

**LAND AT 32-34 BEDFORD ROAD
WILSTEAD
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH
EVALUATION**

Albion
archaeology



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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

HER	Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Record
HET	Bedford Borough Council's Historic Environment Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission was granted by Bedford Borough Council for residential development on land at 32-34 Bedford Road, Wilstead. Acting on advice received from the Council's Archaeologist, the Local Planning Authority attached a condition to the planning consent requiring a programme of archaeological work to be carried out at the site due to its location within an area of archaeological sensitivity.

This programme of work initially comprised an archaeological trial trench evaluation. If required, the results of this work were to be used in the formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy for any revealed archaeological remains.

Wilstead lies in the northern part of the Marston Vale and at the foot of the Greensand Ridge where the A6 approaches Bedford from the south. There is archaeological evidence that the area around Wilstead was settled from at least the early Iron Age onwards.

Extensive settlement activity dating from the early-middle Iron Age up to the Saxo-Norman period has been excavated at the Wixams to the north-west of the proposed development site. Roman pits, ditches and pottery were also investigated to the north of Duck End Farm, close to where the Bedford Road meets the A6. Only c. 450m to the south of the proposed development site, at Luton Road, lies another settlement with evidence for occupation from the early Iron Age to the Saxo-Norman period.

The proposed development site lies to the north of the medieval village but also about halfway to the site of Duck End where further evidence for medieval occupation has been recorded.

No archaeologically significant remains were observed during the trial trench evaluation. Part of the site was found to be heavily disturbed by a large modern intrusion.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission (11/00478/FUL) was granted by Bedford Borough Council for residential development on land at 32-34 Bedford Road, Wilstead. The development will comprise the construction of six dwellings with associated garages and a new access road.

As the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity near the medieval core of Wilstead, a condition (no. 18) was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This was in line with *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* and Local Plan policy BE24.

This report describes the results of the first phase of this programme of work which comprised trial trenching. The work was carried out in accordance with a brief (HET 2011) and subsequent written scheme of investigation (Albion Archaeology 2012). The results of this phase of work will inform future decisions concerning the archaeological potential of the site with regard to the proposed development.

1.2 *Site Location*

Wilstead lies c.4km to the south of Bedford and to the east of the A6 (Figure 1). The proposed development site is located on the northern edge of the village on the north-eastern side of Bedford Road and comprises c.0.37ha of land.

Wilstead lies on the level ground of the Marston Vale at an average height of c. 35m OD. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay Formation mudstone.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

There is archaeological evidence that the area around Wilstead was settled from at least the early Iron Age onwards.

Extensive settlement activity dating from the early-middle Iron Age up to the Saxo-Norman period has been excavated at the Wixams (HER 18246), to the north-west of the proposed development site. This consisted largely of late Iron Age and Roman enclosures and a trackway with evidence of at least seasonal occupation utilising water holes and wells continuing into the Saxon period.

Roman pits, ditches and pottery (HER 18262) were also investigated to the north of Duck End Farm, close to where the Bedford Road meets the A6.

Approximately 450m to the south of the proposed development site, at Luton Road, lies another settlement with evidence for occupation from the early Iron Age to the Saxo-Norman period (HER 18221). This was excavated in advance of housing development in 2001 (Luke and Preece 2010). Here, a seemingly unenclosed Iron Age settlement was followed by the establishment of a Roman farmstead with two foci. This was replaced by a single enclosure in the later Roman period which also contained a pit with a ritual deposit



implying sheep sacrifice. This suggests that the site may have taken on a more religious function during this period.

In the Saxo-Norman period the focus of occupation shifted away from the earlier Iron Age and Roman farmsteads and probably closer to the dispersed settlement associated with the Manor of Wilshamstead. This is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as a fairly large manor of 23 households, valued at 3 hides, mainly exploiting agricultural lands and meadow.

All Saints Church dates to the 14th century but 11th–12th-century pottery and a human skull were found during the construction of the Vicarage in the 1950–60s (HER 16133), suggesting the possible existence of earlier occupation and burial in this area. The proposed development site lies to the north of the medieval village but also about halfway to the site of Duck End where further evidence for medieval occupation has also been recorded (HER 17053).

A brickfield (HER 6742) c.1km to the north of Wilstead is evidence for the extensive, largely 19th-century, exploitation of the clay resources of the Marston Vale for brick production.

The present village of Wilstead still lies mainly within the boundaries of the medieval settlement (HER 17052) with limited expansion along the main roads in the north and south. The buildings in The Square and the Red Lion opposite the proposed development site represent some of this modern housing.

A number of geotechnical test pits were excavated under archaeological supervision at the development site in 2005 in advance of a previous development proposal (Albion Archaeology 2005). The investigations revealed no archaeological features or deposits earlier than the post-medieval period. Remains that were found related to the use of part of the site as a farmyard in the 20th century and the potential remains of a former cottage that was located on the site and believed by the current owners to have burned down in the late 19th or early 20th century. The rear of the site contained relatively undisturbed deposits suggesting it had always been in agricultural use.

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal objective of the archaeological works was to determine whether archaeological remains were present at the site and, if so, to determine their date, nature, extent, condition, and significance. This information was to be used to inform decisions with regard to the impact of the consented development on potential archaeological remains, and to help in the formulation of appropriate mitigation measures to protect remains either by preservation or excavation.



2. METHODOLOGY

The trial trenching took place on 23rd and 24th February 2012. Four trenches, each measuring 20m x 1.8m, were opened within the proposed development area.

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever were encountered first.

Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. All features were assigned a unique context number, commencing at 101 for Trench 1, and 201 for Trench 2 etc. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.

A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2012). The project adhered throughout to the standards prescribed in the following documents:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (1998)
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2006)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> , 2nd edition (2011)
• HET	<i>Brief for a programme of archaeological field evaluation at land at 34A and to the rear of 32 Bedford Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire</i> (February 2011)
• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation</i> (updated 2008) and <i>finds</i> (updated 2008)



3. RESULTS

All archaeological deposits and features found during the investigations are described below and shown on Figure 2. Detailed data on all features and deposits can be found in the appendix.

3.1 Trench 1

Overburden comprised a 0.25–0.3m thick topsoil (101) overlying a 0.3–0.4m thick subsoil (102).

Undisturbed geological deposits in the form of clay (103) were found at a depth of approximately 0.7m below ground level.

No archaeological features were present within Trench 1.

3.2 Trench 2

Overburden comprised a 0.2–0.25m thick topsoil (201) overlying a 0.25m thick subsoil (202).

Undisturbed geological deposits in the form of clay (203) were found at depths of 0.45–0.5m below ground level.

No archaeological features were present within Trench 2.

3.3 Trench 3

Overburden comprised a 0.4m thick deposit of modern dumped material (301) overlying a 0.2–0.4m thick layer of buried topsoil (302).

The entire length of this trench was encompassed by an area of modern disturbance also present within Trench 4. Underlying the buried topsoil (302) was a 1.15m thick layer of redeposited clay with lenses of grey silt (303) overlying a black gravel deposit (304) containing significant amounts of modern material such as brick and glass. These are presumed to be fills within a modern intrusion [305]. The full depth of this feature was not investigated, given the already considerable depth of the excavated trench.

Undisturbed geological deposits were not encountered within Trench 3.

No archaeological features of significance were present within Trench 3

3.4 Trench 4

Overburden comprised a 0.3–0.4m deposit of modern dumped material (401) overlying a 0.2–0.3m thick layer of buried topsoil (402). Underlying layer (402) was subsoil deposit (403) which was 0.3m thick.

At the north-east end of Trench 4 a modern intrusion [406] was observed cutting the subsoil (402). This contained redeposited clay (405) analogous to fill (303) found within Trench 3. It is likely [305] and [406] represent the same feature.

No archaeological features of significance were found within Trench 4.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The trial trench evaluation revealed no archaeological remains of significance within the proposed development site.

The eastern half of the site, investigated by Trenches 1 and 2, revealed relatively undisturbed deposits consistent with former agricultural use. This was also the case in the majority of Trench 4 at the south-west corner of the site.

The central area, as evidenced by Trench 3 and the north-east end of Trench 4, was heavily disturbed by a large modern intrusion. This encompassed the whole of Trench 3 and part of Trench 4. The intrusion contained modern brick and glass and given its considerable size would most likely represent evidence of modern quarrying.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2012. *Land at 32-34 Bedford Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Trial Trenching*. Report no. 2012/24.

Albion Archaeology 2005. *32/34 Bedford Road, Wilstead. Programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication*. Report no. 2005/80.

HET 2011. *Brief for a programme of archaeological field evaluation at land at 34A and to the rear of 32 Bedford Road, Wilstead, Bedfordshire*. February 2011.

Luke, M. and Preece, T. 2010. "Iron Age, Roman and Saxon settlement on the Oxford Clay at Luton Road, Wilstead", *Bedfordshire Archaeology* 26, 99-166.



6. APPENDIX: CONTEXT DETAILS



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0633543829

OS Grid Ref.: TL0632743810

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
101	Topsoil	Firm dark brown grey clay silt Thickness 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay Thickness 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Firm light orange clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 2**Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.****Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0632443857****OS Grid Ref.: TL0631543839****Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of area**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
201	Topsoil	Firm dark brown grey clay silt Thickness 0.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay Thickness 0.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Natural	Firm light orange clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0628343830

OS Grid Ref.: TL0629743816

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
301	Dump material	Loose mid brown grey silt frequent small-large CBM Thickness 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Buried topsoil	Firm dark brown grey clay silt Thickness 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Modern intrusion	dimensions: min depth 1.25m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Fill	Firm light brown clay occasional small-medium CBM Thickness 1.15m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Fill	Firm dark black silty gravel frequent small-large CBM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL0627543829

OS Grid Ref.: TL0626043816

Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
401	Dump material	Loose mid brown grey silt frequent small-large CBM Thickness 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Topsoil	Firm dark brown grey clay silt Thickness 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay Thickness 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Natural	Firm light orange clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
406	Modern intrusion	dimensions: min breadth 6.m, min depth 0.6m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
405	Fill	Firm light brown clay moderate small-large CBM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

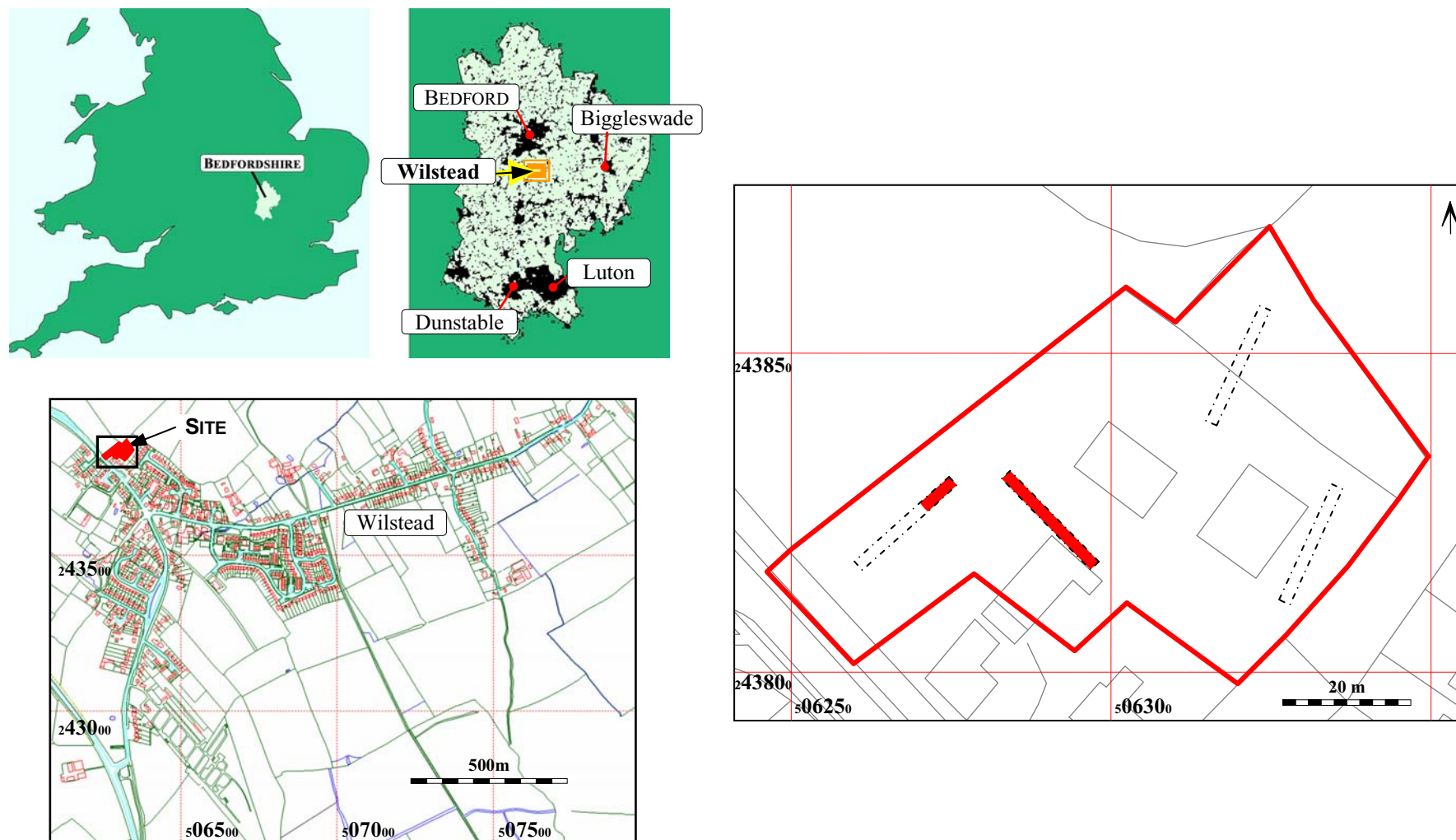
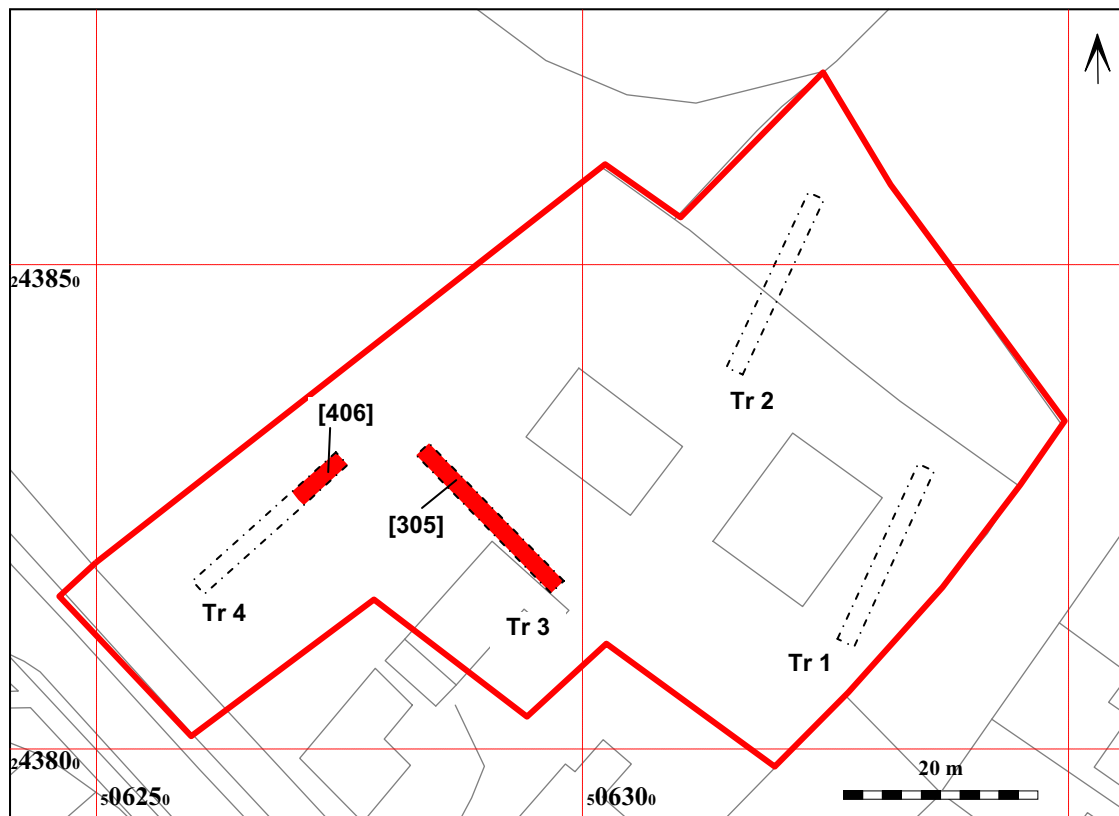


Figure 1: Site location

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Trench 4 looking south-west

Figure 2: Trenching results

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