



128-136 HIGH STREET, PLAISTOW E13 LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM

Archaeological Watching Brief



MOL# PLZ05
Ref: 61350.01

November 2005

**128-136 HIGH STREET, PLAISTOW, E13
LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Museum of London Site Code PLZ05

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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology (London) would like to thank Neil Abbott on behalf of CARD Geotechnics for commissioning the works.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Phillip Frickers, and Hilary Valler who also prepared this report. The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology (London) by Lawrence Pontin. Mark Roughley prepared the illustrations.

Non-technical Summary

Wessex Archaeology (London) was commissioned by CARD Geotechnics to undertake an archaeological watching brief on geotechnical window samples and boreholes at 128-136 High Street, Plaistow in the London Borough of Newham, centred on NGR 540590/183070 (the Site).

The works were commissioned as part of the determination of a planning application to re-develop the Site for residential development.

Observations on the geotechnical window and boreholes samples showed that there is a potential for archaeology with evidence of backfilled cellars which probably relate to the terrace housing built fronting onto the High Street prior to 1896. In three of the five window samples, evidence for a void within the ground along the north east side and potentially on the north west side of the Site was observed and could relate to the backfilling of cellars.

There was limited potential to observe archaeological deposits during the watching brief because of the limited areas exposed on the window and borehole samples and with a large extent of the central part of the Site filled with petrol holding tanks. It would be advisable to evaluate a small area on the periphery of the Site to explore the archaeological potential and achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the Site's history which has been but glimpsed during the watching brief.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Document

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CARD Geotechnics Ltd (the Client) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of five window samples and two boreholes at 128-136 High Street, Plaistow E13 in the London Borough of Newham (the Site), centred on NGR 540590/183070 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The watching brief for the window samples was undertaken on 14th October 2005 with the boreholes observed over three days from 31st October to 2nd November 2005.
- 1.1.3 This document sets out the results from the observation of the geotechnical window samples and boreholes. It does not constitute a full archaeological evaluation of the Site.

1.2 Planning Background

- 1.2.1 A planning application has been submitted for the residential redevelopment of the Site, with the erection of residential flats. As part of this process, further information has been requested by the Local Planning Authority on the survival of any archaeological deposits within the Site.
- 1.2.2 David Divers, English Heritage Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Newham, agreed that in the first instance, such information could be derived from a watching brief on geotechnical investigations on the Site.

2 SITE GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

- 2.1.1 The underlying geology of the area comprises Flood Plain Gravel, terraces of the Thames and Roding (British Geological Society Drift Edition, Sheet 257).

2.2 Topography

- 2.2.1 The modern ground level within the site is approximately 10m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 2.2.2 The Site is a disused petrol filling station with much of the central area filled with holding tanks for the petrol. It is on the corner of High Street (A112) and Winkfield Road, to the south of an area known as Broadway.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Area of Archaeological Priority

- 3.1.1 The Site is defined within the London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan (adopted June 2001) as being within an Area of Archaeological Priority. The area is presumed to contain evidence of early post medieval housing along the course of the historic West Ham Lane. Some evidence may also exist of Roman activity given the use of Roman building material in the medieval church of All Saints Church to the north and evidence of a Roman building found adjacent to Newham General Hospital, to the south, in 1964.
- 3.1.2 The Site appears on an early Ordnance Survey map (1869) as parkland fronting onto the High Street. Prior to 1896 a row of terrace houses had been built on the land fronting on to the High Street with gardens at the back of the buildings. These were slightly set back from the road and therefore, the north east side of the Site lays over the pedestrian walkway. These buildings were demolished prior to 1951, the Ordnance Survey map shows the Site clear of buildings and in the early 1960s buildings are established along the north west side of the Site when it became a garage. It continued in use as a garage in some form to date.

3.2 Aims and Objectives

- 3.2.1 The objective of the watching brief was to elucidate the nature and character of any archaeological remains disturbed by the excavation of the window samples and boreholes, and to assess their potential significance.

4 WATCHING BRIEF STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Methodological Standards

- 4.1.1 All excavation was undertaken in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (as amended 2001).

4.2 Health and Safety

- 4.2.1 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force.

4.3 Fieldwork

- 4.3.1 The window samples and boreholes were drilled by a percussion borer. Each intervention was undertaken under archaeological supervision.
- 4.3.2 All spoil was visually inspected for artefacts.
- 4.3.3 A photographic record was maintained using digital images.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1.1 Detailed contextual information is presented in tabulated form in **Appendix 1** at the rear of this report.
- 5.1.2 All the interventions were excavated to a depth well in excess of the top of the underlying natural.
- 5.1.3 WS01 and WS02 were respectively sited on the south west and south of the Site. In both, layers of made ground were encountered to depths of 1.20m and 1.05m, beneath which a sequence of natural gravel was observed.
- 5.1.4 Of the five window samples, two which were located on the south east of the Site (WS03 and WS04) and WS05 (to the north) produced results which inferred that they may have been within backfilled cellars. WS03 produced a fragment of medieval roof tile from a depth of 2.50m just above the natural sand and gravels at 2.70m. WS05 was positioned in the north corner of the Site and fragments of modern plate glass were recorded at 2.00m depth and could possibly have been another backfilled void (possible cellar). Natural was not encountered within WS05 with modern material being recorded at 3.00m depth.
- 5.1.5 The two boreholes (BH01 & BH02) undertaken produced similar stratigraphic results comprising a modern surface (concrete slab) over makeup layers above natural gravel at a depth of 1.20m. No further evidence for backfilled cellars was observed in either borehole.

6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

- 6.1.1 The window samples and boreholes were positioned around the periphery of the Site to avoid an encounter with any petrol tanks. No significant archaeology was encountered within WS01 (south west), WS02 (south), BH01 (south) and BH02 (north west), but information retrieved from WS03, WS04 (both north east side) and potentially WS05 (north west) infer the potential for backfilled cellars.
- 6.1.2 There was limited potential to observe archaeological deposits during the watching brief. This was due to the limited areas exposed through the window and borehole samples and with a large extent of the central part of the Site filled with petrol holding tanks. It would be advisable to evaluate a small area on the periphery of the Site to explore the archaeological potential and achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the Site's history which has been but glimpsed during the watching brief.

7 APPENDIX 1. WINDOW SAMPLE/BOREHOLE SUMMARY TABLES

Window Sample No.	Dimensions (Width/Depth)		
01	0.10m x 2.10m		
Context No.	Description	Interpretation and Processual Key word	Depth below ground level
101	Concrete slab	Modern surface	0-0.15m
102	Brick makeup to slab	Brick makeup beneath slab	0.15-0.30m
103	Dark brown grey silty clay with small brick, slate fragments	Modern makeup	0.30-0.60m
104	Pale brown grey silty clay with large & small round & angular flint pebbles and brick fragments	Made ground	0.60-1.20m
105	Whitish grey gravel and clay	Natural	1.20-1.50m
106	Orange brown coarse sand and mainly fine gravel	Natural	1.50-2.10+m

Window Sample No.	Dimensions (Width/Depth)		
02	0.10m x 1.45m		
Context No.	Description	Interpretation and Processual Key word	Depth below ground level
201	Concrete slab	Modern surface	0-0.15m
202	Brick makeup for concrete slab	Brick makeup beneath slab	0.15-0.30m
203	Stained gravel, clinker	Modern makeup	0.30-0.40m
204	Orange brown silty clay with brick flecks	Madeground	0.40-0.60m
205	Medium brown mixed silty clay & fine gravel lenses	Madeground	0.60-0.80m
206	Gravel fragments	Laid gravel (not natural)	0.80-1.05m
207	Grey clay fine gravel	Natural	1.05-1.30m
208	Orange brown coarse sand & fine & medium gravel	Natural	1.30-1.45+m

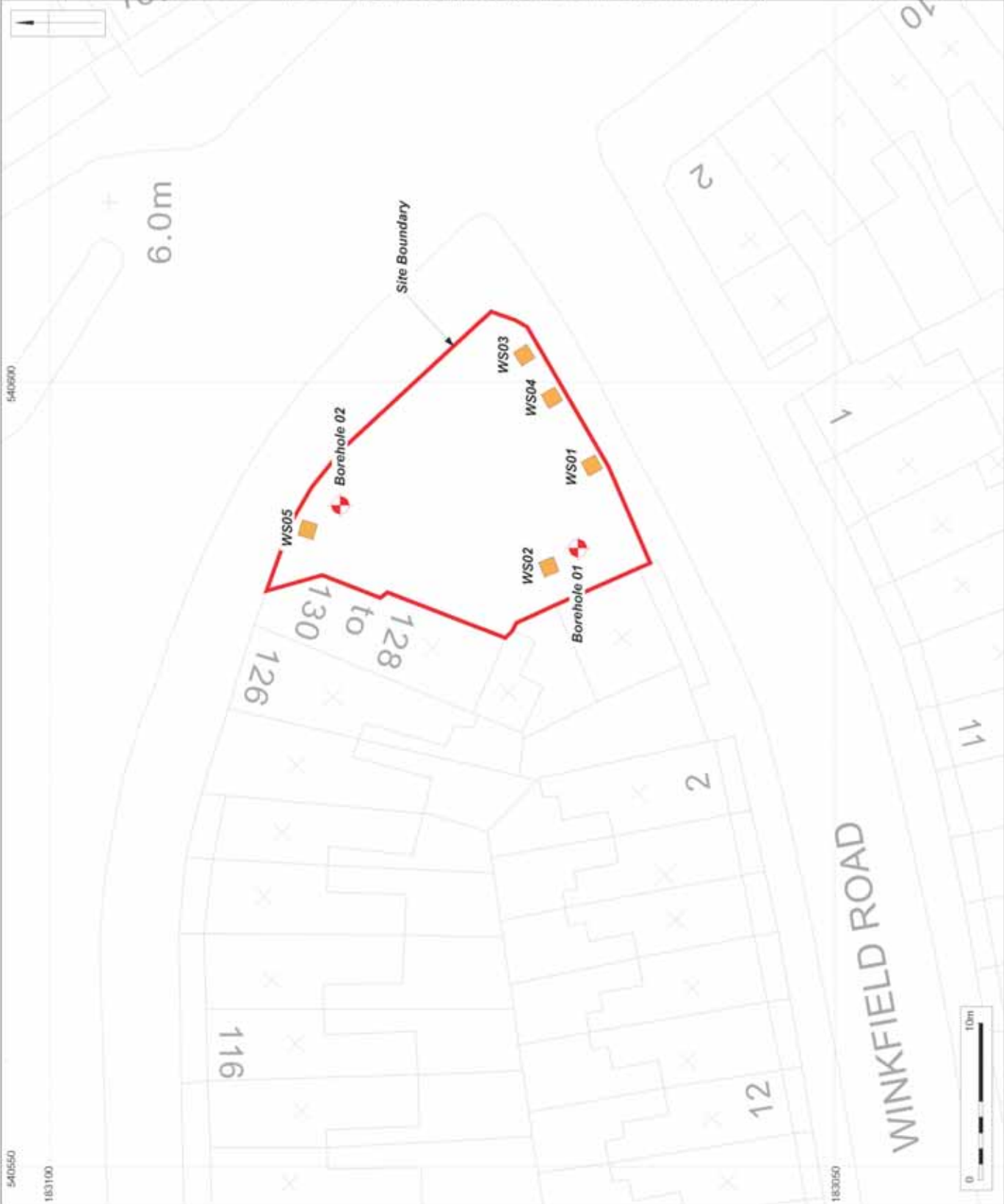
Window Sample No. 03		Dimensions (Width/Depth) <i>0.10m x 3.00m</i>	
Context No.	Description	Interpretation and Processual Key word	Depth below ground level
301	Concrete slab	Modern surface	0-0.15m
302	Brick makeup layer with pink modern bricks	Brick makeup beneath slab	0.15-0.50m
303	Brick makeup layer with red & yellow bricks & glazed ceramic tile fragments. Then silty grey matrix and then void down to 2.00m – possibly partial backfilled cellar ¹	Backfilled cellar?	0.50-0.95m Void to depth of 2.00m
304	Mid brown silty sand	Backfilled layer?	2.00-2.25m
305	Clay sand matrix with fine gravel with yellow handmade brick frags & slate frags	Layer	2.25-2.50m
306	Dark brown silty clay and fine gravel with medium tile fragments	Layer	2.50-2.70m
307	Orange brown coarse sand & gravel	Natural	2.70-3.00+m

Window Sample No. 04		Dimensions (Width/Depth) <i>0.10m x 3.60m</i>	
Context No.	Description	Interpretation and Processual Key word	Depth below ground level
401	Concrete slab	Modern surface	0-0.15m
402	Yellow coarse sand with some brick rubble	Brick makeup beneath slab or possible infill?	0.15-0.45m
403	Grey silt with red & yellow bricks	Dumped layer/ cellar infill?	0.45-3.00m
404	Light orange brown clay	Natural	3.00-3.25m
405	Possible trace of gravel at surface – grey brown clay	Natural	3.25-3.60+m

Window Sample No. 05		Dimensions (Width/Depth) <i>0.10m x 2.95m</i>		
Context No.	Description	Interpretation and Processual Key word	Depth below ground level	
501	Concrete slab	Modern surface	0-0.15m	
502	Dark orange brown sand	Makeup beneath slab	0.15-0.25m	
503	Medium brown sandy silt with small concrete & slate fragments (to 0.50m) then same matrix with red brick fragments	Modern dump layer	0.25-1.20m	
504	Dark grey brown sandy silt with brick & slate frags	Modern dump layer	1.20-1.55m	
505	Sandy silt/clay silt with brick rubble and slate frags. Modern plate glass at 2.00m depth – possible in filled cellar?	Infill within cellar?	1.55-2.95+m	

Borehole No. 01		Dimensions (Width/Depth) <i>0.10m x 1.20m</i>		
Context No.	Description	Interpretation and Processual Key word	Depth below ground level	
1001	Concrete slab	Modern surface	0-0.15m	
1002	Dark orange brown sand	Makeup beneath slab	0.15-0.25m	
1003	Pale grey loose sandy clay with concrete fragments	Modern makeup	0.25-0.40m	
1004	Mid grey brown sandy clay (wet) with red brick fragments	Modern dump layer	0.40-0.75m	
1005	Dark brown sandy clay (firm & wet) with yellow brick fragments	Modern dump layer	0.75-1.20m	
1006	Orange brown coarse sand & gravel	Natural	1.20+m	

Borehole No.		02		Dimensions (Width/Depth) <i>0.10m x 1.20m</i>	
Context No.	Description	Interpretation and Processual Key word	Depth below ground level		
2001	Concrete slab	Modern surface	0-0.15m		
2002	Dark orange brown sand	Makeup beneath slab	0.15-0.25m		
2003	Medium brown sandy silt with small concrete & slate fragments (to 0.50m) then same matrix with red brick fragments	Modern dump layer	0.25-1.20m		
2004	Orange brown coarse sand & gravel	Natural	1.20-2.80m		
2005	Mid yellow grey sandy clay with occasional rounded gravel, very firm with water ingress at 2.90m	Natural	2.80-2.90+m		



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Revision Number:	0
Illustrator:	MR
Date:	15/11/05
Scale:	1:12,500 & 1:250 @ A3
Path:	London, Y:\Projects\61350\
Drawing Office/Report Figures (05-11) \WB	

Site Location Map showing Location of Window Samples and Boreholes



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