

ARNOLD HOUSE
21 Great Eastern Street
London N1

London Borough of Hackney

Watching brief report

July 2016



ARNOLD HOUSE
21 Great Eastern Street
London EC2A 3EJ

Site Code GES16
NGR 533332 182254
OASIS reference molas1-257133

Planning reference 2015/2762
Condition Number 18

Report on an archaeological watching brief

Sign-off History:

Issue No.	Date:	Prepared by:	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for Issue:
1	12.07.16	Tony Mackinder Michael Smith	Michael Smith	First issue

Graphics: Carlos Lemos

Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by MOLA at Arnold House, 21 Great Eastern Street, London, EC2A 3EJ. The report was commissioned from MOLA by the client WT Partnership.

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2016) a watching brief was carried out on the site on 13th June 2016. The original development scheme allowed for the excavation of foundation pads and a lift pit to depths of between 2m and 3m below the existing ground level. However, the nature of the groundworks were amended to piled foundations subsequent to the approval of the written scheme of investigation with minimal groundworks to a maximum depth of 1.5m below existing ground level.

The watching brief on enabling works for the lift pit showed that there was significant modern disturbance to a depth of at least 1.5m. GLAAS therefore agreed that no further watching brief was required.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by MOLA at Arnold House, 21 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3EJ ('the site') on 13th June 2016 (see *Fig 1*). The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 533332 182254. This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 A search was made of the Greater London Historic Environment Record and the results added to the site specific written scheme of investigation (WSI – MOLA 2016). This recorded that archaeological remains of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date have been made in the vicinity of the present site.
- 1.1.3 Further to the condition on Planning Consent a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2016). 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* (see Section 1.2, MOLA 2016).
- 1.2.2 The watching brief was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by the London Borough of Hackney (Consent reference 2015/2762; Condition number 18).

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 original development scheme allowed for the excavation of foundation pads and a lift pit to depths of between 2m and 3m below the existing ground level. However, the nature of the groundworks were amended to piled foundations subsequent to the approval of the written scheme of investigation with minimal groundworks to a maximum depth of 1.5m below existing ground level (See *Fig 2*). As a result of the initial site visit by MOLA, GLAAS agreed that no further watching brief was required.
- 1.3.3 The watching brief was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for watching brief specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014).
- 1.3.4 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.5 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief (Section 2.2)

2 Topographical and historical background

- 2.1.1 A summary of the archaeological background to the site was provided in the WSI (section 1.3, MOLA 2016)

2.2 Topography

- 2.2.1 The general topography of the area slopes down very gently to the south towards the River Thames. The site itself is located in a fairly level area; Ordnance Survey mapping shows the street level on Great Eastern Street 35m to the north-west at 15.4m Ordnance Datum (OD) and at 15.3m OD, 10m to the south-west of the site. There are no indicators in the topography of the former course of the Walbrook to the west, and it is likely that the valley has been levelled and built up.
- 2.2.2 3.3.2 The site lies across the boundary of two gravel formations, with the majority of the site overlaying Hackney Gravel. A small part of the site at the south overlies gravel from the Taplow Gravel formation. Previous excavations in the study area have discovered brickearth overlying the gravels in some areas. Brickearth (Langley Silt Complex) is fine-grained silt believed to have accumulated by a mixture of processes (eg wind, slope and freeze-thaw) mostly since the Last Glacial Maximum around 17,000BP. It once covered much of the terrace gravels but was used for bricks and much has been quarried away or removed by building development

2.3 Archaeology

- 2.3.1 The potential archaeological interest on the site is a low potential for residual finds of prehistoric and Roman date. A moderate potential for remains associated with the medieval Holywell Priory. The site is adjacent to the location of the Curtain Theatre; low potential for associated remains. High potential for remains associated with the post-medieval and early-modern development of the area.

3 The watching brief

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 The slab was broken out and cleared by contractors. MOLA inspected the trench after the modern concrete had been broken out.
- 3.1.2 The trench was investigated in accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2016).
- 3.1.3 Trench locations 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 A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was carried out in accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2016).

3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	1
Number of overall location plans	0
Number of Context (SU) sheets	0
Number of photographs	2
Number of Plan sheets	0
Number of Sections	0

4 Results of the watching brief

For area and/or trench locations see *Fig 2*

4.1 Area/Trench 1

Location	Site of lift pit near SE corner of the development site
Dimensions	6m by 4m by c 1m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	c 15.5m OD
Base of modern fill/slab/turf	14.5m OD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	n/a
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	n/a
Top of surviving natural observed at	14.5m OD
Level of base of trench	14.5m OD

- 4.1.1 Concrete ground beams and concrete piles associated with the present structure were exposed in the trench. Only two small areas within a larger area measuring approximately 4 x 6m (northwest to southeast) were found to be clear of obstructions. Lighting conditions were very poor, however, a dark grey clay which may have been the top of disturbed natural was observed in the base of the trench c 1m below the top of the basement slab. Above it there were traces of a dark grey silty deposit c 0.20m thick, as this had no obvious inclusions it could not be dated.

4.2 The finds

- 4.2.1 No finds were recovered.

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

- 5.1.1 The research aims were identified in the WSI.
- 5.1.2 *What is the nature and level of natural topography?*
The top of the possible natural was found at a depth of about 1m below present slab level. However, this could not be proven as it was not investigated.
- 5.1.3 *What are the earliest deposits identified?*
The earliest deposit was a dark grey clay that may have been the disturbed top of the natural soil.
- 5.1.4 *What are the latest deposits identified?*
The concrete groundbeams and piles associated with the existing structure.
- 5.1.5 *What is the extent of modern disturbance?*
The groundbeams removed the deposits to a depth of c 1m below the existing slab level
- 5.1.6 *Are there any features of Roman date that can be tied in with the moderate quantity of residual Roman finds from the vicinity?*
None were found.
- 5.1.7 *Are there any remains associated with the Holywell Priory?*
None were found.
- 5.1.8 *Are there any features that can be associated with the post-medieval Curtain Theatre?*
None were found.

5.2 Answering new research aims

- 5.2.1 No new research aims have been identified.

5.3 Significance of the data

- 5.3.1 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.
- 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 2016) with the Museum of London Archaeological Archive 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 5.3) 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*.

7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 The author would like to thank the following for their contributions and help in producing this report: Rob Lilly and Tim Hill of WT Partnership for commissioning the work assistance in carrying it out.

8 Bibliography

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Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Greater London

MOLA, 2016, *Written Scheme of Investigation for Arnold House*, MOLA unpub report

Museum of London, 2002 *A research framework for London archaeology 2002*

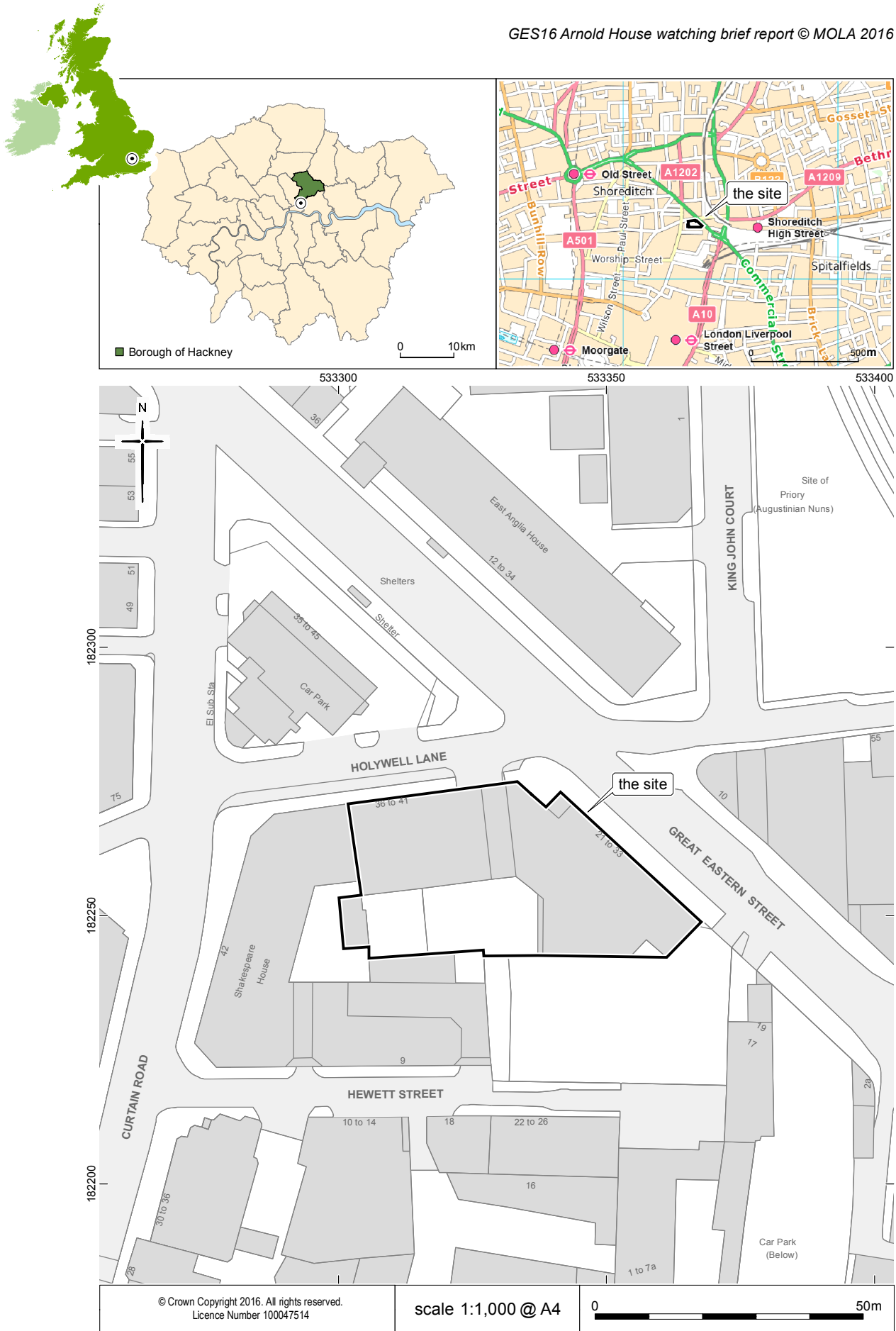


Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Lift pit location

HACK1245WB16_GEST16#02



Fig 3 General view of lift pit excavation (WT Partnership)



Fig 4 Detail of deposits exposed in the lift pit excavation, looking north-west



Fig 5 Detail of deposits exposed in the lift pit excavation, looking south-west

9 OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-257133

Project details

Project name	Arnold House, 21 Great Eastern Street, London
Short description of the project	A watching brief on a new lift shaft found a clay deposit assumed to be natural c 1m below basement slab level located in two areas between modern disturbances.
Project dates	Start: 13-06-2016 End: 13-06-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	GES16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY Arnold House
Postcode	EC2A 3EJ
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 33319 82265 51.523046974081 -0.078093354752 51 31 22 N 000 04 41 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	GLAAS
Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	Michael Smith
Project supervisor	Tony Mackinder
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of	WT Partnership

sponsor/funding body

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"none"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Photograph","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Arnold House, 21 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3EJ
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Mackinder, T
Date	2016
Issuer or publisher	MOLA
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	Client report, grey literature

Entered by	tmackinder (tmackinder@mola.org.uk)
Entered on	8 July 2016