



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

A programme of archaeological observation and
recording at 20 Denford Road, Ringstead,
Northamptonshire

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Summary

Observation during groundworks shows that ground levels on the site of a new house at 20 Denford Road have previously been vastly reduced, probably in relation to an adjacent car park development at nearby Britannia House. This has removed the potential for the preservation of archaeological remains.

Introduction

An archaeological condition was attached to a planning consent for the construction of a single new house at 20 Denford Road, Ringstead, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 9897 7523; Fig 1. Application no 15/00315/FUL). Accordingly an archaeological brief was issued by the Northamptonshire County Council's Assistant Archaeological Advisor, dated 30 June 2015. Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd was commissioned to carry out the work in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), dated 20 July 2015.

The site lies on the east side of the north- to south-aligned Denford Road, Ringstead, almost at its junction with Gladstone Street, and lying next to a former industrial building, Britannia House. The natural geology is Northampton Sand with Ironstone but here observation showed this to be a paste-like shattered version, more sand than anything; it directly overlay blue/green Jurassic Lias clays.

The site lies on Denford Rd, Ringstead. The village's archaeology was set out by the former Royal Commission (RCHME 1975, 83-5). Iron Age to Roman and medieval remains are known from the parish, but a more recent nearby discovery of Saxon pottery is suggestive of some continuity between those periods and may indicate a settlement focus other than the later village centre.



Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2015

Methodology and fieldwork

At the outset the site was being cleared of builders' rubble and other debris from an adjacent previous development using a c10-ton mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The adjacent development had comprised a raised car park which serves the next-door Britannia House and the debris from those works had clearly been stored on the current site.

As the mound of debris began to be cleared it became apparent that the groundworks for the car park had cut deeply into the steeply sloping ground which had previously characterised the back-plot of Britannia House and which still characterises the steep hill up which Gladstone Street is aligned at right-angles to Denford Road (Fig 2).



Fig 2: Gladstone Street; Britannia House to left. The entrance to the recent car park is arrowed.

The rear terrace wall of the recent car park had cut into the hillside, but the process of creating this terrace had extended north to take out the bank which had lain at the side of the plot behind the first house on Gladstone Street (seen in Fig 2).

The old terrace cut was clearly visible in the back of the current plot, where it was clear that the level of the natural geology had been reduced by over 1m (Fig 3). This terrace extended across the length of the proposed house in the current development



Fig 3: The earlier terrace being uncovered by the removal of builders' rubble; scale 1m. The dashed line shows the old ground surface cut back to build the car park wall.

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This terrace strongly suggested that any archaeology which may have existed would have been lost in such earth-moving. Accordingly it was agreed that foundation trenches should be dug immediately in order to check for the survival of any former ground surface from front to back of the site.

The foundation trenches showed that under the gravel hard-standing on which works were located (and upon which the builders' rubble lay), lay only reduced natural geology (Fig 4). Seemingly the gravel surface had been put down after the truncation had taken place, perhaps for a builders' compound. At the front of the site was a deep pit containing brick and concrete, indicative of a large modern disturbance at depth. Plans show that the front of the site also contains a deep mains sewer. At this point the programme of observation was curtailed as no archaeology stood a chance of coherent survival.



Fig 4: View east along the southern side of the new house foundations, showing the extent of truncation in the existing terracing behind; scale 1m

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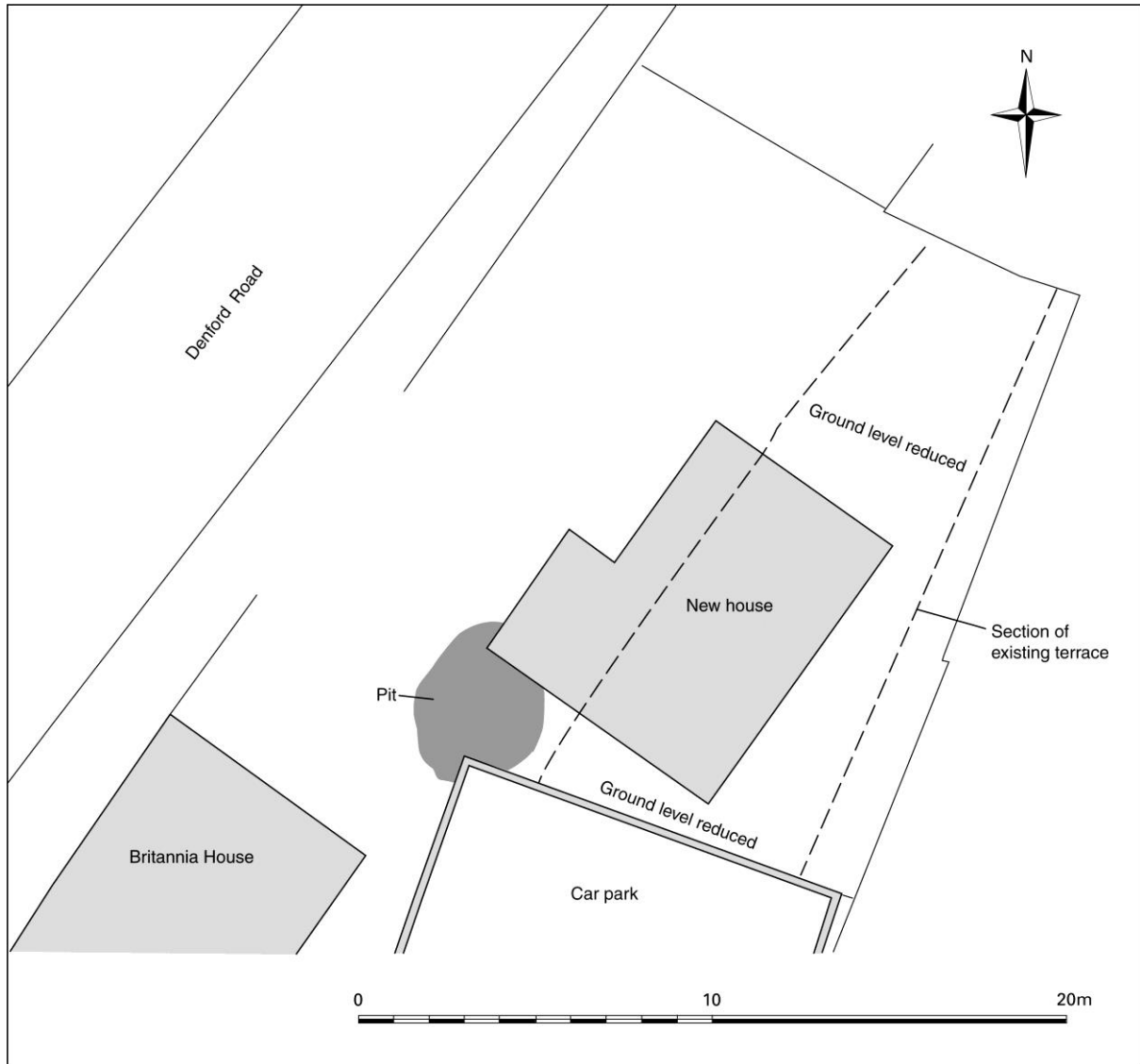


Fig 5: Plan of the plot, showing the area of truncation and the approximate location of the modern pit. To the front of the house lay a mains sewer. (Andy Isham)

Conclusion

The observations show that the site has recently been heavily truncated in order to flatten it. Thus this site cannot make any contribution to the recent discovery of Saxon pottery in the vicinity. However, the works of truncation have affected only this single plot and other plots nearby may have enjoyed different planning histories with a greater possibility of survival.

Reference

RCHME 1975 *An inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton; I: Archaeological sites in North-West Northamptonshire*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England



IS Heritage, 19 August 2015