

**51 WEST END ROAD  
SILSOE  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

**Albion**  
archaeology





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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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1.0	03/11/2015	n/a

## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council's Historic Environment Record
LPA	Local Planning Authority
OD	Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## Non-technical Summary

Planning permission (CB/15/00506/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for the erection of a new dwelling at 51 West End Road, Silsoe, Bedfordshire.

As the development had the potential to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest, a condition was attached to the planning permission. This required that a written scheme of archaeological investigation should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) before any development could take place and that the development should only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.

Archaeological observation and investigation during the groundworks took place periodically between 8th and 19th October 2015. The observed groundworks comprised the excavation of trenches for the foundations of the proposed building and a soak-away towards the rear of the garden.

The only features observed during the groundworks were three modern pits, two of which were probably for refuse and a brick-filled, possible soak-away. This might potentially relate to a building shown on an early 18th-century estate map, but otherwise these features related to domestic / garden activities and are of negligible archaeological significance.

Overall, the extent of the excavations was very limited so the results of these observations do not alter the existing assessment of the archaeological potential of the development area set out in the Heritage Statement for the development. This assessment is summarised below.

<i>Period</i>	<i>Known Heritage Assets</i>	<i>Potential for Heritage Assets</i>	<i>Significance of archaeological remains</i>	<i>Significance of Impact</i>
<i>Prehistoric (before AD 43)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Slight to Moderate</i>
<i>Roman (AD 43–c. AD 450)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Slight to Moderate</i>
<i>Anglo-Saxon (AD 400–1066)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Local to Regional</i>	<i>Moderate to Large</i>
<i>Medieval (AD 1066–1550)</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Local to Regional</i>	<i>Moderate to Large</i>
<i>Post-medieval (AD 1550–1900)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Slight to Moderate</i>
<i>Modern (AD 1900–present)</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Slight</i>

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (entry no. LTNMG 1153). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-218220).



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 **Project Background**

Planning permission (CB/15/00506/FULL) was granted for the erection of a new dwelling at 51 West End Road, Silsoe, Bedfordshire.

Because of the site's archaeological potential the following condition (no. 7) was attached to the planning permission:

*No development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation, that adopts a staged approach and includes post-excavation analysis and publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said development shall only 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.*

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the necessary work. Following discussions with the CBCA it was agreed that the condition could be addressed by a programme of archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication. The programme was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Albion Archaeology (Albion Archaeology 2015b) and approved by the CBCA and LPA.

Subsequently, however, the developer decided not to implement the permitted proposal in full. The house and landscaping were to be built, but the proposed basement was to be omitted. On behalf of the client, Albion Archaeology consulted the CBCA to seek approval for a variation to the strategy set out in the WSI. The CBCA agreed that the following strategy would be acceptable:

- All groundworks (other than topsoil stripping less than c. 150mm in depth) must be undertaken under archaeological supervision.
- If archaeological finds or deposits are encountered, these must be investigated and recorded in accordance with the approved WSI. The CBCA's assent must be sought before subsequent construction works can proceed.
- An archaeological report will be required and the level of reporting will be commensurate with the results of the fieldwork.
- Any works permitted under CB/15/00506 that are not undertaken now will need to be carried out in accordance with the approved WSI, if implemented in the future (unless otherwise agreed formally with the LPA).

### 1.2 **Site Location and Description**

The proposed development area (PDA) is located on the south side of West End Road at the westernmost end of the made road. It forms a rectangular parcel of land within the western half of the garden of no. 51. It contains a modern double



garage in brick with a tiled roof. Most of the plot is under grass with gravel in front of the garage.

The north and west sides of the plot are formed by fenced boundaries with a screen of semi-mature trees lining the road-side verge. The south side is bounded by a tall, hedged boundary between this and the adjacent house to the south. The west side of the plot is defined by a picket fence. Immediately north of the PDA is West End Road with a landscaped open area on the north side of the road. To the east is a large area of modern residential development. On the south side are two modern houses which front onto the track to the west of the PDA. To the west are open arable fields.

The area is characterised largely by very recent housing development which extends along West End Road and to the north and south of the road. The housing in the eastern part of West End Road is interspersed with some older listed buildings ranging in date from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The property adjacent to the east side of the PDA is a 17th-century Grade II Listed Building.

Silsoe lies to the east of the Greensand Ridge and West End Road follows a slight east-west aligned erosion gully cutting into the higher ground to the west. The PDA slopes down slightly towards its north end and lies at a height of c. 65m OD. The site is centred on grid reference TL 0770 3544.

The underlying geology consists of Gault Formation Mudstone with the site lying close to the boundary with the Woburn Sands Formation Sandstone a short distance to the north of West End Road. Superficial deposits are formed by Head, Quaternary slope deposits consisting of clay, silt, sands and gravels.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The archaeological and historical background to the site is presented in a desk-based heritage statement (Albion Archaeology 2015a) and is summarised here.

Extensive archaeological investigations have been undertaken around West End Road in advance of modern residential developments. These have uncovered very limited evidence of prehistoric activity in the form a late Iron Age enclosure on higher ground 200m to the north-east of the PDA. Limited evidence of activity in the Roman period consists of occasional residual artefacts in later features.

There is higher potential for the PDA to contain archaeological remains of Saxon or medieval date.

Silsoe's origins are likely to lie in the late Saxon period. Excavated evidence consists of a sunken-featured building (SFB) with early-middle Saxon pottery and two shallow pits located close to the late Iron Age enclosure noted above.

Archaeological evidence for the medieval period consists of ditched enclosures along the north and south sides of West End Road forming settlement tenements. The evidence ranges in date between the 10th and 15th century with the highest level of activity spanning the 12th to 14th centuries. The medieval village had





two main settlement cores: one focused on the High Street and parish church (HER17002) with a second at West End (HER17003). The PDA extends into the western extent of the West End medieval settlement focus (as defined by the HER).

Archaeological and historical map evidence shows a reduced level of activity in West End during the post-medieval period with a small number of buildings. At this time the main settlement focus was towards the High Street and at West End Farm. Historical maps show that the PDA has lain within a plot attached to the cottage at 51 West End Road since at least the early 18th century.

#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

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 features or deposits present at the site;
- establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape;
- local environmental conditions via the recovery of palaeo-environmental remains.

The development area lies within a heritage asset with archaeological interest (HER17003) and had the potential to preserve archaeological remains related to the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval development of the village. The investigation of rural Saxon and medieval settlements — to examine their diversity, characterise settlement forms and understand how they appear, grow, shift and disappear — is a local and regional archaeological research objective (Wade 2000, 24–25; Oake 2007, 14; Medlycott 2011, 70).



## 2. METHODOLOGY

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2015b). Archaeological observation and investigation during the groundworks took place periodically between 8th and 19th October 2015. Groundworks observed comprised the excavation of trenches for the foundations of the proposed building — they were c. 0.5–1m wide and c. 1m deep — and the excavation of a c. 3m-long, c. 2.2m-wide and c. 1.5m-deep soak-away trench towards the back of the garden.

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).
ALGAO	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. EAA Occasional Paper No. 14</i> (2003)
CIfA	<i>Charter and by-law; Code of conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation</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)
Historic England (formerly English Heritage)	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> , (2nd edn, 2011)
Luton Culture	<i>Procedure For Preparing Archaeological Archives For Deposition With Luton Culture</i> (2010 - with minor updates July 2013)

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### 3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

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#### 3.1 *Description of Features Observed*

The features and deposits observed are shown in plan on Figure 1, with photographs presented in Figures 2–5. Numbers in square brackets refer to context numbers for features [\*\*] and round brackets (\*\*) refer to deposits.

The overburden, comprising topsoil and subsoil, was 0.4–0.5m thick. Topsoil (1) was friable dark grey-brown clay silt containing occasional fragments of modern brick, tile, metal objects and pottery. The latter comprised five sherds (17g) of 19th-century transfer-printed earthenware and Mocha ware (respectively fabric type P45 and P391).

Subsoil (2) was firm, mid brown-grey silty clay. An abraded sand-tempered pottery sherd (C59B: 12g) of 12th–13th-century date was recovered from the deposit. This suggests that, as is often the case, the subsoil was partly derived from agricultural activity during this period.

Undisturbed geological deposits (3) comprised firm, mid orange-grey silty clay.

A possible soak-away and three modern pits were revealed within the groundworks. Although not fully revealed, the possible soak-away [10] (Figure 3) appeared to be sub-circular in shape with steep sides. It was 3.2m long, at least 1.4m wide and at least 1m deep. The deposit within it (11) comprised mainly fragments of brick and mortar in a matrix of compact mid grey-brown sandy silt. The brick fragments were un-frogged and stock-moulded; one incomplete example (448g) was 115mm wide and 47mm deep. It is possible that these bricks were derived from a building on the site, but they may equally well have been imported onto the site for the purpose of constructing the soak-away.

Two of the modern pits [8] and [12] (Figure 4) contained single refuse deposits, suggesting that they had been dug specifically for this purpose and soon after backfilled. Pottery collected from these features (3 sherds: 83g) comprises fine white wares of 19th- and 20th-century date. The third pit [4] (Figure 5) contained three distinct deposits, the upper most of which (7) contained fragments of concrete paving slabs and was probably deliberately backfilled. The middle deposit (6) contained peat and was probably also backfilled. It not clear whether the earliest deposit (5) was also backfilled or deposited naturally, so the interpretation of the original function of the pit is less certain than it was for pits [8] and [12]. Overall, the pits were 0.8–1.8m in diameter and 0.25–0.85m deep.

#### 3.1 *Discussion of Significance*

All of the features revealed by the groundworks were modern and probably related to activities in the domestic garden attached to the cottage at 51 West End Road. As such they have *negligible* archaeological significance.

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<sup>1</sup> Fabric types defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series



There was no evidence within the excavated trenches for the possible building indicated on the Duke of Kent estate survey of 1718 (BLARS reference: L33/286), although it is possible that the brick-filled soak-away was in some way associated. It might have been constructed to serve the building or the bricks might have been derived from its demolition.

Overall, the extent of the excavations was very limited, so the results of these observations do not alter the existing assessment of the archaeological potential of the development area set out in the Heritage Statement (Albion Archaeology 2015a). This assessment is summarised below.

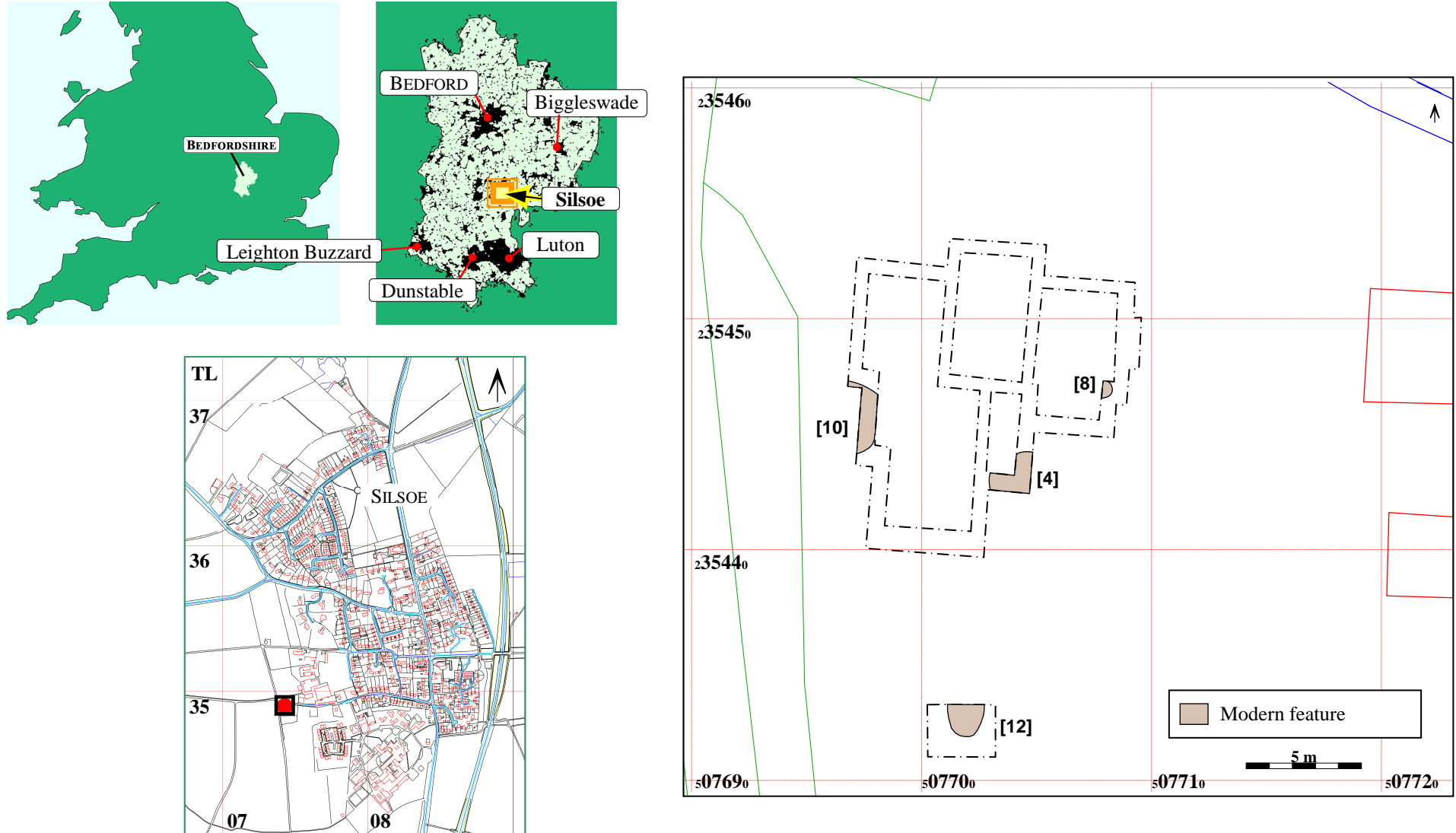
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Prehistoric (before AD 43)	No	Low	Local	Slight to Moderate
Roman (AD 43–c. AD 450)	No	Low	Local	Slight to Moderate
Anglo-Saxon (AD 400–1066)	No	Low	Local to Regional	Moderate to Large
Medieval (AD 1066–1550)	Yes	Moderate	Local to Regional	Moderate to Large
Post-medieval (AD 1550–1900)	No	Moderate	Local	Slight to Moderate
Modern (AD 1900–present)	No	Negligible	Negligible	Slight



## 4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**Figure 1: Site location and all features plan**

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 Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication



**Figure 2:** Excavating the footings trenches, looking north



**Figure 3:** The possible brick-filled soak-away, pit [10]



**Figure 4:** South-facing section of new soak-away trench showing shallow pit [12]



**Figure 5:** South-facing section showing pit [4]



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