

# 7 LIMEHARBOUR ISLE OF DOGS LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

## Geoarchaeological Deposit Model Report

**NGR:** TQ 3993 7945

**Site Code:** LHB16

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016

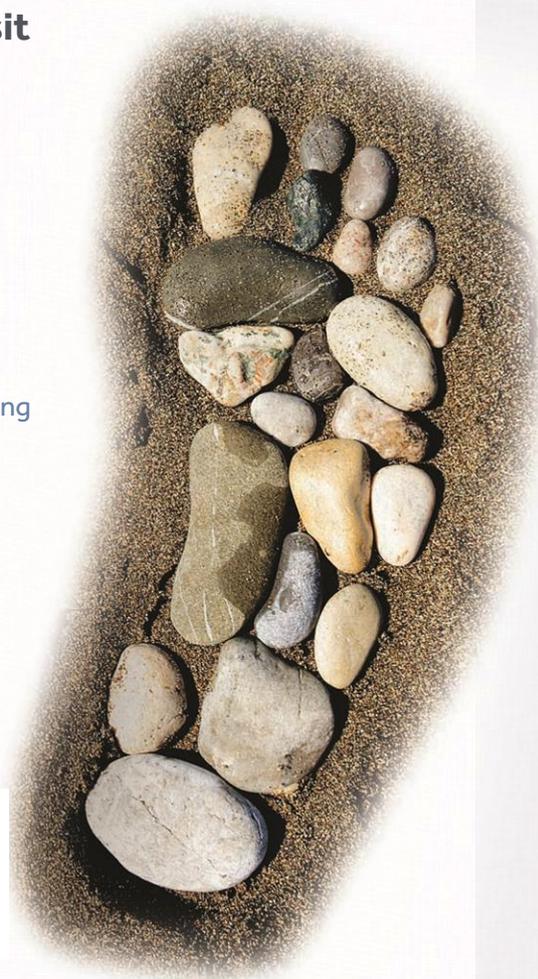
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University of Reading 2020



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the findings arising out of the geoarchaeological fieldwork and deposit modelling undertaken by Quaternary Scientific (University of Reading) in connection with the proposed development of land at 7 Limeharbour, Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (NGR centred on: TQ 3993 7945; site code: LHB16; Figures 1 & 2). Quaternary Scientific were commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd to undertake the geoarchaeological investigations. 7 Limeharbour is located on the floodplain of the estuarine Thames, ca. 500m west of the modern waterfront. The site lies towards the centre of the Isle of Dogs, bounded to the west, south and east by a large meander loop of the Thames, and is located to the east of the Millwall Inner Dock. The area of investigation (Figure 1) is located on the floodplain of the estuarine Thames, where the British Geological Society (BGS; [www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience)) maps the superficial geology as 'Alluvium- Clay, Silty, Peaty, Sandy' overlying Palaeogene Lambeth Group bedrock.

Recent and historic geotechnical boreholes put down both on and nearby to the site indicate a sequence of Pleistocene River gravels (the Late Devensian Shepperton Gravel) overlain by Alluvium including, in places Peat. The gravel surface is variable; towards the northern borders of the site and beyond, the existing data indicates it rests between 0 and -2m OD; the gravel is recorded at a similar height beneath 1-3 Turnberry Quay to the south (Krawiec, 2015; Figures 1 and 2). Between these two areas, on the southern half of the site, the gravel surface drops to as much as -4.6m OD. This is a pattern that extends westwards, indicating the presence of a west-east aligned trough (possible palaeochannel) traversing the site and nearby area.

Within the confines of the possible palaeochannel, the alluvial deposits overlying the River Terrace gravels, largely comprise a tripartite sequence of silty sand (the Lower Alluvium), Peat and silty clay (the Upper Alluvium) is generally recorded (e.g. Lime-BH3, Lime-BH4, TQ37NE3123, TQ37NE3294, TQ37NE3145, TQ37NE3146). Beyond the margins of the channel, the alluvial sequence is more variable, with Peat recorded less frequently (Lime BH2, TQ37NE3117, TQ37NE3122 and Turnberry-BH1 being the only cases), and thinner horizons of fine grained alluvial deposits often resting directly onto the River Terrace gravels.

Where recorded, the Peat varies between 0.3 and 1.2m thick, resting between -0.5 and -1.8m OD across the 7 Limeharbour site and local surroundings. Elsewhere on the Isle of Dogs, Peat was recorded at Preston Road, Poplar (Branch *et al.*, 2007) between -0.46 to -0.32m OD and accumulated between 4260-3910 and 3650-3360 cal BP (late Neolithic to Bronze Age). Undated Peat was also recorded beneath the Delta Junction site between 0.3 and -0.86m OD (Yendell, 2012). At the Atlas Wharf site (Lakin, 1998) Peat formation occurred during the early/middle Neolithic (ca. 5750 cal BP) through to the Bronze Age. Significantly, a Bronze Age structure (possible platform) was recorded at this site, the earliest construction date radiocarbon dated to 3840-3550 cal BP (Lakin, 1998).

The 7 Limeharbour site thus offers an opportunity to contribute to our understanding of landscape evolution in this part of the Lower Thames Valley. Five significant research aims were thus proposed within the geoarchaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Batchelor, 2015a) for the site as follows:

1. To clarify the nature of the sub-surface stratigraphy across the site, in particular to elucidate size and orientation of possible palaeochannel traversing the site;
2. To clarify the nature, depth, extent and date of any alluvium and peat deposits
3. To investigate whether the sequences contain any artefact or ecofact evidence for prehistoric or historic human activity
4. To investigate whether the sequences contain any evidence for natural and/or anthropogenic changes to the landscape (wetland and dryland)
5. To integrate the new geoarchaeological record with other recent work in the local area for publication in an academic journal (if appropriate)

The content of this report achieves the first two of these aims and considers the potential of addressing aims 3 to 5 through laboratory-based assessment and analysis. The following objectives were carried out in order to address aims 1 & 2:

1. To retrieve three geoarchaeological borehole sequences on a north - south transect across the site (Figure 2)
2. To utilise the stratigraphic data from the new and existing records to produce a deposit model of the major depositional units across the site.



**Figure 1: Location of (1) Limeharbour, Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and nearby sites discussed in the text: (2) 1-3 Turnberry Quay (Krawiec, 2015); (3) Atlas Wharf (Lakin, 1998); (4) Heron Quays (Batchelor and Young, 2014); (5) Delta Junction (Yendell, 2012). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right [2016].**

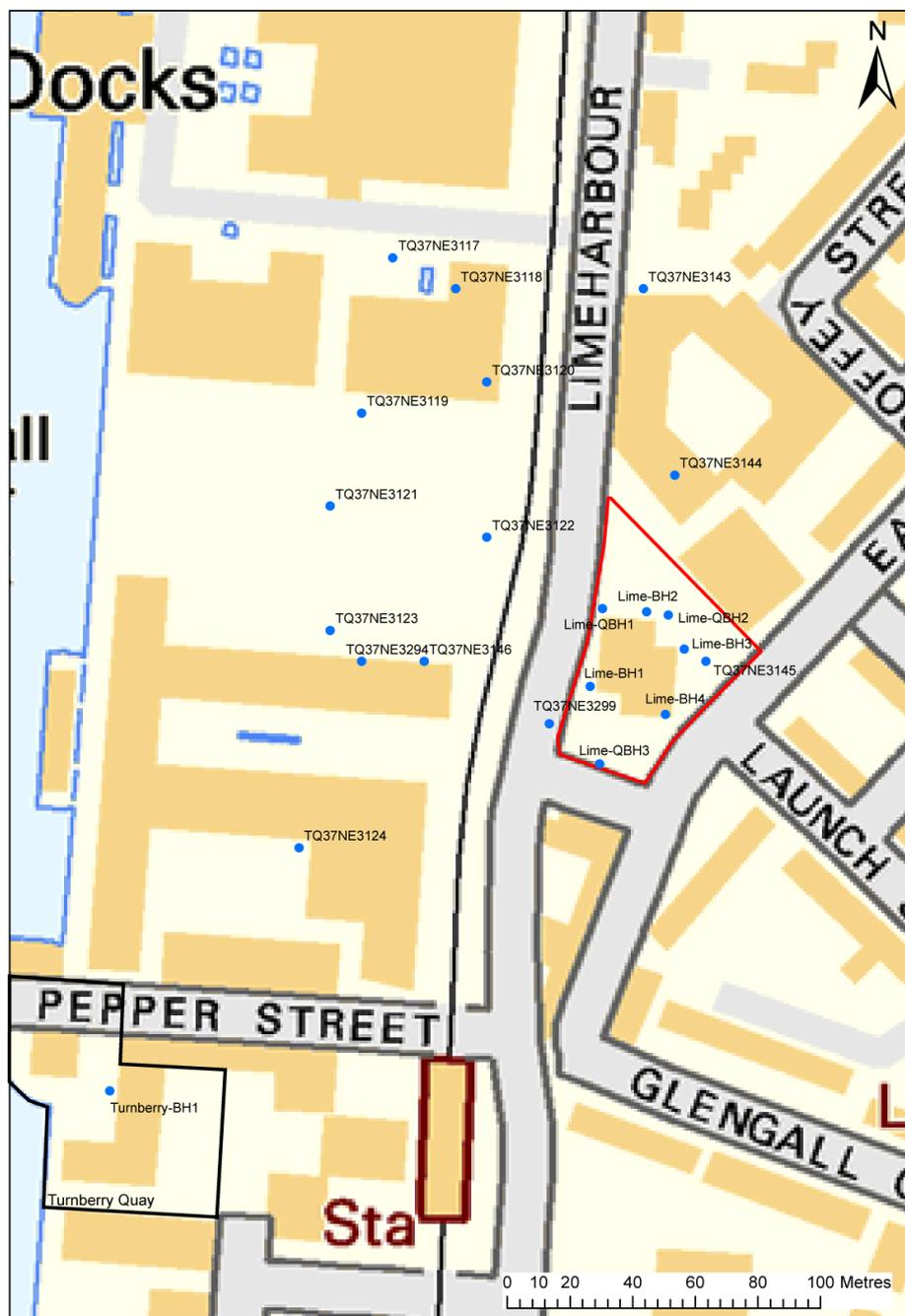


Figure 2: Location of the geoarchaeological boreholes, and historic geotechnical records

## 2. METHODS

### Field investigations and lithostratigraphic descriptions

Two geoarchaeological boreholes (boreholes Lime-QBH2 and QBH3) were put down at the site in December 2015 (Figure 2) by Quaternary Scientific. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a sequence in the location of Lime-QBH1 despite three attempts being made. The borehole core samples were recovered using an Eijkelpamp window sampler and gouge set using an Atlas Copco TT 2-stroke percussion engine. This coring technique is a suitable method for the recovery of continuous, undisturbed core samples and provides sub-samples suitable for not only sedimentary and microfossil assessment and analysis, but also macrofossil analysis. The new and historic borehole locations were obtained with reference to site maps and recent topographic surveys (Table 1).

The lithostratigraphy of the retained core samples was described in the laboratory using standard procedures for recording unconsolidated sediment and organic sediments, noting the physical properties (colour), composition (gravel, sand, clay, silt and organic matter) and inclusions (e.g. artefacts) (Tröels-Smith, 1955). The procedure involved: (1) cleaning the sample using a scalpel; (2) recording the physical properties, most notably colour using a Munsell Soil Colour Chart; (3) recording the composition; gravel (Grana glareosa; Gg), fine sand (Grana arenosa; Ga), silt (Argilla granosa; Ag) and clay (Argilla steatoides); (4) recording the degree of peat humification and (5) recording the unit boundaries e.g. sharp or diffuse. The results are displayed in Figures 3 (north-south transect) and 4 (west-east transect) and in Tables 2 and 3.

### Deposit modelling

The deposit model was based on a review of 22 borehole records, incorporating the two new geoarchaeological boreholes, and historical records from within or around the site (Figure 2; Table 1). Sedimentary units from the boreholes were classified into three groupings: (1) Gravel, (2) Lower Alluvium; (3) Peat; (4) Upper Alluvium and (5) Made Ground. The classified data for groups 1-5 were then input into a database with the RockWorks 16 geological utilities software. Models of surface height (using a nearest neighbour routine) were generated for the Gravel, Lower Alluvium, Peat and Upper Alluvium (Figures 5, 6, 7 & 9). Thickness of the Peat, Total Alluvium and Made Ground (Figures 8, 10 and 11) was also modelled (also using a nearest neighbour routine). Because the boreholes are not uniformly distributed over the area of investigation, the reliability of the models generated using RockWorks is variable. In general, reliability improves from outlying areas where the models are largely supported by scattered archival records towards the core area of commissioned boreholes. Because of the 'smoothing' effect of the modelling procedure, the modelled levels of stratigraphic contacts may differ slightly from the levels recorded in borehole logs and section drawings.

As a consequence of this the modelling procedure has been manually adjusted so that only those areas for which sufficient stratigraphic data is present will be modelled. In order to achieve this, a maximum distance cut-off filter equivalent to a 50m radius around each record is applied to all deposit models. In addition, it is important to recognise that multiple sets of boreholes are

represented, put down at different times and recorded using different descriptive terms and subject to differing technical constraints in terms of recorded detail including the exact levels of the stratigraphic boundaries. Of the records used in the deposit model, the cores from the boreholes monitored and recorded by Quaternary Scientific (Lime-QBH2 and QBH3) represent the most detailed record of the sediment sequences.

**Table 1: Borehole attributes for those records used in the deposit model, 7 Limeharbour, Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Borehole number	Easting	Northing	Height (m OD)	Top of Upper Alluvium	Top of Peat	Top of Lower Alluvium	Top of Sand	Top of Gravel	Notes
Lime-QBH1	537977	179467	5.1						Obstructions in the Made Ground prevented the borehole reaching below 2m from surface
Lime-QBH2	537998	179465	5	3.9	5.36	5.84		6.92	UA organic rich between 5.00 and 5.36
Lime-QBH3	537976	179417	2.3	1.6	2.8	3.36		4.9	
Lime-BH1	537973	179442	3.73	4.2				8	
Lime-BH2	537991	179466	5.01	5.5	5.8			6.2	
Lime-BH3	538003	179454	5.02	5.6	6.1	7.5		7.9	
Lime-BH4	537997	179433	3.87	3.8	5	5.6		8	
TQ37NE3143	537990	179570	4.5	4.3				5.8	clay with peat between 4.7 and 5.8
TQ37NE3144	538000	179510	4.48	3.2				6.3	alluvium described as silty sand
TQ37NE3145	538010	179450	4.94	4.5	5.5	6.7		9.6	clay with peat 6.7 to 7.4
TQ37NE3299	537960	179430	5.23	4.5	5.9	6.6		8.2	traces of peat in LA
TQ37NE3122	537940	179490	4.26	1.8		3.2		5	
TQ37NE3120	537940	179540	4.32	3.1				4.3	clay with peat between 3.5 and 4.2
TQ37NE3118	537930	179570	4.7	3.3		5.1		6.6	
TQ37NE3117	537910	179580	5.23	1.8	5.5	6		6.1	traces of peat in UA & LA
TQ37NE3119	537900	179530	5.18	2.1				6.2	
TQ37NE3121	537890	179500	5.3	1.5				4.9	
TQ37NE3123	537890	179460	5.3	1.2	5.9	6.9	8.1	9.5	
TQ37NE3294	537900	179450	5.01	1.6	6.5	6.8		9.7	traces of peat in UA & LA
TQ37NE3146	537920	179450	5.01	1.6	6.5	6.8		9.7	traces of peat in UA & LA
TQ37NE3124	537880	179390	5.18	1.9	5.8	6.2		7.8	
Turnberry-BH1	537819	179313	5.61	4	6.57	7		8	

### 3. RESULTS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE LITHOSTRATIGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS AND DEPOSIT MODELLING

The geoarchaeological investigations (Tables 2 and 3) have permitted a programme of deposit modelling of the surface elevation and thickness of each major stratigraphic unit (Figures 3 to 11).

The basal unit at the site is a horizon of sand and gravel, probably equivalent to the Shepperton Gravel that underlies the Holocene alluvium of the Thames (Gibbard, 1985), deposited during the Late Devensian (15,000 to 10,000 years before present) within a high energy braided river environment (Figures 3 to 5). The surface of the Gravel is generally fairly even across the site and surrounding area, resting between 0 and -2m OD. However, on the southern half of the 7 Limeharbour site, the gravel surface drops to as low as -4.6m OD (e.g. Lime-BH1 and Lime-BH4). This is a pattern that extends westwards, indicating the presence of a west-east aligned trough (possible palaeochannel) traversing the site and nearby area. This depth was not reached in the two new geoarchaeological boreholes (Lime-QBH2 and Lime-QBH3), put down to the north and south of Lime-BH1 and Lime-BH4, which reached -1.92 and -2.6m OD respectively. This new information therefore provides some insight into the dimensions of the potential former channel, indicating that it was a maximum of 60m wide and ca. 2.5m deep.

Confusing this interpretation is the mention of a gravel surface on the 3 Limeharbour site that rests at ca. -6.5m OD (Hawkins, 2002; Mayo, 2015). However, it is likely that this depth was miscalculated; in the text of both reports for example, BH1 is described as containing 4.3m of Made Ground with a thickness of 3.1m of alluvium resting on gravel (i.e. a 7.4m sequence). On the 7 Limeharbour site, the surface OD height is in the region of +5m OD; assuming this is consistent with the surface height across 3 Limeharbour, it would suggest an OD height for the gravel surface of -2.4m OD; approximately the same as that recorded in historical borehole records TQ37NE3143 and TQ37NE3144. Since it is not possible to obtain the original logs and OD heights, the 3 Limeharbour data has therefore been discounted [from the deposit models](#).

Within the confines of the possible palaeochannel, the alluvial deposits overlying the River Terrace gravels, a tripartite sequence of silty sand (the Lower Alluvium), Peat and silty clay (the Upper Alluvium) is generally recorded (e.g. Lime-BH3, Lime-BH4, TQ37NE3123, TQ37NE3294, TQ37NE3145, TQ37NE3146). This is suggestive of the progressive infilling of the palaeochannel, with deposits similar to that recorded across other parts of the Lower Thames Valley. However, in one instance (Lime-BH1), the alluvial sequence consists solely of silty clay. Similar occurrences are recorded within former palaeochannels such as the Bankside Channel and River Lea, where the Peat and Lower Alluvium has been scoured and infilled by the Upper Alluvium as a result of subsequent channel activity. Beyond the margins of the channel, the alluvial sequence is more variable, with Peat recorded less frequently (Lime BH2, TQ37NE3117, TQ37NE3122 and Turnberry-BH1 being the only cases), and thinner horizons of fine grained alluvial deposits often resting directly onto the River Terrace gravels.

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Where recorded, the Peat varies between 0.3 and 1.2m thick, resting between -0.5 and -1.8m OD across the 7 Limeharbour site and local surroundings. Within new geoarchaeological boreholes Lime-QBH2 and Lime-QBH3, the Peat is approximately 50cm thick. Elsewhere on the Isle of Dogs, Peat was recorded at Preston Road, Poplar (Branch *et al.*, 2007) between -0.46 to -0.32m OD and accumulated between 4260-3910 and 3650-3360 cal BP (late Neolithic to Bronze Age). Undated Peat was also recorded beneath the Delta Junction site between 0.3 and -0.86m OD (Yendell, 2012). At the Atlas Wharf site (Lakin, 1998) Peat formation occurred during the early/middle Neolithic (*ca.* 5750 cal BP) through to the Bronze Age. Significantly, a Bronze Age structure (possible platform) was recorded at this site, the earliest construction date radiocarbon dated to 3840-3550 cal BP (Lakin, 1998).

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The alluvial sequence is capped by up to 5m of Made Ground (Figure 11).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aims of the geoarchaeological investigations at the 7 Limeharbour site were: (1) to clarify the nature of the sub-surface stratigraphy across the site, in particular to elucidate the size and orientation of a possible palaeochannel traversing the site; (2) to clarify the nature, depth, extent and date of any alluvium and peat deposits, and (3) to evaluate the potential for reconstructing the environmental history of the site and its environs (aims 3 to 5 of the project). In order to achieve these aims, a programme of geoarchaeological fieldwork and deposit modelling was carried out, incorporating previous geotechnical borehole descriptions and records from new geoarchaeological boreholes.

The results have confirmed the presence of a west-east deep depression (potential channel) traversing the southern part of the site. The channel is cut into the Shepperton Gravel surface, measuring up to 60m in width and *ca.* 2.5 in depth. A tripartite sequence of Lower Alluvium, Peat and Upper Alluvium infills the potential palaeochannel, and surrounding higher gravel surface. The Peat varies between 0.3 and 1.2m in thickness, resting between -0.5 and -1.8m OD across the 7 Limeharbour site and local surroundings. Within new geoarchaeological boreholes Lime-QBH2 and Lime-QBH3, the Peat is approximately 50cm thick. The Alluvial deposits are capped by up to 5m of Made Ground.

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The sequences represented in Lime-QBH2 and Lime-QBH3 have the potential to provide insights into the environmental history of the site and its environs, thus contributing towards aims 3 to 5 of the project. It is therefore recommended that an environmental archaeological assessment of one of these sequences is carried out. This assessment should consist of: (1) range-finder radiocarbon dating to ascertain the age of Peat accumulation and cessation; (2) organic matter determinations to aid identification of the sedimentary units; (3) assessment of the palaeobotanical remains (pollen, waterlogged wood and seeds) to provide a provisional reconstruction of the vegetation history; (4) assessment of the diatoms to provide an indication of the palaeohydrology (e.g. marine, brackish or freshwater), and (5) assessment of the zooarchaeological remains (insects and Mollusca) to provide information on the general environmental conditions, climatic change and

hydrology of the site. The assessment will also highlight any indications of nearby human activity, and provide recommendations for further analysis (if necessary). It is further highlighted that the findings from the investigation should be integrated with any ongoing/further work carried out on the 1-3 Turnberry Quay site (see Krawiec, 2015).

## 5. REFERENCES

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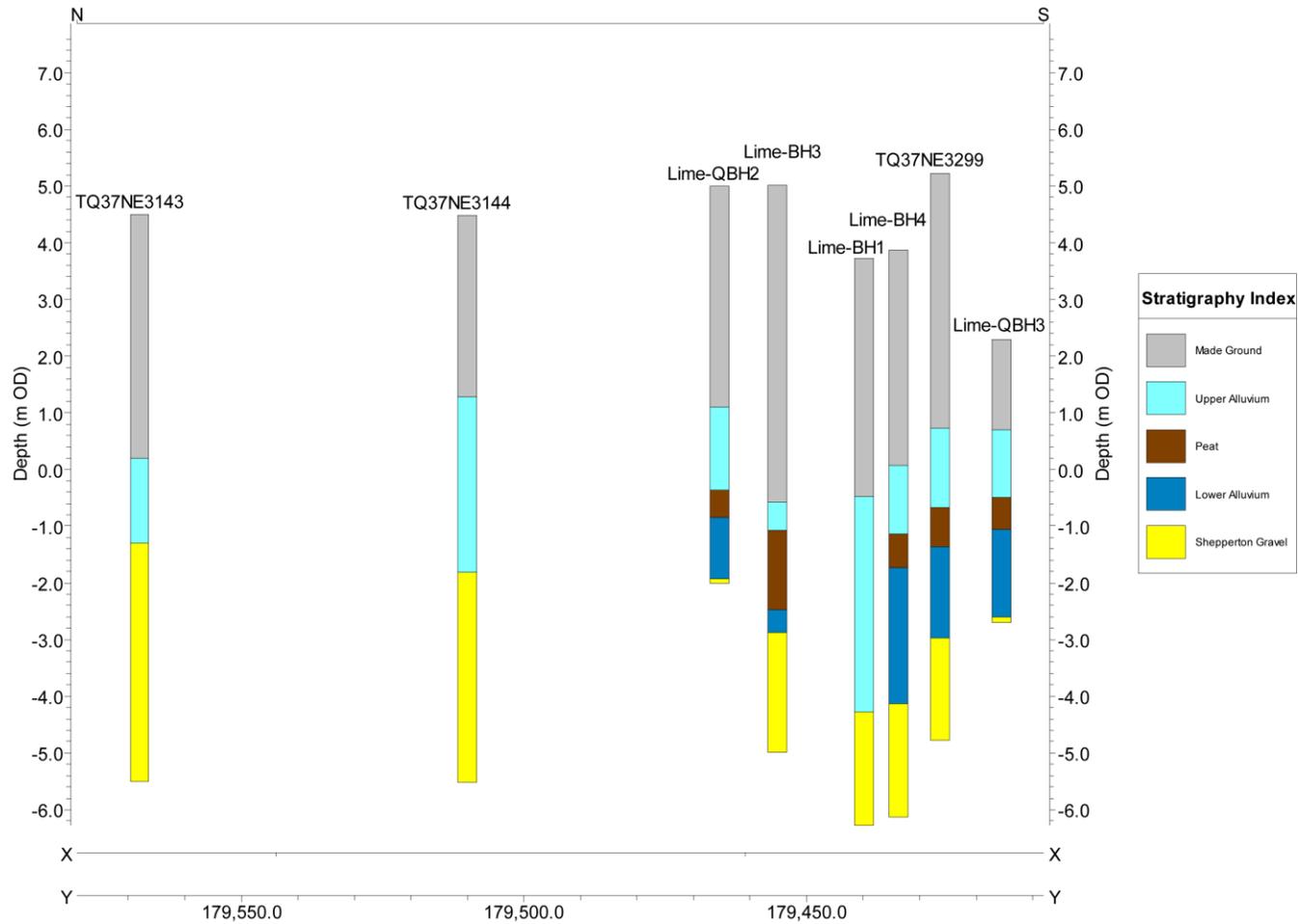


Figure 3: North-South transect of selected boreholes across 7 Limeharbour, Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

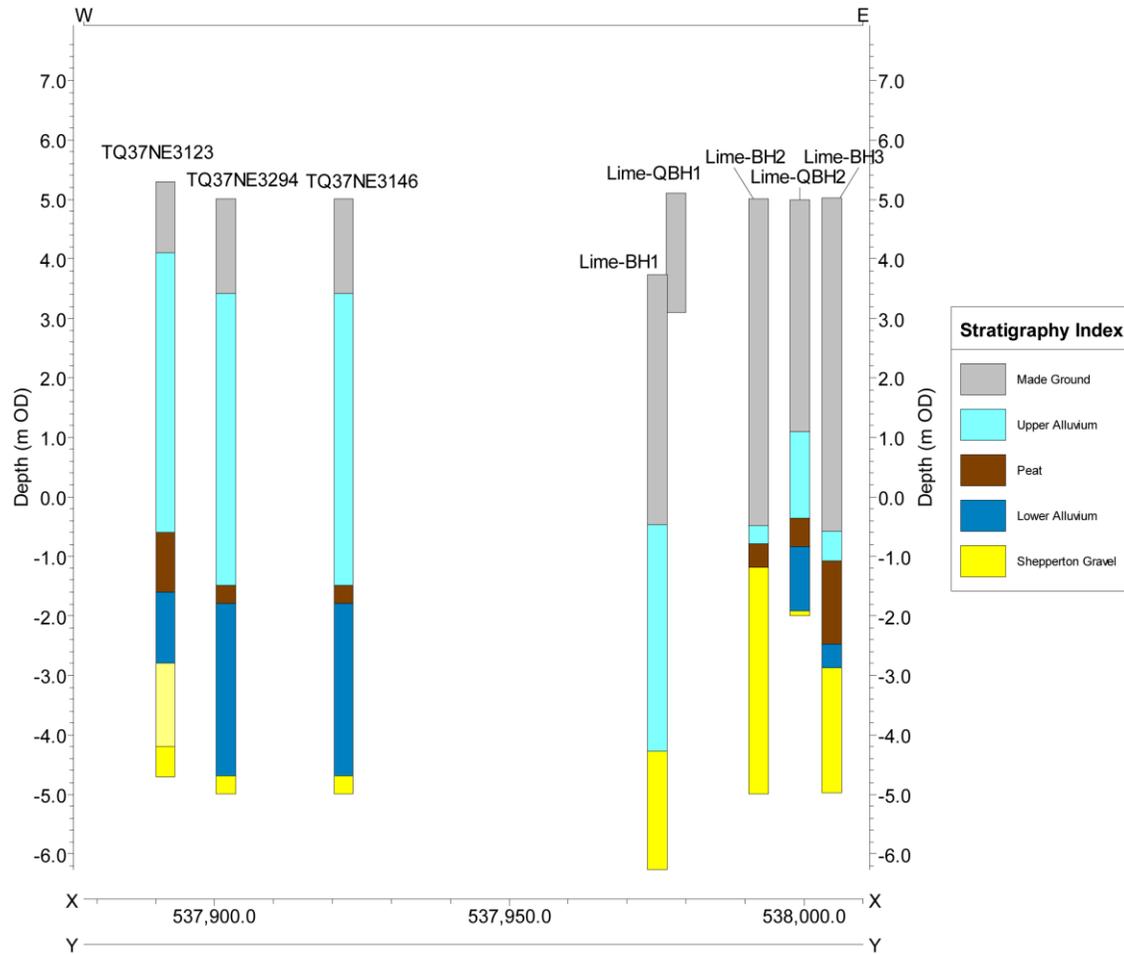


Figure 4: West-East transect of selected boreholes across 7 Limeharbour, Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

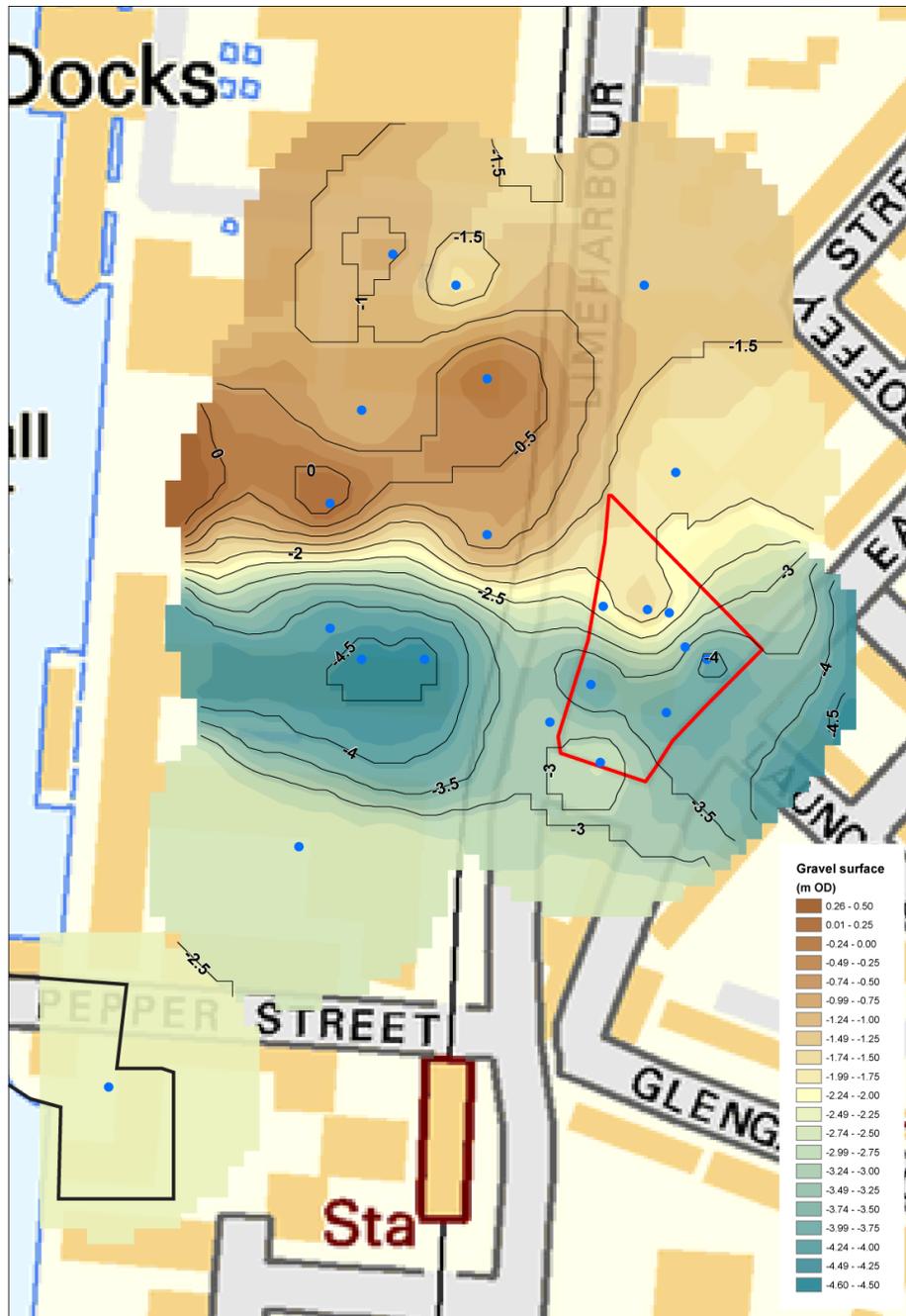


Figure 5: Top of the Shepperton Gravel (m OD) (site outline in red)

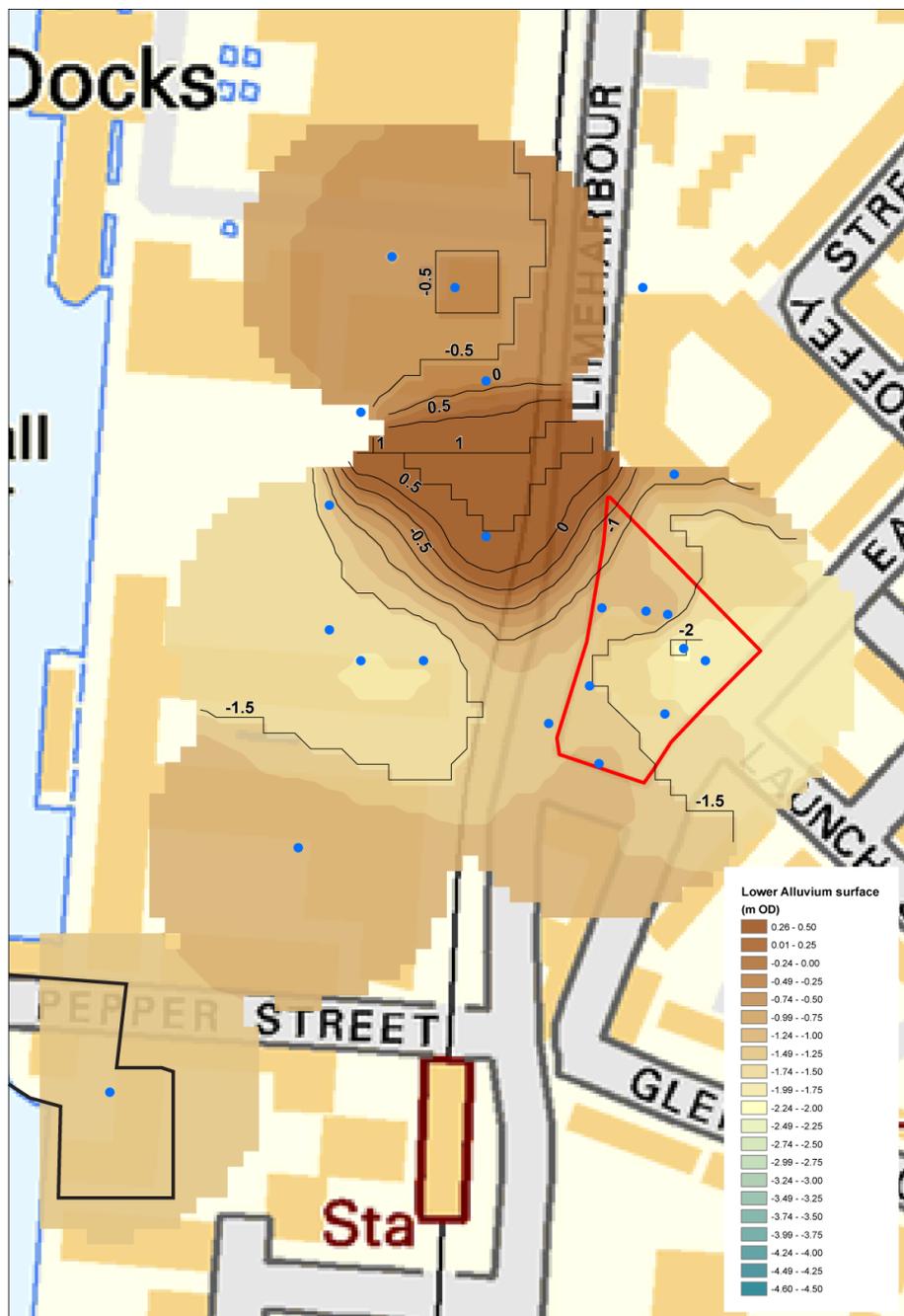


Figure 6: Top of the Lower Alluvium (m OD) (site outline in red)

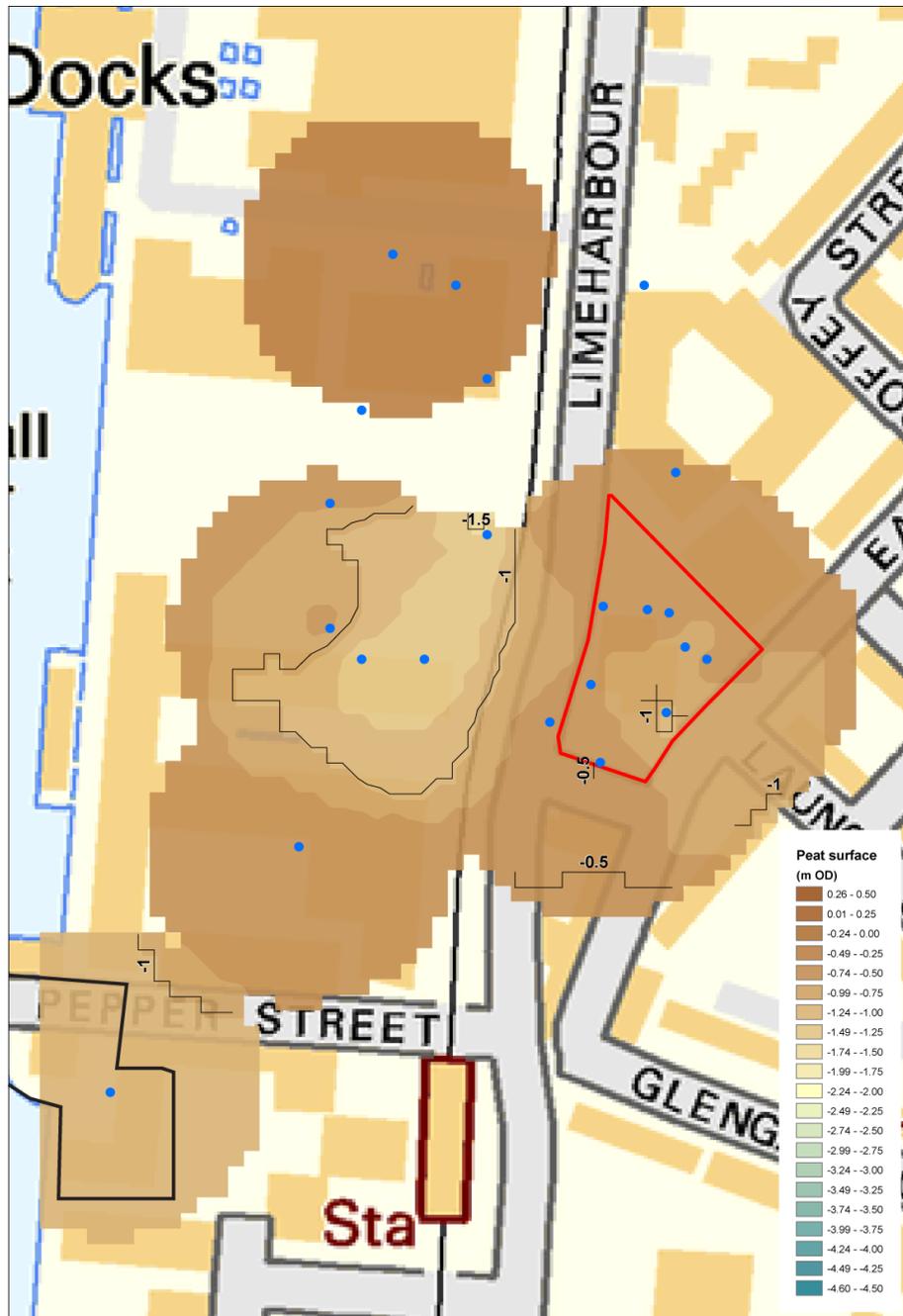


Figure 7: Top of Peat (m OD) (site outline in red)

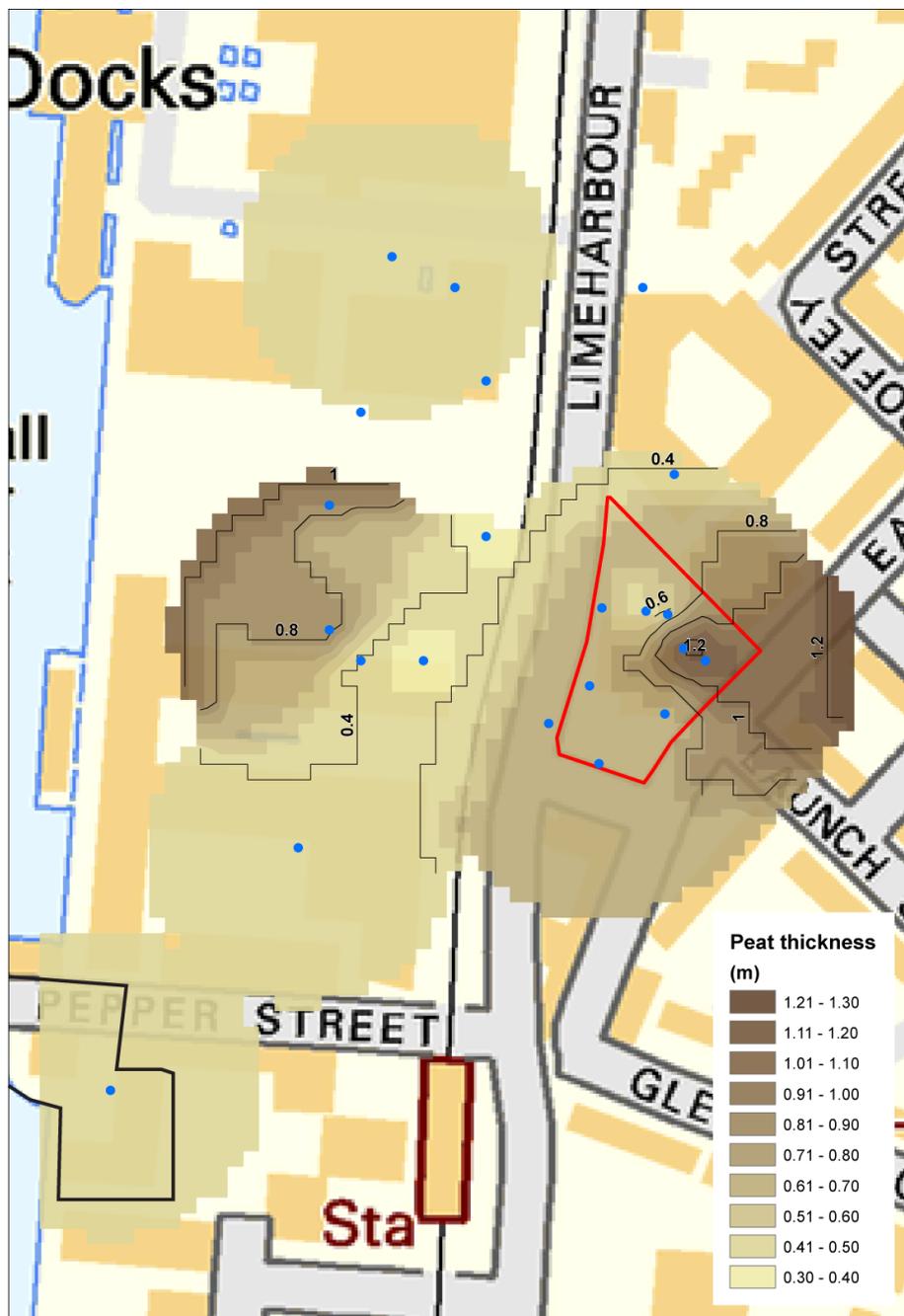


Figure 8: Thickness of Peat (m) (site outline in red)

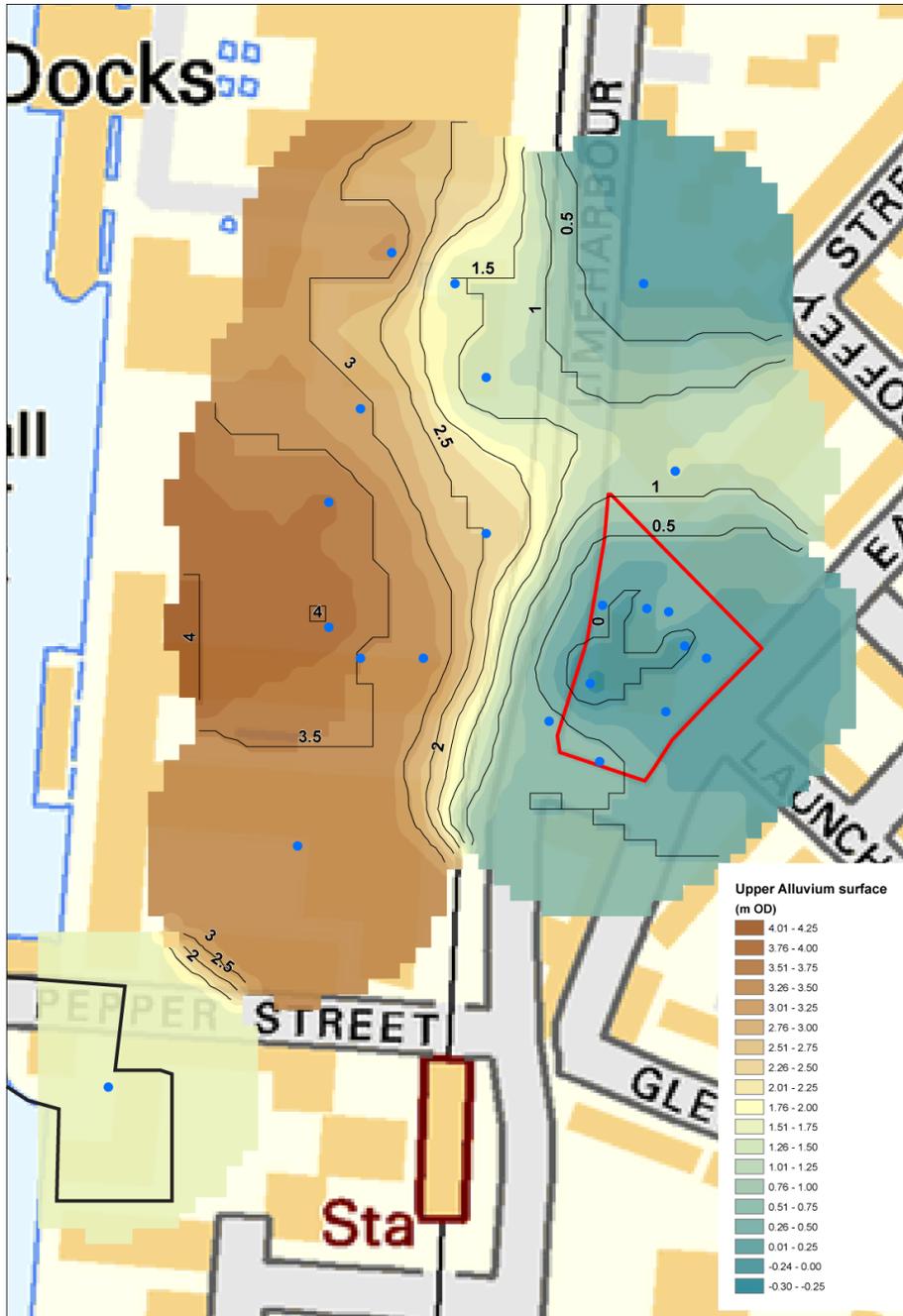


Figure 9: Top of the Upper Alluvium (m OD) (site outline in red)

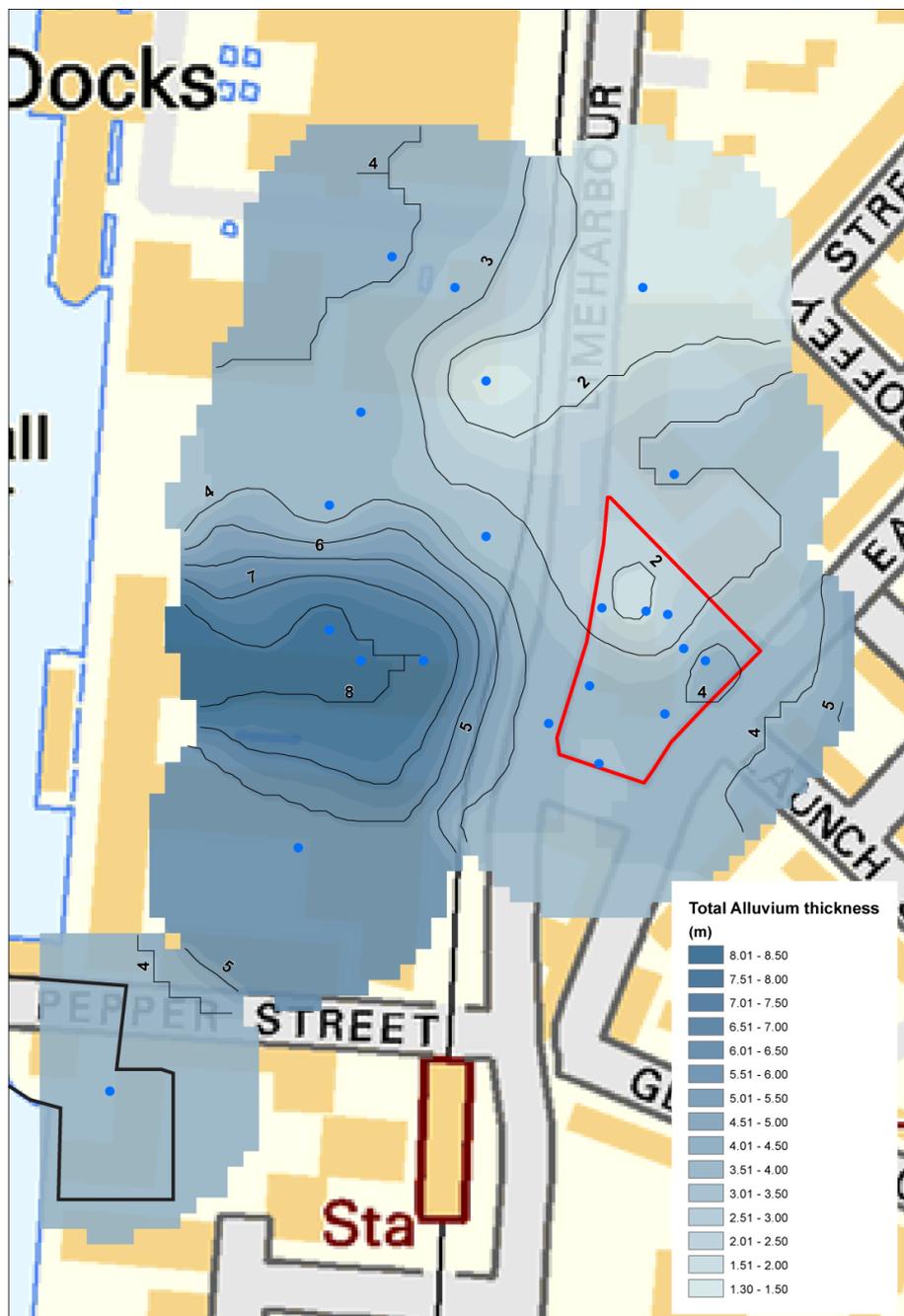


Figure 10: Thickness of Total Alluvium (m) (site outline in red)

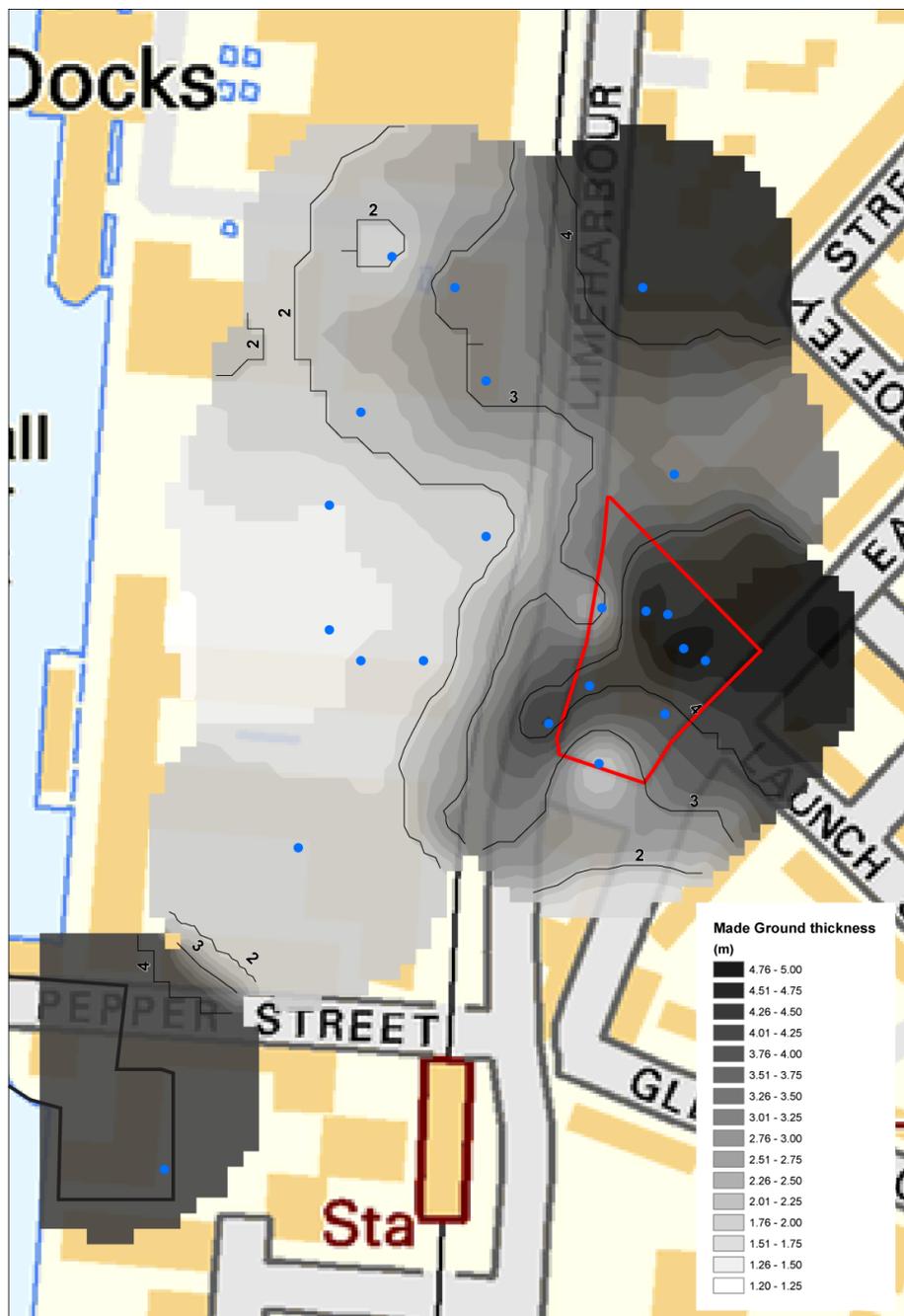


Figure 11: Thickness of Made Ground (m) (site outline in red)

**Table 2: Lithostratigraphic description of borehole Lime-QBH2, 7 Limeharbour, Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Depth (m OD)	Depth (m bgs)	Description
5.00 to 1.10	0 to 3.90	Made Ground
1.10 to 0.25	3.90 to 4.75	10YR 5/2; As3, Ag1; greyish brown silty clay; diffuse contact into:
0.25 to 0	4.75 to 5.00	10YR 5/2; As3, Ag1, DI+; greyish brown silty clay with traces of detrital wood; sharp contact into:
0 to -0.05	5.00 to 5.05	DI4; Detrital wood
-0.05 to -0.36	5.05 to 5.36	10YR 3/1; Ag2, Sh1, Dh1, DI+; very dark grey organic-rich silt with detrital plant and wood remains; sharp contact into:
-0.36 to -0.84	5.36 to 5.84	2.5YR 2.5/1; Sh3, Th <sup>3</sup> 1, Tl+; Humo 3; reddish black herbaceous and unidentifiable peat with traces of wood peat; diffuse contact into:
-0.84 to -1.33	5.84 to 6.33	7.5YR 4/1; Ag2, As2, DI+; dark grey silty clay with traces of detrital wood
-1.33 to -1.91	6.33 to 6.91	2.5YR 4/2; Ga3, Ag1; dark reddish brown silty sand with horizontal bedding with finer/coarser beds; diffuse contact into:
-1.91 to -2.00	6.91 to 7.00	2.5YR 4/2; Ga3, Gg1; dark reddish brown sandy gravel, with flint clasts up to 60mm.

**Table 3: Lithostratigraphic description of borehole Lime-QBH3, 7 Limeharbour, Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Depth (m OD)	Depth (m bgs)	Description
2.30 to 0.70	0 to 1.60	Made Ground
0.70 to 0.30	1.60 to 2.00	10YR 4/2; As3, Ag1; stiff greyish brown silty clay with frequent iron staining
0.30 to -0.50	2.00 to 2.80	10YR 4/3; As3, Ag1; brown silty clay; sharp contact into:
-0.50 to -0.70	2.80 to 3.00	10YR 2/1; Sh3, As1; Humo 4; black well-humified unidentifiable peat with clay and frequent root material. The unit has the appearance of a buried soil, but may just be very dry peat; diffuse contact into:
-0.70 to -1.06	3.00 to 3.36	2.5YR 2.5/1; Sh3, Tl13; Humo 2/3; reddish black well-humified wood and unidentifiable peat; sharp contact into:
-1.06 to -1.70	3.36 to 4.00	5Y 4/1; Ag3, As1, DI1; dark grey clayey silt with detrital wood; diffuse contact into:
-1.70 to -2.49	4.00 to 4.79	5Y 5/1; Ag3, Ga1 / Ga2, Ag2; grey silty sand with inclusions of detrital wood; diffuse contact into:
-2.49 to -2.60	4.79 to 4.90	5Y 5/1; Ga3, Ag1, DI+; grey silty sand with detrital wood; horizontal beds of more/less sandy material.
-2.60 to -2.70	4.90 to 5.00	No recovery – potential gravel?

## 6. APPENDIX 1: OASIS FORM

### Project details

Project name	7 Limeharbour
Short description of the project	A geoarchaeological borehole and deposit modelling were carried out on the site. The results reveal a west-east aligned trough (possible palaeochannel) traversing the site, measuring <60m wide and ca. 2.5m deep. A sequence of alluvial and peat deposits infills the channel, capped by made ground. Further work was recommended to elucidate the age and nature of the peat deposits.
Project dates	Start: 01-12-2015 End: 28-01-2016
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	LHB16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Environmental assessment
Monument type	PALAEOCHANNEL Uncertain
Monument type	PEAT Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Survey techniques	Landscape

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS TOWER HAMLETS 7 Limeharbour
Postcode	E14
Study area	5000 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3993 7945 51.49614589447 0.016030552469 51 29 46 N 000 00 57 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Quaternary Scientific (QUEST)
Project brief originator	Consultant
Project design originator	Dr C.R. Batchelor
Project director/manager	C.R. Batchelor
Project supervisor	C.R. Batchelor
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Media available	"Report"

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### Project bibliography 1

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