



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Land r/o 115 Station Road
Lower Stondon
Henlow
Bedfordshire

Accession No: 2022/53



Quality Check

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Summary

In December 2022, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation at the Land to the rear of 115 Station Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Central Bedfordshire as a condition for the development of the site. A single 10m long trench was excavated within the footprint of a proposed detached dwelling. Three undated features, consisting of a pit, ditch and a posthole were observed to the south of the trench and a post-medieval land drain was located to the north.

The site is located on the hinterlands of a small early-mid Iron Age settlement to the north and a later larger Iron Age settlement to the east. Iron Age features relating to probable livestock management were located to the south of the site. However, due to the lack of dateable material, the features uncovered for the purposes of this investigation cannot confidently be associated with any particular time period.

1 Introduction

1.1 In December 2022, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation at the Land to the rear of 115 Station Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by Hayley Pryor, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Watson 2022), and approved and approved by the Central Bedfordshire County Archaeological Team (CBCAT), Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Central Bedfordshire Council. The relevant planning application reference is CB/22/01996/FULL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This project has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Condition 3 of the Planning Consent for the development of the site.

1.3 *The Site*

Location

The development site is situated in the village and civil parish of Lower Stondon, which is within the administrative district of Central Bedfordshire Council. It is centred on at National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 1596 3558 (Fig. 1).

Description

The development site is situated in the rear garden of 115 Station Road; in an area measuring approximately 0.084 hectares. The site is bounded to the north by a new housing development at Beverley Gardens, to the south by 115 Station Road, to the east by 117 Station Road, and to the west by 113 Station Road (Fig. 2).

Geology and Topography

The bedrock geology is mudstone of the Gault Formation, formed between 113 and 100.5 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. This is overlain by superficial deposits of the Lowestoft Formation (diamicton: a sediment resulting from dry-land erosion), formed between 480 and 423 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The site is situated at an approximate elevation of 58m AOD.

Development

The development calls for the erection of a 4-bedroom detached dwelling and improvements to access (Fig. 3).

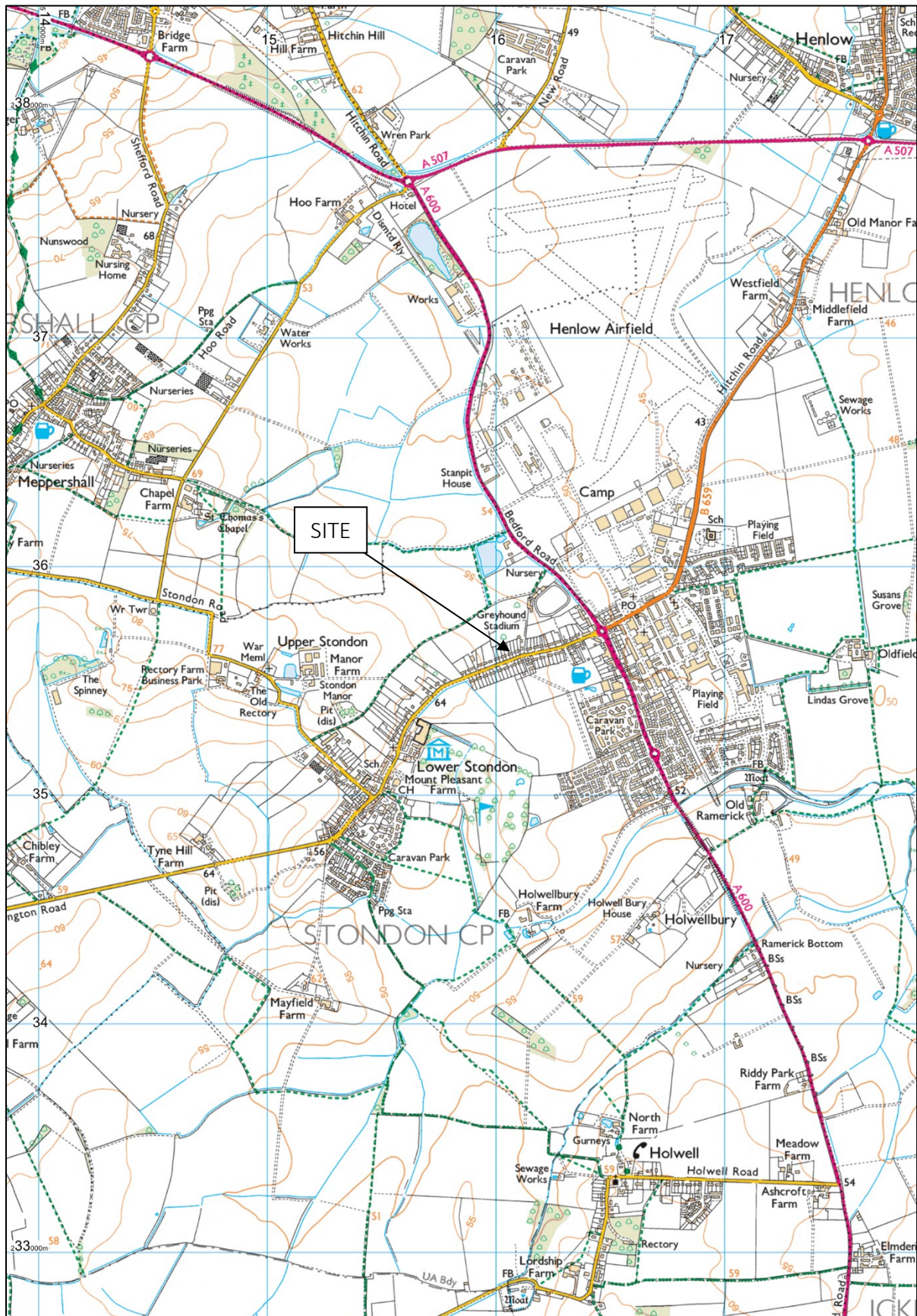


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)



Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1250)

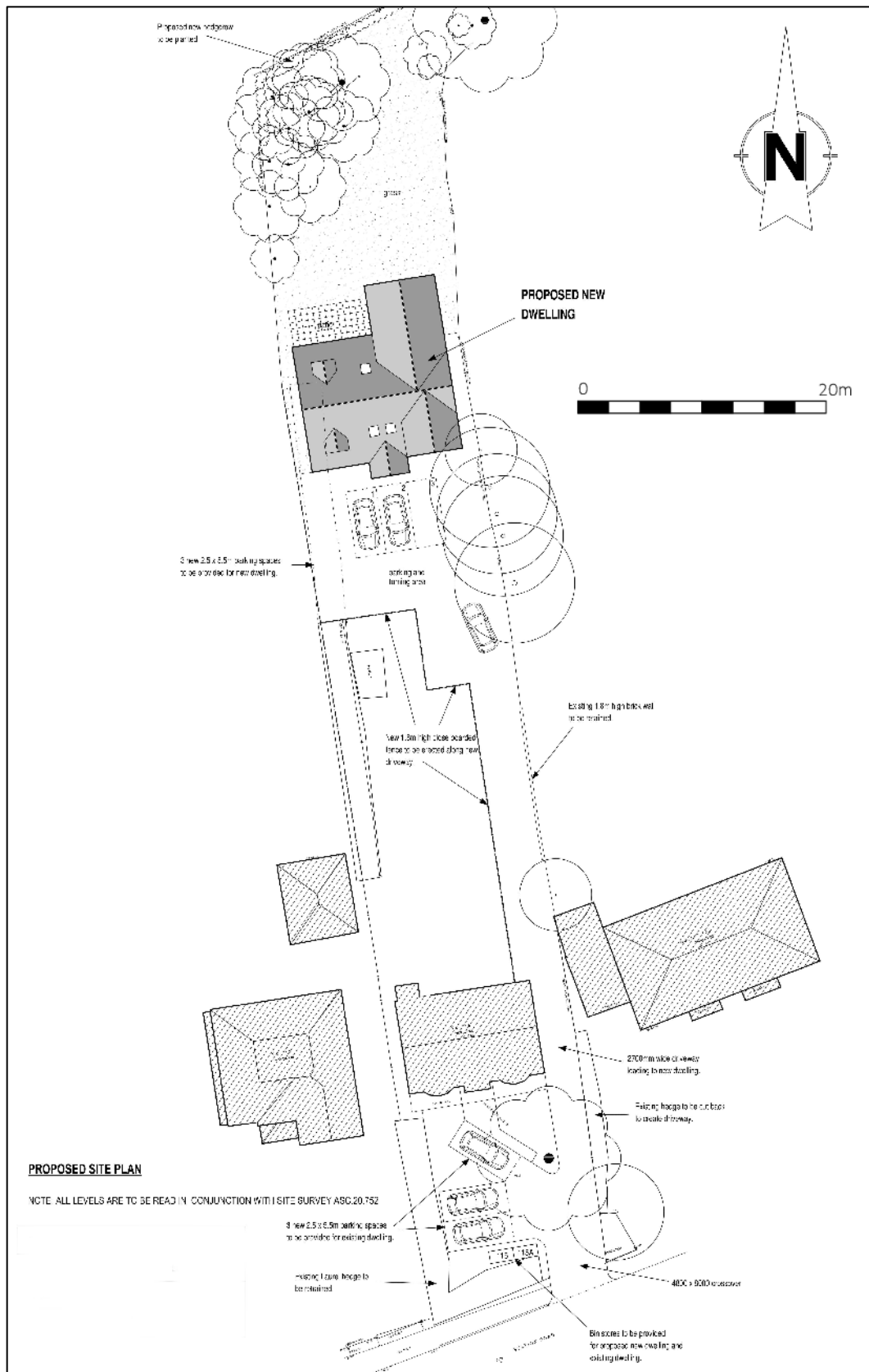


Figure 3: Development plan (1:500)



2 Aims and Methods

2.1 Aims

The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Watson 2022) 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 were to consider the settlement pattern and use of landscape in the Iron Age; settlement types and the transition from Iron Age to the Roman period (Medlycott 2011: 30-31) as well as 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

In line with the requirements of the CBCAT, the methods used were as follows:

- A single trench, which was 10m long by 2.30m wide, was excavated down to the natural geology (Fig. 4).
- The trench was hand cleaned and recorded in accordance with the WSI (Watson 2022)
- All archaeological features were hand dug and recorded. Discrete features were initially excavated to 50% as outlined within the WSI; however, due to the lack of datable material, the posthole was excavated to 100% and the pit was excavated to the water table.

2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2020a)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2021)
- Current English Heritage guidelines (EH 2008, HE 2015b)
- The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003)



3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 Lower Stondon is located c.4 km south-west of Henlow and close to the border with Hertfordshire. The general area has been settled since prehistory, but the modern village's origins are in the Saxon period. The toponym derives from the Old English elements *stān* + *dūn* (a stone + a hill), meaning 'Stone Hill'.

This section has been compiled with information from Central Bedfordshire Council Historic Environment Record (HER ref. 202223/087) and reliable online sources. The HER data, with a 500m search radius from the development site, is shown in Fig. 5.

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

Numerous remains from these periods have been found locally, especially from later prehistory. A late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pit (HER 20309; Albion 2015) was revealed during archaeological investigations, c.480m southeast of the development, and broadly dated by the pottery it contained: this comprised four coarse flint-tempered pottery body sherds that represented one vessel.

There is considerable evidence for Iron Age activity and settlement in the wider area, and adjacent to the development site. A small early to middle Iron Age settlement was identified to the north of Station Road in an area that overlaps with the northern end of the development site (HER 16792; Boothroyd 2017). Three or four enclosures and possible boundary ditches forming the hinterland to the east and west made up the settlement. The finds from the enclosure ditches included pottery, butchered animal bone and quern stone fragments. Further Iron Age enclosures with some internal features, and dated by pottery to the early to middle Iron Age, have been recorded on the southern side of Station Road between c.100m to 500m southeast (HER 19455, 16793, 21521; Albion 2013, 2015, 2017).

A mid to late Iron Age settlement was revealed during trial trenching to the east of the cropmarks of rectilinear enclosures and circular features located to the east of Upper Stondon, c.200m north of the proposed development site (HER 403; Morgan-Shelbourne 2020).

Metal detecting at Manor Farm (HER 18981), c.400m northwest, found three Iron Age coins, one of which was a Late Iron Age bronze unit of *Tasciovanus*, and a late Iron Age to early Roman copper-alloy bull's head mount, a possible bucket escutcheon. A heavily corroded copper-alloy bead or weight of uncertain date (HER 18955), dated somewhere between the early Bronze Age to the 19th century AD, was found c.400m north was also found in the same area.

3.3 *Roman (AD43 - c.450)*

The postulated route of a Roman road (HER 10480) was identified by the Viatores (road 210), and recorded as following the course of the present day A600 between Bedford and Ickleford, c.500m east of the proposed development site. However, archaeological investigations have been unable to confirm its existence and the evidence for it is mainly conjectural. Local activity during this period is indicated by cropmarks of a rectilinear enclosure, interpreted as Roman, found north east of Manor Farm (HER 402) and nearby findspots of numerous Roman coins, a pin, brooches and a bracelet, found by metal detecting (HER 18363, 18389, 18396). All of this evidence indicates the presence of some form of settlement, perhaps a farmstead, that may have been relatively affluent.



3.4 **Saxon** (c.450 - 1066)

The only entry in the HER search area is for an 6th century AD, incomplete, copper-alloy brooch that was discovered at Manor Farm, c.450m to the northwest of the proposed development site (HER 18982).

There were two manors in Stondon at the time of the Norman Conquest; the Abbot of Ramsey held half a hide in Lower Stondon, which later formed part of the manor of Shillington (Page 1908) and Wulfmaer of Eaton Socon held a 2½ hide estate (Williams & Martin 2002: 566 & 586) that later became Upper Stondon. It was a small settlement with a total of 5 households recorded in 1086, putting it in the smallest 20% of settlements recorded in Domesday Survey (Powell-Smith 2022).

3.5 **Medieval** (1066 - 1500)

The focus of the hamlet of Lower Stondon appears to have been around Manor Farm where medieval and post-medieval finds are concentrated. These include buckles, coins, a hinged book clasp and other small metal items (HER 18956, 18983, 18984). Most of the evidence listed in the HER search area indicates extensive agricultural activity, particularly to the south of Station Road where a ditched enclosure, ridge and furrow and former field boundaries have been identified (Albion 2015). Ridge and furrow is an archaeological pattern of ridges and troughs created by a system of ploughing used in Europe during the Middle Ages, and is typical of the open-field system. Widely dispersed areas of ridge and furrow have also been documented c.200m to the northeast of the proposed development site (HER 20900), west of Bedford Road (HER 22069), land to the rear of Station Road (HER 19583), at Mount Pleasant Golf Course (HER 20310), and adjacent to the development site, along with linear anomalies of uncertain origin (Sumo Geophysics Ltd. 2017). These indicate the centrality of agriculture to the economy during these periods.

3.6 **Post-Medieval** (1500 – 1900)

Early mapping shows brickworking had been established in Lower Stondon by 1845. A brickworks and a clay pit (HER 6684) owned by the West Park estate and leased by William Watson, architect, builder and County Surveyor in 1860 was situated on the west side of the Shefford to Hitchin Road, just north of Henlow Camp. The brickyard, which produced gault bricks and drain pipes, covered some 6 acres ceased production by 1914.

One of the two main branches of the Hitchin and Bedford Turnpike, dating from 1757-1870 (HER 11927), follows the course of the Bedford Road.

3.7 **Modern** (1900 - present)

Stondon in its current form is a civil parish formed in 1985 when the ancient parish of Upper Stondon was combined with the hamlet of Lower Stondon, which had previously been part of the parish of Shillington (SPC 2022). Remains from this period comprise: WWII pill boxes (HER 9290, 9294) situated north and south of Station Road; RAF Henlow, formed at as far back as 1918 (HER 9265); and a 20th century greyhound stadium (HER 12942).

Undated cut features (e.g., ditches) have been documented by archaeological investigations to the south of Station Road (HER 21523, 21581), and west of Swallow View (HER 21522).

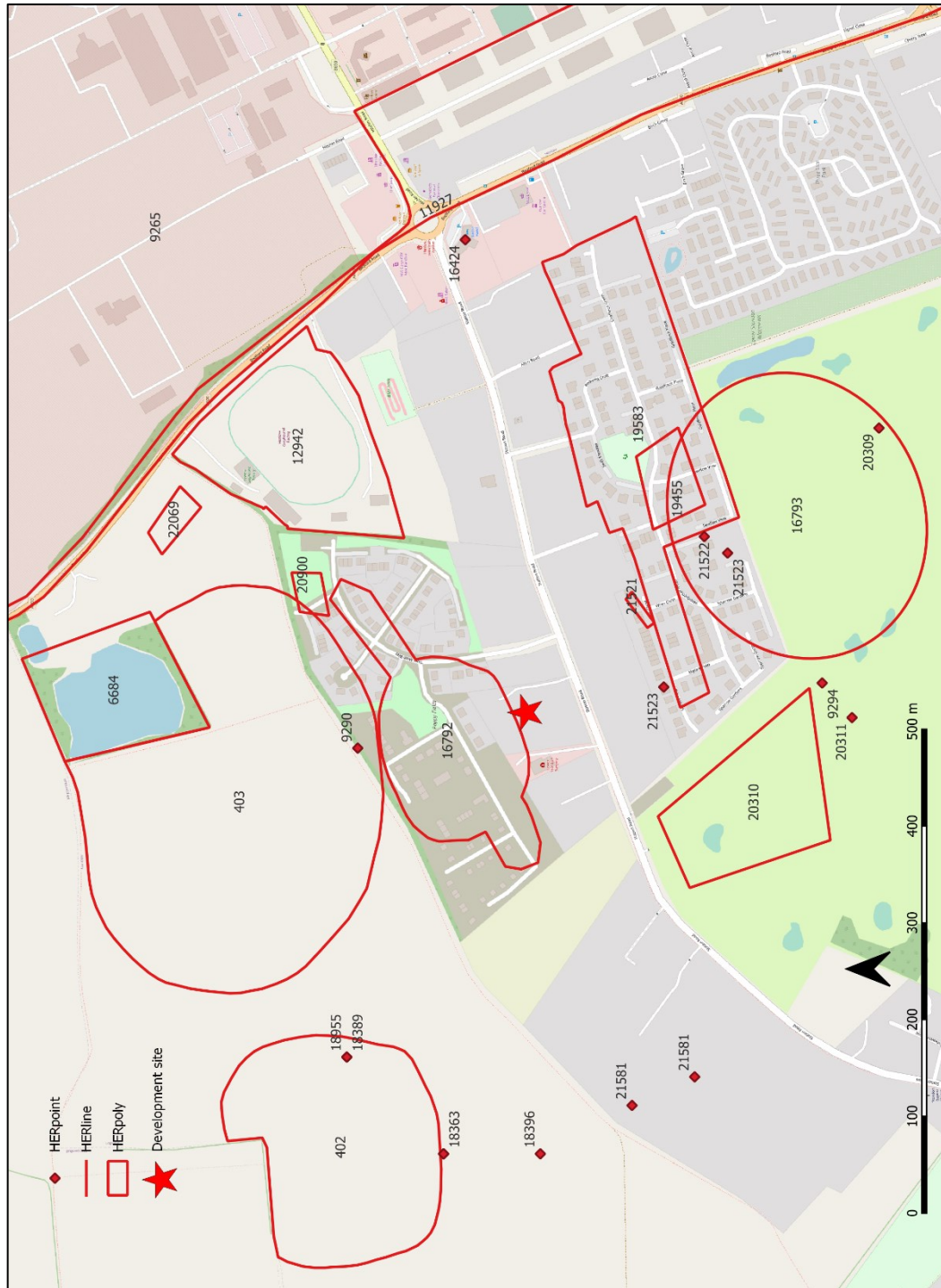


Figure 4: HER data plan (scale as shown)



4 Results

4.1 Introduction

A single trench measuring 10m long and 2.30m wide was excavated within the footprint of the proposed dwelling (Fig. 5). This was done using a five tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m toothless ditching bucket.

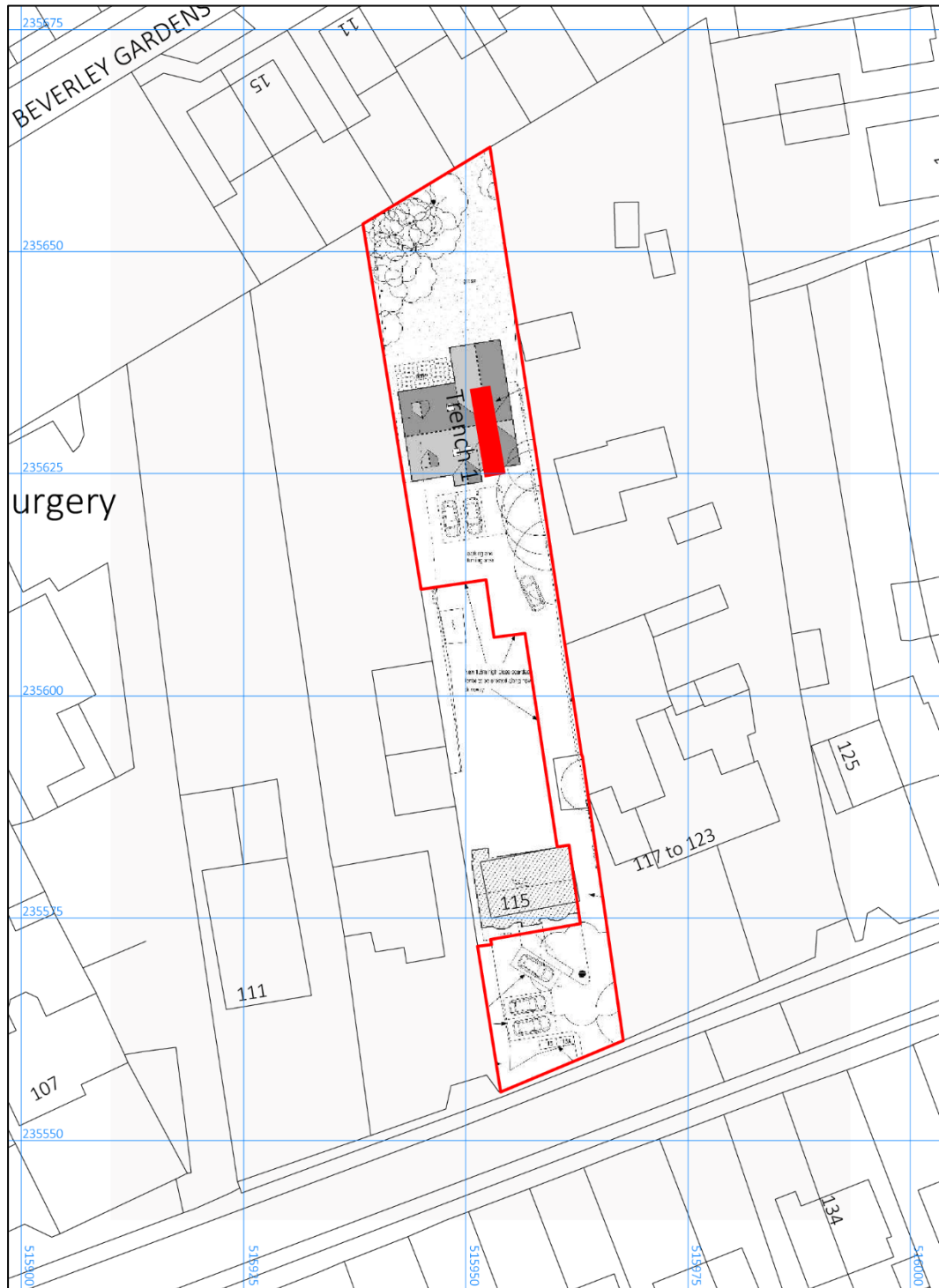


Figure 5: Trench location (scale 1:750)



The topsoil and over burden was removed in spits under constant archaeological supervision. The natural geology was uncovered at a depth of 0.49m (Fig.6; Plate 1-2). The stratigraphy comprised:

- Topsoil (100). Dark grey slightly clayey silt. Friable with occasional small angular flints and rounded stones. This layer was 0.17m deep.
- Subsoil (101). Mid brownish grey silty clay 0.13m in depth. Very malleable. Contained occasional sub-angular stones. Rooting was present within this layer
- Subsoil (102). Mid brownish orange slightly sandy silty clay with occasional stone and flint gravel inclusions. The depth of this layer varied between 0.19m to the north and 0.09m to the south. Rooting had also penetrated this layer.
- Natural geology (110). Mid yellowish brown slightly sandy silty clay with occasional stone and flint gravel inclusions and a moderate number of chalk pieces.

No artefacts were noted in the stratigraphic layers. A 19th century horse shoe shaped land drain was observed to the north of the trench but no further disturbances were noted.



Plate 1: Trench 1, Looking north northwest



Plate 2: Site stratigraphy, looking east northeast

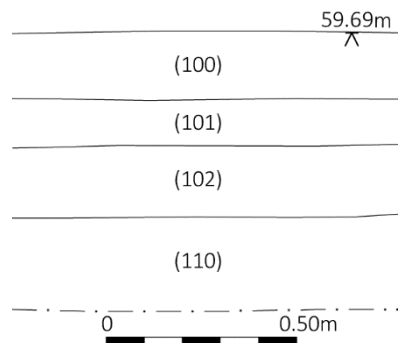


Figure 6: Representative site stratigraphy (scale 1:20)

4.2 Description

Three features were observed cutting into the natural geology. All were located within the southern half of the trench.

Ditch [103] (Fig. 7; Plate 3-4)

Near the centre of the trench was a northeast-southwest orientated ditch, [103]. The feature was 0.71m wide, 0.21m deep and a length of 2.91m could be observed before both ends were obscured by the limit of excavation. The ditch contained two fills; lower fill (104), a gravelly sand located to the southern half of the feature, and an upper naturally silted fill (105). No artefacts were recovered from the fill; however, (105) contained occasional small flecks of charcoal.



Pit [108] (Fig. 7; Plate 5-6)

To the south of Ditch [103] was small Pit [108]. The pit was round in shape, had steep side and measured 0.73 x 0.70 x 40m in size (L X W X D). The fill appeared to be the result of natural processes meaning that the pit was left open once it went out of use. Occasional chalk and charcoal flecks were observed within this pit but no dateable material was recovered. It is possible that this feature was used for storage purposes.

Posthole [106] (Fig. 7; Plate 7-8)

Between Ditch [103] and Pit [108] was a large steeply sided posthole. The feature measured 0.42m long, 0.39m wide and 0.27m deep and was filled with a single hard packed gravelly fill, (107). Once more, no artefacts were recovered and no further postholes were identified within the trench.



Plate 3: Southwest facing section of Ditch [103]

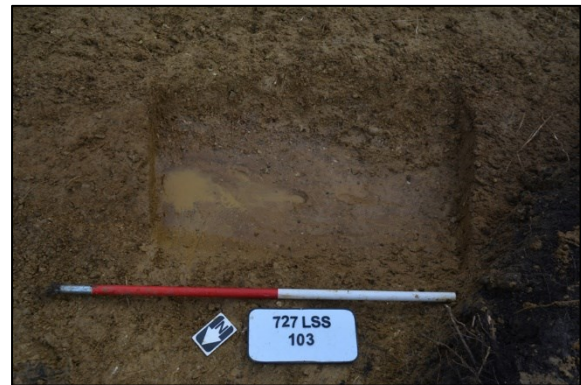


Plate 4: Ditch [103], looking southeast



Plate 5: Southeast facing section of Pit [108]



Plate 6: Pit [108], looking northwest



Plate 7: Southeast facing section of Posthole [106]



Plate 8: Posthole [106], looking northwest

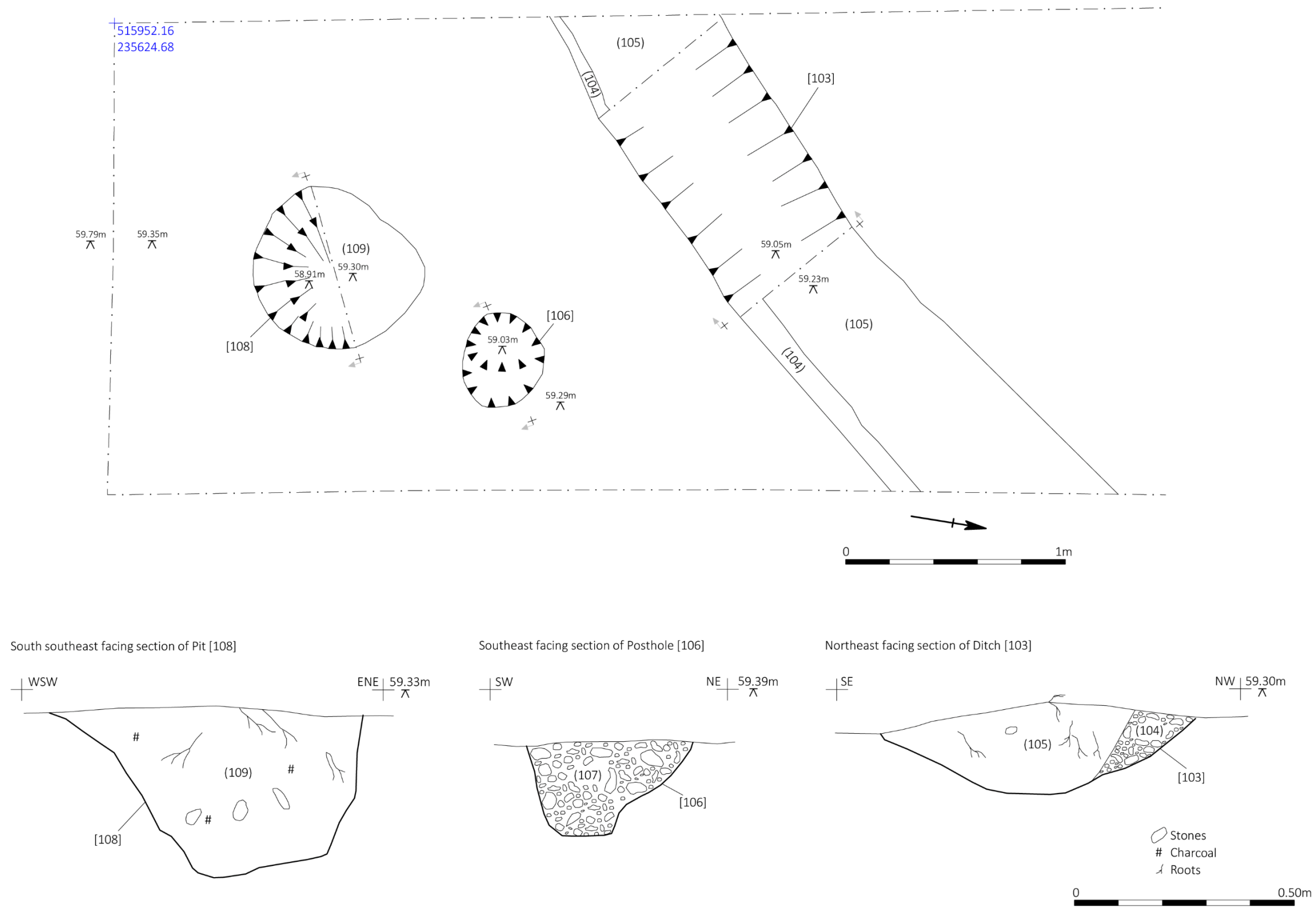


Figure 7: Plan (scale 1:20) and sections (scale 1:10) of features



5 Conclusions

A single trench was excavated within the footprint of a new dwelling. It was apparent from the stratigraphic makeup of the site that no modern disturbances had been undertaken on the site with the exception of the installation of modern fence posts, some of which were still partially embedded in the ground, and a plain horse shoe shaped ceramic land drain which was located to the north of the trench. Three undated features were uncovered during this investigation; a small pit, a ditch and a posthole. None of the features provided any dateable material.

Recent excavation within the Lower Stondon has shown the area to be of high archaeological potential. Surrounding the land to the rear of 115 Station Road is evidence for prehistoric activity. Cropmarks had been identified to the north of the investigation site, and subsequent archaeological investigation uncovered evidence for a small early-mid Iron Age settlement. Artefacts from sealed contexts were localised within the crop marks near the centre of the site, with the periphery containing features dating to post-medieval/modern agrarian practices (Oxford Archaeology 2017). To the south, a small number of Iron Age features were observed which have been identified as being related to live stock management (Albion 2013). In both the 2013 and 2017 excavations artefacts were scarce and many of the features uncovered on the site remain undated.

Due to the lack of datable material, it is impossible to determine if these features are contemporary with the Iron Age landscape, though the size and quantity of the features noted within the trench would suggest the site is not located in an area of high occupation or activity from the Iron Age or indeed any other period. It is therefore likely that site in on the periphery the known settlement activity in the area.

Whilst the trench provided a small “keyhole” view of the archaeology in the vicinity of 115 Station Road, as no datable material was recovered from the features, none of the original regional research aims could be furthered on this occasion.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Hayley Pryor for commissioning this report. Thanks are also due to Stephen Coleman of Central Bedfordshire Council for providing historic environment records and other relevant documents and to Clara Schonfeld of Central Bedfordshire Council for monitoring the project. We would also like to thank the staff of Pryor Construction Ltd for their assistance and hospitality on site.

The fieldwork was carried out by Laura Dodd MSc MCIfA and Barney King PCIfA. The report was written by Laura Dodd, 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

7.2 The archive will be deposited with The Culture Trust (Accession No. 2022/53). The digital archive will be uploaded to ADS and the DOI will be sent to the HER.



8 References

Standards and Specifications

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Sumo Geophysics Ltd 2017 *Geophysical Survey Report: Station Road, Lower Stondon*. Report No. 11251.



Appendix 1: Photograph List

Shot	Digital	Subject
1	NNW	Trench 1
2	ENE	Trench 1 stratigraphy
3	NE	Southwest facing section of Ditch [103]
4	SE	Ditch [103]
5	NW	Partially excavated Posthole [106]
6	NW	SE facing section of Posthole [106]
7	NW	Fully excavated Posthole [106]
8	NW	Pit [108]
9	NW	SE facing section of Pit [108]



Appendix 2: Excavation Summary Tables

Context	Type	Measurements (m)			Description			Interpretation
		W	L	D	Colour/ Shape	Texture/ Sides	Consistency/ Base	
100	Layer	2.30	10	0.17	Dark grey	Slightly clayey silt	Friable	Topsoil found across site. Heavy vegetation including large roots. Some occasional rounded Stones and flint gravels
101	Layer	2.30	10	0.13	Mid brownish grey	Very silty clay	Very malleable	Secondary subsoil above primary subsoil (102). Thin layer which contained occasional angular stones. Rooting present throughout.
102	Layer	2.30	10	0.19	Mid brownish orange	Slightly sandy silty clay	Fairly malleable	Primary subsoil. Similar to natural but slightly darker and did not contain chalk inclusions. Occasional stone and flint gravels were noted as well as larger rounded stones. No finds were recovered from the layer
103	Cut	0.71	2.91	0.21	Linear	<45 degrees	U-shaped	Cut of linear. Orientated NE-SW. Both ends obstructed by the limit of excavation. Contained two fills with no finds
104	Fill	0.13	>1	0.16	Mid greyish brown	Very gravelly sand	Fairly compact	Stoney primary fill of Ditch [103]. Comprised tightly packed stone & flint gravels in loose silty sand matrix. No finds recovered
105	Fill	0.58	>1	0.21	Mid greyish brown	Clayey sandy silt	Fairly soft	Naturally silted secondary fill of Ditch [103]. Contained occasional rounded stones and flecks of charcoal. Some iron panning also noted. Small rootlets and worm activity noted. No finds recovered.
106	Cut	0.42	0.39	0.27	Sub-circular	>45 degrees	U-shaped	Sub circular posthole. The only feature of its kind in the trench. Contained a single fill
107	Fill	0.42	0.39	0.27	Mid greyish brown	Gravelly sand	Fairly compact	Fill of Posthole [106]. Contained well packed stone & flint gravel set in a sandy matrix. Rooting present and water table hit
108	Cut	0.73	0.70	0.40	Circular	Steep	Flat	cut of a possible small pit, it is a regular circular shape dug in to the natural. It is adjacent to posthole [106]. No dating evidence in fill. Function unknown
109	Fill	0.73	0.70	0.40	Light greyish brown	Very silty clay	Fairly soft and friable	Fill of small Pit [108]. No finds. Fill was heavily bioturbated and appeared to be the result of natural silting. Some charcoal was present as well as occasional flecks of chalk. Contained occasional angular gravels and some larger rounded stones
110	Layer	2.30	10	-	Mid yellowish brown	Slightly sandy silty clay	Fairly malleable	Natural geology. Contained frequent small gravel inclusions and small chalk pieces



Drawing Register

Drawing No	Sheet No	Scale	Details	
1	1	S	1:10	SE facing section of posthole [106]
2	1	S	1:10	SSE facing section of small pit [108]
3	1	S	1:10	SW facing section of Ditch [103]
4	1	P	1:20	Plan of trench



Appendix 3: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	Land r/o 115 Station Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Bedfordshire	Project Site Code	727/LSS
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-509685	Event/Accession no	2022/53
OS reference	TL 1596 3558	Study area size	28sq m
Project Type	Evaluation	Height (mAOD)	58
Short Description	<p>In December 2022, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation at the Land to the rear of 115 Station Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Central Bedfordshire as a condition for the development of the site. A single 10m long trench was excavated within the footprint of a proposed detached dwelling. Three undated features, consisting of a pit, ditch and a posthole were observed to the south of the trench and a post-medieval land drain was located to the north.</p> <p>The site is located on the hinterlands of a small early-mid Iron Age settlement to the north and a later larger Iron Age settlement to the east. Iron Age features relating to probable livestock management were located to the south of the site; However, due to the lack of dateable material, the features uncovered for the purposes of this investigation cannot confidently be associated with any particular time period.</p>		
Previous work	None	Site status	None
Planning proposal	Erection of a 4 bedroom detached dwelling and improvements to access	Current land use	Residential
Local Planning Authority	Central Bedfordshire Council	Planning application ref.	CB/22/01996/FULL
Monument type	Ditch, Pit, Posthole	Monument period	Unknown
Significant finds	None	Future work	No
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	-	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	David Kaye	Director/Supervisor	Laura Dodd
Sponsor/funding body	Hayley Pryor		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	05.12.2022	End date	06.12.2022
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical	The Culture Trust, Luton	-	
Paper		Report, WSI, Permatrace, Fieldwork forms	
Digital		Digital photographs. All digital files to be uploaded to ADS	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title	Archaeological Evaluation Report: Land r/o 115 Station Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Bedfordshire		
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