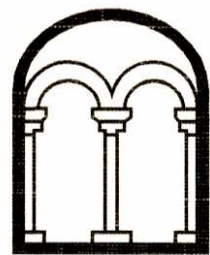


**LAND AT 29-31 ST JOHN'S STREET  
BEDFORD**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,  
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND  
PUBLICATION**

**Albion**  
archaeology





**LAND AT 29-31 ST JOHN'S STREET  
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION,  
INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND  
PUBLICATION**

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Mark Phillips	Jeremy Oetgen	Drew Shotliff

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Birmingham B3 1QU





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## Preface

*Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete an assessment as possible, within the terms of the specification. 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.*

*The fieldwork was undertaken by Wesley Kier, Christiane Meckseper and Mark Phillips (Project Officers). This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips with figures by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).*

*Albion Archaeology thanks David Payne of BPG (Urban) Limited for commissioning the programme of archaeological work. We are also grateful to Geoff Saunders, Archaeological Officer, Bedford Borough Council, for monitoring the project on behalf of the Planning Authority. Furthermore, the assistance and co-operation of the various contractors undertaking construction works are gratefully acknowledged.*

*Albion Archaeology  
St Mary's Church  
St Mary's Street  
Bedford.  
MK42 0AS  
☎: 0300 300 8141  
Fax: 0300 300 8209  
e-mail: [office@albion-arch.com](mailto:office@albion-arch.com)  
Website: [www.albion-arch.com](http://www.albion-arch.com)*

## Version History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>Reason for re-issue</i>
<i>1.0</i>	<i>25/01/2013</i>	<i>n/a</i>

## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BBC	Bedford Borough Council
BCC	Bedfordshire County Council
CAO	BCC's Archaeological Officer
HER	Heritage Environment Record
HET	BBC's Historic Environment Team
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd ed, 2001 Albion Archaeology
SARM	Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*A programme of archaeological monitoring works was undertaken by Albion Archaeology during the conversion of former commercial offices to residential units at 29-31 St John's Street, Bedford. During the initial planning stages of the project in 2005 a desk-based assessment and trial trench evaluation were undertaken to assess the archaeological potential of the site. Planning consent granted in 2007 included a condition stipulating a requirement for archaeological works. In accordance with the requirements Albion Archaeology undertook additional evaluation and prepared a Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management (SARM). Subsequently the development was placed on hold as a result of the prevailing economic situation. When the development restarted in 2010 it was revised and consisted of refurbishment of the existing buildings without any new construction. Works with the potential to impact on archaeological deposits comprised groundworks for the installation of sewers and landscaping associated with the creation of a play area and garden (amenity area).*

*The site is situated to the south of Bedford town centre, c.300m south of the River Great Ouse, on the west side of St John's Street centred on (NGR) TL 0509 4925. The underlying geology comprises river terrace gravels, over cornbrash limestone. Archaeological monitoring was undertaken in two stages, from 30th July to 31st August 2010 and between 24th July and 8th October 2012.*

*Deposits close to the St John's Street frontage were examined in 19.5m-long trench excavated along the northern side of the existing building. At least five pits were identified. These were cut into the underlying river terrace gravels and sealed beneath a layer of modern (i.e. late 20th-century) construction overburden up to 1.2m thick. Some of the pits were large quarry sized features that could have been dug for gravel. No dating evidence was recovered but the results from the earlier evaluation indicated domestic activity in the area close to the street frontage from the Saxon-Norman period (10th-12th centuries) through to the modern period. A 2m-square trench excavated in the central area of the site, c.50m from the street frontage, revealed a single pit with a dark fill that contained a single sherd of Saxo-Norman pottery. The archaeological deposits in this part of the site were covered by 0.5m of modern overburden.*

*Because the archaeological impact of the development was relatively low, the exposure of archaeological deposits was limited to small construction trenches. However, the results of the monitoring programme reinforce the results of previous investigations on this site and nearby. The results demonstrate that significant archaeological deposits survive below modern demolition and construction deposits within this area which formed the southern burh of the Saxon town.*





## 1. INTRODUCTION

---

### 1.1 *Planning Background*

In 2005, the then Local Planning Authority, on the advice of Bedfordshire County Council's Archaeological Officer (CAO), requested that further information be made available on the archaeological potential of a former commercial site on St John's Street, Bedford, which was being proposed for redevelopment. Albion Archaeology undertook a desk-based assessment and trial trench evaluation of the site at this time (Albion Archaeology 2005b and 2005c).

Planning permission for the redevelopment was granted with a condition requiring the implementation of a Scheme of Archaeological Resource Management (SARM). The CAO issued a brief which also included a requirement for additional evaluation work (BCC 2007). Albion undertook a second trial trench excavation and produced the SARM (Albion 2008 and 2009). The original development plans were for the refurbishment and conversion of the existing buildings along with the construction of two new residential blocks; however the development was placed on hold as a result of the worsening world economic situation at that time.

In 2009 a new unitary authority, Bedford Borough Council, replaced the previous two-tier local authorities and the Historic Environment Team (HET) at the new authority became responsible for advice on heritage issues. When the development restarted the additional residential blocks were omitted from the revised scheme for the refurbishment of the existing buildings. As a result, the archaeological impact of the works was much reduced, consisting of groundworks for services and landscaping.

Archaeological monitoring during the installation of services in 2010 and the construction of a play area and garden (amenity area) in 2012 were undertaken according to the methodology set out in the original SARM, modified with the agreement of Bedford Borough Council's HET.

### 1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The development lies to the south of Bedford town centre, approximately 300m south of the River Great Ouse on the west side of St John's Street. The overall development area covers approximately 0.72 hectares centred on (NGR) TL 0509 4925 (Fig. 1). The site contained two large commercial buildings, built in the late 20th century, and associated car park.

The site lies on level ground at a height of c. 26m OD. The underlying geology comprises river terrace gravels, over cornbrash limestone.

### 1.3 *Archaeological Background*

The overall archaeological background for Bedford has been presented in an Extensive Urban Survey commissioned by English Heritage (Albion Archaeology 2005a). The detailed archaeological and historical study of the



development area formed the subject of a separate desk-based assessment (Albion Archaeology 2005b).

In summary, the development area lies within the bounds of the southern *burh* of Bedford, first described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for AD 915. The southern *burh* was defined by a substantial D-shaped earthwork which is still partially extant as the King's Ditch. Excavations on the eastern side of St John's Street (Baker *et al.* 1979) suggest that this part of the town may have been occupied from at least the middle Saxon period (6th–8th century AD).

Evaluation excavation in advance of the development (Albion Archaeology 2005c, 2008) revealed evidence of domestic and industrial activity, Saxo-Norman rubbish pits, an early medieval posthole and a layer of buried topsoil near the St John's Street frontage. These were located in the central and north-eastern part of the development area. Evidence of similar activity was also found for the post-medieval period in the same parts of the development area, suggesting continuity of use. Two 19th-century wells were also revealed adjacent to St John's Street. The remains of modern gardens were found in the centre of the site while the western side of the development area produced no remains conclusively earlier than the 19th century. This area appears to have been subject to intensive modern quarrying, which is likely to have destroyed the majority of any earlier archaeological remains that may once have existed there.

Cartographic evidence from the 1600s onwards shows that occupation was focussed on the St John's Street frontage whilst the western part of the development area has remained as open space. It is probable that intensive 19th- and 20th-century redevelopment along the street frontage has had a substantial impact on earlier archaeological deposits in this part of the development area.

#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

The SARM outlined a detailed set of research objectives derived from national, regional and local archaeological research agendas. The objectives included chronology and typology of urban settlement, social organisation, economy, road layouts, property boundaries and late medieval settlement shrinkage (Albion Archaeology 2009, 11-13).

The aims and objectives in the SARM were designed to address development plans which involved a significant area of ground reduction. The revised development scheme of building refurbishment had a low archaeological impact. Monitoring of the works produced only a small archaeological data set which is unable to address the original detailed project objectives.

Revised objectives which are more suited to the results are to:

- Determine the nature of the archaeological remains present.
- Assess the state of preservation of the archaeological deposits.



The results will add to the existing knowledge gained from the earlier evaluations and previous archaeological work. Assessment of the preservation of deposits provides data that could inform future planning decisions which might affect potential archaeological remains on the site.

### **1.5 Methodology**

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken in two stages, from 30th July to 31st August 2010 and between 24th July and 8th October 2012.

The first stage of monitoring was conducted during the installation of services. This comprised the excavation of four inspection chambers and a pipe trench. The holes were opened by the contractor using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision.

The second stage took place during the construction of an amenity area with play equipment, hard and soft landscaping, planting and the erection of a fence. Intrusive works in this area were minimal with the play area and planting containers being contained within low brick walls built on top of the existing tarmac ground surface. The only intrusions that required monitoring were a series of fence posts holes for a fence along the eastern boundary. The holes which were approximately 0.3m in diameter, up to 0.6m deep were hand-dug by the contractors and left open until they had been inspected.

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

- IfA's *Code of Conduct (now revised, 2012)*;
- IfA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and Field Excavations and finds (now revised, 2012)*;
- Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Analysis of Fieldwork Records* 2nd edn. (2001);
- English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide* (2006).



## 2. RESULTS

---

### 2.1 Introduction

The locations of the works that were monitored are shown on Figures 1 and 2. Only two of the excavations contained archaeological features and these trenches have been numbered 6 and 7 to distinguish them from the five trenches which were excavated during the trial trench evaluation. Significant features and deposits are described in this section and all of the recorded contexts are tabulated by trench in Appendix 1.

### 2.2 Monitoring of Service Trenches

Trench 6 was dug to lay a sewer pipe along the north side of the tower block in the area close to the St John's Street frontage (Figures 2 and 3; Image 1). The trench was 1m wide and 1.9–2m deep. Safety considerations due to the depth of the trench meant that observations were made from the top of the trench with features being identified in section.

The base of the trench extended into an undisturbed geological deposit (604), sandy gravel. At least five separate cuts were identified [605], [607], [609], [612] and [614] cutting into the gravel to depths of 0.6–1m. Some of the pits appeared to be very large features; [605] for example continued for at least 6.5m in section. The complete profile of one pit [612] was visible in section. It was 2m wide and 0.8m deep with steep sides and a flat base. The majority of the other pits were steep-sided with flat bases. Feature [609] appeared to be the remains of two inter-cutting pits with rounded bases. The fills of the pits consisted of dark greyish brown or dark brown sandy silts. No finds were recovered. The archaeological features in the trench were covered by up to 1.2m of modern overburden, which included brick rubble layers and a 0.45m thick layer of concrete (602).

Trench 7 was a 2m square hole that was excavated for the construction of a sewer inspection chamber close to the south-west corner of the tower block (Figure 2 ; Image 2 ). This trench contained a single pit [703] which was partly exposed in the south-east corner of the trench (Image 3). It was steep-sided and at least 0.7m deep, extending below the limit of excavation. A single sherd of St Neots ware pottery was noted in the sole fill of black clayey silt (704). The feature was sealed by 0.5m of modern overburden and had been truncated on its western edge by the construction of a modern sewer trench. No archaeological features were identified during monitoring of construction of the other inspection chambers.

### 2.3 Monitoring of Amenity Area

Works for the amenity area consisted of the construction of a raised play/garden area and the erection of a steel fence along the St John's Street frontage.

A low brick retaining wall was built to contain the play/garden area. The foundations for the wall were constructed within rubble hardcore lying just



beneath the existing tarmac surface. Wooden dividers to contain the ‘play bark’, gravel and planting areas were constructed on top of the existing tarmac surface (Image 4). These works had no archaeological impact.

Groundworks during construction of the boundary fence were monitored (Images 5 and 6). Postholes for the fence posts were hand dug by the contractors and inspected by an archaeologist. The holes were 0.4–0.6m deep and approximately 0.3m in diameter. Deposits within the postholes consisted of the existing topsoil above mixed deposits including tarmac, concrete, brick demolition rubble and soil containing small stones and brick rubble.



### 3. CONCLUSIONS

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The investigations were undertaken as part of a scheme of building refurbishment works which had a limited impact on sub-surface archaeological deposits. The results of the observations are therefore limited but provide data which reinforces the results of the earlier evaluation work (Albion Archaeology 2005c and 2008)

Deposits adjacent to the St John's Street frontage were examined in Trench 6, excavated along the northern side of the tower block. This demonstrated the survival of archaeological features cut into the underlying geology and sealed beneath modern construction overburden. The features represent an area of pitting which included some large pits. The circumstances of the investigation, within a deep machine-excavated trench, means that the results are limited. Some of the pits appeared to be large features, suggesting that they could have been dug to extract gravel. No dating evidence was recovered but the results from the evaluation (Trenches 1 and 2) demonstrated domestic activity in this area from the Saxon-Norman period (10th-12th centuries) through to the modern period.

The single pit identified in Trench 7 indicates the potential for archaeological deposits in this area. Evaluation trenches (Trenches 3, 4 and 5) excavated to the west and north showed that the western part of the site had been subject to extensive quarrying in the modern period.

Investigations during the construction of the amenity area demonstrated that shallow deposits adjacent to the street frontage consist of modern demolition and levelling debris.

The site records do not merit any further analysis or reporting. The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM:2008/32). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (Oasis reference albionar1-141448).



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Baker, *et al* . 1979. "Excavations in Bedford. 1967-1977." *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* Vol 13.

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## **5. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DETAILS**

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**Trench: 6**

**Max Dimensions: Length: 19.50 m. Width: 1.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1. m. Max: 1.2 m.**

**Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 5120: Northing: 49268)**

**Reason: Archaeological monitoring of pipe trench**

<b>Context:</b>	<b>Type:</b>	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
600	External surface	Tarmac surface	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
601	Make up layer	Red brick hard core rubble	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
602	External surface	Concrete surface	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
603	Make up layer	Red brick rubble hardcore containing frog bricks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
604	Natural	Loose yellow sandy gravel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
605	Pit	base: flat dimensions: min breadth 6.5m, min depth 0.6m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
606	Fill	Dark grey brown sandy silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
607	Pit	dimensions: min depth 0.7m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
608	Fill	Dark grey brown sandy silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
609	Pit	Probably two intercut pits with similar fill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
610	Fill	Dark grey brown sandy silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
611	Make up layer	Dark brown sandy silt With frequent brick fragments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
612	Pit	sides: steep base: flat dimensions: min breadth 2.m, min depth 0.8m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
613	Fill	Dark grey brown sandy silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
614	Pit	sides: steep base: flat dimensions: min breadth 1.7m, min diameter 1.1m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
615	Fill	Dark brown sandy silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Trench:** 7

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 2.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.5 m. Max: 0.5 m.

**Co-ordinates:** OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 5085: Northing: 49240)

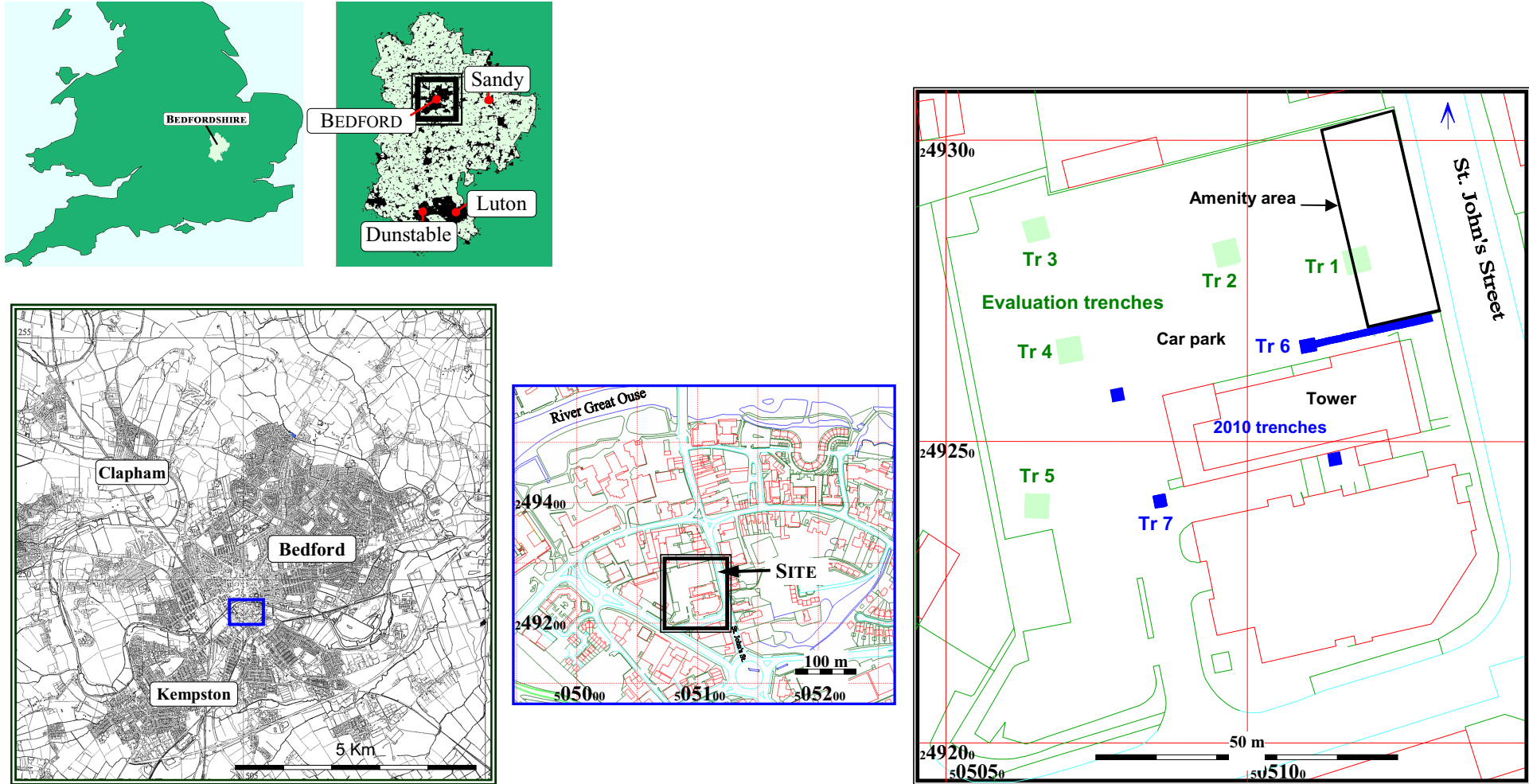
**Reason:** Archaeological monitoring of manhole number 1

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
700	External surface	Concrete surface	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
701	Make up layer	Mid red brown sandy silt frequent small stones Containing moderate concentration of brick fragments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
702	Natural	Mid yellow brown sandy gravel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
703	Pit	sides: steep dimensions: min breadth 0.56m, min depth 0.7m Pit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
704	Fill	Black clay silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 6. APPENDIX 2: OASIS ENTRY FORM

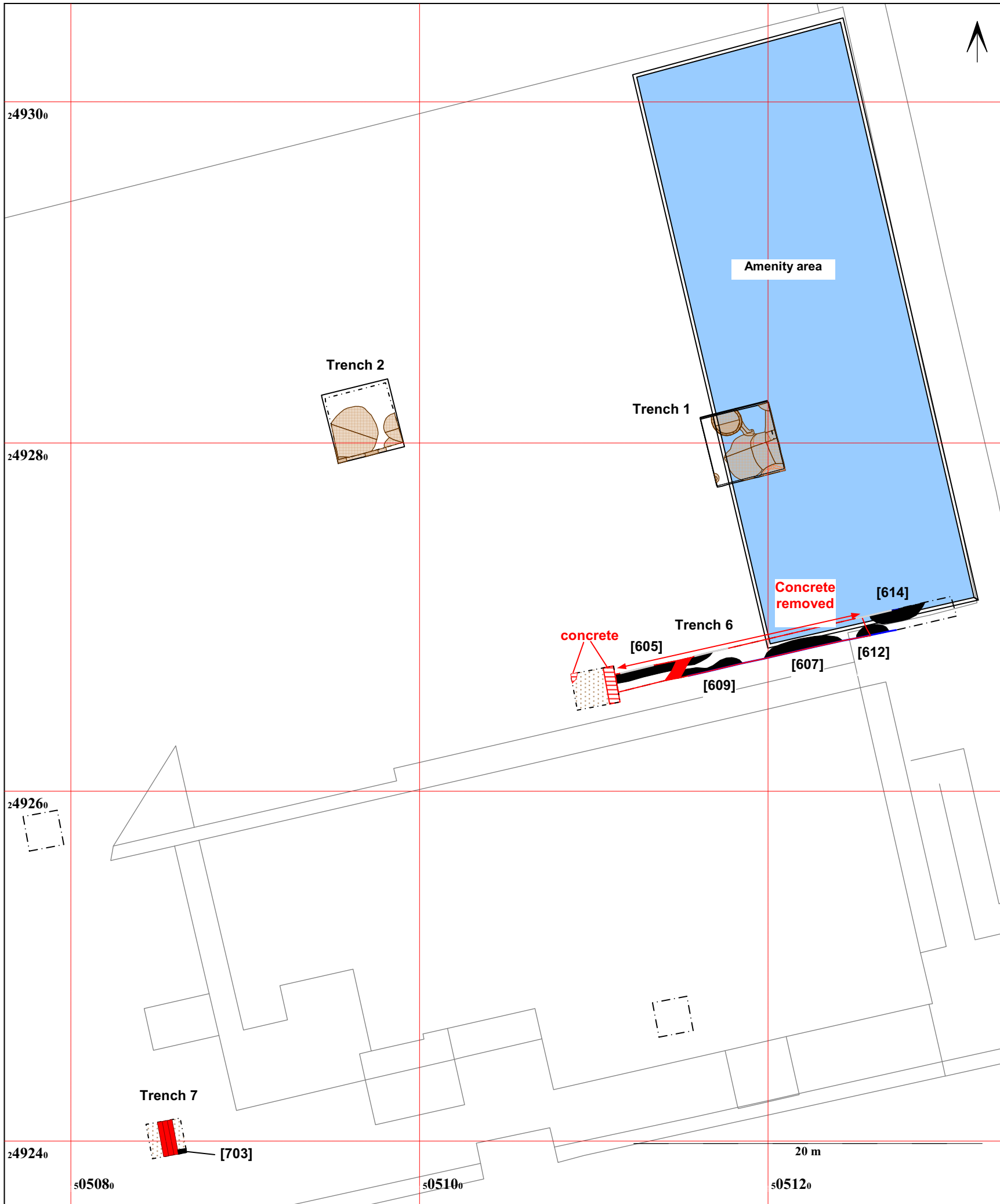
OASIS ID	albionar1-141448
PROJECT DETAILS	
Project name	29-31 St John's Street, Bedford
Short description of the project	A programme of archaeological monitoring works was undertaken by Albion Archaeology during the conversion of former commercial offices to residential units at 29-31 St John's Street, Bedford. Deposits close to the St John's Street frontage were examined in a 19.5m-long east-west aligned trench excavated along the northern side of the tower block. At least five pits were identified. These were cut into the underlying river terrace gravels and sealed beneath a layer of modern construction overburden up to 1.2m thick. Some of the pits were large quarry-sized features that could have been dug for gravel. No dating evidence was recovered but the results from the earlier evaluation indicated domestic activity in the area close to the street frontage from the Saxon-Norman period (10th-12th centuries) through to the modern period. A 2m-square trench excavated in the mid part of the site, c.50m from the street frontage, contained a single pit with a dark fill that produced a single sherd of Saxo-Norman pottery. The archaeological deposits in this part of the site were covered by 0.5m of modern overburden.
Project dates	Start: 30-07-2010 End: 08-10-2012
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	SJB1277 - Contracting Unit No. BEDFM:2008.32 - Museum accession ID albionar1-41362 - OASIS form ID
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type/Period	PITS /Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE
Investigation Type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition
PROJECT LOCATION	
Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE BEDFORD BEDFORD St John's Street, Bedford
Study area	0.72 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 0509 4925

PROJECT CREATORS	
Name of Organisation	Albion Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Jeremy Oetgen
Project supervisor	Mark Phillips Christiane Meckseper Wesley Keir
PROJECT ARCHIVES	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive notes	N/a
Digital Archive recipient	Albion Archaeology
Digital Media available	"Database", 'Images raster / digital photography', "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Bedford Museum
Paper Archive ID	BEDFM:2008.32
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Microfilm", "Miscellaneous Material", 'Photograph', "Report"
Paper Archive notes	To be stored at Albion Archaeology until deposition. To be deposited with work from earlier investigations (albionar1-41362)
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land at 29-31 St John's Street, Bedford: Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Phillips, M'
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Oetgen, J'
Other bibliographic details	2013/5
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	Albion Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Bedford
Description	Comb bound report



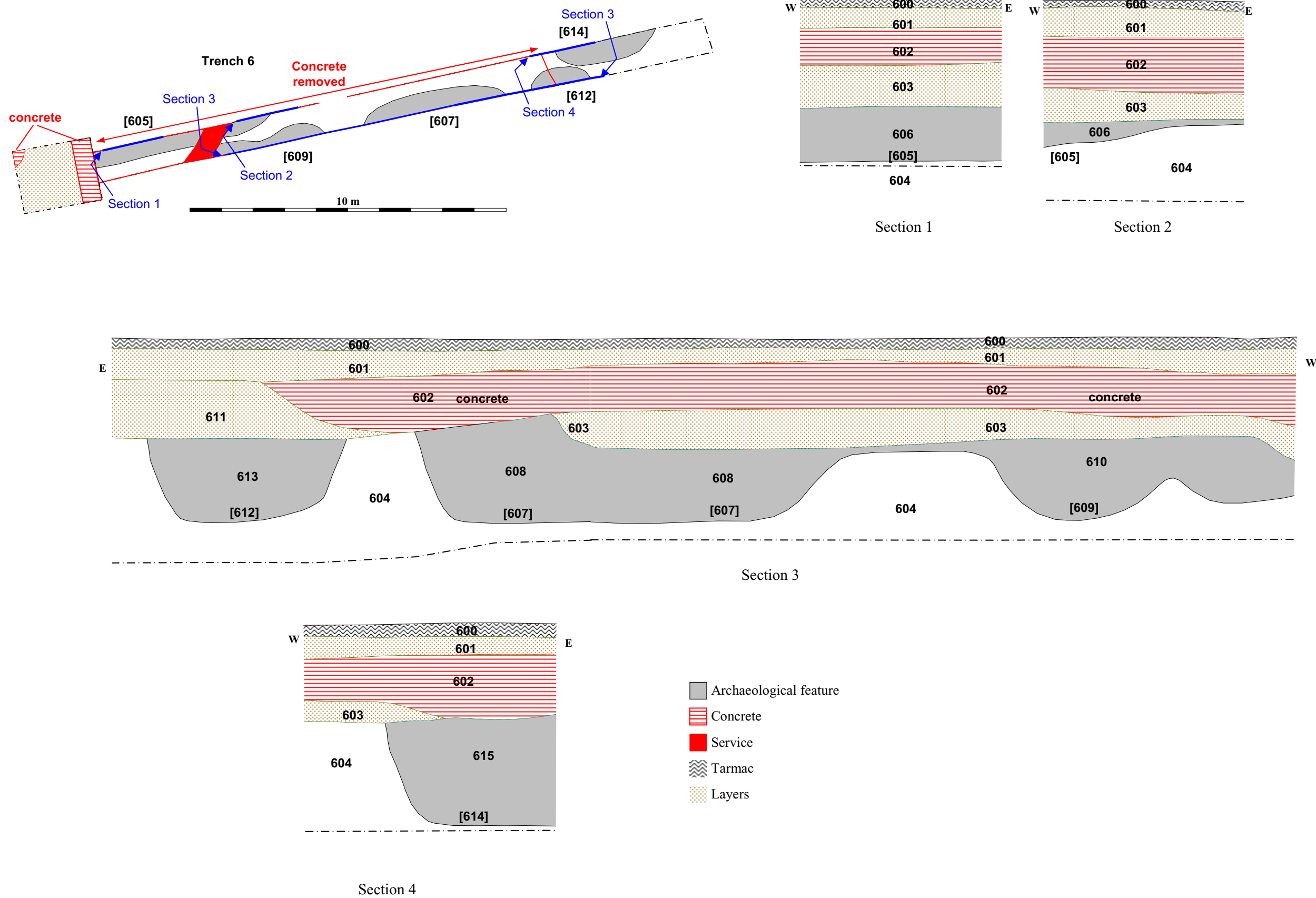
**Figure 1: Site location plan**

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**Figure 2: All features plan**

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**Figure 3: Sections**



**Image 1: Trench 6 (sewer trench)**  
Showing pit [614] in south-facing section



**Image 2: Trench 7 (inspection chamber)**  
Machine excavation





**Image 3: Trench 7, pit [703]**

Showing pit truncated by modern sewer trench in north-facing section  
(1m scale)



**Image 4: Amenity area**

Looking south towards tower block showing retaining wall  
and wooden dividers built up over the existing tarmac surface

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*Land at 29-31 St John's Street, Bedford:*

*Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication*



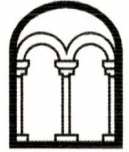
**Image 5: Amenity area fencing**  
Looking north towards St Mary's Church showing partly erected metal fence



**Image 6: Amenity area fencing**  
Showing typical posthole for fence adjacent to pavement on St John's Street, looking north (40cm scale)



**Albion**  
archaeology



Albion Archaeology  
St Mary's Church  
St Mary's Street  
Bedford  
MK42 0AS

**Telephone** 01234 294000  
**Email** [office@albion-arch.com](mailto:office@albion-arch.com)  
[www.albion-arch.com](http://www.albion-arch.com)

