

234 BATH ROAD
Harlington, London
UB3 5AP

London Borough of Hillington

Archaeological watching brief

June 2024



**234 Bath Road,
Harlington,
UB3 5AP**

Site Code: BTG24
NGR: 508088,176979
OASIS reference: molas1-525426

Planning reference: 41331/app/2016/1035
Condition no.: 21

Report on an archaeological watching brief

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by MOLA at 234 Bath Road, Harlington, UB3 5AP. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Nine Heathrow Ventures Ltd.

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation, a watching brief was undertaken in a delimited area (Area 1) comprising c. 1200m².

Machining had started before the commencement of archaeological attendance and the eastern side, 40m x 20m, was already exposed to natural gravel at 21.87m aOD.

On the western side of Area 1, the main deposits observed, below modern made ground, consisted of sand and gravel belonging to the Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel member. Within the sequence of sand and gravel was a layer of gravel mixed with dark grey silt and clay. The presence of this layer across the site raised the possibility of it constituting a buried soil which may have sealed a more ancient land surface. To better characterise the deposit geoarchaeological support was required on site.

Possible archaeology was observed in the northwest, where two pits [8] and [10] were investigated; no finds were recovered, although oak, blackthorn and hazel charcoal were recovered from pit [10]. An undated tree throw was also investigated.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by MOLA at 234 Bath Road, Harlington, UB3 5AP, specifically at Novotel Terminal 1,2&3 Car Park ('the site') between the 15th and the 23rd of May 2024. This document reports on that work.
- 1.1.2 The site is located in a dense suburban area of West London. It is 2.7km east of the river Colne, and 1km south of the M4 (Fig. 1). It is immediately north of Heathrow airport and the site itself was in use as the Novotel car parking.
- 1.1.3 No previously evaluation works were carried out on the site and no Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA) has been undertaken for this site, however much relevant information can be gleaned from a borough-wide assessment of Archaeological Priority Zones completed by CgMs for the London Borough of Hillingdon (CgMs 2013) and reported here from the WSI (L-P: Archaeology).

1.2 Planning background

- 1.2.1 The watching brief was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the conditional Planning Consent granted by LBH for the redevelopment of the site, Condition 21 of a Planning Permission 41331/APP/2016/1035.

1.3 Scope of the evaluation

- 1.3.1 The aims of the watching brief, recommended by Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), were to record any archaeological remains revealed during the works; to ensure that were significant remains encountered, that the GLAAS Archaeological Advisor was informed, and appropriate action taken.
- 1.3.2 The specific aims of the Watching Brief were:
 - To watch for the presence of any prehistoric remains
 - To watch for any evidence of medieval land use that might relate to nearby settlements
 - To watch for and record evidence for the land use of the site and its nature over time
- 1.3.3 An archaeological watching brief is a limited fieldwork exercise designed to test the conclusions of preliminary WSI work. It is not the same as full excavation.
- 1.3.4 The monitoring and recording were carried out under the terms of the relevant *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching brief* published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2020).
- 1.3.5 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's *A research framework for London Archaeology* (2002).
- 1.3.6 All work was undertaken within research aims established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief (L-P: Archaeology 2019)

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 The British Geological Survey GeoIndex shows the site to be located on a bedrock of Thames Group (clay, silt, sand, and gravel), with superficial deposits of River Terrace deposits of undifferentiated sand and gravel (BGS, 2019). The Taplow Gravels form one of a sequence of gravel terraces in this area created during the Pleistocene, by movement of the river Thames (Lewis et al. 2006: 5).
- 2.1.2 In Volume 1 of the syntheses on the excavations of Heathrow Terminal 5, the authors use the term 'Heathrow Terrace' synonymously with this area Taplow Gravels, as a useful means to describe an ancient topographic valley zone. The Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel areas refer to the block of landscape which is 'defined by the river Colne in the west and the river Crane in the east', and in the north by the 'junction of the Taplow and Lynch Hill Terraces, and to the south the junction of the Taplow with the Kempton Park Terrace' (Lewis et al. 2006: 6).
- 2.1.3 These geological boundaries appear on the ground as breaks in slope, which are imperceptible today owing to the effects of modern development, however, would have had a far more marked topographic effect in the past.

2.2 Archaeology

Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 In the prehistoric period the area around Heathrow would have appeared as a series of slopes, formed of gravel terraces, in a broad valley down to the Colne (see 2.1.3 above).
- 2.2.2 Significant prehistoric sites are known throughout the Colne Valley; the higher dry ground surrounding river valleys often forming a focus for activity. Archaeological sites around Heathrow have been excavated since the 1940s, with investigations at Heathrow Terminal 5 (Lewis et al. 2006), Home Farm (Hoad et al., 2010), and Prospect Park contributing much to our understanding of the prehistoric landscape.
- 2.2.3 Palaeolithic material such as hand axes and lithic tools are deposited widely within the Taplow terraces, these terraces having been occupied from the late Lower Palaeolithic onwards (Lewis et al. 2006: 13). A small assemblage of early Upper Palaeolithic material was excavated as the World Cargo site at Heathrow (Juby 2011). Mesolithic activity is known from the Terminal 5 Perry Oaks site; a pit cluster and residual Mesolithic flakes in later scatters (Lewis et al. 2006: 28).
- 2.2.4 During the Neolithic period the area became widely more settled, and vast monumental earthworks were constructed; represented by the linear Stanwell Cursus, 3.6km in length, as well as smaller circular or sub-circular enclosures such as the causewayed enclosure at Yeoveny Lodge, and a large double ditched enclosure to the east of Perry Oaks at Mayfield Farm, as well as pits at 'Caesar's Camp' (Grimes et al 1993).
- 2.2.5 Substantial tracts of Bronze Age field systems are recorded around Heathrow with many linked settlements across the area. The excavations at Perry Oaks at least six potential settlements with linked field systems. This kind of activity is known widely throughout the area Harmondsworth, Sipson, Harlington, and has continuity into the Iron Age (CgMs 2013: 73).
- 2.2.6 In 1944, an excavation was undertaken by WF Grimes 1km to the east of the

site, on the monument popularly known as 'Caesar's Camp'. The rescue excavation revealed remains of Late Bronze Age activity and extensive structural remains dating from the Iron Age, including a postulated Romano-Celtic style 'temple' situated within the Iron Age enclosed settlement of roundhouses (Grime et al., 1993).

Saxon and medieval

- 2.2.7 There is a significant amount of early medieval activity recorded in the wider area around Heathrow. Harlington itself is a village with its origins in the Saxon period; it is named in a 9th-century charter as *Hygeredington* and in the 1086 Domesday survey as *Herdinstone*. St Peter and St Paul's Church can be dated to the 12th century (CgMs, 2013: 20).
- 2.2.8 A medieval field system of small enclosures and wells was recorded at the Imperial College Sports Ground approximately 700m north of the site.

Post-medieval

- 2.2.9 Rocque's 1754 *Map of London & 10 miles around* (not reproduced), shows a rural landscape characterised by number of hamlets and villages, with fields beyond. The east-west road now represented by the modern-day Bath Road is pictured on the site. It is likely that the site would have existed as one of the open green fields fronting Bath Road.
- 2.2.10 Later maps from the Ordnance Survey 1895 and 1935 (not reproduced), show the slow pace of development in this rural landscape throughout the 1800s, with piecemeal Victorian development following the formalising of the landscape post-enclosure. The site is roughly located in an area known as Sipson Green, an area between Bolton's Lane and 'New Road' shown with several residential houses fronting the roads, with large garden plots to the rear.
- 2.2.11 Following the construction of the airfield in the 1940s and its limited development in the following decades, it was not until the 1980s that the surrounding rural areas were swept away in favour of suburban schemes servicing the airport.

3 Watching brief methodology

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 A watching brief was carried out in the western side (20m by 20m) of Area 1. Two sections (north- and south-facing) were examined and were recorded as 1m sections (reproduced below). The work was carried out between 15 May 2024 and 23 May 2024.
- 3.1.2 Archaeological investigation was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (L-P: Archaeology 2019).
- 3.1.3 Three features were investigated, of which two were pits, [8] and [10], which were identified in the northwest as possible archaeological features. These were half-sectioned, recorded and then fully excavated.
- 3.1.4 In the southwest part of site, a third feature was investigated, which proved to be a more recent tree throw.
- 3.1.5 The pits were located and plotted on plans by MOLA. Further levels, referenced in this report (eg '21.87m OD'), levels relate to OS Ordnance Datum, were supplied by the subcontractor on site, using a laser dumpy level.
- 3.1.6 The methodology for the individual pits is explained below. The MOLA generic watching brief methodology for sites is in the Appendix.

3.2 Recording methodology

- 3.2.1 A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (L-P: Archaeology, 2019).

3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	0
Number of overall location plans	2
Number of Context (SU) sheets	12
Number of photographs	62
Number of Plan sheets	2
Number of Sections	4

4 Results of the watching brief

4.1 Area 1

Location	234 Bath Road, Harlington, Novotel Terminal 1,2 & 3 Car Park (at north)
Dimensions	60m by 20m by 3.31m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	23.57m OD
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	21.94m OD
Top of surviving natural observed at	21.87m OD
Level of base of trench	20.26m OD

- 4.1.1 MOLA was asked to attend 15 May 2024, when ground reduction had already commenced. As a consequence, in discussion with the GLAAS archaeological advisor, it was decided that the work would assume a geoarchaeological focus, in addition to the completion of a standard archaeological watching brief, in order to assess the potential for Upper Palaeolithic activity to have been present on the site.
- 4.1.2 As a result of this, MOLA geoarchaeologists made site visits in tandem with the attending Senior Archaeologist to record the sections visible in the walls of the excavation area for the proposed new build (see logs, Section 9).
- 4.1.3 The investigation area, referred to as Area 1, was approximately 60m in length (east-west) and 20m in width (north-south) (Fig. 2).



Photo 1 General view of site, looking east

- 4.1.4 During the archaeological watching brief, it was only possible to monitor works in the western part of the site (c 20m by 20m) (Photo 1), the rest of the area already having been impacted by machining. From a geoarchaeological point

of view the north side of the proposal area was most promising with the Taplow gravel sequence interrupted by a layer

- 4.1.5 The earliest exposed deposit was natural gravel [3] revealed at 21.87m OD. It comprised orange sand and gravel belonging to the Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel member and was present across the whole area 1.



Photo 2 South-facing site section of area 1, looking north

- 4.1.6 Above this was a layer of light grey clayey/silty gravel [11] which was thicker towards south although it was not present at all in the south-facing section of the area. This deposit appears to represent a buried prehistoric land surface. It was exposed at 21.92m OD.
- 4.1.7 Cut into this layer were two archaeological features exposed in northwest part of site, pit [8] and pit [10]. (Fig. 2). There was no physical relationship between the two pits (Fig. 5), although they were found next to each other and exposed at 22.22m OD (Photo 4).
- 4.1.8 Samples were taken from the fills of both pits. Fill [7] from pit [8] failed to yield anything more than comminuted fragments of charcoal, precluding identification. Fill [9] from pit [10] yielded a small quantity of identifiable remains consisting of oak, blackthorn and hazel.

- 4.1.9 To the southeast of these pits was a shapeless feature (Photo 5) in the same gravelly land surface [11]; following investigation it was concluded that the feature represented a tree throw [12].

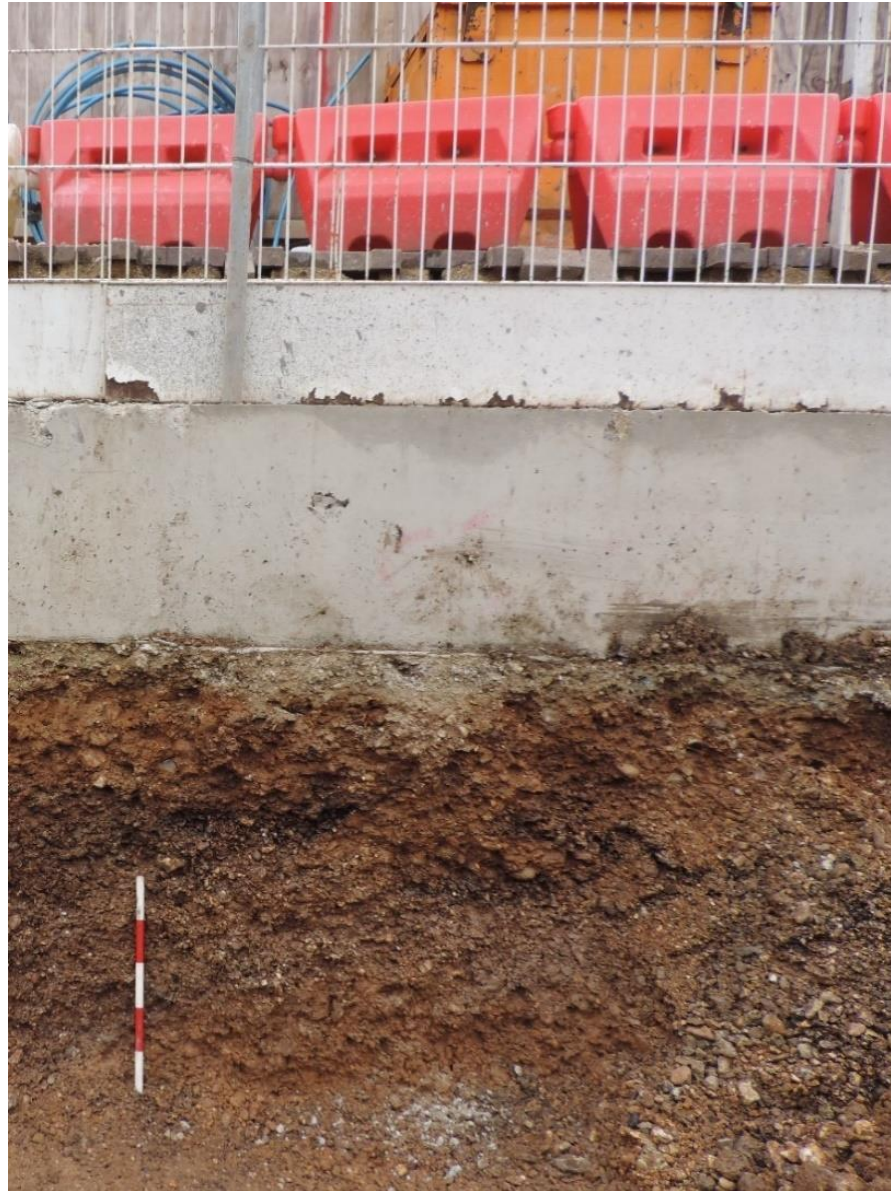


Photo 3 North-facing site section of area 1, looking south

- 4.1.10 Despite sampling and full excavation of the pits, no finds were recovered from any of the features, which prevents any proposing any possible date for the features; it is however most likely that these represent background prehistoric activity in the area. Pit [10] did, however, yield a low diversity range of charred longer-lived and shorter-lived wood species.
- 4.1.11 Above this was a patchy layer of gravel mixed with black silty clay [5] exposed at 22.07m OD. The presence of this layer across the site, although patchy, raised the possibility of it constituting a buried soil which may seal more ancient land surfaces. No anthropogenic material (i.e. worked flints) was found in association with this layer or the underlying strata. Sample {1} from the layer yielded unidentifiable charcoal and occasional molluscs in the deposit.
- 4.1.12 Additionally, there was no evidence of soil horizon formation (i.e. a subsoil). Furthermore, the presence of living roots and the presence of vegetation along the southern fringe of the site raises the possibility that roots from this

vegetation had intruded into this layer and contributed to its character. (Fig. 4).

4.1.13 Another deposit of light orange gravelly sand overlaid the above. It was observed at 22.17m OD and its thickness was 0.20m ca.

4.1.14 Made ground with a thickness of 1.2m, which in turn was sealed by 0.10m thick paving, at 23.57m OD, covered the above deposit (Photo 3).



Photo 4 Northeast facing section pit [8] and pit [10]



Photo 5 Tree throw, looking east

4.2 Archaeobotany

Marvin Demicoli
Archaeobotanist

- 4.2.1 Three environmental samples were collected during a watching brief excavation from the site of BTG24 for the recovery of archaeobotanical and other organic remains. The samples were collected from possibly prehistoric contexts. The volume of the sample was 10-20 litres of sediment. The samples were processed by flotation, using a Siraf flotation tank, with meshes of 0.25mm and 1.00mm to catch the flot and residue respectively. The residues were dried and sorted and any ecofacts were retained. The flot was kept wet and was scanned using a low-powered binocular microscope. Any archaeobotanical materials and other environmental materials were recorded and identified.
- 4.2.2 The results of the assessment of the archaeobotanical remains are given in table 1.
- 4.2.3 Sample {1} from context [5], contained occasional charred wood (charcoal) fragments. These were all smaller than 2mm which precluded any taxonomic identification. Occasional molluscs were noted in the flot.
- 4.2.4 Sample {2} from context [7], also contained occasional charred wood fragments. These were again all smaller than 2mm which precluded any taxonomic identification.
- 4.2.5 Sample {3} from context [9], the fill of a pit, contained occasional charred wood fragments. Five of these fragments were larger than 2mm which allowed taxonomic identification. Charcoal of oak (*Quercus* sp.), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), and hazel (*Corylus* cf. *avellana*) were identified. Oaks are large woodland trees while blackthorn and hazel are smaller shrubs. This was reflected in the annual growth ring curvature of the charred wood fragments, where the oak fragments had weak curvature indicating a larger tree, while the other taxa had strong curvature indicating smaller branches or coppice/pollard poles.
- 4.2.6 The assessed samples had very low quantities of archaeobotanical remains and as such have very low significance. No further archaeobotanical analysis is being recommended for the assessed samples. Should further archaeological excavation works be conducted at the site, there is low to medium potential for the recovery of botanical remains, especially wood charcoal, if systematic sampling is conducted.

Table 1. Sample register and summary of archaeobotanical and charred wood remains recovered from BTG24.

SITECODE	CONTEXT	SAMPLE	PROCESS	ID	ABUNDANC	DIVERSITY	COMMENTS
BTG24	5	1	F	CHD WOOD	Occasional		<2MM +
BTG24	5	1	F	MOLSC TR	Occasional		
BTG24	7	2	F	CHD WOOD	Occasional		<2MM +
BTG24	9	3	F	CHD WOOD	Occasional		<2MM +
BTG24	9	3	W	CHD WOOD	Occasional	Low	>2MM 0.1G; QUERCUS (2) CD1(2), MG(1); PRUNUS SPINOSA (1) CD3; CORYLUS (2) CD2 (2)

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

Research aims established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief were in Section 3, (L-P: Archaeology 2019)

5.1.1 *Presence of any prehistoric remains?*

Two pits, which were undated, but probably prehistoric were revealed during the works, in addition to the undated tree throw,

No prehistoric artefacts were present.

5.1.2 *Any evidence of medieval land use that might relate to nearby settlements?*

No evidence for medieval land use.

5.1.3 *Evidence for the land use of the site and its nature over time?*

Two pits next to each other were exposed in the northeast of area 1, but no anthropogenic material was found for a better understanding.

5.2 General discussion of potential

5.2.1 No previous archaeological investigations had been done within the site.

5.2.2 The watching brief in Area 1, although partial, enabled comparison of the data with adjacent investigations, such as at the nearby Heathrow airport. Although the features were undated and therefore cannot contribute significantly to any understanding of the immediate environment, it is clear that this part of the terrace was contiguous with the rest of the exploited prehistoric landscape of West Middlesex.

5.2.3 The 'Heathrow Terrace', term used synonymously with this area Taplow Gravels, as a useful means to describe an ancient topographic valley zone. The Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel areas refer to the block of landscape which is 'defined by the River Colne in the west and the River Crane in the east', and in the north by the 'junction of the Taplow and Lynch Hill Terraces, and to the south the junction of the Taplow with the Kempton Park Terrace' (Lewis et al. 2006: 6). The topography of the site seems to indicate a possibly Pleistocene hollow to the north of the site which was filled with silty clay gravel in which the postulated archaeological features and the tree throw were found.

5.3 Significance

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

5.4 Assessment of the evaluation

5.4.1 The archaeological watching brief contributed to a better understanding of the archaeological potential of site, confirming that the site is located on a bedrock of Thames Group (clay, silt, sand, and gravel), with superficial deposits of River Terrace deposits of undifferentiated sand and gravel, the Taplow Gravels.

6 Figures

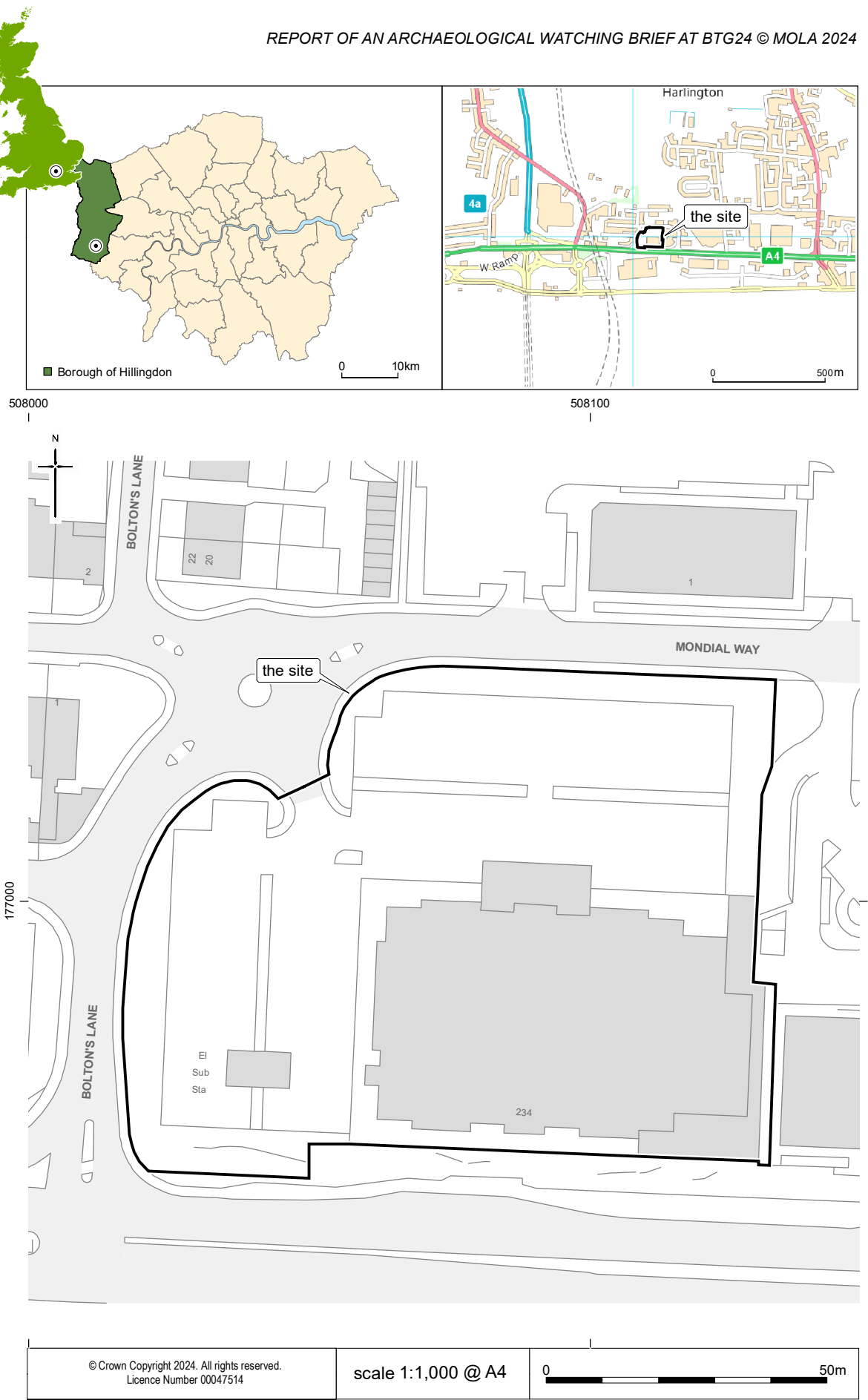


Fig 1 Site location

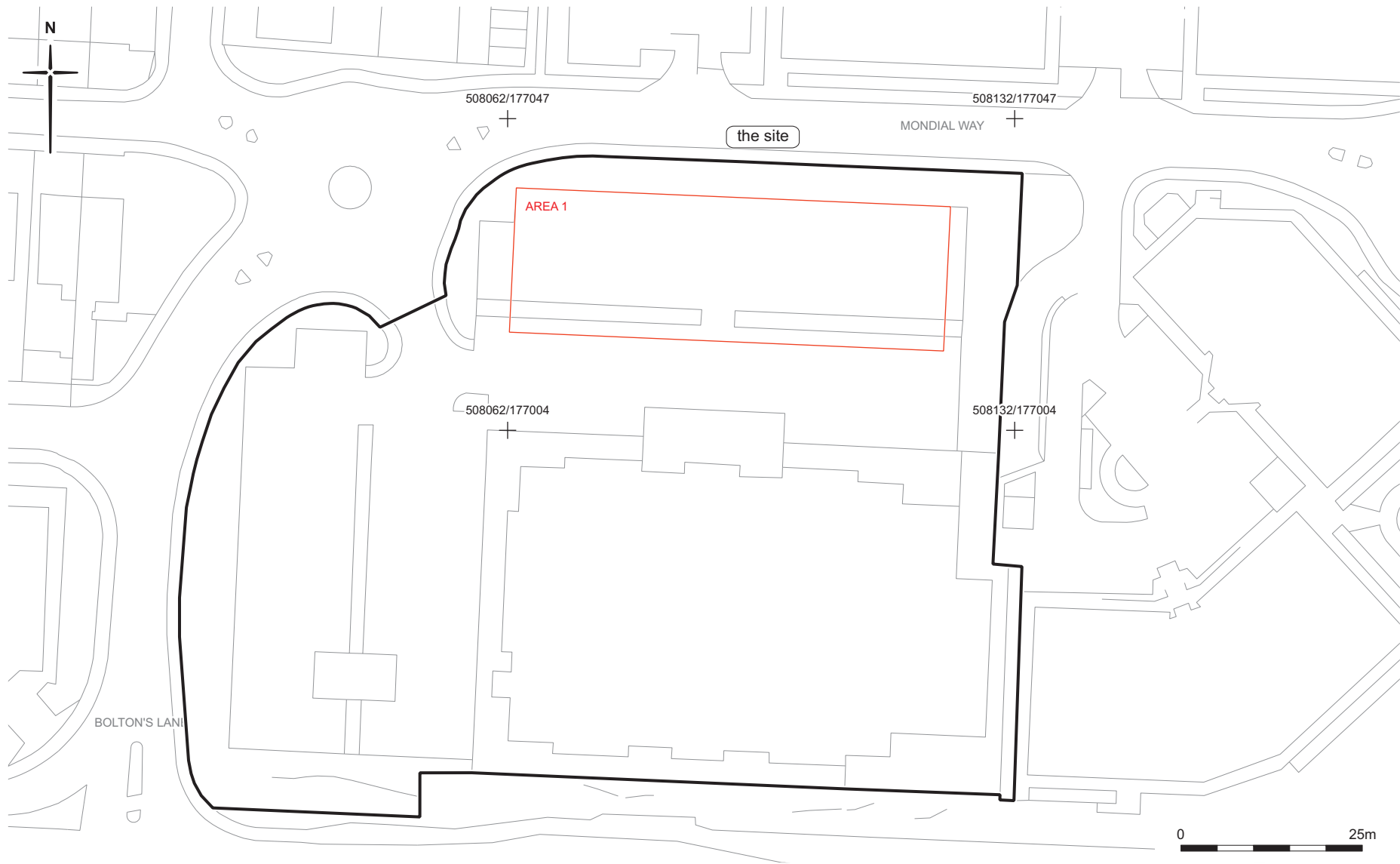


Fig 2 Location of area 1

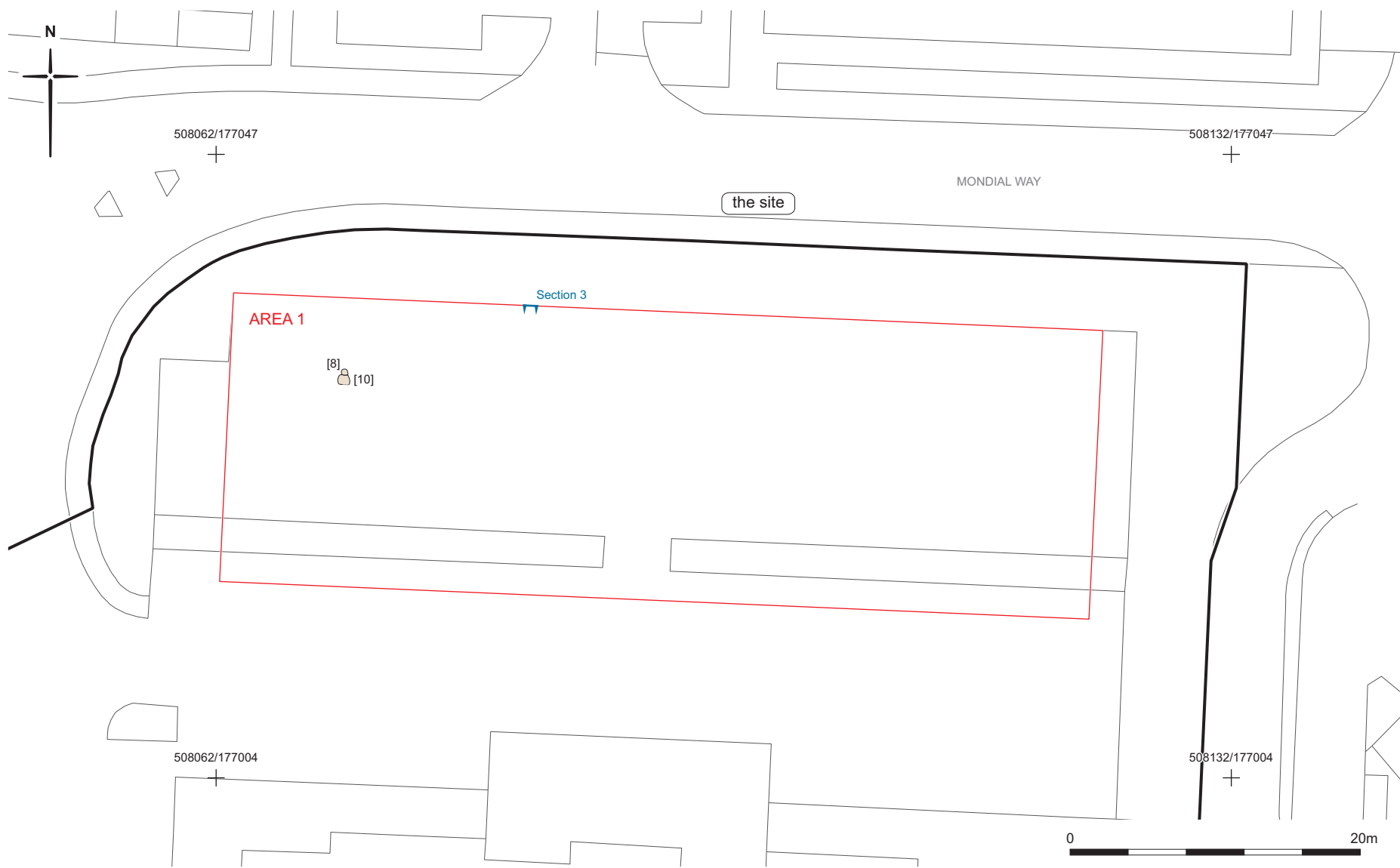


Fig 3 Archaeological features and site section in plan

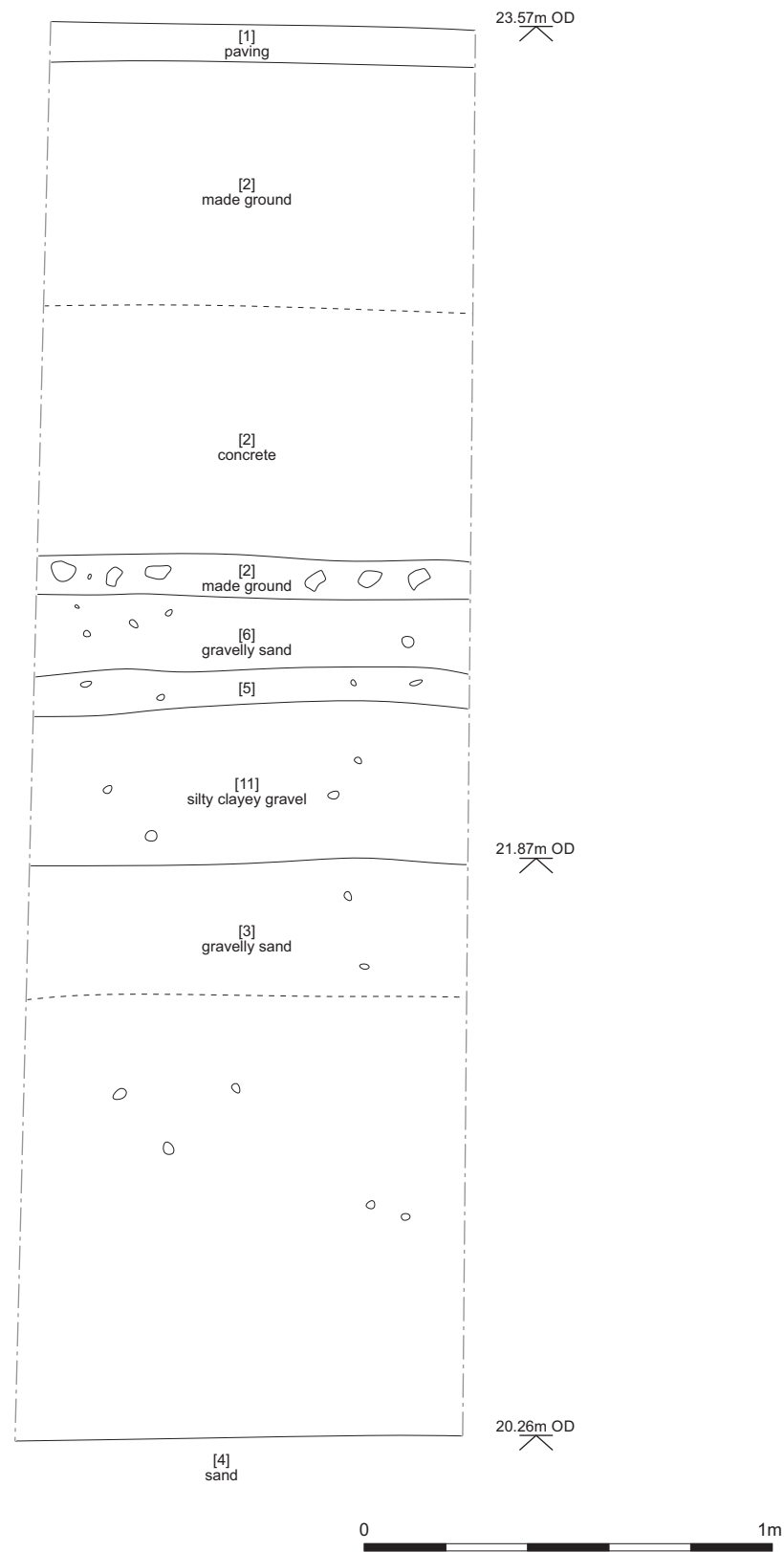


Fig 4 North facing section of the excavation in area 1

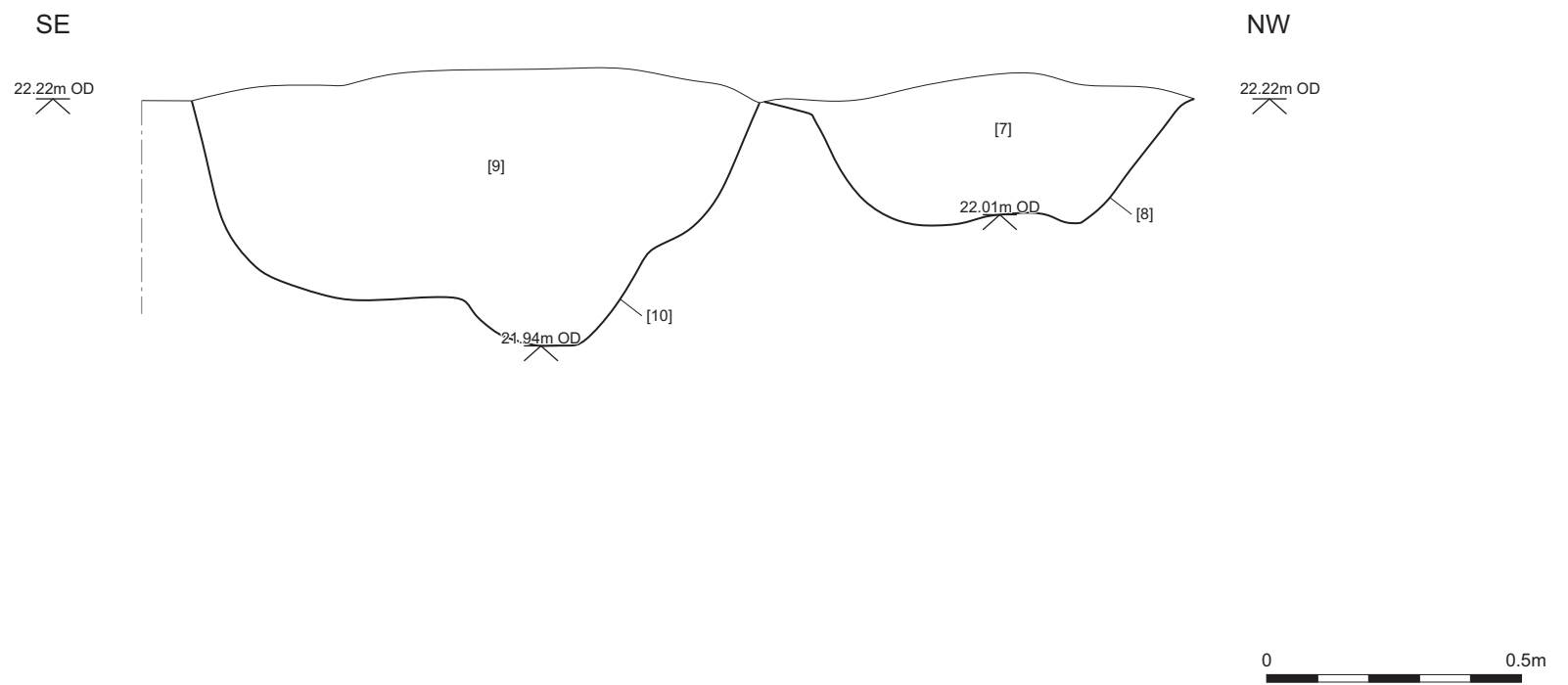


Fig 5 North east facing section pit [8] and pit [10]

7 Acknowledgements

The Museum and the authors would like to thank the Principal Contractor Nine Heathrow Ventures Ltd for funding and commissioning the work, and for the assistance on site. The authors would also like to thank Sandy Kidd from GLAAS for monitoring the site.

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9 Geoarchaeological logs

Prepared by Roland Tillyer

234 Bath Road South facing section							
508089	177036	OD height:		25.11			
Depth to top of unit (m bgl)	Depth to base of unit (m bgl)	OD height of top of unit (m)	OD height at base of unit (m)	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0.00	0.60	23.57	22.97	0.60	Concrete slab.	Modern made ground	2
0.60	0.74	22.97	22.23	0.14	7.5YR 6/2 Pinkish grey compact silty SAND and GRAVEL. Sand is angular, subangular, subrounded and rounded fine, medium and coarse flint and concrete. Clear and wavy boundary.	Modern made ground	2
0.74	0.76	22.23	22.21	0.02	7.5YR 8/1 White compact silty sandy GRAVEL. Gravel is angular, subangular, subrounded and rounded fine, medium and coarse concrete with occasional flint. Sand is fine, medium and coarse. Clear and wavy boundary.	River terrace deposit (Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel)	6
0.76	0.97	22.21	22.00	0.21	7.5YR 4/6 Strong brown compact sandy GRAVEL. Gravel is angular, subangular, subrounded and rounded fine, medium, coarse and cobble-sized flint. Sand is fine, medium and coarse. Clear and wavy boundary.		6
0.97	1.10	22.00	21.87	0.13	7.5YR 4/1 Dark grey compact silty clayey GRAVEL. Gravel is subangular, subrounded and rounded fine, medium and coarse flint, becoming increasingly coarse with depth. Moderate small living roots. Clear and wavy boundary.	Potential buried topsoil or disturbed deposit?	5
1.10	1.24	21.87	21.73	0.14	7.5YR 5/6 Strong brown compact sandy GRAVEL. Gravel is subangular and subrounded fine, medium and coarse flint. Sand is medium and coarse. Diffuse and smooth boundary.	River terrace deposit (Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel)	11
1.24	1.43	21.73	21.59	0.19	10YR 6/8 Brownish yellow compact sandy GRAVEL. Gravel is subangular and subrounded fine, medium and coarse flint. Sand is medium and coarse. Diffuse and smooth boundary.		11
1.43	1.69	21.59	21.33	0.26	10YR 5/8 Yellowish brown compact sandy GRAVEL. Gravel is subangular and subrounded fine, medium, coarse and cobble-sized flint.		3

234 Bath Road North facing section; located 21m from SW corner							
5080620	177018	OD height:		25.11			
Depth to top of unit (m bgl)	Depth to base of unit (m bgl)	OD height of top of unit (m)	OD height at base of unit (m)	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0.00	0.57	25.11	24.54	0.57	Made ground	Modern made ground Modern made ground Modern made ground	2
0.57	1.13	24.54	23.98	0.56	Concrete (laid down for current construction work)		2
1.13	1.23	23.98	23.88	0.10	Moderately compact light grey and yellowish grey mix of sand, gravel and crushed flint and concrete. Occasional larger concrete fragments throughout.		2
1.23	1.41	23.88	23.70	0.18	Moderately compact light orange slightly clayey coarse gravelly sand. Gravel is rounded to subangular fine to coarse with larger pebble sized pieces throughout. Flint and occasional roots present throughout.	River terrace deposit (Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel)	3
1.41	1.49	23.70	23.62	0.08	Moderately compact black (occasional yellow and white) slightly clayey gravel. Black maybe a result of organic matter, though there is no odour of any kind. Gravel is rounded to subangular. Gravel is fine to coarse with occasional larger pebbles. No roots. Deposit is unevenly distributed		3
1.49	1.84	23.62	23.27	0.35	Moderately compact mid orangey and greyish brown slightly clayey gravel. Very coarse sand throughout (potentially just fine gravel). Flint throughout. Gravel is rounded to subangular, fine to very coarse, with occasional pebble sized inclusions and occasional roots.		3
1.84	2.16	23.27	22.95	0.32	Moderately loose mid greyish orange slightly clayey very gravelly sand. Gravel is subrounded to subangular. Occasional small roots.		3

10 OASIS form

OASIS Summary for molas1-525426

OASIS ID (UID)	molas1-525426
Project Name	Watching Brief at 234 Bath Road, London UB3 5AP, United Kingdom
Sitename	234 Bath Road, London UB3 5AP, United Kingdom
Sitecode	BTG24
Project Identifier(s)	BTG24
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	41331/APP/2016/1035
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	MOLA
Project Dates	15-May-2024 - 23-May-2024
Location	234 Bath Road, London UB3 5AP, United Kingdom NGR : TQ 08089 76977 LL : 51.481433, -0.444833 12 Fig : 508089,176977
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Hillingdon Local Authority District : Hillingdon Parish : Hillingdon, unparished area
Project Methodology	An archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken during the excavation of a delimited area (area 1), consisting in 1200 square meters ca.
Project Results	<p>On the western side of Area 1, the main deposits observed, below modern made ground, consisted of sand and gravel belonging to the Heathrow Terrace/Taplow Gravel member. Within the sequence of sand and gravel was a layer of gravel mixed with dark grey silt and clay. The presence of this layer across the site raised the possibility of it constituting a buried soil which may have sealed a more ancient land surface. To better characterise the deposit geoarchaeological support was required on site.</p> <p>Possible archaeology was observed in the northwest, where two pits [8] and [10] were investigated, no finds were recovered, although oak, blackthorn and hazel charcoal were recovered from pit [10]. An undated tree throw was also investigated.</p>
Keywords	
Funder	Private or public corporation Nine Heathrow Ventures Ltd
HER	Greater London HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Gwilym Williams
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Physical Archive, Documentary Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with Museum of London;