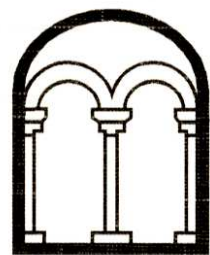


**ROBERT BLOOMFIELD ACADEMY
SHEFFORD
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



**ROBERT BLOOMFIELD ACADEMY
SHEFFORD
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

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Mark Phillips	Drew Shotliff

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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 Morgan Sindall plc on behalf of Robert Bloomfield Academy and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake (Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist).

The fieldwork was undertaken by Mark Phillips (Project Officer), who also prepared this report. 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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Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

DA	Development Area
HER	Historic Environment Record
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission (CB/14/02363/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the demolition of temporary classrooms and the construction of a new two-storey classroom block at Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The development lies in an archaeologically sensitive area close to a focus of Roman settlement (HER 379). A condition requiring a programme of archaeological investigation was attached to the planning permission. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Morgan Sindall plc, on behalf of Robert Bloomfield Academy, to carry out the archaeological works.

Archaeological monitoring of construction works with the potential to impact on archaeological remains was carried out between 29th October and 4th November 2014. The groundworks consisted of a trench measuring 58m by 11m for the new classroom block and additional linear trenches to divert services.

The soil profile (from the top) consisted of: made-ground associated with modern building works; topsoil; subsoil across the west and northern part of the area; and undisturbed clay geology. No archaeological features were identified and no pre-modern artefacts were found during monitoring of the ground reduction or from scanning spoil. The absence of subsoil in the south and east of the trench suggests that the area has been subject to ground reduction, probably during levelling of the playground and playing field.

The results from this investigation, reinforced by the results of previous trial trench evaluations on this side of the school complex suggest that the Roman settlement focus was located to the north of the development area.

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2014.57). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-190309).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

Morgan Sindall plc, on behalf of Robert Bloomfield Academy, was granted planning permission (CB/14/02363/FULL) for the demolition of three temporary classrooms and the construction of a new two-storey classroom block at Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford, Bedfordshire (Figure 1).

A heritage assessment (Albion Archaeology 2014a) prepared in support of the planning application identified heritage assets in the vicinity of the development area (DA). The archaeological background data indicates the presence of high-status Roman settlement (including an aisled building, possible temple and cemetery) a short distance to the north-west of the DA.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA) advised that the development was located within a heritage asset with archaeological interest. Accordingly a condition was attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation as a consequence of the development. This is in line with national planning guidelines in the form of Policy 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local Policy 45 of the Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (revised pre-submission version, June 2014). The CBCA issued a brief outlining their requirement for a programme of archaeological works (CBC 2014).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Morgan Sindall plc, on behalf of Robert Bloomfield Academy, to carry out the archaeological works in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Albion 2014b) prepared in response to the CBCA's brief. The WSI detailed the methodology for archaeological observation, investigation and recording of any archaeological remains and a programme of post-fieldwork analysis, reporting and archiving.

This report presents the results of the archaeological observations.

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

The small town of Shefford lies in the eastern part of Central Bedfordshire on the A600 from Bedford to Hitchin. The rivers Flit and Hit pass through the town from the west and south, converging to become part of the River Ivel in the east.

The Robert Bloomfield Academy is located in the western part of the town between modern housing estates to the south of the Ampthill Road and arable fields to the north of the A505. The DA lies in the southern part of the school grounds, in between the current sports field and a block of classrooms built in the last few years.

The DA is centred on grid reference TL 1386 3867 and lies on fairly level ground at c. 45m OD. The underlying geology is Gault Mudstone overlain by the Lowestoft Formation of sands and gravels (Contains British Geological Survey materials ©NERC [2014])



1.3 Archaeological Background

The Robert Bloomfield Academy is located within an area of known archaeological remains related to late Iron Age to Roman occupation (HER 379) (Figures 2 and 3). The development that forms the subject of this report is located to the south-east of the main focus of Roman settlement.

Amphill Road, to the north, is on the same ENE-WSW alignment as a suggested Roman road (HER5342) running from Flitwick to Shefford. Another suggested Roman road (HER717) from Shefford to Bedford meets it at a T-junction to the north of the DA.

Both the academy and adjacent Shefford Lower School sites have been subject to archaeological investigation since the late 19th century and in particular over the last few years during previous construction work within the school grounds.

Archaeological remains of Roman occupation were first identified by local antiquarian Thomas Inskip in the 1820s, during gravel extraction south of Amphill Road (Luke, Preece and Wells 2010, 270-274 and HER 379). Here, he identified what he believed to be a walled Roman cemetery (Inskip 1850). The cemetery included cremation burials, grave goods including complete pottery vessels, such as Samian ware and amphora, as well as glass and bronze vessels with coins and other metal objects. In the 1830s Inskip examined an area south-east of the cemetery (Dryden 1845) and discovered a possible rectangular Roman building, interpreted at the time as a temple.

During levelling of the school field in 1940, the remains of a Roman building were identified by Edgar Gray (recorded in the Victoria County History). Simco believed this building was the same as that previously claimed by Inskip as a temple (Simco 1984). Artefacts and material of Roman date continued to be recovered during the construction of a school extension in 1976.

In the last twenty years a range of archaeological investigations have been undertaken by Albion Archaeology within the area of the Roman settlement, including field evaluations, watching briefs and open area excavations (Albion project numbers 244, 365, 412, 445, 583, 665, 694, 773 and 893). The results of these investigations are summarised by Luke, Preece and Wells (2010), who also summarise and reinterpret the results of earlier investigations in the light of the recent work.

The earliest firm evidence for settlement was in the form of a substantial ditch, which possibly originated in the late Iron Age but continued in use throughout the Roman period (Luke et al. 2010, 323 and fig. 18). A post-built building, pits and gullies dated to the Roman period were also located within the settlement enclosure during an investigation carried out in 2004 (Luke et al. 2010, fig. 6).

A second enclosure was located to the west of a possible routeway and this contained a large number of quarry pits and a dog burial (Luke et al. 2010, fig. 6). The investigations recovered a substantial quantity of Roman pottery, ceramic building material, along with mortar and painted plaster indicating the presence of a high status building



More recent archaeological investigations have produced further evidence of archaeological remains within the Lower School site (Flavell 2010, Jones 2012 and Albion Archaeology 2014). A large expanse of Roman quarry pitting, boundary ditches and traces of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation were identified within two playground areas. Whilst investigation of a tank area and drainage trenches identified an extensive Roman boundary, which is likely to have defined the western limit of the settlement's domestic focus (Luke et al. 2010).

The results of the archaeological interventions suggest that the main concentration of Roman remains, including an aisled building and cobbled surface (EDB394), are situated to the north and north-west of the DA. However, a ditch dated to the Roman period was found to the north containing domestic debris suggestive of domestic occupation (Albion Archaeology 2007); another ditch was found to the north-west (Walker 2007). No remains dated to this period were identified during evaluation on land to the west of the school (Project CR2336).

Robert Bloomfield Academy is also on the western edge of the historic town of Shefford. The archaeological background of the town is summarised in the Extensive Urban Survey Assessment for Shefford (Bedfordshire County Council 2003).

Other archaeological remains comprise traces of medieval ridge and furrow (HER 19881) cultivation and post-medieval pits (HER 19882), identified during evaluation to the west of the school (Project CR2336). A likely continuation of the ridge and furrow was also identified during recent investigations on the west side of the school (SLS2012).

1.4 Project Objectives

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine: the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the development area; the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes; and to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

A number of specific research objectives were also defined in the WSI. These were focused on the potential for Iron Age and Roman remains and were derived from the local and regional research agendas (Glazebrook 1997), (Brown and Glazebrook 2000), (Oake *et al* 2007) and (Medlycott 2011).

No Iron Age or Roman remains were identified during the archaeological monitoring of the development. The full results of the investigation are presented below.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology for the archaeological works is set out in full in the WSI (Albion 2014). Archaeological monitoring of the groundworks took place between 29th October and 4th November 2014.



The trench for the piling mat measured 48m north-south, 11m east-west and was 0.56–1.1m deep. It reached the level of undisturbed geological clay across its full extent.



2. RESULTS

The results of the fieldwork are summarised below and are illustrated in Figure 4.

2.1 *Geological Deposit*

The undisturbed geology consisted of light greenish-grey or yellowish clay (4). It was exposed across the whole of the piling mat trench with an upper surface at a depth of between 44.67–44.54m OD.

2.2 *Subsoil*

A layer of subsoil (3) extended across the majority of the piling mat trench and was seen in the base of the re-routed service trenches to the north-west of the main trench. It was mid yellowish-brown silty clay with occasional small stones.

Subsoil was absent at the eastern side of the main trench. Along the western side it varied from 200mm thick at the north (Figure 4, Section D) to a maximum of 400mm thick in the middle (Figure 4, Section C), gradually thinning to the south where it ran out approximately 15m from the south end of the main trench.

The subsoil is likely to be a former ploughing/cultivation layer. The absence of the deposit in the east and south of the development area suggests that the playing field and playground area may have been subject to ground reduction or levelling in the modern period.

2.3 *Topsoil*

A layer of topsoil (2) was found across the area. It consisted of dark grey-brown clay silt with occasional small-medium stones, occasional flecks of charcoal, small fragments of brick and tile and transfer-printed pottery (not collected). It occurred at the surface in the northern part of the development area (Figure 4, Section D) where it was up to 340mm thick. In section along the western side of the trench, it was covered by recent made ground (Figure 4, Sections A and C) and at the eastern side it was overlain by make-up for the playground (Figure 4, Section B).

2.4 *Modern Made Ground*

Layers of recent made ground (1) were found along the eastern side of the trench and in the southern half of the western side of the trench. The material at the east was associated with the construction of the playground (Figure 4, Section B). The material at the west is associated with the recently constructed gymnasium on this side of the trench (Figure 4, Sections A, C and Photo 2). The material along the western side included re-deposited natural clay as well as modern debris associated with construction works.

2.5 *Modern Intrusions*

Modern intrusions included a water pipe running to an access pit at the south of the trench and another service trench running across the width of the trench.

A tile drain of relatively recent construction was aligned north-south along the middle of the trench. It contained a wide, circular section clay pipe in a clean



gravel fill. Remains of some earlier tile drains were found in the mid part of the trench.

At the north, a NE-SW aligned, flat-based, linear feature crossed the north-west corner of the trench; it appeared to be modern in date. Its fill consisted of material identical to the subsoil layer (3) and it contained occasional small fragments of post-medieval/modern brick or tile.

Two modern service trenches across the north-west part of the trench were dug out and the services re-routed around the edge of the new building.



3. CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological features were identified during the archaeological observation. Features cut into the subsoil and geological deposits consisted of tile drains (land-drains) and modern service trenches. Close monitoring of the groundworks and scanning of the spoil failed to identify any pre-modern artefacts.

The level of archaeological visibility was good with machining carried out with a toothless bucket down to the undisturbed geological deposit. Some discrete areas of disturbance were present due to the removal of deep tree roots but they were not extensive enough to mask the presence of any significant archaeological remains. Other areas of disturbance caused by intrusive features were limited to modern service trenches. In the eastern and southern part of the development area the lack of subsoil suggests that these parts of the site may have been truncated in the past, probably for the levelling of the playground and playing field.

The results from this investigation, reinforced by the results of previous trial trench evaluations on this side of the school, suggest that the Roman settlement focus was located to the north of the development area.

The project archive will be deposited with Bedford Museum (accession no. BEDFM 2014.57). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (OASIS ID no. albionar1-190309).



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5. APPENDIX 1: OASIS SUMMARY

OASIS ID: albionar1-190309

Project details

Project name	Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford, Bedfordshire
Short description of the project	Planning permission was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the demolition of temporary classrooms and the construction of a new two-storey classroom block at Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford, Bedfordshire. The development lies in an archaeologically sensitive area close to a focus of Roman settlement (HER 379). A condition requiring a programme of archaeological investigation was attached to the planning permission. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Morgan Sindall plc, on behalf of Robert Bloomfield Academy, to carry out the archaeological works. The work included a Heritage Assessment. Archaeological monitoring of construction works with the potential to impact on archaeological remains was carried out. The groundworks consisted of a trench measuring 58m by 11m for the new classroom block and additional linear trenches to divert services. The soil profile consisted of: made-ground associated with modern building works; topsoil; subsoil across the west and northern part of the area; and undisturbed clay geology. No archaeological features were identified and no pre-modern artefacts were found during monitoring of the ground reduction or from scanning spoil. The absence of subsoil in the south and east of the trench suggests that the area has been subject to ground reduction, probably during levelling of the playground and playing field. The results from this investigation, reinforced by the results of previous trial trench evaluations on this side of the school complex suggest that the Roman settlement focus was located to the north of the development area.
Project dates	Start: 29-10-2014 End: 04-11-2014
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	RB2348 - Contracting Unit No. BEDFM 2014.57 - Museum accession ID CB/14/02363/FULL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	BEDFORDSHIRE MID BEDFORDSHIRE SHEFFORD Robert Bloomfield Academy
Study area	528.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 1386 3867



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	Mark Phillips
Project supervisor	Mark Phillips

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Albion Archaeology
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Database", "GIS", "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Bedford Museum
Paper Archive ID	BEDFM 2014.57
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Drawing", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Report"

Project bibliography

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford, Bedfordshire: Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Phillips, M'
Other bibliographic details	2014/194
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Project bibliography

2

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Robert Bloomfield Academy, Shefford, Bedfordshire: Heritage Assessment
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Meckseper, C'
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Starke, W'
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Entered on	27 November 2014



6. FIGURES

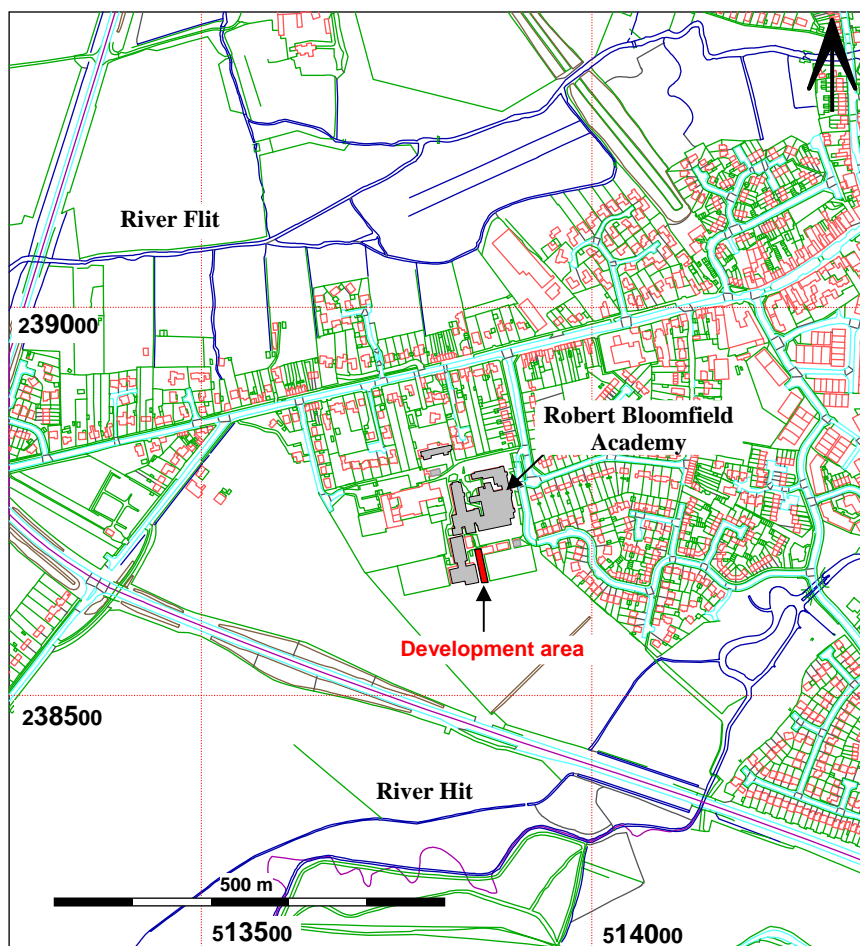
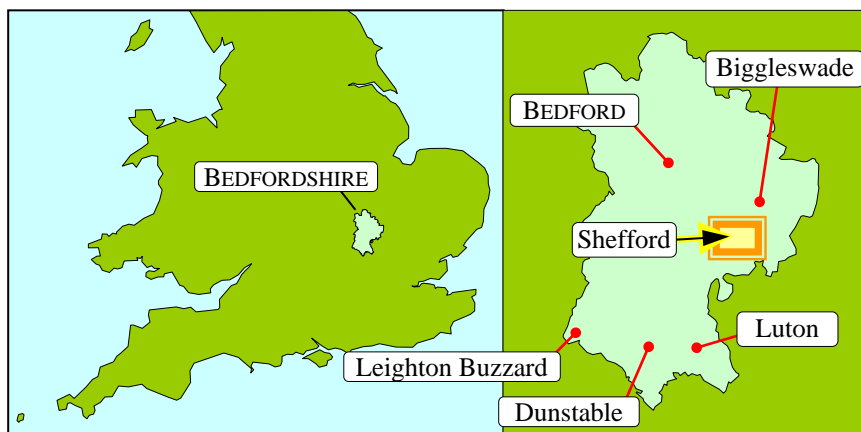
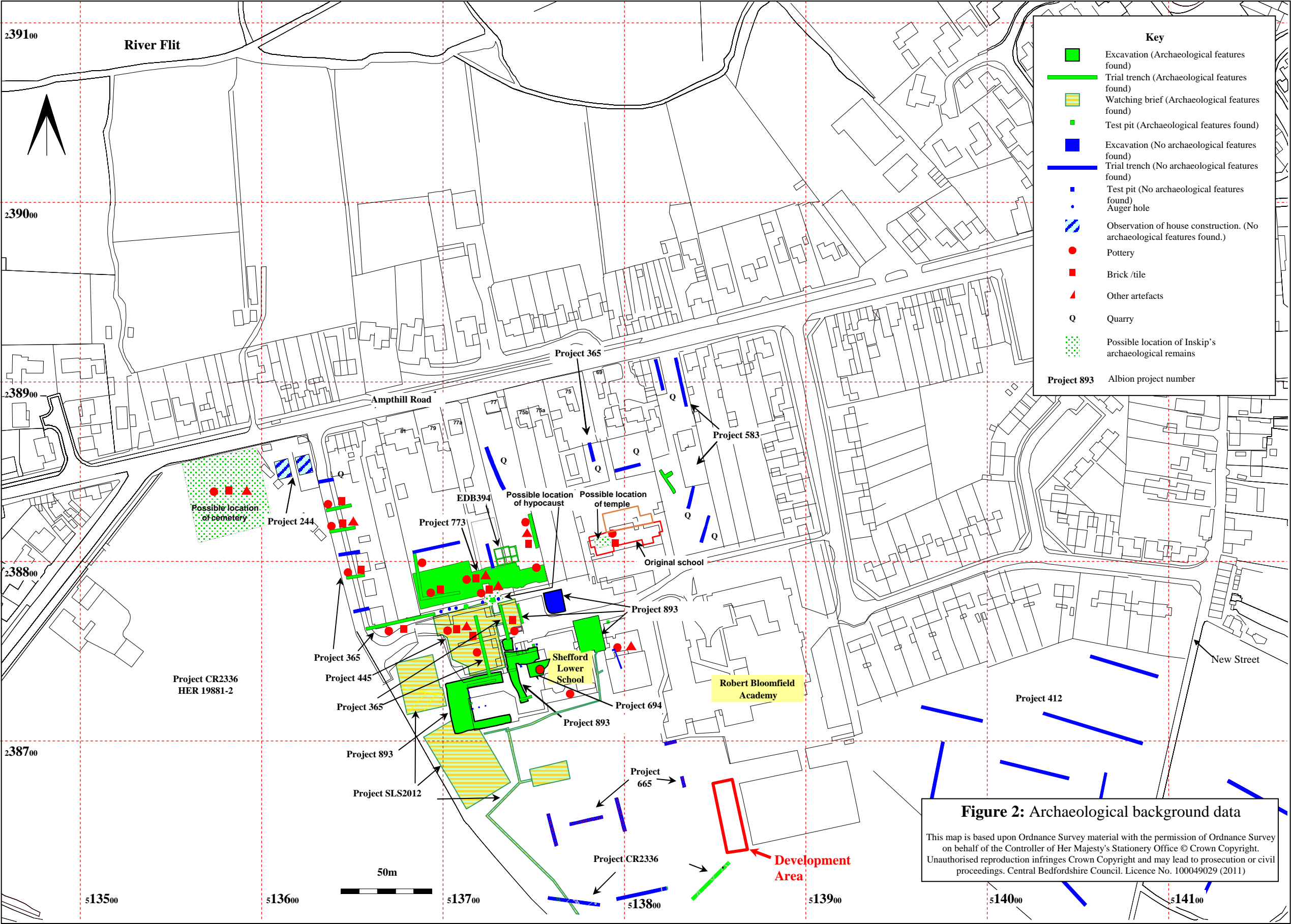


Figure 1: Site location

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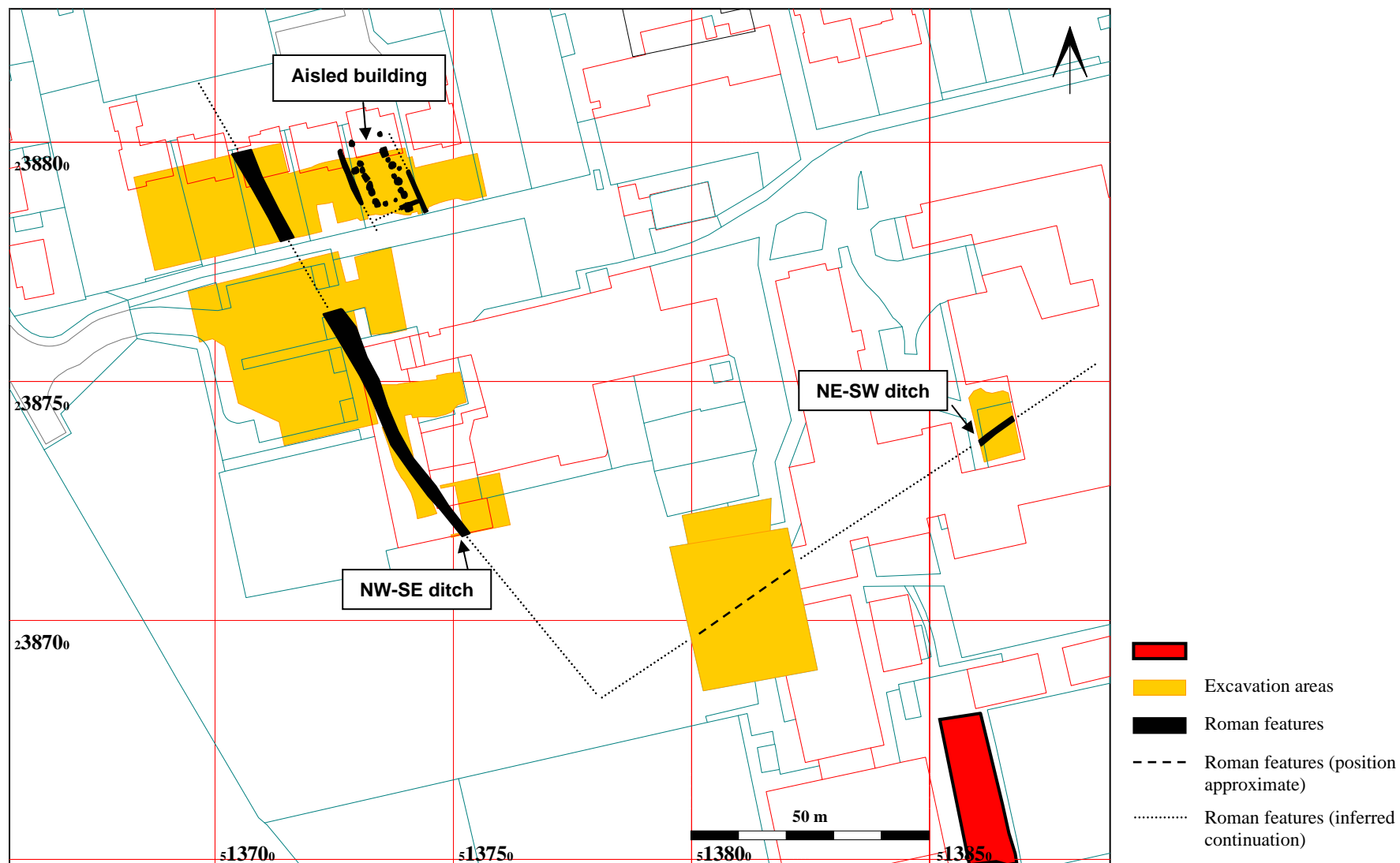


Figure 3: Selected Roman features close to the development area

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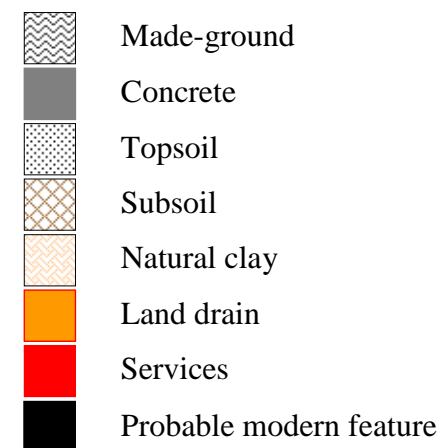
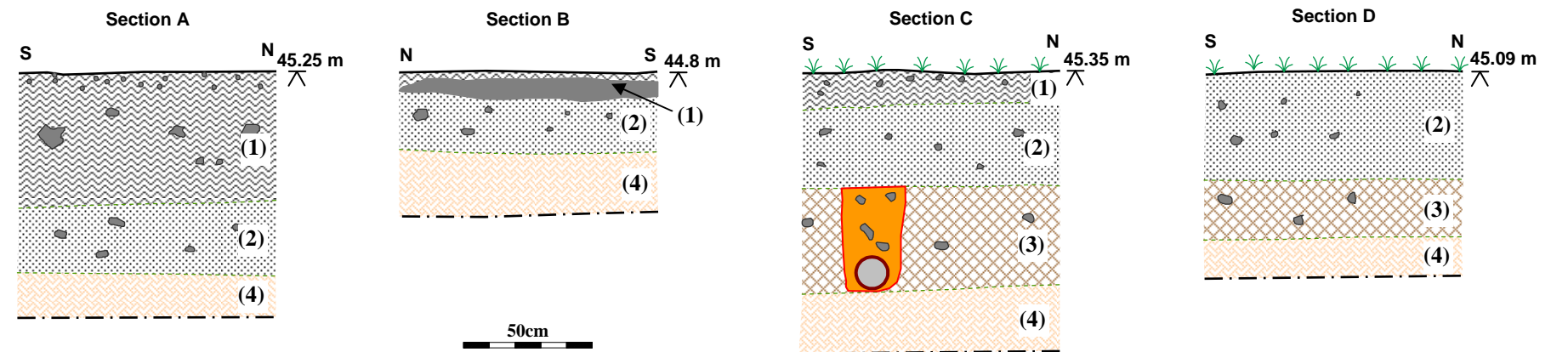
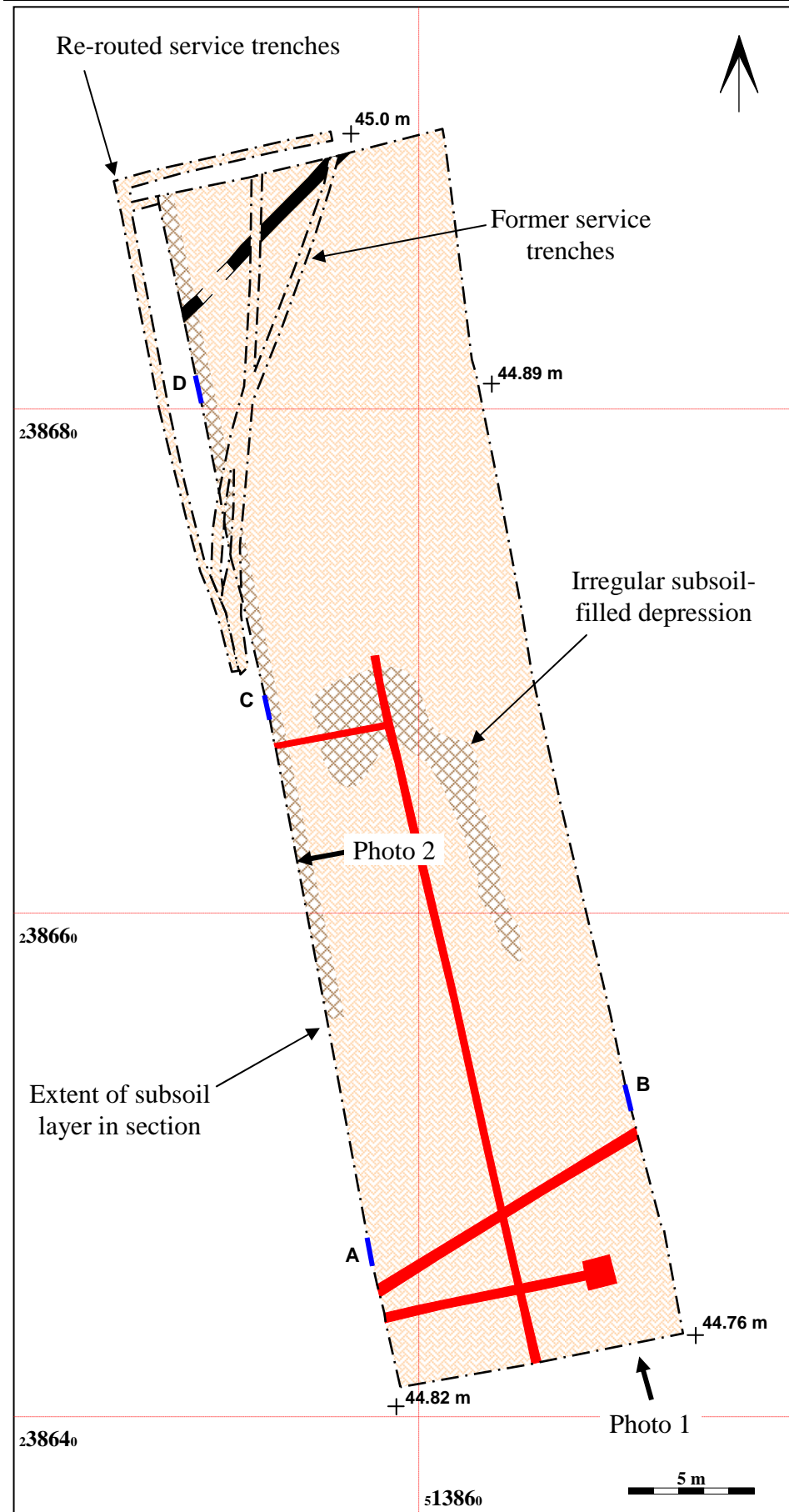


Photo 2: Section at west side of trench



Photo 1: General view from south end of trench

Figure 4: All features plan

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