

# Wyllie Court, Atlee Way, Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent:

## An Archaeological Watching Brief Report

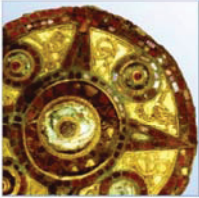
Planning Reference: SW/12/1188

National Grid Reference Number: TQ 90500 65210

AOC Project No: 32383

Site Code: WYC13

Date: June 2013



ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

## Wyllie Court, Attlee Way, Milton Regis, Sittingbourne Kent: An Archaeological Watching Brief Report

<b>On Behalf of:</b>	<b>Rydon Construction</b> Rydon House Station Road Forest Row East Sussex RH18 5DW
<b>National Grid Reference (NGR):</b>	<b>TQ 90500 65210</b>
<b>AOC Project No:</b>	<b>32383</b>
<b>Prepared by:</b>	<b>Daniel Eddisford</b>
<b>Illustration by:</b>	<b>Lesley Davidson</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>June 2013</b>

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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**Date:** June 2013

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**Date:** July 2013

**Report Stage:** Draft

**Date:** July 2013

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## Non-Technical Summary

*Between the 28<sup>th</sup> May and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013 AOC Archaeology Group undertook a watching brief at Wyllie Court, Attlee Way in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent. The watching brief was commissioned by Rydon Construction. The work comprised the monitoring of topsoil stripping and the excavation of a series of foundation trenches for the new building, its services, access and parking.*

*The watching brief was recommended by the archaeological advisor to Swale Borough Council as a condition on planning consent. The site lies in an area of archaeological potential associated with the identification of possible prehistoric hut circles as cropmarks on aerial photos of school grounds to the west. However, historic maps indicate that the site has been affected by quarrying in the past and has been also subject to development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

*No archaeological features or finds were identified on the site. No evidence of prehistoric activity was identified.*

*The site was found to contain numerous modern intrusions and disturbances associated with the foundations and services of the previous development on the site.*

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The site is located at Wyllie Court, Attlee Way in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent (NGR TQ 90500 65210; Figure 1).
- 1.2 The site consists of a parcel of land measuring c 0.52ha located on the corner of Attlee Way and North Street, approximately 500m northeast of the High Street in Milton Regis (Figure 2). The development involves demolition of the present buildings on the site and redevelopment with a single building and modification of the adjacent grounds and creation of access and parking.
- 1.3 A watching brief was recommended by Simon Mason, the Archaeological Advisor to Swale Borough Council as a condition on planning consent.
- 1.4 This report details the results of the archaeological watching brief.

## 2 Planning Background

- 2.1 The local planning authority is Swale Borough Council. Archaeological advice to the council is provided by Simon Mason, Principal Archaeological Officer at Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council (KCC)
- 2.2 Within the boundaries of the site, there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, English Heritage Registered Parks and Gardens or Registered Battlefields. However, it does lie in an area of Archaeological Potential, due to the presence of prehistoric remains identified through cropmarks, and there have been finds in the general area of Roman date.
- 2.3 The proposed development (Planning Application Ref No: (SW/12/1188) includes consent for demolition of all buildings on site, followed by redevelopment. The new build will comprise a three-storey block of flats with support and public areas, plus provision of parking bays and a communal landscaped garden.
- 2.4 Condition 6 of the conditional approval states:

*Prior to the commencement of development hereby approved, the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, shall secure 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 shall be in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

- 2.5 The brief from Kent County Council (KCC 2013) recommended a practical approach to the watching brief, its scope and archaeological attendance was to be assessed in the light of ongoing results, particularly where past truncation was proved to have removed potential archaeological deposits.
- 2.6 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared for the site by AOC Archaeology (2013) and approved by Simon Mason of KCC for the planning authority, Swale Borough Council.

## 3 Geology and Topography

- 3.1 Information published by the Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) 1:625000 series, South Sheet (BGS 1979), indicates that the solid geology of the site is the upper chalk formation of the Cretaceous period. This material is overlain by the Thanet Beds, which consist of very pale grey or buff fine slightly clayey soft sand. Further north, this is overlain by London Clay.

- 3.2 The site lies at around 7.1mOD, and is generally flat. It is located c.800m of the Milton Creek, which flows northeast to The Swale and Elmley Island.
- 3.3 The watching brief recorded pale green grey slightly clayey sand at 5.80mOD. This was overlain by a 0.40m thick layer of orange sandy gravel.

## 4 Archaeological and Historical Background

### Prehistoric (c. 500,000 BC – AD 43)

- 4.1 Kent is the richest county in Britain in terms of the number of Palaeolithic sites and findspots recorded (Wymer 1999). However, there are no sites or finds of such antiquity recorded in the immediate vicinity of the development site. A large amount of the Palaeolithic material recovered in the wider area is obtained from coarse gravel sediments, either swept off land surfaces adjacent to rivers during flooding, or incorporated into the gravel by the cut and fill mechanism of an active river swinging over its flood plain (Wymer 1999).
- 4.2 Mesolithic activity is prevalent in Milton Regis. Much of the evidence comes from excavations at Castle Rough in the 1970s, which revealed over one hundred tools, including 16 cores, 28 blades, 23 scrapers. Two Tranchet axes have also been found locally (Heritage Gateway 2012).
- 4.3 There was also Neolithic activity in the Milton Regis and Sittingbourne area, specifically at Highsted (3km to the southeast) and at Kemsley, although the Kemsley site was destroyed by excavations for brickearth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century a series of possible Neolithic burials were unearthed over 2km distant, in Sittingbourne. A 'number' of skeletons were found in 1835, and a single skeleton was unearthed in 1879 (AOC 2006). In 1883 a cist burial was found which contained a male skeleton, accompanied by a bronze knife/dagger and a shale bracelet. A bronze spearhead was also found in the same field (AOC 2006).
- 4.4 Cunliffe suggests that Kent would have been densely settled in the period 600-100 BC, and attributes the lack of reliable evidence of this density to a lack of systematic investigation (Cunliffe 1982).
- 4.5 Kent County Council (KCC 2013) have highlighted the presence of cropmarks indicative of possible prehistoric hut circles on aerial photos of school grounds to the west of the site.

### The Roman Period (AD 43 – AD 410)

- 4.6 The main Roman road into Kent, Watling Street, follows the same line as that of the modern A2, approximately 1.2km to the south of the site. A large number of Roman cemeteries are recorded within the Sittingbourne area, most of them situated to either side and within a short distance of Watling Street. These are most likely related to localised settlement remains, which probably represent a ribbon development along the line of the road (Borthwick 1996).
- 4.7 Milton Regis has its origins in the Roman period (Risbridger 2010), and this may be based on easy access to the Thames estuary as well as local oyster beds. Physical evidence of occupation of this date has been shown by sherds of Roman Pottery found at Castle Rough, 1.5km northeast of the site. Two other finds of note are glass bangles or bracelets from the church, which may be of either Roman or Saxon date.

### The Early Medieval (AD 410 – AD 1066) and Medieval periods (AD 1066 – AD 1538)

- 4.8 Milton is a Saxon place name, and believed to have been founded before 700AD (Page 1932). Holy Trinity Church, 300m northeast of the site, has its origins in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The *Domesday Monachorum* records that Milton Regis had 10 dependent churches.



- 4.9 The town is mentioned in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle for 1052 when Earl Godwin is recorded as burning the town to the ground in a dispute with King Edward.
- 4.10 Watling Street continued in use throughout the medieval period, as one of the four highways falling under the King's special protection. However the presence of the large forest ensured that the local area remained largely unoccupied in the early Medieval period, and the focus of activity continued to be centred around Faversham and Canterbury to the east, and Rochester to the west. The site lay within the extensive territory of Milton Regis, under the governorship of the King (Page 1932).
- 4.11 The historic centre of Milton Regis was High Street, with North Street subsidiary to it. An excavation at 132a High Street recorded a boundary of medieval date, and its historic character is shown by the large number of Grade II listed buildings located along it. Numbers 52-110 High Street form a group, and most are of 18<sup>th</sup> century date, although there are elements of timber-framed buildings and evidence for jettied buildings behind some of the frontages (English Heritage 2013).
- 4.12 Only one property on North Street is listed, No 66, which is a 17<sup>th</sup> century house with later modifications.
- 4.13 Holy Trinity Church is Grade I listed, and the listing dates the whole building to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Post-Medieval (AD 1538 – AD 1900) and Modern Period (AD 1900 to present)**

- 4.14 Two industries were common in the latter post-medieval period; brick manufacture and paper making, with the creek providing a valuable power source, for example for Periwinkle Mill, of 17<sup>th</sup> century date (Page 1932). There are few changes to the site apparent through study of the Ordnance Survey maps until the 1980 edition, which shows Attlee Road. Prior to this, the site is depicted as a square field or open land on the north side of North Street, with only gradual development of residential properties throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The exception is the 1908 Ordnance Survey map, which shows a gravel pit on the site. To the east is Holy Trinity Church and its graveyard to the east, with Trinity Farm adjacent to it.
- 4.15 The current buildings on site of Wyllie Court are the first buildings depicted on site, on the 1981 Ordnance Survey map, and are of 1970s or 1980s construction. They are two-storey residential brick building with some tile cladding and tiled roofs, and are divided into flats.

## **5 Aims of the Investigation**

- 5.1 The aims of the watching brief were defined as being:
- To record any changes in form and direction of the archaeological features identified in the archaeological evaluation.
  - To record any other archaeological remains within the site, which may relate to the use of the site in the medieval period
  - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any prehistoric remains encountered.
  - To record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
  - To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
  - To confirm the extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
  - To enable the archaeology advisor to Swale Borough Council to make an informed decision on the status of the condition, and any possible requirement for further work in order to satisfy that condition.
  - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.

- 5.2 The final aim was to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

## 6 Methodology

- 6.1 The watching brief was carried out between the 28<sup>th</sup> May and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Archaeological monitoring was carried out on intrusive groundworks, defined as topsoil strip and subsoil strip to natural geology. Archaeological monitoring was also carried out on the excavations of foundations trenches for the new building and the associated drainage and service trenches, areas of landscaping and formations for parking (Figure 3). The initial topsoil removal was intensively monitored. During the excavation of the foundation trenches all areas of the site were monitored intermittently; specific attention was paid to the northwest area of the site, which was thought to have the highest archaeological potential.
- 6.2 The excavation, recording and reporting conformed to current best archaeological practice and local and national standards and guidelines:
- English Heritage – Management of Archaeological Projects (EH 1991).
  - English Heritage – Archaeological Guidance Paper 3: Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork (EH 2009).
  - English Heritage – Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (EH 2011).
  - Institute for Archaeologists - Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IfA 2008a).
  - Institute for Archaeologists – Standards and Guidance and Guidelines for Finds Work (IfA 2008b).
  - Archaeologists – Code of Conduct (IfA 2010).
  - Museum of London – Archaeological Site Manual (Third Edition) (MoL 1994).
  - RESCUE & ICON – First Aid for Finds (RESCUE & ICON 2001).
  - United Kingdom Institute for Conservation – Guidance for Archaeological Conservation Practice (UKIC 1990).
- 6.3 Insurances, copyright and confidentiality, and standards are defined in Appendix A.
- 6.4 A unique site code, **WYC13** was used as the site identifier on all records.
- 6.5 The watching brief was undertaken by Les Capon, Chris Clarke, Daniel Eddisford, Catherine Edwards and Andy Tynan; under the overall direction of Melissa Melikian, Operations Director of AOC Archaeology. The work was monitored by Simon Mason, Principal Archaeological Officer at Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council (KCC).

## 7 Results

- 7.1 No archaeological features or finds were identified during the watching brief. Natural deposits were observed consistent with the geology suggested for the site by the British Geological Survey (BGS 1979).

### Natural Deposits

- 7.2 Pale green grey slightly clayey sand (4) was recorded at 5.80mOD. This may represent the uppermost deposits associated with the Thanet beds; Paleocene sedimentary deposits which are 54.8 to 57.0 million years old (Figure 4).
- 7.3 This deposit was overlain by a 0.40m thick layer of orange sandy gravel (03).



- 7.4 Loose mid brown sandy silt gravel (2) was also likely to have been deposited naturally, but was heavily disturbed by modern intrusions.



Plate A: Natural deposits (2), (3), and (4).

### **Modern Deposits and Intrusions**

- 7.5 A number of modern services were recorded on within the site, associated with concrete foundations of buildings from the previous use of the site. In the southeast part of the site was a large modern cut interpreted as a tree throw.
- 7.6 In the northeast part of the site were two modern levelling layers; dark brown clay (7), 0.6m thick and grey sandy silt (6) 0.15m thick. Both layers contained modern artefacts, including pottery and ceramic building material. These deposits represent 20<sup>th</sup> century levelling, presumably associated with the previous buildings on the site.
- 7.7 The levelling layers, old foundations and service trenches were sealed by brown humic topsoil (1) between 0.1-0.3m thick.



Plate B: Foundation trenches in NW area of the site.

## **8 Finds**

- 8.1 No finds were recovered from the site.

## **9 Conclusions**

- 9.1 No archeological features or finds were identified during the watching brief.
- 9.2 Extensive modern intrusions associated with the previous use of the site were recorded into the natural deposits of brown sandy gravels (2) and (3) (Plate A), and these may have truncated any archaeological deposits that once occupied the site.
- 9.3 No finds were recovered from the excavated material, suggesting there was little activity on the site predating the 20<sup>th</sup> century development of the area.

## **10 Publication and Archive Deposition**

- 10.1 Due to the nature of the project publication will be restricted to a record of the work with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) (Appendix B).
- 10.2 The archive, consisting of paper records, drawings, photographs, and digital records will be deposited with the relevant department within Kent County Council (KCC).

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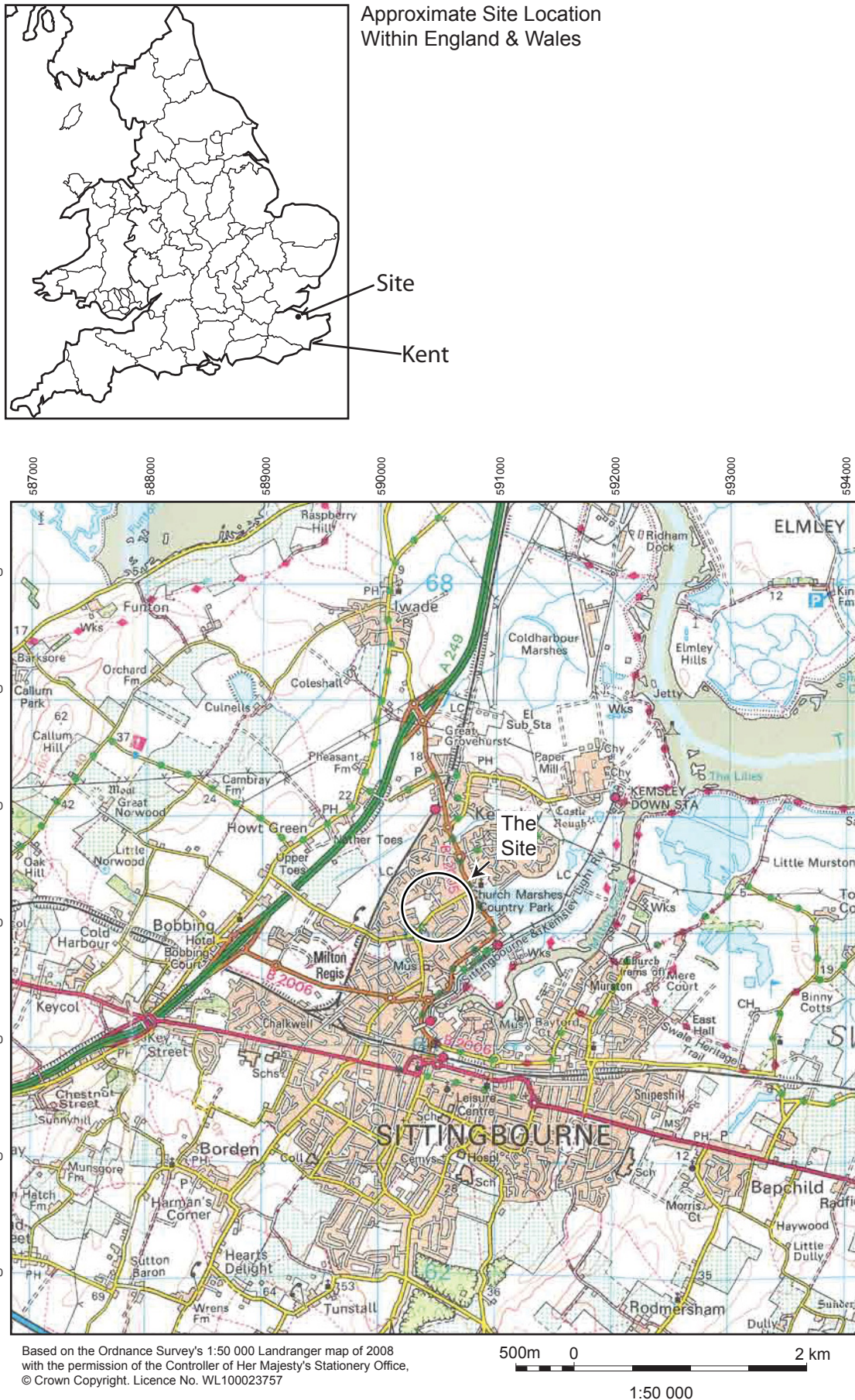
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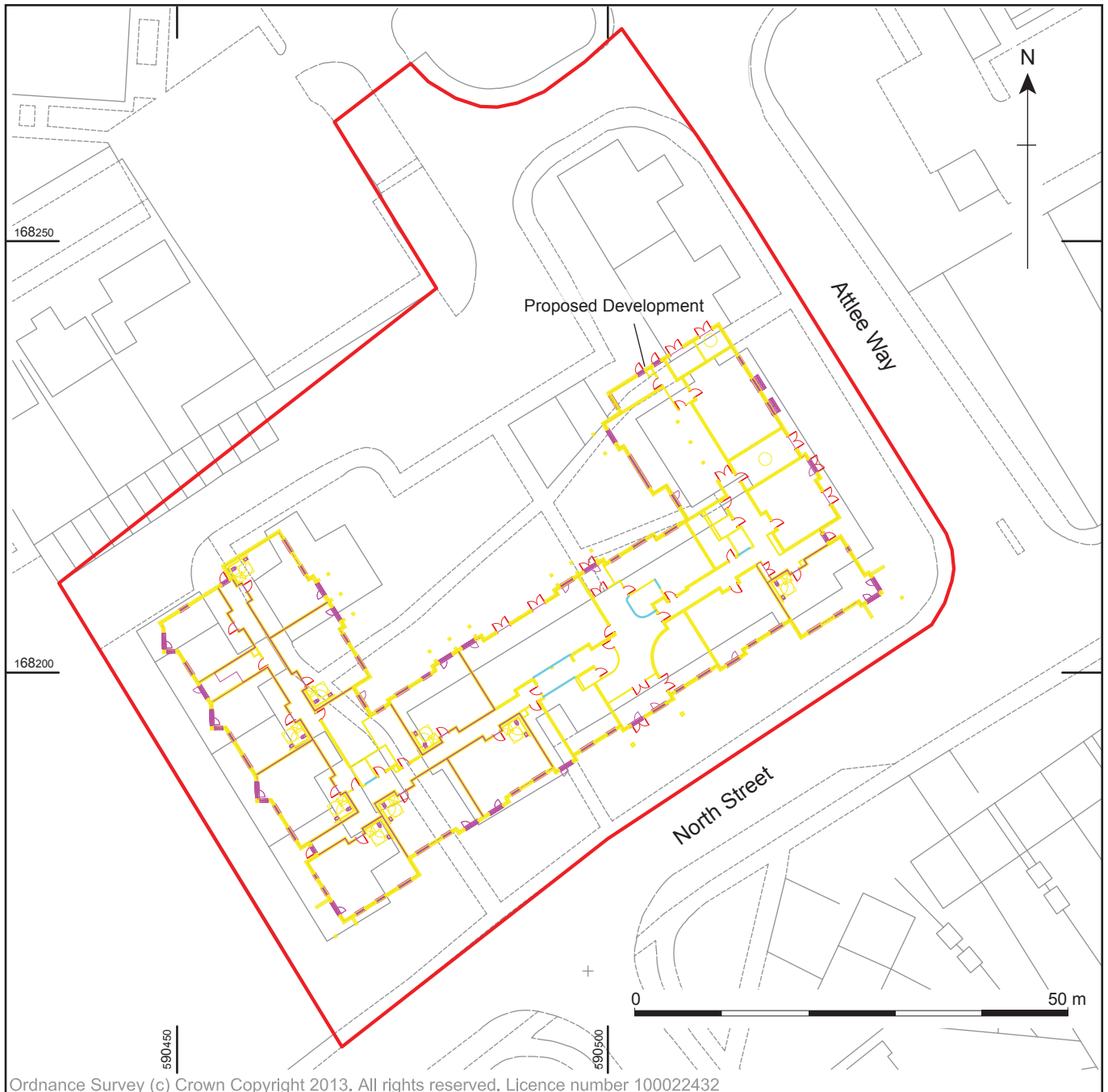
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT



**Figure 1:** Site Location



**Figure 2:** Detailed Site Location Plan



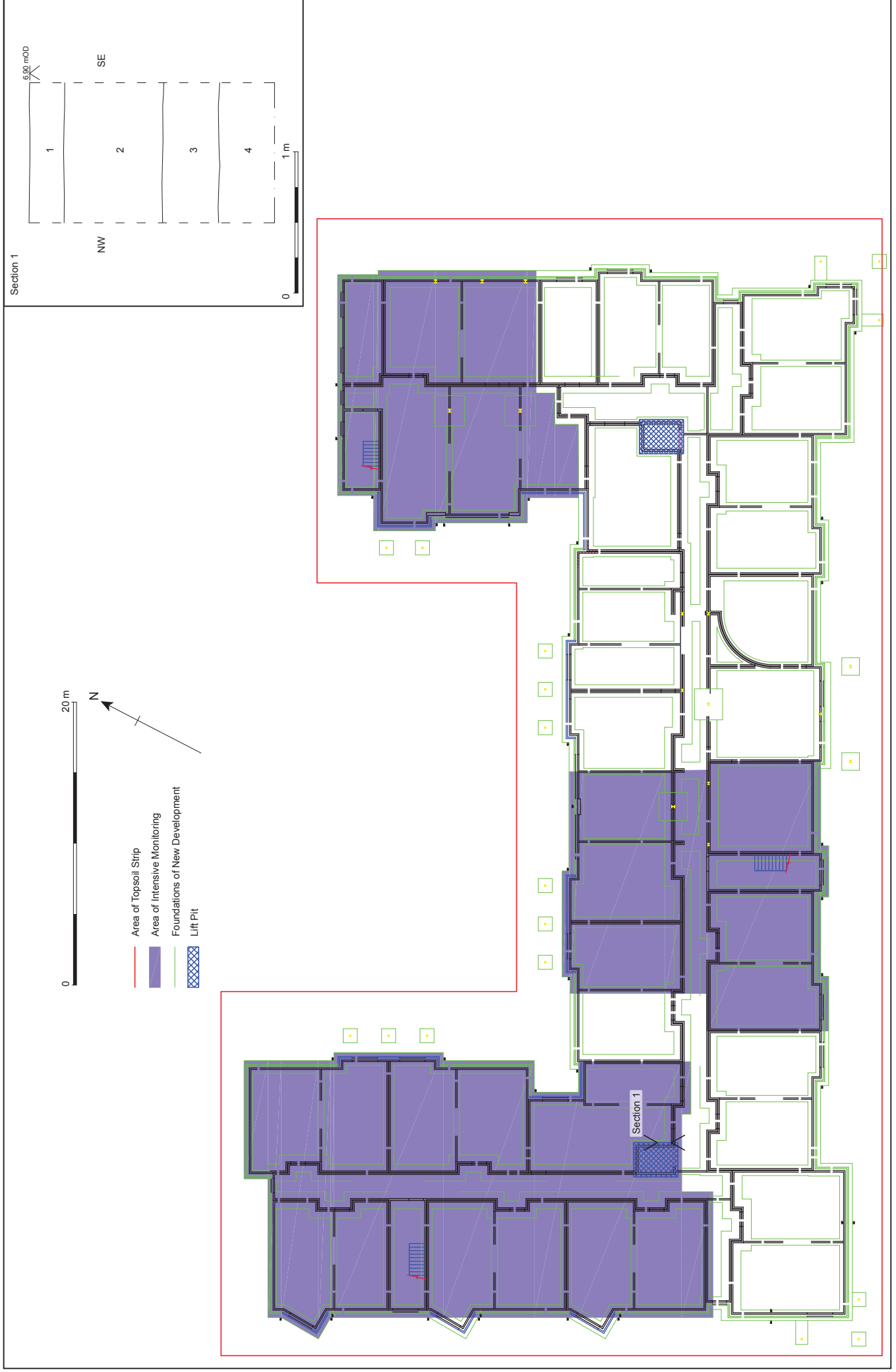


Figure 3: Plan of Area of Topsoil Strip and Foundation Trenches and Section

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## Appendices

## Appendix A – Context Register

Context	Description	Thickness
1	Topsoil	0.10m – 0.30m
2	Loose mid brown sandy silt gravel	0.70m
3	Orange sandy gravel	0.40m
4	Soft pale green grey slightly clayey sand	NFE
6	Soft grey sandy silt with gravel lenses and modern inclusions	0.15m
7	Soft dark brown clay, contains modern inclusions	0.60m

## Appendix B – Oasis Form

### **OASIS ID: aocarcha1-147667**

#### Project details

Project name Watching Brief at Wyllie Court, Milton Regis

Short description of the project A watching brief carried out during development at Wyllie Court

Project dates Start: 29-04-2013 End: 27-06-2013

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes WYC 13 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes 32383 - Contracting Unit No.

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Community Service 1 - Community Buildings

Investigation type ""Watching Brief""

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

#### Project location

Country England

Site location KENT SWALE SITTINGBOURNE Wyllie Court, Attlee Way

Postcode ME10 2HB

Study area 5260.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 90500 65210 51 0 51 21 12 N 000 44 10 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 7.00m Max: 7.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation AOC Archaeology

Project brief originator Kent County Council

Project design  
originator AOC Archaeology

Project  
director/manager Melissa Melikian

Project supervisor Les Capon

Type of  
sponsor/funding body Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive No  
Exists?

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography","Text"

Paper Media available "Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title WYLLIE COURT, ATTLEE WAY, MILTON REGIS, SITTINGBOURNE  
KENT: A WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Author(s)/Editor(s) Capon, L.

Date 2013

Issuer or publisher AOC

Place of issue or publication AOC

Description Unbound A4 report with illustrations

Project bibliography 2

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title WYLLIE COURT, ATTLEE WAY, MILTON REGIS, SITTINGBOURNE  
KENT: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Author(s)/Editor(s) Eddisford, D.

Date 2013

Issuer or publisher AOC

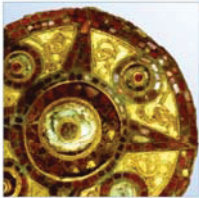
Place of issue or publication AOC

Description Unbound A4 report with illustrations

Entered by Melissa Melikian (melissa.melikian@aocarchaeology.com)

Entered on 27 June 2013





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