SLB EXTRA CARE (GREENFIELDS) LEIGHTON BUZZARD BEDFORDSHIRE

STAGE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION







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29th July 2014

Produced for: Kyle Smart Associates On behalf of: Adlwyck Housing Group Ltd

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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.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Kyle Smart Associates on behalf of Adlwyck Housing Group Ltd. It was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ben Barker (Project Officer) under the management of Rob Wardill (Project Manager). This report was prepared by Ben Barker with figures produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	29/07/2014	n/a

Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
PDA	Proposed development area



Adlwyck Housing Group Ltd was granted planning permission (CB/13/03019/FULL) by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of eighty-two extra care flats for older persons at SLB Site 17A Grovebury Farm, Extra Care Facility (Greenfields), Leighton Buzzard.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) advised that the development site had the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest. Consequently a condition (4) was attached to the planning permission. The condition requires that:

"Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a written scheme of archaeological investigation that adopts a staged approach and includes post excavation analysis and publication, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.

Reason: To record and advance understanding of the heritage assets with archaeological interest which will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of the development (Policy 45 D.S.C.B.)".

The CBCA issued a brief for Stage 1 of the archaeological works, comprising evaluation of the site by means of trial trenching. In response to the brief Albion Archaeology produced a written scheme of investigation (approved by the CBCA) for the works.

The excavation of five trial trenches in July 2014 revealed the presence of a modern boundary gully, an isolated posthole, and modern land drains. No archaeological features or finds pre-dating the 19th century were identified.

It is concluded that the Stage 1 evaluation has shown that there is a very low probability that significant archaeological features or deposits are present within the development area. The revealed features were no earlier than the 19th century in date and have no potential to address regional archaeological research frameworks.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

Planning permission (CB/13/03019/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for the construction of eighty-two extra care flats for older persons, with communal areas, support facilities and associated parking at SLB Site 17A Grovebury Farm, Extra Care Facility (Greenfields), Leighton Buzzard.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) advised that the development site had the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest. Consequently a condition (4) was attached to the planning permission. The condition requires that:

"Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a written scheme of archaeological investigation that adopts a staged approach and includes post excavation analysis and publication, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.

Reason: To record and advance understanding of the heritage assets with archaeological interest which will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of the development (Policy 45 D.S.C.B.)".

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 CBCA issued a brief for the Stage 1 archaeological works, comprising evaluation of the site by means of trial trenching (CBC 2014). If significant archaeological remains were encountered during this stage of works, further archaeological investigation might have been required and would have been subject to an additional brief and/or WSI.

This report represents the findings of the Stage 1 trial trench evaluation, which was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2014) approved by the CBCA.

1.2 Site Location and Description

Leighton Buzzard is *c*. 12km south of Milton Keynes, *c*. 20km north-west of Luton and *c*. 9km north-east of Aylesbury. The proposed development area (PDA) is located at the southern periphery of the town to the west of Billington Road. It is currently a field of rough grassland and is centred on NGR SP 9281 2368. Land within the PDA is relatively level and lies at *c*. 90m OD. The underlying geology of the area is predominately gault clay with pockets of boulder clay and glacial gravels.



1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 Archaeological and historical background to the environs of the PDA

The archaeological background for 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 the site (Albion Archaeology 2013). The locations of heritage assets (HER) and events (EBD) are indicated in Figure 2 of the HAA. A brief summary of the results is given here.

The prehistoric periods are represented by various sites in the area around the PDA. The late Neolithic/early Bronze Age is represented by a stray artefact, a scraper (HER8355), which was found during sand extraction to the north of the PDA. Iron Age settlement activity and field systems have been located to the west and to the south of the PDA.

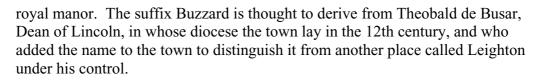
In 2013, excavations to the west of the PDA at Site 17A Grovebury Farm revealed late prehistoric and Roman activity (Albion Archaeology forthcoming; HER18306). Late Bronze Age / early Iron Age evidence comprised a field system in the north of the excavation area, probably lying on the periphery of a contemporary farmstead to the north. The field system was redefined and expanded southwards at some point during the pre-Belgic Iron Age. Several dispersed areas of discrete features, including a water pit and burials, were located in the immediate vicinity of the field system's boundary ditches.

Further evidence for agricultural/horticultural activity, dating to the early Roman period, was also revealed. It comprised eleven unenclosed fields of parallel bedding trenches. The fields were originally laid out in the south-east corner of the site and expanded towards the north-west. A wide, NW-SE aligned track between the fields provided access. These bedding trenches are thought to represent the cultivation of specialist crops. Only four sherds of Roman pottery were recovered, indicating that the fields lay some distance from a contemporary settlement focus.

The site declined in the later Roman period and saw a change of land use, characterised by isolated boundary ditches and a single cremation burial. Further Roman activity is recorded in the area through stray finds of pottery from areas to the south and east of the PDA.

No evidence for medieval or post-medieval activity was revealed at Site 17A but Leighton Buzzard was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as *Lestone*. It was the largest royal manor in Bedfordshire with 126 households and a total tax assessment of 47 geld units. The appearance of Leighton Buzzard in Domesday Book shows that there was likely to have been a settlement there since at least the late Saxon period. The settlement was close to the Theedway (HER10843), an important trade and communication route during the Saxon period, which also functioned as demarcation line between territories. The Theedway passes c. 50m to the north of the PDA on an ENE-WSW alignment.

During the medieval period Leighton Buzzard, then Leighton, flourished as a



Evidence for medieval ridge and furrow cultivation is known from Billington parish (HER5206) and from areas to the west and south-east of the PDA. Within the PDA no visual evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation survives; however, a geophysical survey conducted in 2005 revealed linear anomalies which could relate to former furrows surviving at sub-surface level on the PDA (Albion Archaeology 2006; Stratascan 2005).

The post-medieval period in the area is represented by more industrial heritage. Two sites of former brickworks (HER10767, HER7112), both demolished, are situated north of the PDA and the branch railway line (HER2436) from Linslade to Dunstable passes the PDA in the east. It was closed in 1969 and later dismantled. Other post-medieval heritage assets are a 17th-century "Camp" (HER10733) recorded to the north of the PDA and "Pages Park" (HER16425), a 19th-century designed landscape garden, also located to the north of the PDA.

Modern heritage assets within the area are scarce. The only one listed in the HER is a disused sand pit (HER11141) associated with the branch line railway.

Historical maps show that the PDA lies within Billington parish, in an area of agricultural land use. At the time of the Tithe map (1848) Billington Road was already an established route. Development on the properties to the north and south of the PDA occurred in the latter half of the 20th century.

1.3.2 Geophysical survey of the PDA

The PDA was subject to geophysical survey in 2005. The work was undertaken as part of a magnetic susceptibility scan of the whole of the 17A Grovebury Farm site that included the current PDA (Stratascan 2005). The Greenfields site was thought to be dominated by agricultural anomalies of relatively recent origin.

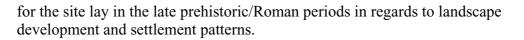
1.4 Project Objectives

The general objectives of the investigation were to provide information on the following:

- the location, date, nature and extent of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the development area;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the development area.

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 an area that has produced evidence for late prehistoric/Roman specialised agriculture practices. However, definite settlement traces have been scarce. Therefore, the focus of research objectives



The research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in general, more work is needed to correlate early field systems with contemporary settlement patterns (Oake et al 2007).

The need for investigation into the origins, development and dynamics of rural settlements as well as agricultural regimes and their relationship between rural and/or urban sites 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 late prehistoric/Roman activity in this part of Leighton Buzzard;
- landscape development throughout the periods in this part of Leighton Buzzard;
- settlement patterns during the prehistoric to medieval periods.



2. METHODOLOGY

The trial trenching took place between 16th and 17th July 2014. A layout of five trenches, each measuring 2m x 30m, was agreed with the CBCA, targeting the areas likely to suffer the greatest impact as a result of the development. Due to the presence of live services and a bund, it was agreed with the CBCA on site that the south-east end of Trench 5 could be shortened to 20m.

The trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. All excavation and recording was carried out by an experienced Albion staff member.

Any potential archaeological features were investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence, commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc.* Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [***] and round brackets to fills or layers (***). The trenches were inspected by the CBCA prior to their backfilling.

following documents:	
Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2 nd edn, 2001).
ALGAO	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. EAA Occasional Paper No. 14 (2003)
Luton Culture 2013	Procedure for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with Luton Culture
CBC 2014	Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication at SLB Site 17A Grovebury Farm, Extra Care Facility (Greenfields), Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire Stage 1 Evaluation
EAA	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (2003)
English Heritage	Management of Research Projects in the HistoricEnvironment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide(2009)Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theoryand practice of methods, from sampling andrecovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition (2011a)
IfA	By-Laws and Code of ConductStandard and Guidance for Archaeological FieldEvaluations (updated 2008) and finds (updated2008)

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

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (Entry no. LTNMG 1095). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (ref: albionar1-180476) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The results of the trial trenching are summarised below, with the trench locations shown on Figure 1. Details of all the observed features and deposits are provided in Appendix 1. No artefacts were present.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The north-eastern part of the site, sampled by Trenches 4 and 5, had been recently used as a compound during the construction of the modern estate road to the south of the PDA (named Theedway). As such, this part of site was covered by approximately 0.5m of made ground (401) and (501), largely consisting of crushed concrete, modern bricks and general building refuse. Traces of this material had also migrated into the topsoil (301) within Trench 3.

A thin topsoil layer was present in all the trenches, including Trenches 4 and 5, where it was buried beneath the made-ground of the compound. The dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil layer (101/201/301/402/502) was, on average, 0.25m thick across the site. There was no evidence of a subsoil, or ploughsoil, and the topsoil generally overlay undisturbed geological deposits.

The underlying geological deposits comprised firm, mid yellowish brown silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions.

3.3 Trench Summaries

No datable archaeological features were revealed in any of five trial trenches. The characteristics of each trench including any modern disturbance are discussed below; photographs of each trench are presented in Figure 2.

3.3.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 displayed the most variation to the underlying geological deposit. Irregular variations, consisting of mid greyish brown silty clay (102), were observed along its length. Mattock-testing revealed that these amorphous deposits were all less than 0.1m thick and devoid of artefacts. It is likely that these deposits were due to localised weathering of the geological strata by periglacial activity and bioturbation processes such as rooting.

A NE-SW aligned land drain [104] was present at the northern end of the trench. It was lined with an irregular fill of small, flat stones and broken fragments of peg-hole tile, suggesting an early modern date. Irregular linear banding of weathered geology (102) was noted either side of the land drain. This may relate to an extremely poorly preserved furrow or, more likely, increased root activity in the vicinity of the drain.

3.3.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 contained no features, other than two east-west aligned ceramic land drains. No trace of ridge and furrow cultivation was evident.



3.3.3 Trench 3

No archaeological features or modern disturbance was evident within Trench 3.

3.3.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was largely devoid of features but was bisected by a modern N-S aligned gully [404]. The gully was 0.25m wide and 0.1m deep with vertical sides. It contained fragments of coal and was evidently of modern origin, probably relating to the plot boundary depicted on the current Ordnance Survey mapping (Figure1).

3.3.5 Trench 5

A single posthole [504] was identified in Trench 5 (Figure 2), c. 8m from the south-east end of the trench and 0.4m from the north-east baulk. It was 0.25m in diameter, but less than 0.1m deep. Its fill was sterile but sufficiently humic to suggest a relatively modern origin.

Two intersecting modern ceramic land drains were identified at the north-west end of the trench.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Summary and Significance of the Trial Trenching Results

The trial trenching has confirmed the results of the largely blank geophysical survey (Statascan 2005) and the Heritage Asset Assessment (Albion 2013). The latter concluded that the potential for any below-ground heritage assets on the PDA was *low* for any given period. All five of the excavated trenches were devoid of significant archaeological features or deposits.

The western part of the PDA, as sampled by Trenches 1–3, was covered by a relatively thin topsoil layer, with no evidence for the development of a subsoil horizon, or traces of ridge and furrow. This would suggest that the land has not been subject to intensive arable cultivation either in the medieval or modern periods. Attempts to improve the land are attested to by the presence of ceramic and stone land drains, both of which are likely to be 19th century in date.

The eastern part of the PDA, fronting on to Billington Road and the modern Theedway, was sampled by Trenches 4 and 5. These confirmed that this part of the PDA had recently been utilised as a compound area. The preservation of a modern buried topsoil layer, coupled with the survival of a small isolated posthole, indicates that this activity had not had a detrimental impact on the preservation of archaeological deposits in this area.

The modern boundary gully identified in Trench 4 is likely to post-date 2001 as it is not visible on any of the mapping presented in the Heritage Asset Assessment (Albion 2013). This boundary feature [404] and posthole [504] are most likely to have been created as part of the recent construction activity associated with the construction of the Theedway estate road and the wider Site 17a Grovebury Farm development.

4.2 Conclusions

The evaluation has shown that there is a very low probability that significant archaeological features or deposits are present within the PDA. The revealed features were no earlier than the 19th century in date and have no potential to address regional archaeological research frameworks.



Albion Archaeology, 2001, Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd ed.

- Albion Archaeology, 2005. Land South of Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire: Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment. Unpublished report 2005/20
- Albion Archaeology 2006. Land at Potential Development Area H17, Southern Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire Archaeological Field Evaluation. Report no. 2006/14
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- Albion Archaeology 2014, *SLB Extra Care, Billington Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Stage 1 Field Evaluation* Report no. 2014/105, version 1.1
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- Stratascan 2005, Geophysical Survey Report: Area H17 Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire. Unpublished report J2095.



6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench:	1				
Max Dimensions:	Length:	30.00 m.	Width: 2.00 m.	Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.25 m.	Max: 0.25 m.
Co-ordinates:	OS Grid	Ref.: SP	(Eastin		
	OS Grid	Ref.: SP	(Eastin	g: 92796: Northing: 23696)	
Reason:	Spatial sa	ample			

Context:	Туре:	Description:	Excavated: I	Finds Present:
101	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown silty clay occasional small stones 0.25m thick.	\checkmark	
102	Weathered interface	Firm mid grey brown silty clay occasional small stones Less than 0.1m	thicl 🗸	
103	Natural	Hard mid yellow brown silty clay		
104	Land drain	Linear NE-SW sides: vertical base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.25m, depth 0.1m, min length 2.2m	, mir 🗹	
105	Fill	Friable mid brown grey silty clay frequent medium CBM, frequent medi stones	um 🔽	

Trench:	2					
Max Dimensions:	Length:	30.00 m.	Width: 2.0	00 m.	Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.2 m.	Max: 0.25 m.
Co-ordinates:	OS Grid	Ref.: SP	(Easting: 92810: Northing: 23698)			
	OS Grid	Ref.: SP	((Easting	: 92838: Northing: 23688)	
Reason:	Spatial sa	ample				

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated: Finds Presen	nt:
201	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown silty clay occasional medium-large stones 0.2m thick.		
202	Natural	Hard mid vellow brown clav		

Context:	Туре:	D	escription:]	Excavated: Find	ls Present:
	Reason:	Spatial sa	mple					
		OS Grid	Ref.: SP		(Eastin	g: 92851: Northing: 23685)		
Co-	ordinates:	OS Grid	Ref.: SP		(Eastin	g: 92849: Northing: 23715)		
Max Di	imensions:	Length:	30.00 m.	Width:	2.00 m.	Depth to Archaeology Min: (0.25 m. Max:	0.35 m.
	Trench:	3						

301	Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay frequent small-medium CBM, frequent small-medium concrete 0.3m thick.	\checkmark	
302	Natural	Hard mid yellow brown clay		



Trench:	4				
Max Dimensions:	Length:	30.00 m.	Width: 2.00 m.	Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m.	Max: 0.7 m.
Co-ordinates:	OS Grid	Ref.: SP	(Eastin	g: 92857: Northing: 23724)	
	OS Grid	Ref.: SP	(Eastin	g: 92887: Northing: 23724)	
Reason:	Spatial s	ample			

Context:	Туре:	Description:	Excavated: Finds Prese	nt:
401	Make up layer	Hard mid brown grey hardcore occasional small-medium CBM, frequent small-medium concrete 0.2m to 0.5m thick.	t 🗹	
402	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty clay occasional small stones 0.2m thick.	\checkmark	
403	Natural	Hard mid yellow brown clay		

Trench: 5

Max Dimensions:	Length:	20.00 m.	Width: 2.00 m.	Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.75 m.	Max: m.
Co-ordinates:	: OS Grid Ref.: SP		(Easting: 92886: Northing: 23749)		
	OS Grid	Ref.: SP	(Easting: 92898: Northing: 23732)		
Reason:	Spatial sa	ample			

Context:	Туре:	Description:	Excavated: Finds Presen	nt:
501	Make up layer	Hard mid brown grey hardcore frequent small-medium CBM, frequent small-medium concrete 0.5m thick.		
502	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty clay occasional small stones 0.25m thick.		
503	Natural	Hard mid yellow brown clay		
504	Posthole	Circular sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.25m, m diameter 0.06m	ax 🔽	
505	Fill	Friable mid grey brown clay silt occasional small stones Orange mottles and modern rootlets present.		

7. APPENDIX 2: OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS ID: albionar1-180476

Project details

Project name	SLB Extra Care (Greenfields), Leighton Buzzard
Short description of the project	Adlwyck Housing Group Ltd was granted planning permission (CB/13/03019/FULL) by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of eighty-two extra care flats for older persons at SLB Site 17A Grovebury Farm, Extra Care Facility (Greenfields), Leighton Buzzard. The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist advised that the site had the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest. Consequently a condition was attached to the planning permission, requiring a staged programme of archaeological work. Stage 1 comprised archaeological evaluation. The excavation of five trial trenches in July 2014 revealed the presence of a modern boundary gully, an isolated posthole and modern land drains. No archaeological features or finds pre-dating the 19th century were identified.
Project dates	Start: 16-07-2014 End: 17-07-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SL2146 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	CB/13/03019/FULL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Monument type	DITCH Modern
Monument type	POST HOLE Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (e.g. As a condition)
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE LEIGHTON LINSLADE SLB Extra Care (Greenfields), Leighton Buzzard
Study area	8000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	SP 9281 2368 51.9034801516 -0.650820449707 51 54 12 N 000 39 02 W Point

Project creators

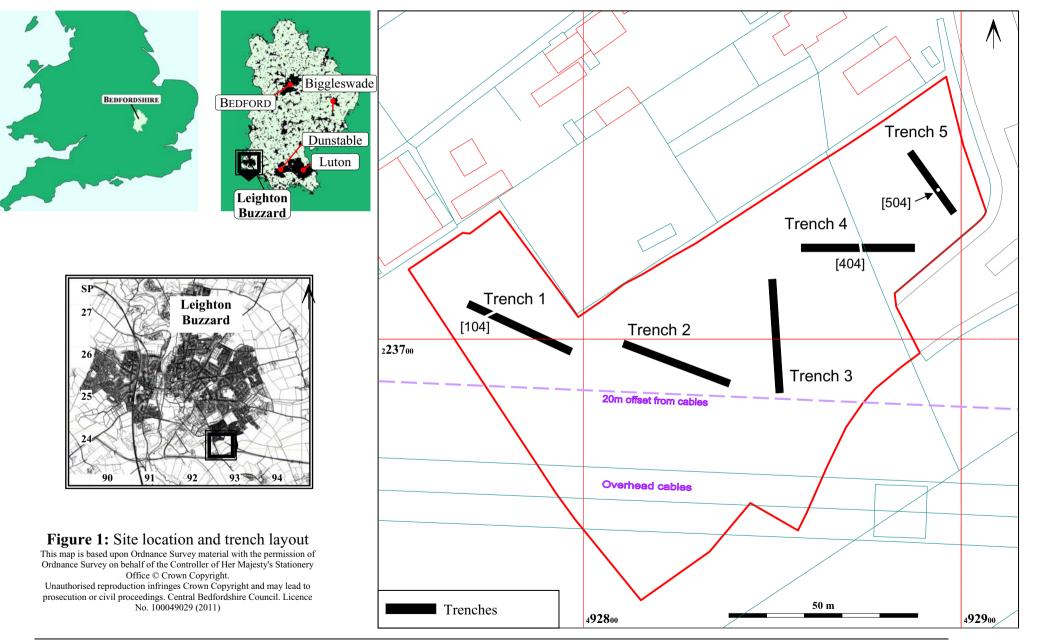
Name of

Albion Archaeology



Organisation	
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Robert Wardill
Project supervisor	Ben Barker
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Luton Museum
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	SLB Extra Care (Greenfields), Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Field Evaluation Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Barker, B'
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Entered on	28 July 2014







Top left: Trench 1 – looking NW.

Top right: Trench 2 – looking SE.





Mid left: Trench 3 – looking N.

Mid right: Trench 4 – looking W.





Bottom left: Trench 5 – looking NW.

Bottom right: Posthole [504] – looking W.



Figure 2: Trench photographs





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