

Archaeological Watching Brief Report Larkspur Bridge, Langney Eastbourne, East Sussex

NGR: 562042 101896

ASE Project No: 160585 Site Code: LBL16 ASE Report No: 2016489 OASIS id: archaeol6-271234



By Kristina Krawiec

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WB: Larkspur Bridge, Langney Eastbourne, East Sussex ASE Report No: 2016489

Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological and geoarchaeological watching brief carried out by Archaeology South-East at Larkspur Bridge, Langney, Eastbourne between October and November 2016. The fieldwork was commissioned by Southern Water in advance of the installation of a new rising water main connection.

The works did not reveal any archaeological remains but a record of the sediments of the site was made. This demonstrated the presence of the Willingdon Levels peat which thinned out to the south of the site. In addition, a layer of bi-valve shells was recorded in the contact between the upper and lower alluvium.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East was commissioned by Southern Water to undertake a geoarchaeological and archaeological watching brief Larkspur Bridge, Langney, Eastbourne, hereafter 'the site' (centred on NGR 562042 101896; Figure 1).

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the Willingdon Levels, an area of low lying land between Polegate and Eastbourne which preserves a sequence of Holocene alluvium and peat which map changes in the local environment from marine conditions to freshwater marsh, later engulfed in tidal waters before being cut off by the formation of a sand and shingle bar to the south.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology of the site is mapped by the British Geological Survey as comprising alluvium (clay, silt, peat and sand) overlying the Upper Greensand Formation (siltstone) (BGS 2016).

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 This scheme falls within the necessary parameters of the General Permitted Development Order benefitting from Southern Water's Permitted Development rights as a Statutory Undertaker. It is understood that no element of the scheme is subject to planning consent.
- 1.3.2 The works comprised the replacement of an existing above ground section of rising main which is supported on a bridge crossing the Langney Sewer. The proposal included using an augur bore to lay the new rising main below the Langney Sewer to a depth of approximately 4m. Open cut sections were required to link the ends of the new rising main into the existing below ground rising main in close proximity to the bridged section. All construction works were undertaken by Southern Water's appointed Delivery Partner (MGJV).
- 1.3.3 In light of the known archaeological potential of the site (see below) ASE consulted the East Sussex County Council Archaeology Officer (Greg Chuter, hereafter the ESCC Archaeologist) who provided comments on the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential of the site. In light of this potential it was proposed that all intrusive ground works required mitigation in the form of a controlled archaeological/geoarchaeological watching brief. In particular, the excavation of the augur bored access pits and any sections of open cut trenching were undertaken under direct archaeological control.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The broad aims and objectives of the investigation, in keeping with previous similar projects were:
 - To determine the presence or absence of archaeological and geoarchaeological remains and deposits
 - To excavate and record all archaeological remains and deposits exposed within the limits of ground works in order to understand their character, extent, preservation, significance and date before their loss through development impacts
 - To refine the dating, character and function of any features/deposits identified
 - To establish a broad phased plan of the archaeology revealed during ground works
 - To provide a refined chronology of the archaeological phasing of any Bronze Age activity identified and, if possible, relate this to other nearby sites (e.g. Shinewater Lake, etc, see below)
- 1.4.2 The project sought to inform on the following areas of research in line with the South-Eastern Research Framework (SERF):
 - To clarify the form, character and extent of prehistoric activity on the Willingdon Levels, with particular reference to the Bronze Age
 - To clarify the form, character and extent of any later activity and land use
 - To use environmental evidence to better understand local diet and subsistence throughout all represented periods
 - To use geoarchaeological methods, sedimentary & palaeoenvironmental analysis, and scientific/artefact dating to refine the currently understood chronological development of the Willingdon Levels (see below)

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report details the results of the watching brief carried out between October and November 2016 by Kristina Krawiec (Senior Archaeologist), Chris Russel (Archaeologist) and Alice Dowsett (Assistant Archaeologist). The project was managed in the field by Neil Griffin and in post-excavation by Dan Swift.

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2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The ESCC Archaeologist's consultation is set out below:

"This section of Seaside Road is very interesting in relation to geoarchaeology as it is on the edge of the Willingdon Levels peat deposits and was crossed by a watercourse known as the Bourne Stream. The area has a very high potential for being utilised during the prehistoric periods, and could contain prehistoric peat deposits containing important organic remains and palaeoenvironmental information."

2.2 Period Summaries

- 2.2.1 The Willingdon Levels are an area of low-lying land situated between Polegate and Eastbourne, East Sussex. The Levels are protected from the sea by a shingle bank known as the Crumbles and consist of unconsolidated clays and silts, with a thin peat horizon at circa +1.4m O.D. The Willingdon Levels peat, together with an overlying deposit of alluvium, has protected some of the best preserved prehistoric remains in Sussex and are arguably of national significance. The Willingdon Peat deposits were recorded by ASE some 3km to the north during the construction of Shinewater Lake (ASE 1995a; ASE 1995b and ASE 1998), in advance of development adjacent to Willingdon Drove (ASE 2000a; ASE 2000b) and during works associated with the realignment of the A22 Golden Jubilee Way (ASE 1996). Large upright oak posts had been driven through this peat in the Late Bronze Age (900-800 BC) to support a horizontal timber/brushwood platform over which had accumulated a 200mm thick layer of cultural material including pottery, bone, quernstone fragments, worked and burnt flints. The peat from the area of the platform has also yielded a number of finely crafted bronze artefacts, including four axes, a chisel and a bracelet. The most spectacular discovery was a unique bronze reed hook complete with intact field maple handle.
- 2.2.2 The platform was found to be connected to higher dry land approximately 250m to the west, by a substantial timber track or causeway. The surviving track was at least 6m. wide. It comprised a series of horizontal timbers and rods located in the top of the peat. The structure was secured by three parallel rows of vertical oak posts which may have also marked the route during periods of flooding. Two smaller timber trackways of at least 46m and 100m long have also been recorded on a part of the Willingdon Levels known as Dittons. These have been radiocarbon dated to 1440-1310 cal BC and 2460-2205 cal BC respectively.
- 2.2.3 The evidence of tracks, trade and exchange recorded on the Willingdon Levels, demonstrates that the Shinewater platform formed part of a complex network of prehistoric settlements and communication channels.
- 2.2.4 The Ordnance Survey map of 1870, which is the first detailed map of the area available, shows the Langney Sewer already in existence although it is called the 'Willingdon Sewer'.

2.2.5 A search of the ESCC Historic Environment Record (HER) was undertaken in order to identify entries falling within 1km of the pipeline route (unique HER reference number 376/16). Entries are summarised below in Table 1.

2.3 Palaeoenvironmental Background

- 2.3.1 Palaeoenvironmental data relating to the development of the Willingdon Levels has been presented previously (Burrin 1982; *ibid* 1983; and Jennings & Smyth 1985; *ibid* 1987a; *ibid* 1987b; *ibid* 1990). However, a more detailed examination of the local sedimentary sequence was conducted by Dr. Simon Jennings of North London University. The results of this work are summarised below. It should be noted that the following paragraphs refer to the site at Shinewater Lake, but are considered valid for the current site which lies at the edge of the Willingdon Levels peat deposit.
- 2.3.2 Approximately 9000 years ago, the Willingdon Levels occupied a former small valley which was steadily silting with a blue-grey clay as the English Channel encroached. However, by the Bronze Age the sea had retreated from the resulting estuary or inlet. This marine regression was induced by the accumulation of thick mud under saltmarsh conditions and was probably aided by the formation of a sand or gravel beach across the bay entrance. Consequent peat growth in the less saline water conditions led to a further raising of the Levels and established the surface upon which the Shinewater complex was constructed.
- 2.3.3 During the Bronze Age, the platform was situated towards the southern edge of the contemporary fen. This location would have provided a brackish to freshwater environment, just north of an expanse of saltmarsh and mudflats. It should also be noted that the bog was dissected by a number of brackish channels that fed into the estuary covering the lower part of the Levels. Indeed, one large palaeochannel is known to exist immediately east of the platform.
- 2.3.4 At the time of site occupation, the Willingdon peat supported grasses, reeds and sedges. Scattered alder, willow and oak was also growing on the fen or along its boundaries. However, the area was essentially open, so that anyone standing on the adjacent chalk hills would have had a clear view of the timber structures below. Certainly, pollen analysis suggests that during the Late Bronze Age, crops were being grown on the surrounding downland slopes, while the Levels were more suitable for grazing. Fossil evidence has confirmed that platform construction corresponded with the driest conditions since fen development.
- 2.3.5 Nevertheless, by the Early Iron Age (c.800 BC) settlement on Shinewater marsh had become untenable due to flooding from the sea. This marine transgression has been observed at a number of coastal sites in South-East England although its cause is not fully understood. The episode is clearly demonstrated in the Levels formation by a thick layer of alluvial clay, which immediately overlies the cultural deposits of platform and track.

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2.3.6 In 2012 a small test pit was excavated at Arkwright Road in order to recover palaeoenvironmental sample for analysis. The preliminary assessment of these samples indicated the Willingdon Levels peat unit to be located between 0.40m to -0.80m OD. The full results of this study are yet to be published but the initial study indicates a similar sequence to that recorded at Shinewater (Allen 2012).

No	Date	NGR (TQ)	MonUID	Name
1	Lower Palaeolithic	56169 10170	MES507	Findspot- Lower Palaeolithic handaxe
2	Early Neolithic- Late Bronze Age	56145 10250	MES15463 EES14056	Willngdon Drove: Prehistoric timber trackway
3	Late Bronze Age	561458 102949	MES7375 EES9616 EES13959 EES14116	Eastbourne Park: LBA timber platform & trackway
4	Bronze Age	560990 102527	MES8523	St. Peter's Vicarage: Barrow, mound, ditch
5	Saxon	5610 1028	MES652	The Hydneye: inhumations?
6	Medieval	56317 10218	MES514	Langney Grange: Medieval Priory
7	Medieval	5612 1025	MES517	Hydneye: DMV
8	18 th century	56298 10245	MES33333	Milepost
9	19 th century	6262 0268	MES21113	BARN
10	19 th century	6296 0265	MES21114	BARN
11	Post- Medieval	6285 0160	MES513	MARTELLO TOWER
12	Medieval	63 02	MES7019	MILL
13	20 th century	6119 0232	MES7032	WIND PUMP, BRICKFIELD
14	20 th century	613 025	MES7033	WIND PUMP
15	Post- Medieval	62900 01300	MES7932	BUILDING
16	Post- Medieval	63150 01960	MES7933	SLUICE HOUSE
17	20 th century	62326 01595	MES7491	AIRFIELD
18	20 th century	6270 0155	MES7990	HANGAR
19	20 th century	62750 01530	MES7991	GUARDHOUSE
20	20 th century	62870 01270	MES8240	COTTAGE HOME
21	20 th century	62790 01260	MES8241	JUNIOR SCHOOL
22	Medieval	612 025	MES517	DOCK, VILLAGE
23	Medieval	6312 0203	MES22531	HAMLET
24	19 th century	-	MES32760	OUTFARM
25	19 th century	-	MES32772	FARMSTEAD
26	19 th century	-	MES33073	OUTFARM
27	19 th century	-	MES33085	OUTFARM
28	19 th century	-	MES33086	FARMSTEAD
29	19 th century	6247 0289	MES29488	BRICKWORKS

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No	Date	NGR (TQ)	MonUID	Name
30	19 th century	6215 0293	MES29489	BRICKWORKS
31	19 th century	631 015	MES29592	BRICKWORKS
32	20 th century	6290 0207	MES33189	PILLBOX
33	Post- Medieval	6316 0217	MES33398	BUILDING
34	Post- Medieval	6286 0160	DES9279	St Anthony's Hill
35	Medieval	6326 0215	DES9724	Langney Priory
36	Prehistoric	6106 0184	DES9135	Willingdon Levels

Table 1: Summary of ESCC HER data

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3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2016) was produced prior to the commencement of the work.
- 3.1.2 The groundworks comprised the excavation of two drill pits c.7m x 2m x1.25m, a large pit to locate the existing pipe on the north side of the Langney Sewer (10.0m x 10.0m x 1.25m) and the excavation of a pipe trench on the south side of the river (15.0m x 2.00m x 4.60m) to divert the new pipe around existing gas services. The excavations were carried out by hand in the vicinity of existing services and also by mechanical excavator fitted with a ditching bucket under the supervision of the ASE geoarchaeologist. Spoil was removed under controlled conditions was also inspected by the ASE geoarchaeologist to recover any artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest.
- 3.1.3 The lithology within the auger bore pits was recorded using the Troels-Smith (1955) system of recording unconsolidated sediment (Appendices 1 and 2). The scheme breaks down a sediment sample into four main components and allows the inclusion of extra components that are also present, but that are not dominant. Key physical properties of the sediment layers are also identified according to darkness (Da), stratification (St), elasticity (El), dryness of the sediment (Dr) and the sharpness of the upper sediment boundary (UB). The logs were supplemented by digital photography. In addition, the deposits were recorded on pro-forma context sheets for the site archive.

3.2 Fieldwork Constraints

3.2.1 During the last stages of the hand excavation a depth was reached, c.4.60mbgl, that was deemed to be below the level of the known archaeological horizon. In consultation with ESCC Archaeologist the monitoring was therefore terminated.

3.3 The Site Archive

3.3.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Eastbourne Museum in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 2).

Context sheets	3
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	49
Context register	1
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	10
Test pit forms	2

Table 2: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box)	0
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 3: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

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4.0 RESULTS

4.1 North side of the Langney Sewer

- 4.1.1 To the north of the Langney Sewer the initial excavation was a drill pit 7m x 2m x 1.25m (Figures 2 and 3). The upper part of the Willingdon levels sequence was encountered. The surface of the Willingdon peat [003] was only seen in patches (0.67m OD). This demonstrated the undulating nature of the surface of the peat which was well humified and silty with visible orange staining throughout (oxidation). This was overlain by an oxidised grey orange mottled alluvial silt clay [002] which was in turn overlain by a grey brown silt clay topsoil [001].
- 4.1.2 This trench was then extended to locate the existing water pipes and allow access for the new connections. This second pit was substantially larger, c.10m x 10m x 1.30m deep. It revealed the same sequence. The alluvium was extremely dry and blocky in character and, at the interface with the peat, bivalve shell fragments were recorded. The surface of the peat was seen across the whole of this trench and was shown to be silty but demonstrating signs of oxidation through the presence of orange staining. The peat was also dry despite the water ingress during the excavations. No archaeological remains were identified.

Context	Туре	Interpretation	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m
001	Layer	Topsoil	7m	2m	0.30m
002	Layer	Alluvium	7m	2m	0.95m
003	Layer	Willlingdon Peat			Not excavated
004	Layer	Lower Alluvium	7.5m	0.40m	Not bottomed

Table 4: List of recorded contexts

4.2 South side of the Langney Sewer

- 4.2.1 The drill pit, excavated to the south of the sewer, was similar in size to the drill pit on the north side, c.7.5m x 2m x1.25m. The same thickness of topsoil [001] was recorded but the surface of the peat was not seen. The alluvium in this area was thicker than that observed to the north. The west and eastern ends of the open cut trench were hand excavated due to the presence of high pressure gas main services.
- 4.2.1 The open cut pipe trench was excavated to the west of the drill pit, c.15m long by 2.00m wide to a depth of 4.60m bgl (-2.71m OD). This demonstrated the upper oxidised alluvium [002] to be up to 1.90m thick with a band of bi-valve shells at the interface with the lower grey silt [004], sometimes sandy clay of the lower alluvium. The Willingdon peat deposit [003] was observed in the centre of the trench and thinned out to the west. A maximum thickness of 0.20m for this deposit was observed.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The watching brief carried out during the works at Larkspur Bridge, Langney identified the edge of the Willingdon Levels peat deposit. This deposit has demonstrated good preservation of archaeological remains at other site within the Levels such as Shinewater. This deposit was shown to thin out completely on the southern side of the Langney Sewer drainage ditch and no archaeological remains were recorded.
- 5.2 The alluvial deposits at the site demonstrated a high degree of oxidation up to 1.90m below ground level which are likely to be as a direct result of the presence of the Langney Sewer. The natural roundwood remains observed within the Willingdon peat also demonstrated a high degree of compression and desiccation.
- 5.3 The upper alluvial deposit recorded on the southern side of the Sewer demonstrated a layer of bi-valve shells at the interface with the lower alluvium, perhaps demonstrating material washed into the site during marine transgression.

5.4 Conclusions

5.5 The watching brief has allowed the southern edge of the Willingdon levels peat to be mapped and demonstrated a degree of degradation in the sediments at the site probably due to modern drainage. It is not clear the effect this has had on the palaeoenvironmental archive, but preservation is likely to be comprised in the upper alluvium.

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HER Summary

HER enquiry no.	376/16									
Site code	LBL16	LBL16								
Project code	160585									
Planning reference										
Site address	Langey S	Sewe	er, Lang	ney,	Eastb	ourne,	Eas	t Sussex		
District/Borough	Eastbour	ne								
NGR (12 figures)	562042 1	018	96							
Geology	Upper Gr	eens	sand Fo	rma	tion: A	lluvium	1			
Fieldwork type	Eval	Exc	cav	WE	3	HBR		Survey		Other
Date of fieldwork	October 2016									
Sponsor/client	Southern Water									
Project manager	Neil Griffin									
Project supervisor	Kristina K	(raw	iec							
Period summary	Palaeolith	nic	Mesolit	nic	Neoli	thic	Bro Age	nze e	Iro	on Age
	Roman		Anglo- Saxon		Medie	eval	Pos Me	st- dieval	0	ther
Project summary	This report presents the results of an archaeological and geoarchaeological watching brief carried out by Archaeology South-East at Larkspur Bridge, Langney, Eastbourne between October and November 2016. The fieldwork was commissioned by Southern Water in advance of the installation of a new rising water main connection. The works did not reveal any archaeological remains, but a record of the sediments of the site was made. This demonstrated the presence of the Willingdon Levels peat which thinned out to the south of the site. In addition, a layer of bi-valve shells was recorded in the contact between the upper and lower alluvium.									

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-271234

Project details

Project name Larkspur Bridge, Eastbourne, watching brief

Short description of

the project

A watching brief during permitted water works around Larkspur Bridge on the Willingdon Levels. No archaeology recorded but the edge of the Willingdon peat mapped.

Project dates Start: 01-09-2016 End: 29-11-2016

Previous/future

work

No / No

Type of project Recording project

Current Land use Grassland Heathland 2 - Undisturbed Grassland

Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Water Act 1989 and subsequent code of practice

Project location

Country England

Site location EAST SUSSEX EASTBOURNE EASTBOURNE Langney

Site coordinates TQ 62042 01896 50.79334988707 0.299439505457 50 47

36 N 000 17 57 E Point

Project creators

Name of

Organisation

Archaeology South East

Project brief originator

Archaeology South East

Project

director/manager

Neil Griffin

Project supervisor

Kristina Krawiec

Type of

sponsor/funding

body

Southern Water

Name of

sponsor/funding

body

Southern Water

Project archives

Archaeology South-East

WB: Larkspur Bridge, Langney Eastbourne, East Sussex ASE Report No: 2016489

Physical Archive

Exists?

No

Digital Archive recipient

Eastbourne Museum

Digital Media available

"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient

Eastbourne Museum

Paper Media available

"Diary","Photograph","Report","Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Publication type

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief at Larkspur Bridge,

Langney, Eastbourne, East Sussex

Author(s)/Editor(s) Krawiec, K

Other bibliographic

details

2016489

Appendix 1: Troels-Smith (1955) table

Degree o	f Darkness
nig.4	black
nig.3	
nig.2	
nig.1	
nig.0	white

Degree	e of Stratification
strf.4	well stratified
strf.3	
strf.2	
strf.1	
strf.0	no stratification
	strf.4 strf.3 strf.2 strf.1

	Degree	of Elasticity
	elas.4	very elastic
	elas.3	
	elas.2	
	elas 1	
	0.001	
ļ	elas.0	no elasticity

Degree	of Dryness
sicc.4	very dry
sicc.3	
sicc.2	
sicc.1	
sicc.0	water

	Sharpness of Upper Boundary		
lim.4	< 0.5mm		
lim.3	< 1.0 & > 0.5mm		
lim.2	< 2.0 & > 1.0mm		
lim.1	< 10.0 & > 2.0mm		
lim.0	> 10.0mm		

1		T	T
	Sh	Substantia humosa	Humous substance, homogeneous microscopic structure
l Turfa	Tb	T. bryophytica	Mosses +/- humous substance
	TI	T. lignosa	Stumps, roots, intertwined rootlets, of ligneous plants
	Th	T. herbacea	Roots, intertwined rootlets, rhizomes of herbaceous plants
II Detritus	DI	D. lignosus	Fragments of ligneous plants >2mm
	Dh	D. herbosus	Fragments of herbaceous plants >2mm
	Dg	D. granosus	Fragments of ligneous and herbaceous plants <2mm >0.1mm
III Limus	Lf	L. ferrugineus	Rust, non-hardened. Particles <0.1mm
IV Argilla	As	A.steatodes	Particles of clay
	Ag	A. granosa	Particles of silt
V Grana	Ga	G. arenosa	Mineral particles 0.6 to 0.2mm
	Gs	G. saburralia	Mineral particles 2.0 to 0.6mm
	Gg(min)	G. glareosa minora	Mineral particles 6.0 to 2.0mm
	Gg(maj)	G. glareosa majora	Mineral particles 20.0 to 6.0mm
	Ptm	Particulae testae molloscorum	Fragments of calcareous shells

Appendix 2: Sediment logs

North trench

0-0.30m Topsoil, loose dry red brown silt clay

0.30-1.25m DA ST EL SICC UB 3 0 0 4 4

Ag2 As2

Yellow grey mottled silt clay alluvium, very dry and blocky

1.25m DA ST EL SICC UB 4 0 0 4 4

Ag2 Sh2 Th TI

Well humified silt peat frequent pale rootlets, occasional woody

remains, very dry

South open cut trench

0-0.30m Topsoil, loose dry red brown silt clay

0.30-1.90m DA ST EL SICC UB

3 0 0 4 4

Ag2 As2 Ptm+

Yellow grey mottled silt clay alluvium, very dry and blocky, bivalve

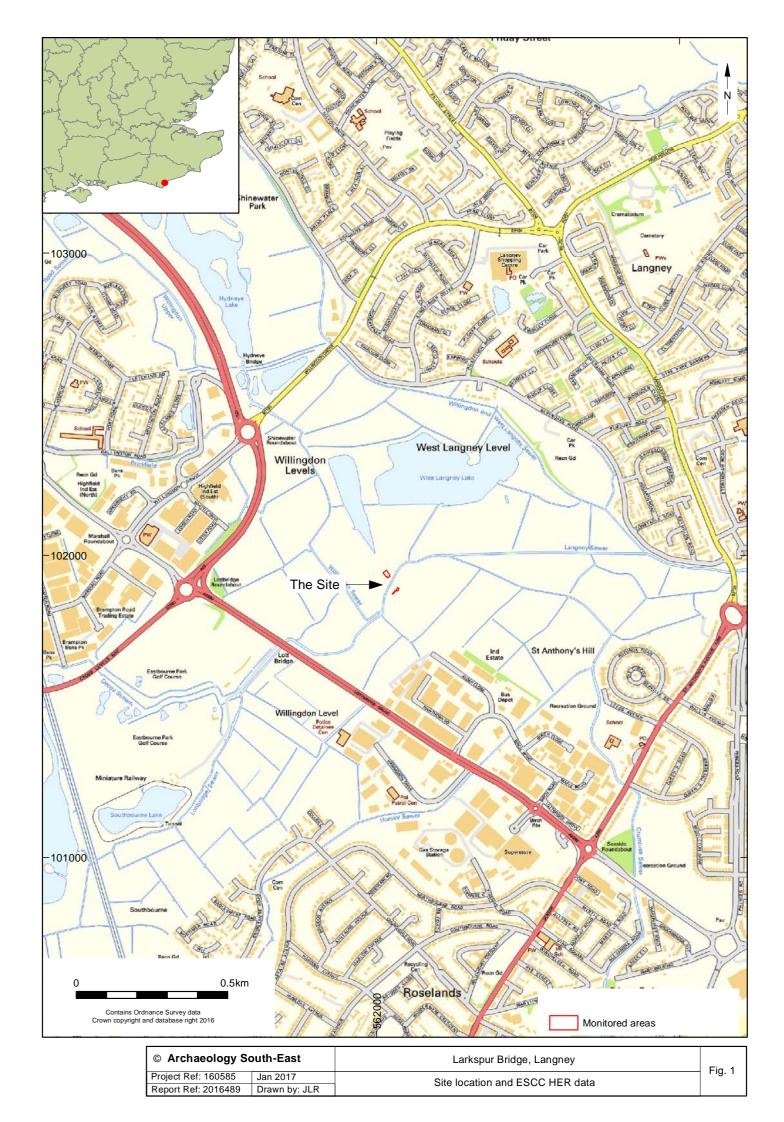
fragments at base

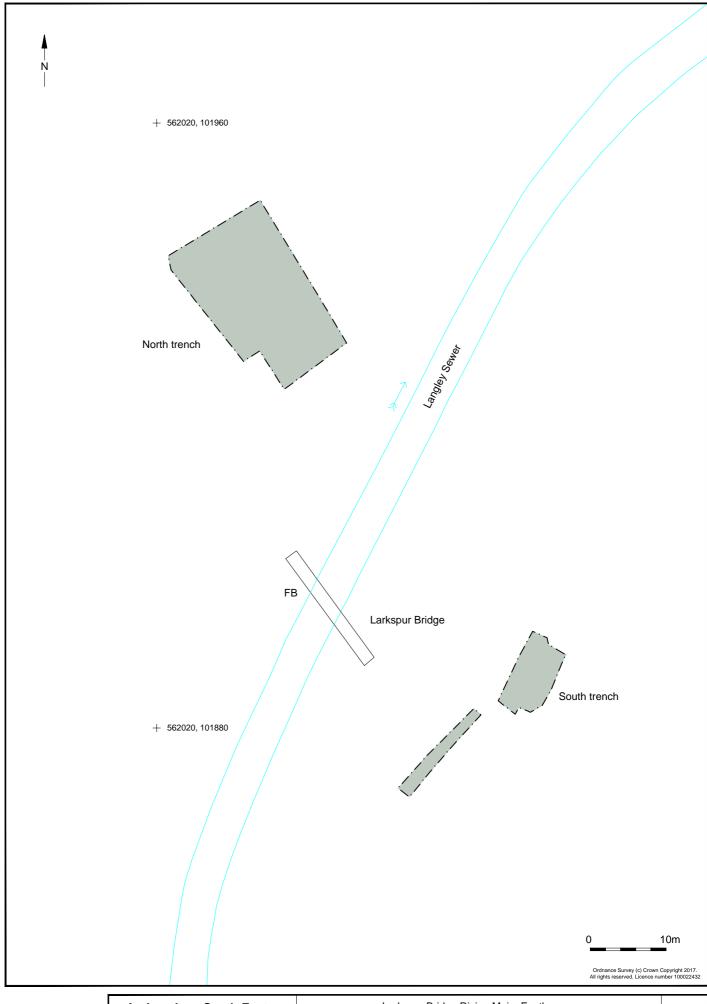
1.90-2.60m DA ST EL SICC UB

3 1 0 3 3

Ag3 As1 Gmin++ Ptm Sh Blue-grey silt occasional clay with weak sand laminations and

occasional black organic flecks





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North side of sewer excavation, looking north-east



South side of sewer excavation, south-east facing section

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