

**2 STATION ROAD  
MARSTON MORETAINE  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

**Albion**  
archaeology



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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 document 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.*

*The fieldwork and report preparation was undertaken by Mark Phillips (Project Officer). The illustrations were prepared by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). The project was managed on behalf of Albion Archaeology by Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).*

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## Structure of the Report

*Section 1 provides an introduction to the project. The archaeological background to the site is presented in Section 2. A description and interpretation of the results of the investigation forms Section 3. Section 4 is a bibliography.*

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## Key Terms

Throughout this document the following terms or abbreviations are used:

HER	Historic Environment Record
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
PDA	Permitted development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



## **Non-technical Summary**

*Planning permission was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the erection of an end-of-terrace dwelling at 2 Station Road, Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire. The permission included a condition requiring a programme of archaeological works as the site lies within a landscape characterised by a high density of prehistoric to medieval settlement sites. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the developer to undertake the archaeological works.*

*The groundworks for the building foundations were excavated on 24th July 2017 under constant archaeological observation. The groundworks comprised strip footing up to 3m deep and ground reduction of 250mm for internal floor levels.*

*No archaeological features or artefacts were found revealed by the groundworks. The layers observed in the sides of the foundations consisted of topsoil and two geological layers. The upper geological layer was mid-yellow-brown sandy clay approximately 1m thick. This is probably Head, material formed by downslope movement during the Quaternary period; it forms the recorded superficial deposits beneath Marston Moretaine. The lower layer was Peterborough Member Mudstone (Lower Oxford Clay).*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 *Planning Background*

Planning permission (CB/15/03196/FULL) was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the erection of an end-of-terrace dwelling at 2 Station Road, Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire, MK43 0PH.

A heritage statement, submitted as part of the planning application, highlighted that the site lies within a landscape characterised by a high density of prehistoric to medieval settlement sites and had, therefore, the potential to contain sub-surface archaeological remains (Albion 2015).

The planning permission contained a condition (no. 2) requiring a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) approved by the local planning authority (LPA). The CBC Archaeologist (CBCA) confirmed that a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication would be required to address the planning condition.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the client to prepare a WSI (Albion 2016) and to undertake the archaeological works, the results of which are presented in this report.

### 1.2 *Site Location, Description, Topography and Geology*

Marston Moretaine lies in central Bedfordshire, c. 5.5km south of Bedford and adjacent to the A421 and Stewartby Lake and clay pits. No. 2 Station Road is the corner plot at the junction of Station Road with Bedford Road in the modern, eastern part of the village (Figure 1). The permitted development area (PDA) was a garden area set to grass at the time of the fieldwork.

Marston Moretaine lies on level ground within the Marston Vale at c.40m OD. The PDA is centred at SP 99628 41486.

Superficial geological deposits in the area covered by the village consist of Head — clay, silt, sand and gravel deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period as a result of down-slope movements caused by solifluction and hill wash. The underlying bedrock consists of Peterborough Member Mudstone, sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 161 to 165 million years ago in the Jurassic period<sup>1</sup>. It is the lower facies of the Oxford Clay Formation.

### 1.3 *Nature of the Development Works*

The development comprised the construction of a single residence next to no. 2 Station Road, forming a continuation of the existing row of terraced houses. The groundworks comprised strip footings for walls and ground reduction for the internal floors levels (Images 1 and 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Contains British Geological Survey materials ©NERC [2017]



#### **1.4 Project Objectives**

The development of the nearby Browns Close might have caused some disturbance or truncation to any surviving archaeological remains within the PDA. However, the site still retained potential for significant remains of prehistoric to medieval date. If such remains did survive on the site, the investigations had the potential to address 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).

#### **1.5 Methodology**

The methodology employed for the investigation is detailed in the WSI (Albion 2016). The site recording procedures are set out in the Albion Archaeology *Procedures Manual* (2001). Continuous archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the machine excavation of the strip footings and ground reduction. The groundworks were completed in a single day on 24th July 2017.



## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

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The archaeological and historical background to the PDA was presented in detail in a heritage statement submitted with the planning application (Albion 2015). The following represents a summary of the historic environment around the site, based on the heritage statement and a more recent HER search (ref. 201617/169) undertaken during preparation of the WSI.

### 2.1 *Prehistoric to Roman (before AD 410)*

Several sites of Iron Age to Roman occupation have been investigated at the edges of Marston Moretaine and within the Stewartby Millennium Country Park. The sites closest to the PDA are:

- HER 15321 — Land east of Bedford Road, c.350m east of the PDA. Enclosure and boundary ditches, pits and postholes. The presence of a roundhouse and hearth allowed the enclosures to be assigned both domestic as well as agricultural functions (EBD 344, 345, 343, 100).
- HER 16140 — Iron Age occupation south of the roundabout on the A421 c.400m north of the PDA. Middle to late Iron Age settlement comprising ditches, pits and postholes and a single cremation burial.
- HER 17715 — Iron Age occupation in the Millennium County Park, a site at the southern end of Station Road, c.250m south of the PDA. Dense pit clusters, ditches, roundhouses and enclosures of Iron Age date were excavated (EBD102, 665). A very small number of Roman pottery sherds suggest that settlement in this period was concentrated elsewhere, most likely the farmstead at Marston Park to the north (see below). The site was re-occupied in the Saxon period.
- HER 17713 — Iron Age and Roman pits, ditches, structural features and domestic hearths, excavated north-west of Moat Farm, c.550m west of the PDA (EBD99, 409, 593).
- HER 15321 — Extensive evidence for an Iron Age and Roman settlement was excavated in 2010 in advance of a housing development at Marston Park, c.400m east of the PDA (Albion Project number MP1571, Area 1). Investigations concentrated on a series of known cropmarks (HER 15321) and revealed a middle to late Iron Age farmstead, defined by drainage and enclosure ditches, roundhouse drip gullies and evidence for animal husbandry and agriculture. Changes in layout of boundary and enclosure ditches suggest a re-organisation of the site after the Roman invasion in AD 43 but the farmstead remained in use, largely unchanged. Contemporary burials were recorded, along with the remains of various industrial and agricultural processes.

Roman finds in the form of a brooch, knife and coin were found by metal detector south-east of St Mary's Church (HER 18451 and 18533). A further Roman coin was found west of the A421 (HER 18403) and another on The Green (HER 14676).





## **2.2 Anglo-Saxon to medieval (AD 410–1066)**

The settlement of Marston Moretaine is recorded in Domesday Book of 1086. The first part of the name derives from the Old English “Mers-ton”, meaning “marshy place” and suggests settlement from the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period.

Remains of Anglo-Saxon settlement activity were revealed during evaluation in advance of the ‘Millennium’ Country Park (HER 17715) close to the Elstow Brook. The evidence consisted of large groups of intercutting pits close to the Iron Age settlement discussed above. The pits may have had an industrial function but were backfilled with domestic waste. A further focus of activity was in a more isolated position further to the south-east and consisted of a large number of postholes believed to be fence lines.

Further investigation of the northerly settlement focus during the excavations at Marston Park in the summer of 2010 (Albion project number MP1571, Area 2) revealed further settlement evidence in the form of pits, postholes and possible sunken-featured buildings (SFBs).

An aisled hall house of a post and interrupted beam construction, dating to the Saxo-Norman period, was excavated prior to the extension of Church End Lower School, immediately to the south of the PDA (HER 16356). The building had undergone a number of internal alternations and artefacts associated with the building suggest a non-domestic function. It is possible that the building represents a public building related to the settlement further east near the Elstow Brook.

An 8th-century coin was found by metal detecting west of the A421 (HER 18402).

## **2.3 Medieval (1066–1550)**

The medieval core of the village (HER 16939) is located to the south of the modern village, immediately west of the PDA. The earliest archaeological evidence was revealed during excavations in advance of development east of Moat Farm (HER 16098). Excavations uncovered evidence for timber buildings and house platforms dating to the 12th–13th centuries. The houses were replaced in the 14th century by an enclosure and associated pits. From the 15th to the 17th century a large pond was on the site. It is thought that this change from occupation to agricultural use might have been partially driven by the construction of the adjacent Morteyne Manor (Crick 1999).

By the 14th century, Morteyne Manor had been established by a Norman family who also added their name to the village title. The family of Morteyne acquired the rights to hold a weekly market in 1324 (Page 1912).

Morteyne Manor is associated with the present-day Moat Farm (HER 53), the most complete of three moated sites within the village. The site is thought to have been built in the 14th century and to have replaced an earlier moated site now in the grounds of the rectory (HER 54). It includes a rectangular platform with a water-filled moat and a slightly later 15th-century Grade II\* listed cruck-framed building on the eastern part of the island (DBD1925).



A number of earthworks to the south-east of Moat Farm are considered to indicate an associated settlement and holloway. Together, the moated site HER 53 and the earthworks constitute a designated Scheduled Monument (DBD466).

Industrial evidence in the form of a late medieval saw pit was excavated on the Church End Lower School site (HER 16356), 200m south of the PDA. The pit was rectangular in plan with layers of sawdust and a crude wooden floor preserved in waterlogged conditions.

Of the moated site (HER 54) in the grounds of the rectory only the southern arm of the moat survives; it is water-filled. The south-western arm is visible as a dry depression in the ground.

A third moated site still exists to the south of St Mary's Church (HER 8317) but is now partly covered by a churchyard extension. It is associated with a U-shaped fish pond.

St Mary's Church (DBD1914) and its associated, separate tower (DBD3730) date from the 14th century, even though the tower is thought to have its origins as a much earlier defensive structure. Both are designated heritage assets in the form of Grade I listed buildings. A watching brief during excavations in the medieval churchyard (HER 8930) revealed four in situ burials and a single fragment of 12th–13th-century pottery (EBD 436).

Earthworks to the south of the church (HER 8329) are thought to represent the site of another part of the earlier medieval village.

The medieval village was part of a landscape that was extensively farmed through ridge and furrow cultivation in the medieval period (HER 2791). Remains of medieval furrows were revealed in all the archaeological interventions discussed above.

The isolated find of a medieval/post-medieval eylet (HER 18671) was made to the north of the PDA.

## **2.4 Post-medieval (1550–1900)**

A number of listed buildings are clustered in the core of the old village. The building within the scheduled moated site was extended and altered in the 16th century and restored in the late 19th century. It is now a Grade II\* listed building. The Old Rectory (DBD1916) to the west of The Green is an 18th-century building, reworking an earlier structure and was substantially extended in the 19th century. The building complex includes a coach house and granary/dovecote (HER 14417).

A post-medieval routeway, Green Lane (HER 8327), shown on Jefferys' 1765 map of Bedfordshire, runs past Moat Farm, but only short sections of the route have remained visible.

The site of a clay pit (HER 6673), south-west of modern Marston Moretaine, provides evidence of the post-medieval quarrying of the clay substrata of the



landscape. The clay most likely provided the raw material for the extensive brickworks in the vicinity at Marston and Stewartby.

## **2.5 Modern (1900 to present day)**

The war memorial (HER 20149) to those who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars stands at the junction of Station Road and Bedford Road and is the only modern heritage asset near the PDA. The war memorial was erected in the early 1920s and is first shown on the OS map of 1924.



### 3. RESULTS

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#### 3.1 *Introduction*

The strip footings were machine-excavated to a depth of up to 3m below existing ground level. Ground reduction for internal floor levels involved the machine removal of approximately 250mm of topsoil. The results of the fieldwork are summarised below and are illustrated in Figure 2.

No archaeological features or deposits were present in the strip footing trenches. No artefacts were collected during the fieldwork. The only material that was seen during the monitoring of machine excavation or scanning spoil heaps was modern debris within the topsoil.

#### 3.2 *Modern Deposits*

The uppermost layer was dark grey, clayey silt topsoil and turf (1).

#### 3.3 *Geological Deposits*

Two geological layers were exposed in the sides of the strip footing trenches (Figure 2, Images 3 and 4).

The upper geological layer (2) was mid-yellow-brown sandy clay, approximately 1m thick. Some variation in composition was noticeable across the area. The section at the south-west end of the PDA was sandier and the sides of the trench at this end of the site partially collapsed as they were machined out. The deposit contained occasional lenses of fine gravel in various locations, particularly in the lower part of the layer just above the boundary with layer (3).

The lower geological layer (3) was light blue-grey clay, grading into a dark grey colour towards the base of the trench. The upper surface of this deposit lay at 1–1.2m below the ground surface.

#### 3.4 *Interpretation*

The site is covered by a relatively thin topsoil layer (1), which was probably disturbed during housing construction in the mid-20th century and has been mixed by subsequent garden activity.

The geological layer (2) seen in the upper part of the trenches probably forms part of the superficial deposits recorded from the area. These consist of Head formed in the Quaternary period through downslope movement from the higher ground surrounding the Vale of Marston. The geological layer (3) in the lower part of the trenches is Peterborough Member Mudstone (Lower Oxford Clay), which was used for brick production in the nearby Stewartby brickworks throughout the 20th century.

No archaeological remains were revealed by the groundworks associated with the development.



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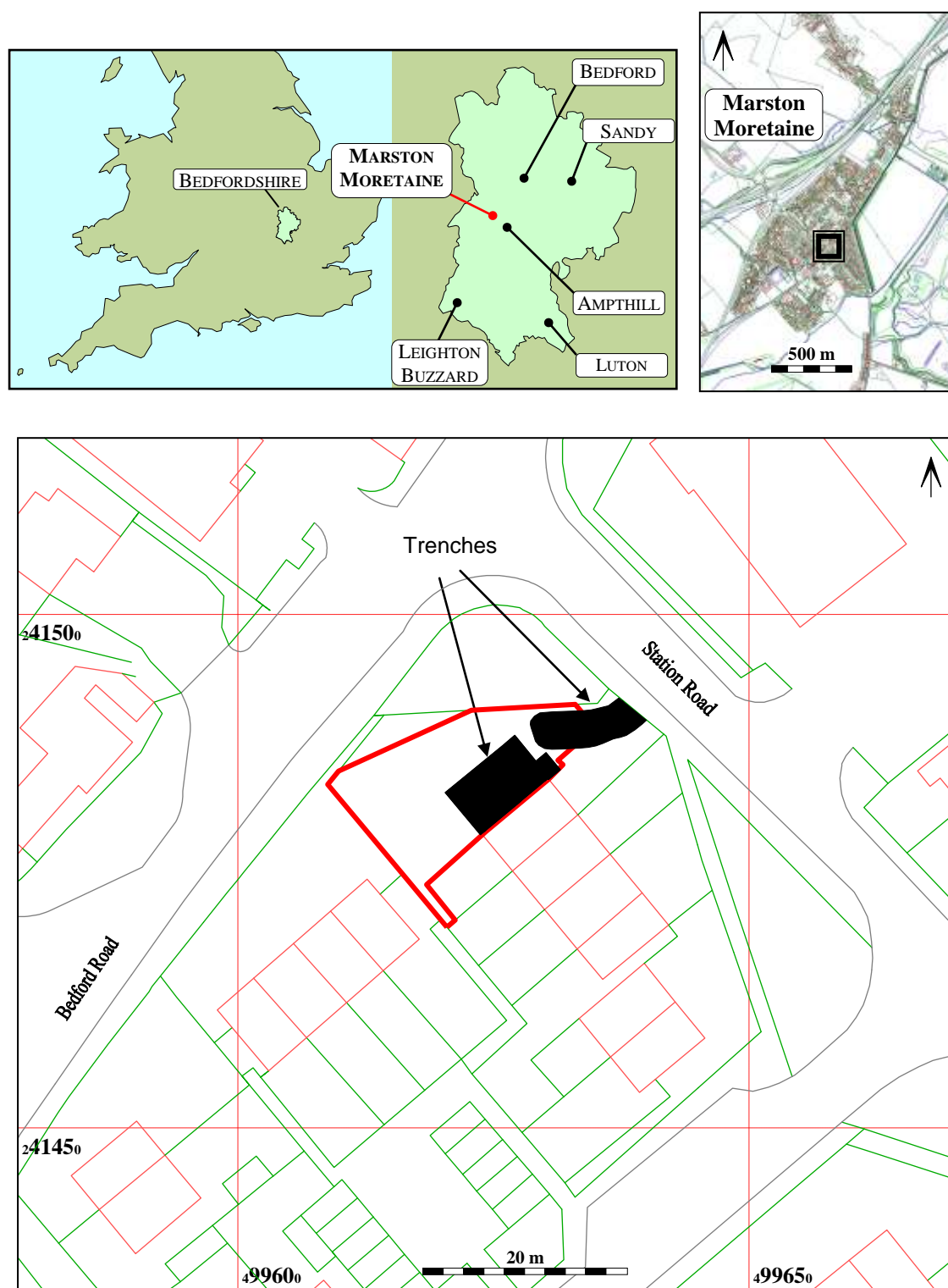
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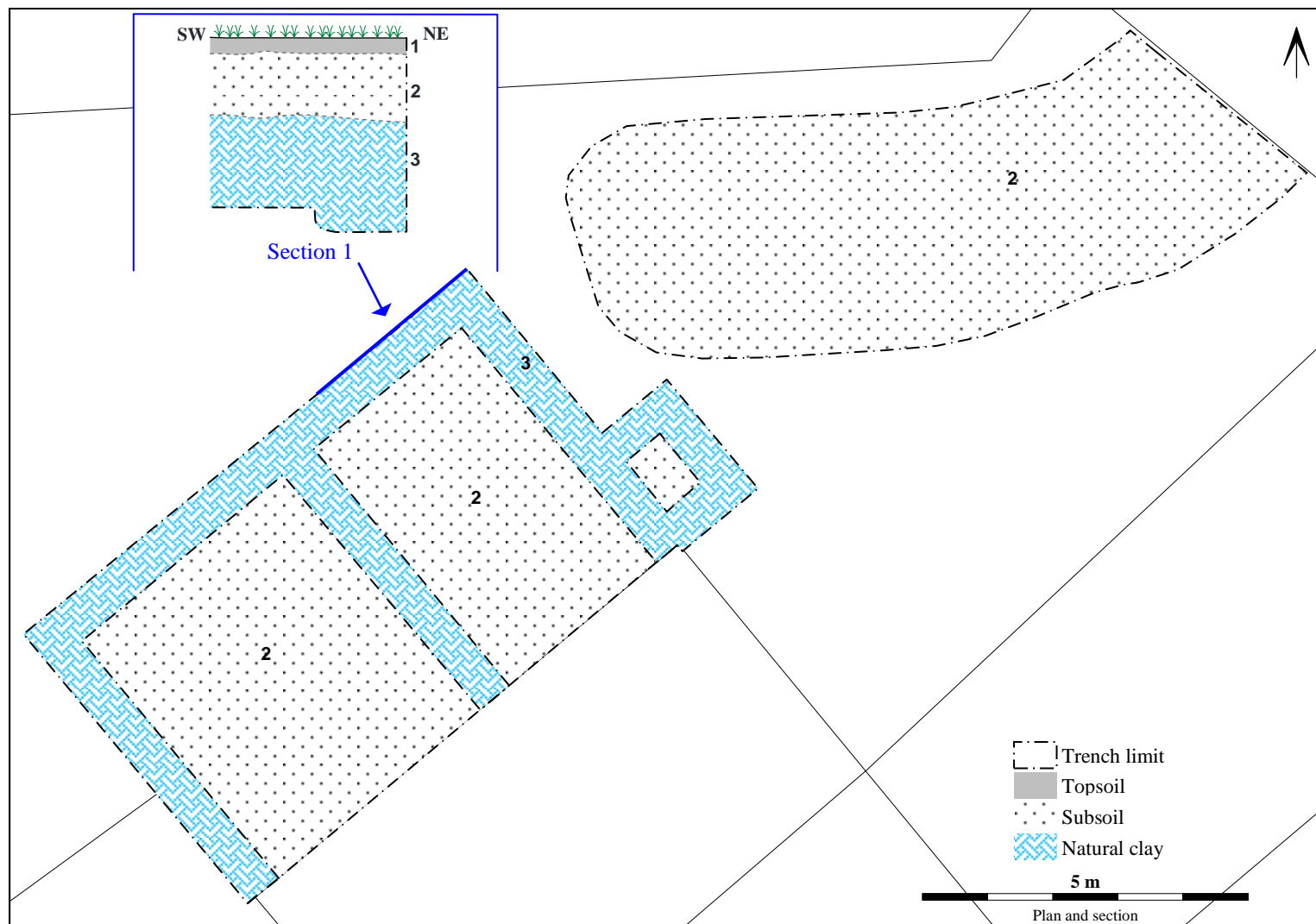
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**Figure 1: Site location plan**

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**Figure 2: All-features plan**





**Image 1:** Site access, looking west

Shows topsoil strip for site access off Station Road



**Image 2:** Completed foundation trenches, looking west





**Image 3:** North-east corner of foundation trenches

Shows sequence of geological deposits with yellow brown sandy clay (2) above blue-grey Oxford Clay in the base of the trench, which is 3m deep



**Image 4:** South-west end of foundation trenches

Shows slightly lighter yellow, sandy part of layer (2) above Oxford Clay in the base of the trench, which is 2.4m deep

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