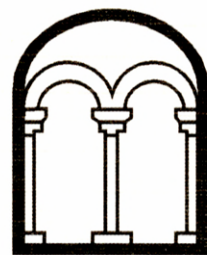


**CHILTERN VIEW
HIGHAM GOBION
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



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INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS
AND PUBLICATION**

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Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and should not be relied upon by any third party. This document should not be used for any other purpose without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council). Any person/party relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Albion Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Albion Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the persons/party by whom it was commissioned. This document is limited by the state of knowledge at the time it was written.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by GPS Estates Ltd and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

The archaeological works were undertaken by Hanno Conring and Kathy Pilkinton, who also prepared this report.

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Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
DA	Development area
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council's Historic Environment Record
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission CB/14/03105/FULL with variation CB/15/01584/VOC was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the demolition of the existing buildings at Chiltern View, Higham Gobion, and the construction of a replacement dwelling with a new access road.

Chiltern View is located on the Higham Gobion Road, approximately halfway between Barton-le-Clay in the south-west and the hamlet of Higham Gobion to the east, centred on NGR TL 094 321. It is part of a small series of plots of land on the northern side of the road, c. 350m east of Westhey Manor, which consist of pasture, woodland and the farm. To the north, east and west the plots are surrounded by arable land. The development area (DA) is on level ground at c. 60m OD with views southwards to the Chilterns. Eastwards the ground rises towards the village of Higham Gobion. The underlying geology of the area is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation.

Chiltern View lies in a landscape rich in cropmark and fieldwalking evidence for prehistoric and Roman settlements, whilst the hamlet of Higham Gobion, c. 1km to the east of the DA is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and is likely to have late Saxon origins. Cropmark and cartographic evidence identified a series of potentially medieval closes to the south-west of the hamlet, adjacent to, and including, the DA (HER 16706).

The initial stage of groundworks was undertaken in late March 2016, focusing on the footprint of the new dwelling, which involved the stripping of overburden to the archaeological horizon, followed by excavation of the large cavity for the basement of the new dwelling. This revealed extensive disturbance associated with the former farm and its subsequent demolition, including traces of footings of buildings.

Subsequently, in February 2017 stripping of the new access road was monitored. Whilst there was little disturbance from modern activity, the investigation only revealed a former cultivation soil above the undisturbed geological strata. No artefacts were recovered.

The investigation only revealed modern disturbance in the area of the former farm / new dwelling, whilst the access road only revealed undisturbed geological strata. If any features had been present, they would have been well defined against the geological strata. No traces of any activity associated with the possible medieval enclosures or earlier utilisation of the site were revealed.

The results of the investigation have been fully analysed in this report. No additional analysis or publication is deemed necessary. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website, reference no. albionar1-217419. The project archive will be deposited with Luton Culture, entry no. LTNMG 1152.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project Background**

Planning permission CB/14/03105/FULL with variation CB/15/01584/VOC was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the demolition of the existing buildings at Chiltern View, Higham Gobion and the construction of a new dwelling and access road.

A heritage statement, submitted as part of the planning application, highlighted that the site is of archaeological interest (Albion Archaeology 2014). Accordingly, the following condition (no. 2) was attached to the planning permission:

No development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation, that includes post excavation analysis and publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development hereby approved shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.

Reason: This condition is required prior to commencement of the development to record and advance understanding of the heritage assets with archaeological interest which will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of the development.

The CBC Archaeologist (CBCA) confirmed that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication would be required.

This recommendation was in accordance with national planning guidelines in the form of paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF), which requires that developers secure a strategy to record and advance understanding of heritage assets with archaeological interest that will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of development. It was also in accordance with Central Bedfordshire Council's Policy DM13 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the client to undertake the archaeological component of the project, commencing with the formulation of the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the work (Albion 2015).

1.2 **Site Location, Topography and Geology**

Chiltern View is located on the Higham Gobion Road, approximately halfway between Barton-le-Clay in the south-west and the hamlet of Higham Gobion to the east (Figure 1). It is part of a small series of plots of land on the northern side of the road, c. 350m east of Westhey Manor, which consist of pasture, woodland and the farm. To the north, east and west the plots are surrounded by arable land.



The development area (DA) is centred on NGR TL 094 321, occupying level ground at *c.* 60m OD with views southwards to the Chilterns. Eastwards the ground rises towards the village of Higham Gobion.

The underlying geology of the area is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The archaeological and historical background of Chiltern View was presented in detail in a heritage assessment, submitted with the planning application (Albion 2014). The following represents a summary of the historic environment around the DA.

Chiltern View lies in a landscape rich in cropmark and fieldwalking evidence for prehistoric and Roman settlements, recoded in the Central Bedfordshire Council Historic Environment record (HER). One such site (HER 9352) lies *c.* 500m to the west of the DA and consists of an extensive series of enclosures visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs, with early Iron Age, Belgic and Roman pottery sherds being identified during fieldwalking.

Situated some 750m to the north of the DA, a series of enclosures and linear features (HER 9353) have been recorded. These are associated with Iron Age pottery and a saddle quern. A large area of polygonal cropmarks lies immediately to the south-east of the PDA (HER 17112). This is not associated with any datable evidence but has been assigned a prehistoric to Roman date in the HER.

The hamlet of Higham Gobion, *c.* 1km to the east of the DA, is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, and is likely to have at least late Saxon origins.

Cropmark and cartographic evidence suggests the presence of a series of potentially medieval closes (HER 16706), located to the south-west of the hamlet, adjacent to, and including the DA. These are still reflected by the modern boundaries of the DA. It is not clear if these plots represent parts of a settlement or are simply paddocks. In the post-medieval period the plots were open fields with no evidence for built structures.

The farm was built in the early to mid-20th century and does not represent a heritage asset. It was used as a poultry farm and residential dwelling.

1.4 Historical Maps

1.4.1 1700 Estate map (Figure 2: Map A)

This copy of the estate map was transcribed by Stephen Coleman at the CBC HER. It shows that the current western and northern boundary of the DA and its adjacent plots are a direct survivor of boundaries present in 1700 and probably earlier. The field name of the western closes is recorded as “Barton Pikles”; while the eastern field, which is now gone, is marked as “Mathew’s Pikle”. The map also shows the small pond within “Barton Pikles” that is later shown on the first OS maps.



The map also records the “Roadway from Barton to Shedlington” — the current Higham Gobion Road.

1.4.2 1st and 3rd revised edition 6-inch OS maps, 1881–1950 (Figure 2: Maps B and C)

The first and third editions of the OS map show that most of the field boundaries of the potential medieval closes survive until the late 19th/early 20th century. The 6-inch maps show the plots of land that are currently pasture and woodland and accommodate the farm as one elongated open plot of land with no subdivisions. They also show that the northern boundary of the eastern plots of “Mathew’s Pike” survived until at least the mid-20th century. A small pond is shown on the DA on the maps. The plots were most likely used for agriculture or pasture. Westhey Manor is labelled “Lane Farm”.

The 3rd edition revised map of 1950 shows that a driveway and a series of small rectangular units had been established on the DA (Figure 2: Map C). This could have been the beginnings of the Chiltern View Poultry Farm.

1.4.3 Modern OS Map, 1977

This is the first map that shows the former farm, indicating that it was built sometime in the mid-20th century. The map shows the driveway with the main house and garages and a number of outhouses at the rear of the plot. The farm is labelled “Chiltern View Poultry Farm”.

1.5 Project Objectives

Archaeological evidence from the surrounding area indicated that there was the potential for the survival of archaeological remains, most likely from the medieval and post-medieval periods within the DA, with evidence of Iron Age to Roman settlement activity at a greater distance. The focus of the project’s research objectives were related to the medieval period and, to a lesser extent, the Iron Age/Roman periods.

It was recognised that the archaeological potential of the development site might have been compromised by the construction of the 20th-century building, its outhouses and driveway. However, it was considered that the DA had the potential to preserve archaeological remains that could address a number of research objectives identified in the research framework for Bedfordshire (Oake et al. 2007) and the revised framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011).

The research framework for Bedfordshire states that, in common with the rest of the eastern region, further research is needed on the characterisation of rural prehistoric, Roman and medieval settlements, their distribution, density and dynamics, and to understand how they appear to grow, shift and disappear (Oake 2007, 11 and 14; Wade 2000, 24–5; Medlycott 2011, 31, 47 and 70).

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:



- whether there was any evidence for Iron Age and/or Roman settlement features, or contemporary agricultural or dispersed activity that might relate to the known settlement sites within the area;
- whether there was any evidence for activity relating to the possible medieval closes along Higham Gobion Road.

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature and date of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape;
- local environmental conditions via recovering palaeo-environmental remains.



2. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological investigation took place in two phases (Figure 3), with the initial phase undertaken in late March 2016 to monitor ground reduction within the footprint of the new dwelling. Subsequently the new access road was stripped in early February 2017. The groundworks were undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. All deposits were assigned a unique context number commencing at (100).

The project adhered throughout to the standards prescribed in the following documents:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• CIFA	<i>Charter and By-law; Code of conduct</i> (2014) <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> (2014) <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
• EAA.	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• English Heritage (now Historic England)	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> (2011)
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide</i> (2015)
• Luton Culture	<i>Procedure for preparing archives for deposition with Luton Culture</i> (2013)

Permission will be sought from the landowners for transfer of title of all finds to Luton Culture on completion of post-excavation analysis and reporting (entry number: LTNMG 1152).

Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS database under reference number albionar1-217419.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Both phases of monitoring were undertaken in generally dry, cloudy conditions when the ground was moist. This allowed for good observation of the exposed deposits. The footprint of the new dwelling extended c. 21m by 18m. The new access road was created a short distance to the south-west of the farm access extending c. 25m from the road varying from 5m to 25m wide.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

Prior to arrival on site the existing buildings in the area of the new dwelling had been demolished and the debris removed from the area along with the upper part of the topsoil. This left 0.3–0.5m friable dark brown sandy silt. This would appear to have originally been a cultivation soil based on the nature and thickness of the deposit, though probably incorporating both a colluvial element due to the downslope movement of soil, and a modern component associated with the recent use of the area as a farm. The soil had been extensively disturbed by modern activity associated with the former farm and its subsequent demolition.

The bedrock geology at Chiltern View belongs to the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation. The chalk was not observed, though the blue-grey and off-white clay deposit would appear to have been derived from the underlying chalk.

3.3 Archaeological Observation

Despite the close proximity of the two areas that were monitored, there was a marked contrast between the results. The initial area was in the vicinity of the former farmhouse and an initial inspection indicated it was heavily disturbed. In contrast the site of the new entrance was away from the focus of modern activity and nearer the road and, therefore, had greater potential for earlier evidence to survive.

3.3.1 Ground reduction associated with the new dwelling

The stripping was undertaken in blocks, initially removing the overburden with a toothless bucket to the top of the undisturbed geological strata. This was examined for archaeological features. Subsequently excavation continued with a toothed bucket to create the cavity for the substantial basement to the dwelling (Figure 4: images 1 and 2).

The soil consisted of modern building materials and other refuse associated with the use and subsequent demolition of the former farm. Intermittent traces of footings of the former farmhouse and an ancillary building were revealed (Figure 3). These footing and robbing trenches were very difficult to trace, as the friable dark brown fill, which was mixed with flecks of brownish mid red sandy silt and fragments of concrete and brick, was almost indistinguishable from the overburden, from which it was derived. No traces of medieval or earlier features or artefacts were identified.

The only activity recorded was associated with the modern farm.



3.3.2 Ground reduction associated with the new access

Ground reduction was observed to formation level on the new access road, which extended from the road frontage. The overburden was removed to the top of the undisturbed blue-grey clay geological strata (Figure 3 and Figure 5: images 3 and 4). The geological horizon was well defined with no evidence for modern or earlier features cut into the deposit. Any such features would have been easily identifiable.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The investigation focused on the areas impacted by the development, comprising the footprint of the new dwelling and the access road. The dwelling area revealed extensive disturbance associated with the former farm and its subsequent demolition. Below the disturbance the geological strata was well-defined, with no trace of any earlier features or artefacts.

The new access was away from activity associated with the farm, although no earlier features were revealed following removal of the overburden. The thickness of the overburden suggests that it was a former cultivation soil. This deposit is not reliably dated, as modern building materials were present.

Although only a relatively small area of the DA was impacted by the actual development, the lack of features and finds predating the farm may suggest that the possible medieval enclosures were not a focus of human activity; possibly serving as areas of pasture for livestock, or perhaps serving another agricultural function, away from the focus of human activity.

The results of the investigation have been fully analysed in this report. No additional analysis or publication is deemed necessary. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website, reference no. albionar1-217419. The project archive will be deposited with Luton Culture, entry no. LTNMG 1152.



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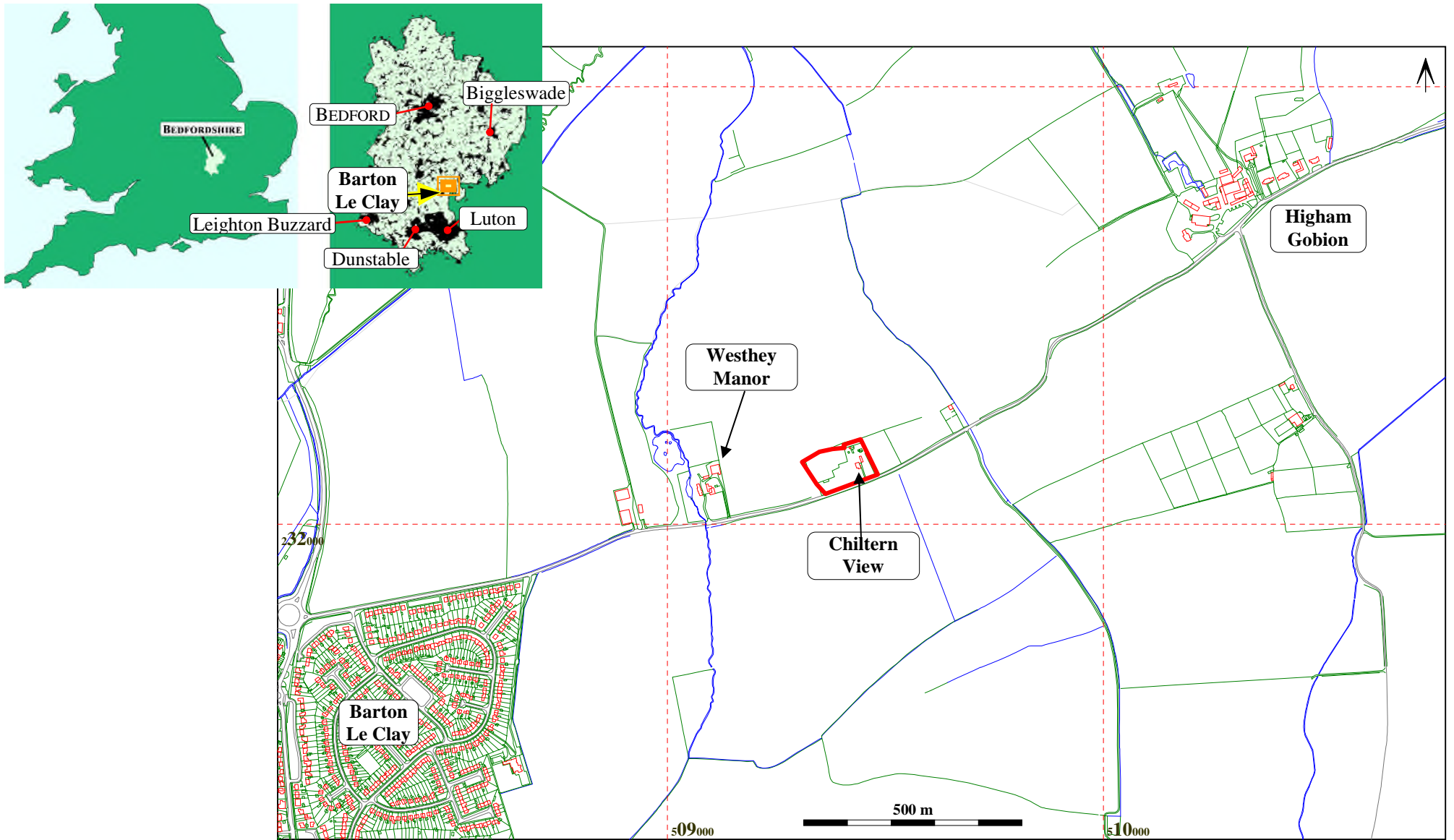
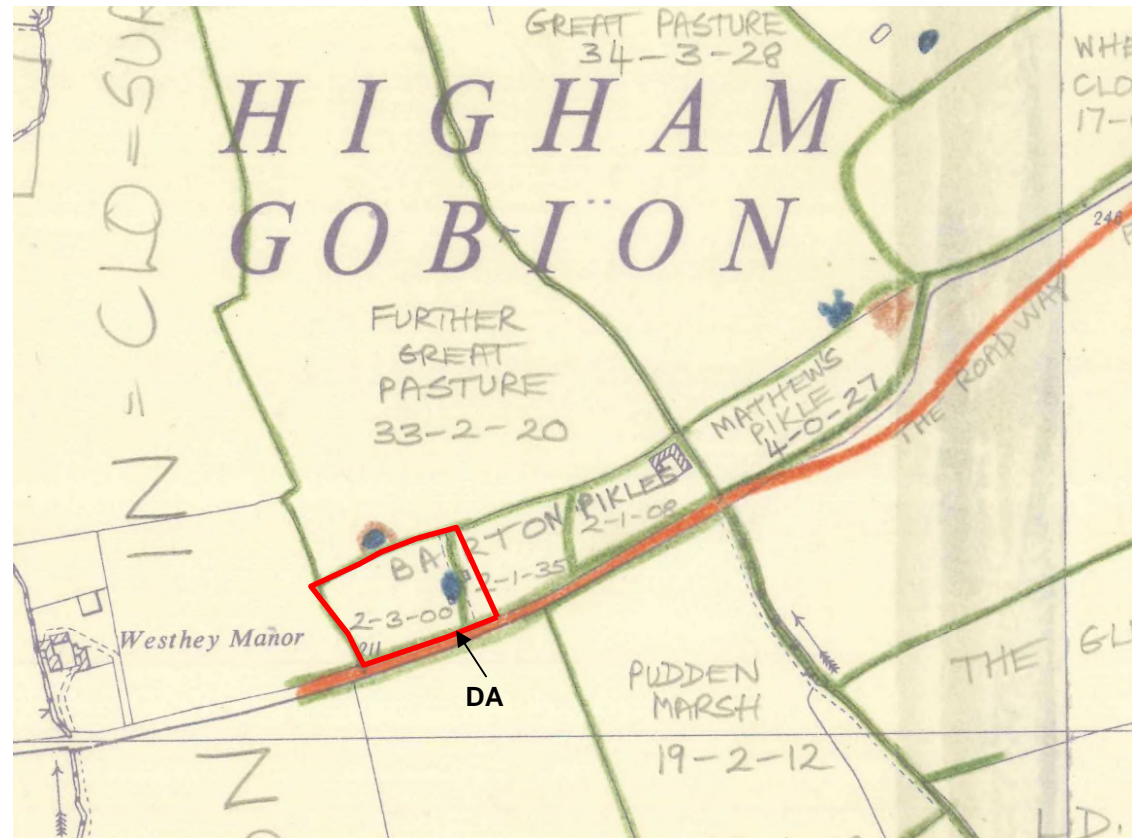


Figure 1: Site location

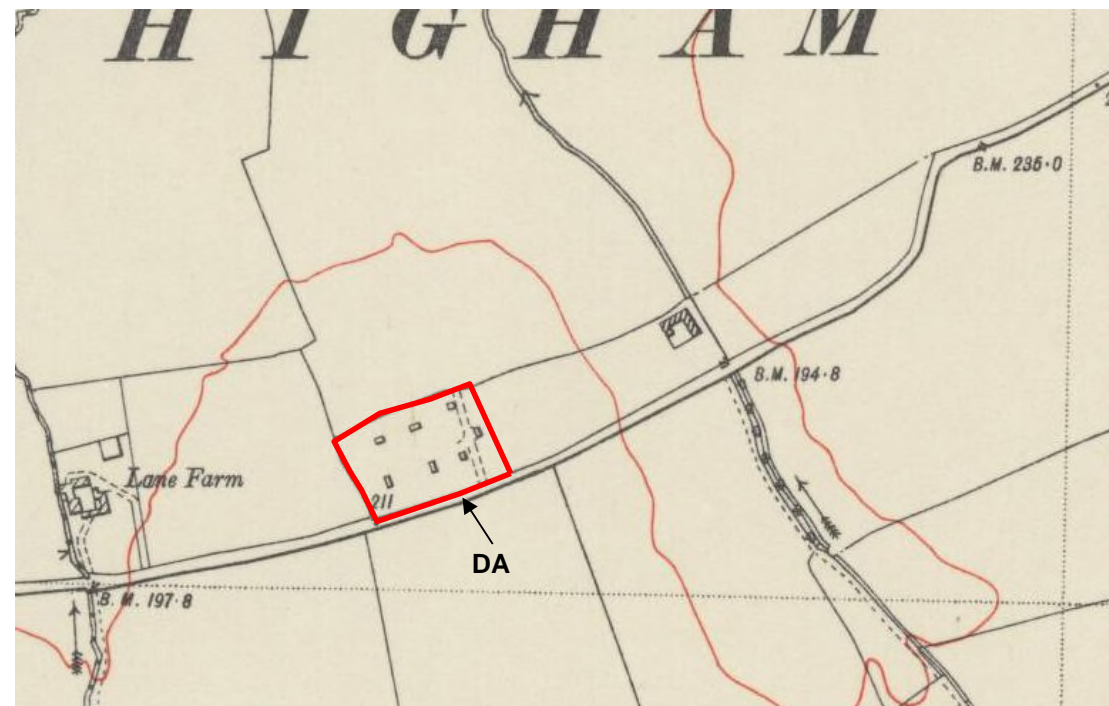
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Map A: Transcribed Higham Gobion estate map of 1700



Map B: 1881 first edition 6-inch OS map*



Map C: 1950 third revised edition 6-inch OS map*

* Images used courtesy of National Library of Scotland

Figure 2: Historical maps

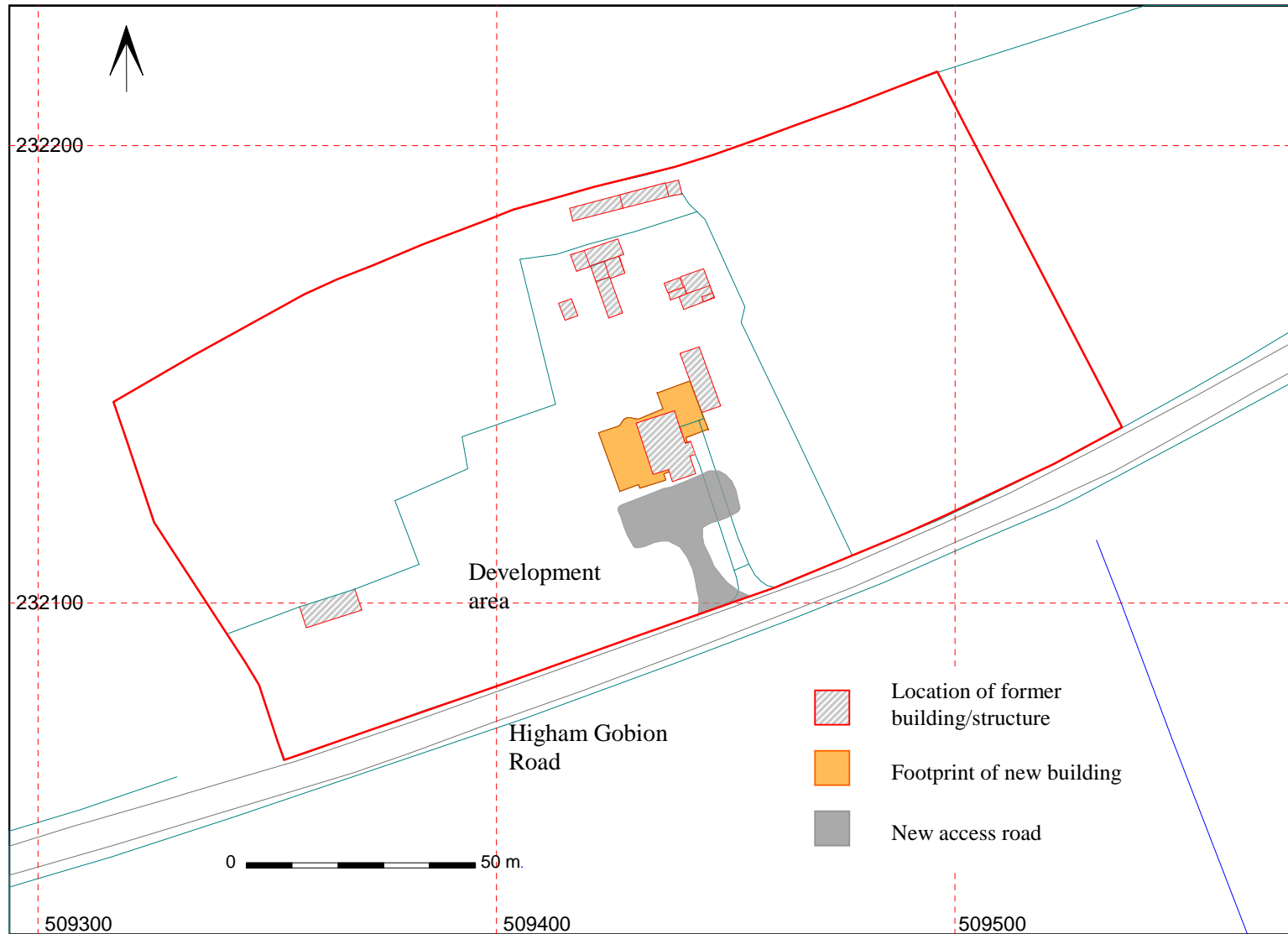


Figure 3: Site plan

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Image 1: Stripping of the footprint of the new dwelling. The large cavity to the right of the image is part of the basement already stripped to formation level.



Image 2: General view of dwelling area.

Figure 4: Selected images 1 and 2 — dwelling area



Image 3: View into the site from vicinity of Higham Gobion Road, looking towards the partly constructed basement in the middle distance and an old farm building beyond.



Image 4: Stripping of the main part of the access road and turning area, to the level of the undisturbed geological strata.

Figure 5: Selected images 3 and 4 — new access road



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