



Land at Howard Close Wilstead Bedfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation





on behalf of: Lagan Homes Ltd and Clarence Country Homes Ltd

> CA Project: MK0393 CA Report: MK0393_1

> > March 2021

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1	11.03.2021	Eilidh Barr	Anna Wolf	Draft	_	Adrian Scruby

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SUMMARY

Project name: Land at Howard Close

Location: Wilstead, Bedfordshire

NGR: 506557 243051

Type: Evaluation

Project Number: MK0393

Date: 8-10 February 2021

Planning reference: 19/01019/MAO (Appeal ref. APP/K0235/W/19/3237824)

Location of Archive: To be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery and Museum

In February 2021, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Howard Close, Wilstead, Bedfordshire, on behalf of Lagan Homes Ltd and Clarence Country Homes Ltd. Seven trenches were excavated across the 1.7ha development area.

Evidence for recent activity within the site was observed in the form of a northwest/southeast aligned lead water pipe running across trenches 1-3. A single pit of unknown date was investigated near the northeast edge of the site in trench 3. No other features of archaeological interest were identified.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In February 2021, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at Howard Close, Wilstead, Bedfordshire (centred at NGR: 506557 243051; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken on behalf of Lagan Homes Ltd and Clarence Country Homes Ltd.
- 1.2. An initial outline planning application (Ref 19/01019/MAO) made to Bedford Borough Council for the erection of 30 dwellings (including affordable, self-build and build for rent) with all matters reserved except access was refused but subsequently granted on appeal (Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/19/3237824), subject to a number of conditions. Condition 9 of this planning permission, included on the advice of the Bedford Borough Council Archaeological Officer (AOBBC; Geoff Saunders), states that:

No development shall take place until an archaeological strategy for evaluation and, if necessary, a further mitigation strategy based on the outcome of the evaluation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

1.3. The evaluation was carried out in line with the Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020), Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation (Historic England 2015a) and Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide (Historic England 2015b).

The site

- 1.4. The development site is approximately 1.7ha in extent. It lies on the southern side of the village of Wilstead, to the south of Bedford (Fig. 1). The site currently comprises a single rectangular parcel of land with areas of scrubland, bounded to the east by agricultural land and to the north, south and west by residential development. The site lies at approximately 44m AOD on mostly flat ground.
- 1.5. The underlying bedrock geology of the site is mapped as mudstone of the Stewartby Member and Weymouth Member (undifferentiated), formed approximately 157 to 166 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. No superficial deposits are recorded for the area (BGS 2021).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The archaeological background to the site has been previously presented in detail as part of a Desk-based Assessment (DBA; CgMs 2015). A search of the Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (BBHER 050 (2020-21)) was also undertaken in December 2021 to update the baseline information contained in the DBA.

Prehistoric and Romano-British

- 2.2. Two undated, but probable prehistoric, rectangular ditched enclosures are recorded c. 900m north-west of the site.
- 2.3. A field, c. 1km south-west of the site, named 'Burnt Ground' could suggest an Iron Age or Roman occupation site, though there is no archaeological evidence for this.
- 2.4. Excavations in advance of a housing development on Luton Road, c. 350m northwest of the site, uncovered the site of a small Iron Age farmstead that was redeveloped during the Roman period. The remains of domestic timber buildings were uncovered along with evidence for sheep and cattle rearing. Evidence of ritual activity was suggested by a pit containing 3 sheep skulls, each facing a different direction. The Iron Age farmstead was replaced in the Roman period by a rectangular, ditched, multiple enclosure system with settlement features in each enclosure. In the later Roman period another single enclosure on a different alignment with fewer settlement features was laid out. An early Medieval settlement, which had two domestic foci separated by a boundary ditch, was also recorded at the Luton Road excavation.

Medieval and post-medieval

- 2.5. Archaeological works, including geophysical survey, trial trenching (MOLA 2018) and excavation, undertaken on land off Whitworth Way, approximately 250m to the northeast of the site, have revealed an extensive and previously unknown area of 12th century settlement.
- 2.6. Areas of medieval ridge and furrow have also been recorded in the vicinity of the site, which is situated away from the historic village core and is therefore likely to lay in the former medieval open fields.
- 2.7. A possible medieval/post-medieval moated farmstead located approximately 710m to the northwest of the site is visible as earthworks on aerial photographs at Wilstead and was mapped as part of the Bedford Borough NMP project. The earthworks form

a square ditched enclosure which is divided by a ditch though this may be later in date as a pond has formed in the northern corner and the dividing ditch may relate to land drainage. The outer ditch encloses an area that measures about 47metres across. It is situated at the corner of a former road leading to and from Wilstead and the enclosure is respected by the surrounding ridge and furrow cultivation.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objective of the evaluation is to provide further information on the likely archaeological resource within the site, including g its presence/absence, character, extent, date and state of preservation. This information will enable Bedford Borough Council to identify and assess the particular significance of any archaeological heritage assets within the site, consider the impact of the proposed development upon that significance and, if appropriate, develop strategies to avoid or minimise conflict between heritage asset conservation and the development proposal, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2019). A further objective of the project is to compile a stable, ordered, accessible project archive (see Section 7).
- 1.1. The results of the investigation will be assessed and, where relevant, reference will be made to the regional research objectives outlined in:
 - Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 1, Resource Assessment (Glazebrook, J. 1997);
 - Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2,
 Research Agenda and Strategy (Brown, N & Glazebrook, J. 2000);
 - Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy (Oake et al 2007);
 - Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England (Medlycott 2011);
 - The Regional Historic Environment Research Framework for the East of England - Regional Research Framework Review (EAA/ ALGAO East, 2018).

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The evaluation fieldwork comprised the excavation of 7 trenches in the locations shown on Fig. 2, with six measuring 40m long by 2m wide and one measuring 36m long by 2m wide and totalling 552sqm. The trenches were located to provide a representative sample of the of the site.
- 4.2. The locations of trenches 1- 4 and 7 were adjusted due to the presence of dense shrubs and trees occupying the northwest quarter of the site. Trench 1 was moved 6m to the northeast. Trench 2 was pivoted resulting in an almost east-west alignment and shortened by 4m. Trench 3 was shifted 6m towards the northeast, and Trench 4 was changed to a northeast-southwest alignment and moved 8m towards the east. Lastly trench 7 was moved 12 m towards the northeast.
- 4.3. Trenches were set out on OS National Grid co-ordinates using Leica GPS. Overburden was stripped from the trenches by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision to the top of the natural substrate, which was the level at which archaeological features were first encountered.
- 4.4. Archaeological features/deposits were investigated, planned and recorded in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual.
- 4.5. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites. No deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.6. CA will make arrangements with The Higgins Art Gallery and Museum (the Musuem) for the deposition of the project archive. A digital archive will also be prepared and deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). The archives (museum and digital) will be prepared and deposited in accordance with the Museum guidelines (Bedford Museum 2010) and the Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives respectively (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020).
- 4.7. A summary of information from this project, as set out in Appendix B, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the evaluation results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts can be found in Appendix A. No finds or samples were recovered from the site.
- 5.2. The natural substrate was encountered at depths ranging between of 0.3m and 0.57m below present ground level (bgpl) and comprised mid red-brown silty clay with flecks of light grey-blue throughout. The substratel was covered by a subsoil deposit of mid orange-brown silty clay measuring between 0.06m and 0.45m thick. This was sealed in turn by topsoil comprised of mid to dark grey-brown silty clay which contained some rounded stone inclusions and was observed to be heavily root-disturbed. The topsoil ranged in thickness between 0.1m and 0.24m. No archaeological features or deposits of any kind were encountered in trenches 1, 2 and 4-7 (see Figs. 3-6 for photographs of trenches 1, 5, 6, and 7); however, a relatively modern lead water pipe was observed running on a northwest-southeast alignment through trenches 1-3.

Trench 3 (Fig. 7)

5.3. A single pit 303 was encountered in Trench 3, partially exposed at the eastern end of the trench. The feature measured 0.7m long, 1.14m wide and 0.4m deep and contained two fills. The lower deposit (304) comprised mid grey-blue silty clay containing occasional charcoal flecks and measured 0.25m thick. This was overlain by a secondary fill 305, measuring 0.16m thick and composed of mid orange-brown silty clay. No finds were recovered from the feature and no environmental samples taken.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. The results of the evaluation suggest that activity related to the Iron Age and Romano-British farmstead recorded to the northwest of the site does not extend into the proposed development area. It is likely that the site formed part of the agricultural hinterland surrounding the site.
- 6.2. Equally, it appears that the site also remained untouched by the 12th settlement recorded to the northeast, and the medieval settlement at the core of the present village of Wilstead to the north and continued to be located within the agricultural hinterland surrounding these focal points.

6.3. Evidence of recent activity within the site itself was encountered in the form of a lead water pipe running across trenches 1-3, likely relating to previous uses of the site as livestock pasture or similar.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

7.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Eilidh Barr, assisted by Isak Ekberg, Christian Burgess, and Shannon Lucas. This report was written by Eilidh Barr. The report illustrations were prepared by Rosanna Price. The project archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Hazel O'Neill. The project was managed for CA by Adrian Scruby.

8. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

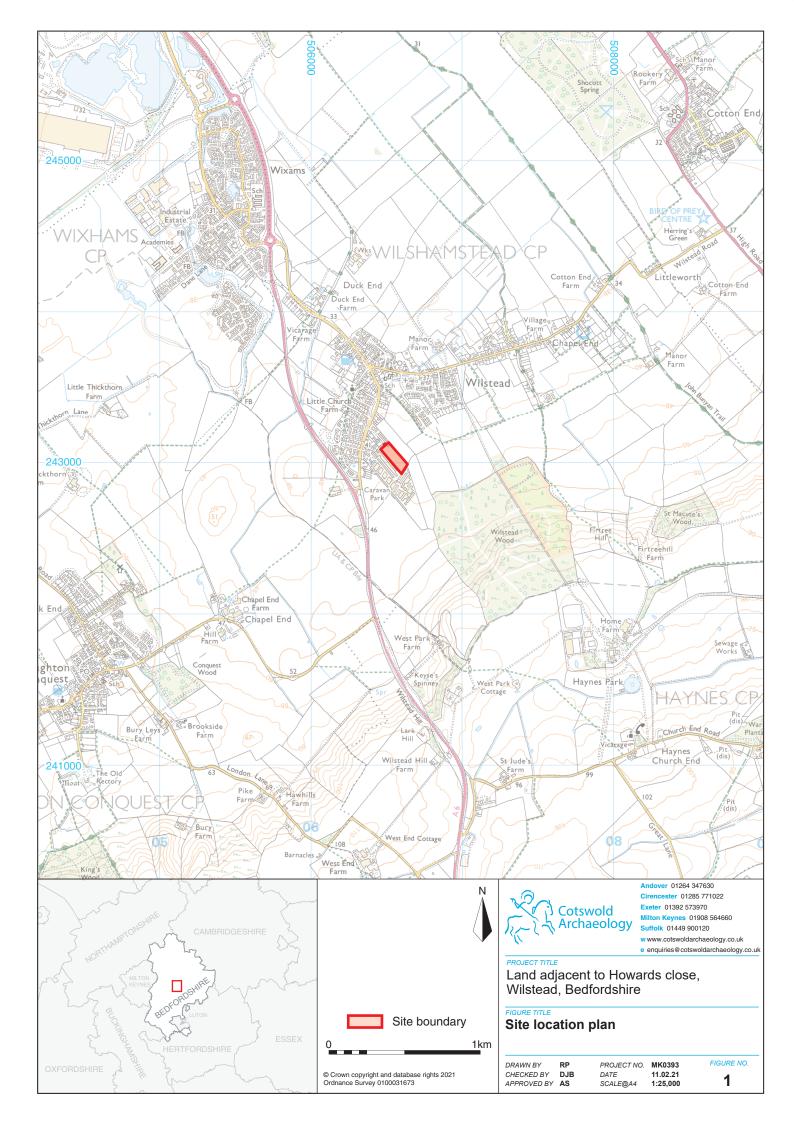
Trench	Context No.	Туре	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/ thickness (m)
1	100	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown, silty clay with rooting and turf deposits	40	2	0.15
1	101	Layer		Subsoil	Mid grey brown silty clay with occasional roots and rounded pebbles present	40	2	0.2
1	102	Layer		Natural	Mid red brown, silty clay with patches of light grey blue clay throughout	40	2	-
2	200	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown, silty clay with rooting and turf deposits	40	2	0.14
2	201	Layer		Subsoil	Mid grey brown silty clay with occasional roots and rounded pebbles present	40	2	0.26
2	202	Layer		Natural	Mid orange yellow clay with gravel inclusions and patches of mid greyish blue clay throughout	40	2	>0.4
3	300	Layer		Topsoil	Dark grey brown, silty clay with rooting and turf inclusions throughout	40	2	0.12
3	301	Layer		Subsoil	Mid grey brown, silty clay with occasional rooting and rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.45
3	302	Layer		Natural	Mid yellowish orange clay with fragmented flint inclusions	40	2	>0.26
3	303	cut		Pit	Cut of pit, steep irregular sides and a flattish base	1.18	0.7	0.4
3	304	Fill	303	Primary fill	Dark greyish brown, silty clay, friable with occasional small fleck of charcoal and rub rounded stone inclusion	1.04	0.7	0.25
3	305	Fill	303	Secondary fill	Light orangey brown, silty clay, friable, with occasional small subrounded stone inclusions	1.18	0.7	0.16
4	400	Layer		Topsoil	Dark greyish brown, silty clay, friable with rooting and rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.15
4	401	Layer		Subsoil	Mid greyish brown, silty clay, firm with occasional rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.2
4	402	Layer		Natural	Mid red brown silty clay with some light greyish blue clay patches	40	2	>0.35
5	500	Layer		Topsoil	Dark greyish brown, silty clay, friable with rooting and rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.15
5	501	Layer		Subsoil	Mid greyish brown, silty clay, firm with occasional rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.25
5	502	Layer		Natural	Mid red brown silty clay with some light greyish blue clay patches	40	2	>0.4
6	600	Layer		Topsoil	Dark greyish brown, silty clay, friable with rooting and rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.1
6	601	Layer		Subsoil	Mid greyish brown, silty clay, firm with occasional rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.2
6	602	Layer		Natural	Mid red brown silty clay with some light greyish blue clay patches	40	2	>0.3

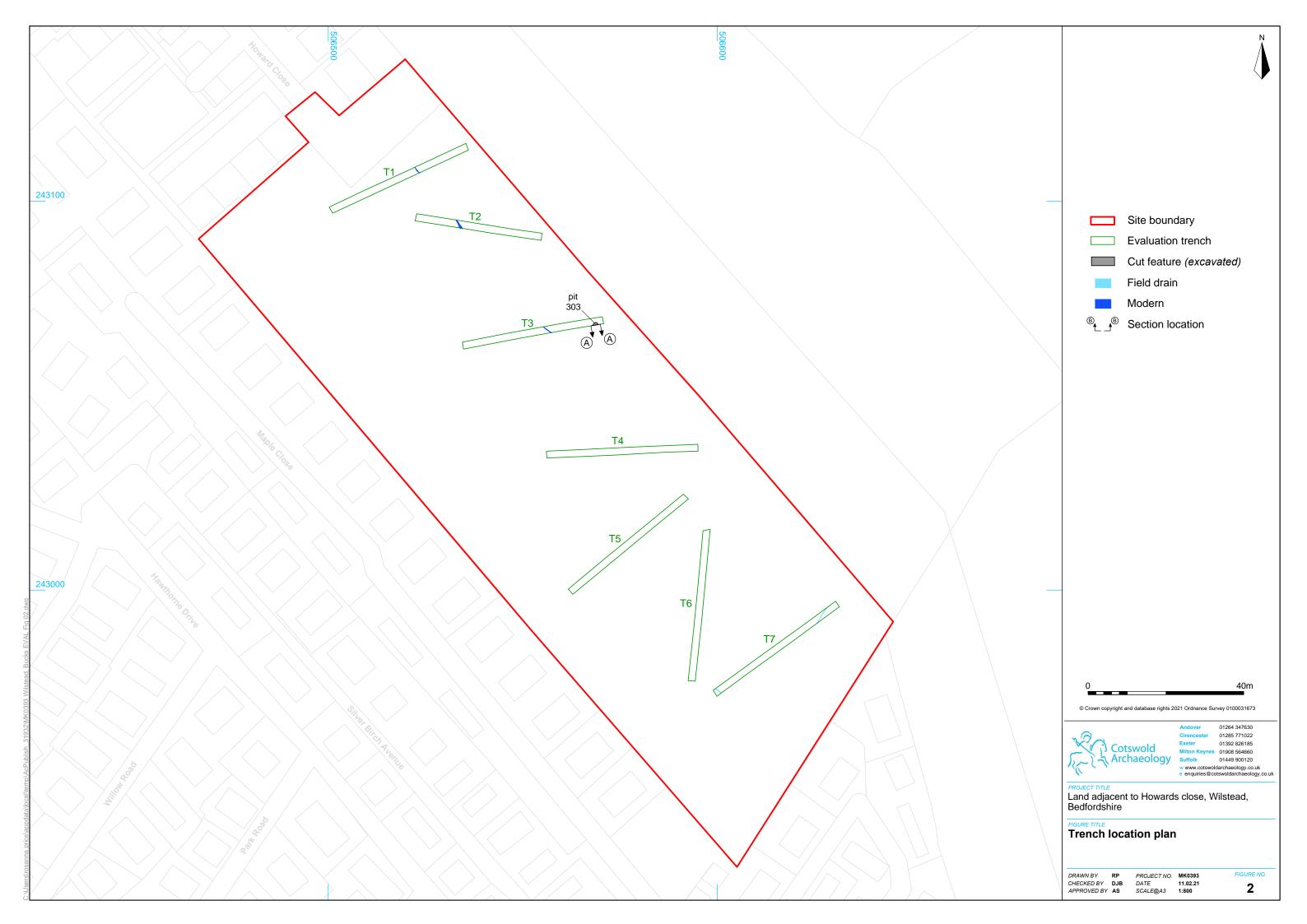
7	700	Layer	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown, silty clay, friable with rooting and rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.24
7	701	Layer	Subsoil	Mid greyish brown, silty clay, firm with occasional rounded stone inclusions	40	2	0.06
7	702	Layer	Natural	Mid orangey brown silty clay with some light greyish blue clay patches	40	2	>0.3

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

Project name	Land at Howard Close, Wilstead, Bedfo	rdshire				
Short description	In February 2021, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an					
		archaeological evaluation of land at Howard Close, Wilstead,				
		Bedfordshire, on behalf of Lagan Homes Ltd and Clarence				
		Country Homes Ltd. A total of 7 trenches were excavated across				
	the proposed development area.					
	A single pit of unclear date was investig	ated near the northeast				
	edge of the site in trench 3 but no finds	or deposits suitable for				
	environmental sampling were encounte					
	activity within the site was observed in t					
	northwest/southeast aligned lead water	pipe running across				
	trenches 1-3.					
	The results of the fieldwork suggest that					
	development site has consistently formed part of the agricultural hinterland of several distinct phases of settlement activity in the					
	immediate area; first an Iron Age and R					
	to the northwest and subsequent settler					
	medieval village at Wilstead, located to the north within the current village.					
Project dates	8-10 Feburary 2021					
Project type	Field evaluation					
Previous work	none					
Future work	Unknown					
PROJECT LOCATION						
Site location	Howard Close, Wilstead, Bedfordshire					
Study area (m²/ha)	1.7ha	, , ,				
Site co-ordinates	506557 243051					
PROJECT CREATORS	<u> </u>					
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology					
Project brief originator	Bedford Borough Council					
Project design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology					
Project Manager	Adrian Scruby					
Project Supervisor	Eilidh Barr					
MONUMENT TYPE	Pit (undated)					
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None					
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery animal bone etc)				
Physical	n/a	n/a				
Paper	The Higgins Art Gallery and Museum	Trench sheets, context				
1	35 2	sheets, registers,				
		drawings				
Digital	The Higgins Art Gallery and Museum;	Digital photographs				
~	ADS					
BIBLIOGRAPHY	•	•				

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General shot of trench 1 (blank trench), looking south-west



General shot of trench 6 (blank trench), looking north-east



General shot of trench 5 (blank trench), looking south-west



General shot of trench 7 (blank trench), looking south-west



Andover 01264 347630 Cirencester 01285 771022 Exeter 01392 573970 Milton Keynes 01908 564660 Suffolk 01449 900120

ROJECT TITLE

Land adjacent to Howards close, Wilstead, Bedfordshire

FIGURE TITLE

Photographs

 DRAWN BY
 RP
 PROJECT NO.
 MK0393

 CHECKED BY
 DJB
 DATE
 11.02.21

 APPROVED BY
 AS
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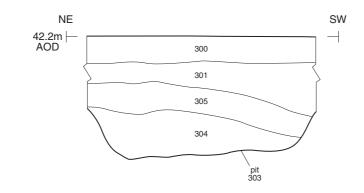


General shot of trench 3, looking north-east



Pit 303, looking south-east (1m scale)





1:20



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Land adjacent to Howards close, Wilstead, Bedfordshire

Trench 3: section and photographs

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