THE SALT BOX
BEDFORD ROAD
LAVENDON
MILTON KEYNES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION

Albion archaeology

Location	The Salt Box, Bedford Road
Parish	Lavendon
NGR	SP 9198 5340
Planning application No.	13/01460/OUT
Event No.	EMK1251
Museum Accession No.	AYBCM: 2013.56
Oasis Reference	albionar1-195642
Project No	SL2181
Fieldwork start date	10th December 2014
Fieldwork completion date	18th December 2014

THE SALT BOX
BEDFORD ROAD
LAVENDON
MILTON KEYNES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION

Project: SL 2181

Document: 2015/28
Version 1.0

Issue date: 9th March 2015

Compiled by	Approved by
Richard Gregson, Jackie Wells and Gary Edmondson	Drew Shotliff

Produced for:

High Street Homes Ltd

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

The figures are bound at the rear of the document.

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.

This document has been prepared by Richard Gregson (Project Supervisor), Holly Duncan (Project Manager – Artefacts), Jackie Wells (Artefacts Officer) and Gary Edmondson (Project Manager). The document was approved by Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager). Albion would like to acknowledge the assistance of the staff of High Street Homes, as well as Nick Crank, the Senior Archaeological Officer who monitored the project on behalf of Milton Keynes Council.

Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
Bedford, MK42 0AS
☎: 0300 300 6867
Fax: 0300 300 8209
E-mail: g.edmondson@albion-arch.com
Website: www.albion-arch.com

Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	09/03/2015	n/a

Structure of this Report

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the project, describing the site's location, its archaeological background and the aims of the archaeological work. Section 2 describes the investigation methodology and Section 3 summarises the results of the investigation. Section 4 is a bibliography.

Client	High Street Homes Ltd
HER	Historic Environment Record
CI*f*A	Chartered Institute *for* Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MKC	Milton Keynes Council
Procedures Manual	*Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2nd edn, 2001 Albion Archaeology
DA	Development area
SAO	Senior Archaeological Officer of MKC
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

Non-Technical Summary

The client commissioned Albion Archaeology to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation works associated with planning application (13/01460/OUT) for residential development on a plot of land known as The Salt Box, located off Bedford Road, at the eastern margin of the village of Lavendon, Milton Keynes. The development area is located on the south side of the A428 trunk road (Bedford Road), just to the east of the T- junction with Harrold Road. The roughly rectangular plot extends approximately 110m along the street frontage, tapering to 85m at the SW limit, to cover an area of c. *0.96ha, centred on grid ref SP (4)91980 (2)53400. At the time of the mitigation works, the site contained a series of buildings or concrete hard-standing, marking the locations of former structures, concentrated in the western land parcel, with the eastern parcel being more open.*

In mid June 2013, Albion undertook an evaluation of the site, utilising the development plan to target six trenches on the proposed house plots, which were the main potential archaeological impact of the development. This strategy was devised in consultation with the Senior Archaeological Office of Milton Keynes Council. The evaluation revealed a concentration of archaeological features in the NW corner of the site, towards Bedford Road. Trench 1 contained only modern features. Trench 2 contained a series of pits, one of which, due to a high groundwater table, preserved a wattle lining. This feature was not fully investigated so as not to compromise the preservation conditions. No datable artefacts were recovered from the exposed deposits of this pit or the excavated fills of the other pits in this trench. Further south Trench 3 contained a ditch and a large pit; the former produced a small artefact assemblage including abraded Roman pottery.

The layout of house plots was subsequently rearranged, which resulted in only the street–front area in the vicinity of Trench 2 being impacted by the development. The mitigation strategy was revised to take account of these changes. A roughly rectangular area extending to 23m by 6.5m was stripped and investigated.

The investigation was undertaken in mid-December 2014, revealing several features surviving below extensive disturbance associated with the former use of the site. This disturbance comprised extensive ground reduction, which had truncated underlying deposits and features. The earliest activity was a large pit which may have been a quarry for the extraction of gravelly sand. This appears to have infilled gradually. A very small amount of possible Romano-British pottery was recovered from the fills, though this is not thought to give reliable dating for the feature. However, the deposits were heavily mineralised, suggesting that they were of some antiquity. Initially this resulted in several pits being identified; the element exposed in the trial trench had changed colour compared to the continuation of the pit beyond the trial trench, due to exposure to the air, resulting in the loss of the greenish hue. Truncating this was a smaller pit, which correlates to the wattle-lined pit identified in the evaluation; however, the wood forming the lining had deteriorated markedly. Investigation of this feature recovered a large fragment of 19th-century glass. No sign of the continuation of the possible Roman ditch was identified further to the east.

No further analysis or dissemination work is required on the data recovered during the mitigation works. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website under reference albionar1-195642 and the archive deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum Service under accession number AYBCM: 2013.56.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by High Street Homes Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation associated with planning application (13/01460/OUT) for residential development on a plot of land known as The Salt Box, located on the southern side of the Bedford Road (A428 trunk road) at the eastern margin of the village of Lavendon, Milton Keynes (Figure 1).

An archaeological evaluation of the site in 2013, in support of the planning application, revealed archaeological deposits in the NW corner of the site (Albion Archaeology 2013). The *National Planning Policy Framework* advises that disturbance of heritage assets such as archaeological deposits are a material consideration in the planning process.

No brief for mitigation was issued, but following discussions with the Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) of Milton Keynes Council, a WSI was formulated (Albion 2014), focusing on those areas of the site directly affected by the development proposal.

Due to changes in the development proposal, it became clear that only the street-front properties would impact archaeological deposits, corresponding to Trench 2. Relocation of the house to the south moved it away from the vicinity of Trench 3; the strategy was revised in discussions with the SAO.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The village of Lavendon is situated near the northern edge of the Borough of Milton Keynes, with the development area (DA) located at the eastern margin of the village, just beyond the T-junction with Harrold Road (Figure 1). The DA is located on the south side of the A428 trunk road (Bedford Road), one of the roads along which the village has developed. The DA comprises two land parcels which extend for approximately 110m along the street frontage, though tapering to only 85m in the south, some 115m SW of the road. The DA is centred on grid reference SP (4)91980 (2)53400. It contains a series of buildings or concrete hard-standings, marking the locations of former structures, concentrated in the western land parcel; the eastern parcel being more open.

The site occupies roughly level ground at *c*. 68m OD. The underlying geology is recorded as limestone of the Cornbrash formation.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Lavendon is recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086, which indicates that the area was heavily wooded, although not part of the royal forests in the vicinity. The site is adjacent to an important junction linking the village to other medieval settlements in the area. It is also located a short distance south of Uphoe Manor, a significant medieval site.

Prior to the evaluation, the DA contained no heritage assets recorded by the Milton Keynes Historic Environment Record (HER). However, part of the DA was within an Archaeological Notification Area, indicating archaeological potential. Of the 45 sites recorded by the Milton Keynes Historic Environment Record (HER), within 500m of the site, the majority were post-medieval buildings or structures; however, there is evidence of medieval and earlier activity particularly to the north around Uphoe Manor and westwards towards the core of the village.

Aerial photographs indicated that the paddock immediately to the west of the DA contains a series of earthworks, including enclosures along the street frontage with traces of ridge and furrow earthworks, characteristic of medieval arable cultivation, further to the SW. This land would have been one of the village's open fields, extending to the edge of the valley of the Lavendon Brook.

In June 2013 the site was subject to archaeological field evaluation in connection with an earlier development proposal (Albion Archaeology 2013). In the NW corner of the site, towards the street frontage, archaeological features were revealed in Trenches 1–3, below a series of modern deposits. These ranged from a modern ditch and the cut for the construction cone of an adjacent brick-lined well in Trench 1, to a series of undated, intercutting features in Trench 2. The latter comprised a large rectangular pit, truncated by another pit, which contained wood, apparently forming a wattle lining. The margins of other features were also revealed. A large pit was identified at the northern limit of Trench 3. A substantial ditch immediately to the south contained a small quantity of abraded Roman pottery. The archaeological deposits in Trenches 2 and 3 were deemed to be significant.

The rest of the site contained modern deposits above features associated with the arable utilisation of the area, particularly from the post-medieval to modern periods.

1.4 Historical Maps

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1882 shows that a series of land parcels, extending from the street frontage, including the two which form the DA, had been established prior to this date. These would appear to have been generally devoid of internal activity, the exception being the western land parcel of the DA, which by 1900 contained a building in the NW corner, adjacent to the street frontage.

1.5 Project Objectives

The general aims of the mitigation works were to:

- establish the date, nature and extent of past activity identified in the vicinity of Trench 2;
- recover artefactual and environmental remains from deposits encountered;
- disseminate the results of the investigation — the approach to be determined in consultation with the SAO, dependant on the significance of the results;

- produce a site archive for deposition with the Buckinghamshire County Museum Service, and to provide information for inclusion in the Milton Keynes HER.

The mitigation works had potential to provide information on:

- Features revealed in the evaluation, particularly the nature of the undated pitting in the north;
- the artefactual and ecofactual nature of undated pitting and potentially the nature of activity in the adjacent area — information which does not normally survive;
- Development and change of the site over time.

1.6 Research Aims and Objectives

The regional research framework for the later medieval period by Munby (in Hey and Hind 2014) had several themes relevant to the DA, particularly relating to the village edge, which is often affected first by expansion up to the 14th century, followed by a period of decline or shrinkage. Evidence from the earthworks in the vicinity may suggest that this was a zone of expansion, although it is not clear if this was planned or piecemeal. The location of the site in proximity to both a routeway and at the edge of a valley is also significant, as is (potentially) the nearby moat.

The date of the clustering of activity, if datable, can assist in providing an insight into the partition and zoning of activity within the landscape (Munby *16.4.1*).

Munby identified the rarity of anoxic conditions on rural sites (*16.4.17*); the pitting (if waterlogging preserved remains) had the potential to provide evidence on aspects of the local economy from artefacts not normally persevered in dry conditions such as leather and wood. There was also potential for various types of ecofactual evidence to be preserved, ranging from plant remains (uncharred as well as charred) to insects.

2. METHOD STATEMENT

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below and detailed in Appendix 1 of the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion 2014).

2.1 Methodological Standards

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

CI*f*A	*By-Laws and Code of Conduct*
	Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (updated 2008) and finds (updated 2008)
Albion Archaeology	*Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork* (2nd edn, 2001)
Archaeological Archive Forum	*Archaeological Archives: A Guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (2007)
Buckinghamshire County Museum	*Procedures for Notifying and Transferring Archaeological Archives* (revised 2013)
English Heritage	*Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (2009)
	Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (second edition) (2011)

2.2 Archaeological Mitigation

The mitigation strategy focused on those archaeological deposits impacted by the revised development in the vicinity of Trench 2. The revised development proposal did not impact on the archaeological deposits in the vicinity of Trench 3. The roads and associated draining also would not impact on the archaeological horizon.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Archaeological investigation was undertaken between 10th and 18th December 2014, in a period of variable weather conditions. The SAO was regularly updated on progress and visited the site on Friday 12th December.

The mitigation area was opened using a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket. All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff.

Contexts in brackets refer to deposits recorded on site. The following summary integrates the results of the evaluation and mitigation phases of the investigation. The contexts for the evaluation commenced at (100), whilst the mitigation record block commenced at (800). Cut features are in square brackets, for example [821] defines a modern pit in the mitigation area. Deposits or layers are in curved brackets, for example (818) is the fill of the modern pond [817].

3.2 Overburden and Modern Disturbance

The investigation revealed extensive disturbance across the area, which has led to the reinterpretation of some of the deposits identified in the evaluation.

3.2.1 Large pit

Machining quickly established that Trench 2 was actually within an extensive modern cut [821], which extended across the entire mitigation area, to a depth of some 0.8m below the ground level. This had almost certainly been excavated by a machine fitted with a toothless bucket; probably at some time during the late 20th century. This truncation is likely to have removed topsoil, subsoil and some of the underlying geological strata. The truncated area was later backfilled with at least three distinct deposits (800), (801) and (802) that contained modern debris including brick, tile, tree fragments and tarmac. Some of these items were pressed into underlying deposits, especially the softer, underlying fills of features. Deposits (800) to (802) equate to trial trench deposits (200) to (202), which comprised dumped material (200), a make-up layer (201) and what was thought to be buried subsoil (202) — these are, in fact, deposits backfilled into the large modern cut [821]. It is likely that deposit (212) investigated in the evaluation was also part of this disturbance, rather than part of the earlier pitting. Part of the deposit had to be left undisturbed due to the presence of asbestos fragments (Figure 2 – red hatched area). None of the original soil profile that would have comprised topsoil and subsoil survived within the mitigation area (Figure 3: images 1 and 2). A large segment of a tree trunk had been dumped into the base of the modern pit and pressed down into the fills of the underlying features.

3.2.2 Small pit

A small sub-rectangular pit [819] was revealed at the northern margin of the mitigation area (Figure 2 – red feature). It was 1.85m long by at least 1.55m wide, filled with loosely consolidated dark grey silty sand that contained moderate amounts of modern building materials. This cut through the fills of the large modern cut [821].

3.2.3 Pond

Part of an in-filled modern pond [817] was revealed in the NW corner of the mitigation area (Figure 2 – brown feature and Figure 3: image 1), filled with dark grey-brown clay silt (818). This deposit marks the edge of an earlier, larger form of the pond that still exists in the area immediately to the NW of the mitigation area.

3.3 Geological Deposits

This comprised light yellow-orange silty or gravelly sand with light grey clay restricted to the higher eastern extent of the area.

3.4 Archaeological Features

Figure 2 shows an all-features plan of the mitigation area, with associated sections, whilst Figures 3 to 7 contain selected images. The features are discussed from earliest to latest, based on stratigraphic evidence, with finds information integrated into the discussion.

3.4.1 Large pit

An irregular feature was revealed in the SW part of the mitigation area (Figure 2 – light green / light green hatched feature; Figure 3: image 1; and Figure 4: image 3), extending some 8m by at least 4.4m and up to 0.8m deep. It comprised contexts [205], [806], [809], [811] and [815]. In section the pit had near vertical or undercutting sides and a flat or uneven base (Figure 2: sections 1–4; Figure 4: image 4; and Figure 5: image 6). The deposits within it varied from mid grey-green to dark blue-green in colour and from clay silt to silty clay in composition. When the feature was initial revealed in the evaluation (Figure 2 – light green hatched feature), the fill has a greenish tinge (Figure 4: image 4); however, by the time of the mitigation work, the colour of the fill had changed (Figure 4: image 3), with the greenish tinge probably lost through oxidation. However, the continuation of the feature beyond the trial trench still had a greenish tinge. No finds were recovered from the fill during the evaluation, though three very small, abraded fragments of possible Romano-British pottery were recovered from the mitigation works. The small quantity of pottery does not provide definitive dating of the feature; however, the nature of the fill does suggest a feature of some antiquity.

The nature of the feature and its fill suggests that this was a quarry for the extraction of the underlying gravelly sand. The fill appears to have accumulated gradually through natural erosion, suggesting that the pit was located in a marginal area, some distance from any focus of occupation.

3.4.2 19th-century wattle-lined pit

A circular, wattle-lined pit [207] / [803] truncated the large early pit (Figure 2 – black feature). It had a diameter of 0.8m and was *c*. 0.3m deep (Figure 6: images 7 and 8).

The upper part of the feature had been disturbed by modern cut [821] and distorted by part of a modern tree trunk, which had been dumped into it. The evaluation had suggested that the pit was large and more rectangular, but this appears to have been the result of deposits and disturbance associated with the

modern cut [821]. The fill had also been disturbed by modern roots which had grown though the deposit; these did not have the distinctive black colour of the wattle lining.

The lower fill consisted of mid green-grey clay silt (804); the upper fill (805) was a darker, mid green-brown clay silt. A fragment of clear colourless pressed glass, dating to the latter part of the 19th century, was recovered from the lower deposit (804) (Figure 7: image 9). Pressed glass was intended as an affordable alternative to 'cut glass' for everyday use. Production blossomed between *c*. 1850 and 1910 with its heyday in the 1880s. The shard has a 'sunburst' or 'starburst' radiating pattern, with Xs filling the space between the 'rays'. It appears to be from the base of a vessel, as two edges are just beginning to rise to form a wall. Possible vessel types may include a butter dish.

3.4.3 Ditch in evaluation Trench 3

The evaluation revealed a substantial ditch in Trench 3, to the south of the mitigation area, aligned ENE-WSW. A small quantity of Roman pottery was recovered from the fill. The projected line of this ditch would have taken it into the SE part of the mitigation area (see Figure 2); however, it was not detected in this area. Modern pit [821] may have removed the continuation of this feature.

3.5 Artefacts

A small finds assemblage was recovered from the mitigation area and the evaluation trenches in the vicinity, which are jointly summarised here. This assemblage comprised mainly pottery and animal bone (Table 1). Datable artefacts are four pottery sherds, weighing 21g. Two derived from ditch [107] — 17th-century black-glazed earthenware (fabric PM16, after Mynard 1992) and 18th-century creamware (PM23). The upper fill (306) of ditch [304] contained a leached and highly abraded shell-tempered Roman jar rim sherd (fabric 1a, after Marney 1989). A tiny, abraded sherd, possibly also of Roman date, derived from the lower fill (305). Irregular feature [806] / [809] yielded two abraded shell-tempered pottery crumbs (2g), which are too fragmentary to positively identify and date. A shard from a glass vessel was recovered from the wattle-lined pit [803].

	Feature	Description	Context	Date range	Finds summary
Evaluation: Western Land Parcel	107 (Tr. 1)	Ditch	108	Undated	Fired clay (1g); animal bone (1g)
	107 (Tr. 1)	Ditch	109	Modern	Pottery (2g); ferrous slag (33g); animal bone (60g)
	304 (Tr. 3)	Ditch	305	Undated	Pottery (1g)
	304 (Tr. 3)	Ditch	306	Roman	Pottery (18g); animal bone (1g)
Mitigation	803	Pit	804	Modern	Vessel glass (24g); animal bone (9g)
	806	Large pit	807	Undated	Pottery (1g)
	809	Large pit	810	Undated	Pottery (1g)

Table 1: Artefact Summary

Eleven pieces of animal bone (71g) were collected from ditches [107], [304] and pit [809]. All are battered and abraded, with an average fragment weight of 6g. A burnt sheep/goat molar or premolar recovered from pit [809] is the only piece which can be identified to species.

3.6 Summary

The investigation revealed several features that had been identified in the evaluation. These survived below extensive modern disturbance associated with the former use of the site, comprising extensive ground reduction which had truncated underlying deposits and features. The earliest feature was a large possible quarry pit. Only a very small quantity of possible Romano-British pottery was recovered from the fill. This does not provide conclusive dating evidence for the feature, though together with material from the ditch identified in evaluation Trench 3 to the south, it does suggest contemporary activity in the vicinity. No sign of the continuation of this ditch was identified within the mitigation area.

The wattle-lined pit that had been identified in the evaluation was investigated. This revealed that the wood forming the lining had deteriorated markedly in the intervening period. A large fragment of 19th-century glass was recovered from the associated fill, indicating that the feature was modern in date.

No further analysis or dissemination work is required on the data recovered during the mitigation works. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website under reference albionar1-195642 and the archive deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum Service under accession number AYBCM: 2013.56.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

Albion Archaeology, 2013, *The Salt Box, Bedford Road, Lavendon, Milton Keynes: Archaeological Field Evaluation*, Document 2013/110 Version 1.0

Albion Archaeology, 2014, *The Salt Box, Bedford Road, Lavendon, Milton Keynes: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Mitigation*, Document 2014/201

Buckinghamshire County Museum, 2013, *Procedures for Notifying and Transferring Archaeological Archives*

CI*f*A, 2008, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*

CI*f*A, 2008, *Standards and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials*

English Heritage, 2009, *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)*

English Heritage, 2011, *Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (second edition)

Munby, J in Hey, G and Hind, J, (eds) 2014, *Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment: Resource Assessments and Research Agendas*

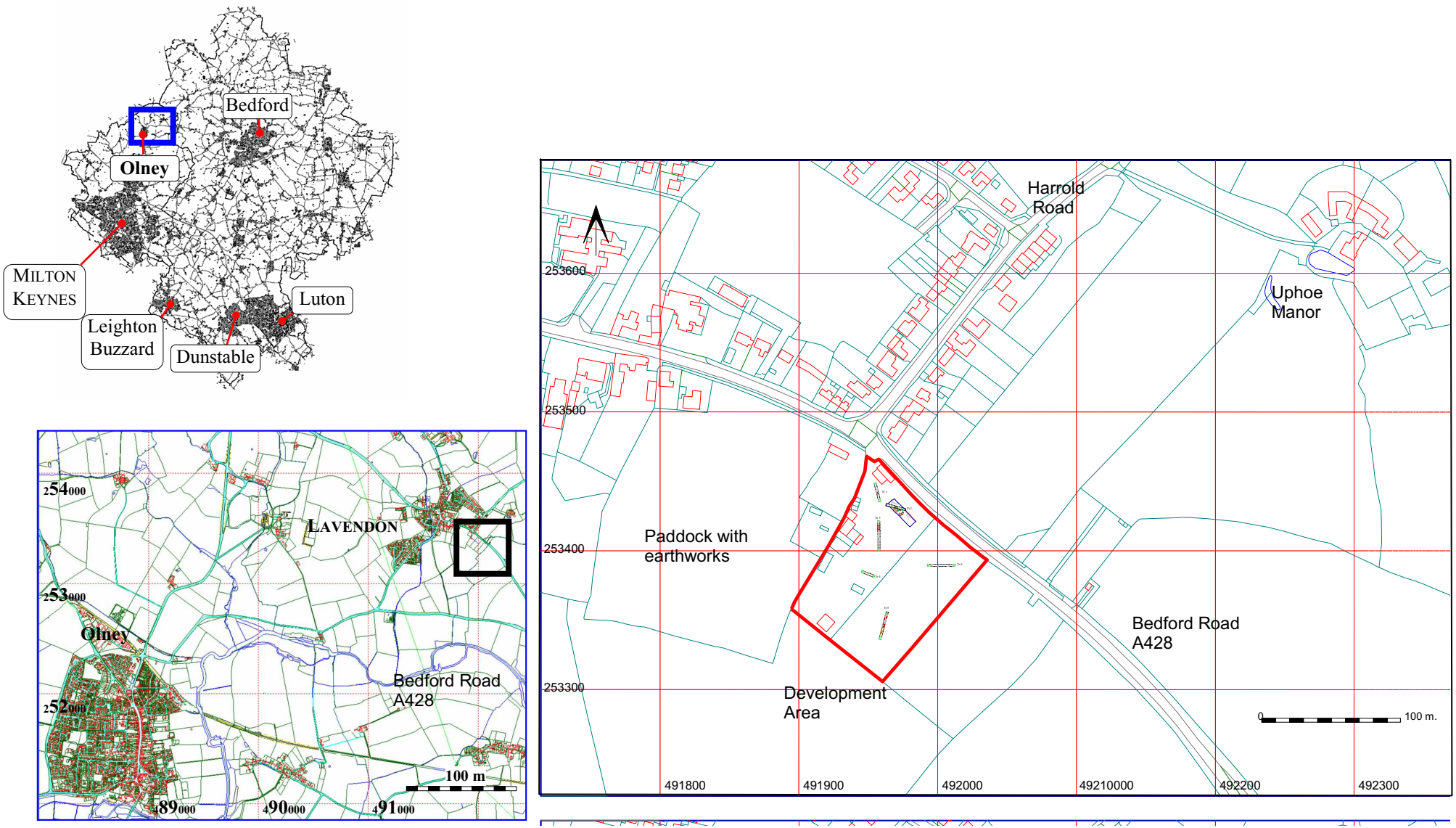
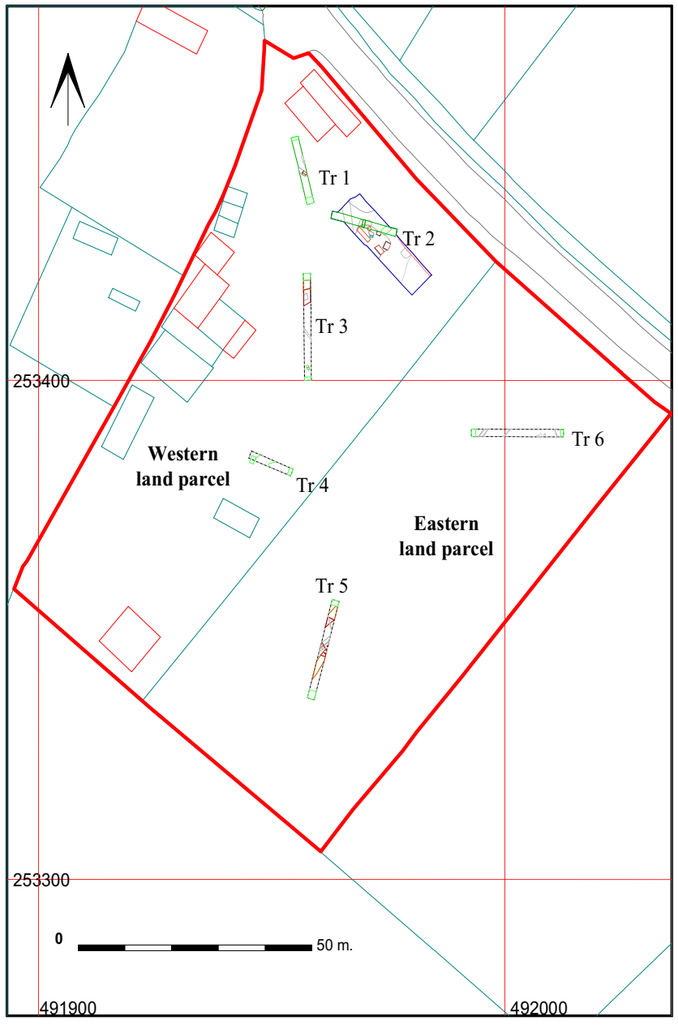
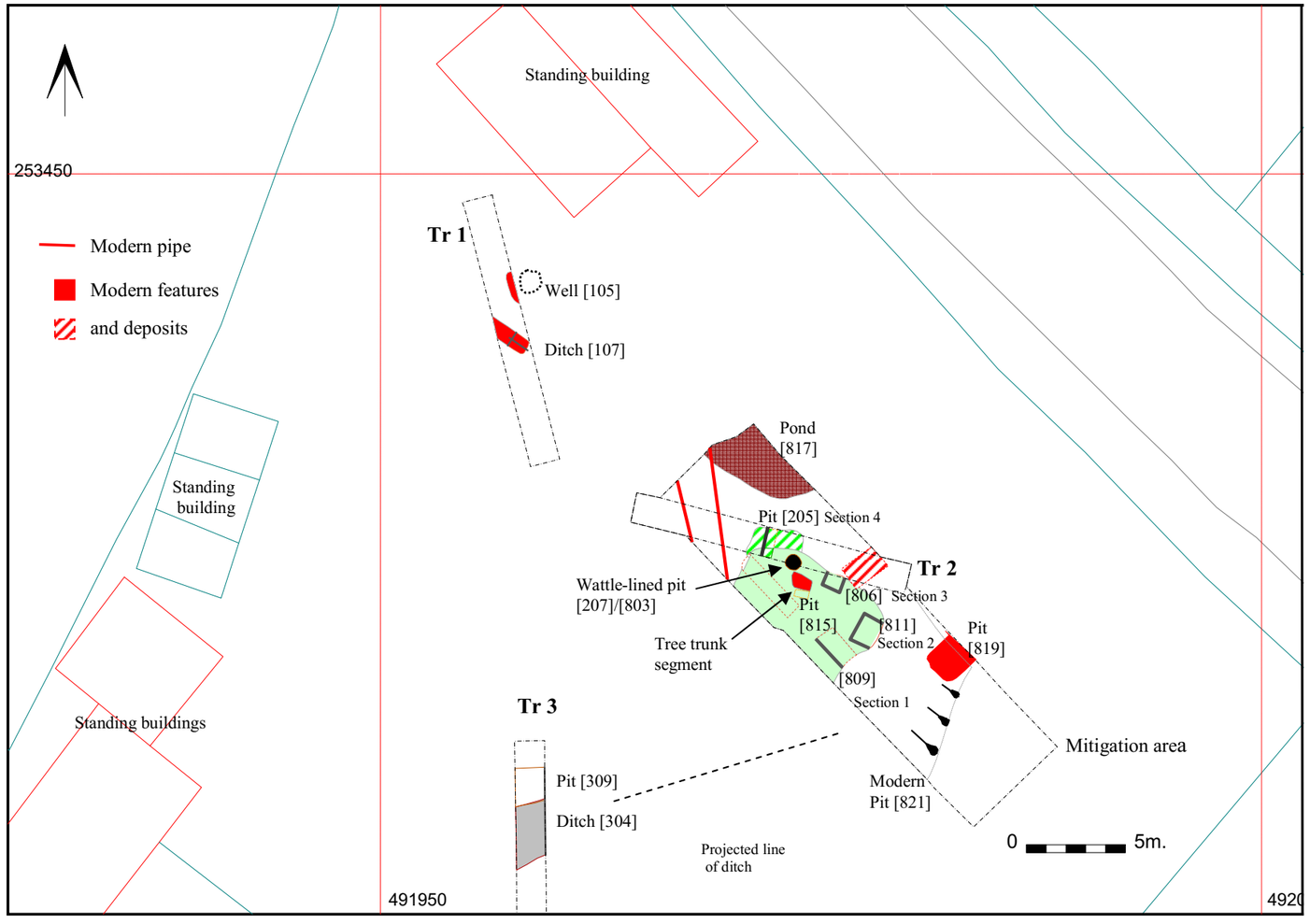


Figure 1: Site location map





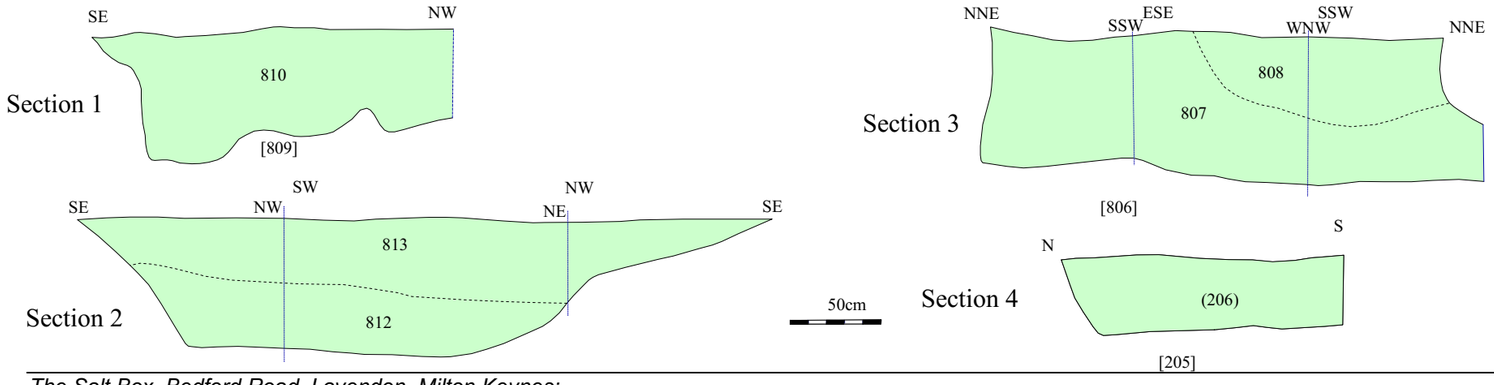


Figure 2: All-features plan and selected sections

Image 1: General view of western part of area showing pond [817] at top right of image, with pitting to bottom left, surviving below extensive modern pit [821]. The area was subsequently extended further to the east. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Image 2: Extension of the area to the east revealed that modern pit [821] became shallower near the boundary with the Eastern land parcel – to the right in this image. However, that ground had been reduced to the geological strata, removing the upper soil profile.

Figure 3: Selected images 1 and 2

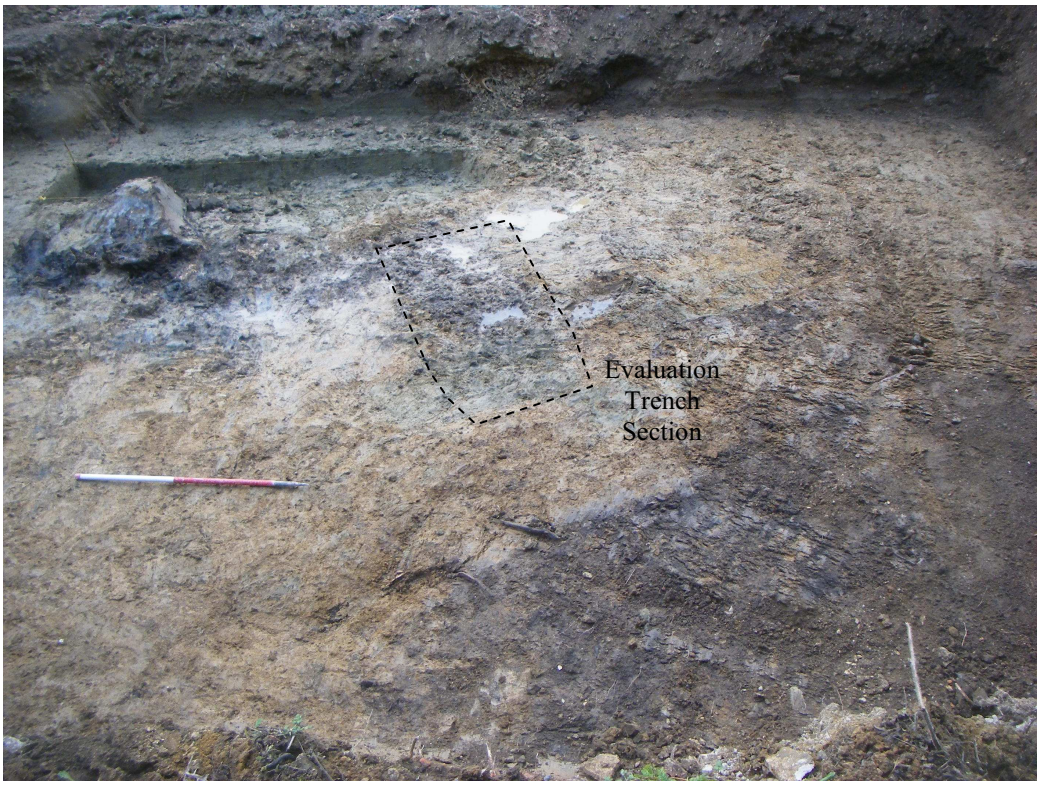


Image 3: Detail of NW part of area, showing the dark fill of pond [817] at bottom right of the image, with the sequential pits towatds the top left. Pit [205] investigated in the evaluation has faded in colour when compared to Image 4 below. The large segment of tree trunk in the base of the modern pit [821] can be seen pressed into the soft fill of the early pits. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Image 4: General view of Trench 2 during the evaluation, with a section excavated through pit [205]. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Figure 4: Selected images 3 and 4

Image 5: General image of initial mitigation area looking eastwards, with initial section through large pit [815] underway. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Image 6: Section through northern edge of large pit [815], with the greenish fill contrasting strongly with the adjacent geological strata. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Figure 5: Selected images 5 and 6

Image 7: Initial small-scale investigation of the wattle-lined pit [207], during the evaluation. Scale 30cm in 10cm divisions.

Image 8: Investigation of the wattle-lined pit during the recent mitigation works, showing the considerable deterioration in the wood.

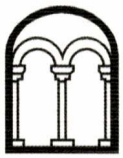
Figure 6: Selected images 7 and 8

Image 9: Fragment of clear colourless pressed glass dated to the 19th century, recovered from the lower fill (804) of the wattle-lined pit [803]. Scale 5cm in 1cm divisions.

Figure 7: Selected image 9

Central Bedfordshire

Albion archaeology



Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
Bedford
MK42 0AS

Telephone 01234 294000
Email office@albion-arch.com
www.albion-arch.com