



Land at Former Twyford Tip,  
Abbey Road, London

Archaeological Investigation





**LAND AT FORMER TWYFORD TIP,  
ABBEY ROAD, LONDON**

**Archaeological Investigation**

Prepared on behalf of  
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**FORMER TWYFORD TIP,  
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**Summary**

Ashia Centur Ltd commissioned Wessex Archaeology, through their agent, Mr R Huntley to undertake an archaeological investigation on the line of a disputed entrance road into the site of the former Twyford Tip, Abbey Road, London Borough of Brent, NW10 7UW. The Site is located at NGR 519605 183522.

Planning permission was granted by Brent Council on 15 September 1993, Reference 92/0009 for development of the Site. The client has undertaken works to implement the permission and has sought the Council's confirmation that the permitted development has been lawfully begun.

The Council has not given the confirmation sought and the Client has made application for a Certificate under S192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to the effect that the development permitted by the 1993 permission may be completed without the need for any fresh grant of planning permission. That application has not been decided by the Council and an appeal has been lodged to the Secretary of State.

The Site Investigation was designed to determine whether works of road construction in accordance with the planning permission previously granted had been undertaken and whether there was evidence that a hardened road base had been created.

The results of the Site investigation show that development had occurred along the projected line of the entrance road into the proposed development. Site observation showed that the upper surface had been cleared, levelled and compacted.

The excavation through the compacted surface showed that the soil for a depth of 0.45 – 0.50m had been treated with some form of hardener and that this treatment only existed within the width of the line of the road. This observed alteration to the natural ground conditions would conform to the stabilisation and hardening process of treating the deposits with Permazyme as described in documents presented to Wessex Archaeology.

It is the conclusion of the report that sub-surface alteration to the soil profile is a result of planned human intervention consistent with commencement of the development of site.

**FORMER TWYFORD TIP,  
ABBAY ROAD, LONDON**

**Archaeological Investigation**

**Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Rob Huntley Esq, Rob Huntley Planning Consultant, on behalf of Ashia Centur Ltd who funded the assessment. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank, for their help and advice, Rob Huntley, and Sharad Patel.

The Site investigation was undertaken by Hilary Valler. This report was researched and compiled by Peter Reeves and the illustrations were prepared by Will Foster. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Peter Reeves.

## FORMER TWYFORD TIP, ABBAY ROAD, LONDON

### Archaeological Investigation

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

##### 1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Ashia Centur Ltd (the Client) commissioned Wessex Archaeology to undertake an archaeological investigation at a former landfill site in the London Borough of Brent. The Site is located on the west side of Abbey Road. The Site is centred on NGR 519605/183522 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The Site Investigation was designed to determine whether works of road construction in accordance with the planning permission previously granted had been undertaken and whether there was evidence that a hardened road base had been created.
- 1.1.3 Although the investigations have not been undertaken in conjunction with the evaluation of archaeological resources or potential, the techniques of archaeological excavation and recording are appropriate to search for, describe and record and features that may be present beneath the ground surface.

##### 1.2 Landscape and Geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is located at NGR 519605 183522 and is located to the west of Abbey Road. The Site is bordered to the north by the North Circular Road (A406). The Site, a former landfill site known as Twyford Tip, is overgrown with an undulating surface where previous site works have occurred. The area for investigation is noticeably flatter than the remainder of the Site and it was also noted that significantly less vegetation was found in this area.
- 1.2.2 The Site is located on an overgrown fairly level patch of ground (**Plate 1**). The Site is located at approximately 25m aOD. The Grand Union Canal passes to the west and south of the Site through an industrial landscape. Twyford Abbey, a former Manor House renamed and rebuilt in the nineteenth century lies to the west of the canal. Abbey Road is to the east and the North Circular Road passes to the north.
- 1.2.3 The former tip is located within the centre of the Site and to the north west of where the current investigation was undertaken. The south west corner of the plot is occupied by a waste recycling centre. Access to the waste recycling site is from Abbey Road and the archaeological investigation was undertaken immediately to the south of this road.
- 1.2.4 The Site is located on London Clay which may have outliers of the Taplow Gravels and alluvial deposits associated with the River Brent.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Scope**

- 2.1.1 The aim of the investigation was to determine whether construction works in connection with the creation of a new access road had been undertaken. The documents which form part of an appeal against Brent Council's failure to determine an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness were provided to Wessex Archaeology. These indicated that construction work in conjunction with the access was undertaken in the summer of 2003.
- 2.1.2 The investigation was targeted on the area that planning documents submitted to and approved by the council showed that the construction of the access road was to take place.
- 2.1.3 The investigation was to record the depth and nature of ground alteration and to retrieve a sample of material from the altered ground if present.
- 2.1.4 Prior to conducting the site investigation a rapid review of the Site was undertaken to determine whether any other activities that have occurred historically on the Site might be responsible for results obtained during fieldwork.

### **2.2 Research**

- 2.2.1 A number of publicly accessible sources of primary and synthesised information were consulted.

#### ***Documentary Sources***

- 2.2.2 A search of relevant primary and secondary sources was carried out digitally and in Wessex Archaeology's own library.

#### ***Cartographic Sources***

- 2.2.3 A rapid search of historic manuscripts and Ordnance Survey maps was undertaken.

#### ***Aerial Photographs***

- 2.2.4 Under certain conditions sub-surface archaeological features can be visible on Aerial Photographs (APs). A review of recent colour aerial photographs covering the Site was undertaken.

#### ***Site Visit***

- 2.2.5 The aim of the visit was to assess the general aspect, character, condition and setting of the Site. The Site area was inspected by a walkover of the area and its boundaries lying between the access road leading to the Waste Transfer Station, Abbey Road and industrial premises to the southeast..

### **2.3 Site Investigation**

- 2.3.1 The Site investigation was undertaken using a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. In the first instant the surface accumulation of debris covering the line of the disputed access road was cleared.
- 2.3.2 Following photographic recording of the cleaned surface the JCB excavated

through the hardened deposit until its base and the underlying natural soils deposits were reached.

2.3.3 The results of the investigation were photographed through all stages and the results are presented in **Plates 1 to 3**. A sketch section was made and the deposits encountered allocated context numbers.

2.3.4 A sample to be passed to the client or the client agent was retrieved from the hardened layer. A second sample was retrieved and taken to the clients office on the day of investigation.

### **3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Saxon (AD 410 – 1066) and Medieval (AD 1066 -1499)**

3.1.1 There are no known archaeological remains from either of these periods within the proposed Site. However it is thought Twyford may be of Saxon origin meaning ‘two fords’.

3.1.2 Twyford Abbey renamed and rebuilt in the nineteenth century was a Medieval Manor House, a census dated to 1599 suggests that it was the only building in the area.

#### **3.2 Post-Medieval (AD 1500 – 1799) to Modern**

3.2.1 The Grand Union Canal was constructed to the west and south of the area in which the Site is located. The fact that the canal skirts around the area indicates that it was a defined area of land, but of unknown usage.

3.2.2 The only modern usage that can be attributed to the Site is waste disposal. It is probable that the Site developed as a result of the growth of, initially, industrial units in the locality which were shortly followed by residential units.

### **4 RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 This section of the report covers the rapid archaeological review of the Site in terms of historical development that may account for effects of previous land use on observations made during the field investigation.

4.1.2 This section contains the descriptive results of the field investigation.

#### **4.2 Map Regression**

4.2.1 A rapid review of available mapping show that the Site and the area has seen relatively little change since the late nineteenth century.

4.2.2 Planning drawings, submitted to Wessex Archaeology, illustrate the position of the access road leading into the site, which would be to the south of the

existing access to the Waste Recycling site.

#### 4.3 Site Walkover

- 4.3.1 The site walkover was undertaken in clear dry sunny weather, visibility was good. The height and density of the vegetation varied across the Site being more abundant toward the former tip and very low to sparse in the area to be investigated.
- 4.3.2 The Site Walkover commenced from the existing junction of the access road to the waste recycling centre and Abbey Road.
- 4.3.3 Overall the Site shows evidence of previous Site investigation and earth moving. The area to be investigated appeared level and slightly overgrown.

#### 4.4 Site Investigation

- 4.4.1 The Site investigation was conducted under the supervision of a fully qualified archaeologist at all times. An area measuring 15 m in length and 1 m in width was investigated placed perpendicular to the known line of the disputed access road.
- 4.4.2 A thin layer of material (**001**), varying in thickness between 0.01m and a maximum of 0.06m, was encountered at the uppermost level. The layer is best described as a thin wind blown topsoil consisting of a mid-brown coloured mixture of silt, sand and clay. The layer contains some pebbles and is largely held together by roots.
- 4.4.3 The uppermost level was cleared down to the surface of **002**. The lower deposit consisted of a mid-orange brown coloured firm sandy clay. The machine bucket met with resistance as the upper surface was encountered. The surface was found to be very regular and level (**Plate 2**).
- 4.4.4 Deposit **002** was found to be a 'blocky' layer containing some pebbles and bits of plastic and other modern debris. The 'blocky' nature is the result of the soil matrix being bonded or cemented together. The deposit stopped at a uniform depth 0.50m below the present ground surface. The character of **002** is unlike any soil that has been encountered by either the on-site archaeologist or the Project Manager either on this site or elsewhere.
- 4.4.5 Deposit **002** overlay **003**, a mid grey coloured orange mottled clay. The clay was consistently encountered at 0.50m below the present ground surface. To confirm that **003** was a natural deposit it was excavated to a depth of 0.20m below the base of **002** (**Plate 3**).
- 4.4.6 Two samples were taken from the 'blocky' layer, one sample is held by the client, the second, currently held at the Wessex Archaeology office in London will be passed to Rob Huntley.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The Site inspection showed that generally the Site showed evidence of construction activity predominantly related to Site clearance. In particular the area of the disputed access road was observed to be more even and level than the rest of the Site area, the same area contained less vegetation. The potential for encountering evidence of road construction was considered to be **high**.
- 5.1.2 The rapid Desk - Based Appraisal of the Site indicates that there is a **very low** potential for the causes of this localised levelling to be a result of activities on Site predating those described in the documents supplied to Wessex Archaeology. The only activities described are those occurring for the purpose of construction for the new access road in the summer of 2003.
- 5.1.3 The surface of layer **002** is consistent with what is to be expected following the activities of grading and rolling as described in the documents supplied to Wessex Archaeology for the finishing of the road bed prior to the application of the final finished surface. The surface of **002** was found to be level and hardened.
- 5.1.4 Layer **002** was found to be bonded together in a manner not previously encountered in the natural environment by either the on-site archaeologist or the manager overseeing the project. The nature of the deposit is consistent with the description forwarded to Wessex Archaeology regarding the application of Permazyme to soils and the process by which it strengthens underlying materials.
- 5.1.5 The natural soil deposits (**003**) were encountered consistently at the same depth (0.70m) below ground surface within the investigated strip. The upper surface of the natural clays appeared to have been scraped or sheared off by mechanical means. The clear cut horizon may have been formed as part of the mixing and regrading process following application of Permazyme as described in documents supplied to Wessex Archaeology.
- 5.1.6 The conclusion of the Site investigation is that the probability, following the process described in documents supplied to Wessex Archaeology regarding the ground works undertaken for the construction of the access road, that this work was undertaken is **very high**.
- 5.1.7 The deposit sequence observed on site and the expected nature of the deposits is consistent with the activities described for the purpose of constructing a road bed using Permazyme.

## 6 REFERENCES

Rob Huntley Planning Consultancy, 2006, Application for a certificate under S192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

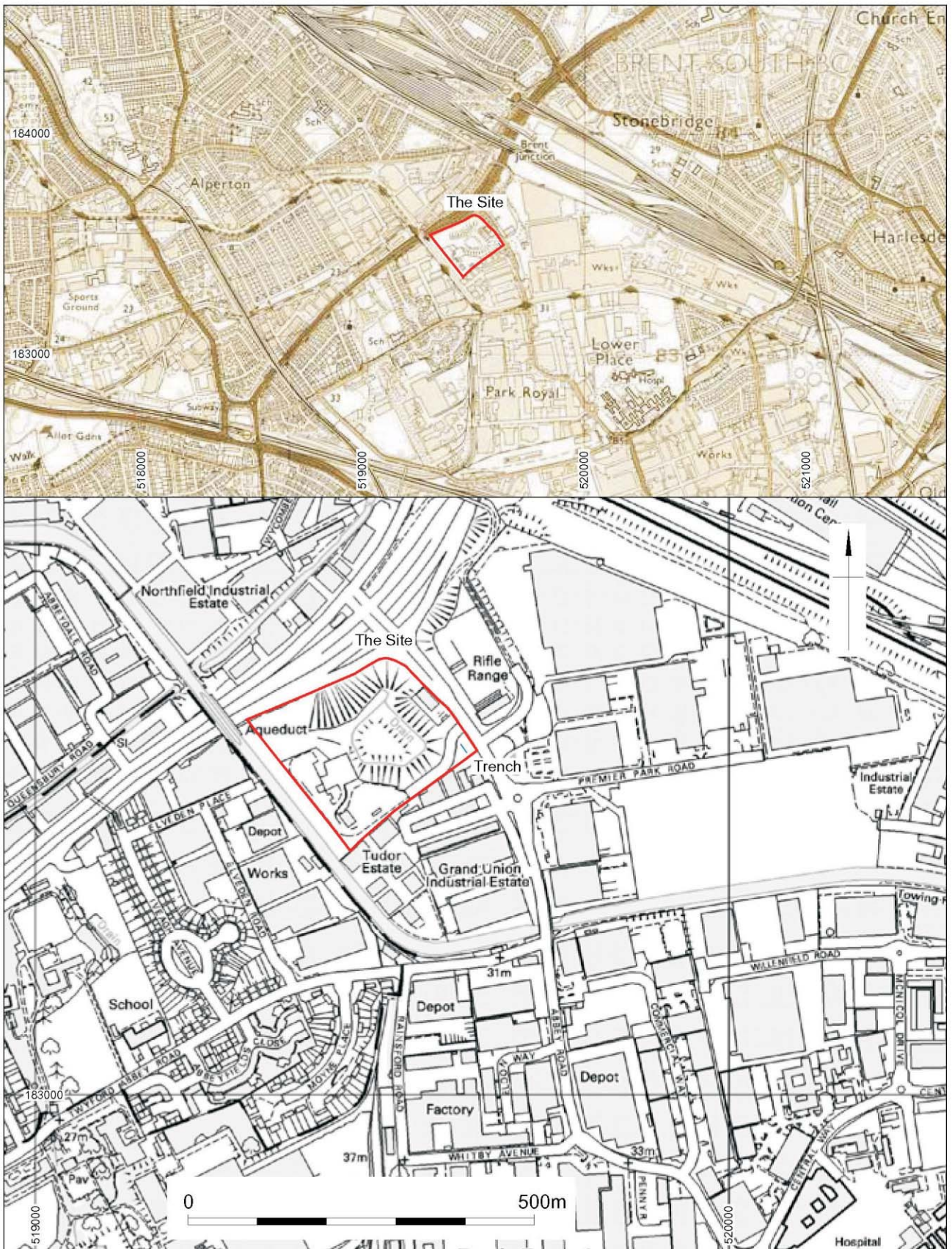
Client Documents, 2006, Appendix A – Schedule of Planning Decisions.

Client Documents, 2006, Appendix B – Letter from Mr R Vale of LB Brent Dated 27 October 2006.

Client Documents, 2006, Appendix C – Correspondence concerning works on Site

in October 2002.

Client Documents, 2006, Appendix D – Correspondence concerning amendments to highway design requested by Brent Council.



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Site and Trench location


Figure 1



Pre-investigation view of Site looking east



Pre-investigation view of Site looking west


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Machine clearing of accumulated debris



Surface accumulation cleared

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Machine cutting through treated layer



East facing section



West facing section

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