Land to the Rear of Western Pumping Station, 124 Grosvenor Road, Westminster

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

for St. James Homes Limited

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological

Services

Site Code GRW98/19

October 1998

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Introduction

The site lies on the northern side of the Thames close to the Embankment and to the east of the approach to Chelsea Bridge (TQ 28677804) (Fig 1). The project was commissioned by Mr Mark O'Grady of St. James Homes Limited, 102 The Green, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW2 5AG, as part of their plans to redevelop the site for residential use.

The desk-based assessment comprises the first stage of the process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological and historic remains which may be affected by redevelopment of the area.

The study has followed the guidelines set out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Guidelines for desk-based assessments* and those required by English Heritage Guidance Papers.

The site

The site comprises a parcel of land in the ownership of Thames Water, sandwiched between the railway approaches to Victoria Station to the east and north, the Embankment to the south and the Grosvenor Canal facilities to the west (Fig 2). The dominant features of the site at the present time are the Western Pumping Station building, chimney tower, cooling water pond and ancillary structures, including an electricity sub-station. The pumping station building and chimney tower are listed buildings and the tower is also a landmark feature. Of significance to the survival of any below-ground archaeological deposits are the presence of a number of large, deep sewer pipes (Fig 3)

The site lies on level ground at a height of about 5 m above Ordnance Datum and occupies an area of c 0.724 hectares. According to the British Geological Survey the underlying geology is alluvium (BGS 1981). No site investigations of the below-ground deposits have been carried out to date.

Planning background and development proposals

An outline planning application has been made for the redevelopment of part of the site for residential use (TP8696, RN987140, 987141). The development will comprise demolition of several of the water pumping facilities on the site and the construction of a single block of 60 apartments with basement parking. A provisional layout of the development plan is shown in Figure 3. At the present time there are no details as to the profile of the proposed building nor the foundation levels of the basement slabs. It is assumed that the foundations will be piled. The western pumping station and chimney tower lie outside of the proposal area and these along with a house within the proposal area, are to be retained. The pedestrian access beneath Grosvenor road to the riverside wildlife garden is to continue in use for these proposals. Mr Ian Morrison of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, who advises the Borough on archaeological matters, has requested further information on the development proposals in order to assess the archaeological potential of the site.

The treatment of archaeological and historic landscape matters in the planning process is detailed in three strands of guidance. '*Archaeology and Planning'* (PPG16, 1990) points out that where a desktop study has shown that there is a strong possibility of the presence of significant archaeological deposits in a development area it is reasonable to provide more detailed information from a field evaluation so that an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on archaeology can be drawn up:

Paragraph 21 states:

> 'Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer's own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out.....'

Should the presence of archaeological deposits be confirmed, further guidance is provided. *'Archaeology and Planning'* stresses preservation *in situ* of archaeological deposits as a first consideration, as in paragraphs 8 and 18.

Paragraph 8 states:

> '..Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation....'

Paragraph 18 states:

> 'The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled.....'

However, for archaeological deposits that are not of such significance it is appropriate for them to be 'preserved by record' (ie fully excavated and recorded by a competent archaeological contractor) prior to their destruction or damage.

Paragraph 25 states:

> 'Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation *in situ* of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the development and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself ... that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains.'

The policies covering archaeology in the Unitary Development Plan of the City of Westminster (UDP 1997) are covered in section DES18:

Extracts of Policy DES 18:

> '(A) The City Council will promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage of Westminster and its interpretation and presentation to the public. Where development may affect land of known or potential archaeological importance, the City Council will expect applicants to properly assess and plan for the archaeological implications of their proposals....'
>
> '(D) The City Council will seek to ensure that nationally important archaeological remains and their settings are permanently preserved *in situ* and where appropriate are given statutory protection. In such cases, if preservation *in situ* is both desirable and feasible, the City Council will normally require the development design to accommodate this objective.'
>
> '(E) Where the preservation of archaeological remains *in situ* is inappropriate, the City Council will require that no development takes place on a site until archaeological investigations have been carried out by a reputable investigating body. Such investigations shall be in accordance with a detailed scheme to be approved in advance by the City Council.'

This particular development site does not lie within an archaeological priority area, but this does not necessarily mean it has no archaeological potential.

The Historic Environment

A companion Planning Policy Guidance document to PPG16 is *Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG15, 1994). This document has a wider remit than the majority of the below-ground sites covered by PPG16 as it deals with upstanding structures and a diverse range of features, from listed buildings to parks, gardens and battlefield sites. In the context of our study area the introductory section of PPG15 is an appropriate overview:

Paragraph 1.1 states:

> 'It is fundamental to the government's policies for environmental stewardship that there should be effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment. The physical survivals of our past are to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity. They are an irreplaceable record which contributes, through formal education and in many other ways, to our understanding of both the present and the past. Their presence adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside. The historic environment is also of immense importance for leisure and recreation.'

The document does not deal with specific classes of site, and is primarily aimed towards buildings. However, various sections cover other non-building topics which are relevant here. For example:

Paragraph 2.26 The wider historic landscape:

> '... Plans should protect its most important components and encourage development that is consistent with maintaining its overall character.....'

At a more general level, in recent years English Heritage have taken an active role in protecting monuments of the country's industrial heritage (Streeten 1995, 20). Their programme to date has concentrated on primary productive industries such as mining but topics such as water supply are intended to be covered (English Heritage 1995, 6; Stocker 1995, 9).

Cartographic Study

Eleven maps were examined in the Greater London Record Office and the British Library (Appendix 1, Figs 4–9). The earliest map was one by Cary dated 1727 (Fig 4). This shows that the site was occupied by 'low-lying woodland', probably osier beds, within a delta formed by three channels which formed the easternmost branch of the river Westbourne at this time. Two of the channels located to the west of the site formed part of the functioning of Chelsea Water Works and were built using an Act of Parliament in 1721 (Denney 1977, 128) An illustration of the waterworks in 1752 is presented in Barty-King (1992,95). The current site area is not defined and the Embankment road has not been built. The maps by Rocque (1746), Stockdale (1797) and Mylne (1800), the latter at a small scale, show few changes to the earlier pattern (not illustrated) and three buildings shown on Rocque may lie within the current proposal area. However, the map by Horwood made between 1799 and 1819 now shows a complex of buildings for the Chelsea Water Works and two other buildings to the east which, by comparison with later maps, lie within the boundary of the application site (Fig 5).

The vicinity of the site is dominated by the Grosvenor Canal which was commissioned in 1823 and opened in 1825. The documentary sources indicate a need to retain a navigable channel during construction work, showing that traffic was already using the existing watercourse. A detailed plan of the canal presented in Denney (1977, pl 31) shows the canal superimposed on the earlier channels and osier beds which had now gone out of use. At least one of the waterworks buildings had also gone out of use at this time. The canal comprised a lock at the junction with the Thames, behind which lay a basin. Two structures are shown to the south-east of the canal basin, which overlie the buildings present on the Horwood map (Fig 5). Apart from these buildings, the site is unoccupied. This layout is shown less accurately on a map by Greenwood of 1827 (Fig 6). By the time of the first Ordnance Survey map of 1869 (Fig 7) the eastern boundary of the application site had now been defined by the London, Brighton and South Coast railway which terminated at Victoria Station. The western side of the application site can be defined by reference to the canal, and the southern side by the Embankment (Grosvenor Road) which had been built in c 1850. The site is now unoccupied by structures. The building of the embankment led to the reclamation of the Thames foreshore and part of the site lies within the latter zone.

By 1888 a map by Bacon shows little change to the canal to the west but the application site is now occupied by a water pumping station and ancillary structures including a cooling pond which is still present today (Fig 8).

The Ordnance Survey map of 1916 shows the application site in more detail and the northern boundary has been defined by the presence of railway sidings (Fig 9). The western pumping station building adjacent to Grosvenor Road has been extended and the chimney tower has now been built.

Many of the features present on the application site in 1916 are still present today, although at the northern end of the site four semi-detached houses and a small copse or orchard have disappeared and an access shaft to main sewers has been built.

Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR)

A search was made on 11th February 1998 covering an area within a 1 km radius of the site. This search (summarised in Appendix 2) revealed a number of entries of various dates in the vicinity of the development, but none for the site itself (Fig 1). Few formal archaeological investigations of the general vicinity of the area have been carried out, the nearest being at 93, Ebury Bridge Road, where redeposited Prehistoric pottery and flintwork was found in an alluvium-filled channel adjacent to a sandbank (GLSMR No 083654).

The majority of the entries detail finds made during the construction of the Chelsea Bridge and may relate to the ford thought to have crossed the Thames at this point. It has been suggested that this ford may have been the one used by Caesar during his invasion in 55-54 BC, although there is no direct evidence for this.

It is possible that the Prehistoric bronzework listed in the GLSMR could have been eroded from rich Thames riverbank settlements such as those found at Runnymede Bridge (Longley 1980), or Wallingford (Thomas et al 1986). Alternatively, these finds and the numerous human skulls could be indicative of votive offerings (Bradley 1982). If any archaeological deposits are present on the site beneath or within alluvial

deposits, perhaps in waterlogged conditions, then their archaeological potential is likely to be much greater than their dryland counterparts.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on or within 500 m of the site and the development will not affect the landscape setting of any more distant Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

The development proposal does not have an adverse effect on the corridor or associated structures of the historic Grosvenor canal.

Listed Buildings

Both the sewage pumping station building and the Chimney tower are Grade II listed buildings (TQ2877NE, 112/3; 112/2). Both structures were built in 1875 when the pumping station was created, and both are brick built with stone dressings.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The location of the site on the side of the Thames, in the vicinity of the findspots of Prehistoric stone tools and Bronze Age bronze metalwork, raises the potential that a rich riparian settlement may be present. The construction of the deep sewers on the site and possibly some of the ancillary structures such as inspection pits for machinery will have destroyed archaeological deposits in their immediate vicinity but this does not necessarily imply that all archaeologically relevant levels have been removed across the whole of the site.

It is recommended that the impact of development on below-ground archaeological deposits should be assessed by means of a field evaluation. A scheme for this evaluation should be drawn up and approved by the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (who advise the City of Westminster in archaeological matters) and implemented by a competent archaeological contractor. The evaluation should, in particular, be designed to search for remains of any rich riparian Prehistoric occupation sites and their palaeoenvironmental setting. The trenching pattern should, ideally, target the footprint of the proposed new structure. Should any important deposits be discovered, a scheme to mitigate the impact of development on these will need to be drawn up in consultation with the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service.

There is an increasing interest in the archaeological recording of important post-Medieval structures as recognised in English Heritage's policy towards the industrial landscape. At the present time, specific policy guidance as to the significance of water facilities have not been fully formulated but the significance of various components of the industry are highlighted in Douet (1995). However, as the pumping station building and chimney tower are excluded from this development proposal and the house is to be retained, there would not appear to be any need at this time to record in detail the buildings either for their architectural merit, or for any contribution that these structures or their internal workings would make towards the industrial archaeology of the water industry. It is most probable that the original detailed architectural plans and elevations for the pumping station site are retained by Thames Water and this may already include a photographic record. However, if such records are not available, in order to present a complete record of the nature of the pumping station as now remaining, prior to the demolition of any structures on the site, in particular the cooling water pond, a photographic record should be made to Royal Commission on Historic Monuments of England standard, level 1.

References

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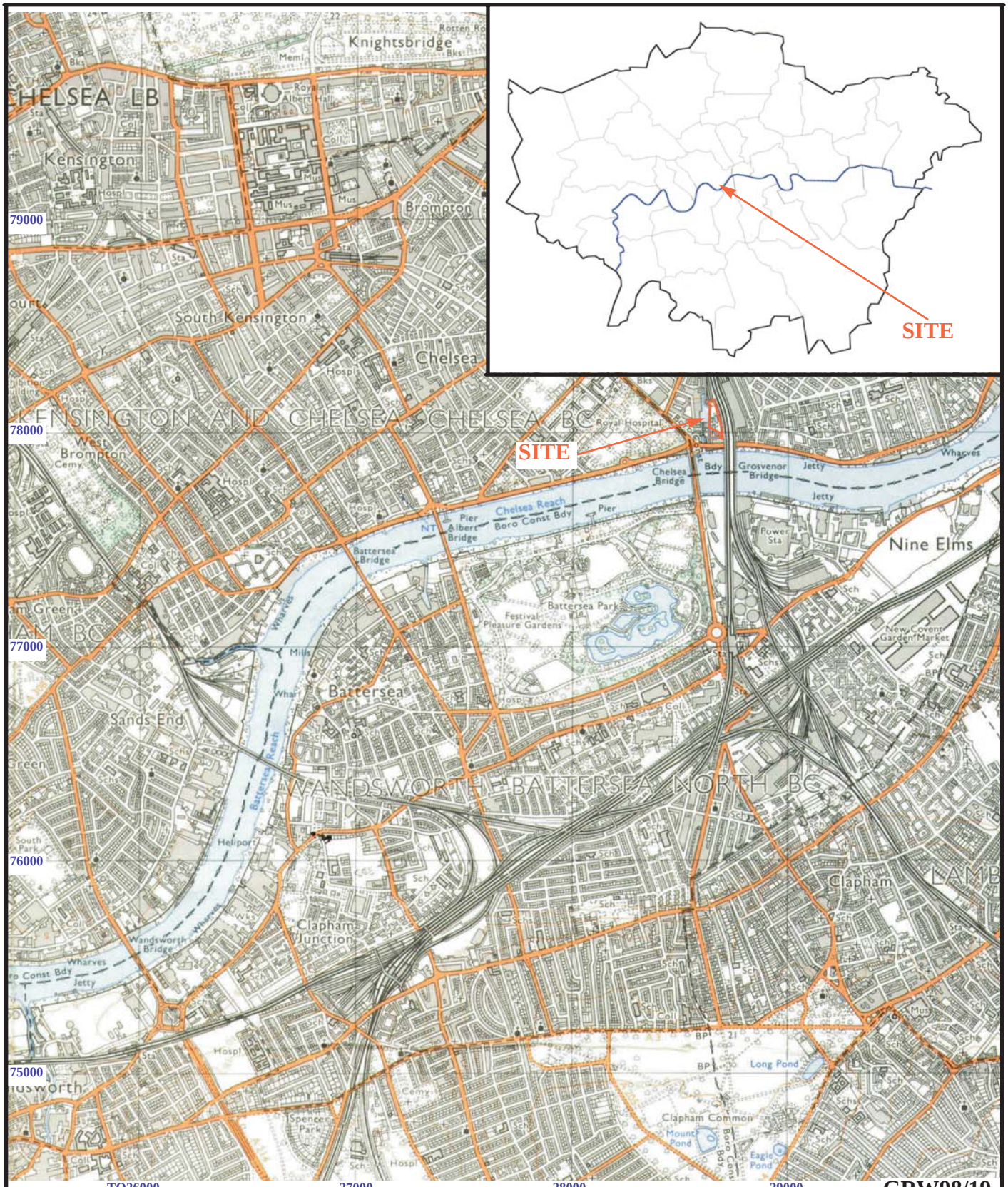
UDP 1997, *City of Westminster Unitary Development Plan*, July 1997

APPENDIX 1: Extracts from Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR)

GLSMR No	*NGR (TQ)*	*Summary*
081615	2855 7780	Site of ford?
083654	2849 7812	Struck flints and pottery. Date: Prehistoric
112053	2855 7780	Flint axe. Date: Neolithic
112058	2855 7780 or 274 775	Flint hand axe. Date: Palaeolithic
112062	285 778	Bronze sword. Date: Late Bronze Age
112063	285 778	Bronze spearhead. Date: Late Bronze Age
112064	285 778	Bronze dagger. Date: Bronze Age
112065	285 778	Numerous human skulls. Date: various
112066	285 778	Iron spearhead. Date: Roman
112067	285 778	Iron sword. Date: Roman
112068	285 778	Pierced limestone block, possibly an anchor. Date: Roman?
112069	285 778	Leather shoes. Date: Roman
112070	285 778	Iron sheath. Date: Roman
112071	285 778	Iron sheath. Date: Roman
112072	285 778	Bronze cauldron. Date: Roman
112073	285 778	Flint axes. Date: Neolithic

APPENDIX 2: Cartographic sources consulted in Greater London Record Office and British Library

1727	Cary (Fig 4)
1746	Rocque
1797	Stockdale
1799-1819	Horwood (Fig 5)
1800	Mylne
1825	Plan of the Grosvenor Canal
1827	Greenwood (Fig 6)
c 1848	Plan of proposed new Street (=Chelsea Bridge Road)
1869	Ordnance Survey First Edition 5' LIV (Fig 7)
1888	GW Bacon (Fig 8)
1916	Ordnance Survey 5' IX (Fig 9)



GRW98/19

Rear of 124 Grosvenor Road, Westminster, London, 1998

Figure 1. Location of site within Westminster and London.

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Rear of 124 Grosvenor Road, Westminster, London, 1998

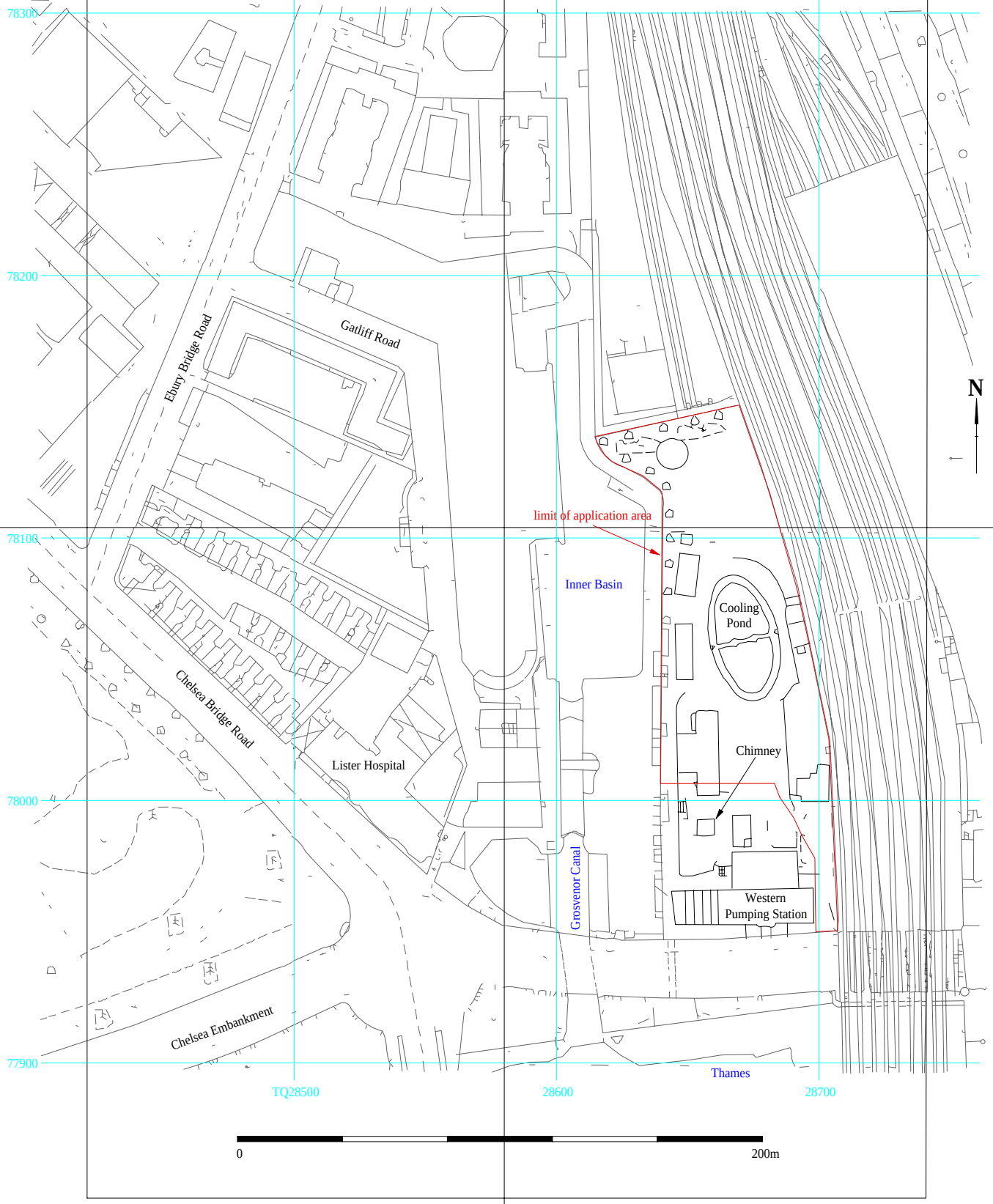


Figure 2. Location of site showing current use. GRW98/19

Rear of 124 Grosvenor Road, Westminster, London, 1998

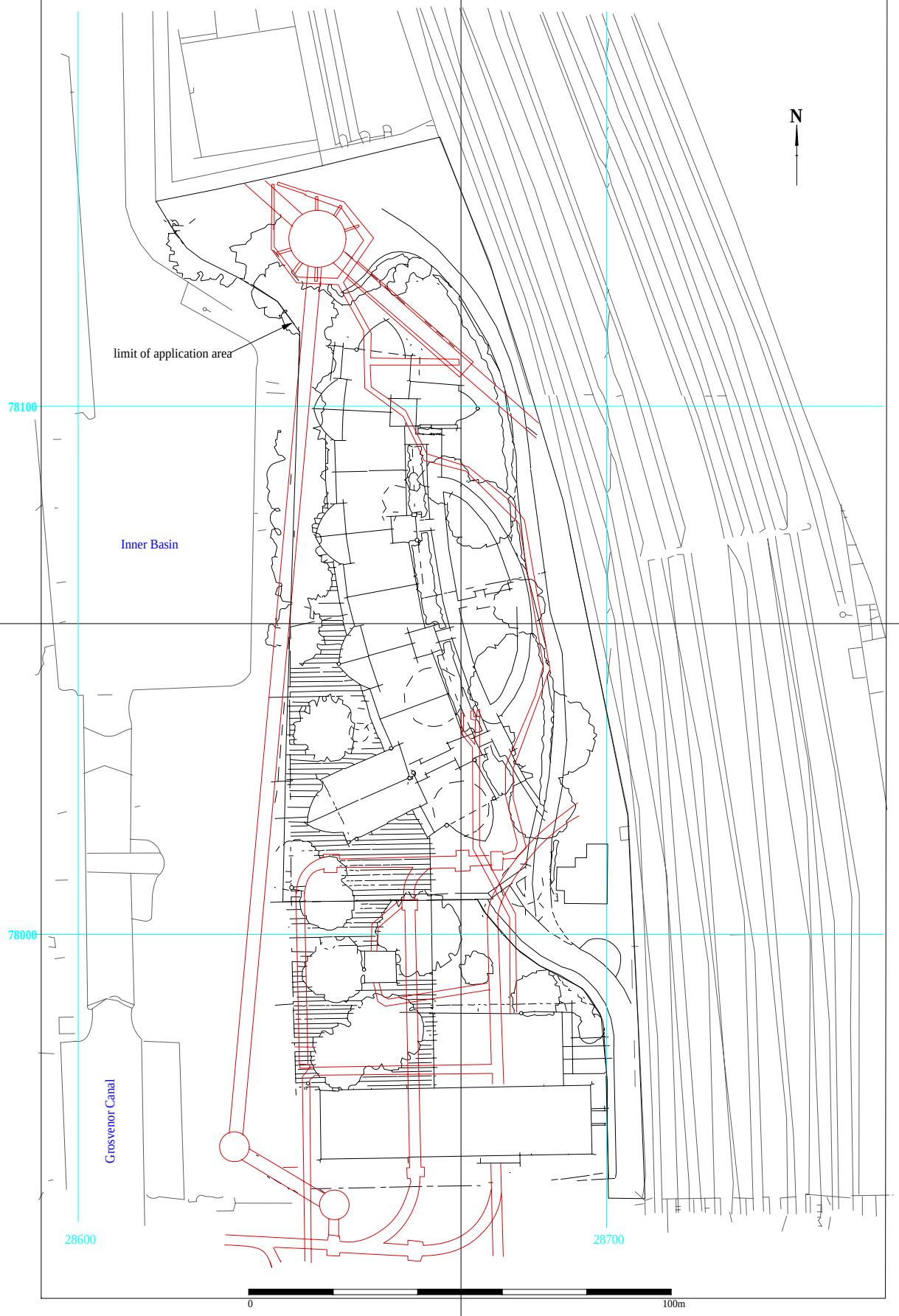
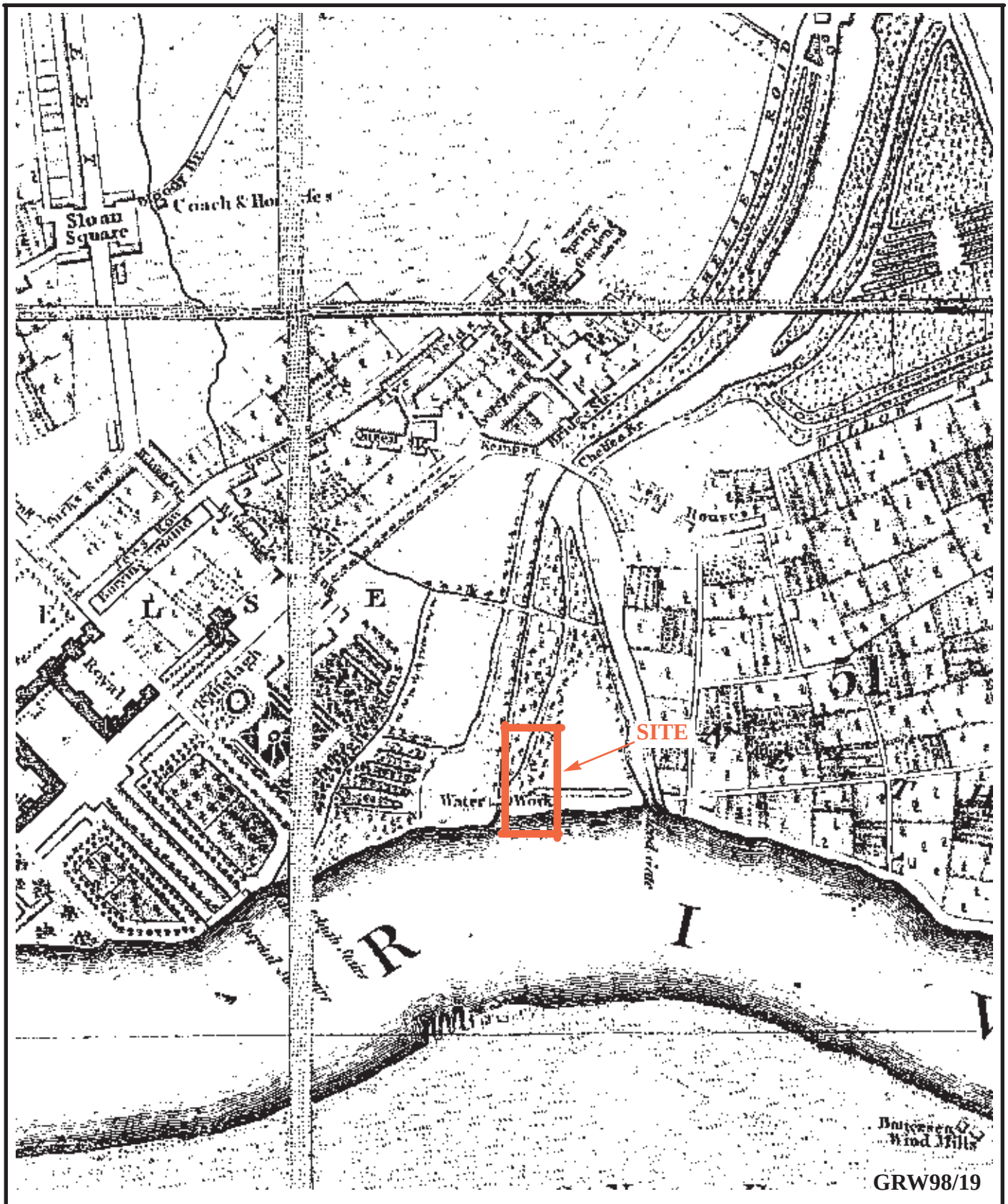


Figure 3. Site plan showing development proposals and location of services. GRW98/19



Rear of 124 Grosvenor Road, Westminster, London, 1998

Figure 4. Cary's map of 1727.

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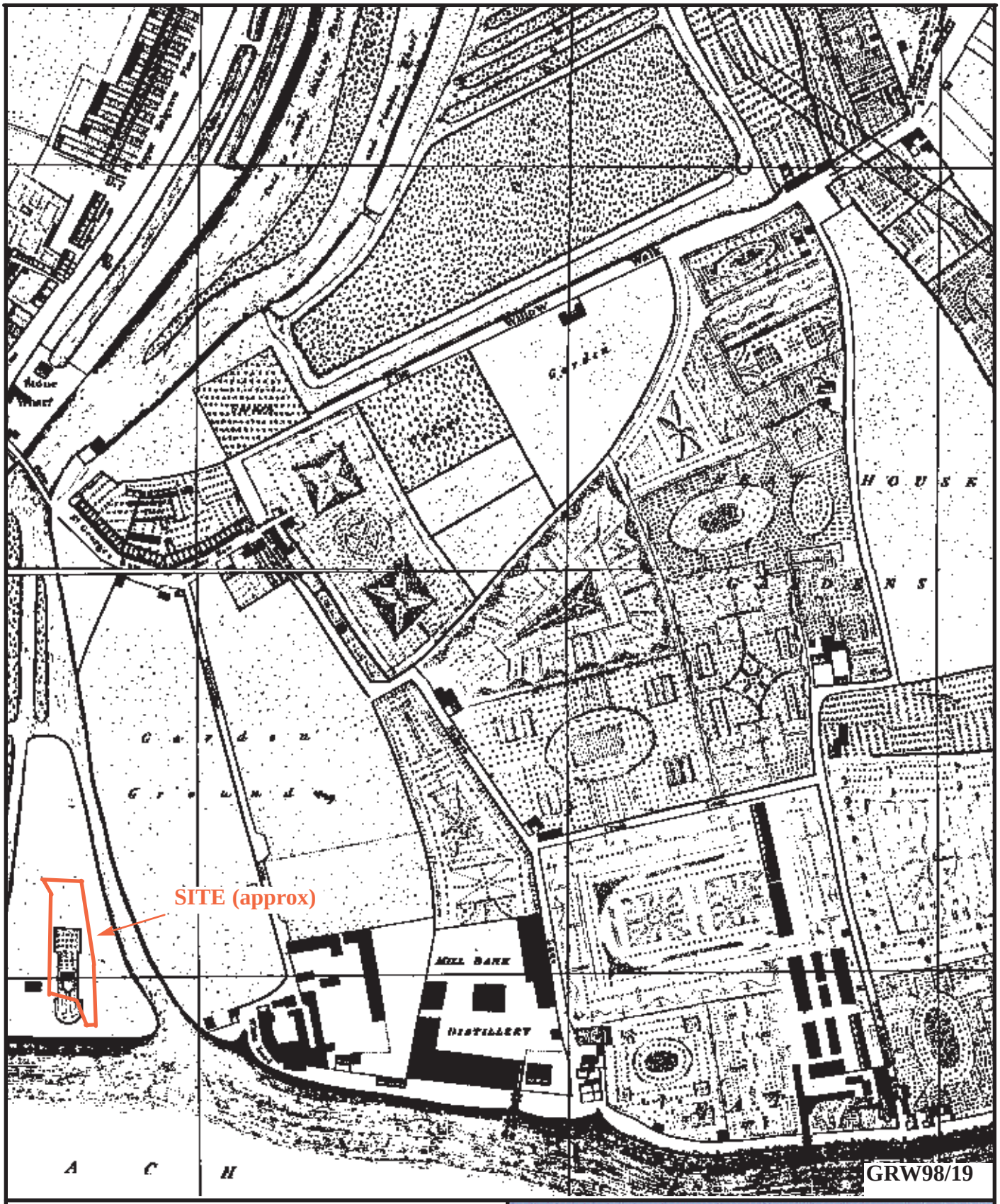

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Figure 5. R. Horwood's map of 1799-1819.

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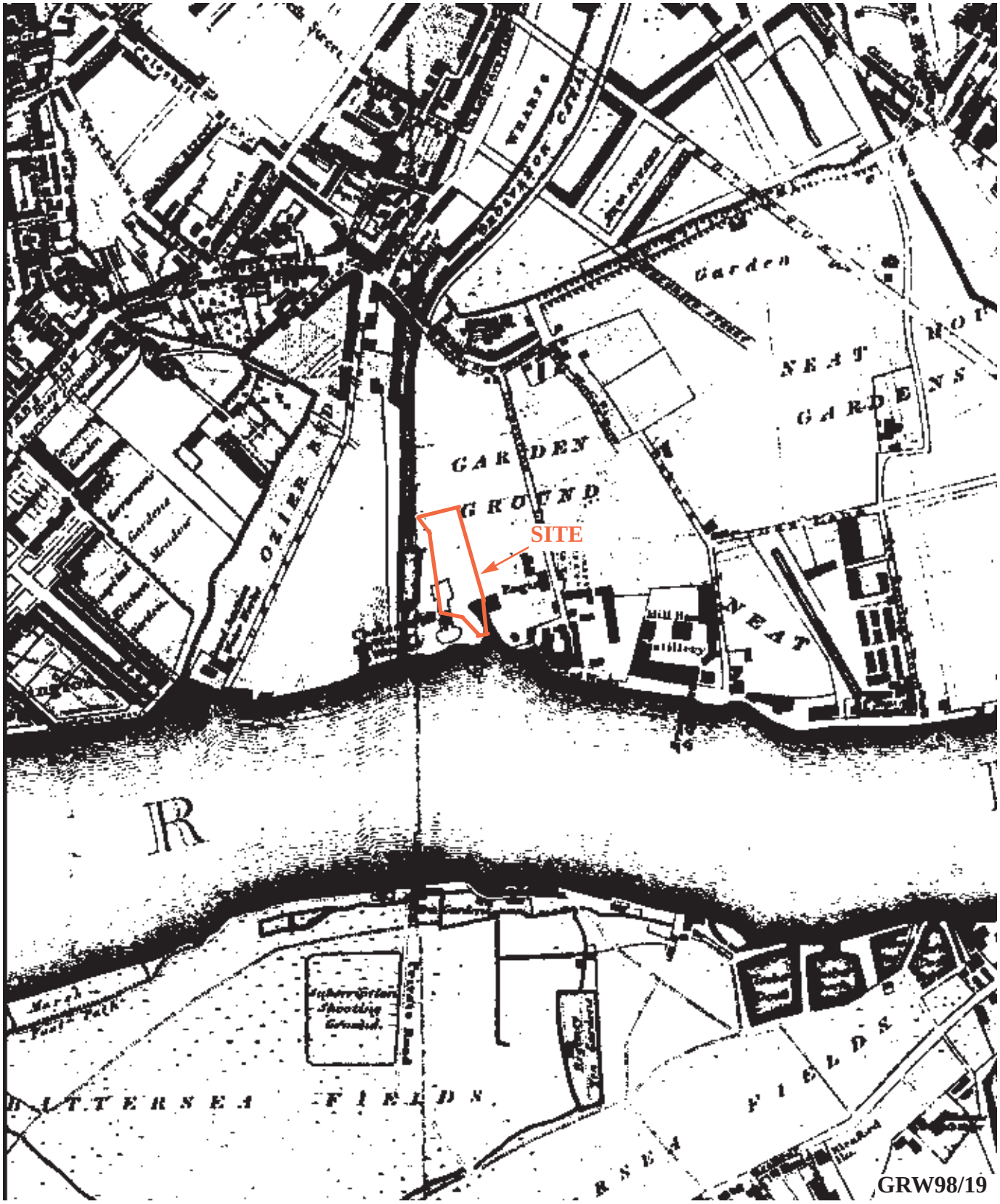

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Figure 6. Greenwood's map of 1827.

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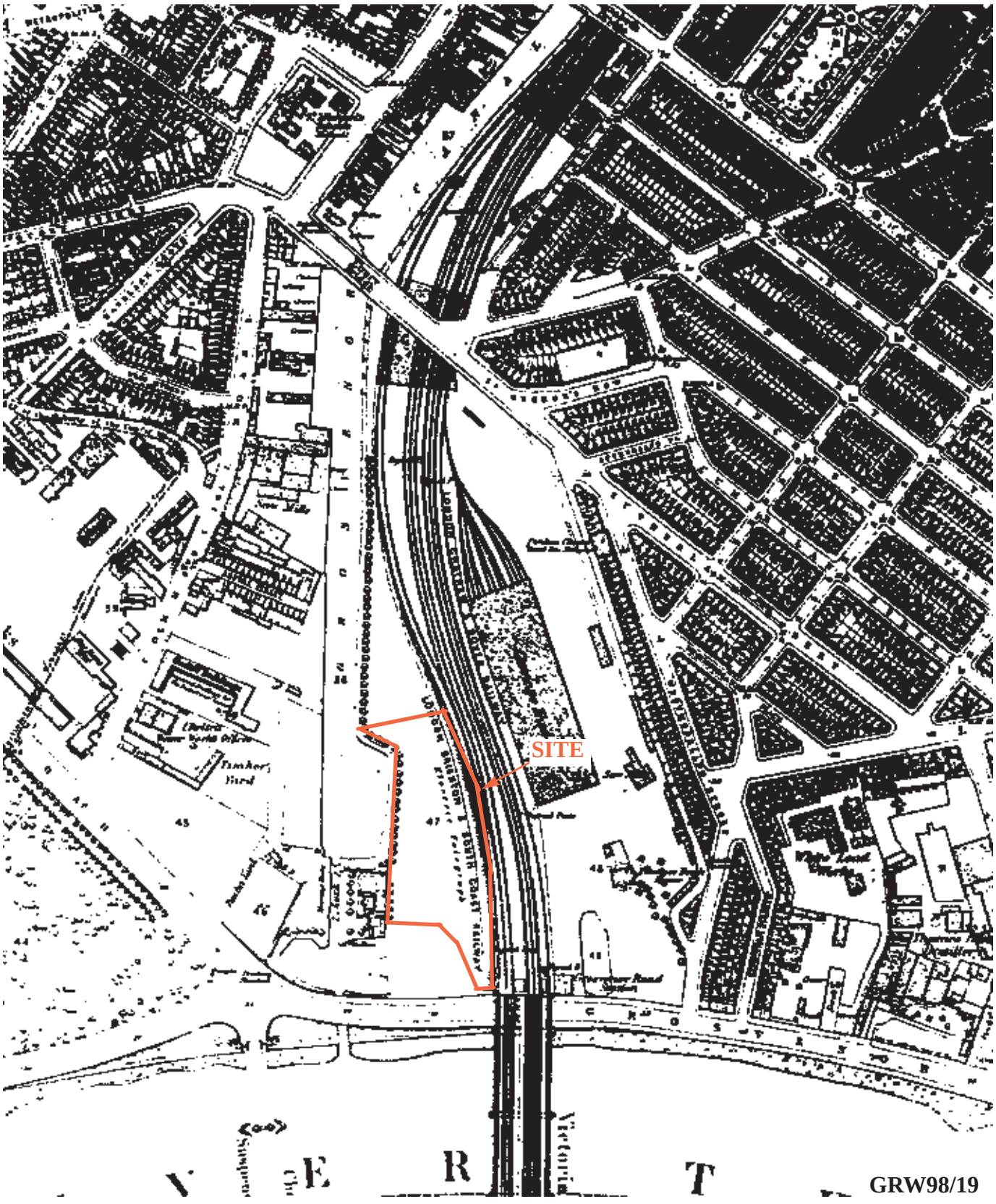

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Figure 7. Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1869.

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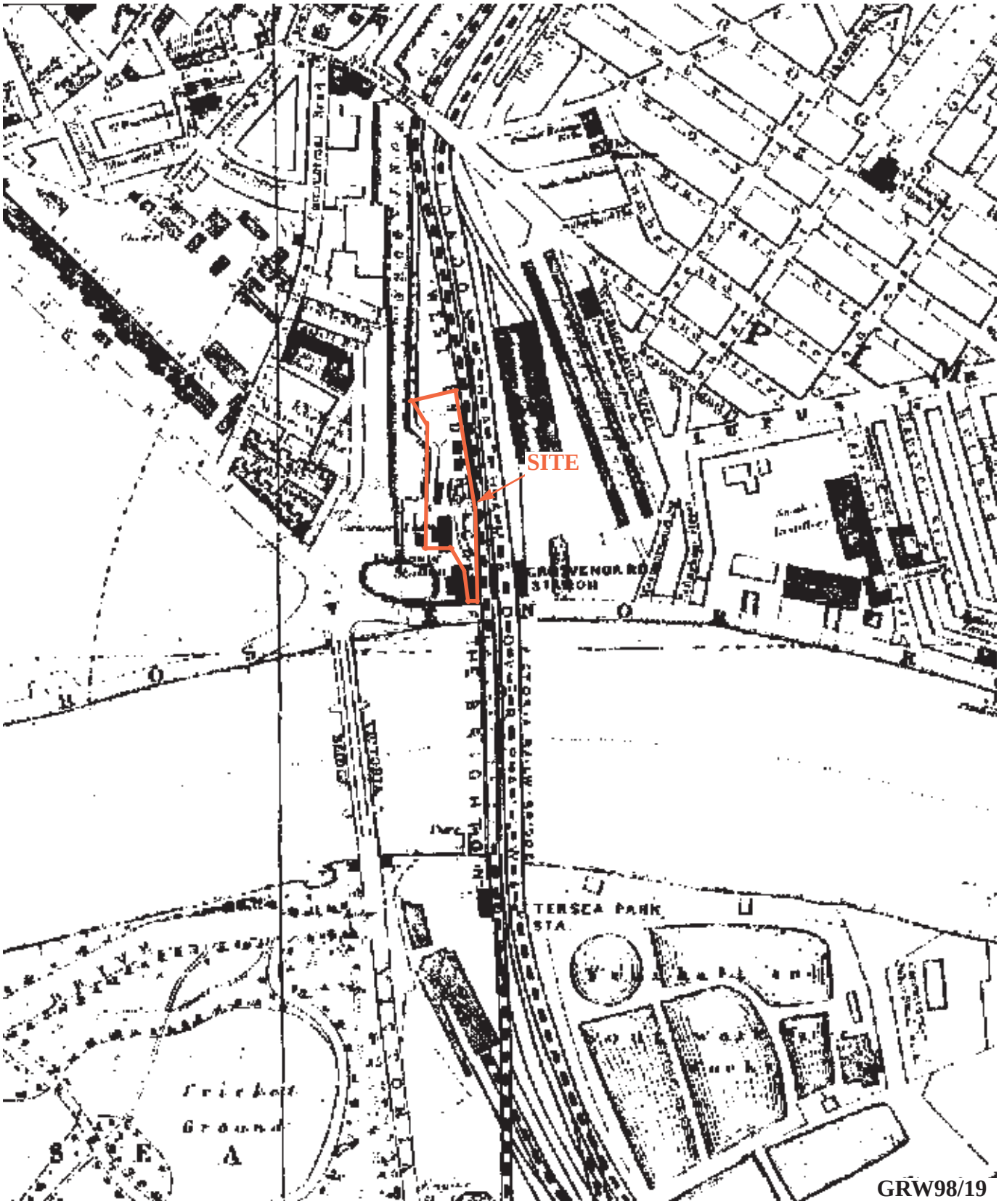

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Figure 8. Extract from G. W. Bacon's map of 1888.

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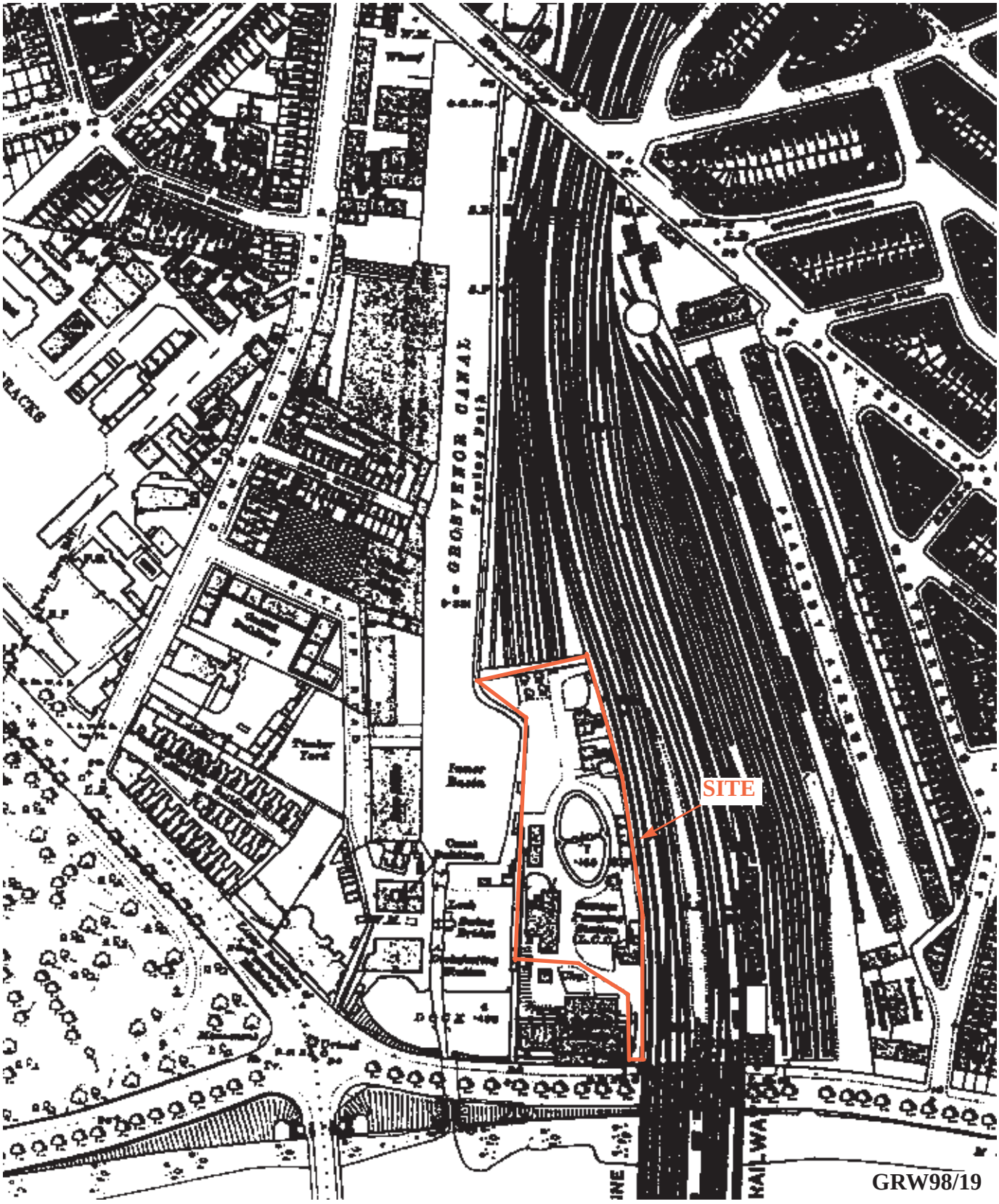

Rear of 124 Grosvenor Road, Westminster, London, 1998

Figure 9. Ordnance Survey third Edition, 1916.

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