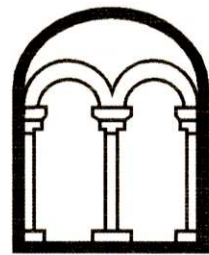


LAND TO THE REAR OF
43 ICKWELL ROAD
NORTHILL
BEDFORDSHIRE

STAGE 1: ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



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Project: IRN3606
HER search no: 201920/208
Museum accession no.: BEDFM 2020.05
OASIS no.: albionar1-382054

Document: 2020/42
Version 1.0

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12th May2020

Prepared for:
Northhill Developments Ltd



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Preface

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Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Northhill Developments Ltd and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Slawek Utrata of the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Team. The fieldwork was undertaken by Adam Williams (Archaeological Supervisor) and Sabine Pescheck (Archaeological Technician). The report has been prepared by Sabine Pescheck and Kathy Pilkinton, with contributions on illustrations from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	12/05/2020	n/a

Key Terms

The following terms and abbreviations are used throughout this report:

ALGAO	Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
BARS	Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCAO	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Officer
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
PDA	Proposed development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Northhill Developments Ltd is applying for planning consent for the erection of two detached dwellings within Plots 5a and 6a on land to the rear of 43 Ickwell Road, Northhill, Bedfordshire (CB/19/02571/FULL).

As the proposed development area (PDA) is located in a part of Northhill known to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest the CBC Archaeology Officer (CBCAO) recommended a staged programme of archaeological investigation. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the applicant to prepare the required Written Scheme of Investigation and to carry out the Stage 1 evaluation, the results of which are presented in this report

Archaeological trial trenching, comprising three 20m-long trenches, took place on the PDA on 4th March 2020.

No archaeological remains (artefacts or features) were encountered in any of the three trenches. The only evidence of activity on site was a single land drain associated with modern field drainage. The absence of archaeological features indicates that settlement associated with the medieval village of Northhill did not extend into the PDA. Furthermore, there was no evidence within the PDA of post-medieval quarrying or brick manufacture, which had been identified on the directly adjacent to the site to the west.

The groundworks associated with the proposed residential development could potentially have a negative impact on any sub-surface remains on the PDA. However, the results of the field evaluation suggest that the archaeological potential of the site is extremely low and, therefore, the potential impact of the proposed development on archaeological remains is negligible.

The project archive will be deposited at The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no. BEDFM 2020.05). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no. albionar1-382054) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Northhill Developments Ltd is applying for planning consent for the erection of two detached dwellings within Plots 5a and 6a on land to the rear of 43 Ickwell Road, Northill, Bedfordshire (CB/19/02571/FULL).

As the proposed development area (PDA) is located in a part of Northill known to contain heritage assets with archaeological interest the CBC Archaeology Officer (CBCAO) recommended that the application should be accompanied by a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a staged programme of archaeological investigation. This was in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (current version: MHLG 2019).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the applicant to prepare the required WSI (Albion Archaeology 2020) and to carry out the Stage 1 evaluation, the results of which are presented in this report.

1.2 *Site Location and Geology*

The village of Northill lies in central Bedfordshire, c.3.5km south-west of Sandy and 4.5km north-west of Biggleswade (Figure 1). The River Ivel and A1 Great North Road are situated c.3km to the east. Northill developed around the junction of three roads: Bedford Road, Thorncote Road and Ickwell Road. The 14th-century St Mary's Church is situated adjacent to this junction.

The PDA comprises c.0.2 hectares of land on the east side of Ickwell Road, to the rear of no. 43 and to the south of no. 5 Queen's Close/no. 25 Sand Lane. It is centred on NGR TL 1510 4637. At the time of the fieldwork the PDA comprised former pasture with a number of trees in its northern half.

Northill lies on the north-east end of the mid-section of the Greensand Ridge. The underlying bedrock comprises Jurassic-period Stewartby and Weymouth Member mudstone¹, overlain by superficial deposits of glaciofluvial sands and gravels and occasionally clay.

1.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

The following text is based on previous work in the vicinity (Albion Archaeology 2015; 2018) and on a review of documents and records located within a 500m-radius of the PDA, which are held by the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record (HER) and Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service (BARS). This is referred to as the 'study area' in the following section. In preparation of the WSI, an updated search of the HER was made (HER search no: 201920/208).

1.3.1 *Medieval (1066–1550)*

Northill is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as 'Nortgiuele' or 'Nortgible', interpreted as meaning 'North Ivel'. This suggests that the

¹ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk>



settlement is at least late Saxon in origin, though an earlier Roman settlement cannot be ruled out; Roman burials (HER 425), pottery (HER 430) and metal artefacts (HER 18417) have been found at least 490m to the west and south-west of the PDA. At the time of the Domesday Survey Northill was recorded as 6.5 hides held by William Espec or Spech (Page 1912).

No Anglo-Saxon heritage assets have been recorded within Northill, although five brooches (HER 16036) of this date were recorded through the PAS scheme. Their exact find-spots are unknown.

Northill is identified as a medieval village in the HER (HER 14905), with the 14th-century St Mary's Church (NHLE 1221856), Northill Manor House (HER 14910) and former village green (HER 14906) as its focus. The manor house is no longer extant, but it is thought to have been situated *c.*100m to the south-west of the parish church. A scheduled complex of medieval fishponds and a warren (NHLE 1018455, HER 429), situated *c.*900m west of the PDA, are thought to have been part of the manorial estate.

The PDA lies *c.*250m south-east of the medieval core of the village (HER 14905), as defined by the immediate environs of the church. The boundary of the overall medieval village, as defined in the HER (HER 17121), lies immediately to the west of the PDA. Early medieval remains were uncovered by trial trenching at the north-west margins of the village (EBD 1786; MOLA 2019). Subsequent open-area excavation identified two phases of activity, dated to the 10th–12th and 12th–13/14th centuries. No evidence for medieval activity was identified during archaeological investigations immediately to the south-west of the PDA (Heritage Network 2013; Albion Archaeology 2018).

Other medieval heritage assets within the study area comprise a long rectangular fishpond (HER 15371), *c.*140m to the north-east of the PDA. Late-medieval silver coins (HER 426) were also found under the floor of the church; a buckle (HER 15994) was recovered from a garden in Garner Close *c.*220m to the north of the PDA; and a harness pendant (HER 19794) was found *c.*350m south of the PDA.

Northill continued as a settlement into the post-medieval period and the majority of surviving heritage assets in the vicinity of the PDA date from this period.

Ickwell Bury to the west of the PDA has medieval origins (see above), but the present grounds are of 17th-century date. The grounds are a Registered Park and Garden (NHLE 1000577/HER 6995) with the main access coming off Ickwell Green. The grounds consist of several driveways, gothic gatehouses, pasture and woodland, fishponds and lakes. The gardens near the house most likely originated as a 17th-century kitchen garden, but their recent lay-out stems from the 1940s. The manor house also originated in the 17th century, but was re-built in 1940 after a fire. Extant outbuildings and barns within the grounds of the manor are of 17th–19th-century date and are now Grade II listed.



1.3.1 Post-medieval (1550–1900)

Post-medieval sub-surface remains of a brick-working site were identified adjacent to the PDA during trial trench evaluation (EBD 1113, HER 19794; Heritage Network 2013). The remains of a brick clamp and associated clay extraction pit were uncovered, the latter correlated with a pond depicted on the 1884 OS map. The presence of ‘salmon’-coloured brick in these features and others, was taken as definitive evidence of brick manufacture on the site or nearby. ‘Salmon brick’ was a poor quality brick that lacked weather resistance. For this reason they were not transported from the brick-making sites, but were instead reused in covering the outside of the brick clamps (Heritage Network 2013).

A small number of post-medieval pits and ditches were identified during archaeological investigations immediately to the south-west of the PDA (EBD 1708; Albion Archaeology 2018). However, no further evidence for brick-making was uncovered.

The brick-making industry has a long association with Bedfordshire, due to the availability of Oxford clay, the raw material needed in brick production. A ‘Brick and Tile Works’ is depicted on the 1884 first edition OS map c.600m to the south of the PDA in Ickwell (HER 6690). No reference is made to any industry of this kind in Northill, although a mortgage document of 1714 refers to ‘John Green of Northill’ whose occupation was ‘brickmaker’ (BARS HY396).

1.4 Project Objectives

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

The principal purpose of the archaeological trial-trench evaluation was to establish whether heritage assets relating to the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval development of Northill village were present on the PDA—in particular, further remains pertaining to brick-making.

With regards to the investigation of medieval settlement the regional research framework states the few medieval settlements have been investigated archaeologically within Bedfordshire and research is needed into the diversity, characterisation of settlement forms and the appearance, growth, shift and disappearance of settlements (Oake 2007, 14; Medlycott 2011, 70). This needs to be undertaken at the micro-scale of investigating the chronology, structure and function of individual settlements (for example the PDA) and at the macro-scale of broad patterns of settlement (Oake 2007, 14).

Brick-making has been one of the major industries in Bedfordshire and evidence for its 20th-century development is still visible in several forms. However, little is known about its development in the later medieval and post-medieval periods; its impact on the landscape and buildings (Oake 2007, 16). In order to address this knowledge gap the study of early brick-making needs



to move beyond the usual inventory of remains; studies should focus on their physical and social contexts (Medlycott 2011, 78–9).

In summary, the specific research objectives of the archaeological evaluation were to:

- Investigate any Saxon or medieval remains that might be present within the PDA.
- Investigate any post-medieval remains that might be present within the PDA, in particular any related to brick-making activity.
- Investigate any earlier remains that might be present within the PDA.

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

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

This information will be used by the CBCAO to evaluate the significance of the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains that might survive within the site.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below; a full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2020).

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).
• ALGAO (East)	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (Gurney, 2003)
• Bedford Museum	<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 evaluation</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
• 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)

The trial trenching took place on 4th March 2020. Three 20m x 2.5m trenches were excavated, equating to an area of 150m² and targeting the footprints of the new dwellings and access road.

The south-west end of Trench 1 was moved c.1m to the east to avoid an existing outbuilding at the western edge of the PDA (to the right of the picture in Figure 2).

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever were encountered first. All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff. The trenches were inspected by a representative of the CBC Archaeology Team on 4th March 2020.

The project archive will be deposited at The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford (accession no. BEDFM 2020.05). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no. albionar1-382054) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All significant deposits found within the trial trenches are summarised below. Details of all observed deposits are provided in Appendix 1. Trench locations are shown in Figure 1 and there is a photograph of each trench in Figures 2–4.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

In the majority of trenches the overburden consisted of topsoil and subsoil, with a combined thickness of between 0.5m and 0.9m. Depths were generally similar, except for a significant reduction of the overburden in the western part of the PDA.

Topsoil comprised a friable, mid-grey-brown silty clay, between 0.3m and 0.5m thick, with frequent large modern roots. Below this the subsoil comprised friable, light orange-brown silty clay, between 0.2m and 0.5m thick, with frequent small modern roots and a modern land drain in Trench 3.

Undisturbed geological strata comprised yellow-orange clay with patches of red-orange sandy gravel in Trenches 1 and 3.

3.3 Modern

A single land drain relating to modern agricultural use of the site was observed within the subsoil in Trench 3.



4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 *Summary of Results*

No archaeological features were encountered in any of the three trenches, nor were there any artefacts recovered during machine excavation of the soil horizons. The only evidence of former activity on site was a single land drain associated with modern field drainage.

The absence of archaeological features indicates that settlement associated with the medieval village of Northill did not extend into the PDA. Furthermore, there was no evidence within the PDA of post-medieval quarrying or brick manufacture, which had been identified directly to the south-west of the site (see Section 1.3).

4.2 *Significance of the Results*

Overall, the results of the evaluation are of negligible significance with no potential to address national or regional research objectives (Oake 2007, 14-15; Medlycott 2011, 70), being entirely associated with modern rural land management and division.

4.3 *Impact of the Proposed Development*

The potential archaeological impact of the proposed development is considered in detail in the heritage statement prepared for the planning application (Albion Archaeology 2017). This concluded that the proposed residential development and associated groundworks could potentially have a negative impact on any sub-surface remains on the PDA.

However, the results of the field evaluation suggest that the archaeological potential of the site is extremely low, with no archaeological features present in the trenches and no artefacts found within the topsoil and subsoil. The evaluation has confirmed that the potential impact of the proposed development on archaeological remains is negligible.



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6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 2.40 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.5 m. Max: 0.9 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15089; Northing: 46367)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15084; Northing: 46349)

Reason: Investigation into archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay Thickness = 0.3m to 0.4m; frequent rooting at SW end of trench	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Subsoil	Friable light orange brown silty clay Thickness = 0.2m to 0.5m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural	Friable light yellow orange silty clay Changes to loose, mid red orange, sandy gravel at the SW end of trench	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 2.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.8 m. Max: 0.8 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15091; Northing: 46351)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15111; Northing: 46351)

Reason: Investigation into archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay Thickness = 0.4m to 0.5m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Subsoil	Friable light orange brown silty clay Thickness = 0.3m to 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Natural	Friable light yellow orange silty clay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 20.00 m. Width: 2.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.9 m. Max: 0.9 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15115; Northing: 46364)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 15127; Northing: 46348)

Reason: Investigation into archaeological potential

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay Thickness = 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Subsoil	Friable light orange brown silty clay Thickness = 0.5m - modern land drain visible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Natural	Friable light yellow orange silty clay Changes to loose, mid red orange, sandy gravel at NW end of the trench	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

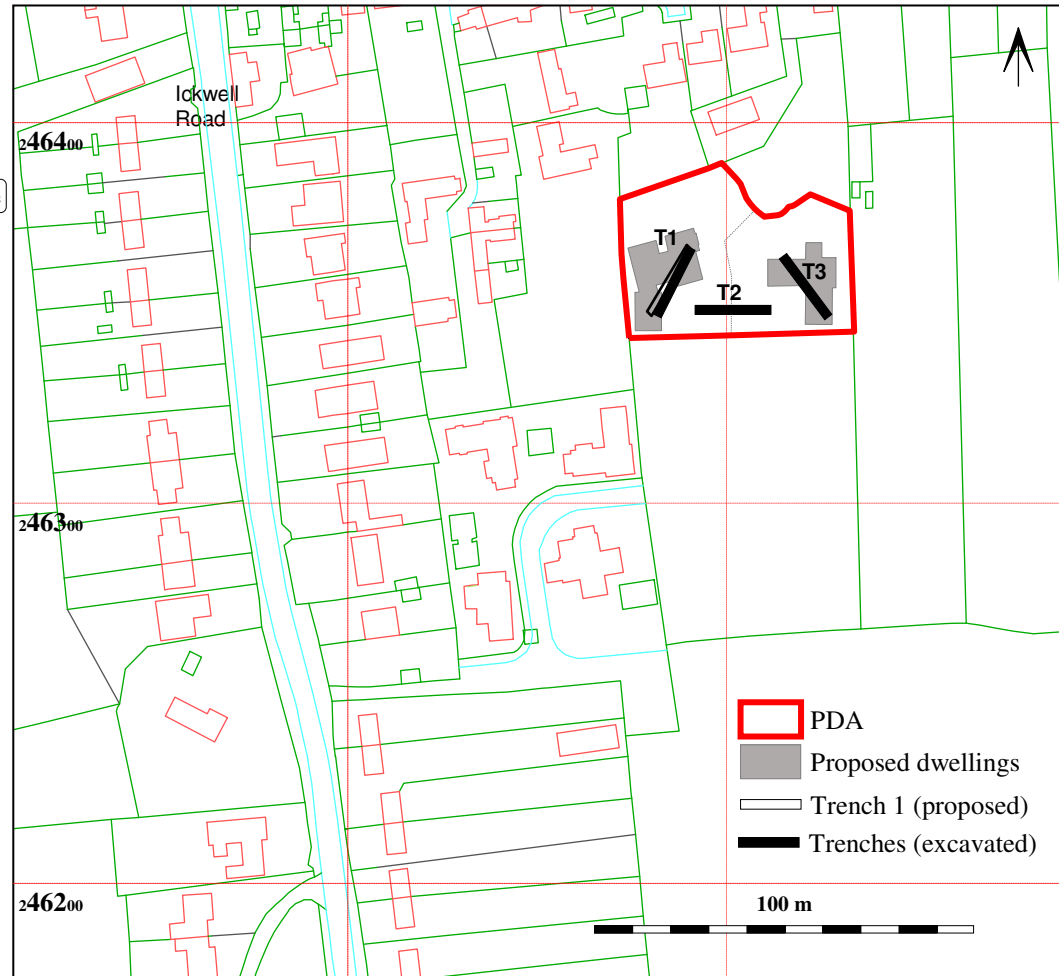
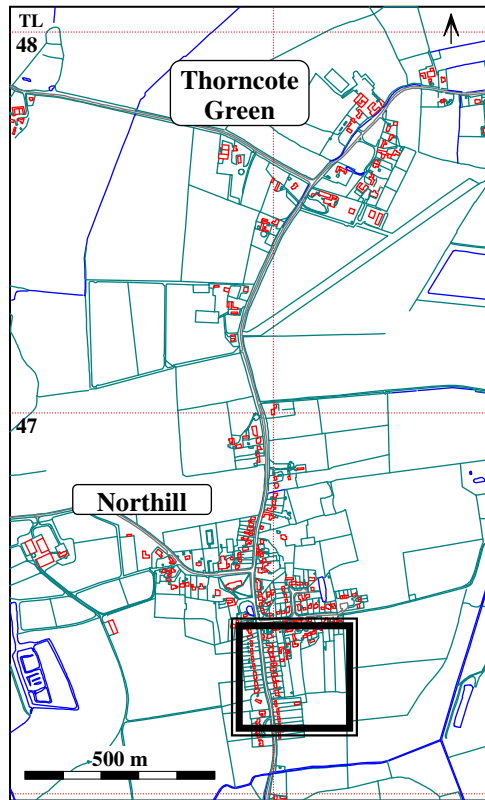
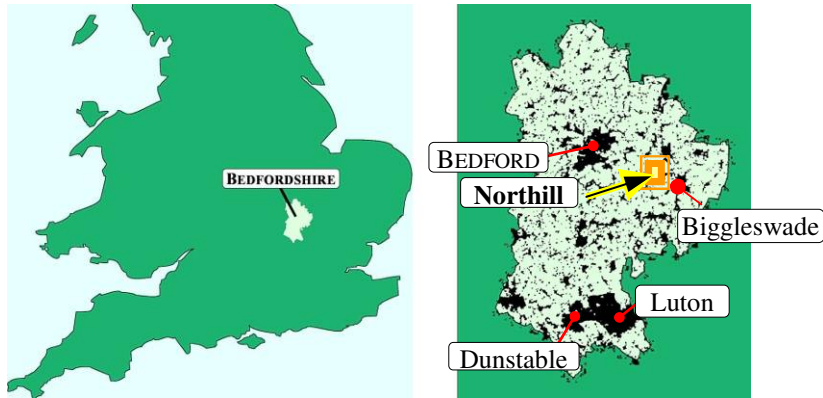


Figure 1: Site and trench location plan

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Figure 2: Photograph showing Trench 1 from the north-east



Figure 3: Photograph showing Trench 2 from the west



Figure 4: Photograph showing Trench 3 from the north-west



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