

Catherine Thompson-McCausland

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Cc: "Stormer, Sandra" <sandra.stormer@environment-agency.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 February 2008 13:05
Subject: Groundwater flooding in Notting Hill
Mrs. Thompson McCausland

As discussed earlier today, I have made notes on our telephone conversation. Hopefully these will help to clarify the situation. Also, as agreed, I have sent you a map showing the topography, location of previous calls, and drift deposits on the area. I have also marked the likely flow direction of natural surface water drainage. I have also sent you a copy of our guidance and information booklet, 'Groundwater Flooding'.

I believe that the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment available from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea website

(http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/Planning/localdevelopmentframework/ldf_strategic_flood_assess.asp) is currently a draft. The Environment Agency have provided an official response which we hope will be incorporated into the final version of the document.

As you will be aware, PPS25 is based on fluvial flooding and not groundwater flooding. However, an SFRA should help improve understanding of what may flood, how, where, when and how often and to what extent. In turn, it informs decisions on flood risk management, land allocation and emergency planning which can all contribute to flood risk reduction and help deliver sustainable development. An appropriate SFRA should identify current and future extent and nature of flooding from fluvial, tidal and other natural/artificial sources. It should look at all forms of flooding.

By looking at the topography of the area, I can see that there is a natural drainage channel flowing from the east to the west. It looks as though flow would start from the area around Artesian Road, and come through the gardens of Elgin Crescent and the west side of the gardens of Blenheim Crescent. This may have formed a tributary of Counter's Creek at some stage, but there is no evidence for this. This drainage will be heavily influenced by the surface water drains of road networks and the sewerage system, and the real surface flow situation may vary greatly to that expected by looking at topography alone.

True groundwater flooding will occur when the water table continues to rise so that the water level in the aquifer is higher than that of ground level. The level of the water table in the chalk aquifer is approximately 40 to 45m below ground level at this location, and will not be the cause of flooding. However, there may well be shallow Groundwater caused by drift depositing sitting on top of the London Clay. The London Clay will prevent water seeping downwards and entering into the lower geology. The exact locations and edges of these drift deposits are difficult to determine without a site investigation, but may be alluvial or gravels in this area. Unfortunately our maps are not defined well enough to give a precise determination. If a deposit such a gravel is present, it may well contribute to shallow groundwater flooding of below ground structures, and will impact on excavations. This will need to be determined by the developer prior to excavation work so that they can make a proper assessment of dewatering activities.

I hope that this is of use

Marius Greaves
Groundwater & Contaminated Land

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08/06/2010

NOOKS and CORNERS

ARUNDEL Gardens is a street of unassuming, unlisted mid-Victorian terraced houses in a conservation area in Notting Hill, that once raffish and poor area of London now favoured by bankers and the Camerons.

No. 5 Arundel Gardens was run down for years until it was sold, a few years ago, to a smart restaurateur who secured permission from Kensington & Chelsea council to add another storey and hollow out the garden to create an extra room. He quickly sold it on to an investment banker, Anthony Kingsley, and his wife Sophie, who won further permission to gut and reconstruct the interior.

Work began last year on digging out the basement and removing the existing floors and staircase in the old house. Neighbours not only had to endure relentless banging by builders but also the consequences of upsetting the stability of the terrace: cracks appeared in their walls; and doors no longer opened and shut properly.

To design their dream home the Kingsleys hired Houston Morris, a youngish American-born architect brought up in Scotland and trained at the Architectural Association. His ineffably pretentious website explains the "conversion" thus: "A double-height living room with an open plan kitchen/dining and suspended fireplace [?!sic] extends fully to the rear and the garden beyond. A structural glass conservatory contains a stainless steel and glass stairs and a ceremonial staircase connects the mezzanine library to the double height space... in the basement, a wine cellar, gym, cinema and games room are clustered around external courtyards". To help realise this tantalising vision of yuppie heaven, Seacon Ltd, experts in "Construction and Refurbishment", and the Bailey Knowles Partnership, quantity surveyors, were also employed.

A month or so ago, the side wall at the rear of the basement flat in No. 7 Arundel Gardens suddenly imploded under the pressure of a mass of liquid concrete being poured next door to create the new structure to hold together the revamped No. 5. Luckily the flat had recently been sold and the new owners had not yet moved in. They cannot now do so as the flat is structurally unstable following the violent irruption of masonry.



Litigation has now started; but as money seems to be no problem for Mr Kingsley, no doubt everything will be rectified and Mr Houston Morris can continue to extol his project on his website.

The case may seem comparatively trivial, but in fact it is far from unique. All over London, especially in the wealthiest parts, perfectly decent older houses are being gutted and basements and gardens dug out to increase the interior space, and thus potential value, of the property.

In Bedford Park, the "first garden suburb" largely designed by Norman Shaw, where the houses were deliberately built without dark, damp basements, the stability of buildings is being undermined by the construction of basement games rooms, swimming pools or whatever. Such Victorian buildings usually have shallow foundations perfectly adequate for their purpose – but not for such massive structural interventions.

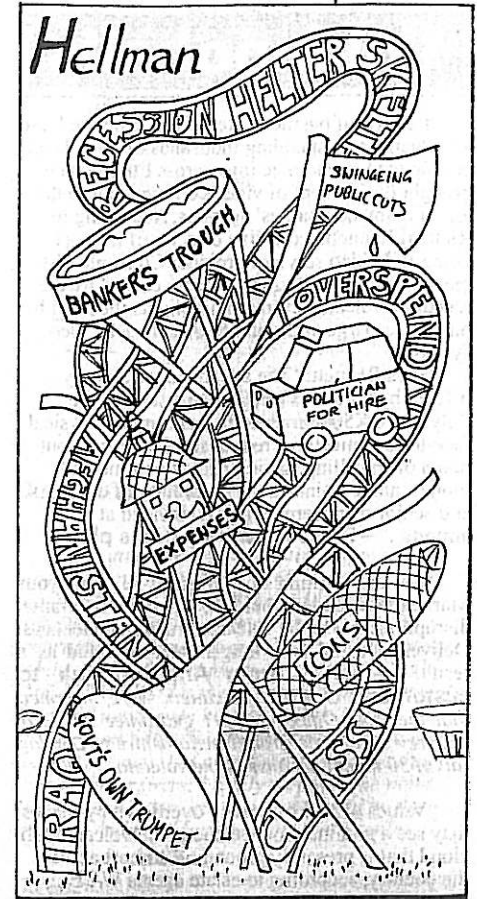
Unfortunately there seems to be no shortage of rich people determined to mutilate and undermine older buildings, creating misery for their neighbours for months or years. Equally unfortunately, council building control officers seem all too happy to grant permission for such ruthless works – planning permission is often not needed.

Nor is there a shortage of modernist architects willing to attach their names to such modish disembowellings. It's perhaps no surprise to find that the fashion was set by Lord Rogers of Riverside, who, in 1987, gutted not one but two innocent houses in St Leonard's Terrace in Chelsea to create (presumably to his own design) a giant family kitchen.

"Rogers slipped behind the unaltered early Victorian facades a slightly mad, but wonderful, double-height space: an expression of his yearning for structural clarity, the architectural equivalent of colonic irrigation," wrote the neophilic Stephen Bayley in an article in 2008 entitled "How to liberate the soul of your home". Bayley naturally applauded the process by which a builder "will demolish the back wall, slip in Acrow props to prevent the whole pile returning to nature and, in three months, build them a double-height glass extension".

Traditional buildings, with brick walls and

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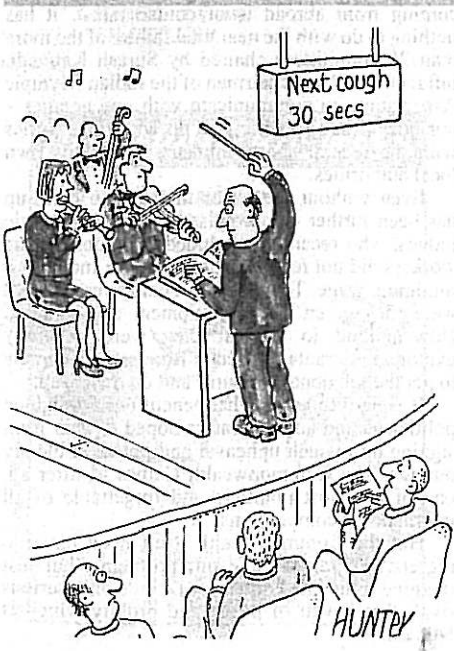


The ArcoverTittal Obit
A mangled monument to the Broken Britain Olympics by sculptor Amishmash Kaper and structural engineer Basil Babelworld

timber floors and joists, are eminently adaptable and will happily last for centuries if respected and maintained. Of course they can, and should, be altered and extended; but gutting them to create fashionably minimalist interiors which bear no relation to the facades, destroys their architectural integrity. It also leaves us with rigid, reinforced-concrete structures which future generations may well find inflexible as well as ridiculous.

So-called "conversions" are damaging the capital's and the nation's valuable building stock. It is something that ought to be stopped – or at least require properly and sanely considered planning permission.

'Piloti'



MUSIC & MUSICIANS

PERFORMING musicians, forced to honour their playing commitments, have been hit worse than most by the no-flights travel chaos.

British-based pianist Nikolai Demidenko had to stand all the way on Eurostar, London to Paris, then drive 10 hours to Barcelona, then give a concert. Worse was the experience of violinist Daniel Hope, struggling to get from Istanbul to Stuttgart. He managed to charter a private plane as far as Zagreb, drive from there to Vienna, rush to the Hauptbahnhof for a train to Germany, couldn't get on, tried to hire a car and drive, at which point he collapsed with nervous exhaustion and was taken to hospital.

Even without volcanoes, it's become increasingly obvious that many top musicians – especially singers – are half dead with tiredness by the time they reach the platform. At least two celebrity pianists admit to having fallen asleep at the keyboard in mid-recital. And O'Boulez remembers another big star who, approaching the climax in a Rachmaninov concerto with a sweeping gesture, fell off his stool and on to the floor – where he remained until a stretcher came.

The audience thought it was a heart attack; it was, in fact, stress and fatigue.

Then there was Polish soprano Aleksandra Kurzak, who recently appeared in Covent Garden's *Turco in Italia*. To get there, she'd travelled in a minicab from Warsaw, a 19-hour overnight journey of 1,000 miles, arriving in London at 5pm and onstage by 7.30pm. Her only consolation was that, unlike the cab driver who charged John Cleese £3,300 from Oslo to Brussels, Kurzak's Polish cabbie only charged her £220 door to door.

FOR 20 years the admirable Manchester Camerata orchestra has been giving concerts, school workshops and other educational programmes in and around Crewe – funded by East Cheshire council with a modest annual grant of £7,300.

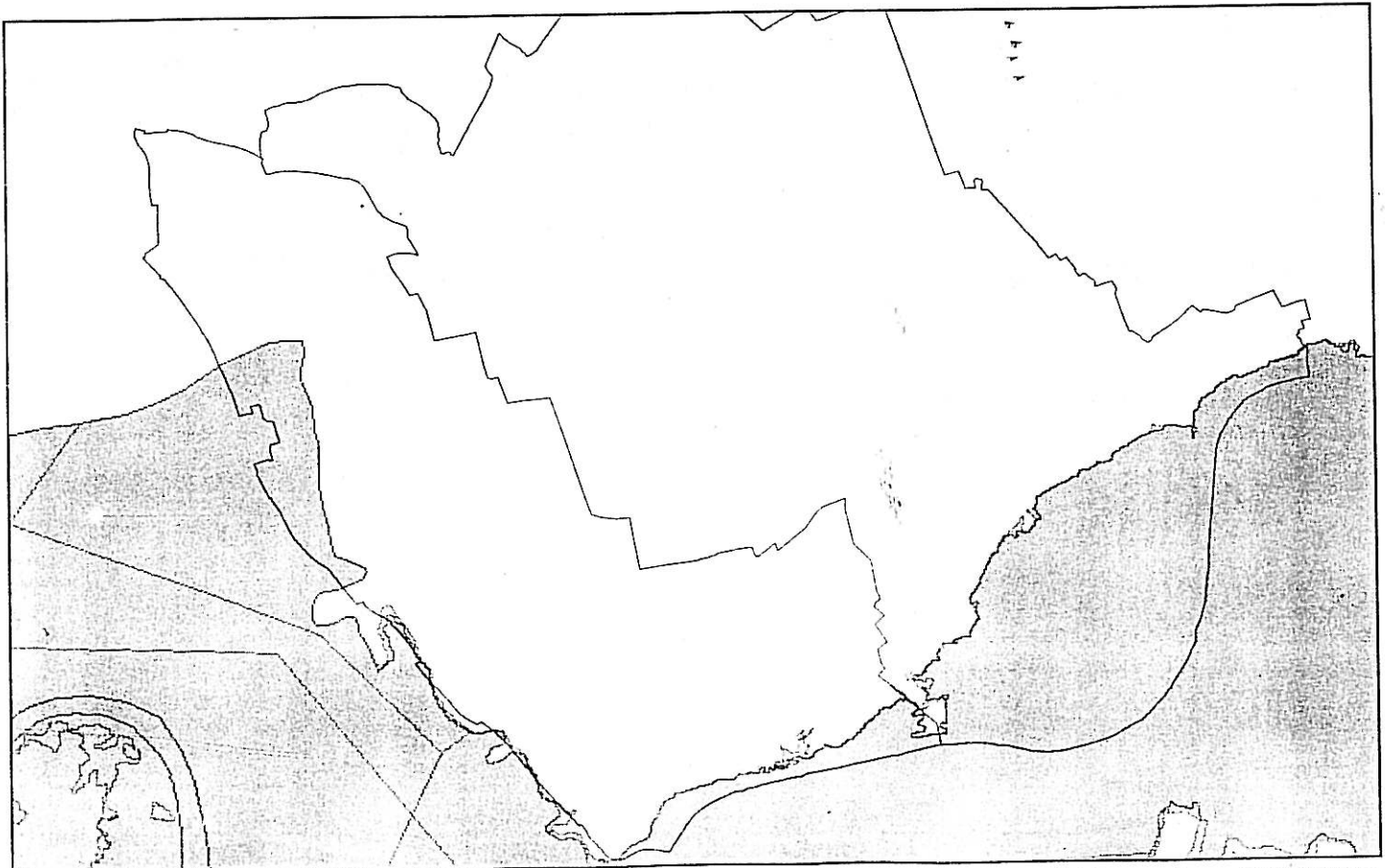
But no more: the council has axed the grant, saying it can no longer afford it. Fortunately the council has been able to afford some other key areas of expenditure, including £16,000 for a stand at the last Conservative party conference. They know their priorities in Cheshire.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

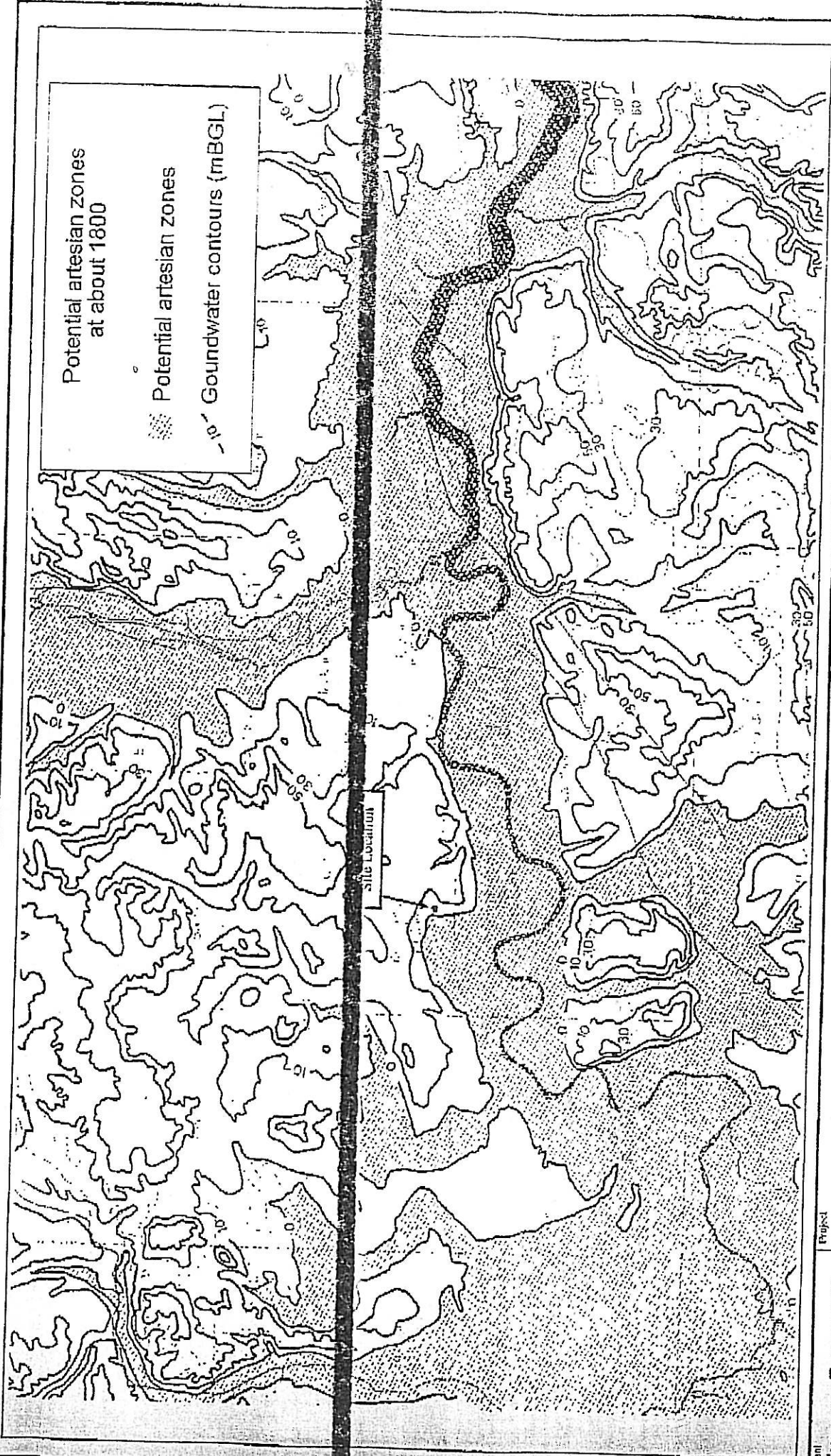


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Should the River Thames flood and escape the flood barriers, these are the low-lying areas of Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith, Westminster and Lambeth most likely to be flooded. The blue lines above mark the borough boundaries of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster; note that along their southern boundaries the lines also follow the course of the River Thames. Below is the same area in outline form.



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JCB:NB

Figure 3

97 Elgin Crescent

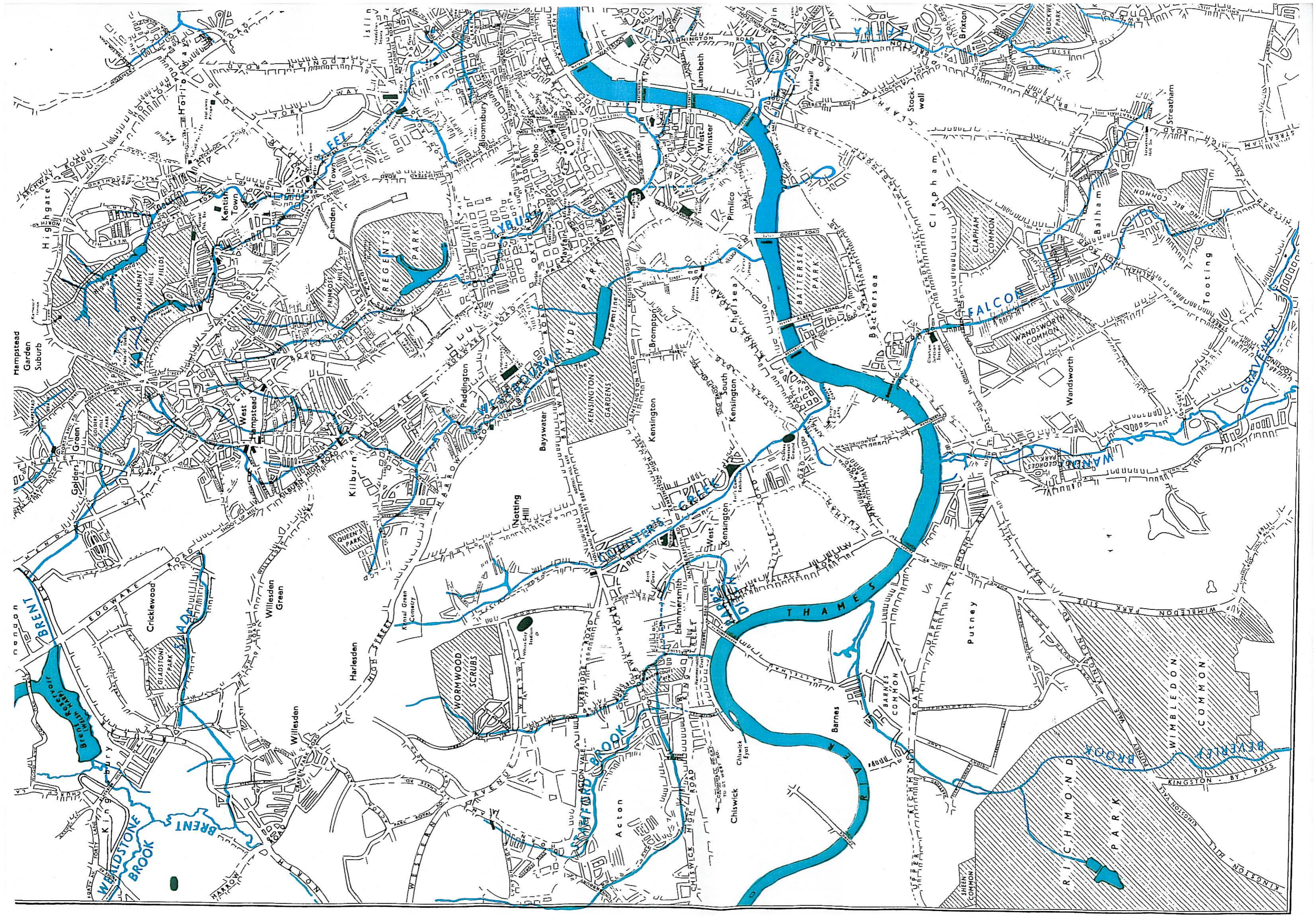
Historic groundwater levels in London at about 1800

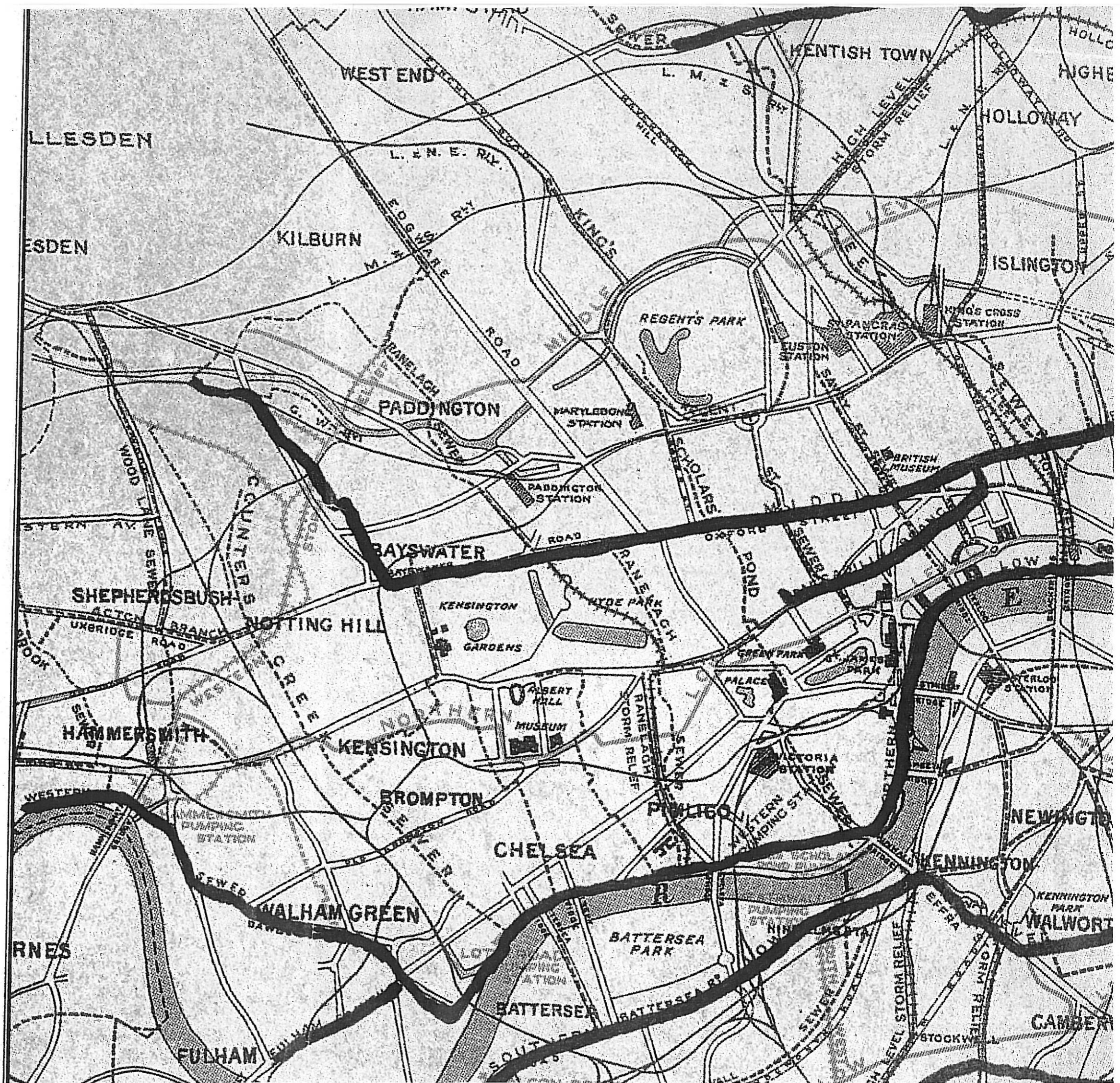
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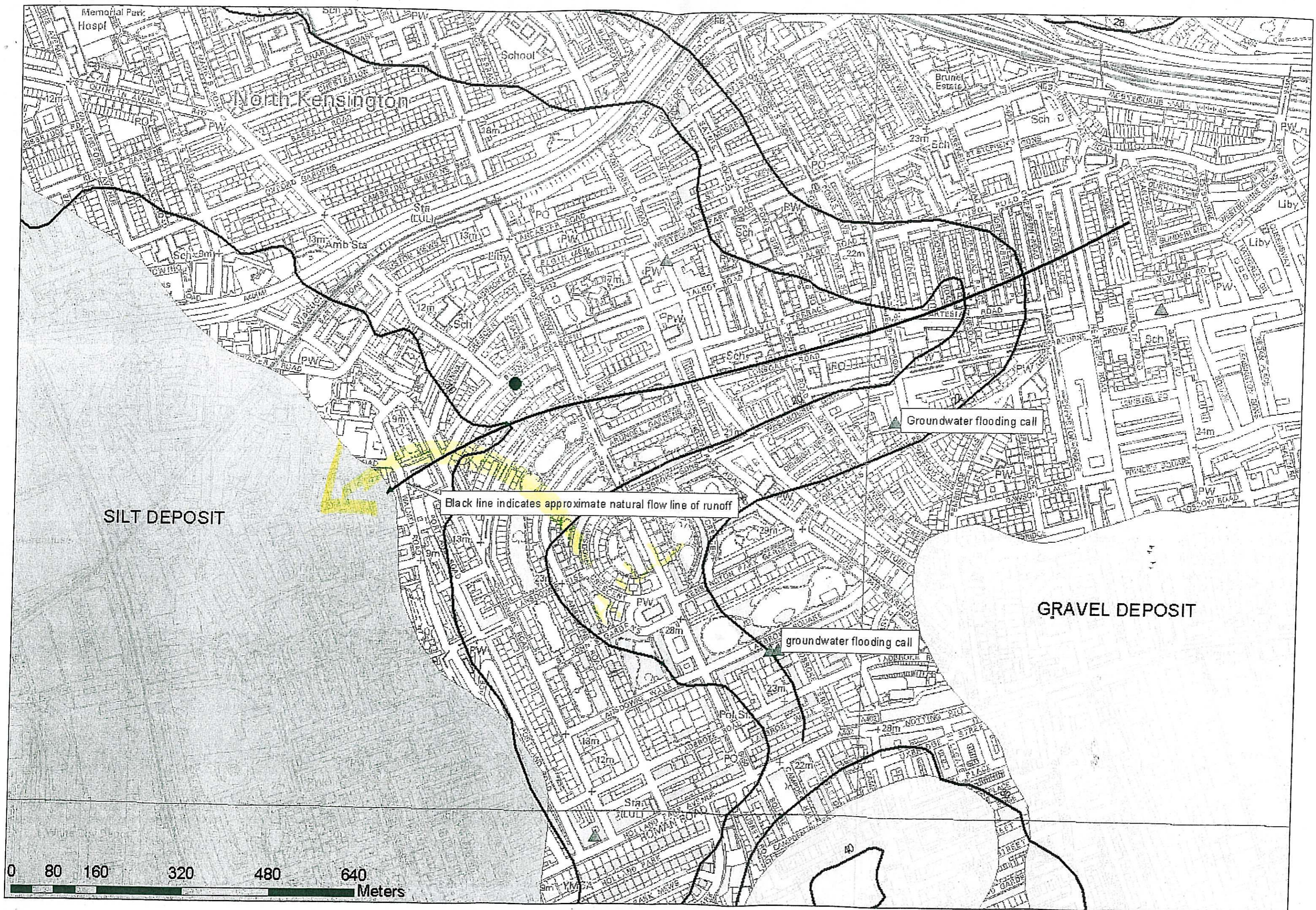
Title

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