



**PROPOSED CARE HOME
Nelson Street
East Ham
London
E6**

London Borough of Newham

An archaeological evaluation report

May 2006



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

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An archaeological evaluation report

Site Code: NSE06

Project Manager
Author

David Lakin
Sylvia Kennedy
Neville Constantine

Museum of London Archaeology Service
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Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED
tel 020 7410 2200 fax 020 7410 2201
email molas@molas.org.uk

Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on the site of Nelson Street, East Ham, London E6. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by SDC Housing.

Following the recommendations of English Heritage three evaluation trenches were excavated on the site between 4 and 7 April 2006.

Modern ground level on site is at 5.63m OD, the highest level of natural occurred at 5.0m OD, the lowest level at 4.9m OD

The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. Brickearth and untruncated gravels are present in some areas of site but these deposits show no archaeological features or datable evidence. Original archaeological horizons, little over half a metre below the present ground level, have been truncated by the foundations to the latest building and other modern features such as sumps and drain runs.

In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site the report concludes the impact of the proposed redevelopment is low and that no further work is necessary.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at Nelson Street, East Ham, London E6, hereafter called 'the site'. It is bounded by Wellington Street to the west, Nelson Street to the south and Melbourne Road to the east. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 542883 183517. The site is currently vacant, present ground level varies between 5.38m OD and 5.65m OD. Modern pavement level near to the site lies at *c* 5.50m OD. The site code is NSE06.

A *Method Statement for an Archaeological Evaluation* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (MoLAS, 2006) This 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.

The archaeological field evaluation presented in this report was carried out in a series of trenches on the site between 4 and 7 April 2006.

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 Section 1.2, MoLAS, 2006).

1.3 Planning background

The evaluation reported on here was undertaken in response to a planning condition placed on the proposed development.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by SDC Housing and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field 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 limited nature of the proposed works and the archaeological evaluation makes it unreasonable to establish any specific archaeological research objectives. The archaeological brief is essentially limited to establishing the levels and nature of surviving archaeological deposits, and to ensure that the digging of evaluation trenches does not involve unnecessary destruction of such deposits. Nevertheless, following broad 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?

What are the latest deposits identified?

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1.1 Geology

The site lies on the terrace gravel according to the Geological Survey. Tributaries of the Thames such as the River Roding have since eroded much of these gravels and have deposited a layer of alluvial silts in the base of these shallow valleys. The site lies about 1km to the west of the River Roding and away from its alluvial floodplain. An archaeological evaluation on a nearby site revealed thin brickearth deposits between 5.15 and 5.26m OD over natural gravels at between 5.05m OD and 5.13m OD¹. Modern ground level on this site lay at c 5.90m OD.

A borehole carried out to the northwest of the site also shows brickearth deposits described as grey-brown sandy silty clay².

Modern ground level adjacent to the site is 5.50m OD.

2.1.2 Prehistoric

Prehistoric finds within approximately 1km of the study site include individual finds of Palaeolithic flint axes and other flint artefacts, a Bronze Age axe or 'Celt', an Iron Age currency bar, and an Iron Age coin (Ptolemy). Exact locations were not recorded for these objects, as most are 19th century discoveries, found whilst digging natural gravel.

The gravel terraces are known to have attracted prehistoric settlement, offering fertile and well-drained brickearth soils outside the forest zone, with easy access to water and marshland resources at the nearby River Roding.

2.1.3 Roman

The modern East Ham High Street, North and South, has long been held to follow the line of a typically straight Roman road which links two important Roman sites and North Woolwich, a ferry crossing point. The earlier name for the southern end, East Ham Manor Road, is still preserved in East Ham Manor Way in Beckton.

At the northern end of East Ham High Street in Wanstead Park, the mosaic floor of a Roman villa was discovered in 1715, with further finds, including pottery and decorated wall plaster, during excavations between 1983 and 1989. Judging by its proximity to the city, this is likely to have been the country home of a high official, and is unusual in being one of only two villas found north of the Thames and east of

¹ Holder, N 1997 *East Ham Baths and Tramsheds: An Archaeological Evaluation*. MoLAS

² British Geotechnical 1996 *Geotechnical Investigation for a Sports Centre, East Ham*

the city³. Land in this area may have become part of an imperial estate, having been taken from the Trinovantes following their part in the Boudiccan revolt of AD 60.

There have been no other significant finds of the period within a 1km radius.

2.1.4 Medieval

The medieval manor house, first documented in 1267, was thought to have been situated to the north of Vicarage Lane. It was called Hawelooes and later East Ham and West Ham Burnells. In 1282 the lands were granted to Robert Burnell, bishop of Bath and Wells.

The manors were divided in 1565 and descended separately. The site of the manor house is not known but was described as near the London Road but had been destroyed by the early 17th century. It may have been situated in a field near Vicarage Lane which was called Burnels Down or it may have been closer to Barking Road which was probably the London Road.

To the north of the study site, the Barking Road follows the line of a medieval or possibly earlier, route to Barking across the Back River, where a wooden footbridge was demolished in 1447 to make way for heavier traffic (using a ford). It was subsequently rebuilt, and is referred to in 1606. An excavation in 1995 found evidence of made-up ground and piling in this area probably relating to the earlier bridge or ford⁴.

Barking Road (originally called New Road) was built around 1812 to facilitate travel from Barking to the East India Docks. The continuation westward from East Ham High Street also follows the line of an earlier road. Although it has obviously fallen out of use, its age is suggested by the field boundaries which ran both to the north and to the south of it, suggesting that the road predated the field divisions.

The cross-roads of East Ham High Street and Barking Road therefore represent the junction of important Roman and medieval roads, which may themselves be based on earlier routes.

2.1.5 Post medieval

There was a decline in the population of East Ham between the 14th and 17th centuries, possibly owing to serious flooding; thereafter it increased gradually until the rapid industrial expansion of the late 19th century. It was largely rural until that time, and supported farming and market gardening, with the marshes providing grazing and supplies of osiers.

At the junction of the High Street and Nelson Street, 150m west of the site, evaluation by MoLAS revealed a thick 'ploughsoil' beneath the concrete slab, between 5.62m OD and 5.69m OD, probably the result of many years of turning over the soil for

³ Merrifield, R 1983 *London City of the Romans*, 135

⁴ Udall, J, 1996 *East Ham Baths; Archaeological Desktop Study*. Newham Museums Service

agriculture. 18th century finds were observed in this layer but the use of the land for agriculture almost certainly goes back a lot further. A thin layer of natural brickearth survived under the ploughsoil and capped the river gravels. No features were observed cutting the brickearth or gravels.

The map of 1894 shows the site still as open ground although much development of small terraced houses has taken to the south and east of the site. A Methodist Chapel has been constructed northwest of the site and Wellington Road and Nelson Street have been laid out.

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MoLAS, 2006), and the *MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

The buildings on site had been demolished prior to this evaluation. Three trenches were excavated in the northern, southern and western areas of site in order to best assess extent of truncation and survival of archaeological deposits across the area. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by members of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of evaluation trenches were recorded by MoLAS surveyors and 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 MoLAS site recording manual (MoLAS, 1994). Levels were calculated using a Temporary Benchmark (6.50m OD) set up on site by the contractors.

The site has produced: one trench location plan; five context records; three section drawings at 1:20 and six plans at 1:10. No finds were recovered from the site.

The site records can be found under the site code NSE06 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 1.

Fig 1 Areas of evaluation

| <i>Evaluation Trench 1</i> | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Location | Southern area |
| Dimensions | 2m by 15m E-W |
| Modern ground level/top of slab | 5.53m OD |
| Base of modern fill/slab | 5.33m OD |
| Depth of archaeological deposits seen | 0.4m |
| Level of base of deposits observed | 4.13m OD |
| Natural observed | 4.95m OD |

Trench 1 was heavily truncated by modern features. Natural orange–grey gravel in a clayey matrix (4) was observed at 4.95m OD. Overlying this was a layer (1) of greyish brown silty sand with moderate CBM, charcoal flecks, small stones and occasional brick fragments. This is interpreted as post medieval topsoil and was seen at 5.33m OD. Modern features were observed cutting into layer (1): an east–west drain running along most of the south side of the trench the base of which was not reached; two cement bonded red–brick foundation walls and a sump associated with the latest building on site. This masonry was seen at c 5.20m OD and sat on cement footings that cut into the natural gravel. These features were sealed by topsoil which consisted of a dark brown sandy silt contaminated by fragments of iron and glass, probably a mixture of the two latest layers seen in Trench 2.

| <i>Evaluation Trench 2</i> | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Location | Western area |
| Dimensions | 12.5m by 2m E–W |
| Modern ground level/top of slab | 5.65m OD |
| Base of modern fill/slab | 5.05m OD |
| Depth of archaeological deposits seen | 10cm |
| Level of base of deposits observed | 4.65m OD |
| Natural observed | 4.90m OD |

Trench 2 could not be extended north–south the full 15m as the portacabins to the north restricted machine access. It did not suffer from much modern truncation due to its position towards the edge of site but a field drain and modern pipe were present. Orange gravel (4) was observed at 4.75m OD underlying natural brickearth (2) at 4.90m OD. The brickearth was c 0.2m thick, weathered with frequent iron–pan which implied that it had been open ground at some stage. No features were seen cutting into the gravel or brickearth. Overlying (2) was a layer of greyish brown clayey silty sand (5) with CBM flecks at 5.05m OD. This deposit is probably the same as layers (1) and (3) in Trenches 1 and 3 and thus represents post–medieval topsoil, alluvial in origin. Above (5) was a brownish black sandy silt 0.3m thick at 5.40m OD with moderate small fragments of red–brick. The sequence was capped by a mid brown topsoil with frequent root disturbance.

| <i>Evaluation Trench 3</i> | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Location | Northern area |
| Dimensions | 2m by 13m E–W |
| Modern ground level/top of slab | 5.38m OD |
| Base of modern fill/slab | 5.18m OD |
| Depth of archaeological deposits seen | 18cm |
| Level of base of deposits observed | 4.52m OD |
| Natural observed | 5.00m OD |

Trench 3 was moved 2m further south as much of the latest building was visible in the proposed location. It was therefore assumed that survival would be minimal and excavation difficult due to the presence of a number of walls.

Orange gravel (4) was observed at 4.75m OD. Directly above was 0.25m of weathered brickearth (2) with frequent iron-panning suggestive of open ground. Overlying (2) was a layer of greyish brown clayey silty sand (3) with CBM flecks and occasional glass at 5.18m OD. This deposit is probably the same as layers (1) and (5) in Trenches 1 and 2 respectively; it is thus interpreted as post-medieval topsoil. Cutting this deposit were several modern drains and concrete foundations and one large pit. These modern intrusions were all sealed by 0.2m of made ground consisting of black silty sand at 5.38m OD.

3.3 Assessment of the evaluation

GLAAS guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) 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 the trenches have revealed the remains of the latest building to occupy the site and its associated features, some post medieval field drains predating the building and truncated topsoil deposits cut by these features.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

Natural deposits consist of orange gravels in a grey clayey matrix overlain by weathered brickearth up to 0.25m thick. The gravel slopes slightly from 4.95m OD in the southeast to 4.75m OD in the northwest. Clean weathered brickearth is present in the north and western areas only at a maximum height of 5.00m OD.

What are the earliest deposits identified?

The earliest deposits identified consist of a post-medieval topsoil (1)=(3)=(5), identified in all three evaluation trenches. The top of this layer was between 5.30m OD and 5.05m OD. This supports the documented evidence that the land in this area was mostly rural until the 19th century.

What are the latest deposits identified?

The earliest *archaeological* deposit identified, the post-medieval topsoil, is also the latest deposit on site.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is moderate to low. No features or deposits earlier in date than post-medieval were observed which suggests there is little potential for survival of ancient cut features. Survival is likely to be limited in certain areas because foundations, drain runs and modern pits associated with the latest building on the site cut into the natural gravel. The average depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is likely to be *c* 20cm.

4.3 Significance

The deposits discovered during the evaluation are of local significance only. Although largely negative, the evidence will contribute to our knowledge of the location and extent of archaeological deposits in Newham.

5 Assessment by EH criteria

The recommendations of the GLAAS 1998 guidelines on *Evaluation reports* suggest that there should be:

‘Assessment of results against original expectations (using criteria for assessing national importance of period, relative completeness, condition, rarity and group value)’ (Guidance Paper V, 4 7)

A set of guide lines was published by the Department of the Environment with criteria by which to measure the importance of individual monuments for possible Scheduling. These criteria are as follows: *Period*; *Rarity*; *Documentation*; *Survival/Condition*; *Fragility/Vulnerability*; *Diversity*; and *Potential*. The guide lines stresses that ‘these criteria should not...be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case’.⁵

In the following passages the potential archaeological survival described in the initial Assessment document and Section 3.2 above will be assessed against these criteria.

Criterion 1: period

Taken as a whole, archaeology in the Application site is not characteristic of any particular period.

Criterion 2: rarity

There is nothing to suggest that any of the likely archaeological deposits are rare either in a national or regional context.

Criterion 3: documentation

Not applicable.

Criterion 4: group value

None of the likely archaeological deposits are associated with contemporary single Monuments external to the site.

Criterion 5: survival/condition

Evaluation results quoted above have demonstrated that archaeological remains will be horizontally truncated to different levels.

Criterion 6: fragility

Not applicable.

Criterion 7: diversity

⁵ Annex 4, DOE, Planning and Policy Guidance 16, (1990). For detailed definition of the criteria see that document. Reference has also been made to Darvill, Saunders & Startin, (1987); and McGill, (1995)

Clearly, taken as a whole, the archaeological deposits which are likely to be found in the site do not represent a diverse and heterogeneous group of archaeological remains of all types and periods. There is no reason to suggest that the remains have any particular value which ought to be protected..

Criterion 8: potential

Not applicable

6 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed redevelopment at Nelson Street, East Ham, London E6 involves the removal of the current foundations in order to create a care home. Ground reduction by 600mm will take place across most of the site. Foundation level will therefore cut into terrace gravels or brickearth. This will remove potential archaeological deposits, However the evaluation has shown that these consist only of post-medieval topsoils, (heavily truncated by modern features across most of the site) as no archaeological features were seen cutting into natural deposits.

The assessment above (Section 5) does not suggest that preservation *in situ* would be the only appropriate mitigation strategy. The low significance of the remains identified suggest that no further work is required.

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the deposits revealed within Nelson Street rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

7 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Roy Paris of SDC Housing

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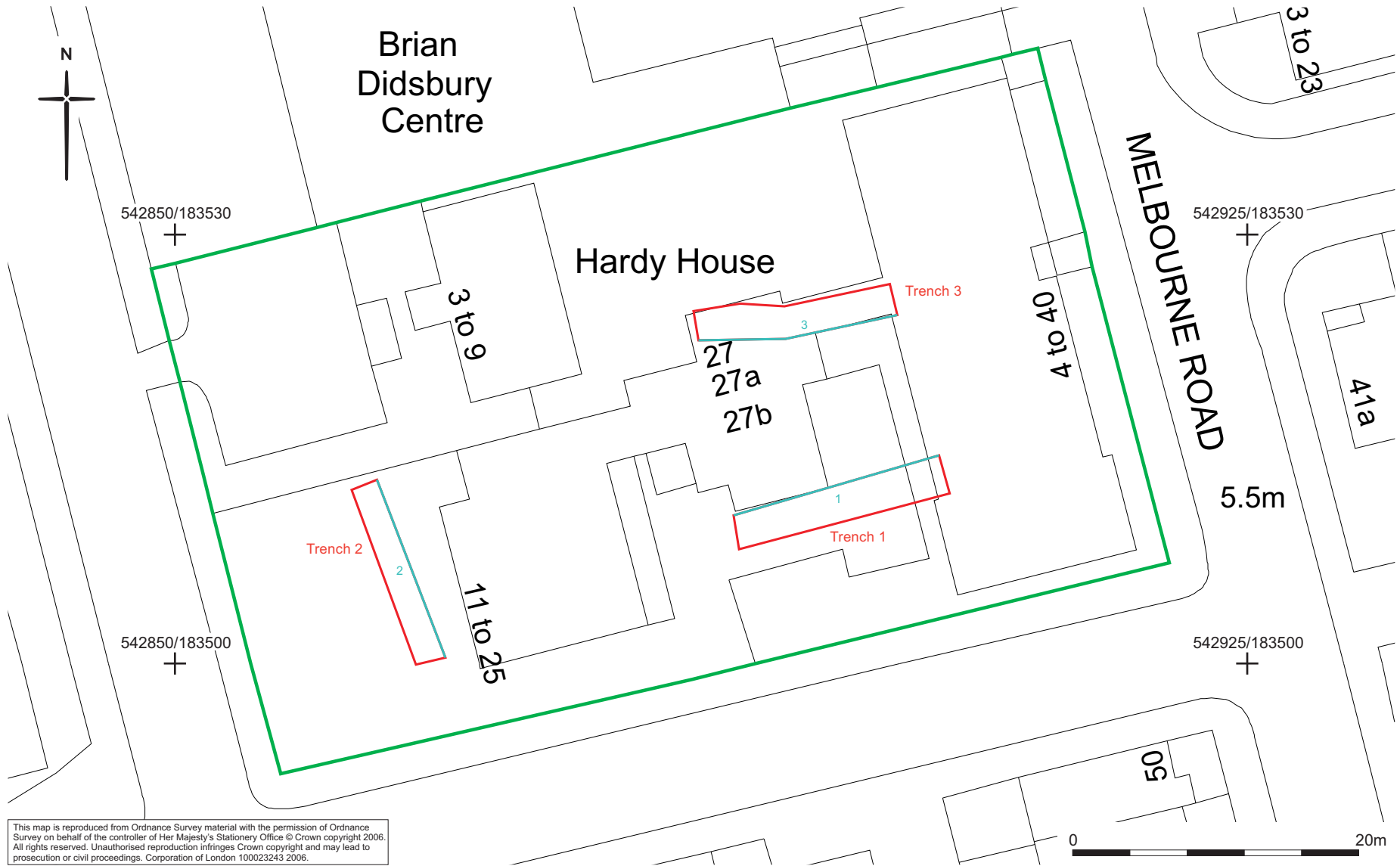
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Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Areas of evaluation

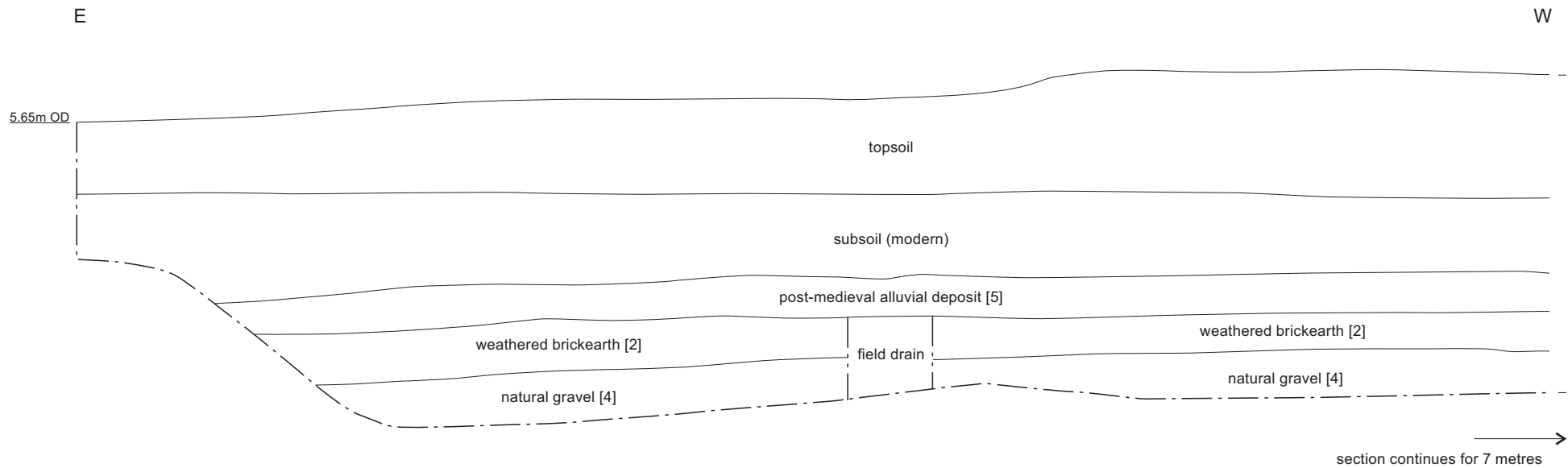


Fig 3 North-facing section, Trench 3

9 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-13956

Project details

Project name Proposed Care Home, Nelson Street, East Ham London E6

Short description of the project Following the recommendations of English Heritage three evaluation trenches were excavated on the site between 4 and 7 April 2006. Modern ground level on site is at 5.63m OD, the highest level of natural occurred at 5.0m OD, the lowest level at 4.9m OD The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. Brickearth and untruncated gravels are present in some areas of site but these deposits show no archaeological features or datable evidence. Original archaeological horizons, little over half a metre below the present ground level, have been truncated by the foundations to the latest building and other modern features such as sumps and drain runs.

Project dates Start: 04-04-2006 End: 07-04-2006

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes NSE06 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed

Methods & techniques 'Targeted Trenches'

Development type Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Position in the After full determination (eg. As a condition)
planning process

Project location

Country England
Site location GREATER LONDON NEWHAM EAST HAM Proposed care home,
Nelson Street
Postcode E6
Study area 1800.00 Square metres
National reference grid TQ 42883 83517 Point
Height OD Min: 4.90m Max: 5.00m

Project creators

Name of MoLAS
Organisation
Project originator brief English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project originator design MoLAS
Project director/manager David Lakin
Project supervisor Sylvia Kennedy
Sponsor or funding body SDC Housing

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?
Digital Archive LAARC
recipient

Digital Contents 'Survey'

Paper recipient Archive LAARC

Paper available Media 'Context sheet','Plan','Report','Section'

Project bibliography 1

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