

UHC 2 Building (Priory Quarter Development) Cambridge Road, Hastings, East Sussex

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**UHC 2 BUILDING
(PRIORY QUARTER DEVELOPMENT)
CAMBRIDGE ROAD,
HASTINGS
EAST SUSSEX**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by McLaren Construction Group (hereafter '**the Client**') to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief on groundworks, specifically pile cap excavations at the UHC 2 Building Site, Priory Quarter, Hastings, East Sussex centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 581554, 109444 (hereafter '**the Site**').

The watching brief was conducted between the 26th July 2010 and the 4th August 2010. This work was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the Local Planning Authority. Development proposals include the construction of a five story over basement building adjacent to the rear of the extant Post Office building which fronts onto Cambridge Road.

Archaeological supervision was undertaken on a total of 59 piles and limited ground reduction across the site. Two test pits were also excavated in order to determine the presence of archaeological remains. The groundworks uncovered no finds, features or layers of archaeological significance. An assessment of two geoarchaeological boreholes is currently ongoing. The purpose of this work is to mitigate the impact of the present development and inform future development proposals in the immediate vicinity.

**UHC 2 BUILDING (PRIORY QUARTER DEVELOPMENT) CAMBRIDGE ROAD,
HASTINGS, EAST SUSSEX**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank McLaren Construction Group, particularly Stuart Ladbury, for commissioning this Archaeological Watching Brief and Greg Chuter, the Archaeological Advisor to East Sussex County Council, for monitoring the fieldwork.

The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Brendon Wilkins. The fieldwork was undertaken by Katharine Barber. The report was undertaken by Daniel Jackson and the illustrations were prepared by Ken Lymer.

**UHC 2 BUILDING, (PRIORY QUARTER DEVELOPMENT), CAMBRIDGE ROAD,
HASTINGS, EAST SUSSEX****Archaeological Watching Brief****1 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project Background**

Wessex Archaeology has been commissioned by McLaren Construction Group (hereafter **the Client**) to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief on groundworks, specifically pile cap excavations at the UHC 2 Building Site, Priory Quarter, Hastings, East Sussex centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 581554, 109444 (hereafter 'the Site').

Planning permission was granted by Hastings Borough Council for the construction of a five storey over basement building adjacent to the rear of the extant Post Office building which fronts onto Cambridge Road (HS/FA/09/00472). Archaeological provision was covered by Item 8, specifically:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agent, or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, including a timetable for the investigation, which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The works shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved programme and timetable.

The Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken in accordance with the *UHC 2 Building (Priory Quarter Development), Cambridge Road, Hastings, East Sussex. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief (WSI)* (Wessex Archaeology 2010). The WSI specified the strategy, techniques and methods to be employed by Wessex Archaeology's archaeologists during the watching brief. It was approved prior to commencement of fieldwork by Hastings Borough Council and their Archaeological Advisors East Sussex County Council. The fieldwork was conducted between the 22nd and 30th of July 2010

1.2 Site Description

The Site occupies a roughly rectangular piece of land in Hastings town centre. The Site is bound to the south by Cambridge Road, to the west, by Priory Road, to the north by a plaza associated with a high rise development to the north and to the east by terraced housing and associated rear yards (**Figure 1**).

The Site lies within the valley of the historic Priory Stream, the western of two valleys around which Hastings developed. The land forms a bowl that slopes down towards the sea from north to south rising slightly at the southern end of

Priory Street where it meets Cambridge Road. The topography also declines west to east from Cambridge Gardens down into Priory Street before rising again towards Havelock Road to the east.

1.3 Geology and Topography

The geology of the Site comprises Sand in Wadhurs Clay, overlain at the north-west and south-west by Head deposits, and with alluvium along the valley (*British Geological Survey* 2010).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

The following section gives a general overview of the archaeological and historic context of the Site. A more detailed assessment can be found in *Wessex Archaeology* (2006).

Below a brief review is presented of the records of archaeological artefacts, features and remains held in the Essex County Council Historic Environment Record. The numbers of such records is provided, for example **SMR MES877**.

Prehistoric (500,000BC – AD43)

There is little evidence for prehistoric settlement at Hastings before the Iron Age, due in part to rising sea levels. The preserved remains of trees and peat deposits, dating to the late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age, are still visible during low tides along the coast. There was an Iron Age hillfort (the Ladies' Parlour) on the promontory between the two streams – the Bourne Valley to the east and the Priory Valley to the west – with another on East Hill. Isolated finds possibly from within the Study Area include three Iron Age gold coins found in the 19th century – a *stater* of Commius (**NMR 417216**) and two uninscribed Gallo-Belgic $\frac{1}{4}$ *staters* (**NMR 417295**, **NMR 417296**).

Romano-British (AD43 – 410)

Similarly, the evidence for Romano-British activity comprises isolated and poorly located findspots of coins and other finds, and the dearth of pottery and other domestic materials suggests the absence of any significant settlement in the area. The finds include two bronze figurines, of a gladiator and of a sitting fawn, found together (**NMR 417211**), a number of coins (two of them found in an urn) dating from (AD69-395), and a ewer (possible a recently imported curio and not *in situ*) (**NMR 417310**). One coin was an *antoninianus* of Gallienus (AD 260-8) (**SMR MES877**).

Saxon (AD410 – 1066) Medieval (AD1066 – 1500)

The first reference to Hastings is in the 10th century Burghal Hidage which refers to the burh of *Haestingacaestre* (**NMR 1074122**). A mint was established in the burh during the reign of Athelstan (c. 895-939), which continued in use until 1055 (**NMR 1083303**). Though occupation of the area

during this period is highly likely no archaeological evidence for the burh has been found, again possibly due to natural erosion of the coastline.

Medieval (AD1066 – 1500)

Following the Norman Conquest, Robert, Count of Eu, built a castle on the promontory between the two valleys, partly within the earthworks of the earlier hillfort (the Ladies' Parlour). By 1094 a college of priests had been established within the castle bailey (dissolved in 1546). The fate of the Saxon burh following the battle of Hastings and the location of the original Norman Town are both unclear and no archaeological traces of it have been located.

There are references in the 12th century to a 'new town'. This appears to have been situated in the eastern, Bourne, valley, although it too suffered from erosion. From 1155, Hastings enjoyed privileged status as one of the Head Ports of the Cinque Ports. However, the town was burnt by the French in 1377, and such attacks, combined with destructive natural forces, meant that it never developed as a major port, although attempts to build a harbour continued without success until the 16th century.

The Priory of the Holy Trinity (**NMR 417251**, **NMR 626627**, **SMR MES864** and **SMR EES9314**), on the west side of the Priory Valley, was a small religious house of five Black Canons of St Augustine, established c 1189-99. As the priory suffered from the inundation of the sea, the canons obtained licence in 1334 to acquire further lands. However, the priory appears to have had an unsettled history at Hastings, and in c 1413 it moved to Warbleton, the new site being dedicated in 1417.

Some remains of the priory were uncovered in 1937 during construction of the Ritz Cinema but no records of these excavations survive. However, the priory was the subject of a rescue excavation in 1972 when the cinema site was redeveloped as a supermarket. During the excavations, which noted at least four phases of construction, parts of the chapterhouse (where the canons would meet in college), the cloisters, the refectory, the rere-dorter (latrine) and the dormitory undercroft (the room below the monks' dormitory) were identified.

Among the churches in Hastings from which the canons received endowments, after 1240, was the church of St Peters (**NMR 417277**), formerly linked to the priory at Combwell in Kent. It is possible that the church lay in the Priory valley, but its location is not known. It suffered from pirate raids in the early 14th century and it is not mentioned after 1339.

The names of two of the fields, *Upper Bricketts* and *Lower Bricketts* (**Cant 1746** and **Cant 1746**, *not reproduced*), are suggestive of brickmaking, and there is also a record of a brick kiln operating on the eastern edge of the site, on what is now the western side of Havelock Road (**Beswick 1993**, *not reproduced*)

Post-medieval and Modern (AD1500 – to date)

In the 16th and 17th centuries the new town, to the east of the Site, expanded onto the beach in front of the town wall, but Priory Meadows in the western valley was not resettled and redeveloped until the early 19th century, a process accelerated by the coming of the railway in 1851.

Up to the 19th century, remains of the priory buildings were incorporated into the buildings of Priory Farm (**Cant 1746, not reproduced**), which was in turn abandoned late in that century to make way for buildings along the newly formed Cambridge Gardens. The last visible remains were covered by the construction of Cambridge Hall.

The western valley was transformed by developments in the second half of the 19th century. These included the draining in 1836 of Priory March by running a culvert to the sea, the stabilisation of the seafront, the laying out of new residential streets, initially south of *Bohemia Road* (now Cambridge Road), and the construction in 1851 of the railway station at the north of the Site (**NMR 501114, SMR MES941**). The station was on the South East Railway (SER) line from Ashford and the London Brighton and South Coast Railways (LBSCR) line to Lewes (**NMR 1357356**). Most of the Site, however, remained undeveloped at this date, Priory Farm being shown as a number of buildings arranged around a square courtyard, with others to its north-west.

The first developments north of Cambridge Road (Linton Terrace) had begun by 1859 with new buildings laid out along Priory Street and Havelock Road as well as Middle Street and Station Road. By 1871 Priory Farm had become much reduced – most of the earlier buildings had been demolished to make way for housing on Cornwallis Gardens and Holmesdale Gardens to the west, and it consisted now only of one of the buildings at the north-west. To the east of the site was the square *Cricket Ground*, and a *Sawmill* is shown on the OS map just outside the Site, between Station Road and Middle Street (**OS 1st edn 1873**).

By the 2nd edition OS map of 1899, the whole Site had been filled in, with housing along Baybrooke Road, north of the railway line. In 1937, the Ritz Cinema was built on the Priory site, but there was little change to the rest of the Site until the early 1970s when the west side of Priory Street was redeveloped.

Negative Evidence

An archaeological watching brief at the Cricket Ground revealed nothing of archaeological interest (**NMR 1328743**).

2.2 Archaeological potential

In advance of site works, a Desk Based Assessment was undertaken for the Site, with the following risks identified:

- The potential for Prehistoric remains within the Site is generally considered as Low or Low Significance.
- The potential for Roman remains within the Site is generally considered as Low or Low Significance.
- The potential for Anglo Saxon/ Medieval remains within the Site is generally considered as Moderate or Moderate Significance.
- The potential for Post Medieval/Modern remains within the Site is generally considered as Low or Low Significance.
- The potential for Palaeo-environmental remains within the Site is generally considered Moderate or Moderate significance.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aims of the Archaeological Watching Brief, as specified in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2010), were to clarify the presence or absence, date, nature and extent of any buried archaeological remains and to investigate and record these within the area of the piling required for the development.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2010) and undertaken in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2008).

4.2 Fieldwork

- 4.2.1 The watching brief entailed monitoring of the groundworks for the foundation piling as part of the development works on the Site. A total of 59 boreholes were excavated across site (**Figure 1**). Of this number, 37 had an average diameter of 750mm and 22 an average diameter of 450mm. The average depth for the 750mm piles was 20m below existing ground level and for the 450mm piles it was 15.6m below existing ground level. The up-cast removed during the piling was carefully examined in order to identify any archaeological material. Two test pits were also excavated by machine in order to characterise piling obstructions prior to removal. This also afforded an opportunity to examine the section for layers of archaeological significance.

4.3 Recording

All recording was undertaken using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system.

- 4.3.1 Photographs were taken as appropriate to provide a record of the excavated areas (not all batteries could be photographed for security reasons). The photographic record contains digital images.

4.4 Health and Safety

All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety regulations 1992 and Health and Safety in Field Archaeology 1997, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

A Health and Safety Risk Assessment was produced by Wessex Archaeology (2009), which was read and understood by all staff attending the Site before groundworks commenced.

5 RESULTS

This section presents the results of the watching brief. Detailed descriptions of the deposits observed in the section of test pit 1 are included in **Appendix 2**. Given that much of the deposit was monitored during borehole piling, it was difficult to assess the precise level from which spoil had originally emerged. Section depth was recorded from both Test Pit 1 and 2, both of which had been excavated by machine in order to remove piling obstructions. No archaeological remains were encountered during the excavation of these test pits.

The Site was covered with a significant deposit of made ground, to a depth of between 1.5m and 3m, with a series of sterile layers typically of silty clay, to a depth of between 5m and 7m. These layers comprised brown silty clays, with occasional fragments of brick and gravel. Concrete ground beams relating to the previous demolished structure were identified in both test pits, accounting for the piling obstruction.

Geotechnical investigations prior to this phase of works recorded an organic layer directly below the made ground across the site. This was interpreted as the medieval and pre-medieval marsh landscape. Evidence for this organic layer was observed in the piling debris, but not in the test pits as they were not excavated deep enough. No archaeological remains associated with the exploitation of the marsh were identified in the spoil that was investigated from this layer.

No layers of archaeologically significant material were identified in general, and no archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were recorded during monitoring of the piles. Although some organic remains such as small pieces of brushwood were preserved within the peat layers, none exhibited worked surfaces and were not judged to be of archaeological origin.

6 DISCUSSION

No archaeological features or deposits were recorded in any of the boreholes or test pits. This may be due to the limited scope for archaeological intervention during the course of piling construction. The Geoarchaeological borehole survey will expand on this picture significantly, verifying the archaeological potential of the made ground; assessing the organic layers comprising the pre-post-medieval salt marsh identified during

previous Geotechnical works; and identifying the potential for remains in the immediate vicinity not anticipated by previous research and record.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

This report posits a **moderate to high degree of confidence** that the negative evidence observed is a reflection of the lack of archaeological features or significant deposits within the pile foundations.

8 ARCHIVE

8.1 Preparation and Deposition

The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's *Guidelines for Archive Preparation* and in accordance with *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage* (Walker 1990) and following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995). On completion of the project, the archive will be deposited with the County Museum Service or similar repository to be agreed with Hastings Borough Council's archaeological advisor at East Sussex County Council.

8.2 Archive

Following the fieldwork, the archive was transported to Wessex Archaeology's Maidstone office. The documentary records from the evaluation have been compiled into a stable fully cross-referenced and indexed archive in accordance with Appendix 6 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).

The contents of the project archive, comprises an A4 ring-bound file containing the following (as further detailed in **Appendix 1**):

- 1 Trench Record Sheet
- 1 Photographic Record Sheet
- Day Book
- A copy of the WSI

The project archive including plans, photographs and written records are currently held at Wessex Archaeology's Maidstone office under the site code **75150**. The project archive will be deposited with an appropriate local museum in the Essex area. As no artefactual evidence was recovered no agreement from the landowner is required in relation to the deposition of the archive.

8.3 Copyright

The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive license for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profit making, and conforms to the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003.

8.4 Security Copy

In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Monuments Record Centre (NMR) (English Heritage) in Swindon; a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at the appropriate local museum, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

- Beswick, M., 1993, *Brickmaking in Sussex*. Midhurst: Middleton Press
- British Geological Survey 2010 *Geological map data*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/GeolIndex/geology.htm>
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- Institute for Archaeologists 2008 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
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- Walker K. 1990 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage*. UKIC Archaeology Section
- Wessex Archaeology 2006 *Priory Quarter Hastings, Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*. Report Number 63531.01
- Wessex Archaeology 2010 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Geoarchaeological Borehole Survey at the UHC 2 Building Site, Priory Quarter, Hastings, East Sussex*. Report Number 75150.02

APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE INDEX

File No.	NAR Cat.	Details	Format	No. Sheets
1	-	Index to Archive	A4	1
1	A	Client Report	A4	
1	-	Project Specification	A4	9
1	B	Day Book (photocopy)	A4	9
1	B	Trial trench records	A4	1
1	B	Survey Data Index	A4	0
1	B	Survey Data Print-out	A4	0
1	B	Site Graphics	A4	0
1	B	Site Graphics	A3	0
1	D	Photographic Register	A4	1
1	D	CD-Rom – digital photo's	-	
1	E	Environmental Sample Register	A4	0
1	E	Environmental Sample Records	A4	0
2	-	B+W Negatives	35mm	0
2	-	Colour slides	35mm	0
FINDS		None		

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT SUMMARY TABLES

All archaeological deposits/features shown in **bold**
 All (+) indicate deposits/features not fully excavated
 'Depth' equals depth from present ground surface

Test Pit 1			
Context	Description	Interpretation/Process of deposition	Depth (m)
001	Impacted gravel, very recent, overlaying terram.	Made Ground	0.00-0.75
002	Soft brown silty clay, infrequent fragments of brick and gravel	Made Ground	0.75-1.50
003	Soft mid dark brown silty clay with occasional brick wood and steel work	Made Ground	1.50-2.90
004	Dense greyish brown silty clay smooth, few inclusions.	Natural Silting	1.90-2.65+
005	Concrete ground beam	Modern Structure	2.40-2.65
006	Concrete footing, contains some fragments of brick within concrete	Modern Structure	1.40-2.65

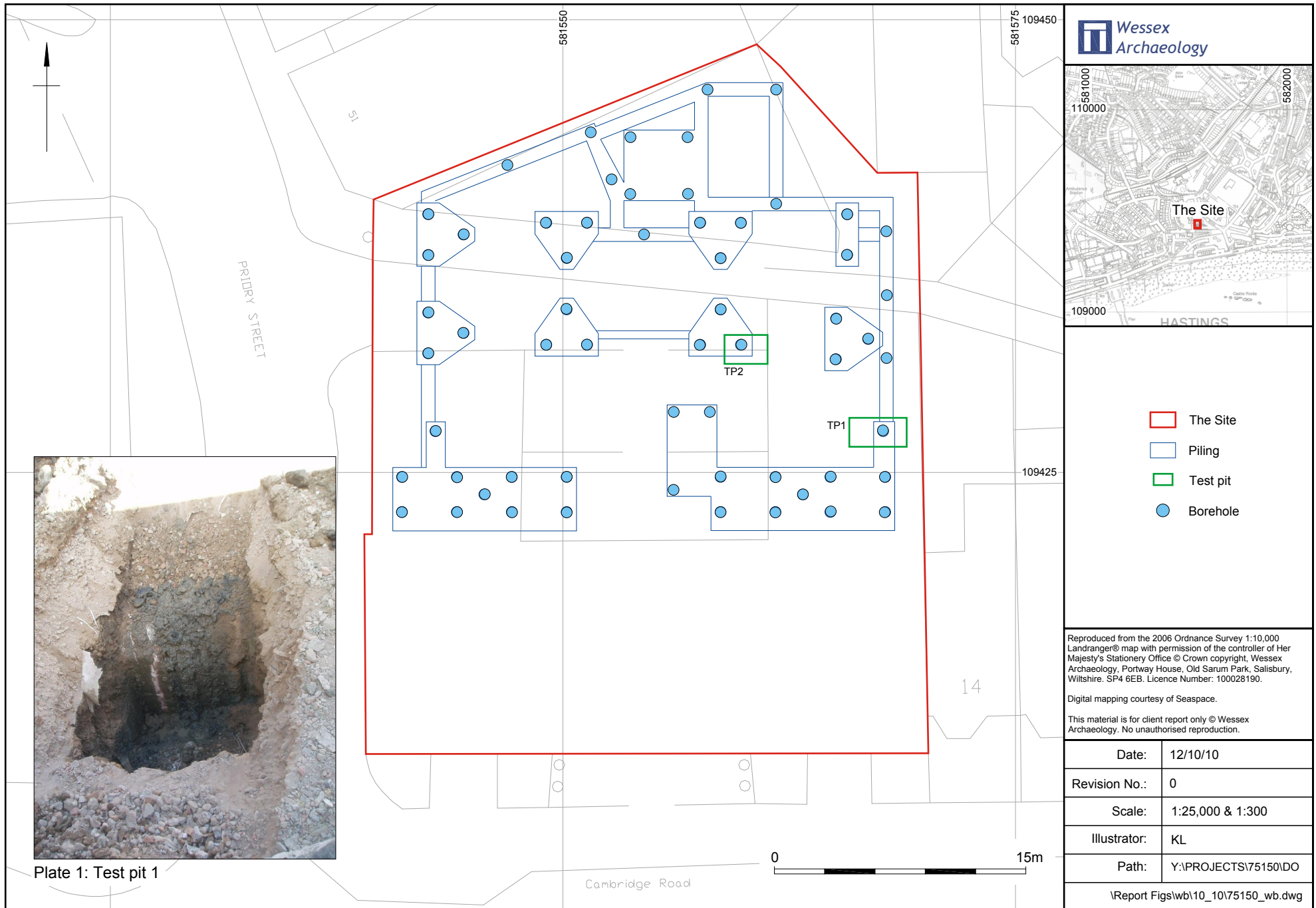


Plate 1: Test pit 1

Site location and piling layout plan

Figure 1



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