

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on land at  
St. Paul's Street and King Street,  
Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent**

**Planning Ref: SW/98/016 and SW/04 1051**

**NGR590409 164429  
TQ 90409 64429**



**ASE Project No. 3671  
Site Code: MRC 09  
ASE Report No. 2010018  
OASIS id: archaeol6-73168**

**Kathryn Grant MSc AIFA**

**March 2010**

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## **Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Jennings Design Ltd to maintain an archaeological watching brief during the development of a BP Service Station on land at St Pauls Street and King Street in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent (NGR 590409 164429). The watching brief took place from 10<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009 over the course of five site visits.*

*The excavations revealed made ground deposits, which were probably associated with the demolition of the Victorian gasworks previously located on the site. Successive truncation and levelling activity would have removed or displaced any archaeological remains which may have once been present.*

*Natural brickearth geology was encountered at approximately 47.85m AOD. This had been truncated and completely removed in some parts of the site where made ground was revealed directly over the chalk bedrock at 46.75m AOD.*

*No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief.*

## **CONTENTS**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 Archaeological Background**

### **3.0 Archaeological Methodology**

### **4.0 Results**

### **5.0 Discussion and Conclusions**

## **References**

## **Acknowledgements**

## **SMR Summary Form OASIS Form**

## **FIGURES**

Figure 1: Site location  
Figure 2: Monitored groundworks  
Figures 3-6: Photographs

## **TABLES**

Table 1: Quantification of the Site Archive  
Table 3: List of Recorded Contexts

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University College London (CAAUCL), was commissioned by the client, Jennings Design Ltd, to maintain an archaeological watching brief during development of a BP Service Station on land at St Pauls Street and King Street in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent (NGR 590409 164429/ Figure 1), hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

1.1.2 The archaeological watching brief was carried out during intrusive groundworks and the removal of contaminated ground (Figs 2-6). These works were associated with the development of a new petrol station including the construction of tanks and ancillary works.

1.1.3 Prior to the watching brief it was expected that the groundworks will include:

- site clearance and demolition
- removal of concrete hardstanding
- excavation of foundation trenches
- excavation of fuel tanks
- excavation of service and drainage trenches
- landscaping

### **1.2 Site Location, Geology and Topography (Fig. 1)**

1.2.1 The site is located on land northeast of St. Paul's Street (B2006) and northwest of King Street and encompasses an area of approximately 2100m<sup>2</sup>. It lies on fairly flat ground which has been derelict for some, bounded to the west by residential buildings and to the north by 'Milton Precast' concrete works. The south is bounded by St. Paul's Street and the west by King Street and Mill way.

1.2.2 According to the maps of the British Geological Survey (BGS 1996), the underlying geology is Upper Chalk overlain by Alluvium and Head Brickearth.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 Swale Borough Council's planning references for the proposed redevelopment of the site are SW/98/016 and detailed application SW/04 1051. A condition on the planning consent required the implementation of programme of archaeological work. This condition stated that::

"No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

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

1.3.2 Simon Mason, Assistant County Archaeologist, Kent County Council (KCC),

in his capacity as advisor to Local Planning Authorities on archaeological recommended that watching brief, maintained during intrusive elements of the ground works would be a suitable programme of work.

- 1.3.3 A *Specification* document outlining the strategy for the watching brief monitoring was prepared by the Heritage Conservation Group (HCG) of KCC (2008). All fieldwork undertaken during the watching brief works was carried out in accordance with the *Specification*.

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.4.1 The specific aim of the watching brief was to 'contribute to knowledge of Sittingbourne through the recording of any archaeological remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks' (HCG 2008).
- 1.4.2 The objective of the archaeological watching brief was to ensure that any archaeological features, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts exposed and affected as a result of the groundworks were recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards. Particular attention was to be made to the character, height below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.

#### **1.5 Scope of this Report**

- 1.5.1 This report details the findings of the watching brief which was undertaken by Kathryn Grant, Alice Thorne and Dylan Hopkinson (Archaeologists) over the course of five site visits undertaken between 10<sup>th</sup> June and the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009. The project was managed by Neil Griffin (fieldwork) and Jim Stevenson (post-excavation).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Archaeological and historical summary**

- 2.2.1 There is little pre-medieval evidence of known activity in the area although there is a possible Roman presence in the vicinity indicated by the quantity of Roman finds which probably relate to activity from the nearby London to Canterbury road known as Watling Street.
- 2.2.2 There is little evidence of Sittingbourne as a town until after the death of Thomas Becket in 1170 when the High Street became part of the pilgrimage route to his shrine. The town was granted a market in 1573 but this seems to have been short lived after complaints from nearby Milton whose market must have suffered from the competition (KCC 2003).
- 2.2.3 The site lies close to the core of the medieval settlement of Milton Regis, which is a suburb of Sittingbourne and a pre-Norman town, probably based on a Saxon royal estate (HCG 2008). The head of Milton Creek lies around 60m to the south east and the site lies on the edge of the area though to have constituted the medieval harbour that served the town. Boatyards are known on the creek-side from the post-medieval period. Sittingbourne remained a quiet town until the advent of the railway in the mid nineteenth century, which brought industry to the area. Many sources show that Sittingbourne was renowned for its brick-making industry in the past. In the nineteenth century the site was part of a gasworks and seems to have escaped the brickearth extraction that seems to have taken place further east.
- 2.2.4 The Specification noted that the possible alluvial deposits on the site may have preserved deposits of environmental and geoarchaeological interest.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

- 3.1.1 The complete adopted methodology is given in the *Specification* (KCC 2008). This section is a brief précis of the methodology used on site, which was in accordance with the *Specification* unless otherwise stated.
- 3.1.2 The ground works which were monitored are shown on Figure 2. Machine excavation was carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted where practicable with a flat-bladed bucket to minimise damage to deposits.
- 3.1.3 The excavations, undertaken by engineering contractors, were monitored at all times by an archaeologist until/unless it became clear that no archaeological remains were present (e.g. once excavation had reached undisturbed natural subsoils, below which there were no archaeological remains present or at the required level of excavation, whichever was encountered first). Revealed surfaces were manually cleaned in an attempt to identify individual archaeological features. Exposed sections were selectively cleaned to observe and record their stratigraphy. The removed spoil was scanned for any stray, unstratified archaeological artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest. The uncovered deposits were recorded according to accepted professional standards (IFA 2000 and 2001, EH 1991) using pro-forma context record sheets.
- 3.1.4 A full photographic record of the work was kept and forms part of the site archive.
- 3.1.5 The monitored groundworks were planned onto the plans provided by the contractors (Fig. 2) and tied into the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 scale map of the area.
- 3.1.6 Once excavation had demonstrated that the potential for archaeological remains at the site was very low due to the significant modern truncation observed within the trenches, the KCC Archaeological Officer was consulted and the watching brief ceased.

#### **3.2 The Archive**

- 3.2.1 The site archive is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices in Portslade, East Sussex, pending submission to a suitable local museum. The contents of the site archive are summarised below in Table 1.

Number of Contexts	5 contexts
Number of files/paper record	1 file
Plan and sections sheets	1 plan showing monitored groundworks and measured sections
Photographs	37
Finds and samples	None

Table 1: Quantification of the Site Archive



## **4.0 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Overview**

- 4.1.1 Four contexts were revealed during the monitored groundworks at the site. These comprised modern made ground and natural strata and have been tabulated and described below. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the groundworks. No archaeological artefacts were recovered from the site as only modern debris was uncovered.
- 4.1.2 The monitored areas have been illustrated in Figure 2 and comprised the monitoring of the excavations in the northwest corner of the site and the excavation of a tank pit to the east of the site. Excavation of the footing trenches for a proposed shop were not monitored as they were located within an area which had already been seen to a depth of 4m during the removal of contaminated material from the site.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Deposit Thickness</b>	<b>Approximate Height m AOD</b>
001	Deposit	Made ground	2.5m	50.35
002	Deposit	Contaminated made ground	Up to 4m	50.75
003	Deposit	Natural Brickearth	-	47.85
004	Deposit	Natural Chalk	-	46.75

Table 2: List of Recorded Contexts

### **4.2 Land Remediation Excavations**

- 4.2.1 These excavations involved the removal of contaminated soils and materials from the site by subcontractors QDS Ltd. Site visits for the monitoring of these excavations were carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009. The initial excavations involved the removal of the contaminated infill from the 19<sup>th</sup> century gas holder measuring 12m diameter (see location on Figure 2).
- 4.2.2 The area to the north of the gas holder, up to the site perimeter, was also reduced (see Figure 2). These excavations were to a depth of 1.7m across the area with a deeper 2m by 4m sondage in the middle undertaken to determine the full extent of the contaminated material [002] which contained modern bricks, scrap metal, glass, Asbestos and pockets of viscous tar. The sondage demonstrated that contaminated made ground was present to a depth of 4m at c. 46.75m AOD where natural chalk geology [004] was encountered. The water table was present at this level. It was considered likely that any remains pre-dating the Victorian gasworks that might have once existed here, had been heavily, if not completely truncated by activity from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.
- 4.2.3 Once this area had been excavated there was a two month period during which QDS were sorting, stockpiling and treating the contaminated material. Further excavations to do with the new forecourt outside of the remediation area were undertaken two months after the initial site visits in August. This stage involved the monitoring of the Tank Pit excavations (Figure 2).

### **4.3 The Tank Pit**

- 4.3.1 The excavation of a tank pit, measuring 7m by 12m, was carried out on 28<sup>th</sup> August and 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009. The pit was located towards the east of the site. The deposits revealed during these excavations were a layer of made ground [001] comprising firm mid grey brown sandy silt with frequent concrete rubble overlying natural brickearth geology [003] at a depth of 2.5m below ground level at c. 47.85m AOD.
- 4.3.2 There was no evidence of a buried soil horizon, made ground being observed directly over the natural geology. This suggests removal of the subsoils when the area was levelled and the made ground was deposited.

## **5.0 DISCUSSION**

- 5.1** The excavations associated with the development on land at St. Paul's Street and King Street in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, were monitored until it became clear that no archaeological remains were likely to be present at the site.
- 5.2** Natural brickearth geology was revealed in the east of the site at a depth of approximately 2.5m (c. 47.85m AOD). The underlying natural chalk bedrock was encountered to the west of the site at a depth of approximately 4m (c. 46.75m AOD), where brickearth seems to have been previously removed.
- 5.3** The monitored excavations revealed that substantial deposits of made ground with an abundance of modern concrete and brick throughout were directly overlying the natural geological horizon. These deposits represent dumps and levelling episodes that post-date the Victorian gasworks. The excavation demonstrated that truncation of the natural substrate had occurred and in the northwest corner of the site the brickearth had been entirely removed. The deposition of contaminated materials in its place make it difficult to determine whether the removal of brickearth in this area was deliberate quarrying associated with Sittingbourne's prolific brick-making industry or whether it was just levelling after the destruction of industrial buildings associated with the old gasworks. No archaeological features were uncovered during the excavations and no artefacts of archaeological interest were recovered from the recorded contexts.
- 5.4** The archaeological potential of the site, in terms of deposit survival, appears to have been greatly reduced during successive levelling activity and truncation. This appears to have removed or displaced any historic deposits that may have once overlain the natural stratum.

## REFERENCES

British Geological Survey Sheets *Sheet 272 Chatham* (Solid and Drift Edition)  
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Heritage Conservation Group (HCG) 2008. Specification for a Targeted Watching  
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Document*. Unpublished KCC report

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology South East would like to thank Jennings Designs Ltd. for commissioning  
the work and the co-operation and assistance of Russel Deacon (QDS), Nello (GB  
Forecourts) and Mick Skelton (Site Manager) is also gratefully acknowledged. Many  
thanks also to Simon Mason of KCC for his on site advice and guidance.

## SMR Summary Form

Site Code	MRC 09					
Identification Name and Address	St Pauls Street and King Street in Milton Regis					
County, District and/or Borough	Sittingbourne, Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 590409 164429					
Geology	Brickearth and Chalk					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3671					
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 10/06/09 – 01/09/09 (5 visits)	Other		
Sponsor/Client	VKHP-Douglas Rose Consulting Engineers/ESCC					
Project Manager	Darryl Palmer					
Project Supervisor	Kathy Grant					
Period Summary	Palaeo. None	Meso. None	Neo. None	BA None	IA None	RB None
	AS None	MED None	PM None	Other Modern made ground and truncation only – no archaeological features or finds		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p><i>Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Jennings Design Ltd to maintain an archaeological watching brief during the development of a BP Service Station on land at St Pauls Street and King Street in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent (NGR 590409 164429). The watching brief took place from 10<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009 over the course of five site visits.</i></p> <p><i>The excavations revealed made ground deposits, which were probably associated with the demolition of the Victorian gasworks previously located on the site. Successive truncation and levelling activity would have removed or displaced any archaeological remains which may have once been present.</i></p> <p><i>Natural brickearth geology was encountered at approximately 47.85m AOD. This had been truncated and completely removed in some parts of the site where made ground was revealed directly over the chalk bedrock at 46.75m AOD.</i></p> <p><i>No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief.</i></p>						

## OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-73168**

### Project details

Project name	St Pauls Street and King Street in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne
Short description of the project	<p><i>Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Jennings Design Ltd to maintain an archaeological watching brief during the development of a BP Service Station on land at St Pauls Street and King Street in Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent (NGR 590409 164429). The watching brief took place from 10<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009 over the course of five site visits.</i></p> <p><i>The excavations revealed made ground deposits, which were probably associated with the demolition of the Victorian gasworks previously located on the site. Successive truncation and levelling activity would have removed or displaced any archaeological remains which may have once been present.</i></p> <p><i>Natural brickearth geology was encountered at approximately 47.85m AOD. This had been truncated and completely removed in some parts of the site where made ground was revealed directly over the chalk bedrock at 46.75m AOD.</i></p> <p><i>No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief.</i></p>
Project dates	Start: 10-06-2009 End: 01-09-2009
Any associated project reference codes	MRC 09 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	KENT SWALE SITTINGBOURNE St. Paul's Street and King St., Milton Regis, Sittingbourne
Postcode	ME10 2
Study area	2100.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 590409 164429 50.9249087741 0.263210621803 50 55 29 N 000 15 47 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 47.85m Max: 47.85m

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**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Kent County Council
Project design originator	The Heritage Conservation Group Kent County Council
Project director/manager	Neil Griffin
Project supervisor	Kathryn Grant
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client

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Entered by	Kathryn Grant (Kathryn.Grant@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	26 February 2010





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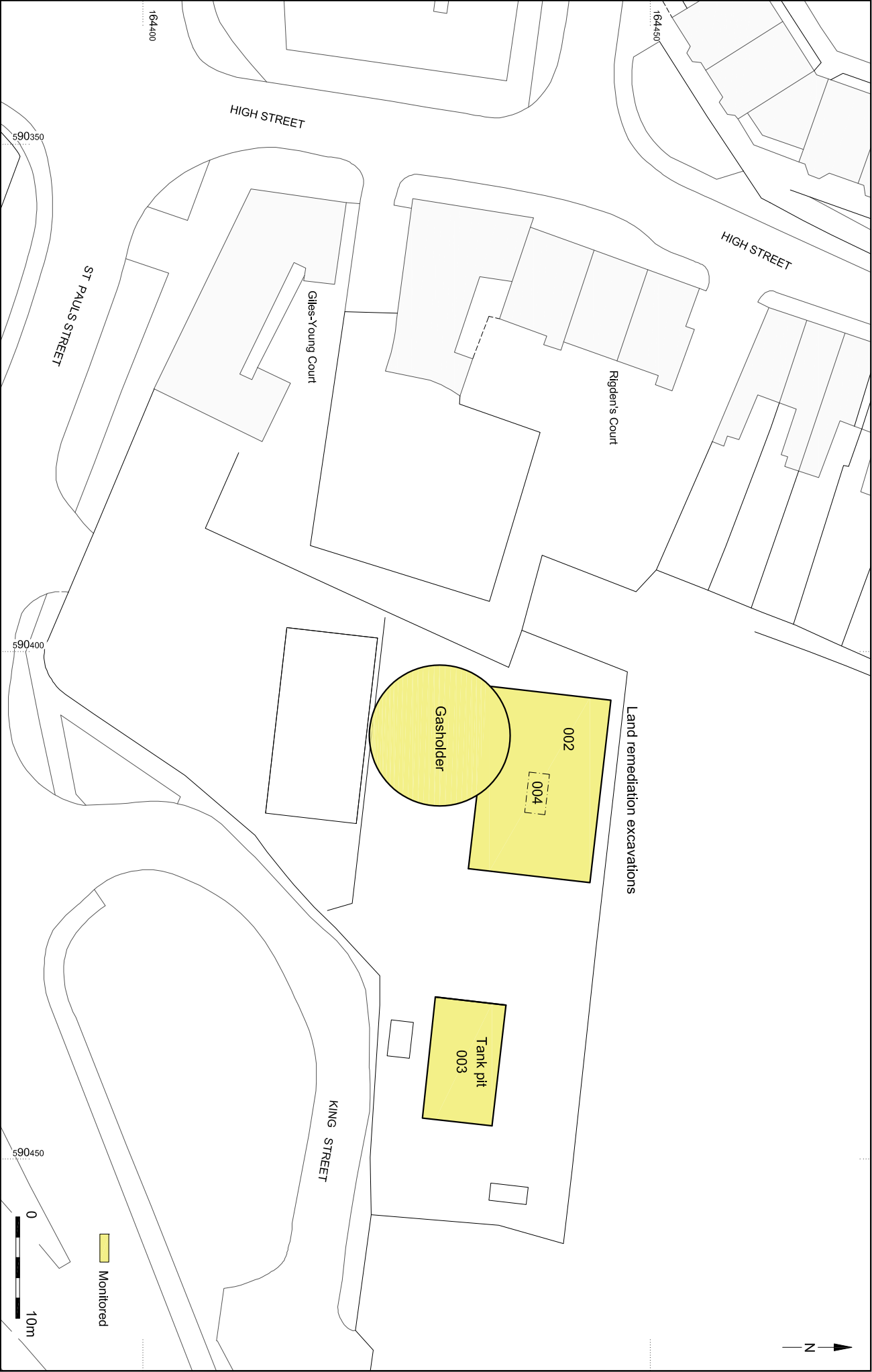
Site location

Fig. 1

Report Ref: 2010018

Drawn by: HLF





<b>© Archaeology South-East</b>		<b>St Paul's Street &amp; King Street, Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, Kent</b>	<b>Fig. 2</b>
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Proposed final layout of the site & monitored areas			





Fig. 3. NW corner showing 001 & 002



Fig. 4. Sondage through 002

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Fig. 5. SW view of site showing 4m deep gasholder



Fig. 6. SE view of site

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