

**17 CROSS STREET,
ISLINGTON, LONDON N1 2BH
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**



**LONDON BOROUGH OF
ISLINGTON**



REPORT NO: R11667

MARCH 2014



17 Cross Street, Islington, London N1 2BH

An Archaeological Watching Brief

Central NGR: TQ 3181 8395

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Islington

Site Code: CRX14

Commissioning Client: Studio 30 Architects on behalf of Mr Vos and Mrs Giles

**Written/Researched by: Matt Edmonds
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited**

Project Manager: Helen Hawkins (MIfA)

**Contractor: Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Unit 54 Brockley Cross Business Centre
96 Endwell Road
Brockley
London SE4 2PD**

Tel: 020 7732 3925

Fax: 020 7732 7896

E-mail: hhawkins@pre-construct.com

Web: www.pre-construct.com

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DOCUMENT VERIFICATION


Site Name

17 Cross Street, Islington, N1 2BH

Type of project

Archaeological Watching Brief

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Project Code			K3352
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	M Edmonds		21.03.14
Graphics Prepared by:	M Roughley		21.03.14
Graphics Checked by:	J Brown	<i>Josephine Brown</i>	25.03.14
Project Manager Sign-off:	H Hawkins		25.03.14

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Unit 54
Brockley Cross Business Centre
96 Endwell Road
London
SE4 2PD

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) undertook an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of geotechnical test pits located in the basement and garden at 17 Cross Street, Islington, N1 2BH, London Borough of Islington (Figures 1 and 2).
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned by Studio 30 Architects on behalf of Mr Vos and Mrs Giles.
- 1.3 Archaeological monitoring was carried out on 13th March 2014 during the excavation of seven test pits. The test pits were designed to explore the ground conditions and foundations of the property at 17 Cross Street prior to a proposed scheme of redevelopment. The test pits were hand excavated by the client's contractor under archaeological supervision.
- 1.4 The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 3181 8395.
- 1.5 The proposed development will see the redevelopment of the site to lower the basement slab and extend into the back patio area.
- 1.6 Discussions were carried out with the Archaeological Adviser to the London Borough of Islington, Sandy Kidd and it was agreed that an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of geotechnical test pits would be a suitable first stage for evaluating the archaeological potential of the site. Five test pits were proposed in the basement area, and two more were added, at Mr Kidd's request, in the rear patio area.
- 1.7 The site is located within a locally designated Archaeology Priority Area. An archaeological planning condition has been attached to the site:

4 A) No development shall take place until the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological evaluation in accordance with a written scheme which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority in writing and a report on that evaluation has been submitted to the local planning authority.

B) If heritage assets of archaeological interest are identified by the evaluation under Part A, then before development commences the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) shall secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority in writing.

C) No development or demolition shall take place other than in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (B).

D) The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under Part (B), and the provision for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason: Heritage assets of archaeological interest may survive on the site. The planning authority wishes to secure the provision of appropriate archaeological investigation, including the publication of results.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1 According to the 1:50,000 British Geological Survey Sheet 256, North London (2006) the underlying geology of the area comprises of Palaeogene London Clay, deposited between 56 and 34 million years ago.
- 2.2 Topographically the site lies on land that exhibits little variation in elevation from east to west but slopes down gradually from north to south. The road surface of Cross Street, just outside 17 Cross Street, has been recorded at 32.6m OD.
- 2.3 The site lies between two manmade bodies of water; the New River ends about 350m north of the site, and the Regent's Canal lies around 700m south of the site.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment for the site has been previously carried out (PCA 2014). The following archaeological and historical background is taken from that report.
- 3.2 Prehistoric
- 3.2.1 There is no evidence of prehistoric activity within 250m of the study site.
- 3.3 Roman
- 3.3.1 The only evidence of Roman activity within 250m of the study site is at 21 Popham Street, which is just to the west of the study site on the west side of Essex Road. During an evaluation at this site in 2000, four sherds of residual Roman pottery were recovered from medieval and post medieval layers. However, no stratified Roman layers were found on the site.
- 3.4 Early Medieval
- 3.4.1 The study site lies just to the north west of what was the old settlement of Islington. The first mention of the settlement was c. 1000AD when it was called Gislandune, (Gisla's hill or down). This gradually turned into Isledon which lasted well into the 17th century. There are several theories on the etymology of Islington including the Saxon words isen (iron) or the Old British words ishel (lower) and dun or don (town or fortress).
- 3.4.2 The only archaeological evidence of early medieval activity near the study site is a single sherd of pottery found at Essex Road, just south of the study site. During an evaluation and excavation at 71-85 Essex Road a piece of residual Saxon pottery was recovered within waterlain deposits. These deposits were in stream channels that crossed the site in the 16th century. No stratified early medieval layers or features were found on site.
- 3.5 Medieval
- 3.5.1 The hamlet of Islington had established itself in the medieval period, with houses along what are now known as Upper Street and Essex Road. Upper Street, along with Goswell Road, St John Street and Liverpool Road once formed part of a major medieval road system exiting London to the north. The junction of these roads became the nucleus of the settlement by the 15th century. Along these busy byways inns sprang up to catch the passing trade.
- 3.5.2 Just to the south west of the study site is the site of the former Church of St Mary Islington. A history of the church dates the presence of a church on that locale to the 12th century.
- 3.5.3 Writings in 1170-82 described the vicinity of Islington as an area of 'fields for pasture and open meadows...into which river waters do flow and mills turned about'. By the 14th century much of the land was arable pasture, with windmills on circular high mounds including those at St John Street and east of Goswell Road. Archaeological investigations at 21 Popham Street concur with historical writings. A layer of silt containing small sherds of medieval pottery, dating from 1270-1350 was found and thought to be related to agricultural tillage. Just behind the study site at 19-20 Dagmar Terrace another archaeological investigation discovered two probable ditches cut into the natural gravels c.2m below the land surface. These features contained material dated to the 14th-15th century and were sealed by a surface layer of packed gravel containing similarly dated material.
- 3.5.4 As well as pastoral farming, the land around Islington was used by high class families who wished to retreat from the busy life of London. Just across the road from the study site is the site of the former residence of the Fowler family, lords of the Manor of Barnsbury. The mansion house was built with a timber frame and plaster walls and ceilings. The estate became part of the growth of Islington in the 17th century, by 1690 it consisted of the mansion house, a three acre field, The Thatched House Tavern, c. fourteen other houses and a barn. The large house itself was later used as a boarding house and demolished in 1850.

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- 3.5.5 Water supply in the medieval period came from the numerous springs that were in abundance on the higher ground in the area. In 1613 access to this water became industrialised with a new reservoir and water house built at New River Head, an artificial river channel taking fresh water from Hertfordshire to Clerkenwell. Overland pipes then took water from this terminus to areas in and around London. Possible evidence of this construction was recovered in an excavation at 71-85 Essex Road. A 16th century culvert was found which may have been part of the New River tunnel. By the 17th century the culvert had collapsed or been demolished and a set of 17th century terrace brick celled houses had been built. Rubbish pits were also excavated and dated to this time in the rear gardens of these houses.
- 3.6 Post-Medieval
- 3.6.1 Land use around the study site in the early post-medieval period changed little from the medieval period; in 1548 Islington was still a small hamlet of around 440 people known principally for its inns. The north and east of Essex Road was open land and pasture reserved for farming, illicit prayer meetings, gentlemanly recreation and sport. To the south of the study site tenements lined Islington High Street and what was then known as Lower Street. Lower Street has now become Essex Road, the branch between Islington Green and Cross Street. Archaeological evidence of these tenements was found at 21 Popham Street, just off Essex Road. Deposits of domestic refuse and hearth rake-out were found and thought to have been used as garden soil. Pottery from these deposits was dated to the late 16th century. 18th-19th century features were also found on site including a brick drain and two parallel wall footings running east west.
- 3.6.2 The proximity to London and Westminster, along with the allure of the rural surroundings, attracted many rich and distinguished residents; just east of the study site, on the east side of Essex Road is the location of the 17th century Fisher House, belonging to the Fisher Fowler families, Lords of Canonbury. This was later demolished and a Baptist Church built in its place in 1850. As well as titled residents, the area around the study site also attracted wealthy middle class residents. Archaeological investigations in the area around the study site show a period of building to accommodate these new inhabitants. On the west side of Essex Road the excavation undertaken at 71-85 Essex Road found a set of 17th century terrace houses. This site also showed the infiltration of industrial practices into the area; industrial works dated to the 19th century, possibly connected to the Colour Works, were recorded. These works included a steam driven machine complex.
- 3.6.3 The rural nature of the area can be illustrated by the presence of a farmstead owned by a Mr Sutton on the east side of Essex Road, south of the study site. A farm has been referenced to have been at the location since around 1796 as a farm for the poor of the city and a farmhouse still stood there in 1811. Further to this archaeological investigations at 276 Upper Street recovered a post medieval plough or garden soil lying directly on the natural brickearth. No mention was made of the date of the building on the property.
- 3.6.4 Between the 18th and 19th centuries the population of Islington rapidly increased; the number of houses grew from 325 in 1708 to 1,745 in 1801. Much of the population were incomers retreating from London wishing to enjoy the benefits of Islington air. In the 19th century there was a rapid and irregular spread of building and development; the number of houses between 1821 and 1831 rose by 80%. Archaeological evidence of the 19th century development in Islington is quite widespread with much of it residential. To the west of the study site refuse deposits were recorded and dated to the 18th-19th century at Almeida Street. In the 19th-20th century re-deposited gravels were laid across the east end of the site. However, much of this site was truncated by the 20th century Post Office basements. Observations at St Mary's Neighbourhood Centre on Upper Street recorded an 18th-19th century brick well, a ditch cut into the natural gravels and a spread of re-deposited brickearth. To the south of the study site archaeological investigation uncovered a 19th century basement at 24 Gaskin Street, along with 19th-20th century made ground.

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- 3.6.5 A demonstration of the surge in population in Islington around the 19th century is the increase in number of burial grounds. A cemetery is noted about 250m south of the site. Privately owned by Rev. Jones between 1817 and 1854 the cemetery has been known by a number of names including; Little Bunhill Fields, New Bunhill Fields, Jones Burial Ground and Islington Chapel Ground. Observations of this site noted a very good preservation of coffins within a well ordered burial ground with known burial plots.
- 3.6.6 Cartographic evidence of the Islington area also shows the gradual extension and increasing density of occupation. A survey of Islington in 1735 showed the spread of development along the main roads of Upper Street and what was then Lower Street (Essex Road), with an expanse of empty pasture around. Sixty-five years later Baker's 1800 plan illustrated that minor roads and lanes had been incorporated and developed into a more substantial urban area. As transport links and roads improved more people began moving into the area, houses and inns spread along these new roads and occupation round the crossroads of Upper and Lower Street (Essex Road) increased in density. The old mansions and manor houses of the gentry were converted into smaller residences or commercial properties, mainly inns. However, the residences still had large gardens and orchards, with large houses and mansions fronting onto the roads that branched off Lower Street (Essex Road) and Upper Street.
- 3.6.7 Maps from 1841 and 1859 illustrated how these orchards and gardens were gradually reduced through the 19th century as land was increasingly divided and compartmentalised into criss-crossing streets of residences and shops. The overall picture of Islington was that of an area being increasingly densely packed, and with a rapidly decreasing level of wealth and status. By the 1840s the population of Islington was mainly poor, with mass overcrowding and decaying, run down housing. From the 1860s provision of working class housing to help deal with the overpopulation changed the landscape of the area. Throughout the 19th century new streets and the re-housing of much of the population led to the street layout seen today. The first Ordnance Survey map in 1874 demonstrates in detail how the open spaces of the 16th and 17th centuries had been reduced to narrow long gardens of densely packed terrace housing. It is on this map that Lower Street was first referenced as Essex Road.
- 3.6.8 The study site itself lies on a street that has long been an intersection between Upper Street and Lower Street (Essex Road), historical sources have shown it to be in existence at least before 1735. No property existed on the study site at this time; however there were residences across the road and on the west side of Cross Street. By 1800 the whole of Cross Street had been developed with properties on either side of the road. Archaeological evidence for occupation at and around the study site shows signs of the 19th century development that occurred. Just across the road from the study site at 40 Cross Street, an archaeological watching brief observed numerous layers of 19th century occupation. The earliest deposit was an early 19th century external surface, probably a yard surface which was covered by a makeup layer mid 19th century in date. This was possibly associated with building works of similar date. Other test pits on site indicated further building works including a basement, an earlier internal floor, a well or cess pit and a garden wall and garden soils. At St Mary's Church Primary School, just off Cross Street, basements of demolished 19th century buildings were found during building work at the site. From 1800 cartographic and archaeological sources show little change at the study site.
- 3.7 Modern
- 3.7.1 In the 20th century the largest impact on the area around the study site was due to bombing raids on London during World War II. Maps from 1874 to 1916 have no obvious change in the layout or design of the streets and properties surrounding the study site. From the London County Council Bomb Damage map it can be seen that property on Cross Street and on the roads around received varying degrees of damage, probably from the V2 bomb that landed on Hayward Street just north of the study site. It has already been noted that the Church of St Mary on Upper Street was damaged beyond repair, but the Baptist Church across the road from the study site also suffered massive damage, along with some of the properties on Dagmar Terrace, to the south of the site. The Ordnance Survey map of 1953 illustrated the fallout of the bomb damage; with the above mentioned property described still as ruin.
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4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Seven test pits were monitored during the archaeological watching brief. They were excavated by the client's groundworks contractor by hand with an archaeologist in attendance throughout the excavation.

4.2 In the basement of the property five test pits were excavated and two further test pits were excavated in the garden. Test Pit 4 was originally proposed in a basement storage area in the south-east of the site but due to difficult access was moved to another basement storage area in the north-west of the site.

4.3 Summary Table of Test-Pits:

Test-Pit No.	Dimensions (Metres):				Area
	North-South	East-West	Depth to Natural (BGL)	Total Depth (m)	
TP1	0.7	0.5	0.35	0.7	Basement
TP2	0.8	0.6	0.20	0.4	Basement
TP3	0.9	0.8	0.33	0.5	Basement
TP4	0.9	0.8	0.3	0.6	Basement
TP5	0.75	0.75	0.25	0.80	Basement
TP6	0.6	1	0.7	1	Garden
TP7	0.6	0.5	0.8	1.1	Garden

4.4 The locations of the trenches are illustrated in Figure 2.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE AND INTERPRETATION

- 5.1 Trench locations and sections are shown on Figures 2, 3 and 4.
- 5.2 Phase 1: Natural
- 5.2.1 Natural deposits of clay and gravel were observed in all of the test pits undertaken. The natural deposits ranged from a firm stiff mid-orange brown clay [1] to a compact light orange brown clay gravel with small to medium sub-angular and angular flints [2]. Test Pits 1, 2, 3 and 4 all encountered natural deposits between 0.2m and 0.35m BGL (below ground level). These were located in the rooms and corridors of the basement. Test Pits 6 and 7 were located in the garden area of the site. In these test pits natural deposits were encountered between 0.7m and 0.8m BGL.
- 5.2.2 Only the top of the natural deposits was excavated and probably continued well beyond the base of the test pits. It is likely that this natural deposit is the Paleogene London Clay with bands of gravel as described by the British Geological Survey.
- 5.3 Phase 2: Post Medieval
- 5.3.1 In the garden area of the site Test Pit 6 encountered a layer of firm dark grey brown clay silt with occasional brick fragments [4]. This layer sealed the natural clay deposits and was interpreted as part of an earlier garden surface as pavement slabs from an earlier patio / yard surface were observed.
- 5.3.2 In Test Pit 7 the natural clay deposits were sealed by a loose/friable dark brown clay silt deposit [3]. This layer was encountered at 0.5m BGL and was 0.3m in thickness. This layer has been interpreted as part of an earlier phase of garden layout before the existing patio was put in place.
- 5.4 Phase 3: Modern
- 5.4.1 In the basement the test pits (1 to 5) all had a similar sequence of a levelling layer consisting of a loose to firm coarse sand, brick and gravel. This was sealing the natural deposits and it was encountered at 0.10m BGL and was between 0.25m and 0.15m in thickness. This deposit seems to be the levelling bedding layer for the current concrete basement slab and indicated that the current basement had truncated the natural deposits. The concrete slab was about 0.10m in thickness.
- 5.4.2 In the garden, Test Pits 6 and 7 both had a sequence of ground raising 0.40m and 0.45m in thickness and were encountered at 0.10-0.15m BGL. This deposit was used to build up the ground for the current concrete and paving stone patio surface observed in the rear garden area of the site.

6 CONCLUSIONS

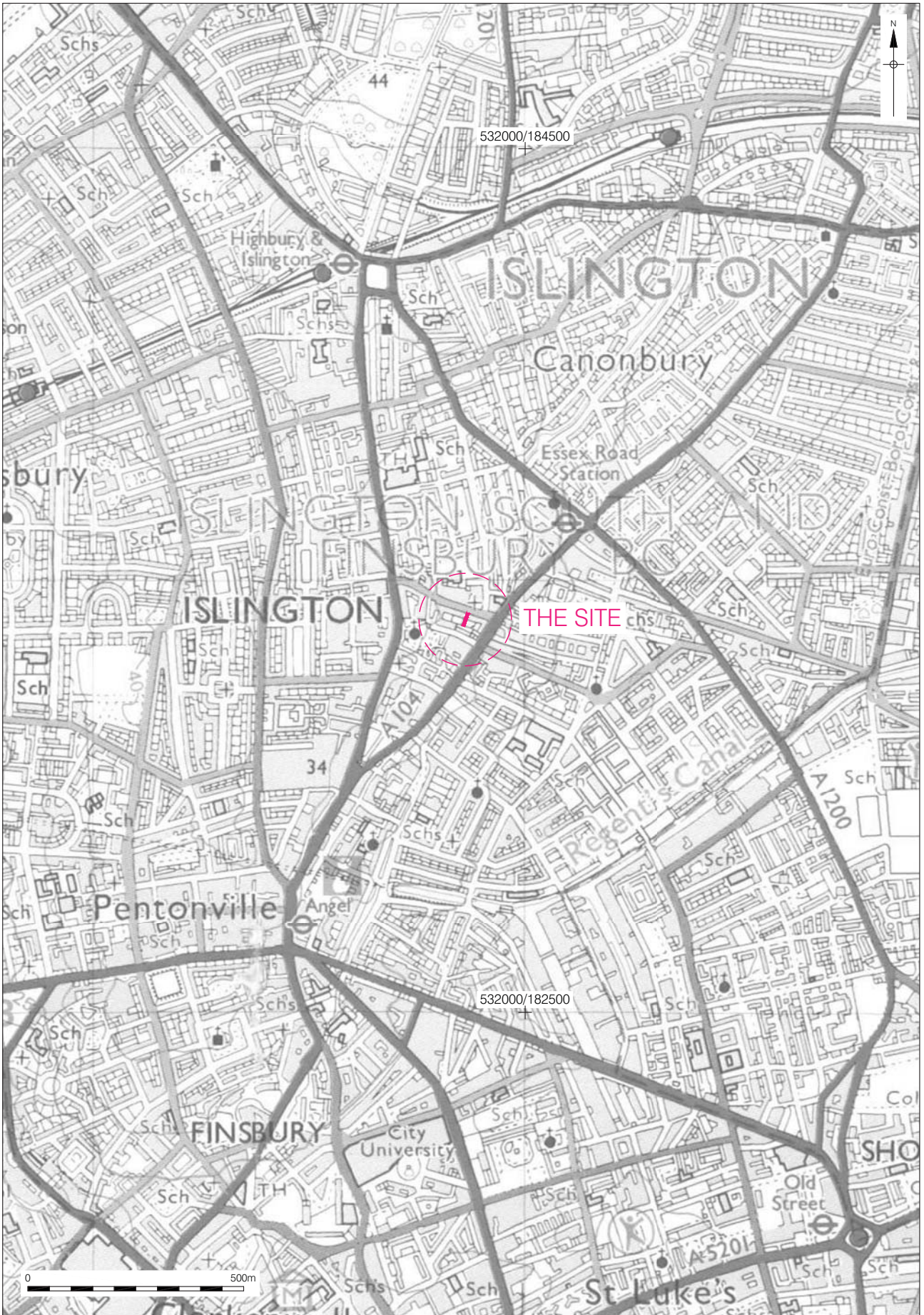
- 6.1 The watching brief recorded all of the interventions undertaken in the basement and gardens of the property at 17 Cross Street.
- 6.2 The natural clay and gravel observed in all of the test pits show that construction of the property and the landscaping of the rear garden has truncated any possible archaeological features and deposits. That natural clay was encountered at such a shallow depth and so close beneath the concrete slab of the basement clearly demonstrates this. In the garden the truncation is slightly less severe than the basement but the deposits encountered are associated with the landscaping and maintenance of the garden in the early 19th Century than anything of more immediate archaeological significance.
- 6.3 In spite of the presence of natural deposits in all of the test pits, no archaeological finds or features were observed during the works, and it is clear that both the basement and the garden area have undergone extensive truncation as part of previous development on the site.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Studio 30 Architects for commissioning the project.
- 7.2 The author would like to thank Helen Hawkins for her project management, Rui for organising the hand digging of the test pits and Hayley Baxter for the preparation of illustrative material.

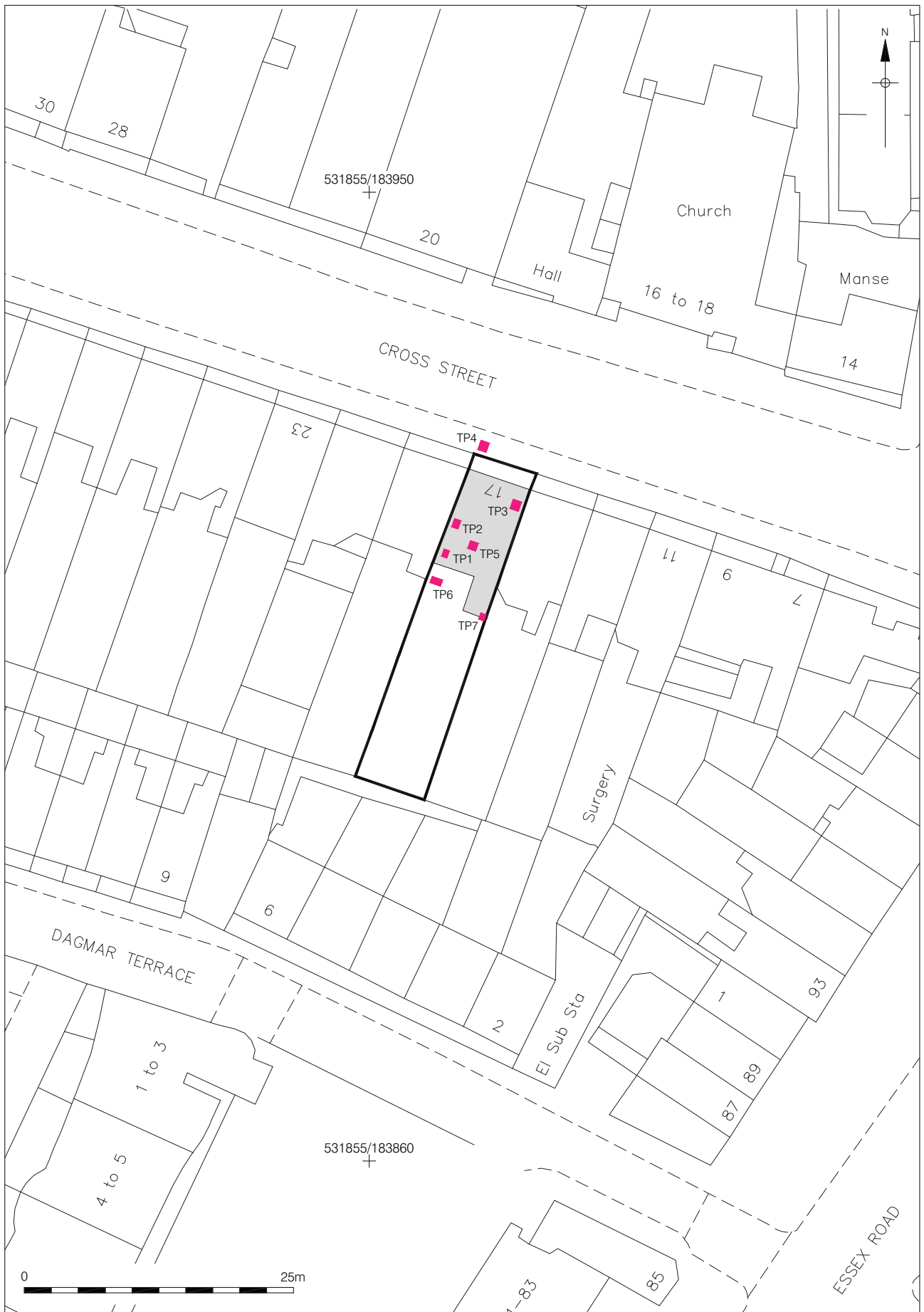
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, unpublished client report



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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:12,500 at A4



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Figure 2
 Detailed Site Location
 1:500 at A4

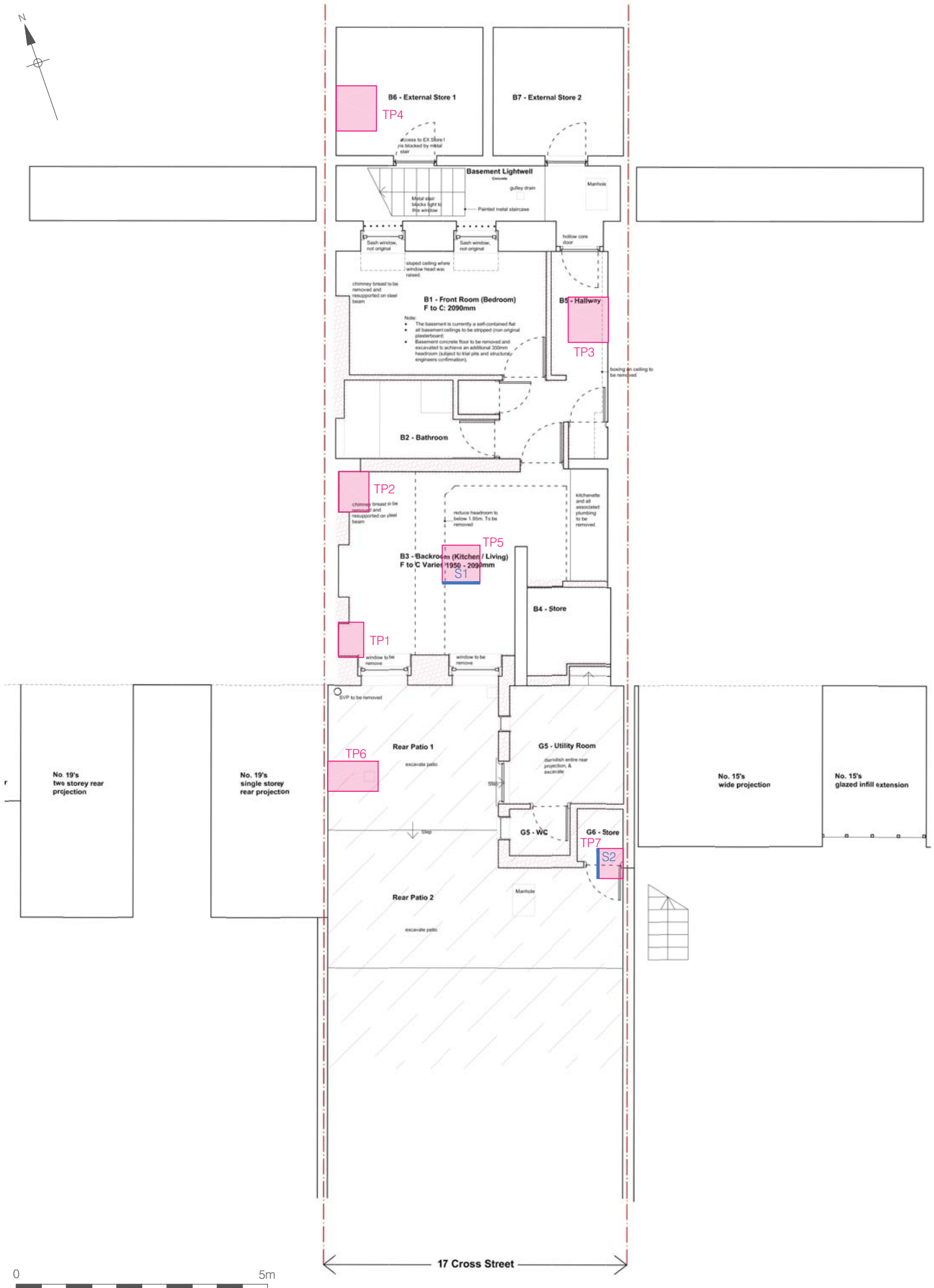
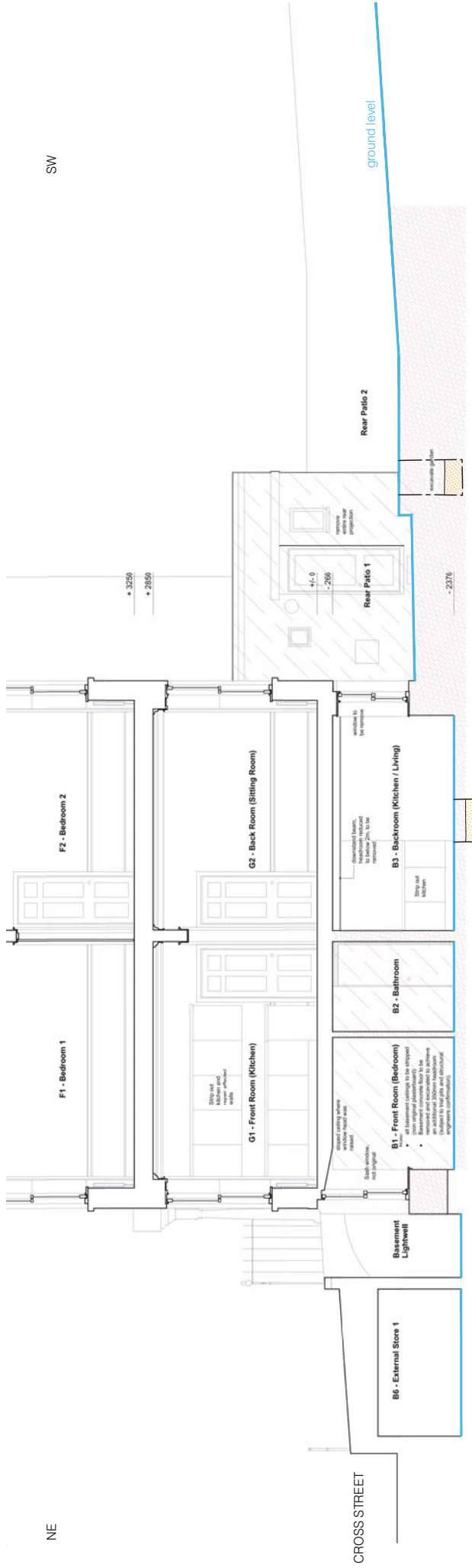
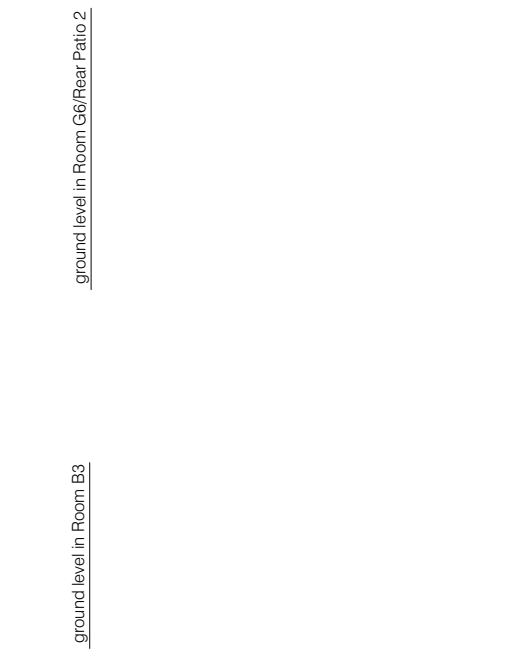
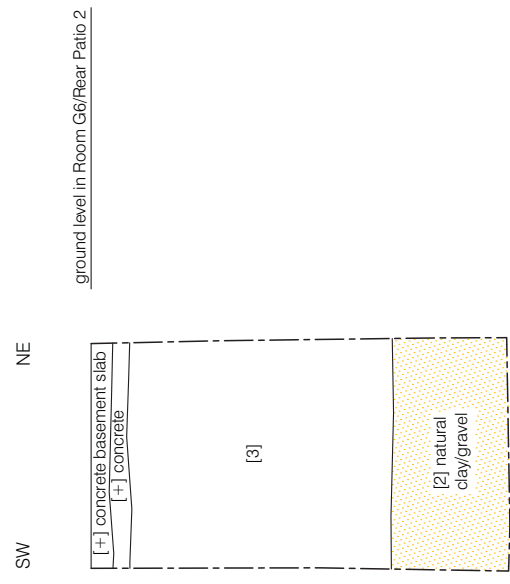


Figure 3
Test Pit & Section Location
1:100 at A4



Section Locations in relation to Ground Level
1:100 at A4



APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 1: Test Pit 2 facing north



Plate 2: Test Pit 6 facing west

APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-175605

Project details

Project name	17 Cross Street, Islington, London N1 2BH
Short description of the project	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) undertook an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of seven geotechnical test pits located in the basement and garden at 17 Cross Street, Islington, N1 2BH, London Borough of Islington. Truncated natural clay was found in the basement and garden soils over natural clay were found in the garden area.
Project dates	Start: 13-03-2014 End: 13-03-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	CRX14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON ISLINGTON ISLINGTON 17 Cross Street
Postcode	N1 2BH
Study area	30.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 318100 839500 51.5385458816 -0.0992031430781 51 32 18 N 000 05 57 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 0m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

originator

Project design originator Helen Hawkins

Project director/manager Helen Hawkins

Project supervisor Matt Edmonds

Type of sponsor/funding body Private Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body Mr Vos and Mrs Giles

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Archive ID CRX14

Digital Contents "none"

Digital Media available "Database", "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Paper Archive ID CRX14

Paper Contents "none"

Paper Media available "Context sheet", "Drawing", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

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APPENDIX 3: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No.	TP No.	Phase	Type	Description
1	1,3,4,6	1	Layer	Natural Clay
2	2, 5, 7	1	Layer	Natural Gravel
3	7	2	Layer	Late Post Medieval garden soil
4	6	2	Layer	Late Post Medieval garden soil

PCA

PCA SOUTH

UNIT 54
BROCKLEY CROSS BUSINESS CENTRE
96 ENDWELL ROAD
BROCKLEY
LONDON SE4 2PD
TEL: 020 7732 3925 / 020 7639 9091
FAX: 020 7639 9588
EMAIL: info@pre-construct.com

PCA NORTH

UNIT 19A
TURSDALE BUSINESS PARK
DURHAM DH6 5PG
TEL: 0191 377 1111
FAX: 0191 377 0101
EMAIL: info.north@pre-construct.com

PCA CENTRAL

7 GRANTA TERRACE
STAPLEFORD
CAMBRIDGESHIRE CB22 5DL
TEL: 01223 845 522
FAX: 01223 845 522
EMAIL: info.central@pre-construct.com

PCA WEST

BLOCK 4
CHILCOMB HOUSE
CHILCOMB LANE
WINCHESTER
HAMPSHIRE SO23 8RB
TEL: 01962 849 549
EMAIL: info.west@pre-construct.com

PCA MIDLANDS

17-19 KETTERING RD
LITTLE BOWDEN
MARKET HARBOROUGH
LEICESTERSHIRE LE16 8AN
TEL: 01858 468 333
EMAIL: info.midlands@pre-construct.com

