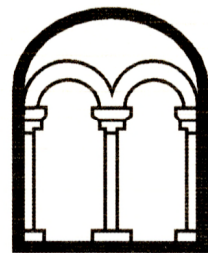


**HOUGHTON REGIS NORTH 1  
HOUGHTON REGIS  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**FROST'S TOPSOIL EXCAVATION AREA**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION**

**Albion**  
archaeology



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## Preface

*All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and should not be relied upon by any third party. This document should not be used for any other purpose without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council). Any person/party relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Albion Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Albion Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the persons/party by whom it was commissioned. This document is limited by the state of knowledge at the time it was written.*

## Acknowledgements

*The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Assistant Archaeological Manager) and Marco Capardoni (Archaeological Supervisor). All finds were processed by Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). The project was managed by Wesley Keir (Archaeological Manager) with the support of Ian Turner.*

*This report has been prepared by Marco Capardoni and Ian Turner with contributions from Jackie Wells (artefacts). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff.*

*The project was commissioned by WT Partnership, on behalf of Lands Improvement Holdings, and monitored on behalf of the local planning authority by Martin Oake (Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist).*

## Version History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>Reason for re-issue</i>
<i>1.0</i>	<i>16/10/2020</i>	<i>n/a</i>

## Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

AIA	Advanced Infrastructure Application
AIW	Advanced Infrastructure Works
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CI/A	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
PDA	Frost's topsoil excavation area adjacent to Chalton Cross Farm access track within HRN1
WSARM	Written Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*In 2014, Central Bedfordshire Council granted outline planning consent (CB/12/03613) for a housing-led urban extension to the north of Houghton Regis—a development known as Houghton Regis North 1 (HRN1).*

*HRN1 lies within an archaeologically sensitive area where extensive archaeological remains of early prehistoric to medieval date have been found. For this reason, the application was supported by the results of an archaeological field evaluation (Albion Archaeology 2012). Condition 20 on the planning consent required the preparation of a Written Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management (WSARM) for each development area.*

*Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake Strip, Map and Sample investigation within a small area located in the north-east part of HRN1 where topsoil was to be excavated and used for the HRN1 landscaping works. The work was undertaken between 24th April and 1st May 2020 in accordance with an approved WSARM (Albion Archaeology 2017) produced for this area of HRN1, which was previously referred to as development area F1 and F2.*

*The only archaeological features revealed within the PDA were two ditches.*

*The earlier of the two ditches, dating to the late Iron Age, corresponds with one arm of an enclosure detected by previous geophysical survey (Stratascan 2012). Ditches of a similar date were identified within the nearby investigation carried out within the farm access track to the north (Brown 2020), though the enclosure ditch itself does not appear to have been revealed. It seems likely that these features are related to the mid-late Iron Age settlement remains identified within the trial trenches (Albion Archaeology 2012) and the A5-M1 investigation at Site K (Brown 2020) carried out to the north.*

*The second ditch produced no finds but corresponds with a ditch excavated within the ACA13 open-area excavation c.200m to the south of the PDA where it was shown to be related to Roman enclosures and associated settlement. The same ditch was revealed within the farm access track investigation to the north of the PDA (Brown 2020) and a trial trench (Albion Archaeology 2012) excavated to the south. The considerable length of this ditch—geophysical survey (Stratascan 2012) indicates that it extends for a distance of at least 470m—suggests that it is likely to have represented a significant boundary within the wider Roman landscape.*

*With the landowner's permission, the project archive will be deposited with The Culture Trust Luton under accession no: LUTNM: 2020/10. Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-392831) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 **Project Background**

In 2014, Central Bedfordshire Council granted outline planning consent (CB/12/03613) for a housing-led urban extension to the north of Houghton Regis—a development known as Houghton Regis North 1 (HRN1).

HRN1 lies within an area where extensive archaeological remains of early prehistoric to medieval date have been found. For this reason, the application was supported by the results of an archaeological field evaluation (Albion Archaeology 2012). The latter had revealed evidence for a series of Iron Age/Roman settlements, field boundaries and trackways along with evidence for dispersed activity and medieval cultivation.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) advised that further archaeological work would be required to record and advance understanding of archaeological remains that would be unavoidably destroyed as a consequence of the development. Condition 20 on the planning consent stated that:

*No development shall take place within each development area or sub area of that development area ... until a written scheme of archaeological resource management [WSARM] for that development area or sub area has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority...*

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the client to undertake Strip, Map and Sample investigation within a small area located in the north-eastern part of HRN1 where topsoil was to be excavated and used for the HRN1 landscaping works. The work was undertaken between 24th April and 1st May 2020 in accordance with an approved WSARM (Albion Archaeology 2017) produced for this area of HRN1, which was previously referred to as development area F1 and F2.

### 1.2 **Site Location**

The permitted development area (PDA) comprises an area of c.0.1ha, centred on TL 0348/2562 (Figure 1). It lies adjacent to a track leading to Chalton Cross Farm within the north-east corner of the HRN1 development area to the west of the Woodside Link (A5505) and south of the A5–M1 Link Road.

The topography of the area is relatively flat, lying at 121–126m OD. The geology comprises chalk of the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation and Totternhoe Stone Member, together with superficial deposits of Lowestoft Formation – Diamicton<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.3 **Archaeological Background**

HRN1 was subject to extensive assessment and field evaluation in 2012, the results of which formed Chapter 13 of the Environmental Statement that accompanied the original outline application for the development (HRDC 2012). In summary, the investigations found evidence for a series of Iron Age/Roman settlements, field boundaries and trackways along with evidence for medieval cultivation across the application area.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain>. Accessed 07-10-2020



The findings of the investigations were used to identify twenty-one Archaeological Character Areas (ACA), which were described within Chapter 13 of the Environmental Statement (HRDC 2012). The PDA lies within parts of ACA11 and ACA12 characterised within the Environmental Statement as containing Iron Age/Roman and later field system boundaries and agricultural features, as well as features associated with a potential Iron Age/Roman settlement site (within ACA12).

Numerous archaeological investigations have since been undertaken within and around the HRN1 development area. Of particular relevance to the current works is the excavation carried out within ACA13 (Luke and Barker, in prep.) to the south of the PDA and investigations carried out near the east end of the A5–M1 Link Road (Brown 2020).

Potential later Iron Age/early Roman settlement remains were identified by geophysical survey (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2007, 2008a; Stratascan 2012; Figure 3) and trial trenching (Albion Archaeology 2012; Northamptonshire Archaeology 2008b) to the north of the PDA. Subsequent investigations on Site K near the eastern end of the A5–M1 Link Road confirmed a mid- to late Iron Age date for the remains (Brown 2020). They included storage pits and a pit cluster revealed within the road corridor in the vicinity of an enclosure detected by the previous geophysical survey. A number of boundary ditches were also revealed both in the road corridor and within the route of the Chalton Cross Farm access track, which lies immediately to the north of the PDA.

During 2018–19, open-area excavation was undertaken within ACA13, which lies c.200m to the south of the PDA. The excavation predominantly revealed extensive Iron Age and Roman settlement remains; the later settlement was associated with an E–W aligned trackway (Luke and Barker, in prep.). The settlement was characterised by numerous enclosures, two of which contained drying ovens. Earlier activity included a ring-ditch monument and a nearby un-urned, early Bronze Age cremation burial. A mid- to late Bronze Age field system was also revealed along with six similarly dated cremation burials and an inhumation.

Further to the west of the PDA, investigations associated with the HRN1 Phase 1 Advanced Infrastructure Works revealed widespread late Bronze Age to Roman remains (Albion Archaeology 2019; Albion Archaeology, in prep.). This included evidence of field systems, scattered late Bronze Age to middle Iron Age pits and a late Iron Age/Roman settlement.

A number of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age dispersed pits and Iron Age/Roman boundary ditches were also revealed to the south of the PDA, during Strip, Map and Sample investigation carried out along the route of the Woodside Link (A5505) (Barker, in prep.).

#### **1.4 Project/Research Objectives**

The principal aim of the fieldwork was to determine and understand the nature, function and character of an archaeological site in its cultural and environmental setting.



To achieve the above, the data collected during the fieldwork aimed to determine the following:

1. the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the PDA;
2. the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
3. the local environmental conditions (through the recovery of palaeo-environmental remains).

Previous archaeological investigations and assessments in the vicinity of the PDA had indicated that there was potential for remains dating to the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and medieval/post-medieval periods to be present. The following research themes were, therefore, also identified as potentially being applicable:

- Landscape development in the Bronze and Iron Ages (Oake 2007, 9–10);
- Characterising Roman rural settlement including settlement layout and economy (Oake 2007, 10–12; Going and Plouviez 2000 and Medlycott 2011, 47);
- Regional variation in settlement in the Roman period (Oake 2007, 17 and Medlycott 2011, 47);
- The origins and development of field systems and the relationship between field systems and settlements in the Iron Age and Roman periods (Oake 2007, 10–12; Bryant 2000, 15; Going and Plouviez 2000 and Medlycott 2011, 47);
- The origin and development of medieval field systems (Oake 2007, 14).

The HRN1 development traverses a wide archaeological landscape. The regional research framework (Medlycott 2011, 84–5) states that “Human interaction with landscape and environment is central to archaeological study [...] in the East of England” and “the establishment of projects at a landscape scale, rather than that of an individual site, would allow for the chronological and spatial development of complex areas of palimpsest cropmarks and finds scatters to be analysed. Targeted fieldwork providing dating evidence for those landscapes should be a primary future research aim for the region”.

## 1.5 Methodologies

The development works within the PDA were anticipated within the WSARM (Albion Archaeology 2017) to have a destructive impact upon any potential archaeological remains. These remains were adjudged within the Environmental Statement (HMRC 2012) to be of low–moderate significance.

A Strip, Map and Sample investigation of the PDA was proposed to mitigate the impacts upon archaeological remains.

The project adhered throughout to the standards set out in the following documents:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd edn, 2017).
• CifA	<i>Charter and by-law</i> (2014); <i>Code of conduct</i> (2019) <i>Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation</i> (2014)





• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (Gurney 2003)
• Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> (2015)
• The Culture Trust Luton	<i>Procedures for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with Luton Culture</i> (2013)

The detailed methodology for the Strip, Map and Sample investigation is provided within the WSARM (Albion Archaeology 2017). In summary:

- Ground reduction was carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket down to the top of undisturbed geological deposits or archaeological remains, whichever was encountered first.
- All ground reduction was undertaken under the supervision of an archaeologist.
- Any revealed archaeological features or deposits were fully investigated and recorded in accordance with methods outlined within the WSARM.

The archaeological investigation was carried out between 24th April and 1st May 2020 and was monitored on behalf of the LPA by the CBCA.

## 1.6 **Project Archive**

With the landowner's permission, the project archive will be deposited with The Culture Trust Luton under accession no: LUTNM: 2020/10. Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-392831) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service.



## 2 RESULTS

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### 2.1 Introduction

The results of the excavation are presented below; any artefacts recovered are discussed within the text.

Sections and a plan of all the excavated features can be found on Figure 2.

### 2.1 Overburden and Geology

The overburden consisted of a 0.15m-thick topsoil overlying a 0.08m-thick subsoil of mid-grey-brown clay silt. The underlying geology comprised light orange-white chalky silt with patches of orange sandy silt.

### 2.2 Iron Age and Roman Ditches

Two ditches were revealed within the PDA.

NNW–SSE-aligned ditch [6] was located near the east side of the PDA. It was >24m long, 1.25m wide and 0.38m deep. It became shallower to the north where it finally petered out. It corresponds with one arm of an enclosure detected by the previous geophysical survey (Figure 3; Stratascan 2012). Three abraded pottery sherds (25g) in coarse, shell- and sand-tempered fabrics (respectively types F16 and F28<sup>2</sup>) were recovered from its mid-brown chalky clay fill. They are broadly datable to the pre-Belgic Iron Age. Thirty-three eroded animal limb bone, mandible and tooth fragments (131g), the latter including a worn cattle molar, were also recovered.

N–S-aligned ditch [4] was located on the west side of the PDA. It was 1.1m wide and 0.4m deep, extending for 10.5m across the PDA. It was filled with a mid-brown silty clay, which produced no finds. However, it corresponds with a linear geophysical anomaly (Figure 3), which was revealed to be a Roman boundary ditch within a trial trench (Trench 123) excavated 70m to the south (Albion Archaeology 2012) and within open-area excavation undertaken within ACA13 (Luke and Barker, in prep.) located a further 130m to the south.

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<sup>2</sup> Fabric types identified in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series



### 3 CONCLUSIONS

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The only archaeological features revealed within the PDA were two ditches.

The earlier of the two ditches, dating to the late Iron Age period, corresponds with one arm of an enclosure detected by previous geophysical survey (Stratascan 2012; Figure 3). Ditches of a similar date were identified within the nearby investigation carried out within the farm access track to the north (Brown 2020), though the enclosure ditch itself does not appear to have been revealed. It seems likely that these features are related to the mid- to late Iron Age settlement remains identified within the trial trenches (Albion Archaeology 2012) and A5–M1 investigation at Site K (Brown 2020) carried out to the north.

The second ditch produced no dating evidence but it corresponds with a ditch excavated within the ACA13 open-area excavation *c.*200m to the south of the PDA where it was shown to be related to Roman enclosures and associated settlement. The same ditch was revealed within the farm access track investigation to the north of the PDA (Brown 2020) and a trial trench (Albion Archaeology 2012) excavated to the south. The considerable length of this ditch—geophysical survey (Figure 3; Stratascan 2012) indicates that it extends for a distance of at least 470m—suggests that it is likely to have represented a significant boundary within the wider Roman landscape.



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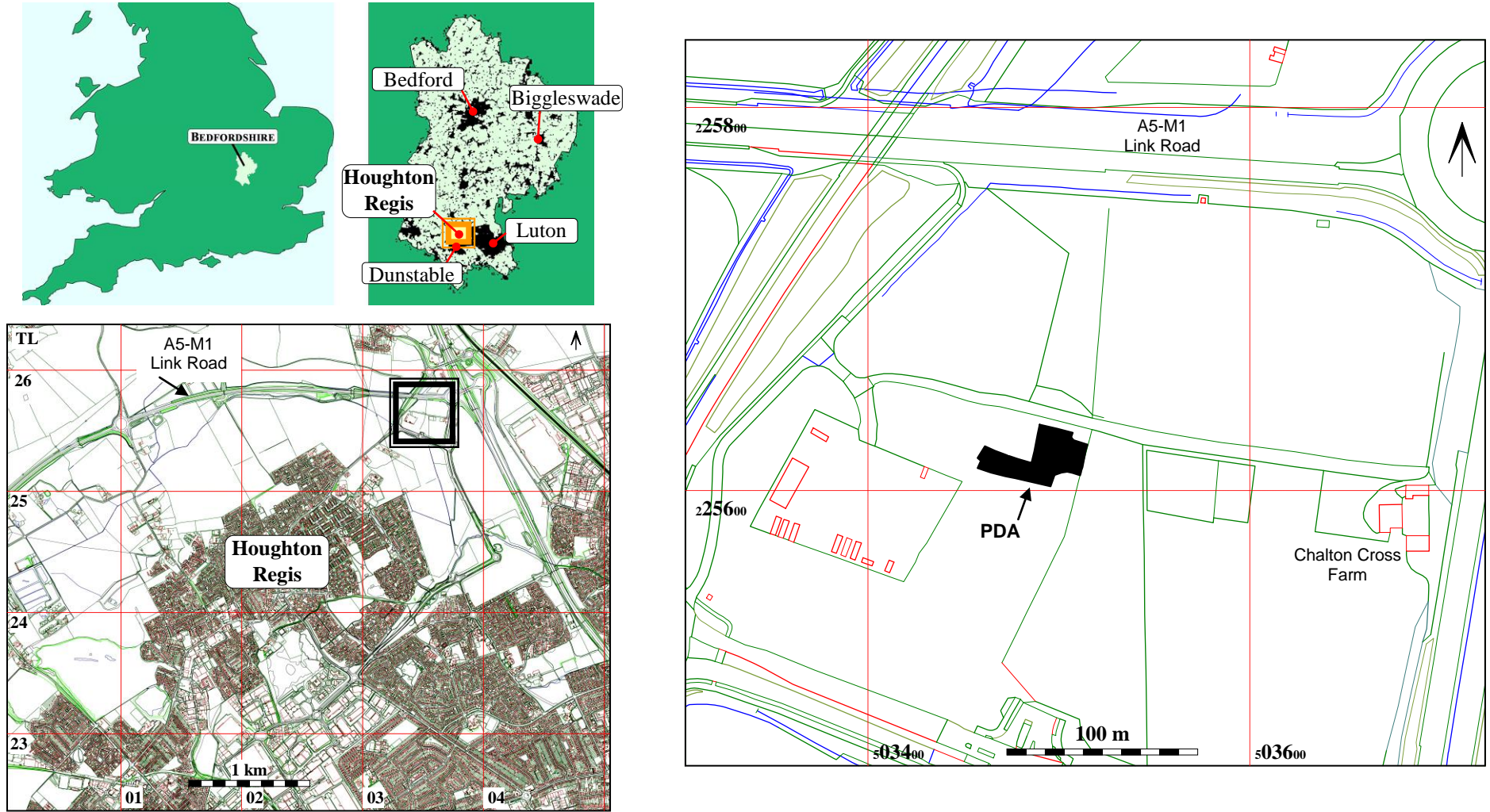
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## 5 FIGURES

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**Figure 1: Site location**

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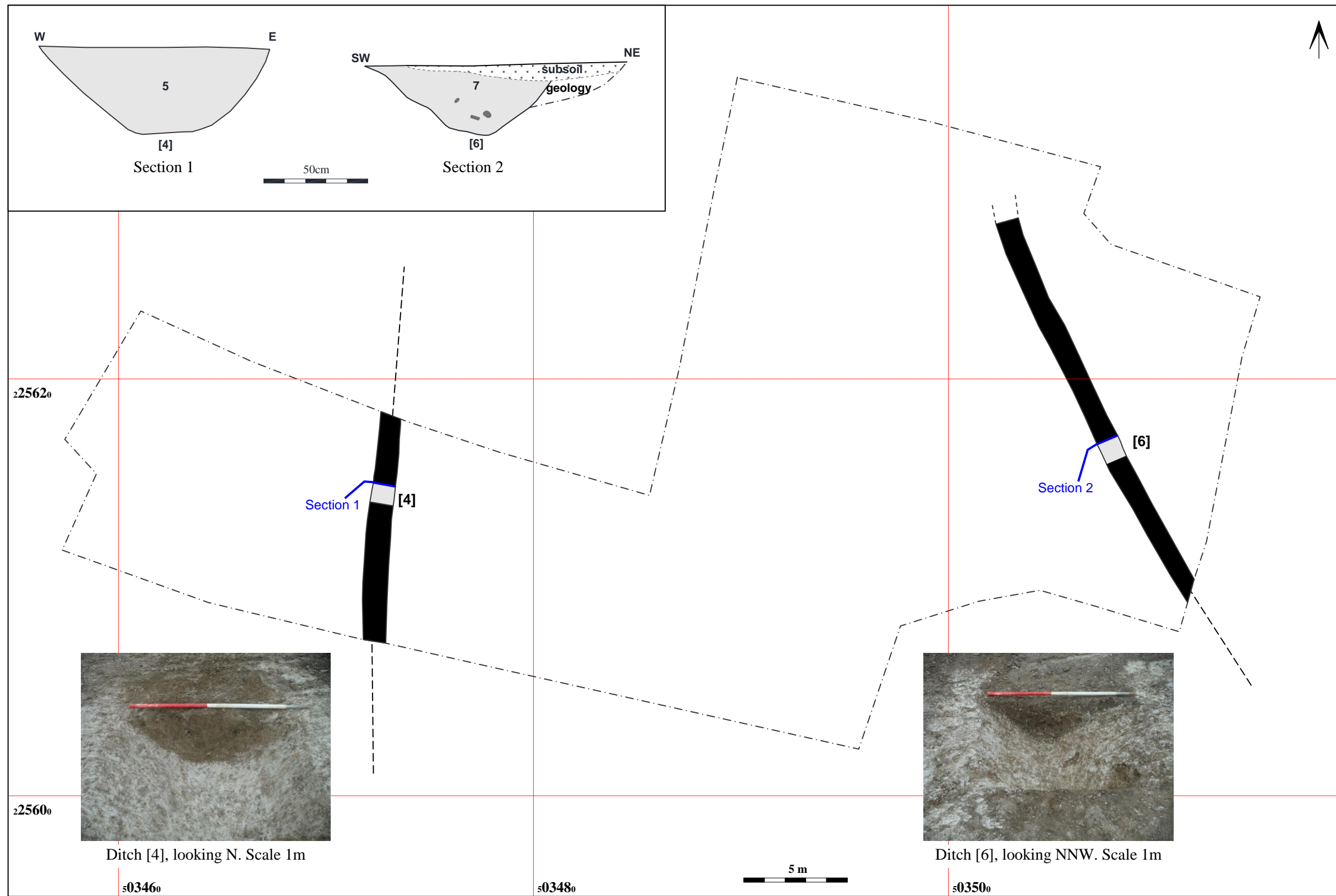
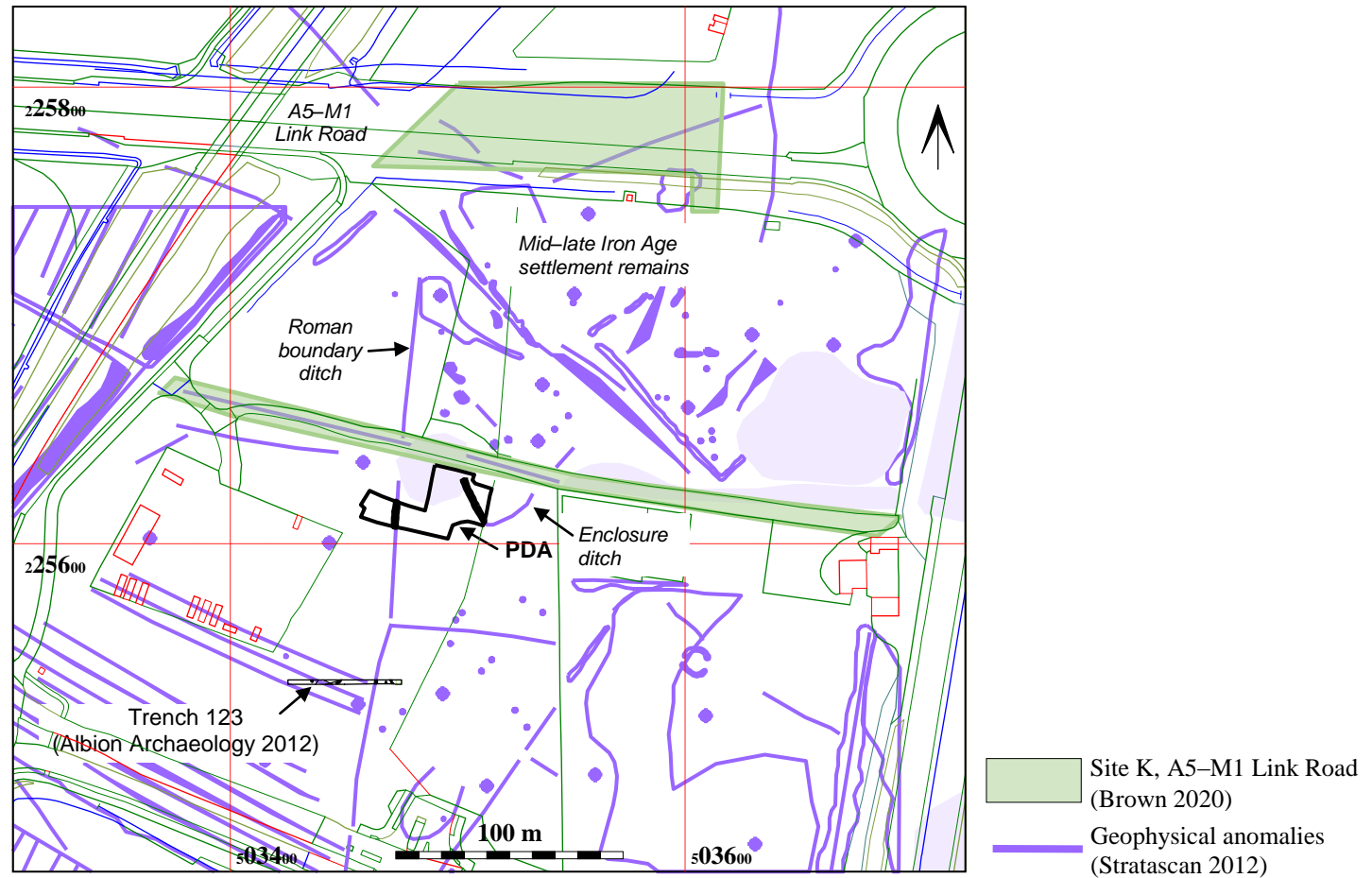


Figure 2: Plan and sections of revealed features





**Figure 3:** Geophysical survey results and selected investigations undertaken within the vicinity of the PDA

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