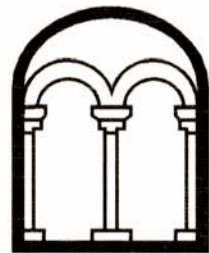


**SILSOE HOUSE  
SILSOE  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION  
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND  
PUBLICATION**

**Albion**  
archaeology



**SILSOE HOUSE  
SILSOE  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION  
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND  
PUBLICATION**

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Wesley Keir	Drew Shotliff

Produced for:  
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On behalf of:  
J C Gill Developments



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## **Preface**

*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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## **Version History**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Issue date</b>	<b>Reason for re-issue</b>
1.0	10th October 2014	n/a

## **Key Terms**

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council's Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-technical Summary**

*Planning permission (CB/12/03766/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for alterations and additions to an existing house, cottage, bungalow and flats to form two new dwellings and two single timber-clad garages at Silsoe House, Silsoe in Bedfordshire.*

*Due to the archaeological sensitivity of the site of the planned works, a condition (no. 12) was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The required programme of archaeological works is described in the CBCA brief (CBCA 2013) and comprised the observation and recording of relevant groundworks and investigation of any revealed archaeological remains.*

*Archaeological observation and investigation during the groundworks took place on 29th January and 14th May 2014. Though much of the area appears to have suffered little in the way of modern truncation, no archaeological features or deposits were revealed within the observed groundworks. However, given the relatively small size of the area observed, there remains the potential for the survival of archaeological features and deposits within the vicinity.*

*The post-medieval ditches that were revealed within the trial trench evaluation (Albion Archaeology 2014) undertaken subsequent to this investigation were not observed within the nearby service trench or within the area excavated for parking. However, the ditch deposits were revealed at depths of 0.8–1.2m beneath the current ground level — significantly deeper than the level reached within the service trench or car parking area.*

*The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (accession no. LUTNM 2013/23). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-166003).*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission (CB/12/03766/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for alterations and additions to an existing house, cottage, bungalow and flats to form two new dwellings and two single timber-clad garages at Silsoe House, Silsoe in Bedfordshire.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) advised that the development site had the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest. Consequently a condition (no. 12) was attached to the planning permission. The condition required that “no development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority” and that “the development shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme”. The recommendations were in accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy 45 of the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

The required programme of archaeological works is described in the CBCA brief (CBCA 2013) and comprised the observation and recording of relevant groundworks and the investigation of any revealed archaeological remains.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to produce the written scheme of investigation (Albion Archaeology 2013) and to undertake the archaeological work. The WSI was approved by the CBCA in advance of the fieldwork. The results of the fieldwork are set out in this report.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Development Description*

The village of Silsoe lies to the west of the A6, approximately 14km south of Bedford (Figure 1). The development site is located on the corner of Amptmill Road at its junction with the High Street in the centre of the village. It covers an area of 0.4ha, centred on grid reference TL0814 3579.

The site lies on a ridge at a height of 65m OD above the valley of the river Flit to the north. The underlying bedrock is Woburn Sands Formation (Lower Greensand). Localised superficial deposits of glacial till and head deposits are recorded around Silsoe and consist of clay, silt, sand and gravel.

At the time of the fieldwork the site contained a large detached house, outbuildings to the rear and two residential dwellings set within a large garden. The development works comprised alterations and additions to the existing dwellings and outbuildings. Demolition works comprised the removal of a greenhouse, a canopy/workshop area, a single-storey link building and a swimming pool. The new construction comprised small extensions on the east and west side of the main house and two garages. Landscaping works included alterations to the access and drives as well as the creation of hard standing and parking spaces.



### 1.3 Archaeological Background

The archaeological background to the site has previously been set out in a Heritage Asset Assessment (HAA) which examined historical maps, known archaeological assets and previous archaeological interventions within a 500m radius of Silsoe House (Albion Archaeology 2012). An archaeological evaluation, comprising a single trial trench (see Figure 2), was also undertaken subsequent to this investigation within the grounds of Silsoe House in advance of the construction of a new dwelling to the south-west of the main house (Albion Archaeology 2014). This revealed two ditches associated with an E-W aligned field boundary and routeway depicted on 18th- and early 19th-century maps.

There is slight evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity within the general vicinity of the site. A single sherd of late Iron Age pottery was recovered during the trial trench evaluation recently undertaken within the grounds of Silsoe House (Albion Archaeology 2014; see Figure 2). It was recovered from a post-medieval levelling layer, suggesting it could be derived from anywhere within the vicinity of the site. Further afield, a flint axe dating from the Mesolithic/early Neolithic period (HER18594) was found in Juniper Close, c. 170m NNE of the site. A leaf-shaped Neolithic/early Bronze Age arrowhead was found in a secondary context at the Church of St James (EBD686) 200m to the south. Limited evidence dated to the Roman period was found during archaeological evaluation at the Cranfield University site c. 330m south of the site (EBD611).

Silsoe was recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086, where it is referred to as *Siuuilessou* or *Sewilessou*. At that time there were two manors, the larger of which was held by Hugh of Walter, brother of Saher; it later became the manor of Wrest. The appearance of Silsoe in Domesday Book shows that there was likely to have been a settlement there since at least the late Saxon period.

Archaeological investigations around West End Lane (EBD611) c. 300m south of the site found evidence of occupation during the early/middle Saxon and late Saxon to early medieval periods (Thatcher 2011; Upson-Smith 2012).

To the east of the High Street stands the parish church of St James (HER 1121). The church was built between 1829 and 1831, replacing a medieval chapel. Documentary sources for the chapel begin in the early 13th century. Archaeological monitoring (EBD686) at the church in 2000 during the construction of an extension at the north-west corner revealed an east-west aligned ditch that contained sherds from four early/middle Saxon vessels, one sherd of early medieval pottery, a fragment of daub and a redeposited leaf-shaped arrowhead (see above) (Albion Archaeology 2000 and Steadman *et al* 2001).

The medieval settlement is likely to have been polyfocal with occupation centred around West End (HER17003) and around the church and High Street (HER 17002).

Evidence for the post-medieval period consists mainly of listed buildings which range between the 16th and 19th century in date. No. 53 High Street which stands between the site and the High Street dates from the 18th century with 19th-



century additions but may be a reworking of an older building. The High Street next to the site was part of the A6 until it was bypassed and was one of the main north-south routes through the county.

An estate map of 1718 indicates that the site was in agricultural use at this time. After 1800 the northern half of the site was developed with a range of farm buildings set around a rectangular yard. The earliest map depicting Silsoe House is the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1882 (Figure 3).

#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the development area;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes.
- to recover contemporary palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

The local and regional research contexts were provided by Glazebrook (1997), Brown and Glazebrook (2000), Oake et al (2007) and Medlycott (2011).

The development area lies within a possible focus of medieval settlement and therefore the focus of research objectives for the site lie in the Saxon and medieval period. The research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in general, few medieval rural settlements, particularly with Saxon origin, have been investigated in the county (Oake 2007). Oake states a need for research into rural settlement on a micro-scale of investigation, in order to establish the chronology, structure and function of individual settlements as well as classes of settlement, ranging from the prehistoric to the medieval period. The need for investigation into the origins, development and dynamics of medieval rural settlement are also emphasised by Medlycott (2011) in the East of England Research Framework.

The specific objectives of the project were to investigate possible evidence for:

- the date range, character and economy of Saxon/medieval activity in this part of Silsoe.

Other objectives were to have been devised during the project, in the event that the investigation produced evidence relevant to other themes identified in the published research frameworks.





## 2. METHODOLOGY

Archaeological observation and investigation during the groundworks took place on 29th January and 14th May 2014. Groundworks observed included footing trenches required for the two extensions to either side of Silsoe House, service trenches excavated to the front of the house and an area excavated for car parking to the front of the house (Figure 2).

Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked for artefact recovery.

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• CBC brief	<i>Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication at Silsoe House, Silsoe, Bedfordshire</i> (2013)
• 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 edn, 2011)
• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation</i> (updated 2013)
	<i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief</i> (updated 2013)
	<i>Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (updated 2013)
• Luton Culture	<i>Procedure For Preparing Archaeological Archives For Deposition With Luton Culture</i> (2010 - with minor updates July 2013)

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2013).



### 3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

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#### 3.1 Introduction

Groundworks observed comprised (see also Figure 2):-

- footing trenches for the two extensions to either side of Silsoe House. They were *c.* 0.75m wide and varied considerably in depth (1–2.5m) due to the presence of adjacent basements attached to Silsoe House.
- service trenches excavated to the front of the house measuring *c.* 0.8m wide and 0.5–0.7m deep.
- an area excavated for car parking to the front of the house measuring 14m x 11m and up to 0.6m deep.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed within these groundworks. The deposits observed are summarised below.

#### 3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The overburden observed throughout the groundworks typically comprised a *c.* 0.2m-thick garden soil overlying a *c.* 0.2m-thick subsoil of mid red-brown silty sand. Within most of the observed groundworks the garden soil had been overlain by a *c.* 0.2m-thick layer of brick rubble and gravel deposited during works associated with the on-going development.

The underlying undisturbed geological deposits were generally observed at 0.5–0.6m beneath the current ground level and comprised mid red-orange silty sand with patches of ironstone fragments.

Some variation to the above described deposits was observed where layers of sand and gravel in excess of 0.4m thick had been laid beneath the topsoil, presumably associated with previous landscaping episodes at the site. This was apparent in areas of the N-S aligned service trench and in the area of car parking — these could correspond with the locations of pathways and access routes marked on the 1882 OS map within the grounds of Silsoe House (See Figure 3). However, the greatest variation to the above described deposits was observed within the footing trenches excavated for the extensions to Silsoe House. Here, the undisturbed geological deposits were overlain by 0.6–1m of layered sand and gravel, likely to have been deposited during the construction of the adjacent house.

#### 3.3 Conclusions

Though much of the area appears to have suffered little in the way of modern truncation, no archaeological features or deposits were revealed within the observed groundworks. However, given the relatively small size of the area observed, there remains the potential for the survival of archaeological features and deposits within the vicinity.

The post-medieval ditches that were revealed within the trial trench evaluation (Albion Archaeology 2014) undertaken subsequent to this investigation were not observed within the nearby service trench or within the area excavated for



parking. However, the ditch deposits were revealed at depths of 0.8–1.2m beneath the current ground level — significantly deeper than the level reached within the service trench or car parking area.

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (accession no. LUTNM 2013/23). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-166003).



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## 5. APPENDIX 1: OASIS FORM

### 5.1 OASIS ID: *albionar1-166003*

#### Project details

Project name	Silsoe House, 2 Ampthill Road, Silsoe - Watching Brief
Short description of the project	Planning permission was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for alterations and additions to an existing house, cottage, bungalow and flats to form two new dwellings and two single timber-clad garages at Silsoe House, Silsoe in Bedfordshire. Due to the archaeological sensitivity of the site of the planned works, a condition (no. 12) was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The required programme of archaeological works is described in the CBCA brief (CBCA 2013) and comprised the observation and recording of relevant groundworks and investigation of any revealed archaeological remains. Archaeological observation and investigation during the groundworks took place on 29th January and 14th May 2014. Though much of the area appears to have suffered little in the way of modern truncation, no archaeological features or deposits were revealed within the observed groundworks. However, given the relatively small size of the area observed, there remains the potential for the survival of archaeological features and deposits within the vicinity. The post-medieval ditches that were revealed within the trial trench evaluation (Albion Archaeology 2014) undertaken subsequent to this investigation were not observed within the nearby service trench or within the area excavated for parking. However, the ditch deposits were revealed at depths of 0.8-1.2m beneath the current ground level - significantly deeper than the level reached within the service trench or car parking area.
Project dates	Start: 29-01-2014 End: 14-05-2014
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	SH1990 - Contracting Unit No. LUTNM 2013/23 - Museum accession ID albionar1-192123 - OASIS form ID CB/12/03766/FULL) - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Prompt	Planning condition

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE SILSOE Silsoe House, 2 Ampthill Road, Silsoe - Watching Brief
Study area	2500.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 0813 3580



### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Albion Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Wes Keir
Project supervisor	None

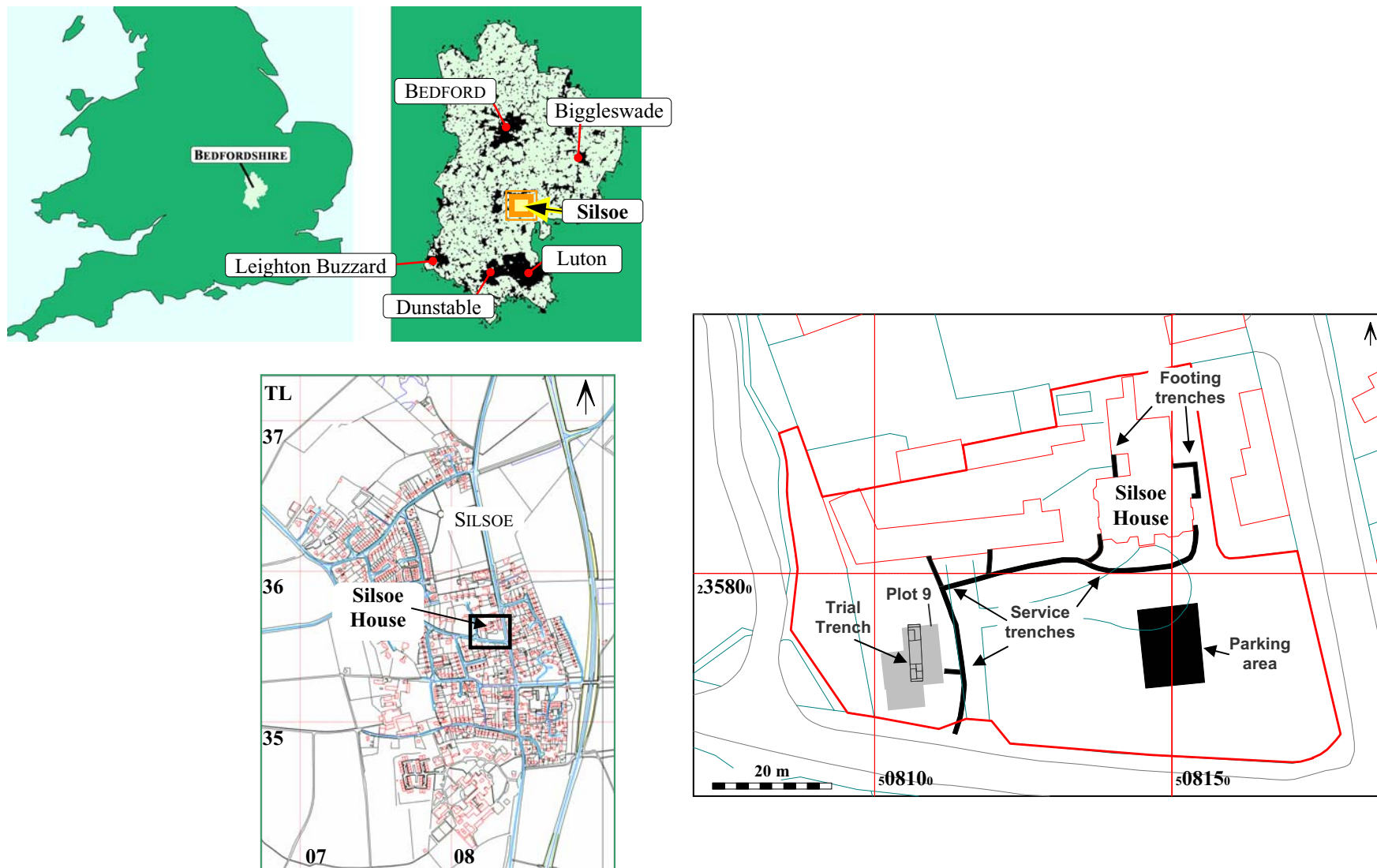
### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Albion Archaeology
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Database", "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Luton Museum
Paper Archive ID	LUTNM 2013/23
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Correspondence", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report"
Paper Archive notes	To be archived with Evaluation from same area - oasis id: albionar1-192123

### Project bibliography 1

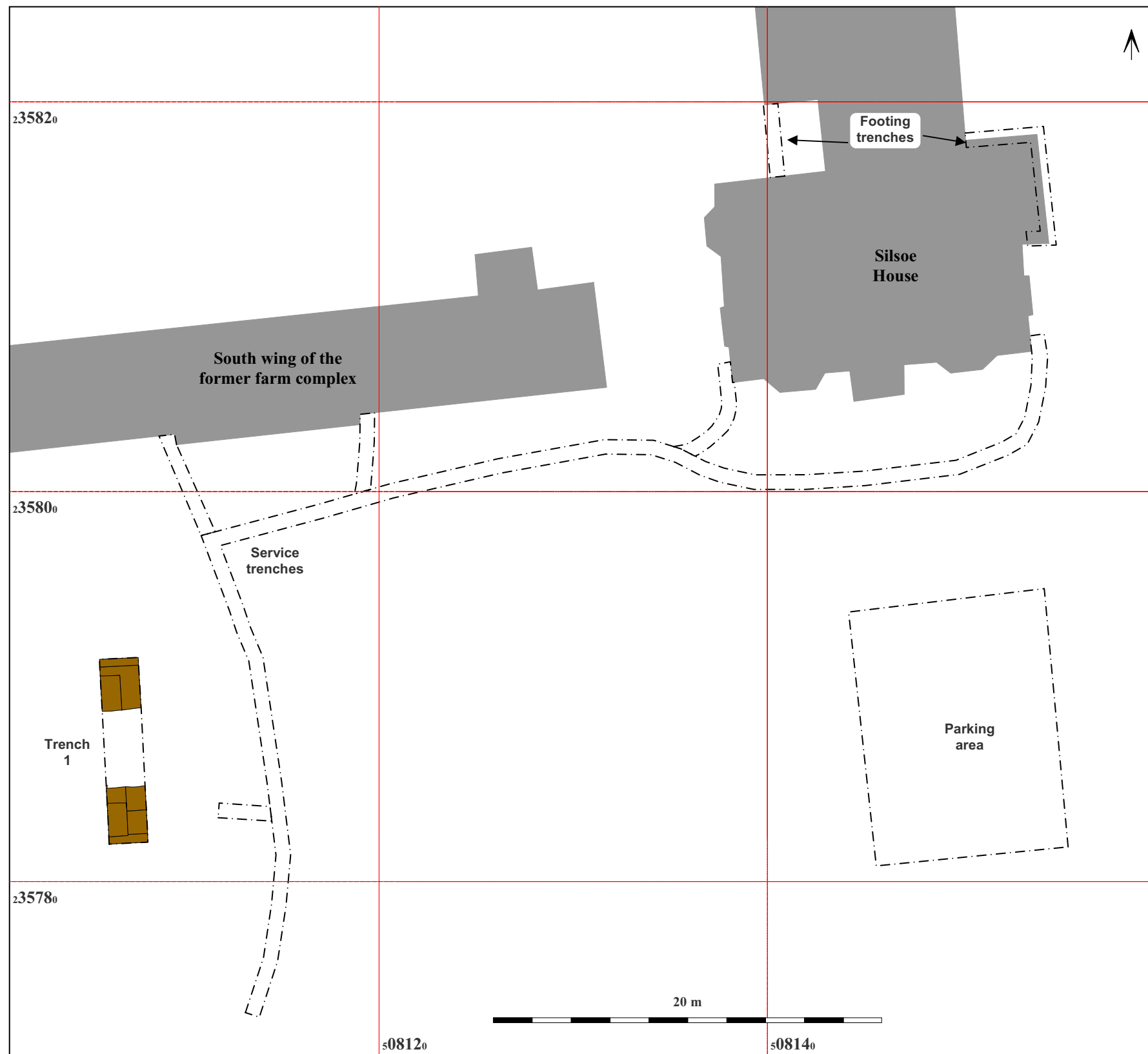
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Silsoe House, Silsoe, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication
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**Figure 1: Site location**

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**Figure 2:** Observed groundworks



Footing trench excavated on the west side of Silsoe House Facing SE.

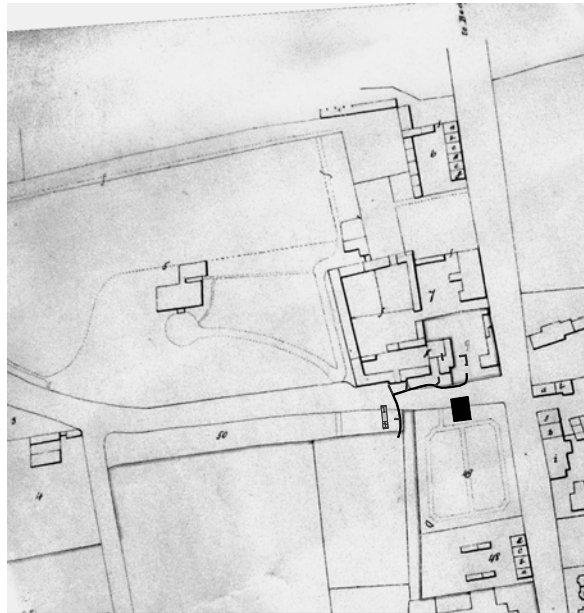


Parking area. Facing NW

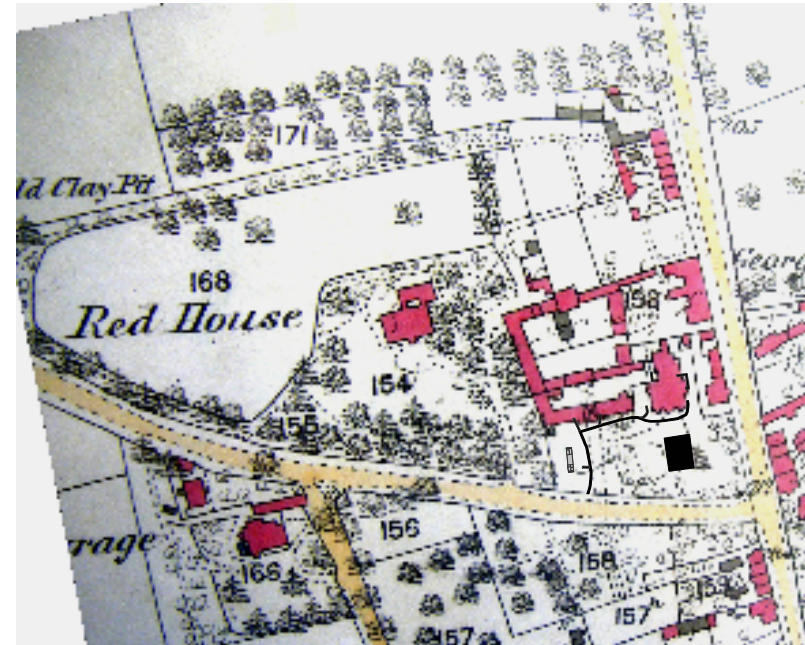


E-W aligned service trench excavated to the south of the south wing of the former farm complex. Facing NW. 40cm scale





Extract from estate map dated 1856  
BLARS ref. L33/12B

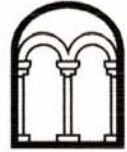


OS 1st edition map dated 1882

**Figure 3:** Approximate location of the observed groundworks overlaid with historical maps dating to the later 19th century



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