

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION AT ASHDOWN  
COURT, ASHFORD, KENT TN24  
8EJ.**



**REPORT NO: R11701**



**APRIL 2014**



**An Archaeological Investigation at Ashdown Court, Ashford, Kent  
TN24 8EJ.**

**Site Code: KASH14**

**Application Ref: SE/10/03384?**

**Central National Grid Reference: TR 0108 4305**

**Written and Researched By Phil Frickers**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, April 2014**

**PCA Report Number: R11701**

**Project Manager: Helen Hawkins MfA**

**Commissioning Client: Durkan Limited**

**Contractor:**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited**

**Unit 54 Brockley Cross Business Centre**

**96 Endwell Road**

**Brockley**

**London**

**SE4 2PD**

**Tel: 020 7732 3925**

**Fax: 020 7732 7896**

**Email: [hhawkins@pre-construct.com](mailto:hhawkins@pre-construct.com)**

**Website: [www.pre-construct.com](http://www.pre-construct.com)**

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**April 2014**

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**DOCUMENT VERIFICATION**


**Site Name**

**Ashdown Court, Hardinge Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8EJ**

**Type of project**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Project Code			K3429
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	P Frickers		29.04.14
Graphics Prepared by:	J Simonson		29.04.14
Graphics Checked by:	J Brown	<i>Josephine Brown</i>	29.04.14
Project Manager Sign-off:	H Hawkins		29.04.14

Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd  
Unit 54  
Brockley Cross Business Centre  
96 Endwell Road  
London  
SE4 2PD

## **1 ABSTRACT**

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken in three phases on a site at Ashdown Court, Ashford, Kent TN24 8EJ by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. Area A was conducted on 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February 2014, Area B, on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014, and Area C took place on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.
- 1.2 The watching brief on Area A consisted of archaeological monitoring during ground reduction in the south-western corner of the study site.
- 1.3 Area B consisted of archaeological ground monitoring during ground reduction in the north-western corner of the study site.
- 1.4 Area C consisted of archaeological ground monitoring during ground reduction in the north-eastern corner of the study site.
- 1.5 No features of archaeological significance were discovered. One sherd of late medieval pottery was recovered from a made ground horizon in Area B. The watching brief indicated that the site had been heavily truncated by previous development.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on the site of Ashdown Court, Hardinge Road, Ashford, Kent.

2.2 An archaeological condition had been attached to the site as part of the planning approval. Condition 8 stated:

*No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or their successors in title, has secured the implementation of a watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the local planning authority so that the excavation is observed and items of interest and finds are recorded. The watching brief will be in accordance with a written programme and specification which has previously been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

*Reason: to ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.*

2.3 Discussions were carried out with Wendy Rogers, Archaeological Adviser to Ashford Borough Council, and she advised that in this instance, the standard Kent County Council Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief would suffice as the specification for the site. This specification was subsequently supplied to PCA by Wendy Rogers.

2.4 The site was triangular in shape and was bounded to the west by North Street, to the north by Hardinge Road and to the south-east by a narrow footpath running north-east south-west with residential buildings beyond. The site sloped significantly from south to north with a height on the southern boundary of 54.57m OD and heights on the northern boundary of between 52.17m and 51.88m OD.

2.5 The central National Grid Reference for the site was TR 0108 4305

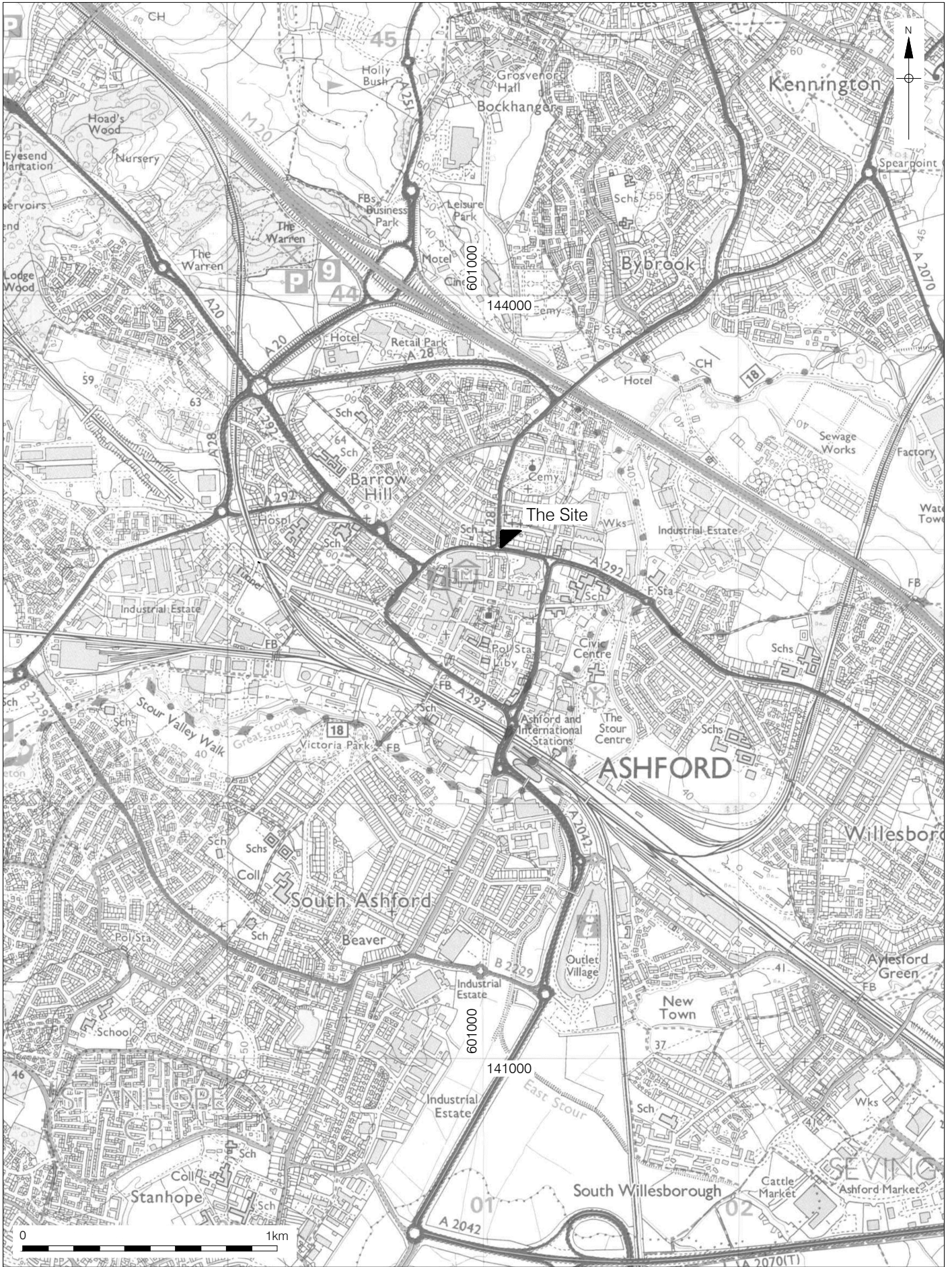
2.6 The site was given the unique site code KASH 14.

2.7 The principal objectives for the watching brief, as outlined in the Specification for the work (Rogers 2014), were to:

- Identify evidence for any Palaeolithic activity in the area of the study site.
- Identify any evidence of land use or settlement during the Roman period, or activity associated with the nearby Roman Road.

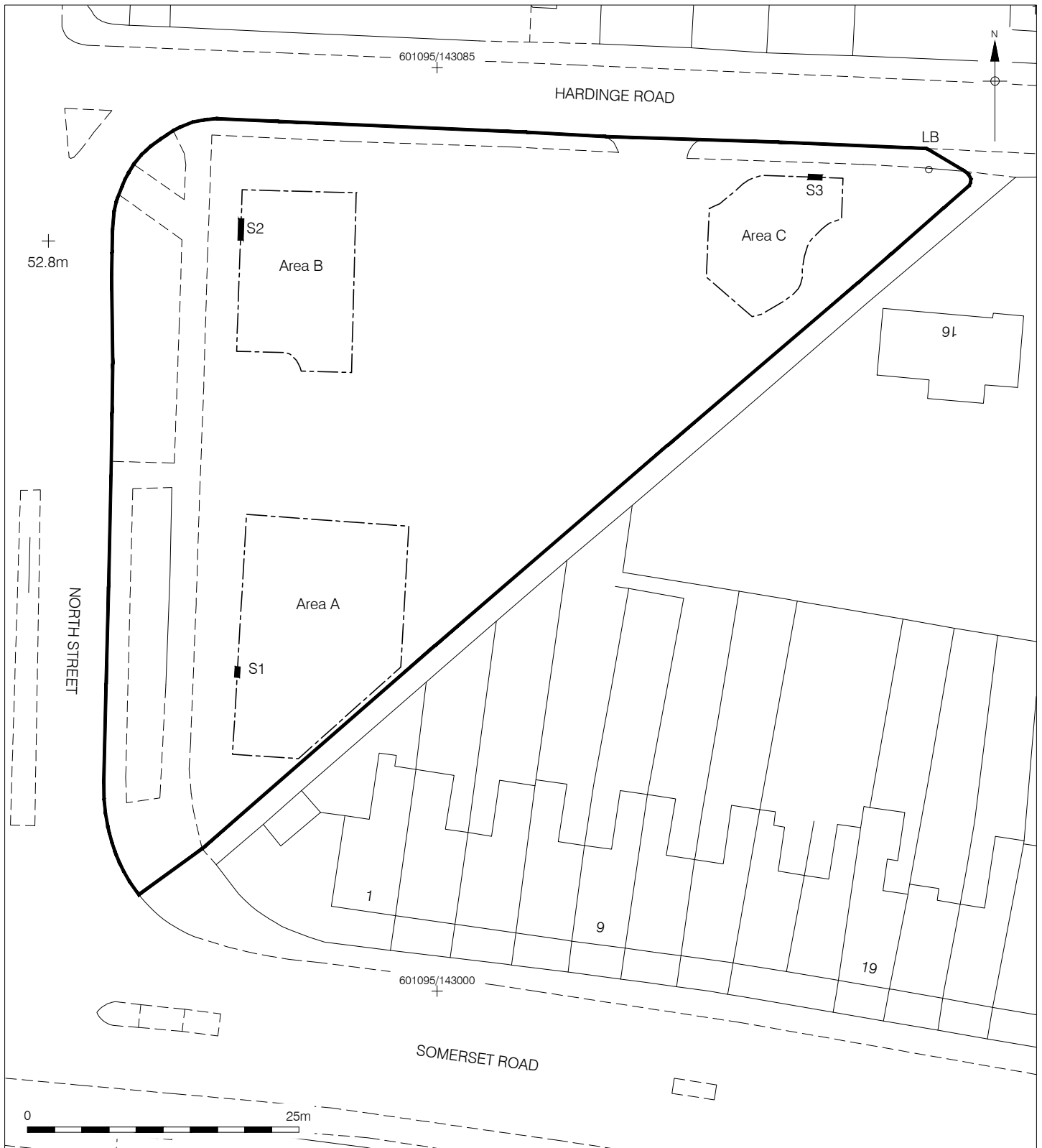
2.8 The project was monitored on behalf of Ashford Borough Council by Wendy Rogers, archaeological adviser for Kent County Council, project managed for PCA Ltd by Helen Hawkins and supervised by the author.

2.6 The commissioning client was Durkan Ltd.



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Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:20,000 at A4



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 29/04/14 JS

Figure 2  
 Trench Location  
 1:500 at A4



### **3 PLANNING BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2012-Section 12
- 3.1.1 The planning framework for archaeology is set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government in the NPPF (2012). This set out the Secretary of State's policy on archaeological remains on land. It provided recommendations, many of which have been integrated into county structure and local development plans.
- 3.2 Ashford Borough Council's Local Plan (2000) has a number of saved policies, several of which relate to archaeology:

#### **Archaeology and Ancient Monuments**

3.35 In Ashford Borough there are 30 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, that is sites of national archaeological importance. These sites are shown on the Proposals Map.

3.36 Kent County Council maintains an Archaeological Sites and Monuments record which identifies known archaeological sites in the county. Using this and other detailed information, the County Council can identify areas of archaeological potential where there is a reasonable possibility that archaeological remains exist.

3.37 Within these areas, the possible impact of proposed development on archaeological remains will be considered. In certain cases developers may be expected to provide information, before a planning application is determined, on the nature and quality of any archaeological remains on the site of the proposed development. An archaeological evaluation may be needed to a specification and standard provided by the Borough Council. Large scale development proposals affecting areas outside areas of known archaeological potential may also require such an evaluation.

3.38 Such evaluation work will enable the Council to come to a balanced judgement on any proposal. Should a significant archaeological find be made unexpectedly during development, the Council will seek specialist advice and encourage appropriate action, be it recording, preservation in situ (the preferred option), limited excavation or full excavation. In some cases approved schemes may need to be amended to avoid excessive damage to the remains.

EN22 Development which would adversely affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument, its setting or other nationally important archaeological remains will not be permitted.

EN23 In exceptional circumstances, permission may be given for development affecting important archaeological sites of regional or local importance, if the applicant has demonstrated that the site will be satisfactorily preserved either in situ or by record. Any archaeological recording should be by an approved archaeological body and take place in advance of development in accordance with a specification and programme of work to be submitted to and approved by the Borough Council.

EN24 The Council will need to be satisfied that the archaeological implications of development proposals have been properly considered before permission is granted.

EN25 Should an important archaeological find be made on a site which already has the benefit of planning permission the Council will seek to secure access for a recognised archaeological body to evaluate and record the archaeological remains before any development takes place, or if the find is made during development, before the development continues.

## **4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **4.1 Geology**

- 4.1.1 The British Geological Survey of England and Wales (Sheet 271) states that the superficial geology of the site is Clay Silt Sand and Gravel over bedrock Geology of Lower Greensand Group Sandstone and Mudstone (bgs.ac.uk).

### **4.2 Topography**

- 4.2.1 The study site was triangular in shape with lengths of 65m on the west side and 60m on the north side. The site sloped significantly from south to north with a height on the southern boundary of 54.57m OD and heights on the northern boundary of between 52.17m and 51.88m OD.
- 4.2.2 Made ground was observed along the western edge of the site, levelling out the natural incline in the ground.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The archaeological and historical background is taken from an archaeological desk based assessment for the Ashford Commercial Centre (PCA 2011) and from historical maps of the area. An archaeological priority area, as defined in the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan, is marked directly to the west of Canterbury Road, opposite the site.
- 5.2 Palaeolithic Period (c. 500,000 – c. 10,000 BC)
- 5.2.1 Palaeolithic remains have been identified in the wider Ashford area, located in the River Terrace Gravels which may underlie the site.
- 5.3 Roman Period (43 – c. 410 AD)
- 5.3.1 The projected line of a Roman road runs near to the site, along the eastern end of Hardinge Road where Hardinge Road runs north-south.
- 5.4 Saxon
- 5.4.1 Evidence pertaining to the Saxon period is sparse, despite the name having Saxon origins. Former variations of the town name included *Essetesford*, and *Eshetisford*, believed to derive from 'æscet' or 'æscseat' meaning 'collection of ash trees' or a corner angle where ash trees grow. The earliest written record of the name appears in the Will of Wulfgyth dated to 1053, but may date earlier, and relates that land at *Essetesford* is bequeathed to her daughter Ealdgyth.
- 5.4.2 Precise information about the settlement pattern at this time remains unknown. There is a record of an Saxon inhumation burial with associated claw beaker and weaponry discovered prior to 1856 near to the site. It is likely that settlements and key road systems implemented during the Roman period at least partially remained in use at this time.
- 5.5 Medieval Period (1066 – c. 1485)
- 5.5.1 The medieval core of Ashford is located to the south of the site. The *Domesday* records three entries relating to Ashford. These include South Ashford (Licktop Manor), East Stour (Manor of Essella) and the main town itself which was comprised of a church and two mills:
- 5.5.2 Additional evidence for the development of the town derives from the earliest map of England; the 'Gough' map dating to c.1360. This illustrates a settlement at Ashford with a road leading from Sussex to Canterbury, roughly following the alignment of the projected Roman Road
- 5.6 Post-Medieval

- 5.6.1 The early post-medieval period saw a steady rise in Ashford's population from 700 to 800 in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to around 1200 during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A review of the death rates revealed there to have been repeated outbreaks of disease. The number of deaths more than doubled in the years 1578, 1584, 1594, 1625 (owing to plague), 1687 and in 1741, the latter most likely a result of a smallpox epidemic. These undoubtedly kept the population from increasing more rapidly.
- 5.6.2 A key influence in the development of Ashford was improved transport links. The first turnpike road in Kent was implemented in 1709 and the first to affect Ashford appeared in 1762. This spanned the Faversham to Ashford route and then on to Hythe, and also the Ashford to Canterbury road. Additional roads from Ashford to Tenterden, Maidstone, and Hamstreet were turnpiked in 1767 and 1793 respectively (the latter two roads in the same year). In total there were four turnpike trusts responsible for the roads leading in and out of Ashford.
- 5.6.3 The major boost to population and local industry was the coming of the railways. The rail link to London reached Ashford by 1842. This was one of the earliest London to Dover railway lines.
- 5.6.4 The population rose dramatically between the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from 2,151 in 1801 to 12,808 in 1901.
- 5.6.5 The site lay to the north of the main town of Ashford until the later 19<sup>th</sup> century when houses were built in the area as Ashford expanded. The Ordnance Survey map of 1878 shows a footpath running south-west north-east along the southern boundary of the site. A number of semi detached houses front North Street and Hardinge Road, set back from the road. A nursery is marked in the north-west corner of the site. By 1907, the houses appear to have been replaced with terraces. A pub is marked in the south-west corner. By 1960, the houses have been replaced by a large bakery building located in the centre of the site. The pub is still marked in the south-west corner. The bakery building was replaced by the Ashdown Court flats in the 1970s.

## **6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 6.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd supervised the excavation, by 360° tracked excavator, of all groundworks except where deep foundations from the previous standing building were removed. This included the stripping of subsoils, ground reduction above the natural deposits, and foundation excavations. The machines were fitted with flat bladed ditching buckets, and removed the earth in spits of no more than 0.10m per pass.
- 6.2 After the removal of each distinguishable soil layer the areas of excavation were examined for archaeological artefacts, features, structures and deposits. The spoil heaps were also examined for artefacts.
- 6.3 The faces of the trenches that required examination and recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. All investigation of archaeological levels was by hand.
- 6.4 All recording systems employed were fully compatible with those used elsewhere in Kent. Individual descriptions of archaeological strata and features excavated and/or exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. All plans and sections of archaeological deposits were recorded on polyester based drawing film, the plans being drawn at a scale of 1:100, and 1:150, and the sections at 1:10, as appropriate. The recording system used was a combination of multicontext plans complemented by sections, where appropriate.
- 6.5 A photographic record of the investigations was prepared.
- 6.6 The completed archive, including all written, drawn and photographic records, will be deposited with the local museum.

## 7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Area A

- 7.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered on site was a natural fine sandy clay light grey deposit with orangey mottling [4]. This natural layer was recorded at a height of 53.23m OD and located 2m east of the western site perimeter and 15m north of the southernmost point of the site. The base of this context was not seen.
- 7.1.2 Overlying this layer was a further layer of natural sandy clay [3] which was mid orangey brown in colour. This layer was approximately 300mm thick and located at a height of 53.50m OD.
- 7.1.3 Sealing this context was a layer of silty clay up to 0.15m in thickness recorded at a height of 53.58m OD. This was interpreted as a thin layer of made ground.
- 7.1.4 Above the made ground was a layer of loose hogging [1], coarse round pebbles/small boulders up to 300mm deep. This was present all round the edge of the 1970s development up to 0.80m deep in places. This layer illustrated that during the construction of the previous building, first a large hole was excavated then the concrete ground beams inserted and the border infilled with the hogging.

### 7.2 Area B

- 7.2.1 The earliest deposit in this area was a fine clayey sand, light yellow in colour [9]. This natural layer was seen at a height of 51.70m OD in a small area that had been truncated extensively prior to the installation of concrete ground beams slightly to the north.
- 7.2.2 Sealing the natural was a light yellowish brown silty clay [8] containing charcoal, brick fragments and a single sherd of pottery. This layer was 0.25m in thickness and seen at a height of 51.70m OD. The context was interpreted as made ground which was much thicker further at the base of the slope than at the south end of the site. The potsherd has been identified as M40B, an Ashford/Wealden sandy ware that is dated to between 1175 and 1400 AD, (C. Jarrett, pers comm).
- 7.2.3 Sealing layer [8] was a further layer of made ground [7] mid brown in colour and slightly sandy clay in composition. Up to 0.45m in depth this was seen at a height of 52.05m OD. There was no dating evidence but this may well be a post medieval deposit. No features were seen within layers [7] or [8].
- 7.2.4 Above these layers was a sandy silt dark grey brown in colour with shell and brick fragments [6]. With a maximum depth of 300mm depth and a height of 52.30m OD this layer was interpreted as topsoil relating to a ground surface prior to the construction of the 1970s flats.
- 7.2.5 The latest material seen in Area B was layer of compacted demolition rubble [5].

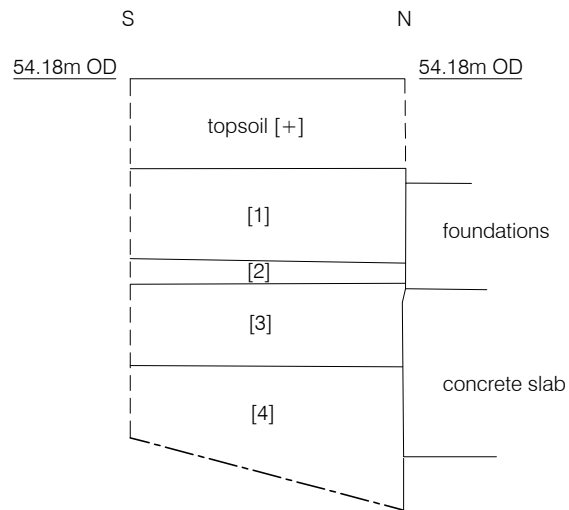
### 7.3 Area C

- 7.3.1 In this area the earliest deposit encountered was a slightly sandy clay, soft in texture and lightish yellow in colour [13]. This layer had a diffuse top horizon located at 50.70m OD. The base of this natural context was not seen.
- 7.3.2 Overlying layer [13] was a thick layer of fine sandy clay lightish yellow brown in colour with orangey mottling within it [12]. The top horizon of this natural deposit was at 51.55m OD. The thickness was 0.80m.
- 7.3.3 Sealing the natural layers was a loose deposit of demolition material [11], up to 200mm thick, consisting of brick fragments, silt and mortar debris. This was interpreted as ground raising for the 1970s development.
- 7.3.4 Finally this area was covered along the northern edge by a layer of redeposited clayey sand [11]. This acted as a subsoil for the flower beds placed on top. Further south, a compacted layer of brick fragments [14], 400mm in depth with a top height of 51.95m OD acted as the base for the tarmac of a car park that occupied this area whilst the previous flats were standing.

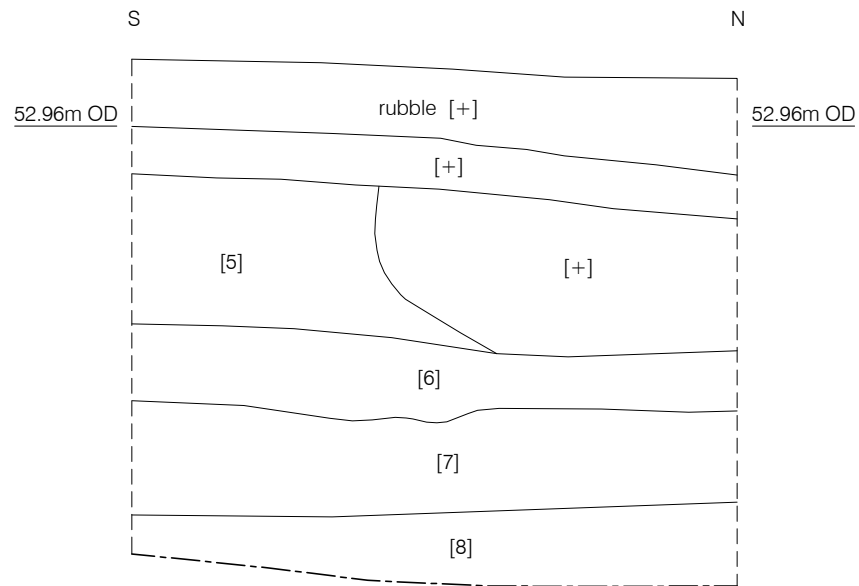
## 8 INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 No archaeological features were identified during the watching brief.
- 8.2 The earliest deposits evidenced during the watching brief were the fine sandy clay layers of natural ground found in all areas. These were recorded as layers [3] and [4] in Area A, layer [9] in Area B, and layers [12] and [13] in Area C.
- 8.3 A small amount of made ground was found in Area A amongst the subsoil [2]. The majority of made ground was found in Area B, layers [7] and [8]. The presence of pottery within layer [8] attests to the wider, well-attested medieval activity from the town to the south of the study site. The pottery was not found in association with any features and therefore may well be considered residual.
- 8.4 In Area B, below the make up for the modern building, a layer of dark brown sandy silt [6] was considered to be an earlier topsoil horizon.
- 8.5 Layers [1], [5], [10], [11] and [14] in the areas examined were considered modern, associated with the 1970s development of blocks of flats on the site.
- 8.6 All sediments were thoroughly examined on site and none were deemed suitable for sampling or further investigation.
- 8.7 The erection of the now demolished flats on the site in the 1970s had a considerable effect on any potential archaeology. First a large hole was quarried across most of the site, with considerable ground reduction especially on the southeast side where the hill was removed to provide a level area for a car park. Then large reinforced footings were inserted to counter against subsidence on the sloping ground and finally the area around the standing buildings was backfilled with stone hogging. It was clear that the previous development on the site had completely truncated any potential archaeological remains.

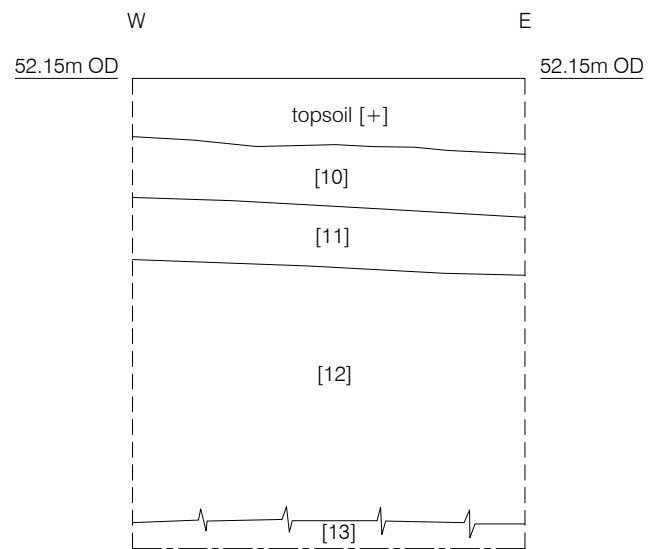




Section 1  
Area A  
East Facing



Section 2  
Area B  
East Facing



Section 3  
Area C  
South Facing

0 1m  
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Figure 3  
Sections  
1:25 at A4

## PLATES



Plate 1: Layers [3] and [4] in Area A



Plate 2: Area B, Layers [6], [7] and [8]



Plate 3: Area C

## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Trevor Parslow of Durkan Construction Ltd for commissioning the work. Thanks also to Wendy Rogers for monitoring the project on behalf of Kent County Council.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Kevin Schofield of Durkan and Ling Demolition for their help during the groundwork in Ashford.
- 9.2 The author would also like to thank Helen Hawkins for her project management and editing, Chris Jarrett for the pottery identification and Hayley Baxter for the illustrations.

## 10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fairman A 2011 An Archaeological Desktop Assessment of the Ashford Commercial Quarter, Kent, TN23 1HU Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd unpublished client report

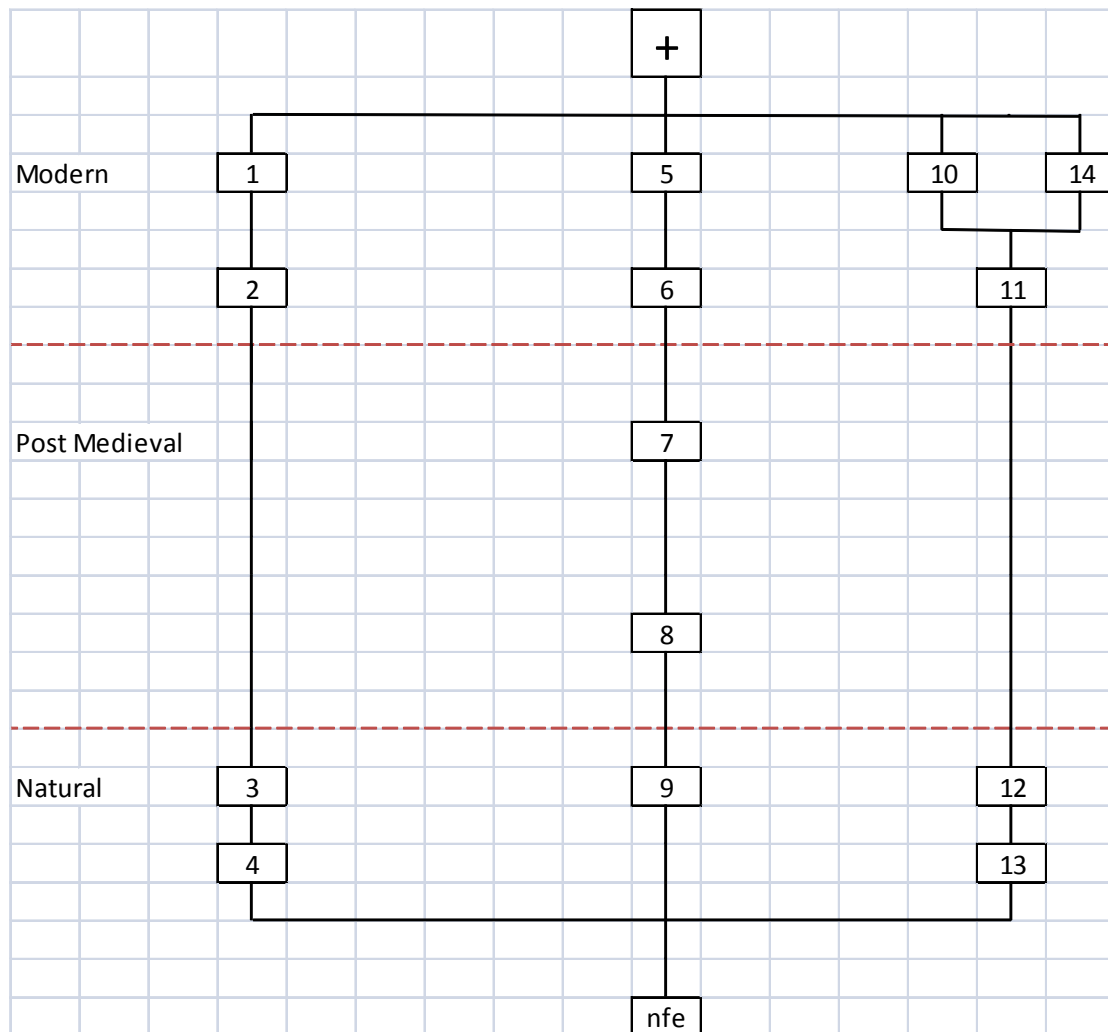
Rogers W 2014, Specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief in Kent, Kent County Council

bgs.ac.uk accessed online 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014

## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Site Code	Context No.	Area	Plan	Section / Elevation	Type	Description	Date
KASH14	1	A		S1	Layer	Hogging, 1970s Infill	Modern
KASH14	2	A		S1	Layer	Earlier subsoil/Made ground	Modern
KASH14	3	A		S1	Layer	Sandy Clay	Natural
KASH14	4	A	Area A	S1	Layer	Sandy Clay	Natural
KASH14	5	B		S2	Layer	1970s Surface	Modern
KASH14	6	B		S2	Layer	Earlier topsoil	Modern
KASH14	7	B	Area B	S2	Layer	Made ground	Post Medieval
KASH14	8	B	Area B	S2	Layer	Made ground	Medieval
KASH14	9	B	Area B		Layer	Clayey Sand	Natural
KASH14	10	C		S3	Layer	Redeposited sandy clay	Modern
KASH14	11	C		S3	Layer	Demolition material	Modern
KASH14	12	C		S3	Layer	Sandy Clay	Natural
KASH14	13	C	Area C	S3	Layer	Sandy Clay	Natural
KASH14	14	C		S3	Layer	Make up	Modern

## APPENDIX 2: STRATAGRAPHIC MATRIX



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## APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

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OASIS ID: preconst1-177389

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### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Investigation at Ashdown Court, Hardinge Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8EJ.
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the site of Ashdown Court, Ashford by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. The watching brief consisted of archaeological monitoring during ground reduction. No features of archaeological significance were discovered. One sherd of Medieval pottery was recovered from a layer of made ground on the west side of the site. It may well be residual.
Project dates	Start: 24-02-2014 End: 31-03-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	KASH 14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	NONE None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

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### Project location

Country	England
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Site location	KENT ASHFORD ASHFORD Ashdown Court
Postcode	TN24 8EJ.
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TR 601085 143055 50.8688469524 1.69734029551 50 52 07 N 001 41 50 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 51.88m Max: 54.57m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.
Project originator	Durkan Construction Ltd.
Project design originator	Trevor Parslow
Project director/manager	Helen Hawkins
Project supervisor	Phil Frickers
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Durkan Construction Ltd.

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### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Local museum
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Local museum
Digital Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital available Media	"Spreadsheets", "Text"

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Paper recipient	Archive	Local Museum
Paper available	Media	"Context sheet", "Plan", "Section", "Unpublished Text"

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### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Investigation at Ashdown Court, Ashford Kent TN24 8EJ
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Frickers P
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Place of issue or publication	Brockley, London

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Entered by	Phil Frickers (pfrickers@o2.co.uk)
Entered on	17 April 2014

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# PCA

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## **PCA SOUTH**

UNIT 54  
BROCKLEY CROSS BUSINESS CENTRE  
96 ENDWELL ROAD  
BROCKLEY  
LONDON SE4 2PD  
TEL: 020 7732 3925 / 020 7639 9091  
FAX: 020 7639 9588  
EMAIL: [info@pre-construct.com](mailto:info@pre-construct.com)

---

## **PCA NORTH**

UNIT 19A  
TURSDALE BUSINESS PARK  
DURHAM DH6 5PG  
TEL: 0191 377 1111  
FAX: 0191 377 0101  
EMAIL: [info.north@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.north@pre-construct.com)

---

## **PCA CENTRAL**

7 GRANTA TERRACE  
STAPLEFORD  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE CB22 5DL  
TEL: 01223 845 522  
FAX: 01223 845 522  
EMAIL: [info.central@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.central@pre-construct.com)

---

## **PCA WEST**

BLOCK 4  
CHILCOMB HOUSE  
CHILCOMB LANE  
WINCHESTER  
HAMPSHIRE SO23 8RB  
TEL: 01962 849 549  
EMAIL: [info.west@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.west@pre-construct.com)

---

## **PCA MIDLANDS**

17-19 KETTERING RD  
LITTLE BOWDEN  
MARKET HARBOROUGH  
LEICESTERSHIRE LE16 8AN  
TEL: 01858 468 333  
EMAIL: [info.midlands@pre-construct.com](mailto:info.midlands@pre-construct.com)

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