

**Archaeological Test Pit Report
Hurst Court, The Ridge
Hastings
East Sussex**

NGR 582127 112603

**Hastings Borough Council Planning Reference
HS/FA/11/00695**

**ASE Project No: 5206
Site Code: HCH11**

**ASE Report No. 2011268
OASIS ID: archaeol6-113367**

**by
Simon Stevens BA MIFA**

**With contributions from Luke Barber
Trista Clifford, Karine le Hégarat
Sarah Porteus**

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Roger Howell Architects to excavate 2 archaeological test pits at Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings, East Sussex. These were manually excavated.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A small assemblage of 19th to 20th century artefacts was recovered from the topsoil.

The thinness of the overburden and the finds from it are suggestive of intensive landscaping at the site probably associated with the creation of grounds for the school in the 1860s. It was not possible to establish the extent of this truncation and archaeology may survive in other areas of the site but any potential archaeological features in the area of the test pits would have been heavily impacted upon during the process.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Archaeological Background
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology
- 4.0 Results
- 5.0 The Finds
- 6.0 Discussion and Conclusions

Bibliography
Acknowledgements

HER Summary Sheet
OASIS Form

TABLES

- Table 1: Summary of ESCC HER data
- Table 2: Quantification of site archive
- Table 3: Quantification of finds

FIGURES

- Figure 1: Site location including ESCC HER data
- Figure 2: Test pit location
- Figure 3: Photographs

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of University College London (UCL) Centre for Applied Archaeology (CAA) at the Institute of Archaeology (IoA) was commissioned by Roger Howells Architects to excavate two archaeological test-pits at Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings, East Sussex (NGR 582127 112603; Fig. 1).

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The site lies to the north of the modern commercial centre of Hastings at a height of c. 140mAOD. It is situated to the north of the confluence of The Ridge, Stonestile Lane and Chowns Hill, and consists of part of the former grounds of Hurst Court.

1.2.2 According to current data from the British Geological Survey the site lies close to the junction of the Tunbridge Wells Sand and Wadhurst Clay formations. There is no recorded superficial geology (BGS 2011).

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 Planning permission has been sought from Hastings Borough Council for the construction of 20 residential dwellings with associated access routes, parking and services (planning ref. HS/FA/11/00695). East Sussex County Council (ESCC; who act as advisers to Hastings Borough Council on archaeological issues) has recommended the planning application should not be determined until the results of an evaluation had been provided.

1.3.2 Following discussions between ASE and ESCC it was agreed that excavation of two hand dug test pits would be sufficient to provide information on the nature of past impacts, depths of deposits etc at the site to inform a planning decision

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 Following further discussions between ASE and ESCC, no detailed *Written Scheme of Investigation* was required for this work due to time constraints and the relatively straightforward nature of the required work. The specific aim of the work was to understand the likely nature of past impacts and deposit depths in the central area of the site in order to allow an informed planning decision to be made.

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 The current report provides results of the excavation and recording of two test-pits excavated at the site in November 2011. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist), Liz Chambers (Archaeological Assistant) and John Cook (Archaeological Surveyor). The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A full Desk-Based Assessment of the site has been undertaken (ASE 2011) which provides a comprehensive archaeological background to the current site, which is summarised below. The East Sussex County Council Historic Environment Record lists the following sites within a 1km radius (site locations are shown on Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Site No.	HER No.	NGR (TQ)	Description	Period
1	MES839	8183 1245	Findspot of Roman coin of Maximinus II found in 1936.	Roman
2	MES2461	8056 2150	Rochester to Maidstone and Hastings Roman road designated RR 13	Roman
3	MES840	8201 1208	Remains of medieval and post-medieval manor house. <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument SAM ES156</i>	Medieval & Post-Medieval
4	MES846	8205 1209	Ruins of St Helens Church. <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument SAM 20002 Listed Building 293815</i>	Medieval
5	MES2568	819 133	Rectangular 16 th century pottery kiln. <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument SAM ES472</i>	Post-Medieval
6	MES2569	819 132	Stone-built 16 th century pottery kiln. <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument SAM ES472</i>	Post-Medieval
7	MES7353	8187 1325	Stone-built 16 th century pottery kiln. <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument SAM ES472</i>	Post-Medieval
8	MES7015	8278 1312	Well house, probably associated with Coghurst Hall.	Post-Medieval
9	MES969	8173 1254	Great Ridge – 17 th century former farmhouse. <i>Listed Building 294049</i>	Post-Medieval

Table 1: Summary of ESCC HER Data

2.2 The results of the DBA suggested that the potential for discovery of archaeological remains was as follows:

Prehistoric - Low
Romano-British - Moderate
Anglo-Saxon - Low
Medieval - Low
Post-medieval - Moderate

- 2.3 There is little or no evidence of prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity in the vicinity of the site. The potential for Romano-British remains is based on the information suggesting that the site lies along the line of a known Roman road, running from Hastings to Rochester and as such has been designated an *Archaeological Notification Area*. The area extends on both sides of the road line to accommodate the possibility of associated roadside settlement.
- 2.4 The first known activity in the vicinity of the site was the beginning of construction of Hurst Court adjacent to the current site (which formed part of the grounds) in 1863. It was established by Dr Thomas Reed as a boarding school for 'young gentlemen', and opened in February 1864, originally known as The College, Ore. It was renamed as Hurst Court in 1866.
- 2.5 In 1884 the school became a Jesuit College for several years, before reverting to its former use as a preparatory school which it remained until it closed in December 1968, apart from a short interlude during the Second World War when it was commandeered for military, during which time the school buildings were damaged by the explosion of a V1 'flying bomb'. In January 1970, the buildings were acquired by Hastings Youth Trust and developed as a Residential Conference and Training Centre. The main house was recently demolished.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Two archaeological test-pits each measuring 1m by 1m were manually excavated at the site. The locations were scanned with a CAT scanner prior to excavation. The excavation was taken down to the top of the 'natural' geological deposits, or to the top of any recognisable archaeological deposits, whichever was the higher. Care was taken not to damage archaeological deposits through excessive use of mechanical excavation.
- 3.2 Revealed surfaces of the 'natural' were manually cleaned in an attempt to identify individual archaeological features. Spoil was scanned for the presence of artefacts, both visually and with a metal detector.
- 3.3 All encountered deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East context record forms. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.4 A full photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive. The site archive is currently held by Archaeology South-East at the offices in Portslade, and has been offered to Hastings Museum, pending reply. The archive consists of the following:

Number of Contexts	4
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	-
Bulk Samples	-
Photograph	4 digital images
Bulk finds	-
Registered finds	-
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 2: Quantification of Site Archive

4.0 RESULTS (Fig. 2)

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Two 1m x 1m test-pits were manually excavated at the site in an area of open grass away from trees or bushes.

4.2 Test-Pit 1

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
1/001	Deposit	Topsoil	130mm
1/002	Deposit	'Natural'	-

4.2.1 Test-Pit 1 was manually excavated to a maximum depth of 130mm (137.09mAOD) at which the 'natural' was encountered and excavation ceased. The overburden consisted of a homogenous deposit of light brownish grey silty clay topsoil, context [1/001]. It directly overlay the 'natural', a yellow clay with grey mottling and outcrops of yellow sandstone, context [1/002].

4.2.2 No archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A small assemblage of 19th to 20th century artefacts was recovered from the overburden.

4.3 Test-Pit 2

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Deposit Thickness
2/001	Deposit	Topsoil	260mm
2/002	Deposit	'Natural'	-
2/003	Cut	Garden Feature	-
2/004	Masonry	Garden Feature	-

4.3.1 Test-Pit 2 was manually excavated to a maximum depth of 260mm (137.05mAOD) at which the 'natural' was encountered and mechanical excavation ceased. The single deposit of overburden and the 'natural' were similar in character to those found in Test-Pit 1 and were recorded as context [2/001] and [2/002] respectively. A small assemblage of 19th to 20th century artefacts was recovered from the topsoil.

4.3.2 The only feature encountered was late post-medieval in date and consisted of a concrete and brick base for a garden feature/ornament of some kind, context [2/004], which had a diameter of 360mm, located in the south-east corner of the test-pit. It had been laid in a hole of unknown depth, cut [2/003]. Following an on-site discussion with Casper Johnson, County Archaeologist, ESCC, it was concluded that given its obvious modernity, the feature need not be recorded in detail.

4.4 Backfilling

4.4.1 Following inspection by Casper Johnson the test-pits were backfilled and the turf replaced.

5.0 THE FINDS

A small collection of finds was recovered during the evaluation at Hurst Court, Hastings. An overview of the assemblage is shown in Table 1

Context	Pottery	wt (g)	CBM	wt (g)	Flint	wt (g)	FCF	wt (g)	Stone	wt (g)	Slag	wt (g)	CTP	wt (g)	Glass	wt (g)	Coal	Wt (g)
1/001	15	24	6	28			3	46	1	<2	1	14	1	<2	3	8	1	4
2/001	8	18	2	242	1	32	3	8	1	6					2	2		
Total	23	42	8	270	1	32	6	54	2	6	1	14	1	0	5	10	1	4

Table 3: Quantification of finds

5.1 The Pottery –by Luke Barber

5.1.1 Small quantities of pottery were recovered from the topsoil in Trenches 1 and 2 all of which can be placed between the late 19th and early 20th century. The material consists of very small sherds (the largest being a mere 25mm across), many of which appear to have been burnt. As such the assemblage would appear to represent deliberately burnt and scattered domestic refuse. Context [1/001] produced a 2g fragment from an unglazed earthenware flower pot, three (7g) sherds from English stoneware bottles, a 1g fragment of pearlware (flow blue decoration), a 3g fragment from a blue willow-pattern transfer-printed plate and eight (10g) fragments from refined white earthenware vessels. The most notable of these are the four sherds from a Keiller Dundee Marmalade preserve jar (4g). The only other sherd from this deposit consists of a 1g chip of English porcelain.

5.1.2 Context [2/001] produced less pottery but that which is present is very similar to that in [1/001]. Two sherds (4g) from a purple transfer-printed vessel are present along with three quite heavily burnt refined white earthenware sherds (5g).

5.2 The Ceramic Building Material by Sarah Porteus

5.2.1 A total of seven fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) with a combined weight of 270g were recovered from two contexts. A provisional fabric series has been drawn up.

5.2.2 Context [1/001] contained five fragments of highly abraded peg tile in two fabrics, T2, A fine sandy fabric with sparse black iron rich inclusions and T3, an orange fabric with cream silt streaking. None of the fragments is accurately datable, though a 17th to 19th century date is probable. A fragment of stone was also present in the assemblage.

5.2.3 Context [2/001] contained a fragment of peg tile in fabric T2 of probable 18th to 19th century date and a fragment of wall tile. The wall tile is unglazed, machine made, earthenware with a polished upper surface of 12mm thickness. A diagonal lattice pattern is embossed on the base with the

partial remains of the maker's mark; 'MINTON HOLLINS PATENT TILE WORKS STOKE ON TRENT'. The Minton and Hollins Company was operational between 1845 and 1968 and was a major producer of dust-pressed wall tiles (Van Lemmen 2000). The very fine fabric of the tile with no notable inclusions suggests the tile is made using the dust-pressed method which improves strength and water resistance for a durable tile, perhaps for kitchen or outdoor use.

- 5.2.4 The majority of the assemblage has been discarded with the exception of the Minton Hollins tile which has been retained for archive. Quantification of the assemblage by form, fabric and type has been drawn up on pro forma recording forms for archive.

5.3 The Flint by Karine le Hégarat

- 5.3.1 A single struck flint weighing 6g and six burnt unworked flint weighing 54g were recovered during the course of the evaluation at the site. The struck flint came from the topsoil in Trench 1. It consists of the proximal end of a flake manufactured on a light grey flint. The broken piece isn't chronologically diagnostic.

5.4 Glass by Trista Clifford

Three sherds including a rim from a clear glass vessel, probably a bowl, were recovered from [1/001]. Context [2/001] also produced two small fragments of glass (3g), both quite heavily burnt and as a result hard to identify. However, all would be in keeping with a later 19th- to early 20th-century date and at least one is from a green cylindrical bottle.

5.5 Slag by Trista Clifford

- 5.5.1 Context [1/001] also contained a fragment of undiagnostic slag, together with a piece of coal dated to the 19th century or later.

5.6 Other Finds by Luke Barber

- 5.6.1 Context [1/001] produced a single, relatively fresh, plain stem from a clay tobacco pipe of mid-18th to 19th century date. The same deposit also produced a 1g chip of Welsh slate. Context [2/001] also produced a piece of Welsh slate (5g) though this had been reddened by burning.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered in either of the test-pits. The only feature encountered was clearly late post-medieval in origin and appeared to be the remains of some form of garden ornament.
- 6.2 The thinness of the overburden and the finds from it are suggestive of intensive landscaping at the site probably associated with the creation of grounds for the school in the 1860s.
- 6.3 The conclusion of this report is that the work was successful in confirming that the central area of the site appears to have been terraced down flat on to natural substrate. There was no evidence for a surviving subsoil below a thin and what looked like, modern topsoil layer. Whilst it is not known how much original ground surface has been removed (this could be modelled from the site survey from west to east across the site) it is clear there has been truncation which is likely to have impacted on any below ground archaeological remains, reducing their potential significance....'etc..

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank Roger Howells Architects for commissioning the work and Casper Johnson and of Greg Chuter, County and Assistant County Archaeologists East Sussex County Council for their guidance throughout the project.

HER Summary Form

Site Code	HCH11					
Identification Name and Address	Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings					
County, District &/or Borough	Hastings Borough, East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	582127 112603					
Geology	Tunbridge Wells Sand/Wadhurst Clay					
ASE Project No.	5206					
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. 08.11.2011	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Roger Howells Architects					
Project Manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		
<p>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Roger Howell Architects to excavate 2 archaeological test pits at Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings, East Sussex. These were manually excavated.</p> <p>No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A small assemblage of 19th to 20th century artefacts was recovered from the topsoil.</p> <p>The thinness of the overburden and the finds from it are suggestive of intensive landscaping at the site probably associated with the creation of grounds for the school in the 1860s. It was not possible to establish the extent of this truncation and archaeology may survive in other areas of the site but any potential archaeological features in the area of the test pits would have been heavily impacted upon during the process.</p>						

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-113367

Project details

Project name	Archaeological Test Pits at Hurst Court, The Ridge Hastings, East Sussex
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Roger Howell Architects to excavate 2 archaeological test pits at Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings, East Sussex. These were manually excavated. No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A small assemblage of 19th to 20th century artefacts was recovered from the topsoil. The thinness of the overburden and the finds from it are suggestive of intensive landscaping at the site probably associated with the creation of grounds for the school in the 1860s. It was not possible to establish the extent of this truncation and archaeology may survive in other areas of the site but any potential archaeological features in the area of the test pits would have been heavily impacted upon during the process.
Project dates	Start: 08-11-2011 End: 08-11-2011
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	HS/FA/11/00695 - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	5206 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	HCH11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	GLASS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CLAY PIPE Post Medieval
Methods &	'Test Pits'

techniques

Development type Housing estate

Prompt Planning condition

Position in the
planning process Between deposition of an application and determination

Project location

Country England

Site location EAST SUSSEX HASTINGS HASTINGS Hurst Court, The Ridge

Postcode TN35 4PW

Study area 2.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 821270 126030 50.8835621304 0.589482697699 50 53
00 N 000 35 22 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 137.05m Max: 139.09m

Project creators

Name of
Organisation Archaeology South-East

Project brief
originator East Sussex County Council

Project design
originator Archaeology South-East

Project
director/manager Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson

Project supervisor Simon Stevens

Type of
sponsor/funding
body Client

Name of
sponsor/funding
body Roger Howells Architects

Project archives

Physical Archive
Exists? No

Digital Archive
recipient Hastings Museum

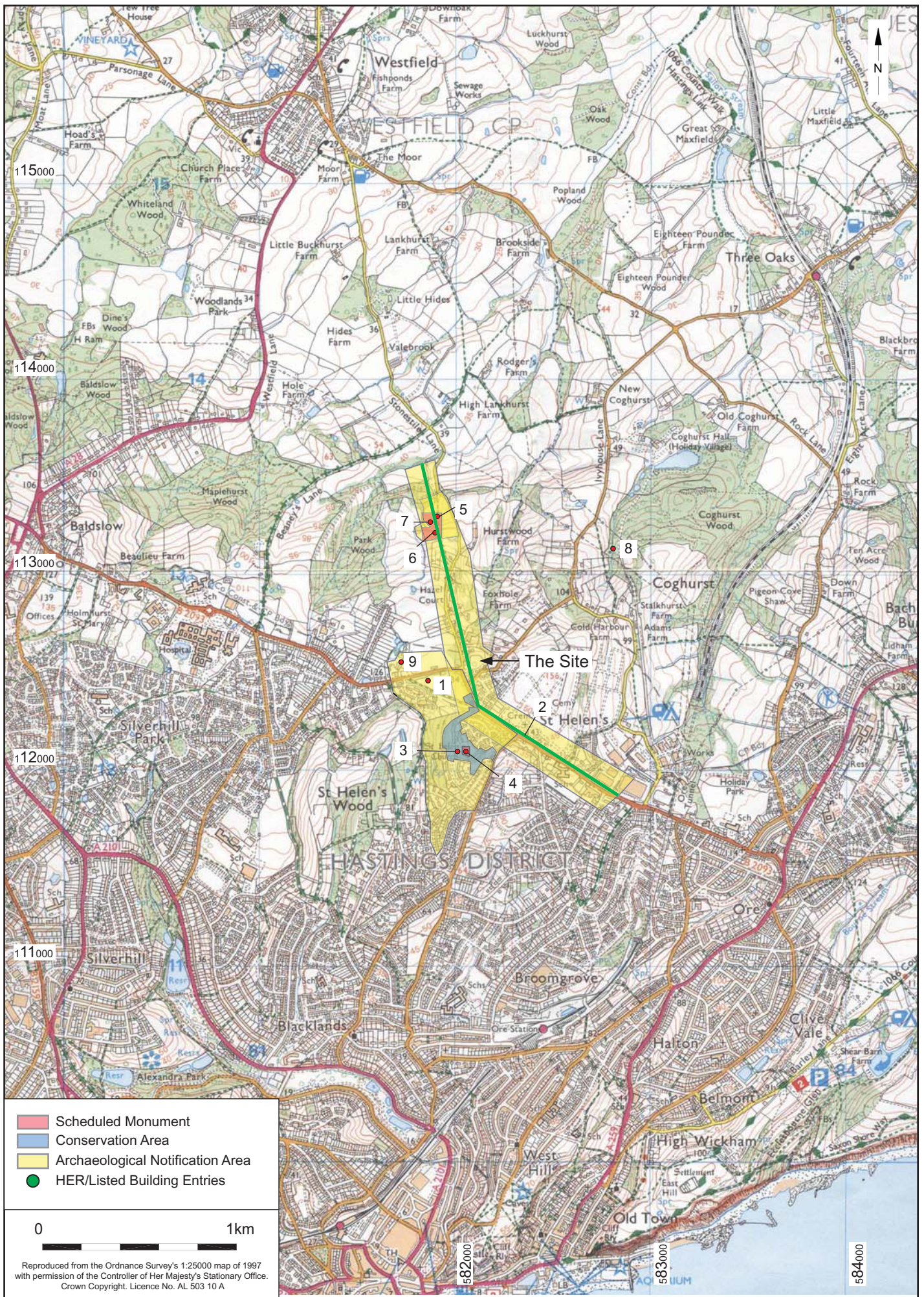
Digital Contents 'other'

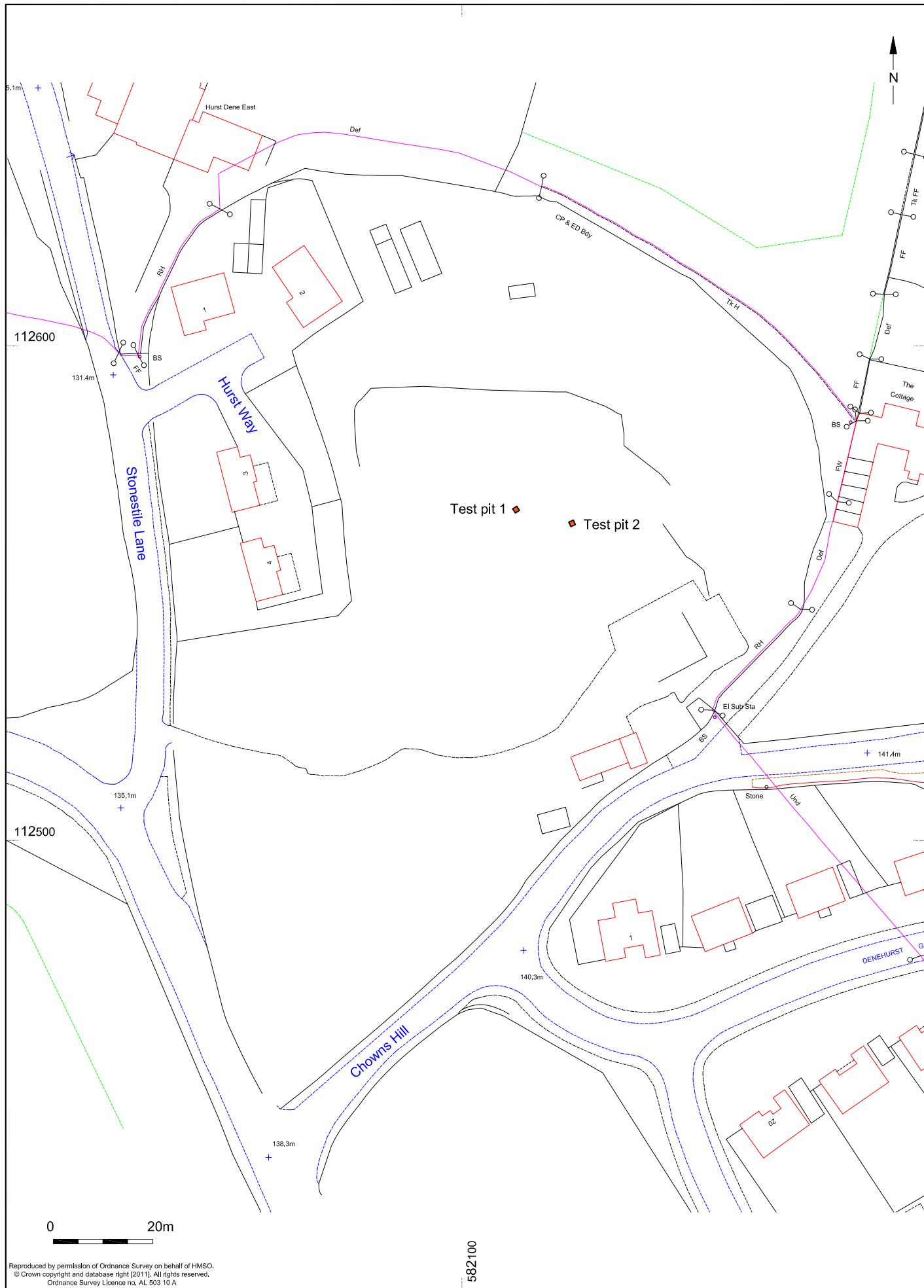
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet', 'Miscellaneous Material', 'Report', 'Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Test Pits at Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings, East Sussex
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Stevens, S.
Other bibliographic details	ASE Report No. 2011268
Date	2011
Issuer or publisher	Archaeology South-East
Place of issue or publication	Portslade, East Sussex
Description	ASE Client report. A4-sized with cover logos.

Entered by	Dan Swift (d.swift@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	15 November 2011





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© Archaeology South-East		Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 5206	Nov 2011	Test pit location		
Report Ref: 2011268	Drawn by: JLR			



Test pit 1



Test pit 2

© Archaeology South-East		Hurst Court, The Ridge, Hastings	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 5206	Nov 2011	Photographs	
Report Ref: 2011268	Drawn by: JLR		

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