



**THE BIRCHES INDUSTRIAL ESTATE,
EAST GRINSTEAD PARISH,
MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL, WEST SUSSEX**

Results of Archaeological Watching Brief



**THE BIRCHES INDUSTRIAL ESTATE
EAST GRINSTEAD PARISH
MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL
WEST SUSSEX**

**PLANNING REFERENCES GR/05/01525/FUL & GR/05/01528/FUL
NGR 5371 1392**

RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

on behalf of
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by
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Figure 1 Site location plan, observed areas and archaeological features

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Plate 1 View from northeast of ditch [11]

Plate 2 View from southeast of plough scars within the Access Road area

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Environ UK Ltd acting on behalf of RBSI Custody Bank Ltd and RBSI Trust Bank Ltd, to carry out an archaeological Watching Brief during construction of industrial units, at The Birches Industrial Estate, East Grinstead, West Sussex, centred on NGR 537100 139245. This work was undertaken between 26th January and 3rd February 2006.

The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Schemes of Investigation prepared by Wessex Archaeology and approved by West Sussex County Council's Archaeological Officer, for the local planning authority (Mid Sussex District Council), and followed detailed assessments of the known and potential archaeological resources, and the possible impact upon those resources by the programme of construction.

In general the Site was identified as having low archaeological potential but a clear assessment was prevented by a lack of previous archaeological work in the area.

Two ditches and associated plough scarring were revealed during the Watching Brief. A putative medieval / post medieval date was suggested for the features due to their position in the Site's stratigraphic sequence.

The features suggest the area was used predominantly for agricultural purposes and support the findings of the Desk-Based Assessment undertaken in advance of the Watching Brief.

It was concluded that the impact of the current ground works on archaeological remains appears to have been, in general, slight. The archaeological features revealed in the topsoil stripping proved to be of little archaeological significance, but at least demonstrate the survival of buried archaeological remains in the landscape.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Environ UK Ltd for commissioning the programme of archaeological work. The assistance of their groundwork contractors is also acknowledged. The advice of John Mills, Archaeological Officer at West Sussex County Council, was gratefully received.

Caroline Appleton, Dave Budd and Gemma White carried out the programme of fieldwork. This report was compiled by Caroline Appleton. The report illustrations were prepared by Mark Roughley. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Lawrence Pontin.

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RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by RBSI Custody Bank Ltd and RBSI Trust Bank Ltd to carry out an archaeological Watching Brief for topsoil stripping during the development of Phase 3A of the Birches Industrial Estate, East Grinstead, West Sussex (the Site).

1.1.2 The development involved the creation of industrial warehousing units linked by an access road with hard and soft landscaping (**Figure 1**).

1.1.3 The Watching Brief was requested, by way of a planning condition, by the West Sussex County Council Archaeology Officer as a suitable level of mitigation given the potential impact of the ground works on archaeological deposits.

1.1.4 A Project Specification (Wessex Archaeology, 2006) was prepared in consultation with Environ UK Ltd and submitted to and approved by Mid Sussex County Council. This set out the archaeological work to be carried out on the development area and methods to be employed during initial groundwork carried out on Site in January 2006.

1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 The Phase 3 site comprises 5.3 hectares of, at the time of the watching brief, rough grazing land. Phase 3A occupies approximately 50% of that area.

1.2.2 The Site is centred on Ordnance Survey NGR 537100 139245.

1.2.3 The underlying geology of the Site is Grinstead Clay, Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand and Wadshurst Clay (BGS Sheet 1:50,000; Sheet 302).

1.3 Archaeological Background

1.3.1 An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment Report was produced in support of the planning application for the now approved Phase 3A development (Wessex Archaeology 2005).

1.3.2 The report concluded that the Site had low potential for the presence of archaeological remains of any period. This conclusion in part reflects the low level of previous investigation within the area.

1.3.3 Consequently the West Sussex County Council Archaeology Officer (WSCCAO) recommended to Mid Sussex District Council, the Local Planning Authority, that an archaeological condition, with regard to an archaeological Watching Brief being undertaken, was attached to a planning consent.

1.4 Watching Brief Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The overall aim of the Watching Brief was to establish and record, as far as reasonably possible, any archaeological remains that may have survived beneath the present ground surface, through the observation of topsoil stripping works carried out during the re development of the Site.

1.4.2 It sought to characterise the nature, date, depth, state of preservation of any such features or deposits, and to retrieve where present, stratified assemblages of finds and ecofacts.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

2.1.1 All works were carried out in accordance with Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2001).

2.1.2 The Watching Brief comprised an archaeological attendance and monitoring of all topsoil stripping connected with the development of the Site which currently comprises the areas associated with Units 25, 26, 28, 29 and the Access Road (**Figure 1**).

2.1.3 The exact extent and scope of the archaeological works were dictated by site conditions and Health and Safety issues.

2.2 Fieldwork

2.2.1 The monitored area was stripped of topsoil using hydraulic tracked excavators in a single and continuous manner. The topsoil was banked on site.

2.2.2 All excavations were observed by a competent Archaeologist and, where appropriate, work was redirected whilst investigations were carried out by Wessex Archaeology staff. All archaeological features on the Site were excavated by hand.

2.2.3 Individual archaeological deposits and features were recorded on Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets. In addition, a general record of

the work, comprising a description and discussion of the archaeology, was maintained as appropriate.

- 2.2.4 Plans and sections of archaeological features and deposits were drawn at appropriate scales (1:50, 1:20, and 1:10).
- 2.2.5 A photographic record of the works was maintained and forms part of the Site archive.
- 2.2.6 All spoil and uprisings were scanned visually for artefacts.
- 2.2.7 In order to enhance retrieval of archaeological finds on the Site, a metal detector, operated by a member of Wessex Archaeology staff, was used to scan archaeological features revealed during the topsoil stripping and/or spoil derived from this.
- 2.2.8 The Watching Brief was carried out on seven days from 26th January to 3rd February 2006.

3 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The following summary of results is based on more detailed records prepared during the programme of work. The records constitute the archive of the work and are held by Wessex Archaeology under site code 62051.

3.2 Archaeological Features

- 3.2.1 Two ditches, three land drains and a series of plough scars were revealed during the Watching Brief (**Figure 1**).
- 3.2.2 Ditch [**11**] (**Plate 1**), situated on the eastern side of the Site was linear in plan and aligned north-east south-west. The ditch measured approximately 1.05m wide by 0.33m deep and extended from the centre of Unit 29 to the eastern boundary of the Site. The full extent of the ditch was not uncovered within the excavated area. The ditch contained two dark grey silty clay fills, which appeared to have been deposited through deliberate backfilling and a single mid orange clay fill, deposited during initial stabilisation.
- 3.2.3 The ditch appeared to form the boundary of a series of plough scars revealed to the south (**Plate 2**). The plough scars were observed to run along the length of the access road towards the Site entrance and were aligned north-west south-east.
- 3.2.4 Ditch [**12**], situated on the eastern side of the Site, was linear in plan and aligned north-west south-east. The ditch measured approximately 0.50m wide by 0.10m deep and extended from the eastern side of Unit 26 terminating some 3 m from ditch [**11**]. The full extent of the ditch was not uncovered within the excavated area. The ditch contained a dark grey silty

clay fill, which appeared to have been deposited through deliberate backfilling.

- 3.2.5 The features were observed on the interface between the topsoil and shallow cultivation layer. A putative medieval / post medieval date may be offered based the nature of the features and the nature of their fills. The features appear to be part of a larger agricultural complex, the ditches acting as drainage or boundaries. This supports the findings of the previous desk-based assessment which suggested that the area had predominantly been utilised as arable and rough pasture.
- 3.2.6 Three post medieval land drains were also revealed and investigated during the Watching Brief (**Figure 1**).

3.3 Conclusion

- 3.3.1 Conditions for monitoring were good and the results represent a fair reflection on the lack of archaeological material on the Site. The archaeological features revealed in the topsoil stripping of Units 25, 26, 28, 29 and the Access Road proved to be of little archaeological significance, but at least demonstrate the survival of buried archaeological remains in the landscape.
- 3.3.2 No further work, by way of assessment or further analysis and publication of the results of the watching brief, is proposed.

4 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

4.1 Museum

- 4.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive including a copy of this report be deposited with West Sussex County Council Museum Services.

4.2 Archive Storage

- 4.2.1 The complete site archive will be prepared to comply with guidelines set out in Environmental Standards for the permanent storage of excavated material from archaeological sites (UKIC 1984, Conservation Guidelines 3), and Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (Walker, 1990).

4.3 Discard Policy

- 4.3.1 Wessex Archaeology, in consultation with recipient museums, follows the guidelines set out by the Society of Museum Archaeologists in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections* (1993). This allows for the discard (by means of outright disposal, or dispersal to reference or teaching collections) of un-diagnostic and/or poorly provenanced material, whose further study is considered to be of limited value.

4.4 Copyright

- 4.4.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be not-for-profit.

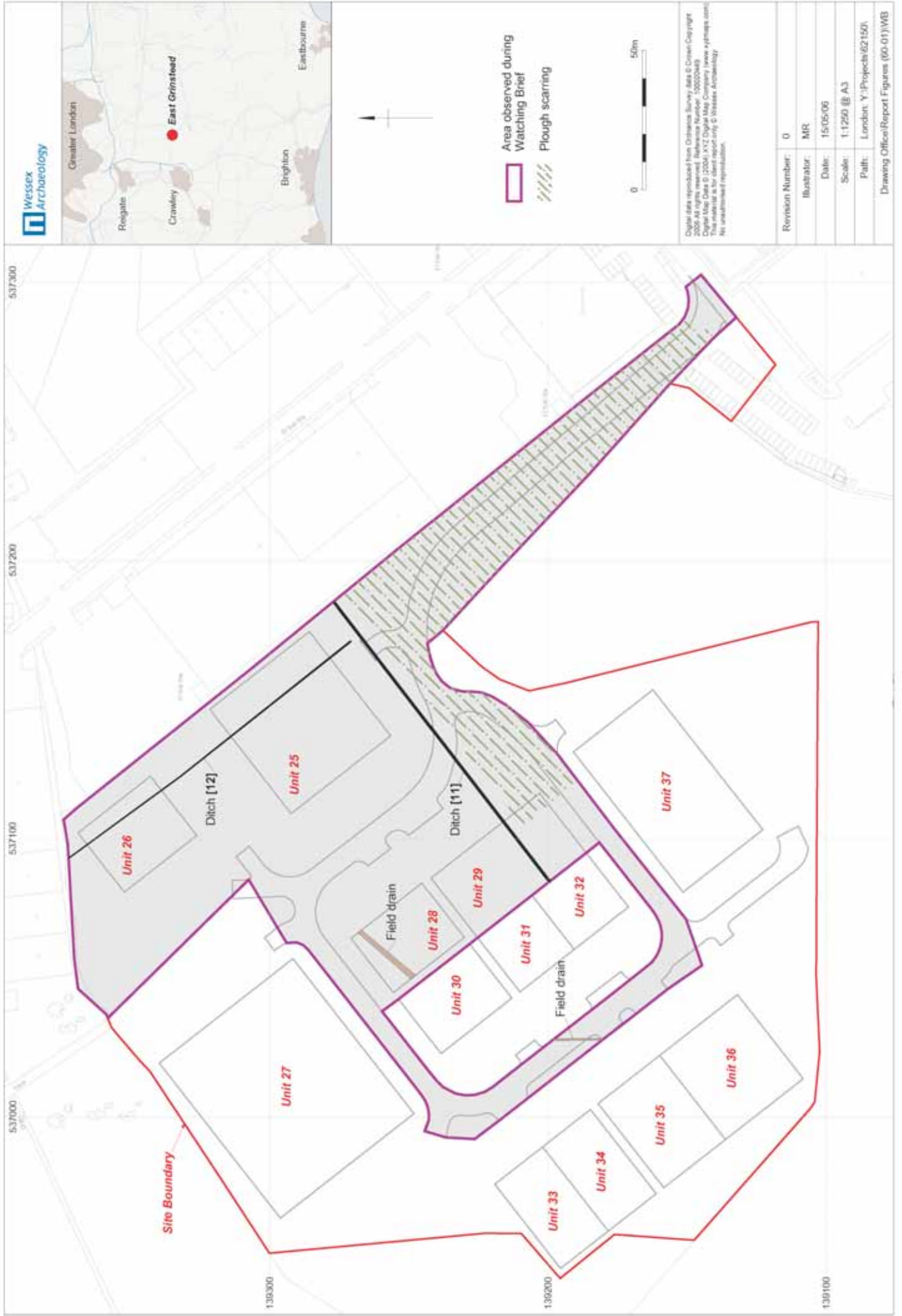
4.5 Security Copy

- 4.5.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Archaeological Record (RCHME), a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records at the Museum, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.
- 4.5.2 Details of the watching brief will be entered into the online “Oasis” database maintained by the Archaeological data Service (ADS). A copy of the OASIS entry will be included in the written report.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wessex Archaeology 2005, *Land at The Birches Industrial Estate, East Grinstead, West Sussex, Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*, Client report 59970.01

Wessex Archaeology 2006, *The Birches Industrial Estate, East Grinstead Parish, Mid Sussex District Council, West Sussex, Archaeological Watching Brief Project Specification*, Client report 59020.01



Site Location Map and Plan showing observed areas and archaeological features

Figure 1



Plate 1: View from northeast of Ditch [11]



Plate 2: View from southeast of plough scars within the Access Road area

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