

Monitoring of topsoil stripping and archaeological recording preparatory
to building construction at 192 Duffield Road, Derby
July 2003



Event: DR 1802
Source: DR 19373

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TPAU Code: DRD.3
Filename: 2299\SPD_2003_REP.DOC

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SUMMARY

In 1998, a proposal for building development within the garden of 192 Duffield Road led to an evaluation conducted by T&PAU which revealed a thin layer of cobble metalling, with two parallel, linear slots, terraced into the slope. This was interpreted as the stance for a timber building, probably of Roman date.

The planning application went to Appeal; the development was approved with a requirement to ensure that the important archaeological remains were preserved *in situ*.

A brief for the mitigation strategy was issued by Derby City Development Control Archaeologist, requiring that:

the *western zone* be stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision, then a terram and stone laid. The strip was to cease at the surface of silts overlying the metalling. No vehicle movement was to be allowed on the stripped surface until the protective overburden had been laid.

the *eastern zone* was to be stripped of topsoil down to subsoil, then any archaeological features recorded and excavated

any archaeological features within the *southern zone* were to be recorded and excavated

The brief was complied with, and the position of the concrete piles for the building foundation surveyed, over five days in July/August 2003. In addition, spot-heights were taken on the stripped surface.

In the *western zone* the topsoil strip revealed an area of silt probably equating with the soil overlying the metalling. This deposit was more extensive than the metalling so it would appear that there was an extensive terrace, only part of which was metalled.

Close to the boundary of Duffield Road a separate area of metalling, on a separate terrace, was retained *in situ* under topsoil as part of the gardens of the development.

All of the features in the *eastern zone* were either modern garden features and very shallow, or interpreted as consistent with ridge and furrow type ploughing before Victorian development along Duffield Road.

The subsoil sloped steeply, so the formation level in the south-eastern corner of the development did not remove topsoil horizons; this area was also preserved *in situ*.

Two sections through metalling were recorded in the cut for the former garage. Their alignment and character strongly suggests that it was part of the same feature as revealed by the evaluation.

The options for interpretation of the metalling as a building stance or terrace track-way are discussed. The former is favoured here since the immediately overlying silts are consistent with the build-up of deposits below floorboards, but no interpretation can be certain.

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Plate 1. Surface stripped, with the machine on spoil, terram being laid and stone being delivered. The disturbed area just above centre is the void left by the garden pond. Looking west towards Duffield Road.

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INTRODUCTION

When a development was proposed in the sloping garden of 192 Duffield Road in 1998, an evaluation was requested by Derby City Council as the postulated line of a Roman road ran along the adjacent lane known as Darley Slade (a fuller description of the context prior to evaluation is reproduced as Appendix 1). The two-stage evaluation revealed a thin layer of metalling, with two parallel, linear slots, terraced into the slope; this was interpreted as the stance for a timber building, probably of Roman date (Garton *et al.* 1998). This metalling was covered by a pale, orange-brown, virtually stone-free silt and then a greyish-brown silt interpreted as the 'remnant' soils developed on these silts. Down-slope of these well preserved remains, the topsoil lay directly on the boulder clay; no features were located here by evaluation.

The results of the evaluation led to three areas being defined within the garden plot:
a *western zone* containing well preserved archaeological remains with a high information potential

an *eastern zone* which might contain truncated features dug into the subsoil

a *southern zone* (which had been terraced in the earlier part of the century for a garage) and where the potential for any archaeological remains was reduced.

The planning application went to Enquiry and Appeal on two occasions. On the second Appeal the Inspector's decision placed a requirement to ensure that the important archaeological remains are preserved *in situ* (AP/C1055/A/02/1090894). To that end, a brief for the mitigation strategy, and a design for the works, was issued by Derby City Development Control Archaeologist (DER/07/01/00903/PRI).

This brief required that:

the *western zone* be stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision, then a terram and stone laid. The strip was to cease at the surface of the pale silts overlying the metalling. No vehicle movement was to be allowed on the stripped surface until the protective overburden had been laid.

the *eastern zone* was to be stripped of topsoil down to subsoil, then any archaeological features recorded and excavated

any archaeological features within the *southern zone* were to be recorded and excavated

METHOD

The initial 0.2m of the topsoil was removed, then any deposits stripped in *c.* 0.1m spits under close archaeological supervision using a tracked machine with a back-actor and toothless bucket.

Western zone

In the *western zone* the topsoil was removed to formation level, spot-heights taken on the stripped surface (Fig. 2), and a scatter of post-medieval pot plotted (Fig. 3). Terram was then laid by hand and then stone, delivered from the entrance-gap made onto Duffield Road, was tipped successively from west to east so that no machine ran on the stripped surface (Plate 1).

The areas north and south of the access-gap to Duffield Road were stripped of vegetation, then terram and stone was laid directly onto topsoil for the contractor's cabins. These areas will eventually be returned to garden, so topsoil was not stripped here.

Eastern zone

In the *eastern zone*, the revealed surface was machined to archaeological specifications, then a sample of this surface was hand-cleaned by hoe and the features planned by EDM survey (Fig. 3). A scatter of brick fragments and post-medieval pot on this surface was also plotted. The features were then tested by hand-trowelling, removing a section which was drawn and photographed. A series of spot-heights was also taken (Fig. 2).

Southern zone

In the *southern zone*, the garage walls were removed by the machine pulling them in towards the void, then the sections were hand-cleaned and recorded by drawing and photography (Fig. 6, Plate 2). Metalling was observed in both east-west sections, but not in the north-south section. The metalling appeared coherent in the northern section but only patches survived in the southern section, so to confirm that the cobbles were part of a deliberately laid horizon here, the overlying soils were cut back for *c.* 0.10m and photographed. The sections were then covered with terram and the void filled, partly with overburden, then with stone to level with the surrounding surface. The void was filled by machine-lifting the materials in by back-actor to prevent damage to the edges.

Once the stone was laid, square concrete piles were inserted by tracked pile driver. The locations of the piles were plotted by EDM survey (Fig. 5).

RESULTS

Formation level of the development

The EDM survey for both the 1998 evaluation, and the current phase of work, was tied to the Ordnance Survey bench-mark some 100m to the south down Duffield Road. By using the same Ordnance Datum for both phases of work, any impact on the archaeologically sensitive horizon can be demonstrated.

Fig. 2 shows the spot-heights taken in 1998 on the undisturbed ground-surface (in black), against the spot-heights taken on the stripped formation level (in red).

In the *western zone*, the topsoil strip was a maximum of 0.53m deep, with most being between 0.3-0.4m deep. This was sufficient to reveal a greyish-brown silt which probably equates with the 'remnant soil' overlying the metalling over much of this area, though topsoil was evident to either side (Fig. 3). The subsoil clearly rises up to Duffield Road; at the entrance gap made in the wall, the strip had to bite into the subsoil to achieve the correct formation level (Figs 2,3).

Similar depths of topsoil were removed from the *eastern zone*. Here the subsoil was clearly exposed in the northern part, but topsoil remained *in situ* in the southern part; the subsoil surface slopes down to both south and east. Since the formation level was

reached before the topsoil was fully removed in the southern part of the site, this whole area was also preserved *in situ* by covering with terram and stone.

No spot-heights were taken in the *southern zone*, but inspection of the sections showed that the formation level was up to 1m below the depth where archaeological features might be expected to be preserved (Fig. 6).

Western zone

The western zone was stripped into the subsoil by the entrance gap onto Duffield Road, but elsewhere topsoil or pale greyish-brown silt (probably equating with the 'remnant soil' overlying the metalling in evaluation trench 08), was mapped (Fig. 3). Although the downslope limit of the silts ran under topsoil (Fig. 3) it seems likely that the silts did not extend much further to the east, since there subsoils were exposed at only *c.* 0.3m below the modern ground surface. The up-slope limit of this silt was not mapped since it ran beneath topsoil that was left *in situ*, though it was seen in 1998 to the west, in evaluation test-pits 05 and 11 (Fig. 4). This silt was cut by a cinder and brick base for a garden path, the pipe-trench to a circular pond, and a large approximately rectangular feature which included brick fragments within its fill. The circular garden feature (surviving as an upstanding flower-bed in 1998) was a concrete-lined garden pond cut about 1m deep. The upcast from its construction was visible on its southern side. This upcast was left *in situ*, together with topsoil over which it lay, downslope of the pond (Fig. 3). A scatter of late post-medieval sherds, including slip-wares, brown-glazed sherds, white china and blue and white transfer wares were found on the stripped surface of this topsoil.

A second area of metalling, with overlying silts, was discovered in test-pit 06 of the evaluation. Hence, the machining of the entrance gap to the north of test-pit 06 was watched intently as the soils were machined off in spits *c.* 0.1m deep, but no evidence of silts or metalling were recognised despite the formation level being taken to nearly the same level OD as the metalling (*cf.* Figs. 2, 4) and biting into the subsoil. Here a thin topsoil appeared to come straight down on to subsoil, though we cannot be certain that this result is not a frailty of the watching brief methodology.

Eastern zone

Overlying the topsoil at the junction of the eastern and western zones was an area containing brick and stone fragments; it was not stony enough to represent a hard-standing, and its location is suggestive of up-cast from the digging of the driveway to the garage (Fig. 3). The lack of post-medieval pottery from its surface is consistent with this interpretation. The topsoil east and west of this up-cast was stone free, and reminiscent of the soils below turf which have been subject to worm-sorting (and have therefore been *in situ* for some time); they were planned and remained *in situ*. These topsoils included a scatter of post-medieval pottery (white china, red terracotta and brown stoneware).

The base of a cinder and brick path ran from the pond to another modern feature on the eastern edge of the site. The area south of the path was stripped to subsoil. It was inspected on stripping, and then again after rain when features were visible elsewhere. No features were visible in this area and no further action was taken.

The area north of the cinder and brick path was entirely hand-cleaned by hoe. Several linear features, some plough-scores and a modern, brick-lined probable post-hole were recorded. The linear features were sectioned, but all were filled entirely with topsoil with no intervening horizon, and none was more than 0.08cm deep. The largest feature, running approximately down-slope, was a shallow u-shaped hollow reminiscent of a furrow from medieval ploughing. The plough-scores were obvious because a lower, yellower subsoil had been brought up into the pinkish subsoil in lines up to *c.* 0.06m wide. Five of the plough-scores ran down-slope, with the other two at approximate right-angles to them.

Southern zone

Hand-cleaning of the end and two sides of the former garage showed metalling in both side sections. The metalling in the northernmost section seemed complete in that both eastern and western limits of the metalling appeared to be within the cut for the garage. The southernmost section lay underneath an elder tree, and was not so well preserved; it seems likely that the full extent of the metalling was not preserved here.

In the northern section the stratigraphy comprised the base of topsoil, overlying a grey-brown silty loam with a few stones (equivalent to the remnant soil), which overlay boulder clay at either end of the section, but in the central part overlay an orange-brown stone-free silt which lay directly on an uneven metalled surface. Like the metalling in evaluation trench 08, this surface had slots some 1.8m apart (centre to centre), with cobbles at their base: a single slot lay on the west side of the section and a double slot on the east side. The cobbles stopped within 0.80m of the western slot and 0.10m of the eastern slot, though here a spread of 'dirty' boulder clay continued for another 0.60m. This section is precisely what might have been expected had the metalling in evaluation trench 08 been excavated; its eastern edge lies precisely in line with that within evaluation trench 08. A single sliver of brick/tile (AEB), with no surviving surfaces, was located within the grey-brown silts 0.06m above the metalled surface.

In the southern section two separate patches of cobbles were noted. Though both proved to form a metalled surface when the section was cut back by 0.10m, correlation with the opposite section is not certain. The easternmost patch of pebbles was up to 0.14m deep, and appeared to form a dip in section, so might be a continuation of the slot, though this was not obvious when the section was cut back by 0.10m. This patch of metalling does not continue the projected alignment of the slot from evaluation trench 08 into the northern section.

INTERPRETATION

Western zone

It has already been noted that the pale, greyish-brown silt probably equates with the 'remnant soil' overlying the metalling discovered in the evaluation. Taking the downslope limit of the silt mapped in the topsoil strip, and the upslope limit of test-pits 05 and 11, this suggests this *in situ* deposit survived for almost the full width of the garden and was in excess of 14m wide. Hence, the silt deposit is more extensive than the metalling (Fig. 4: no metalling being present in test-pits 01, 05 and 11). Thus it would appear that there is an extensive terrace, only part of which is metallated. No metalling was exposed in plan during monitoring of the stripping.

The metalling located within test-pit 06 remains unexplained. It is probably not continuous with the metalling in trench 08 since none was recovered in the intervening test-pits 05 and 11, and it is at *c.* 1.2m above that in 08 (Fig. 4). Our original conclusion, that it was a separate area of metalling, on a separate terrace, still seems the best explanation.

Eastern zone

All of the linear features, and most of the plough-scores, ran in approximately the same direction i.e. downslope. They run at an angle to the recent garden and the line of Duffield Road and therefore probably pre-date them. Though not visible in the park immediately outside this garden, elsewhere within Derwent Park, on the top of the escarpment, there is clear ridge and furrow from Medieval ploughing. We suggest that the nature of these features is consistent with ridge and furrow type ploughing before Victorian development along Duffield Road.

The south-eastern corner of this zone was not stripped so deeply to reach the development formation level, so some topsoil remained *in situ*. It is clear from the levels OD of the subsoils to the north that the natural land formation dipped quite steeply at this point, the levels probably having been modified by medieval ploughing, gardening and the dumping of material when the driveway to the garage was dug out. The road immediately east of the garden wall is now at a lower level, and material from this cutting may also have contributed to a build up of deposits along the south-eastern perimeter.

Southern zone

The projected line of the eastern edge of the metalling in evaluation trench 08 lines up with the edge of metalling recorded in the cutting for the former garage (Fig. 4). A profile taken across the metallated surface within evaluation trench 08 is very similar to the northern section, with the centre of the slots at 1.7m and 1.8m intervals respectively. The height OD of the metallated surface falls regularly to the south (Fig. 4). The thickness of metalling is consistent with that investigated in trench 08. Taken together, this all strongly suggests that the metalling in 08 and both garage sections is the same feature. If so this feature is over 16m long. If the limit of the metalling is at the western end of the recorded section in the cut for the garage, it is some 4.8m wide, though we cannot be certain that this end has not been truncated.

DISCUSSION

Preservation in situ

The spot-heights taken in 1998 and 2003 (Fig. 2) would seem to demonstrate that the brief to preserve the potentially informative horizons below stone overburden has been achieved. Concrete piles were driven through the archaeological metalling in at least four locations (Fig. 5). Experience elsewhere, based on the examination of piled structures, suggests that the zone of deformation of deposits around each pile is up to double their radius (J. Williams, English Heritage, pers. comm.). Only future excavation will show how the piling has affected the archaeological horizons on this site.

Archaeological interpretation

Our original interpretation of the metalling in 08 (and perhaps 06) was for a stance for a timber-building on an artificially-cut terrace; there is no evidence from the recent work which can contradict this interpretation. With a length over 16m and perhaps a width of 4.8m, as suggested by the section, this could represent a long, narrow structure, well within the size-range of Roman strip-buildings (*cf.* building plans in Hingley 1989, 39-47). However, as commented in 1998, without further excavation this interpretation cannot be certain. The results from the section recorded in the cutting for the garage introduce a further factor for consideration: on the downslope side of the metalling there appear to have been two slots, not one. Without excavation in plan this cannot be verified, but multiple slots might be interpreted as rutting within a trackway terraced into the slope, and as such their presence on the downslope side would not be unexpected. If so, the ruts would appear to run consistently close to the trackway edge, and there is no obvious build-up or repair of metalling (though this might not be obvious without detailed excavation). The width between the slots, or ruts, of 1.7-1.8m is at the limit of known Roman carts, the average gauge being 1.4m (Davies 2002, 64, 69). If this metalling is a roadway, it is almost certainly not the Roman Road to the fort since it is on the wrong alignment (see Appendix 2) and does not have the well-constructed foundation and depth of metalling characteristic of such roads (Davies 2002, 57-8), though it might have been a trackway running off such a road. However, it must be acknowledged that if this metalling was a road, we have no ready explanation for the origin of the stone-free silt which immediately overlies the metalling. Without further excavation and detailed examination of this deposit, our best explanation for its origin is from the dust and debris accumulated below any floorboards of a structure: any deposit relating to the use of a trackway, or colluvium overriding it, would probably be stony. The jury must remain out until future opportunities allow further exploration of this area.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our thanks to the current landowner, Mr T Pratt, for commissioning the work; the assistance of the staff of Mathew Montague Architects who managed the project; Dr Andy Myers for discussion and advice; and the site contractors, particularly the site Manger, Phil, and the foreman, Grenville, for their willing assistance. The excavation and recording was conducted by Matthew Hurford, the survey and drawing preparation by Doug Gilbert, and the monitoring and recording by Daryl Garton. As always, we are grateful to Graeme Guilbert for his help and perceptive comments.

APPENDIX 1: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT FOR THE 1998 EVALUATION

The proposed development plot lies in the district of Derby known as Strutt's Park, and is situated near the top of an east-facing slope, c. 350m west of the Derwent, with the site of the Roman fort at Little Chester lying immediately east of the river (Fig. 1). The underlying geology comprises boulder clay, sitting atop the Mercia Mudstone, which forms a cliff along the western edge of the valley; and the plot is situated above one of the few areas of relatively gentle slope within this escarpment. The plot is close to Belper Road, where previous fieldwork has recovered artefacts of the mid-1st century AD, together with structures thought to relate to military occupation; and this has led to the suggestion that Strutt's Park was the site of an early Roman fort (Brassington 1970; Dool 1985, 15, 25). The plot is also on the postulated line of the Roman road leading west from Little Chester, traced via alignments of more recent roads, field-boundaries and public footpaths from Rocester (Staffordshire) to the western boundary of Markeaton Park, some 2km due west of Strutt's Park. It has been postulated that the road descended to the river via Darley Slade, the comparatively gently sloping hollow which lies adjacent to the proposed development plot, to cross the river by a bridge, the stone piers of which (believed Roman because of their location) were recorded by Stukeley in the 18th century (Dool 1972, 9; Brassington 1981, 90-2) and reported recently surviving as piles of rubble on the bed of the river, though not located (Brassington 1970, 30; 1991, 41).

The development plot has formerly been used as gardens and currently consists of a series of small lawned terraces. The evaluation, comprising nine hand-dug test-pits (01-06 and 09-11) and two trial-trenches (07 and 08), was conducted over 2 weeks in August 1998. The objectives were to determine any evidence for either the postulated road (ditches or metalling) or other *in situ* stratified deposits.

APPENDIX 2: THE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE 1998 EVALUATIONS

The archaeological remains are impressive, particularly in trench 08, and have a very high quality of preservation. Initially, it was thought that the metalling was for the Roman Road, but the orientation of its edge (which was at approximate right-angles to that expected), the lack of layering among the cobbles (which one might expect in any road construction which lasted for any time and was re-surfaced or repaired), the lack of metalling in test-pit 11 (which lay between those test-pits with metallated surfaces: Fig. 2), and the vertical height difference between the areas of recovered metalling (at least 1.2m) all favoured another interpretation. The discovery of the slot probably bedding for a cill-beam, along the edge of the metalling in 08, the interpretation of a second, parallel, gap in these cobbles, and the cut at the edge of the metallated surface, all suggest that this is an artificially-levelled terrace for a timber building. Very little of the metalling was removed for the purposes of this evaluation, but it may be surmised that this building would have been fully framed, with the super-structure morticed into the cills. The second beam did not lie at the edge of metalling and may have been either one of a series of joists for a raised, timber floor, or the footing for an internal partition. The fine silts lying above the metalling could represent the dust accumulated through the floor-boards, any rotting debris beneath them, and perhaps the abandonment and degradation of the structure itself. Clay or daub, which are common materials used in rendering timber-framed structures, are rarely recovered unless the building was burnt, and no lumps of this material were recognised in the remnant soils overlying the metalling. The precise

nature of these soils infilling the upper part of the terrace is unclear, but they seem best regarded as an accumulation of slope-creep, reworked by plants and animals during normal soil processes.

A 2nd century date for the use of the building is tentatively suggested on the basis of the pottery recovered from the silt overlying the metalling, and this would be in keeping with the Hadrianic silver denarius recovered by metal-detecting over the spoil heap.

Rectangular 'strip buildings', with doorway in the gable-end, facing on to the street, were common in the more urbanized settlements of Roman Britain, and this is just the kind of structure that might reasonably be envisaged spreading out from the fort at *Deventio*.

Although it cannot be conclusively demonstrated from the evaluation, it is possible that the metallated surface identified in test-pit 06 was part of the floor or yard associated with another building. If so, it is possible that these are two of a series of timber buildings, set on terraced platforms at right-angles to the road, and representing ribbon-development along the road to Rocester. Where there are two such buildings, it would not be surprising to find more; and the apparently blank area within the eastern part of the proposed development plot may once have contained such structures.

Such buildings may have foundations of variable depth cut into the subsoil, so that even where they are not so well preserved as to have floor-levels (like those partly revealed in trench 08), there may well be traces of slots (examples recorded at Belper Road in the 1970s ranged between 0.08-0.70m deep: Dool 1985, 17-23) and other features, like pits, cut into the subsoil. No such features were observed within the area exposed by trench 07, but such fragmentary traces cannot be discounted over this eastern part of the plot; indeed, it would be surprising if none were there.

One implication of suggesting that the building in trench 08 represents ribbon-development along the Roman road must be that the line of that road passed just to the north or south of these buildings, i.e. beside/beneath 192 Duffield Road, or along the current access to Derwent Park (Fig. 2). The present use of the latter as a roadway is perhaps suggestive, but further archaeological investigation would be required to locate the Roman road. This new evidence also has a bearing upon the extent of Romano-British development in the 2nd century AD; previous discoveries in Strutt's Park have tended to emphasise the presence of 1st century material, with later development around the fort at Little Chester (Dool *et al.* 1985, 301). Moreover, it illustrates the high level of preservation within this built-up area of Derby, and demands that future development should continue to be monitored archaeologically wherever it occurs in the Strutt's Park area.

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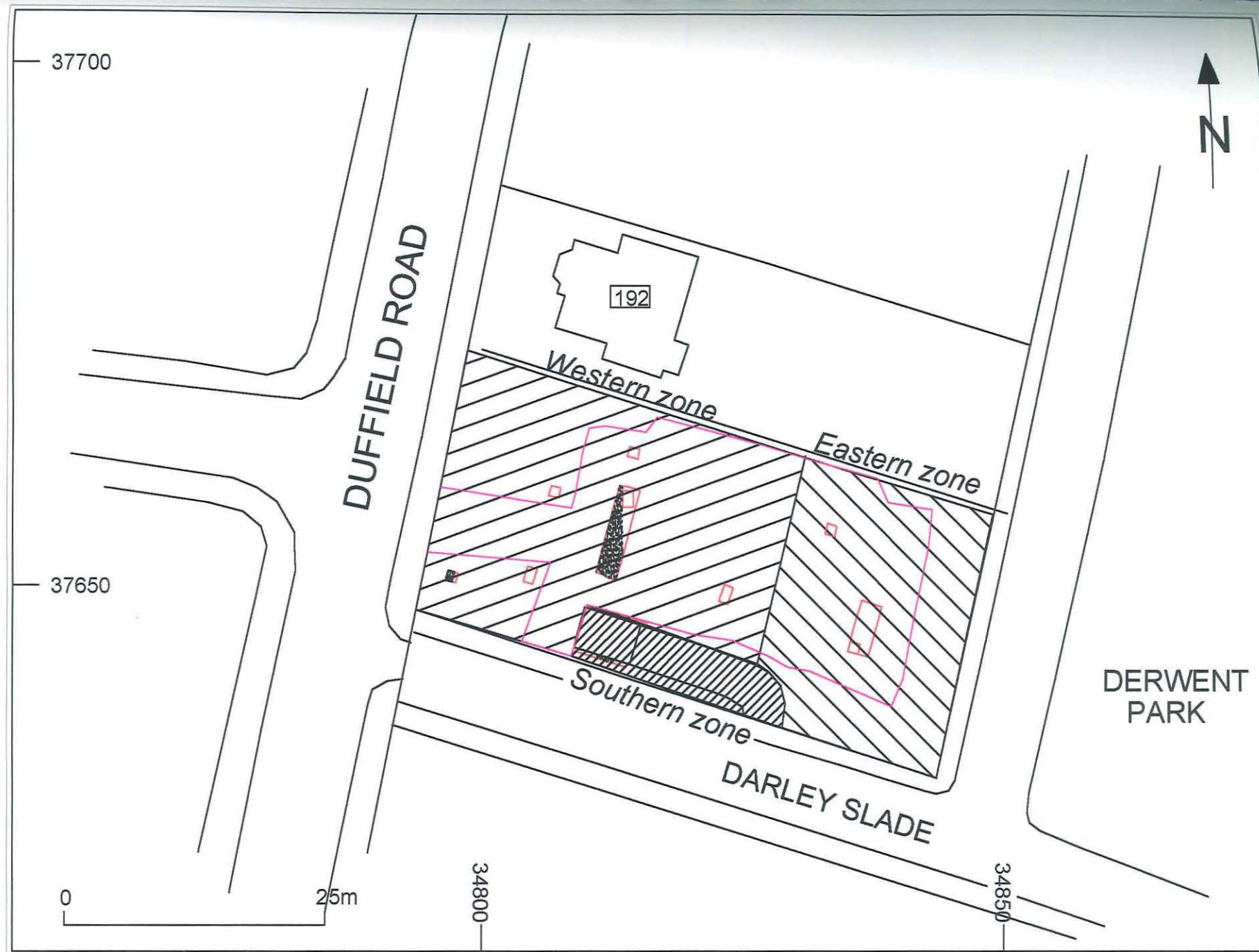


Fig. 1. Location of stripped area and zones for mitigation within garden of 192 Duffield Road, Derby. Scale 1:500.

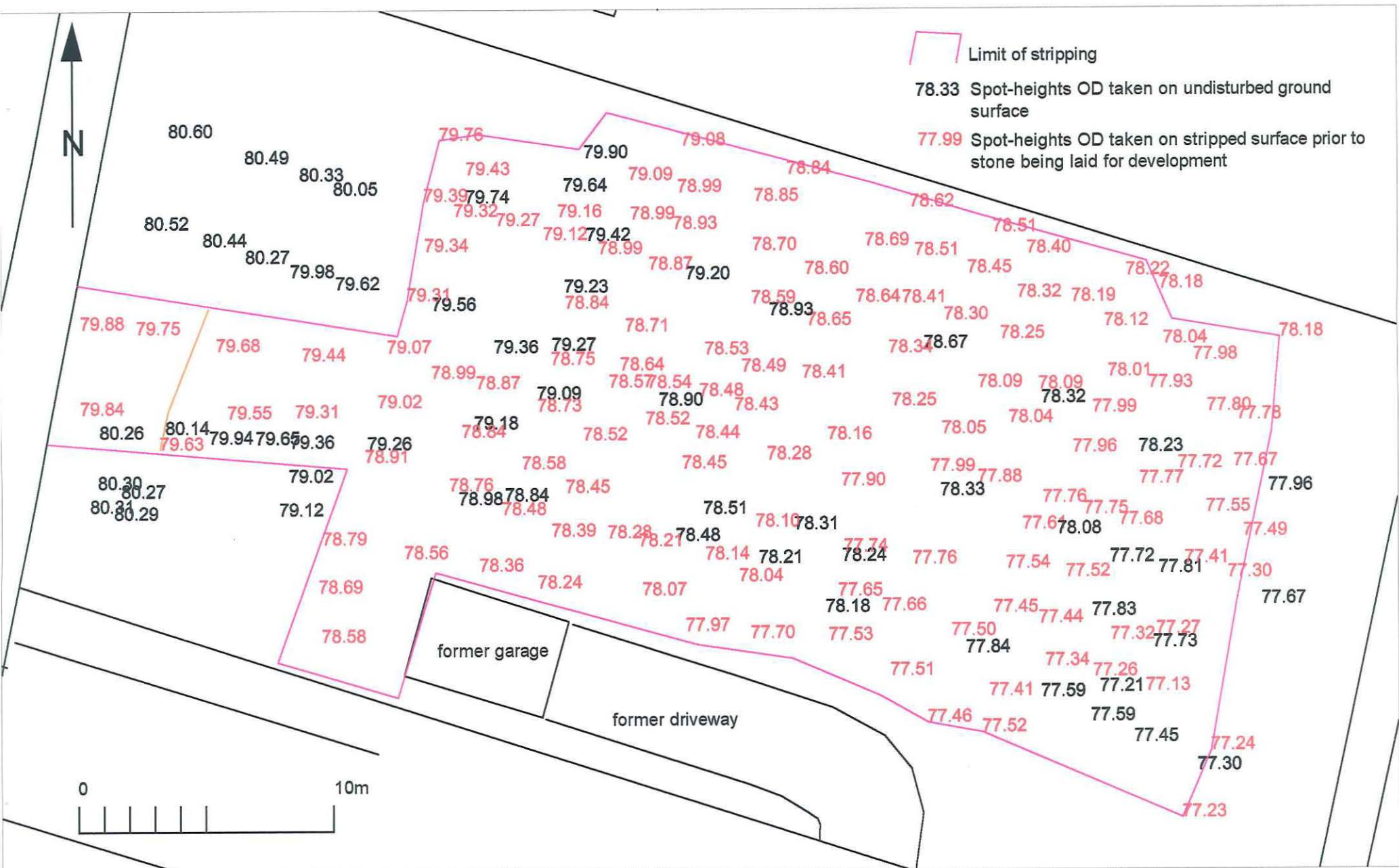


Fig. 2. Spot-heights OD of ground surface in 1988 (in black) and stripped formation level for development (in red). Scale 1:200.



Fig. 3. Summary plan of major deposits and modern features. Scale 1:200.

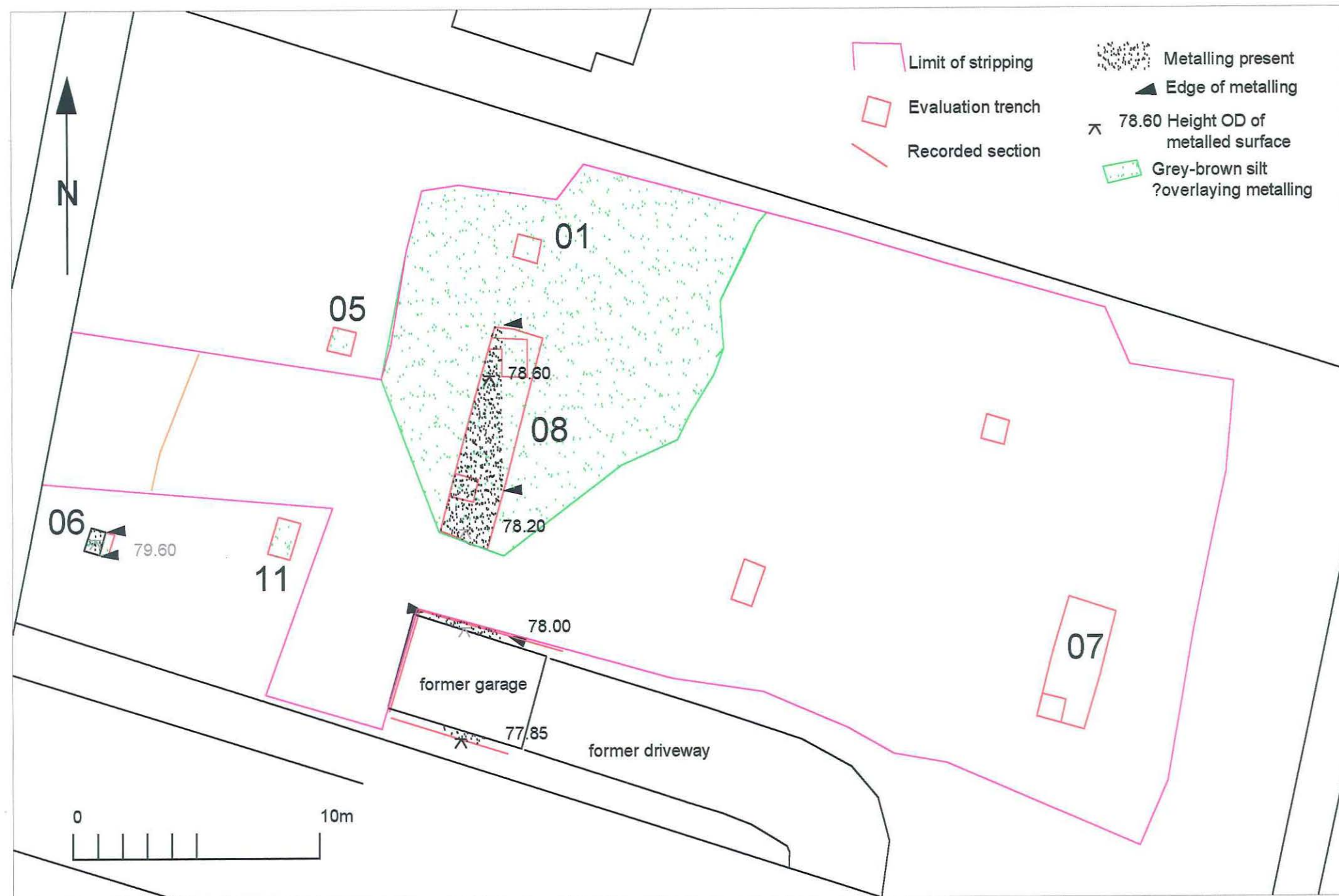


Fig. 4. Summary plan showing extent of grey-brown silts interpreted as 'remnant' soil and extent of metalling with heights OD on its surface. Scale 1:200.



fig. 5. Summary plan showing known extent of significant archaeological deposits and location of piles for the development. Scale 1:200.



Fig. 6. Modified field-drawing (context numbers removed, limits of the metalling emphasised) of the northern section in the cutting for the former garage: the cobbles of the metalling are coloured in black, skerry sandstones within boulder clay are coloured grey, coal within boulder clay hatched. Scale 1:20.



Plate 1: Surface stripped, with the machine on spoil, terram being laid and stone being delivered. The disturbed area just above centre is the void left by the garden pond. Looking west towards Duffield Road.



Plate 2: The layer of metalling in the northern section of the cut for the garage (see also Fig. 6). Scales 1m with 0.1m divisions.