

**TRAFALGAR WAY, LONDON
E14 5SP, TOWER HAMLETS:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**

**SITE CODE: TRF14
REPORT NO: R11889**

OCTOBER 2014



**PRE-CONSTRUCT
ARCHAEOLOGY**

**2 Trafalgar Way, London E14 5SP, Tower Hamlets
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Site Code: TRF14

Central NGR: TQ 3820 8060

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Planning Reference: PA/08/01321

Commissioning Client: Mills Whipp on behalf of Essential Living (Helix) Ltd and
Mcdonalds Real Estate LLP Ltd

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DOCUMENT VERIFICATION


Site Name

2 Trafalgar Way, London E14 5SP, Tower Hamlets

Type of project

Archaeological Evaluation

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Project Code			K3754
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 On 13th October 2014 an archaeological evaluation was carried out prior to the insertion of a capping beam at 2 Trafalgar Way, E14 5SP in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.
- 1.2 During the evaluation made ground relating to backfilling of the upper reservoir in the 19th century was found to be sealed by further layers of made ground dating to the twentieth century.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mills Whipp on behalf of Essential Living (Helix) Ltd and McDonalds Real Estate LLP Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at 2 Trafalgar Way, London E14 5SP (Figure 1). The evaluation was carried out on 13th October 2014.
- 2.2 The work was commissioned in advance of the redevelopment of the site (planning application number PA/08/01321) in accordance with the archaeological condition attached to the planning permission.
- 2.3 The evaluation was managed for Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited by Helen Hawkins and the fieldwork was supervised by James Langthorne of Pre-Construct Archaeology. Adam Single (GLAAS), Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, monitored the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.
- 2.3.1 The site was located at 2 Trafalgar Way, London, E14 5SP. It was bounded by Aspen Way to the north, Billingsgate Market car park to the west and Trafalgar Way to the south. The Site contained no Scheduled Ancient Monuments as defined by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979). The Site lies about 200m south of an Archaeological Priority Area (as defined by London Borough of Tower Hamlets).
- 2.4 Prior to the archaeological work commencing a non-intrusive desk based assessment of the archaeological potential of the area was carried out by Mills Whipp Consulting (Mills Whipp Projects 2014). Following this a written scheme of investigation was produced outlining the working methods of the archaeological investigation (Hawkins 2014).
- 2.4.1 One trench measuring 6.0m by 3.0m by 1.8m deep was excavated at the site at the location of a proposed capping beam required to enable the development (Figure 1). It was excavated by machine under archaeological control to approximately 1.8m BGL (below ground level).
- 2.4.2 The investigation was designed to mitigate the impact of the capping beam excavation and therefore all archaeological deposits, and features within the trench were fully recorded and investigated by archaeologists. The trench also served to provide information about the rest of the site's archaeological potential in advance of subsequent archaeological work which will be designed to facilitate the latter construction stages.
- 2.5 The site was assigned the code TRF 14. Upon conclusion of all stages of the work the completed archive will be submitted for deposition with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The planning background of the site along with all relevant planning policies has been discussed in detail in the Desk Based Assessment (Mills Whipp Projects, 2014). Therefore only the site specific planning background is discussed below.

3.2 Site Specific

- 3.2.1 The 2009 Planning Permission was granted for the redevelopment subject to conditions. This included Condition 17 relating to archaeology:

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. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme pursuant to this condition.

The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Important archaeological remains may exist on this site. Accordingly the planning authority wishes to secure the provision of archaeological excavation and subsequent recording of the remains prior to development, in accordance with the guidance and model condition set out in PPG16.

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 4.1.1 The underlying geology of the site is Kempton Park gravel capped by alluvium (BGS 256). The southern extent of this gravel deposit corresponds with the line of Poplar High Street. This formed a steep bank called the Linches in documents from the 12th century (VCH 1998 5). Low lying land, subject to repeated flooding by the Thames, was found to the south of this gravel bank and it is in this area that the site was situated.
- 4.1.2 Boreholes on and near the site have revealed a sequence of waterlain clays and peat. The peat or peats lie between 5.2m and 7.5m below the present surface.

4.2 Topography

- 4.2.1 The site was situated c. 350m to the northwest of the River Thames, upon the Isle of Dogs and the ground level on the site was recorded at c.5.0m OD.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The desk-based assessment considered the archaeological potential of the site and concluded that there is archaeological potential for prehistoric peat deposits to be found. There is no evidence that there was significant Roman, Saxon, medieval or early post-medieval occupation on or near the Site. In the 19th century the site saw multiple phases of development due to its location within the London docks (Mills Whipp Projects 2014). After the decline of the docks in the late 20th century the site was once again redeveloped as the area was transformed into a financial district.

5.2 Prehistoric

5.2.1 A scatter of prehistoric axes has been reported from the study area, but the only indication of prehistoric settlement comes from an excavation 300m south-east of the subject site at Yabsley Street where Neolithic occupation was identified and a single burial were found. At the same site possible early Bronze Age occupation was found, together with a peat deposit. It has been suggested by the excavator that the settlements lay on an earlier shoreline of the Thames.

5.2.2 From the 17th century onwards excavations for docks and wharves have revealed peat, sometimes including buried trees, over 1m thick in places. These deposits were probably laid down in the Neolithic and / or the Bronze Age when the area was open fen and forest, although some deposits may be mediaeval in date.

5.3 Roman

5.3.1 A road led from the eastern side of the Roman City to Shadwell and Ratcliff. It has been suggested a road may have continued eastwards across the northern edge of the Isle of Dogs but no reliably provenanced Roman material has been reported from the study area.

5.4 Early medieval

5.4.1 In the late Saxon period the Site lay within the manor of Stepney (*OE* 'Stebba's landing place') within the South Marsh. The area was probably used for fishing and fowling. In the later Saxon period there may have been attempts at reclamation around the Isle of Dogs.

5.5 Later medieval period

5.5.1 The manor probably formed part of an estate owned by Bernard of Stepney, whose son Robert exchanged it in 1200 with Henry de Bedfont. The manor was held for life by Sir John Pulteney, mayor of London, until 1349 when it passed to his wife Margaret. Between 1354 and 1358 the Black Prince stayed in the manor of Poplar for a few days during the summer. In 1362 Sir William Pulteney settled the manor on himself and his heirs. By 1374 Poplar was settled on Sir Nicholas Lovayne and others. In 1395 the Bishop of Winchester was licensed to alienate the manor of Poplar to St Mary Graces Abbey, by the Tower. After the Dissolution in 1538 the manor was retained by the Crown finally being handed over to the City of London. The manor house lay south of the later East India Dock Road east of Wade Street approached by a lane from Poplar High Street.

5.5.2 By the 13th century embankments had been built to keep floodwater from the Isle of Dogs. As a result much arable land was reclaimed. In the mid 13th century a chapel had been built at the southern end of the Isle of Dogs, presumably serving a small village. By the early 14th century the ditches and banks had been neglected and were deemed liable to be overwhelmed. In 1327 Poplar is mentioned for the first time. The discovery of marsh deposits south of Poplar High Street indicate the road follows the line of a marsh wall or causeway. The land to the south of the wall was called Poplar Marsh.

5.5.3 Flooding in Poplar Marsh (including the subject Site) hastened the transition from arable to pasture in the 15th century. During a flood in 1448 more than 1000 acres of the Isle of Dogs were flooded. After that there seems to have been little occupation. It is likely the Site was open, low-lying ground to the south of the small village of Poplar.

5.6 Post-medieval

- 5.6.1 In the late 16th century Blackwall became a base for ship building and Blackwall Reach to the east was a convenient place for larger ships to moor, discharge their cargoes for transit by road to London via Poplar and Radcliff Highway. The earliest located map of the area from 1703 showed the subject Site as open ground crossed by a field boundary south of Poplar High Street. To the east lay Blackwall Yard. Similarly, in 1746 the Site was depicted as open ground crossed by a ditch behind the houses and gardens of Poplar.
- 5.6.2 In the late 18th century rising concern by the West India merchants about the congestion in the Pool of London led to the construction of the West India Docks between 1799 and 1801. As shown in a map from 1813, the Site lay in a field north-east of West India Dock crossed by a lane running south from Poplar High Street.
- 5.6.3 As part of the dock development the West India Dock Company built reservoirs in 1827-8 to provide clean impounded water. The eastern half of the subject Site occupies the northern part of the reservoirs.
- 5.6.4 The reservoirs were designed to keep the water level in the docks high and so prevent an influx of water and mud when the entrance locks were opened at high tides. The reservoirs were sited as far east of the main dock complex as possible, Preston Road being rerouted, to allow the construction of another dock, at some future date, to the west of the reservoirs. The reservoirs, designed by Sir John Rennie, comprised two settling reservoirs and an elevated northern reservoir. The construction was carried out by Daniel Pritchard and William Hoof, excavators, of Walham Green.
- 5.6.5 Each of the settling reservoirs was 650ft by 110ft (200m by 34m) and was fed from the river at every high tide. The bottom of each reservoir inclined upwards from a depth of 18ft 6ins (5.6m) at the south end and their retaining banks, faced with Kentish ragstone, had a 30° slope. A steam engine, a 30hp Boulton & Watt machine, pumped settled water into the upper reservoir, which was 320ft by 300ft (100m by 90m) and sluiced directly into the Blackwall Basin and entrance lock.
- 5.6.6 The engine was inadequate so it was replaced in 1830-1 by James Watt with a single 'Great Pump' of 46ins diameter, which by working a 16½ hour day could make up 5¼in water loss. The reservoirs cost £28,336, more than twice the estimate and furthermore were no cheaper than dredging the docks had been.
- 5.6.7 The upper reservoir, now occupied by the subject site, was filled in 1838-9 because the site was required by the London and Blackwall Railway. In 1843 the impounding system was abandoned in favour of a steam dredger. The lower reservoirs were adapted to be a pond for floated timber. Eventually, the pond was rebuilt as a dock, becoming Poplar Dock in 1851.
- 5.6.8 In 1840 the London and Blackwall Railway improved the links between London and Poplar but did not extend to the docks. In 1851 the railway line was extended to the new Poplar Dock, particularly being used for the transport of coal. This was the first railway to link with a dock in London. The subject site occupies part of the railway depot, as shown 1862.
- 5.6.9 Plans for Poplar Dock in 1841 included a 'terminus and goods station' but only very basic shelter was provided. In 1851 Henry Marin designed an open-sided timber and slate-roofed goods shed over the north and western quays, including part of the subject Site. The shed was extended north in 1852. Also in 1852 the London and North Western Railway arranged designs for a substantial warehouse on the eastern half of the north quay. It was used for exports, principally the storage of Pale Ale and Burton Ale for Bass and Allsopps. Bottling of ale took place in the basement. The ale stores were extended to the west in 1859, on to the subject Site.
- 5.6.10 To the west of Poplar Dock a barge dock extension was built in 1875-7 and a network of railway lines were laid out across the surrounding area, including the subject Site. The dock access was enlarged in 1898.

- 5.6.11 In 1908 Poplar Dock remained in the hands of the North London Railway Company when the other docks were brought together under the Port of London Authority. The NLRC was absorbed in 1923 by the London, Midland and Scottish Railway Co. and the dock was largely used for coal, beer and iron. The ale depot on the north quay, part of the subject Site, was totally destroyed in 1940.
- 5.6.12 After World War II, traffic declined. The railway was partially rebuilt and a shed erected by 1955. By the early 1970s the barge dock extension closed. Railway lines and buildings were removed by 1971. Poplar Dock closed in 1981 and was sold to the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in 1982. By 1985 the subject was largely open ground crossed by two tracks. In 1988 the barge dock extension was filled in to make space for roads.
- 5.6.13 By 1990 the present road layout was beginning to be fixed and 20m of the northern part of Poplar Dock were infilled. By 1998 the barge dock had been completed infilled, another 15m on the northern part of Poplar Dock were infilled and the present site arrangements had been established.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1.1 The trench measured 6.0m by 3.0m and was designed to reach a basal depth of 1.8m below ground level. This depth was required to accommodate the capping beam and does not reflect the base of the archaeology.
- 6.1.2 The trench location was CAT-scanned by the Principal Contractor prior to excavation
- 6.1.3 The machining was undertaken using a mechanical excavator and driver provided by the client. The machine used a toothless ditching bucket to remove modern overburden under the supervision of an archaeologist. Spoil was mounded at least 2m from the edges of the trenches.
- 6.1.4 Machine excavation continued in spits of 100mm at a time.
- 6.1.5 Following machine excavation, relevant faces of the trench that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools.

7 PHASED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Phase 1: Post-Medieval

- 7.1.1 The earliest deposit [4] reached during the evaluation was a layer of redeposited natural sand and gravel containing occasional flecks of cbm and very occasional fragments of coal (Figure 3, Plate 1). This deposit was encountered at a depth of 4.65m OD and continued to the limit of excavation at 4.47m OD.
- 7.1.2 This layer may represent the backfilling in 1838-9 of the upper reservoir to make way for the London and Blackwell Railway as mentioned in the historical background above.

7.2 Phase 2: Modern

- 7.2.1 Sealing [4] was a layer [3] of dark blackish brown modern made ground 0.15m thick (Figure 3, Plate 1). The layer contained frequent flecks of cbm and timber railway sleepers which suggest that it was deposited after the dismantling of the railway in the early 1970s.
- 7.2.2 Further modern made ground [2] was observed sealing layer [3]. This layer [2] was 1.15m thick and contained multiple dumps of modern material including frequent mortar fragments, occasional fragments of concrete and occasional plastic service pipes.
- 7.2.3 A layer of topsoil [1] made up the modern ground surface.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The archaeological evaluation has demonstrated that multiple phases of development and land remediation occurred on the site from the 19th century onwards. Made ground dating to the 19th century probably relates to the backfilling of a large reservoir in order to make way for the construction of a railway which served Poplar dock, found to the south of the site. This railway infrastructure was in turn replaced by a road in the 1980s, when the wider Isle of Dogs area was redeveloped. This 20th century development was represented by further layers of made ground sealing earlier deposits.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mills Whipp on behalf of Essential Living (Helix) Ltd and McDonalds Real Estate LLP Ltd. for commissioning the work and Adam Single for monitoring the work on behalf of English Heritage and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank James Langthorne for carrying out the evaluation, Jennifer Simonson for the AutoCAD illustrations and Helen Hawkins for project management and editing this report.

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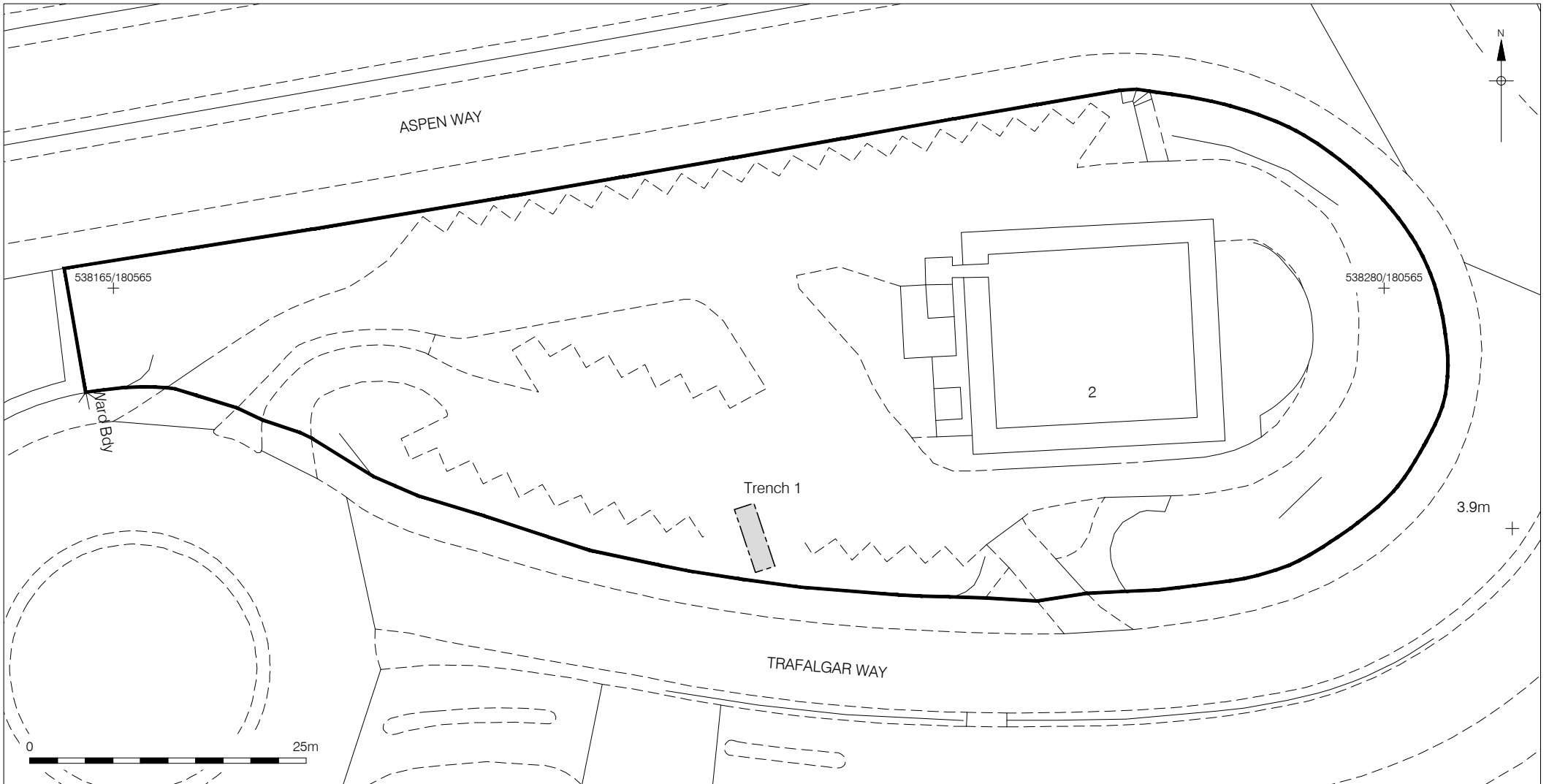
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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:20,000 at A4

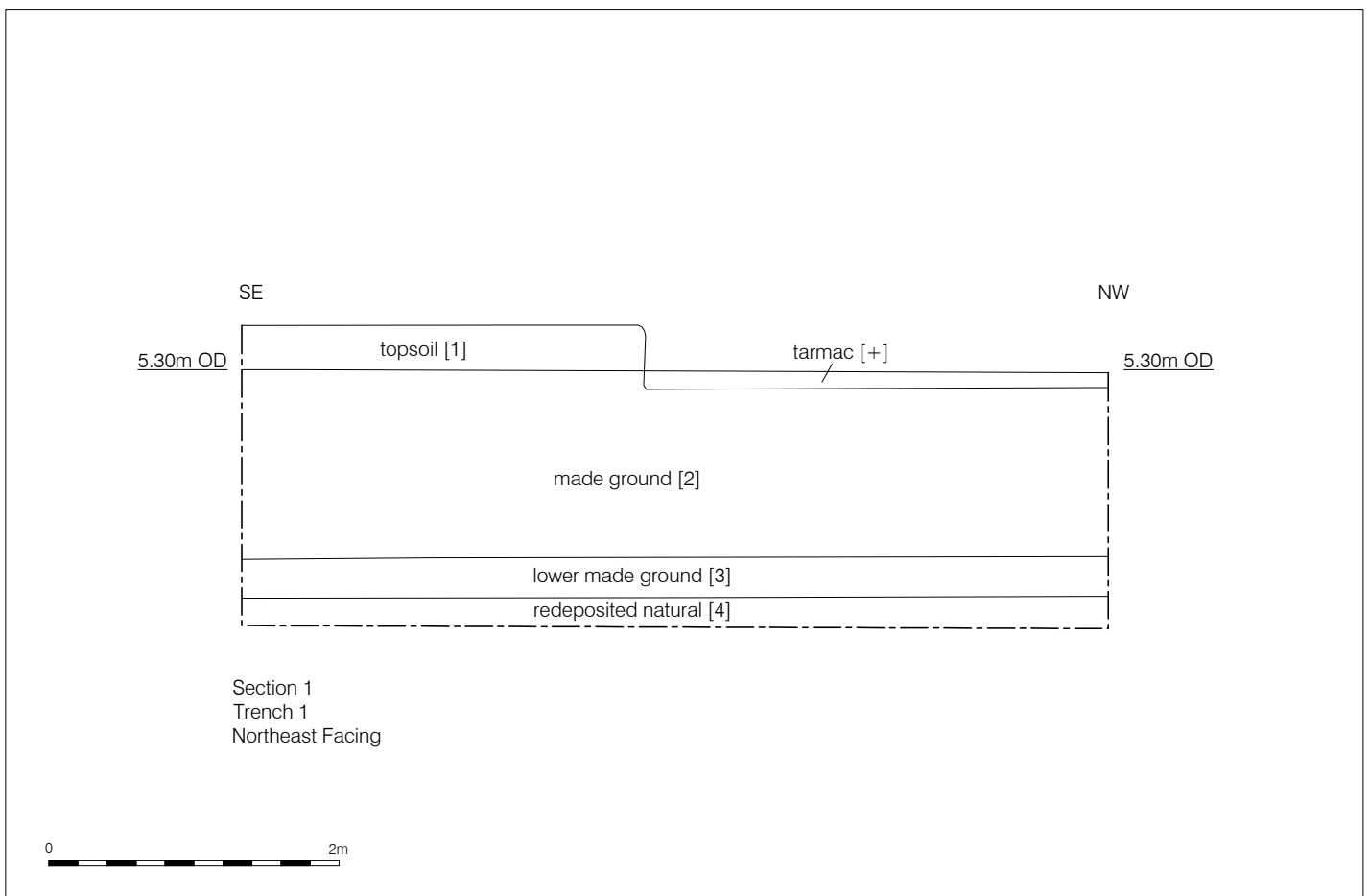
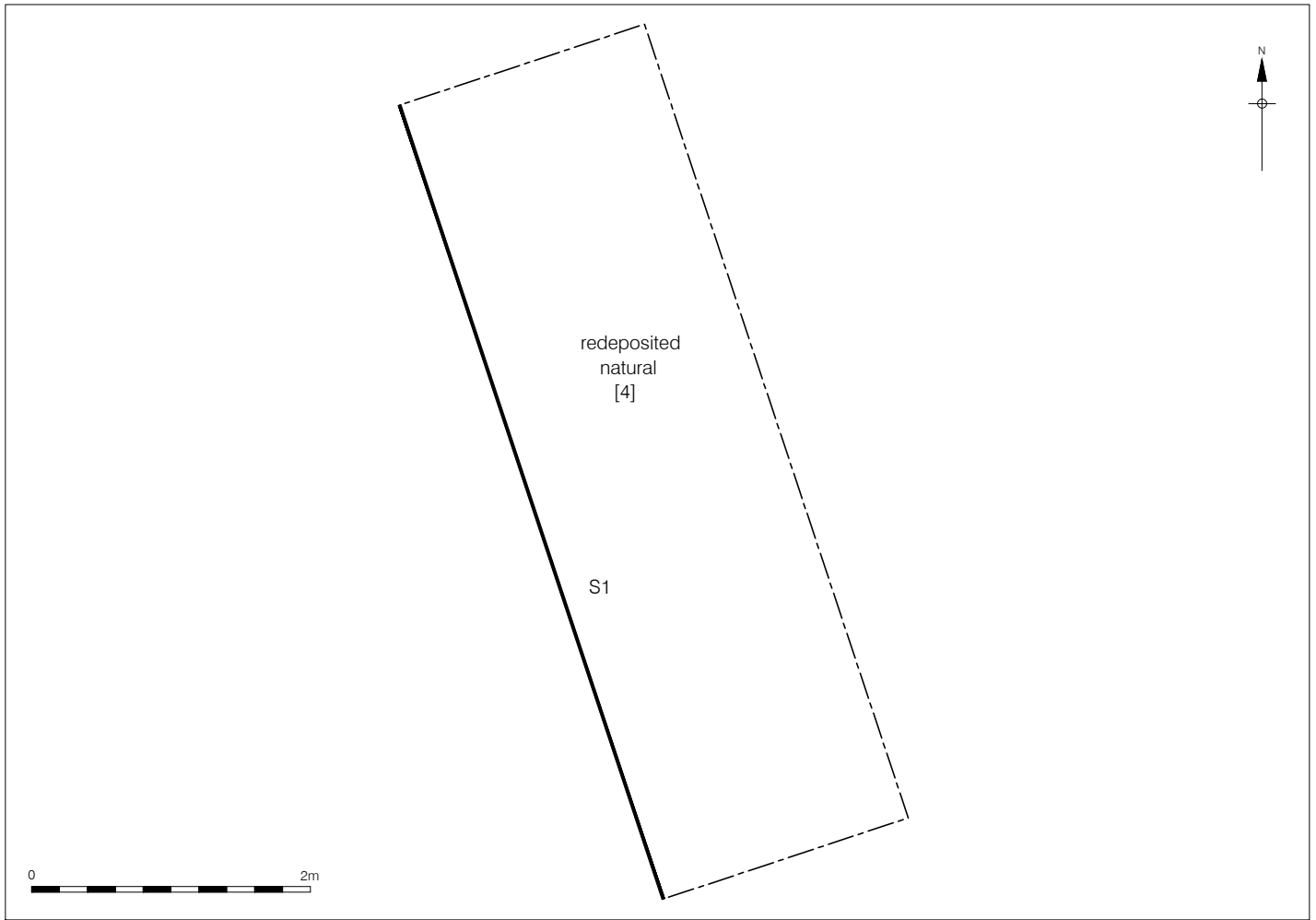


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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:500 at A4



APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT REGISTER

Context No	Interpretation	Description	Phase
1	Modern Topsoil	Firm, dark greyish brown, clayey silt	2
2	Modern made ground	Compact and loose, mid greyish brown, silty sand	2
3	Modern made ground	Firm, dark black brown, silty clay sandy silt	2
4	Redeposited natural	Loose, mid yellowish orangey brown, sandy gravel	1

APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX

Phase 2: Modern			1
			2
			3
Phase 1: Post-Med			4

APPENDIX 3: PLATES

Plate 1. West facing section



Plate 2. Trench 1 facing South



APPENDIX 4: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-192848

Project details

Project name 2 Trafalgar Way, London E14 5SP, Tower Hamlets

Short description of the project On 13th October 2014 an archaeological evaluation was carried out prior to the insertion of a capping beam at 2 Trafalgar Way, E14 5SP in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. During the evaluation made ground relating to backfilling of the upper reservoir in the 19th century was found to be sealed by further layers of made ground dating to the twentieth century.

Project dates Start: 13-10-2014 End: 13-10-2014

Previous/future work No / Yes

Any associated project reference codes TRF14 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds NONE None

Methods & techniques "Targeted Trenches"

Development type Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, 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 2 Trafalgar Way

Postcode E14 5SP

Study area 0.10 Hectares

Site coordinates TQ 382000 806000 51.5069076005 -0.0084273960167 51 30 24 N 000 00
30 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 0m Max: 0m

Project creators

Name of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
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Project brief Mills Whipp
originator

Project design Mills Whipp Projects
originator

Project Helen Hawkins
director/manager

Project supervisor James Langthorne

Type of Commercial Developer
sponsor/funding
body

Name of Essential Living (Helix) Ltd and Mcdonalds Real Estate LLP Ltd
sponsor/funding
body

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Archive LAARC
recipient

Digital Archive ID TRF14

Digital Contents "none"

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

Paper Archive LAARC

recipient

Paper Archive ID TRF14

Paper Contents "none"

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

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