



Northamptonshire  
County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation of land at  
11 Stratford Road, Sandy  
Bedfordshire

September 2008



Simon Carlyle

October 2008

Report 08/157

Accession no. BEDFM 2008.224

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Front page illustration: General view of site, facing south-west

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	Archaeological Evaluation of Land at 11 Stratford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Three test pits were excavated within the footprint of a proposed double garage and soakaway, to be built in the garden of 11 Stratford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire. In one of the test pits there was a small ditch, possibly of Iron Age or Roman date, sealed beneath a thick layer of colluvium that had accumulated at the base of the slope below Galley Hill. With the exception of a 19th-century pit, no further archaeological remains were encountered.	
Project type	Test pit evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	None	
Monument type and period	None	
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	11 Stratford Road, Sandy	
OS NGR	51827 24783	
Height aOD	30m	
Area	34m <sup>2</sup>	
Land use	Garden	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	Bedfordshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Simon Carlyle, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Simon Carlyle, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Simon Carlyle, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr Keith Hill, landowner	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2008	
End date	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2008	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Accession no. BEDFM2008.224		
Physical	Bedford Museum	Site records, pottery
Digital		
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	Archaeological Evaluation of Land at 11 Stratford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire	
Serial title and volume	08/157	
Author(s)	Simon Carlyle	
Page numbers	6 text, 3 figs, 2 plates	
Date	October 2008	

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Plate 2: Possible late Iron Age/Roman ditch [205] beneath the colluvium in Test Pit 2, facing north-west

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT  
11 STRATFORD ROAD, SANDY  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**OCTOBER 2008**

***Abstract***

*Three test pits were excavated by Northamptonshire Archaeology within the footprint of a proposed double garage and soakaway, to be built in the garden of 11 Stratford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire. In one of the test pits there was a small ditch, possibly of Iron Age or Roman date, sealed beneath a thick layer of colluvium that had accumulated at the base of the slope below Galley Hill. With the exception of a 19th-century pit, no further archaeological remains were encountered.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

In September 2008, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) in the garden of 11 Stratford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 1827 4783; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Keith Hill, the landowner, who has been granted planning permission by Mid Bedfordshire District Council for the construction of a double garage, close to the south-western boundary of the property (planning application no. 08/00706/FUL).

The application site was known to lie immediately adjacent to a Roman cemetery and ribbon development leading south along the road from the Roman small town at Sandy. As a consequence, Bedfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Section (BCCHEs), acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, advised that a programme of archaeological investigation should be carried out prior to development, in accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16)*, section 30.

The project has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Brief for Archaeological Investigation and the Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation issued by BCCHEs (2008a and b) and the Project Design prepared by NA (2008).

**2 BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Topography and geology**

The proposed double garage, which covers an area of approximately 34m<sup>2</sup>, will be located in the garden of 11 Stratford Road, Sandy (Fig 2). The property is located on the eastern side of Stratford Road, c 1km to the south of the town. Topographically, the site lies at approximately 30m aOD and is situated on the edge of the floodplain of the River Ivel on the lower slopes of the Greensand ridge, below Galley Hill. The underlying geology is Lower Greensand with superficial deposits of Valley Gravels and alluvium in the river valley. The soil belongs to the

Frilford (554a) soil association, comprising deep, well-drained sandy and coarse loamy soils (SSEW 1983).

## 2.2 Historical and archaeological background

A search was made of the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and archaeological publications for relevant archaeological sites in the general area of Stratford Road, Sandy. The location of the HER sites is shown in Figure 1.

The earliest evidence for human activity in the study area is a Mesolithic occupation site (1165), discovered near Cottage Farm to the south-east of Galley Hill. In the Neolithic and Bronze Age there was settlement and activity on the floodplain of the River Ivel. On the west bank of the river, to the south-east of Beeston, a number of possible Bronze Age ring ditches have been identified from cropmarks (1495) and to the south of the study area (not shown) is the Sandy/Biggleswade Neolithic/Bronze Age funerary/ceremonial complex (Malim 2000). Other prehistoric sites which may date to the same period include: the find spot of a stone axe (2434), approximately 400m to the south-east of the site; and a prehistoric inhumation burial (16152) on the eastern slope of the Greensand escarpment.

On the crest of the Greensand escarpment, to the east of the River Ivel, there are three Iron Age hill forts: Galley Hill (445; McOmish 2005) and Sandy Lodge (1164; Dyer 1971) are situated on the high ground immediately to the east of the site; and Caesar's Camp (442) lies *c* 1.2km to the north. There may have been an unenclosed late Iron Age settlement in the area later occupied by the Roman town, although there is no conclusive evidence for this. Continuity between the late Iron Age and Roman periods has been demonstrated at Warren Villas (3527), where a complex of enclosures was excavated ahead of gravel extraction in the late 1980s (BCAS 1989; Dawson 2000).

The small Roman roadside town of Sandy, the remains of which have been partially excavated in Sandy cemetery on the south-eastern outskirts of the modern town (444), was established in the later 1st century AD, with occupation probably continuing into the 5th century (BCAS 1997). It clustered around a *mansio* that was built on the Roman road that ran northwards from Baldock to Godmanchester (Simco 1984). The surface of a Roman road has been located near Sandy station (10803) and a road surface (11316) and a possible ford (3321) have been tentatively identified to the south-east of the site, on the presumed line of the road. A rectangular enclosure, interpreted as a small Roman fort (unpublished), was excavated on Biggleswade Common in the 1960s (Dyer 1971). Reference to the discovery of Roman remains and artefacts at Sandy and its environs date back to the 17th century, and there are numerous records of discoveries made during the construction of the Great Northern Railway in the 1850s, and in association with gravel extraction, market gardening and general development throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. One of the most recent discoveries, at 6 Stratford Road (11309), identified the remains of a late Roman inhumation cemetery and Roman ribbon development along the line of the road (CCCAFU 2005). Similar remains have been identified further to the north-west, just south of the Roman town (13407).

In the early medieval period a small Saxon cemetery (SMR 432) was established to the north of the site of the Roman town, which suggests that there was settlement in the area in the early/middle Saxon period. Later Saxon and medieval settlement was focused on the parish church. Excavation ahead of gravel extraction to the north of Manor Farm located later medieval activity in the area (3527) and the site of the medieval settlement of Beeston Berrys (1495) has been identified from substantial rectilinear cropmarks on the west bank of the River Ivel.

### 3 TRIAL EXCAVATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

To investigate the archaeological potential of the proposed development area, three test pits were excavated (a total of 6 linear metres; *c* 9m<sup>2</sup>). Test Pits 1 and 2 were located in the south and north corners of the garage footprint respectively; Test Pit 3 was excavated in the area of the soakaway, immediately to the west of the proposed garage (Fig 2).

The specific aims of the project were to:

- Establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation on the development site, recovering artifacts to assist in the development of type series within the region and to recover any possible palaeoenvironmental deposits to determine local environmental conditions
- Place the archaeology of the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context.
- To define any potential constraints for further archaeological fieldwork including areas of disturbance, service locations etc.

All works were conducted in accordance with the *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, revised 2001), the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1985, revised 2006) and *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003). The project referred to the national framework for research set out by English Heritage (EH 1997) and regional and county frameworks (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; and Oake *et al* 2007). This report complies with the framework for archaeological reports set out in Appendix 7 of *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991). The work was monitored by BCCHES.

#### 3.2 Methodology

The site of the proposed garage had been cleared of undergrowth and marked out by the landowner, Mr Hill. The test pits were positioned in accordance with the approved location plan provided with the specification, with the exception of Test Pit 3, which had to be moved to the revised location for the soakaway. The test pits, which were 2m long and 1.6m wide, were excavated using a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil, subsoil and colluvium were excavated under archaeological supervision to reveal significant archaeological remains or, where these were absent, the natural substrate. All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The test pits were cleaned by hand to define any features and a representative sample of the features was then excavated by hand to determine their date and character. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

All archaeological deposits encountered during the course of the evaluation were fully recorded, following standard NA procedures. All archaeological features and deposits were given a separate context number and were described on *pro-forma* context sheets to include details of the context, its relationships and interpretation. Artefacts were collected by hand and retained, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site (Watkinson and Neal 1998). Unstratified

animal bones and modern material were not retained. No dated deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.

The test pits were planned at a scale of 1:20. Sections through features and soil profiles were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate, and related to Ordnance Datum. A full photographic record comprising both 35mm black and white negatives and colour transparencies was maintained, supplemented with digital images. On completion the test pits were backfilled. The field data has been compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing, in accordance with Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993) guidelines, and details of the project will be submitted to Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS III).

### **3.3 Test pit results**

#### ***General***

The natural substrate and the overlying sequence of deposits was generally the same in all three test pits. The natural substrate was weakly cemented yellowish white fine sandy silt with very occasional fine gritty angular pebbles. This deposit was probably the weathered surface of the Lower Greensand, altered under glacial or periglacial conditions. In Test Pits 1 and 3 the surface of the natural substrate, to a depth of *c* 0.12m, had a mixed, grubby appearance, possibly due root action. Overlying the natural substrate was a thick layer of colluvium, up to 0.8m thick, comprising mid orangey brown silty sand with very occasional fine to coarse pebbles and charcoal flecks. The colluvium was sealed by topsoil, which was up to 0.55m thick and consisted of dark greyish brown slightly sandy organic silt with moderate fine to coarse pebbles. In Test Pits 1 and 2 the lower half of the topsoil had a more compact structure and a sandier texture, suggesting that the upper half of the topsoil had been redeposited, possibly when the driveway to the west was created. A summary of the features/deposits, their depth below ground level and a checklist of associated finds is provided in the Appendix.

#### ***Test Pit 1***

The natural substrate (106) was encountered at a depth of 1.16m below ground level and was overlain by a layer of colluvium (103), which was up to 0.59m thick. The upper part of the colluvium contained a single sherd of 18th-century glazed red earthenware pottery. Cut into the surface of the colluvium, at a depth of 0.50m below ground level, was a shallow, square or rectangular pit [105] (Plate 1). The pit, only the north-west corner of which was exposed in the test pit, was at least 1.6m long, 1.1m wide and had a depth of 0.14m. It was filled with mid greyish brown sandy silt (104) and contained clinker, a fragment of roofing slate, clay pipe stem and 19th-century red earthenware pottery sherds. The overlying topsoil, (101) and (102), had a combined thickness of 0.57m.

#### ***Test Pit 2***

Cut into the natural substrate (206), at a depth of 1.06m, there was a small ditch [205] with a shallow, V-shaped profile (Fig 3; Plate 2). It was aligned roughly north-west to south-east, measured 0.65m wide and 0.22m deep, and was filled with mid grey sandy silt (204). No finds were recovered from the ditch, but may be Iron Age or Roman in date, given that it was sealed by the colluvium (203). The colluvium was 0.54m thick and contained two abraded sherds of pottery, one probably of late Iron Age date, the other Roman sandy greyware (A Chapman pers comm). A modern drain cut the colluvium in the south-west corner of the test pit. The overlying topsoil, (201) and (202), had a combined thickness of 0.51m.



### ***Test Pit 3***

The natural substrate (304) lay at a depth of 1.12m below ground level and was overlain by a thick deposit of colluvium (302), approximately 0.64m thick. The topsoil (301) was 0.48m thick. The test pit contained no archaeological features.

## **4 DISCUSSION**

The only significant archaeological feature within the footprint of the proposed double garage was a small ditch. Although undated, it was sealed by colluvium and is therefore may be late Iron Age or Roman in date. The build-up of colluvium over features of Roman date has been noted on other sites along Stratford Road (CCCAFU 2005; A Maull pers comm), which suggests that the slopes below Galley Hill were not cleared for arable farming until at least the Roman period. With the exception of a 19th-century pit, no further archaeological remains were encountered.

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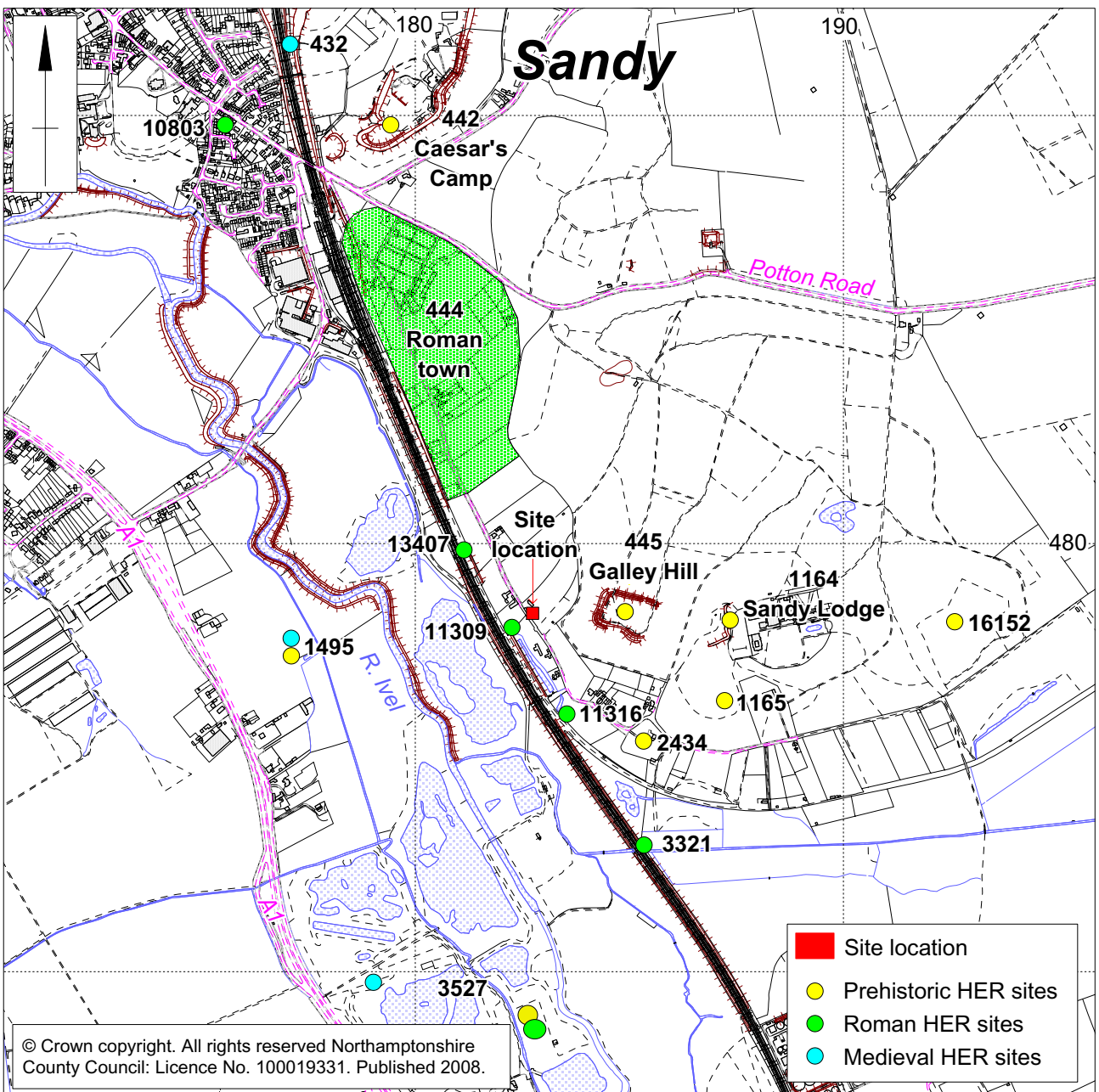
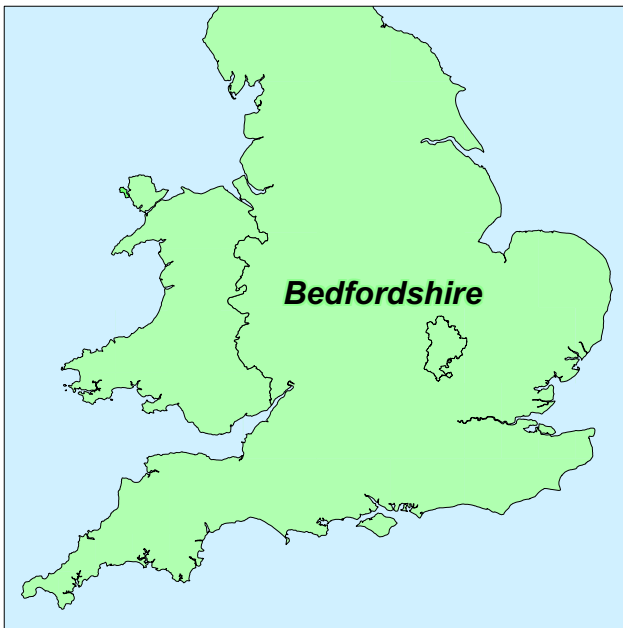
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## **Maps**

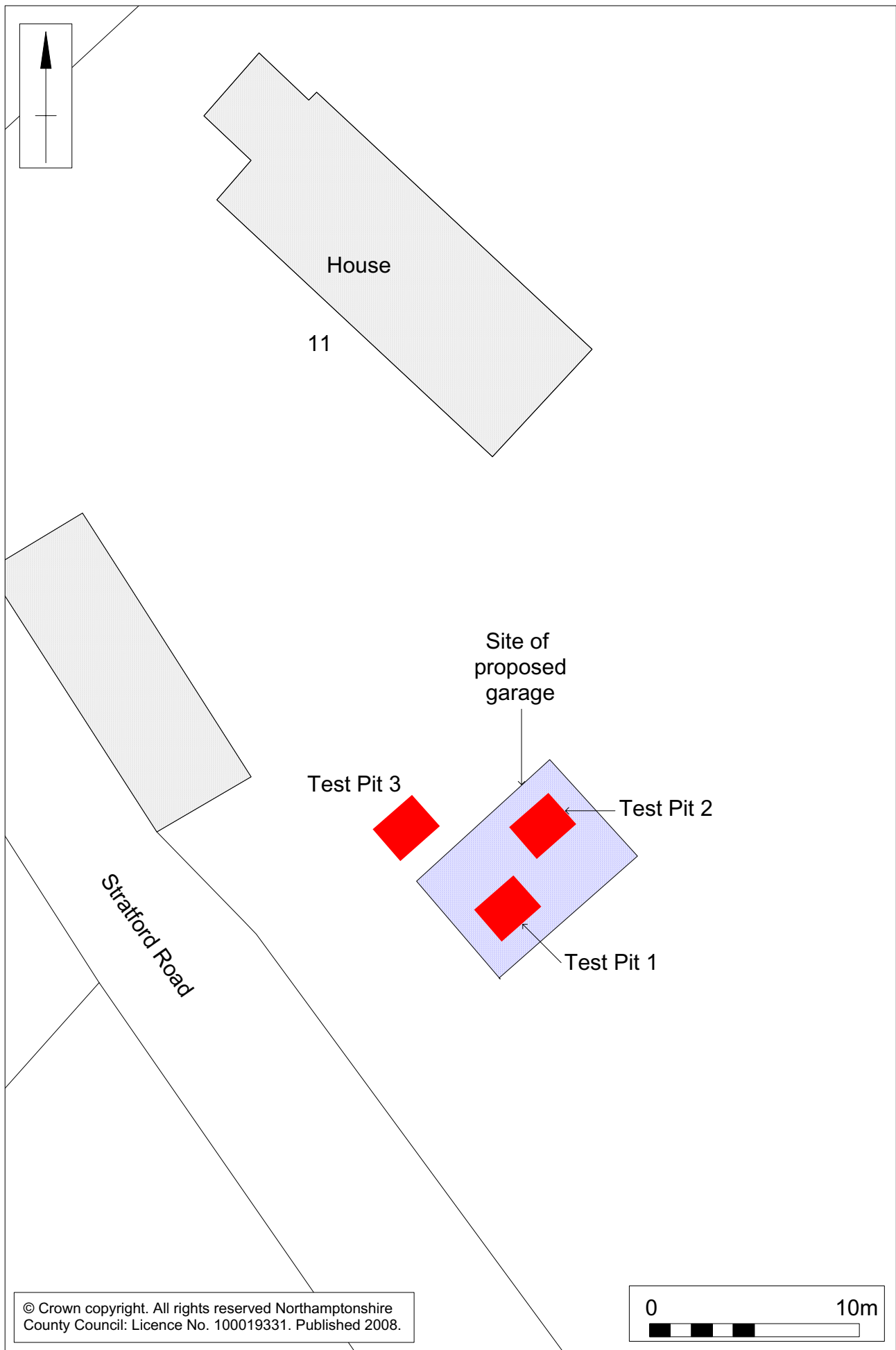
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SSEW 1983, *Soils of Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 4, 1:250,000



Scale 1:15,000

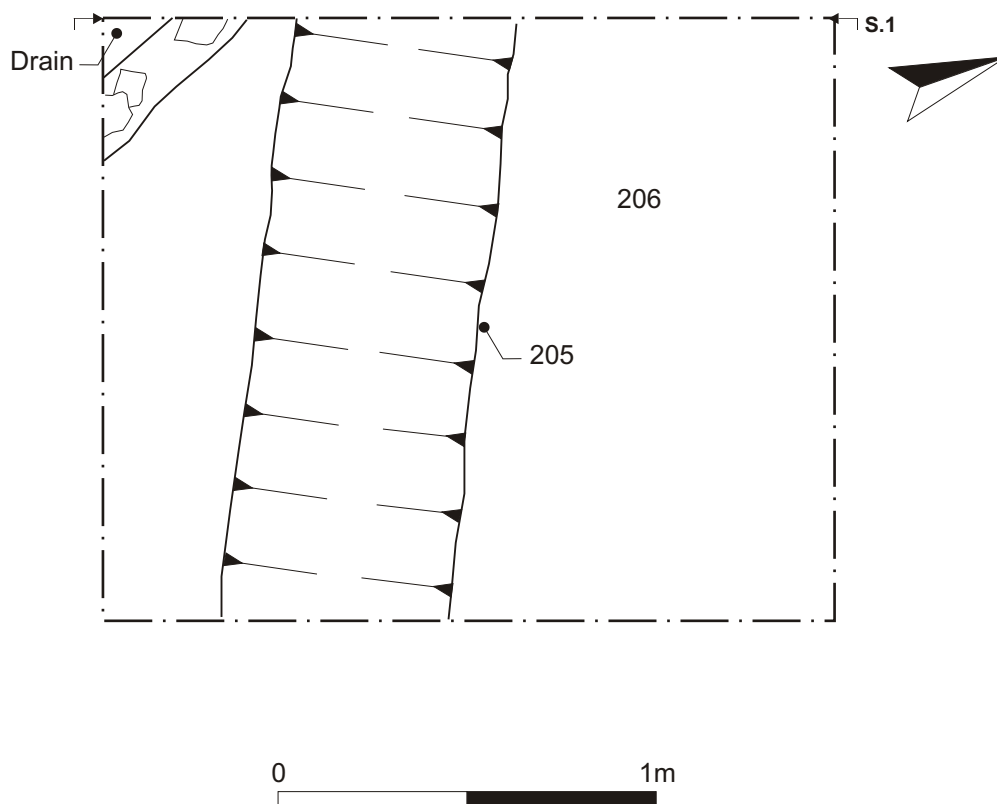
Site location and HER sites Fig 1



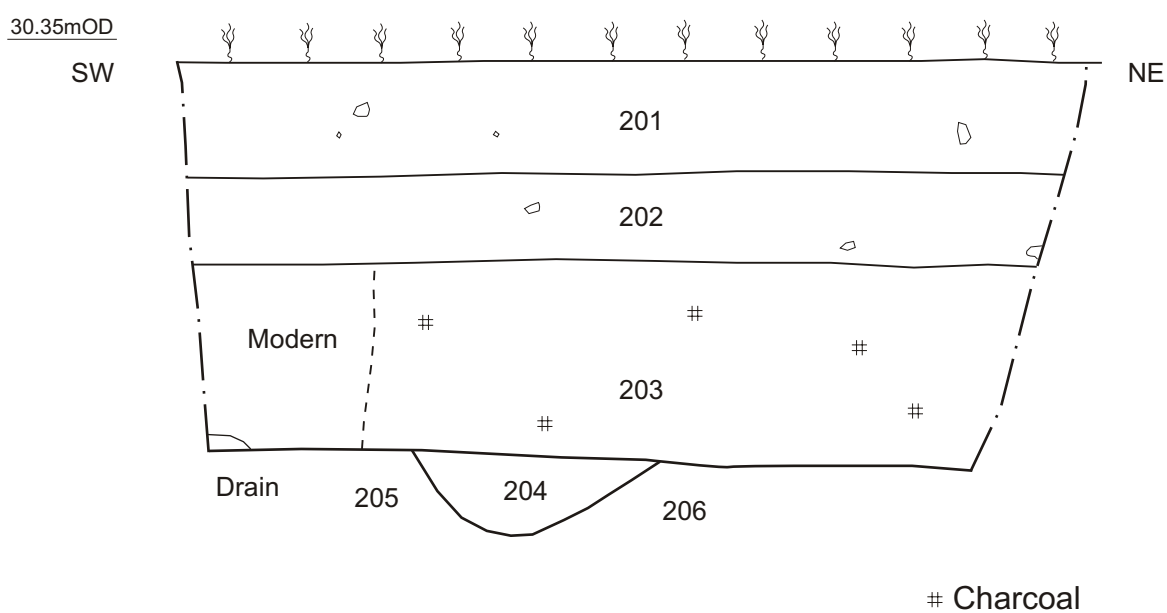
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Test pits location plan Fig 2

## Test Pit 2



## Section 1



Plan and section of Test Pit 2 Fig 3





Plate 1: Modern pit [105] cut into the surface of the colluvium in Test Pit 1, facing south-west



Plate 2: Possible late Iron Age/Roman ditch [205] beneath the colluvium in Test Pit 2, facing north-west

## APPENDIX

### Summary of features

#### *Abbreviations*

P pottery; T roof tile (slate); CP clay pipe

Test pit no.	Context no.	Feature type	Date	Depth below ground level (m)	Finds
1	101	Topsoil	-	0	-
	102	Topsoil 2	-	0.29	-
	103	Colluvium	-	0.57	P
	104 [105]	Modern pit	Modern, 19th century	0.57	P T CP
	106	Natural substrate	-	1.16	-
2	201	Topsoil	-	0	-
	202	Topsoil 2	-	0.30	-
	203	Colluvium	-	0.51	P
	204 [205]	Gully	Undated, possibly Iron Age or Roman	1.06	-
	206	Natural substrate	-	1.06	-
3	301	Topsoil	-	0	-
	302	Colluvium	-	0.48	-
	303	Natural substrate	-	1.12	-