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**Report on an  
Archaeological Geophysical Survey  
on land adjacent to  
Falmer Avenue,  
Saltdean,  
East Sussex**

Project Number CBAS0502

By  
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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1** Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Hyde New Build Ltd to carry out an Archaeological Geophysical Survey at land adjacent to Falmer Avenue, Saltdean, East Sussex (Fig. 4), in order to establish the likely presence or absence, and importance of any archaeological remains, in connection with a planning application for a proposed residential development.
- 1.2** The Site is a sub-rectangular plot located to the north-west of Falmer Avenue, on the northern fringes of Saltdean village; centred at TQ 3784 0310. The south and east sides of the site are bounded by housing, whilst the west and north sides are bounded by open downland. The Site rises gradually to the north from c65m to c75m OD.
- 1.3** The site is within an Archaeological Notification Area of prehistoric field systems. It is situated on the edge, but outside of the South Downs National Park and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 1.4** According to the British Geological Survey (Sheet 318/333), the geology of the Site comprises Upper and Middle Chalk, with the potential for some Head Deposit extending into the site from the southern end.
- 1.5** A written scheme of investigation covering the Archaeological Geophysical Survey of the site was prepared and approved<sup>1</sup>. The survey comprised a Magnetometry Survey on an established and surveyed Grid pattern positioned to expose the most likely areas of potential archaeology (Fig. 1).
- 1.6** The purpose of the Geophysical Survey was to determine whether there are any potential archaeological remains surviving on the site that may be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development. The survey will also help to determine the likelihood of archaeological remains being present on the site, with a view to establishing whether any further archaeological intervention is required.

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<sup>1</sup> Butler, C. 2014 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological geophysical Survey on land adjacent to Falmer Avenue, Saltdean, East Sussex*

## 2.0 Archaeological & Historical background (Fig. 5)

- 2.1 There is no evidence for Palaeolithic or Mesolithic activity at or near the site. However, the majority of the evidence for Mesolithic activity on the South Downs is found on outcrops of Clay-with-Flints, which tend to be found capping some of the highest points of the South Downs, such as that to the north of the site.
- 2.2 Little evidence for Neolithic activity has also been found close to the site although some of the flintwork found on watching briefs, and during recent fieldwalking by the Brighton & Hove Archaeological Society further west at Rottingdean is almost certainly of Neolithic date. The causewayed enclosure at Whitehawk is situated some 3km to the west of the site, its high position would suggest that this area would be within its site catchment both in terms of the manpower required for its construction and the use of the monument throughout its long existence<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3 The evidence suggests that the surrounding landscape was quite densely populated by small farming settlements, surrounded by fields during the Middle and Later Bronze Age. Examples of settlements have been found at Mile Oak<sup>3</sup>, Coldean Lane<sup>4</sup>, Varley Halls<sup>5</sup> and Patcham Fawcett<sup>6</sup>. In each case, evidence was found for round houses and other features set within an enclosure on a south facing slope. Although no settlements are known within the vicinity of the site, to the north and west of the site are extensive field systems which may have originated in the Bronze Age (MES243, MES245 & MES1529).
- 2.4 A number of Bronze Age burial mounds (Barrows) are also known from around the site, including a Late Bronze Age flint cairn and cremation burial found in 1923 (MES239), and a possible barrow to the south of the site (MES471). The earthworks and cropmarks of a possible Bronze Age field system on Highdole Hill & Iford Hill includes a number of Bronze Age barrows, and an undated cross-ridge dyke (MES1529).
- 2.5 One of the major features of the Iron Age Downland landscape is the hillfort. Many of these appear to have originated in the Later Bronze Age, but become important centres of control and redistribution in the Middle and Later Iron Age. Hollingbury hillfort, located 6km to the north-west of the site contained round houses and evidence for specialist craft activities. This site is almost certainly a central place and would have dominated the local area from its prominent hilltop location<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Oswald et al. 2001 *The Creation of Monuments*, Swindon, English Heritage.

<sup>3</sup> Russell, M. 2002, 'Excavations at Mile Oak Farm', in Rudling, D. (ed) *Downland Settlement and Land-Use*, London, Archetype Publications Ltd.

<sup>4</sup> Rudling, D. 2002 'Excavations adjacent to Coldean Lane', in Rudling, D. (ed) *Downland Settlement and Land-Use*, London, Archetype Publications Ltd.

<sup>5</sup> Greig, I. 1997 'Excavation of a Bronze Age settlement at Varley Halls, Coldean lane, Brighton, East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **135**, 7-58.

<sup>6</sup> Greatorex, C. 2002 'Excavations at Patcham Fawcett: A Summary', in Rudling, D. (ed) *Downland Settlement and Land-Use*, London, Archetype Publications Ltd.

<sup>7</sup> Hamilton, S. et al. 1997 'Prominent Enclosures in 1st millennium BC Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **135**, 93-112.

- 2.6** The field systems to the north and west of the site almost certainly remained in use throughout the Iron Age and into the Roman period. Local examples of Romano-British villas include Southwick, Brighton (Preston) and West Blatchington, although none are known from the east of Brighton. Although there have been finds to the west of Rottingdean which hint at Roman activity, no Roman remains have been found in the area of the site,
- 2.7** Evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement is difficult to find, with the discovery and excavation of larger settlements, such as Bishopstone<sup>8</sup>, being comparatively rare, as is the occasional discovery of isolated Saxon buildings, such as the Sunken Featured Building at Itford in the Ouse Valley. Saxon cemeteries and individual graves are often found, with two burials found just to the south of the site (MES6927) and a Saxon pot and some human remains found to the east of the site (MES246).
- 2.8** Rottingdean was located in Whalesborne Hundred at the time of the Domesday Book, and was held by Hugh from William de Warenne, having previously been held by Haminc from Earl Godwin. It was assessed at two hides, and was part of the estate of Frog Firle<sup>9</sup>. Rottingdean later became part of Younsmere Hundred.
- 2.9** The parish suffered from coastal erosion, with the inhabitants in 1340 stating that since 1292, 50 acres of arable land had been lost to the sea; with a further 240 acres of land lying uncultivated due to its poor quality<sup>10</sup>. In 1377 the village and church was burnt during a French raid<sup>11</sup>. There is no evidence for Medieval activity at the site, although Rottingdean has a medieval church (MES251) and it was also the site of a medieval market (MES22010)
- 2.10** The area of the site was probably open farm land throughout the Post Medieval period, with most of the land in Rottingdean held by copyhold, and comprised strips of land called laines in several large fields<sup>12</sup>. The site is shown as open downland on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map (1874), with just a few old chalk pits in the vicinity (Fig. 3), and this situation is unchanged until the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition OS map of 1930 which shows a number of road to the south and east of the site, although no houses have yet been built.
- 2.11** In 1923, The Neville Construction Company built it's first homes in Rottingdean Heights and pegged out many miles of avenues and roads in Saltdean - The Downland Post reported that over 20 miles of avenues had been laid out. Neville stated that the contours of the land had made it necessary to lay out Saltdean as it was<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Bell, M. 1977 'Excavations at Bishopstone', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **115**.

<sup>9</sup> Salzman, L. F. (Ed) 1973 *Victoria County History of Sussex VII*, London, Dawsons.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> D'Harcourt, L. 2001 *Rottingdean: The Village*, DD Publishing.

<sup>12</sup> Heater, D. 1993 *The Remarkable History of Rottingdean*, Brighton, Dyke Publications.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.saltdean.info/begsaltdean.htm>

### 3.0 Methodology

3.1 The site is bounded by houses along Falmer Avenue to the east and south, a footpath to the west and open Downland to the north; it is rectangular in shape, the total surveyed area being 11,825m<sup>2</sup>. The site is clear of overgrowth and has wire fencing along all of its boundaries. A rectangular area at the north-east of the site contains stables/garage outbuildings and was precluded from the Survey, to the south of this is a Drain Culvert, the drain which this serves runs south along this side of the field to connect to the local foul water drain.<sup>14</sup> A manhole was noted further north of the Culvert and so some continuation of the drain can be presumed.

3.2 The site was divided into 11 grid squares, numbered A1 – A11, of which A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A10 & A11 were partial grid squares. Grid squares A1, A2 & A3 were aligned along the west boundary of the site, which was used as the datum for the survey being approximately 18° west of magnetic north; the survey station was sited in the south-west corner at a nominal E.500, N.500, Z.50.00 (TQ 37780 03031 by Hand GPS) (Fig. 1). Three resection points were recorded to relocate features within the grid and onto the Ordnance Survey. Additionally the all the site boundary lines were surveyed.

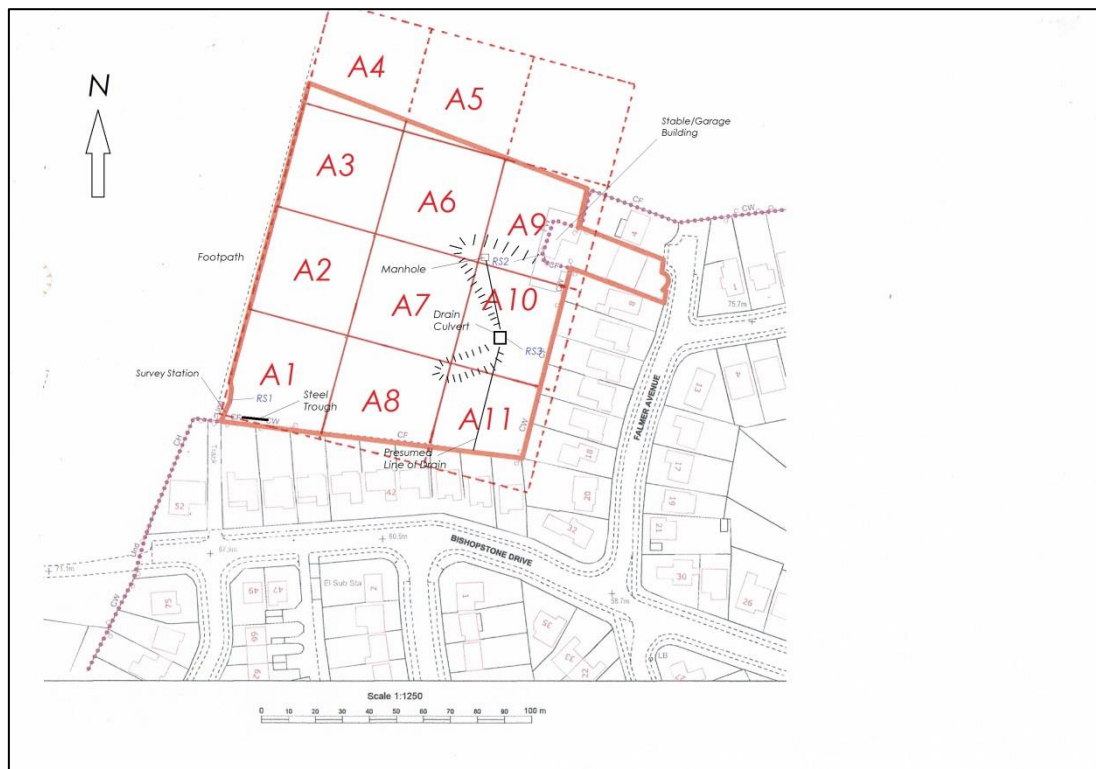


Fig. 1. Land Adjacent to Falmer Avenue, Saltdean. Geophysics Grid Layout.

<sup>14</sup> Site owner, *pers. comm.*

- 3.3** Two steeply raised areas extending in curves from the Drain Culvert, to the south-west and north-west, were noted; these appeared to be modern and contemporary with the Drain Culvert.
- 3.4** Conditions on the day were sunny and dry; the ground was a firm to hard, friable silty/clay, with a cover of grass mown around the edges of the site.
- 3.5** The survey was carried out using a Bartington Grad601-2 fluxgate gradiometer within 40m x 40m grids. The grids were set out using a Topcon GTS 211D on an arbitrary grid. Field boundaries were partly surveyed to enable the overlay of the survey results onto an OS base map / aerial mapping. The sample rate was four readings per metre along lines spaced 1m apart. The grids were walked on E-W orientation.
- 3.6** The data was processed using Snuffler geophysics software using zero mean line destripe filters, followed by interpolation from 1m x 0.25m samples to 0.5m x 0.25m. The display threshold is +/- 2 nT.

#### 4.0 Survey Results (Figs. 2 & 3)

4.1 The results for the survey area are shown in Fig. 2 and are interpreted in a single Interpretation Diagram in Fig. 3. Features, revealed by the survey, are colour coded in Fig. 3; grey denoting areas where no results were obtained, red denoting modern features.

4.2 The survey results revealed areas of modern disturbance; the raised banks extending from the Drain Culvert being the most prominent of these features, the results of these areas indicate the presence of some modern metallic debris.

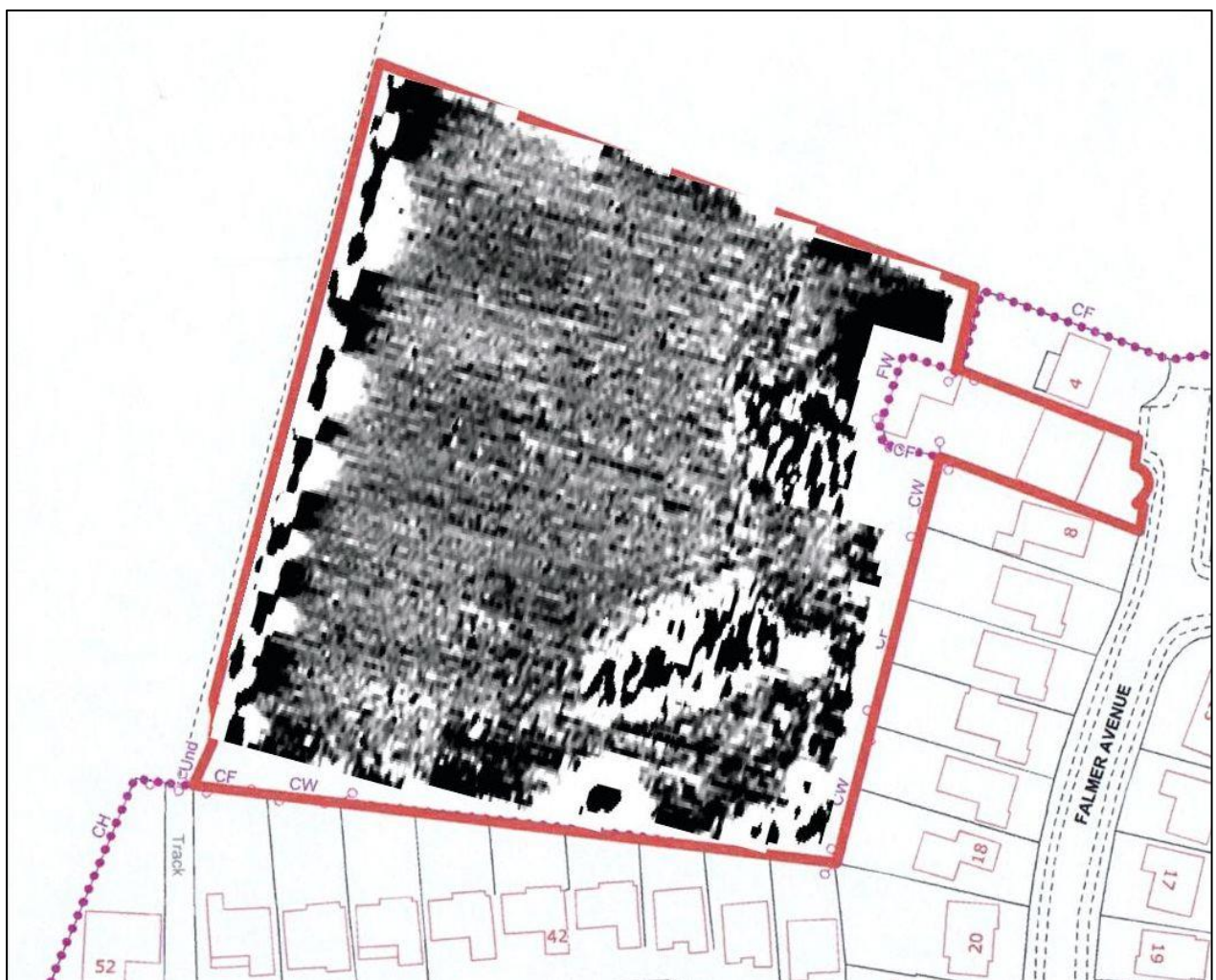


Fig. 2. Land Adjacent to Falmer Avenue, Saltdean - Survey results.

4.3 The course of the drain run was not shown, but the area around the Culvert revealed no indications of any significant features, the Culvert itself could not be surveyed hence appears as a blank on the results, see Fig. 2. There are localised areas of higher results around the boundaries of the site due to the wire fencing which surrounds the site.





Fig.3. Land Adjacent to Falmer Avenue, Saltdean - Survey results interpretation diagram.

- 4.4** There are localised areas of higher results around the boundaries of the site due to the wire fencing which surrounds the site. Modern disturbance is indicated along the southern boundary and the eastern boundary immediately adjacent to the houses sited along these boundaries, possibly from the original construction of these properties.
- 4.5** During a conversation with the property owner, It was noted that during the construction of the properties bordering the site to the south the entire area was stripped away and then landscaped afterwards and that since then the site has been used for grazing horses, hence the Stable/Garage Block on the East side.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Site owner, *pers. comm.*



## **5.0 Conclusions & Recommendations**

- 5.1** The survey did not reveal any archaeologically significant results, but only areas of modern disturbance, indicating that the site may have been significantly disturbed.
- 5.2** The steeply raised areas immediately adjacent to the Drain Culvert appear contemporary with the Culvert and the results appear to support this. The comments of the owner indicate that the site has largely been re-landscaped in modern times.
- 5.3** Although the survey did not produce any significant results on which further investigations could be targeted, it should be considered that as the site is on chalk with no tertiary geology, magnetometry does not always detect all archaeological features; there remains the possibility of archaeology existing on the site which has not been highlighted.
- 5.4** It is therefore recommended that an Evaluation Excavation should be considered before any development.

## **6.0 Acknowledgements.**

- 6.1** We would like to thank Hyde New Build Ltd for appointing us to undertake this survey, and would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of David Staveley who processed and provided the interpretation of the survey results.

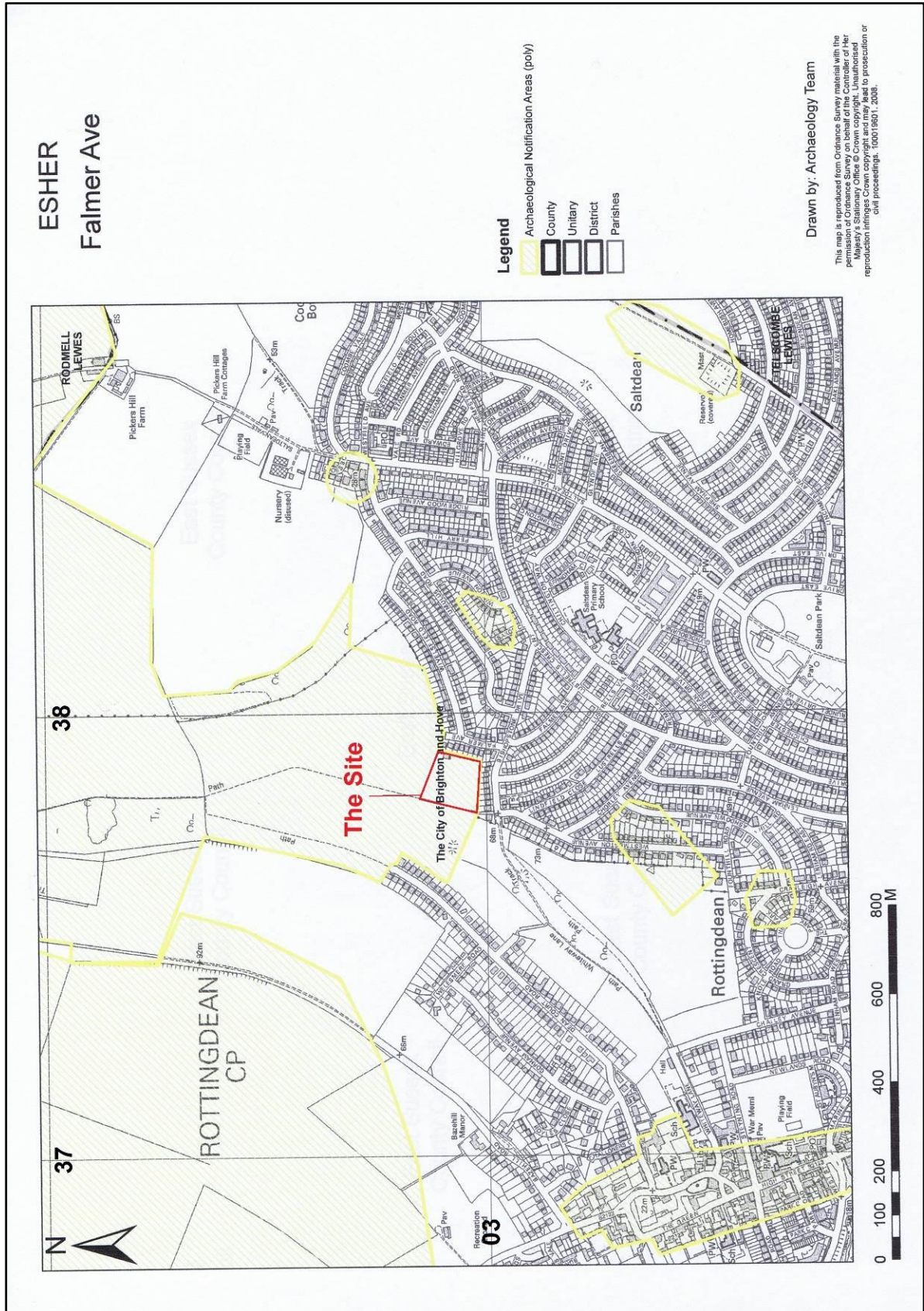


Fig. 4: Land Adjacent to Falmer Avenue: Location Map and Archaeological Notification Areas (adapted from map provided by ESCC)  
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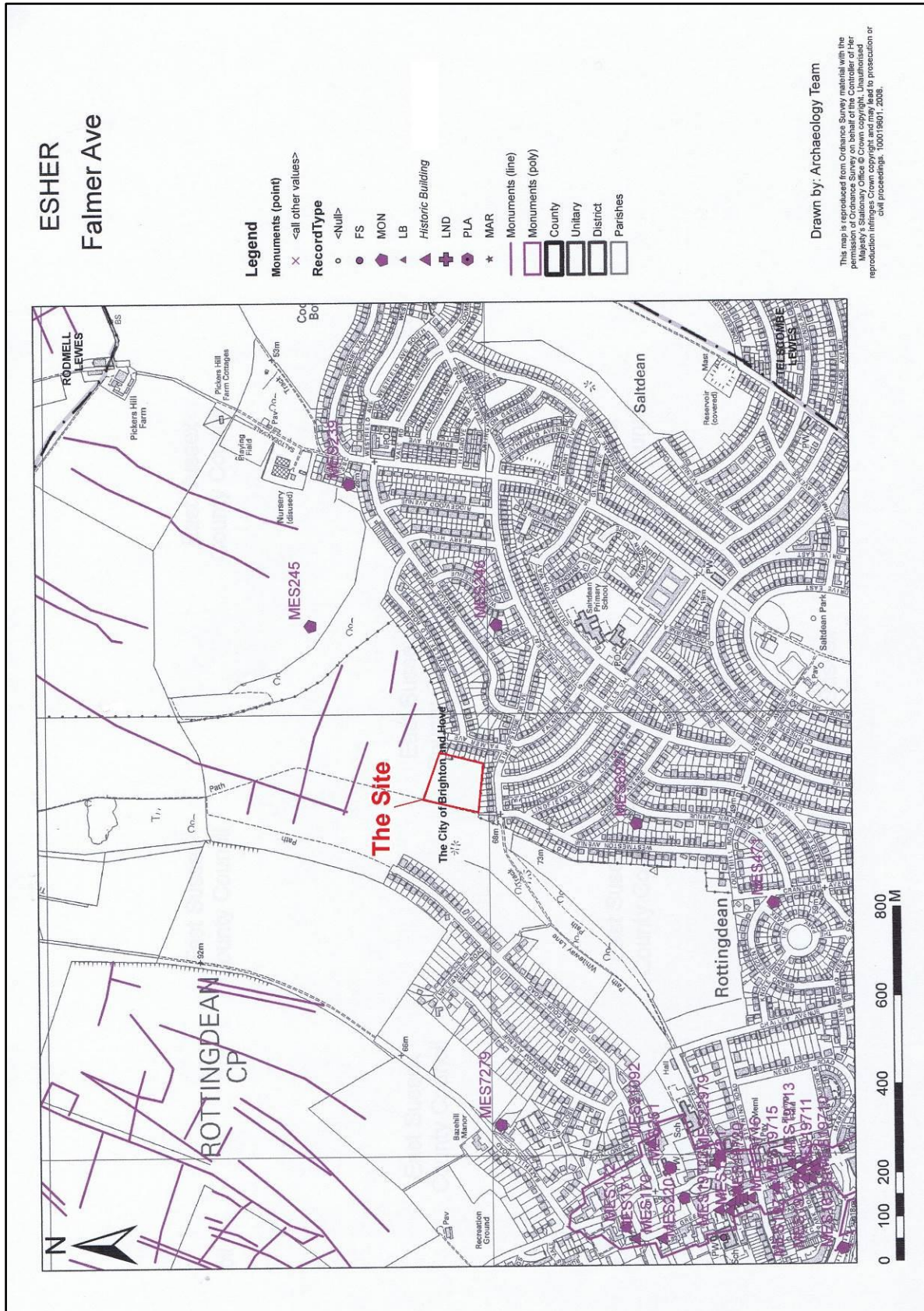


Fig. 5: Land Adjacent to Falmer Avenue: HER Map  
(adapted from map provided by ESCC)  
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