

Land at Bestwood Street, Lewisham, London SE8 5AW: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 35904 78577

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Lewisham

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Commissioning Client: CgMs Consulting

PCA Report Number: R12535

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief on land at Bestwood Street, Lewisham, London Borough of Lewisham, SE8 5AW. The work was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, and was commissioned by CgMs Consulting. The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of the excavation of a series of foundation bases and service trenches associated with the redevelopment of a Lidl food store on the site. Ground levels on the site generally ranged between 1.50m OD to 2.00m OD.
- 1.2 Natural layers on site comprised interleaved layers of sands and terrace gravels. These were sealed by layers of yellowish grey alluvial clayey sand and sandy clay. In places this was in turn sealed by further alluvial layers of dark brown to grey silty clay.
- 1.3 Widespread horizontal truncation of earlier archaeological deposits is likely to have taken place on the site when the original Lidl store was constructed in the 1980s. This had resulted in the removal and/or redeposition of much of the alluvial clays and the later 19th century made ground which sealed and in places replaced the alluvial clays in the sequence.
- 1.4 No confirmed archaeological features were recorded predating the late 19th century and later development of the site.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out an archaeological watching brief on land at Bestwood Street, Lewisham, London Borough of Lewisham SE8 5AW (Figure 1). The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Bradley 2015).
- 2.2 The study site is located on the south bank of the River Thames and is bounded to the north by Bestwood Street (A200) up to the junction with Trundley's Road, adjacent to the borough boundary with the London Borough of Southwark. It is bounded to the east by land occupied by a branch of McDonald's and by development sites to the west and south.
- 2.3 The site is centred at NGR TQ 35904 78577.
- 2.4 The work was carried out between 9th May and 20th June 2016. The fieldwork was supervised by Przemek Polakiewicz, Bruce Ferguson and Phil Frickers and the project was managed by Tim Bradley, all of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited. The archaeological consultant for the project was Richard Meager, CgMs Consulting.
- 2.5 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will be deposited with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).
- 2.6 This archaeological watching brief will be archived under the site code BWO16.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The general aims and objectives of the watching brief, as outlined in the WSI (Bradley 2015) were as follows:

- What is the nature, depth, survival and date of any archaeological deposits on the site?
- What information can be gathered to further understand the natural topographic sequence across the site?
- Is there any evidence for human occupation of the site within the alluvial sequence, particularly any evidence for prehistoric remains within any surviving peat deposits or at the surface of the underlying gravel?
- What has been the impact on the site by previous development?

4 GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 An archaeological desk based assessment previously prepared for the site (CgMs 2015) summarised the geological background as follows:

4.2 Geology

4.2.1 The solid geology of the study site is shown by the Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS 1979) as London Clay deposits forming the London Basin. Overlying the London Clay is a series of gravel terraces deposited during periods of glacial and inter-glacial conditions (Bridgland 1996). The British Geological Survey Sheet 270 (South London 1998) shows the study site to lie within an area of alluvium, defined as mainly sand, silt and clay.

4.3 Topography

4.3.1 The surrounding area is fairly flat. Ordnance datum heights on Bestwood Street and Trundley's Road measure respectively 2.10m and 1.50m.

4.3.2 On the study site itself the finished floor level of the new building will be 1.75m OD. Ground level on the site was generally between 1.50m and 2.00m OD.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 An archaeological desk based assessment has previously been prepared for the site (CgMs 2015). The archaeological potential for the site as presented in that report can be summarised as follows:

5.2 The site lies within an Archaeological Priority Area as designated by the London Borough of Lewisham, associated with the alluvial floodplain:

APA1 Thames alluvial floodplain

The extensive peat and clay deposits across North Southwark and North Lewisham are up to 12m thick and record the geological and environmental history of south-east England for the past 12,000 years. Environmental changes include the loss of the European land-bridge c. 7,000 BC and the clearance of the once extensive woodland. These deposits contain a range of prehistoric evidence including:

- **Upper Palaeolithic/early Mesolithic flint scatter sites;**
- **Late Mesolithic and early Neolithic flint scatter sites and remains of associated woodlands;**
- **Middle and later Bronze Age sites, including the remains of tracks, timber platforms, 'camps', and vegetation clearance.**

5.3 Despite the location of the site in the above Archaeological Priority Area, supplied borehole logs, recorded by Opus in July 2015, appeared to show varying levels of modern made ground (between 0.90m and in excess of 5m) directly overlying natural sand and gravel. No evidence for peat formations was recorded within these boreholes and this was confirmed during the archaeological excavations, therefore reducing the potential for environmental archaeological survival.

5.4 The sole finds of Roman date within the 500m area search radius include a hoard of 269 coins of Honorius and Arcadius (i.e. late fourth/early fifth century AD) found at Chilton Grove to the northeast (MLO425, TQ3600 7880), and a hoard of Hadrianic coins found at Plough Way to the northeast (MLO111, TQ3610 7890). The presence of Roman coin hoards is usually taken as an indication of nearby settlement, although in this instance the time gap between the two hoards makes them unrelated. No other evidence of Roman settlement has been found in the vicinity of the site. Equally, no finds or features of Anglo-Saxon or Medieval date have been identified within the 500m study area search radius.

5.5 Development commenced in the site in the mid-late 19th century, with phases of development and demolition continuing until the present day.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a sequence of foundations bases and service trenches spread over the majority of the site.
- 6.2 The trenches were excavated by a combination of 360° 13 and 14 ton tracked mechanical excavators.
- 6.3 Both machines were fitted with toothless grading buckets, excavating in 100mm spits. The spoil was removed from the area by dumper.
- 6.4 The excavation was monitored suitably qualified and experienced archaeologists. Sections and plans were measured and drawn, descriptions of ground noted on *proforma* sheets, and a photographic record kept.
- 6.5 Many of the bases were excavated to a depth of 2.50m below ground level with vertical sides. Health and safety constraints precluded the entering any such locations and in these instances recording took place from the ground surface.
- 6.6 All relevant health and safety legislation, CDM and COSHH regulations and codes of practice were respected.
- 6.7 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will be deposited with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) under the site code BW016.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Natural

- 7.1.1 The earliest deposits encountered on the site were a sequence of interleaving sand and gravel horizons. This consisted of soft light yellowish brown sand and darkish brown, orangey brown compacted fine and medium rounded gravels. These deposits were given the context numbers [3], [8], [15], [16] and [23] and were found at OD heights varying between +0.10m and -0.30m, and in the deeper excavations was recorded to a depth of -2.20m OD without the base being seen. The thickest section of gravel exposed was 2.00m.
- 7.1.2 Several other contexts were related to these sand and gravel deposits.
- 7.1.3 In a base in the extreme southern corner of the site (Area ref. I1 and section S1) a further deposit of lightish grey sandy gravel [4] was present. With a highest level of -0.60m OD this context was very low and visible for a maximum thickness of 0.40m. This layer either underlay, or more likely was interleaved within, the gravel deposits.
- 7.1.4 Slightly further to the northwest on the site was a layer of greyish blue silty clay [16]. This was stratigraphically sealed by a lightish grey alluvial layer. Once again this was almost certainly a lens within the gravel formation. With a highest level of 0.00m OD, this was at a similar height as the local gravel deposits, and was therefore interpreted as forming part of the terrace deposits rather than earlier Palaeogene London Clay.
- 7.1.5 Seen in foundation base G4 was a subcircular feature [20] contrasting with the surrounding gravel. This had a diameter of around 0.30m. Due to the vertical sides and depth of the base it was not possible to examine the feature by hand. However, given that the feature was only positively identified at the base of the foundation pad, well within the natural horizons, and no inclusions were evident within the light brown sandy silt fill, it would seem most likely that this feature represents a variation in the lensing within the gravels.
- 7.1.6 Consistently sealing the gravels over the entire site was a layer variously described as light yellowish grey or brown clayey sand or sandy clay. This was considered to represent natural alluvial deposition, and was recorded as [2], [7], [14] and [22]. This context varied in thickness between 1.00m and 0.60m. The highest level for this context varied between +1.00m OD and +0.30m OD. This material was interpreted as being the result of more than one flood event, although no individual units/events could be differentiated within the deposit.
- 7.1.7 Sealing this context intermittently towards the north end of the site was a further layer of alluvium. This was a silty clay, either dark brown or grey in colour, recorded as [24] and [27]. This context was recorded at heights of between +1.10m OD and +0.50m OD.

7.1.8 In base C1 towards the northern edge of site a linear cut [26] was recorded. The feature cut into the local variant of clayey sand alluvium [22] and was filled with a darker apparently alluvial clay recorded here as [25]. This feature ran northwest to southeast along the northeast edge of the excavated area, had a highest level of +0.50m OD and was 0.75m deep. There was no difference visible between [24], seen above the feature, and the linear fill [25]. Both these alluvial layers were very clean, and no inclusions were present. It seems therefore the feature was natural, probably carved out by water movement in the area.

7.2 Late 19th Century

7.2.1 A large pit was recorded in foundation base G2 (Section 3). The cut for this, recorded as [10], measured 3.00m in depth by at least 5.00m east-west. The pit was filled with loose sand, silt and ash [9] and pottery and glass recovered from the pit dated to the last quarter of the 19th century. The feature is likely to represent a back-plot rubbish pit associated with Robinson Terrace, which fronted Bestwood Street at this time.

7.2.2 The truncated remains of one single masonry structure was recorded. In the southeast corner of the site in base I4 a red brick wall [11] was seen in section. This was constructed of shallow frogged, late post-medieval red bricks. Once again due to the depth of the base the brickwork could not be examined by hand.

7.2.3 This location is to the south and rear of the terrace mentioned above, and is likely to represent either part of a well or soakaway. The brickwork extended down to a depth of -0.50m OD.

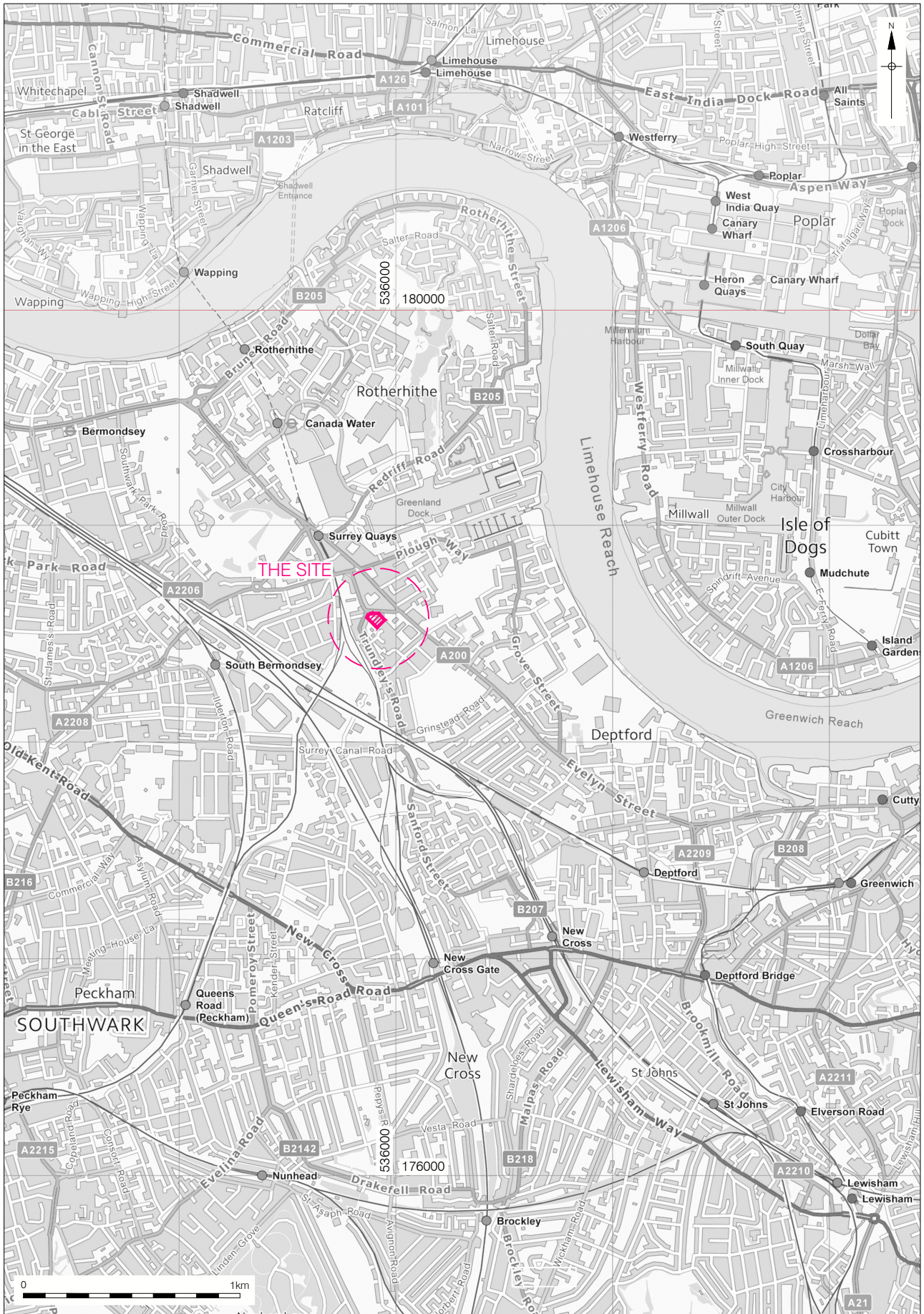
7.2.4 In various locations layers of late post-medieval made ground were recorded. This deposit is likely to represent ground raising/levelling activity associated with the development of a low lying previously rural area. An example was [21] recorded towards the northern edge of the site (Area Ref. D1, D2). This was a dark grey brown sandy silt containing brick fragments, coal, charcoal and other inclusions. This context survived to a maximum height of 1.40m OD and was up to 0.90m deep. This context was not recorded site wide, and is likely to have been truncated by later construction activity in some locations.

7.3 Modern

- 7.3.1 The area to the south and south east of the site was more disturbed than elsewhere. This was the location of the original Lidl store built in the 1980's.
- 7.3.2 Here areas of reworked material between 1.20m and 1.50m were present below the current ground level. This consisted of dark silty sands with both made ground and modern items; plastic and terram geotextile fabric. Contexts in this area were [1], [17], [18], [5] and [12].
- 7.3.3 Two very late cuts were also recorded; [6] and [13]. These were most likely associated with the previous construction or "grubbing out" processes associated with the former Lidl, and contained the same mixture of disturbed material – modern debris concrete, plastic etc.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Natural sands and terrace gravels were recorded across the site in all monitored foundation and service trenches. They were recorded at heights of between +0.10m OD and -0.30m OD. In the deeper excavations up to 2.00m thickness of gravel was recorded without the base being reached.
- 8.2 Sealing this was a layer of light grey clayey sand / sandy clay alluvium was also recorded across the site at heights of between +1.00m OD and +0.30m OD with an average thickness of 0.60m.
- 8.3 The only possible feature associated with these layers was almost certainly a variation in the natural deposition, which was variable in its matrix across the site.
- 8.4 Above this, but only recorded intermittently towards the northern edge of the site, was a further layer of alluvium, in this instance dark brown/grey silty clay.
- 8.5 Towards the northern edge of excavation a linear feature, almost certainly natural in origin, was recorded. This was cut into the upper clayey sand alluvium and filled with the silty clay alluvium. The fill was completely devoid of inclusions and finds and apparently homogenous throughout. The precise interpretation of this feature could not be determined but given its location within the sequence it could either represent a rapidly infilled and late (?post-medieval) channel or possibly a ditch.
- 8.6 Two features of late 19th century date were recorded. A large pit, from which pottery and glass fragments dating to the last quarter of the 19th century, was recorded towards the central south of the site and in the south east a heavily truncated area of brickwork, possibly a soakaway or well, seen in section. Both of these deposits are likely to represent domestic back-plot activity associated with the historic Robinson Terrace, previously located in this area of the site.
- 8.7 Much of the site has also been subject to varying levels of truncation and “grubbing out”, which appeared to have taken place in the 1980’s prior to the construction of the first Lidl supermarket. Where present, this truncation was typically recorded to a depth of 1.20m below present ground level although in places it was deeper.



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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:25,000 at A4



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 28/06/16 RM

Figure 2
 Detailed Site Location
 1:400 at A3

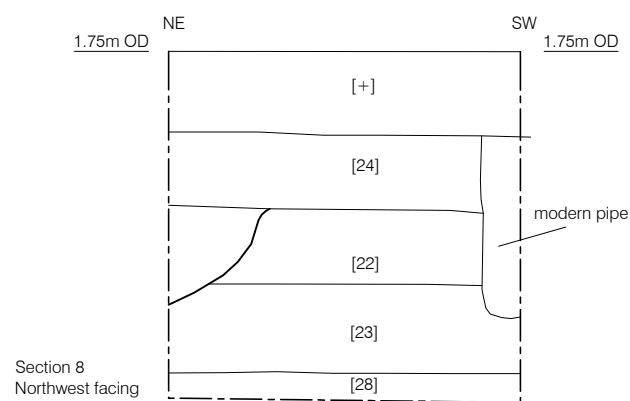
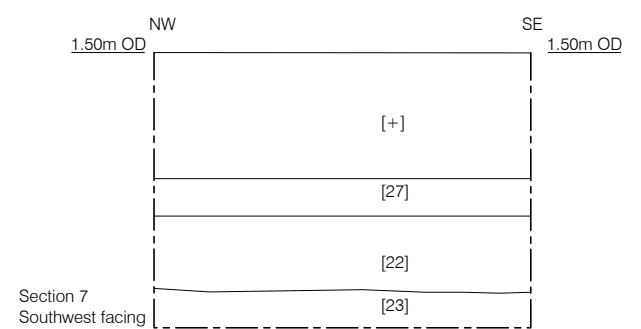
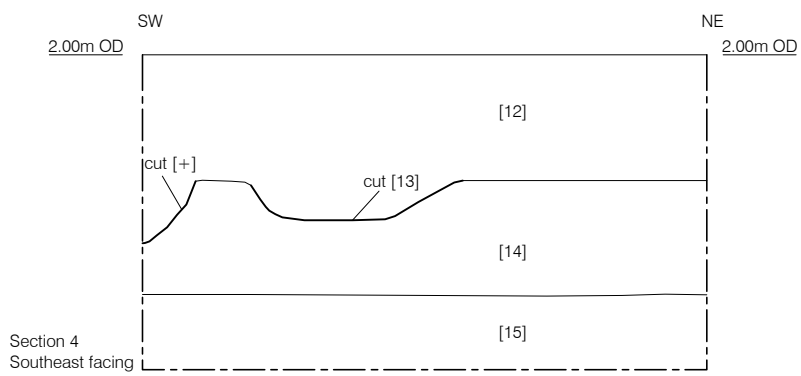
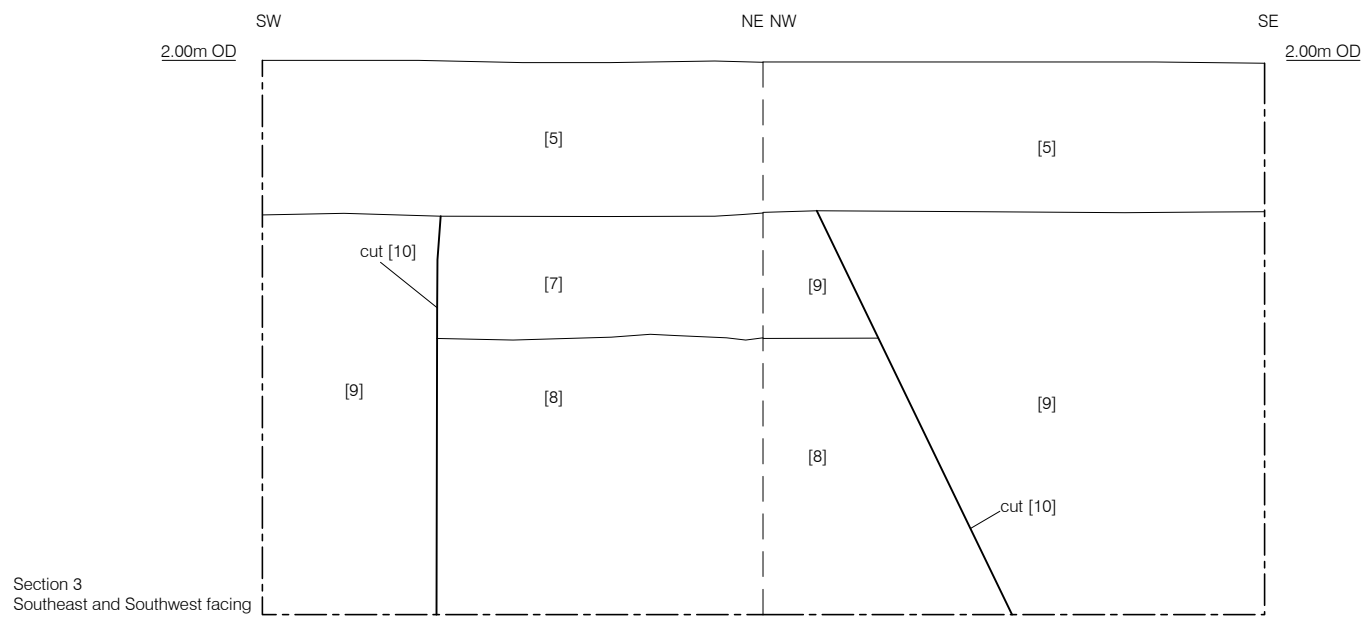
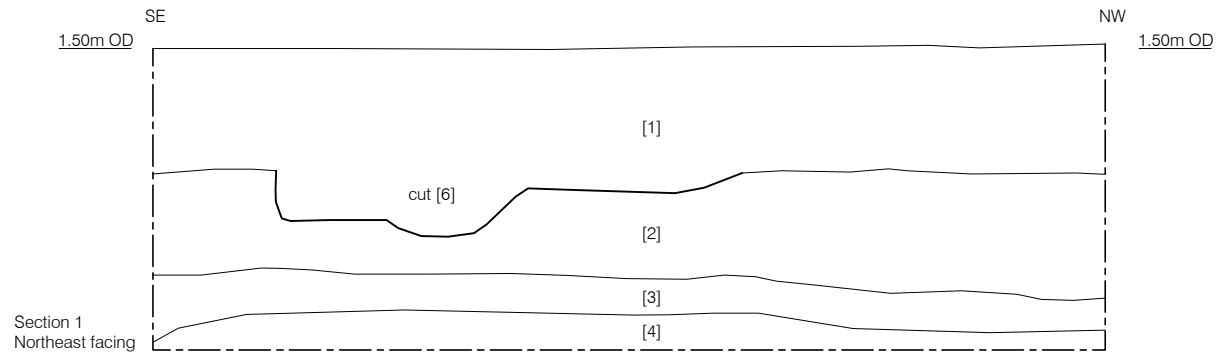


Plate 1 Base H3 Southern edge of site



Plate 2 Travellator Trench, NW corner of site



Plate 3 Base G2 Section 3 showing 19th century pit



Plate 4 Base C1 Section 8 showing linear feature



Plate 5 Base I4 NE facing, showing SE-NW orientated truncated brickwork



9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bradley, T. 2015 *Land at Bestwood Street, Lewisham, London Borough of Lewisham SE85AW. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief (Unpublished Client Report).*

CgMs 2015 *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, Land at Bestwood Street, Lewisham, London SE8 CgMs Consulting (Unpublished Report).*

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to express their thanks to CgMs Consulting for commissioning this archaeological watching brief, and to ISG for their cooperation on site.
- 10.2 The author would like to thank Przemek Polakiewicz and Bruce Ferguson for their work on site and Tim Bradley for his project management and editing of this report. Thanks also to Ray Murphy for the illustrations, and Berni Seddon for the pottery and glass report.

APPENDIX 1: POST-ROMAN POTTERY AND GLASS

Berni Seddon

A small assemblage of pottery and glass was recovered from context [9], dating to the late 19th century (see Table 1). The makers' names on the ceramic and glass bottles and jar are of some localised interest but the small assemblage is otherwise typical for the period and as such no further work is recommended.

Description	No	Weight	Date	Context considered date
Transfer-printed refined whiteware plate, pale blue floral design.	1	141g	1780 – 1900	Late 19 th century
Transfer-printed refined whiteware tureen, dark blue/ black floral garlands.	1	473g	1825 – 1900	
Refined white earthenware cylindrical jar, stamped to base 'BROWN / CASTELL'.	1	214g	1805 – 1900	
English stoneware ginger beer bottle with beehive (ribbed) neck, stamped to shoulder with 'J. Mills' and a ?batch number '43102'.	1	102g	1800 – 1900	
English stoneware cylindrical bottle	1	89g	1700 – 1900	
Glass Codd bottle relief moulded with 'Lee and Son/ Rotherhithe' to front and 'Codd's patent/ 4/ Barnett & Foster/ Sole Agents/ London' to reverse.	1	285g	1873 – 1900	

Table 1: Pottery and glass from context [9]

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No.	Type	Interpretation	Position	Section No.	Levels (m OD)		Period
1	Layer	Made Ground	SE corner of site	S1	1.5		20th Century
2	Layer	Natural Alluvium	SE corner of site	S1	0.3		Natural
3	Layer	Natural Sands and Gravels	SE corner of site	S1	-0.3		Natural
4	Layer	Sandy Gravels	SE corner of site	S1	-0.6		Natural
5	Layer	Made Ground	E boundary of site	S2	2		20th Century
6	Cut	Modern Cut	E boundary of site	S1, S2	0.3	-0.25	20th Century
7	Layer	Natural Alluvium	E boundary of site	S2, S3	1		Natural
8	Layer	Natural Sands and Gravels	E boundary of site	S2, S3	0		Natural
9	Fill	Fill of [10]	E boundary of site	S3	1		19th Century
10	Cut	Pit	E boundary of site	S3	1	-2.2	19th Century
11	Masonry	Brick Wall	SE corner of site		0.7		19th Century
12	Layer	Made Ground	N boundary of site	S4	2		20th Century
13	Cut	Modern Cut	N boundary of site	S4	1	0.7	20th Century
14	Layer	Made Ground	N boundary of site	S4	1		20th Century
15	Layer	Natural Sands and Gravels	N boundary of site	S4	0.1		Natural
16	Layer	Natural	S boundary of site	S5	0		Natural
17	Layer	Made Ground	S boundary of site	S6	2		20th Century
18	Layer	Natural Alluvium	S boundary of site	S6	1.6		Natural
19	Fill	Fill of [20]	G4		-0.5		Natural
20	Cut	Natural Feature	G4		-0.5		Natural

Context No.	Type	Interpretation	Position	Section No.	Levels (m OD)	Context No.	Type
21	Layer	Made Ground	D1, D2		1.4		20th Century
22	Layer	Natural Alluvium	A6, C1, C2, C5, C6, D1, D2, Travellator	S7, S8	0.5		Natural
23	Layer	Natural Sands and Gravels	A6, C1, C2, C5, C6, D1, D2, Travellator	S7	-0.1		Natural
24	Layer	Natural Alluvium	C4	S8	1.1		Natural
25	Fill	Fill of [26]	C4	S8	0.5		Natural
26	Cut	Linear Cut?	C4	S8	0.5	-0.25	Natural
27	Layer	Natural Alluvium	A6, Travellator	S7	0.5		Natural
28	Cut	Construction Cut	SE corner of site		0.7	-0.5	19th Century

APPENDIX 2: OASIS REPORT

Project details

Project name	Land at Bestwood Street, Lewisham, London SE8 5AW
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on land at Bestwood Street, Lewisham, London Borough of Lewisham SE8 5AW. The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of a series of foundation bases and service trenches associated with the redevelopment of a Lidl food store on the site. Natural layers on site consisted of sands and gravels, layers of yellowish grey alluvial clayey sand and sandy clay, and dark brown alluvial silty clay. Two late 19th century features and layers of made ground were recorded.
Project dates	Start: 09-05-2016 End: 20-06-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Monument type	WALL Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON LEWISHAM LEWISHAM AND BLACKHEATH Land at Bestwood Street
Postcode	SE8 5AW
Study area	1250 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 35904 78577 51.489284575996 -0.04227302672 51 29 21 N 000 02 32 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 1.5m Max: 2m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting
Project design originator	Tim Bradley
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley
Project supervisor	Phil Frickers
Type of sponsor/funding body	Consultancy
Name of sponsor/funding body	CgMs Consulting

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Archive ID	BWO16
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	BWO16
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	BWO16
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Matrices", "Plan"

Project bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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