Archaeology South-East

ASE

Archaeological Evaluation Report
Land at the Former GlaxoSmithKline Site
Central Road, Dartford
Kent

NGR: 55423 17553
(TQ 5422 7553)

Planning Ref: DA/08/000168/FUL

ASE Project No: 7285
Site Code: GSK 13

ASE Report No: 2015340
OASIS id: archaeol6-224051

By Gary Webster and Kristina Krawiec

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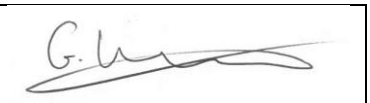
Prepared by:	Gary Webster and Kristina Krawiec	Archaeologists	
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Abstract

Archaeology South-East was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the former GlaxoSmithKline factory site, Dartford, Kent. A total of 10 trenches were excavated across the site, mainly targeting areas of high ground identified by a previous borehole survey. The onsite conditions were such that the trenches suffered from hydrocarbon pollution and rapid water ingress which resulted in unstable trench edges and access for personnel difficult. The trenches recorded extensive modern truncation of underlying deposits and no archaeological features or finds.

Despite this truncation and problems with the water table, pockets of undisturbed alluvium and peat overlying Mucking Gravels were recorded. A small sample of gravel from Trench 10 was recovered which contained abundant marine shells and rounded to subangular flint gravels. Due to conditions during excavation, only the surface of these were exposed and whilst the sample characterises the deposit at the site, it is of little palaeoenvironmental value. Peat and alluvium samples from the previous borehole survey are considered to hold more potential than those recovered during this evaluation; should any further assessment be required. No archaeological finds were identified from the Pleistocene deposits.

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TABLES

FIGURES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the former GlaxoSmithKline site, Dartford, Kent (NGR 55423 17553; Figure 1). The trenches were located to target areas of high ground and peat deposits as defined by a borehole survey (ASE 2014).

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The underlying geology of the site is Seaford and Newhaven Chalk formation, with superficial deposits of the Taplow Gravel Formation, consisting of sand and gravel (BGS 2013).

1.2.2 The site lies just to the north of Central Road, and to the west of the A282, within the Darent Valley. The site was occupied by a former GSK factory, now demolished. The River Thames is located 2km to the north-east of the site.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 A planning application was submitted for a link road between Central Road and Bob Dunn Way (Planning Ref. DA/08/000168/FUL).

1.3.2 An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (CgMs Consulting 2011) considered that there was a high potential for prehistoric and Roman remains on the site.

1.3.3 The first phase of archaeological evaluation (ASE 2014) initially focussed only the northern part of the site, the route of a road to connect Central Road to Bob Dunn Way. No archaeological features were identified.

1.3.4 Secondarily, a borehole survey (ASE 2014) was carried out in the southern part of the site. This identified a thin floodplain peat deposit and alluvial silts and clays overlying sands and gravels. Although the peat deposit was fairly thin and visibly desiccated, there was considered some potential for the preservation of wooden archaeological remains. Subsequently, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological evaluation was produced (CgMs Consulting 2015).

1.4 Scope of Report

1.4.1 This report represents the results of a second archaeological evaluation which took place on the southern portion of the site between 24th August and the 2nd September 2014. The work was carried out by Gary Webster (Archaeologist) and Susan Chandler (Assistant Archaeologist).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 A summary of the archaeological background is given in the WSI (CgMs Consulting 2014). A precis of this is given below.

2.1.2 Historically, the site lay on the Thames floodplain. Prior to reclamation in the later medieval period, possibly earlier, the site would have been marshland. During the post-medieval period it was freshwater marsh, such as is found in low-lying, frequently flooded, areas, with the water remaining on or near the surface for extended periods of time during the growing season. It is possible that prior to human interaction it was salt marsh and frequently inundated by salt water at high tide. Surface levels recorded prior to in-filling for the GlaxoSmithKline development in the late 1970's fell from the south-eastern corner of the site at c. 2.1m AOD to the north-western corner of the site at 1.56m AOD (CgMs Consulting 2014).

2.1.3 The archaeological desk-based assessment considered the area of the link road to have a moderate to high potential for late prehistoric remains and a high potential for Roman remains. In the Phase 1 evaluation this was proven not to be the case (ASE 2014). The underlying gravels were encountered in six of the seven evaluation trenches and there was a large amount of modern debris over the entire site, particularly to the north, where there was in excess of 2.3 metres of made ground. No archaeological remains were identified in any of the trenches and no struck flints were recovered from the gravels.

2.1.4 The borehole survey (ASE 2014), as well as previous surveys, recorded peat deposits up to 0.95m thick at depths of 2.5-4m BGL, though there was variation across the site. Riverside peat deposits such as this are known to contain prehistoric and Roman archaeology at various locations along the Thames Valley.

2.2 Project Aims and Objectives

2.2.1 The main aims of the project were;

- To establish whether any archaeology survived at the site
- To determine the survival, extent, date, character, condition, significance and depth below ground of any archaeological remains
- To clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions which may affect the potential for the survival of archaeological remains

2.2.2 In particular the evaluation presented the opportunity to address the following objectives;

- To establish the presence or otherwise of human activity associated with the gravel islands. Is there evidence to establish if such activity can be associated with the Prehistoric or Roman periods?

- To establish the presence or otherwise of any Medieval or Post-Medieval deposits on the site. Can the land use of the site be determined during these periods?

- To establish the environmental context of the deposits identified, including provision for geoarchaeological sampling/analysis of appropriate deposits at the site. Determine whether the peat horizons observed in the geoarchaeological boreholes hold any further potential to inform on human activity or their environmental context.

- Evaluate the likely impact of past land use and development.

- Provide sufficient information to, if appropriate construct an archaeological mitigation strategy.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

3.1.1 A total of 10 x 30m x 2m trenches were mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision using a 21 tonne machine excavator fitted with a flat-bladed bucket. The layout can be seen in Figure 2.

3.1.2 The trenches were laid out using a GPS, with their positions linked to the Ordnance Survey.

3.1.3 All trenches were scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) before excavation commenced, to ensure that live services were not encountered.

3.1.4 The trenches were excavated into the top of Taplow/Mucking River Gravels and were stepped where appropriate for safety, although upper made ground deposits were extremely unstable.

3.1.5 All deposits were recorded on standard ASE recording sheets.

3.1.6 Taplow/Mucking River Gravels were identified in all of the trenches and were carefully checked for worked flint and/or other artefacts, however, trenches were normally inundated at such depths.

3.1.7 All of the trenches were backfilled on the same day as excavated to ensure that no hazards were left open overnight.

3.1.8 Deposits considered to have potential for recovery of palaeoenvironmental remains and artefacts were targeted for sampling. A sample <1> was taken from the surface of the exposed natural gravel in Trench 10.

3.2 Site Constraints

3.2.1 There were several services encountered in every trench. These were avoided as far as was practicable.

3.2.2 In some trenches gravel could only be identified very briefly before they became flooded. The speed which the ground water inundated the trenches was too great in many cases to allow safe entrance.

3.3 Archive

3.3.1 ASE informed Dartford Museum prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at Dartford Museum in due course.

Number of Contexts	35
No. of files/paper record	1
Digital photos	130
Trench Record Forms	10

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
1/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	2.00-2.40	2.95
1/002	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 2: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts

4.1.1 This trench experienced rapid water ingress and therefore could not be entered safely. The gravel was inspected within the machine bucket despite he problems with access.

4.1.2 The underlying gravels were encountered in the base of trench and comprised mid brown yellow coarse sand and gravel [1/002]. The gravel component comprised rounded to subangular <50mm flint clasts in a matrix of crushed marine? shell and yellowish grey sand. This deposit rose towards the east end of the trench. This was overlain by a disturbed alluvium and gravel made ground deposit up to 2.40m thick [1/001]. There were also numerous services within the made ground deposit. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.2 Trench 2

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
2/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	1.90-2.22	3.00
2/002	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 3: Trench 2 list of recorded contexts

4.2.1 This trench experienced extremely rapid water ingress and therefore could not be entered safely. The underlying gravels [2/002] were only seen briefly and were similar to those encountered in Trench 1 (see above.)

4.2.2 The made ground, which sealed the gravels, comprised plastic, gravel and demolition rubble [2/001]. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.3 Trench 3

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
3/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	1.30-1.45	2.75
3/002	layer	Silt clay	Tr	Tr	0.15	
3/003	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 4: Trench 3 list of recorded contexts

4.3.1 The underlying gravels [3/003] were sealed by grey blue silt clay alluvium [3/002].This was only recorded in the southern end of the trench and was overlain by made ground [3/001].

4.3.2 The trench was flooded shortly after excavation and exhibited evidence of

hydrocarbon contamination in the water. It was also not possible to enter the trench after excavation. No archaeological features were encountered.

4.4 Trench 4

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
4/001	layer	made ground	15	2	1.00-1.20	2.50
4/002	layer	natural	30	2	-	
4/003	layer	Oxidised alluvium	15	2	0.48	
4/004	cut	service trench	10	1	-	
4/005	fill	gravel fill of service trench	10	1	-	
4/006	construction	manhole	1.5	1.5	-	
4/007	layer	Silt clay	15	2	0.50	

Table 5: Trench 4 list of recorded contexts

4.4.1 The underlying gravels [4/002] were overlain by grey blue alluvial silt clay deposit [4/007] which was highly oxidised towards the top of the profile [4/003]. This was not recorded in the southern end of the trench which demonstrated high levels of modern truncation. A kubiena sample <3> was recovered from this deposit, the base of which recovered a small amount of gravel. This was overlain by made ground [4/001].

4.4.2 A service trench [4/004] truncated the south of the trench which led to a concrete manhole [4/006]. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.5 Trench 5

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
5/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	1.20-1.60	3.20
5/002	layer	Organic silt clay	2	Tr	0.36	
5/003	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 6: Trench 5 list of recorded contexts

4.5.1 The underlying gravels [5/003] were overlain by a disturbed, dry, organic silt clay [5/002]. This contained frequent modern cbm, gravel and chalk fragments. This level of disturbance made this deposit unsuitable for sampling. This was overlain by made ground [5/001]. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.6 Trench 6

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
6/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	1.55-1.67	3.10
6/002	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 7: Trench 5 list of recorded contexts

4.6.1 This trench experienced extremely rapid water ingress and therefore could not be entered safely. The underlying gravels [2/002] were only seen briefly and were similar to those encountered in Trench 1 (see above.)

4.6.2 The made ground, which sealed the gravels, comprised plastic, gravel and demolition rubble [2/001]. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.7 Trench 7

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
7/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	1.5	3.15
7/002	layer	clay deposit	10	Tr	0.3	
7/003	layer	silty peat	10	Tr	1	
7/004	layer	clay deposit	Tr	Tr	0.3	
7/005	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	
7/006	construction	sewer	2	1.5	-	

Table 8: Trench 7 list of recorded contexts

4.7.1 At the north end of the trench the gravels [7/005] were overlain by a dark blue grey clay [7/004]. This was sealed by a peaty silt deposit [7/003] which was in turn overlain by another clay deposit [7/002]. The made ground [7/001] capped the sequence.

4.7.2 A sewer bisected the trench c.10m from the west end of the trench, which was left *in situ.*

4.7.3 The trench experienced rapid water ingress, and due to safety concerns it was not possible enter in order to recover samples. The sequence at the eastern end of the trench was difficult to establish due to the water ingress, although no further organic deposits were observed in the material removed. Trench 7 was located in close proximity to BH4 which contained a better thickness of the peat deposit and has been retained by ASE and could provide material for sampling if required. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.8 Trench 8

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
8/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	0.60-1.35	2.80
8/002	layer	clay	8	Tr	0.4	
8/003	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 9: Trench 8 list of recorded contexts

4.8.1 The underlying gravels [8/003] were overlain by grey blue clay alluvial deposit [8/002]. This was overlain by made ground [8/001].

4.8.2 The alluvium [8/002] was only present in the centre of the trench, having been truncated away to the north-west and south-east by modern truncation.

4.8.3 The water in the trench showed evidence of hydrocarbon contamination. No

archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.9 Trench 9

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
9/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	1.10-1.45	3.00
9/002	layer	Silt clay	Tr	Tr	0.18-0.20	
9/003	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 10: Trench 9 list of recorded contexts

4.9.1 The underlying gravels [9/003] were sealed by a thin grey blue silt clay alluvial deposit [9/002]. This was overlain by made ground [9/001]. This trench demonstrated quite extreme hydrocarbon contamination. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

4.10 Trench 10

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thick m	m AOD
10/001	layer	made ground	Tr	Tr	1.00-1.01	3.00
10/002	layer	clay	Tr	Tr	0.16-0.20	
10/003	layer	Organic silt interface with gravels	Tr	Tr	0.1	
10/004	layer	natural	Tr	Tr	-	

Table 11: Trench 10 list of recorded contexts

4.10.1 The underlying gravels [10/004] were sealed by a greyish blue clay alluvial deposit [10/002] which was more organic at the interface with the gravels [10/003]. This was then capped by the made ground [10/001].

4.10.2 A kubiena tin <2> was recovered from the organic silt clays [10/002-004] and a bulk sample <1> was also recovered from the underlying gravels prior to the excessive water ingress making working conditions untenable. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

5.0 GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL SAMPLES

5.1 Sample <1> taken from the Pleistocene gravel deposits was recovered from the surface of the deposit in Trench 10 as a bulk sample.

5.2 The gravels recovered in sample <1> comprised a coarse, slightly sandy, gravel. The gravel component comprised rounded to subangular <50mm flint clasts in a matrix of crushed marine? shell and yellowish grey sand. Some variation in the gravels was noted during excavation, although the above sufficiently characterises the gravels as encountered across site.

5.3 As only the surface of the Mucking gravels was exposed, it is not possible to expand on the Quaternary sequence across the site. The presence of shells in the surface of the gravels is notable. It is not possible to determine whether they derive from the formation of the gravels, or whether they represent the incorporation of a later phase of deposition into the weathered or reworked surface of the same. Due to the level of water ingress it was not possible to view these deposits in section to determine the nature of the shells within the deposit.

5.4 No finds were recovered from Sample <1>.

5.5 Although samples <2> (alluvium recorded in Trench 10) and <4> (alluvium in Trench 4) has been retained they are not considered to hold as great a potential for palaeoenvironmental assessment as those same deposits that were previously encountered in borehole 4 (which are also retained, ASE 2014).

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Overview of stratigraphic sequence

6.1.1 The stratigraphic sequence recorded during the evaluation broadly conformed to that recorded by the borehole survey (ASE 2014). The underlying gravels were encountered in every trench and were directly overlain by modern made ground in Trenches 1-6. A high degree of modern truncation was also observed in the remaining trenches. No artefacts were recovered from the gravel deposit which is suggested to have a low archaeological potential.

6.1.2 The alluvial deposits recorded at the site were thin and minerogenic in character with only occasional organic remains recorded. No archaeological finds or features were recorded in association with the peat, alluvial and gravel deposits in any of the trenches.

6.1.3 Severe problems of water ingress at the site made many of the trenches unsafe to enter and in some cases (Trenches 1, 8 and 9) bad hydrocarbon contamination was also recorded. Due to these constraints it was only possible to conduct minimal sampling. However the material already recorded during the borehole survey is available should any further assessment be required.

6.2 Deposit survival and existing impacts

6.2.1 The alluvial deposits recorded in the borehole survey did survive in some of the trenches (Trenches 3, 4, 7-10), although this was truncated by the large amount of services and demolition and only survived as a thin layer in most cases (c. 40cm). The sediment was minerogenic, with a low organic content and did not contain archaeological material. The most organic deposit was that recorded in Trench 5 which demonstrated a high level of disturbance, possibly pre-dating the GSK factory and almost certainly post-medieval in origin. The site was overlain by between 1.2m – 1.6m of made ground deposits, which was either imported to counteract the low-lying, waterlogged nature of the site or derives from the demolition of the GSK factory.

6.2.2 The services, comprising pipes and wires, recorded at the site derive from the former GSK factory and are therefore relatively recent in date.

6.3 Consideration of research aims

6.3.1 In this section, relevant aims as detailed in section 2.2 are considered.

Original aim

- *To establish the presence or otherwise of human activity associated with the gravel islands. Is there evidence to establish if such activity can be associated with the Prehistoric or Roman periods?*

6.3.2 No prehistoric tools or activity were identified in the gravels. A small sample <1> was recovered from the gravels and despite careful processing no

archaeological remains were identified. There was also an absence of cut archaeological features.

Original aim

- *To determine the survival, extent, date, character, condition, significance and depth below ground of any archaeological remains*

6.3.3 While a large part of the site had been truncated to the surface of the gravels, there were pockets where alluvial deposits were still *in situ*. These were sampled (<2> Trench 10) but are not considered to hold as great a potential as existing samples of the same deposit sampled in the borehole survey. Peat was also recorded (in Trench 7), however, existing samples from the borehole survey are considered to hold greater potential and so no further sampling of the peat was undertaken. The stratigraphy and relevant depths for each trench have been fully recorded and are available in the tables above.

Original aim

- *To clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions which may affect the potential for the survival of archaeological remains*

6.3.4 The past land use of the site as a GlaxoSmithKline factory which have heavily impacted on the preservation of deposits at the site, with modern intrusions and/or hydrocarbon pollution present in every trench.

6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that despite alluvial and peat deposits existing in pockets over the gravels, no archaeological remains were recorded. The site is situated on the Taplow/Mucking Gravel Formation which formed between Marine Isotope Stages (MIS) 8 and 6, including the MIS 7 Aveley interglacial. River terrace gravels of this date have the potential to contain evidence of the continued adoption of the Levallois technique of lithic reduction in Britain. However, neither artefact bearing deposits nor those with potential for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction, were encountered at the site.

6.4.2 The lack of well preserved, deeply stratified Holocene deposits led to a low level of sampling at the site. The borehole survey previously carried out at the site a recovered more intact sequence of deposits despite the extensive modern truncation recorded during the phase 2 evaluation. It would be possible to assess this material for palaeoenvironmental information and to recover material for radiocarbon dating should it be required.

6.4.3 The extensive truncation, from the construction of the GSK factory, has had a detrimental effect on the preservation of deposits at the site. The condition and makeup of the ground, and the excessive water ingress would seriously hamper any further attempts at archaeological mitigation, should any be required.

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HER Summary

Site code	GSK 13					
Project code	7285					
Planning reference	DA/08/000168/FUL					
Site address	Former GlaxoSmithKline site, Central Road, Dartford, Kent					
District/Borough	Dartford, Kent					
NGR (12 figures)	TQ 55422 17553					
Geology	Taplow Gravel formation					
Fieldwork type	Eval					
Date of fieldwork	24th August - 2nd September 2015					
Sponsor/client	CgMs Consulting					
Project manager	Paul Mason					
Project supervisor	Gary Webster					
Period summary						
Project summary **(100 word max)**	An archaeological evaluation was conducted at the former GlaxoSmithKline site in Dartford, Kent, between the 24th August and 2nd September 2015. Ten trenches were excavated, measuring 30m long. Most of the site was truncated down to the natural gravels, though some pockets of natural stratigraphy remained. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were identified. Gravel and alluvial deposits were sampled however none of these are considered to hold as great potential as existing samples from the borehole survey.					
Museum/Accession No.	n/a					

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-224051

Project details	
Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at the former GlaxoSmithKline site, Dartford, Kent
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was conducted at the former GlaxoSmithKline site in Dartford, Kent, between the 24th August and 2nd September 2015. Ten trenches were excavated, measuring 30m long. Most of the site was truncated down to the natural gravels, though some pockets of natural stratigraphy remained. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were identified. Gravel and alluvial deposits were sampled however none of these are considered to hold as great potential as existing samples from the borehole survey.
Project dates	Start: 24-08-2015 End: 02-09-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	GSK13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	KENT DARTFORD DARTFORD Former GlaxoSmithKline site, Dartford, Kent
Postcode	DA1 5JW
Site coordinates	TQ 55422 17553 50.935874014737 0.2122272115 50 56 09 N 000 12 44 E Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South East
Project design originator	CgMs Consulting
Project director/manager	Paul Mason
Project supervisor	Gary Webster

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Project creators

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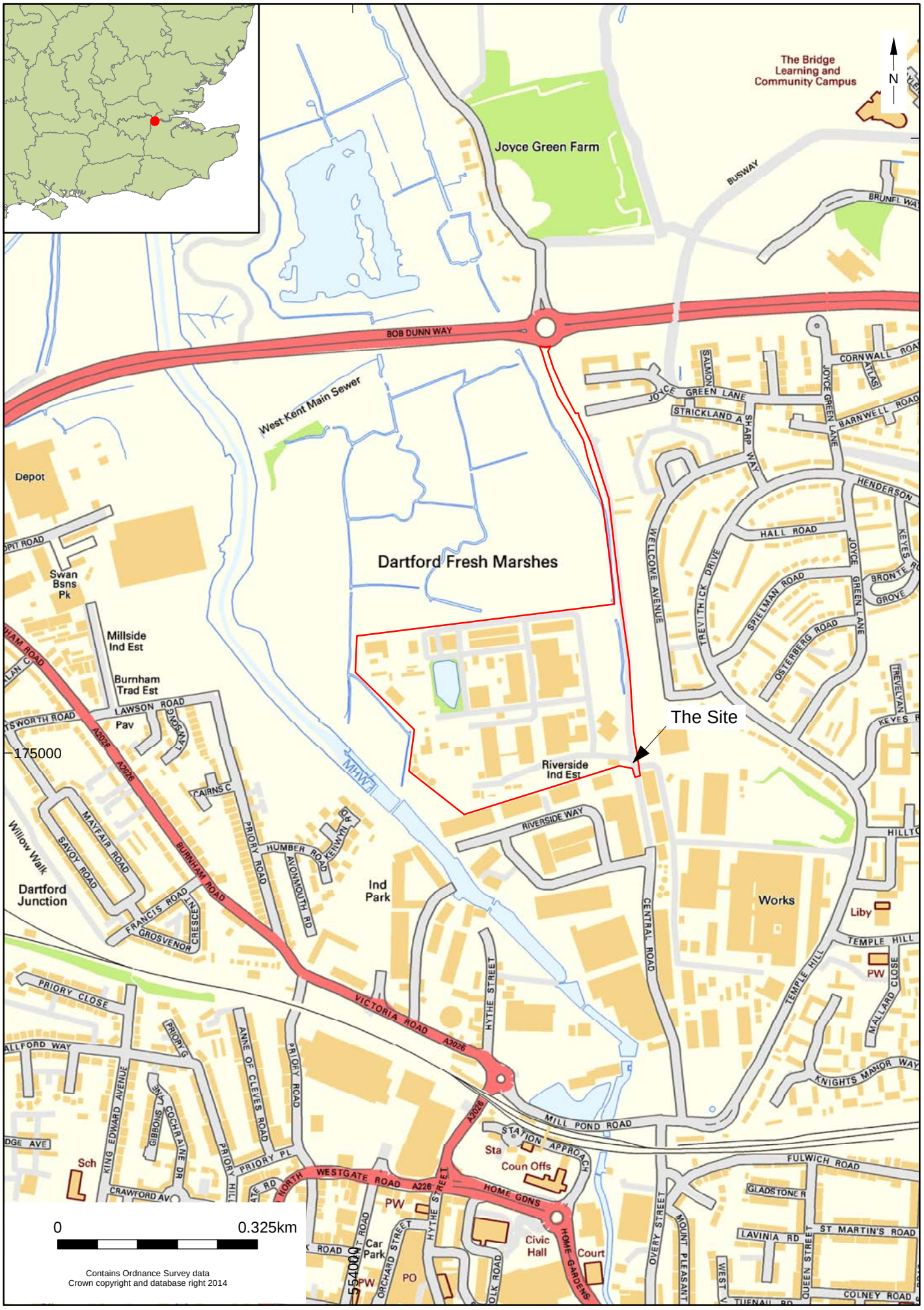
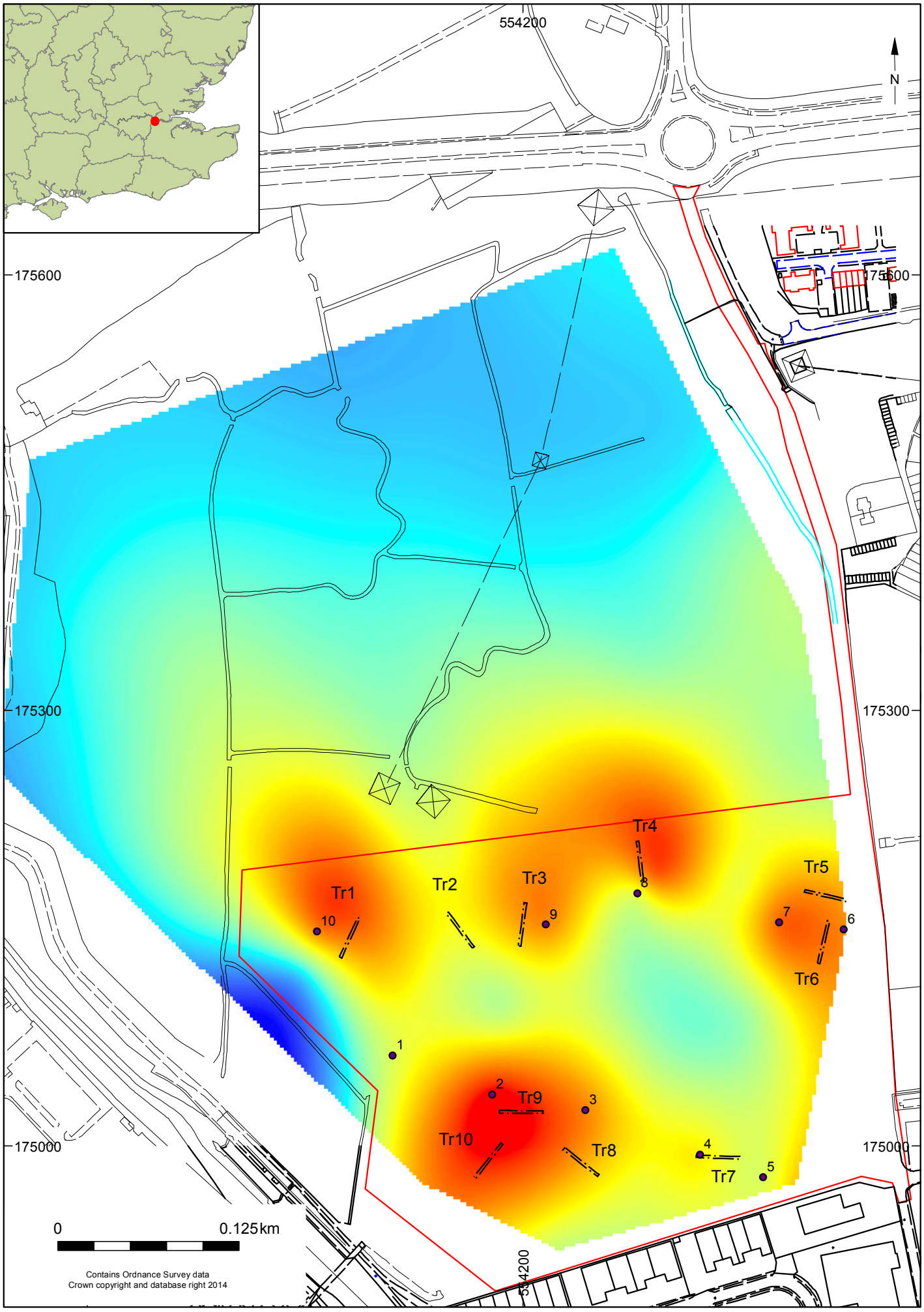


© Archaeology South-East		Former GlaxoSmithkline site, Dartford, Kent	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 7285	September 2015	Site locatioon	
Report Ref: 2015340	Drawn by: JC		



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Project Ref: 7285	September 2015	Trench location and surface of gravels	
Report Ref: 2015340	Drawn by: JC		

Trench 1 looking south

Trench 2 looking north west

Trench 3 looking south

Trench 5 looking east

Trench 6 looking south

Trench 7 looking east

Trench 8 looking east

Trench 9 looking west

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Project Ref: 7285	September 2015	Trench photographs	
Report Ref: 2015340	Drawn by: JC		

Trench 10 looking east

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