



**Archaeological observation, investigation and
recording on land at John White Close
Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire
June and July 2014**

Report No. 14/161

Author: Yvonne Wolframm-Murray

Illustrator: Amir Bassir



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		Oasis No. molanort1-187884	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at John White Close, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire		
Short description	An archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA in June/July 2014 for Higham Ferrers Town Council during the installation of reinforced grass parking bays at John White Close, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire within the Scheduled Monument of Castle Fields. No pre-modern deposits or artefacts were recorded.		
Project type	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording		
Site Status	Scheduled Monument No 13607		
Previous work	-		
Current land use	Lawn		
Future work	unknown		
Monument type and period	-		
Significant finds	-		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	John White Close, Higham Ferrers		
Post code	-		
OS co-ordinates	SP 9613 6871		
Area (sq m/ha)	c 143sq m		
Height aOD			
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Higham Ferrers Town Council		
Project Design originator	MOLA Northampton		
Director/Supervisor	Yvonne Wolfram-Murray		
Project Managers	Anthony Maull		
Sponsor or funding body	Higham Ferrers Town Council		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	30 June 2014		
End date	01 July 2014		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Contents	
Physical	MOLA Northampton store	Tile, brick, pottery and glass	
Paper		Site records (1 small archive box)	
Digital		Client report PDF	
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)			
Title	Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at John White Close, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire		
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Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on land at John White Close Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire June and July 2014

Abstract

An archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by MOLA in June/July 2014 for Higham Ferrers Town Council during the installation of reinforced grass parking bays at John White Close, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire within the Scheduled Monument of Castle Fields. No pre-modern deposits or artefacts were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by Higham Ferrers Town Council to undertake a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording on 30 June and 1 July 2014 during the installation of reinforced grass parking bays at John White Close, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire (SP 9613 6871, Fig 1). The site lies within the scheduled Monument of Castle Fields (Monument No 13607), the works were carried out under Scheduled Monument consent S00069397.

The works were required following a request for a programme of archaeological observation and investigation by English Heritage. A Written Scheme of Investigation was produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology for the work (Leigh 2014).

MOLA Northampton is an Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) registered organisation. The work was carried out in accordance with the current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008) and the procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (EH 2009).

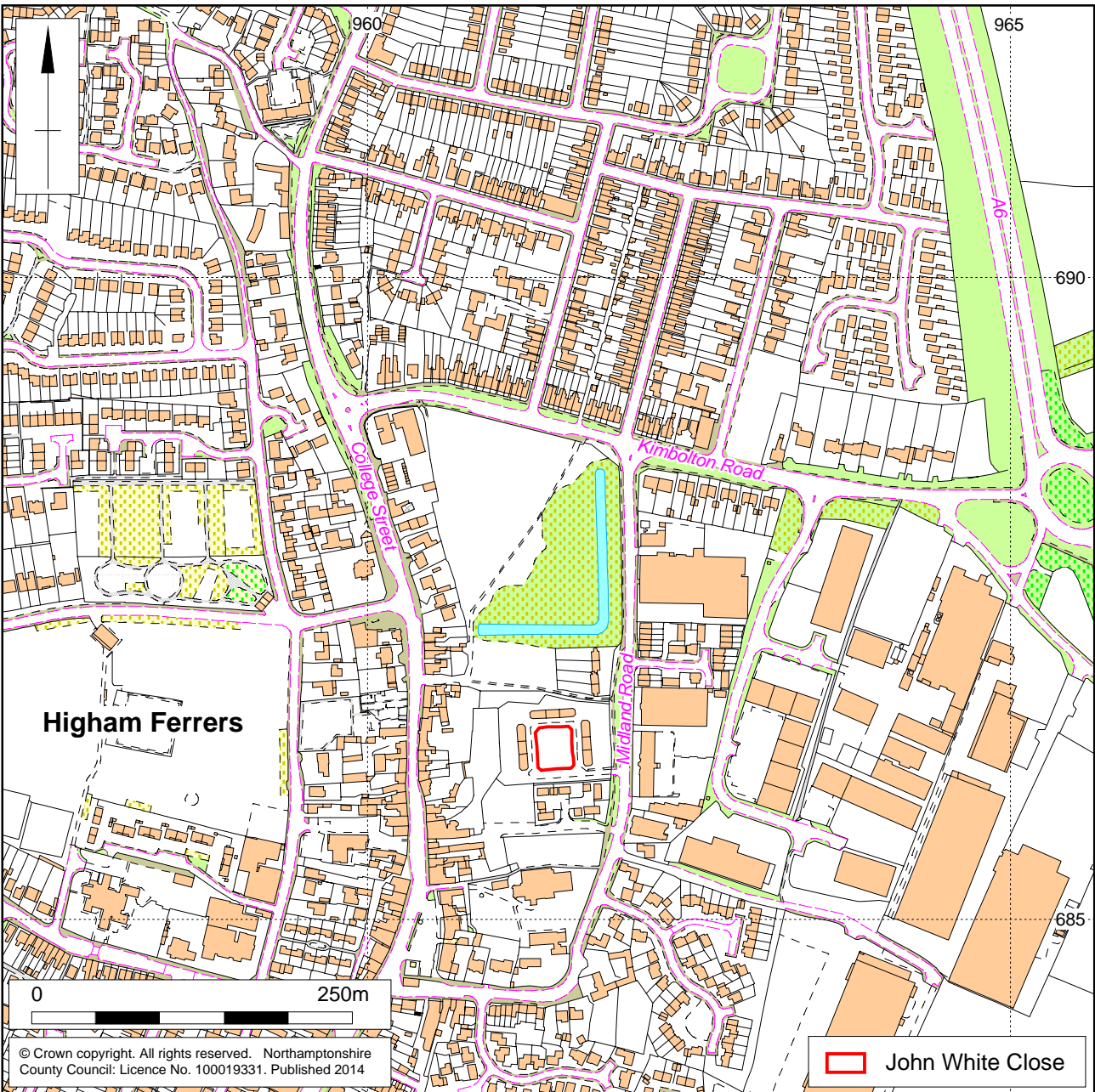
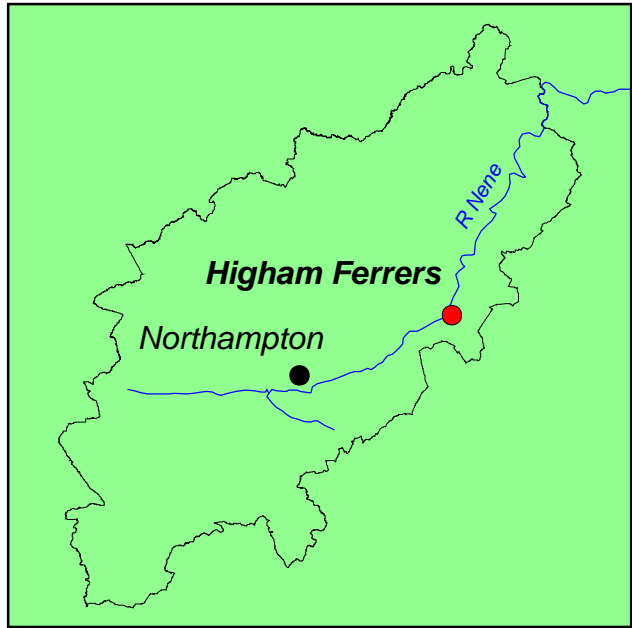
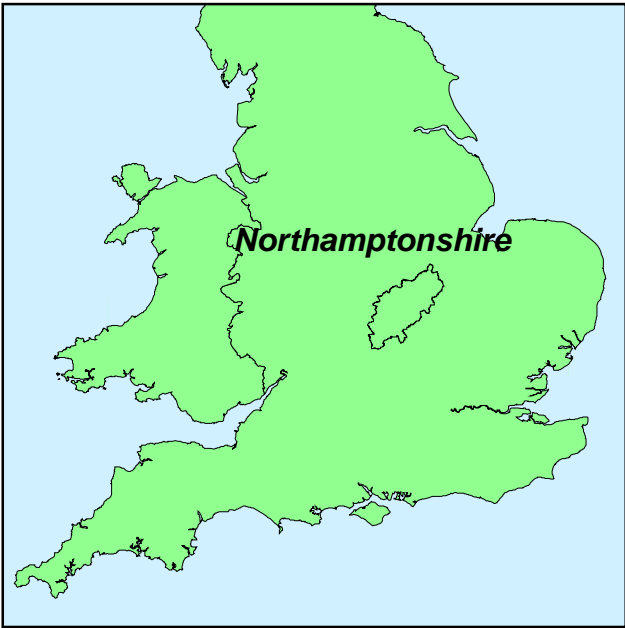
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The town of Higham Ferrers lies approximately 26km north-east of Northampton on the eastern side of the River Nene. The Scheduled Monument lies within the town on relatively level ground at an approximate height of 72m aOD.

The monument is bounded on the northern side by Kimbolton Road and by Midland Road on the east. Residential development bounds the western edge with the Parish Church of St Mary situated immediately south of the monument. John White Close lies in the southern part of the scheduled monument. The car park area comprises an area of grass bounded by modern road in the centre of the development.

The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great as comprising great Oolite Limestone (BGS Geindex; <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geindex>).



Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The investigation area is located within an area of particular archaeological interest and within the southern part of the Scheduled Monument of Castle Fields (Scheduled Monument No: 13607).

Castle Fields is located in the outer ward of the former motte and bailey castle and within the northern part of the Scheduled area. It comprises a large L-shaped moat, up to 30m wide and 2.5m deep, thought to be former fishponds. Lying immediately adjacent to this is a substantial irregular mound of spoil, which documentary sources suggest was once used as a rabbit warren during the late medieval period (RCHME 1975, 55).

The castle is recorded as having been constructed by William Peverel who had been granted the manor of Higham Ferrers shortly after the Norman conquest of 1066AD. The monument appears to have originally comprised two baileys along with a keep defended by a deep moat (Kerr 1925). A number of references relate to the buildings which made up the castle, these include a drawbridge, gates, a chapel, a tower, stables and barns along with fishponds, warrens and a dovecote.

Records suggest that the castle was demolished in 1523 although cartographic evidence of 1591 indicates that stone foundations were still visible above ground at that time. By 1838 an account by Cole (1838) refers to the castle site as being completely levelled with no sign of the moat or castle mound. To the south is located the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, a Grade I Listed Building (No: 23252) which dates from the 13th/14th centuries with later additions.

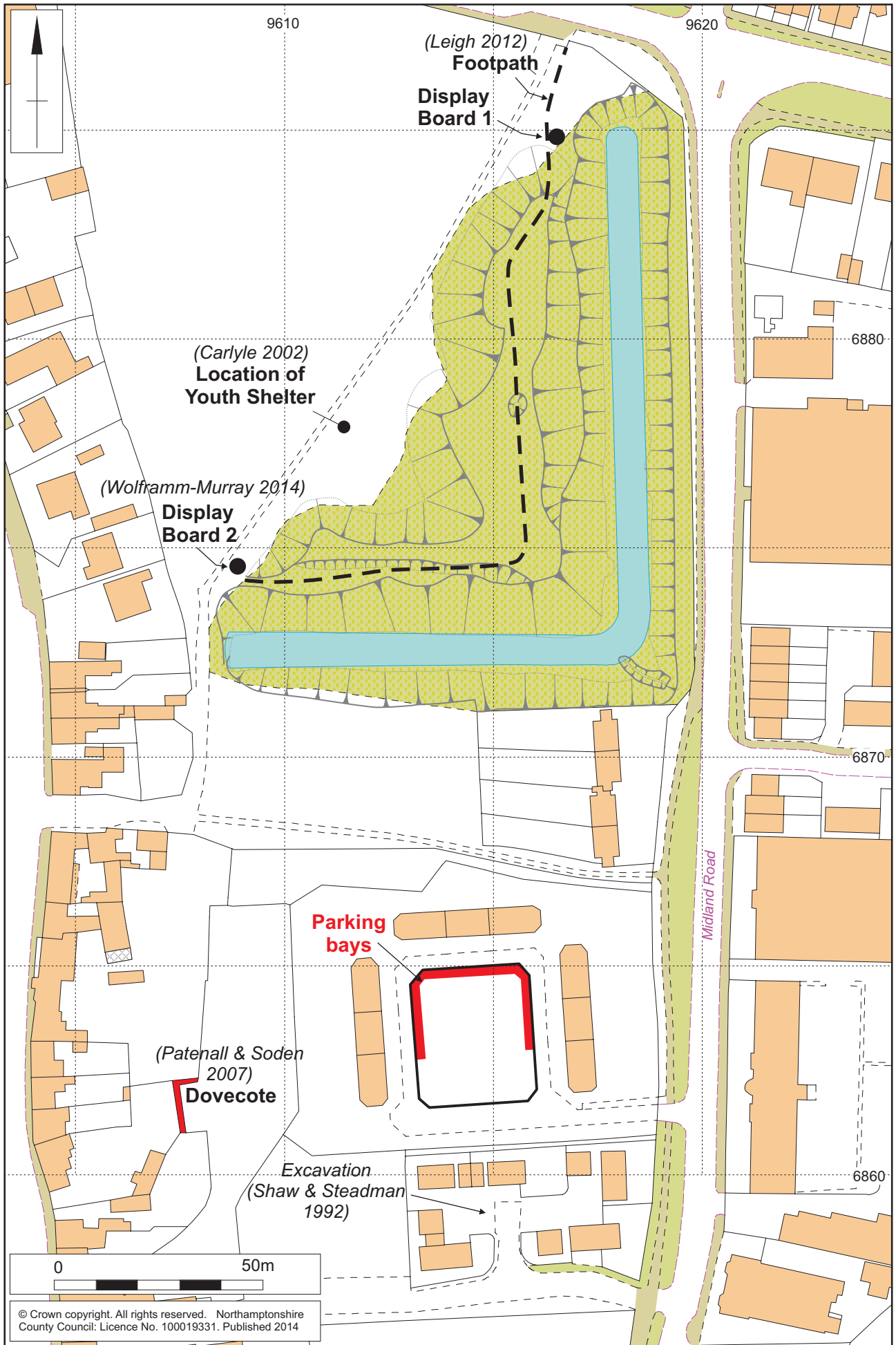
Previous archaeological investigations recorded as having been carried out within the area of the monument have comprised an archaeological evaluation undertaken in 1991 in the southern part of the Scheduled Monument which identified ditches, the remains of former mounds and a short length of stone wall foundation thought to relate to the castle (Shaw and Steadman 1992; Fig 2). Pre-castle occupation deposits possibly dating from the Anglo-Saxon period were also identified.

A watching brief carried out during the construction of a youth shelter at the base of the mound (Carlyle 2002; Fig 2) did not expose any archaeological deposits nor did subsequent archaeological investigations carried out on the site of the castle (Morris 2001) and by the dovecote (Patenall and Soden 2007). Recent watching briefs during the construction of a new public footpath with a limited clearance of vegetation from the moat (Leigh 2012; Fig 2) and the installation of notice boards (Wolframm-Murray 2014; Fig 2) at the scheduled monument did not reveal any archaeological deposits.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the archaeological resource within the proposed development area the objectives of the investigation were to:

- Initially determine whether the area within the grassed island has been subject to modern disturbance or landscaping;
- Should it be determined that the area of the grassed island has been subject to modern disturbance the extent and nature of this will be assessed, and following discussions with English Heritage a suitable strategy for adequately dealing with further works will be decided upon;
- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the groundworks for the new car-parking area and any associated groundworks;



Scale 1:1250

Area of Archaeological Observation Fig 2

- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The character, composition and general depositional sequence of stratification was recorded on MOLA watching brief sheets. All recording followed the guidelines detailed in the *MOLA Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2014). A photographic record was maintained, consisting of digital images and colour slides. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive site archive in accordance with the guidelines of Appendix 3 in the English Heritage procedural document, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (2009).

The development site comprised an area of c 143m² (Figs 2 and 3), it was undertaken on 30 June and 1 July 2014 during the groundworks associated with the proposed development. Initial test pits were excavated on all three affected sides in the presence of MOLA staff and English Heritage to assess the stratigraphy of the site. The preparation for the car park area comprised the removal of the topsoil and soils in a 2.20m wide strip around the western, northern and eastern sides of the grass area to a depth of 0.25m. The length of the strips on the eastern and western sides was 20m.

The groundworks were undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. Work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (IfA 2008).

The majority of removed soil remained on site and was levelled across the centre of the grass square. Any material taken off site was inspected for artefacts.



Grass area pre-excitation Fig 3

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The test pits and the groundworks revealed the same stratigraphy and finds (Fig 4). At 0.25m below the current ground level redistributed natural was uncovered along the northern edge of the development site (Fig 5). This comprised 0.05m light orange-brown sandy gravel with large to small stones and brick fragments. This was overlain by 0.07m

to 0.13m thick layer of mid brown-grey sandy clay with silty loam in patches. The excavation depth did not exceed this layer. The inclusions comprised frequent small to medium sub-angular sandstone, brick and tile fragments, pottery sherds, glass and metal objects (Fig 6). The topsoil comprised mid brown-grey loam with frequent small to medium stones, brick and tile fragments, and pottery sherds. All finds date between the late 18th century and the present, they have not been retained.

The north-eastern corner was heavily disturbed by passing cars, the corner had been in filled with rubble over time.



The excavated area, looking south-west Fig 4



The northern strip, looking west Fig 5



The western strip, looking north Fig 6

A final site visit was undertaken on completion to ensure that the subsequent levelling work was undertaken to English Heritage specification with no artificial earthworks having been created.



The site upon completion, looking south-west Fig 7

5 DISCUSSION

Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on the machine excavation of the groundworks during the installation of reinforced grass parking bays at John White Close, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire was carried out. A 2.20m wide strip, 0.25m deep was excavated on the eastern, northern, and western edges of a grassy area in the centre of housing.

No pre-modern deposits or artefacts were recorded and the stratigraphy is disturbed. Below the topsoil a layer was noted overlaying a layer of redeposited natural. A mixture of brick, tile, glass, pottery and metal objects dating between the late 18th century and the present, were noted but not retained. The inspection of material leaving site revealed the same artefact composition.

The conditions were good and observation of the excavated groundworks was possible throughout the machine excavation.

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