

Watching Brief Report of Land at

89 - 91 PARK LANE CROYDON

For Copithorne Homes

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Watching Brief Report of Land at

89 - 91 PARK LANE CROYDON

Client: Copithorne Homes

Local Authority: London Borough of Croydon

NGR: 532613, 165032

Planning App:

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Abstract

Land at 89-91 Park Lane, Croydon is proposed for redevelopment. The site is located close to a known Anglo Saxon burial ground which is west of Park Lane. It is thought unlikely that the burials extend east of Park Lane which runs along the peak of a ridge.

For this reason English Heritage requested a 'proactive watching brief' during the initial phase of groundworks. This work entailed stripping the entire footprint of the new building under archaeological monitoring conditions.

No archaeological cut features were observed during groundworks. A probable post medieval ploughsoil was identified overlying the natural deposits.

1. Introduction and Scope of Study

- 1.1. This watching brief report has been researched and prepared by Guy Hunt of L - P : Archaeology on behalf of Copithorne Homes. Fieldwork took place on the 25th of July 2006.
- 1.2. Fieldwork was undertaken under a Specification for Archaeological Works (HUNT 2006).
- 1.3. The report considers land at 89-91 Park Lane Croydon. The Local Authority is the London Borough of Croydon who take archaeological advice from English Heritage's Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS). In this case the archaeological advisor is Mark Stevenson.
- 1.4. The site is located at OS grid reference 532613, 165032.
- 1.5. The site lies in an area which is known to contain both Roman and Anglo Saxon burials as well as various archaeological finds from other periods. The focus of the cemetery is thought to be to the west of Park Lane, in fact no burials have yet been found to the east of the road. This potential is discussed in more detail in section 2.
- 1.6. In response to this potential English Heritage requested a “proactive” watching brief approach which involved the stripping of the entire new building footprint under archaeological monitoring.
- 1.7. The assessment seeks to address the following issues:
 - ◆ To assess the potential archaeology on this site
 - ◆ To assess the survival of potential archaeology

2. Site Background

2.1.GEOLOGY

2.1.1. The British Geological Survey Datascience GeoIndex (<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm>) indicates that the site is underlain by drift cover of alluvium (clay, sand and silt). This deposit overlies the London Clay. It should be noted that this data is only available at low resolution and thus more detailed site investigation data is likely to alter or refine this information.

2.1.2. Observations on site confirmed that the site does indeed stand on an area of quite mixed drift geology. In this case being beds of sand gravel and clay. The solid geology was not observed.

2.2.TOPOGRAPHY

2.2.1. Park Lane runs approximately north-south along the crest of a natural ridge. The land slopes down to the west, with the study site being located in a position that would have been highly visible from the west.

2.2.2. The site is roughly square aligned north-south parallel to Park Lane (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The site is bounded by Park Lane to the west, Mulgrave Road to the south and by adjacent properties to the north and east.



Plate 1 - View of existing buildings on site.

2.3.SITE CONDITIONS AND PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT

- 2.3.1. The site is currently occupied by a small terrace of late Victorian or Edwardian buildings. The southernmost of these buildings has been demolished, leaving only a facade which is to be retained as part of the development (see Figure 3).
- 2.3.2. The foundations of the demolished building and the area of hard standing at its rear were left intact until they could be removed under the archaeological watching brief as detailed in this report.
- 2.3.3. The two remaining buildings are due to be refurbished while the demolished building is to be rebuilt to modern specifications, retaining the facade.

2.4.ARCHAEOLOGY

- 2.4.1. There are a wide variety of archaeological findspots recorded in the vicinity of the site. These include some significant sites as well as some more ephemeral findspots.
- 2.4.2. It should be noted that this brief overview is not based on a full analysis of the sites and monuments record, but is based largely on personal communication with Mark Stevenson at GLAAS as well as a cursory overview of the resources available on the LAARC website.
- 2.4.3. The most significant nearby site is that at 90 Park Lane excavated under site code PLO99, the London Archaeologist Round-up 1999 states:

All or parts of 39 inhumation graves were revealed above the natural gravels, part of a known early Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Most of the graves were orientated E-W and were concentrated in the NW of the site. Two graves in the SE of the site were surrounded by a ring ditch and were, therefore, probably of mid, rather than early, Saxon date. Bone preservation was very poor, with only a few small fragments surviving within 16 of the graves. Objects were recovered from 30 graves (77%), the most common objects being blades or knives, with a small number of shield bosses, buckles, brooches, spearheads and tweezers. Textiles and organic material, eg. a copper-alloy bowl containing hazelnuts, were also recovered. Most individuals appear to have been sub-adult or adult, including 9 males and 5 females. Three cremation burials were excavated, two in urns, of which one was redeposited within, and the other cut through, the fills of inhumation graves. Postholes, possibly structural, and a pit, possibly later in date, were also recorded.

- 2.4.4. Additional parts of the cemetery have been excavated at 82-86 Park Lane under site code PAK92. London Archaeologist Round-up 1992 states:

Evaluation Sept 1992 Access, Equity & Law Investments. A number of pits and gullies, dated to the Bronze Age, were recorded. Cremations and inhumation burials, dated to 5th/6th c, are part of a previously identified Anglo-Saxon cemetery. All the graves were truncated during subsequent ploughing; one layer, presumed to be plough soil, contained finds from the prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods. Towards the N of the site was a brick wall on chalk footings, provisionally dated to the late 18th/early 19th c.

- 2.4.5. Other archaeological remains such as prehistoric finds are also known in the area, such as prehistoric features recorded at 68-74 Park Lane, London Archaeologist Round-up 1996 states:

Excavation Mar 1996 Croydon Properties Ltd. A layer of colluvium above the natural gravel sealed prehistoric cut features: two pits, a posthole and a linear cut, which are broadly dated from the Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age. They were sealed by the possible remains of a cultivated soil containing Roman and medieval material. At the N end of the trench a medieval gravel extraction pit was recorded, followed by a further cultivated soil into which 18th-19th-c wall footings had been set; the site was sealed with modern make-up.

- 2.4.6. As discussed, these references are not intended as a definitive guide to the archaeology of this area, but they serve to illustrate the type of deposits likely to be found on the study site.

3. Aims

- 3.1. Given the archaeological potential discussed above, the aim of the works was to strip the entire proposed building footprint under archaeological supervision.
- 3.2. Based on the findings of this work, one of three courses of action was to be followed:
 - 3.2.1. If significant archaeological remains or burials were present on site, a more detailed brief for their excavation or preservation was to be produced.
 - 3.2.2. If low levels of archaeology were encountered, any features were to be dealt with according to a normal watching brief methodology.
 - 3.2.3. If no archaeology was identified, the watching brief was to stop.
- 3.3. In order to achieve the level of information required to make this decision, the aims of the initial phase of watching brief were as follows:
 - 3.3.1. To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains.
 - 3.3.2. To assess the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on the site. To assess the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological remains on the site.
 - 3.3.3. To assess the anticipated impact of the development proposals on any surviving archaeological remains.
 - 3.3.4. To collect enough information to allow a reliable decision to be made as to the necessity of further archaeological works as set out in paragraph 3.2.
- 3.4. Low levels of archaeology were encountered on site, these were recorded under watching brief conditions, the aim of the recording under watching brief was:
 - 3.4.1. To characterise the nature of the archaeological deposits encountered on site.
 - 3.4.2. To provide dating information that will be useful in dating the archaeological deposits encountered.
 - 3.4.3. To provide accurate plans of the archaeological remains encountered on the study site.

4. Method and Results

4.1.METHOD

4.1.1. The entire area of the proposed new development was stripped in two blocks due to the size restrictions of the site which mean that spoil needed to be piled up in one part of the site whilst the other was stripped.

4.1.2. The first half of the site to be stripped was the area nearest to the retained facade of the building. In this area, some topsoil remained and this was cleaned with the machine bucket and then by hand in order to be examined for cut features and finds. This topsoil was then reduced in spits using the machine bucket until level with the natural deposits. The entire area was then stripped in spits to natural, cleaned and inspected for traces of cut features and finds.



Plate 2 - Front half of stripped area

4.1.3. The second half of the site, to the rear of the plot, was then stripped and the spoil from this stripping was piled onto the first area. Thus the entire area of the proposed building footprint was observed under archaeological supervision, with the archaeologist directing the stripping.

4.1.4. All stripping was undertaken in thin spits with a smooth toothless ditching bucket.



Plate 3 - Rear area of the site

4.2.RESULTS

- 4.2.1. 2 soils were observed and recorded. The first of these was a topsoil deposit that probably represents a late post medieval ploughsoil and the second was a sandy deposit of natural geology.
- 4.2.2. Context 1 which is probably a late post medieval ploughsoil or garden soil survived in a limited area of the site. In particular it survived only within the area of the former building. The soil was a loamy brown soil c.30cm thick containing a limited number of finds such as clay tobacco pipe. The deposit had been truncated by the foundations of the former building. This soil was not present at the rear of the former building where modern hard standing was observed directly overlying the orange natural deposits.
- 4.2.3. Context 2 was a natural deposit of orange sand was observed across the entire area of the new building footprint, no cut features were observed in this deposit.

4.3.DISCUSSION

- 4.3.1. The most likely analysis of these results is that the site was open undeveloped land up till the buildings on site were constructed at around 1900. Context 1 is perhaps best interpreted as a ploughsoil, although it may have been disturbed during the original building works.
- 4.3.2. The survival of context 1 can be attributed to the suspended floor of the original building. This deposit survived under the suspended floor of the building but had been entirely removed in the areas outside the building such as the yard area at the rear of the building where the hard standing was observed to be directly overlying the natural geology.
- 4.3.3. The absence of any remains of the nearby Anglo-Saxon cemetery does not really confirm the extent of the cemetery. No evidence of the cemetery has ever been seen on this East side of Park Lane and this confirms this general picture. Unfortunately the results from the site are inconclusive as to why this is the case. The most likely explanations are:
 - 4.3.4. The cemetery never extended onto the study site, being confined to the area of the 'crest' of the ridge rather than right on top of it where the site is located.
 - 4.3.5. The position on top of the ridge has meant a greater deal of soil erosion and therefore a greater impact of disturbance through activities such as ploughing due to the thin soils. Soil movement of this type is shown in evidence such as the deposit of colluvium identified further down the hill at 68-74 Park Lane.

5. Summary and Conclusions

5.1. Land at 89-91 Park Lane, Croydon is proposed for redevelopment. The site is located close to a known Anglo Saxon burial ground although it is thought unlikely that the burials extend West of Park Lane.

5.2. For this reason English Heritage requested a 'proactive watching brief' of the initial phase of groundworks. This work entailed stripping the entire footprint of the new build building under archaeological conditions.

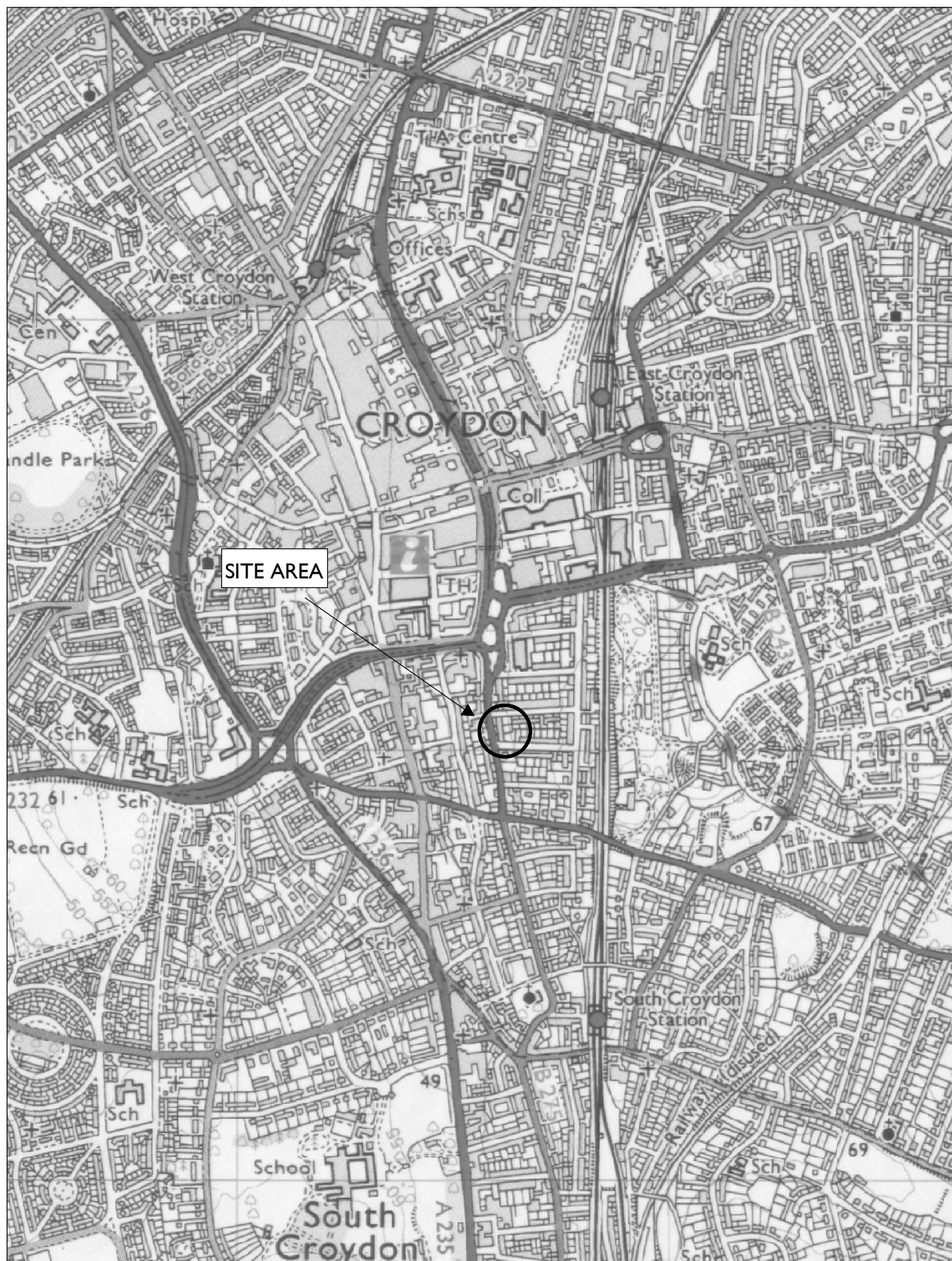
5.3. No archaeological cut features were observed during groundworks. A probable post medieval ploughsoil was identified overlying the natural deposits.

5.4. Significance of results is local:

5.4.1. The results do not conclusively prove that there are no burials East of Park lane, but in terms of their local significance, they do form part of a corpus of evidence indicating that the focus of the Anglo Saxon cemetery was most likely to the West of Park Lane.

FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site Location General



CLIENT // Copithorne Homes

PROJECT // LP0486L- Park Lane

DESCRIPTION // Map of general site location

DOC REF: LP0486L-WBR-v1

L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

0 920m

10

60_m

DOC REF: LP0486L-WBR-v I

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FIGURE 3 // Extent of Watching Brief



retained structure
 stripped area

0 9m



CLIENT // Copithorne Homes

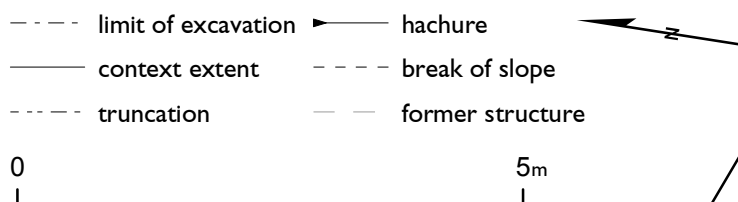
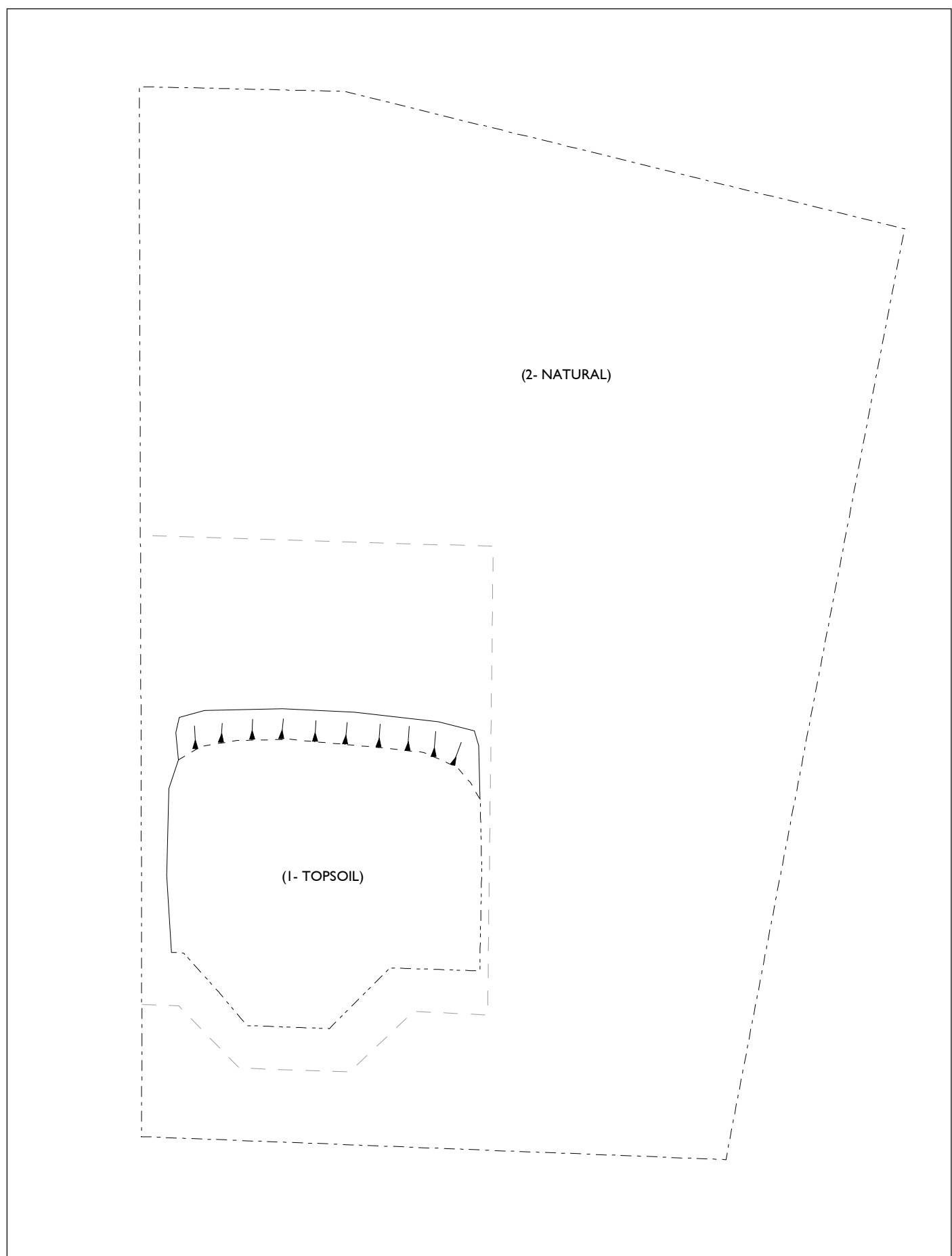
PROJECT // LP0486L- Park Lane

DESCRIPTION // Map of extent of existing structure and watching brief

DOC REF: LP0486L-WBR-v1

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FIGURE 4 // Sketch Plan of Contexts



CLIENT // Copithorne Homes
PROJECT // LP0486L- Park Lane
DESCRIPTION // Indicative sketch plan of stripped site area and contexts
DOC REF: LP0486L-WBR-v1

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SOURCES CONSULTED

APPENDIX I

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