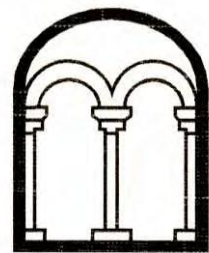


**4 LEA ROAD
LUTON
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION, RECORDING,
ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



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ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

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Ian Turner	Wesley Keir	Drew Shotliff

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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.

Acknowledgements

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Mr Ishwinder Binning of CellarVino. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

Fieldwork was carried out by Ian Turner and Wiebke Starke (Archaeological Supervisors). This report was prepared by Ian Turner. Figures were created by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

Albion Archaeology
 St Mary's Church
 St Mary's Street
 Bedford, MK42 0AS
 ☎: 0300 300 8141
 Fax: 0300 300 8209
 E-mail: office@albion-arch.com
 Website: www.albion-arch.com

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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologists
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
OS	Ordnance Survey
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-technical Summary

Luton Borough Council granted planning permission (10/01248/FUL) for the construction of student accommodation at 4 Lea Road, Luton.

The development area was judged likely to contain archaeological remains related to medieval Luton and, in particular, the moat of Fulk de Breauté's early 13th-century castle. Due to the potential impact of the development upon the significance of this locally designated heritage asset, a condition (no. 12) was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This condition was in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

An archaeological open area excavation on the site was carried out between 16th and 24th July 2012.

The excavation confirmed the location of the south-west arm of the moat of Fulk de Breauté's 13th-century castle. It was revealed to be similar in character to the north-west arm of the moat excavated in 2009 — appearing to be largely filled with deposits that had accumulated during the post-medieval and later periods.

Though previous excavations a short distance to the north had revealed features likely to be associated with the use of the castle, no other features associated with the castle were revealed within the site. This may simply be due to the site's close proximity to the edge of the moat — a location unlikely to have been the focus of intensive activity.

A colluvial deposit containing late Neolithic to early Bronze Age worked flint was also revealed. Though these artefacts are likely to have moved some distance from their originally deposited location, they do indicate activity of this date in the vicinity. No finds or features predating the Iron Age period have previously been identified within a 500m radius of the site.

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (accession no. 2012.26). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-131863).



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Luton Borough Council granted planning permission (10/01248/FUL) for the construction of student accommodation at 4 Lea Road, Luton.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologists (CBCA), archaeological advisers to Luton Borough Council, advised that the development had the potential to impact upon the significance of a locally designated heritage asset and accordingly a condition (no. 12) was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. This condition was in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

A brief (CBC 2012) outlining a programme of archaeological investigation and recording comprising an open area excavation was issued by the CBCA.

The archaeological excavation was carried out in accordance with the brief and a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2012) between 16th and 24th July 2012.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The site lies within central Luton, *c.* 170m to the SSE of the parish church of St Mary (Figure 1). It is *c.* 200m² in extent and is centred on grid reference TL 0958 2101. It is bounded on all sides by urban development, dominated by the Park Viaduct to the south-east and the headquarters of the Luton Corps of the Salvation Army to the north-west.

At the time of the investigations the site was derelict land, which had previously been occupied by a, subsequently demolished, ambulance station.

Luton sits at the north end of the Lea Gap, cut through the Chilterns by the River Lea, which flows *c.* 200m to the north-east of the site. In this part of Luton the chalk bedrock is overlain by head deposits comprised of clay, silt, sand and gravel. The parish church is sited on a chalk knoll, which extends into the river valley. The original town was positioned in the valley, taking advantage of the knoll and the river for protection (Edwards 1974, 33). The site lies within the valley of the River Lea; it is effectively level ground, at *c.* 105m OD.

1.3 *Status and Purpose of this Document*

Given the nature of the recovered data sets, this report presents the results of all stages of the archaeological investigations including any required analysis of the results. This approach was agreed with the CBCA during the final site monitoring meeting.



1.4 **Archaeological Background**

The archaeological and historical background for the site is summarised in a heritage statement (Albion Archaeology 2011b) submitted with the planning application.

The most significant heritage assets identified by the heritage assessment relate to medieval Luton and, in particular, Fulk de Breauté's early 13th-century castle which lay immediately to the south-east of the parish church of St Mary. Though historically termed a 'castle', the moated site was also a manorial centre — a court house was documented on the site until the early 17th century.

The castle was located on the south side of the church and covered most of the area from the church to Lea Road (Dyer and Dony 1975, 47–48). Its exact extent is unknown, although the 1842 tithe map does depict what may be the south-east corner of the precinct in the vicinity of the site. Excavation 100m to the north-west of the site in 2009 did locate the north-west side of the castle's moat; the ditch was up to 12m wide and 3m deep (Keir forthcoming; see Figure 3). Part of the remains of a contemporary, large, timber-framed building was also found within the circuit of the moat.

Features also likely to be related to the manorial complex were revealed during investigations to the north of the site in 2010 (ASE 2010) and 2011 (Albion Archaeology 2011a; Marshall-Woodley & Abrams forthcoming) (see Figure 3). The 2010 investigations were undertaken immediately to the north of the site and revealed 13th- or 14th-century pits and ditches that were sealed by a series of soil horizons. An industrial area consisting of large pits along with a series of parallel ditches and fences were identified during the 2011 investigations.

Though Roman material was recovered during the nearby Vicarage Street excavations (ASE 2010), there is less surviving evidence for the pre-medieval period, largely due to the relative absence of archaeological investigation during the redevelopment of central Luton from the late 1960s onwards. Map evidence suggests that for much of the post-medieval period the site was open ground on the outskirts of Luton until it was developed for housing in the late 19th century.

1.5 **Project Objectives**

The overall purpose of the archaeological works was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of the site in its cultural and environmental setting, and to prepare and disseminate a report that fully described the findings (this document).

The aims of the investigation included:

- establishing the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation within the site;
- establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- recovering palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.



2 METHODOLOGY

Due to the confined nature of the site and with the agreement of the CBCA, the site was investigated in two halves — the southern half being investigated first, followed by the northern half with the resulting spoil being transferred to the southern half.

All topsoil and overburden were removed by a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket, except where a toothed bucket was required to remove substantial slabs of concrete or tarmac.

Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked on a regular basis for the recovery of archaeological artefacts.

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

IfA	<i>Code of Conduct Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (updated 2008)</i>
Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd edn, 2001)</i>
English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (2009)</i>
East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14	Gurney, D., 2003, <i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i>

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2012).



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All archaeological features and deposits revealed during the excavation are discussed chronologically below and shown on Figure 2. Details of any recovered artefacts and ecofacts are integrated within the text.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The overburden revealed across the site was largely associated with the demolition of the ambulance station that had previously occupied the site. These deposits were up to *c.* 1m thick and are described below (from the uppermost to the lowest):

- (100) Demolition spread — loose silty sand with frequent large modern brick and concrete fragments, 0.50–1.10m thick.
- (101) Demolition spread — only present in patches towards the eastern edge of the site. Comprised loose mid brown grey sandy silt with moderate small modern roof tile and brick fragments, 0.24m thick.

These deposits overlay undisturbed geological deposits of the following nature (described from the uppermost to the lowest):

- (105) Light brown orange silty clay with occasional small and medium sized stones, depth not known.
- (102) Light orange brown silty clay with frequent small and medium sized stones, *c.* 0.20m thick.
- (114) Mid orange brown clay silt, mottled with patches of mid brown clay silt and with occasional small and medium sized stones, *c.* 0.29m thick.
- (103) Light brown orange silty clay with frequent small and medium sized stones *c.* 0.50m thick.
- (104) Light white chalk, depth not known.

Part of layer (114) was hand excavated to confirm its nature due to the irregular but clearly defined boundaries between it and layers (103) and (105). It was found to be overlain by geological deposit (105), appearing to slope down gently towards the north. A few worked flints of probable late Neolithic to early Bronze Age date were recovered. These comprised a multi-platform core, two hard hammer struck secondary flakes, a tertiary flake with evidence for possible platform preparation, a large cortical flake (possibly created during core testing) and a flake with a damaged proximal end and a nicked lateral edge. A bulk soil sample (30 litres) of the deposit produced three small fragments of burnt stone, three small un-worked flint fragments and four small fragments of charcoal which may have entered the deposit through worm action.

Its largely sterile nature and relationship with naturally derived layer (105), suggests layer (114) is most likely to have accumulated naturally through colluvial processes on the downward slope above the River Lea to the north-



east. The worked flint may have been derived from the erosion of deposits located further up-slope to the south-west.

3.3 The Castle Moat

A large, WNW-ESE aligned ditch was partially revealed in the southern end of the site. It corresponds with the postulated course of the southern-most arm of the moat belonging to Fulk de Breauté's 13th-century castle (Figure 3).

Initially, a small segment [107] was excavated by hand to confirm its nature. Due to its excessive depth and with the agreement of the CBCA, a larger section [117] was then excavated by machine which identified that the moat was at least 3m deep and at least 5m wide. Its full width continued beyond the southern limits of the site.

The moat was filled with four distinct deposits, similar in character to those excavated during the 2009 excavation of the moat to the north-west (Keir forthcoming). The primary deposit (118) was a loose mid grey sandy silt with frequent stones likely to be derived from weathering and slumping of the sides of the moat. The secondary deposit (119) was a black, humic clay silt, up to 0.9m thick, which is likely to have accumulated over a considerable length of time. It contained two fragments of post-medieval peg tile (25g). This deposit was similar to waterlogged deposits sampled in the moat sections excavated in 2009. These contained a considerable amount of medieval and post-medieval artefacts and were thought to be derived through a mixture of natural silting and waste disposal during the post-medieval period.

The upper two deposits (120 and 121) of mid-grey and light orange-brown clay silt probably represent deliberate back-filling of the moat. They contained five pieces of post-medieval roof tile (234g), and three base and lower body sherds (45g) from a black-glazed earthenware mug or butter pot (fabric code P03). These deposits are likely to be associated with the levelling and development of the area for terraced housing in the late 19th century, as shown on the 1901 OS map.

3.4 Modern Features

Concrete foundations associated with the recently demolished ambulance station and modern demolition layers were present across the site.



4 CONCLUSIONS

The excavation confirmed the location of the south-west arm of the moat of Fulk de Breauté's 13th-century castle. It was revealed to be similar in character to the section of the north-west arm of the moat excavated in 2009 — appearing to be largely filled with deposits that had accumulated during the post-medieval and later periods.

Though previous excavations a short distance to the north had revealed features likely to be associated with the use of the castle, no other features associated with the castle were revealed within the site. This may simply be due to the site's close proximity to the edge of the moat — a location unlikely to have been the focus of intensive activity.

Though they are likely to have moved some distance from their originally deposited location, the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age worked flint found within the colluvial layer do indicate activity of this date in the vicinity. No finds or features predating the Iron Age period have previously been identified within a 500m radius of the site.

This report will be uploaded onto the ADS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS ref: albionar1-131863). Following approval of this document by the CBCA, the archive of materials (subject to the landowner's permission) and accompanying records will be deposited with Luton Museum (accession no. 2012.26).



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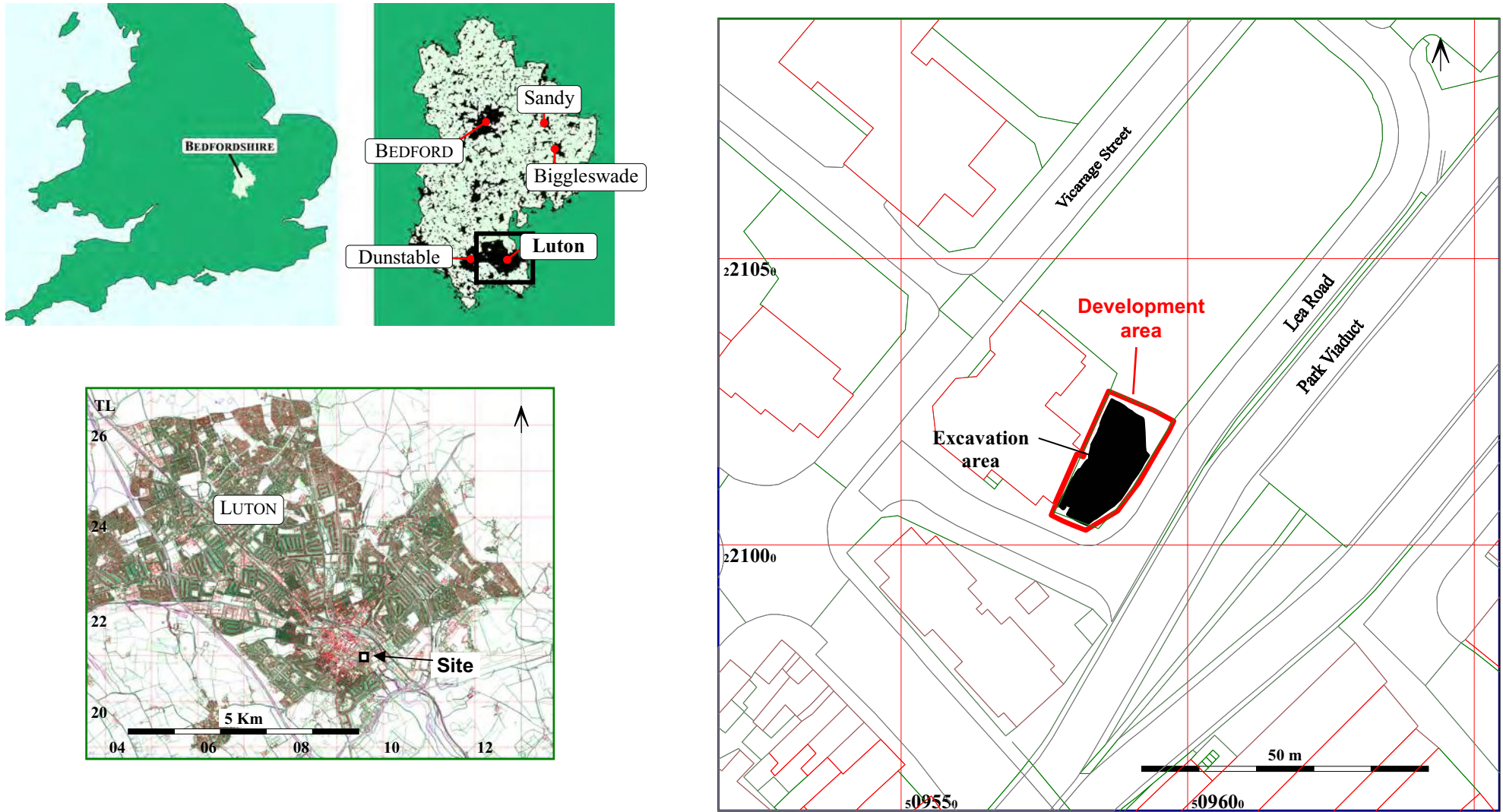
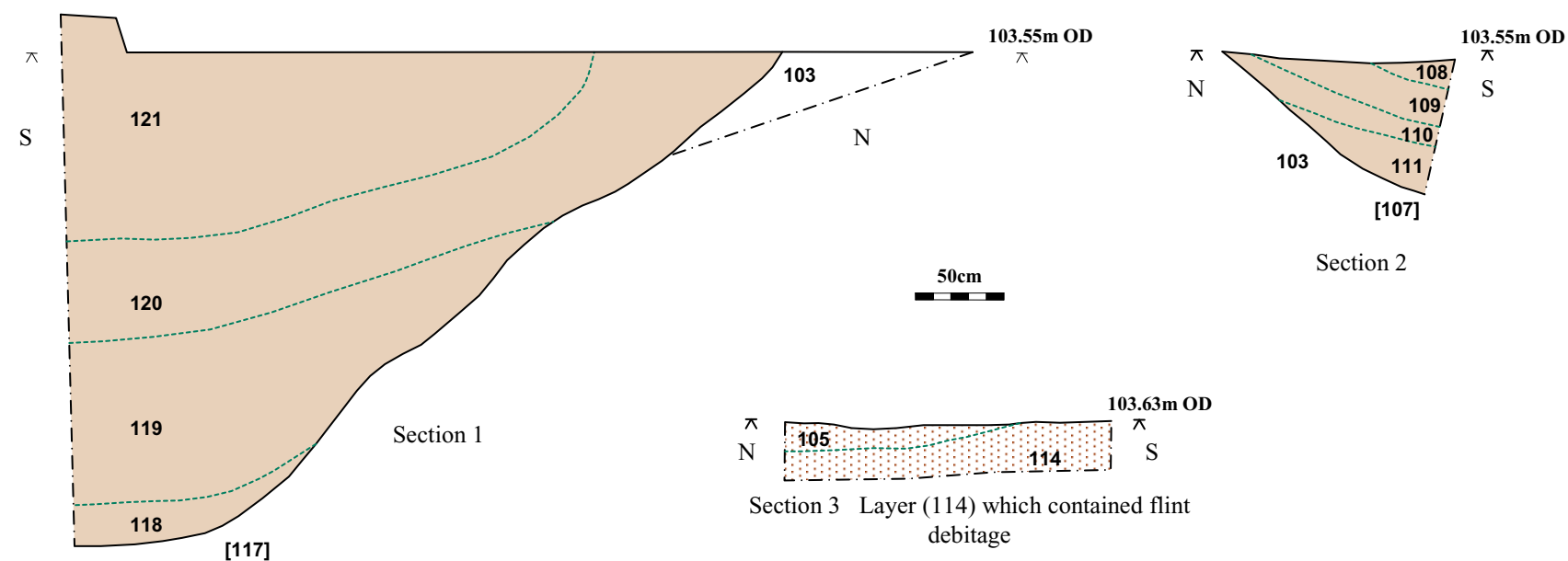
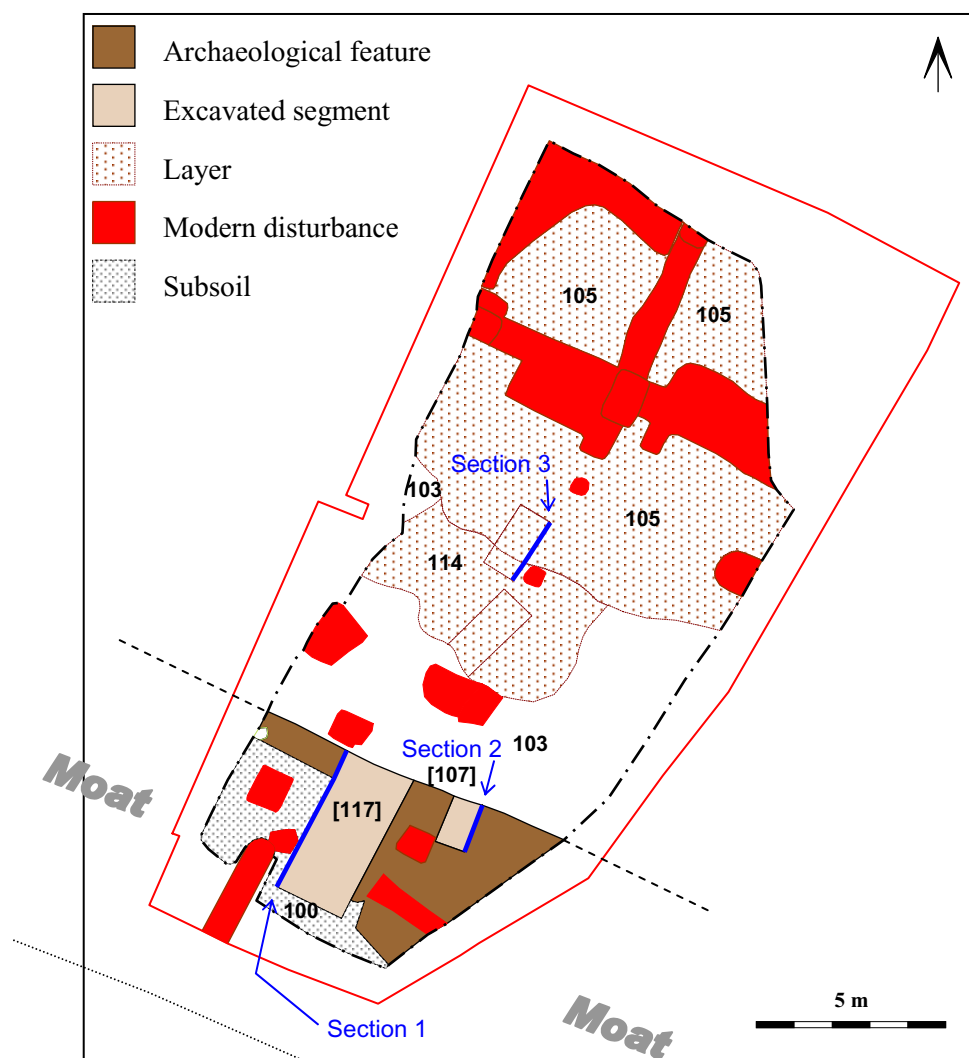


Figure 1: Site location

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Section 1: A machine cut section exposing the edge of the Moat [177]



Section 2: A hand dug section exposing the edge of the moat [107]

Figure 2: Excavation area

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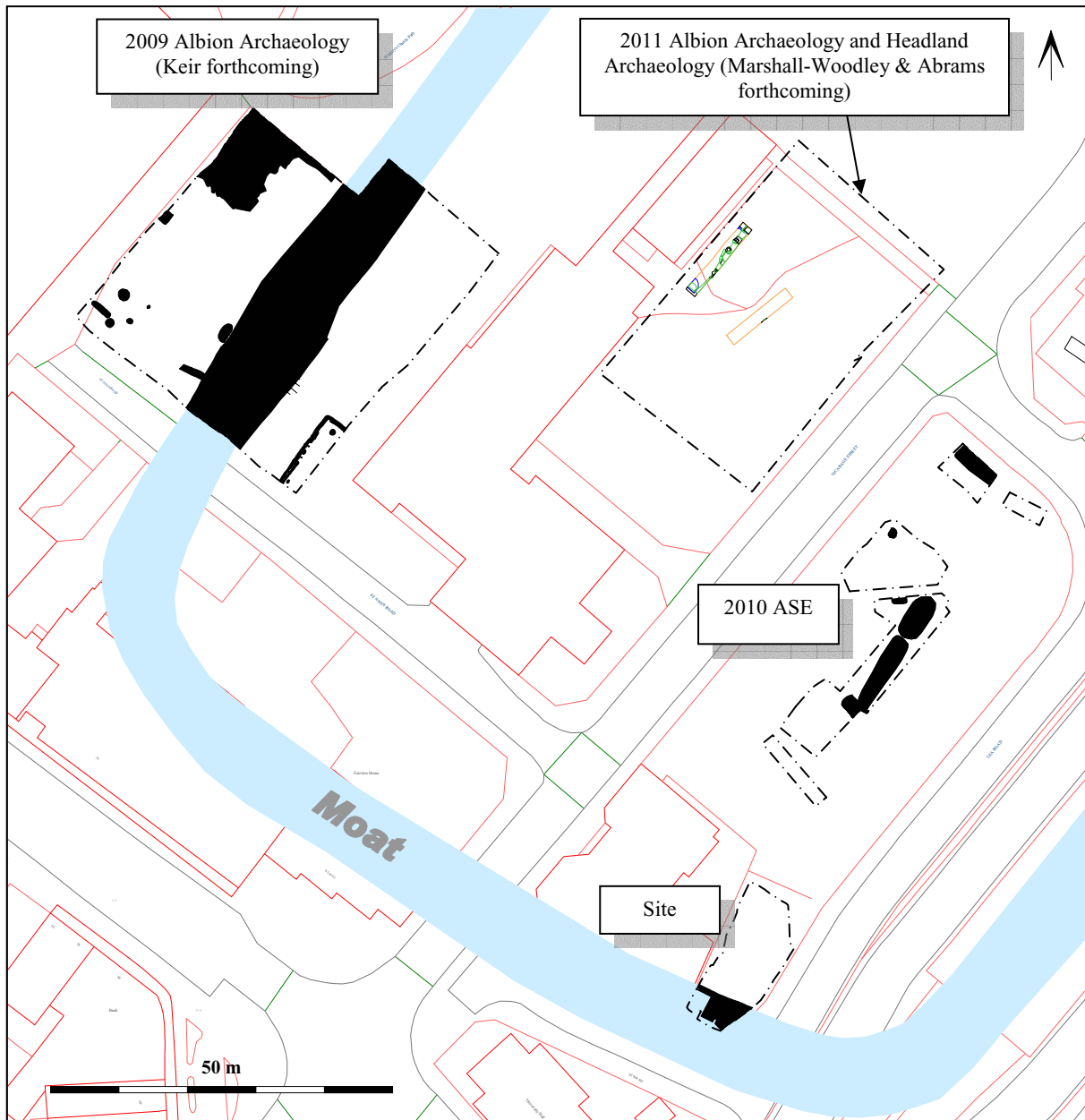


Figure 3: Excavations in the vicinity of the site and the extrapolated course of the moat

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Central
Bedfordshire

Albion
archaeology



Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
Bedford
MK42 0AS

Telephone 01234 294000
Email office@albion-arch.com
www.albion-arch.com

