

**TOP FARM
SHRUBBERY LANE
WILDEN
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



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GC Planning Partnership Ltd

On behalf of:
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Preface

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Acknowledgements

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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
BBHER	Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HET	Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team
LPA	Local Planning Authority
OD	Ordnance Datum
PDA	Permitted development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-technical Summary

Bedford Borough Council granted planning permission (18/00442/FUL) for the formation of a new vehicular access and driveway at Top Farm, Shrubbery Lane, Wilden, Bedfordshire.

Because the permitted development area (PDA) is in an area of archaeological interest, located immediately to the south-west of a number of known cropmarks considered likely to be Iron Age and Romano-British in origin, the Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team (HET) advised the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that a condition (no. 7) be attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication. This was in accordance with local policies and the National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2012).

Archaeological observation works comprised ground reduction within the perimeter of the new access and driveway and covered an area approximately 100m long by 3m wide; two areas for passing bays also excavated. The ground was reduced by approximately 0.2–0.25m.

Topsoil and modern dumped material layers were revealed at the formation level of the new access and driveway; no features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed in the base of the trench.

The lack of Iron Age or Romano-British artefacts may suggest that the known settlement activity of that date (identified immediately to the north-east of the current investigations) did not extend into the PDA. However, a number of 12th–13th century pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil. This, in turn, may indicate that early medieval archaeological remains could potentially be present at a lower level within the PDA itself or in the vicinity.

The project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum under accession no. BEDFM 2018:69. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website under reference number albionar1-329082.



1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

1.1 *Project Background*

Bedford Borough Council granted planning permission (18/00442/FUL) for the formation of a new vehicular access and driveway at Top Farm, Shrubbery Lane, Wilden, Bedfordshire.

Because the permitted development area (PDA) is located in an area of archaeological interest, the Bedford Borough Council Historic Environment Team (HET) advised the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that a condition (no. 7) be attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This was in accordance with local policies¹ and the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012 (revised 2019)). The archaeological mitigation work was to comprise a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) in accordance with the planning condition (Albion Archaeology 2018) and to carry out the subsequent programme of archaeological works.

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

Wilden is a village and civil parish in the north-east of the Borough of Bedford. It lies *c.*7km to the north-east of the centre of Bedford on the South Brook, which flows eastwards to the River Great Ouse. Top Farm lies *c.*1.4km to the north-west of the parish's main focus of settlement around St Nicholas's Church. The PDA comprises a strip of land to the north of the pond that lies on the northern edge of the farm complex at NGR TL 0824 5605 (Figure 1).

The PDA lies at *c.*70m OD on higher ground above the main village. The underlying geology comprises superficial deposits of Oadby Member Diamicton (boulder clay) above Peterborough Member - Mudstone².

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The PDA is located immediately to the south-west of a number of known cropmarks considered likely to be Iron Age and Romano-British in origin (HER14056; 16667; 16663). Metal-detecting within the area of cropmarks HER16663 has led to the recovery of numerous Roman and Iron Age coins, including a hoard of 84 bronze coins (HER21854) (*c.*250 to the NNE of the PDA) and a number of Roman brooches.

¹ Saved Policies BE24 & BE25 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002, Policy CP23 of the Bedford Borough Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008)

² <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>



Given the PDA's proximity to the known Iron Age and Romano-British activity, it was possible that it might contain important archaeological remains of a similar date.

The PDA's location on the edge of the parish suggested it was less likely that it would contain archaeological remains relating to former medieval or post-medieval settlement.

1.4 Project Objectives

The relevant research frameworks for the area are: *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake *et al.* 2007) and *A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

As the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement activity is known to exist in the vicinity, there was potential to reveal heritage assets of a similar date on the PDA.

For the Iron Age and Romano-British period the research framework for Bedfordshire states that little detailed work has been carried out on the characterisation of rural settlement. Patterns of settlement nucleation or dispersal are areas of considerable significance, but are little understood (Oake 2007, 11). More work is also needed to understand the inter-relationship between Roman towns and their hinterlands (Medlycott 2011, 47–8). Of particular relevance to the study area is the need to examine potential differences between settlements in the river valleys to those on the clay plateau in the north of the county (Oake 2007, 11).

The general purpose of the archaeological observation was to recover information on the:

- location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits, if such remains were present within the PDA;
- integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits, if such remains were present within the PDA;
- nature of palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

In summary, the specific research objectives of the archaeological observation were:

- To determine if any archaeological heritage assets relating to the known nearby Iron Age and Romano-British settlement were present within the PDA.
- To determine if any archaeological heritage assets relating to earlier periods were present within the PDA.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below and a full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2018).

2.1 Standards

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

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd edn, 2017).
• Bedford Museum	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (ver. 2.8, 2010)
• CI/A	<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)
• Gurney (EAA)	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• Historic England	<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)

2.1 Archaeological Observation

Archaeological observation works were carried out on 13th March 2019. The works being monitored comprised ground reduction within the perimeter of the new access and driveway and covered an area approximately 100m long by 3m wide; two areas for passing bays were also excavated (Figure 1). The ground was reduced by approximately 0.2–0.25m.

All ground reduction was carried out with a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under constant archaeological supervision. The base of the stripped area and the excavated spoil were scanned by eye and metal detected for finds recovery. All investigation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion Archaeology staff.

All encountered deposits were assigned a unique context number commencing at (1); they were subsequently photographed and recorded as appropriate.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The deposits observed during the groundworks are described below and shown on Figure 2. Information on artefacts recovered is also contained in Section 3.2 below.

No archaeological remains or undisturbed geological strata were revealed. Two soil layers were observed in the excavated area.

3.2 Soil Layers

The topsoil layer (1) was a dark brown-grey clay-silt deposit with occasional small to large stone inclusions. It was approximately 0.15m thick in the eastern half of the PDA and at least 0.25m thick at the formation level in the remainder of the stripped area (Figure 2; Images 1 and 2). The layer contained occasional modern (20th-century) tile and brick fragments, which were not retained. Six pottery sherds (106g) of 12th–13th century date were recovered from this deposit. They comprise four sherds of shelly ware (fabric B07³), including a jar rim, and single sherds of St Neots-type ware and Lyveden ‘A’ ware (fabrics B01A and B09 respectively). Shelly wares are known to derive locally from production centres on the Beds./Bucks./Northants. borders; the Lyveden ware derives from kilns in Northamptonshire.

An external dump layer (2) was exposed in the eastern half of the excavated area but was obscured in places by thicker elements of the overlying topsoil layer. The dumped material deposit was 0.1m thick at the formation level. It comprised light grey clay (re-deposited boulder clay) with pockets of mid-grey-brown clay silt, probably representing an incorporated element of the subsoil/topsoil (Figure 2; Images 2 and 3). The layer is probably derived from previous groundworks carried out on the farm, e.g. extending the pond immediately to the south. It contained modern (20th-century) metalwork, glass and plastic objects as well as brick and tile fragments, none of which were collected.

³ Fabrics defined in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series



4. CONCLUSIONS

The topsoil and modern dumped material layers were revealed at the formation level of the new access and driveway; no features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed in the base of the trench.

The lack of Iron Age or Romano-British artefacts may suggest that the known settlement activity of that date (identified immediately to the north-east of the current investigations) did not extend into the PDA. However, a number of 12th–13th century pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil. This, in turn, may indicate that early medieval archaeological remains could potentially be present at a lower level within the PDA itself or in the vicinity.

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5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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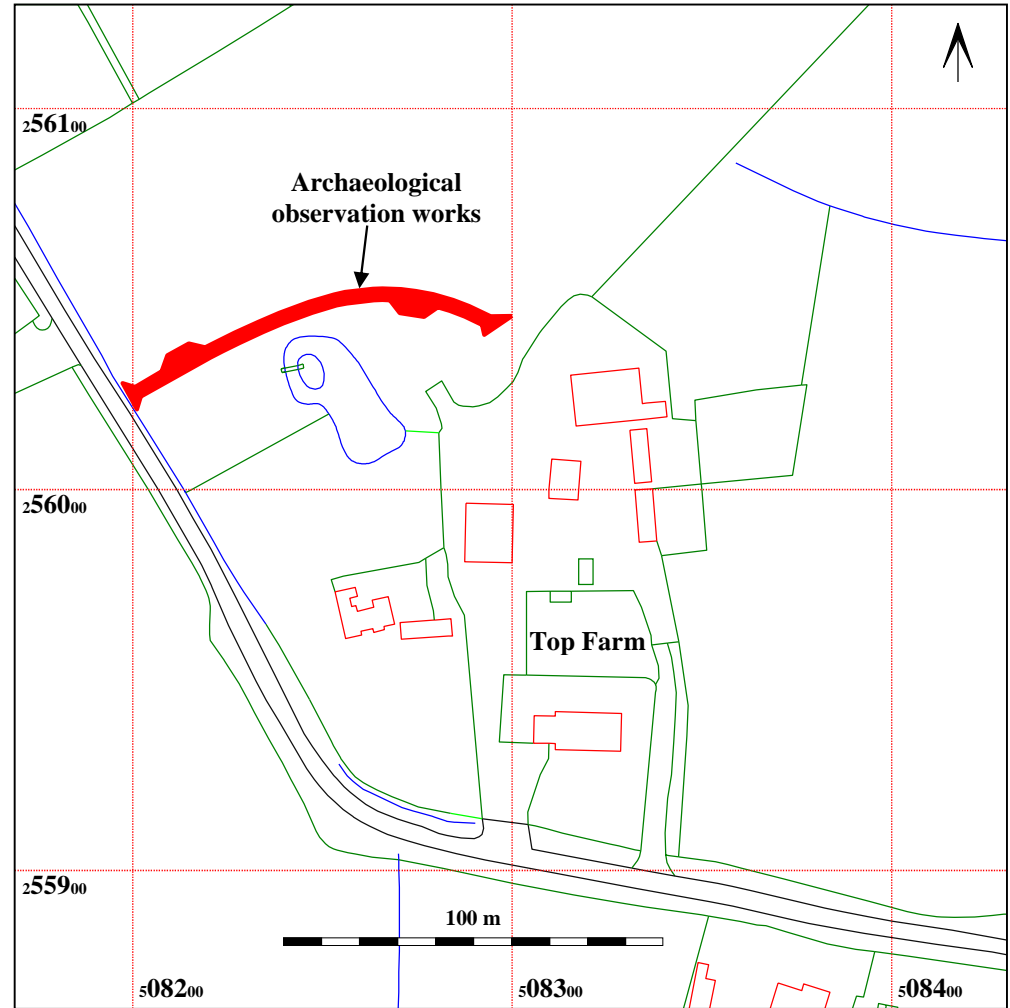
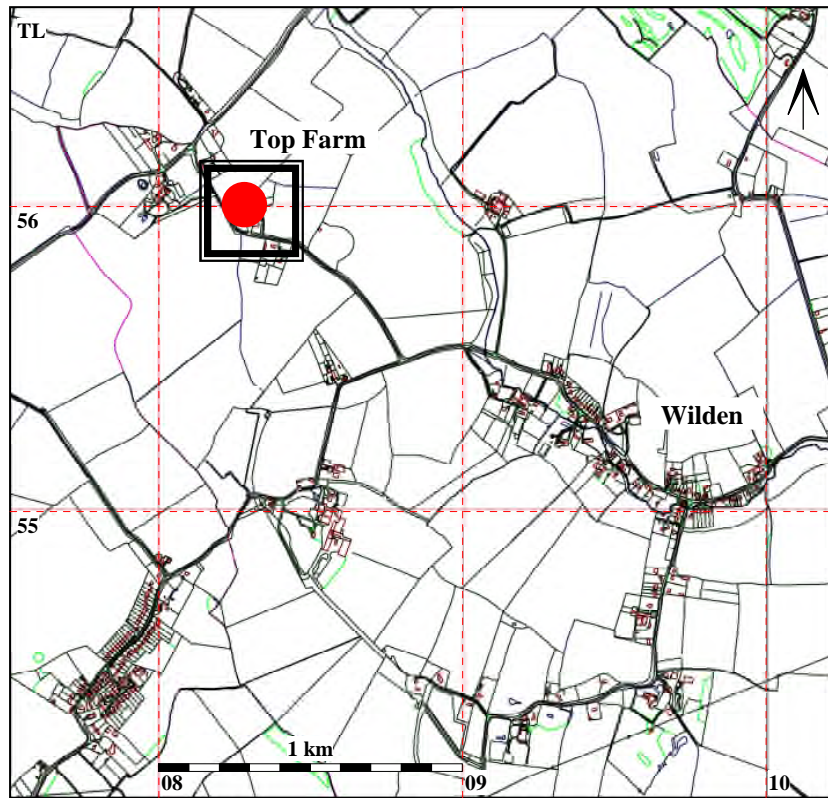
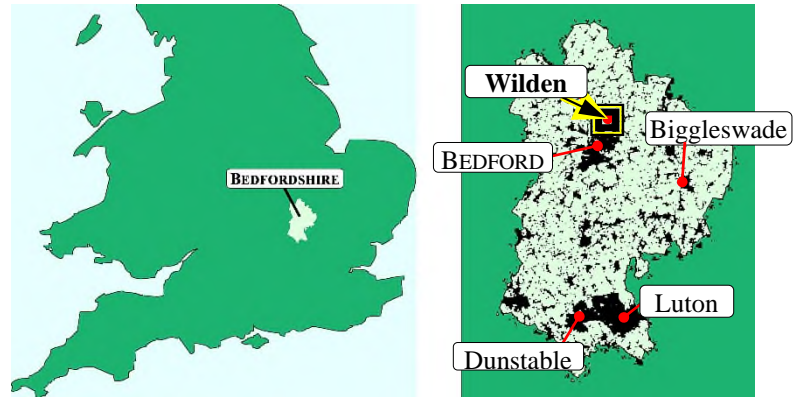


Figure 1: Site location plan

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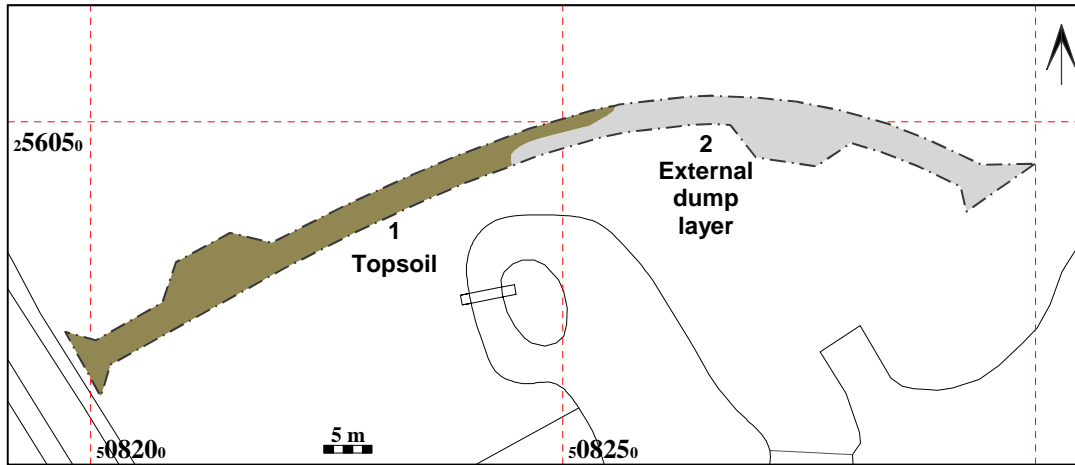


Image 1: View of the access road from west end of strip; looking NE. Scale 1m.



Image 2: Topsoil (1) and external dump (2) (background); looking E. Scale 1m.



Image 3: External dump (2) and passing bay at E extent of strip; looking SE. Scale 1m.

Figure 2: All-features plan and selected images

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