

**ROUNDWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL
ROUNDWOOD PARK
HARPENDEN
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TEST-PIT EVALUATION**

Albion
archaeology



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TEST-PIT EVALUATION**

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Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Allan King	Jeremy Oetgen	Drew Shottliff

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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 Kier Property and monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Simon Wood, Hertfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Advisor. The fieldwork was undertaken by Allan King (Archaeological Supervisor) and Petros Fountoukidis, Sabine Pescheck and Jonathan Nilsson (Archaeological Technicians). This report has been prepared by Allan King with figures produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

Albion Archaeology
 St Mary's Church
 St Mary's Street
 Bedford, MK42 0AS
 ☎: 0300 300 8141
 E-mail: office@albion-arch.com
www.albionarchaeology.co.uk

Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	26/02/2019	n/a

Key Terms

Throughout this project design the following terms or abbreviations are used:

CifA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HEA	Historic Environment Advisor for Hertfordshire County Council
NGR	National Grid Reference
PDA	Permitted development area
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 3rd edn, 2017 Albion Archaeology



Non-Technical Summary

A planning application (5/3117-18 (CC0073)) for the erection of a single-storey staff-room building at Roundwood Primary School, Harpenden, AL5 3AD, was granted by Hertfordshire County Council. As the permitted development area (PDA) lies in an area of known Roman occupation, the Historic Environment Advisor for Hertfordshire County Council (HEA) advised that an archaeological evaluation was necessary in order to identify and investigate the site's archaeological potential and significance. Due to site constraints the HEA advised that the initial excavation of two test-pits on the PDA would be a suitable method by which to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site.

The evaluation took place between 18th and 20th February 2019. Two test-pits, measuring 2m x 2m, were manually excavated. The locations of both test-pits were altered to avoid known services and to move them out from under tree canopies. Excavation of Test-pit 1 was curtailed when a previously unknown gas pipe and water main were discovered beneath a make-up layer.

The only feature identified within the PDA was a modern pit that may be associated with the construction of Roundwood Primary School. The absence of any other features or artefacts suggests that the Roman activity identified c.100m to the west does not continue into the PDA. In addition, none of the archaeological remains recorded in the Hertfordshire HER continued into the PDA. The PDA has already been subjected to considerable modern disturbance as a result of modern services, the footings of the existing play apparatus and root disturbance from small trees in the area; this suggests that there is a very low probability that any unidentified archaeological remains exist within the PDA.

The remains identified within the site are of negligible significance and have no potential to address regional archaeological research agenda. The findings of the test-pit evaluation also suggest that the development of the site will have no significant archaeological impact.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Planning Background*

A planning application (5/3117-18 (CC0073)) for the erection of a single-storey staff-room building at Roundwood Primary School, Harpenden, AL5 3AD, was granted by Hertfordshire County Council.

As the permitted development area (PDA) lies in an area of known Roman occupation, the Historic Environment Advisor (HEA) for Hertfordshire County Council advised that an archaeological evaluation was necessary in order to identify and investigate the site's archaeological potential and significance. Due to site constraints the HEA advised that the initial excavation of two test-pits on the PDA would be a suitable method by which to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to prepare a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for the archaeological test-pit evaluation (Albion Archaeology 2019) and to carry out the fieldwork.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

Harpenden is a town situated in the St Albans City District of Hertfordshire, c.7km north of St Albans and c.8km south of Luton. The A5 is located 4km to the west of Harpenden. The PDA is situated on the west side of the town, off Roundwood Park Road.

The PDA is centred on NGR TL 12315 14669 and comprises a grassed area in the grounds of Roundwood Primary School. The main school building is positioned immediately north of the PDA and to the south lies a tree-lined avenue known as The Nicky Line.

The underlying geology comprises Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation (undifferentiated) chalk. Overlying this is Clay-with-Flints Formation clay, silt, sand and gravel¹ associated with the River Lea that defines the eastern boundary of Harpenden.

1.3 *Archaeological and Historical Background*

The Extensive Urban Survey for Harpenden and Wheathampstead (Thompson 2002) indicates that Harpenden lies within an area rich in archaeological remains dating from the prehistoric to post-medieval periods. The heritage assets recorded within a 1km-radius of the PDA provide evidence of human activity dating to the late Iron Age, Roman and post-medieval periods.

Activity spanning the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic period in Harpenden has been characterised by worked flint scatters found in gravels associated with the River Lea and along the margins of the river. During the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods settlement evidence indicated a shifted away from a purely

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



riverine distribution onto higher ground. So far, no prehistoric heritage assets have been recorded in the vicinity of the PDA and the nearest findspot, a polished Neolithic axe (HER 663), is situated c.1.3km to the north-west.

Evidence of activity during the late Iron Age and Roman periods is far more abundant in Harpenden, compared to earlier periods, but so far no settlement focus has been identified.

Roman activity has been identified c.100m to the west of the PDA during monitoring of a new sports hall in the grounds of Roundwood Primary School. Here two ditches, a pit and a spread of mortar (HER 9737) were identified. Roman pottery and a gaming counter (HER 674) have also been recorded c.630m to the north-east of the PDA and quernstones c.900m to the east (HER 2886). Most recently a site containing ditches, pits, numerous postholes and Roman pottery was investigated c.200m WNW of the PDA. Also present was a quantity of Roman brick and tile indicating the likelihood of buildings being present (Dr Simon Wood pers. comms.)

The site of a Roman mausoleum has been recorded c.1km south-west of the PDA at Rothamsted Experimental Station (HER 58). It comprised an almost square enclosure defined by a flint rubble wall and external ditch. In the centre of the enclosure was a circular masonry structure. Two 2nd-century cremation burials were associated with the site and fragments of a draped figure in limestone. Interestingly, a ditch containing late Iron Age pottery was found underlying the circular structure and indicates the long duration of activity in this location.

Further Roman pottery (HER 9726) has been found in fields to the north of the mausoleum and crop-mark ditches parallel to the north-east side of the mausoleum have also been recorded (HER 4987).

No Anglo-Saxon heritage assets have so far been recorded in the vicinity of the PDA, but the A1081 Luton Road, c.870m to the east of the PDA, has been recorded as a potential Saxon routeway linking Wheathampstead and Kinsbourne—the likely place of a high-status Saxon burial (Thompson 2002, 6; fig. 3). During the medieval period settlement in the Harpenden area was focused on scattered ‘Ends’ and ‘Greens’. At this time Harpenden lay in the parish of Wheathampstead, the latter being one of the few nucleated settlements in south-west Hertfordshire (Thompson 2002, 7). It is likely that the PDA formed outlying fields during the medieval period; development of this area did not begin until the mid-20th century following the construction of the Harpenden to Hemel Hempstead Railway (HER 9809).

The former railway line, now known as the ‘Nicky Way’, forms the southern boundary of Roundwood Primary School and lies c.10m to the south of the PDA. It was a branch of the Midland Railway, running from Harpenden Central station to the gasworks near Boxmoor on the LNWR. The HER records that the line was opened in 1877, was taken over by the Midland Railway in 1886 and closed in 1947. The line originally emerged from the



Midland main line from the north and was not accessible from Harpenden station until a new spur from the south was built, opening in 1888. The route of the 'Nicky Line' survives in part, as a path for cyclists and pedestrians.

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal purpose of the archaeological test-pit evaluation was to recover information on the:

- location, extent, nature, and date of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the PDA;
- integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits that might be present within the PDA.
- nature of palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

This information will be used by the HEA and the LPA to evaluate the significance of the potential impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains that might survive within the site.

The results of the archaeological works were examined in this report in relation to their local, regional and national context and have been assessed against the published research frameworks for the region. The relevant documents for the region are provided by *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties* (Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Hertfordshire and Essex) (Glazebrook 1997, Brown and Glazebrook 2000) and *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below; a full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2019).

2.1 Standards

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

Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (3rd edn, 2017).
ALGAO East	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (Gurney 2003)
Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation, 2nd edition</i> (English Heritage 2011)
CIfA	<i>By-laws and 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)

2.2 Archaeological Test-pits

The evaluation took place between 18th and 20th February 2019. Two test-pits, measuring 2m x 2m, were manually excavated. The locations of both test-pits were altered to avoid known services and to move them out from under tree canopies.

Excavation of Test-pit 1 was curtailed when a previously unknown gas pipe and water main were discovered beneath a make-up layer covering the area. Test-pit 2 was excavated to undisturbed geological deposits.

All excavation and recording was carried out by experienced Albion staff. All features and deposits were assigned a unique context number commencing at 100 for Test-pit 1 and 200 for Test-pit 2. Each test-pit was subsequently drawn and photographed as appropriate.



3. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All features and deposits found during the investigations are described below and shown on Figures 3-9. Detailed information on features and deposits revealed during the investigation can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

The overburden in both test-pits consisted of topsoil, a make-up layer and buried subsoil (layers (100–102) and (201–201) respectively). Test-pit 1 was excavated to the top of the buried subsoil at a depth of 0.60m before excavation was curtailed for safety reasons (see Section 2.2); the undisturbed geological stratum was not reached. Topsoil was between 0.21–0.28m thick and consisted of dark grey-brown silty loam with a moderate amount of stone inclusions.

The topsoil sealed a make-up layer, presumably laid down to level up the playgrounds around the school building at the time of its construction. This layer was comprised of re-deposited topsoil mixed with waste building material, including bricks, concrete and aggregate (not collected) and was between 0.26–0.39m thick. There was a higher concentration of waste building material in this layer than in Test-pit 1. It overlay a buried subsoil, 0.26m–0.34m thick, which consisted of mid-yellow-brown sandy silt, with a moderate amount of stone inclusions.

Test-pit 2 was excavated down to the top of undisturbed geological deposits (203), which consisted of mid-yellow-orange silty sand.

3.3 Features

A modern pit [204] was recorded along the northern edge of Test-pit 2, with one straight side visible on a roughly east–west alignment; it was cut through the make-up layer. It was not excavated below the level of the geological strata. The lowest fill identified (205) comprised dark-grey silty sand mixed with waste building material, including bricks, ceramic tiles, large stones and concrete rubble (not collected). The upper fills (206) and (207) consisted of re-deposited topsoil and geological deposits used as backfill.



4. CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS

4.1 Conclusions

The only feature identified within the PDA was a modern pit [204] that is most likely associated with the construction of Roundwood Primary School.

The absence of any other features or artefacts suggests that the Roman activity identified *c.*100m to the west does not continue into the PDA. In addition, none of the archaeological remains recorded in the Hertfordshire HER continued into the PDA.

In any event, the PDA has already been subjected to considerable modern disturbance as a result of:

- numerous modern services, including those detected by the client's service scan and those revealed by excavation of Test-pit 1;
- the modern pit in Test-pit 2;
- the footings of the existing play apparatus;
- root disturbance from small trees in the area.

As a result there is a very low probability that any unidentified archaeological remains exist within the PDA.

4.2 Significance of the Results

The remains identified within the site are of negligible archaeological significance and have no potential to address any archaeological research agenda. The findings of the test-pit evaluation also suggest that the development of the site will have no significant archaeological impact.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albion Archaeology, 2017 *Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork* (Unpubl. rep. 3rd edn.)
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6. APPENDIX 1: TEST-PIT SUMMARY

6.1 Test-pit 1

Max Dimensions: Length: 2.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.6 m. Max: 0.6 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 12317; Northing: 14676)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 12318; Northing: 14679)

Reason: Archaeological evaluation

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown silty loam moderate small-medium stones . 0.21m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Make up layer	Compact mid red brown sandy gravel . Mixed with light pink sandy rubble and mid-grey-brown silty sand with brick, tarmac and concrete rubble throughout. 0.39m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Buried subsoil	Friable mid yellow brown sandy silt moderate small-medium stones . Not excavated due to the presence of a gas main.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.2 Test-pit 2

Max Dimensions: Length: 2.00 m. Width: 2.00 m. Depth to Archaeology Min: 0.65 m. Max: 0.79 m.

Co-ordinates: OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 12319; Northing: 14672)

OS Grid Ref.: TL (Easting: 12321; Northing: 14674)

Reason: Archaeological evaluation

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
200	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown silty loam moderate small-medium stones . 0.28m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
201	Make up layer	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt frequent small-medium stones, moderate large stones . With moderate brick rubble. 0.26m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	Buried subsoil	Friable mid yellow brown sandy silt moderate small-medium stones . 0.34m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Natural	Compact mid yellow orange silty sand occasional small-medium stones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	Modern intrusion	NW-SE sides; near vertical dimensions: min breadth 0.68m, min depth 0.67m, min length 2.m . Not fully excavated. Shape in plan uncertain, possibly linear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	Backfill	Compact dark grey silty sand . Mixed with brick, large stones and concrete rubble. 0.09m thick to limit of excavation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	Backfill	Compact mid yellow orange silty sand occasional small-medium stones . With small pockets of clay, and patches of mid-grey-brown sandy silt. 0.43m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	Backfill	Friable dark grey brown sandy silt moderate small-medium stones . With patches of mid-yellow-orange sand. 0.25m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



7. APPENDIX 2: HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address: Roundwood Primary School, Roundwood Park, Harpenden		
County: Hertfordshire	District: St Albans	
Village/Town: Harpenden	Parish: Harpenden	
Planning application reference: 5/3117-18 (CC0073)		
HER Enquiry reference: n/a		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Hertfordshire County Council		
Nature of application: Construction of staff-room building		
Present land use: Grassed school playground		
Size of application area: 100m ²	Size of area investigated: 8m ²	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 1232 1467		
Site code (if applicable): RS3473		
Site director/Organization: Jeremy Oetgen / Albion Archaeology		
Type of work: Archaeological test-pit evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 18/02/2019	Finish: 20/02/2019
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: Verulamium Museum		
Related HER Nos: n/a	Periods represented: Modern	
<p>Relevant previous summaries/reports:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Albion Archaeology, 2019 Roundwood Primary School, Roundwood Park, Harpenden, Hertfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Test-pit Evaluation (Unpubl. rep. 2019/05)</i></p>		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>A planning application (5/3117-18 (CC0073)) for the erection of a single-storey staff-room building at Roundwood Primary School, Harpenden, AL5 3AD, was granted by Hertfordshire County Council. As the permitted development area (PDA) lies in an area of known Roman occupation, the Historic Environment Advisor for Hertfordshire County Council (HEA) advised that an archaeological evaluation was necessary in order to identify and investigate the site's archaeological potential and significance. Due to site constraints the HEA advised that the initial excavation of two test-pits on the PDA would be a suitable method by which to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site.</p> <p>Two test-pits, measuring 2m x 2m, were manually excavated. Excavation of Test-pit 1 was curtailed when a previously unknown gas pipe and water main were discovered beneath a make-up layer.</p> <p>The only feature identified within the PDA was a modern pit that may be associated with the construction of Roundwood Primary School. The absence of any other features or artefacts suggests that the Roman activity identified c.100m to the west does not continue into the PDA. The PDA has already been subjected to considerable modern disturbance as a result of modern services, the footings of the existing play apparatus and root disturbance from small trees in the area; this suggests that there is a very low probability that any unidentified archaeological remains exist within the PDA.</p> <p>The remains identified within the site are of negligible significance and have no potential to address regional archaeological research agenda. The findings of the test-pit</p>		



evaluation also suggest that the development of the site will have no significant archaeological impact

Author of summary: Allan King

Date of summary: 26/02/2019



8. APPENDIX 3: OASIS SUMMARY FORM

OASIS ID: albionar1-340077

Project details

Project name	Roundwood Primary School, Harpenden
Short description of the project	A planning application for the erection of a single-storey staff-room building at Roundwood Primary School, Harpenden, was granted by Hertfordshire County Council. As the permitted development area lies in an area of known Roman occupation, the Historic Environment Advisor for Hertfordshire County Council advised that an archaeological evaluation was necessary in order to identify and investigate the site's archaeological potential and significance. Due to site constraints it was advised that the initial excavation of two test-pits would be a suitable method by which to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site. Two test-pits, measuring 2m x 2m, were manually excavated. The locations of both test-pits were altered to avoid known services and to move them out from under tree canopies. Excavation of Test-pit 1 was curtailed when a previously unknown gas pipe and water main were discovered beneath a make-up layer. The only feature identified was a modern pit that may be associated with the construction of Roundwood Primary School. The absence of any other features or artefacts suggests that the Roman activity identified c.100m to the west does not continue. The area has already been subjected to considerable modern disturbance as a result of modern services, the footings of the existing play apparatus and root disturbance from small trees in the area.
Project dates	Start: 18-02-2019 End: 20-02-2019
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	RS3473 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Monument type	PIT Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Test Pits"
Development type	Small-scale extensions (e.g. garages, porches, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (e.g. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	HERTFORDSHIRE ST ALBANS HARPENDEN Roundwood Primary School, Harpenden
Study area	8 square metres
Site coordinates	TL 12315 14669 51.818890965646 -0.370319270208 51 49 08 N 000 22 13 W Point



Project creators

Name of Organisation	Albion Archaeology
Project brief originator	No Brief
Project design originator	Albion Archaeology
Project director/manager	Jeremy Oetgen
Project supervisor	Allan King

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Verulamium Museum
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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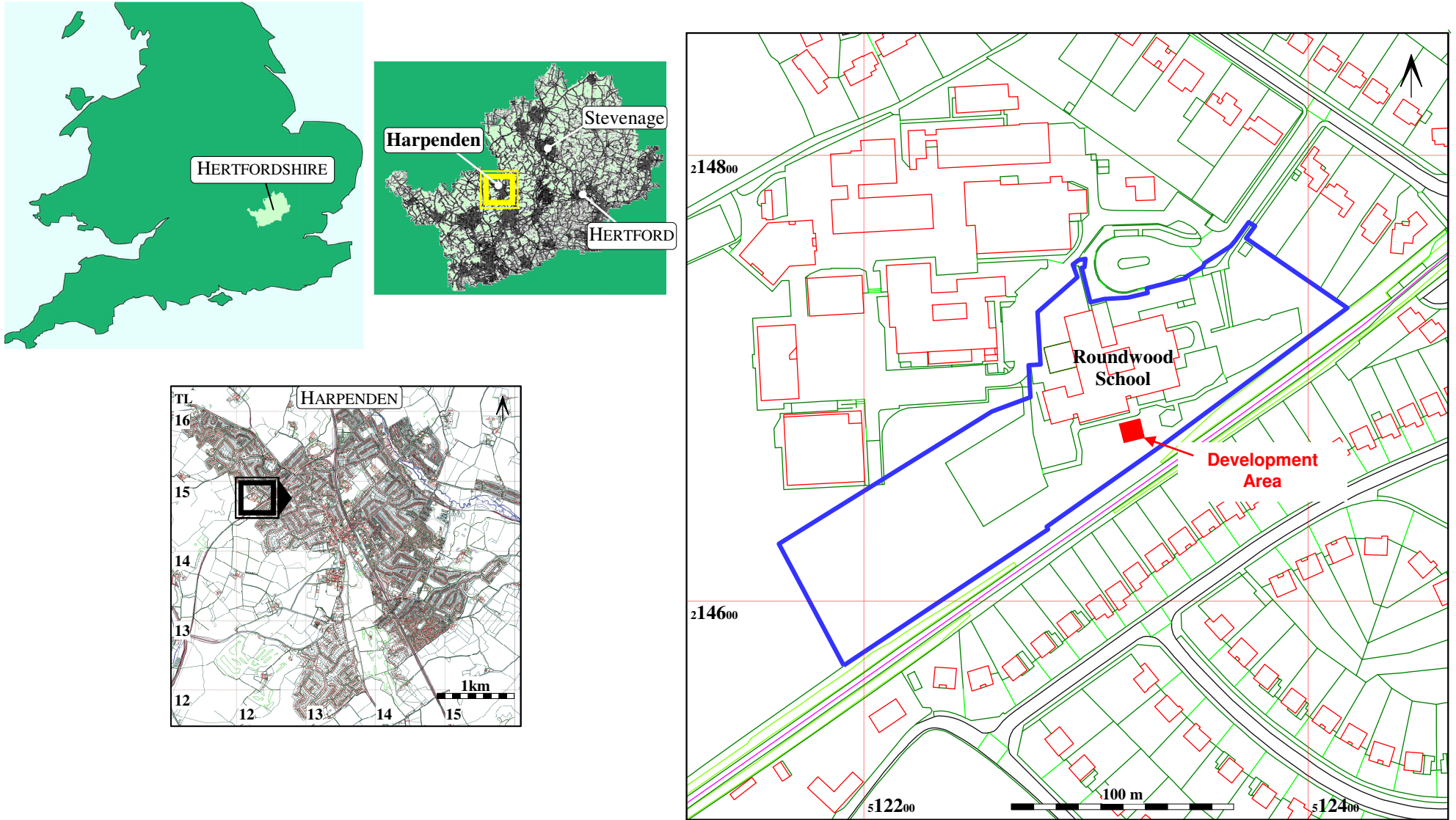


Figure 1: Site location plan

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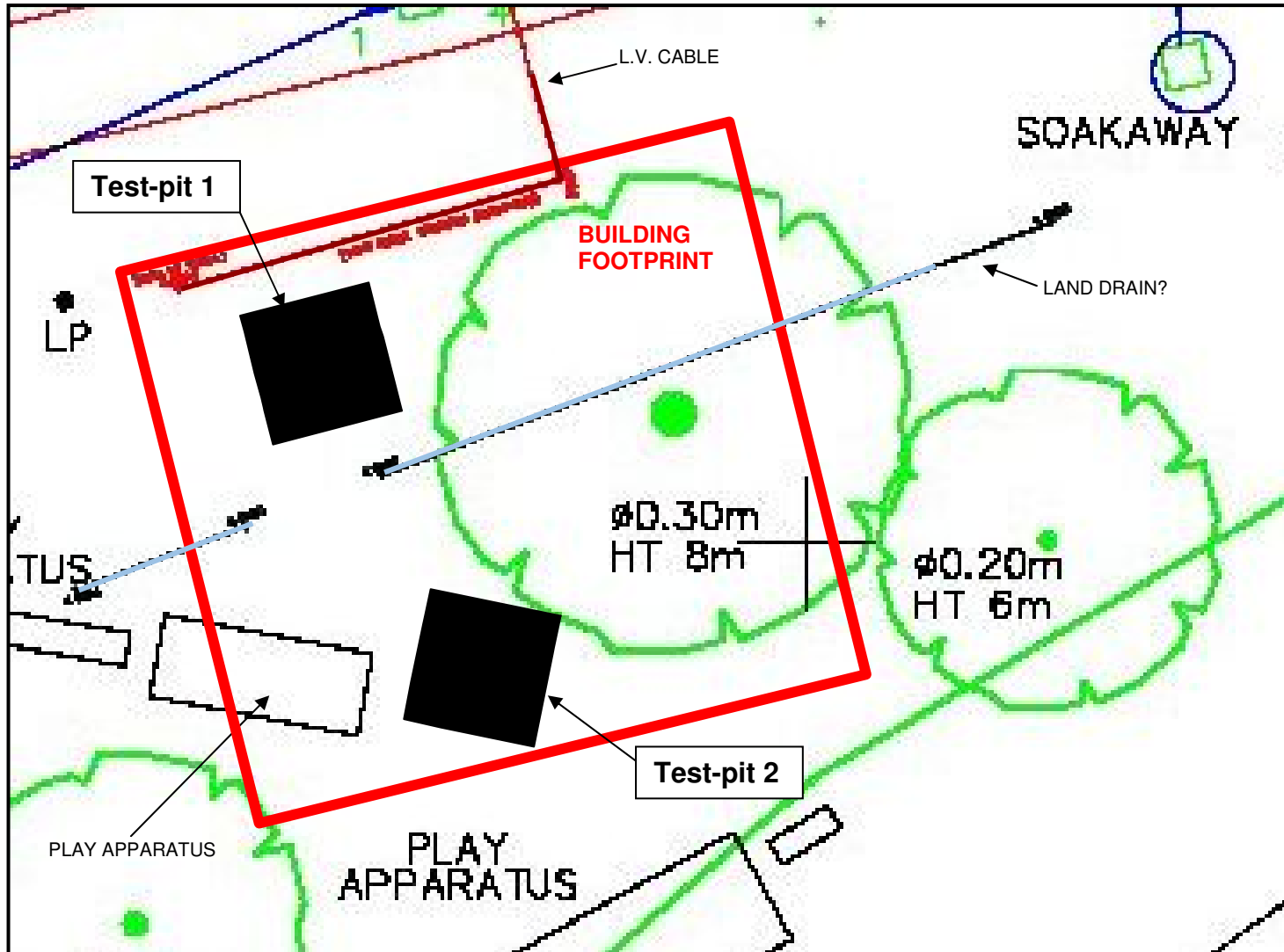


Figure 2: Test-pit locations

(Based on Kier drawing 490/1003)

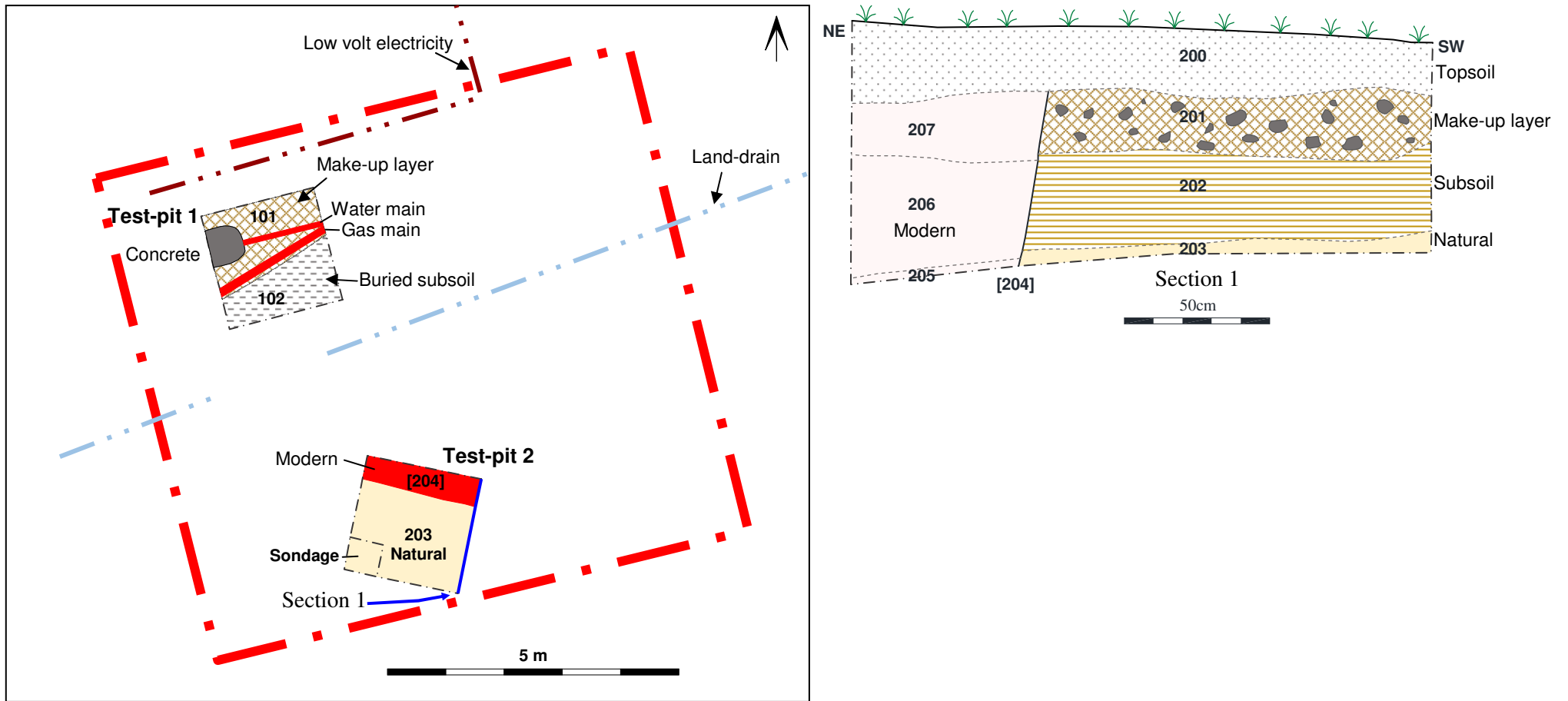


Figure 3: All-features plan and section



Figure 4: Test-pit 1, looking north

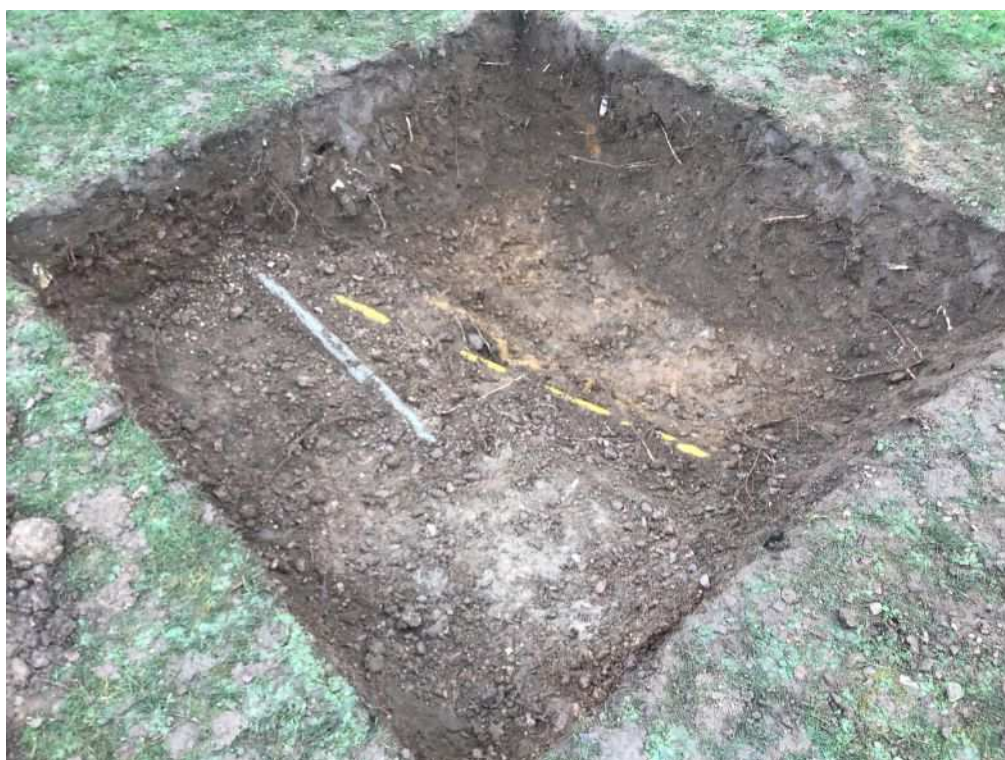


Figure 5: Test-pit 1, looking south-east



Figure 6: Test-pit 2, looking west



Figure 7: Test-pit 2, looking south



Figure 8: Test-pit 2, looking east



Figure 9: Test-pit 2, looking north

Central
Bedfordshire

Albion
archaeology



Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church,
St Mary's Street,
Bedford,
MK42 0AS

Telephone 0300 300 8141
Email office@albion-arch.com
www.albion-arch.com

