

**Venners,  
Wessex Drive,  
Erith,  
DA8 3AA**

Watching brief report

Project Code: WSX 16 (CAT Project Code OT WDE 17)  
Planning Refs: 16/01151/FUL  
NGR: 551530 176335 (centred)  
Report No: 2018/7  
Archive No: 3796

January 2018

**Document Record**

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

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01	Andrew Macintosh	Project Officer	17/01/18	<i>J. Ruddy</i>

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## Background and summary

Between October 2017 and January 2018, an archaeological watching brief was carried out by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) at Venners, Wessex Drive, Erith DA8 3AA during initial stages of development. The works comprised targeted monitoring of groundworks with provision for additional intensive archaeological work if archaeology or significant geoarchaeological deposits were identified. The work was carried out to a specification provided by CAT.

The site fronts the south side of the south part of Wessex Drive, Erith in the London Borough of Bexley (Fig. 1). The site, located about 70m west of Northend Road (A206) is centred at NGR 551530 176335 and forms a not quite rectangular plot, c 93m long and 24m wide at the road frontage, spreading to 35m wide at its southern boundary (approximately 2, 740m<sup>2</sup> in area). On the west, south and east the plot is completely bounded by domestic properties and their gardens. The rear garden of the former property on the site was the area of main impact, where two additional blocks of residential buildings are to be constructed (Fig 2).

The proposed new development is to include erection of 10 dwellings comprising 2 x 4 bed and 6 x 3 bed houses and 2 x 2 bed bungalows with associated parking and amenity space (Planning Application 16/01151/FUL; London Borough of Bexley).

The first phase of work, comprising an evaluation to an approved written scheme of investigation (WSI), took place in November 2016 (Rady & Scott 2017). This indicated that Pleistocene deposits, including those which form part of the 'Crayford Brickearths' were present across the footprint of the proposed development. The basal sediments of this sequence have elsewhere in the area produced *in situ* Neanderthal archaeology and faunal remains of international significance, within 500m of the site itself. It was further determined that if impact depth exceeds 1.20m below the current ground surface within the southern half of the site, calcareous sediments with the potential to preserve faunal and microfaunal material could be impacted upon and if impact depth across the site was to exceed 2.80m below current ground surface, then deposits likely to be geologically contemporaneous with the known Neanderthal occupation of the Crayford-Erith area would be impacted upon. In the light of this, Historic England's Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) recommended to the local authority that:

*'the depth of anticipated impact from the development is assessed to determine if and/or where within the site there is a need for limited archaeological mitigation in the form of pro-active observation and recording'.*

The watching brief proved to be negative and no archaeological finds, features or deposits of any significance were encountered. The lowest exposed geological deposits were Crayford 'Brickearths' overlain by a shallow fluvial channel sealed by a silty clay subsoil or colluvium.

## SUMMARY WATCHING BRIEF - SITE REPORT SHEET

COUNTY: Greater London	TOWN/PARISH: London Borough of Bexley	DATE: 30/10/17 to 04/01/18
RECORDING BODY: Canterbury Archaeol. Trust		Individual(s): A. Macintosh
SITE NAME: Venners, Wessex Drive, Erith CODE: WSX16 <sup>1</sup>		Archive Number: 3796 CAT Ref: 2018/7 PLAN No: 16/01151/FUL
NGR: 551530E, 176335N		ELEVATION: Approx. 15m-16m O.D.
<p><b>TOPOGRAPHY:</b> The site fronts the south side of the south part of Wessex Drive, Erith. The site, located about 70m west of Northend Road (A206) is centred at NGR 551530 176335 and forms a not quite rectangular plot, c 93m long and 24m wide at the road frontage, spreading to 35m wide at its southern boundary (approximately 2, 740m<sup>2</sup> in area). On the west, south and east the plot is completely bounded by domestic properties and their gardens. The rear garden of the former, now demolished, property was the area of main impact, where two additional blocks of residential buildings are to be constructed (Fig. 2).</p>		<p><b>NATURAL:</b> Bedrock geology: Seaford Chalk Formation and Newhaven Chalk Formation (undifferentiated) – Chalk. Superficial geology: Crayford Silt Member – Clay and Silt (British Geological Survey 1:50,000 digital map, accessed January 2018)</p>
<p><b>FORMER LAND-USE:</b> Residential ('Venners') close to the Wessex Drive frontage with a number of outbuildings, including a garage and large greenhouse within an extensive rear garden.</p>	<p><b>FUTURE LAND-USE:</b> The development is the erection of 10 dwellings comprising 2 x 4 bed and 6 x 3 bed houses and 2 x 2 bed bungalows with associated parking and amenity space.</p>	
<p><b>APPLICANT:</b> McCulloch Homes Ltd</p>	<p><b>TENANT:</b> N/A</p>	
<p><b>TYPE OF EXCAVATION:</b> Machine cut foundation trenches for new dwellings, attenuation tanks, catch pits and pumping station pits.</p>		
<p><b>EXTENT OF EXCAVATION (Sizes):</b></p> <p><b>Attenuation tank 1:</b> Aligned east to west 10m long by 2.3m wide and 1.5m deep.  <b>Attenuation tank 2:</b> Aligned east to west 7.5m long by 3.5m wide and 2.10m deep.  <b>Catchment pit:</b> Aligned east to west 3m long by 1.8m wide and 2m deep.  <b>Foundation trenches block 'C':</b> A total approximate 110m length of foundation trenching was observed measuring 0.70m wide by 1.50-1.75m deep.  <b>Pump Station pit:</b> 2m long by 1.8m wide and 3.2m deep.</p>		
<p><b>NATURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION:</b></p> <p>Archaeological watching brief maintained during ground works over 1.2m in depth.</p>		

<sup>1</sup> This code (WSX16) is the same as that allocated for the evaluation, as advised by Museum of London on 15/03/2017

## GENERAL SOIL SEQUENCE:

The sequence of deposits observed over most of the area was similar to those encountered during earlier evaluation (Rady & Scott 2017).

### **Attenuation tank 1**

Situated at the southern end of the site, attenuation tank 1 required excavation of a trench on a roughly east to west alignment to a maximum depth of 1.5m below ground level.

The earliest deposit encountered at 0.75m below ground level comprised a mid yellowish brown and green compact clay (1006) with inclusions of calcareous patches.

Overlying the clay was a 0.35m thick deposit (1005) comprising a compact mid reddish brown gravel. At the east end of the trench a north-east to south-west aligned deposit (1004) comprising a pale to mid yellowish brown compact clay ran through the gravel.

Sealing the gravel and clay deposit was a 0.20m thick layer of reworked mid orangey brown compact sandy clay (1002) with inclusions of infrequent flecks of CBM and rounded pebbles.

The uppermost deposit (1001) comprised a 0.20m thick topsoil.

### **Attenuation tank 2 and catchment pit**

Situated mid-way between the foundations for block 'B' and block 'C' Attenuation tank 2 required excavation of a trench aligned roughly east to west with a maximum depth of 2.10m below ground level.

Located adjacent to the east of the attenuation tank a catchment pit required excavation with a maximum depth of 2 m below ground level.

The earliest deposit encountered at 0.75m-1m below ground level comprised a mid yellowish brown and green compact clay (1006) with inclusions of calcareous patches.

Overlying the clay was a 0.30m thick deposit (1005) comprising a compact mid reddish brown gravel.

Sealing the gravel was a 0.40m thick layer of reddish orangey brown sandy clay (1003).

Above layer 1003 was a very similar deposit (1002) of a reworked mid orangey brown compact sandy clay with inclusions of infrequent flecks of CBM and rounded pebbles. The layer was fairly consistently 0.20m thick.

The uppermost deposit (101) comprised a 0.10m-0.20m thick tread or topsoil.

### **Foundation trenches block 'C'**

At the southern end of the site foundations for block 'C' of the development were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.50m-1.75mm below ground level.

The earliest deposit encountered at 0.75m-1m below ground level comprised a mid yellowish brown and green compact clay (1006) with inclusions of calcareous patches.

Overlying the clay was a 0.30m thick deposit (1005) comprising a compact mid reddish brown gravel. The deposit was heavily root disturbed by a row of trees along the southern boundary of the PDA.

Sealing 1005 was a 0.20-0.30m thick layer of reddish orangey brown sandy clay (1003).

Above layer 1003 was a very similar deposit (1002) 0.20m thick comprising a reworked mid orangey brown compact sandy clay with inclusions of infrequent flecks of CBM and rounded pebbles.

The uppermost deposit (1001) comprised a 0.20m thick topsoil.

### **Pump station pit**

Located immediately west of attenuation tank 2, the pump station required excavation of a pit with a maximum depth of 3.2m below ground level.

At 3.2m below ground level this excavation represented the greatest impact on the underlying geology. However no perceivable difference in the soil sequence was observed.

The earliest deposit encountered at approximately 0.90m below ground level comprised a mid yellowish brown and green compact clay (1006) with inclusions of calcareous patches.

Overlying the clay was a 0.30m thick deposit (1005) comprising a compact mid reddish brown gravel.

Sealing the gravel was a 0.20m thick reddish orangey brown sandy clay (1003).

Above 1003 was a very similar deposit (1002) 0.40m thick comprising a reworked mid orangey brown compact sandy clay with inclusions of infrequent flecks of CBM and rounded pebbles.

### **FINDS AND NOTES:**

Throughout the entire monitoring process, no finds, features or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered. The earliest deposit (1006) encountered across the site was indicative of the Crayford 'Brickearth'. The greatest impact on this layer was within the pumping station pit with an exposed thickness of approximately 2m.

Deposite 1005 which sealed the Crayford 'Brickearth' layer probably represents a fluvial channel or sequence of shallow fluvial channels. This was on a very approximate east-west or north-west/south-east alignment and was observed during earlier evaluation (Trench 1, Rady and Scott 2017).

No further definition of the extent of the fluvial channel was achieved during the watching brief other than to confirm its presence at the southern end of the site.

Deposit 1004 likely represents a narrow natural lens or channel that has eroded the gravel 1005 and infilled with a finer silt clay matrix.

Layer 1003 was indicative of a subsoil which was found to be sterile and subject to heavy bioturbation. This was interpreted as a colluvial layer during evaluation (Rady & Scott 2017), and the present observations do not contradict that interpretation. The similar looking deposit 1002 (with no clear interface with 1003), suggested that the upper part of layer 1003 had been subject to bioturbation or horticultural activity, and had been reworked, this evidenced by the recovery of brick or tile flecks and rounded pebbles and the slightly darker appearance to the soil.

The uppermost layer 1001 formed the modern topsoil and overburden.

#### CONCLUSION & FUTURE POTENTIAL OF AREA:

The site is located within a designated Archaeological Priority Area or Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP 7 Crayford Brickearths; DesigUID: DLO37072). This is focussed around concentrations of highly significant Palaeolithic material recovered from brickearth and clay pits in the Crayford area, roughly between Barnehurst and Slade Green, mostly in the nineteenth century. This locale represented a rare opportunity to observe unquarried open spaces through the Crayford Brickearths between two known *in situ* archaeological sites in the palaeolandscape, Stoneham's and Rutter's Pits (Rady & Scott 2017).

Despite the lack of archaeological material or features from this investigation, it broadly confirmed the previous conclusions from the earlier evaluation phase (Rady & Scott 2017). However, based on the admittedly small sample of the pumping station pit, it may be the case that the significant lower levels of the Crayford brickearths where artefacts occur, may be somewhat deeper than 3m below ground level in this location (the evaluation only attained 2.8m below ground level).

These deeper deposits that may be of much greater significance, remain undisturbed on the site. A large proportion of the overlying deposits, although of less significance, will also survive the development. Any future groundworks (including services), both on this site or any others in the immediate vicinity, that extend deeper than 1.2m below the present ground level, may impact upon the calcareous brickearth sediments, which still retain the potential to preserve faunal and microfaunal material. If impact depth exceeds 2.80 – 3.00m below current ground surface, then deposits that are likely to be geologically contemporaneous with the known Neanderthal occupation of the Crayford-Erith area will be impacted upon.

#### Reference

Rady, J. and Scott, B., 2017, Venners, Wessex Drive, Erith DA8 3AA, Archaeological and geo-archaeological evaluation, CAT client report Report No: 2017/6

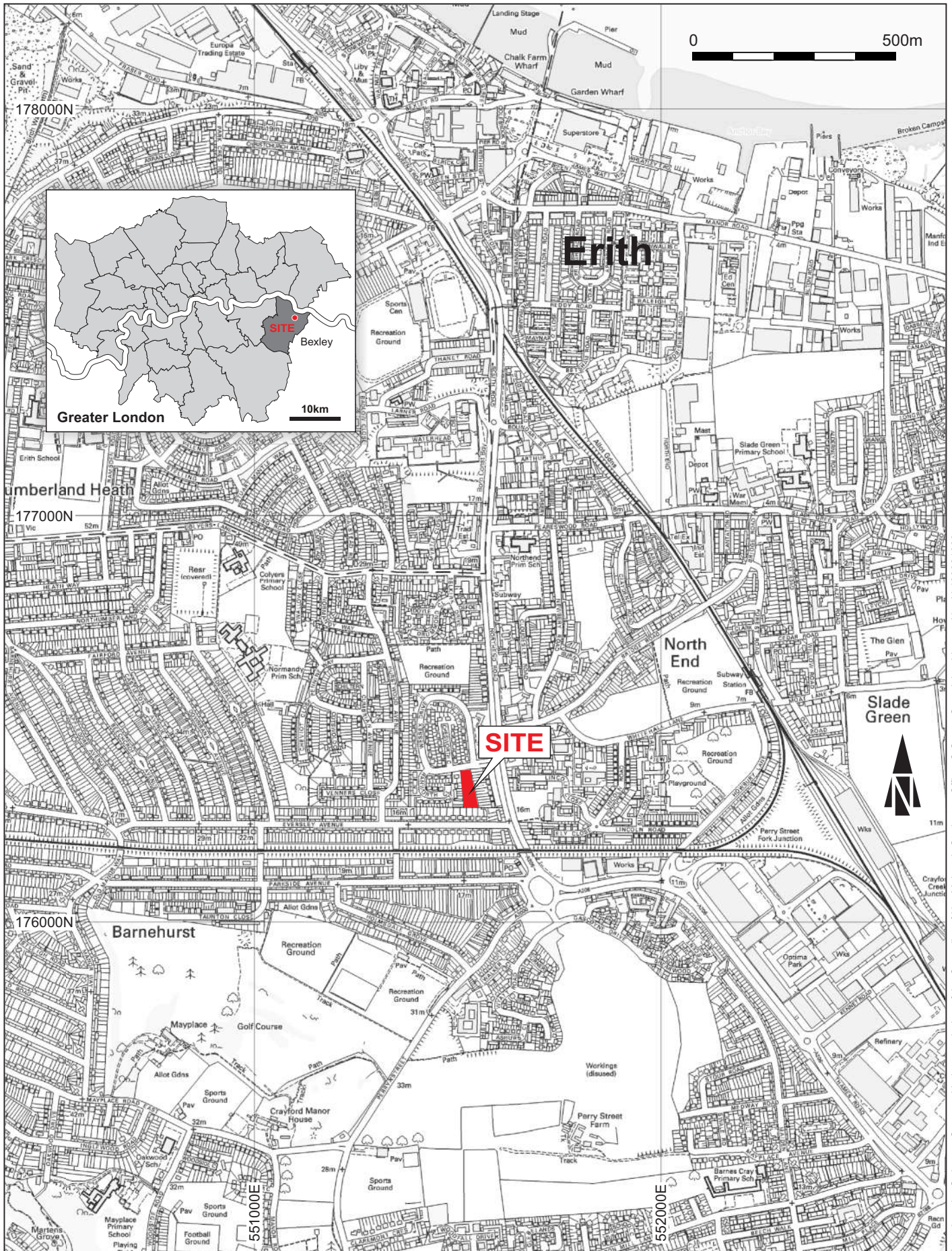


Fig. 1 Location map (1:500,000 and 1:20, 000)

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Figure 2: Location plan showing excavations.

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	<b>PROJECT CODE</b> WSX16 (CAT Project Code: OT WDE17)	<b>DATE</b> 09/01/18	<b>LAST REVISION</b> 17/01/18
	<b>SITE ADDRESS</b> Venners, Wessex Drive, Erith DA8 3AA	<b>CHECKED</b> ---	
		<b>REF/DRG NO.</b> N\PROJECTS ACTIVE\Projects Managers & Live Projects\Jon Raby\Wessex Drive, Erith\Watching Brief NOV 2017\Report	





Plate 1: Site location looking south



Plate 2: Site location looking north-east



Plate 3: Excavation for attenuation tank 1 showing gravel layer (1005) looking west. Scale 1m



Plate 4: Excavation for attenuation tank 1 looking south-west



Plate 5: Section of attenuation tank 1 excavation looking south-east.



Plate 6: Excavation for attenuation tank 2 looking east



Plate: 7 Excavation of attenuation tank 2 looking north. Scale 1m



Plate: 8 Close-up of catchment pit section looking east. Scale 1m



Plate 9: foundation trench of block 'C' looking north-east



Plate 10: foundation trench of block 'C' looking south-west



Plate 11: Pump station pit looking west