SHEFFORD LOWER SCHOOL
SHEFFORD, BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

All figures are bound at the end of this report

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 brief. 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

This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips (Assistant Project Officer) and Jackie Wells (Artefacts Officer) and was edited by Reuben Thorpe (Project Manager). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager). All illustrations in this report were prepared by Joan Lightning (CAD technician). Hand excavation and recording was undertaken by Mark Phillips, Adam Lee, Chris Mallows, and David Ingham. The finds have been processed by Jackie Wells.

Albion Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Eric Wakely (Mouchel Consulting Ltd), Ms. Lesley-Ann Mather (Assistant County Archaeological Officer) and the staff of Shefford Lower School.

Key terms

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

CAO	Bedfordshire County Council Archaeological Officer
Albion	Albion Archaeology
BCC	Bedfordshire County Council
Brief	*Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of land at Shefford Lower School, Shefford, Bedfordshire*, V1 14th January 2003, Heritage and Environment Section, BCC
Client	Mouchel Consulting Ltd
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record BCC
LPA	Local Planning Authority
Procedures Manual	*Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork*, 2000 Albion Archaeology
Project Design	*Land at Shefford Lower School, Shefford, Bedfordshire. Project Design for an Archaeological Field Evaluation.* Albion Archaeology, Report No. 2003/08

Structure of this report

After an introduction (Section 1), this report presents the results of the trial excavation in Section 2. A summary of the archaeological remains and a discussion of their significance forms Section 3. Detailed trench descriptions are included in Appendix 1 with a detailed quantification of the pottery in Appendix 2.

Glossary of technical terms used in this report

flue tile, box tile	Type of specialised tile used in hypocaust systems.
hypocaust	Under floor heating system
opus signinum	Floor surface composed of mix of mortar and crushed tile.
tesserae	Fragments of stone or tile used in construction of mosaic floors.
tufa	Stone often used in the construction of vaulted ceilings because of its lightness.

Non-technical summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Albion Archaeology who were commissioned by Mouchel Consulting to carry out the study in advance of proposed works to extend and refurbish Shefford Lower School, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The County Archaeological Officer has advised that the development is in an area of archaeological sensitivity and has stipulated that, in accordance with Local Plan Policy and guidance contained in PPG16, further information is required to enable an assessment of the potential impact of the development. This information was obtained through an archaeological field evaluation and will allow an appropriate mitigation strategy to be devised. Nine trial trenches were excavated in the Study Area the aim of which was to determine the date, nature, character and extent of any archaeological remains.

Archaeological remains were located in five trenches (1-5) distributed widely across the Study Area. Trenches 6, 7, 8 and 9, in the northeastern part of the Study Area, contained no archaeological features. Archaeological deposits were located between 0.2m and 0.65m below the modern ground surface.

The earliest artefacts consisted of pottery dated to the Late Iron Age/early Roman transition (50 BC -AD 50). The majority of the dateable artefacts belonged to the Roman period and dated from the 1st to the 4th century AD. Two ditches dating to the Roman period were located in the western part of the Study Area. A further two undated features were also discovered, consisting of a small pit in the western part of the Study Area and a ditch in the eastern part of the Study Area.

The larger of the two Roman ditches is interpreted as a continuation of a substantial boundary ditch found during previous excavations (Albion Project No 773) immediately north of the present Study Area. This excavation uncovered an aisled building and cobbled surfaces. It is believed that the ditch found in the previous excavation and the ditch discovered during this evaluation form part of an enclosure surrounding a high status settlement or villa type complex. The continuation of the boundary ditch into the present Study Area demonstrates that a large part of the present Study Area lies within the enclosure that surrounded the villa complex.

The archaeological remains within the Study Area have the potential to contribute to a number of national and regional research agendas associated with Roman rural settlement and are likely to be of interest to the residents of Shefford.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report represents the results of an archaeological field evaluation and discusses the archaeological significance of the remains discovered.

1.1 Planning background

Bedfordshire County Council proposes to extend and refurbish Shefford Lower School, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The County Archaeological Officer (CAO) advised that the proposed development is in an area of archaeological sensitivity and that there was insufficient information to assess the potential impact of development on any buried remains or allow an appropriate mitigation strategy to be developed.

In line with Local Planning Policy and PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning*, the CAO advised that further information is required on the archaeological potential of the site and that this information was to be obtained through an intrusive archaeological field evaluation. Accordingly the CAO issued a Brief[1] that provides the basis for undertaking these archaeological works.

On the 21st February 2003 *Albion* were appointed by *The Client* to undertake the evaluation.

1.2 Overall programme of investigation

The evaluation was carried out between Monday 10th and Wednesday 12th March 2002. A total of nine trial trenches were excavated, four were initially opened by machine in open ground to the west of the school buildings. A further five test pits were opened by hand in the open area between the two blocks which make up the school. A detailed method statement is outlined in the Project Design[2].

The Assistant County Archaeologist (ACAO), Ms. Lesley-Ann Mather attended the site on the 28th October for a monitoring meeting. The initial trenches provided sufficient information to address the project objectives and therefore, no contingency trenching was invoked.

1.3 *Location of Study Area* (Figure 1)

Shefford Lower School lies on the western side of Shefford, to the south of the Ampthill Road. The location of the intended development works, adjacent to the existing school buildings, is centred on TL 13753875 and has a total area of approximately 1711 square meters. School buildings, playgrounds and grassed open areas, currently occupy the site.

Topographically the Study Area is on a low east-west ridge between the River Flit (to the north) and a tributary stream to the south. It is at a height of *c.*40m

[1] Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of land at Shefford Lower School, Shefford, Bedfordshire, V1 14th January 2003, Heritage and Environment Section, BCC

[2] Land at Shefford Lower School, Shefford, Bedfordshire. Project Design for an Archaeological Field Evaluation. Report No. 2003/08. Albion Archaeology (2003)

AOD. The geology of the Study Area is Lower Greensand with valley gravels and alluvium associated with the River Flit and local deposits of Boulder Clay.

1.4 *Archaeological background*

The present Study Area is situated within an area of great archaeological interest recorded in BCC's Historic Environment Record (HER) as HER 379.

During gravel extraction in 1826 a local antiquarian (Thomas Inskip) identified what he believed to be a walled Roman cemetery[3]. The location of his investigations has been estimated, based on his sketch maps, to be in the vicinity of 95 Ampthill Road which lies 150m to the northwest of Shefford Lower School. The cemetery included cremation burials, some buried with grave goods including pottery vessels such as samian and amphora as well as vessels of glass and bronze accompanied by coins and other metal objects.

In the 1830s Inskip examined an area some 220m southeast of the cemetery[4]. Here he located a possibly rectangular Roman building, interpreted at the time as a temple. An assessment of his description of the location of his finds would place this building in the immediate vicinity of the original Robert Bloomfield Primary School, less than 50m north of the present Study Area.

Artefacts continued to be found in this area of Shefford. There are unconfirmed reports of the discovery of Roman armour during the construction of the new school to the south in 1872.

Later, in the summer of 1940, Edgar Gray excavated two trenches during levelling of the school field (recorded in the Victoria County History). Behind the garden of 77a Ampthill Road he located the remains of a Roman building which included a hypocausted room. Simco[5] believed this building was the same as that previously claimed by Inskip as a temple.

More recently, in 1976, artefacts and material of Roman date were found during the construction of a school extension.

With the implementation of PPG16 all subsequent development in the vicinity of HER 379 has been subject to archaeological evaluation. These evaluations comprise *Albion* project numbers 244, 365, 412, 583, 665, 694 and 773. Three of these, projects 244, 694 and 773 proceeded to detailed investigations. Project 365 comprised trial trenching and test pitting, undertaken in 1993 in advance of the new school access road and car park[6]. Roman features including ditches, pits and postholes were identified. The recovered artefacts included a wide range of pottery and metal objects. Although no Roman

[3] "On ancient relics collected in Bedfordshire", *Associated architectural societies reports and papers* 1. Inskip, T, 1850. pt. 1, 165-172

[4] "Roman and Romano-British remains at and near Shefford, Bedfordshire", *Cambridge Antiquarian Society quarto publication.* Dryden, H, 1845.

[5] *Survey of Bedfordshire; The Roman Period.* Simco, A, 1984

[6] *Robert Bloomfield Middle School, Shefford: Archaeological Evaluation*, (Report 93/23). Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service, 1993.

buildings were clearly identified the recovery of tile, brick, *opus signinum*, mortar and painted wall plaster suggests that Roman buildings existed in the vicinity and were of a "high status". A subsequent watching brief (Project 445), carried out during construction of the car park, located a 4m wide Roman ditch. In 2002, Project 773, an excavation on land immediately to the north of the school,[7] revealed substantial Roman remains. These remains included an aisled building, cobbled surfaces, a substantial boundary ditch and artefacts including painted plaster and hypocaust flue tile.

[7] Albion Archaeology Project ASH 773 (report in preparation)

2. TRIAL EXCAVATION

The evaluation was carried out between Monday 10th and Wednesday 12th March 2002 when nine trial trenches were excavated. See Figure 2 for a plan of the trench locations and archaeological features.

2.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation, as outlined in the *Brief,* were to:

- Investigate the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits that were present.
- Assess the integrity, state and level of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present.
- Investigate any possible surviving archaeological features.

2.2 Method Statement

Topsoil and modern overburden were removed by machine, or by hand, down to either the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural geological strata, whichever was encountered first. All machine excavation was supervised by an archaeologist and was undertaken with a tracked 3 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

All trenches that contained archaeology were cleaned to define and identify archaeological deposits. Deposits were issued with a unique context number for recording purposes and the artefacts recovered from each deposit were bagged and labelled accordingly. A drawn record of all archaeological deposits comprising plans at a scale of 1:50 or 1:20 and sections at a scale of 1:10 was prepared. A digital photographic record was compiled, recording significant archaeological features and soil profiles.

All archaeological and geological deposits (contexts) were assigned an individual number in a single sequence commencing at (100). Numbers in brackets within the text refer to the context number issued on site. Within this report context numbers referring to cut features are expressed [**], layers or deposits within cut features are expressed (**). Each trench was allocated a block of numbers, with (100) identifying the topsoil in Trench 1, [405] identifying a ditch in Trench 4 and (505) identifying the fill of a pit in Trench 5 etc. Trench summaries detailing all contexts are listed in Appendix 1.

2.3 Adjustments and contingency work

The initial trenches provided sufficient information to address the project objectives. No contingency trenches were required by the *CAO*.

2.4 Overall method statement

Throughout the project the standards set in the IFA *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* have been adhered to. Also those standards outlined in the Albion Archaeology *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records* (1996), the IFA Code of Conduct, English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991) and *Preparing*

Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire (1993) were adhered to.

2.5 Results (Figure 2)

Fiftytwo contexts were investigated within nine trenches and of these five contained archaeological features. Sample sections of soil profiles and archaeological features in trenches 2, 3, 4 and trenches 5, 6, 9 are illustrated in Figure 3 and Figure 4 respectively.

2.5.1 Modern topsoil deposits

Topsoil was, generally (trenches 1,2 and 4 to 9) between 120mm and 220mm in depth, and consisted of a layer of turf over dark grey clay loam or silty clay containing small stones and flecks of building material. This represents a layer of topsoil that was probably laid down after the construction of the present school buildings in the 1970s. It was spread over layers of build-up and disturbance created by building work (see 2.5.2) and subsequently grassed over.

In trench 3 the turf and topsoil layer consisted of a very thin layer of dark brown silty sand. In this trench the topsoil layer probably consisted of a layer of turf laid directly onto sandy subsoil where the ground has been reduced to slope down to the level of an adjacent playground.

2.5.2 Build-up layers and construction disturbance

Across most of the Study Area layers of build-up and disturbance associated with the construction of the present school buildings were found

In the trenches to the west of the school varying build-up layers were found, apart from in trench 3 where the ground level had been reduced. Trench 1 contained a layer of broken brick rubble (108), probably representing the remains of hard standing associated with either the construction of the school or the adjacent car park. Trench 4 contained a layer of redeposited natural clay (401), up to 120mm thick, which was probably derived from ground works associated with the construction of the adjacent school buildings or playgrounds which are set below the surrounding ground level.

In the three northernmost test pits, in the eastern part of the Study Area, there was a layer of mixed soil (601) (801) and (907). This was between 150mm and 300mm thick. It is likely that this is a modern deposit of mixed topsoil and subsoil, that has been reworked by earthmoving during construction work. The sequence in trench 9 confirms this interpretation. A similar deposit was observed overlying redeposited natural clay (901) and a modern service trench [905].

2.5.3 Buried soil layers

In trenches 1, 2 and 4, to the west of the school, buried topsoil (101) (201) (402), between 150mm and 200mm thick, survived below recent build-up layers. In trench 3 this deposit had been removed by a reduction in the ground level. Subsoil deposits of yellowish brown, silty clay, between 200 and

300mm thick, (102) (202) (301) (403) lay above geological and archaeological deposits in all four of these trenches.

In the eastern part of the Study Area the survival of topsoil and subsoil layers predating construction of the school was variable. In trenches 6 and 8 a layer of soil mixed by construction disturbance (see 2.5.2) lay directly above undisturbed geological deposits. The southern most test pits, (5 and 7), contained layers of buried topsoil (501) (701) and subsoil (502) (702), undisturbed beneath a layer of topsoil (see 2.5.1). In trench 9 a full soil profile of subsoil (903) and buried topsoil (902) was sealed below material associated with recent construction activity. It is likely that the ground level had been lower in this part of the site and was levelled up during construction work on the school.

2.5.4 Geological deposits

The geological deposits vary across the Study Area. The majority of the area is covered by light orange/yellow brown clay with patches of light orange brown sandy silt in the west in trench 3, and areas of light yellow grey clay in the northeast part of the Study Area (trenches 6 and 8).

2.5.5 Archaeological features

Four archaeological features were found in the Study Area. All were cut into the underlying natural geology and overlain by subsoil.

2.5.5.1 Roman features

Feature [303] was situated at the western limit of the evaluated area in trench 3 (see section, Figure 3). This feature, partly obscured by the limit of excavation, was interpreted as a ditch orientated northwest-southeast with a minimum depth of 0.65m and a width of at least 1.5m. A single fill (304) of light brown clay silt appeared to be minerogenic in origin, only slightly modified from the surrounding geological parent material. It contained Roman pottery and a single sherd of high medieval pottery that is likely to be intrusive.

Ditch [106] [204] and [405] was orientated north-northeast to south-southwest and was observed in trenches 1, 2 and 4 in the western part of the Study Area. Two segments were excavated, [204] trench 2 and [405] in trench 4 (see sections, Figure 3). In trench 2, where a complete section was excavated, ditch No. [204] was 2.1m wide and 0.72m deep. The fills were mainly dark brown or grey and contained moderate amounts of occupation debris. This feature is dated by pottery and tile to the Roman period.

2.5.5.2 Undated features

Feature [104], possibly a pit, was located in trench 1 in the western part of the Study Area. It was partly obscured by the limit of excavation to the north, the visible portion being semicircular and measuring 0.54m across and 0.17m deep. It was filled by mid greenish brown silty clay. A single nail was recovered from the fill. The feature is undated.

Feature [504] in trench 5, a probable ditch or gully, was obscured by the limit of excavation but appeared to be a linear feature orientated east northeast-west southwest. It was more than 0.38m wide and 0.1m deep with a shallow flat base. The single fill (505) consisted of mid brown grey silty clay with moderate amounts of charcoal fragments. It is undated.

2.6 Artefact assemblage

2.6.1 Introduction

The evaluation produced an artefact assemblage comprising mainly pottery and ceramic building material (Table 1). The assemblage was scanned to ascertain the nature, condition and where possible, date range of the artefact types present. No finds were recovered from trenches 5 or 7.

Tr.	Context	Feature	Feature type	Spotdate*	Pottery *Sherd/g*	CBM *Frag/g*	Animal Bone *Frag/g*	Other Finds
01	102	102	Layer	Roman	16:206	3:504	1:68	
	105	104	Pit	-				RA 1 fe ?nail
	107	106	Ditch	Roman		4:466		
02	202	202	Layer	Roman	22:411	13:1246	21:175	RA 2 fe ?blade
	205	204	Ditch	Roman	17:504	14:2446	9:89	Fe nails x 2, oyster shell (3g)
03	301	301	Subsoil	Medieval	2:21	2:58		
	304	303	Ditch	Roman	7:78			
04	406	405	Ditch	Roman	14:117	7:1085	5:467	
	407	405	Ditch	Roman	2:7	5:1060	3:137	Oyster shell (36g)
	408	405	Ditch	Roman	4:46			
06	600	600	Topsoil	Modern	1:4	6:106		
08	800	800	Topsoil	Post-medieval		3:49		Clay pipe (2g), vessel glass (7g)
09	900	900	Topsoil	Modern	1:2	1:12		
	902	902	Topsoil	Modern	7:17	2:22		
	906	905	Sewer trench	Modern	9:37	11:458	1:5	
Total					**102:1450**	**71:7512**	**40:941**	

*** -** the spotdate is based on the latest date of all artefacts from the context
CBM – ceramic building material **RA** – registered artefact

Table 1: Artefact Assemblage by Trench and context

2.6.2 Pottery

One hundred and two sherds, weighing 1.4kg were recovered. These were examined by context and quantified using sherd count and weight (Appendix 2). Sherds are generally sizeable (average weight 15g), unabraded, and survive in good condition. Several vessels are represented by more than one sherd.

Twenty-five fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, held by *Albion.*

Fabrics are listed below (Table 3) in approximate chronological order: bracketed italics (*r*) and (*c*) denote regional and continental imports respectively.

Fabric type	Common name	Sherd No.	Context / Sherd No.
Belgic Iron Age (*c.* 50BC-100AD)			
Type F06B	Medium grog	**2**	(202):2
Type F09	Sand and grog	**6**	(202):3, (205):3
Roman (*c.* 100-400)			
Type R01 (*c*)	Samian ware	**3**	(202):1, (205):1, (902):1
Type R03B (*r*)	Gritty whiteware	**2**	(202):2
Type R03E (*r*)	Fine whiteware	**1**	(408):1
Type R05A	Orange sandy	**2**	(301):1, (408):1
Type R06A (*r*)	Nene Valley greyware	**1**	(102):1
Type R06B	Coarse greyware	**16**	(102):8, (202):3, (205):1, (406):3, (407):1
Type R06C	Fine greyware	**5**	(102):1, (202):1, (205):1, (406):2
Type R06D	Micaceous greyware	**12**	(205):1, (304):4, (406):4, (407):1, (408):2
Type R06E	Calcareous greyware	**1**	(406):1
Type R06G	Silty greyware	**1**	(205):1
Type R07B	Sandy blackware	**9**	(102):2, (202):2, (304):2, (406):3
Type R07C	Gritty blackware	**1**	(205):1
Type R12B (*r*)	Nene Valley Colour Coat	**1**	(406):1
Type R13	Shelly	**11**	(102):2, (202):2, (205):6, (902):1
Type R14	Sandy (red-brown harsh)	**6**	(202):1, (205):2, (902):2, (906):1
Type R18 (*r*)	Pink gritty	**1**	(906):1
Type R24	Red quartz	**5**	(102):1, (202):5
Type R33 (*r*)	Mortaria	**1**	(102):1
Medieval (1150-1400)			
Type C09 (*r*)	Brill/Boarstall type (fine)	**1**	(304):1
Type C53	Sandy (pasty)	**1**	(301):1
Post-medieval (1500-1750)			
Type P01	Fine glazed red earthenware	**2**	(906):2
Modern (1750+)			
MOD	Flower pot, china etc.	**9**	(600):1, (900):1, (902):3, (906):4
UNID	Unidentified ware	**2**	(202):1, (906):1

Table 2: Pottery Type Series

The pottery ranges in date from the late Belgic Iron Age to the post-medieval / modern period, the bulk of the material being of early Roman date.
Late Belgic Iron Age types are grog and sand tempered wares; diagnostic forms are a large storage jar and a lid-seated jar. The incidence of pre-Roman pottery is restricted to trench 2, where the sherds are largely residual in Roman ditch [204].

The Roman fabric types present are comparable with those recovered from adjacent projects 365 and 694 (Figure 5). They mainly comprise locally manufactured reduced wares, with a small quantity of shelly wares; types commonly distributed throughout the county, and in use throughout the Roman period. Regional products from Hertfordshire (Verulamium region industries) and the Nene Valley constitute a small proportion of the assemblage. Continental imports are represented by three sherds of samian ware, one of which is burnt. Recognisable forms are limited to burnished 'dog' bowls, narrow neck and triangular rim jars and single sherds of a mortarium and late Roman beaker, the latter with barbotine decoration.

Medieval pottery occurs only in trench 3 and comprises undiagnostic sherds of Brill/Boarstall type (imported from Buckinghamshire), and locally manufactured sand tempered ware.

Post-medieval and modern pottery derived from topsoil in trenches 6 and 9 and from sewer trench [905].

2.6.3 Ceramic Building Material

A total of 71 fragments, weighing 7.5kg were recorded. The majority are sand tempered roof tile (*tegulae*, *imbrices*) and brick fragments of Roman date. In contrast with adjacent projects 365 and 694, no flue tile was present.

Twenty-two fragments (721g) of late / post-medieval flat roof tile and brick were recovered. Most were unstratified, deriving from topsoil or subsoil layers in trenches 2, 3, 6, 8 and 9, while eight fragments were found in sewer trench [904].

2.6.4 Registered Artefact

Iron fragments of a possible timber nail (**RA 1**) and knife blade (**RA 2**) were recovered from pit [104] and layer (202) respectively. Both require x-ray to assist in their further identification.

2.6.5 Animal Bone

Faunal remains comprise forty fragments, weighing 941g, the majority (604g) deriving from the fills of ditch [405], trench 4. The bone survives in good condition, with little evidence of surface erosion. The assemblage comprises fragments of large mammal bone, and includes vertebrae, ribs, mandible, teeth and long bones. Fragments of the latter from ditch [405] bear cut marks.

3. SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Given that the Study Area is located in an area of known archaeological remains it would be misleading to discuss the results without reference to the surrounding area. Therefore the following summary includes evidence from other archaeological investigations undertaken in the vicinity as appropriate.

3.1 Summary of archaeological remains (Figure 5)

The current evaluation located archaeological features spread across the Study Area. Though relatively few in number the features when examined in relation to previous investigations can be seen as part of a larger pattern of Roman activity, possibly a villa type complex.

The substantial ditch found in trenches 1, 2 and 4 appears to be a continuation of one that was found during excavations at the rear of 77-81 Ampthill Road (Albion Project No 773) which also uncovered an aisled building and associated cobbled surfaces. This ditch is thought to be a boundary, part of an enclosure surrounding an area of occupation and an aisled building. Preliminary analysis suggests that the building was constructed in the early 2nd century AD. It was 11m wide and more than 18m long, continuing beyond the limits of excavation to the north and to the south beneath the school car park. Building materials recovered from deposits associated with the building include nails, roof and flue tile, fragments of tufa, brick, mortar, wall plaster (some painted), fragments of *opus signinum* flooring and four possible tesserae. It is possible that remains of a *hypocaust,* excavated in 1940 beneath what is now the school car park, were part of this aisled building.

Cobbled surfaces extended to the east of the aisled building towards the probable location of further building remains, excavated in the 1830s by Thomas Inskip who interpreted them as a Roman temple. If the location is accurate then it seems likely that the aisled building was part of a larger range of buildings.

Ditch [303] in trench 3 may be related to a series of parallel ditches, orientated northwest-southeast, found during the evaluation of the Lower School access road and car park (Albion Project No 365). These ditches, if projected southwards, would run close to the location of the ditch in trench 3.

It is, judging from the remains found in the vicinity, likely that the undated pit [104] and ditch [504] found beneath subsoil in the present evaluation are also Roman in date.

The results of a number of archaeological investigations can be combined to suggest a distribution of Roman remains in this part of Shefford. A range of buildings, possibly a villa, was situated in the area now occupied by the southern end of gardens of numbers 75 and 77 Ampthill Road, the car park of Shefford Lower School and the 19th century school building. This range of buildings may have stood within an enclosure defined by a substantial ditched boundary, probably rectilinear in plan. Previous archaeological evaluation

suggests that the area of activity did not extend beyond the grassed area to the south of the Lower School into the space now occupied by sports pitches. Ditches found to the west of the "villa enclosure" point to the presence of other enclosures or trackways. The presence of a ditch, found in Project 773, which intersected the "villa enclosure" suggests that there was more than one phase of activity. The extent of Roman activity to the west of the present Study Area is not known however, 19th century records indicate the presence of a Roman cemetery somewhere between School Lane and Campton Road.

3.2 Significance of the archaeological remains

The significance of identified archaeological remains within the planning process is partly dependent on their distribution within the development area and their quality of preservation.

3.2.1 Distribution of archaeological remains

Whilst the overall numbers of features found in the present evaluation is low they are distributed widely across the Study Area from the extreme western edge of the evaluated area to the area between the two existing school buildings. The overall distribution of remains found in this and earlier investigations, suggests that the potential that archaeological deposits might be encountered anywhere within the Study Area is high.

3.2.2 Preservation of the archaeological remains

The level of preservation can be assessed based on the nature of the survival of archaeological features and artefacts/ecofacts.

3.2.2.1 Archaeological features

The Study Area has been subjected to a number of episodes of cultivation or ground-works that could have affected the survival of archaeological deposits. It was probably cultivated during much of the medieval and post-medieval periods. The layer of subsoil encountered across much of the site is probably the lower part of a former cultivation horizon, possibly soil build-up due to ploughing. It is likely that the site was landscaped or levelled in the 1940s during preparation of playing fields associated with school buildings to the east of the Study Area. The excavation that uncovered remains of a *hypocaust* was associated with this phase of activity. More ground-works occurred in the 1970s during the construction of the present school buildings and again in the 1990s during construction of the school car park.

Where archaeological features were located these were sealed by a layer of subsoil, probably soil build-up, associated with medieval or post-medieval cultivation. The majority of the evidence for modern activity associated with construction work consists of build-up layers and disturbance to the soil profile above layers of either subsoil or subsoil and buried topsoil. In the space between the two buildings that currently make up the Lower School, within trenches 6 and 8, it appeared that disturbance associated with construction had reworked the soil profile down to the top of the geological natural. The only evidence of modern disturbance within the trial trenches was found in trench 9 where a modern service pipe had been cut through into

the underlying geological natural. The depth of overburden found above archaeological deposits suggests, that if present in the Study Area slight features such as post holes and surfaces could survive as they did in the adjacent excavation, Albion Project No 773.

None of the trenches contained evidence of nineteenth century quarrying as has been found in a number of other evaluations in this part of Shefford. The quarrying activity found to date has been concentrated along the Ampthill Road.

3.2.2.2 Artefact and Ecofact Assemblage

The artefact assemblage from the Study Area comprised mainly durable materials such as ceramics and stone. Animal bone was well preserved but fragmentary. The small average size of the bone fragments is likely to be caused by taphonomic effects that are not necessarily related to the soil type. Variation of the proportions of clay and sand within the natural geological deposits are likely to make the survival of vulnerable artefacts variable across the area of the Study Area, e.g. animal bone will be less well preserved in areas of acidic, sandy geology. Additional variation is caused by depositional microenvironments; the size of features and the nature of their fills would influence the survival of vulnerable materials. None of the excavated deposits contained waterlogged remains.

3.2.3 Assessment of the significance of the archaeological remains

It is not the role of the archaeological contractor to speculate on the likely implications that archaeological remains will have on the planning process for the proposed development however, a discussion of the significance of the remains in terms of their national and regional research frameworks is appropriate.

With the issuing of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16; Archaeology and Planning (PPG16)* central government accepted the view that archaeological remains should be regarded as a finite, non-renewable resource, and that there should be a presumption in favour of the physical preservation of nationally important remains. The Mid Beds Local Plan policy BE18 adopted this view. The creation of an archaeological record, through the mechanism of archaeological fieldwork, was indicated to be the second best option and a similar view was adopted in Local Plan BE20.

Central government, through English Heritage, addressed the issue of national research needs with the publication of *Exploring our Past* in 1991 and a draft Research Agenda in 1997. The latter contains a number of research agendas, against which the archaeological resource of an area may be assessed.

On a regional level, the County Archaeologists of East Anglia have published the first volume in a research framework for the eastern counties. Although this document covers the adjacent counties of Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, it does not specifically consider Bedfordshire. Nevertheless, topographical and historical similarities (at a regional level) between these

counties make the document a useful tool for assessing the significance of the archaeological remains within the Study Area.

The Study Area is part of a larger Roman settlement, occupying part of a compound that contains a high status villa-type building. There is potential for good preservation where archaeological deposits have been protected from the effects of later disturbance by deep overburden. Archaeological remains within the Study Area have the potential to contribute to an understanding of the nature and development of the villa type complex. In this regard evidence from the Study Area may have the potential to address a number of national and regional research aims, including those concerned with "Romanisation" and processes of change. In addition, English Heritage has highlighted the need to examine rural Roman settlements to provide a contrast with the evidence from towns.

4. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARIES BY TRENCH

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 7.00 m. Width: 1.30 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1373438747

OS Grid Ref.: TL1374138748

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	**Topsoil**	**Dark grey silty clay**	☑	☐
101	**Buried topsoil**	**Firm dark grey sandy clay**	☑	☐
102	**Subsoil**	**Mid yellow grey silty clay occasional small stones**	☑	☑
103	**Natural**	**Mid orange brown silty clay occasional medium stones**	☐	☐
104	**Pit**	**base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.54m**	☐	☐
105	Fill	Mid green brown silty clay occasional small stones	☑	☑
106	**Ditch**	**Linear NNW-SSE**	☐	☐
107	Fill	Dark brown grey silty clay occasional small-medium stones	☐	☑
108	**Dump material**	**Mid brown silty clay frequent medium-large ceramic building material, frequent medium-large concrete Rubble layer**	☑	☐

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 4.00 m. Width: 1.30 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.65 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1373538739

OS Grid Ref.: TL1373938740

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	**Topsoil**	**Dark grey silty clay**	☑	☐
201	**Buried topsoil**	**Dark grey sandy clay**	☐	☐
202	**Subsoil**	**Dark yellow grey silty clay**	☐	☑
203	**Natural**	**Mid orange brown silty clay occasional small-medium stones**	☐	☐
204	**Ditch**	**Linear NNW-SSE profile: convex base: concave dimensions: max breadth 2.1m, max depth 0.72m**	☐	☐
205	Upper fill	Dark brown grey silty clay occasional medium stones	☑	☑
206	Lower fill	Dark yellow grey silty clay occasional small-medium stones	☐	☐

Trench: 3

Max Dimensions: Length: 16.00 m. Width: 1.30 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.2 m. Max: 0.2 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1371338730

OS Grid Ref.: TL1372938733

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Topsoil	Dark brown silty sand occasional small-medium stones	☑	☐
301	Subsoil	Light brown clay occasional small-medium stones	☑	☑
302	Natural	Light brown clay occasional small-medium stones Interspersed with extensive patches of light orange brown sandy silt	☐	☐
303	Ditch	Linear NW-SE profile: stepped base: concave	☐	☐
304	Fill	Light brown clay silt occasional small stones	☑	☑

Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 7.00 m. Width: 1.30 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1374138722

OS Grid Ref.: TL1374838724

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	**Topsoil**	**Mid grey clay loam occasional small ceramic building material, occasional small stones**	☑	☐
401	**Dump material**	**Light yellow brown clay**	☑	☐
402	**Buried topsoil**	**Dark grey silty clay occasional small ceramic building material, moderate flecks charcoal, moderate small stones**	☑	☐
403	**Subsoil**	**Light brown silty clay occasional medium stones**	☑	☐
404	**Natural**	**Light yellow brown sandy clay With patches and flecks of "chalky" material.**	☐	☐
405	**Ditch**	**Linear NNW-SSE profile: 45 degrees dimensions: min breadth 2.15m, min depth 0.69m Not excavated to full width and depth.**	☐	☐
406	Upper fill	Mid brown clay silt occasional small stones	☑	☑
407	Fill	Mid brown silty clay occasional small stones Lenses of light yellow brown clay occurred towards the upper surface of the context.	☑	☑
408	Fill	Mid grey silty clay moderate flecks charcoal, occasional small stones	☑	☑

Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 1.45 m. Width: 1.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.65 m. Max: 0.65 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1377838752

OS Grid Ref.: TL1375038750

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
500	Topsoil	Dark brown grey silty clay	☑	☐
501	Buried topsoil	Dark grey silty clay	☑	☐
502	Subsoil	Dark orange brown silty clay	☑	☐
503	Natural	Light yellow brown silty clay occasional small-medium stones	☐	☐
504	Ditch	Linear ENE-WSW profile: 45 degrees base: flat dimensions: min breadth 0.38m, max depth 0.1m	☐	☐
505	Fill	Mid brown grey silty clay moderate flecks charcoal	☑	☐

Trench: 6

Max Dimensions: Length: 1.50 m. Width: 1.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.4 m. Max: 0.4 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1377538762

OS Grid Ref.: TL1377638760

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
600	Topsoil	Dark brown grey silty clay	☑	☑
601	Layer	Dark grey silty clay Mixed layer of soil disturbed by building work.	☑	☐
602	Natural	Light yellow grey clay	☐	☐

Trench: 7

Max Dimensions: **Length:** 1.45 m. **Width:** 1.00 m. **Depth to Archaeology** **Min:** 0.6 m. **Max:** 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: **OS Grid Ref.: TL1378338750**

OS Grid Ref.: TL1378438750

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
700	Topsoil	Dark brown grey silty clay	☑	☐
701	Buried topsoil	Dark grey silty clay	☑	☐
702	Subsoil	Dark orange brown silty clay	☑	☐
703	Natural	Light yellow brown silty clay occasional small-medium stones	☐	☐

Trench: 8

Max Dimensions: Length: 1.50 m. Width: 1.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.35 m. Max: 0.35 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1378238760

OS Grid Ref.: TL1378238759

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
800	Topsoil	Dark brown grey silty clay	☑	☑
801	Layer	Dark grey silty clay moderate small stones Mixed layer with lenses of gravel. Soil horizon disturbed by building work.	☑	☐
802	Natural	Varied geological deposit. 50 percent split between light yellow grey clay and light yellow brown silty clay.	☐	☐

Trench: 9

Max Dimensions: Length: 1.45 m. Width: 1.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1. m. Max: 1. m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL1379038766

OS Grid Ref.: TL1379038765

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
900	Topsoil	Dark brown grey silty clay	☑	☑
901	Dump material	Light yellow grey clay Geological material redeposited during building works.	☑	☐
902	Buried topsoil	Dark grey silty clay	☑	☑
903	Subsoil	Dark orange brown silty clay	☑	☐
904	Natural	Light yellow brown silty clay occasional small-medium stones	☐	☐
905	Modern Intrusion	Linear E-W profile: near vertical Cut of modern service trench.	☑	☐
906	Modern Intrusion	Layers of mid orange brown clay, dark brown and mid grey clay loam filling service trench in tip lines.	☑	☑
907	Buried topsoil	Dark grey silty clay Mixed with lenses of gravel. Layer of building disturbance.	☑	☐

APPENDIX 2: POTTERY TYPES BY CONTEXT

Context	Fabric type	Date	Weight (g)
102	R06A	Roman	13
102	R06B	Roman	66
102	R06C	Roman	4
102	R07B	Roman	22
102	R24	Roman	13
102	R33	Roman C1-2	47
102	R13	Roman	41
202	R06B	Roman	20
202	R13	Roman	48
202	R01	Roman C2-3	8
202	UNID	-	4
202	R03B	Roman C2	155
202	F06B	Late Iron Age / early Roman	22
202	R24	Roman	70
202	R07B	Roman	9
202	F09	Late Iron Age / early Roman	46
202	R06C	Roman	21
202	R14	Roman C2	8
205	R06B	Roman	9
205	R14	Roman C2	31
205	R13	Roman	40
205	R06G	Roman	2
205	R06C	Roman	15
205	R06D	Roman	5
205	R01	Roman C2-3	26
205	F09	Late Iron Age / early Roman	368
205	R07C	Roman	8
301	C53	Early medieval	7
301	R05A	Roman	14
304	R06D	Roman	39
304	R07B	Roman	31
304	C09	High medieval	8
406	R06C	Roman	18
406	R12B	Roman C3-4	4
406	R06D	Roman	15
406	R06E	Roman	8
406	R07B	Roman	60
406	R06B	Roman	12
407	R06D	Roman	2
407	R06B	Roman	5
408	R03E	Roman C2-3	9
408	R05A	Roman	1
408	R06D	Roman	36
600	MOD	1750+	4
900	MOD	1750+	2
902	R13	Roman	5
902	MOD	1750+	4
902	R14	Roman C2	7
902	R01	Roman C2-3	1
906	R18	Roman	2
906	MOD	1750+	4
906	UNID	-	4
906	R14	Roman C2	3
906	P01	Post-medieval	24

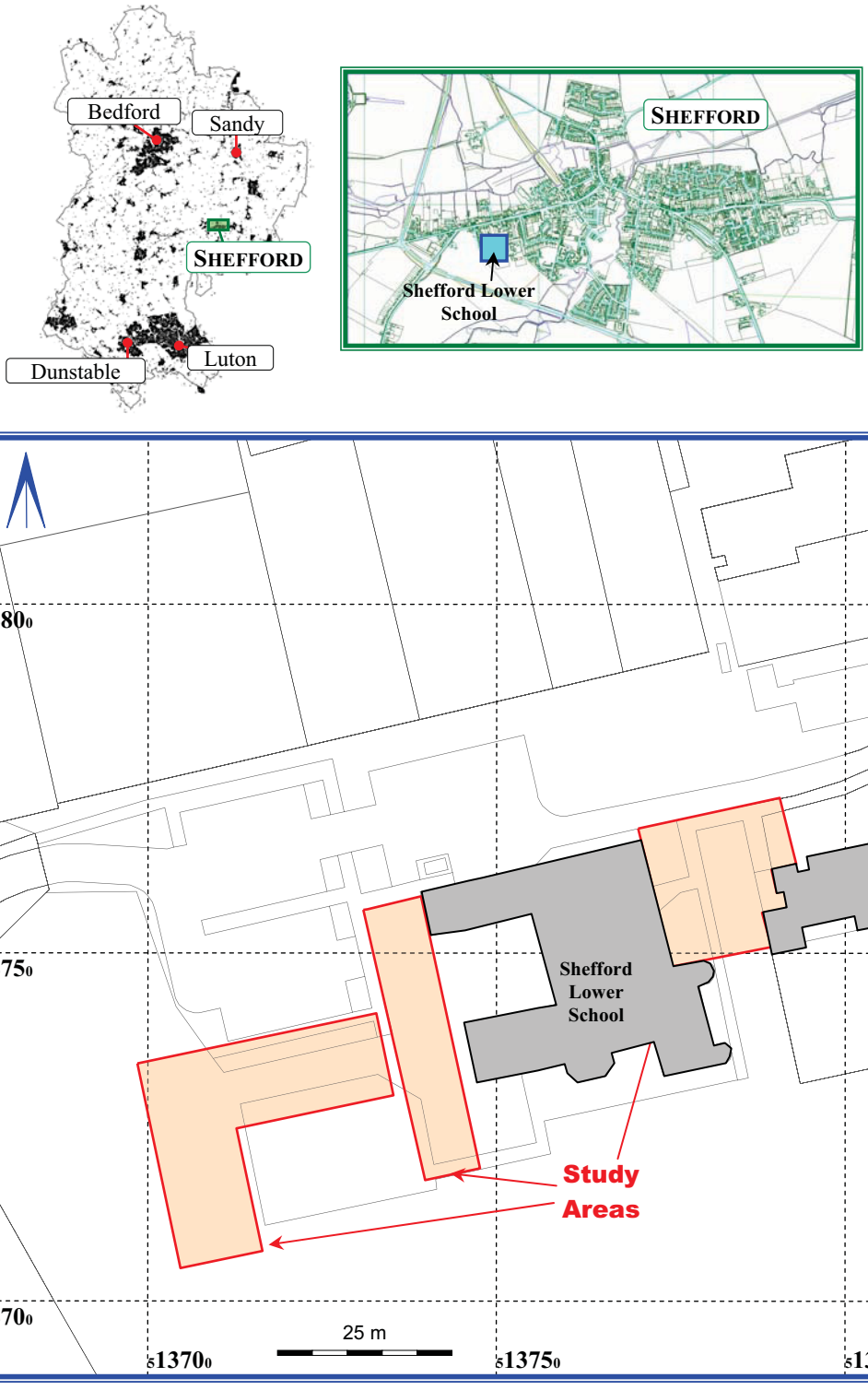

Figure 1: Location of study area

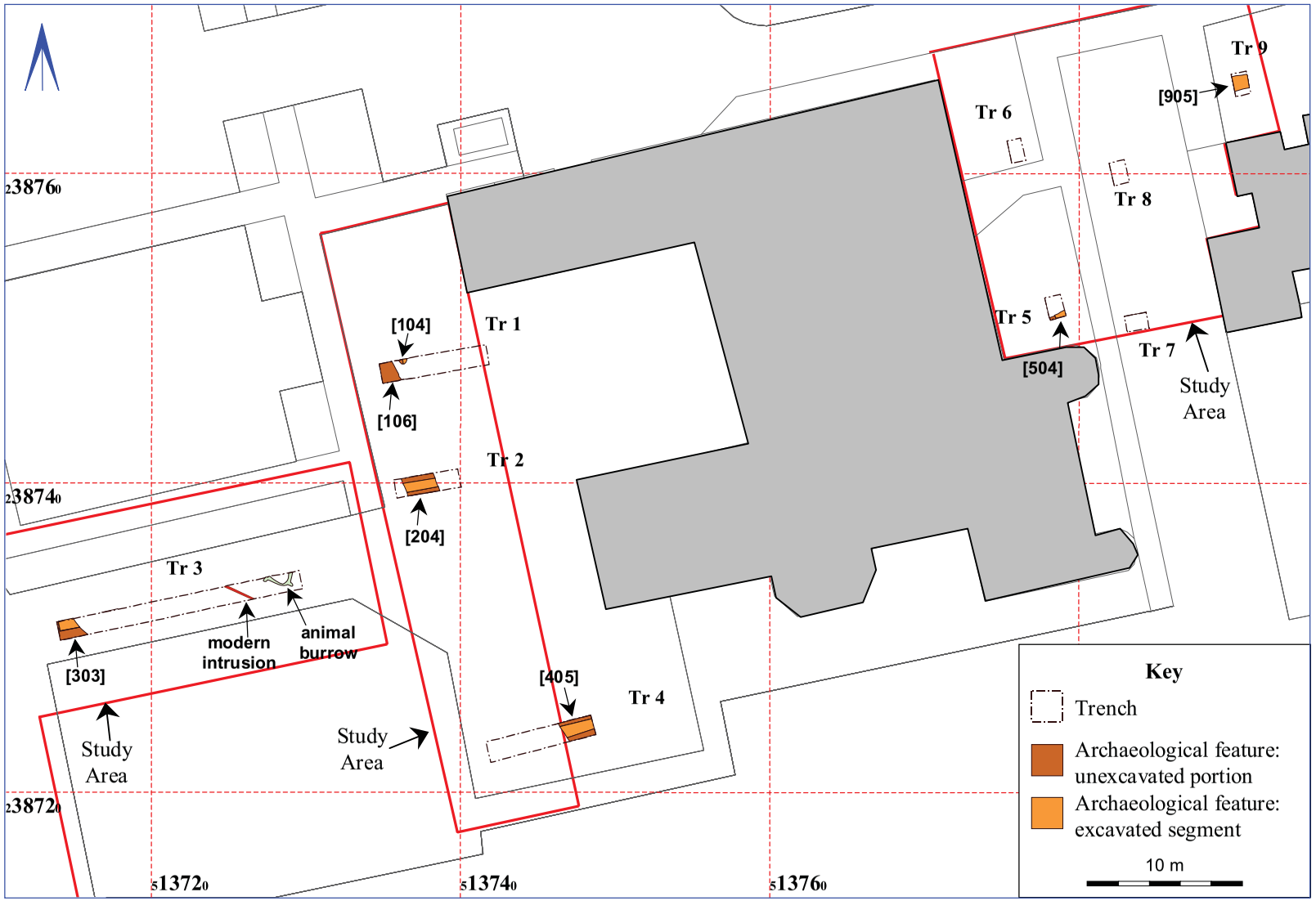

Figure 2: Location of trenches and archaeological features

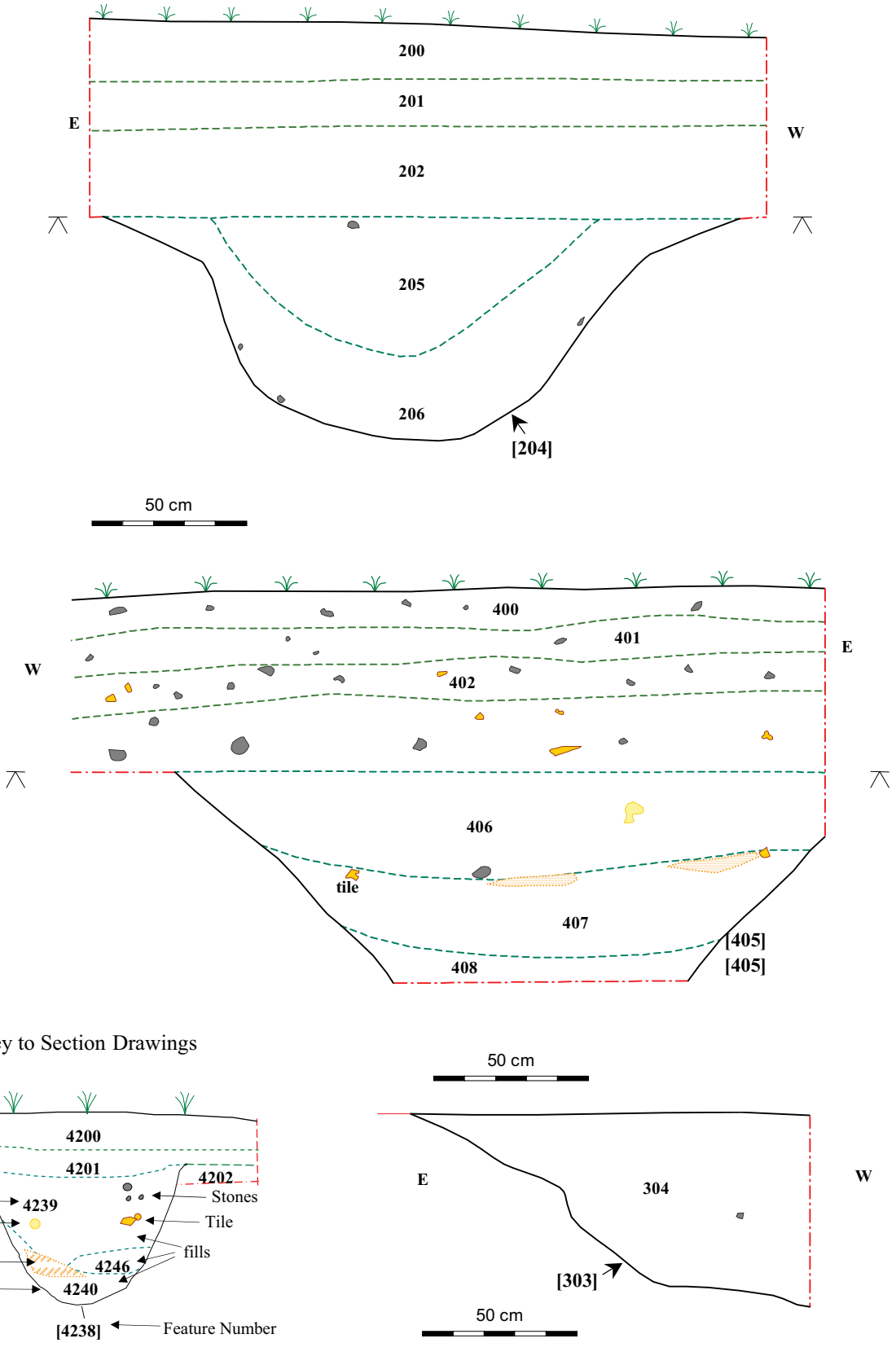

Figure 3: Sections

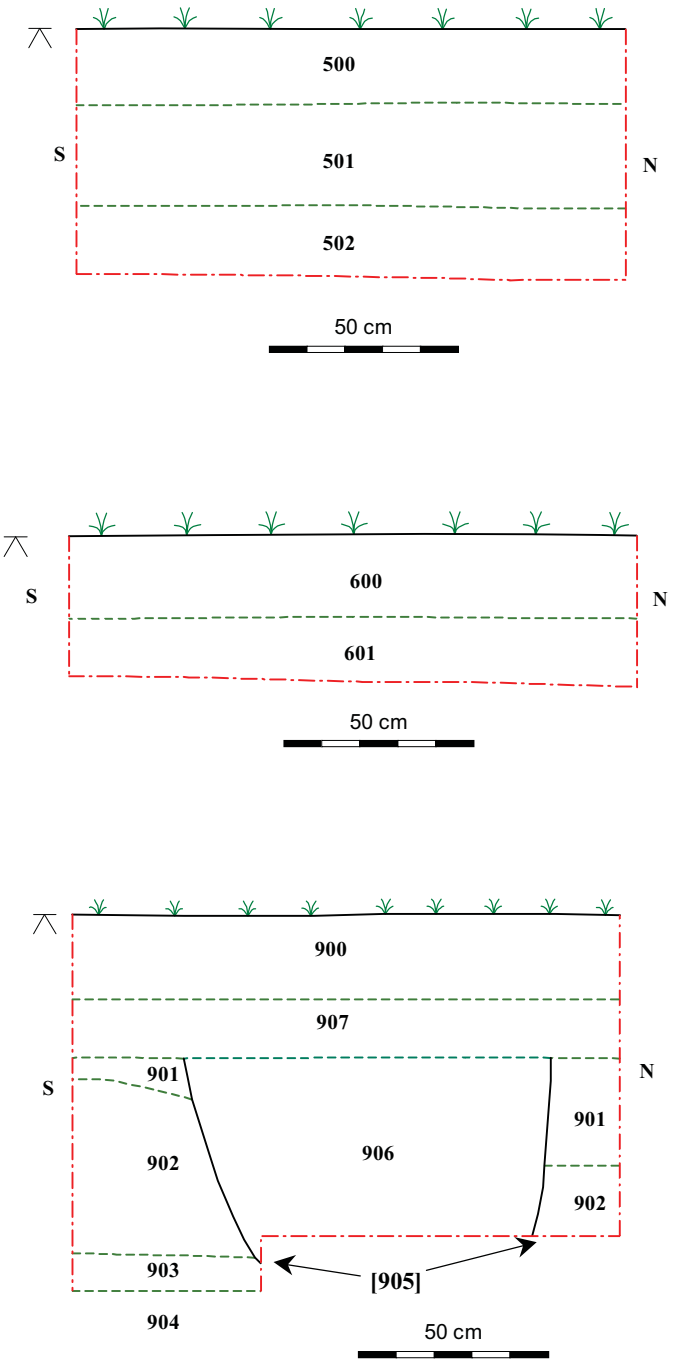

Figure 4: Sections

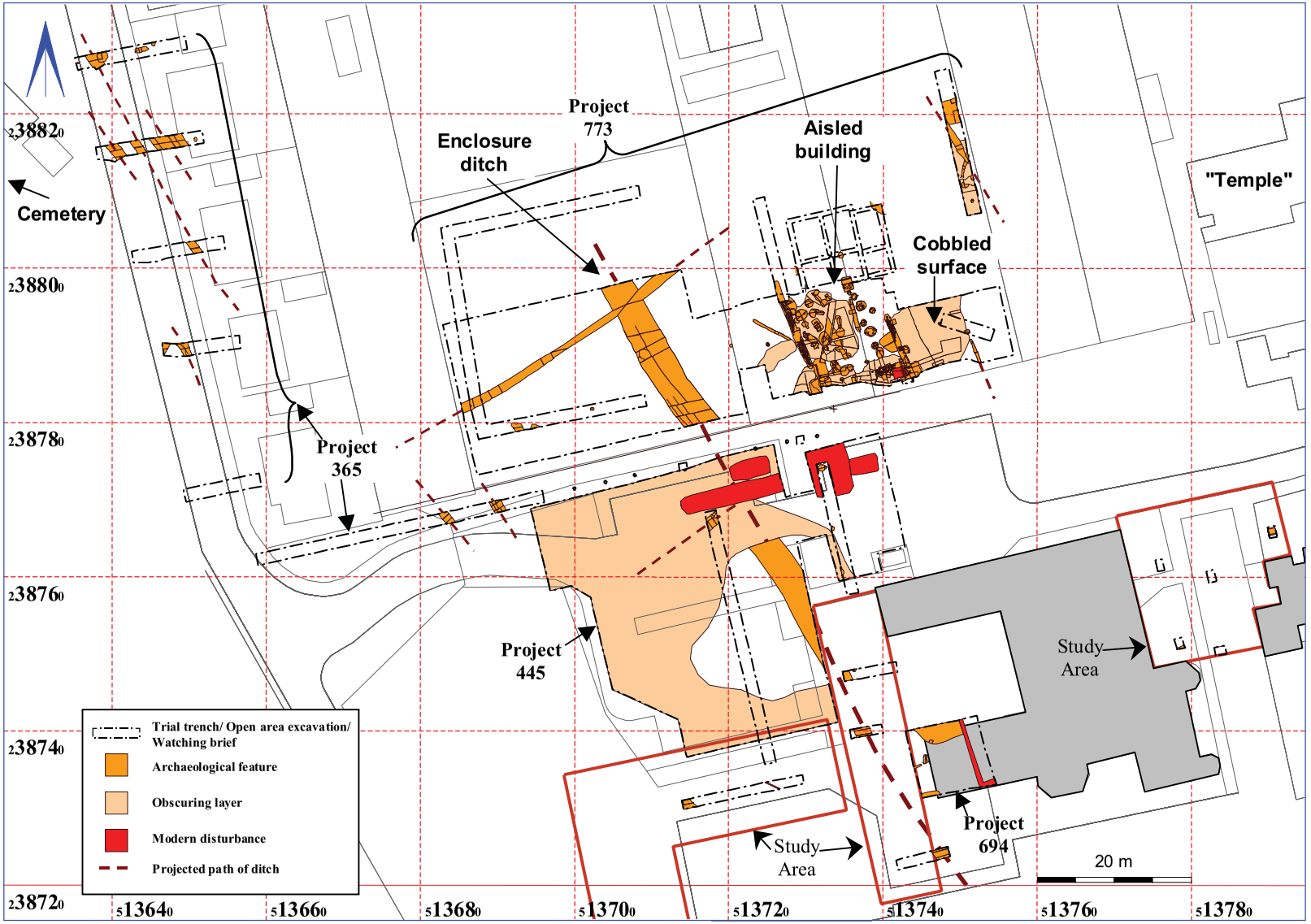

Figure 5: Known archaeology in the vicinity