



**421-445 LONDON ROAD
Mitcham
London**

London Borough of Merton

Evaluation Report

May 2011



**421–445 LONDON ROAD
Mitcham
London CR4**

London Borough of Merton

Site Code LND11

Report on archaeological evaluation

Sign-off history:

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Museum of London Archaeology

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Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) on the site of 421–45 London Road, Mitcham, CR4. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Mansell Construction Limited.

Following the recommendations of a desk-based assessment, three evaluation trenches were excavated on the site.

The results of the field evaluation did not reveal any archaeological deposits, finds or features of significance, and indicates that archaeological remains in the areas outside of the evaluation trenches, should they exist, will be discrete and isolated.

In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site the report concludes that there is no evidence for any significant archaeological remains on this site and, therefore, no additional investigation is recommended.

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the potential archaeology on the site rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at 421–445 London Road, Mitcham, London, CR4, hereafter called ‘the site’. It is located on the east side of London Road, and is bounded by Tramway Path to the north and by a play area and car park to the south and east. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 527215 168050. Modern ground level across the site varies between 19.63m OD in the south to 20.67m OD in the north. The site code is LND11.

An *Archaeological desk-based assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (Scott Wilson Heritage 2008). The *assessment* document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial interpretation of its archaeological potential.

An archaeological field evaluation was subsequently carried out with three evaluation trenches in May 2011.

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Method Statement*, which formed the project design for the evaluation (see Miles 2011, Section 1.2).

1.3 Planning background

The site has outline planning permission for a fire station (Application number 09/P1482; London Borough of Merton).

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Mansell Construction Services Limited and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MOLA). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA 2001).

Field evaluation, and the *Evaluation report* which comments on the results of that exercise, are defined in the most recent English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1998) as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:

- formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or
- formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or
- formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research

1.5 Aims and objectives

All research is undertaken within the priorities established in the Museum of London's *A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002*.

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the evaluation (Section 2.2):

- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
- Is there any evidence of prehistoric activity?
- Is there any evidence of Roman agriculture or settlement activity?
- Is there any evidence of Saxon activity?
- Is there any evidence of medieval agricultural or settlement activity?
- Is there any evidence for eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the market gardening?
- What are the latest deposits identified?

2 Topographical and historical background

A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the earlier Archaeological desk-based assessment (Scott Wilson Heritage 2008). A brief resume is provided here:

2.1 Topography

The site is generally flat, with the ground rising gently to the north. It lies within the former floodplain of the River Wandle. The present course of the river is c 200m to the south. The underlying geology comprises gravel overlain by superficial deposits of alluvial clay.

2.2 Prehistoric

Palaeolithic and Neolithic activity in the area comprises a small number of flint artefacts. A sherd of prehistoric pottery was found in a Saxon feature at 42 Tramway Path, adjacent to the site. Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts were found during the excavation of Saxon cemetery, c 200m to the west.

2.3 Roman

Evidence for Roman agriculture and possible small-scale settlement has been identified in the area. This includes pottery and building material in a Saxon feature at 42 Tramway Path, and a burial on Willow Lane to the south-east.

2.4 Saxon

Evidence for Saxon activity in the area comprises a cemetery, of c 230 graves, and a possible sunken-floored building at 42 Tramway Path.

2.5 Medieval

This period marks the transition of Mitcham to a thriving medieval town, with the construction of the church, 600m to the north-west. However, archaeological evidence in the vicinity of the site is limited to agricultural building remains at 381 London Road and other building remains, probably 13th century, at Mitcham Grove.

2.6 Post medieval

The post medieval archaeological evidence in the vicinity consists of 17th-century pottery at 42 Tramway Path, 19th century building remains at 381 London Road, probably relating to Mitcham Grove Hall, building remains and a possible brickearth quarry at 520 London Road, along with evidence of agricultural practices, such as drainage ditches and field systems from other archaeological investigations in the area.

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (Miles 2011), and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS 1994).

Three evaluation trenches were excavated (see Fig 2 and Section 3.2). These trenches are located to avoid the previously basemented area in the south east corner of the site, a live sewer/drain that runs approximately east-west across the site close to the southern boundary and the electricity pylon, south of Tramway path. The trenches are designed to evaluate the area that will be affected by the construction of the new fire station and not areas where there is little or no impact (Miles 2011, Section 2.4.1).

The trenches were excavated mechanically under the supervision of a member of staff from MOLA.

The locations of evaluation trenches were recorded using GPS. This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MOLA site recording manual (MoLAS 1994). Levels were calculated by reference to spot-height (19.72m OD) on water value cover shown on topographic survey (Scott Wilson Drawing number D121032/1).

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan, 3 trench record sheets, 12 context records; 1 detailed sketch section drawing sheet at 1:50 and 13 digital photographs. No finds were retained.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code LND11 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

| <i>Evaluation Trench 1</i> | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Location | North-west of site |
| Dimensions | 11m by 9m by 1.6m depth |
| Modern ground level | 20.00–20.40m OD |
| Base of modern deposits (inc 19th-century building levels) | 19.00m OD |
| Depth of archaeological deposits | 0.25–1.00m deep |
| Base of trench | 18.70m OD |
| Natural observed | 19.00m OD |

Evaluation trench 1 was located in the north-west of the site. It was excavated by machine to the top of the underlying natural Wandle floodplain gravels at 19.00m OD. The trench measured 11m by 2m, although the eastern 2m couldn't be excavated because of a concrete footing.

Above the gravels was up to 1m of loose mottled grey brown and yellow silty sand [3], interpreted as a plough-soil. This deposit had presumably truncated the natural deposits and in places had been removed by later development. Ceramic building material (not kept) within the plough-soil indicated it was active until the 19th century because of the presence of frogged bricks.

Cutting the plough-soil, to the east of the trench was well [1]. The well had been capped and not infilled. It was exposed in section (Fig 3), between 19.60m OD and 18.72m OD but continued below the base of the trench to at least 16.75m OD; where the top of the water table was encountered. The well was built with red frogged bricks and had an internal diameter of 1.00m. Two lead pipes had been inserted through the top of the well, and into the water. The well was interpreted as a backyard structure to supply water to the Victorian houses that fronted on to London Road.

The remains of these one of these houses were seen to cross the trench to the west of the well, but were not recorded in detail. The demolition debris was sealed by the tarmac ground surface, at 20.00m OD–20.40m OD.

| <i>Evaluation Trench 2</i> | |
|--|------------------------|
| Location | Central west of site |
| Dimensions | 11m by 2m by 1.4 depth |
| Modern ground level | 19.86m OD – 20.24m OD |
| Base of modern deposits (inc 19th-century building levels) | 19.00m OD |
| Depth of archaeological deposits seen | 0.75m deep |
| Base of trench | 18.70 m OD |
| Natural observed | 19.00m OD |

Evaluation trench 2 was located in the central west part of the site. It was excavated by machine to the top of the underlying natural Wandle floodplain gravels at 19.00m OD. The trench measured 11m by 2m.

Above the gravels was 0.75m of loose mottled grey brown and yellow sand silty sand [11], interpreted as a plough-soil and the same as deposit [3] in evaluation trench 1.

At the northern end of the trench, overlying the plough-soil, were the remains of a red ceramic tile floor [12] (Fig 4). The remains were seen in section at 19.30m OD, as they did continue beyond a possible east–west aligned robber trench [8]. The robber cut was filled with white mortar debris [7] that also covered the floor.

The mortar debris appeared to be cut on its south side by a brick-lined cess pit [5]. The cess pit (Fig 5) was seen in section, the machine removing its western end. The exposed remains were 1.20m wide by 1.20m deep, although its overall depth was greater. It was infilled with demolition debris that included sherds of blue and white transfer printed pottery. It is possible the cess pit abutted the former property represented by robber trench [8] and was, therefore, contemporary. To the south, the cess pit cut the earlier plough-soil.

Also cutting the plough-soil, at the south of the trench, was well [9] (Fig 6). It was seen in section and had similar dimensions to well [1]. It had been infilled and, therefore, had no evidence of capping or lead piping. It could have been a soakaway, rather than a well.

Both cess pit [5] and well [9] were interpreted as a backyard structures for the Victorian houses that fronted London Road, like well [1] in evaluation trench 1. Floor [12] could have been part of an earlier property but this could not be confirmed.

All these structural elements were sealed by modern debris under tarmac and concrete slab at ground between 20.24m OD at the north and 19.86m OD to the south.

| <i>Evaluation Trench 3</i> | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Location | South-west of site |
| Dimensions | 11m by 2m by 0.9m depth |
| Modern ground level | 19.60m OD |
| Base of modern deposits | 18.70m OD |
| Depth of archaeological deposits | None |
| Base of trench | 18.70m OD |
| Natural observed | 18.70m OD |

Evaluation trench 3 was located in the south-west of the site. It was excavated by machine to the top of the underlying natural Wandle floodplain gravels at 18.70m OD. The trench measured 11m by 2m.

The gravels were lower in this trench than the other two, probably as a result of the extensive modern truncation seen across the entire area of the trench.

3.3 Assessment of the evaluation

Present guidelines (English Heritage 2009) require an assessment of the success of the evaluation 'in order to illustrate what level of confidence can be placed on the information which will provide the basis of the mitigation strategy'. In the case of this site it can confidently be stated that extensive remains other than later post-medieval building structures do not survive on the site, but the presence of discrete isolated features cutting the natural gravels cannot be dismissed.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
The natural deposition seen on the site was the yellow sandy gravels of the Wandle floodplain gravels. Its upper level was recorded at 19.00m OD in evaluation trenches 1 and 2, but at 18.70m OD in trench 3. However in trench the gravels had been truncated by modern disturbance, so it is assumed the natural topography of the site is flat.
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
The earliest archaeological deposits were plough-soil [3] in evaluation trench 1 and plough-soil [11] in evaluation trench 2. The two contexts were interpreted as the same deposit. It was dated as 19th-century by the presence of frogged bricks.
- Is there any evidence of prehistoric activity?
There was no evidence of prehistoric activity.
- Is there any evidence of Roman agriculture or settlement activity?
There was no evidence of Roman agriculture or settlement.
- Is there any evidence of Saxon activity?
There was no evidence of Saxon activity
- Is there any evidence of medieval agricultural or settlement activity?
There was no evidence of medieval agricultural or settlement activity
- Is there any evidence for eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the market gardening?
Plough-soil [3] in evaluation trench 1 and plough-soil [11] in evaluation trench 2 may be evidence for eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the market gardening.
- What are the latest deposits identified?
Well [1], floor [12], robber trench [8], cess pit [4] and well [9], have all been associated with the Victorian properties that fronted on to London Road.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of later post-medieval structures on the site is high. However the potential for survival of earlier archaeological features, sealed beneath the 19th-century plough-soil, is likely to be limited because of modern truncation. Also, if such features do survive, they are likely to be isolated and discrete.

4.3 Significance

The later post-medieval features are of low significance but potential features, in particular those associated with Saxon burial practices or settlement, would be of possible regional significance.

5 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed redevelopment on the site involves the construction of a new fire station, including a main building, garage, drill tower, training area and car parking. The final construction design has not been seen by the author but is unlikely to remove all the areas of potential surviving archaeology.

The evaluation trenches did not reveal any archaeological deposits, finds or features of significance, and indicates that archaeological remains in the areas outside of the evaluation trenches, should they exist, will be discrete and isolated.

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the potential archaeology on the site rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mark Stevenson of English Heritage and Iain Cunningham of Mansell Construction Services Limited for their assistance with this evaluation.

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8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

| | |
|--|---|
| OASIS ID: molas1-100594 | |
| Project details | |
| Project name | 421-445 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 |
| Short description of the project | Three evaluation trenches found 19th-century building remains, cutting an 18th-/19th-century plough-soil that sealed natural gravels. |
| Project dates | Start: 04-05-2011 End: 06-05-2011 |
| Previous/future work | No / Not known |
| Any associated project reference codes | LND11 - Sitecode |
| Type of project | Field evaluation |
| Site status | Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) |
| Current Land use | Industry and Commerce 4 - Storage and warehousing |
| Methods & techniques | 'Sample Trenches' |
| Development type | Not recorded |
| Development type | Fire Station |
| Prompt | Planning condition |
| Position in the planning process | After outline determination (eg. As a reserved matter) |
| Project location | |
| Country | England |
| Site location | GREATER LONDON MERTON MITCHAM 421-445 London Road, Mitcham |
| Postcode | CR4 |
| Study area | 0.50 Hectares |
| Site coordinates | TQ 27215 68050 51.3966941431 -0.171153374663 51 23 48 N 000 10 16 W Point |
| Height OD / Depth | Min: 18.00m Max: 21.00m |
| Project creators | |
| Name of Organisation | MOL Archaeology |
| Project brief originator | Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service |
| Project design originator | MOL Archaeology |
| Project manager | Derek Seeley |
| Project supervisor | Isca Howell |
| Type of funding body | Client |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Name of funding body | Mansell Construction Services Ltd |
| Project archives | |
| Physical Archive recipient | LAARC |
| Physical Archive ID | LND11 |
| Physical Contents | 'Ceramics' |
| Digital Archive recipient | LAARC |
| Digital Archive ID | LND11 |
| Digital Media available | 'Text' |
| Paper Archive recipient | LAARC |
| Paper Archive ID | LND11 |
| Paper Media available | 'Context sheet','Photograph','Report','Section','Survey ' |
| Project bibliography | |
| Publication type | Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript) |
| Title | 421-445 London Road, Mitcham |
| Author | Howell, I |
| Date | 2011 |
| Issuer or publisher | MOL archaeology |
| Place of issue or | London |
| Description | unpublished client report |

Fig 1 Site location

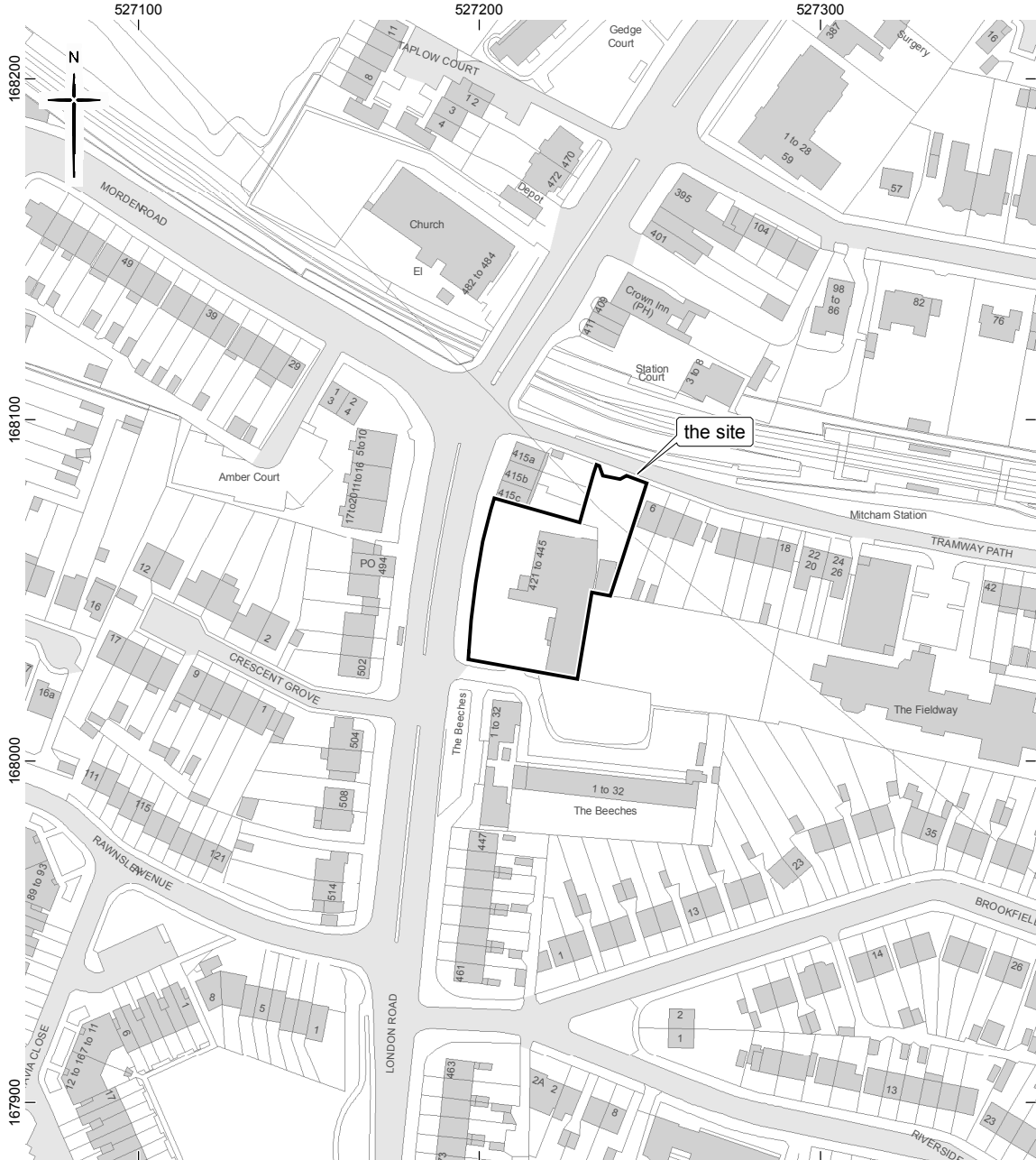
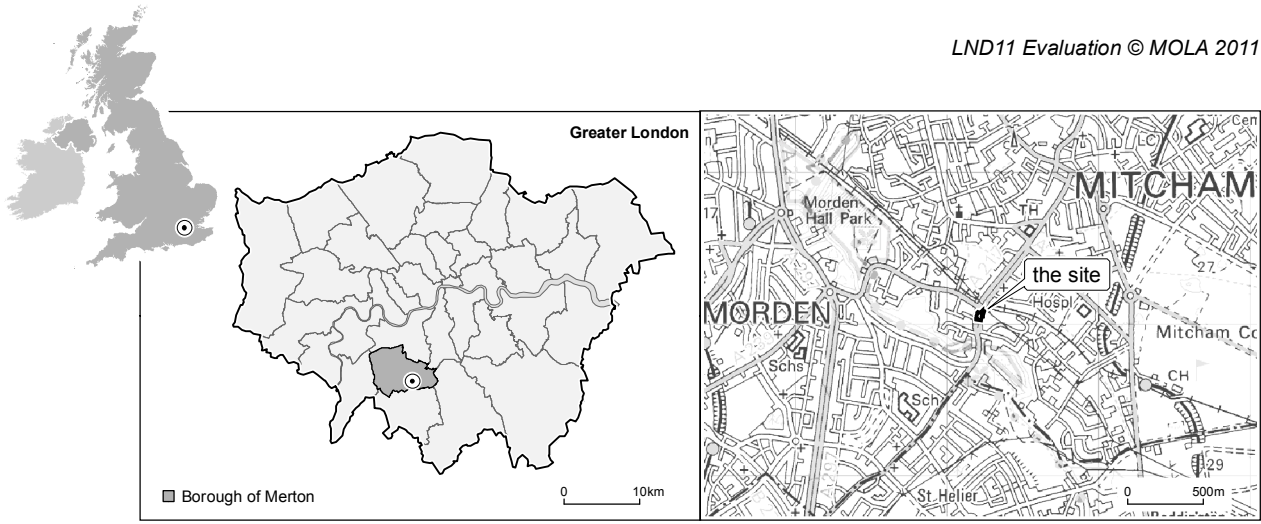
Fig 2 Locations of evaluation trenches

Fig 3 Well [1] from north (1m scale)

Fig 4 Floor [12] from south (1m Scale)

Fig 5 Possible brick-lined cess pit [5] from west (1m scale)

Fig 6 Well or soakaway [9] from east (1m scale)

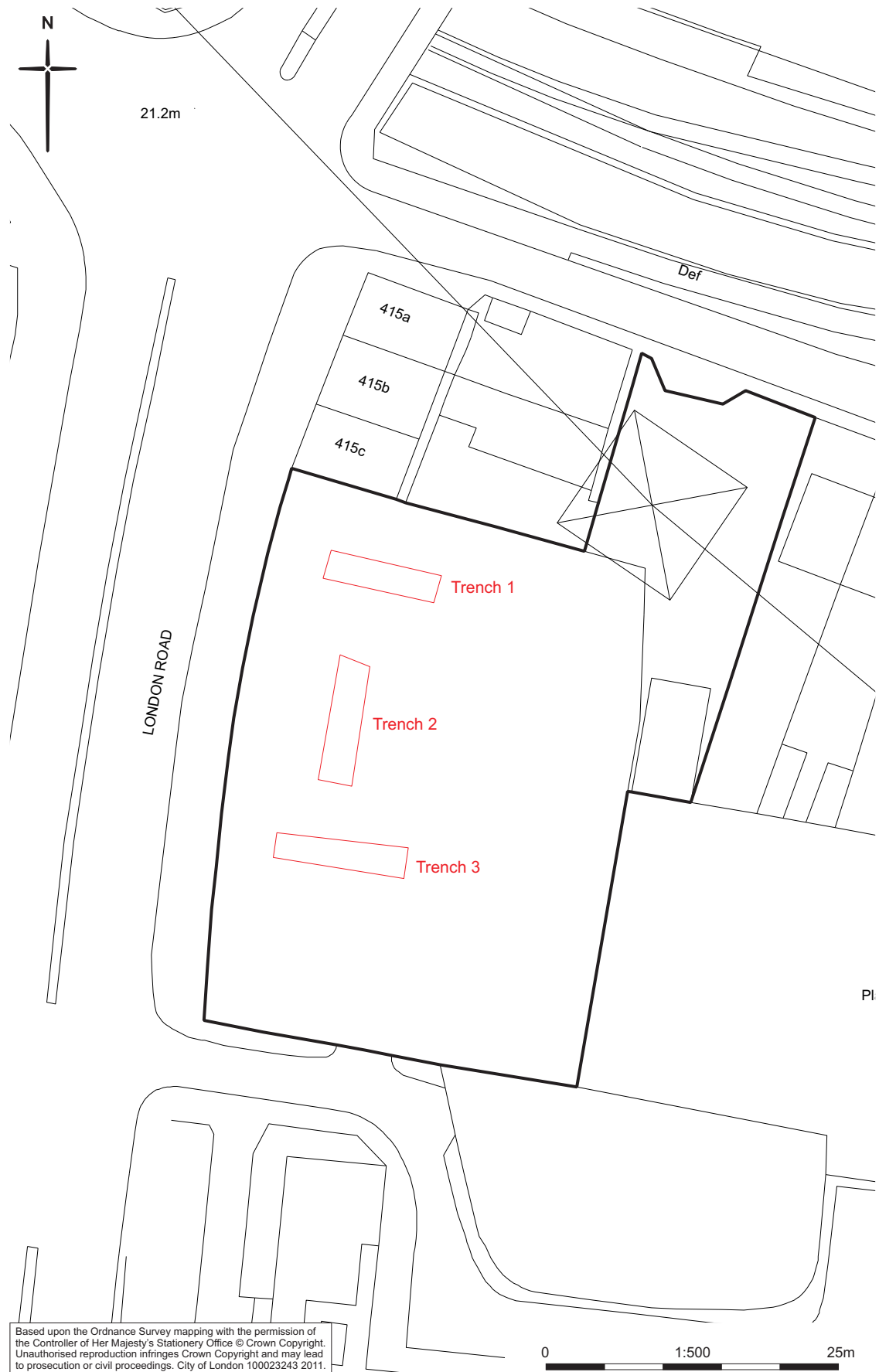


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Scale 1:2,000 @ A4

0 100m

Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Location of evaluation trenches



Fig 3 Well [1] from the north (1m scale)



Fig 4 Floor [12] from south (1m scale)



Fig 5 Possible brick-lined cess pit [5] from west (1m scale)



Fig 6 Well or soakaway [9] from east (1m scale)