Marine Wharf (West) Deptford London

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Marine Wharf (West) Deptford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by David Score

and illustrated by Markus Dylewski

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Summary

Between November 2011 and July 2015 monitoring of ground works was undertaken by OA on the seven successive phases of the development at Marine Wharf, Deptford. There was no major bulk excavation of significant deposits and monitored works included pile cap excavations, lift pits, crane bases, attenuation tanks and service trenches.

The presence across the site of a substantial depth of modern made ground was confirmed and with one exception all of the excavations were within this made ground and had no impact on natural deposits or deposits with potential to contain archaeology.

The one exception was a deep excavation for an attenuation tank in the north east part of the site where in this location modern made ground / dump deposits extended to a depth of 4.5m below current ground level where at 0.5m AOD alluvial deposits were seen. No archaeology was present. This served to confirm at least in this location the significant previous truncation which has taken place.

1 Introduction

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA), was been commissioned by Berkeley Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at the site of a proposed mixed use development at Marine Wharf, Deptford.

1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: 10/73437/X). Although the Local Planning Authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with Mark Stevenson, Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS) established the scope of work required and OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (OA 2011) which set out how OA would satisfy those requirements.

1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the WSI and local and national planning policies.

2 Location, geology and topography

2.1.1 The site of Marine Wharf (West) is situated at National Grid Reference TQ 3636 7876 in Deptford. It is bounded by Plough Way to the north and Carteret Way to the south. The River Thames is approximately 400m to the east of the site.

2.1.2 The area of proposed development is at approximately 5m AOD and currently consists mainly of hard standing and concrete floor slab relating to the previous buildings on the site which have been demolished. A 20m wide strip of rough ground running north to south along the western edge of the site denotes the line of the in-filled Surrey Canal.

2.1.3 The site has a significant thickness of modern made ground which overlies Alluvium Deposits, River Terrace Gravels and Thanet Sand Formation, with Chalk at depth.

3 Archaeological and historical background

3.1.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in the Environmental Statement for the site (WSP Environmental 2010), and will not be reproduced in detail here.

3.1.2 However, the Environmental Statement concludes that the baseline data available for the Site indicates that the archaeological deposits expected to be within the Site boundary will be limited. A combination of limited nearby activity alongside evidence of

considerable disturbance during the Post Medieval and later periods suggest that little material dating from the Roman to early Post Medieval period should be expected to survive.

3.1.3 The presence of alluvial deposits at depth within the Site boundary could have allowed the preservation of waterlogged deposits and horizons of peat which would be considered of moderate to high importance.

3.1.4 However, a significant number of geotechnical investigations were undertaken prior to the production of the Environmental Statement. The top of the alluvial deposits was generally encountered between 2m and 4m below the current ground surface and they extended to over 6m below current levels. Although lenses of peat were noted to occur in the alluvial deposits the records available (White Young Green Environmental 1998) (RSK Group 2009) indicate that layers of peat were not widespread and the deposits themselves not of a substantial nature.

4 Project aims

4.1 General

4.1.1 To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

4.1.2 To record the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains affected by the proposed works.

4.1.3 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site and to take samples where appropriate.

4.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

4.2 Specific

4.2.1 To identify and record any peat horizons which are exposed during the development works and investigate them for evidence of human activity.

5 Methodology

5.1 Scope of works and impacts

5.1.1 This is a mixed use development with both commercial and residential units constructed in courtyard arrangements with associated landscaping, access and car parking. New public open space will be created along the route of the back filled former Grand Surrey Canal.

5.1.2 The site has areas with significant levels of contamination in the buried deposits and development proposals aimed to minimise disturbance of these. There was not any bulk excavation for basements or below ground car parking and only relatively minor adjustments were made to current ground levels.

5.1.3 Most of the site is covered by a minimum of 2m of modern made ground and in much of the area this deposit is considerably deeper so possible impacts on deposits which may have archaeological potential mainly derived from the excavation of lift pits and the provision of attenuation tanks and drainage to comply with EA/TWA requirements. There were excavations for services although most of these did not penetrate to archaeologically significant levels.

5.1.4 The buildings have piled foundations and the density of the buildings does not necessitate an unusually high impact from this activity. Pile cap excavations were thought unlikely to have a significant impact below modern made ground.

5.2 General methodology

5.2.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A of the WSI (OA 2011). Standard methodologies for Geomatics and Survey, Environmental evidence, Artefactual evidence and Burials can also be found in that document (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

5.3 Site specific methodology

5.3.1 Site specific methodologies as laid out in the WSI were as follows:

(i) Given the level of impact anticipated generally on the site and specifically from piling, the depth and uncertain potential of deposits such as peat and the difficulty of targeting it and the concerns regarding contaminated ground it was not felt that 'off-set' mitigation measures such as test pits to look at such deposits would have been viable.

(ii) It was proposed that the impacts of the development would be mitigated by an archaeological watching brief on development activity where excavations were likely to proceed below the modern made ground layers including but not limited to those mentioned in the scope of works above.

(iii) If archaeological deposits were noted the developer was to make access and time available for the archaeologist to adequately investigate and record them.

(iv) If a significant archaeological find was made the archaeologist would immediately have informed the developer and Mark Stevenson (GLAAS) so that arrangements could have been agreed for it to be properly dealt with.

6 Results and conclusion

6.1.1 Between November 2011 and July 2015 monitoring of ground works was undertaken by OA on the seven successive phases of the development. Works impacting below ground deposits are now complete.

6.1.2 There was no major bulk excavation of significant deposits and monitored works included pile cap excavations, lift pits, crane bases, attenuation tanks and service trenches.

6.1.3 Nearly all of the excavations were less than 1.5m below the current ground levels with many of the pile caps, lift pits and crane bases being approximately 1m in depth.

6.1.4 The presence across the site of a substantial depth of modern made ground was confirmed and with one exception (described below) all of the excavations were within this made ground and had no impact on natural deposits or deposits with potential to contain archaeology.

6.1.5 The one exception was a deep excavation for an attenuation tank in the north east part of the site (Figure 2) where there was an opportunity to assess a deeper sequence. In this location modern made ground / dump deposits extended to a depth of 4.5m below current ground level where alluvial deposits were seen to a depth of 6.25m (-1.25m AOD). At this depth thin lenses of peat were seen overlying natural gravelly sand. No archaeology was present. This served to confirm at least in this location the significant previous truncation which has taken place.

7 References

OA 2011, Marine *Wharf (West) Deptford. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief.*

RSK Group 2009, *Marine Wharf, Deptford, London. Detailed Quantitative Groundwater Risk Assessment.* Client Report

White Young Green Environmental 1998, *Ground Contamination and Geotechnical Assessment of the site at Plough Way, Deptford, London SE8.* Client Report

WSP Environmental 2010, *Marine Wharf, Deptford. Volume 1, Environmental Statement. Chapter 8 Archaeology.* Client Report

8 Summary of Site Details

Site name:	Marine Wharf (West) Deptford
Site code:	MWH 11
Grid reference:	Centred on TQ 3636 7876
Type of project:	Watching Brief
Date and duration of project:	November 2011 to July 2015
Area of site:	c. 2.5ha
Summary of results:	Significant depth of modern made ground across the site. No archaeological deposits.
Location of archive:	Museum of London

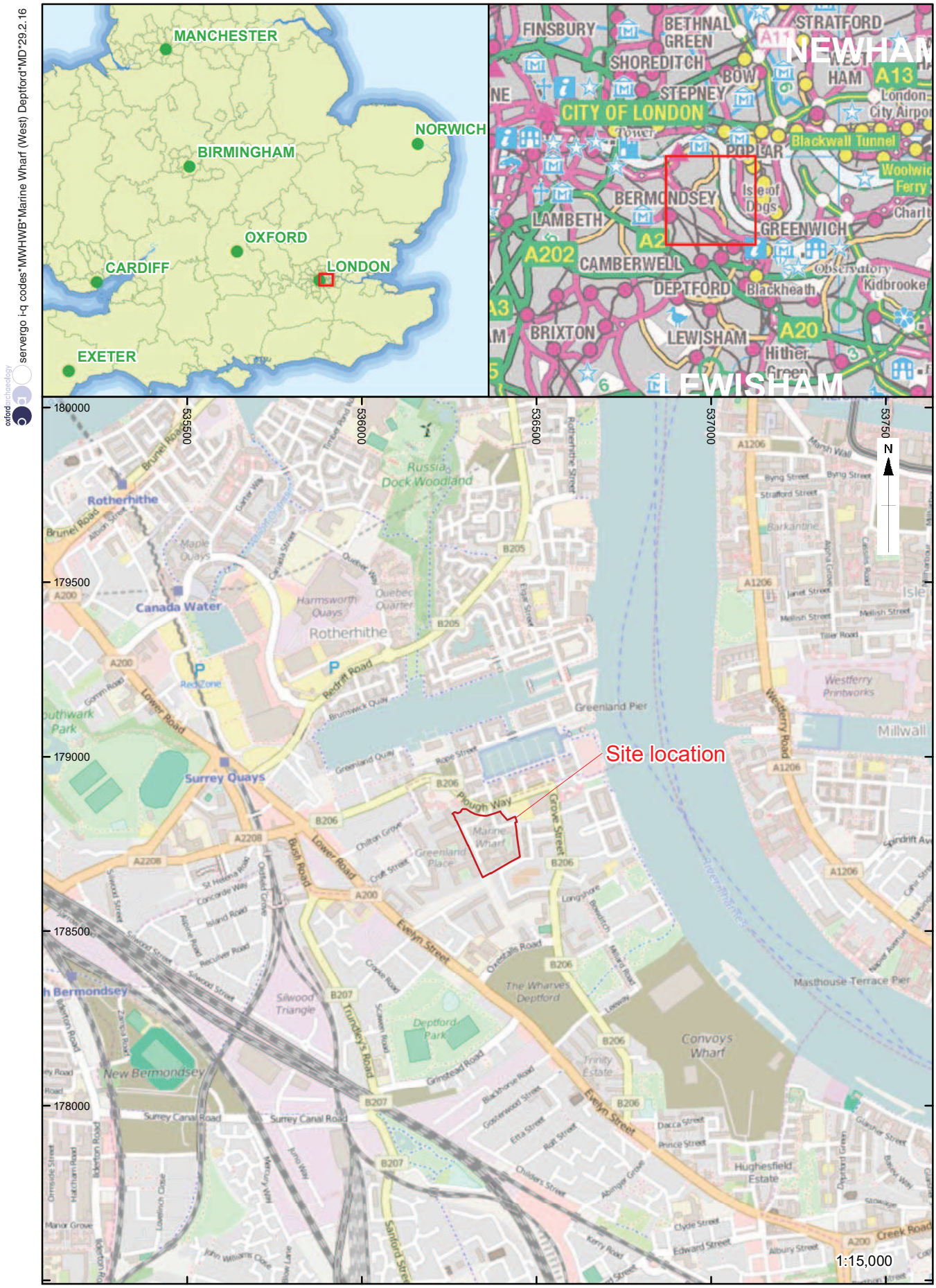

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Figure 1: Site location

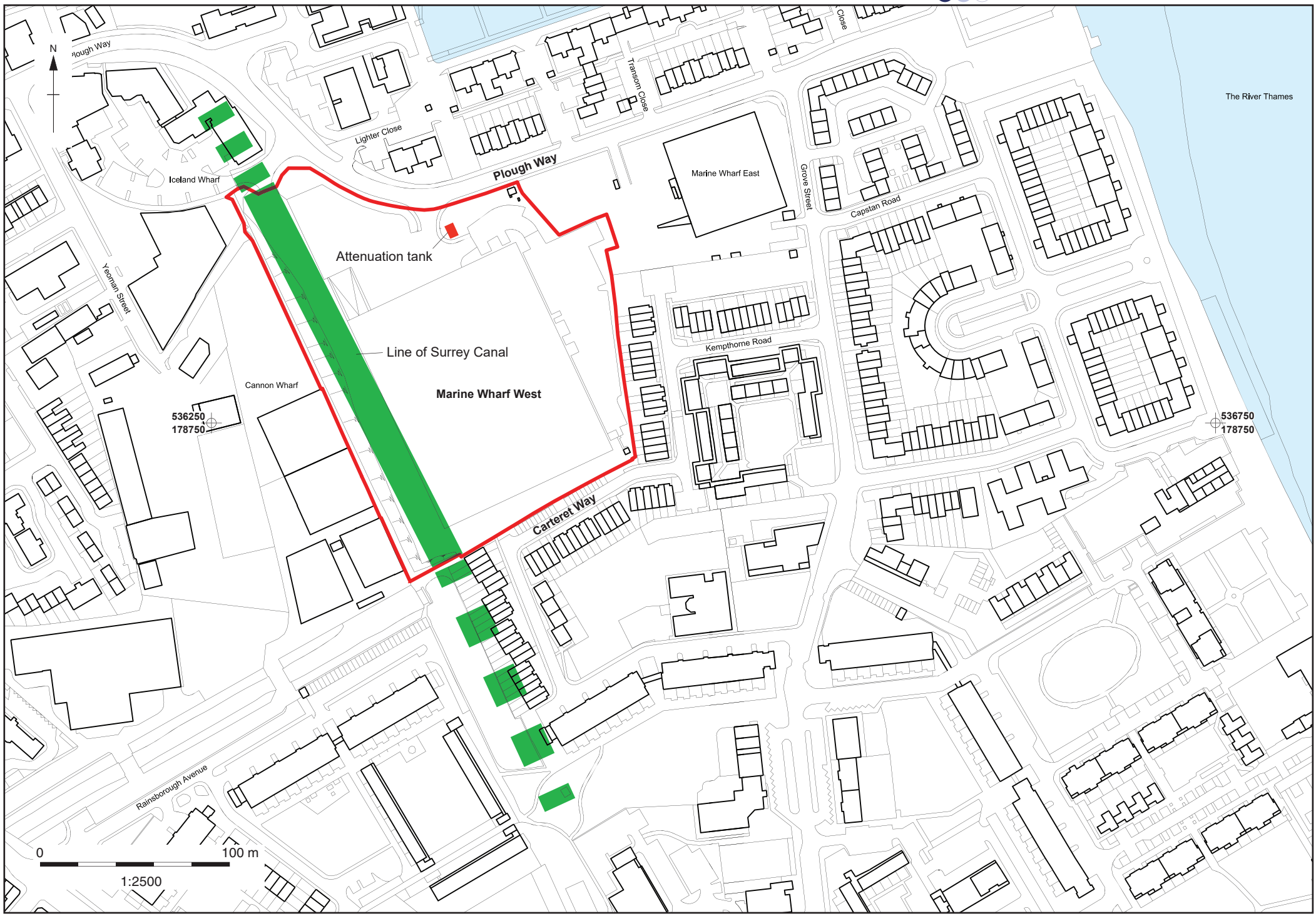

Figure 2: Site Development with location of attenuation tank excavation

Plate 1: Typical pile cap excavation in NE area of site

Plate 2: Typical pile cap excavation in NW area of site

Plate 3: Service trench excavation through modern made ground

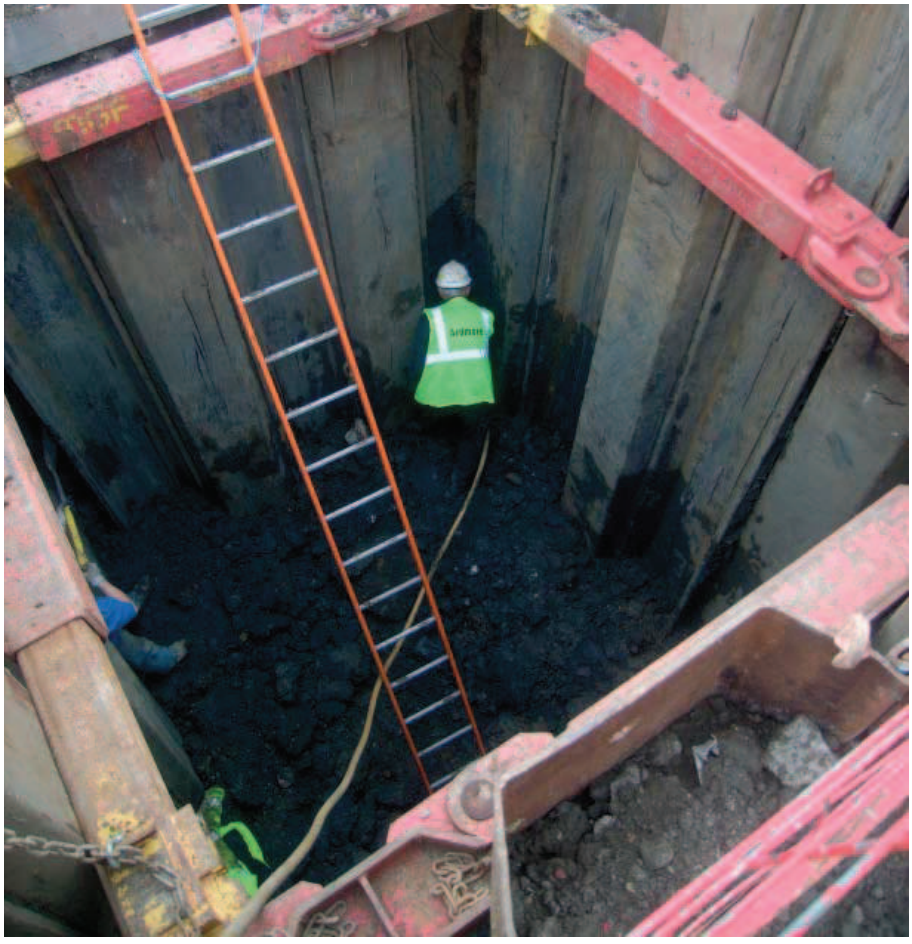

Plate 4: Excavation for deeper attenuation tank in progress

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