

**12 KING STAIRS CLOSE  
ROTHERHITHE  
LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**PLANNING APPLICATION NO.: 05-AP-2602**

**TQ 3495 7977**

**APRIL 2007**

**National Grid Reference:** TQ 3495 7977

**Site Code:** KNC 07

**On behalf of:** John and Donna Spedding  
12 King Stairs Close  
Rotherhithe  
London Borough of Southwark  
SE16 4JF

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**Timing:** Evaluation Fieldwork: 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007  
Post-excavation and report production: April 2007

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## 1 ABSTRACT

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2007 at 12 King Stairs Close, London Borough of Southwark, on behalf of John and Donna Spedding. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of proposed redevelopment on any surviving archaeological remains.*

*The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of a single trench in land currently occupied by the garden and car parking area of 12 King Stairs Close. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.80m below ground level. The earliest deposits identified were the result of land reclamation activity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

*A wall and associated paved floor overlying the reclamation deposits are likely to represent the remnants of the previous land use; that of a 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse, possibly Yarley's Granary or Sufferance Wharf. Overlying this structure were demolition deposits and a substantial 20<sup>th</sup> century concrete slab.*

*A borehole excavated in close proximity to the trench revealed that alluvial clay lies approximately 4.50m below ground level, the natural gravels being approximately 5.10m below ground surface. It is therefore possible that archaeological deposits are preserved either cutting the alluvium or below it.*

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### **Site Location** (Figures 1 & 2)

- 2.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 3495 7977, and is bounded by King Stairs Park to the south and west, the Thames Path and foreshore to the north, and by 12 King Stairs Close to the east.
- 2.2 The proposed development of the site involves the erection of a five storey dwelling house with an off-street parking space at the end of the existing terrace.

### **Planning Background**

- 2.3 The local planning authority is Southwark Council. Archaeology advice to the council is provided by the Archaeological Officer for Southwark, Chris Constable.
- 2.4 In accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16) issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990 (DoE, 1990), an archaeological evaluation was to be carried out as a condition of the planning permission (Application No.: 05-AP-2602). The methodology was presented in a Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2007). This was submitted for approval to

the Archaeology Officer, Chris Constable, and the fieldwork was subsequently undertaken on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

- 2.5 This document reports on the findings of the evaluation fieldwork.

### **Geology and Topography**

- 2.6 The site is located on the Lower Floodplain Terrace, or Shepperton Gravel. This forms the current bank of the Thames. This is overlain by a complex sequence of alluvial deposits including sand and gravel, which formed islands with peat forming in the channels between three such islands in the vicinity: Horsleydown Eyot, Rotherhithe Eyot and Bermondsey Eyot.
- 2.7 A borehole excavated on 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> March 2007 indicates that the alluvial sequence starts approximately 4.50m below ground surface with green clay overlying green gravel at a maximum height of 5.10m below ground level.

## **3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.**

- 3.1 The information summarised below is largely derived from the Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) of the site (JMHS 2007). For a more complete account of the archaeological background this document should be referred to.

### **PREHISTORIC**

- 3.2 Scattered flint and stone artefacts typify the earliest prehistoric activity recovered near the site, including two stone axes and a flint knife. No direct occupation appears to have occurred until the Bronze Age, when cultivation of the gravel islands began. A ditch and a fence line at Platform Wharf, just 150m to the southwest, are evidence of habitation during the Bronze and Iron Ages. These features are dated by the pottery within; flint artefacts have also been recorded from the vicinity.

### **ROMAN**

- 3.3 There was Roman occupation upon Bermondsey Eyot, to the south and southwest of the site. More locally, abraded pottery has been recovered from Platform Wharf on Rotherhithe Eyot, and a ditch at Rupack Street, 250m to the south contained a coin of Roman date. Roman settlement in Southwark is concentrated around Borough High Street and the waterfront at London Bridge, some 2km to the west.

### **SAXON**

- 3.4 Southwark does not appear to have been densely settled until the end of the Saxon period, and Rotherhithe lies to the east of the main settlement. The name 'Rotherhithe' derives from two Saxon words, *redhra* a mariner, and *hyth*, a haven. This indicates a focus towards the river rather than inland. The only

archaeological evidence in the area is from the excavations at Platform Wharf, which revealed Saxon pottery of the 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century.

### **MEDIEVAL**

- 3.5 Rotherhithe was located within the royal manor of Bermondsey until 1089, when it was created as a separate manor. The centre of medieval Rotherhithe is thought likely to have been focused around a church which stood where the current 18<sup>th</sup> century church of St. Mary lies. This is around 230m northeast of the site.
- 3.6 150m southwest of the site are the remains of Edward III's manor house, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There appears to have been a number of previous buildings before this was built, and could indicate a previous manorial centre. The moated manor house was built in 1353, and comprised a series of stone buildings around a central courtyard, a moat and an earthen bank. The site was bequeathed to the Cistercians in 1377, and by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to Bermondsey Priory.
- 3.7 The site lies close to the riverfront, so the medieval waterfront therefore has more immediate relevance to the site than the manor house or Rotherhithe village. The Thames had severely flooded in the early medieval period, including one flood that destroyed London Bridge in 1097. The response was to build strong embankments between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, until the riverbank was stabilised. At National Wharf, 200m to the west, a late medieval or Tudor jetty has been identified, dated by a pilgrim badge and a silver penny from the reign of Edward IV.

### **POST-MEDIEVAL**

- 3.8 Rotherhithe witnessed industrial development during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with the construction of docks. The first was the Howland Wet Dock, and a further ten had been built by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Other industries were also established: a delftware pottery factory was established on the site of Edward III's manor house by 1641 and abandoned by 1662. Two mills were also present within 200m of the site.
- 3.9 The post medieval period also featured waterside shipyards, more revetments and reclamation of land from the river. This is shown by a shipyard, two jetties and mooring points 150m downriver.
- 3.10 The cartographic evidence provides much evidence regarding the development of the site. The map by John Roque of 1746 shows buildings fronting directly onto the river, and one block has a partition where King Stairs Close ends today. Horwood's Map of 1792-99 shows the buildings to be no longer present, whereas a map by Blick (1848) shows structures again present, suggesting a period of demolition and redevelopment at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This may be a property boundary that has continued in use since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- 3.11 The first edition of the Ordnance Survey Map shows two warehouses on the site, with a possible alley between. Sufferance Wharf is on the east of the site and Yardley's Granary is to the west. These are just two of several industrial buildings along the waterfront, a sequence which includes Albion Mill and Garden's Wharf to the east and an engineers to the west. It was thought likely that remains of the foundations of Yardley's Granary or Sufferance Wharf lie within the site. These buildings were both five-storey brick buildings used for storing grain, and are likely to have had significant foundations.
- 3.12 On the 1887 Goad Insurance Plan Sufferance Wharf has been renamed as Matthews' Sufferance Wharf, and is known as Matthews Wharf thereafter.
- 3.13 The first Ordnance Survey map after the Second World War (1949) shows that Yardley's Granary is now a ruin, but Matthews wharf is still present. The ruination of Matthews Wharf was the result of bomb damage.

## **4 STRATEGY**

### **Aims of the Investigation**

- 4.1 The aims of the evaluation were identified in the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2007) as being:
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
  - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
  - To record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
  - To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
  - To determine the extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
  - To enable the LPA and its archaeology advisor to make an informed decision on the status of the planning application, and any possible conditions for further work required.
  - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation in order to inform the mitigation strategy as part of the planning process.
- 4.2 The specific objectives of the Evaluation were to:
- Determine the nature, extent and dating of any prehistoric activity identified on the site.

- If there is no evidence of prehistoric activity, has this been removed by water action or modern truncation?
  - Determine the presence of any Roman remains on site.
  - Determine the presence of medieval activity, to aid understanding of the medieval archaeology of Rotherhithe
  - Edward III's manor house existed close to the site: is there any association between the development site and this property?
  - Is there any evidence for the changing nature of the waterfront at Rotherhithe, both sedimentary and structural?
  - What is the nature of the made ground on the site
  - What is the impact of the former warehouse at the site?
- 4.3 The final aim is to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

### **Methodology**

- 4.4 Before commencing the fieldwork a unique site code was obtained from the Museum of London (**KGC 07**).
- 4.5 The field evaluation was intended to comprise the excavation of one trench measuring 2m x 2m at base. Due to the presence of electric cables down one side of the trench, the trench shape was altered and resulted in a trench measuring 1m x 1.6m at base (Figure 3).
- 4.6 All machining was carried out using a 1.5 tonne tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under the constant supervision of the Archaeology Project Supervisor. Undifferentiated topsoil or overburden of recent origin was removed in successive level spits down to the first significant archaeological horizon. On completion of the machine excavation, the trench was hand cleaned.
- 4.7 Due to its depth the trench was stepped to ensure a safe working environment.
- 4.8 A full black and white, and colour (35mm transparency) photographic record was maintained. This illustrates the principal features both in detail and in a general context. The photographic record also includes working shots to represent more generally the nature of the fieldwork. Digital photography was used to supplement the record on film.
- 4.9 The evaluation was carried out by Dan Eddisford, Project Supervisor, under the overall management of Ron Humphrey. The investigation was monitored by Chris Constable, Archaeology Advisor to Southwark Council.



## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Trench 1 (Figure 4).

Present Ground Level: 5.02mOD	Context No. and Description
5.02mOD to 4.97mOD	(1/001). 20 <sup>th</sup> century brick patio surface.
4.97mOD to 4.67mOD	(1/002). 20 <sup>th</sup> century concrete slab.
4.67mOD to 4.46mOD	(1/003). 20 <sup>th</sup> century moderately compacted mid brown silt with frequent building material inclusions. Demolition layer.
4.46mOD to 4.36mOD	(1/004). 20 <sup>th</sup> century moderately compacted dark brown silt with moderate building material inclusions. Demolition layer.
4.36mOD to 4.30mOD	(1/005). 19 <sup>th</sup> century surface of paving slabs.
4.30mOD to 4.10mOD	(1/006). 19 <sup>th</sup> century firmly compacted dark brown silt with frequent building material inclusions. Bedding layer for (1/005).
4.10mOD to 4.00mOD	(1/007). 19 <sup>th</sup> century loosely compacted light brown sandy silt with occasional brick inclusions. Made ground/land reclamation activity.
4.00mOD to 3.20mOD	(1/008). 19 <sup>th</sup> century moderately compacted dark brown clayey silt with moderate building material inclusions. Made ground/land reclamation activity.

5.2 No natural deposits were identified in the trench. The earliest deposit in the trench was dark brown clayey silt (1/008) containing building material inclusions of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. It is likely that this represents land reclamation and stabilisation immediately prior to construction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouses. At its deepest this was 1.80m below ground level (3.20mOD). It was overlain by a second layer of made ground (1/007) to a maximum height of 4.10mOD.

5.3 A wall (1/009) aligned north-south along the east side of the trench comprised red and yellow frogged bricks bonded with pale yellow mortar. This was 3.30m long to the limits of excavation and 0.60m wide to a maximum height of 4.46mOD. A construction cut for this wall was not visible. However, it is probable that it was cut through the made ground deposits given that a bedding layer (1/006) and a paved surface (1/005) overlaid the made ground and butted the wall. The paved surface comprised 0.40m x 0.50m slabs laid flat on the bedding layer (1/006).

5.4 The brick and paved structures (1/009) and (1/005) were sealed by moderately compacted dark brown demolition material (1/004) with frequent brick inclusions.

This was 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and was overlain by a second phase of demolition material (1/003) to a maximum level of 4.67mOD.

- 5.5 Sealing the demolition material was a 0.30m thick concrete base (1/002) for the present brick patio surface (1/001) at a maximum height of 5.02mOD.

### **Finds**

- 5.6 No finds were retrieved from the site.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The remnants of a 19<sup>th</sup> century building were identified in the trench sealing layers of 19<sup>th</sup> century made ground. This structure is the foundation of one of two 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouses, either Yardley's Granary or Sufferance Wharf, both present on the site until one was bombed during World War II and the other demolished more recently.
- 6.2 Earlier archaeological remains may be present below the level reached in this evaluation. This could include earlier evidence for a waterfront and made ground dumped during reclamation since the medieval period. There may also be evidence for prehistoric or even Roman occupation of the area. However, given the depth of the trench at 3.20mOD; 1.80m below ground surface, further excavation was not possible due to on-site restrictions and health and safety considerations. The borehole results indicate that the latest natural deposit is alluvial clay, at approximately 0.50mOD.
- 6.3 The concrete raft upon which the development is to be based is at a level of 4.90mOD (Figure 5) and will be 150mm thick. Given that the wall is at a maximum height of 4.46mOD, it is unlikely that it will be impacted upon by the concrete raft. Removal of the present concrete slab will be necessary where the raft will be laid. However, this will be limited to the minimum required to enable the installation of the raft and will therefore not impact upon any possible underlying archaeology.
- 6.4 Any requirements for further work will be decided by the Archaeology Officer for the London Borough of Southwark.

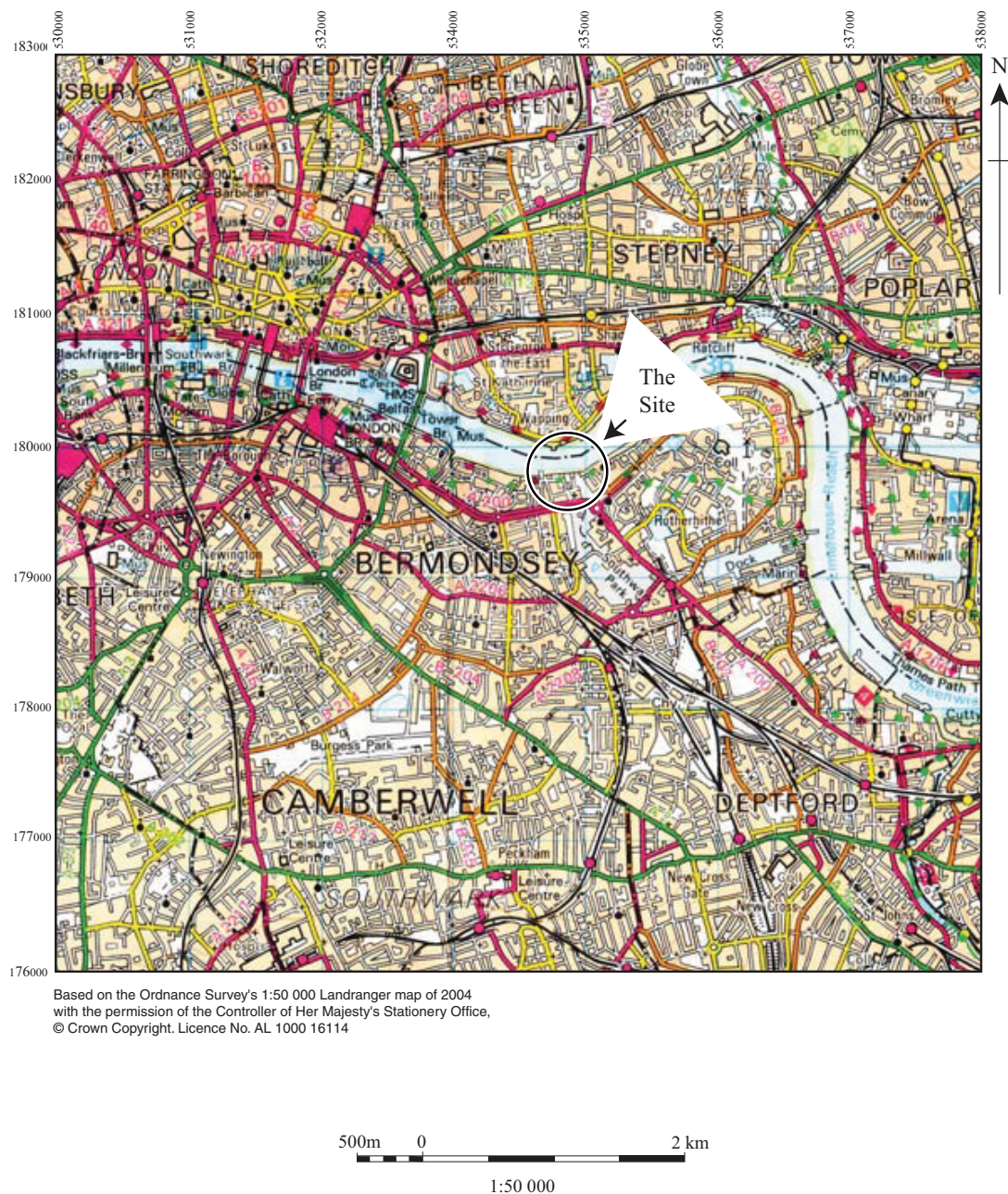
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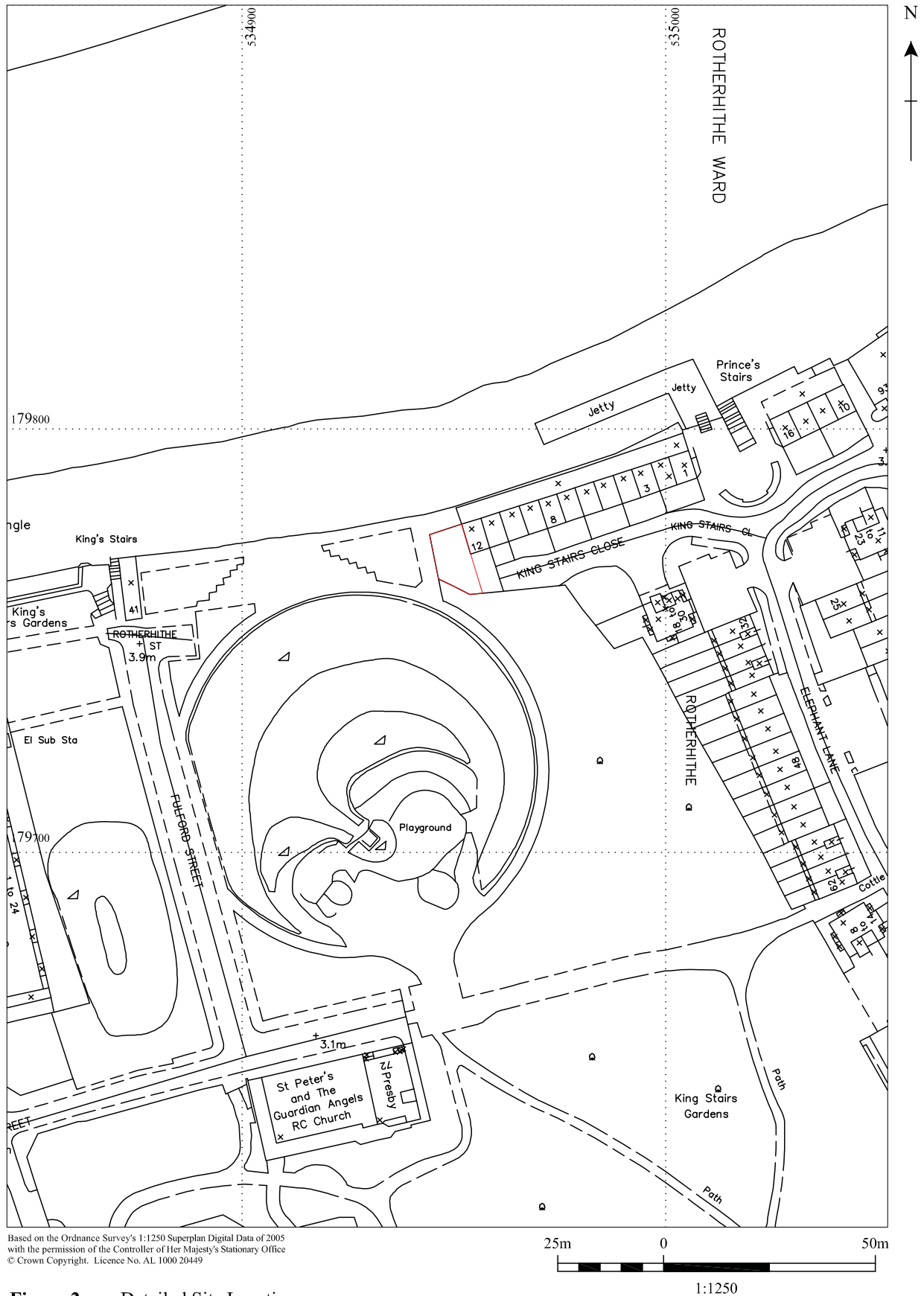
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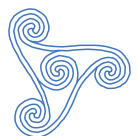


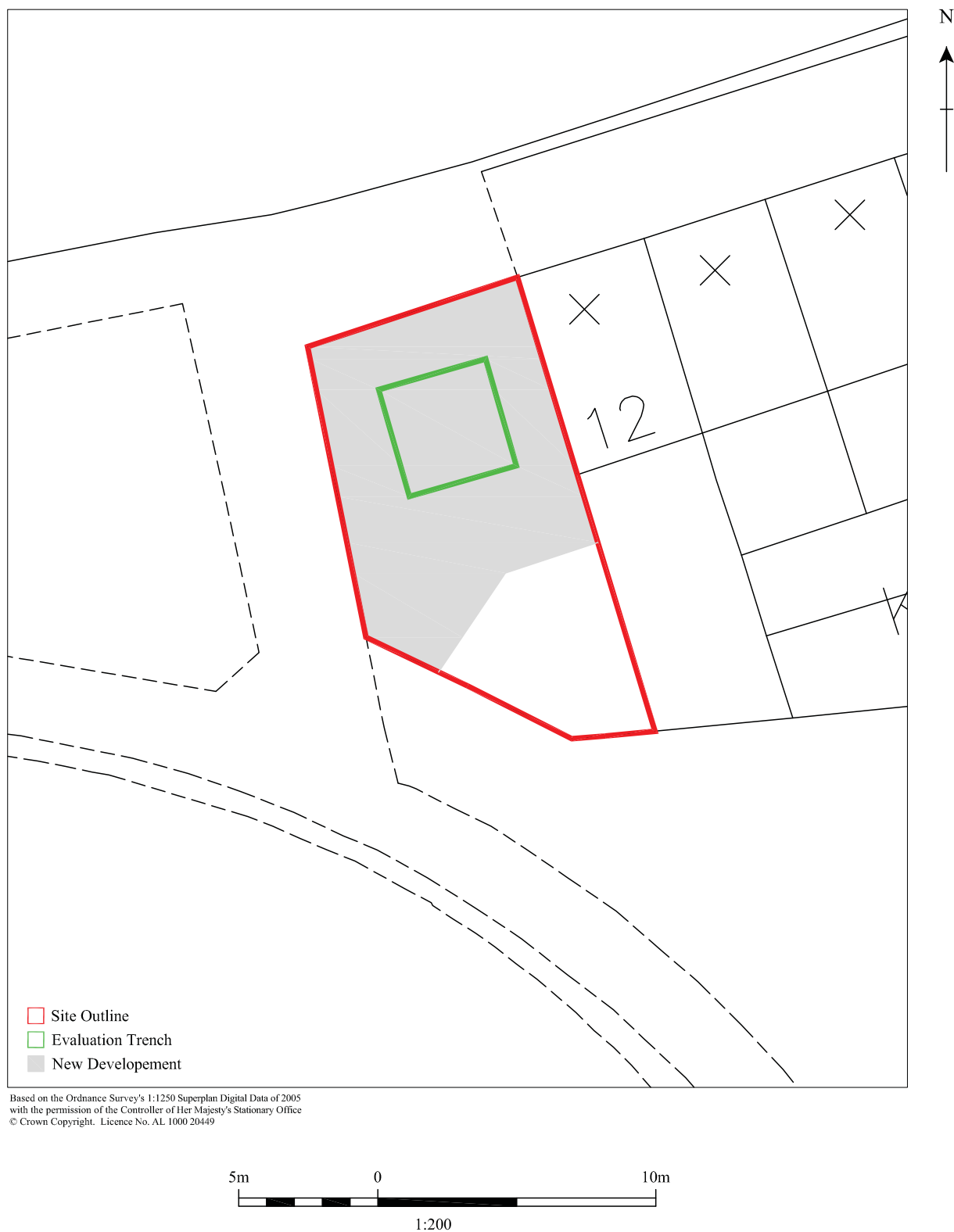


**Figure 1.** Site Location

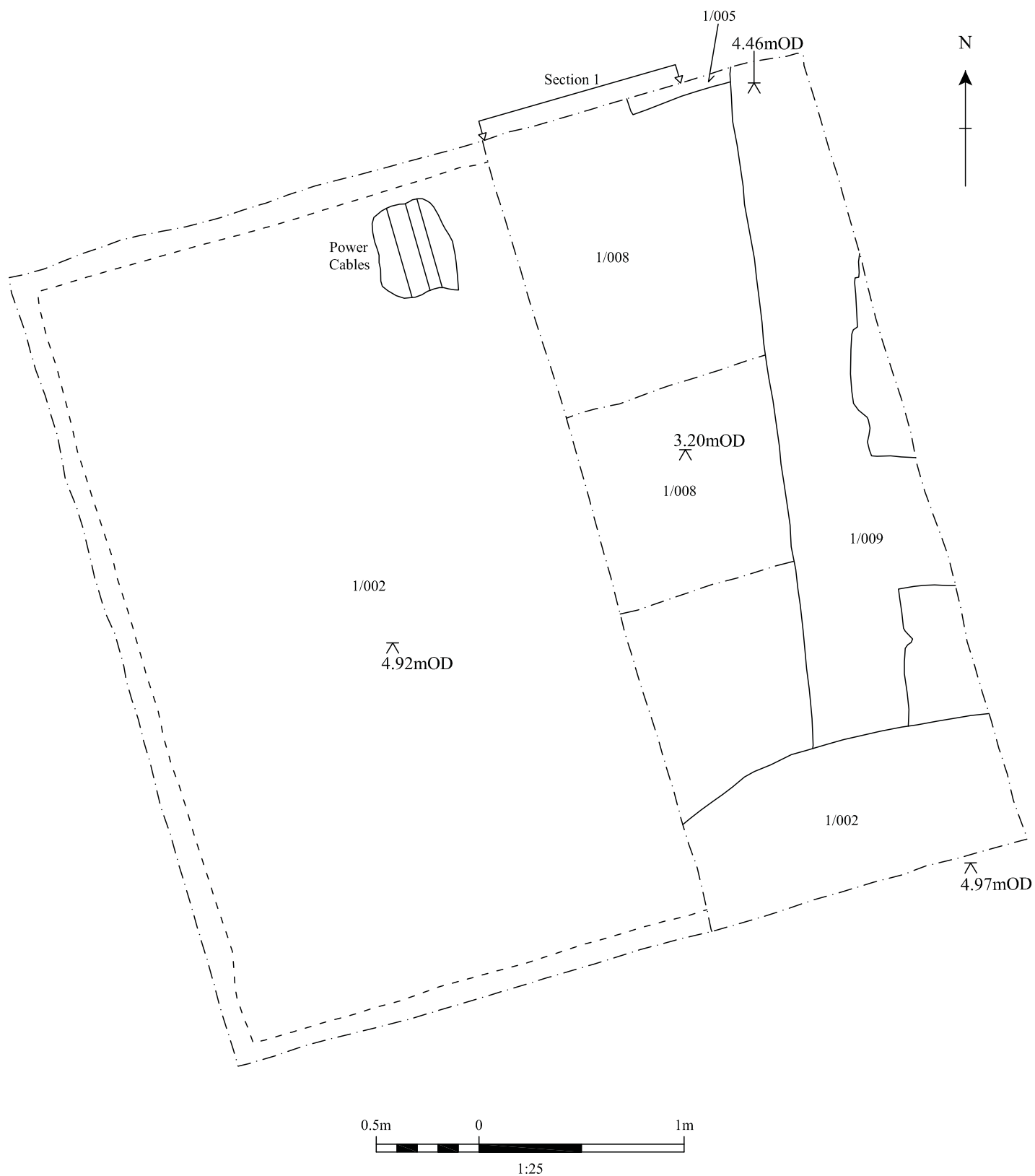


**Figure 2:** Detailed Site Location



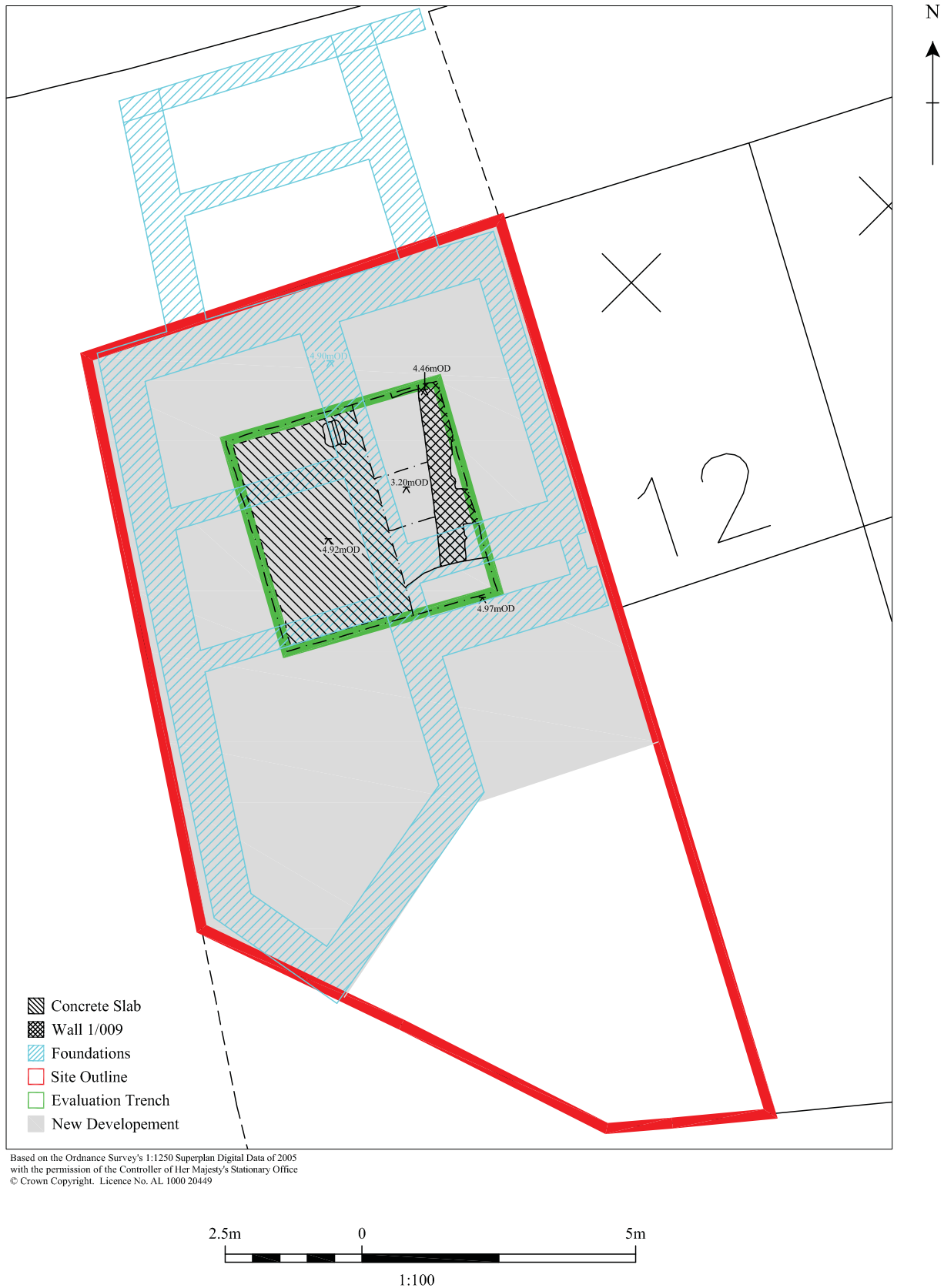


**Figure 3:** Evaluation Trench Location



**Figure 4:** Plan of Trench 1





**Figure 5:** Foundation Raft Impact Plan



Title 12 King Stairs Close, Rotherhithe, London Borough of Southwark: An Archaeological  
Evaluation Report

Author(s)/Editor(s) Leonard, A.

Date 2007

Issuer or  
publisher AOC Archaeology

Place of issue or  
publication AOC Archaeology

Description A4 bound document

Entered by Andy Leonard (andyleonard@aocarchaeology.co.uk)

Entered on 23 April 2007

## 4 OASIS:

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