

**LAND OFF CHURCH STREET
LANGFORD
BEDFORDSHIRE**

BUILDING RECORDING

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Produced for:
Mr R Heaps



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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.

This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips (Project Officer) and edited by Hester Cooper-Reade (Business Manager and historic buildings project manager). The fieldwork was undertaken by Mark Phillips.

Albion Archaeology would like to acknowledge Mr R Heap for commissioning this survey and the assistance of M Oake (Conservation and Design Team, CBC) during the project.

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Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, this report presents the results of building recording (Section 2). This is followed by a brief conclusion (Section 3).

Key Terms

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

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
Client	Mr R Heaps
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2 nd Edition 2001. Bedfordshire County Council
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation





Non-Technical Summary

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the Mr R Heaps to undertake a programme of archaeological works during redevelopment of a site in Langford. The brief issued by the Conservation and Design Team of Central Bedfordshire Council stipulated a requirement for building recording of a barn on the sit. This report presents the results of the building recording.

The barn was located on land to the west of Church Street in Langford, Bedfordshire, centred on NGR TL 1861 4159. A measured survey and photographic record of the building was undertaken on the December 2009.

The barn was rectangular in plan, 11.85m by 6.35m, aligned east-west, of three bays with a central full height door opening. The frame was of machine sawn softwood throughout. The frame was constructed on a low brick plinth. The principle components of the frame were tenoned and pegged whilst the lighter parts, studs and diagonal braces, were nailed. Externally it was clad in weatherboard with a plain tile roof.

Roof trusses consisted of a collar and tie beam with raking struts. The purlins were clasped between the principle rafters, tie beams and the notched ends of the raking struts. The roof structure is braced by diagonal beams running from the wall plate level on one truss up to the collar beam level on the adjacent truss.

The western bay had one mid height floor forming a loft lit by a single window in the western elevation. The eastern bay has two floors, at mid height and attic level. These were of lightweight, slatted construction as was the partition which divides the mid height floor from the central open bay. There were two doors in the eastern elevation, one at ground level and a first floor taking in door. There was also a horizontal vet in the eastern gable. The inner ends of the floors were supported by posts consisting of re-used railway sleepers.

Historic plan evidence indicates that the building was constructed between 1900 and 1921, first appearing on the third edition 25" O S map which was surveyed in 1921. The barn appears to correspond to one described in the rate assessment of c.1927 when the owner was E.M. Street.

The slatted construction of the floors and partition in the eastern end of the barn indicate that it was probably used as an onion store. Specialised onion stores of a similar slatted construction occur in the area around Biggleswade where market gardening has formed an important part of the local economy.

The project archive will be deposited at Bedford Museum under accession code 2009/84.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

Mid Bedfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the demolition of a barn and the construction of a dwelling on land off Church Street, Langford, Bedfordshire (MB/07/00689). The implementation of the planning consent has been administered by Central Bedfordshire Council which replaced the Mid Bedfordshire District Council in April 2009. The Conservation and Design Team of Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC 2008) issued a brief for a programme of archaeological works which included building recording and archaeological observation and investigation. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Mr R Heaps to carry out a scheme of archaeological works. Albion Archaeology produced a Written Scheme of Investigation which outlined the methods and procedures to be employed during the works (Albion 2009). This report presents the results of building recording undertaken in December 2009 in advance of demolition work on the site.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The village of Langford is situated in the east of Bedfordshire, to the south of Biggleswade, with the site located at TL 1861 4159. Topographically Langford lies in the valley of the River Ivel, on the eastern side of the river. The site is on flat ground behind the frontage of Church Street, the main north-south route through the village.

1.3 *Historical background*

Documentary sources show that Langford existed by the 10th century and was a substantial settlement by the time of the Domesday Book. The development site lies in the northern part of Langford, in Church End, which is likely to have been the location of the historic core of the village.

Examination of historic maps in the Bedford and Luton Archive Service shows the development of the site from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The enclosure map of the parish of Langford, surveyed in 1807, shows that no buildings existed on the site at this time. A single building within a small enclosed plot lay immediately to the north of the site and a cluster of buildings ranged around the sides of a rectangular plot lay to north-east, in the position now occupied by the Plough Inn.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891 shows significant development along Church Street. By this time buildings extended all along the eastern side of the street and a number of plots had been developed on the west side of the street, included two on the plot immediately to the south of the site. No buildings are shown on the site at this time.



The second edition 25” Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1900, shows very little change from the situation in the 1890s and the site remained undeveloped. The plot to the south shows some addition small buildings.

The third edition 25” Ordnance Survey map, survey in 1921, shows a building on the site which is presumably the barn that forms the subject of this survey.

Examination of the rate assessment documents from c.1927 shows that the owner, occupier of the site was E. M. Street. The barn is not described on page 62 which details the area and valuation of this plot. However, the description of the plot to the south (page 61) which was also owned by E M Street contains details of a number of buildings. One of these is a wooden building with a tile roof which was described as a large barn with two lofts, a description which perfectly describes the barn occupying the present development site.

1.4 Methodology

The barn was recorded to English Heritage Level 2 (2006). The methodology for building recording is set out in detail in section 6.1 of the WSI (Albion 2009). In summary the record comprises the normal components of a Level 2 survey: a descriptive record, a measured floor plan and photographic survey of exterior and interior of the barn.

At Level 2 limited historical research will take place to set the building in context. This will usually entail an examination of readily available sources at BLARS and a map regression exercise.



2. RESULTS OF BUILDING RECORDING

2.1 Description

2.1.1 General arrangement

The building was rectangular in plan, aligned east–west. The walls were covered in weatherboard cladding and the gable roof with plain red tiles. Openings consisted of a full height, double door in the southern wall, a single door in the north end of the east wall, a high level taking-in door in the east wall and a window in the gable of the west wall.

The building was 11.85m long and 6.35m wide (measurements to the outside edge of the frame) and 7.04m high internally from floor to apex.

2.1.2 Construction details

The building was constructed on a low brick plinth 0.18m wide and approximately 0.2m high. The base of the timber frame consisted of a sill beam, 0.13m wide, set flush with the outer edge of the brick plinth.

The main vertical parts of the frame consisted of four corner posts, two door posts for the southern door and eight wall posts. These consisted of continuous timbers running from the sill beam to the underside of the wall plate, approximately 3.1m long. The corner posts and door posts were 0.15m square whilst the wall posts were rectangular in section 0.13m by 0.1m. Half way up the frame a mid rail was formed of horizontal timbers (c.0.13m square) tenoned and pegged into the vertical timbers. A framework of lighter timbers (0.07m square) was used to brace the frame and support the external weatherboarding. This consisted of diagonal braces, slanting downwards from the main vertical timbers down to the sill beam and vertical studs.

Roof trusses consisted of a collar and tie beam with raking struts. The purlins were clasped between the principle rafters, tie beams and the notched ends of the raking struts. The roof structure is braced by diagonal beams running from the wall plate level on one truss up to the collar beam level on the adjacent truss.

All of the timber used in the frame was machine-sawn softwood of square or rectangular cross section. A possible Baltic timber mark was seen on one of the frames. This was lightly scored and not replicated elsewhere in the building. The joints in the main parts of the wall frames such as the junctions between mid rail and wall posts were joined with pegs. All of the other fixings appear to have been made with nails.

2.1.3 Internal layout and details

The ground floor of the barn was continuous with no permanent divisions, though the headroom was limited by the presence of mid-height floors at either end and partly obstructed by vertical posts used to support the floors above.

The ground floor was accessed via a large pair of double doors in the south



wall and via a small door located towards the northern end of the west wall. The double doors extended almost up to the level of the wall plate and the opening was strengthened by curved braces. The base of the double doors stopped approximately 0.4m above ground level. Rebated blocks were fitted to the door posts for leap boards, horizontal planks used to fill the gap below the door. The low fence formed by leap boards could help to retain grain on threshing floors and restrict access to animals; also the shortened doors would remain clear of uneven ground. The central part of the building, corresponding to the position of the double doors was open to the roof.

To either side of the open bay, the building was subdivided by the insertion of mid-height floors to form lofts. The division was not even, the loft in the east end of the building was 4.6m long whilst that at the west was 3.56m long.

The loft in the western end was divided from the central bay by an internal, weatherboard partition which extended up to tie beam level. Its planked floor was supported by narrow joists which were in turn supported by two east-west aligned beams. The eastern end of these beams were supported by two vertical posts made from reused railway sleepers whilst the western end was supported by rectangular section posts of c. 0.15m x 0.05m section. The beams themselves and a beam that supported the partition were constructed from relatively thin sections of timber, paired up to form more substantial beams. The western loft was accessible either via a door in the partition wall or via a trapdoor situated in its south-eastern corner. A ladder of horizontal timbers was fixed to the south wall above and below the trapdoor. Internally the loft was lined with weatherboarding up to eaves level with area above on the gable wall left unlined. The loft was lit by a single window in the gable wall. The window was divided into six by vertical glazing bars.

The loft in the eastern end of the building had two floors. These floors and a partition wall up to tie beam level were lightly constructed using narrow wooden battens with gaps between. The first floor was supported by four vertical posts which in turn supported north-south aligned beams. As in the western loft the beams were made up from thin sections used in pairs and the two westernmost posts consisted of reused railway sleepers. The second floor was supported by three posts arranged above the central beam that supported the joists of the first floor. Access to the eastern loft was provided by a door in the partition, a trapdoor in the south-west corner of the loft or a high level door in the eastern wall. The partition door was constructed in the same method as the partition itself, using narrow vertical battens with gaps between. Details of the trapdoor were similar to that seen in the western loft, with a ladder built into the southern wall. Additional ventilation for the upper floor was provided in the form of horizontal vent in the upper part of the eastern gable of the building. It was not possible to access this feature for detailed examination. An external horizontal projection above the vent may have been to prevent the entry of water. It is unclear whether this was hinged to allow the vent to be closed. A vertical post above the vent held by iron staples may have been part of a mechanism for operating the vent.



3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Discussion

Evidence from historic maps indicates that the barn was constructed after 1900. It is first shown on the third edition Ordnance Survey 25" map which was surveyed in 1921. The use of machine cut softwood, primary bracing and nailed fixings is consistent with construction in this period.

Differences are apparent between the shell of the building and the floors. The shell is framed using single baulks of new timber in a variety of sizes appropriate to each component of the frame. The dimensions of the panels which make up the frame are consistent throughout. The floors appear to have been inserted into the finished shell rather than being integral to its construction. The outer ends of the floor beams supporting the joists are supported on narrow baulks of timber set up against the inside of the framing of the buildings. The timber used in the floor beams consists of relatively thin cross-sections which have been doubled up where necessary to form sections of sufficient width. In addition the four principle vertical posts, situated on either side of the open bay, are re-used railway sleepers. The junctions between the vertical and horizontal components of the floors are reinforced with triangular wooden gussets.

The differences in construction between shell and floors suggest that these represent different phases of construction. It is possible that the shell was built by specialist contractors whilst the internal work was improvised, making use of a limited range of timber. This second phase could have been carried out shortly after the construction of the shell. The rate assessment evidence indicates that the barn existed in its present state before 1927.

The construction of the two floors in the eastern bay is consistent with use for the storage of onions. Examples of a particular type of purpose built onion sheds with slatted walls occur in this part of Bedfordshire around Biggleswade. This barn though of standard construction was modified internally for this specialised use, leaving little external evidence.

Market gardening formed an important part of the local economy in the Ivel valley around Biggleswade, particularly from the mid nineteenth with improved transport by railway and the growing demand due to the expansion of London. With the link between the railway and local agriculture it is interesting to see the use of railway sleepers used in the construction of the barn. In 1901 the railway station in Biggleswade was relocated and work carried out on the tracks. It is possible that this provided the source for the sleepers used in the barn.

Changes in agricultural practice and re-development have led to a situation where traditional farm buildings are an increasingly diminishing resource within the historic landscape. This example, though relatively recent, is of



interest and worthy of record due to its connection with the development of the local market gardening economy.

3.2 Project Archive

The project archive will be deposited at Bedford Museum under accession code 2009/84.



REFERENCES

Albion Archaeology 2001 Procedures Manual Vol. 1 Fieldwork 2nd edition.

Albion Archaeology 2009 *Land off Church Street, Langford, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication* Albion Report 2009/1

CBC 2009 *Brief for Programme of Building Recording and Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication at Land Off Church Street, Langford, Bedfordshire.*

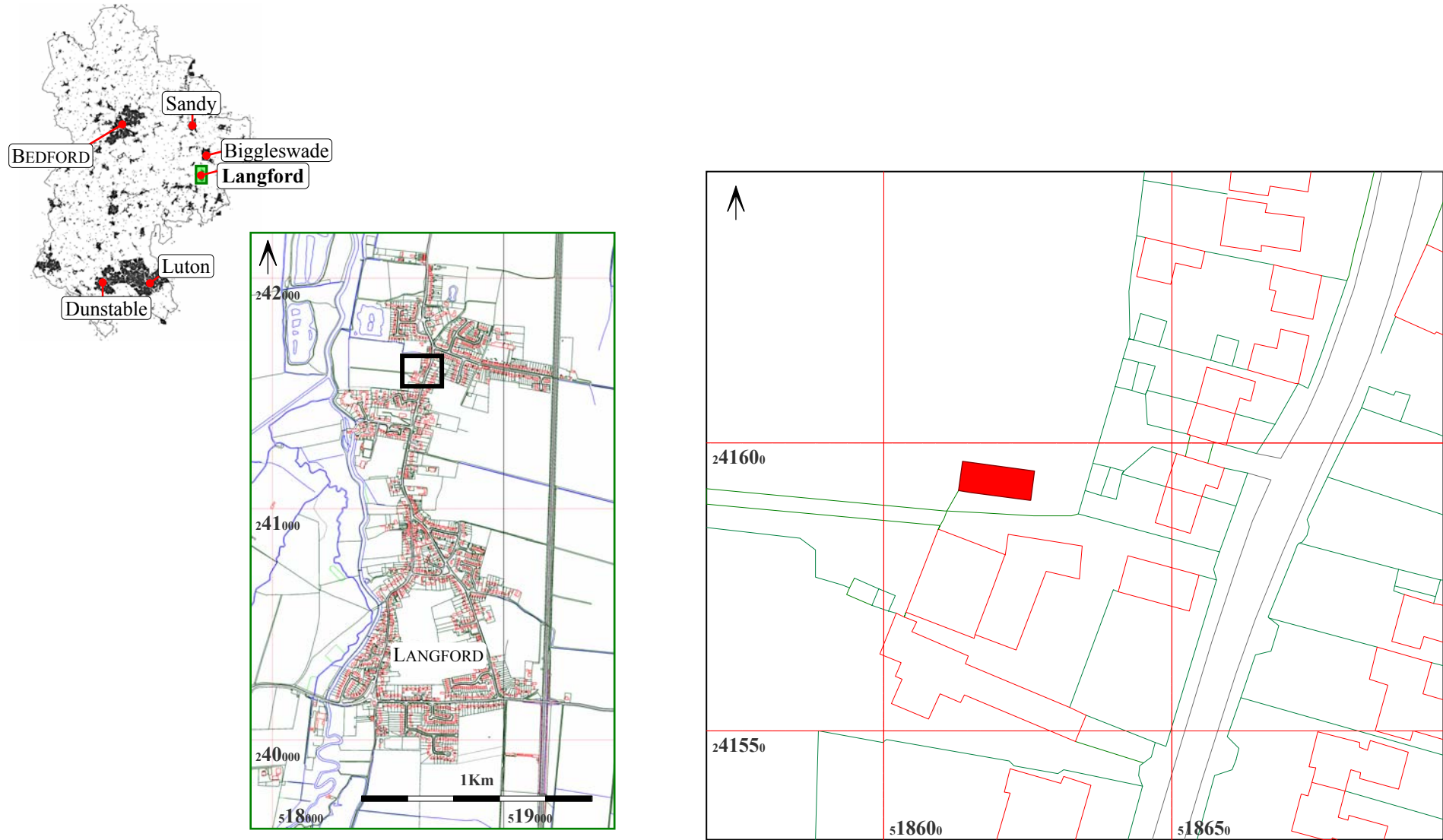
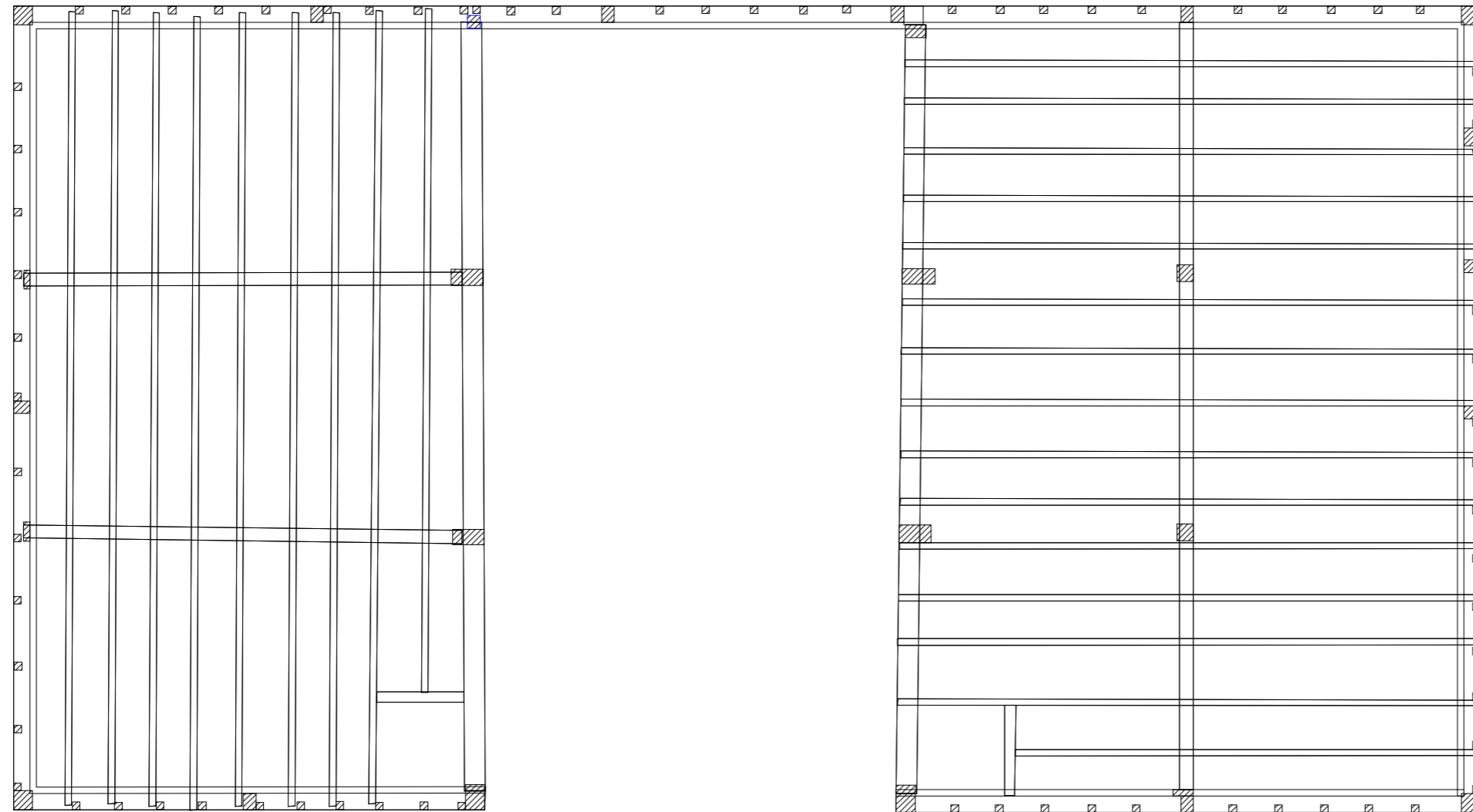


Figure 1: Site location plan

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.



Church Lane, Langford
Figure 2: Plan



Plate 1: South elevation



Plate 2: North elevation



Plate 3: West elevation



Plate 4: East elevation



Plate 5: Interior view of central bay looking north



Plate 6: Interior view of roof structure



Plate 7: Interior view looking east



Plate 8: Interior view looking west