



131 HIGH STREET London EN5

London Borough of Barnet

Watching brief report

August 2015



**131 High Street
Barnet
London
EN5 5UZ**

Site Code HSB15
NGR 524463 196749
OASIS reference molas1-217722

Planning reference B/00742/12
Condition Number 7

Report on an archaeological watching brief

Sign-off History:

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by MOLA at 131 High Street, Barnet. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Ronald Cardy on behalf of the client W.D Properties UK Ltd

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2014) a watching brief was carried out on the site between January and March 2015.

Natural was sandy gravel (Stanmore Gravel) lying at c 129.60m OD. The site being located some distance from the medieval core of Barnet, which lies at the south end of the High Street, was being used for rubbish disposal from the late 15th–16th century with several pits being dug. Further activity with gravel surfaces was occurring in the late 16th–17th century period.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by MOLA at 131 High Street, Barnet, London ('the site') between 22/01/15 and 23/03/15 (see *Fig 1*). This document is the Report on that work. The site comprises about 106m², and is bounded by High Street to the east, 129 High Street to the south, the Spires Shopping Centre car park to the west, and a service lane to the north. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 524463 196749. Modern pavement level near to the site lies at c 130.30m OD.
- 1.1.2 The site is being developed to create a four storey mixed use building. The development received planning permission (reference B/00742/12) and included Condition No 7. That required an archaeological watching brief groundworks associated with the construction of the new building and its associated landscaping
- 1.1.3 Further to the condition on Planning Consent a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared (MOLA 2014). All archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with that WSI.

1.2 Planning background

- 1.2.1 The legislative and planning framework in which the watching brief took place was fully set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* which formed the project design for the watching brief (see Section 1.2, MOLA 2014).
- 1.2.2 In the London Borough of Barnet's Local Plan (adopted September 2012), Policy DM06 covers heritage and conservation
- 1.2.3 The watching brief was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by the Local Authority (Planning reference B/00742/12 Condition no 7).

1.3 Scope of the watching brief

- 1.3.1 An archaeological watching brief is normally a limited fieldwork exercise. It is not the same as full excavation, though individual features may be fully excavated.
- 1.3.2 The watching brief was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for watching brief specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014).
- 1.3.3 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.4 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief (Section 2.2)
- 1.3.5 The limited nature of the proposed works and the watching brief upon them makes it unreasonable to establish many specific archaeological research objectives. Nevertheless a few broad research questions can be outlined:
- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
 - What are the earliest deposits identified?
 - What are the latest deposits identified?
 - What is the extent of modern disturbance?
 - Are there any remains associated with medieval or post-medieval road side activity?
 - Are there any remains associated with the Battle of Barnet of 1471?

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 The British Geological Survey (BGS Sheet 256) shows that the site overlies the Stanmore Gravel, a Late Pliocene/Early Pleistocene fluviate deposit that was laid down by the early Thames. This gravel is sandy and clayey in parts, and forms a ridge of high land. Nearby modern ground level lies at c 130.30m OD

2.2 Historical and Archaeological

2.2.1 Prehistoric

The Barnet area has only produced a few Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age flints, and three Bronze Age arrowheads. An Iron Age enclosure or hillfort was discovered at Monken Hadley Common, Hadley Wood (HEA No. 080562).

2.2.2 Roman

There is also very little Roman material from the Barnet area. However, a small number of finds have been found. A Roman wall, well and jug were discovered at number 68 High Street (HEA Nos. 081949, 081889 & 081957), and a potsherd was found behind the Mitre Public House (HEA 082277).

2.2.3 Saxon

Little is known of Barnet during the pre-Conquest period as it is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, although the place name is Saxon in origin.

2.2.4 Medieval

The earliest documentary evidence for Barnet dates from 1199, when the Abbot of St. Albans acquired a royal charter for a market there. The settlement of Chipping ('market') Barnet was known as 'Barnetley' until the 14th century. It had grown up along the main route to the north towards St Albans that was established in the late 11th or early 12th century. Barnet Hill and the High Street are now part of this route. The present Parish Church of St. John the Baptist was built in the 15th century (HEA 222005), although tile found in the chancel suggests that a 13th-century church stood there before it (HEA 081991). Archaeological work on the High Street has found some 12th–14th century pottery.

Possibly the most famous local event was the Battle of Barnet taking place during the Wars of the Roses, which was fought on 14th April 1471 on open ground just to the north of the town. The Yorkists under Edward IV beat the Lancastrians, killing Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. Unfortunately archaeological evidence of battlefields is difficult to identify although occasional artefacts can be found.

2.2.5 Post-medieval

The settlement continued to develop along the High Street; several of the existing buildings are 17th century in date and are listed. John Rocque's map of Middlesex from 1754 shows the areas behind the High Street as open ground. The coming of the railways in the 19th century resulted in the rapid expansion of Barnet ('New Barnet') becoming a commuter suburb of London.

3 The watching brief

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 Any concrete slab had been removed earlier when the piling took place. Six trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors for ground beams to link with the new piles. This was monitored by MOLA, where possible the faces were cleaned and recorded.
- 3.1.2 Trench locations and features were plotted on plans provided by the client using an 'offset methodology' and subsequently tied to the OS grid by MOLA Geomatics.

3.2 Recording methodology

- 3.2.1 All recording was carried out in accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2014) and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MOL 1994).

3.3 Site archive

Number of overall location plans	1
Number of Context (SU) sheets	19
Number of photographs	20
Number of Plan sheets	4
Number of Sections	7

4 Results of the watching brief

For trench and section locations see *Fig 2*

4.1 Archaeology

- 4.1.1 Natural was a sandy gravel [15], the highest survival was at c 129.60m OD towards the east and lower towards the west suggesting the topography is dipping down to the west. In places this was overlain by a brown clay [14] up to 0.40m thick, a lack of finds suggests this was also a natural deposit capping the gravels.
- 4.1.2 Two pits were found cutting the natural. Pit [13] was vertical sided and undated. This pit was sealed by dumping [10] and [11] (see *Fig 3* section 2).



Pit [13] looking north west

- 4.1.3 There was another vertical sided pit [17] (see *Fig 4* section 6) that was dated to c 1480–1600 by two sherds of pottery. The fill [16] also included several fragments of animal bone which comprised 11 fragments of dog *Canis lupus familiaris*. The fragments included proximal ('upper'), distal ('lower') and mid-shaft areas of ribs. The group represents disposal of rib-cage fragments of a dog skeleton, all probably from the same animal.
- 4.1.4 To the east an area of gravel [18] 0.30m thick lying 129.50m OD was located close to the modern High Street frontage. This appears to be a yard surface and not related to the road. This may be a continuation of gravels surfaces recorded elsewhere on the site lying at c 129.45m OD. Surface [1] is dated to c 1630–1700, while surface [7] was cut by a stake hole [6] and a small pit or posthole [4]

dated c 1680–1750, although the pottery recovered could have been deposited before 1700.



Gravel surface [7] looking north

4.1.5 Below surface [18] which was undated there was an undated dump [19] and natural was not seen in this area of site.

4.1.6 Two isolated dumps [2] and [9] are each dated to c 1580–1700.

4.1.7 Conclusions

There was some archaeology on the site; the pits suggest late 15th–16th century activity, showing the area at that time was not built up but was open fields lying alongside the main road leading to St Albans. The gravel surface(s) may be yard surfaces laid after the pits were infilled and along with several dumps are dated to the late 16th-17th century.

4.2 The pottery

Jacqui Pearce

The pottery was spot-dated and recorded in accordance with current MOLA practice, using standard codes for fabric, form and decoration, with quantification by sherd count, estimated number of vessels (ENV) and weight in grams. The data were entered onto the Oracle database. A total of 14 sherds from a minimum of 11 vessels, weight 603 g, were recovered from five contexts.

Date, fabrics and forms

The small assemblage of pottery recovered is essentially of 16th-/17th-century date. The earliest finds are two sherds of late medieval/transitional sandy red ware

(LMSR), found in context [16], which is dated to c 1480–1600. They are both unglazed and the forms cannot be identified. This redware fabric is typical of local usage in the 16th century, although specific sources are unknown. Contexts [2] and [9] are each dated to c 1580–1700, based on the presence of London-area post-medieval redware (PMR) – part of a large storage jar in [9], and a small rounded bowl in [2]. There is also a sherd from a handled bowl in Surrey-Hampshire border redware (RBOR) in [9]. This context could be dated later than c 1700, although the date range assigned is the most likely for the pottery recovered. Context [2] also includes part of a large, heavily potted flanged dish in post-medieval fine redware (PMFR), made at kilns in and around Harlow in Essex and used in the London area from c 1580 to 1700. The dish is accompanied by a sherd from a butter pot in Midlands purple ware (MPUR), made at centres in Staffordshire and elsewhere as a means of storing and transporting butter. Context [1] is dated to c 1630–1700 by a sherd from a dish in Metropolitan slipware (METS), which was also made at the Harlow kilns and which is found in London in contexts dating between c 1630 and 1700. It was found with two sherds from a jug in PMFR. The latest context recorded is [3], which is dated to c 1680–1750, although it could well have been deposited before 1700. This is based on the presence of one small sherd of PMFR and a sherd of tin-glazed ware with decoration in blue on white typical of the later 17th to 18th century (TGW H).

The pottery represents domestic waste disposal on a small scale and has very limited potential for further work.

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

5.1.1 Some of the original research questions can be answered;

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

Natural was sand and gravels, the highest survival was at c 129.60m OD, the topography slopes slightly down to the west.

What are the earliest deposits identified?

The earliest deposit was in a pit dated to the late 15th–16th century.

What are the latest deposits identified?

The latest deposits are a gravel surface and dumps dated to the late 16th-17th century.

What is the extent of modern disturbance?

Little modern disturbance was identified.

Are there any remains associated with medieval or post-medieval road side activity?

None of the remains could be identified specifically as road side activities.

Are there any remains associated with the Battle of Barnet of 1471?

None of the archaeology could be associated with the Battle of Barnet.

5.2 Significance of the data

5.2.1 Whilst the archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

6 Publication and archiving

- 6.1.1 The results of the watching brief will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic researches into the development of London or Barnet.
- 6.1.2 The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2014) with the Museum of London Archaeological Archive (LAARC) within 12 months of the end of the watching brief.
- 6.1.3 In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 5) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 5.2) it is suggested that a short note on the results of the watching brief should appear in the annual round up of the *London Archaeologist*.
- 6.1.4 No further work is required.

7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 MOLA would like to thank Jamie Shea WD Properties (UK) Ltd for assistance during the watching brief and Ron Cardy for commissioning the work. The author would like to thank the following at MOLA for their contributions and help in producing this report: Tim Braybrooke, Mark Burch (geomatics), Jacqui Pearce (pottery) and Alan Pipe (animal bone)

8 Bibliography

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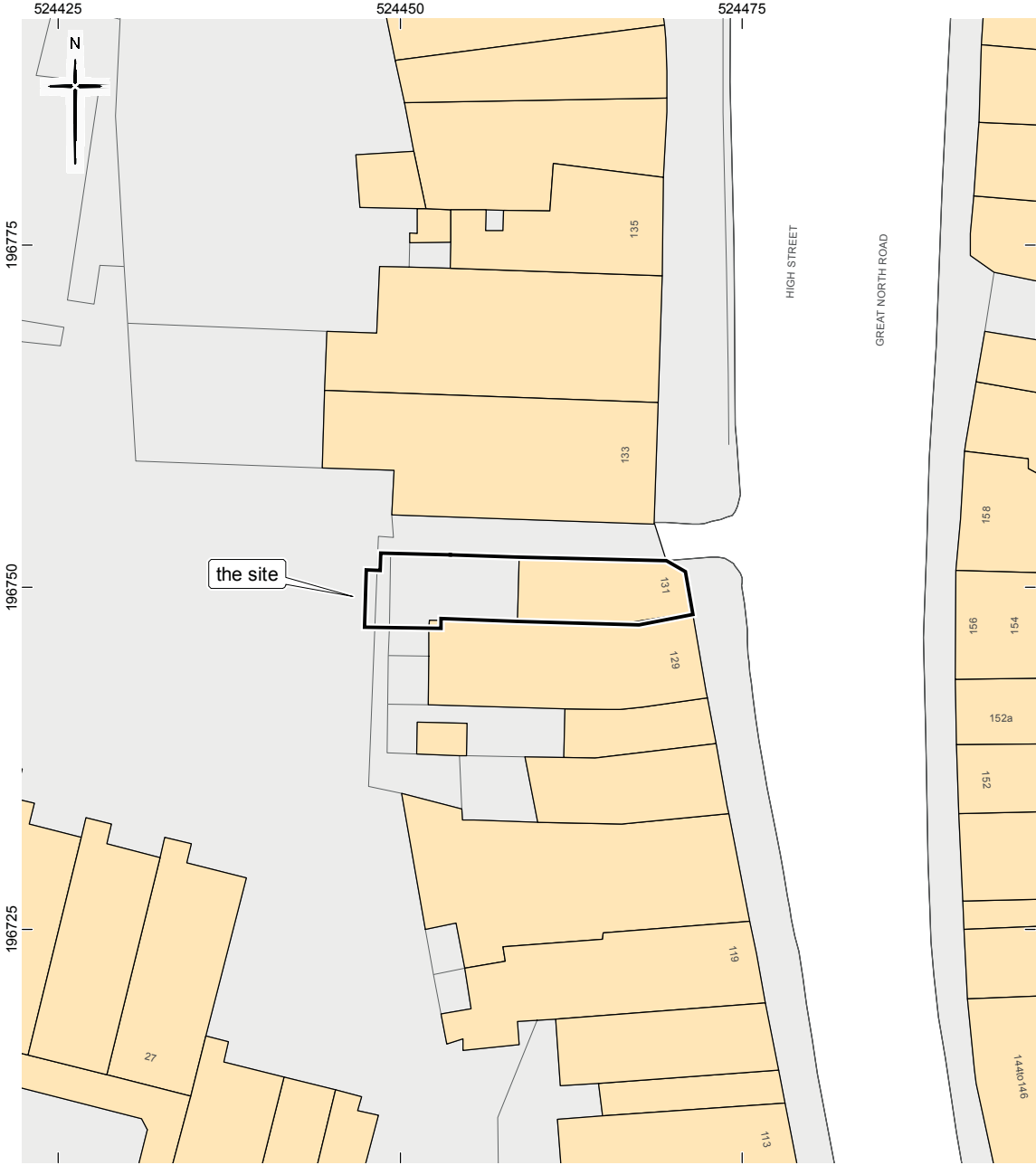
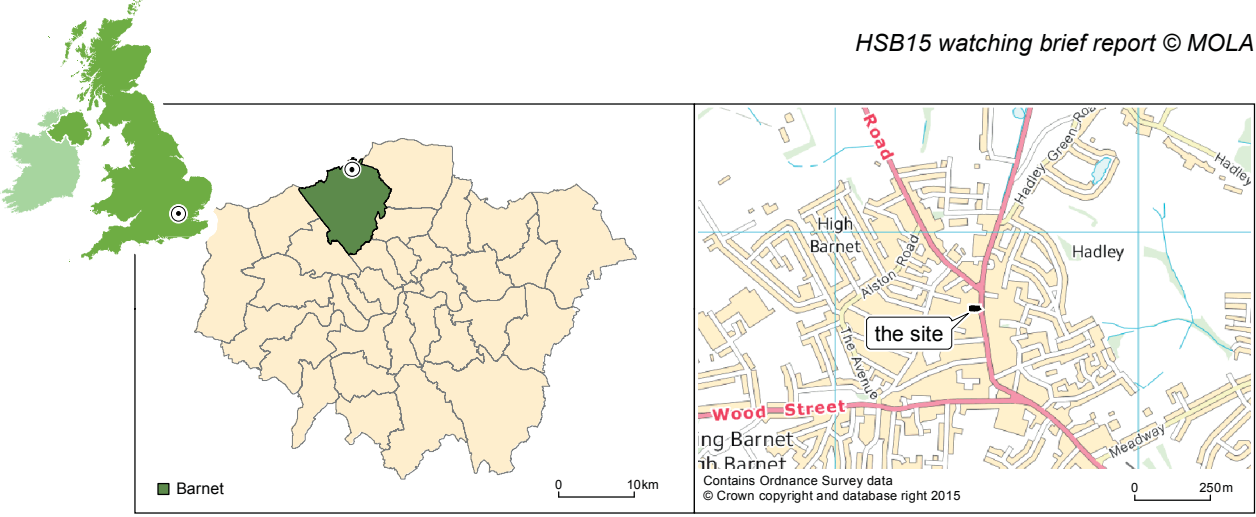
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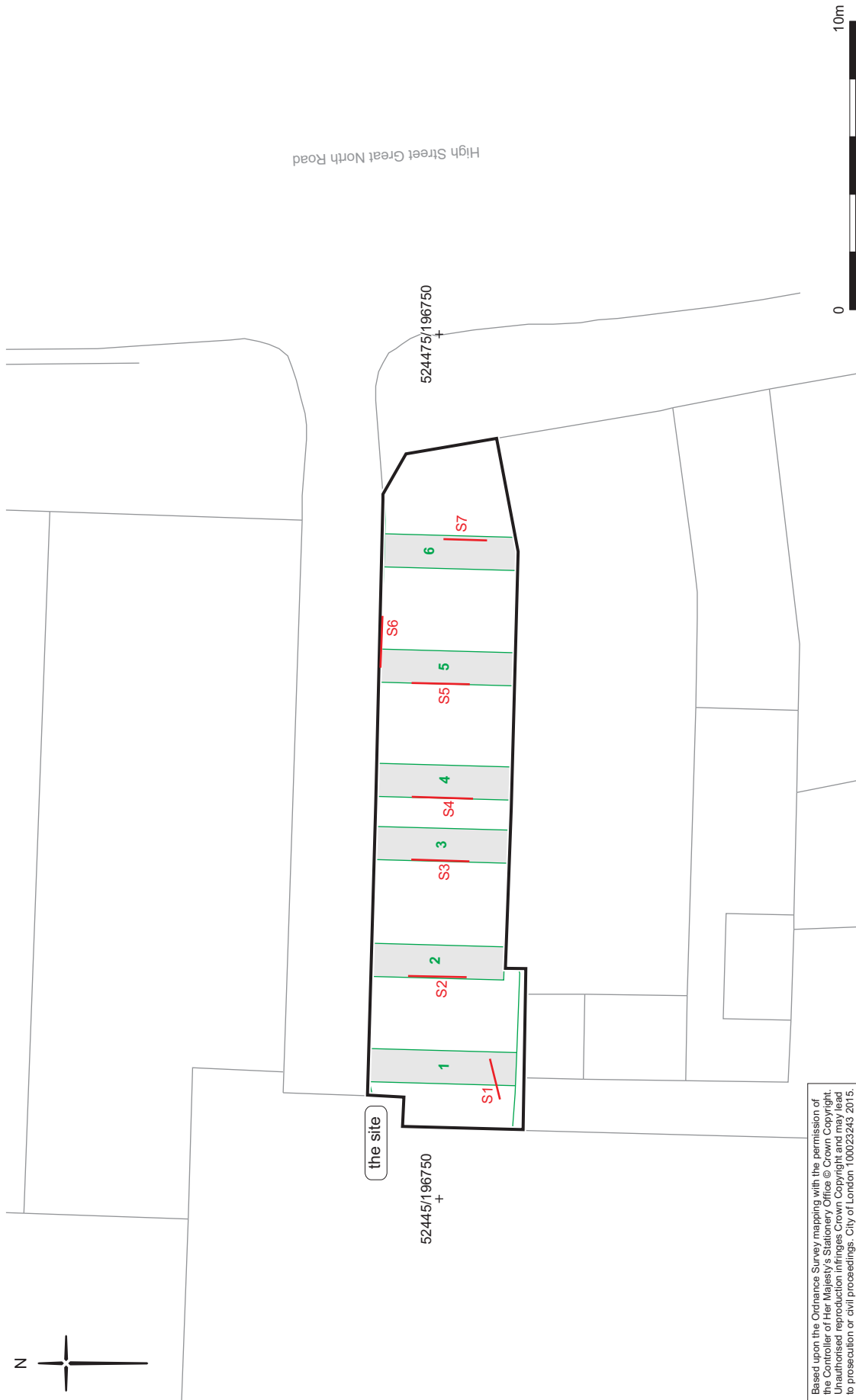


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scale 1:500 @ A4

0 25m

Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Areas of investigation

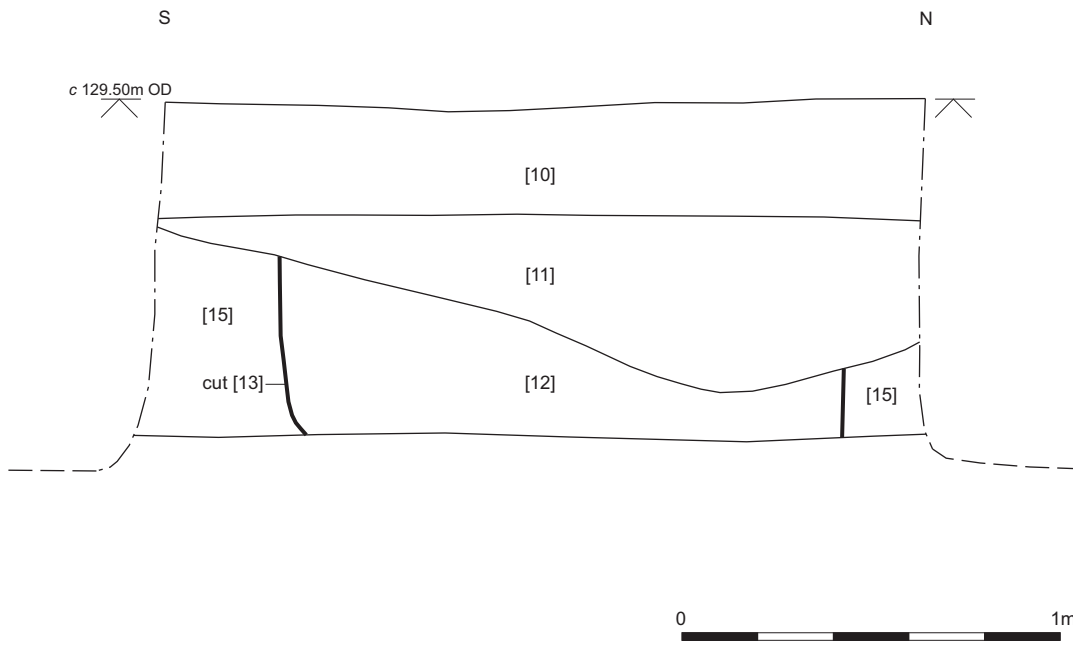


Fig 3 Section 2

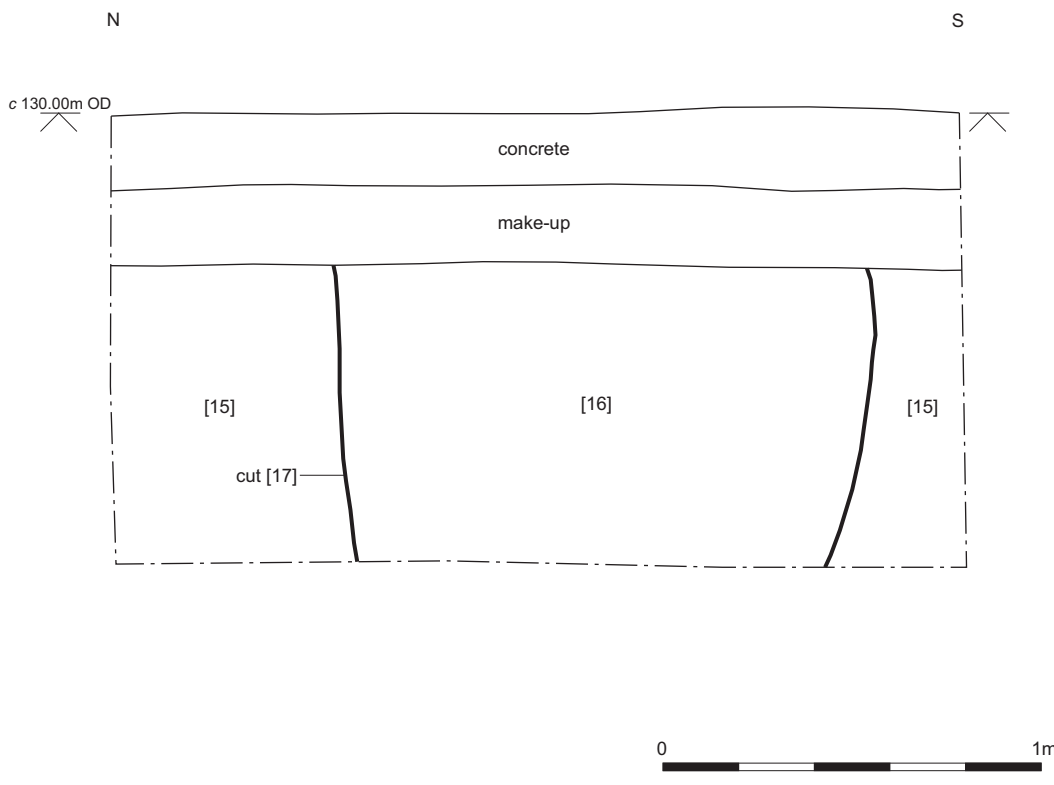


Fig 4 Section 6

9 OASIS archaeological report form

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-217722

Project details

Project name	131 High Street, Barnet, London
Short description of the project	A watching brief found natural was a sandy gravel (Stanmore Gravel) lying at c 129.60m OD. The site being located some distance from the medieval core of Barnet, was being used for rubbish disposal from the late 15th-16th century with several pits being dug. Further activity with gravel surfaces was occurring in the late 16th-17th century period.
Project dates	Start: 22-01-2015 End: 23-03-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	HSB15 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON BARNET BARNET 131 High Street, Barnet, London
Postcode	EN5 5UZ
Study area	106.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 24463 96749 51.6552535926 -0.200552818985 51 39 18 N 000 12 01 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 129.40m Max: 129.60m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	GLAAS
Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	Mike Smith
Project supervisor	Tony Mackinder
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	WD Properties (UK) Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Archive ID	HSB15
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	HSB15
Digital Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Digital Media available	"Database"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	HSB15
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Matrices","Photograph","Plan","Section","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

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Title	131 High Street, Barnet, London EN5 5UZ

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