

**STRATFORD CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESKTOP STUDY**

**TQ3945 8475**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Newham Museum Services was commissioned by Robson Planning Consultancy to carry out a Desktop Archaeological Assessment of the Stratford Campus for the University of East London in support of an outline planning application.

1.2 The site is situated on the north side of Romford Road, and bounded by Water Lane, Cedars Road and Torrens Square. The site covers an area approximately 300m north/south by 200m (Fig.1B).

1.3 Part of the site is located in an Archaeological Priority Zone described in the London Borough of Newham's Unitary Development Plan 1993 (Fig. 2)

1.4 The southern part of the site between Romford Road and The Green is currently occupied by the University of East London, formerly the West Ham Technical College and Free Library, erected 1895-98. The whole precinct is Grade 2 (starred) Listed, and the gardens on Water Lane contain a Grade 2 Listed statue of William Shakespeare.

1.5 At the time of preparation of this document, no information had been provided about the proposed developments, so their effect on the structures and deposits in the area could not be assessed.

1.6 This study has been produced within the guidelines detailed in the English Heritage document "Model Brief for an Archaeological Desk top Assessment, London Region Archaeological Guidance Paper: 1, December 1993."

## **2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

2.1 The site lies on a gravel terrace of the River Thames known as the Taplow Gravels which extends northwards up the Lea Valley. These gravels are known to have attracted prehistoric settlement such as the recent series of Bronze Age sites (LE-OC 92-95 unpublished) excavated by Newham Museum Service in Leyton, about 2km to the north-west. A palaeolithic handaxe or core was found in the Stratford Broadway area (Fig. 3. No 1).

2.2 Stratford, first recorded as a place-name between 1066 and 1087, developed where the Roman Road to Colchester crossed the River Lea. The original crossing point was at Old Ford, but the road was diverted in the early 12th century when bridges, linked by a causeway, were built to carry the road over the Lea and Channelsea rivers. The villages of Stratford Bow and Stratford Langthorne developed on the west and east sides respectively. The Savignac and later Cistercian Abbey of Stratford Langthorne was founded in 1135 on land adjacent to the Channelsea. (WH p.9) Settlement in Stratford was to the northeast along the line of the road to Colchester. By the early 17th century this area had become a separate ward of West Ham Parish. In 1670, the ward had 179 houses, and in 1722 Daniel Defoe reported considerable expansion with new hamlets springing up at Maryland Point and the

Gravel Pits on the Ilford Road which has been taken to be the settlement north of Stratford Green, now The Green (WH p.11).

2.3 Romford Road has long been considered to preserve the line of one of the earliest Roman roads, running from London to Colchester, the first Roman capital. This view has been supported by excavations outside the Fire Station (Marshall 1964) (Fig. 3, No. 2), at 30 Romford Road (Redknap 1987) (Fig. 3, No. 3), and a watching-brief at 58 Broadway in 1994 (Fig. 3, No. 4). Roman pottery has been found near St John's Church in the Broadway (Fig. 3, No. 5).

2.4 Medieval pits have been discovered in the area: a rubbish pit was recorded at The Grove during utility works in 1965 (Fig. 3, No. 6), and agricultural and industrial pits, possibly in association with a pond, at 2-12 Romford Road in 1982 (Fig. 3, No. 7).

2.5 The site of the present University and Library complex, between Romford Road and The Green, was originally the broader westernmost end of a wedge-shaped piece of common land running along the northern side of Romford Road. Rocque's map of 1745 shows a number of irregular shaped ponds on the common which do not appear on Chapman and Andre's map of 1777, which shows only a north/south trackway or path, and a four-mile milestone adjacent to the road (Appendix 1A & B.). The Survey of the Parish of West Ham 1821 shows the common divided up, with the western end as a single plot of land numbered '51' (Appendix 1C). The common was enclosed c.1807-20 (WH p.11), and appears as Stratford Green (not 'common') on the O/S map of 1873-82 which shows a roughly square area surrounded by a narrow belt of trees and containing a small rectangular pond (Appendix 1D). There is an opening on to Romford Road which is still present on the O/S map of 1894-96 although the pond has disappeared (Appendix 1E).

2.6 North of The Green, the earliest maps show a line of buildings adjacent to the road, with a large orchard occupying the rest of the site (Appendix 1). The map of 1821 shows divisions into plots of land, and 18th- and early-19th-century houses survived until the Second World War when the area was bombed (WH p. 22). Artillery House, a neo-Gothic style, two-storey house built or rebuilt c.1840 survived, and is included in the premises of the University (WH p. 22, photograph p. 43). An artillery depot existed at the Green from the 1860s to 1960 (WH p.43). The Willows (37 The Green), a three-storey Georgian brick house of five bays with an ornate porch, was demolished after the Second World War (Fig. 3, No. 8). Cedars Road to the north and east contains mainly late-19th-century terraced housing (WH pp. 24, 174).

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

3.1 The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record does not record any archaeological finds from within the area of the proposed development (Appendix 2). The range of the search was a 500m radius, and records within this area are predominantly of standing buildings. The area has been built up since the latter part of the 19th century, and records of archaeological finds are generally the result of

excavation or watching-brief opportunities brought about by redevelopment or service-trenching.

3.2 The archaeological potential of the Stratford Campus cannot be fully determined from the sparse information currently available. Further work, in the form of field evaluation, would be needed to ascertain the site's potential and determine the nature and extent of any archaeological survival, once the development plans were finalised.

3.3 As the information stands, the archaeological interest of the site lies in:

(a) it's position on the Taplow gravel terrace with the consequent possibility of prehistoric settlement.

(b) it's proximity to the Roman road offering the opportunity to investigate roadside settlement.

(c) the evidence for structures along the north side of the Green, including high status 18th- and 19th-century houses.

3.4 The area concerned falls within an Archaeological Priority Zone of the London Borough of Newham (designated Area L, Stratford Village), and any development will affect surviving structures (e.g. Artillery House) and potential deposits.

#### **4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

O/S - Ordnance Survey

SPG - Supplementary Planning Guideline

WH - West Ham 1886-1986 (Powell & Sainsbury)

VCH - Victoria County History (Powell)

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## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Sites and Monuments Record**

The records below are located on Figure 3

1. 060583, palaeolithic handaxe or core (exact find site uncertain)
2. 061634, Roman road
3. 061635, Roman road
4. 062379, Roman road
5. 061615, Roman pottery
6. 061630, medieval rubbish pit
7. 061631, 061632, agricultural/industrial pits possibly in association with pond
8. 061812, 18th century house - 'The Willows', 37 The Grove