

12-18 Stratford Road Cottages
Buckingham
Buckinghamshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



Oxford Archaeology

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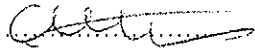
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12-18 Stratford Road Cottages, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

On the 14th February 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at 12-18 Stratford Road Cottages, Buckingham (NGR:SP 698 342) on behalf of MOH Properties Ltd. The evaluation revealed two phases of post-medieval roadside culverts and substantial deposits of garden soil. No significant archaeology was discovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 14th February 2005 OA carried out a field evaluation at 12-18 Stratford Road Cottages, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire (NGR: SP 698 342) on behalf of MOH Properties Ltd. in respect of a planning application for development of a single dwelling and conversion of existing 17th and 18th century structures on the site (Planning Application No. 03/03224).
- 1.1.2 A brief was set by David Radford, the Archaeological Officer for Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS 2004) requiring a two stage archaeological investigation of the proposed development. Stage 1 was to comprise the excavation of a single trial trench and a pre-conversion building recording action while Stage 2 would comprise a watching brief to be carried out during any significant works undertaken on the historic fabric of the 17th and 18th century range. A Written Scheme of Investigation (OA, 2005) was produced showing how OA would implement the requirements of the brief.
- 1.1.3 Prior to undertaking Stage 1 of the brief, MOH Properties Ltd reduced the scope of the work to only the evaluation of the area of the proposed new build, following the decision not to develop the range of cottages.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development area is located towards the north-eastern edge of the town of Buckingham (Fig. 1). It is bounded by Stratford Road to the south and south-east, by Northend Court to the north and north-west and by Northend Square to the south-west. The site is located at the base of a shallow south-east facing slope, but has been levelled with a terrace wall running across the back of the site. The previous use of the site was as a small garage and filling station with the structures to the rear of the cottages now demolished.
- 1.2.2 The site lies at approximately 78 m OD and the underlying geology is Great Oolite and Cornbrash overlain by boulder clay.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation was prepared for the WSI, the results of which are given below.

- 1.3.2 The Stratford Cottages site lies towards the north-east edge of the historic town in an area known as 'North End' or 'North East End' in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is likely that this area lies outside the Saxon settlement in an area of planned medieval expansion associated with the laying out of the market place. The site is not shown occupied by buildings on Speed's map of 1610 but is partially occupied by the time of Jeffrey's map of 1770.
- 1.3.3 The 17th century timber framed building was listed in 1976 but subsequently de-listed. However it still retains much of its original structure (OA 2003). In the 18th century this building was abutted by a new three storey brick building, thus forming the 17th-18th century cottages. The latter has not been inspected to date following an assessment deeming the integrity of the structure's interior dangerous to enter.
- 1.3.4 An evaluation at Stratford House to the south-east of the site was carried out by Oxford Archaeology in 2002 (OA 2002). This revealed pits dating to the 11th-14th centuries and 17th-18th centuries, indicating occupation from the medieval period onwards and representing the maximum extent of known growth during this time along the High Street and away from the Saxon settlement's core within Buckingham, before its contraction in the later medieval period.
- 1.3.5 In AD 915 Edward the Elder constructed a double-burh at Buckingham. Although this has as yet not been located within the town, it seems likely that at least the principal burh was situated on the bend of the river occupied by Castle Hill and the site of the medieval church to the south-west of the hill. The church is believed to have originated as a late Saxon 'minster' and became an important place of pilgrimage associated with the cult of St Rumbold.
- 1.3.6 Buckingham acquired a mint in the late 10th and early 11th century and became recognised as a borough and the county town at the time of the Domesday survey. A castle was built sometime after the Norman conquest but became ruinous by the early 17th century. Two hospitals were also founded in the town.
- 1.3.7 Following the collapse of the medieval church, a new church was built on Castle Hill in 1777-81, although the graveyard remained within the bounds of the medieval church site. The main focus of the medieval town was the market place on the eastern side, particularly during the mid 14th century onwards. The town was closely connected with the wool trade highlighted by the Draper's Hall in the market place. By the 15th and 16th centuries this trade and the town itself was in decline. In 1725 the town was devastated by a major fire which destroyed 138 of the 387 houses known to have existed at this time. Despite protests, Buckingham gradually relinquished its status as county' town to Aylesbury during the subsequent years.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 2.1.2 To establish evidence for past environments, with provision for environmental sampling included.

2.1.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of a single trench measuring 10 m in length by 1.8 m wide located to the north-east of the standing cottages (Fig. 2).

3.1.2 The overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator (JCB) fitted with a 1.8 m wide toothless grading bucket. Excavation by machine proceeded in spits down to either undisturbed natural deposits or to the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

3.2.1 The trench was cleaned by hand and any revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and where possible to retrieve finds and environmental samples. The trench was planned at a scale of 1:50, while sections of features and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. The trench and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OA Field Manual* (OAU, 1992).

3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the evaluation.

3.4 Presentation of results

3.4.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below, starting with a stratigraphic account of the deposits followed by an overall discussion and interpretation.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site is located on level ground and comprised of modern tarmac and concrete surfaces overlying service trenches and garden soils. The boundaries of the layers and edges of the features were well defined. Soil conditions were moist but not waterlogged.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of deposits

5.1.1 The natural, a red-brown silty clay colluvium (4) was reached at a depth of 0.8 m below ground level (77.98 m OD). This was sealed below a 0.2 m thick layer of dark grey-brown silty clay (12). This contained charcoal flecking and many small

subangular limestone fragments representing a layer of subsoil or earlier worked soil. Towards the north-eastern end of the trench this layer was cut by a rectangular pit (6) measuring 0.75 m by 0.5 m with 0.35 m depth surviving. This was filled by a grey-brown clay silt (5) containing charcoal and ash flecking and which produced a fragment of brown glazed earthenware suggesting it was an 18th century rubbish pit. Sealing pit 6 and layer 12 was a 0.35 m thick layer of grey-brown clay silt (3). This layer contained charcoal flecking and produced an 18th century clay pipe stem and fragments of brown glazed earthenware, and was probably an 18th or 19th century garden soil.

- 5.1.2 At the south-western end of the trench layer 3 was cut by a 1.2 m wide trench (13) running parallel to Stratford Road, containing a stone constructed culvert (7). This structure consisted of drystone side walls topped by limestone slabs. Truncating the northern wall of this culvert, and also running parallel to Stratford Road, was cut a steeply sloping 3m wide by 1 m deep trench (11) containing a later circular brick culvert (8). This construction cut had been backfilled with a 0.6 m deep layer of light greyish brown silty clay (10) and a 0.4 m deep layer of grey-brown silty clay (9). The bricks used to construct this culvert were of a size indicative of 19th century bricks despite the fragments of 18th century clay pipe stem and bowl from within fill 9.
- 5.1.3 At the northern end of the trench layer 3 was cut by a modern pit (14) containing one of the former petrol station's steel fuel tank. This had been backfilled with redeposited soils. Overlying these features was a 0.2 m thick layer of gravel (2) supporting a 0.1 m thick layer of concrete (1), representing the garage forecourt surface.

5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 Fragments of brown glazed earthenware were recovered from layer 3 and fill 5, while fragments of clay pipe stem and bowl were recovered from layer 3 and fill 9. All finds were of 18th to 19th century date. No earlier finds were recovered.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The percentage sample of the proposed development (c.16%) and the absence of residual finds earlier than the 18th century gives a high confidence that the interpretation will apply throughout the development area.

6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 Within the trench a high level of post-medieval intrusion had taken place, with culverts 7 and 8 truncating any original deposits within a 4 m wide band running parallel with Stratford Road. Similarly the installation of the modern fuel tank 14 had also destroyed any original deposits. The undisturbed stratigraphy within the centre of the trench was indicative of horticultural landuse with cultivation penetrating down to the surface of the underlying colluvium. The dating of these layers and anecdotal evidence from a conversation with a local resident suggest that this area

was formerly part of the gardens belonging to the local workhouse which produced food for the workhouse kitchens. The absence of any features earlier than post-medieval and the absence of earlier residual finds suggests this area was open waste land or agricultural land prior to the 17th century construction of the timbered framed cottages and stone lined culvert (7).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Surface	-	0.1 m	Modern concrete forecourt surface	-	C20th
2	Layer	-	0.2 m	Gravel make up	-	C20th
3	Layer	-	0.35 m	Garden soils	Pottery, clay pipe stems	C18th/C19th
4	Layer	-	>0.3 m	Natural colluvium	-	-
5	Fill	0.5 m	0.35 m	Backfill of rubbish pit 6	Pottery	C18th/C19th
6	Cut	0.5 m	0.35 m	Rubbish pit	-	C18th/C19th
7	Structure	1.2 m	>0.3 m	Stone built culvert	-	C18th/C19th
8	Structure	0.9 m	0.9 m	Brick built circular culvert	-	C19th
9	Fill	3.5m	0.4 m	Layer of backfill over culvert 8	Clay pipe, brick	C19th
10	Fill	2.5 m	0.6 m	Layer of backfill over culvert 8	Brick	C19th
11	Cut	3.5 m	1.0 m	Construction cut for culvert 8	-	C18th/C19th
12	Layer	-	0.2 m	Subsoil, earlier worked soil	-	-
13	Cut	1.2 m	>0.3 m	Construction cut for culvert 7	-	-
14	Cut	3.0 m	>1.5 m	Cut for modern underground fuel tank	-	C20th

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

BCAS, 2004 *Brief for an Archaeological Excavation and Building Recording. 12-18 Stratford Road Cottages, Buckingham*

IFA, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluations*

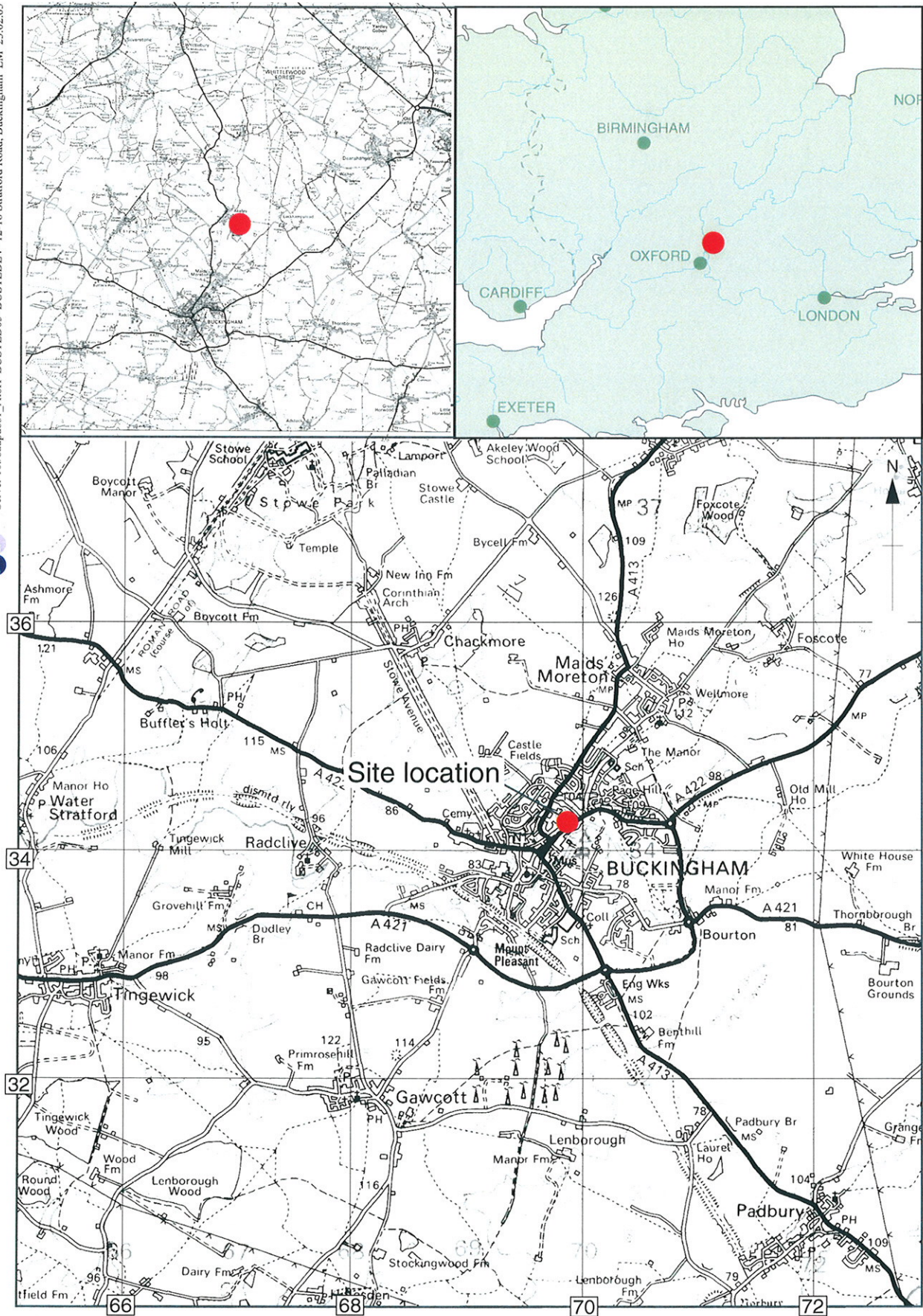
OA, 2002 *Stratford House, Buckingham. Archaeological Evaluation Report*

OA, 2003 *12-16 Stratford Road Cottages, Buckingham. Archaeological Assessment and Historic Building Analysis*

OA, 2005 *12-16 Stratford Road Cottages, Buckingham: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS**Site name:** 12-16 Stratford Road Cottages, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire**Site code:** BUSTED 05**Grid reference:** NGR: SP 698 342**Type of evaluation:** 1 trench measuring 10 m by 1.8 m**Date and duration of project:** 1 day, 14th February 2005**Area of site:** 110 m²**Summary of results:** 2 phases of post-medieval culverts and a waste pit, overlain by post-medieval garden soil. Later cut by modern fuel tank trench.**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: AYBCM 2005.4



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

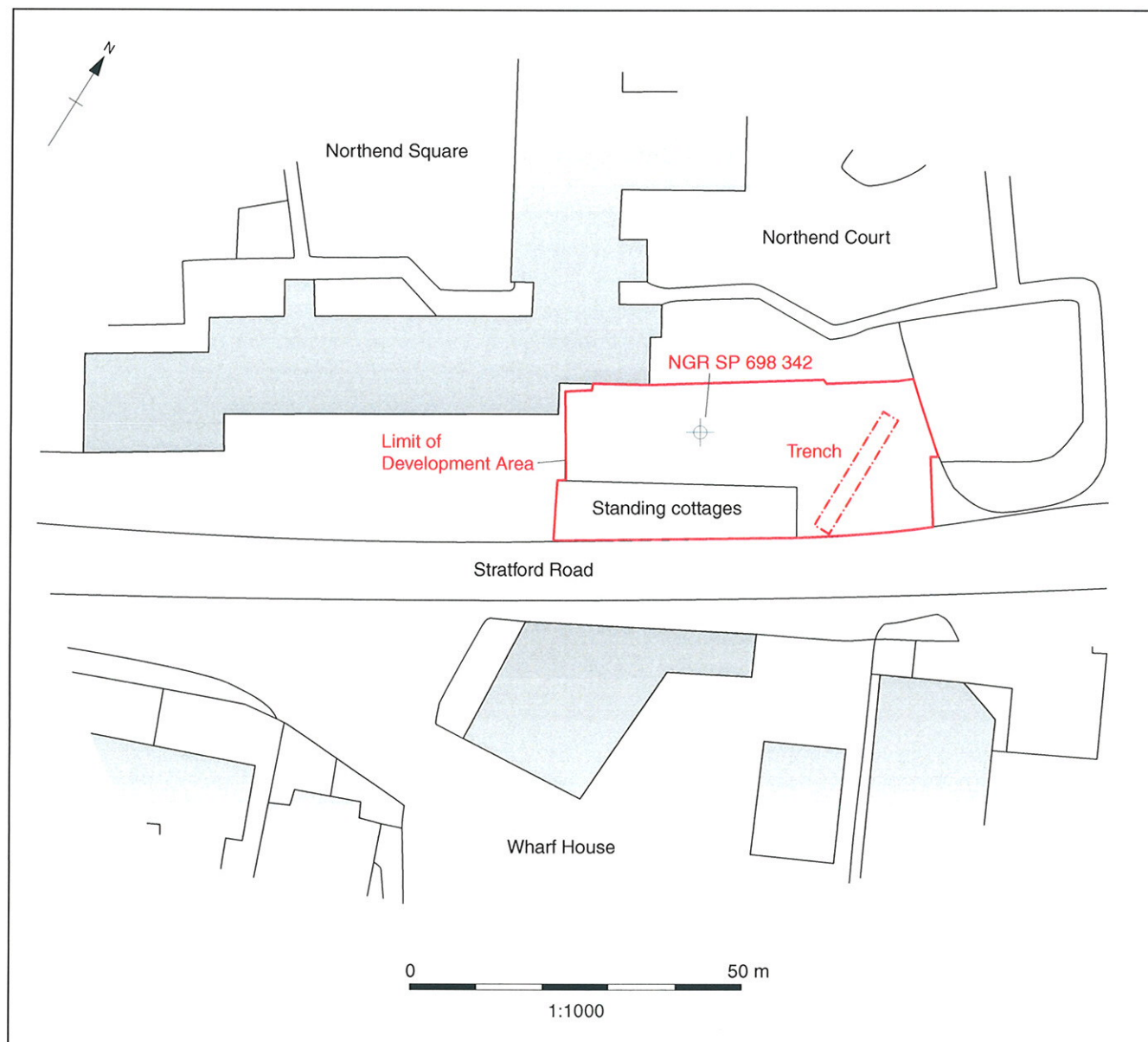


Figure 2: Trench location

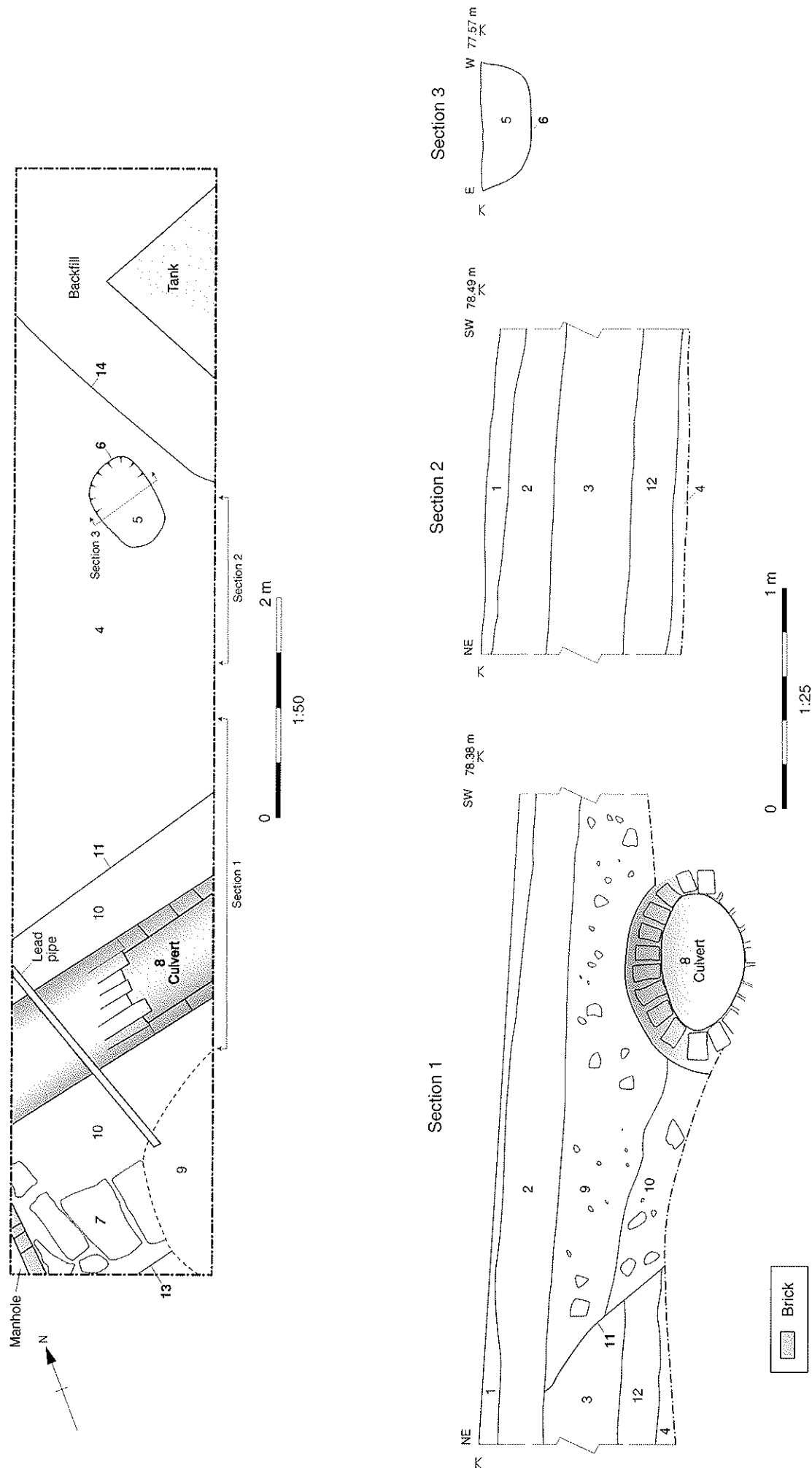


Figure 3: Trench plan and sections



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