

## **40 MARSH WALL, ISLE OF DOGS, LONDON E14 9TP: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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**Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

**Planning Ref: PA/10/01049; PA/13/01949**

**Site Code: MSH13**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 37259 79851**

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## 1 Abstract

- 1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd within the footprint of a recently demolished office block at 40 Marsh Wall, Isle of Dogs in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The archaeological investigation was conducted intermittently between 18<sup>th</sup> November and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013, with a return visit on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014, and was commissioned by CgMs Consulting and monitored by the archaeological advisor to Tower Hamlets, Adam Single of English Heritage.
- 1.2 The scheme for strip trenches proposed by CgMs Consulting (June 2013) could not be undertaken because of the extent of below-ground obstructions associated with the previous development. The work therefore comprised the excavation of four test trenches each measuring approximately 2.5m by 2.5m, intended to provide an even spatial coverage of the site. Impacts on archaeological levels as a result of the construction of the recently demolished office block were seen to be considerable with natural levels directly overlain by modern ground raising deposits and reinforced concrete foundations.
- 1.3 Trenches were excavated down to naturally-occurring sandy-gravels. Occasional lenses of sand were seen within the gravels and it was noted that the gravels appeared to rise up towards the north-west of the site area. Sealing natural gravel and sand layers was an alluvial (water-lain) deposit of variable thickness.
- 1.4 In a trench towards the south of the area, a clean sand horizon seen above natural alluvium was initially interpreted as a windblown dry-land deposit, although further evidence supplied subsequent to the evaluation test pitting suggests this deposit is more likely to represent a variation in the alluvial deposition. No anthropogenic finds, features or deposits were observed, though abraded medieval tile was present in the post-medieval redeposited alluvial layer immediately above.
- 1.5 A 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick well cut through the alluvium in Trench 1 down to natural gravels and was most-likely associated with terraced housing built over the area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was heavily truncated and extended beyond the limits of the trench. Overlying the earlier deposits was redeposited alluvial clay likely to be laid down as a ground raising deposit that contained late post-medieval ceramic building material fragments. This in turn was sealed by modern ground-raising and levelling deposits that served as a pre-cursor to the modern concrete slab that covered the area.
- 1.6 The results of the work have proved the survival of an intact gravel horizon rising from east to west through the site from -0.41m OD in Trench 3 to west 0.13m OD in Trench 1. No anthropogenic evidence was observed within the gravels or overlying alluvial deposits, with previous work on the Isle of Dogs suggesting that whilst the gravel is

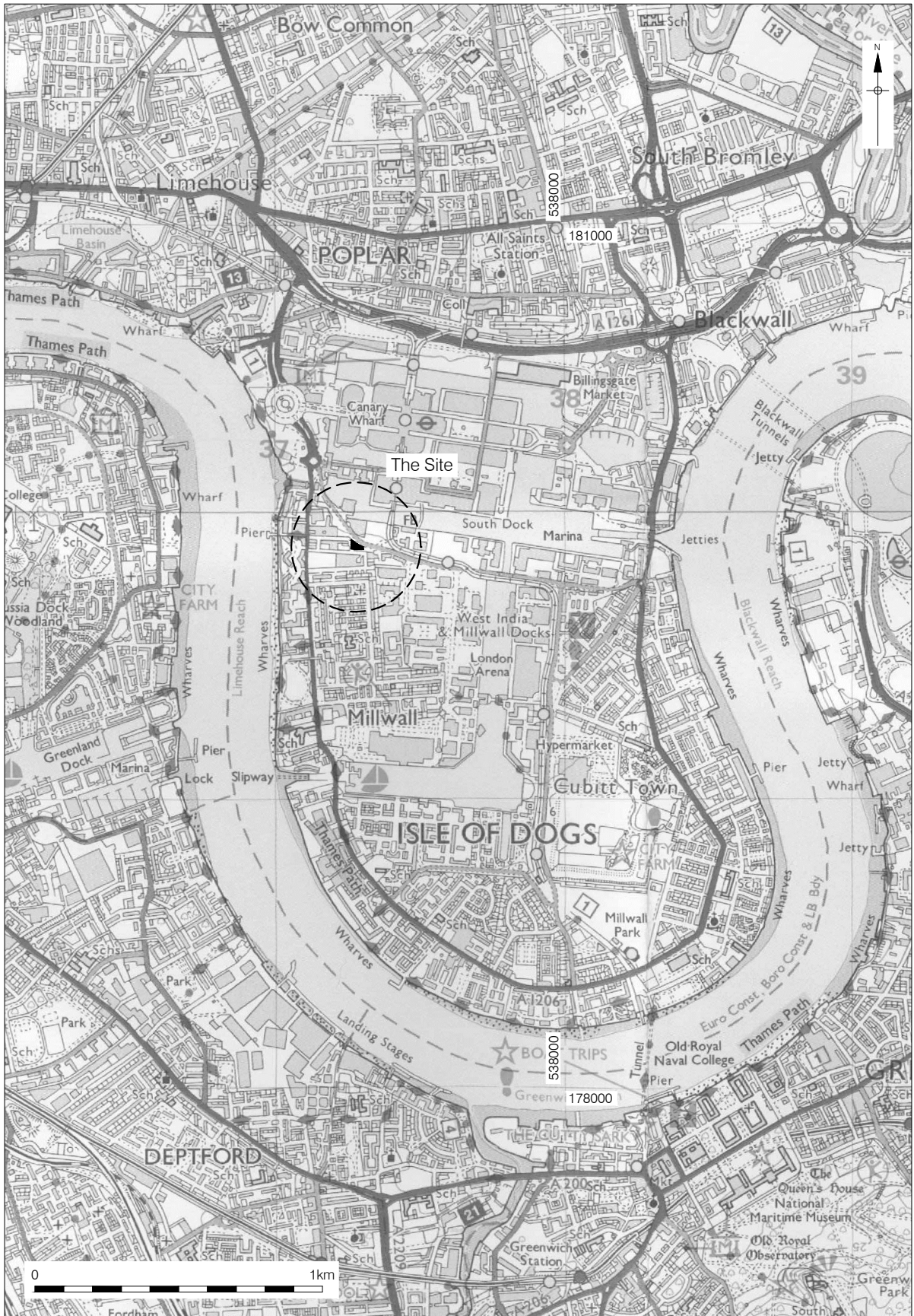
rising across the site, it is to the lower end of the spectrum or below the level where prehistoric occupation might be expected to occur. The construction of the previous office block across the footprint of the site had truncated the upper sequence across the area of the site.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. (PCA) within the footprint of a recently demolished office block at 40 Marsh Wall, Isle of Dogs, London E14 9TP within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Figure 1). The proposed development, which will see the construction of a 39 storey building, has been granted conditional planning permission (PA/10/01049), one of the conditions being that a programme of archaeological investigation should be carried out prior to development.
- 2.2 The site is bounded to the north-east by Marsh Wall, by Manilla Street to the south and Cuba Street to the west, whilst to the north-west at 30 Marsh Wall is a similar existing office block to the one that occupied the site.
- 2.3 The site does not lie within an Archaeological Priority Area nor do Scheduled Ancient Monuments lie on or close to the site.
- 2.4 The investigation was conducted between 18<sup>th</sup> November and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013, with a return visit on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014, and was commissioned by CgMs Consulting. The works were supervised by Guy Seddon and Richard Humphrey and managed by Tim Bradley, of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited. The archaeological works were monitored by the archaeological advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Adam Single, of English Heritage. All work was undertaken following the appropriate English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (EH GLAAS) guidance (2009).
- 2.5 An archaeological desk-based assessment had previously concluded that there was a moderate potential for remains from the prehistoric period (Darton 2009).
- 2.6 The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by PCA (Bradley 2013), which was submitted to Tower Hamlets Borough Council and approved by EH GLAAS. The WSI posed the following research objectives:
- To determine the natural topography of the site.
  - To determine the geoarchaeological sequence on the site.
  - To establish the presence or absence of prehistoric activity, whether settled occupation or artefact scatters.
  - To determine the presence or absence of Roman activity on the site.
  - To establish the presence or absence of medieval activity on the site.
  - To establish the presence or absence of post-medieval activity on the site.
  - To establish the nature, date and survival of activity relating to any archaeological periods on the site.
  - To establish the extent of all past post-depositional impacts on the

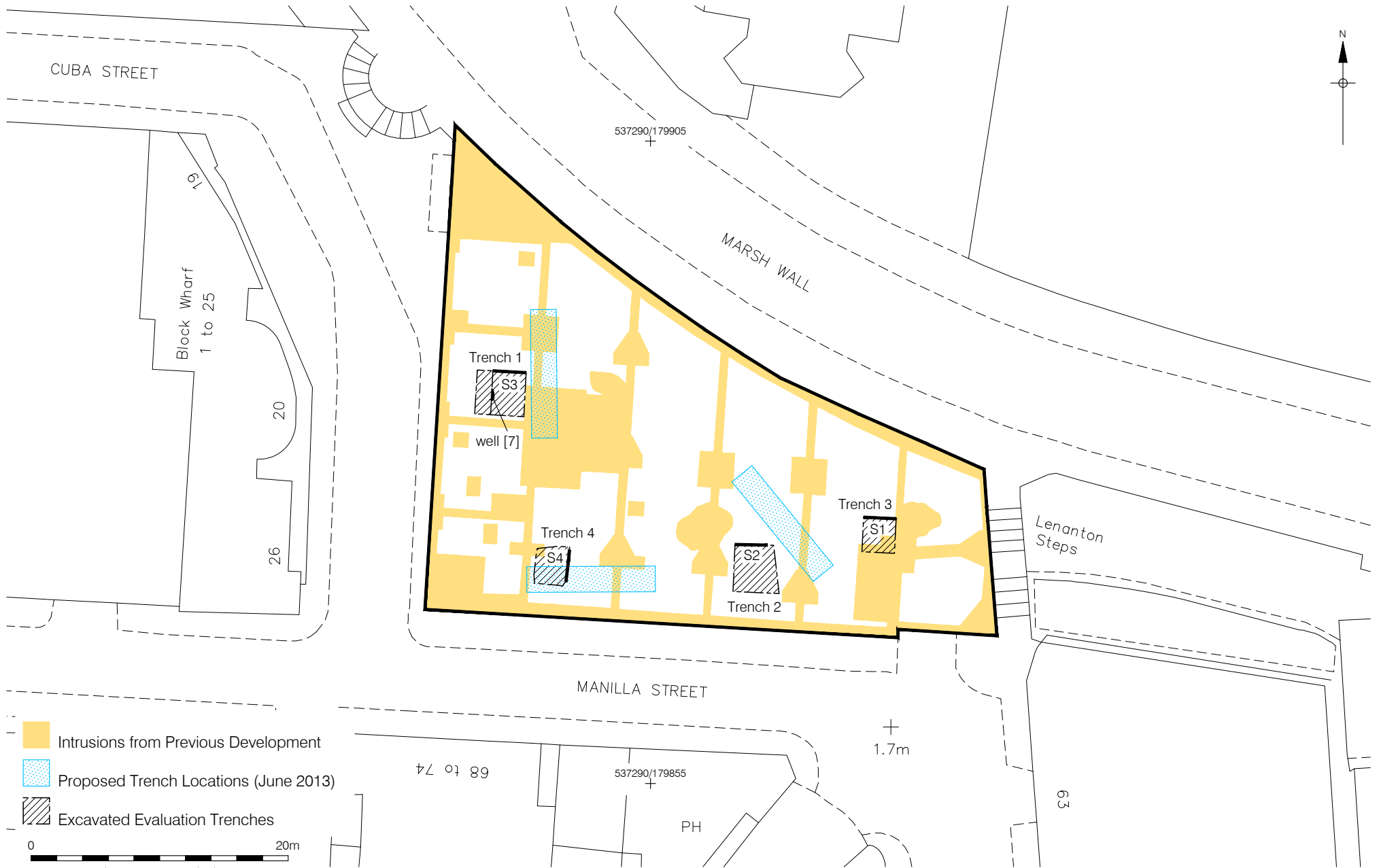
archaeological resource

- 2.7 The scheme for strip trenches proposed by CgMs Consulting (June 2013) could not be undertaken because of the extent of below-ground obstructions associated with the previous development. The work therefore comprised the excavation of four test trenches positioned between below-ground obstructions, each measuring approximately 2.5m by 2.5m, intended to provide even spatial coverage of the site. Digging was conducted by a tracked machine fitted with a flat bladed grading bucket with further examination of archaeologically relevant deposits completed using hand tools. An on-site geoarchaeologist was also employed to give detailed accounts of the deposits observed.
- 2.8 The central National Grid Reference for the site is TQ 37259 79851.
- 2.9 The site was allocated the unique site code MSH13.
- 2.10 The completed archive comprising all site records from the fieldwork will be deposited with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).



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Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:20,000 at A4



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Figure 2  
 Trench Location Rev 2  
 1:400 at A4



### **3 Geology and Topography**

- 3.1 The site is located on the floodplain of the Lower Thames close to the southern end of the substantial meander core known as the Isle of Dogs and c. 0.2km from the modern waterfront.
- 3.2 According to the British Geological Survey (Sheet 270; South London) the underlying geology of the site comprises Eocene Woolwich and Reading Beds overlain by sand silt and clay of the Palaeogene (Eocene) London Clay formation, deposited between c. 34 and 55 million years ago. This in turn is overlain by Quaternary Kempton Park Terrace gravels, which are capped by alluvium, though in more marginal areas of the Thames floodplain, fluctuating sea and river levels resulted in the creation of marshy areas and localised peat formation, which was most prevalent during the Tilbury IV regression phase that equated with the Middle to late Bronze Age.
- 3.3 The natural alluvial sequence is overlain by made ground in most places in the Isle of Dogs and in some places may also have been truncated during the course of successive phases of development. No geotechnical data is currently available for the site. Boreholes elsewhere in the Isle of Dogs recorded a 'peat' layer, generally towards the bottom of the Holocene alluvial sequence with an upper surface at levels between -3m and 1m AOD
- 3.4 The site lies broadly level ground at a mean elevation of c. 1.90m AOD.
- 3.5 The site is bounded to the west by Cuba Street, to the north-east by Marsh Wall, to the east by Lenanton Steps, and to the south by Manilla Street.

## 4 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site was included in the desk-based assessment (DBA) produced prior to the archaeological fieldwork (Darton 2009). The main findings of this assessment are summarised as follows:
- 4.2 The earliest material recorded within the vicinity of the site, some 300m to the north, was a fossilised forest of Elm, Oak and Fir, found at a depth of approximately 2.5m below ground level (bgl) during development of the West India Docks at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cowper (1853) noted that the remains of the forest were associated animal and human remains, and also recorded decayed wood, rushes and snails below the alluvial sequence during excavation of the former linking tunnel from the Blackwall Basin to the West India Docks, some 600m north-east of the study site. This forest has long thought to be of Palaeolithic date although recent radiocarbon dates have indicated that a Neolithic or Bronze Age date is much more likely. Evidence for the forest has also been recorded at locations east of the study site at Crossharbour (Capon and Melikian 2007) and Wood Wharf (Crothers 2005; Lythe 2008)
- 4.3 Peat formed during the Bronze Age is recorded from a number of locations in the vicinity of the study site, including Crossharbour and Wood Wharf, as well as at Mastmaker Road, a short distance south-east of the site (Edwards 2007). Archaeological investigations at Atlas Works, on the western side of the Isle of Dogs some 600m south-west of the site, revealed a multi-phase timber platform at the top of the peat sequence. This structure, occupied between the Early to Middle and Middle to late Bronze Age, was almost certainly a base for wildfowling, fishing and/or reed gathering, rather than a permanent site. The platform was located at the eastern edge of a NNW to SSE aligned braided stream channel crossing the eastern part of the site. The juxtaposition of channel and platform suggested the latter may have been accessed by boat. Bronze Age activity has also been identified at 33-39 Westferry Road on the west side of the Isle of Dogs, approximately 200m south-west of the study site. The evidence comprised a small quantity of burnt flint associated with peat (Swift 1999).
- 4.4 A recent archaeological evaluation at 22-28 Marsh Wall, immediately west of the site recorded natural gravels at -0.5m AOD overlain by sand and clay up to 0.2m AOD indicating a possible raised gravel island beneath the site with potential for prehistoric occupation activity. Geotechnical monitoring at a site on Cuba Street to the south of 30 Marsh Wall recorded gravels between -0.8m AOD and 0m AOD overlain by c. 1m of sandy clay which correlated with the gravel 'island' recorded at 22-28 Marsh Wall (Sankey 2008). An archaeological evaluation undertaken in July 2007 at Indecon Court c. 200m south-east to the study site (Taylor 2007) recorded natural sand at c.

- 4.1m bgl (-0.9m AOD) and an evaluation at Lanterns Court in December 2007 some 250m south-east of the site (Weale 2007) recorded natural sand at approximately 3.bgl (0.4m AOD).
- 4.5 *In situ* Roman activity has only recently been identified on the Isle of Dogs to the west of the West India Docks, in an area of raised gravels. Archaeological evaluation and excavation revealed Roman remains at Express Wharf, No. 38 Westferry Road approximately 200m south-west of the study site (Ford 2001; Anthony *et al.* 2004). The Roman occupation of the site was represented by two gullies and a series of pits and stakeholes of 2<sup>nd</sup>-century date, which lay on the edge of the gravel terrace and had been sealed by alluvium.
- 4.6 During the late Roman period it is known that there was a significant rise in sea level and evidence for flooded agricultural landscapes has been identified between Crossness and North Southwark. It is likely that whole of the Isle of Dogs, as far north as the present Poplar High Street, was either permanently or seasonally flooded from the end of this period until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted that Limehouse Causeway and Poplar High Street run along the top of major late medieval flood defences that attest to the level of flooding that could occur. No early medieval or medieval activity is recorded in the vicinity of the study site, which lay between the main medieval river defences at Poplar High Street and the Thames and in all likelihood comprised salt marsh. Indeed, for a significant proportion of these periods the site is likely to have lain underwater.
- 4.7 From the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards the Isle of Dogs was subject to the process of 'inring' whereby salt marsh was reclaimed by embanking, draining and conversion to pasture. This process was extremely slow and often subject to sudden and catastrophic reverses though flood events. However, by the 14<sup>th</sup> century the island was noted for the quality of its sheep pasture. The last major flood appears to have occurred in 1448 when the river wall opposite Deptford was breached. The archaeological evaluation at nos. 33-39 Westferry Road revealed a medieval ditch, whilst excavation of Millwall South Dock, some 200m north of the study site at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century revealed a medieval gold spur. By the close of this period the main flood defences probably ran along the line of Westferry Road/ Manchester Road/ Prestons Road.
- 4.8 John Rocque's map of 1747 (Darton 2009, Fig. 2) shows the study site as undeveloped agricultural land, close to the river wall, 'The Breach', and south of a water course, 'Poplar Gut'. The West India Docks located c.150m north of the study site was opened in 1802. The South Dock was the southernmost of the three principal docks in the system and originated as a ship canal built across the Isle of Dogs in 1800-5. A plan of West India Docks of 1841 (Darton 2009, Fig. 3) shows the study site to the south of the South Dock and to the west of Timber Pond. The Ordnance

Survey map of 1868 (Darton 2009, Fig. 4) shows the site occupied by terraced housing fronting Alfred Street to the south and Robert Street to the north (later maps show the streets renamed as Manilla Street and Cuba Street, respectively). The site is shown located south-west of the South Dock.

- 4.9 The South Dock was entirely rebuilt in 1866-70 as the whole dock system had become inadequate. The dock was widened and deepened. The new South Quay wall slipped twice before the dock was finished in August 1869 and was opened to shipping in 1870. By the mid 1860s pressure for warehouse space had increased so much that it was clear that new buildings were needed. By 1894-6 South Dock was extended southwards, dockside warehouses were built along South-West Quay to the north-west of the study site, though there were no significant changes to the buildings on the site.
- 4.10 By 1949 the buildings on the study site had been demolished and the site cleared. By 1970 a railway line was constructed along the north-eastern site boundary. This was removed before 1981 and the line replaced by Marsh Wall. This was constructed by the LLDC in order to give entry into the heart of the formerly enclosed docks area and the newly designated Enterprise Zone. Opened in 1982, Marsh Wall was three-quarters of a mile long. The recently demolished office block that formerly occupied the site was built in 1992.

## 5 Planning Background

- 5.1 The development of the site is subject to planning guidance and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), The London Plan and policies of The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which it is the custodian.
- 5.2 In March 2012, the government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which replaced existing national policy relating to heritage and archaeology (Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5)). In summary, current national policy provides a framework which protects nationally important designated Heritage Assets and their settings, in appropriate circumstances seeks adequate information (from desk based assessment and field evaluation where necessary) to enable informed decisions regarding the historic environment and provides for the investigation by intrusive or non-intrusive means of sites not significant enough to merit *in-situ* preservation. Relevant paragraphs within the NPPF include the following:

*128. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

*129. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

*132. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

*135. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

139. *Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.*

141. *Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.*

- 5.3 The London Plan, published July 2011, includes the following policy regarding the historic environment in central London, which should be implemented through the Local Development Framework (LDF) being compiled at the Borough level:

**POLICY 7.8 HERITAGE ASSETS AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

**Strategic**

- A London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.
- B Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.

**Planning decisions**

- C Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.
- D Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.
- E New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials. The physical assets should, where possible, be made available to the public on-site. Where the archaeological asset or memorial cannot be preserved or managed on-site, provision must be made for the investigation, understanding, recording, dissemination and archiving of that asset.

**LDF preparation**

- F Boroughs should, in LDF policies, seek to maintain and enhance the contribution of built, landscaped and buried heritage to London's environmental quality, cultural identity and economy as part of managing London's ability to accommodate change and regeneration.

- 5.4 The local planning authority responsible for the site is the London Borough of Tower Hamlets whose Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is currently being replaced with the Tower Hamlets Local Plan, which is influenced by policies set out in the NPPF. The Local Plan consists of the Core Strategy, adopted on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and the Management Development Document (MDD) adopted on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013. The Core Strategy contains the following policy in relation to heritage assets:

### **Core Strategy Spatial Policy 10**

1. Protect, manage and enhance the Tower of London World Heritage Site, its setting, and surrounding area, as well as the buffer zone and setting of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site through:

- a. The respective World Heritage Site Management Plans and associated documents.
2. Protect and enhance the following heritage assets and their settings: World Heritage Sites
- Statutory Listed Buildings
  - Conservation Areas
  - London Squares
  - Historic Parks and Gardens
  - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
  - Archaeological Remains
  - Archaeological Priority Areas
  - Locally Listed Buildings
  - Local Landmarks
  - Other buildings and areas that are identified through the
  - Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Guidelines

5.5 Policy included within the MDD relating to the historic environment is as follows:

#### **POLICY DM27: Heritage and the Historic Environment**

1. Development will be required to protect and enhance the borough's heritage assets, their setting and their significance as key elements of developing the sense of place of the borough's distinctive 'Places'.

2. Applications for the alteration, extension, change of use, or development within a heritage asset will only be approved where:

- a. it does not result in an adverse impact on the character, fabric or identity of the heritage asset or its setting;
- b. it is appropriate in terms of design, scale, form, detailing and materials in its local context;
- c. it enhances or better reveals the significance of the asset or its setting;
- d. opportunities to mitigate or adapt to climate change through the re-use or adaptation are maximised; and
- e. in the case of a change of use, a thorough assessment should be carried out of the practicability of retaining its existing use and the wider benefits of the proposed use.

3. Proposals for the demolition of a designated heritage asset will only be considered under exceptional circumstances where the public benefit of demolition outweighs the case for retention. Where exceptional circumstances require demolition to be considered, applications will be assessed on:

- a. the significance of the asset, architecturally, historically and contextually;
- b. the condition of the asset and estimated costs of its repair and maintenance in relation to its significance and demolition, and to the value derived from its continued use;
- c. the adequacy of efforts made to retain the asset in use; and
- d. the merits of any alternative proposal for the site.

4. For proposed development that lies in or adjacent to Archaeological Priority Areas, the Council will require the proposal to include an Archaeological Evaluation Report and will require any nationally important remains to be preserved permanently in site, subject to consultation with English Heritage.

**27.1** Core Strategy Spatial Policy 10 identifies the range of Heritage Assets that exist in the borough and their contribution to the character, history and heritage of Tower Hamlets. This policy provides more detailed assessment criteria to ensure that these assets are protected and enhanced by any development proposal that directly impacts on these or their setting.

**27.2** The Council is taking a proactive approach through its Conservation Strategy to protect and enhance Tower Hamlets' heritage resources to ensure that it can be appreciated and enjoyed by current and future generations. Decisions will be based on the nature, extent and level of significance of the heritage asset. To help conserve heritage assets, an appropriate and viable use must be consistent with their conservation. Restrictions on development in the historic environment should not be used to hinder otherwise satisfactory development and the Council is committed to working with applicants and developers to find creative development solutions.

**27.3** An application will be required to demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the relevant asset or its setting. As a minimum this should be through reference to the Greater London Historic Environment Record (HER) or by a desk top analysis and reference to other documentation. As part of its Conservation Strategy, the Council is continuing to improve the level of heritage information available on its website. The Adopted Policies Map identifies Conservation Areas and Archaeological Priority Areas.

**27.4** Any other research undertaken of the heritage asset affected should describe the significance of the heritage asset in sufficient detail to determine its historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest to a level proportionate to its importance.

**27.5** Detailed plans will be required to be submitted with applications.

5.6 There are no Scheduled Monuments or Statutorily Listed Buildings within the development site and neither does the site lie within an Archaeology Priority Zone, as defined by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

5.7 It is now proposed to redevelop the site for residential purposes, a planning application (PA/10/01049) having been submitted in May 2010 and approved with conditions by Tower Hamlets Borough Council in November 2010. Condition 6 of the consent is as follows:

No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority (in consultation with English Heritage). The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme pursuant to this condition.

Reason: Important archaeological remains may exist on the site. Accordingly the Planning Authority wishes to secure the provision of archaeological excavation and the subsequent recording of remains prior to development, in accordance with the guidance set out in PPS5.

5.8 As mentioned above, PPS5 has now been superseded by the NPPF and local planning policies are currently being revised. However, a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for archaeological works was submitted, as detailed in the earlier condition, in a subsequent application for the approval of details in August 2013 (Planning Ref. PA/13/01949).



## 6 Archaeological Methodology

- 6.1 Initially it was proposed to excavate three evaluation trenches each measuring 10m x 1.8m. However this proved impossible due to the extent of existing footings. Therefore the fieldwork comprised the archaeological excavation and recording of four evaluation trenches and all aspects of the work followed national (IFA 2008) and local (GLAAS 1998) guidelines, and complied with PCA's own fieldwork manual (Taylor and Brown 2009). The fieldwork was carried out according to a written scheme of investigation (WSI) issued by PCA (Bradley 2013).
- 6.2 Four trenches, each measuring approximately 2.5m x 2.5m were excavated across the site. The scheme for strip trenches proposed by CgMs Consulting (June 2013) was not implemented, with the extent of below-ground obstructions associated with the previous development demonstrating that such a scheme could not have been successfully implemented (Figure 2).
- 6.3 It was initially necessary to break out sections of a pre-existing concrete slab using a breaker attached to a mechanical excavator, in order to access underlying deposits. Subsequently a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat bladed grading bucket was used under archaeological supervision to remove overburden down to the highest archaeological or natural horizon. The features and deposits identified within the trenches were then cleaned and investigated by hand. Investigation was limited to identifying the extent and nature of the deposits and to recover dating evidence. The archaeological deposits were assigned individual context numbers and recorded onto pro-forma sheets and recorded in plan and section as appropriate.
- 6.4 Upon completion of the trench excavations, 1:20 scale plan drawings were made as well as 1:10 scale section drawings. Natural and archaeological levels were recorded on *pro forma* context sheets using the Museum of London single context recording system. Heights of deposits in relation to Ordnance Datum were also recorded and a digital photographic record was made.

## 7 Trench Description and Interpretation of Sequences

7.1 This section records the stratigraphic sequences in each of the excavated trenches and offers some interpretation of the sequences revealed. The relative elevations of the varying sequences are shown in Figure 3.

### 7.2 Trench 1

7.2.1 Trench 1 was the most northerly of the trenches excavated (Plate 1). The basal deposit was a moderately firm, grey mottled, mid reddish brown gravel in a fine sandy matrix [11] recorded at a maximum elevation of 0.13m AOD, a sondage excavated on the northern side of the trench revealing that it was in excess of 0.85m thick. The gravel was well-sorted, suggesting a location towards the top of an upward-fining alluvial sequence, whilst a lens of sand [12] within the gravel may have been indicative of an erosion event. The gravel was overlain by a 0.45m thick deposit of quite firmly compacted, mid reddish brown sandy clay with silt bands [10], the surface of which was recorded at 0.58m AOD. This has been interpreted as fine-grained Thames alluvium.

7.2.2 At the western side of the trench, the eastern edge of a feature was partly exposed (Plate 2). This comprised a circular, brick-built structure [7] within a construction cut [8]. The structure measured at least 0.85m across and stood at least 0.46m high. It was interpreted as a well and although the bricks used in its construction may have been earlier, the mortar exhibited 19<sup>th</sup>-century characteristics (see Appendix 4) and it is likely that the well lay in the yard area of one of the residential properties illustrated on earlier maps of the area. Finds recovered from the backfill [6] of the well included clay tobacco pipe fragments and sherds of pottery, which were also of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date (see Appendices 5 & 6).

7.2.3 The alluvium and backfilled well were overlain by a further 0.3m of redeposited alluvial material [9], which had probably been disturbed during previous development work on the site. This was overlain by 0.25m of made ground, which was sealed by the 0.45m thick modern concrete slab. The surface of this lay at 1.58m AOD.

### 7.3 Trench 2

7.3.1 Trench 2 lay in a south-central part of the site (Plate 3). The basal deposit was a moderately firm, grey mottled, mid reddish brown sandy gravel with sandy clay patches infilling the voids in the gravel [5]. A sondage excavated on the western side of the trench revealed this to be at least 0.45m thick, its upper surface elevation being measured at -0.15m AOD. The gravel was overlain by a 0.85m thick deposit of firmly compacted, light yellowish brown sandy clay [4], the surface of which was recorded at 0.70m AOD. This has been interpreted as fine-grained Thames alluvium and was overlain by a 0.15m thick redeposited alluvial deposit, which had again been

disturbed by previous development on the site [3]. The sequence was completed by 0.1m of made ground overlain by the modern concrete slab, the surface of which was recorded at 1.53m AOD.

#### 7.4 Trench 3

7.4.1 Trench 3 was the easternmost of the trenches excavated on the site (Plate 4). The basal deposit here was a moderately firm, mid reddish brown sandy gravel [2] recorded at an upper elevation of -0.41m AOD and interpreted as coarse alluvial gravel. It was sealed by up to 0.50m of firmly compacted, mid reddish brown sandy clay [1] recorded at an upper elevation of 0.00m AOD and interpreted as Thames alluvium. No distinct disturbed alluvial deposit was observed in this sequence and the natural gravel was overlain by up to 1.30m of made ground, above which was the modern concrete slab, the surface at this location being recorded at 1.68m AOD.

#### 7.5 Trench 4

7.5.1 Trench 4 was located to the south of Trench 1 and west of Trench 2 (Plates 5 & 6). The basal deposit was a moderately firm, grey mottled, mid reddish brown gravel in a fine sandy matrix [16]. This was well-sorted and in common with the material in Trench 1 has been interpreted as being consistent with a location towards the top of an upward-fining alluvial sequence. The gravel was at least 0.30m thick with the surface elevation being recorded at -0.02m AOD. It was overlain by up to 0.21m of moderately compacted, mid yellowish grey sandy clay [15], interpreted as Thames alluvium and recorded at an upper elevation of 0.18m AOD. This was overlain by up to 0.30m of loose, light yellowish brown sand [14], initially interpreted as a wind-blown deposit, but which may have formed a variation to the alluvial sequence. This deposit was recorded at an upper elevation of 0.48m AOD. Above this was a layer of soft, mid brownish grey silty clay [13], up to 0.45m thick and recorded at a surface elevation of 0.93m AOD. This appeared to comprise redeposited alluvium along with some anthropogenic material, including highly abraded medieval peg tile fragments (see Appendix 4), although the same deposit produced late post-medieval material in other trenches. It was sealed by 0.1m of made ground and the sequence was completed by the concrete slab, the surface of which was recorded at 1.53m AOD.

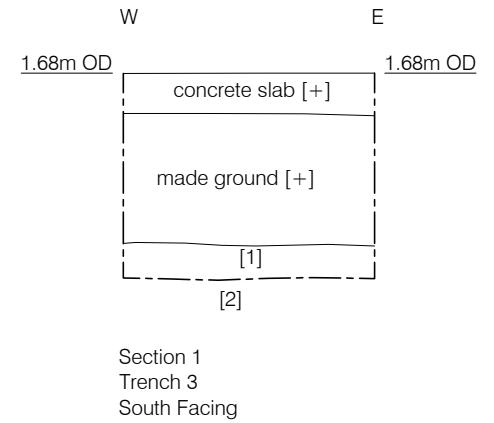
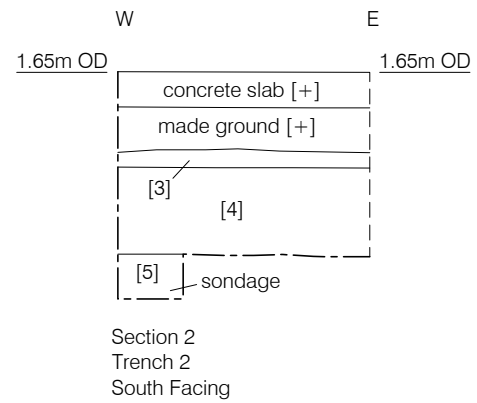
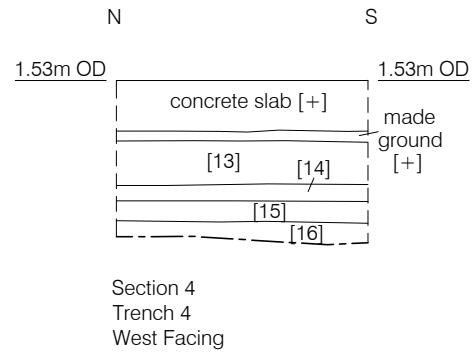
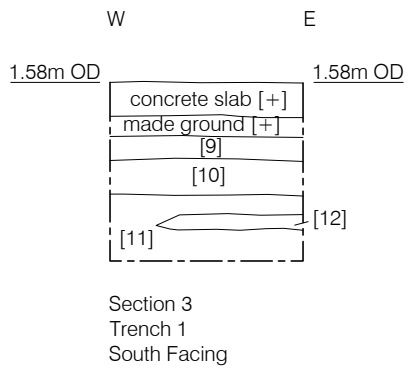


Figure 3  
Sections Through Stratigraphic Sequences in Trenches 1 - 4  
1:75 at A4

## **8 Phased Archaeological Sequence**

### **8.1 Phase 1: Natural Gravel Deposits**

8.1.1 The earliest deposit recorded in all sequences was firmly compacted, naturally deposited gravel, which was not fully penetrated in any of the trenches. The recorded elevations clearly showed that the surface elevation of the gravel increased from east (-0.41m OD in Trench 3) to west (0.13m OD in Trench 1), indicating that the site lay in an area of rising gravel. However, these gravels are at the lower end of the datum envelope at which human activity might be anticipated. The nature of the gravel also varied between trenches indicating that it was probably laid down in varying depositional environments. The lowest-lying material in Trenches 2 & 3 appeared to be alluvial material deposited under a high-energy regime rather than that derived from glacial or colluvial activity and was most likely deposited in the Late Glacial or early Post-Glacial period as a result of increased water flow following glacial melting. The better-sorted gravel in Trenches 1 and 4 was indicative of material towards the upper part of an upward fining alluvial sequence, the lower levels being represented by material such as that recorded in Trench 3.

### **8.2 Phase 2: Alluvial Deposition**

8.2.1 In all sequences the coarser gravel was overlain by a much finer material, generally a sandy clay and interpreted as fine Thames alluvium. This would have been deposited in a relatively low-energy environment at the margins of the river, though as no artefactual evidence was recovered, the deposit could not be dated in any of the trenches. It is possible that the deposit represented accumulation over an extensive timescale, the thickness of the material in Trench 2 demonstrating the likelihood of this, whereas the material in Trench 1 and possibly Trench 3 had probably been significantly truncated by recent activity.

### **8.3 Phase 3: Potential 'Dry-Land' or Alluvial Deposit**

8.3.1 In Trench 4 the alluvium, which was a thinner deposit here than in other sequences, was overlain by a deposit of sand interpreted initially as possibly wind-blown material, though no artefactual evidence was recovered from this layer. This deposit lay below the upper levels of alluvial accumulation recorded in Trenches 1 and 2, and the deposit is therefore perhaps more consistent with a variation in the alluvial sequence. Above this was a deposit apparently comprising redeposited alluvium.

### **8.4 Phase 4: 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

8.4.1 The only clear evidence of human occupation on the site was recorded in Trench 1 where the eastern edge of a circular (or sub-circular) brick-lined well was exposed. Although manufactured from bricks that may have been earlier the well was clearly

constructed and backfilled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As mentioned above, the well probably lay to the rear of one of the properties shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Maps, most likely one that faced onto the north side of Manilla Street (Alfred Street on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition).

## **8.5 Phase 5: Later Post-Medieval**

8.5.1 The alluvium in Trenches 1 and 2 was overlain by a deposit of disturbed alluvial material, which was probably also seen in the upper part of the layer overlying the wind-blown sand in Trench 4. This material has been interpreted as being associated with an earlier phase of development on the site, though given the lack of further *in situ* structural remains, it is not clear whether this was disturbed prior to construction or following demolition of the Manilla Street and Cuba Street properties that formerly occupied the site. There is a strong possibility that disturbance of later alluvial deposits occurred during development of the docks and therefore pre-dated the construction of residential properties. Disturbed alluvial material may also have been present in the Trench 3 sequence but was not recognised as a discrete layer, separate from the extensive made ground material.

## **8.6 Phase 6: Modern Deposits**

8.6.1 Modern deposits on the site comprised the variable thickness of made ground and the concrete slab. The made ground was probably mostly made up of material deposited following the demolition of the Manilla Street and Cuba Street properties in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is known that the concrete slab was associated with the building constructed in 1992.

## 9 Discussion and Conclusions

- 9.1 Although clear evidence of human activity was mostly restricted to relatively recent periods, the archaeological evaluation revealed a natural sequence of deposition from the late Pleistocene/early Holocene up to the modern era.
- 9.2 Natural gravel was recorded as the basal unit in all sequences and has been interpreted mostly as material deposited by high-energy riverine activity and therefore probably dating to a period of late or post-glacial melting and therefore increased runoff. There was a clear rise in the surface elevation of the gravel from south-east to north-west, confirming earlier observations from the immediate vicinity of the site. The highest level for the gravel was recorded in Trench 1 at the western end of the site, where it was recorded 0.13m OD. This is somewhat lower than recorded evidence of occupation/exploitation of the gravels previously recorded on the Isle of Dogs (0.67m OD plus, see Appendix 1). There was no evidence of exploitation of the gravels within the site.
- 9.3 The gravel was overlain in all trenches by a variable thickness of fine-grained alluvium, which would have been deposited at the Thames margins under a much lower-energy regime than that responsible for gravel deposition. The variable thickness of the fine alluvium was partly a result of different levels of more recent truncation, however, the complexity of the sequence was demonstrated in Trench 4. Here, a relatively thin layer of alluvium was overlain by a sand deposit, initially interpreted as a possible dry-land deposit. However, this layer is well below the upper levels of alluvial accumulation recorded in Trenches 1 and 2, and the deposit is therefore more consistent with a variation in the alluvial sequence.
- 9.4 Alluvial deposition probably continued well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century and only ceased a short time prior to the development of the docks at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Disturbance of the upper alluvial material will have initially occurred during the period of docks development, though there was probably further truncation of deposits during the development of the residential properties along Alfred Street and Robert Street.
- 9.5 Deposition of the variable thickness of made ground recorded across the site almost certainly post-dated the demolition of the residential properties along the renamed Cuba Street and Manilla Street in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and much of the material was probably derived from their demolition. The most recent phases of activity on the site prior to the archaeological investigations are known to have been the construction of the office block in 1992 and its subsequent demolition a short time prior to the investigations.
- 9.6 Overall the archaeological evaluation has demonstrated that the site has been subject to extensive truncation of deposits by development from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century

onwards, particularly by the most recent development, which included deep ground beam and pile foundations across the site, with more extensive truncation of the deposits at the western side of the site where the previous lift pits, stairwell and water tank were located (Figure 2). The underlying topography of the natural gravels survived sufficiently to demonstrate that it was rising from east to west to a highest level of 0.13m OD in Trench 1. No evidence was recorded for exploitation of this horizon, which previous interventions in the area suggest was at the lower end or below the prehistoric occupation horizon for the Isle of Dogs. The sequence was sealed across the area by truncated alluvial deposits and modern construction levels.



## **10 Acknowledgements**

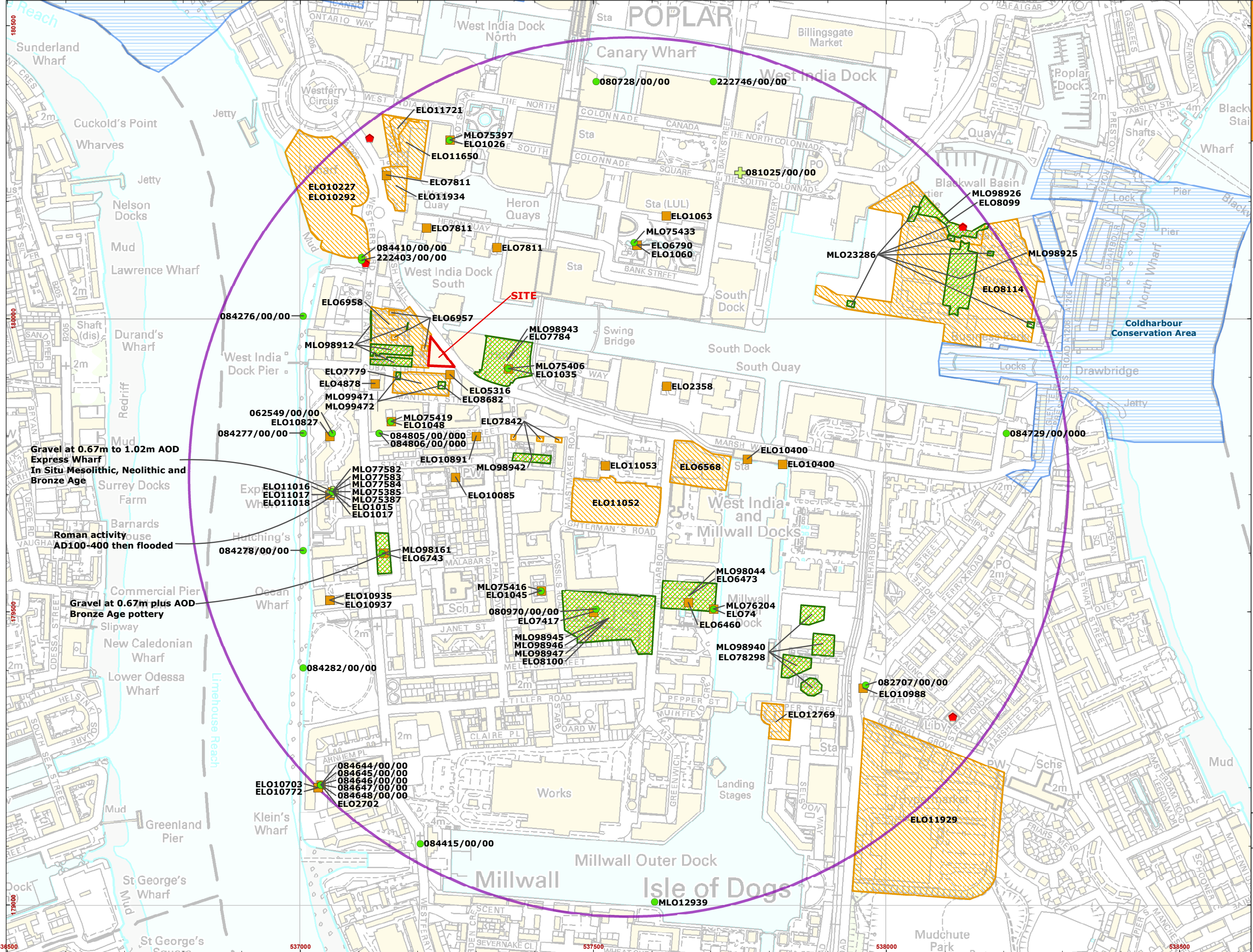
- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. would like to thank Lorraine Mayo and Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work and providing additional contextual information, Chris of O'Connell Plant & Groundworks for carrying out the machine excavation, Demolition Solutions for permitting access to the study site and Adam Single of English Heritage GLAAS, who monitored the archaeological work on behalf of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 10.2 The authors wish to thank Tim Bradley for project management and editing this report, Guy Seddon for initially supervising the evaluation, David Taylor for providing a geoarchaeological input and assisting on site, Chris Jarrett and Kevin Hayward for commenting on the finds Rick Archer for surveying and Josephine Brown for preparing the illustrations.

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- Site Boundary
- Search Area (750m radius)

Designated Heritage Assets:

- ◆ Listed Building
- Conservation Area

Non-Designated Heritage Assets:

- Monument Point
- + Findspot
- Monument Area

Previous Archaeological Work:

- Event Point
- Event Area

Gravel at 0.67m to 1.02m AOD  
Express Wharf  
In Situ Mesolithic, Neolithic and  
Bronze Age

Roman activity  
AD100-400 then flooded

Gravel at 0.67m plus AOD  
Bronze Age pottery



Scale at A3: 1:6,000  
0 150 m

Appendix 1:  
HER Plot



Additional information:

- Site Boundary
- ◆ Borehole Location
- Section Line

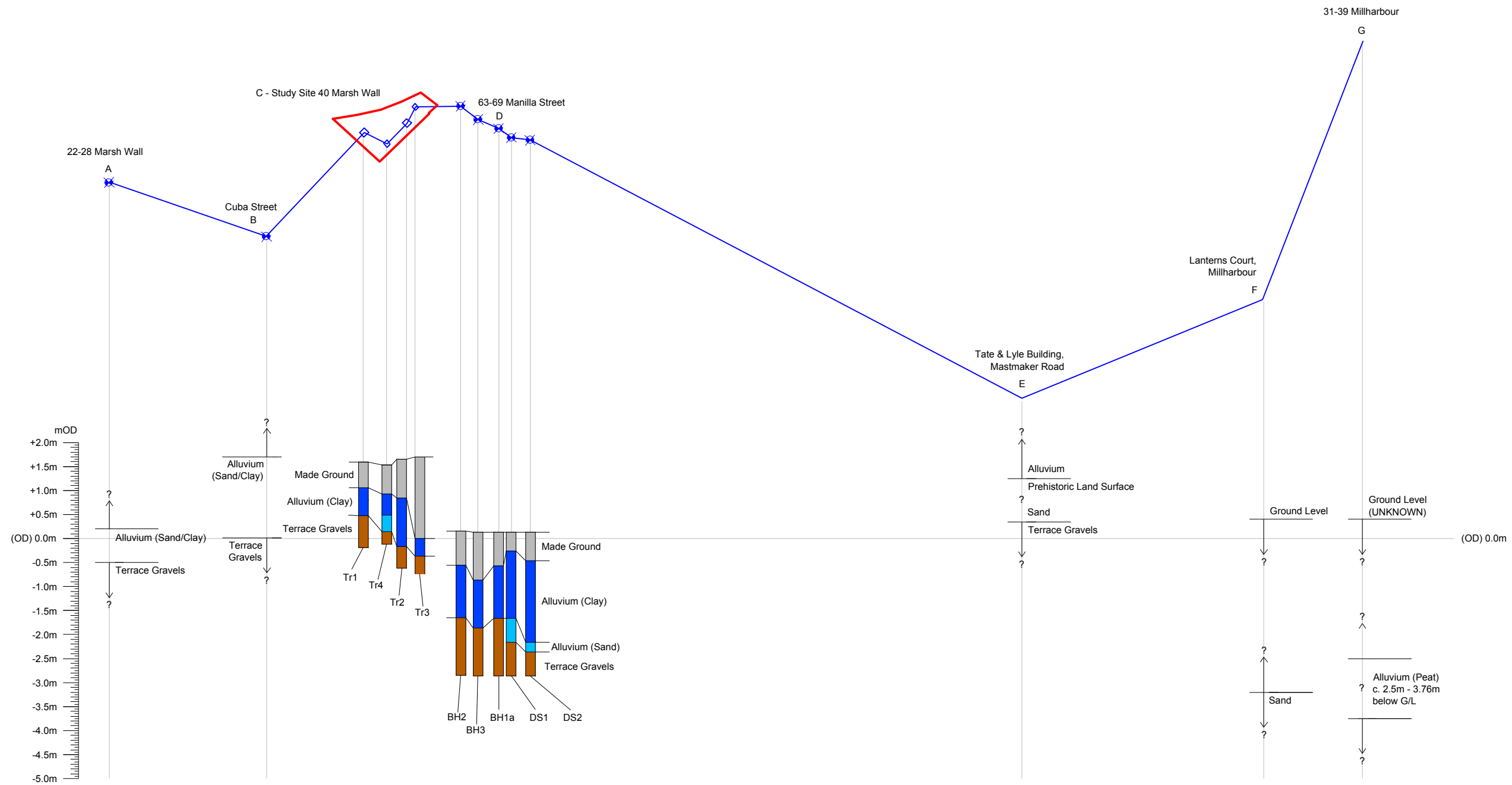


Project title:  
40 Marsh Wall

	London Cheltenham Kettering Newark Birmingham www.cgms.co.uk
	Planning & Development Archaeology & Historic Buildings

Not to Scale: Illustrative Only

Date printed: Jan 10, 2014	Drawn by: LW Checked by: DH
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Additional information:

Project title:  
40 Marsh Wall



Planning & Development  
Archaeology & Historic Buildings

Not to Scale: Illustrative Only

Date printed:  
Jan 10, 2014

Drawn by: LW  
Checked by: DH

### APPENDIX 3: PLATES



Plate 1: Trench 1, Looking North



Plate 2: Well [7] at Western Edge of Trench 1



Plate 3: Trench 2, Looking South



Plate 4: Trench 3, Looking East





Plate 5: Trench 4, Looking North

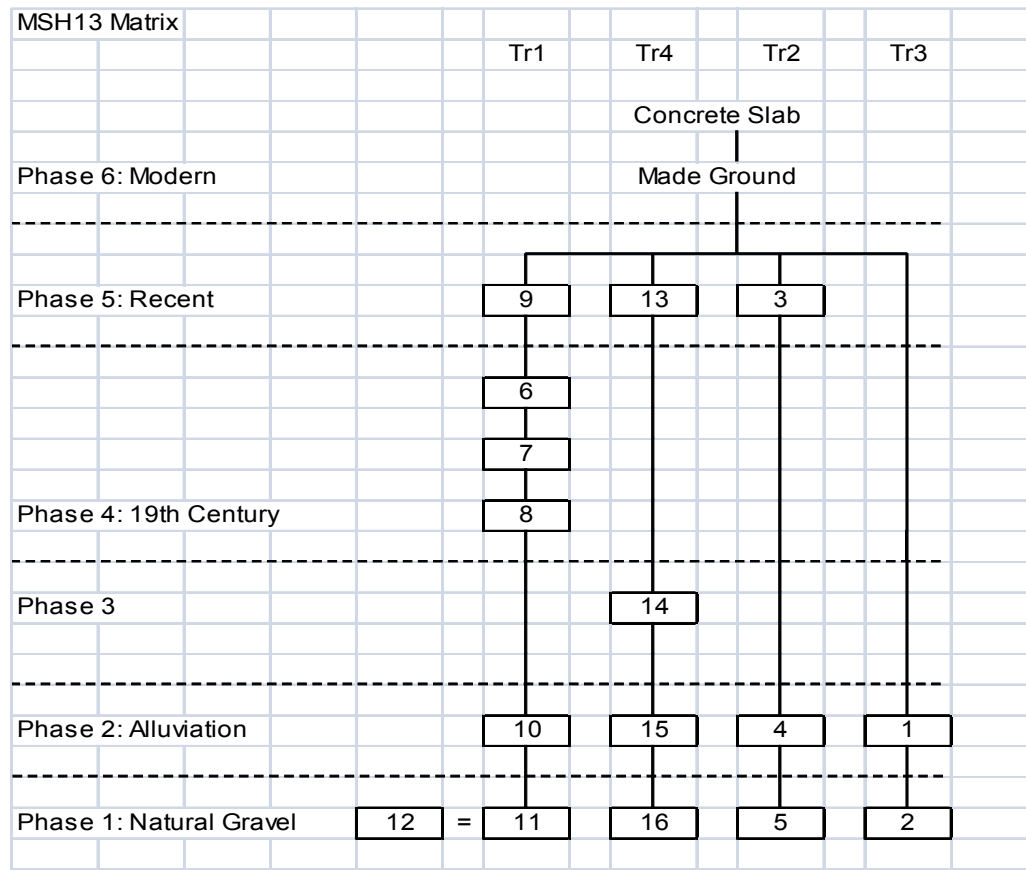


Plate 6: Trench 4, West-Facing Section

## APPENDIX 4: CONTEXT INDEX

Site Code	Context	Type	Trench	Description	Date	Phase
MSH13	1	Layer	3	Alluvium	Alluviation	2
MSH13	2	Layer	3	Natural gravel	Natural	1
MSH13	3	Layer	2	Redeposited alluvium	Recent	5
MSH13	4	Layer	2	Alluvium	Alluviation	2
MSH13	5	Layer	2	Natural gravel	Natural	1
MSH13	6	Fill	1	Backfill of well [7]	19 <sup>th</sup> Century	4
MSH13	7	Masonry	1	Masonry well	19 <sup>th</sup> Century	4
MSH13	8	Cut	1	Const. Cut for well [7]	19 <sup>th</sup> Century	4
MSH13	9	Layer	1	Redeposited alluvium	Recent	5
MSH13	10	Layer	1	Alluvium	Alluviation	2
MSH13	11	Layer	1	Natural gravel	Natural	1
MSH13	12	Layer	1	Sandy lens in gravel	Natural	1
MSH13	13	Layer	4	Redeposited Alluvium	Recent	5
MSH13	14	Layer	4	Sandy deposit	Medieval?	3
MSH13	15	Layer	4	Sandy alluvium	Alluviation	2
MSH13	16	Layer	4	Natural gravel	Natural	1

## APPENDIX 5: SITE MATRIX



## APPENDIX 6: BUILDING MATERIALS

### CBM REVIEW

Kevin Hayward

Context	Fabric	Material	Size	Date range of material		Latest dated material		Spot date	Spot date Mortar
7	3065 Estuarine; 3101	Three locally produced Red later post medieval Voussoir Bricks sharp arises; hard gravel mortar	3	1450	1900	1450	1900	1800-1900	1850-1950
13	2271; 2586	Abraded medieval peg tile	2	1180	1800	1180	1800	1180-1600+	No mortar

### Review

Five items of building material (c7kg) (peg tile and brick) were recorded from the Marsh Wall Excavations at Tower Hamlets MSH13.

The material from [13] consists of highly abraded medieval peg tile in two fabrics the common sandy 2271 with a reduced core and the iron oxide rich 2586. Although there is no glazing the former has remnants of coarse moulding sand and is of a thickness (9mm) typical of medieval period.

Of particular interest are three curved (voussoir) bricks from structure [7]. Although they are similar to the early post medieval (Tudor-Stuart) fabric 3065, these are well made with dimensions (220mm x 108mm x 66mm), more typical of Victorian brick. What is more the fabric contains casts of numerous small estuarine shells that suggest production at a local brickfield relatively close to the river/marshland. Furthermore they are adhered with a type of hard gravel cement mortar that would only have been in circulation from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that they were reused from a well.

### Recommendations

The abraded peg tile could have come from any part of the medieval city or its suburbs and washed in. Although voussoir bricks are rare they are Victorian in date, well made and locally produced

The site has limited potential in terms of the building material and early material should be viewed merely as washed in debris.

## **APPENDIX 7: POTTERY**

### **POTTERY DATING INDEX**

**Chris Jarrett**

#### **Review**

Context [6]: spot date: c. 1840-1870

Refined white earthenware with under-glaze painted decoration (chrome colours) (REFW CHROM), one sherd, 1 ENV, 18g. Form: dinner plate with a plain edge rim, embossed with green-glazed 'shell-edged decoration, dated c. 1840-1870.

#### **Comments**

The sherd of pottery has no significance and is of a pottery type commonly excavated in the London area. The pottery has no potential other than to date the context it was recovered from. There are no recommendations for further work.

## **APPENDIX 8: CLAY TOBACCO PIPE**

### **CLAY TOBACCO PIPE DATING INDEX**

**Chris Jarrett**

#### **Review**

Context [6]: spot date: c. 1740-1910

Two stems with thin diameters and fine bore diameters, dated c. 1740-1910

#### **Comments**

The clay tobacco pipe stems have no significance and their only potential is to broadly date the context they were recovered from. There are no recommendations for further work.

## APPENDIX 9: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-166725

### Project details

Project name 40 Marsh Wall, Isle of Dogs

Short description of the project Four 2.5m x 2.5m evaluation trenches were excavated down to naturally-occurring sandy-gravels. Occasional lenses of sand were seen within the gravels and it was noted that they rose up towards the north-west. The gravel was overlain by fine alluvium, which varied in thickness because of different levels of recent truncation. In a trench towards the south of the area, a clean sand horizon seen above natural alluvium was interpreted as a windblown dry-land deposit. No anthropogenic finds, features or deposits were observed though abraded medieval tile was recovered from a layer just above. A 19th-century brick well was seen cut through the alluvium in another trench and most-likely related to terraced housing built over the area in the late 19th century. The earlier deposits were overlain by redeposited alluvial clay that contained late post-medieval ceramic building material fragments. This in turn was sealed by modern ground-raising and levelling deposits that served as a pre-cursor to the modern concrete slab that covered the area.

Project dates Start: 18-11-2013 End: 06-12-2013

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference codes MSH13 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed

Monument type WELL Post Medieval

Significant Finds TILE Medieval

Significant Finds POTTERY Post Medieval

Significant Finds BRICK Post Medieval

Significant Finds CLAY TOBACCO PIPE Post Medieval

Methods & techniques "Sample Trenches"

Development type Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)

Prompt National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS POPLAR 40 Marsh Wall

Postcode E14 9TP

Study area 0.11 Hectares

Site coordinates	TQ 37259 79851 51 0 51 30 01 N 000 01 20 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: -0.41m Max: 0.13m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	Adam Single
Project design originator	Lorraine Mayo
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley
Project supervisor	Richard Humphrey
Project supervisor	Guy Seddon
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	CgMs Consulting
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Spreadsheets","Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Diary","Matrices","Plan","Section"
Project bibliography	
1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	40 MARSH WALL, ISLE OF DOGS, LONDON E14 9TP: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Humphrey, R.
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Boyer, P.
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	MAP2/MoRPHE report

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Entered by Peter Boyer (pboyer@pre-construct.com)  
Entered on 12 December 2013