St Luke’s Square, Canning Town, London Borough of Newham

An Archaeological Evaluation
for Mizen Design Build Limited

by Andrew Weale
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

March 2008
Summary

Site name: St Luke’s Square, Canning Town, London Borough of Newham

Grid reference: TQ 3975 8115

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 8th March 2007 and 21st-29th February 2008

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: LUC07

Area of site: c. 0.5ha

Summary of results: An undisturbed sequence of naturally deposited alluvial clays and peat was observed in all test pits and trenches. No archaeological features or artefacts were recovered.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Museum of London in due course
Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out St Luke’s Square, Canning Town, London Borough of Newham (TQ 3975 8115) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Mullins, Building Director for Mizen Design Build Limited of Heron House, 109–115 Wembley Hill Road, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 8DA. Full planning permission has been approved (application number 06/00054/LTGDC) for the redevelopment of the site for commercial use on ground and mezzanine levels, 162 residential apartments above, associated landscaping and basement car parking, accessed via Jude Street. The planning permission was subject to a condition (21): ‘No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme pursuant to this condition. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitable qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority’.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment’s Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), policy EQ453 of the London Borough of Newham adopted Unitary Development Plan and Policy 4B.14 of the London Plan on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Divers, Archaeological Advisor of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (English Heritage). The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Taylor, Andrew Weale, Danielle Milbank and Ceri Falys on the 8th March 2007 (test pits), 21st February 2008 and the 25th to 29th of February 2008 and the site code is LUC07. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at The Museum of London in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located close to the confluence of the River Lea and River Thames, with the River Lea to the west and the Thames to the south (Fig. 1). The site currently consists of the footprints of demolished buildings and is generally flat at approximately 2m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as alluvium over
London Clay (BGS 1976), however, in all the trenches and one of the test pits a sequence of alluvium and peat over gravel was observed. The site is roughly rectangular, bounded to the north by Turner Street, the east by St Luke’s Square, the south by Jude Street and the west by Shirley Street.

**Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the floodplain of the River Thames. Within this area of floodplain, prehistoric and Roman landscapes are typically buried by late Roman and subsequent alluvium, which has led to good preservation of archaeological deposits including organic remains. Deposits dating from the Neolithic and Bronze Age have been recorded in the area of the site, which include a number of wooden trackways that linked areas of higher drier ground (islands) across the wetter areas (Meddens 1996; Crocket et al. 2004). A number of stray finds of prehistoric date have been recorded from the general area of the site including late Bronze Age metalwork such as a sword from Bow Creek and a spearhead and socketed axe head from Canning Town and Plaistow Marshes. Other stray finds include a medieval iron spearhead, medieval horse harness and an undated human bone. Various archaeological surveys in the area have produced mixed results. At Butchers Road to the east of the site Late Bronze Age/Iron Age occupation was revealed (GLSMR no 62493); at Alexandra Street an undated cremation burial together with Roman ditches were recorded (76367). However a survey just to the north of the site on St Luke’s School land, Ruscoe Street, revealed nothing of archaeological interest (62804). St Luke’s church to the east of the site is a listed building.

**Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims of the project are;

To determine if archaeological relevant levels have survived on the site given that parts of the site have been previously developed with deep basements.

To determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

To determine if any Roman or prehistoric remains are present, possibly with organic preservation.

To determine the palaeoenvironmental potential of the site.

Four trenches were to be excavated, each measuring 10m long and 4m wide at the base. They were to be positioned to provide targeted spatial coverage of the site. The trenches were stepped to facilitate safe access
and were dug under constant archaeological supervision, by a 360°-type machine fitted with the toothless ditching bucket. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds. Trenches were to be cleaned using hand tools where necessary. The trenching was preceded by the digging of three geotechnical test pits which were also archaeologically monitored.

Results

Test pits

Three machine-dug test pits were excavated prior to the demolition of buildings on the site, the locations of which are shown in Fig. 3. All three test pits were between 1–1.2m wide and 2m long. All three test pits were excavated under the supervision of an archaeologist, however due to their depths none of the test pits were entered and all recording was undertaken outside the test pits. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

Test Pit 1
Test Pit 1 was excavated through an area of concrete hard standing. The observed stratigraphy comprised 0.10m of concrete over 0.15m of made ground consisting of brick/tile and concrete rubble. Beneath this was 1.80m of firm brown alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.20m of firm bluish grey alluvial clay. Beneath this was 1.55m of peat with thin lenses of sandy alluvial clay. The natural geology (gravel) was not reached at the base of this test pit. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

Test Pit 2
Test Pit 2 was excavated through an area of concrete hard standing. The observed stratigraphy comprised 0.30m of concrete over 0.45m of made ground consisting of brick/tile and concrete rubble mixed with silty sand. Beneath this was 1.95m of firm mid-brown alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.40m of firm bluish grey alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.75m of peat with thin lenses of sandy alluvial clay. Beneath the peat layer was mid-grey coarse sand and gravel natural geology. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

Test Pit 3
Test Pit 3 was excavated though the floor slab of a demolished building. The observed stratigraphy comprised 0.20m of concrete above 0.55m of made ground consisting of brick/tile and concrete rubble. Beneath this was 1.65m of firm brown alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.30m of firm bluish grey alluvial clay. Beneath this was 1.30m of peat with thin lenses of sandy alluvial clay. The natural geology was not reached at the base of this test pit. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.
Trenches

Following demolition, all buildings had been reduced to floor slab or footing level and some made ground had also been removed across the site. The trenching also took place after insertion of the piled perimeter basement wall. The four trenches were excavated in the location shown in Fig. 3. The trenches were stepped in after 1.2m and were excavated though three or four steps as necessary onto the natural geology (gravel). The locations of Trenches 1 and 4 were moved up to the edges of the exterior piled wall to take advantage of needing no steps on two sides. The locations of Trenches 2 and 3 were also moved from the positions intended, to facilitate vehicle movement on site, and for health and safety reasons, with the agreement of the Borough’s archaeological adviser.

All machining was supervised by an archaeologist and all spoil heaps were monitored for finds. The bases of all trenches were partially cleaned by hand, however, due to heavy flooding this could not be completed in any trench. The use of a metal detector was employed but abandoned due to flooding.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Plate 1)
Trench 1 was excavated against the edge of the piles on two sides (north and west), stepped on the east side and battered for machine access on the south. The area of Trench 1 at the top was 12m long by 10m wide. The first step was 0.93m deep, the second step was 0.95m deep and the third was 0.73m deep. The area of Trench 1 at the base was 9m long by 7m wide. The observed stratigraphy comprised 1.0m of made ground and demolition rubble, above 1.15m of mottled bluish grey alluvial clay with reddish brown alluvial clay. Beneath this was 1.50m of blackish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay, occasional branches and twigs. The peat was waterlogged. Beneath this was a coarse bluish grey sand and gravel with occasional patches of greenish blue sand. The top 0.03m of the sand and gravel was made up of medium sized sub-rounded pebbles with little sand. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

Trench 2 (Plate 2)
Trench 2 was stepped on all four sides. The area of the trench at the top was 16.5m long by 10m wide. The first step was 1.26m deep, the second step as 1.21m deep and the third was 0.57m deep. The area of Trench 2 at the base was 11m long by 5m wide. The observed stratigraphy comprised 0.44m of made ground and demolition rubble. Beneath this was 0.38m of mottled brown alluvial clay with reddish brown alluvial clay. Beneath this...
was 0.59m of mottled bluish grey alluvial clay. Beneath this was 1.41m of blackish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay, occasional large pieces of tree including sections of trunk, branches and twigs. The peat was waterlogged. Beneath this was a coarse bluish grey sand and gravel with occasional patches of greenish blue sand. The top 0.05m of the sand and gravel was made up of medium sized sub-rounded peddles with little sand. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

**Trench 3 (Plate 3)**

Trench 3 was excavated with one edge in an area of already reduced dig (made ground removed), stepped on the south side and battered for machine access on the east. The north side was initially left vertical for the collection of a soil column from the natural sand and gravel through the peat layers to the overlying alluvial clays, and later battered back for safety. The area of Trench 3 at the top was 11m long by 10m wide. The first step was 1.06m deep, the second step as 0.80m deep, the third was 0.91m deep and the fourth step was 1.16m deep. The area of Trench 3 at the base was 10m long by 6m wide. The observed stratigraphy comprised 1.10m of made ground and demolition rubble above 0.35m of mottled bluish grey alluvial clay with reddish brown alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.98m of mottled bluish grey alluvial clay. Beneath this was 1.42m of blackish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay, occasional large branches and twigs. The peat was waterlogged. Beneath this was a coarse bluish grey sand and gravel with occasional patches of greenish blue sand. The top 0.02m of the sand and gravel was made up of medium sized sub-rounded pebbles with little sand. No archaeological features or artefacts were present. A column sample (sample 1) was taken though the peat layers for future study if required.

**Trench 4**

Trench 4 was excavated against the edge of the piles on two sides (south and west), stepped on the east side and battered for machine access on the north. The area of trench 4 at the top was 12.5m long by 10m wide. The first step was 0.93m deep, the second step as 1.10m deep; the third was 1.07m deep and the fourth 0.62m deep. The area of Trench 4 at the base was 10m long by 7m wide. The observed stratigraphy comprised 0.65m of made ground and demolition rubble. Beneath this was 1.03m of mottled brown alluvial clay with reddish brown alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.44m of mottled bluish grey alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.65m of blackish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay, occasional branches and twigs. The peat was waterlogged. Beneath this was 0.45m of dark bluish grey alluvial clay. Beneath this was 0.70m of lighter brown peat with lenses of grey sand, occasional branches and twigs. Beneath this was a coarse bluish grey sand and
gravel with occasional patches of greenish blue sand. The top 0.07m of the sand and gravel was made up of medium sized sub-rounded pebbles with little sand. No archaeological features or artefacts were present.

**Conclusion**

All the test pits and trenches gave a similar profile of undisturbed alluvial clays above a sequence of peat layers which in turn lay above a coarse grey sand and gravel. Apart from modern truncation near the top of the sequence by the remains of footings and service trenches no features were observed within the clays. Likewise no cut features were observed within the top of the peat layers. All the pieces of wood that were removed and scanned on site show no evidence of working or tool marks and appeared to be naturally deposited. No features were observed within the sand and gravel except for in-situ root systems from the peat layer above. No artefacts were observed on the surface of the sand and gravel or on the spoil heaps. With the exception of Trench 3 the natural was at approximately the same level across the site c. 1.75m below Ordnance Datum, within Trench 3 the natural was slightly lower at c. 2.00m below OD. This difference is likely to be naturally occurring variation in the underlying sand and gravel. The top of the gravel in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 showed signs of erosion beneath the peat layer.

On the basis of these results therefore, the site has no archaeological potential.

**References**


### APPENDIX 1: Trench details

#### 0m at south end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench/test pit</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Breadth (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Pit 1</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>Concrete and made ground above an undisturbed sequence of alluvial clay and peat. Natural geology not encountered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Pit 2</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Concrete and made ground above an undisturbed sequence of alluvial clay and peat. Natural coarse grey sand and gravel at 1.70m Below OD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Pit 3</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Concrete and made ground above an undisturbed sequence of alluvial clay and peat. Natural not encountered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Test Pit 1**: Concrete and made ground above an undisturbed sequence of alluvial clay and peat. Natural coarse grey sand and gravel at 1.75m Below OD.

2. **Test Pit 2**: Concrete and made ground above an undisturbed sequence of alluvial clay and peat. Natural coarse grey sand and gravel at 1.75m Below OD.

3. **Test Pit 3**: Concrete and made ground above an undisturbed sequence of alluvial clay and peat. Natural not encountered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trench/test pit</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Breadth (m)</th>
<th>Depth (m)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0-1.0m made ground and demolition rubble; 1.0-2.15m mottled bluish grey and reddish brown clay (alluvium) 2.15-3.65m blackish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay; 3.65m+ coarse grey sand and gravel (natural geology) at 1.75m Below OD [Plate 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0-0.44m made ground and demolition rubble; 0.44-0.82m mottled brown and reddish brown clay (alluvium); 0.82-1.41m mottled bluish grey alluvial clay; 1.41-2.82m bluish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay; 2.82m+ coarse grey sand and gravel (natural geology) at 1.75m Below OD [Plate 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0-1.10m made ground and demolition rubble; 1.10-1.45m mottled brown and reddish brown clay (alluvium); 1.45-2.43m mottled bluish grey alluvial clay; 2.43-3.85m blackish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay; 3.85m+ coarse grey sand and gravel (natural geology) at 2.03m Below OD. Column sample 1 taken through peat sequence [Plate 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0-0.65m made ground and demolition rubble; 0.65-1.68m mottled brown and reddish brown clay (alluvium); 1.68-2.12m mottled bluish grey alluvial clay; 2.12-2.77m bluish brown peat with lenses of grey sand and bluish grey clay; 2.77-3.22m dark bluish grey alluvial clay; 3.22-3.92m brown peat with lenses of grey sand; 3.92m+ coarse grey sand and gravel (natural geology) at 1.78m Below OD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England**

List of Projects | Search Projects | New project | Change your details | HER coverage | Change country | Log out

Printable version

**OASIS ID: thamesva1-39502**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project details</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project name</td>
<td>St Luke's Square, Canning Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short description of the project</td>
<td>An undisturbed sequence of naturally deposited alluvial clays and peat was observed; no archaeological features or artefacts were found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project dates</td>
<td>Start: 08-03-2007 End: 29-02-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous/future work</td>
<td>No / Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any associated project reference codes</td>
<td>LUC07 - Sitecode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any associated project reference codes</td>
<td>LUC07 - Museum accession ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any associated project reference codes</td>
<td>06/00054/LTGDC - Planning Application No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any associated project reference codes</td>
<td>07/11 - Contracting Unit No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of project</td>
<td>Field evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site status</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Land use</td>
<td>Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods &amp; techniques</td>
<td>'Sample Trenches','Test Pits'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development type</td>
<td>Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development type</td>
<td>Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Position in the planning process: After full determination (e.g. As a condition)

**Project location**
- **Country**: England
- **Site location**: GREATER LONDON NEWHAM CANNING TOWN St Luke's Square, Canning Town
- **Study area**: 0.50 Hectares
- **Site coordinates**: TQ 3975 8115 51.5114682976 0.01411262036310 51 30 41 N 000 00 50 E Point
- **Height OD**: Min: -2.03m Max: -1.70m

**Project creators**
- **Name of Organisation**: Thames Valley Archaeological Services
- **Project brief originator**: English Heritage/Department of Environment
- **Project design originator**: Steve Ford
- **Project director/manager**: Steve Ford
- **Project supervisor**: Andrew Weale
- **Type of sponsor/funding body**: Developer
- **Name of sponsor/funding body**: Mizen Design Build

**Project archives**
- **Physical Archive recipient**: Museum of London
- **Physical Archive ID**: LUC07
- **Physical Contents**: 'Environmental'
- **Physical Archive notes**: temporarily with TVAS in Reading pending deposition
- **Digital Archive Exists?**: No
- **Paper Archive recipient**: Museum of London
- **Paper Archive ID**: LUC07
- **Paper Contents**: 'Survey', 'Environmental', 'Stratigraphic'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper Media available</th>
<th>'Context sheet', 'Correspondence', 'Drawing', 'Manuscript', 'Matrices', 'Microfilm', 'Miscellaneous Material', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section', 'Survey'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper Archive notes</td>
<td>temporarily with TVAS in Reading pending deposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project bibliography 1</td>
<td>Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>St Luke's Square, Canning Town, London Borough of Newham; an archaeological evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)/Editor(s)</td>
<td>Weale, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other bibliographic details</td>
<td>07/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issuer or publisher</td>
<td>Thames Valley Archaeological Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of issue or publication</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A4 comb-bound client report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered by</td>
<td>Steve Preston (<a href="mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk">tvas@tvas.co.uk</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered on</td>
<td>19 March 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OASIS:

Please e-mail English Heritage for OASIS help and advice
© ADS 1996-2006 Created by Jo Gilham and Jen Mitcham, email Last modified Friday 3 February 2006
Cite only: http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/print.cfm for this page
St Luke's Square, Canning Town,
London Borough of Newham, 2008
Archaeological Evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Canning Town and
Greater London.
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Pathfinder 1159 28/38 at 1:12500
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

Figure 2. Detailed location of site within Canning Town

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital mapping under licence. Scale 1:1000
Figure 3. Location of trenches
Trench 1

Made Ground

Orange grey/blue grey clay silt (alluvium)

Peat

Gravel natural geology (base of trench)

Trench 3

Made Ground

Brown alluvial clay

Blue alluvial clay

Peat

Gravel natural geology (base of trench)

Figure 4. Representative sections
Plate 1. Trench 1 looking south-east, during excavation

Plate 2. Trench 2 looking north, Scales 2m.
Plate 3. Trench 3 looking west, Scales, 2m