



INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
Scheme Title A428 Bedford Southern Bypass	Details Archaeological Watching Brief
Road Number A428	Date August 1996
Bedfordshire County Contractor Archaeology Service	
County Bedfordshire	
OS Reference	
Single sided ✓ Double sided A3 1 Colour 0	

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**A428 BEDFORD SOUTHERN BYPASS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**  
Project definition (Areas of Interest)

Report No. ~~00~~ 23

August 1994

Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service  
CONTRACTS AND CONSULTANCY

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# A428 BEDFORD SOUTHERN BYPASS

## PROJECT DEFINITION

### Areas of interest

#### *Summary*

*Areas along the route of the bypass have been assessed as to the predicted scope of ground disturbance and the resulting level and nature of archaeological observation and recording likely to be required: Level 1 areas receiving the highest input and Level 3 the lowest. These areas are defined and listed with an appropriate response outlined. Refer to the enclosed plans for their locations.*

*It should be noted that the relative status of these areas has been determined by current understanding of a) their archaeological potential and b) the engineering programme, as laid out in the plans supplied to us prior to October 1993 (plans 853/D/108/01/13-20). Either of these criteria are liable to change: current understanding of the archaeology, as groundworks proceed and discoveries are made, and the engineering programme, as a result of more up to date proposals of which we are unaware, or as the contract unfolds and circumstances dictate new approaches. As a result of these and other circumstances the status of an Area is also liable to change (upwards or downwards) and this should be born in mind, especially when considering amendments to the construction programme involving any removal or disturbance of topsoil/subsoil. Close liaison between all parties is essential.*

#### **1. Level 1 Areas**

**1.1 Definition:** all areas where previously undisturbed ground will be subject to topsoil/subsoil removal or disturbance, resulting in possibly significant but unforeseen archaeological discoveries being made. This includes all cuttings, but also those sections where embankments of less than 2m are planned. As a general rule ~ the application of which is at the discretion of the Resident Engineer ~ construction of embankments of less than 2m in height demands the removal of topsoil, whereas a construction of more than 2m will be carried out directly onto the existing ground surface with no topsoil disturbance. In this document calculation of embankment height has been based on an examination of the engineering drawings supplied and an assumed maximum batter to the embankment slopes of 1:2. All works on the re-alignment/diversion of existing roads, and any bridge/culvert works where ground disturbance will take place are also included in this level.

Often no archaeological information exists to gauge the potential of these areas and so significant but unforeseen discoveries are possible. Even in areas that have already been the subject of archaeological evaluation, where results could not justify full excavation, unforeseen discoveries are still possible (as demonstrated at Eastcotts and Village farm). This is especially true immediately adjacent to already excavated areas and it is here in particular that evidence will be sought for the full extent of surviving remains.

Fourteen Level 1 Areas have been identified. Numbers refer to plan location.

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2. Kempston Southern Relief Road to Clay-Pit railway bridge.

The area to west at the junction with KSRR appears to be embanked above 2m. To the east the road enters a cutting. Works associated with the re-alignment and bridging of the B530 Ampthill Rd also demand attention. No archaeological data exists to gauge the potential of this area and modern disturbance associated with road/rail construction and quarrying may already have destroyed any archaeological remains.

3/3a Clay-Pit railway bridge to east of A6 junction.

The road lies in a cutting for this entire stretch. Recent disturbance resulting from the construction of the Clay Pit railway bridge may have destroyed any archaeological remains west of the A6, geophysical survey having failed to identify anything of interest. The area to the east of the A6 (2a), lies immediately adjacent to the archaeological excavations at Peartree farm. Scattered archaeological remains were seen continuing into this area.

5. Peartree farm excavations to Village farm excavations.

The road lies in a cutting for this entire stretch. A continuation of the Romano-British features identified during excavation can be expected in the area between the eastern limit of archaeological excavations and recent engineering excavations for the slurry wall on the western side of the Wilstead Rd. On the immediate eastern side of the Wilstead road modern quarrying has already destroyed archaeological remains.

6A. North of Village farm excavations

The majority of this site has already been excavated and is listed in the level 2 category (section 00). A section of grassed field, on the northern side of the road corridor immediately to the east of the Wilstead Rd and fully within the cutting at this point, was unavailable for investigation as a result of access still being under negotiation. This area will require close watching. Immediately adjacent to this, within that part of the site excavated, a concentration of features including a medieval timber-lined well were recorded.

7. Village farm excavations to Bunyans farm excavations

In this area the road is carried on an embankment below 2m in height. The medieval/prehistoric settlement identified at Village farm clearly continues east beyond the limits of excavation and observations made in this area will be vital to our understanding of the extent of settlement here. Evidence from trial trenches suggests the medieval field system continues even further east, approaching the boundary of the Bunyans farm excavations.

8. Bunyans farm excavations to Manor farm excavations

The major part of both these sites are to be protected under an embankment laid on a geotextile membrane and are thus designated Level 2 Areas (Areas 9 and 10). Sections at the eastern and western extremes of the sites and immediatelel in the middle; although embanked are unprotected by a geotextile membrane and will require careful watching.

12. Bumpy Lane excavations to A600

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The road is on a low embankment or within a cutting as it approaches the A600. Two areas have already been archaeologically excavated, the area between them will require close observation as prehistoric remains were clearly visible running into it. To the east an area earmarked for full excavation was unavailable due to access not having been negotiated (land comprising a redundant railway line and children's playground immediately on the western side of the A600). This area will require investigation.

#### 12A. A600 to Eastcotts excavations

The road lies in a cutting at this point, rising to the east. Excavations at Eastcotts revealed an important Romano-British settlement, although it appeared not to extend all the way to the modern A600. Any groundworks in this area are still of high priority to confirm these observations and to establish the relationship of the Eastcotts settlement to Romano-British features identified at Bumpy lane and Harrowden.

#### 17. Cardington Cross interchange

Sections of the road to the east and west of the main junction appear to be carried on high embankments, but the junction itself and works associated with the re-alignment of existing roads may involve ground disturbance. No direct archaeological information exists for this area although excavations at Eastcotts and prior to the canalisation of the Elstow Brook suggest the continuation of Romano-British landscape boundaries.

#### 19. West of Meadow lane to Octagon farm

The road is carried through here on a low embankment below 2m in height. No archaeological information exists for this area although its proximity to Octagon farm (see below) makes observation a high priority.

#### 20. Octagon farm

This is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and any groundworks beyond those already agreed and monitored in the earlier stages of the project will require prior consent from the Secretary of State. The line of the roadside ditches has already been investigated archaeologically (but the final location of excavations will need to be closely watched) with an embankment over the monument to be laid on a geotextile membrane to afford maximum protection. All plant and traffic access in the area of the monument is to be carried on protective bog-matting or an equivalent. The contractor is expected to submit a detailed method statement for works in this area.

#### 21. Octagon Farm to Castle Mill Viaduct

The road in this area is due to be carried on a high embankment towards the Castle Mill viaduct, the only ground disturbance should come as a result of drainage works. However, aerial photographs show a dense and complex system of crop-marks, and these are likely to represent Iron-Age/Romano-British settlement. Archaeological remains can almost be guaranteed and so this area should be flagged up now as of extremely high priority.

#### 22. Castle Mill Viaduct

Groundworks associated with the bridge construction will take place close to the river in areas of deep alluvium. The archaeological potential of these areas is difficult to

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judge although the proximity to a number of complex crop-mark sites testifies to nearby settlement.

24. Junction with A428 St. Neots Rd.

The junction itself, and the re-aligned existing roads, appears to be on low embankments. No archaeological information exists for this area.

**3.1.2 Response: All groundworks are to be observed in these areas. If discoveries are made the appropriate response will be enacted within the terms of the brief and in consultation with the Resident Engineer, and where necessary the consulting archaeologist. The framework for response is detailed in the Project Brief.**

## 3.2 Level 2 Areas

**3.2.1 Definition:** areas of recognised archaeological importance where excavation has already taken place, including those sites where only the excavation of roadside ditches is anticipated and/or where an embankment is planned to be laid over a geotextile membrane. Although already investigated, artefacts and structures of interest may still be expected from those parts of sites that were only sample excavated. Major unforeseen discoveries are unlikely.

Six Level 2 Areas have been identified. Numbers refer to plan location.

4. Peartree farm

The site of a Romano-British farmstead with earlier Iron-Age and subsequent Saxon activity also represented. The road at this point lies within a cutting and further ground disturbance is inevitable. In line with the excavation project design only a sample of between 20 and 40% of this site has been excavated and so any removal or disturbance of remaining deposits may lead to unexpected discoveries.

6. Village farm

The site of a prehistoric ritual complex and Saxon through to late medieval settlement. The road lies within a cutting at this point and further ground disturbance is inevitable. A sample of between 20 and 40% has been excavated and so unexpected discoveries may result from the removal or disturbance of remaining deposits. A small area to the north of the excavated area was unavailable for investigation and is of Level 1 importance (section).

9. Bunyans farm

A crop-mark complex largely to be protected by embanking the road over a geotextile membrane. The only planned ground disturbance should be the excavation of roadside ditches and the line of these has already been investigated, although only an approximate sample of 20% was taken and unforeseen discoveries may still be made here.

10. Manor farm

As for Bunyans farm above.

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### 13. Harrowden

The site of a well-preserved shrunken medieval village and earlier Romano-British settlement. The major works associated here with the construction of the A600 junction are largely to be supported by a high embankment and no ground disturbance is indicated other than that associated with the excavation of roadside drainage ditches. The area of these ditches has already been investigated archaeologically, but again only an approximate 20% sample was taken, and unforeseen discoveries may still be made.

### 15. Eastcotts

The site of an extensive and significant Romano-British settlement. The road appears to lie at ground level or on a low embankment at this point and so any further removal of topsoil/subsoil, other than to the level already reached through archaeological excavation, may not occur. If ground disturbance does take place similar conditions apply as with Peartree farm.

**3.2.2 Response: as the overall nature and structure of these sites are already known through excavation no large scale recording of significant archaeological deposits is expected. Planned or unforeseen ground disturbance may however initiate small scale works, largely as a result of the sampling policies employed during excavation. All groundworks in this area are to be observed including the excavation of roadside ditches.**

Any unforeseen works beyond the boundaries, but in the immediate area of these sites, will immediately be of Level 1 importance as far as observation is concerned. The likelihood of archaeological discoveries is demonstrably high and any groundworks may involve large scale excavation and recording.

## 3.3 Level 3 Areas

**3.3.1 Definition:** areas where no removal or disturbance of topsoil/subsoil is due to take place other than the excavation of roadside ditches. As far as our understanding goes this includes all parts of the road embanked to a height of 2m or more.

Six Level 3 Areas have been identified. Numbers refer to plan location.

1. Junction with Kempston Southern relief Road

11. Eastern limit of Manor farm excavations to western limit of Bumpy lane excavations

14. Junction with A600 other than areas noted above in (0000)

16. Eastern limit of Eastcotts excavations to Cardington Cross junction.

18. Cardington Cross junction to west of Meadow lane

23. Castle Mill viaduct to junction with A428 St Neots Rd.

**3.3.2 Response: regular checks to be carried out in these areas to ensure that agreed plans are being followed and to monitor any unforeseen groundworks. Excavation of all roadside ditches to be observed in common with procedures along the entire road corridor.**

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## Location of Archaeologically sensitive areas

### List of Areas

1. Junction with Kempston Southern relief Road
2. Kempston Southern Relief Road to Clay-Pit railway bridge.
- 3/3a. Clay-Pit railway bridge to east of A6 junction.
4. Peartree farm
5. Peartree farm excavations to Village farm excavations.
6. Village farm
- 6A. North of Village farm excavations
7. Village farm excavations to Bunyans farm excavations
8. Bunyans farm excavations to Manor farm excavations
9. Bunyans farm
10. Manor farm
11. Eastern limit of Manor farm excavations to western limit of Bumpy lane excavations
12. Bumpy Lane excavations to A600
- 12A. A600 to Eastcoats excavations
13. Harrowden
14. Junction with A600 other than areas noted above in (0000)
15. Eastcoats
16. Eastern limit of Eastcoats excavations to Cardington Cross junction.
17. Cardington Cross interchange
18. Cardington Cross junction to west of Meadow lane
19. West of Meadow lane to Octagon farm
20. Octagon farm
21. Octagon Farm to Castle Mill Viaduct
22. Castle Mill Viaduct
23. Castle Mill viaduct to junction with A428 St Neots Rd.
24. Junction with A428 St. Neots Rd.

