

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Lewes Road,
Ringmer, East Sussex (LRR 06)**

(NGR TQ 447 125)

by

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Project No. 2462

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Archaeology South-East

Archaeology South-East is a division of the Field Archaeology Unit, University College London, one of the largest groupings of academic archaeologists in the country. Consequently, Archaeology South-East has access to the conservation, computing and environmental backup of the college, as well as a range of other archaeological services.

The Field Archaeology Unit and South Eastern Archaeological Services (which became Archaeology South-East in 1996) were established in 1974 and 1991 respectively. Although field projects have been conducted world-wide, the Field Archaeology Unit retains a special interest in south-east England with the majority of our contract and consultancy work concentrated in Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Greater London and Essex.

Based in the local community, the Field Archaeology Unit sees an important part of its work as explaining the results to the broader public. Public lectures, open days, training courses and liaison with local archaeological societies are aspects of its community-based approach.

Drawing on experience of the countryside and towns of the south east of England the Unit can give advice and carry out surveys at an early stage in the planning process. By working closely with developers and planning authorities it is possible to incorporate archaeological work into developments with little inconvenience.

Summary

Between June and July 2006, a watching brief was maintained during the construction of a new sewer at Lewes Road, Ringmer. The route lay within an area of archaeological sensitivity. The watching brief monitored both the works compound area as well as the pipeline route itself and its associated man-holes. No archaeological features or artefacts of interest were located during the work.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Archaeology South-East (a division of the University College London Field Archaeology Unit) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Southern Water Ltd, to maintain an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a replacement sewer at Lewes Road, Ringmer, East Sussex (NGR TQ 447 125) (Fig.1).
- 1.2** The site lies close to the historic core of the village and consisted of two elements. The actual pipe-trench, some 60m in length, was to be excavated within the road corridor from just east of Springett Avenue to just east of the Anchor public house. To the north, within The Green, and adjacent North Road, an area was also stripped of topsoil for the works compound (Fig.2). Although the route of the pipe trench was cut entirely through the existing carriageway tarmac surface, the site compound area was situated on an undisturbed area with grass covering.
- 1.3** According to the British Geological Survey (BGS website www.bgs.ac.uk Geindex), the site is situated on Gault Clay and lies at an average elevation of 22m OD.
- 1.4** As the site lies close to the historic centre of the village the East Sussex County Archaeologist considered it possible that the groundworks associated with the project may adversely impact upon buried archaeological remains. As a result it was recommended an appropriate scheme of archaeological works be implemented at the site in response to the proposed works. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) recommended that in this instance an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks would constitute an appropriate scheme of works.
- 1.5** This watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by CgMs Consulting (S. Weaver, April 2006) which had been approved by East Sussex County Council (ESCC). This document provides background information on the site, much of which is reused in this report with due acknowledgement. The aim of the watching brief was to ensure that any archaeological features or artefacts exposed by the groundworks would be adequately recorded. The work was carried out during a number of site visits undertaken between 30th May and 31st July 2006.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Although there are a number of sites and findspots listed on the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for Ringmer, none fall within the area affected by the current project. A scatter of prehistoric finds, mainly flintwork, attests to some early activity in the area and sporadic findspots of Roman material have also been noted suggesting at least some of the area was cultivated during this period.
- 2.2 It is not until the medieval period that archaeological evidence becomes more common. The first documentary reference to Ringmer dates from the 13th century and relates to the establishment of St Mary's church, which forms the core of the historic village (to the north-west of the sewer-pipe route) though earlier medieval activity has been discovered (see below). The Ringmer Green area, immediately north of the Lewes Road, was originally left as common land due to its situation on the heavy clay subsoils, however, it is known that settlement was encroaching on this area up to the 13th century.¹
- 2.3 Despite the probable low density of medieval domestic occupation in the immediate area of the sewer-pipe works, The Green and areas to the north and east of it are known to have been the location of an important pottery industry from at least the mid/late 12th century. Most archaeological discoveries on the SMR relate to a loose scatter of medieval pottery kilns and spreads of pottery wasters from around the village. Two kilns have been excavated, one at Barnett's Mead², the other at Norlington Lane³ but many more are known of from documentary sources and findspots⁴. These finds have shown the industry to have been producing a range of vessels, often very competently made, with much of the material finding its way to the market at Lewes in the later 13th to 14th centuries.⁵ The scattered nature of the kilns and potter's workshops means their location is not usually predictable, particularly in areas not subjected to modern arable agriculture such as the current site.
- 2.4 Recent excavations fronting the Lewes Road on the western edge of the village by Thames Valley Archaeological Services have uncovered significant archaeological deposits. Although some Bronze Age, Iron Age/Roman activity was identified this appears to be quite low density and may relate to the manuring of arable fields. However, ditches and

¹ Ringmer Conservation Area Appraisal (1976)

² Hadfield, J. 1981. 'The Excavation of a Medieval Kiln at Barnett's Mead, Ringmer, East Sussex' *Sussex Arch. Coll.* **119**, 89-106.

³ Gregory, D. 1993. 'Ringmer Pottery Dig' *Sussex Past and Present* No. **71**, (December), 8.

⁴ Streeten, A. undated. Unpublished PhD Medieval and Later Ceramic Production and Distribution in South-East England. Southampton University.

⁵ K.J. Barton 1979. *Medieval Sussex Pottery*.

gullies from the 11th/12th centuries show the formalised demarcation of the land and some occupation. Activity/occupation appears to have peaked in the later 13th to 14th centuries but tailed off during the 15th century.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1** The CgMs Written Scheme of Investigation outlined the approach to be adopted during the watching brief. This entailed the monitoring of all groundworks, the inspection of all exposed sections and the recording of any archaeological features and/or deposits revealed. After establishing the speed and methodology of the on-site contractors, regular short monitoring visits were deemed more appropriate than a continual presence. This enabled the whole pipe trench to be inspected more cost effectively.
- 3.2** Archaeological monitoring included an inspection of the surface of the interface between the overburden and surface of the natural, all excavated topsoil/subsoil and sections in order to identify archaeological features, deposits or concentrations of artefacts/ecofacts. Generally visibility was poor/moderate due to the smearing of the side of the trench by the excavator's bucket. Despite this any significant archaeological features or finds would have been visible.
- 3.3** All recording was to be undertaken in accordance with accepted professional standards as outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation and the UCL Field Archaeology Unit Fieldwork Manual (Draft).

4.0 Results

The Works Compound

- 4.1 A rectangular area on The Green measuring approximately 18 x 25m, with an access onto North Road, was stripped of topsoil for use as the works compound (Fig. 2). The initial strip of topsoil and laying down of a hardcore base/surface was unfortunately undertaken prior to the onset of archaeological monitoring. An inspection of the topsoil spoil revealed a few sherds of 19th- century glazed redware pottery, Welsh slate and post-medieval peg tile (none retained) but no older finds. The topsoil itself consisted of a mid/dark grey silt clay with 1% flint pebbles to 40mm (Context 1). In places the removed topsoil had traces of the underlying natural orange brown silt clay showing that at least in places the strip for the compound had reached the surface of the natural, though had not penetrated deeper.
- 4.2 In order to examine the compound area a further visit was made at the end of the site works to monitor the removal of the hardcore base and replacement of the topsoil. The stripping of the hardcore and backfilling with topsoil were done simultaneously thus only ever giving a small area exposed for examination at any one time. However, this was enough to show that in many areas the topsoil had not been totally removed during the initial strip. In the areas where the natural surface had been exposed no finds or features of archaeological interest were noted though the surface was somewhat disturbed from the compression of concrete/brick lumps into the surface.

The Pipe-trench and manholes

- 4.3 The pipe-trench and associated manholes were all cut within the already disturbed area of the existing Lewes Road. The edges of the trench were initially cut by angle-grinder and the tarmac/base broken out using a breaker/toothed bucket fitted to a tracked excavator. Excavation then continued down through the soft deposits to the required depth with a 1.2m wide toothless bucket. The pipe-trench was between 2.5 and 3m deep and some 1.22m wide (though this increased to 2.2m square around the manholes) and was cut from east to west.
- 4.4 The stratigraphy exposed in the eastern 10m of the trench was comparable to that exposed in most of the remaining 50m to the west. This consisted of 100mm of modern tarmac road surface (Context 2) overlaying a 400mm thick layer of old tarmac and aggregate make-up (Context 3). Context 3 rested on a 100mm thick off-white layer of chalk and downland flint (Context 4), presumably representing an earlier road base. At a depth of 600mm Context 4 had a sharp contact with a mid

grey clay, with some brown mottles which extended beyond the limit of excavation at a depth of 2.5m. This deposit represents the natural Gault Clay.

4.5 The stratigraphy to the west of the 2nd man-hole (Fig. 2), although showing some variation was essentially the same as to the east. The modern tarmac surface (Context 2) was still 100mm thick though the underlying aggregate/tarmac base (Context 3) had thickened to 650mm. Context 4 below was 170mm thick and, in addition to the chalk and flint already noted, contained post-medieval red brick and modern wire/ironwork/concrete proving it not to be of any antiquity. This layer was variable in coarse components and thickness along both the trench length and width. Again it rested directly on the underlying Gault Clay with a sharp contact. This stratigraphy remained unchanged all the way to the third manhole at the west end of the new trench. The only variance was that the top 400-500mm of the Gault Clay had been stained mid/dark blue grey by leeching from the overlying aggregate base (Context 3), particularly where Context 4 was thinner. This was most obvious in the westernmost 6m of the trench and it is possible some of this disturbance may also be associated with the presence of an existing manhole with its 3m deep brick-built inspection shaft.

4.6 The only features noted cut into the natural clay were several modern services at various points along the pipe-trench and no artefacts were noted with the exception of late post-medieval/modern materials in the lowest road base (Context 4).

5.0 The Finds by Luke Barber

5.1 The watching brief only noted a few 19th- century pottery sherds, Welsh slate and peg tile from the topsoil stripped from the works compound (Context 1) and post-medieval brick fragments from the base road make up in the pipe-trench (Context 4). None of this material was retained in the field.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Although nothing of archaeological interest was located in the compound area during the watching brief visibility was generally poor and it cannot be conclusively stated that there are no archaeological remains there. Whatever the case, the groundworks here did not seriously disturb the natural deposits and thus any archaeological remains would not have been damaged.

6.2 No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were noted during the monitoring of the pipe-trench. Although visibility was not always good due to the smearing of the trench sections during excavation most

archaeological features, particularly significant ones containing finds, would have been visible. As a precaution careful checks were made of the excavated spoil to ensure no artefacts of archaeological interest were present. None were found.

- 6.3** The sharp contact between the natural Gault Clay and road make-up layers strongly suggest that as well as the removal of the topsoil, some of the natural clay may also have been truncated prior to the laying of the first base layer (Context 4). This may have removed shallow archaeological features had they been present. Interestingly the level of The Green to the north of the Lewes Road is some 0.8-1m lower than the road surface and to the south of the road the ground drops away gradually suggesting that the road may have followed a slight east-west ridge to gain better drainage. Despite this the thickness of the road make-up has raised the road further presumably to further improve drainage.
- 6.4** The methodology deployed was the most appropriate and cost effective form of archaeological monitoring and investigation for the sewer replacement works. The negative results demonstrate that the works have not adversely affected the archaeological resource of the village in any way.

7.0 OASIS FORM

Project details

Project name	Ringmer Pipeline
Short description of the project	Between June and July 2006, a watching brief was maintained during the construction of a new sewer at Lewes Road, Ringmer. The route lay within an area of archaeological sensitivity. The watching brief monitored both the works compound area as well as the pipeline route itself and its associated man-holes. No archaeological features or artefacts of interest were located during the work.
Project dates	Start: 30-05-2006 End: 31-07-2006
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	LRR06 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	2462 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'

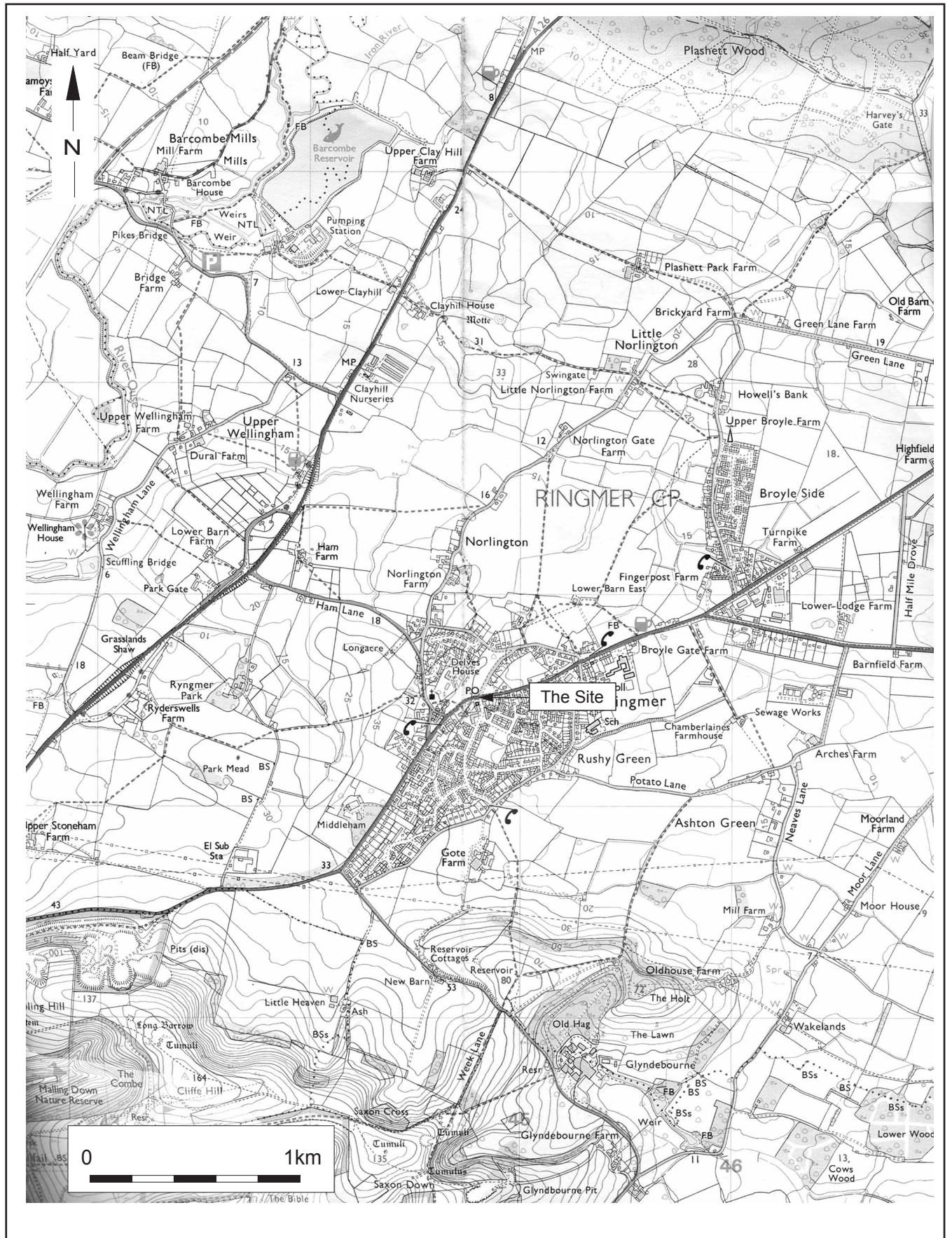
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	EAST SUSSEX LEWES RINGMER Ringmer Pipeline
Postcode	BN8
Study area	200.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 4470 1250 50.8932573691 0.05771831721530 50 53 35 N 000 03 27 E Point
Height OD	Min: 21.99m Max: 22.00m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Consultant
Project design originator	consultant
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Luke Barber
Type of sponsor/funding body	Water Authority/Company
Name of sponsor/funding body	CgMs Consulting Ltd
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Archive recipient	Lewes Museum
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Lewes Museum
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Report'

**Project
bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Lewes Road,
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Barber, Luke
Date	2006
Issuer or publisher	ASE
Place of issue or publication	ASE
Description	grey report
Entered by	Jon Sygrave (j.sygrave@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	2 October 2006

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	LRR 06					
Identification Name and Address	Lewes Road, Ringmer, East Sussex					
County, District &/or Borough	Lewes District					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 447 125					
Geology	Gault Clay					
Arch. South-East Project Number	2462					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other village road		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. May-July 2006	Other		
Sponsor/Client	CgMs Consulting/Southern Water Ltd					
Project Manager(s)	Darryl Palmer					
Project Supervisor	Luke Barber					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other modern		
<p><i>Between June and July 2006, a watching brief was maintained during the construction of a new sewer at Lewes Road, Ringmer. The route lay within an area of archaeological sensitivity. The watching brief monitored both the works compound area as well as the pipeline route itself and its associated man-holes. No archaeological features or artefacts of interest were located during the work.</i></p>						



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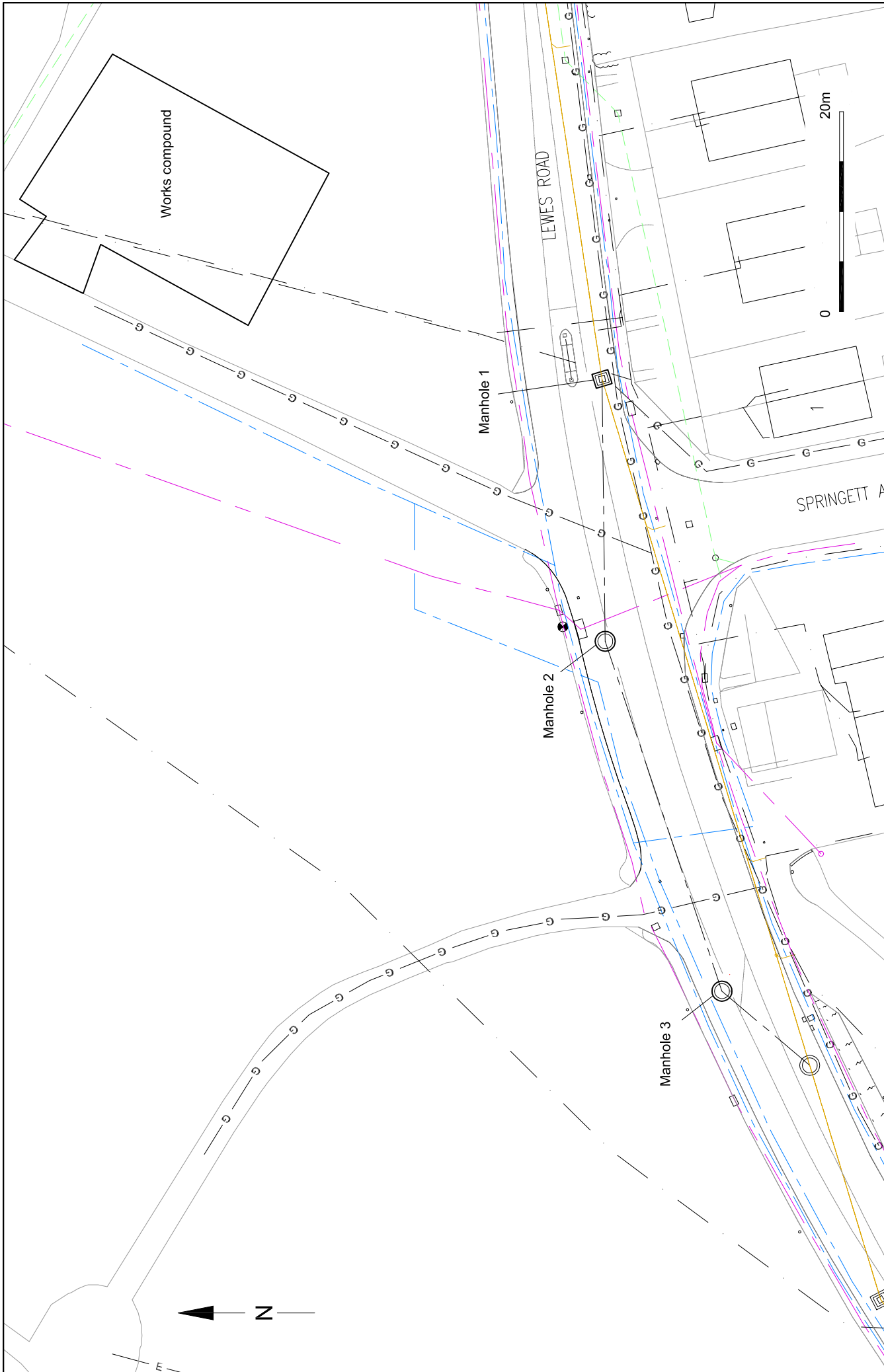
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© Archaeology South-East			Lewes Road, Ringmer	Fig. 1
Ref: 2462	Aug 2006	Drawn by: JLR	Site Location Plan	

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© Archaeology South-East		Lewes Road, Ringmer		Fig. 2
Ref: 2462	Aug 2006	Drawn by:	JLR	