

Archaeological Watching Brief

**Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road
London Borough of Hackney**

NGR: 535004 185908

Planning Ref: 2015/2277

**ASE Project No: 8487
Site Code: MIF15**

**ASE Report No: 2016142
OASIS id: archaeol6-246290**



April 2016

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With contributions by
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Date of Issue:	April 2016	
Revision:		

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Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by Archaeology South-East at the Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road in the London Borough of Hackney between 10th March and 15th March 2016. The work was commissioned by Northill Properties Ltd in advance of the proposed redevelopment of the site.

ASE had previously undertaken a historic building record prior to the demolition of the former public conveniences. Prior to this use, the site was occupied by St James' Terrace, a row of houses shown on the 1870-1873 and 1896 Ordinance Survey maps.

Ground reduction works removed a c.1.2m thickness of overburden deposits and exposed bluish grey sandy silt alluvium in the west of the site and natural sand and gravel across the east.

The watching brief identified a pit on the south-east site edge, with a probably contemporary posthole in its base, of possible late Medieval/ early post-medieval date. The pit also truncated a possible second posthole, although no dating evidence was retrieved from this poorly-defined feature.

A brick-lined soakaway and two fragments of brick wall foundations were recorded on the northern and southern edges of the site that were almost certainly associated with the structures of the former St. James' Terrace.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

1.1.1 Archaeology South East (ASE) a division of the Centre of Applied Archaeology, University College London, was commissioned by Northhill Properties Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the site of former public conveniences on Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney during redevelopment of the site. This followed the historic building recording of the public conveniences prior to their demolition (Harrow 2015).

1.1.2 The site's former use was that of a public conveniences building. This occupied a roughly-triangular area of land positioned at the junction of Millfields Road and Mildenhall Road (NGR: 535004 185908), which enclose the site to the south and north respectively and meet at Lower Clapton Road, which lies immediately west of the site (Figure 1). A small park around Clapton Pond is located west/northwest of the site, and effectively forms an 'island' bisecting Lower Clapton Road. Prior to ground reduction the site was at street level and was flat.

1.1.3 The site lies within the Clapton Archaeological Priority Area and the Clapton Ponds Conservation Area.

1.2 Geology and Topography

1.2.1 The solid geology of the study site is shown by the British Geological Survey Online as London Clay deposits which form the London Basin. Overlying the London Clay is Hackney Gravel Member deposits.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 The work was carried out to satisfy conditions placed on planning consent by Hackney Borough Council (planning ref. 2015/2277). In light of the nature of the building on the site and the archaeological potential of the site, the following condition had been attached to the planning consent:

SCL10 – Archaeological investigation

No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To safeguard the archaeological interest of the site, which is within an Area of Archaeological Priority.

1.3.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation which outlined the scope of the archaeological works, in the form of a watching brief of the geotechnical works on site, was subsequently prepared by Archaeology South-East (ASE

2015) and duly approved by Historic England Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The general aim of this phase of work was to demonstrate the presence or absence of any archaeological remains within the ground reduction being carried out on the site.

1.4.1 Further to the above, the objectives of the watching brief were:

- To record any archaeological features, artefacts and ecofacts and their context which may be affected by the groundworks.
- To determine, if possible, the date of the earliest human activity in this area and the subsequent sequence of occupation.
- To record any significant archaeological deposits which may be exposed during construction work and assess their relation to the early settlement of Clapton Pond.
- The London Research Framework (LRF) sets out a draft research agenda for improving the understanding of the post-medieval/modern period in the region (Museum of London 2002). The LRF identifies the following objective:
Understanding how the proximity of the metropolis, the largest urban conurbation in Britain, affected the lives of people living and working in the immediate surrounding area.
- To help further inform our understanding of past activity in the Hackney area.

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report details the results of the archaeological watching brief carried out between the 10th and 15th of March 2016 and has been prepared in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2015).

1.5.2 The site work was carried out by Thomas Rugg, and was managed by Andy Leonard (fieldwork) and Jim Stephenson (post-excavation).

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 A Historic Building record (Historic England level 2-3) was undertaken on the former public conveniences by ASE prior to demolition (Harrow 2015).
- 2.1.2 The site falls within an archaeological priority area as designated by the London Borough of Hackney.
- 2.1.3 The archaeological background is taken from the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by ASE. For a full background consult the Heritage Statement which has previously been prepared for the site (Harrow 2015) and the Clapton Pond Conservation Area Appraisal (The Conservation Studio/Hackney Council 2004).

2.2 Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 The Clapton Pond Conservation Area Appraisal states that there is little record of pre-roman settlement in the Hackney Area, although a significant palaeolithic site is known around Stoke Newington Green.

2.3 Roman

- 2.3.1 The site lies close to the Roman Road, Ermine Street; which is now Kingsland Road. The archaeological background of Roman London is well known, however its surrounding environs are less well-understood. While other Roman towns had densely populated hinterlands or *territoria* to support them, the area around London seems to have been significantly less densely settled; although this may partly reflect the relative paucity of fieldwork in the outskirts of the modern urban area.

2.4 Anglo-Saxon

- 2.4.1 The Early Saxon period saw central London largely abandoned. Instead, a number of small settlements grew up around the periphery, with particular emphasis along the Thames and its tributaries. In the Late Saxon period Hackney formed part of Manor of Stepney, held by the Bishops of London since the 7th Century. Both the names Hackney and Clapton are Saxon in origin.
- 2.4.2 Very little is known about the Site during this period, although a Saxon dugout canoe was found in Clapton.

2.5 Medieval

- 2.5.1 During the medieval period the site remained in the possession of the Bishops of London and was tenanted out to farmers. Clapton Lane is recorded in 1378. The main medieval villages in the vicinity were Clapton, Church Street and Homerton.

2.6 Post-medieval and modern

- 2.6.1 After the restoration in 1660 many wealthy London merchants moved into Hackney and a number of sizable houses were built. Towards the end of the 17th century the area was settled by the descendants of Huguenot refugees and a small community of Sephardic Jews. Building continued throughout the 18th century but the area remained relatively sparsely developed. Roque's map of 1745 shows the presence of Lower Clapton Road as well as Millfields Road and Clapton Pond. The map shows that the area around the pond was well developed and that the site was built on by this time.
- 2.6.2 19th century Ordnance Survey Maps show that even by 1870 the land to the east of the site was relatively undeveloped.
- 2.6.3 The site itself was by this time occupied by St James's Terrace; part of which still survives to the north of the site (Harrow 2015)
- 2.6.4 The site was cleared by 1935, before the present building was constructed by the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 A Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) was prepared prior to commencement of the work.
- 3.1.2 A site code (MIF15) was obtained from the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) and was used as the unique site identifier for all records.
- 3.1.3 The watching brief work comprised the observation of ground reduction works of the new development.
- 3.1.4 All work was undertaken in accordance with this document and with the relevant standard and guidance documents of GLAAS and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (EH 2006 a and b; GLAAS 2015; CIfA 2015)
- 3.1.5 All archaeological features were recorded according to standard ASE practice. Where practicable, all features have been planned at 1:20 and section drawings at 1:10. All drawings are on plastic draughting film. Features and deposits are described on standard pro-forma recording sheets used by ASE. A photographic record has been made in both monochrome and colour transparency.

3.2 Fieldwork Constraints

- 3.2.1 The planned excavation depth for the development was only 0.80m below existing ground level. This depth was insufficient to penetrate overburden deposits present. However, in some areas of the site this level was exceeded and archaeological features and deposits exposed.
- 3.2.1 In the event that excavations were in excess of 1.2m recording would be undertaken from ground surface. Although the ground reduction in the east went to 1.40m, due to the gradual nature and large area of the ground reduction it was considered safe by the archaeologist to enter for the purpose of recording.

3.3 Site Archive

- 3.3.1 ASE informed the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) prior to the commencement of fieldwork that a site archive would be generated. A site code (MIF15) was obtained and has been used as the unique site identifier for all records.
- 3.3.2 The site archive is currently held at the offices of ASE and will be deposited at the LAARC in due course. The contents of the archive are quantified below (Table 1).

Item	Quantity
Number of Contexts	13
No. of files/paper record	20
Plan and sections sheets	2
Colour photographs	-
B&W print neg photos	-
Digital photos	13
Drawing film sheets	2
Trench Record Forms	-

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 General

4.1.1 Ground reduction works were monitored between 10th of March and 15th March 2016. The whole site was reduced down by a depth of c.0.80m. In some places this level was exceeded sufficiently to expose archaeological remains.

4.1.2 The overburden sequence consisted of concrete and paving slabs overlying a layer of mid blackish brown clay silt made-ground containing brick rubble and concrete fragments. Below the overburden, alluvium was observed at c.1.20m below ground level and the undisturbed natural deposit was encountered at 1.40m below ground level.

4.1.3 Three features were identified to cut the natural deposit in the south-east of the site.

Context	Type	Interpretation	Max. Length m	Max. Width m	Depth/ thickness m
001	Layer	Made-ground	-	-	1.20
002	Layer	Alluvium	-	-	0.20
003	Layer	Natural Geology	-	-	
004	Fill	Single fill of [005]	2.86+	0.84+	0.19
005	Cut	Cut of pit	2.86+	0.84+	0.19
006	Fill	Single fill of [007]	0.32+	0.26+	0.27
007	Cut	Cut of posthole	0.32+	0.26+	0.27
008	Fill	Single fill of [009]	0.53+	0.52	0.20
009	Cut	Cut of posthole	0.53+	0.52	0.20
010	Struct	Brick soakaway	0.62	0.57	-
011	Struct	Wall	1.83	0.48	0.56 (Height)
012	Struct	Wall	1.00	0.22	0.07 (Height)
013	Cut	Construction cut for [012]	1.04	0.26	0.07

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

4.2 Cut features

4.2.1 A light bluish grey sandy silt alluvium [002] with occasional flint was reached at 1.20 below ground level in the west of the site. Light orangish yellow sand and gravel natural [003] was observed 1.40m below ground level in the east. It was at the south-eastern edge of site where cut features were uncovered (Figures 2 and 3).

4.2.2 Pit [005] was elongated and oval in shape and filled with a mid purplish brown sandy silt [004] with frequent gravel and moderate charcoal flecks. Fragments of animal bone, peg tile and a single residual Roman pottery sherd were recovered from it. It was not possible to determine its use or extent (due to its continuation beyond the site boundary).

4.2.3 Posthole [007] measured in excess of 0.32m in length and 0.26m in width and was filled with a mid purplish brown sandy silt with frequent gravel [006]. A single piece of peg tile was retrieved. Due to being filled with identical deposits, the posthole is likely contemporary with Pit [005].

4.2.4 Possible posthole [009] which was circular in plan and measured in excess of 0.53m in length, 0.52m width and 0.20m depth. It was filled by a light bluish grey sandy silt with frequent gravel [008]. This indefinite feature was truncated by pit [005] and no finds were present within its sterile fill.

4.3 Masonry

4.3.1 On the north-western edge of site a domed brick-lined soakaway [010] was exposed (Figure 2). Constructed of mid orangish red shallow frogged brick measuring 220x100x65mm, in plan the domed part of the soakaway was visible and the dimensions measured 0.62x0.52m. It was possible to see inside the structure which was more circular in shape, with a diameter of 0.80m. The bonding material was a soft whitish grey mortar with small pebble inclusions. The construction cut was not visible due to the ground reduction works stopping short of the natural; likewise the overall bond was not perceptible. The soakaway was backfilled with the made-ground [001] and its depth was not established.

4.3.2 Two brick walls were observed on the southern edge of site, both north/south aligned (Figure 2 and Figure 3 photos). In the case of Wall [012] only the lowest course remained, constructed of yellow and dark red unfrogged bricks with varied measurements (150x100x65mm and 220x100x70mm). Although the bond was not perceptible, some bonding material, a friable whitish grey mortar with small pebbles inclusions, remained. The construction cut into alluvial deposit [002], and was overlain by c.1.2m of made ground.

4.3.3 The remains of Wall [011] were more substantial, with eight courses in height being observed. Mid reddish orange unfrogged brick measuring 230x110x70mm formed an English bond wall which was bonded with a firm greyish white mortar. It was truncated by a water valve at its northern extent and to the south was overlain by concrete which formed the foundation of the existing garden/boundary wall of the conveniences. Part of the western face of wall [011] was rendered with a 0.02m-thick greyish white plaster.

4.3.4 Brick samples were taken from both walls and the soakaway to give a clearer indication of date, a summary of which is presented in section 5.0.

4.3.5 It is possible that the two walls relate to the former buildings of St James Terrace, shown on the 1870-1873 and 1896 Ordnance Survey maps.

5.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered during the watching brief works. All finds were washed and dried or air dried as appropriate. They were subsequently quantified by count and weight and were bagged by material and context (Table 3). All finds have been packed and stored following ClfA guidelines (2014). No further conservation is required.

Context	Pottery	weight (g)	CBM	weight (g)	Bone	weight (g)
004	1	22	1	25	4	132
006			1	35		
010			1	2188		
011			1	3386		
012			1	2324		
<i>Total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>7958</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>132</i>

Table 3: Finds quantification

5.2 Roman Pottery by Anna Doherty

5.2.1 A single bodysherd of Roman pottery, an unsourced micaceous grey ware with a slightly oxidised exterior surface, was found in context [004]. The sherd is not closely datable within the Roman period.

5.3 Ceramic Building Material by Isa Benedetti-Whitton

5.3.1 Three bricks and two peg tile fragments weighing a total of 7958g were recovered from five contexts: [004]; [006]; [010]; [011]; and [012]. All of the bricks were in common Museum of London (MoL) post-medieval fabrics (Table 4).

5.3.2 The bricks from [010] and [012] were respectively stock fabrics MoL 3032 and MoL 3035, both of which were common from the 18th-19th centuries. Both bricks were faintly frogged, but the MoL 3032 brick had traces of cement mortar on it, suggesting it was using in a later structure than the MoL 3035 brick which had a thick layer of charcoal flecked lime mortar coating its base. Lime mortar was largely superseded by cement mortars during the 19th century. The brick from [011] was in fabric MoL 3033 and did not appear frogged. MoL 3033 is generally believed to be a pre-1666 fabric, suggesting that this brick was originally made in the 17th century, although reused at a later date as it had remnants of the same charcoal flecked lime mortar found on the MoL 3032 brick.

5.3.3 The pieces of peg tile from [004] and [006] were both very fragmentary and abraded, and cannot be precisely dated.

Fabric	Description
MoL 3032	Dark red, reddish purple fabric; parts of the surface often discoloured by fine yellow speckling. Common burnt black ash and flint inclusions (up to 6mm) with varying amounts of quartz (up to 0.8mm). Clay pipe stems in some bricks
MoL 3033	Fine, often quite soft red-orange fabric with scatter of quartz (up to 0.8mm), calcium carbonate inclusions (up to 1.5mm) and black iron oxide (up to 1.5mm). Occasional flint fragments and small pebbles (up to 7mm).
MoL 3035	Generally yellow-cream coloured with common burnt black ash and chalk inclusions (up to 4mm). Scatter of quartz (up to 0.6mm). The fabric is hard and riddled with tiny air pockets where organic matter has burned out during firing.

Table 4: CBM fabric descriptions (after MOLA 2007 fabric descriptions)

5.4 Animal Bone by Gemma Ayton

5.4.1 Just four fragments of animal bone were hand-collected from a single context, [004]. The bones are in a poor condition being fragmented and showing signs of surface weathering. Two of the bones have been identified as horse, the fragments derive from a mandible and a distal radius. The remaining two specimens derive from a large-mammal cranium and a large-mammal cervical vertebra. There is no evidence of butchery, burning, gnawing or pathology on the bones.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The Watching Brief on ground reduction works at the site of former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney identified the presence of a pit of probable Late Medieval/ Early Post Medieval date. The pit contained a seemingly integral posthole [007] and also truncated a possible further posthole, although whilst excavated it was noted as undefined and lacking in any dating evidence.

6.2 The masonry on site, consisting of north/south orientated walls [011] and [012], seems to confirm the placement of St James's Terrace seen on the 1870-1873 and 1896 Ordinance Survey map. A domed brick-lined soakaway [010] was also uncovered which lies within the St James Terrace of the 1870-1873 OS Map but possibly externally to the building on the 1896 OS Map.

6.3 The construction of the former Public Conveniences building had evidently removed any earlier remains once present in its footprint.

6.4 Alluvial deposits were observed within the western half of site at 1.20 below ground level and natural deposits at 1.40 to the east.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASE would like to thank Northill Properties Ltd for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project, and John Gould, the GLAAS advisor for his guidance and monitoring. The watching brief was undertaken by Thomas Rugg. The author would like to thank Andrew Lewsey who produced the figures for this report, Andrew Leonard who project managed the excavations and Jim Stevenson who project managed the post-excavation process.

HER Summary

HER enquiry no.					
Site code	MIF15				
Project code	8487				
Planning reference	2015/2277				
Site address	Former Public Conveniences, Millfield Road				
District/Borough	London Borough of Hackney				
NGR (12 figures)	535004 185908				
Geology	Sand and Gravel				
Fieldwork type			WB		
Date of fieldwork	10/03/16 to 15/03/16				
Sponsor/client	Northill Properties Ltd				
Project manager	Andrew Leonard, Archaeology South-East				
Project supervisor	Thomas Rugg, Archaeology South-East				
Period summary					
			Medieval	Post-Medieval	
Project summary (100 word max)	<p>Ground reduction works removed a c.1.2m thickness of overburden deposits and exposed bluish grey sandy silt alluvium in the west of the site and natural sand and gravel across the east.</p> <p>The watching brief identified a pit on the south-east site edge, with a probably contemporary posthole in its base, of possible late Medieval/early post-medieval date. The pit also truncated a possible second posthole, although no dating evidence was retrieved from this poorly-defined feature.</p> <p>A brick-lined soakaway and two fragments of brick wall foundations were recorded on the northern and southern edges of the site that were almost certainly associated with the structures of the 19th century St. James' Terrace shown on historic OS mapping of the site.</p>				
Museum/Accession No.					

OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-246290	
Project details	
Project name	Former Public Conveniences Millfields Rd Hackney
Short description of the project	The watching brief identified a pit on the south-east site edge, with a probably contemporary posthole in its base, of possible late Medieval/ early post-medieval date. The pit also truncated a possible second posthole, although no dating evidence was retrieved from this poorly-defined feature. A brick-lined soakaway and two fragments of brick wall foundations were recorded on the northern and southern edges of the site that were almost certainly associated with the structures of the 19 th century St. James' Terrace shown on historic OS mapping of the site
Project dates	Start: 10-03-2016 End: 15-03-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Associated project reference codes	8487 - Contracting Unit No. MIF15 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Conservation Area
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	PIT Medieval POST HOLE Medieval POST HOLE Uncertain SOAKAWAY Post Medieval WALL Post Medieval WALL Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval CBM Medieval BRICK SAMPLES Post Medieval ANIMAL BONE Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road
Postcode	E5 0RU
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3487 8596 51.555894 -0.054314733 51 33 21 N 000 03 15 W Point

Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	GLAAS
Project design originator	ASE
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard/Jim Stevenson
Project supervisor	Tom Rugg
Type of sponsor/funding body	client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Northill Properties Ltd
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Paper Media available	"Drawing","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Context sheet","Correspondence"
Project bibliog	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Rugg. T
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	ASE
Place of issue or publication	Witham
Entered by	T Rugg (tcrntpj@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	22 March 2016



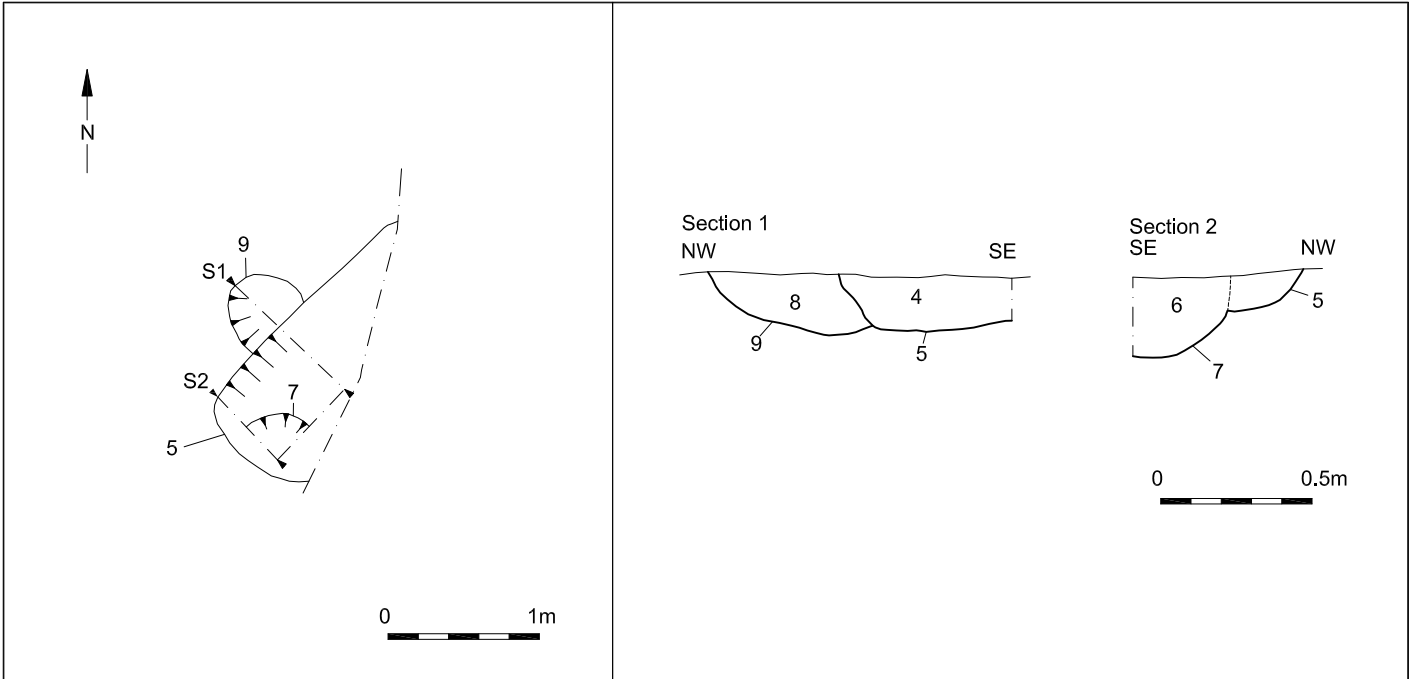
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Project Ref: 8487	Mar 2016	Site location		
Report No: 2016142	Drawn by: APL			



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© Archaeology South-East		Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney		Fig.2
Project Ref: 8487	Mar 2016	Location of features		
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Pit 5 and postholes 7 & 9 looking south-east



Soakaway 10



Wall 11 looking south-east



Wall 12 looking south

© Archaeology South-East		Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney	Fig.3
Project Ref: 8487	Mar 2016	Plan of pit 005, sections 1 & 2 and selected photographs	
Report Ref:2016142	Drawn by: APL		

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