

**STEPHENSON LOWER SCHOOL
CANVIN WAY
BEDFORD**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. 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.

The project was commissioned by Alan Dennis of Mouchel Parkman UK Ltd and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Lesley-Ann Mather of the Bedfordshire County Council Heritage and Environment Service.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Beswick (Archaeological Supervisor). This report was prepared by Matthew Smith (Project Officer) and edited by Joe Abrams (Project Manager) with contributions from Joan Lighting (CAD Technician. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Structure of the Report

Section 1 is an introduction to the project, the methodology and results of the fieldwork are presented in Sections 2 and 3. Section 4 presents a synthesis of the results of the fieldwork. Section 5 is a bibliography.

Appendix 1 contains detailed descriptions of the archaeological deposits recorded on the site.

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CAO	Bedfordshire County Council's County Archaeological Officer
HER	Historic Environment Record
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists

Non-technical Summary

In October 2007, Albion Archaeology carried out an archaeological field evaluation on land at Stephenson Lower School, Canvin Way, Bedford.

The 300 sq m development area lies c.2km to the south-east of the centre of Bedford centred on TL 0617 4825 (NGR) at a height of 26m OD.

Previous investigations in and around Stephenson Lower School have unearthed remains from the Iron Age, Romano-British and medieval periods. These remains include Romano-British kiln debris and Iron Age/ Romano-British settlement evidence from within c.300m of the development area.

The evaluation comprised one trial trench which tested an 18m² area. Up to 0.7m of overburden was removed from the trench at which point undisturbed geological deposits were revealed.

No archaeological remains or artefacts were encountered.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

Bedford Borough Council has granted planning permission (07/0010FUL) for the construction of an extension to provide three new classrooms at Stephenson Lower School, Canvin Way, Bedford.

The CAO advised that the area being considered for the development was archaeologically sensitive. As a result, a condition was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a scheme of archaeological investigation.

A brief was issued by the CAO (BCC 2007a, 2007b) to secure the implementation of the archaeological works required to fulfil the condition.

These documents outline a three-staged approach to the programme of archaeological work:

- Stage I – archaeological field evaluation (trial trenching).
- Stage II – appraisal of the results of the archaeological field evaluation.
- Stage III – implementation of an agreed programme of archaeological investigation and recording (if required, following completion of Stage II).

In September 2007, Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the client to produce a project design for Stage I (Albion Archaeology 2007), to undertake the evaluation of the site and prepare a report on the results (this document).

1.1 Site Location

The proposed development area is located in the south-east of Bedford *c.*2km from the town centre within the grounds of Stephenson Lower School. It is located to the south-west of existing school buildings and is centred at TL 0617 4825 (NGR). The site of the new building is *c.*300 sqm in size (Figure 1).

1.2 Topography, Geology, Soils and Land Use

Topographically the development area overlooks the valley of the Elstow Brook that flows to the south. It is on an area of raised ground at 26m OD.

Geological deposits comprise riverine sands and gravels from the Great Ouse terraces overlying Oxford clay. At the time of the fieldwork the development area was grassed.

1.3 Archaeological Background

There have been several archaeological investigations in the vicinity of Stephenson Lower School. These have produced evidence of activity dating from the Iron Age, Romano-British and medieval periods.

In 1990 Roman kiln debris was discovered during the erection of concrete fence posts adjacent to the Southway Building and Kingsbrook School playing fields *c.*150m to the south-west (HER 16284). It is possible that this debris

was associated with an extensive kiln site located at Mile Road allotments c.400m to the south (HER 979). Iron Age and Roman occupation remains (HER 271) are also known to exist in London Road, c.250m to the south-east.

Albion Archaeology (2005) undertook an investigation c.25m north of the proposed development area. This revealed a field boundary ditch and a pit, neither of which could be securely dated. These investigations also revealed that land in this area had not been subject to significant modern truncation and, therefore, the potential for archaeological deposits to survive was considered to be relatively high.

1.4 Project Objectives

The primary aim of the project was to gather more information on the archaeological potential of the proposed development area.

The main objectives of the trial trenching comprised the following:

- Determine the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that were present.
- Obtain information on the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that were present.

2. METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching took place in October 2007 and one 12m x 1.6m (18 sqm) trench was opened (Figure 2).

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

- IFA's *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation (1999b)*
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records (2001)*
- IFA's *Code of Conduct (1999a)*
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects (1991)*

The trench plan was agreed by the CAO prior to any trial trenching taking place.

Topsoil and overburden were removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket and operating under close archaeological supervision. These deposits were removed down to the top of undisturbed geological deposits.

The base and sides of the trench were cleaned by hand. Deposits were recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique number sequence commencing at 100 for Trench 1.

The CAO was notified prior to backfilling of the trench.

3. RESULTS

Deposits of interest are summarised below in chronological order. Detailed descriptions of the deposits can be found in Appendix 1.

3.1 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The overburden comprised a 0.2m thick layer of imported topsoil, overlying a 0.2m thick layer of buried topsoil and a 0.3m layer of subsoil. No artefacts were recovered from any of the layers.

The undisturbed geological deposit lay at a depth of 0.7m below ground level. It was a loose, brown yellow, sandy gravel (104).

4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 *Summary of Deposits*

The presence of a topsoil (100) and a buried topsoil (101) suggests that the area has at some time been levelled up. This process was most probably contemporary with the construction of the school, taking place during the creation of a flat school playing field.

No archaeological remains or artefacts were revealed by the trial trenching.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Albion Archaeology 2007, *Stephenson Lower School, Canvin Way, Bedford: Project Design for Archaeological Field Evaluation*. Report 2007:92.

Bedfordshire County Council 2007: A) *Brief for Programme of Archaeological Investigation of Land at Stephenson Lower School, Canvin Way, Bedford, Bedfordshire*.

Bedfordshire County Council 2007: B) *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land at Stephenson Lower School, Canvin Way, Bedford, Bedfordshire..*

English Heritage 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).

IFA 1999a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.

IFA 1999b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings)*.

6. APPENDICES

6.1 Context Summary



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 12.00 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0. m. Max: 0. m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: WEST END (Easting: 50617000: Northing: 24825000)

OS Grid Ref.: EAST END (Easting: 50618300: Northing: 24825000)

Reason: To evaluate the archaeological potential of the development area

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
104	Natural	Loose light brown yellow sandy gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Topsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty clay occasional flecks ceramic building material, occasional small sand thickness 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Buried topsoil	Compact mid grey brown silty clay occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones thickness 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Subsoil	Firm light yellow brown silty clay occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones thickness 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

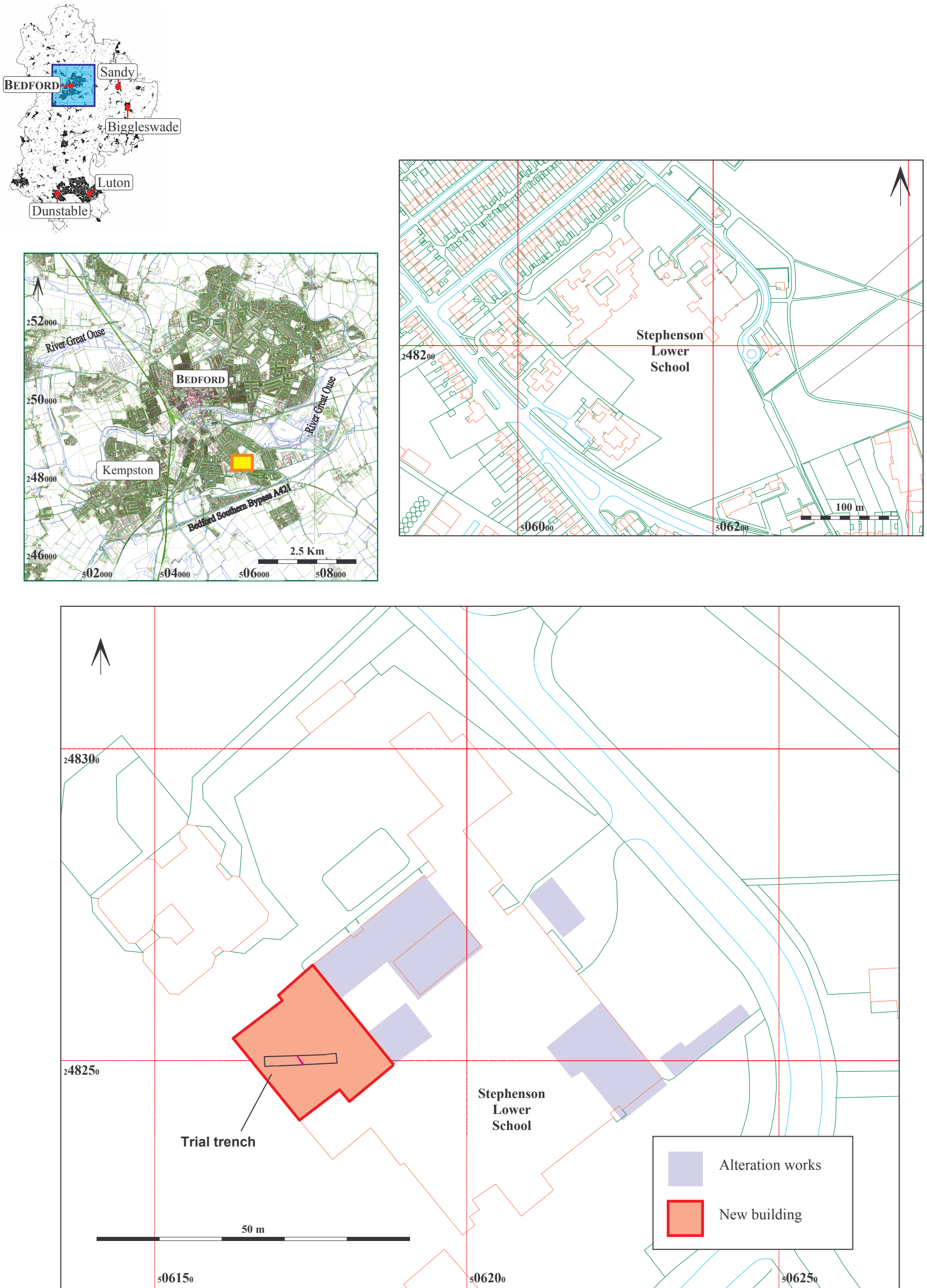
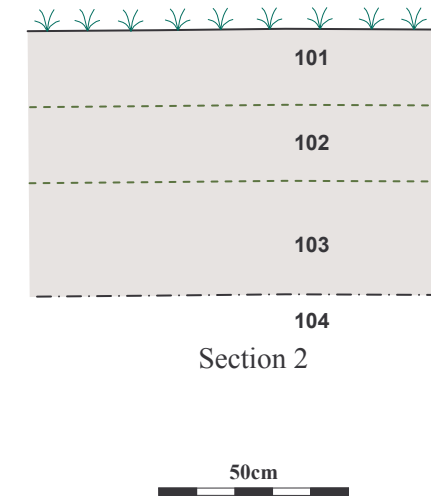
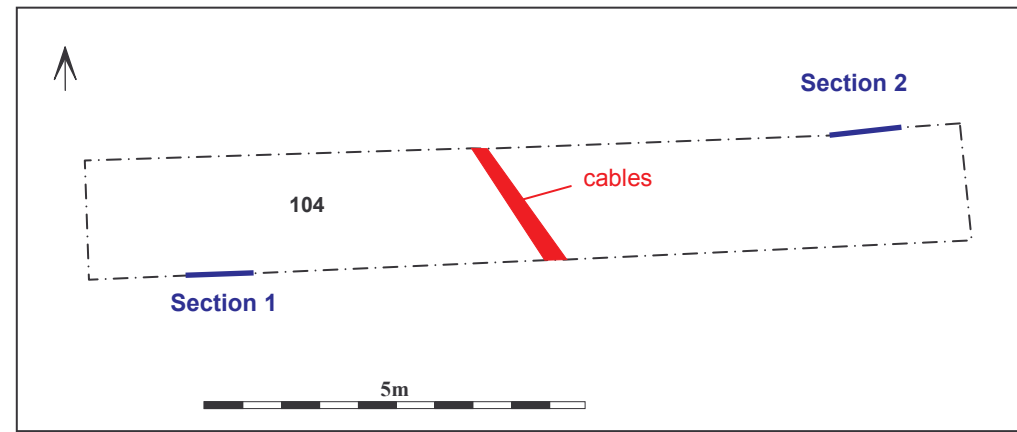
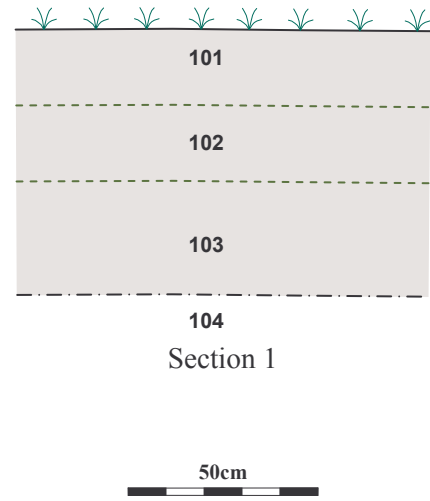


Figure 1: Site location map and trench layout

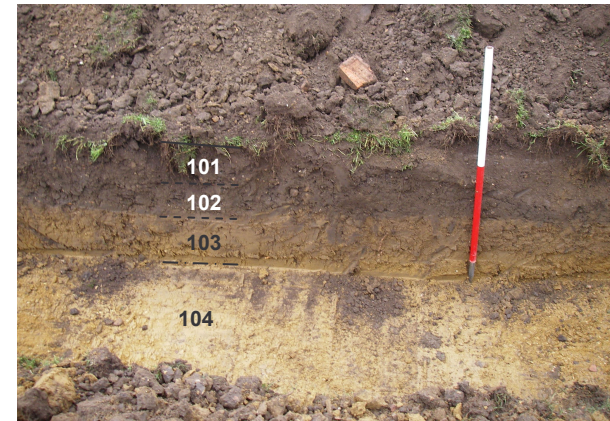
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Start of stripping. Looking east-south-east



Excavated trench. Looking east. Scale 1m.



North section of trench. Scale 1m.



Modern cables. Looking south-east. Scale 1m.



Stripping. Looking east.



Trench. Looking south-east.



After backfilling. Looking south-east.

Figure 2: Trench plan, sections and photographs