

**KEMPSTON RURAL LOWER SCHOOL
KEMPSTON CHURCH END
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**SUMMARY REPORT FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL
OBSERVATION AND INVESTIGATIONS
ASSOCIATED WITH A NEW HARD PLAY AREA**

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Contents

List of Figures	3
This Document	5
Key Terms	5
Non-technical Summary	6
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Project Background	7
1.2 Site Location and Description	7
1.3 Archaeological Background	7
1.4 Methodologies	8
2. SUMMARY OF RESULTS	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Observation and Recording within Utility Trenches	9
2.3 Observation and Recording within Hard Play Area	9
2.4 Observation and Recording within the Access Track	10
2.5 The Artefact Assemblage	10
2.6 The Project Archive	12
3. SUMMARY	13
4. BIBLIOGRAPHY	14
5. CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS	15

List of Figures

Figure 1: Site location plan and groundworks associated with new temporary classroom

Figure 2: Location of archaeological monitoring areas and identified features

Figure 3: Extent of Romano-British settlement and previous archaeological investigations





Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation and submission of this document and all statements 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.

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This Document

This document has been prepared by Mike Luke (Project Manager), Ben Barker (Project Officer) and Jackie Wells (Artefact Officer).

Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	6th November 2009	n/a
1.1	24th November 2009	Comments from BBC Archaeological & HER Officer

Key Terms

Throughout this project report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
BBC	Bedford Borough Council (the local planning authority)
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd Edition 2001.</i> Albion Archaeology



Non-technical Summary

Kempston Rural Lower School is located in an area of intense past human activity, dating from the late Iron Age through the Romano-British, Saxon and medieval periods. Some of the existing buildings within Kempston Church End date to the 15th century.

The school is located within the area of medieval and post-medieval settlement, and also within an extensive Romano-British settlement. Previous archaeological investigations have indicated that the latter was unusual because of its large extent, organised layout and the presence of at least two large cemeteries.

No archaeological investigations have ever been carried out in the vicinity of the school and no evaluation was undertaken associated with the present scheme of works.

The archaeological advisor to Bedford Borough Council requested a programme of observation, recording, analysis and publication for groundworks associated with a new temporary classroom. The new classroom was constructed above ground so the potential archaeological impacts were limited to the associated utility trenches and hard play area. All archaeological work associated with the hard play area was undertaken in line with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation.

During monitoring of ground disturbance nearly forty sherds of Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered. The majority of the Roman assemblage is dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries and includes types found within previous nearby investigations. The smaller medieval assemblage includes types of both early and later medieval date. Although no Roman archaeological features were observed within the ground disturbance works, this may well be because only the topsoil and upper part of the subsoil were removed. In places, the latter had the appearance of alluvial (flood) clays and therefore it is possible that in situ archaeological remains might still survive below these layers.

The site archive, subject to the landowner's approval, will be deposited with Bedford Museum. Prior to deposition the archive will be kept in secure storage at Albion's offices in St Mary's Church, Bedford.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

The archaeological advisor to Bedford Borough Council, the Local Planning Authority, requested a programme of observation, recording, analysis and publication for the groundworks associated with the new temporary classroom at Kempston Rural Lower School. This was because the work had the potential to disturb archaeological deposits.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Kempston Rural Lower School is centred at TL 01530/47890 at the southern end of Kempston Church End (Fig. 1). The new classroom and new hard play area are located *c.* 30m to the east of the present school building, very close to the River Great Ouse. The underlying geology in the area is limestone which is overlaid by river terrace gravels which, in turn, is, in places, overlain by alluvial clays.

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The school is located in an area of intense past human activity, of which only a brief summary is presented here. For more detailed results of the investigations in the area the following reports/publications should be consulted: Bedford Western Bypass (Albion 2008a), David Wilson Homes (Albion 2008b), Bovis Homes (Luke 2008), Southern Orbital Sewer (Dawson 2004, pp. 38-66), Kempston Box End quarry (Luke and Preece forthcoming).

Several hundred Palaeolithic artefacts have been recorded from the Biddenham and Kempston areas (Wood 1984, 23). Bronze Age burial monuments are known to occur in large numbers on the Biddenham Loop and three have been found within the Cutler Hammer Sportsground 650m to the south. A number of early-middle Iron Age farmsteads are known to exist on the edge of the river terrace on the Biddenham Loop and a similar pattern may be expected on the Kempston side of the river. Evidence for one of these may have been found in a recent pipe trench dug to the north of the Cutler Hammer Sportsground (Albion ongoing).

The school is situated on the eastern edge of an extensive Roman settlement (HER 162) (Fig. 3). Its extent (over 17ha), layout (gridded appearance with metalled roadways) and presence of two large cemeteries suggest it may be a planned settlement. The existence of Roman remains in the Kempston Church End area has been known since the mid-19th century, based on the recovery of metal artefacts (Wood 1984, 24). It was first investigated in 1991 and 1992 in advance of the construction of the Southern Orbital Sewer (Dawson 2004, 38-66, 152-266). An evaluation at Cutler Hammer Sportsground 650m to the south located Romano-British ditched enclosures and it was suggested that these were part of the same settlement (BCAS 1999, 35). In 2004, salvage investigation



were undertaken 350m to the north within Box End quarry (Luke and Preece forthcoming). Two years later an open area excavation was undertaken 170m to the south in advance of the Bedford Western Bypass. This was the first investigation within the settlement that had been planned and programmed in advance of construction works, and with a methodology and strategy determined by full evaluation. It provided extremely useful information as to the origins, layout and development of the settlement in this area (Albion 2008a, 49-50).

An indication of the contemporary landscape in the vicinity of the settlement was found during investigations in advance of both the Bedford Western Bypass (Albion 2008a, 50-54) and David Wilson Homes development (Albion 2008b). The Biddenham Loop contained at least six contemporary farmsteads all of which are in similar topographical positions to the Kempston Church End settlement (Luke 2008, 57).

There is some evidence for the continuation of the settlement into the early-middle Saxon period from the sewer investigations (Dawson 2004, 61) and from the Bedford Western Bypass investigations (Albion 2008a, 57), suggesting that it was not completely abandoned. Saxo-Norman and medieval settlement in the area is concentrated around the parish church of All Saints, which is believed to contain late Anglo-Saxon features within its fabric (Wood 1984, 45) and around The Bury (Albion 2008a). The existing timber-framed building known variously as the “Town House” or 1-4 Church End is believed to originate in the 15th century and be associated with All Saints (Edis 2001).

The intensity of past human activity in this area and the longevity of settlement around Kempston Church End must be due in part to local topography: a riverine location with adjacent land just above the floodplain. Any settlement would have been well positioned to exploit a wide range of natural resources.

1.4 Methodologies

The methodological approach to the project was detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion 2009) and is therefore not repeated here. This document was approved by the archaeological advisor to Bedford Borough Council on 15th September 2009.

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

- IfA’s *Codes of Conduct*
- IfA’s *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*
- IfA’s *Guidelines for Finds Work*
- Albion Archaeology’s *Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork 2nd Edition* (2001).



2. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

2.1 Introduction

The observation and investigation was undertaken during August and September 2009. All ground disturbance was monitored by an archaeologist from Albion Archaeology. In addition, all disturbed soil was scanned for artefacts. Deposits were recorded in line with the *Procedures Manual* and descriptions are included in Section 5.

2.2 Observation and Recording within Utility Trenches

As part of the new classroom development utility trenches were dug to the north-west of the new hard play area (see Fig. 1). The excavation of these was monitored by an archaeologist during the period 7th August to 3rd September 2009.

The majority of the trenches contained a thick layer of topsoil (1) which contained a small number of Roman and medieval pottery sherds. Underlying this in the vicinity of The Causeway track and to the west was disturbed ground (4) containing post-medieval and modern building material. However, *in situ* natural sandy gravels (8) were observed in a few places towards the base of the trench. An E-W aligned limestone wall foundation [5] was identified within the electricity cable trench adjacent to the existing playground (Fig. 2). It was 0.9m wide and loosely bonded. Given this and the absence of a parallel wall, it is more likely to be part of a boundary wall rather than a structure. A sherd of pottery recovered from material around the wall (6) might suggest that the feature could be late medieval or later in date.

2.3 Observation and Recording within Hard Play Area

Ground disturbance associated with the extension to the hard play area was monitored by an archaeologist on 22nd and 23rd September 2009.

The vegetation and approximately 0.3m of topsoil (09) was removed from a 25m by 30m area to the south of the existing playground. This reduced level was still within the topsoil/subsoil horizon over much of the area; however probable alluvial clays (10, 12) were also exposed. These ranged from light greyish brown mottled clay (10) closest to the river, to dark yellowish-brown clay-silt that contained frequent small stones (12) further away.

Toward the centre of the area, a NNW-SSE aligned ditch [13] was identified (Fig. 3). This boundary feature continued the alignment of the existing coppiced willow trees, two of which were situated within the new hard play area. The ditch itself was approximately 0.7m wide and contained an organic grey brown clay-silt (14). This fill was sealed by a dump of limestone rubble, post-medieval tile and modern engineering brick (15). The ditch truncated a localised disturbance layer of mid to dark grey silty clay subsoil (11) that contained traces



coal, clinker animal bone and post medieval pottery. This indicates that the ditch was of very recent origin.

On 19th and 20th October 2009 twenty-two postholes, dug to hold a new fence around the hard play area, were monitored. They revealed that the topsoil along the western side of the hard play area (16) was in excess of 0.7m deep. It contained a sherd of Roman pottery and a fragment of post-medieval tile. To the east the topsoil was less than 0.2m deep, and overlay at least 0.5m of sterile mid yellowish-brown alluvial clay.

2.4 Observation and Recording within the Access Track

The construction of an access track to the new hard play area was monitored on 22nd and 29th September 2009. Only 0.3m of material was removed and this was all within the topsoil horizon so underlying subsoil/alluvial clays or any evidence for the adjacent wall [5] were not uncovered.

A small number of Roman and medieval pottery sherds were recovered from the surface and were assigned to topsoil context (09).

2.5 The Artefact Assemblage

2.5.1 Introduction

The investigations produced a small assemblage (Table 1) comprising forty pottery sherds (671g) and a piece of ceramic roof tile (51g). The pottery was recovered mainly from topsoil and subsoil deposits, the majority deriving from topsoil layer (09).

Context	Deposit type	Artefact dates	Sherd No.	Wgt (g)	
01	Spoil heaps	LIA, RB, M	17	93	
06	Foundation	M	1	5	
09	Topsoil	RB, M, PM, Mod	22	318	
10	Alluvium	PM, Mod	3	76	
			CBM	1	48
11	Alluvial- Subsoil	M, PM	6	163	
16	Topsoil	RB, PM	1	16	
			CBM	1	3
			42	722	

KEY: LIA= Late Iron Age, RB= Romano-British, M= medieval, PM= post-medieval, Mod= modern

Table 1: Summary of artefacts recovered from groundworks

Sixteen pottery fabric types were identified in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, currently maintained by Albion Archaeology (Table 2).

2.5.2 Late Iron Age/Romano-British pottery

The earliest sherd is a grog tempered bowl rim (fabric F06B), datable to the late 'Belgic' Iron Age (c. 50 BC-AD 50). Roman pottery is broadly datable to the



early Roman period and comprises seven reduced sand tempered coarse ware sherds (R06C, R06D, R07B) and four shelly sherds (R13), all likely to be of local manufacture. Plain rim grey ware bowls, some with burnished decoration, are the only diagnostic vessel forms. Similar material has been recovered, in greater quantities, from the nearby excavations at Kempston Church End (Parminter 2004, 495) and Kempston Box End (Wells forthcoming).

2.5.3 Medieval pottery

The medieval assemblage comprises three wheel-thrown shell tempered sherds (B07) of probable local manufacture, datable to the 12th-13th centuries. Pottery of 13th-15th century date is represented by five wheel-thrown sherds of a Potterspury ware jug (C10), a regional import from Northamptonshire. Later medieval pottery comprises single oxidised and reduced sand tempered sherds (E01, E03) of 14th-15th century date.

2.5.4 Post-medieval pottery and tile

Pottery datable to the 17th-18th centuries comprises twelve sherds of glazed and slip-decorated earthenware (P01, P03, P06) and single sherds of mottle/speckle-glazed ware (P19) and Chinese porcelain (P34). Diagnostic forms are mainly bowls. Three undiagnostic sherds of creamware and pearlware (types P38 and P43 respectively) are datable to the 18th-19th centuries.

Subsoil (10) and topsoil (16) each yielded single pieces of sand tempered post-medieval flat roof tile.

Fabric Type	Common name	Sherd No.	Context / Sherd
<i>Late Iron Age</i>			
F06B	Medium grog	1	(09):1
<i>Romano-British</i>			
R06C	Fine grey ware	5	(01):1, (09):4
R06D	Micaceous grey ware	1	(01):1
R07B	Sandy black ware	1	(09):1
R13	Shell	5	(09):4; (16):1
<i>Medieval</i>			
B07	Shell	3	(09):3
C10	Potterspury ware	5	(01):5
E01	Late medieval reduced ware	1	(06):1
E03	Late medieval smooth	1	(11):1
<i>Post-medieval</i>			
P01	Fine glazed red earthenware	8	(09):4, (10):1, (11):3
P03	Black-glazed earthenware	3	(09):1, (11):2
P06	Fine slip-decorated earthenware	1	(09):1
P19	Mottle/speckle-glazed ware	1	(09):1
P34	Chinese porcelain	1	(09):1
<i>Modern</i>			
P38	Creamware	2	(09):1, (10):1
P43	Pearlware	1	(10):1

Table 2: Pottery type series



2.6 The Project Archive

The project archive, subject to the landowner's approval regarding the artefacts, will be deposited with Bedford Museum under accession number BEDFM: 2009.51. Prior to deposition the archive will be kept in secure storage at Albion's offices in St Mary's Church, Bedford.



3. SUMMARY

The monitoring of ground disturbance associated with the new temporary class room resulted in the recovery of nearly forty sherds of Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery.

No sub-surface features of Roman date were identified. The majority of the Roman pottery assemblage is dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries and includes types found within previous nearby investigations (Parminter 2004; Wells forthcoming). Although they are the first such artefacts recorded as being found within this part of Kempston Church End, their discovery is not unexpected given that they are located in the vicinity of a larger Romano-British settlement (Fig. 3). However, their presence does not firmly establish whether the settlement continued into this area, although this is clearly possible.

No definite sub-surface features of medieval date were identified, although the wall foundations [5] were associated with a single sherd of late medieval pottery. The overall medieval pottery assemblage includes types of both early and later medieval date. Again, although interesting in the context of medieval Kempston Church End its presence does not assist in determining the nature of the settlement in this area.

A single sub-surface feature, ditch [13], associated with existing trees is probably post-medieval in date. The nature of the deposits near to 'The Causeway' suggests that this area has been subjected to disturbance over the last 200 years.

In places, the layer underlying the topsoil had the appearance of alluvial (flood) clays. It is therefore possible that *in situ* archaeological remains will have been preserved at a greater depth below these deposits. However, the presence of alluvial clays also raises the possibility that the groundworks were situated off the gravel terrace and within the ancient flood plain where archaeological remains are less likely to survive even if they existed in the first place.

Finally, it should be stated that, due to the nature of these investigations, all archaeological observations were restricted to the requirements of the construction works. Archaeological observation within narrow trenches and where open areas were largely restricted to the topsoil/subsoil interface are notoriously difficult to interpret and can on some occasions give quite misleading results.



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5. CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Location	Description	Interpretation
1	Spoil heap finds	Dark brown grey silty loam with moderate small to large stones, occasional limestone fragments, charcoal flecks and CBM, >1.2m thick.	Topsoil
2	Utility trench	Tarmac layer, 0.1m thick.	Tarmac surface
3	Utility trench	Mid yellow grey gravelly sand, >0.3m thick.	Make up layer below (2)
4	Utility trench	Mid orange grey silty sand with occasional small to medium stones and limestone fragments, >0.3m thick.	Subsoil
5	Utility trench	E-W orientated, U-shaped linear feature, 0.9m wide by 0.35m deep and >0.45m long.	Foundation cut for wall (6)
6	Utility trench	Irregular, rough, hewn limestone fragments < 0.4m in dia. Loosely bonded with mid greyish orange sandy lime mortar.	Wall foundation
7	Utility trench	Dark grey brown silty sand with moderate small to medium limestone fragments.	Backfill of foundation cut [5]
8	Utility trench	Light yellowish grey gravelly sand.	Natural sandy gravels
9	Play area /access track	Dark grey brown silt with occasional small stones, 0.3m thick.	Topsoil
10	Play area	Light grey brown clay with frequent red brown mottles	Alluvium
11	Play area	Mid to dark grey silty clay with red brown mottles and modern building debris.	Disturbed subsoil/alluvium
12	Play area	Dark yellow brown clay silt with frequent small stones	Alluvium
13	Play area	NNW-SSE linear feature with diffuse edges, 0.7m wide and >20m long.	Ditch
14	Play area	Dark greyish brown alluvial clay silt	Fill of Ditch [13]
15	Play area	Dump of limestone rubble (<0.2m dia.), tile fragments and modern brick fragments.	Dump within top of ditch [13]
16	Play area	Dark grey brown silty loam with occasional small stones	Topsoil within excavations for fence posts

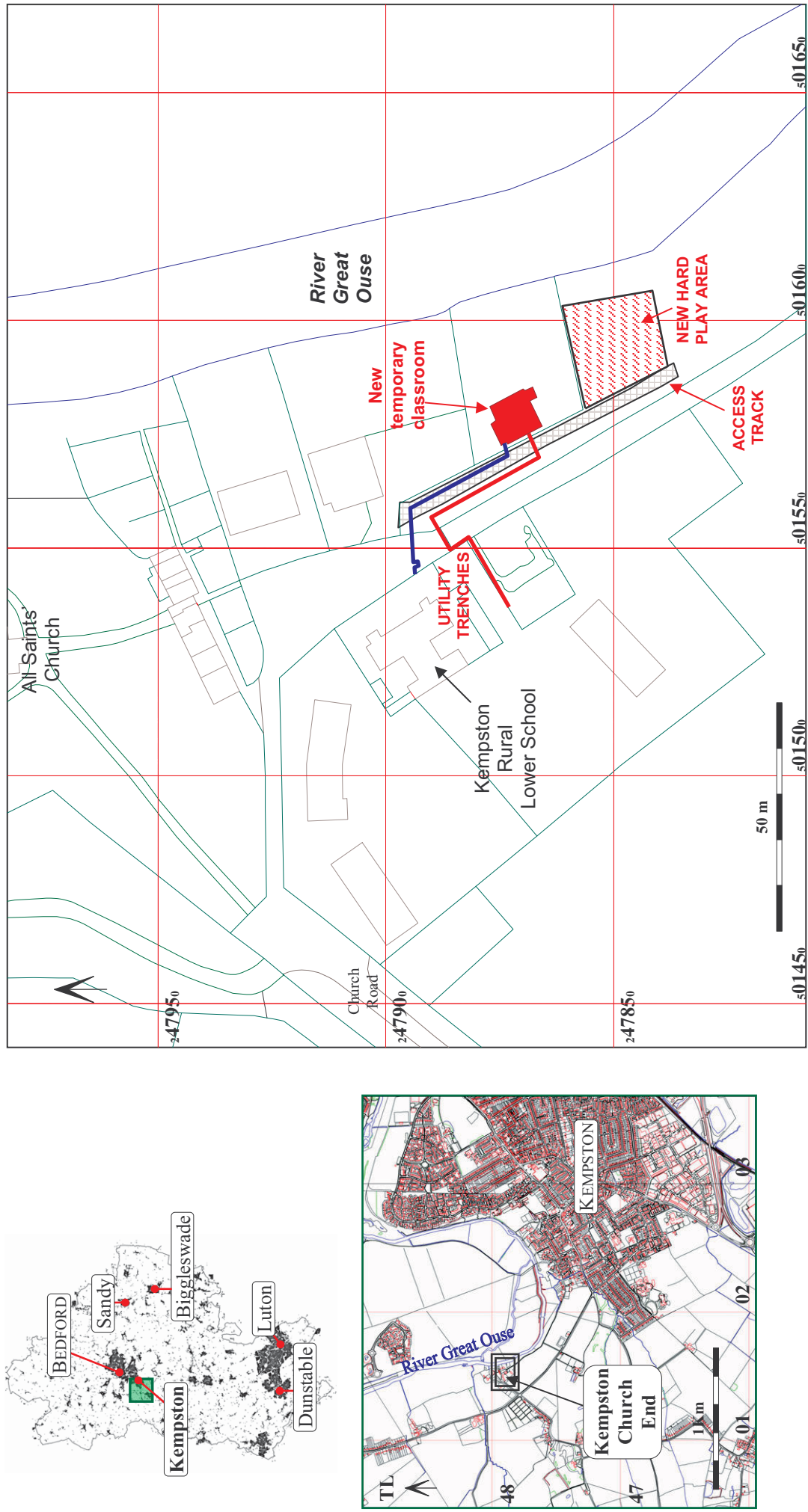


Figure 1. Site location plan and groundworks associated with a new hard play area

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.

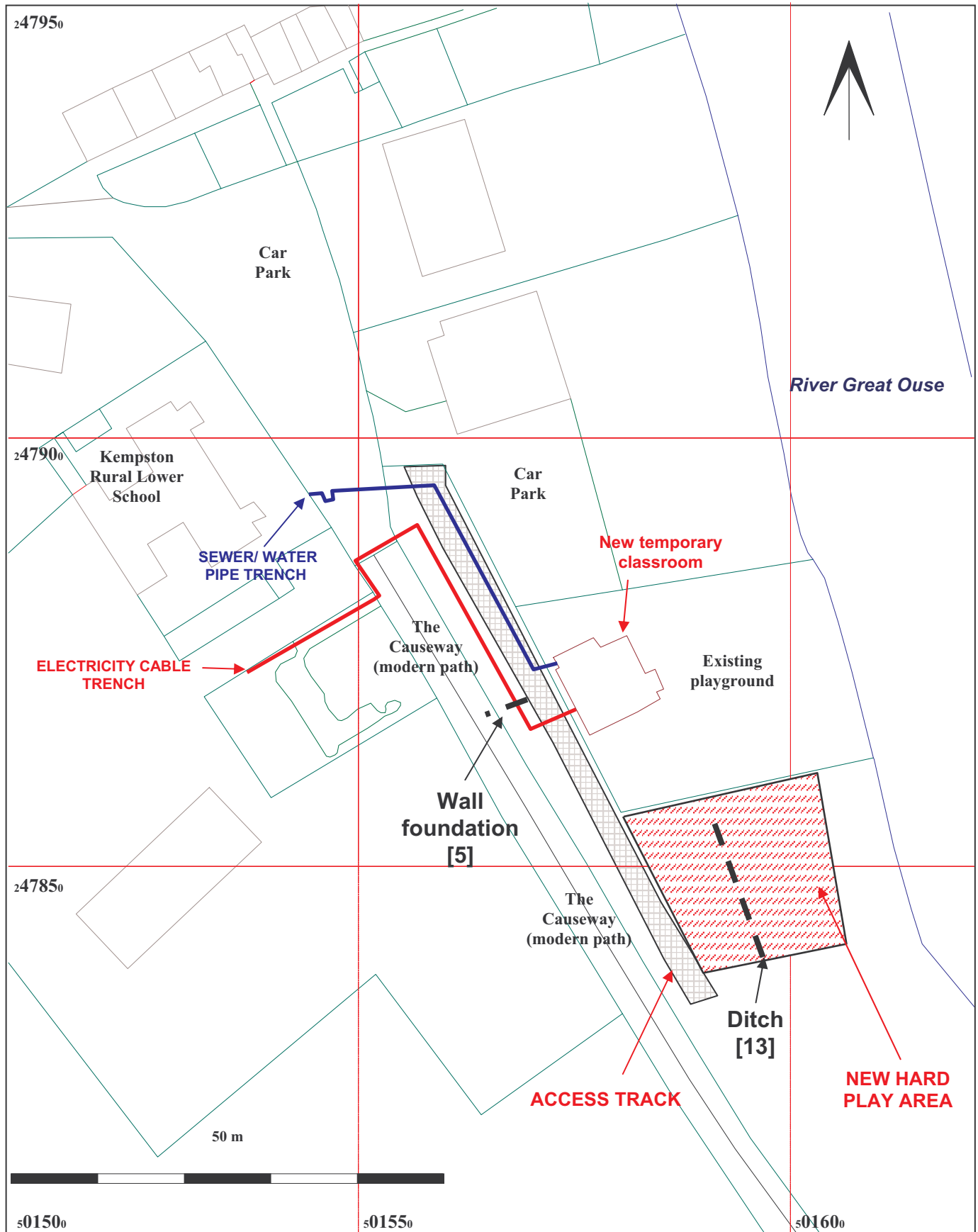


Figure 2. Location of archaeological monitoring and identified sub-surface features

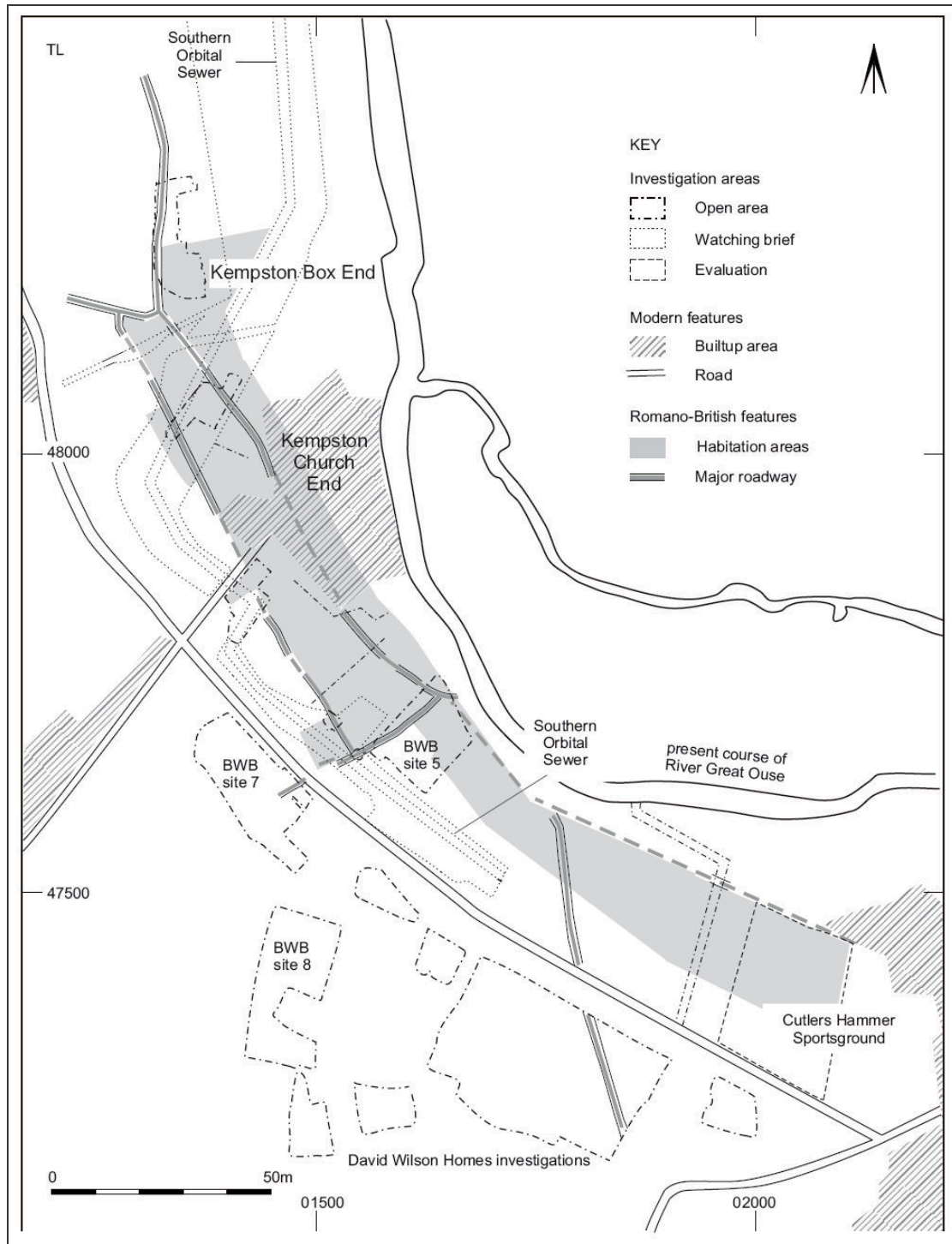


Figure 3. Extent of Romano-British settlement and previous archaeological investigations (Luke and Preece forthcoming, fig. 19)