

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological evaluation at  
Marriotts Close, Witney  
Oxfordshire  
October 2006



Adrian Burrow  
October 2006

Report 06/155

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**NOVEMBER 2006**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**  
**AT MARRIOTT'S CLOSE, WITNEY**  
**OXFORDSHIRE**  
**OCTOBER 2006**  
**06/155**

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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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Approved by			

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## OASIS REPORT FORM

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project title	An Archaeological Evaluation at Marriott's Close, Witney, Oxfordshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Marriotts Close, Witney on land proposed for residential and commercial development. The only archaeological remains present were two parallel ditches which most likely related to tenement plots fronting onto the High Street, dating from the late medieval period.	
Project type	Field Evaluation (Site Code: MCW06)	
Previous work	Desk based, archaeological assessment, Under Construction Archaeology 2005	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type And period		
Significant finds (artefact type and period)	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Oxfordshire	
Site address (including postcode)	Marriott's Close, Witney, Oxfordshire	
Easting	4354	
Northing	2100	
Height OD	c80 OD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Hugh Coddington, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service	
Project Design originator	NA for Under Construction Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Adrian Burrow	
Project Manager	Tony Walsh (NA), David Hunter (UCA)	
Sponsor or funding body	Simons Developments Limited	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	October 2006	
End date	October 2006	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>		
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	OXCMS:2006.128	Animal bone
Paper		
Digital		
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title	An Archaeological Evaluation at Marriott's Close, Witney, Oxfordshire	
Serial title & volume	NA 06/155	
Author(s)	A Burrow	
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Date	November 2006	

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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**  
**AT MARRIOTT'S CLOSE, WITNEY**  
**OXFORDSHIRE**  
**OCTOBER 2006**

*ABSTRACT*

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out in October 2006 by Northamptonshire Archaeology, for Under Construction Archaeology at Marriotts Close, Witney (NGR: SP 4354 2100) on land proposed for residential and commercial development (Planning Application No 06/1158/P/OP).*

*Two undated parallel ditches, approximately one traditional chain apart, were found in Trench 2. These were probably boundaries of medieval tenement plots fronting on High Street, possibly extending west to Puck Lane.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Planning Permission is being sought from West Oxfordshire District Council to redevelop the former Highway Depot and Marriott's Close area at Witney, Oxfordshire (NGR: SP 4354 2100, Planning Application No 06/1158/P/OP for residential and commercial purposes and associated infrastructure and landscaping (Fig 1). Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by Under Construction Archaeology (UCA) to carry out an archaeological evaluation on behalf of their clients Simons Development Limited. The requirements of the evaluation are set out in a Brief prepared by the Deputy County Archaeologist for Oxfordshire (Coddington 2006).

**1.1 Aims and Objectives**

The main objective of the archaeological evaluation (as stated in the project design, NA 2006, section 2.1) was:

*'to determine the nature and extent of the archaeological resource, to assess the impact of the development upon it and to inform future works that may be required to manage an mitigate this impact.'*

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Topography and Geology**

The development area is located to the northeast of the historic core of Witney, Oxfordshire. It lies to the north of Welch Way and is bounded to the north by Mill Street, vacant mill buildings and modern development, to the west by Witney Community Hospital and to the east by the rear boundaries of properties fronting onto High Street. It occupies an area of approximately 4.33ha. The geology comprises Cornbrash limestone overlain by alluvium ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex)).

### **2.2 Archaeological Background**

The archaeological background is described in detail in a desk-based assessment (Under Construction Archaeology 2005) which found that although there was no direct evidence of archaeological remains in the development area, there was the potential for previously unknown remains to be present, particularly relating to the medieval new town; established in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and later post-medieval property divisions.

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

A total of 3 hand dug test pits and 4 machine dug trial trenches were excavated in the development area, totalling 177m<sup>2</sup> (Fig 2).

The three test pits (1a, 1b and 1c) were positioned within the walled plot of Wilkinson's Close on the north of the development area, and each measured 3m by 3m. Due to restricted access these were hand dug.

Two trenches (2 and 6) were excavated in the Marriott's Close football pitch and two (5 and 7) were positioned in the overflow car park to the north and west of the Close. These were positioned on the gravel hard standing rather than the tarmac to lessen traffic disruption and allow for ease of backfilling (Plate 4). All the trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision, using a JCB 3CX with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching blade.

All potential archaeological features were examined by hand excavation whilst standard Northamptonshire Archaeology recording procedures were employed. Contexts were recorded on pro-forma sheets with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature (Tabulated context descriptions are given in Appendix 1). Trenches containing archaeology were planned at 1:100 while all sections were recorded

at 1:10. Levels were taken in all trenches and related to Ordnance Survey Datum.

All works were carried out in accordance with the *IFA Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (1994, revised 1999) and the *Code of Conduct* of the Institute of Field Archaeologist (1985, revised 2000).

All procedures complied with the Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines (NA 2003). Archaeological works were monitored by David Hunter (Under Construction Archaeology) and Hugh Coddington (Oxfordshire County Council).

## **4 THE EVALUATION EVIDENCE**

### **4.1 Test Pits**

No archaeology was present in any of the test pits.

The general stratigraphic sequence recorded within the three test pits in Wilkinson's Close was as the same. The natural substrate (03) (Plate 1) comprised solid cornbrash limestone at an elevation of approximately 82m above ordnance datum. This was overlain by the subsoil (02) a greyish brown silty clay, which contained frequent small limestone fragments, rounded pebbles and considerable amounts of modern ceramic, glass, bone and brick fragments. The subsoil was 0.12-0.2m thick. Above this was topsoil (01), comprising of a dark brown clay loam containing frequent small pebbles and very small limestone pieces, up to 0.2m thick. Large quantities of modern material were also present in this layer.

### **4.2 Trench 2**

Located on the eastern side of Marriotts Close football pitch, this trench was 30m long and aligned north to south (Fig 3). The natural geology (204) was light orange and grey sand and gravels at an average depth of 0.8m, at 78.9m AOD. Overlying the gravel (204) was a 0.4-0.6m thick alluvial deposit (203) of mottled orange and grey clayey silt containing moderate amounts of manganese flecking and pea gravel.

Cut into the alluvium (203) and crossing the trench on a roughly east-west alignment were two parallel ditches [206] and [208]. Ditch [206] (Fig 3, section 1; Plate 3) had a steep, slightly concave sides with a flat base, measuring 0.87m wide by 0.42m deep. It was filled by (205) compact orangey brown clayey silt with frequent small limestone fragments and moderate quantities of small charcoal pieces. One large limestone slab



was present on the very base of the ditch.

Ditch [208] (Fig 3, section 2; Plate 2) had a broad flattened U-shaped profile. It measured 1.5m wide and 0.5m deep. The lower fill (209) comprised of a firm orange and grey clayey silt 0.25m thick containing frequent inclusions of gravels, limestone pieces and charcoal flecks. One very large limestone slab was lying horizontally within this fill whilst several other flat limestone slabs were slumped down both edges suggesting a deliberate placement. The upper fill (207) was 0.25m thick, firm brown and orange silty clay with moderate gravel inclusion. Animal bone, probably sheep or pig, were recovered from this fill.

Overlying the fill of the ditches was subsoil (202) a mid brown sandy silt, 0.3-0.4m thick, which contained moderate quantities of small limestone pieces and charcoal flecks. Topsoil (201) was a friable dark brown sandy silt layer 0.2m thick. Large amounts of modern waste material such as ceramics, brick fragments and pieces of metal were found in both the subsoil and the topsoil.

### **4.3 Trench 5**

No archaeology was present in this trench.

This trench was positioned within a gravel car parking bay to the west of Marriotts Close. It measured 30m long and was aligned north-northeast to south-southwest. The stratigraphic sequence in this trench mirrored that found in Trench 2. The natural gravels (504) were revealed at 79m AOD. This was overlaid by an alluvial layer (503) of orange and grey clayey silt, 0.45m thick. Above this was the subsoil (502), 0.13m thick. The subsoil had been partially truncated by construction for the car park, being replaced by a bedding layer of Grade 1 gravels which measured 0.3m thick. No topsoil remained, having been removed during the car park construction.

### **4.4 Trench 6**

No archaeology was present in this trench.

Located on the west side of Marriotts Close football pitch, this trench measured 20m in length and was aligned east to west. The stratigraphic sequence was identical to that in trench 2 to the east. The gravel layer (604) was at a depth of 0.82m in this trench, overlaid by layer (603) the alluvial clayey silt which was 0.46m thick. Above this was the subsoil (602), 0.18m thick. Topsoil (601) measured 0.16m thick. Modern waste material was recovered from both subsoil and topsoil.

#### 4.5 Trench 7

No archaeology was present in this trench.

Positioned on gravel hard standing on the extreme north of the overflow car park this trench was 20m long and aligned east to west. The undisturbed natural geology (706) was yellow and white limestone and gravels, revealed at 1.2m below ground level, at an elevation of 79.2m AOD. Overlaying (706) was the ubiquitous alluvial clay silt layer (705), measuring 0.3m thick. Above this was (704), a firm mid brown deposit of sandy silt 0.45m thick. This was a modern deposit, containing brick fragments, which was interpreted as a make up layer, to raise the car park area above that of the football pitch to the south. Cut from the top of this deposit was a large pipe trench which crossed Trench 7 at an angle and joined a concrete culvert projecting slightly out of the northern bank.

Sealing (704) was (703), a mixed layer of broken black tarmac material and yellow sand, gravel and mortar 0.2m thick. This was probably material from the original car park surface. Above this, a highly compacted layer of yellow gravel and mortar (702) served as the bedding layer, 50mm thick, for the Grade1 gravel hard standing of the current car park surface (701). At only 50mm, this was much thinner than the same deposit in Trench 5.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The evaluation revealed limited evidence for past land use on the site.

Two parallel ditches c19m apart were found in Trench 2, a spacing of approximately one traditional chain (=20.1m). Although these were undated, they were probably boundaries of medieval tenement plots fronting on High Street, possibly extending west to Puck Lane.

The results of the evaluation indicate that the area of the football pitch and car park are located on the low lying alluvial flood plain of the river Windrush, whereas Wilkinson's Close is situated on a higher outcrop of cornbrash limestone. The fall in height of 3m was clear between the test pits in Wilkinson's Close (82m AOD) and Trench 7 (79m AOD) 20m to the south. It also appears that in the overflow car park area north of the football pitch modern material has been deposited, raising the ground level.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Northamptonshire Archaeology

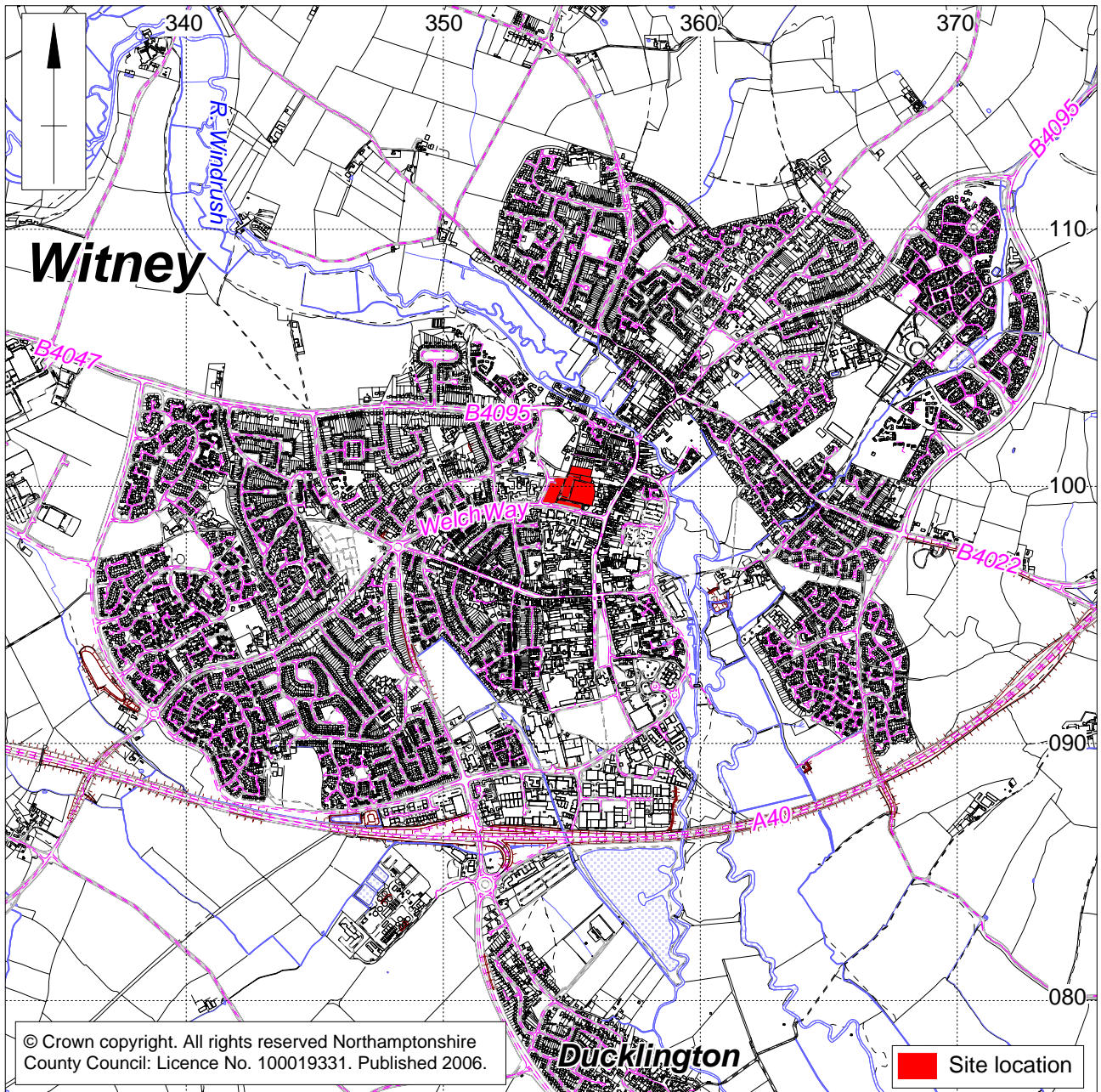
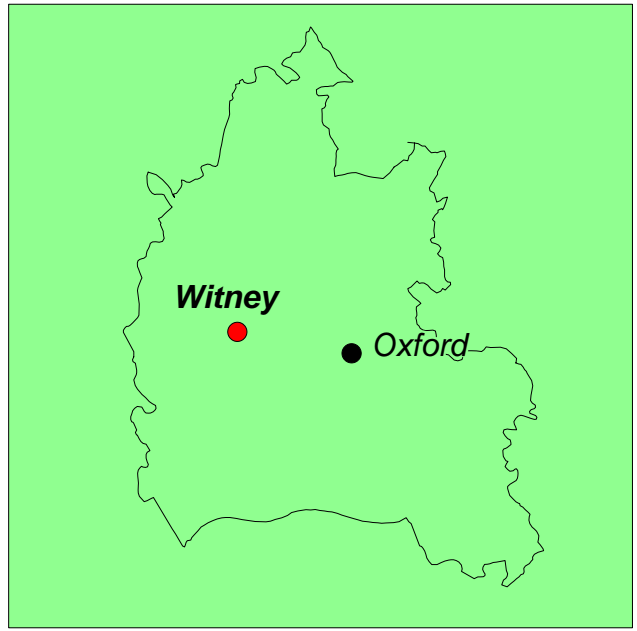
Northamptonshire County Council

October 2006

APPENDIX A1: SITE DATA

Test Pit No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
1a	01	Layer	Topsoil, dark brown friable clay loam 0.2m thick containing frequent small pebbles and very small limestone pieces.	Ceramic, glass
	02	Layer	Subsoil, greyish brown silty clay 0.12-0.2m thick. containing frequent small limestone fragments, rounded pebbles	Ceramic, glass, bone and brick fragments.
	03	Layer	Natural Cornbrash Limestone	
1b	01	Layer	Topsoil, dark brown friable clay loam 0.2m thick containing frequent small pebbles and very small limestone pieces.	Ceramic, bone, glass
	02	Layer	Subsoil, greyish brown silty clay 0.16m thick. containing frequent small limestone fragments, rounded pebbles	Ceramic, bone and brick fragments.
	03	Fill	Natural Cornbrash Limestone	
1c	01	Layer	Topsoil, dark brown friable clay loam 0.24m thick containing frequent small pebbles and very small limestone pieces.	Ceramic, glass, brick
	02	Layer	Subsoil, greyish brown silty clay 0.18m thick containing frequent small limestone fragments, rounded pebbles	Ceramic, glass, bone and brick fragments.
	03	Layer	Natural Cornbrash Limestone	
Trench No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact type
2	201	Layer	Topsoil, friable dark brown sandy silt 0.2m thick, frequent gravel and small pebble inclusion	Brick, ceramic, glass
	202	Layer	Subsoil, soft mid brown silt 0.25m thick frequent gravel, small pebble and charcoal inclusion	Ceramic, metal pieces, glass
	203	Layer	Alluvial deposit, firm mottled grey/orange clayey silt with manganese nodes and fine gravel, 0.2-0.4m thick	
	204	Layer	Natural gravels, light orange/grey	
	205	Fill	Fill of [206], firm orangey brown silty clay with charcoal flecking and moderate small limestone fragments, several large limestone pieces, 0.42m deep	Bone
	206	Cut	Ditch aligned east to west. Steep, slightly concave profile with flat base, 0.87m wide x 0.42m deep	

Test Pit No	Context	Deposit Type	Description	Artefact types
	207	Fill	Upper fill of [208]. Firm brown/orange silty clay with moderate small gravel inclusion, 0.25m thick	Bone
	208	Cut	Ditch aligned east to west. Broad, irregular concave profile with slight channel at the base, 1.5m wide x 0.5m deep	
	209	Fill	Lower fill of [208]. Firm orange/grey clayey silt with frequent gravel and charcoal flecks, several large limestone slabs, 0.25m thick	Bone
5	501	Layer	Hardcore gravel layer for car park bay surface, 0.3m thick	
	502	Layer	Subsoil, greyish brown silty clay with gravel inclusion, partially truncated by (01), 0.13m thick	Ceramic
	503	Layer	Alluvial deposit, firm mottled grey/orange clayey silt with manganese nodes, fine gravel, 0.45m thick	
	504	Layer	Natural sand and gravel, yellow and grey	
6	601	Layer	Topsoil, same as (201), 0.2m thick	Ceramic, bone, brick, glass
	602	Layer	Subsoil, same as (202), 0.18-9.2m thick	Ceramic, glass
	603	Layer	Alluvial deposit, same as (203), 0.46m thick	
	604	Layer	Natural sand and gravels	
7	701	Layer	Hardcore gravel layer for car park surface, 50mm thick	
	702	Layer	Yellow gravel, sand and mortar bedding layer for (01), 50mm thick	
	703	Layer	Mixed broken tarmac and gravel/mortar layer, limestone pieces and concrete inclusion, 0.2m thick	
	704	Layer	Dark grey brown clayey silt with charcoal and limestone inclusion, 0.45m thick	Ceramic
	705	Layer	Alluvial deposit, mid orange brown silty clay, 0.25m thick	
	706	Layer	Natural cornbrash limestone and gravel	

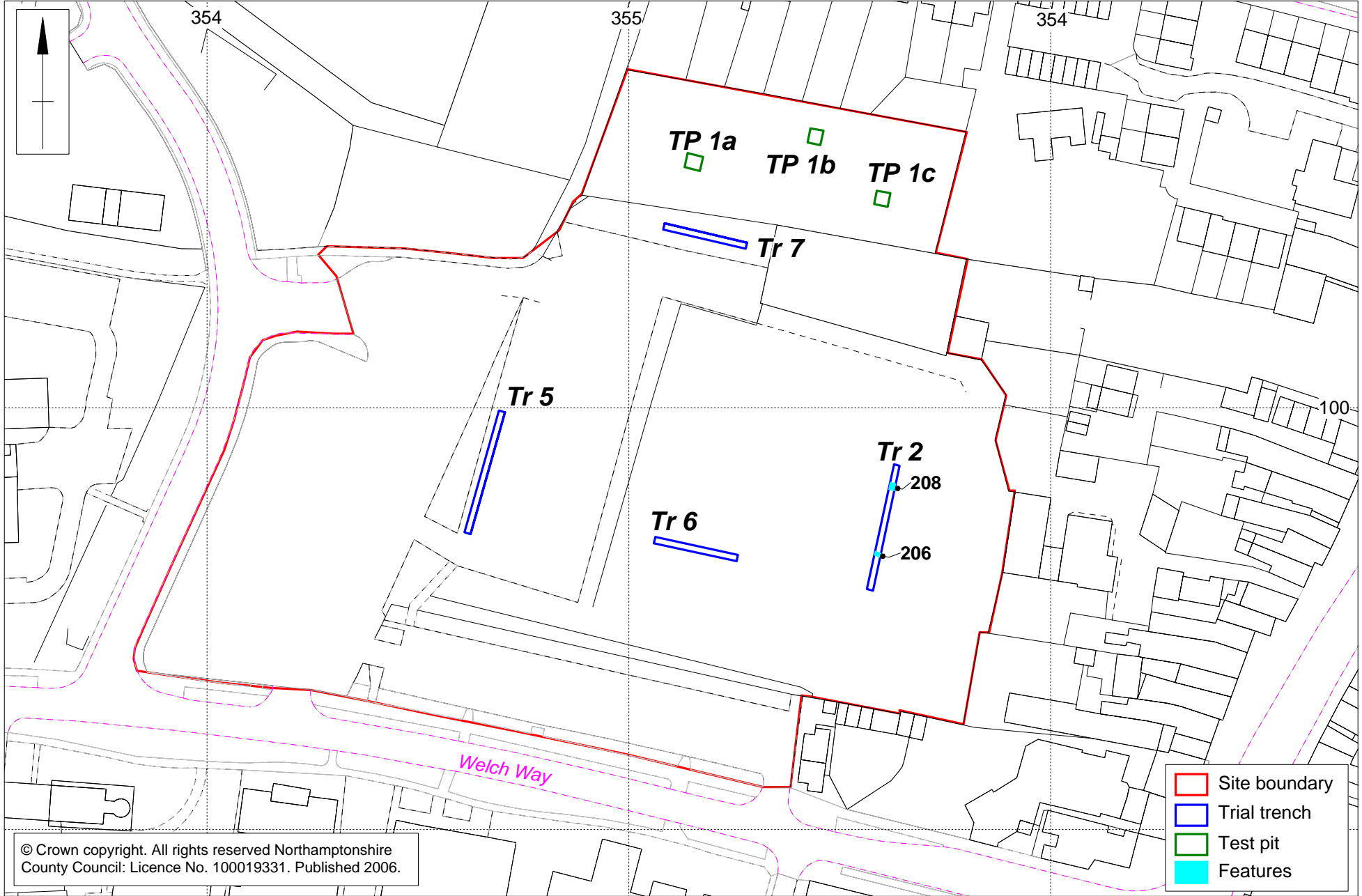


Scale 1:30,000

Site location Fig 1

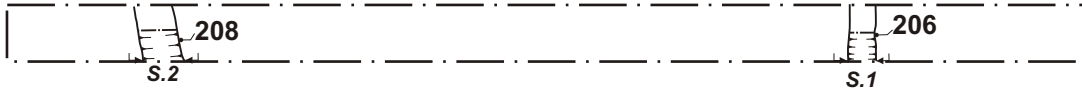
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Trench and Test Pit location Fig 2

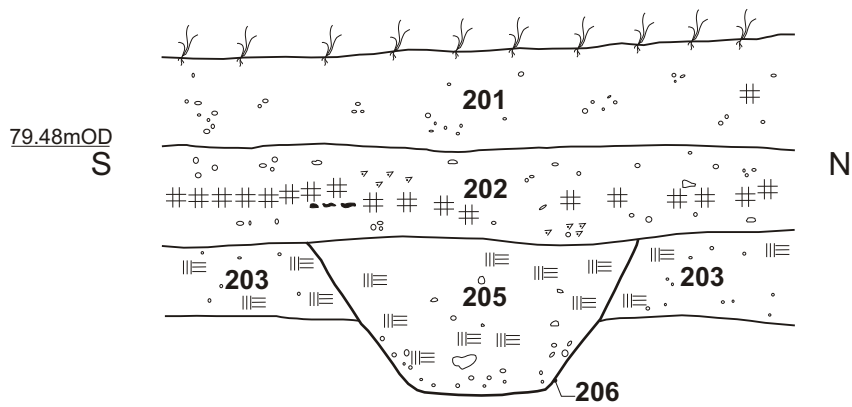


- Site boundary
- Trial trench
- Test pit
- Features

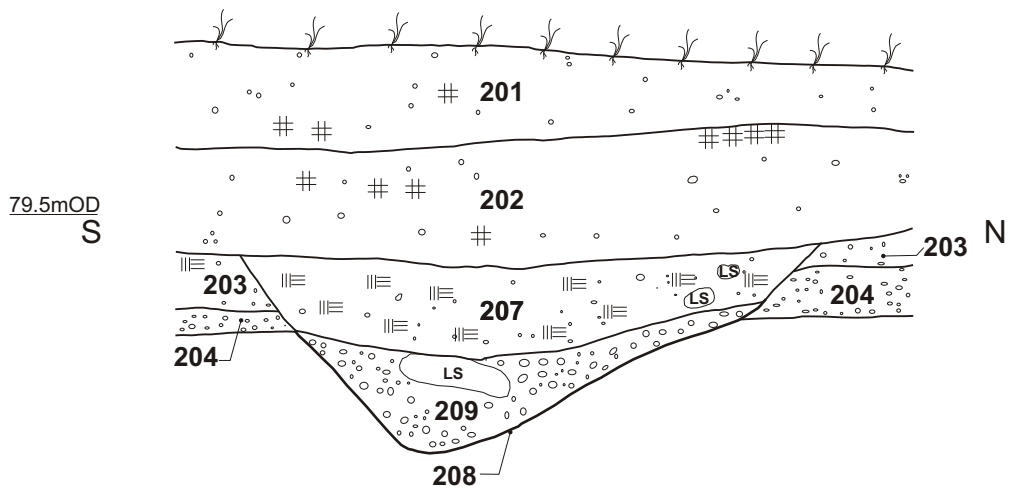
# Trench 2








## Section 1 - Trench 2



## Section 2 - Trench 2



-  Mortar
-  Charcoal
-  Bone
-  Limestone
-  Clay



Trench 2 Plan and Sections 1-2 Fig 3





Plate 1: Test Pit 1b looking NE



Plate 2: Trench 2, ditch [208] looking West



Plate 3: Trench 2, ditch [206] looking NW



Plate 4: Backfilling Trench 5