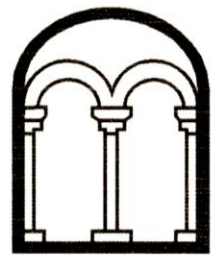


12 & 12A VICARS CLOSE
BIDDENHAM
BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



**12 & 12A VICARS CLOSE
BIDDENHAM
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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On behalf of:
Ian Laing and Dr Hugh Laing

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Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. This document should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council).

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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Phillips Planning Services Ltd on behalf of Ian Laing and Dr Hugh Laing.

This report has been prepared by Ian Turner (Assistant Archaeological Manager). The fieldwork was undertaken by Ernie Rizzo (Archaeological Supervisor). Digitisation of site drawings and illustration were undertaken by Joan Lightning. The project was managed by Wesley Keir (Archaeological Manager). All Albion Archaeology projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff.

Fieldwork was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Vanessa Clarke (Bedford Borough Council Senior Archaeological Officer).

Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.1	22/02/2021	SAO comments
1.0	08/02/2021	N/A

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
HER	Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
OD	Ordnance Datum
PDA	Permitted development area
SAO	BBC Senior Archaeological Officer
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Bedford Borough Council (BBC) granted planning permission (19/01564/FUL) for the demolition of the existing dwellings and erection of two new dwellings at 12 and 12A Vicars Close, Biddenham, MK40 4BG. A Variation of Condition (2020/00065/S73) was subsequently granted in May 2020.

Due to the archaeological potential of the permitted development area (PDA) an archaeological condition (no. 4 on the Variation of Condition) was attached to the planning permission. The condition required a staged programme of archaeological work, comprising an initial trial-trench evaluation to determine if the site contained significant archaeological remains.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Phillips Planning Services Ltd to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation for carrying out the required works (Albion Archaeology 2019) and to undertake the evaluation in accordance with the requirements of the condition. This report presents the results of the trial-trench evaluation.

Four trenches were excavated, within which the only features revealed were a ditch and two pits of modern date, and an undated posthole. The posthole's proximity and similar fill to that of the ditch suggests it too is most likely to be of modern date.

It would appear that the PDA has seen little activity in the past other than for agricultural purposes (as indicated on 19th-century historical maps), prior to the construction of the extant surrounding houses during the 20th century.

The features identified during the evaluation are of negligible interest and of no archaeological significance. They have no potential to address local or regional research objectives.

On completion of the project the archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (accession no.: BEDFM: 2019.101). Any born digital elements of the archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service (ref. no. albionar1-376566).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Bedford Borough Council (BBC) granted planning permission (19/01564/FUL) for the demolition of the existing dwellings and erection of two new dwellings at 12 and 12A Vicars Close, Biddenham, MK40 4BG. A Variation of Condition (2020/00065/S73) was subsequently granted in May 2020.

On the recommendation of the BBC Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) a condition (no. 4 on the Variation of Condition) was attached to the permission. The condition required a staged programme of archaeological work, comprising an initial trial-trench evaluation to determine whether or not the site contained significant archaeological remains.

This approach was in accordance with Policy 41S of the *Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030*, Policy CP23 of the *Bedford Borough Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan* (2008) and according to policies contained within National Planning Policy Framework – Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (MHCLG 2019).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Phillips Planning Services Ltd to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for carrying out the required works (Albion Archaeology 2019) and to undertake the evaluation in accordance with the requirements of the condition.

This report presents the results of the trial-trench evaluation.

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

The village of Biddenham lies *c.*3km west of Bedford, within the valley of the Great Ouse. The permitted development area (PDA) comprises 12 and 12A Vicars Close, which lies on the south side of the village.

At the time of the evaluation, the PDA comprised areas of hardstanding associated with the recently demolished houses, with gardens to the rear. Mature trees divided the gardens of the two properties and lined the southern boundary of the PDA. The site is centred on grid reference TL 0210 4974 with the land lying at a height of *c.*35.5m OD.

The underlying geology comprises Kellaways Sand Member – Sandstone and Siltstone¹. No superficial deposits are recorded, although there are extensive deposits of river-terrace sands and gravels within and to the south of Biddenham.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The data recorded by the Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Record (HER license no: BBHER 054 (2020-21)) from within a 500m-radius of the PDA, referred to as the ‘study area’, is summarised below.

¹ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> [Accessed 17.12.2019]



1.3.1 Undated enclosure

The PDA lies within a large oval enclosure, which in places still survives as an earthen bank and ditch (HER15271). The enclosure is thought to pre-date the medieval village and could potentially date to the Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon period.

1.3.2 Prehistoric

Palaeolithic flints were recovered from the Biddenham area in the 19th/20th centuries, but the locations were not recorded. Evidence of prehistoric activity to the south of the study area comprises cropmarks of a ring-ditch (HER740) and a ring-ditch, pit alignment and trackway (HER1476). Open area-excavations on the Biddenham Loop and Land west of Kempston, to the south of the PDA, revealed middle Bronze Age unenclosed settlement, a water-pit, inhumation and cremation burials, a trackway, post alignments and field-system ditches (HER MBD18916).

1.3.3 Roman (AD 43–c. AD 410)

Evidence of activity in the study area during this period is sparse.

During the *c.*19th/20th century, Roman 1st- to 2nd-century vessels thought to be from burials, were recovered from an unknown location from one of ‘various gravel pits in the Bromham - Kempston area’ (HER16048).

Further afield, a Roman farmstead was revealed within Area 8 of investigations carried out to the north of Bromham Road *c.*1km to the north of the PDA (Albion Archaeology 2016; Luke and Barker, in prep.). This comprised a number of ditched rectangular enclosures with an integral trackway. Peripheral enclosures possibly associated with the farmstead were found to the north (Area 7) adjacent to the A6 bypass.

1.3.4 Anglo-Saxon (c.410-1066)

There is little evidence of activity in the study area during this period. During the *c.*19th/20th century, an Anglo-Saxon cremation urn was recovered from an unknown location from one of ‘various gravel pits in the Bromham - Kempston area’ (HER16048).

A Saxo-Norman pit was revealed during archaeological excavations at 43–45 main road (HER17732). At Ramsmead, Church End, Biddenham (EBB760), located *c.*275m north-west of the PDA, a Saxo-Norman ditch and small pit were also revealed during an evaluation.

1.3.5 Medieval (1066–1550)

The PDA lies *c.*70m to the south of the historic core of the village of Biddenham, which is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The existence of a village green is recorded from later post-medieval documentary evidence (HER8671). The medieval core of Biddenham village is considered to have survived, with post-medieval expansion having occurred only to the north-east of the village (HER17017).



Medieval occupation evidence was revealed by archaeological excavations at 43–45 main road, c.150m north-west of the PDA; it comprised two early medieval ditches and a late medieval stone surface (HER17732).

Medieval features were also revealed during a watching brief at ‘The Three Tuns’ public house, located c.150m to the north-east of the PDA; they comprised three medieval ditches and a pit. A medieval horse pendant fitting, a tag end, and a pierced plate were recovered by metal-detecting on the ‘Townsend Piece’ area (HER15949), c.300m south-west of the PDA.

1.3.6 Post-medieval and modern (1550–1950)

The post-medieval and modern heritage assets recorded by the HER within the study area are predominantly buildings. They are located to the north of the PDA, distributed in an ‘arc’ on both sides of the ‘curving’ High Street.

Two post-medieval and twelve modern buildings are listed. There are nineteen non-designated buildings of interest, with the known locations of six demolished post-medieval buildings also being recorded.

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal purpose of the archaeological field evaluation was to recover information on the:

- location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the PDA;
- integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the PDA;
- nature of palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

This information will be used by the SAO and the LPA to evaluate the significance of the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains that might survive within the site.



2. METHOD STATEMENTS

2.1 Methodological Standards

The standards and requirements set out in the following documents have been adhered to throughout the project:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd edn, 2017).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Procedures for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with Registered Museums in Bedfordshire</i> . V2.8 (2010)
• CIfA	<i>Charter and by-law</i> (2014); <i>Code of conduct</i> (2019)
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> (2020)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2020)
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment PPN3: Archaeological Excavation</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> . 2nd ed. (2011)

The methodological approach to the project was detailed in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2019), which was approved by the SAO prior to commencement of the work.

2.2 Implementation

The archaeological investigation was undertaken between 11th and 13th January 2021. Four trenches were excavated measuring 15m long and 2m wide (Figure 2).

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, operated by an experienced driver, under constant archaeological supervision. The overburden was removed down to the top of undisturbed geological or archaeological deposits, whichever was encountered first. The soil heaps from the excavated trenches were scanned for artefacts. All deposits were recorded in a unique number sequence, using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.

A monitoring visit was conducted with the SAO on 13th January 2021.

2.3 Archiving

A full archive of the records generated during the project will be compiled in accordance with Historic England (MoRPHE) standards. It will be kept secure



at all stages of the operation prior to its deposition with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (accession no.: BEDFM: 2019.101) (see Appendix 1).

Albion Archaeology adheres to strict archiving standards and ensures that all archive materials are stored appropriately. All storage material is of archival-quality and includes archival-quality photographic storage sleeves. As part of the archiving process all records are microfiched.

Any born digital elements of the archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service (reference no.: albionar1-376556).



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The results are presented below in chronological order. Where site recording numbers have been used they are distinguished by different bracket styles to indicate feature number = [***] and fill number = (***). Context numbers reflect the trench number e.g. [204] is a feature within Trench 2 and, therefore, the trench number is only given where necessary.

Detailed descriptions of each individual context are provided in Appendix 2. An all-features plan is illustrated in Figure 2 and selected photographs are shown in Figures 3 and 4.

3.2 Overburden and Geology

The thickness of overburden within the trenches varied between 0.55m and 0.68m; it was thickest at the north-west end of Trench 4.

The topsoil comprised 0.07–0.23m of dark brown-grey silt. The underlying subsoil comprised 0.28–0.38m of mid-grey-brown clay silt.

A levelling layer, up to 0.45m thick, was present in the west half of Trench 4 only. It comprised dark brown-black silty clay with frequent medium-sized to large brick and concrete fragments. The layer was associated with the construction of the recently demolished dwelling.

The undisturbed geological strata consisted of light orange-brown sandy clay with frequent gravel.

3.3 Modern Features

A ditch and two pits in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 contained modern artefacts (Figure 2).

3.3.1 Ditch

Modern ditch [305], aligned NNW–SSE, was located towards the centre of Trench 3. It had a shallow concave profile, measuring at least 1.9m wide and 0.15m deep. A land drain was revealed at its base, running parallel with the ditch. A deposit of brown clay silt sealed the land drain and filled the ditch.

The location and alignment of the ditch is similar to a field boundary illustrated on the OS map of 1881–2 (Figure 2).

3.3.2 Pits

Two modern, sub-circular, soak-away pits were located towards the centre of Trench 2 and the west end of Trench 4.

The pits [207] and [407] were 1m and 1.5m in diameter and contained modern bricks.



3.4 Undated Features

A posthole containing no finds was located 0.3m south-west of modern ditch [305]. It was oval in plan with a concave profile measuring c.0.4m long, 0.25m wide and 0.1m deep.

Its close proximity and similar fill to that of modern ditch [305] suggests it is most likely to of a similar date.

3.5 Tree Rooting

Three features located within Trenches 1 and 2 were proven, upon excavation, to be tree-throws/root holes. They had shallow asymmetric concave profiles, measuring 0.53–1m long, 0.35–0.5m wide and c.0.1m deep. They contained mid grey-brown silty clay deposits and no artefacts.



4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 *Summary of Results*

The archaeological field evaluation revealed a ditch and two pits of modern date. A posthole was also revealed which contained no finds, though its close proximity and similar fill to that of the modern ditch suggests it is most likely to of a similar date.

No pre-modern artefacts were observed within the topsoil or subsoil.

It would appear that the PDA has seen little activity in the past other than for agricultural purposes (as indicated on 19th-century historical maps), prior to the construction of the extant surrounding houses during the 20th century.

4.2 *Significance*

The features identified during the evaluation are of negligible interest and of no archaeological significance. They have no potential to address local or regional research objectives.



5. REFERENCES

Albion Archaeology, 2016, *Land North of Bromham Road, Biddenham, Bedford: Assessment of Potential and Updated Project Design*, Report no. 2015/94 ver.1.1

Albion Archaeology, 2017 *Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork* (3rd ed)

Albion Archaeology, 2019, *12 & 12A Vicars Close, Biddenham, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Field Evaluation*, Report no. 2019/144

Historic England, 2015 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers Guide*

Luke, M. and Barker, J., in prep, *Land North of Biddenham. Investigation of a Neolithic to Post-Medieval Landscape North of Biddenham, Bedford*



6. APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE

The physical project archive, including a digital security copy, will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum under accession no. BEDFM 2019.101. Any digital elements of the archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website under reference number albionar1-376566.

The archive will comprise the following:

- Physical
 - 1 file of paper records and A3/4 graphics
 - 1 sheet of permatrace
- Digital
 - Photographs (.JPEG, .TIFF)
 - Spatial data (.DWG)
 - Reports (.PDF/A)
 - Correspondence (e-mail)



7. APPENDIX 2: TRENCH SUMMARIES



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 15.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.56 m. Max: 0.63 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2117: Northing: 49747)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2118: Northing: 49733)

Reason: Assess archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silt occasional small stones 0.17-0.23m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Subsoil	Firm mid grey brown silty clay occasional small-large stones 0.29-0.3m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural	Firm light orange brown sandy clay frequent small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Tree throw	Sub-oval sides: asymmetrical base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.45m, min depth 0.1m, min length 1.m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Fill	Friable mid brown clay silt occasional small stones Fill of tree throw, <0.12m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 15.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.55 m. Max: 0.56 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2111: Northing: 49751)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2126: Northing: 49751)

Reason: Assess archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silt occasional small stones 0.12-0.13m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Subsoil	Firm mid grey brown clay silt occasional small-medium stones 0.3-0.34m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Natural	Firm light orange brown sandy clay frequent small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Tree throw	Sub-oval N-S sides: asymmetrical base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.48m, min depth 0.1m, min length 0.9m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Fill	Friable mid brown clay silt occasional small stones Root disturbance, <0.1m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Tree throw	Sub-oval E-W sides: asymmetrical base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.35m, min depth 0.08m, min length 0.5m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	Fill	Friable mid brown clay silt occasional small stones Root disturbance, <0.09m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Modern intrusion	Irregular N-S sides: irregular dimensions: min breadth 0.9m, min length 2.1m Soak-away, filled with large modern brick fragments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 15.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.58 m. Max: 0.63 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2091: Northing: 49739)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2082: Northing: 49726)

Reason: Assess archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silt occasional small stones <0.1m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Subsoil	Firm mid grey brown clay silt occasional small-medium stones 0.28-0.33m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Natural	Firm light orange brown sandy clay frequent small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Posthole	Sub-circular sides: steep base: concave dimensions: min depth 0.1m, max length 0.4m, min length 0.25m Posthole located immediately south-west of ditch [305]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Fill	Friable mid brown clay silt occasional small stones <0.11m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Ditch	Linear NNW-SSE sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 1.9m, min depth 0.15m Ditch with land drain at its base, matching its alignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
306	Fill	Friable dark brown clay silt moderate small-medium stones <0.15m thick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 15.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.65 m. Max: 0.68 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2081: Northing: 49743)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2097: Northing: 49739)

Reason: Assess archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silt occasional small stones 0.07-0.13m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Make up layer	Firm dark brown black silty clay frequent medium-large CBM, frequent medium-large concrete, moderate small-medium stones <0.45m thick. Garden landscaping layer, related to adjacent patio area of demolished property.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Subsoil	Firm mid grey brown silty clay moderate small-medium stones <0.38m thick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Natural	Firm light orange brown sandy clay frequent small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Modern intrusion	Irregular dimensions: min diameter 1.5m Soak-away filled with large modern brick fragments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

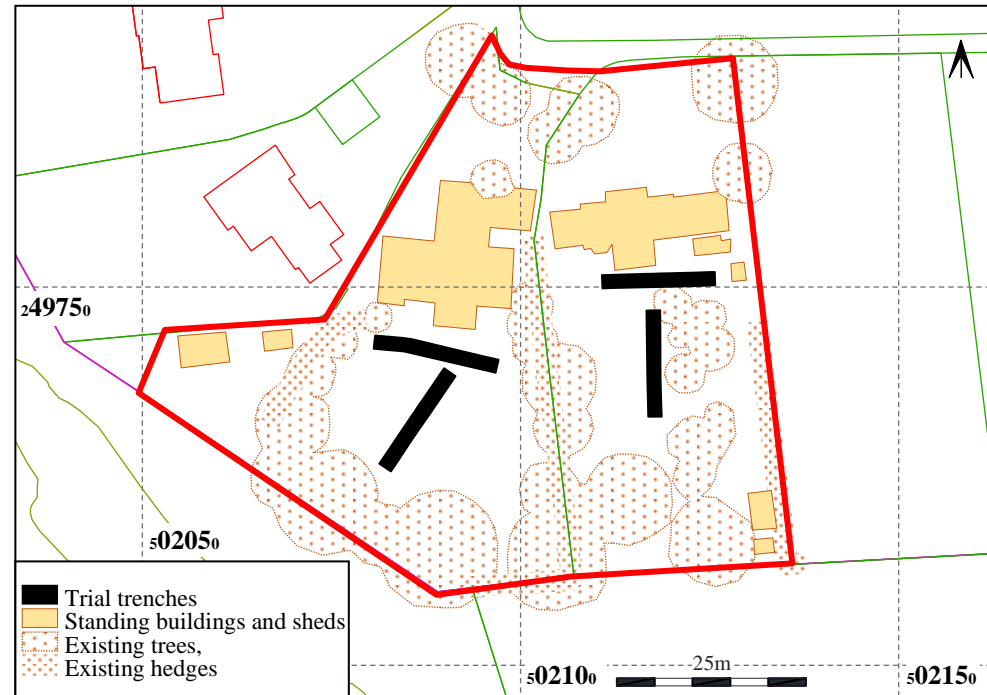
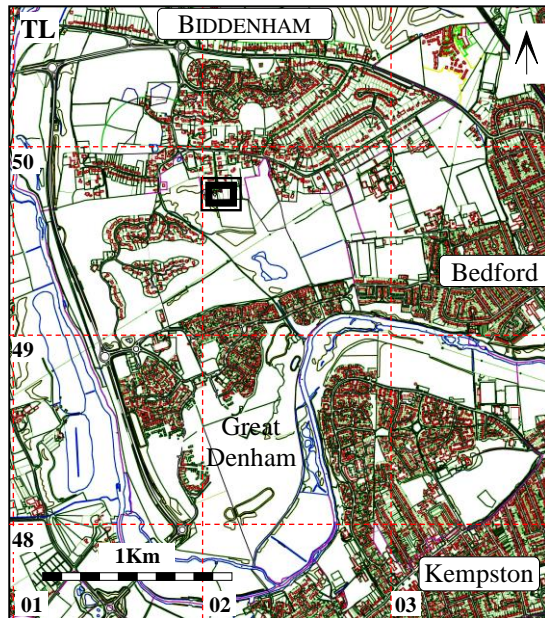
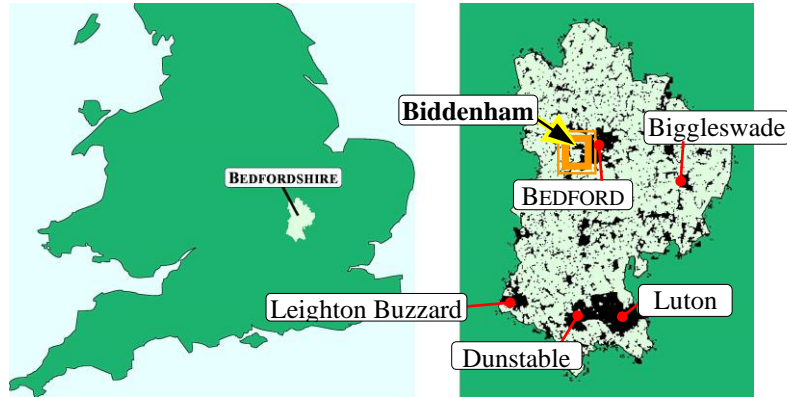


Figure 1: Site location plan

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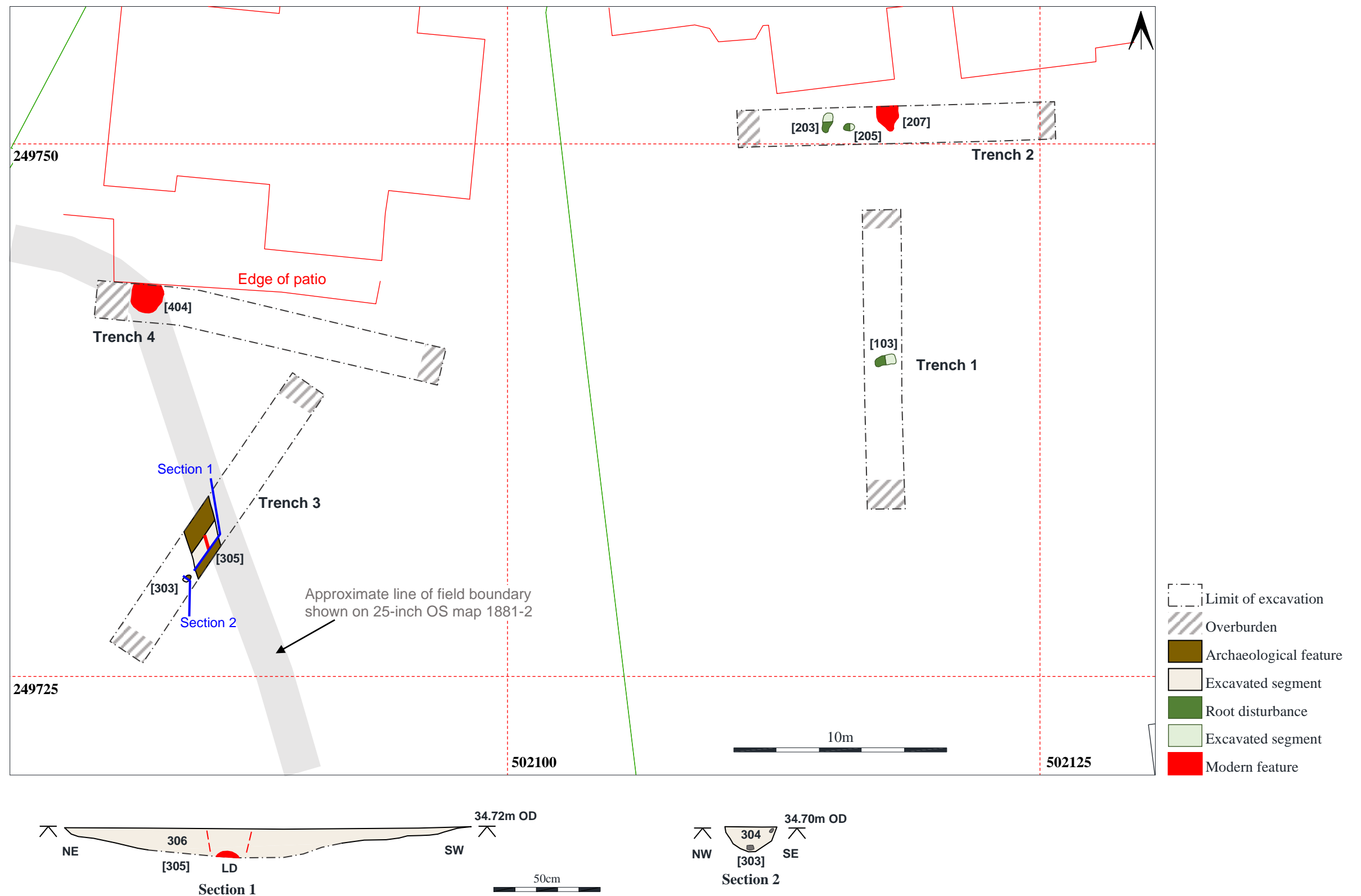


Figure 2: All-features plan and selected sections

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Tr 3. Ditch with field drain at its base [305].
Scale 1m. Looking north-west



Tr 3. Posthole [303]
Scale 40cm. Looking south-east



Tr 2. Brick-filled pit [207]
Scale 1m. Looking north



Tr 4. Brick-filled pit [404]
Scale 1m. Looking west

Figure 3: Photographs of Trenches 2, 3 and 4



Tr 1. Scale 1m.
Looking north



Tr 1. Scale 1m.
Looking south



Tr 2. Scale 1m.
Looking west



Tr 2. Scale 1m.
Looking east



Tr 3. Scale 1m.
Looking north-east



Tr 3. Scale 1m.
Looking south-west



Tr 4. Scale 1m.
Looking west-north-west



Tr 4. Scale 1m.
Looking east-south-east

Figure 4: Trench overview photographs

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