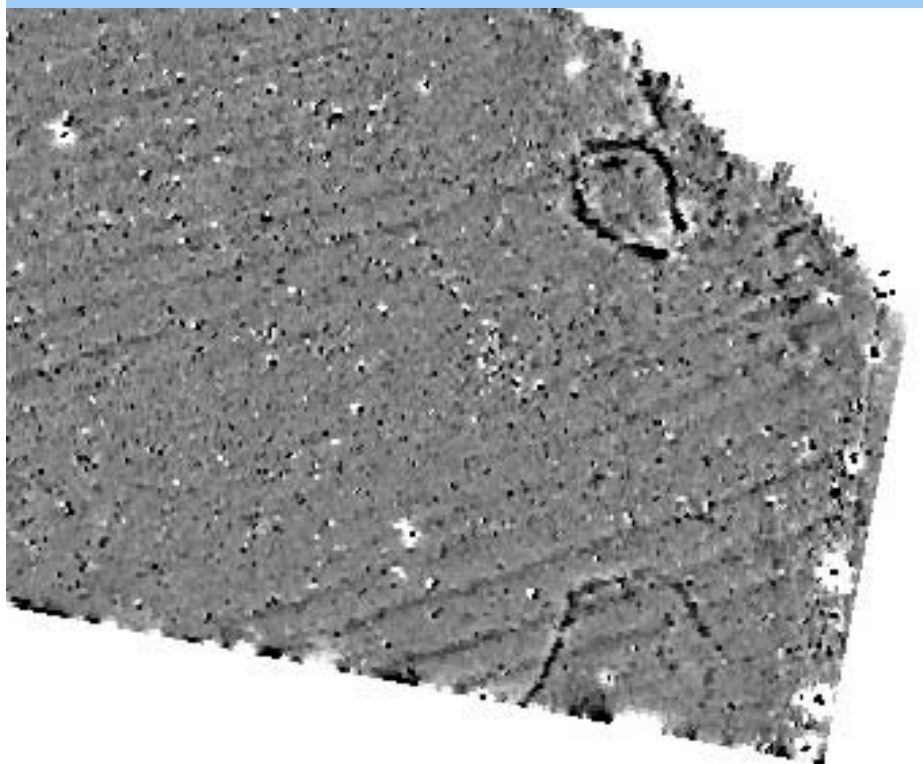




# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological geophysical survey of land at  
Bridge Farm, Shefford, Bedfordshire  
March 2012



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
County Council

Adrian Butler

Report 12/57

April 2012

BEDFM:2012.22



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**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman	<i>PC</i>	
Verified & Approved by	Mark Holmes	<i>MH</i>	

**OASIS**

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological geophysical survey of land at Bridge Farm, Shefford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire March 2012	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out a detailed magnetometer survey on a proposed development site at Bridge Farm, Shefford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire. An area of c 4.8ha was investigated, revealing two separate ditched enclosures at the east of the area. The southernmost enclosure contained a small ring ditch, possibly a roundhouse gully. Another anomaly on the northern boundary of the survey area may be a further roundhouse. The enclosures are likely to relate to cropmark complex HER 11766, to the north-east. Anomalies indicating the medieval ridge and furrow field cultivation system was present over the entire area	
Project type	Geophysical survey	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Desk-Based Assessment (Dawson 2012)	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work	Archaeological Evaluation	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds	Ovoid and polygonal enclosure, date uncertain	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Bedfordshire	
Site address	Bridge Farm, Shefford Road, Shefford,	
Study area	4.8ha	
OS Easting & Northing	TL 145 384	
Height OD	c 41m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Anthony Maull	
Project Manager	Adrian Butler	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting for Bovis Homes	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	26/03/12	
End date	02/04/12	
ARCHIVES		
	Location	Content
Physical	BEDFM:2012.22	N/A
Paper		Site survey records
Digital		Geophysical survey & GIS data
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report	
Title	Archaeological geophysical survey of land at Bridge Farm, Shefford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire, March 2012	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Reports 12/57	
Author(s)	Adrian Butler	
Page numbers	14 pages of text and illustrations	
Date	3rd April 2012	

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY  
OF LAND AT BRIDGE FARM, SHEFFORD ROAD  
SHEFFORD, BEDFORDSHIRE  
MARCH 2012**

**ABSTRACT**

*Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out a detailed magnetometer survey on a proposed development site at Bridge Farm, Shefford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire. An area of c 4.8ha was investigated, revealing two separate ditched enclosures at the east of the area. The southernmost enclosure contained a small ring ditch, possibly a roundhouse gully. Another anomaly on the northern boundary of the survey area may be a further roundhouse. The enclosures are likely to relate to cropmark complex HER 11766, to the north-east. Anomalies indicating the medieval ridge and furrow field cultivation system was present over the entire area*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs Consulting to carry out detailed magnetometer survey on a proposed development site at Bridge Farm, Shefford Road, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The works were undertaken on behalf of Bovis Homes in support of a proposal for development in accordance with *PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2010).

The works formed part of the requirements of the Central Bedfordshire Local Validation Checklist. The site has been allocated for housing in the Central Bedfordshire Site Allocation Development Plan Document. The survey was designed to contribute to an understanding of the possible archaeological impacts of the development. The proposed development site comprises c 4.8ha of land, located on the southern outskirts of Shefford, Bedfordshire centred on NGR TL 145 384 (Fig 1).

## **2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The proposed development area is located on the northern edge of a ridge overlooking a tributary of the River Flit. The survey area comprises a sub-rectangular block of arable land, which slopes gently from south to north. The ridge is composed of Gault mudstone capped by a drift of Diamicton till (Dawson 2012, 9; BGS 2012)

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

A Heritage Assessment encompassing up to 500m around the proposed development site has been undertaken (Dawson 2012) and is briefly discussed below. The evidence from the Central Bedfordshire Historic Environment Records (HER) shows that the proposed development area lies within a rich archaeological landscape. The evidence reflects recent development in the immediate vicinity around the small town of Shefford, allied to evidence from local antiquarians and archaeologists, including Thomas Inskip and David Kennet.

The early prehistoric period is defined by two cropmark complexes; HER 602, possible ring ditches within the grounds of Robert Bloomfield School to the west of the proposed development site and HER 11766, a possible Neolithic enclosure. The topographical location of the proposed development would indicate that the proposed development area had the potential to contain as yet undiscovered early prehistoric archaeology.

Later prehistoric and Roman evidence is known to cluster in the western part of the parish, west of the proposed development site, specifically focussed on the Amphill Road and centred on Robert Bloomfield School and Shefford Lower School. The information indicates the presence of a settlement, the size of which has not yet been determined, the course of a possible Roman road is also known to the west of the site (HER 10480). Antiquarian and recent excavations within the environs of Amphill Road show the settlement was established prior to the Roman conquest and comprised a large ditched enclosure which continued to function throughout the 2nd century until the 3rd century and contained evidence for a possible roundhouse and a later substantial aisled building (Luke, Preece and Wells 2010). Within the margins of the development site itself and extending to the north-east are a series of cropmarks HER 11766 which indicate the remains of a probable Iron Age and Roman settlement, comprising a trapezoidal enclosure with attached smaller curvilinear enclosures. The situation of these

cropmark enclosures on a south-west facing slope above a watercourse is typical of later prehistoric and Roman period settlement and it is likely that the proposed development site will have settlement related remains dating to the later prehistoric or Roman periods.

Shefford probably originates in the late Saxon period. Although there is no mention of Shefford in the Domesday Book, there is a record of a 'Sheep-ford', by which the crossing was known in the early 11th century. It only appears to become a place in its own right, rather than just a river-crossing, in the 12th century. Although no settlement is mentioned here at Domesday it is thought that there was at least one, if not several mills in the area at that time, including a watermill belonging to Walter Gifford, lord of the manor of Campton. This may have been located either on the River Hit at Campton or possibly at Shefford (VCH 1908). It is probable that the proximity of the Gilbertine Priory at Chicksands, 2km to the west, influenced the development of the settlement (Steadman and MacQueen 2003). By 1225, the right to a market was granted. The population of the town, however, remained small until the middle of the 19th century.

The Ordnance Survey maps from 1883 onwards illustrate a lack of development on the site throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with the landscape remaining agricultural. The railway to the north was in place by the publication of the first edition (1883) Ordnance Survey mapping and Bridge Farm was built between 1938 and 1976.

#### **4 METHODOLOGY**

The survey was conducted with Bartington Grad 601-2, twin sensor array, vertical component fluxgate gradiometers (Bartington and Chapman 2003). These are standard instruments for archaeological survey and can resolve magnetic variations as slight as 0.1 nanoTesla (nT).

A tape measure and optical square were used to divide the survey area into a grid of 30m squares, and this grid was tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid with a Leica Systems 1200 dGPS. The gradiometers were carried at a brisk but steady pace through each grid square, collecting data along 1m spaced traverse lines. Measurements were automatically triggered every 0.25m along the traverses, giving a total of 3600 measurements per square.

All fieldwork methods complied with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and by the Institute for Archaeologists and correspond with the Specification produced by NA (EH 2008; IfA 2011; NA 2012).

The survey data was processed using Geoplot 3.00v software. Striping, caused by slight mismatches in sensor balance, was removed using the 'Zero Mean Traverse' function and destaggering of the data was performed as necessary.

The processed data is presented in this report in the form of a grey-tone plot, at a scale of +/- 4nT black/white. The plot has been scaled, rotated and resampled (georectified) for display against the Ordnance Survey base mapping (Fig 2). An interpretative overlay has been produced and is shown in Figure 3.

## **5 SURVEY RESULTS**

The results of the magnetic survey have revealed two sets of positive magnetic anomalies likely to indicate ditched enclosures in the eastern half of the proposed development area (Figs 2 & 3). The enclosure in the north-east of the field is penannular in plan, approximately 20m long, abutting a likely L-shaped ditch, which in turn may cross into the enclosure. The enclosure is of moderate anomaly intensity, which markedly increases either side of a south-east orientated entrance. Such an increase suggests deposits of more highly magnetised material in the ditch terminals, possibly burnt or fired material such deposits from fires, or possibly ceramics.

The other enclosure is situated on the south-eastern boundary of the area and is composed of at least five segments enclosing an area of approximately 30m x 30m, likely to extend to the south of the development. A short, curving positive anomaly, likely to indicate a ring ditch, was detected within the enclosure. The ditch could represent partial remains from a structure such as a roundhouse.

A small, U-shaped positive anomaly was detected in the centre of the northern boundary of the field. This may represent the southern half of a roundhouse, the north having been lost beneath the field boundary.



A linear positive and negative magnetic anomaly was located orientated north to south at the eastern limit of the development area. Regularly spaced intensely magnetic, ferrous, anomalies detected along its length suggest that this was a former boundary, with iron fence posts. The area immediately adjacent to the east of Bridge Farm contained a great deal of magnetically noisy data, indicating likely ceramic debris, such as brick rubble. Ridge and furrow cultivation aligned south-west to north-east was also noted across the entire area of proposed development.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

Magnetometer survey of the proposed development area in the south of Shefford revealed two ditched enclosures which were spaced 60m apart. The larger enclosure to the south is fragmentary, although it is unclear whether this is due to the presence of any entrances into the enclosure. The south-eastern boundary of the penannular-shaped enclosure appears to be defined by two flared terminal ends, indicating an entrance. The ring ditch or roundhouse gully in the northern part of the site may be related to the large, trapezoid-shaped cropmark enclosure to the north-east. The enclosures are likely to relate to cropmark complex HER 11766 which indicates the presence of prehistoric or Roman occupation. Medieval ridge and furrow cultivation pattern was present over the entire area.

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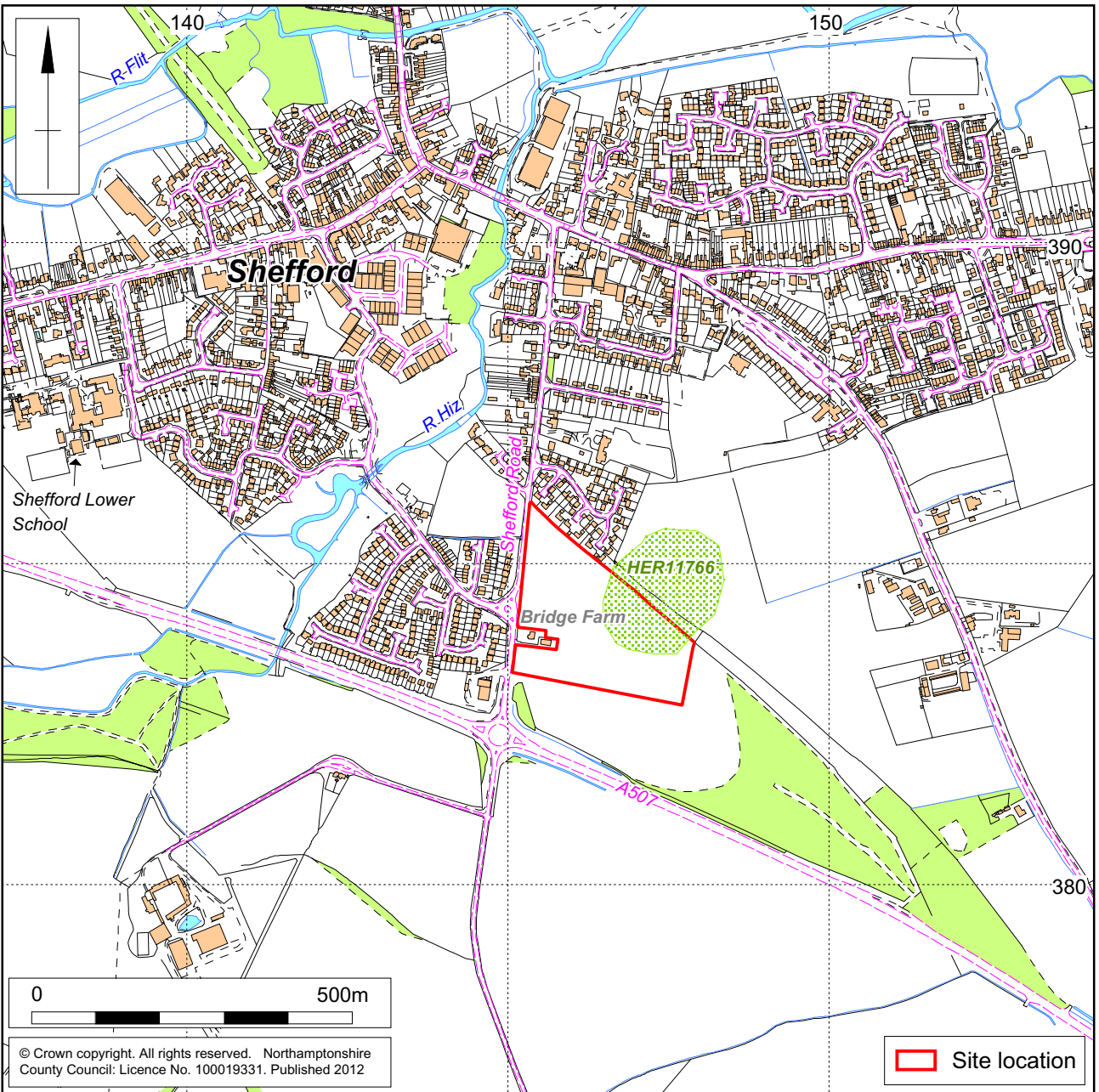
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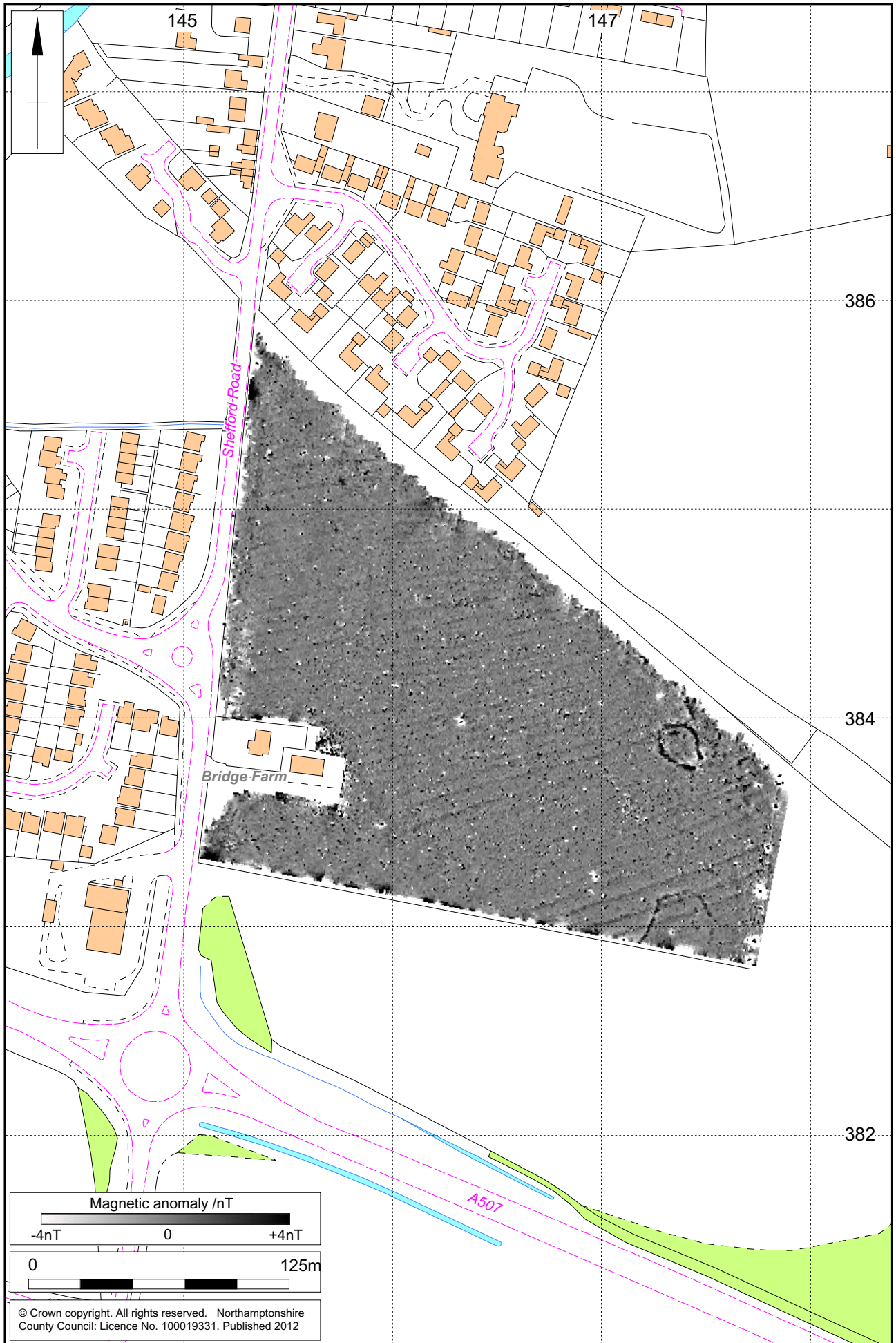
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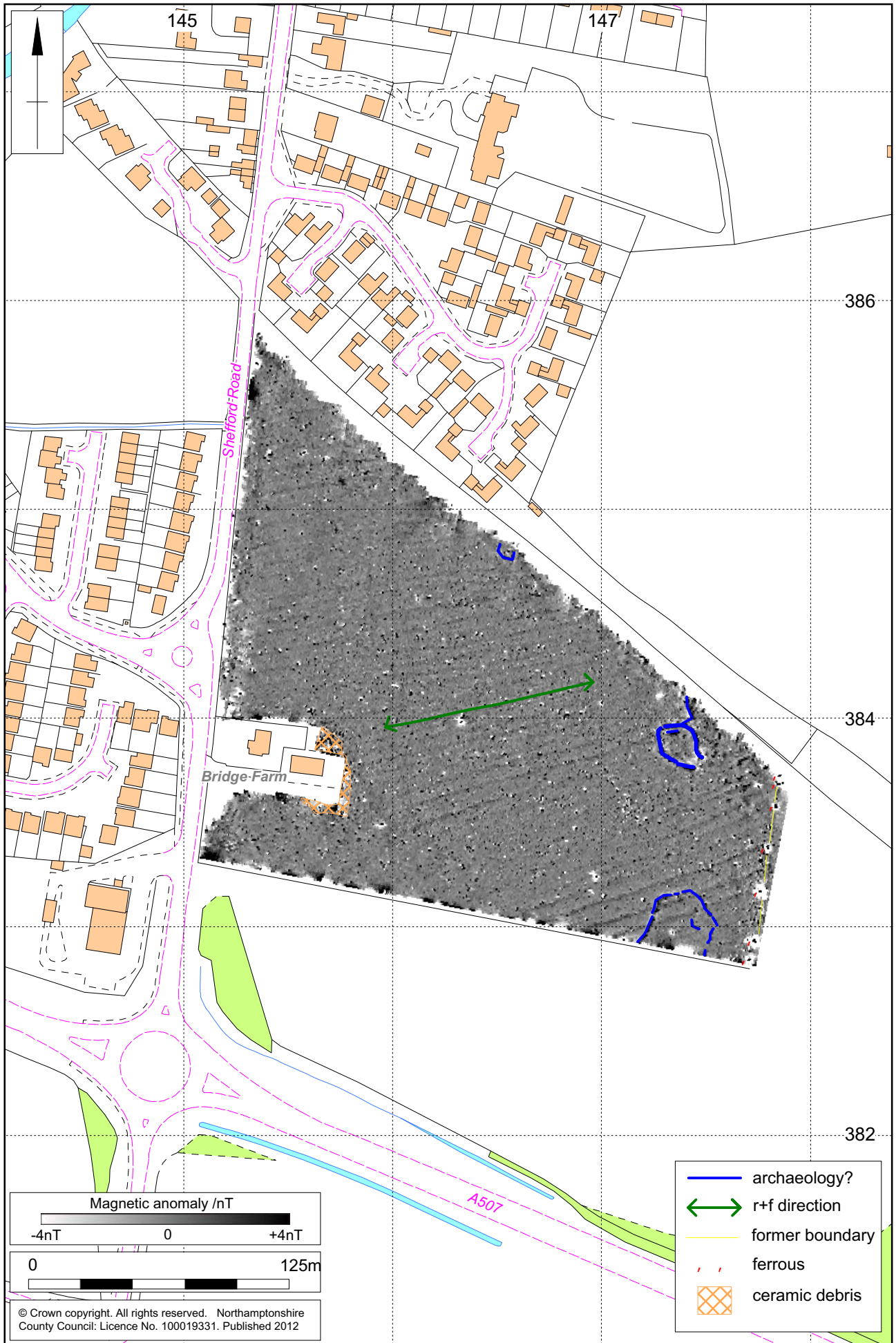
Scale 1:10,000

Site Location Fig 1



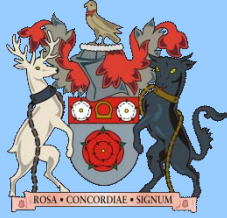
1:2,500

Survey Results Fig 2



1:2,500

Survey Interpretation Fig 3



**Northamptonshire County Council**

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