



Land at Canute Road and Royal Crescent Road, Southampton

Archaeological Mitigation Works Report



LAND AT CANUTE ROAD AND ROYAL CRESCENT ROAD, SOUTHAMPTON

Archaeological Mitigation Works Report

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Southern to undertake archaeological investigations within an 'L-shaped' c. 0.18 hectare area of land at the corner of Canute Road and Royal Crescent Road, Southampton centred at National Grid Reference 442700 111000.

The work comprised two phases of work; an initial evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2007 ref: 66390.03) and a subsequent watching brief.

The evaluation covered 120m² in the western part of the site and recorded a number of intercutting and discrete post-medieval pits of 17th – 18th century date with residual material of medieval date. The pits cut into deposits of estuarine clay and underlying natural gravel lay within open ground or backyards of tenements fronting three roads surrounding the Site. The artefacts provided a representative selection of domestic waste that made it possible to reconstruct the expansion and status of settlement from the core of medieval Southampton.

The subsequent watching brief was commissioned to record additional deposits and features as work progressed. Nothing was seen and it is likely that any surviving deposits beyond the area of the evaluation were removed with demolition rubble during initial ground work to lower the site to foundation level.

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Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was commissioned by Kier Southern, and the help of Tim Yeagle is gratefully acknowledged. Wessex Archaeology would also like to acknowledge the support and assistance of Alan Morton, Planning Archaeologist of Southampton City Council's Heritage Conservation Unit, who monitored the work on behalf of Southampton City Council.

The watching brief was carried out by Dave Reay, Sian Reynolds and Phil Harding, who also compiled this report. The illustration was prepared by Karen Nichols. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Caroline Budd.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kier Southern to carry out an archaeological evaluation and watching brief on an 'L-shaped', c. 0.18 hectare area of land at the junction of Canute Road and Royal Crescent Road, Southampton centred at National Grid Reference 442700 111000 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The Site lies within a Local Area of Archaeological Importance as defined in Policy HE6 of the City of Southampton Local Plan. Planning permission (06/01707/FUL) was granted for the erection of a five to seven storey residential unit with a basement level approximately 3m below original ground levels (c 0.5m aOD).
- 1.1.3 An archaeological condition for a two stage programme of works, an archaeological evaluation and subsequent watching brief during ground works to record any surviving archaeological features and deposits, was attached to the planning consent.
- 1.1.4 This document records the results of the watching brief and supplements the results of the evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 2007, ref: 66390.03) undertaken in July 2007.

2 THE SITE

2.1 Location and Topography

- 2.1.1 The Site occupies a roughly L-shaped parcel of land of approximately 0.18 ha extent at c 3m aOD, defined by Albert Road to the north, Royal Crescent Road to the west, and Canute Road to the south. The Site was formerly occupied by warehouses and a hotel (**Figure 1**).

- 2.1.2 The natural geology comprises estuarine clay that overlies River Terrace Gravels.

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.2.1 The archaeological and historical record is summarised by the evaluation report and is not repeated here. No previous archaeological research had been undertaken in the area although documentary sources indicate that settlement, especially industrial activity, was known from at least the 13th century.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 General

3.1.1 The archaeological programme aimed to locate any archaeological remains, predating the 19th century, especially the possible survival of a medieval windmill and saw pit suggested by cartographic evidence on the Site. Details of the natural topography of the area were also required. Any surviving deposits were to be sampled and recorded using standard archaeological procedures. The results of the evaluation were used to assist in the implementation of the subsequent watching brief.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Evaluation

4.1.1 The evaluation trench, measuring 14.6 by 8.2m, established that archaeological features were present c. 1.8m below post-medieval waste deposits, made-up ground and modern demolition debris.

4.1.2 The work established that the natural geology, into which archaeological features were cut, comprised estuarine clay, 0.98m thick, which overlaid natural bedded gravel.

4.1.3 A number of shallow pits, 0.2-0.45 m deep, were found, predominantly in the southern part of the trench. The walls of a rectangular cellar, at least 2m deep and probably part of the Queen's Hotel public house, were found in the north-east corner of the trench.

4.1.4 On the basis of the results of the evaluation it was confirmed that any additional work could best be addressed by an archaeological watching brief that coincided with progress of redevelopment.

4.2 Watching brief

4.2.1 Four visits were made to the site between 12th September and 31st of October 2007 to monitor progress at the redevelopment. The initial report observed that work was predominantly restricted to the underpinning of existing walls and the removal of modern demolition deposits across large areas of the site. Deposits of estuarine clay and natural gravel were present to the rear of buildings fronting onto Canute Road, although no archaeological features were observed.

4.2.2 Towards the central part of the site areas of contaminated ground, coinciding with locations of former warehouses, were encountered with post-medieval cellars parallel to the Albert Street frontage.

- 4.2.3 Subsequent visits were made during the installation of deep piles across the site to provide foundations for the development. Throughout these visits no additional estuarine clay was exposed either as areas of undisturbed deposit or as freshly cut sections.
- 4.2.4 The final visit was undertaken after final excavation had commenced to systematically lower the site by an additional 0.40m to the foundation levels. This work, in a strip along the south edge of the site bordering Canute Road, produced isolated, relatively clean sections of natural gravel. These sections could be traced for over 1 m from the base of the development, between areas of concrete underpinning beneath existing walls.
- 4.2.5 Deposits of natural gravel were also observed around the concrete piles in the area immediately south-west of the east edge of the development area.
- 4.2.6 At this point it seemed likely that the entire site lay within the natural gravel and was below the level at which archaeological features might occur. The prevailing conditions on site throughout the watching brief made it difficult to observe areas of deposit that might contain archaeological features.
- 4.2.7 The results of the evaluation, which offered the most controlled conditions under which to observe and record archaeological features, indicated that the site was heavily dissected by cellars, modern foundations and contaminated ground and that areas of undisturbed deposit were likely to be relatively scarce.
- 4.2.8 The limited results from the watching brief appear to confirm that any residual areas of estuarine clay were probably removed during the initial stages of site clearance.

5 FINDS

- 5.1.1 No artefacts were retained during the watching brief.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL

- 6.1.1 No material suitable for environmental analysis was demonstrated to be present within the watching brief area.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 The project to examine and record the archaeological deposits affected by the redevelopment of the site at Canute Road and Royal Crescent Road has provided valuable information on the development of settlement in this part of Southampton. The survival of deposits that provided chronological detail in the evaluation trench has been placed in a wider context by the results of the watching brief.
- 7.1.2 The presence of medieval pottery hinted at the proximity of occupation in the locality although permanent settlement of the site does not appear to have commenced before 17th-18th centuries. This has been unbroken to the present time.
- 7.1.3 Subsequent development, especially cellar construction, is thought to have been responsible for the dissection of the deposits and for the reduction in their size to small remnants. One such was encountered by the evaluation trench. Properties fronting onto the streets are likely to have been especially susceptible to destruction by these phases of later redevelopment.
- 7.1.4 The watching brief was able to examine the remainder of the site in less detail. It confirmed that only small areas of undisturbed deposit appear to have survived. These areas, characterised by estuarine clay overlying natural gravel, may have contained additional archaeological features.
- 7.1.5 The failure to observe further archaeology is likely to have resulted from the large scale use of heavy machinery to clear the site. This activity not only removed the demolition rubble that is likely to have masked undisturbed archaeology but also mixed the two components together rendering any archaeological features unrecognisable.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1.1 Given the results of the watching brief no further work is recommended on the Site. Therefore this report should be submitted to Southampton City Council with a view to discharging the condition attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of an archaeological programme of works.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wessex Archaeology, 2007, *Final Land at Canute Road and Royal Crescent Road, Southampton, Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, unpublished client report ref 66390.03



- Watching Brief area
- Evaluation area
- Areas of earlier trial excavation
- Modern brick cellar
- Post-medieval pits
- Modern disturbance

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Site and trench location

Figure 1



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