

**Archaeological Evaluation Report
Land at Rock Close, Mitcham,
London Borough of Merton**

**NGR: 52672 16901
(TQ 2672 6901)**

**ASE Project No: 160980
Site Code: ROK16**

**ASE Report No: 2017045
OASIS id: archaeol6-275016**

By Ian Hogg

February 2017

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Date of Issue:	February 2017		
Revision:			

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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by ACD Environmental to undertake an archaeological evaluation on Land at Rock Close, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton. The evaluation comprised two machine excavated trenches.

Natural deposits were not recorded in either trench; excavation ceased due to spatial constraints and reaching groundwater. The earliest deposits in both trenches were 20th century made ground, probably representing an attempt to reclaim marshy land. The made ground was overlain by deposits associated with the current housing development.

No archaeological remains were observed or recovered on site.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by ACD Environmental Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation on Land at Rock Close, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton (Figure 1, NGR: TQ 2672 6901).

1.1.2 The site is in use as flats and adjoining communal garden and car park. It is an approximate rectangle in shape, bound to the north by housing, to the west by Rock Close, to the south and east by further houses and gardens.

1.1.3 The evaluation comprised two trenches located in the car park in the north of the site; both trenches were moved slightly to avoid services and because of a lack of space.

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The site is underlain by London Clay and this is overlain by drift geology comprising Taplow Gravels.

1.2.2 The site is broadly level at c.17.7m AOD.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 A planning application has been submitted (Ref. No.: 16/P2439) for the redevelopment of the site and erection of a part 2, part 3 storey building to provide eight residential units. Discussions with Mark Stevenson of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) have indicated that the following condition would be attached to any planning consent:

Reason

Heritage assets of archaeological interest may survive on the site. The planning authority wishes to secure the provision of appropriate archaeological investigation, including the publication of results, in accordance with Section 12 of the NPPF.

Condition

- A. No development other than demolition to existing ground level shall take place until the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) has secured the implementation of a programme of site related archaeological evaluation site work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority in writing and a report on that evaluation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing.*
- B. Under Part A, the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) shall implement a programme of archaeological evaluation site work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation.*

- C. *No development other than demolition to existing ground level shall take place until the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) has secured the implementation of a programme of site related archaeological mitigation (if required) in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority in writing and a report on that mitigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing.*
- D. *Under Part C, the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) shall implement a programme of archaeological mitigation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation.*
- E. *The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and possible mitigation work has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Parts (A and C), and the provision for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured.*

Informative

Written schemes of investigation will need to be prepared and implemented by a suitably qualified archaeological practice in accordance with Historic England Greater London Archaeology guidelines. They must be approved by the planning authority before any on-site development related activity occurs.

- 1.3.2 Mark Stevenson (Archaeological Advisor, GLAAS) has stated that:

“The main concern is to evaluate the northern portion of the site given the information held by the Historic Environment Record for Greater London of the occurrence of a Roman burial to the north. It is therefore recommended that the evaluation can be achieved by excavating two 6 by 1.8 m trenches: trench 1 orientated northeast southwest across parking spaces 4-6; trench 2 orientated west-east in the area to the south of trench 1 but still north of the live sewer that crosses the site.”

- 1.3.3 Accordingly, an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared prior to the commencement of works (ASE 2016). All works were carried out in accordance with this document and with the ClfA standards and guidance (ClfA 2014a, b and c) and the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS) Standards for Archaeological Work (Historic England 2015).

1.4 Scope of Report

- 1.4.1 This report details the results of the archaeological evaluation carried out on the site between the 30th and 31st January 2017. It has been prepared in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2016). The work was carried out by Ian Hogg (Senior Archaeologist), Nathalie Gonzales (Archaeologist) Jasmine Vieri (Assistant Archaeologist). The fieldwork was managed by Sarah Ritchie, the post-excavation work by Jim Stevenson.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A search of the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER) was commissioned as part of the WSI. The 750m radius search found 97 monuments and 52 events as well as six Archaeology Priority Areas (APA's). This material has been reduced to only include those entries pertinent to the current evaluation and these are shown on Figure 1.

2.2 Prehistoric

2.2.1 Very little earlier prehistoric activity has been recorded within the search area. A single flint tool of Palaeolithic date was found to the south-east of the site at Miles Road (MLO9092, TQ 2700 6880).

2.2.2 The site lies around 400m east of the River Wandle; the Wandle Valley would have been an attractive area for prehistoric settlements given the good farmland and water source. An APA around Lavender Park to the north of the site (DLO37694, TQ 2722 6979) records Bronze Age settlement activity from 1500BC onwards. Within the APA excavations at the Kings Sports Ground in 1989 (ELO3770, TQ 2725 6985) found evidence of Bronze Age agricultural features as well as a 'banjo' enclosure.

2.2.3 Further Bronze Age activity was noted at Deen City Farm (MLO64286, ELO9987, TQ 26746 69140) comprising three channels, one of which contained Bronze Age pottery. Flint tools of unspecified date were found during the excavation of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Ravensbury to the south-east of the site (MLO8932, TQ272 683) and at Westfield Road (MLO521, TQ 2753 6903).

2.3 Roman

2.3.1 The line of Stane Street, the Roman road from Chichester to London, ran to the west of the site; an APA at the River Wandle/Collier's Wood (DLO37690, TQ 2652 6988), records the road crossing the river south of Merton High Street. Possible Roman settlement activity was recorded at Deen City Farm (ELO9987, MLO64286, TQ26746, 69140) in the form of ditches containing 1st-2nd century pottery; twelve inhumations of possible Roman date were also recorded during the work. Work at Haslemere Avenue (MLO60674, TQ 2672 6918) postulated that Roman burials could be preserved on site despite no inhumations actually being discovered.

2.3.2 A Roman ditch was recorded at benedict Gardens to the south-east (MLO22511, TQ 2696 6862) to the south-east of the site. Further Roman ditches have been found at Haslemere Avenue (MLO60782, ELO3670, TQ 2657 6929), at Phipps Bridge just to the north-west of the site (MLO9316, MLO24467, TQ 2673 6918) where a possible Roman inhumation was also recorded.

2.3.3 Residual Roman pottery and box tile were recorded during work at 54-56 Church Road to the east of the site (MLO76362, ELO882, TQ 27234 68668).

2.4 Anglo Saxon and Medieval

- 2.4.1 An APA is located on the site of an early Saxon cemetery at Ravensbury (DLO 37690, MLO8942, TQ 2691 6819); the cemetery was excavated between 1888 and 1922 during which time 238 graves were excavated, dated to the 5th and 6th centuries.
- 2.4.2 The historic settlement of Mitcham (DLO37956, TQ 2760 6859) lies to the south-east of the site. This settlement is thought to have been founded to the south near another Saxon cemetery outside of the search radius. The settlement seems to have developed as a ribbon settlement along London Road with settlement concentrations at the Upper and Lower Greens. The settlement also extended west towards the Church of St Peter and Paul (MLO90469, TQ 27047 68689).
- 2.4.3 The site lies outside the historic settlement of Mitcham although Anglo-Saxon activity has been recorded relatively close to the site: a Saxon pit was recorded to the south east at 80-82 Church Road (ELO3974, TQ 2715 6865).
- 2.4.4 Excavations conducted at 21 Church Road produced boundary or drainage ditches of Saxon date as well as rubbish pits and postholes dated to the 9th to 12th centuries (ELO4816, DLO67678, TQ 2708 6858).
- 2.4.5 Excavations at Benedict Gardens (MLO225, TQ 2696 6862) revealed two large ditches on the alignment of a medieval route way; the ditches contained pottery of 10th-11th century date as well as later medieval pottery and a posthole.
- 2.4.6 Merton Priory (MLO10782, TQ 2641 6976) was established for the Augustinians in 1117 to the west of site. Much of the abbey was demolished during the dissolution although excavations at the Chapter House (MLO66287, TQ 2650 6960) revealed the entire footprint of the building as well as parts of the cloister and infirmary passage. Fragments of the abbey's precinct wall are also still extant (MLO90393, TQ 26408 69518) (MLO90532, TQ 26426 69540).
- 2.4.7 Medieval ditches, pits and postholes were recorded during the excavations at 21 Church Road (ELO882, TQ 2708 6858). Further medieval ditches as well as a posthole were recorded at 7-13 Church Road (ELO7707, TQ 27173 68605). Other medieval findspots clustered around Church Road include sherds of pottery found at 54-56 Church Road MLO77176, TQ 27234 68668), 5 sherds of pottery from 32 Church Road (MLO78037, TQ 27300 68670).
- 2.4.8 The site appears to have lain just to the north-west of this settlement activity centred at Church Road. Closer to the site, such as at Phipps Bridge Road (MLO8921, TQ 2673 6918), medieval findspots are limited to pottery scatters.

2.5 Post-medieval and modern

- 2.5.1 During the post-medieval period the River Wandle became an important area for industry; APA's at Colliers Wood (DLO37951, TQ 2652 6988) at Mitcham Riverside (DLO37953, TQ 2732 6711) and at Morden Hall Park (DLO37952, TQ 2621 6880) all denote areas where the River has been utilised with the

development of mills and factories, mills were particularly prevalent in the area with paper, copper and wood milling occurring.

- 2.5.2 Mitcham, to the south of the site continued to develop around its historic core (DLO37956) with it achieving popularity as a country retreat within reach of London. The settlement grew significantly during the 18th and 19th centuries. Cartographic evidence suggests that the site remained undeveloped for much of the 19th century. The 1865 Ordnance Survey map records the site as lying directly north of the buildings of a floorcloth manufactory. By the end of the 19th century this had changed into a Japan and varnish factory. The site does not appear to be developed upon until the later 20th century, being denoted as a recreation ground until the mid-1990's.
- 2.5.3 The GLHER records a continuation of activity from the medieval period with Church Road still being a centre of activity; a horse burial was recorded at 21 Church Road (ELO 882, TQ 2708 6858) and a 19th century brick building was recorded at 7-13 Church Road (ELO7707, TQ 27173 68605). Post-medieval ploughsoil was recorded at 45-71 Church Road (MLO63488, TQ 2694 6874), 18th to 19th century pitting at the junction of Church Road and Lower Green West (MLO63540, TQ 2738 6856).
- 2.5.4 The GLHER also records the combination of agriculture and industry seen in cartographic sources. A 19th century brickworks is recorded at Western Road (MLO505, TQ 2690 6960) to the east of the site. Agricultural features from the 19th century were also recorded at 336 Western Road during a watching brief (ELO14305, TQ 2686 6974). A post-medieval drainage ditch was recorded during works at Phipps Bridge Road (ELO2835, TQ 2629 6925), while gravel and rubbish pits were recorded at Batsford Road (ELO3164, TQ 2684 6909).

2.6 Project Aims and Objectives

2.6.1 The general aims of the evaluation were:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains and deposits with palaeoenvironmental potential within the footprint of the proposed development.
- To determine the survival, extent and minimum depth below modern ground level of any such remains
- To determine the nature and significance of any archaeological deposits
- To enable the archaeology advisor at GLAAS to make an informed decision as to the requirement for any further archaeological work at the site.

2.6.2 Site specific aims for the evaluation included:

- Is there any evidence of Bronze Age activity?
- To determine the presence of Roman remains, specifically any relating to the nearby cemetery
- To assess the potential for Saxon remains to survive on the site. Is there any evidence of Saxon inhumations?
- To determine the presence of medieval remains on site. Did the site lie within the hinterland to the north-west of the settlement activity at Church Road?
- Is there any evidence of post-medieval activity, particularly related to the agricultural and industrial activities recorded on surrounding site?

2.6.3 With reference to the research framework for London (MoL 2002) the project considered the following research aims:

P5, para. 3:

- *Clarifying the mechanisms that prompted agricultural intensification. Is there a link between such intensification and the production and consumption of prestige goods? Establishing more, better dated evidence for the subsistence economy. The balance between pastoral and arable economies and patterns of subsistence are areas for further study, but these require improved data-sets, particularly the retrieval of good faunal assemblages.*

R8, para. 2:

- *Investigating the development of cemeteries around London over time, and the relationship between their location and major and minor roads.*

S3, para 2:

- *Studying the correlation between Saxon sites associated with watercourses and meander bends, with a view to understanding the origins and roles of the settlements.*

M4, Para 1:

- *Examining the London mendicant houses in light of the many (relatively recent) archaeological excavations that have taken place in their precincts. Were the houses that occupied the City of London vastly different from those of the much smaller cities and towns around the kingdom?*

L8, Para 1:

- *Developing models to demonstrate how archaeology can contribute to the history of food production and market gardening in the London area*

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Evaluation Methodology

- 3.1.1 Two trenches were excavated each measuring 6.00m x 1.80m in plan. Both trenches were moved slightly due to spatial constraints and live services. The location of the trenches is shown on Figure 2.
- 3.1.2 All trenches were scanned using a cable avoidance tool prior to excavation. Mechanical excavation was undertaken under archaeological supervision in spits of no more than 0.25m to the top of archaeological deposits.
- 3.1.3 All deposits were recorded using ASE standard context sheets. Vertical sections were taken across features where necessary and a comprehensive photographic record maintained throughout the work.
- 3.1.4 Trenches were hand planned and tied in to the Ordnance Survey.
- 3.1.5 Spoil heaps and trial pit bases were scanned by eye for unstratified finds.
- 3.1.6 Trenches were backfilled using the machine bucket, no formal reinstatement was undertaken.

3.2 Archive

- 3.2.1 The London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) was contacted prior to the commencement of fieldwork and the site code ROK 16 was obtained for the work. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at the LAARC in due course. The contents of the archive are tabulated below (Table 1).

Context sheets	10
Section sheets	1
Plans sheets	1
Colour photographs	0
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	11
Context register	1
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	0
Trench Record forms	2

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Trenches 1 and 2 (Figure 3)

4.1.1 Both trenches measured 6.00m x 2.00m in plan and displayed the same stratigraphic sequence. The trenches could not be full excavated and did not reach natural deposits due to spatial constraints and the ingress of groundwater.

Trench	Context	Type	Interpretation	Depth	Height
1	1/001	Masonry	Car park surface	0.08	17.61-17.66
1	1/002	Layer	Made ground	0.70	17.53-17.58
1	1/003	Masonry	Concrete slab	0.10	16.83-16.88
1	1/004	Layer	Made ground	0.55-0.58	16.73-16.78
1	1/005	Layer	Made ground	1.00-1.20	16.15-16.22
2	2/001	Masonry	Car park surface	0.08-0.10	17.67-17.73
2	2/002	Layer	Made ground	0.78-0.80	17.59-17.65
2	2/003	Masonry	Concrete slab	0.10-0.12	16.79-16.85
2	2/004	Layer	Made ground	0.56-0.65	16.69-16.75
2	2/005	Layer	Made ground	0.85-0.95	16.10-16.13

Table 2: Trenches 1 and 2: List of recorded contexts

4.1.2 The earliest deposit recorded in either trench was mid orange grey modern made ground [005], which contained pottery, plastic, iron, Ceramic Building Material (CBM) and concrete. This deposit, which was at least 1.20m thick, appeared to have been stained orange by the metallic content. Made ground [005] was overlain by a dark grey brown sand silt deposit [004]. This was similar in composition to [005], measured between 0.55m and 0.60m thick and also contained pottery, plastic, iron and CBM. It was overlain by a thin concrete slab [003] between 0.10m and 0.12m thick. Directly above the concrete was 0.70m to 0.80m of made ground [002] comprising crushed brick and concrete in a brown silt matrix. This was sealed by the existing car park surface [001], consisting of asphalt and cast concrete sets, measuring between 0.08m and 0.10m thick.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

5.1.1 Natural deposits were not recorded in either trench due to the ingress of groundwater and spatial constraints. The earliest deposits recorded were 20th century made ground, almost certainly deposited in order to raise the level of an area, which is likely to have been marshy given its proximity to the River Wandle. These deposits contained industrial material and may well originate from the nearby factories such as the varnish factory which lay to the south of the site during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

5.1.2 The made ground deposits were overlain by concrete slabs and further made ground associated with the existing housing development. Both trenches were sealed by the existing car park surface.

5.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

5.2.1 It was impossible to assess the survival or impact on any archaeological deposits given that neither archaeological remains nor the natural deposits were observed during the works.

5.3 Consideration of research aims

5.3.1 Unfortunately, as the evaluation recorded only modern deposits to a depth of 2.70m (approximately 15.00 mOD), with groundwater being reached at 2.50m, it was not possible to address specific research questions.

5.4 Conclusions

5.4.1 The evaluation recorded only modern made ground deposits in both trenches. While the upper made ground deposits were associated with the existing housing development, the lower deposits are most likely to be related to attempts to dry out the area in the earlier 20th century. Natural deposits were not recorded as excavation ceased in both trenches due to the ingress of groundwater and spatial constraints.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank ACD Environmental for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project. Thanks are also due to Mark Stevenson of GLAAS for his guidance and monitoring. The excavation was directed by Ian Hogg.

HER Summary

HER enquiry no.											
Site code	BSC17										
Project code	160980										
Planning reference	16/P2439										
Site address	Land at Rock Close, Mitcham										
District/Borough	London Borough of Merton										
NGR (12 figures)	526720 169010										
Geology	Hackney Gravels										
Fieldwork type	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;">Eval</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> </tr> </table>		Eval								
	Eval										
Date of fieldwork	30 th to 31 st January 2017										
Sponsor/client	ACD Environmental										
Project manager	Sarah Ritchie										
Project supervisor	Ian Hogg										
Period summary	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Other Modern</td> </tr> </table>										Other Modern
				Other Modern							
Project summary (100 word max)	<p><i>Archaeology South-East was commissioned by ACD Environmental to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Land at Rock Close, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton. The evaluation comprised two machine excavated trenches.</i></p> <p><i>Natural deposits were not recorded in either trench; excavation ceased due to spatial constraints and reaching groundwater. The earliest deposits in both trenches were 20th century made ground probably representing an attempt to reclaim marshy land. The made ground was overlain by deposits associated with the current housing development.</i></p> <p><i>No archaeological remains were observed or recovered on site.</i></p>										
Museum/Accession No.											

Project details

Project name	Land at Rock Close, Mitcham,
Short description of the project	The evaluation comprised two machine excavated trenches. Natural deposits were not recorded in either trench; excavation ceased due to spatial constraints and reaching groundwater. The earliest deposits in both trenches were 20th century made ground probably representing an attempt to reclaim marshy land. The made ground was overlain by deposits associated with the current housing development. No archaeological remains were retrieved from the site.
Project dates	Start: 30-01-2017 End: 31-01-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	160980 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	ROK 16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Voluntary/self-interest
Position in the planning process	Between deposition of an application and determination

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON MERTON MITCHAM Land at Rock Close, Mitcham
Postcode	CR4 3PU
Study area	1040 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 2672 6901 51.405433723753 -0.177922704729 51 24 19 N 000 10
40 W Point

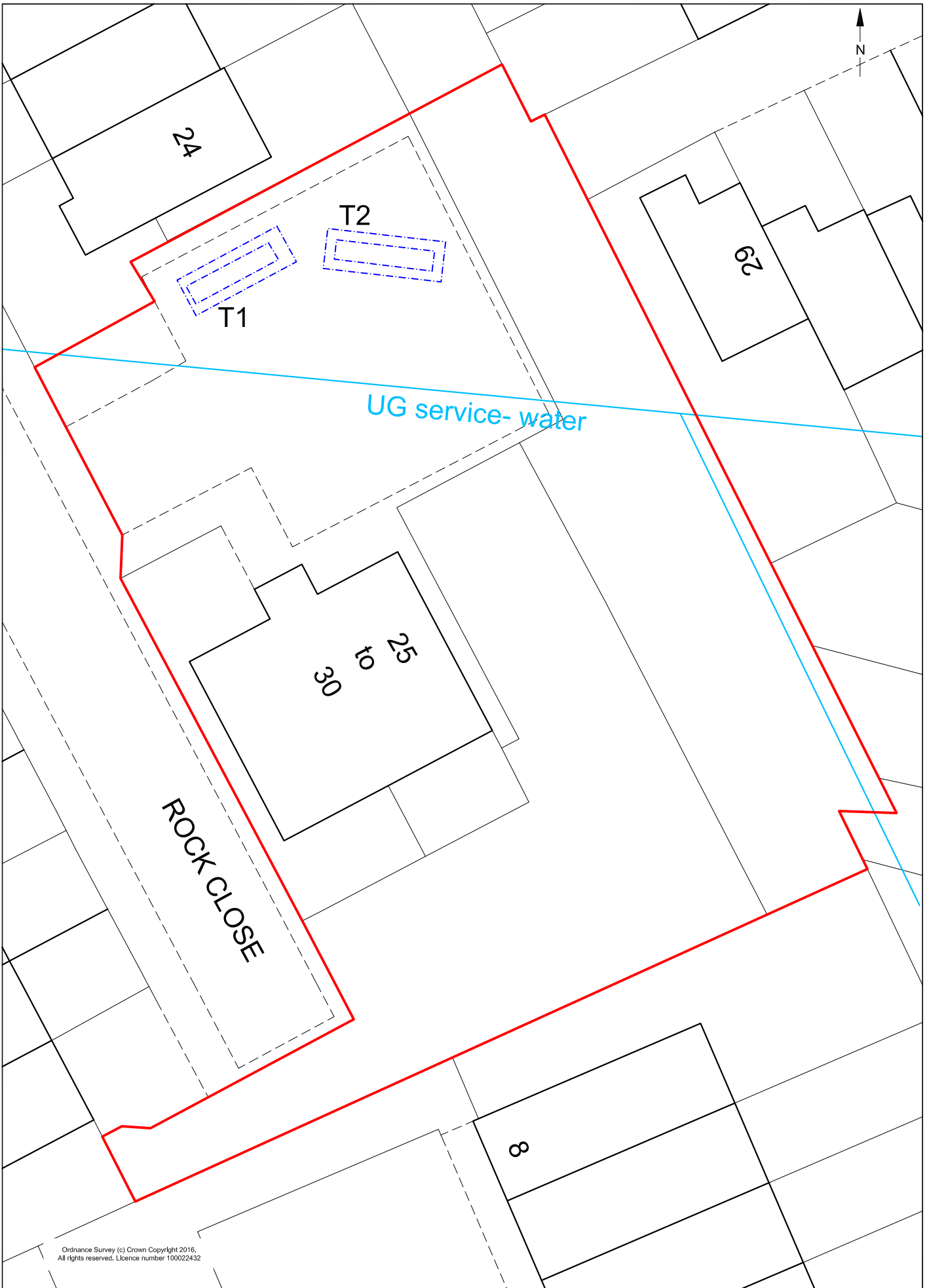
Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	GLAAS
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Sarah Ritchie
Project supervisor	Ian Hogg
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	ACD Environmental

Project archives

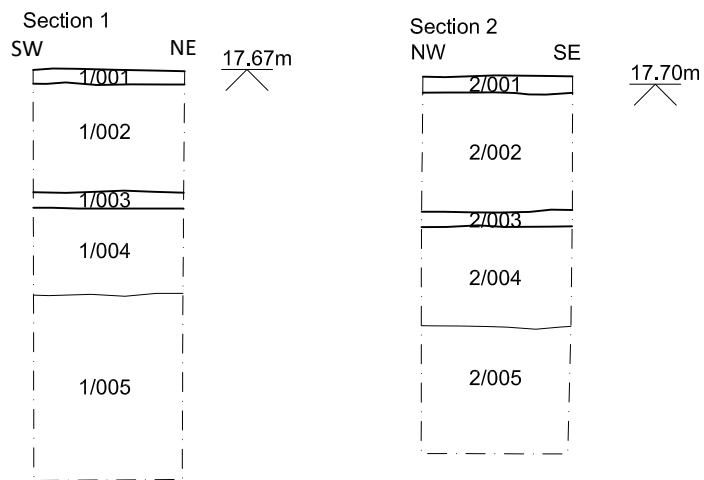
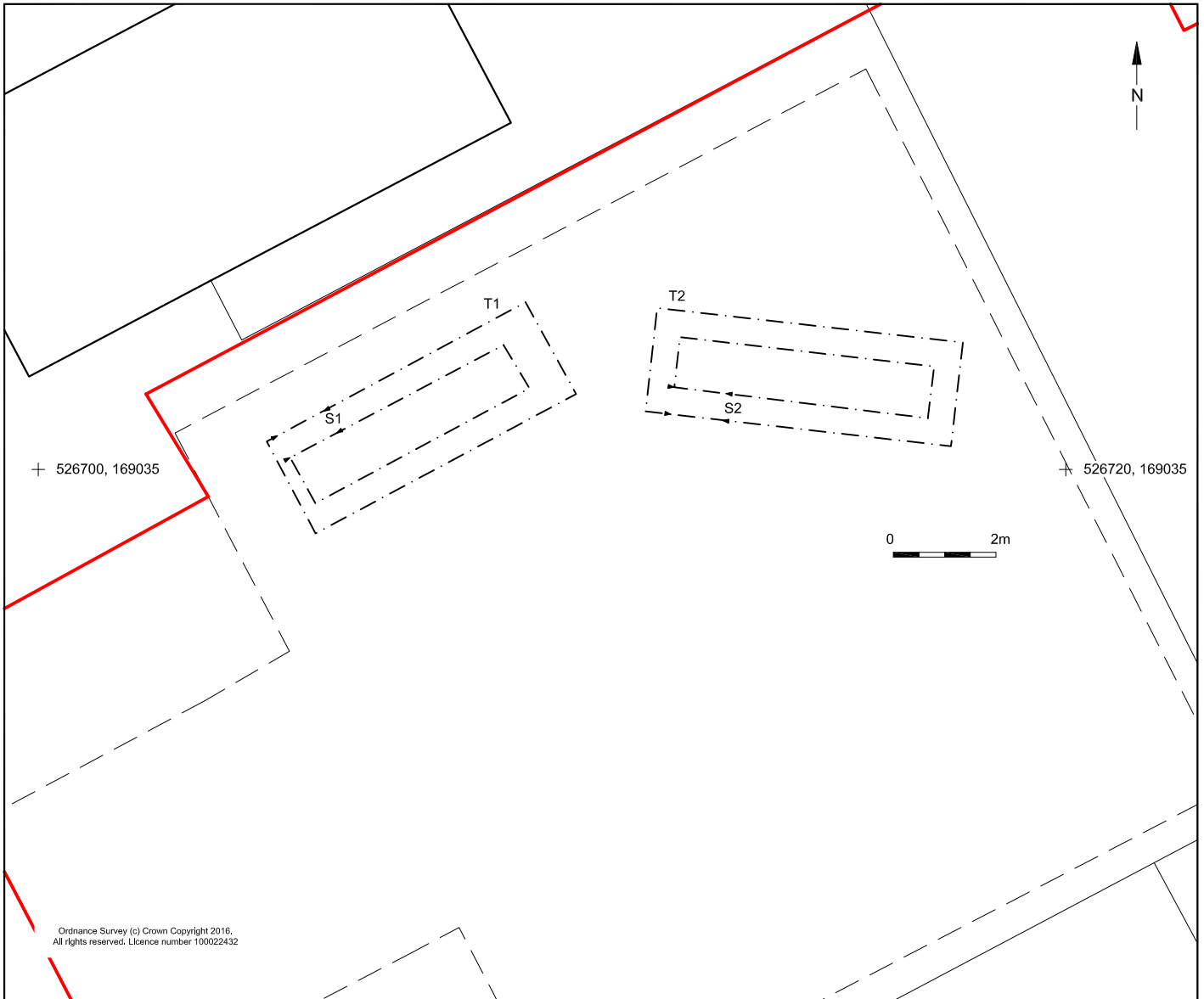
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Report","Section"

Entered by	Ian Hogg (ian.hogg@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	1 February 2017



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© Archaeology South-East		Land at Rock Close, Mitcham	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 160980	Feb 2017	Trench locations	
Report Ref: 2017045	Drawn by: APL		



Trench 1 looking south-west



Trench 2 looking east

© Archaeology South-East		Land at Rock Close, Mitcham	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 160980	Feb 2017	Trenches 1 & 2, plan, sections and photographs	
Report Ref: 2017045	Drawn by: APL		

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