

Sutton Archaeological Services

Evaluation Report

on

32-42 Bethnal Green Road,

London, E1 6HZ.

BNJ 09 (TQ 3375 8230)

for

Telford Homes Plc.

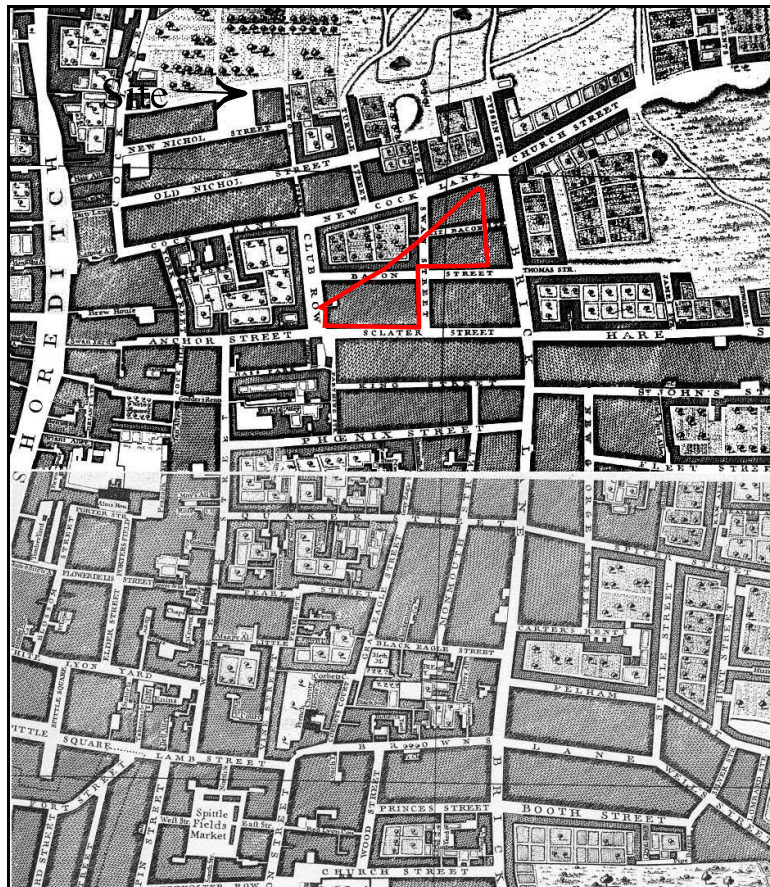


Fig. 1 John Rocque's map (1746)

SAS

Dir. **JEFFREY G. PERRY: BA(Hons), MIFA.**

Evaluation Report

on

**32-42 Bethnal Green Road,
London, E1.**

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
BNJ 09 (TQ 3375 8230)

by

J G PERRY: November 2010

Summary

This relates to the development site at 32-42 Bethnal Green Road, London, E1. Sutton Archaeological Services (SAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation and watching brief in two phases between 19th October 2009 and 16th November 2009 and 15th and 24th November 2010.

The site lay in an area of archaeological importance as defined in London Borough of Tower Hamlet's Unitary Development Plan. Research by Sutton Archaeological Services for the research design indicated that there was Post-Medieval occupation and activity in the surrounding area.

Three stepped trenches were excavated across the site revealing made ground, alluvial clay and black sandy silt above the natural gravel, as well as a number of 19th century brick built structures, mainly cellars. In trench 1, several 18th to early 19th century structures were found. These consisted of a brick built cess pit and another underlying pit. Two sherds of late 18th to 19th century pottery along with fruit stones of wild cherry and plum. Fragments of concrete, CBM, wood, glass, metal and 19th to 20th century pottery were recovered from the made ground deposits in all three trenches.

No archaeology, other than 18th century to modern, was found on the site and some potential for environmental analysis was revealed, consisting of the contents of an 18th century brick built cess pit and an earlier 18th century pit.

Following the evaluation, our revised view is that the site has no potential for archaeological remains of any period. Our findings set out above lead us to conclude that the proposed development did 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 and that the archaeological condition in the planning consent 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.

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Situation

This interim report relates to the eastern part of the proposed development site at 32-42 Bethnal Green Road, London, E1. The final evaluation report will cover the entire site including the current results and the results from the remaining two trenches.

Telford Homes Plc (the Developer) commissioned Sutton Archaeological Services (SAS) to carry out an archaeological evaluation and any subsequent archaeological work that may be necessary.

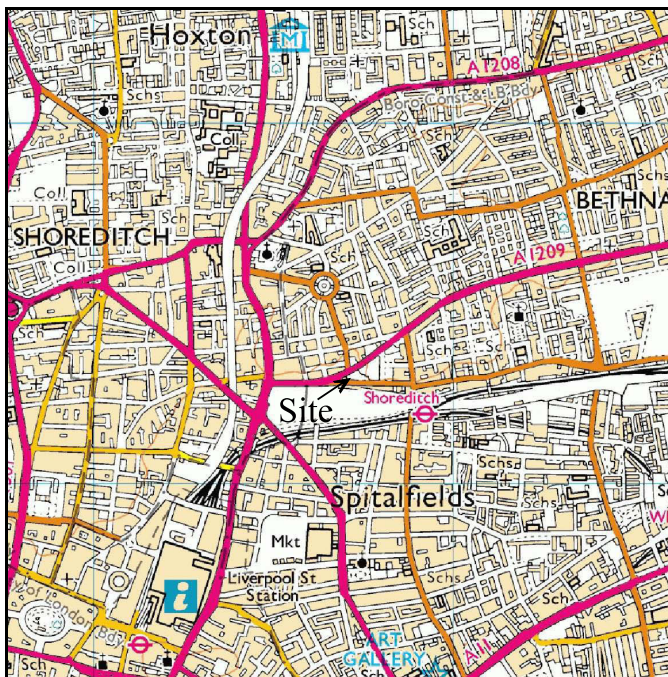


Fig. 2 Site Location © Crown Copyright MC/98/38

Location: The site lies in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, close to its western boundary with the London Borough of Hackney. The site lies just to the east of the A10, Shoreditch High Street, close to the junction of Bethnal Green Road and Sclater Street. To the north lies Arnold Circus, with Brick Lane to the west. Liverpool Street Station, Spitalfields Market and Commercial Street lie to the south.

Topography: The site lies in a residential and commercial area on the western side of the Lea valley, which runs southwards to the Thames. The ground slopes downwards from the north (18m aOD) to the south (15m aOD), with the site lying at a height of about 15-16m aOD.

Geology: Under the site lies over brickearth over the natural sand and gravel and London clay.

Planning background

The site was a series of single storey commercial properties fronting on to Bethnal Green Road that have now been demolished.

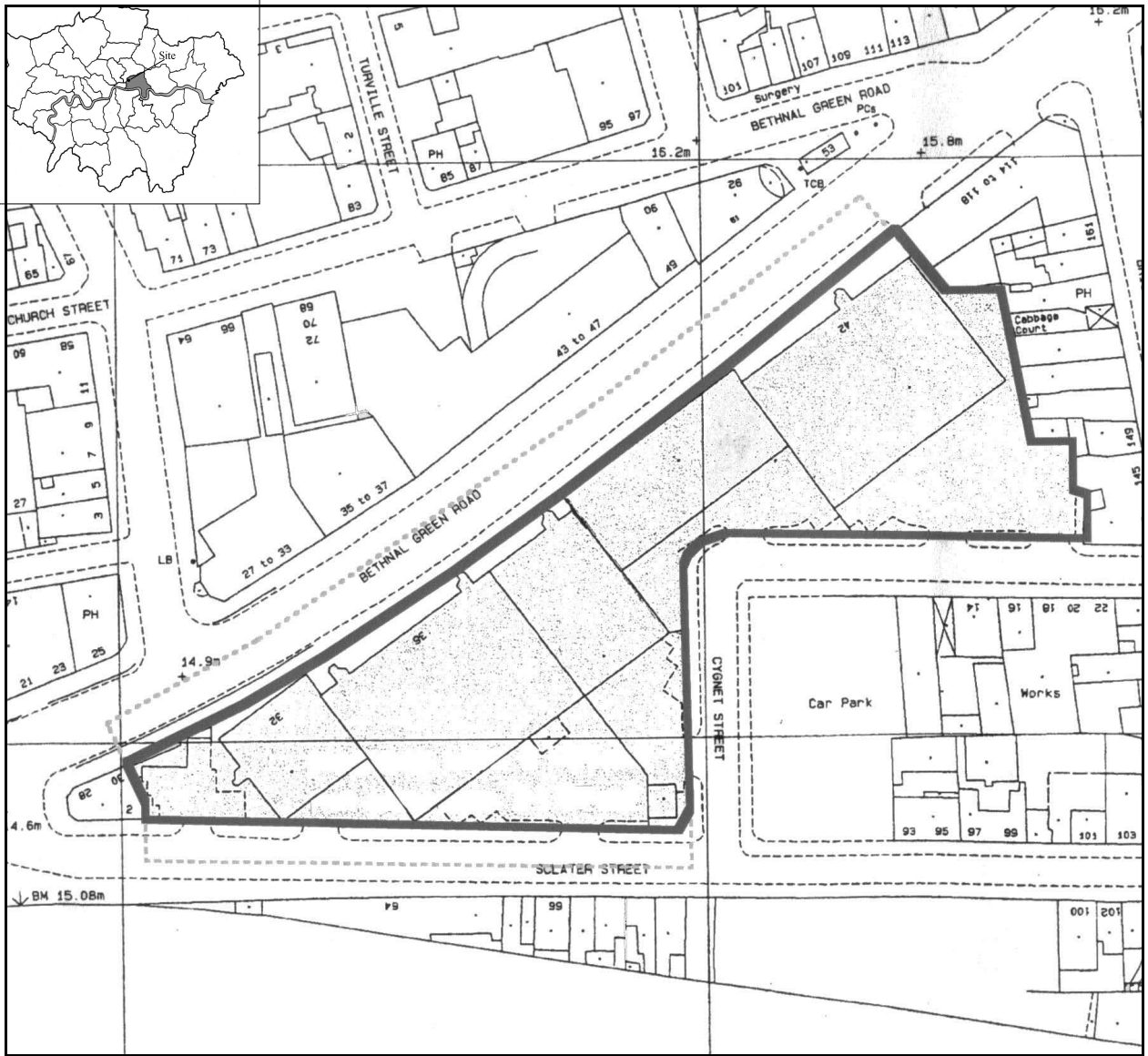


Fig. 3

Site Location Plan

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Planning permission has been received for to demolition of the existing buildings and for the erection of two buildings from 4 to 25 stories in height. They will provide 3,434 sqm of commercial floor space within use class A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, B8, D1 & D2 and 360 residential units (comprising of 32 x studios, 135 x 1 bed, 116 x 3 bed, 7 x 4 bed, 5 x 5 bed), basement car parking, bicycle parking, refuse, recycling, access new public space (figs. 4 and 5).

London Borough of Tower Hamlets approved planning permission for the proposed development and included an archaeological condition under PPG 16¹ in planning approval PA/07/2193 dated 21st May 2008:

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

9. *No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme for investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme pursuant to this condition. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body that should be agreed by the local planning authority.*

Archaeological discussion

There is evidence for human occupation and activity in the research area, though this is mostly confined to the Medieval and later periods. Taking the evidence as a whole, before the evaluation, the potential for Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval occupation and activity seemed low.

Prehistoric: There were only a few Prehistoric finds recorded in the research area. However, this could be due to a lack of archaeological survey in the research area, rather than a lack of Prehistoric activity or finds.

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was a low potential for Prehistoric archaeology on this site.

Roman: The main Roman occupation and activity is well away from the site. The building material from Shoreditch High Street may belong to buildings along the line of the supposed Roman road. Any Roman settlement in this area is more likely to be found by the crossroads of the two Roman roads. All the Roman burials are away from the site, around the Spitalfields area.

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was a low potential for Roman archaeology on this site.

Saxon: There was no evidence for Saxon occupation or activity in the research area. Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was a low potential for Saxon archaeology on this site.

Medieval: There was little evidence for Medieval occupation in the immediate area around the site. There was a large population in the area, but the known settlements, in this case Bethnal Green, were well away from the site. The two main areas of Medieval activity, the two religious sites, one to the west and the other to the south are well away from the site.

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was a low potential for Medieval archaeology on this site.

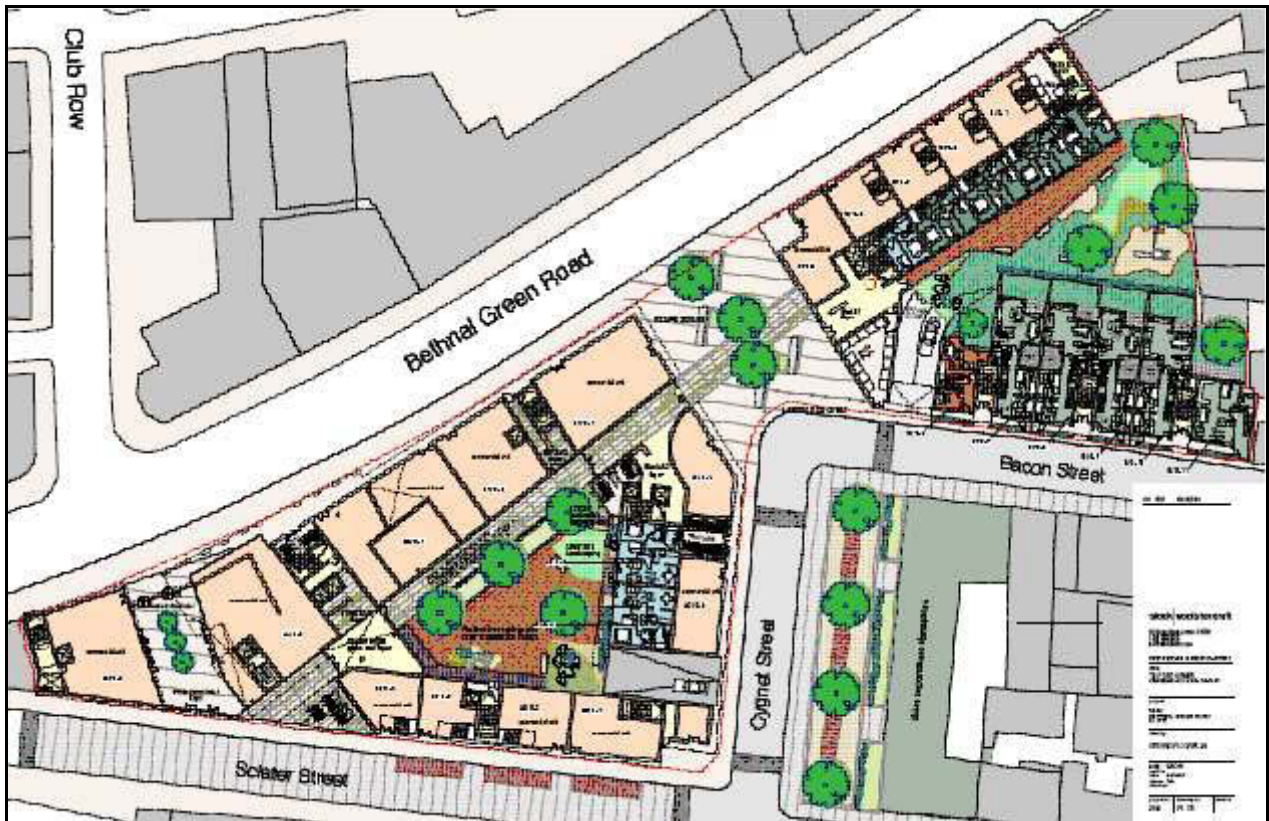


Fig. 4 Ground floor plan

Post-Medieval to Modern: The cartographic evidence suggested the development around the site began in the 17th century, being the northerly extension of Spittle Fields Hamlet (Gascoyne 1703). The surrounding areas appear from Gascoyne’s map to be market gardens. It was not until the late 19th century the area was fully developed.

Pre-evaluation evidence suggested there was a low potential for Post-Medieval to Modern archaeology on this site.

Research objectives

In January 2009 Sutton Archaeological Services produced its research design. Based on our brief assessment of the evidence, we formed the objectives to look for signs of Post-Medieval to Modern occupation and activity on the site, and if found to determine their extent, date, condition and significance.

The Institute for 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

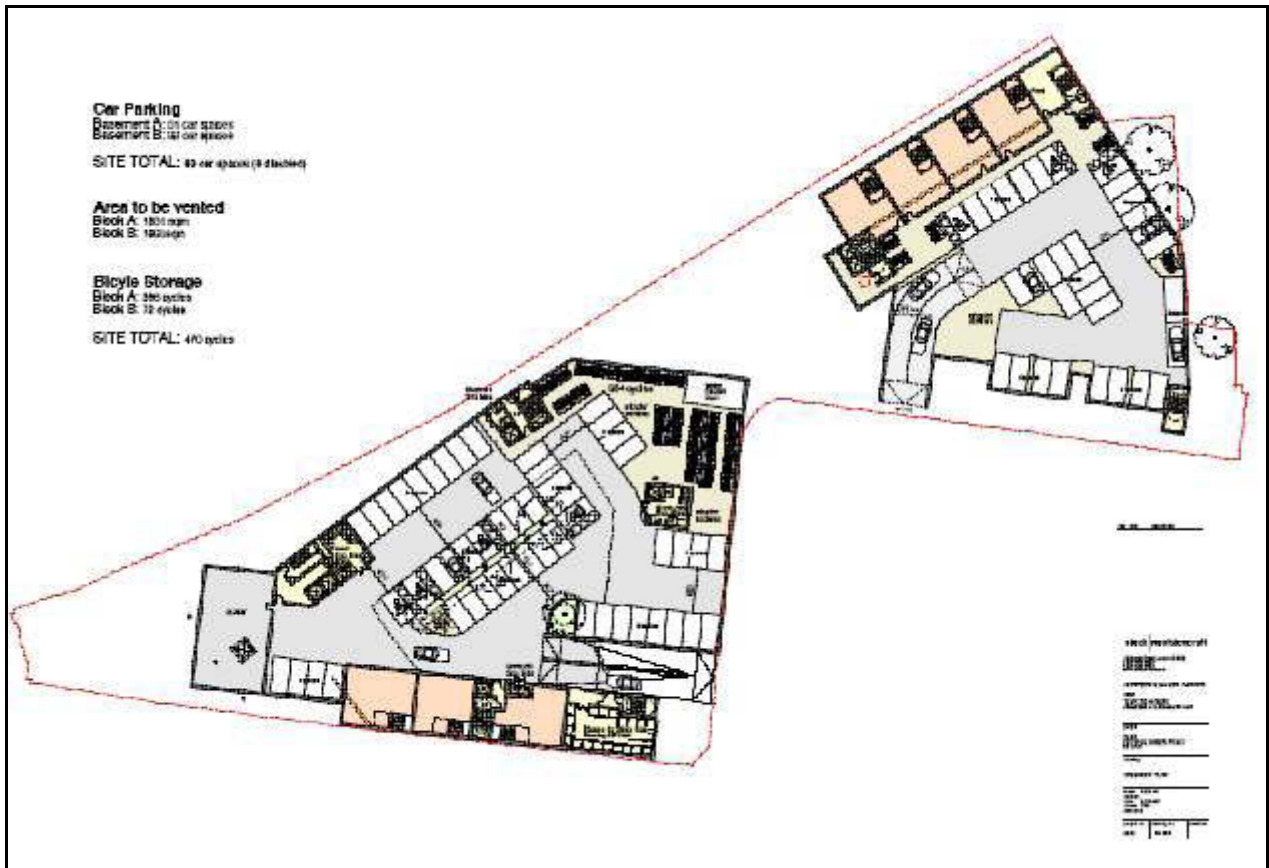


Fig. 5 Basement plan

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 a suitable mitigation strategy or design measures to protect the archaeology. If significant remains were encountered then further investigation would have been needed to mitigate the impact of development, and the scope of that work would have been detailed in another Research Design.

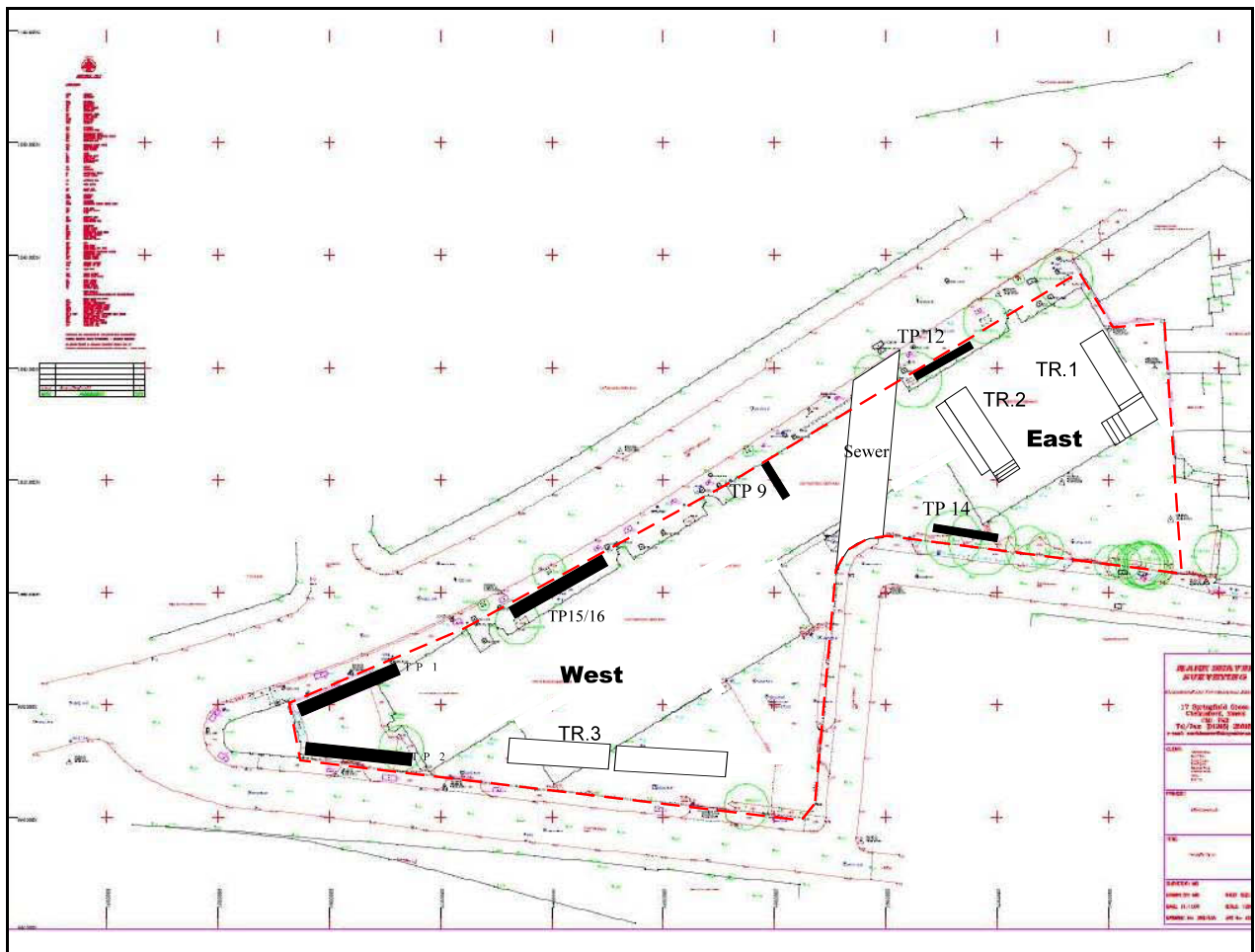


Fig. 6 Watching brief and trench location plan

SAS initially proposed to excavate 7, 15m x 2m stepped trenches across the site. Following the monitoring of a series of test pits and, with the agreement of English Heritage, the trenches were reduced to 4 x 15m x 4m stepped trenches and their position changed. After the first two trenches had been excavated and with further discussions with English Heritage, the remaining two trenches were combined to make 1, 30m x 2m trench (see fig. 5).

Archaeological methodology

Standards: SAS carried out the archaeological evaluation in accordance with:

- our research design dated January 2009.
- 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. 6. The archaeological evaluation followed directly behind the demolition process, which only concerned to the above ground structures, and the excavation of some test trenches.

We broke open the trenches with a 360° tracked machine, using a 2m wide-bladed smooth-edged ditching bucket.

Non-archaeological deposits: In each trench we removed by machine, in level spits of no more than 10-15 cm, the made ground deposits. 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 trenches without finding any archaeological deposits other than 18th century and later items.

Site records: We recorded all features as we proceeded, by written records, plans, sections and photographs. In all, we recorded 18 contexts - numbered [001] to [018] - 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: Levels for the eastern part of the site were taken from the developers site survey 258/03A dated 21/11/06, while those for the western part site temporary bench mark, value ***.

Backfilling: After excavating and recording the demolition contractors backfilled the trenches and roughly levelled the ground.

Evaluation and watching brief results

A watching brief was carried out before the main archaeological evaluation began. Most of these investigations were in the western part of the site, with only a few in the eastern part. They were located around the perimeter of the site to see what, if any, obstructions were present before the insertion of the sheet piling for the basement. They were generally deep excavations and health and safety considerations prevented any access to them. All observations were taken from the surface and

individual made ground deposits were noted, but not recorded in full. A quick level was taken on the top of the natural and any none made ground deposits. No other measurements were made. The concrete slab had been removed, revealing the underlying brick rubble make up deposit.

Test Pits 1 and 2 (plate 6 and 7)

The first context was again a mixed demolition and concrete make up deposit between 0.25m to 0.34m deep. Below this was what appeared to be an infilled, brick built Victorian basement. The walls of which could be seen in the southern and western edges of test pit 2 and the northern edge and western edges of test pit 1. The infill was a orangish sand containing brick rubble and other debris. In test pit 2 the brick floor was removed to reveal the natural sand and gravel at 11.10m aOD at the western end and 9.95m aOD at the eastern end. In test pit the natural sand and gravel was at 11.40m aOD.

Test Pit 9 (plate 5)

The first context was a mixed demolition and concrete make up deposit about 0.53m deep. Below this was an infilled, brick built Victorian basement. The whole of the basement was filled with a dark brown sandy clay containing brick rubble and other debris. The brick floor was removed to reveal the natural sand and gravel (11.70m aOD).

Test Pit 12

The first context was a mixed demolition and concrete make up deposit between 0.48m and 0.52m deep containing numerous brick and concrete fragments. Below the demolition deposit there appeared to be several made ground deposits. They mainly consisted of a sandy clay 1.90m to 2.05m deep with 19th century brick fragments. Below the made ground was a black sandy silt garden soil deposit (13.20m aOD) about 0.95m deep. The natural brickearth was recorded at 12.25m aOD.

Test Pit 14

The first context was a mixed demolition and concrete make up deposit between 0.75m and 0.80m deep containing numerous brick and concrete fragments. Below the demolition deposit were various made ground deposits. They mainly consisted of a sandy clay 2.5m to 2.75m deep with 19th century brick fragments. The natural brickearth was recorded at 11.53m aOD.

Test Pits 15 and 16 (plate 8)

These test pit were originally started as two separate pits and then joined together. The first context was again a mixed demolition and concrete make up deposit about 0.44m deep. Below this was what

appeared to be an infilled, brick built Victorian basement. The stepped wall foundation was observed along the northern edge of the pits and the infill was a sandy clay containing brick rubble and other debris. The brick floor was removed to reveal the natural sand and gravel (10.77m aOD).

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located on the east side of the eastern part of the site and oriented roughly north (15.65m aOD) to south (15.70m aOD). Originally, the trench was going to be 15 long by 4m wide, but after excavation started, a large concrete ground beam was discovered lying over a substantial brick wall. The southern 4.40m of the trench was excavated first, with the western part of this section being stepped. The remainder of the trench was continued on the other side of the concrete beam. This part of the trench was found to be an infilled basement filled with brick rubble. The trench was excavated for a further 15.60m to complete the trench and also to find the extent of the basement for the developers. Because of the instability of the brick rubble the trench was excavated to 4.5m in width and the west side had to be battered back. Cutting down through the deposits across the site, from below the ground slab, were a series of old boreholes which had been filled with flint pebbles.

Context **001** was a made ground deposit, consisting of a friable dark brown to black sandy clay. It contained about 10% small to large 19th century brick fragments and frequent small to large flint pebbles. Fragments of 19th century pottery were recovered from the context. This context was only found in the southern part of the trench and was 2.75m deep. Below **001** was a garden soil type deposit, consisting of a friable, black sandy silt [**002**] (13.95m aOD) about 1.25m deep, containing frequent small to large flint and brick fragments pebbles.

Below this context were a couple of features. The main one was a brick built pit [**004**](12.67m aOD), which measured externally 1.60m by 1.60m. Only one course of bricks remained, which was two bricks wide (21cm) and was built of broken bricks (10cm x 6.5cm x ?). The northern part of the pit was built of brick and a timber plank. Around the outside of the brick wall, but not the plank, was a 19cm thick clay lining [**007**]. Inside the pit was a very similar context the overlying garden soil [**002**]. It was a friable, black sandy silt [**003**] (12.68m aOD), containing frequent small to large flint pebbles. Two sherds of late 18th to 19th century pottery were recovered from the context.

The pit had cut into a very soft, dark grey to black silty clay [**005**] (12.69m aOD), containing occasional fine to small flint pebbles. This deposit appeared to lie in a shallow depression, rather than a cut. Below **005** was the natural brickearth, a friable to very soft, orangish brown silty clay [**006**]

(12.77m aOD), containing very occasional fine to small flint pebbles. This context was excavated to a depth of about 18-21cm, to the natural sand and gravel [008] (12.57m aOD).

The remainder of the trench, to the north of the concrete raft, comprised a large brick built Victorian basement [009] measuring a minimum 4½ m wide and at least 15m long, with a partition in the centre. The whole of the basement was filled with brick rubble and other debris. The brick floor and its' brick rubble and bitumen seal were removed to reveal the natural sand and gravel [008] (12.35m aOD).

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the central part of the eastern site and oriented roughly north (15.90m aOD) to south (15.79m aOD). The trench was excavated for a for a length of 17.60m, with a 2m step on the western side and a 2m access to the south.

The first context was a demolition deposit, a friable sandy clay [009] between 1.27m and 1.30m deep and with 10% medium to large 19th century brick fragments. Below context 009 was were several brick walls, the relationship of which were unknown and there were no associated floors. Between the walls were a series of infill deposits, some with discernable tip lines (north: 14.59m aOD to south: 14.52m aOD). They mainly consisted of a friable sandy clay [010] between 0.95m and 1.06m deep and with frequent medium to large 19th century brick fragments and small to large flint pebbles.

Below 010 was a garden soil type deposit, consisting of a friable, black sandy silt [011] (north: 13.13m aOD to south: 13.55m aOD) between 1.39m and 1.47m deep, containing frequent small to large flint and small brick fragments pebbles.

Below 011 were the remains of the natural brickearth, a friable to very soft, orangish brown silty clay [012] (12.14m aOD), containing very occasional fine to small flint pebbles. This context was between 1-3cm thick, but did not cover the whole trench, revealing the natural sand and gravel [013] (12.08m aOD) below.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located in the southern part of the western site and oriented roughly east (15.30m aOD) to west (15.15m aOD). The trench was excavated in two parts, separated by a large concrete ground beam. The western part was 14.10m by 3m wide and the eastern part was 16.40m by 3m wide. The contexts were the same in both parts of the trench.

Context **014** was a made ground deposit, consisting of a friable, dark brown to black sandy clay containing frequent small to large 19th century brick fragments and small to large flint pebbles. It was between 1.48m deep at the eastern and 1.79m at the western end. Fragments of 19th century pottery and clay pipe were recovered from the context. Contained within the context at the western end of the trench were the deep remains of a modern brick wall on a concrete foundation. At the western end, two large re-enforced concrete ground beams crossed the trench.

Below **014** was the usual garden soil type deposit, consisting of a friable, black sandy silt [**015**] (east: 13.82m aOD to west: 13.36m aOD) between 1.86m 2.13m deep. It contained frequent small to large flint pebbles and 18th century brick fragments and fragments of 18th and 19th century pottery, clay pipe and CBM were recovered. Also within the matrix were the remains of straw, as one might get from a stables.

The natural sand and gravel [**016**] lay below **015** (east: 11.69m aOD to west: 11.63m aOD). Cut into the sand and gravel in the western part was a large rectangular pit [**017**] (top 11.66m aOD). The fill of the pit [**018**] was the same as the garden soil **015**. Due to safety restrictions the pit was not fully excavated, though it contained 18th century brick and pottery fragments.

Assessment and interpretation

The evidence from the SAS preliminary research indicated that there was Post-Medieval to Modern archaeology and activity in the surrounding area, though the potential for all periods was considered low.

Three stepped trenches were excavated across the site revealing made ground, alluvial clay and black sandy silt above the natural gravel, as well as a number of 19th century brick built structures, mainly cellars. In trench 1, several 18th to early 19th century structures were found. These consisted of a brick built cess pit and another underlying pit. Two sherds of late 18th to 19th century pottery along with fruit stones of wild cherry and plum. Fragments of concrete, CBM, wood, glass, metal and 19th to 20th century pottery were recovered from the made ground deposits in all three trenches.

No archaeology, other than 18th century to modern, was found on the site and some potential for environmental analysis was revealed, consisting of the contents of an 18th century brick built cess pit and an earlier 18th century pit.

The earlier 18th and 19th century developments has been destroyed by the later, more extensive later 19th century development. The area along the sides of the site had extensive basements, up to 4m deep, truncating any earlier archaeology and the natural gravel. The central part of the two sites and in the southern part of the western section, in the area of Trench 3, appears to have been gardens and earlier part of Swan Field, owned by one Slaughter on Joel Gascoyne's Map of 1703.

Archaeological Potential

Following the evaluation, our revised view is that the eastern area of the site has no potential for archaeological remains of any period, other than some environmental analysis from two 18th century pits.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our findings set out above lead us to conclude that the proposed development did 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 and that the archaeological condition in the planning consent 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.

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 when the final report has been done.

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.

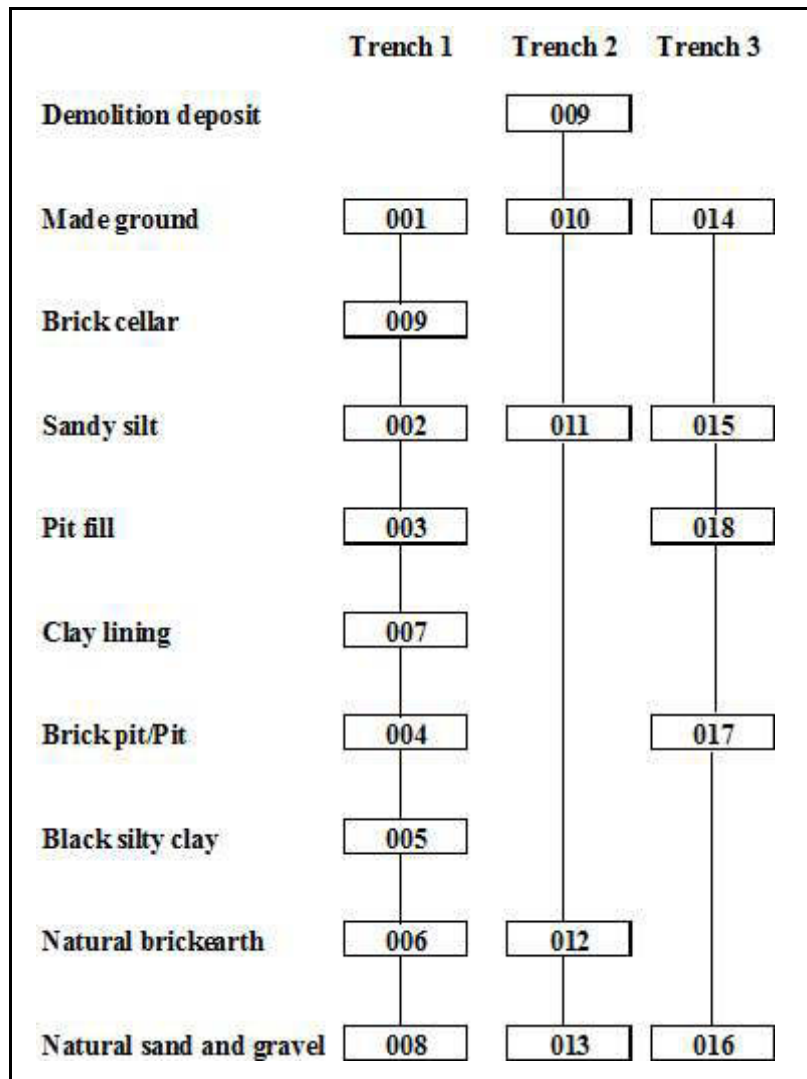


Fig. 7 Context matrix



Plate 1 Trench 1: south end



Plate 2 Trench 1: brick pit



Plate 3 Trench 1: Victorian cellar



Plate 4 Trench 1: Victorian cellar



Plate 5 Test pit 9



Plate 6 Test pit 1: west end



Plate 7 Test pit 1: east end



Plate 8 Test pit 15/16



Plate 9 Tr. 3: east end



Plate 10: Tr. 3: south section

Introduction

This report summarises the findings arising out of the archaeobotanical assessment undertaken following an archaeological evaluation at a site in London (BNJ 09). The evaluation uncovered two Post-Medieval pits from which two bulk samples were taken. The aim of this report was to ascertain the concentration and preservation of archaeobotanical material and to evaluate their potential for establishing the:

- 1) function of the context
- 2) economy and diet and
- 3) the local environment.

Methods

The bulk sample was processed by the wash-over system using a 300 micron mesh sieve. The flot and the residue were scanned using a low power zoom-stereo microscope. Identifications were made with reference to the author's modern seed reference collection, and Capers *et al* (2006), Berggren (1981) and Anderberg (1994). Recommendations for further analysis were based on the diversity, concentration and standard of preservation of the material. Plant nomenclature follows Stace (1997). The results are summarised in Table 1.

Results

Pit

The bulk samples taken from fill **003** from pit **004** and context **005**. Both contexts presented moderately diverse desiccated archaeobotanical assemblages. Context **005** presented a moderately dense assemblage with seeds of redshank (*Persicaria maculosa*), brambles (*Rubus*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), fat hen (*Chenopodium album*) plus seeds from the dead-nettle family (Lamiaceae). Fill **003** presented a large moderately dense assemblage with occasional fruit stones including wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) and plum (*P. domestica*), plus occasional to frequent seeds of black bindweed (*Polygonum convolvulus*), bramble, nightshade (*Solanum*), chickweed and rose (*Rosa*). One charred cotyledon of a vetch / pea (*Vicia / Lathyrus*) was also present. Anthracite was abundant and animal bone was occasional in both samples. Clinker, charcoal and desiccated wood were occasional in context **005**.

Interpretation and Discussion

Desiccated seeds may represent archaeological material rather than modern contamination if preserved through waterlogging. This would occur if the fills remained in a damp condition. The clay-like matrix of context **005** may have acted to provide such conditions. Brambles (raspberry or blackberry), cherries and plums are all edible and popular fruits and are common in cess pits. The remainder of the assemblages are either inedible or unlikely to have been consumed. The mixed assemblage of animal bone, clinker, charcoal and seeds may be indicative of a cess and / or rubbish pit.

Recommendations

Full analysis of the assemblages from contexts **003** and **005** has a moderate potential to establish the function of the context, aspects of the diet and the local environment through obtaining a full species list. Full analysis would also enable comparison with contemporary sites. It is therefore recommended that both assemblages from contexts **003** and **005** are fully analysed.

References

- Berggren, G. 1981 *Atlas of Seeds: Part 3*, Swedish Museum of Natural History, Berlings, Arlöv, Sweden
- Cappers, R.T.J., Bekker, R.M. and Jans, J.E.A. 2006 *Digitale Zadenatlas Van Nederland*, Barkuis Publishing and Groningen University Library, Groningen
- Stace, C. 1997 *New Flora of the British Isles* (2nd ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Table 1: BNJ 09 Archaeobotanical Assessment

Sample	Context	Cut	Sample vol. (l)	Flot vol. (ml)	Content		Wood		Other	Details
					Chd	Des.	Chd	Des.		
001	3	006	5	325	*	****			A anthracite	Chd: <i>Vicia / Lathyrus</i> Des.: <i>Prunus avium, Prunus domestica, Polygonum convolvulus, Rubus, Solanum, Stellaria media, Rosa</i>
002	5	006	5	100		****	O	O	Clinker, A anthracite	Lamiaceae, <i>Persicaria maculosa, Rubus, Stellaria media, Chenopodium album</i>

Key:

O = Occasional	*	=	<11	Chd = charred
F = Frequent	**	=	11-25	Des. = desiccated
A = Abundant	***	=	26-50	
	****	=	51-100	
	*****	=	>100	



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