

Archaeological Assessment

Introduction

1. This Archaeological Advice Note has been prepared by Dr Anne Johnson BA PhD FSA MCIfA, Archaeologist at Archaeology Collective, on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC). This document is intended to provide initial advice based on desk-based research and a site visit undertaken in June 2018. This assessment does not consider built heritage aspects, which have been dealt with in a separate document.¹
2. The subject of this Advice Note is the site of the former Kent County Council Boughton Mount Social Education Centre, hereafter referred to as the 'Site', which is situated on the northern outskirts of the village of Boughton Monchelsea, immediately north of the former ragstone quarries ('The Quarries') c.5km south of Maidstone, in Kent, centred at NGR 576960,152220.
3. The Site, which is rectangular in shape, covering an area of 4.6ha, is bounded to the west and south by Boughton Lane, on the north by the farm track serving Boughton Mount Farm, and on the east by a metalled track (PROW). The northern part of the site, covering an area of c.1.8ha is occupied by a number of derelict single- and two-storey brick-built educational buildings of late 1960s-1970s date and Victorian outbuildings, together with a 20th century water tower, with areas of hard standing and car parking to the northwest, and a series of disused horticultural buildings and garden walls to the northeast. A derelict brick-built house stands close to the main entrance from Boughton Lane (west). The southern part of the site is occupied by overgrown former parkland and gardens. The Site has been vacant since 2009-2010.
4. The Site was formerly occupied by a Victorian mansion house, Boughton Mount House; the house, stable block and coach house and walled garden with

¹ McEntee, S. 2018. *Boughton Mount, Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME17 4NA. Heritage Assessment*. Heritage Collective.

greenhouses occupied the northern third of the Site, whilst the remainder, comprised gardens and parkland separated by a stone-built Ha-Ha, crossed by a stone bridge. The house had been destroyed by fire and demolished in the 1940s; its cellars remain beneath the current buildings. The Site was gifted to Kent Count Council in 1948 by sisters Henrietta Foster Wheeler and Joan Foster Pickering under a covenant restricting its use to 'the education of delicate children.' The covenant was subsequently relaxed to permit wider educational use as a residential hostel and training centre. Much of the walled garden was utilised after the war by Kent County Council for horticultural purposes, and several of the Victorian ragstone-built outbuildings and garden walls are still standing. One of the outbuildings has been adapted to provide a water tower.

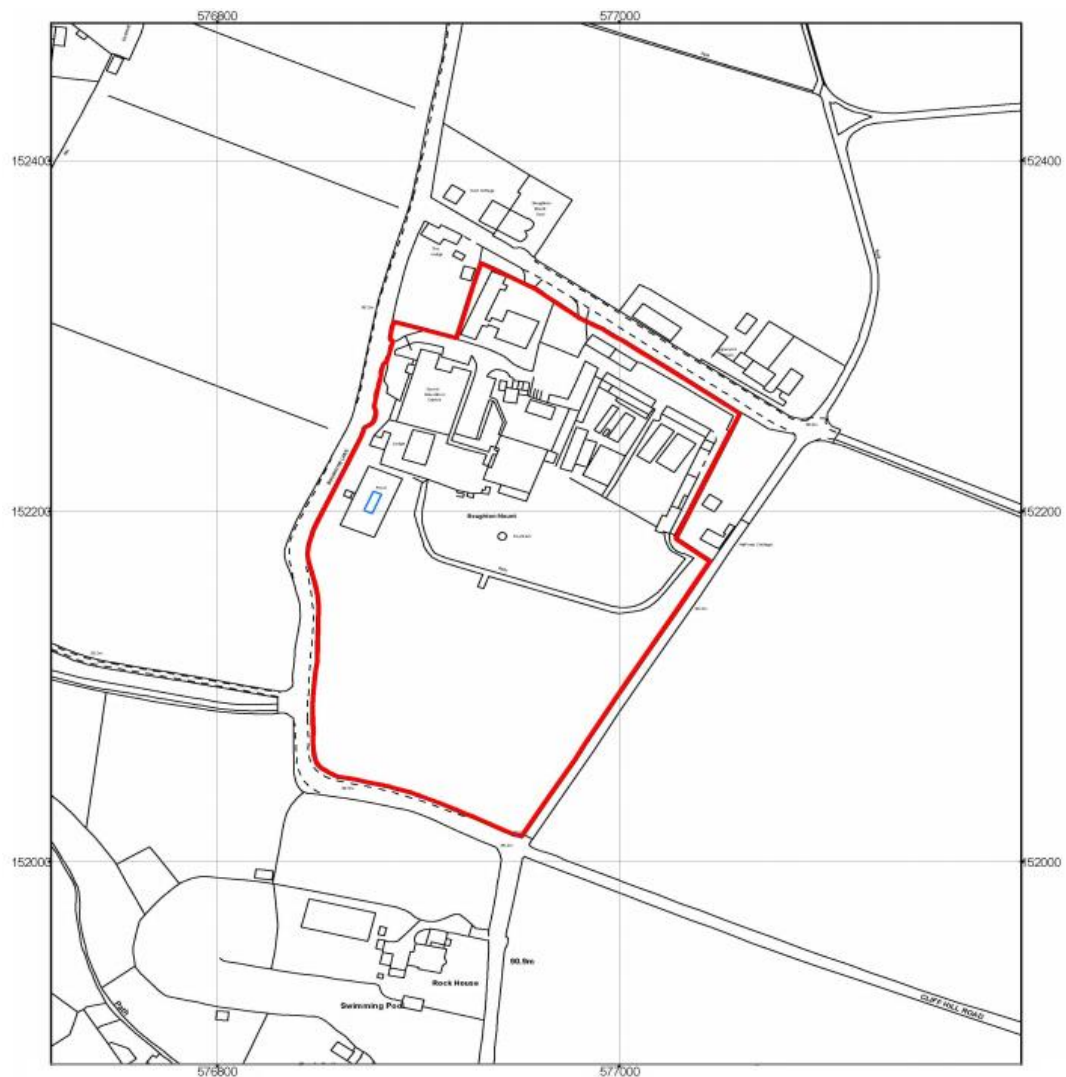


Figure 1. Site location © Crown Copyright 2017. Licence No. LAN1001544.



Figure 2. Satellite image, 2018 © Google Earth.

5. The British Geological Survey identifies the solid geology as Hythe Formation – alternating bands of sandstone and limestone, known as ‘ragstone’. No superficial deposits are recorded. There is currently no site specific geotechnical information available.
6. The land lies in an elevated position at c.98m AOD. The southern boundary of the Site along Boughton Lane lies c.150m north of the valley of the Loose Stream. The stream has cut a deep valley into the ragstone at this location, which has been further deepened and extended by extensive quarrying, leaving significant cliffs along the valley sides, an area of Boughton Monchelsea known today as ‘The Quarries’.

Archaeological Potential

7. Archaeological finds, monuments, and investigations held on the Kent Historic Environment Record (KHER) within a 1km radius of the Site, hereafter referred to as the 'Study Area' have been considered in this assessment.
8. There are no designated archaeological assets within the Site. There is a single designated archaeological asset, a scheduled monument, within the 1km radius Study Area: standing earthworks visible on the south side of Quarry Wood, which have been identified as the defences of a late prehistoric (Iron Age) fortified settlement, variously known as 'Boughton Quarry Camp' or 'Loose Oppidum'.²

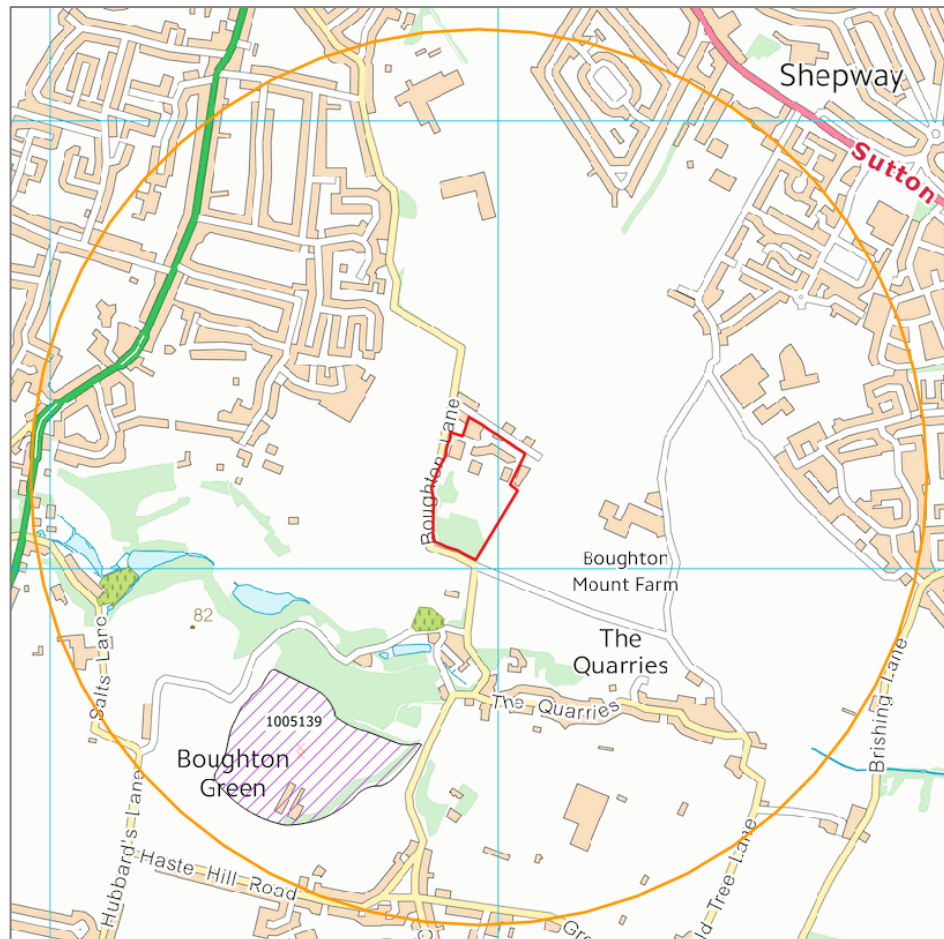


Figure 3. The location of the scheduled monument (1005139).

² Historic England List Entry No. 1005139.

9. The northern defences of this monument lie 400m southwest of the southern boundary of the Site (Boughton Lane), and 630m southwest of the proposed development area currently occupied by buildings within the northwestern part of the Site. There is no inter-visibility between the Site and the scheduled monument, and there is unlikely to be any setting issues.
10. The Kent HER records two designated assets within the Site, both grade II listed buildings associated with the early Victorian mansion house ('Ha-Ha with a footbridge in the Grounds of Boughton Mount'³ and 'Folly in the Grounds of Boughton Mount'⁴). Both of these assets have been assessed in a separate document.⁵
11. The Kent HER records a single undesigned asset within the northwest angle of the Site, the former Boughton Mount House stable yard, described as 'a multiyard farmstead' (MKE84747). Two further records relate to the designated assets (Listed Buildings): the folly (TQ 75 SE 376) and the Ha-Ha (TQ 75 SE 375).

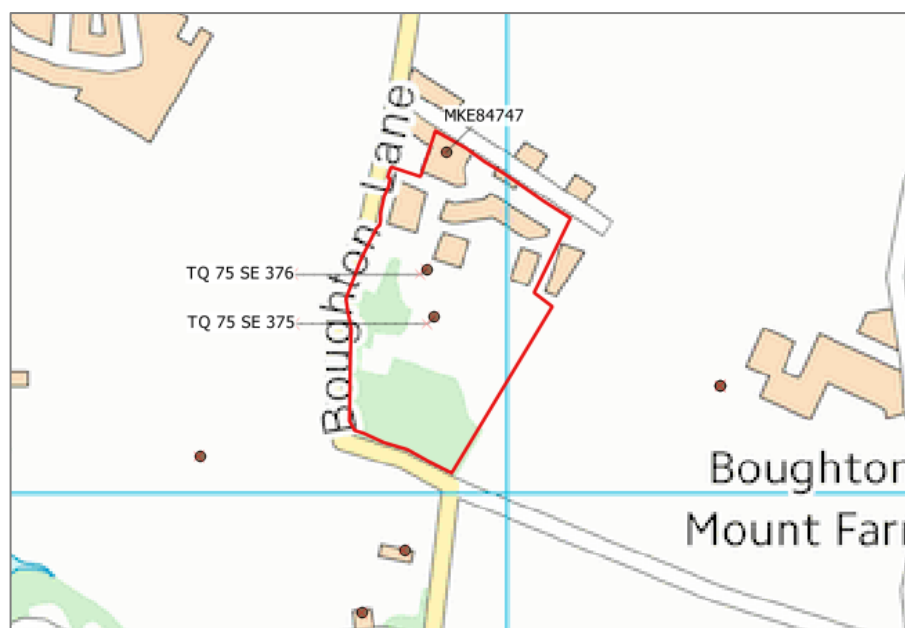


Figure 4. Post-medieval monuments within the Site

³ Historic England List Entry No. 1413736.

⁴ Historic England List Entry No. 1413737.

⁵ McEntee 2018.

12. Archaeological excavations in 1998 on the west side of Boughton Lane, c.80m west of the Site, revealed a series of gullies and ditches possibly representing a later prehistoric (late Bronze Age or early Iron Age) field system, together with a group of associated postholes suggesting a contemporary dwelling and the presence of iron slag suggesting iron smelting activity.⁶ In addition, the discovery of several prehistoric finds within the Study Area, together with the earthworks of the possible later prehistoric (scheduled monument) settlement south of Quarry Wood, indicates the potential for encountering prehistoric remains of low to medium significance within undisturbed parts of the Site.

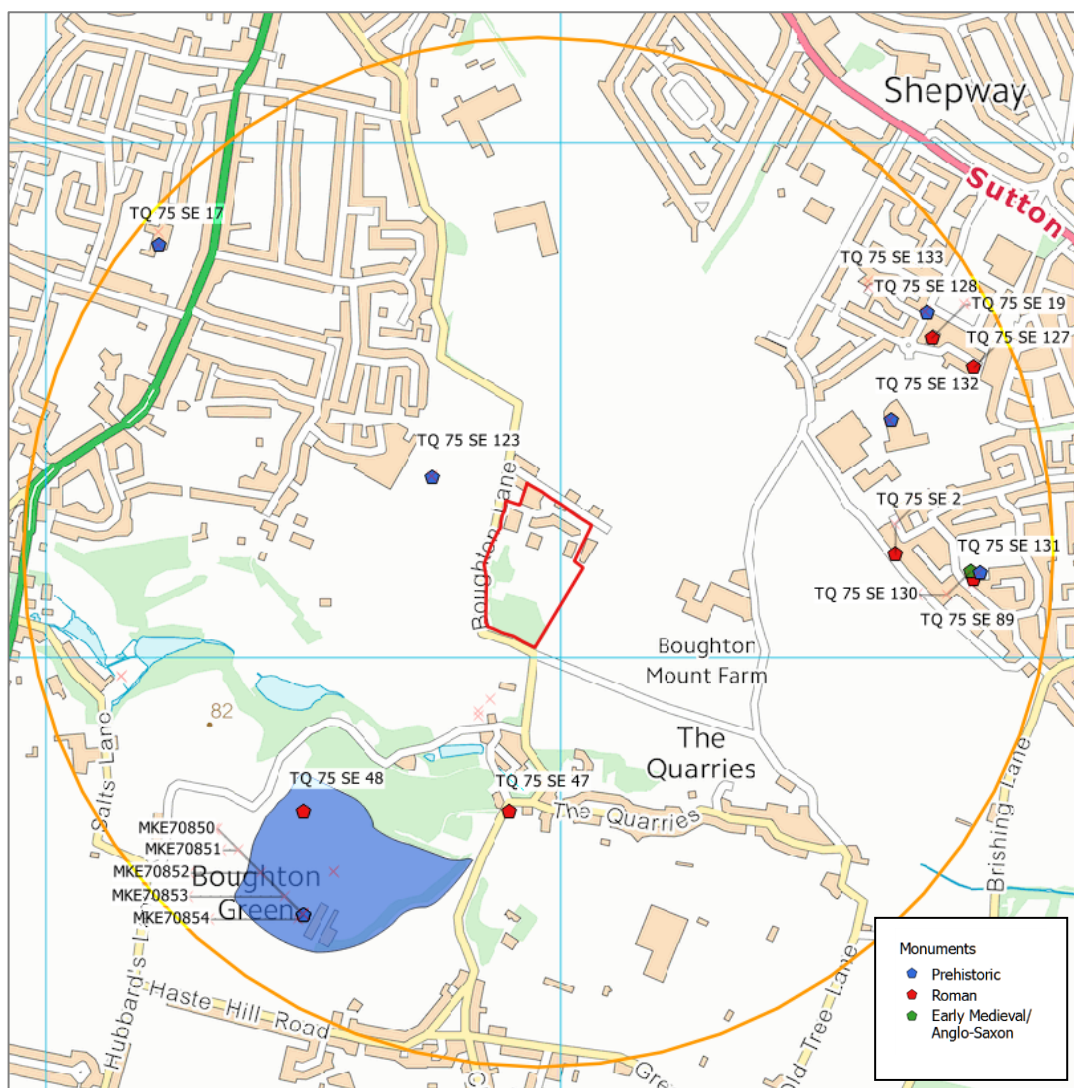


Figure 5. Prehistoric – Early Medieval Monuments within the 1km Study Area.

⁶ KHER TQ 75 SE 123.

13. The ragstone quarries at Boughton Monchelsea have probably been in use since the Roman period. Roman remains and structural evidence recorded near Brishing Court, c.1km southeast of the Site and close to Pested Bars Road within the eastern part of the Study Area suggest the presence of a large Roman villa estate associated with this earliest period of ragstone quarrying. No Roman material was recorded during archaeological work west of Boughton Lane, and the potential for encountering Roman material within undisturbed parts of the Site is considered to be low.
14. The principal medieval activity within the Study Area was associated with the quarries. The parish church and medieval core of the village lay over c.2km south of the Site. One of three large houses in the parish in the post-medieval period, and probably earlier, known as 'Wychden', the seat of the Alchorne family, stood on the site of the present Rock House, on the opposite (south) side of Boughton Lane from the Site. This house was also known as 'The Clock House', and had become 'Boughton Mount' by the middle of the 18th century.
15. A new mansion house was built on the north side of Boughton Lane, 300m north of the present Rock House, within the northern part of the Site, by John Braddick, the new owner of the Boughton Mount Estate, in the early 1820s, together with an extensive walled garden and glasshouses to the northeast of the house in which he intended to cultivate new varieties of fruit trees.
16. The 1842 Boughton Monchelsea tithe map is the earliest to show the layout of the new house (Boughton Mount) and its outbuildings, together with the small almost square detached folly standing southwest of the house, and the semi-circular edge of the garden defined by the Ha-Ha.



Figure 6. Boughton Monchelsea Tithe Map, 1842.

17. Late 19th and early 20th century sale catalogues detail the ragstone-built and slate-roofed house with its extensive cellars, the estate offices to the north of the house, the stable yard to the northwest, the walled kitchen garden to the northeast, and the extensive pleasure grounds containing specimen trees. The Ha Ha separated the lawns from the paddock to the south, and the grotto is described as '*a rustic stone grotto and fernery, the roof of which, approached by two flights of stone steps, forms a summer house with flower garden.*'



Figure 7. The southeast side of Boughton Mount House.

18. An aerial photograph shows Boughton Mount House and gardens shortly before its destruction by fire in c.1944 (Figure 7).



Figure 8. Aerial photograph, 1940.

19. The site of the former house and the existing ancillary buildings and garden walls are of local archaeological and historical interest.

Impacts upon archaeological deposits

20. As the land was farmland until the middle of the 19th, when the mansion house was built, existing impacts on below ground strata will derive principally from long-term cultivation, which will inevitably have impacted upon potential underlying archaeological deposits.

21. It is understood that no development is proposed within the former gardens or parkland so there would be impact there upon potential underlying archaeological deposits.
22. Any underlying archaeological deposits within the northern part of the site will have been truncated by the foundations and services of both the Victorian and later buildings, and will have been completely removed by the extensive cellarage beneath the former house and the substantial water tank constructed beneath the coach house in the stable block to the northwest of the house. There is likely to be significant horticultural truncation to any underlying archaeological deposits within the former walled garden in the northeast part of the Site.

Conclusions

23. There are no designated archaeological assets within the Site.
24. A single designated archaeological asset (scheduled monument) is recorded within the 1km Study Area: a prehistoric defended settlement south of Quarry Wood. Proposed development within the Site will not have an adverse impact upon the fabric, significance or setting of the scheduled monument.
25. The Kent Historic Environment Record shows a single non-designated monument within the northwest part of the Site, former stable buildings of Boughton Mount House.
26. The Kent Historic Environment Record shows evidence for prehistoric activity immediately west of the Site and there is considered to be a medium potential for encountering prehistoric material within undisturbed parts of the Site. There is considered to be a low potential for encountering archaeological activity of other periods before the middle of the 19th century, when the mansion house was built. Non-designated buildings, foundations and garden walls associated with this stage of the history of the site are of local archaeological and historical interest.

27. There is no evidence to suggest any obvious significant archaeological constraints to proposed development within the northwestern part of the Site.
28. On the basis of the available evidence, it is advised that further archaeological investigation may be required by the LPA archaeologist in advance of development. In the first instance this should comprise a desk-based archaeological assessment combined with an archive study to provide as detailed a history of the former Boughton Mount House and its grounds as possible, which will inform the need and scope of any further archaeological works which may be necessary.
29. Underlying archaeological deposits will have been truncated locally by the foundations of the former and modern buildings, cellars beneath the former house, from a water tank beneath the stable block, and from horticultural activity within the former walled garden.
30. The retention of non-designated early Victorian buildings and garden walls where possible would enhance the historical significance of the site of the former mansion house and its grounds.