



OLD STREET MAGISTRATES' COURT
335–337 Old Street
EC1

London Borough of Hackney

An archaeological evaluation report

September 2007



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

OLD STREET MAGISTRATES' COURT
335--337 Old Street
EC1

London Borough of Hackney

An archaeological evaluation report

Site Code: OSM07
National Grid Reference: 53334 18270

Project Manager
Author
Graphics

Jo Lyon
Peter Cardiff
Sandra Rowntree

Museum of London Archaeology Service
© Museum of London 2007
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 Old Street Magistrates Court, London, EC1.

The report was commissioned from MoLAS by ADZ Architects Limited on behalf of the client Mastcraft Limited.

Following the recommendations of the previous desk based assessment report (Schofield, May 2007), and the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site.

The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. Trench 1 showed 18th/19th century dumping over roughly contemporary pitting. Trench 2 showed 19th/20th century structural remains and dumps and pits.

In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site the report concludes the impact of the proposed redevelopment is low.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Site background	1
1.2	Planning and legislative framework	1
1.3	Planning background	1
1.4	Origin and scope of the report	1
1.5	Aims and objectives	2
2	Topographical and historical background	3
2.1	Archaeological background	3
2.1.1	<i>Prehistoric</i>	3
2.1.2	<i>Roman</i>	3
2.1.3	<i>Early Medieval (Saxon)</i>	3
2.1.4	<i>Medieval</i>	3
2.1.5	<i>Post-medieval</i>	4
3	The evaluation	5
3.1	Methodology	5
3.2	Results of the evaluation	5
3.3	Assessment of the evaluation	7
4	Archaeological potential	8
4.1	Realisation of original research aims	8
4.2	General discussion of potential	8
4.3	Significance	8
5	Proposed development impact and recommendations	9
6	Acknowledgements	10
7	Bibliography	10

8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

12

List Of Illustrations

Front cover: View of wall [17] in Trench 2 (looking east)

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Trench locations

Fig 3: East facing section Trench 1

Fig 4: South facing section Trench 2

Fig 5: South east corner of wall [17] Trench 2

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place in the car park of the Old Street Magistrates Court, hereafter called 'the site'. It is located on the north side of Old Street and is bounded by Hoxton Street on the west, to the east by Nos. 343-347 Old Street and to the north by Drysdale Street. The OS National Grid Ref. for centre of site is 53334 18270. The level of the car park tarmac is 17.1m OD. Modern ground level immediately adjacent to the site is the same. The site code is OSM07.

A desk-top *Archaeological Assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (Schofield, May 2007). The *Assessment* document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background and the initial interpretation of the site's archaeological potential.

An archaeological field evaluation was subsequently carried out via two trenches in the car park in August 2007.

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the previous Archaeological desk-based assessment (Schofield, May 2007, section 3).

1.3 Planning background

The evaluation was carried out pre-planning and it is intended that this evaluation report will be submitted in support of the planning application for the redevelopment of the site.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by ADZ Architects Limited 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 following 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?*
- *Can Roman activity associated with the known roads be demonstrated?*
- *Is there any evidence for the suspected Saxon settlement of the area*
- *Was the site occupied in the medieval period?*
- *Is there any surviving evidence for the almshouses known to have been present on the site in the post-medieval period?*

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Archaeological background

A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the earlier *Archaeological desk-based assessment* (Schofield, May 2007). A brief resume is provided here:

2.1.1 Prehistoric

No archaeological remains of buildings or land-use dated to the Neolithic, Bronze Age or Iron Age have been recorded on the site or within the study area; but a Bronze Age chisel has been recovered from a site in City Road, south-west of the site (Museum of London 2002, 96).

2.1.2 Roman

Old Street is also thought to be a Roman road, connecting the major Roman road out of Bishopsgate with other roads to the west of London. If this is so, then there would have been an important road junction in the Roman period where Old Street meets the north end of Shoreditch High Street, at the start of Kingsland Road, 100m east of the site. However, little of Roman date has yet been found in the vicinity.

2.1.3 Early Medieval (Saxon)

Hoxton, like several other place names in Hackney, is thought to be of Saxon derivation, though there is little evidence in the archaeological record for occupation before the Norman Conquest (AD 1066). There is an unsubstantiated tradition that there was a church at Shoreditch in Saxon times. Shoreditch is also thought to be a Saxon name, perhaps indicating the area originated as a village during this period. It is first mentioned in documents in about AD 1148. Shoreditch may have grown in post-Roman times as a settlement at the junction of the two Roman roads, c 100m to the east of the site, in which case the site may have lain within or adjacent to such a settlement. There is no specifically Saxon material from the area to report and the nature and extent of activity during this period is currently poorly understood.

2.1.4 Medieval

In the medieval period the site was part of the settlement of Shoreditch, which was centred on the junction of Shoreditch High Street and Old Street. The parish church of St Leonard, Shoreditch lay on the east side of this junction. Medieval houses and gardens might be expected along the south frontage of the site, but their remains will have been truncated by later building, especially the present one. In 1588, the site formed part of a large property called the Star. At this date buildings are only shown along the main east side, with the rest of the plot of 5½ acres comprising orchard, garden or meadow. The property extended all the way to what is now Hoxton Street on the west. Medieval discoveries in the vicinity include ditches (possibly indicating agriculture) and brickearth quarries.

2.1.5 Post-medieval

Cartographic evidence comprising early maps of the area indicate that the site was located on the western edge of the Shoreditch settlement, which centred on the Shoreditch High Street/Old Street junction.

A portion of the site was sold in 1658 to be Walter's almshouses; John Walter was a draper who bequeathed them to the Drapers' Company. In 1670 the remainder of the site was sold to an Allen Badger. The Walters almshouses, then called the Weavers' and Drapers' almshouses, are shown in the southern edge of the proposed development site on the map by Rocque (1746). The central and northern parts of the site are shown as gardens. The rear of the buildings fronting onto Kingsland Road extend into the north-eastern corner of the site.

There have been numerous sites in the study area that have revealed post-medieval remains including brick structures such as walls of buildings, cess pits/soakaways, drains, wells and soil deposits. At 3–5 and 7–27 Drysdale Street, contiguous to the development site on its north-east corner, ditches, 17th-century rubbish pits and a cellar were recorded.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1872 shows the Victorian character of the area, which has completely changed since. On Hoxton Street to the west, outside but contiguous to the present development, were the almshouses of Badger's Charity (now 1a–2a Hoxton Street). On the Old Street frontage along the southern edge of the site were the almshouses of 'Porter and Walter's Charity'. They comprised a range of small houses with gardens in front built in 1826 on the site of the previous range of almshouses. Behind Porter and Walter's almshouses was a large Timber Yard, entered from Hoxton Street. In 1876, a building juts into this yard from the west.

The present building, until recently the Magistrates' Court and Police Station buildings which together form the south frontage of the site to Old Street were designed by J D Butler in 1904. It is a very fine Edwardian public building, constructed to a high standard.

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, July 2007), and the *MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

Two evaluation trenches were excavated in the car park of the Magistrates' Court. The slab/ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MoLAS supervision. The trenches were excavated by hand, and by machine by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of the evaluation trenches were recorded by MoLAS by offsetting from adjacent standing walls. This information was 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 by measuring down from ground level.

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan; 17 context records; 2 section drawings at 1:20; and 22 digital photographs.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code OSM07 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 2.

Numbers in brackets represent context numbers.

<i>Evaluation Trench 1</i>	
Location	North west corner of car park
Dimensions	8.00m x 4.00m x 2.85m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	17.1m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	16.20m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1.86 m deep
Level of base of deposits observed and/or base of trench	14.25m OD
Natural observed	14.90m OD

Natural mid brown brickearth [9] was located at 14.90m OD. Natural brickearth was overlaid by bands of mid pale orange brown natural gravel which, in turn, overlay pale brown fine natural sand. These deposits were cut by a large circular pit [8],

which was filled with a heavy mid brown clay [7] with occasional brick/charcoal flecks and oyster shells. This was sealed by a dark grey clay deposit [6], at 15.30m OD, containing occasional brick flecks and charcoal flecks. At the top of [6] was a 0.12m thick deposit of crushed chalk that may have been capping over [7], put there to mask unpleasant smell emanating from the fill [7]. Overlying [6] was a 0.30m thick dump deposit [5] of greyish red burnt and unburnt brick fragments, lenses of coarse sand and silt, containing occasional charcoal and coal (or clinker) flecks with animal bones and some organic matter (straw?). There were also some large storage jar fragments, one of which contained traces of what may have been red paint. Layer [5] was cut through in the south by a feature [4] 0.90m wide at the top and 0.60m wide towards the bottom, which extended below the limit of excavation. It was filled with silty gravel and occasional brick fragments [3]. This feature may have been a robbed out wall but there was no direct evidence for this. It did not appear in the opposite (west facing) section, but this may be because there was a large north-south running modern cut feature that truncated all the archaeology in the east end of the trench. Overlying [5] and [3] was a 0.36m thick dump deposit [2] of dark grey silt, with occasional lenses of thick grey brown clay, charcoal and brick flecks, oyster shells, tile fragments, cinder fragments, mixed pebbles and lenses of silty sand. The top of [2] was at 16m OD. This deposit was sealed by a deposit of dark grey clay silt [1], which in turn underlay a 0.40m deep layer of brick crush and fragments of concrete. Concrete slab of 0.12m thickness lay immediately beneath the 0.50m thick layer of tarmac, which was at 17.10m OD.

<i>Evaluation Trench 2</i>	
Location	Eastern area of car park
Dimensions	10.00m x 4.00m x 2.9m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	17.10m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	16.60 OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	2.40m deep
Level of base of deposits observed and/or base of trench	14.20m OD
Natural observed	14.90m OD

Stiff mid brown natural brickearth [10] was observed at 14.90m OD and overlay a sequence of bands of natural sandy gravel and pale grey slightly greenish clay (London Clay). This was cut by a steep-sided feature [11], filled with pale brown sandy gravel [12]. Feature [11] extended below the limit of excavation and its western side was truncated by another feature [13], which also extended below the limit of excavation. Feature [13] was filled with a stiff mid dark brown clayey brickearth [14] at 15.20m OD, which appeared to extend across the entire trench, in plan, sealing [13] and [10]. It may be that the fill of this feature was actually two separate deposits: pit fill in turn sealed by a layer, but it was not possible to discern this at time of excavation.

A 0.90m thick dump of dark grey clayey silt [15] was observed across the whole trench, which contained occasional charcoal, mortar and brick flecks, fragments of oyster shell, tile, brick, slate, glass, pipe stem, coal or clinker and animal bone. A 0.40m thick deposit of dark grey clayey silt [16] with moderate mortar flecks and brick fragments sealed [15]. Running east-west along the southern limit of excavation

was a trench built brick foundation wall [17]. The wall extended into the western extent of the excavation and ran 6.50m eastwards before heading northwards into the northern limit of the excavation. Both branches of the wall were 0.32m wide and made of red bricks 0.22m long by 100mm wide by 70mm thick, each with rudimentary frogging. Each course was made up of alternating stretchers backed by headers and headers backed by stretchers: English bond. Each wall had survived to a depth of 1.20m. The bottom course was stepped out by 0.11m.

The walls were truncated at 16.50m OD by the ground slab and tarmac preparation works. Hence a modern deposit of brick crush and concrete fragments, 0.40m thick, and 0.50m of concrete supporting 0.50m of tarmac overlay the walls.

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 there was no evidence in the two trenches to suggest that any of the archaeology predated the 19th century.

The deposits recorded on the site comprise levelling/dumping deposits and pitting and 19th/20th century wall foundations. The levelling deposits contained no finds of archaeological interest and it is likely that they are related to the fact that the central and northern parts of the site were used as gardens, as shown on Rocque’s map of 1746 and Horwood’s map of 1800. By the late 1800s the site is still shown as open space (a timber yard – as shown on OS 1st edition 25” map, 1872 (Schofield, May 2007)).

The brick foundations discovered on the site date to the 1800s/1900s; indeed cartographic evidence suggests that there were no buildings in the area of trench 2 until after 1872. The foundations are certainly not related to the Almshouses that previously occupied the site.

There is nothing to suggest that any of the deposits on the site are rare either in a local or national context.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

- **What is the nature and level of natural topography?**
Brickearth at 14.90m OD over natural gravel.
- **What are the earliest deposits identified?**
18th or 19th century pitting
- **What are the latest deposits identified?**
20th century construction
- **Can Roman activity associated with the known roads be demonstrated?**
No
- **Is there any evidence for the suspected Saxon settlement of the area**
No
- **Was the site occupied in the medieval period?**
No
- **Is there any surviving evidence for the almshouses known to have been present on the site in the post-medieval period?**
No

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 low. There is potential for survival of deep cut features, however. The average depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is likely to be 2.00m to 3.00m.

4.3 Significance

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

5 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed redevelopment at the Old Street Magistrates' Court involves building a multi storey structure in the car park with a basement under part of it. This will involve at least the partial destruction of any archaeological deposits.

The assessment above (Section 4.2) does not suggest that preservation *in situ* would be an appropriate mitigation strategy. MoLAS considers that the archaeological significance of the site is low but that it may be worthwhile for construction works to be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

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

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Zsolt Moldan of ADZ Architects.

7 Bibliography

Corporation of London Department of Planning and Transportation, 2004 *Planning Advice Note 3: Archaeology in the City of London, Archaeology Guidance*, London

Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe, 2000 *Code of Good Practice On Archaeological Heritage in Urban Development Policies; adopted at the 15th plenary session in Strasbourg on 8-10 March 2000* (CC-PAT [99] 18 rev 3)

Department of the Environment, 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance 16, Archaeology and Planning*

English Heritage, 1991 *Exploring Our Past, Strategies for the Archaeology of England*

English Heritage, May 1998 *Capital Archaeology. Strategies for sustaining the historic legacy of a world city*

English Heritage, 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2)*

English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, June 1998 *Archaeological Guidance Papers 1-5*

English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, May 1999 *Archaeological Guidance Papers 6*

London Borough of Hackney, 1995 Hackney Unitary Development Plan

Institute of Field Archaeologists, (IFA), 2001 *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists*, (rev. 2001), *Standard and guidance: field evaluation*

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), supplement 2001, *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists: Standards and guidance – the collection, documentation conservation and research of archaeological materials*

Museum of London, 1994 *Archaeological Site Manual 3rd edition*

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

Schofield, J, with Maloney, C, (eds), 1998 *Archaeology in the City of London 1907-1991: a guide to records of excavations by the Museum of London and its predecessors*, Archaeol Gazetteer Ser Vol 1, London

Schofield, J, 2007 Old Street Magistrates Court: An archaeological assessment, unpub MoLAS report

Thompson, A, Westman A, and Dyson, T (eds), 1998 *Archaeology in Greater London 1965-90: a guide to records of excavations by the Museum of London*, Archaeol Gazetteer Ser Vol 2, London

8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-31167

Project details

Project name	watching brief
Short description of the project	Observation of two trenches excavated in the car park of the Old Street Magistrates Court, Old Street, London
Project dates	Start: 06-08-2007 End: 10-08-2007
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	OSM07 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	OSM07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	WALL Post Medieval
Monument type	WALL Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Visual Inspection'
Development type	Car park (flat)
Prompt	Environmental (unspecified schedule)

Position in the planning process Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country England
Site location GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY 343-347 Old Street
Postcode EC1
Study area 72.00 Square metres
Site coordinates TQ 53334 18270 50.9428780829 0.182832290246 50 56 34 N 000 10 58 E Point
Height OD Min: 14.90m Max: 14.90m

Project creators

Name of Organisation LAARC
Project brief originator English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator MoLAS
Project director/manager Jo Lyon
Project supervisor Jo Lyon
Type of sponsor/funding body Mastcraft Limited
Name of sponsor/funding body ADZ Architects Limited

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
Physical recipient Archive LAARC

Entered by P. Cardiff (pcardiff@museumoflondon.org.uk)
Entered on 10 September 2007

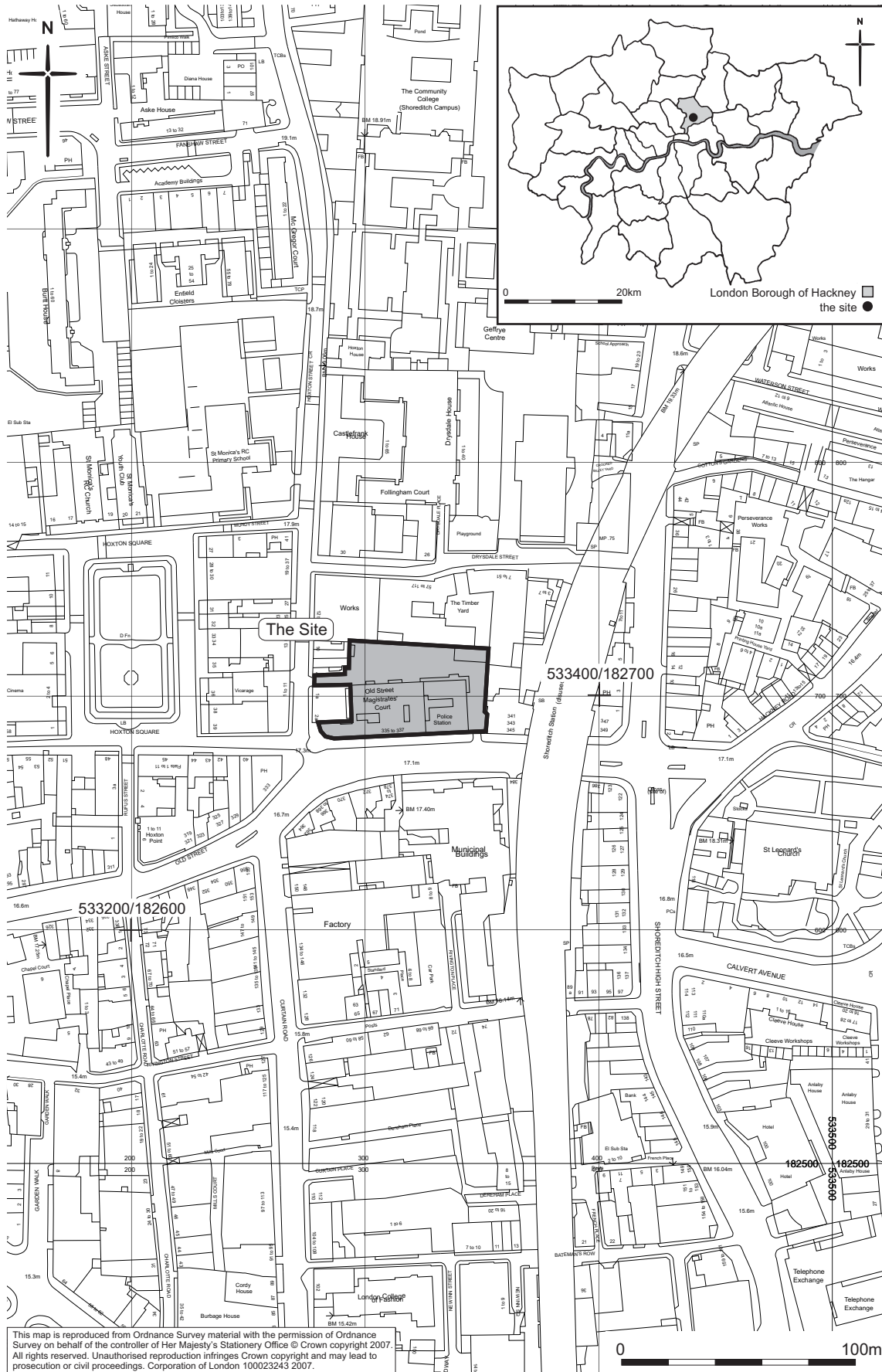
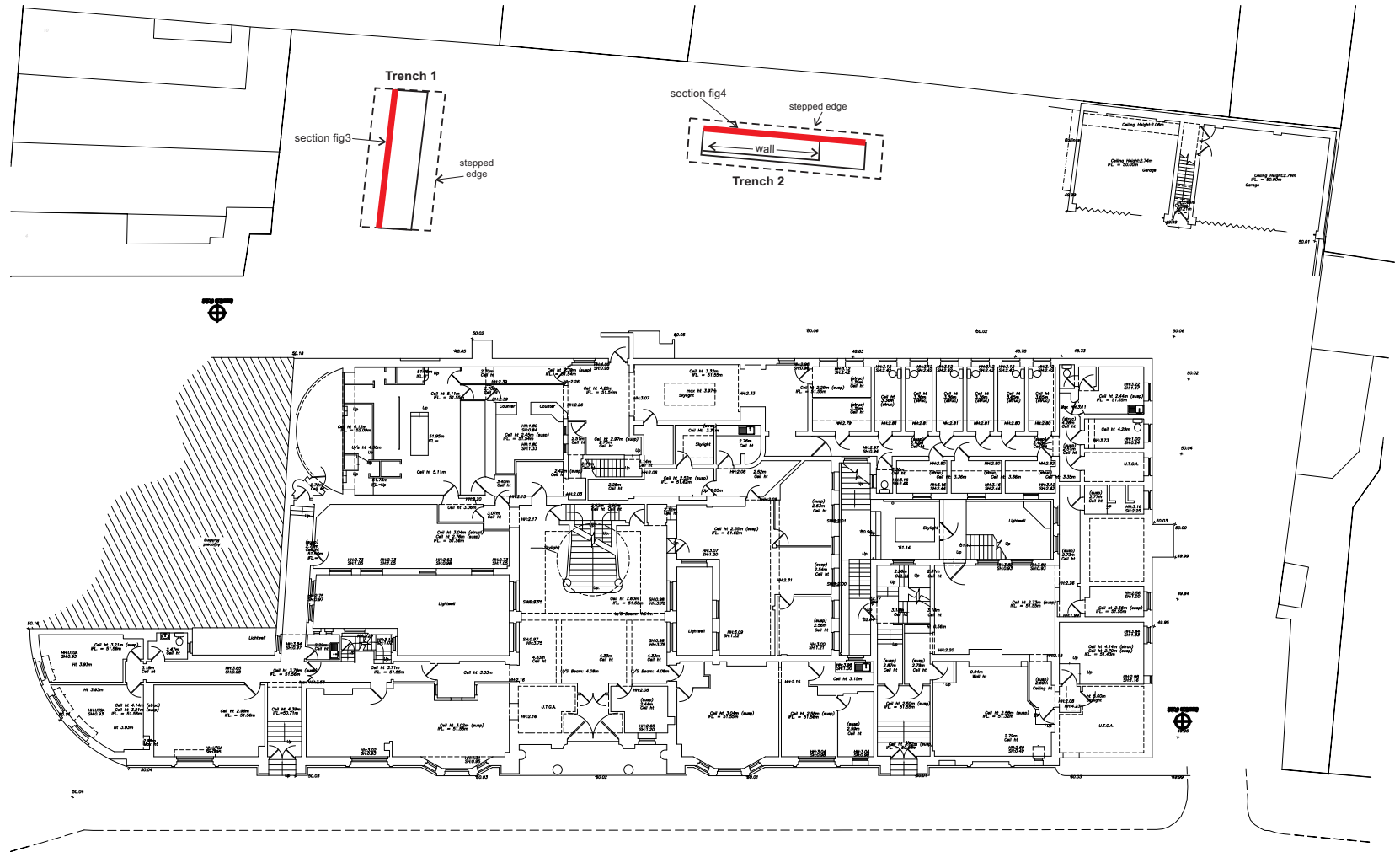


Fig 1 Site location



PROJECT:
PROPOSED HOTEL
OLD STREET, LONDON EC1

TITLE:
UPPER GROUND FLOOR
SURVEY



ADZ Architects
One Bunney Street
London EC1A 3DF
T: 020 7460 8020
F: 020 7460 8220
E: info@adzarch.com

DATE: JUN 07	PROJ No.: A06.45	DWG. No.: EX 02	REV. No.:
SCALE: 1:200 @ A3 1:100 @ A1			

Fig 2 Trench locations

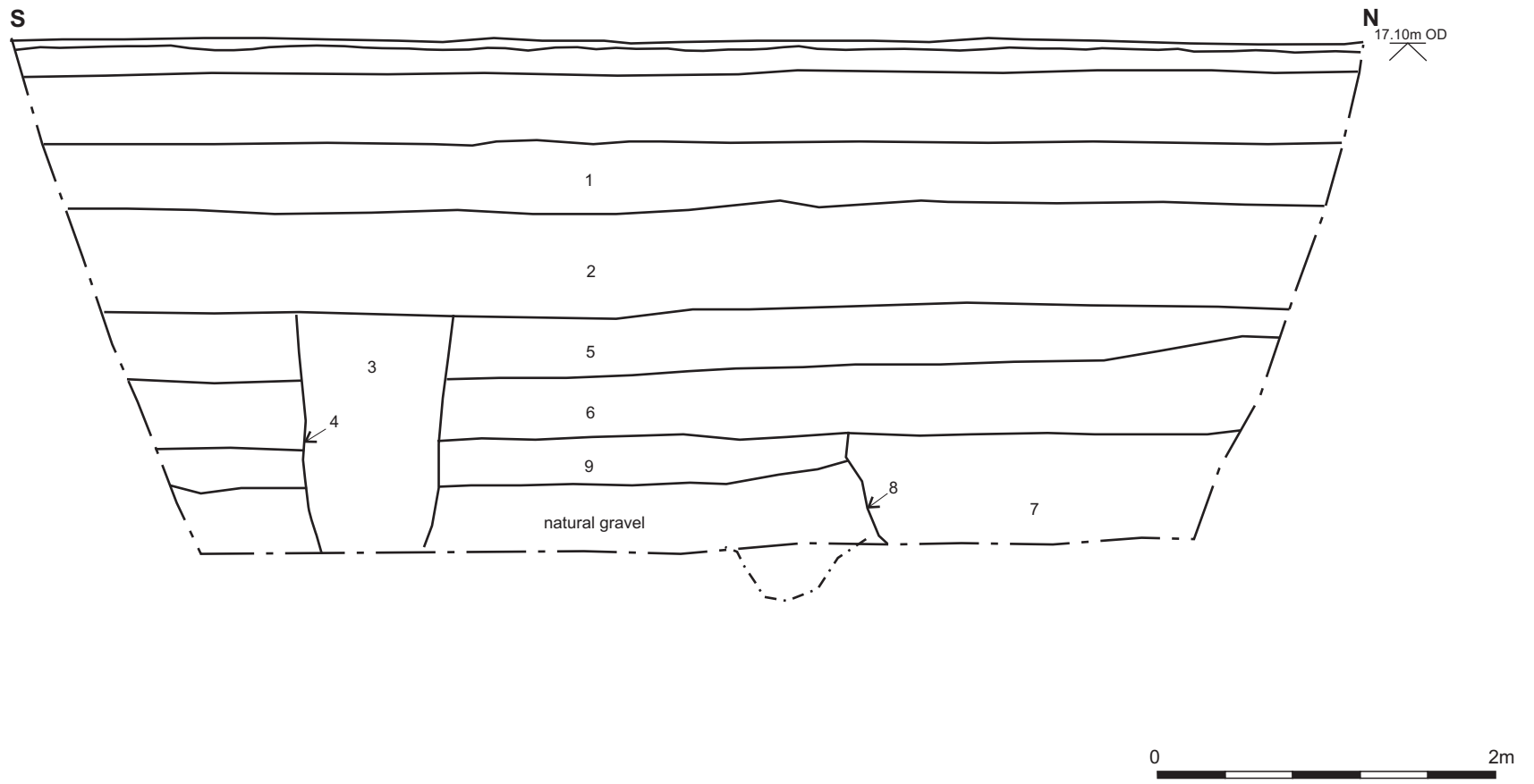


Fig 3 East facing section Trench 1

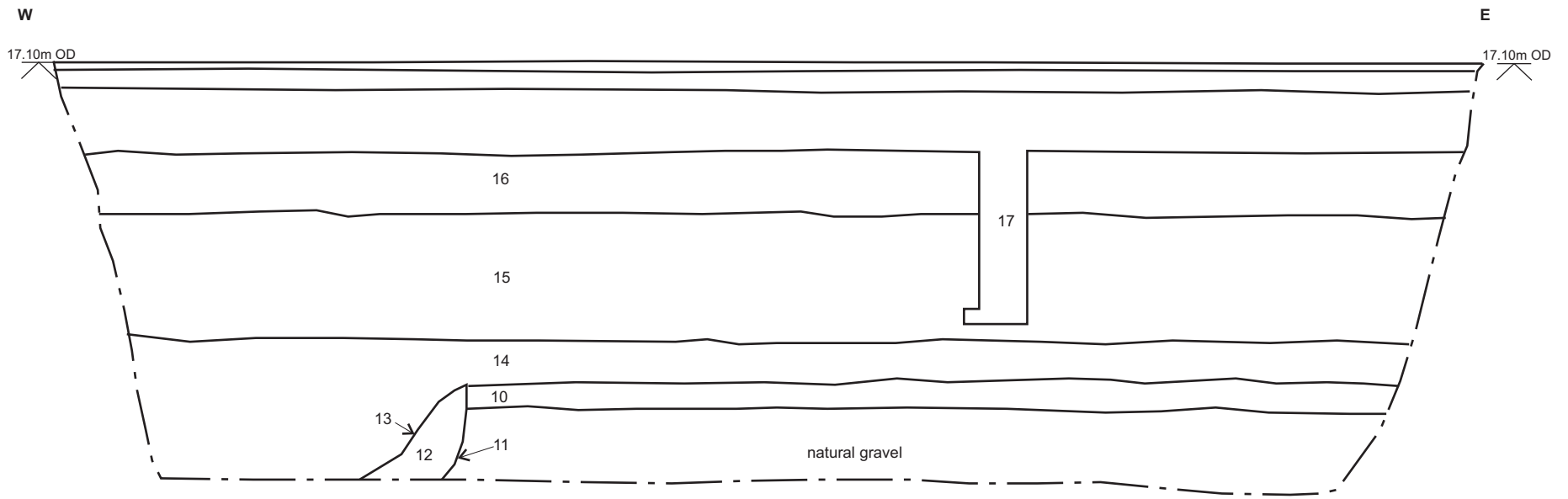


Fig 4 South facing section Trench 2



Fig 5 South east corner of wall [17] Trench 2