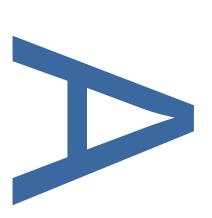
1A DOWNS ROAD, LONDON
BOROUGH OF HACKNEY, E5 8QJ:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF



LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

SITE CODE: DSR16

AUGUST 2019



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

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1A DOWNS ROAD, HACKNEY, E5 8QJ; AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY: London Borough of Hackney

SITE CODE: DSR16

CENTRAL NGR: TQ 34137 85906

COMMISSIONING CLIENT: LAXCON CONSTRUCTION

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief at 1A Downs Road, Hackney, E5 8QJ, undertaken intermittently between 17th of June 2019 and 19th July 2019. The watching brief was designed to archaeologically monitor the further reduction of ground to formation level in advance of redevelopment of the site. The work was commissioned by Laxcon Construction.
- 1.2 The site is bound by railway lines to the west, Downs Road to the south and properties fronting Rendelsham Road to the east. The site fronts onto Downs Road and is centred at TQ 34137 85906.
- 1.3 The current works supplement information gathered from a previous watching brief, which was carried out on site by PCA in 2016 and comprised the excavation Windowless Sample Boreholes and Cable Percussion Boreholes. (Frickers, 2016). The earlier watching brief identified the potential for identifying the former course of the Hackney Brook and therefore the site was recommended for a further watching brief to further refine the geoarchaeological and archaeological potential of the site.
- 1.4 Natural London Clay was identified throughout the study site, overlain in parts by alluvial horizons and post-medieval levelling.
- 1.5 No evidence of significant archaeological features was recorded during the investigations. Evidence of a historic watercourse; the Hackney Brook, was recorded during previous archaeological investigation in March 2016 (Frickers, 2016). The watercourse appeared to have been infilled in the later 19th century. Beyond alluvial deposits recorded in section, no in situ evidence of the former watercourse was identified during this phase of archaeological watching brief.
 - 1.6 This report details the results of a watching brief undertaken on c.10 percent of the total development area. It should be noted that prior to attendance the ground had excavated to an approximate depth of 12.58m OD (4.22m BGL) throughout the site and in the southern area of development and 15.10m OD (2m BGL). This report presents the recording below the 12.58m OD in the southern area of watching brief and below 15.10m OD in southern extension of area.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) was commissioned by Laxcon Construction to archaeologically monitor the ground reduction on area of 1A Downs Road, Hackney, E5 8QJ prior to redevelopment on site.
- 2.2 This watching brief was designed to supplement information gathered from a previous watching brief carried out on site in 2016 by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Frickers, 2016), which recorded Windowless Sample Boreholes and Cable Percussion Boreholes. The earlier watching brief encountered alluvial deposits most likely associated with the course of the Hackney Brook.
- 2.3 The watching brief programme consisted of supervising mechanical ground reduction from a reduced level across the southern limits of the subject site (see Figures 1 and 2). The northern limits had been reduced prior to archaeological attendance to a level of 8.155m OD.
- 2.4 The site does not lie within an Archaeological Priority Zone as designated by the London Borough of Hackney. The site is centred at NGR TQ 34137 85906.
- 2.5 The watching brief was supervised by Armi Utriainen and the project was managed by Amelia Fairman, both of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. Project was monitored by Adam Single of Historic England and the geoarchaeological monitoring was done by Dr D. Young of QUEST on 17th of June, where the depth of machine excavation was discovered to have reached London Clay, throughout the area. A Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeological monitoring was prepared for the site (Bradley, 2016). All work was undertaken in accordance with this document.
- Once the site works and post-excavation project is complete, the entire site archive (comprising written and drawn records, and digital photographs) will be deposited with LAA under the site code DSR16.

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 Planning permission had been granted (2015/055) for the demolition of all existing buildings and structures and the erection of four buildings between 1 and 15 stories in height. The following condition relating to archaeology has been attached to the planning permission:

Condition 33:

- A) No development other than demolition to existing ground level shall take place until the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) 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 writing and a report on the results 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 the development, other than demolition to existing ground level commences, the applicant (or their heirs and successors in title) shall secure the services of an 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 demolition or development shall take place other than in accordance with the written scheme of investigation 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 provision of the 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 publication of results, in accordance with Section 12 of NPPF.

3.2 In accordance with the above archaeological condition, a written scheme of investigation was prepared for the archaeological monitoring of a comprehensive scheme of geotechnical investigation across the site (Bradley 2016). This report details the results of that archaeological investigation.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 Archaeological Potential

- 4.1.1. Prior to attendance a GLHER search of a radius of 500m around the study site was made (GLHER Report 12342). Use was also been made of PCA's report archive.
- 4.1.2. The Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:50 000 scale map of the area (Sheet 256, 'North London') showed that the site is on the margins of the Pleistocene deposits of Hackney Gravel (a post-diversionary Thames River Terrace Deposit composed of gravel, sand, and clay in part), although in the area of the site was not shown to be present, with Palaeogene London Clay potentially directly underlying the site. There was also thought to be potential for the presence of alluvium (not illustrated by BGS) associated with the former course of the Hackney Brook (see below).
- 4.1.3. The nearest major watercourse to the site is the River Lea, approximately 1.2km to the northeast. Additionally, the Hackney Brook, a tributary of the Lea, was thought to run very close to, or through the area of the site from north to south. During the watching brief for geotechnical boreholes in 2016 some alluvial clay and gravel deposits were observed towards the eastern limit of the excavation area. They follow the expected location of the Hackney Brook and are thus probably the surviving alluvial deposits of the tributary.

4.1.4. Prehistoric

Five find spots for prehistoric evidence have been recorded within the study area, dating from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic, generally clustered some distance to the south west of the site. Based on this it is unlikely that anything more than scattered finds from the prehistoric period might survive within the development site.

4.1.5. Roman

The study site lies to the east of the line of Roman Ermine Street, now Kingsland Street, and is likely to have been within an area of farmland. The GLHER contained no find spots dating to the Roman period within the study area. No substantial occupational evidence was known within the study area.

4.1.6. Saxon

Whilst the names of Hackney and Clapton are known to have linguistic origins in the Saxon period, no archaeological evidence from the Saxon period has been recorded from within the study area.

4.1.7. Medieval

The HER results show a low level of medieval activity in the study area, with suggestions that Lea Bridge Road may have medieval origins.

4.1.8. Post-Medieval and Modern

Cartographic evidence shows that the site had been located within open fields and partially occupied by the course of Hackney Brook, which watching brief 2016 confirmed. From the mid-late 19th century the Hackney Brook is no longer evident, and the site is seen as being sub-divided as development commences along the northern edge of Hackney Downs. It was thought possible that evidence may exist from this initial phase of residential development, such as possible early foundations or garden evidence. It is also possible that evidence may exist of earlier agricultural activity, or indeed further evidence for the presence of the former Hackney Brook.

5 RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 The archaeological watching brief aimed to address the following broad and primary objectives:

Assess the level of truncation from the existing and previous building foundations and modern activity on the site;

Assess the interface of the soil deposits with the natural drift geology for archaeological features;

Assess the underlying deposits for evidence of deposits associated with the former Hackney Brook

Assess the site for prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval archaeology.

5.2 Within the broad research design set out above, and where archaeological deposits are encountered, the following research objectives, as featured in *A research framework for London Archaeology* prepared by the Museum of London and English Heritage in 2002, were selected as being potentially relevant to this site:

Prehistoric - Early Roman:

P2 Palaeolithic: gathering baseline information, establishing a chronology, informing research and developing relevant models.

P3 Palaeolithic-Mesolithic: gathering baseline information, understanding the locality and its evolution.

P4 Mesolithic-Neolithic: understanding the transition, reconstructing the environment, understanding settlement and economic development and patterns, and the influence of the landscape upon settlement and the creation of monuments; developing a pottery typology.

P5 Bronze Age-Iron Age: habitation and utilisation of the Thames Valley.

P6 Late Iron Age-early Roman: assessing the relationship of London with the rest of the southeast, agricultural intensification, settlement patterns and roads.

Roman:

R1 understanding the transition between Iron Age and Roman, including cultural interaction, evidence of the invasion, the economic and administrative development and decline of London and its hinterland.

R2 understanding the relationship between the landscape, river and settlement.

R3 understanding settlement in London and its hinterland.

R4 understanding the evolution of transport links and infrastructure, including built development.

R5 understanding domestic development.

R8 understanding population development.

R12 agriculture.

Saxon:

S2 identifying rural, agricultural land use; determining the impact on subsequent development with reference to Continental examples.

S3 relating settlement to watersources; understanding migration patterns, and the origin of rural settlement.

S7 understanding agricultural practice; fishing; town and country regarding food production and management; interaction of kingdoms in the region; transport; the economy; manufacturing; production specialisation.

Medieval:

M2 understanding human interaction with the environment; establishing baseline chronologies.

M6 synthesising breeding programmes and wildlife management, strategies and effects; understanding the development of specialist areas; challenge/complement historical sources; understanding patterns of consumption.

London After 1500

L2 understanding developing building design, and socio-economic relations; how London related to its hinterland; the effect of royal palaces; government buildings; developing infrastructure; the development of suburbs and recreational spaces.

L3 how archaeology contributes to understand social, economic, ethnic or religious aspects of different neighbourhoods, including sections of society with no history.

L4 understanding human physical survival in London.

L6 understanding the development of religious belief and related material culture.

L7 understanding the history of leisure, links with trade and the economy.

L8 understanding food production; London's growth and related environmental consequences.

L10 understanding London as a distribution, financial and fashion centre; the adaptation of smaller towns within the London area; its continued world pre-eminence.

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 **General**

- 6.1.1. The watching brief, as per the Written Scheme of Investigation (Bradley, 2016) required that archaeological monitoring of ground reduction would take place from modern ground level (approximately 16.800m OD) across the site to formation level at 12.00m OD in the southern limits of the site and 8.155m OD in the northern part of the site.
- 6.1.2. At the start of the archaeological watching brief the ground had been reduced in the northern part of the site to c.8 m OD, the final formation level for the basement. The southern area had been reduced to approximately 12.58m OD across the southern part of excavation area. The archaeological watching brief was conducted on the southern area to final formation level and included an extension further south on the western part of site.
- 6.1.3. All Health and Safety regulations were followed as per the Written Scheme of Investigation (Bradley, 2016). All recording of was done following the Research Design and Site Methodology, also set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 6.1.4. Due to the size of area of excavation, it was arbitrarily divided into 3 separate areas, which will be referenced in this report (See Figure 2), where relevant as follow:
 - Area 1: Located in the eastern wing, approximately the size of 25m east to west and 20m north to south.
 - Area 2: Western part of excavation following the railway line and limited to the southern end
 of ground reductions for northern basement. Approximately 35m northeast to southwest and
 25m north to south.
 - Southern extension: Located directly south of Areas 1 and 2, measuring approximately 20m east to west and 10m north to south.
- 6.1.5. During the excavation, the ground in the southern area was mechanically reduced to 12m OD and the archaeologist present monitored the reduction as well as the excavation of of 3 pile caps in Area 1, where in 2016 the alluvial deposits had been identified in previous investigations (Frickers, 2016). This also included the examination of the spoil produced during the reduction.
- 6.1.6. Surviving stratigraphical information in between the piles at the eastern limit of excavation was recorded on *pro forma* recording sheets. This consisted of drawn sections (See Figure 3) which were located using existing plans of the site provided by the on-site engineer. In addition to this, Context Sheets and corresponding records sheets were used to record the nature of the deposits. All the layers observed were given individual context numbers and surviving sections were photographed. No finds were collected from sections as they presented a hazard of collapse.

- 6.1.7. In Area 2, it was not possible to record a surviving section as no soil remained between piling to an adequate height. The area had been machined to approximate height of 12.32m OD. This meant that the only deposit recorded in this area was London Clay, which continued below formation level.
- 6.1.8. The southern extension of the watching brief started from c.16.10m OD. Following excavation a thick layer of contaminated sandy gravel was identified. The latter was likely a result of the former presence of fuel tanks. As such, access to the area was limited.
- 6.1.9. Periods of heavy rainfall during excavation resulted in excess standing water, which was pumped out of the excavation area using a single pump.
- 6.1.10. All excavation was carried out with machine using a flat bladed ditching bucket. Once geological horizons were cleaned or exposed, a representative from QUEST (Dr. D Young) attended site to assess geo-archaeological potential.
- 6.1.11. The fieldwork was carried out according to the relevant methodologies, as follows:
 - Historic England (GLAAS), Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Greater London, 2015;
 - Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1990);
 - The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 'Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation' (2014);
 - The Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct (1999);
 - The Institute for Archaeologists Code of Approved Practices for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology (1999);
 - The Institute of Archaeologists Standard and Guidelines for Archaeological Evaluation (1994, revised 2001);
 - The Treasure Act (1996);
 - The Burial Act (1857).
- 6.1.12. All recording systems adopted during the investigations were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in London; that is those developed out of the Department of Urban Archaeology Site Manual, now published by Museum of London Archaeology (MoLAS 1994). Individual descriptions of all archaeological and geological strata and features excavated and exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. All plans and sections of archaeological deposits were recorded on polyester based drawing film, the plans being at scale 1:20 and the section at 1:10. The OD heights of all principle strata were calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans and sections.
- 6.1.13. A photographic record of the investigations was made using only digital format.

- 6.1.14. Levels were calculated using on-site engineering plans provided by the client.
- 6.1.15. The archaeological works were visited and monitored by Adam Single, the Archaeological Officer for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets on behalf of GLAAS/Historic England.
- 6.1.16. The complete site archive including site records, photographs and finds will be deposited at the London Archaeological Archives (LAA) under the site code DSR16.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASED DISCUSSION

Phase 1: London Clay (Natural)

- 7.1 London Clay [1] covered the entirety of the observed excavation area. The deposit comprised a mid to dark grey layer of stiff clay with occasional well-sorted lenses of sand and moderate inclusions of fossilised tree and plant material.
- 7.2 The top of the London Clay was identified at its highest at 14.10m OD in the south-eastern end of site (Southern extension) and at its lowest was recorded at 14m OD in eastern part of site, in Section 1 (Area 1; see Figure 3). The maximum recorded thickness of the deposit was observed at the bottom of piling caps, which reached the depth of 11.20m OD (over 2m thickness). This depth was standard throughout the site and the London Clay deposit extends deeper, beyond the maximum depth of piling caps throughout the areas.

Phase 2: Alluvial Deposits (Undated)

- 7.3 In Area 1 the clay was sealed by alluvial blueish grey clay [11]. In Area 2, due to the heavy truncation it wasn't possible to establish any overlaying deposits. In the Southern extension the London Clay was overlain by a thin layer of blueish brown clay [30] and a layer of yellowish brown sandy clay [29].
- 7.4 Alluvial deposits light brown clay [7], silty gravel [8], blueish grey gravel [9], and yellow gravel [10] sealed clay [11] from 15.70m OD with the combined depth of 0.40m. These deposits were identified in Area 1 and could be seen sloping towards the south and east (see Figure 3). The slope is possibly in relation to the Hackney Brook, which has been thought to run along the eastern side of excavation area.
- 7.5 The Southern extension showed a similar sequence of deposits to Area 1; a light yellowish-brown sandy clay, with occasional pebbles [29] and a layer of blueish grey possibly alluvial clay [30]. These deposits contained no inclusions indicative of human activity. Layers [29] and [30] were recorded in Section 2 in the area of Southern extension from 15.30m OD with the combined thickness of c.0.70m. Context [29] had been heavily truncated by the removal of fuel tanks and a layer of contamination remained above, described in more detail in Phase 4 below.

Phase 3: Levelling Deposits (Post-Medieval)

7.6 All of the levelling deposits observed during the watching brief were located in Area 1 (see Figure 3). It is likely that these deposits may have extended over larger areas of site, if not over the complete site, but due to fragmentary preservation this remains unknown. These deposits were identified from

16.50m OD and comprised silty sand containing fragments of ceramic building material [4], sandy clay containing gravels [5] and gravelly clay [6] with the combined thickness of 0.40m. These were interpreted as late 19th to early 20th century levelling horizons.

Phase 4: Modern

- 7.7 A large modern intrusion was noted at the base of the excavation area. Cut [3] extended 2.40m east-west by 3.53m north-south and had been backfilled by [2], a deposit of sandy clay and brick rubble. This was interpreted as the remnants of former tanks on the site, which had been partially excavated for the installation of a crane base. The contamination however prompted the capping of the feature with modern materials.
- 7.8 Additional indications of the former use of the area were represented by deposit [28] identified in section (see Figure 3). The latter comprised a layer of contaminated gravels, presumably contaminated from former petrol tanks which were known to have been located on site.
- 7.9 The entirety of the site had been covered by a modern concrete slab visible in Section 1 and Section 2, which had been laid down sometime between the initial geotechnical watching brief in March 2016 and the archaeological watching brief in June 2019.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The natural solid geology (London Clay) was observed throughout the site at between 14.10m OD and 14.00m OD during the archaeological monitoring of ground reduction These levels were observed in the Southern extension in Area 1. In Area 2 the London Clay was observed in section at c.15m OD.
- 8.2 The geotechnical watching brief identified London Clay from levels between 13.90m OD and 14m OD, and therefore broadly comparable to the levels recorded during the wider site ground reduction.
- 8.3 Substantial modern truncation had occurred, exposing London Clay deposit throughout the site. These truncations are likely responsible for the slight variations between the recorded elevations of London Clay across the majority of the site, compared with the slightly raised elevation recorded in Section 1 in the east of the investigation area. When examined the clay horizon contained multiple fragments of fossilised plant material throughout the area of investigation.
- 8.4 No archaeological evidence of prehistoric, Early Roman, Roman, Saxon or Medieval habitation or land use was found during the archaeological investigation.
- 8.5 Undated alluvial deposits were recorded in the southern and eastern limits of excavation, in comparable locations to earlier window samples which also identified an alluvial sequence. The latter recorded alluvium from 15.60m OD in the southern limit of excavation (WS10) and c.15m OD in the eastern limits of excavation (WS11). The wider ground reduction recorded alluvium from 15.70m OD in the east and 15.30m OD in the south. The slight disparity in elevations are likely to represent an undulating upper horizon of numerous flood events within the southern and eastern parts of the site.
- 8.6 Post-medieval levelling deposits were identified in both phases of work. The earlier watching brief identified such horizons across the majority of the site, suggesting widescale redevelopment of the immediate area during the later 19th and early 20th century.

9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 9.1 Original Research Questions
- 9.2 The archaeological watching brief aimed to address the following broad and primary objectives:

Assess the level of truncation from the existing and previous building foundations and modern activity on the site;

The site had been impacted in localised areas by the former petrol station. This was most evident in the form of deep truncations for the former petrol tanks, and by areas of notable contamination indicative of leaking fuels.

Assess the interface of the soil deposits with the natural drift geology for archaeological features;

The interfaces could not be examined due to the extent of ground reduction prior to archaeological monitoring.

Assess the underlying deposits for evidence of deposits associated with the former Hackney Brook

No deposits or features could be identified to conclusively highlight the former course of the Hackney Brook. Alluvial deposits indicative of repeated flood episodes were however noted in the eastern parts of the site, which do correspond to the expected route of the former brook. Furthermore slight discrepancies in elevation of these deposits would suggest a slight slope towards the east, i.e. within the path of a former waterway.

Assess the site for prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval archaeology.

No archaeological features or horizons pre-dating the post-medieval period were identified. Evidence related to the post-medieval period was limited to widespread levelling deposits.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

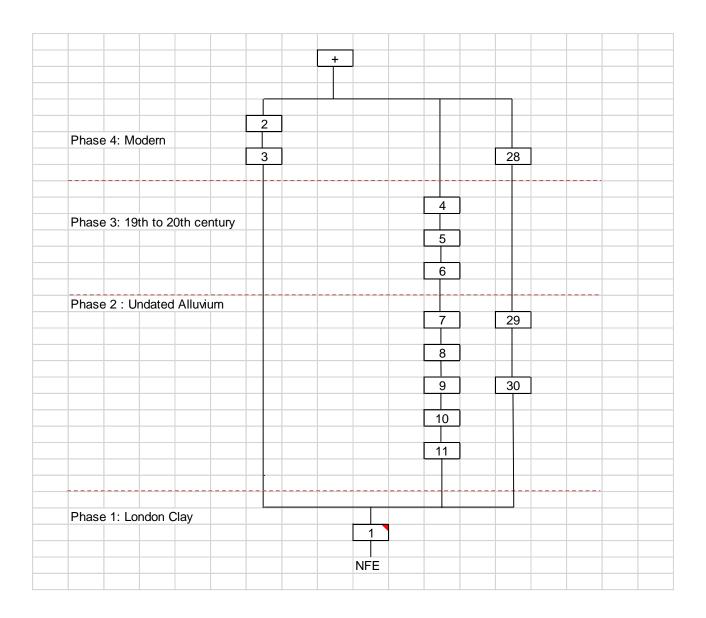
- 11.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Laxcon Construction for commissioning the work and for their help and co-operation during excavation.
- 11.2 The Author would like to thank Amelia Fairman for her project management and editing of this report.

 The Author would also like to extend their thanks to Dr Daniel Young of QUEST for his help and expertise during excavation as well as to Adam Single of English Heritage for his monitoring of the excavations.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Site Code	Context Number	Context Type	Description	Phase
DSR16	1	Layer	London Clay	1
DSR16	2	Fill	Fill of [3]	4
DSR16	3	Cut	Modern intrusion	4
DSR16	4	Layer	Levelling	3
DSR16	5	Layer	Levelling	3
DSR16	6	Layer	Levelling	3
DSR16	7	Layer	Light brown clay; Alluvium	2
DSR16	8	Layer	Light brown silty gravel; Alluvium	2
DSR16	9	Layer	Silty gravel; lense within alluvium	2
DSR16	10	Layer	Silty gravel; lense within alluvium	2
DSR16	11	Layer	Greenish clay; alluvium	2
DSR16	28	Layer	Modern levelling	4
DSR16	29	Layer	Silty clay; alluvium	2
DSR16	30	Laver	Silty clay; alluvium	2

APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX



APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-364168

Project details

Project name 1a Downs Road, LB Hackney

Short description of

the project

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on ground reduction at 1a Downs Road, LB Hackney. The watching brief was designed to archaeologically

monitor the further reduction of ground to formation level in advance of redevelopment of the site. London Clay was observed across the site, overlain

by alluvial horizons and post-medieval levelling.

Start: 17-06-2019 End: 19-07-2019 Project dates

Previous/future work Yes / Not known DSR16 - Sitecode Any associated

project reference

codes

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed

Monument type LAYER Post Medieval

Monument type LAYER Modern Investigation type "Watching Brief"

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY 1a Downs Road

Postcode E5 8QJ

Site coordinates TQ 34137 85906 51.555575615137 -0.064920622556 51 33 20 N 000 03 53 W

Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 14m Max: 15m

Project creators

Name of Organisation **PCA**

Project brief originator

Adam Single

Project design originator

Tim Bradley

Project

Amelia Fairman

director/manager Project supervisor

Armi Ultrianen

Type of

Construction Company

sponsor/funding

body

Name of sponsor/funding

body

Laxcon Construction

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?

No

Digital Archive

recipient

LAA

Digital Archive ID

DSR16

Digital Media available

"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient

LAA

Paper Archive ID

DSR16

Paper Media available

"Context sheet","Diary","Matrices","Miscellaneous Material"

Project bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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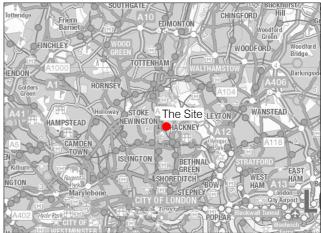
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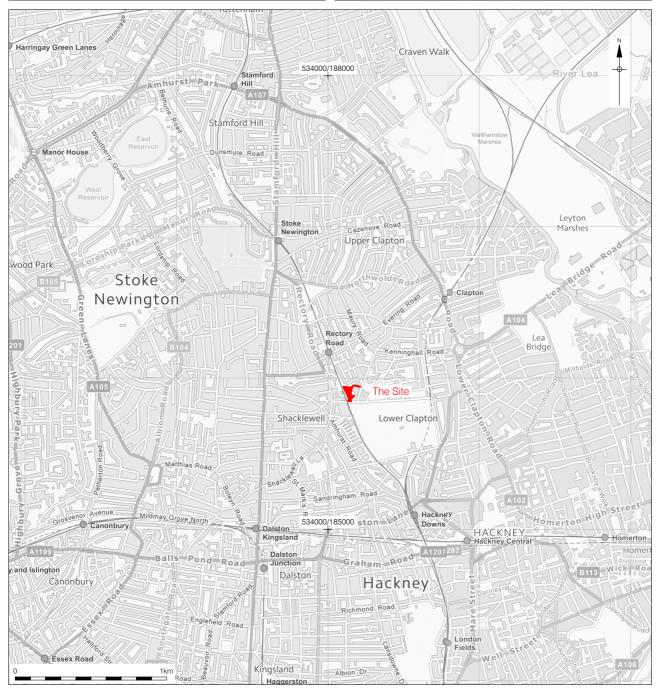
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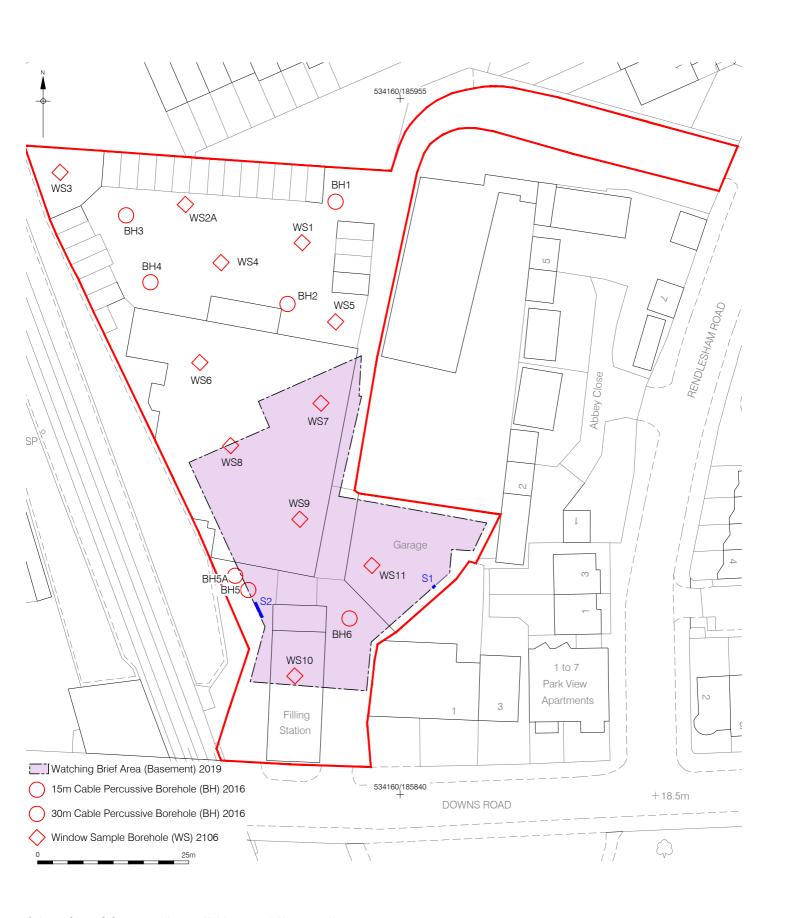
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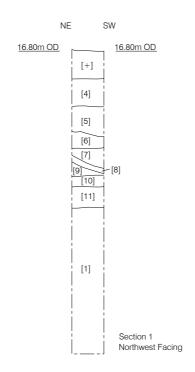
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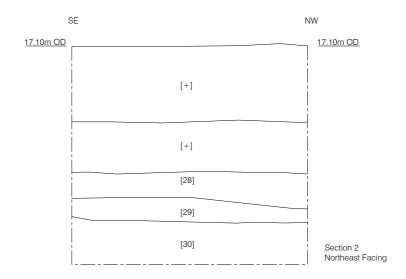














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