



HERITAGE NETWORK



**MANOR FARM**  
**62 High Street, Meppershall, Bedfordshire**

HN821

*Archaeological Monitoring Report*



# *THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD*

*Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation*

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

MANOR FARM  
62 High Street, Meppershall, Beds.

Project ref.: HN821

Planning ref.: CB/TP/2009/682

Bedford Museum accession ref.: BEDFM2009.55

## *Archaeological Monitoring Report*

*Prepared on behalf of Mr and Mrs M Read*

by

Katie Nicholas, BA (HONS)

Report no. 564

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*The cover photograph shows the north-west facing elevation of Manor Farmhouse*

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Katie Nicholas and Alison Hudson; the finds assessment was undertaken by Andy Fawcett, and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Mr and Mrs Read, the clients; and Martin Oake and Hannah Firth, Archaeological Officers, Central Bedfordshire Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

## Summary

|                                      |  |                                   |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Site name and address:</b>        | Manor Farm, 62 High Street, Meppershall, Beds, SG15 5LY  |                                   |  |
| <b>County:</b>                       | Bedfordshire   | <b>District:</b>                  | Mid Bedfordshire                             |
| <b>Village/town:</b>                 | Meppershall  | <b>Parish:</b>                    | Meppershall                                  |
| <b>Planning reference:</b>           | CB/TP/2009/682 & CB/LB/2009/685  | <b>NGR:</b>                       | TL 13740 36410                               |
| <b>Client name and address:</b>      | Mr & Mrs M Read, Manor Farm, 62 High Street, Meppershall, SG15 5LY   |                                   |  |
| <b>Nature of work:</b>               | Extension to existing building   | <b>Former land use:</b>           | Garden                                       |
| <b>Site status:</b>                  | AAS6; Listed Bldg.   | <b>Reason for investigation:</b>  | Direction of LPA (PPG 16)                    |
| <b>Position in planning process:</b> | After full determination   | <b>Project brief originator:</b>  | Local Authority                              |
| <b>Size of affected area:</b>        | 67.5m <sup>2</sup>   | <b>Size of area investigated:</b> | 67.5m <sup>2</sup>                           |
| <b>Site Code:</b>                    | HN 821   | <b>Other reference:</b>           | BEDFM2009.55                                 |
| <b>Organisation:</b>                 | Heritage Network   | <b>Site Director:</b>             | David Hillelson                              |
| <b>Project type, methods etc.:</b>   | Monitoring   | <b>Archive recipient:</b>         | Client (finds); Bedford Museum (documentary) |
| <b>Start of work</b>                 | 27/10/2009   | <b>Finish of work</b>             | 04/11/09                                     |
| <b>Related SMR Nos:</b>              | n/a  | <b>Periods represented:</b>       | Late medieval, post medieval                 |
| <b>Oasis UID</b>                     | Heritage1-62900  | <b>Significant finds:</b>         | Late medieval pottery                        |
| <b>Monument types:</b>               | 3x pits, 2x brick flooring, 3x wall, 1x dump layer, 1x demolition layer, 1x levelling layer, 1x square brick lined pit, 1x brick manhole |                                   |  |
| <b>Physical archive:</b>             | Pottery, CBM, Brick, Mortar, Shell, Animal Bone, Flint   |                                   |  |
| <b>Previous summaries/reports:</b>   | n/a  |                                   |  |

**Synopsis:** In response to a condition on the planning permission for an extension to the dwelling at Manor Farm, 62 High Street, Meppershall, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks for the proposed rear and side extensions to the existing house. Manor Farm house is a Grade II listed building dating to at least the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, and likely to be earlier.

The ground level was reduced by up to 0.93m across the site, revealing a number of features, including a pit, a demolition layer and a dump layer, suggesting late medieval occupation. Several structural features, including walls and wall foundations, were also encountered, relating to at least one earlier range to the house, demolished in 1949, and an outbuilding, demolished in the 1880s.

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# 1. Introduction

**1.1** This report has been prepared on behalf of *Mr and Mrs M Read*, as part of the archaeological monitoring and recording of development works at Manor Farm, 62 High Street, Meppershall, Bedfordshire.

**1.2** The investigation was a requirement of the planning consent for the development granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) (ref. CB/TP/2009/682 & CB/LB/2009/685), under the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning (DoE 1990). The extent of the work has been defined in a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication* prepared by the Archaeological Officer (AO) from the Conservation and Design Team of Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), the new unitary authority covering the site.

**1.3** The site is situated on the north-west side of the High Street, centred on NGR TL 13740 36410. It is bounded by no. 60 High Street to the north east and by no. 64 High Street to the south west. The development proposes a single storey side extension and a two storey rear extension to the existing building.

**1.4** On the basis of the known archaeology in the vicinity of the present site, the AO advised that a programme of archaeological monitoring of the groundworks associated with the development should be undertaken, and the recording and investigation of any observed archaeological remains.

**1.5** The present report describes the findings of the monitoring programme and is intended, together with the deposition of the documentary archive with Bedford Museum, to complete the requirements of the planning condition. The material archive will be returned to the care of the client.

## 2. Fieldwork

### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

**2.1** The site lies on an area of rising ground at approximately 75mAOD and the land was previously used as a garden for the original house.

**2.2** Locally the soils belong largely to the Evesham 3 Association (411c), described as '*Slow permeable calcareous clayey, and fine loamy over clayey soils. Some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged non-calcareous clayey soils.*' (SSEW 1983).

**2.3** The underlying geology, which is recorded as Mudstone of the Gault Formation (BGS), is overlain on the present site by a superficial deposit of brownish yellow (10YR 6/8) sand.

### METHODOLOGY

**2.4** The timetable for the fieldwork followed the client's groundwork schedule. Two site visits were made prior to the start of the groundworks. These were at the request of the owners and were in order to hand dig a test pit to try and locate a possible brick-built ice store (HER 16164), encountered during previous excavations for a soakaway in the rear garden.

**2.5** Seven site visits were made during the ongoing groundworks to monitor the ground reduction in the area of the extensions and the excavation of footings trenches.

**2.6** The machining was undertaken using a tracked JCB excavator fitted with a 600mm toothless bucket.

**2.7** All work was carried out in accordance with the approved *Project Design*, current health and safety legislation, and both IfA and ALGAO standards.

**2.8** All identified contexts were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled sections were drawn on drafting film at a scale of 1:10, elevations at an appropriate size of either 1:10 or 1:20 and plans at 1:20.

**2.9** All compass directions referred to in this report are based on site north, which took the existing building as aligned north to south rather than north-west to south east.

**2.10** All references to pottery fabrics in this report are based on the Bedfordshire Pottery Type Series.

### TEST PIT

**2.11** A test pit measuring 0.46m by 0.50m was excavated in the garden on the western edge of the proposed rear extension, approximately 6m to the north-west of the present house (Figure 2). The stratigraphy in the test pit consisted of a layer of very dark grey (10YR 3/1) firm silty sand topsoil, 0.40m in depth, which contained moderate amounts of brick and tile fragments and occasional small flints. Below this was a dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2) friable silty clay subsoil, excavated to a depth of 0.25m, containing moderate amounts of brick and tile fragments and occasional very large flints. The natural sand was not reached in the test pit.



**2.12** A brick wall, running approximately east – west, was encountered at a depth of 0.65m below the present ground level (Plate 1). The exposed area had a maximum length of 0.21m and a maximum width of 0.25m. Only the surface of the structure was revealed. It was constructed from red unfrosted bricks of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, bonded with lime mortar. Following discussion with the owner it was interpreted as part of an outbuilding to the rear of the house, marked on mid-19<sup>th</sup> century maps and demolished in the 1880s. Its eastern continuation was investigated as context [104] during the course of the ground reduction (see below & Figure 4).

**2.13** Two sherds of pottery, of late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century date were recovered from the vicinity of the structure. One is a yellow-glazed base sherd (Fabric P100), the other a transfer printed teacup rim (Fabric P45).

## MONITORING AND RECORDING

### Stratigraphy

**2.14** The stratigraphy varied across the site. The northern side comprised a layer of overburden, consisting of very dark grey (10YR 3/1) loose silt, 0.80m in depth, which contained frequent areas of rooting, CBM and gravel, as well as occasional ceramic pipe, window glass and glass bottles, and modern ceramics (all of which were observed but not collected). It extended between the northern edge of the excavation area and wall [103], located to the north of the existing building (Figure 4). The natural brownish yellow (10YR 6/8) sand was reached at a depth of 0.80m to the west of wall [103].

**2.15** To the south of wall [103], the stratigraphy consisted of a layer of loose, yellowish red (5YR 4/6) redeposited sand, context (116), which butted up against the south face of the wall and measured 0.93m in depth. It extended south from wall [103] to the house. Below this was the clean natural sand.

### Ground reduction

**2.16** The footprints of both the rear and side extensions were reduced in depth by between 0.80 and 0.93m. The rear extension measured 9m x 7m. The side extension measured 4m x 4m (Figure 2).

**2.17** A number of features and deposits were revealed during the ground reduction. Context [115] was a brick surface, measuring 1.40m x 0.70m, which extended north from the rear of the existing building (Figure 4). It was made from yellowish grey cambered bricks, dated to the period 1810/1820, that may have originated from Arlesey. They had apparently been reused at least once. To the south was feature [101] (Plate 2), an area of possible flooring or a hearth, measuring 0.60m x 0.55m. This was constructed of brickwork dating to the 1830s. Both of these were exposed at the existing ground level, above context (116), a layer of redeposited sand.

**2.18** Context (116) comprised loose, yellowish red (5YR 4/6) sand, 0.93m in depth, which contained no inclusions. It butted the southern face of wall [103] but appeared to continue into the eastern baulk, beyond wall [113] (Figure 4). It also appeared to continue under the existing house and may represent a layer of redeposited sand upon which the this range of the house was built.

**2.19** Context (116) covered context (112), a soft dark grey (5Y 4/1) sandy clay dump layer which measured 2m in length, 1.30m in width and 0.17m in depth and was observed in the area of



the side extension (Figure 4). Finds recovered from this layer include pottery sherds from three wheel thrown vessels, dating from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century, brick and tile fragments, animal bone, flint and oyster shell.

**2.20** Feature [114] was observed in the northern baulk at a depth of 0.60m. The exposed area consisted of a narrow band of brick and tile rubble, 2.6m in length and 0.08m in depth (Figure 5; Plate 3). The brick and tile fragments, which had mortar attached, have been dated to between c.1450/1500 and 1650/1700. Not enough of the feature was exposed to determine whether it represented a structure or a demolition layer / surface.

**2.21** Feature [104] represents the lower course of a north-west to south-east aligned wall which had slumped forward (Plate 4). It measured 0.98m in length and 0.24m in height and was located on the western edge of the excavation area (Figure 4). It represents the eastern continuation of the wall identified in the test pit. Bricks from this feature date to the 1870s.

**2.22** Wall [103] ran on an approximate east – west alignment 3.92m to the north of the existing building (Figure 4). The wall was built of red bricks, bonded with lime mortar, and survived to a height of 0.72m (6 courses) (Plate 5). The bricks have been dated to the 1840s/50s. The wall may represent the lower courses and foundations of the rear wall to an earlier range of the present house which, according to records held by the client, had been used as a farm shed since at least the 1920s and was demolished in 1949 (Sandra Read, *pers. comm.*).

**2.23** Wall [113] ran north to south along the eastern side of the rear extension (Figure 4). It measured 3.35m in length and survived to a maximum height of 0.44m and was constructed from red bricks bonded with lime mortar (Plate 6). The bricks represent footings bricks and have been dated to the 1850s. The wall had a sandstone block foundation and could also be part of the demolished range. Walls [103] and [113] appear to be contemporary, although no clear stratigraphic or physical relationship could be demonstrated.

**2.24** Structure [102] was a rectangular brick lined pit, aligned north-east to south-west and located on the western edge of the excavation area, approximately 6m north of the existing house (Figure 4). The feature was observed at a depth of 0.30m below the present ground level. Its external dimensions measured 0.80m x 0.90m, with internal dimensions of 0.65m x 0.55m and a depth of 0.30m. It was constructed from red brick, bonded with lime mortar and rendered on its internal surface (Plate 7). The bricks have been dated to the 1840s. There was no evidence to suggest a possible use, though it has previously been interpreted as an ice store (HER 16164).

**2.25** Feature [106] was a small sub-circular pit, measuring 0.55m in length, 0.40m in width and 0.34m in depth. It was located in the centre of the excavation area and was observed cutting the natural sand at a depth of 0.80m below the existing surface (Figure 5). The feature contained fill (105), a loose yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) sand (Plate 8). A small pit or posthole, cut [108], was located 0.40m to the north-west. This measured 0.28m in length, 0.20m in width and 0.20m in depth and contained fill (107), which was similar to fill (105) and suggests that these features may be contemporary. No finds were present to date either feature.

**2.26** A seam of natural dark grey (5Y 4/1) clay was observed running through the natural sand, across the south-western corner of the excavation area, on a north-west to south-east alignment (Figure 5; Plate 9). On the surface this seam was 0.80m in width, but it became wider as the depth increased.

*Contexts recorded during the ground reduction*

| Context | Type    | Description  | Dimensions (m) |       |       |
|---------|---------|--|----------------|-------|-------|
|         |         |  | Length         | Width | Depth |
| 101     | Layer   | Brick surface, possible floor or hearth  | 0.60           | 0.55  | -     |
| 102     | Feature | Rectangular brick lined pit  | 0.80           | 0.90  | 0.30  |
| 103     | Feature | Red brick wall running E-W   | 3.90           | 0.33  | 0.72  |
| 104     | Feature | Red brick wall running NW-SE   | 0.98           | 0.22  | 0.24  |
| 105     | Fill    | Fill of cut [106]. Loose yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) sand with very occasional chalk fragments  | 0.55           | 0.40  | 0.34  |
| 106     | Cut     | Small pit containing (105)   | 0.55           | 0.40  | 0.34  |
| 107     | Fill    | Fill of cut [108]. Loose yellowish brown (10YR 5/8) sand with occasional small chalk fragments | 0.28           | 0.20  | 0.20  |
| 108     | Cut     | Small oval pit/posthole containing (107)   | 0.28           | 0.20  | 0.20  |
| 112     | Layer   | Dark grey (5Y 4/1) dark grey soft sandy clay with occasional small and medium stones           | 2.00           | 1.30  | 0.17  |
| 113     | Feature | Brick wall with sandstone foundations  | 3.35           | 0.25  | 0.44  |
| 114     | Layer   | Destruction layer of brick and tile  | 2.60           | -     | 0.08  |
| 115     | Layer   | Brick surface  | 1.40           | 0.70  | -     |
| 116     | Layer   | Yellowish red (5YR 4/6) loose sand layer   | -              | -     | 0.93+ |

**Footings trenches**

**2.27** Footings trenches were excavated through the natural sand around the outside edge of the two storey rear extension and across the centre of the side extension (Figure 5). This latter trench was hand dug due to its location and the structural fragility of the existing building. The trenches were between 0.60m and 0.90m in width and varied in depth between 1m and 1.40m.

**2.28** Two associated pits, cuts [110] and [118], were encountered in the north-western corner of the northern footings trench (Figure 5). Cut [110] lay on the western side and had a V-shaped profile with irregular sides and base measuring 0.60m in width and 0.20m in depth. It contained fill (109), a loose yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) sand with occasional tile fragments dated to the late medieval / early post-medieval period. Cut [118] was located immediately to the east of [110] and was similar in nature, comprising a V-shaped profile with irregular sides and base measuring 0.55m in width and 0.20m in depth. It contained fill (117), which was very similar to (109).

**2.29** Feature [111] was a modern brick-lined inspection pit with a ceramic pipe running on an east-west alignment through its centre. It measured 0.46m in width and 0.75m in height and was located in the eastern footings trench (Figure 5).

**2.30** Feature [114] was a narrow layer of brick, tile and mortar, 2.60m in length and 0.08m in depth, which was only observed in the northern section of the northern footings trench. It may represent a demolition layer or the remnants of a former structure.

*Contexts recorded in the footings trenches*

| Context | Type    | Description  | Dimensions (m) |       |       |
|---------|---------|--|----------------|-------|-------|
|         |         |  | Length         | Width | Depth |
| 109     | Fill    | Fill of cut [110]. Loose yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) sand with occasional CBM and tile. | -              | 0.60  | 0.20  |
| 110     | Cut     | Cut of irregular shaped pit containing (109)   | -              | 0.60  | 0.20  |
| 111     | Feature | Brick inspection pit with ceramic drain  | 0.46           | -     | 0.75  |
| 114     | Feature | Brick and tile layer observed in section   | 2.60           | -     | 0.08  |
| 117     | Fill    | Fill of cut [118]. Loose yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) sand with occasional CBM and tile. | -              | 0.55  | 0.20  |
| 118     | Cut     | Cut of irregular shaped pit containing (117)   | -              | 0.55  | 0.20  |

**FINDS ASSESSMENT***Concordance*

| Context | Pottery |     | CBM |     | Brick |      | Mortar |     | Shell |    | An bone |     | Flint |    |
|---------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-------|------|--------|-----|-------|----|---------|-----|-------|----|
|         | No      | Wt  | No  | Wt  | No    | Wt   | No     | Wt  | No    | Wt | No      | Wt  | No    | Wt |
| Subsoil | 2       | 100 | -   | -   | -     | -    | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 101     | -       | -   | -   | -   | 1     | 2390 | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 102     | -       | -   | -   | -   | 2     | 8165 | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 103     | -       | -   | -   | -   | 2     | 5350 | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 104     | -       | -   | -   | -   | 2     | 5740 | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 109     | -       | -   | 9   | 720 | -     | -    | 11     | 100 | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 112     | 33      | 540 | 3   | 320 | -     | -    | -      | -   | 2     | 15 | 3       | 155 | 1     | 2  |
| 113     | -       | -   | -   | -   | 2     | 6375 | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 114     | -       | -   | 10  | 815 | 1     | 760  | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |
| 115     | -       | -   | -   | -   | 2     | 3710 | -      | -   | -     | -  | -       | -   | -     | -  |

NOTE: The site owners, Mr and Mrs Read, have requested that the artefacts recovered during the present project be returned to them at Manor Farm, 62 High Street, Meppershall. The documentary archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum.

*Pottery*

**2.31** A total of 35 sherds, weighing 640g, was collected during the present project. The pottery only suffers from minor abrasion, and a number of sherds also join, suggesting that they are in their place of primary deposition.

**2.32** One stratified context (112) contains virtually all of the pottery (33 sherds, weighing 540g). The bulk of the assemblage (32 sherds, weighing 505g) consists of wheel thrown late medieval oxidised wares (Fabric B02), with a date range from the mid- 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD. Sherds from four separate vessels are present. These include two jugs of 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century date, each with at least one handle. The body and handle of the first is unglazed, though a brown speckled glaze was noted on the inside of the rim. The second jug comprises a handle and plain bodysherds. The third vessel, dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> – early 16<sup>th</sup> century, is represented by three sherds, including one rim, one base and one body sherd; a brown speckled glaze was noted on the upper body and interior. The fourth vessel, of unknown form, is represented by ten bodysherds. This has a brown glaze on the exterior, but is unglazed on the interior and is later than the other vessels, dating to the late 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century.

**2.33** One undiagnostic bodysherd, weighing 35g, of 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century date (Fabric C3) is also present.

**2.34** The remaining two sherds, weighing 100g, were collected from the subsoil in the vicinity of the brick structure recorded in the test pit. These have been dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century AD.

#### *Recommendations*

**2.35** No further analysis of this small collection is proposed. Its value will be as a comparable record for any subsequent assemblages recovered from the locality.

#### *Tile*

**2.36** A total of 22 pieces of tile with a weight of 1855g are present in three stratified contexts (109, 112 & 114). The assemblage consists entirely of roof tile and several examples exhibit attached mortar, indicating some form of constructional reuse. Although the tile is fairly fragmented, it is only slightly abraded. The overall style and fabric suggests a date range of c.1450/1500 to 1650/1700.

**2.37** Four distinct tile fabrics are present. The largest group (11 pieces, weighing 915g) are in a coarse-grained dark red matrix, tempered with sand and large inclusions of chalk, flint and quartz. They are made in a mould and hand finished and date to the early post-medieval period. All the examples from (109) and two pieces from (114) are in this fabric.

**2.38** The second group (7 pieces, weighing 585g) is in a light red fine-grained matrix, tempered with fine sand and occasional large calcareous inclusions, some of which have burnt or leached out of the surfaces, and quartz pebbles. They are handmade, with irregular edges and date to the late medieval period. All of the tile from context (112) is in this fabric, plus two pieces from (114).

**2.39** Two pieces, weighing 255g, both from the same tile, were recovered from (114). They are in a very fine pink matrix, with no obvious coarse inclusions, and have been made in a mould and hand finished. They date to the late medieval or early post-medieval period.

**2.40** A single example, weighing 50g, of a tile in a dark red fabric, tempered with fine sand, fine calcareous flecks and larger grog inclusions, was recovered from (114).

#### *Recommendations*

**2.41** As the assemblage is small and fairly fragmented no further analysis of the material is proposed.

#### *Brick*

**2.42** Sample bricks were collected from the structural contexts encountered during the groundworks in order to ascertain their date. These were examined by Tom Doig, the Heritage Network's brick and tile specialist.

**2.43** The brick from context [101] measures 9" x 4¼" x 2" (22.5cm x 10.5cm x 5cm) and has been dated to the 1830s. It was not properly dried and had sunk in the kiln. The brick from

context [102] measures 9½” x 4¼” x 2¼” (23cm x 10.5cm x 5.5cm) and has been dated to the 1840s. That from context [103] measures 9” x 4¼” x 2¾” (22.5cm x 10.5cm x 6.5cm) and has been dated to the 1840s/50s. Like the example from [101] it not been dried properly. The brick from context [104] measures 8½” x 4¼” x 2¾” (21.5cm x 10.5cm x 6.5cm), is lightly frogged and dates to the 1870s. The brick from [113] measures 9½” x 4¼” x 2¾” (21cm x 10.5cm x 6.5cm) and has been dated to the 1850s. A flooring brick, measuring 9¼” x 4½” x 2¼” (22.75cm x 10.5cm x 5.5cm), was collected from context [115] and has been dated to the 1810/20s. It is cambered and had apparently been used and then reused.

**2.44** The fabric of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century bricks (those from [101], [102], [103] and [113]) is similar and comprises a fine sand tempered pink matrix, darker red on the surfaces. The fabric also contains frequent calcareous and sandstone inclusions. The brick from wall [104] is in a coarser darker red fabric with frequent quartz, calcareous and grog inclusions. These are all likely to be locally made.

**2.45** The brick from [115] is in a fine-grained white clay matrix, with few quartz inclusions. This may have come from the Arlesey brickworks.

**2.46** An abraded half brick, measuring 3¾” (9cms) wide by 2¼” (6cms) thick and weighing 760g, was recovered from context [114], a layer or possible structure exposed in the northern section of the northern footings trench. It is handmade in a fine micaceous matrix, tempered with occasional large pieces of red sandstone and frequent smaller calcareous inclusions and red grog. The brick is burnt along one face and has been dated to the late medieval period.

**2.47** Because of the exploratory nature of the test-pit no sample bricks were retrieved at that time. The subsequent investigation indicates that the identified feature equates to wall [104] (see above).

#### *Recommendations*

**2.48** No further work is proposed on this small assemblage.

#### *Shell*

**2.49** Two fragmentary pieces of oyster shell, weighing 15g, were recovered from layer (112).

#### *Recommendations*

No further work is proposed on this small assemblage.

#### *Animal Bone*

**2.50** Three fragments of animal bone, weighing 155g, were collected from layer (112). All remains are discoloured black as a result of burning. The remains consist of a juvenile, unidentified mid-size mammal rib, the proximal half of a pig metapodial and the distal quarter of an unfused pig femur.

*Recommendations*

**2.51** Due to the small and fragmentary nature of the assemblage, no further work is proposed.

*Mortar*

**2.52** A total of 11 variably sized pieces of lime based mortar, with a weight of 100g, were recovered from fill (109) in pit [110].

*Recommendations*

**2.53** Due to the small and fragmentary nature of the assemblage, no further work is proposed.



## 3. Discussion

**3.1** The study area is located in the centre of the medieval village of Meppershall. The village is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, at which time it answered for 3 hides (approximately 360 acres) in Bedfordshire, and a further 3 hides and a virgate (approximately 390 acres) in Hertfordshire.

**3.2** Evidence for prehistoric activity has been identified in the immediate vicinity of the study area, including late Bronze Age finds from the rear of 64 High Street (HER 16319) immediately to the south-west of the present site. Roman pottery and coins have been collected from the garden of the present site (HER 16164), and from other sites along the High Street (HER 16316-16320). Features and artefacts of Roman date were also found during an archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation on the Nursery site (HER 16318), now Gregory Close, approximately 100m to the east. Some of the finds are indicative of a high status building in the vicinity. A possible Roman settlement (HER 368) has also been identified close to 'The Hills', approximately 600m to the south-west.

**3.3** Significant evidence for medieval activity has been recorded at the southern end of the village, approximately 600m to the south-west of the present site. It includes the remains of a manorial complex, encompassing the 12<sup>th</sup> century parish church of St Mary the Virgin (HER 950) and the site of the moated manor house (HER 5455). 'The Hills', a motte and bailey castle (HER 396), lies to the south of the church. It is a Scheduled Monument (SM16) and was probably erected during the civil wars of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Other evidence for this period includes the moated site at Rectory Farm (HER 371), approximately 300m to the south, where unstratified 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century pottery was recorded in the course of a watching brief in 1993. Four fishponds (HER 5490) and a dovecote (HER 5491) are also located at the Rectory. Excavations on High Street in 2005, immediately to the south of the present site, revealed a number of features, including a spring and associated ditch of 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century date and a trackway of 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century date (HER 17105); the finds assemblage indicates domestic occupation in the immediate vicinity. Medieval pottery and tile have been recovered from a number of locations off the High Street, including the present site (HER 16316-16320).

**3.4** Post-medieval industrial activity has been recorded in the form of a windmill mound to the south of Windmill Farm, 900m to the southwest (HER 3155) and a number of sand and gravel pits. These include a sand pit to the east of the High Street, 200m to the south (HER 2477) and three gravel pits 100m to the east (HER 2972). In addition to the present site there are 5 Grade II and 1 Grade II\* listed buildings recorded in the area.

**3.5** The present project exposed a number of features possibly relating to earlier occupation on the site. A dump layer, context (112), was recorded immediately to the north-west of the existing building. This contained pottery sherds from three vessels dating to the mid-14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and fourth vessel dating to the late 16<sup>th</sup> / early 17<sup>th</sup> century. A possible layer, feature [114], was observed in the section of the northern baulk. This contained brick and tile fragments dated to the same period. A pair of pits, cuts [110] and [118], was encountered in the north-western corner of the excavation area, which also contained tile fragments of late medieval / early post-medieval date. Their presence suggests that the origins of Manor Farm are probably earlier in date than currently thought. According to the listing description, the present house dates to around the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, although an earlier date has been proposed on the basis of a carpenter's joint in a replaced wall plate in the existing house (S. Read, 2009).



**3.6** Structural features, probably relating to now demolished ranges and outbuildings, were also encountered. Three walls of mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century date were exposed during the ground reduction. Wall [113] runs north to south and indicates a continuation of the existing building whilst [103] and [104] run parallel to the existing northern wall of Manor Farm. These are likely to represent the lower courses and foundations of a previous extension to the house that was demolished in 1949. Two areas of brick flooring, contexts [115] and [101], also dating to the mid – late 19<sup>th</sup> century, were observed at the modern ground level immediately to the north of the present building. The presence of these walls and floors, show that Manor Farm has undergone a series of alterations since its original construction.

**3.7** A brick-lined pit, structure [102], was revealed on the western edge of the excavation area. Bricks from the feature show that it dates to the 1840s. It is likely that this is the same structure as that revealed during previous excavations for a soakaway, and recorded on the Historic Environment Record as a 17<sup>th</sup> century ice pit/store (HER 16164) on the basis of the reported identification of the bricks.

**3.8** The excavation of a test pit in the rear garden, intended to locate the supposed ice pit/store, encountered part of a brick wall. Its eastern side was investigated during the ground reduction phase as context [104], a wall dated to the 1870s.

**3.9** Prior to the start of the present project the client had recorded a brick feature, filled with soot, and possible brick floor layers beneath the former patio, which was adjacent to the northern elevation of the east range to the existing building (Sandra Read, pers. com.). The patio had been removed before the start of the ground reduction, and no evidence for these features was observed during the course of the present project. On this basis, the client has been encouraged to separately record the earlier findings with the Bedfordshire HER.

### **Conclusions**

**3.10** The known archaeological evidence from the vicinity of the site includes activity from the Bronze Age onwards, and, in particular, evidence for Roman settlement which may represent a precursor to the medieval and post-medieval village. On this basis, it was considered that the development might disturb features, deposits and artefacts of multiple periods, and had the potential to contribute to a number of research topics highlighted in the published local research agenda (Brown & Glazebrook 2000; Oake et al 2007; Medlycott & Brown 2008).

**3.11** These included nature and extent of Bronze Age activity in the vicinity; the nature and extent of the Roman settlement at Meppershall, and the nature and extent of the medieval manorial complex. No evidence was encountered for any period pre-dating the late medieval.

**3.12** Limited evidence for late medieval activity was observed, suggesting that the origins of Manor Farm date back to at least the late 14<sup>th</sup> / 15<sup>th</sup> century.

**3.13** The present house, which is at least 17<sup>th</sup> century in date, appears to have been constructed on a raft of redeposited sand, context (116). Evidence for now demolished post-medieval ranges, in the form of a series of walls dating to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, was recorded. The possible brick-built ice pit/store, previously encountered during excavations for a soakaway, was revealed on the western side of the new extension. Bricks from this feature were collected during the present project and dated to the 1840s.

*Confidence Rating*

**3.14** Conditions on site were generally acceptable for the identification and recording of any potential remains and as such there are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which was less than High.

## 4. Schedule of site visits

| Date       | Staff | Hours | Comments                                   |
|------------|-------|-------|--|
| 22/09/2009 | AH    | 8     | Locate & excavate possible brick structure |
| 23/09/2009 | AH    | 4     | Excavate brick structure                   |
| 27/10/2009 | KRN   | 9     | Monitor excavations of ground reductions   |
| 28/10/2009 | KRN   | 10    | Monitor excavations of ground reductions   |
| 29/10/2009 | KRN   | 9     | Monitor excavations of footings            |
| 30/10/2009 | KRN   | 6     | Monitor excavations of footings            |
| 02/11/2009 | KRN   | 9     | Monitor excavations of footings            |
| 03/11/2009 | KRN   | 9     | Monitor excavations of footings            |
| 04/11/2009 | KRN   | 6     | Monitor excavations of footings            |

## 5. Bibliography

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Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) 1983 Map Sheet 4, Soils of Eastern England, Scale 1:250,000.

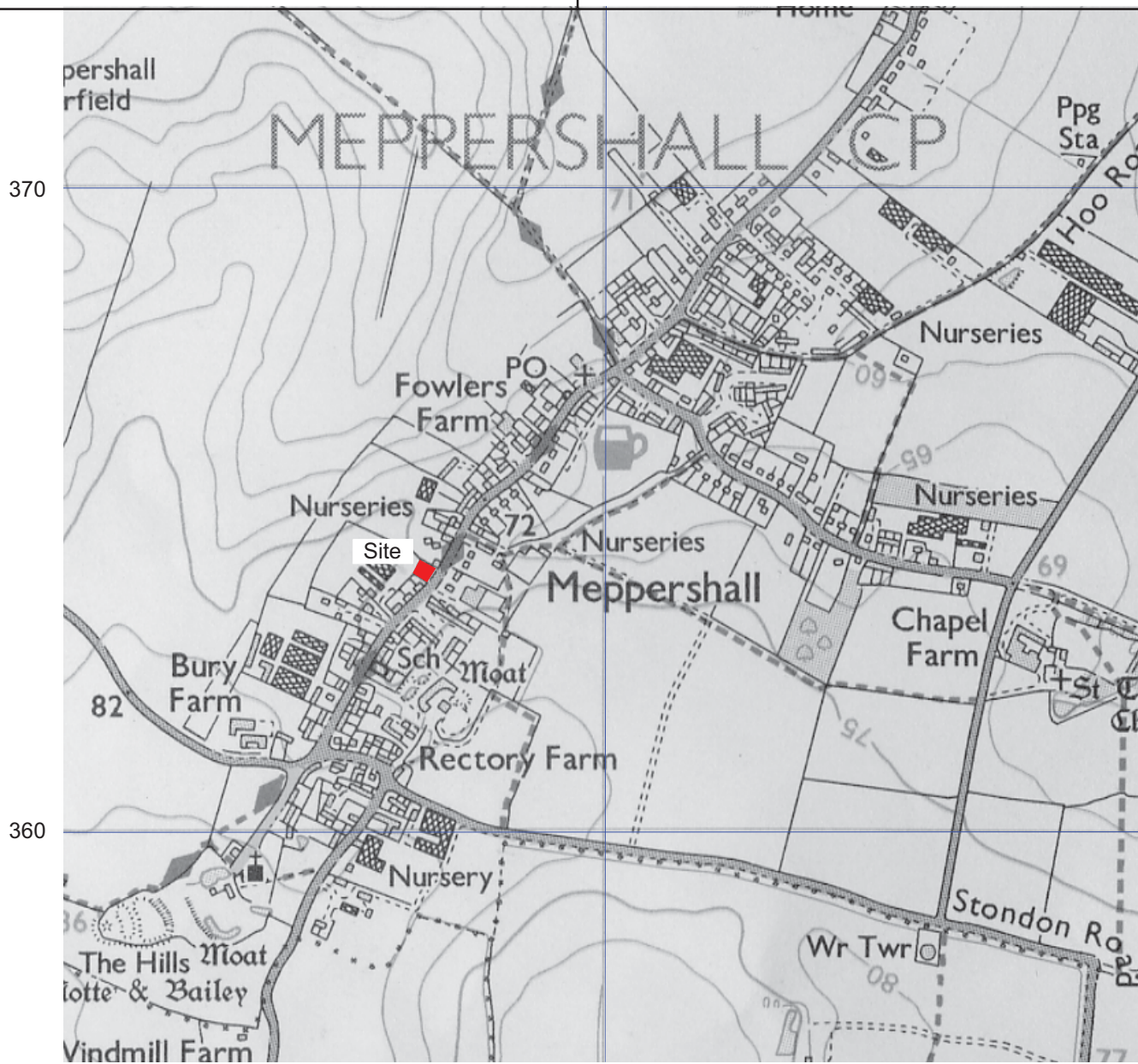
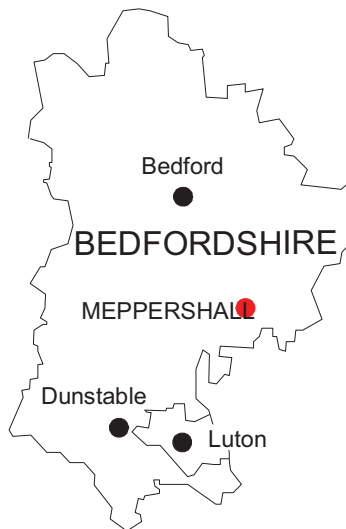
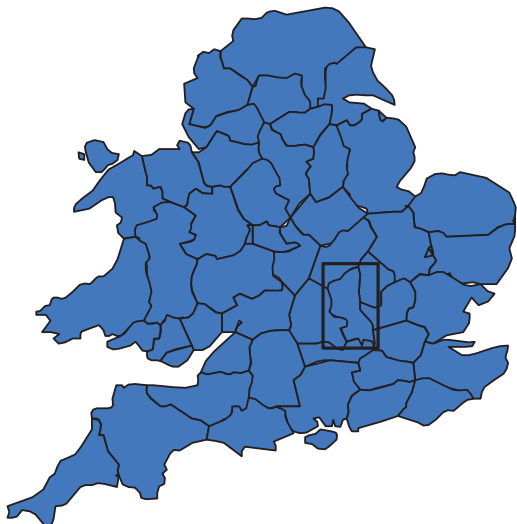
## 6. Illustrations

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
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| Figure 4 ..... | Plan & sections of features exposed during ground reduction    |
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Meppershall, Beds.

HN821



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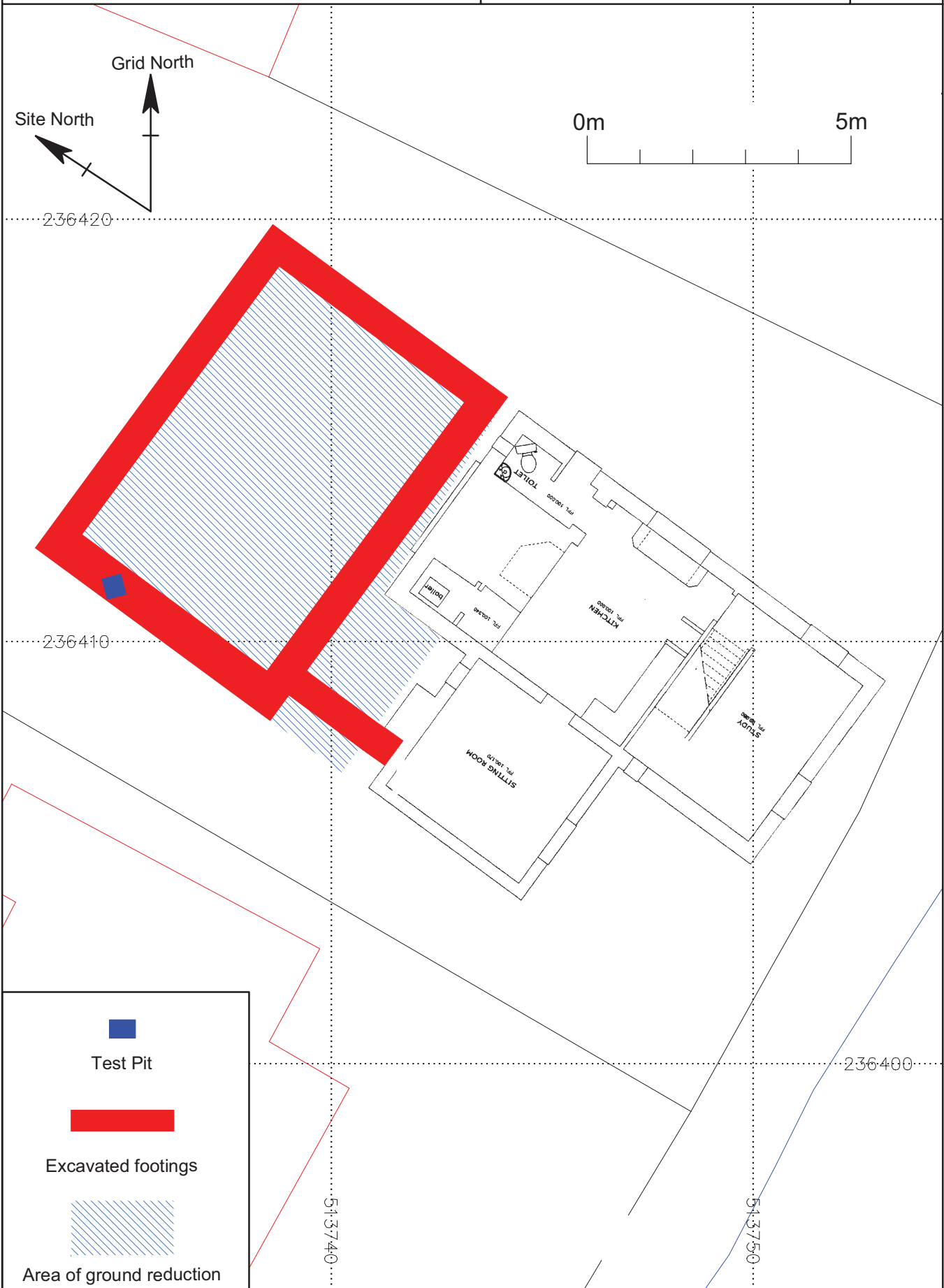
Site Location

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of  
the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Licence no. AL100014861

Scale 1:10000

Figure 1





Site Layout

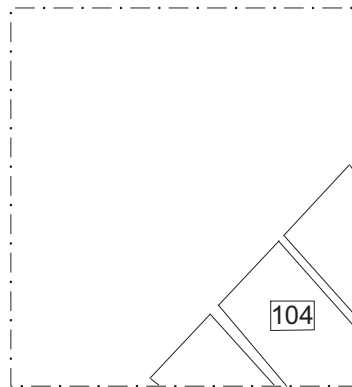
Scale 1:100

Figure 2

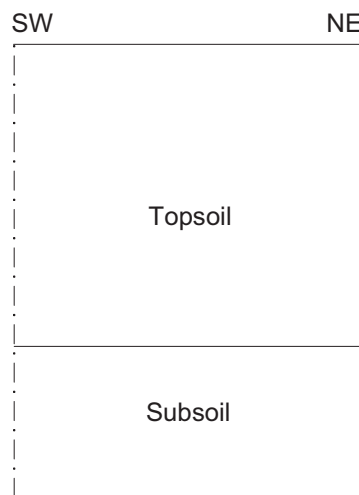
Site North



Test pit containing wall [104]



North-west facing section of test pit



Plan and section of test pit

Scale 1:10

Figure 3





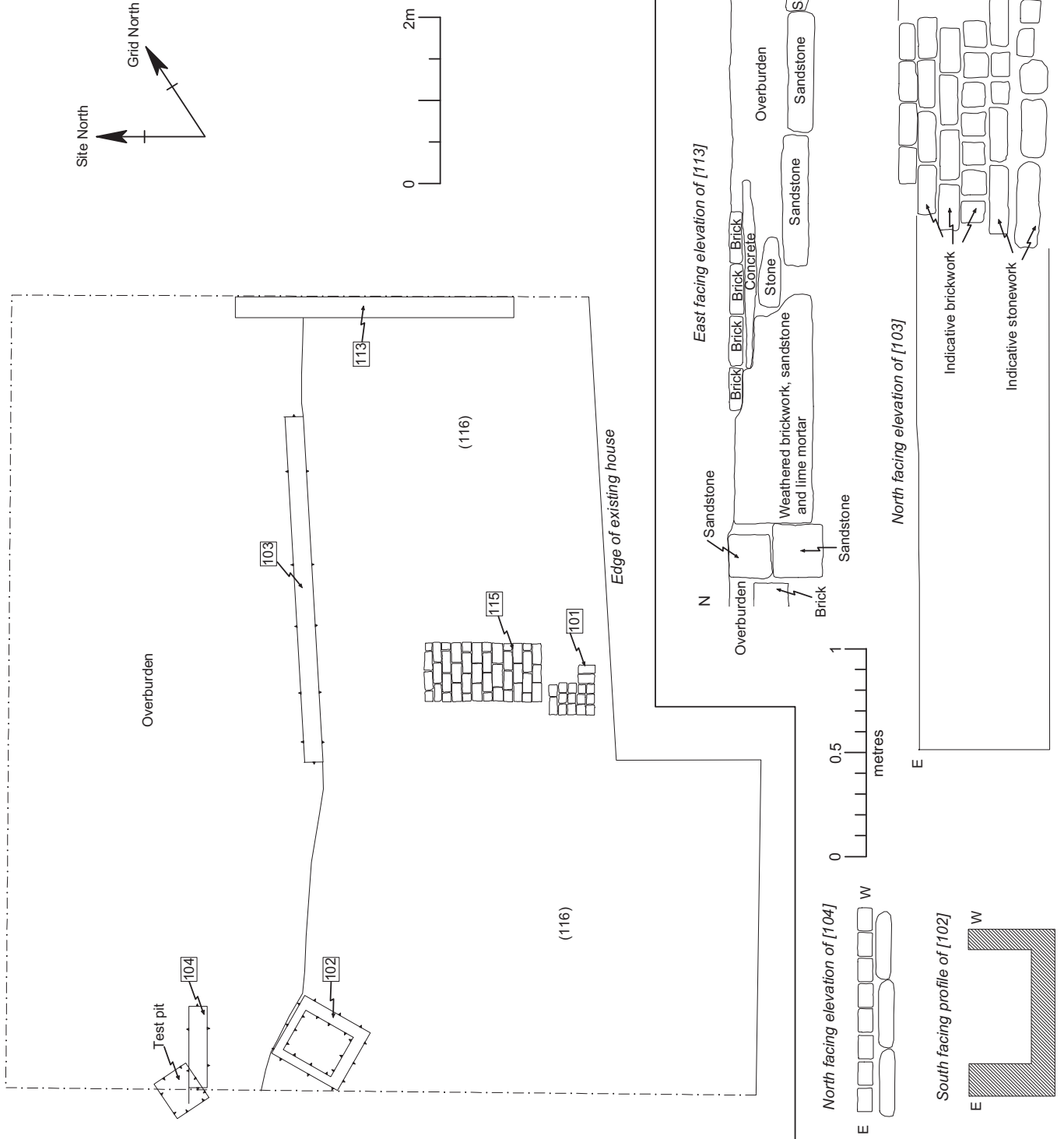
Manor Farm, 62 High Street  
Meppershall  
HN821

Plan of site after partial  
ground reduction,  
removing overburden and (116)  
Elevations of exposed features

Scale 1:50 & 1:20

Figure 4

Plan of site after partial ground reduction, removing overburden and (116)



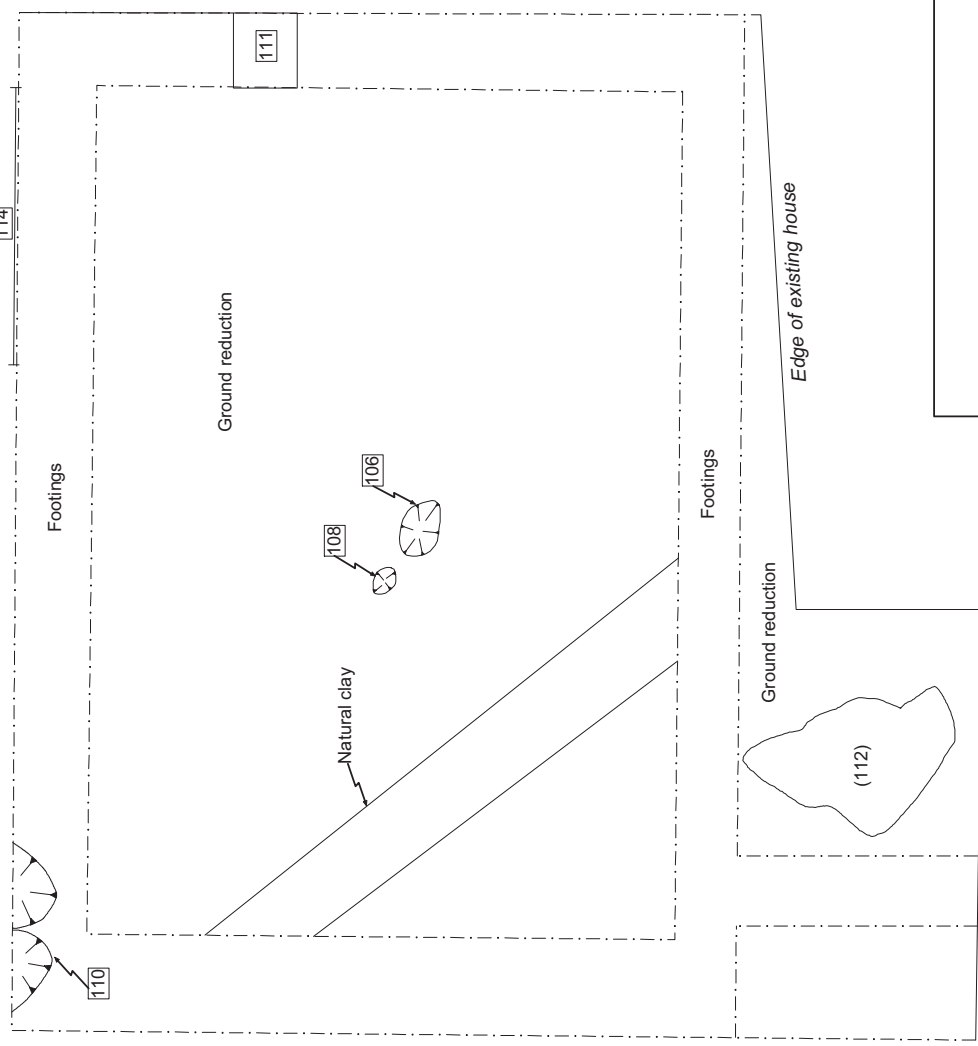


Manor Farm, 62 High Street  
Meppershall  
HN821

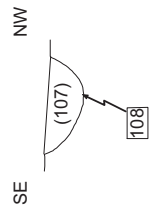
Plan of site after ground reduction  
and excavation of footings

Sections of  
exposed features

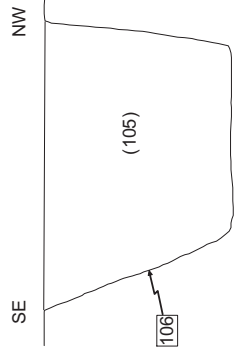
Plan of site post excavation Scale 1:50



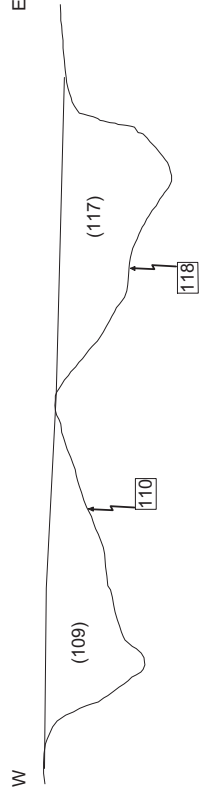
North east facing section of [108]



North east facing section of [106]



South facing section of [110]



Scale 1:50 & 1:10

Figure 5



Plate 1: Brick structure in test pit



Plate 2: Brick surface [101], looking south





Plate 3: Layer (114), looking north



Plate 4: Wall [104], north-east facing elevation





Plate 5: Wall [103], north facing elevation



Plate 6: Wall [113] looking east





Plate 7: Structure [102], looking east



Plate 8: Pit [106] looking north east





Plate 9: Section showing natural sand and clay seam in N footings trench



Plate 10: Pit [110] looking north



# Appendix

## Oasis Data Entry Form

| OASIS ID: heritage1-62900          |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project details</b>             |  |
| Project name                       | Meppershall, Manor Farm, 62 High Street  |
| Short description of the project   | In response to a condition on the planning permission for an extension to the dwelling at Manor Farm, 62 High Street, Meppershall, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the owners to undertake the archaeological monitoring of the development groundworks for the proposed rear and side extensions to the existing house. Manor Farm house is a Grade II listed building dating to at least the mid-17 <sup>th</sup> century, and likely to be earlier.<br><br>The ground level was reduced by up to 0.93m across the site, revealing a number of features, including a pit, a demolition layer and a dump layer, suggesting late medieval occupation. Several structural features, including walls and wall foundations, were also encountered, relating to at least one earlier range of the house, demolished in 1949, and an outbuilding, demolished in the 1880s. |
| Project dates                      | Start: 27-10-2009 End: 04-11-2009  |
| Previous/future work               | No / No  |
| Associated project reference codes | HN821 - Sitecode   |
| Associated project reference codes | BEDFM2009.55 – Museum Accession No.  |
| Type of project                    | Recording project  |
| Site status                        | Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area   |
| Current Land use                   | Other 5 - Garden   |
| Monument type                      | PIT Uncertain<br>PIT Uncertain<br>PIT Uncertain<br>BRICK FLOORING Post Medieval<br>BRICK FLOORING Post Medieval<br>WALL Post Medieval<br>WALL Post Medieval<br>WALL Post Medieval<br>DUMP LAYER Medieval<br>DEMOLITION LAYER Post Medieval<br>BRICK LINED PIT Post Medieval<br>LEVELLING LAYER Uncertain<br>BRICK MANHOLE Modern   |
| Significant Finds                  | POTTERY Medieval   |
| Development type                   | Small-scale extensions (e.g. garages, porches, etc.)   |
| Prompt                             | Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16  |
| <b>Project location</b>            |  |
| Country                            | England  |
| Site location                      | BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE MEPPERSHALL Manor Farm, 62 High St.  |
| Postcode                           | SG17 5LX   |
| Study area                         | 67.50 Square metres  |
| Site coordinates                   | TL 1363 3646 52.0145 -0.344055555556 52:0:52.2N 0:20:38.6W Point   |
| Height OD / Depth                  | Min: 75.00m Max: 75.00m  |
| <b>Project creators</b>            |  |
| Name of Organisation               | Heritage Network   |
| Project brief originator           | Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body  |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Project design originator     | Heritage Network  |
| Project director/manager      | David Hillelson   |
| Project supervisor            | Katie Nicholas  |
| Type of sponsor/funding body  | Landowner   |
| <b>Project archives</b>       |   |
| Physical Archive recipient    | Client  |
| Physical Contents             | Animal Bones, Ceramics, Industrial, other                                       |
| Digital Archive recipient     | Bedford Museum  |
| Digital Media available       | Images raster / digital photography   |
| Digital Media available       | Images raster / digital photography   |
| Paper Archive recipient       | Bedford Museum  |
| Paper Media available         | 'Context sheet', 'Diary', 'Drawing', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report'             |
| <b>Project bibliography 1</b> |   |
| Publication type              | Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)                               |
| Title                         | Manor Farm, 62 High Street, Meppershall, Beds: Archaeological Monitoring Report |
| Author(s)/Editor(s)           | Nicholas, K.  |
| Other bibliographic details   | Report Number 564   |
| Date                          | 2010  |
| Issuer or publisher           | Heritage Network  |
| Place of issue or publication | Letchworth, Hertfordshire   |
| Description                   | A4 booklet, comb bound, green cover, 16 pages, 5 figures, 10 plates             |