



## C257 Archaeology Central Interim Statement

# Archaeological Targeted and General Watching Brief at Finsbury Circus Access Shaft (XRZ10)

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## 1 Introduction

This Interim Statement covers an archaeological targeted watching brief carried out at the Finsbury Circus shaft by the C257 Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA).

This was carried out between 09/11/11 and 15/11/11 and supervised by MOLA Senior Archaeologist Sam Pfizenmaier.

It was recorded under event code (sitecode) XRZ10.

This document is an interim statement of the results of the fieldwork one week after the end of fieldwork. More extensive background, results, and conclusions will be included the Fieldwork Report which will be submitted within six weeks of the end of fieldwork (Crossrail, *Archaeology, Specification for Evaluation & Mitigation (including Watching Brief, Doc. No. CR-PN-LWS-EN-SP-00001, v. 5.0,13.07.11)*).

**All levels in this document are quoted in metres Above Tunnel Datum (m ATD). To convert Tunnel Datum to Ordnance Datum subtract 100m, ie 1m OD = 101m ATD.**

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with:

- A Crossrail **Site-specific Written Scheme of Investigation (SS-WSI)**: *Liverpool Street Station, Doc No. C138-MMD-T1-RST-C101-00001, Revision 2.0, 29/04/10 (Crossrail 2010)*.
- An **Addendum to the WSI (Addendum)**: *Liverpool Street Station, Addendum to WSI: General & Targeted Watching Brief. Finsbury Circus (XRZ10), doc. no. C138-MMD-T1-RST-C101-00006, Revision 5.0, 29/06/1 (Crossrail 2011a)*.
- **Method statement, Archaeological targeted and general Watching brief at Finsbury Circus Access Shaft, Doc. No. C257-MLA-X-GMS-C101\_WS101-50001 Version 2 14.09.11 (MOLA for Crossrail 2011)**

## 2 Aims and Objectives

### 2.1 Research Aims

The original overall aims and objectives were listed in the Liverpool Street WSI (Crossrail 2010). Evidence relating to the Walbrook, its tributaries and Moorfields Marsh deposits may provide data relevant to the following themes:

- Understanding London's hydrology, river systems and tributaries and the relationship between rivers and floodplains;
- Understanding how water supply and drainage provision were installed and managed;
- Refining our understanding of the chronology and function of the landward and riverside defences and extramural evidence of defensive or military structures in the Roman period;

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- Understanding the relationships between urban settlements and royal villas or religious estates;
- Examining the proposal that there was an ideological polarity between town and anti-town systems: Roman towns did not so much fail as were discarded;
- The end of the Roman occupation: developing explanatory models to explain socio-political change and considering the influence of surviving Roman structures on Saxon development; and
- Examining the use in any one period of materials from an earlier period (eg Saxon use of surviving Roman fabric) and the influence on craftsmanship, manufacture and building techniques.
- Understanding the differences, if any, between burial practices in the city and outlying cemeteries;
- Understanding life expectancy, origins and belief, seen through studying health, diet and disease, and preparing models for future research;
- Considering the relationship between cemeteries and major or minor roads, in terms of symbolism, status, privacy and convenience; and
- Understanding the cultural and symbolic roles played by London's defences through the ages as reflections of power and political security or imposition and dominance.

Furthermore, the potential at Finsbury Circus for geo-archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits to be recovered will contribute to the following themes:

- The development of models for understanding the significance of geomorphology, ecology, ecosystems and climate, hydrology, and vegetational and faunal development, on human lives;
- Characterising changing climatic conditions, and air and water quality and pollution, throughout the archaeological record, towards understanding its implications for how people behaved;
- The Mesolithic/Neolithic transition: understanding the significance of horticultural experimentation at this time, and the transition from hunter-gatherers into farmers; and
- Understanding what London's past environments meant to different groups and individuals.

## **2.2 Fieldwork Objectives**

The objective of the archaeological investigations, as stated in the Addendum to the WSI (Crossrail 2011), is set out below:

- Mitigation in the form of general and targeted archaeological watching brief to excavate and record archaeological deposits for analysis and dissemination.



### 2.2.1 Task-specific Archaeological Objectives

The following objectives have been devised by MOLA to guide the fieldwork (Method statement, MOLA for Crossrail 2011).

- What is the nature, *and in particular the date*, of the Roman activity on the site, how does it compare with that in the surrounding area ? Is this related to any variations the levels of the natural geology ?
- Are any Roman burials present ?
- At what date, and by under which environmental conditions, did the Moorfields Marsh develop ?

*This has mostly been addressed by geoarchaeological recording and sampling during the evaluation, but if marsh deposits are present above natural geology or features differing from those seen in evaluation, further work may be required to record and sample any variations.*

- What evidence is there for activities in the area of the marsh, or in the surrounding area, represented by dumping of refuse in/on it ?
- How, and when, was the marsh reclaimed, eg by drainage (ditches etc) and dumping (land raising and consolidation) ?
- Is there any evidence for activities carried out in the Moorfields following reclamation of the marsh ?
- Is there any evidence for the layout of Finsbury Circus gardens in the early 19th century ?

### 3 Provisional Results

See Fig 1 for the shaft location



Photo 1, general watching brief, machine excavating post-medieval dumps at 3m beneath ground level, looking south.

Temporary Access Shaft	
Location	Finsbury Circus gardens, southern side.
Dimensions	13m diameter circle
OS National grid coordinates	532867 181592
LSG grid coordinates	83216 36281
Modern Ground Level/top of the slab	113.70m ATD
Modern subsurface deposits	19th-century basement truncated to 1.95m bGL (111.75m ATD) in the south-west of the shaft. To the east the backfilled evaluation trench truncated to 5.2m bGL (108.48m ATD).
Level of base of archaeological deposits observed and/or base of trench	Base of quarry pit [19] cuts natural to 107.95m ATD)
Natural observed not truncated	Mixed terrace gravels at 108.87m ATD (4.73m bGL)

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Extent of modern truncation	19th-century basement truncates to 1.95m bGL and the backfilled evaluation trench to 5.20m bGL
<b>Archaeological remains</b>	<b>Dating Evidence, Finds, and Samples</b>
Contexts [29]–[33] Holocene channel and related deposits between 108.75–108.05m ATD. [34] Taplow river terrace gravels.	Monolith sample [29]–[33] {10} Bulk sample [32] {11} Bulk sample [31] {12} Bulk sample [30] {13} Bulk sample [29] {14} & {15}
Fills [39] & [40], both sterile of large pit [41] cutting natural between 108.73 and 107.95m ATD. Truncated by [36]	
Pit fill [35] and cut [36] overlain by [38] and truncating [39] and natural between 108.79 and 108.42m ATD. Homogenous silty clay, occasional animal bone and charcoal.	[36]: pot (provisionally) Roman
Pit cut [28], truncating natural gravels between 108.73 and 108.49m ATD, Primary fill [27] very sterile with silty gravel. Secondary fill [26] contained animal bone, charcoal and frequent oyster shells. Overlain by lower marsh deposit [38].	[26]: pot (provisionally) Roman Bulk sample [26] {9}
[38] Lower marsh deposit. Dark brown humic silt, rooting to top. Diffuse horizon with [46], upper marsh deposit. Similar, dark blackish brown peat, less organic.	[38]: pot (residual Roman) and 1 small bag of leather
[43], [44] & [45] post-medieval dumps between 113.15 and 109.55m ATD.	
[37] Brick culvert aligned north-east–south-west. Between 111.75 and 109.85m ATD. 1.02m wide, cut [42]	[37]: 4 x bricks (provisionally) 18/19th-century
<b>Interpretation and summary</b>	
<p>Contexts [29–33] are provisionally identified as the remains of a naturally formed stream/river channel, covering the western area of the shaft footprint (approx 30m<sup>2</sup>). The relatively shallow survival of these deposits (0.7m) suggests that they may have been truncated during the deposition of the overlying terrace gravels [34]. They are most likely Holocene in date (created within the last 10,000 years), although may possibly be earlier. The channel edges were not visible within the shaft footprint and there was no evidence of human activity. There was only limited organic material surviving within context [31]. This sequence was overlain by a 300mm band of terrace gravel [34] between 109.04 and 108.75m ATD.</p> <p>Cut feature [41], with sterile fills [39] &amp; [40] represents the earliest phase of human occupation. This corresponds to the quarry pit [19] recorded during the evaluation</p>	

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phase of fieldwork. Significantly this is overlain and truncated by [36], in which quantities of unabraded Roman pottery were recovered. Therefore [41] is Stratigraphically likely to be have been Roman or earlier in date.

Slightly to the west, visible in the south-facing section was a second pit [28] (*Photo 2, pit cut [28] visible in section, sealed by Moorfields marsh deposits [38]*) again containing quantities of unabraded Roman pottery, provisionally appearing similar to those found in [36]. The earliest fill [27] was sterile and similar to the primary fill of [41] located immediately to the south-east. The secondary more organic fill [26] was consistent with a rubbish dump.

Overlying these features lay the Moorfields Marsh deposit (contexts [46] & [38]), which has been previously recorded and summarised in the evaluation report (C257 Archaeology Central, Fieldwork Report, Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Briefs, Finsbury Circus Shaft (XRZ10), C257-MLA-X-RGN-CRG03-50012 v1, 16.06.11).

Post-medieval dump and levelling deposits, again previously recorded during the evaluation, and of limited significance filled the remainder of the shaft footprint up to 111.75m ATD. A substantial culvert [37] aligned north-east–south-west survived immediately below the modern brick basement (former wine bar) between 1.95 and 2.85m beneath ground level. The culvert stood almost 2m high; and would have been easily accessible by foot. The structure was not truncated, and survived in good condition.



Photo 2, pit cut [28] visible in section, sealed by Moorfields marsh deposits [38], looking north



Photo 3, culvert [37] (provisionally) dated by brick types as early 19th-century or later, looking north.

## 4 Significance of Results (*provisional*)

### 4.1 Summary of Fieldwork Results

- The channel deposits (contexts [29]–[33]), exposed in the western area of the trench, represent the gradual silting up of a river channel. The conditions and period during which this sequence of events occurred requires further investigation. Analysis of monolith and bulk samples can provide further details of this. Provisionally, the later deposits (contexts [29], [30] & [31]) are dated to the early Holocene. Contexts [32] and [33], are potentially Pleistocene in date, as [33] appears to pre-date the orange sand and gravel that covers the rest of the site. Overlying this at a maximum height of 109.04m ATD was a 300mm band of coarse river terrace gravel that extended over the site. This was sealed by the Moorfields Marsh deposit.
- Provisionally-dated Roman features in the form of two pits, one of which truncated [41] (a large quarry pit, the same as [19] recorded during the evaluation), were recorded cutting natural gravels between 108.79 and 108.42m ATD. Both features yielded quantities of unabraded Roman pottery suggesting they had been deposited in situ. The larger pit [28] had two distinct fills. The earliest [27] was sterile and slight sorting of the gravels suggests it may have been naturally backfilled (eg left open, and the sides gradually eroded) the later fill [26] was similar to [35], the fill of pit [36], both were organic, with inclusions consistent with rubbish deposits. The isolation of these features along with the similarities in their fills suggests that they may have been contemporary. Pit [36] overlay a larger feature that has been previously identified as a quarry pit ([41]=[19]), and can now with greater confidence be dated to the Roman period. This also supports the evaluation results which pointed to two distinct phases of (Roman) activity in the area.
- The overlying Moorfields Marsh deposits (contexts [38] and [46]) varied little across the shaft base and have been previously described and sampled (MOLA for Crossrail 2011: *Fieldwork Report, Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Briefs, Finsbury Circus Shaft (XRZ10)*, C257-MLA-X-RGN-CRG03-50012, v1 16.06.11). Samian pottery and late medieval/early post-medieval leather retrieved from [38] (that corresponds to [15] in the evaluation phase of fieldwork) probably represent a long period of marsh accumulation.
- The later post-medieval deposits [43]–[45] overlying the marsh recorded during the general watching brief are reclamation/landfill dumps, and correspond with contexts [10]–[13] recorded during the evaluation. Of significance was a large culvert [37] (provisionally dated by bricks as 18–19th-century) aligned north-east–south-west between 111.75 and 109.85m ATD. This survived immediately underneath the basement of the 19th-century building which recently occupied the site. The dimensions of this culvert suggest it may have been built as a storm drain.



## 4.2 Importance of Resources

The archaeological remains identified in the fieldwork are provisionally assessed as being of low to moderate importance, as the early channel deposit has not been previously recorded, and potentially can shed light on the prehistoric conditions in the area prior to human occupation. The (provisionally) identified Roman features contribute to our knowledge of activity in this extra-mural area before the spread of the marsh, but are inherently of only limited importance. The 19th-century culvert is of typical form and materials and although apparently unknown to the utility companies, belongs to a well-documented period, and can also be considered of low importance.

## 4.3 *Provisional* Assessment of Results against Aims and Objectives

- Further analysis of the prehistoric waterlain channel will help understanding of the ecosystems, climate, hydrology, and vegetational development, of the area.
- Roman activity on site is typical of extra-mural activity in the area, limited to quarry and shallow rubbish pits. The date of this activity will be further explored in the fieldwork report.
- No Roman burials were present.
- Potentially finds retrieved from [38] will help date the period(s) when the earlier marsh deposits developed.
- No new evidence for marsh reclamation was recorded; the results from the evaluation were consistent across the shaft footprint.
- No evidence for the drainage of the marsh (ditches etc) was present.
- No evidence was found relating to dumping of refuse on the marsh, that could inform on activities in the surrounding area.
- The general watching brief phase of work supported the conclusions that intermittent phases of post-medieval dumping occurred following reclamation of the marsh, although, again no evidence was found for the alterations to the layout of Finsbury Circus gardens in the early 19th century.



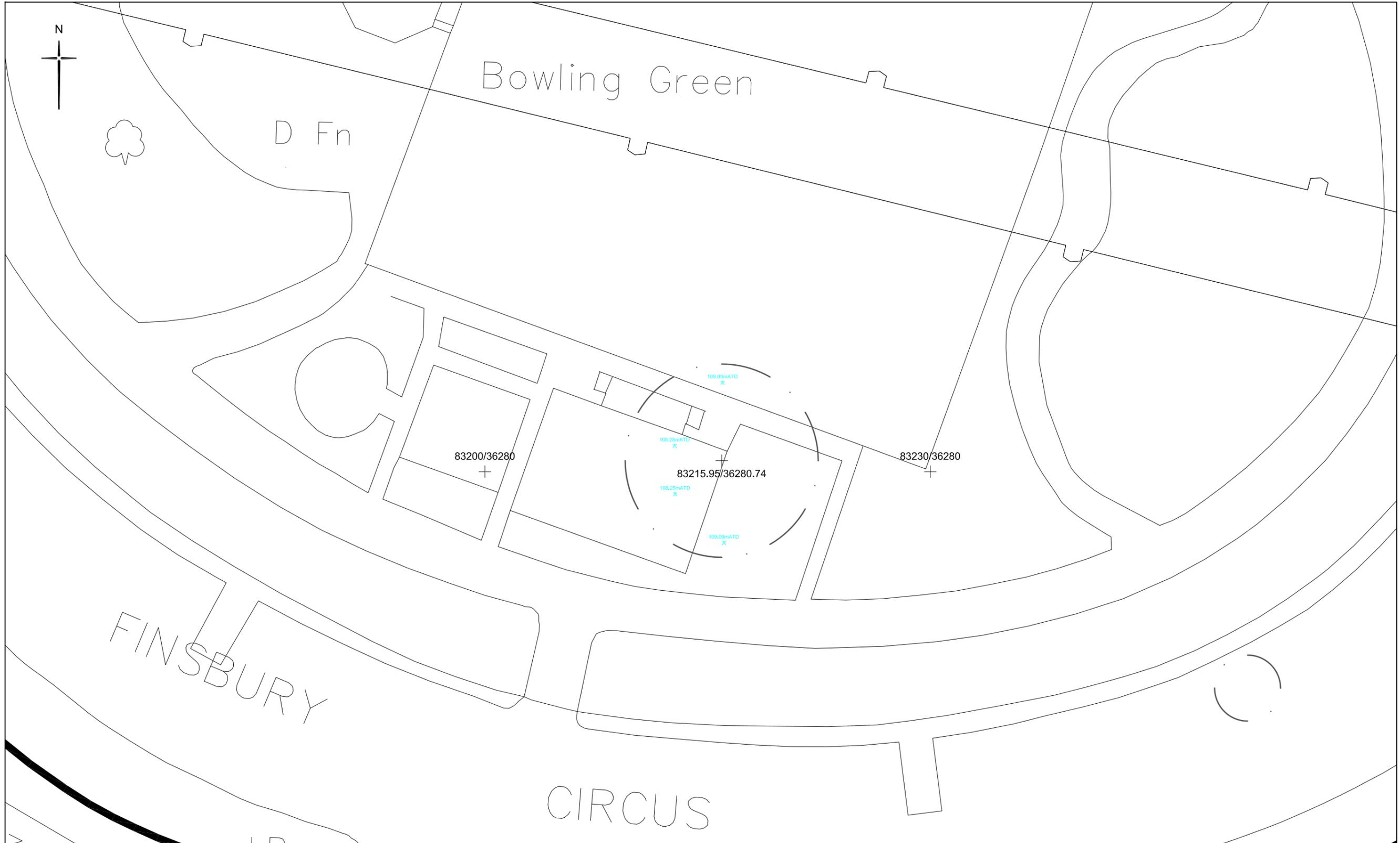
## **5 Future Deliverables**

The remaining deliverables for the site, and their delivery dates as specified by *Crossrail, Archaeology, Specification for Evaluation & Mitigation (including Watching Brief)*, Doc. No. CR-PN-LWS-EN-SP-00001, v. 0.3, 26.06.09, are:

- **Survey Report** by 30th November 2011
- **Fieldwork Report** by 30th December 2011
- **Summary Report** by 18th January 2012



## **Annex 1 –Access Shaft Location Plan**



Site code: XRZ10  
 Figure type: Interim report

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Type of fieldwork:  
 Watching Brief  
 Site Address:  
 Crossrail: Finsbury Circus  
 Liverpool St, Finsbury Circus  
 London EC2M 7AB

 site outline  
 watching brief area  
 TBMs

0 1:250 @ A3 70m