

LEYTONSTONE FIRE STATION London E11

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report on an archaeological evaluation

February 2015



**Leytonstone Fire Station
466 High Road
London E1 3HN**

Site Code HLE14
NGR 539355 186550
OASIS reference molas1-204365

Planning reference 2012/1339
Condition Number 5

Report on archaeological evaluation

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Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation undertaken by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) at Leytonstone Fire Station, 466 High Road, London E11 in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. National grid reference to the approximate centre of the fire station is 539335 186550. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Kier Construction Ltd.

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2013) two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site between the 9th and 10th February 2015.

Archaeological remains were limited to an undated ditch or quarry pit filled with waterlain clay in the north of the site, assumed to date to the post-medieval period, although potentially earlier. Tentative evidence for management of this feature survived in the form of a rudimentary fence or pit lining. Two parallel lines of stakes or roots, immediately to the east may be the remains of a fish trap or bush/shrub. This feature may potentially be associated with a Roman Road, which it is believed followed the line of Leytonstone High Road.

In the south-west of the site a semi-circular feature may be a tree throw or rubbish pit. Finds retrieved from the fill, including pot, tobacco pipe and part of a shaft-and-globe bottle, likely represent rubbish discarded between 1650 and 1700, prior to the development of the surrounding area in the mid-18th century.

The report concludes that potentially significant archaeological remains will be removed by the redevelopment.

A building survey to English Heritage Level 2 standard (English Heritage 2006, 14) has already been produced, providing a descriptive and visual record of the existing fire station building, exterior and interior (MOLA 2015).

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out by MOLA at Leytonstone Fire Station ('the site') between 09/02/15 and 10/02/15 (see Fig 1). This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 A written *Historic Environment Assessment* was previously prepared, which covered the whole area of the site (MOLA 2012). 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.

1.2 Planning background

- 1.2.1 The legislative and Planning framework in which the evaluation took place was fully set out in the *Historic Environment Assessment* which formed the project design for the evaluation (see Section 10, MOLA 2012). To summarise here:
- 1.2.2 The evaluation was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by the borough of Waltham Forest (Consent reference 2012/1339; Condition number 5).

1.3 Scope of the evaluation

- 1.3.1 Evaluation is defined by English Heritage as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:
 - 1.3.2 - 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
 - 1.3.3 - formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research
- 1.3.4 An archaeological evaluation is a limited fieldwork exercise designed to test the conclusions of preliminary desk based work. It is not the same as full excavation.
- 1.3.5 The evaluation was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for evaluation specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014).
- 1.3.6 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.7 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation (section 2, MOLA 2013).

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 The site and surrounding area are generally flat. Street level on Leytonstone High Road to the west of the site is c 16.7m OD; ground level in the site is approximately the same. The level of natural deposits within the site is not currently known.

2.2 Archaeology

- 2.2.1 A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the earlier *Historic Environment Assessment* (MOLA 2012). A brief resume is provided here: The underlying geology of the site comprises Hackney Terrace Gravels, in places possibly capped by brickearth. Previous boreholes and window samples undertaken on the site by the Harrison Group revealed up to 1.60m deposits of made ground overlying the river terrace gravels. Window sample 5 located at the south of the station building recorded 1.20m of made ground over gravels and window sample 4 recorded 1.50m made ground over the gravel. These two window samples are located in the vicinity of the planned evaluation trenches for the site, Trenches 1 and 2.
- 2.2.2 The Fillebrook (or Phillebrook), a small tributary of the Lea, now culverted, formerly ran c 1km west of the site; the River Roding is c 2.75km to the north-east. On dry gravels, with relatively easy access to the resources of the Rivers Lea and Roding and their tributaries, the area of the site would have attracted prehistoric activity, and possibly settlement. This would seem to be supported by the number of residual finds of the period, and the fragmentary *in situ* evidence recorded in the area. Late Neolithic or early Bronze Age activity has been suggested in the vicinity of the site, and cut features of possible Bronze Age date have been recorded c 625m south-west of the site. A large number of isolated prehistoric findspots have also been recorded within the site vicinity.
- 2.2.3 The Roman road to Great Dunmow in Essex has been traced on the east side of the Lea in the Clapton area; heading north-east it may have followed the modern route of Lea Bridge Road, c 2.2km north-west of the site (Margary 1967, 250). It has been suggested, however, that a road may have run north-east from a crossing of the Lea in the vicinity of Temple Mills in Leyton, c 1.6km south-west of the site, continuing north along the line of Leytonstone High Road (which forms the western boundary of the site). The designation of the Archaeological Priority Area along Leytonstone High Road takes this possibility into account. The probable course of a Roman road, on the line of Leytonstone High Road, lay immediately to the west of the site, although its route has not been confirmed archaeologically. Remains of the road in the western part of the site, if present, are likely to have been truncated by modern development. In the remainder of the site there may be evidence of roadside ditches, settlement or associated activity such as quarrying.
- 2.2.4 During the medieval and later medieval period the site is likely to have been within woodland, or cultivated land. The site was at some distance from known areas of settlement. There may however, be localised evidence of occupation. The village of Leytonstone was located to the north of the site.
- 2.2.5 Leytonstone remained as a rural hamlet into the post-medieval period, although the High Road became important for coach traffic, and a number of country houses were built in the area. The village expanded in the typical ribbon like development

along the High Road and Richard Cushee's 1728 map, *A Survey of the Manor of Ruckholt*, a few buildings are shown strung out along Leytonstone High Road. Rocque's map of 1746 shows possibly three or more buildings in or close to the site, with allotments or gardens to the rear. Chapman and André's map of 1777 shows buildings fronting Leytonstone High Road which are probably within the site. The 1863 Ordnance Survey map shows the site within a cluster of houses and other buildings alongside the High Road, still largely surrounded by open fields or gardens.

- 2.2.6 In 1768, residents of the parish purchased a fire-engine and buckets. Local administration was gradually taken over by the local board, which in 1878 contributed to the cost of a second fire engine house, in St. John's churchyard, c 800m north of the site. In 1881 it bought another engine for Leytonstone, and a third station (known as Harrow Green, after the triangle of land, formerly Saul's Green, to the south) was set up in the site for the hose cart. The 1895 Ordnance Survey map shows a number of buildings within the site. The fire station appears to be in the northern part of the site, fronting the High Road. The 1914 Ordnance Survey map shows the fire station with a different footprint to the 1895 map, suggesting that it may have been rebuilt or substantially modified.
- 2.2.7 In 1965, Leytonstone fire station was absorbed into the Greater London fire brigade and 1965 Ordnance Survey map shows small extensions to the rear of the station building, and an additional triangular building or structure in the northern part of the site. In the 1990s, a single-storey extension providing office, storage, kitchen and mess accommodation was constructed to the south of the main station building, with a brick and stone façade to match the older section, and a flat roof. The yard also included a modern drill tower close to the northern edge of the site.
- 2.2.8 Generally the site has a low to moderate potential for evidence of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age activity, activity has been recorded in the area along with a number of isolated prehistoric finds, although none within the immediate vicinity. The site has moderate potential for Roman activity as it may have been alongside a Roman road, on the line of Leytonstone High Road. There may be evidence of the road in the western part of the site, and of roadside ditches, occupation or other activity in the remainder of the site. Historic maps indicate various buildings in the western side of the site from the early 18th century, although any remains are likely to have been heavily truncated by modern development. Elsewhere within the site there may be evidence of cultivation soils, or features such as drainage ditches, field boundaries and pits. Additionally localised remains of the late 19th-century fire station buildings may survive in the north-western part of the site.

3 Evaluation methodology

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 Two evaluation trenches c 4.7m by 3.9m (Trench 1) (Photo 1) and 9.8m by 1.85m (Trench 2) (Photo 3) were excavated to depth of 2.60 m and 2.15m respectively below ground level. Trench 1 was extended to the east due to modern truncations possibly associated with a recently demolished water tower to the north.
- 3.1.2 The slab/ground had been broken out by the contractors prior to MOLA attendance. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by a MOLA supervisor. Features were further excavated by hand where appropriate.
- 3.1.3 The Trenches were located by MOLA after an initial ground reduction of c 0.4m undertaken prior to supervision.
- 3.1.4 Archaeological excavation was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2013).
- 3.1.5 Trench locations were surveyed on site by MOLA surveyors and tied to the OS grid by MOLA Geomatics.
- 3.1.6 All nineteenth century and later material within trenches was removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon.

3.2 Recording methodology

- 3.2.1 A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2013).
- 3.2.2 The recording systems adopted during the evaluation were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in London, and those required by the Archive Receiving Body, the Museum of London.

3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	2
Number of overall location plans	0
Number of Context (SU) sheets	4
Number of photographs	19
Number of Plan sheets	2
Number of Sections	0

4 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 2. For trench plans see Fig 3 and Fig 4.

4.1 Trench 1

Location	North of the site (Fig 3) (Photo 1, Photo 2)
Dimensions	4.7m by 3.90m by 1.5m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	16.80mOD
Base of modern fill/slab/turf	16.40mOD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	No stratigraphy, but feature [4] cut into the natural to a depth of 0.6m.
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	14.24 mOD
Top of surviving natural observed at	15.00mOD
Level of base of trench	14.86m OD



Photo 1 Trench 1, natural deposits exposed in the extended trench, and pit/ditch [4] at bottom right, looking east

- 4.1.1 Significant archaeological remains were limited to a waterlain feature [4] in the south-west corner of the Trench recorded between 15.00 and 14.24m OD. The only fill [3] consisted of a dense mid blue-grey sterile clay. No dateable evidence was recovered associated with the feature, and it was assumed to date to the post-medieval period, although it may be earlier. The southern edge curved gently to the west disappearing into the section at 14.86mOD. The northern edge was truncated by a 19th-century or later foundation trench (see *Photo 1* bottom right, probably for a water tower. The base of [4] was exposed in a machine excavated slot (*Photo 2*), and appeared relatively flat. It is possible that what was exposed within the trench

was the corner of a considerably larger pit or ditch, which continued into the bulks to the south, and west. There was tentative evidence for management along the eastern edge, in the form of a rudimentary fence or some form of lining (possible for a pit). Two enigmatic lines of stakes, or possible roots, perpendicular to the edge of [4] may be the remains of a fish trap or bush/shrub.



Photo 2 Profile of pit or ditch [4], looking north.

- 4.1.2 This feature may potentially represent a roadside ditch, or quarry pit associated with a Roman Road, which it has been hypothesized (but not archaeologically confirmed) followed the line of Leytonstone High Road.

4.2 Trench 2

Location	West of the site (Fig 4) (Photo 3, Photo 4)
Dimensions	9.8 by 1.85 by 0.75m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	16.78mOD
Base of modern fill/slab	16.55mOD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	Stratigraphy consisted of 19th/20th-century ground levelling to a depth of 1.5+
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	14.64 mOD
Top of surviving natural observed at	15.30mOD or N/A
Level of base of trench	15.04mOD



Photo 3 Trench 2, brickearth exposed along the base of the trench, with the occasional modern disturbance, looking east.

- 4.2.1 A semi-circular feature [2] (*Photo 4*) in the centre of the trench was partially excavated, and survived between 15.10 and 14.64m OD. The base was flat, with evidence of rooting, suggesting it may be a tree throw (caused by a falling tree, and the resulting hollow forming a circular shaped pit) or a rubbish pit. This measured 1.8m east-west, 1m north-south and 0.55m deep, and continued into the northern section. Finds from the light blue-grey sand and clay fill [1] included pottery dating from between the 17th and 18th centuries, tobacco pipe, a fragment of brick (16th–17th Century) and the end of a glass bottle dated 1650–1700. Together the dated finds suggest this feature was formed and backfilled prior to 1700. The laminated nature of the fill suggested it may have been formed by intermittent flooding. The finds likely represent rubbish discarded in the immediate area, which probably found their way into the hollow depression through natural processes.



Photo 4 Partially excavated clay filled hollow [2], looking west.

4.2.2 The remainder of the Trench was pock-marked with modern truncations, mostly situated in the south and south-west.

4.3 The finds

Trench	Context	Material	Sherds/ Fragments	Period	Date	Brief Comments
2	+	Pot	6	p-med	18th–19th Century	Mostly Victorian 1807+
2	+	Tobacco pipe	2	p-med	17th–18th Century	Only stems
2	1	CBM	1	p-med	16th–17th Century	Partially burnt, handmade brick, fragment
2	1	Pot	2	p-med	17th–18th Century	Butter pot and black glazed ware
2	1	Glass	1	p-med	1650– 1700	Shaft-and-globe bottle
2	1	Tobacco pipe	1	p-med	17th–18th Century	Only stems

Table 1 The finds

4.4 The site as a whole

4.4.1 The undated waterlain feature [4] in Trench 1 between 15.00 and 14.24m OD may be Prehistoric, Roman (relating to the north-south road to the west) or early post-medieval. It is very likely that it predates the mid 18-century building development depicted in Rocque's map of 1746. Although it is possible (but less likely given the sterile nature of pit/ditch [3]), that it was in fact a pit, or pond located within the allotment or gardens of domestic premise that fronted the high street during the mid-

18th-century.

- 4.4.2 The single feature in Trench 2 appears unrelated (although it may be contemporary), and given its irregular base, is probably a tree throw, although it may be a rubbish pit. The historic assessment placed the site within woodland during the later medieval period, and this may be the source of this feature. Either way it appeared to have been slowly backfilled possibly during intermittent episodes of flooding between the 16th and 18th century, prior to the development of the surrounding area in the mid-18th century.
- 4.4.3 Results from the two evaluation trenches suggest that 19th-20th century activity has removed all stratigraphy, with only relatively deeply cut features surviving at a maximum height of 15.30m OD. Generally deeper truncation below 15.30m OD was limited to an area in the north-west of Trench 1.

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

The following research aims were devised by MOLA for the evaluation phase of work (MOLA 2013).

1. What is the nature and level of natural topography?

Natural geology consisted of clean brickearth observed between 15.30 and 14.30m OD, this capped coarse terrace gravels exposed at the base of a sondage in Trench 1 at 14.24m OD.

2. What are the earliest deposits identified?

The earliest deposit is potentially the undated ditch or quarry pit [4] recorded in Trench 1. This may date to the prehistoric or Roman periods, although it may be much later.

3. Is there any evidence of prehistoric activity on the site?

See 2

4. Is there any evidence of Roman activity on the site?

See 2

5. Is there any evidence of medieval or early post-medieval activity on the site?

There is tentative evidence that rubbish was being dumped in/around the site, possibly as early as the 16th-century. The brick fragment from [1] may have originally been part of a hearth, hinting at possible contemporary land use.

6. Is there any evidence of structures that pre-date the existing fire station as shown on historical mapping and if so what is their date and significance?

No structural evidence was found associated with buildings predating the 1914 fire station.

7. What is the nature and significance of the surviving archaeological remains?

The remains are limited to cut features, possibly dating to between the prehistoric and post-medieval period, and are of local significance, although the feature in Trench 1 [4], will be of greater significance if it can be proved to be prehistoric or Roman.

8. What are the latest deposits identified?

19th–20th century levelling deposits, and a possible construction trench (see 4.1.1) were recorded across the site, the latter likely associated with the 1914 phase of fire station construction.

5.2 General discussion of potential

5.2.1 The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification above natural ground) on the site is limited.

5.2.1 Archaeological survival was limited to cut features surviving between 15.30 and 14.24m ATD. Potentially similar features will survive across the site.

5.2.2 Survival is likely to be extremely limited in certain areas because of 19th–20th century truncation (particularly in the south-east of the site in the location of the

diesel tanks). For example in Trench 2 there was 1.5m of rubble crush overlying the natural brickearth between 16.78 and 15.30m ATD. No significant archaeological deposits survived above 15.30m OD.

5.3 Significance

- 5.3.1 Whilst the archaeological remains are of local significance there is nothing to suggest at this stage that they are of regional or national importance. However feature [4] from Trench 1 may potentially be of regional significance if it proves to be from the Roman period, as it may shed light on the location/existence of the Roman road immediately to the west of the site.

5.4 Assessment of the evaluation

- 5.4.1 The evaluation consisted of 2 trenches, located in the north-west and west of the site. Trench 1 was extended to the east, and Trench 2 was located approximately 2-3m further north than originally planned, to allow for vehicular access. Trench 2 in particular was located to evaluate activity fronting the High Street. The centre, east and south-east areas of the site were not evaluated as they had already been designated as either contaminated (south-east) or previously truncated.
- 5.4.2 The evaluation Trenches exposed natural deposits and two cut features between 15.30 and 14.24m OD. The lack of stratified deposits exposed across the site is likely a reflection of the high levels of horizontal truncation combined with limited archaeological activity.
- 5.4.3 It is fair to say that the evaluation has produced an accurate reflection of archaeological survival. Although it is possible (but unlikely) that stratified deposits survive beyond the evaluated areas

6 Proposed development impact and conclusions

- 6.1.1 The proposed redevelopment at the site involved demolition of the existing building and associated groundworks. It is likely that the deposits recorded within Trench 1 will be all or partially removed.
- 6.1.2 In the light of the results of the evaluation it is recommended that the remaining archaeological deposits that will be affected by the proposed development should be archaeologically excavated by means of a targeted watching brief with option to excavate to cover the area to the west of Trench 2, using appropriate methodologies, which reflect the potential and significance of the deposits present.

7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 MOLA would like to thank Kier Construction for commissioning this evaluation and report. Adam Single (English Heritage) for his input. Recording on site was undertaken by the author. Ceramic building material assessment was undertaken by Ian Betts, and the glass, pottery and tobacco pipes by Lyn Blackmore. Surveying by Moises Hernandez-Cordero and Mark Burch (also digitising) and photography by the author. The project was managed for MOLA by Michael Smith.

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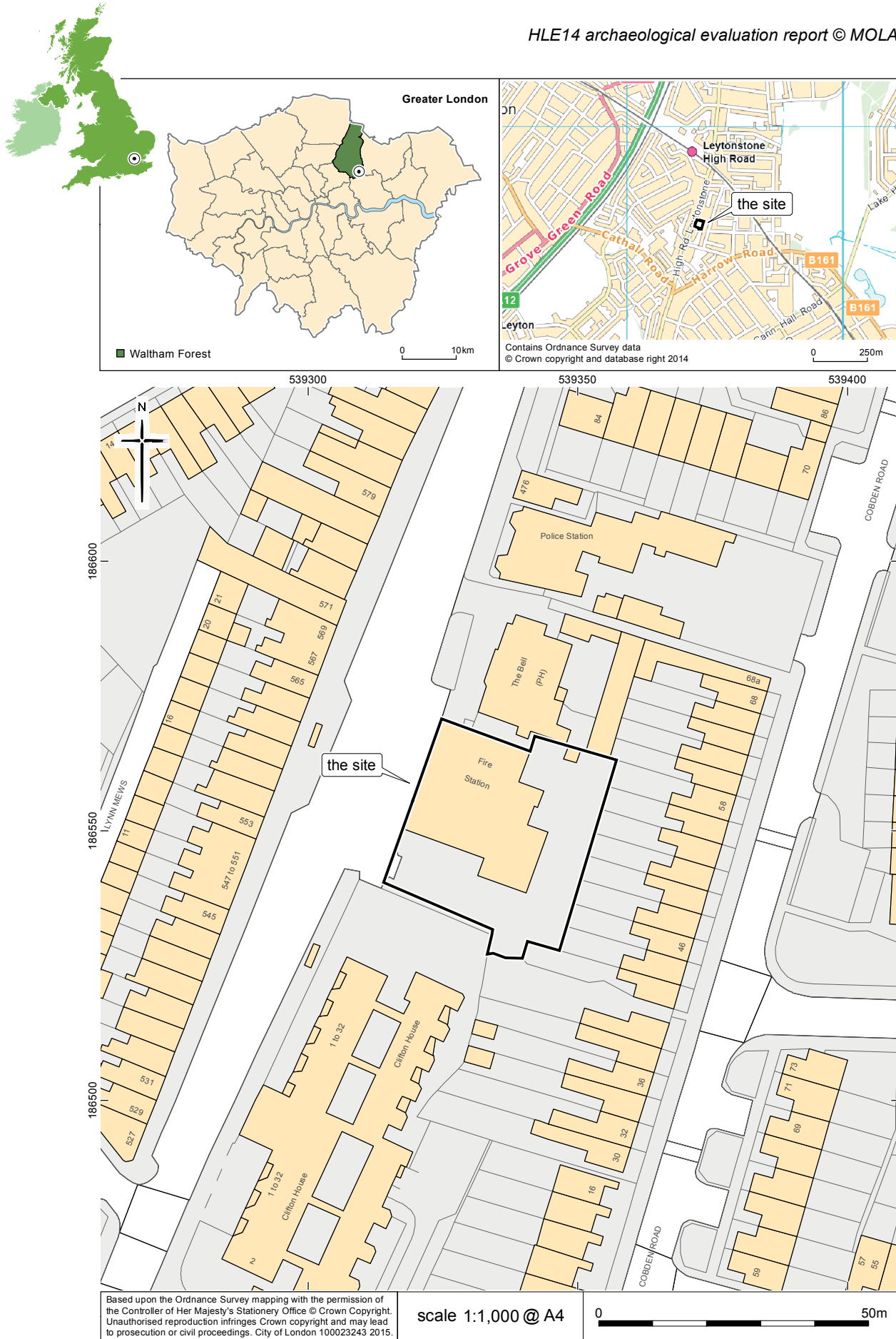


Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Areas of evaluation



539342/186565



539342/186558



- roots, possible postholes [4]
- roots, ? fish trap
- 19th-century intrusion



Fig 3 Trench 1



539317/186550



539329/186550



 19th-century intrusion



Fig 4 Trench 2

9 OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-204365

Project details

Project name	Leytonstone Fire Station
Short description of the project	Two evaluation trenches were excavated in the north-east and south-west of the site in February 2015 following demolition of the 1914 Fire station building. Archaeological remains were limited to an undated ditch or quarry pit filled with waterlain clay in the north of the site, assumed to date to the post-medieval period, although potentially earlier. Tentative evidence for management of this feature survived in the form of a rudimentary fence or pit lining. Two parallel lines of stakes or roots, immediately to the east may be the remains of a fish trap or bush/shrub. This feature may potentially be associated with a Roman Road, which it is believed to share the alignment of the modern High street. In the south-west of the site a semi-circular feature may be a tree throw. Finds retrieved from the fill, including pot, tobacco pipe and part of a shaft-and-globe bottle, likely represent rubbish discarded between 1650 and 1700, prior to the development of the surrounding area in the mid-18th century. A building survey to English Heritage Level 2 standard (English Heritage 2006, 14) has already been produced, providing a descriptive and visual record of the existing fire station building, exterior and interior (MOLA 2015).
Project dates	Start: 09-02-2015 End: 11-02-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HLE14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	DITCH/PT Post Medieval
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BOTTLE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	TOBACCO PIPE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	""Targeted Trenches""
Development type	Fire Station development
Prompt	Planning agreement (Section 106 or 52)
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
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Site location	GREATER LONDON WALTHAM FOREST WALTHAM FOREST Leytonstone Fire Station
Postcode	E113HN
Study area	40.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3922 8661 51.560661 0.0086501241 51 33 38 N 000 00 31 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 14.24m Max: 15.30m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	KIER Construction
Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	Mike Smith
Project supervisor	Sam Pfizenmaier
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Kier Construction

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Archive ID	HLE14
Physical Contents	"Glass","other","Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	HLE14
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	HLE14
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic","Survey"
Paper Media available	"Drawing","Photograph","Plan","Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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Title	Leytonstone Fire Station Evaluation Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Pfizenmaier, P.
Date	2015
Issuer or publisher	MOLA
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 Ringbound client report
Entered by	Sam Pfizenmaier (spfizenmaier@mola.org.uk)
Entered on	20 February 2015