Wessex Archaeology

RIVERSIDE YARD, RIVERSIDE ROAD, WIMBLEDON SW17 0BB, LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH

Archaeological Evaluation Report

MOL# - RVY06
Ref: 63520.02

July 2006

RIVERSIDE YARD,
RIVERSIDE ROAD,
WIMBLEDON, SW17 0BB,
LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Museum of London Site Cod**e RVY06**

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Figure 1. Site location map showing the approximate footprint of new build and trench location

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Non Technical Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Riverside House Ltd (the Client) to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Riverside Yard, Riverside Road, SW17 in the London Borough of Wandsworth (the Site), centred on NGR 526050 171950.

The evaluation comprised one 4.90m x 3.66m trench, which was excavated in order to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains.

No structures or artefacts of archaeological significance were uncovered during the evaluation.

The evaluation showed that the Site has been raised and levelled with a 2.16m thick sequence of modern demolition debris, industrial waste, including foundry slag and re-deposited alluvial clays. This levelling appears to be recent in date, the debris contained fragments of plastic at its base, and was almost certainly lain down prior to the laying down of the concrete hard standing of the present car park.

Beneath the modern leveling and makeup deposits, the evaluation revealed the remains of the former topsoil of the Site.

The former topsoil sealed a series of water lain alluvial deposits. Historical maps show that the Site was covered by watercress beds up until the end of the 19 th century and it seems safe to assume that these alluvial deposits represent the use and silting up of one of these beds.

Beneath the alluvial deposits the remains of a former topsoil overlaid a 0.55m thick water lain alluvial clay deposit which represent a further period of flooding, presumably from the River Wandle.

At the base of the trench, a coarse sandy fluvial gravel the represents the earliest deposit uncovered on Site.

The report concludes that in common with much of the area, the Site has been waterlogged for much of its life, either as part of the wetlands and marshland running along either side of the River Wandle or deliberately flooded for use as watercress beds, water meadows, millponds etc.

Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Riverside House Ltd for commissioning the project. The assistance of Carol Sullivan of The Wimbledon Art Studio is also warmly acknowledged.

Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Diane Walls of English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) for monitoring the work.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Lawrence Pontin (Project Manager); the fieldwork was undertaken by Chris Ellis and Gary Evans. The report was compiled by Gary Evans. Mark Roughley prepared the illustrations.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (London) was commissioned by Riverside House Ltd (the Client) to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Riverside Yard, Riverside Road, Summerstown, Wimbledon, SW17 0BB in the London Borough of Wandsworth (the Site) centered on NGR 526050 171950 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 This report presents the results of the archaeological evaluation which took place on the 10th July 2006.

1.1.3 Planning permission has been granted (2006/0994) for the redevelopment of the Site, involving a five storey framed office development, covering 326²m, in the centre of the Site (**Figure 1**). An archaeological condition was attached to the permission requiring archaeological evaluation of the Site area, with mitigation to follow if archaeological remains were recovered.

1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 The Site comprises a triangular parcel of land of approximately 0.4 hectares. The Site lies some 100m to the north east of Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium and 190m to the east of the River Wandle. To the east and west, the Site is bordered by industrial units and workshops whilst to the south it backs on to the car park of the Wimbledon Stadium. To the north Riverside Road forms the Site's northern boundary (**Figure 1**).

1.2.2 The Site lies at *c*. 9.75m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

1.2.3 The ground is currently in use as a car park and is covered by a concrete hard standing.

1.2.4 The underlying geology consists of alluvium over London Clay (BGS 1:50000 scale, Sheet 270, 1998).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The site does not lie within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) nor are there any listed buildings on Site. However, it does lie within an Archaeological Priority Area (APA). As defined in the Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan (adopted August 2003).

2.1.2 The Site lies within the flood plain of the River Wandle which would have provided opportunities for hunting, farming and settlement.

2.1.3 The area has produced evidence of human activity dating from the Paleolithic, medieval and post medieval periods.

2.1.4 To the north east of the Site, two Paleolithic flakes are noted in the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) as having been found in Burntwood Lane (GLSMR 031107/031108). Whilst at 533 Garrett Lane, a prehistoric water channel has been recorded (GLSMR 021501).

2.1.5 Summerstown is first mentioned in Domesday Book where it is called "*Sumerton*" (Weinreb and Hibbert, 1999, 869). A water mill, Sumerton Mill, belonging to the nearby Merton Abbey is known to have stood in the area in the 12th century (Museum of London, 2000, 253. Weinreb and Hibbert, *Op., Cit*. 869). A medieval pottery sherd is recorded as coming from 533 Garrett Lane (GLSMR 021502).

2.1.6 The area was densely wooded during the late medieval period and was a favorite hunting ground for Henry VI. During whose reign the woods are recorded as having been destroyed by fire (Weinreb and Hibbert, *Op., Cit*. 869).

2.1.7 The areas proximity to the River Wandle, a ready source of water and power saw the development of a number of mills in the area during the post medieval period, including calico and printing mills from 1572 on wards, as well as copper mills and a gunpowder works in the 17th century (Weinreb and Hibbert, *Op., Cit*. 869). A pit and a layer of post medieval peat have been recorded at 533 Garrett Lane (GLSMR 021504/021503).

2.1.8 In the 19th century the development of the area continued and a number of large works, including a silk printing factory and Heath's Print Works, were established in the area. (Weinreb and Hibbert, *Op., Cit*. 869). On the 1874 ordnance Survey map of the area (not illustrated) a series of millponds are shown along side the River Wandle to the north of the Site, whilst a large copper mill is shown to the south of the Site in the area now occupied by Coppermill Lane. At this time the River Wandle consisted of several abraded channels.

2.1.9 Despite the area becoming increasingly industrialized and built up, parts of Summerstown were still rural at the end of the 19th century when the area was famous for its watercress beds situated along side the River Wandle (Weinreb and Hibbert, *Op., Cit*. 869). On the 1874 Ordnance Survey map (not illustrated) of the area, a series of 12 rectangular watercress beds can be clearly seen running east west from the east bank of the River Wandle to just west of present day Summerstown Lane. The present day Riverside Road runs along what was the northern boundary of the water cress beds and the Site itself is situated in what would have been in the middle of the northern most bed.

2.1.10 The present development around the Site appears to date from the 20th century, the nearby Greyhound Stadium being built in the 1920's.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1.1 The aims of the evaluation were to:

- Characterise the nature, date, extent and state of preservation of underlying archaeological deposits.
- Identify the depth of burial (and thus the depth of sensitivity) of any underlying archaeological deposits or features.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Methodological Standards

4.1.1 All field work and the preparation of this report was undertaken accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) compiled by Wessex Archaeology (WA 2006 ref 63520.01) and agreed by GLAAS.

4.1.2 Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, arrangements were be made with the Museum of London for deposition of the archive and finds, subject to agreement with the landowner. A Museum of London Site Code (**RVY06**) was allocated at this time.

4.1.3 All works were undertaken in accordance with the guidance and standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (1999 amended 2001). Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork in London (GLAAS 1998, Archaeological Guidance Paper 3). Archaeological Reports (*Ibid.* Archaeological Guidance Paper 4) and Evaluations (*Ibid.* Archaeological Guidance Paper 5).

4.2 Health and Safety

4.2.1 Health and Safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices overrode archaeological considerations at all times.

4.2.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992 and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

4.2.3 Wessex Archaeology prepared a Health and Safety Risk Assessment. As part of the Project Briefing all staff were made aware of their responsibilities and site specific hazards, identified under the Risk Assessment prior to commencement of fieldwork.

4.3 Fieldwork

4.3.1 The fieldwork strategy is described in detail in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2006, 2-4), but in summary the evaluation comprised the machine excavation of one trench 4.90m x 3.66m in plan. Due to the depth of overburden this was stepped in and a 2.40m x 1.50m sondage cut in the middle of the trench. The trench was located in the area of the Site likely to be effected by the proposed development and where ground conditions were suitable (**Figure 1**).

4.3.2 The trench was located on the ground using tapes from known landmarks and features present on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (e.g. boundaries or buildings).

4.3.3 The trench was dug using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. This took place under the constant supervision of a competent archaeologist.

4.3.4 All spoil was scanned for finds.

4.3.5 Machining continued to the top of archaeological deposits or the underlying natural strata.

4.3.6 A complete drawn and photographic record of the trench was compiled. This included both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (1:20 or 1:50 for plans, 1:10 or 1:20 for sections). The heights of all trenches were expressed in metres above Ordnance Datum (aOD**)** and plans/sections were annotated with OD heights.

4.3.7 A photographic record was also compiled including digital images, colour transparencies and black and white negatives (on 35mm film).

4.3.8 On completion of fieldwork, the trench was backfilled with the agreement of Diane Walls of GLAAS.

4.4 Finds Collection and Retention

4.4.1 All collected finds were treated in accordance with the principles and practices set out by the Society of Museum Archaeologists (1993), Medieval Pottery Research Group (2001) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (1999 amended 2001).

4.4.2 Where features or deposits were clearly modern, finds were examined, noted and discarded.

4.5 Environmental Sampling Strategy

4.5.1 The strategy for sampling archaeological and environmental deposits and structures was developed in consultation with Wessex Archaeology's environmental manager Dr. Mike Allen and was set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2006).

4.6 The Archive

4.6.1 The completed project archive will be prepared in accordance with *the Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (UKIC 1990).

4.6.2 The resulting archive will be microfiched to the standards accepted by the National Monuments Record (NMR).

4.6.3 One copy will be deposited with the GLSMR; a further copy will be deposited with the NMR.

4.6.4 The archive from the project, subject to the wishes of the landowner, will be deposited with the Museum of London.

4.6.5 Details of the evaluation will be entered into the online 'Oasis' database maintained by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).

5 RESULTS

5.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below with a detailed summary of the results of the evaluation presented in **Appendix 1**.

5.1.2 Fully cross referenced site records are contained in the site archive (WA 63520.02).

5.1.3 In the following sections context numbers are given in bold. Contexts representing deposition, re-deposition or re-working of material are enclosed in round parentheses i.e. (**00**). Those representing the actions of construction, reconstruction or truncation are enclosed in square brackets i.e. [**00**].

5.1.4 The following sequence of deposits was observed:

5.1.5 The earliest deposit observed on Site was a mixture of coarse sand and fine to medium sub rounded and sub angular gravel (**109**) this was noted at the base of the trench 3.35m below the present ground surface (6.40m aOD).

5.1.6 This was overlain by a 0.55m thick layer of greyish yellow fine sandy clay (**108),** this alluvial deposit contained occasional small fragments of white shell or chalk but no other inclusions.

5.1.7 This alluvial deposit was sealed by a 0.20m thick layer of dark brown humified clay **(107**) which contained occasional small plant rootlets. This deposit which contained no dating material, almost certainly represent the remains of a former topsoil

5.1.8 The former topsoil was sealed by deposits of light bluish grey and bluish brown gleyed alluvial silty clay (**105-106**). These soft homogenous deposits, which we 0.19m thick in total, contained small fragments of shell or chalk but no datable artifacts. Lain down when the area was flooded / waterlogged, these deposits most likely represent the silting up of one of the watercress beds which stood on the Site until the beginning of the 20th century.

5.1.9 These alluvial deposits were sealed by a 0.09m thick layer of dark brown clay **(104**) which contained occasional small plant rootlets. This deposit almost certainly represents the remains of the former topsoil prior to the laying down of a series modern leveling layers.

5.1.10 A 2.00m thick layer of modern leveling comprised of modern demolition debris, industrial waste and re-deposited alluvial clays (**100-103**) formed the latest horizon observed during the evaluation. This deposit lay directly beneath the concrete slab of the present day car park.

5.2 The Finds

5.2.1 The only material recovered from the Site was clearly modern in date. This material was noted but not retained.

5.3 Environmental Evidence

5.3.1 Due to the absence of any suitable deposits, no samples were taken for environmental analysis.

6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

6.1.1 No archaeological features were observed during the evaluation.

6.1.2 The evaluation showed that the Site has been raised and leveled with a 2.16m thick sequence of modern demolition debris, industrial waste and re-deposited alluvial clays, So that the present ground surface on Site is some 2.30m above the surrounding land (**Figure 1**). This leveling appears to be relatively recent in date, the debris contained fragments of plastic at its base, and was probably lain down prior to the laying down of the concrete hard standing of the car park.

6.1.3 Beneath the modern leveling and makeup deposits, a sequence of alluvial silty clay layers and humified clays (**104-108)** were recorded.

6.1.4 The uppermost of these deposits, brown humified clay (**104**) appears to represent the remains of the former topsoil prior to the modern leveling of the Site.

6.1.5 The former topsoil sealed a series of water lain deposits (**105-106**). Historical maps of the area show that the Site was covered by watercress beds up until the end of the 19 th century and it seems safe to assume that these alluvial deposits represent the use and silting up of one of these beds.

6.1.6 Beneath the alluvial deposits the remains of a former topsoil overlaid a 0.55m thick water lain alluvial clay deposit which represent a period of flooding, whether this was from natural flooding of the River Wandle or deliberate man made flooding is not known.

6.1.7 At the base of the trench, a coarse sandy fine fluvial gravel (1**09**) the represents the earliest deposit uncovered on Site.

6.1.8 The evaluation showed that the Site has been waterlogged for much of its life, either as part of the wetlands and marshland running along either side of the River Wandle or deliberately flooded for use as watercress beds, water meadows, millponds etc.

6.1.9 The lack of archaeological features, aside from the silted up watercress bed, or artefacts suggest that little or no archaeological remains are present within the proposed development area.

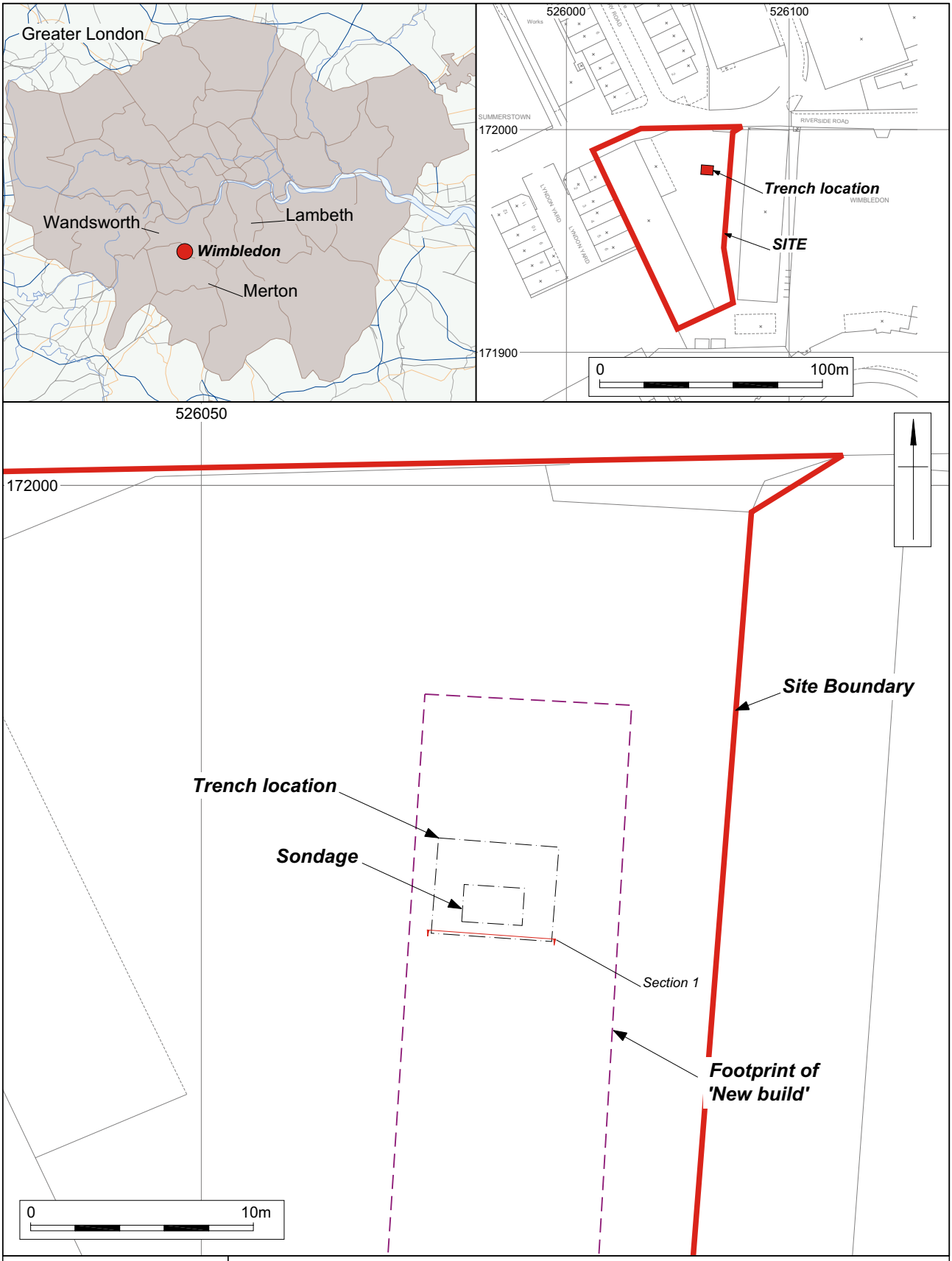
7 REFERENCES

British Geological Survey	1998	South London Sheet 270
English Heritage	1998	*London Region Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork - Archaeological Guidance Paper 3* .
Ibid.	1998	*London Region's Archaeological* Reports *Archaeological Guidance Paper 4*
Ibid.	1998	*London Region's Archaeological Evaluations Archaeological Guidance Paper 5*
Institute of Field Archaeologists	1999	*Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*
Museum of London	2000	*The Archaeology of Greater London*
Wandsworth Borough Council	2003	*Wandsworth Unitary Plan* http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/NR?Wandsworth/UDP?udpFinal
Weinreb, B. and Hibbert, C	1983	*The London Encyclopaedia,*
Wessex Archaeology	2005	*Riverside Yard, Riverside Road, Wimbledon SW17, London Borough of Wandsworth. Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation, Ref; 63520.01*

8 APPENDIX 1 TRENCH SUMMARY TABLE

	Length **4.90m**	**Width** **3.66m**	**Ground Level** **9.75 m aOD**
Context no.	**Description**	**Keyword**	**Depth (m) Below Ground Level**
100	Reinforced concrete slab	Construction	0.0-0.20m
101	Mid greyish brown silty clay matrix, very common sub rounded flint gravel, concrete, frogged red brick fragments, degraded iron fragments, batteries, metal oil drum, pipe, plastic fragments, re-deposited clay, roofing slate, occasional fragments asbestos board,. In south facing section mostly large fragments of foundry slag and clinker	Levelling Makeup Made ground	0.20-1.62m
102	Very dark grey re-deposited clay, rare small sub angular flint gravel, up to 10mm, rare re-deposited pale yellowish clay lumps, modern plastic fragments, modern pottery, degraded iron	Levelling Makeup Made ground	1.62-2.04m
103	Light bluish grey clayey silt, slightly gleyed deposit, rare re-deposited light yellowish brown clay	Levelling Makeup Made ground	2.04-2.16m
104	Dark grey brown silty clay, sparse plant remains, rare very small flint fragments	Former Topsoil	2.16-2.25m
105	Light blue grey, homogenous clay, very rare small, up to 1mm, fragments of white shell	Alluvial Use / Disuse	2.25-2.35m
106	Light grey clay, browner than overlying deposit **(105)**, clay, very rare small fragments, up to 1mm, white shell	Alluvial Use / Disuse	2.35-2.60m
107	Very dark brown grey, homogenous humified silty clay,	Former Topsoil	2.60-2.80m
108	Light greyish yellow fine sandy clay, numerous laminations, lens light bluish grey and yellow sandy clay, occasional small, less than 1mm, fragments shell	Alluvial Use / Disuse?	2.80-3.35m.
109	Light – mid grey coarse sandy gravel. Gravel= 60% small, up to 10mm, sub rounded sub angular flint pebbles. 40% medium, up to 30mm, sub rounded / sub angular flint pebbles	Alluvial Natural Geology?	3.35-3.65m

9 APPENDIX 2 OASIS SUMMARY



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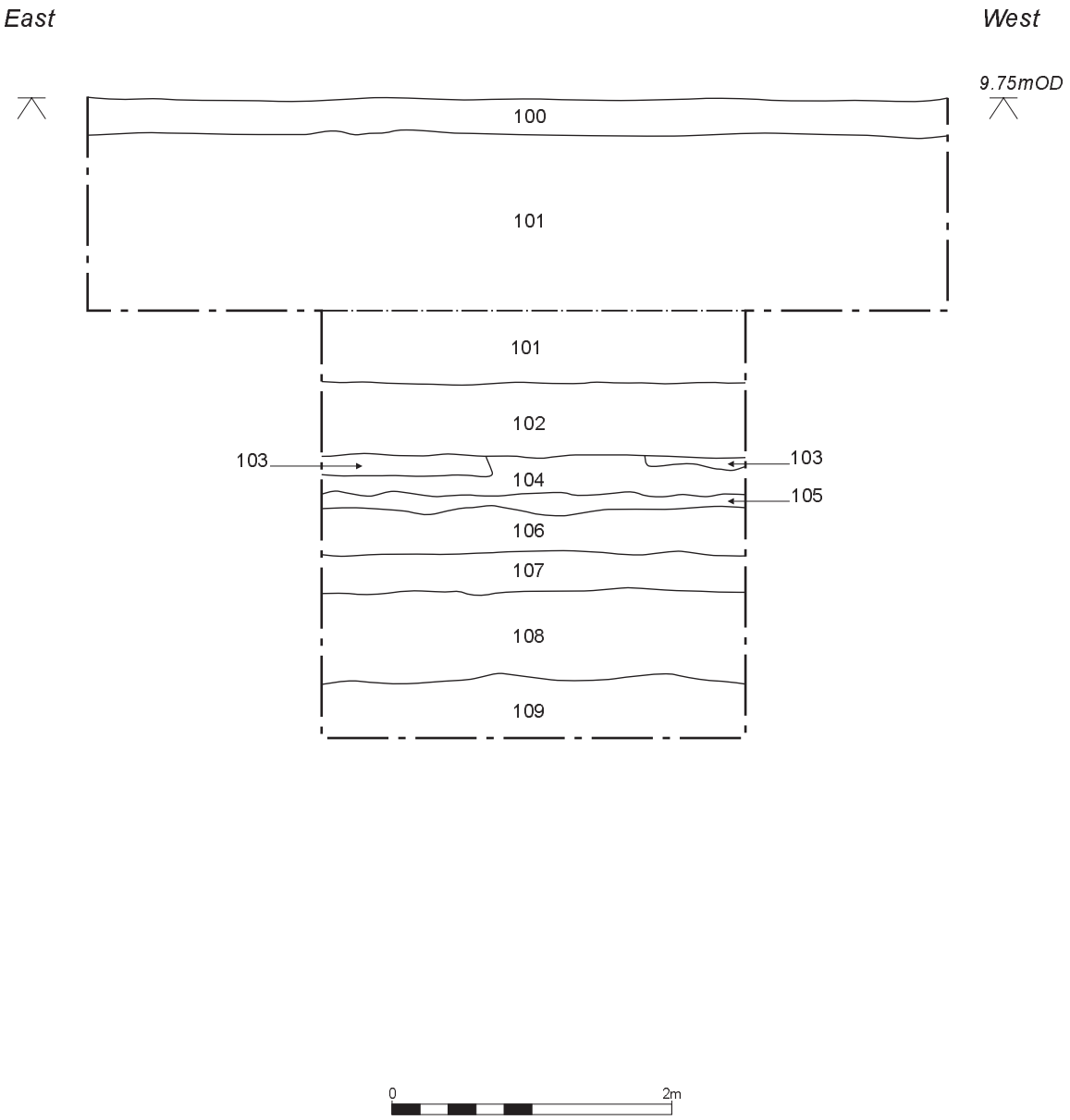
Site location map showing approximate footprint of New Build and Trench location Figure 1

North facing Section 1



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