

**LAND OFF BEDFORD ROAD,
LOWER STONDON,
HERTFORDSHIRE.**

NGR: 517069 235080 (centred)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

March 2021
Report No. 1413



ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY, MANAGEMENT & FIELD SERVICES

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Quality Assurance

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CONTENTS

Summary

Glossary of Archaeological Terms and Abbreviations

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND
- 3 AIMS
- 4 METHODOLOGY
- 5 RESULTS
- 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
- 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIGURE LIST

- Figure 1: Site Location
- Figure 2: Site Plan
- Figure 3: Feature Plans and Sections
- Figure 4: Representative Photographs

SUMMARY

Between 28th September 2020 and 1st March 2021 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological watching brief on land off Bedford Road, Lower Stondon, Hertfordshire (NGR: 517069 235080 - centred). The project was commissioned by Rob Bourn of Orion Heritage Ltd., on behalf of Barratt David Wilson Homes.

The archaeological works comprised the monitoring of a mechanical strip associated with the construction of a pond, which formed part of a Sustainable Drainage Solution (SuDS).

The watching brief identified natural substrates beneath a subsoil and subsequent topsoil. There was a general paucity of archaeological features and finds within the monitored area.

Two isolated small pits were entirely devoid of artefacts, or other anthropogenic indicators and it was uncertain if they represented archaeological or geological remains. In light of the occurrence of variable *Diamicton* deposits in the near vicinity of the site, the latter interpretation was more likely. The complete absence of other possible archaeological features indicated that the site was likely to have been located outside of any focus of activity associated with a moated site to the east.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Diamicton

A type of glacial till, which is characterised by highly variable and ill-sorted boulders, cobbles, sand, silt and clay.

Medieval

The period between AD 1066 and AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms, this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-medieval

The period between AD 1500 and AD 1900.

Prehistoric

The period prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43, traditionally sub divided into; *Palaeolithic* – c. 500,000 BC to c. 12,000 BC; *Mesolithic* – c. 12,000 BC to c. 4,500 BC; *Neolithic* – c. 4,500 BC to c. 2,000 BC; *Bronze Age* – c. 2,000 BC to c. 800 BC; *Iron Age* – c. 800 BC to AD 43.

Roman

The period traditionally dated AD 43 until AD 410.

Saxon

The period between AD 410 and AD 1066.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a programme of archaeological watching brief, undertaken by Foundations Archaeology between 28th September 2020 and 1st March 2021, on land off Bedford Road, Lower Stondon, Hertfordshire (NGR: 517069 235080 - centred). The project was commissioned by Rob Bourn of Orion Heritage Ltd., on behalf of Barratt David Wilson Homes.
- 1.2 The watching brief was conducted in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), prepared by Orion Heritage Ltd. (2020) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 1.3 The CIfA code of conduct was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site comprises an area of land, which was set aside for the construction of a Sustainable Drainage Solution (SuDS), including a pond. It is located at the northeast of a new residential development (the study area), which is situated at the southern edge of Lower Stondon, within the parish of Ickleford. The study area is located immediately east of the A600 (Bedford Road) and is bounded to the north by residential development, to the east by Old Ramerick Manor and to the south by agricultural fields. The River Hiz is located approximately 1km to the east. The topography within the site is generally flat, at approximately 44m AOD and the underlying geology is recorded as *Woburn Sands Formation* – sandstone, which is overlain by *Alluvium* – clay, silt, sand and gravel. Variable *Diamicton* deposits are recorded to the immediate north and south of the site (BGS Online Viewer). At the time of the fieldwork, the site consisted of rough grass and scrub.
- 2.2 The study area has been subject to previous investigations, including a desk-based assessment (Orion 2016) and a subsequent archaeological evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2017). The desk based assessment concluded that the study area had the potential to contain buried remains from the Medieval period, possibly related to a moated site located immediately to the east. The evaluation trenching revealed a paucity of finds or features within the study area; however, due to flooding, it was not possible to evaluate the area of the proposed SuDS.
- 2.3 Due to the proximity of the proposed SuDS to the recorded moated site, the Hertfordshire County Historic Environment Advisor required a programme of archaeological watching brief during associated groundworks.
- 2.4 The site therefore had the potential for the presence of archaeological remains, predominately dated to the Medieval period. This did not prejudice the monitoring against evidence related to other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The principal aim of the archaeological programme of works was to determine the character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality of any archaeological remains present; therefore, ensuring their preservation by record.
- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- Ensure the recording of archaeological assets discovered during the archaeological works;
 - Ensure that any below-ground archaeological deposits exposed are promptly identified;
 - Ensure the recording of archaeological remains, to place this record in its local context and to make this record available.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The monitored works consisted of the mechanical strip of the area of the SuDS, as shown in Figure 2. These groundworks were carried out under the constant supervision of the archaeologist. Where machine excavation was required, this was used only for the removal of non-significant overburden or natural substrates. Plant was suitable for the task and was equipped with a toothless grading bucket.
- 4.2 All archaeological investigation, excavation and recording was undertaken in accordance with the approved WSI and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.
- 4.2.1 In order to help recover artefacts, pit [103] was excavated to a 100% sample level, subsequent to recording. Due to severe flooding, pit [101] was only excavated to an approximate 50% sample level.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 In general, preservation and visibility conditions were good; although, some Modern surface dumping had occurred within the site.
- 5.2 The natural substrates, which consisted of yellow-brown-beige plastic clay, with occasional patches of orange gravel, were present at an average depth of 0.80m (43.30m AOD) below the Modern ground surface. These were overlain by a tan brown sand silt clay subsoil (1002), average 0.45m thick, which was sealed by a dark brown clay silt topsoil (1001), average 0.35m thick. The topsoil contained occasional Modern detritus (not retained). Two possible

archaeological features were present within the stripped area; these were cut into the top of the natural deposits and were sealed beneath subsoil (1002).

- 5.3 **Feature [101]** was 1.90m long, 1.0m wide and 0.23m in depth and consisted of a sub-oval pit with a shallow, rounded profile. It contained fill (102), which comprised a variable grey, black, beige-pink gritty clay sand, with occasional small stones. No artefacts or charcoal were present within the fill.
- 5.4 **Feature [103]** was 1.70m long, 0.93m wide and 0.25m in depth and consisted of a kidney-shaped to sub-oval pit with a shallow, rounded profile, which contained fills (104) to (106). Fill (104) was up to 0.25m thick and comprised a blue grey soft plastic clay sand, which contained occasional small stones. This was overlain by a dark brown to black clay sand (105), up to 0.14m thick. Fill (105) was subsequently overlain by a beige-pink sand gravel (106), up to 0.08m thick. No artefacts or charcoal were present within the fills.
- 5.5 There were no other archaeological features or finds present within the monitored excavations.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The mechanical strip revealed natural clay and gravel substrates, which were sealed beneath a subsoil and subsequent topsoil. There was a general paucity of archaeological features and finds within the monitored area.
- 6.2 Two isolated small pits [101]/[103] were present within the site. These features contained brightly coloured, variable clay sand and gravel fills, which were entirely devoid of artefacts, or other anthropogenic indicators, such as charcoal. It was, therefore, uncertain if they represented archaeological or geological remains. In light of the occurrence of variable *Diamicton* deposits in the near vicinity of the site, the latter interpretation seems more likely. The complete absence of other possible archaeological features indicated that the site was likely to have been located outside of any focus of activity associated with the moated site to the east.
- 6.3 The archive is currently held at the offices of Foundations Archaeology but will be deposited in due course with North Hertfordshire Museum under Accession Code ICK/BR '20. A short note will be submitted for publication in the relevant local archaeological journal and an OASIS form will also be submitted to ADS.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Reading.

Land off Bedford Road, Lower Stondon, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Watching Brief

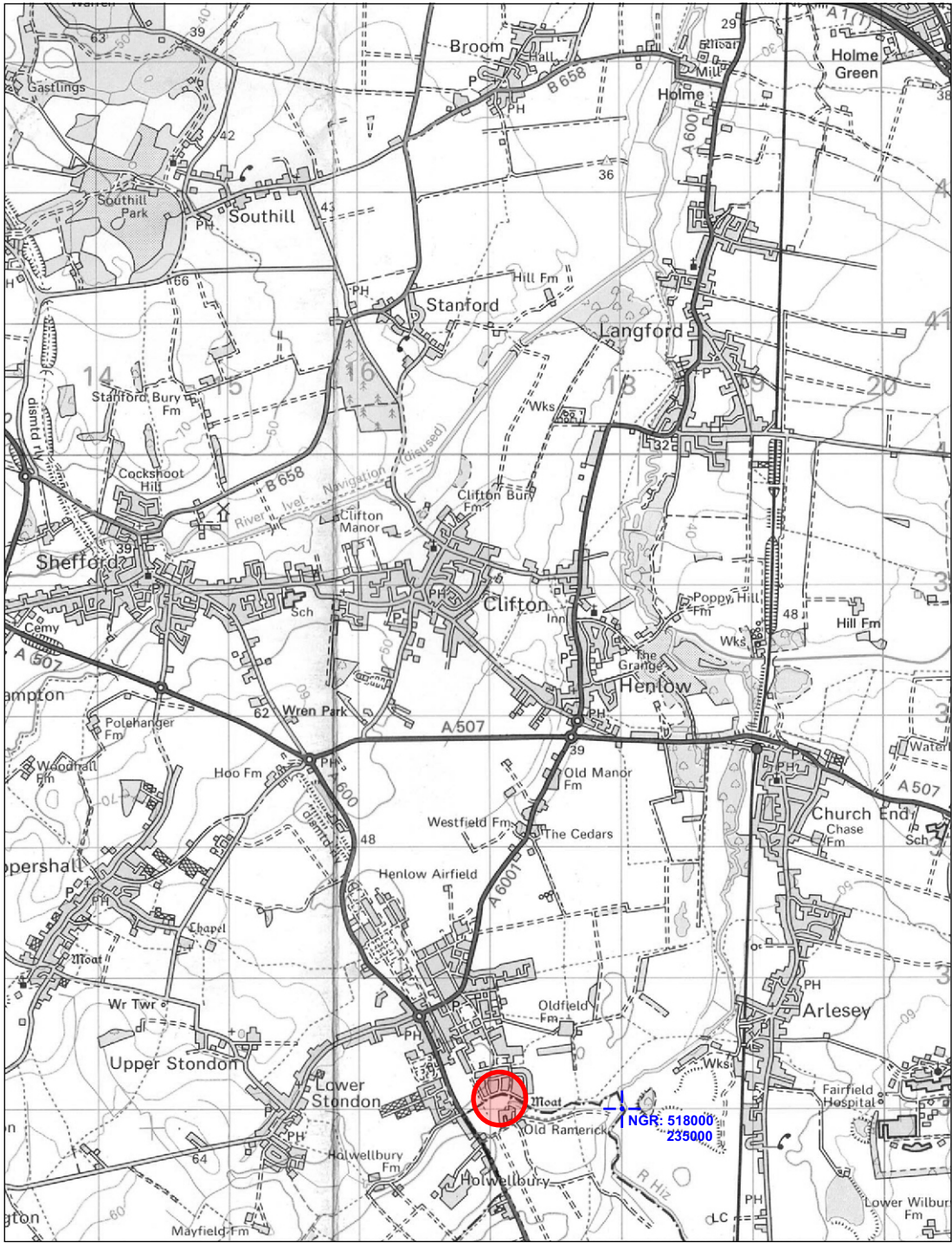
Cotswold Archaeology. 2017. *Land off Bedford Road, Lower Stondon, Hertfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation*. Unpublished report. (Report No. 17662).

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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Site Code: BRS20
Accession Code: ICK/BR '20

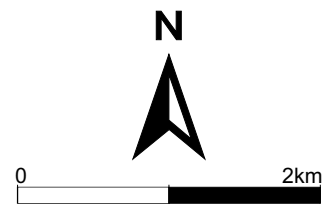


FIGURE 1: Site Location



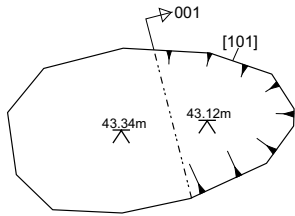
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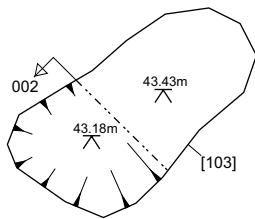
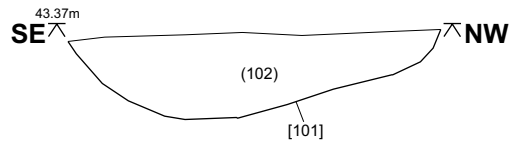
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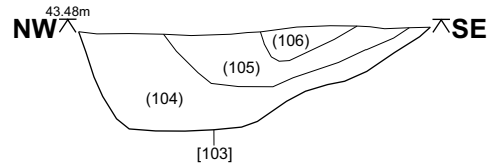
FIGURE 2: Site Plan



SEC 001: NORTHEAST FACING SECTION [101]



SEC 002: SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION [103]



Site Code: BRS20
 Accession Code: ICK/BR '20

N



FIGURE 3: Feature Plans and Sections



PHOTOGRAPH 1: TOPSOIL STRIP IN PROGRESS



PHOTOGRAPH 2: COMMENCEMENT OF SUBSOIL STRIP



PHOTOGRAPH 3: COMPLETION OF MECHANICAL STRIP



PHOTOGRAPH 4: REPRESENTATIVE SECTION



PHOTOGRAPH 5: FEATURE [101] PRE-EXCAVATION



PHOTOGRAPH 6: FEATURE [101] NORTHEAST FACING SECTION



PHOTOGRAPH 7: FEATURE [103] PRE-EXCAVATION



PHOTOGRAPH 8: FEATURE [103] SOUTHWEST FACING SECTION

<p>Site Code: BRS20 Accession Code: ICK/BR '20</p>
<p>FIGURE 4: Representative Photographs</p>