



BOILER HOUSE AT BELPER COURT
1 Pedro Street
London E5

London Borough of Hackney

Report on an archaeological watching brief and evaluation

October 2018



**Boiler House at Belper Court
1 Pedro Street
Hackney
E5 0BE**

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OASIS reference molas1-331863

Planning reference 2017/3512
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Report on an archaeological watching brief and evaluation

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by MOLA at the Boiler House Belper Court, 1 Pedro Street, Hackney, E5 0BE. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Potter Raper Partnership on behalf of the client London Borough of Hackney.

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2018), MOLA works consisted of an initial archaeological watching brief on the demolition and clearance of the former boiler house ground level slab and foundations along the southern side of the site. This was followed by the excavation of an evaluation trench which was subsequently divided in three areas: east area, west area and extension of the west area.

These revealed that building foundations had truncated all archaeological deposits down to natural gravel observed at 3.5mOD. Above this, a localised patch of yellowish brown alluvium was encountered at the western end of the investigation areas at 4.2mOD. This was so oxidised and bioturbated that it was considered unsuitable for any sedimentary investigation. The alluvium did not present any archaeological features and did not contain any finds.

A 20th century ceramic pipe cut through the alluvium, but due to its very recent date, it was not regarded as archaeologically significant. Some 19th-century clay bottles were exposed during this work, but were not retained because they were residual in deposits related to the construction of the Boiler House.

In the light of the results of the evaluation exercise, due to the level of truncation related to the construction of the former boiler house, MOLA considers that it is unlikely that archaeological deposits of any significance will survive within the remnant of the site footprint. If alluvium is encountered, this is likely to be extremely patchy, sterile and of negligible significance.

This report recommends that no further archaeological work is deemed to be necessary.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out by MOLA at the site of the Boiler House Belper Court, 1 Pedro Street, Hackney E5 0BE, on the 11th and 12th October 2018 (*Fig 1*). This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 A Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment (AB Heritage 2017) was previously prepared, which covered the whole area of the site (AB Heritage 2017, the *HEA*). 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 HEA (Section 3, AB Heritage 2017).
- 1.2.2 The evaluation was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by Local Authority (Planning reference 2017/3512; Condition number 8). A *Written Scheme of Investigation* for an Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief was consequently prepared by MOLA (2018)

1.3 Scope of the evaluation

- 1.3.1 Evaluation is defined by Historic England as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:
 - 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
- 1.3.2 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.
- 1.3.3 The evaluation was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for evaluation specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014).
- 1.3.4 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 evaluation (Section 2, MOLA 2018, 5)

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography and Archaeology

- 2.1.1 A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the earlier Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment (AB Heritage, 2017).

3 Fieldwork results

3.1 Methodology

- 3.1.1 MOLA archaeological investigation commenced with a watching brief. This consisted in monitoring the site contractor breaking out the former boiler house ground-floor slab and clearing its large concrete foundations with a 30-tonne machine along the southern side of the site, away from an area of tanks lying at the north.
- 3.1.2 This was followed by the machine excavation of an evaluation trench down to the base of the modern backfill; however, due to the presence of the former boiler house chimney foundations, this was later divided in two separate areas, east and west of the chimney. The east area measured 4.5m in length by 2.45m in width by 3.1m in depth; the area west, slightly bigger, measured 8m in length by 3m to 4.4m wide by a max depth of 3.1m (Fig 2).
- 3.1.3 In order to investigate an area of alluvium uncovered at the west end of the trench, it was agreed with Historic England, that an extension of 3.8m by 5m will be excavated at west of the evaluation trench (Fig 2). A larger area of alluvium was exposed. This was subsequently examined *in situ* by a MOLA Geoarchaeologist but deemed not suitable for further analysis because of its highly oxidised component and poor preservation.
- 3.1.4 All archaeological investigations were carried out in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2018).
- 3.1.5 Trench locations were recorded on site by MOLA Senior Archaeologist by offsetting measurements from the surrounding standing buildings. These were subsequently plotted on a plan provided by the client's agent and tied to the OS grid by the MOLA Geomatics team.
- 3.1.6 Levels in metres above Ordnance Datum (m OD) were calculated by measuring down from known levels detailed on a plan as provided by the client on site (Drawing "PED/1 102" Rev 01.09.17 issued for planning, Ash Sakula Architects).

3.2 Site archive

- 3.2.1 Total site archive is as follows:

Number of trench record sheets	1
Number of overall location plans	1 digital
Number of photographs	11

3.3 Results of the evaluation

- 3.3.1 The evaluation trench excavated at the southern side of the site was divided in three areas (Fig 2):
- East area (east of the former boiler house chimney foundations)
 - West area (west of the former boiler house chimney foundations)
 - Extension of the west area

- 3.3.2 **The East area** measured 4.5m (east-west) by 2.45m wide (north-south) by 3.1m deep. This revealed that all archaeological deposits had been truncated down to natural gravel deposits. These were observed at c 3.5m OD and were blue in colour which suggests that they had been contaminated by hydrocarbon substance and oil based deposits.
- 3.3.3 **The West area** measured 3m to 4.4m (north-south) by 8m (east-west) by 3.1m deep. This revealed that all archaeological deposits had been truncated down to natural gravel deposits at c 3.5m OD, with the only exception of the western 2m where a small patch of alluvial clay was encountered at 4.1mOD (c 2.5m bgl).
- 3.3.4 In order to expose more of this, an **extension to the West area** was excavated. This measured a further 3.8m to the west and revealed a total area of alluvium of 5.8m by 5m. It was yellowish brown, fairly sterile with a sandy clay composition with clear signs of bioturbation (Photo 1). A large concrete foundation had truncated the centre of it down to natural at c 3.5m OD, the alluvium survived on both sides at 4.2m OD in the west and 4.1m OD in the east. No finds were recovered from this.
- 3.3.5 A 20th century ceramic pipe cut through the alluvium, but due to its very recent date, it was not regarded as archaeologically significant. Some 19th-century ceramic bottles were also noted on site, but not retained, as they were residual within deposits related to the construction of the Boiler House.
- 3.3.6 No sampling or further analysis was recommended on the alluvium because of its highly oxidised component and poor preservation.
- 3.3.7 Ground level on this part of the site was recorded at c 6.6mOD.



Photo 1 looking west, showing extension of the west area with alluvium truncated by pad foundations

3.4 The site as a whole

- 3.4.1 The former Boiler House has truncated the majority of the site down to Pleistocene terrace gravels observed at 3.5mOD (*Fig 3*).

- 3.4.2 Alluvial clay survives on the west side of the site, but in discontinuous areas, truncated by modern foundations. It is a thoroughly oxidised deposit and has undergone some biological reworking in the past, and so is unsuitable for pollen analysis. It is likely that truncation on the north side of the site, beneath the tanks, is even more severe and if alluvium survives, it is likely to be in pockets between truncations.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Answering original research aims

4.1.1 Site-specific Research objectives (Section 2.2, MOLA 2018, 5) were addressed as follows:

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography?* Pleistocene terrace gravel lay at 3.5m OD, above which there was an undated sandy-clay alluvium which survived to a maximum level of 4.2m OD
- *What are the earliest deposits identified?* No archaeological deposits were identified and the archaeologically sterile alluvium was undated.
- *Are alluvial deposits relating to the River Lea present on site? If so, what is their nature and extent?* Late Glacial or Holocene alluvial deposits are present. They are characterised as a highly oxidised yellowy-brown sandy clay with some calcium carbonate present. They have frequent worm burrows or vertical root holes with mineralised iron deposits within them, indicating that they have been biologically reworked at some point in their history.
- *Do any prehistoric cut features or deposits survive on site? If so, what is their nature and extent?* There were no prehistoric cut features
- *What are the latest deposits identified?* Above the River Lea alluvium only deposits associated with the Boiler House were identified. Some 19th-c ceramic bottles were identified (not retained) but they were in deposits that had been reworked when the Boiler House was constructed.
- *What is the extent of modern disturbance?* Modern disturbance reached the top of Pleistocene gravel across most of the site (3.5m OD) but was at 4.1m–4.2m OD at limited areas at the west of the site.

4.2 General discussion of potential

- 4.2.1 The evaluation has shown that the potential for any stratified archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed building is **low** (Fig 3).
- 4.2.2 Truncated natural gravel was recorded 3.1m below ground level at c 3.5m OD throughout the majority of the investigation areas located at the southern side of the site.
- 4.2.3 Alluvium, when encountered, was patchy and localised to west end side of the investigation areas with an average depth above natural between 0.6m and 0.7m OD. This was deemed unsuitable for any laboratory analysis and did not contain any archaeological features or finds.
- 4.2.4 In the light of the results from all investigation areas, it appears that if alluvium survive within the footprint of the proposed building, this is likely to be in

pockets between truncations.

4.3 Significance

4.3.1 The deposits recorded are considered to have a negligible local significance.

4.4 Assessment of the evaluation

4.4.1 The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) carry out 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.

4.4.2 In case of the site, an evaluation trench, subsequently divided in three areas, was excavated along the southern edge of the site. This revealed that all archaeological deposits had been truncated down to natural gravel deposits over the majority of the area (3.5m OD).

4.4.3 Alluvial clay survived only on the west side of the site, but in discontinuous areas, truncated by modern foundations. This deposit was archaeologically sterile and undated.

4.4.4 In the light of these results, due to the level of truncation related to the construction of the former boiler house, MOLA considers that it is unlikely that archaeological deposits of any significance will survive within the remnant of the site footprint. If alluvium deposit are encountered, this are likely to be extremely patchy, sterile and of negligible significance.

5 Proposed development impact and conclusions

- 5.1.1 No archaeological remains or deposits of archaeological interest were found on site.
- 5.1.2 The proposed development is for the construction of a new eight-storey block of residences, ranging from 2 to 4 bedrooms, with outdoor communal areas and associated car parking. The new building will have a decreasing floor plan as the storeys ascend and provide 28 dwellings.
- 5.1.3 The decision on the appropriate archaeological mitigation to the deposits revealed rests with the Local Planning Authority. However, MOLA recommends that no further archaeological work is deemed to be necessary.

6 Bibliography

AB Heritage, 2017 Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment for Boiler House, Belper Court, Pedro Street, Hackney

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, (CIFA), 2014 *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Standard and guidance: field evaluation*

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Historic England Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, 2015 *Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Greater London*

MOLA 2018, Boiler House at Belper Court, 1 Pedro Street, Hackney, E5 0BE , a Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation with Watching Brief

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



Fig 1 Site location

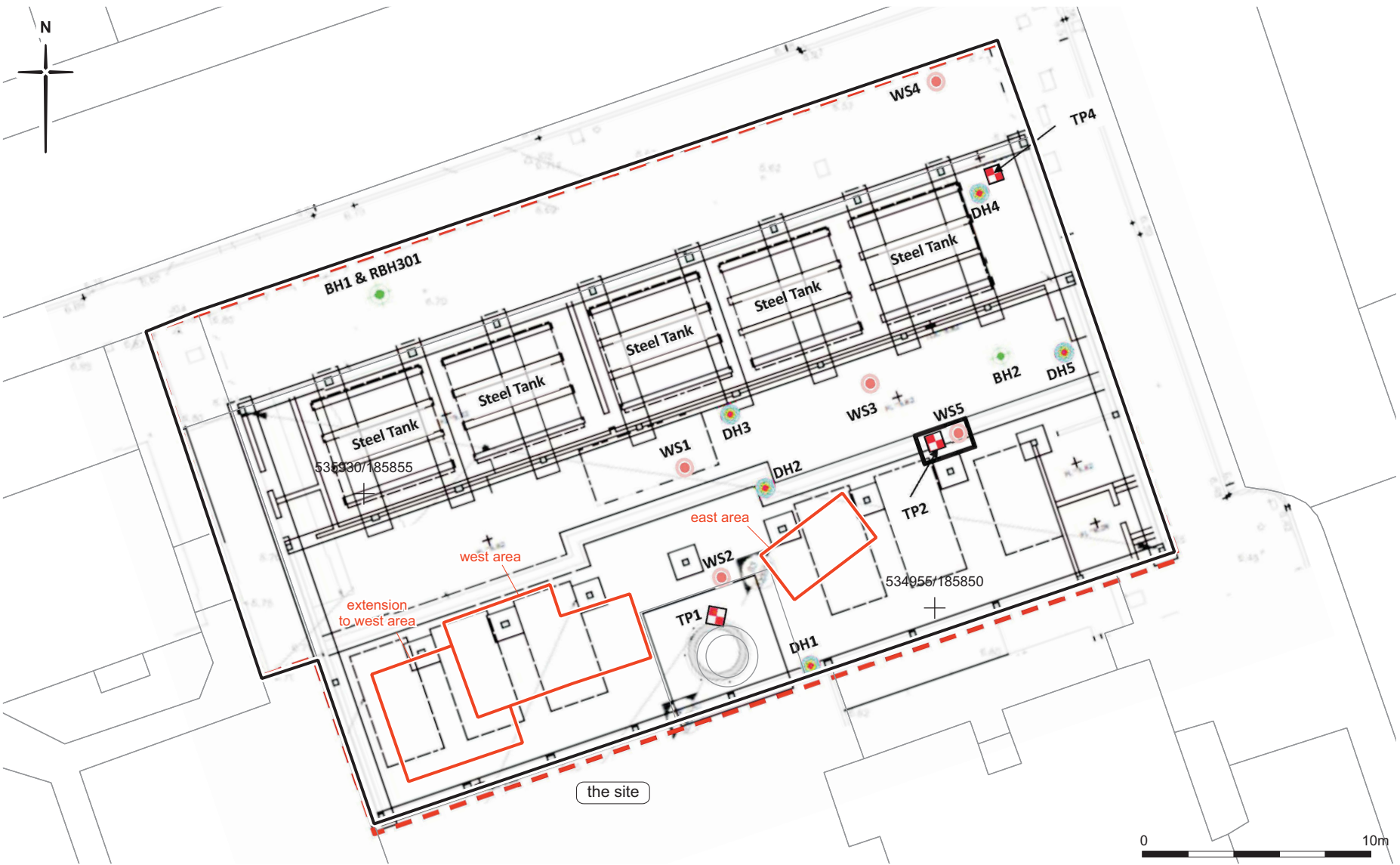


Fig 2 Areas of evaluation



Fig 3 Results of evaluation

7 OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-331863

Project details

Project name

An archaeological watching brief followed by and archaeological evaluation was carried out at the site. These revealed that building foundations had truncated all archaeological deposits down to natural gravel observed at 3.5mOD. Above this, a localised patch of yellowish brown alluvium was encountered at the western end of the investigation areas at 4.2mOD. This was so oxidised and bioturbated that it was considered unsuitable for any sedimentary investigation. The alluvium did not present any archaeological features and did not contain any finds.

Short description of the project Watching brief on

Project dates Start: 11-10-2018 End: 12-10-2018

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference codes PDR18 – Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)

Current Land use Other 2 - In use as a building

Methods & techniques "Targeted Trenches"

Development type Housing estate

Prompt Planning condition

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY Boiler House At Belper Court 1 Pedro Street Hackney E5 0BE, an archaeological watching brief and evaluation

Postcode E5 0BE

Study area 918 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 3594 8585 51.554639749122 -0.038948211527 51 33 16 N 000 02 20 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 3.5m Max: 4.2m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	Historic England
Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	Rob Tutt
Project supervisor	David Sankey
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Potter Raper Partnership on behalf of the London Borough of Hackney

OASIS ID: molas1-331863, cont'd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London Archaeological Archive
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archaeological Archive
Paper Media available	"Notebook - Excavation', ' Research', ' General Notes', "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography

1

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