

**EDWARD PEAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL  
POTTON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP  
AND SAMPLE EXCAVATION,  
ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

**Albion**  
archaeology



**EDWARD PEAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL  
POTTON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP  
AND SAMPLE EXCAVATION,  
ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Document: 2020/55  
Version 1.0

Project: EP3529  
HER search reference: 201920/062  
Museum accession number: BEDFM 2019.69  
OASIS no: albionar1-357026

10th July 2020

Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Kathy Pilkinton	Wes Keir	Drew Shotliff

Produced for:  
CBC – Capital Construction Projects



## ***Contents***

---

Preface .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	2
Version History .....	2
Key Terms .....	2
Non-Technical Summary .....	4
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Project Background .....	5
1.2 Status and Purpose of this Document.....	5
1.3 Site Location and Description .....	5
1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background .....	6
<b>2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Methodological Standards.....	9
3.2 Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation.....	9
<b>4. RESULTS OF THE FIELDWORK .....</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1 Overburden and Natural Deposits.....	11
4.2 Tree-rooting Holes.....	11
4.3 Artefacts.....	11
<b>5. CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>13</b>

### ***List of Figures***

Figure 1: Site location plan

Figure 2: Investigated areas and features revealed

Figure 3: Selected photographs

*The figures are bound at the end of the document.*



## 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

*This document was prepared by Kathy Pilkinton (Assistant Archaeological Manager) and Wes Keir (Archaeological Manager). Figures were prepared by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and Kathy Pilkinton. Fieldwork was undertaken by Kathy Pilkinton and Allan King (Archaeological Supervisor).*

*Albion Archaeology is grateful for the assistance provided by the staff of Ashe Construction Group. We would also like to thank Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist, for his advice and for on-site monitoring during the works.*

Albion Archaeology  
 St Mary's Church  
 St Mary's Street  
 Bedford, MK42 0AS  
 ☎: 0300 300 8141  
 E-mail: [office@albion-arch.com](mailto:office@albion-arch.com)  
[www.albion-arch.com](http://www.albion-arch.com)

## Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	10/07/2020	n/a

## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CI/A	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
Client	CBC – Capital Construction Projects



EBD	Event BeDfordshire
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
LPA	Local Planning Authority
PDA	Permitted development area
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 3rd edn, 2017 Albion Archaeology
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) granted planning permission (CB/19/01211/FULL) for the construction of a new classroom block and car park to the south and east, respectively, of Edward Peake Middle School, Potton Road, Biggleswade.*

*As the development could impact upon potential below-ground archaeological remains of prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval date, a condition (no. 7) was attached to the planning permission requiring archaeological strip, map and sample excavation, analysis and publication, as described in a Written Scheme of Investigation, prepared by Albion Archaeology. This report presents the results of the strip, map and sample excavation that was required to satisfy Condition 7.*

*The investigation was undertaken during July and August 2019 and March 2020, within the areas of a new classroom, car park and playground extension.*

*Only three potential archaeological features were revealed; upon excavation their irregular nature indicated that they were most likely to be associated with the removal of trees.*

*Overburden deposits across the site proved to be broadly similar in nature. They comprised largely undisturbed topsoil and subsoil, although it is likely some landscaping took place when the school was built in the 1980s. It is possible that the three revealed features, associated with the removal of trees, were associated with this landscaping.*

*The undisturbed nature of the observed deposits suggests that any potential archaeological remains would still have been present following the initial construction of the school. Though Roman pits and ditches are known to have been located within the vicinity of the school site, the fact that no archaeological features or finds were revealed during the investigation suggests that the extent of the Roman activity lies outside the PDA.*

*Once this report has been approved by the CBCA, the project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no. BEDFM 2019.69). This report will be submitted to the Archaeology Data Service for inclusion on the OASIS database (OASIS ID albionar1-357026).*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

---

### 1.1 *Project Background*

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) granted planning permission (CB/19/01211/FULL) for the construction of a new classroom block and car park to the south and east, respectively, of Edward Peake Middle School, Potton Road, Biggleswade.

As the development could impact upon potential below-ground archaeological remains of prehistoric, Roman and post-medieval date, the following condition (no. 7) was attached to the planning permission:

*The development hereby approved shall only be implemented in full accordance with the written scheme of investigation for a programme of archaeological strip, map and sample excavation, analysis and publication as described in Albion Archaeology document 2019/76, version 1.1, dated 2nd July 2019.*

*Reason: In accordance with paragraph 199 of the NPPF to ensure that the developer records and advances the understanding of the significance of any heritage assets affected by development before they are lost (wholly or in part) and makes the results of the archaeological work (and any archive generated) publicly available.*

### 1.2 *Status and Purpose of this Document*

This document presents the results of the strip, map and sample excavation that was carried out in order to satisfy Condition 7. Following approval by the CBC Archaeologist (CBCA), it will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) and uploaded to OASIS<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.3 *Site Location and Description*

Edward Peake Middle School is located to the north-east of Biggleswade, on the south side of Potton Road (Figure 1). It lies on the edge of the Ivel River Valley on generally level ground at 33m OD. It is bounded on the north and west by built-up areas of the town, including recent housing developments, and to the south and east by the Kings Reach housing development, and agricultural land. Biggleswade is situated in south-east Bedfordshire, with Bedford 15km to the north-west and Sandy 5km to the north.

The permitted development area (PDA) comprised green space on the south and east sides of the pre-existing school buildings. The classroom development measured c.1,285sqm and the car park c.1,035sqm. The PDA is centred on grid reference TL 2007 4556. The underlying geology consists of glaciofluvial sand and gravel, over Woburn Sands Formation bedrock<sup>2</sup>. A small tributary stream to the Ivel flows south to north c.300–500m to the east.

---

<sup>1</sup> Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations <https://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main>

<sup>2</sup> [www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer). Accessed June 2019



## **1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background**

In preparation of the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2019) a search of the HER was carried out for all heritage assets within a 500m radius of the PDA (ref.: 201920/062).

The PDA is located within a wider archaeological landscape with remains dating from the Neolithic period onwards. Although the PDA itself has not been subject to archaeological investigation, it is within an area of recorded Roman pits and ditches south-east of Biggleswade Hospital (HER3544).

### **1.4.1 Prehistoric (before AD 43)**

The earliest archaeological evidence within the wider area comprises Neolithic pits, a number of which were found near Potton Road immediately to the north of the site (HER 13544; Northamptonshire Archaeology 2009). An indistinct cropmark has been identified *c.*470m to the north of the PDA; it may be a Neolithic cursus monument (HER16818).

Middle Neolithic to early Bronze Age activity was also identified within Kings Reach Archaeological Area 6 as a cluster of small pits and postholes (Albion Archaeology in prep.), *c.*1km to the south.

To the north of Potton Road, a geophysical survey (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2013) confirmed the presence of a D-shaped enclosure (HER15079), which may date from the middle Bronze Age. Additionally, a Bronze Age ring-ditch was partially excavated *c.*420m to the south-east of the PDA (HER15328; Oxford Archaeology 2004).

An excavation *c.*250m to the west of the PDA (EBD832) identified two isolated Iron Age pits, which produced pottery and a small stone bead (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2010).

### **1.4.2 Roman (AD 43–410)**

Evidence of Roman activity includes various cropmark sites (HER1615; HER15080; HER15327 and HER16160). The PDA falls within an area of Roman pits and ditches, recorded to the south-east of Biggleswade Hospital (HER 3544). These mostly survive as cropmarks; an archaeological excavation *c.*400m to the north of the PDA confirmed their Roman date (EBD429; Oxford Archaeology 2003).

### **1.4.3 Medieval (1066–1550)**

Extensive evidence of earthworks *c.*550m to the north-east of the PDA represent a medieval field system (HER1615) on the edge of a river meadow related to the River Ivel tributary.

### **1.4.4 Post-medieval to modern (1550–present day)**

A post-medieval gravel pit (HER15328) was identified during an excavation *c.*420m to the south of the PDA (Oxford Archaeology 2004). Additionally, a fragment of glazed post-medieval brick with a 'petal' design was recovered *c.*230m to the south-east of the PDA (HER20135).





Turnpike Road followed the current route of Potton Road to the north of the PDA and documentary evidence suggests that it was an 18th-century toll road (HER20568).

Three HER records relate to 20th-century WW2 defences. These include a now-demolished concrete tank trap (HER17839) and a demolished Home Guard firing range (HER17846) both *c.*420m to the west of the PDA. A hutted camp on Laburnham Road has been recorded *c.*350m to the south-west of the PDA (HER17829). It has also been demolished.



## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION**

---

### **2.1 Fieldwork Data Collection Aims**

The primary function of the archaeological investigation was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of any archaeological remains in their cultural and environmental setting.

### **2.2 Project Research Objectives**

Specific research objectives, linked to published research strategies (Brown and Glazebrook 2000; Medlycott 2011; Oake *et al.* 2007), were also formulated, based upon what archaeological remains were most likely to be present within the PDA.

The proposed groundworks had the potential to reveal archaeological remains associated with an archaeological landscape that is rich in remains dating from the Neolithic period onwards.

The general objectives of the archaeological investigation were to:

- establish the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the PDA;
- establish the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present at the PDA;
- establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

Recent investigations in the vicinity suggested that the most relevant research aims would correspond with the following regional and local research priorities:

#### *Neolithic/Bronze Age*

- Understanding settlement variation in the region
- Understanding the relationship between monuments and settlement
- Understanding changes to landscape associated with adoption and development of farming

#### *Iron Age/Romano-British*

- Characterisation of rural settlement
- Understanding settlement pattern and use of landscape



### 3. FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Methodological Standards

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd edn., 2017).
Bedford Borough Council	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedford</i> (ver. 2.8, 2010)
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 the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
Historic England (formerly English Heritage)	<i>The MoRPHE Project Managers Guide</i> (2015)
	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment PPN3: Archaeological Excavation</i> (2015)
	Archaeology Guidelines and Standards <sup>3</sup> ;

#### 3.2 Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation

A programme of archaeological strip, map and sample excavation was carried out within the footprints of the new buildings, car park and playground (Figure 2).

Area	Nature of development	CBCA sign-off date
1	Classroom – 25m x 36m	30th July 2019/2nd September 2019
2	Car park – 18m x 31m	14th August 2019
3	Playground extension – 9m x 41m	27th March 2020

Ground reduction was undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket and operated by an experienced driver under the supervision of an archaeologist. Topsoil and overburden were removed to the top of archaeological deposits or the top of natural geological deposits, whichever were encountered first. Archaeological investigation and recording was undertaken in accordance with the detailed strategy set out in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2019) and completed to the satisfaction of the CBCA before the relevant area was handed back to the contractor.

<sup>3</sup> Historic England guidelines on a number of specialist fields and materials, including environmental archaeology, are available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/advice-and-guidance/>.



After limited archaeological results were obtained from observation of the above-mentioned areas, the CBCA agreed that no further monitoring of the groundworks was necessary.

### **3.3 *Post-fieldwork Assessment, Analysis and Publication***

The WSI specified that the post-fieldwork programme would be commensurate with the scale and significance of the results of the fieldwork. With the agreement of the CBCA, this could comprise either:

- an assessment and updated project design, followed by analysis and publication or
- the production of a client report.

Given the nature of findings, the CBCA agreed that a client report was appropriate in this case. The present document fulfils that requirement and no further analysis and reporting is required.

### **3.4 *Archiving***

Once this report has been approved by the CBCA, the project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no. BEDFM 2019.69). The report will be submitted to the Archaeology Data Service for inclusion on the OASIS database (OASIS ID albionar1-357026).



## **4. RESULTS OF THE FIELDWORK**

---

The results of the investigation are summarised below and illustrated in Figures 2–3.

### **4.1 Overburden and Natural Deposits**

Topsoil comprised *c.*0.2–0.4m of mid-brown-grey silty sand that was present across all three excavated areas. Subsoil was also present within all three areas and comprised mid-orange-brown gravely silt that was up to 0.2m thick.

Natural geological deposits comprised compact red-orange gravely silt.

### **4.2 Tree-rooting Holes**

Three potential archaeological features were revealed within the investigated areas; each was partially excavated. All were irregular in plan and profile and measured up to 1.5m across and 0.4m deep; they were filled with a brown-grey gravely silt. Their irregular nature indicates they are likely to be associated with the removal of trees.

### **4.3 Artefacts**

No archaeological artefacts were recovered from the investigated features or from within the overburden.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

---

Overburden deposits across the site proved to be broadly similar in nature. They comprised largely undisturbed topsoil and subsoil, although it is likely some landscaping took place when the school was built in the 1980s. It is possible that the three revealed features, associated with the removal of trees, were related to this landscaping.

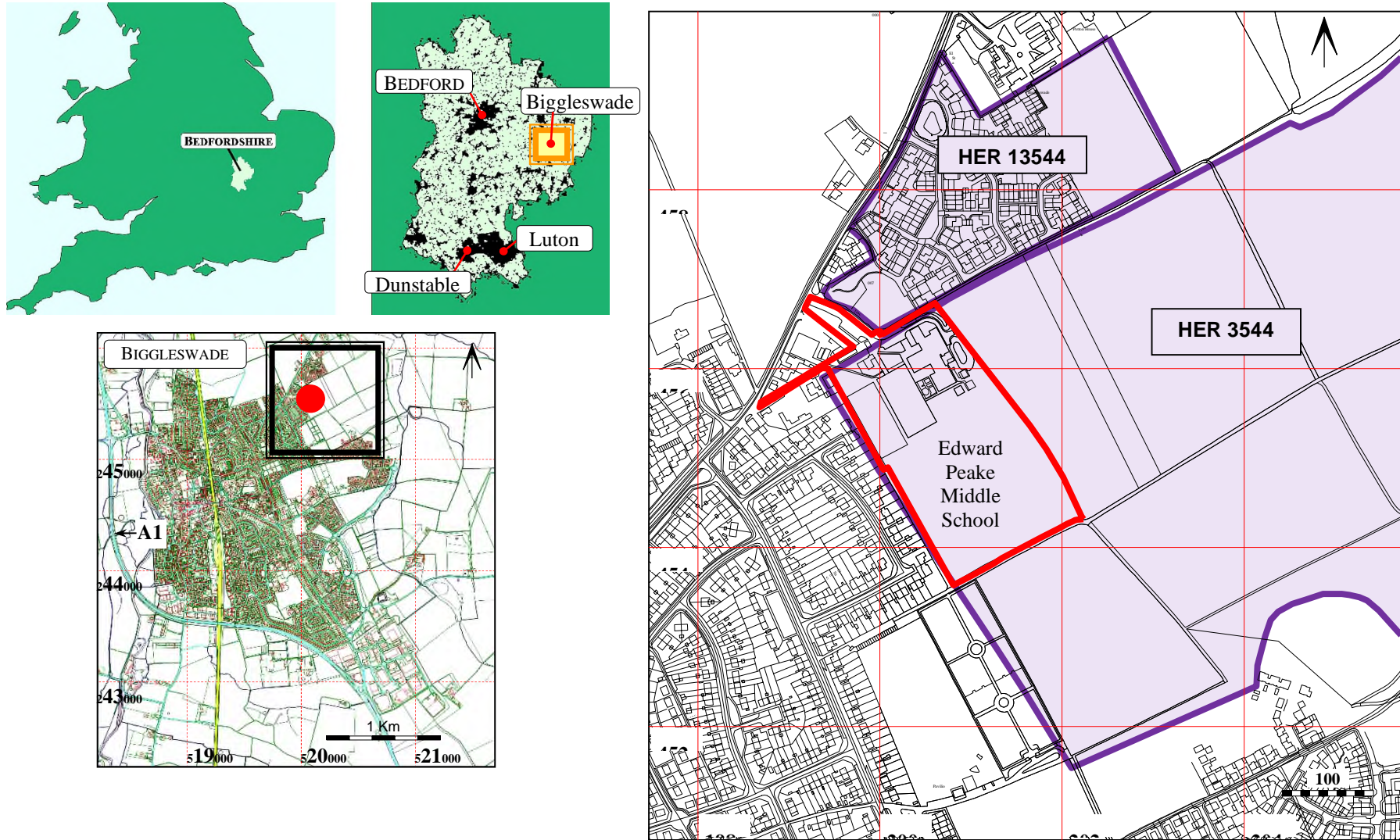
The undisturbed nature of the observed deposits suggests that any potential archaeological remains would still have been present following the initial construction of the school. Though Roman pits and ditches are known to have been located within the vicinity of the school site (HER3544; Figure 1), the fact that no archaeological features or finds were revealed during the investigation suggests that the extent of the Roman activity lies outside the PDA.



## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

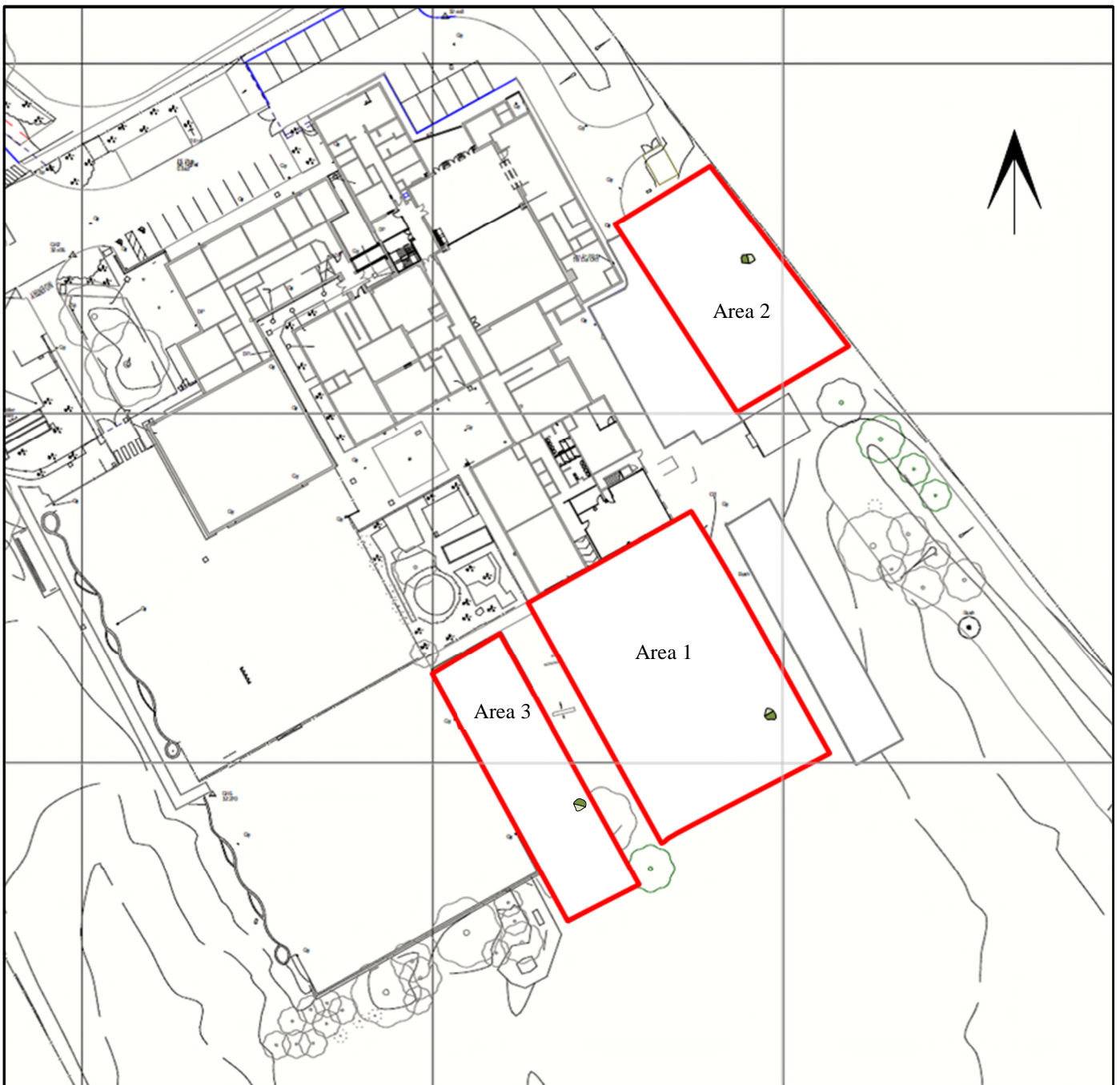
- Albion Archaeology, 2017, *Procedures Manual Vol. 1: Fieldwork*, 3rd Edn.
- Albion Archaeology, 2019, *Edward Peake Middle School, Potton Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation, Analysis and Publication* Report no. 2019/76
- Brown, N. and Glazebrook, J., 2000, *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties. 2. Research agenda and strategy*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 8
- CIfA, *Codes, Standards and Guidelines*. Available at: <http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa>.
- Historic England, 2011, *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from sampling and recovery to post excavation*. English Heritage Guidelines
- Medlycott, M. (ed), 2011, *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24
- Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2009, *Archaeological strip, map and sample excavation at Potton Road, Biggleswade*. 09/146
- Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2010, *An archaeological evaluation for the Boddington Gardens Flood Alleviation Scheme, Biggleswade*. 09/190
- Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2013, *Archaeological Geophysical Survey of Land at Potton Road, Biggleswade*. 13/36
- Oake, M., Luke, M., Dawson, M., Edgeworth, M. and Murphy, P., 2007, *Bedfordshire Archaeology –Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy*, Bedfordshire Archaeology Monograph 9
- Oxford Archaeology, 2003 *Land to the East of Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, Stage 1 Fieldwalking, Stage 2 Scan and Detailed Geophysical Survey, Archaeological Evaluation Report*
- Oxford Archaeology, 2004 *Land to the East of Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, Archaeological Evaluation Report*



**Figure 1: Site location plan**

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Central Bedfordshire Council. Licence No. 100049029 (2011)





**Key**



Observed areas



Tree-hole excavated/unexcavated

**Figure 2:** Investigated areas and features revealed



**Photograph 1:** Area 1 viewed from the east. 1m scale



**Photograph 2:** Area 2 viewed from the north-east



**Photograph 3:** Area 3 viewed from the south. 1m scale

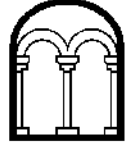


**Photograph 4:** Tree-hole viewed from the south-west within Area 3. 1m scale

**Figure 3:** Selected photographs

Central  
Bedfordshire

**Albion**  
archaeology



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

**Telephone** 0300 300 8141  
**Email** [office@albion-arch.com](mailto:office@albion-arch.com)  
[www.albion-arch.com](http://www.albion-arch.com)

