

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
THE FORMER SWANSCOMBE CLINIC SITE
SWANSCOMBE STREET
SWANSCOMBE, KENT**

DRAFT

NGR 560416 173927

(TQ 604 739)

Project No: 5022

Site Code: SWA11

ASE Report No: 2011204

OASIS ID: archaeol6-108059

by

Diccon Hart

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by A2C Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of the former Swanscombe Clinic site, Swanscombe Street, Swanscombe, Kent.

During groundworks, natural geology was recorded between c. 39.59m and 39.66m OD across the monitored area and a single undated pit was sealed beneath an 18th-19th century sequence which included a post-medieval subsoil horizon, a rammed chalk surface, a pit and a building with external surfaces. The sequence was capped with up to 0.60m of modern overburden.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the UCL Institute of Archaeology Centre for Applied Archaeology, was commissioned by A2C Developments Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological works during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of the former Swanscombe Clinic site, Swanscombe Street, Swanscombe, Kent. The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 560416 173927 and its location is shown in Figure 1.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 According to current data from the British Geological Survey, the site lies on Thanet Sand (BGS 2011). Field observation, however, indicates that the site in fact lies on mid yellowish brown clay with occasional gravel pockets that may represent a local pocket head deposits, mapped elsewhere in the immediate vicinity by the British Geological Survey (*ibid*).
- 1.2.2 The site is situated at around 40m OD and comprises tarmac hardstanding in the southern half of the site, with the recently demolished footprint of the former clinic building to the north. It is bounded by St Pauls Close to the south and Swanscombe Street to the east, with residential development to the west and north.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 The proposed redevelopment of the site entails the construction of a terrace of three dwellings, largely within the footprint of the previous clinic building which stood on the site (planning reference: DA/11/00096). Due to the archaeological potential of the site, the Heritage Conservation Group at Kent County Council (KCC) recommended that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken as a condition of permission. Condition 2 of the decision notice therefore states that:

'No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority'.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.

- 1.3.2 A *Specification* outlining the requirements for the archaeological work, which consisted of an *archaeological watching brief* was subsequently produced by KCC (KCC 2011). All work was carried out in accordance with this document and with the relevant standards and guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

1.4 Scope of Report

- 1.4.1 This report details the results of the archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks on the site. The work was undertaken between 9th and 15th August 2011 by Diccon Hart (Senior Archaeologist). The fieldwork was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and the post-excavation analysis was managed by Jim Stevenson (Project Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies approximately 600m southeast of the Lower Palaeolithic site of Barnfield Pit. This internationally significant site was one of the first Lower Palaeolithic sites to be systematically excavated in Britain and has yielded an important corpus of lithic artefacts and biological evidence, including the famous Swanscombe skull. These remains have been recovered from a sequence of river terrace gravels, separated by floodplain silts, currently mapped as the Boyn hill Gravels by the British Geological Survey (BGS 2011) but usually referred to as the Lower and Middle gravels and Lower Loam within the context of the site itself. These deposits are considered to date to the Hoxnian interglacial (Oxygen Isotope Stage 11), dated to around 400,000 BP (Wenban Smith 2007).
- 2.2 The earliest artefactual remains recovered from the site comprise undisturbed Clactonian cores and flakes, recovered from the Lower Loam and Gravel. Acheulian handaxes and associated cores and flakes, as well as the Swanscombe Skull, were recovered from the Middle Gravels. The associated faunal evidence includes wolf, beaver, elephant, lion, rhinoceros, as well as rabbit, vole and pine marten and osprey, cormorant and duck. Together, the faunal assemblage indicates a warm climate, with woodland, open grassy areas and nearby watercourses.
- 2.3 The site also lies in an area of Roman and medieval potential. A Roman kiln has been excavated in the vicinity (Detsicas 1983, 157) and various casual finds of Roman artefacts are also documented in the area (*ibid.* 147; KCC 2011). The site also lies within the historic core of the village of Swanscombe, in close proximity to the medieval Church of St. Peter and St. Paul.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

- 3.1.1 All ground reduction and trenching was carried out under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist, with the exception of areas where prior truncation or disturbance could be demonstrated.
- 3.1.2 Wherever possible, machine excavation was undertaken using a tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket (although the latter was not always practical). Where archaeological features or deposits were revealed, machining was stopped and excavation was continued by hand. The spoil from the machine excavations was scanned for the presence of any artefacts, both visually and using a metal detector.
- 3.1.3 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded in accordance with the Specification and with the relevant Standards and Guidance of the Institute of Archaeologists (KCC 2011; IfA 2008), using pro-forma context record sheets. Archaeological features and deposits were planned at a scale of 1:50, with selected detail drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10.
- 3.1.4 A photographic record of the work was kept and forms part of the site archive. The archive (quantified in Table 2), including the finds, is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade, and will in due course be offered to a suitable local museum.

3.2 Aims and Objectives

- 3.2.1 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief, as set out in the *Specification* (KCC 2009) were to contribute to heritage knowledge of the area through the recording of the archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks.

3.3 Quantification of Archive

Number of Contexts	21
No. of files/paper record	1 file
Plan and sections sheets	2
Bulk Samples	none
Photographs	13 Digital
Bulk finds	1 box
Registered finds	none
Environmental flots/residue	none

Table 1: Site Archive Quantification

4.0 RESULTS (Figures 2 - 4)

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The following groundworks were monitored within the area shown on Figure 2:

- Ground reduction an area measuring c. 15m² c. 39.89m OD, followed by:
- Machine removal of all pre-existing foundations and obstructions, followed by:
- Excavation of new foundation trenches to a maximum depth of c. 38.29m OD.

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m OD)
001	Layer	Modern overburden and truncations	15.00m	15.00m	1.5m	40.54m
002	Fill	Fill of [005]	15.00m	0.30m	0.30m	30.89m
003	Fill	Fill of [005]	15.00m	0.05m	0.30m	39.89m
004	Masonry	Foundation wall	15.00m	0.40m	0.30m	39.89m
005	Cut	Construction cut for [004]	15.00m	0.80m	0.30m	39.89m
006	Layer	Cobbled surface	8.40m	3.00m	0.10m	39.89m
007	Layer	Rammed chalk surface	15.00m	3.50m	0.15m	39.89m
008	Layer	Rammed chalk surface	115.00m	1.40m	0.12m	39.89m
009	Fill	Fill of [011]	15.00m	0.20m	0.10m	39.89m
010	Masonry	Foundation wall	15.00m	0.20m	0.10m	39.89m
011	Cut	Construction cut for [010]	15.00m	0.20m	0.10m	39.89m
012	Layer	Rammed chalk surface	15.00m	2.00m	0.15m	39.89m
013	Fill	Fill of [014]	1.00m	0.90m	0.40m	13.89m
014	Cut	Pit	1.00m	0.90m	0.40m	13.89m
015	Layer	Clinker surface	10.00m	2.70m	0.10m	14.00m
016	Layer	Subsoil horizon	8.00m	5.65m	0.15m	13.74m
017	Fill	Fill of [018]	0.80m	0.50m	0.35m	3.64m
018	Cut	Pit	0.80m	0.50m	0.35m	3.64m
019	Layer	Natural	15.00m	15.00m	-	13.66m
020	Layer	Rammed chalk surface	15.00m	2.60m	0.15m	13.89m
021	Layer	Subsoil horizon	15.00m	1.40m	0.15m	13.74m

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

4.2 Natural Geology

Group 1: Natural geology (Figs 3 and 4)

4.2.1 The natural geology [019] observed during the monitored groundworks consisted of Head Deposits of mid yellowish brown silty clay with occasional pockets of gravel. This was generally recorded between c. 39.59m OD and 39.66m OD across the monitored area, with the exception of areas of deeper truncation.

4.3 Period 1: pre-18th century

Group 2: undated pit (Fig. 3 and 4)

- 4.3.1 The earliest archaeological activity identified during the course of the fieldwork consisted of a single small ovoid pit [018], filled with mid greyish brown silty clay [017] located in the northeast corner of the monitored area. No finds were recovered from the feature, although an 18th-19th century *Terminus Ante Quem* is provided by the overlying subsoil horizon which sealed the feature.

4.4 Period 2: 18th-19th century

Group 3: remnant subsoil horizon

- 4.4.1 The undated pit [018] was sealed by a subsoil horizon of mottled mid yellow-grey silty clay [016] (Group 3), from which a handful of fragments of 18th-19th century peg tile fragments were recovered. This subsoil horizon appeared to survive only in the north-eastern corner of the monitored area; elsewhere it appears to have been entirely truncated during the levelling of the site for the subsequent construction of a substantial surface of rammed chalk

Group 4: rammed chalk surface (Figs. 3 and 4)

- 4.4.2 The Group 4 rammed chalk surface extended across the entire monitored area and consisted of a thick layer of compacted chalk (contexts [007], [008], [012], [020]). Localised areas of makeup consisting of demolition debris were noted in places and presumably reflect attempts to consolidate or level the ground prior to the construction of the Group 3 surface. Fragments of peg-tile recovered from these areas of makeup indicate an 18th-19th century date for the surface.

Group 5: pit (Figs. 3 and 4)

- 4.4.3 A small pit ovoid or sub-circular pit [014] (Group 5), filled with mid greyish brown silty clay [013] was cut into the Group 3 chalk surface. Fragments of 18th-19th century brick and tile were recovered from the feature.

Group 6: brick foundations (Building 1; Figs 3 and 4)

- 4.4.4 The evidence for Building 1 consisted of two north-south aligned brick foundations [004] and [010] (Group 6) which were cut into the underlying Group 3 chalk surface (Figs 3 and 4). Both walls were constructed of standard red unfrosted brick of 18th-19th century date, bonded with light brown sandy mortar, though no particular bond was employed in either case.

Groups 7 and 8: external surfaces associated with Building 1 (Fig. 3)

Two external surfaces were recorded to the east and west of the Group 6 brick foundations and appear to represent contemporary, associated external surfaces. To the east this included a heavily truncated surface of flint cobbles (Group 7, context [006]), while to the west the Group 7 surface consisted of compacted clinker (context [015]).

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Geology and Topography

5.1.1 The investigation has shown that the geology of the site consists of head deposits, rather than the Thanet Sand mapped by the British Geological Survey (BGS 2011). This is itself is not particularly remarkable as head deposits are mapped elsewhere in the immediate vicinity and the evidence from the current investigation merely provides further detail on the local geology of the Swanscombe area. Of greater interest is the absence of Boyn Hill Gravels on the site, which are known to contain significant Lower Palaeolithic archaeological and environmental evidence elsewhere in the vicinity. In this respect, however, it is worth noting that the evidence from Barnfield Pit indicates that these gravel deposits occur between c. 22m and 32m OD (Wenban-Smith 2007, 50), whereas the subject site lies at around 40m OD. If the Boyn hill Gravels do extend as far south as the subject site, therefore, it seems safe to assume that they are well protected beneath some 8 to 10 metres of overburden.

5.2 The archaeological evidence

5.2.1 Almost all the archaeological features revealed during the course of the monitoring date to the 18th-19th century and include a rammed chalk surface, a pit and the brick foundations of a north-south aligned building.

5.2.2 The only recorded earlier feature is undated pit [018], which was sealed beneath a post-medieval subsoil horizon at the base of the recorded sequence.

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Acknowledgements

ASE would like to thank Richard Bearsby of A2C Developments Ltd for commissioning the work and KCC for their guidance throughout the project.

Appendix 1: Context and Group Register

Table 1: Context register

Context	Context type	Feature type	Parent context	Subgroup	Group
1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	F	S	5	5	6
3	F	S	5	5	6
4	M	W	4	5	6
5	C	S	5	5	6
6	L	ES	6	6	7
7	L	ES	7	4	4
8	L	ES	8	8	4
9	F	S	11	12	6
10	M	W	10	12	6
11	C	S	11	12	6
12	L	ES	12	9	4
13	F	P	14	10	5
14	C	P	14	10	5
15	L	ES	15	13	8
16	L	NS	16	3	3
17	F	P	18	2	2
18	C	P	18	2	2
19	L	N	19	1	1
20	L	ES	20	11	4
21	N	NS	21	7	3

Table 2: Group register

Group no	Description	Period
1	NATURAL	
2	PIT	1
3	SUBSOIL HORIZON	2
4	RAMMED CHALK SURFACE	2
5	PIT	2
6	FOUNDATIONS	2
7	COBBLED SURFACE	2
8	CLINKER SURFACE	2

Appendix 2: SMR Summary Sheet and OASIS Summary Form

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	SCS09					
Identification Name and Address	Former Swanscombe Clinic Site, Swanscombe Lane, Swancombe, Kent					
County, District &/or Borough	Kent, Dartford					
OS Grid Refs.	560416 173927					
Geology	Head Deposits					
Arch. South-East Project Number						3513
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 09-15/08/11	Other		
Sponsor/Client	A2C Developments Ltd					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Diccon Hart					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other Modern		
<p>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by A2C Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of the former Swanscombe Clinic site, Swanscombe Street, Swanscombe, Kent.</p> <p>During groundworks, natural geology was recorded between c. 39.59m and 39.66m OD across the monitored area and a single undated pit was sealed beneath an 18th-19th century sequence which included a post-medieval subsoil horizon, a rammed chalk surface, a pit and a building with external surfaces. The sequence was capped with up to 0.60m of modern overburden.</p>						

OASIS Summary form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-108059

Project details

Project name	Former Swanscombe Clinic Site, Swanscombe Lane, Swancombe, Kent
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by A2C Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of the former Swanscombe Clinic site, Swanscombe Street, Swanscombe, Kent. During groundworks, natural geology was recorded between c. 39.59m and 39.66m OD across the monitored area and a single undated pit was sealed beneath an 18 th -19 th century sequence which included a post-medieval subsoil horizon, a rammed chalk surface, a pit and a building with external surfaces. The sequence was capped with up to 0.60m of modern overburden.
Project dates	Start: 09-08-2011 End: 15-08-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SWA11 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	5022 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Monument type	SURFACE Post Medieval
Monument type	FOUNDATION Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval
Significant Finds	TILE Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT DARTFORD SWANSCOMBE AND GREENHITHE Former Swanscombe Clinic Site, Swanscombe Lane, Swancombe, Kent
Postcode	DA10 0JY
Study area	900.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 604 739 51.440826 0.308190515102 51 26 26 N 000 18 29 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 39.59m Max: 39.66m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Kent County Council
Project design originator	Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Diccon Hart
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	A2C DEVELOPMENTS LTD

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Dartford Museum
Digital Contents	'Ceramics','Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Dartford Museum
Paper Contents	'Ceramics','Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Context sheet'

**Project
bibliography 1**

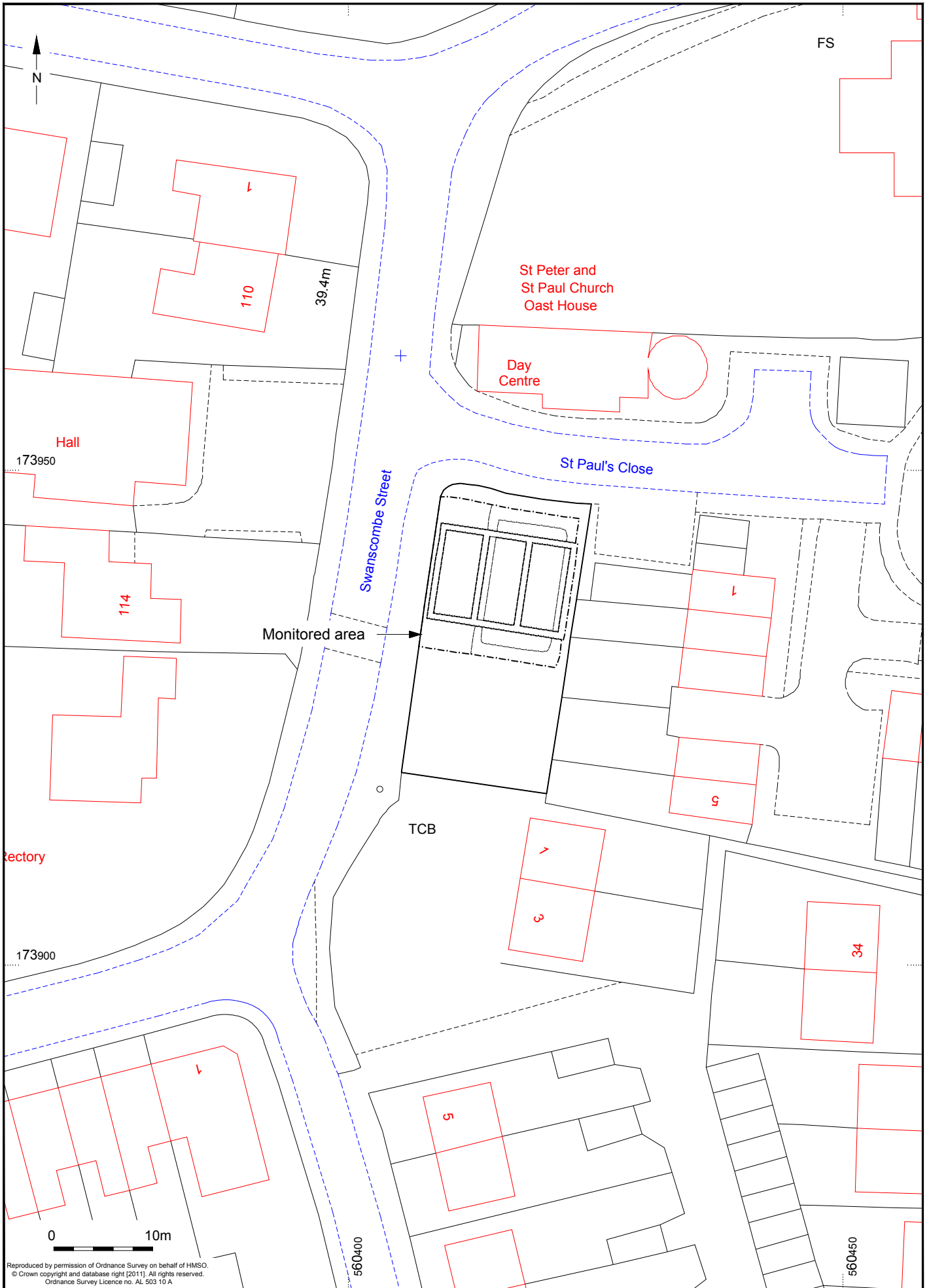
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	an archaeological watching brief at the former Swanscombe Clinic site, Swanscombe Street, Swanscombe, Kent
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Hart, D
Other bibliographic details	2011204
Date	2011
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East
Place of issue or publication	Archaeology South-East
Description	A4 booklet

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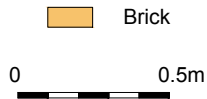
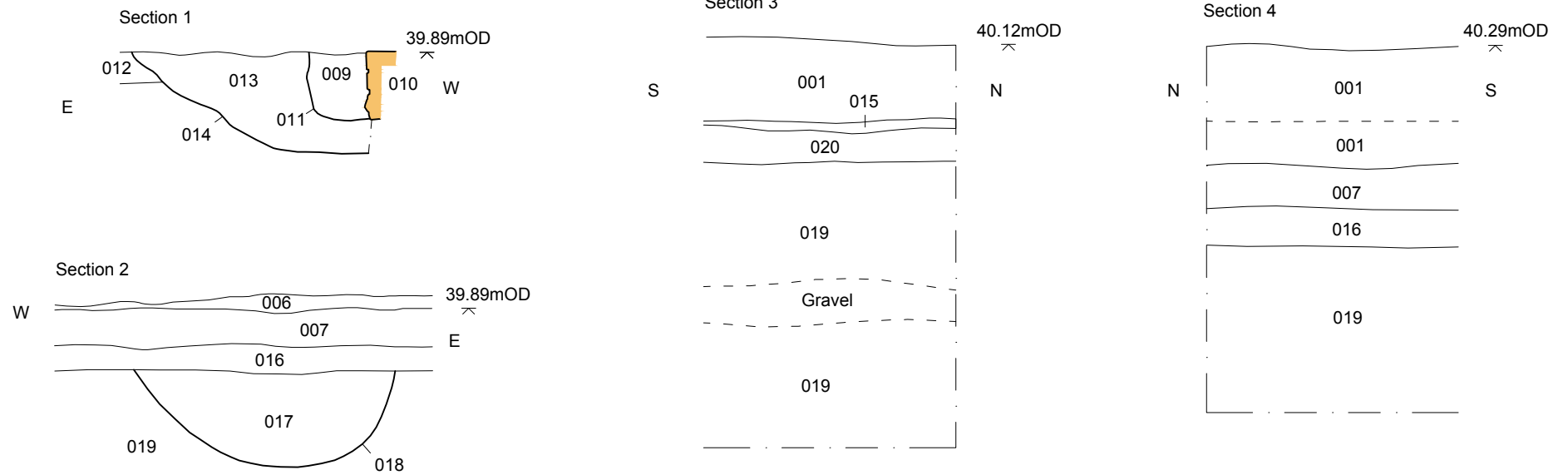
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© Archaeology South-East		The Former Swanscombe Clinic Site		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 5022	Aug 2011	Site location		
Report Ref: 2011204	Drawn by: JLR			

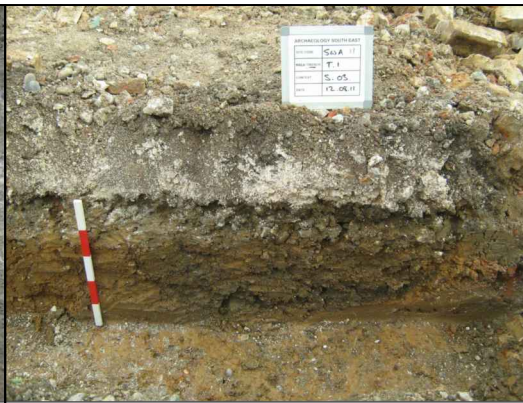


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© Archaeology South-East		The Former Swanscombe Clinic site		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 5022	Aug 2011	Site plan		
Report Ref:	Drawn by: JLR			



W 010 and 014, section 1, looking south



018, section 2, looking north



Section 3 looking west



Section 4 looking east

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