



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

**Archaeological observations ahead of construction of
two houses on King Street, Maidford,
Northamptonshire**

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Archaeological observations ahead of construction of two houses on King Street, Maidford, Northamptonshire

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Summary

Observations during ground preparation for a new development of two houses at King Street, Maidford showed that modern demolition of a former cottage had grubbed out the former frontage, in places exposing natural geology. Behind the frontage clean subsoil and deep loamy topsoil betokened a long-lived former garden.

Introduction

Planning permission was granted in 2016 by South Northamptonshire Council (Application S/2016/0147/FUL) for construction of two semi-detached homes on land adjacent to Westholme, King Street, Maidford, Northamptonshire NN12 8HQ (NGR: SP 6086 5245; Fig 1). The current owner, Mr Marc Harris bought the site with permissions and undertook to discharge Conditions 8 and 16 regarding archaeology. Condition 8 relates to a programme of fieldwork in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation and 16 relates to a report on the fieldwork.

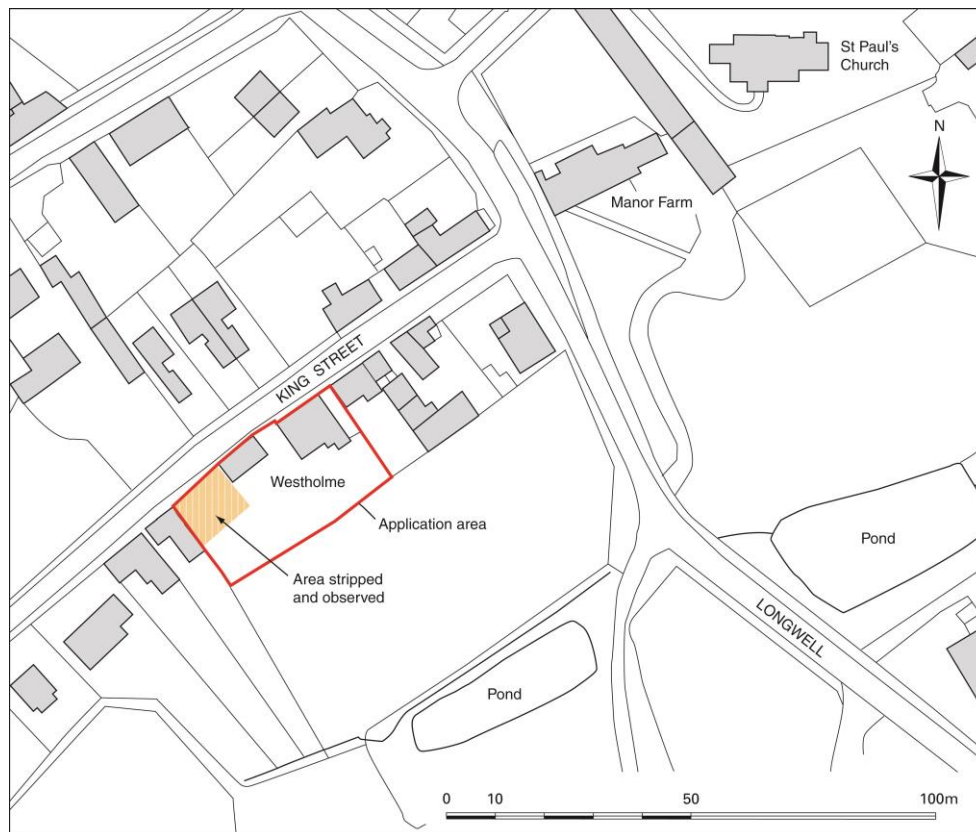


Fig 1: Site location with area stripped and monitored (Andy Isham)

King Street, Maidford

In accordance with these conditions Mr Harris, via his agents, Roger Coy Partnership, commissioned Iain Soden Heritage Services to undertake the WSI, fieldwork and reporting. The WSI, dated 3 May 2017, was approved prior to the commencement of fieldwork by the Local Authority and Liz Mordue from Northamptonshire County Council, as Assistant Archaeological Advisor to the Planning Authority as clearance of pre-commencement elements of condition 8.

Fieldwork took place on 15 August 2017 in discharge of Condition 8. This report has been compiled to facilitate discharge of Condition 16.

Background

Little archaeological work has previously been carried out in Maidford, principally since opportunities have not been forthcoming. The current consent relates to a rare development in what the RCHME (1982, 97-8) suggests may be a planned medieval settlement. The same entry also notes the intriguing former earthworks of the village in respect of a lack of Roman remains locally thus far. Thus there is a potential locally for undiscovered Roman remains to in-fill a topographical gap in the known Romano-British landscape.

The supposed extent of the medieval village is shown in Partida *et al* (2013, Map 66M), but a lack of fieldwork so far has not borne this out.



Fig 2: The village layout in 1810 (Ordnance Survey Surveyor's edition, sheet 228). Note the watermill site at bottom left. The current site location is arrowed although the frontage lacks detail.

King Street, Maidford

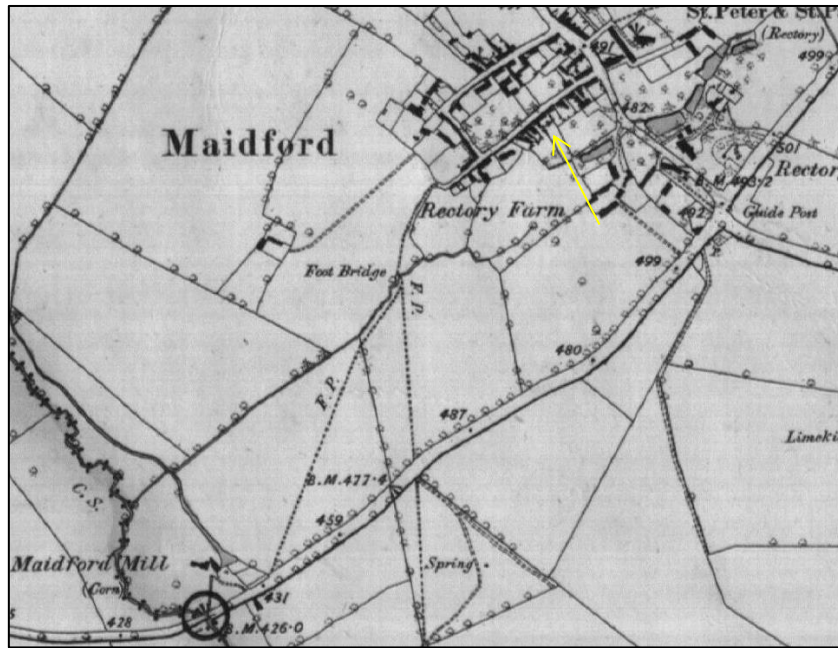


Fig 3: The village layout in 1886 (1st edition Ordnance Survey). Note the water mill still in existence. The current site location is arrowed where a frontage building is indicated.

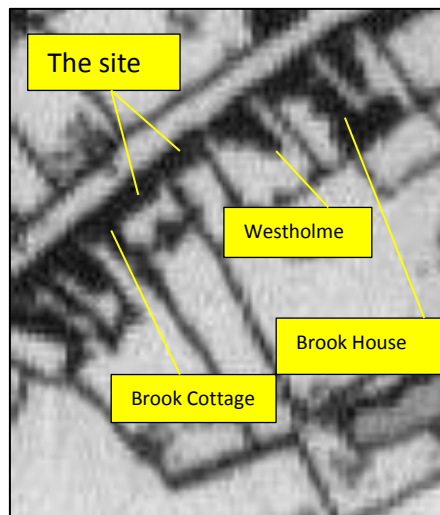


Fig 4: Detail of Fig 3, showing the exact building-for-building correlation in 1886.

Both historic maps consulted, the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1886 (1:2500 scale) and the foregoing 2-inch Ordnance Survey Surveyors map of c1810, suggest that the frontage of the application site contained a small cottage sitting directly onto King Street. On the 1950 Ordnance Survey, the previously-depicted frontage was still in existence (Sheet SP65). Demolition seems to have taken place in the 1950s or 1960s leaving an open-fronted site. On the 1886 map the outbuilding can also be noted, as can the larger houses to the east with their distinctive orientations and layouts (Westholme and Brook House), helping to locate the site exactly (Fig 4).

The site appears to have enjoyed a long, thin plot in common with its westerly neighbours, but at some time after 1886 this was divided off (presumably sold off) and a shorter plot retained, in

King Street, Maidford

common with its neighbour on the east (Westholme). It is noticeable that the frontage cottage and the adjacent 'garage' building, once lay on separate land parcels.

Fieldwork

The footprint of the new houses, two semi-detached homes, was stripped using a 5-ton 360-degree excavator fitted with a 1.6m-wide toothless ditching bucket. The work took place under archaeological scrutiny and control where requested. This exposed the natural substrate or any archaeology as appropriate.



Fig 5: The site looking west during machining of the topsoil; garage building to right

While one half of the frontage comprised a former boundary wall, which was being reduced for the construction of the new houses, the other half comprised a garage-building which was to be retained and re-used in the new development as garages serving the two new houses. The extant front and side walls are of ironstone and preserved within the front wall are the blocked former openings of a door and a window, relating to a previous, probably domestic cottage, use.



Fig 6: Adjacent garages with former cottage front wall with blocked doorway and window. These are being reused in the new development

The boundary wall being demolished where the new houses are being constructed is an unremarkable ironstone wall about 1.2m high and 0.5m wide. It butted up against the modern render of the adjacent cottage and was thus patently modern in date. It retained at ground level a broken fragment of a former millstone as a feature. It has been noted above that on maps of 1810 and 1886 the former Maidford watermill stood not far away.



Fig 7: Broken piece of millstone re-used in the existing frontage wall

Results

The stripped footprint of the two new homes totalled 225 sq m. Most of this was covered by a 300-400mm-thick layer of turf and dark brown loamy topsoil containing only the occasional sherd of 19th- to 20th-century pottery. This layer lapped up against the modern re-build of the frontage wall and was unbroken back into the garden area which supported mature fruit trees.



Fig 8: Looking west to the preserved former gable. The former cottage footprint is outlined; scale 2m



Fig 9: The site following machining, looking east. The stark difference along the dashed line is a 'mortary smudge'- all that remained of the cottage demolition (left) and clean subsoil (right). At top is exposed natural ironstone; scale 2m

King Street, Maidford

Beneath the stripped topsoil, one third of the frontage comprised exposed clean solid geology (fragmented ironstone), while two thirds comprised demolition and disturbance into the same (from removal of the mapped and demolished cottage, of which the straight back edge was visible).

Behind the former cottage footprint lay clean medium-brown subsoil which contained no features.

Of the former cottage, the front edge appears once to have occupied the back of pavement and its front wall has more recently been mimicked by the now-demolished roadside wall (Figs 6 and 7). The cottage gable end is still visible made-good against next the door cottage (the 19th century Brook Cottage- Fig 8).

The cottage foundations seem to have been grubbed up at time of demolition – leaving nothing bigger than a half-brick or an ironstone fragment for the most part. The site seems to have been very professionally cleared in the post-War period, leaving only the most ephemeral ‘mortary smudge’ of the former cottage’s rectangular footprint. The cottage itself appears to have removed any earlier evidence, or it is possible that the site was previously not built-upon.

Residual finds from the topsoil were all 19th-20th century ceramics and were not retained. There were no earlier finds.

Conclusion

The site formerly contained a frontage of a post-medieval cottage, the profile of which remains visible in the adjacent gable. Modern (previous) site clearance shows, however, that its demolition was very thorough, leaving scant remains. There is no evidence of a predecessor but that may be due to that same thoroughness of the previous site-clearance which had once exposed natural geology in part. The site has been able to shed little light on the supposed planned medieval form of Maidford, nor on the presence of any Roman remains.

Bibliography

Partida T, Hall D, and Foard, G, 2013 *An atlas of Northamptonshire-the medieval and early-modern landscape*, Oxbow

RCHME 1982 *An inventory of the historical monuments in the County of Northampton; Volume IV: Archaeological sites in South-West Northamptonshire*, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England

King Street, Maidford

Appendix *OASIS data*

Project Name	King Street, Maidford
OASIS ID	iainsode1-297896
Project Type	Watching Brief
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	No
Current land use	Village frontage
Development type	Residential
Reason for investigation	Planning condition
National grid reference	SP 6086 5245
Start/end dates of fieldwork	15 August 2017
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive
Study area	225 sq m



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13 October 2017