# CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COLLEGE KINGSWAY DUNSTABLE BEDFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION & STAGE 2 EVALUATION

Albion archaeology





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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION, INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION & STAGE 2 EVALUATION

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1

# **Contents**

List o	List of Figures2			
Prefa	reface			
Versi	Version History			
Key 7	Terms3			
1. IN	TRODUCTION 5			
1.1	Planning Background5			
1.2	Site Location, Topography and Geology6			
1.3	Archaeological Background6			
1.4	Stage 1 Evaluation Results Summary6			
1.5	Project Objectives7			
2. MI	ETHODOLOGY 8			
2.1	Implementation8			
2.2	Standards8			
2.3	Archiving8			
3. RE	SULTS9			
3.1	Area A9			
3.2	Area B – Trench 5			
3.3	Area C10			
3.4	Area D10			
3.5	Area E11			
4. C	ONCLUSIONS 12			
4.1	Summary of Results12			
4.2	Significance of Results12			
5. BI	BLIOGRAPHY 13			
6. AF	6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH AND AREA A CONTEXT SUMMARY 15			



# List of Figures

Figure 1: Site and trench location plan Figure 2: All-features plan and section

Figure 3: Area A photographs Figure 4: Areas B–E photographs



#### 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 CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Central Bedfordshire College and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Ian Turner, Kathy Pilkinton, Joanne Barker (Archaeological Supervisors) Mark Phillips and Wesley Kier (Project Officers). This report was prepared by Ian Turner. The illustrations are by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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#### Version History

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1.0	30/04/2016	n/a	

#### Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CBCA Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist

HER Historic Environment Record
WSI Written Scheme of Investigation



#### Non-Technical Summary

South Bedfordshire District Council (now Central Bedfordshire Council) granted planning permission (SB/OUT/04/0166) in 2005 for development of land at Dunstable College (now Central Bedfordshire College). An extension of the time limit for development was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CB/10/02067/REN). The proposed development comprised part-demolition, alterations and extensions to the existing college buildings. A condition attached to the planning permission (No. 24) stipulated that no development should take place until the applicant or developer had secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which had been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The first stage of trial-trench evaluation was undertaken within the area of the proposed car park in the north-west part of the site. The results indicated that this area of the site contained archaeological remains of local and regional significance. Accordingly, the CBCA advised that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was required during the proposed groundworks in order to mitigate the impact of the development on these remains.

This report presents the findings of the second stage of the archaeological investigation, which comprised one additional trial trench (Stage 2 of the trial trenching) and the monitoring of groundworks in four other areas. The work was carried out in accordance with a second Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the CBCA.

The monitoring of Area A, the new car park to the north-west, mirrored the result of the four earlier trial trenches, which had revealed the two parallel, side ditches of a c.13m-wide trackway. The two ditches were again identified in the deeper segments of the carpark strip. A smaller ditch identified to the north-west of the trackway during the trial trenching was also further exposed and found to turn to the west at its south-west end.

The additional Stage 2 trial trench (Trench 5 in Area B) contained no archaeological features or deposits. Monitoring of the groundworks for the new 'E' block building and its associated drainage (Areas C, D and E) did not reveal any archaeological features or deposits. The lack of surviving topsoil or subsoil within the area of the new 'E' block building indicates truncation down to the chalk geology during the construction of the original school in the 20th century.

The fact that no archaeological features were present in Trench 5 or the eastern part of site suggests that it is located beyond the limit of the early Roman settlement previously revealed at the site of the former Queensway Hall, 150m to the south-west. However, the presence of the trackway and another ditch may indicate that further features lie to the north-west of the college boundary. Given their limited extent, the revealed remains are of relatively low significance, but they do add further to our understanding of the immediate environs of the Roman town of Durocobrivis.

The project archive will be deposited with Luton Culture under accession number LUTNM: 2014/08. Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (ref. albionar1-177009) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.



#### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Planning Background

South Bedfordshire District Council (now Central Bedfordshire Council) granted planning permission (SB/OUT/04/0166) in 2005 for development of land at Dunstable College (now Central Bedfordshire College). An extension of the time limit for development was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council (CB/10/02067/REN).

The proposed development comprised part-demolition, alterations and extensions to the existing college, including: provision of amenity space and 192 parking spaces; and construction of residential development with associated parking, landscaping and public open space.

A condition attached to the planning permission (No. 24) stipulated that no development of the College Phase or the Residential Phase should take place until the applicant or developer had secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

These recommendations were in accordance with paragraph 128 of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* and Policy 45 of the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (pre-submission version, January 2013).

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) issued briefs (CBC 2009a and b), which provided the basis for the preparation of the WSI. A staged approach to the archaeological investigation was specified, with the possibility that further, more detailed investigation might be required depending on the results of the initial evaluation and monitoring of demolition. Any such works would be agreed in advance with the CBCA by CgMs Consulting Ltd and secured by a further brief and/or WSI as appropriate.

The first stage of trial-trench evaluation (Albion Archaeology 2014a) was undertaken within the area of the proposed car park in the north-west part of the site (Figures 1 and 2). The results indicated that this area of the site contained archaeological remains of local and regional significance. Accordingly, the CBCA advised that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was required during the proposed groundworks in order to mitigate the impact of the development on these remains.

This report presents the findings of the second stage of the archaeological investigation, which comprised one additional trial trench (Stage 2 of the trial trenching) and the archaeological monitoring of groundworks in four other areas. The work was carried out in accordance with a second Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology 2014b) approved by the CBCA.



## 1.2 Site Location, Topography and Geology

The Central Bedfordshire College, Kingsway Campus is located to the north of Dunstable town centre at TL 0203 2236 (Figure 1). The site contained a mixture of buildings, car-parking areas and grassed open areas. It was bounded by Kingsway and College Drive to the south, and commercial properties and the Luton-Dunstable guided busway to the north.

The site lies on relatively level ground at a height of c.140m OD. The underlying geological deposits consist of middle chalk with localised shallow deposits of clay.

#### 1.3 Archaeological Background

Dunstable is located where the major Roman road of Watling Street crosses the Icknield Way, a long-distance track which originated in the prehistoric period.

A Roman settlement at Dunstable seems likely to have been based on the presence of this important road crossing. Archaeological investigations have not fully defined the extent or character of the Roman settlement. Investigations 150m to the south-west of the development area on the site of the former Queensway Hall uncovered ditches dating from the early Roman period. This site appears to have gone out of use by the late 1st or early 2nd century (Mudd 2004). Excavation at the New Venue site, c.100m to the west of the development area, identified a 1st/2nd-century Roman cemetery with both inhumation and cremation burials and a pyre site (AOC 2006).

The town appears to have been abandoned in the Anglo-Saxon period. In the early 12th century it was refounded by Henry I, who established a royal residence and an Augustinian Priory, 400m to the south of the development area.

The historical and archaeological background to the town is summarised in an Extensive Urban Survey report (Albion 2003). A desk-based assessment of the site was prepared by CgMs Consulting Ltd (Smith 2008).

#### 1.4 Stage 1 Evaluation Results Summary.

The first phase of the archaeological investigation comprised trial trenching, which was undertaken in March 2014 (Albion Archaeology 2014a).

Four trial trenches revealed archaeological features, comprising seven substantial SW-NE aligned ditch segments that produced a small number of Roman artefacts.

The locations of six of these ditch segments suggested that they were parts of two parallel ditches, which extended for a distance of at least 170m, suggesting that they were two sides of a c.13m-wide trackway. The alignment of a slightly smaller ditch [206] located to the north-west suggested that it was either an additional ditch defining the trackway or perhaps a boundary to an enclosure that respected the trackway. The location and shallow depth of a gully suggested that it could represent a wheel-rut.

The lack of other features, such as pits or post-holes, within the trenches and the paucity of artefacts recovered tended to suggest that the site lay on the periphery of the Roman settlement within Dunstable rather than in the immediate vicinity of



the settlement core. The remains of the trackway were of some significance, adding to a growing body of knowledge regarding the overall layout of the Roman town of Durocobrivis.

#### 1.5 Project Objectives

The available background information indicated that the development site was located in an area that contained heritage assets with archaeological interest, in particular evidence relating to Roman settlement.

The objective of the archaeological fieldwork 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 aims were to:

- Establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation within the development area;
- Establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape;
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

The remains of the Roman trackway suggested that there was potential for the investigation to contribute to regional research aims relating the Roman settlement of Dunstable (Oake 2007, 11).

As the project progressed and the archaeological potential of the site became clearer, research objectives would be revised as required. Any revisions would be based upon established Research Frameworks within Glazebrook (1997), Brown and Glazebrook (2000), Oake et al (2007) and Medlycott (2011).



#### 2. METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Implementation

The overall archaeological investigation was undertaken between 22nd April 2014 and 21st July 2015. The post-evaluation phase of work comprised the excavation of an additional Stage 2 trial trench (Trench 5 in Area B) and the monitoring of groundworks for a new car park (Area A), the new 'E' block building, (Areas D and E), and associated pipe trenches and a water-tank pit (Areas C and E).

The excavations were carried out using a mechanical excavator operated under close archaeological supervision. Deposits encountered were investigated and recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked on a regular basis for the recovery of artefacts. A detailed methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion 2014b).

#### 2.2 Standards

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

Albion Archaeology	Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork (2nd edn,		
	2001).		
ALGAO	Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of		
	England, EAA Occasional Paper No. 14 (2003)		
English Heritage	Management of Research Projects in the Historic		
	Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide		
	(2009)		
	Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory		
	and practice of methods, from sampling and		
	recovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition (2011)		
I <i>f</i> A	By-Laws and Code of Conduct (2013)		
	Standard and guidance for archaeological		
	excavation (2013)		
	Standard and guidance for an archaeological		
	watching brief (2013)		
Luton Culture	Procedure for Preparing Archaeological Archives		
	For Deposition with Luton Culture (2010 with		
	minor updates July 2013)		

#### 2.3 Archiving

An integrated project archive was prepared on completion of the project. All records and materials produced will be archived to the standards outlined in English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (2009). The archive will be deposited with Luton Culture under accession number LUTNM: 2014/08.

Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (ref. albionar1-177009) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.



#### 3. RESULTS

The results are discussed by area, as follows:

- Area A: the new car park
- Area B: an additional trial trench (Trench 5)
- Area C: drainage works
- Area D: the new building (block 'E')
- Area E: re-strip of the new building (block 'E'), a water tank and pipe trenches.

All features and deposits revealed during the works are summarised below and shown on Figure 2. Each is allocated a unique context number. Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [\*\*\*] and round brackets to fills or layers (\*\*\*). Selected photographs are presented in Figures 3 and 4.

#### 3.1 Area A

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during ground reduction for a new car park in Area A. Initial ground reduction was to a depth of c.0.45m, which did not penetrate the subsoil. However, in places, the depth of the machining increased to c.0.65m, exposing the chalk bedrock the three ditches identified during the trial trenching.

#### 3.1.1 Overburden

The overburden comprised:

- 0.35m of dark grey, silty topsoil (613);
- up to 0.5m of mid-brown-grey clay with large modern brick fragments (614), a levelling deposit only present along the south-east side of the area, adjacent to the college buildings
- c.0.15m of mid-brown-grey silty subsoil (615).

#### 3.1.2 Geological bedrock

Where exposed the undisturbed bedrock was light white chalk (616).

#### 3.1.3 Archaeological features

Two parallel NE–SW aligned ditches [600] and [602], spaced c.12m apart, crossed the central and north-west parts of the area (Figures 2 and 3). Ditch [600] was traced for c.82m and ditch [602] for c.21m. An excavated section through ditch  $[602]^1$  revealed an asymmetrical profile and a narrow flat base. The ditch was 1.5m wide and 0.58m deep; it contained four deposits that varied from mid-grey-brown silt to dark grey-brown sandy silt. No artefacts were recovered.

The position, alignment, size and profile of the ditches matched those seen during the trial trenching. Overall, the trackway ran for a distance of at least 170m. The segments dug during the trial trenching produced a small amount of Roman pottery and a key that could only be broadly dated from the Roman period to the 9th century.

Trenching

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Ditch [602] was also recorded as ditch [606] (see section on Figure 2).



A third parallel ditch [604] was revealed to the north-west of the track. It ran for a distance of c.17m before turning to the west. This ditch had also been investigated during the trial trenching. No artefacts were recovered but its similar form to the trackway ditches suggests it is a related, contemporary boundary or enclosure ditch.

A small, circular pit [611], containing frequent modern brick fragments, was recorded within the path of the trackway.

#### 3.2 Area B – Trench 5

The 30m-long Trench 5 was dug within the footprint of the new 'E' block building (Figures 2 and 4). It was located directly across the main path to the college main reception entrance. It was 1.8m wide and 0.7–1.15m deep.

#### 3.2.1 Overburden

Beneath the extant paved path was a 0.45m-thick layer of sand and brick fragments above an earlier paved path (507) and former topsoil (505).

To the sides of the extant path was a landscaping layer (500) above a 0.3m-thick layer of brown-grey clay silt (501), containing modern brick fragments. This sealed 0.3m of buried former topsoil (502) (dark brown-grey clay-silt) above a 0.25m-thick mid-brown-grey clay-silt subsoil.

#### 3.2.2 Geological bedrock

The exposed undisturbed bedrock was light white chalk (503).

#### 3.2.3 Archaeological features

No archaeological features or deposits were present in Trench 5. Several NE–SW aligned, modern service trenches (associated with the college) crossed the trench.

#### 3.3 Area C

Area C comprised the excavation of two parallel pipe trenches, close to the footprint of the new block 'E' building (Figures 2 and 4). The trenches were 28m and 32m long, 0.6m wide and 1.5m deep.

The pipe trenches were excavated through a 0.25m-thick demolition layer of loose modern brick rubble, which sealed undisturbed chalk bedrock. No archaeological features or deposits were present in either pipe trench.

#### 3.4 Area D

Area D comprised the footprint of the new block 'E' building, located in the southeast corner of the site (Figures 2 and 4). The monitored area measured 57m x 33m; it was reduced to a depth of c.0.2m. The area was subsequently dug to a deeper level, recorded as Area E (see Section 3.5).

Area D had previously been occupied by a large college building and a layer of demolition rubble covered most of the area. In a few small isolated spots, the undisturbed chalk bedrock was exposed. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.



#### 3.5 Area E

Area E comprised the re-strip of the footprint of the new 'E' block building to the level of the undisturbed chalk bedrock (Figures 2 and 4). This area appeared to have been stripped to the natural chalk and levelled when the original college was constructed in the 1960s. The excavation of a rectangular pit to accommodate a water tank and a short, associated pipe trench was also monitored, as was a shallow trench, dug to expose services to the east of the new building footprint.

The re-stripped area was 57m long, 33m wide and c.0.3m deep. The water-tank pit measured 5m long, 3m wide and 2m deep; the associated pipe trench was 14m long, 0.8m wide and 2m deep. The trench to expose services was 25m long, 0.6m wide and 0.5m deep.

Area E contained a c.0.3m layer of demolition rubble that was removed to expose the chalk bedrock. No archaeological features or deposits were present within the building footprint or the other elements of ground reduction.



#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

#### 4.1 Summary of Results

The archaeological remains in Area A mirrored those found in the four earlier trial trenches, confirming the presence of a c.13m-wide, Roman trackway that ran for a distance of at least 170m.

A smaller ditch identified to the north-west of the trackway may either define a separate 'branch' of the trackway or represent the boundary ditch of an enclosure that respected the trackway.

The additional trial trench, Trench 5, revealed no archaeological features or deposits, as did the monitoring of the groundworks in Areas C, D and E. The absence of a surviving topsoil or subsoil within Area E indicates that it was reduced to the chalk bedrock and levelled during construction work in the 1960s. This would have destroyed any shallow archaeological features, although the lower part of any larger features would probably have survived.

## 4.2 Significance of Results

The absence of archaeological features to the south-east of Area A suggests that the Roman trackway is located beyond the limit of the contemporary settlement remains revealed on the former Queensway Hall,  $c.150 \mathrm{m}$  to the south-west. However, the possible enclosure boundary ditch identified in Area A suggests that additional features may survive to the north-west of the site.

The revealed remains are of relatively low significance, but they do add further to our understanding of the immediate environs of the Roman town of Durocobrivis.



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#### 6. **APPENDIX 1: TRENCH 5 AND AREA A CONTEXT SUMMARY**



Trench: 5

Max Dimensions: Length: 30.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.7 m. Max: 1.15 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 1989: Northing: 22378)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 2008: Northing: 22355)

Reason: Assess archaeological potential

<b>Context:</b>	Type:	<b>Description:</b>	<b>Excavated:</b>	<b>Finds Present:</b>
500	Topsoil	Friable mid brown grey clay silt Thickness: 0.4m. Contains occasional modern brick fragments. Current soil landscaping layer on either side of th paved building entrance path.	<b>✓</b>	
501	Make up layer	Friable mid brown grey clay silt Thickness: 0.3m Contains moderate modern brick fragments. A levelling layer.	<b>✓</b>	
502	Buried topsoil	Friable dark brown grey clay silt Thickness: 0.3m	✓	
503	Natural	Compact light white chalk		
504	Make up layer	Loose yellow sand frequent medium CBM Thickness: 0.45m. Contains frequent large brick fragments. A levelling layer of hardcore beneath modern paving.	✓	
505	Turf line	Friable dark grey clay silt Thickness: 0.1m. A layer of buried former modern turf, predating very recent raised landscaping.	<b>✓</b>	
506	Buried subsoil	Friable mid brown grey clay silt occasional small chalk, moderate small-medium stones Thickness: 0.25m	<b>✓</b>	
507	External surface	Thickness: 0.1m. A layer of former paving buried beneath recent raised landscaping / levelling layer (504).	<b>✓</b>	



Area: A
Extent (ha): 0.25

OS Co-ordinates: TL0197022420

Description: New car park area to the north-west of the site

<b>Context:</b>	Type:	Description: Excav	ated:	Finds Present:
600	General number	Linear NE-SW dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min length 120.m. General numb for cut of north-west ditch of a pair of parallel, trackside ditches, c.13m apart on NE-SW alignment.		
601	General number	Friable mid brown silt occasional medium chalk, occasional small-medium stones. General number for fill of ditch		
602	General number	Linear NE-SW dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min length 120.m. General numb for cut of south-east ditch of a pair of parallel, trackside ditches, c.13m apart on NE-SW alignment.		
603	General number	Friable mid grey brown silt occasional small-medium stones. General number for fill of ditch		
604	General number	Curving linear dimensions: min breadth 1.1m, min length 30.m. General number for cut of ditch located to north-west of trackside ditches. On a NE-SW alignment turning to west at its SW end.		
605	General number	Friable mid grey brown silt occasional flecks chalk. General number for fill of ditch		
606	Ditch	Linear NE-SW sides: convex base: flat dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min depth 0.58m	· 🗸	
607	Primary fill	Friable dark grey sandy silt frequent small chalk, frequent small-large stones	<b>✓</b>	
608	Secondary fill	Friable dark brown grey sandy silt frequent small chalk, moderate small-large stones	<b>✓</b>	
609	Fill	Friable mid grey brown silt occasional flecks chalk, occasional small-medium stones	<b>✓</b>	
610	Fill	Friable dark grey brown silt occasional flecks charcoal, occasional small-large stones	<b>✓</b>	
611	Pit	Circular dimensions: min diameter 0.6m. Cut of a modern pit. Not excavated.		
612	Fill	Friable dark grey brown silt occasional small-medium stones. Occasional fragments post-medieval $/$ modern brick and roof tile.	of [	
613	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown clay silt occasional small-medium stones. 0.32m thick.	<b>V</b>	
614	Make up layer	Compact mid brown grey clay silt frequent medium chalk. Frequent large modern brick fragments. 0.50m thick.	<b>✓</b>	
615	Subsoil	Friable mid brown clay silt occasional flecks chalk. 0.17m thick.	<b>✓</b>	
616	Natural	Hard white chalk		



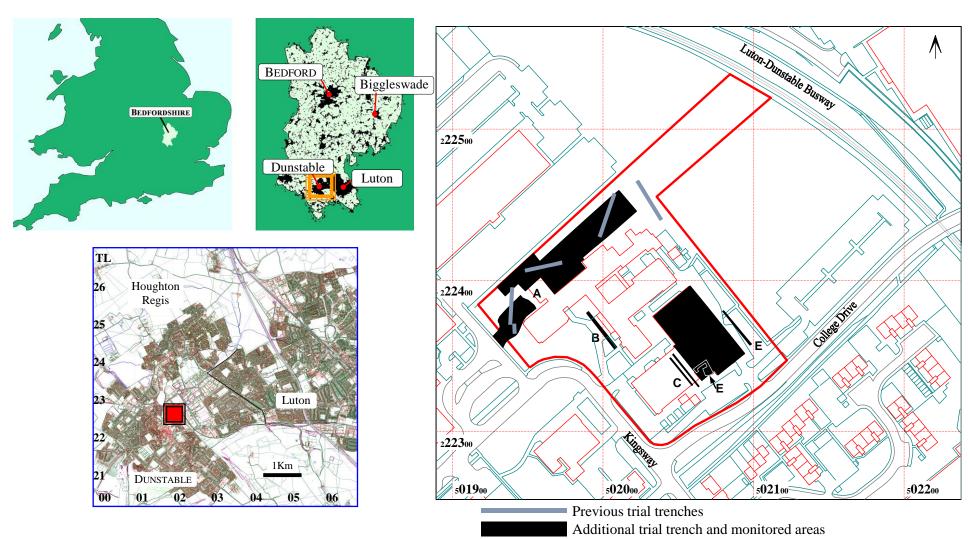
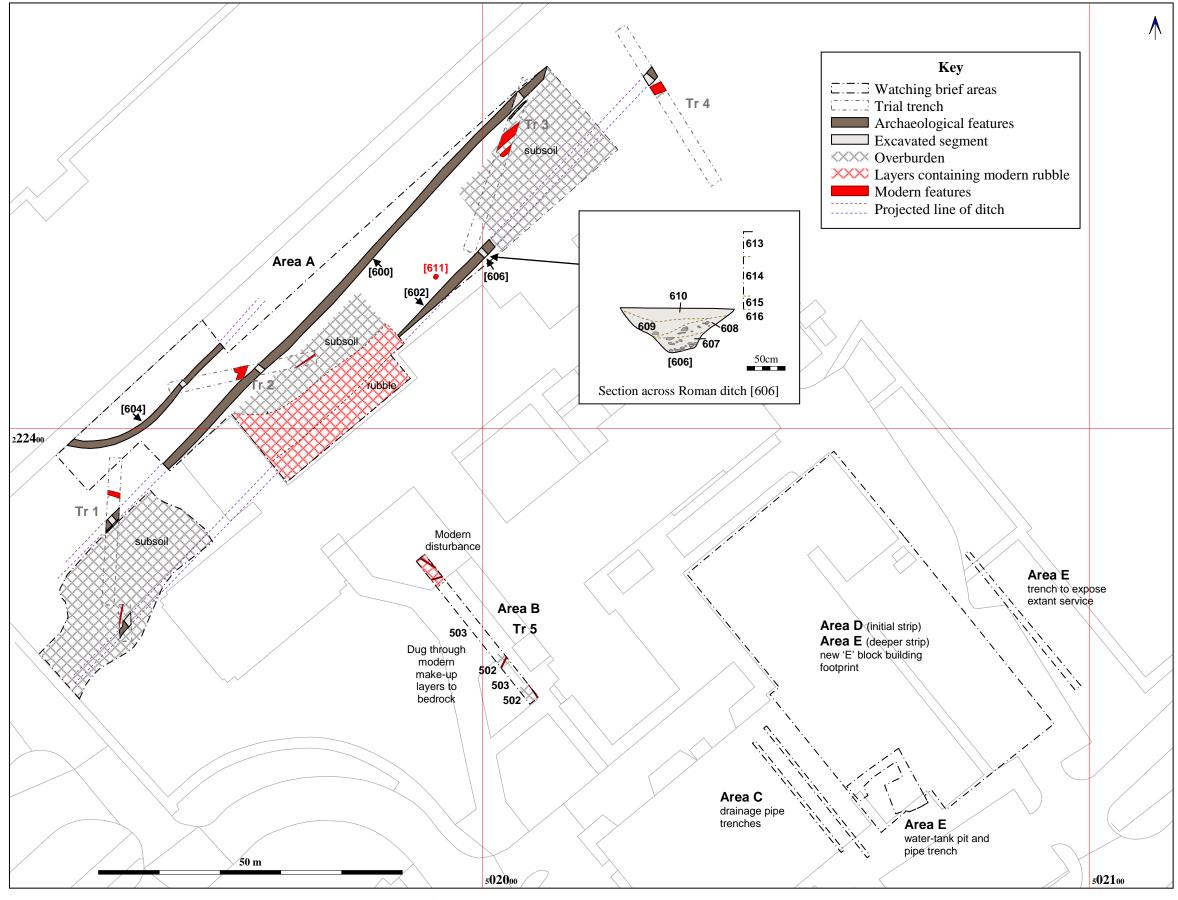


Figure 1: Site and trench location plan

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**Figure 2:** All-features plan and section

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Roman ditch [600], looking NE (scale 1m)



Roman ditch [606], looking NE (scale 1m)



Roman ditch [602] and modern pit [611], looking north (scale 1m)



Roman ditch [604], looking NE

Figure 3: Area A photographs





Area B: Trench 5, looking NW (scale 1m)



Area B: Trench 5, looking SE (scale 1m)



Area C: pipe trench, looking south



Area D: shallow stripped area, looking north



Area E: water-tank trench, looking SE



Area E: service trench, looking north

**Figure 4:** Areas B–E photographs



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