mid-twentieth century by the enlargement of the water filled channels into an even larger curving moderate sized lake. Whilst elements of the earlier channel arrangements can still be determined in the present lake, almost the entire possible moat interior has been largely lost.

Regardless of this, the footprint and building arrangement of Gore Green Farm, Higham has not altered since at least the mid nineteenth century. Consisting of a typical Kentish enclosed farmstead arranged around a central courtyard, it possessed a farmhouse, later converted into two cottages, on its southwest side, a small – moderate sized timber-framed barn on its south-eastern side with animal stock buildings, cart sheds on the northeast side and a granary with secondary farming structures forming its north-western side.

FUTURE POTENTIAL OF AREA:

The archaeological potential is based on the proximity of archaeological remains and historical sites and buildings presently recorded in the Kent Historic Environmental Record (KHER). The archaeological contractor will consult fully the KHER for further background information in relation to the proposed development.

The application area lies in an area of archaeological potential relating to past landscapes, as evidenced by known archaeological sites, landscape features and possibly standing historic buildings of either prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval origin incorporated into, and overlain by the present surrounding historic landscape. Listed below are the principal discoveries within the surrounding landscape as included on the Kent Historical Environmental Record (KHER).

Whilst the proposed development occupies the core of Gore Green Farm, this is recognised as being an historic farmstead comprising *'a loose courtyard with working agricultural buildings on three sides and with additional detached elements*

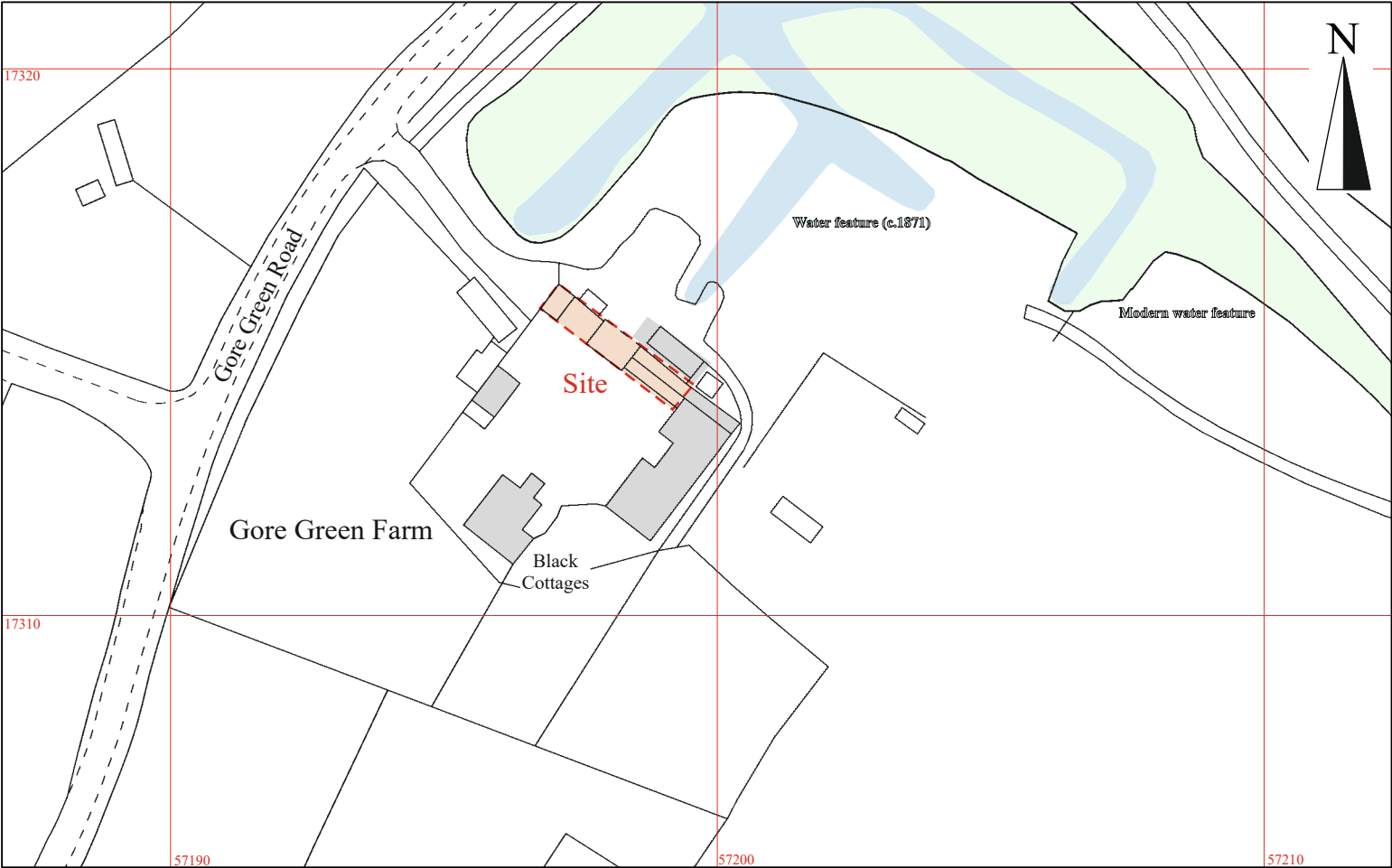
to the main plan' (Forum Heritage Services 2012: Kent Farmstead & Landscape Project SKE18075; English Heritage 2009, Historic Farmstead: A Manual for Mapping SKE18076; KHER: MKE83442). Within this survey, the farmhouse is noted as being detached with its gable end-on to the yard within a hamlet position. Separately listed within this farm group is Gore Green Farm Barn, which is noted as being of Grade II listed status and regarded as being '*Perhaps sixteenth century. Aisled oak structure in five bays. Weather boarded with asbestos cement roofing. Queen posts. Passing braces in aisles. Central midstreys somewhat altered*' (KHER: TQ77 SW1014: Listed Building Number: 1373862).

Situated south of the original settlement of Higham, with its focus around St Mary's Church, with its possible Anglo-Saxon origins, and the former site of Higham Priory, the present settlement of Lower Higham formed away from the parent settlement following the initial construction of the ill-fated Thames & Medway Canal in the early nineteenth century. Originally consisting of a small collection of housing surrounded by small historic farmsteads known as Chequers Street, Gore Green Farm was one of these smaller typical Kentish farmsteads. Possibly able to trace its origins to the earlier medieval period, the oldest surviving building within the present farm group consists of the barn forming the southeast corner of the farm group. Suggestively dating from the sixteenth century, all the remaining buildings of the farm group are of later date suggesting a wholesale redevelopment/refounding of the site in the later eighteenth century. Indeed, until the middle of the twentieth century possible evidence in the surrounding water ditches to the northeast could have indicated the possibility of the site having been enclosed by a moat. Unfortunately, the gradual enlargement of these ditches into large irregular shaped ponds has all but obliterated any evidence of this earlier water enclosure. Within the Gore Green Farm group itself, various constructions, and subsequent losses, of lesser buildings surrounding the farmyard has left the present appearance, though this has changed little since the early twentieth century.

Further detailed information on the above is available through consultation with this assessment document as well as provided in the Kent Historic Environment Record (KHER) held and maintained at the County Historic Environment Record held in Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone ME14 1XX.

Though unlikely to be regarded for further development in the immediate near future, any further small-scale groundworks within the general vicinity should be covered by a scheme of an archaeological watching brief at the least, whilst larger development schemes should be subjected to archaeological prospecting evaluation prior to any development submission.

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		DATE 15/03/22	LAST REVISION
	COMMENTS	CHECKED	
		REF/DRG NO.	



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Figure 1. Extract from the modern Ordnance Survey map showing the position of the proposed development site at Gore Green Farm, Gore Green Road, Higham in relation to historic water feature extent and the surrounding rural landscape.



Plate 1. General view looking east across the proposed development site showing the northern end of the timber-framed barn (right) following clearance of the former farm building.



Plate 2. General view looking southeast showing the timber-framed barn in its unrestored state.

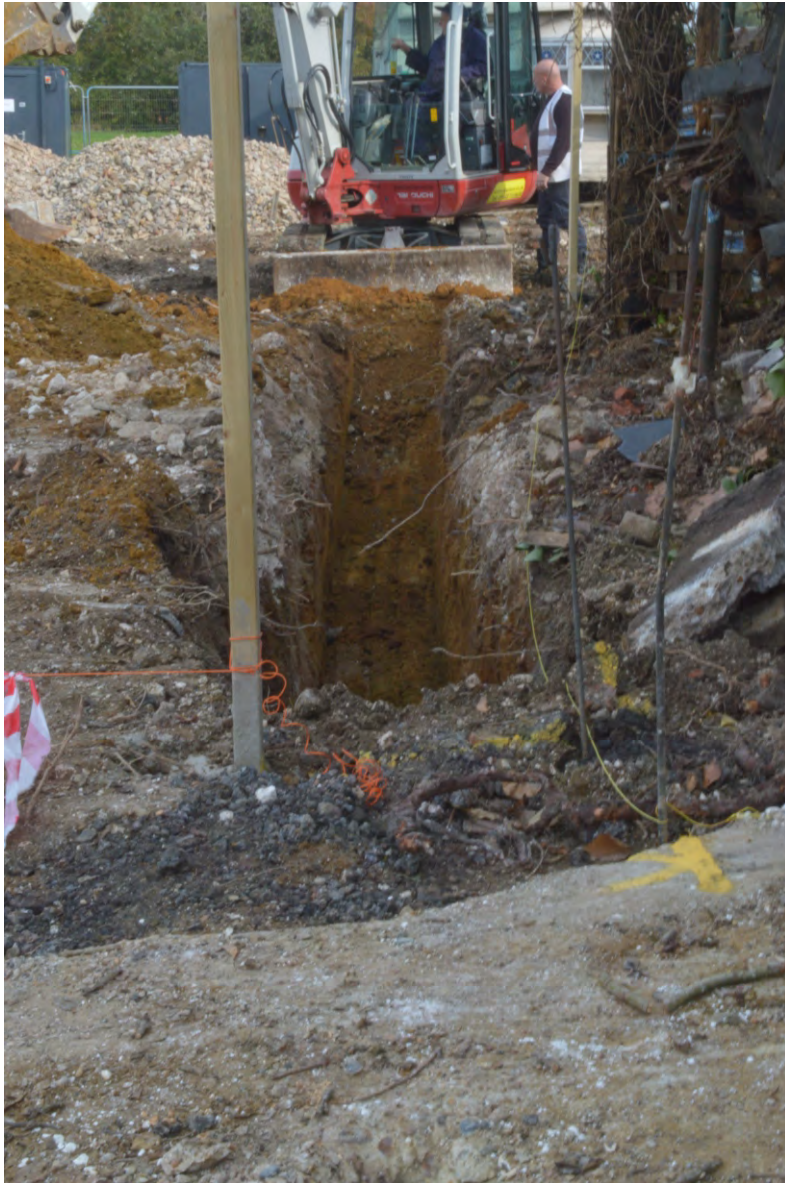


Plate 3. General view looking northwest along the line of the new open strip foundation trench.



Plate 4. General view looking along the open strip foundation trench forming one main side to the proposed new building.



Plate 5. General view looking northwest along the line of the new open strip foundation trench.



Plate 6. General view looking southeast along the line of the new open strip foundation trench.



Plate 7. General view across the junction of new open strip foundation trenches showing natural bedrock geology sealed beneath compacted imported chalk and flint rubble dump deposit used to raise the local ground surface.



Plate 8. Section detail of the main open strip foundation trench showing darkened geology associated possible water feature sealed beneath imported chalk and flint rubble, itself sealed by further chalk rich dump deposit, all to raise the local ground surface.