

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**203-221 North Street, Romford,
London Borough of Havering**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Aidan Colyer

Site Code: NSR21/174

(TQ 5066 8949)

**203-221 North Street, Romford,
London Borough of Havering**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for JIM Construction**

by Aidan Colyer
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code NSR 22

January 2022

Summary

Site name: 203-221 North Street, Romford, London Borough of Havering

Grid reference: TQ 5066 8949

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 25th - 27th January 2022

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Aidan Colyer

Site code: NSR 21/174

Area of site: c. 0.47ha

Summary of results: The evaluation was successfully carried out with all trenches opened to the greatest extent possible. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the Museum of London in due course with accession number NSR22.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 03.02.22
	Steve Preston ✓ 03.02.22

203-221 North Street, Romford, London Borough of Havering An Archaeological Evaluation

by Aidan Colyer

Report 21/174b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 203-221 North Street, Romford, London Borough of Havering (TQ 5066 8949) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Mark Dunkley, of JIM Construction Ltd, 80 Nightingale Lane, Wanstead, E11 2DZ.

Planning consent (P1181.19) has been gained from the London Borough of Havering for the construction of three high-rise apartment buildings with associated landscaping, amenities, car parking and services along with the refurbishment of the listed building Vine Cottage on this 0.47ha plot on the west side of North Street, Romford. The consent is subject to a condition (16) which requires a programme of archaeological work to be carried out prior to development. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021), and the Council's policies on the archaeology.

As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site, which may be damaged or destroyed by the proposed re-development, the results of an archaeological evaluation have been requested, to be supported by a preliminary geoarchaeological assessment, in order to determine the site's archaeological potential and to help formulate a mitigation strategy as necessary. An initial Geoarchaeological survey was carried out at the site (St. John-Brooks 2021).

The fieldwork was carried out according to a specification approved by Mr Adam Single of the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS), the archaeological advisers to the Borough. The fieldwork was undertaken by Aidan Colyer and Elspeth St. John Brooks on 25th - 27th January 2022 and the site code is NSR 21/174. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Museum of London in due course, with accession code NSR22.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies c. 1km north of the centre of Romford (Fig. 1) and the south-western boundary of the site is the River Rom (also referred to as the Beam River closer to its confluence with the River Thames), one of the many tributaries of the River Thames (Bridgeland 1994). At this location the Rom is c. 9-10km from the Thames.

The site was a mixed-use parcel of land with a range of buildings including a structure occupied by a car dealership, car garage and warehouses. The warehouses were situated across the south-eastern aspect of the site. The majority of the area was covered by Tarmac/made ground/levelled ground with a large portion of the River Rom culverted and flowing beneath a car park to the north-west of site. All of the buildings from the north-east entrance gate onwards, as well as the culverted portion of the Rom, had been removed along with the Tarmac covering the site by the time the fieldwork was undertaken (Pl. 1).

Geo-environmental survey (Hunter 2019) and geoarchaeological assessment (St John-Brooks 2021) were carried out to assess the character of sediments found across the site. These identified thick made ground above thick alluvial deposits across the whole site which overlie this large clast, compacted gravel layer which varies in thickness between (0.20m to >1m). This gravel unit was also found at the 143 North Street (CAL 2018) and 146-147 North Street (PCA 2006) sites. Only archaeology was found at 146-147 North Street, the Iron Age archaeology was found in the alluvial clays above this gravel unit. This gravel unit encountered at all 3 sites and the geoarchaeological assessment is a riverine gravel deposit likely of Pleistocene Age (derived from the Hackney Terrace Gravels). The gravels across this side of the River Rom undulate and have varying thicknesses of alluvial clays overlying.

At the time of evaluation, the site has been reduced since the borehole survey to an extent and is now relatively level. The geoarchaeological assessment suggests that the site has a more complex sequence to that seen in the British Geological Society mapping (1996). The site shows a sequence where there is the clay alluvium from the River Rom, likely dating from the late prehistoric to medieval periods, overlying gravels derived from nearby Quaternary Hackney Gravel Terrace deposits, with a sequence of bedded clays and sands which become homogenous sands lower in the sequence overlying the Palaeogene London Clay.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location in the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wide range of sites and finds of all periods frequently encountered (MoLAS 2003; Williams and Brown 1999). The site lies within an archaeological priority zone with the historic (medieval) centre of Romford to the south and with certain and possible prehistoric riparian settlement adjacent to the River Rom. There are, however, few sites or finds recorded for the immediate vicinity of the site. The site contains Vine Cottages (listed buildings) which are to be retained in the development. A watching brief to the north and evaluation to the south-west revealed no archaeological deposits. However, the Greater London Historic Environment Record records the

presence of an excavated Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age site adjacent to the River Rom a few hundred metres to the south (PCA 2006). Recent extensive fieldwork to the west of the town comprising geophysical survey and trenching, found very little of archaeological interest: a single Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age pit and a few post-medieval ditches (Weale 2009; Porter 2013) with another evaluation only recording a single pit of early Iron Age date (Taylor 2014). However, to the north-west at Warren Farm, Bronze Age, Iron Age and later enclosure complexes have been investigated and the Greater London Historic Environment Record also records the presence of cropmarks to the north-east including a possible enclosure complex, field system and ring ditches (levelled round barrows).

At 146-147 North Street there were ditches found to aid the drainage of the area in the Medieval and Post-medieval periods. There is evidence of controlled flooding in this area through time, and Iron Age features were found on the western side of the River Rom. This consisted of a large hollow which contained potential hearths or burning features with various finds including burnt flint, animal bone and pottery along with preserved wood which has been interpreted as a dump (or refuse) rather than a constructed building (Bishop 2010).

Nearby an Early to Middle Iron Age site was discovered at 146 North Street (c. 250m south-east of the current site). This spanned the land between the road and the current river and found thick alluvial sequences overlying gravels (PCA 2006). At 146 North Street the archaeology lay at around 14m aOD, and that site was bisected by the River Rom.

The earliest maps of Romford show the River Rom running from north to south towards the River Thames with a tributary joining the east bank. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1896) shows the area in detail with the site lying on or very close to this confluence. The 1914 edition shows that this unnamed stream has been culverted to flow underneath North Street and along the north-western edge of the site. The same map also shows the beginnings of the culverting of the River Rom.

In a wider context, land at Crown Farm to the east (Taylor 2014) was at the same height above sea level as the current site (17–18m aOD) where the underlying geology was of brickearth and Hackney gravels (BGS 1996). To the west, the Hackney gravels butt right up to the side of the River Rom. For the site itself the deposits are recorded as undifferentiated Head Deposits (BGS 1996).

The geoarchaeological assessment of the site itself (St. John-Brooks 2021) showed thick man made deposits (made ground) overlying natural alluvial deposits on the site. The sequence revealed is complex and is almost certainly due to the confluence of the main River Rom and the other tributary stream prior to culverting.

Some peaty clay deposits found at the north-east end of Transect 1 likely indicate a palaeochannel and suggest the potential for alluvially preserved organic material.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present, and if so, how they relate spatially to the piling and development plan;
- to determine if any deposits of prehistoric date are present, preferentially located adjacent to the River Rom;
- to determine if any waterlogged deposits are present which may relate to the landscape and period represented in excavations at 146-147 North Street;
- to provide further information on the nature of the gravel deposit(s) recorded in the borehole survey;
- to determine if any deposits of Roman date are present, in particular those which may relate to *Durolitum* Roman settlement;
- to determine if any deposits of medieval date are present; and
- to inform a strategy for mitigation if required.

The potential and significance of any such deposits located was to be assessed according to the research priorities such as set out in Historic England Research Agenda (HE 2017) or more local or thematic research priorities such as *A Research Framework for London's Archaeology* (MoLAS 2003) and that for the greater Thames Estuary (Williams and Brown 1999) as necessary.

Five trenches, each 15m long and 1.8-2m wide, were to be dug using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. It may be required to sub-divide or re-position the trenches to avoid obstacles such as the presence of live services. All trenches were provisionally to be excavated to the top of the known gravel deposit and then to a depth of approximately 14m aOD, apart from trench 5 which was to be excavated to approximately 13.2m aOD. At these depths trenches were to be stepped and battered where appropriate while leaving the stratigraphy visible to be recorded. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed to expose the archaeologically sensitive levels. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined

above, without compromising the integrity of any feature that might warrant preservation *in situ* or be better investigated under the conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

All five trenches were opened with alterations made to take into account live services. This led to the shortening of several trenches and the splitting and widening of trench 5. Trenches were stepped and battered where appropriate while preserving the stratigraphy for recording. The trenches ranged from 12m to 15m in length and 1.7m to 3.2m in depth. A complete list of trenches giving length, breadth, depth and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 2 and 3)

Trench 1 was aligned SW - NE and was 12.5m long and 2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.09m of concrete overlying, 0.06m of scalpins overlying, 0.4m of rubble bedding overlying, 0.57m of alluvial clay layer, overlying 0.58m of a darker alluvial clay, overlying 0.15m of natural gravel overlying 0.15m+ of clay natural geology. This trench was moved 2m to the northwest due to originally being placed directly over several live services and the line of the culvert as per section 4.1.1 of the agreed WSI. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3 and 5; Pls 4 and 5)

Trench 2 was aligned W - E and was 13m long and 1.9m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.65m of topsoil overlying, 0.55m of mixed alluvial clay and made ground, overlying 0.25m of dark grey brown made ground and clay mix, overlying 0.45m of natural gravel overlying clay natural geology. The trench was shortened due to the presence of a live mains electricity cable and there was nowhere close to the trench available to extend the area. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Trench 3 (Figs. 3 and 5; Pls 6 and 7)

Trench 3 was aligned close to W - E and was 14m long and 1.7m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.70m of modern rubble overlying Terram. Underneath this was 0.25m of alluvial clay and 0.3m of dark grey brown clay overlying 0.5m+ of natural gravel. Victorian and modern truncation was observed through the clay layers of the trench. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Trench 4 (Figs 3 and 6; Pls 8 and 9)

Trench 4 was aligned close to SW - NE and was 12m long and 1.95-2.05m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.80m of modern rubble overlying Terram. Underneath this was 0.35m of alluvial clay and 0.45m of darker alluvial clay overlying 0.35m+ of natural gravel. Modern truncations were observed including existing piles and a drain that is in the vicinity of the culvert. These reduced the overall length of the trench. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 7; Pl. 10)

Trench 5 was aligned close to W - E and was 15m long and 3.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 1m of modern rubble overlying Terram. Underneath this was 0.8m of alluvial clay and 0.65m of darker alluvial clay overlying 0.75m of natural gravel, which in turn was overlying pale blue clay with orange mottling. Modern truncations and Victorian field drains were observed in the clay layers. A mains gas pipe was encountered 11m along the trench necessitating the remaining 4m be dug on the other side. No archaeological features or finds were observed.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered during the course of the evaluation.

Conclusion

The area of the evaluation had been heavily truncated by modern activity including multiple large services, piling, footings, and deep pits containing rubble (likely previous footings that had been removed at some time before the previous building was constructed). Despite this activity Victorian field drains were observed the majority of the way through the gravels suggesting the clays required draining during the 19th century, presumably to reclaim the land for construction. The areas that were not truncated by any of this Victorian and modern disturbance were archaeologically sterile. Despite both monitoring and the repeated checking of the spoilheaps not even stray artefacts were observed. The western end of trench 2, the area not completely truncated by modern activity, showed Victorian truncation including foundations that had been partially removed before the construction of the modern house.

No organic deposits were encountered and no features observed even where the trenches were initially stopped at the top of the gravel. After the removal of gravel in the trenches (where possible) no archaeological deposits were observed. The evaluation and geoarchaeological assessment suggest this site has a more complex

sequence to that seen in the British Geological Society mapping (1996). The site shows a sequence where there is the clay alluvium from the River Rom, likely dating from the late prehistoric to medieval periods, overlying gravels derived from nearby Quaternary Hackney Gravel Terrace deposits, with a sequence of bedded clays and sands which become homogenous sands lower in the sequence overlying the Palaeogene London Clay.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	12.5	1.8	2	0-0.09m concrete; 0.09-0.15m (modern scalpins bedding layer) bedding; 0.15-0.55m (mixed rubble bedding layer) rubble bedding; 0.55-1.12m (mid yellow brown) clay; 1.12-1.70m (mid to dark yellow brown) clay; 1.70-1.85m (mid to dark yellow brown gravels) gravel natural [14.55m aOD]; 1.85-2m+ (pale bluish grey-brown clay) natural. [Pls 2 and 3]
2	13	1.8	1.9	0-0.65m topsoil; 0.65-1.2m mid yellow brown mixed made ground; 1.2-1.45m dark grey brown mixed made ground; 1.45-1.90m gravel natural [14.22m aOD]; 1.90m+ natural. [Pls 4 and 5]
3	14	1.8	1.7	0-0.70m modern demolition rubble; 0.70-0.95m mid yellow brown clay; 0.95-1.20m (mid to dark yellow brown) clay; 1.20-1.70m+ gravel natural [14.28m aOD]. [Pls 6 and 7]
4	12	1.8	2.05	0-0.80m modern demolition rubble; terram; 0.80-1.15m (mid yellow brown) clay; 1.15-1.60m (mid to dark yellow brown) clay; 1.60-1.95m+ gravel natural [14.69m aOD]. [Pls 8 and 9]
5	15	2.5	3.2	0-1m modern demolition rubble; terram; 1-1.8m (mid yellow brown) clay; 1.8-2.45m (mid to dark yellow brown) clay; 2.45-3.2m gravel natural; 3.2m+ natural [13.47m aOD]. [Pl. 10]

Appendix 2: Oasis submission form/over



Evaluation at 203-221 North Street, Romford

ADS Library Summary

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OASIS ID (UID): thamesva1-504350

Project Name: Evaluation at 203-221 North Street, Romford

Activity type: Evaluation

Project Identifier(s): NSR21/174

Planning Id: P1181.19

Reason for Investigation: Planning: Post determination

Organisation Responsible for work: Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Project Dates: 25-Jan-2022 - 27-Jan-2022

HER: Greater London HER 🗨

Project Methodology: Five trenches were excavated.

Project Results: Modern made ground and modern and Victorian truncations overlay naturally deposited clays above the natural gravel. There were no finds or features of archaeological interest.

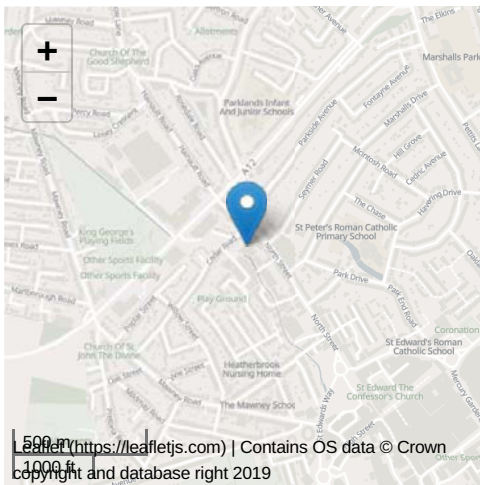
Keywords:

Archive:

Documentary Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with Museum of London

Reports in OASIS:

Colyer, A., (2022). *203-221 North Street, Romford, London Borough of Havering: an archaeological evaluation*. Reading: Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd. 21/174b. 👍



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Location

Site 1

Site name: 203-221 North Street, Romford

Coordinates:

TQ 50660 89490

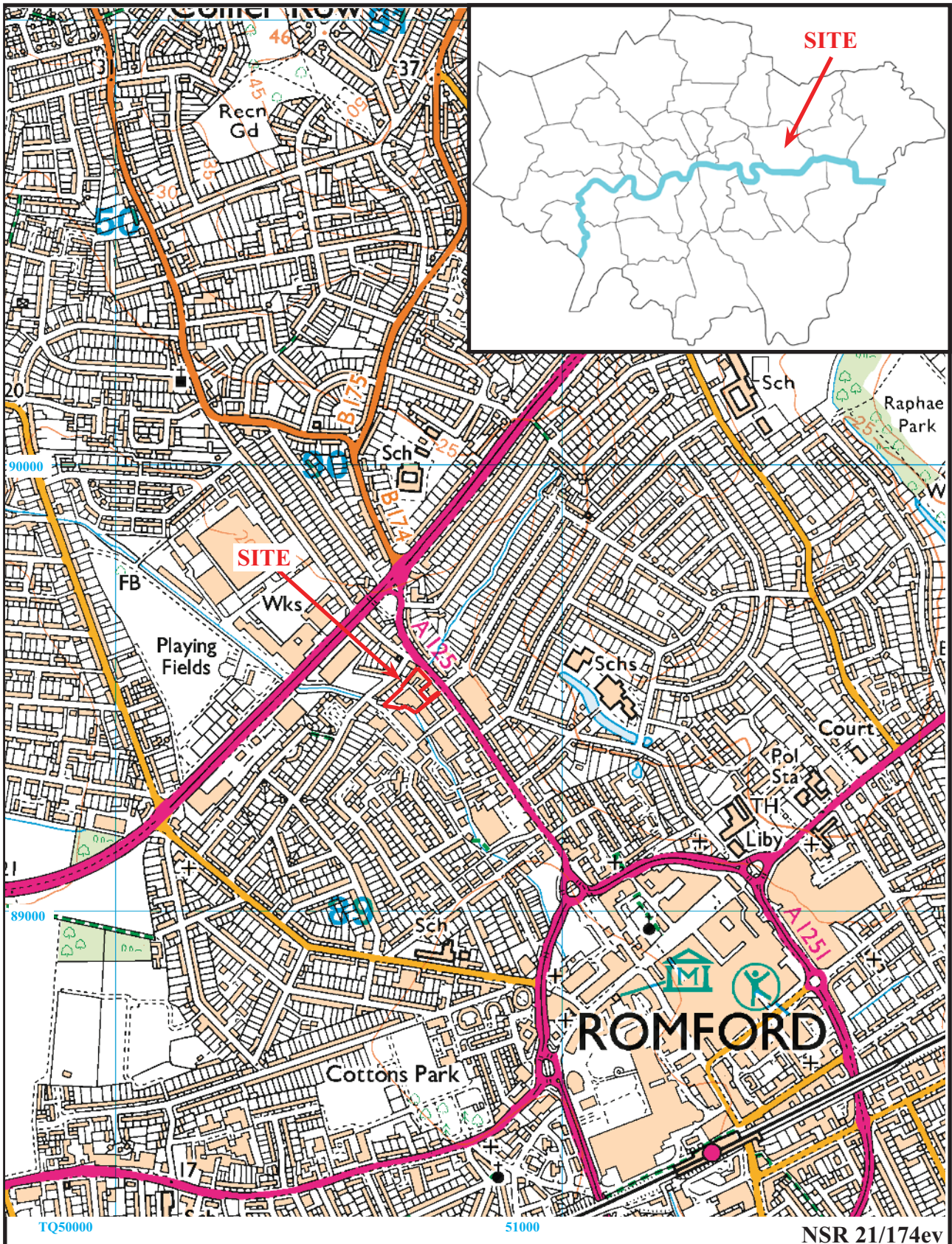
Administrative Areas:

Country : England

County : Greater London

District : Havering

Parish : Havering, unparished area



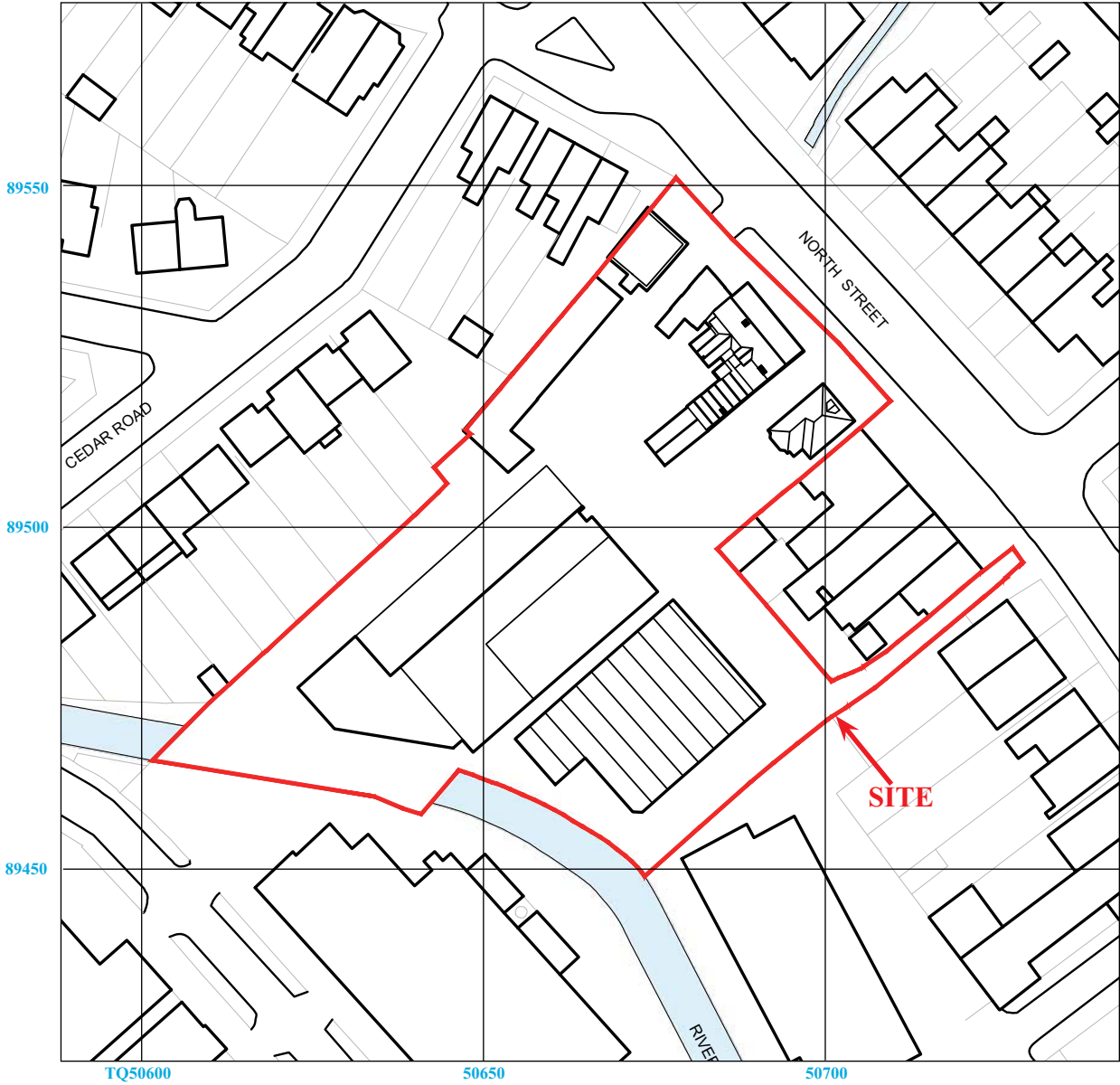
**203-221 North Street, Romford,
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Figure 1. Location of site within the London Borough of Havering and London,

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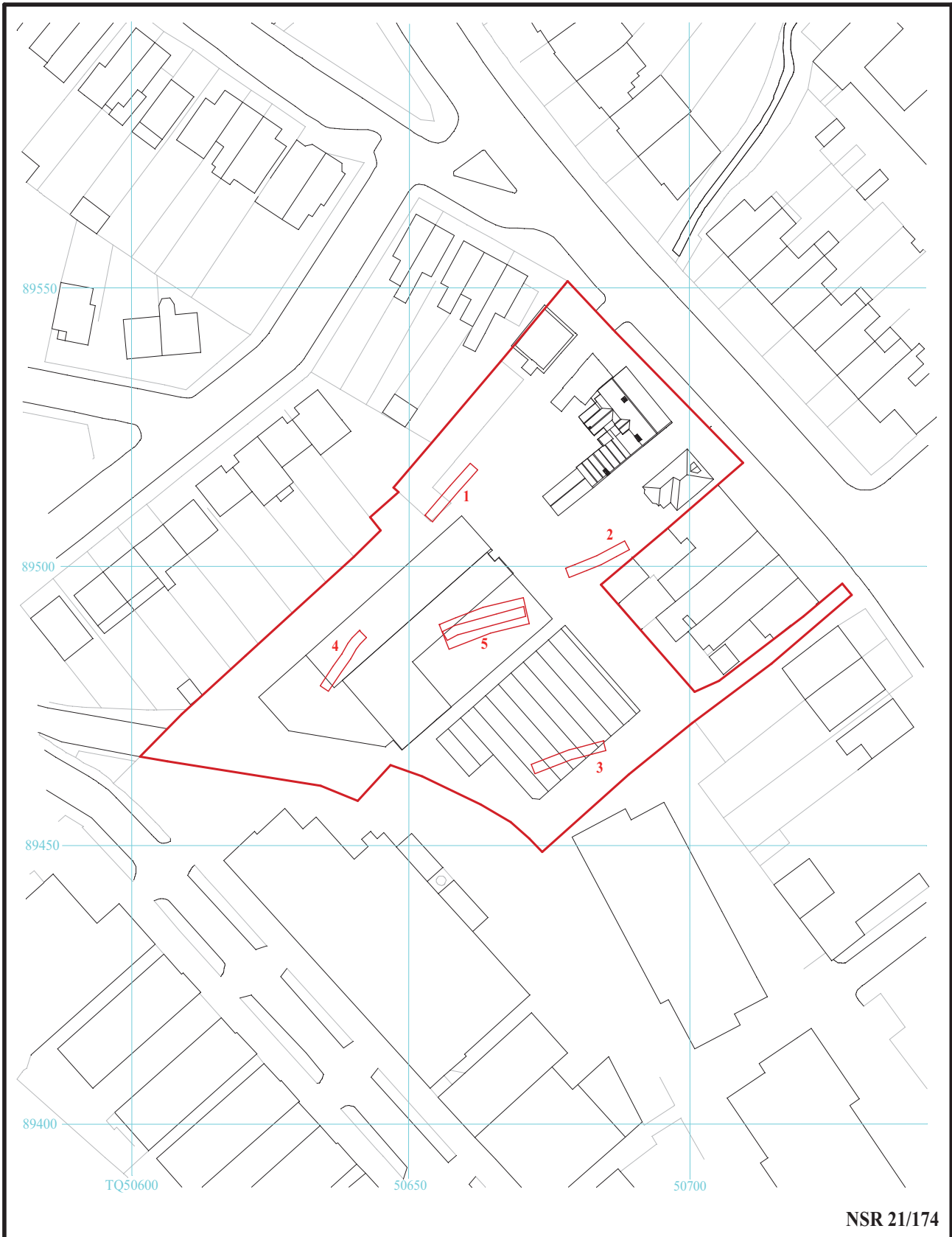
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off North Street.

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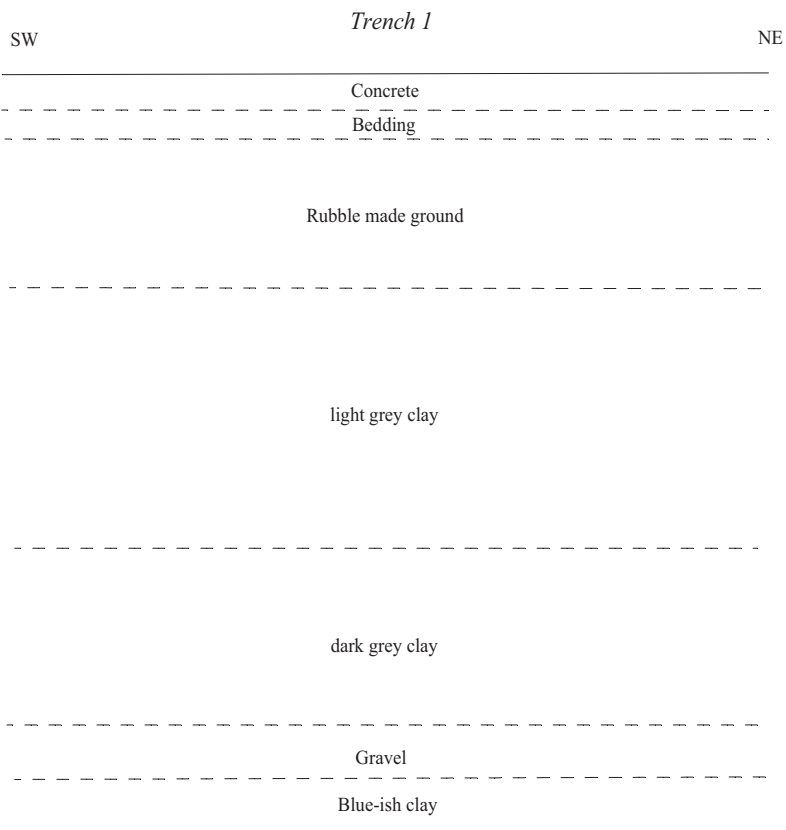
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Figure 3. Trench locations.



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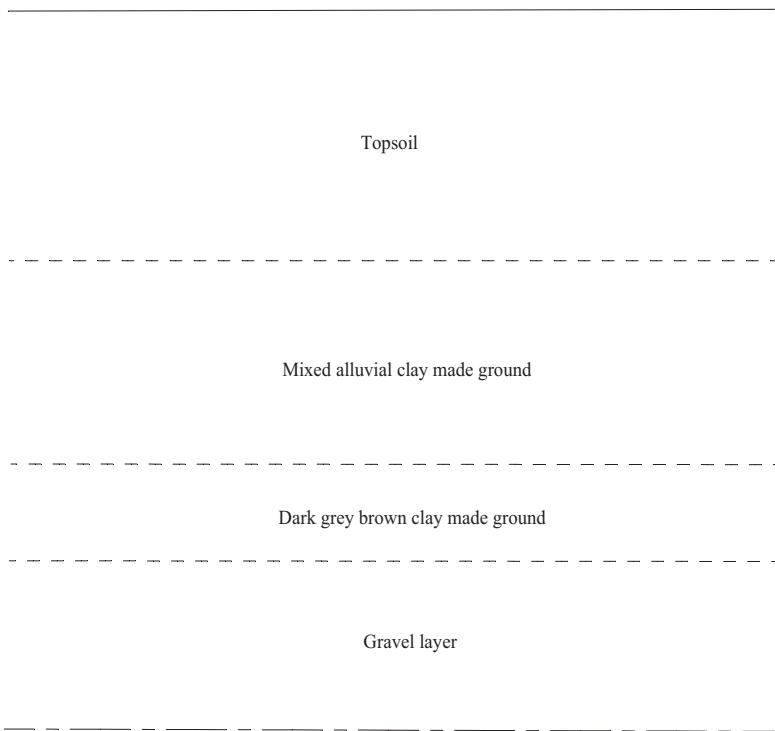
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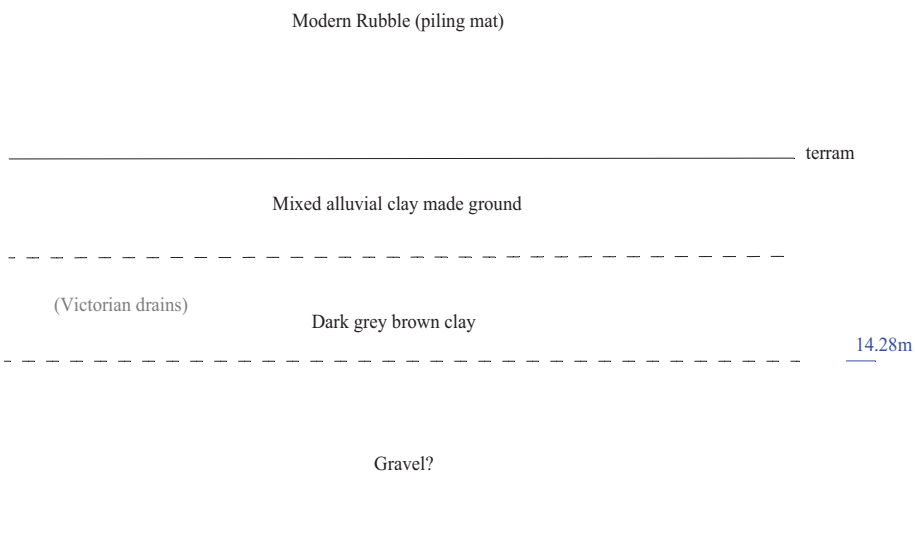
Figure 4. Representative sections (Trench 1).



SW *Trench 2* NE



SW *Trench 3* NE

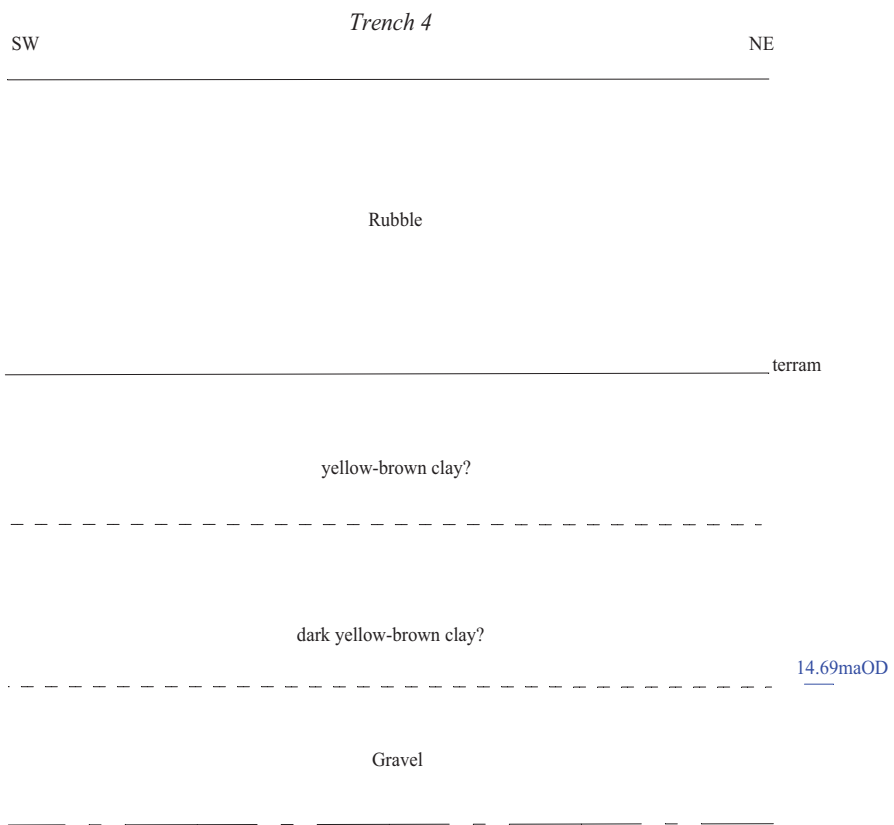


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Figure 5. Representative sections (Trench 2 and 3).





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Figure 6. Representative section (Trench 4).



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SW *Trench 5* NE

rubble

Light grey clay

machine step

dark grey clay

13.47maOD

gravel

Pale blue mottled clay

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Figure 7. Representative section (Trench 5).



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Plate 6. Trench 3, looking north. Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m. Plate 7. Trench 3 section looking south. Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 8. Trench 4 looking south west. Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 9. Trench 4 section looking south east. Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 10. Trench 5 Section looking south. Scales: 2m and 1m.

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203-221 North Street, Romford,
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Plates 6 to 10.

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Plate 1. General view of site, looking north west.



Plate 2. Trench 1 looking south west. Scale: 2m.



Plate 3. Trench 1 section looking south. Scale: 2m.



Plate 4. Trench 2 looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.



Plate 5. Trench 2 Section looking north. Scale: 2m.

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**203-221 North Street, Romford,
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Plates 1 to 5.**

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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