

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at 1-7 Willow Street, London, London
Borough of Hackney, EC2**

**Site Code: WII 05
Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3307 8245**

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at 1-7 Willow Street, London. The work consisted of the recording of deposits exposed during groundwork associated with the construction of a new hotel complex.

- 1.2 A linear feature, probably a ditch, was located in the northeast corner of the site aligned on a north-south orientation. This feature is likely to date to the 16th or 17th century. A portion of 18th century wall foundation was exposed in the north facing section of the limit of excavation in the southwest corner of the site.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at 1-7 Willow Street, London (Figure 1) following the results of an archaeological Desk-Based Assessment prepared by RPS Planning. The investigations were implemented in order to satisfy the planning condition relating to the redevelopment of the site.
- 2.3 The work was conducted between the 7th July and 18th July 2005 and was commissioned by RPS Planning on behalf of Lawnpond Ltd.
- 2.4 The watching brief constituted the archaeological recording of ground reduction works across the northern part of the site (Figure 2) in accordance to the Method Statement prepared by RPS Planning.
- 2.5 The site is bounded by Great Eastern Street on its northern side, No's 77-79 Great Eastern Street on its eastern side, Willow Street on the south side and Willow Court and 85 Great Eastern Street on its western side.
- 2.6 The National Grid Reference of the centre of the site is TQ 3307 8245
- 2.7 The unique code WII 05 was assigned to the project.
- 2.8 The work was undertaken by Stuart Holden and the project managed by Tim Bradley for Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited.

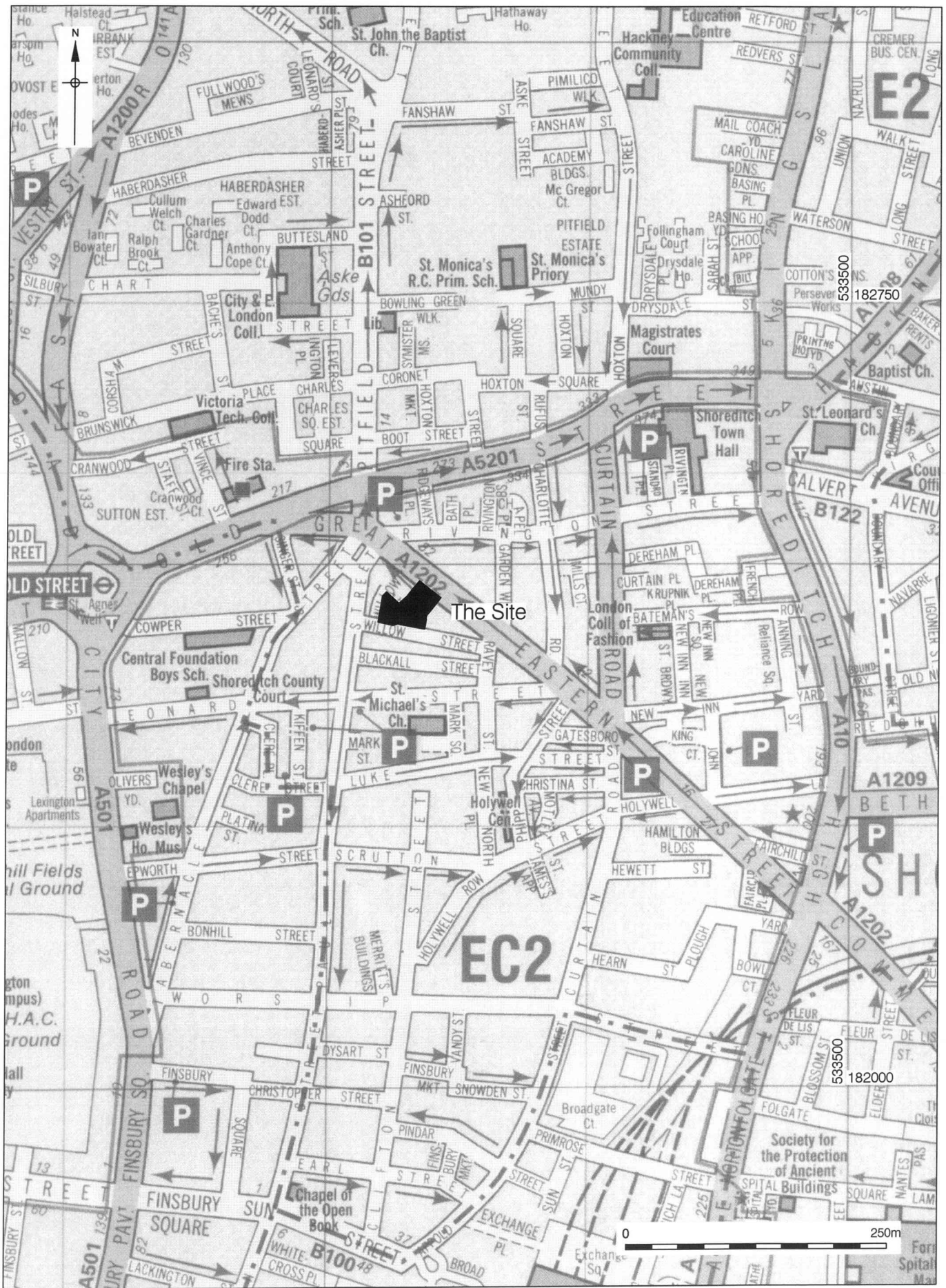


Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:5000



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-  New Groundbeams and Pile Caps
-  Observed Trenches

Figure 2
Area of Monitored Excavation
1:500

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 Planning background

3.1.1 The study aims to satisfy the objectives of London Borough of Hackney, which recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which they are the custodians. The London Borough of Hackney Unitary Development Plan (adopted June 1995) contains policy statements in respect of protecting the buried archaeological resource. These are laid out in detail in Section 2 of the desk-based assessment (RPS Planning, 2005a) and reiterated here.

3.1.2 The site is located within an Archaeological Priority Area as defined by the Proposals Map for the London Borough of Hackney

3.1.3 Strategic Policies relating to archaeology include:

ST8

“The Council will preserve and enhance listed buildings and the character and appearance of conservation areas and will have regard to the Borough’s archaeological heritage.”

3.1.4 Regarding implementation of the Plan the UDP states:

“Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Archaeology

62. The Council also has a duty to make provision for the proper preservation and recording of archaeological remains found in the Borough, often upon redevelopment. Areas of archaeological interest are recorded on the proposals map and it is advisable for prospective developers to contact the Council’s Town Planning Service at an early stage in their considerations if their sites are located within such an area. If archaeological remains are found during development, developers should immediately contact the Council’s Town Planning Service.”

3.1.5 Environmental Quality Local Policy Context indicates:

“EQ 29 Archaeological Heritage

In the areas of archaeological priority shown on the proposals map and elsewhere as necessary the council will normally require:

(a) prior assessment and planning for the archaeological implications of development (if necessary based upon a preliminary archaeological site evaluation prior to a planning determination); and

(b) for sites requiring in situ preservation, suitable design, land use and management;
or

(c) for sites not requiring *in situ* preservation, an appropriate level of archaeological investigation and presentation to the public of any finds.”

“The Archaeological Heritage of Hackney is considerable and includes the internationally important Palaeolithic site between Stamford Hill/Upper Clapton, Medieval and Elizabethan remains in South Shoreditch as well as dozens of smaller sites throughout the Borough. The Council will use its available powers to ensure that such remains are not needlessly destroyed. The preservation of this valuable education and cultural asset is a legitimate objective against which the needs of development must be carefully balanced and assessed in line with Government advice.

The physical preservation *in situ* of important sites will be sought, where desirable and feasible. Preservation by record (excavation) is a second best option and developers should not expect to obtain planning permission for archaeologically damaging development merely because they arrange for the recording of sites. The Council encourages developers to consider the archaeological aspects of a development site as early as possible in order to reduce uncertainty and conflict will itself seek professional advice on assessing the archaeological importance and potential of a site.

Where appropriate the Council will require an archaeological statement (a written assessment) and/or an archaeological field evaluation (on site assessment by trial work) before a decision on the application is taken. The policy will apply, particularly, in areas of archaeological priority but may be applied elsewhere, on the advice of English Heritage, should the archaeological evidence suggest that this would be appropriate. The case for *in situ* preservation will be assessed on an individual basis, weighing the importance of the remains against the needs for development. Where presentation to the public of the preserved *in situ* remains is desirable and feasible, the Council will require the development design to accommodate this objective. Where the preservation of known archaeological remains *in situ* is not justified, the Council will require that no development takes place on a site until archaeological investigations have been carried out by an investigating body, to be approved by the Council; such investigations shall be in accordance with a detailed scheme to be approved in writing in advance by the Council. Investigations should be undertaken by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or consultant. Developers are urged to contact at an early stage English Heritage who maintain the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and advise on the archaeological potential of sites both within and outside areas of archaeological priority. Further guidance will be published as Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes.”

3.2 **Research Objectives**

- 3.2.1 The work aimed to record any evidence of archaeologically sensitive material that would be adversely affected by the redevelopment of the site. The desk-based assessment highlighted the greatest possibility of encountering post-medieval remains.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 An archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (RPS Planning, 2005b) was prepared prior to the commencement of the watching brief. Below is a summary of the findings of the baseline data, taken from that document.

SECTION 4: Assessment of Archaeological Potential (existing Baseline Conditions)

The application site is located within an LPA designated Archaeological Priority Area. Information from the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) indicates that although no archaeological sites have been excavated within the immediate vicinity of the application site, the site has the potential to contain archaeological remains that may address Framework Objectives set out in 'A research framework for London archaeology' (MoL/EH 2002).

Evidence from the GLSMR indicates the site may contain the following potential:

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flint implements have been recovered from the vicinity of the site. The circumstances of their recovery is not clear and it is possible that such finds were located on and/or within the terrace gravels or re-deposited within later materials. Similar survival on the application site could tie in with aspects of P2 and P3 Framework objectives (MoL/EH 2002, 20-21).

Roman

A number of Roman finds are recorded within the GLSMR which may be linked to the suggestion that Old Street and Clerkenwell Road form the alignment of a possible Iron Age trackway and Roman road. Such survival on the application site could tie in with aspects of P6 and R1 to R5 Framework objectives (MoL/EH 2002, 26-27 & 30-35).

Medieval

No evidence of Saxon artefacts are recorded in the GLSMR. Medieval activity within the vicinity largely relates to the Priory of Holywell to the east of the site. This does not extend to the application site. To the north-west of the application site is the site of the well of Saint Agnes Le Clare.

Post-medieval

Information from the GLSMR and the documentary and cartographic background to the site, indicate that this may be the greatest potential that the site holds, in relation to the development of Finsbury Fields/Moorfields and the construction of tenement properties in the late eighteenth/early-nineteenth century. Survival of such remains on the application site would tie in with Framework objectives L1 to L3 and L8 (MoL/EH 2002, 68-71 & 73). Cartographic evidence indicates that the tenements shown on the Horwood map were cleared to make way for large-scale residential development of the site during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The fieldwork was designed to record any archaeologically sensitive deposits affected by the redevelopment of the site.
- 5.2 The work consisted of archaeological monitoring of construction impacts (excavation) to the northern half of the site. In addition to the watching brief on these impacts, recording of archaeological remains where present in exposed sections in the southern half of the site was also undertaken.
- 5.3 Sections were drawn at an appropriate scale on polyester based drawing film and the deposits recorded on to pro forma context sheets. Contexts were numbered sequentially and are referred to in square brackets within this report.
- 5.4 A photographic record was compiled and includes general images of the site and specific records of the deposits.
- 5.5 All works were undertaken in accordance with the guidelines set out by English Heritage and the Institute of Field Archaeology.
- 5.6 In addition to the fieldwork, David Divers (English Heritage GLAAS) requested that an assessment be made of the geotechnical investigation report in order that any information regarding archaeological deposits that have been negatively affected by the development prior to the implementation of the watching brief may be highlighted. No photographs were available to assess the impact of the crane base.

6 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 6.1 The study site slopes gently from north to south with Great Eastern Street at the north at c.15.60mOD and Willow Street at the south at c.15.35mOD.
- 6.2 The site is shown on the 1:10,560 British Geological Survey map as being underlain by River Terrace Gravels above London Clay. The borehole data (Small, 2004) proves the presence of the gravels at 3.2-3.4m below ground level and the London Clay at 6.4m below ground level.
- 6.3 Excavations in the northeast corner of the site exposed a deposit of light yellowish brown gravely brickearth at c.12.69mOD. This was also recorded in borehole BH1 (Small, 2004).

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Summary

- 7.1.1 Natural brickearth was located in the northeast corner of the site. This was cut by a linear feature running north-south and although not excavated, is likely to represent a ditch. Above these deposits, made ground from the 19th and 20th centuries occupied the northern part of the site.
- 7.1.2 In the north facing section at the southern limit of the site, a portion of 18th century wall foundation was exposed and recorded.

7.2 Phase 1 - Natural

- 7.2.1 Excavations in the northeast corner of the site exposed a deposit of light yellowish brown gravelly brickearth at c.12.69mOD [06] adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site and in excavations adjacent to the northern boundary of the site.

7.3 Phase 2 - 16th/17th Century

- 7.3.1 Cutting into the natural brickearth in the northeast corner of the site, close to the eastern boundary of the site where deeper excavations were undertaken (c.12.69mOD), a linear feature [05] was exposed, running north-south (fig 3). Only the eastern edge of this feature was seen and the depth of the excavations did not enable the profile to be established. A small test slot was excavated by hand into the mid grey clayey silt fill [04] at its edge, from which a fragment of animal bone and two pieces of pottery were recovered. These were a residual sherd of Roman date and a fragment of Werra ware (WERR), imported from Germany and dated 1580-1650.
- 7.3.2 At a second location where excavations were deeper (c.13.00mOD), adjacent to the northern limit of excavation, a probable continuation of the feature was exposed [22]. Again, only the eastern edge of the feature was exposed and no finds were recovered from the small test excavation into the fill [21].

7.4 Phase 3 - 18th Century

- 7.4.1 A portion of 18th century wall foundation [01]/[02] was exposed in the north facing section at the southern limit of excavation adjacent to Willow Street. This was constructed in a light orange, unfrogged brick Fabric 3032 and appeared to be poorly fired 'seconds' from the outer regions of a clamp. This wall foundation is almost certainly part of the 18th century tenements identified in the Desk-Based Assessment.

7.5 Phase 4 - 19th and 20th Centuries

- 7.5.1 The documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that the 18th century tenement buildings were cleared during the 19th century to make way for redevelopment. Approximately 2-3m of made ground was observed across the northern part of the site (Figure 4; Sections 1 & 2), cut into which were modern concrete foundations.
- 7.5.2 From this made ground, a clay tobacco pipe bowl was retained. This was decorated in relief with images and writing, although the mould was very worn. It appears to be a commemorative item, honouring the Duke of Wellington's victory at the Battle of Waterloo. Both the words 'Wellington' and 'Waterloo' are legible on the left side of the bowl whilst on the right, the word 'Enmouth' may be written. On the back of the bowl a crown can be seen. On the spur, the maker's letters R and C are present. Possible known makers are Rebecca Cant, who operated in Whitechapel from 1832-37 and Robert Cook who produced pipes in Bethnal Green from 1806-50 (Oswald, 1975). As the battle took place during the summer of 1815, the former of the two would seem more likely.

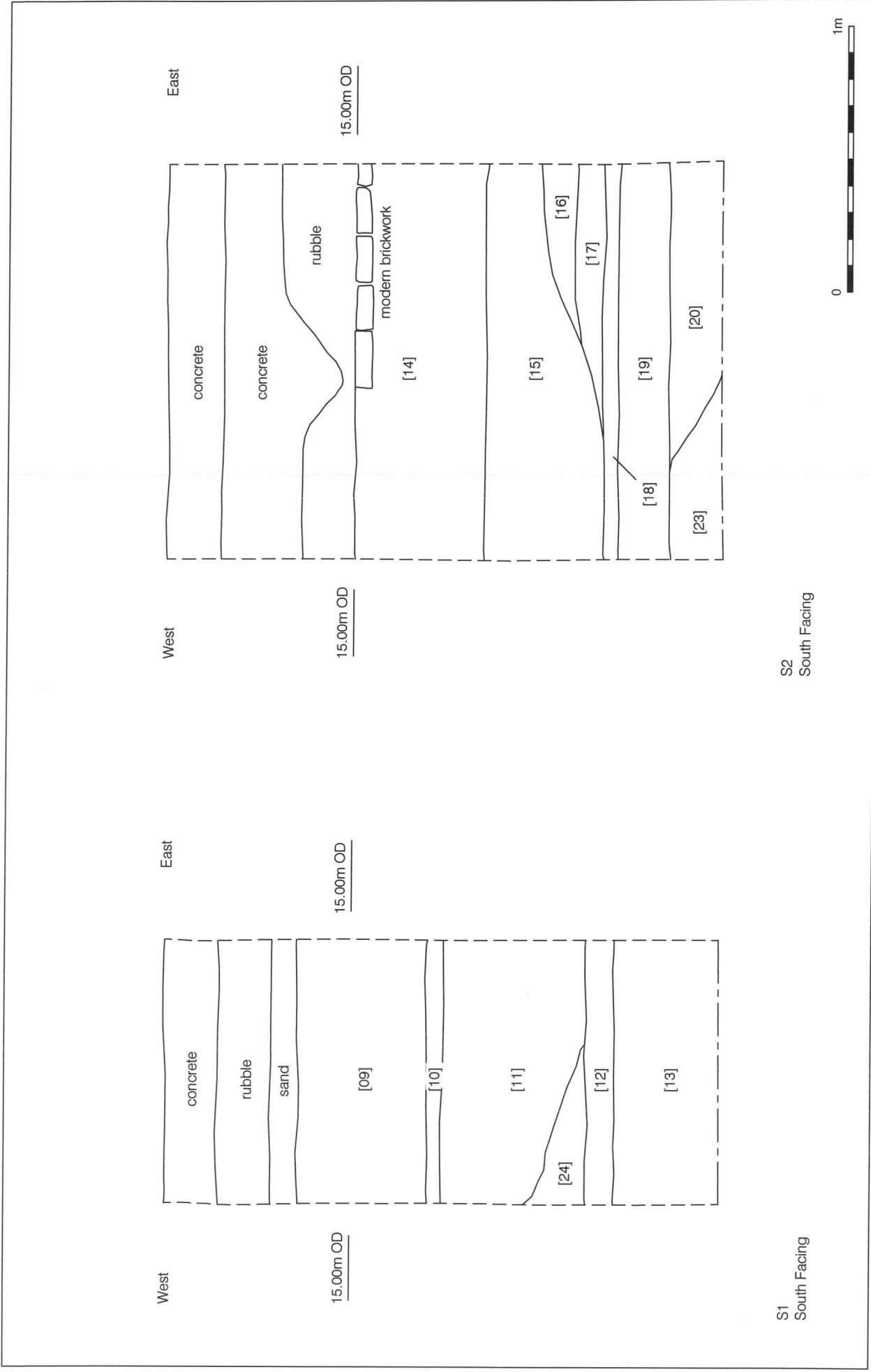


Figure 4
 Sections 1 and 2
 1:20

8 GEOTECHNICAL ANALYSIS

8.1 In order to consider the below ground conditions for areas not monitored within the scope of the watching brief, an assessment of the geotechnical and geo-environmental data was requested by GLAAS. The following section gives an overview of the borehole and trial pits report (Small, 2004).

8.2 The investigation consisted of two light cable percussive boreholes to a maximum depth of 20m and the excavation of five trial pits by mechanical excavator, spread across the site. Below is a description of the sequence encountered in each with the thickness of each deposit. Concrete slabs were encountered at the base of Trial Pits 1 and 2. Trial pits TP3 and TP4 were excavated adjacent to neighbouring buildings to ascertain their foundation details.

8.2.1 Borehole 1 15.49mOD

0.10m Tarmac

0.20m Made ground- Yellow brown loose concrete

2.90m Made ground- Brown clay very sandy gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker

0.80m Gravel- Medium dense orange brown sandy very clayey fine to coarse sub-angular to sub-rounded flint

2.40m Gravel- Medium dense orange brown sandy fine to coarse sub-angular to sub rounded flint

0.30m Clay- Firm brown slightly sandy

13.30m Clay- Stiff to very stiff dark grey slightly sandy with rare pockets of fine sand

8.2.2 Borehole 2 16.04mOD

3.40m Made ground- Brown clayey very sandy fine to coarse angular gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker

3.00m Gravel medium dense orange brown mottled yellow sandy very clayey fine to coarse sub-angular to sub-rounded flint

13.60m Clay- Stiff to very stiff dark grey slightly sandy with rare pockets of fine sand

8.2.3 Trial Pit 1 (IP1) 15.90m OD

0.10m Tarmac

0.40m Made ground- Yellow brown loose concrete

1.10m Made ground- Brown clayey very sandy fine to coarse angular gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker. Rare cobbles.

8.2.4 Trial Pit 2 (IP3) 15.98m OD

0.30m Brown clayey very sandy fine to coarse angular gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker

0.20m Made ground- Orange very gravelly sand with fine to coarse angular brick, concrete and flints. Rare cobbles

8.2.5 **Trial Pit 3 (IP3)** 15.49m OD

0.10m Tarmac

0.30m Made ground- Yellow brown loose concrete

1.60m Brown clayey very sandy fine to coarse angular gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker

8.2.6 **Trial Pit 4 (TP3)** 16.02m OD

0.30m Made ground- Brown clayey very sandy fine to coarse angular gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker. Rare cobbles

0.30m Made ground- Orange very gravely sand with fine to coarse angular to sub-rounded flints

0.60m Made ground- Brown clayey very sandy fine to coarse angular gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker. Rare cobbles

8.2.7 **Trial Pit 5 (TP4)** 15.51m OD

0.10m Tarmac

0.20m Made ground- Yellow brown loose concrete

0.30m Made ground- Orange very gravely sand with fine to coarse angular to sub-rounded flints

0.90m Made ground- Brown clayey very sandy fine to coarse angular gravel with bricks, concrete, flint, pottery, glass, plastic, clinker. Rare cobbles

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The borehole logs recorded during the geotechnical investigation of the site revealed evidence of London Clay at a depth of approximately 6m below ground level, which was capped by terrace gravels at between 3.2 and 3.4m below ground level. During the excavations in the northeast corner of the site, the gravel was found to be capped by a brickearth deposit at 12.69m OD. This brickearth was also recorded in BH1, also situated in this area of the site.
- 9.2 The linear feature exposed in the northeast corner of the site is likely to have been a ditch used for drainage and possibly land division. As only two sherds of pottery were recovered, with one being residual, the feature can only be very tentatively dated to the 16th or 17th century, although it almost certainly predates the tenements identified in the Desk-Based Assessment.
- 9.3 The portion of wall foundation recorded in the north facing section in the southern limit of excavation is probably a remnant of the 18th century tenements cleared from the site in the 19th century. This redevelopment appears to have caused large-scale truncation of much of the site to a depth of nearly three metres, below which archaeological features survive.
- 9.4 As the present development consists of pile foundations, with excavations to depths of generally less than three metres, any archaeological deposits are likely to survive with localised disturbance around the pile locations.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Simon Blatherwick of RPS Planning for commissioning the work on behalf of Lawnpond Ltd. PCA would also like to extend our gratitude to Bowmer Kirkland for their cooperation and communication during the archaeological works. The author would like to thank John Brown for identifying the brick samples, Chris Jarrett and Berni Sudds for their comments on the pottery and clay tobacco pipe and Adrian Nash for providing the illustrations.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

| Context No. | Type | Trench | Phase | Description |
|-------------|---------|---------------------|-------|--|
| 1 | Masonry | Watching Brief Area | 3 | 18 th Century wall foundation identified at south of site |
| 2 | Masonry | Watching Brief Area | 3 | 18 th Century wall foundation (same as [1]) |
| 3 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Mid brown silty sand made ground |
| 4 | Fill | Watching Brief Area | 2 | Mid grey clayey silt fill of ditch [5] |
| 5 | Cut | Watching Brief Area | 2 | Cut of probable ditch |
| 6 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 1 | Light yellowish brown sandy silty clay brickearth |
| 7 | Fill | Watching Brief Area | 2 | Mid grey clayey silt fill of ditch [8] (same as [5]) |
| 8 | Cut | Watching Brief Area | 2 | Cut of probable ditch (same as [5]) |
| 9 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Mid grey brown silty gravel with freq. cbm frags – made ground |
| 10 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Light brown silty sand – made gnd |
| 11 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Mid grey brown silty gravel with freq. cbm frags – made ground |
| 12 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Light yellowish brown sand gravel made ground |
| 13 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Mid brownish grey silty sand made ground |
| 14 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Mid greyish brown gravely sandy silt made ground |
| 15 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Dark greyish brown gravely sandy silt made ground |
| 16 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Compact mortar and cbm rubble |
| 17 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Light greyish brown gravely sandy silt made ground |
| 18 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Very dark brown silt and clinker |
| 19 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Light greyish brown sandy silt and mortar |
| 20 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Compact mortar and cbm rubble |
| 21 | Fill | Watching Brief Area | 2 | Mid grey clayey silt fill of ditch [22] |
| 22 | Cut | Watching Brief Area | 2 | Cut of probable ditch |
| 23 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Mid greyish brown gravely sandy silt made ground |
| 24 | Layer | Watching Brief Area | 4 | Mid brownish grey silty sand made ground |

APPENDIX 2: PLATES



Plate 1: View of the northeast corner of the site.

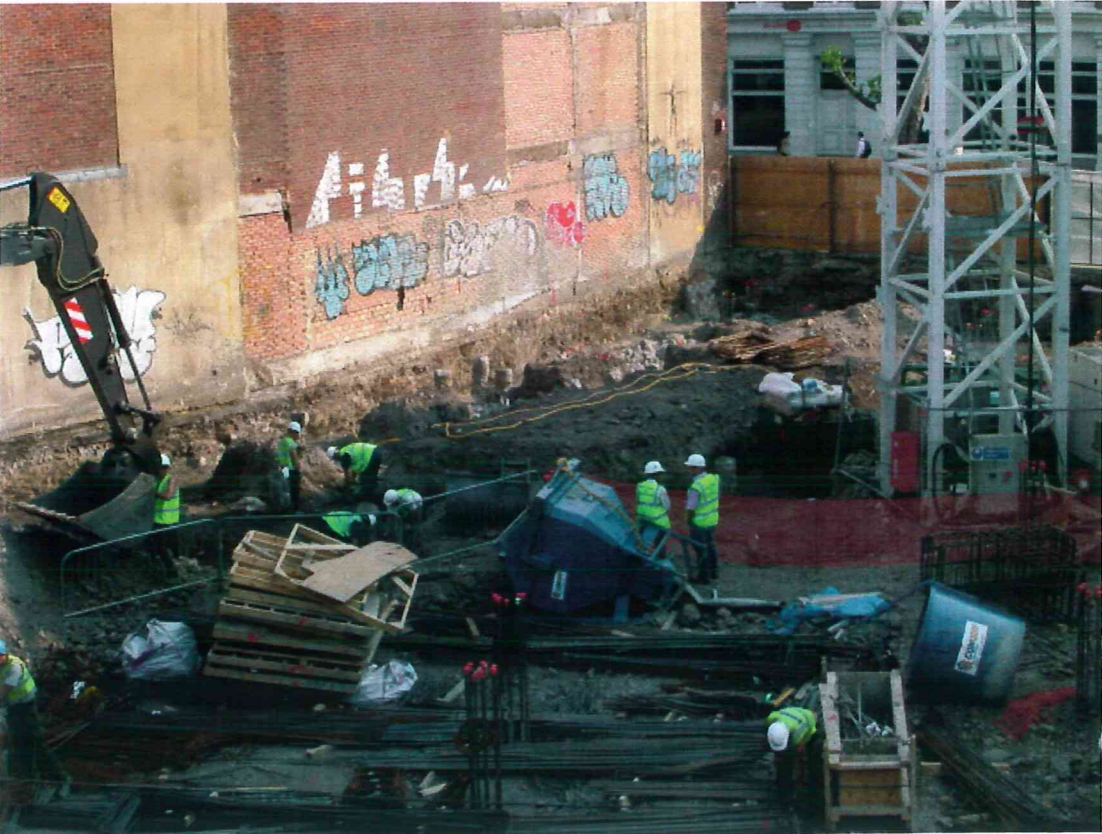


Plate 2: View of the northwest corner of the site.



Plate 3: Eighteenth century wall showing in the north facing section by Willow Street.



Plate 4: West facing section towards the centre of the site (c.1.1m depth).



Plate 5: South facing section at the northeast corner of the site (2m depth).



Plate 6: South facing section towards the northwest corner of the site (2.1m depth)

APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-9371

Project details

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Project name | 1-7 Willow Street |
| Short description of the project | A watching brief was undertaken at 1-7 Willow Street, EC2 that revealed a probable ditch of 16th or 17th century date and a fragment of 18th century wall foundation. |
| Project dates | Start: 07-07-2005 End: 18-07-2005 |
| Previous/future work | Yes / No |
| Project reference codes | WII 05 - Sitecode |
| Type of project | Recording project |
| Site status | Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area |
| Current Land use | Other 15 - Other |
| Monument type | LINEAR Post Medieval |
| Monument type | WALL FOUNDATION Post Medieval |

Project location

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Country | England |
| Site location | GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY 1-7 Willow Street, London, EC2 |
| Postcode | EC2 |
| Study area | 1.00 Hectares |
| National grid reference | TQ 3307 8245 Point |
| Height OD | Min: 12.69m Max: 12.69m |

Project creators

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Name of Organisation | RPS Planning / Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd |
| Project brief originator | Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service |
| Project design originator | Simon Blatherwick |
| Project manager | Tim Bradley |
| Project supervisor | Stuart Holden |
| Entered by | Stuart Holden (sholden@pre-construct.com) |
| Entered on | 22 July 2005 |