Smartlife Centre Land
off Kings Hedges Road
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire

Excavation Report

December 2010

Client: Fusion Project Management
on behalf of Cambridgeshire
County Council

OA East Report No: 1228
OASIS No: oxfordar3-88180
NGR: TL 4551 6179
Smartlife Centre, Land of Kings Hedges Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Excavation

By Thomas Lyons BA

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Report Date: December 2010
Report Number: 1228
Site Name: The Smartlife Centre, Land off Kings Hedges Road, Cambridge
HER Event No: 3447
Date of Works: November 2010
Client Name: Fusion Project Management on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council
Client Ref: 12342
Planning Ref: C/05007/10
Grid Ref: TL 4551 6179
Site Code: CAM KHR 10
Finance Code: CAM KHR 10
Receiving Body: CCC Stores, Landbeach

Accession No:
Prepared by: Thomas Lyons
Position: Project Supervisor
Date: November 2010

Checked by: Stephen Macaulay
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: November 2010
Signed: 

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Summary

Oxford Archaeology East conducted an excavation on the site of the proposed new Smartlife Centre on land adjacent to Kings Hedges Road on the northern perimeter of Cambridge. The site lies immediately to the east of the putative course of Akeman Street Roman road which runs from the historic city centre and forms part of the modern A10 to the north on its way to Ely and Denver in Norfolk, and therefore had a high archaeological potential.

No archaeological remains of any antiquity were encountered during the investigation. Ditches and postholes identified on the site were post-medieval in date.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

An archaeological excavation was conducted at land between Kings Hedges road and the Guided Busway, immediately to the east of the Orchard Park estate. The investigation was carried out in advance of the construction of a new Smartlife Centre.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application C/05007/10), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

The development site overlies the 3rd Terrace River Gravels, with some overlying alluvial deposits: the solid geology is Gault Clay (BGS 1981).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The site lies within a known area of Iron Age and Roman activity: An Iron Age fort (known as Arbury Camp) lies approximately 500m to the west of the proposed development area. A Roman villa lies beneath the site of Kings Hedges School (HER 05421) approximately 500m to the south while the northwestern boundary of the site marks the putative course of Akeman Street Roman road.

Akeman Street Roman Road runs from the southwest of England, through the historic core of Cambridge City, through the centre of Roman Cambridge (Duroliponte) at Castle Hill and heads northeast (known locally as Mere Way), towards Ely, on its way to Denver on the Norfolk border. Sections of the modern A10 follow its route. It is known to date to the early-mid 2nd century AD, constructed during the Hadrianic-Antonine period (Macaulay 1997).

Immediately to the east of the proposed development area, adjacent to the site, an archaeological investigation was undertaken in advance of the building of an electricity substation but this investigation found no archaeological remains (HER ECB 2512).

The wider area to the north of the A14 and either side of the A10 is known to be rich in Iron Age and Roman archaeological remains.

1.4 Acknowledgements

The project was funded by Cambridgeshire County Council and commissioned by Fusion Project Management on their behalf and was directed by Chris Thatcher, assisted by Tom Lyons, of OA East. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay and monitored by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council.
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims
The objective of this excavation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology
The Brief required that a 'Strip and Map' investigation be undertaken and in the event of significant archaeological remains being discovered a suitable programme of excavation designed.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked 360-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East’s pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
3 Results

3.1 Introduction

An area of approximately 720sqm (covering the footprint of the proposed SMARTlife Centre) was stripped clear of topsoil and subsoil to reveal any underlying archaeological features. Subsoil was between 0.2m and 0.3m deep and topsoil was up to 0.28m thick. Natural geology was reached at approximately 0.5m beneath current ground level over most of the site. No modern truncation of these levels was observed.

A total of seven archaeological features were revealed, located on the western side of the proposed development area. These included four post holes on a SW – NE alignment (nos. [103-109]) as well as two ditch lines (nos. [111 & 113]) orientated on a complementary WSW alignment.

3.2 Ditches

Feature [111] was 2m wide and 0.22m deep. The fill (110) was a homogeneous brown silty clay with few inclusions or artefacts. The ditch terminated close to the centre of the trench where it narrowed and was difficult to see in plan.

Feature [113] was 2.7m wide and 0.3m deep. The fill (112) was a homogeneous brown silty clay with few inclusions or artefacts. The ditch was visible in plan over the entire width of the trench and appeared to terminate adjacent to the west facing baulk 2.5m from the north east corner of the trench.

Both ditches had indistinct edges uneven bases and produced modern pottery sherds. No evidence of a bank was observed for either ditch.

3.3 Post Holes

The four post holes discovered close to the south west corner of the trench [103, 105, 107 & 109] were sub circular in shape; post holes 105 & 107 were excavated to a depth of 0.08m and 0.11m respectively while 103 & 109 were 0.26m and 0.19m deep respectively.

Fill 108 contained a modern nail, otherwise no finds were recovered from the post holes.

3.4 Finds Summary

Finds recovered from the features consisted post medieval and modern artefacts including C19th glazed wares, post medieval tiles and nails. These were few in number.
4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The few archaeological features discovered within the proposed development area date to the post medieval period. Their alignment on a south-west to north-east orientation indicate they were laid out respecting the route of Akeman Street which would presumably have been still in use, as it is today, as a trackway/footpath, known as *Mere Way*. The two ditches run perpendicular to *Akeman Street* and may form a possible track which runs off the former Roman road.

In the light of, and absence, of evidence from the immediate surrounding area i.e. Orchard Park to the west and beneath the electricity substation immediately to the east, it can be stated with some confidence that this stretch of Akeman St was not associated with Roman road side settlement or activity (e.g. burial).
APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

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Trench 1

General description: Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of soil and subsoil overlying a natural of silty sand.

Orientation: n/a

Avg. depth (m): 0.5
Width (m): 26
Length (m): 28
APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cambridgeshire County Historic Environment Record (CHER)

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

**Project Details**

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**Type of Project/Techniques Used**

**Prompt**

Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG15

**Please select all techniques used:**

- [ ] Field Observation (periodic visits)
- [ ] Full Excavation (100%)
- [ ] Full Survey
- [ ] Geophysical Survey
- [x] Open-Area Excavation
- [ ] Part Excavation
- [ ] Part Survey
- [ ] Recorded Observation
- [ ] Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- [ ] Salvage Excavation
- [ ] Systematic Field Walking
- [ ] Systematic Metal Detector Survey
- [ ] Test Pit Survey
- [ ] Watching Brief

**Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods**

List feature types using the NMR Monument Type Thesaurus and significant finds using the MDA Object type Thesaurus together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

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### Digital Media
- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

### Paper Media
- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey

## Notes:
Figure 1: Site location (Trench outlined red)
Figure 2: Excavation plan
Figure 3: Section drawings
Plate 1: Trench shot (from north-east)

Plate 2: Post holes (from south-west)