NEW ROAD NURSERIES GREAT BARFORD BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION

Albion archaeology





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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 project was commissioned by J & J Design on behalf of Multequip LLP. The archaeological works were monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Vanessa Clarke, (Bedfordshire Borough Council).

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner (Supervisor) and Mark Phillips (Project Officer). This report has been prepared by Mark Phillips. Artefacts analysis was undertaken by Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). The illustrations are by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

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1.0	25/09/2014	n/a		

Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

BBC Bedford Borough Council
HER Historic Environment Record

HET Historic Environment Team (Bedford Borough Council)

WSI Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission was granted (13/01634/MAF) for the erection of a new warehouse (Class B8) with offices, external storage and new vehicular access, at The Nurseries, New Road, Great Barford, MK44 3LH. As the development lies within an archaeologically sensitive area the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a condition requiring the implementation of an archaeological mitigation strategy was attached to the planning consent.

Archaeological monitoring of the construction groundworks was undertaken between 20/5/2014 and 17/7/2014. The excavation for building foundations and soakaway drains was monitored. Areas of ground reduction were not monitored as the observations on site indicated that these works were too shallow to expose archaeological deposits.

A small number of dated archaeological features were identified, mostly in the western half of the site. These comprised three ditches which produced small amounts of animal bone and Romano-British pottery dated to the 1st/2nd century AD. A shallow, flat-bottomed pit contained a small amount of animal bone and Saxon pottery. Undated features comprised two ditches and four pits.

The Romano-British ditches appear to form a continuation of rectilinear enclosure cropmarks (HER 604) recorded to the north and south-west of the development. The form of the Saxon pit suggests that it could be the remains of sunken-featured building. However, no diagnostic features such as structural postholes were identified within the exposed part of this feature.

Cropmark evidence records a circular feature approximately where the new building stands. This was not identified during the monitoring works; however, the area ground reduction undertaken for the building's floor slab was not deep enough to expose archaeological levels.

The recovered evidence indicates activity in the earlier Romano-British and Saxon periods. It adds to the existing dataset for rural settlement in these periods but, on its own, is insufficient to address research themes identified in the local and regional research frameworks. No further analysis of the results of the fieldwork is necessary. This report will be uploaded onto the ADS OASIS website (albionar1-167244). The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2013.79).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

Planning permission was granted (13/01634/MAF) for the erection of a new warehouse (Class B8) with offices, external storage and new vehicular access, at The Nurseries, New Road, Great Barford, MK44 3LH.

As the development area lies within an area of archaeological sensitivity, the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a condition (no. 6) was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of an archaeological mitigation strategy. This advice was in accordance with Saved Policies BE24 & BE25 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002, Policy CP23 of the Bedford Borough Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008) and national policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The required programme of archaeological works was specified in a brief issued by the HET (BBC 2013). It comprised the observation and recording of groundworks with investigation of any revealed archaeological remains, followed by analysis and reporting on the results.

Albion Archaeology were commissioned by J&J Design on behalf of the developer (Multequip LLP) to carry out the archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion 2014), approved by the HET.

This report presents the results of the archaeological monitoring works.

1.2 Site Location, Topography and Geology

The development site is located on previously developed land at New Road Nurseries to the east of Great Barford village (centred on NGR: 513650 252454), c. 400m to the west of the River Great Ouse (Figure 1). It is rectangular in shape and covers an area of c. 0.4ha.

The site of the former plant nursery was vacant at the beginning of construction but still included areas of hardstanding.

The bedrock comprises part of the Jurassic Oxford Clay Formation, which is overlain by First and Second Terrace deposits of the Ouse Valley Formation.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that the development site lies in a locally designated Area of Archaeological Interest, based upon a number of known archaeological cropmarks — a scatter of ring ditches (probable ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mounds) and a group of rectilinear enclosures (HER 604) (Figure 1). At least two ring ditches and a group of linear features are recorded immediately beneath New Road Nurseries on a number of aerial photos (particularly ALH 96 taken on 01.07.1965) held in the English Heritage Archives (former National Monuments Record). The extent of



previous damage to any archaeological remains caused by the original nursery development is not known. However, the site is c. 1m lower than the adjacent New Road, suggesting that some ground reduction may have taken place in the past.

Approximately 500m to the south of the development site archaeological work in advance of housing development identified a series of archaeological remains: Bronze Age pits and postholes, representing settlement; a middle Iron Age pit alignment (major land boundary) alongside three contemporary parallel ditches; the entrance to a Romano-British enclosure; and a scatter of late Saxon/Saxo-Norman settlement features (Abrams et al, forthcoming).

1.4 Project Objectives

The full project objectives are detailed in the WSI (Albion 2014). The principal objective was to mitigate developmental impacts on any archaeological remains. This was to be achieved through a programme of fieldwork to identify and investigate any remains present and to produce an archive report detailing the results.

Archaeological monitoring during the construction works identified a small number of archaeological features (see Section 2). The evidence indicates activity in the earlier Romano-British and Saxon periods. It adds to the existing dataset for rural settlement in these periods but individually is insufficient to address research themes identified in the local and regional research frameworks (Medlycott 2011, Oake *et al* 2007). The limited results of the investigation are insufficient to support further post-excavation analysis and the results are presented in full below.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology for the archaeological works is set out in full in the WSI (Albion 2014). The WSI anticipated a programme which included strip, map and record in advance of construction of an access road as well as monitoring during excavation for construction of foundations. In the event the strip map and record work on the access road was not undertaken.

The site was attended between 20/5/2014 and 27/5/2014 during construction of foundations for the building and then from 30/6/2014 to 17/7/2014 during the excavation of trenches for soakaway drainage in the eastern half of the site. The results indicated that area ground reduction undertaken during construction would not have affected any archaeological deposits. The foundation level for the building floor slab lay above the level of archaeological features found in the foundation pads for the building. The limited ground reduction for access and car parking in the eastern half of the site did not extend below the level of modern ground disturbance noted in this part of the site.

Numbers (1 to 31) were assigned by the excavator to identify the individual foundation trenches for convenience of recording. These appear on Figures 2 and 3 but are only occasionally referred to in the text.



2. RESULTS

2.1 Introduction

The features and deposits are described below and are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. Section 5 contains detailed descriptions of all contexts recorded on site.

2.2 Geological Deposits

The undisturbed geological deposits varied from clay silt to gravel or clean sands. The uppermost layer consisted of mid orange clay silt (102). In places a layer of grey-orange gravel and sandy silt (103) was noted immediately below (102). The deeper geological material consisted of clean, light coloured sands and gravels (104) that were well sorted and layered.

2.3 Modern Deposits

The least disturbed modern soil layers were noted towards the western side of the site. These consisted of a dark topsoil (100) up to 350mm thick and in some places a lighter coloured subsoil layer up to 130mm thick.

Other modern deposits included a deposit of imported, light yellow-brown clayey-gravel that formed a band running approximately north-south in the mid-eastern part of the site. A vertical-sided pit or post-pit in foundation trench 8 was cut from the ground surface (both shown in Figure 2).

In general, the eastern half of the site showed a much greater level of modern disturbance. At the eastern end of the office part of the new building 0.95m of modern disturbance and made ground sealed truncated archaeological deposits (e.g. ditch [117]). Here, the profile consisted of tarmac on a gravel base, above a dark mixed soil containing modern debris which lay above a layer of re-deposited geological material.

2.4 Romano-British Features

Three ditches produced Romano-British pottery dated to the 1st–2nd centuries AD.

NW-SE aligned ditch [106] in the south-west corner of the site was c. 0.6m wide and 0.43m deep with a steep-sided profile. It contained two fills; a small amount of animal bone (101g) and pottery (2 sherds: 8g) was recovered from the lower fill.

Ditch [109] in the middle of the western side of the site had a similar alignment to [106]. It was 1.1m wide and 0.57m deep with V-shaped cross-section. It contained two fills which together yielded a total of 50g of animal bone and 39g of pottery (4 sherds).

Ditch [117] was found in the foundation trench at the eastern end of the office part of the new building; it was aligned roughly north-south. It had been partially truncated by modern disturbance but had a surviving depth of at least 0.45m. It had a steep-sided profile, although its complete cross-section was not fully



exposed in the trench. A single fill produced a small amount of pottery (2 sherds: 5g).

2.5 Possible Saxon Sunken-featured Building

Pit [112] produced six small sherds of pottery, broadly dateable to the early-middle Saxon period (*c*. 5th to 8th century AD). This feature was partially exposed within a foundation pit and in an adjacent service trench on the western boundary of the development area. It appears from the portion that was visible to have been aligned roughly NE-SW; it was at least 4.3m long and 1.6m wide. It was only 0.2m deep with shallow sloping sides and a flat base. The single fill produced a small amount of animal bone (61g) and pottery (6 sherds: 32g).

2.6 Undated Archaeological Features

A small number of undated features were identified.

A shallow ditch [119] on the western side of the site had a similar alignment to the two Roman ditches identified nearby. It was 3.6m wide but was not investigated to its full depth as it extended beyond base of the trench.

The partial remains of ditch [121] were found in the eastern half of the site where it had been partly truncated by a large, linear modern intrusion. It was aligned north-south and was at least 1.5m wide.

Towards the north-west corner of the site was small pit [114] with a concave cross-section that contained a small slab of fired clay.

Three other undated pits were partly exposed during monitoring of the soakaway drain trenches in the eastern half of the development area. They were cut into the underlying gravel and had been truncated by modern disturbance. Pit [124] in the north-east of the site was 1.5m wide and 0.6m deep with straight sides sloping at c. 45° to a flat base. Pit [126] was partly exposed in plan in the base of a trench and had a concave profile. Pit [128] was a small feature, 0.5m wide and 0.4m deep, with near vertical sides and a flat base.

2.7 Artefacts

Five cut features yielded a finds assemblage comprising pottery, animal bone and fired clay (Table 3).

Feature	Description	Fill	Date range	Finds Summary
106	Ditch	107	Early Roman	Pottery (8g); animal bone (101g)
109	Ditch	110	Early Roman	Pottery (4g); animal bone (15g)
109	Ditch	111	Early Roman	Pottery (45g); animal bone (35g)
112	Pit	113	Saxon	Pottery (32g); animal bone (61g)
114	Pit	116	Undated	Fired clay (37g)
117	Ditch	118	Early Roman	Pottery (5g)

Table 3: Artefact summary by feature

2.7.1 Pottery

Fourteen pottery sherds (94g) representing twelve vessels were collected. The sherds are fairly fragmented, with a mean weight of 7g, although are largely



unabraded. Six fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series (Table 4).

Fabric type	Common name	Sherd No.	Wt (g)	Fill / Sherd No.
Early Roman				
R03A	Verulamium region white ware	1	23	(111):1
R06C	Fine grey ware	4	15	(107):1, (110):1, (118):2
R06E	Calcareous grey ware	2	22	(111):2
R13	Shell	1	2	(107):1
Saxon				
A16	Coarse quartz	4	21	(113):4
A29	Sandstone and limestone	2	11	(113):2

Table 4: Pottery type series

<u>Early Roman</u> (c. mid 1st to late 2nd century AD)

Eight sherds (62g) collected from ditches [106], [109] and [117] are datable to the early Roman period. They comprise locally manufactured grey wares, and single sherds of shelly ware and white ware, the latter a regional import from the Verulamium (St Albans) region. Diagnostic forms are a narrow-necked jar (rim diameter 90mm) and a straight-sided dish.

<u>Saxon</u> (c. 5th to 8th century AD)

The fill of pit [112] contained six quartz-tempered Saxon sherds (32g) deriving from hand-made vessels. A simple rounded rim is the sole diagnostic element, although it is too fragmentary for diameter to be estimated.

2.7.2 Fired clay

The secondary fill (116) of undated pit [114] yielded a piece of fired clay (37g) in a sand and organic fabric. The fragment is 35mm thick with a rectangular profile, and is likely to derive from a hand-formed slab of the type commonly recovered from late Iron Age and early Roman sites. Such objects may have been used as pre-fabricated furniture in domestic or agricultural ovens or hearths.

2.7.3 Animal bone

Nineteen pieces of animal bone (212g) were collected, the largest deposit (101g) from early Roman ditch [106]. Individual fragments have a mean weight of 11g, and generally survive in fair condition. Anatomical elements comprise limb bone, scapula, pelvis fragments, and a burnt vertebra(?), although none are sufficiently complete to be identified to species.



3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

No previous investigations had taken place on the site prior to the current building works. Cropmarks close to the site (HER 604) include a number of ring ditches and rectilinear enclosures (Figure 1). Photographs taken prior to the development of the nursery show two ring ditches and linear features within the nursery site with one of the ring ditches plotted directly below the building in the current development. More recent aerial photographs show a complex of rectilinear enclosures in the field immediately north of the site.

None of the features that were identified during the monitoring works can be correlated with the circular cropmark feature that is plotted on the site.

The Roman ditches found on the site are likely to represent a continuation of the enclosure cropmarks that have been identified to the north and south-west of the development. The alignment of the Roman ditches [106 and 109] found along the western edge of the site corresponds to that of a number of the enclosure cropmarks. The Roman ditches found on the site contained small amounts of animal bone and pottery which dates from the 1st–2nd century AD. The very small finds assemblage recovered from the ditches suggest that they were probably not associated with intensive domestic activity and are perhaps part of a peripheral activity area.

The presence of Saxon pottery within a large, shallow pit with a flat base [112] is of some interest as the pit could be the remains of a sunken-featured building (SFB). Its full extent lay beyond the limits of the groundworks and no clear diagnostic features, such as the end posts for a roof structure, were identified. It is, however, similar to other excavated examples of this feature type in terms of its size and profile.

The presence of Roman and Saxon features demonstrates the survival of archaeological deposits on the site, despite its previous use as a nursery. In the western part of the development area the features were found beneath 300–400mm of topsoil (100). The construction of the building involved the excavation of pits for concrete pads and minimal ground reduction within the footprint of the building for the concrete floor slab. In this part of the site it is likely that archaeological features are relatively intact. A significant amount of modern disturbance — up to a depth of 0.95m in places — was noted during monitoring works in the eastern half of the site. This level of disturbance and the installation of an extensive network of soakaway drainage trenches as part of the development suggest that any archaeological deposits in this part of the site are likely to be less well preserved.

The recovered evidence indicates activity in the earlier Romano-British and Saxon periods. It adds to the existing dataset for rural settlement in these periods but, on its own, is insufficient to address research themes identified in the local and regional research frameworks. No further analysis of the results of the fieldwork is necessary. The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum



(accession no. BEDFM 2013.79). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-167244).



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5. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DETAILS

Context:	Type:	Description: Excava	Excavated: Finds Present:		
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silt occasional small-medium stones			
101	Subsoil	Friable light grey brown silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones			
102	Natural	Friable mid orange clay silt moderate small-medium stones			
103	Natural	Firm light grey orange silty gravel			
104	Natural	Loose light yellow sands and fine gravel with patches of mid red brown sand and gravel			
106	Ditch	Linear NW-SE sides: steep base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.55m, max depth 0.43m			
107	Primary fill	Friable dark orange grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stones	✓	✓	
108	Secondary fill	Friable dark grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stones	✓		
109	Ditch	Linear ESE-WNW sides: V-shaped base: v-shaped dimensions: max breadth 1.1m, max depth 0.57m	, 🗆		
110	Primary fill	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones	✓	✓	
111	Main fill	Friable mid brown grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones	✓	✓	
112	Pit	NE-SW sides: concave base: flat dimensions: min breadth 1.6m, max depth 0.2m, min length 4.3m			
113	Fill	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stones	✓	✓	
114	Pit	Sub-circular sides: steep base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.56m, max depth 0.26m	✓		
115	Primary fill	Friable mid orange silt . Redeposited natural fill	✓		
116	Main fill	Friable dark brown grey clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small stones	✓	✓	
117	Ditch	Linear N-S sides: steep dimensions: min breadth 0.65m, min depth 0.45m			
118	Fill	Friable mid grey brown clay silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-medium stones	✓	✓	
119	Ditch	Linear ESE-WNW sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 3.6m, min depth 0.4m	✓		
120	Fill	Friable dark grey clay silt occasional small stones	✓		
121	Ditch	Linear N-S sides: concave base: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min depth 0.6m	✓		
122	Upper fill	Friable mid brown grey clay silt occasional small-medium stones	✓		
123	Lower fill	Friable mid brown silt occasional small-large stones			
124	Pit	Sub-circular sides: 45 degrees base: flat dimensions: max breadth 1.5m, max depth 0.6m			
125	Fill	Friable dark grey silt			
126	Pit	Irregular sides: concave dimensions: min breadth 1.7m, max depth 0.5m			
127	Fill	Friable dark brown sandy silt occasional small-medium stones			
128	Pit	Sides: near vertical base: flat dimensions: max breadth 0.5m, max depth 0.4m			
129	Fill	Friable dark brown sandy silt occasional small stones			



APPENDIX 2: OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM 6.

OASIS ID: albionar1-167244

Project details

Project name New Road Nurseries, Great Barford

Short description of the project

Planning permission was granted for the erection of a new warehouse with offices, external storage and new vehicular access, at The Nurseries, New Road, Great Barford. As the development lies within an archaeologically sensitive area the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Bedford Borough Council recommended that a condition requiring the implementation of an archaeological mitigation strategy was attached to the planning consent. Archaeological monitoring of the construction groundworks was undertaken. The excavation for building foundations and soakaway drains was monitored. Areas of ground reduction were not monitored as the observations on site indicated that these works were too shallow to expose archaeological deposits. A small number of dated archaeological features were identified, mostly in the western half of the site. These comprised three ditches which produced small amounts of animal bone and Romano-British pottery dated to the 1st/2nd century AD. A shallow, flat-bottomed pit contained a small amount of animal bone and Saxon pottery. Undated features comprised two ditches and four pits. The Romano-British ditches appear to form a continuation of rectilinear enclosure cropmarks (HER 604) recorded to the north and south-west of the development. The form of the Saxon pit suggests that it could be the remains of sunken-featured building. However, no diagnostic features such as structural postholes were identified within the exposed part of this feature. Cropmark evidence records a circular feature approximately where the new building stands. This was not identified during the monitoring works; however, the area ground reduction undertaken for the building's floor slab was not deep enough to expose archaeological levels. The recovered evidence indicates activity in the earlier Romano-British and Saxon periods. No further analysis of the results of the fieldwork is necessary.

Start: 20-05-2014 End: 17-07-2014 Project dates

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes

NR2261 - Contracting Unit No.

Any associated project reference

codes

13/01634/MAF - Planning Application No.

Any associated project reference codes

BEDFM 2013.79 - Museum accession ID

Type of project Recording project **DITCHES Roman** Monument type PIT Early Medieval Monument type

DITCHES Uncertain Monument type Monument type PITS Uncertain **POTTERY Roman** Significant Finds

Significant Finds POTTERY Early Medieval

Investigation type "Watching Brief"



Prompt National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country England

Site location BEDFORDSHIRE BEDFORD GREAT BARFORD New Road Nurseries,

Great Barford

Study area 0.40 Hectares
Site coordinates TL 1365 5245

Project creators

Name of Albion Archaeology

Organisation

Project brief Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

originator

Project design Albion Archaeology

originator

Project Robert Wardill

director/manager

Project Mark Phillips

director/manager

Project supervisor Ian Turner

Project archives

Physical Archive Bedford Museum

recipient

Physical Archive ID BEDFM 2013.79

Physical Contents "Animal Bones", "Ceramics"

Digital Archive

recipient

Albion Archaeology

Digital Contents "Animal Bones", "Ceramics", "other"

Digital Media

available

"Database" 'Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive

recipient

Bedford Museum

Paper Archive ID

BEDFM 2013.79

Paper Contents

"Animal Bones", "Ceramics", "other"

Paper Media available

"Context sheet', "Correspondence", "Drawing", "Miscellaneous Material",

"Photograph" "Report"

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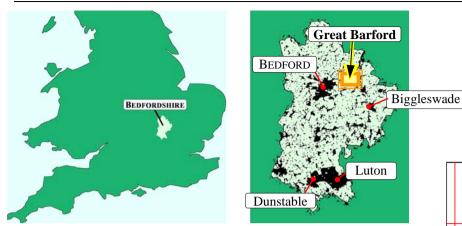
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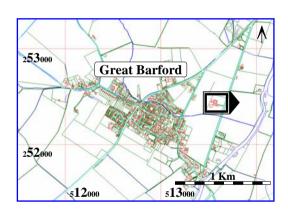
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7. FIGURES







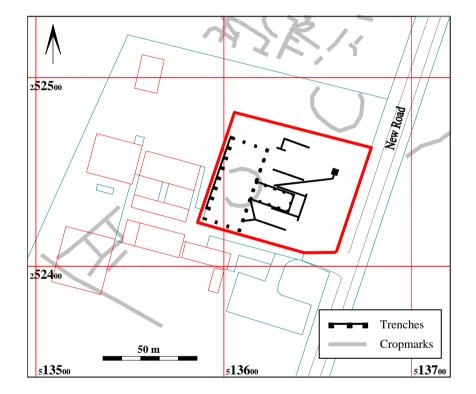
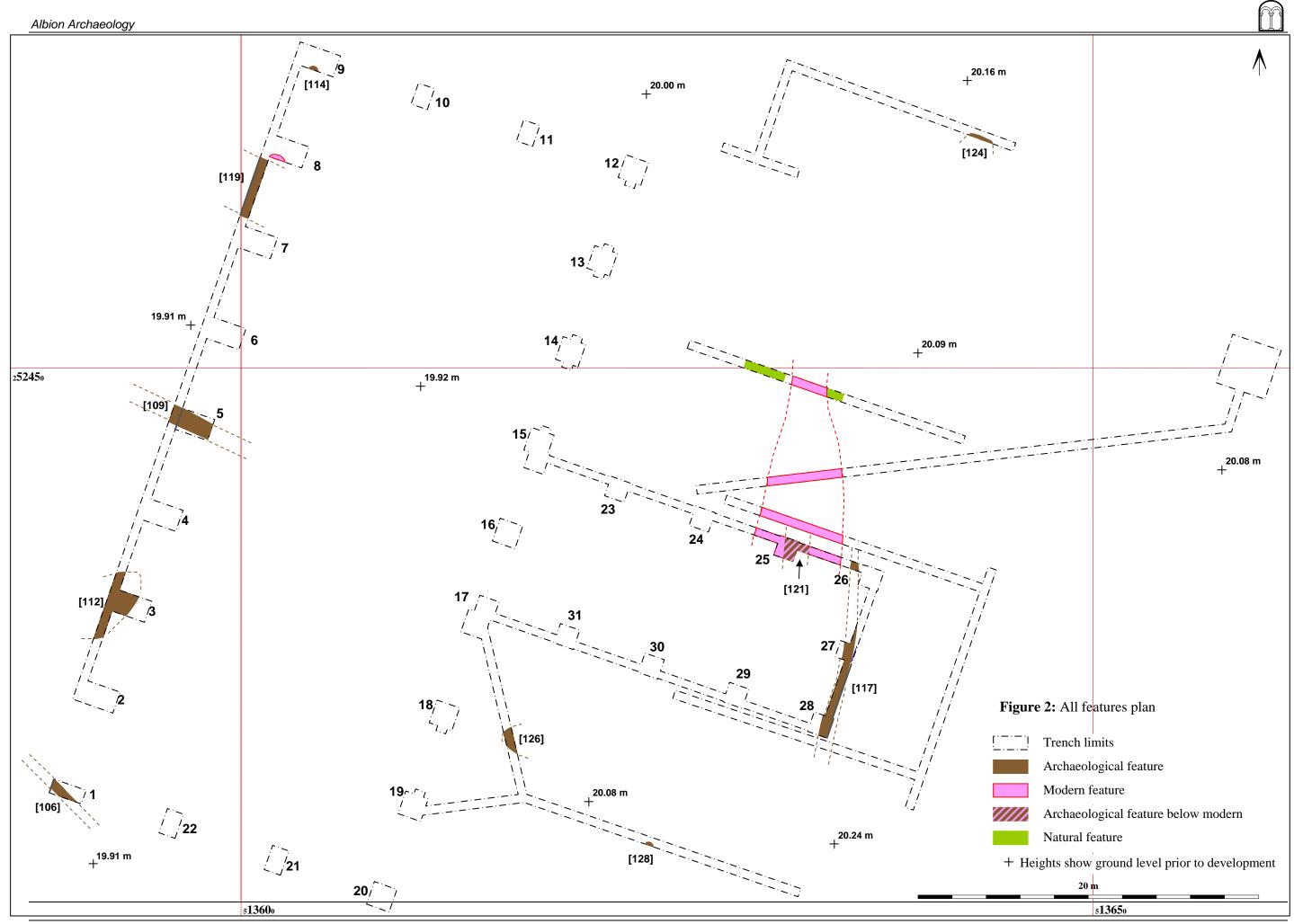
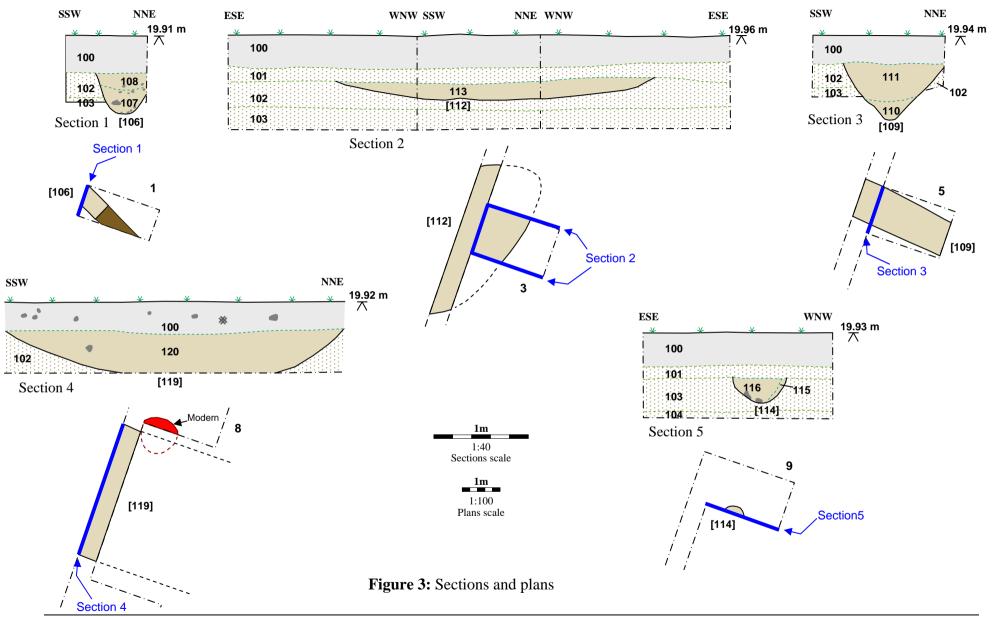


Figure 1: Site location plan

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New Road Nurseries, Great Barford, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication



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