

**LAND TO THE REAR OF 12-26 CRAYFORD HIGH STREET**

**CRAYFORD, DA1**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING**

June 2008

**COMPASS**



**ARCHAEOLOGY**

LAND TO THE REAR OF 12-26 CRAYFORD HIGH STREET

CRAYFORD, DA1

LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

SITE CODE: CFZ 08

SITE CENTRE NGR: TQ 51440 74870

PLANNING REFERENCE: 07/10073/FULM

COMPASS ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED

5-7 SOUTHWARK STREET

LONDON SE1 1RQ

Telephone: 020 7403 9660

Facsimile: 020 7403 9661

E-mail: [mail@compassarchaeology.co.uk](mailto:mail@compassarchaeology.co.uk)

June 2008

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## ***Abstract***

*Archaeological observation and recording took place during groundworks at land to the rear of No. 12-26 Crayford High Street, Crayford, London Borough of Bexley between 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out as a condition of planning consent, prior to redevelopment of the site for residential properties.*

*No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered during the course of the archaeological fieldwork. Deposits largely represent made ground and demolition material related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century use of the site. A number of older probable 19<sup>th</sup> century wall bases were revealed in several test pits, but these are again deemed of low significance and represent either earlier former wall foundations or cellars. Where pottery samples could be recovered, these all fell within a date range of the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Natural orange-brown alluvial silt sequences were observed at a relatively shallow depth (0.4m below the present ground surface in some cases) beneath the made ground and brickwork. In some of the deeper and more central test pits, River Terrace gravels could be seen mixed with river lain silts.*

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** This report presents a summary of archaeological observation and recording on land to the rear of No. 12-26 Crayford High Street, Crayford DA1, London Borough of Bexley. The site is approximately centred at NGR: TQ 51440 74870
- 1.2** Compass Archaeology undertook the archaeological monitoring fieldwork between the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008. Prior to the redevelopment the site consisted of a car park, the Bexley Business Centre (a single storey structure; No. 14B Riverside House) and a tarmac surface.
- 1.3** The archaeological fieldwork programme was carried out in response to a grant of planning consent with conditions for residential redevelopment (London Borough of Bexley planning reference: 07/10073/FULM). Mark Stevenson, of English Heritage, then advised that a programme of archaeological observation and recording be carried out in accordance with the specified archaeological condition.
- 1.4** It was considered that the site had potential for Prehistoric and Roman remains, given the site's location on the River Terrace, at the edge of the alluvial floodplain as well as being in quite close proximity to Watling Street (the main Roman and medieval road to Rochester and Canterbury). In addition, it was thought probable that the site held evidence relating to the historic development of Crayford High Street.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

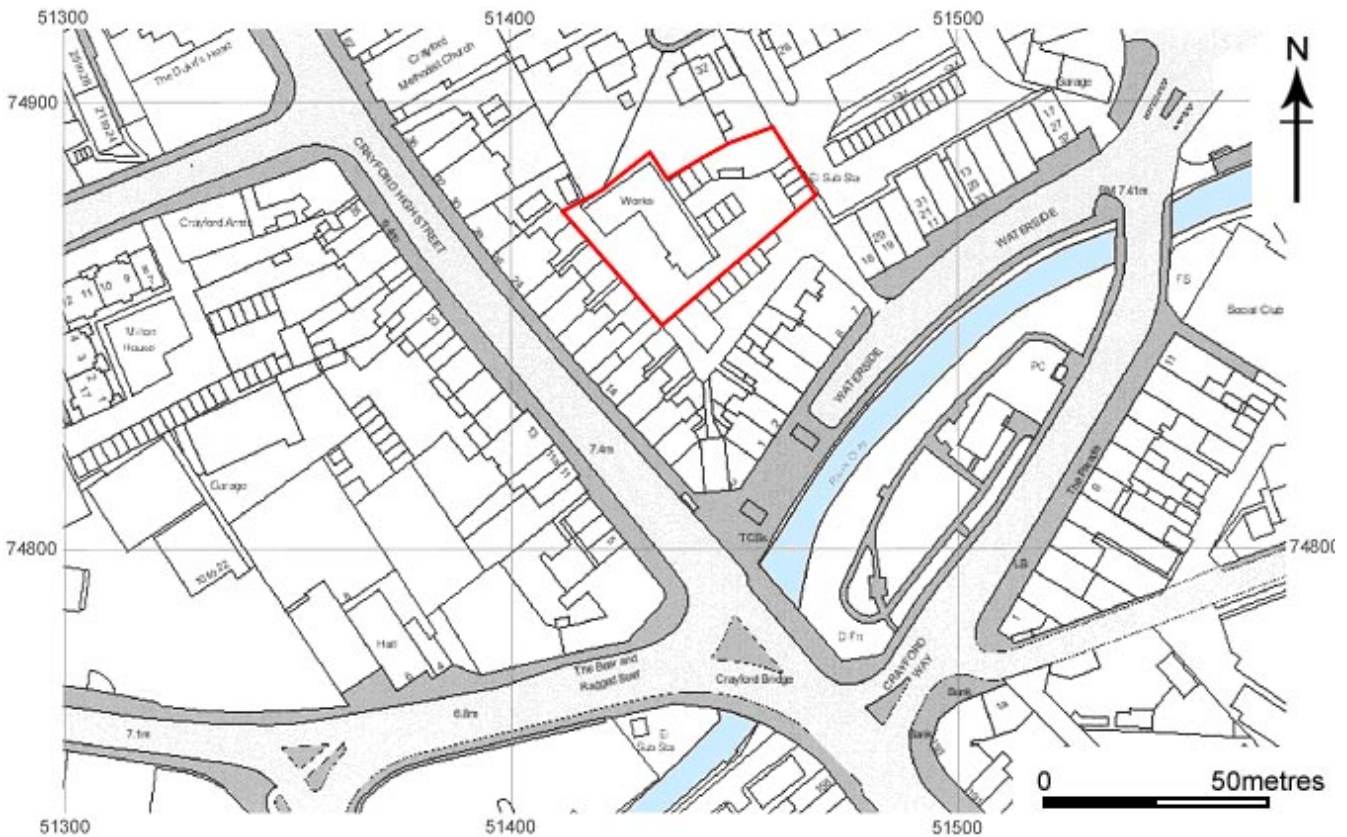
The archaeological watching brief was commissioned by Steve Watson of Lakedale Homes Ltd. Further assistance was provided by Peter Haughey also of Lakedale Homes Ltd.

Mark Stevenson (English Heritage, Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service) monitored the project on behalf of the London Borough of Bexley. Ken Stone of the London Borough of Bexley (Environment and Regeneration Services) also provided advice.

## **3. Location, geology and topography**

- 3.1** The site is located to the rear of properties fronting onto Crayford High Street and Waterside, some 50m to the northwest of the River Cray and approximately centred at TQ 51440 74870 (figure 1). Spot heights on the pre-development site survey give a surface level of about 8.0m to 8.8m OD, with land rising slightly to the north.
- 3.2** The geological survey indicates that the site lies on or close to the boundary between the alluvium within the floodplain of the River Cray (predominantly silt and clay) and the underlying River Terrace Deposits (Taplow Gravel). Some

150m to the north is an exposed band of much earlier Thanet Sand (British Geological Survey 1998. *Dartford. England & Wales Sheet 271*).



*Fig. 1 Site location, the site is shown outlined in red.*

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#### **4. Archaeology and history**

- 4.1** The site has some potential for prehistoric and Roman finds, not least given its position on the River Terrace and at the edge of the alluvial floodplain. It also lies about 150m to the north of Watling Street, the main Roman and medieval road to Rochester and Canterbury (the present-day A226).
- 4.2** Although the medieval settlement was fairly small its position on the river gave it some importance, including an iron mill established by 1570 (Weinreb & Hibbert, 1983 *The London Encyclopaedia*, 208). Historic maps indicate an essentially ribbon development along the line of the High Street, with a gradual expansion of development. Land on either side of this – including the area of the present site – was probably given over to allotments and small-scale workshops.
- 4.3** Maps from the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries show a number of small buildings on the site, although the current boundaries were also largely established by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1938 Ordnance Survey shows the site as largely empty and also open to the High Street. Subsequent maps show some

lockup garages and (between 1961 and 1972) the development of the present building as an electronic engineering works.



Fig. 2 Ground floor plan of proposed development

Adapted from a planning application drawing by Neal Tuson Architects, No. 223.P02 (E)

## 5. Objectives and archaeological research questions

5.1 In summary, the basic objective of the watching brief was to contribute to knowledge of the area, and to inform future responses. More specifically the fieldwork presented the opportunity to address several research questions, as outlined below.

- What is the nature of the natural ground surface; is the site still within the alluvial floodplain of the Cray or directly over earlier River Terrace deposits?
- Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity, either *in situ* or residual?
- Is there any evidence for Roman activity or settlement?
- Is there any evidence for medieval or earlier post-medieval activity, and does this give any insight into contemporary land use or settlement?



- What evidence is there for later post-medieval development, and can this be related to cartographic sources?

## **6. The archaeological programme**

### **6.1 Standards**

The field and post-excavation work was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (in particular, *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork, Guidance Paper 3*<sup>1</sup>). Works also conformed to the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*<sup>2</sup>). Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full Member of the Institute.

### **6.2 Fieldwork**

#### **6.2.1 Attendance**

All fieldwork followed the project design as set out in the previously approved Written Scheme of Investigation<sup>3</sup>. An archaeologist was on site supervising groundworks at all times for the test pits and ground stripping carried out in preparation for the redevelopment.

English Heritage were advised of the on-site start date. Both the client and English Heritage were kept informed of the progression of works, and nature of deposits encountered during the course of the archaeological observation and recording.

#### **6.2.2 Methodology**

Where test pitting and ground stripping revealed remains of potential interest, machine excavation ceased to allow investigation and recording so that the significance of deposits could be appropriately assessed. Significant deposits were investigated further by hand and then recorded in plan and section where appropriate. Where possible finds were collected.

All recording was carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in the Museum of London *Archaeological Field Manual*. Deposits were recorded in section and plan and by written description on *pro forma* recording and drawing sheets, which are designed to be directly compatible with those developed by the Museum. A photographic record was maintained of deposits, sections and working shots.

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<sup>1</sup> English Heritage 1998

<sup>2</sup> IFA 1999

<sup>3</sup> Compass Archaeology Ltd. March 2008

As deposits and features largely consisted of made ground and wall bases from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, or natural deposits, there was nothing considered worthy of preservation *in situ*, and preservation by record was instead carried out.

The location of stripped areas and test pits were located on the site plan, and tied into the Ordnance Survey by taped measurement to fixed points on the existing site property and site boundary walls.

### **6.2.3 Post-excavation work**

Copies of the report will be supplied to the Client, English Heritage and to the Local Authority and Local Studies Library.

Finds were collected and bagged separately by type with unique numbers related to the site record. These were later processed, quantified and assessed.

### **6.2.4 The site archive**

Following completion of the project the site archive will to be prepared in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990)* and will be deposited in the Museum of London Archive.

## 7. The archaeological watching brief

The test pit locations and areas of ground stripping monitored for archaeological potential are located in figure 3 below. This is followed by a test pit by test pit discussion of the results of fieldwork and description of the stripped areas, which are then drawn together with site conclusions and with reference to the outlined research objectives.

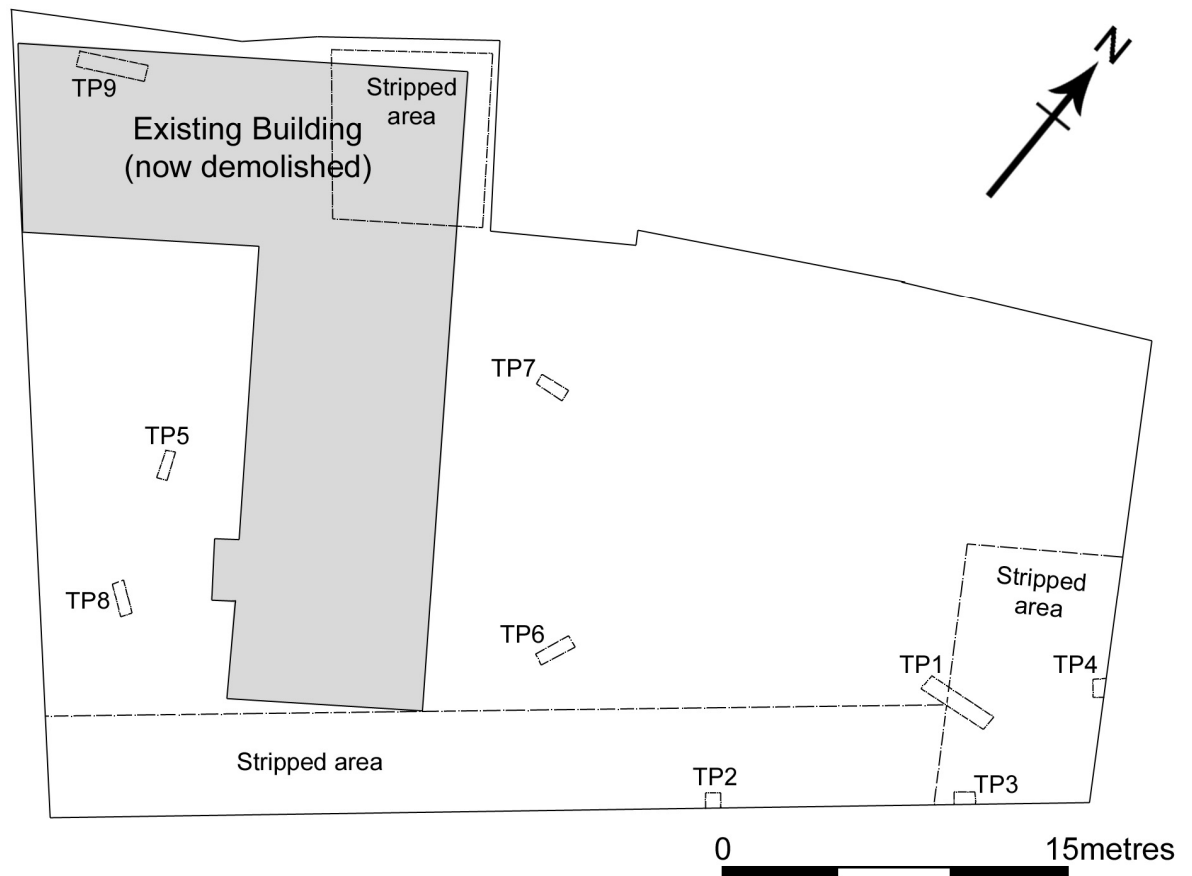


Fig 3

Fig. 3 The site plan showing the location of monitored test pits and areas of ground stripping

### 7.1 Test Pit 1

Test pit 1 (TP1) was located approximately 6m to the west of the eastern corner of the site and was on an east-west alignment. The trench measured 2.2m (east to west) and was 500mm wide. The maximum depth was approximately 2.3m at the eastern end of the trench.

Beneath the shingle/ gravel yard surface a modern made ground deposit of pale brown rubble was observed (at least 0.5m thick). Below this was a black-dark grey sandy/ash deposit with frequent charcoal and small stones. This deposit was 150mm thick at the maximum point at the eastern end. The eastern half of

the north facing section had a thin (80mm thick) layer of pale fine-medium sand. Below this was a dark grey sandy deposit that had occasional ceramic building material (CBM) fragments and small stones; this layer was just 150mm thick. This overlaid a similar but thicker (300mm) deposit, which was distinguished by its inclusions of CBM fragments, occasional flint nodules, rusted metal fragments, and what appeared to be slag or bone (health and safety issues prevented pit access to examine further). At the base of the trench a natural mid-light brown (increasingly orange with depth) soft sandy silt with gravels was observed.

This sequence of deposits was interpreted to represent a series of former construction surfaces, made ground deposits and dumped burnt material showing repeated developments on the site in its recent history. These overlaid natural alluvial silts and gravels related to the nearby river Cray.



*Fig. 4 The north facing section of test pit 1 (scale 0.5m)*

## **7.2 Test Pit 2**

Test pit 2 was located on the northeast-southwest aligned site boundary wall in the south of the site. It was positioned right against this wall and was situated 16.5m along its length measuring from the eastern corner of the site. The small pit measured just 950mm in length (east-west) by 650-700mm, but had a depth of 1.9m at the deepest point. This hand dug pit revealed several layers of made ground material with a concrete base observed at a depth of 300mm. Below this was a 500mm thick dark grey sandy silt with occasional CBM (red and yellow stock bricks), glass, and pot sherds. Beneath this was a layer of soft white mortar with *in situ* brick (the exposed section being northwest facing) work below to a depth of 1.70m, which jugged out 3-400mm from the boundary wall. The red handmade bricks were tightly mortared with a white, charcoal flecked

mortar. This brickwork most likely represented either earlier wall foundations or a former cellar of 19<sup>th</sup> century date and was considered to be of low significance.



*Fig. 5 The northwest facing section of test pit 2, with the in situ brick work visible below the scale (scale: 0.5m)*

### **7.3 Test Pit 3**

Test pit 3 was located along the same boundary wall as test pit 2, but 5.3m along its length from the eastern corner. The pit measured just 850mm by 600mm, and had a depth of 1.4m. The upper 200mm comprised a made ground deposit of broken CBM fragments, concrete fragments, and tarmac pieces. Below this was a 600mm thick dark grey-brown sandy silt, with frequent CBM (red and yellow stock bricks) occasional concrete fragments, potsherds, and chalk fragments. The lowest 600mm of the test pit was comprised of cleaner soft brown sandy silt. No archaeological finds or features were observed.

### **7.4 Test Pit 4**

Test pit 4 was located approximately one third (5m) of the way along the northeastern boundary wall, measuring from the eastern corner of the site. The small and shallow hand dug pit measured just 70mm by 500mm with a depth of 800mm at maximum point under the present boundary wall foundations. This pit revealed waste CBM similar to that used in the existing boundary wall, which the pit abuts. The wall sat upon a 80mm thick concrete base, itself overlying light brown sandy silt with frequent gravels that extended beyond the limit of excavation.

## 7.5 Test Pit 5

Test pit 5 was located in the west of the site, the most northerly of the test pits in front of the Bexley Business Centre (No. 14B Crayford High Street). The trench was orientated northwest-south east, having a length of 2.1m and width of 0.5m. The depth was between 1.2 and 1.3m deep.

The upper 250mm of deposits consisted entirely of repeated layers of tarmac and tarmac base. Below which was a dirty deposit of dark grey gritty material interpreted to be a backfill or made ground deposit. Comprised largely of coarse sandy silt, with CBM and pottery inclusions, this deposit was up to 700mm thick. At the very base of the trench natural mid-light orange brown sandy silt which was increasingly clean and sandy with depth. Just 300mm of this deposit was exposed, but it most likely continues beyond the limit of excavation. Four courses of white mortared red brickwork were exposed *in situ* in the west facing section, at a slightly different alignment to the trench. This brickwork most likely represents former cellars or wall foundations from the 19<sup>th</sup> buildings known to previously exist on the site.



*Fig. 6 The west facing section of test pit 5, showing the in situ brick work observed at the southern end of the trench*

## 7.6 Test Pit 6

Test pit 6 was located at the rear of the Bexley Business Centre building towards the approximate middle of the site as shown in figure 3. The trench was 2.5m in length (approximately north to south) but just 0.5m in width. A maximum depth of 2.1m was recorded. The pit revealed a simple sequence of deposits of modern rubble made ground over broken tarmac base at a depth of 750mm, with further similar rubble below (but with notably fewer large brick fragments, in the dry coarse sandy matrix) to a depth of 1.3m. Below these deposits was a

natural mid brown clean silty clay, and beyond the upper 400mm, the deposit became orange with frequent gravels extending beyond the limit of excavation.



*Fig. 7 The east facing section of test pit 6, please note that for health and safety access reasons the test pit could not be examined from within the trench (scale: 0.5m)*

### **7.7 Test pit 7**

Test pit 7 was also at the rear of No.14B Crayford High Street, but further to the north than test pit 6. This trench measured 2.8m east to west by 550mm wide, with an average depth of 2.1m. Deposits encountered were very similar to those seen in test pit 6, with the upper 400mm of deposits comprising modern made ground rubble, with a dirty and mixed dark grey-brown silt below with occasional pot, CBM and chalk lumps. This deposit blended with the underlying soft mid orange-brown silt, which became increasingly gravely and sandy towards the base of the trench.



*Fig. 8 The north facing section of test pit 7, please note that for health and safety access reasons the test pit could not be examined from within the trench (scale: 0.5m)*

### **7.8 Test pit 8**

This test pit was located further to the south of test pit 5, just outside the entrance to No. 14B Crayford High Street. The test pit measured approximately 2.2m east to west, by 0.5m north to south. The pit had a maximum depth at the mid point of 1.15m. Tarmac and tarmac base comprised the upper 150mm of deposits, with a concrete base below to a depth of 550mm. Below this, at the western end, in the east facing section were several courses of *in situ* brickwork (five courses exposed). The upper three courses were made of red bricks, with yellow stock bricks below. As with other recorded brickwork on the site, the brickwork was not thought to be of any great significance or antiquity and most likely represents former building foundations or cellars. At the base of the trench yellow-orange sandy clay was observed, which was thought to be the brickworks' construction cut backfill.





*Fig. 9 The east facing section of test pit 8 showing the in situ brickwork (scale: 0.5m)*

### **7.9 Test pit 9**

Test pit 9 measured 2.15m in depth, and was 3m long (approximately east-west) by 0.55m wide. It was located in the northwestern corner of the site about 3m out from the boundary wall as shown in figure 3 above. The upper 0.4m was comprised entirely of demolition material, which directly overlaid a natural alluvial sequence. The upper alluvium was a very fine mid orange brown silt, with lenses of gravels becoming more compact with depth (0.6m). This blended with the lower alluvium, which became greyer and more clayey with fine sands at depth.

### **7.10 Stripped areas**

Three large areas of ground stripping were closely archaeologically monitored and are discussed below. The location of these areas is marked in figure 3 above.

An area measuring 11m by 7m was stripped in the eastern corner of the site to a depth of approximately 1m below the present gravel car park surface. A sandy dark brown-black made ground deposit was revealed. This contained frequent CBM, wood and concrete inclusions suggesting a very recent origin, perhaps from when the Bexley Business Centre was built in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Fig. 10 The stripped area in the eastern corner of the site. Left: view of the stripped site access route, looking west. Right: the west facing section showing the modern made ground. (scale: 1m)*

On a later site visit, stripping of the southern area of the site for the new roadway was carried out under archaeological supervision to a depth of 0.4m. The stripped area was 4.5m wide, and ran the southern length of the site. The stripping revealed made ground overlying humic topsoil. The cut of a single modern feature was revealed. Below this was a rich orange brown silty alluvium, which was sterile of inclusions with the exceptions of pebbles and thermally struck flints. A similar sequence was encountered in the northwestern part of the site.



*Fig. 11 The stripped area in the northwest corner of the site below the made ground (scale: 1m)*

## 8. Conclusions

### 8.1 Commentary on the archaeological research objectives

- *What is the nature of the natural ground surface; is the site still within the alluvial floodplain of the Cray or directly over earlier River Terrace deposits?*

The site lies within the alluvial floodplain, with alluvial silt sequences comprising the natural deposits on the site. There is some evidence for River Terrace gravels towards the middle of the site, however these are overlain and intermix with the silts, gravels appear as lenses in the alluvium rather than as discrete deposits in their own right.

- *Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity, either *in situ* or residual?*

There was no evidence for prehistoric activity in the site, neither *in situ* nor residual.

- *Is there any evidence for Roman activity or settlement?*

There was no evidence for Roman activity in site, neither *in situ* nor residual.

- *Is there any evidence for medieval or earlier post-medieval activity, and does this give any insight into contemporary land use or settlement?*

There was no evidence for medieval or earlier post-medieval activity in site, neither *in situ* nor residual.

- *What evidence is there for later post-medieval development, and can this be related to cartographic sources?*

A number of *in situ* wall bases were observed in the small test pit sections. These most likely date to the later 19<sup>th</sup> and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, being either former wall foundations or cellars and are of quite low archaeological significance. Whilst these wall bases cannot conclusively be tied to specific buildings in the site area shown in the historic maps, the site was occupied by a series of small buildings from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It seems probable the observed wall bases relate to these.

About two dozen potsherds gathered from the test pits and from unstratified spoil heap deposits all date to the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Material included blue and white transfer-printed ware, plain cream or white earthenware and glazed and unglazed red ware (including flowerpot sherds), plus two sherds of hand-decorated mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century porcelain.

### 8.2 Summary

No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered during the period of archaeological observation and recording. Deposits largely represent made ground and demolition material related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century use of

the site. A number of older probable 19<sup>th</sup> century wall bases were revealed in several test pits, but these are again deemed of low significance and represent either earlier former wall foundations or cellars. Where pottery samples could be made, these all fell within a date range of the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century to 20<sup>th</sup> century

Natural orange-brown alluvial silt sequences were observed at a relatively shallow depth (0.4m below the present ground surface in some cases) beneath the made ground and brickwork. In some of the deeper and more central test pits, River Terrace gravels could be seen to mix with river lain silts.

## **9. Bibliography**

British Geological Survey, 1998 *England & Wales. Sheet 271. Dartford. Solid and Drift Geology 1:50 000*

Compass Archaeology, March 2008. *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Observation and Recording During Redevelopment Works on Land r/o No. 12-26 Crayford High Street, London Borough of Bexley.*

Department of the Environment, 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance No. 16: Archaeology and Planning*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1996 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

Neal Tuson Architects, Planning Application Drawings: No. 223.P02 (E)

Ordnance Survey maps, various dates.

Weinreb & Hibbert, 1983 *The London Encyclopaedia* p208

## Appendix I. OASIS Data Collection Form

**OASIS ID: compassa1-44640**

### Project details

Project name	Land to the Rear of 12-26 Crayford High Street, London Borough of Bexley. Archaeological Observation and Recording
Short description of the project	A programme of Observation and Recording was carried out by Gill King on behalf of Compass Archaeology Ltd. The fieldwork took place during groundworks at land to the rear of No. 12-26 Crayford High Street, Crayford, London Borough of Bexley between 26th March 2008 and 3rd June 2008. The archaeological fieldwork was carried out as a condition of planning consent, prior to redevelopment of the site for residential properties. No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered during the course of the archaeological fieldwork. Deposits largely represent made ground and demolition material related to the 20th century use of the site. A number of older probable 19th century wall bases were revealed in several test pits, but these are again deemed of low significance and represent either earlier former wall foundations or cellars. Where pottery samples could be made, these all fell within a date range of the earlier 19th century to 20th century. Natural orange-brown alluvial silt sequences were observed at a relatively shallow depth (0.4m below the present ground surface in some cases) beneath the made ground and brickwork. In some of the deeper and more central test pits, River Terrace gravels could be seen mixed with river lain silts.
Project dates	Start: 26-03-2008 End: 03-06-2008
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	CFZ 08 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	NONE None
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON BEXLEY CRAYFORD Land to the Rear of 12-26 Crayford High Street
Postcode	DA1
Study area	1575.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 51440 74870 51.4520162160 0.179772500046 51 27 07 N 000 10 47 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Project supervisor	Gill King
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive
Digital Contents	'none'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Map','Plan','Report'

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land to the Rear of 12-26 Crayford High Street, Crayford, London Borough of Bexley. Archaeological Observation and Recording
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Johnson, K.
Date	2008
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology Ltd
Place of issue or publication	Compass Archaeology, 5-7 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1RQ
Description	Spiral bound grey literature report.
Entered by	Katie Johnson (mail@compassarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	26 June 2008

## **Appendix II. London Archaeologist summary**

Land to Rear of 12-26 Crayford High Street, Crayford, DA1. TQ 51440 74870 CA (Gillian King). Watching Brief. March - June 2008. Lakedale Homes Ltd. CFZ 08

### **Summary**

No significant archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered during the course of the archaeological observation and recording. Deposits largely represent made ground and demolition material related to the 20<sup>th</sup> century use of the site. A number of older probable 19<sup>th</sup> century wall bases were revealed in several test pits, but these are again deemed of low significance and represent either earlier former wall foundations or cellars. Where pottery samples could be made, these all fell within a date range of the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Natural orange-brown alluvial silt sequences were observed at a relatively shallow depth (0.4m below the present ground surface in some cases) beneath the made ground and brickwork. In some of the deeper and more central test pits, River Terrace gravels could be seen to mix with river lain silts.