



**Archaeological observation, investigation
and recording at Dovecote House, Wollaston
Northamptonshire
February 2015**

Report Number: 15/30

Author: Claire Finn

Illustrators: James Ladocha and Amir Bassir



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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-204448	
Project title	Archaeological observation, investigation, and recording at Dovecote House, Wollaston, Northamptonshire February 2015		
Short description	MOLA Northampton carried out a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, and recording on land to the south of London Road, Wollaston. The archaeological works identified a single pit-like feature, probably natural, and an area of modern made ground. No other archaeological features were found.		
Project type	Strip and map analysis		
Site status	none		
Previous work	Trial Trench evaluation (Finn 2015a) 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	Dovecote House, London Road, Wollaston		
Postcode	n/a		
OS co-ordinates	SP 90500 62585		
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	Ian Fisher, MOLA		
Project Manager	Anthony Maull, MOLA		
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	18 February 2015		
End date	19 February 2015		
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content	
Physical	MOLA Northampton Archive Store Acc no. ENN107925	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Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (MOLA report)			
Title	Archaeological observation, investigation, recording, and analysis at Dovecote House, Wollaston, Northamptonshire February 2015		
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Archaeological observation, investigation, and recording at Dovecote House, Wollaston, Northamptonshire February 2015

Abstract

MOLA Northampton carried out a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, and recording on land to the south of London Road, Wollaston. The archaeological works identified a single pit-like feature, probably natural, and an area of modern made ground. No other archaeological features were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, on behalf of their clients Dr and Mrs Goldsmith, to carry out archaeological observation, investigation, and recording ('strip, map and sample') 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).

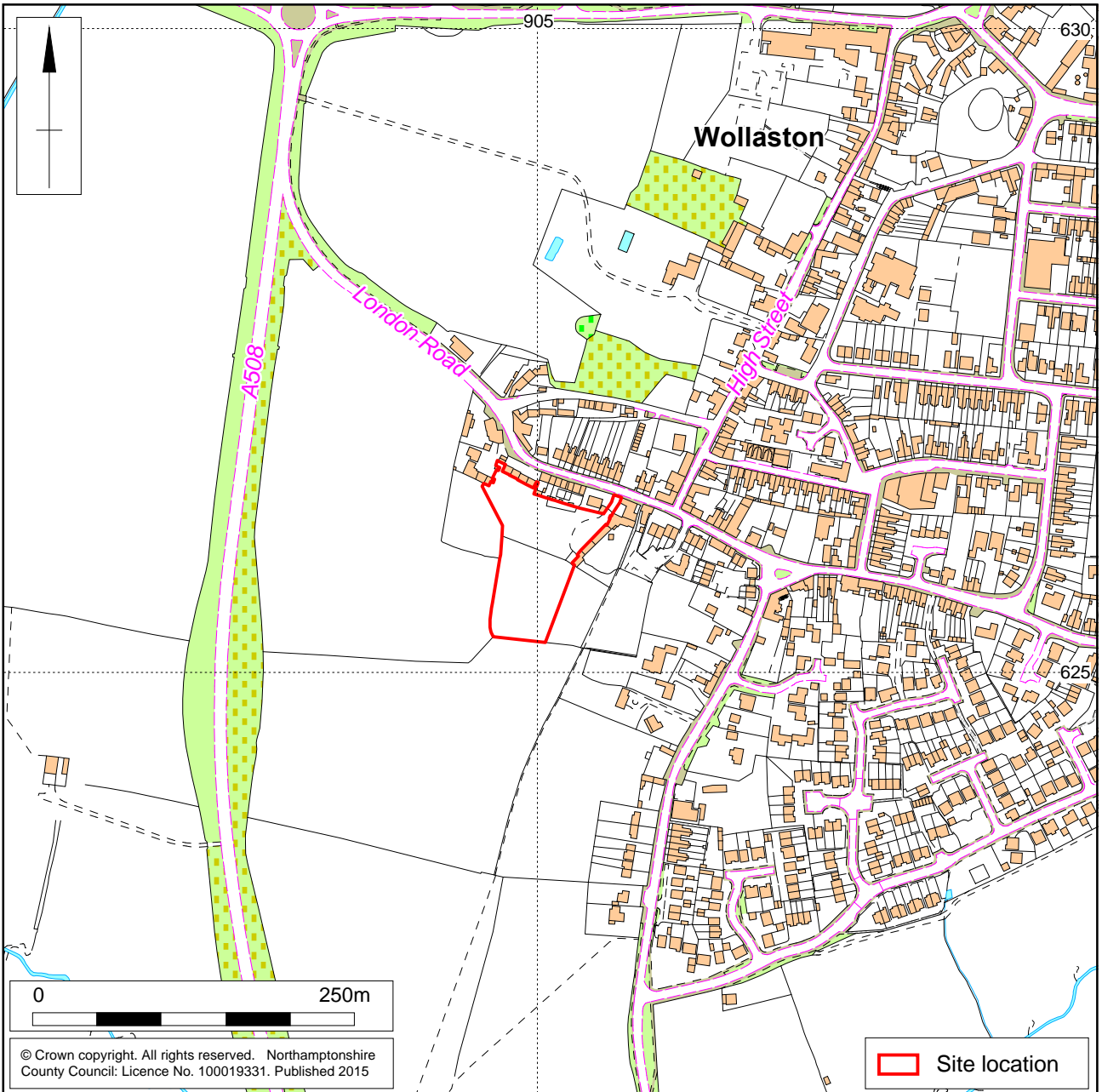
Northamptonshire County Council Planning Authority required that the works were undertaken (NCC 2014), in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012). The works aimed to ensure that any archaeological remains within the area of proposed groundworks are appropriately investigated and recorded. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* was prepared by MOLA and approved by NCC Planning prior to work commencing (Finn 2015b). The strip, map and sample was carried out following the guidelines of the ClfA (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

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken within the proposed development area in February 2015 by MOLA Northampton. This comprised a single trial trench 25m long by 1.80m wide, placed across the footprint of the proposed construction. No archaeological features were identified (Finn 2015a).

A small excavation recorded by Hall in the “Doctor’s Field” or the “paddock behind Cromwell House” may have been carried out within the close vicinity of the proposed development area in 1964 (HER 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 (Hall 1974, 38; Hall 1977, 17, Hall pers. comm.).

A Heritage Statement for the area was produced (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 (HER) (Fig 2). The following historical background is drawn from Dawson’s Desk Based Assessment (DBA (2013).

Prehistoric

There are no known prehistoric sites or finds within the development area. A polished greenstone axe 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 (HER 5307, 3226), one of which (HER 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 pit group, aligned south-west to north-east, pre-dated 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 (HER ENN17882, Chapman and Jackson 1992) also produced a significant Roman site, which comprised a Romano-British bath house (HER 3240/0/6), late 2nd-century ditches and pits (HER 3240/1/1), a 3rd-century oven (HER 3240/1/2), and a late Roman burial (HER 3240/0/5). The area of Roman activity extends to the east across the field between the bypass and the present site (HER 3240/0/0/ and 3240/1). The wider region is known to contain extensive Roman period remains, summarised in RCHME (1979, 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 (HER 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 (HER 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 (HER 3250/2, SAM 13647) erected during the reign of King Stephen (1135-54). The shrunken medieval village of Strixton, which has substantial extant earthworks, (HER 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).

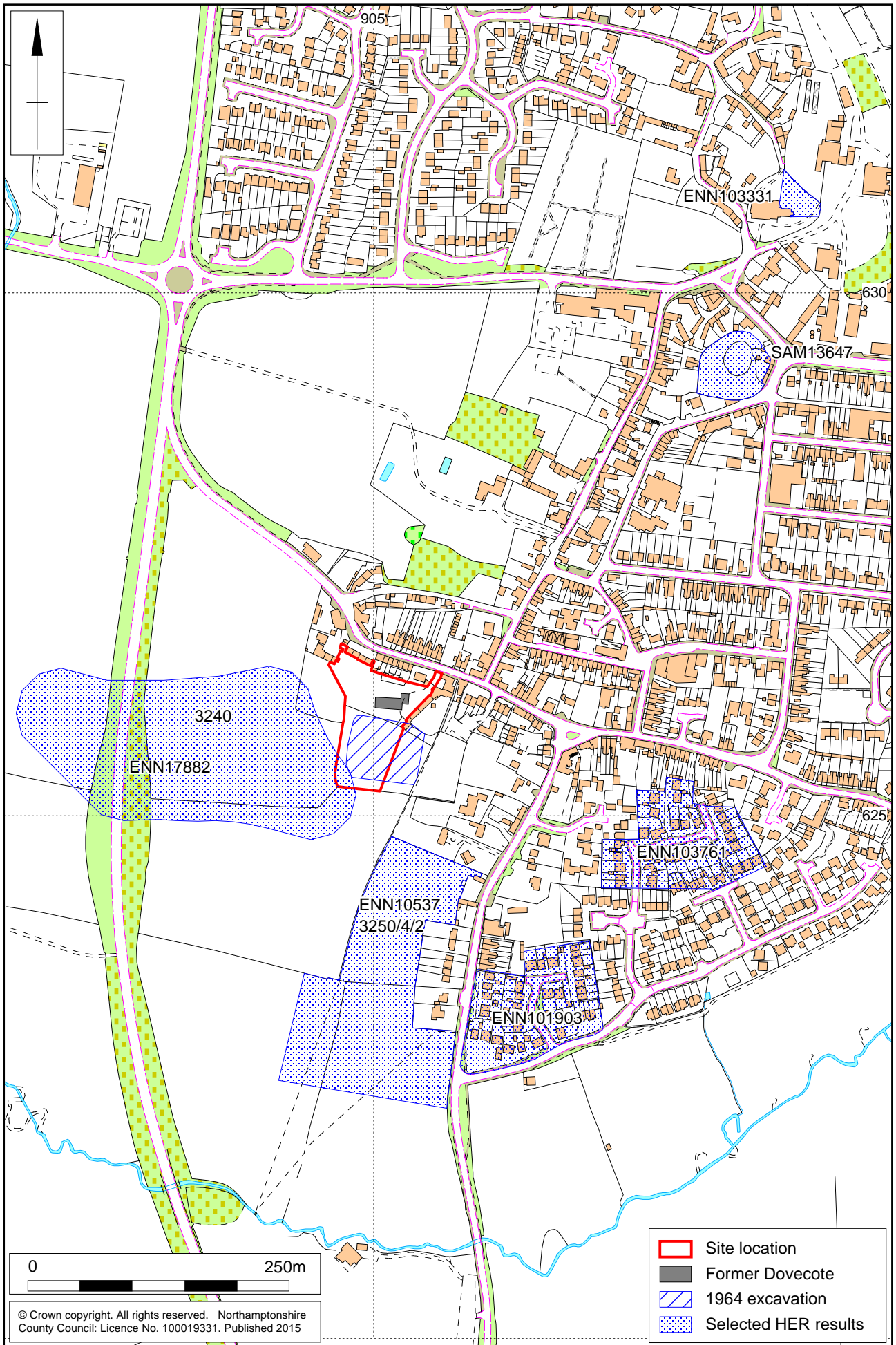
Post-medieval and modern

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 (HER 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 (HER 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 main objectives of the strip, map and sample exercise were:

- to record the stratigraphic sequence from the topsoil to the top of the natural substrate, so far as it is revealed;
- to record the presence of any archaeological deposits revealed by the groundworks, and recover any artefacts from the upcast.

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 strip, map and sample conformed to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief* (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 outlined in the Brief issued by Northamptonshire County Council Planning authority (NCC 2014), and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by MOLA (Finn 2015b).

Archaeological observation, investigation and recording were maintained during the early stages of the groundworks process, within the entire footprint of the proposed development (Fig 3) to the depth of the archaeological horizon or natural geology. Archaeological observation, investigation and recording was subsequently maintained during groundworks for service trenches. The trench was excavated by machine using a toothless bucket, and any features further defined by hand.

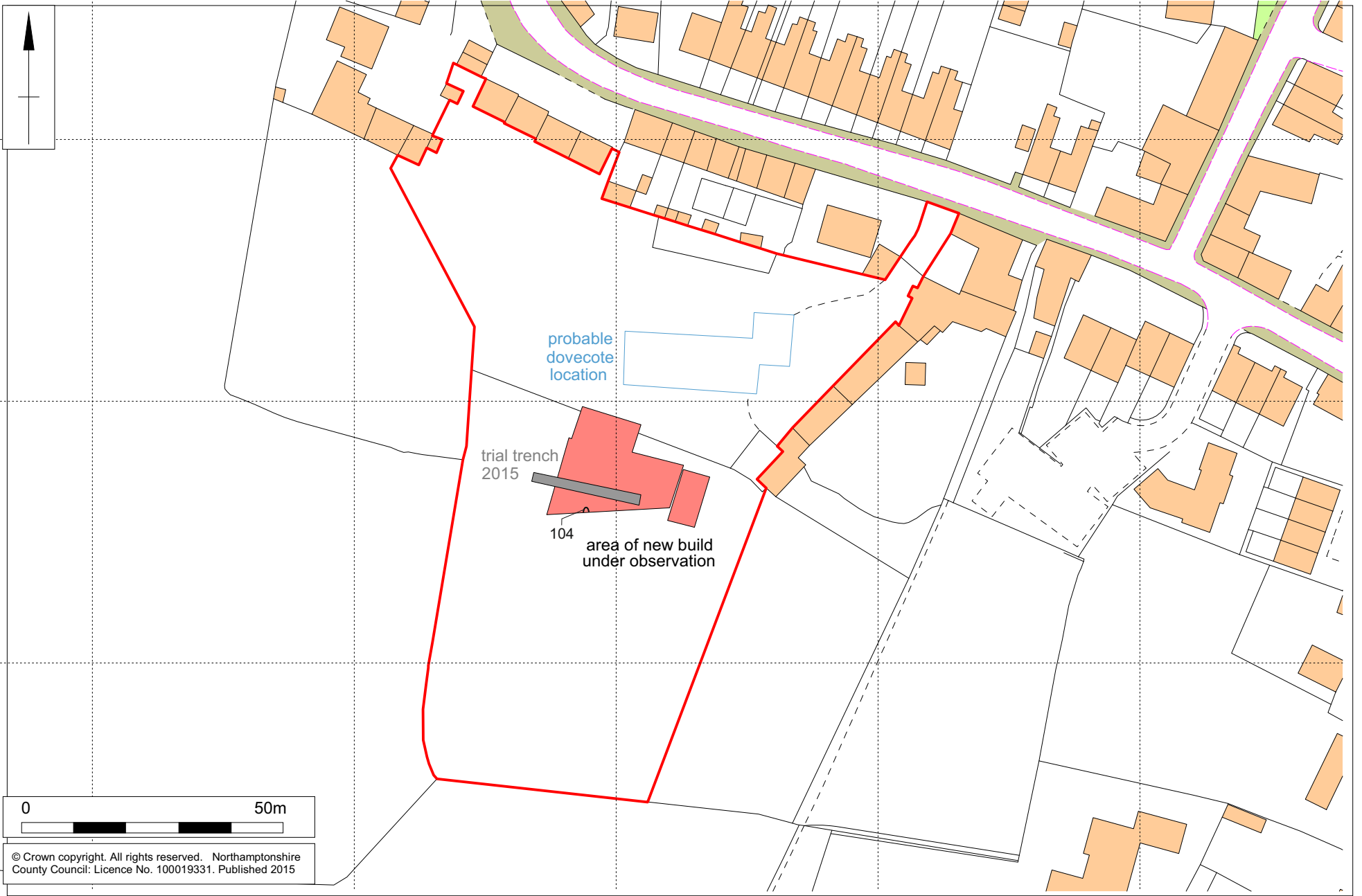
All archaeological features were to be given a separate context number, and deposits were described on *pro-forma* trench sheets to include details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds (MOLA 2014). The trench and spoil heap was scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

A section drawing (Fig 4) of the opened area was produced, alongside an area plan. Digital photographs also formed the principal photographic record for report purposes, and black and white negatives were taken for submission to the archive.

Scale 1:1,000

Area of observation at Wollaston, Dovecote House

Fig 3

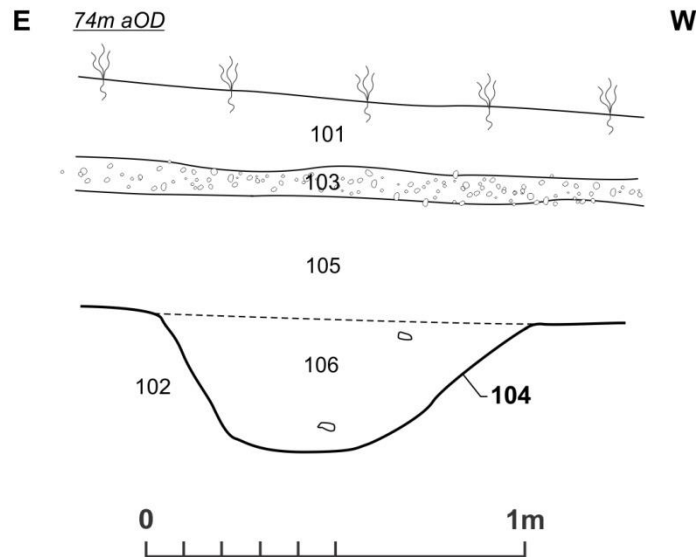


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5 EVALUATION EVIDENCE

The stripped area contained four principal horizons. The natural geological deposit in this area was yellow-brown chalky gravel (102). This was overlain by a buried soil horizon, a firm mid brown sandy clay buried topsoil (105). The buried soil was overlain by a thick layer of brick, mortar concrete, plastics and debris, which seems to have been laid down as a levelling layer (103). The topsoil across the trench was a firm, mid brown sandy clay, with frequent gravels.

Section 1



The stratigraphic sequence and pit [104] Fig 4



Trench edge and tree throw [104], looking south Fig 5

The only cut feature was a small, roughly circular pit, 0.95m wide by c0.35m deep [104] (Figs 4 and 5). The fill (106), which was almost indistinguishable from the buried soil horizon above, was a firm mid brown sandy clay. The asymmetrical nature of the cut and its shallow, irregular base has led this feature to be identified as a natural feature, probably a tree throw.

In the trial trenching undertaken on this site in February 2015, an area at the western end of the trench contained what was thought to be 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 (Finn 2015a). The feature was around 3.30m wide and between 1.10m and c0.50m deep. The feature contained a loosely compacted dump of modern backfill, comprising red brick, engineering blue brick, mortar, electrical cable and plastics. The feature was hypothesised to be the possible location of a backfilled trench from the 1964 excavations in this area.

The strip, map, and sample exercise also produced similar material stretching across much of the stripped area, particularly extending to the west (Fig 6). Layer (103) was formed of very similar modern demolition debris and was around 100mm in thickness. The cuts observed in the trial trenching proved not to extend further into the trench. The rubble and demolition dump is now thought to be an area of made ground, constructed here as a levelling layer.

No other archaeological features or finds were observed.



Trench edge showing levelling demolition layer, looking west Fig 6

6 CONCLUSION

The archaeological observation, investigation, and recording at London Road in Wollaston involved a strip, map and sample exercise across the proposed footing of Dovecote House. The works were undertaken after a trial trench evaluation in February 2015 found a backfilled cut feature, possibly a former area of archaeological intervention. It was also thought that an 18th-century dovecote and house, and a Saxon occupation site may be located in the vicinity.

No archaeological features, artefacts, or material were found within the strip of the proposed development footing. No structural evidence relating to the dovecote or other buildings was found. A layer of made ground was identified, extending across the west of the proposed development area, to a depth of c100mm. This layer was formed of modern demolition debris such as crushed brick, concrete, and plastics, and was probably intended for levelling or landscaping in this area of the field.

A shallow pit-like feature was shown to be of natural occurrence, probably caused by rooting or burrowing.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INVENTORY

Stripped area	Area	NGR	Surface height (aOD)	Depth & height of natural (aOD)
Dovecote House	c390m ²	490500 262585	74m	55-60m
<i>Context</i>	<i>Context type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Artefacts/Samples</i>
101	Topsoil	Firm, mid brown sandy clay	0.40 – 0.60m deep	-
102	Natural	Yellow-brown chalky gravel	-	-
103	Levelling layer/dumping	Modern dumping contains brick, mortar, concrete, and plastics	1.10m deep	-
104	Cut of pit	Cut of tree throw	c1m wide, 0.35m deep	-
105	Buried topsoil	Firm, mid brown sandy clay	0.30m deep	-
106	Fill of pit [104]	Firm, mid brown sandy clay	0.35m deep	-



Overview of stripped area, looking north-west Fig 7

