

**Archaeological Evaluation at  
Haslemere Primary School, Haslemere Avenue  
Mitcham, London Borough of Merton**

**NGR TQ 2683 6918**



**David Fallon**

**ASE Project Number 3238**

**Site Code HZF07**

**ASE Report Number 2008010**

**January 2008**

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**Planning Ref: 07/P1926  
ASE Project Number: 3238  
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**By**

**Dave Fallon**

**Project No: 3238  
Report No: 2008010**

**January 2008**

**Archaeology South-East  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex  
BN41 1DR**

**Tel: 01273 426830  
Fax: 01273 420866  
Email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.archaeologyse.co.uk](http://www.archaeologyse.co.uk)**

### *Abstract*

An Archaeological Evaluation was undertaken at Haslemere Primary School between 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2007, which was commissioned by Atkins Ltd on behalf of their client. The Evaluation consisted of the mechanical excavation of two trial trenches to assess the location, form, extent, date, character, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains threatened by the proposed development

The underlying natural, (river terrace gravels and clays), was encountered at a maximum height of 15.72m OD in the south of the site (Trench 2) falling away to 15.26m OD in the north (Trench 1). The natural in both Trench 1 and Trench 2 appeared to be contaminated. The natural substrate in both trenches was overlain by a homogenous dump of modern construction/demolition rubble which was sealed by a terramating cover prior to the construction of the existing car park.

One feature of interest was observed in Trench 1 and consisted of a fragment of a late nineteenth or early twentieth century brick surface, possibly representing that of a coal room. This feature was truncated by modern, though defunct, services and was buried beneath the dumped modern construction/demolition rubble. No archaeological features were seen to cut into the natural.

Hydrocarbon contamination was believed to be present in both trenches. The extent of this contamination across the site is not known, however, given the makeup of these trenches any archaeological remains within the area of the proposed development could be heavily truncated and/or contaminated.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by Atkins Ltd on behalf of their client to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of a Children's Centre on land at Haslemere School, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton (NGR TQ 2683 6918) (Fig. 1).
- 1.2** The proposed development is located at the junction between Haslemere Avenue and Foxton Grove and is bounded by Haslemere Primary School to the south and east and by residential housing to the north and west.
- 1.3** The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), Archaeological Advisor recommended that a programme of trial trenching be undertaken in order to ascertain the archaeological potential of the site and inform any future mitigation strategy.
- 1.4** This document represents an Evaluation Report prepared by ASE and complies fully with the standards of archaeological fieldwork as employed by GLAAS and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and will be submitted to GLAAS for approval by Atkins Ltd. All work was carried out in accordance with the GLAAS *Archaeological Guidance Paper No.3 (AGP3)*.
- 1.5** The general aim of the archaeological evaluation was to assess the location, form, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains threatened by the development and to ascertain the nature and extent of existing disturbance/truncation and thus the degree of archaeological survival on the site.

## **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** The preceding brief (Atkins 2007) stated the archaeological potential of the site. It is reproduced below with due acknowledgement:

The site is located within a designated Archaeological Priority Area and has particular potential for finds dating from the Roman and medieval periods.

Prehistoric activity is known in the area from the Sites and Monuments Records and finds from this period has been found, in particular, to the south of the site.

Archaeological excavation at the western section of the school site showed evidence of a cemetery dating to the Roman period and further burials have been found further south near Deen City Farm.

The site of Merton Priory is located approximately 700m north of the evaluation area. It was founded in 1114 and dissolved in 1538 and excavations have been able to recreate part of its plan, however, some sections have been truncated by Merton Station and the railway line. The only part of the priory which exists are the remains of the of the precinct wall.

Further medieval finds have been recovered within deposits near the proposed development site providing further evidence of medieval activity.

**2.2** Recent archaeological works conducted on or near the site are listed below:

**HME01 Haslemere First School, Brooklands Court, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4**

London Archaeologist Round-up 2001: Dumped, modern material was noted beneath topsoil; natural strata were not reached.

**HEM99 Haslemere First School, Roslyn Close, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4**

London Archaeologist Round-up 1999: Natural gravels were overlaid by three deposits, the lowest of which was undated, the others of 19th-20th c date.

**HSM94 Haslemere First School, Roslyn Close, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4**

London Archaeologist Round-up 1994: Natural gravels were overlain by a soil horizon; one trench contained backfill - probably of a large quarry pit marked on a 1911 OS map.

London Archaeologist Round-up 1995: Watching brief Aug-Sept 1995 London Borough of Merton. The site lay within the area of a Roman cemetery which was to be left in situ. Only the overburden, which produced modern rubble, was disturbed.

**HMM94 Windlesham and Sunningdale Allotments, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4**

*(to the north east of the current site)*

London Archaeologist Round-up 1994: Within the natural gravels was evidence of a silted stream channel which, during the last post-glacial period, had flowed, and flooded, across the N part of the site towards the nearby River Wandle. To the E of the channel were two ditches and, to the S, a number of shallow intrusions which are dated to the 2nd c or later.

Analysis of their silt fills indicates a damp or waterlogged environment, suggesting that the area was marshy.

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1** Two trial trenches (Trenches 1 and 2) were excavated (Fig. 2). These trenches were located to assess the impact of the proposed development upon any archaeological remains present. Both Trench 1 and 2 measured 10m in length by 1.50m in width.
- 3.2** Other than minor alterations in location to compensate for a reinforced concrete bicycle park to the north of the site, the location of the trenches conformed to the original trench layout as specified in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Sygrave 2007).
- 3.3** The trial trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a JCB back hoe equipped with a grading bucket (see Fig. 3 and Plates 3 and 4).
- 3.4** The existing hard standing was removed and the underlying, contaminated, deposits reduced gradually to the underlying geology. The level revealed thus was drawn and levelled.
- 3.5** Any features of archaeological interest were recorded according to accepted professional standards and utilised the site code 'HZF 07' assigned by the Museum of London. The site was planned at a scale of 1:100 (Fig 3). The colours of the deposits were established by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour Chart.
- 3.6** A photographic record was kept of the Trial Trenches and deposits of archaeological interest.
- 3.7** The site drawings, records and photographs comprise the site archive which is being kept at Archaeology South East's head offices, Portslade, as a temporary measure and will, in due course, be offered to a suitable museum (Museum of London).

### **4. RESULTS**

- 4.1** The evaluation revealed a stratigraphic sequence of contaminated natural deposits, comprising clays and river terrace gravels, underneath successive layers of demolition rubble and levelling/made ground deposits to a depth of between 2m (Trench 1) and 1.30m (Trench 2) beneath the hard standing. The hard standing had a thickness of 0.07m and was comprised of a brick laid car park.
- 4.2** The observation of the natural clays and gravels was restricted to observation from outside of the trenches due to the odour of

hydrocarbons being emitted and the presence of ground water. However, despite this it was possible to observe the natural deposits closely enough to determine that there were no negative features present within the study area. One positive feature [106] was recorded beneath the modern rubble layer in Trench 1.

### 4.3 Trench 1

Context Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. width	Max. Thickness
100	Hard Standing	Brick Car Park	Trench	Trench	0.07m
101	Levelling Layer	Coarse Sand	Trench	Trench	0.23m
102		Terram.	Trench	Trench	N/A
103	Layer	Modern Demolition Rubble	Trench	Trench	0.40m
104		Modern Services	Trench	0.50m	0.50m
105	Layer	Coal Dust	0.50m	Trench	0.10m
106	Masonry	Red Brick Cellar Floor	1.00m	Trench	Unexcavated
107	Layer	Natural Clays / Gravels	Trench	Trench	N/A

#### 4.3.1 Trench Summary

The earliest deposit was the natural, comprising alluvial clays and river terrace gravels [107], encountered at a maximum height of 15.47m OD at the centre of the trench falling away gradually north through the trench to 15.26m OD. The exact stratigraphic sequence in Trench 1 was unclear due to restriction of access for Health and Safety reasons. However, the next deposit above the natural was a brick surface, [106], above which was a layer of coal dust, [105]. Layer [103] sealed the deposits in this trench but were seen to be cut by a modern service, [104]. A layer of terramatt, [102], had been placed throughout the trench prior to a levelling/make up layer, [101], of coarse sand being laid as a base for the extant brick car park, [100].

(Context [100] was the same as context [200]. Context [101] was the same as context [201]. Context [102] was the same as context [202]. Context [103] was the same as context [203]. Context [107] was the same as context [204]).



#### 4.4 Trench 2

Number	Type	Description	Max. Length	Max. width	Max. Depth
200	Hard Standing	Brick Car Park	Trench	Trench	0.07m
201	Levelling Layer	Coarse Sand	Trench	Trench	0.23m
202		Terram.	Trench	Trench	N/A
203	Layer	Modern Demolition Rubble	Trench	Trench	1.30m
204	Layer	Natural Clays / Gravels	Trench	Trench	N/A

##### 4.4.1 Trench Summary

The earliest deposit was the contaminated natural, comprising alluvial clays and river terrace gravels [204], encountered at a maximum height of 15.72m OD at the centre of the trench falling away gradually south through the trench to 15.70m OD. The next deposit above this was a layer of demolition rubble, [203] which included pockets of contamination. Above this was a layer of terramating, [202], sealing the contaminated deposit prior to a layer of coarse sand levelling/make-up, [201], and above this the extant brick car park, [200].

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

- 5.1** This programme of works has demonstrated the presence of a large quantity of modern dumped material beneath the extant surface. This has previously been noted during archaeological investigations at the site (HME01 London Archaeologist Round-up 2001, see section 2.2 above). Late nineteenth/early twentieth century remains, possibly associated with a coal room, were observed at a depth of 0.90m beneath current ground level. Any earlier remains have most likely been truncated by modern activity.
- 5.2** The natural gravels were encountered at between 15.26m OD and 15.72m OD. The natural appeared to be undisturbed although the high level of contamination prevented a detailed inspection. The extent of this contamination is not known. However, it was present throughout Trench 1 and Trench 2 (see Fig. 3).
- 5.3** Any archaeological remains which may have survived within the area of the proposed development are likely to be heavily truncated and may also be contaminated by hydrocarbon waste.

**REFERENCES**

Atkins 2007 Brief for An Archaeological Evaluation at Haslemere School, unpub grey report

Sygrave, J. 2007 Written Scheme of Investigation: Haslemere Primary School, Haslemere Avenue, Mitcham, London Borough of Merton. ASE unpublished report

**OASIS FORM**

**Project details**

Project name	Haslemere Primary School
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation consisting of two 10m trial trenches prior to redevelopment of an existing car park
Project dates	Start: 19-12-2007 End: 21-12-2007
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HZF07 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	3238 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

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**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON MERTON MITCHAM Haslemere Primary School
Postcode	CR4 3PQ

Study area 30.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 2683 6918 51.4069370585 -0.176281101387 51 24 24 N  
000 10 34 W Point

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**Project creators**

Name of Organisation Archaeology South East

Project brief originator Consultant

Project design originator consultant

Project director/manager JON SYGRAVE

Project supervisor David Fallon

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**Project archives**

Physical Archive recipient n/a

Digital Archive recipient Local Museum

Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper Archive recipient Local Museum

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Drawing', 'Map', 'Plan', 'Report'

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**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type            Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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Author(s)/Editor(s)        Fallon, D

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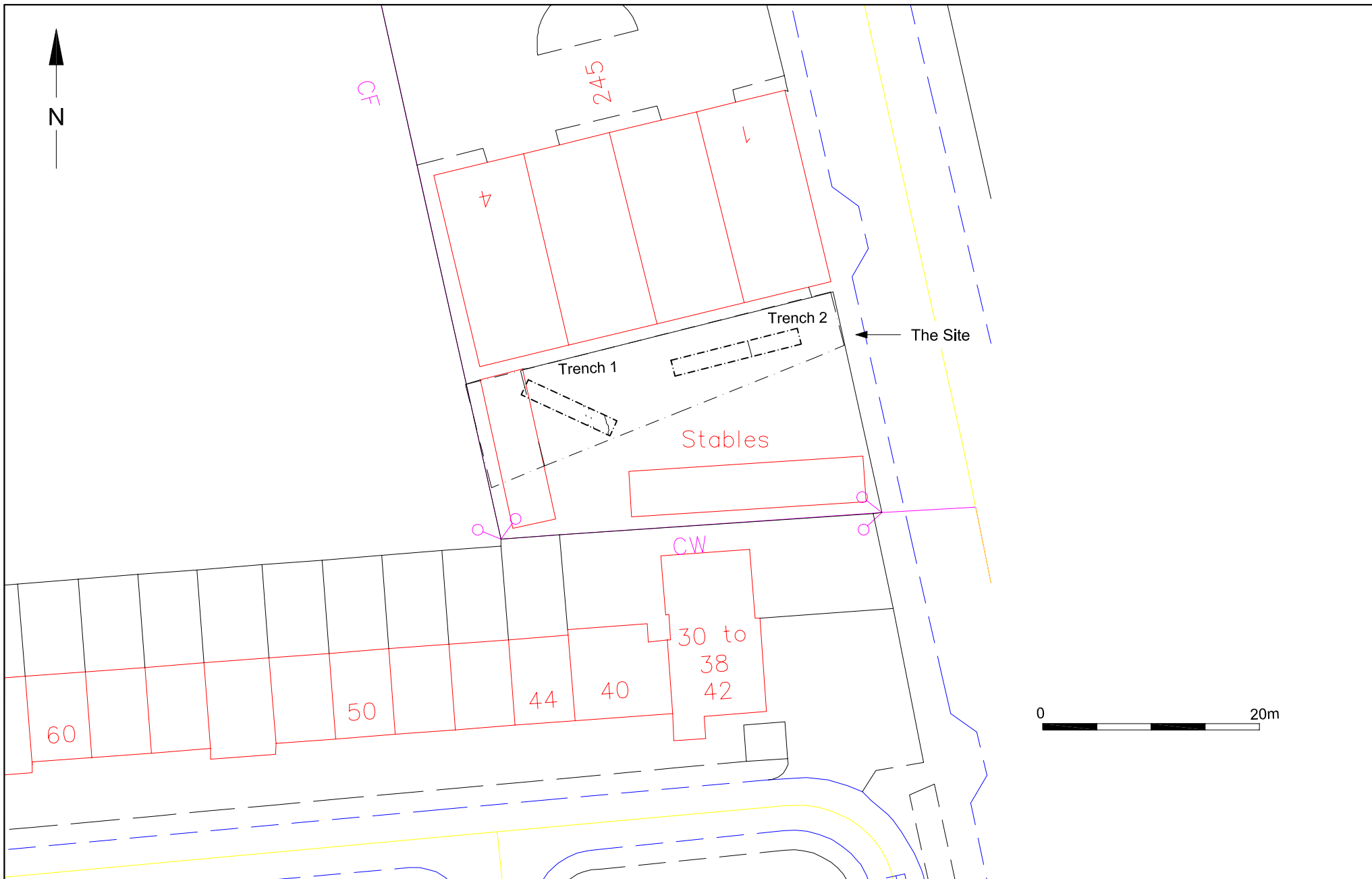
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© Archaeology South-East		Haslemere Primary School, Mitcham	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 3238	Jan 2008	Site Plan	
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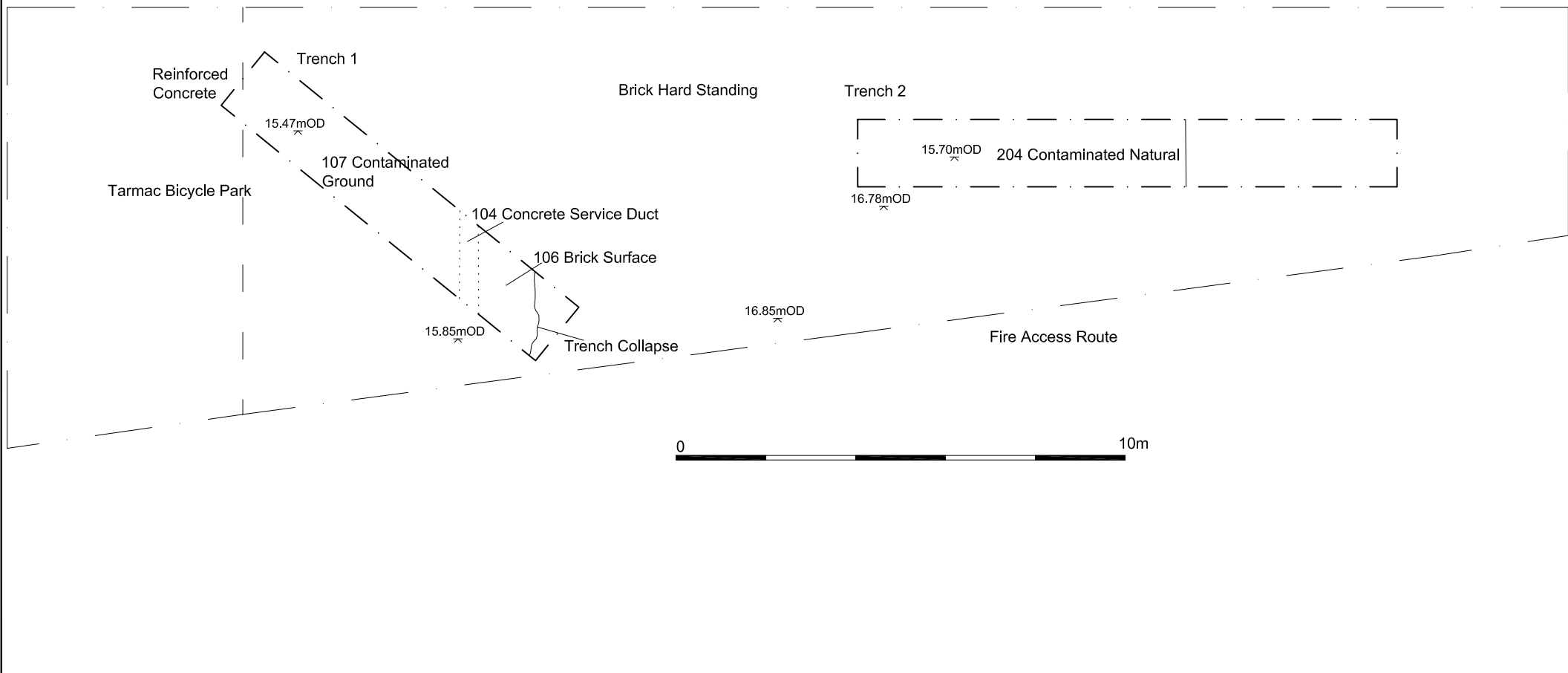
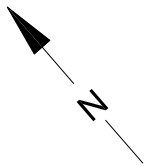






Plate 1: Trench 1 Pre-Excavation



Plate 2: Trench 2 Pre-Excavation



Plate 3: Trench 1 Excavation



Plate 4: Trench 2 Excavation SE Facing



Plate 5: Trench 1 Contamination



Plate 6: Trench 2 Contamination



Plate 7: Trench 1 NW Facing Section



Plate 8: Trench 2 E Facing Section



Plate 9: The Site Post Excavation