



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Land to the rear of Elms Mere
96 Cotton End Road
Wilstead
Bedfordshire



Quality Check

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Summary

In February 2021 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation of Land to the rear of Elms Mere, 96 Cotton End Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire. Despite the proximity of the development site to archaeological sites and finds dating from prehistory, and its location within the postulated boundaries of the medieval settlement, the evaluation did not reveal any significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts. It appears that the footprint of the development may be situated between widely dispersed features.

1 Introduction

1.1 In February 2021 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation of Land to the rear of Elms Mere, 96 Cotton End Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by DKP Developments Ltd, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Watson 2021), and approved by Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team (BBHET), Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Bedford Borough Council. The relevant planning application reference is 19/00628/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This project has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Condition 4 of the planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *The Site*

Location

Wilstead is a small village situated in the civil parish of Wilshamstead and the administrative district of Bedford Borough. The village is situated to the east of the A6 approximately 5 miles south of Bedford town centre. The development site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 0739 4374 (Fig. 1).

Description

The development site is situated immediately south of No. 96 Cotton End Road, and is bounded to the west by Ivy Lane, and to the east and south by residential buildings (Fig. 2).

Geology and Topography

The bedrock geology is the Stewartby and Weymouth Members (undifferentiated), which are sedimentary mudstones formed approximately 157 to 166 million years ago in the Jurassic Period; no superficial geology has been recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The development site lies at an elevation of c.34m AOD.

Development

The proposed development entails the erection of a detached dwelling and new access (Fig. 3).

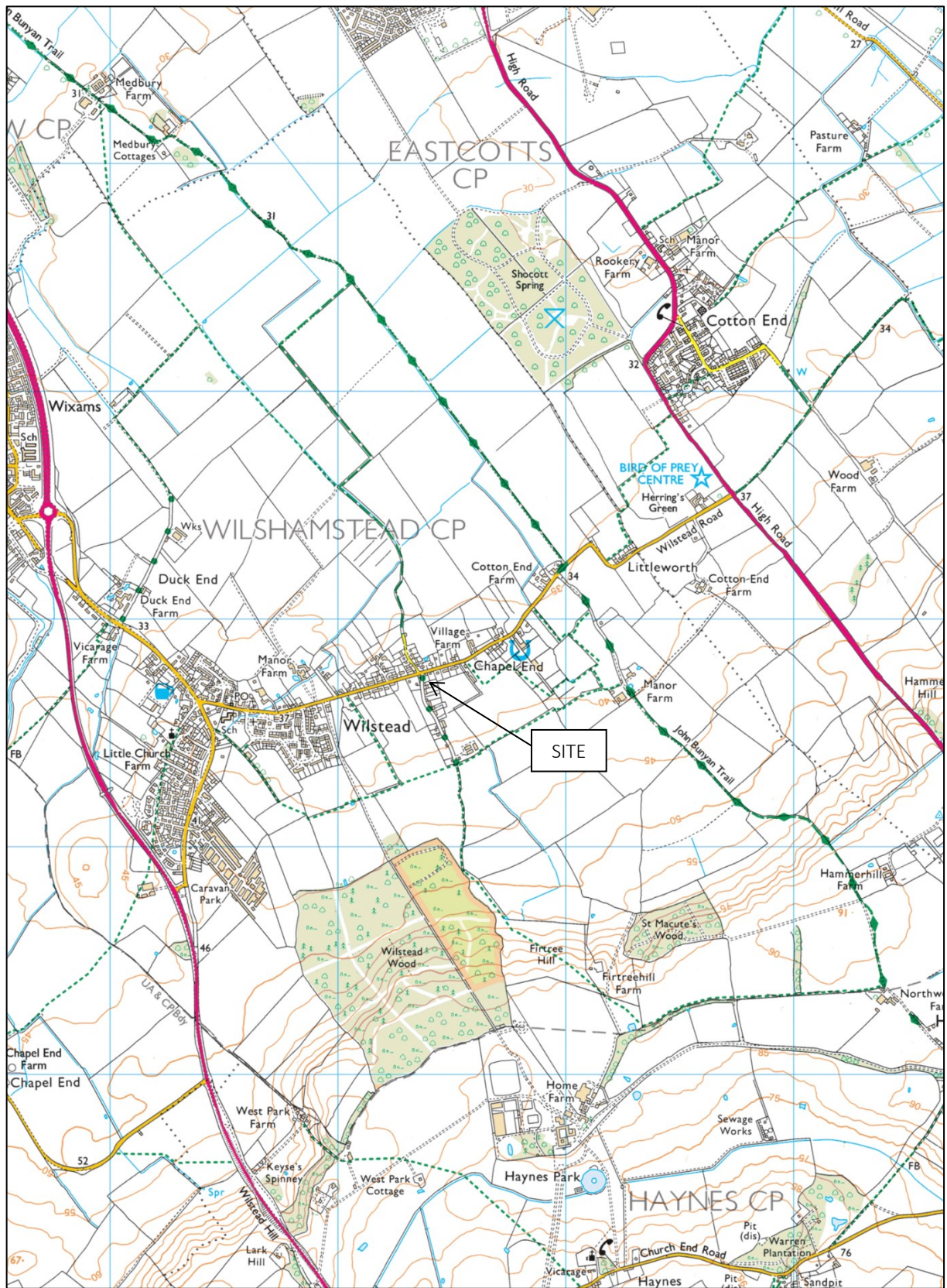


Figure 1: Site location (scale 1:25,000)

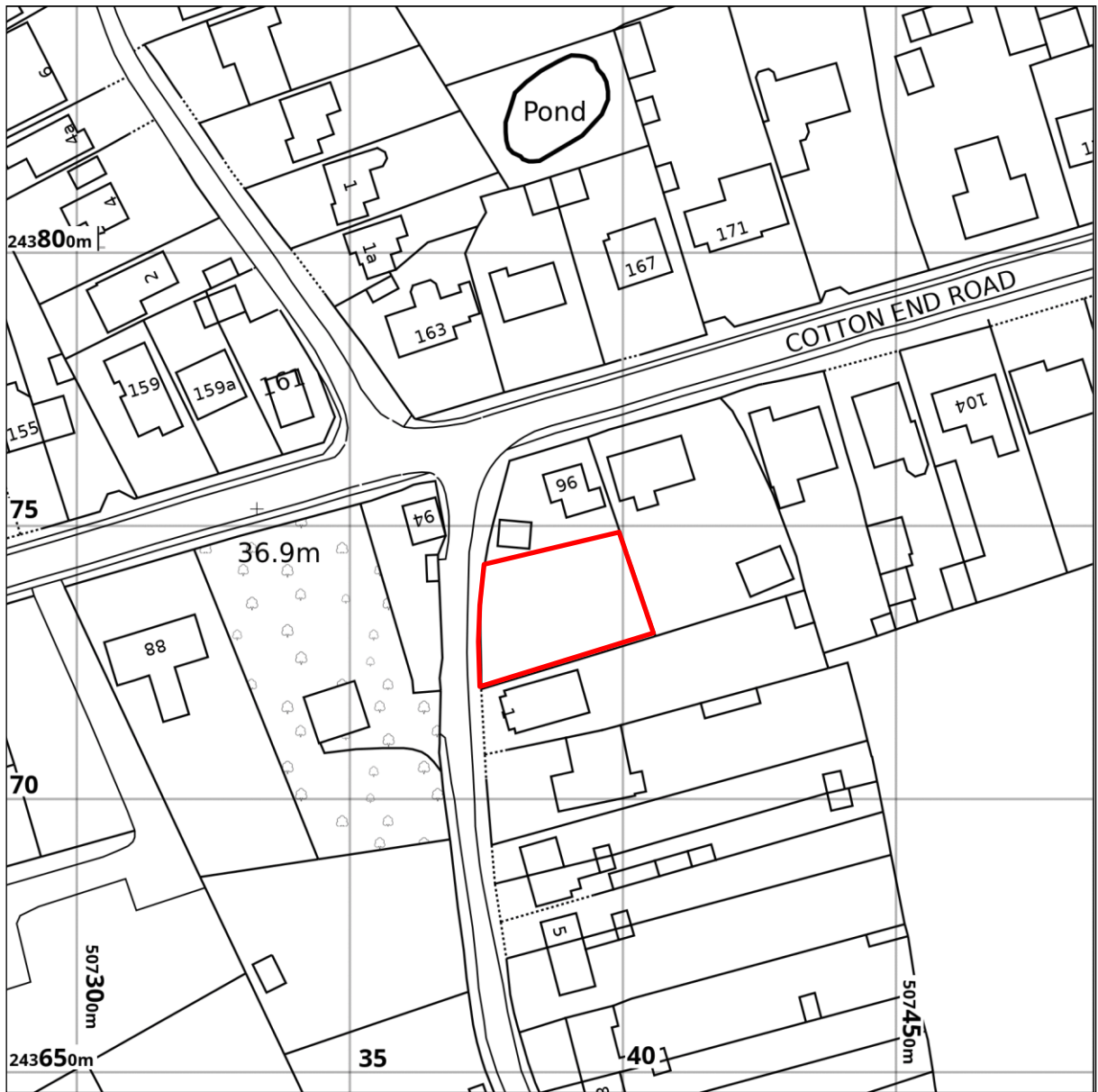


Figure 2: Site layout (scale 1:1,250)

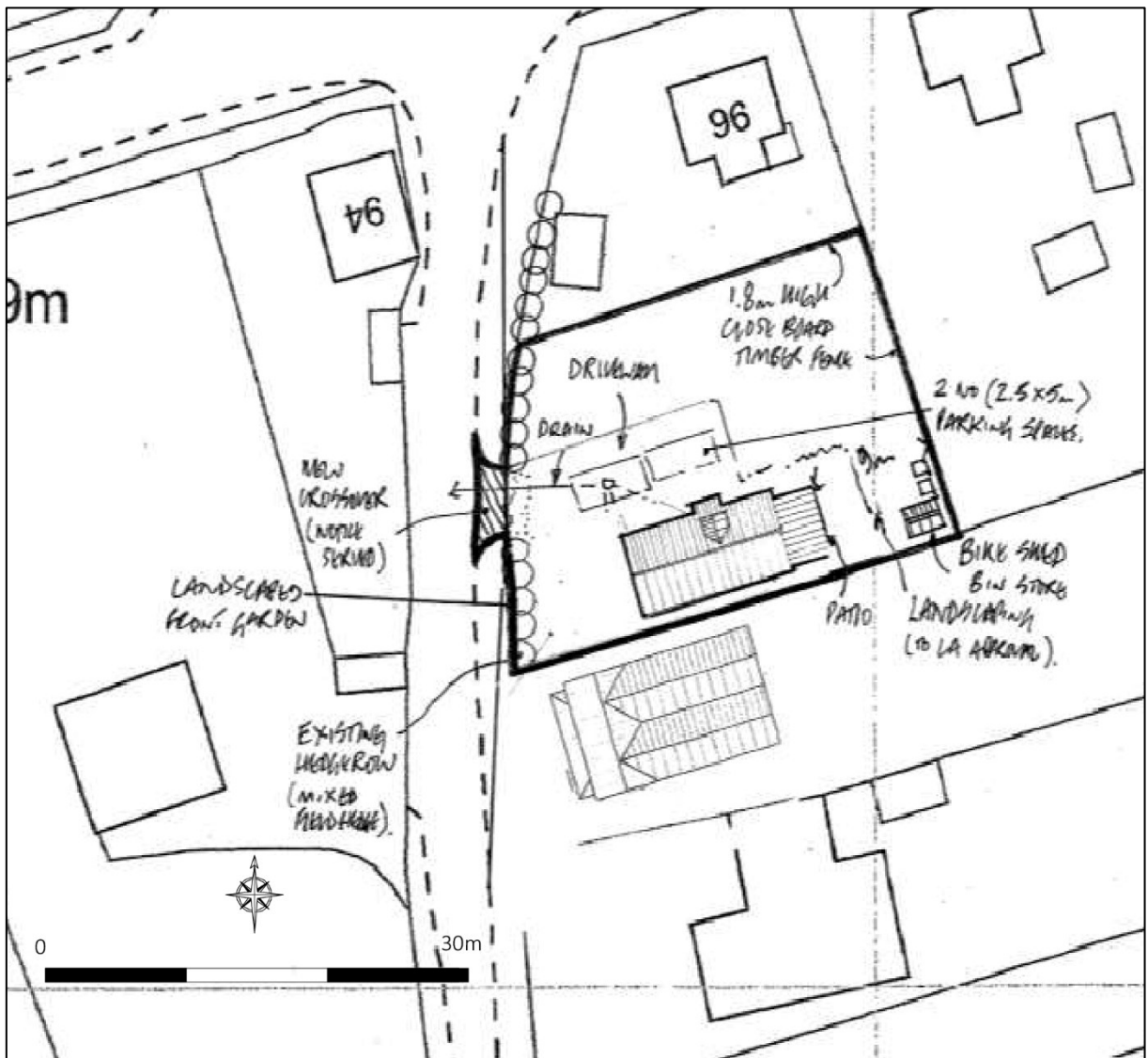


Figure 3: Development plan (scale 1:500)



2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Watson 2021) 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.

2.2 Methods

The methods used were as follows:

- The excavation of a single trench measuring 11m long x 2.10m wide; equivalent to 23.10m² (Fig. 4).

2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The design brief
- The relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2020)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2019)
- 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)
- Data Protection Act 2018

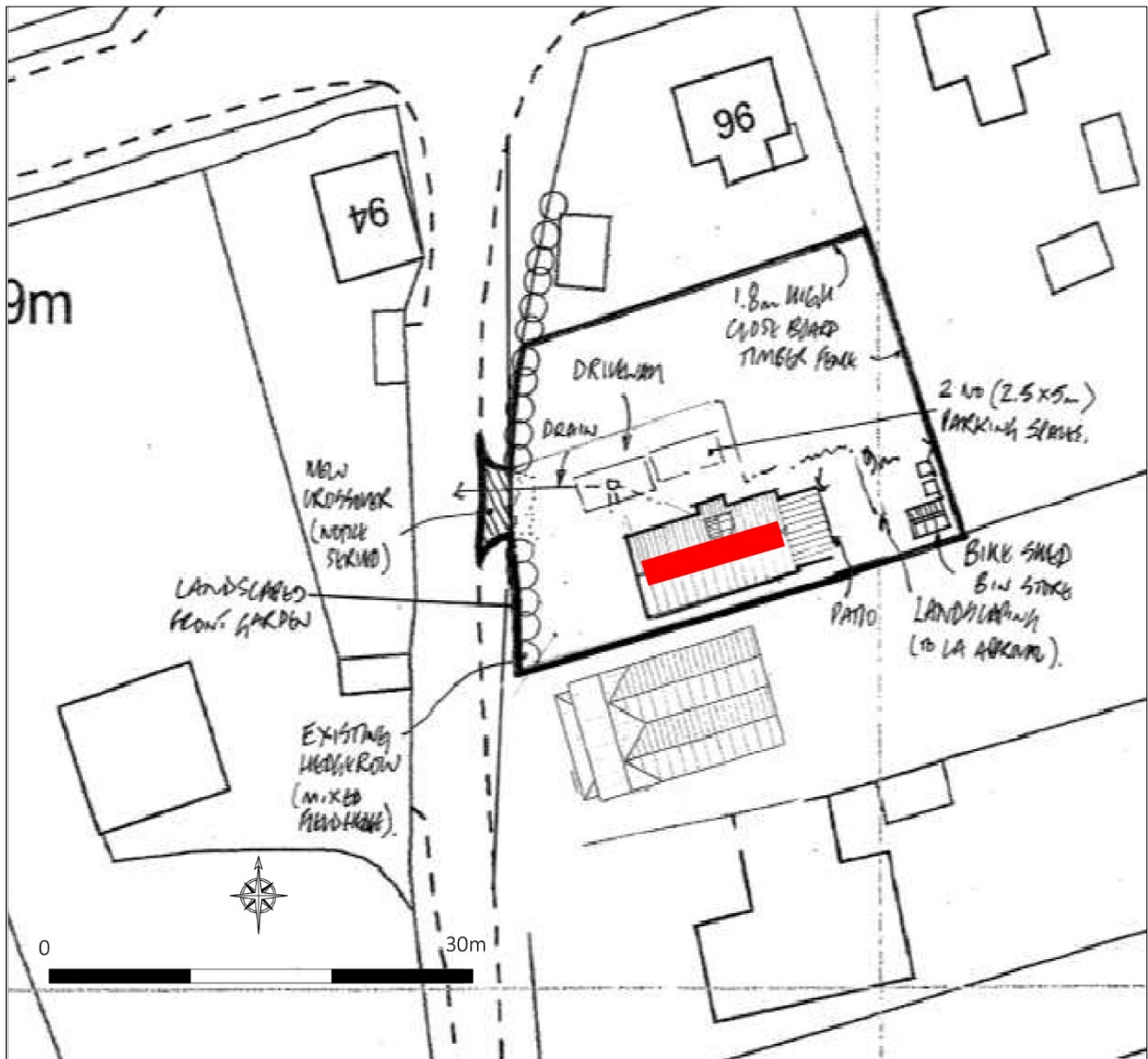


Figure 4: Trench location (scale 1:500)



3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 Settlement at Wilstead can be traced with some certainty from the Iron Age, though it may pre-date this period. Although the prehistoric and Roman area of occupation appears to coincide with the late Saxon and medieval settlement, evidence is currently lacking for continuity in the immediate post-Roman period. The name Wilstead is derived from the Old English for Wilshamstead, meaning Wil's (or Winel's) homestead (hām-stede; BBCCA 2020; KEPN 2020). The development site is located within the postulated extent of the medieval settlement of Wilstead (HER 17052), and directly opposite the site, on the west of Ivy Lane, is the Grade II listed 18th century Spindle Cottage (BBHER 3590; List Entry No. 1114201). Consequently, it is possible that medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains associated with Wilstead's origins and development, survive within the proposed development site.

This section has been compiled with information from the Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (BBHER; Licence No: BBHER 049 (2020-21)), KDK's library, and reliable online sources. The HER data, with a 1km search radius, is shown in Fig. 5. The HER lists ten Grade II listed buildings and nine locally important buildings (including 'site of') within the search area (all post-medieval), and as this project primarily focuses on subterranean remains the majority of those heritage assets will be excluded from the following summary as they will not be impacted by the development.

3.2 *Prehistoric (before 600BC) to Iron Age (600BC - AD43)*

Aerial photographs indicate significant prehistoric settlement in the area. The remains of prehistoric settlement and boundary cropmarks were observed to the west of Cotton End (BBHER 22078), c.750m northeast of the development site. The features comprise an irregular enclosure with a double-ditched trackway extending from its north-western corner that terminates in a small sub-triangular enclosure and a group of fragmentary field boundaries located adjacent to the north. These may date from the Bronze Age, Iron Age or Roman periods.

Iron Age settlement is known from the area around Rookery Farm at Cotton End at the north-eastern edge of the HER search area (EBD316). Aerial photographs revealed archaeological remains dating from the late Bronze Age through to the post-medieval period. Prehistoric activity comprised two late Bronze Age pits and a small farmstead which dated from the middle Iron Age. Several pits and three parallel, but widely spaced ditches also dated to the Iron Age. Further evidence of Iron Age settlement (BBHER 22077) is also visible as a cropmark, possibly a sub-circular enclosure, on aerial photographs, and is located c.600m northwest of the development. The enclosure is formed by a narrow ditch and measures approximately 45m in diameter. A possible entrance with a faint linear ditch extending from it is located on the south eastern side. It is possible that the site may be the remains of a banjo enclosure.

The development site appears to have been situated near the periphery of at least two Iron Age settlements. Archaeological trial trenching (EBB1050) to the south of Cotton End Road, southeast of the development, encountered a ditch or large pit of probable late pre-Belgic Iron Age date. However, on its own (and given the paucity of artefacts within it) this isolated feature is of limited significance and is not indicative of a nearby focus of settlement. However, early-middle Iron Age and 'Belgic' Iron Age/early Romano-British settlements were revealed at Luton Road, c. 800m southwest of EBB1050, though it is outside of the HER search area (Luke & Preece 2010). An early to middle Iron Age occupation site and medieval field system to the south of Manor Farm, with some areas still in use in the Roman period (BBHER 18188; EBB568-70) was revealed c. 800m southeast of the development prior to pipeline construction between Willington and Steppingly.



3.3 **Roman** (AD43 - c.450)

The general area was occupied throughout the Romano-British period, mostly with low-status farmsteads, and there may have had a 'votive' centre at the Romano-British settlement documented outside of the HER search zone at Luton Road (Luke & Preece 2010: 154-155).

The possible alignment of a Roman road (BBHER 3639; EBB592, EBB922) between Bedford and Haynes has been traced using cropmark and earthwork evidence. The line of the road running south from Bedford is indicated by a track on a map of Bedford St Mary's parish, dated 1799; on a 1767 map of Elstow parish it is shown by boundaries between furlongs, and further south by another track. In Wilstead parish it is traceable as a track shown on the Enclosure Map of 1869, and the road is visible as an agger and cropmark to the west of Cotton End, where it passes the site of a possible Roman settlement (BBHER 1181), which is beyond the HER search area.

Two Roman rural settlement sites were identified near Rookery Farm at Cotton End (EBD316) one of which superseded the Iron Age farmstead. Parts of a possible Romano-British field system were also present; and a late medieval/post-medieval trackway may follow the line of a former Romano-British land boundary.

3.4 **Saxon** (c.450 - 1066) to **Medieval** (1066 - 1500)

There is no archaeological evidence for early or mid-Saxon occupation at Wilstead, though late Saxon settlement is attested by the entries in the Domesday Survey of 1086 (BCCA 2020), and at the Luton Road 'Saxo-Norman' settlement situated outside of the HER search area on previously unoccupied land to the north of the Iron Age and Romano-British settlements (Luke & Preece 2010). The Domesday Survey records that there were two *vills*, with each held by a number of freemen who were able to sell their land and a small landholding of one virgate held by a man named Ordwy. Whilst Ordwy was able to hold onto his virgate, the other two *vills* were granted to the Countess Judith and Nigel de Albini after the Norman Conquest. Countess Judith's manor of Winessamestede was relatively small at only 3 hides, but worth £7, 6s in 1086. She had granted the manor to her monastic foundation at Elstow by the time the Domesday Survey had been drawn up (Williams & Martin 2002: 583). The second *vill*, known as Westcotts and formerly held by 7 sokemen was granted to Nigel de Albini, who also held neighbouring Eastcotts (BCCA 2020).

The modern village of Wilstead is still mainly within the postulated boundaries of the medieval settlement (BBHER 17052), although small areas of expansion have occurred to the north and south. The development site is situated within its core. One of the most significant heritage assets from this period stands close to the crossroads in the middle of the village, though beyond the HER search area to the west, in the form of the 14th century Parish Church of All Saints (Grade II*, List Entry No. 1321582; BBHER 3603).

Domestic occupation of the Luton Road site appears to have given way to arable cultivation by the 12th- 13th century (Luke & Preece 201: 156). Indeed, the medieval manors of Westcotts and Wilhamstead apparently had plentiful agricultural resources, as much of the land surrounding Wilstead shows evidence for extensive areas of ridge and furrow cultivation (BBHER 662, BBHER 3570, EBB1377, EBB1170 and EBB1054).

Numerous remains of agricultural buildings have been documented locally. A rectangular earthwork observed in the field to the southeast of the present farmhouse at Manor Farm (BBHER 111) may be a medieval moated site although it could also be the remains of old farm buildings. To the north, along Elms Lane are former farmstead field boundaries (BBHER 22079)



consisting of a number of linear boundary ditches and field boundary that are visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. The ditches likely represent the boundaries of a former medieval or post-medieval farmstead which is depicted on the 1815 Ordnance Survey Map; the field boundary was visible on the 1st edition OS Map (1883). A double ditched medieval/post-medieval trackway (BHER 22457) runs to the northeast of Wilstead, which is visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs, and was marked on the Wilshamstead inclosure map of 1809. Archaeological evaluations of land at Whitworth Way (EBB1316, EBB1350) in 2018 revealed a series of linear boundary ditches and associated gullies, the majority of which can be firmly dated by artefactual evidence as medieval, dating from as early as the 12th century, and two rectangular one-acre plots that most likely fronted onto a local medieval routeway, representing a lost 'end' of Wilstead. An evaluation of land adjacent to Northwood Farm (EBB1349; Summerfield-Hill 2018) revealed a late medieval pit containing mid-14th century pottery and late medieval roof tile, a ditch containing 15th century pottery, and late medieval roof tile. The site is within the postulated extent of the medieval settlement and the late medieval pit and ditch found likely represent peripheral activity to the historic core of the village to the west.

3.5 ***Post-Medieval (1500 - 1900) to Modern (1900 - present)***

Wilstead remained a predominantly agricultural settlement, and the heritage assets in the HER generally reflect its rural characteristics. The Northwood Farm archaeological evaluation (EBB1349; Summerfield-Hill 2018) uncovered a possible post-medieval pit dating to the 18th century and modern dumping. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1880 depicts a building extending into the development site with which these features may have been associated.

The development site is situated on the opposite side of the road (c. 30m west) to the Grade II listed 18th century timber framed Spindle Cottage (BBHER 3590; List Entry No. 1114201), and 110m north of the 18th century timber framed 12 Ivy Lane, Compton Cottage (Grade II, List Entry No. 1321587; BBHER 12592). The locally listed building at 161 Cotton End Road (BBHER 10071), c. 80m northwest, is a modified post-medieval house. The name Dovehouse Close (BBHER 7144), marked on a map of 1809, implies the former location of a dovehouse, although no further evidence has been found to substantiate this possibility.

Archaeological trial trenching (EBB1050) to the south of Cotton End Road, southeast of the development, revealed a possible post-medieval pond. A number of tree throws were also found indicating it had been formerly wooded. Some of the tree throws showed signs of *in-situ* burning, which may indicate land clearance. Artefactual evidence suggests this could have occurred in the post-medieval period. Another pond (BBHER 5230) is shown on the 1794 pre-enclosure/enclosure award map. Archaeological evaluation at 1 Luton Road (EBB724) found no archaeological features, deposits or finds, and the lack of any significant quantity of material covering the natural geology indicates that the site may have been previously reduced, possibly during construction of no 1 Luton Road.

3.6 ***The Known Archaeology & History of the Site***

Cotton End Road is proximal to a range of heritage assets dating from the prehistoric to the post-medieval/modern periods, as detailed above, but no site specific information is available for No. 96 Cotton End Road.

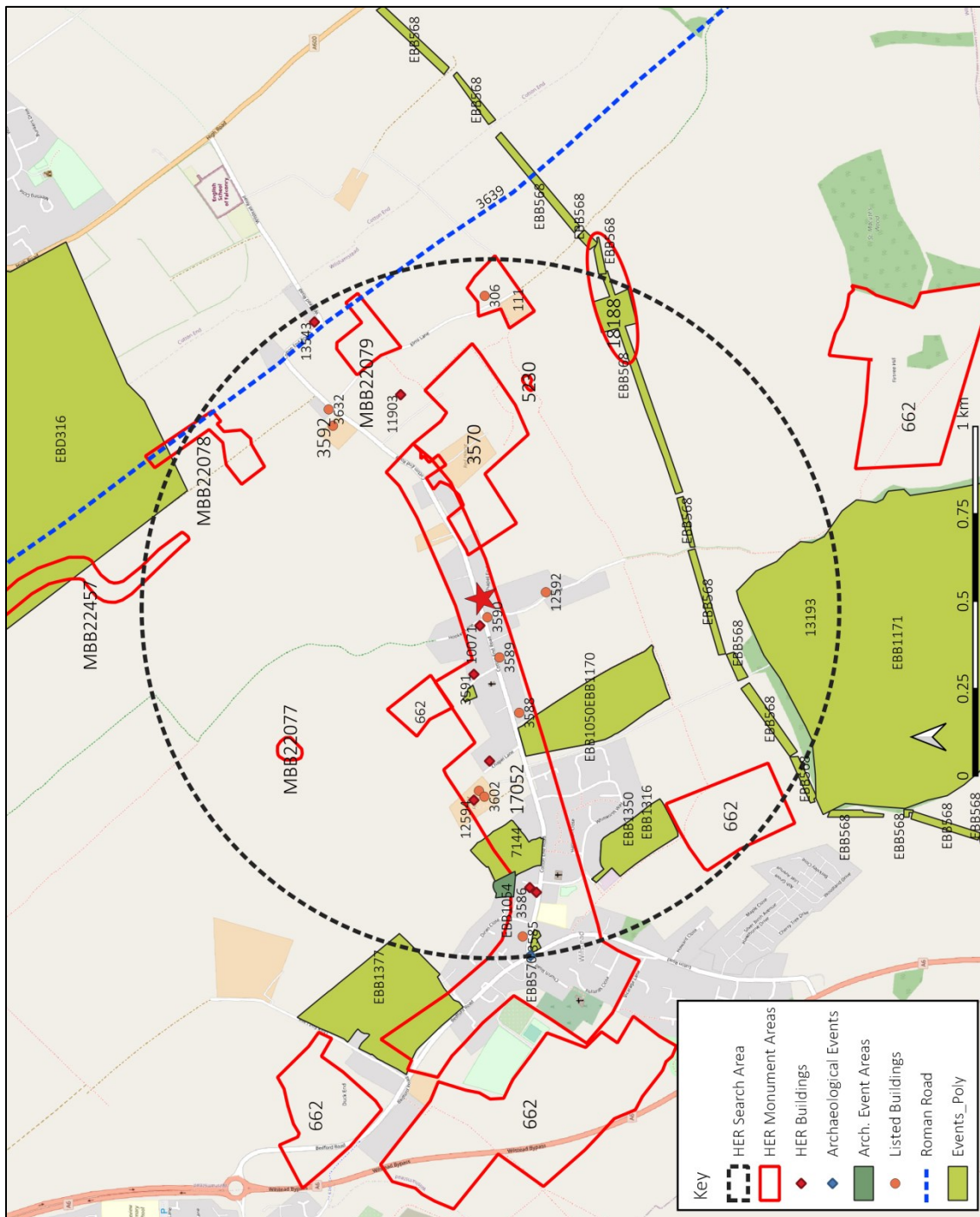


Figure 5: HER data plan (red star = development site; scale as shown)



4 Results

4.1 *Introduction*

The archaeological evaluation entailed the excavation of a single trench within the footprint of the new dwelling. Trench 1 measured 11m x 2.10m, with a depth of 0.60-0.66m and a total area of 23.10m², and was excavated utilising a 3-tonne tracked digger fitted with a 1.2m toothless ditching bucket (Figure 4; Plates 1-2).

4.2 The topsoil of the development area had been extensively tracked over and in parts mixed with the upper subsoil prior to the evaluation. However, the stratigraphy revealed within Trench 1 was uniform along its length and comprised (Figure 6, Plate 3):

- Topsoil (101): Dark brownish grey, silty clay; c. 0.1m thick.
- Subsoil (102): Mid to dark brownish grey, soft, clay; c. 0.24m thick.
- Natural (103): Yellowish brown, sandy clay with moderate inclusions of small stones (<0.05m) and occasional lenses of gravel; <0.36m thick.

The only feature revealed was a Victorian land drain, oriented NW-SE, which was situated near the centre of Trench 1 (Plate 4). On completion of the fieldwork, no significant archaeological features, finds, or deposits were revealed within the evaluation trench.

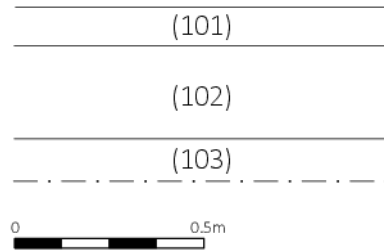


Figure 6: Trench 1 schematic stratigraphy (scale 1:20)



Plate 1: Trench 1, facing South-West



Plate 2: Trench 1, facing North-East



Plate 3: Trench 1, stratigraphy



Plate 4: Trench 1, land drain, facing North-East



5 Conclusions

Despite the proximity of the development site to archaeological sites/finds dating from prehistory to the post-medieval period and its location within the postulated boundaries of the medieval settlement, the archaeological evaluation did not reveal any significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts. As subsoil is present across the excavated area it appears that the soil profile is undisturbed and any potential truncation may have only impacted the topsoil. On the basis of available evidence, it appears that the footprint of the development was probably situated between widely dispersed features.

As nothing of archaeological significance was discovered by this evaluation, the research aims of the project could not be advanced on this occasion.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to DKP Developments Ltd for commissioning this report. Thanks are also due to Geoff Saunders of Bedford Borough Council for providing historic environment records and other relevant documents, and for monitoring the project.

The fieldwork was carried out by Barney King & Samuel Pryor BSc. The report was written by Derek Watson PhD, and edited by David Kaye BA ACIfA.



7 Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Written Scheme of Investigation
2. Initial report
3. Monitoring sheets
4. Site drawings
5. Client's site plans
6. List of photographs
7. Specialist reports

7.2 The archive will be deposited with The Higgins Museum (Accession Number BEDFM 2020.90).



8 References

Standards & Specifications

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Appendix 1: Photograph List

SITE NO/CODE: 568/WCE		Site Name: Land r/o Elms Mere, 96 Cotton End Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire
Shot	View	Subject
1	SW	Trench 1, scale 1m
2	SW	Trench 1 (No information board), scale 1m
3	SW	Trench 1 (No information board), scale 1m
4	NE	Trench 1, scale 1m
5	NE	Trench 1 (No information board), scale 1m
6	NE	Trench 1, land drain, scale 1m
7	NW	Trench 1, stratigraphy



Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	Land to the rear of Elms Mere, 96 Cotton End Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire	Project Site Code	568/WCE
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-410946	Event/Accession no	BEDFM 2020.90
OS reference	TL 0739 4374	Study area size	23.10m sq.
Project Type	Archaeological Evaluation	Height (mAOD)	34m
Short Description	In February 2021 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation of Land to the rear of Elms Mere, 96 Cotton End Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire. Despite the proximity of the development site to archaeological sites/finds dating from prehistory and its location within the postulated boundaries of the medieval settlement, the evaluation did not reveal any significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts. It appears that the footprint of the development was probably situated between widely dispersed features.		
Previous work	None	Site status	None
Planning proposal	Erection of detached dwelling and new access	Current land use	Private garden
Local Planning Authority	Bedford Borough Council	Planning application ref.	19/00628/FUL
Monument type	None	Monument period	None
Significant finds	None	Future work	Unknown
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	Bedford Borough Council	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	Karin Kaye MA MCifA	Director/Supervisor	Barney King
Sponsor/funding body	DKP Developments Ltd, 12 Ashburnham Road, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2RH		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	04.02.2021	End date	04.02.2021
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical	The Higgins Museum (BEDFM 2020.90)	None	
Paper		WSI, Report	
Digital		WSI, Report, photographs, field-work sheets	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title	Archaeological Evaluation Report: Land to the rear of Elms Mere, 96 Cotton End Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire		
Serial title & volume	568/WCE		
Author(s)	Derek Watson PhD		
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