

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Former Gas Holder Site,
Marden Road, Staplehurst, Kent**

NGR 578111 143790

Site Code MRS07

**Project No. 2488
ASE Report Number 2007269**

Planning Application No. MA/05/0116

OASIS ID: archaeol6-39888

**by
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Abstract

Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology were commissioned by Rydon Construction, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the demolition of numbers. 1 and 2 Gas Cottages and the gasworks buildings and the subsequent groundworks associated with the development of 14 dwellings in five blocks at Marden Road, Staplehurst, Kent. The site centre is located at NGR 578111 143790. It was found during the project that the site had received some degree of disturbance of fairly modern origin. This included services and foundations relating to Gas Cottages and the gasworks. Further archaeological remains related to the air raid shelter, the gasworks and the cottages were not identified.

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Archaeological Background

3.0 Methodology

4.0 Results

5.0 Discussion and Conclusions

6.0 References

SMR Summary Sheet
Oasis Record Sheet

Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Figure 2: Site Plan

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology were commissioned by Rydon Construction, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Marden Road, Staplehurst, Kent., Thw watching brief took place during the demolition of numbers. 1 and 2 Gas Cottages, the gasworks buildings and the subsequent groundworks associated with the development of 14 dwellings in five blocks (Figs.1 and 2).

1.2 The site is located on the north side of Marden Road, to the west of the centre of Staplehurst and south of Hen and Duckhurst Farm and is centered at NGR 578111 143790. The eastern area to be developed is situated on a former gas works site, the northwest formerly occupied by a cottage. According to the British Geological Survey (Sheet 228) the underlying geology at the site is Weald Clay.

1.3 The Heritage Conservation Group at Kent County Council advised that the following condition, for a programme of archaeological work, should be applied to any consent on planning application:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.

1.4 The Heritage Conservation Group decided that an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the demolition of the former buildings and construction of the new dwellings would constitute an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation. A Written Scheme of Investigation for the work was produce by the Heritage Conservation Group (KCC 2007)

1.5 The specific aim of the project was to contribute to the knowledge of Staplehurst through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed during groundworks.

1.6 The on-site archaeological work was carried out between the 24th October 2007 and 3rd January 2008 variously by Dan Swift (Senior Archaeologist), Andrew Margetts, Alice Thorn, David Atkin, and Deon Whittaker (Archaeologists). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager)

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The archaeological potential and background of the site was outlined in the WSI, produced by KCC. This information is summarized here with due acknowledgement.
- 2.2** The Roman road from Maidstone to Hastings is around 450m to the east of the site a contemporary coin find is recorded 500m east south east.
- 2.3** The C19th gasworks is marked on 1896 – 99 OS maps and is of historical and industrial interest.
- 2.4** An unusual C20th air raid shelter within the garden of 2 Gas Cottage has been previously recorded fully as part of a separate planning condition. This structure is unaffected by the current development but a potential for associated underground features exists in the western half of the site in the vicinity of Plot 3 (Fig. 2).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** The eastern half of the site contained contaminated ground and was subject to remediation work to a depth of 4.5m, including the demolition and removal of the gas holders. No archaeological monitoring took place during these works.
- 3.2** The following aspects of the groundworks were subject to archaeological monitoring and are shown on Fig. 2
 - 3.2.1 Initial topsoil strip in western part of the site.
 - 3.2.2 Footing trenches in Plots 2, 3 and 4 were excavated with a machine equipped with a toothless bucket to a width of 1.1m and depth of approximately 1.2m. Footing trenches were not monitored in Plot 1 because the area was previously stripped to the surface of the natural clay.
 - 3.2.3 Ground reduction in Plots 1, 3 and 4 was monitored. All topsoil stripping was carried out using a machine equipped with a toothless bucket. Plot 4 (the northwest part of the site) was due to contain gardens and required a 250mm topsoil strip and also incorporating the removal of a 100mm concrete raft for the former cottage. This was broken using a pecker and mucked away together with 100mm of hardcore, revealing natural clay deposits.
 - 3.2.4 The access way was topsoil stripped by a machine equipped with a toothless bucket. This ground reduction was monitored.
 - 3.2.5 The grubbing out of the foundations of the former Gas Cottages was monitored.
- 3.3** All exposed deposits were inspected and recorded to accepted archaeological (IFA) standards.
- 3.4** Spoil heaps were scanned both visually and with a metal detector to recover any unstratified artefacts
- 3.5** The KCC Archaeological Officers were informed of progress on the site.
- 3.6** A photographic record of the work was kept as appropriate and will form part of the site archive.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Initial Topsoil Strip

4.1.1 The initial topsoil strip in the western part of the site was not deep enough to consistently expose the surface of the underlying natural substrate. Intermittent patches of clay were exposed but no archaeological remains were identified.

4.1 Plot 1

4.1.1 List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Depth	Height m OD
001	Deposit	Topsoil	0.20-0.30m	-
003	Deposit	Natural clay	N/A	-

4.1.2 Plot 1 was located at the southwest corner of site and subject to a topsoil strip which revealed the following. 0.20-0.30m of mixed dark grey brown silty clay topsoil, [001], overlying the natural of light orange brown / greenish grey silty clay. The natural clay was exposed across the area of ground reduction. Brick and tile fragments were pressed into the surface of the clay.

No archaeological features were identified within Plot 1.

4.2 Plot 2

4.2.1 List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Depth	Height m OD
002	Layer	Concrete and Hardcore	0.50m	27.86 at surface
003	Deposit	Natural clay	0.70m exposed	-

4.2.2 Within Plot 2, footing trenches were dug to a depth of 1.2m below the ground level of 27.86 m AOD. These revealed 0.50m thick crushed concrete and brick, [002], (laid down by the contractor for a working platform) above clean probably truncated natural of light orange brown / greenish grey silty clay, [003].

No archaeological features were identified within Plot 2

4.3 Plot 3

4.3.1 List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Depth	Height m OD
004	Layer	Hardcore	0.50m	-
003	Deposit	Natural clay	0.70m exposed	26.5m at base

4.3.2 Plot 3 was located approximately 12m west of the air raid shelter. Ground reduction revealed hardcore traces, probably from the former Gas Cottages and a foundation raft in the northernmost section. Footing trenches were excavated to a depth of 26.5 m AOD, exposing natural of light orange brown / greenish grey silty clay, [003].

No archaeological features were identified within Plot 3

4.4 Plot 4

4.4.1 List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Depth	Height m OD
005	Layer	Concrete raft	0.10m	-
006	Layer	Hardcore	0.10m exposed	-
003	Deposit	Natural Clay	Up to 0.70m exposed	26.5m at base

4.4.2 Plot 4 was located at the north of the of site, formerly occupied by a cottage. Ground reduction revealed 0.10m of concrete raft, [005], below which lay 0.10m of hardcore, [006]. Footing trenches were excavated to a depth of 26.5 m AOD, exposing natural of light orange brown / greenish grey silty clay, [003]. The grubbing out of the former cottage's foundations was also monitored and revealed made ground overlying natural clay.

No archaeological features were identified within Plot 4.

4.5 The Access Way

4.5.1 List of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Description	Max. Depth	Height m OD
001	Deposit	Topsoil	0.20-0.30m	-
003	Deposit	Natural clay	N/A	-

4.5.2 The Access Way was topsoil stripped revealing natural of light orange brown / greenish grey silty clay, [003]. Brick and tile fragments were pressed into the surface of the natural clay, which was also cut by a cast iron pipe.

No archaeological features were identified within the Access Way Strip.

4.6 Grubbing Out of Former Foundations

4.6.1 The grubbing out of the foundations of the former Gas Cottages were monitored. The natural clay was exposed to a depth of c.1.00m. No archaeological features were identified.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The underlying geology encountered during the course of the evaluation comprised Weald Clay.
- 5.2** It was found during the project that the site had received a degree of disturbance of 19th century-modern origin. This included services and foundations relating to the Gas Cottages and the gasworks.
- 5.3** Natural clay was revealed during the various topsoil strips and footing trench excavations across the site. However, there was no evidence of any intact subsoils and it is probable that these were removed during the initial development of the site as a gasworks. In the immediate vicinity of the gasworks, the ground level had been reduced by several metres.
- 5.4** No ancient features or deposits were identified during the watching brief and it is highly likely that the 19th century development would have removed all but the most substantial remains. Similarly, no unstratified artifacts were recovered.
- 5.5** Further remains related to the air raid shelter, the gasworks and the cottages were not observed,

6.0 REFERENCES

Kent County Council: Heritage Conservation Group. 2007. *Specification for a Targeted Archaeological Watching Brief at the Former Gas Holder Site, Marden Road in Staplehurst.*

SMR Summary Sheet

Site Code	MRS07					
Identification Name and Address	Gas Cottages , Marden Road, Staplehurst Kent					
County, District &/or Borough	Staplehurst					
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference	NGR 578111 143790					
Archaeology South-East Proj. No.	2488					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 24-10-07 03-01-08	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Rydon					
Project Manager	Neil Griffin					
Project Supervisor	Deon Whittaker					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		
<p>Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology were commissioned by Rydon Construction, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the demolition of nos. 1 and 2 Gas Cottages and the gas works buildings, and the subsequent groundworks associated with the development of 14 dwellings in five blocks. The site centre is at NGR 578111 143790. It was found during the project that the site had received some degree of disturbance of fairly modern origin. This included services and foundations relating to Gas Cottages and the gasworks. Further archaeological remains related to the air raid shelter, the gasworks and the cottages were not observed, save for the deposit of burnt clay exposed during the excavation of the access way.</p>						

OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details

Project name	Former Gas Works Marden Rd Staplehurst
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology were commissioned by Rydon Construction, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the demolition of nos. 1 and 2 Gas Cottages and the gas works buildings, and the subsequent groundworks associated with the development of 14 dwellings in five blocks. The site centre is at NGR 578111 143790. It was found during the project that the site had received some degree of disturbance of fairly modern origin. This included services and foundations relating to Gas Cottages and the gasworks. Further archaeological remains related to the air raid shelter, the gasworks and the cottages were not observed, save for the deposit of burnt clay exposed during the excavation of the access way.
Project dates	Start: 24-10-2007 End: 03-01-2008
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT TONBRIDGE AND MALLING TONBRIDGE Former Gas Works Marden Road Kent
Postcode	TNH12 0

Study area	900.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 781 437 51.1642084343 0.547564636453 51 09 51 N 000 32 51 E Point
Height OD	Min: 26.50m Max: 29.60m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Dan Swift
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Rydon Construction

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Local Museum
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'

Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Local Museum
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Former Gas Holder Site, Marden Road, Staplehurst, Kent
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46

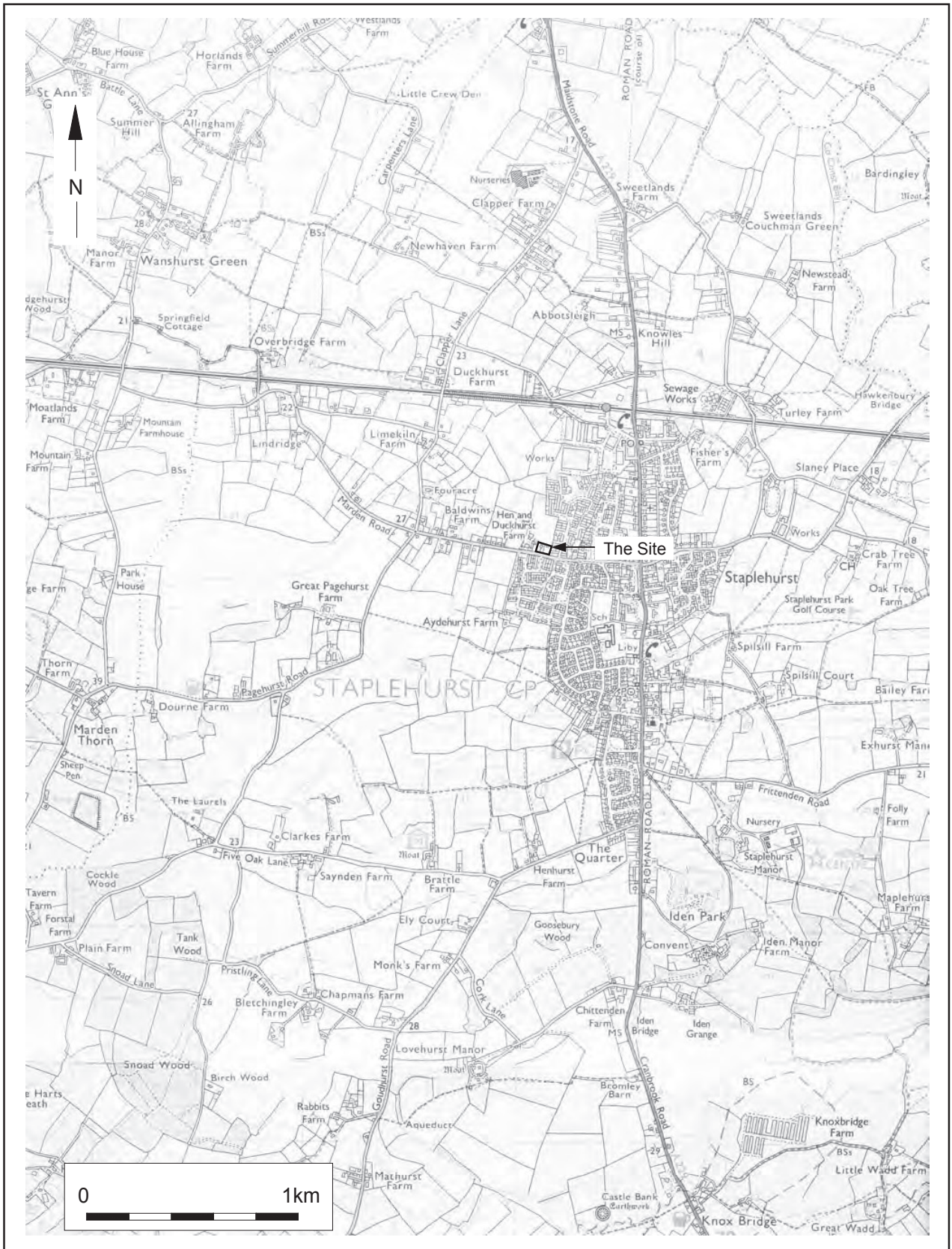
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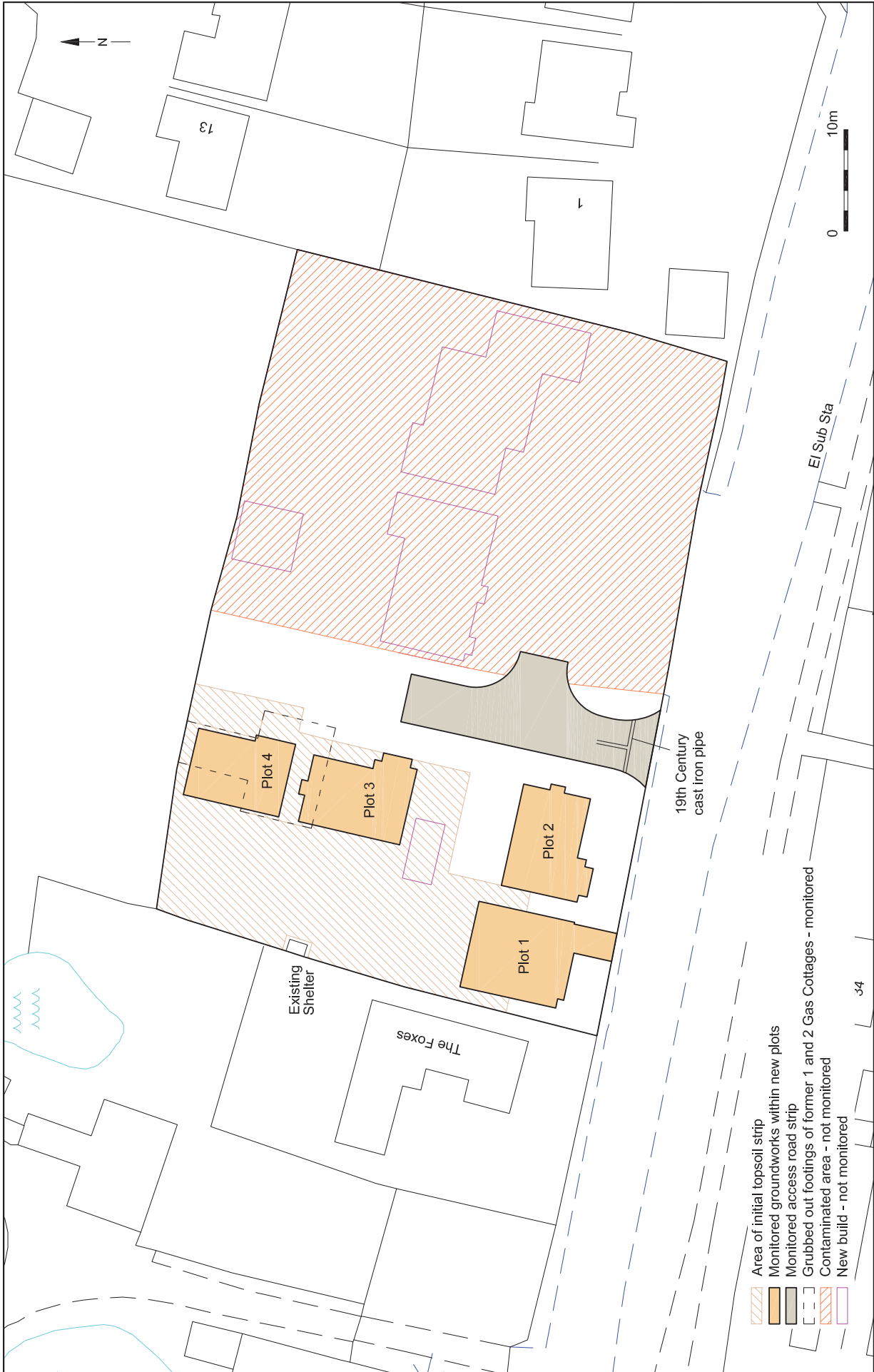
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© Archaeology South-East		Former Gasworks, Marden Road, Staplehurst		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 2488	July 2008	Site Location Plan		
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© Archaeology South-East		Former Gasworks, Marden Road, Staplehurst	
Project Ref: 2488	July 2008	Site Plan showing monitored areas	
Report Ref: 2007269	Drawn by: SM		

Fig. 2