



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

Land between 73-85 Grange Road

Blunham

Bedfordshire



## Quality Check

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## Summary

In January 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd carried out an Archaeological Evaluation at the Land between 73-85 Grange Road, Blunham, Bedfordshire prior to the construction of two new dwellings on the site. The trenching contained a possible oven/hearth of unknown date but suggestive of domestic occupation and also a post-medieval pit.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In January 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation at Land between 73-85 Grange Road, Blunham, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by Fowler Homes Ltd, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Barclay-Jones 2018), and informally agreed with Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Team (CBCAT), Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Central Bedfordshire Council. The relevant planning application reference is CB/17/04540/FULL.

### 1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site.

### 1.3 *The Site*

#### *Location*

The site is located on the west side of Grange Road, within the village and civil parish of Blunham in the administrative district of Central Bedfordshire. It lies at National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 15220 51988 (Fig. 1).

#### *Description*

The site is bounded to the north and south by adjoining properties, while the east boundary is formed by Grange Road, which provides the access to the site. The boundary to the west is formed by cultivated fields (Fig. 2). It is on level ground, at approximately 19m AOD.

#### *Geology & Topography*

The geology of the site comprises sedimentary bedrock of mudstone from the Peterborough Member, overlain by superficial deposits of sand and gravel from River Terrace Deposits 1-2 (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

#### *Development*

The application is for the construction of two detached dwellings, with associated works including garages, landscaping and access provision (Fig. 3).

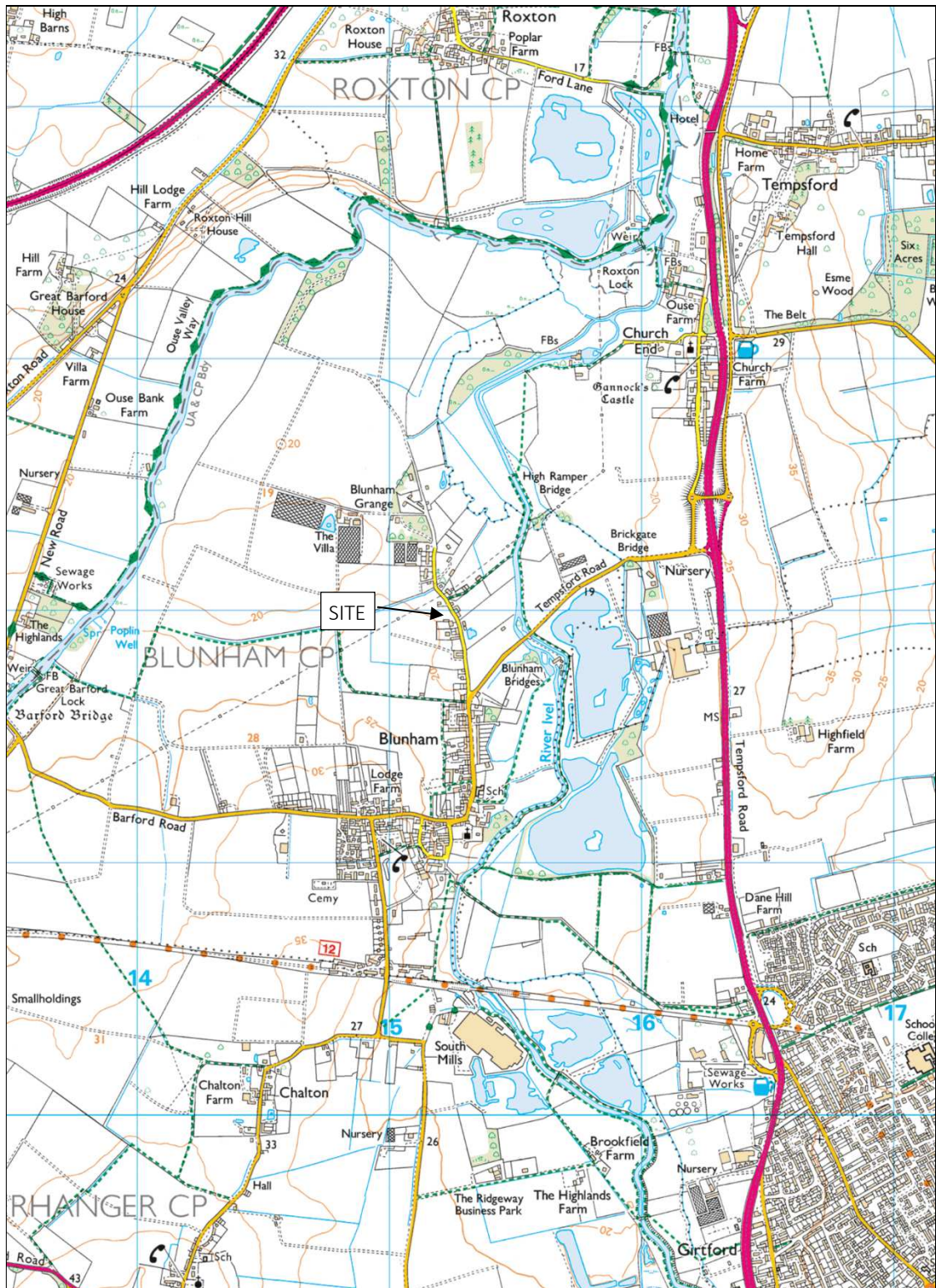
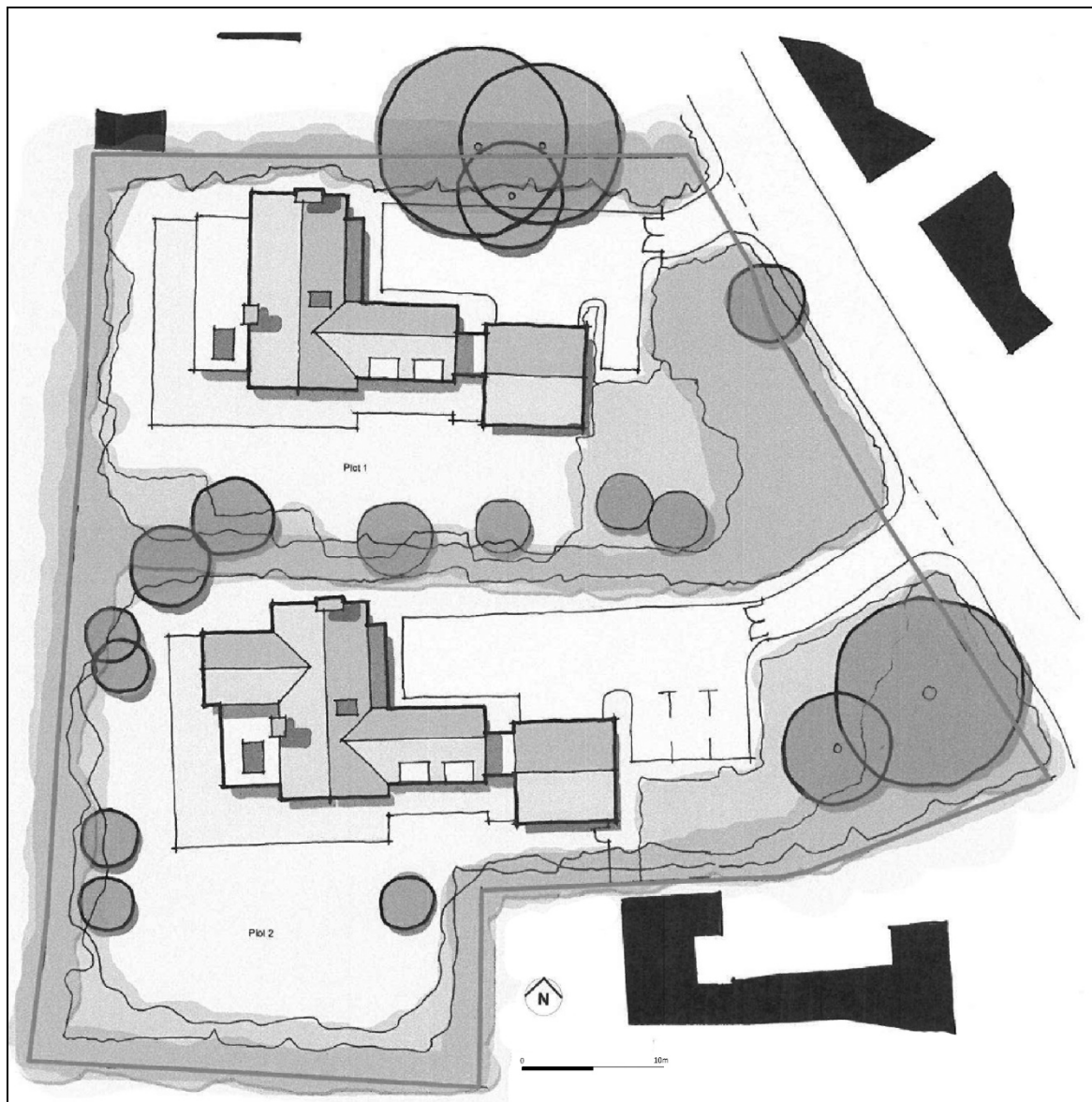


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)



Figure 2: Site location (scale 1: 1,250)



**Figure 3:** Proposed development (scale: 1:500)



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## 2 Aims & Methods

2.1 The aims of this project as defined in the WSI (Barclay-Jones 2018) were:

- To establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation within the development area
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape
- To recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

In addition, the research aims will inter alia consider various aspects of the development of rural Saxon, medieval and post-medieval settlements; their origins, morphology, diversity and ultimate success or failure (Wade 2000: 24-25; Oake 2007: 14; Medlycott 2011: 70 and Edgeworth 2007: 121-123).

### 2.2 *Methods*

This is the first part of a staged investigation whereby the results of this stage will be assessed to determine the need and extent of further stages of archaeological investigation. The methods used were as follows:

- An archaeological field evaluation of the site consisting of two 25m trenches and one 20m trench within the suggested footprints of the new buildings (Fig. 4). A further 40 sq. meters was allowed as a contingency to explore and clarify features.

### 2.3 *Standards*

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (CIfA 2014)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014)
- Current English Heritage guidelines (HE 2015, EH 2008)
- The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003)



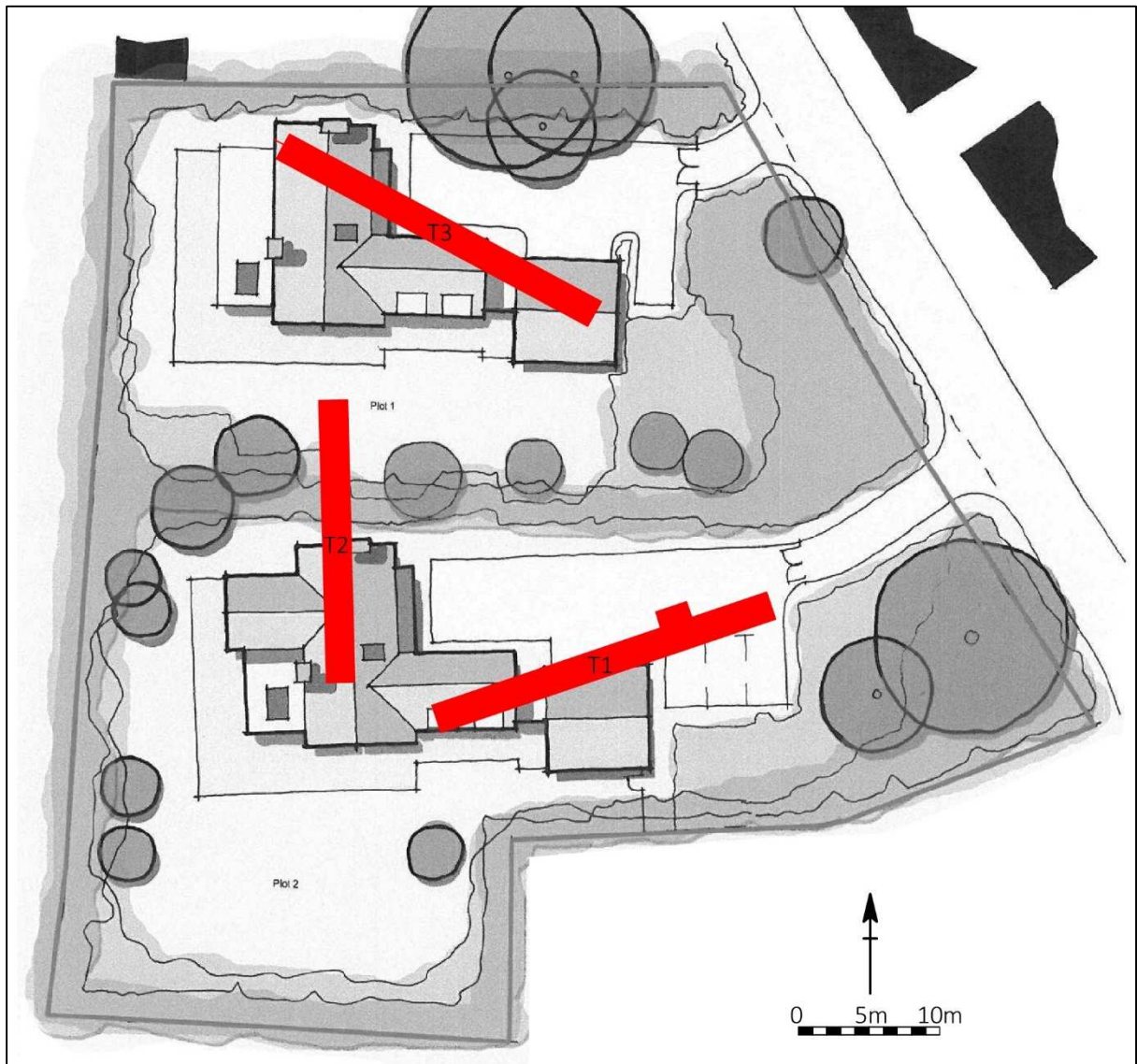


Figure 4: Trench plan (scale 1: 500)



### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 Blunham is a small village which appears to have started as a linear settlement along the line of the present-day High Street before widening out at the south end, and then expanding further to the west during the post-medieval period (Historic Environment Record). The name of the village may derive from the Old English for 'homestead, or land in a river-bend, of a man called Bluwa' (Mills 1991: 41). The development site lies outside the Blunham Conservation Area (DBD 3273) which is focussed south of the site around the main part of the village. There is no firm evidence of occupation or activity in the area prior to the Saxon period, although there are a number of undated cropmarks which may suggest prehistoric activity.

This section has been compiled with information from Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (search number 201819/148; search radius 500m), KDK's own library and reliable internet sources.

#### 3.2 *Prehistoric - Saxon* (before 600BC – AD 1066)

A number of cropmarks (HER 1776) to the north-east of the development site (south of Tempsford Mill) have been seen in aerial photographs, which show a series of at least eight ring ditches (including a double ditch), as well as a pit alignment. Although there is no dating evidence for these features, they are thought to be Bronze Age in date (Historic Environment Record). The area containing the cropmarks was disturbed by the canalisation of the River Ivel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

To the north-west of the site, at The Villa, there are further cropmarks (HER 13756) which show a series of sub-rectangular enclosures. These are partly buried under glasshouses, but archaeological investigations to the west revealed a number of undated features including pits and a boundary ditch. A few flakes of flint were also found, but were not suitable for dating purposes.

The only other possible evidence for early activity in the area around the site comes from two isolated finds. A fragment of a corroded copper alloy object, thought to be a possible Bronze Age dagger chape or personal ornament (HER 18521), was found just south-west of the site, and an undated and incomplete spoon (HER 20618) was found to the west of the site. The form of the spoon was typically Roman in style, but the patina and stem section suggest a much later date.

By the late Saxon period, much of Blunham was held by freemen. It was good arable land, with ploughland, meadow and land for oxen, as well as a mill.

#### 3.3 *Medieval* (1066 - 1500)

At the time of the Domesday Survey, Blunham was in Wichestanestou Hundred and was divided between three holdings. The settlement was assessed at a total of 14 households (making it a medium sized settlement) and at a total worth of 5 geld units, which was a high value for the size of the village (Open Domesday). The Abbey of Bury St Edmunds held 4 hides and 1 virgate directly of the king, which included the mill, and which was worth £4 (Williams & Martin 1992: 566). The Abbey also held half a hide of ploughland of the Countess Judith, which was worth 20s (*ibid.*: 585). Domnic held 1 virgate of Eudo the Steward, with land for oxen, worth 2s (*ibid.*: 570). The historic core of medieval Blunham (HER 17152) lies mainly to the south of the development area.

The evidence suggests that the village was part of a wider, largely agricultural landscape. The cropmarks to the north-east of the site (HER 1776) show a preserved area of ridge and furrow,



and the linear features also revealed by the crop marks are thought to be from later agricultural activities. In the immediate vicinity of the site, documentary evidence suggests that there was a medieval-post-medieval dovehouse (HER 9768), since demolished. No physical evidence of the dovehouse remains, but a combination of documentary records suggests the location.

Two isolated medieval coins have been found in the village by metal detectorists. One is a 14<sup>th</sup> century silver farthing (HER 18469), which was found in the main part of the village to the south of the development area, and one is a 13<sup>th</sup> century silver penny of John or Henry III (HER 18573) which was found to the south-west of the site. No other evidence for medieval activity has been found within the vicinity of the site.

#### 3.4 ***Post-Medieval - Modern*** (1500 - present)

The village expanded to the north in the post-medieval period, and there are a number of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Grade II and III listed buildings along Grange Road, some now demolished (i.e. HER 5580, HER 5581, HER 20058), as well as a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, both listed and unlisted. These include 71-73 Grange Road, which are directly adjacent to the site, forming part of the southern boundary. These are two 19<sup>th</sup> century timber framed cottages which are now combined as one Grade II listed house (HER 1363; DBD 2688).

The village continued to be largely agricultural during this period. Blunham Mill (HER 1025) is an 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century watermill on the River Ivel, to the south-east of the development area. It is probably on the site of an earlier mill (or mills), as a mill is mentioned in the Domesday Survey, and leases from the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries mention the presence of a corn mill, a fulling mill and a wheat mill. It is directly adjacent to the Old Mill House (HER 5579), a formerly Grade II listed house from the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. Onion-drying sheds or lofts are also known in the village, including one recorded at 66 Grange Road (HER 13375) and one at Red House Farm, Grange Road (HER 13395). Within the village is also the site of an early post-medieval pound (HER 9769). Gravel extraction was also an industry in the village in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with two gravel pits being known to have existed to the west and north-east of the village (HER 9770; HER 9857), although both have now been levelled.

Blunham Bridges (HER 997; DBD 3616) are a pair of Grade II listed bridges over the River Ivel to the east of the site. The first is thought to date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (although with later additions) and is a stone structure with five semi-circular arches and four cutwaters over the river which has been designated as a Scheduled Monument (SM 1004504). The second bridge adjoins the first, but dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is not part of the Scheduled Monument. The later bridge is also recorded separately as a Navigation Bridge, built during improvements to the river's navigation in the early 1800s (HER 15057).

A decorative copper alloy object (HER 19717), thought to probably be part of an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century sword hilt was found to the south of the development area.

A WWII pillbox (now demolished) (HER 17849) was located on the road between the bridges on Tempsford Road to east of site, but there are no other monuments of note from the modern period.

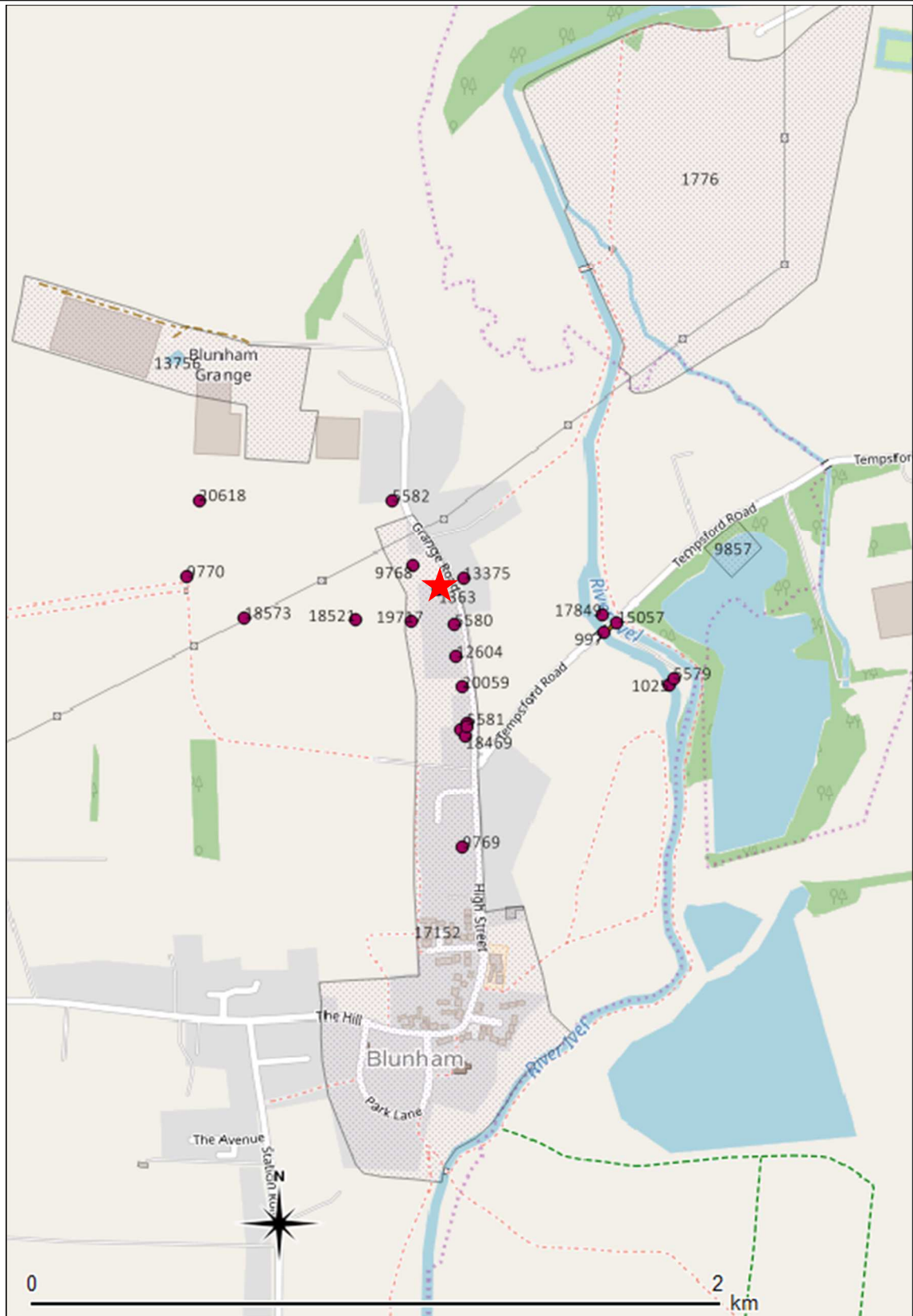


Figure 5: HER data plan (scale 1:17,500); © OpenStreetMap contributors 2018  
Dots: monuments; blocks: monument areas; Star: site



## 4 Results

### 4.1 Introduction

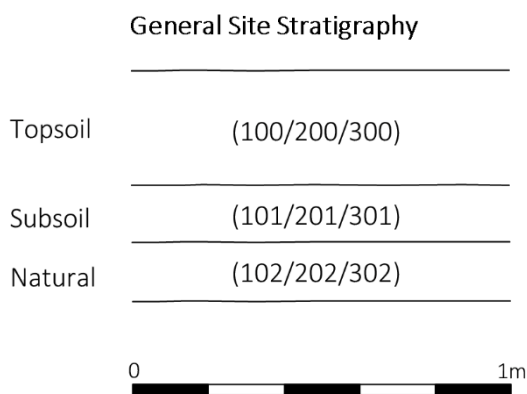
Three trenches were mechanically excavated in the footprint of the new development, with a 1.5 tonne machine fitted with a 0.9m toothless ditching bucket.

The site stratigraphy was consistent throughout the trenches comprising:

Topsoil (100/200/300) up to 0.3m in depth consisting of dark grey brown, heavily bioturbated silty clay with occasional sandy inclusions throughout;

Subsoil (101/201/301) up to 0.15m in depth consisting of mid grey brown silty clay with occasional sub-rounded stones <20mm;

Natural (102/202/302) > 0.15m in depth consisting of light brownish orange sandy gravelly clay (Plates 1-2, 10-13; Fig. 6).



**Figure 6:** Stratigraphy section (scale 1:20)

### 4.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was situated at the southern end of the site orientated southwest-northeast. The general site stratigraphy was observed along with a possible oven/hearth GN105, a small pit [103] and a modern drainage run, all of which were found towards the northeast end of the trench. Initially this trench measured 25m in length, 2m in width and up to 0.5m in depth, but in order to fully define the possible oven/hearth GN105 the trench had a side extension that measured 2.3m in length, 1.2m in width and up to 0.5m in depth (Plates 1-10; Figs. 7-9).

**Oven/Hearth GN105** was sub-rectangular in plan orientated north-northwest - south-southeast. It measured 0.75m in width, 0.9m in length and 0.1m in depth. It consisted of a deposit of mid orangey red, friable, baked clay (106) measuring 0.5m in width, 0.85m in length and 0.03m in depth. This was overlying deposits (107) and (108); (107) consisted of mid beige brown, fairly soft silty clay and measured 0.21m in width and 0.03m in depth; deposit (108) consisted of a burnt deposit of dark grey black, fairly soft silty clay with light grey ash and fine charcoal residues measuring 0.75m in width, 0.84m in length and 0.07m in depth.

The subsoil (102) was overlying the feature. The feature itself was very shallow, and the deposits were found within a poorly defined cut [109], cutting into the natural (102). There was no evidence for heat affected earth underlying or surrounding the feature, and no finds were recovered (Plates 3-7; Fig. 8).



Environmental samples were taken from this feature and processed, with the results presented in Appendix 3. Both the baked clay (106) and the ashy charcoal (108) were floated using a 0.5mm sieve with the residue then being dry sieved and hand sorted. A magnet was passed over the processed residue. The samples contained plant material (rootlets), small shells, charcoal and indicated small quantities of burnt animal bone were present, but no evidence of industrial activity such as hammerscale.

It is possible that this feature is a hearth or small oven. The burnt clay overlying the ash and charcoal would suggest that there has been some kind of collapse of the super-structure immediately prior to abandonment. However, there is little remaining of the clay, and not enough to form, for example, a dome over the footprint of the feature.

**Pit [103]** appeared to be sub-circular in plan and continued beyond the limit of excavation. It had concave sides and a U-shaped base and measured 0.84m in width, was greater than 0.45m in length and 0.43 in depth. Its primary fill (104) measured 0.73 in width and 0.28m in depth and consisted of dark greyish brown, slightly silty fairly friable clay with occasional sub-rounded stones less than 5mm in diameter. This fill contained small fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), clay pipe stem with a 2mm bore and the rim of a glass bottle. The secondary fill (110) measured 0.84m in width and 0.16m in depth and consisted of mid greyish brown, fairly soft, silty clay with occasional sub-angular stones less than 10mm in size and small fragments/flecks of CBM. The pit was found cutting through the subsoil and covered by topsoil (Plates 8-9; Fig. 9).

#### 4.3 *Trench 2 & 3*

Trench 2 was situated at the western side of the site orientated north-south. It measured 20m in length, 2m in width and up to 0.6m in depth, whilst Trench 3 was at the northern end of the site, orientated west-northwest - east-southeast and measured 25m in length, 2m in width and up to 0.55m in depth. In both these trenches the general site stratigraphy was seen with no finds, features or deposits observed (Plates 11-14; Fig. 7).



**Plate 1:** Trench 1, looking WSW (scale 2x1m)



**Plate 2:** Trench 1, stratigraphy, looking SSE (scale 1m)



**Plate 3:** Oven/Hearth GN105, pre-ex, looking N (scale 1m)



**Plate 4:** Oven/Hearth GN105, pre-ex, looking WNW (scale 1m)



**Plate 5:** Oven/Hearth GN105, mid-ex Quad 1, looking NNW (scale 2x0.5m)



**Plate 6:** Oven/Hearth GN105, mid-ex Quad 2, looking SSE (scale 2x0.5m)



**Plate 7:** Oven/Hearth GN105, post-ex, looking NNW (scale 2x1m)



**Plate 8:** Pit [103], looking SSE (scale 1m)





Plate 9: Finds from Pit [103] (scale 3cm)



Plate 10: Modern drainage channel, looking ESE (scale 1x0.5m)



Plate 11: Trench 2, looking SSE (scale 2x1m)



Plate 12: Trench 2, stratigraphy, looking W (scale 2x1m)



**Plate 13:** Trench 3, looking NW (scale 2x1m)



**Plate 14:** Trench 3, stratigraphy, looking NNE (scale 2x1m)

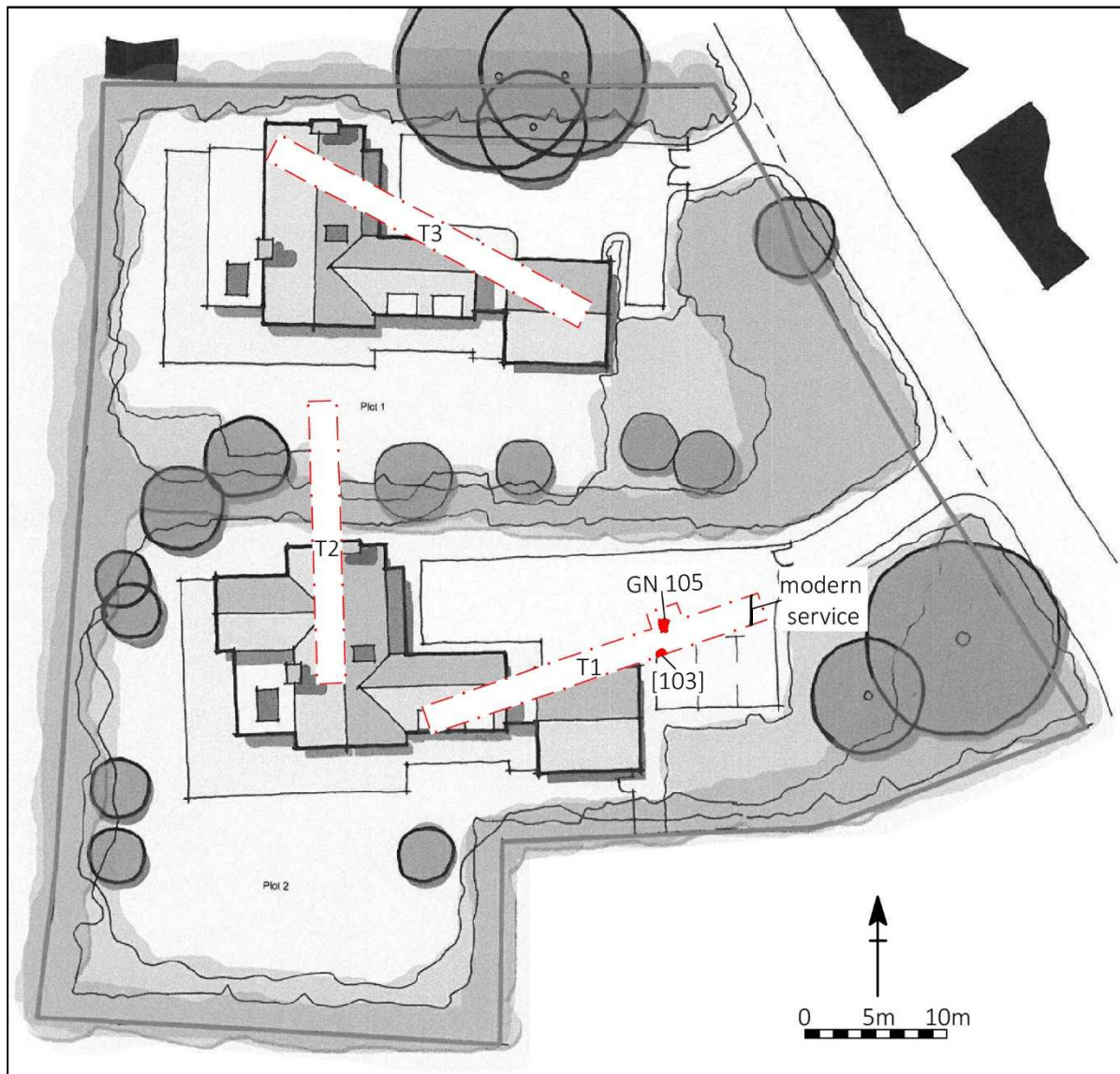
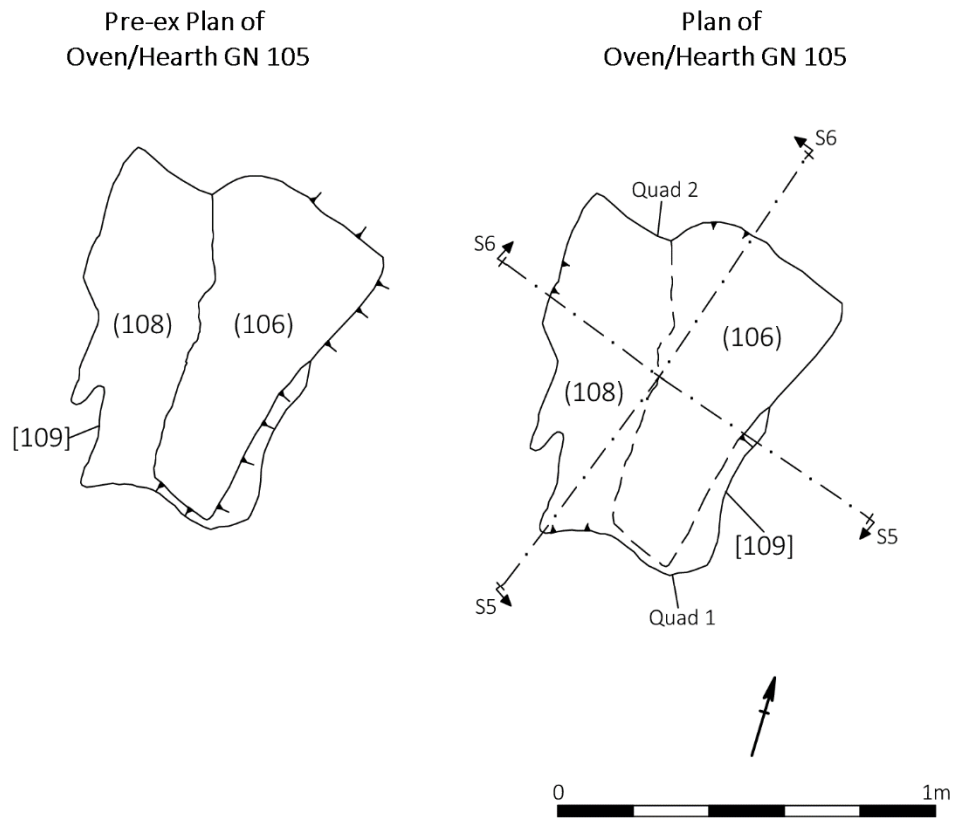
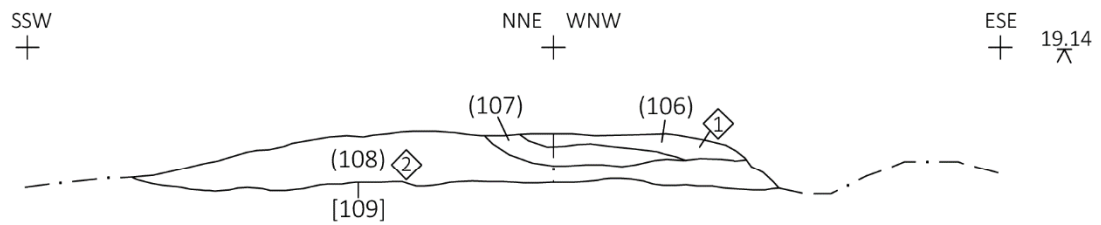


Figure 7: Overall archaeology plan (scale 1:500)



S5: Multi facing section of Oven/Hearth GN 105 - Quad 1



S6: Multi facing section of Oven/Hearth GN 105 - Quad 2

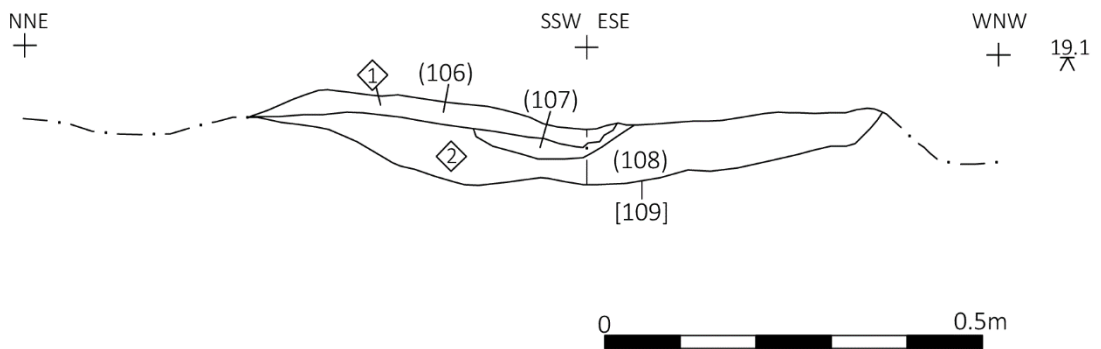


Figure 8: Possible Oven/Hearth GN105 – plans and sections (scale 1:20/1:10)

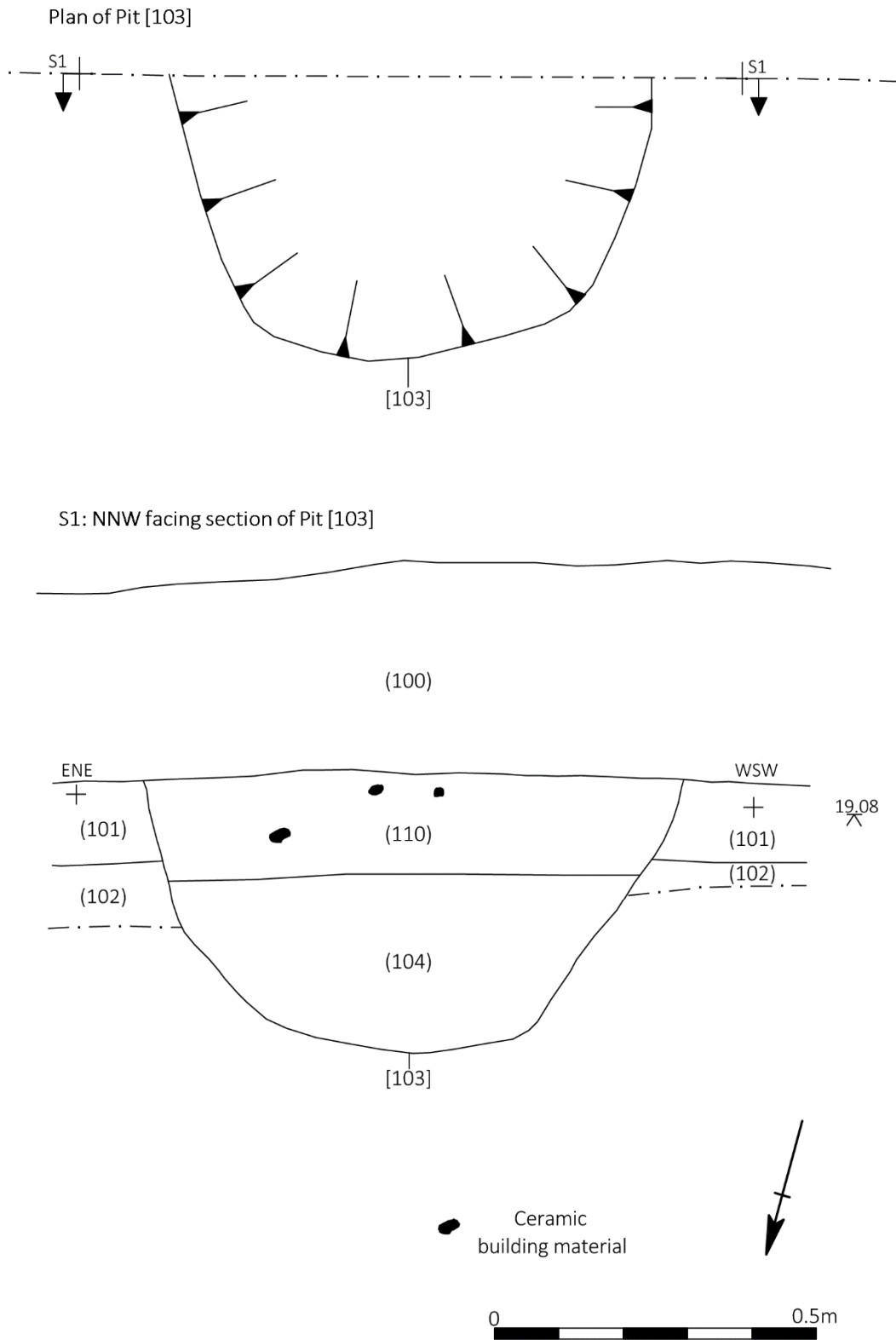


Figure 9: Pit [103] - plan and section (scale 1:10)



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## 5 Conclusions

The site is situated in the historic core of the village, along Grange Road and there are a number of post-medieval listed buildings in the vicinity. There is also evidence of earlier activity to the northeast with extensive cropmarks thought to be Bronze Age, and further undated cropmarks to the northwest.

The evaluation revealed an oven or hearth type feature that was unfortunately undated, but does suggest domestic occupation existed on the site. The environmental analysis indicated small quantities of burnt animal bone was present, and no evidence of hammerscale, indicative of more industrial type activity. The presence of the animal bone likely also indicates a more domestic use for this feature.

As the feature is undated and the analysis of the clay and underlying ash and charcoal did not provide any indication of function, this feature remains enigmatic. However, as the burnt clay forms the upper layer of the deposit, it could be argued that there is a greater likelihood that it is the remains of a collapsed structural feature such as an oven, rather than a hearth. Whilst the overlying clay was heat affected the same could not be said for the surrounding geology. This may be because the temperatures involved were not particularly high or that it was not in use for very long.

Given the location of the development area in the historic core of the village and closely situated to post-medieval buildings the presence of a post-medieval pit ties in with the surrounding contemporary landscape, and its presence is not especially surprising.

As the site has indicated evidence for occupation, the two trenches that were blank may possibly be in an area of the site with more widely dispersed features.



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## 6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Philip Fowler for commissioning this report on behalf of Fowler Homes Ltd. Thanks are also due to Stephen Coleman from the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record Office for providing historic environment records and other relevant documents; and to Slawek Utrata of Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Team (CBCAT) monitoring the project.

Thanks, are also given to the site contractors for their full co-operation during the fieldwork.

The fieldwork was carried out by Carina Summerfield-Hill MSc ACIfA and Barney King. The report was written by Carina Summerfield-Hill, and edited by David Kaye BA ACIfA.



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## 7 Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Written Scheme of Investigation
2. Initial report
3. Trench recording sheets
4. Sample records
5. Finds records
6. Site drawings
7. Client's site plans
8. List of photographs
9. B/W prints & negatives
10. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (BEDFM: 2018.72).





## 8 References

### ***Standards & Specifications***

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## Appendix 1: Photograph List

Digital	B&W	View	Subject
1	1	WSW	Trench 1
2		SSE	Trench 1, stratigraphy
3	2	SSE	Pit [103]
4	3	NNW	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105
5		NNW	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105
6	4	N	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, fully defined
7		WNW	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, fully defined
8		ESE	Trench 1, drainage channel
9	5	SSE	Trench 2
10		W	Trench 2, stratigraphy
11	6	WNW	Trench 3
12		NNE	Trench 3, stratigraphy
13	7	NNW	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, Quad 1
14	8	WNW	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, Quad 1
15	9	NNE	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, Quad 1
16	10	SSE	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, Quad 2
17	11	ESE	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, Quad 2
18	12	SSW	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, Quad 2
19	13	NNW	Possible Oven/Hearth GN 105, post-ex
20		-	Finds from Pit [103]



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**Appendix 2: Finds Concordance**

Context Numbers		CBM		Glass		Clay Pipe	
Fill	Cut	No.	Gms	No.	Gms	No.	Gms
104	[103]	2	30	1	30	1	2
<b>Total</b>		2	30	1	30	1	2

No finds retained



### Appendix 3: Environmental Sample Concordance

Context No.	Sample No.	Sample Volume	Bag No.	Weight	Retent/ Flot	Brief Description of content
106	1	20l	1	4g	F	Plant material (rootlets), small shells and charcoal
106	1	20l	1	7g	R	Ferromagnetic rock
106	1	20l	1	1g	R	Pieces of animal bone, some heat effected
106	1	20l	1	2.3kg	R	Heat effected clay
108	2	20l	1	11g	F	Plant material (rootlets), small shells and charcoal
108	2	20l	1	17g	R	Heat effected clay
108	2	20l	1	21g	R	Ferromagnetic rock
108	2	20l	1	2g	R	Pieces of animal bone, some heat effected



## Appendix 4: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	Land between 73-85 Grange Road, Blunham, Bedfordshire	Project Site Code	408/BGR
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-329236	Event/Accession no	BEDFM: 2018.72
OS reference	TL 15220 51988	Study area size	140 sq.m
Project Type	Evaluation	Height (mAOD)	19.49
Short Description	In January 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd carried out an Archaeological Evaluation at the Land between 73-85 Grange Road, Blunham, Bedfordshire prior to the construction of two new dwellings on the site. The trenching contained a possible oven/hearth type feature of unknown date but suggestive of domestic occupation and a post-medieval pit.		
Previous work	None	Site status	None
Planning proposal	Erection of two detached dwellings, with associated garages, access and landscaping	Current land use	Unused ground
Local Planning Authority	Central Bedfordshire Council	Planning application ref.	CB/17/04540/FULL
Monument type	Oven/hearth Pit	Monument period	Unknown Post-medieval
Significant finds	None	Future work	Unknown
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	CBCAT	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	David Kaye BA ACIfA	Director/Supervisor	Carina Summerfield-Hill MSc ACIfA
Sponsor/funding body	Fowler Homes Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	15.01.19	End date	17.01.19
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical	Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (BEDFM: 2018.72)	None	
Paper		WSI, report, site records, development plan, b&w photographs and negatives, printout of digital photos	
Digital		The above in digital format with report downloaded to OASIS	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title	Archaeological Evaluation Land between 73-85 Grange Road, Blunham, Bedfordshire		
Serial title & volume	408/BGR/2.2		
Author(s)	Carina Summerfield-Hill MSc ACIfA		
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