



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief beside the  
M1 motorway southbound at  
chainage 5850-6600, Leagrave, Luton



## 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

Jim Brown

Report 12/105

June 2012

Accession: LUTNM 2010.67





**STAFF**

Project Manager Jim Brown BSc PGDip MIfA

Text and illustrations Jim Brown

Fieldwork Paul Clements BA

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Anthony Maull		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		



**OASIS REPORT FORM 128071**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	An archaeological watching brief beside the M1 motorway southbound at chainage 5850-6600, Leagrave, Luton	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology beside the M1 motorway southbound at chainage 5850-6600, Leagrave, Bedfordshire. The work observed the cleaning of an existing drainage ditch and excavation of a single trench for the insertion of a vortex separator tank at the base of the motorway embankment. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.	
Project type	Archaeological watching brief	
Site Status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Motorway embankment	
Future work	None	
Monument type and period	None	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Central Bedfordshire	
Site address	M1 motorway southbound, Chainage 5850-6600, Leagrave	
Post code	None	
OS co-ordinates	TL 05196 23488	
Area (sq m/ha)	25 sq m (5m by 5m)	
Height	c122.5m above Ordnance Datum	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council	
Project Design originator	Iain Williamson, URS	
Director/Supervisor	Paul Clements, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Costain and Carillion Joint Venture, acting for the Highways Agency	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	29/3/12	
End date	30/3/12	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Physical	Luton Museum LUTNM 2010.67	No finds
Paper		Watching brief record sheets, engineering plans, photographic register and background notes
Digital		Client PDF and digital photographs
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)
Title	An archaeological watching brief beside the M1 motorway southbound at chainage 5850-6600, Leagrave, Luton	
Serial title & volume	12/105	
Author(s)	Jim Brown	
Page numbers	7	
Date	June 2012	



# Contents

- 1 INTRODUCTION
  
- 2 BACKGROUND
  - 2.1 Archaeological background
  - 2.2 Topography and geology
  
- 3 FIELDWORK STRATEGY
  - 3.1 Objectives
  - 3.2 Methodology
  
- 4 THE WATCHING BRIEF
  
- 5 SUMMARY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Tables

Table 1: Historic Environment Record data

### Figures

Front cover: Engineers shoring the trench sides, looking north

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Extent of the engineering works

Fig 3: Drainage ditch, cleaned and concreted, looking north

Fig 4: Layers above the chalk within the vortex separator trench, looking west

Back cover: Ground level compared with the school field, looking north-east

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF BESIDE THE  
M1 MOTORWAY SOUTHBOUND AT CHAINAGE 5850-6600  
LEAGRAVE, LUTON**

**MARCH 2012**

*Abstract*

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology beside the M1 motorway southbound at chainage 5850-6600, Leagrave, Bedfordshire. The work observed the cleaning of an existing drainage ditch and excavation of a single trench for the insertion of a vortex separator tank at the base of the motorway embankment. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology beside the M1 motorway southbound at chainage 5850-6600, Leagrave, Bedfordshire for URS on behalf of the principal contractors Costain and Carillion Joint Venture, acting for the Highways Agency (NGR: TL 05196 23488; Fig 1). The engineering work encompassed a 63m length of existing drainage ditch and a 5m by 5m trench for a new vortex separator that connects to an existing M1 surface water drainage outfall tank and culvert. The archaeological watching brief forms part of an ongoing scheme of works for the M1 improvements as a whole. The work followed a Written Scheme of Investigation as part of this larger archaeological mitigation design, which was approved by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeological Officer prior to the commencement of the M1 improvement scheme (Highways Agency 2011).

Northamptonshire Archaeology is an Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Registered Organisation (RAO48). All work was undertaken in accordance with current best archaeological practice as defined in the Institute for Archaeologists *Code of Conduct* (IfA 2010), *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), and the procedural documents of English Heritage (EH 1991; 1997; 2002; 2009).

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Archaeological background**

There are six references listed in the Central Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record that are located within 250m radius of the vortex separator trench (Fig 1). These are summarised in Table 1.

A Roman coin was found to the east, which is a low denomination copper alloy coin of Constantine I, 274-337 AD showing Sol standing and holding a globe (HER15277). On the opposite side of the motorway, to the north-west, there was a Roman inhumation burial of a child found in a gravel pit in 1934, associated with three sherds of pottery, excavated by Manshead Archaeological Society (HER1984).

Map evidence suggests that the M1 motorway embankment overlies the site of a medieval manor, c160m to the north-west (HER12378). Domesday Book also records a watermill in close proximity (HER10817). A rectangular waterfilled moat is shown on



an estate map of 1795 and three sides of the waterfilled moat also appear beside the river shown on a map of 1842.

To the west of the motorway lay the manor of Lewsey (HER12380), and a map of 1795 shows the estate surrounding a complex of buildings with a courtyard on the site of the former Lewsey Farm, demolished prior to 1960.

The 19th-century building of the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, constructed c1800, is also recorded along the High Street nearby (HER12398).

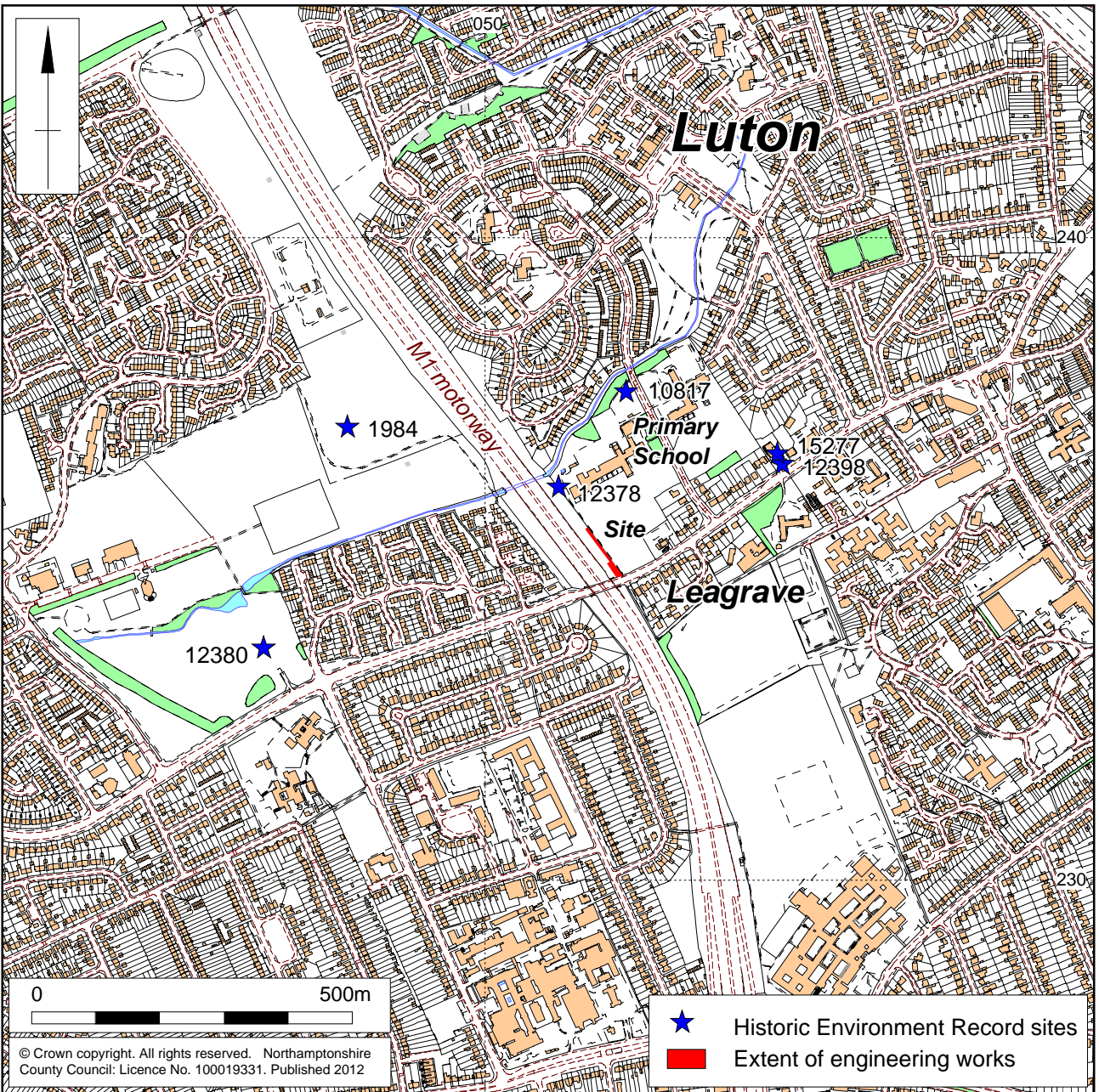
*Table 1: Historic Environment Record data*

Period	Description	HER reference	Source
Roman	inhumation	1984	Manshead Archaeological Society, Luton Museum, Accession 170/54/1-4
Roman	coin	15277	Bibliographic reference, Bedfordshire Archaeology
medieval	moat	12378	Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS), R1/53 estate map
medieval	watermill (site of)	10817	Bedford Museum, map
post-medieval	manor (site of)	12380	BLARS, R1/53 estate map
post-medieval	chapel	12398	BLARS, AT and MAT 301/ tithe award and map

## 2.2 Topography and geology

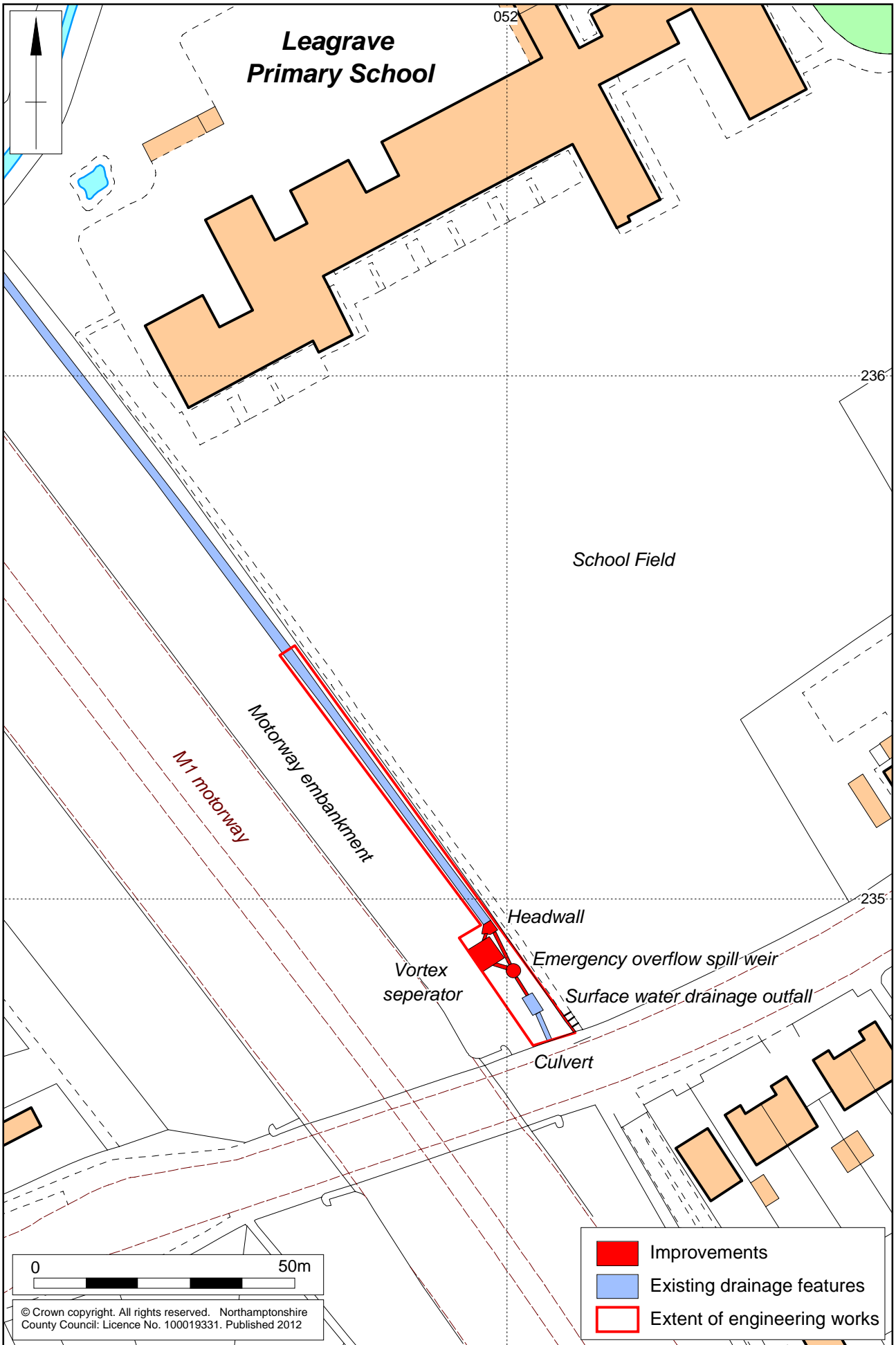
The site comprises an 83m long stretch of motorway embankment which was covered by semi-mature trees and scrub vegetation prior to the works (Fig 1). The embankment lies on the east (southbound) side of the motorway and borders the Leagrave Primary School field at chainage 5850-6600. The perimeter was previously bounded by a hedgerow and trees.

The underlying geology is Cretaceous Chalk (BGS 2001). The soil belongs to the Swaffham Prior soil association comprising well drained calcareous coarse and fine loamy soils over chalk rubble, prone to erosion (LAT 1983).



Scale 1:10,000

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:1,000

Extent of the engineering works Fig 2

### 3 FIELDWORK STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Objectives

The main aim of the investigation was to determine if archaeological features or deposits were present, and to record these if they were encountered by the development.

If remains were present, then the specific objectives of the project were to determine their location, extent, date and degree of preservation, and to define the sequence and character of activities encountered. The work would then interpret this evidence within its local, regional and national contexts, advised by the research aims laid out in the regional research frameworks for the eastern counties (Glazebrook 1997; Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Oake *et al* 2007; Medleycott and Brown 2008) and the English Heritage research agenda (EH 1997).

#### 3.2 Methodology

Archaeological attendance, observation, investigation and recording was conducted during the mechanical excavation of the engineering works and prior to construction of the vortex separator (Fig 2). The topsoil and subsoil above the vortex separator pit was removed under archaeological observation. Excavation took place using a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, to reveal significant archaeological remains or, where these were absent, the natural substrate. The existing drainage ditch along the base of the embankment was cleaned out and reinstated over a distance of 162m.

The site location, area and extent was recorded in relation to the Ordnance Survey using engineering plans and fixed boundaries. Spot heights were taken from the engineering survey and recorded in relation to Ordnance Datum.

Digital photographs were taken, supplemented with 35mm monochrome negatives, and colour transparencies for archive purposes. The photographic record is accompanied by *pro forma* watching brief record sheets that contain notes on the areas of investigation (NA 2011). All photographs and paper archive records have been compiled in accordance with recognised museum practise (Walker 1990, IfA 2008) and the requirements of Luton Museum (BLM 2008).

### 4 THE WATCHING BRIEF

The embankment sloped between 122.50-129.12m above Ordnance Datum. The drainage ditch and vortex separator trench lay at the base of this slope. The trench was square, 5m by 5m, and a total of 5.20m deep. The drainage ditch was 1.50m wide by 0.45m deep (Fig 3). Dredging of the existing drainage ditch did not expose archaeological deposits, and it was subsequently lined with concrete.

During excavation of the vortex separator trench the Cretaceous Chalk substrate was observed at c1.2m depth. Immediately on top of the chalk was taram sheeting overlain by a jumble of scrap metal (Fig 4). This was overlain by variations of compact pinkish-red sandy clay gravel, comprising M1 embankment material, c0.80m thick. Light greyish-brown clay loam topsoil lay at the surface, c0.30mm thick.



Drainage ditch, cleaned and concreted, looking north Fig 3



Layers above the chalk within the vortex separator trench, looking west Fig 4

## 5 SUMMARY

No features or deposits of antiquity were present. A sequence of modern make up layers were observed, comprising modern embankment materials in the top 1.0m, and natural chalk bedrock lay at the base of the trench (Fig 4).

Whilst remains of a medieval moated manor may be noted on map evidence, overlain by the motorway embankment c160m to the north-west, this small intervention did not provide evidence for archaeological remains of any period.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BGS 2001 *Solid Geology Map, UK South Sheet, Scale 1:625 000*, British Geological Survey
- BLM 2008 *Procedure for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with registered museums in Bedfordshire*, Bedford & Luton Museums
- Brown, N, and Glazebrook, J, 2000 *Research and Archaeology, A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 2, Research Agenda and Strategy*, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Paper, **8**
- EH 1991 *Management of archaeological projects*, second edition (MAP2), English Heritage
- EH 1997 *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda*, English Heritage
- EH 2009 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment and MoRPHE Project Planning*, English Heritage
- Glazebrook, J, 1997 *Research and Archaeology, A Framework for the Eastern Counties: 1, Resource Assessment*, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Paper, **3**
- Gurney, D, 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeol, Occasional Paper, **14**
- Highways Agency 2011 *M1 Junctions 11 and 12 Improvements, Junction 12: Written Scheme of Investigation for Detailed Archaeological Excavation, Targeted Watching Brief, Historic Hedgerow Recording and Historic Building Recording*, Report **D123846/5/5/04**
- IfA 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists
- IfA 2010 *Code of Conduct*, Institute for Archaeologists
- LAT 1983 *Soils of Southern England and Wales*, **4**, Scale 1:250 000, Lawes Agricultural Trust
- Medleycott, M, and Brown, N, 2008 *Revision of the Regional Archaeological Framework for the Eastern Region*, Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
- NA 2011 *Archaeological fieldwork manual*, Northamptonshire Archaeology
- Oake, M, Luke, M, Dawson, M, Edgeworth, M, and Murphy, P, 2007 *Bedfordshire Archaeology Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* Bedfordshire Archaeology monog, **9**
- Walker, K, 1990 *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage*, United Kingdom Institute for Conservation



Northamptonshire County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology



**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)

