



KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS

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**The results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trench prior to
development on land at 1 Old Foxbury Manor, Old Watling Street,
Higham, Kent ME2 3UG**

Planning Reference 20211448 (Gravesham Borough Council)

TQ 70619 69538 (centred)

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1) Introduction and planning background

In April 2022 Mr Jonathan Bolton, Director at Synergy Planning & Property Consultants Ltd, instructed Kent Archaeological Projects to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to and east of 1 Old Foxbury Manor, Old Watling Street, Higham, Kent ME2 3UG (**Figures 1 & 2, Plates 1 & 2**). The evaluation took place in compliance with Condition 7 of a Notification of Grant of Permission to Develop Land (20211448) granted by Gravesham Borough Council. Condition 7, which is part of outline planning permission with all matters reserved for the erection of one detached dwelling, required that:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of

i. Archaeological field evaluation works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation and timetable which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; and

ii. Following on from the evaluation, any safeguarding measures to ensure preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation and timetable which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: *To ensure appropriate assessment of the archaeological implications of any development proposals and the subsequent mitigation of adverse impacts through preservation in situ or by record.*

This condition was applied on the basis of advice received from the Archaeological Officer of Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group with responsibility for Gravesham Borough, who stated that:

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential adjacent to the line of Roman Watling Street, the proposed development has the potential to impact on belowground archaeological remains.

The evaluation took place on the 28th April 2023 on the basis of that advice and on the terms of a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Kent Archaeological Projects as required by Part 1 of Condition 7 (see above). The work was undertaken under the supervision of Tim

Allen following notification of the start of works to the Archaeological Officer of Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Group.

2) Summary

The evaluation exposed made ground consisting for the most part of *in-situ* concrete at depths of between 1.25m and 1.85m below the present ground level. The concrete took the form of a large rectangular block, partly exposed in the northern part of the trench, and, 5.5m to the south, a 7.2m-wide, 0.9m-thick concrete layer, which overlay 0.52m-thick made-ground consisting of mid-light yellow-brown crushed concrete mixed with sand and shingle containing and intermediate discontinuous layer of large concrete fragments. Natural mid-brown clay-silt with frequent inclusions of small chalk fragments was exposed beneath the made-ground at a depth of 1.85m below the present ground surface.

The evaluation indicated that the site had been subject to large-scale activity associated with the construction of a substantial roadway or extensive area of hard-standing and the construction of a large rectangular block foundation. The latter almost certainly supported a pylon or similar structure used to carry electric cables. Fragments of cable, along with circular ceramic disc fragments and a large bulb-shaped iron-and-ceramic object with a handle-like protuberance, were recovered from the made-ground immediately overlying the block foundation block, above which part of a cast-iron man-hole cover was also exposed.

It was concluded that previous disturbance on the site caused by the above-described activity at depths of between 1.6m and 1.85m below the present ground surface precluded the survival of any significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts.

3) Site location

The proposed development site lies a relatively short distance north of the M2 and the A2 (Watling Street), on the north-west margin of Higham, which lies immediately west of Strood, near Rochester (**Figure 1**). At present the site, which is mostly laid to lawn with adjacent flower beds and shrubbery, comprises the eastern half of the garden attached to and east of 1 Old Foxbury Manor (see **Figure 2, Plates 1 & 2**). The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 70619 69538 and lies on land sloping downwards and northward toward

Old Watling Street, which here has the form of a metalled sunken way running east-west adjacent to the garden's boundary hedge.

4) Background

i) Landscape and geology

The *Parish Setting and History of Higham* (<https://higham-kent-pc.gov.uk>) states that the parish of Higham 'consists mainly of agricultural farmland but set within its countryside are the villages of Higham Upshire, Lower Higham and Three Crutches, the small hamlet of Church Street and Higham's several remaining great houses'. The present site lies in the Three Crutches area, with the pub of that name and Crutches Lane both lying some 150m to the east.

The underlying geological strata observed during nineteenth century railway cuttings were recorded as follows during excursions made between 1860 and 1890 (eds Holmes, T. V., Davies Sherborn, C., and Stanford, E.; The Geologists' Association 1891.

Oldest

	Brown clay, apparently LONDON CLAY, but without any sign of the usual pebbly basement-bed; up to about eight feet.
OLDHAVEN BEDS	Fine buff slightly false-bedded sand, with masses of fossils in places (<i>Cardium</i> , <i>Pectunculus</i> , <i>Natica</i> , <i>Corbula</i> , <i>Lamna</i> teeth and vertebrae, and pieces of carapaces of Turtle); up to eight or ten feet.
OLDHAVEN BEDS	Small flint-pebbles in sand, generally about six inches; but in 0 L one part nearly three feet.
WOOLWICH BEDS	Light-coloured sand, with incipient tubular concretions (?), about seven feet.
WOOLWICH BEDS	Shelly clay (Cyrena), about three feet.
WOOLWICH BEDS	Sharp grey sand, with traces of peaty matter in the upper part; many feet but the whole thickness not seen at one place.

WOOLWICH BEDS	Thin layer of very small flint pebbles in pale greenish sand.
	Fine soft THANET SAND; a few feet.

Most recent

ii) *The archaeological and historical background*

Edward Hasted (1797, Vol III, 491) describes the parish of Higham as follows:

HIGHAM was part of the possessions with which William the Conqueror enriched his half-brother, Odo, bishop of Baieux and earl of Kent, under the general title of whose lands, it is thus entered in the book of Domesday, taken in the year 1080.

¶The same Adam holds Hecham of the bishop (of Baieux). It was taxed at 5 sulings. The arable land is 12 carucates. In demesne there are 3 carucates, and 24 villeins, with 12 borderers having 6 carucates and an half. There are 20 servants, and 30 acres of meadow. There is a church, and 1 mill of 10 shillings, and a fishery of 3 shillings, and in Exesle pasture for 200 sheep. In the time of king Edward the Confessor, it was worth 12 pounds, and afterwards 6 pounds, now 15 pounds.

In the time of king Edward, Goduin, the son of Carli and Toli, held this land for two manors.

Later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ordnance Survey maps of the development site and its nearby environs show it as woodland south of Old Watling Street and open agricultural fields to the north, the woodland named as Cole's Wood, with Cole Cottage shown in the approximate location of Old Foxbury Manor on the 1892-1914 OS. The area is now dominated by the nearby junction of the M2, A2 (Watling Street) and Hasted Street.

5) Results

The evaluation exposed natural mid-brown brickearth-like clay-silt with frequent inclusions of small chalk fragments (Context Recording Number 7) at an average depth of 1.85m in the southern two-thirds of the trench, where it underlay a 0.52m-thick levelling layer of mid-light yellow-brown crushed concrete mixed with sand and shingle containing an intermediate

discontinuous layer of large concrete fragments (**Figure 3, Plates 4, 5 & 6**). The levelling layer was capped with approximately 0.1m-thick, 7.2m-wide and largely *in-situ* concrete layer (probably a buried road or hard-standing surface) that was present at depths of between 1.10m and 1.23m below the present ground level.

Five-and-a-half metres to the north, a large rectangular block was partly exposed in the northern part of the trench (**Figure 3, Plates 4 & 9**). A manhole, presumably providing access to a void below the concrete surface, was exposed in the north-west trench corner. The block as a whole was surrounded by light yellow-brown builders' sand used as the backfill around the structure. This material was cut by two pit-like features (CRNs 4 & 6), both with identical light-brown humic silty sand fills of 0.5m and 0.23m depths respectively (**Figure 3, Plates 4, 8 & 9**). A fragment of modern brick was recovered from the fill of feature CRN 6. Both features cut the sandy backfill and were therefore clearly modern features probably resulting from animal or root disturbance. The southernmost feature (CRN 6) also cut natural, chalk-speckled clay-silt (CRN 7) to the south, where it was exposed at a depth of 1.6m below the present ground surface (**Figure 3, Plate 9**).

It was concluded that the site had been subject to large-scale activity associated with the construction of a substantial concrete surfaced roadway or, less likely, an extensive area of hard-standing, and the construction of a rectangular concrete block foundation. The latter almost certainly supported a pylon or similar structure used to carry electric cables.

Fragments of cable, along with circular ceramic disc fragments and a large bulb-shaped iron-and-ceramic object with a handle-like protuberance, were recovered from the made-ground overlying the foundation block, above which part of a cast-iron man-hole cover was also exposed (**Figure 3, Plate 10**). A date of 1961 present on one of the ceramic disc fragments identified the approximate period when the concrete block structure was built.

Plate 7 shows a representative section of the site's deposit sequence that illustrates the impact of mid twentieth-century construction activity on the site

6) Conclusion

It was concluded that the proposed development site was the subject of large-scale engineering activity during the mid-twentieth century. This activity, during which a substantial roadway or hard-standing area with a 0.52m-thick sub-foundation of built, as was

a rectangular block-like structure that was almost certainly some kind of electrical installation. The construction activity as a whole resulted in ground reduction to depths of between 1.6m and 1.75m, a degree of disturbance that can be assumed to have removed any significant archaeological deposits, features or artefacts on the site. The proposed development poses no threats to any such remains.

7) Figures and plates

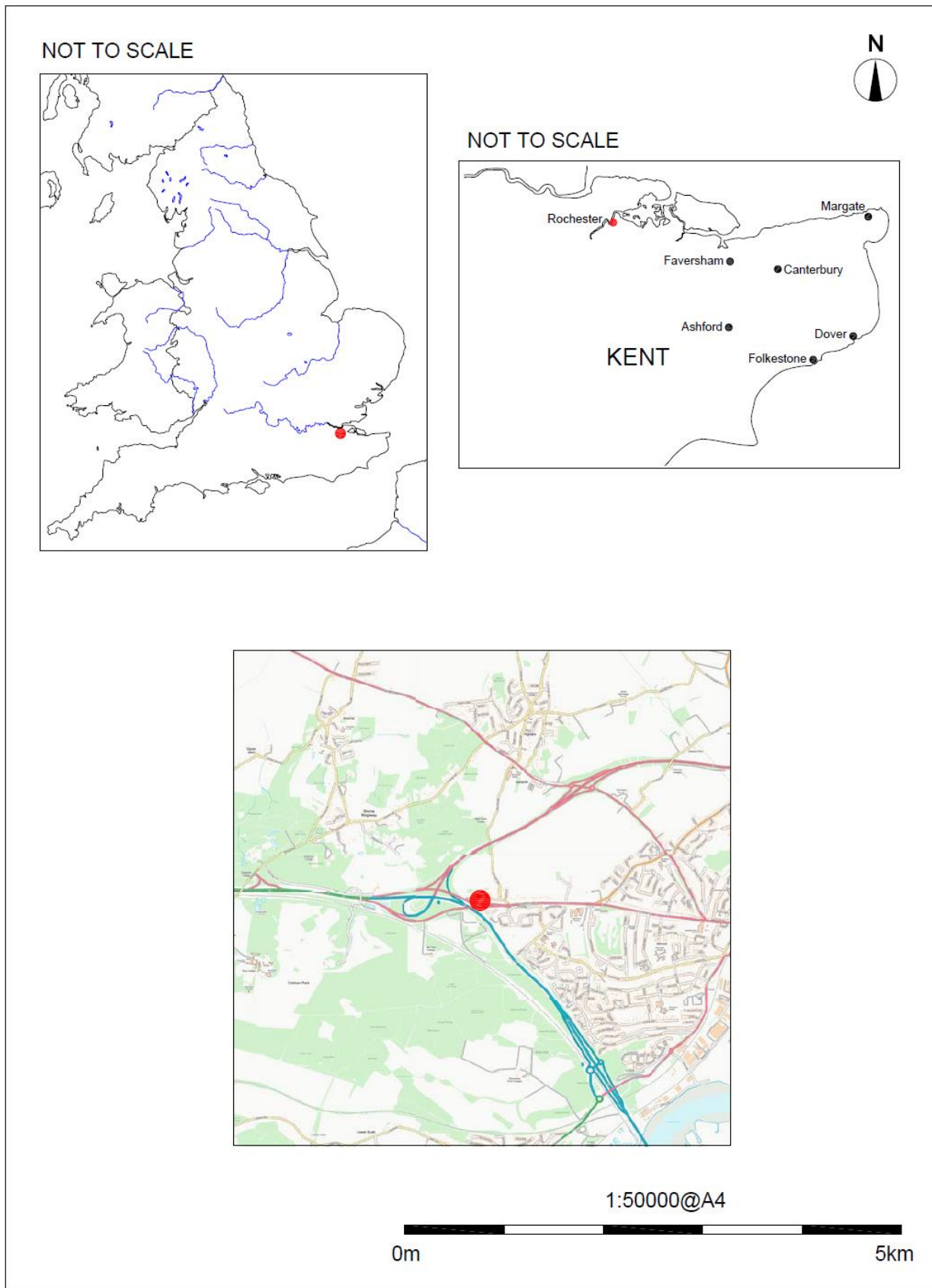


Figure 1. Site location

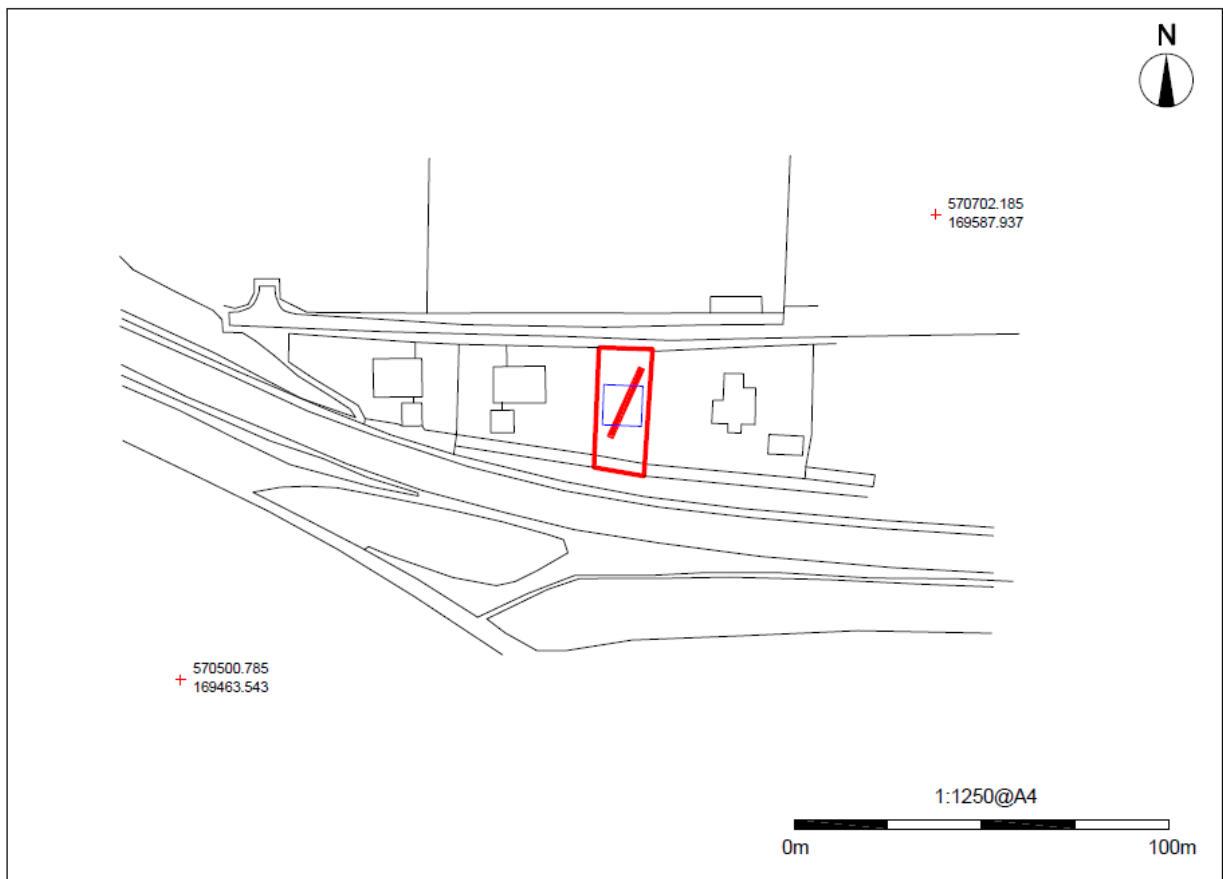


Figure 2. Site location, development area (outlined in red) and evaluation trench position

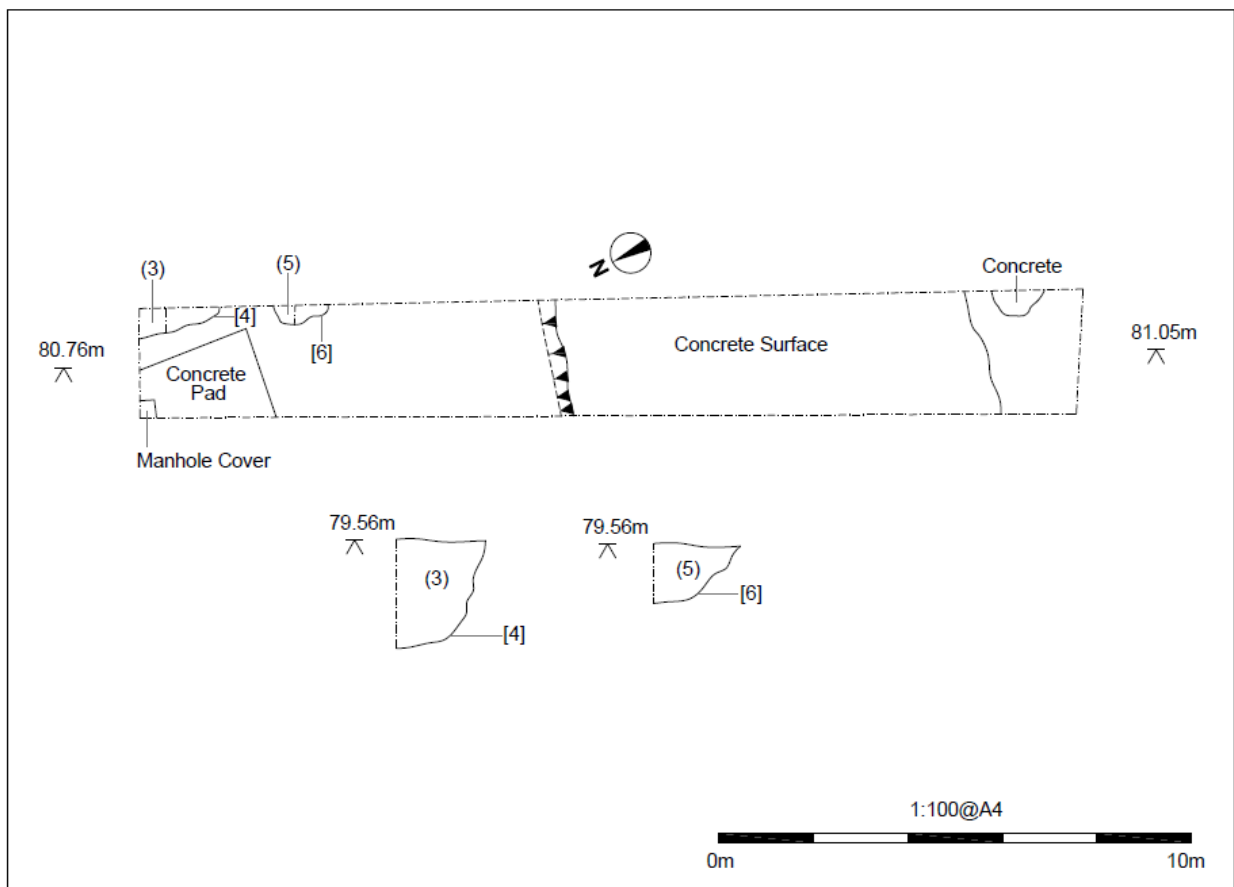


Figure 3. Trench plan and feature sections

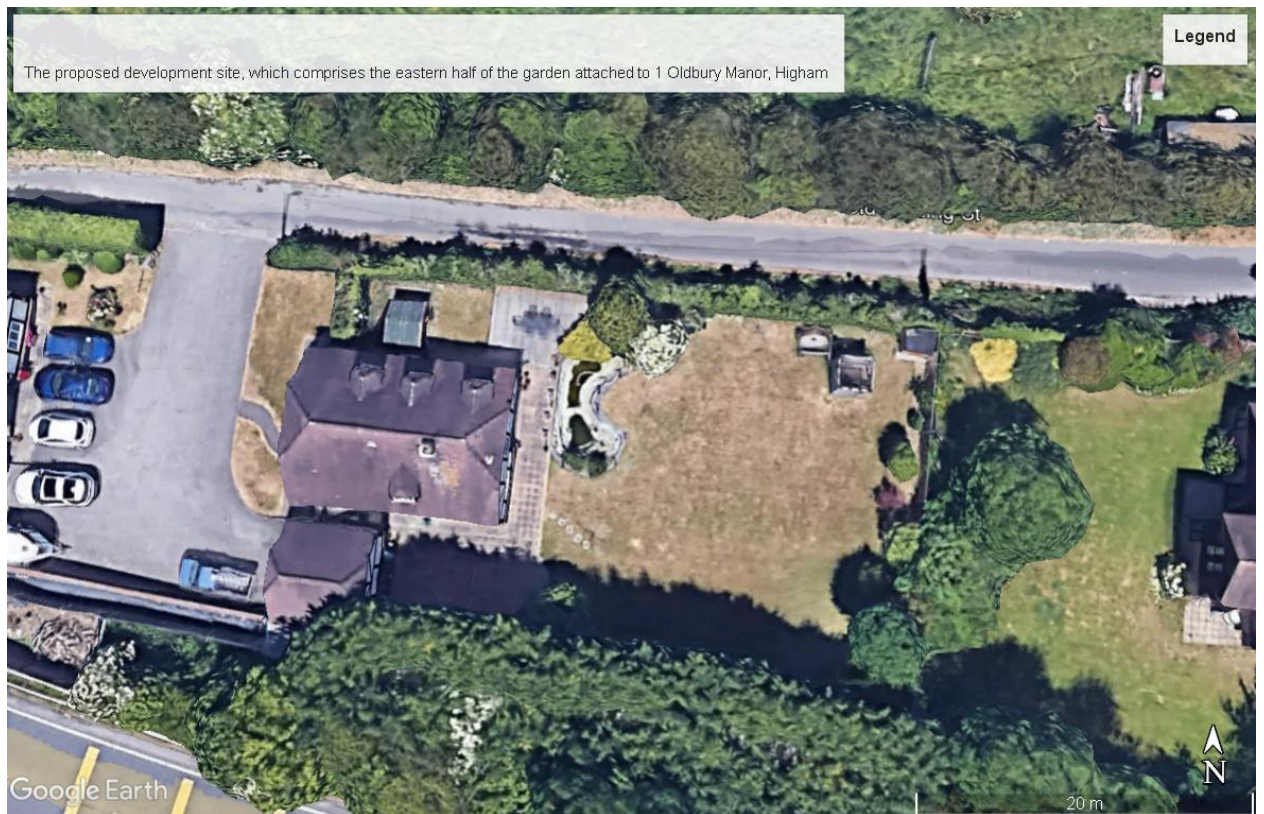


Plate 1. Aerial view of the site



Plate 2. The development site prior to the evaluation (looking south-east-south)



Plate 3. The beginning of the evaluation



Plate 4. The trench looking south-east-south showing the concrete block foundation in the foreground and concrete road/hard-standing in the background. Manhole cover in right foreground (two-metre scale)



Plate 5. The concrete road/hard-standing and its underlying levelling/consolidation (two-metre scale, looking south-east-south)



Plate 6. The trench looking north-west-north showing the *in-situ* concrete road/hard-standing and its exposed underlying levelling/consolidation (two-metre scale)



Plate 7. Representative section showing natural clay-silt (CRN 7) under a modern levelling spread (CRN 2) under redeposited clay-silt (CRN 1) under recently formed topsoil, to which no context number was attributed (each scale section 0.25m long)



Plate 8. Half-sectioned pit 4 (fill=3) cutting sand backfill around concrete block foundation in foreground (looking northeast, two-metre scale)



Plate 9. Half-sectioned pits 4 (fill=3) and 6 (fill=5) cutting sand backfill around concrete block foundation (looking northeast, two-metre scale)



Plate 10. Ceramic and ceramic-and-iron artefactual evidence associated with electric conduction recovered from the made-ground above the concrete block foundation.

8) KCC HER Summary Form

Site Name: 1 Old Foxbury Manor, Old Watling Street, Higham, Kent ME2 3UG	
Site Address: As above	
Summary: No other archaeologically significant deposits, features or artefacts was observed during the evaluation, the results of which pointed to large-scale construction activity on the site during the mid-twentieth century having led to ground reduction sufficient to remove any such remains.	
District/Unitary: Gravesham	Parish: Higham
Period(s): Mid-twentieth century	
NGR (centre of site : 8 figures): (NB if large or linear site give multiple NGRs) TQ 70619 69538	
Type of archaeological work: Evaluation Planning Ref 20211448	
Date of Recording: 28/04/2023	
Unit undertaking recording: Kent Archaeological Projects	
Geology: Thanet Sands	
Title and author of accompanying report: <i>The results of an archaeological evaluation by trial trench prior to development on land at 1 Old Foxbury Manor, Old Watling Street, Higham, Kent ME2 3UG</i> , Tim Allen	
Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate) The evaluation exposed no archaeological features, deposits or artefacts. The proposed development can therefore be consider to pose no negative archaeological impact	
Location of archive/finds: KAP Office	
Contact at Unit: Tim Allen	Date: 11/05/2023