

An Archaeological Evaluation on Land West of the Junction of Poplar High Street and Preston's Road and East of Poplar Business Park, Preston's Road, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Site Code: PPP 06

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 38250 80700

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August 2006**

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken on land west of the junction of Poplar High Street and Preston's Road and east of Poplar Business Park, Preston's Road, Poplar, London, E14. The evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd for CgMs Consulting Ltd. It was project managed by Chris Mayo of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd and supervised by the author from 19th to 23rd June 2006 and by Alexis Haslam from 26th to 27th June 2006.
- 1.2 Two trenches were excavated at the site. A layer of modern crushed concrete covered the site at the time of excavation.
- 1.3 Trench 1 contained a deposit of natural terrace gravel sealed by a layer of weathered "brickearth", probably deposited during the Pleistocene era and weathered during the Holocene era. The ground level was then artificially raised during the post-medieval period with the deposition of a thick dump layer, on top of which a series of post-medieval to 19th century brick walls and floors were constructed. The masonry was truncated in places by modern intrusions, interpreted as World War II bomb damage, and sealed by a layer of 20th century made ground.
- 1.4 The earliest deposit encountered within Trench 2 was also a layer of natural terrace gravel of probable Pleistocene date, sealed by an alluvial sequence of probable early to mid Holocene date. The alluvial sequence consisted of a lower unit of sandy silty clay, sealed by a unit of peat, sealed by an upper unit of sandy silty clay. This probably represents a marine transgression, represented by the lower unit of clay, a marine regression creating a stable land surface, represented by the unit of peat, and another marine transgression, creating the upper unit of clay. The alluvial sequence was partially truncated by a semi-circular cut containing dumped domestic waste dating to the early 19th century, which was sealed by a dump of Reigate stone and a thick deposit of 19th century made ground.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on land west of the junction of Poplar High Street and Preston's Road and east of Poplar Business Park, Preston's Road, in advance of a proposed redevelopment of the site for residential properties. The evaluation was conducted between 19th and 27th June 2006 and was commissioned by Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting Ltd.
- 2.2 The site is bound to the north by Poplar High Street, to the south by Poplar Business Park and Aspen Way, to the east by Preston's Road and to the west by Poplar Business Park and properties fronting Poplar High Street.
- 2.3 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 38250 80700.
- 2.4 The site was given the code PPP 06.
- 2.5 The project was monitored by David Divers of English Heritage, project managed by Chris Mayo and supervised by Alexis Haslam and the author.

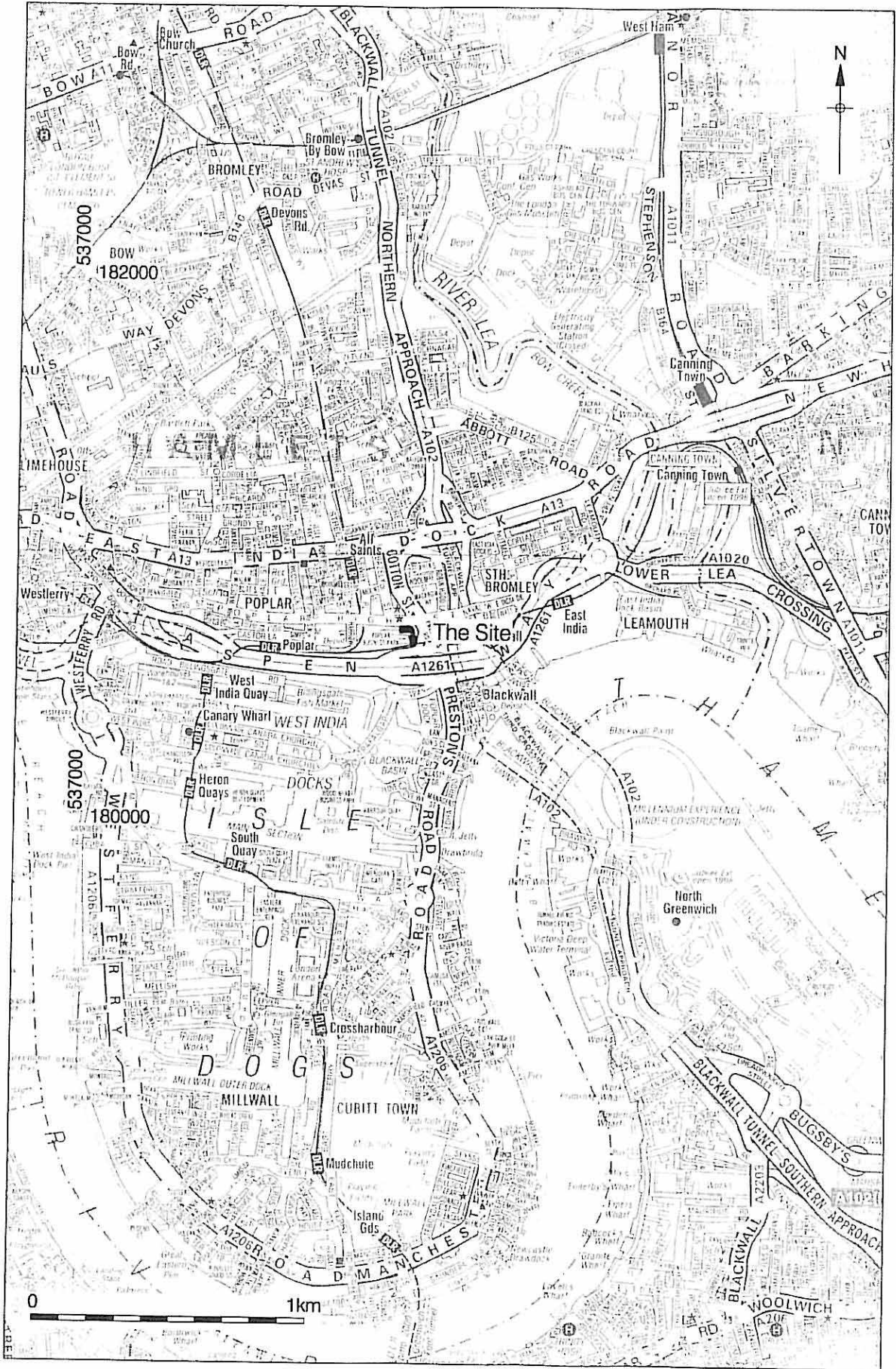
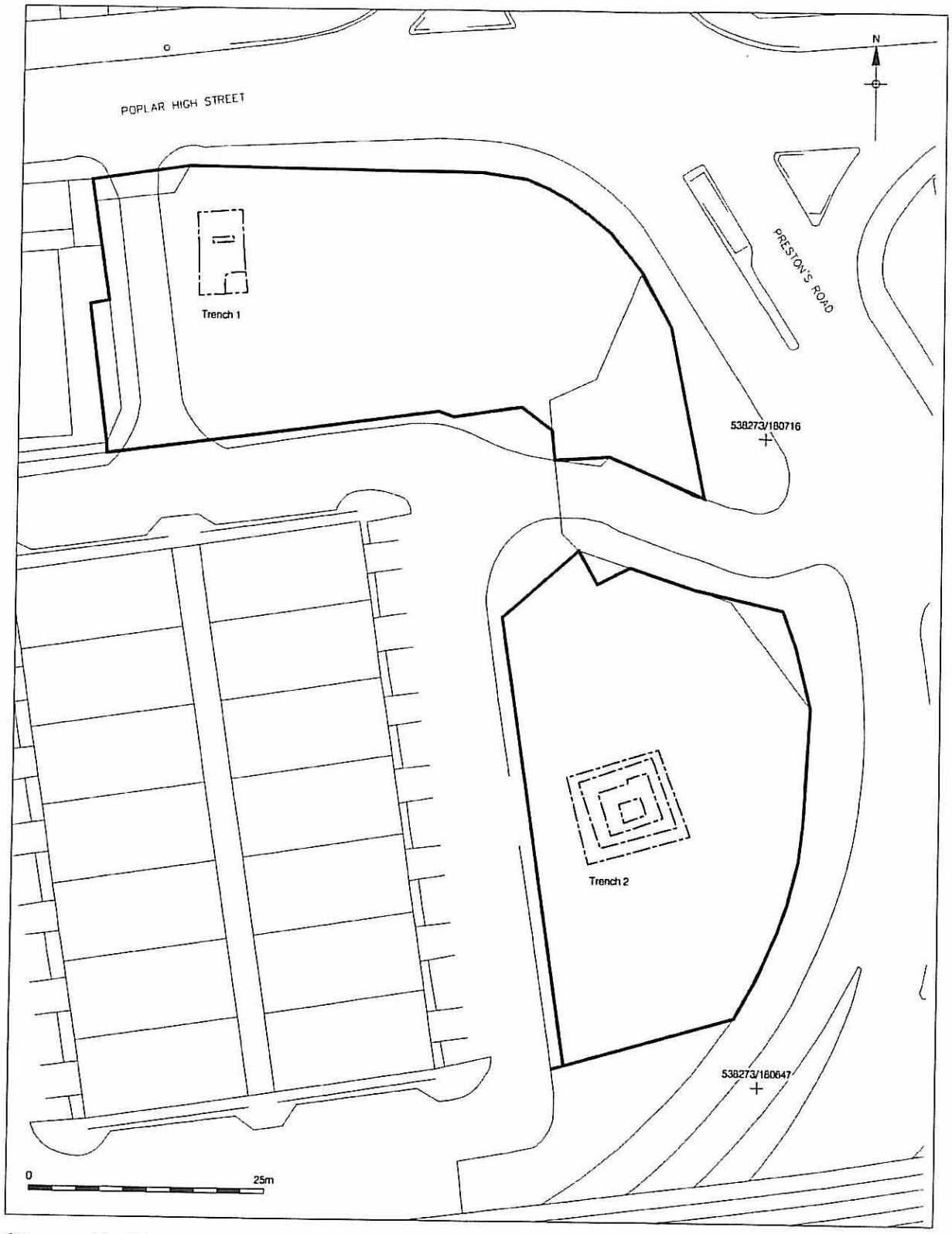


Figure 1
Site Location
1:20,000



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Figure 2
Site Location
1:500

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) "Archaeology and Planning", providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.

3.2 In short, government policies provide a framework which:

- Protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Protect the settings of these sites
- Protect nationally important un-scheduled ancient monuments
- Has a presumption in favour of in situ preservation
- In appropriate circumstances, requires adequate information (from field evaluation) to enable informed decisions
- Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not important enough to merit *in situ* preservation

3.3 In considering any proposal for development, the local planning authority will be mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16, of existing development plan policy and of other material considerations.

3.4 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan (UDP) includes several clauses in relation to archaeological practice within the Borough. This includes the following:

DEV42 DEVELOPMENT WHICH ADVERSELY AFFECTS NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS, INCLUDING SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS, WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED.

DEV43 DEVELOPMENT WHICH AFFECTS ANY LOCALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OR REMAINS, INCLUDING INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY, MAY BE PERMITTED DEPENDING UPON :

1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS;

2 THE NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT; AND

3 MEASURES PROPOSED FOR THE PROTECTION, ENHANCEMENT AND PRESERVATION OF THE SITE AND THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF THE REMAINS TO THE PUBLIC.

DEV44 THE PERMANENT PRESERVATION IN SITU OF NATIONALLY IMPORTANT REMAINS WILL NORMALLY BE REQUIRED. PRESERVATION OF OTHER REMAINS WILL BE A PREFERENCE, SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REMAINS AND THE NEED

FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE. WHERE PRESERVATION IS NOT APPROPRIATE, EXCAVATION AND RECORDING MAY BE REQUIRED.

DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES SHOULD ADOPT SUITABLE DESIGN, LAND USE AND SITE MANAGEMENT TO ACHIEVE THESE ENDS.

DEV45 PROPOSALS INVOLVING GROUND WORKS IN AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OR POTENTIAL, SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, OR CONCERNING INDIVIDUAL SITES NOTIFIED TO THE COUNCIL BY ENGLISH HERITAGE OR THE MUSEUM OF LONDON WILL BE SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING

REQUIREMENTS:

1. WITHIN AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE APPLICANTS WILL NEED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN PROPERLY ASSESSED. A WRITTEN ASSESSMENT (ARCHAEOLOGICAL STATEMENT) BASED ON THE PROFESSIONAL ADVICE OF AN APPROVED ARCHAEOLOGY CONSULTANT OR ORGANISATION SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AS PART OF THE DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR A COMPLETE PLANNING APPLICATION.

2. WITHIN AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE, THE COUNCIL MAY REQUEST, WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS LIKELY TO AFFECT IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS, THAT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION OF THE SITE IS CARRIED OUT BEFORE ANY DECISION IS MADE ON THE PLANNING APPLICATION.

3. WHERE THE PRESERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS *IN SITU* IS NOT APPROPRIATE, THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT NO DEVELOPMENT TAKES PLACE ON THE SITE UNTIL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION, EXCAVATION AND RECORDING HAS TAKEN PLACE BY AN APPROVED ARCHAEOLOGICAL ORGANISATION.

4 IN APPROPRIATE CASES THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AFFORDED FOR THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SITES, BEFORE AND DURING DEMOLITION AND DEVELOPMENT. SUITABLE PROVISION SHOULD BE MADE FOR *IN SITU* PRESERVATION OF REMAINS (DEV44) AND FINDS IN THE ORIGINAL LOCATION, OR FOR REMOVING THEM TO A SUITABLE PLACE OF SAFE KEEPING.

5.62 Tower Hamlets has a long and rich history. Archeological remains are an important source of evidence of this history from Roman times to the recent industrial past. One of the principle sources of archaeological evidence is the development of sites, but this evidence is easily destroyed in the development process. The Council therefore wishes to ensure that development involving groundworks in areas which may contain archeological remains makes early and specified allowance for the investigation of the archaeological potential of the site before groundworks for the development is allowed to proceed. The Council's preference will be to seek and maintain any finds and remains *in situ*. The Council will seek the guidance of English Heritage and the Museum of London in determining the importance of archaeological remains.

5.63 The Council is concerned to see that sites which may be of interest are properly investigated and records made of any finds before development takes place. It is important the Borough's archaeological heritage is made accessible to the public as an educational, recreational

and tourist resource. The Council will therefore support and promote measures which protect and conserve sites and which will allow the public access to sites with archaeological remains to the extent that this is compatible with the protection of the remains.

5.64 The Council will seek professional archaeological advice from English Heritage or a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or consultant as appropriate and expect applicants to do the same when proposing development which could affect archaeological remains. It is important that developers have properly assessed and planned for the implications of their proposals in terms of scheduling time and resources for investigations to be carried out of the site. Proposals for investigation should be built into the development programme at an early stage in the process. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Archaeology and Development, outlines the preferred procedure for investigation before development takes place. An archaeological assessment is normally a desktop evaluation of existing information on the development site, commissioned from a professional archaeological body or consultant. Sources may include historic maps, written sources, previous finds, archaeological fieldwork and geographical surveys. An archaeological evaluation is in contrast field based, but, as distinct from a full archaeological excavation, is normally a small scale and rapid operation, entailing ground survey and limited trial trenching. It should, nevertheless, be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or individual. An evaluation of this kind helps to define the character and extent of surviving archaeological remains in the area of a proposed development, and thus to indicate the weight that ought to be attached to their preservation.

5.65 Archeologically important areas are found throughout the Borough as shown on the Proposals Map. There are also records of numerous finds which may indicate areas of potential. The Council will consult with English Heritage and the Museum of London in the designation of areas of archaeological importance and will consult them about any areas of potential. Proposals which fall within these areas will be subject to policy DEV 42 to 66.

- 3.5 The northern portion of the site is located within an Area of Archaeological Potential as shown on the London Borough of Tower Hamlets UDP Proposals Map and as defined in section 5.67 of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets UDP.
- 3.6 In accordance with the conditions laid down in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets UDP, a programme of evaluation by trial trenching was designed¹ and carried out in consultation with David Divers of English Heritage.

¹ Hawkins, D., 2006.

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 Geology

- 4.1.1 The British Geological survey of England and Wales suggests that the drift geology of the site consists of Holocene alluvium (comprised of a sequence of peats and clays), overlying the Kempton Park Gravels².
- 4.1.2 Previous work in the area suggests that Poplar High Street is located immediately to the north of the interface between the higher terrace gravel and the lower lying alluvium of the Thames floodplain, with the terrace gravels falling away sharply just to the south of the High Street³. It was therefore hypothesised within the Desk Based Assessment⁴ that, in antiquity, the north of the site would have been situated on free-draining terrace gravels and the south of the site would have been situated within the marsh-like, alluvial facies of the Thames.
- 4.1.3 The site has undergone a comprehensive series of geotechnical investigations. These investigations support the hypothesis that the northern portion of the site is located on the gravel terrace, and the southern portion of the site is located above an alluvial sequence of marshy deposits. The data suggests that the alluvial sequence increases in depth towards the south, reaching a maximum thickness of 1.75m at its most southerly point, and the underlying gravel dips down towards the south. As sequences of even thicker alluvium have been recorded further south on the Isle of Dogs, the evidence strongly suggests that the site is situated on the fringe of a marsh-like environment⁵.
- 4.1.4 The alluvial units probably range in date from the early / mid Holocene era to the post-medieval period, as documentary evidence suggests that the site was only reclaimed from the marsh at the beginning of the 19th century. It therefore remains a possibility that archaeological horizons may occur within the alluvial sequence⁶.

² British Geological Survey; North London, England and Wales, sheet 256: Solid and Drift Edition

³ Proctor, J., 1997

⁴ Hawkins, D., 2006

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

4.2 Topography

- 4.2.1 The site slopes gently from a level of 4.0m OD in the north to a level of 3.4m OD in the south. However, the modern topography is entirely the result of land reclamation via the deposition of dump layers during the early 19th century. The original land surface probably sloped downwards from the gravel terrace in the north to the floodplain in the south in a more pronounced fashion⁷.

⁷ Hawkins, D., 2006.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

5.1.1 The archaeological Desk-Based Assessment indicates a low archaeological potential for the Palaeolithic period, a high potential for the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, a low potential for the Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and medieval periods and a high potential for the post-medieval period⁸. The palaeoenvironmental potential for the site is also extremely high as the anaerobic conditions present within the alluvial sequence create excellent taphonomic conditions for the preservation of all types of organic remains⁹.

5.2 PREHISTORIC

5.2.1 Palaeolithic

5.2.1.1 Evidence of an elm, oak and fir forest was discovered during the excavation of the West India Docks. Further environmental evidence in the form of Mollusca and animal bones was also recovered, along with some human remains. Comparable evidence was also unearthed during excavations at Blackwall Yard. The remains were originally dated to the Palaeolithic period, but have since been reinterpreted. They are now more widely believed to span a range of periods from the late Mesolithic to the historic¹⁰.

5.2.1.2 The only find in the vicinity of the site that has been securely dated to the Palaeolithic period is a fragment of Pleistocene mammoth tusk, recovered from terrace gravels during the excavation of the Blackwall Tunnel¹¹.

5.2.2 Mesolithic

5.2.2.1 With the exception of an axe found in Poplar, no Mesolithic finds are recorded in the vicinity of the site¹².

5.2.3 Neolithic / Bronze Age

5.2.3.1 A Neolithic activity site consisting of flint and pottery scatters on a sand and gravel island was observed during excavations at the White Swan Public House in Blackwall. A crouched inhumation, accompanied by a fragment of carinated bowl, a flint knife and

⁸Hawkins, D., 2006.

⁹*ibid*

¹⁰*ibid*

¹¹*ibid*

¹²*ibid*

some struck flints, was also recovered. The burial was dated to 4220-3979 BC¹³. A Bronze Age hearth was also found.

5.2.3.5 A series of timbered causeways and trackways appear to have been constructed during the Neolithic to Bronze Age periods in the vicinity of the site. These trackways were designed to link the gravel terrace to the north with the low lying floodplain marshes to the south and to link gravel islands of higher ground with the marshland¹⁴.

5.2.3.6 Whilst several activity sites dating to these periods have been recorded within the vicinity of the site, actual settlement remains are yet to be discovered. It is hypothesised that any such remains will be situated on larger gravel islands within the marshland, or at the interface of the marsh and the higher, well-drained land to the north. The site is situated on such an interface¹⁵.

5.2.4 Iron Age

5.2.4.1 No evidence of Iron Age settlement or activity has been recovered in the vicinity of the site.

5.3 ROMAN

5.3.1 As stated in the Desk Based Assessment, it is theorised that "Poplar High Street represents the continuation of a Roman Road known to exist at Ratcliffe", although no material evidence has, as yet, been recovered to support this assertion¹⁶.

5.3.2 A small amount of Roman pottery was found during the excavation of the Limehouse Link Road Scheme to the west of the site¹⁷.

5.4. SAXON AND MEDIEVAL

5.4.1 In the middle ages, the site was part of The Manor of Stepney. It is thought to have been "part of the original foundation endowment of the Bishopric of London in 604 AD", remaining the property of the Bishops throughout the medieval period¹⁸.

5.4.2 The first documentary evidence relating to a settlement at Poplar High Street, dates to 1452 when the village appears to have functioned as a fishing settlement. It describes a

¹³ Hawkins, D., 2006., p.9

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ *ibid*

cottage at "stanbregge", which may refer to the Stonebridge located at the western end of Poplar High Street¹⁹.

- 5.4.3 No findspots of archaeological material dating to the Saxon or Medieval periods have been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site²⁰.

5.6 POST-MEDIEVAL

- 5.6.1 A plan dated to 1573 seems to indicate that the High Street had been fully developed by this time, although a degree of artistic license may have been employed during its creation²¹. An archaeological excavation carried out at 216 to 242 Poplar High Street revealed contradictory evidence, suggesting that the High Street was built along a flood embankment and that the southern side was unoccupied²².

- 5.6.2 All other historic documents and maps consulted as part of the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment suggest that the southern side of Poplar High Street remained undeveloped until the mid to late post-medieval period. The "Six Rooms" for the accommodation of the poor may have been constructed on the northern portion of the site in 1731-1737 and the Rising Sun Public House, which fronted Poplar High Street, was constructed on the northern portion of the site in 1765²³.

- 5.6.3 The West India Docks were constructed between 1800 and 1806 to the south of the site. By 1841, railway yards associated with the docks had been constructed on the southern section of the site itself. These yards remained *in situ* until the 1970s. The northern block of the site was occupied by late Georgian and Victorian buildings, which, despite World War II bomb damage, remained standing until the 1950s²⁴.

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Hawkins, D., 2006.

²² Proctor, J., 1997.

²³ Hawkins, D., 2006.

²⁴ Hawkins, D., 2006.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 In accordance with the specification²⁵, the trenches were arranged to fully investigate the underlying drift geology and the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains across the site.
- 6.2 A total of two archaeological trial trenches, originally intended to be 6m x 6m at ground level, were excavated. However, the depth of the archaeological and geological sequences in both trenches was considerable, and necessitated expansion of the trenches at ground level in order to create enough space to excavate sondages safely, or to enable the trenches to be stepped and / or battered back. Trench 1 was located in the northern portion of the site and was 9.75m north-south x 4.7m east-west. Two sondages were excavated within the trench in order to create windows into the underlying geology. The dimensions of Sondage 1, in the south of the trench, were 2m north-south and 2.4m east-west and the dimensions of Sondage 2, in the north of the trench, were 700mm north-south and 2.4m east-west. The sondages were too unsafe to enter, and as a result were recorded from the top. Trench 2 was located in the southern section of the site and was 9m north-south x 9.25m east-west at ground level. It was stepped 4 times in order to enable safe access, and as a result was 1.85m north-south x 2.35m east-west at the base.
- 6.3 The trenches were excavated using a 360 mechanical excavator, under archaeological supervision, fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket. Excavation by machine was undertaken in spits and continued through the made ground until significant archaeological horizons or natural gravel was reached.
- 6.4 One long section in each trench and the base of each trench were hand-cleaned before recording.
- 6.5 All recording systems adopted during the investigations were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in London, that is those developed out of the Department of Urban Archaeology Site Manual, now published by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS 1994). Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated and exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. All plans and sections of archaeological deposits were recorded on polyester based drawing film, the plans being drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 and the sections at 1:10 or 1:20. The OD heights of all principal strata were calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans and sections. A full photographic

²⁵ Hawkins, D. 2006.

record of the investigations was also prepared, including both black and white prints and colour transparencies on 35mm film.

- 6.6 Levels were taken from two Temporary Bench Marks (TBMs) established on the site. The northern TBM had a value of 3.15m OD and the southern TBM had a value of 3.4m OD. The TBMs were traversed in from a benchmark located on the southwest corner of 10 Bazley Street, which had a value of 6.82m OD. The trenches were surveyed in by hand using 30m tapes and a plan detailing the outline of Poplar Business Park. They were then tied into the Ordnance Survey grid.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION

7.1 OVERVIEW

7.1.1 Trench 1, in the north of the site, contained a deposit of natural terrace gravel sealed by a layer of weathered "brickearth". This was sealed by a thick deposit of made ground, on top of which a series of post-medieval to 19th century brick walls and floors were constructed. The masonry was truncated in places by modern intrusions, and sealed by a layer of 20th century made ground. The earliest deposit to be encountered within Trench 2, in the south of the site, was a layer of clayey silty gravel, sealed by an alluvial sequence consisting of a lower unit of sandy silty clay, a unit of peat and an upper unit of sandy silty clay. The alluvial sequence was partially truncated by a semi-circular cut, containing dumped domestic waste dating to the early 19th century. The cut was sealed by a dump of Reigate stone, which was in turn sealed by a thick deposit of 19th century made ground.

7.2 Phase 1 – Natural Pleistocene Terrace Gravel

7.2.1 In Trench 1, a layer of a compact, light reddish yellow clayey sand, clast supported by very frequent, sub-rounded to rounded pebble sized flint gravel inclusions, was observed at the base of Sondage 1 as context [26] and Sondage 2 as context [21]. In Trench 2, a mid blue grey layer otherwise identical in composition was observed, context [9]. The contexts covered the base of both sondages in Trench 1 and the bottom of Trench 2, and are assumed to represent one continuous layer. The variation in colour between the two trenches is presumed to be due to the oxidizing conditions present in the free-draining northern portion of the site and the reducing conditions present in the southern portion of the site, which is waterlogged at this depth. The layer appears to slope towards the south, having been observed at 0.54m OD in Sondage 2 to the north, -0.1m OD in Sondage 1 to the south, and -1.04m OD in Trench 2, even further south. It was interpreted as natural terrace gravel, presumed to date to the Pleistocene period, forming part of the Kempton Park Gravel bed, as suggested by the British Geological Survey of England and Wales.

7.3 Phase 2 – Early to Mid Holocene

7.3.1 The terrace gravel was sealed by a 300mm to 360mm thick layer of firm, light brownish yellow, sandy silty clay, in Trench 1, respectively termed contexts [25] and [22] in Sondages 1 and 2. The top of the deposit was observed at a level of 0.88m OD in the northernmost sondage and 0.15m OD in the southernmost sondage, suggesting that it sloped towards the south. It was interpreted as a layer of weathered natural clay, which may have formed part of a stable land surface at the beginning of the Holocene period.

7.3.2 The weathered clay was not present in Trench 2. Instead, the terrace gravel was sealed by an alluvial sequence of clay and peat. The earliest alluvial unit was context [8], a layer of very finely laminated, firm, mid blue-grey sandy silty clay. It was 720mm thick, the top being at a level of -0.34m OD. The composition and microstratigraphy of the layer strongly suggests that it was deposited in a low energy, aquatic environment. It was therefore interpreted as a layer of river alluvium. The alluvium was sealed by context [7], a 220mm thick layer of firm, mid red brown, organic rich silty clayey peat, observed at a level of -0.29m OD. It is thought that the layer represents a slight marine regression, which would have created a less waterlogged, more stable land surface, upon which plant life was able to flourish. This plant material accumulated and partially decayed over time, forming the organic rich peat layer. Sealing context [7] was context [6], a 340mm thick layer of very finely laminated, firm, mid blue-grey sandy silty clay, the top of which was observed at a level of 0.03m OD. The composition and microstratigraphy of the layer strongly suggests that it was deposited in a low energy, aquatic environment, and was therefore interpreted as a deposit of river alluvium, indicative of a slight marine transgression. According to the Desk Based Assessment, the alluvial sequence probably began to form in the early to mid Holocene, most likely dating from the Bronze Age onwards, when the site formed part of the Thames floodplain²⁶.

7.4 Phase 3- Post-Medieval

7.4.1 In Trench 1, a 1.1m thick layer of loose, dark greyish bluish green, silty sandy clay with occasional inclusions of sub-rounded pebble to granule sized flint gravel was observed, sealing the deposit of weathered clay in Sondage 2. The top of the deposit, termed context [22], was encountered at a level of 1.98m OD. It was interpreted as a post-medieval dump layer, probably deposited in order to create a drier surface, less prone to flooding, enabling the construction of the later masonry structures.

7.4.2 Truncating the deposit of made ground within Sondage 2 was rectangular masonry wall [20]. The masonry structure was 8 courses deep and 2 courses wide. It was constructed with stretcher bonded, unfrogged, orange fabric bricks, bonded with friable, very light yellowish brown sandy mortar with inclusions of charcoal and shell. The wall was orientated east-west and was 500mm high, the top being at a level of 2.58m OD. No construction cut was observed, and as a consequence the wall is presumed to be trench-built. It was interpreted as being older than the rest of the masonry within Trench 1, which forms Structure [27] (see para 7.5.4). This assertion is proved by the fact that the wall was truncated to the west during the construction of [27], and by the fact that it

²⁶ Hawkins, D. 2006

was sealed by a later leveling layer, which was itself truncated by the later walls. Additionally, the brick and mortar types used within the wall were typical of the early to mid post-medieval period, suggesting that it may indeed belong to an earlier phase of construction. The brick was a near 3039 type, which dates from 1480 to 1700. It was handmade and stock moulded, with an uneven base, indicating that it may be 17th century, although bricks of this type do occur in the 18th century in this area of London²⁷. The wall was therefore interpreted as being part of a building that would have fronted Poplar High Street, probably in the mid to late post-medieval period.

7.5 Phase 4- 19th Century

- 7.5.1 In Trench 2, layer [6] was truncated by [5], a semi-circular cut that continued beyond the northern and eastern limits of excavation. The dimensions of the cut, as seen within the confines of the trench, were 800mm north-south, 1.72m east-west and over 300mm deep, the fill of the feature only having been partially excavated in order to obtain dating evidence. The truncation was filled with context [4], a deposit of loose, dark blueish grey silty sand with frequent inclusions of finely fragmented shells and late 17th to early 19th century pottery and CBM²⁸. The top of the feature was at a level of 0.07m OD. It was interpreted as an early 19th century rubbish pit, created prior to reclamation of the marsh in the early to mid 19th century.
- 7.5.2 Sealing fill [4] was context 3, a dump of roughly hewn, cobble to boulder sized Reigate stone blocks. The blocks did not appear to be bonded, forming a loose mound, which continued beyond the northern and eastern limits of excavation. The dimensions of the deposit, as seen within the confines of the trench, were 710mm north-south, 1.62m east-west and 420mm thick. It was interpreted as an early 19th century dump of rubble, deposited prior to or at the very start of the land reclamation phase instigated in the early to mid 19th century.
- 7.5.3 Context [24] sealed the post-medieval wall in Trench 1. The layer was composed of loose, light greyish greenish brown sandy silty clay, with occasional inclusions of sub-rounded, pebble-sized flints. It was 800mm thick, the top being at a level of 2.78m OD. A similar deposit, context [2], was also observed in Trench 2, sealing the dump of Reigate Stone. The deposit was 1.6m thick, the top being at a level of 1.63m OD. It was sealed by context [1], a deposit of loose, dark grey brown silty clayey sand with frequent lenses of firm mid brown grey silty clay and loose mid grey green silty sand, observed at a level of 2.25m OD. All three layers contained frequent inclusions of 19th century pottery, bricks and CBM. They were all interpreted as 19th century dump layers, deposited in order to further consolidate or reclaim the land from the marsh.

²⁷ B. Sudds, 2006 *pers comm.*

²⁸ B. Sudds 2006, *pers comm.*

- 7.5.4 The remains of a building, structure [27], was observed within Trench 1, the walls of which were found to be at a maximum height of 3.28m OD. The structure was composed of walls [11], [12], [13] [16] and [18], all of which were at least 2 to 5 courses high. No construction cuts were observed and as a result they are assumed to be trench built. An external yard surface, context [17], and its bedding layer, context [14]/[15], also formed part of the structure. The dimensions of the building were over 4.5m north-south and over 4.2m east-west, having been truncated to the north, south, east and west, possibly by bomb damage in World War II. Several different building styles, composed of different building materials, are present within the structure, suggesting that it was not all constructed at the same time.
- 7.5.5 Wall [18] was composed of header bonded, red unfrogged bricks, held together with friable, light reddish grey sandy mortar. The wall was 2 courses wide and was "L"-shaped in plan, extending 1.9m to the north and east. The structure is assumed to be contemporary with wall [11] to the west, as the east-west portion was aligned with this context and their forms and fabrics were identical. The two walls may form part of the same building, which would have fronted Poplar High Street. Alternatively, context [18] may represent the southwest corner of a building and context [11] may be associated with a contemporary though separate structure. Either way, the 840mm gap between the two could have functioned as a doorway or small alley leading to an external yard, the remains of which are described later.
- 7.5.6 Wall [12], orientated east-west, was composed of header bonded, yellow and purple fabric unfrogged bricks, constructed with compact, greyish white sandy mortar. It was 2 courses wide. Partially sealing wall [12] and butting wall [11] was rectangular wall [13], aligned north-south. The wall was composed of identical building materials to wall [11] and was between 1 and 2 courses wide. Both walls are thought to be external, being situated to the rear of the building, within the yard.
- 7.5.7 Sealing walls [12] and [13] was rectangular masonry wall [16], orientated east-west. It was composed of header bonded, yellow and purple fabric, unfrogged bricks, held together with friable, light yellowish brown sandy mortar. The structure was 1 course wide and is assumed to be a later rebuild or modification to the external yard walls.
- 7.5.8 Butting walls [13] and [11] was rubble layer [14] / [15]. The layer consisted of a friable, light brownish yellow sandy mortar matrix, within which frequent whole and fragmentary red fabric, unfrogged bricks were set in an irregular fashion. The layer was interpreted as bedding for masonry floor surface [17], which partially seals the deposit. Masonry floor [17] was constructed from one course of stretcher bonded, red fabric, unfrogged

bricks and half bricks, held together with friable, light greyish yellow sandy mortar. The floor was interpreted as the partial remains of an external yard surface associated with the 19th century building or buildings to the north.

- 7.5.9 The external yard was presumably constructed at 19th century ground level. Levels taken on the floor surface therefore indicate that this was at a height of 3.2m OD in the north of the site.
- 7.5.10 Butting [27] was masonry structure [19]. It was composed of header bonded, unfrogged, red fabric bricks, held together with indurated, light grey mortar. The structure was 1 course wide and over 1 course deep and was rectangular in plan with a central void, partially capped by a slab of slate. Its dimensions were 1.45m north-south, 620mm east-west and over 50mm deep, the top being at a level of 3.16m OD. It was truncated to the east by a large modern intrusion, probably the result of World War II bomb damage. It was interpreted as part of a 19th century drain, associated with the properties fronting Poplar High Street.
- 7.5.11 A thick layer of modern made ground, which may represent fill of a large truncation created by World War II bomb damage, was observed in section in Sondage 1. Modern made ground and crushed concrete, deposited to form a piling mat, sealed the entire trench.

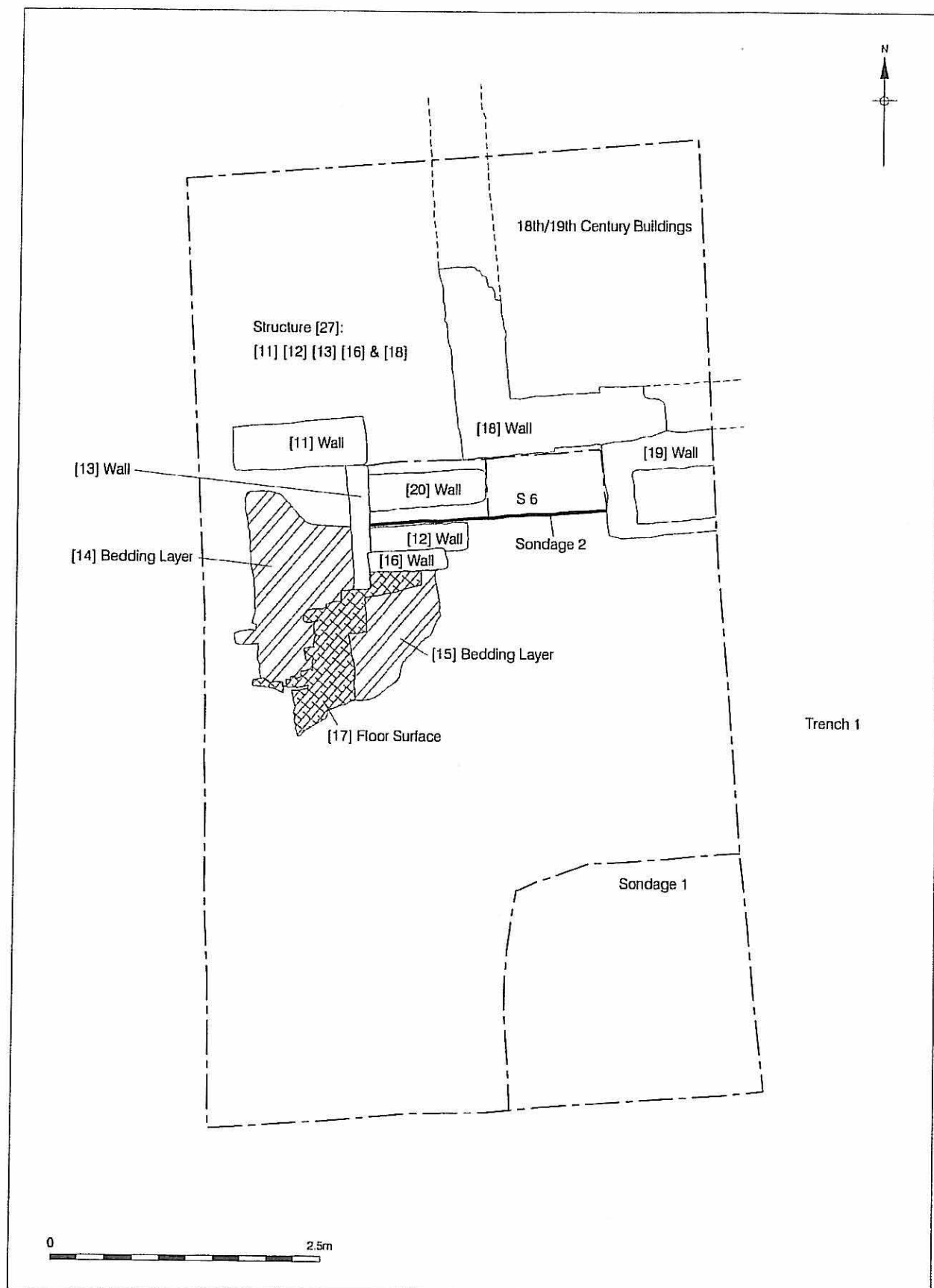


Figure 3
Trench 1
1:50

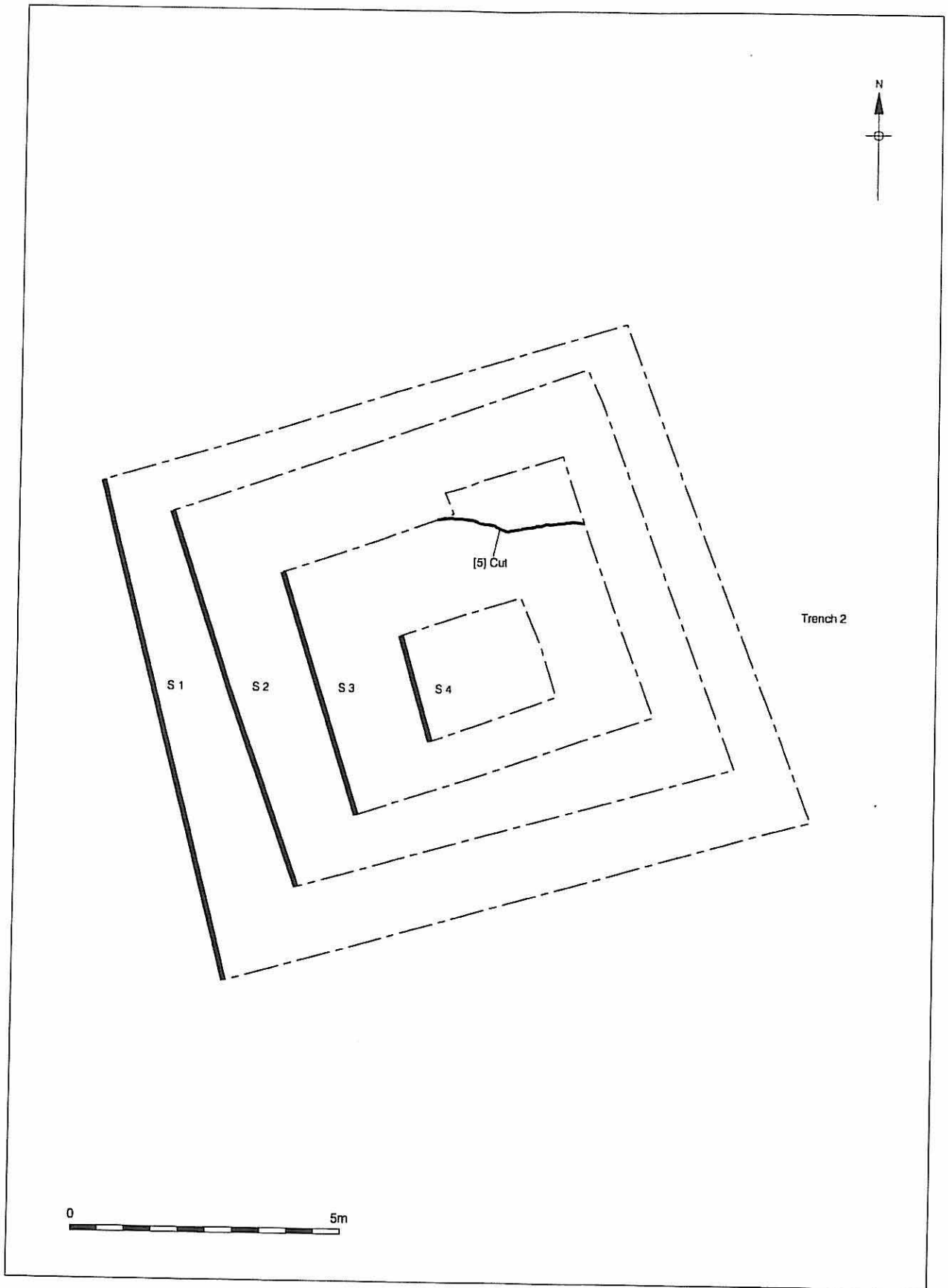


Figure 4
Trench 1
1:100

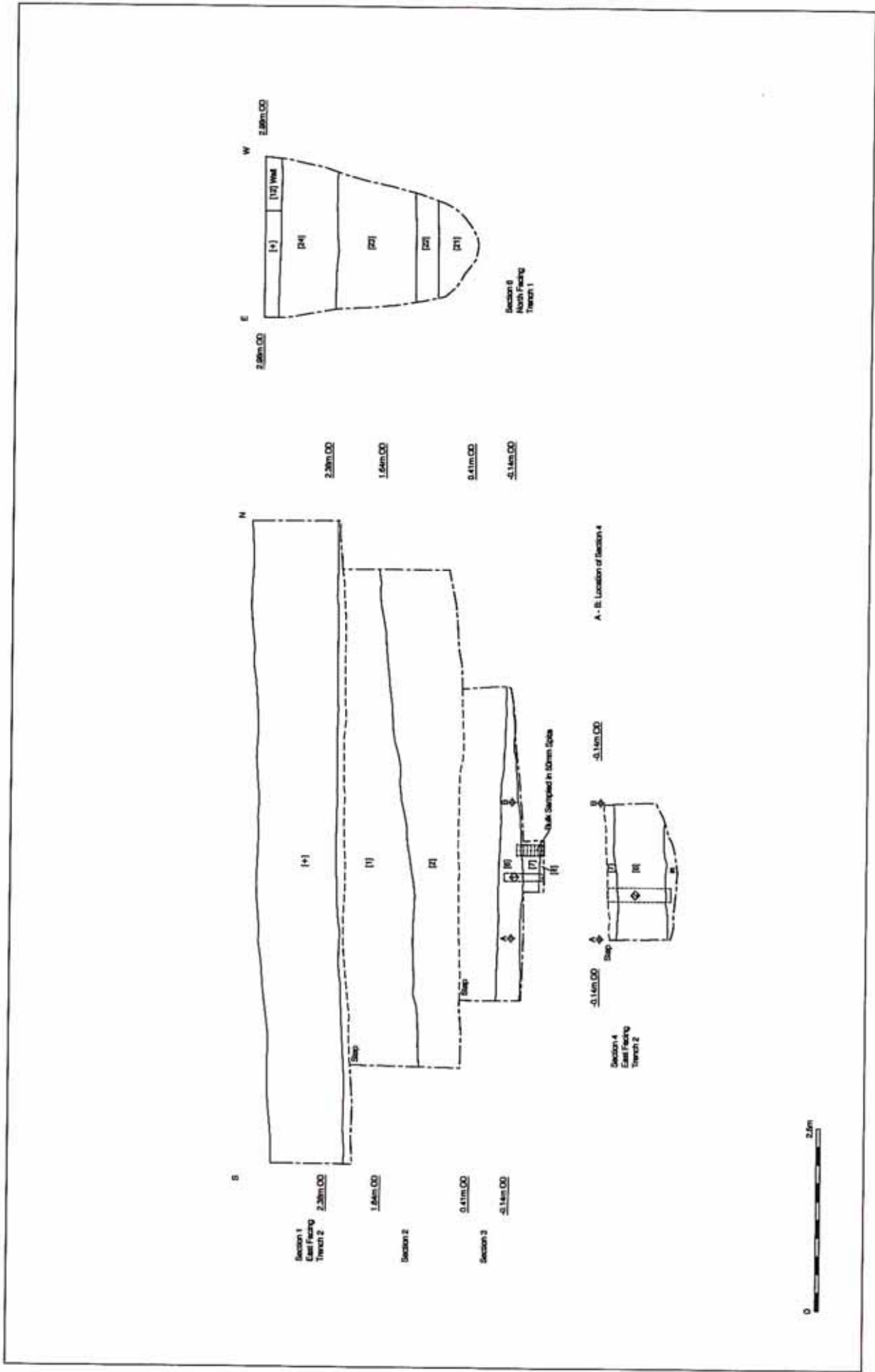


Figure 5
Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6
1:50

8 INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The principal objectives of the archaeological evaluation were to assess the nature of the underlying drift geology, to determine the presence or absence of archaeological activity of any period and to obtain ecofacts from any alluvial sequences encountered to aid palaeoenvironmental reconstruction. These objectives were achieved and the results are summarised below.
- 8.2 A deposit of natural terrace gravel was found in the north of the site, which was sealed by a layer of weathered "brickearth", probably deposited during the Pleistocene era. The "brickearth" appears to have formed a stable land surface, probably during the early to mid Holocene, hence the weathering. A deposit of clayey silty gravel, also thought to be Pleistocene in date, was observed in the southern trench. It is hypothesised that the gravel slopes sharply from the higher, drier gravel terrace of the northern trench (0.54m OD), to the marshy floodplain of the southern trench (-1.04m OD). The terrace gravel in the southern trench was indeed sealed by an alluvial sequence, typical of floodplain facies, presumed to date from the early to mid Holocene. The sequence consisted of a lower unit of sandy silty clay, indicative of a low-energy, aquatic depositional environment, sealed by a unit of peat, indicative of a waterlogged but stable land surface, sealed by an upper unit of sandy silty clay, once again indicative of a low-energy aquatic environment. The sequence appears to represent a marine transgression, represented by the lower unit of clay, a marine regression, represented by the unit of peat, and another marine transgression, represented by the upper unit of clay.
- 8.3 The next phase of deposition did not take place until the post-medieval period, when the ground level was artificially raised in the northern trench. The dumped material observed during the evaluation probably created a drier surface, less prone to flooding, on top of which a series of post-medieval to 19th century brick walls and floors were constructed. It is thought that these walls and floors are remnants of properties that fronted Poplar High Street. In the southern trench, the alluvial sequence was partially truncated by a semi-circular cut, containing dumped domestic waste dating to the early 19th century. The cut was sealed by a dump of Reigate stone, which was in turn sealed by a thick deposit of 19th century made ground. This was probably dumped in order to raise the ground level and reclaim the site from the marsh, prior to the construction of the railway yard in the 1850s. Documentary evidence suggests this land reclamation was contemporary with the construction of the West India Docks to the south, an assertion supported by the artefactual evidence obtained during the excavation.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting Ltd for commissioning the work and David Divers of English Heritage for monitoring the evaluation on behalf of London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Chris Mayo for his project management and editing, Dave Harris for the illustrations, Clare Henshaw and Victoria Donnelly for their hard work and assistance with the fieldwork and Lisa Lonsdale for technical and logistical support.

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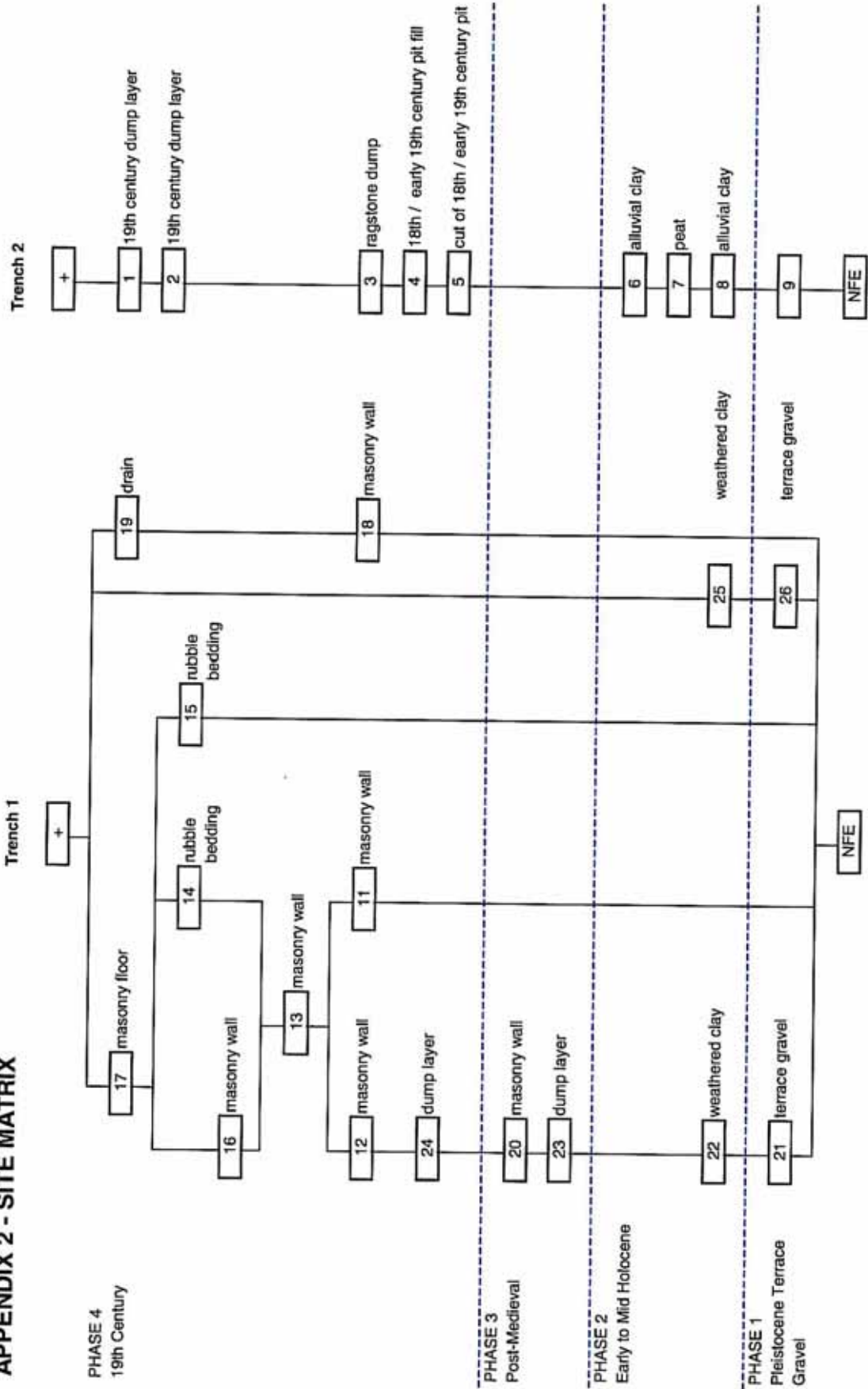
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APPENDIX 1- CONTEXT INDEX

Context	Plan No.	Section No.	Sample No.	Photo	Phase	Trench No.	Type	Description	Find
1	Tr2	1, 2	*	Y	4	2	layer	19th century made ground	*
2	Tr2	2	1	Y	4	2	layer	19th century made ground	*
3	Tr2	*	*	*	4	2	masonry	dump of reigate stone	Pottery, brick, CBM
4	Tr2	2	*	*	4	2	fill	fill of [5]	*
5	Tr2	*	*	*	4	2	cut	19th century pit	*
6	Tr2	2	1	Y	2	2	layer	alluvial clay	*
7	Tr2	3, 4	1, 2	Y	2	2	layer	peat	*
8	Tr2	3, 4	2, 3	Y	2	2	layer	alluvial clay	*
9	Tr2	4	2	Y	1	2	layer	natural terrace gravel	*
10	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID	VOID
11	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	19th century brick wall	*
12	Tr1	6	*	Y	4	1	masonry	19th century brick wall	*
13	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	19th century brick wall	*
14	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	rubble floor	*
15	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	rubble floor	*
16	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	19th century brick wall	*
17	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	brick floor	*
18	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	19th century brick wall	*
19	Tr1	*	*	Y	4	1	masonry	19th century brick wall	*
20	Tr1	*	*	Y	3	1	masonry	post-medieval brick wall	*
21	Tr1	6	*	*	1	1	layer	natural terrace gravel	*
22	Tr1	6	*	*	1	1	layer	weathered clay	*
23	Tr1	6	*	*	3	1	layer	post-medieval made ground	*
24	Tr1	6	*	*	3	1	layer	post-medieval made ground	*
25	Tr1	5	*	*	2	1	layer	weathered clay	*
26	Tr1	5	*	*	1	1	layer	natural terrace gravel	*

APPENDIX 2 - SITE MATRIX



APPENDIX 3 - OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-16420

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation on land West of the Junction of Poplar High Street and Preston's Road and East of Poplar Bu
Short description of the project	This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken on land west of the junction of Poplar High Street and Preston's Road and east of Poplar Business Park, Preston's Road, Poplar, London, E14. The excavation was undertaken by Pre-construct Archaeology Ltd for CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Galliard Homes. It was project managed by Chris Mayo of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd and supervised by the author from 19th to 23rd June 2006 and by Alexis Haslam from 26th to 27th June 2006. Two trenches were excavated on the site. A layer of modern crushed concrete covered the site at the time of excavation. Trench 1 contained a deposit of natural terrace gravel sealed by a layer of weathered
Project dates	End: 27-06-2006
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	PPP 06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Significant Finds	PLANT MACRO REMAINS Uncertain
Significant Finds	POLLEN Uncertain
Significant Finds	POT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (e.g. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS POPLAR Preston's Road, Poplar
Postcode	E14 9XX
Study area	6250.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 38250 80700 Point
Height OD	Min: 0.54m Max: -1.04m

Project creators

Name of	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
---------	-------------------------------

Organisation	
Project brief originator	CgMs Consultants Ltd
Project design originator	CgMs Consultants Ltd
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Rebecca Lythe
Sponsor or funding body	Galliard Homes

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Evaluation on land West of the Junction of Poplar High Street and Preston's Road and East of Poplar Business Park, Preston's Road, Poplar
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Lythe, R.
Date	2006
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Brockley, London
Description	A4 sized document, ring bound with blue cover.

Entered by	Rebecca Lythe (rlythe@pre-construct.com)
Entered on	6 July 2006