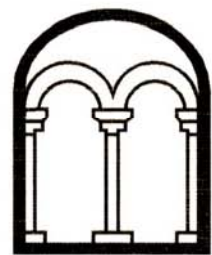


**LARKSWOOD LTD
BEDFORD ROAD
ASPLEY GUISE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

Albion
archaeology



**LARKSWOOD LTD
BEDFORD ROAD
ASPLEY GUISE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

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Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Kathy Pilkinton	Robert Wardill	Drew Shotliff

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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

Acknowledgements

The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kathy Pilkinton (Archaeological Supervisor), Alan King (Assistant Archaeological Supervisor) and Matthew Billings (Archaeological Technician). This report has been prepared by Kathy Pilkinton with contributions from Jackie Wells (Finds Officer). The figures have been produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Key terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

BLARS	Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Service
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
PDA	Proposed development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning consent was granted (CB/15/01111/FUL) by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of ten dwellings, with associated garages, parking and landscaping, at the former Larkwood Ltd factory site, Bedford Road, Aspley Guise, Milton Keynes, MK17 8DG.

The proposed development area (PDA) lies within the Aspley Guise Conservation Area, which encompasses the medieval village core. A number of medieval and post-medieval heritage assets are known in the area, including Grade II listed buildings adjacent to the northern end of the PDA. Accordingly, a condition (no. 11) was attached to the planning consent to secure a staged programme of archaeological investigation as a consequence of the development.

The trial trenching took place between 14th and 16th December 2015. It comprised the excavation of four trenches. Trench 4 was 30m long; Trenches 1 and 2 were 15m long; and Trench 3 was shortened to 10m to avoid the track crossing the site.

The trial trenching revealed post-medieval/modern rubbish pits in Trenches 2 and 3 and undated postholes in Trench 1. No features of archaeological significance were present in Trench 4 but a substantial depth of modern overburden was recorded.

The pits and postholes revealed within Trenches 1–3 predate the recently demolished buildings and are most likely to be backyard remains associated with former buildings and the present-day properties fronting Bedford Road.

Although the PDA lies within the core of medieval Aspley Guise, it is likely that the standing buildings along Bedford Road overlie any more substantial remains of earlier occupation. Buildings in this area are first recorded on the 1st edition 25-inch OS map of 1883.

The depth of overburden and levelling layers identified in Trench 4 in the south-east corner of the PDA are indicative of the infilled natural sloping landscape, still evident in the adjacent field. The thicker subsoil in this area is probably a colluvial deposit formed at the base of the shallow valley.

The archaeological remains revealed by the evaluation are of no more than low/local significance. They have no potential to address the research aims outlined in Section 1.4 or other research priorities identified by the regional research frameworks.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project Background**

Planning consent was granted (CB/15/01111/FUL) by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of ten dwellings, with associated garages, parking and landscaping at the former Larkwood Ltd factory site, Bedford Road, Aspley Guise, Milton Keynes, MK17 8DG. As part of the development the majority of the existing buildings within the proposed development area (PDA) were demolished; a former office building on the Bedford Road frontage was retained for refurbishment (Figure 1).

A heritage statement (Albion Archaeology 2015a) was prepared to support the planning application. This concluded that there was a possibility that currently unknown archaeological remains might be affected by the development. A check with the CBC Historic Environment Record (HER) (search reference no. 201516/154) confirmed that no additional heritage assets had been identified since the heritage statement was prepared.

The PDA lies within the Aspley Guise Conservation Area (DBD3243), which encompasses the medieval village core (HER 16891). A number of medieval and post-medieval heritage assets are known in the area, including Grade II listed buildings (HER 3696, 3675) adjacent to the northern end of the PDA.

Accordingly, a condition (no. 11) was attached to the planning consent to secure a staged programme of archaeological investigation as a consequence of the development. This approach is in accordance with Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework and policy 45 of the *Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire*.

1.2 **Site Location and Description**

The PDA is centred on grid reference SP 94320 35890 in the village of Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire (Figure 1). Aspley Guise is in the west of the county close to the border with Buckinghamshire, 19.5km south-west of Bedford and 3.5km north of Woburn.

The PDA lies on land between Bedford Road to the north and Spinney Lane with entrances on both. To the north, west and south the site is bordered by residential and commercial properties. The area to the east of the PDA is open parkland with mature trees.

Aspley Guise is located on the Greensand Ridge escarpment. The PDA lies at a height of c. 100m OD. It is approximately level for the most part, but falls away to the north down to the Bedford Road entrance. The underlying bedrock is Woburn Sands formation, which covers the southern half of the parish, giving way to Oxford Clay on the north edge of the village. No superficial deposits are recorded for this location.

1.3 **Archaeological Background**

The proposed development lies within the Aspley Guise Conservation Area (DBD3243), which encompasses the historic medieval village core (HER 16891)



as well as areas of open land which includes parkland bordering the east side of the PDA. The conservation area description notes the enclosed character of the village, with buildings on the street frontage and lanes with high-hedged boundaries.

Aspley is first recorded in a charter of 969 where it appears as *Aepslea*. The charter records a grant of 15 hides of land by King Edgar to his thegn Alfwold (Page 1912). The name *Aepslea* refers to an 'Aspen tree clearing' (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 113). At the time of the charter Aspley Heath, Woburn Sands and Hulcote and Salford formed part of a single landholding.

It has been suggested that Aspley originated as a nucleated settlement around the triangular space at the centre of the village (Brown 1979, 15). Much of the existing road layout may have also have been established by the late Saxon period (ibid. 8).

At Domesday in 1086, Aspley (*Aspeleia*) was assessed at 10 hides, held by Acard de Ivri of Hugh de Beachamp. By this time Hulcote was a separate holding, accounting for the remaining land described in the charter of 969.

Documentary evidence records a single manor of Aspley in the medieval period. The manor was inherited by John Guise in 1501 who exchanged it with the Crown. In 1541 it was annexed to the honour of Ampthill (Page 1912).

The settlement and roads that appear to have been established in the late Saxon period remained into the medieval period with the addition of a manorial site (HER 10112) and the church of St Botolph (HER 1007), both located to the north of the village centre (Brown 1979, 15).

The northern part of the PDA falls within the inferred extent of the medieval settlement of Aspley (HER16891). This is indicated as a linear settlement extending along Church Street and West Hill, centred on The Square.

The village contains numerous post-medieval buildings ranging in date from the 16th to 19th centuries. Immediately to the north of the PDA the present-day Bedford Road was a focus of settlement until the middle of the 18th century. The pre-enclosure map of c. 1745 shows houses on the south side of the road extending east as far as the Mount Pleasant area. Only a few of these remained at the west end of the road when the parish was enclosed in 1761 (Albion 2015a).

No heritage assets dating to the prehistoric or Roman periods have been recorded within the vicinity of the PDA. Some evidence for settlement in the Roman period has been found in the wider area, including Roman pottery found in 1958 during building works at Aspley Hill and significant evidence of Roman settlement and industrial-scale pottery production (HER 18268) near Woburn. Evidence for Roman roads in the Aspley Guise area (identified by the *Viatores*) is untested.



1.4 Project Objectives

The principal purpose of the evaluation was to gather information on possible sub-surface archaeological heritage assets within the PDA.

The PDA's location close to the centre of medieval Aspley Guise suggested potential for the archaeological investigation to contribute to research topics identified within the regional research frameworks — *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011); and specifically for Bedfordshire: *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake et al. 2007).

The investigation of rural Saxon and medieval settlements to examine diversity, characterise settlement forms and understand how they appear, grow, shift and disappear is a local and regional archaeological research objective (Wade 2000; Oake et al. 2007, 14; and Medlycott 2011, 70).

The archaeological trial trenching endeavoured to determine:

- the date, nature, and extent of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
- the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- the potential of any palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2015b).

2.1 Methodological Standards

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

Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd edition (2001)
EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2009)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> , 2nd edition (2011)
CifA	<i>Charter and By-law; Code of Conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
Bedford Museum	<i>Preparing Archaeological Archives for Deposition in Registered Museums in Bedfordshire</i> (2010)

The project archive will be deposited at Bedford Museum (Accession Number BEDFM 2015:68). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-222872) in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.

2.2 Trial Trenching

The trial trenching took place between 14th and 16th December 2015. It comprised the excavation of four trenches; Trench 4 was 30m long; Trenches 1 and 2 were 15m long; and Trench 3 was shortened to 10m to avoid the track crossing the site. The trenches were positioned to achieve an even coverage of the footprint of the proposed new buildings.

The trenches were opened by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under close archaeological supervision. All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff with external specialists consulted as necessary. Any potential archaeological features were investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's pro forma sheets. The trenches were subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All deposits revealed within the trial trenches are summarised below and shown on Figures 2 and 3. Context numbers in square brackets refer to the cuts [***] and round brackets to fills or layers (***). Detailed information is provided within Appendix 1.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

Buried topsoil comprising dark grey sandy silt was overlain in Trenches 1–3 by up to 0.3m of demolition rubble, associated with the former factory buildings. Only a thin layer of topsoil (c. 0.1m) survived in Trenches 1 and 3; it may be an interface with the overlying rubble rather than a true topsoil. Trenches 2 and 4 were less disturbed by the former buildings and revealed up to 0.3m of buried topsoil.

Buried subsoil comprising mid grey-brown silty sand was c. 0.2m thick in Trenches 1 and 3 and 0.4m thick in Trenches 2 and 4. Its thickness increased to 0.66m at the south-east end of Trench 4.

The underlying geological deposits comprised brown-orange silty sand with medium ironstone fragments.

Trench 4 revealed a series of brick and rubble levelling layers in the south-east end where the natural ground level dropped (Figure 3, Section 1).

3.3 Post-medieval/Modern Features

3.3.1 Posthole

A single posthole [304] in Trench 3 contained fragments of tile, charcoal and coal suggesting it is likely to be modern in origin.

3.3.2 Rubbish pits

Two post-medieval/modern pits were revealed. Pit [204] in Trench 2 was c. 0.7m deep, largely cut into the subsoil; it contained broken tarmac fragments. Pit [306] in Trench 3 was 0.9m deep and contained dark grey sandy silt with charcoal flecks. Post-medieval brick and tile fragments were observed on excavation.

3.4 Undated Features

Trench 1 revealed the remains of three possible postholes, measuring up to 0.15m deep and 0.4m wide. They produced no dating evidence but could potentially represent the remains of a fence or garden feature.

3.5 Discussion and Significance

The trial trenching revealed post-medieval/modern rubbish pits in Trenches 2 and 3 and undated postholes in Trench 1. No features of archaeological significance were found in Trench 4 but a substantial depth of modern overburden was recorded.



The pits and postholes revealed within Trenches 1–3 predate the recently demolished buildings and are most likely to be backyard remains associated with former buildings and the present-day properties fronting Bedford Road.

Although the PDA lies within the core of the medieval settlement, it is likely that the standing buildings along Bedford Road overlie any more substantial remains of earlier occupation. Buildings in this area are the first recorded on the 1st edition 25-inch OS map of 1883.

The depth of overburden and levelling layers identified in Trench 4 in the south-east corner of the PDA are indicative of the infilled natural sloping landscape, still evident in the adjacent field. The thicker subsoil in this area is probably a colluvial deposit formed at the base of the shallow valley.

The archaeological remains revealed by the evaluation are of no more than low/local significance. They have no potential to address the research aims outlined in Section 1.4 or other research priorities identified by the regional research frameworks.



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5. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARY

Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 14.50 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.53 m. Max: 0.63 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94275: Northing: 35921)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94285: Northing: 35909)

Reason: Test area of proposed building footprint

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Demolition layer	Loose mid brown grey sandy rubble frequent small-large CBM Thickness: 0.28m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Buried topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt Thickness: 0.05m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Buried subsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty sand Thickness: 0.23m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Natural	Loose mid yellow orange sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Posthole	Sub-circular sides: steep base: concave dimensions: max depth 0.13m, max diameter 0.12m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
105	Fill	Friable mid grey brown sandy silt occasional small-medium stones Thickness: 0.12m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Posthole	Sub-circular sides: near vertical base: concave dimensions: max depth 0.13m, max diameter 0.33m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Fill	Friable mid grey brown sandy silt occasional small-medium stones Thickness: 0.13m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
108	Posthole	Circular sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max depth 0.15m, max diameter 0.42m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Fill	Friable mid grey brown sandy silt occasional small-medium stones Thickness: 0.15m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 15.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.65 m. Max: 0.75 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94316: Northing: 35906)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94323: Northing: 35893)

Reason: Test area of proposed building footprint

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Demolition layer	Loose mid yellow brown sandy rubble frequent small-large CBM Thickness: 0.24m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Buried topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt Thickness: 0.2 - 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Buried subsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty sand moderate small-medium stones Thickness: 0.39m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Natural	Loose mid yellow orange silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Pit	sides: steep base: uneven dimensions: max breadth 2.05m, max depth 0.68m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Fill	Friable mid grey brown sandy silt occasional small-medium stones Includes scrap metal and crushed tarmac Thickness: 0.68m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Trench: 3**

Max Dimensions: Length: 10.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.35 m. Max: 0.5 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94302; Northing: 25894)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94293; Northing: 35889)

Reason: Test area of proposed building footprint

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
300	Demolition layer	Loose dark grey black sandy rubble frequent small-large CBM Thickness: 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
301	Buried topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt Thickness: 0.14m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
302	Buried subsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty sand Thickness: 0.2m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
303	Natural	Loose mid orange brown sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
304	Posthole	Circular sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.33m, max depth 0.13m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
305	Fill	Friable dark brown grey silty sand occasional small CBM, occasional flecks charcoal, moderate small-medium stones Thickness: 0.13m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
306	Pit	Oval sides: steep base: concave dimensions: min breadth 0.85m, max length 2.35m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
307	Fill	Friable dark brown grey silty sand moderate flecks charcoal Thickness: 0.89m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trench: 4

Max Dimensions: Length: 31.00 m. Width: 1.80 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 1.1 m. Max: 1.5 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94313; Northing: 35870)

OS Grid Ref.: SP (Easting: 94342; Northing: 35882)

Reason: Test area of proposed building footprint

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
400	Demolition layer	Loose dark grey black silty rubble frequent small-large CBM Thickness: 0.07m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
401	Levelling layer	Compact sandy hardcore frequent small-medium CBM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
402	Levelling layer	Loose mid yellow orange sandy rubble Thickness: 0.43 - 0.53m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
403	Buried topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt Thickness: 0.2 - 0.3m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
404	Buried subsoil	Friable mid grey brown silty sand Thickness: 0.37 - 0.66m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
405	Natural	Friable mid orange brown silty sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

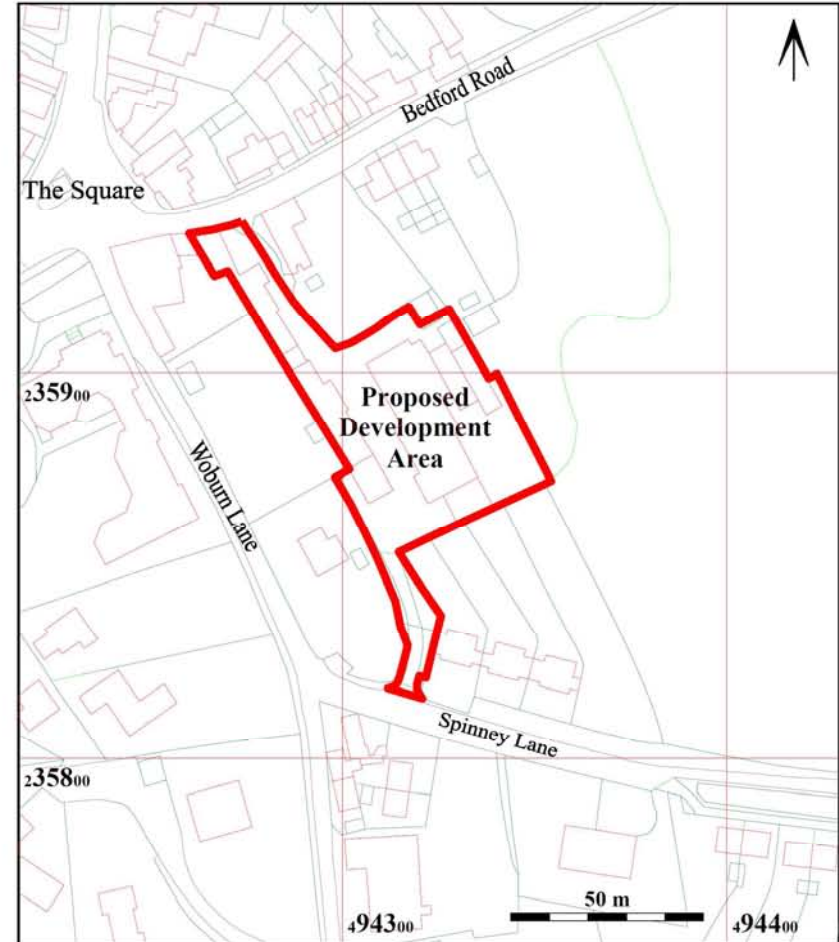
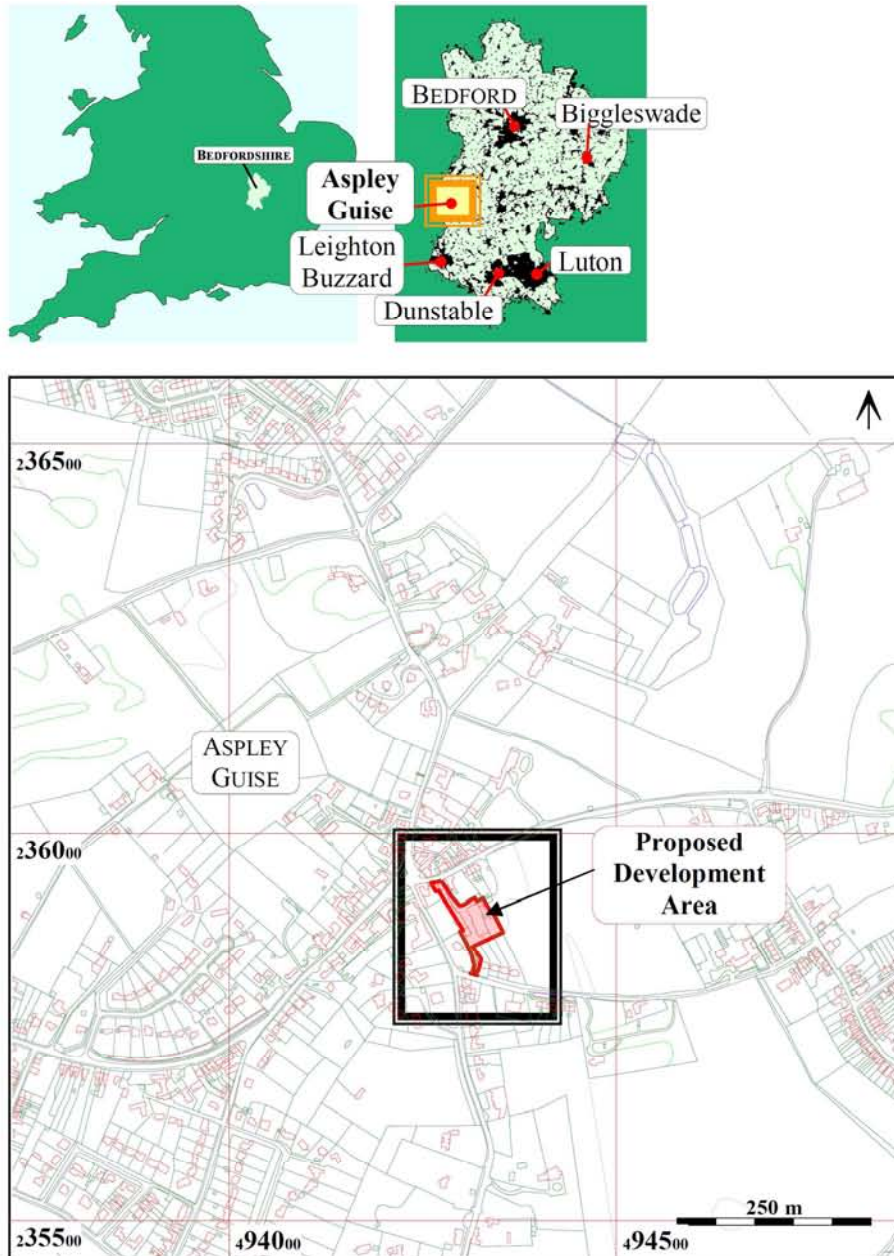


Figure 1: Site location plan

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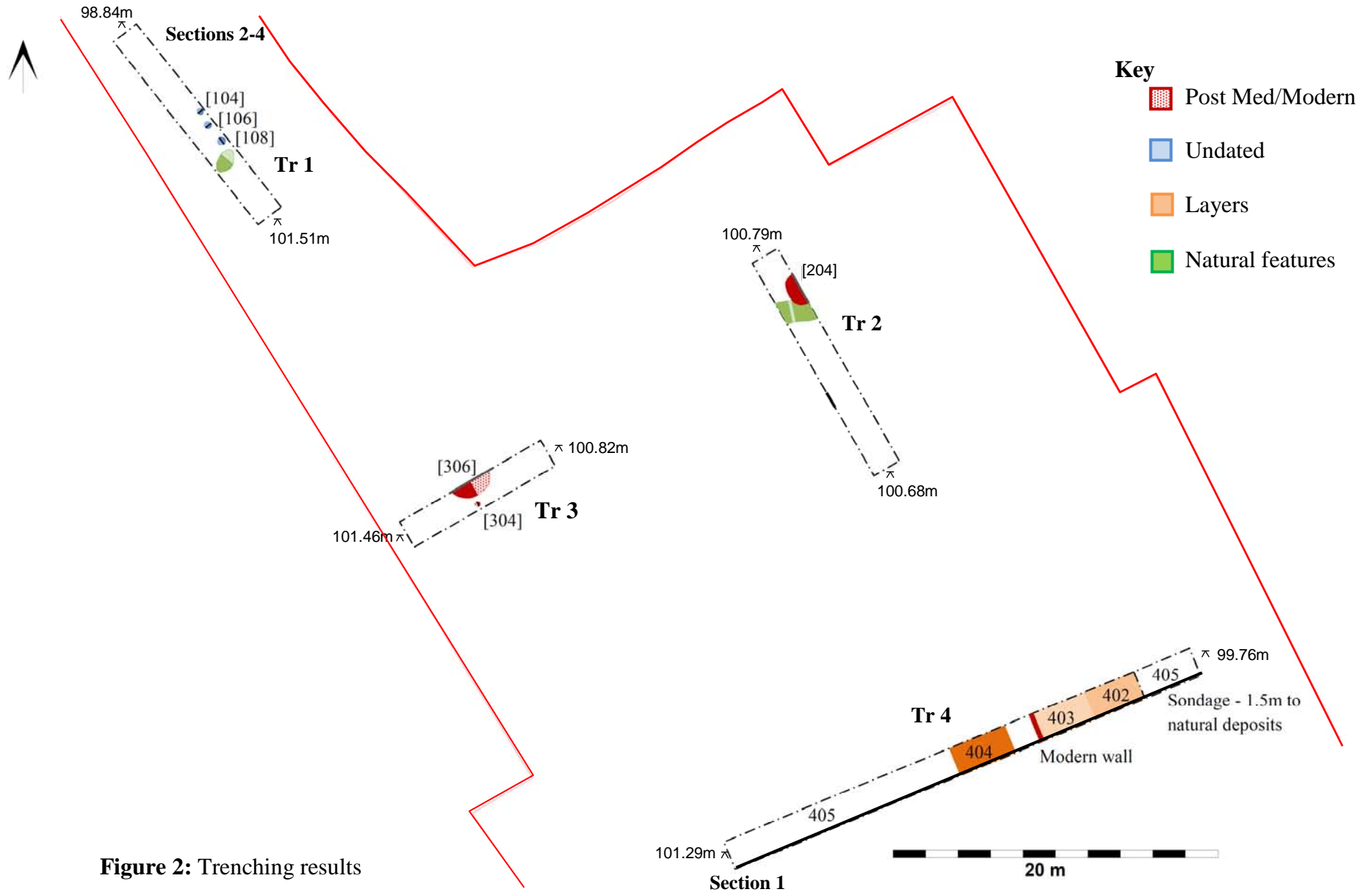
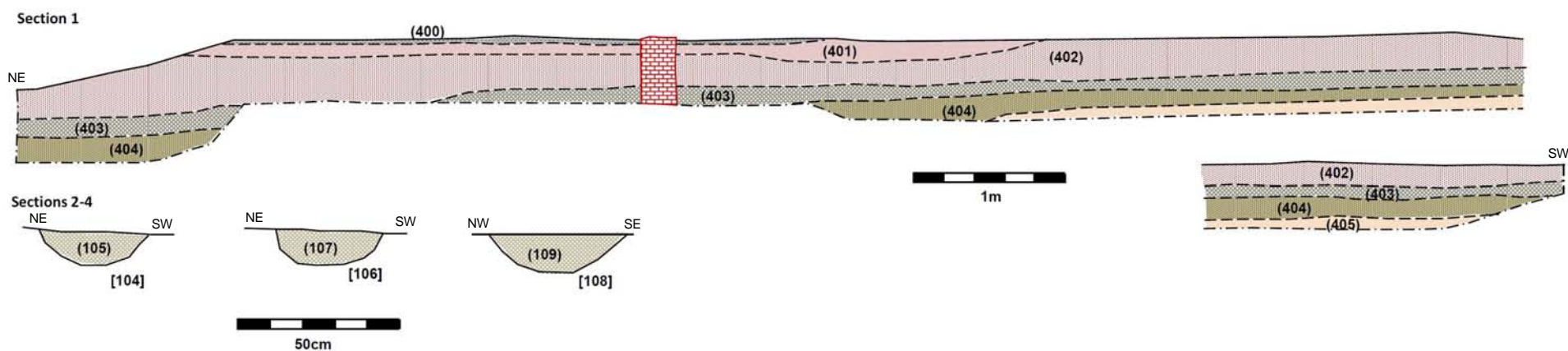


Figure 2: Trenching results



Trench 1 from SE
1m scale



Trench 2 from NW
1m scale



Trench 3 from NE
1m scale



Trench 4 from NW



Trench 1 - Post hole [108] from SW
40cm scale



Trench 3 - Modern rubbish pit [306] from NE
1m scale

Figure 3: Selected sections and photographs

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