

**437 - 439 BROCKLEY ROAD
London N1**

London Borough of Lewisham

Evaluation report

March 2011



**437- 439 Brockley Road
London
SE4 2PJ**

Report on an archaeological evaluation

Site Code: BRO11
National Grid Reference: 536515 174515

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Sign-off History:

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Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) on the site of 437 – 439 Brockley Road, London SE4 2PJ. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Eison Build Ltd.

An archaeological planning condition currently attached to the planning application for the site redevelopment led to the excavation of one trench on site between 07/03/2011 – 08/03/2011.

The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. It is now clear that the presence of archaeological features and deposits on site is minimal.

In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site the report concludes that the impact of the proposed redevelopment on the disturbance of archaeological features and deposits is likely to be minimal.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at 437 – 439 Brockley Road, London SE4 2PJ, hereafter called 'the site'. The site comprises 437 – 439 Brockley Road, London SE4 2PJ and is currently occupied by active retail/residential premises with a rear yard area containing workshop and storage unit. The site is bounded by Sevenoaks Road to the south, Brockley Road to the west, no. 435 Brockley Road to the north and a lane separating the site and no. 1 Sevenoaks Road to the east. The OS National Grid Reference for centre of site is 536415 174515 (Fig 1). The level of the concrete slab in the rear yard of the buildings varied between 30.54 and 30.42m OD. Modern pavement level immediately adjacent to the site is c 31m OD. The site code is BRO11.

A *Method Statement* or *Written Scheme of Investigation* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (MOLA, 2011) The *Method Statement* 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 and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2011) which formed the project design for the evaluation (see Section 1.2, MOLA 2011).

1.3 Planning background

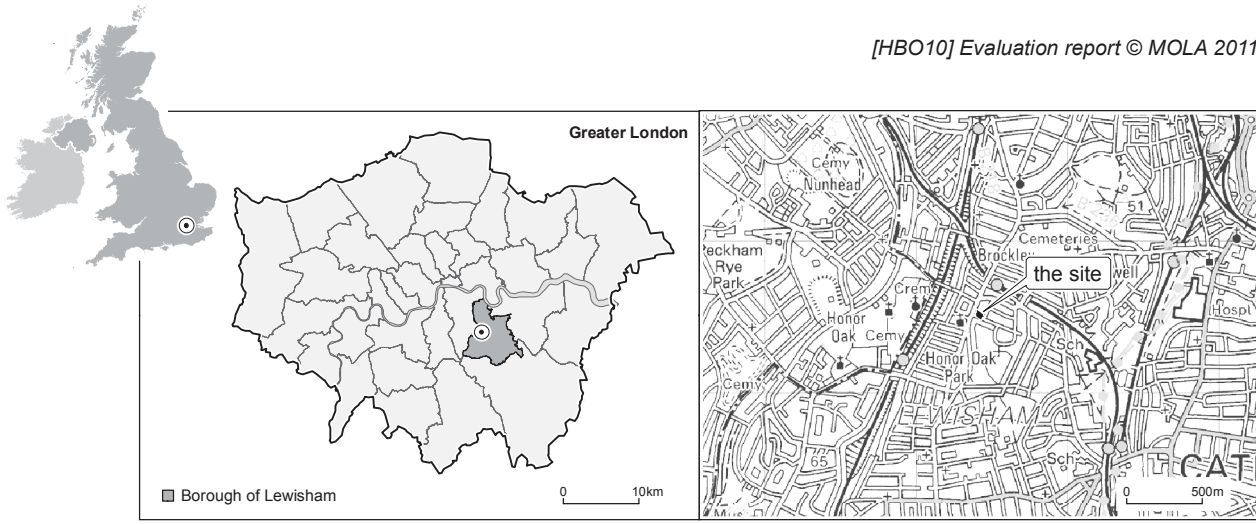
The evaluation has been carried out as part of an archaeological planning condition currently attached to the planning application. This involves the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which will require submitting to and approval in writing by the local planning authority.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Eison Build Ltd and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (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



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Scale 1:1,000 @ A4

0 50m

Fig 1 Site location

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, MOLA 2011):

- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
- What evidence is there for the Roman road currently projected to cross close to the site to the west and for activity associated with it?
- What evidence is there for medieval or early post-medieval activity on the site?
- What are the latest deposits identified?

2 Topographical and historical background

Further information on the geology, archaeology and history of the site has been provided in the earlier Method Statement (Section 1.3, MOLA 2011). A brief outline is provided here:

2.1 Topography

The site is located on the Sydenham Range at c 30m OD in an area where Woolwich beds are overlain by London Clay. The course of Honour Oak branch of the River Ravensbourne is located c 350m south-east of the site.

2.2 Prehistoric (700,000 BC–AD 43)

In the general area, occasional prehistoric flints artefacts have been found in the Ravensbourne valley.

2.3 Roman (AD 43–410)

Archaeological remains from the Roman period have been recorded in the vicinity of the site. The projected route of the London-Lewes Roman road passes just to the west of the site. One Tree Hill, allegedly the site of the victory of Suetonius Paulinus over Boudicca in AD 61, also lies to the west of the site, further away.

2.4 Early and late medieval period (AD410 – 1485)

The nearest evidence of Saxon activity is c 1km south-east of the site, at Catford Bridge, where the Greater London Sites and Monuments Records (GLSMR) notes that a Saxon bridge mill was located.

In the medieval period, the London-Lewes Roman road was utilised as an administrative boundary. A 15th-century Inn is known to have been situated on Brockley Road, directly opposite the site (GLSMR 070126).

2.5 Post-medieval periods (AD 1485– present)

The site was in open fields for most of the post-medieval period and may have been used for pasture. The site is located just to the south of Brockley Hall (GLSMR 07010601), a large residence built in the 18th century.

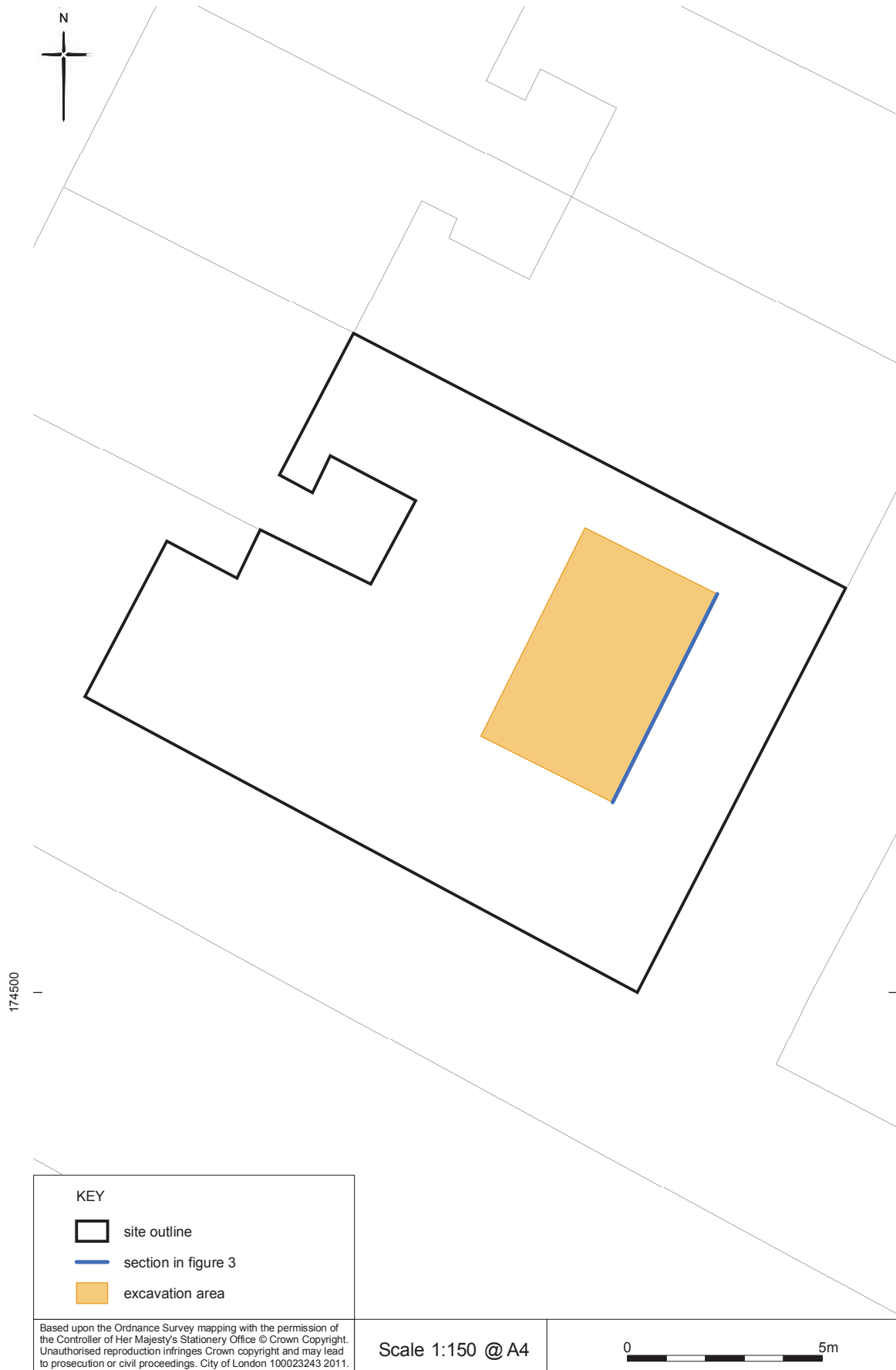


Fig 2 Area of evaluation

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2011) and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

One evaluation trench was excavated in the yard at the rear of the 437 – 439 Brockley Road buildings (Fig 2). The slab adjacent to the trench was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision. The trench was excavated by machine by the contractor, and monitored by a member of staff from MOLA.

The location of evaluation trench was recorded by MOLA by offsetting from adjacent standing walls and 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 MOLA site recording manual (MOLAS, 1994). Levels were calculated from a temporary bench mark located opposite the site, on the western side of Brockley Road, at 31.52m OD.

The site has produced: 3 trench plans; 3 context records; 1 section drawing at 1:10; and 9 photographs. In addition 3 sherds of pottery were recovered from the site.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code BRO11 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see (Fig 2).

<i>Evaluation Trench 1</i>	
Location	Rear yard of 437 – 439 Brockley Road
Dimensions	6m length x c 3.8m wide x c 1.9m max depth
Top of concrete slab	Between 30.54m and 30.42m OD
Base of slab	Between 30.34m 30.22m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	c 0.7m max depth
Level of base of deposits observed	29.13 m OD
Natural observed	29.14m OD

Sitting directly above natural sands (3) was a fairly acerbic bluish-grey external layer (2), which may have been partially waterlogged at some point (Fig 3, Fig 4). This could explain the somewhat organic character and the moderate occurrence of charcoal flecking and staining within the deposit. Layer (2) was recorded at a height of 29.49m OD It also contained CBM flecks and a sherd of Chinese porcelain, dated to the period 1580 - 1800. It therefore appears that external layer (2) was an open field or pasture in the post-medieval period, and certainly 18th and 19th century maps show that the site was located within open land during this time (MOLA 2011, Section 1.3). Since layer (2) is sat upon natural, this indicates that any potential earlier archaeological (of perhaps Roman or medieval date), had been entirely truncated away by this later activity.

Above it was an external consolidation/levelling layer (1), which may have been primarily used to seal the acerbic smell of layer (2) (Fig 3). It was recorded at a height of 29.82m OD and contained post medieval redware pottery dated to 1580 - 1800. Layer (1) was sealed by modern back fill/made ground for the current concrete slab on site.

Natural sands (3) were observed in Trench 1 at a maximum height of 29.14m OD. A sondage, c 1.8m max width x c 4.2m max length x 0.6m max depth, was excavated within the bottom of the trench to a maximum depth of 28.54m OD.

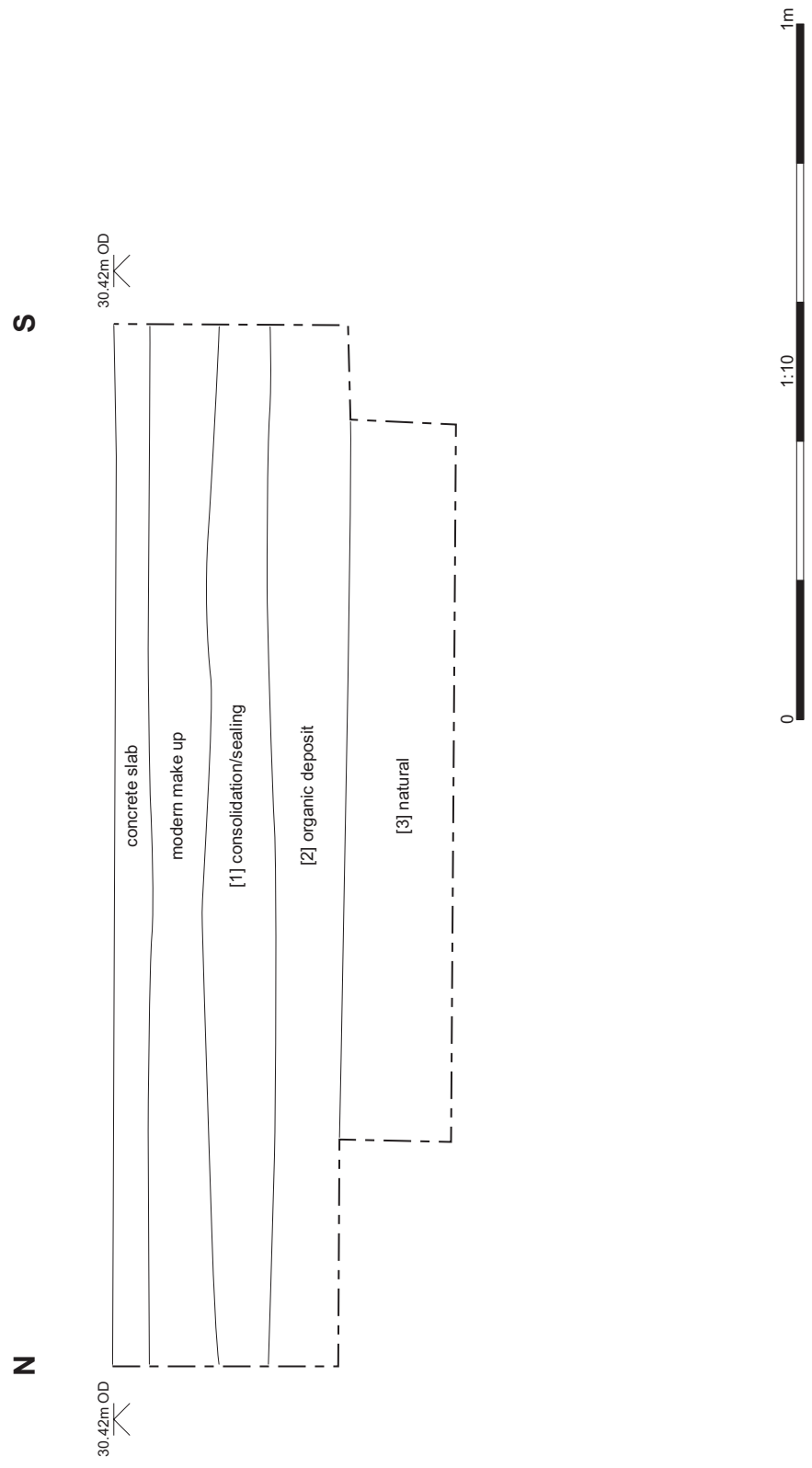


Fig 3 Trench 1: West facing section (S1)

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, the size of the trench (Section 3.3) was calculated to ensure that approximately a 5% sample of the site area was archaeologically evaluated. Only horizontal activity, in the form of external layers, were uncovered. These survived at fairly low levels, from 29.82m OD, which was 0.6m below the top of the current concrete slab.

Fig 4 Trench 1, south facing



Remnants of slightly waterlogged and organic layer (2) can be seen in the foreground; the sondage is through natural sands (3).

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography?*

Natural sands were encountered at 29.14m OD.

- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*

The earliest deposit identified was a fairly acerbic layer (2), which included a sherd of pottery dated to 1580 – 1800.

- *What evidence is there for the Roman road currently projected to cross close to the site to the west and for activity associated with it?*

No evidence of the Roman road was encountered on site.

- *What evidence is there for medieval or early post-medieval activity on the site?*

No evidence for medieval or early post-medieval activity was observed.

- *What are the latest deposits identified?*

The latest deposit identified was a consolidation/levelling layer (1), which sealed acerbic layer (2), and included pottery dated to 1580-1800, probably towards the latter part of this period.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of post-medieval ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is highly likely. There is limited potential for the survival of cut features, such as ditches, which could be associated with post-medieval ground surface activity, although no vertical archaeology was encountered during the evaluation. However, such survival is likely to be extremely limited on site, as the open field/pasture character of the site in the post-medieval period may, as a result of its very nature, reveal little evidence of human occupation/activity. The average depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is likely to be c 0.7m.

4.3 Significance

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

5 Assessment by EH criteria

The recommendations of the GLAAS 1998 guidelines on *Evaluation reports* suggest that there should be:

‘Assessment of results against original expectations (using criteria for assessing national importance of period, relative completeness, condition, rarity and group value)’ (Guidance Paper V, 4 7)

A set of guide lines was published by the Department of the Environment with criteria by which to measure the importance of individual monuments for possible Scheduling. These criteria are as follows: *Period*; *Rarity*; *Documentation*; *Survival/Condition*; *Fragility/Vulnerability*; *Diversity*; and *Potential*. The guide lines stresses that ‘these criteria should not...be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case’.¹

In the following passages the potential archaeological survival described in the initial Assessment document and Section 3.2 above will be assessed against these criteria.

Criterion 1: period

Taken as a whole, archaeology in the Application site is characteristic of the post-medieval period. The Evaluation indicates a site of post-medieval date, probably late 18th century.

Criterion 2: rarity

There is nothing to suggest that any of the likely archaeological deposits are rare either in a national or regional context.

Criterion 3: documentation

It is known from (non-primary) documentary sources that the projected route of the London-Lewes Roman road passes just to the west of the site. Written sources also confirm that in the medieval period, the road was preserved as an administrative boundary and therefore remained a prominent landscape feature. Eighteenth and 19th century maps show that the site was open land by the late post-medieval period and the nature of the archaeological remains uncovered on site support this. If Roman or medieval features originally existed on site, they had been entirely truncated away by this later activity.

Criterion 4: group value

None of the likely archaeological deposits are associated with contemporary single Monuments external to the site.

Criterion 5: survival/condition

The evaluation trench has demonstrated that archaeological remains have faced minimal horizontal truncation from modern activity, as the maximum height of the archaeological deposits is reasonably low beneath current ground level.

Criterion 6: fragility

¹ Annex 4, DOE, Planning and Policy Guidance 16, (1990). Reference has also been made to Darvill, Saunders & Startin, (1987); and McGill, (1995)

Experience from other sites has shown that isolated and exposed blocks of stratigraphy can be vulnerable to damage during construction work.

Criterion 7: diversity

Clearly, taken as a whole, the archaeological deposits which are likely to be found in the site represent a minimal, although still informative, group of archaeological remains. This grouping is in itself the product of a random process of vertical and horizontal truncation and separation. There is no reason to suggest that the grouping *per se* has any particular value which ought to be protected.

Criterion 8: potential

The archaeological deposits from the site have limited potential to contribute to the knowledge of post-medieval Brockley/Lewisham.

6 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed redevelopment at the site involves the alteration, extension and reconfiguration of the existing commercial units and flats at 437 – 439 Brockley Road, together with the construction of a part three/part four storey building comprising an office unit, two artist studios, various residential units, a bicycle space area, a bin store and associated landscaping. The impact of this on the surviving archaeological deposits may be quite unobtrusive, as some of the work will take place above ground level and also the maximum height of surviving archaeological deposits below the current concrete slab is reasonably low.

The assessment above (Section 5) does not suggest that preservation *in situ* would be the only appropriate mitigation strategy. MOLA considers that no further archaeological investigation or monitoring is required on the site based on the low significance of the deposits recorded in the evaluation.

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

7 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Eison Build Ltd for commissioning the evaluation and Stuart Rennie (Eison Build Ltd) for his assistance.

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9 NMR OASIS archaeological report form: molas1-95723

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-95723

Project details

Project name 437 - 439 Brockley Road, London SE4 2PJ

Short description of the project An evaluation trench was excavated on site; horizontal post-medieval external layers, presumably representing open fields or pastures, were uncovered on site, sat upon natural sands.

Project dates Start: 07-03-2011 End: 08-03-2011

Previous/future work No / Not known

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Other 2 - In use as a building

Monument type OPEN FIELDS Post Medieval

Significant Finds POTTERY Post Medieval

Methods & techniques 'Sample Trenches'

Development type Building refurbishment/repairs/restoration

Prompt Planning condition

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

Project location

Country England

Site location	GREATER LONDON LEWISHAM CATFORD 437 - 439 Brockley Road
Postcode	SE4 2PJ
Study area	20.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 536515 174515 50.9354376366 0.187003396330 50 56 07 N 000 11 13 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 28.54m Max: 29.14m
Project creators Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	Eison Build Ltd
Project design originator	Eison Build Ltd
Project director/manager	Derek Seeley
Project supervisor	Hana Lewis
Project archives Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Media available	'GIS'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Media	'Context sheet', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section'

available

Project
bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title 437 - 439 Brockley Road, London SE4 2PJ

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