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Archaeology Assessment

Rear of 83 St. James' Road, Sutton, SM1 2TJ

Assessment prepared by Chilcroft Heritage Planning
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The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
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The Georgian Group



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Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	The Location	5
3.	Archaeology Study	6
4.	Map Regression Exercise	8
5.	Conclusions	10

1) Introduction

In July 2022 we were commissioned to conduct an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) on the site of land to the Rear of 83 St James' Road, Sutton, London Borough of Sutton SM1 2TJ. The work was commissioned in support of a planning application associated with the redevelopment of the site. The proposed development entails the demolition of the existing garage and erection of a detached two storey dwelling with cycle and refuse stores and parking to front.

The site lies within the locally designated North Downs Fringe Springline Archaeological Priority Area and near to but not within the Sutton Conservation Area. There are no Listed Buildings that take in the setting of the site or that are impacted by the proposed development.

Through the course of this DBA it has become clear that the study site has lain within open, undeveloped ground for much of its history. It lies close to the emerging Saxon and medieval settlements of Carshalton and Wrythe Green but outside of their immediate zones of influence. St James' Road was laid out at the turn of the 20th century, during the Edwardian period. Development occurred in a piecemeal fashion with number 83 remaining an open plot until the early-20th century. Historic cartographic sources shown the site as being occupied by 1910, with the present standing building believed to date from c.1908.

There is considered a low potential for encountering finds and features from the Prehistoric to early post-medieval periods. However if stratigraphy or finds are present they may survive in a good state of preservation due to the lack of development. There is a higher potential for exposing stratigraphic deposits relating to the 20th century development of the site and various phases of building which have been undertaken. Based on the site's location within an Archaeological Priority Area, presence of prehistoric finds in the vicinity in particular and potential survival, albeit limited of archaeological deposits some further mitigation may be required. It is recommended that this mitigation take the form of an appropriate worded condition attached to an approved planning application, rather than any pre-determination action.

2) The Location

The proposed site is situated on the south-east corner of the junction with St. James' Road and St. James' Avenue. To the west of this is Norman Road with Western Road further to the south. Robin Hood Lane leads off to the east, beyond the staggered crossroads on St. James' Road.

This proposed site lies in a wide expanse of late 19th Century and early 20th Century development, with the nearest Listed Building located some distance away, to the east in the form of the Church of St Nicholas (**List No. 1065629**) a Grade II* listed building from 1862-4, replacing an earlier medieval church on the same site. There are five other listed buildings clustered in the graveyard of the church from the early 17th Century, including a mausoleum, tombs and headstones.

The Grade II listed building of Nonsuch Park (**List No. 1001672**) is located far to the western side of the A232 which also includes a Milestone outside No. 135 Cheam Road, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (**List UID 1001999**) from the 18th Century, that shares group value with the Milestone in Sutton High Street (**List UID 1001998**) which is also from the 18th Century.

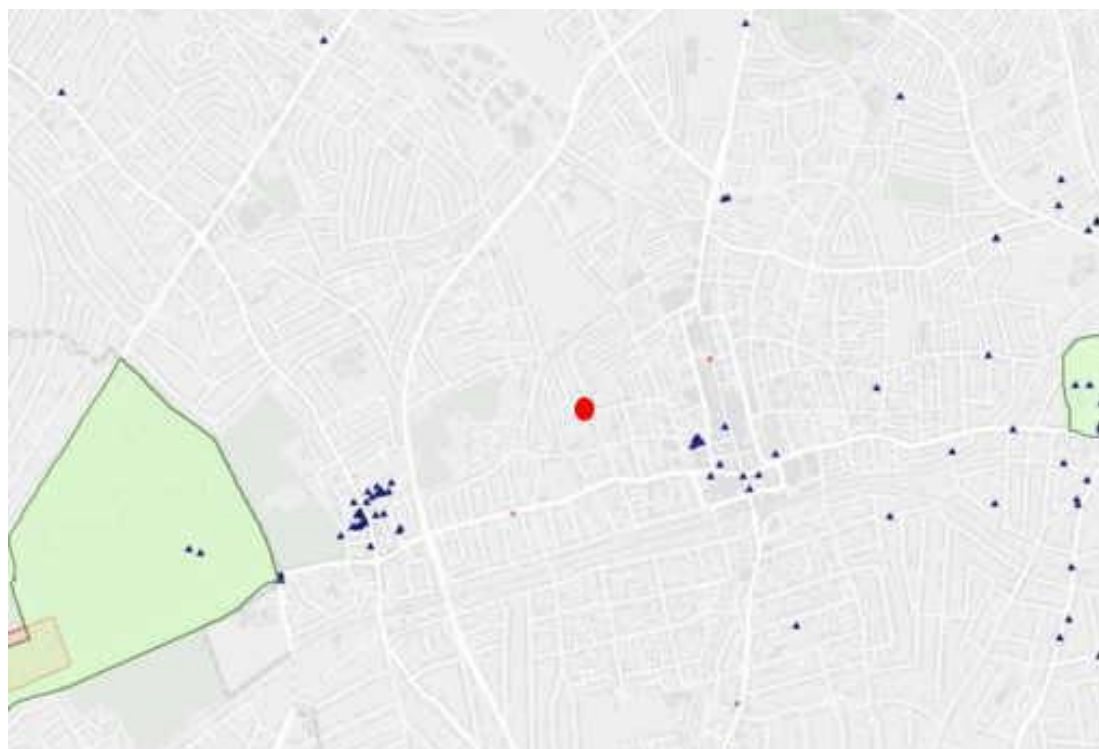


Fig 1: The proposed site (central in red) is situated within an expanse of land that had always been pasture till the early 20th Century with the nearest listed buildings (blue/green) some distance away.

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3) Archaeology Study

- 3.1) The archaeological evidence indicates that there was a human presence in the vicinity of the study site throughout the Prehistoric period, though it is unclear as to what degree this was occurring; the finds suggest a low-level activity and possible settlement, with industrial processes or substantial occupation as yet absent in the record. It is likely that some form of gravel and chalk extraction was being undertaken. The date range of the finds, from earlier Prehistoric right through to Bronze Age/Iron Age also indicates that the area was revisited and utilised over a considerable period of time, likely to continue exploiting the local resources.
- 3.2) It is likely that the natural resources which attracted Prehistoric communities to the area continued to be exploited by local groups throughout the Romano-British period. Lying well outside of the zone of influence of the city of Londinium the area would have depended it upon its own resources for income, such as agriculture and mills sited along the Wandle.
- 3.3) The Roman road of Stane Street, which ran between London and Chichester is believed to have passed through Sutton Common – the route now forming the parish boundary. In the area of Sutton the route ran through Merton Abbey, close to Colliers Wood station and continued into Merton Park, Morden and Sutton and on to Ewell and beyond, now the A297. St James' Road lies approximately a mile west of this routeway so as such is unlikely to have been subject to passing trade and travellers.
- 3.4) During the Saxon period Sutton lay within the administrative Hundred of Wallington in the Kingdom of Wessex. Under Edward the Confessor (AD1042 - 1066) it was divided into manors. The Wrythe is an Anglo-Saxon derivation of the word rithe meaning small stream and denotes its location on the River Wandle. A designated place name also means it is likely some form of activity of settlement was emerging in this area during this period. A large number of mills are recorded as being along the river in the medieval period and it is probable many of them had Saxon origins.

- 3.5) The manor of Sutton belonged to Chertsey Abbey from before the Norman conquest and is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, lying within the Hundred of Wallington in the County of Surrey. Recorded as Aulton the land was under the single ownership of Geoffrey de Mandeville, 1st Earl of Essex and the settlement comprised 12 villagers, 10 cottagers and 10 slaves (Open Domesday 2022). With a population of 32 households (a household in this instance being an entire estate of family, workers etc.), it was in the largest 40% of settlements recorded in the survey. The manor and its manorial estates remained in the hands of several well-connected families throughout the medieval period, being passed down via inheritance and marriage.
- 3.6) Sutton remained predominantly rural throughout the later medieval period into the mid post-medieval. Wrythe Green was classified as a ‘waste’ of the Manor of Carshalton and so was land that could be used for common benefit and building was restricted with the exception of special circumstances (Sutton 2021). As a result the land encompassing the proposed site remained devoid of development into the 18th century.
- 3.7) By the end of the 18th Century, the land that had always been agriculturally farmed was beginning in to see some early signs of development, with the gradual spread westwards from Carshalton. This was conducted in a piecemeal fashion and followed the lines of existing fields, hedgerows and roads, to account for individual ownership and parcels of land as they were separately bought for development.
- 3.8) A second a more notable wave of development took place following the arrival of the railways in the mid 19th Century, providing new access to central London and Brighton, with journey times shortened to hours rather than days. As such, areas such as the proposed site took on a new lease of life, providing houses in the suburbs with an explosion in housing stock suddenly needed, with demand quickly outstripping supply. Residential development also continued to expand throughout the 20th century, infilling the previously open agricultural landscape. The result of this steady expansion has meant the previously nucleated hamlets of Carshalton and Sutton now being almost indistinguishable from each other.

4) Map Regression Exercise

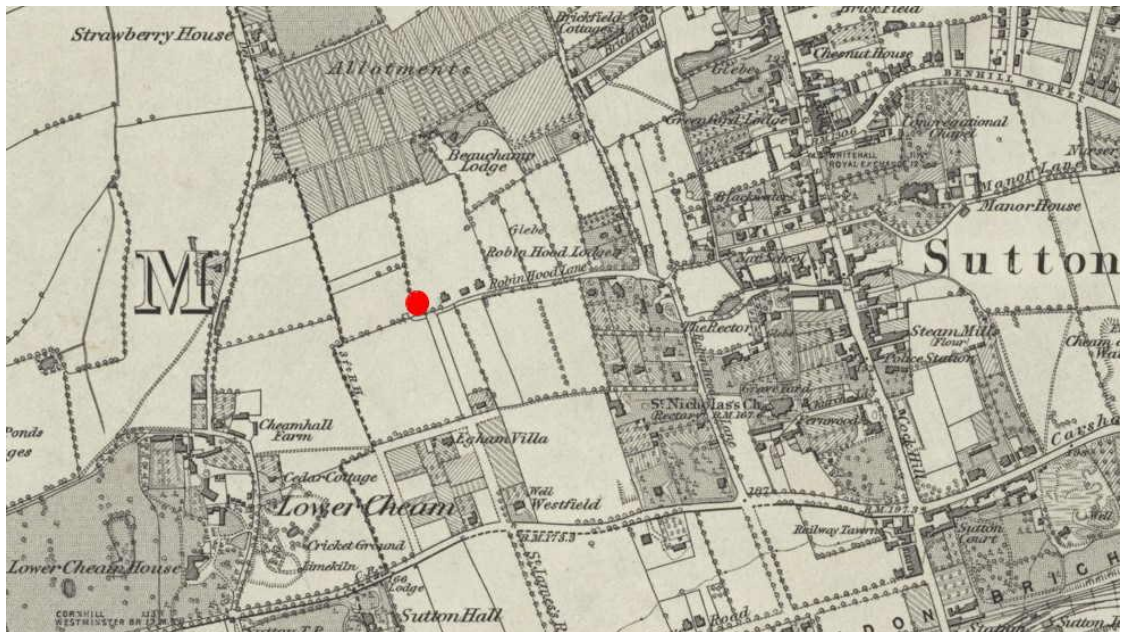


Fig 2: 1866 – During the mid 19th Century, the proposed site remained as open agricultural pasture, with three small tenant dwellings located to the eastern side along Robin Hood Lane.

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Fig 3: 1866 – An enlarged map shows the proposed site just as it had always been throughout the majority of its lifetime, as a piece of agricultural pasture, to the far western end of Robin Hood Lane.

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Fig 4: 1894 – By the turn of the 20th Century, the proposed site was still undeveloped, with a gradual increase in tenant dwellings scattered to the south and east along St. James' Road and Robin Hood Lane.
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Fig 5: 1910 – Come the end of the Edwardian era, we see 83 St. James' Road fully constructed along with the adjacent rows of terraced buildings, with the built area of Sutton expanding ever westwards.
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5) Conclusions

Based on the quantity of finds recovered from the Sutton area and proximity of the study site to known Prehistoric features of interest, the potential for encountering further finds and / or features of this date can be considered low to medium.

Due to a lack of archaeological evidence of a Roman presence within the study site and its immediate environs and likelihood of the area being open ground throughout this period the potential for encountering significant archaeological remains can be considered low.

The lack of representation of the Saxon period in the archaeological record of Sutton leaves the potential for encountering finds, features and stratigraphic deposits from this date can be considered low.

Due to the limited archaeological evidence of activity or occupation within the immediate site vicinity during the medieval period, the potential for encountering features of interest can be considered low.

St James' Road was laid out at the turn of the 20th Century and the land adjacent to 83 developed during this period. There is considered a moderate potential for exposing finds, feature and stratigraphy relating to this construction period. It is also possible that the site itself was developed in the post-medieval period, existing in the intervals between revisions of the Ordnance Survey maps.

In the modern period, there is considered moderate potential for exposing finds, features and stratigraphic deposits, including demolition and construction deposits associated with the various phases of construction which have been undertaken.

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