An Archaeological Watching Brief at 3-11 Woodside Green, South Norwood, London Borough of Croydon, SE25 5EY

Site Code: WGI 07

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3426 6700

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1 ABSTRACT

1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of land at 3-11 Woodside Green, South Norwood in the London Borough of Croydon. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 3426 6700 (Fig.1).

1.2 The watching brief monitored the mechanical excavation of foundation trenches associated with the construction of a new church and attached residential units. Five representative sections were drawn which characterised the extant remains (Fig. 2).

1.3 The watching brief found evidence of natural clay, sand and gravel, a remnant of a possible historical topsoil horizon and extensive evidence of late post-medieval truncation. These features and layers were sealed by a layer of late 20th/early 21st century material associated either with the demolition of existing structures and slabs or the levelling associated with the current construction project (Fig 3).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 3-11 Woodside Green, South Norwood, London Borough of Croydon by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd between the 25th of July 2007 and the 2nd of August 2007. The watching brief monitored foundation trenches that were being excavated for the erection of a church and attached residential units.

2.2 The commissioning client was Jordan Developments; Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd undertook the watching brief under the supervision of Douglas Killock and the project management of Tim Bradley.

2.3 The site is situated on the corner of Woodside Green and Hermitage Lane, South Norwood.

2.4 The completed archive comprising written and drawn records will be deposited at the Museum of London under the site code WGI 07.

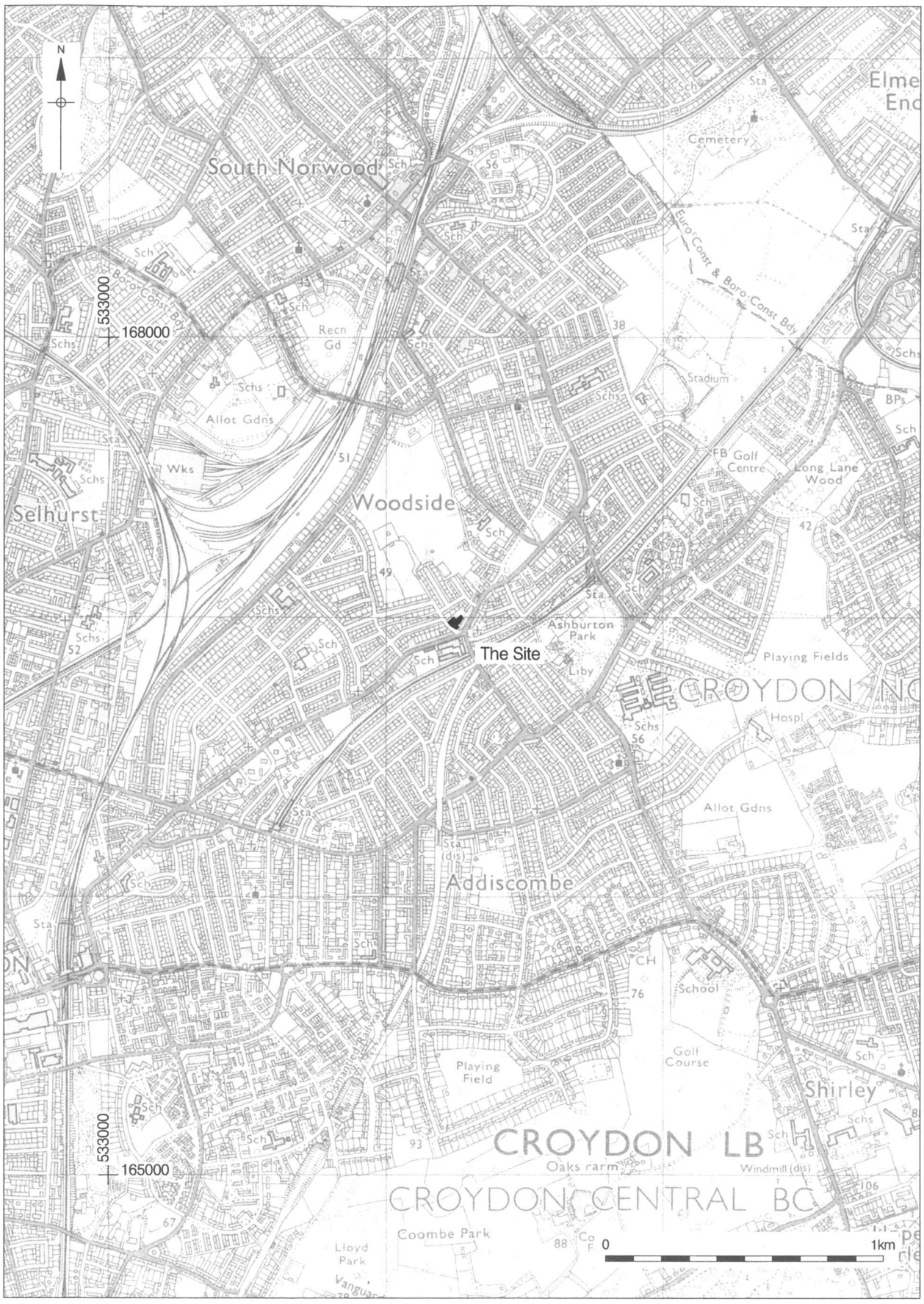


Figure 1
Site Location
1:20,000 at A4

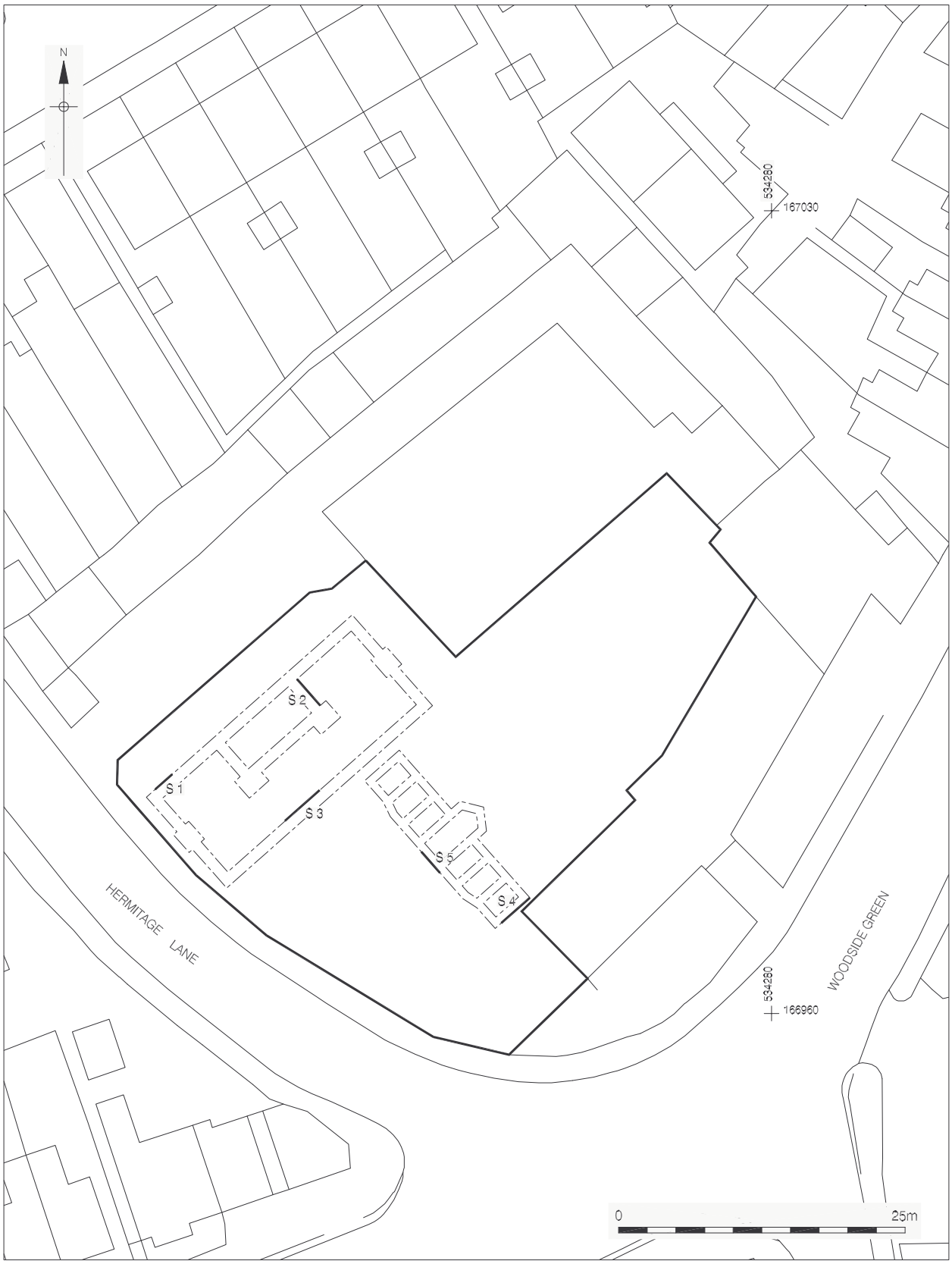


Figure 2
Trench Locations
1:500 at A4

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 The site is located within an Archaeological Priority Zones as defined by the London Borough of Croydon's Unitary Development Plan (see APZ 9, Woodside).

3.2 Mr Mark Stevenson of English Heritage, GLAAS, determined that a Watching Brief should be carried out on the site during the groundworks associated with the new development to monitor the possible presence of archaeological remains.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Prehistoric

4.1.1 No prehistoric remains have been recorded within a 500m radius of the site but flint axes and flakes dating as far back as the Palaeolithic period are known from Addington and Shirley[1]. Stone battle axes and pottery dating to the Bronze Age are also known from Croydon[2]. Although not mentioned in some later publications the prehistoric remains evident on the higher ground to the south of the subject site were well known even by the late 19th century and hut circles are reported 'close to the borders of this (Addington) parish'. Twenty-five barrows were also said to have existed there but were no longer extant at the time of writing[3].

4.2 Roman

4.2.1 Central Croydon is located along the line of a Roman road that runs from London toward Lewes and the south coast and a scatter of Roman remains throughout central Croydon indicates that a roadside settlement of some sort existed there. Although it is difficult to define a centre for this settlement the area from which Roman remains have been recovered continues to expand from central Croydon, more recent finds have been made from Lower Coombe Street toward the south of Croydon[4] and Lloyd Park[5] a little to the south of the subject site.

4.3 Saxon

4.3.1 The strategic importance of Croydon's position, on the line of a Roman road and just north of a gap in the North Downs, may have attracted early Saxon settlers to the area. The diversity of the soils and habitat may also have been a factor in this choice. Heavy clays dominate the landscape to the north and east, especially the South Norwood area, whereas a mixture of chalk and sands further south offered better returns for relatively primitive agricultural landuse, as did the sands and gravels of the upper Wandle valley to the west[6]. An early Saxon cemetery located in Park Street, Croydon, has been the subject of investigation from the late 19th century onward. The evidence from this cemetery suggests a very early Saxon settlement and hints at the possibility of continuity from the late Roman period[7].

[1] Wymer, J. J. 1987
[2] Field, D. and Cotton, J. 1987
[3] A History of the County of Surrey, 1912
[4] Taylor, J. 2005
[5] Archaeological Review 1997-98, English Heritage
[6] Mcphail, R.I. and Scaife, R. G. 1987
[7] McKinley, J. I., 2003

4.4 Medieval

4.4.1 The manor of Croydon was given by William the Conqueror to Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury and he and subsequent archbishops had their palace there until 1758. The town was granted a charter for a market and fair in 1276. Despite being an important regional market town the settlement did not expand appreciably during the medieval period and even when mapped by Rocque in 1762 it appears to consist of little more than a ribbon development along the main road.

4.4.2 The earliest reference to South Norwood may be found in the document in the Minister's of Bailiffs Account of the Chauntry of St Nicholas 3, during Edward IV reign that a rent of 33 shillings and four pence was paid annually for a place called "Cholmerden". This was a coppice of woodland later known as the "Goat House", which was situated in the area now known as "Sunnybank". All the area including Woodside was once part of the Great "Northwood" and the origin of Norwood came from the village of that name[8].

4.5 Post-Medieval

4.5.1 A 1678 map of the time shows an area of 19 acres with a house and barn called "Shelverdine" alias "Goat House". Also shown are gateways to the woodland at Selhurst, spelt "Cellors", at Whitehorse Road and possibly at Harrington Road.

4.5.2 Very little development took place in the South Norwood or Woodside area prior to the opening on the railway from West Croydon to Deptford in 1839. This followed the line of the short-lived Grand Surrey Canal which had opened in 1809 but never prospered and was forced to close after only 27 years service.

4.5.3 Records from 1848 show that the high street in South Norwood consisted of a mere two timber cottages.

4.5.4 Brick manufacturing became an important local industry during the 19th century. The abundant London clay, whilst totally unsuitable to early agriculturalists, offered cheap and easily accessible raw materials. A burgeoning local market for building materials was assured once the railways had made the outer suburbs of London accessible to the masses. Although this may not have been achieved by the middle of the century the relocation of the Crystal Palace to Upper Norwood in 1854 stimulated the growth of railway traffic and new stations were opened throughout the Norwood area. The opening of first the canal and later the railways also ensured that locally produced bricks could be cheaply transported outside of the production area.

4.5.5 Handley's brickworks, situated less 250m from the subject site at what is now Brickfields Meadow, became the major employer in the area during the early-mid 20th century. At its peak the works covered c 45 acres and employed around 250 people who produced

[8] http://www.met.police.uk/croydon/history.htm

some 500,000 bricks every week. The seven large chimneys rising from the brickworks provided easy navigation points for German aircraft during the Second World War and the area around the brickworks was heavily bombed as a consequence.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The watching brief monitored the mechanical excavation of foundation trenches associated with the development of the site. Any putative archaeological remains had been removed over most of the site by post-medieval truncation, much of which appeared to be horizontal. Representative sections were drawn to characterise the truncations, natural deposits and in some localised areas remnants of undated topsoil that had survived *in situ.* (Fig.2).

5.2 The foundation trenches were approx 0.60m-0.90m in width and excavated on average to a depth of c 1.00m. A mechanical excavator removed the deposits within the trenches until the appropriate project level was attained.

5.3 Recording on site was undertaken using the single context recording system as specified in the Museum of London Site Manual. Representative sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Contexts were numbered sequentially and recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets.

5.4 Monitoring of the foundation trenches continued until a complete transect extending both north-south and east-west across the development area of the site had been obtained, and adequate recording had been undertaken. Due to the complete absence of archaeological structures, features or deposits, Mr Mark Stevenson, GLAAS, confirmed that further monitoring of the intersecting foundation trenches was not required.

5.5 The site was given the code WGI 07.

6 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

6.1 Phase 1 Undeveloped Natural Deposits

6.1.1 Layers of mixed sand and gravel and, above all, yellowish-brown clay were evident wherever modern intrusions had not destroyed them above project level (Fig 3). These deposits are typical of the area, which lies on a peripheral zone between the London clay that extends to the north and the sands and gravels of the Blackheath Beds that rise to Shirley, Addington Hills and Croham Hurst to the south. Natural clays survived to a maximum height of c. 51.30m OD.

6.1.2 A steep-sided cut feature [19] was recorded in Section 5. Although the profile of this feature suggested that it could easily have been man-made, no artefacts, flecks of charcoal or other indications of human activity were evident within its fills [17] and [18]. The layer sealing this feature [16] was also devoid of any signs of human activity and seemed to be a naturally formed subsoil.

6.2 Phase 2 Developed Subsoils

6.2.1 Developed subsoils which had probably resulted, at least in part, from human intervention were evident in Sections 2 and 3 as layers [4] and [7] respectively. Both of these deposits were sealed by what appeared to be buried topsoil horizons (see 6.4 below). Virtually no dating evidence could be recovered from these deposits but layer [7] did produce a single piece of peg tile which indicates that it had not developed before the late medieval or early post-medieval periods. These layers survived to a maximum height of 51.46m OD.

6.2.2 Other less humic subsoils were evident above the level of the unmodified natural clays and gravels. These principally consisted of bluish-grey clay deposits which were probably naturally formed and are indicative of the poorly drained nature of the area. Seasonally waterlogged stagnogley soils feature a bluish-grey colour which results from the iron in the soil being reduced as no oxygen can penetrate into the waterlogged deposits. Layers [12] and [16], which probably resulted from this process, were evident in Sections 4 and 5.

6.3 Phase 3 Undated Topsoil Horizon

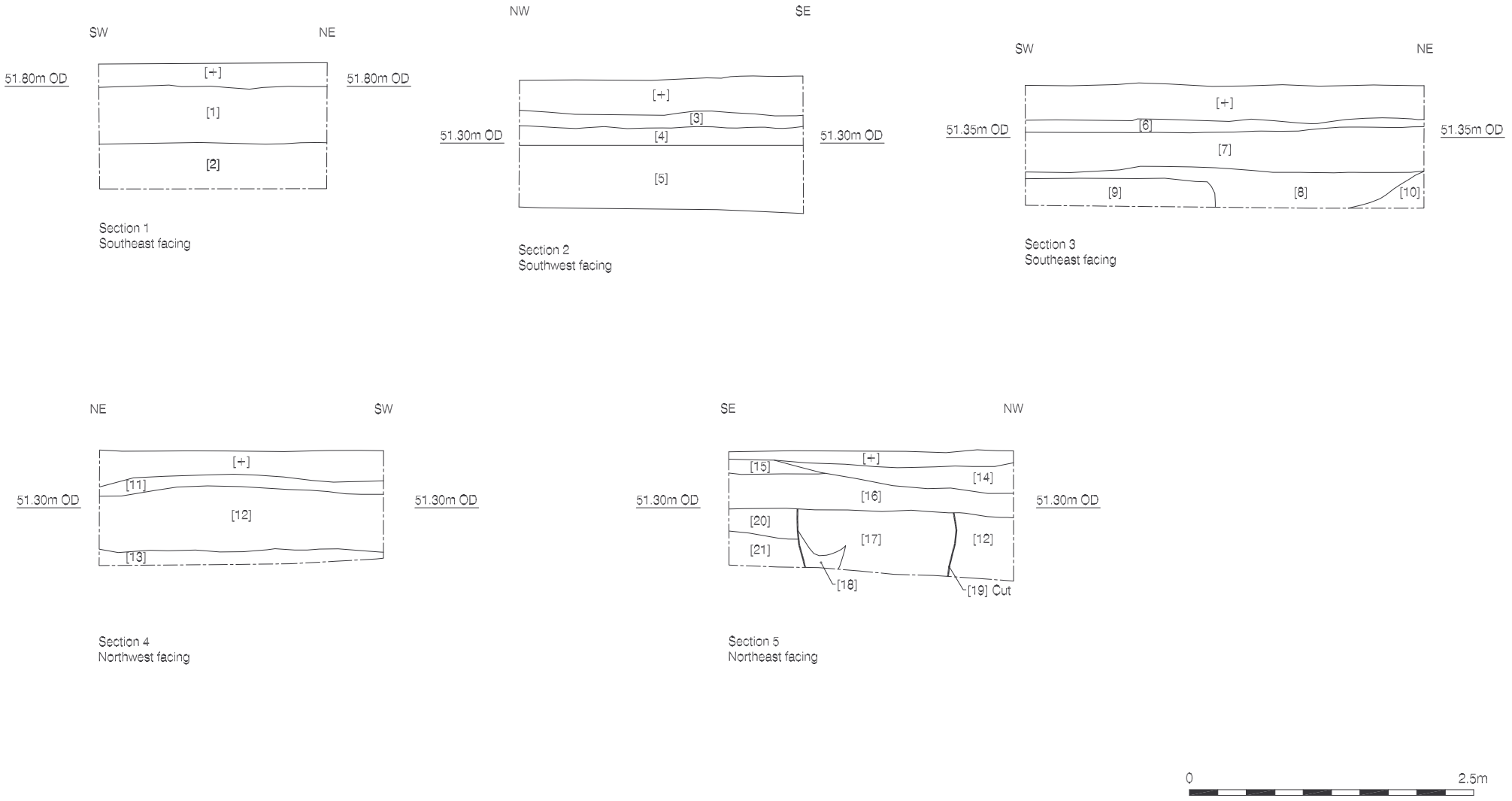
6.3.1 A probable topsoil horizon was evident in Sections 2 and 3 and was recorded as layers [3] and [6]. These deposits seemed identical and were characterised by being a dark grey colour, probably as a result of containing an elevated organic element. These layers also showed evidence of human activity in the form of small flecks of charcoal and

possibly tiny flecks of daub or crushed brick/tile. No dating evidence was recovered from these deposits but layer [6] sealed the subsoil deposit [7], which contained a fragment of peg tile. The topsoil horizon cannot therefore date to earlier than the late medieval period. The topsoil was recorded at 51.60m OD in Section 2 and 51.51m OD in Section 3. Layers [3] and [6] lay directly below modern levelling deposits associated with the current building project and may be relatively modern.

6.4 Phase 4 Modern Deposits

6.4.1 A tiny fragment of a topsoil layer [15] was evident in Section 5. It was sealed by a rammed chalk yard surface [14] which was probably not of great antiquity as it was sealed by the levelling material associated with the current building works. The rammed chalk surface survived to a maximum height of 51.72m OD.

6.4.2 Extensive signs of horizontal truncation were evident throughout the trenches monitored. In Section 1 the depth of this truncation is shown at the base of layer [1]. This might have resulted from clay extraction or trial works undertaken to establish the extent and quality of clay deposits on the site.



Section 1
Southeast facing

Section 2
Southwest facing

Section 3
Southeast facing

Section 4
Northwest facing

Section 5
Northeast facing

Figure 3
Sections
1:50 at A4

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Watching Brief uncovered natural clay, mixed with some sand and gravel, recorded across the entire development site. An undated topsoil horizon survived in very small pockets (see Sections 2 and 3). The topsoil horizon was so close to the current ground surface that it might be assumed to be relatively modern. However, the development of Woodside and South Norwood generally occurs so late in the post-medieval period that no great depth of stratigraphy is likely to have accumulated in the area. Most of South Norwood lies in the base of a valley sandwiched between the higher ground of Upper Norwood, Beulah Hill and Central Hill to the north and the hills of Addiscombe and Shirley to the south. The heavy clay soils of the area were not attractive to early agriculturalists and indeed most of the area remained densely wood until it developed into a commuter suburb in the second half of the 19th century.

7.2 Extensive signs of horizontal truncation were evident throughout the trenches monitored. This might have resulted from clay extraction or trial works undertaken to establish the extent and quality of clay deposits on the site, an activity which is likely to have removed any earlier archaeological horizons which may have been present on the site.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Jordan Developments Ltd for commissioning the work and their cooperation in gaining access to the site and the foundation trenches. Special thanks go to Steve Nicholson for making the author feel welcome on the project. Thanks to Mark Stevenson, GLAAS, for monitoring the work on behalf of the London Borough of Croydon.

9.2 The author would like to thank Dave Harris for the illustrations, Hayley Baxter for her help with the mapping and Tim Bradley for his project management and editing.

Appendix 1: OASIS FORM

Project details

Project name	Woodside Green
Short description of the project	Watching brief on foundation trenches for a church and residential units. No signifiacant remains present
Project dates	Start: 25-07-2007 End: 02-08-2007
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	WGI 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	CLAY PIT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	ROOF TILE Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Visual Inspection'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Development type	Church with residential units
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CROYDON NORWOOD 3-11 Woodside Green
Postcode	SE25 5EY
Study area	1100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3426 6700 51.3856302672 -0.07033145779710 51 23 08 N 000 04 13 W Point
Height OD	Min: 51.11m Max: 51.31m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service
Project design originator	Tim Bradley
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley
Project supervisor	Douglas Killock
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Jordan Developments

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'

Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Plan','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 3-11 Woodside Green, South Norwood, London Borough of Croydon, SE25 5EY
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Entered on	16 August 2007

1 OASIS:

Appendix 2 Context Register

Context No.	Plan	Section / Elevation	Type	Description	Date	Phase	Drawings	Photos No.	Site Code
1	No	1	Layer	Levelling/backfill of extensive horizontal truncation	25/07/2007	4			WGI 07
2	No	1	Layer	Natural yellowish brown clay	25/07/2007	1			WGI 07
3	No	1	Layer	Buried topsoil horizon	26/07/2007	3			WGI 07
4	No	2	Layer	Mid greyish brown subsoil	26/07/2007	2			WGI 07
5	No	2	Layer	Natural yellowish brown clay	26/07/2007	1			WGI 07
6	No	2	Layer	Buried topsoil horizon	26/07/2007	3			WGI 07
7	No	3	Layer	Mid greenish/bluish grey subsoil	26/07/2007	2			WGI 07
8	No	3	Layer	Natural yellowish brown clay and sand	26/07/2007	1			WGI 07
9	No	3	Layer	Natural yellowish light gravel and clay	26/07/2007	1			WGI 07
10	No	3	Layer	Natural yellowish brown clay	26/07/2007	1			WGI 07
11	No	4	Layer	Dark grey modern topsoil	02/08/2007	4			WGI 07
12	No	4	Layer	Mid light bluish grey subsoil	02/08/2007	2			WGI 07
13	No	4	Layer	Natural light bluish grey and light yellowish brown sandy clay	02/08/2007	3			WGI 07
14	No	5	Layer	Rammed chalk surface	02/08/2007	4			WGI 07
15	No	5	Layer	Topsoil deposit	02/08/2007	4			WGI 07
16	No	5	Layer	Light bluish grey sandy clay	02/08/2007	2			WGI 07
17	No	5	Fill	Light bluish brown gravel fill of natural channel (19)	02/08/2007	1			WGI 07
18	No	5	Fill	Reddish coarse sand fill of natural channel (19)	02/08/2007	1			WGI 07
19	No	5	Cut	Natural? channel	02/08/2007	1			WGI 07
20	No	5	Layer	Mid greenish grey clay	02/08/2007	1			WGI 07
21	No	5	Layer	Natural light greyish brown clay	02/08/2007	1			WGI 07
22	No	5	Layer	Natural light greyish brown clay	02/08/2007	1			WGI 07