

Northamptonshire Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief
on land at 2 Copper Beech Close,
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire
July 2007



David J. Leigh

August 2007

Report 07/119

Northamptonshire Archaeology

2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park

Northampton NN4 8BE

t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822

e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk

w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk



STAFF

Project Manager Steve Parry MA MIFA
Text David J. Leigh BA Hons
Fieldwork David J. Leigh
Illustrations Jacqueline Harding BA

QUALITY CONTROL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Steve Parry		
Verified by	Andy Mudd		
Approved by	Andy Chapman		

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	An archaeological watching brief on land at 2 Copper Beech Close, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire	
Short description	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks connected with the construction of a new garage and soak-away with associated groundworks on land at 2 Copper Beech Close, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. A single un-dated ditch was recorded, no artefacts were recovered.	
Project type	Watching Brief; Planning application No: 4/00704/07/DRC	
Site status	None	
Previous work	None	
Current Land use	Private garden	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type/ period		
Significant finds		
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Hertfordshire	
Site address	2 Copper Beech Close, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire	
Study area (sq.m or ha)		
OS Easting & Northing		
Height OD		
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	The Archaeological Advisor, Hertfordshire County Council	
Project Design originator	N/A	
Director/Supervisor	David J.Leigh	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr G.V.Groves, 2 Copper Beech Close, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	July 2007	
End date	July 2007	
ARCHIVES	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical		
Paper		Watching brief forms (2) Colour slides (6) black and white contact prints (6) Digital photographs (36)
Digital		Report text and figures

Contents

- 1 INTRODUCTION
 - 2 BACKGROUND
 - 3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY
 - 4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE
 - 5 THE SITE ARCHIVE
 - 6 CONCLUSIONS
- BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Figures

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Location of groundworks

Plates

Plate 1: The area of development prior to the start of groundworks

Plate 2: The development area during groundworks

Plate 3: The garage foundations

Plate 4: The soak-away pit

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON LAND AT
2 COPPER BEECH CLOSE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD,
HERTFORDSHIRE
JULY 2007**

Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in July 2007 during groundworks connected with construction of a new garage and a soak-away on land at 2 Copper Beech Close, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. A single un-dated ditch was recorded, no archaeological artefacts were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology in July 2007 during groundworks connected with the construction of a new garage and soak-away on land at 2 Copper Beech Close, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 037, 057; Planning Application No: 4/00704/07/DRC: Fig 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Mr G.V.Groves of 2 Copper Beech Close, Hemel Hempstead, and followed the recommendations of the Archaeological Advisor, Dacorum Borough Council.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

The development area is located on the western side of Hemel Hempstead town centre and fronts directly onto Copper Beech Close.

2.2 Historical Background

Previous archaeological work within the development area has comprised of an archaeological evaluation. This produced no evidence of significant archaeological deposits. Up to the present application the development area has functioned as part of the garden of number 2 Copper Beech Close.

3 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aims of the watching brief were to:

- ◆ Observe the groundworks connected with the construction of the new garage and soak-away with associated groundworks, and to record all archaeological deposits uncovered
- ◆ Determine the date, character, state of preservation and depth of any archaeological deposits observed and to retrieve all datable artefacts
- ◆ Create a permanent archive and record of the archaeological information collected during the course of the fieldwork and analysis.

The fieldwork comprised a single visit to the site during the excavation of the garage foundations and the removal of material within the footprint of the garage down to formation level. A pit for a soak-away was also excavated along with a connecting trench for the drainage and an electric service trench. The groundworks were carried out using a 360° mini-excavator excavator fitted with a combination of both toothed and toothless buckets.

A photographic record in both black and white negative and colour slide was kept, with supplementary photographs in digital format. The written record used Northamptonshire Archaeology pro-forma sheets. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the standards and guidelines for an archaeological watching brief (IFA 2000).

4 THE RECORDED EVIDENCE

4.1 The garage foundation

The garage foundations comprised the excavation of a foundation trench 0.25m deep and 0.42m wide for the walls of the garage. The material within the footprint was then reduced by 0.15m down to formation level.

At the base of the stratigraphic sequence throughout the garage foundation there was compact mottled grey/white/brown chalk silt. This was thought to be natural, but the deeper excavation for the soak-away pit might suggest that it was recently redeposited material, see below and discussion. Cut into this material was a U-shaped ditch, 1.0m wide by up to 0.15m deep, aligned north-south. The ditch was filled with mid grey/brown silt loam containing numerous small fragments of chalk. The basal layer and the ditch was sealed by mid brown subsoil, up to

0.10m thick, containing occasional fragments of modern ceramic building material, which was not retained. The subsoil was sealed by a grey/brown silt loam topsoil/turf layer, up to 0.05m thick, containing occasional fragments of modern ceramic building material and corroded modern iron wire, also not retained.

4.2 The service trenches

The service trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.25m with a width of 0.42m. The stratigraphic sequence was consistent to that present in the garage foundation, with the exception of the subsoil which increased in thickness to 0.22m at the western end of the run from the garage to the soak-away pit.

4.3 The soak-away pit

The pit for the soak-away was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.0m and was 1.3m square. At the base of the exposed stratigraphic sequence there was grey/brown silt loam, which extended below the depth of the excavation and contained numerous sherds of modern glass and occasional sherds of modern, white ceramic pottery with fragments of modern ceramic building material, none of which was retained. This was sealed by compact mottled grey/white/brown chalk silt, up to 0.26m thick, similar to the chalk silt seen in the base of the garage foundation trenches. Overlying this was mid brown subsoil, up to 0.22m thick, containing occasional fragments of modern ceramic building material and small glass sherds. The subsoil was sealed by a grey/brown silt loam topsoil/subsoil layer, up to 0.08m thick.

5 THE SITE ARCHIVE

The project has generated a small archive comprising:

RECORD	NUMBER
Watching brief forms	2
Colour slides	6
Black and white contacts and negatives	6
Digital photographs	36

6 CONCLUSIONS

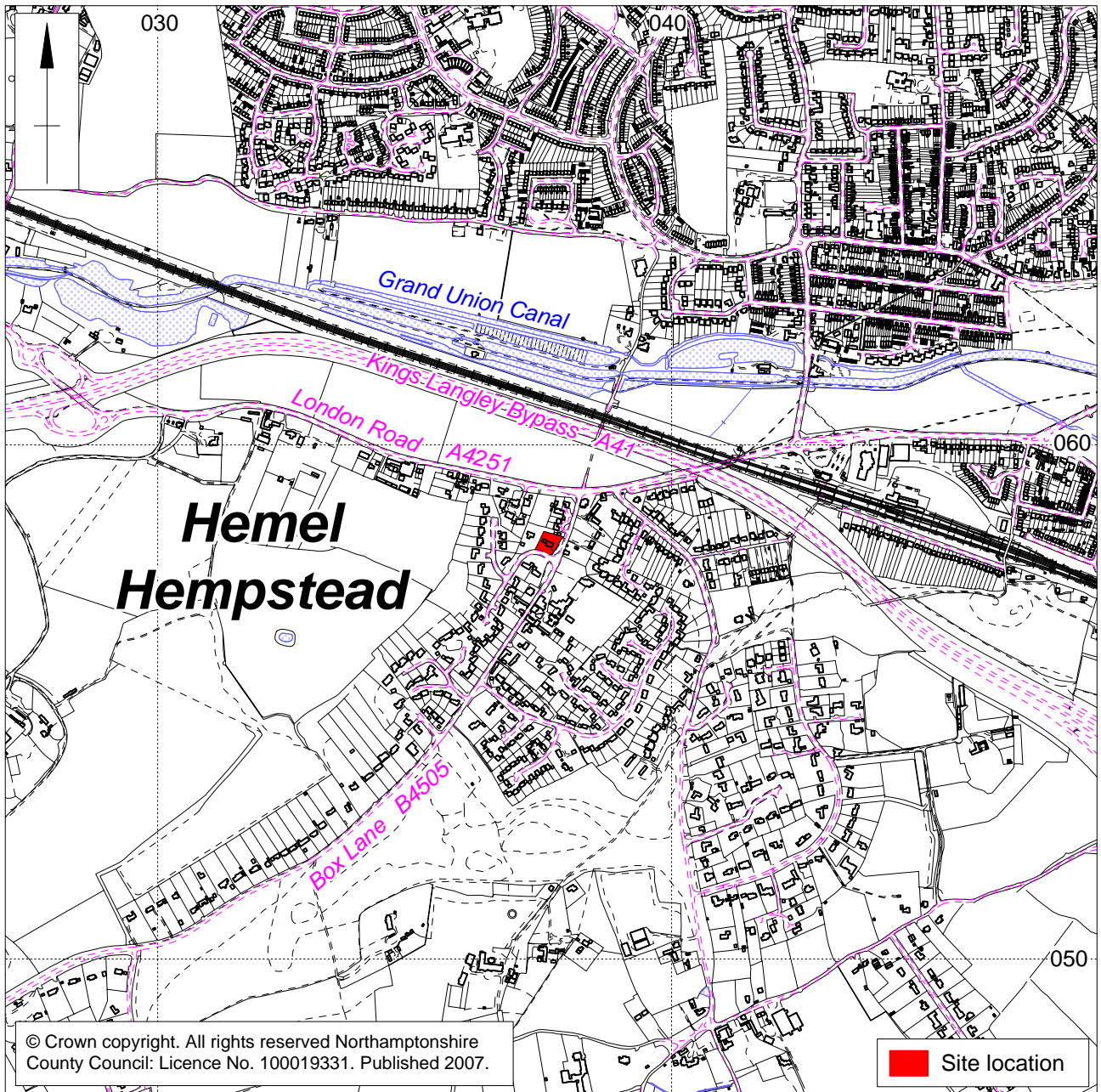
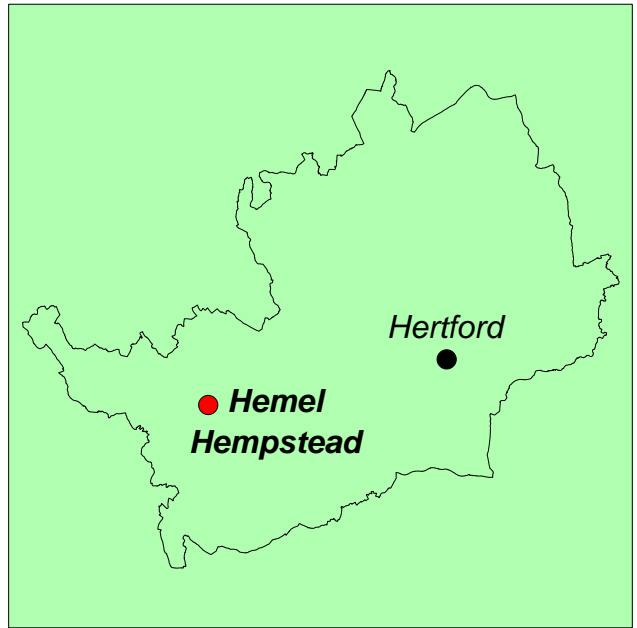
The un-dated ditch recorded within the foundations of the new garage was initially thought to be cut into natural undisturbed substratum. However, the deeper excavation of the soak-away revealed a deposit containing modern material that was sealed beneath a similar layer that was also initially thought to be the natural chalk substratum.

From the limited nature of the groundworks it is unclear if redeposited natural silts and chalk had been laid directly onto a modern soil layer overlying natural, thus building up the ground levels, or if truncation of the natural substratum had taken place as part of the process. However, the presence of redeposited natural other modern soils would suggest that there had been considerable disturbance of the natural. As a result, while the presence of archaeologically significant deposits within the development area cannot be ruled out entirely, such levels, if present, would be buried beneath a considerable depth of modern material, including redeposited natural.

The watching brief was carried out in favourable conditions and the results are considered to be reliable.

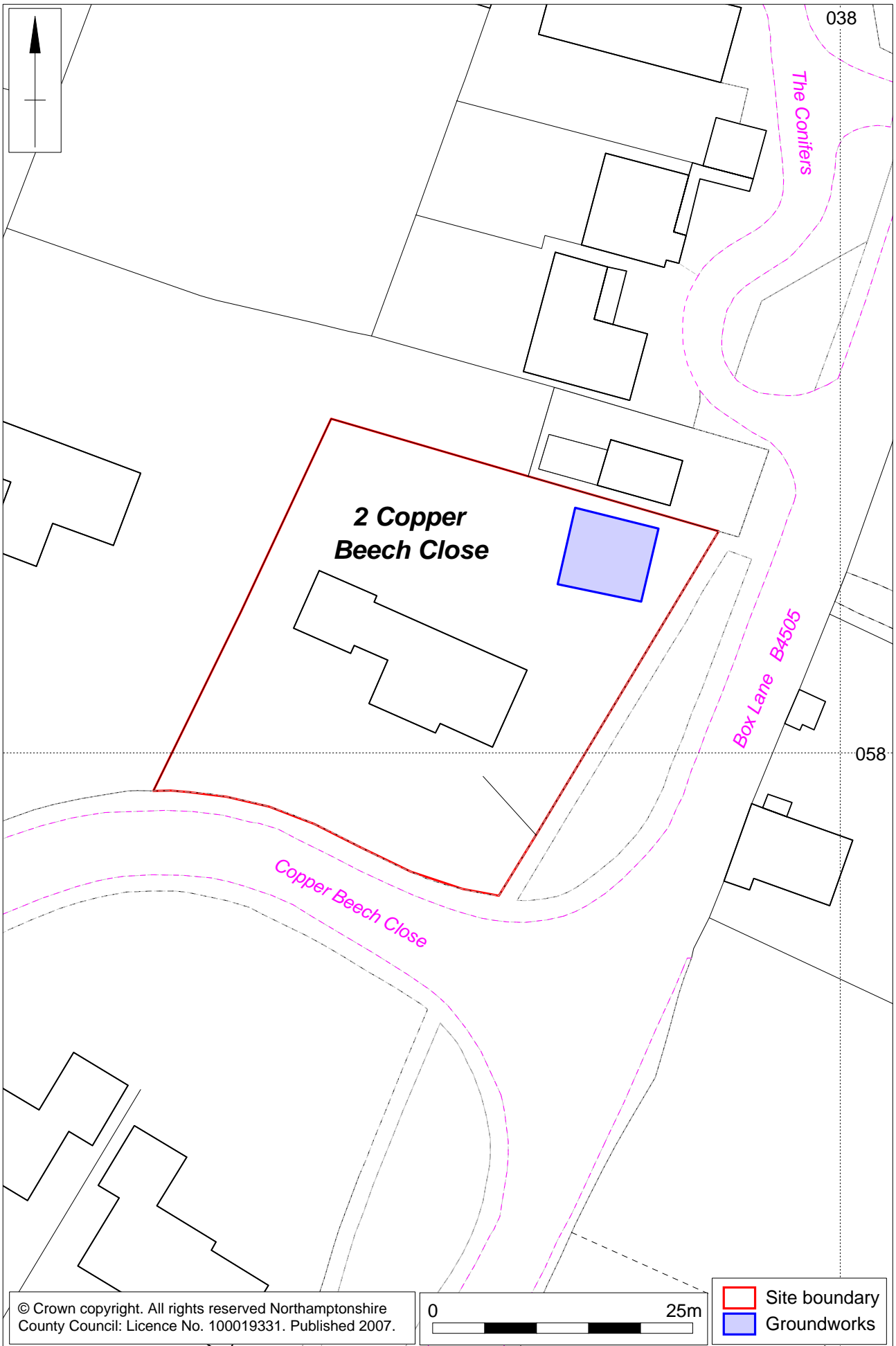
BIBLIOGRAPHY

IFA 2000 *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute of Field Archaeologists



Scale 1:12,500

Site location Fig 1



Scale 1:500

Location of groundworks Fig 2

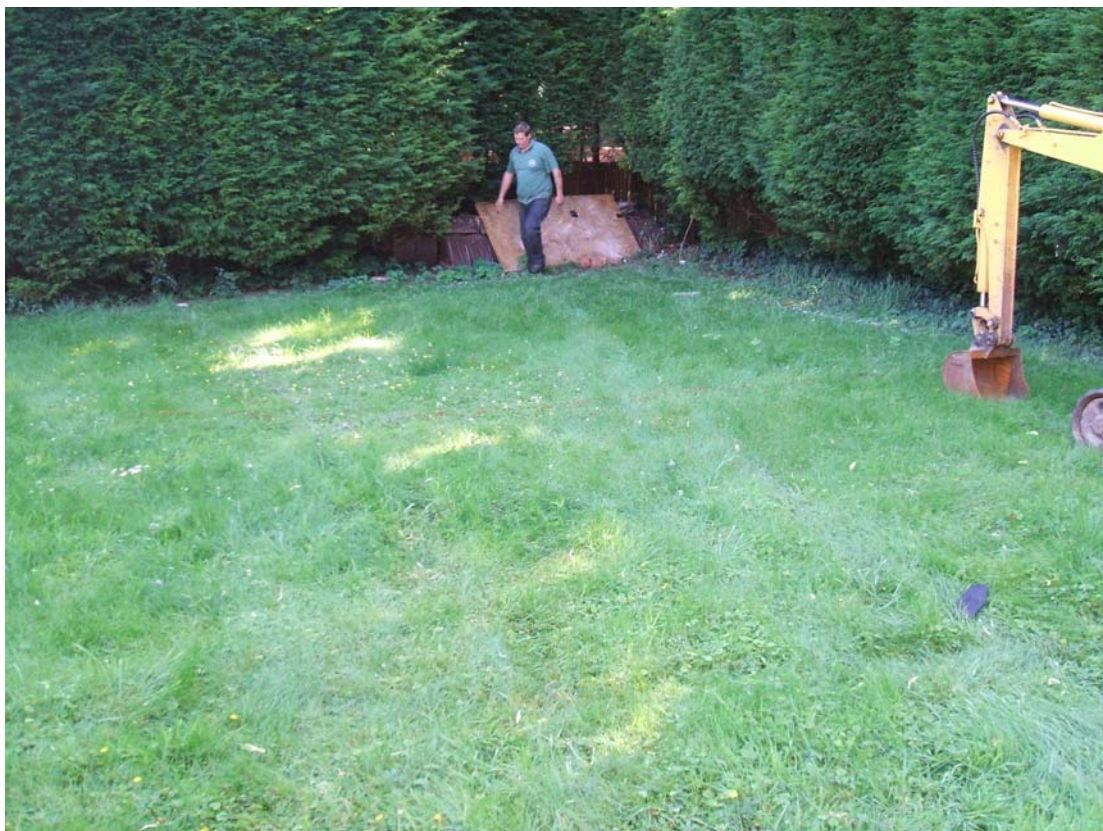


Plate 1: The area of development prior to the start of groundworks



Plate 2: The development area during groundworks



Plate 3: The garage foundations



Plate 4: The soak-away pit