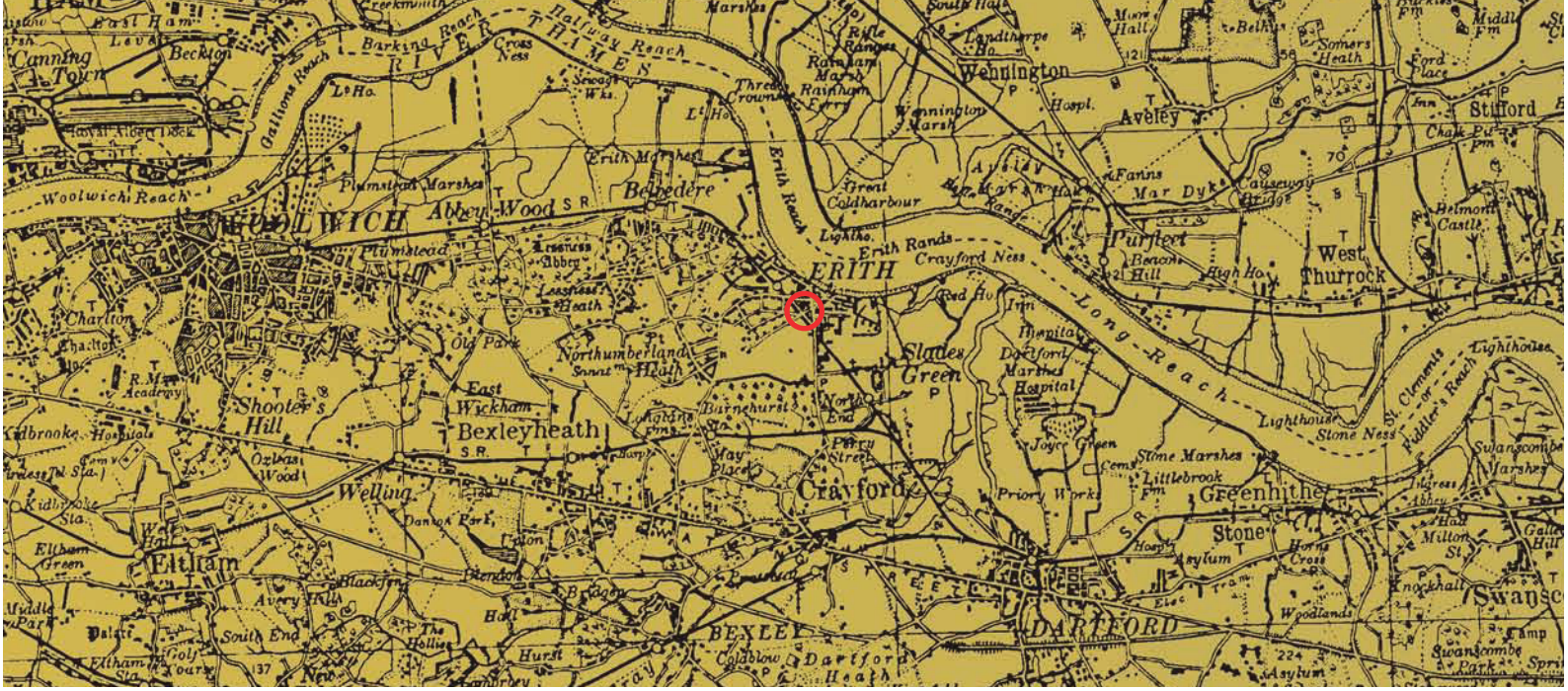

ERITH HIGH STREET
Erith

London Borough of Bexley

An archaeological watching brief
March 2005

REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

MUSEUM OF LONDON
Archaeology Service

Erith High Street
Erith

London Borough of Bexley

An archaeological watching brief report

National Grid Reference: 551600 177869

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Summary (non-technical)

This report has been commissioned by Alan Camp Architects, on behalf of Hexagon Housing, in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at High Street, Erith.

Three test pits were monitored between the 12th and 14th January 2005 whilst geotechnical investigations were under way. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed.

Natural River Terrace Gravel was recorded at the base of one pit. Overlying this was a possibly pedogenic 'subsoil' itself sealed by a more recent deposit of mixed silts. Pits adjacent to the buildings revealed only modern rubble. There was no intrinsic dating material from the pits, though the nature of the fills suggested a post medieval date.

List of Illustrations

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at High Street, Erith, hereafter called 'the site'. The site is located at in the 'Erith Small Business Centre', bounded by Erith High Street to the west, James Watt Way (also known as The Avenue) to the south-east and Pier Road to the north (see **Fig 1**). The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference 551600 177869. The terrain slopes down from west to east. No survey data was available for the site but the OS map gives a spot height of 8.70m OD 60m to the south-west, and at 9.79m OD 300m to the east (measured from the centre of the car park). The site code is ESB05.

A desk top *Archaeological (impact) assessment* was previously prepared by MoLAS, which covers the whole area of the site.[1] This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial assessment of its archaeological potential. A *Method Statement* for the watching brief was prepared in January 2005.[2]

1.2 The planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological impact assessment.* Planning Permission for the development was granted on the 13th January 2005 (04/04860/FULM).

1.3 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Alan Camp Architects, on behalf of Hexagon Housing, and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether archaeological remains or features were present on the site and, if so, to record the nature and extent of such remains. A number of more site-specific research aims and objectives were established in the preceding *Method Statement* and are outlined in the following section.

The purpose of the present report is to analyse the results of the excavation against the original research aims, and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

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[1] Watson, S, July 2004, *Erith High Street; An archaeological assessment report*, unpublished MoLAS report.
[2] Nielsen, R, Jan 2005, *Erith High Street (Erith Masterplan South), Erith, Kent: A method statement for archaeological monitoring and recording/evaluation of geotechnical test pits*, unpublished MOLAS report.

1.4 Aims and objectives

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the watching brief (Section 2.2):

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

What are the earliest deposits identified?

What are the latest deposits identified?

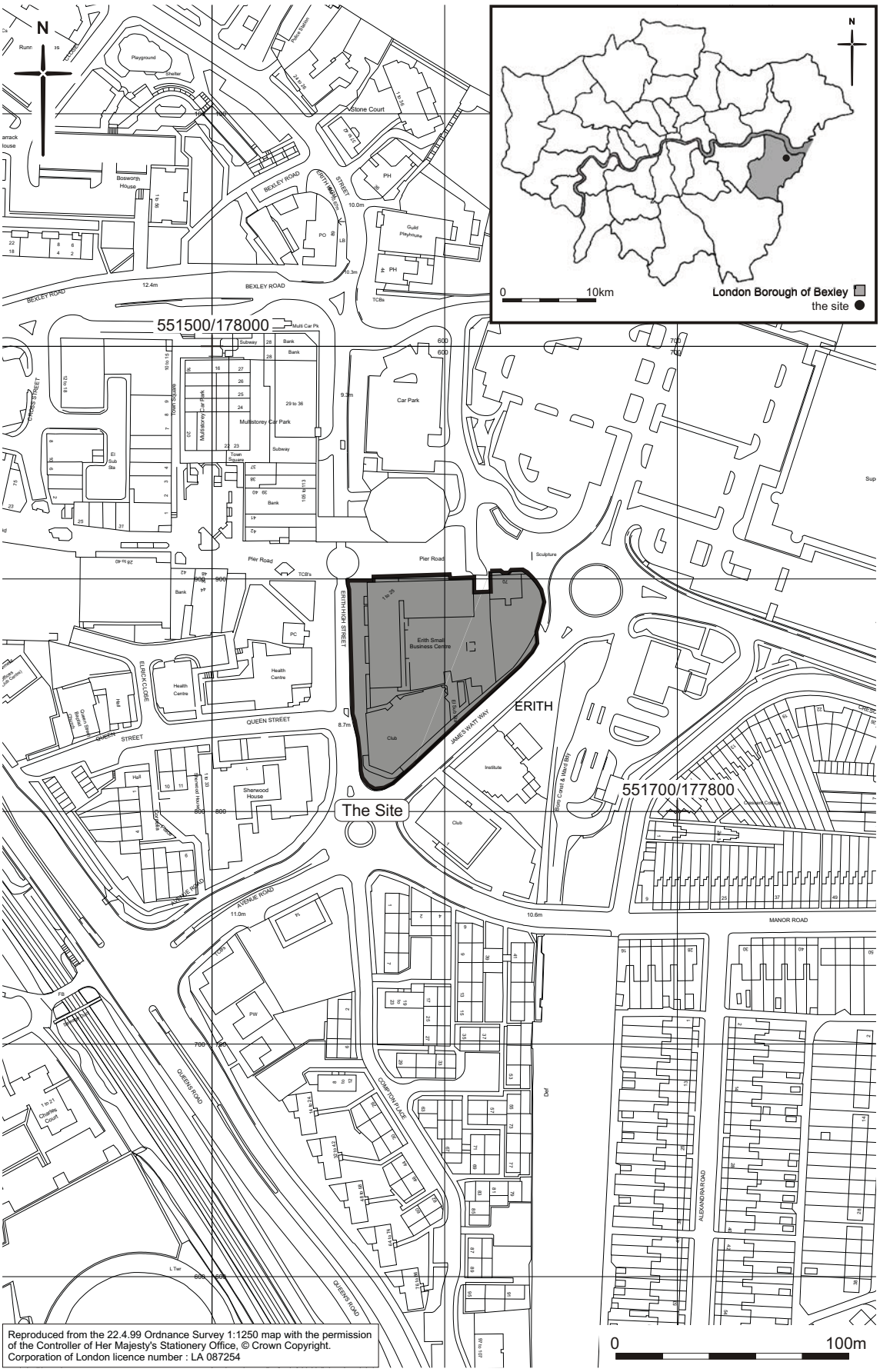

Fig 1 Site location

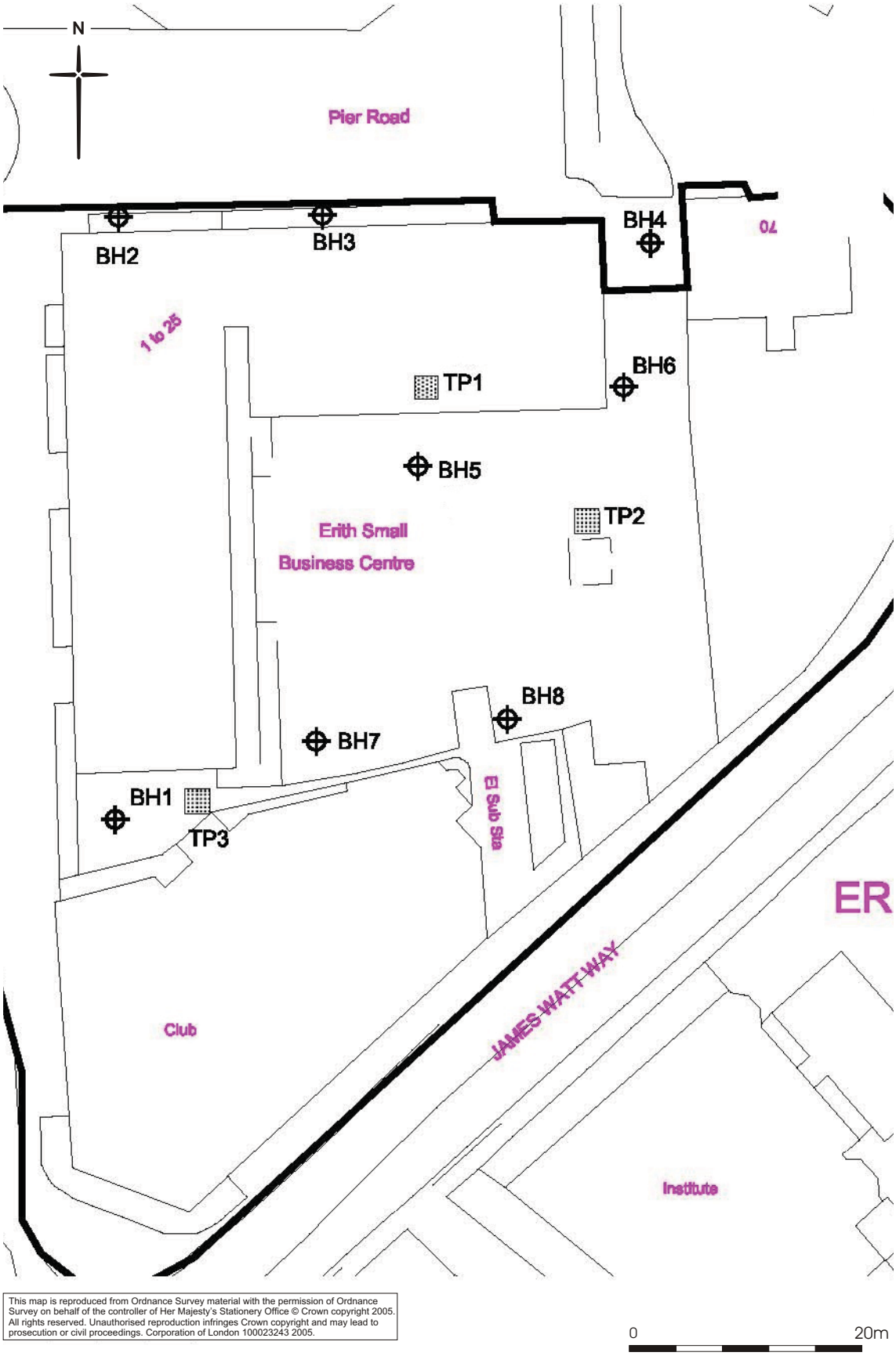

Fig 2 Location of test pits and boreholes

2 The watching brief

2.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and recording during the watching brief was done in accordance with the *Method Statement* and the MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual.

The ground surface was broken out and cleared by contractors under MoLAS supervision. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS. The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by the contractors. For all pit locations see **Fig 2**.

2.2 Results of the watching brief

In total, three separate interventions (test pits) were made for the purposes of geotechnical and archaeological examination. These have been numbered 1 to 3 There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded.

Test Pit 1

Test Pit 1	
Location	Within Unit 8 on the north side of the car park
Dimensions	1m by 1.1m by 1.7m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	-
Base of modern fill/slab	0.42m from surface
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1.3m (below modern slab)
Level of base of deposits observed	-
Natural observed	-

The only deposit encountered was a mixed brown silt containing fragments of red and yellow brick. This is interpreted as a dump or backfill.

Test Pit 2

Test Pit 2	
Location	Situated on the north side of the substation within the car park.
Dimensions	1.1m by 1.1m by 1.65m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	-
Base of modern fill/slab	0.40m
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1.25m (below modern slab)
Level of base of deposits observed	-
Natural observed	Coarse sand at 1.54m below ground level

A natural coarse sand / gravel was observed at the base of the pit. This was overlain by a sterile brown silt, interpreted as a 'subsoil'. Above this, at 0.90m below ground level, was a mixed brown silt containing fragments of red and yellow brick.

Test Pit 3

Test Pit 3	
Location	Located just south of the building fronting the High Street
Dimensions	1.1m by 0.8m by 1.30m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	-
Base of modern fill/slab	0.15m
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1.30m (below ground surface)
Level of base of deposits observed	-
Natural observed	-

The deposits within this pit consisted entirely of mixed brown silts with brick and concrete rubble. At the base of the pit was a large concrete haunched duct / pipe running north-south.

Bore Holes

The client's geotechnical programme included the sinking of eight bore holes. Just before boring, pits measuring an average of 1.50m were dug in order to ascertain whether any obstructions needed removing. Two of these pits (BH nos 6, 8) were observed and information was also provided on two others (BH nos 2,5).

BH 2
Situated to the north-west of the buildings. This was not observed but was described as being full of modern brick and concrete rubble.

BH 5
Situated in the northern part of the car park. This was not observed but photographs showed what appeared to be similar deposits to those encountered in Test Pits 1 and 2 – mixed brown silts.

BH 6
Situated in the north-east corner of the site. Modern make up to 0.20m and modern backfills to 0.90m below ground surface. Below this was a mixed clay and silt dump containing occasional loose fragments of chalk and flint. The base of the excavation was at 1.53m below ground surface.

BH 8
Situated in the southern end of the car park area. Modern make up to 0.43m below ground surface. Below this could be seen a mixed brown silt deposit containing brick fragments. Due to the confines of this pit, no further excavation was made before bore drilling.

3 Potential of archaeology

3.1 Original research aims

Coarse sand / gravel within Test Pit 2 can be interpreted as River Terrace Gravel just over 1.50 below modern ground surface. There was no dating material recovered from any of the pits. Chalk and flint fragments from BH 6 may suggest building debris from the 16th to 18th centuries. Brick fragments seen in most of the pits were 19th or 20th century in date.

3.2 New research aims

The lower level of silts recorded in pits 1 and 2 may have been pedogenic, though this would need to be confirmed. Any exploitation of this horizon may be confirmed by wider examination. Fragments of what appeared to be early post medieval building material in BH 6 may have derived from nearby structures. The uppermost mixed silts seen in most pits may be earth raising dumps or localised fills. Examination of a wider area might confirm the nature of this deposit.

3.3 Significance of the data

There were no features or deposits of any significance. The possibility of building remains in the vicinity of BH 6, may suggest limited significance. There was nothing that suggested any significance beyond possible local importance.

4 Publication and archiving

Information on the results of the excavation will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic researches into the development of London.

The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Method Statement* with the Museum of London within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 3) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 3.3) it is suggested that a short note on the results of the watching brief should appear in the annual round up of the *London Archaeologist*.

5 Acknowledgements

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) would like to thank Alan Camp Architects for commissioning this project, particularly Paul Gendle for his assistance. On site work was also facilitated by Mr Andrew McDonald and resident engineer Mr James Payne of contractors William Vestry Ltd and the personnel of geotechnical contractors Southern Testing Laboratories Limited.

6 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

Project details

Project name	Erith High Street, Erith
Short description of the project	Sandy gravel as observed in TP2 at 1.54m below ground surface. This was overlain - as in most other test pits - by a 'subsoil' average 0.60m thick, This was overlain by a redeposited silt, probably late 19th century in origin. Overall, the upper metre of all test pits comprised concrete over rubble fills.
Project dates	Start: 12-01-2005 End: 14-01-2005
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ESB05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	DEMOLITION Uncertain
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Site location	GREATER LONDON BEXLEY ERITH Erith High Street, Erith
Postcode	DA8 1RT
Study area	2400 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 51600 77869 Point
Height OD	Min: 6m Max: 6m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MoLAS
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	MoLAS
Project director/manager	Robin Nielsen
Project supervisor	JMC Bowsher
Sponsor or funding body	Alan Camp Architects

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	ESB05
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic','other'
Digital Media available	'Text'
Digital Archive Exists?	No

Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	ESB05
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Survey '
Paper Archive Exists?	No

Project bibliography 1

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