



MORPETH SECONDARY SCHOOL
Portman Place
London E2 OPX

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Archaeological Evaluation

October 2009



MORPETH SECONDARY SCHOOL
Portman Place
London E2 OPX

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Archaeological Evaluation

National Grid Reference: 535484 182667

Contract Manager Jo Lyon

Author David Sankey

Museum of London Archaeology Service

© **Museum of London 2008**

Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED

tel 020 7410 2200 fax 020 7410 2201

email molas@molas.org.uk

web www.molas.org.uk

Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) on the site of Morpeth Secondary School, Portman Place, London E2 0PX (in Bethnal Green). The report was commissioned by Bouygues UK Ltd.

Following the recommendations of the English Heritage Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets an 8m x 3.4m trench was excavated on the site. It was located to investigate the area of a Science Pod, a light “stand-alone” building extension to an existing school block, which had the potential for post-medieval burials.

The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. No evidence of human bone or burials was revealed. Evidence of a large post-medieval brickfield quarry (10.00m – 10.43m OD) was discovered backfilled with nightsoil and building rubble.

In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site the report concludes the impact of the proposed redevelopment will be on buried 19th century remains. No further investigations are proposed.

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Site background	3
1.2	Planning and legislative framework	3
1.3	Origin and scope of the report	3
1.4	Aims and objectives	5
2	Topographical, historical and archaeological background	6
3	The evaluation	7
3.1	Methodology	7
3.2	Results of the evaluation	8
3.3	Assessment of the evaluation	11
4	Archaeological potential	12
4.1	Realisation of original research aims	12
4.2	General discussion of potential	12
4.3	Significance	12
5	Proposed development impact and recommendations	13
6	Bibliography	14
7	NMR OASIS archaeological report form	15

Illustrations

Front cover: John Rocque's map of 1746

Fig 1	Site location	2
Fig 2	Trench location	6
Fig 3	Trench plan	7
Fig 4	Trench, looking east	8
Fig 5	Sondage section through quarry fills, looking east	9
Fig 6	Proposed development plan	17

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The site comprises the Morpeth Secondary School, Portman Place, London E2 0PX (in Bethnal Green, Fig 1). The site is bounded by Morpeth Street to the east, neighbouring properties located along Digby Street and Knottisford Street to the north, 11–59 Portman Place to the west, and railway tracks of the Great Eastern Railway to the south. It is centred on OS National Grid Reference 535484 182667: The site is fairly flat with a gradual slope down from 13.7m Ordnance Datum (OD) in the north to 12.8m OD in the south. The site code is MPM09.

A desk-based *Archaeological assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (MOL Archaeology 2009a). The *assessment* 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.

Following recommendations of the *assessment*, a *written scheme of investigation* was prepared (MOL Archaeology 2009b) which specified the excavation of a 5m x 5m archaeological evaluation trial trench. The shape of this trench was altered to accommodate buried services. This report details the results of the evaluation.

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The Planning and legislative background to the site has been adequately summarised in the previous *Archaeological desk-based assessment* (MOL Archaeology 2009, section 2).

1.3 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Bouygues UK Ltd and produced by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute for 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

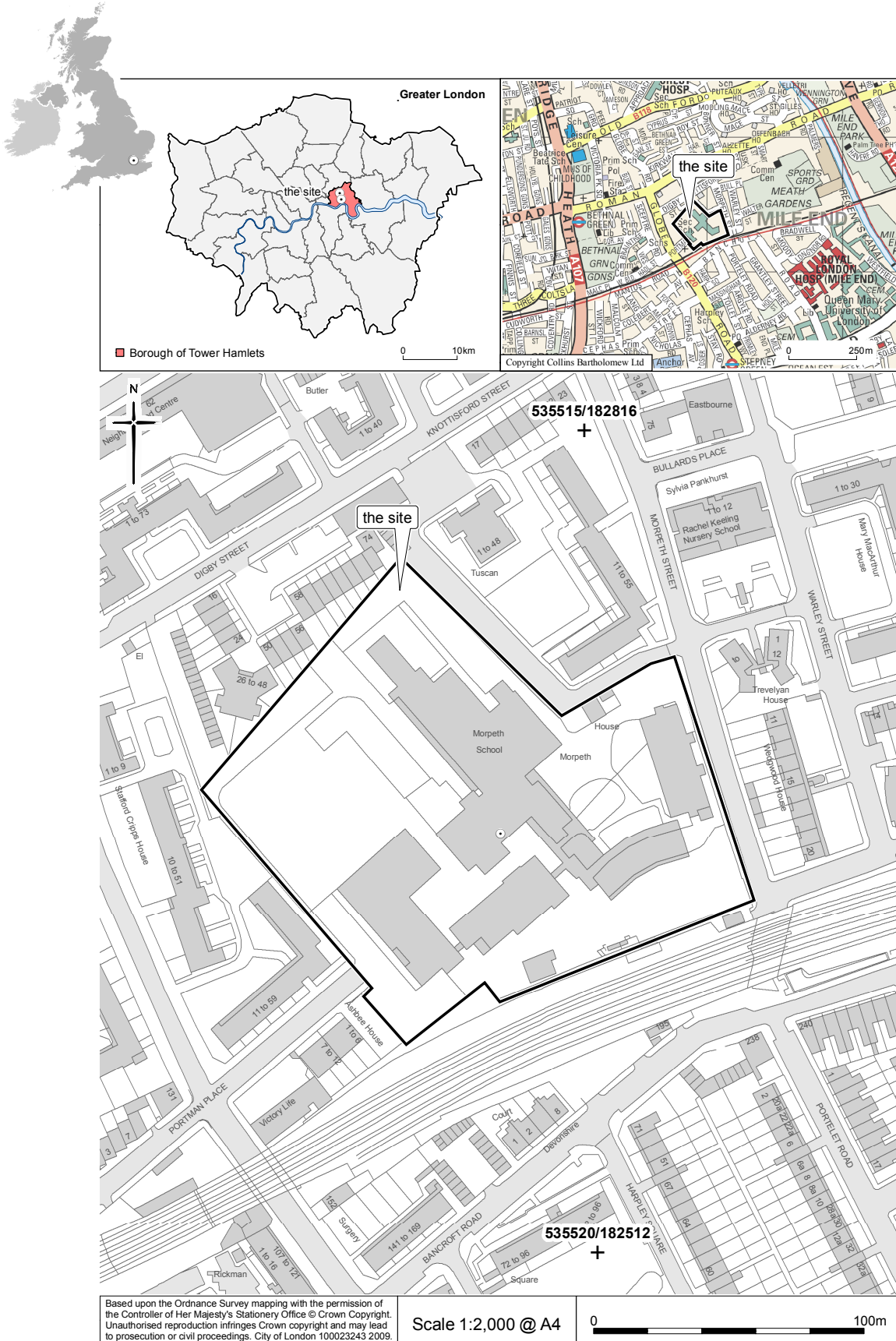


Fig 1 Site location

1.4 Aims and objectives

All research is undertaken within the priorities established in the Museum of London's *A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002*.

In addition to the archaeological brief being limited to establishing the levels and nature of surviving archaeological deposits, and ensuring that the digging of evaluation trenches did not involve unnecessary destruction of such deposits, the following research aims and objectives were established in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* for the evaluation (Section 2.2):

- What evidence is there for the use of the site as a burial ground?
- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
- What are the latest deposits identified?

2 Topographical, historical and archaeological background

A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the earlier Archaeological desk-based assessment (MOL Archaeology 2009a). A brief resume is provided here:

The site's underlying geology is Taplow Gravel. The site was judged to have a high potential for post-medieval burials as stacks of coffins were removed from the footprint of block A in the western half of the site during its construction in the 1990s (Morpeth School Facilities Manager, pers. comm. 14/07/09). The extent of this previously unrecorded burial ground is not fully understood.

The rationale for the evaluation was developed with reference to the results of the geotechnical survey, carried out on the site by Ian Farmer Associates Ltd in November 2008. There are three main areas where impact will occur on site, in areas not currently occupied by buildings. The geotechnical results indicate that modern made ground is present in the majority of the proposed impact areas on site and so a single evaluation trench was proposed in the southern area of the site, where there is high potential for the survival of the post-medieval burial ground.

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MOL Archaeology 2009b), and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS 1994).

An 8m x 3.4m evaluation trench was excavated in the playground near to (and north of) Block A – The Portman Building. The trench was located within the footprint of the proposed 'Science Pod' building. The trench was positioned to avoid services illustrated on plans provided by the client. Positions of services were also checked on site with a Cable Avoidance Tool CAT scan. Drain covers were lifted to check the depth and direction of pipes.

The trench was altered to 8m x 2.4m from the originally proposed 5m x 5m outline to avoid services. Despite these measures, further services were revealed in the trench during excavation. For example, an electricity cable was located along the northern edge of the trench and another 0.9m from the southern edge of the trench. The trench was also partially located over a 3.5m-deep main sewer.

After excavating the full area between cables to a safe depth of approximately 1.2m a sondage was dug 3.06m deep, 2.1m long and 0.9m wide.

All excavation was by machine and directed by archaeologists. Surfaces were cleaned by hand in the main area of excavation and deposits were recorded on standard trench sheets.

The location of the evaluation trench was recorded by MOLA survey by offsetting from adjacent standing walls, which were recorded on the *Site and Services Survey*, drawing no. 93933.0001.0002 Rev. A (Kings Land and Architectural Surveyors). This was best fitted to the digital OS 1:1250 map. Levels were recorded relative to Station K2 on the same drawing and ultimately derived from OSBM 13.71m OD, on the north-east corner of block D (East Block).

A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MOLA site recording manual (MOLAS 1994).

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan; two trench record sheets (one for a sketch section) and 6 digital photographs. No finds were recovered from the site.

The site records can be found under the site code MPM09 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

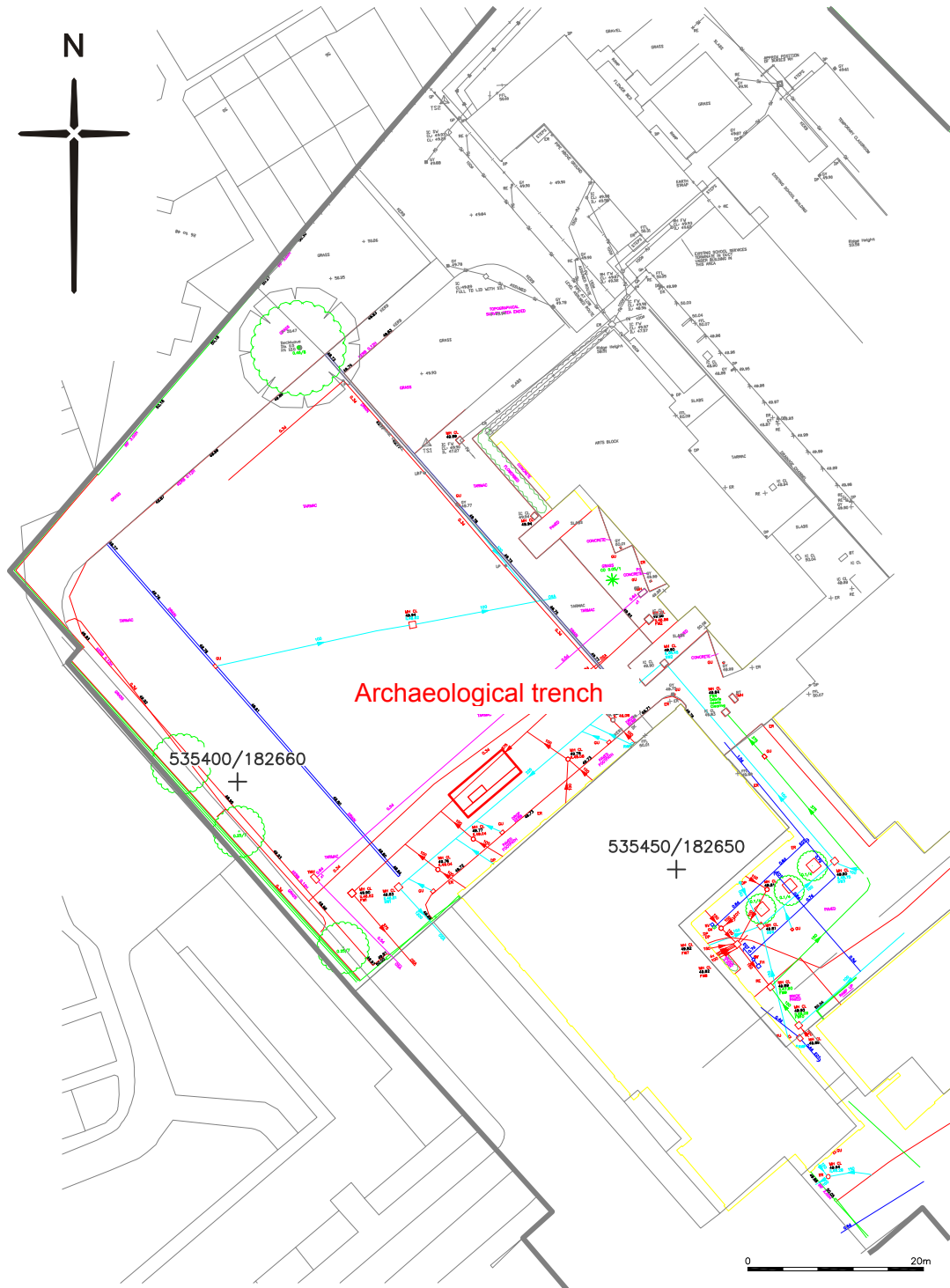


Fig 2 Trench location

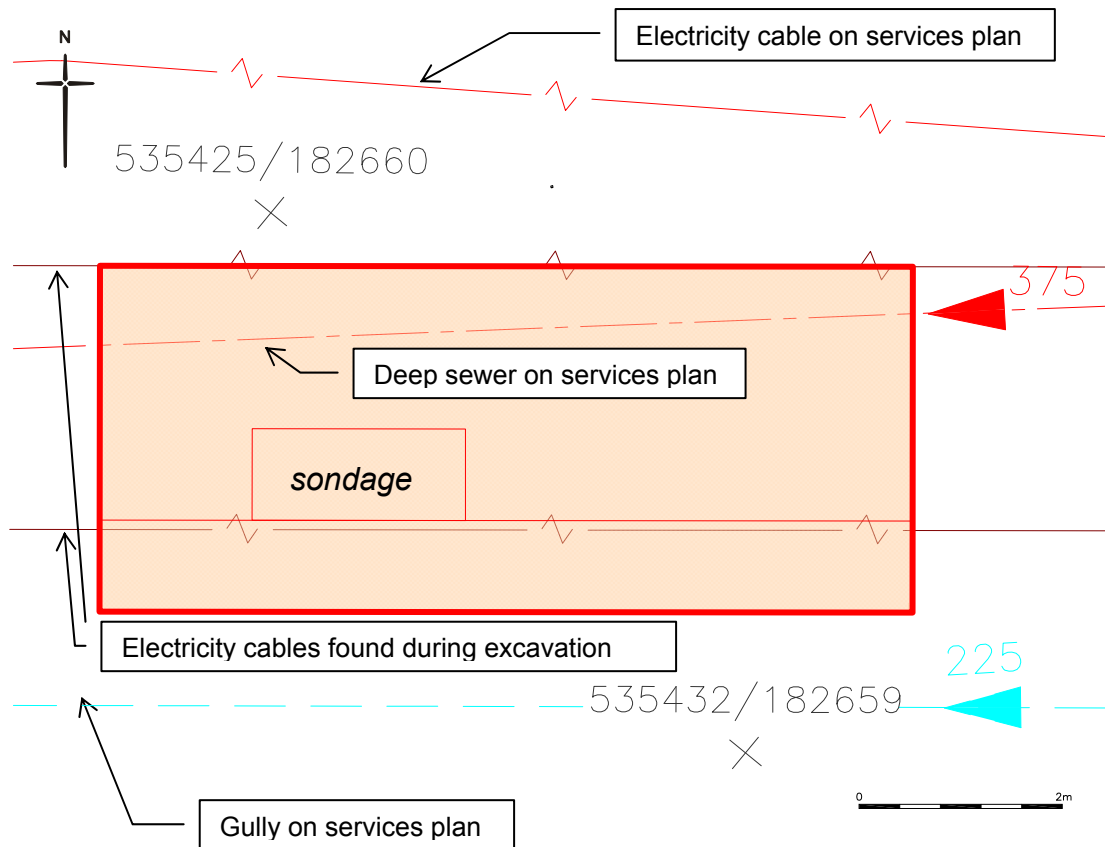


Fig 3 Trench plan

<i>Evaluation Trench</i>	
Location	Adjacent to mobile classrooms in west playground
Dimensions	8m by 3.4m by 1.25m (3.05m in <i>sondage</i>) depth
Modern ground level	13.06m – 13.04m OD
Base of modern fill	12.73m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	12.73m – 10.00m OD deep
Level of base of deposits observed and/or base of trench	Base of trench 10.00m OD
Natural observed	Not reached

The deepest excavated deposits were reworked brickearth with some gravels and a greenish hue added to its natural tan or orangey brown colour. This brickearth was observed at the base of a *sondage*, or deeper trial hole, at the limits of excavation, 10.00 – 10.43m OD. It is thought that this is the bottom fill of a large brickfield quarry. Above it was a series of dark grey clayey, organic and coal-ashy fills with brick and tile fragments and lime mortar, indicating demolished building rubble and lenses of crushed red brick. These fills underlay modern deposits at 12.73m OD and continued to 10.43m OD and are typical of nightsoil from earth closets and building rubble used to backfill quarries in the post-medieval period.

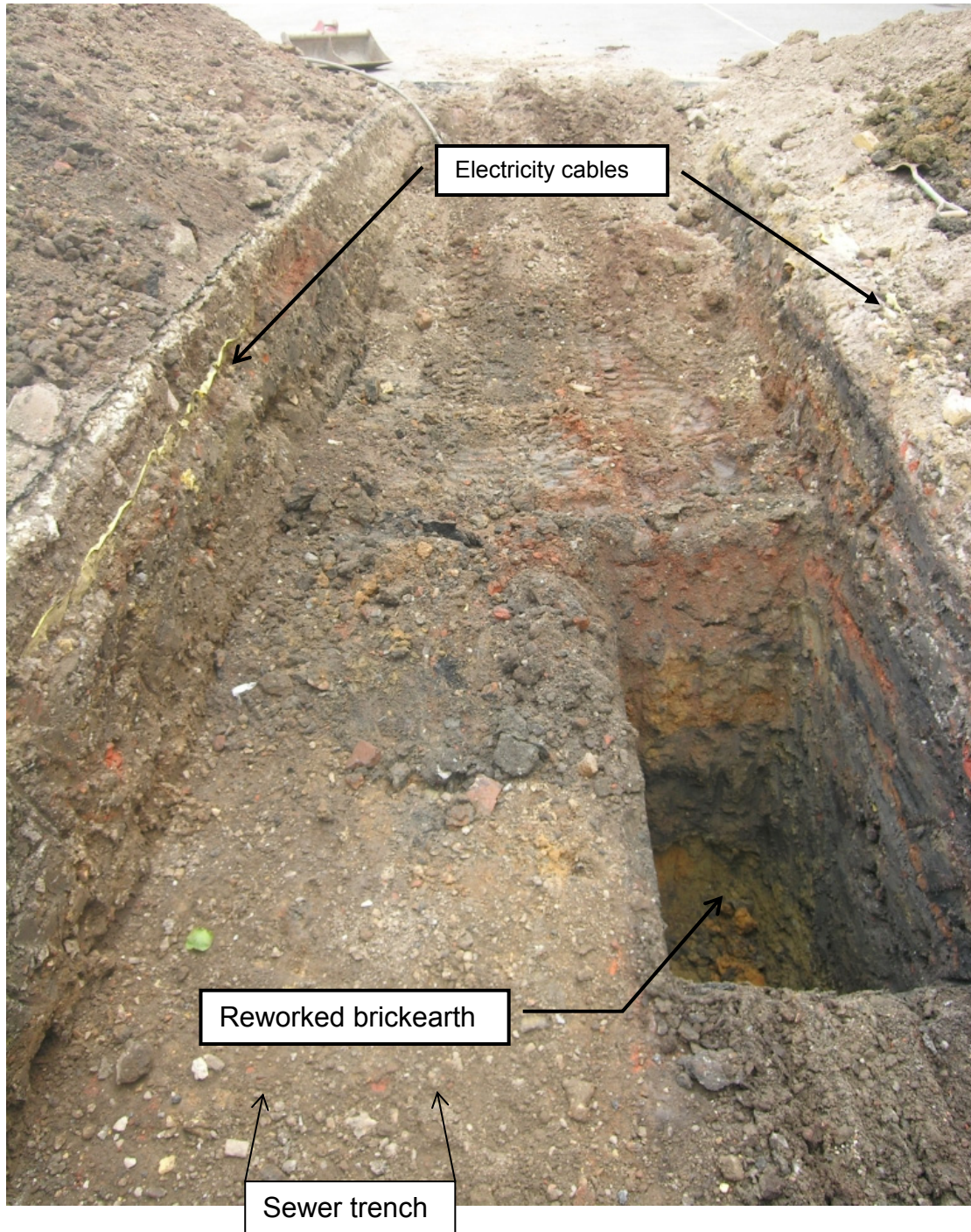


Fig 4 Trench, looking east

There was no evidence of human remains in either the upcast spoil from the trial trench or any of the exposed surfaces of archaeological deposits. There was no evidence of burials or coffin stacks.



Fig 5 Sondage section through quarry fills, looking east

The photograph above illustrates the alternate layers of building material and nightsoil used to backfill a large quarry.

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 this case significant sized areas were investigated – compared with the size of proposed new building in the area. It is reasonable to expect the types and variety of archaeological remains that were potentially present on site to have been exposed by this exercise.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

Within the trenches, the nature and type of archaeological remains was established. Specific questions were answered:

- *What evidence is there for the use of the site as a burial ground?*
There is no evidence of the use of the site as a burial ground in this area
- *What is the nature and level of natural topography?*
Undisturbed natural geological strata lay beneath the limit of excavation. Natural was not reached during the evaluation.
- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*
The earliest deposits are the reworked brickearth deposits from large-scale brickearth quarrying (a “brickfield”)
- *What are the latest deposits identified?*
The latest deposits identified were those of the post-medieval (18th- or 19th-century) backfilling of the quarry.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the area of the site investigated does not contain horizontal archaeological deposits or stratigraphy and that there are no buried ground-surfaces, buried soils, etc. Nor are there any human remains, neither burials nor disturbed human bone. The remains observed were those of an 18th- or 19th-century brickearth quarry (or “brickfield”) and it is likely to have disturbed or removed earlier remains.

4.3 Significance

The archaeological remains exposed in the trial trench are of local significance – adding detail more significant remains nearby. There is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

5 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The development proposals comprise the demolition of blocks E in the central part of the site (with the exception of its southern end, which would be retained and remodelled into block P/plant), the demolition of blocks H and K, the construction of four new blocks (L, M, N, and the “Science-Pod” – additional space to adjacent science laboratories), and minor refurbishment of blocks A, B and D. Blocks J, G and C will remain untouched (see Fig.

The construction of the Science Pod was considered to have potential archaeological impact. It is proposed that it will be built of lightweight materials and have relatively shallow foundations. However, it may involve service diversions and the relatively soft subsurface deposits revealed in the evaluation trench and *sondage* may be considered unsuitable for – for instance – pad foundations and slabs or piled foundations may be considered more appropriate.

Whichever foundation design is approved it will disturb or remove the upper levels of a substantial brickearth quarry and possibly penetrate into the lower deposits of the same quarry in the case of piled foundations. The quarry is thought to be a large subsurface feature and the impact of the small Science Pod on this feature will be very low. No further archaeological investigations are, therefore, proposed on the site.

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the remains revealed within Morpeth Secondary School rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

6 Bibliography

- MOL Archaeology 2009a Morpeth Secondary School, London, E1 *Archaeological desk-based assessment*. Unpub. report.
- MOL Archaeology 2009b Morpeth Secondary School, London, E1 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*
- ACAO, 1993 *Model briefs and specifications for archaeological assessments and field evaluations*, Association of County Archaeological Officers
- BADLG, 1986 *Code of Practice, British Archaeologists and Developers Liaison Group*
- Department of the Environment, 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance 16, Archaeology and Planning*
- English Heritage, 1997 *Sustaining the historic environment: new perspectives on the future*
- English Heritage, May 1998 *Capital Archaeology. Strategies for sustaining the historic legacy of a world city*
- 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*
- English Heritage Centre for Archaeology Guidelines, 2002 *Environmental archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation*
- English Heritage Centre for Archaeology Guidelines, 2004 *Human bones from archaeological sites: guidelines for producing assessment documents and analytical reports (2002)*
- Institute for Archaeologists (IFA), rev. 2001 *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute for Archaeologists: Standards and guidance — Field Evaluation*
- Institute for Archaeologists (IFA), supplement 2001, *By-Laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute for Archaeologists: Standards and guidance – the collection, documentation conservation and research of archaeological materials*
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan (1998)
- Museum of London, 1994 *Archaeological Site Manual 3rd edition*
- Museum of London, 1998 *General Standards for the preparation of archaeological archives deposited with the Museum of London*
- Museum of London, 2002 *A research framework for London archaeology 2002*
- Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers, 1991 revised 1997 *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology, Manual*

7 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-65362

Project details

Project name	Morpeth School London E2 0PX
Short description of the project	Evaluation trench in the location of a proposed Science Pod, revealed 18th- or 19th-century largescale quarry fills. Reworked brickearth 10.00m - 10.43m OD followed by nightsoil and brick rubble to 12.73m OD. Undisturbed natural deposits were not exposed. There were no human remains and no finds
Project dates	Start: 24-08-2009 End: 28-08-2009
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	MPM09 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	QUARRY Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Small-scale (e.g. single house, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS BETHNAL GREEN Morpeth Secondary School
Postcode	E2 0PX
Study area	23000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3548 8267 51.5261713833 -0.04680422392140 51 31

34 N 000 02 48 W Point

OASIS ID: molas1-65362 con'd

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOL Archaeology
Project brief originator	Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service
Project design originator	MOL Archaeology
Project director/manager	Jo Lyon
Project supervisor	David Sankey
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Bouygues UK Ltd
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Media available	'Manuscript','Report','Unpublished Text'
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Morpeth Secondary School, London E2 0PX, an Archaeological Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Sankey, D.
Date	2009
Issuer or publisher	Museum of London
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 report
Entered by	David Sankey (DSankey@museumoflondon.org.uk)
Entered on	6 October 2009