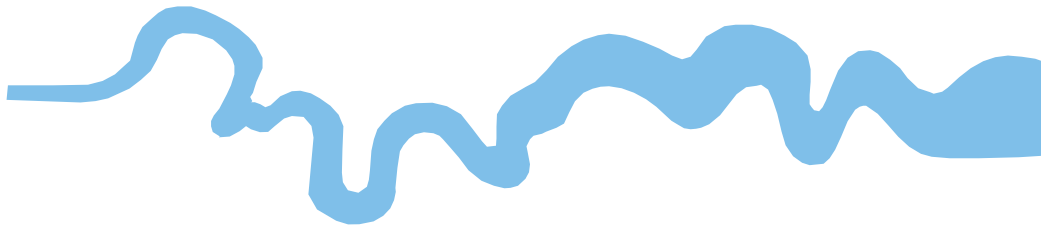


**T V A S**



**EAST MIDLANDS**

**Land at 96 Wood Lane End,  
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**by Steve Ford**

**Site Code: WEH22/08**

**(TL0815 0788)**

# **Land at 96 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

**for Surfbuid Limited**

by Steve Ford

TVAS East Midlands

Site Code WEH22/08

**January 2022**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land at 96 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

**Grid reference:** TL 0817 0792

**Site activity:** Archaeological evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 28th January 2022

**Project coordinator:** Tim Dawson

**Site supervisor:** Steve Ford

**Site code:** WEH 22/08

**Area of site:** c. 400 sq m

**Summary of results:** The evaluation was carried out as intended with two trenches excavated. One trench, corresponding with the footprint of the previous structure on the site, revealed extensive disturbance and truncation of the natural geology. The area of the second trench was undisturbed and revealed a single ditch of Roman date backfilled with much fired clay and charcoal.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at TVAS East Midland Wellingborough and will be deposited with Dacorum Heritage Trust in due course.

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston ✓ 31.01.22
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# Land at 96 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Steve Ford

Report 22/08

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 96 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire (TL 0817 0792) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Andy Josephs of Andrew Josephs Associates on behalf of Surfbuild Limited, Unit C, 100 Cecil Street, Watford, WD24 5AD.

Planning permission (4/03067/18/FUL) has been gained from Dacorum Council to construct new housing on the site following demolition of the existing building. The planning permission is subject to conditions (8 and 9) relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological investigation. This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2018), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. It is acknowledged that NPPF has been revised in 2021.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms. Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire County Council Archaeological Service who advises the District Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford on 28th January 2022 and the site code is WEH 22/08. The archive is presently held at TVAS East Midlands, Wellingborough and will be deposited with Dacorum Heritage Trust when the museum resumes the collection of archives.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the eastern margins of Hemel Hempstead in a small zone of housing but largely surrounded by a zone of industrial use (Fig. 1). It lies on relatively flat land at a height of *c.* 135m above Ordnance Datum sloping gently to the south. The area of development currently comprises a vacant plot levelled of all previous structures (Fig. 2; Pl. 4). The underlying geology is mapped as clay-with-flints (BGS 1946) which was observed in both trenches as a light brown clay containing small flint pieces with large nodules at depth.

## Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location adjacent to the site of a Roman temple complex dating from the 1st- 2nd centuries AD. The principal features are presented on Figure 2. The complex is a Scheduled Ancient

Monument (1015490). It included a small bath complex, tower and an apsidal building interpreted as a 'schola' (hall for studying) and was surrounded by a boundary ditch. The complex was re-ordered in the 2nd century but seems to have gone out of use subsequently. It is considered that it was a private complex rather than for public use. The complex was originally discovered during water-pipe laying (Neal 1983; 1984) and its environs have been partially examined subsequently (Wood 1995; Lewis 2016).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims for this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

- to determine if any Iron age or Roman occupation is present which may relate to the Roman complex previously found to the east; and

- to provide information to assist in the development of a mitigation strategy.

The potential and significance of any such deposits located were to be assessed against research priorities such as those set out in *Historic England Research Agenda* (HE 2016) or more local or thematic research priorities as appropriate (Medlycott 2011).

Two trenches were proposed to be dug, each 10m long and 1.8m wide, targeting areas to be disturbed by new development. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed under constant archaeological supervision by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. Spoil heaps were to be monitored throughout the process for finds and any possible deposits of archaeological interest were cleaned and excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief. Excavation and recording of archaeological deposits was to be done without compromising any deposits which would warrant preservation *in-situ* or which would have been better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

## **Results**

Both trenches were successfully opened (Fig. 3). The trenches ranged in length from 8.4m to 12.5m and in depth from 0.6m to 0.85m . Both trenches were stripped down to expose the natural geology. The natural geology in each trench was a light brown clay with flint small (30-50mm) pieces at the stripped surface with larger nodules deeper down. Appendix 1 gives a list of trenches including lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology.

#### Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1 and 3)

Trench 1 was aligned West – East and was 8.4m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.60m of turf/topsoil overlying the natural clay geology. A single ditch (1) was observed aligned SW-NE cutting the natural geology. The ditch was hand dug to c.0.5m depth with the little remaining fill removed by machine. The ditch was notable for the presence of infill (50) of intense fire-reddened clay and large pieces and amounts of charcoal. The ditch was 1m wide and 0.58m deep with a bowl-shaped profile (Fig. 4; Pl. 3). The fill was markedly heterogeneous with much amorphous fire-reddened clay and clay lumps with no surfaces nor wattle impressions present. The fill also contained large pieces of charcoal and some patches of redeposited natural geology and flint pieces. Just a single sherd (in two refitting pieces) of Roman grey ware was recovered from a depth of c. 0.4m. It is clear that the ditch has been deliberately backfilled with rubbish derived from an oven, kiln or furnace though no artefacts were recovered to support the latter two possibilities.

#### Trench 2 (Fig. 3; Pls 2 and 4)

Trench 2 was aligned North – South and was 12.5m long and up to 0.95m deep. The stratigraphy at the southern end for approximately 3.5m consisted of 0.55m of turf/topsoil containing modern rubbish overlying the clay with small flint pieces natural geology. This part of the trench was undisturbed by development but revealed no archaeological deposits. The remainder of the trench to the north was occupied by made ground overlying modern foundations, and structures including a large 20th century pit pre-dating the recently demolished building. Further, the natural geology at the centre of the trench had been truncated by at least 0.2-0.3m with removal of any shallow archaeological features in this location. No artefacts nor deposits of archaeological interest were recovered.

## **Finds**

### *Roman pottery* by Cristina Mateos

The Roman pottery assemblage comprised just 2 sherds from cut 1 (50), weighting 5g. Both fragments belong to the same vessel. There were no rims or decoration. As a consequence dating is determined by the fabric.

GR: Medium rough grey sandy wares with a abundant frequency of moderately sorted rounded quartz, subrectangular feldspar and white mica 1-2 mm.

Grey wares were used between 1st and 4th century AD but due to the size and nature of this piece only a generic chronology of Roman can be determined.

## *Paleoenvironmental Remains* by Elspeth St John-Brooks

One 5ltr bulk sample was taken from context 50 in ditch 1. This was floated and sieved using standard flotation practices with a 0.25mm flot mesh and the resultant flots air dried. The dry sample flots were then passed through 0.5cm, 0.25cm and 0.10cm sieve and fragments fractured using a blade for species identification. These were then examined with a hand lens at x8 magnification and under a lower powered microscope at magnifications between x50 and x1000. Identification was carried out using Jacomet 2006 and Schweingruber 1978 along with online resources [www.plantatlas.eu/](http://www.plantatlas.eu/) and [www.woodanatomy.ch](http://www.woodanatomy.ch). Taxonomy and nomenclature follow Stace (1997).

Charred plant macrofossils were found within this sample including both charcoal and seeds. Four types of seeds were identified. These include 3 Peas (*Pisum sativum*), 10 Wheat (*Triticum ssp.*), 5 Barley (*Hordeum vulgare ssp.*) and 2 Oat (*Avena sp.*) grains. In total 12 fragments of Ash charcoal were identified, all <2.5cm in size from ditch 1.

This is a small assemblage that does not give a clear understanding of the burning practices on this site. Barley was often grown as a dredge crop along with oats as a buffer against adverse weather and was also mixed with oats to make coarse bread for the lower classes in society. The composition of the grain remains likely reflect the intentional deposition or accumulation of domestic waste. These grains also provide evidence of cereal farming and processing likely relating to local cereal utilisation, potentially bread making and associated with the local diet (Jacomet 2006; Qin 2017).

## **Conclusion**

This small evaluation has revealed a single deposit of archaeological interest namely a ditch of Roman or possibly later date. Dating evidence was provided by just a single sherd of Roman pottery. The backfill of the ditch was unusual in that it comprised deliberate infilling with much fired clay and charcoal. The ditch is thought to relate to the nearby 'temple' complex in being both of Roman date and on the same north west- south east alignment as the previously recorded features.

## **References**

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Schweingruber, F H, 1978 *Microscopic wood anatomy*. Birmensdorf. Swiss Federal Institute of Forestry Research  
Stace, C, 1997, *New flora of the British Isles*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Web Pages:

<http://www.plantatlas.eu/za.php> - Online Digital Plant Atlas  
<http://www.woodanatomy.ch/> - Online Digital Wood Archive



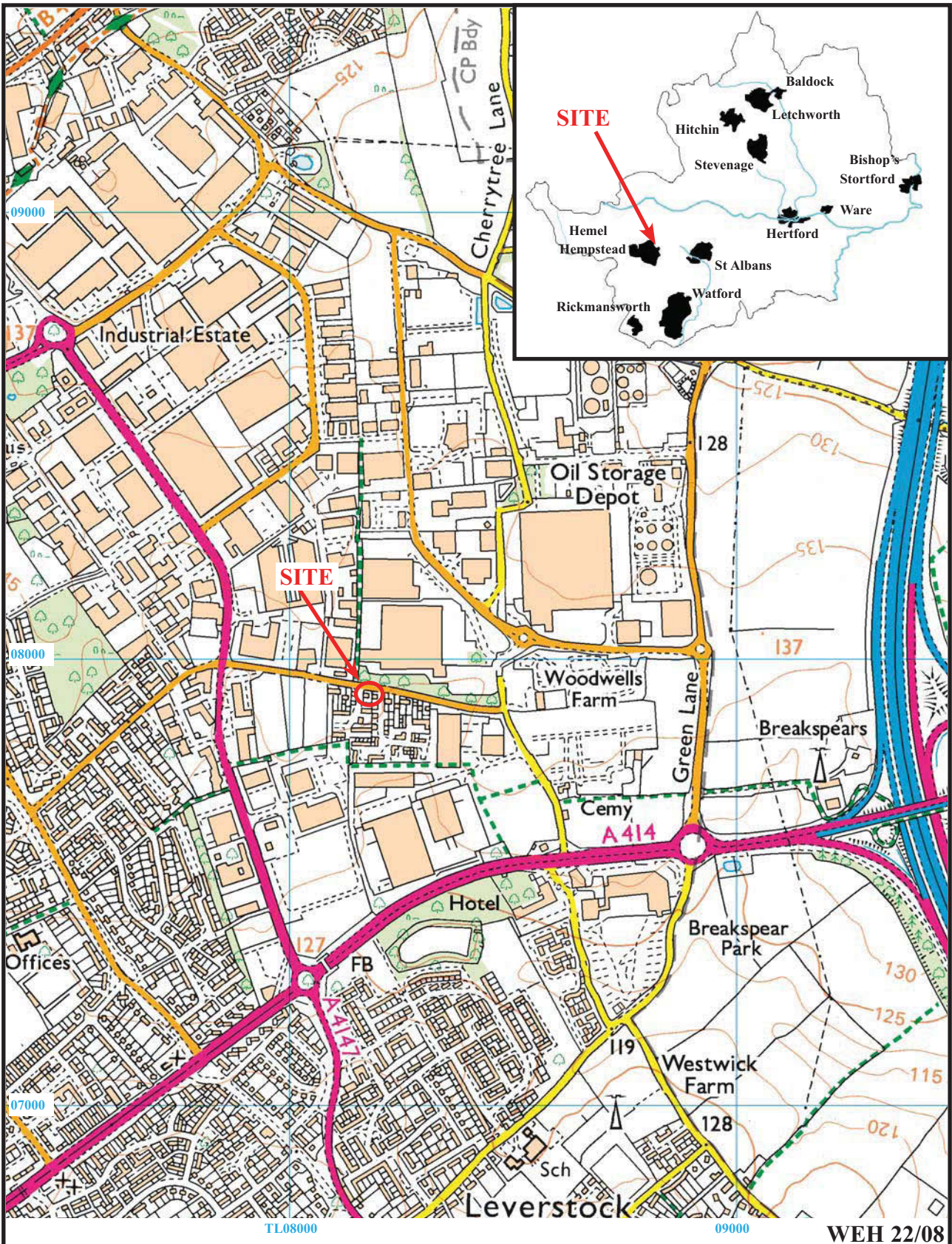
## APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	8.40	1.80	0.6	0–0.58m turf/topsoil; 0.58m+ light brown clay with rare small flint pieces (natural geology) Ditch 1. <b>[Pls 1 and 3]</b>
2	12.5	1.80	0.95N 0.55S	<b>0-3.5m.</b> 0-0.55m Turf/topsoil with modern brick; 0.55m+ light brown clay with flint pieces natural geology. <b>3.5-12.5m</b> 0-0.95m Made ground; 0.95m+ truncated natural geology. Numerous modern intrusions – walls, pits, pipe trenches. . <b>[Pls 2 and 4]</b>

**APPENDIX 2: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Site name and address:</b> Land at 96 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire		
<b>County:</b> Hertfordshire	<b>District:</b> Dacorum	
<b>Village/Town:</b> Hemel Hempstead	<b>Parish:</b> Hemel Hempstead	
<b>Planning application reference:</b> 4/03067/18/FUL		
<b>Client name, address, and tel. no.:</b> Surfbuild Limited, Unit C, 100 Cecil Street, Watford, WD24 5AD.		
<b>Nature of application:</b> Housing		
<b>Present land use:</b> vacant		
<b>Size of application area:</b> 400 sq m	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> 400 sq m	
<b>NGR (to 8 figures):</b> TL0815 0788		
<b>Site code (if applicable):</b> WEH22/08		
<b>Site director/Organization:</b> Steve Ford, Thames Valley Archaeological Services		
<b>Type of work:</b> Evaluation		
<b>Date of work:</b>	Start: 28/1/22	Finish:28/1/22
<b>Location of finds &amp; site archive/Curating museum:</b> To go to: Dacorum Trust		
<b>Related HER Nos:</b>	<b>Periods represented:</b> Roman	
<b>Relevant previous summaries/reports</b>		
<b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b> The evaluation revealed a single Roman ditch backfilled with much fired clay and charcoal dated by a sherd of grey ware		
<b>Author of summary:</b> Steve Ford	<b>Date of summary:</b> 31/1/22	



**Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead,  
Hertfordshire, 2022**

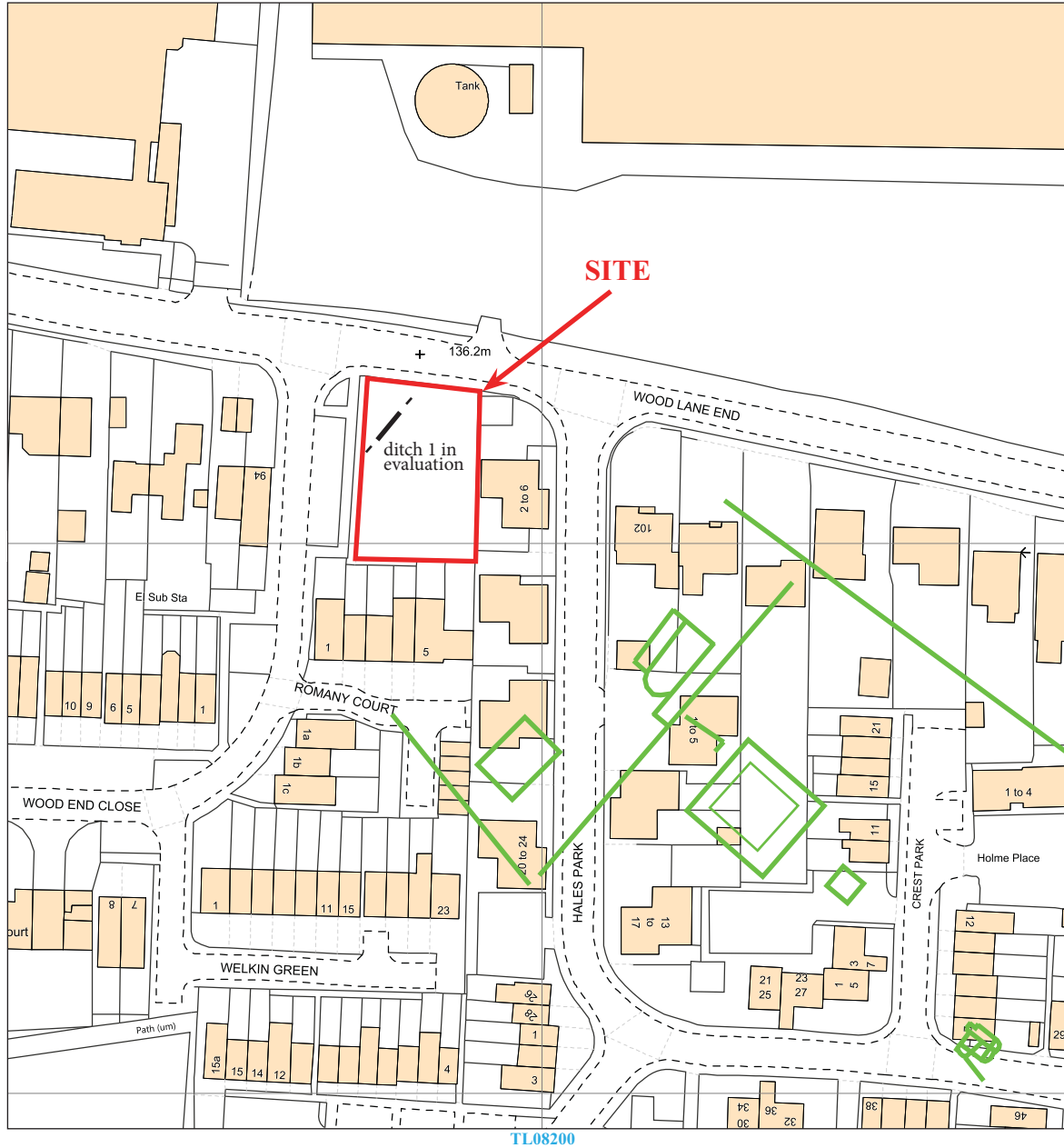
**Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Hemel Hempstead and Hertfordshire.

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WEH 22/08



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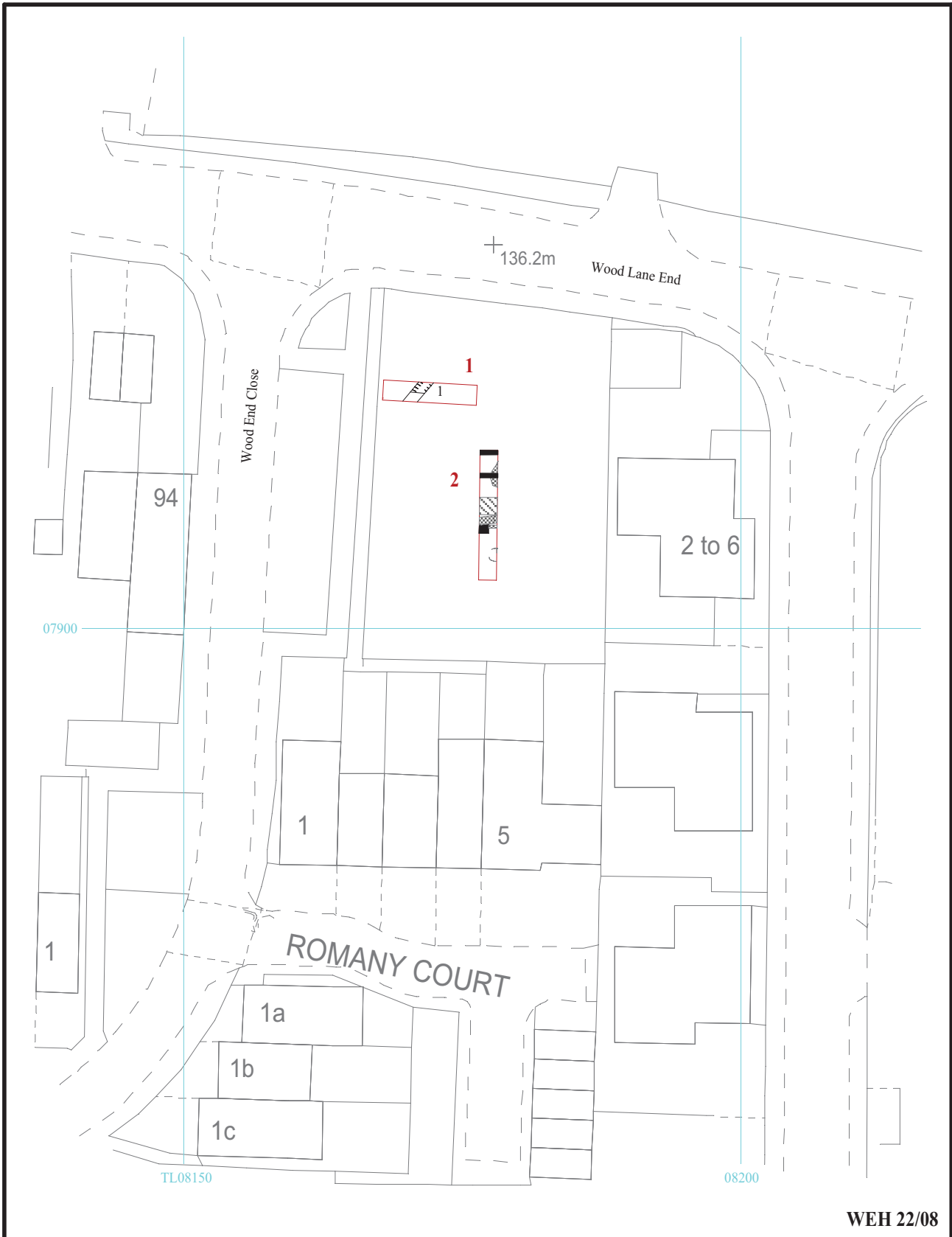


**Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead,  
Hertfordshire, 2022**

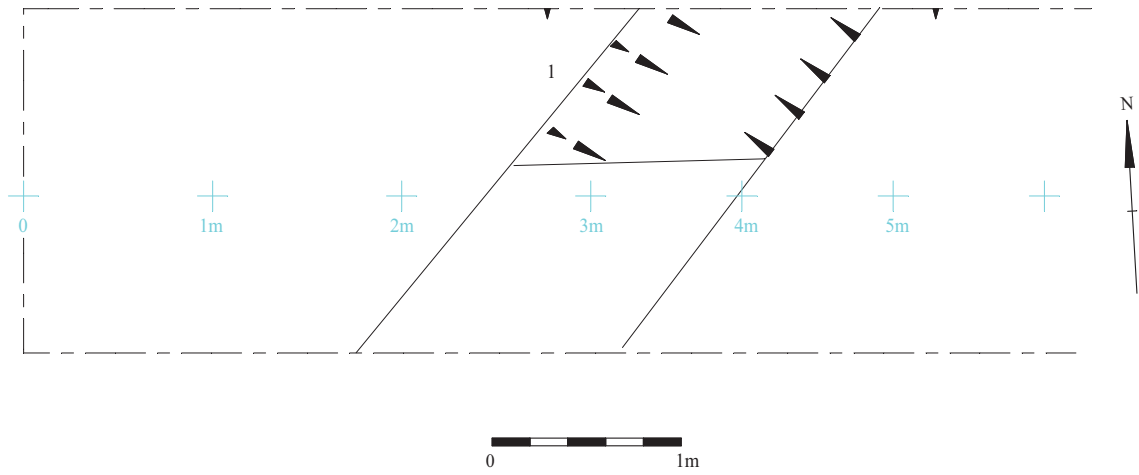
**Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 2. Detailed location of site at Wood End Close showing previous findings (green) after Neal 1984. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence. Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:1250

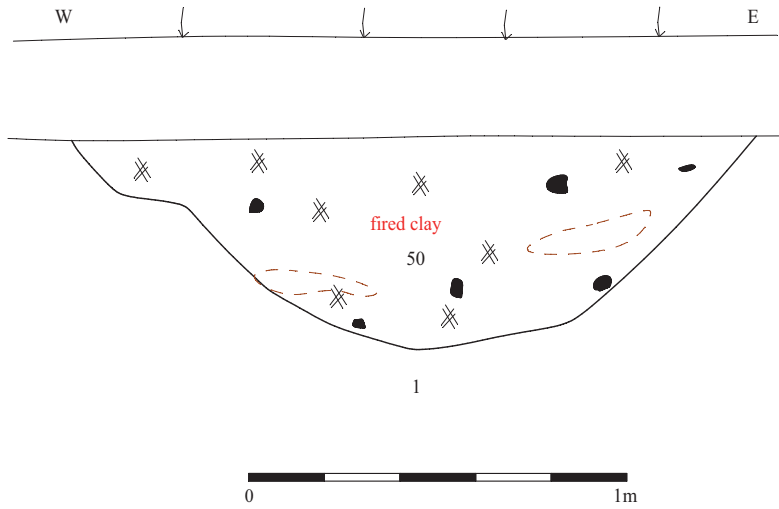




Trench 1



Trench 1



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Hertfordshire, 2022  
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Figure 4. Trench 1 plan and section of ditch 1



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking West, Scales: horizontal 2m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking South, Scales: horizontal 2m, vertical 0.5m.

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**Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead,  
Hertfordshire, 2022  
Archaeological Evaluation  
Plates 1 and 2.**



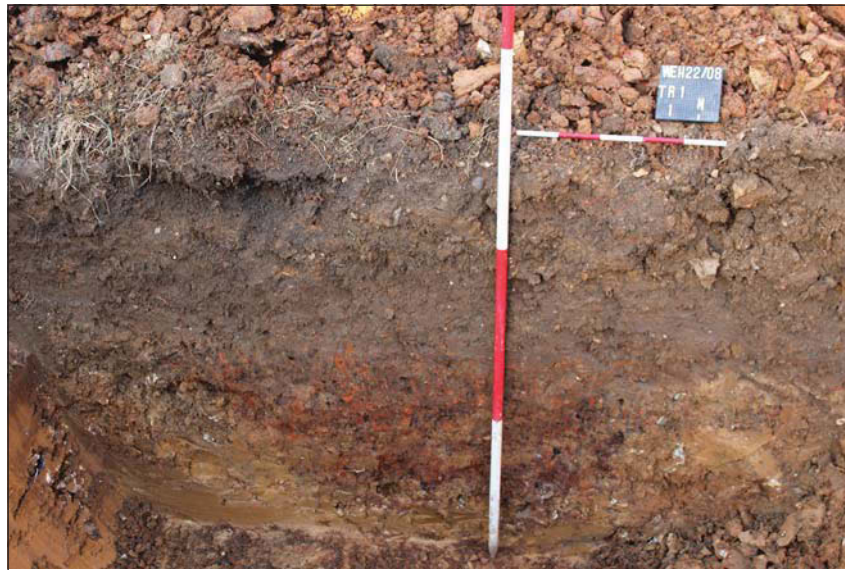


Plate 3. Trench 1, Ditch 1 looking North, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. General view looking South west (and Trench 2).

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**Wood Lane End Close, Hemel Hempstead,  
Hertfordshire, 2022  
Archaeological Evaluation  
Plates 3 and 4.**

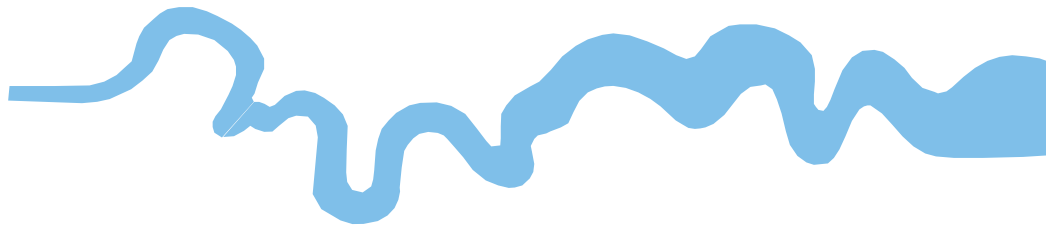




## TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late .....	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early .....	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late .....	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early .....	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper .....	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle .....	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower .....	2,000,000 BC





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