

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD

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For London Borough of Southwark

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Cornelius Barton BA AIfA

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

# ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD

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Client: London Borough of Southwark

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Local Authority: London Borough of Southwark

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NGR: 533437, 179893

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Planning App: 11-AP-0825

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Author: C. Barton

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Doc Ref: LPI221L-WBR-v1.1

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Date: April 12

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site Code: SJC12

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**L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY**

A trading name of L – P : Heritage LLP.

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# Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks at St John's Churchyard, in the London Borough of Southwark. The watching brief was implemented because of the potential for archaeological remains on the site and undertaken by L - P : Archaeology. This report has been prepared by Cornelius Barton of L – P : Archaeology on behalf of London Borough of Southwark.

The site was previously the churchyard of St. John's Horsleydown, one of the Fifty New Churches commissioned by Act of Parliament in 1711. The site has potential to contain material associated with its use as a burial ground, including human remains and fragments of gravestones and other monuments. There is also some small potential for the presence of earlier remains.

The objectives of the watching brief were to determine the presence or absence of any such remains on site and to record any such remains that were found. Due to the shallow extent of the works carried out, no archaeological remains were disturbed during the watching brief.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St. John's Churchyard, Fair Street for London Borough of Southwark (LBS) who are also the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.2. The fieldwork was carried out by Cornelius Barton and Chaz Morse of L – P : Archaeology between March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 14<sup>th</sup> 2012. This report was written by Cornelius Barton of L - P : Archaeology.
- 1.3. The site is centred on NGR 533437, 179893.
- 1.4. The site code allocated by London Archaeological Archive and Resource Centre is SJC12.
- 1.5. The work was carried out in accordance with the specification prepared by L – P : Archaeology (DUFFY 2011) and agreed with LBS before commencement of works.

## 2. site Background

### 2.1.PLANNING

- 2.1.1. Planning consent has been granted for improvements to the park including remodeling of plant beds, moving some of the paths and adding additional equipment to the childrens play area. The application reference is 11-AP-0825.
- 2.1.2. The site is not a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and is not adjacent to any Scheduled Monuments.
- 2.1.3. The site lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone as defined in the Southwark Unitary Development Plan (adopted 2007).
- 2.1.4. There are two listed buildings within the site area. The northern boundary of the churchyard is defined by iron railings, Grade II listed, which probably date from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within the site boundary is the war memorial, also Grade II listed, and dated to approximately 1920. The site also lies adjacent to two Grade II listed buildings. These are No. 10 Fair Street (636-1/5/333) an 18<sup>th</sup> Century house formerly used as the Vicarage, and Fair Street Watch House (636-1/5/334), also dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 2.1.5. When considering an application, LBS is bound by local policy 3.18 regarding archaeology and planning. As such, the following condition was attached to the development.

#### CONDITION 5:

before any work hereby authorised begins, the applicant shall secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

- 2.1.6. LBS and L – P: Archaeology have agreed the methodology for these works in the Specification for watching brief (SWB) LP1221L-SWB-1.4 (DUFFY 2011).
- 2.1.7. This document seeks to satisfy the condition by describing the results of the watching brief and clarifying the status and location of the project archive.

## **2.2.GEOLOGY**

- 2.2.1. The known geological sequence for the area is of alluvial clays and silts interspersed with horizons of localised peat formation, above Kempton Park Terrace/Shepperton Gravels which in turn overlie London Clay (ALLEN ET AL 2005).
- 2.2.2. None of the excavations observed during the watching brief were of sufficient depth to observe the geology on the site.

## **2.3.TOPOGRAPHY**

- 2.3.1. The site lies approximately 250m south of the Thames. It is bounded to the north by Fair Street, to the south by Druid Street, and to the east by Tower Bridge Street. To the west the site is bounded by residential properties (FIGURE 2).
- 2.3.2. The site is generally flat with the area of the existing play area slightly raised at its southern limit. The site is located at approximately 3.5m to 4m OD.
- 2.3.3. The site area is currently in use as a park and playground.

## **2.4.ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY**

- 2.4.1. A search of the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER) was carried out prior to the watching brief, to a distance of 250m radius of the site. A summary of this information follows, with some additional basic background research. A full Desk Based Assessment was not considered necessary by LBS.

### **EARLY PREHISTORIC**

- 2.4.2. Previous excavations have established that the basic palaeotopography of Southwark and Bermondsey area consists of sand and gravel islands eroded and dissected by braided channels and tributaries of the Thames producing a landscape of low-lying islands or eyots separated by mudflats, marshes and tidal watercourses. The islands are known to have been a focus of prehistoric activity (ALLEN ET AL 2005).
- 2.4.3. The search of the GLHER identified little recorded Early Prehistoric activity



within the vicinity of the site. A few scattered findspots of Mesolithic and Neolithic date have been recorded between 160m and 180m to the east (MLO65998 and MLO75082).

2.4.4. From the end of the Neolithic period and into the Bronze Age, the surrounding area became a focus of more permanent settlement. Excavations in Borough High Street and Union Street have uncovered evidence suggesting the area was in agricultural use during this period (MCKINLEY 2006).

#### **BRONZE AGE**

2.4.5. There is some evidence for agricultural activity in Southwark during the Bronze Age (RIDGEWAY 1999) but the GLHER does not record any remains dating to this period in the immediate vicinity of the site. A flood deposit dated to the Bronze Age is located approximately 120m to the south (MLO59492).

#### **IRON AGE**

2.4.6. There is very little evidence of Iron Age activity in Southwark, possibly due to rising sea levels during this period (MILNE ET AL 1983). No sites or findspots dating from this period were identified in the study area around the site in the GLSHER.

#### **ROMAN**

2.4.7. The Roman presence in Southwark, which was a separate settlement from London at that point, was extensive and well documented. The Roman Road (known as Stane Street) ran from London Bridge southward, approximately along the line of Borough High Street. The site itself was not within the main Roman settlement, and was probably under low-level cultivation during the Roman period (MCKINLEY 2006).

2.4.8. Occasional findspots and features dating to the Roman period have been identified in the area surrounding the site. Ditches have been recorded to the south (MLO66128) and to the north west (MLO17989).

#### **EARLY MEDIEVAL**

2.4.9. The main focus of settlement in the Early Medieval period shifted away from

Southwark during this period, and there is little Early Medieval activity known within the area around the site. The only activity recorded in the GLHER search is a find of Saxon pottery sherds, believed to be residual, at the corner of Tower Bridge Road (MLO66004).

## **MEDIEVAL**

2.4.10. During the medieval period Southwark grew more densely inhabited once more. The main focus of settlement was to the west of the site, with the area being dominated by the Cluniac priory of St Saviour, Bermondsey which was later to become a Cistercian Abbey. The site lay outside the Abbey grounds, and the area probably remained under cultivation during this period (MCKINLEY 2006).

2.4.11. No sites or findspots dating to the period were identified within the study area in the GLHER.

## **POST MEDIEVAL**

2.4.12. During the Post Medieval period the landscape surrounding the site becomes heavily industrialised with sites such as pottery kilns to the north (MLO23128) and numerous breweries, tanneries and warehouses to the south.

2.4.13. The GLHER identifies the site as a former Post Medieval artillery ground (MLO5939) with a Drill Hall located to the west, later in use as a workhouse (MLO8848).

2.4.14. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the church of St John the Evangelist was constructed on the site with the surrounding area in use as the churchyard (MLO13529). The Church was one of the Fifty New Churches to be built by Act of Parliament in 1711, and was designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor and John James. Following severe damage of the church in the Blitz of 1942, the building fell into decline and was demolished in 1968, with the burials in the churchyard removed to Brookwood Cemetery. The site then became a park, as it remains today.

## **2.5. SITE CONDITIONS**

2.5.1. The site is currently a park. The plinth of the former Church, which is a Grade

II listed structure, now supports the Headquarters of the London City Mission.

### 3. Aims and Objectives

3.1. The general aims of the archaeological watching brief were to record the character, date, type, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains on site exposed or disturbed during groundworks.

3.2. The specific aims of the archaeological watching brief, as defined by the SWB (DUFFY 2011) were:

- ◆ To determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains.
- ◆ To record the character, date, location and preservation of any archaeological remains on the site.
- ◆ To record the nature and extent of any previous damage to archaeological remains on the site.
- ◆ To assess the potential for and impact on any human burials within the former graveyard. Potential remains include human remains, both articulated and disarticulated, with associated burial remains, including coffins and fittings as well as memorials.
- ◆ To establish the presence or absence of remains relating to the earlier use of the yard as a military training ground.

## 4. Methodology

- 4.1. For a full description of the archaeological methodology please refer to section 4 of the SWB (DUFFY 2011).
- 4.2. Most of the excavation work on site was carried out by means of a 5-ton mini-digger. Some of the de-turfing in the south-east of the site was done by hand, due to the presence of protected trees. All excavation was undertaken under archaeological supervision.

## 5. Results

5.1. No remains of any archaeological significance were exposed during the watching brief. A brief summary of works follows.

### 5.2. PLANTING BEDS

5.2.1. The two planting beds were dug to a maximum depth of approximately 0.5m below ground level, with the deepest area being in the centre of the two beds (FIGURE 2). The only material exposed was a dark grey brown humic topsoil containing assorted construction debris including asphalt fragments and broken 20<sup>th</sup> century brick. This deposit was assigned the context number (100). The upcast material was examined carefully but none of the rubble appeared to be remnants of masonry from the church or associated gravestones.

### 5.3. PLAY AREA

5.3.1. Small alterations were made to the play equipment in this area. This involved pulling up some of the existing footings and sinking new ones to a depth of approximately 0.5m. The area was observed to have been truncated by previous development, and no archaeological remains were present.

### 5.4. OLD PATHWAY

5.4.1. The existing pathway was removed for returfing (FIGURE 3). This involved breaking and removal of the asphalt surface and the hardcore below, to a maximum depth of 0.25m. No archaeological remains were observed during removal of this material.

### 5.5. NEW PATHWAY

5.5.1. In order to construct the new pathway the line of the new path was deturfed and dug to a depth of 0.25m (FIGURE 3). No archaeological remains either structural or artefactual were exposed during the digging. The material below the topsoil was identical to that exposed by digging the planting beds.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusions

6.1.No archaeological remains were exposed during the watching brief at St. Johns Churchyard. The only material exposed was redeposited topsoil, which was presumably deposited during the remodeling of the churchyard after removal of the burials in the late 1960s. Specifically, no human remains or gravestone fragments were present.

6.2.It should be noted that although the results of this watching brief were negative, the works carried out were of a very limited scope being no deeper than 0.5m and in most cases not more than 0.25m deep. It is possible that human remains, gravestones or other archaeological remains could be present in other areas of the park, or deeper than the works described in this document. Any future development would need to take this into account.

## 7. Archive

7.1. The paper archive consists of:

- ◆ 1 x Photographic Register
- ◆ 36 x Digital Photographs
- ◆ 1 x Context Register
- ◆ 1 x Context Sheets
- ◆ 3 x Attendance Sheets

7.2. The archive is to be deposited at the Museum of London.



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# FIGURES

FIGURE I // Site Location



250  
Meters



PROJECT // I221L- St John's Churchyard

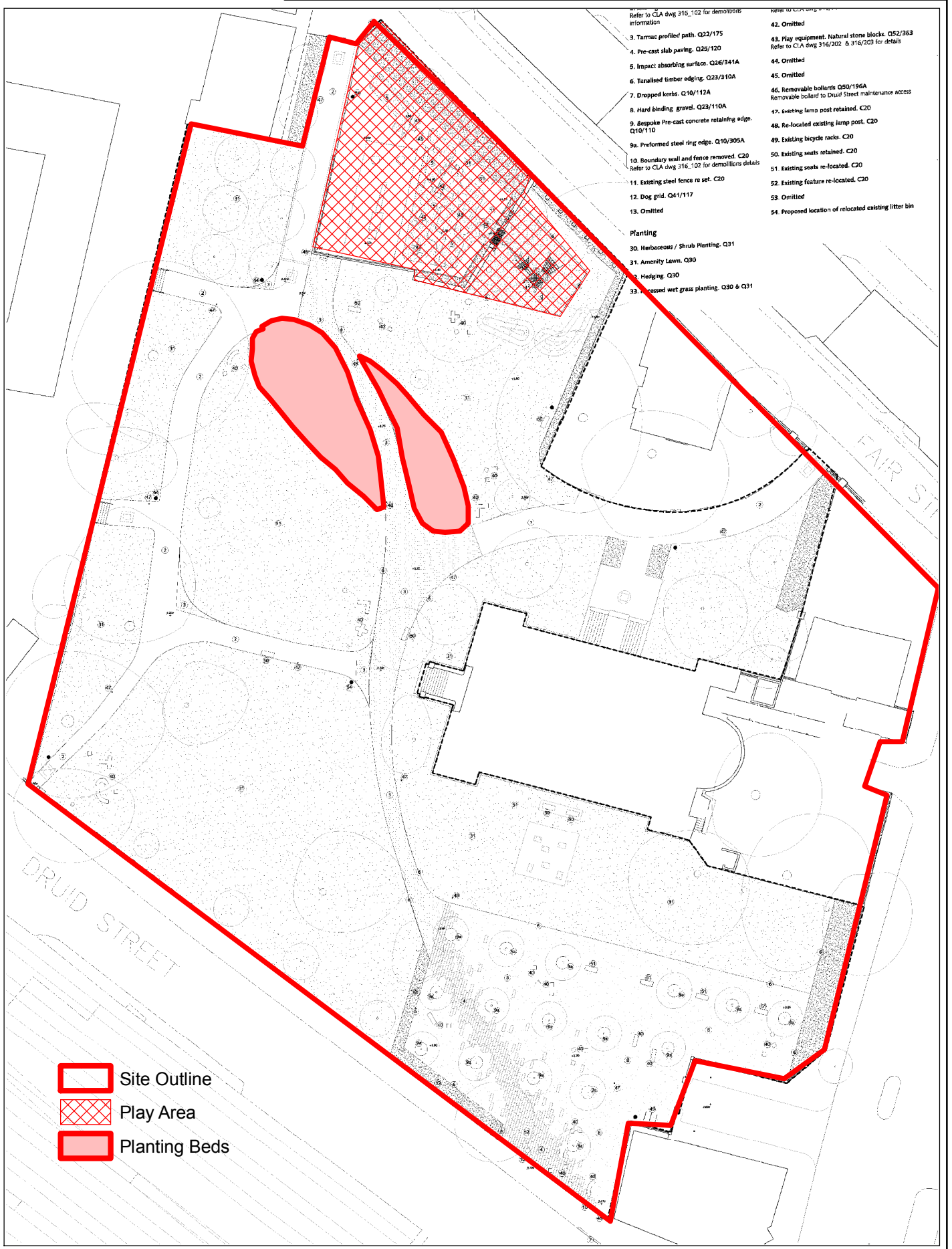
DESCRIPTION // Site Location




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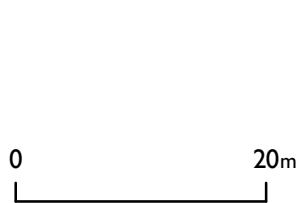
DOC REF: LPI221L-SWB-v1

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FIGURE 2 // Site Detail



-  Site Outline
-  Play Area
-  Planting Beds



PROJECT // 1221L- St John's Churchyard

DESCRIPTION // Planting Beds and Play Area

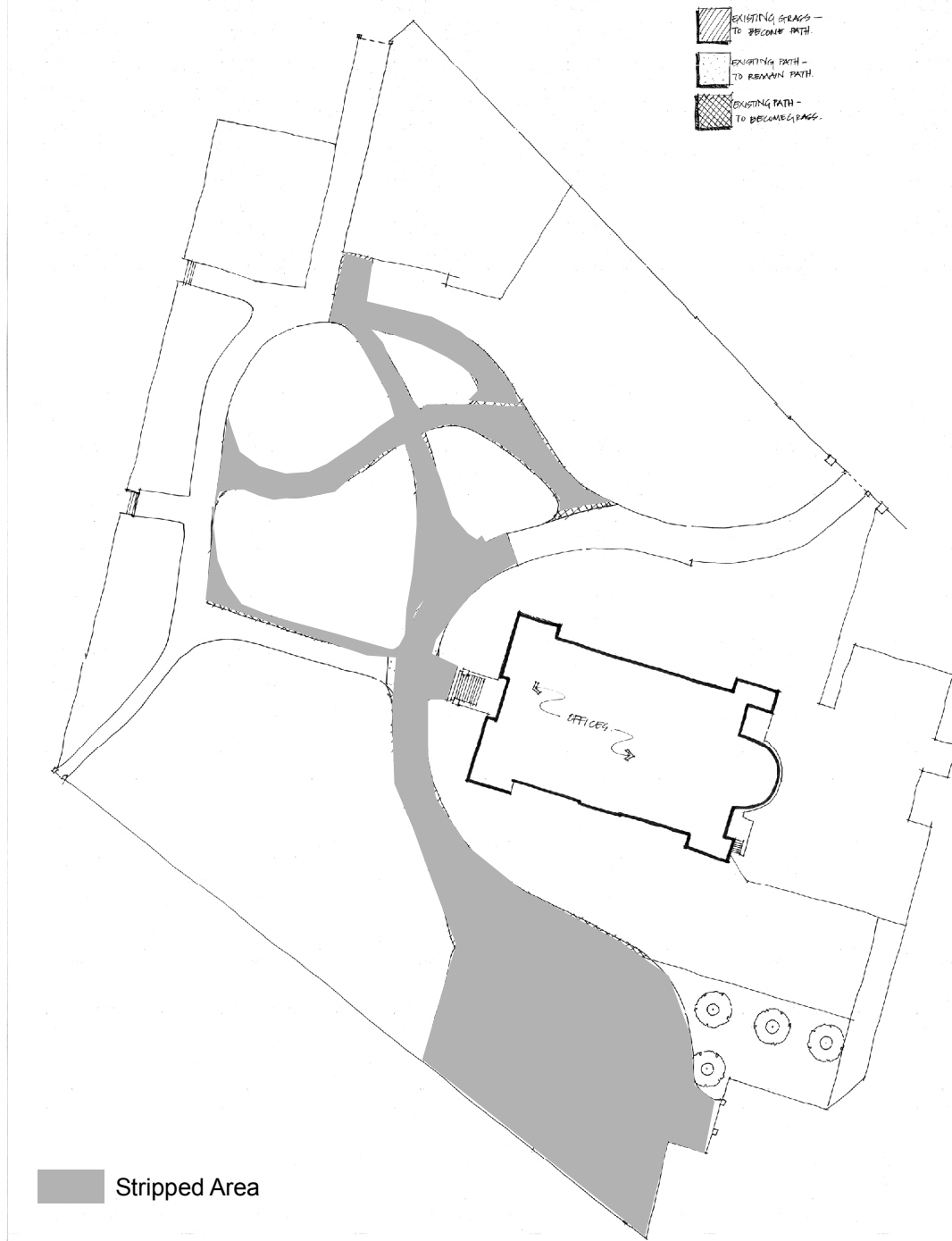
Courtesy of Southwark Council

DOC REF: LPI221L-SWB-v1

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FIGURE 3// Stripped Areas

LDC 20.02.12



0m 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90 95 100

SCALE 1:200 @ A1.  
9.7.10.05 - AP.021 - 01116.

NOT TO SCALE



PROJECT // LPI221L - St. John's Churchyard

DESCRIPTION // Sketch Plan of Stripped Areas

Courtesy of Southwark Borough Council

DOC REF: LPI221L-WBR-v1.0

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# OASIS FORM

## APPENDIX I

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**OASIS ID: Iparchae1-123917**

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### Project details

Project name	St. John's Churchyard
Short description of the project	watching brief on park improvement works
Project dates	Start: 01-03-2012 End: 14-03-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SJC12 - sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	LP1221L - sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	N/A None
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Investigation type	'watching brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority

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### Project location

Country	England
site location	GREATER LONDON SOUTHWARK BERMONDSEY ROTHERHITHE AND SOUTHWARK St John's Churchyard
Postcode	SE1 2XA
Study area	0.40 Hectares
site coordinates	TQ 533437 179893 50.9403528989 0.182852090523

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50 56 25 N 000 10 58 E Point  
Height OD / Depth Min: 3.50m Max: 4.00m

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### Project creators

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Name of Organisation	L - P : Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	L - P : Archaeology
Project director/manager	Cornelius Barton
Project supervisor	Chaz Morse
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	London Borough of Southwark

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### Project archives

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Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Archive ID	SJC12
Digital Contents	'none'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London
Paper Archive ID	SJC12
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Report'

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### Project bibliography 1

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Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Title	St. John's Churchyard, Southwark
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Barton, C.
Other bibliographic details	LP1221L-WBR-v1.0
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	L- P : Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 bound

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Entered by	Cornelius Barton (c.barton@lparchaeology.com)
Entered on	19 April 2012

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Figure List:

FIGURE 1 - SITE LOCATION

FIGURE 2 - SITE PLAN

FIGURE 3 – SKETCH PLAN OF AREAS

Appendix List:

APPENDIX 1 - OASIS FORM