



Northamptonshire  
County Council

# Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief at the  
Market Place, Kettering  
Northamptonshire

August 2008



Jim Brown

September 2008

Report 08/145

## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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**QUALITY CONTROL**

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Approved by	Andy Chapman		

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief at the Market Place, Kettering, Northamptonshire, August 2008	
Short description (250 words maximum)	Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief at the Market Place, Kettering in Northamptonshire during August 2008 at the time of geotechnical test pit excavation conducted in advance of its rejuvenation. Remains of late post-medieval structures were observed in two of the three pits located under the car park at the southern end of the site and relate to the former properties demolished c1926-1950. The features that were identified comprised an ironstone cellar wall, a brick-lined pit and an ironstone wall footing. No other archaeology was observed and no finds were retained.	
Project type	Watching brief	
Site status	None	
Previous work	Desk-based study (Mason 2008)	
Current Land use	Market square and civil amenities	
Future work	Unlikely	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Market Place, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN16 0AL	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	2970 sq m	
OS Easting and Northing	centred on 4866 2784	
Height OD	c85-88m above Ordnance Datum	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originators	Dan Windwood, Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Jim Brown, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	Alan Baxter Integrated Design	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	August 2008	
End date	September 2008	
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Accession no.</b>	<b>Contents</b>
Physical		None
Paper		Watching brief record, photographic record, client report
Digital		Client report PDF, mapinfo files
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	An archaeological watching brief at the Market Place, Kettering, Northamptonshire, August 2008	
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE  
MARKET PLACE, KETTERING  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**AUGUST 2008**

*Abstract*

*Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief at the Market Place, Kettering in Northamptonshire during August 2008 at the time of geotechnical test excavation conducted in advance of its rejuvenation. Remains of late post-medieval structures were observed in two of the three pits located under the car park at the southern end of the site and relate to the former properties demolished c1926-1950. The features that were identified comprised an ironstone cellar wall, a brick-lined pit and an ironstone wall footing. No other archaeology was observed and no finds were retained.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned in August 2008, by Alan Baxter Integrated Design, to conduct a watching brief during geotechnical excavations at the Market place, Kettering, Northamptonshire (Fig 1; Centred on NGR 4866 2784). This was a condition of the planning permission for rejuvenation of the public square. Work proceeded following a brief issued by the Northamptonshire Archaeological Planning Advisor who approved and monitored the work (Windwood 2008).

The archive will be prepared according to the *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage* (Walker 1990), *Standards in the care of archaeological collections* (MGC 1994) and the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001). The archive will be held at Northamptonshire Archaeology until a suitable repository is available. A copy of the report will be deposited with the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Topography and geology**

The study area comprises a triangular-shaped market place lying in the centre of Kettering to the south of the town's main shopping thoroughfare, High Street (Fig 1). Market Street forms its northern boundary and a carriageway defines its western edge. To the south-east is the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul and to the east lies the rectory.

Market Place occupies ground that exhibits a pronounced south-east to north-west slope (c85-88m above Ordnance Datum); steps have been cut into its northern and western sides. The ground is currently surfaced with block paving into which are set numerous iron posts and saplings, some encircled with iron seating. Raised flower beds are placed along Market Place's northern and western periphery and there is a bus stop on its western side.

The underlying geology comprises Inferior Oolite overlain by Northampton Sand and Ironstone ([www.bgs/geoindex.org](http://www.bgs/geoindex.org)).

## 2.2 Archaeological background

The site has been the subject of a desk-based assessment conducted by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Mason 2008). The history and archaeology of Kettering, from prehistoric to modern periods, was the subject of a comprehensive study as part of Northamptonshire's Extensive Urban Survey (Taylor 2002; Foard and Ballinger 2000). This initiative was funded by English Heritage with the purpose of providing an effective information base and research framework to guide the management of the county's archaeological resource.

### *Prehistoric*

There is no clear evidence for prehistoric occupation in Kettering although stray finds of coins dating to the Iron Age have been recovered from various locations.

### *Roman*

The Roman settlement at Kettering appears to have been focused along a road connecting Irchester to the Gartree Road with its core lying c1.7km north north-east of the current study area. Little is known of its exact size and character; existing evidence suggests that its origins lie in the later 1st century AD and that it covered an area of 12-16ha. It continued to be occupied well into the 4th century.

### *Saxon*

An early Saxon cemetery was discovered to the north of the Stamford Road in the late 19th century, c1.4km north-east of the current study area. Saxon place-names such as Walcot and Sharlecotes suggest the presence of dispersed farmsteads and hamlets in the vicinity of the modern town during this period.

Kettering is mentioned in several Saxon charters. In 956 the manor was held by King Eadwig who granted '10 Cassatos' at 'Cytringan' to his minister, Aelfsige. In c963 Bishop Aethelwold granted Kettering to *Medhamstede* which later became Peterborough Abbey.

In 1086 the Domesday survey the manor at Kettering was held by the Abbot of Peterborough and comprised 10 hides with land for 16 ploughs. In demesne, the land farmed by the Abbey, there was one plough and one female slave and 31 villeins with 10 ploughs. There were two mills worth £1, 107 acres of meadow and 3 acres of woodland.

### *Medieval*

The settlement retained its agrarian village character until 1227 when the Abbot obtained a grant for a Friday market, thus initiating the urban expansion of the town. It is from this grant that the history of Market Place can be traced.

#### *The market place*

The market place lies to the north of the Church of St Peter and St Paul and the site of the original manor house, both of which were in existence by 1125-6 (Foard and Ballinger 200, 15). When the 1227 charter was granted, it is thought that the market place was laid out to the north of these buildings. Its exact form remains the subject of conjecture. As the church lies well back from the late medieval market place, it has been suggested that it may have originally been laid out as a square, subsequently altered by encroachment in a westerly direction from the church and rectory (*ibid*, 34).

In 1305 and 1309 there was reference to 15 shops newly occupied by capital tenants for 5/4d which implies that the standard rent per shop was 4d (*ibid*). In 1405 there were 14 shops and 24 stalls, by 1488 the number of shops had risen to 16, although some were only paying half rents, and the number of stalls had fallen to only six. The shops are assumed to be those occupying Rotten Row,

laid out in the centre of market place along the eastern side of the current carriageway and first depicted on Ralph Treswell's Map of Kettering in 1587 (Mason 2008). By the late 16th century some of the tenements facing onto the market place were also trading as shops.

It is probable that, as in the post-medieval period, different parts of the market place were devoted to the sale of different goods. In 1719 the northern apex of the market place was called Cornhill. To the west of Rotten Row was the Sheep Market and to the east Butcher's Row.

The medieval market cross stood in the south-eastern corner of Market Place, close to the churchyard. It would appear that it was taken down before Treswell's map was produced in 1587. Its remains were described by the antiquarian Bridges in 1719 as a set of round stone steps. Beneath them was a lock-up (Foard and Ballinger 2000, 36). It was removed c1790 and replaced with a smaller cross (Bull 1891, 161).

A Sessions House was constructed between the site of the market cross and Rotten Row in 1629 to house the county Quarter Sessions. It became known as Market House and was described in 1721 as, 'a good stone building supported by pillars' (Bull 1891). It was demolished in 1805, outliving Rotten Row by 15-20 years.

The inhabitants near the Market Place in Kettering were a long time desirous of having the row of shops (Rotten Row) on the west side of the Market Place taken down which was accomplished 1785-1789. There were 12 shops with Chambers over them very irregularly built and all thatch (Bull 1891, 160). The length of Rotten Row was 62 yards (56.7m). A pump appears to have existed in the northern part of Market Place by 1787, perhaps replacing an earlier well, the outline of which is loosely depicted on Treswell's map.

The principal buildings facing onto Market Place date from the 'post-clearance' area. The Town Hall and Corn Exchange were built on its eastern side in 1853, later becoming a theatre and cinema. Today it is occupied by a number of businesses including Ladbrokes bookmakers and 'Gladiator' gymnasium. The Royal Hotel, located at the north-east end of Market Place was formerly known as the White Hart Inn and is a Grade II Listed Building. It was built in 1878 and has accommodated both Charles Dickens and Queen Victoria.

The last suite of demolitions in Market Place, allowing it to assume its prevailing 'open' plan, occurred in the second quarter of the 20th century when the buildings lining its southern periphery were removed (Mason 2008). This area has now been incorporated into the expanse of Market Place and is used largely for car parking.

### **3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The objectives of the watching brief were stated in the brief (Windwood 2008).

- Provide consistent detailed information on the presence or absence, extent, degree of survival and depth of burial of archaeological deposits and features within the proposed development.
- Provide sufficient information on the site's surviving archaeology to allow a proper assessment of the implications for future development and to enable informed decisions to be made for effective mitigation of any archaeology present.

Twelve geotechnical test pits were located within the Market Place as part of a much larger survey extending beyond the scope of the watching brief, and hence the numbering sequence appearing unusual (Fig 2). Each test pit varied slightly in size, adjusted for buried services or obstructions, but were no more than 4m long by 1m wide by 1.8m deep.

Excavation was conducted by the contractor and was observed by an archaeologist during the digging of each individual test pit. The surface cobbles were removed by hand and underlying deposits excavated using a mini-digger fitted with a 0.6m wide toothed bucket. Where concrete was encountered this was broken using a pneumatic hand drill. Spoil was removed entirely and reinstatement was with a coarse aggregate, overlaid with the original cobbles or fresh tarmac surface.

Potential archaeological features and artefacts were examined as they were exposed. Recording followed standard NA guidelines. All archaeological features and deposits were given separate context numbers. Deposits were described on *pro-forma* record sheets to include details of the deposit or feature, its relationships, an interpretation and a check-list of associated finds. This field data was compiled into a site archive with appropriate cross-referencing.

A digital photographic record was maintained. In addition to basic section shots and features, overall site photographs, feature groups and working shots were also taken. Significant archaeological sections were sketched with measurements and later drawn at an appropriate scale. No finds were discovered.

## **4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS**

### **4.1 General overview**

For the most part the deposits observed in the test pits across the Market Place were similar, in the majority of cases these comprised the make-up of the present plaza and its levelling layers (Fig 2). In the central area of the site there were indications in Test pits 7 and 13 of demolition deposits of late post-medieval date, which may relate to the Sessions House that was built in 1629 and demolished in 1805 (Mason 2008, 4). Variations were most apparent at the southern end of the site in the vicinity of the former Market Hill frontage that was demolished c1926-1950. Late post-medieval features were encountered in Test Pits 12, 20 and 22 that indicate some survival for deeper features such as cellars and brick-lined pits, although the exact nature of the features could not be determined during these works.

In those test pits where no archaeological features or deposits were encountered the top of the natural substrate was encountered at 300-450mm below the present plaza and car park areas. The natural substrate comprised dark orange sandy clay with frequent weathered ironstone fragments occasionally interspersed with patches of orange sand, typical of the local geology. For the most part this was overlain by a bed of dark pinkish-grey aggregate made up of angular pieces of sandstone shale up to 30mm in size and spread across the area in a layer that was between 100-280mm thick. This was overlain by clean yellowish-orange coarse sand with frequent micro quartz inclusions and some small grit up to 5mm in size. It formed the base for the plaza and was spread across the area in a layer that was between 50-240mm thick. At the surface the plaza cobbles or setts were laid forming a simple aesthetic pattern using different sizes. Individual setts came in three sizes 240mm by 160mm, 150mm by 150 mm and 150mm by 120mm, all of which were 60mm thick. They were made from coarse greyish-white concrete with frequent quartz grit inclusions and crushed sandstone fragments up to 5mm in size bonded with the mix.

### **4.2 Test pits 7 and 13**

The deposits in these two test pits were comparable, located within the plaza. The natural substrate was not exposed at the base of either test pit, 1.25m below the present ground surface. In its place was loose dark yellowish-brown sandy loam (706/1307) containing frequent fragments of hand made brick, ironstone, mortar and flecked throughout with pieces of plaster. Overlying it in a dump 500mm thick was firm light yellowish brown sandy loam (706/1305) containing large amounts of mortar, brick fragments, ironstone, fragments of grey-blue roof slate and plaster, some of which

had impressions. This was sealed by 100mm thickness of compact sandy loam (705) with small fragments of concreted lime in Test Pit 7 only over which there was 200-300mm of dirty pinkish-grey aggregate mixed with greyish brown sand (704). In Test Pit 13 this was substituted for 70mm of dark greyish-black degraded tarmac (1304). In both instances these layers were sealed by the construction layers of the present plaza.

#### **4.3 Test pit 12**

The test pit was 4m long by 0.8m wide by 1.6m deep, located within the plaza. Natural substrate was encountered at c0.73m below the present ground surface. Overlying it was a thin 100-200mm thick layer of dirty cream coloured crushed mortar and sandy loam (1210). Above this was the remnant of an ironstone wall footing [1205] aligned across the west end of the trench from north-west to south-east (Plate 1). The wall comprised a single course of ironstone blocks of varying size measuring up to 500mm long by 200mm wide by 300-400mm thick. There was no mortar bonding the stones and it had been badly disturbed. Immediately surrounding the stones were also fragments of Collyweston limestone roofing tile, handmade brick and freshwater oyster shells. The wall footing had been truncated vertically by a brown lead glazed foul water pipe [1208] above which 20mm of degraded greyish-black tarmac dust (1211) was spread. This also formed the base for a 200mm thick slab of grey concrete (1203) that lay at the west end of the test pit. These layers were sealed by the construction layers of the present plaza.

#### **4.4 Test pit 20**

The test pit was 1.8m long by 1.06m wide by 1.3m deep, located within the southern car park. Natural substrate was encountered at 0.27m below the present ground surface. Cut into this was a late post-medieval rectangular brick-lined pit [2007] that measured 0.98m wide by 0.73m deep (Fig 3). The floor of the pit comprised a single layer of red brick bats (2006) measuring 220mm long by 110mm wide by 65mm thick. Built against the sides of the pit, on top of the brick bat floor, were the retaining walls of the pit (2005). The walls were seven courses deep (560mm) and two brick widths thick (230mm), mortared together with a coarse hard white sandy-lime mix. The external width of the pit was 0.98m, the internal width was 0.52m. It was filled with firm dark greyish black silty clay (2004) with successive bands of ash and charcoal inclusions suggestive of gradual fill from domestic fires. Along the outer west side of the pit was a modern black plastic water pipe buried in fine loose gravel and aligned north-west to south-east. The whole of the test pit was sealed by 50mm of degraded greyish-black tarmac dust (2003) upon which a bed of solid greyish white concrete (2002) was set. The concrete contained moderate coarse mixed gravel inclusions, mainly quartz and sandstone, with some flint and was 160mm thick. The surface layer comprised 60mm of solid greyish-black tarmac.

#### **4.5 Test pit 22**

The test pit was 2m long by 0.98m wide by 1.2m deep, located within the southern car park. Natural substrate was encountered at 0.25m below the present ground surface. Cut into this was what is probably part of a late post-medieval cellar wall [2204] located close to the north-east corner of the cellar (Plate 2). The wall was aligned east to west and measured 0.5m wide by 0.95m deep, the full depth of the cellar was not revealed. There was a visible north to south return of the wall in the east side of the test pit. It was constructed from large cut ironstone blocks of varying sizes up to 300mm long by 180mm wide by 140mm thick. These were bonded together with a coarse hard white sandy-lime mix. The cellar was filled by demolition rubble (2205) which largely comprised a mixture of loose dark greyish-brown sandy loam, orange sand, shattered ironstone, brick fragments, mortar, greyish-blue slate roof tile and plaster. The whole of the test pit was sealed by a 20mm thickness of degraded greyish-black tarmac dust (2203). Upon this was a layer of concrete that was 150mm thick and comprised white concrete (2202) with moderate coarse mixed gravel inclusions. The surface layer comprised 80mm of solid greyish-black tarmac.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

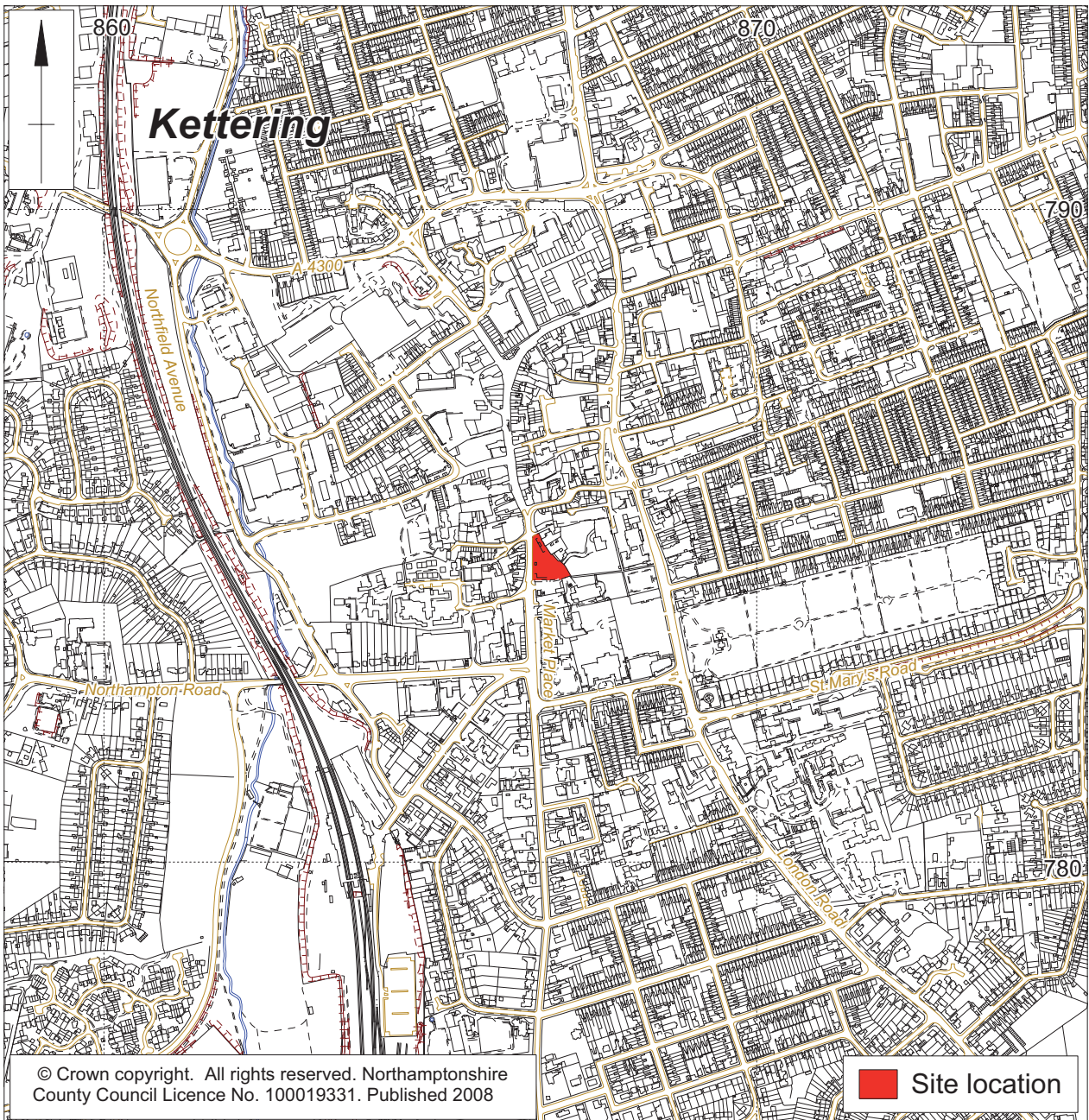
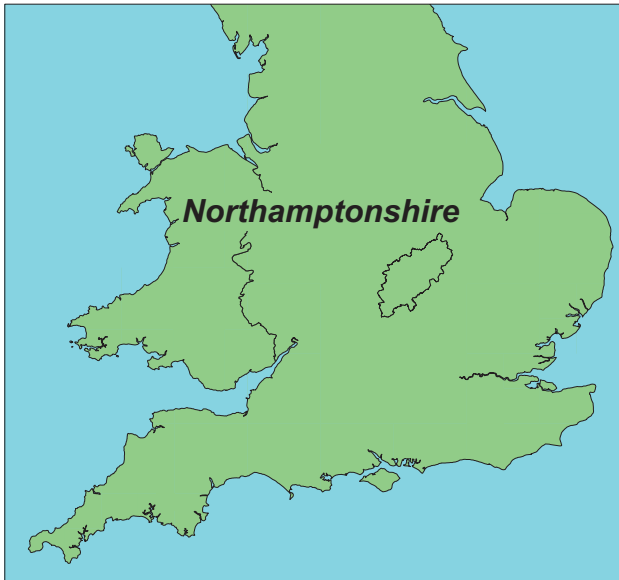
The watching brief identified a certain degree of truncation on the site, in that no garden soil horizons or building foundations were identified in areas where they might have been expected. Only the deepest structural features survive in the form of cellars and brick-lined pits. Other substantial sub-surface structures such as wells might also survive.

None of the features that were identified produced finds, however, from the style of handmade brick encountered it was clear that these features were of 19th-century origin at the very earliest. In the case of demolition deposits, it may be suggested that they were the 19th-century demolition associated with structures that stood on the site from as early as the 18th century (Mason 2008). It is unlikely that they would date much earlier.



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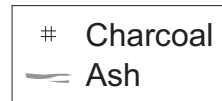
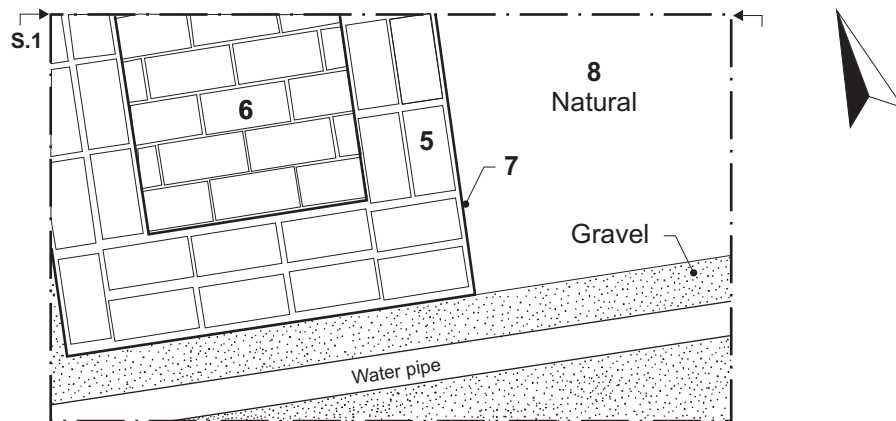
Site location Fig 1



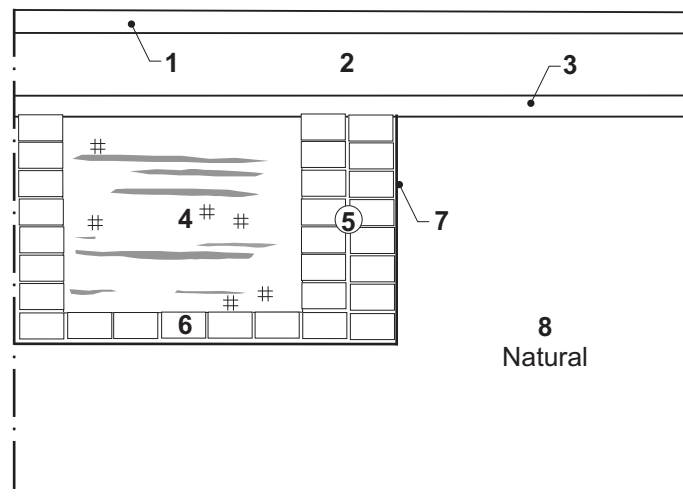


Location of geotechnical test pits Fig 2

## Test Pit 20



## Section 1



Plan and section of Test Pit 20 Fig 3



Plate 1: Wall 1205 at the west end of Test Pit 12, facing north



Plate 2: Cellar wall 2204 in Test Pit 22, facing south