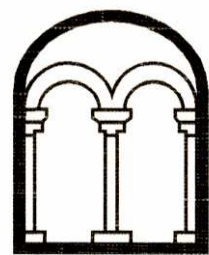


**AYLESBURY HIGH SCHOOL
WALTON ROAD
AYLESBURY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Albion
archaeology



**AYLESBURY HIGH SCHOOL
WALTON ROAD
AYLESBURY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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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

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Ashe Construction Ltd on behalf of Aylesbury High School. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer for Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Marcin Koziminski (Archaeological Supervisor). This report has been prepared by Marcin Koziminski, Jackie Wells (Finds) and Joan Lightning (Illustrations).

The project was managed by Robert Wardill (Project Manager) under the overall direction of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used in this document:

APCO	Buckinghamshire County Council Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer
BCAS	Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service
BCM	Buckinghamshire County Museum
HER	Historic Environment Record
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
LPA	Local Planning Authority



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission has been granted for the construction of a new 6th-form block at Aylesbury High School, Walton Road. Due to the impact of the development upon potential heritage assets in the form of sub-surface archaeological remains, the County Archaeological Service advised the LPA that a condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work should be placed on the planning consent.

The proposed development site is located on the edge of the historic core of Walton, a settlement known to date from the Saxon period. A number of previous archaeological excavations in the Walton area have revealed the presence of extensive settlement remains of Bronze Age to Anglo-Saxon date in the vicinity.

The first stage of the programme of archaeological work comprised evaluation by trial trenching. This work was carried out in April 2011. One ditch of possible late Iron-Age date was found in the trial trenching.

Following the evaluation the APCO recommended an archaeological watching brief during groundworks.

One possible undated archaeological feature was found during the watching brief; it may represent the continuation of the ditch (dated to the Iron Age period) that was revealed during the trial trenching of the site. However, this could not be confirmed as the ground between the two features had been excavated prior to archaeological attendance.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission has been granted for the construction of a new 6th-form block at Aylesbury High School, Walton Road, Aylesbury (planning application CC/04/11).

Due to the potential impact of the development on heritage assets the County Archaeological Service's Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer (APCO) advised the LPA that a condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work should be placed on the planning consent. This is in accordance with *PPS 5 Planning for the Historic Environment*, Policy HE12.3.

The first stage of the programme of work was an evaluation of the site through trial trenching. The objective was to characterise the archaeological potential of the site to inform decisions on any further stages of work. Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the evaluation in April 2011. The trial trenching was completed in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2011a), prepared in response to BCAS's brief (BCAS 2011a).

Following the evaluation the APCO recommended an archaeological watching brief during groundworks. The work was completed in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2011c) which was approved by the APCO and prepared in response to BCAS's brief (BCAS 2011b).

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Aylesbury High School is located in the hamlet of Walton, approximately 1km to the south-east of Aylesbury town centre (Figure 1). It is bounded to the north-west by Walton Road and to the north-east by Turnfurlong Lane.

The site of the new 6th-form block lies on the Turnfurlong Lane side of the School, centred on grid reference SP82687/13335. It measures c.18m x 15m (270m²).

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The development area is located on the edge of the historic core of Walton (HER 0009302000), a settlement known to date from the Saxon period.

A number of previous archaeological excavations in the Walton area have revealed the presence of extensive settlement remains of Bronze Age to Anglo-Saxon date in the vicinity of the proposed development. The Saxon settlement excavated at Walton is considered to be of at least regional significance.

A watching brief during previous construction works in the High School located early to late Iron Age and Roman features (HER 0637701000), suggesting there may be a late Iron Age/Roman farmstead in the vicinity. Further work at the



school found additional evidence of Romano-British agricultural activity (HER 0637702000).

At a site 300m to the west, excavations revealed middle Bronze Age and middle Saxon settlement remains. Evidence for a pagan Saxon cemetery was also uncovered 250m north-east of the development site.

The trial trenching of the site undertaken in advance of the proposed development (Albion 2011b) in April 2011 located a ditch terminus. The fill of this ditch contained a small amount of worked flint and a sherd of late Iron Age (c.100BC–AD50) grog-tempered pottery.

1.4 Project Objectives

The objective of the watching brief was to monitor and supervise all groundworks that had the potential to reveal archaeological remains, and to investigate, characterise and record any archaeological deposits encountered within them.

The broader objectives of the project were to add to the knowledge and understanding of the archaeology of Buckinghamshire and to produce a report and archive that fully describe the archaeological works.



2. METHODOLOGY

A detailed methodology is provided in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2011c).

Throughout the project the standards set out in the following documents were adhered to:

• IfA	By-Laws and <i>Code of Conduct</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for Excavation</i>
	<i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief</i>
• English Heritage	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (2009)</i>
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (2002/01)</i>
• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2nd edn, 2001).
• Bucks County Museum	<i>Procedures for the Deposit of Archaeological Archives</i> (1999).

Archaeological observation of the groundworks took place during five visits between 23rd and 29th November 2011. The works comprised the excavation of a building foundation trench, a trench for an emergency access road and two test pits dug to locate a modern foul pipe trench (Figure 2).

The new building foundation trench covered an area of c. 20m x 23.5m (c. 470m²). Approximately a half of the trench (c. 240m²) had been excavated down to formation level (c. 0.2-0.4m below the top of undisturbed geological strata) prior to the first visit of an archaeologist on 23rd November 2011. This included the area where archaeological remains were found during the trial trenching (Figure 2).

After the arrival of the archaeologist all excavations were carried out under close supervision by a mechanical excavator, fitted with a flat-edged bucket operated by an experienced driver.

Overburden was removed down to the top of geological deposits. The base of the trench was cleaned by hand to reveal any potential archaeological features. All deposits were recorded in a unique number sequence, using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. The trench was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate. After archaeological investigation was carried out the machine excavation continued down to formation level. Spoil heaps were also checked on a regular basis for archaeological artefacts recovery.

The archive of finds and records generated during the project will be deposited with the Buckinghamshire County Museum under the accession number AYBCM:2011.158.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Deposits and archaeological remains found during the watching brief are summarised below and shown in Figure 2.

3.2 Overburden

From top to bottom the overburden comprised:

- Topsoil (1), comprising dark brown grey sandy silt topped with turf (up to 0.2m thick).
- A demolition layer (2), comprising loose mid yellow grey silty sand (up to 0.06m thick) with moderate modern brick and tile fragments.
- A dump of material (3), comprising dark brown grey sandy silt (0.07–0.25m thick) that had been built-up to form a bank, sloping down from NE-SW.
- A buried subsoil (4), comprising mid brown grey sandy silt (up to 0.46m thick) with occasional modern brick and tile fragments. The deposit contained two pottery body sherds (10g). One is flint and quartz tempered, and probably of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age date; the second is an early to high medieval sherd of Hertfordshire-type grey ware. Both are abraded, consistent with their recovery from a subsoil deposit.
- Also a modern make-up layer (7), comprising light grey yellow sand, was revealed in the west corner of the 6th-form block foundation trench.

In addition to the above, the removal of topsoil from the emergency access road trench revealed an external surface deposit (10) of a former compound associated with the construction of the school (Figure 2); it comprised mid grey brown silty sand with frequent stones and brick fragments.

3.3 Undisturbed Geological Deposits

The undisturbed geological deposits comprised mid grey white silty chalk with bands of flint and fossilised shells (6) and large patches of mid brown orange clay (5). The geological strata were not revealed in the emergency access road trench running along the south-eastern edge of the new building trench.

3.4 Archaeological Features/Deposits

The only likely archaeological feature was seen in the north-western section of the new building trench. It was 1.26m wide and 0.32m deep with an asymmetrical profile suggesting that it might have been a N-S aligned linear ditch [8] (Figure 2). The feature contained a single deposit (9) of firm mid brown orange silty clay, which produced no dating evidence.



4. CONCLUSIONS

One possible undated archaeological feature was found during the watching brief. It may represent the continuation of a ditch dated to the Iron Age period that was revealed during previous trial trenching of the site. However, this could not be confirmed as the ground between the two features had been excavated prior to archaeological attendance.

The results of the archaeological works suggest that archaeological remains of possible prehistoric date are present in the area. However, their relatively low density and sparse artefactual content suggests that they are related to activities peripheral to a main settlement site.



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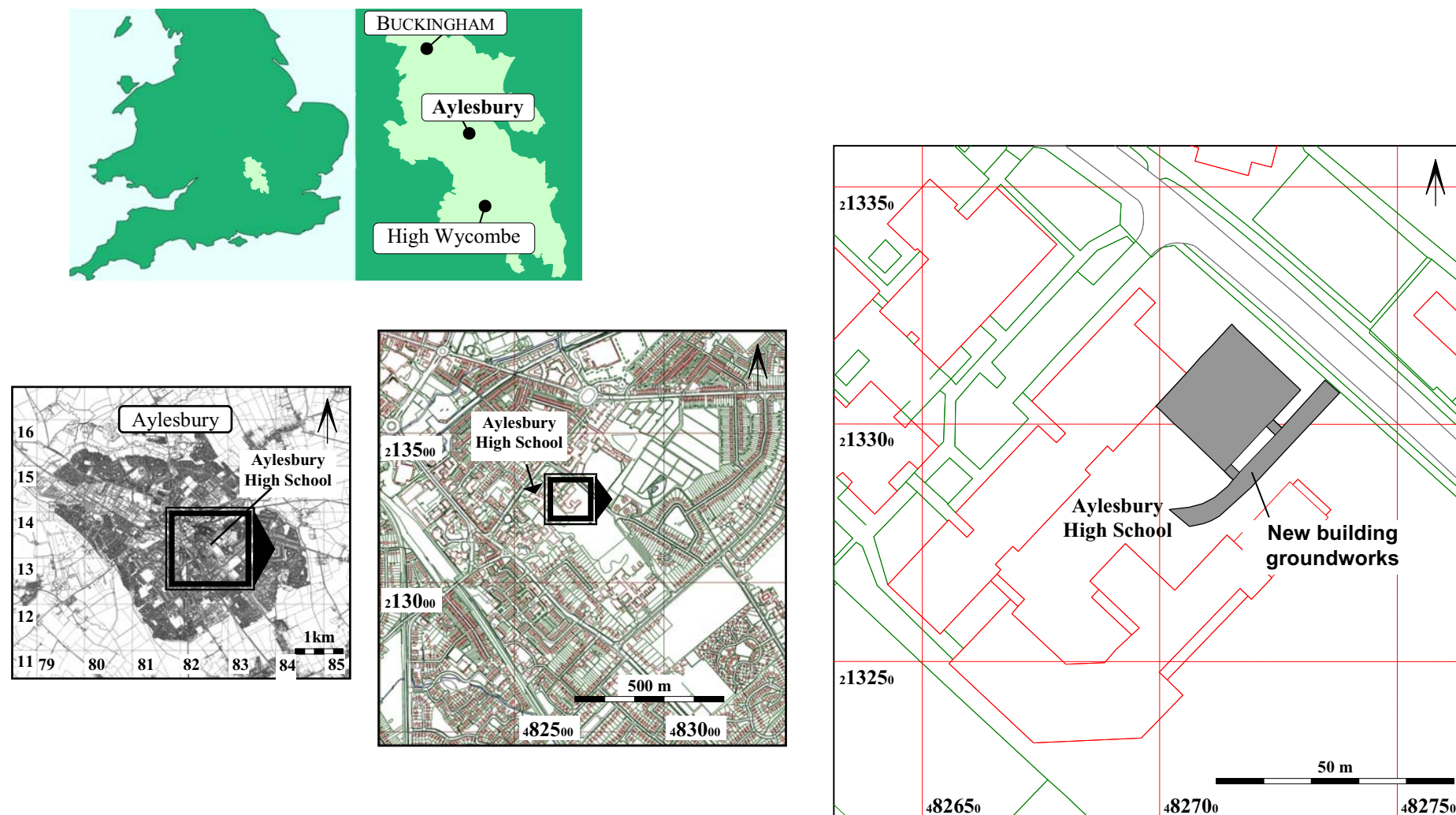
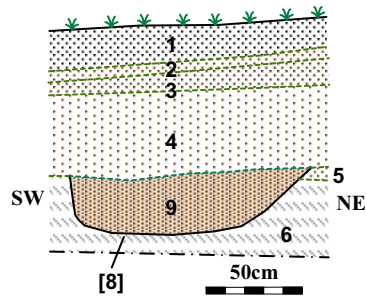
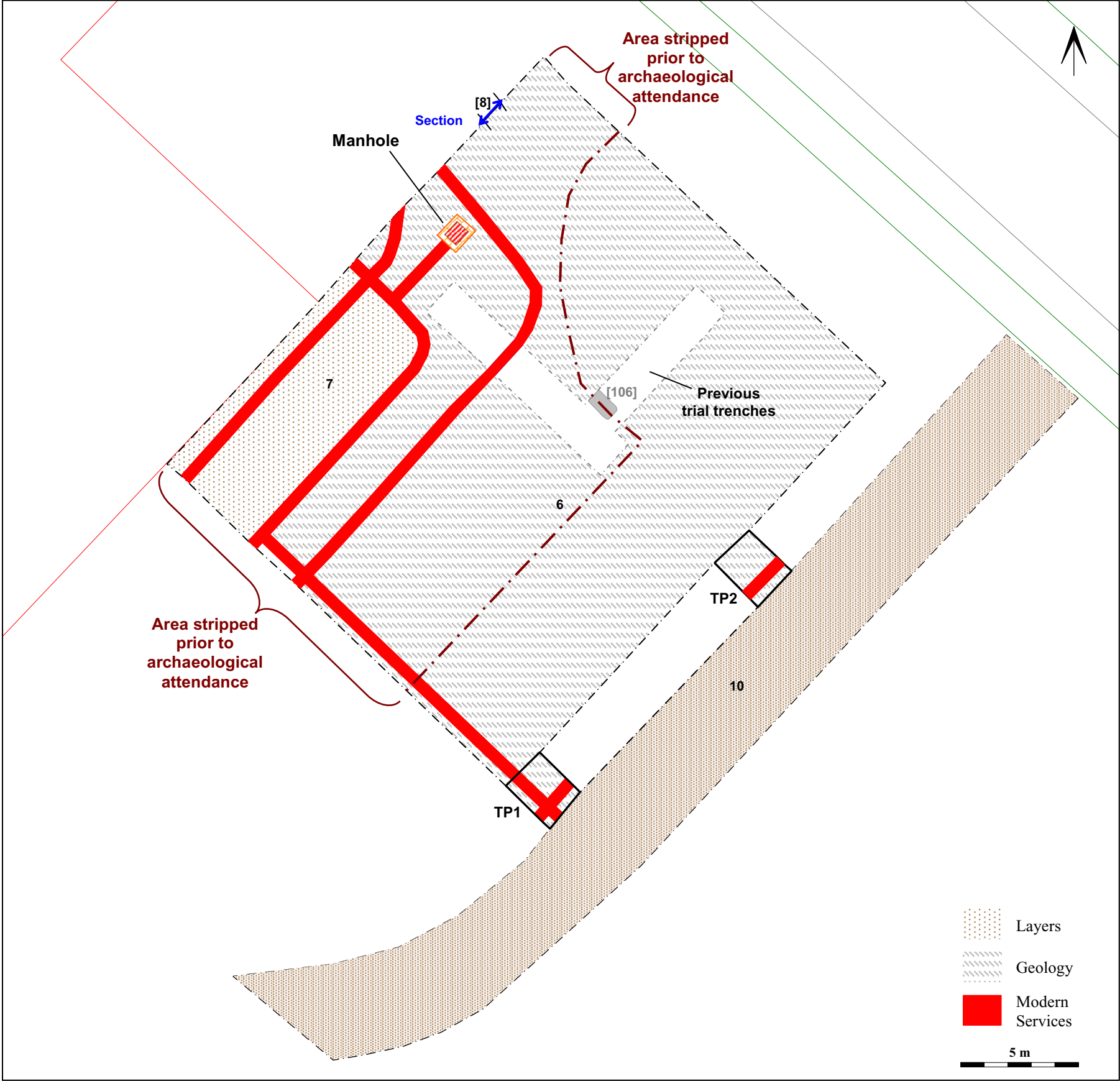


Figure 1: Site location plan

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Section of feature [8]



Photograph of feature [8] Scale 1m



Area machined prior to archaeological attendance



Photograph of north-west section, including feature [8].
Scale 1m

Figure 2: Watching brief results

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