



**Archaeological observation, investigation and  
recording at the Northampton Innovation Centre  
Green Street, Northampton  
November-December 2013**

Planning reference 11/0067/FULWNN

Report No. 14/11

Author: Christopher Jones

Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		<b>OASIS NUMBER: 169030</b>	
Project title	Archaeological Observation, Investigation Recording at the Northampton Innovation Centre, Green Street Northampton		
Short description	An archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the Northampton Innovation Centre, Green Street was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in November-December 2013. The excavation of five test pits was observed. Four were excavated by Kier Construction to check for obstructions in advance of piling and the largest was excavated over the footprint of the lift pit to the maximum depth of construction. The ground was heavily disturbed by post-medieval earthmoving and landscaping and as a result of this no pre-modern archaeological deposits were observed in the five locations examined.		
Project type	Watching brief		
Previous work	Trial trench evaluation (Albion Archaeology)		
Current land use	Car park		
Future work	Unknown		
Monument type and period	Medieval		
Significant finds	none		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Green Street, Northampton		
Easting Northing	SP 74825 60363		
Area (sq m/ha)	1,238 sqm		
Height aOD	c61m		
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>			
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)		
Project brief originator	Lesley-Ann Mather, Northamptonshire County Council Planning		
Project Design originator	Jim Brown (NA)		
Director/Supervisor	Christopher Jones (NA)		
Project Manager	Jim Brown (NA)		
Sponsor or funding body	Kier Construction		
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>			
Start date	18 November 2013		
End date	6 December 2013		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>	
Physical	Northamptonshire County Store MOLA Northampton	Site records (1 archive box)	
Paper			
Digital		Client report PDF. Photographs	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Title	Archaeological Observation, Investigation Recording at the Northampton Innovation Centre, Green Street Northampton		
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Author(s)	Christopher Jones		
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION AND  
RECORDING AT THE NORTHAMPTON INNOVATION CENTRE  
GREEN STREET, NORTHAMPTON  
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2014**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological observation, investigation and recording at the Northampton Innovation Centre, Green Street was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in November-December 2013. The excavation of five test pits was observed. Four were excavated by Kier Construction to check for obstructions in advance of piling and the largest was excavated over the footprint of the lift pit to the maximum depth of construction. The ground was heavily disturbed by post-medieval earthmoving and landscaping and as a result of this no pre-modern archaeological deposits were observed in the five locations examined.*

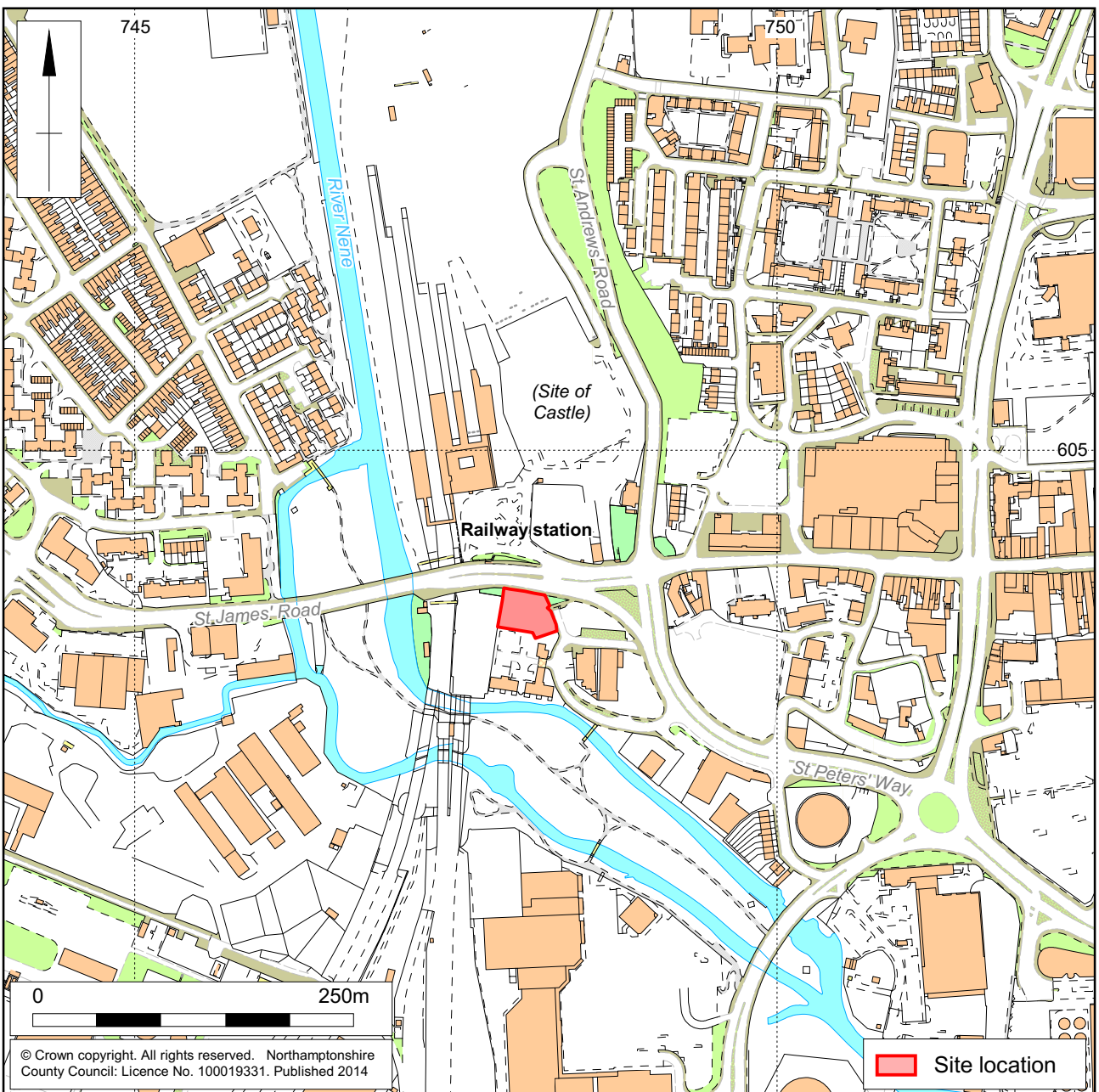
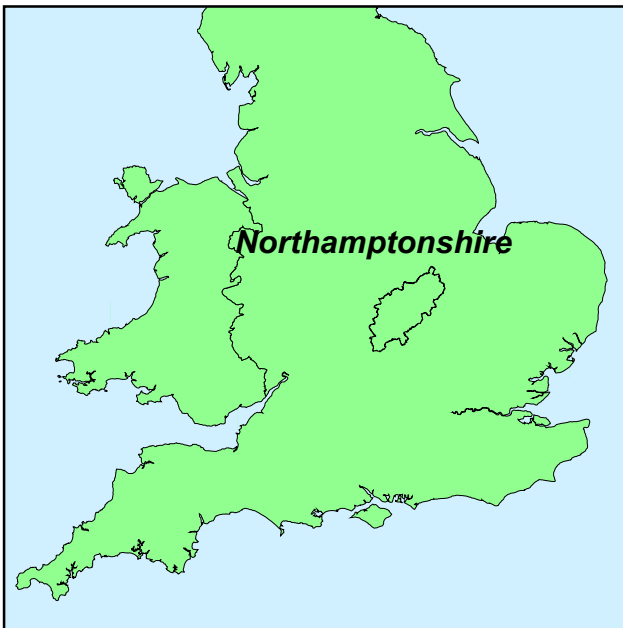
## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Archaeological observation, investigation and recording was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (now MOLA) between November-December 2013 on the development site of the Northampton Innovation Centre, Green Street, Northampton (NGR: SP 74825 60363; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Kier Construction in advance of the development of the land.

The main structural impact will comprise piled foundations, with cutting required to construct the lower ground floor and lift pit. Examination of the topographical survey of the site against excavated evidence during trial trench evaluation indicated that only the lower level of the cutting; the lift pit and foundations, were likely to cut below the horizon of post-medieval activity located in the evaluation (Meckseper 2011). This land lies on the line of the late Saxon and medieval town defences and was overlooked by Northampton Castle, the site now occupied by the railway station. As a consequence to this, archaeological attendance was arranged during groundwork by Kier Construction where there was the opportunity to examine the nature of deposits at the maximum depth of excavation, prior to piling taking place.

The scope of works was outlined and detailed in the Brief issued by Northamptonshire County Council Archaeological Planning Advisor and a strategy was outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Mather 2013; Brown 2013).

Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) registered organisation, which has now become part of MOLA (formerly Museum of London Archaeology). All works were conducted in accordance with the procedural documents of English Heritage (1991; 2006; 2008; 2011) and the appropriate standards and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (IfA 2008a).



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1



## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Location and geology

The development is located within Northampton to the west of the town centre. Historically, the site lay almost entirely within St Peter's parish, with the south-eastern corner in All Saints parish. It is bounded by an embankment for Black Lion Hill to the north, Green Street to the east, car-parking associated with the railway station to the west and recent residential development to the south.

The site was formerly occupied by a vacant car park (Fig 2), left behind after the demolition of the former public house, most recently the United Social Club, which was the last vestige of a 19th-century terrace that once occupied the site, lying on the south side of Black Lion Hill on the approach to the old west bridge.



Site prior to groundwork

Fig 2

The geology of the area is mapped as alluvium and Upper Lias Clay, although first terrace river gravels were encountered during excavation to the south (Chapman 1999). A recent trial trench excavation by Albion Archaeology placed the height of the car park at c61m above Ordnance Datum (Meckseper 2011).



## 2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The site is part of a much larger development zone, which was the subject of archaeological desk-based assessment by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Walker 2011).

Northampton Castle lay to the north, and the area of the car park in front of the present station, which lies within the outer bailey of the former castle, has been subject to evaluation in 2012 (Chapman 2012) and open area excavation in 2013 prior to the building of a new station (Fig 3).

A Scheduled Monument (SM201) lies to the north-east of the site, comprising the middle Saxon palace complex and late Saxon and medieval urban deposits in the vicinity of St Peter's Church (Williams 1979a-b; Williams *et al* 1985). Listed Buildings nearby include 1 Black Lion Hill and the adjacent Black Lion Inn (Grade II) and St Peter's Church (Grade I).

Excavation in 1995-6 on the plot to the immediate south, uncovered remains of the late Saxon town defences (Chapman 1999, figs 3, 8 & 10). A soil horizon contained middle Saxon pottery, and above this there was a clay bank with a timber revetment, later rebuilt in stone. Following the Conquest, an ironstone wall was constructed on top of the bank. To the west there was a broad deep medieval ditch, with later narrower ditches that probably dated to the 17th century as part of a refurbishment during the Civil War (Chapman 1998-9). To the east remains of the defences were found beneath at least 1.0m of recent building deposits with some walls and numerous pits, many related to tanning, penetrating much deeper than this and sometimes into the natural beneath the medieval deposits, some 1.9m below ground level.

Projecting the excavated line of the defences northward, the buildings of the former United Social Club would have lain over the site of the bank, with the rear wall of the building and yard on the same alignment as the defences, suggesting that this boundary was established with respect to the topography created by the defences. The open car park to the rear of the club would have lain over any northward continuation of the medieval ditch.

Archaeological trial trench investigations by Albion Archaeology in 2011 comprised a test pit, 4.0m square, in a small open area to the immediate south of the still standing United Social Club buildings, and a trench, 10.0m long, across the possible line of the medieval ditch (Meckseper 2011). Both trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.2m below ground level. To the east, only post-medieval deposits were encountered, but deposits could have lain at greater depth here, as on the adjacent site the base of the middle Saxon soil horizon was 1.9m below ground level. A comparison of Ordnance Survey level data shows that the base of trench 1 was at c59.76m aOD, which was 0.40m higher than the top of Saxon and medieval remains found on the neighbouring site (Meckseper 2011; Chapman 1998-9, figs 8 & 10).

To the west there was similar disturbance, but as Trench 2 was also excavated to a depth of 1.2m, c59.64m aOD, it was also not deep enough to find Saxon and medieval levels, although an extensive soil horizon at the base of the trench could be seen as consistent with the presence of earlier deposits beneath, perhaps further ditch fills (Meckseper 2011, fig 4, layer 209 and Chapman 1999, fig 8).

It was also thought that Saxon or medieval deposits might survive within the vicinity relating to the use of the land beside the River Nene, which may have been open ground adjacent to the medieval defences. It was also expected that the medieval road and crossing of the river would have been close to the site. Later encroachments in the vicinity of the medieval defences were also possible with the majority of such development expected to fall within the late medieval and early post-medieval era.

### 3 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to recover information that might assist in understanding the nature, function and character of past occupation within the parish in its cultural and environmental setting, specifically:

- *record evidence for the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation encountered during the development works;*
- *recover artefacts to assist in development of the type series within the region;*
- *and to recover palaeo-environmental remains where they are encountered.*

The investigations were carried out according to the objectives suggested by the published research priorities set out for the East Midlands (EH 1997; Cooper 2006; Knight *et al* 2012).

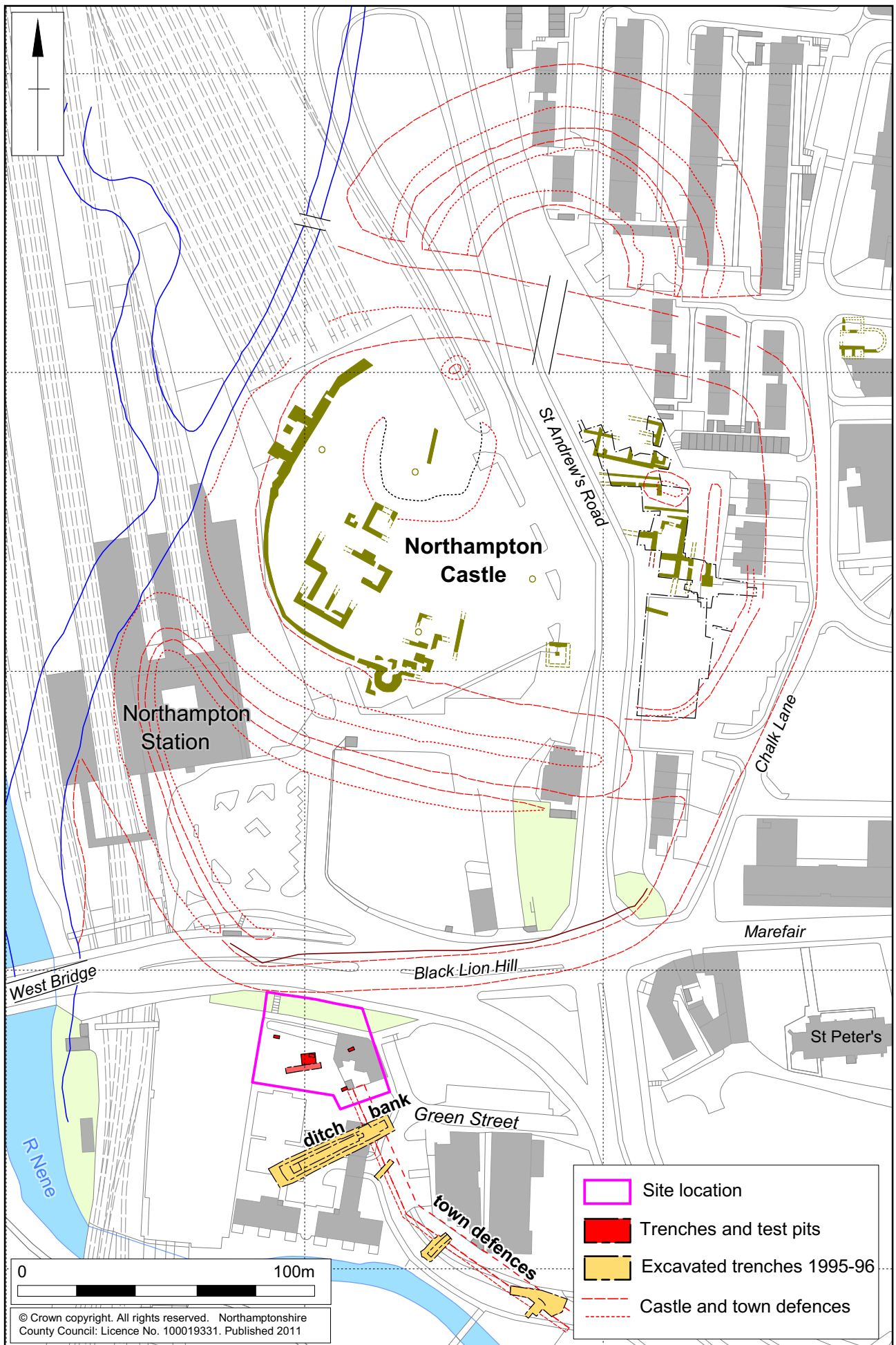
The results of this archaeological programme of works will be used to assess the effectiveness of the foregoing evaluation (Mather 2013, 4.4).

### 4 METHODOLOGY

The piling method will employ a drilling rig, which will produce arisings that may be of interest. Before the piling was undertaken four test pits were excavated in the vicinity of pile caps to check for obstructions (Fig 4). This provided an opportunity to examine the deposits below the evaluated horizon and, if Saxon or medieval remains were recognised artefacts and environmental samples would have been retrieved without interrupting machine operation at the time of piling and adhere to Health & Safety constraints.

All machine excavation was monitored by an archaeological supervisor. The machine works were undertaken using a toothless bucket of a width appropriate to the work, wherever possible. No artefacts were recovered during the works and no suitable deposits for environmental sampling were found.

Deposits were recorded on *pro-forma* trench logs including an interpretation of the deposits, thickness and content. Owing to the nature of the test pits, cleaning of sections could not be undertaken. Digital photographs form the principal photographic record and are supplemented with 35mm monochrome negatives for the archive.



Scale 1:1750

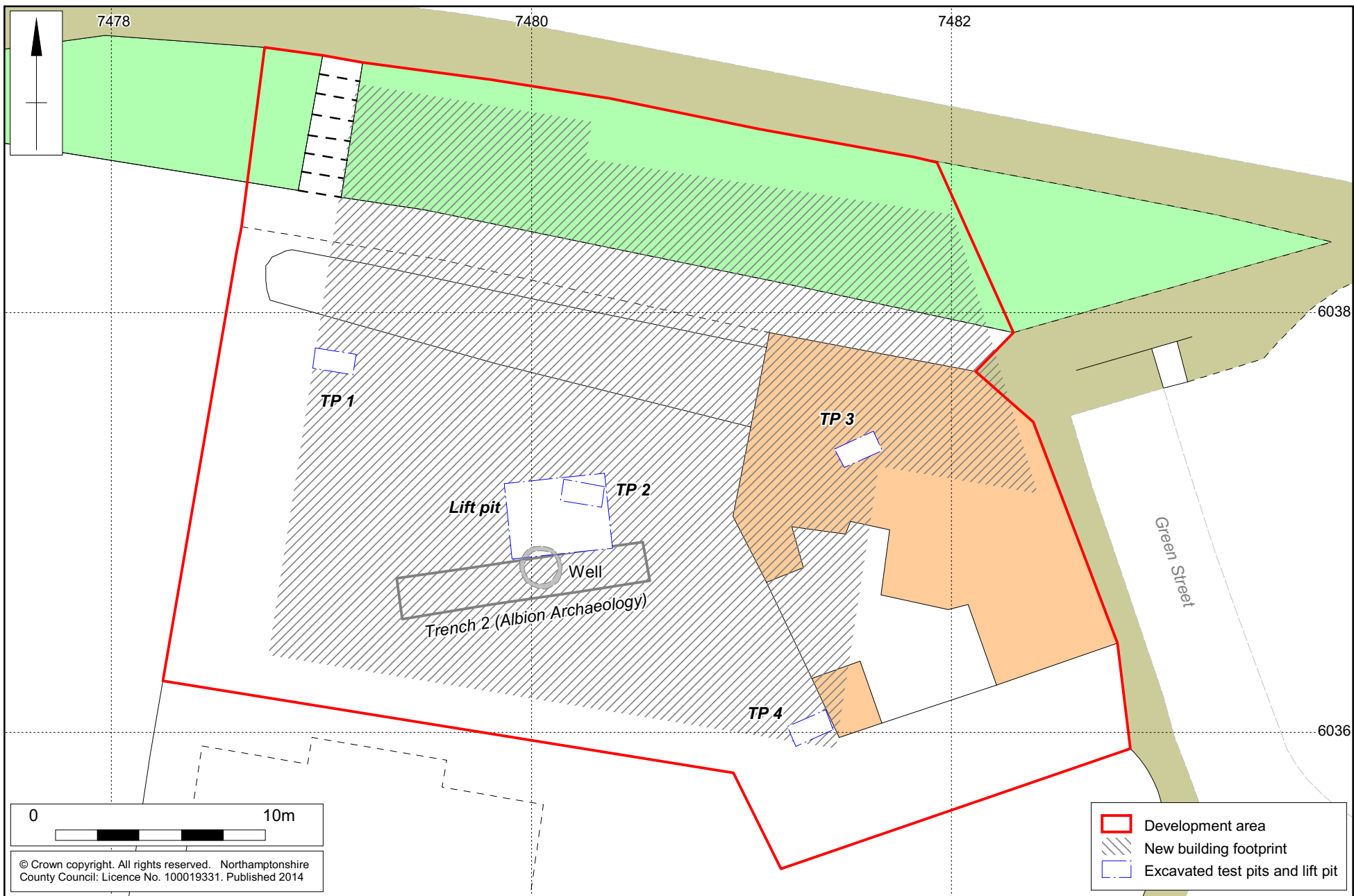
Green Street, showing Northampton Castle and the town defences

Fig 3

Scale 1:250

Test pits and lift pit locations

Fig 4



## 5 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

### 5.1 General stratigraphy

Before the piling was undertaken four test pits were excavated in the vicinity of the pile caps to check for obstructions and record any archaeological remains.

In all of the test pits there was a layer of tarmac, 0.10m thick, above a series of gravel and concrete levelling and make-up layers to a thickness of 0.27-0.30m, which relate to the former modern car park.

### 5.2 The test pits and lift pit

Test pits 1-4, excavated on the 18 November 2103, were each 2.0m long by 1.56m wide, and were 1.50-2.90m deep, exposing layers of 19th and 20th-century demolition rubble down to clay, presumed to be natural (Figs 5-8). The context details of each test pit are summarised in the table below (Table 1), most appeared to be the fill of former cellars.

*Table 1: Summary of recorded contexts within Test pits 1-4*

Test pit	Context	Description	Max. depth (m)
1	101	tarmac and brick bat sub-surface	0.30
1	102	mixed brick rubble and brown silty clay	1.65
1	103	mid-orange-brown clay	2.40
2	201	tarmac surface and grey stone sub-surface	0.30
2	202	mixed brick rubble, clay, ironstone and sand	1.90
2	203	mid-orange-brown clay	2.80
2	204	dark blue clay	2.90
3	301	tarmac surface and grey stone sub-surface	0.30
3	302	mixed brick rubble, silty clay and ironstone	2.60
4	401	tarmac surface and grey stone sub-surface	0.30
4	402	mixed brick rubble, silty clay and ironstone	1.50



Test pit 1, looking north

Fig 5





Test pit 2, looking west

Fig 6



Test pit 3, looking south-west

Fig 7





Test pit 4, looking south-west

Fig 8



Lift pit, showing the stone face of the 19th-century well, looking south-west

Fig 9

The footprint of the lift pit, excavated on the 6 December 2013, was 4.80m long by 3.60m wide by 3.0m deep, and lay in the area of test pit 2 and trench 2 of the trial trench excavations (Meckseper 2011). The top 1.0m comprised mixed soils of dark greyish-brown silt clay with 19th and 20th-century stone, brick, glass and china. Above the natural was a layer of loose disturbed mixed soil, clay and Northampton sand with ironstone. Natural clay and ground water was exposed at 3.0m.

A stone-lined well were observed on the south side of the pit, which correlated with the well identified by trial trench excavation, where the upper part of the lining had been rebuilt in brick (Fig 9). The whole sequence within the footprint of the lift pit had been disturbed by post-medieval earthmoving and landscaping.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

No features relating to the late Saxon or medieval defences were observed in the excavated test pits or the lift pit. However, as it was not possible to enter and clean the four test pits it was not possible to record the full complexity of the exposed stratigraphy, and it is likely that fine detail will have been missed. However, it was evident that there was extensive disturbance from post-medieval buildings and related features, typically to depths in excess of 1.0m. In each test pit a clay layer, perhaps natural, was reached. Several wall foundations and remains of a circular stone-built well were revealed during the excavation of the lift pit, which were the remains of 19th and 20th-century structures (Fig 9).

The test pits show that the development area has been extensively disturbed by 19th and 20th-century terraced buildings and subsequent landscaping following their demolition. Since then the ground has been further truncated by modern services. The sum of this activity creates a complex arrangement of modern features in the uppermost 1.2m, truncating lower deposits at certain points where wells or cellars were located.

The evaluation and the observation of the test pits and the lift pit have not recorded any evidence for the presence of the late Saxon and medieval defences, but as these works cover only 45m<sup>2</sup>, 3.6% of the total site area of 1240m<sup>2</sup>, there is potential that buried deposits may survive in other parts of the site, and beneath the level of the groundworks associated with the current development.

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27 January 2014



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