

**LAND ADJACENT TO 68 HIGH STREET,  
HARROLD, BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

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Produced for:  
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## ***Contents***

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List of Tables .....	3
List of Figures .....	3
Preface .....	4
Structure of the Report .....	4
Metadata Statement and Archive.....	4
Key Terms .....	6
Non-Technical Summary .....	7
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Planning Background.....	8
1.2 Scheme of Works.....	8
1.3 Site Location and Description .....	8
1.4 Archaeological Background.....	9
<b>2. TRIAL TRENCHING .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Method Statement .....	10
2.2 Procedures.....	10
2.3 Results of Trial Trenching.....	10
<b>3. ARTEFACT ASSEMBLAGE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	12
Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and context.....	12
3.2 Pottery .....	12
Table 2: Pottery fabric types and contexts .....	13
<b>4. CHRONOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS.....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	14
4.2 Medieval .....	14
4.3 Site Formation / Transformation Processes .....	14
<b>5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REMAINS .....</b>	<b>15</b>



5.1	Pre-Roman/ Roman.....	15
5.2	Medieval .....	15
6.	APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES.....	17

**List of Tables**

Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and context	12
Table 2: Pottery fabric types and contexts	13

**List of Figures**

- Figure 1: Location of Study Area and Trench Locations
- Figure 2: Plan of Trench 1 with Drawn Section
- Figure 3: Evaluation Trenches and Previous/Ongoing Excavations

All figures are bound at the rear of the report.



## **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 Project Design. 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.*

*This report was written by Reuben Thorpe and Jackie Wells and was edited by Reuben Thorpe. Hand excavation was conducted by Peter Sprenger and Chris Thatcher and was supervised by James Pixley. Artefact processing and reporting was undertaken by Jackie Wells. All illustrations in this report were prepared by Joan Lightning.*

*Albion Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance of the owners, Dr S M Mitchell and Miss S P Mitchell, together with their agent, Dr G Mitchell. The assistance of Mr Peter Jane of Bryant Homes is also gratefully acknowledged. Finally, the authors would also like to thank Ms Lesley-Ann Mather, Assistant County Archaeological Officer.*

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## **Structure of the Report**

After an introductory section, this report presents the summary results of an intrusive archaeological evaluation in Section 2. Section 3 contains a chronological summary and synthesis of the results and their significance. Summary details from the evaluation trenches are presented as appendices in Appendix 1. All figures referred to in the text are bound at the back of this report. This document fulfils the reporting requirements of Albion Archaeology and is designed to inform the drafting of any mitigation strategies in advance of any construction.

## **Metadata Statement and Archive**

All documents and figures were compiled on an IBM compatible computer utilising either an MS XP® or Windows 98® operating system. All texts were compiled in MS Word for Windows 97/2000®. Figures were digitised in AutoCAD 12® and imported into G-Sys 5®. These were then output into a .doc format in MS Word for Windows



97/2000®. Trench summary tables were input into Albion Archaeology's projects database in MS Access 2000®.

The report is held on the Albion Archaeology network at:

*O:/HSH\_913/Project\_Management/Reports/HSH\_913\_03\_24.doc*

The Trench Summary Database is held on the Albion Archaeology Network at:

*O:/smallprj/SP\_data.mdb*

The figures are held on the Albion Archaeology network at:

*O:/HSH\_913/Project\_Management/Reports/figs*

The archive, at present, resides with Albion Archaeology. The address is given at the beginning of this report.



## **Key Terms**

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
Brief	<i>Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land Adjacent to 68 The High Street, Harrold, Bedfordshire.</i>
CAO	County Archaeological Officer
ACAO	Assistant County Archaeological Officer
Client	Dr S M Mitchell and Miss S P Mitchell
Evaluation	Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land Adjacent to 68 High Street, Harrold, Bedfordshire.
IFA	Institute of Field Archaeologists
Procedures Manual	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2001</i> Albion Archaeology



## **Non-Technical Summary**

*A request for planning consent (03/00003/OUT) to construct residential dwellings on land to the east of 68 High Street, Harrold was submitted to Bedford Borough Council. It was subsequently withdrawn on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2003. The CAO has stipulated that a scheme of archaeological investigation is required in order to assess the likely impact any development may have on buried archaeological deposits and allow a suitable mitigation strategy to be devised.*

*The evaluation consisted of the excavation of three trial trenches to determine the date, character and extent of any archaeological remains. The trenches were laid out in accordance with a trench location plan, agreed with the Assistant County Archaeological Officer. The work was undertaken between Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May and Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2003.*

*No archaeological evidence of human occupation, preceding the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, was encountered during the evaluation, other than residual sherds of Roman and Iron Age pottery from Trench 1. The proximity, however, of late Iron Age/Roman industrial features and possible settlement evidence some 4m to the north of the evaluated land, within the Bridgeman Joinery site, implies that features of this date may lie at the northern extent of the study area.*

*Medieval evidence was concentrated in the south of the study area in Trench 1, in the form of an infilled ditch cutting a buried cultivation soil which had infilled a relict stream channel. The infilling and disuse of the ditch dated to between the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the early 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, while the buried cultivation soils can be viewed as being somewhat earlier in date (possibly late Saxon). They probably represent headland deposits generated by the turning of the plough at the end of a furrow to the west of the stream.*

*The archaeological remains within the study area may contribute to addressing issues of changing land-use and settlement pattern between the late Saxon and early medieval period. The medieval feature, by virtue of its relationship to the infilled stream, represents archaeological deposits of regional importance and significance.*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Planning Background*

A request for planning consent (03/00003/OUT) to construct residential dwellings on land to the east of 68 High Street, Harrold was submitted to Bedford Borough Council. It was subsequently withdrawn on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2003. The CAO has stipulated that a scheme of archaeological investigation is required in order to assess the likely impact any development may have on buried archaeological deposits and allow a suitable mitigation strategy to be devised.

Previously, archaeological excavations conducted immediately to the east and the north of the proposed development area, in the 1950s, 1990s and at the time of writing, have revealed extensive preservation of deposits and structures dating from the Neolithic to the post-medieval period.

Due to the archaeologically sensitive nature of the immediate area (Fig. 3) the Assistant County Archaeological Officer (ACAO) advised that an archaeological evaluation would be necessary to determine the impact of any proposed development. A *Brief for the Archaeological Field Evaluation of Land Adjacent to 68, High St, Harrold, Bedfordshire* was issued on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by Dr S M Mitchell and Miss S P Mitchell to undertake an intrusive evaluation to establish the extent and condition of any archaeological deposits within the application area. This information will allow the impact of the proposed development to be assessed and any necessary mitigation measures devised.

### 1.2 *Scheme of Works*

The evaluation was carried out between Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May and Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2003. A site monitoring visit on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May, by the ACAO, was conducted shortly after the completion of the evaluation to verify that the conditions of the *Brief* had been met.

Three trial trenches were excavated, no contingency was invoked.

### 1.3 *Site Location and Description*

#### 1.3.1 *Location*

The evaluation area consists of grassed over open ground and paddock, to the north of the High Street of Harrold (Fig 1) and is centred on OS grid co-ordinate SP9518/5688.

#### 1.3.2 *Geology, topography and land use*

The application area lies within the Great Ouse valley and is bordered by tributary streams of the river to the south and east. It lies at around 46m OD.

The underlying geology consists of argyllic brown earths over fine loams with





a substrate of alluvial valley gravels which, in turn, overlies solid geology of Oolitic limestone.

#### **1.4 Archaeological Background**

Archaeological works have been conducted on three separate occasions within the vicinity of the proposed development. The first of these took place in the 1950s and focused on an area to the north, which was developed for aggregate extraction. Discoveries from this initial archaeological work revealed occupation on the site spanning the Bronze Age to Anglo-Saxon periods.

Subsequent archaeological investigation, conducted by Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service (BCAS), was undertaken at Meadway / Dove Lane, to the north-east of the site (BCAS 1997). This revealed a palimpsest of archaeological evidence, including Neolithic burials, an associated funerary monument, an Iron Age cremation cemetery and evidence of early-mid Saxon occupation, comprising buildings, pits and other structural features. Investigation of the land to the west of Meadway, to the north-east of the proposed development site revealed the continuation of well preserved archaeological deposits (Fig 3).

An evaluation conducted by Albion Archaeology in October 2002<sup>1</sup> and subsequent excavation<sup>2</sup> (currently in process at the time of writing) immediately to the north of the proposed development, has revealed evidence of Roman industrial activity/crop processing as well as sealed horizons of medieval cultivation. These discoveries imply that archaeological deposits may survive beneath the area of proposed development considered in this evaluation report.

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<sup>1</sup> *Land at the Former Bridgeman Joinery Works, Harrold. An Archaeological Evaluation.* Albion Archaeology 2002/68.

<sup>2</sup> *Former Bridgeman Joinery Works, Harrold, Bedfordshire. Project Design for Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief.* Albion Archaeology 2003/10



## 2. TRIAL TRENCHING

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### 2.1 *Method Statement*

A total of three trenches were excavated and recorded (Fig 1). The location of the evaluation trenches was determined specifically to answer a pre-determined set of questions outlined in the *Brief*, these were primarily designed to:

- Investigate the location, extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits that were present.
- Assess the integrity, state and level of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that were present.

The ACAO, Ms. Lesley-Ann Mather, attended the site on 15<sup>th</sup> May for a monitoring meeting and to confirm that the evaluation had been completed within the terms of the *Brief*.

### 2.2 *Procedures*

Trenches were laid out in accordance with an agreed trench location plan. Topsoil and modern overburden was removed by machine to reveal either the top of the archaeological deposits, or the underlying geological strata, whichever was encountered first. All machine excavation was supervised by an archaeologist and was undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches 2 and 3 were approximately 10m long and 2.2m wide while Trench 1 was 15m long.

All trenches were cleaned by hand to define and identify areas where archaeological deposits survived. These deposits, where occurring, were excavated in the reverse order to which they had been deposited and the finds from each layer, bagged and tagged with the context number of the deposit from which they came. All archaeological deposits and structures were drawn to scale. A digital photographic record was compiled in accordance with the Albion Archaeology *Procedures Manual*.

All archaeological and geological deposits (contexts) were allotted a unique number and recorded on individual, pro-forma, recording or context sheets. Context numbers, referred to in this report, describing actions of construction or re-construction, such as the cutting or re-cutting of a ditch are enclosed within square brackets *e.g.* [000]. Deposits or fills, within cut features, representing processes of use or disuse are enclosed within rounded brackets *e.g.* (000). All contexts are listed by trench in Appendix 1.

### 2.3 *Results of Trial Trenching*

Archaeological deposits were encountered in Trench 1 (Fig 2) which was located towards the very south of the evaluation area.



### **2.3.1 Plough soil and Subsoil**

Plough soil deposits were uniform throughout the site and consisted of a dark, grey brown, clay silt, approximately 0.10m to 0.3m thick.

Subsoil deposits, comprised of a mid yellow brown silty clay, were typically between 0.30m and 0.60m thick.

### **2.3.2 Anthropogenic Site Formation**

The eastern third of Trench 1 revealed deposits of plough soil and alluvial loam (07), which consisted of dark yellowish brown silty clays, of an indeterminate thickness, infilling an old stream course [06]. This feature was also attested from the evaluation and excavation of the Bridgeman Joinery works to the north. The date of inception of the infilling of this stream is elusive. However, it is known to have been completed by the middle Saxon period.

### **2.3.3 Geological Strata**

The underlying geological deposits generally consisted of light orange yellow gravel, which was ubiquitous across most of the study area.

### **2.3.4 Archaeological Features**

The following sections narrate the archaeological features encountered in the study area. The ascribed dating of the features is derived primarily from dateable artefacts retrieved from the excavated samples of each feature. In the case of features that contained no artefacts, stratigraphic and spatial relationships to dated features have been used to indicate a possible date.

Only Trench 1 revealed archaeological features consisting of no less than two ditches and a buried soil. Trenches 2 and 3 did not contain any archaeological features.

### **2.3.5 Early Medieval (AD1000 – 1250)**

The evidence of medieval activity was concentrated in the southern extreme of Trench 1.

#### **2.3.5.1 Ditch**

An east-west aligned ditch [04] was recorded extending for the whole length of the trench and was observed and recorded as cutting the infill of the palaeochannel (07) (see 2.3.2. above). It was at least 2m wide and 1.4m deep with a weathered profile. Health and Safety regulations prevented the excavation of this ditch to its full depth. It contained sherds of early medieval pottery in its fills (05, 09).

#### **2.3.5.2 Buried cultivation horizon**

A buried soil representing the infilling of a palaeochannel (07) preserving medieval ground surface or a relict cultivation horizon was discovered (Fig 2). This horizon consisted of a mid brown, grey, silty clay that was of indeterminate depth.



### 3. ARTEFACT ASSEMBLAGE

#### 3.1 Introduction

Evaluation produced an artefact assemblage comprising pottery and animal bone (Table 1). The material was scanned to ascertain the nature, condition and, where possible, date range of the artefact types present. No finds were recovered from Trenches 2 or 3.

Tr.	Feature	Type	Context	Spotdate*	Pottery	CBM	Animal Bone	Other Finds
01	02	Subsoil	02	19 <sup>th</sup> century	2:10			
	04	Ditch	05	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> century	2:12	2:8		
01	06	Stream fill	07	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> century	2:18			
	06	Ibid	09	12 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> century	5:16	1:1		
<b>Total</b>					<b>11:56</b>	<b>3:9</b>		

\* spotdates are based on the latest artefact in the assemblage

\*\* finds discarded

CBM ceramic building material

**Table 1: Artefact summary by trench and context**

#### 3.2 Pottery

Eleven sherds of pottery weighing 56g were recovered. These were examined by context and quantified using minimum sherd count and weight. The sherds are small (average weight 5g) and exhibit varying degrees of abrasion. Six fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series (held by Albion Archaeology). Fabrics are listed below (Table 2) in approximate chronological order.

The pottery ranges in date from the late 'Belgic' Iron Age (c. 50BC-AD50) to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The late Iron Age material is residual within the upper (07) and lower (09) fills of the infilled palaeo channel [06], and comprises four undiagnostic grog and shell tempered sherds. Lower fill (09) also contained a shell tempered sherd, of probable Roman date, likely to originate from local kilns<sup>3</sup> (Brown 1994). The four undiagnostic shell tempered sherds of 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century date recovered from ditches [04] and [06] are also of local origin (Hall 1972)<sup>4</sup>.

Subsoil (02) contained two sherds of 19<sup>th</sup> century earthenware

<sup>3</sup> Brown, A., 1994, 'A Romano-British Shell-gritted Pottery and Tile manufacturing Site at Harrold, Beds', *Bedfordshire Archaeology* Vol 21, 19-117.

<sup>4</sup> Hall, D., 1972, A thirteenth century pottery kiln at Harrold, Beds', *Milton Keynes Journal* Vol 1, 23-32



<b>Fabric type</b>	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Sherd No.</b>	<b>Context/Sherd No.</b>
<b>Late 'Belgic' Iron Age</b>			
Type F07	Shell	<b>1</b>	(09):1
Type F09	Grog and sand	<b>3</b>	(07):1, (09):2
<b>Roman</b>			
Type R13	Shell	<b>1</b>	(09):1
<b>Early medieval</b>			
Type B07	Shell	<b>4</b>	(05):2, (07):1, (09):1
<b>Modern</b>			
Type P11	Buff earthenware	<b>2</b>	(02):2

**Table 2: Pottery fabric types and contexts**



## **4. CHRONOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS**

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### **4.1 Introduction**

The following section relates the evidence of occupation on or near to the proposed development area, chronologically, from earliest to latest ending with the most recent. It is a synthesis of the relative chronologies established in each trench and combines the evidence garnered from the finds assemblages.

### **4.2 Medieval**

Early medieval activity on site is clearly attested by the presence of a large ditch [04], which went out of use in the 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century and the fact that it cut the latest fills observed of a relict stream course.

### **4.3 Site Formation / Transformation Processes**

From the archaeological evaluation certain conclusions can be drawn about the formation processes operating over the development area and the ways in which they have affected, or may affect/condition, the survival of archaeological deposits and structures.

The eastern one to two thirds of the site lies over what once formed the channel of a tributary of the river Great Ouse. This tributary is thought to have been filled by the late Saxon Period and, based on excavated evidence further north, was open during the late Iron Age and Roman period. Evidence of archaeological features may lie below the filling of the relict stream bed, as has been shown during the excavation to the north on the Bridgeman Joinery site.



## 5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REMAINS

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In assessing the significance of the remains reference has been made to both the draft national Research Agenda<sup>5</sup> produced by English Heritage (the government's advisory body on archaeological matters) and on a regional level the Resource Assessment<sup>6</sup> and Draft Research Agenda<sup>7</sup> for the Eastern Counties.

### 5.1 Pre-Roman/ Roman

The presence of deposits and structures of demonstrable antiquity to the north and east of the proposed development area, within the Bridgeman Joinery site, begs the question as to why so little, if anything, from these earlier periods of prehistory, is present within the study area. Elements of a late Iron Age settlement have been found immediately to the north and north-west of the study area and a possible Roman malting oven lay less than 23m to the north-east of Trench 3. Scant evidence of late Iron Age and Roman activity has been found; what there is takes the form of several sherds of pottery, residual in later contexts (07). This paucity of evidence however, does not equate to evidence of absence. It is entirely possible that, though evaluation trenching failed to find any pre-Roman archaeological deposits, given excavated evidence to the north, prehistoric/Roman deposits may occur on the development site, probably to the north of the site and at the edge of the relict stream channel.

### 5.2 Medieval

Medieval activity is, significantly, characterised by the cutting and infilling of a ditch which may have formed a pre-cursor or have been part of the original line of the brook forming the southern boundary of the study area. The relationship of this ditch, which went out of use by the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century, with the infilled stream channel to the east is of significance.

To the north-east of the site, excavations by BCAS in 1997 on the Meadway / Dove Lane development, demonstrated the existence of an early-middle Saxon settlement. Evaluation and excavation by Albion Archaeology in 2002/3 has shown that the Saxon settlement respected an established stream and that at sometime, during or after the middle Saxon period, this stream became infilled and canalised. Medieval cultivation horizons, dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century, have been excavated overlying this stream.

The early medieval origins of Harrold are known but somewhat poorly understood. That Harrold appeared in the Domesday survey of 1086 would indicate a Saxon settlement already in existence by the time of the Norman Conquest. Evidence from excavations at Harrold Meadway suggests early and middle Saxon occupation immediately to the north of present day Harrold.

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<sup>5</sup> English Heritage, 1997, *Research agenda* (Draft)

<sup>6</sup> Glazebrook, J, 1997, *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties, 1.Resource Assessment*

<sup>7</sup> Brown, N and Wade, K. (1999), *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2: Research Agenda and Strategy*.



Medieval market centres (though Harrold was never granted a charter it is known to have been an important market centre) were often enclosed by a town ditch. The brook forming the southern boundary of the study area may be a relic of such a ditch. If this were the case and ditch [04] formed part of a precursor to it, then it may be possible to refine the dating frameworks for the transition from a dispersed, middle Saxon settlement pattern to the more nucleated settlement pattern of the later Saxon and Saxo-Norman periods. This would directly address current and national research issues centred around the early creation of villages and settlement nucleation within the rural landscape.





## **6. APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARIES**

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**Trench: 1**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 15.00 m. Width: 2.20 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.15 m. Max: m.

**OS Co-ordinates:** Ref. 1: SP9517556873 Ref. 2: SP9519056874

**Reason:** Evaluation of land to aid development of mitigation in advance of development.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1	Topsoil	Friable dark brown grey silty clay occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Subsoil	Loose mid grey brown clay silt moderate small stones, occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	Natural	Compact mid grey grey sandy gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Ditch	Linear E-W profile: vertical dimensions: min breadth 1.5m, min depth 1.05m, min length 12.m	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Upper fill	Spongy mid yellow brown clay silt occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	Main fill	Compact dark yellow grey silty clay frequent small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Lower fill	Firm dark yellow grey silty clay occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Ditch	Linear N-S dimensions: min breadth 9.m, min length 0.8m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Upper fill	Compact dark yellow brown silty clay moderate medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



**Trench: 2**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 10.00 m. Width: 2.20 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

**OS Co-ordinates:** Ref. 1: SP9516956884 Ref. 2: SP9517956885

**Reason:** Evaluation to aid development of mitigation in advance of development.

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
11	Topsoil	Compact dark grey clay silt occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Subsoil	Firm light orange brown clay silt moderate small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Natural	Compact light yellow orange silty gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



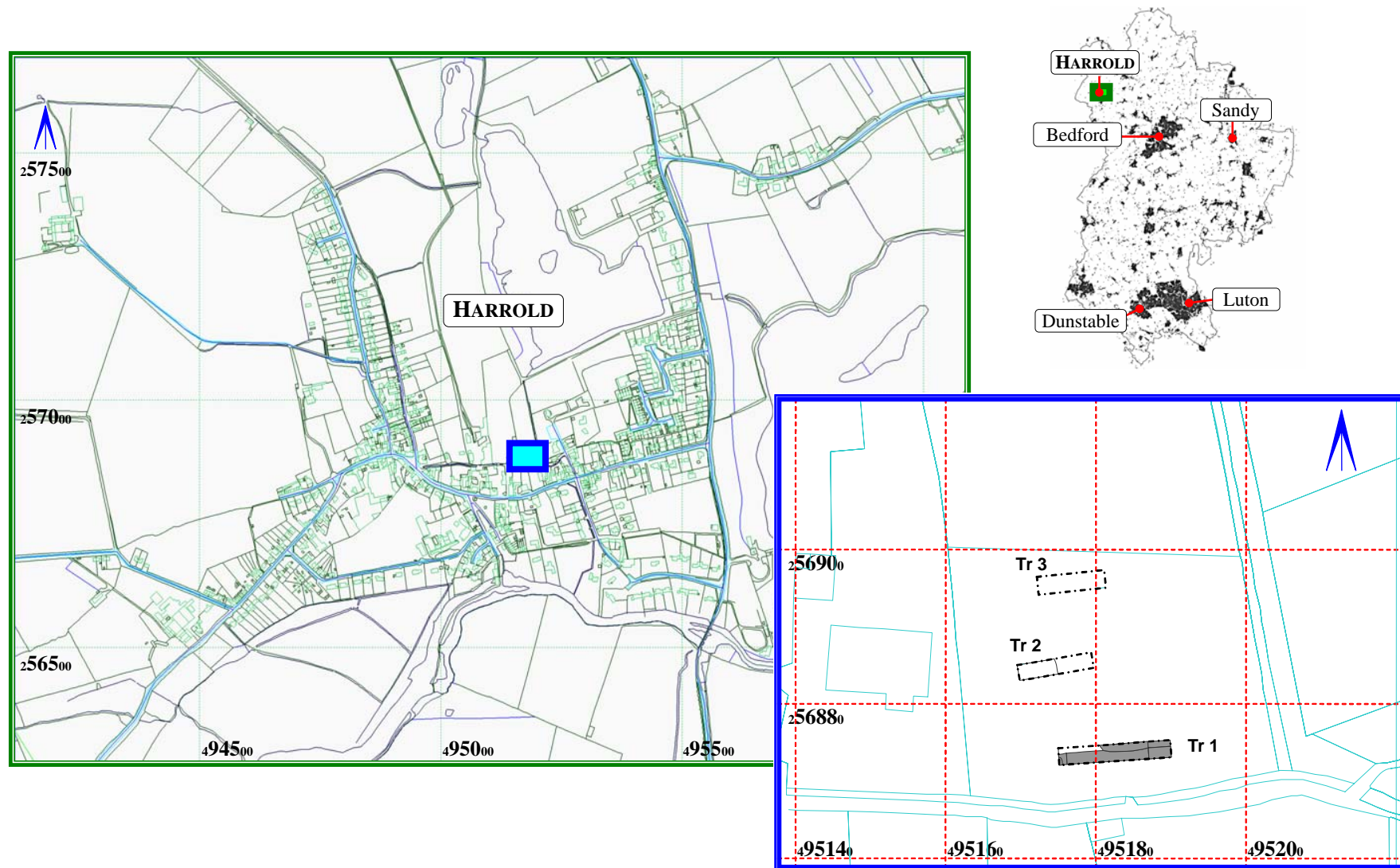
**Trench: 3**

**Max Dimensions:** Length: 10.00 m. Width: 2.10 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

**OS Co-ordinates:** Ref. 1: SP9517256895 Ref. 2: SP9518156896

**Reason:** Evaluation to aid development of mitigation in advance of development

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
21	Topsoil	Firm dark grey clay silt occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	Subsoil	Compact dark brown grey clay silt occasional small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	Natural	Compact mid brown grey gravel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Figure 1:** Location of Study Area and Trench Locations

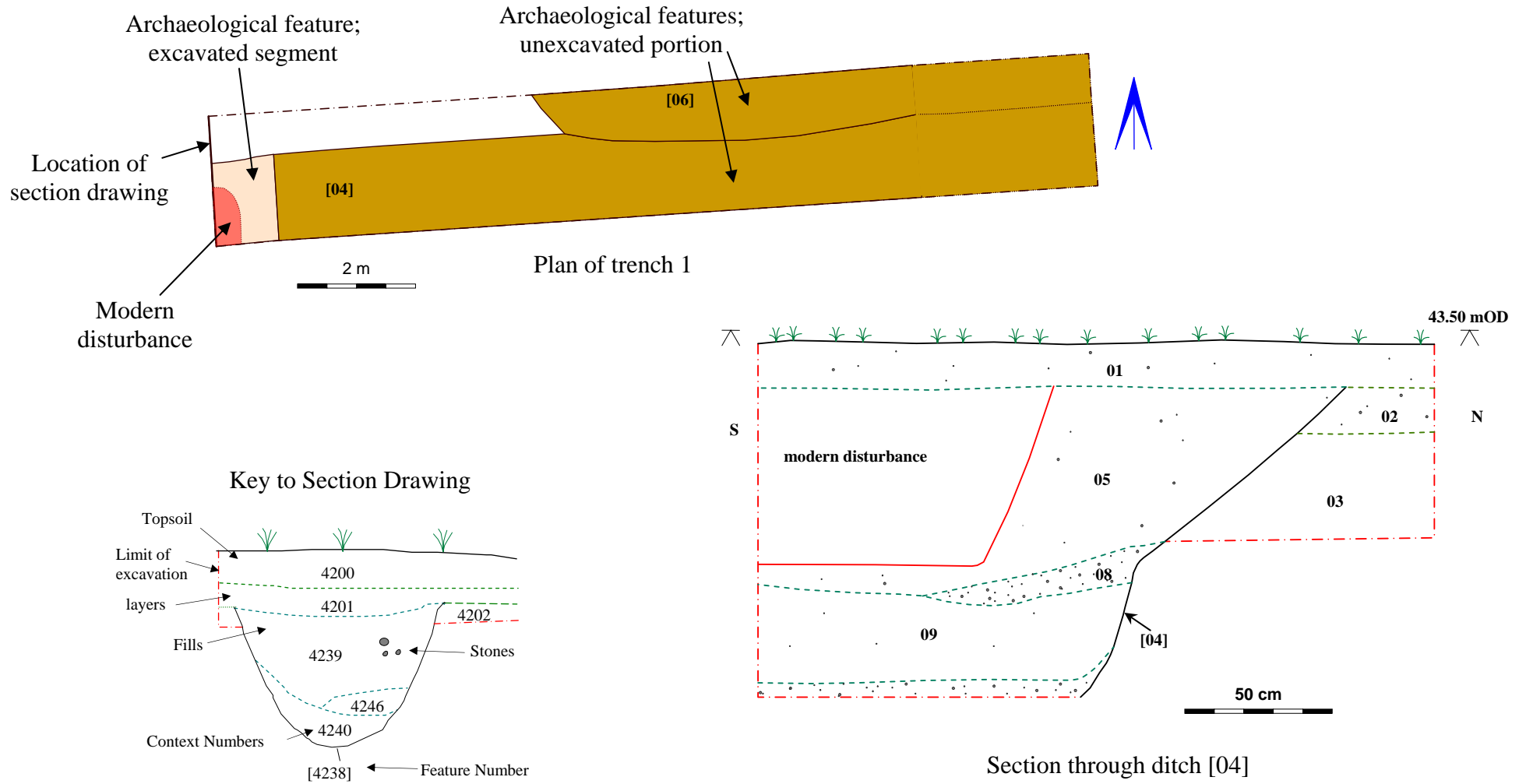
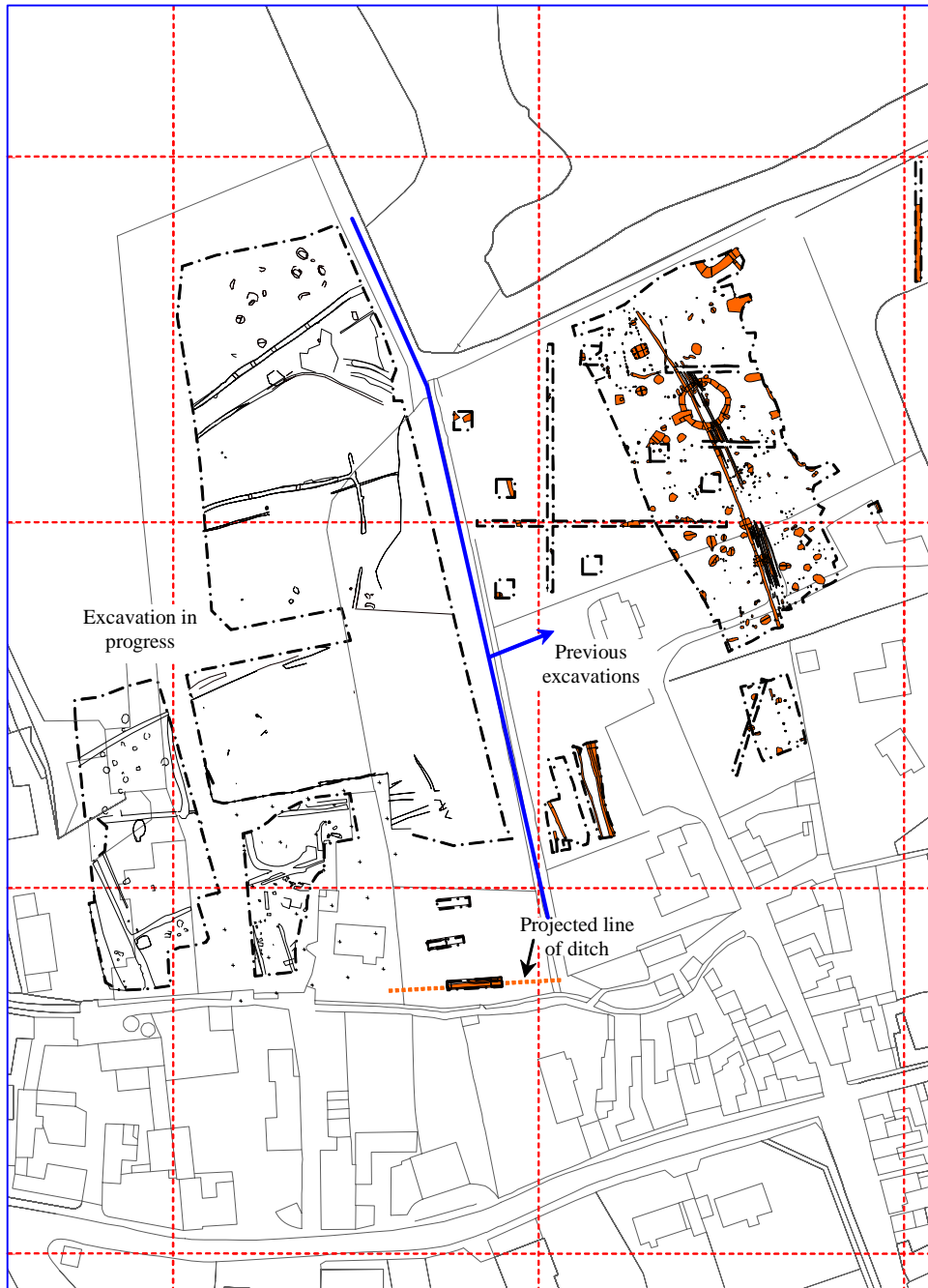


Figure 2: Plan of Trench 1 with Drawn Section



**Figure 3:** Evaluation Trenches and Previous/Ongoing Excavations