



Cranbrook Mews
Rear of 88-96 High Street,
Walthamstow E17,
London Borough of Waltham Forest

Watching Brief Report





**CRANBROOK MEWS
REAR OF 88-96 HIGH STREET
WALTHAMSTOW E17
LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST**

Watching Brief Report

Prepared for:

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Yogo Developments (the Client) to undertake a watching brief at Cranbrook Mews rear of 88-98 High Street, Walthamstow E17, in the London Borough of Waltham Forest (the Site). The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 536665, 188878.

The Site lies within a council-designated Archaeological Priority Area defining the historical Walthamstow Medieval Settlement, which lies some 1200m to the east of the Site.

The work was carried out as a means to discharge a planning condition attached to consent for the redevelopment of the Site involving the construction of two two-story residential blocks and associated car parking and bike sheds as well as the relocation of a brick built electricity sub-station.

The watching brief observed the excavation, by the site contractor, of strip foundation trenches to a depth of between 1.4m and 1.8m below the present ground level. It took place intermittently from the 2nd to the 30th June 2008.

The watching brief observed no archaeological deposits or features. All of the archaeological deposits observed during the watching brief contained exclusively 19th century or later material.

Geological deposits comprising undulating, silty clay over laminated coarse sandy gravels were observed in all of the excavated areas at heights of between 14.00m aOD (Trench 1) and 13.80m aOD (Trench 2).

The results of this Watching Brief show that the proposed development would not have an impact on significant archaeological deposits.

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Acknowledgements

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Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank the English Heritage Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Waltham Forest, David Divers, for monitoring the works.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Lawrence Pontin. The fieldwork was undertaken by Cornelius Barton, Gary Evans and Lawrence Pontin.

Gary Evans compiled the report. Illustrations were by Kitty Brandon.

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Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Project

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Yogo Developments to undertake an archaeological watching brief on a new residential development at Cranbrook Mews (the Site). The Site is situated at the rear of 88-96 High Street, Walthamstow, E17 7LD, centred on NGR 536665,188878 (see **Figure 1**).

1.2 Planning Background

1.2.1 The entire Site is proposed for re-development to provide residential properties. The approved proposal (Planning Application no. 2006/1791) comprises the construction of two two-storey buildings at the southeast and southwest corners of the Site with car parking and bike sheds to the rear. The proposal also includes the relocation of a brick built electricity sub-station from the southeast corner to the northeast corner of the Site.

1.2.2 The Site is situated within a council-designated Archaeological Priority Area defining the historical Walthamstow Medieval Settlement (BHE17, Waltham Forest Unitary Development Plan 2006).

1.3 Fieldwork

1.3.1 The fieldwork programme, which comprised the monitoring of ground works, including the excavation by the ground contractor of foundation trenches, was requested by the Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Waltham Forest (AALBWF) who advised that the Site had the potential for archaeological remains. These archaeological works sought to expedite the development of an appropriate mitigation strategy for the impact of the proposed scheme on any archaeological deposits that would be affected by its construction.

1.3.2 This report details the results of the fieldwork that took place intermittently from the 2nd to the 30th June 2008.

2 THE SITE

2.1 Site Location

2.1.1 The Site, which is rectangular in plan, covers an area of 690m² and lies some 1200m to the east of the historical core of Walthamstow. The Site fronts Cranbrook Mews to the south and backs on to the rear of a row of 1960s shops/maisonettes that front on to Walthamstow High Street to the north. To the east the Site is bordered by the car park of an Iceland supermarket and to the west by a brick built "club house" and the backyard of no 86 High Street (**Figure 1**). The Site was, until

recently, occupied by a row of 1960s brick built garages and an open car park for 88-96 High Street. The car park was covered partly in a concrete and tarmac hard standing and compacted pulverized fuel ash.

2.2 Topography

- 2.2.1 The height on the roadway in front of the Cranbrook Mews entrance to the Site is 14.40m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The Site itself is generally flat with a slight rise from west to east (northwest corner = 14.40m aOD northeast corner = 14.53m aOD).

2.3 Geology

- 2.3.1 The underlying Site geology comprises deposits of Pleistocene river terrace gravels, the Taplow Gravels (British Geological Survey, Map sheet 256). These are believed to have been deposited between *circa.* 250,000 and *circa.* 120,000 years Before Present (BP) (MoL, 2000, 15).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 No previous archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken on the Site and it is not part of a Scheduled Monument. A number of archaeological finds, mostly found in the 19th century, are recorded in the area, with dates ranging from Palaeolithic to medieval. However, few of these can be accurately provenanced.

3.2 Palaeolithic

- 3.2.1 The Taplow Gravels have historically been rich sources of Palaeolithic and Pleistocene finds, and prehistoric artefacts have been recovered from the vicinity of the Site. Individual and groups of Lower Palaeolithic hand axes (500,000-150,000 BC) and other flint tools have been found between St James and Walthamstow Central railway stations (MoL 2000, 43). Although these represent isolated poorly provenanced find spots they do serve as an indicator of transient human activity for a time when more comprehensive archaeological evidence is sparse.

3.3 Saxon and Medieval

- 3.3.1 The Area of Special Archaeological Priority, as defined in the Waltham Forest UDP, highlights the potential for medieval or earlier settlement evidence in the area. Whilst there is no direct evidence of a Saxon or early medieval settlement in the vicinity, the place name; Walthamstow- “a place where strangers are welcome” (Weiner and Hebert, 1983, 945) would suggest some form of settlement at that time.
- 3.3.2 The first reference to a manor at Walthamstow is in a Domesday Book entry dating from 1086. At this date the manor belonged to the Ralph de Toni, standard bearer to William I (Weiner and Hebert, 1983, 946).
- 3.3.3 The area appears to have been part of the Royal Forest of Waltham in the medieval period (Weiner and Hebert, 1983, 946).
- 3.3.4 Throughout the medieval period the area appears to have been rural, with the main focus of settlement being around the 12th century parish church of St Mary, some 1200m to the east of the Site.

- 3.3.5 From the 15th century onwards the forest was cleared and Walthamstow became a popular site for large houses built by City merchants.
- 3.3.6 The present High Street, formerly called Marsh Street, appears to be relatively ancient. It leads from Hoe Street and the historical centre of Walthamstow along the line of present day Coppermill Lane, to a mill situated on the River Lea. A mill is mentioned in the Walthamstow entry in Domesday Book.

3.4 Modern

- 3.4.1 By the turn of the 19th century, cartographic evidence records the dramatic expansion of the built up area in Walthamstow and St James following the construction of the Great Eastern Railway Company's Walthamstow Hackney Branch Railway in the 1870s.
- 3.4.2 The 1867-1876 Ordnance Survey Maps (not illustrated) show the Site as a field or orchard laying to the south of Marsh Lane (present day High Street) a large house, Grove House, is shown to the west of the Site and the field/orchard was possibly part of the Grove House estate. By the 1890s the area along High Street had been built on although the Site itself appears to have remained open and was probably used as a yard for the properties fronting High Street. The layout of the Site appears to have remained essentially the same until modern times.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1.1 The overall objective of the watching brief was to establish and record, as far as reasonably possible, any archaeological remains that may survive beneath the present ground surface.
- 4.1.2 It sought to characterise the nature, date, depth and state of preservation of any features and deposits and to retrieve where present, stratified assemblages of finds and ecofacts.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Fieldwork

- 5.1.1 All watching brief work was conducted in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2001) and English Heritage's *London Region Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork* (1998), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.
- 5.1.2 The fieldwork strategy is described in detail in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WA, 2008 ref 68820.01) but in summary it comprised the supervised excavation in 50mm spits, of all ground intrusive works including strip foundation trenches (**Figure 1**). The work was carried out with a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket and all works took place under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist.
- 5.1.3 All archaeological deposits were recorded by means of Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording sheets. A photographic record was made by means of black and white prints, colour slides and digital images. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 and sections at 1:10.

5.2 Finds Collection and Retention

- 5.2.1 All Finds were treated in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2001), the UK Institute of Conservators' *Guidelines Conservation Guideline No 2* and the Museums and Galleries Commission's *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (1991), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.
- 5.2.2 Where features or deposits were clearly modern finds were examined noted and discarded.

5.3 Environmental Sampling Strategy

- 5.3.1 A strategy for sampling archaeological and environmental deposits was developed in consultation with Wessex Archaeology's environmental manager and was set out in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology, 2008, section 6.2).

5.4 The Archive

- 5.4.1 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in London under the Wessex Archaeology project code Wessex Archaeology 68820.
- 5.4.2 The project archive will be prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage* (UKIC 1990).
- 5.4.3 The resulting archive will be put onto microfiche to the standards accepted by the National Monuments Record (NMR).
- 5.4.4 Following the conclusion of the project and with the permission of the landowner the archive will be prepared for deposition with the Museum of London under MOL Site Code: CBK 08.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Depositional sequence

- 6.1.1 The following section presents a brief summary of the results and an outline of the depositional sequence observed on Site. Detailed summaries of the trenches are presented in **Appendix 1** and full details are available in the project archive. In the following sections context numbers are given in bold.
- 6.1.2 No archaeological features, deposits or related artefactual material other than modern were observed in any part of the Site.
- 6.1.3 The soil profile observed was broadly similar in all the sections observed (**Figure 2**).
- 6.1.4 The earliest deposit observed was a layer of laminated undulating gravel **06** whose base was not reached at 1.8m below modern ground level (12.90m aOD). This geological deposit, which comprised orange brown coarse sand and clayey gravel made up of frequent small to medium sub-angular to sub-rounded pebbles, contained no artefacts or ecofacts

- 6.1.5 This deposit was overlain by a 0.3m thick layer of stiff yellowish brown silty clay (**05**) which contained few inclusions and no finds and almost certainly represents the upper surface of the drift geology.
- 6.1.6 The clay deposit was sealed by dark grey brown clay silt (**04/08**) which comprised the former topsoil. This was up to 0.6m thick although in some of the sections observed this deposit had been substantially or completely removed by modern truncation. In the centre of the Site this deposit was a much darker grey and showed signs of having been severely waterlogged by seepage from a modern drain and manhole.
- 6.1.7 Over most of the Site the former topsoil was overlain by rubble rich deposits (**03** and **07**). These levelling / bedding layers were up to 0.6m thick in total and contained red and yellow brick fragments, roofing slate and other demolition material. There was also occasional fragments of 19th and 20th century pottery and green bottle glass mixed with the former topsoil. In parts of the Site the bedding layer lay directly over the clay deposits of the drift geology.
- 6.1.8 In parts of the Site the bedding layer was overlain by a layer of tarmac and compacted pulverized fuel ash (**02**) and in areas by a thin layer of concrete (**01**) which formed the surface of the modern car park. The walls of the modern garages and a number of modern services cut through these deposits.

6.2 Finds

- 6.2.1 The only artefacts recovered on Site were modern in origin. These were noted but not retained

6.3 Environmental Evidence

- 6.3.1 Due to the absence of suitable deposits, no samples were taken for environmental analysis.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 General

- 7.1.1 The watching brief observed no archaeological deposits or features.
- 7.1.2 Geological deposits comprising undulating, silty clay over laminated coarse sandy gravels were observed in all of the excavated areas at heights of between 14.00m aOD (Trench 1) and 13.80m aOD (Trench 2). No artefacts or ecofacts were uncovered from these deposits.

7.2 Impact

- 7.2.1 The results of the watching brief show that the proposed development would not have an impact on significant archaeological deposits.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage London Region (1998) *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork – Archaeological Guidance Paper 3*

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9 APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT SUMMARY TABLES

Trench 1 (New Electricity Sub-Station)

(+) = base of feature or deposit not reached

Context no.	Description	Interpretive keywords	Height in metres aOD
01	Concrete	Construction slab of car park	14.53
02	Tarmac and compacted pulverized fuel ash.	Construction slab of yard/car park	14.43
03	Rubble rich deposit. Red yellow brick (frogged) fragments, crushed white and yellow mortar, yellow sand, 19 th and 20 th century pottery, occasional fragments of green bottle glass	Construction. Bedding/ levelling layer. "Made ground"	14.33
04	Dark greyish brown, clay silty. Frequent charcoal flecks throughout, occasional small fragments of red roof tile, some bioturbation, roots throughout	Topsoil. Cultivation	14.23
05	Mid yellowish brown stiff silty clay with 20% mid orange brown mottles. No intrusions	Drift geology. "Natural"	14.00
06	Mid orange brown, laminated clayey coarse sandy gravel. Gravel – small to medium sub rounded to sub angular pebbles	Drift geology. "Natural"	Top-13.80 Base- 13.10 (+)

Trench 2 (South western house)

(+) = base of feature or deposit not reached

Context no.	Description	Interpretive keywords	Height m aOD
02	Tarmac and compacted pulverized fuel ash. Did not cover all of Trench 2	Construction slab of yard/car park	14.50
07	Dark-mid grey loose clayey silt with frequent fragments of tarmac, small sub rounded pebbles, red brick	Bedding/ levelling layer. Construction. "Made ground"	14.50
08	Mid greyish brown, fine sandy clay silt. Occasional small to well rounded pebbles, small fragments of red roof tile, roofing slate, 19 th and 20 th century pottery, occasional fragments of green bottle glass throughout	Former topsoil. Cultivation	14.40
05	Mid yellowish brown stiff silty clay with 20% mid orange brown mottles. No intrusions	Drift geology. "Natural"	13.80
06	Mid orange brown, laminated clayey coarse sandy gravel. Gravel – small to medium sub rounded to sub angular pebbles	Drift geology. "Natural"	Top-13.50 Base- 12.90 (+)

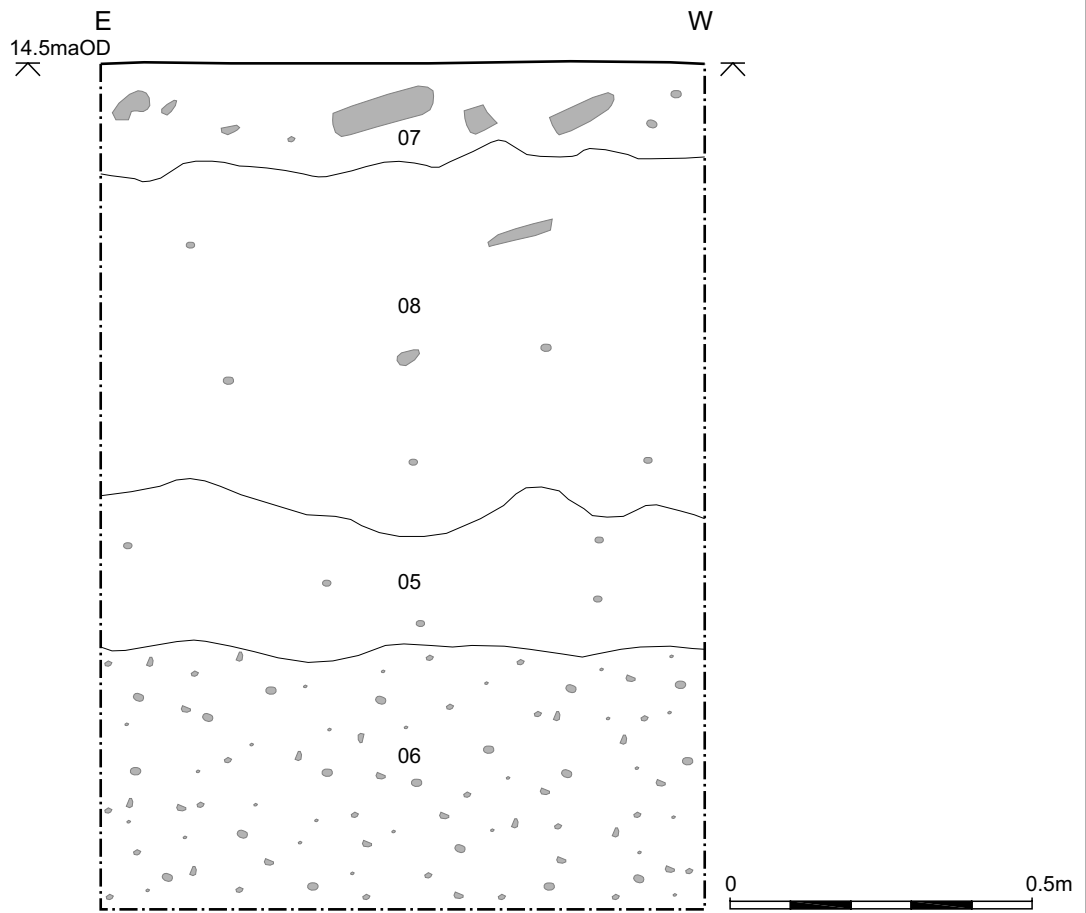
Trench 3 (South eastern house)

(+) = base of feature or deposit not reached

Context no.	Description	Interpretive keywords	Height m aOD
03	Dark grey brown. Rubble rich deposit. Demolition mixed with humic topsoil. Frequent red and yellow brick (frogged) fragments, crushed white and yellow mortar, yellow sand, roofing slate	Bedding/levelling layer. Construction. "Made ground"	14.63
04	Dark greyish brown, clay silt. Frequent charcoal flecks throughout, occasional small fragments of red roof tile, some bioturbation, roots throughout	Former Topsoil. Cultivation	14.00
05	Mid yellowish brown stiff silty clay with 20% mid orange brown mottles. No intrusions	Drift geology. "Natural"	13.80
06	Mid orange brown, laminated clayey coarse sandy gravel. Gravel – small to medium sub rounded to sub angular pebbles	Drift geology. "Natural"	Top-13.60 Base-12.80 (+)

(+) = base of feature or deposit not reached





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North-facing representative section of Trench 2

Figure 2



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