



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological trial trench evaluation  
on land to the north of 40 West Street  
Olney, Buckinghamshire  
December 2011



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE  
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822  
e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council

Edmund Taylor

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**STAFF**

Project Manager Edmund Taylor BSc  
Text Edmund Taylor  
Fieldwork Jason Clarke BSc MA AlFA  
Jonathan Elston BA  
Illustrations Amir Bassir BSc

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Charlotte Walker		
Verified by	Pat Chapman		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>	
Project name	Olney, 40 West Street
Short description	An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology on land to the north of 40 West Street, Olney, Buckinghamshire during December 2011. The work was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new residential dwelling. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during the course of the evaluation.
Project type	Trial Trench Evaluation
Site status	None
Previous work	None
Current land use	Rough ground
Future work	None
Monument type/ period	None
Significant finds	None
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	
County	Buckinghamshire
Site address	40 West Street, Olney
OS Easting & Northing	SP 88847 51744
Area	1000m <sup>2</sup>
Height aOD	50m
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)
Project brief originator	Milton Keynes Council
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Director/Supervisor	Jason Clarke
Project Manager	Ed Taylor
Sponsor or funding body	Mr J Booth
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>	
Start date	13 December 2011
End date	13 December 2011
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	
Archive location	AYBCM: 2011.247
Archive contents	Trial Trench forms (2), Col slides (4) B+C contact sheets and negs (4) digital photos (1 cd)
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	
Title	An archaeological trial trench evaluation on land to the north of 40 West Street, Olney, Buckinghamshire
Serial title & volume	11/268
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION  
ON LAND TO THE NORTH OF 40 WEST STREET  
OLNEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
DECEMBER 2011**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire archaeology on land to the north of 40 West Street, Olney, Buckinghamshire during December 2011. The work was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new residential dwelling. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were encountered during the course of the evaluation.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in December 2011 prior to the construction of a new dwelling on land to the north of 40 West Street, Olney, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 8884751744; Figs 1 and 2). The work was commissioned by Bethune Architects, on behalf of their client Mr Jonathan Booth, in response to a request by Milton Keynes Council's Archaeological Officer for archaeological investigation. The investigation followed an approved specification prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2011) and adhered to the procedural document MoRPHE issued by English Heritage (EH 2006) and the appropriate national standards and guidelines, as recommended by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

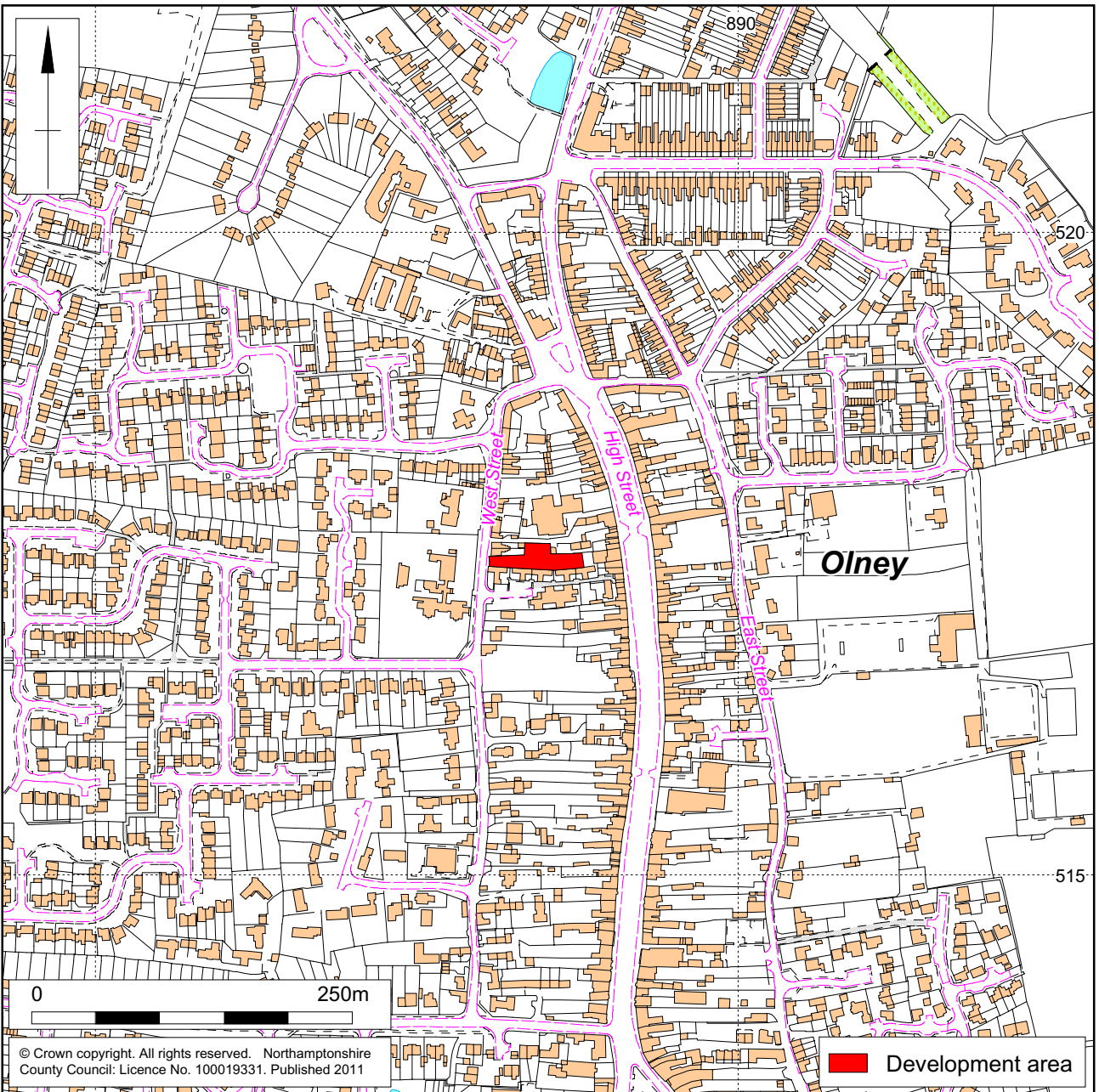
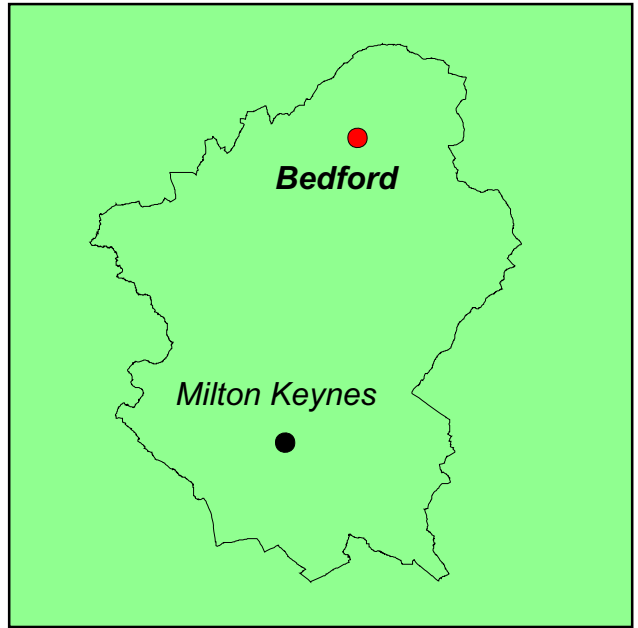
### **2.1 Location and topography**

The development area is located within Olney approximately 16km north-east of Milton Keynes. The site is located to the north of No 40 West Street and extends eastwards, to the rear of the buildings fronting onto Cobb's Garden, at a height of approximately c50m aOD. The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising River Terrace deposits over Oolitic Limestone (BGS 2011).

### **2.2 Historical background**

Little evidence of prehistoric activity has been recorded around Olney. However evidence of Roman-British occupation is well attested with a Romano British settlement identified to the north of the present town, and finds of Roman building material commonly being found within the town itself.

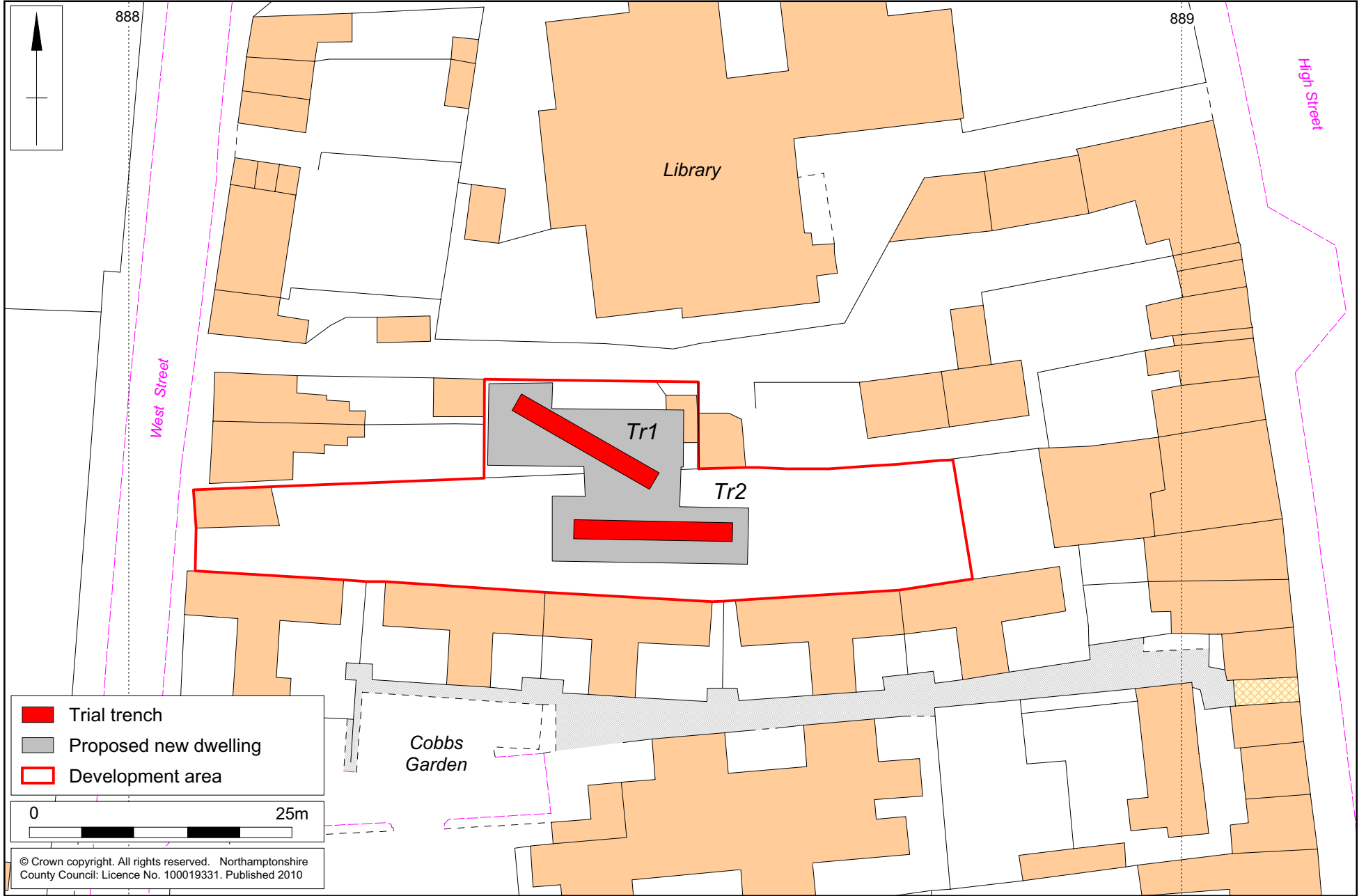
The development area lies within Olney's medieval core in an area thought to be part of a planned extension of probable 13th-century origin. The site occupies the majority of a former burgage plot aligned east to west which originally would have fronted onto High Street and backed onto West Street. Part of the proposed development encroaches on the former burgage plot to the north.



Scale 1:1000

Site location Fig 1

Scale 1:500



Trench locations

Fig 2



Significant medieval and post-medieval remains have been uncovered by recent archaeological investigations at 33 and 51 High Street.

The application area was recently used as a garden nursery and at the time of excavation the application area comprised mostly rough ground with numerous areas of hard standing and two small structures.

### 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- Identify, investigate and record all archaeological deposits, exposed during the trial trenching evaluation;
- Determine and record the date, extent, character, state of preservation and depth of burial of any archaeological deposits;
- To provide information as to the archaeological potential within the site, and to provide for further effective archaeological investigation either in advance of, or during early construction phases;
- Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The trenches were positioned from fixed points using measuring tapes and were excavated, under continuous archaeological supervision, using a JCB type mechanical excavator fitted with a flat toothless bucket. The topsoil and subsoil were stacked separately and adjacent to the trenches. Mechanical excavation proceeded to the top of the archaeological deposits or to the natural substrate where no archaeology was encountered.

Archaeological excavation and recording followed the guidelines outlined in NA's *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2006). Trenches containing possible archaeological remains were cleaned by hand, sufficient to define the features. Each feature or deposit was given a unique number consisting of the trench number and an individual context number (eg 402, Trench 4, context 2). The details of each context were recorded on pro-forma sheets. The trenches were planned (scale 1:50) and section drawings were made at an appropriate scale (1:10 or 1:20) where necessary. Levels, which were related to Ordnance Datum, were taken on the trenches at appropriate points, on section datum and on all major features. Trench locations were related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A photographic record was made of the excavation, using 35mm black and white negative and colour slide film, supplemented by digital images.

The spoil heaps and features were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval. The archive will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC 1992).

All works were carried out in accordance with the specification prepared by NA (2011), the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IfA 1985, revised 2010) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 1994, revised 2008). All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology's Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.





The stratigraphic sequence, Trench 1

Fig 3

#### 4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

The evaluation comprised two 15m trenches located within the footprint of the proposed new dwelling (Figs 2, 4 and 5).

The natural substrate was encountered between 0.45m-0.85m below present ground level and comprised mid-brown sandy clay with gravel patches and light grey clay with chalky flecks. This was overlain by mid-grey sandy clay subsoil, 0.20m-0.50m thick, which contained occasional charcoal flecks and limestone fragments. The overlying topsoil comprised dark grey-black clay loam, 0.25m-0.40m thick (Fig 3).

No archaeological deposits or artefacts were present within the investigation area.

#### 5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Trial Trench Forms	2
Colour slides	4
Black and white contacts and negatives	4
Digital photographs	15



Trench 1, looking north-west



Trench 2, looking east

Fig 4

Fig 5

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The footprint of the proposed dwelling lies in the middle of a medieval burgage plot and also occupies part of the plot to the north. These plots were often cultivated strips of land but may also have contained industrial workshops, stables, out buildings and additional dwellings. Earlier archaeological investigations within Olney and beyond have shown that the intensity and nature of occupation and use of these plots can vary greatly within a settlement (Nick Crank *pers comm*). The current evaluation suggests that the application area lies within in a part of the plot which was not subject to intense activity. The apparent absence of a boundary feature is noteworthy and suggests the two plots may have been separated by a hedge or an insubstantial fence.

The absence of residual artefacts in the topsoil suggests it may have been imported during the site's use as a nursery.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS 2011 <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html> British Geological Survey website

EH 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, MORPHE*, English Heritage Procedural Document

IfA 1985 revised 2010 *Code of conduct*, Institute for Archaeologists

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NA 2006 *Archaeological fieldwork manual*, Northamptonshire Archaeology

NA 2011 *A Specification for an archaeological evaluation on land to the north of 40 West Street Olney, Buckinghamshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology



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