

VILLAGE FARM
HIGH STREET
SUTTON
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 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 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.

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Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
HER	Historic Environment Record
NHLE	National Heritage list for England
PDA	Permitted development area
SHARM	Scheme of Heritage Asset Resource Management



Non-technical Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) granted planning permission (CB/17/02622/REG3) and listed building consent (CB/17/02625/LB) for residential conversion of existing curtilage-listed agricultural buildings to three dwellings at Village Farm, High Street, Sutton, in Bedfordshire. The site is centred on NGR TL 2241/4741.

A condition requiring the implementation of a written scheme of heritage asset resource management (SHARM) was attached to the planning permission. The CBC Archaeologist confirmed that the following stages of work were required to address the condition:

- A programme of building recording of the farm buildings that are being converted, conforming to Level 2 of the Historic England guidance on building recording (Historic England 2016).*
- Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on groundworks associated with the development.*

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to produce the SHARM (Albion 2019) and to carry out the works. The fieldwork was completed between 16th and 21st May 2019.

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during machine excavation of service trenches and drainage works. These were undertaken in the yard enclosed by the farm buildings and immediately to the north of the farm buildings where a soakaway pit was constructed.

No archaeological evidence was found for any activity predating the construction of the 19th-century farm buildings. No artefacts were recovered.

In the yard area the ground appears to have been subject to significant disturbance in the relatively recent past, probably associated with the 20th-century use of the farm. The lowest deposit was a thin layer of organic black sandy silt found at a depth of 0.7m. This could have been farmyard manure, possibly remnants of a deep layer of animal trample. Above this was a layer of mixed, re-deposited geological clay. The upper layers in the yard were a dark topsoil-type deposit, containing stones and broken roofing slate debris. These upper layers, based on the uneven distribution of the stones and building debris, appear to be a mixed dump deposit. Overall, the ground surface in the yard was significantly lower than the floor levels in the surrounding buildings. Along the south side of the yard for example there was a step up of 0.5m into the former cow sheds along this side of the yard. The evidence suggests that the farmyard was cleared at some time in the recent past, which involved significant ground disturbance and a reduction in the finished ground level.

Investigations in a trench immediately north of the farm buildings identified an area of made ground with layers of gravel, ash and brick rubble. This was probably modern hardstanding for farm machinery or part of a track. It lay above layers of subsoil and undisturbed geological deposits.



The project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum under accession no. BEDFM 2019.10. This report will be uploaded onto the OASIS website under reference number albionar1-342973.



1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

1.1 **Planning Background**

Central Bedfordshire Council granted planning permission (CB/17/02622/REG3) and listed building consent (CB/17/02625/LB) for residential conversion of existing curtilage-listed agricultural buildings to three dwellings at Village Farm, High Street, Sutton in Bedfordshire.

The following planning condition (No.8), covering heritage-related issues, was attached to the planning permission:

No development shall commence until a written scheme of heritage asset resource management; that includes the provision for archaeological investigation, post excavation analysis, building recording 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 heritage asset resource management scheme.

Reason: This condition is pre-commencement as a failure to secure an appropriate archaeological investigation and building recording 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.)

This is a pre-commencement condition as it is important to ensure that a written scheme for archaeological investigation is agreed before the development begins.

The CBC Archaeologist (CBCA) confirmed that the following stages of work were required to address condition no. 8:

- A programme of building recording of the farm buildings that are being converted, conforming to Level 2 of the Historic England guidance on building recording (Historic England 2016).
- Archaeological observation, investigation and recording on groundworks associated with the development.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to prepare a written scheme of heritage asset resource management (SHARM), which was submitted to and approved by the LPA (Albion Archaeology 2019a) and to carry out the archaeological investigation and historic building recording. The results of the archaeological work form the subject of the present report.

1.2 **Location, Topography and Geology**

The village of Sutton is located in the east of Bedfordshire, within the area covered by the unitary authority of Central Bedfordshire Council, c.5km east



of the town of Sandy. Village Farm is located approximately mid-way along the High Street, on the north side of the road (Figure 1).

Along its south side the permitted development area (PDA) is bordered by the High Street. Modern housing extends up to the east side of the site. On the west side is the former farmhouse and the land to the north is open land or farmland. The former farmhouse is grade II listed (Village Farmhouse, NHLE1114087) and the PDA is located in the eastern part of the Sutton Conservation Area. It is centred on OS grid reference TL 2241/4741.

The buildings on the PDA consist of 19th-century farm buildings in yellow gault brick. They are arranged in a regular courtyard arrangement, partly open on its west side where it faces the farmhouse.

Sutton is on approximately level ground at the top of a roughly north-south aligned ridge, which forms part of the Greensand Ridge. The PDA lies at *c.*40m OD. The underlying bedrock is Woburn Sands Formation sandstone formed in the Cretaceous Period. The overlying superficial deposits are Oadby Member diamicton, glacial deposits formed by the action of ice and meltwater during the Quaternary Period¹.

1.3 Nature of the Development

The development involved the repair and residential conversion of the existing farm buildings to form three dwellings. Groundworks with the potential to impact on archaeological deposits comprised trenching for services and drainage within the courtyard area and a large trench to the north of the buildings for the installation of soakaway crates.

1.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

The archaeological and historical background to the site was examined in a heritage assessment that was submitted with the planning application (Allen Archaeology 2017). The conclusions of the heritage assessment and the latest information in the Historic Environment Record (HER) and National Heritage List for England (NHLE) are as follows:

- Cropmarks (HER 2941) in fields to the north-east of the village including probable features of prehistoric date (ring ditches, pit alignments and rectangular enclosures).
- No nearby evidence of Roman activity.
- An entry for Sutton in Domesday Book suggests probable origins in at least the late Anglo-Saxon period.
- There is a suggestion that medieval settlement may have been focussed towards the west end of the present-day historic village. At this end there is a motte known as John O'Gaunt's Hill (NHLE 1005403), indicating a manorial centre, the medieval parish church (NHLE 1138081) and a medieval packhorse bridge (NHLE 1004501).

¹ Contains British Geological Survey materials ©NERC [2019]



- In the post-medieval period there was a landscaped park to the north-west of the village, Sutton Park (HER 7005), which was associated with a former Elizabethan house belonging to the Burgoyne family.
- Evidence from the post-medieval and modern (post-1750) periods consist mostly of historic buildings located along the High Street within the Sutton historic village core (HER 17165). A number of the buildings are listed, including the Grade II listed Village Farmhouse (NHLE 1114087) located on the west side of the site.
- The 19th-century farm buildings at Village Farm are themselves recorded as HER 20128.

1.5 Project Objectives

The development site is located within the historic core of the village, the extent of which is indicated by historical maps and the location of historic buildings. The extent and density of the medieval settlement and if it extended into the PDA were uncertain. It is also unknown if surviving archaeological remains from other periods might be present on the site.

The relevant research frameworks for the area are set out in Glazebrook (1997), Brown and Glazebrook (2000), Oake et al. 2007 and Medlycott 2011.

A number of research objectives have been identified relating to the origins, development, settlement hierarchy and the pattern of medieval rural settlement (Oake 2007, 14), (Medlycott 2011, 70).

Bedfordshire was at the forefront in the development of planned farmsteads under the active promotion of the Dukes of Bedford. This type of farmstead has been identified as worthy of study in itself and for its impact on evolving trends in agriculture (Oake, 2007, 16).

In general terms the purpose of the archaeological works was to:

- Establish the date, nature and extent of any pre-modern activity within the PDA;
- Establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

The present report presents the results of the monitoring and investigation of sub-surface archaeological remains during groundworks. The results of historic building recording are presented in a separate report (Albion Archaeology 2019b).

1.6 Methodology

Detailed method statements for archaeological observation, investigation and recording are given in Section 2.3 and Appendix 1 of the SHARM. Excavations of groundworks with the potential to impact on potential



archaeological remains were monitored by an archaeologist. A written, drawn and photographic record of the observations was made.

The groundworks consisted of service and drainage trenches in the central courtyard and a large trench for a crated soakaway drain which was located to the north of the buildings. Due to the existing ground level of the site no general ground reduction was required in the courtyard which will be built up to its finished level. The trenches excavated for drainage pipes were very shallow at one end due to the required fall along the length of the pipe. In these shallow sections the potential for archaeological observation was limited.

Groundworks requiring archaeological monitoring were completed between 16th and 21st May 2019.



2. RESULTS

2.1 Introduction

The deposits recorded on site were assigned context numbers by trench number, with Trench 1 beginning at context (100), Trench 2 (200), etc. All of the deposits identified were layers. See Figure 2 for plans and sections illustrating the deposits; selected images are included at the back of the report. Information on the individual archaeological contexts for each trench is tabulated in Appendix 1.

2.2 Deposits in the Farmyard

The deposits were examined in a series of narrow service trenches (Trenches 1 to 3) excavated in the yard surrounded by the former farm buildings. The deepest of the trenches was dug along the western side of the courtyard, and in this trench undisturbed geological deposits were observed in the base of the trench. In the eastern part of the courtyard the trenches were shallow, limiting the potential for archaeological observations to the upper deposits.

2.2.1 Upper layers

The uppermost layer was dark grey-brown sandy silt (300) found in Trench 3 in the western part of the yard. It contained frequent plant roots and appears to be topsoil which has developed with the disuse of the site. It did not appear to be present in the trenches in the eastern part of the courtyard, but it may have been scrapped off during the initial clearing of surface debris in this area.

The next layer down (contexts 100, 200 and 301) was found in all of the farmyard trenches and was quite similar in colour and composition to (300). It was, however, a mixed deposit with patches of gravel/uneven distribution of stones and with fragments of roofing, slate which in some places was concentrated at the base of the deposit (Figure 2, Section 2). The uneven nature of this deposit suggests that it may be a dump deposit or a deliberately imported layer. The concentrations of shattered roofing slate suggest a possible event relating to the repair of the surrounding farm buildings or possibly it represents imported topsoil that also contained some building debris.

2.2.2 Dump or mixed clay layer

This layer (contexts 101, 201 and 302), found below the dark, upper soil layers, consisted of light to mid-yellow-brown sandy clay. It was a mixed deposit containing discrete concentrations of sand, gravel and patches of clean clay. Only the upper part of the deposit was seen in the shallow eastern and southern ends of the trenches. Where the full depth of the layer was visible in the western side of the yard it was up to 350mm thick. The mixed character of this deposit suggests that it is an imported dump deposit; its composition suggests that it derives from the underlying boulder clay.



2.2.3 Black silt layer

This slightly undulating layer (303) of black, probably organic, sandy silt with a maximum thickness of 110mm was seen in Section 3 but was not present a short distance further north in Section 2.

The nature of the deposit and its location within a farmyard could indicate an origin as a farmyard manure or animal trample in an area formerly used for animal stockyards. It was, however, found at some depth below the present ground surface (*c.*770mm).

2.2.4 Geological deposit

The material in the base of Trench 3 was light yellow-brown clay (304), containing flecks and small fragments of chalk with occasional patches of clean sand. This is the undisturbed superficial geological deposit, Oadby Member diamicton (boulder clay).

2.3 Deposits to North of the Farm Buildings

The deposits to the north of the farm buildings were investigated in Trench 4 — a rectangular trench for a soakaway, 10m long, 5m wide and 0.8m deep. It was located approximately 6m to the north of the farm buildings.

2.3.1 Made ground

The upper 350–390mm in this trench consisted of made ground, comprising:

- an upper layer of gravel (400);
- a thin middle layer of black ashy material (401) and;
- a lower layer of rubble (402), consisting of mortar and fragments of yellow gault brick.

These layers represent imported material used to form an area of hardstanding or a track. The deposit lies just north of an open-fronted cart shed in the north range of the farm buildings, and this area may have been used for storing vehicles or farm machinery.

2.3.2 Subsoil

Below the made ground was a layer of red-brown clay (403), a subsoil layer derived from the underlying geological deposit.

2.3.3 Geological deposit

The deposit in the base of Trench 4 was light yellow brown clay (404), containing flecks of chalk. This is the undisturbed superficial geological deposit, Oadby Member diamicton (boulder clay).



3. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during machine excavation of service trenches and drainage works. These were undertaken in the yard enclosed by the farm buildings and immediately to the north of the farm buildings where a soakaway pit was constructed.

No archaeological evidence was found for any activity predating the construction of the 19th-century farm buildings. No artefacts were recovered.

In the yard area the ground appears to have been subject to significant disturbance in the relatively recent past, probably associated with the 20th-century use of the farm.

The lowest deposit was a thin layer of organic black sandy silt found at a depth of 0.7m. This could have been farmyard manure, possibly remnants of a deep layer of animal trample. Above this was a layer of mixed, re-deposited geological clay. The upper layers in the yard were a dark topsoil-type deposit containing stones and broken roofing slate debris. These upper layers, based on the uneven distribution of the stones and building debris, appeared to be a mixed dump deposit. Overall, the ground surface in the yard was significantly lower than the floor levels in the surrounding buildings. Along the south side of the yard, for example, there was a step up of 0.5m into the former cow sheds along this side of the yard. The evidence suggests that the farmyard was cleared at some time in the past, which involved significant ground disturbance and a reduction in the finished ground level.

Investigations in a trench immediately north of the farm buildings identified an area of made ground, comprising layers of gravel, ash and brick rubble. This was probably hardstanding for farm machinery or part of a track. It lay above layers of subsoil and undisturbed geological deposits.



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5. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT SUMMARY

5.1 Trench 1

Context	Description	Interpretation
(100)	Dark sandy silt with fragments of slate and tile (200mm)	Mixed topsoil with building debris
(101)	Light (chalky) yellow clay. Very firm, mixed (extends below base of trench)	Re-deposited natural clay?

5.2 Trench 2

Context	Description	Interpretation
(200)	Dark sandy silt with fragments of slate and tile (250mm)	Mixed topsoil with building debris
(201)	Light (chalky) yellow clay. Very firm, mixed (extends below base of trench)	Re-deposited natural clay?

5.3 Trench 3

Context	Description	Interpretation
(300)	Dark grey-brown, sandy silt; with small stones and frequent roots. (220mm)	Topsoil
(301)	Dark grey-brown sandy silt, mixed deposit with patches of gravel, small to medium stones with large concentration of fragments of roofing slate at base of deposit (330mm) <i>Probably equivalent to layers (100) and (200)</i>	Dump deposit, giving rise to mixed appearance with some debris
(302)	Mid-yellow-brown sandy clay, mixed deposit with various discrete concentrations of gravel, sand and clean clay. (350mm) <i>Equivalent to layers (101) and (201)</i>	Dump deposit of imported, re-deposited natural clay
(303)	Black, organic sandy silt. Soft, damp layer. (110mm)	Farmyard muck?
(304)	Light yellow-brown clay with flecks and small pieces of chalk, occasional patches of fine-grained yellow sand.	Boulder clay (diamicton)

5.4 Trench 4

Context	Description	Interpretation
(400)	Gravel. Small rounded stones in mid-yellow-brown sandy matrix (180mm)	Gravel, external yard or track surface
(401)	Black ashy layer (80mm)	Spread of imported material, external yard or track surface
(402)	Mid-yellow-brown, rubble layer comprising mortar and fragments of yellow gault brick (140mm)	Imported make-up for yard or track
(403)	Mid-red-brown clay with redder sandy patches, containing flint nodules (295mm)	Subsoil layer
(404)	Light yellow-brown clay with flecks of chalk	Boulder clay (diamicton)

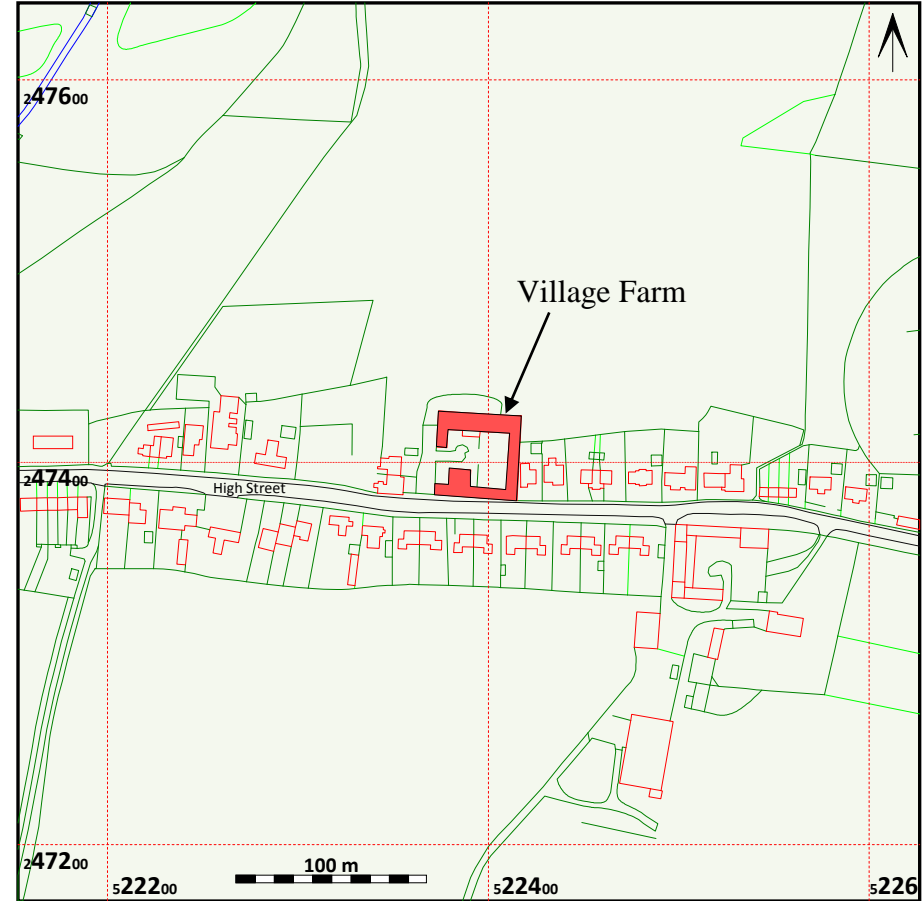
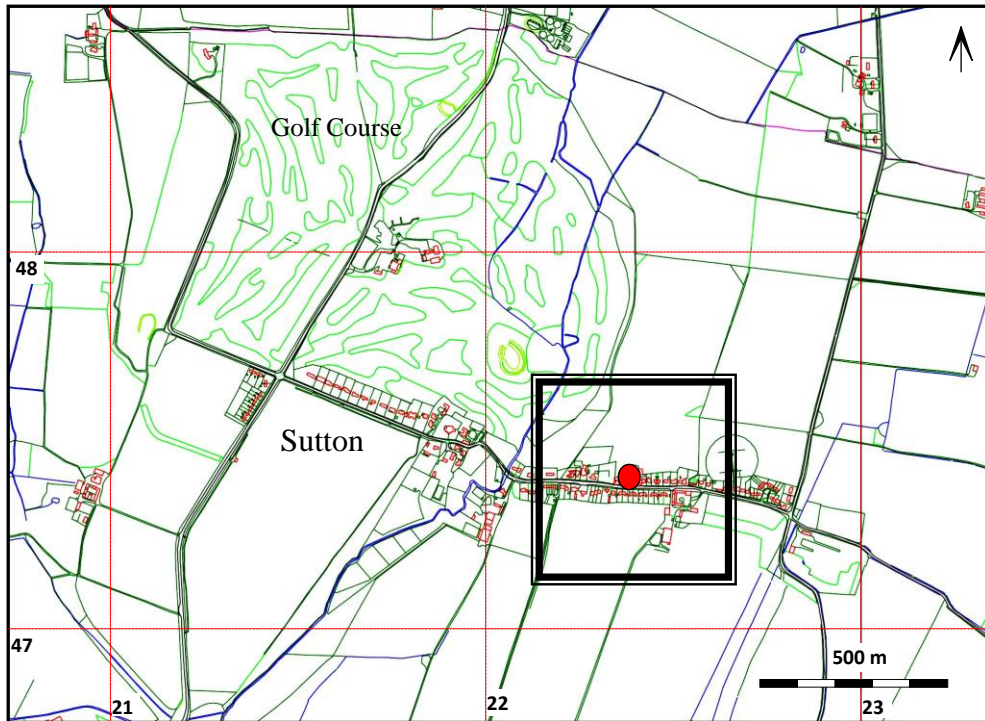
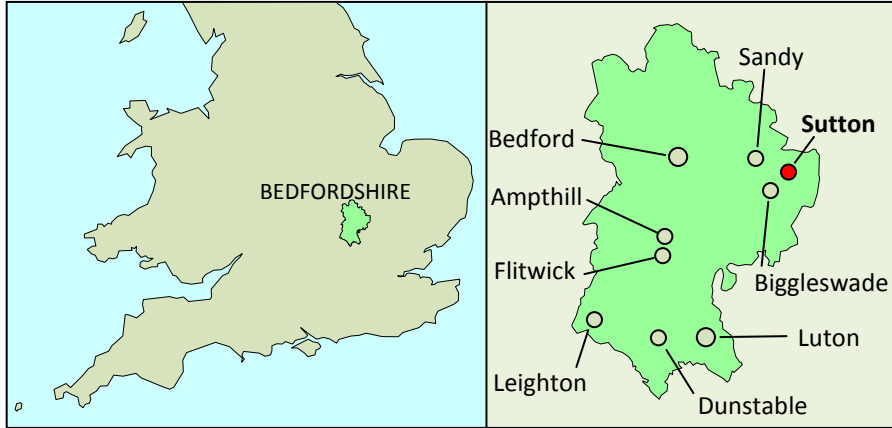


Figure 1: Site location plan

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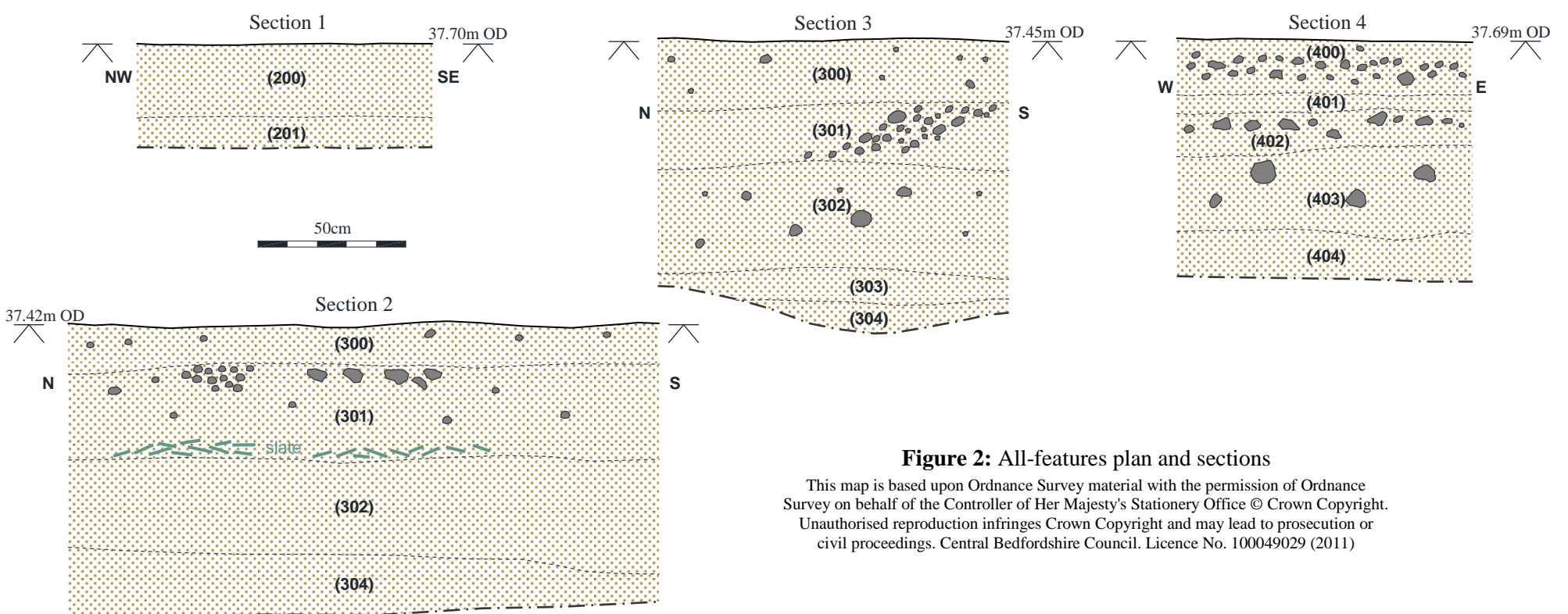
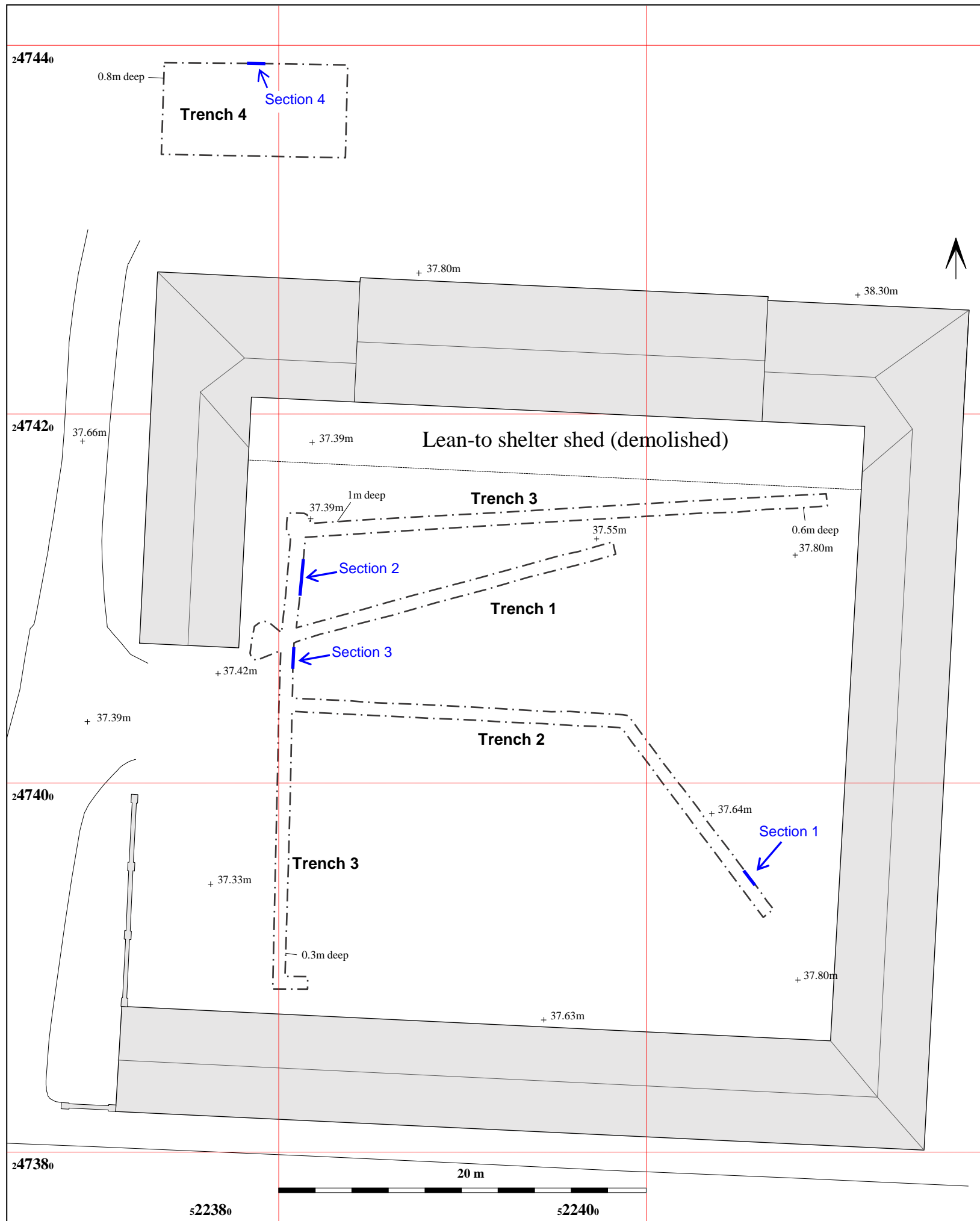


Figure 2: All-features plan and sections

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Image 1: Trenches 1 and 2

Looking east from west side of farmyard showing trenches under excavation



Image 2: Trench 3

Looking north showing western arm of Trench 3 (Scale 2m)



Image 3: Section 2, Trench 3

Looking east showing deposits, including roofing slate debris at base of grey upper layers
(Scale in 200mm divisions)



Image 4: Section 3, Trench 3

Looking east showing deposits, including black sandy silt layer (303) near base of trench
(Scale in 200mm divisions)



Image 5: Trench 4

Looking south-west showing trench for soakaway pit excavated to north of farm buildings
(Scale 2m)



Image 6: Section 4, Trench 4

Looking north, showing layer of made ground (400, 401 and 402) above subsoil and
geological deposit (Scale 1m)



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