

Archaeological Investigations at Mindenhurst

September 2023

Introduction

We are excited to announce that the next six months will be a key period in the progress of the Mindenhurst development. We will shortly be commencing archaeological investigations at two sites in Mindenhurst.

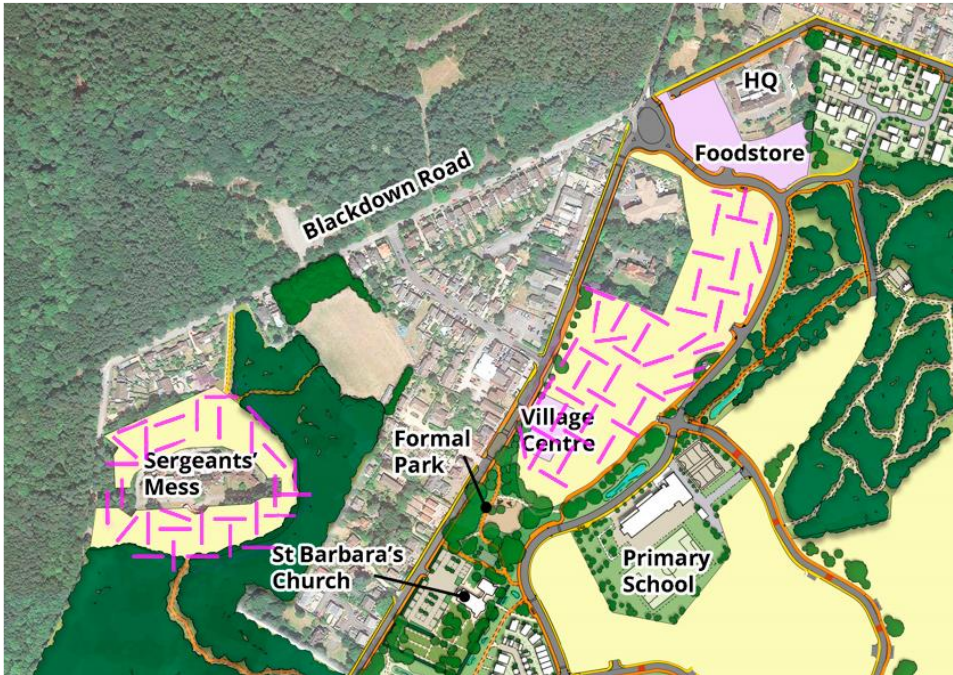
While significant progress has been made on aspects of the development in the past few years, a great deal of visible activity is now going to take place in the coming months. A specialist team of archaeologists will be on site, examining two areas of the Mindenhurst site looking for items of archaeological and historical interest.

Until now much of the demolition work, ground works, laying down of new roads, the construction of the school and the development of the new housing plots has been carried out more distant from existing residents, however it essential to carry out this work before further development takes place to ensure that we protect our cultural heritage.

What's coming next?

The next phase of works will be getting under way with the off-site improvements to be carried out along Deepcut Bridge Road, which will then lead on to the work to create the new formal park and the construction of the community hall at the church. We will be doing all we can to minimise the impact on all the local businesses, residents and the community as a whole.

In addition, in order to ready the final plots of land for sale to housebuilders, we will be commencing the required archaeological investigations across those plots. The map below shows the areas that we expect to be subject to the investigation trenches. These trenches will allow for a detailed examination of the sub-soil for items of archaeological interest.



Please note this is an illustrative plan and not the confirmed location of trenches

Why is the archaeological dig required?

Condition 52 of the Hybrid Permission for the Mindenhurst development requires that prior to the submission of the reserved matters applications for each phase of the subsequent residential developments, the agreed programme of archaeological evaluation work will be carried out. Should anything be found, provision will be made for the preservation of any archaeological remains of national or regional importance should they occur on the site, along with the archaeological investigation, recording and analysis of remains of lesser importance.

What is the archaeological dig looking for?

In 2015 Cotswold Archaeology conducted an earlier archaeological watching brief associated with the excavation of initial geotechnical test pits across the site. While no archaeological features were identified within the test pits, they did reveal information about the character of the made ground across the site, particularly to the south in the area once occupied by the military railway.

A number of structures and features of potential interest for their military heritage value were identified in areas adjacent to the test pits including concrete structures and a short stretch of a possible First World War training trench. In the 19th century the area was characterised by extensive open heathland and woods, with small clusters of housing and sporadic farmland. The British Army began to use the area of heathland around Chobham Common for training and exercises however it wasn't until 1900 when a semi-permanent camp of demountable buildings was built.

The test pits also helped establish which areas retained archaeological potential as a result of a lack of disturbance from military activity or the various phases of development

associated with the camp. It is these areas that will be the focus of the archaeological field evaluation.

This means there are two objectives from the work to be carried out:

- 1) to establish whether any features or deposits of archaeological interest survive.
- 2) to explore the potential for military training features to survive in these areas, especially possible practice trench systems (located next to the new Mindenhurst Road).

How will the work be carried out?

The work will be carried out by a specialist archaeological contractor, and the evaluation will require the excavation of trenches (each 30m long and 1.8m wide) in the locations shown on the attached plan.

All trenches will be excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. The work will be conducted under archaeological supervision and will cease when the first archaeological evidence or the natural substrate level is revealed (whichever is encountered first).

All archaeological features revealed will be recorded in accordance with the *Technical Manual 1 Fieldwork Recording Manual*. Each find will be recorded on a pro-forma context sheet by written and measured description.

Principal deposits will be recorded by hand drawn plans or digitally created plans. Photographs (digital colour) will be taken as appropriate. All finds and samples will be bagged separately and related to the context record. All artefacts will be recovered and retained for processing and analysis in accordance with *Technical Manual 3 Treatment of Finds Immediately after Excavation*.

How will items found be stored?

Following completion of fieldwork, all artefacts and environmental samples will be assessed, photographed, and conserved in accordance with the appropriate museum guidelines.

An illustrated report will be compiled on the results of the fieldwork and assessment of the artefacts and samples. Copies of the report will be distributed to the Surrey County Council Heritage Conservation Team and Surrey Heath Borough Council. A copy of the report will also be deposited with the Surrey Historic Environment Record.

Should no further work be required, an ordered, indexed, and internally consistent site archive will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation (Archaeological Archives Forum 2007)*. Arrangements will be made with the appropriate museum for the deposition of the site archive and the artefact collection.

Will local people be able to find out more about any finds?

We will be working closely with the archaeologists throughout their investigations and will share information via our Facebook page, website, and monthly newsletter when possible.

For further information

Please contact hello@minderhurst.com or call Niki Dufour, Community Relations Manager
+44 (0) 7855 012 104

minderhurst.co.uk facebook.com/MinderhurstDeepcut