

**Commerce Road  
Brentford  
London  
TW8**

London Borough of Hounslow

Interim report on the archaeological evaluation of Phase 1

National Grid Reference: 517219 177431

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Project background**

This Interim Report is designed to briefly report on the initial results of the archaeological evaluation of the Phase 1 area of the site at Brentford Lock, Commerce Road, Brentford, TW8. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 517100 177522 (Fig 1).

### **1.2 Planning, historic and topographic background**

The planning background and historic and topographic background was covered in the previous Historic Environment Assessment prepared to accompany the planning application for re-development of the site. (HEA – *MOLA 2010*).

### **1.3 Outline of proposed works**

The archaeological evaluation has been designed to provide information on modern intrusions (the foundations and general truncation from former commercial and industrial buildings); and the nature and extent of any archaeological strata, deposits and features that may have survived such damage.

The evaluation was planned to achieve a representative sample (c 5%) of the areas affected by proposed new buildings in the south-eastern area of the site.

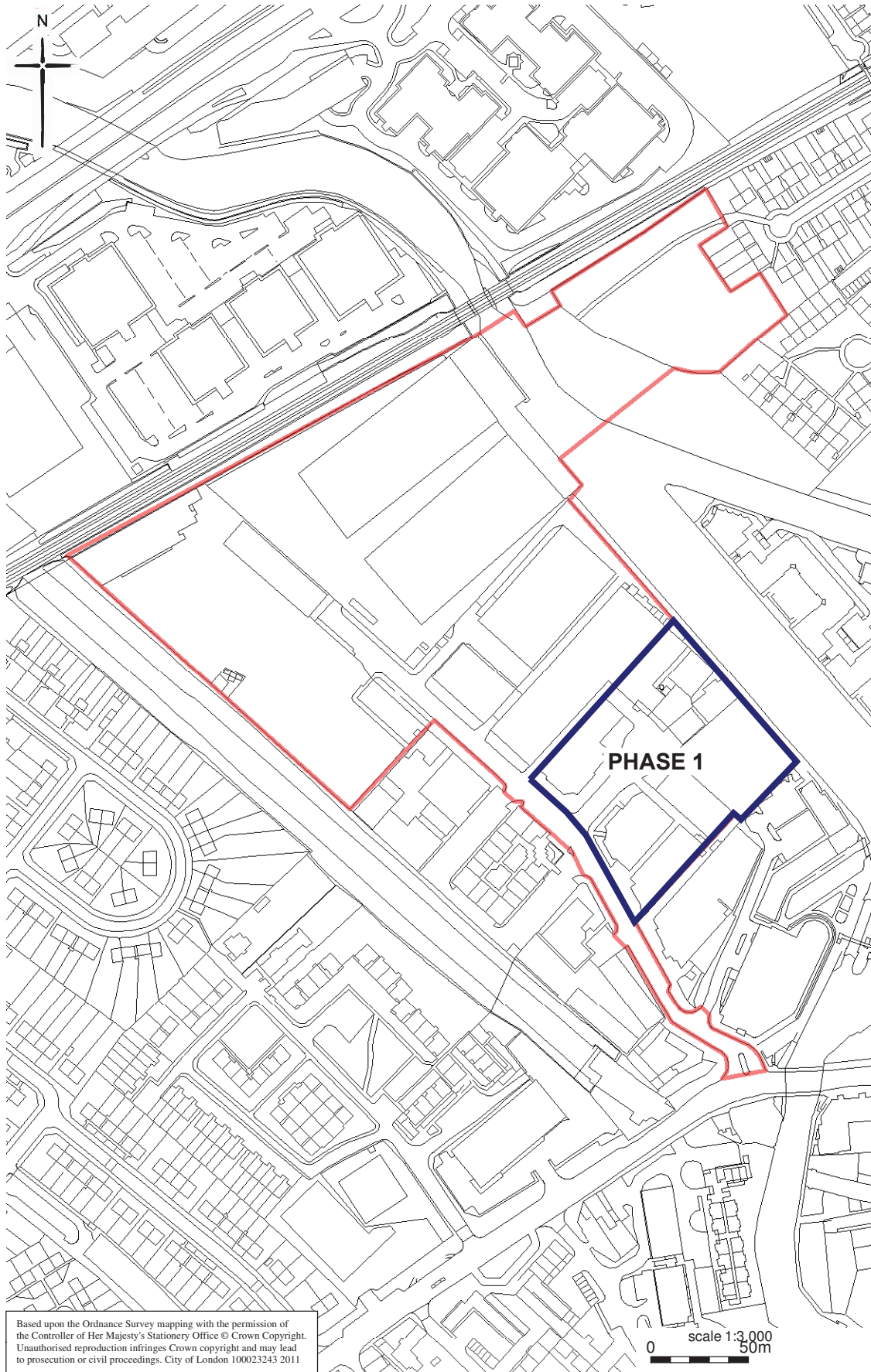


Fig 1 Site location

## **2 The evaluation**

### **2.1 Methodology**

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2012), and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

A total of five evaluation trenches were excavated within, or as close to, the footprint of the proposed development.

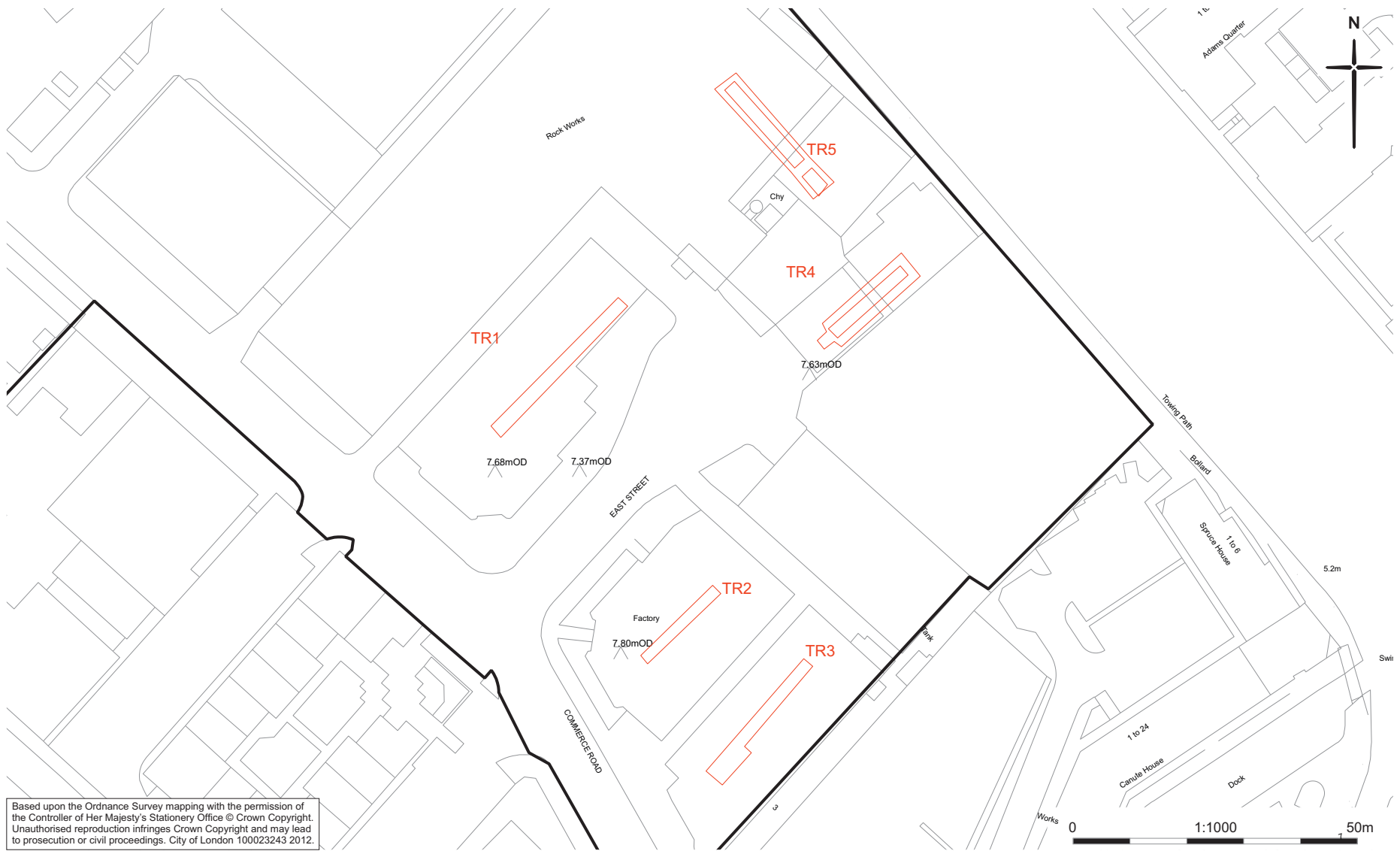
The ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MOLA.

The locations of evaluation trenches were recorded by the MOLA geomatics team.

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).

The site has produced: 5 x trench location plans; 44 x context records; 4 x section drawings at 1:20 and 1:50; and photographs.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code BNL12 in the MoL archive.



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Fig 2 Trench location plan

## 2.2 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 2.

<i>Evaluation Trench 1</i>	
Location	To the rear of 5 Commerce Road
Dimensions	30m by 2m by 1.2m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	7.94m OD
Base of modern fill	7.40m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed and/or base of trench	6.3m OD
Natural observed	7.00m OD

No archaeological remains were found in Trench 1.

A clayey gravel was found to be sealed beneath clean brick earth. This was found to below a truncated plough soil horizon which in turn was sealed beneath post-medieval buried garden soils. The top 0.5m of the trench consisted of modern made ground.

<i>Evaluation Trench 2</i>	
Location	To the rear of 3 Commerce Road
Dimensions	20m x by 1.8m by 1.2m in depth
Modern ground level	7.81m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	7.00m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed and/or base of trench	6.85m OD
Natural observed	6.65m OD

No archaeological remains were found in Trench 2.

Trench 2 contained a similar sequence of deposits as was seen in Trench 1.

A deposit of natural brick earth was found at 0.9m below ground level. This was found to below a truncated plough soil horizon which in turn was sealed beneath post-medieval buried garden soils. The top 0.4m of the trench consisted of modern made ground.

<i>Evaluation Trench 3</i>	
Location	To the south of Trench 2 to the rear of 2 Commerce Road
Dimensions	22.3m x 3.4m (max width at western end) by 1m in depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	7.69m OD
Base of modern fill	7.39m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1m
Level of base of deposits observed	6.70m OD



and/or base of trench	
Natural observed	6.73m OD

A series of intercutting later prehistoric and possibly post-medieval cut features were recorded at the western end of Trench 3 (see Fig 2).

The trench was originally positioned within the centre of the proposed footprint. A series of modern concrete bases were encountered within the first 5m at the western end of the trench and the trench was subsequently repositioned 1.2m further north. This resulted in the irregular trench outline at the western end.

Natural brickearth [2] was found at c 1m below ground level. At the western end of the trench the brickearth was cut by a series of pits, or possible ditch termini, and postholes.

Postholes [8], [14] and [20] were large oval or sub rounded in plan with distinct greyish fills. Post hole [8] contained pottery which has been initially dated to the Early to Mid Iron Age (700–300BC). It also contained fragments of 18th/19th-century redware. At present it is unclear if the post-medieval redware was found intrusively within a Early to Mid Iron Age feature or if the Early to Mid Iron Age pottery was re-deposited within the post-medieval feature. The latter is possible as posthole [8] was found to have truncated the southern edge of a large shallow oval pit [32] or ditch terminus which measured 1.67m x 1.5m and 0.2m in depth which extended beyond the limit of excavation. The top of the pit was recorded at 6.73m OD and the base was found at 6.52m OD.

Pit [32] was filled with [31], a moderately compact light brown clayey silt which contained an exceptional large pottery assemblage and occasional charcoal fragments. The pottery is Early to Mid Iron Age in date. The fill also contained one complete triangular fired clay loom weight and a fragment of a second which are also Iron Age in date.

Adjacent to the eastern edge of [32] was a series of intercutting features. These features included a possibly post-medieval post hole [26], a shallow pit [36], a possible pit [40], a post-hole [42] and a large pit or ditch terminus [38].

The pit or ditch terminus was 1.83m east–west x 1.47m north–south x 0.5m in depth. It extended beyond the limit of excavation to the north. Pottery from [37], the fill of large pit [38], has also been dated to the Early to Mid Iron Age.

Another pit or ditch terminus, [44], which measured 0.9m x 0.68m x 0.47 m in depth, was found to extend beyond the limit of excavation to the south. The fill, [43], was a moderately compact, mid orangey grey clay silt which contained occasional pottery and charcoal fragments. The pottery is predominantly Early to Mid Iron Age in date although one small abraded fragment may be Roman.

Sealing the brickearth was a truncated soil plough soil horizon. Several worked flints and flint tools and fragments of burnt flint were recovered from the interface between the brickearth and plough soil. The plough soil was in turn was sealed beneath post-medieval buried garden soils. The top 0.4m of the trench consisted of modern made ground.



*Fig 3 Photo of western end of Trench 3*

<i>Evaluation Trench 4</i>	
Location	South of Trench 5
Dimensions	18.75m by 5.3m by 2.5m in depth
Modern ground level	7.39 OD
Base of modern fill	6.80m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed and/or base of trench	5.51m OD
Natural observed	5.74m OD

No archaeological remains were found in Trench 4.

Due to the south-eastern area of the site still being occupied, the trench as proposed in the WSI was relocated to an open area adjacent to the proposed location. The trench was excavated as a stepped trench due to the depth of made ground in the area.

Brickearth was recorded at the eastern end of the trench at around 1.35m below ground level. A bluish grey alluvial silty clay was recorded at the west end of the trench at around 1.35m below ground level. The alluvial deposit appeared to be sealing the brickearth. The presence of the alluvial deposit over the brickearth at the end of the trench revealed evidence of the natural topography sloping down towards the canalised river channel on the eastern side of the site. There was water ingress at 1.30m below ground level.

Above the brickearth and alluvial layers was a truncated plough soil at 1.25m below ground level. This in turn was sealed beneath a 0.75m thick layer of buried garden soil and 0.5m of modern made ground.

<i>Evaluation Trench 5</i>	
Location	To the east of Trench 1 and to the north of Trench 4
Dimensions	26m by 4.2m by 2m in depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	7.42m OD
Base of modern fill	5.75m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed and/or base of trench	5.54m OD
Natural observed	5.61m OD

No archaeological remains were found in this trench.

The trench was excavated as a stepped trench due to the depth of made ground in this area of the site. The southern and central areas of Trench 5 were found to be heavily contaminated with hydrocarbons and water ingress occurred at c 1.5m below ground level.

Truncated brickearth was observed at the base of the trench at around 1.8m below ground level (5.61m OD). The brickearth was sealed beneath approximately 1.8m of modern dumped material.

### **2.3 Initial comments on the pottery and fired clay - Jon Cotton and Lyn Blackmore**

The assemblage of pottery and fired clay from the evaluation at site BNL12 was examined in order to give initial comments on date and significance prior to further work on the site. Virtually all the pottery recovered from context [31], the fill of a large shallow pit or ditch terminal [32] that disappeared into the north western section at the southern end of Trench 3. A few sherds were present in other contexts, including context [37], the fill of a second large feature [38] adjacent to [32]. The following is mainly based on the finds from fill [31], which was possibly not fully excavated.

The pottery assemblage is relatively large (c 200 sherds or more), and includes a number of substantial fragments, together with half of a neatly made triangular clay weight perforated at each of its three corners (other fragments from [31] may belong to this or further similar weights).

To judge from the rims, bases and other diagnostic sherds, at least six and probably as many as 10 or 12 pottery vessels are represented in [31]. Most comprise coarse jars of varying sizes and surface finishes; one rim with smoothed surfaces appears to belong to a small plain vessel of round-shouldered bowl-like form. Decoration is sparse, but includes finger-tipping or rough cabling at the rim of one jar, with shallow finger-tip impressions equidistantly spaced on the rounded shoulder of a second. Only one or two sherds are burnished.

A range of fabrics are immediately apparent in hand specimen. Most sherds contain sparse-medium amounts of crushed burnt flint, but at least one vessel was tempered with abundant medium-coarse sand. Other inclusions comprise pellets of reddish iron oxide, the latter perhaps incidentally incorporated in the clay matrix. In addition, a large jar with a flattened and externally expanded rim and bulging, rounded, shoulder, represented by a number of substantial fragments, is in a strikingly coarse 'corky' fabric with abundant large voids left by burnt-out organic or calcareous matter.

The combination of ceramic traits (eg form, fabric, surface finishes, decoration etc), together with the presence of one or more triangular clay weights, makes it clear that this is an Iron Age rather than a Saxon assemblage. Moreover, initial inspection of the range of forms and fabrics suggests that it has earlier Mid Iron Age affinities – a time when the flint-tempered fabrics of the Early Iron Age were giving way to the sand-loaded fabrics of the succeeding phase. Moreover, the absence of late Mid Iron Age vessel forms (eg straight-sided saucepan pots and globular curvilinear decorated bowls) from the present assemblage suggests that it dates prior to the 3rd-2nd centuries BC. While the corky fabric might usually be considered later than this, it would appear that the all the pottery from [31] was deposited at the same time.

There is little within Brentford with which to compare this assemblage, for 50 years or so of locally intensive fieldwork along the line of the Roman road either side of the river Brent have failed to produce any large pottery assemblages of Iron Age date (Canham 1978). However, features containing flint-tempered sherds of 'Iron Age jars' were reported at 159-188 High Street (Darton 2007, 92 and 112); these were dated to the Early Iron Age, 700-300 BC (though note the wide date-bracket). The site lies on the opposite, left (or eastern), bank of the Brent, some 100m or so distant from Brentford Lock.

Other sites in west London that have yielded comparable Mid Iron Age ceramic assemblages include Snowy Fielder Waye, Isleworth (Bell 1996, fig 6, nos 35-40), Thorpe Lea Nurseries, Chertsey (Hayman, Jones and Poulton), and, further out on

the gravel terraces, at Caesar's Camp, Heathrow (Grimes and Close-Brooks 1993, 356-7), Perry Oaks (Terminal 5) (Framework 2010, 219), and Stockley Park, Dawley (Cotton 1985). Bayesian radiocarbon dates from the latter site centre on the 5th-4th centuries BC (Nick Elsdon pers comm).

The assemblage is of considerable importance as it sheds new light on the pre-Roman origins of Brentford. If the area of excavation is extended it is to be hoped that other features such as postholes and gullies will be found that can help gain a better understanding of the nature and duration of occupation on the site.

## **2.4 General discussion of potential**

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of cut features such as pits and post holes is concentrated in the south western area of the site. No evidence of archaeological remains was found within the central or western areas of the site.

## **2.5 Significance**

The archaeological remains are not only of local significance but they are of regional importance as they have the potential to give a better understanding of the pre-Roman origins of Brentford.

There is the potential that the Iron Age activity found during the evaluation relates to Iron Age settlement activity recorded at 2–10 London Road, c 130m south-west of the site. Here a series of east-west ditches containing Iron Age pottery and struck flints were recorded during an excavation in 1989 (site code BRF89); the site was then subject to a watching brief in 1996 when an additional eight ditches, a line of stake holes, a posthole and a gravel spread were recorded.

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