

**BLOCK B
ROGERS COURT
2 KINGSWAY
BEDFORD**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Albion
archaeology



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ROGERS COURT
2 KINGSWAY
BEDFORD**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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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 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.

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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record
PDA	Permitted development area or the site
SAO	BBC Senior Archaeological Officer
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-technical Summary

Planning permission (21/00498/MDC3) was granted by Bedford Borough Council for change of use of the existing building to residential use at Block B, Rogers Court, 2 Kingsway, Bedford, MK42 2BB. The site is located with the southern burh of Bedford, which is believed to have been established in the Anglo-Saxon period. A condition (no. 16) was attached to the planning permission, requiring archaeological monitoring works during the construction of a new access ramp at the front of the building. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the developer to undertake the archaeological works, which were completed between 29th June and 1st July 2021.

Historic maps show the line of the King's Ditch along the west edge of the site, a probably defensive boundary surrounding the southern burh of Bedford, established in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The site is shown as a private garden on maps dating from the late 18th to the start of the 20th century. By 1924 it had been redeveloped as part of a timber-yard, with large storage buildings covering the site and an access road off Cauldwell Street.

The foundation trench for the new access ramp was 20m long, 3.75m wide and up to 0.65m deep. Modern deposits and features consisted of made ground in the upper part of the soil profile and cuts for a drain culvert and the foundations of the existing office block. A tarmac surface noted in the north side of the trench appears to correspond to the access road to the former timber-yard.

Deposits in the lower part of the trench consisted of soil layers which contained a small amount of post-medieval brick (c. 18th–19th century) but no other occupation debris. No earlier archaeological features or geological deposits were identified within the base of the trench.

The findings are consistent with known use of the site from the 18th century to the early 20th century as a garden and a later timber-store. It is possible that earlier archaeological deposits may survive below the formation level of the present groundworks.

The project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum under accession no. BEDFM 2021.57. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website under reference number albionar1-424669.



1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission (21/00498/MDC3) was granted by Bedford Borough Council (BBC) for change of use of existing building from F1 (learning and non-residential institutions) to C3 (residential) use to provide 20 no. self-contained accommodation units with associated support facilities, external alterations comprising replacement of existing windows and insertion of new windows in end elevations, replacement of existing entrance canopy, erection of access ramp and steps, provision of cycle storage, seated areas, smoking shelter and refuse storage area at Block B, Rogers Court, 2 Kingsway, Bedford, MK42 2BB.

The BBC Senior Archaeological Officer (SAO) advised that the permitted development area (PDA) lay within a locally designated area of archaeological interest – the postulated extent of the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval town. The SAO considered that groundworks associated with the construction of the access ramp and steps could potentially impact archaeological remains.

Accordingly, the SAO recommended, in line with the NPPF (2019), a planning condition requiring an archaeological mitigation strategy. The following condition (no. 16) was attached to the planning consent:

No groundworks for the access ramp or steps shall take place until an archaeological mitigation strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The archaeological mitigation strategy shall include a timetable and the following components (the completion of each to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority will result in a separate confirmation of compliance for each component):-.

(i) fieldwork and/ or preservation "in situ" of archaeological remains;
(ii) a post-excavation assessment report (to be submitted within six months of the completion of fieldwork);

(iii) a post-excavation analysis report, preparation of site archive ready for deposition at a store approved by the Local Planning Authority, completion of an archive report, and submission of a publication report (to be completed within two years of the completion of fieldwork).

The strategy shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and timings.

REASON: To ensure the proper recording, reporting and presentation of heritage assets affected by this development, in accordance with Local Plan Policy 41s (viii) of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the client to prepare this written scheme of investigation (WSI), representing the mitigation



strategy required by condition no. 16, and to carry out the required programme of archaeological works.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the developer to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and to carry out the archaeological fieldwork required by the condition. The results of the archaeological work form the subject of the present report.

1.2 Location, Topography and Geology

The PDA lies in the historic core of Bedford, south of the River Great Ouse at the corner of the Kingsway and Cauldwell Street. It is occupied by a former office block, Rogers Court (Block B), which is the subject of the building conversion works. The built development in the vicinity of the PDA generally dates to the late 1960s.

The PDA is centred on grid reference TL 04944 49318 and lies on level ground at c. 26.4m OD. The geological deposits consist of Felmersham Member, sand and gravels formed in Quaternary Period, which overly Great Oolite Group, limestone and argillaceous rocks, sedimentary bedrock formed in the Jurassic Period¹.

1.3 Nature of the Development

The works to convert the former offices for residential use mainly consist of internal building works. The works that formed the subject of archaeological monitoring were on the north side of the building on its Cauldwell Street frontage. Here, an access ramp was built to enable access from street level. The ramp is supported on a concrete slab foundation. Construction involved machine excavation of a trench c. 20m long by 3.5m wide, and this was subject to archaeological monitoring.

1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.4.1 Introduction

The following sections are based on information provided by a search of the Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (HER). Records within a 250m-radius study area were reviewed.

Most heritage assets listed on the HER within the study area date to the post-medieval period and relate to standing buildings, chapels and churches, some of which have since been demolished and some of which are still extant. Of greater relevance to the forthcoming work are the numerous previous archaeological investigations within the study area. These are catalogued as “events” by the HER and are shown on Figure 2. The investigations are summarised by the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) for Bedford (Edgeworth 2005) and an important group of excavations were published by Baker et al. (1979).

¹ Contains British Geological Survey materials © UKRI 2021.



1.4.2 Prehistoric and Roman (before c. AD 450)

The gravel terraces of the River Great Ouse have produced many Palaeolithic artefacts and stretches of the banks of the river are occupied by complex Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual landscapes. However, these are located outside the limits of Bedford town with the most notable sites at Deep Spinney and Biddenham to the west, and Cople and Willington to the east.

Few prehistoric finds, apart from isolated residual occurrences of flint flakes or fragments of pottery in later features, have been identified during excavations within the core of the town and none is listed in the HER for the study area.

Similarly, for the Roman period the occasional finds of artefacts are no more than would be expected from any other part of the river valley (Simco in Edgeworth 2005). The ford through the river may have been used in Roman times but no settlement has yet been identified. The HER lists a potential Roman road (HER 10480), suggested as running from Ickleford to Bedford (Viatores no. 210). Within Bedford the line of the road is lost where London Road meets St John's Street, but if projected, would cross the Great Ouse at TL 048 495. However, the existence of most of the roads identified by the Viatores in Bedfordshire has since been discounted (Simco 1984).

No other Roman heritage assets are listed in the HER for the study area.

1.4.3 Saxo-Norman (AD 850–1150)

The origins of Bedford lie in the Anglo-Saxon period and the first historical reference to the town comes from a treaty drawn up between King Alfred and Earl Guthrum in AD 878. For around 30 years Bedford was part of the Danelaw until it was recaptured by King Edward the Elder, Alfred's son. Until then settlement at Bedford is thought to have been concentrated on the north side of the river. However, excavations on the east side of St John's Street (HER 14390, EBD 607) found evidence of pits and a structure provisionally dated to the 9th century, suggesting that some occupation also existed on the south side of the river.

According to the annal for AD 914 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Edward ordered the burh on the south side of the river to be formally laid out (HER 10530). The main streets of the modern town centre lie on a rectilinear grid that is thought to have been established when the Anglo-Saxon burh was created (Hill 1970; Haslam 1983, 29–31). Cauldwell Street, St Mary's Street and St John's Street are most likely part of this original layout. It is thought that the King's Ditch (HER 1198), which in its current (culverted) form lies immediately to the west of the site, was constructed as part of the military (and possibly flood) defences for the burh (Edgeworth 2005); it probably originally consisted of a large bank and ditch. The site lies south of where Cauldwell Street crosses the line of the King's Ditch and is, therefore, adjacent to the site of one of the entrances to the burh.



Excavations along St Mary's Street, St John's Street and Cauldwell Street uncovered settlement features dating to the Saxo-Norman period in the form of pits, industrial refuse, hearths and timber buildings (HER 3068, 5509, 14386, 14390, 15663). This provides tangible evidence for the expansion of Bedford to the south of the river in the Saxo-Norman period.

1.4.4 Medieval (1150–1500)

Two churches stood at the crossing of St Mary's Street and Cauldwell Street. St Mary's (HER 853), on the east side of the street, originates from the 11th century with extensive alterations and extensions in the 14th and 16th centuries. The Church of St Peter de Dunstable (HER 301) stood on the opposite side of the road. It was in existence by 1220 and was demolished in 1546.

During the medieval period the area of settlement within the southern burh intensified. Evidence for it has been encountered during archaeological investigations within land currently occupied by Bedford College and along St John's Street, St Mary's Street and Cauldwell Street (HER 1680, 3068, 5509, 13421, 14386, 14387, 15265, 15266).

1.4.5 Post-medieval (1500–1900)

Numerous post-medieval heritage assets are located within the study area. These are mainly 19th- and 20th-century buildings, often within the Bedford Conservation Area along St Mary's Street and on the east side of St John's Street.

A small number of post-medieval buildings are mapped near the site. Some of these, like the Wesleyan Methodist chapel (HER 8038) that once stood opposite the site on the north side of Cauldwell Street and the sites of builders' merchants (HER 17540, 17577) to the south of the site, are now demolished. Others, like the 19th-century red-brick Taxation Office (HER 1200) to the west of the site and the 19th-century former shops at 20-22 Cauldwell Street (HER 4118), are still standing.

Most of the 19th-century and earlier buildings on the west side of St John's Street and St Mary's Street were demolished after the Second World War and the area was extensively re-developed, which is why it is not included in the Bedford Conservation Area. The same thing happened at 2 Kingsway. The 19th-century structures visible on the 1924 OS map and on an aerial photograph taken in 1946 are now gone.

Observations during the excavation of footings trenches (HER 1680), probably for the office buildings on or near the site, recorded a culverted length of the King's Ditch (Baker unpub. 1972); it consisted of a stone plinth with a brick capping. It is likely that this is the culvert that was constructed in the early/mid-19th century when the King's Ditch was put underground.

The railway line (HER 1846) linking Bedford and Bletchley was constructed in 1846 and is an important post-medieval asset to the west of the site.



1.4.6 Modern (after 1900)

A small number of heritage assets dating to the modern period are listed in the HER, for example the site of a 20th-century cabinet maker (HER 17418) and a couple of 20th-century buildings within the Conservation Area. None is listed on the site or in its immediate vicinity.

1.4.7 Previous archaeological investigations

David and Evelyn Baker undertook several significant excavations in the area of the southern burh from 1967 to 1974, the results of which are presented in Baker et al. 1979. The EUS (Edgeworth 2005) lists and describes all investigations up to 2001 and recent interventions within the study area are summarised on the HER and mapped on Figure 1.

Several excavations along St Mary's Street, St John's Street and Cauldwell Street (the main thoroughfares of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman settlement) and in the area of the Kingsway uncovered evidence for Saxo-Norman occupation in the form of ditched property boundaries, timber buildings along the street frontages and backyard activity in the form of pits containing domestic refuse and remains of industrial activity such as metalworking and butchery (Baker et al. 1979, EBD 73, 248, 281, and 609; EBB 933, 934 and 1346).

Evidence for medieval occupation was found at the following sites in the southern burh: Baker et al. 1979, EBD 73, 248, 249, 281, 403, 557, and 607.

Medieval occupation in the form of stone buildings (HER 15265) was recorded in St Mary's Street prior to the construction of Bedford College.

Investigations (EBD281) at Bedford College, on the north side of Cauldwell Street, revealed archaeological remains from the Saxo-Norman, medieval, post-medieval and modern periods. Saxo-Norman and early medieval remains included domestic pits and a well, located in the back-plots of the medieval buildings known to have once lined St Mary's Street. A possible early phase of the King's Ditch was also encountered in the west part of the college campus. Evaluation in 1996 recorded the presence of probable domestic and/or industrial remains dated to between the 13th and 15th centuries (EDB249). Evaluation in 2016 revealed deposits at a depth of 1.1m that produced late Anglo-Saxon pottery and medieval (or later) roof tile; post-medieval make-up layers of rubble/brick and clay were also present (EBB 1007). A 2017 watching brief also produced late Anglo-Saxon to late medieval pottery (EBB 1347).

The excavations undertaken at St Mary's Vicarage (HER 14386, Baker 1979) on the site that is now Cauldwell House probably lie closest to the site at 2 Kingsway. Here Saxo-Norman and early medieval activity was evidenced by rubbish pits and a number of timber buildings, set well back from the street frontage. The existence of ash and slag within the pits suggests some industrial activity. Most deposits near the street frontage had been truncated by post-medieval and modern building foundations and cellars.



Within the immediate vicinity of the site, construction trenches, most likely for the surviving office building (HER 1680), revealed little structural evidence apart from a wall footing with associated occupational evidence and ash layers, sealed by “a thick destruction layer”. No dating evidence was recovered (D. Baker 1972). The observations also recorded a length of the King’s Ditch culverted in the 19th century.

At 10 Kingsway, south of the site, observation of a construction trench for a new car wash facility in 2003 revealed a 0.2m-thick layer of brick demolition rubble, most likely the remains of 19th-century demolished buildings, above dark grey soils up to 0.7m thick. These could have been medieval and post-medieval “garden soils” on open ground next to the King’s Ditch.

1.4.8 Historical map evidence

The earliest available map is John Speed’s map of 1610 (not illustrated). This map shows the King’s Ditch looping around the south side of the town where it most likely originated in the Anglo-Saxon period as a defensive boundary to the southern burh. It is now runs in a culvert immediately west of the PDA. Speed’s map shows Cauldwell Street lined with houses on both sides, although it should be noted that the depiction of buildings is schematic.

The 1799 draft enclosure map for Bedford (BARS ref. X1/1) and also Brayley’s 1807 map of Bedford (not illustrated) show an open space or garden in the area that corresponds to the PDA.

The 1836 Dewhurst & Nichol map of Bedford (Figure 3) shows the PDA as a garden area with buildings on the adjacent plots and the King’s Ditch running along the west side of the plot. By the time of the 1841 Reynold’s map (not illustrated) the King’s Ditch had been culverted in the area adjacent to the PDA. This map shows the PDA occupied by a garden with a central oval lawn.

The 1854 map of Bedford by E.W. Salmon showing locations of proposed gas mains (BARS ref. X/133/11) presents a detailed plan of the town (Figure 4). This shows the PDA had been subdivided by a north-south boundary by this time.

The 1884 first edition OS map (Figure 5) shows the PDA still divided into two plots planted with trees and with a small building on the street frontage of the narrow western plot. The area has a large label ‘Cauldwell Cottage’, although it is not clear which building this refers to. The 1900 OS map (Figure 6) shows an additional small building and another boundary subdividing the western plot within the PDA.

The 1924 OS map (Figure 7) shows that the PDA had been redeveloped with the construction of a pair of large, north-south aligned buildings covering the PDA with a central access route off Cauldwell Street. The buildings are drawn with a dashed line on their inner sides, indicating that these were open-sided structures. These appear to have been timber stores which formed part of



Hobson's timber yard. The 1967 OS map (Figure 8) shows that the former store buildings had been demolished and a smaller building stood in the south-east corner of the PDA. The access off Cauldwell Street into the former timber-yard is still shown on this map. The surrounding area had also been substantially redeveloped by this time. The King's Ditch had been fully covered over, buildings to the north of Cauldwell Street had been replaced by Mander College and the Kingsway road had been constructed to the west of the site.

1.5 Project Objectives

The planned works were relatively small-scale but they did have the potential to impact on archaeological remains fronting onto Cauldwell Street. This part of the town might preserve deposits dating from the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and the post-medieval periods. However, repeated construction, demolition, and levelling up mean that the earliest deposits may only survive at a considerable depth below present-day ground level.

The purpose of the archaeological investigation was to make a full record of any archaeological remains impacted by the development, and to place them within their cultural and environmental setting. The specific aims of the archaeological fieldwork were therefore to:

- monitor all groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains;
- investigate the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of archaeological deposits encountered within the groundworks.

Dependent on the nature of any remains that were revealed, specific research aims (most probably relating to urban development in the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods) were to be derived from regional research frameworks (e.g. Brown and Glazebrook 2007; Oake et al. 2007; Medlycott 2011).

1.6 Methodology

Detailed method statements for archaeological observation, investigation and recording are given in Section 2 and Appendix 1 of the WSI. Excavations of groundworks with the potential to impact on potential archaeological remains were monitored by an archaeologist. A written, drawn and photographic record of the observations was made.

Groundworks with the potential to impact on archaeological deposits consisted of a single trench for the construction of a concrete foundation slab. The trench was 20.75m long, up to 4m wide and up to 650mm deep.

Archaeological fieldwork was completed between 29th June and 1st July 2021.



2. RESULTS

2.1 Introduction

The deposits recorded on site were assigned individual context numbers. In the following text and on Figure 9, layers and fills are shown in round brackets and cut features and structures are shown in square brackets. See Figure 9 for plans and sections illustrating the deposits; selected images are included at the back of the report. Information on the individual archaeological contexts for each trench is tabulated in Appendix 1.

2.2 Topsoil

This layer (1) was a dark grey soil *c.* 100mm thick, probably a deliberately deposited landscaping layer to form the grassed area in front of the former office building.

2.3 Modern (20th-century) Layers and Features

Modern deposits consisted of make-up layers and construction features.

Modern make-up layers and surfaces were observed in section in the north side of the trench, immediately below the topsoil. A drawn sample section (Figure 9, Section 1) shows a layer (2) of clean sand (Image 4). The deposits at this depth were quite variable but clearly derived from modern construction activities. A short distance to the left of Section 1 was a tarmac surface buried below the topsoil (Image 3). This tarmac surface appears to correspond to the location of an access road into the PDA which was first shown on the 1924 OS map, where it formed an access to a timber yard (see Figure 7 and Section 1.4.8).

Modern construction features consisted of a cut [4] for the foundations of the present building and a service trench for a drain culvert. It was not possible to distinguish between these two features, so they are indicated with a single line. Investigation by the developers showed that the culvert passes under the building, and so it may be an earlier feature.

2.4 Earlier Soil Layers

The lower half of the trench contained a soil layer (6) which was encountered at a depth of 300mm and continued down to the base of the trench at a depth of up to 650mm. This was a relatively homogenous layer of dark grey silt with occasional small stones, charcoal flecks and brick fragments. The brick was hand-made red brick, *c.* 18th- or 19th-century in date. The layer contained occasional patches of yellow-brown sandy silt.

Towards the base of the trench, at its south-west corner, part of a lower soil layer (7) was uncovered. This consisted of mid-red-brown sandy silt with a moderate concentration of small stones and occasional flecks of charcoal. The nature of the layer suggests it may be derived from the underlying superficial geological deposits.



2.5 Geological Deposits

No undisturbed geological deposits were uncovered in the trench. However, the colour and composition of layer (7), see above, suggest that it was derived from the underlying natural sands and gravels.

2.6 Artefacts

No artefacts or ecofacts were collected. A few late 20th-century items were seen in the upper soil layers, including a Coca-Cola can. A small amount of late post-medieval ceramic building material, fragments of brick and tile, was noted in the dark soil layers; none was retained. Other than a small amount of brick and tile, the soil deposits were comparatively 'clean' with no evidence of domestic or industrial waste and no rubble demolition layers.



3. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during construction of foundations for an access ramp to a former office building at Rogers Court, on the south side of Cauldwell Street, Bedford.

Historic maps show the line of the King's Ditch along the west edge of the PDA, a probably defensive boundary surrounding the southern burh of Bedford, established in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The PDA is shown as a private garden on maps dating from the late 18th to the start of the 20th century. By 1924 it had been redeveloped as part of a timber-yard, with large storage buildings covering the site and an access road off Cauldwell Street.

The foundation trench for the new access ramp was 20m long, 3.75m wide and up to 0.65m deep. Modern deposits and features consisted of made ground in the upper part of the soil profile and cuts for a drain culvert and the foundations of the existing office block. A tarmac surface noted in the north side of the trench appears to correspond to the access road to the former timber-yard. Deposits in the lower part of the trench consisted of soil layers which contained a small amount of post-medieval brick (*c.* 18th–19th century) but no other occupation debris. No earlier archaeological features or geological deposits were identified within the base of the trench.

The findings are consistent with known use of the site from the 18th century to the early 20th century as a garden and a later timber-store. It is possible that earlier archaeological deposits may survive below the formation level of the present groundworks.

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5. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARY

No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
(1)	Layer	Dark grey slightly sandy silt, occasional small stones (100mm thick).	Topsoil
(2)	Layer	Mid-orange-brown sand.	Modern make-up
(3)	Layer	Dark grey slightly sandy silt, occasional small stones (80–100mm thick).	Layer
[4]	Cut	Linear cut, parallel with base of building (c. 1m wide)	Construction cut for existing building
(5)	Fill	Dark grey-brown silt, occasional stones, plastic sheet, fragments of concrete and brick.	Fill of foundation trench [4]
(6)	Layer	Dark grey slightly sandy silt, occasional small stones, brick fragments, and charcoal flecks (more than 0.35m thick).	Dark soil layer
[7]	Layer	Mid-red-brown sandy silt, moderate small stones and occasional charcoal flecks (deposit observed towards base of trench).	Soil layer derived from natural subsoil

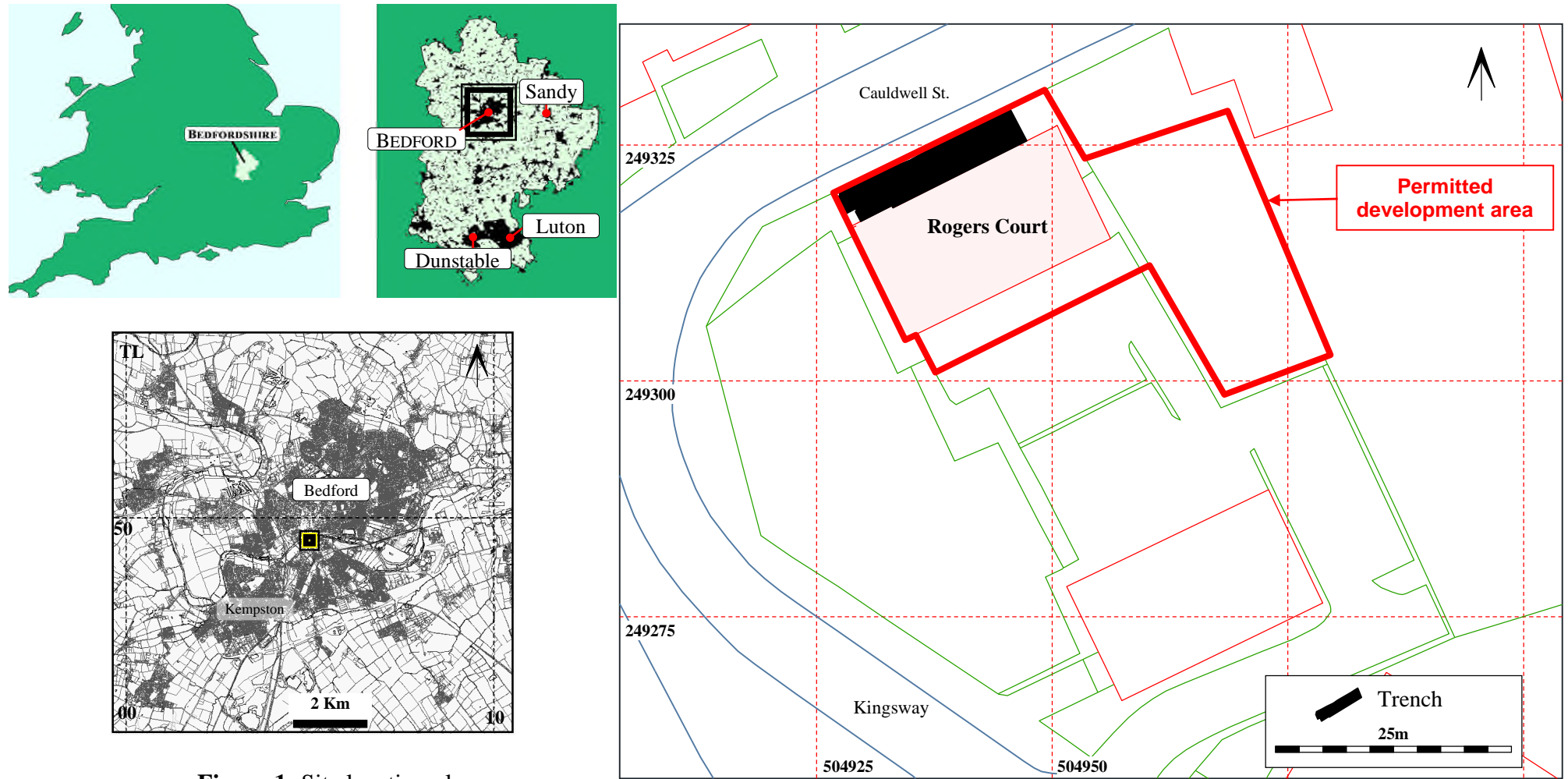


Figure 1: Site location plan

Map data © Crown Copyright and database right 2021. Ordnance Survey 100049029. Central Bedfordshire Council)

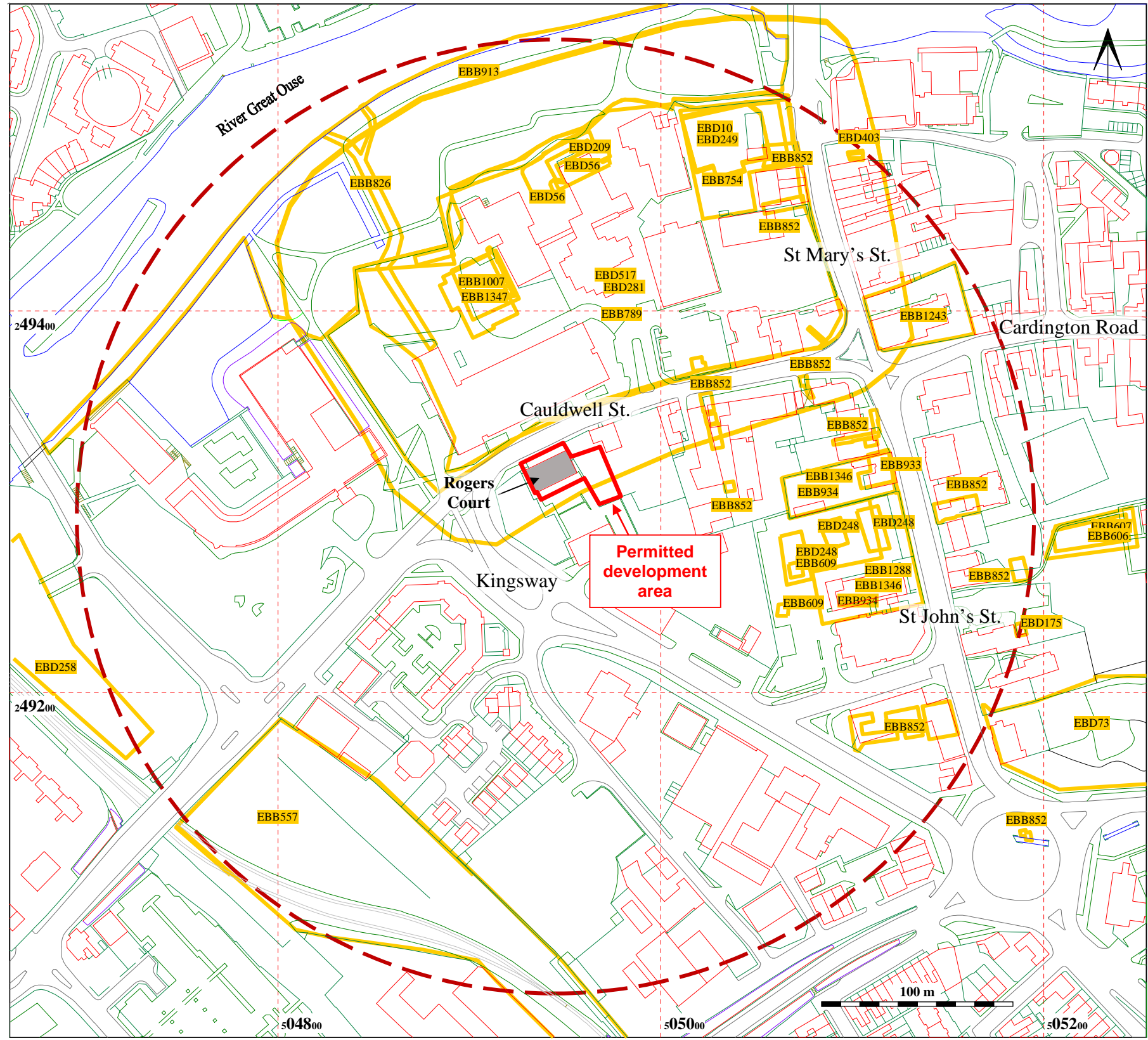


Figure 2: Archaeological background data

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Figure 3: 1836 map

PDA shown in red with trench outlined in blue
(Dewhurst & Nichols map of Bedford, BARS ref: X1/36)

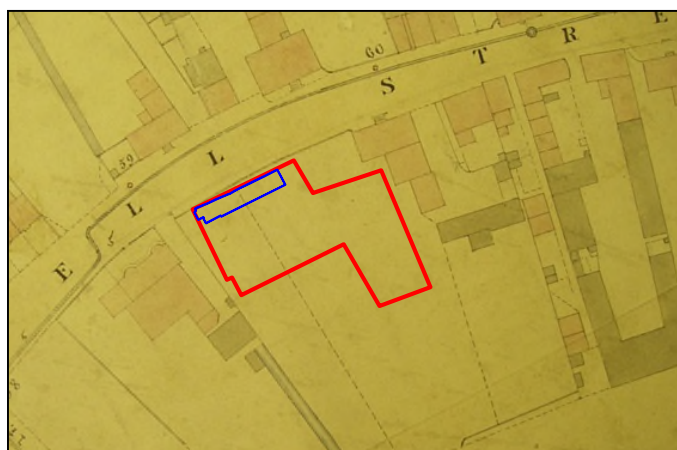


Figure 4: 1854 map

PDA shown in red with trench outlined in blue
(Salmon gas map, BARS ref: X133/11)



Figure 5: 1884 map

PDA shown in red with trench outlined in blue
(Ordnance Survey 25-inch 1st edition)



Figure 6: 1900 map

PDA shown in red with trench outlined in blue
(Ordnance Survey 25-inch 2nd edition)

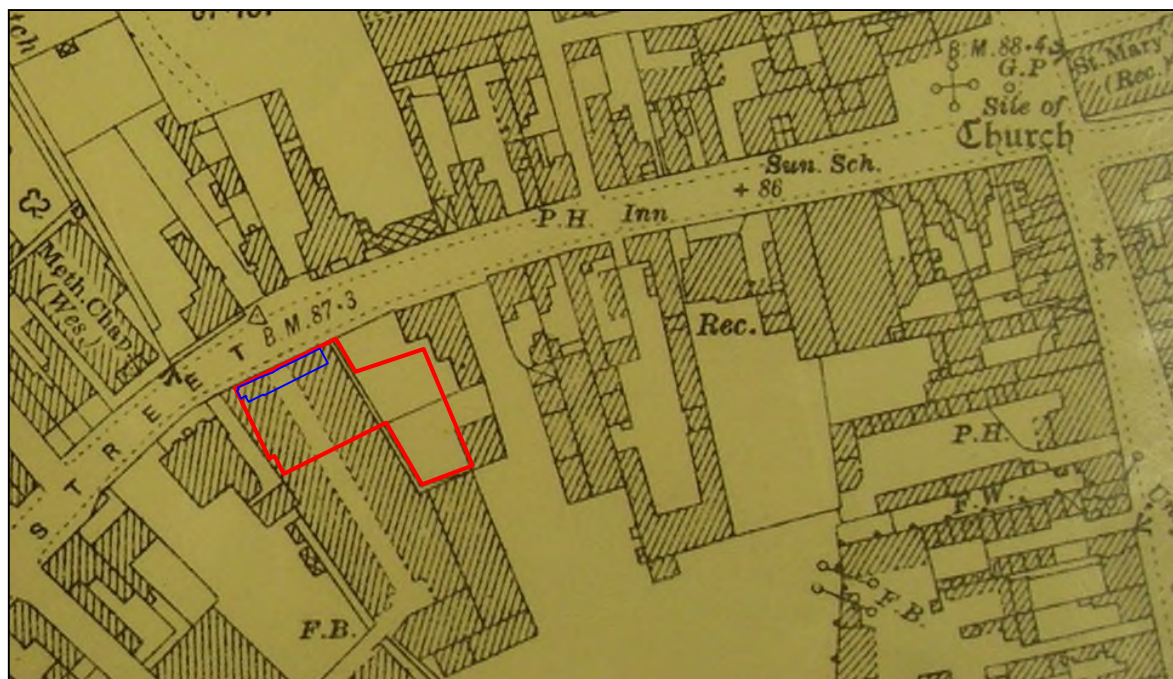


Figure 7: 1924 map

PDA shown in red with trench outlined in blue
(Ordnance Survey 25-inch 3rd edition)

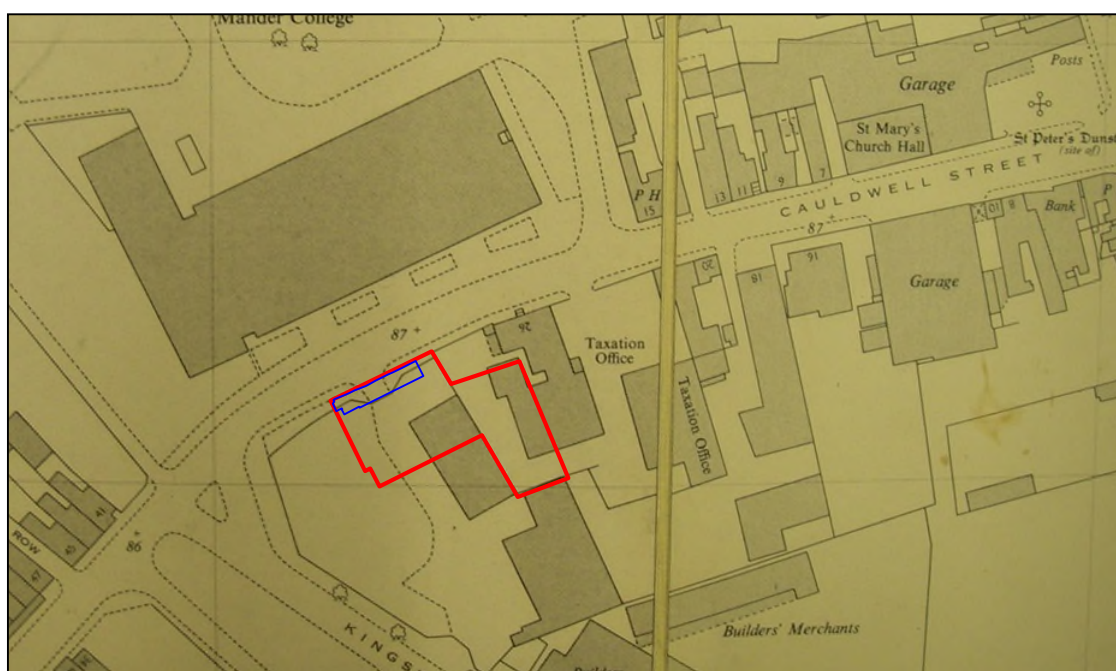


Figure 8: 1967 map

PDA shown in red with trench outlined in blue
(Ordnance Survey 1:1250)

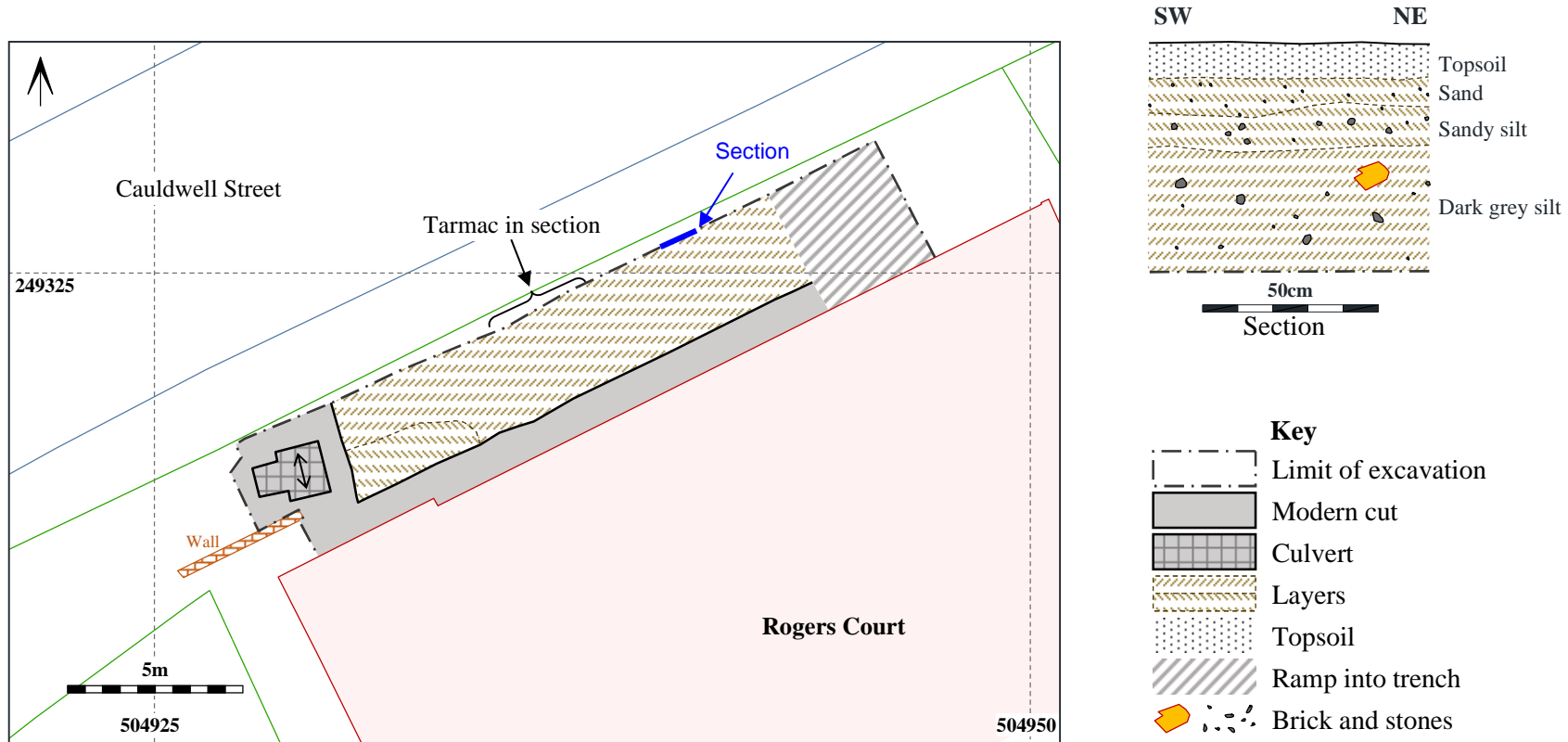


Figure 9: All-features plan and section

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Image 1: Trench, looking east
(Scale 2 x 1m)



Image 2: Trench, looking west



Image 3: North side of trench, tarmac surface
(Scale 1m)



Image 4: North side of trench, Section 1
(Scale 1m)



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