

Sutton Archaeological Services

Evaluation Report

on

Packington Square Estate,

Phase 1

Islington,

London, N1.

PSI 07: (TQ 3220)

for

Rydon Construction Ltd

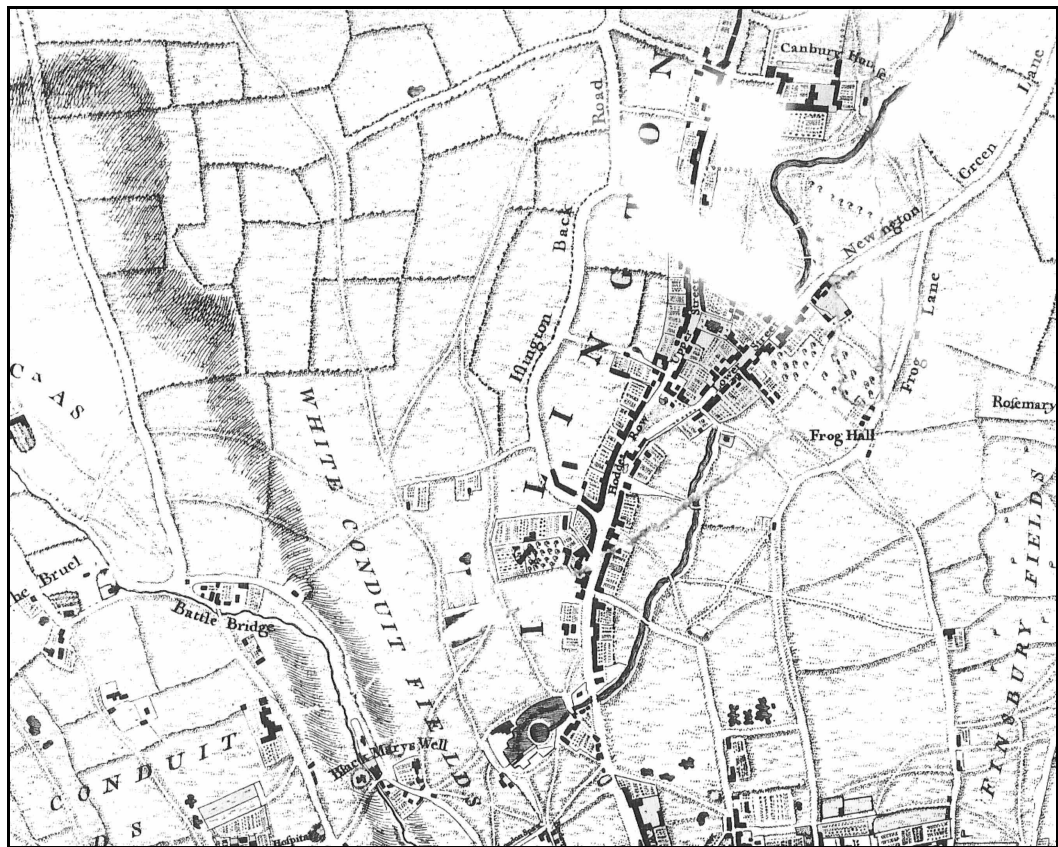


Fig. 1

John Rocque's map of London 1741-5



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London Borough of Islington

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by

J G PERRY: June 2008

Summary

Sutton Archaeological Services (SAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation during the Phase I development at the Packington Square Estate, Islington, London, N1 between 28th September 2007 and 24th June 2008.

The site lay in the London Borough of Islington. They approved planning permission for redevelopment and included an archaeological condition under PPG 16¹ in the decision. Research by Sutton Archaeological Services for the research design indicated that there was little prospect of any archaeology and/or activity in the surrounding area.

Four trenches were excavated across the site revealing made ground, modern features, the remains of 19th century structures, subsoil, all over the natural sand and gravel.

There was no evidence for archaeology, other than modern, in the four trenches and the only finds were modern CBM, re-used Medieval stone and pottery dating from the late Medieval to 20th century.

We suggest that no further archaeological monitoring or intervention is needed in Phase I and that the archaeological condition in the planning consent for this phase has been fulfilled. The decision to discharge the archaeological condition, however, rests with the local planning authority on the advice of the Archaeological Officer at English Heritage. It will be made when all phases have been completed.

¹ Department of the Environment: *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning*, HMSO, 1990.

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Situation

This specification relates to the site of the proposed Phase 1 development at the Packington Square Estate, Islington, London, N1.

Rydon Construction Ltd (the developers) has commissioned Sutton Archaeological Services (SAS) to carry out an archaeological evaluation and any subsequent archaeological work that may be necessary.

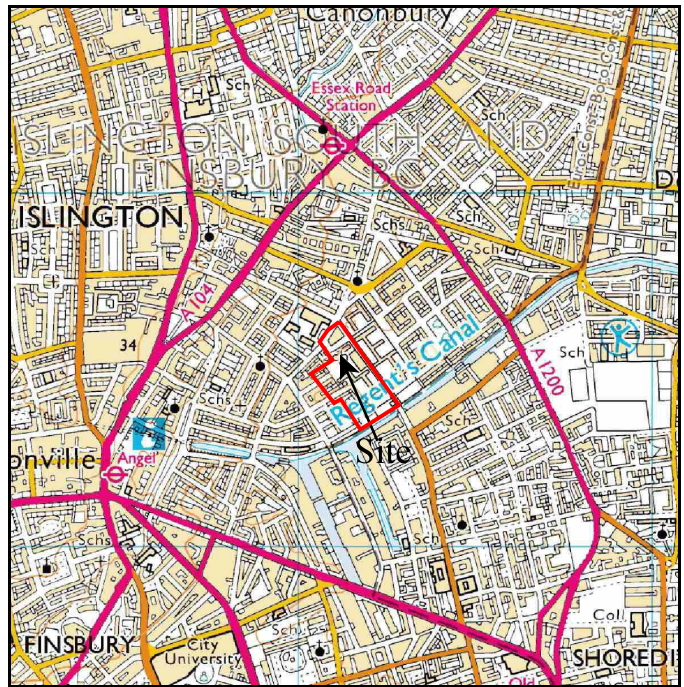


Fig. 2 Location Plan © Crown Copyright MC/98/38

Location: The site is a large, roughly rectangular area situated in Islington, in the south-eastern part of the London Borough of Islington. The site is just to the north side of the Regents Canal, a branch of the Grand Union canal. Prebend Street lies to the north, with Bevan Street and Rector Street to the east. Allingham Street and Dame Street lie to the west

Topography: The site lies on the north side of the Thames valley, in an area predominantly consisting of residential properties and is surrounded by terraced and multi-storey dwellings. Shops are also located nearby. The land slopes from Prebend Street in the north (22.2m aOD) to the south-west end of Arlington Avenue (20m aOD). The area of the site lies at a height of about 2m below the surrounding the estate roads.

Geology: The underlying geology consists of Taplow Gravels over London Clay, and in some areas with Brickearth.

Planning Background

The proposed development area is occupied by an array of five storey blocks of flats, separated by areas of car parking, hardstanding, landscaping, open spaces and playgrounds.

There is to be a phased demolition and development of the estate over a period of about eight years for the building of 1 to 8 storey buildings (some with basements) for 538 x 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom affordable flats, maisonettes and houses, as well as 301 x 1 and 2 bedroom market housing flats for private sale. The development also includes 800sqm of retail space, a 290 sqm community centre and an outdoor recreation facility, a 3 storey workshop, single storey youth centre together with an adventure playground, open spaces, gardens, car parking and new roads. A complete development plan is shown in fig. 4, along with the six phases.

This evaluation report only covers Phase I of the development. Further reports will be issued to cover the additional phases.

Archaeological and Historical Background

The available archaeological, historical and cartographical evidence suggests there was little Prehistoric or Roman activity or occupation in the Islington area. By the late Saxon period Islington was only a small village. Islington seems to have remained as small village throughout the Medieval and that Post-Medieval periods. It was only in the 19th century that Islington was fully developed.

Taking the evidence as a whole, before the evaluation, the potential for Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval settlement and activity around the site seems low. The sparsity of evidence for settlement and activity in the area of the site may be a result of a lack of archaeological investigation, rather than a lack of activity or settlement.

Prehistoric

The lack of any evidence of Prehistoric activity, other than Neolithic hand axes, imply that this was an unimportant area during this period. The Neolithic axes may imply that bands of itinerant hunters were penetrating northwards up the river valleys.

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was not significant Prehistoric occupation around the site and therefore the potential for any Prehistoric archaeology on site is considered low.

Roman

There is little Roman material from Islington. The road is not proven, though the tombstone, if its original findspot was *in situ* may relate to a roadside burial.

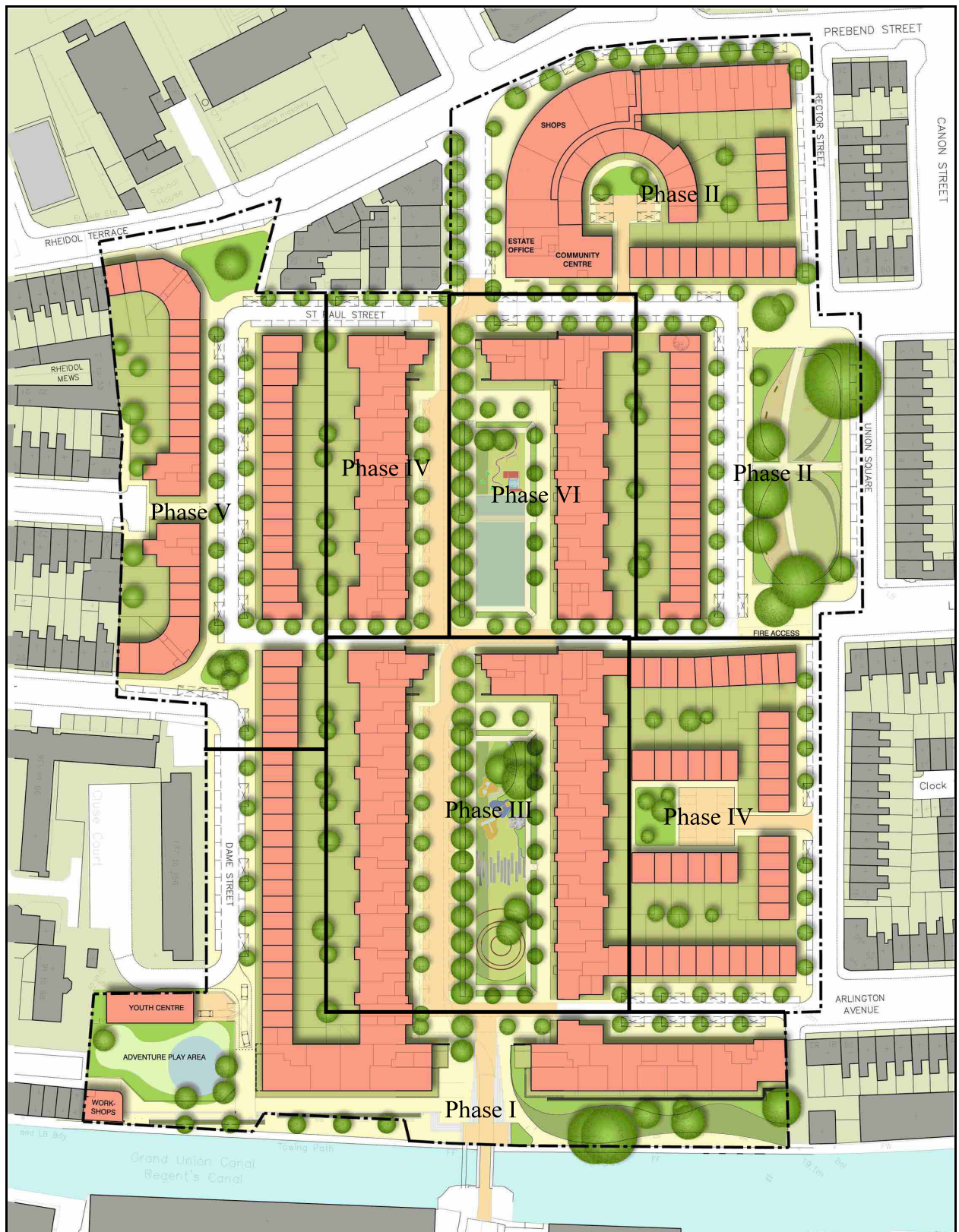


Fig. 4 Packington estate: development plan and phases

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was too little information to be precise, so there is only a low potential for Roman archaeology on this site.

Saxon

The Saxon settlement was probably concentrated around St. Mary's Church, which was the site of the early manor-house. It is unlikely that remains of this period could be present on the site.

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was only a low potential for Saxon archaeology.

Medieval and Post-Medieval

As with the Prehistoric to Saxon periods, the nature of any Medieval activity around the site remains undefined. Islington was probably a small settlement at the junction of two roads throughout the Medieval period.

In the Post-Medieval period Islington probably expanded along the Upper and Lower Roads. This is the picture shown by the maps. Islington expanded in the late 19th century.

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was only a low potential for Medieval and Post-Medieval archaeology.

Research objectives

In September 2007 Sutton Archaeological Services produced its research design. Based on our brief assessment of the evidence, we formed the objectives to look for signs of any Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval occupation and activity on the site, and if found to determine their extent, date, condition and significance.

The Institute of Field Archaeologists has defined the purpose of a field evaluation as follows.

“The purpose of field evaluation is to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:

- the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- the formulation of a strategy to initiate a threat to the archaeological resource

- the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.”

Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations, IFA, 2001

Archaeological Proposals

Usually, where development may destroy archaeology, an evaluation is undertaken to identify the presence or absence, extent, character, quality and date of any threatened deposits and, where necessary, to develop an appropriate mitigation strategy.

SAS proposed to excavate 3, 11m x 11m stepped trenches reducing to a 5m x 5m trench and 1, 9m x 9m stepped trench reducing to a 3m x 3m trench for the Phase I development.

Archaeological methodology

Standards: SAS carried out the archaeological evaluation in accordance with

- our research design dated September 2007. See below for changes we made to trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- the Institute of Field Archaeologists’ Code of Conduct, Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangement in Field Archaeology, Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluations
- the archaeological guidance papers issued by English Heritage.

Control: All excavation work was done under the control of the archaeologists on site.

Trenches: We dug 4 trenches as shown on fig 5. Trench 1 was moved 5m to the west, enabling the amount of overburden needed to be removed to be reduced and the excavated area increase to 10m x 8m. The area of trench 2 was being used as a storage area by the developers, so the trench was moved to the south in the area of the adventure playground. In the area of trench 3, the developers removed part of the overburden enabling an area of 10m x 5m to be excavated. The overburden in the area of trench 4 was less than expected, enabling a 15m by 4m area to be examined, instead of a deeper, stepped trench. These changes allowed a larger area to be examined.

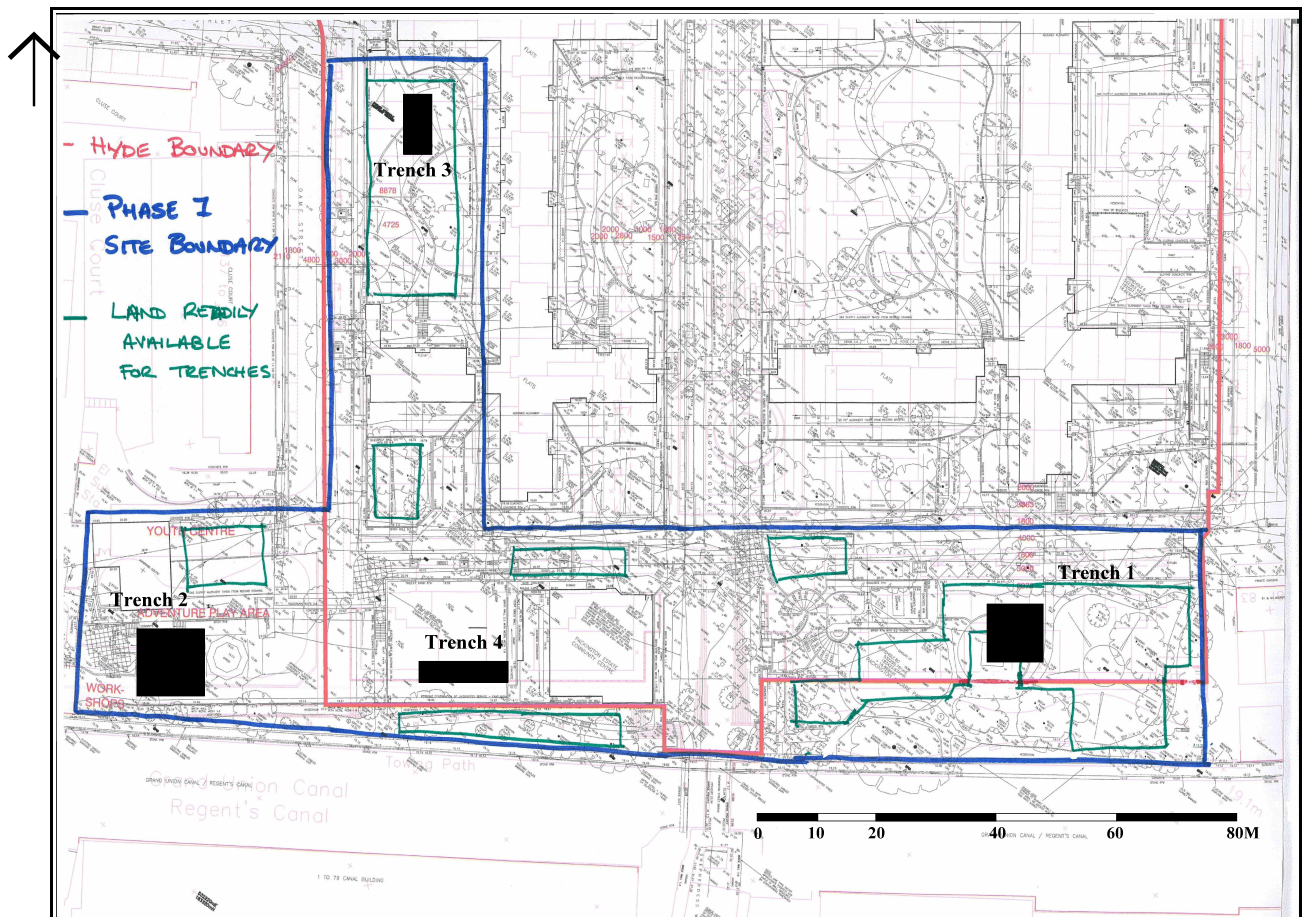


Fig. 5 Trench location plan

We initially broke open the trenches with a JCB 3CX excavator, but later with a 360° tracked machine, using a smooth-edged ditching bucket and a toothed bucket where appropriate.

Non-archaeological deposits: In each trench we removed by machine, in level spits of no more than 10-15cm, the made ground deposit. Work continued removing all overburden until we reached the first significant archaeological layer (or the natural deposits), at which point all machine work ceased in that trench. (We excavated up to 30cm into the natural to make sure we had reached true natural and not re-deposited material.) In this way we excavated the trench without finding any archaeological deposits.

Site records: We recorded all features as we proceeded, by written records, plans, sections and photographs. In all, we recorded 23 contexts - numbered [001] to [023] - in a single context recording system. The site was recorded in accordance with the Fieldwork Methodology in our research design, and using the Museum of London's recording system.

Levels: All levels were initially taken from the developers site survey, then by the developers surveyor using GPS and finally from a site datum.

Backfilling: After excavating and recording the trench was backfilled and all spoil left on site.

Evaluation results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated in an area of a children's playground. The playground was in an depression, with the surrounding land sloping down to the level of the playground. The first context was the turf and topsoil on the sloping ground down to the playground. The rubberised foam covered concrete playground surface had been removed along with the playground structures. The topsoil was a friable, dark brown sandy clay [001](west: 19.625m aOD to east: 19.995m aOD and 18.96m aOD on the playground). It covered the site to a depth of c. 10cm.

Below 001 was a friable to soft, medium to dark brown sandy clay [002](west: 19.525m aOD to east: 19.895m aOD), containing 10-15% medium to large bricks and occasional large fragments of concrete. The context covered part of the trench to a depth of between 1.05m to 1.18m. It also contained fragments of glass, metal and several sherds of 20th century pottery.

Context 003 was the concrete footing for the brick wall surrounding the playground along the north and east sides of the trench (west: 18.345m aOD to east: 18.355m aOD) to a depth of 11cm - 12cm.

A layer of brick rubble lay below the concrete, again along the north and east sides of the trench, [004] (west: 18.235m aOD to east: 18.235m aOD). It consisted of a friable to soft, light to dark brown coarse sand to sandy clay, containing occasional small to large flint pebbles to a depth of 22cm.

The brick rubble overlaid a sand and gravel layer that formed the playground foundation below the rubberised foam covered concrete surface [005] (west: 18.015m aOD to east: 17.975m aOD). It was a loose, light olive brown coarse sand, containing 60-70% medium to large flint pebbles to a depth of 15-16cm.

A further layer of made ground lay below **005**, a soft, medium to dark brown silty clay that covered the whole of the trench area **[006]** (west: 17.855m aOD to east: 17.825m aOD). This context contained moderate small to large flint pebbles and occasional large brick fragments to a depth of 41cm.

On the western side of the trench the remains of a concrete paddling pool were revealed **[007]**(top: 18.285m aOD). The depth of the pool side was 28cm to a blue mosaic surface, with a total depth of 1.10m.

The paddling pool had been built directly into the natural sand and gravel **[008]** (west: 17.445m aOD to east: 17.415m aOD, and 17.185m aOD below the pool). The natural was a loose, yellowish brown silty coarse sand, containing 50-60% fine to large flint pebbles.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was excavated in an area of a children's adventure playground, at the western end of the site. The turf and topsoil was the first context, a soft, dark brown sandy clay **[009]**(west: 18.94m aODm to east: 18.98m aOD). It covered the site to a depth of 13-17cm.

Below the turf and topsoil was a drainage layer of sand. A friable, orangish brown coarse sand **[010]**(west: 18.94m aODm to east: 18.98m aOD), containing 10-20% small to large flint pebbles.

The next context was a layer of made ground, a friable, dark brown sandy clay that covered the whole of the trench area **[011]**(west: 18.62m aODm to east: 18.75m aOD). This context contained 10-15% medium to large CBM fragments and occasional lumps of concrete to a depth of 65-72cm.

The remains of a factory building lay below **011**. It consisted of the remains of 3 brick floors, between a series of brick walls. The walls lay on concrete footings, which also lay on a concrete slab. Made ground deposits lay between the brick walls. The whole of this building was recorded as context **[012]**(west: 17.92m aODm to east: 18.11m aOD).

In the area around the building **[012]** was another context of made ground. This was a soft, medium brown to dark brown sandy clay **[013]**(west: 17.92m aODm). The context contained frequent medium to large CBM fragments and small to large flint pebbles, as well as occasional lumps of concrete. The depth of the context was between was 1.20m to 1.28m.

Below contexts **012** and **013** was a further context of made ground. This was a soft, medium to reddish brown very sandy clay [**014**](west: 16.64m aODm to east: 16.90m aOD). The context contained frequent small to large CBM fragments and small to large flint pebbles. The depth of the context was between was 38cm to 41cm.

The next context was a soft, black clayey silt [**015**](west: 16.26m aODm to east: 16.49m aOD) containing moderate small to medium flint pebbles, flecks of charcoal and occasional large fragments of CBM. The context was excavated to a depth of 1.50m (west: 14.99m aODm to east: 14.76m aOD). At this point water was coming into the trench and part of one section collapsed. The trench was abandoned on safety reasons. The natural sand and gravel was not reached.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was the northerly of the four trenches. The borehole logs suggested there was up to 2m of overburden over the natural sand and gravel. Part of the development scheme was the upgrading of the various services, such as gas and water. About 1.50m of overburden was removed by the developers trying to find the water main. The main was located and diverted. An examination of the water main trench, revealed possible archaeological remains in the section.

The remaining overburden was also removed under archaeological supervision. It was a friable, medium to dark brown sandy clay [**016**](south 18.728m aOD to north: 18.755m aOD), containing 10-15% medium to large bricks and occasional large fragments of concrete and small to large flint pebbles. The context covered the whole trench to a depth of between 78cm to 95cm. It also contained fragments of glass, metal and sherds of 20th century pottery.

The remains of several stone walls were revealed when the overburden was removed. The walls consisted of two groups (fig. 6). The northern one consisted of two contemporary walls forming a cross [**017**](south 18.09m aOD to north: 17.95m aOD) and the southern one formed the stub end of a further wall [**018**](18.12m aOD). The stone walls [**017** and **018**] were constructed of re-used, and in many cases burnt stone. Most of the stonework was rough, but many showed signs of tooling and decoration, with an earlier, white mortar still adhering to the stone. The mortar in the walls had a yellowish, sandy matrix. A number of red bricks were also found mortared in the walls, with a yellow stock brick in wall [**018**].

The walls had been destroyed to the east and south, where the water main trench had destroyed all traces of the walls. This was also the case on the western and northern sides, where modern

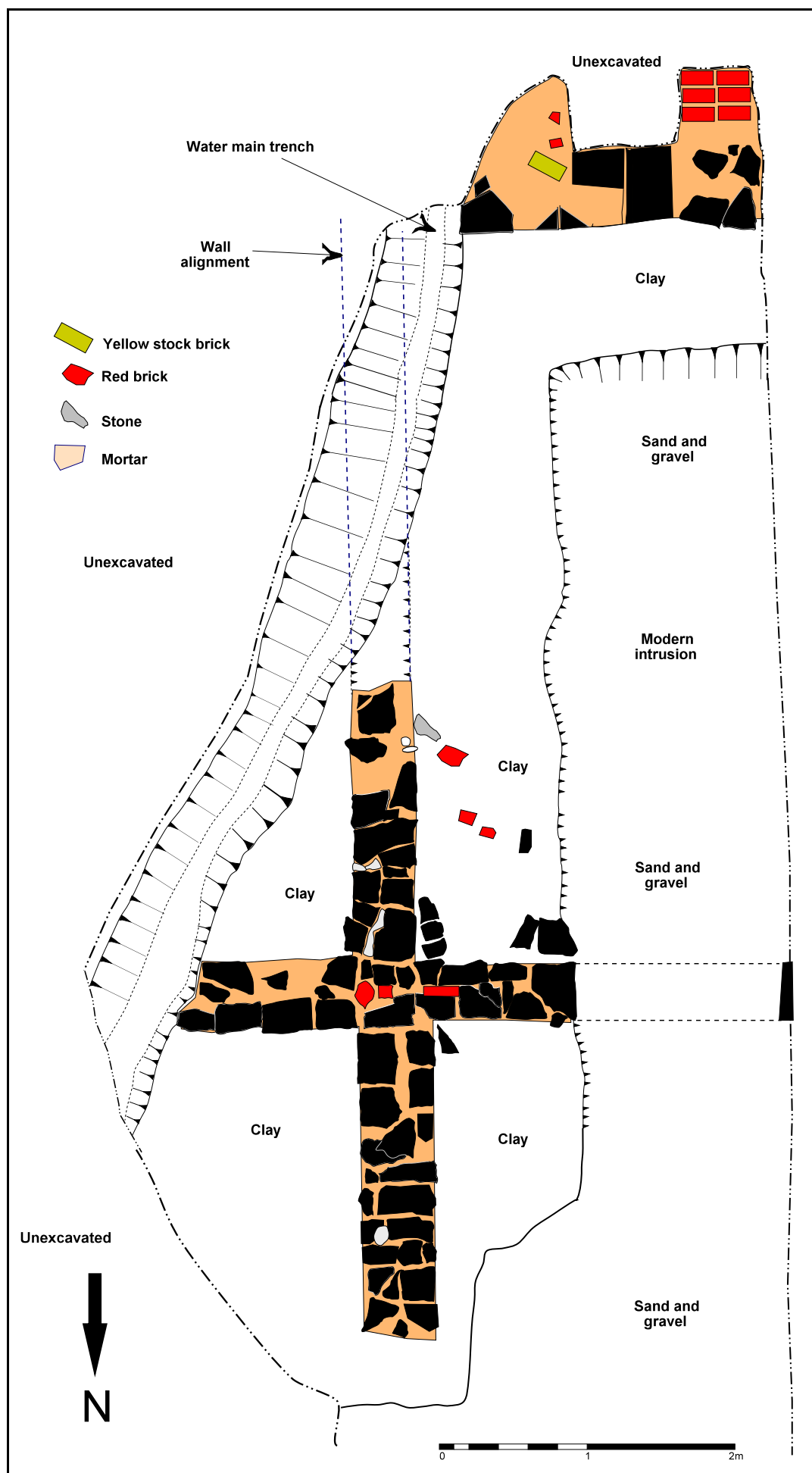


Fig. 6

Trench 3: plan

intrusions had also destroyed the walls. Other than the 19th century bricks within the walls, there was no dating evidence.

The stone walls were built on a clay context, a light orangish brown clay [019](south 17.81m aOD to north: 17.83m aOD) , containing very occasional small to medium flint pebbles.

Below the clay was the natural sand and gravel, a loose, light orangish brown silty coarse sand, containing 30-40% very fine to large flint pebbles [020](south 17.68m aOD to north: 17.73m aOD).

Trench 4

Trench 4 was excavated in an area of a sunken playground/basketball court, next to the Packington Estate Community Centre. The Community Centre had already been removed down to the concrete slab and when the slab was removed only the natural sand and gravel lay immediately below, all other levels having been removed. The crushed material from the Community Centre and other areas was temporarily stored over the basketball court. The crush was removed before the archaeological work began, along with the tarmac surface to the court.

The first context was either a made ground deposit or demolition debris from the previous builds that stood on the site. It was a friable to soft, dark brown sandy clay [021](west: 18.72m aOD to east: 18.845m aOD), containing 25-35% medium to large bricks and occasional fragments of concrete and white mortar. The context covered the trench to a depth of between 67cm to 76cm. It also contained fragments of glass, metal and several sherds of 19th century pottery.

A subsoil context lay below context 021, the only place in the Phase I site where this was found. It was a very soft, medium brown silty clay [022](west: 17.96m aOD to east: 18.17m aOD), containing occasional small to medium flint pebbles. The context contained sherds of late Medieval and Post Medieval pottery as well as clay pipe bowls of 18th and 19th century date. The depth of the context was between 33cm to 41cm.

The final context was the natural sand and gravel, a loose, light orangish brown silty coarse sand [023](west: 17.63m aOD to east: 17.76m aOD), containing 25-30% very fine to large flint pebbles.

Assessment and interpretation

The evidence from the SAS preliminary research indicated that there was little potential for Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval archaeology and activity in the surrounding area.

Four trenches were excavated across the site revealing made ground, modern features, the remains of 19th century structures, subsoil, all over the natural sand and gravel.

Trench 1: the area had been truncated down to the sand and gravel, and a children's paddling pool was built in the area when the flats were first built. The pool later went out of use and the ground was built up, landscaped and a children's playground constructed. The gravel was located at about 17.42m aOD.

Trench 2: there was made ground above the remains of 19th/20th century building and demolition levels including some walls. Two further deep levels of made ground were found, but no natural sand and gravel. The trench went down to 14.76m aOD, well below the height of the gravel in the other trenches. This area of the site appears to have been heavily truncated at sometime in the 19th century or earlier, possibly for gravel extraction.

Trench 3: some of the foundations of the 19th century buildings were revealed. These were constructed with burnt, re-used Medieval masonry. The masonry was probably robbed from some Medieval monastic building during the Tudor dissolution of the monasteries. It was then probably reused in a Tudor building, which was burn down in the 19th century. The masonry was then imported to the site, possibly via the canal, and reused a second time in the foundations of the 19th century housing that was demolished in the 1960s. The width of one building plot was revealed, with a distance of about 5m between party walls. A check was made on the width of the remaining 19th century building plots in the surrounding streets. These plots were also about 5m in width. The height of the gravel was at about 17.70m aOD.

Trench 4: below the 19th century levels, were the remains of the original subsoil, the only location on the site where this was found. The natural sand and gravel lay below at about 17.70m aOD. No signs of any earlier occupation were found.

There was no evidence for archaeology, other than modern, in the four trenches and the only finds were modern CBM, re-used Medieval stone and pottery dating from the late Medieval to 20th century.

Archaeological potential

Following the evaluation our revised view is that this site has no potential for archaeological remains of any period.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our findings set out above lead us to conclude that the proposed development will not threaten to destroy any archaeological remains of national, regional or local importance, deserving further investigation or preservation.

We suggest that no further archaeological monitoring or intervention is needed in Phase I and that the archaeological condition in the planning consent for this phase has been fulfilled. The decision to discharge the archaeological condition, however, rests with the local planning authority on the advice of the Archaeological Officer at English Heritage. It will be made when all phases have been completed.

Publications and dissemination

The evidence is not worthy of publication but a note on the evaluation will be placed in the *London Archaeologist's* round-up and a copy of the report lodged in the local library.

Archive

The resulting archive, including all of the finds, will be donated by the developer and deposited with the Museum of London when the final report has been completed.

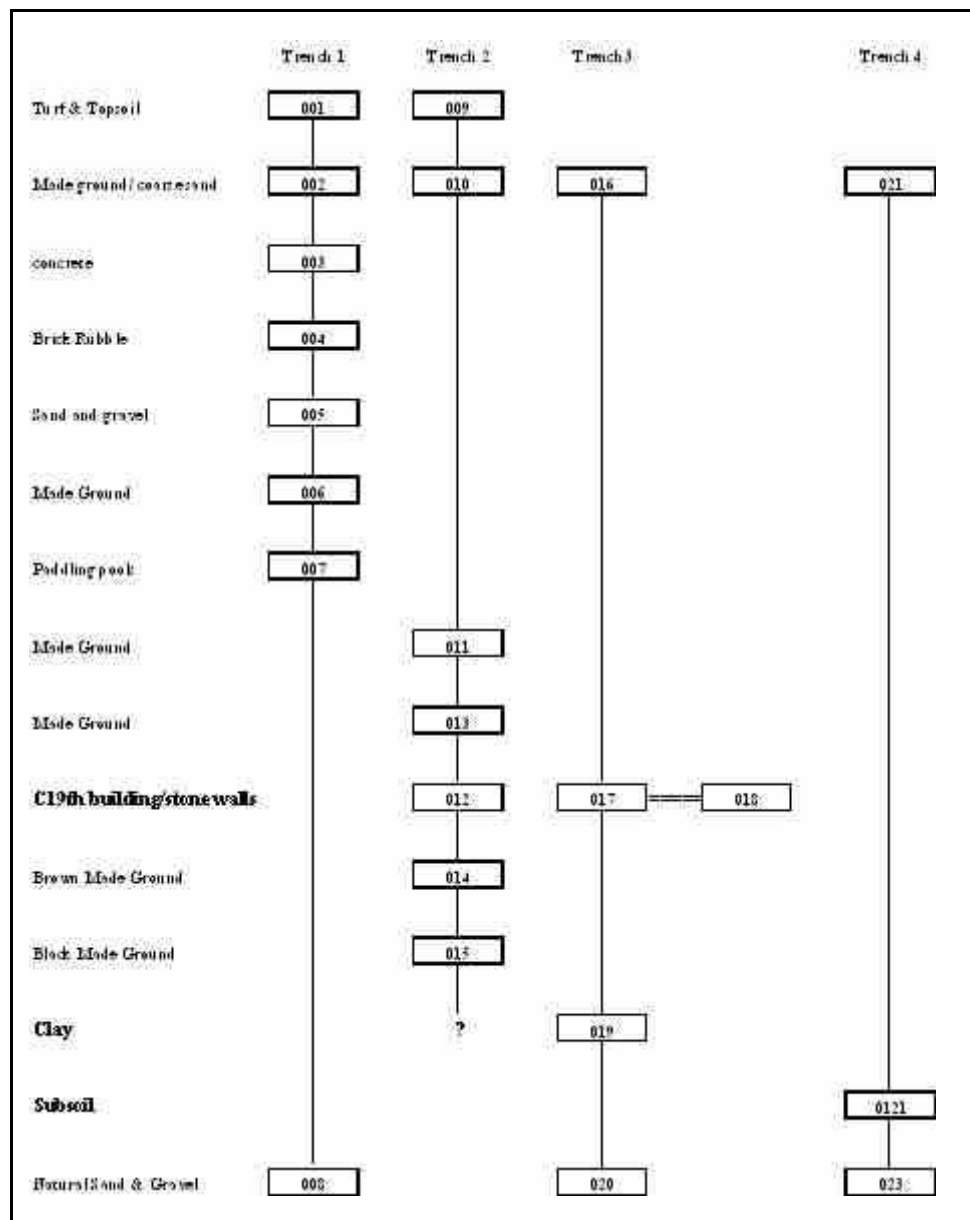


Fig. 7 Context matrix



Plate 1 Trench 1: North section



Plate 2 Paddling pool



Plate 3 Paddling pool surface

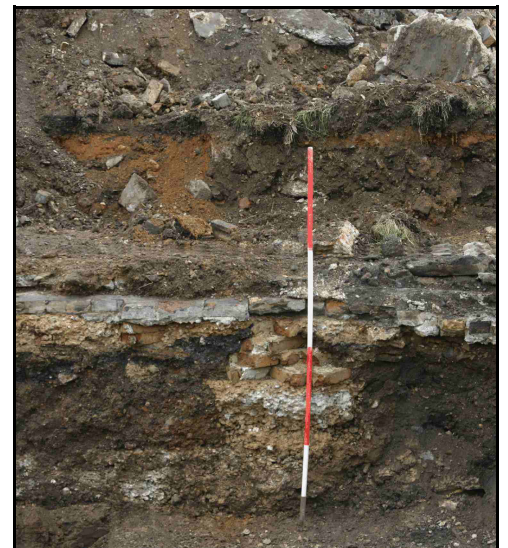


Plate 4 Trench 2: upper section

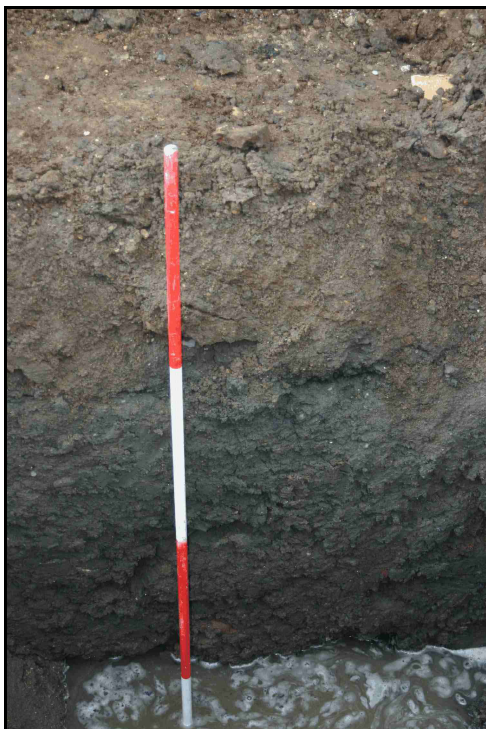


Plate 5 Trench 2; lower section



Plate 6 Trench 3: north section



Plate 7 Trench 3: Walls 017 and 018



Plate 8 Trench 4: south section

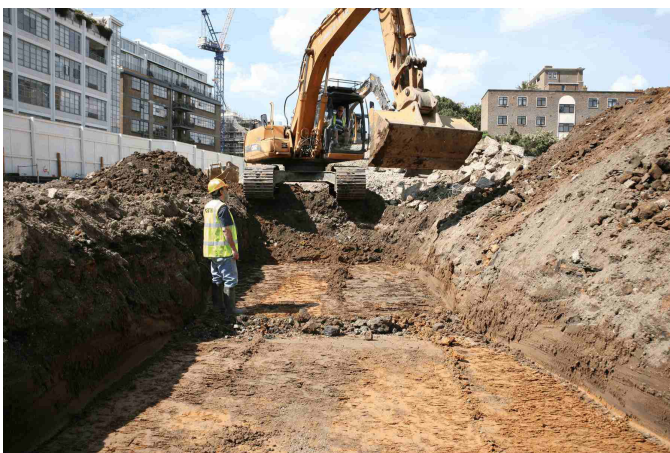


Plate 9 Trench 4: looking west



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