



**Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation
on land at Dovecote House, Wollaston
Northamptonshire
February 2015**

Report No 15/22
Author: Claire Finn

Illustrators: James Ladocha and Amir Bassir



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-203441	
Project title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Dovecote House, Wollaston, Northamptonshire, February 2015		
Short description	MOLA Northampton carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land to the south of London Road, Wollaston. The trench produced a single pit-like feature, probably natural, and a backfilled cut of modern date. This is likely to relate to small scale excavation undertaken in the 1960s. No other archaeological features were found.		
Project type	Trial trench evaluation		
Site status	none		
Previous work	Archaeological heritage statement (Dawson 2013), small excavation 1964 (Hall 1974).		
Current land use	agricultural		
Future work	unknown		
Monument type/period			
Significant finds	none		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Northamptonshire		
Site address	Land at Dovecote House, behind London Road, Wollaston		
Postcode	n/a		
OS co-ordinates	490500 262585		
Area (sq m)	c390m ²		
Height aOD	c70-74m aOD		
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	MOLA Northampton		
Project brief originator	Liz Mordue, Northamptonshire County Council Planning		
Project Design originator	Anthony Maull, MOLA		
Director/Supervisor	Anthony Maull, MOLA		
Project Manager	Jim Burke, MOLA		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	5 February 2015		
End date	5 February 2015		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content	
Physical	MOLA Northampton Archive Store Acc no. ENN107910	none	
Paper		site records, background data, photographs, one section on permatrace	
Digital		survey data, digital report, digital photographs	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)		
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Archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Dovecote House, Wollaston, Northamptonshire February 2015

Abstract

MOLA Northampton carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation on land to the south of London Road, Wollaston. The trench produced a single pit-like feature, probably natural, and a backfilled cut of modern date. This is likely to relate to small scale excavation undertaken in the 1960s. No other archaeological features were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd, on behalf of their clients Dr and Mrs Goldsmith, to carry out archaeological trial trench evaluation on land at Dovecote House, London Road, Wollaston, Northamptonshire (NGR 490500 262585; Fig 1). The proposed development comprises the construction of a detached residential development and access onto London Road (WP/2013/0671/F), totalling an area of c390m². The proposed development area is an area of open field to the rear of properties 28-38 on London Road and to the west of number 50, Cromwell House (Fig 1).

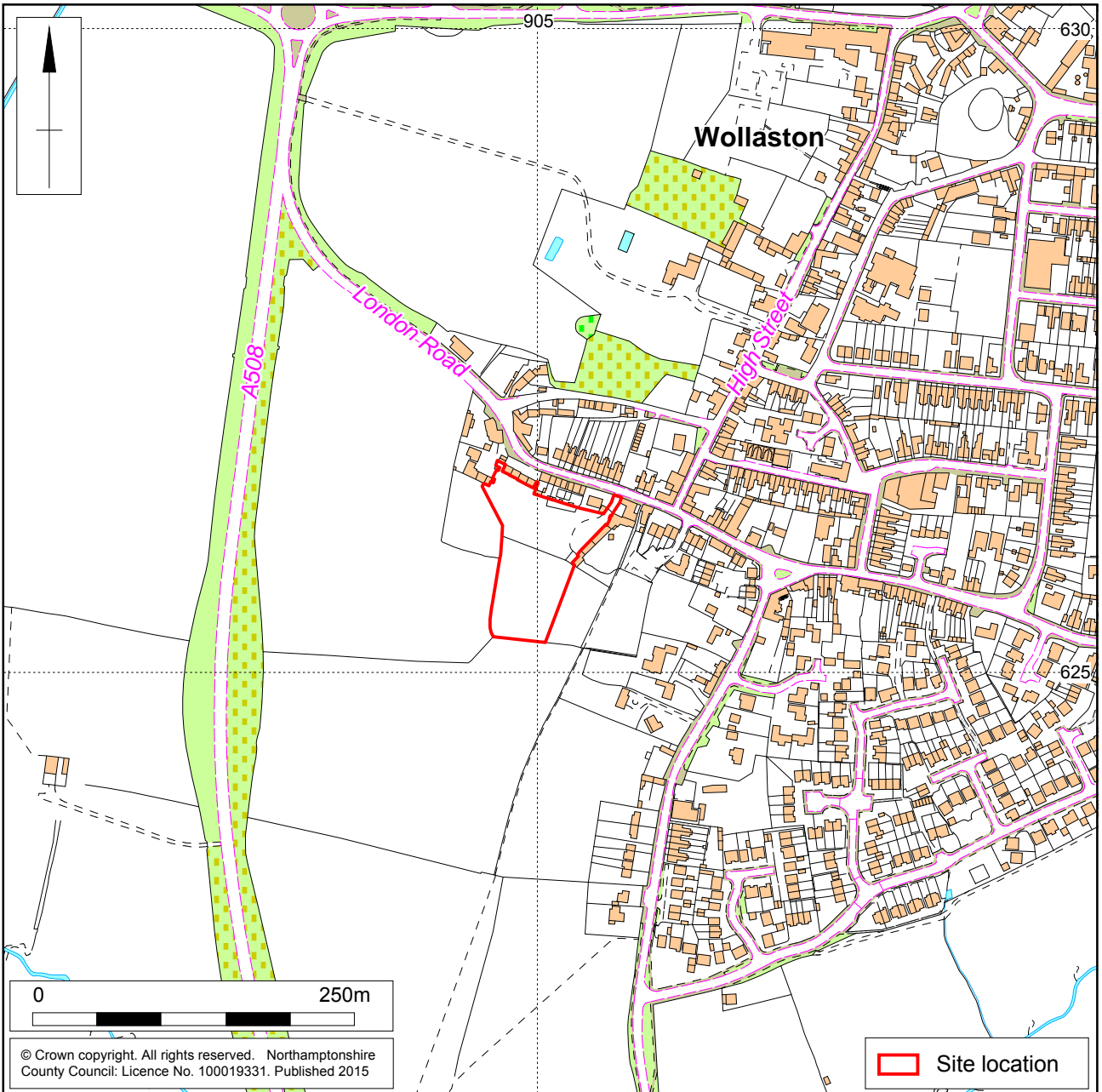
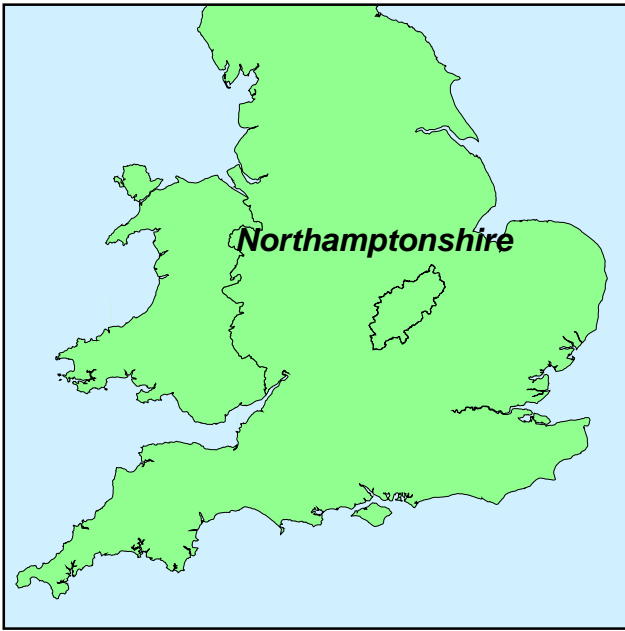
Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) Planning Authority required that the works were undertaken (NCC 2014a and 2014b), in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012). The works aimed to ensure that any archaeological remains within the area of proposed groundworks are appropriately investigated and recorded. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by MOLA and approved by NCC Planning prior to work commencing (Finn 2015). The evaluation was carried out following the guidelines suggested by the ClfA's *Code of Conduct* and *Standard and guidance: Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2014a and b), and the *MOLA Fieldwork Manual* (MOLA 2014).

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and topography

The proposed development site is situated on the south-west edge of the village of Wollaston. The site is bounded to the north by the driveway and front lawn of Cromwell House, which itself is further off to the north-east. Beyond the lawn lie the outhouses, rear gardens, and terraced houses of neighbouring properties facing onto London Road. To the south and west, the site is bounded by arable fields, and to the east by a trackway, with a field beyond. The development area lies on sloping ground, rising from c70m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the west edge of the proposed development, to c74m aOD to the east. The site is currently used as an agricultural field or pasture.

The village of Wollaston is situated in the borough of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. It lies on the watershed between the rivers Ouse and Nene, on a rise of higher ground along the edge of the Nene valley, and about 2.5km to the south-east of the river. The underlying geology of the site comprises Blisworth Limestone Formation, a sedimentary Jurassic-period bedrock. The superficial deposits in this area are not known (BGS 2015).



Scale 1:5,000

Site location Fig 1

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

It is now believed that previous, intrusive archaeological fieldwork had been carried out within the proposed development area. The small excavation is recorded by Hall, and is said to have taken place in “Doctor’s Field” or the “paddock behind Cromwell House” in 1964 (NHER 3240/0/2, ENN10534). While this excavation has not been published, Hall indicates that the partial plans of late Saxon wooden buildings and 9th-century pottery were recovered during these works. More detailed information is not known, but the grid reference provided by Hall (SP905631) falls within the development area (Hall 1974, 38; Hall 1977, 17, Hall *pers. comm.*).

A Heritage Statement of the area was produced in 2013 (Dawson 2013), and a number of other desk-based and field studies have been undertaken around the village of Wollaston, recorded in the Northamptonshire Heritage Environment Record (NHER). The following historical background is drawn from Dawson’s 2013 Desk Based Assessment (DBA).

Prehistoric

There are no known prehistoric sites or finds within the development area. A polished greenstone axe head was found in the near vicinity, around 280m to the north-east of the site (Kennett 1972, 96-7). Further afield, three possible prehistoric settlements, 1km from the site and north of the town, have been identified by aerial photography (NHER 5307, 3226), one of which (NHER 3236) probably extended into the Romano-British period. Earthworks of ditches and enclosures of unknown date are also to be found in the land behind Wollaston house, c150m to the north (2754/0/1 and 2). During the construction of the Wollaston bypass c250m from the site, an undated ditch system, aligned south-west to north east, was found to predate later Roman ditches (Chapman and Jackson 1992).

Roman

Roman activity in the area is mainly concentrated to the north and west of the village, including numerous enclosures, settlements, and a villa. The Bypass excavations (NHER ENN17882, Chapman and Jackson 1992) also produced a significant Roman site, which comprised a Romano-British bath house (NHER 3240/0/6), late 2nd-century ditches and pits (NHER 3240/1/1), a 3rd-century oven (NHER 3240/1/2), and a late Roman burial (NHER 3240/0/5). The area of Roman activity extends to the east across the field between the bypass and the present site (NHER 3240/0/0/ and 3240/1). The wider region is known to contain extensive Roman period remains, summarised in RCHME (2004, 176-180).

Saxon and medieval

The occupation activity to the west of the development site provided evidence for continuity from Roman occupation into the Saxon period. The bypass excavations also uncovered an early to middle Saxon sunken-feature building (3240/0/4, Chapman and Jackson 1992, 72). Further Saxon period unstratified pottery (NHER 3240/0/0) was found around 100m to the west of the site, and additional evidence of Saxon occupation was identified during excavation work at the parish church, c650m to the north (ENN103331). A 9th-century Saxon settlement, which was partially excavated in 1964, is likely to be located within the area of the proposed development (Hall 1974, 38; Hall 1977, 17).

The village of Wollaston is recorded in the Domesday survey as *Wilayston*, and two manors are noted; Bury Manor and Hall Manor. The latter of these is located 150m to the south-east of the site, in an area of around 2.5ha (NHER 3250/4, SAM191). The second manor, now built over, was situated c640m to the north of the site. In the centre of the town, to the south of the church, lies Beacon Hill motte castle (NHER 3250/2, SAM

13647) erected during the reign of King Stephen (1135-54). The shrunken medieval village of Strixton, which has substantial extant earthworks, (NHER 3244) is also nearby, c700m to the south.

Wollaston maintained an open three-field system from 1370 until at least until 1778 when the area was enclosed (Hall 1995, 365). The fields were known as Over Field (later Wood field), Higham Way Field (later Windmill field) and Nether Field. Ridge and furrow earthworks are extant to the south, west and north of the development site, and in the wider vicinity of the village (Partida, Hall and Foard 1993).

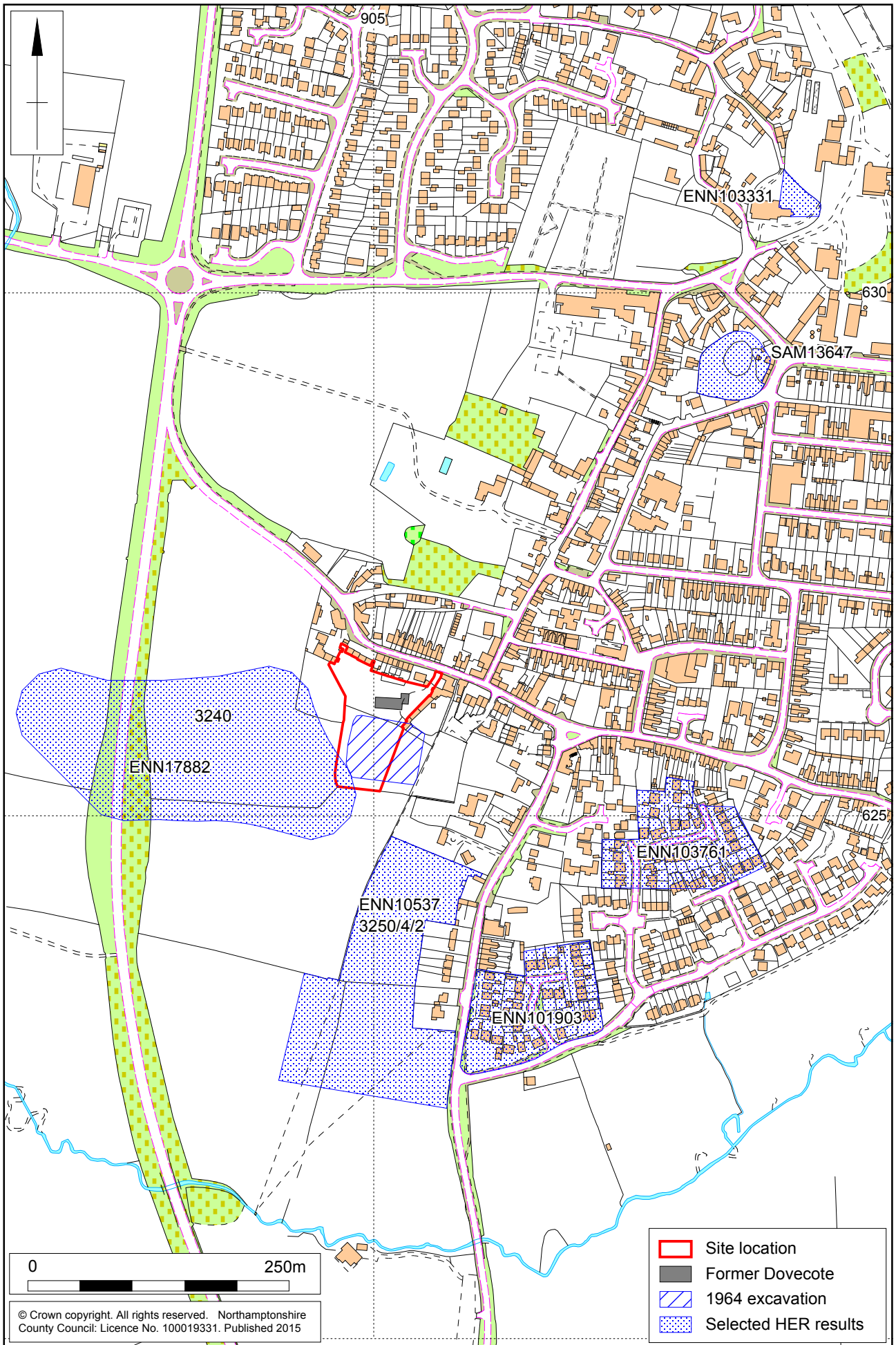
Post-medieval and modern

Historic maps indicate that the area remained enclosed agricultural land until the present day. Two buildings, a dovecote and a stable, are recorded within the proposed development site on the 1789 Enclosure Award Map. Dawson (2013) notes that neither building appears to be upstanding on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map. Evidence of them is likely to remain in this area, although their position on the 1789 map suggests both were originally slightly to the north of the proposed construction, possibly in the area now used as the front garden for Cromwell House (see Fig 2).

Seven listed buildings are to be found within the vicinity of the proposed development area, mainly along London Road. This includes the previously mentioned 17th-century farmhouse property of Cromwell House to the north-east (NHER 22/359), No. 4 Fox Holes to the north (22/354), and No. 55 the Gables to the north-east (22/351). Also listed are the outbuildings and properties on London Road which edge the site's northern border (NHER DNN4020, 22/356-8). These buildings were all involved in the boot and shoe trade in the town.

Previous archaeological work

In addition to the 1964 excavation on the development site, other archaeological works have been undertaken within a 1km radius of the site. These include an earthwork survey at Manor Hall (ENN10537), a watching brief and trial trench excavation at 152 London Road (ENN100714, ENN19779), and trial trench excavation at Pearson's Garage to the north-east (ENN103184). No noteworthy features were identified. A significant area of evaluation, as trial trenching, open area excavation, and watching brief were undertaken c250m to the east of the site in advance of the construction of a housing estate around Dando Close (ENN101903, ENN103761, ENN100551). The open area excavation revealed Saxon settlement features, including nine sunken-feature buildings and two aisled halls, as well as pits, postholes, and later medieval activity (ENN1359634, ENN1404973, Semmelmann and Ashworth 2003).



Scale 1: 5000

Selected Historic Environment Record (HER) results Fig 2

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting, specifically to:

- identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the groundworks for the new development and any associated groundworks;
- determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;
- create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The work aimed to contribute to the research objectives drawn from national and regional research frameworks (EH 1991 and 1997; Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012; Cooper 2006).

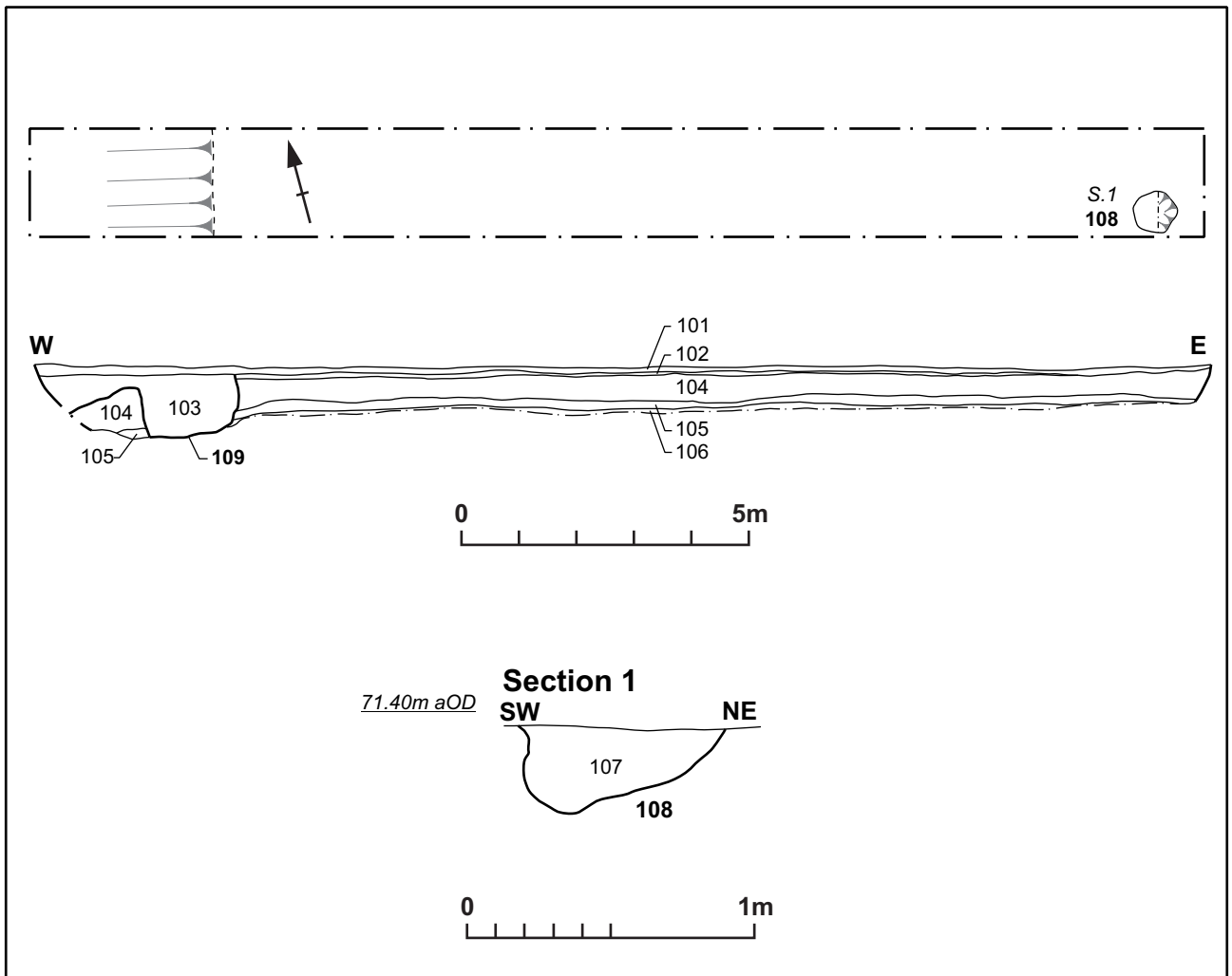
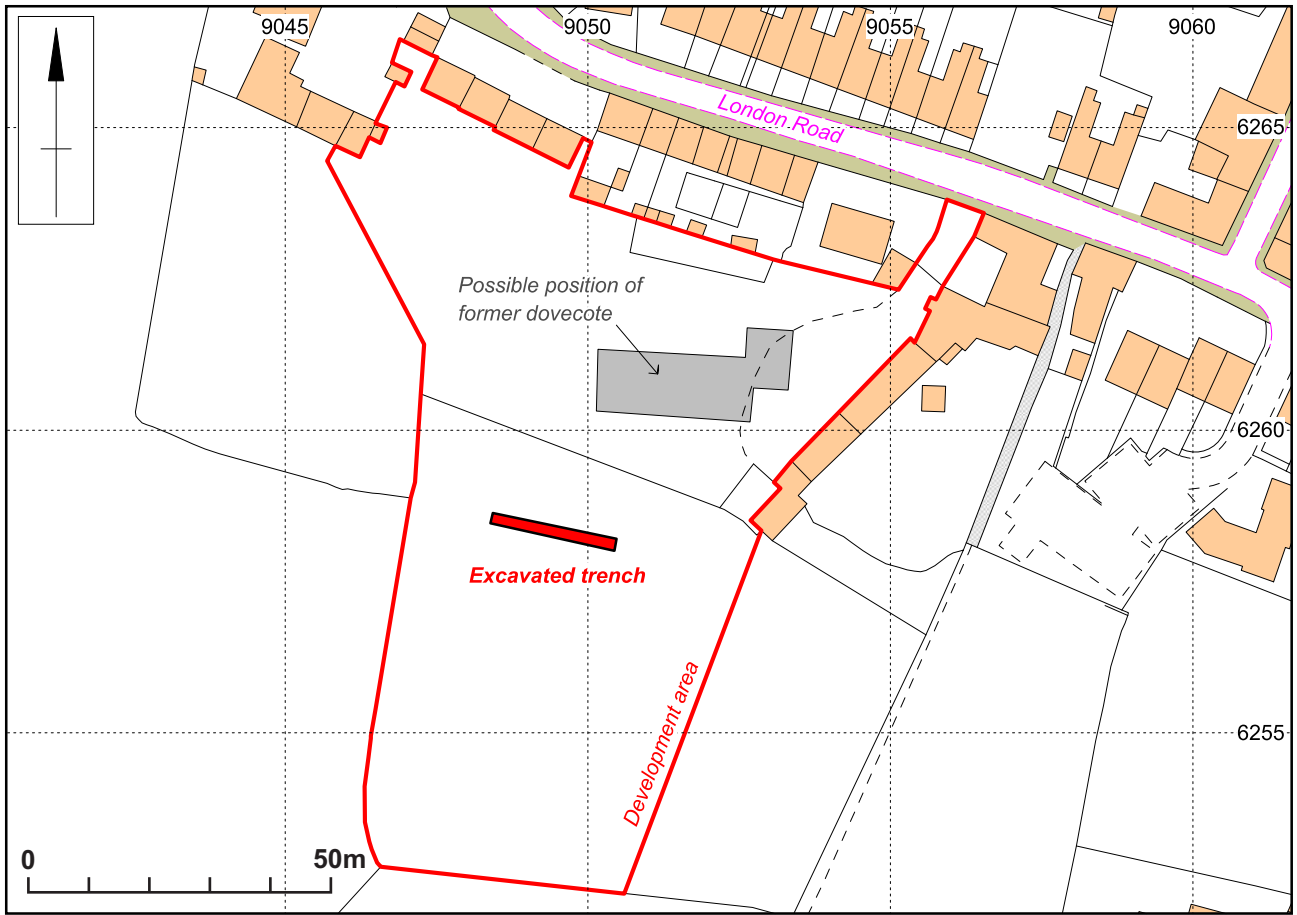
4 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance: Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014b). All stages of the project were undertaken in accordance with English Heritage, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (EH 2006), as well as specific guidelines for this project given by the Briefs issued by Northamptonshire County Council Planning authority (NCC 2014a and 2014b), and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Finn 2015).

A sample of sufficient size to define the character and extent of significant archaeological features from the proposed building footprint was required (NCC 2014b). A single trench, 25-30m long by 1.80m wide, was sited across the centre of the area designated for the footings of the house, aligned east-west. The trench was excavated by machine using a toothless bucket, and revealed features further defined by hand.

All archaeological features were given a separate context number. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* trench sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds (MOLA 2014). The trench and spoil heap was scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval. Subsequent to the evaluation, the trench was backfilled with up-cast, lightly compacted by the mechanical excavator.

Section drawings of the trench and cut [108] were produced, alongside a trench plan, showing the excavated features (Fig 3). Digital photographs also formed the principal photographic record for report purposes, and black and white negatives were taken for submission to the archive.



Scales, Inset 1:1250, Plan 1:125
Section 1:25

Trench 1, plans and sections Fig 3

5 EVALUATION EVIDENCE

The trench contained five principal horizons. The natural geological deposit in this area was yellow-brown chalky gravel with red sandy gravel patches (106). This was overlain by two buried soil horizons, a buried subsoil of orange-brown silty clay (105), and a mid grey-brown silty clay topsoil (104), with frequent gravel and small stones. The buried soils were overlain by a scatter of modern stone and crushed mortar mixed with fine grey-brown, silty sandy clay, which seems to have been laid down as a levelling layer (102). The topsoil across the trench was a firm, mid brown sandy clay, with frequent gravels. The topsoil had several areas of modern disturbance.

Two features were noted in the trench. At the eastern end of the trench a cut [108] was recorded (Fig 3 section 1, and Fig 4). This was a small pit, circular in plan, with a diameter of 0.72m. Upon excavation, the cut was shown to have asymmetrical sides and base, and was only 0.30m deep. The fill (107) was light orange-brown sandy clay with frequent small stones, mixed with soil similar to the buried subsoil (105). Consequently, this feature has been identified as a natural feature, either a tree throw, or the remains of an animal burrow.



Shallow natural feature [108] Fig 4

The second feature was found at the western end of the trench. This was one, or possibly two, large pits, cut with a mostly straight eastern side and with an irregular western edge extending beyond the limit of trench [109] (Fig 3 and Fig 5). The feature was around 3.30m wide and 1.10m deep, although the base was very uneven and in some areas the pit was only c0.50m deep. This might indicate that the feature represents the join of two perpendicular pits or trenches. The pit contained a loosely compacted dump of modern backfill (103), comprising red brick, engineering blue brick, mortar, electrical cable and plastics.

The exact nature of this feature is not known, but given the proposed location of Hall's 1964 excavation, it is possible that pit/s [109] represent part of his excavation trenches (see Fig 2). No evidence of the Saxon occupation structures he excavated were found in this evaluation, and no other archaeological features or finds were observed.



The western end of the trench, showing pit [109] and its modern backfill (103) in the west and north section edges Fig 5

6 CONCLUSION

The evaluation of London Road in Wollaston involved the placing of one trench across the proposed footing of Dovecote House. The evaluation was undertaken to identify any archaeological deposits to be found in the area of the new development, particularly with relation to the previous known structures on the site, the 18th-century dovecote and house, and the Saxon occupation site known to have been excavated in the area during the 20th century.

No archaeological features, artefacts, or material were found within the limits of trial trench, and no structural evidence relating to the dovecote or other buildings was found. These probably lay further to the north (see Fig 2). A shallow pit-like feature was shown to be of natural occurrence, probably caused by rooting or burrowing. A large feature at the western end of the trench is the remains of modern digging of some sort. The feature, or possibly the end of two features which pass beyond the limits of the trench at the north and western edges, were filled with modern building debris and electrical cable. It seems likely that this area of cutting and backfilling was related to David Hall's 1964 excavation in this area, although this cannot be known for certain.

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MOLA
11 February 2015

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
1	20m x 2m, NE-SW			
Context	Context type	Description	Dimensions	Artefacts/Samples
101	Topsoil	Firm, mid brown sandy clay frequent gravels and some modern disturbance	0.05 - 0.22m	-
102	Levelling layer	Modern levelling layer stone and crushed mortar mixed with fine grey-brown, silty sandy clay	0.10 – 0.15m	-
103	Dumping	Modern dumping backfill contains brick, engineering blue brick, mortar, electrical cable and plastics	3.30m wide 1.10m deep	
104	Buried topsoil	Mid grey-brown silty clay frequent gravel and small stone	0.12 – 0.32	-
105	Buried subsoil	Orange-brown silty clay	0.12 – 0.20	-
106	Natural	Yellow-brown chalky gravel with red sandy gravel patches	-	-
107	Fill of pit [108]	Light orange-brown sandy clay frequent small stone	0.72m wide 0.30m deep	-
108	Pit	Possible small pit, asymmetrical sides	0.72m wide 0.30m deep	-
109	Pit	Modern dumping straight-ish eastern side with irregular western extending beyond limit of trench	3.30m wide 1.10m deep	-



Trench overview, looking east Fig 6

