

UHEA01



**Underground Heating, Overend Green Farm, Central Bedfordshire:  
Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording**

*Prepared for Donna Venn*

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

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NGR: SP 9696 2876  
Parish: Heath and Reach  
Council: Central Beds  
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Archive will be deposited with: Luton Museum

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## CONTENTS

1	.....INTRODUCTION .....	4
2	.....SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION .....	4
4	.....AIMS & OBJECTIVES .....	5
5	.....METHODOLOGY .....	5
	5.2 Reporting and Archives.....	5
6	.....RESULTS.....	6
	6.1 Discussion.....	6
	6.2 Conclusion .....	6
7	.....REFERENCES.....	6
	Bibliographic sources .....	6
8	.....APPENDICES .....	7
	8.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers .....	7

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illus 1 – Site Location

Illus 2 – W Facing shot showing excavation through lynchet and field boundary

# UNDERGROUND HEATING, OVEREND GREEN FARM, CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE.

## Archaeological Watching Brief

*Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd undertook observation of ground-works relating to the installation of under-floor heating and drainage modifications to existing farm buildings at Overend Green Farm, Heath and Reach, South Bedfordshire. This observation was designed to record, and to enhance the understanding of, any significant remains, and mitigate the potential negative impact of the development work on those remains. Superficial deposits of Diamicton Till were uncovered along the lengths of five trenches; a recent animal burial was observed in trench 1, no other archaeological deposits or finds were recovered.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The Client had been granted consent (planning reference CB/09/07029/FULL) for implementation of an underground heating system at Overend Green Farm, Heath and Reach, South Bedfordshire.

The Central Bedfordshire Archaeological Officer (AO), who advises the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on archaeological matters, advised that the development site was situated within a landscape that had previously produced archaeological remains dating to the early medieval, medieval and post-medieval periods under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the proposals were considered to have the potential to impact upon heritage assets with archaeological interest.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining the observation strategy and methodology was prepared by Headland Archaeology (2013) on behalf of the client, and was subsequently approved by the AO.

### 2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site lies in open countryside in southwest Bedfordshire around 1 km northeast of Heath and Reach (site centre 493352 / 228760). The development includes the installation of an underground heating system and klargester. The west of the site is bounded by Overend Green Lane. The site is currently in use as a farm.

The site lies on the Greensand Ridge, at a height of c.140m AOD, just below the crest of the ridge on a terrace on a southeast facing slope. The geology of the area is Lower Greensand originating from early Quaternary glaciations (BGS Geology of Britain Viewer).

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A search of Central Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (CBHER) has been undertaken. It covered an area of 500m radius centred on the site. An updated search was undertaken in Jan 2013 and although some digital polygons have altered since the first search, no significant new 'events' (archaeological investigations) have been recorded. Therefore, the archaeological potential of the site remains the same, broadly speaking, as it was in 2010. Some 400m to the southwest of the site is a recorded cropmark previously interpreted as a ring ditch of Bronze Age date (MBD 1887). An aerial photograph in CBHER appears to show a circular mark in a pasture field.

On the western side of Overend Green Lane, some 100m from the site, is the recorded location of an excavated Roman pottery kiln and coin (MBD 14688). Records in the CBHER indicate this find was not precisely located and originated somewhere in the nearby quarry in 1967. Quarrying has been undertaken in the vicinity since at least the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century as a note of a court case in the CBHER makes clear (MBD 10864). A sand quarry opened in 1915 some 400m to the northeast of the site has produced large amounts of Roman material, including pottery and inhumation burials (MBD 1170). Reports relating to these finds appear to have continued into the early 1970s and it has been suggested that a villa may have formerly occupied the quarry site.

The site is surrounded by earthworks thought to relate to medieval settlement and cultivation bisected by Overend Green Lane (MBD 5079, 11178 & 11179). These are clearly shown in aerial photographs taken in the 1940s (CPE/UK/897, 12 Dec 46, F/20//58), as are more extensive ridge and furrow earthworks that have since been eroded by ploughing. Quarrying to the west (MBD 11177) appears to have destroyed further rectilinear earthworks that were recorded by archaeological survey. The origins

of the settlement are not clear and they could lie in the late Saxon period. The date of shrinkage or desertion of the settlement is also unclear. Most of the earthworks relate to ridge and furrow cultivation but alongside the road some 100m north of the site the earthworks were interpreted as representing 2 or 3 tofts or a farmstead; it was noted that they appeared to lie over ridge and furrow cultivation remains (MBD 11179).

The first documentary record relating to Overend Green dates to 1489 (Court Roll, KK 944/4). An enclosure map of 1841 (CRO: MA 62) is the first detailed plan of the area and shows farm buildings in the current locations and the surrounding areas named as 'New Close' to the north and 'Simonds Close' to the south. New Close is first documented in 1689 (KK 301-302) and it would seem likely that the medieval settlement noted above (MBD 11179) had been abandoned by this time.

Several records relate to buildings around the site. Around 50 m to the southeast of the site is a record relating to a ruined post-medieval building (MBD16357). On the west side of Overend Green Lane is a range of 19<sup>th</sup> century outbuildings (MBD 6400) associated with Overend Green House, a Grade II listed farmhouse recorded as mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century but 13<sup>th</sup> century in origin (MBD 6399). The latter dating may be a transcription error as photographs of the farm buildings do not appear to show any medieval elements.

In view of the archaeological background the development site occupies an area with a high potential to contain remains relating to the medieval settlement of Overend Green.

## 4 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In general the purpose of the investigation was to record and enhance understanding of the significance of heritage assets before they are lost (NPPF para 141). This was to be achieved by determining and understanding the nature, function and character of any remains on the site, in their cultural and environmental setting.

The local and regional research contexts are provided by Oake et al (2007), Glazebrook (1997), Brown & Glazebrook (2000) and Medlycott & Brown (2011). Any evidence retrieved during the works will be analysed in light of the objectives contained in these frameworks.

In particular the site had a high potential to contain remains of late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval settlement. Of particular relevance were the objectives set out in Oake (2007, 14) in relation to obtaining more information on different types of sites in the medieval

rural settlement hierarchy (including 'Ends'). Any information concerning the relationship between the post-medieval settlement and its medieval ancestor may also address some objectives laid out by Edgeworth (2007, 121-22).

Specifically the aims of the investigation include:

- Establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site. In particular whether any remains pre-dating the standing structures and post-medieval farm survive within the disturbed areas.
- Establishing the relationship of any remains to the surrounding contemporary landscapes. In particular whether any remains relating to the deserted settlement of Overend Green survive on the site.
- Recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken over the course of two days on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2014. Seven trenches were stripped using a tracked mechanical excavator, fitted with a flat bladed ditching bucket. In all areas machine stripping was undertaken in shallow spits, under the supervision of a professional archaeologist, until clean natural subsoil was observed.

### 5.1 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All contexts were given unique numbers and stratigraphic relationships were recorded. Recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards.

A digital photographic record was taken and a metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs.

### 5.2 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. A summary report has been prepared for submission to the OASIS database (headland4-177170). Deposition of the archive, and any other matters relevant to the long-term curation of the archive will be arranged with Luton Museum. The costs for archiving have been included in the project estimate. Guidance provided in *Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire* (1998) will be followed. All archive preparation will be undertaken in accordance

with guidelines published by the IfA on behalf of the Archaeological Archives Forum (July 2007).

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Discussion

The technical detail of contextual information can be found in our Appendices. The following narrative is designed to interpret that technical detail and attempt to categorise its significance. The areas under monitoring are outlined in the illustrations at the end of this report (see Illus 1-2).

Monitoring across all trenches showed a uniform deposit of topsoil, around 40 centimetres deep, thickening towards the east end of the site. Topsoil thickening was attributed to the formation of a positive lynchet behind an extant hedgerow, which was clearly acting as a break on solifluction. Subsoil on site consisted of a uniform grey blue clay, over a deposit of mid-grey yellow glacial till.

No datable artefactual material or environmental dating evidence was forthcoming for the formation of the lynchet, although contemporary earthworks are known to relate to the medieval occupation of Overend Green.

Trench 1 contained the remains of a modern animal burial. All other trenches returned items of modern waste, including fragments of scrap iron, electrical components and tools, all of which suggest that the area was dedicated to peripheral uses until the middle of the last century.

No negative archaeological features or artefacts were revealed during the course of the investigation.

Table 1: Significance of Heritage Assets

Description of Heritage Asset	Trench Number	Feature Number/s	Significance of heritage asset on Local, Regional, National, International scale
Lynchet, Field Boundary	1-6	-	Low significance of Local Value

### 6.2 Conclusion

Monitoring the excavation at Overend Green Farm has revealed no archaeological remains. It should be borne in

mind that the sample was a very small sample of the local landscape and that it is not unusual for archaeologically sensitive terrain to encompass portions where no cut features are located. The surrounding landscape remains a sensitive one archaeologically, though the specific part of the 'site' being impacted by the proposals is located in an area of relatively blank ground within that sensitive area.

## 7 REFERENCES

### Bibliographic sources

BGS Geology of Britain Viewer accessed 15/04/2014 - <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/>.

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Medlycott M 2011. *Research and Archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the east of England. EAA Occasional Papers 24.*

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## 8 APPENDICES

### 8.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

#### Context Register

Context no.	Area	Description
100	1	Mid brown grey silty clay, loose compaction, abundant modern material, brick, piping, auto parts and plastic. Topsoil, max depth = 0.2
101	1	Dark blue-grey clay, small mid angular stones, dry and compacted. Subsoil, max depth = 0.11
102		Mid grey yellow clay, dry and highly compacted. Natural

#### Photographic Register

Frame no.	B/W no. 908	Direction	Description
1	37	-	ID shot
2	-	N	General shot of work in progress
3	-	N	General shot of work in progress
4	36	NW	E facing section of Tr.1
5	35	W	E facing section of Tr.1
6	34	N	Tr. 1 E facing section
7	33	S	Tr.1 E-W Length of trench
8	32	W	SE facing section of Tr.2
9	-	N	SE facing section of Tr.2
10	-	N	General shot of Tr.2
11	-	N	Working shot of Tr.3 being excavated
12	-	E	Tr.3
13	-	E	Tr.3
14	31	E	W facing section showing animal burial in section



15	30	E	W facing section showing animal burial in section
16	-	N	Tr.3 N-S length
17	-	N	Tr.3 –E-W length
18	-	W	Tr.4 N-S length
19	29	E	Tr.5
20	28	S	N facing section of Tr.5
21	-	W	Working shot of Tr.5
22	-	E	Working shot of Tr.5
23	-	E	Working shot of Tr.5 showing lynchet
24	-	W	Working shot of Tr.5 showing lynchet



**Illus 2**

*Working shot showing excavation  
through lynchet*

