

Archaeological Observation,
Investigation & Recording at
15 Kings Meadow Lane
Higham Ferrers
Northamptonshire

(NGR SP 9586, 6916)

Planning Application 12/01341/FUL



August 2013

Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd
for

Mr F Langley, F&L Group Ltd



**Report on Archaeological Observation,
Investigation & Recording at
15 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire**

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Souterrain Project: SOU13-280

Produced for:

Mr F Langley, F&L Group Ltd
Midland House, 18 Market Square,
Higham Ferrers,
Northamptonshire, NN10 8DJ

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Registered Office: 15 Grove place, Bedford MK40 3JJ
Registered in England and Wales No. 03394485
e-mail: gps@souterrain.biz
www.souterrain.biz

Affiliated to the Council for British Archaeology (CBA)

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(Illustrations follow the main text)

Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

Fieldwork & Report:

Martin Wilson BA Hons, MIfA, MIEEnvSc, MEAGE, FSASc

SUMMARY

Archaeological observation and investigation was carried out during the preparation of foundations for a new building in the former garden of 15 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire.

A small assemblage of 17th to 19th century pottery sherds were found in the topsoil. No archaeological features were present.

1. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report documents the results of archaeological observation and investigation carried out during ground preparation for a new building (the application site) at 15 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire, NN10 8JE (Fig. 1) on the 10th, 11th and 22nd of May 2013, in compliance with a condition attached to the planning consent. The work was commissioned by Mr F Langley of F&L Group Ltd, Midland House, 18 Market Square, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire, NN10 8DJ.
- 1.2 The archaeological investigation was undertaken by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation¹.

2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning permission (Application Ref. 12/01341/FUL) was granted subject to Conditions on 10th October 2012 to F and L Group, Mr F Langley for the erection of a single storey dwelling with integral garage.
- 2.2 In view of the archaeological potential of the site, the planning consent has been granted with a Condition (No.3) attached for an archaeological programme of work, with a written scheme of work to be approved in advance by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council (NCCAAA). The reason for the Condition is to ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Scope of the development

- 2.3 Prior to the archaeological investigation the site was part of a residential garden. The new development comprises a two-bedroom bungalow with garden areas to front and rear with parking for a minimum of two vehicles and access from Kings Meadow Lane. The maximum area of the proposed building footprint is 213.3sq.m. The construction of foundations comprised strip wall footings and raised ground levels.

3. SITE LOCATION AND ASPECT

- 3.1 The application site is situated in a modern residential area towards the northern end of the town of Higham Ferrers. The housing along Kings Meadow Lane is comprised of a mix of two-storey detached, semi-detached, terraced and bungalows. The development plot is bordered to the north and east by Kings Meadow Lane, to the west by Saffron Road and to the south by a house and back garden. It is centred on National Grid reference 495862, 269163. The topography of the site is fairly level at a height of approximately 57m OD. The underlying geology is Northampton Sands and Ironstone.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The application site is located on the northern edge of the medieval borough of Higham Ferrers, the layout of which was surmised by the Extensive Urban Survey (EUA) in 1999². This part of the town, known as the Bond End, is understood to have been the main focus of occupation for the agricultural tenants, which had become known as 'le North Ende'³ by the 16th century. It was thus suspected that the application site was partly occupied by such tenements.

¹ Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd. 2013. *Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Works at: 15 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 9586, 6916) (Application Reference 12/01341/FUL)* V. 1. 26th April 2013

² HER ENN100382

³ Table 1, 'Medieval', HER Nos. 1679/9, 1679/11, 1679/143 and 7196/140, 7196/141

- 4.2 Kings Meadow Lane is known to have been a main thoroughfare in the medieval period from Irthlingborough to Higham which is believed to have originated in the Saxon period. Saffron Road marks the approximate course of a minor lane through the township which is shown on a map of 1737 and is most likely to date from at least the medieval period.
- 4.3 Until 2004, the application site and surrounding area was open farmland. A study of aerial photographs⁴ revealed the former presence of several ditched enclosures across the Study Area, most of which have been interpreted as Iron Age⁵, whilst at least one, a large oval enclosure, was proven to be of early Saxon date⁶. The majority of these enclosures were destroyed in 2004.
- 4.4 Archaeological research has since augmented understanding of the origin and development of the town. A number of investigations have taken place on the opposite side of Kings Meadow Lane. (i.e. to the north and east of the application site). Trial trenching in 1994, in advance of residential developments, revealed evidence of antecedent settlement of early to late Saxon date. The discoveries included four early Saxon *grubenhäuser*⁷ and post-holes representing two phases of middle to Late Saxon timber halls⁸. A later sequence of shallow gullies were interpreted as late Saxon to medieval tenement boundaries.⁹ A series of rescue excavations took place over the course of ten years (1994-2004). Of particular note are the excavations¹⁰ at the former factory site (Chamberlaine Plastics Ltd), between c.50m and 120m ESE of the site, where archaeology ranged in date from the late Saxon to post-medieval periods. This included the evidence of a middle Saxon building¹¹ and early medieval ditches¹² cut by a 14th/15th century pottery kiln¹³.

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 In view of the deemed archaeological potential of the site given the range of discoveries in and around Higham Ferrers, the Written Scheme of investigation advocated a series of research objectives with particular emphasis on regional research themes¹⁴. In brief, the key objectives of the investigation were as follows:
- to attempt to recover evidence that could contribute to understanding of the origin and extent of late Saxon nucleated settlement of Higham Ferrers;
 - to ascertain whether there is evidence of Saxon occupation or land-use at the site that might help determine the function of this part of the landscape in the medieval periods, particularly with respect to the extent of the postulated tenement;
 - to attempt to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions;

⁴ National Mapping Programme, Northamptonshire

⁵ Table 1, 'Iron Age'.

⁶ Table 1, 'Saxon', HER Nos. 7049/0/1, 7049 and 1679/0/60

⁷ Table 1 'Saxon', HER Nos. 7049/0/5, 7049/0/6, 7049/0/7 and 7049/0/8

⁸ Table 1, 'Saxon' HER No. 7049/0/3

⁹ Table 1, 'Saxon' HER No. 7049/0/4

¹⁰ Table 1 HER No. ENN101954

¹¹ Table 1, 'Saxon', HER No.1679/0/25

¹² Table 1 'Saxon', HER 1679/0/26

¹³ Table 1 'Medieval', HER No. 1679/39/1

¹⁴ c.f: Cooper, N (ed.), The Archaeology of the East Midlands, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 13, 191 and Knight, D, Vyner, B. & Allen, C. 2012. Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands, East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (Nottingham/York).

- to identify deposits which have the potential for the recovery of environmental data that may contribute to medieval settlement and the agrarian economy;
- to recover artefacts which may contribute to understanding of interaction between towns/market areas and countryside;
- to identify deposits which have the potential for the recovery of environmental data that may contribute to research themes pertaining to medieval agrarian economy;
- to attempt to recover evidence that may shed light on the function and nature of this part of the landscape in other periods, in particular elements of the prehistoric (Iron Age) landscape in this area that is known mostly from aerial photography;
- to recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region.

6. FIELD PROCEDURE & OBSERVATIONS

- 6.1 The investigation was conducted with due consideration to Health and Safety and in accordance with the requirements of the Written Scheme of Investigation and the Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and Standard Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2001).
- 6.2 Trenching was monitored by an archaeologist throughout with the facility to make investigations and records as appropriate.
- 6.3 The excavation of strip foundation trenches revealed that the ground levels had been modified in the modern periods, probably for the creation of the residential garden. Topsoil c.0.3m thick, directly overlay the geological stratum in the east part of the building footprint (Fig. 3; Fig. 4, 7-8; Fig 5. 9 to 14). Fragments of post-medieval and modern pottery (Table 1) were recovered from the topsoil in the north east part of the site. The arefacts represent domestic waste deposits. There was no subsoil layer discernible.

Table 1. Pottery: Types and chronology

(Note: Fabric codes used in descriptions refer to those of the Northamptonshire Ceramic Type Series).

Context	Description	Fabric code	Approx. date
Topsoil	1 sherd Black-glazed earthen ware	426	C17
	3 sherds planters.	MOD	modern
	1 sherd creamware, cobalt decorated single stripe	415	C18
	1 sherd white earthenware. Painted cobalt floral design	430	C18
	1 sherd stoneware jar.	MISC	C17 th
	1 sherd painted ware. White brown	MOD	modern

- 6.4 Across the west half of the site a layer of mid-brown homogeneous subsoil was present, varying in thickness between 0.2m and 0.7m (Fig. 3, Fig 4, 2-7). At some juncture, topsoil had been entirely removed with the ground subsequently 'made-up' with rubble-strewn soil (Fig. 3, Fig 4, 1-7). This deposit varied in thickness between 0.3m and 0.8m. The rubble included modern concrete, limestone rubble, brick fragments and broken concrete slabs.

- 6.5 The investigation proved to be 'negative' in terms of significant archaeological remains being present. A photographic and descriptive record was made and the site was surveyed to Ordnance Survey National Grid co-ordinates (Fig. 3) and height datum. The top of the geological stratum was recorded across the site which showed a fall in height of around 1.17m east to west over a distance of c.18m.
- 6.6 Further observations were made during the hand-excavation of a services trench near to the roadside (Fig 3; Fig 5, 15). This revealed a modern disturbance throughout, above geological stratum, largely due to service trenches. The geological stratum was reached at 55.35m AOD, c.0.6 below existing ground level.

7. REVIEW OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 The investigation was unable to contribute any of the defined archaeological research objectives (*ante* 5). It is not possible to infer the cultural status or function of this part of the landscape in antiquity from the results of the investigation.

8. ARCHIVE

- 8.1 The archaeological site archive is to be prepared and deposited in accordance with the policy set out in "Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition with Registered Museums".
- 8.2 The OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations: www.oasis.ac.uk) identification number for this project is *souterra1-157504*.

9. COPYRIGHT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 9.1 Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it will provide an exclusive licence to the Owner in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the WSI. Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd retains the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports as defined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. A licence is to be also granted to Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record for the use of all reports arising from projects for planning purposes and *bona fide* research requests.
- 9.2 Souterrain undertakes to respect all requirements for confidentiality about the Applicant's proposals provided that these are clearly stated. It is expected that owners respect Souterrain's and the Institute for Archaeologists' general ethical obligations not to suppress significant archaeological data for an unreasonable period.

Figure 1. Location of Site

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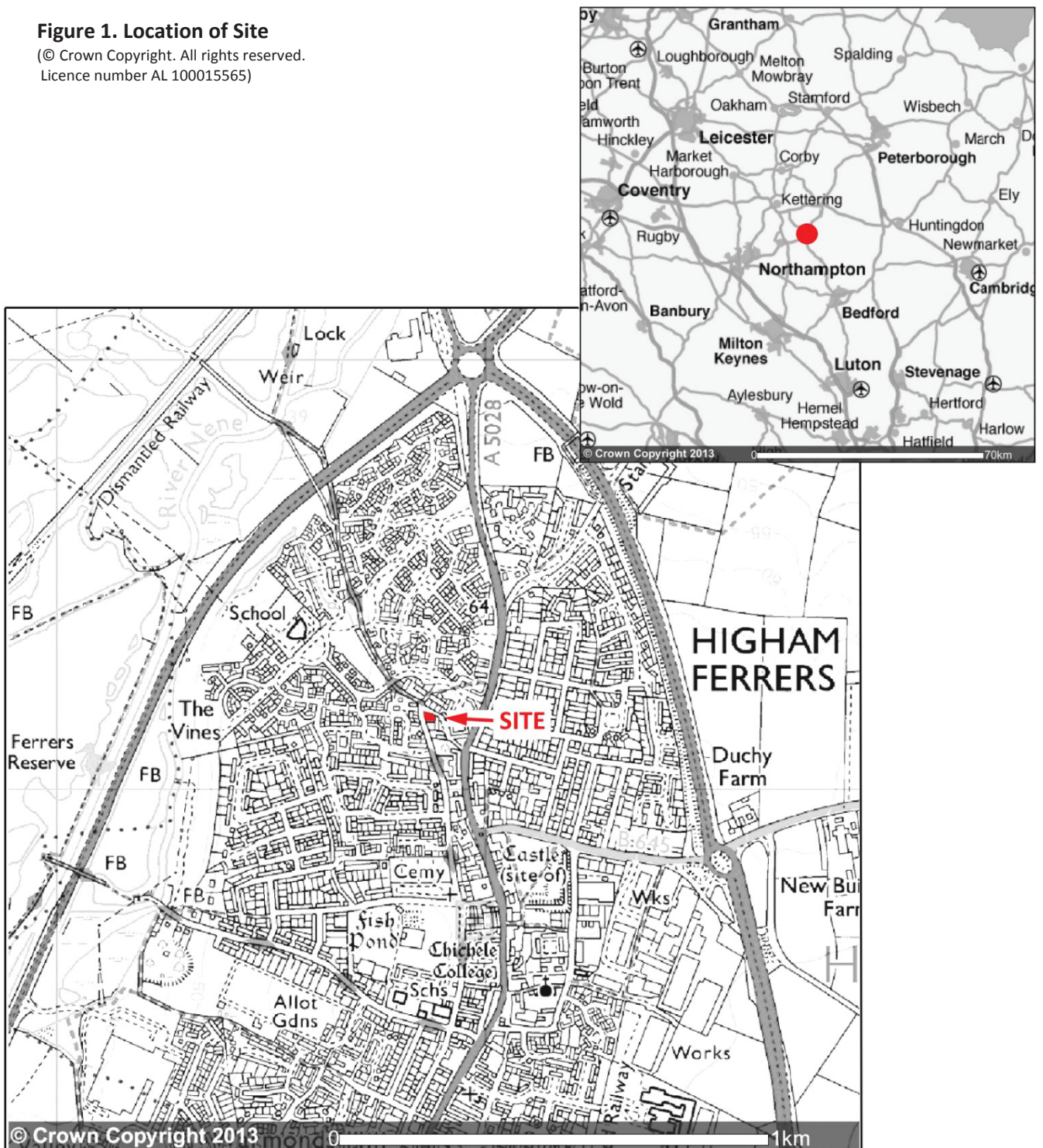




Figure 2. Overview of the development area, pre-excitation, facing SW from Kings Meadow Lane

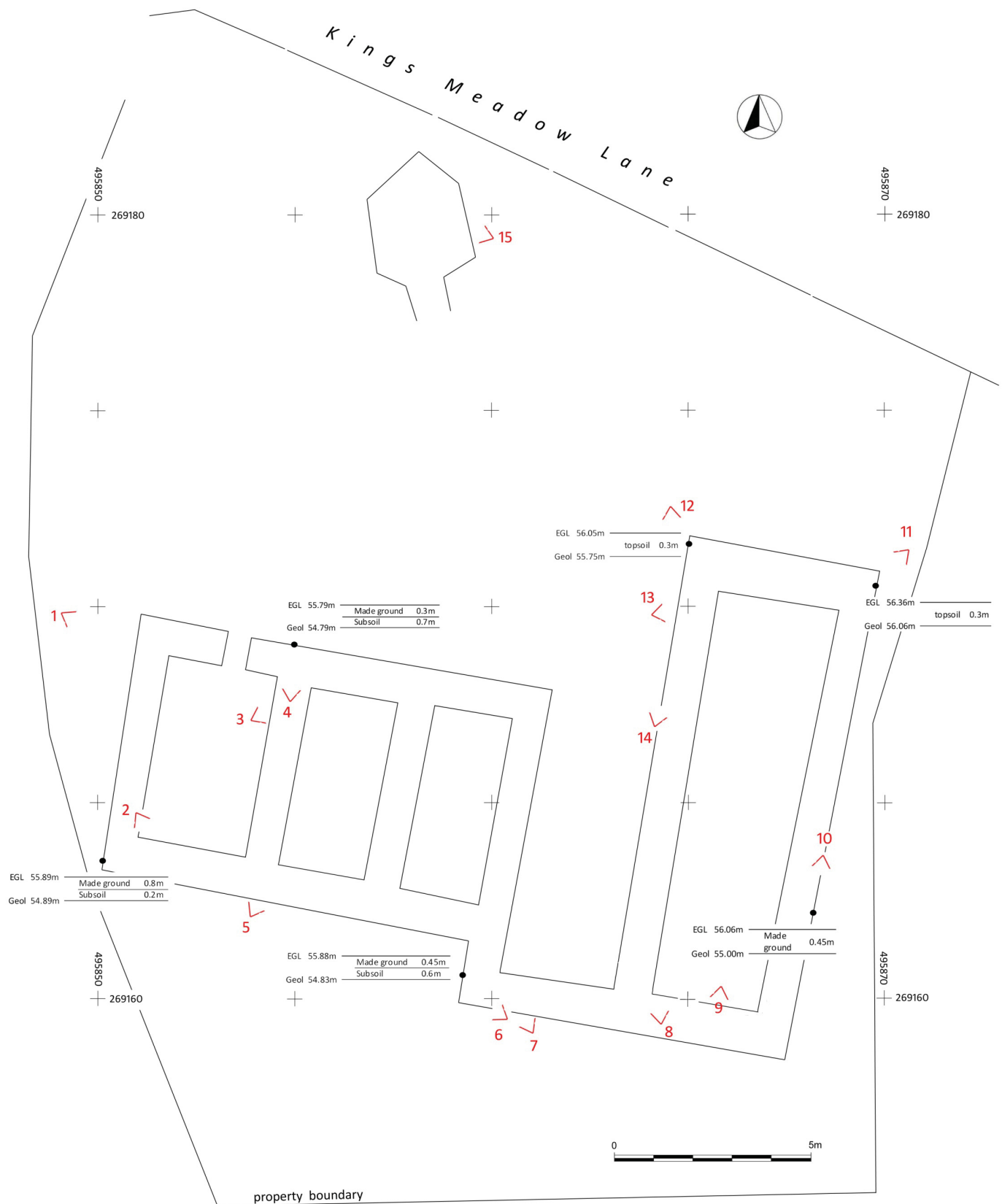


Figure 3. Plan of the development area showing levels and direction of viewpoint at Figs. 4 and 5



Figure 4. Views of the development area (see Fig. 3)



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Figure 5. Views of the development area (see Fig. 3)