BATTLESDEN HOUSE
BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELD EVALUATION

Project: BH 1506

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Version 1.0

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Produced for:
The Bedford Estates

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List of Figures

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. 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 The Bedford Estates and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth, County Archaeological Officer (CAO), Bedfordshire County Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Benjamin Barker (Project Officer). This report has been prepared by James Newboult (Project Officer) and edited by Joe Abrams (Project Manager) with figures by James Newboult and Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Version History

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1.0	*01/05/2009*	*n/a*

Structure of this Report

Section 1 serves as an introduction to the site, describing its location, archaeological background and the aims of the project. Section 2 describes the trial trenching methodology and Section 3 summarises the results. Section 4 provides a synthesis of the results and assesses their significance. Section 5 is a bibliography.

Appendix 1 contains trench summary information and detailed contextual data.

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BCC	Bedfordshire County Council
CAO	Bedfordshire County Council's County Archaeological Officer
Client	The Bedford Estates
HER	Bedfordshire's Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority
Procedures Manual	*Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2nd edn, 2001 Albion Archaeology

Non-Technical Summary

The Bedford Estates have prepared a planning application for a new pool house and an extension to Battlesden House, Battlesden, Bedfordshire, henceforth referred to as the Development Area (DA). In July 2008, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) granted planning permission for this development (08/2394/FUL).

The proposed development lies within an archaeologically sensitive area. As a result, Bedfordshire's County Archaeological Officer (CAO) advised the LPA that a condition should be attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation. On 17th February 2009, the CAO issued two briefs (BCC 2008a, 2009b), outlining a three-staged approach to a programme of archaeological work. In March 2009, Albion Archaeology carried out the Stage 1, intrusive evaluation of the DA and prepared a report on the results (this document).

The DA lies to the west of Battlesden Village. Battlesden House is situated on a spur, with the land sloping gently down towards the south and east. It is centred on SP 9586 2922 and covers an area of c. 300sqm. The underlying substrate comprises the Oak Association with non-calcareous gley soil over boulder clay.

In Trench 2, the evaluation revealed the remains of a small, double-skinned structure to the immediate west of the former stable block. Cartographical analysis has demonstrated that it dates from between 1881 and 1901. Given its proximity to the stables, it is likely to have had a utilitarian function. A ditch encountered in Trench 3 is likely to be a drainage ditch for the broadly N-S aligned track-way or path shown on the 1881 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.

Other remains include two modern (probably 19th-century) pits and several 19th-century and later service trenches.

The preservation of remains associated with the 19th- and 20th-century landscape surrounding Battlesden House is considered to be good. These remains have been interpreted using the 1st, 2nd and 3rd edition Ordnance Survey maps. They are considered to be of low, local archaeological significance.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

The Bedford Estates have prepared a planning application for a new pool house and an extension to Battlesden House, Battlesden, Bedfordshire, henceforth referred to as the Development Area (DA). In July 2008, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) granted planning permission for this development (08/2394/FUL).

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1.2 Site Location and Description

The DA lies to the west of Battlesden Village (Fig. 1). Battlesden House is situated on a spur, with the land sloping gently down towards the south and east. It is centred on SP 9586 2922 and covers an area of *c*. 300sqm. The underlying substrate comprises the Oak Association with non-calcareous gley soil over boulder clay.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The overall archaeological potential for Battlesden is outlined in the CAO's brief (BCC 2009a). The most salient components are briefly summarised below.

The DA sits within an area of historic significance. The extant Battlesden House, a converted stable block, is the latest in a series of structures, possibly beginning with a medieval manor house within or near to the DA. The DA also sits within the largely 18th- and 19th-century Battlesden Park. The park lies within the Church End medieval settlement and may also have medieval origins.

Very few archaeological interventions have been made in Battlesden and, therefore, its archaeological potential is largely unknown. The proximity of the DA to the site of Battlesden House and to the Church End medieval settlement means that there is the potential for finding archaeological remains from the medieval through to the modern periods.

1.4 Project Objectives

The layout of the trenches was discussed with and approved by the CAO. The trenches were arranged to maximise their ability to test the archaeological potential of the DA. The overall objectives of the work were to gain information on:

- the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present; and to
- recover artefacts to assist in the development of a type series within the region;
- recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

2. METHODOLOGY

Trial trenching took place between 23rd and 25th March 2009. All three of the proposed trenches were opened.

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

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

The location of the trenches was marked out on the ground in advance of machine excavation. Overburden was removed using a mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operating under close archaeological supervision. These deposits were removed down to either the top of archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first.

The bases and sections of all trenches were cleaned by hand in order to clarify the nature of potential archaeological remains. The deposits and any potential remains were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn, and photographed as appropriate. All deposits were recorded using a unique recording number sequence commencing at 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 *etc*.

Modern artefactual materials including 19th-century pottery and ceramic building material (CBM) were collected but not retained (Wells pers. comm.).

The trenches were inspected by the CAO prior to backfilling.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Deposits and features of archaeological interest are summarised below in chronological order. Allocated context numbers are prefixed with the trench number they were recorded from, *i.e.* contexts (100) and (101) are from Trench 1.

Detailed technical information on all deposits and archaeological features can be found in Appendix 1 (Section 6.1). The project archive will be accessioned with Luton Museum and Art Gallery.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

Overburden consisted of a silty topsoil overlying a sequence of modern make-up layers (102, 203, 204, 215 and 302) to a total thickness of <0.85m. These deposits contained modern CBM and are probably associated with the construction and/or conversion of the extant Battlesden House. All other remains truncated these make-up layers and are considered to be modern. Overburden also included clay subsoil (202 and 303) between 0.2-0.3m thick.

3.3 Modern

The remains of several pits, foundation walls and service trenches of modern origin were identified in all three trenches.

Trench 1 contained a brick-built man-hole shaft with a cast iron cover, probably constructed as part of the conversion of the stable blocks into the extant house. A pipe trench [106] containing a lead water pipe of probable 19th-century origin was also identified heading WNW out of the house (Fig. 2).

Remains in Trench 2 comprised two modern service trenches [209 and 219], a machine-dug posthole or borehole [221] and a pit [206] containing modern domestic refuse including glass and ceramics (Fig. 3). Trench 3 also contained two modern service trenches [307 and 314] and a small pit [309] which contained modern CBM (Fig. 4). Pits [206 and 309] may be associated with construction and/or demolition works in the 19th and 20th centuries.

3.4 Foundation Walls

Two parallel foundation walls [213] and [217] were encountered in Trench 2 (Fig. 3). They were aligned broadly E-W and were constructed of evenly coursed, machine-made, frogged bricks. They are likely to represent the walls of a structure shown jutting out from the western side of the stable blocks (the extant Battlesden House) on the 1901 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 6). This structure also appears on the 1926 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 7). It was demolished some time after 1926, possibly during the conversion of the stables.

The original 16th- to 18th-century phase of Battlesden House was demolished in 1864 (BCC 2009c) and replaced soon afterwards by a new house, designed in the

chateaux Loire style by Sir Joseph Paxton and G.H. Stokes. This new house did not survive long and was largely demolished *c*. 1885 (BCC 2009c). However, the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map shows that the east wing of the house survived until at least 1901 (Fig. 6). The 1926 Ordnance Survey map shows that the remaining wing had been clearly altered and extended (Figs. 7 and 8). This structure survived until at least 1938 when it appeared on the Ordnance Survey map of that year.

The only extant 19th-century remains are those of the former stable block, now the current Battlesden House. Figure 8 illustrates the development of the 19th- and 20th-century structures in relation to the earlier 16th- to 18th-century house.

3.5 Trackway

A broadly N-S aligned ditch [304] and a possible pit [309] were encountered in Trench 3 (Fig. 4). The deposits within the ditch contained modern ceramic materials; it is likely to be associated with a trackway or path shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 5). This path lay to the east of the late 19th-century Battlesden House, leading from the then stable block to a larger path that ran towards the front of the main house.

4. SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Summary

In Trench 2, the evaluation revealed the remains of a small, double-skinned structure to the immediate west of the former stable block. Cartographical analysis has demonstrated that it dates from between 1881 and 1901. Given its proximity to the stables, it is likely to have had a utilitarian function. The ditch, encountered in Trench 3 is likely to be a drainage ditch for the broadly N-S aligned trackway or path shown on the 1881 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.

Other remains include two modern (probably 19th-century) pits and several 19th-century and later service trenches.

4.2 Preservation and Significance

The preservation of remains associated with the 19th- and 20th-century landscape surrounding Battlesden House is considered to be good. These remains have been interpreted using the 1st, 2nd and 3rd edition Ordnance Survey maps. They are considered to be of low, local archaeological significance.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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6. APPENDICES

6.1 Trench summaries

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: **Length: 5.00 m.** **Width: 2.50 m.** **Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.18 m.** **Max: 0.7 m.**

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: SP** *(Easting: 86633: Northing: 23006)*

OS Grid Ref.: SP *(Easting: 86032: Northing: 23316)*

Reason: **To assess archaeological potential within footprint of proposed extension**

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
101	**Topsoil**	**Friable dark grey brown silty clay occasional small stones 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
102	**Make up layer**	**Firm mid orange clay sand frequent small-medium stones 0.48m thick**	☑	☐
103	**Service Trench**	**Square NE-SW profile: vertical dimensions: min breadth 2.m, min depth 0.7m, min length 2.m**	☐	☐
104	Manhole	Brick-built manhole with cast-iron cover	☐	☐
105	Backfill	Firm mid brown orange clay sand 0.7m thick	☐	☐
106	**Service Trench**	**Linear ESE-WNW dimensions: max breadth 0.42m, min length 4.4m**	☐	☐
107	Pipe	Lead water pipe, 0.06m in diameter	☐	☐
108	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown sandy clay frequent small-medium stones	☐	☐
109	**Natural**	**Firm mid brown orange sand frequent small-medium stones**	☐	☐

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 8.00 m. Width: 1.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.2 m. Max: 0.84 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP *(Easting: 85978: Northing: 22716)*

OS Grid Ref.: SP *(Easting: 85523: Northing: 21806)*

Reason: To assess archaeological potential within footprint of proposed extension

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
201	**Topsoil**	**Friable dark grey brown silty clay occasional small stones 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
202	**Subsoil**	**Firm mid brown grey clay sand frequent small-large stones 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
203	**Make up layer**	**Firm mid orange brown sandy clay frequent small-medium ceramic building material, frequent small-medium stones 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
204	**Make up layer**	**Firm mid orange brown clay occasional small stones 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
205	**Redeposited natural**	**Chalk 0.05m thick**	☑	☐
206	**Pit**	**Sub-oval profile: 45 degrees base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, max depth 0.4m, min length 1.7m**	☑	☐
207	Backfill	Firm dark brown black sandy silt frequent small-medium ceramic building material, frequent medium-large stones Moderate modern domestic refuse, 0.4m thick	☑	☐
208	Brick rubble	Hard mid yellow brown sand frequent small-medium ceramic building material 0.2m thick	☑	☐
209	**Service Trench**	**Linear NNW-SSE profile: steep base: flat dimensions: max breadth 1.25m, max depth 0.8m, min length 1.6m**	☑	☐
210	Backfill	Loose mid orange brown silty clay frequent small chalk, occasional small-medium stones 0.2m thick	☑	☐
211	Backfill	Firm dark grey brown sandy clay frequent small-large ceramic building material, frequent small chalk, frequent large stones 0.65m thick	☑	☐
212	**Foundation trench**	**Linear ESE-WNW profile: vertical dimensions: min breadth 1.m, min depth 0.6m, min length 1.5m**	☑	☐
214	Backfill	Loose mid brown grey clay sand occasional small-medium stones 0.25m thick	☑	☐
213	**Foundation**	**Modern, machine-made, frogged bricks laid in even courses in a mortar bond, four courses high**	☐	☐
215	**Make up layer**	**Loose mid brown grey clay sand occasional small-large stones 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
216	**Foundation trench**	**ESE-WNW profile: vertical dimensions: min breadth 0.85m, min depth 0.6m, min length 1.5m**	☑	☐
218	Backfill	Loose mid brown grey clay sand moderate small-medium stones 0.2m thick	☑	☐
217	**Foundation**	**Modern, machine-made, frogged bricks laid in even courses in a mortar bond, three courses high**	☐	☐
219	**Service Trench**	**Linear NE-SW profile: steep base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.5m, max depth 0.65m, min length 1.6m**	☑	☐
220	Backfill	Firm mid grey brown sand moderate small-medium ceramic building material Contains glass and mortar, 0.65m thick	☑	☐
221	**Posthole**	**Circular profile: vertical dimensions: max depth 0.5m, max diameter 0.35m Machine dug**	☑	☐
222	Backfill	Loose mid grey silty clay Root disturbed, at least 0.5m thick	☑	☐
223	**Natural**	**Firm mid brown orange clay sand frequent small-medium stones**	☐	☐
224	**Land drain**	**N-S dimensions: min breadth 0.3m, max depth 0.6m, min length 1.2m**	☐	☐
225	Backfill	Firm mid brown clay Contains ceramic pipe	☐	☐

Trench: 3

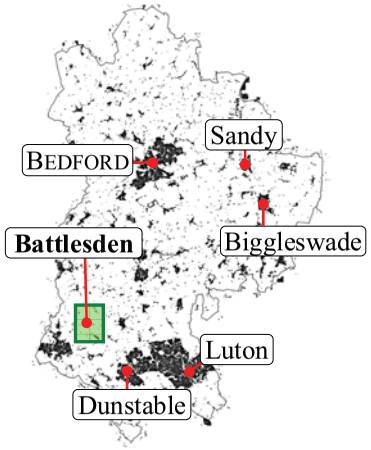
Max Dimensions: Length: 6.40 m. Width: 1.50 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.16 m. Max: 1.1 m.

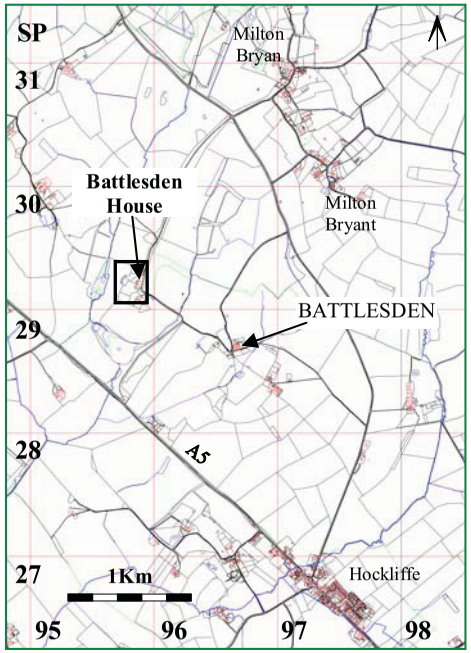
Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP *(Easting: 84615: Northing: 17260)*

OS Grid Ref.: SP *(Easting: 83941: Northing: 17550)*

Reason: To assess archaeological potential within foortprint of proposed pool-house

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
301	**Topsoil**	**Friable dark grey brown sandy silt occasional small stones 0.2m thick**	☑	☐
302	**Make up layer**	**Hard dark grey brown silty clay frequent small-medium ceramic building material 0.32m thick**	☑	☐
303	**Subsoil**	**Mid yellow brown silty clay moderate small chalk 0.3m thick**	☑	☐
304	**Ditch**	**Linear N-S profile: steep base: flat dimensions: max breadth 1.m, max depth 0.8m, min length 1.5m**	☑	☐
305	Backfill	Hard mid grey brown silty clay occasional small-medium ceramic building material, occasional small stones 0.4m thick	☑	☐
306	Backfill	Firm dark grey silty clay frequent large stones 0.36m thick	☑	☐
307	**Service Trench**	**Linear ESE-WNW profile: vertical dimensions: max breadth 0.3m, max depth 0.6m, min length 1.5m**	☑	☐
308	Backfill	Hard dark grey silty clay frequent large stones Contains plastic pipe, at least 0.6m thick	☑	☐
309	**Pit**	**Sub-oval N-S profile: steep base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.8m, max depth 0.62m, max length 2.5m**	☑	☐
310	Redeposited natural	Chalk 0.3m thick	☑	☐
311	Redeposited natural	Firm dark grey brown sandy clay occasional small-medium stones 0.4m thick	☑	☐
312	Backfill	Firm mid brown grey sandy silt frequent medium stones 0.24m thick	☑	☐
313	Backfill	Firm mid orange sandy gravel moderate small-medium ceramic building material 0.18m thick	☑	☐
314	**Service Trench**	**Linear NW-SE profile: vertical dimensions: max breadth 0.6m, min depth 0.56m, min length 1.5m**	☑	☐
315	Backfill	Dark brown clay silt frequent small-medium ceramic building material, frequent small-medium stones Contains iron pipe, at least 0.56m thick	☑	☐
316	**Natural**	**Hard mid grey brown silty chalk**	☐	☐
317	**Natural**	**Chalk Weathered**	☐	☐
318	**Natural**	**Firm light yellow brown sandy clay frequent small-medium chalk**	☐	☐





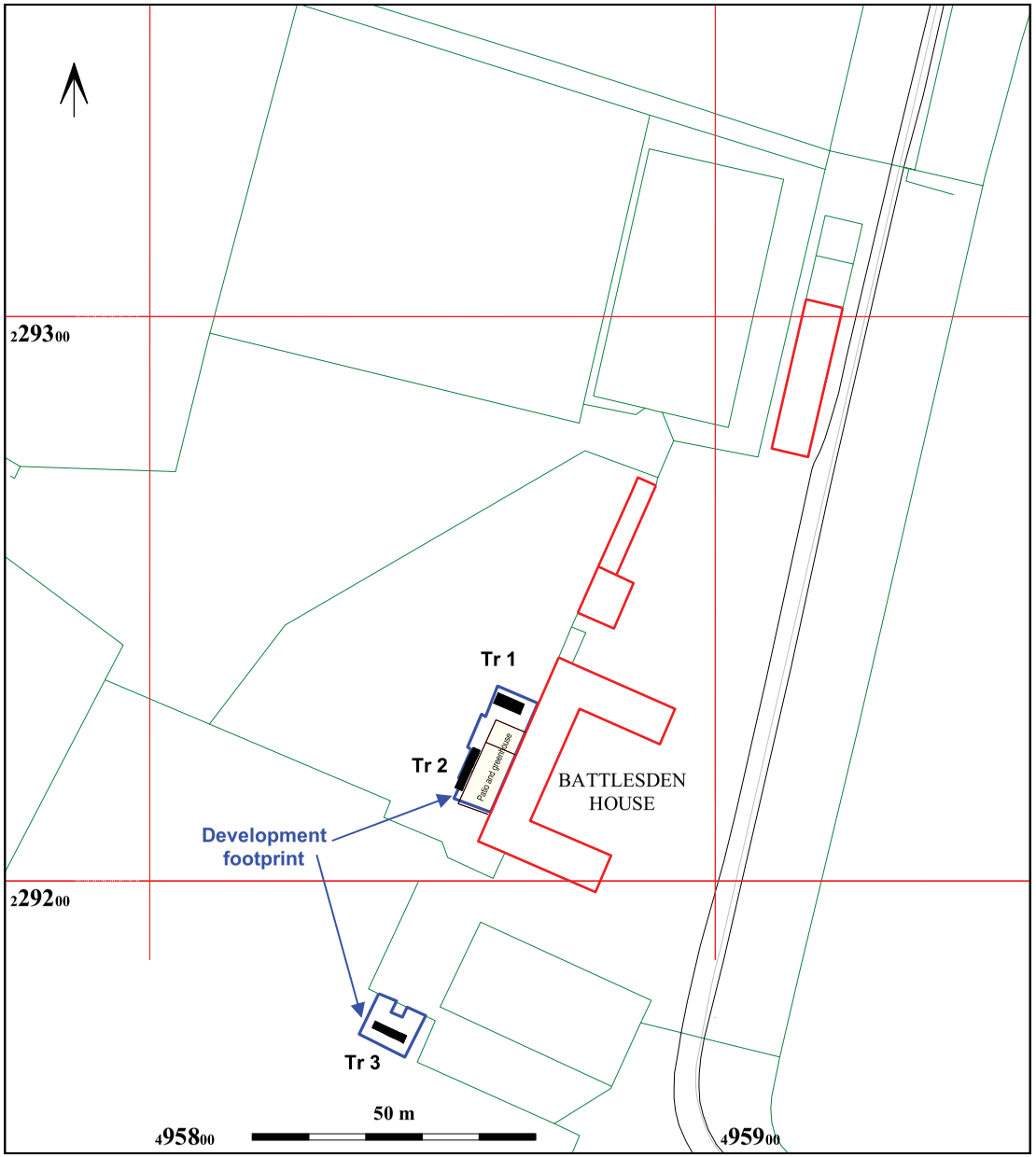
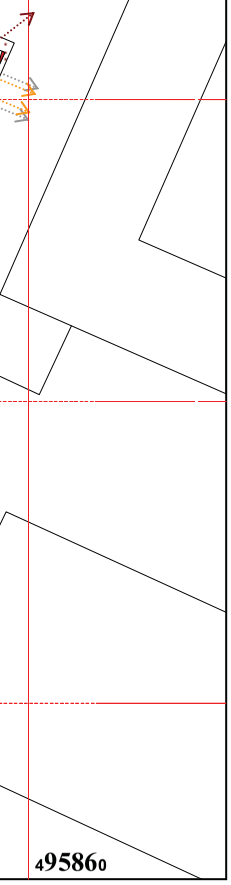
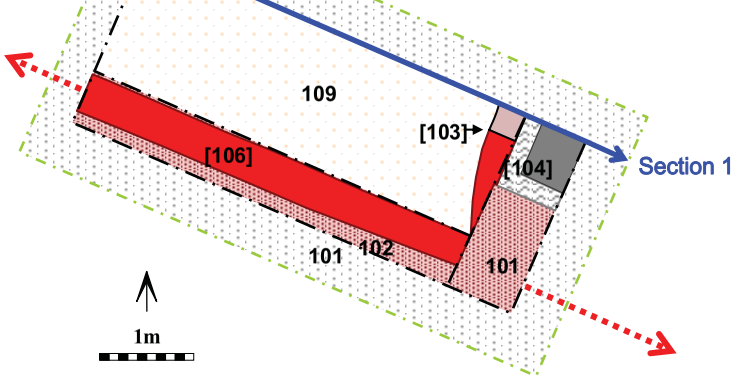


Figure 1: Site location and trench plan

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Albion Archaeology, Central Bedfordshire Council,. OS Licence No. 100017358(LA). © Crown Copyright.

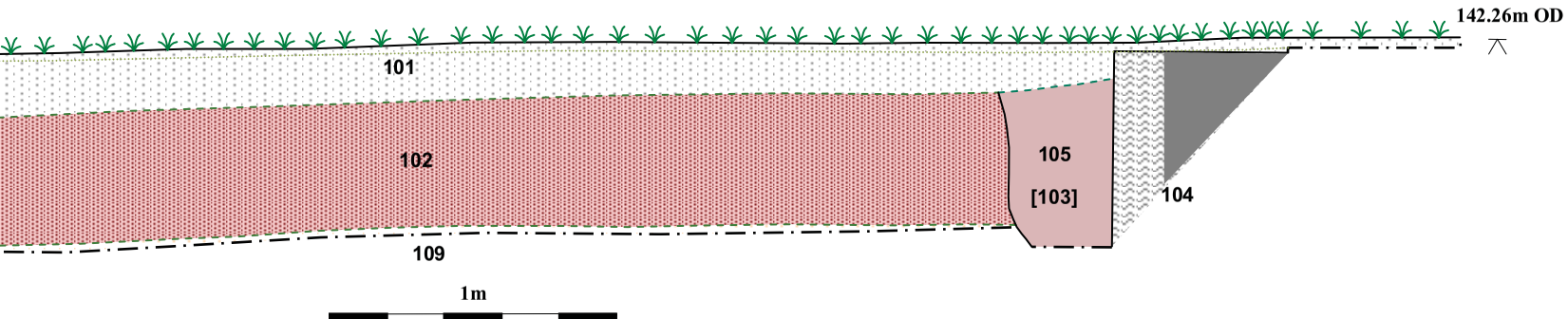


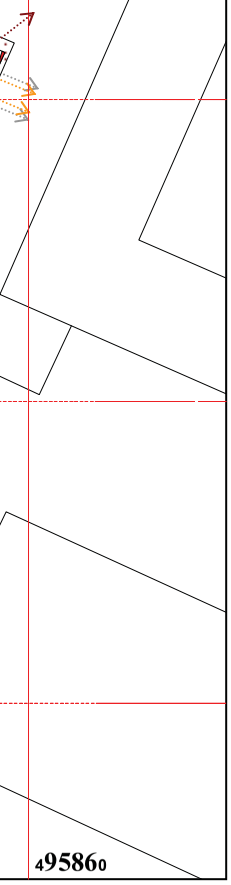


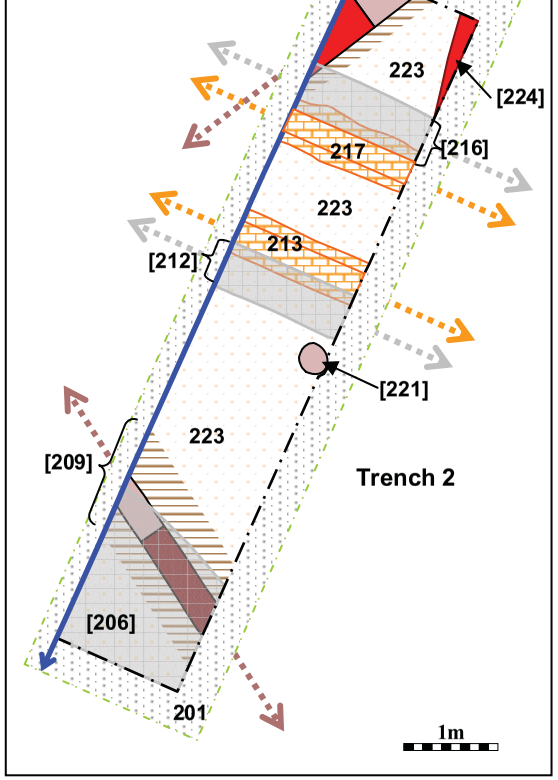
Edge of deturfed area
Limit of excavation
Modern feature
Excavated segment
Manhole
Layer
Topsoil
Undisturbed geology
Projected alignment of linear feature

Trench 1 looking south-east. Scale 40cm

Trench 1 looking north-east. Scale 40cm



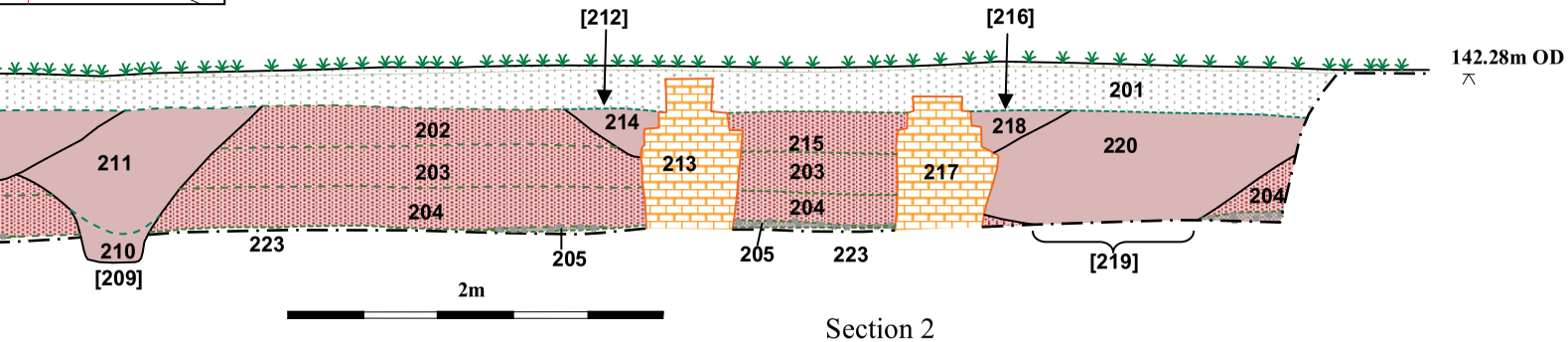




Archaeological feature
Excavated segment
Archaeological feature; full extent in section
Feature only seen in section
Modern feature
Wall
Layer
Topsoil
Undisturbed geology
Projected alignment of linear feature

Trench 2 looking north-east.

Ditch [209] lookin

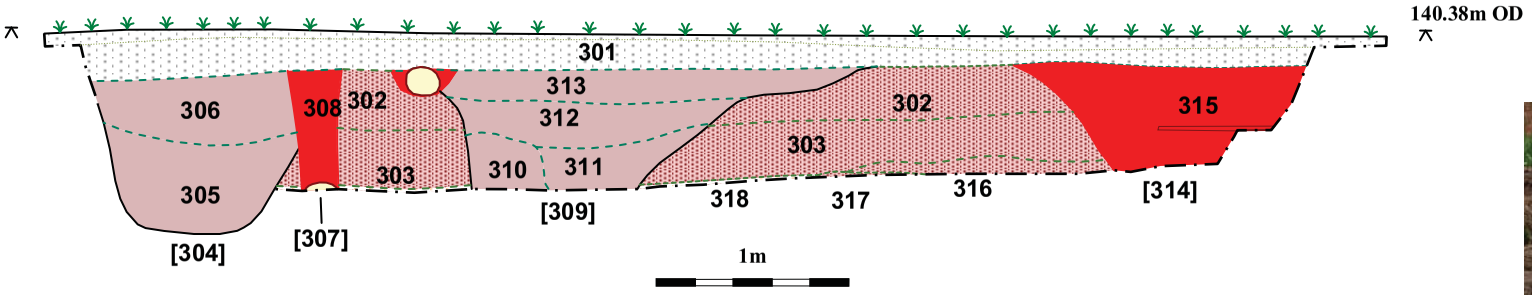


Section 2

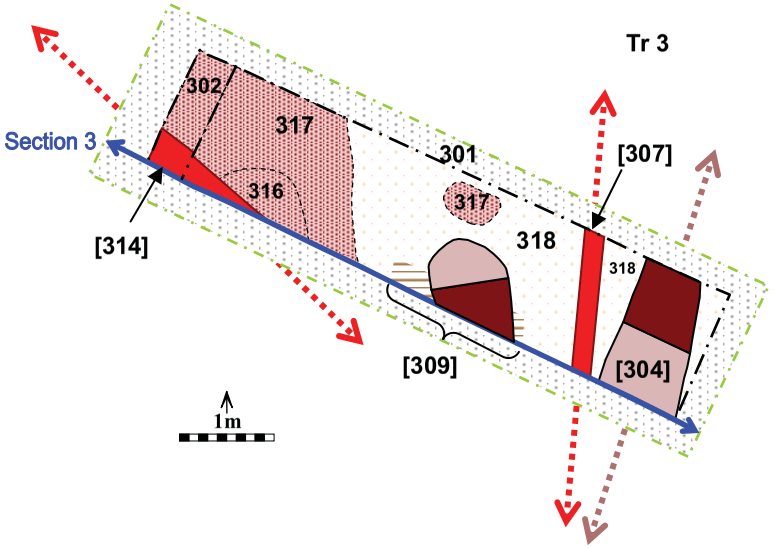
Walls 213 and 217 looking north-west. Sca

Figure 3: Trench 2

Trench 3 looking north-east. Scale 40cm



Section 3



Trench 3 looking south-east

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Figure 4: Trench 3

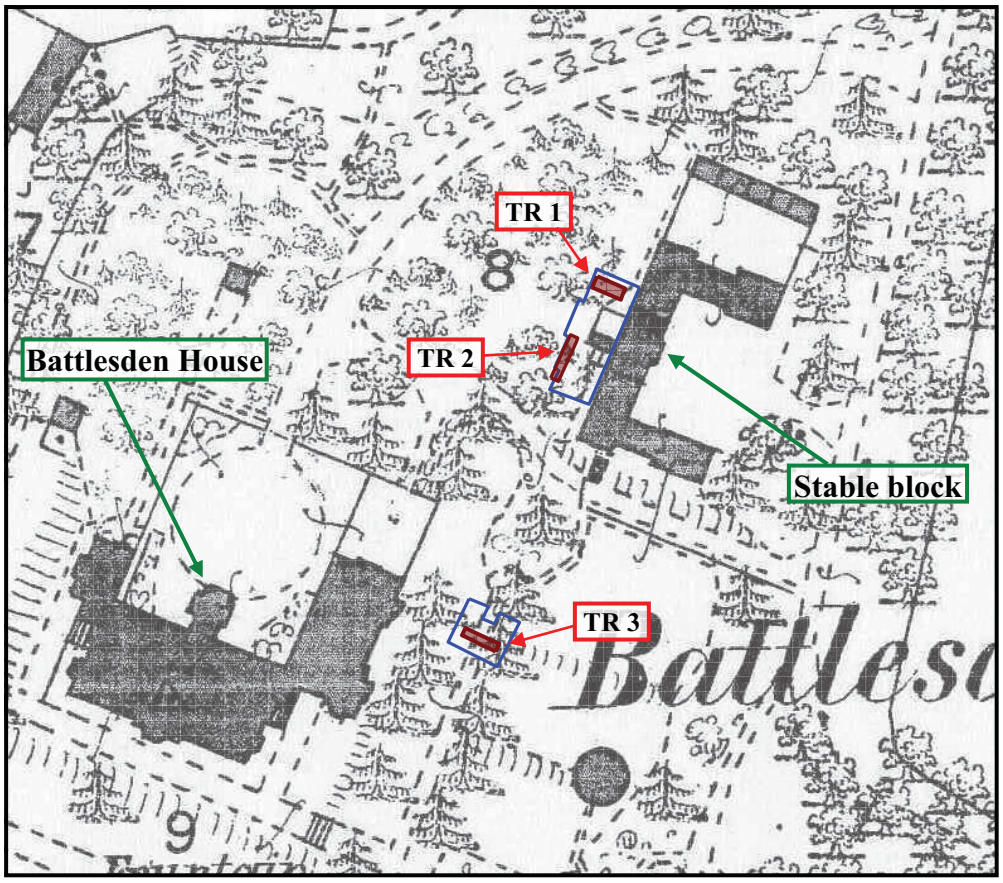

Figure 5: 1881 1st edition Ordnance Survey map overlaid with trenches

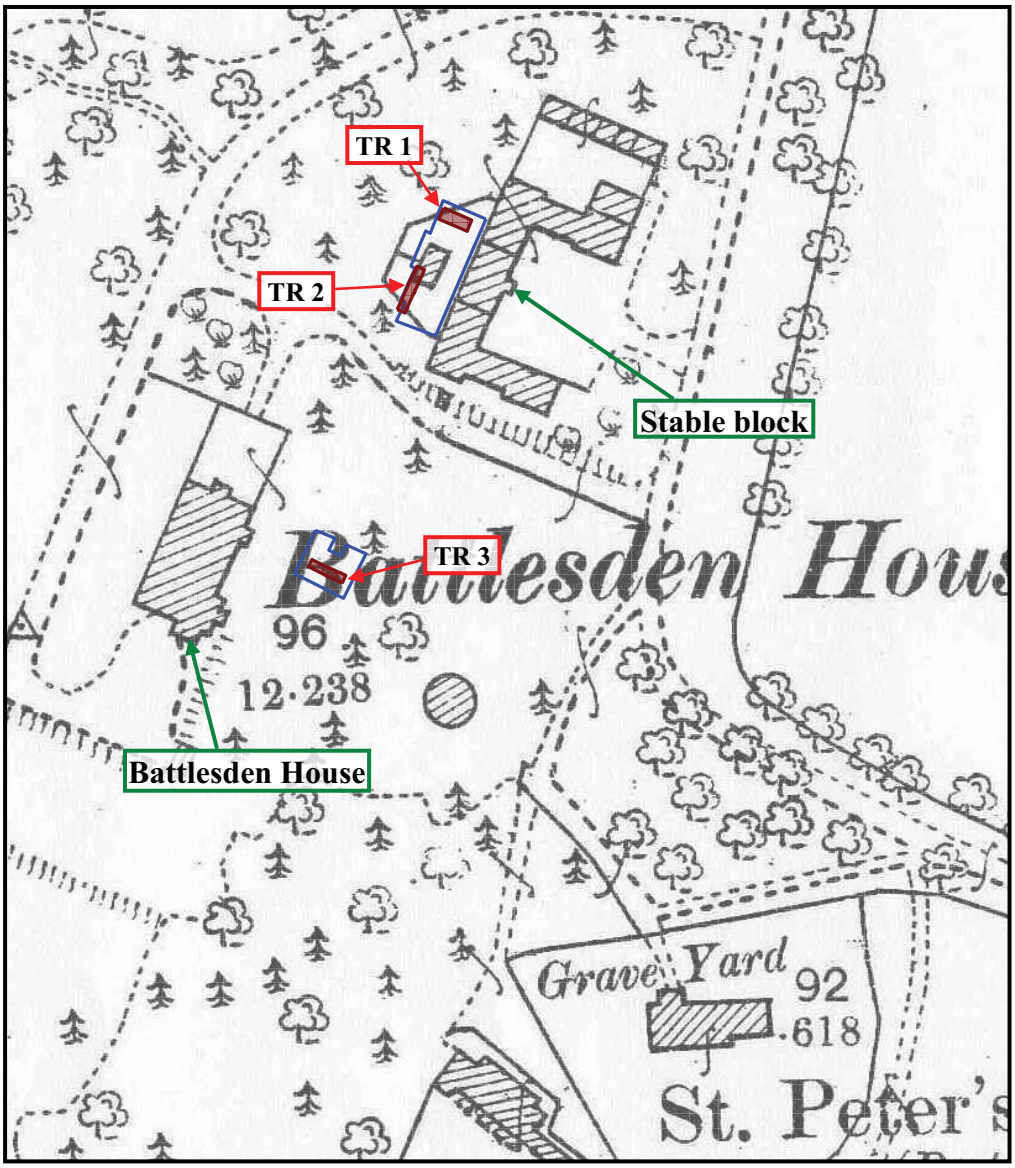

Figure 6: 1901 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map overlaid with trenches

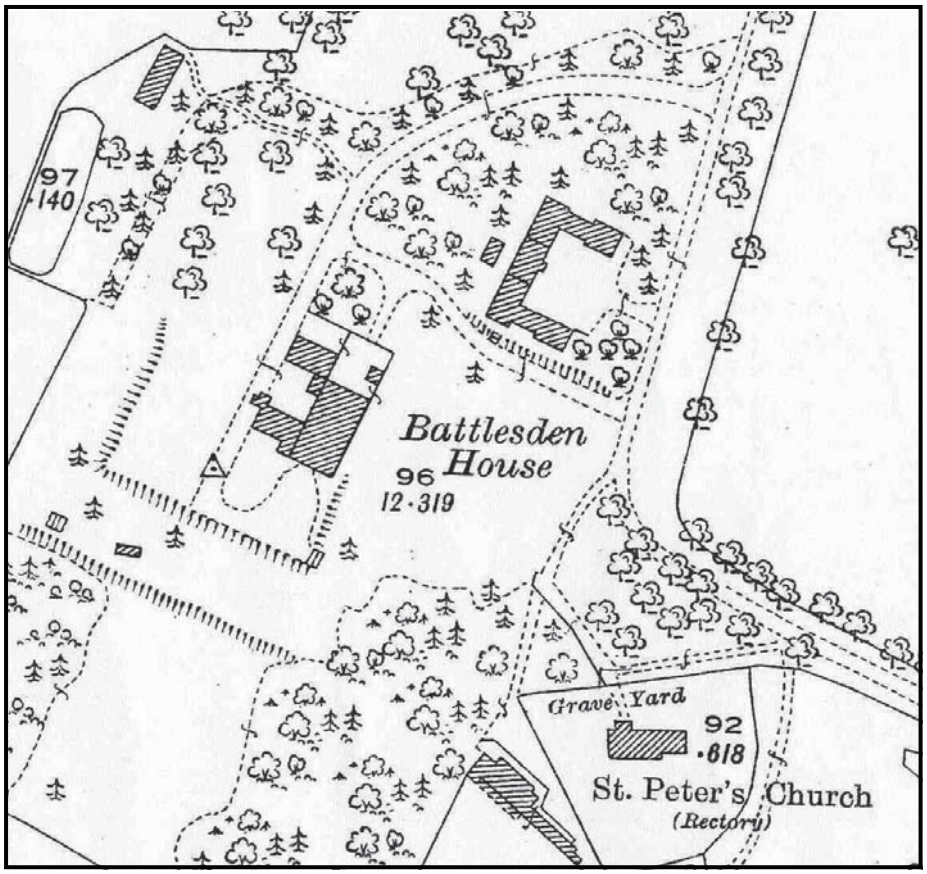

Figure 7: 1926 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map

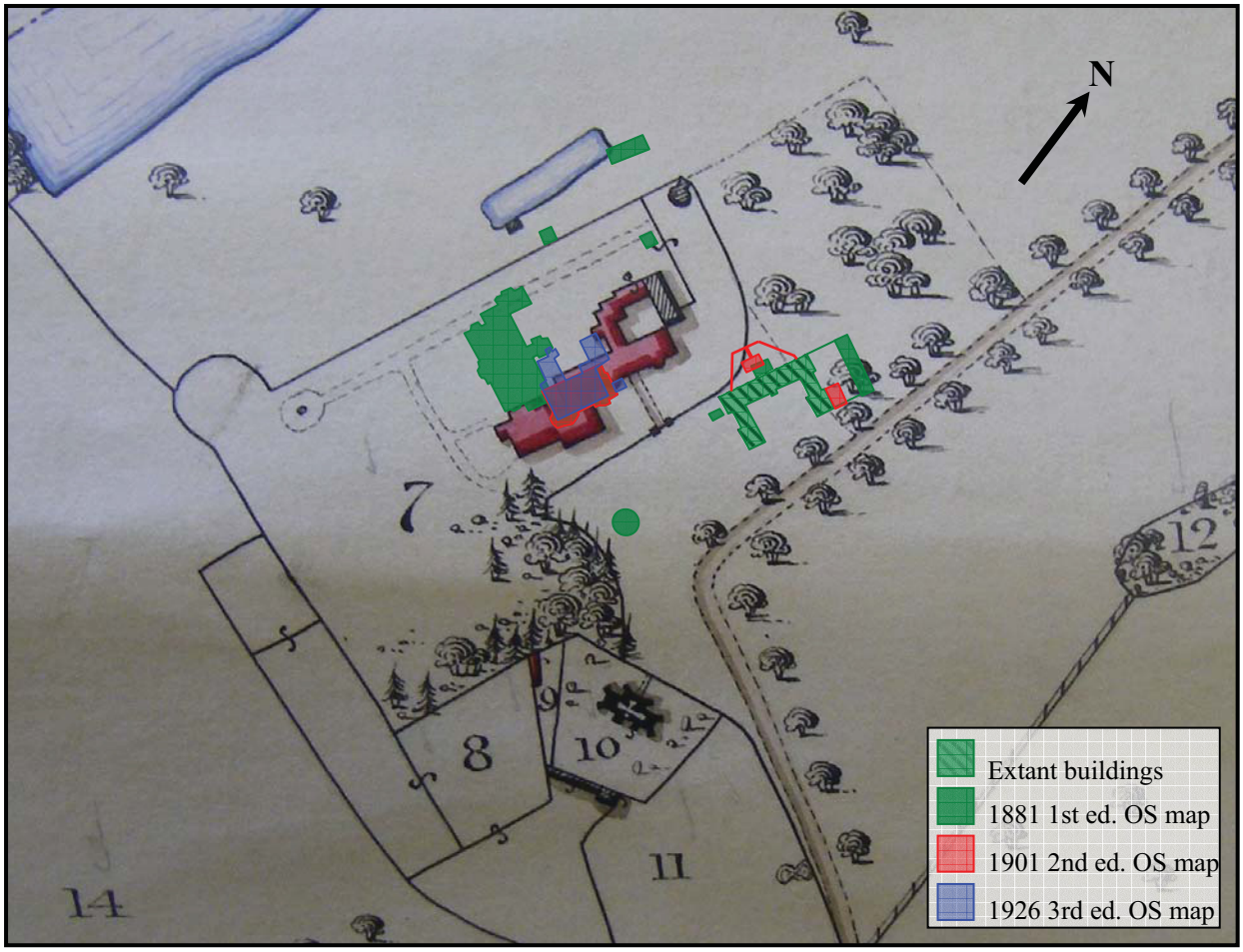

Figure 8: 1845 Battlesden Tithe map showing 16th to 18th-century house overlaid with subsequent structural developments from Ordnance Survey data