

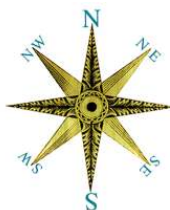
172 – 174 BALHAM HIGH ROAD
BALHAM
SW12 9BW

LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH
ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING



May 2012

COMPASS



ARCHAEOLOGY

172 – 174 BALHAM HIGH ROAD, BALHAM, SW12 9BW

LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING

SITE CODE: BMH12

SITE CENTRE NGR: TQ 28485 73302

PLANNING REF: 2011/0289

COMPASS ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED

5-7 SOUTHWARK STREET

LONDON SE1 1RQ

Telephone: 020 7403 9660

Facsimile: 01932 346784

e-mail: mail@compassarchaeology.co.uk

Author: Emma Jeffery

May 2012

©Compass Archaeology Limited

Abstract

Archaeological trial trenching of a site to the rear of 172 – 174 Balham High Road, Balham, took place on the 3rd May 2012. This trial trenching was carried out as a condition of planning consent, prior to the construction of a four-storey building fronting Balham High Road (based on the existing structure), with a new two-storey addition at the rear, providing retail and residential space (Planning Ref: 2011/0289).

The site had potential for archaeological evidence of Roman activity, particularly because the line of Balham High Road is believed to follow that of Stane Street (the Roman road between London and Chichester). A settlement at Balham then existed from the Saxon period (and is recorded in the Domesday Book), and has been settled since this date. A cinema then occupied the site from 1911 until 1985. The site is partly situated in an Archaeological Priority Area as defined by the London Borough of Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan.

Two trial trenches were excavated: these covered approximately 24 square metres. They were positioned in the area to the rear of Nos. 172 – 174 Balham High Road, in the area where new groundworks were located.

Neither trench revealed any significant archaeological remains, because the construction of the 1911 cinema had truncated any possible earlier archaeological deposits that may once have existed. In both trenches, modern brick rubble (used to level the land after the cinema was demolished in 1985) overlay a thin grey silty-sand deposit (thought to represent the position of the concrete slab which once formed the foundation level of the cinema). This overlay the natural orange-brown gravel deposits.

In view of these results it is recommended that no further archaeological measures should be undertaken in relation to the planning condition.

Contents		page
1	Introduction	1
2	Acknowledgements	1
3	Background	
3.1	Location and topography	1
3.2	Archaeology and history	4
4.	Aims and objectives of the trenching	
4.1	Archaeology and planning	7
4.2	Archaeological research questions	7
5	Methodology	8
6	The archaeological trenching	
6.1	Summary of the findings	11
6.2	List of recorded contexts	11
6.3	Trench 1	12
6.4	Trench 2	17
7	Assessment of the results of the trenching	21
8	Conclusions and recommendations	21
9	Bibliography	23
Appendices		
I	OASIS Data Collection Form	24
II	London Archaeologist summary	26

Figures

Front Cover: 1914 Photograph of the Balham Cinematograph Theatre		page
1	OS Map, with site marked.	2
2	A-Z Map, with site marked.	2
3	Site outline.	3
4	Geology Map, with site marked.	3
5	Rocque's 1745 Map, depicting the settlement of Balham clustered around the High Road.	5
6	1863-7 OS Map, with site outline marked.	5
7	1916 OS Map, depicting the 'Picture Theatre', with site outline marked.	6
8	1914 Photograph of the Cinematograph Theatre which stood on the site.	6
9	Proposed ground-floor plan.	7
10	Location of trenches, within proposed redevelopment plan.	10
11	Southern section of trench 1.	12
12	Photograph of trench 1, looking east.	14
13	Photograph of trench 1, looking west.	15
14	Photograph of the southern section of trench 1.	16
15	Photograph of trench 2, looking east.	18
16	Photograph of trench 2, looking west.	19
17	Photograph of the northern section in trench 2.	20

Figs. 1-4: Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map with permission of the HMSO. © Crown Copyright 2006. All rights reserved. Compass Archaeology Ltd, London SE1 1RQ; licence no. AL 100031317.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This report presents a summary of archaeological trenching carried out on land to the rear of 172 – 174 Balham High Road, Balham, SW12 9BW in the London Borough of Wandsworth. The site was located on the western side of Balham High Road, just north of Balham Station, and between the junction with Chestnut Grove and Ramsden Road (figs. 1 and 2). The new build is taking place within the yard area, to the rear of the existing buildings which are to be partly retained as the basis for the new build. The proposed development area is approximately centred at NGR TQ 28485 73302. The work took place as part of the planning process for the construction of a four-storey building fronting Balham High Road (utilizing the frame and slab of the existing structure), with a new two-storey addition at the rear, providing retail and residential space (Planning Ref: 2011/0289).

Compass Archaeology undertook the fieldwork on the 3rd May 2012.

- 1.2** The site is located adjacent to Stane Street, the Roman London to Chichester road, such that it has potential for evidence relating to Roman activity. There was also a settlement in Balham from Saxon times, with the area having been developed since this date, such that the site has potential for evidence from these periods. It is also partly within an Archaeological Priority Zone as defined by the London Borough of Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan, following the projected line of the Roman road.

Historic map evidence shows that the site has been developed from at least the mid-18th Century. Semi-detached houses are depicted on the First Edition OS Map, with a cinema depicted on maps from the early 20th Century, until it was destroyed in 1985.

- 1.3** Further to the condition of planning consent, English Heritage advised that archaeological trial trenching on the site should be undertaken. It was advised that this should consist of two trial trenches within the yard area, in the area of the proposed two-storey building where new groundworks are located.

A subsequent Written Scheme of Investigation detailed the trenching, including the location of the trial trenches within the redevelopment footprint.

2. Acknowledgements

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by Duncan Clendenan, of Cla Urban Development.

3. Background

3.1 Location and topography

The site itself is located on Balham High Road, just north of the railway line, on relatively flat land (centred at NGR TQ 28485 73302). The site consists of two buildings fronting the High Road (two shops), with an open yard behind this, and an access road leading to the south-west into Chestnut Grove. The new build is taking place within the yard area.

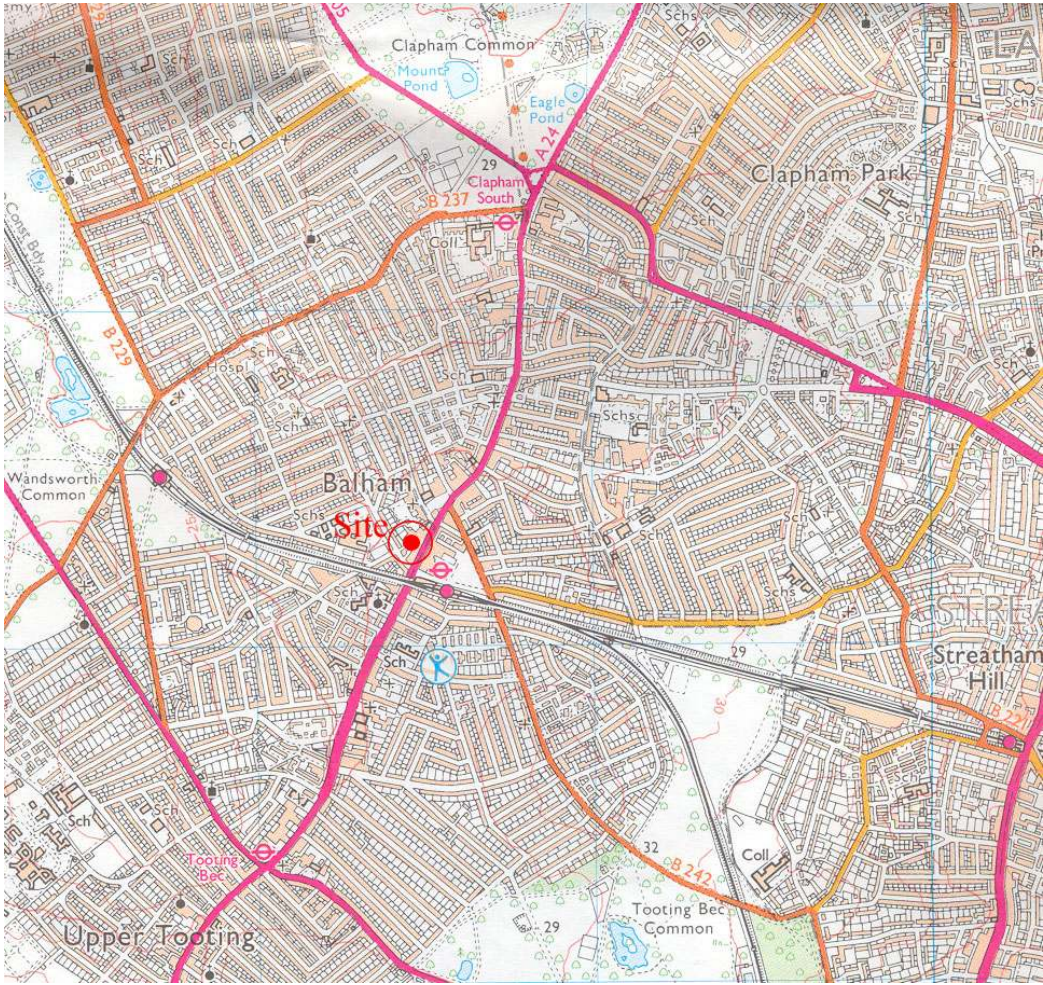


Fig. 1: OS Map, with site marked.

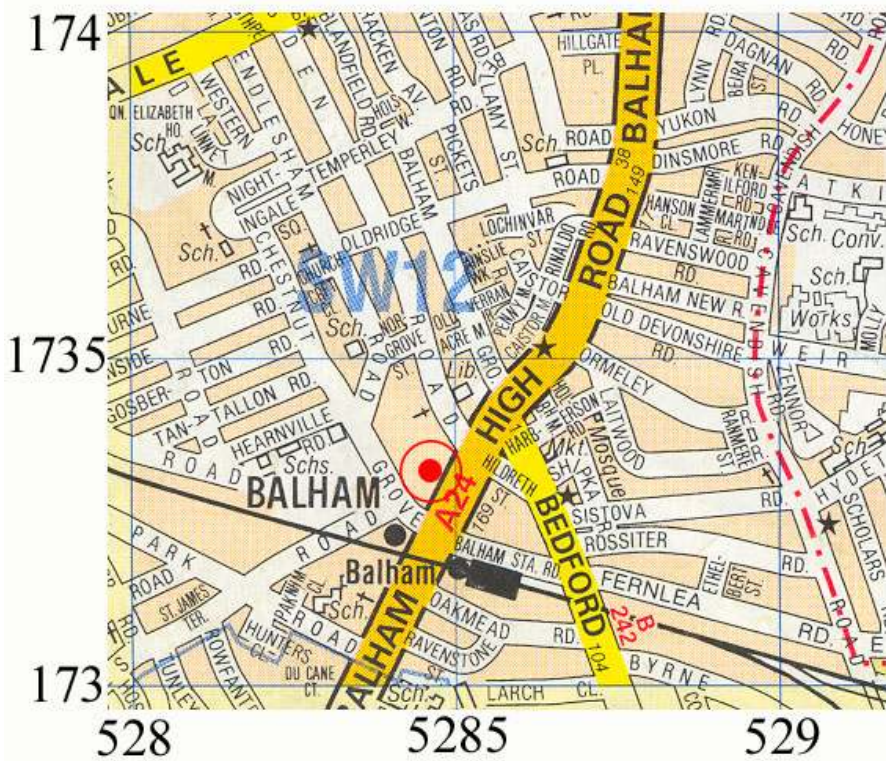


Fig. 2: A-Z Map, with site marked.



Fig. 3: Site outline.

The geological survey (British Geological Survey, South London, Sheet No. 270, 1998 – fig. 4) indicates that the site lies on Lynch Hill Gravels (a post-diversionary River Terrace deposit), overlying London Clay.

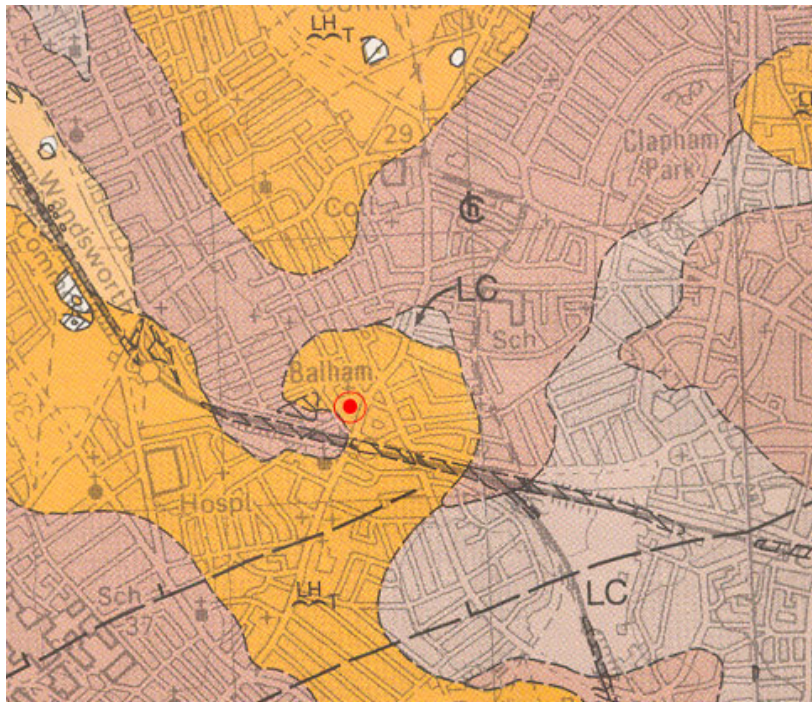


Fig. 4: Geology Map, with site marked. It lies on Lynch Hill Gravels overlying London Clay.

3.2 Archaeology and history

3.2.1 Prehistoric

There is limited evidence for prehistoric activity in this area – the Greater London HER records two prehistoric findspots within a 500m area of the site (one Palaeolithic handaxe and one Neolithic ovate), however these are antiquarian findspots and nothing has been found in more recent work.

3.2.2 Roman

Crucially, the line of Balham High Road follows that of Stane Street, the Roman road which connected London to Chichester, probably constructed in the first decade of Roman occupation of Britain (43-53AD). One record in the Greater London HER (090931/00/00) records the road itself (a disturbed layer of large flints with mortared gravel) being observed in 1968, however no further information about this is given. Unfortunately, no other archaeological work in the vicinity of the site has uncovered any other evidence related to this Roman road. The proximity of the site to the road does, nonetheless, mean that it is possible that Roman activity (roadside settlement) may have existed on this site.

3.2.3 Saxon – Medieval

Balham was originally a Saxon settlement – with the place-name referring to a ‘meeting point’, and it being mentioned in the Domesday Book as ‘Belgeham’. Although little archaeological evidence has been found for this early settlement, it seems likely that it would have been centred on Balham High Road itself (presumably continuing in use from the Roman period). This suggestion is supported further by Rocque’s mid-18th Century map (fig. 5), which shows settlement concentrated around the road, and suggests that settlement in Balham throughout the medieval period took this form. The site may lie within the area of this early settlement.

3.2.4 Post-Medieval

In the 18th Century, Balham attracted the affluent classes who built large houses here (Rocque’s map, fig. 5, depicts this). This shows how the settlement essentially lay within an area of open fields at this time. This, however, changed with opening of the railway in 1856, which prompted far greater development in the area. The First Edition 25inch OS Map (fig. 6) depicts this, with greater number of buildings along the High Road, and Chestnut Grove now constructed to the south-west. This coincided with the expansion of London outwards, such that Balham became enveloped in this urban sprawl. The site itself, according to the First Edition OS Map (fig. 6), contained two semi-detached houses (with cellars), set back from the street frontage, with gardens behind.

In 1911 the Balham Cinematograph Theatre (Cinema) was built on the site (see fig. 7 and 8). It was the fifteenth cinema to open in the chain of Amalgamated Cinematograph Theatres founded by Montagu A. Pyke. It was re-named ‘Picture House’ in 1916 and was operated by Messrs. Norris Ltd, until it was taken over by the Associated British Cinemas in 1933. A new frontage was added in 1953 and the cinema was re-opened as the Ritz Cinema. It was then closed in 1965, and the building taken over by the Bingo and Social Club, until the building was eventually destroyed in 1985.

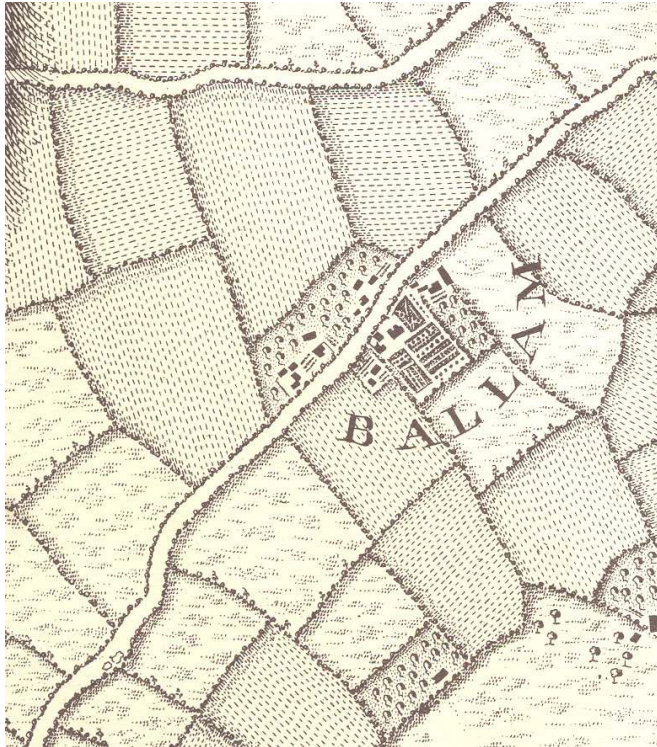


Fig. 5: Rocque's 1745 Map, depicting the settlement of Balham clustered around the High Road.

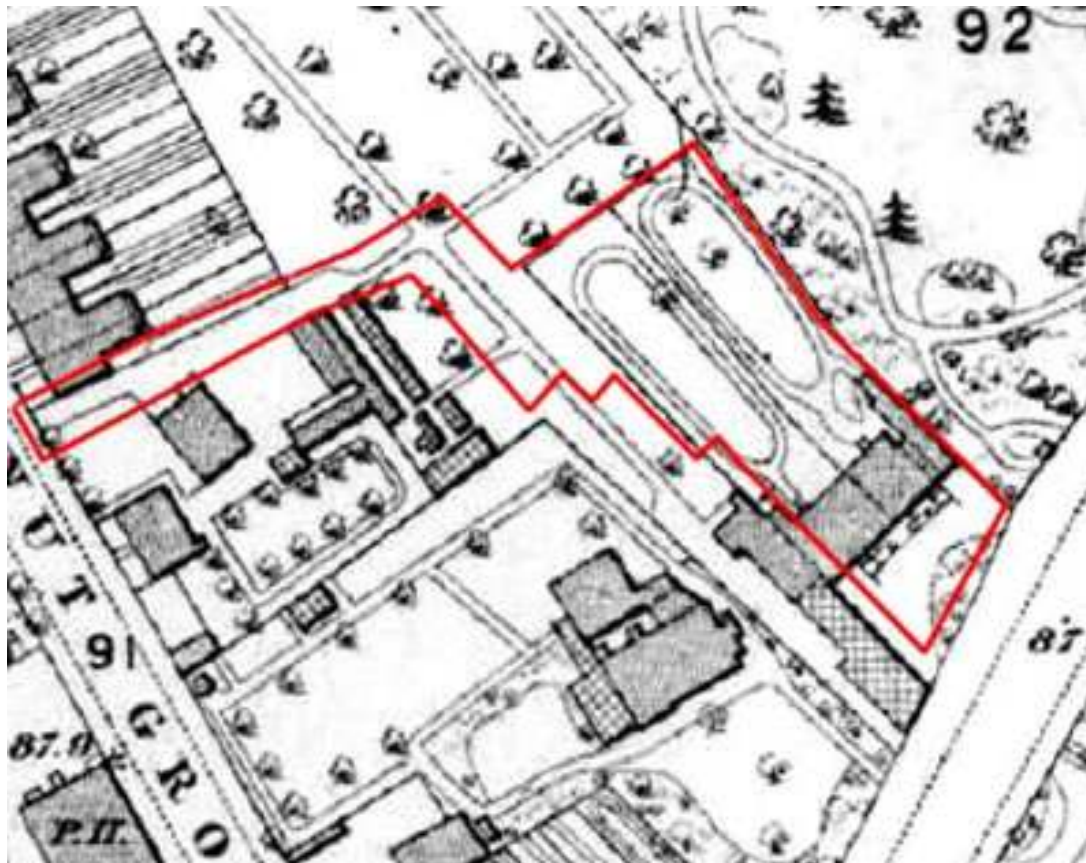


Fig. 6: 1863-7 OS Map, with site outline marked.



Fig. 7: 1916 OS Map, depicting the 'Picture Theatre', with site outline marked.



Fig. 8: 1914 Photograph of the Cinematograph Theatre which stood on the site.

4. Aims and objectives of the archaeological trenching

4.1 Archaeology and planning

The proposed development involves the construction of a four-storey building fronting Balham High Road (utilizing the frame and slab of the existing structure), with a new two-storey addition at the rear, providing retail and residential space (London Borough of Wandsworth Planning Application No: 2011/0289). The footprint of this development measures approximately 20m (north-south) by 60m (east-west) – the present building (where no groundworks will take place) measures c.35m (east-west) X 20m (north-south); with the area of the rear extension (where development groundworks are located) measuring approximately 26m (east-west) X 16 - 20m (north-south). The development footprint (where groundworks are located) is therefore c.470m².



Fig. 9: Proposed ground-floor plan.

Archaeological trial trenching on the site was recommended by English Heritage as part of the Local Authority planning process, in response to a condition of the planning consent.

4.2 Archaeological research questions

The site presented an opportunity to address several research questions, as defined in the preliminary Written Scheme of Investigation (*Compass Archaeology, April 2012*):

- Is there any evidence for Roman activity in the site-area, particularly in relation to Stane Street which is believed to have run along the line of the present Balham High Road? This could take the form of roadside pits, ditches, individual finds, or roadside settlement.
- Is there any evidence for the earliest Saxon settlement in Balham? Is there any evidence concerning what form / size this may have been?
- Is there any evidence for later (medieval – post-medieval) activity or settlement on the site? What form did this take?
- At what levels do any archaeological or geological deposits survive across the area?
- Can the watching brief works inform on the research questions of the Museum of London and English Heritage’s ‘*A Research Framework for London Archaeology*’ publication 2002?

5. Methodology

- 5.1** The fieldwork and post-excavation work was carried out in accordance with the English Heritage guidelines (in particular, *Standards for Archaeological Work*, July 2009) and those of the Institute for Archaeologists. Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full member of the Institute. The Written Scheme was produced prior to the start of fieldwork.

Fieldwork was carried out in accordance with the Construction (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations. All members of the fieldwork team had valid CSCS Cards (Construction Skills Certificate Scheme), and wore hi-vis jackets, hard-hats, and steel-toe-capped boots as required.

- 5.2** The work comprised of two trial trenches located within the area of the proposed two-storey building, as indicated on figure 10. Both trenches were approximately 1.8m wide, and 6.5m in length, covering an area of approximately 24 square metres at the level of potential archaeology or natural.

Initial clearance of the trial trenches was undertaken by a mechanical excavator (small 360° excavator using a ditching bucket and working under archaeological supervision). Modern brick rubble was removed to reveal the natural deposits, c.1.2m beneath the modern ground-surface. This was then cleaned, recorded, and photographed by the archaeologists.

- 5.3** The deposits and features exposed in the trenches were recorded on *pro-forma* sheets by written and measured description, and drawn in plan (scale of 1:20) and section (scale 1:10). The recording system used followed the MoL Site Manual for on-site work. By agreement the recording and drawing sheets used were directly compatible with those developed by the Museum. The fieldwork record was supplemented by photography as appropriate. Levels were derived from an OSBM located on the southern side of No.3 Ramsden Road. The level of this OSBM was 26.72mOD.

The trench position was located to the existing buildings (No. 172 – 174 Balham High Road) by taped measurement, with the resultant plan in turn related as a ‘best fit’ to the Ordnance Survey grid as derived from the 1:1250 map.

The records from the work have been allocated the site code: BMH12 by the Museum of London Archaeological Archive. An ordered and indexed site archive will be compiled in line with the MoL *Guidelines* and will be deposited in the Museum of London Archive.

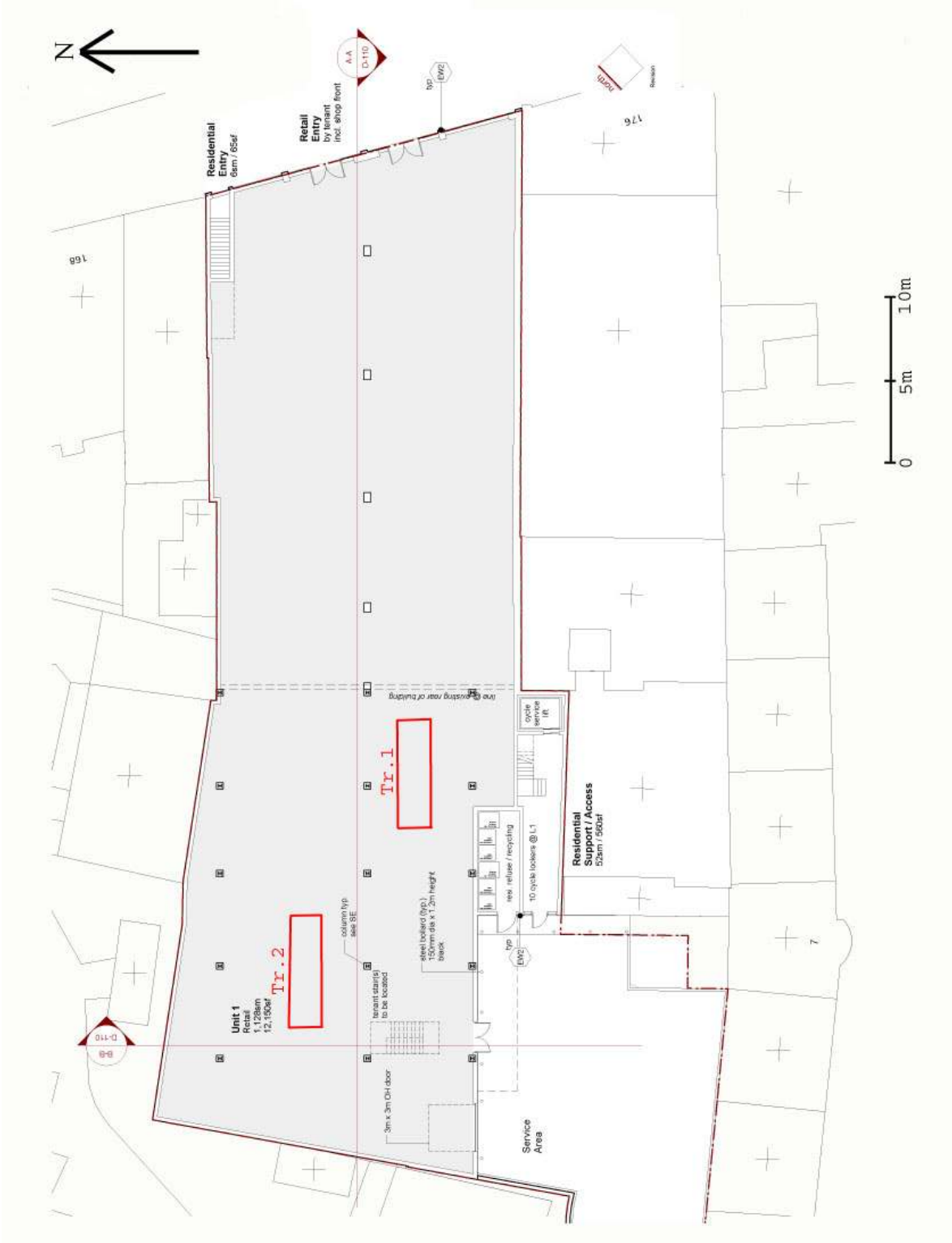


Fig. 10: Location of trenches, within proposed redevelopment plan.

6. The archaeological trenching

6.1 Summary of the findings

Two trial trenches were dug from the present ground surface (*c.*26.1mOD – 26.2mOD). Excavation was to the top of the natural deposits, removing modern deposits.

The sequence of deposits was the same in both trenches, with no features of archaeological significance being observed. A large depth (*c.*0.7-0.85m) of modern brick rubble overlay a thin grey silty-sand layer, directly overlying the orange-brown natural gravel deposits. This section can be seen in figure 11 below.

It is thought that the construction of the Balham Cinematograph Theatre in 1911 truncated any earlier deposits / subsoil horizons down to (or beyond) the level of the natural deposits, when the auditorium was built. The thin grey silty-sand layer is believed to represent the foundation level of this cinema, with part of the concrete slab remaining in places. When the cinema building was destroyed in 1985, the land was presumably built up using brick rubble, accounting for the large quantities of rubble observed on the site.

6.2 List of recorded contexts:

Context	Description	Interpretation
1	Deposit Modern brick rubble, consisting of whole bricks, large chunks of bricks, bits of concrete, plastic bags, etc. Observed across the whole of both trenches, directly beneath the tarmac, for a general thickness of 0.7 – 0.85m.	Infill to level the site after the cinema building was demolished in 1985.
2	Deposit Thin compact grey-brown silty-sand layer. Quite disturbed, with pieces of ceramic building material, etc, in. Observed across the whole of both trenches, directly beneath (1) (<i>c.</i> 0.9m beneath the modern ground-surface), for a thickness of 0.12 – 0.2m. Concrete slab seen in north-east corner of trench 1 at this level (with a small lens of the grey deposit beneath it).	Presumably represents the level at which the 1911 Cinema was constructed (where the concrete slab was observed in the north-east corner of trench 1).
3	Deposit Compact orange-brown gravels, with some sand patches. Observed across the whole of both trenches, at <i>c.</i> 1.2m beneath the modern ground-surface.	Natural deposits. It is believed that the ground was cut down to this level (cutting away any earlier deposits / subsoil) when the cinema was constructed in 1911.

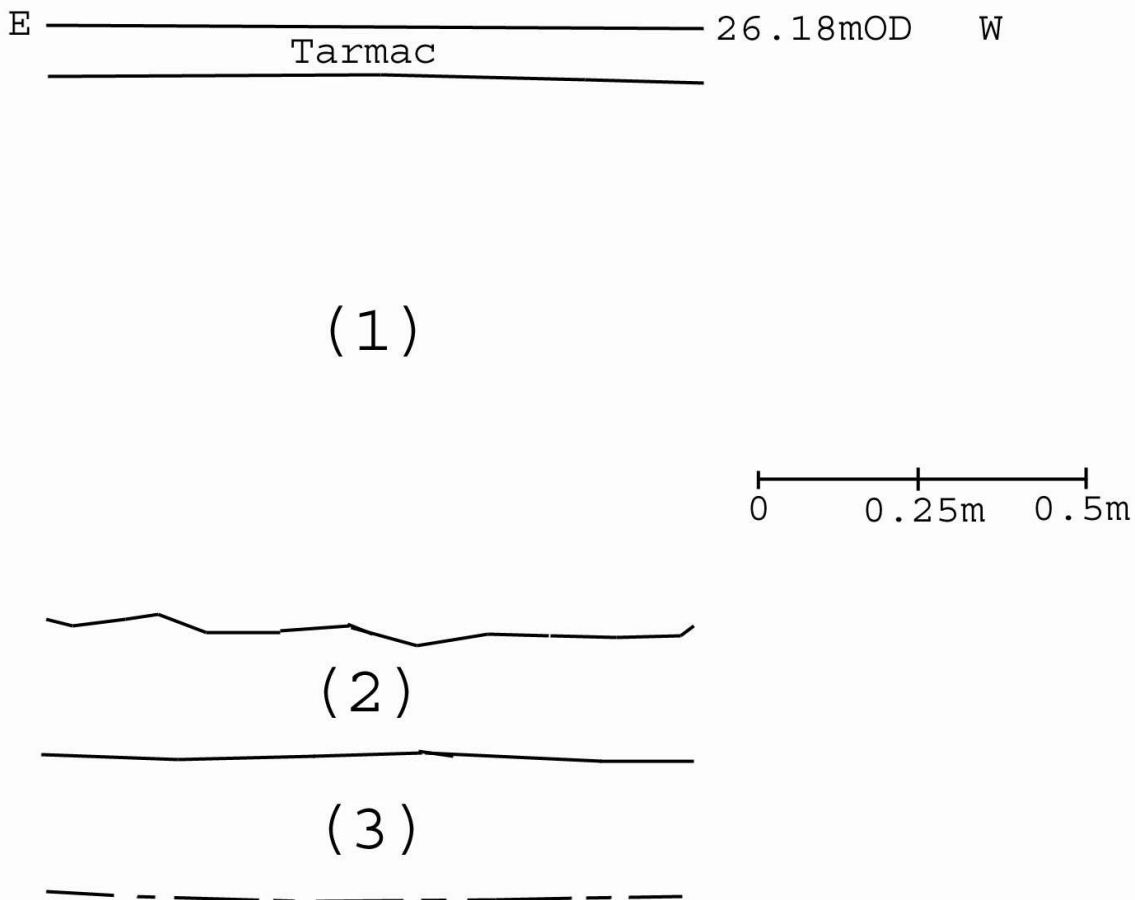


Fig. 11: Southern section of trench 1.

6.3 Trench 1

The trench was dug on an east-west alignment and measured approximately 6.5m by 1.8m in plan. The trench was approximately 1.3m deep.

6.3.1 The natural gravel deposit (3) was exposed over the whole base of the trench. This was encountered at approximately 24.92mOD – 24.98mOD (*c.* 1.15 – 1.25m beneath the modern ground-surface). The deposit was a sterile compact orange-brown gravels, with sandy patches. It was cut away in the north-western corner of trench 1 by a drain which ran northeast – southwest across the corner of the trench – the cut for this was infilled with a loose gravel mix for *c.* 0.2m either side of the drain.

6.3.2 Above the natural gravel deposit, over the whole of the trench, was a thin grey-brown silty-sand layer (2). This was encountered at *c.* 25.3mOD (*c.* 0.95m beneath the modern ground-surface), for a thickness of *c.* 0.2m. At this level, in the northeast corner of trench 1, part of a concrete slab was observed (thickness of 0.1m, overlying *c.* 0.1m of the thin grey silty-sand deposit). It is therefore believed that a concrete slab was once positioned at this level across the whole area of the trench. This was probably the base of the cinema (constructed in 1911).

6.3.3 Overlying this was a substantial quantity of modern brick rubble. This consisted of whole bricks (yellow stock bricks and red brick), large chunks of brick, bits of

concrete, and pieces of plastic bags, etc. This was all very disturbed and loose in nature. *c.*0.7 – 0.85m of this deposit was observed (down to *c.*25.3mOD). This was probably deposited in 1985 when the cinema building was destroyed, and the land needed to be built up / levelled.



Fig. 12: Photograph of trench 1, looking east. The remains of part of the concrete slab, thought to form the base of the cinema, can be seen in the top left of frame.



Fig. 13: Photograph of trench 1, looking west. The modern drain, cutting into the natural deposits, is visible in the top right of frame.



Fig. 14: Photograph of the southern section of trench 1.

6.4 Trench 2

The trench was dug on an east-west alignment and measured approximately 6.5m by 1.8m in plan. The trench was approximately 1.2m deep.

- 6.4.1** The natural gravel deposit (3) was exposed over the whole base of the trench, at 24.91mOD – 24.98mOD (*c.* 1.1 – 1.27m beneath the modern ground-surface). The deposit was a sterile compact orange-brown gravels, with sandy patches and occasional (geological) banding. One small modern feature was observed cut into this deposit in the south-east corner of this trench and running into the unexcavated sections to the south and east. Further excavation revealed it to be only *c.* 0.3m in depth and of no archaeological interest.
- 6.4.2** The thin grey-brown silty-sand layer (2) was also observed above the natural gravel deposit in this trench, at *c.* 25.15mOD (*c.* 0.95m beneath the modern ground-surface), for a thickness of *c.* 0.2m. This is the same deposit as that observed in trench 1.
- 6.4.3** A similar substantial quantity of brickwork (3) was observed in this trench, for depths of *c.* 0.7 – 0.85m. This was very similar to that observed in trench 1 – consisting of bricks, concrete, and other modern detritus.



Fig. 15: Photograph of trench 2, looking east.



Fig. 16: Photograph of trench 2, looking west. The small modern rectangular feature is visible in bottom left of frame.



Fig. 17: Photograph of the northern section in trench 2.

7. Assessment of the results of the trial trenching

The archaeological trenching has provided an opportunity to address the site-specific objectives that were defined within the preliminary *Written Scheme* (4.2 above). The responses to these are outlined below:

- *Is there any evidence for Roman activity in the site-area, particularly in relation to Stane Street which is believed to have run along the line of the present Balham High Road? This could take the form of roadside pits, ditches, individual finds, or roadside settlement.*

No evidence of any Roman activity was found in these trial trenches.

- *Is there any evidence for the earliest Saxon settlement in Balham? Is there any evidence concerning what form / size this may have been?*

No evidence for Saxon activity or settlement was found on this site.

- *Is there any evidence for later (medieval – post-medieval) activity or settlement on the site? What form did this take?*

No evidence for any medieval or earlier post-medieval activity or settlement was found in these trial trenches. Evidence relating to the early 20th century construction of the Balham Cinematographic Theatre was, however, observed. It is believed that the construction of this cinema involved the truncation of the earlier deposits and subsoil, down to the thin grey-brown silty-sand layer, with part of a concrete slab, believed to be at the level of the base of the cinema. The modern rubble overlying this was evidently deposited after the demolition of the cinema building in 1985, and formed the leveling-up of the land after this.

- *At what levels do any archaeological or geological deposits survive across the area?*

It is difficult to judge the levels at which the archaeological and geological deposits survive naturally across the area, because the site has been heavily truncated by the construction of the cinema in the early 20th century. This cut through any earlier archaeological deposits, subsoil layers, and possibly part of the natural deposits. Nonetheless, the natural deposits were observed in these trenches at between 24.91mOD and 24.98mOD (c.1.2m beneath the modern ground-surface).

8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 The archaeological trenching did not reveal any significant archaeological remains or deposits.

8.2 Instead, the whole area appears to have been truncated down in the early 20th century, with the construction of the Balham Cinematographic Theatre. This was cut down to c.1.2m beneath the modern ground-surface, at which level the remains of a concrete slab, and the thin grey-brown silty-sand deposit were observed. In 1985 the cinema building was destroyed, and the land built up by the brick rubble deposit.

8.3 This has, however, meant that any earlier archaeological deposits (Roman, Saxon, etc), which may have once existed on the site are no-longer present.

9. Bibliography

General Sources

Greater London Historic Environment Record

London Archaeological Archive and Resource Centre (LAARC) database

Bibliography

Cinema Treasures, *Ritz Cinema: 172-174 Balham High Road*

(<http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/27363>)

Communities and Local Government, *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (2010)

IFA, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (2009)

Wikipedia, *Balham* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balham>)

Map Sources

British Geological Survey, 1998, Sheet 270, 1:50 000

Ordnance Survey Maps. Various dates and scales

Rocque, 1745, *Exact Survey of the Cities of London, Westminster, and the Country nearly ten miles round*

Appendix I. OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

OASIS ID: [compassa1-125329](#)

Project details

Project name	172 - 174 Balham High Road
Short description of the project	Archaeological trial trenching (two trenches) was undertaken in the yard area to the rear of 172 - 174 Balham High Road, before the construction of a two-storey retail / residential building. No archaeologically significant finds, features, or deposits were observed. Instead, the area had been truncated when a cinema was constructed on the site in 1911, with the land being subsequently built up using brick rubble when the building was demolished in 1985. This has truncated any earlier archaeological deposits that may have once existed on the site.
Project dates	Start: 03-05-2012 End: 03-05-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON WANDSWORTH TOOTING 172 - 174 Balham High Road
Postcode	SW12 9BW
Study area	470.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 28485 73302 51.4436119806 -0.151001607897 51 26 37 N 000 09 03 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 24.91m Max: 24.98m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Project supervisor	Emma Jeffery
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body
Cla Urban Development

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Museum of London archive

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography', 'Text'

Paper Archive recipient Museum of London Archive

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section', 'Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title 172 - 174 Balham High Road: Archaeological Trial Trenching

Author(s)/Editor(s) Jeffery, E

Date 2012

Issuer or publisher Compass Archaeology

Place of issue or publication 5-7 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1RQ

Description Brief report detailing the results of the trial trenching. Includes background information, methodology, photographs of the work, description of the results, trench location plans, a sketch section, and conclusions.

Entered by Emma Jeffery (emma@compassarchaeology.co.uk)

Entered on 8 May 2012

Appendix II. London Archaeologist Summary

172 – 174 Balham High Road, Balham, SW12 9BW. TQ 28485 73302/ CA (Emma Jeffery). Trial Trenching. May 2012. Cla Urban Development. BMH12.

Two trenches (both 6.5m X 1.8m) within the redevelopment footprint did not reveal any significant archaeological remains. The construction of a cinema on the site in 1911 had truncated any possible earlier deposits, such that the remaining sequence consisted of modern brick rubble deposits (used to level the land following the demolition of the cinema in 1985), overlying a thin grey-brown silty-sand layer (where the concrete foundation slab of the cinema had been), overlying truncated natural gravel deposits.