

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
London Power Tunnels 2 (LPT2)  
New Cross Drive Site  
Sandgate Street, London  
SE15 1LE**

**NGR: TQ 3472 7794**

**ASE Project No: 200233  
Site Code: SDA20**

**ASE Report No: 2020236  
OASIS id: archaeol6-407403**

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**Abstract**

*This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Archaeology South-East at London Power Tunnels 2 (LPT2), New Cross Drive Site, London between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The fieldwork was commissioned by HOCHTIEF-MURPHY Joint Venture (HMJV)*

*The Thanet Sand formation was observed at 3.51m AOD and was overlain by 0.70 - 0.80m of made ground and largely truncated by the previous cable install. The interpretation of a dark brownish black deposit at 2.71m AOD only exposed for c. 4m at the base of the trench 18m from its eastern end underneath the truncation caused by the cable is limited due to the excavation limitations, but it could possibly be a peat sediment. Damage caused to this deposit was minimal and as a result it survives largely in situ.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by HOCHTIEF-MURPHY Joint Venture (HMJV) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of Drainage measuring 25m x 0.80 x 2m depth at National Grid's New Cross Drive site. The site is accessed off Sandgate Street, New Cross, SE15 1LE, in the London Borough of Southwark

1.1.2 The site is bound to the west by the World Harvest Christian Centre, to the north and east by National Grid's New Cross Substation, and to the south by an unnamed private road. It was until recently occupied by Southern Gas Networks gasholders.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 The site is located on relatively flat hard standings at a level of between 4m OD and 4.5m OD.

1.2.2. The site lies within the North Southwark and Roman Roads Archaeological Priority Area (APA), which includes the Bermondsey Lake area, a post-glacial lake exploited by prehistoric people which gradually, over time, has reduced in size and been replaced by alluvial and peat deposits.

1.2.3. The site is underlain by Thanet Formation sand. In the north part of the site this is overlain by superficial deposits of Kempton Park Gravel and in the south by Langley Silt.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 The New Cross Drive site was subject to an archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) in 2019 (Wood, 2019). That document considered the archaeological potential of the site and the impacts the recently demolished gasholders and their associated infrastructure may have had on the below ground heritage resource. The document concluded that a targeted archaeological watching brief would be appropriate, centred on one area not already impacted by previous work at the site (Figures 2 & 3). Consultation with Southwark Council on 1st April 2020 (pers. comm.) established that this was considered a reasonable approach, albeit taking into account the reduced redline boundary of the site since the DBA was produced.

1.3.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeological watching brief on ground reduction at specific parts of the site (ASE 2020) was compiled, submitted to and approved by all parties prior to the commencement of the watching brief.

## 1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 Within the area denoted for archaeological monitoring (Figures 2 & 3) the general aims of the watching brief are:

- *To define, insofar as possible, the date, character, form and function of any archaeological features observed on site.*
- *To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed development and to preserve by record any such remains*
- *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*

1.4.2 Site specific research goals are:

- *Is there any evidence of Prehistoric activity within any alluvial and/or peat deposits?*
- *Is there any evidence for Roman activity on the site? If so does it represent settlement relating to Watling Street?*
- *Is there any evidence for the industrial post-medieval use of the site?*

1.4.3 Specific research aims that may be considered as part of the project with reference to the research framework for London Archaeology (Museum of London, 2002) are:

(Roman)

- *R1, Para 6 Understanding how the relationship between hinterland and territorium of Londinium operated.*
- *R4, Para 1 Analysing the nature and reasons for the evolution of the road system, river crossings and internal street layouts and their importance as engines of development and change.*

(London after 1500):

- *L2, Para 2 Understanding how the proximity of the metropolis, the largest urban conurbation in Britain, affected the lives of people living and working in the immediate surrounding area*
- *L2, Para 7 Contributing to our understanding of the creation of the London suburbs and the meanings and values of domestic as well as public gardens*

## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### Prehistoric

- 2.1 There is no evidence of human activity dating to the Palaeolithic within the vicinity of the site although an assemblage of Palaeolithic fossils were discovered immediately south of the site. Mesolithic flints were found during archaeological excavations close to the Old Kent Road and further worked flints were identified 450m to the east of the site
- 2.2 Possible Neolithic ditches and worked flints were identified in 1990 during excavations at the Old Kent Road Canal Bridge, 450m to the west of the site. Two further prehistoric ditches were identified at 551 Old Kent Road, and two phases of a simple Bronze Age log pathway were identified at Varcoe Road.

### Roman

- 2.3 Sections of the Old Kent Road are thought to be aligned on the route of the Roman road Watling Street, the main route from Canterbury to Londinium, Roman London. A metalled surface with accompanying ditches were excavated at the canal bridge on the Old Kent Road and a further section of road was uncovered in 1809, 100m to the east of the site. Pits excavated at the former Cockney's Public House have been interpreted as gravel extraction pits for the construction and repair of the Roman road.
- 2.4 Evidence for Roman occupation along the course of the Old Kent Road comprises several small gullies and pits. A Roman lamp was discovered near the canal in the 19th century.
- 2.5 A second road, thought to be the Roman road from Lewisham constructed in the 2nd Century AD, joins the Old Kent Road 130m to the south of the site. A limestone and ragstone foundation, lying parallel to this road, suggests settlement extended along this routeway also.

### Saxon & medieval

- 2.6 There is no evidence within the vicinity of the site for archaeological remains dating to the early medieval period.
- 2.7 In 1086 Camberwell was assessed as having 29 households, comprising 22 villagers and 7 smallholders. Northmann of Mereworth was lord in 1066, with the King (Edward) his overlord. By 1086 the land had passed into the hands of the sheriff Haimo.
- 2.8 The location of Doveholes Manor House lies 113m to the northeast of the site, thought to date to the 13th or 14th centuries, although the site is not well understood. Evidence for market gardening in this period has been identified at the canal bridge on Old Kent Road, some 420m to the west of the site.

**Post-medieval**

- 2.9 John Roque's map of London shows the site to be within enclosed fields in 1761. Following the construction of the Grand Surrey Canal in 1807 the area surrounding the site began to be developed for both residential and industrial purposes. The use of the canal for transport ended in 1836 when it was converted to wharves and industrial sites, and the canal was eventually closed in 1971 and subsequently drained.
- 2.10 By the close of the 19th century terraced houses lined much of the Old Kent Road and the streets leading from it.
- 2.11 The South Metropolitan Gas Company, founded in 1829, began operations on the site in 1834. Three gasholders were built on the site during the mid-late 19th century, with a fourth constructed to the south. The gasholders were altered and refurbished during the 20th century and the middle one of the three on site was demolished. A steam tramway ran across the site between the gasholders and the fitters workshops, stores and purifiers on the northeast edge of the site and the coal stores immediately to the east.
- 2.12 Following World War II several Victorian and Edwardian terraces were cleared, particularly to the east of the site. The gasworks had been a target for bombing raids during the war, and the site had sustained some damage. In 1953 the gasworks closed and a large recycling facility was developed on the east part of the site. In 2012 National Grid installed a substation between the two remaining gasholders and the new recycling facility, and in 2018 the two gasholders were dismantled.

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 This fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of a drainage trench for installation measuring 25m x 0.80 x 2.30m (Max) deep, a 2m x 2m x 2m deep manhole pit was dug on the far western end.
- 3.1.2 The watching brief was undertaken in line with the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2019). All deposits were recorded using ASE standard context sheets. A digital photographic record of the work was kept.
- 3.1.3 All works were carried out in accordance with the ClfA standards and guidance (ClfA 2014) and the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service's (GLAAS) Archaeological Guidance Papers (Historic England 2015).
- 3.1.4 Datum heights were taken by an onsite surveyor (Tideway).
- 3.1.5 Spoil heaps were all scanned for unstratified finds.

#### 3.2 Fieldwork Constraints

- 3.2.1 The drainage trench that was monitored was narrow and of sizeable depth and after excavation was shored for the installation so only limited interpretations can be made.

#### 3.3 Scope of Report

- 3.3.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020 to the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020

#### 3.4 The Site Archive

- 3.3.1 ASE informed the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) before the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. 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.

Context sheets	6
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0
Colour photographs	38
B&W photos	0
Digital photos	0
Context register	1
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	3
Trench Record forms	0

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive



## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Drainage trench monitored between 02/11/2020 and 05/11/2020

4.2 Natural deposits were seen in the manhole pit at the western end, in the form of an orange sand and gravel [06] overlain by a light yellowish sand [05].

4.3 A dark brownish black deposit [04] was seen around the 18m from eastern end of trench at 2.71m AOD, it was difficult to ascertain the composition of this deposit as it was at the limit of the excavations' depth and only covered a 4m length of trench. Damage caused to the deposit was minimal (between 0.10 - 0.30m) and as a result left in situ. This existed underneath [03].

4.4 [03] consisted of a light yellowish grey sand with modern rubble and plastic inclusions and was the backfill for a cable run seen in the southern section running the complete length of trench, this was sealed by [02] a dark brown silt and sand with rubble and plastic inclusions and in turn was overlain by [01] a dark grey hard core/crush mix making up the current construction work surface.

Context	Type	Interpretation	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Deposit Thickness m	AOD Heights m
01	Layer	Made ground	25.00	0.80-2.00	0.20	4.31
02	Layer	Made Ground	25.00	0.80-2.00	0.50 - 0.60	4.11
03	Fill	Backfill	25.00	0.90	1.40	3.61
04	Deposit	Peat?	4.00	0.80	0.30+	2.71
05	Deposit	Natural Thanet sand	2.00	2.00	-	3.51
06	Deposit	Natural Gravel	2.00	2.00	-	2.65

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

## **5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence**

5.1.1 The Thanet Sand formation was seen at its uppermost at 3.51m AOD and was overlain by 0.70 -0.80m of made ground and largely truncated by the previous cable install. The interpretation of the dark brownish black deposit at 2.71m AOD is limited due to the excavation limitations, but could be a peat sediment although this cannot be stated with confidence. Damage caused to the deposit was minimal and as a result left largely in situ.

5.1.2 Interpretations are based on what was seen in a narrow, sizeably deep trench and ground material was loose so no access was attempted by the onsite archaeologist. Therefore deposits were described by sight and measured from the ground surface and interpretations should be seen as partial.

### **5.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts**

5.2.1 The drainage was being laid next to a cable install, the ground was therefore largely truncated by the install of this previous cable, intact geological deposits were seen underneath the truncation and more intact in the northern section of the manhole pit which extended beyond the width of the rest of trench.

### **5.3 Discussion of archaeological remains by period**

5.3.1 No archaeology was observed during the watching brief.

### **5.4 Potential impact on archaeological remains**

5.4.1 No archaeology was observed on site and due to the drainage being laid next to an existing cable line any impact was minimal.

### **5.5 Consideration of research aims**

- *Is there any evidence of Prehistoric activity within any alluvial and/or peat deposits?*

No material culture was seen during the excavation of the drainage trench. A dark brownish black deposit could potentially be a peat though this was largely undisturbed and only exposed for c. 4m at the base of the trench 18m from its eastern end.

### **5.6 Conclusions**

5.6.1 The Thanet Sand formation was observed at 3.51m AOD and was overlain by 0.70 -0.80m of made ground and largely truncated by the previous cable install. The interpretation of a dark brownish black deposit at 2.71m AOD only exposed for c. 4m at the base of the trench 18m from its eastern end underneath the truncation caused by the cable is limited due to the excavation limitations, but it could possibly be a peat sediment. Damage caused to this deposit was minimal and as a result it survives largely in situ.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ASE would like to thank HOCHTIEF-MURPHY Joint Venture (HMJV) for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project, and Chris Constable Archaeologist, Southwark Council for his guidance and monitoring. The watching brief was monitored by Tom Rugg. Andy Lewsey produced the figures for this report; Andy Leonard managed the excavations and Dan Swift the post-excavation process.

## HER Summary

Site code	SDA20				
Project code	200233				
Planning reference	?				
Site address	National Grid New Cross Site, Sandgate Street, London SE15 1LE				
District/Borough	Southwark				
NGR (12 figures)	TQ 3472 7794				
Geology	Thanet Sand Formation				
Fieldwork type			WB		
Date of fieldwork	02/11/2020 to 04/11/2020				
Sponsor/client	HOCHTIEF-MURPHY Joint Venture (HMJV)				
Project manager	Andy Leonard				
Project supervisor	Tom Rugg				
Period summary					
Project summary	<p>The Thanet Sand formation was observed at 3.51m AOD and was overlain by 0.70 -0.80m of made ground and largely truncated by the previous cable install. The interpretation of a dark brownish black deposit at 2.71m AOD only exposed for c. 4m at the base of the trench 18m from its eastern end underneath the truncation caused by the cable is limited due to the excavation limitations, but it could possibly be a peat sediment. Damage caused to this deposit was minimal and as a result it survives largely in situ.</p>				

## OASIS Form

### OASIS ID: archaeol6-407403

#### Project details

Project name	Archaeological Watching Brief At London Power Tunnels 2 (LPT2) New Cross Drive Site Sandgate Street, London SE15 1LE
Short description of the project	The Thanet Sand formation was observed at 3.51m AOD and was overlain by 0.70 -0.80m of made ground and largely truncated by the previous cable install. The interpretation of a dark brownish black deposit at 2.71m AOD only exposed for c. 4m at the base of the trench 18m from its eastern end underneath the truncation caused by the cable is limited due to the excavation limitations, but it could possibly be a peat sediment. Damage caused to this deposit was minimal and as a result it survives largely in situ.
Project dates	Start: 02-11-2020 End: 04-11-2020
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	SDA20 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON SOUTHWARK SOUTHWARK London Power Tunnels 2 (LPT2) New Cross Drive Site
Postcode	SE15 1LE
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3472 7794 51.483843614563 -0.05956135851 51 29 01 N 000 03 34 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 2.65m Max: 3.51m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	ASE

Project design originator	Archaeology South East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Tom Rugg
Type of sponsor/funding body	HMJV
Name of sponsor/funding body	HOCHTIEF-MURPHY Joint Venture
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Entered by	Tom Rugg (t.rugg@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	5 November 2020