

**LAND AT 73A HIGH STREET  
STOTFOLD  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
AND TRIAL TRENCHING**

**Albion**  
archaeology



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## **Preface**

*Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.*

## **Acknowledgements**

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*The fieldwork was undertaken by Iain Leslie (Archaeological Supervisor) and Marcin Koziminski (Archaeological Supervisor). This report was prepared by Iain Leslie with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) and Jackie Wells (Finds Officer).*

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## **Key Terms**

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

HER	Central Bedfordshire Council Historic Environment Record
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
DA	Development Area
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Central Bedfordshire Council has granted planning permission (CB/11/00888/FULL) for the construction of two bungalows with associated car parking and manageable gardens on land at 73a High Street, Stotfold, Bedfordshire. Acting on advice received from the Council's Archaeologist, the Local Planning Authority attached a condition to planning consent requiring a programme of archaeological work to be carried out at the site due to its location within an area of archaeological sensitivity.*

*This programme of work was to initially comprise a watching brief on groundworks relating to the demolition of existing industrial buildings, followed by trial trench evaluation. The results of this work would be used in the formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy for any revealed archaeological remains.*

*The development site occupies an area of c. 370m<sup>2</sup>. It lies within a rich archaeological landscape containing remains of past occupation of many periods. Settlement and funerary evidence from the Bronze Age to the Saxon period has been found to the east and south of Stotfold. Investigations to the south of Stotfold revealed evidence for large-scale late Saxon / Saxo-Norman settlement, probably a precursor to the medieval settlement of Stotfold itself. Stotfold grew in the post-medieval period and a number of 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century buildings exist within a 500m radius of the site.*

*Stotfold is the site of one of the earliest Quaker meeting places in Bedfordshire and in 1667 the Quakers bought a cottage and one acre of land, now 77 High Street, adjacent to the site. The "acre of land" became the burial ground associated with the meeting house and was in use until 1855. Building works during a kitchen extension at 77 High Street in 2010 revealed three inhumation burials.*

*The archaeological watching brief and trial trenching demonstrated that archaeological remains are present within the development area. These comprised two adjacent pits and a shallow ditch.*

*The pits are likely to be early medieval in date and are indicative of settlement activity of this period within the vicinity. The ditch was post-medieval in date and probably represents a boundary or cultivation feature.*

*No human remains or evidence for graves was found within the trenches or during the watching brief. This suggests that the adjacent former Quaker burial ground does not extend into the proposed development area.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission (CB/11/00888/FULL) has been granted for the construction of two bungalows with associated car parking and manageable gardens on land at 73a High Street, Stotfold. The development also involves the demolition of existing industrial buildings on the site and the taking up of an area of concrete hard standing.

Because the proposed development lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, the local planning authority (Central Bedfordshire Council) placed a condition (3) on the permission requiring a programme of archaeological investigation to be carried out at the site. This condition was in accordance with advice received from the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) and *PPS 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*.

The CBCA prepared a brief detailing the required archaeological works (CBC 2011). The brief outlines a programme of work comprising four stages:

- Stage 1: Observation, investigation and recording (watching brief)
- Stage 2: Trial trench evaluation
- Stage 3: Appraisal of the results of the observation, investigation and recording and the trial trench evaluation and their significance with regard to the proposed development.
- Stage 4: Implementation of an agreed programme of archaeological investigation and recording, if required.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out this programme of archaeological work, initially comprising preparation of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion Archaeology 2011) in consultation with the CBCA, covering Stages 1 and 2.

This report presents the results of Stages 1 and 2 and will inform future decisions concerning the archaeological heritage assets on the site with regard to the impact of the consented development (Stages 3 and 4). Should additional work be necessary (Stage 4), a further brief will be issued by the CBCA.

### 1.2 *Site Location*

Stotfold is a village in the south-east of Central Bedfordshire and lies *c.* 1.2km west of the A1 Great North Road (Figure 1). It occupies an area of land between the River Ivel to the east and the Pix Brook to the west.

The development area (DA) lies to the rear of properties along the northern street frontage of the High Street in the southern part of Stotfold. The DA was occupied by a series of small industrial buildings and is bounded on all sides by residential properties, back gardens and car parks. It is centred on NGR TL 2182 3655 and comprises *c.* 370m<sup>2</sup> of land on fairly level ground at *c.* 50m OD.



The site is located on well drained glaciofluvial sand and gravels over West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Stotfold is situated within a rich archaeological landscape containing extensive cropmarks and remains of past occupation of all periods. Settlement and funerary evidence dating from the Bronze Age to the Saxon period has been found during investigations east of Stotfold, to the north (HER 16829) and south of Baldock Road (HER 74), and recently during large-scale excavations to the south of the village (HER 16381, Albion in prep.).

The investigations on land to the south of Stotfold (HER 16831) also revealed evidence for a large-scale late Saxon / Saxo-Norman settlement, probably a precursor to the medieval settlement of Stotfold itself. This is located only *c.* 150m to the south of the DA.

Stotfold is a polyfocal medieval village with settlement cores identified from historical evidence at Brook End (HER 17163) and Stotfold Green (HER 17161). These lie some distance to the north and north-east of the DA. Earthworks of a possible house platform and ridge and furrow cultivation were also recorded at Rook Tree Lane (HER 759) between the two medieval foci. The Church of St Mary the Virgin (HER 860) has 12th-century origins and lies *c.* 230m to the north-east of the DA.

Stotfold grew in the post-medieval period and a number of 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century buildings exist within a 500m radius of the DA. These Grade II listed buildings include private houses, a school, a public house and a mill house. The cottages fronting the High Street to the south of the DA date from the 19th century (69-75 High Street).

Stotfold is the site of one of the earliest Quaker meeting places in Bedfordshire (Doggett 1983). In 1667 the Quakers bought a cottage and one acre of land “between the ground of Hannah Freeman and John Britten”, now 77 High Street, adjacent to the DA. The “acre of land” became the burial ground associated with the meeting house and was in use until 1855 (HER 18367).

Building works during a kitchen extension at 77 High Street in 2010 revealed three inhumation burials. The reports state that they extended into the adjacent property. The full extent of the burial ground is unknown and it was thought possible that it might extend into the DA.

Much of the remaining built environment in Stotfold and along the High Street dates from the early and late 20th century as the town continues to grow and expand in the present day.



#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

The principal objective of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 archaeological works was to determine whether archaeological remains were present at the site and, if so, to determine their date, nature, extent, condition, and significance. This information will be used to inform decisions with regard to the impact of the consented development on potential archaeological remains, and to help in the formulation of appropriate mitigation measures to protect remains either by preservation or excavation.





## 2. METHODOLOGY

The watching brief (Stage 1) took place on 14th and 15th November 2011 and was related to the removal of a concrete hard standing,

The trial trenching (Stage 2) took place on 22nd and 23rd November 2011. Three trenches with a combined length of 27.5m were opened within the footprint of the proposed development.

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. Overburden was removed down to the top of the archaeological deposits or undisturbed geological deposits, whichever were encountered first.

The bases and sides of the trenches were cleaned by hand. Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, excavated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. All features were assigned a unique context commencing at 101 for Trench 1, and 201 for Trench 2 etc. Each trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.

A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2011). The project adhered throughout to the standards prescribed in the following documents:

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1. Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2006)
• IfA	<i>By-Laws and Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation</i> (2009)
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief</i> (2008)



### 3. RESULTS

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All archaeological deposits and features found during the investigations are described below and shown on Figures 2 and 3. Detailed data on all features and deposits can be found in Appendix 1.

#### 3.1 *Observation, Investigation and Recording (Stage 1)*

Removal of a concrete hard standing associated with the demolished industrial buildings revealed a layer of made ground comprised of brown and yellow grey sands mixed with frequent modern brick rubble (Figure 2). No archaeological features or deposits of interest were revealed.

#### 3.2 *Trial Trench Evaluation (Stage 2)*

##### 3.2.1 Trench 1

Overburden comprised a 0.25–0.4m thick deposit of made ground [101] in the form of brown grey sand with frequent modern brick rubble, overlying a 0.4m thick layer of buried garden soil [102].

Undisturbed geological deposits [103] comprised brown orange sands.

No archaeological features were revealed within Trench 1.

##### 3.2.2 Trench 2

Overburden comprised a 0.15–0.2m thick deposit of made up ground [201] in the form of brown grey sand with frequent modern brick rubble, overlying a 0.25–0.5m thick layer of buried garden soil [202].

Undisturbed geological deposits [203] comprised brown orange sands.

Trench 2 contained a single, E-W aligned linear archaeological feature [204]. It was 50mm deep and 0.6m wide and produced fragments of a post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem (10g).

##### 3.2.3 Trench 3

Overburden comprised a 0.1–0.15m thick deposit of made ground [301] in the form of yellow grey sand with frequent modern brick rubble. This overlay a 0.13m thick dump [302] of red orange sand with frequent wood and iron objects, which in turn sealed a 0.22m thick layer of buried garden soil [303].

Undisturbed geological deposits [304] comprised of grey orange sands.

Trench 3 contained two partially exposed archaeological features. Pit [307] was at least 2.35m in diameter and over 0.75m deep. Only a small portion of pit [305] was visible within the trench; however it was at least 1.37m in diameter and 0.85m deep. Neither pit could be excavated fully to its base.

Five sand-tempered pottery sherds (Bedfordshire Ceramic type series codes C01, C03, C61) weighing 25g were recovered from pit [305]. All are of 12th–13th century date, and have sooted exteriors, indicating their use as cooking



pots. The fill of pit [307] produced three pottery sherds (23g) datable to the 12th–13th century. All occur in sand-tempered fabrics (C04, C61); one is a slightly bevelled rim, and one body sherd has thick sooting on its outer surface.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

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The archaeological investigations have demonstrated that significant archaeological remains are present within the development site. These remains are located towards the southern boundary of the site and comprise two relatively large pits of early medieval date. Whilst their exact function is difficult to determine, their presence is indicative of settlement activity in the vicinity.

The only other remains found within the trenches was a shallow ditch/gully of post-medieval date. This feature may represent the remains of a boundary ditch or fence line, or be a cultivation feature such as a bedding trench.

No human remains or evidence for graves was found within the trenches or during the watching brief. This suggests that the adjacent Quaker burial ground does not extend into the development site.



## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Albion Archaeology 2011. *Land at 73a High Street, Stotfold, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological observation, investigation, analysis and publication.* (Document 1211/124)

CBC 2011. *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication at Land at 73a High Street, Stotfold, Bedfordshire.* V1 15th September 2011 MKO.

Doggett, N. 1983. *Stotfold Parish Survey.* Conservation Section, Bedfordshire County Planning Department unpublished report.



## 6. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DETAILS

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**Trench: 1**

**Max Dimensions: Length: 14.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.**

**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL2183936569**

**OS Grid Ref.: TL2183336556**

**Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of area**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
101	Make up layer	Loose dark brown grey silty sand frequent small-large CBM Thickness 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Buried topsoil	Loose dark brown grey silty sand occasional small-medium stones Thickness 0.4m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Loose mid brown orange sand occasional small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 2**

**Max Dimensions: Length: 8.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.45 m. Max: 0.65 m.**

**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL2182836548**

**OS Grid Ref.: TL2183536552**

**Reason: to evaluate archaeological potential of area**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
201	Make up layer	Loose dark brown grey silty sand frequent small-large CBM Thickness 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Buried topsoil	Loose dark brown grey silty sand occasional small-medium stones Thickness 0.49m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Natural	Loose mid brown orange sand occasional small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.6m, max depth 0.05m, min length 0.55m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Fill	Loose dark brown grey silty sand occasional small-medium stones Thickness 0.05m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>





**Trench: 3**

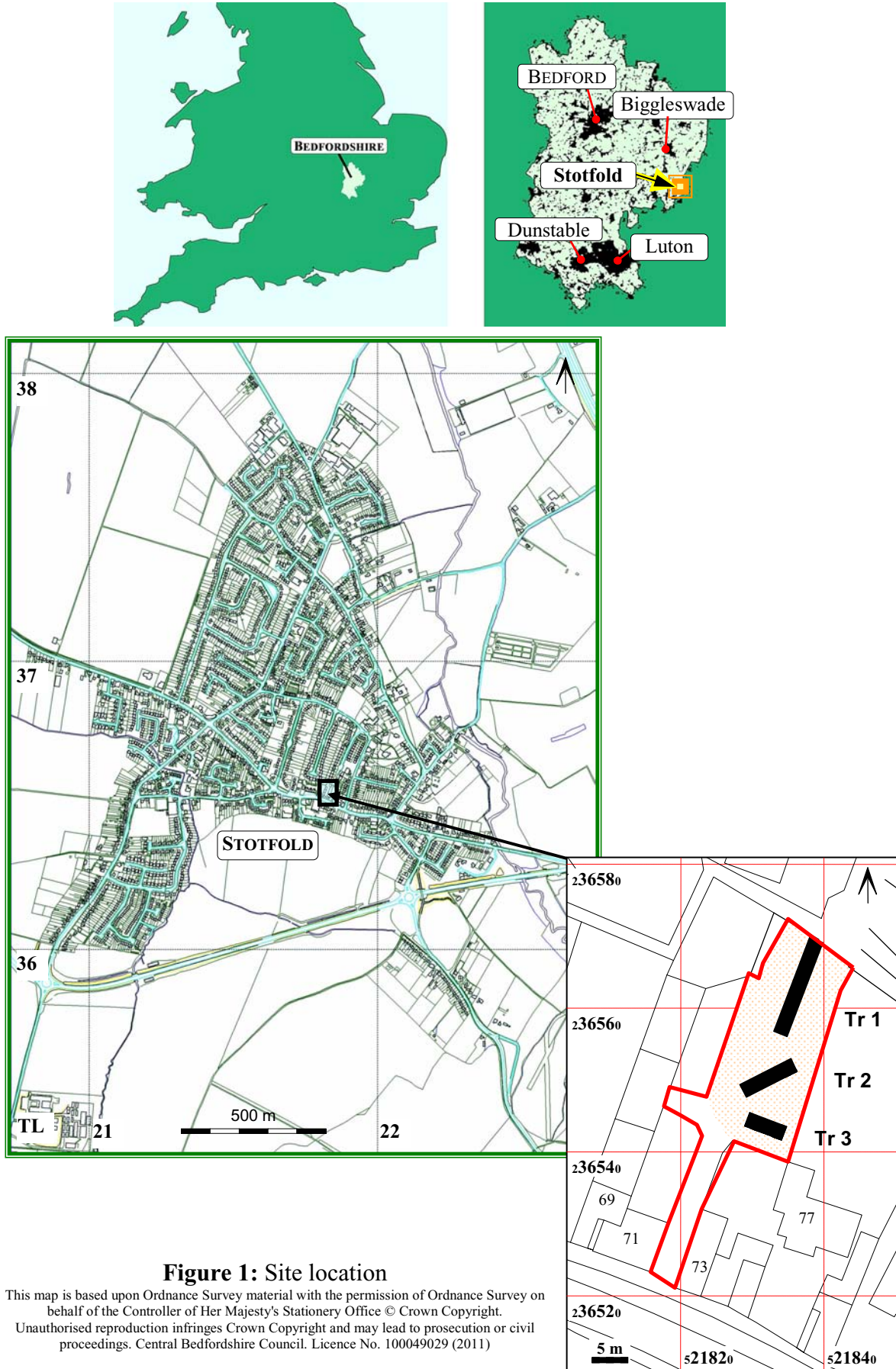
**Max Dimensions: Length: 5.50 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.34 m. Max: 0.44 m.**

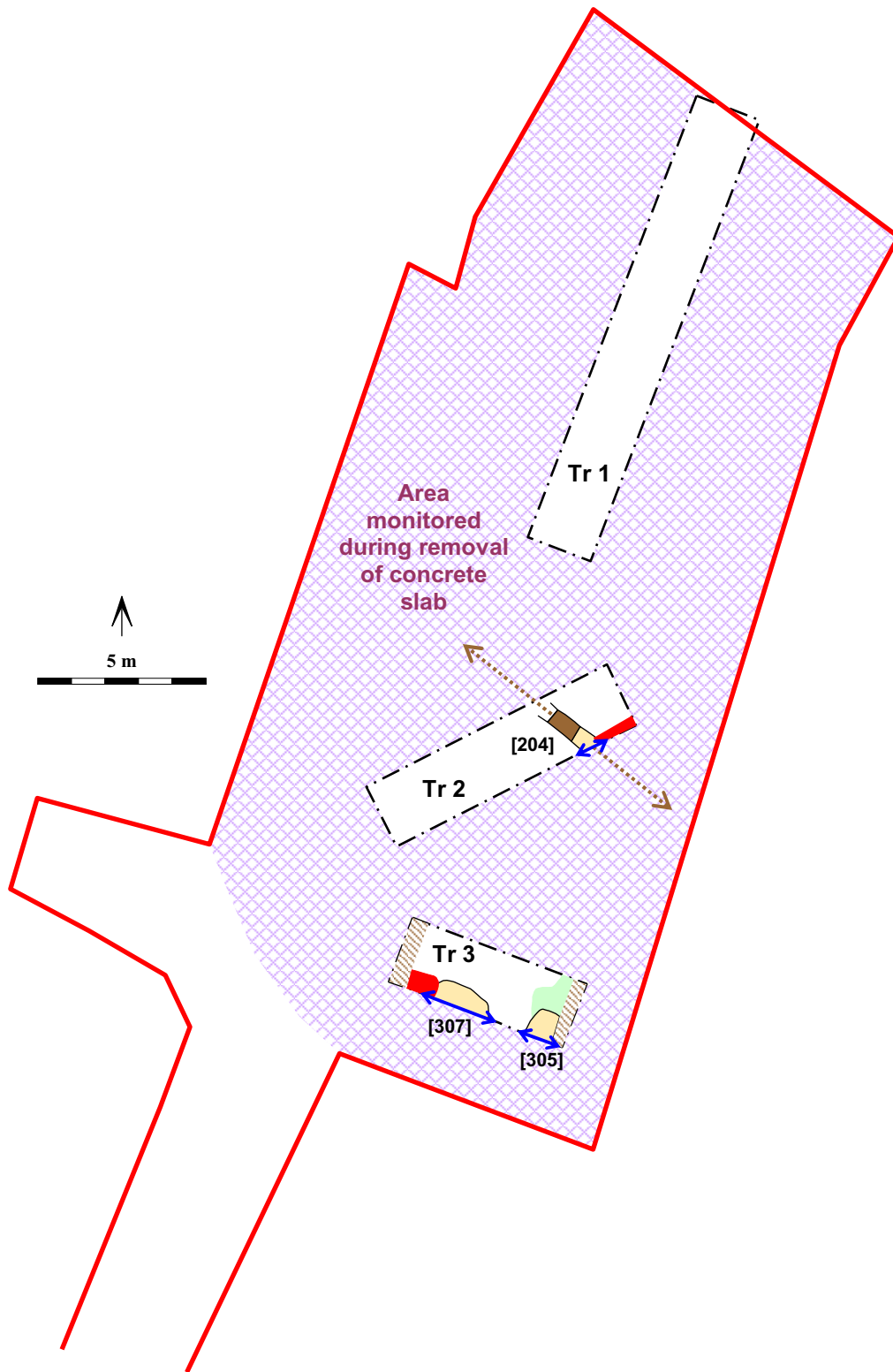
**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL2182936544**

**OS Grid Ref.: TL2183436542**

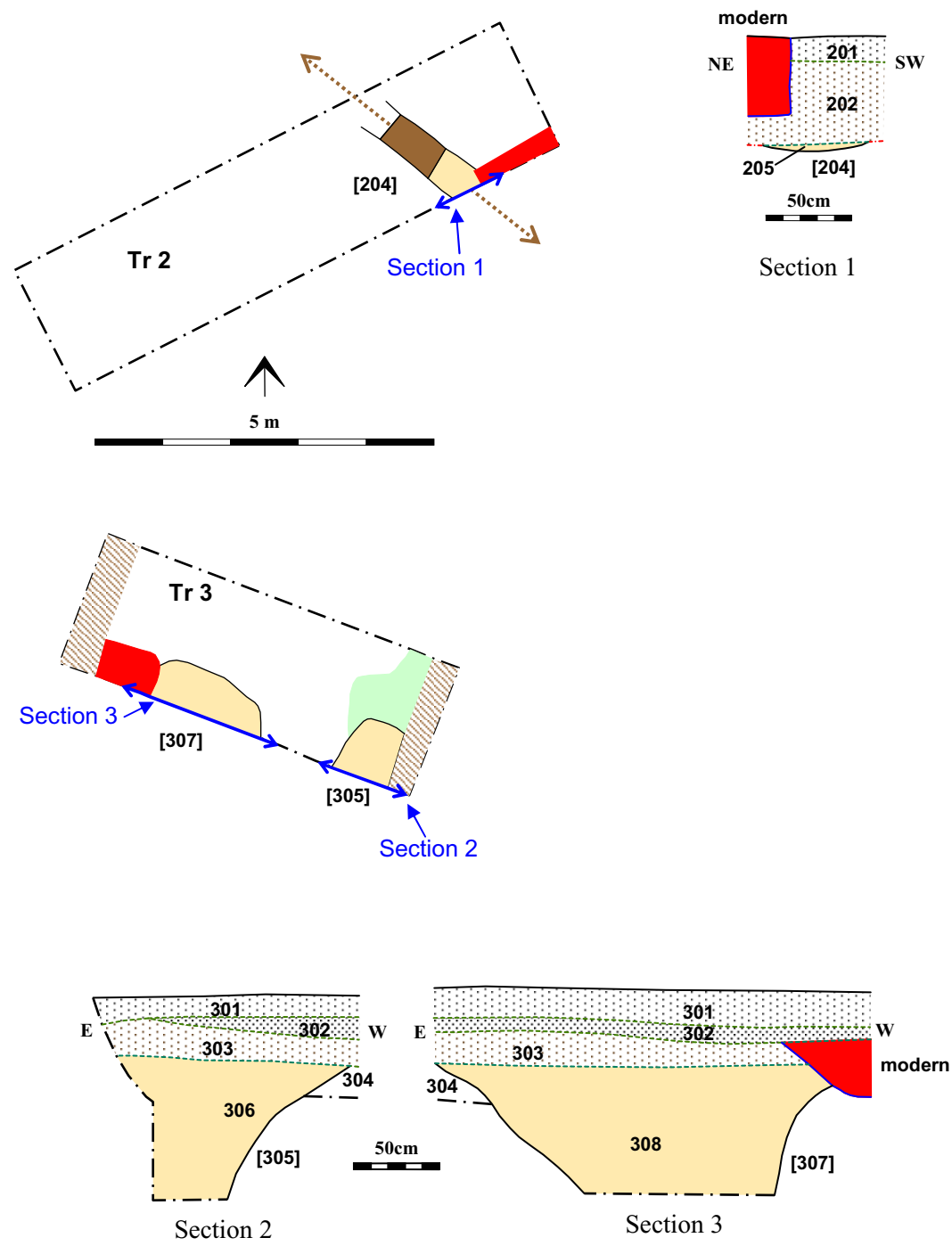
**Reason: To evaluate archaeological potential of area**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
301	Make up layer	Friable mid yellow grey silty sand frequent small-large CBM, moderate small-medium stones Thickness 0.22m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Dump material	Friable mid red orange silty sand moderate small-medium stones Thickness 0.13m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Buried topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty sand occasional small-large stones Thickness 0.22m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Natural	Firm light grey orange silty sand occasional small-large stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Pit	Sub-circular sides: steep dimensions: min depth 0.85m, min diameter 1.37m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
306	Fill	Friable mid brown grey sandy silt occasional small-large stones Thickness 0.85m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
307	Pit	Oval sides: steep dimensions: min depth 0.75m, max diameter 2.35m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
308	Fill	Friable mid brown grey sandy silt occasional small-large stones Thickness 0.75m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>





**Figure 2:** Trenching results



Photograph of trench 1. Looking north



Photograph of ditch/gully [204]. Looking north-west. Scale 40cm



Photograph of trench 3, pre-excitation. Looking north-west. Scale 1m



Photograph of trench 3, post-excitation. Looking south-east. Scale 1m

**Figure 3:** Detail of trenching results



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