



## Building N, Leamouth North, London E14, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Archaeological Watching Brief Report





**Building N,  
Leamouth North,  
London E14,  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

Prepared for:  
**Ballymore Developments Ltd**  
Pointe North  
3 Greenwich View Place  
London E16

by:  
**Wessex Archaeology**  
Unit 113  
The Chandlery  
50 Westminster Bridge Road  
London  
SE1 7QY

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**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

**Summary**

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief commissioned by Ballymore Developments Ltd and carried out by Wessex Archaeology on ground works at Building N, Leamouth North, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 539188 180960.

The work was carried out as a means to discharge a planning condition attached to consent for the re-development of the Site, and took place intermittently during August 2007.

The watching brief observed a series of excavations by the site contractor during ground investigations, including the exposure of river wall ties, to a depth of between 1m and 3m below the present ground level.

All of the deposits observed during the watching brief appeared to be modern in origin and almost certainly represent levelling deposits dumped from the banks of the River Lea (Bow Creek) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later.

Aside from the levelling/dump deposits no archaeological deposits or remains were uncovered.

The report concludes that archaeological remains do not exist within the development area, any remains which may have been present having been disturbed and truncated during previous building work on Site.

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**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

**Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned by Phillip Kingsfield of Ballymore Developments Ltd, and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Willie Duggan of Ballymore Developments Ltd and his staff for their assistance and co-operation on site.

Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank David Divers of English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) for monitoring the project.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Lawrence Pontin. The fieldwork was undertaken by Cornelius Barton (Senior Project Officer). Gary Evans (Project Officer) compiled this report with illustrations by Kitty Brandon.

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**Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Project Background**

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Ballymore Developments Ltd (the Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground investigations, including the exposure of river wall ties, being undertaken by the Site contractor at Building N, Leamouth North, Orchard Place, London E14, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (the Site), centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 539188 180960 (**Figure 1**).

1.1.2 This document presents the results of the watching brief which took place during August 2007. 'Building N' is Ballymore's reference code for the proposed commercial development on the Site Area.

**1.2 Planning Background**

1.2.1 The watching brief was required as a condition attached to planning approval by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for the re-development of the Site, involving the construction of residential and commercial properties (Condition 25 of Planning Consent PA/07/01730/LBTH

1.2.2 The watching brief and preparation of this report were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Wessex Archaeology, 2007) which was prepared by Wessex Archaeology and approved prior to the commencement of work by English Heritage, Greater London Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (GLAAS).

1.2.3 The WSI was prepared in accordance with English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) guidance documents (1998).

**2 THE SITE**

**2.1 Site Location, Topography and Geology**

2.1.1 The Site lies at the confluence of the Rivers Thames and Lea (Bow Creek), some 5.5km to the east of the City of London.

2.1.2 The watching brief area was at the south-western corner of the former Pura Foods site on the northern end of the Leamouth Peninsular and lies between the western river (Lea) wall and Orchard Place (**Figure 1**).

2.1.3 The Site is presently covered by hard standing, the former base of a heat transfer plant.

- 2.1.4 The Site is level and the modern ground level is ca 5.2 m above Ordnance datum (aOD).
- 2.1.5 The underlying geology within the Site has been identified as Holocene alluvium overlying Eocene London Clay eroded by former courses of the rivers Thames and Lea (British Geological Survey 1994, Sheet 256, North London).

## 2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.2.1 A Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) of the area surrounding the Site was carried out by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology, 2006) in order to determine the potential for the survival of archaeological remains on and around the Site area. A brief summary of the results follows.
- 2.2.2 The Site is of some archaeological interest as a potential low-lying, wetland environment for much of the prehistoric period. Most known historic developments on the Site are focussed on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with an important sequence of mixed large-scale industrial and commercial development.
- 2.2.3 There is no evidence for prehistoric, Romano-British or Saxon remains on the Site.
- 2.2.4 There is no evidence for medieval occupation, but the area was exploited for grazing and natural resources since the medieval period at least.
- 2.2.5 There is no known development in the immediate area until a poorly documented, probably early 18<sup>th</sup>-century house called 'Handle Hall', evidence for which might survive towards the south-east of the Pura Foods property.
- 2.2.6 Rocque's mid 18<sup>th</sup>-century map shows the Hall and the entire peninsula as lying outside and to the north of the embanked flood defences.
- 2.2.7 Milne's map of 1800 also suggests that much of the peninsula remained marginal land in the floodplain of the River Lea.
- 2.2.8 The watching-brief area for Building N does not appear to have been developed at all prior to 1850, and may have been utilized as an open storage area by the Samuda shipyard. Subsequent to this the area of Building N was partially under residential development until the post-Second World War clearances. Following this the area housed a small building labelled "Bridge Wharf" on the 1945 Ordnance Survey map.
- 2.2.9 Most recently the Building N area housed a heat distribution plant which was part of the Pura Foods complex.
- 2.2.10 The Lea river wall is modern, although it may enclose earlier river walls, revetments and embankments.
- 2.2.11 Given that the present ground level on the Site (ca.5.20m aOD) has been formed as a result of ground raising dumps and flood/river defences, it was thought that there was good potential for the preservation of early ground surfaces sealed beneath these dumps. The ground level indicated on the 1860–70 Ordnance Survey map (16ft = ca.4.87m aOD) suggests that most of this dumping pre-dates the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3 METHOD STATEMENT

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 All works were carried out in accordance with English Heritage GLAAS guidance documents (1998) and with the relevant guidance given in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2001).

#### 3.2 Aims

3.2.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to identify as far as possible the presence or absence of archaeological remains, and to ascertain and record their age, location, extent and preservation

#### 3.3 Health and Safety

3.3.1 Health and safety considerations were of paramount importance during all fieldwork. All Wessex fieldwork staff were required to familiarise themselves with the Construction Phase Health and Safety Plan prepared by John F. Hunt Ltd.

3.3.2 Wessex Archaeology prepared a Risk Assessment prior to commencement of field work which all Wessex staff and visitors were required to read and sign.

3.3.3 A contamination appraisal of Building N was carried out (WSP Remediation 2007). This study did not identify any contamination "hotspots" in this area.

#### 3.4 Fieldwork

3.4.1 The archaeological watching brief comprised the observation of removal of the existing ground slab and test-digging. This work was undertaken in order to reveal the location of the river wall ties and anchors, and to check for obstructions to later works.

3.4.2 All machine work took place under archaeological supervision, to cease immediately when significant archaeological evidence was revealed, in order to allow recording.

3.4.3 Exposed material was visually examined for archaeological material. Artefactual material was noted but not retained unless of particular interest. No artefactual material was handled without the use of appropriate PPE.

3.4.4 Any archaeological remains encountered were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording sheets and recording system.

3.4.5 A photographic record of exposed remains was created by use of black and white prints, colour transparencies and digital images.

3.4.6 Where appropriate, plans and sections of exposed remains were drawn by hand at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections.

3.4.7 Areas under archaeological observation were surveyed using offset measurements and tied in to the Ordnance Survey.



### 3.5 Finds Collection and Retention

- 3.5.1 Finds were treated in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 2001), the UK Institute of Conservators' Guidelines "*Conservation Guideline No 2*" and the Museums and Galleries Commissions "*Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections*" (1991) excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.

### 3.6 Environmental Sampling

- 3.6.1 An appropriate environmental sampling strategy was developed in consultation with Wessex Archaeology's environmental manager and was set out in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology, 2007).

### 3.7 Archive

- 3.7.1 The complete project archive will be prepared in accordance with Wessex Archaeology's Guidelines for Archive Preparation and in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990)*. On completion of the project the archive will be deposited with the Museum of London.
- 3.7.2 A unique site code was obtained from the Museum of London prior to the start of the watching brief (MOL code OHP 07).

## 4 RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Results

- 4.1.1 The watching brief observed a series of dumps and "made ground" deposits to a depth of up to 3m below present ground level.
- 4.1.2 All of the deposits appeared to be essentially modern in origin and almost certainly represent levelling deposits and dumps (**Plates 1 and 2**).
- 4.1.3 Examination of the exposed area of the river-wall showed that the wall and ties had been substantially renovated during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (**Plates 3 and 4**). No older wall material survives in this area.
- 4.1.4 Aside from the modern levelling deposits, no archaeological deposits or remains were uncovered during work on this part of the Site.

### 4.2 Finds

- 4.2.1 The only artefacts recovered on Site were clearly modern in origin. These were noted but not retained.

### 4.3 Environmental Sampling

- 4.3.1 Due to the absence of any suitable archaeological deposits, environmental soil samples were not taken during this phase of works.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 All of the deposits observed during the watching brief appeared to be modern in origin and almost certainly represent levelling deposits dumped from the banks of the River Lea (Bow Creek) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later.
- 4.4.2 Aside from the levelling/dump deposits no archaeological deposits or remains were uncovered in this trench.
- 4.4.3 The report concludes that archaeological remains do not exist within the development area, any remains which may have been present having been disturbed and truncated during previous building work on Site.

4.4.4

## 5 REFERENCES

- English Heritage, 1998, *Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service Archaeological Guidance Papers 1-5*
- Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2001, *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- Wessex Archaeology, 2006, *Leamouth North, Leamouth, London Borough of Tower Hamlets: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. Report Reference 61390.01
- Wessex Archaeology, 2007, *Building N, Leamouth North, Leamouth, London Borough of Tower Hamlets: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. Reference 64761.01
- WSP Remediation 2007 *Stage 2 Remediation Specification, Former Purafoods Site, Leamouth North, London E14*

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: wessexar1-51447**

### Project details

Project name Building N, Leamouth North, London E14: watching brief

Short description of the project Wessex Archaeology carried out a watching brief during the removal of the existing ground slab and test digging, work undertaken in order to reveal the river wall ties and anchors and to check for obstructions to later works. Excavation was carried out to depths of between 1m and 3m below current ground level. All observed deposits appeared to be modern in origin and almost certainly represent levelling deposits dumped from the banks of the River Lea (Bow Creek) during the 19th century and later. No archaeological deposits or remains were encountered and it was concluded that any that may have been present were disturbed or truncated during previous building work.

Project dates Start: 22-07-2007 End: 29-08-2007

Previous/future work Yes / Not known

Any associated project reference codes 64760 - Contracting Unit No.

Any associated project reference codes OHP07 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes wessexar1-26035 - OASIS form ID

Type of project Recording project

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Planning condition

#### **Project location**

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS TOWER HAMLETS Building N, Leamouth North, London E14
Study area	920.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 39188 80960 51.5098998386 0.00594325764654 51 30 35 N 000 00 21 E Point

#### **Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Wessex Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Wessex Archaeology
Project director/manager	L. Pontin
Project supervisor	C. Barton

#### **Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Archive ID	OHP07

Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London
Paper Archive ID	OHP07
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Photograph','Report','Unspecified Archive'

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**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Entered on	13 November 2008

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 Watching Brief Area	Inset: Digital Map Data © (2007) XYZ Digital Map Company Basemap supplied by client. This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.	
	Date: 11/01/08	Revision Number: 0
	Scale: 1:2000	Illustrator: KJB
	Path: Y:\Projects\64761\Drawing Office\Report Figures\WB\08-01-11	

Site location map and area covered by Watching Brief

Figure 1





Plate 1: Excavation of Building N area, east facing



Plate 2: Sample section - central Building N area, east facing, 1m scale

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Date: 11/01/08

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Plate 3: Exposing the river wall (working shot)



Plate 4: Exposed river wall with tie-rod, from east, 1m scale

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**WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.**

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

London Office: Unit 113, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7QY.

Tel: 020 7953 7494 Fax: 020 7953 7499 london-info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

