



# C261 ARCHAEOLOGY EARLY EAST

## Interim Statement

### Archaeological Excavation

### Stepney Green Shafts

**Document Number: C261-MLA-X-XST-CR140-50001**

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## 1 Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out at Stepney Green Shafts by the C261 Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA). See Fig 1 for location plan.

It was conducted between 22nd June and 18th August 2011

It was recorded under event code (sitecode) XRV10

This document is an interim statement of the results of the fieldwork one week after the end of fieldwork. More extensive background, results, and conclusions will be included the Fieldwork Report which will be submitted within six weeks of the end of fieldwork (Crossrail, *Archaeology, Specification for Evaluation & Mitigation (including Watching Brief, Doc. No. CR-PN-LWS-EN-SP-00001*, v. 0.3, 26.06.09).

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with:

- A Crossrail **Site-specific Written Scheme of Investigation** (SS-WSI): *C123 Intermediate Shafts, Stepney Green Shaft*, Doc No: C123-JUL-T1-TPL-CR094\_SH005\_Z-00001, Revision 6.0, June 2010
- An **Addendum to the WSI**: SS-WSI Document No C123-JUL-T1-RGN-CR094\_SH005\_Z\_00001, Revision 3.0, September 2010
- **MOLA method statement**: C261 Early East Section, Method Statement for Archaeological Targeted Watching Briefs and Excavation at Stepney Green Shaft (Phase 2), Document Number (Blank in P:\MULTI\1051\na\Field\C261\_Early\_East\STE\MS&RA\Stepney\_TWB\_EXCAV\_MS WB Rev 3.0 21.06.11 v.3 signed off.pdf )
- **Addendum to the Method Statement**: C261 Early East Section, Method Statement for Archaeological Targeted Watching Briefs and Excavation at Stepney Green Shaft (Phase 2) – Geoarchaeological and Brick Sampling Strategy, Document Number: C261-MLA-X-GMS-CRG02-500002
- **Addendum to the Method Statement**: C261 Early East Section, Method Statement for Archaeological Targeted Watching Briefs and Excavation at Stepney Green Shaft (Phase 2) – Photographic Aerial Shots, Document Number C261-MLA-X-GMS-CRG02-500002

## 2 Fieldwork Objectives

The overall objectives of the investigation are to establish the nature, extent and state of preservation of any surviving archaeological remains that will be impacted upon by the development.

They are outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation and developed in the Method Statement (section 3.3, p6) and reproduced below:

- Recover archaeological remains of prehistoric date relating to occupation of the area;
- Recover archaeological remains of medieval date relating to the expansion of Stepney Green;

- Recover archaeological remains of Post-medieval, or earlier date relating to Worcester House or its predecessor;
- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains surviving below the foundations of building shown on the 19th century Ordnance Survey map;
- Record the character and extent of archaeological remains identified during trial trenching. Preserve *in situ* any archaeological remains identified by the evaluation and covers the footprint of the working area.

### **3 Methodology**

The archaeological remains were recorded to best practice standards, in order to achieve archaeological objectives. The site recording includes:

- The written record of individual context descriptions on appropriate pro-forma sheets.
- The drawn record: including, plans and section drawings of appropriate features, structures and individual contexts (1:10 1:20, 1:50 and 1:100). Sections were drawn at 1:10 and located on local site grid co-ordinates. Measured and annotated sketches of masonry (brick) structures were drawn on the pro-forma written sheets. Selected remains were topographically surveyed by optical and satellite-based instruments, digitally.
- A stratigraphic matrix of the sequence of deposits and structures was produced.
- The photographic record: photographs taken with a digital camera of resolution of 12 megapixels or greater, providing similar resolution to a conventional 35mm SLR. The photographic record includes photographs of archaeological features, appropriate groups of features, structures, and quaternary deposits. Photographs were recorded using a proforma photographic record sheet, showing image number, area, context number(s), subject/description, direction of view, and date. In addition, appropriate record photographs were undertaken to illustrate work in progress.
- A photomosaic of the site was compiled from low-level (oblique) aerial photographs taken by a vehicle-mounted telescopic pole (by aerial-cam ltd). High resolution (12.3mp) Nikon digital SLR cameras are used and positioned via a motorised pan and tilt head by wire connection to a monitor control box at ground level.
- Levels on plans, sections and other fieldwork records were related to OS datum, via the Crossrail control survey stations and by a level datum established by using a Leica SmartRover ATX 1230+ GNSS Antenna with an RX 1250XC controller. This produces a 3D survey tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid (OSGB36).
- The location of the excavation trench, temporary grids and baselines were electronically surveyed by MOLA Geomatics staff using both satellite and optical instruments. After fieldwork a digital trench location plan was produced.
- Targeted watching-brief areas were offset-surveyed to features located on the OS 1:1250 map and on structures topographically surveyed previously.
- Other appropriate drawn and written records will be produced (for environmental sampling etc).



## 4 Provisional Results

See Fig 1 for Excavation and Targeted Watching Brief locations

### 4.1 Excavation Trench



*Photo 1 Excavation trench looking north, 16th August 2011. Late-medieval or early-Tudor ditch to the bottom of the picture, King John's Court (Palace) / Worcester House to the top. Earlier, remains were excavated in the area below the crushed concrete, to the left.*

<i>Excavation Trench</i>	
Location	Stepney Green Shaft, shaft location, either side of and including Garden Street
Dimensions	52m north to south and 25.2m east to west x 3.2 – 3.0m deep
Modern Ground Level/top of the slab	4.96m OD, 104.96m ATD
Modern subsurface deposits	2.40m deep modern levelling deposits
Level of base of archaeological deposits observed and/or base of trench	Base of trench at bottom of moat: 6.4m OD, 106.4m ATD (southern arm of moat) x 6.2m OD, 106.2m ATD (western arm of moat)

Natural observed (truncated/not truncated?)	Brickearth at 7.9m OD, 107.9m ATD (1.5m bGL) Truncated
Extent of modern truncation	500mm – 1.0m
Archaeological remains	Dating Evidence, Finds, and Samples
A brick wall [196], to the south west of the trench	Late 15th- or 16th-century (l. Betts field identification)
L-shaped ditch [220] / [284] 1.2m deep x <4m wide	N/A (cut)
The south end of ditch [220] and all of [284] were backfilled relatively quickly with homogenous brown-grey brickearth [283] [229].	16th-century pot (provisional date) Samples <4> to <12> (Monoliths and bulk)
Cut into ditch fill [229] was a brick structure [210] founded on two stone blocks set into natural terrace gravels either side of the ditch. The south wall had a shallow – and not altogether successful – relieving arch with infilled brick course below. At either end of the structure the top of the walls had been carved into another semi-circle and an arch of brick set upon them. Over the top of this arch was laid the north wall across the backfilled ditch. The brick structure formed a narrow rectangle in plan with redeposited ditch deposits used to backfill the centre of it [209]	16th-century or Early 17th-century (l. Betts field identification)
North of brick structure [210] ditch fills were of a different character with natural gravel sheared from the west side and slumped [219]. A cassy-silty base deposit with frequent brick and tile fragments and large animal bones ('bottom load' or 'bed load' of a natural sediment) [218], followed by dark grey-brown silt [217] and covered by a deliberate backfill of redeposited gravels and brickearth [216]. It is possible that these were later than the construction of structure [210] and that [210] was a latrine emptying into the ditch	Pottery 17th-century (provisional date) Bulk samples ,<2><3>
Brick drain [206] crossed the ditch fill covered by wall [212] which ran along the edge of the ditch north of structure [210] and which might have been a	16th-century or Early 17th-century (l. Betts field identification)

modification of it	
North and east of the above remains were those of a more enclosed moated house including an outer brick wall [233], 700mm wide (stepped out to 1 meter at base) with a ‘chamfered’ south-east corner mirrored by the internal “island” and -possibly- house wall (0.63m wide) [270]. Between the two was an 8m-wide, 1.7m-deep moat divided into southern [279] and western arms [249] by a causeway of natural gravel left in place. Across the west edge of the causeway was a timber baseplate [287] (originally part of a parallel pair, the eastern one removed by a modern sewer). Central mortices were cut into the upper surface of the baseplate. Dump [296] partially covered it.	16th-century or Early 17th-century (l. Betts field identification)  Baseplate [287] was identified as elm off-site therefore samples <28> and <29> are not suitable for dendrochronology, as elm growth patterns are too variable to sequence. However, they may be suitable for radio carbon dating.
A series of walls in the north-east corner of the trench – founded onto natural brickearth – were the physical remains of the rooms within King John’s Court/Palace – Worcester House [235][237][238][269]	16th-century or Early 17th-century (l. Betts field identification)
The bottom fill of the moat – on the outside edge – was a dump of brick and mortar demolition rubble [290] and followed by a series of water-lain sediments [257][258][275][276][277][288][294][295]	17th-century pottery , (provisional date) bowling ball, spur.  Monolith and bulk samples <13> to <25>
Into the moat fills a brick cess pit or drain trap was cut [254], it was set on a series of mortise, tenoned and pegged baseplates [297][298][299][300]. The lower fill [251] had several complete, or near complete, cooking pots	17th-century pot (provisional date)  Dendro samples <28> and <29>  Bulk Samples <30> and <31>
A series of drains made of re-used building material crossed the site. [252][265][267][271] cut through the area of the Tudor mansion and the silted-up moat. If they ever had a relationship to the trap or cess pit [254] -above- it had been removed by modern truncation. A further drain [286] lay parallel to, and 5m north (inside) of ditch [284] (see L-shaped ditch above).	Early 19th-century (Tobacco pipe – provisional date))  Sample no <4>

<p>A group of walls built with darker red brick and light-grey lime mortar with coal-ash added cut through the earlier rooms of Worcester House / King John's Court [241]</p>	<p>18th- or early 19th-century Brick</p>
<p>The remains of a cess pit [261][262] (one of three exposed in the evaluation) cut through the brick walls [270] and [235]</p>	<p>19th-century pottery (provisional date)</p>
<p>A series of cess pits and wells and/or possible soakaways were located west of Garden Street [182][183],[[185][186][187],[190][191][192],[193][194][195], [197][198][204][203][199], [200][201][202]. [183] and [184] were associated with a brick wall [185], part of which had been exposed in the evaluation.</p>	<p>19th-century pottery and glass (provisional date) Bulk Sample &lt;1&gt;</p>
<p>A north–south aligned yellow-stock brick wall [188] set on concrete was exposed in the southern part of the trench</p>	<p>19th-century to early 20th-century, bricks</p>
<p>Interpretation and summary</p>	
<p>Brick wall [196] might have been the “estate” wall of the property that became known variously as King John’s Palace, King John’s Court and Worcester House, or that of a neighbouring property. It is possible that L-shaped ditch [220] / [284] was part of an earlier moat which enclosed a larger “island” and that it was retained as a decorative garden feature.</p> <p>It is possible that structure [210] is a form of latrine – or else it is some garden feature over part of the ditch that was retained when the southern part was backfilled. Whatever its function, it seems probable that the structure was retained when ditch [220] was filled as drain [206] was dug through the ditch fills and a brick wall [212] both covered [206] and joined onto [210]</p> <p>The most significant remains are those of the main phase of King John’s Court (Palace) / Worcester House. Unfortunately the floor levels of this building have been truncated by later activity, but some details of the superstructure may be gleaned from bricks and tile reused in later drains and moulded-stone fragments found elsewhere.</p> <p>Outer wall [233] was substantial and probably implies that the moat [279][249] not only lapped at its edge (and thereby it functioned as a retaining wall) but also that it stood to a considerable height and would have been a significant “security” feature (cf Lullingstone and Herstmonceaux castle). The timber baseplate [287] is thought to have originally been paired with another the east side of the natural gravel “causeway”. It is likely that they lay just below the water level of the moat and that mortices held tennoned uprights of a bridge crossing the moat. There is no door opposite the end of the baseplate, lending support to the idea that it supported a bridge at a higher level. If this interpretation is correct, the location of such a bridge</p>	



is still curious. It would have exited or arrived at the south-west corner of the “island” and/or possible building. Samples were taken from the baseplate and radio carbon dating may give a construction date for the complex.

The moat fills [257][258][276][277][288][294][295] have been systematically sampled (as was ditch fill [283]), producing a significant assemblage of finds including leather, a bowling ball and 17th-century pottery.

At this juncture, it has not been decided whether the outer wall [270] of the “island” within the moat stood as a retaining wall and a precinct-perimeter wall, or whether the building was constructed above it. Similar moated houses should be examined to determine this.

Little can be gleaned by examining the few rooms exposed in the main excavation, outlined by walls [235][237][238][269]. However, a comparison with remains found in the evaluation may be more fruitful, as would specific historical research.

We know that the house evolved from being the secure London residence of aristocrats with other main residences elsewhere, and that it became divided into separate dwellings following its sequestration by Parliament during the Civil War. It is in this context that the moat silted up and was finally backfilled. This action is one of limited archaeological remains of the profound social changes in the 17th century. The cess pit or drain trap [264] probably dates from the middle of the 17th century. A date may be obtained by dendrochronology, as a sample from its baseplate [297] has been taken.

The area of Worcester House in the 17th century (the name may have been used to support the claims of the Somerset family, marquises of Worcester, to regain the house through legal action in the later 17th century) became by default a religious complex as a Nonconformist meeting house was built facing onto Stepney Way (south of the excavated area and probably west of the southern Targeted Watching Brief) and Worcester House becoming a Baptist College. Brick drains crossed the area of the site and relate to this period [252][265][267][271].

The north end of Garden Street was beginning to be constructed in the early 19th-century and is represented in the 1819 Horwood map. This included building a road over the drains and a chapel, part of which is still standing. The rooms of the college south of the chapel included the brick walls [241] that cut into the 17th-century rooms in the north-east corner of the excavation trench.

The Baptist college was short-lived and the site remodelled following their removal to Regents Park in the middle of the 19th century. The late-medieval or early-Tudor gatehouse King John’s Tower (see evaluation report) was demolished and the walls of the college were reused to form very small houses facing Garden street. Cess pits in those houses included [260][261][262].

Remains west of Garden Street from the late 19th century include cess-pits and wells or soakaways [182][183],[185][186][187],[190][191][192],[193][194][195],[197][198][204][203][199], [200][201][202]. [183] and [185], which may be related to the Ordnance Survey map using wall [185] for detailed comparison.



*Photo 2 Possible latrine structure [210] (after north side removed), and wall [212] dug into late-medieval or early-Tudor ditch fills [229][219][218][217] and [216].*





Photo 3 Late 15th- or 16th-century wall [196]



Photo 4 Remains of King John's Court (Palace) / Worcester House





*Photo 5 Internal walls of King John's Court (Palace) / Worcester House [235][237][238][269], and inserted early 19th-century (lighter) walls [241]*



*Photo 6 Detail of causeway across the moat with timber baseplate [287], cess pit or trap [254] and drains [265][267][271]*



## 4.2 Targeted Watching Brief Congregational Church wall



Photo 7 Removal of first metre of modern fill

<b>Targeted Watching Brief – Congregational Church wall</b>	
Location	Stepney Green Shaft, north and south of the Congregational Church wall
Dimensions	42.6m north – south and 19.5m east – west
Modern Ground Level/top of the slab	Unknown
Modern subsurface deposits	2.2m deep modern levelling deposits
Level of base of archaeological deposits observed and/or base of trench	Base of trench: 2.2m bGL
Natural observed (truncated/not truncated ?)	None observed
Extent of modern truncation	<2.2m
<b>Archaeological remains</b>	<b>Dating Evidence, Finds, and Samples</b>
Ex-situ moulded limestone block found in modern fill	20th-century cement-based mortar adhering

Foundations of Congregational school	19th to early 20th-century bricks
Foundations of Congregational church	19th to early 20th-century bricks
<b>Interpretation and summary</b>	
Remains of the Congregational church and school were investigated in the evaluation. Ground reduction of <2.2m north of the Congregational and <750mm south of it exposed the top of these remains but did not dig into them. A series of hoarding fence post-holes dug around it – to 700mm bGL – exposed only modern deposits only	



*Photo 8 Removal of second metre of modern fill*



### 4.3 Baptist College Chapel protection



*Photo 9 Baptist College Chapel, looking west*



*Baptist College Chapel, looking north*

Targeted Watching Brief – Baptist College	
Location	South and east of the former Baptist chapel
Dimensions	A series of holes 0.8m x 0.8m and 0.9m deep, were dug in prepared ground (trench illustrated) 1.3m wide and 20m long
Modern Ground Level/top of the slab	Unknown (higher than the ground level surrounding the excavation trench)
Modern subsurface deposits	>0.9m modern coal-ashy dump with frequent yellow-stock brick fragments
Level of base of archaeological deposits observed and/or base of trench	?
Natural observed (truncated/not truncated ?)	Not Observed
Extent of modern truncation	>0.9m



Archaeological remains	Dating Evidence, Finds, and Samples
None	
Interpretation and summary	
Modern made ground was exposed, which raised the ground level of the city farm above that of surrounding roads. Hoarding fence post-holes did not disturb archaeological deposits.	



## 5 Significance of Results (*provisional*)

### 5.1 Summary of Fieldwork Results

Modern truncation is generally 1m below ground level but varies between 0.3m and 3m below ground level (modern concrete pads in the location of the former Redcoat School on the corner of Garden Street and Stepney green, north-west corner of the site, were 3m deep). The underlying, archaeologically sterile, natural substrata are of Brickearth silt at 8.00m OD; 108.0m ATD overlying Thames Terrace Gravels at 7.6m–7.3m OD, 107.6m–107.3m ATD.

Archaeological remains have been truncated below the ground floor level. There are substantial sub-surface remains of a Tudor-period moat and a ditch which, possibly, is late medieval in origin. Outside (west) of the earlier ditch is a north-south aligned wall provisionally dated to the late 15th- or 16th-centuries. It is possible that ditch and wall belong to the earliest phase of a brick-built aristocratic house on the site, during the Wars of the Roses or the reign of Henry VII.

A brick structure over the backfilled south end of the ditch is possibly a latrine, although this interpretation is tentative, and a further wall built onto it overlies a drain dug into the later fills north of the possible latrine. Preliminarily dated by bricks on site, it was constructed in the 16th- or early 17th-century.

Also built in the 16th- or early 17th-century is the main form of a moated mansion, recorded variously as King John's Court, King John's Palace and Worcester House. There was no known association with King John but the name was used for at least one other historic house in Tower Hamlets also, where it would appear to imply a dwelling of some age. The excavated elements of the mansion consist of a strong external wall around an 8m-wide ditch and a brick-walled revetted "island". Due to the level of truncation it is not possible to determine at this juncture whether the "island" wall was also the foundation of a house, or not. A "causeway" of natural terrace gravel divided the moat into southern and western sections and a timber baseplate with upper mortices may have once been one of a pair that supported a bridge across the moat. There is no obvious doorway opposite the causeway, and access is thought to have been at a level above modern truncation. The moat preserved organic materials and a bowling ball and leather items were amongst the finds. The moat is the major source of portable finds on the site.

In the north-east corner of the excavation were preserved a series of walls from the sub-structure of the Tudor-period mansion. Where they met the "island" walls there was no join, but neither was there a south wall to the building, which presumably was built on the "island" retaining wall. They had been truncated below the contemporary ground level and details of the superstructure can mainly be gleaned from materials reused to form a series of drains which were laid out across the "island" and ran along its west wall, as well as crossing the backfilled moat. The exact relationship between the drains and a brick cess pit or trap also set into moat fills is obscure but one section of drain runs between the pit/trap structure and the west "island" wall. Fills of the cess pit or trap include complete -broken- large cooking vessels of broadly 17th-century date and drain fills from within the island included 19th-century clay-tobacco-pipe. The structure was founded on timber baseplates, with pegged mortise and tenon joints.

A further group of walls, reusing some of the original Tudor foundations were aligned with the remains of the 19th-century Baptist College Chapel. This was built at the same time as the beginning of Garden Street and the outline of the moat had already been buried. They are thought to be from a radical restructuring of the house to allow it to function as a college.

A 19th-century cess pit which had been partially excavated during the evaluation – where it was one of three recorded – was completely excavated. It had been dug into the junction of the internal house structure and the outer island (or house) walls. It dated from the division of the

college into a series very small houses in the middle of the 19th-century, and before mains foul drainage arrived in the area following a notorious cholera epidemic of the 1860s.

A series of cess pits, wells and possible soakaways, located on the west side of Garden Street may be related to individual houses by the inclusion of a contemporary wall, which may be located on contemporary Ordnance Survey maps. This may allow comparison with census data in the future.

## **5.2 Importance of Resources**

The archaeological remains identified in the excavation are assessed as being of high importance, because of the survival not only of structural remains but also because of the variety and quality of finds from the area of the moat. The remains are identified as those of King John's Court (Palace) / Worcester House, the 17th-century history of which is well documented. The Victoria County History is ambivalent whether this was also Fennes Manor, but if so, a continuous and relatively detailed documentary history survives back to the middle ages. Because of the historical links, as well as the quality of finds and structural remains, they are considered of national significance.

## **5.3 Provisional Assessment of Results against Aims and Objectives**

The overall objectives of the investigation are set out in section 2 (above)

No prehistoric remains were excavated nor were there any medieval remains associated with the village of Stepney outside those of a major manor house.

The earliest remains of King John's Palace are thought to have been a major wall and ditch found on the south-west area of the excavation trench. The wall has been provisionally dated to the late 15th-century or 16th-century and these remains may be from the end of the medieval or the transition to the post-medieval period.

Remains from the well-documented years of King John's Court (Palace) / Worcester House were the most substantial recovered during the excavation. The remains of a moat had not been revealed in evaluation trenches and its discovery has expanded the type of finds and the potential environmental information recoverable from the site. Together with the documentary record, this makes this a nationally, and internationally, important archaeological excavation.

Remains below 19th-century buildings on the west side of Garden Street are those of the earlier brick wall, ditch and the later moat and wall described above.

Targeted Watching Briefs on works to remains of the Congregational Church and Baptist College Chapel included the only significant areas of ground reduction. Hoarding post-holes in these areas did not disturb archaeological remains, nor did ground reduction. This is considered true of works elsewhere, which were generally monitored whilst excavation continued.

## **5.4 Provisional conclusions for future work**

- It is recommended that the area outside of the excavation trench, but still within the southern end of proposed diaphragm walls, (that were unavailable for excavation because of their location) should be monitored during ground reduction with the specific aim of determining whether the early 15th-century wall continues or not.



- The investigation has suggested there is significant potential for correlating the recording of buried structures with historic documentary sources and finds assemblages on the St John's Court/Palace/Worcester House.
- Finds processing and specialist reports are being prepared for the Fieldwork Report.



## **6 Future Deliverables**

The remaining deliverables for the site, and their delivery dates as specified by *Crossrail, Archaeology, Specification for Evaluation & Mitigation (including Watching Brief, Doc. No. CR-PN-LWS-EN-SP-00001, v. 0.3, 26.06.09*, are:

- **Survey Report** by 6th September 2011
- **Fieldwork Report** (including HER Summary Sheet) by 3rd October 2011
- **Summary Report** by 17th October 2011

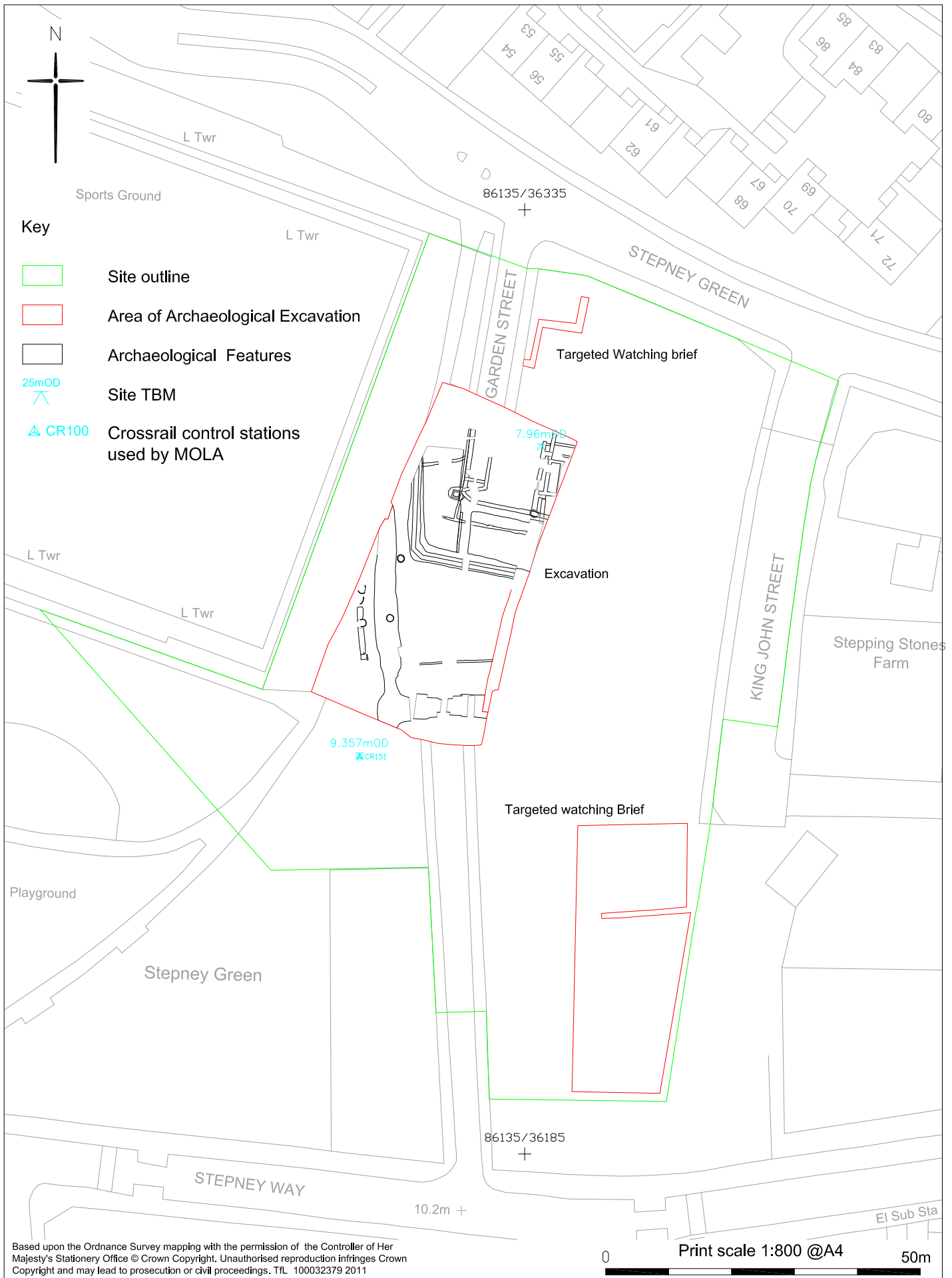




## **7 Annex 1 – Excavation and areas of Targeted Watching Brief Location Plan**

*Fig 1 Location of Excavation and Targeted Watching Briefs*

*(to be inserted in the PDF version of this document)*



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0 **Print scale 1:800 @A4** 50m

<p>Event code / Site code: XRV10 : Fig 1</p>	<p>Site Address: Crossrail : C123 Stepney Green Shaft</p>	<p>Type of fieldwork: Excavation &amp; TWB</p>
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