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Archaeological Services Ltd



**An Archaeological Watching
Brief on land adjacent
to the
BP Filling Station,
Ashington, West Sussex**

DC/16/2235

Project No. CBAS0886

by
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted on the excavation of two boreholes and ground reduction for a non-permanent dwelling on a fallow/brownfield site adjacent to the BP Filling Station at Ashington, West Sussex. The remains of the old A24 London Road ran across the site. Ground reduction exposed a 20th century, chalky made ground deposit overlying the subsoil and natural. No features or finds of archaeological interest were present.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd (CBAS) was commissioned by Giles De Sade (The Client) to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to the BP Filling Station, Ashington, West Sussex (Fig. 1) in connection with a planning application to place on the site a single, non-permanent residential unit changing the land from unused fallow/brownfield to residential, and to remove, replace and/or manage existing low quality planting and provide site access from London Road (DC/16/2235). The following condition was placed on the approval:

Condition 7

No development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until the archaeological site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved and that provision for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing.

- 1.2 The Site is located to the north end of Ashington village, and was unused 'fallow' land being mainly a brownfield area which was formally the original London Road running through Ashington (Fig. 4), before the existing A24 bypass was constructed, and the section of road was 'stopped-up' and enclosed¹. The A24 and a BP filling station is situated on its east side, Martin's Farm is to the north, and a roundabout road and housing development is situated to the south and west. The Site is centred at TQ 1338 1659 and lies at c.30m aOD. The geology of the Site is Weald Clay with bands of sand².
- 1.3 The Site lies within an Archaeological Notification Area covering Late Bronze Age settlement debris, a Medieval farmstead, and Post-Medieval iron working sites and possible kilns (Fig. 2). A 1km radial HER search was conducted (86920-17-064), the results of which are shown in Fig. 3 and discussed further below.
- 1.4 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) covering the archaeological watching brief to monitor all groundworks connected with the planning approval was submitted to and approved by Horsham Borough Council.

¹ Design & Access Statement 2016

² British Geological Survey Sheet 318/333

2.0 Aims and Objectives

2.1 The aims and objectives of the watching brief were to:

1. Establish whether there are any archaeological features present within the footprint of the groundworks; and
2. Ensure that any archaeological remains which may be affected by the proposed groundworks are excavated and recorded.

2.2 The specific research aims were:

1. To record any archaeological remains relating to the Bronze Age settlement which may help to define its extent and character; and
2. To record any archaeological remains which may inform our understanding of the Medieval and Post Medieval activity and the development of Ashington village.

3.0 Archaeological & Historical background

- 3.1 Prehistoric activity in the surrounding area is evident from the discoveries of prehistoric flintwork that have been made. Mesolithic flintwork (MWS4386) was found near East Wolves Farm, whilst other flintwork was found at Rectory Close (MWS6354) and London Road (MWS7033) during watching briefs. At Rock Common, on the Lower Greensand 2.5km to the south of the site, a large Mesolithic flintworking site was excavated which produced over 50,000 pieces of worked flint³.
- 3.2 Later Prehistoric activity seems confined to the late Bronze Age, with excavations at America Wood, to the southeast of the site, producing evidence for settlement in the form of a pit, postholes, and a gully or ditch (MWS3756).⁴ A further excavation east of London Road found a further gully, a large hollow, a pit, postholes and stakeholes, all probably dating to the Late Bronze Age (MWS7037).⁵
- 3.3 The Roman period is represented by artefacts found near Ashington Church (MWS4033). The site of a Roman building, possibly a villa, (Scheduled Monument 1005826), with finds of bricks and roofing tiles, pottery, glass, vitrified flints and a coin of Constantine found in 1947, and excavated by the Worthing Archaeological Society is situated c1km southwest of the site (DWS8554).
- 3.4 Ashington is mentioned in the Domesday Book, which states that it lay in the lands of Washington, and had land for 3 ploughs, and a value of 30s⁶. A church existed by the 13th century (MWS1155), and it seems likely a small settlement existed around it. Hook Farm probably dates from the medieval period (MWS11780). A possible moated site is situated close to Church Farm (MWS4254).
- 3.5 The excavations at America Wood (MWS3757) found evidence for a medieval building, ditches and pits which were probably a farm, which seems to have originated in the 12th century and continued through until the 14th century. A medieval ditch was found with 13th-14th century pottery near Church Farm (MWS7038), whilst a possible medieval ditch was found north of Ivy Cottage (MWS6363), and a sherd of medieval pottery came from near East Wolves Farm (MWS4386).

³ Harding, P. 2000 'A Mesolithic site at Rock Common, Washington, West Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **138**

⁴ Priestley-Bell, G. 1994 'Archaeological excavations at America Wood, Ashington, West Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **132**

⁵ Higgins, P.B. 2004 'Excavations east of London Road, Ashington, West Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **142**

⁶ Morris, J. 1976 *Domesday Book: Sussex*, Phillimore

- 3.6** During the Post medieval period the farming landscape continued to develop, with Batts Farm (MWS11696) probably originating in the 16th century, Holmbush Farm (MWS11672) and West Wolves Farm (MWS13984) originating in the 17th century. Evidence for the farmed landscape is provided by numerous field boundaries (e.g. MWS6363, MWS7033), whilst pits and other features, often containing iron slag, have also been found (e.g. MWS6352, MWS7034). 17th century pottery was found on an evaluation to the east of the site (MWS6377).
- 3.7** The site is shown as being within Ashington Common on the Yeakell & Gardner map of 1778-83 (Fig. 5), and a windmill is shown to the south of the site (MWS409). In the later Post medieval period further farms became established, including Martin's Farm immediately to the north of the site (MWS12344), first being shown on the 1st Edition OS map of 1875-9 (Fig. 6). Holmbush House is shown north of the site, set within a parkscape (MWS33).
- 3.8** A brickworks was operating in the 1930's, to the south of the site (MWS4802). Two undated kilns or ovens were recovered c. 40m south of Martin's Farm during an archaeological evaluation of the Ashington by-pass in May 1993 (MWS3755). By the 4th Edition OS map (Fig. 7) housing development is shown on both sides of London Road to the south of the site.
- 3.9** The London Road runs through the eastern part of the site, and was stopped-up and enclosed in 1994 (Fig. 4) when the A24 by-pass was created. The site now consists of unmanaged scrubland/bushes, while the line of the original London Road is still elevated with the associated roadside ditch running alongside⁷.

⁷ Design & Access Statement 28/9/16

4.0 Method Statement

- 4.1 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (2014) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014), the *Sussex Archaeological Standards* (2015) and the *Treasure Act* (1996).
- 4.2 The watching brief involved the archaeological monitoring of two phases of work. The initial work consisted of three small test holes, two of which were to act as feeder holes for boreholes (Plate 1), and all were located within the footprint of the area being reduced. All were approximately 400mm by 400mm square and 500-520mm deep before boring began down to a depth of approximately 10m.



Plate 1: Location of second borehole looking south-west.

- 4.3 Ground reduction began with the removal of a low bank that formed the edge of the old A24 road. The ground was reduced down to a maximum depth of 1.1m over the footprint of the new dwelling to form a level terrace (Plate 2). It was excavated in careful spits by machine using a flat-bladed bucket under archaeological supervision, in accordance with the Recommended Standards.
- 4.4 All deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards and to the *Sussex Archaeological Standards*. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not with reference to a Munsell colour chart. The spoil from the excavations was inspected by eye, and with a Garrett Ace 150 metal detector, to recover any artefacts of archaeological interest, although none were found.



Plate 2: Ground reduction looking south-west

- 4.5** Levels were taken at the south-west and north-east of the ground works with the TBM situated at the base of the wooden gate post at the entrance to the site. This was tied into the BM on Martins Farm (34.78m AOD).
- 4.6** A full digital photographic record of the work was kept as appropriate and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held by CBAS Ltd but will subsequently be deposited in Horsham Museum. The archive contains no finds as these have been discarded. The West Sussex Historic Environment Record will be supplied with a CD containing the report in PDF/A format and a selection of site photographs. A site reference of BPA17 has been allocated.

5.0 Results

- 5.1** The upper most deposit comprised of 300mm of the modern topsoil (Context 1). It consisted of a very dark grey clayey-silt that contained modern rubbish such as plastic wrappers and soft drinks cans with some rooting, which were not retained. It was a very soft and a recently developed deposit.
- 5.2** Below the modern topsoil was a made-ground deposit of off-white chalk in a mid-brown clayey-silt matrix (Context 2) along the old line of the A24 and also forming the bank edge of the old road (see Plate 4). It was fairly loose and was 550mm at its maximum depth, with the chalk being most concentrated in the upper 200mm of the deposit.



Plate 3: Working shot looking south-west showing dwelling footprint and line of old A24.

- 5.3** A mid-brown deposit, that was interpreted as a possible buried subsoil (Context 4), was present below the made-ground. It was 200mm thick and was above the natural (Context 3). The deposit was fairly sterile with no inclusions and only the very occasional small root. The level of this deposit was between 33.68m AOD at the south west end and 34.78m AOD at the north east end.
- 5.4** This made ground deposit was consistent across the area being reduced, including the embanked edge of the old road. The bank does not appear to have been a separate feature, but simply an extension of the made ground deposit forming a banked edge to the old road, and was not allocated a separate context number.



Plate 4: Section looking south-east showing Contexts 1 to 4.

- 5.5** The natural (Context **3**) was initially observed briefly in the bore-holes as a firm mid-yellow and light grey silty clay before changing to a mid-grey blue alluvium at approximately 3m depth, that was only visible due to the spoil from the boreholes. It was only otherwise visible at the bottom of the ground reduction by approximately 150mm as a mid-yellow and light grey silty clay.

6.0 Finds

- 6.1** No finds were recovered from the excavation. Only modern rubbish in the form of plastic wrappers, crisp packets and soft drinks cans were noted in the topsoil and these were not retained.

7.0 Discussion

- 7.1** No archaeology of note was found. There was no evidence for any activity prior to the construction of the road, and it is possible that the creation of the original road and subsequent works may have removed any trace of earlier activity.
- 7.2** The route of the old A24 appears to be of some antiquity, appearing on Yeakell and Gardners 1778-1783 map of Sussex, and almost certainly originated earlier. There was no evidence found for the road itself, which was probably removed in 1994 when this section went out of use. The deposit found, comprising a chalky made ground, may be the result of backfilling the grubbed-out road material after the decommissioning of the road. This grubbing-out also appears to have removed any evidence for earlier road surfaces.
- 7.3** The deposits forming the low bank along the west side of the reduced area were the same as those elsewhere on site, and of no historical value, probably being formed during the grubbing-out of the old road and backfilling with the made ground.
- 7.4** The watching brief confirmed that no archaeological remains were impacted by the groundworks associated with this development.

8.0 Acknowledgements

- 8.1** We would like to thank the client, Giles De Sade, for commissioning the watching brief and the on site contractors for their co-operation. The project was managed by Chris Butler,

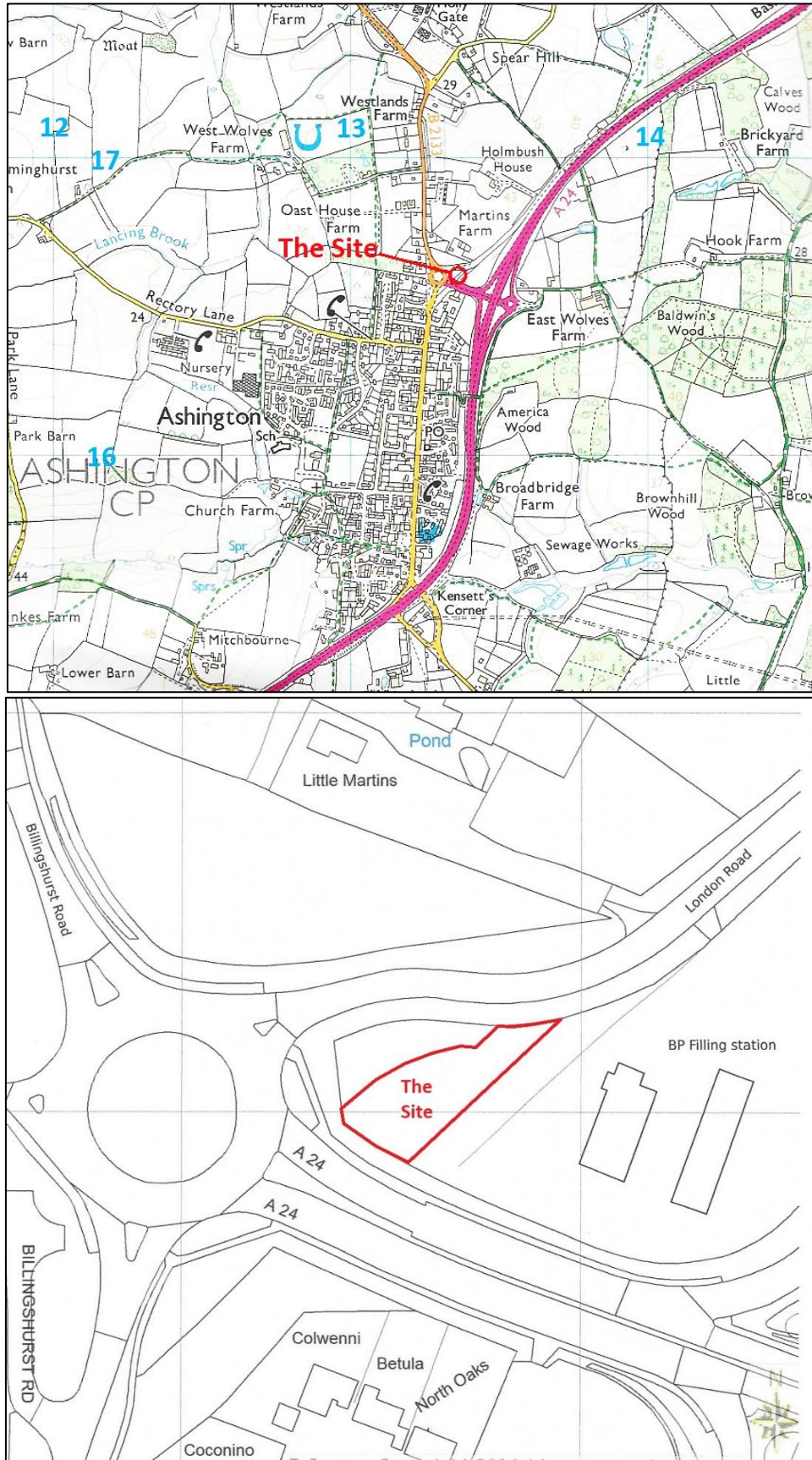


Fig. 1: Ashington: Site Location Map
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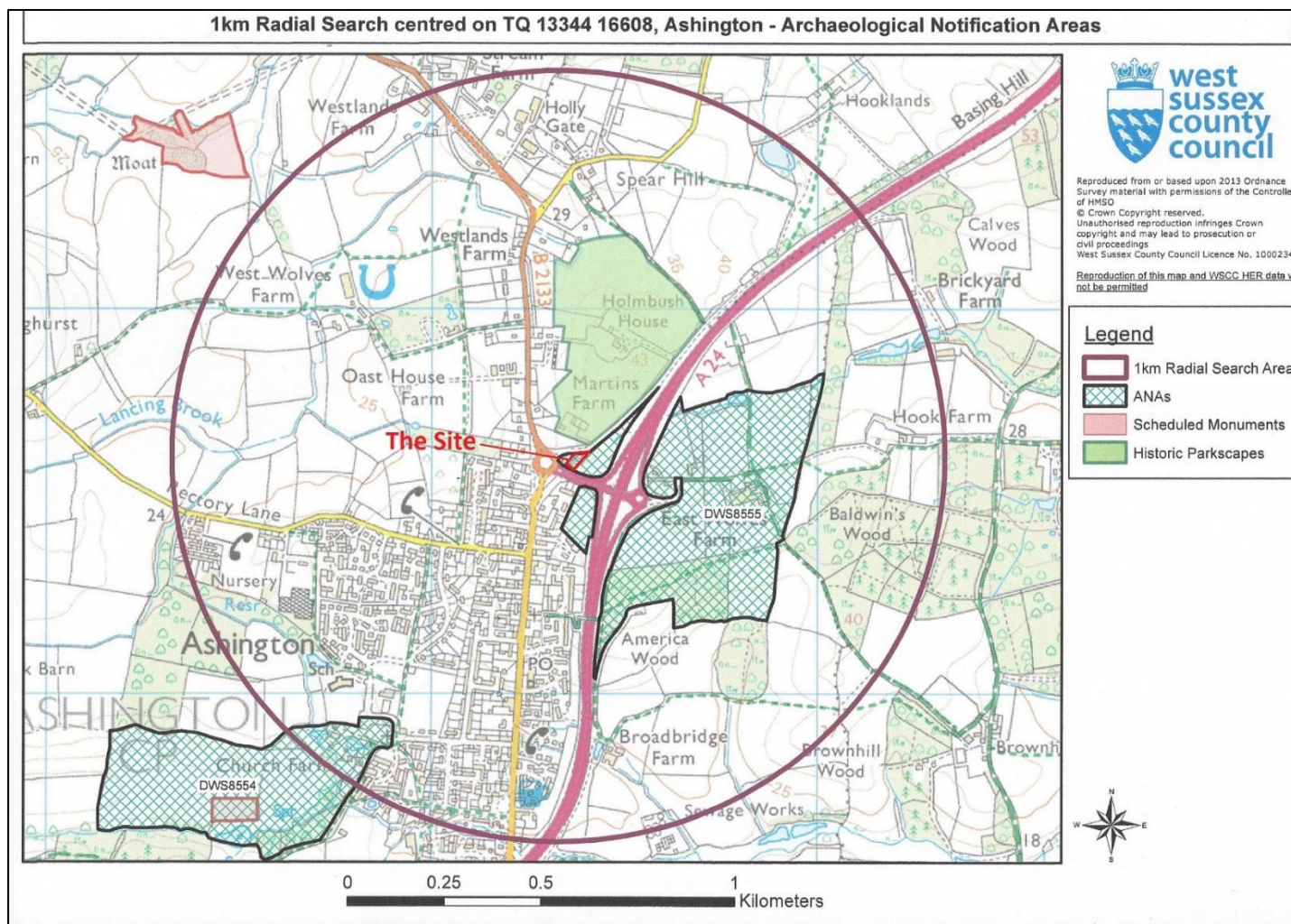


Fig. 2: Ashington: Archaeological Notification Areas & other designated Monuments

Adapted from map provided by WSCC

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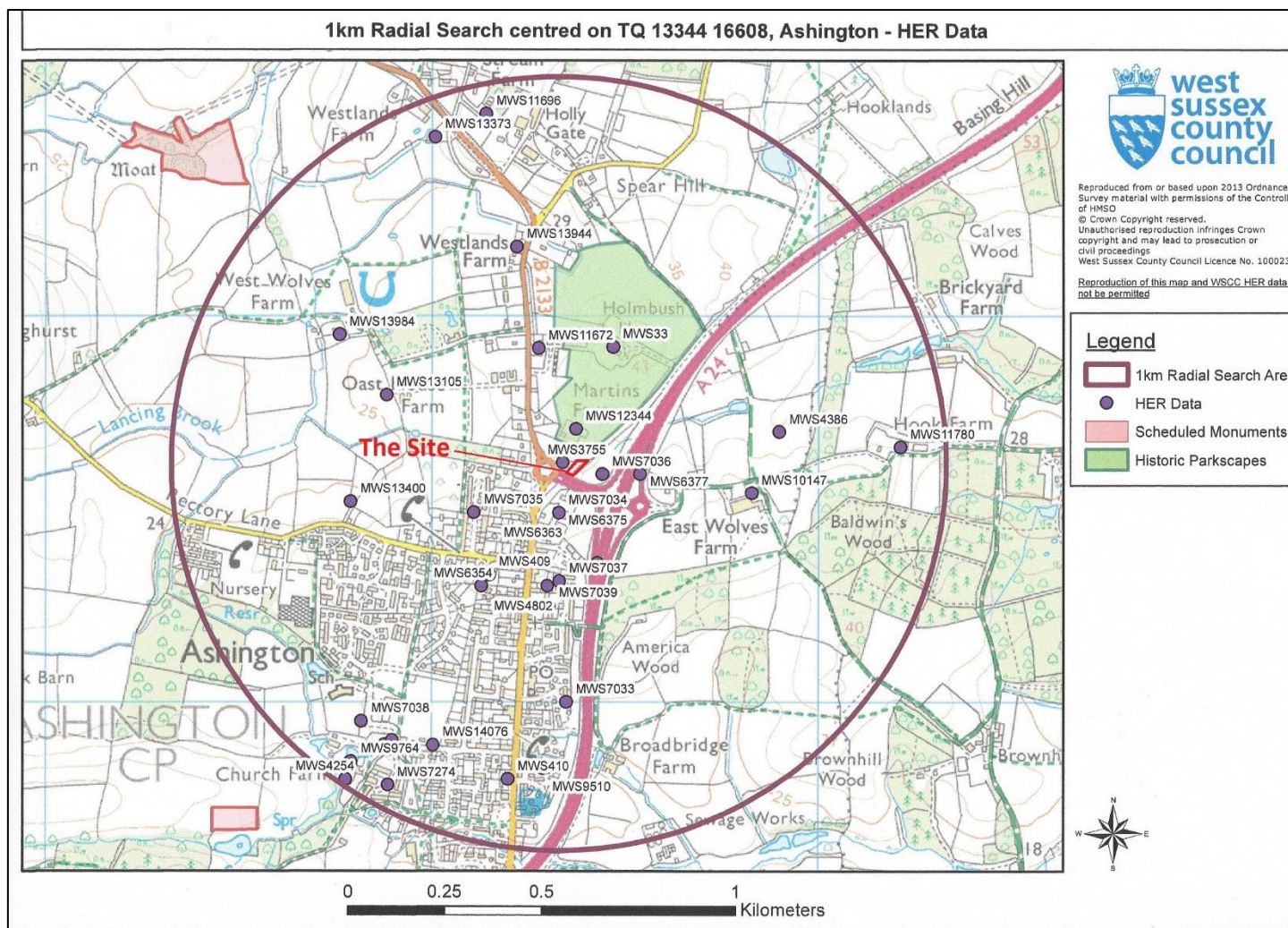


Fig. 3: Ashington: Monuments on the HER
Adapted from map provided by WSSCC
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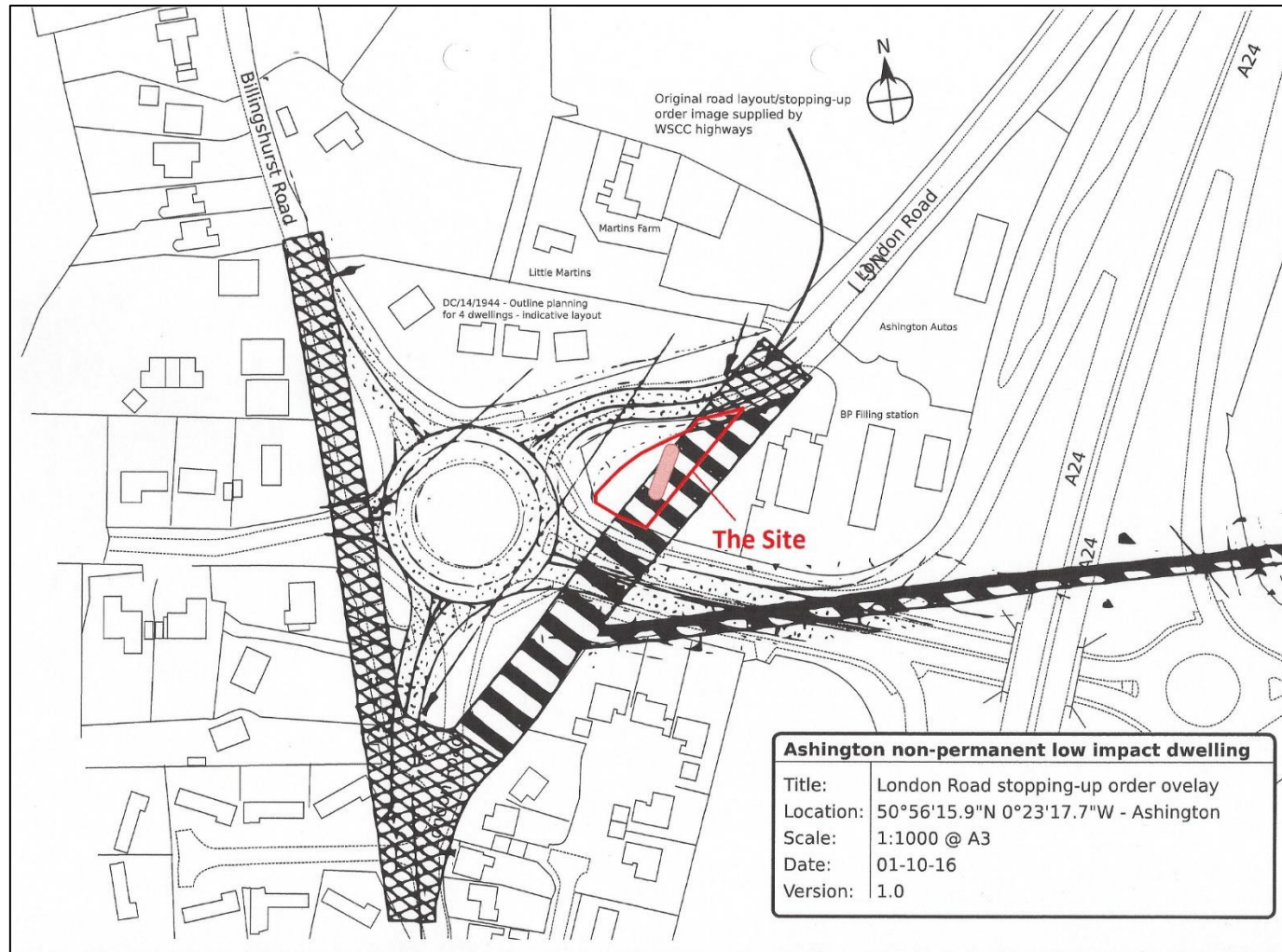


Fig. 4: Ashington: Site location and route of London Road
Adapted from map provided by Client
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Fig. 5: Yeakell and Gardner's 1778-1783 Map of Sussex

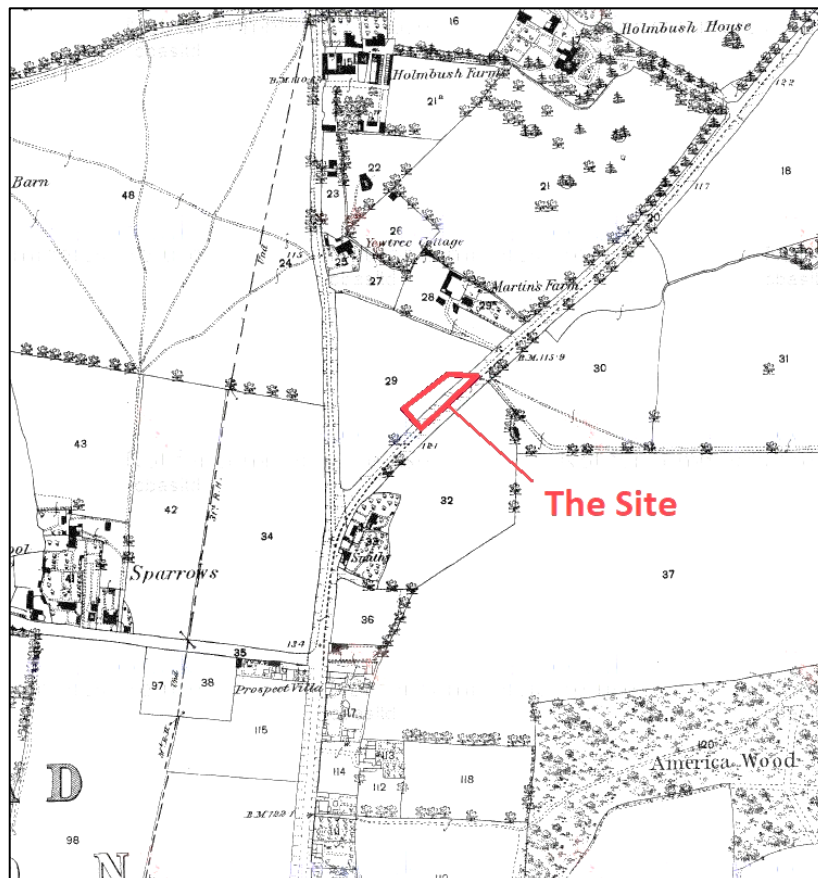


Fig. 6: 1st Edition OS Map (1875-9)

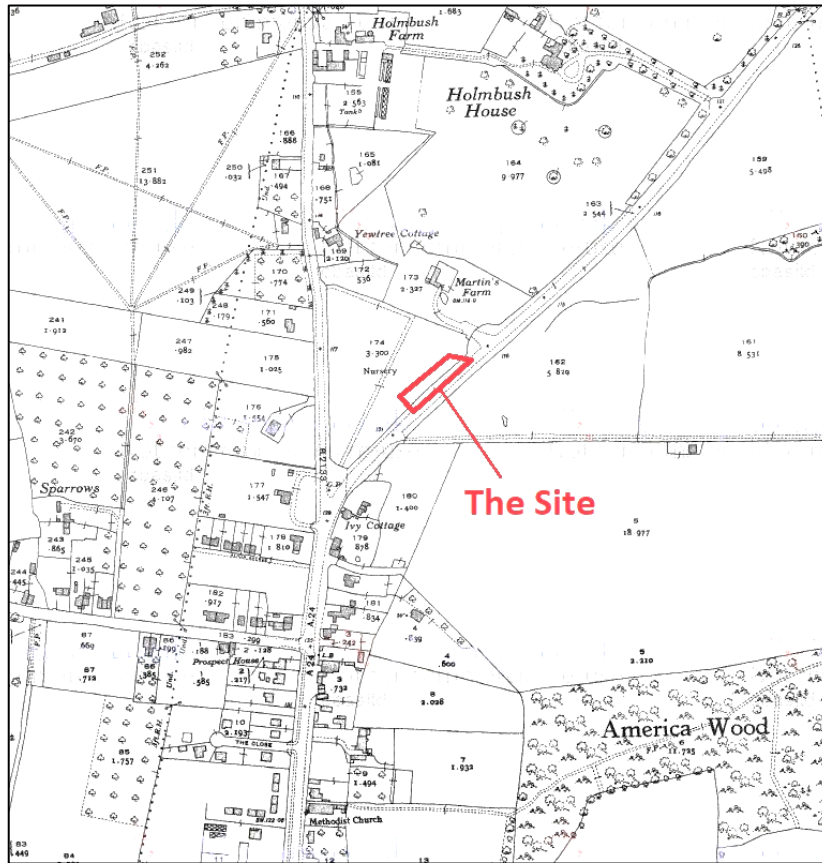


Fig. 7: 4th Edition OS Map (1937-9)

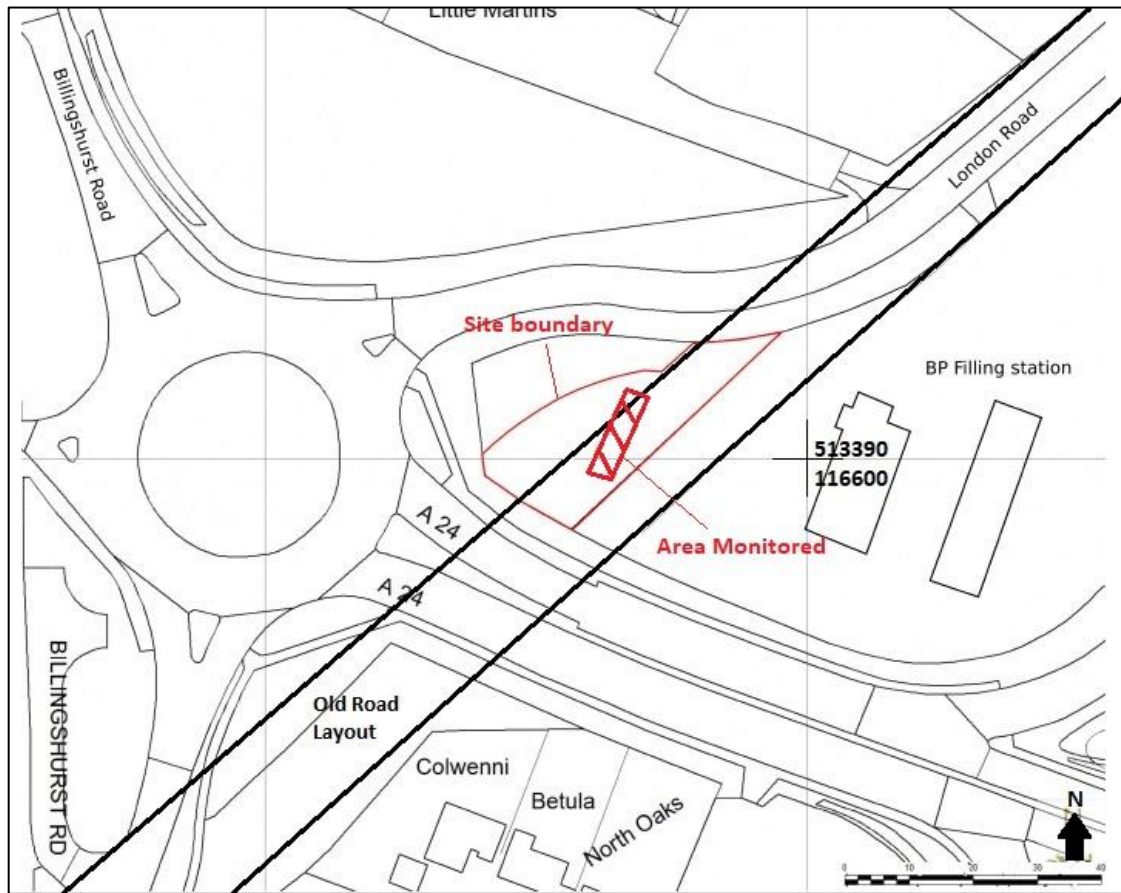


Fig. 8: Site plan showing area monitored

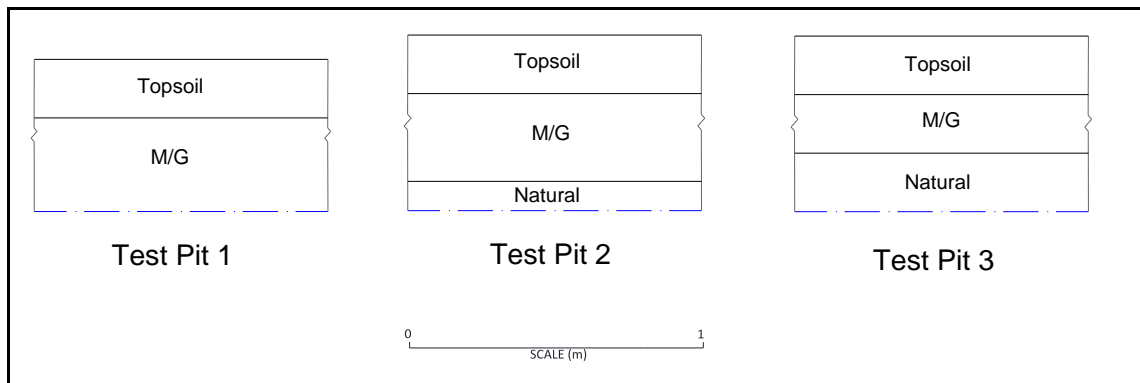


Fig. 9: Representative sections
(M/G = made ground)

Appendix 1: HER Summary Form

HER enquiry number	No: 86920-17-064					
Site code	BPA17					
Project code	CBAS0886					
Planning reference	DC/16/2235					
Site address	Land adj. BP Filling Station, Ashington.					
District/Borough	Horsham District					
NGR (12 figures)	TQ 1338 1659					
Geology	Weald Clay with bands of sand					
Fieldwork type	Eval	Excav	WB X	HBR*	Survey	Other
Date of fieldwork	10/1/18, 11/1/18, 8/2/18.					
Sponsor/client	Giles De Sade					
Project manager	Chris Butler					
Project supervisor	David Atkin					
Period summary	Palaeolithic	Mesolithic	Neolithic	Bronze Age	Iron Age	
	Roman	Anglo-Saxon	Medieval	Post-Medieval	Other X	
Project summary (100 word max)	<p><i>An archaeological watching brief was conducted on the excavation of boreholes and ground reduction for a non-permanent dwelling on a fallow/brownfield site adjacent to the BP Filling Station at Ashington, West Sussex. The remains of the old A24 London Road ran across the site. Ground reduction exposed a 20th century, chalky made ground deposit overlying the subsoil and natural. No features or finds of archaeological interest were present.</i></p>					
Museum/Accession No.	TBA					

Finds summary

Find type	Material	Period	Quantity
None			

Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd

Chris Butler has been an archaeologist since 1985, and formed the Mid Sussex Field Archaeological Team in 1987, since when it has carried out numerous fieldwork projects, and was runner up in the Pitt-Rivers Award at the British Archaeological Awards in 1996. Having previously worked as a Pensions Technical Manager and Administration Director in the financial services industry, Chris formed **Chris Butler Archaeological Services** at the beginning of 2002.

Chris is a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He was a part time lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Sussex, and taught A-Level Archaeology at Bexhill 6th Form College having qualified (Cert. Ed.) as a teacher in 2006.

Chris specialises in prehistoric flintwork analysis, but has directed excavations, landscape surveys and watching briefs, including the excavation of a Beaker Bowl Barrow, a Saxon cemetery and settlement, Roman pottery kilns, and a Mesolithic hunting camp. He has recently undertaken large landscape surveys of Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren and is Co-Director of the Barcombe Roman Villa excavation project.

His publications include *Prehistoric Flintwork*, *East Sussex Under Attack* and *West Sussex Under Attack*, all of which are published by Tempus Publishing Ltd.

Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd is available for Flintwork Analysis, Project Management, Military Archaeology, Desktop Assessments, Field Evaluations, Excavation work, Watching Briefs, Landscape and Woodland Surveys & Fieldwalking, Post Excavation Services and Report Writing.

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