

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

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Watching Brief

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at 115 Wansunt Road, Bexley, London  
Borough of Bexley**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 5044 7313**

**Site Code: WZR06**

**Written and researched by Richard Humphrey  
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, November 2006**

**Commissioning Client:**

**Chapelwood Homes**

**Contractor:**

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## CONTENTS

1	Abstract	3
2	Introduction	4
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	7
4	Archaeological Methodology	9
5	Archaeological Results	10
6	Conclusions	12
7	Acknowledgements	13

### Appendices:

1	Context Index	14
2	Section Register	15
3	Oasis Form	16

### Illustrations:

Figure 1	The Site Location	5
Figure 2	Trench Locations	6
Figure 3	Representative Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	11

# 1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at the site of 115 Wansunt Road, Bexley, London Borough of Bexley. The site central National Grid Reference is TQ 5044 7313. The watching brief was undertaken between 24<sup>th</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> September 2006 by Richard Humphrey. The commissioning client was Chapelwood Homes.
- 1.2 The site is situated on land to the east of the junction of Wansunt Road and Dartford Road. The site is bordered to the north by the property 113 Wansunt Road, to the east by a property boundary, to the south by Dartford Road and to the west by Wansunt Road. The area is roughly flat.
- 1.3 A large test trench dug across the site revealed mid-twentieth century made ground lying directly over natural gravel deposits. Further excavation of footings for the proposed development revealed a similar sequence of stratigraphy. The absence of archaeological finds, features and deposits is most likely due a mid-twentieth century remediation event across much of the site.

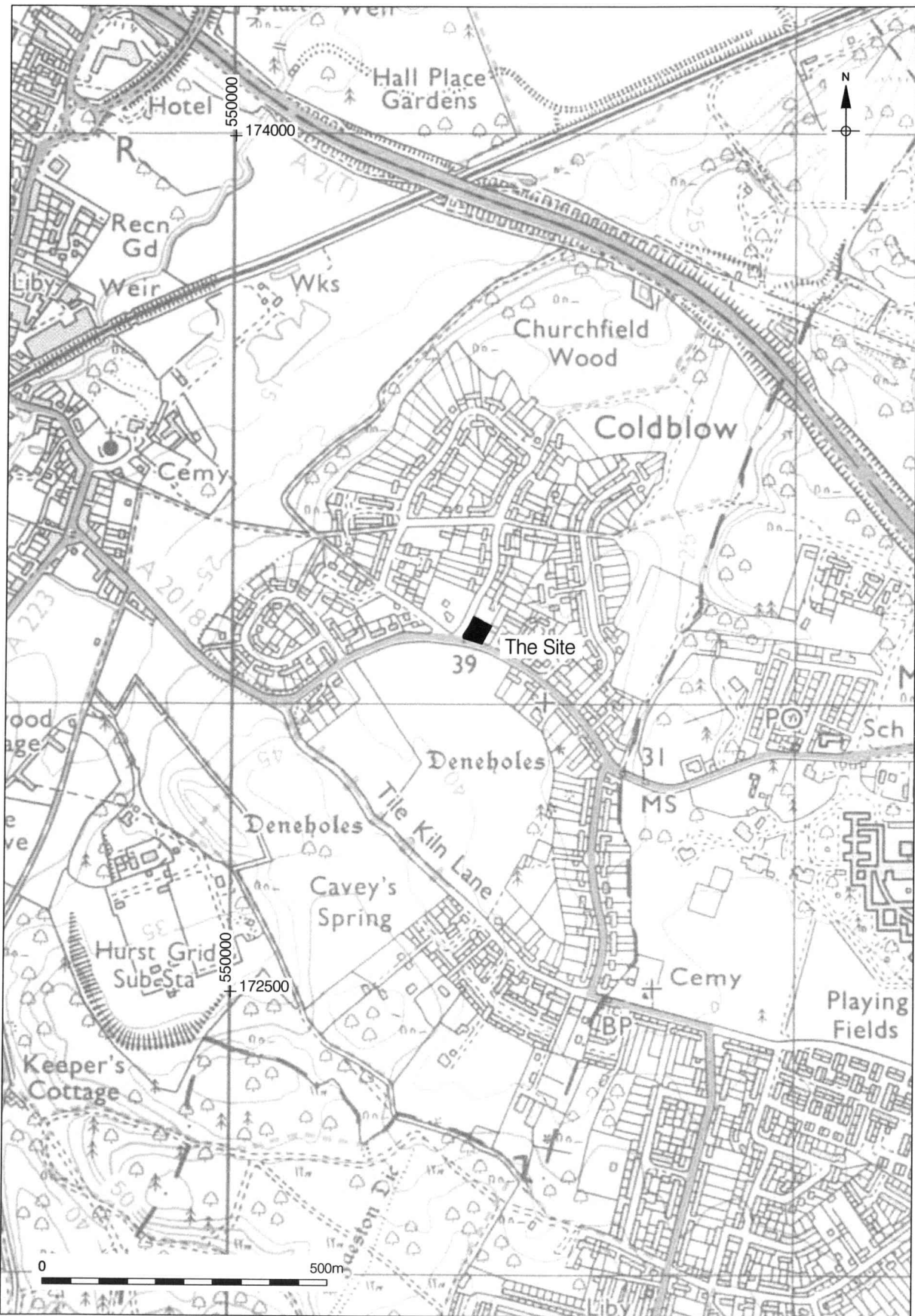
## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd between 24<sup>th</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> September 2006 on land at 115 Wansunt Road, Bexley, London Borough of Bexley (fig.1). The watching brief area was defined by Wansunt Road to the west, Dartford Road to the South, a property boundary of a house to the east and 113 Wansunt Road to the north (fig.2).
- 2.2 The work, completed prior to construction of residential premises was commissioned by Chapelwood Homes and was undertaken following English Heritage guidelines<sup>1</sup> and a Pre-Construct Archaeology specification<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3 The watching brief was conducted during the site set-up and enabling works associated with the new development. The ground works were undertaken by contractors of Chapelwood Homes.
- 2.4 Richard Humphrey undertook the watching brief and the project manager was Peter Moore.
- 2.5 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 5044 7313 and the site was given the code WZR06.
- 2.6 The study site lies outside an Archaeological Priority Zone. However, English Heritage required the presence of an archaeologist to supervise any ground reduction on the site because of the potential for Palaeolithic, Iron Age and Roman Archaeology.

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<sup>1</sup> English Heritage, Greater London Advisory Service, "Archaeological Guidance Papers: 3 Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork in London; 4 Archaeological Watching Briefs (1992).

<sup>2</sup> Peter Moore, 'Specification for an enhanced programme of archaeological observation and recording at 115 Wansunt Road, London Borough of Bexley'. Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, Unpublished report, July 2006



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Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:10,000 at A4

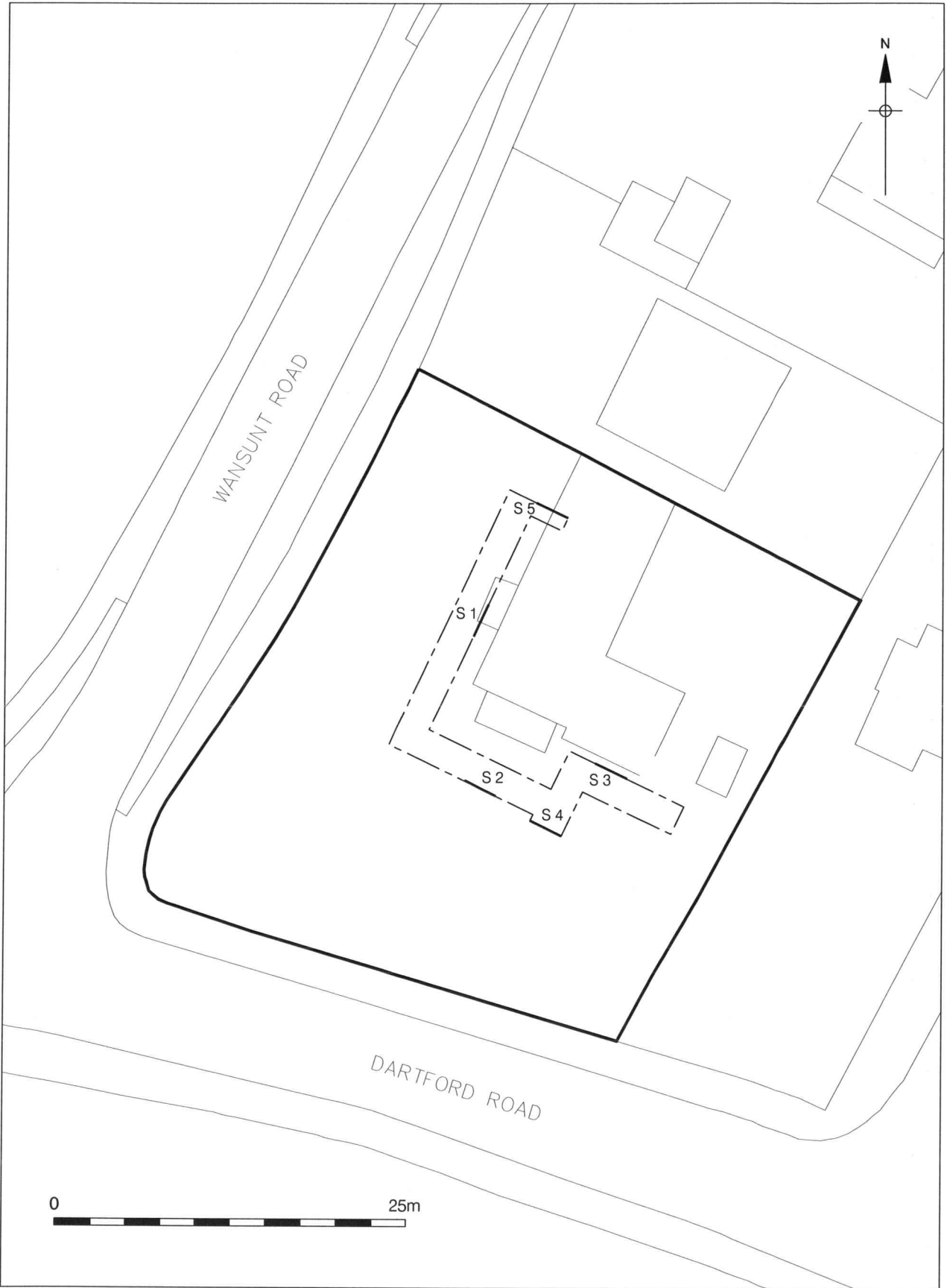


Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:400 at A4

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 While the site lies outside an archaeological priority zone, English Heritage advised that there is sufficient evidence of archaeological activity (Palaeolithic artefacts, Iron Age occupation and a Roman burial have been found nearby) within the vicinity to warrant archaeological mitigation.
- 3.2 There is an abundance of Palaeolithic activity surrounding the study area. Swanscombe is located five miles to the east of Bexley and contains some of the oldest examples of man-made flint tools in the country as well as ancient human remains. Deposits of this nature are often found to be incorporated into sand and gravel horizons as a result of changing sea levels<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, considerable quantities of flint tools have been recovered from the Wansunt and Bowman's Lodge pits on the western edge of Dartford Heath<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.3 The transition from Palaeolithic to Mesolithic, highlighted in the archaeological record by changes in flint working technologies, are represented in the locality of Wansunt Road. Finds from Crayford, North Cray, Foots Cray and Erith as well as Abbey Wood and Dartford Heath all suggest a landscape occupied by roaming hunter-gatherer communities.
- 3.4 The Neolithic period marks a shift from the hunting and gathering groups of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic towards a more sedentary lifestyle practiced by early farming communities. Axes from Upton represent increased selectivity in materials chosen for flint tools, as their source locations are from outside the area. This also confirms the establishment of trade routes not only between the Bexley area and other parts of the country but with the continent too. In addition to this, pottery of a style originating in the Rhine Basin was found in gravel workings near Erith. Also in this area, a prehistoric boat was found in peat marshes containing Neolithic flint tools.
- 3.5 The western side of Dartford Heath revealed a substantial Bronze Age hoard consisting of metal axe-heads, a chisel, knife, spearheads and a sword during excavations in 1930. Earlier excavations in 1906 and 1907 found a hoard of 17 gold bracelets also dating from the Bronze Age. These are a strong suggestion for Bronze Age occupation of the landscape surrounding the site.

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<sup>3</sup> Tester, 1985. The Archaeology of the Bexley Area. Bexley Libraries and Museums Department.

<sup>4</sup> Tester (1975). *Archaeologia Cantiana* XCI 29-39



- 3.6 In addition to a late Iron Age settlement uncovered during construction work in Crayford in 1936, material from the same period was discovered in Cold Blow Crescent in 1957. The fillings of a ditch showed pottery, animal bones, an iron knife and clay loom-weights most likely belonging to a late Iron Age community.
- 3.7 Although Watling Street marks the main route from London to Kent in Roman Britain, (passing through Welling, Bexleyheath and Crayford), there are Roman structural remains uncovered in the Bexley area. The potential remains of a villa were uncovered by gravel digging close to the Cray between Crayford and Bexley. This revealed floor surfaces and coins ranging from the early third to middle fourth centuries AD. Also, a lead coffin was found in 1878 in Bourne Road, Bexley containing the remains of a woman. The coffin is said to have been decorated with scallop shells but further information is limited owing to its reburial on the site. Further evidence of burials including cremations from the later Roman period are also seen in the area as well as another lead coffin burial between East Wickham and Plumstead.
- 3.8 Anglo-Saxon activity in the vicinity is sporadic. A large defensive earthwork seen to run roughly north-south to the southwest of the study area was partially excavated in 1934. This may have formed part of a much larger defensive system, designed to repel invasion from the west. However, a lack of solid dating evidence has caused uncertainty regarding its original construction date.
- 3.9 The medieval period is marked in the area by the growth and development of towns and villages, in this case, Bexley. The area surrounding the village would have been divided up into enclosed woodland and field systems that were leased to tenant farmers. There is no evidence for medieval structures existing within the site.
- 3.10 Contractors working for Chapelwood Homes detailed the location and nature of the building that formerly occupied the site. It was said to be a building dating from the 1950's and was built as a result of the previous building being bomb-damaged during the Second World War. Whereas the extent and nature of the earliest demolished building is unknown, plans showing the exact location of the recently demolished building and depths of truncation were made available by the contractor.

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Prior to arrival on site, contractors working for Chapelwood Homes had demolished the previous standing structure in advance of construction works. The site was a flat, open plot of land measuring approximately 1533 square metres.
- 4.2 In order to assess the archaeological potential of the site, an approximate L-shaped trench measuring approximately 49m by 2m in total, was excavated by machine under an archaeological supervision around the outside of the previous building footprint, on what was considered to be undisturbed ground (fig.2). In addition to this, two extensions to this trench, representative of the proposed new building foundations, were also opened up and recorded.
- 4.3 Recording on site was undertaken using the single context recording system as specified in the Museum of London Site Manual<sup>5</sup>. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20, and representative sections at a scale of 1:10. Contexts were numbered sequentially and recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets.
- 4.4 Levels were provided on site by Chapelwood Homes site engineer.
- 4.5 The site was given the Museum of London code: WZR06.

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<sup>5</sup> Museum of London, 1994. Archaeological Site Manual.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 5.1 Topsoil (1), with a large gravel and demolition rubble content, was removed across the test trench. This was seen at a height ranging from 99.71mOD to 99.50mOD and extended from between 0.30m to 0.60m in thickness.
- 5.2 Below this a gravel layer (2) that combined silt and clay with demolition material was observed. Yellow and red frogged bricks, most likely from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century were common in this horizon. This layer extended from 0.50m in the western side of the site to 1.00m in the eastern side of the site and was seen at a heights ranging from 99.11mOD to 99.26mOD.
- 5.3 Sitting below this layer at the eastern end of the site was layer (3) at a height of 98.20m OD and a thickness of c.0.20m. This layer was not seen in the western end of the site. It consisted of a moderately compacted sandy-silt horizon with gravel inclusions, and was most likely a natural deposit. No archaeological features were observed cutting into this layer and no finds were recovered.
- 5.4 Below (3) on the eastern extremity of the site and below (2) on the western side of the site, lay natural orange sandy-gravels (4). These were encountered at heights ranging from 98.61mOD to 97.70mOD. As above, no archaeological features were seen cutting this layer.
- 5.5 Excavation of footings for the new building were carried out under archaeological supervision where they extended beyond the known area of the recently demolished building. Two areas were recorded and showed no sign of archaeological finds or features. A footing dug for the southeast corner of the proposed development showed a 0.40m thick layer of topsoil to exist at a height of 99.16mOD. Below this was a layer of demolition material consisting of red and yellow frogged bricks. This measured 0.30m in thickness at a height of 98.76mOD. Natural sandy gravels were seen at 98.36mOD.
- 5.6 A footing in the northwest corner of the new building revealed a similar sequence of stratigraphy with topsoil 0.50m thick at a height of 99.28mOD, demolition rubble at 98.78mOD and natural sandy gravels at a height of 98.38mOD.

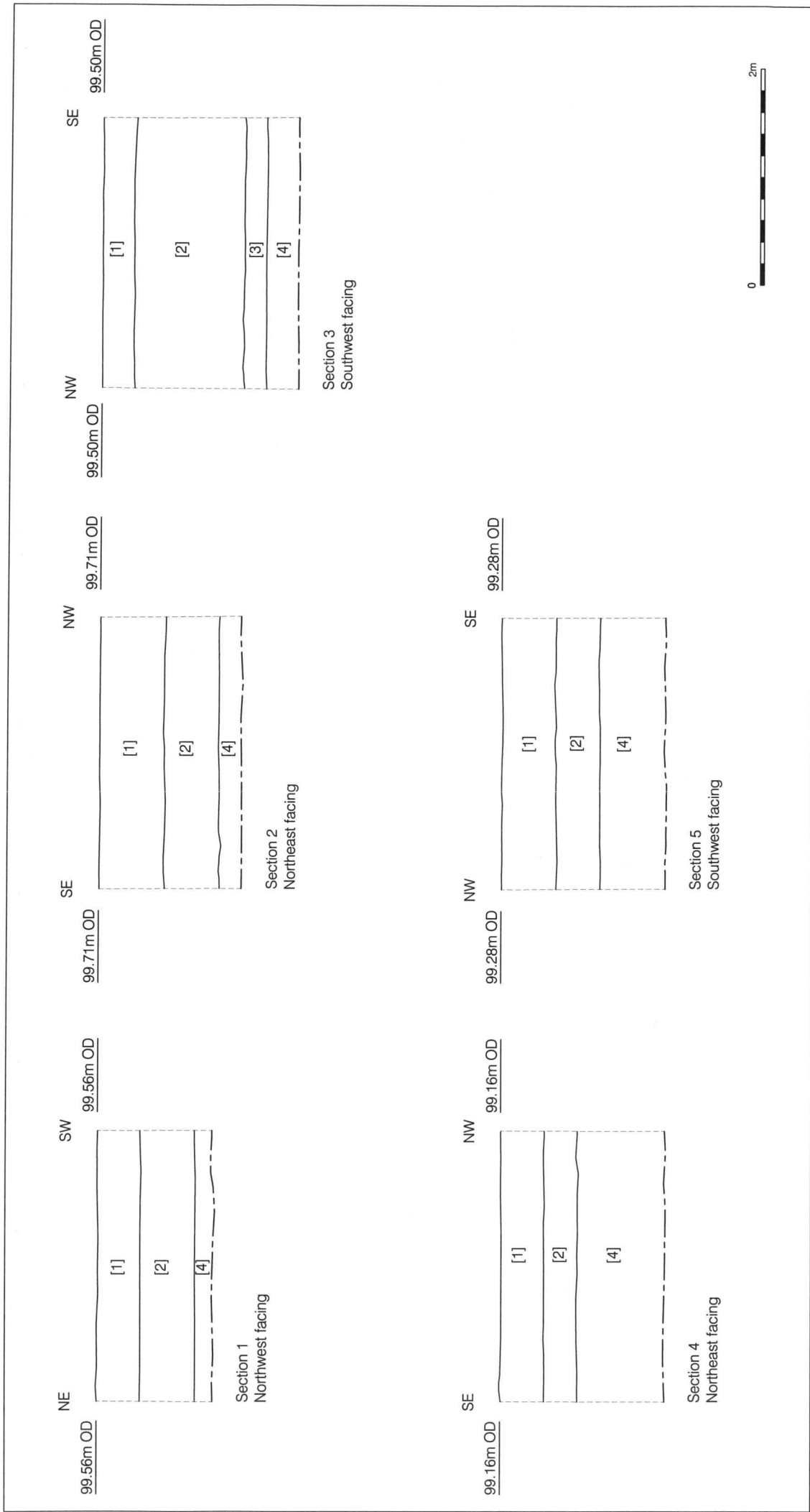


Figure 3  
Sections 1 to 5  
1:50 at A4

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The investigation trench and subsequent foundation extensions revealed natural gravel deposits at heights ranging from 97.70mOD to 98.61mOD. A silty deposit that was seen to overlie natural gravels on the eastern side of the site is most likely to be representative of a natural lense which was truncated on the western part of the site.
- 6.2 The overlying rubble layer seen across the site most likely represents a remediation process of demolition of the site's first building and levelling for the construction of the site's second building (subsequently demolished by Chapelwood Homes for the current redevelopment). The rubble remains suggest that the first building was nineteenth century in date.
- 6.3 No archaeological finds and features were found on the site.

## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Chapelwood Homes who generously funded this project.
  
- 7.2 The author would like to thank all Chapelwood employees for assistance on site, Dave Harris for the illustrations, and Peter Moore for his project management and editing.

## Appendix 1 Context Index

<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Layer	Mixed Topsoil
2	Layer	Demolition Rubble
3	Layer	Sandy-Silt
4	Layer	Natural sandy-gravels

## Appendix 2 Section Register

<b>Section No.</b>	<b>Datum</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	99.56mOD	1:10	W-Facing 2.5m Sample
2	99.71mOD	1:10	N-Facing 2.5m Sample
3	99.50mOD	1:10	S-Facing 2.5m Sample
4	99.16moD	1:10	N-Facing 2.5m Sample
5	99.28mOD	1:10	S-Facing 2.5m Sample



## Appendix 3 OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-20078

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 115 Wansunt Road, Bexley, London Borough of Bexley
Short description of the project	This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at the site of 115 Wansunt Road, Bexley, London Borough of Bexley. The site central National Grid Reference is TQ 50437 73131. The watching brief was undertaken between 24th August and 6th September 2006 by Richard Humphrey. The commissioning client was Chapelwood Homes. The site is situated on land to the east of the junction of Wansunt Road and Dartford Road. The site is bordered to the north by the property 113 Wansunt Road, to the east by a property boundary, to the south by Dartford Road and to the west by Wansunt Road. The area is roughly flat. A large test trench dug across the site revealed mid- twentieth century made ground to directly overlie natural gravel deposits. Further excavation of footings for the proposed development revealed a similar sequence of stratigraphy.
Project dates	Start: 24-08-2006 End: 06-09-2006
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	WZR06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None

Current Land use Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Planning condition

#### Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON BEXLEY BEXLEY 115 Wansunt Road,  
Bexley

Postcode DA5 2DN

Study area 1533.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 50437 73131 51.4366574366 0.164607504843 51 26 11 N 000  
09 52 E Point

Height OD Min: 97.70m Max: 98.61m

#### Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project design originator Peter Moore

Project Peter Moore  
director/manager

Project supervisor Richard Humphrey

Type of Developer  
sponsor/funding  
body

Name of Chapelwood Homes  
sponsor/funding  
body

#### Project archives

Physical Archive LAARC  
recipient

Entered by Richard Humphrey (rhumphrey@pre-construct.com)

Entered on 3 November 2006

#### **OASIS:**

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