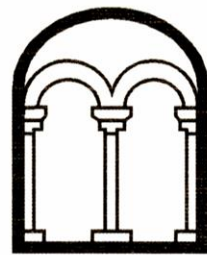


**THE OLD POLICE STATION
EATON BRAY
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



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INVESTIGATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS
AND PUBLICATION**

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Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and was prepared solely for the benefit of the client. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and should not be relied upon by any third party. This document should not be used for any other purpose without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and the prior written authority of Albion Archaeology (a trading unit of Central Bedfordshire Council). Any person/party relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Albion Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Albion Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the persons/party by whom it was commissioned. This document is limited by the state of knowledge at the time it was written.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Resolution Homes Ltd and was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake, Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

The archaeological works were undertaken by Marcin Koziminski, Ian Turner and Slawomir Utrata. The report was prepared by Slawomir Utrata, with contributions from Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

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Version History

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1.0	07/02/2017	n/a

Key Terms

The following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
DA	Development area
EBD	Events Bedfordshire
HER	Central Bedfordshire Council's Historic Environment Record
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NGR	National grid reference
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission CB/16/00954/FULL was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the demolition of the existing dwellings at The Old Police Station, 25 High Street, Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire, LU6 2DN, and development of three new dwellings.

The site lies on the north-east side of the High Street, centred on SP 97210 20704, at c. 99m OD, with the land sloping gradually down towards the River Ouzel, situated to the south-west of the village. The site was occupied by a late 20th-century building, known as The Old Police Station, with later extension and a garden to the rear. The site is situated within the historic medieval core of Eaton Bray, as defined by the HER, and had potential to contain sub-surface archaeological remains relating to Saxon, medieval and post-medieval settlement within the village.

Eaton Bray lies at the foot of the Chilterns escarpment and many tributaries of the River Ouzel flow through the village. The underlying geology varies from West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation to Upper Greensand Formation Siltstone and Mudstone Interbedded. Superficial deposits comprise a mix of clay, silt, sand and gravel.

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken intermittently between late November 2016 and mid-January 2017. Initially, the mechanical removal of the footings of the old building was monitored, followed by the excavation of the footings for the new buildings.

Despite the extensive disturbance associated with the construction and subsequent demolition of the former buildings on site, the investigation revealed elements of the old soil profile together with an undated ditch and an extensive layer of possible ploughsoil. The ditch does not correspond to any boundaries on the available historical maps. The lack of associated features and artefacts within its fill suggests that the ditch was located in an agricultural area, situated some distance from any focus of human activity

The results of the investigation have been fully analysed as far as the evidence permits in this report. No additional analysis or publication is required. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website, reference no. albionar1-260103. The project archive will be deposited with Luton Culture, entry no. LTNMG 1257.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project Background**

Planning permission CB/16/00954/FULL was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the demolition of the existing dwellings at The Old Police Station, 25 High Street, Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire, LU6 2DN, and development of three new dwellings.

A heritage statement, submitted as part of the planning application, highlighted that the site lies within the historic medieval core of Eaton Bray, as defined by the HER, and had potential to contain sub-surface archaeological remains relating to Saxon, medieval and post-medieval settlement within the village (Albion 2016a). Accordingly, the following pre-commencement condition (no. 16) was attached to the planning permission:

No development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation, that includes post excavation analysis and publication, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development hereby approved shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme.

Reason: This condition is pre-commencement as a failure to secure appropriate archaeological investigation in advance of development would be contrary to paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that requires developers to record and advance of understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) as a consequence of the development.

The CBC Archaeologist (CBCA) confirmed that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication would be required. This recommendation is in accordance with national planning guidelines in the form of paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF), which requires that developers secure a strategy to record and advance understanding of heritage assets with archaeological interest that will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of development.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the client to formulate the written scheme of investigation (WSI) (Albion 2016b), which set out the methodology and project objectives and subsequently undertake the works.

1.2 **Site Location, Topography and Geology**

Eaton Bray is situated in south-west Bedfordshire, close to the Bedfordshire-Buckinghamshire border. The nearest towns are Dunstable, 5km to the east, and Leighton Buzzard, 6.5km to the north-west. The development area (DA) is situated on the High Street, c. 300m south-east of the main village crossroads and c. 200m south-east of the medieval church of St Mary's (HER 964/NHLE 1321356).



The DA lies on the north-east side of the High Street, centred on SP 97210 20704. The front of the site lies at 99m OD and the land slopes gradually down towards the River Ouzel, situated to the south-west of the village. Immediately prior to the commencement of the project, the DA comprised a late 20th-century building, known as The Old Police Station, with a later extension to the south-east and a garden to the rear and gravel parking area on the south-west side, adjacent to the High Street. The DA is bounded on two sides by residential properties and to the north-east by a garage compound.

Eaton Bray lies at the foot of the Chilterns escarpment and many tributaries of the River Ouzel flow through the village. The underlying geology varies from West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation to Upper Greensand Formation Siltstone and Mudstone Interbedded. Superficial deposits comprise a mix of clay, silt, sand and gravel¹.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The archaeological and historical background to the DA was presented in detail in a heritage statement submitted with the planning application (Albion 2016a). The following represents a summary of the historic environment around the DA.

The Old Police Station is recorded as a heritage asset in the HER (HER 20308) and was built sometime between 1947 and 1978. Since then a flat-roofed extension has been built on its south-east side. It lies just outside the eastern boundary of the Eaton Bray Conservation.

Evidence for Iron Age activity comprises an abraded fragment of Iron Age pottery, whilst apart from occasional finds of Roman coins close to St Mary's Church, some 200m to the north-west of the DA; no substantial Roman remains have been so far recorded in Eaton Bray.

The present-day settlement of Eaton Bray has its origins in the Saxon period. It is first mentioned in historical records in Domesday Book of 1086, where it was recorded as a large manor consisting of 35 households and land for 20 ploughs. The meaning of "Eaton" is "River Farm" or "well-watered land", a name that most likely refers to the numerous brooks which cross the parish and feed into the River Ouzel to the south-west (Halpin 1980). The lands belonging to the manor consisted of meadows, pasture and woodland.

Despite the recorded pre-Conquest origin of Eaton Bray within Domesday Book, only a small number of late Saxon/Saxo-Norman pits have been identified some 400m to the north-west of the DA (Albion 2013, 2015a). The medieval village of Eaton (HER 16884) was an elongated settlement consisting of three foci around several village greens. Jefferys' 1765 map of Bedfordshire shows the three foci as Eaton Green, Eaton Bray and Moor End. This type of elongated village plan is known as "polyfocal" and is often recognisable by its "Ends", a common historic feature of the Bedfordshire uplands.

¹ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?location=eaton+bray&gobBtn=go>



In the medieval period, buildings were loosely strung along the roads between the village greens and even now the older extant built heritage in Eaton Bray still reflects the original medieval foci. A more central focus for the village was added in the 13th century when the parish church of St Mary's was built. During 2004 a field or property boundary ditch of 12th–13th-century date was uncovered at Poplar Farm, just 40m east of the church.

St Mary's Church (HER 964/NHLE 1321356) lies *c.* 200m to the north-west of the DA and is a Grade I listed building. It was built in the 13th century and altered and extended in the 15th century,

An area of ridge and furrow cultivation was recorded *c.* 500m to the north-west of the DA (HER 5075) and represents extant remains of the medieval open field system associated with the village.

A considerable number of medieval coins and one buckle were recorded by the PAS scheme in the fields between Eaton Bray and Park Farm. These probably represent stray finds lost during traffic between the two centres and/or were spread during manuring and agricultural works.

Most surviving heritage assets within 500m of the DA date to the post-medieval period and consist of private dwellings and farm buildings.

From as early as 1849 the Tithe map shows the DA was part of a field on the east side of Poplar Farm. It was not developed until the police station was built sometime after 1947 (Figure 2).

1.4 Project Objectives

It was recognised that the construction of the police station and its flat-roofed extension might have impacted any potential sub-surface archaeological remains. Nonetheless, the site had potential to preserve archaeological remains dating to the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods.

The investigations had potential to address a number of research objectives identified in *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake *et al.* 2007) and *A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

The research framework for Bedfordshire states that in general few rural Saxon and medieval settlements have been investigated in the county. It stresses the potential for acquiring information about the origins, diversity and development of villages from within or around the edges of existing settlements (Oake 2007, 14). In addition, characterisation of settlement forms, understanding how they grow, shift and disappear is of local and regional importance (Oake 2007, 14 and Medlycott 2011, 70).

These research aims certainly apply to Eaton Bray and the DA, which is positioned within the medieval settlement core, as recorded in the HER (HER 16838).

The specific objectives of the investigation were to determine:



- whether there was any evidence for the Anglo-Saxon origins of Eaton Bray on the DA;
- whether there was any evidence for medieval ‘backyard’ activity on the site, possibly in the form of rubbish pits, boundary ditches and structures;
- whether there was any evidence for post-medieval land-use on the DA.

The general objectives of the investigation were to determine:

- the nature and date of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological remains present at the site;
- establishing the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape;
- local environmental conditions via recovering palaeo-environmental remains.



2. METHODOLOGY

The archeologically investigations took place intermittently between 28th November 2016 and 10th January 2017.

Any potential archaeological features were cleaned, investigated by hand and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. All deposits were assigned a unique context number commencing at 1.

The project adhered throughout to the standards prescribed in the following documents:

- Albion Archaeology *Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork* (2nd edn, 2001).
- CIfA *Charter and By-law; Code of conduct* (2014)
Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (2014)
Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (2014)
- EAA *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (2003)
- English Heritage (now Historic England) *Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (2nd edn, 2011)
- Historic England *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (2015)
- Luton Culture *Procedure for preparing archives for deposition with Luton Culture* (2013)

Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS database under reference number albionar1-260103.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

In accordance with the strategy outlined in the WSI, the Old Police Station building and extension had been demolished to ground level prior to the first archaeological visit. The latter took place on 28th November 2016 and monitored the removal of the concrete base slabs followed by removal of the old footings. The latter involved machining a trench (using a 0.8m-wide toothed bucket) along each section of footings in order to lift these remains. This created an approximately 1.5m wide by 1.0m deep trench that followed the alignment of the footings.

The subsequent visits monitored the excavation of the wall footing trenches for the new buildings and ground reduction associated with the access.

3.2 Overburden and Undisturbed Geological Deposits

Deposits associated with the demolition of the former building (7) and associated cut [6] extended across most of the area; they comprised mid-brown silty clay with frequent brick rubble. The deposit was generally 0.3–0.35m thick, increasing to at least 0.5m thick within the infilled former footings trenches.

In the southern part of the area, a dark brown-grey clay silt deposit (1) up to 0.3m thick was revealed. This would appear to be the old ploughsoil rather than landscaping associated with the former building. Below this was mid-brown-grey silty clay subsoil (2), up to 0.2m thick.

The geological strata (3) comprised a distinctive mid grey silty clay.

3.3 Archaeological Remains

Two deposits predating The Old Police Station were revealed. However, despite careful examination, no artefacts were identified within them.

WNW-ESE aligned ditch [4/9] was intermittently traced across the footings for a length of some 13m. In section the ditch was over 1.5m wide and up to 0.16m deep, with shallow concave sides and a flat base (Figure 3: sections 1 and 2 and Figure 4: images 1 and 2). It was filled with friable mid-brown-grey silty clay. The ditch is interpreted as a former field boundary situated some distance from any focus of contemporary human activity. The relatively dark fill would indicate material derived from an unstable upper soil profile — possibly ploughsoil from an adjacent arable field.

Mid-brown-grey silty clay deposit (8) was revealed in the south-east part of the DA (Figure 3); it was up to 0.4m thick at the south-east margin. It was obscured on the surface by modern deposits, although it was traced in three footings trenches (Figure 5: images 3 and 4). The thickness and colour of the deposit suggest a former ploughsoil, possibly incorporating a colluvial element due to downslope soil movement.



4. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the extensive disturbance associated with the construction and subsequent demolition of The Old Police Station, the investigation revealed elements of the old soil profile together with an undated ditch and an extensive layer.

The ditch does not correspond to any boundaries on the available historical maps, suggesting that it may be of some antiquity. The lack of associated features and artefacts within its fill suggests that the ditch was located in an agricultural area, situated some distance from any focus of human activity. The layer in the south-east part of the site may represent a former ploughsoil.

The limited results of the investigation have been fully analysed in this report. No additional analysis or publication is required. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website, reference no. albionar1-260103. The project archive will be deposited with Luton Culture, entry no. LTNMG 1257.



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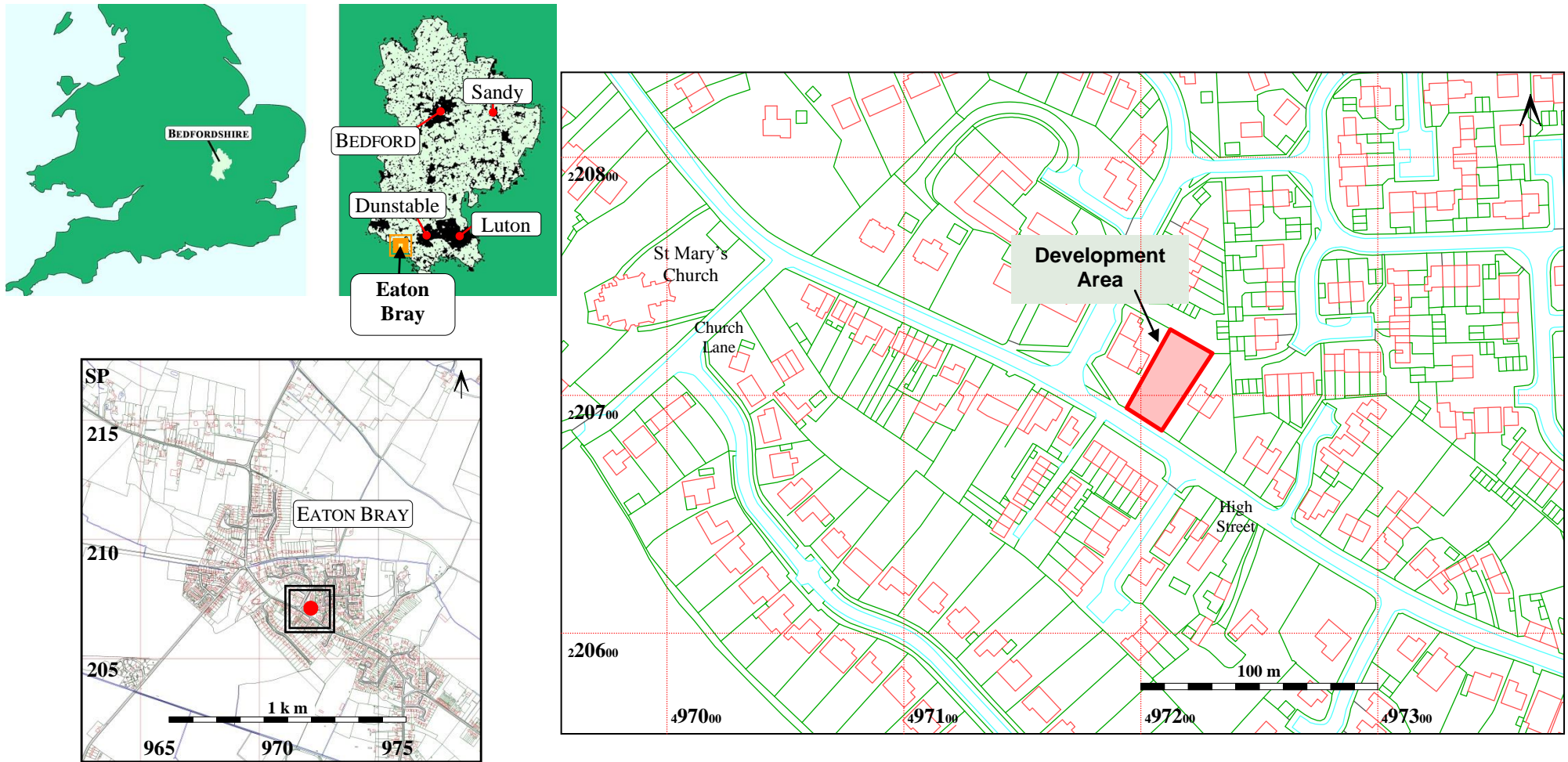
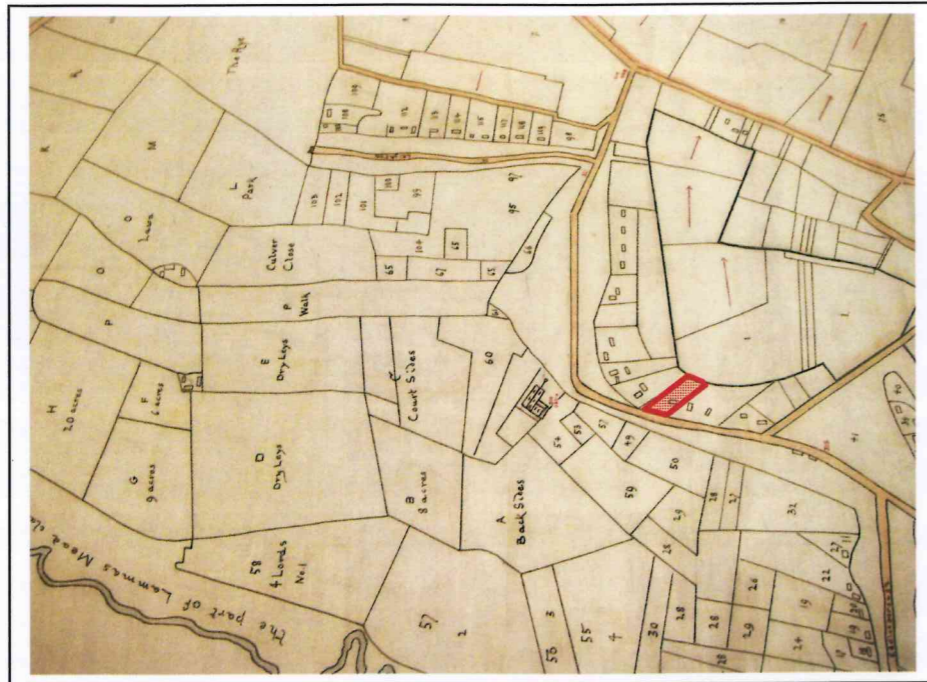
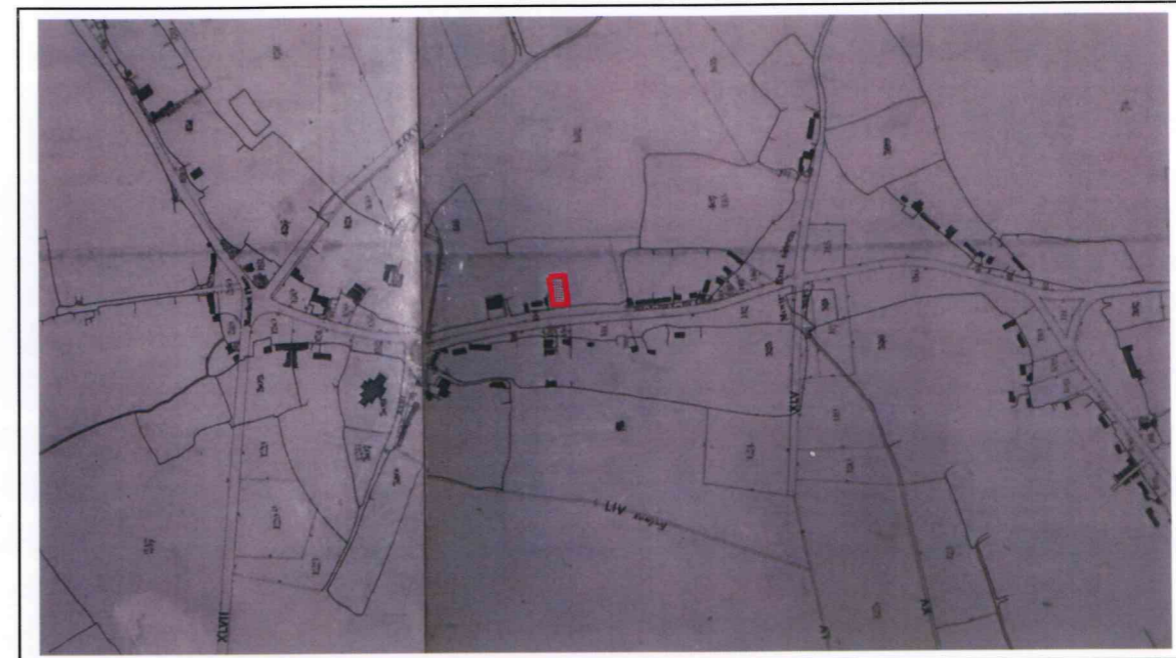


Figure 1: Site location

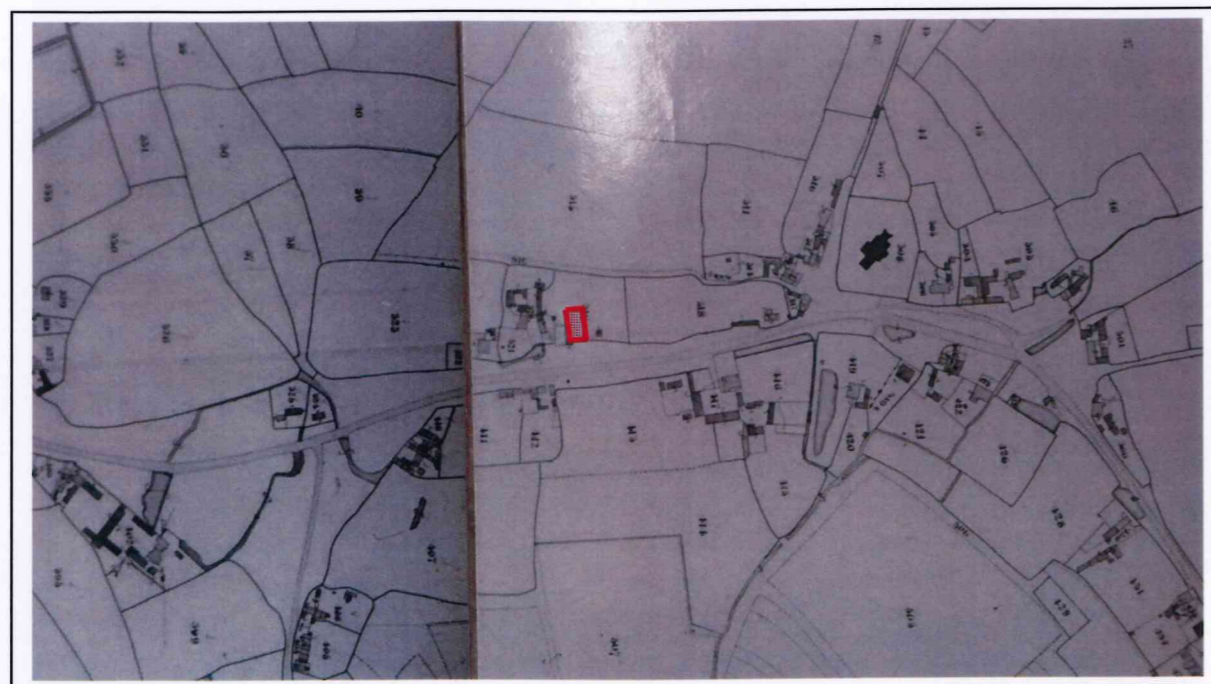
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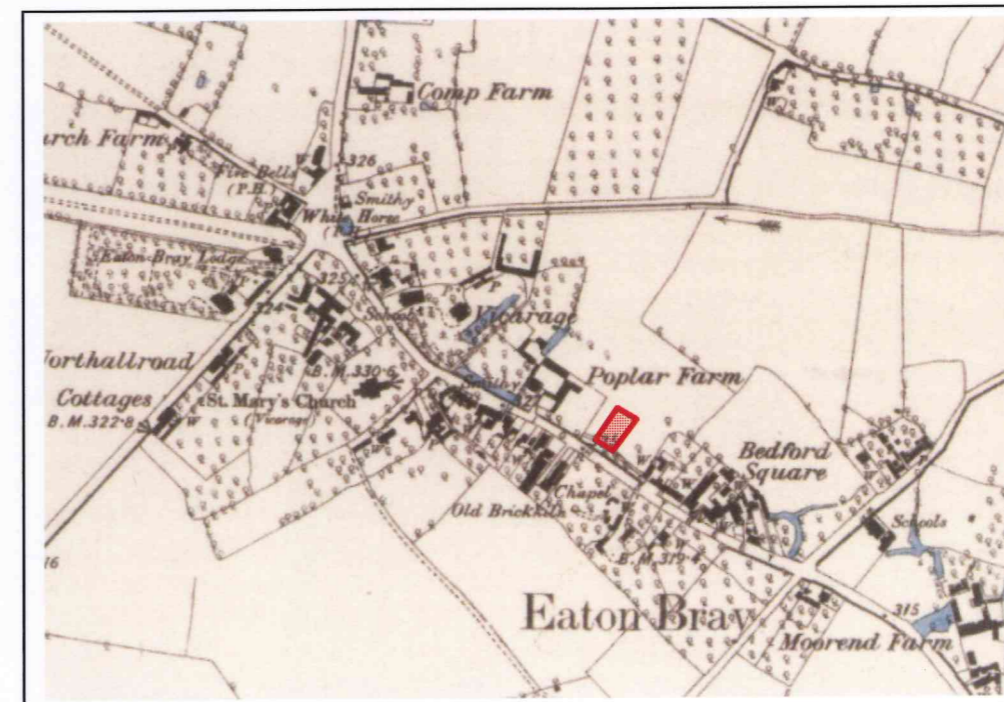
Map 1: Detail of 1819 Tithe map, showing approximate location of the site



Map 2: Detail of 1849 Tithe map, showing approximate location of the site



Map 3: Detail of 1860 Enclosure map, showing approximate location of the site



Map 4: Detail of 1887 first edition Ordnance survey map, showing approximate location of the site

Figure 2: Historical maps

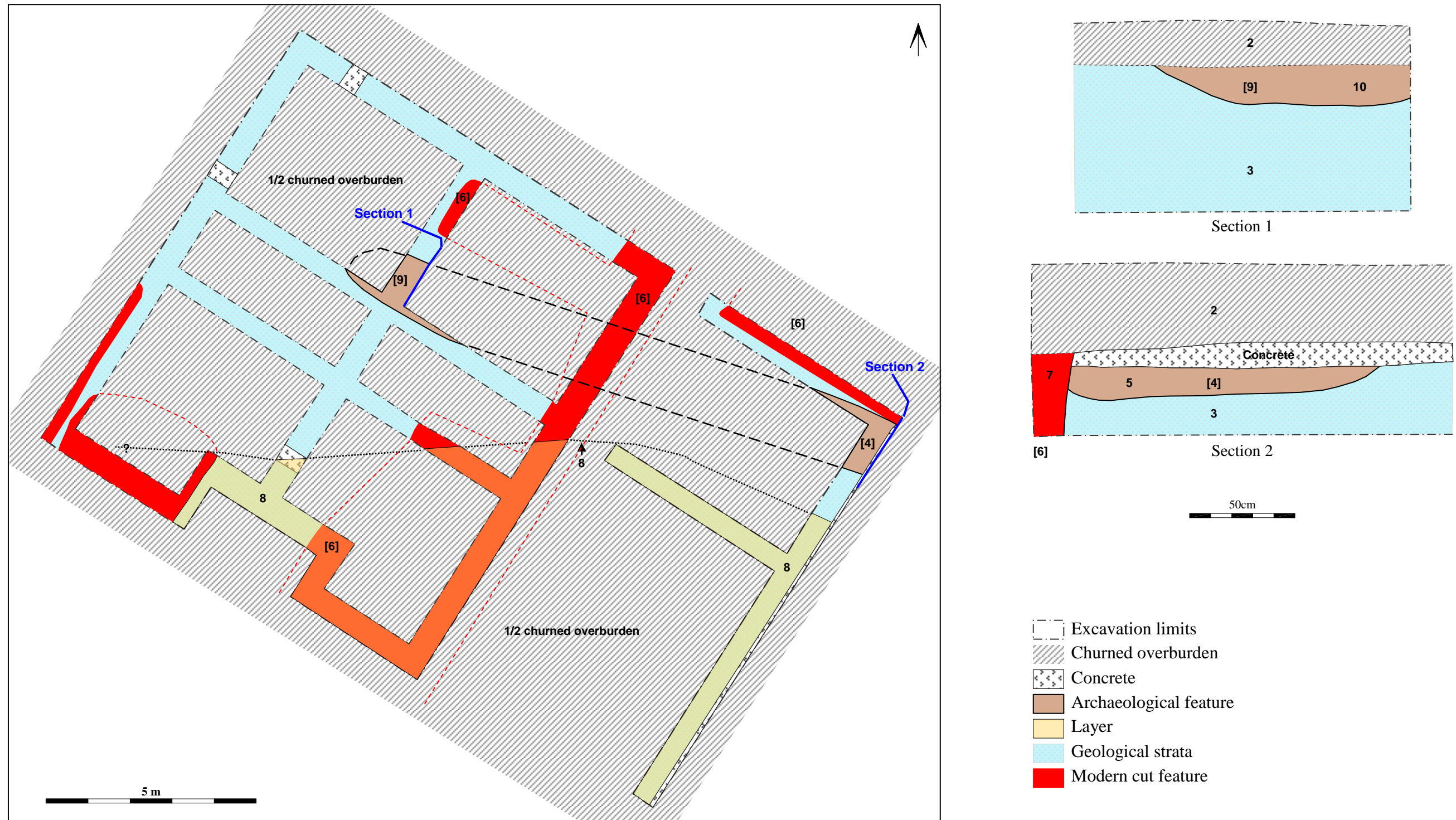


Figure 3: All-features plan and associated sections

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Image 1: General view of ditch [4] revealed at the NE corner of the footing trenches for the new buildings. The dark fill of the ditch is truncated by disturbance associated with the former Police Station. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.



Image 2: General view of western continuation of the ditch [9] revealed at intersection of two footing trenches. The ditch was truncated by disturbance associated with the former Police Station. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Figure 4: Selected images 1 and 2



Image 3: Looking southwards along the eastern wall footing trench, which shows extensive dark layer (8) getting thicker to the south, away from the camera. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.



Image 4: Continuation of extensive layer (8) revealed at the junction of intersecting wall footings trenches. The deposit survives below later disturbance. Scale 1m in 50cm divisions.

Figure 5: Selected images 3 and 4

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