

Chapter 2

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The archaeological investigation of the alluvial tract of HS1 (Fig 2) was undertaken in a phased way that was determined by the perceived difficulties in evaluating and investigating the alluvial sequences as well as restrictions imposed by the engineering constraints of the construction project (see Chap 1, *Engineering of the route corridor*). Initial concerns regarding a perceived lack of archaeological potential of the alluvial tract were raised early in the project lifetime due to the apparent absence of archaeological material identified from the areas of alluvium within the route corridor (URL 1994). Consequently, it was recognised that the results of the historical and cultural resource evaluation of this area would require further consideration and the conclusions require additional investigation before they were resolved. Although this work had highlighted the paucity of data pertaining to the archaeological sequences of the alluvial zones where, with the exception of occasional sites of known prehistoric age (eg, in the Rainham area), only relatively recent (post-medieval) features were noted from these areas. In response an alternative strategy for evaluation was devised (Barham and Bates 1994; 1995) commencing with a detailed desk-top evaluation of extant geotechnical results. The outcome of the desk-top evaluation (URN and URS 1999) was a report detailing the anticipated nature and thickness of the alluvium along the route corridor. Linked to this was the construction of a geoarchaeological model including an assessment of the likely areas of high archaeological potential. The aims of the desk-top evaluation (1999) were to:

- Examine evaluation strategies commonly used within areas containing deeply stratified alluvium;
- Examine the likely relationship between archaeological sites and sedimentary contexts within such areas;
- Examine the likely nature of the stratigraphy within the alluvial areas of HS1 with particular reference to determining the age of the sediment sequences and the nature of the 3-D stratigraphic architecture of the sequences.

Following production of the report, a series of appropriate strategies were developed to address the issues raised in the desk-top evaluation. These strategies varied along the route corridor in relation not only to the perceived nature of the archaeological potential but also to the impact of the construction. In particular attention was paid to the relationship between the construction impact/nature and depth and location of the potential archaeology. A variety of approaches were adopted that are described in this report.

The aims and objectives of the study were developed through an academic framework (*Archaeological Research Strategy*) based on the sub-division of HS1 into a series of distinct landscape zones with an identifiable historical character as well as period specific time slices. This was placed along-side the engineering and geotechnical issues to refine the project aims and objectives.

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