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**LAND ADJACENT TO VER LODGE, 9 PONDWICKS CLOSE,
ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Authors: Zbigniew Pozorski	
NGR: TL 1434 0678	Report No: 4104
District: St Albans	Site Code: PCL 12
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 4874
Signed:	Date: July 2012

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**98-100 Fore Street, Hertford SG14 1AB
Tel 01992 558170**

**Unit 6, Brunel Business Court, Eastern Way,
Bury St Edmunds IP32 7AJ
Tel 01284 765210**

**e-mail info@ascontracts.co.uk
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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire</i>		
<p><i>In July 2012 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation of a site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1434 0678). The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Chris Meadows of Ver Lodge and was undertaken to inform a proposed planning application for development of the site.</i></p> <p><i>The site is located within the south-western part of the centre of St Albans and is bounded to the south by River Ver. The northern part of the site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Saxon/medieval St Albans abbey. The southern boundary of the abbey was identified on the site in 1970s. The site also had a potential for Romano-British archaeological remains.</i></p> <p><i>In the event the evaluation revealed remains of the southern precinct wall of the abbey with an associated ditch to the south. The alignment of the boundary was assessed against the results of previous evaluation of the site.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	4-5/07/2012		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	Y	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	4874	Site code	PCL 12
Type of project	<i>An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Site status	<i>Within Scheduled Ancient Monument</i>		
Current land use	<i>Woodland/garden</i>		
Planned development	<i>Residential</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>Remains of abbey precinct wall and outer ditch (?medieval)</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	-		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>St Albans</i>	<i>St Albans</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire HER</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>AL1 1DG</i>		
Area of site	<i>c. 7200m²</i>		
NGR	<i>TL 1434 0678</i>		
Height AOD (min/max)	<i>77/80m</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>SADC DAO</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	<i>Zbigniew Pozorski</i>		
Funded by	<i>Mr Chris Meadows</i>		
Full title	<i>Site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire. An Archaeological Evaluation</i>		
Authors	<i>Pozorski, Z.</i>		
Report no.	<i>4104</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>July 2012</i>		

SITE ADJACENT TO VER LODGE, 9 PONDWICKS CLOSE, ST ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

In July 2012 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation of a site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1434 0678). The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Chris Meadows of Ver Lodge and was undertaken to inform a proposed planning application for development of the site.

The site is located within the south-western part of the centre of St Albans and is bounded to the south by River Ver. The northern part of the site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Saxon/medieval St Albans abbey. The southern boundary of the Abbey was identified on the site in 1970s. The site also had a potential for Romano-British archaeological remains.

In the event the evaluation revealed remains of the southern precinct wall of the abbey with associated ditch to the south. The alignment of the boundary was assessed against the results of previous evaluation of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In July 2012 Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried an archaeological evaluation of a site adjacent to Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 1434 0678; Figs. 1 & 2). The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Chris Meadows of Ver Lodge and was undertaken to inform a proposed planning application for development of the site.

1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with advice from the District Archaeological Officer of St Albans District Council (SADC DAO) and a specification prepared by AS (dated 25/05/2011) and approved by SADC DAO and English Heritage. The work was carried out under an amendment to Scheduled Monument Consent (SAM), as the site lies within the SAM. The project conformed to the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (revised 2008), as well as the document Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The requirement of the evaluation was to clearly locate the archaeological features identified during the 1970s evaluation of the site in order to inform the current development proposals. The evaluation also aimed to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and

quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development.

Planning policy context

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.

1.5 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings, scheduled monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The site is located in the southern part of St Albans centre and to the immediate south of the former abbey grounds. The cathedral is located c.300m to the north. The river Ver bounds the site to the south while to the west and east are residential properties with associated gardens located at Pondwicks Close and Abbey Mill End. The northern part of the site (to the north of the presumed precinct wall) lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of St Albans abbey.

2.2 The site comprises rectangular plot not occupied by any standing structures with an exception of a garage of light-construction in the south-eastern corner. The site is occupied by the dense woodland along its boundaries. The central part is open with the presumed ditch crossing the site north-west/south-east.

3 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

3.1 The site lies between 81 and 97m AOD on land within the valley of the river Ver. The land falls towards south in the direction of the river which bounds the site.

3.2 The site lies on the solid geology of Upper Chalk (laid down during the Turonian – Campanian period of the Upper Cretaceous) which forms much of the Chiltern Hills (British Geological Survey 1978). It is composed of white, massive-bedded, micritic limestone with courses of modular flints deposited in warm marine conditions. The site is located within the Ver valley and the gravel beds overlying the chalk.

3.3 The soils of central St Albans are unsurveyed due to the urban nature of the area; however, the soils in the surrounding area are those of the Charity 2 Association, which are described as well-drained fine flinty and silty soils in valley bottoms and calcareous fine silty soils over chalk or chalk rubble on the valley sides (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983). These are found in the area to the south-west of the city.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

4.1 The location of St Albans would have been conducive to prehistoric settlement due to its fertile soils and proximity to the river Ver. Neolithic flints have been discovered in the surrounding area of the city with small amounts of Bronze Age material also recovered. St Albans was substantially occupied in the Iron Age period in the area of Prae Wood, which lies 1km to the south-south-west of the site; the location of the Iron Age settlement and the precursor to *Verulamium* Roman town. Despite the probable occupation of St Albans throughout the majority of the prehistoric period, few excavations in the surrounding area have yielded remains earlier than the Iron Age. It is possible that earlier archaeology was truncated by the intense Roman, medieval and post-medieval development of the town.

Romano-British

4.2 At its height the Roman town of *Verulamium* consisted of the third largest settlement in Britain (Pevsner & Cherry 1997). It was founded in AD 50, yet reputedly destroyed by Queen Boudicca ten years later. It became one of Britain's largest Roman centres with a forum basilica complex (opened in AD 79), an amphitheatre and public bathhouses all situated to the south-west of modern St Albans, with the important communication route of Watling Street running through the centre. There was no known fort in the town and the town walls were not built until the 2nd century AD. Much of *Verulamium* was destroyed by fire in AD 155. The remains of the town are known from over 80 hectares enclosed within 3rd century city walls. Extensive archaeological work has taken place within *Verulamium* and has revealed

numerous remains including Romano-Celtic temples, theatre, kilns, sewers, buildings, timber-framed shops, tiled floors, furnaces, cobbled tracks, roads and city walls (Pevsner & Cherry 1997; Niblett & Thompson 2005).

Anglo-Saxon

4.3 By the 8th century the Saxon town of St.Albans/*Verulamium* was known as *Watlingchester* or *Verulamchester* and was described by the historian Bede in AD 730 as containing the '*beautiful church worthy of Alban's martyrdom*' (St Albans Archaeology & History website). The location of the Benedictine Abbey of St Alban was thought to have been the spot where the Christian martyr, Alban was executed in approximately 324 AD. St. Albans Abbey was founded in AD 793 by King Offa of Mercia, although the site lay within the manor of Kingsbury, which belonged to the Saxon kings and was bought by Alfric before he became abbot of St. Albans (Page 1912). The Kingsbury *burh* was possibly located to the north of the abbey. Although the manor of Kingsbury was not listed in the Domesday Book of 1086, it is thought that the '*pond for fish*' listed in the town of St Albans' entry refers to Alfric's large fishpond known as '*Fischpol*' (Page 1912). St Albans School, a public school which occupies a site to the west of the Abbey and which includes the 14th century Abbey Gateway, was founded in AD 948.

4.4 The abbey was probably sacked by the Danes around 890 and the office of abbot remained vacant from c.920 until the 970s when the efforts of Dunstan reached the town. There was an intention to rebuild the abbey in 1005 when Abbot Ealdred was licensed to remove building material from Verulamium. Flint was used with a lime mortar and then either plastered over or left bare. With the great quantities of brick, tile and other stone in Verulamium the Roman site became a prime source of building material for the abbey and other projects in the area, up to the 18th century. Renewed Viking raids from 1016 stalled the Saxon efforts and very little from the Saxon abbey was incorporated in the later fabric.

Medieval

4.5 Medieval St Albans soon took the form recognisable today with settlement moving across the river Ver from the Roman city to the abbey precincts and extending further away from there up the hill to the north and east. By 1086 the town of St Albans incorporated 10 hides, land for 16 ploughs, a park for woodland beasts and three mills valued at 40s and the town had a population of 500 people. In AD 1077 Paul of Caen, the first Norman Abbot, began rebuilding the Abbey of St Albans (St Albans Archaeology & History website). St. Peter's Street, High Street, Market Place, Holywell Street and Fishpool Street were probably all well established in approximately their present positions by the 11th century. The medieval period also saw the division of the town into four wards, roughly corresponding to the built-up areas of the four modern parishes of St Stephen, St Michael, St Peter and the Abbey of St Alban itself. These were each given a constable of the peace and two chief pledges to maintain order by Abbott Richard de Wallingford (1260 – 1291). By 1327 the boundaries of the borough had been

formerly recorded although it is likely that they had already been determined well before then. The Priory was dissolved in 1539 and the Abbey Church became the parish church when it was bought by the local people in 1553 (Page 1912).

4.6 The cruciform abbey was the largest built in England at that time, it had a chancel of four bays, a transept containing seven apses, and a nave of ten bays—fifteen bays long overall. The crossing tower was built using bricks from Roman Verulamium. The monastic abbey was completed in 1089. In the current structure the original Norman arches survive principally under the central tower and on the north side of the nave. The arches in the rest of the building are Gothic, following medieval rebuilding and extensions, and Victorian era restoration. A nunnery (Sopwell Priory) was founded nearby in 1140. The abbey was extended in the 1190s by Abbot John de Cella; as the number of monks grew from 50 to over a 100, the abbey was extended westwards with three bays added to the nave. A new gateway, now called the Abbey Gateway, was built to the abbey grounds in 1365, which was the only part of the monastery buildings (besides the church) to survive the dissolution, later being used as a prison and now part of St Albans School. The abbey is registered as Scheduled Ancient Monument (1003526).

Post-medieval & modern

4.7 Post-medieval development of the town saw the construction of roads, specifically catering to the coaching trade, as St. Albans formed the first stop on the coaching route north from London. It accounts for town's numerous inns, many dating from Tudor times. Later development saw the steady expansion of various industries such as printing, engineering, clothing and hat manufacture, while the construction of the railway in 1858 allowed an increase in communication and trade. The Abbey Church was granted Cathedral status and the town received a City charter in 1877. In the inter-war years it became a popular centre for the electronics industry. After the World War II the town expanded significantly as it took a part in the post-War redistribution of population out of London (St Albans Archaeology & History website).

The site

4.8 The site was subject to an archaeological evaluation in July 1975 (Saunders & Havercroft 1978). An evaluation trench 70m long was excavated along the long axis of the site, revealing the line of the robbed southern precinct wall along and a bank and ditch outside (to the south). The wall was c.1.60m wide and the ditch was c.7m wide. On the southern side of the ditch a clay bank was present.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Three trenches were excavated using a mechanical 360° mini-excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). Initially two trenches were proposed, however the excavation of Trench 1 did not reveal the

remains of the precinct wall of the abbey. It was judged that the alignment of the wall projected on the plans provided was not accurate. Therefore Trench 2 was re-sited further to the north and an additional trench, Trench 3, was excavated. Trench 1 measured 15 x 0.75m, Trench 2 measured 10 x 1.50m and Trench 3 measured 13 x 1.50m.

5.2 The evaluation required the excavation of the trenches to the first recognised archaeological deposits. In practice only the topsoil was mechanically excavated (0.15 – 0.25m below the existing ground) surface. This was done under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

6 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Trench 1 (Fig. 2, DP 1)

Description: No archaeological features or finds were revealed, and the trench did not reveal the abbey boundary. The northern end of the trench was located just to the south of a bank which appeared to be associated with a ditch (DP 5).

Trench 2 (Fig. 2, DP 2-3)

Description: Two linear features (Ditch F1001 and Former Precinct Wall F1004) were revealed within the trench after the topsoil (L1000) had been removed.

Ditch F1001 was linear, orientated north-west/south-east, and was 3.70m+ wide. It was located in the southern part of the trench within an area of low ground in the central part of the site. This feature, likely a ditch, contained at least two fills. Uppermost L1002 was a thin (c. 0.05m) layer of gravel which overlay L1003, a dark grey, compact, sandy silt.

F1004 was also linear, located to the north of F1001 and shared a similar alignment (DP 4). It was 2m wide and it contained L1005, a light brown, fairly loose, gravel. This feature adheres to the alignment of the abbey precinct wall and contained building materials left after the wall had been robbed.

The ditches were separated by L1008, a light brownish yellow, sandy clay (c. 0.80m wide). The deposit present to the north of F1004, L1009, was a mid to dark grey, friable, clayey silt with moderate gravel and flint.

Trench 3 (Fig. 2, DP 6-7)

Description: Ditch F1001 and Former Precinct Wall F1004 found within Trench 2 were also present within Trench 3.

Ditch F1001 was present in the southern part of the trench and co-incident within the linear depression visible on the surface. It was 4.50m wide within the trench and also contained fills L1002 and L1003.

Former Precinct Wall F1004 was 1.50m wide and again it contained fill L1005, a light brown, fairly loose, gravel.

The ditches were separated by L1006 (0.75m wide), a light brown, compact, sandy silt. To the north of F1004 a deposit of dark grey, friable, sandy silt with moderate gravel (L1007) was present.

7 CONFIDENCE RATING

7.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recognition of archaeological features or finds.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The aim of the evaluation was to locate accurately the remains of the St Albans abbey southern boundary first recorded during an evaluation of the site in the 1970s. The boundary comprised a precinct wall and a southern outer ditch. The evaluation was carried out to provide reliable information to be considered as part of the proposed planning application.

8.2 The evaluation revealed the former precinct boundary and associated ditch. The features compared to those recorded in 1970s but were now accurately plotted. The boundary was orientated north-west/south-east.

8.3 The area to the south of the boundary features did not contain archaeological remains and this accords with the results of the previous evaluation. Any development within this area may have limited impact.

9 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

9.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited with any donated finds from the site at St Albans Museum. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions would like to thank Mr Chris Meadows for funding the project and for his assistance.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of Mr Simon West of St Albans City & District Council.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1. Trench 1. Looking south-south-west.



DP 2. Trench 2. Looking north-east.



DP 3. Trench 2. Looking north-north-east.



DP 4. Trench 2. Remains of the precinct wall: F1004 with L1005. Looking north-north-east.



DP 5. Contour of Ditch F1001. Looking north-west.



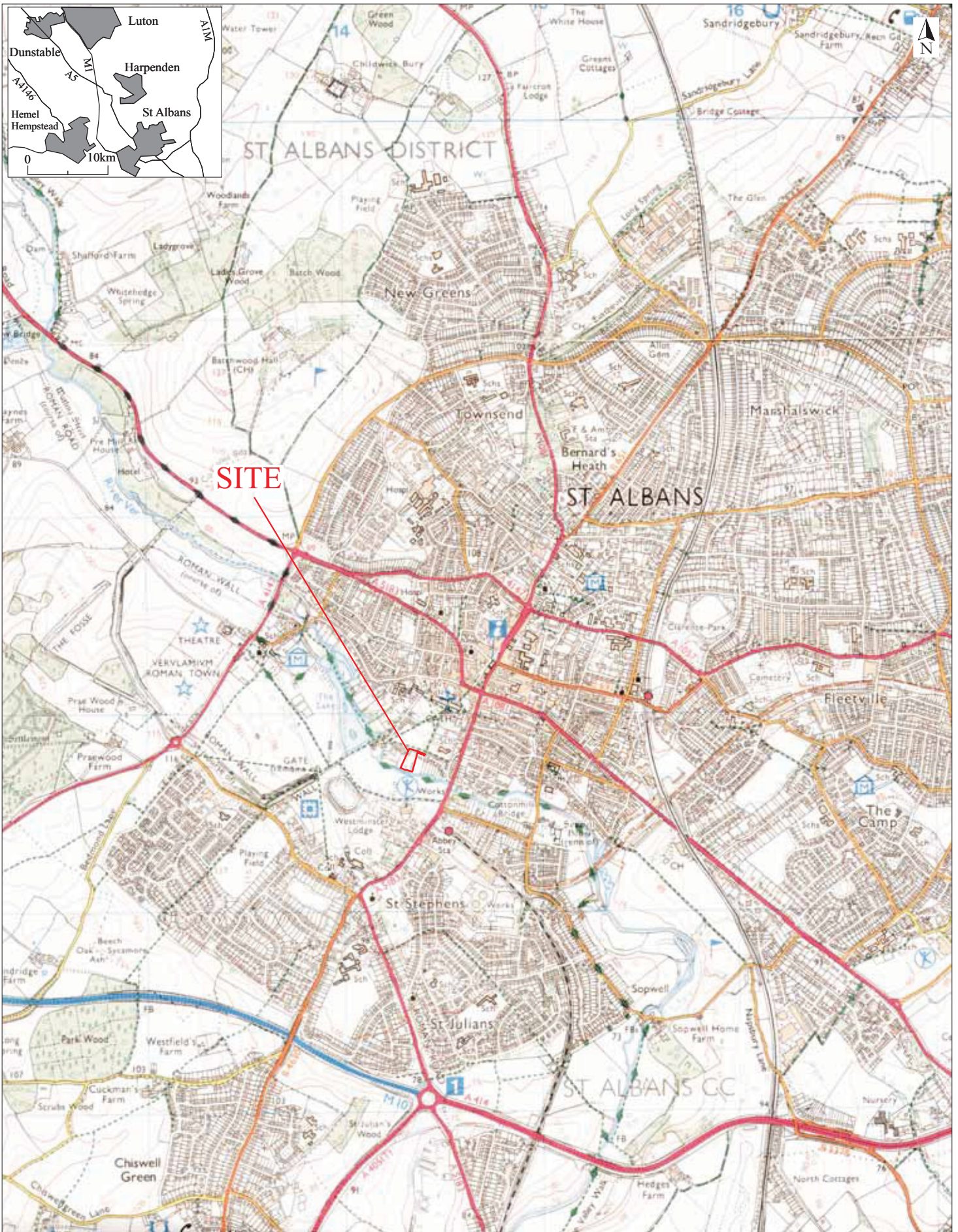
DP 6. Trench 1 and Ditch F1001 in background. Looking south-south-west.



DP 7. Trench 3. Looking south-south-west.

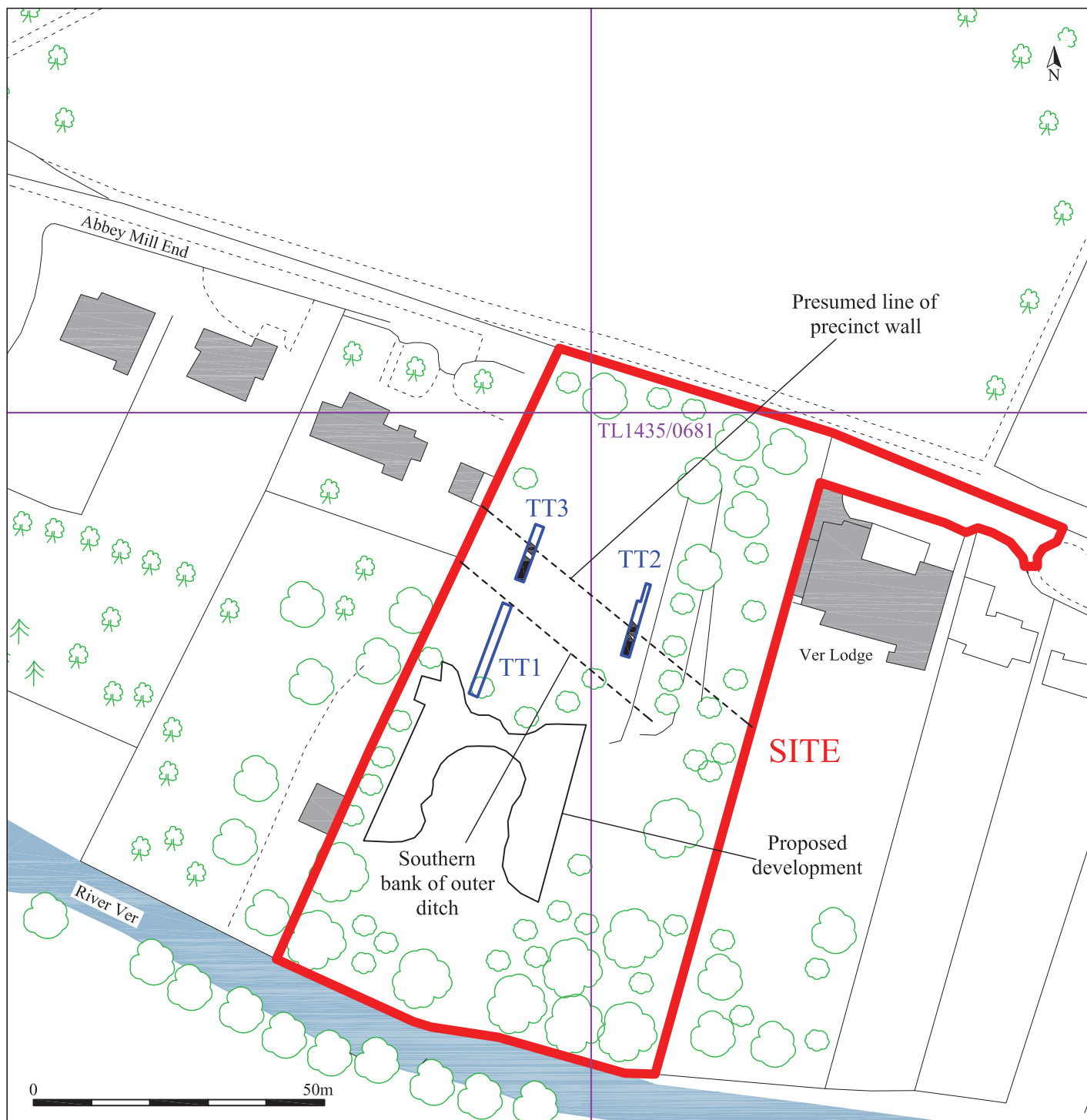


DP 8. Trench 3. Remains of the precinct wall: F1004 with L1005. Looking south-east.



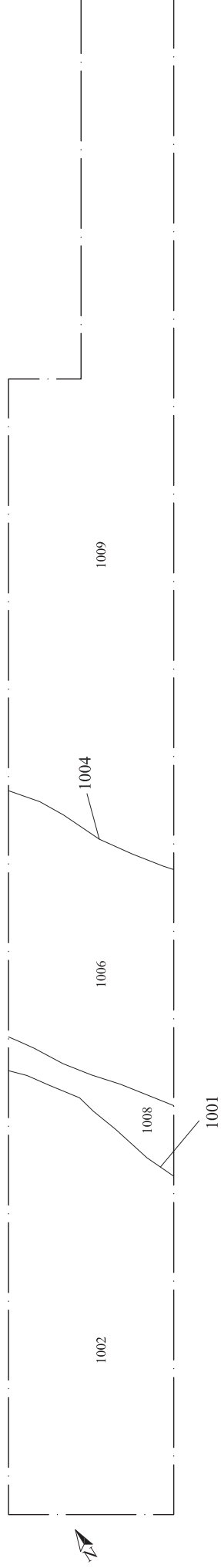
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4

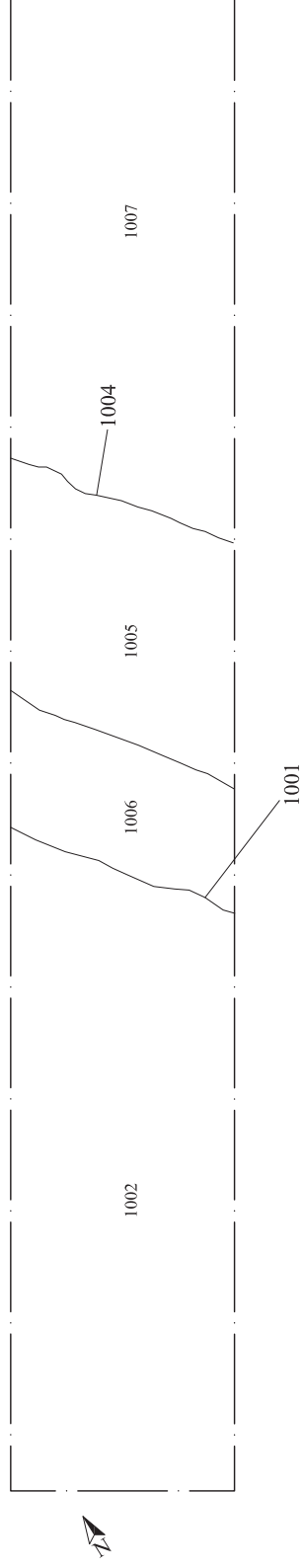


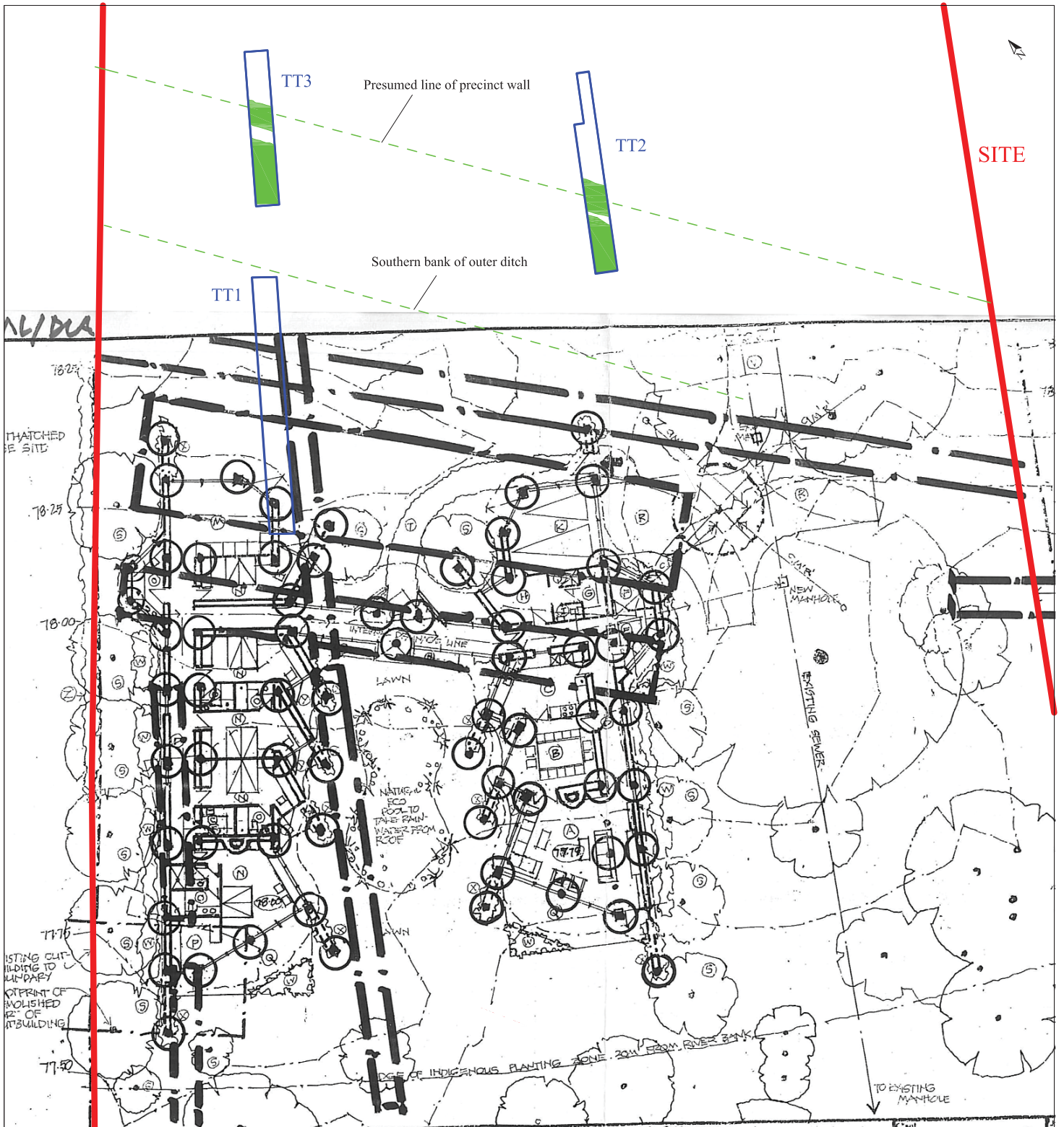
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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:1000 at A4

Trench 2



Trench 3





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Fig. 4 Proposed development plan
 Scale 1:250 at A3