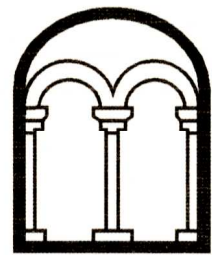


**4 STRATFORD ROAD
SANDY
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

Albion
archaeology



**4 STRATFORD ROAD
SANDY
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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

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Produced for:
Mr & Mrs R W Inglis

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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

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to carry out the archaeological works by Mr & Mrs R W Inglis. The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Martin Oake. Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist.

Fieldwork was carried out by Catie Watts. This report was prepared by Mike Luke and Catie Watts, with figures created by Joan Lightning and Catie Watts. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

Version History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>Reason for re-issue</i>
<i>1.0</i>	<i>23/12/2020</i>	<i>n/a</i>

Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this document:

Albion	Albion Archaeology
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
CBM	Ceramic building material
CI/A	Chartered Institute <i>for</i> Archaeologists
Client	Mr & Mrs R W Inglis
HER	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record
PDA	Permitted development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-technical Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council granted planning permission CB/20/00517/FULL for the erection of a single-storey side extension, at 4 Stratford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, centred on OS grid reference TL 1790/4859. The extension was located within the area of the known Roman small town and, therefore, a condition was placed on the planning permission requiring archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication. Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake this work in line with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation.

The excavation of the foundation trenches for the new extension were monitored by an archaeologist on 12th November 2020. The following deposits were recorded:

- *A thick layer of colluvium, which from other investigations is known to be an extensive layer that seals Roman remains and deposits within this part of Sandy.*
- *Fragments of sandstone (below the colluvium and at the very base of the foundation trench), which were not obviously linear in arrangement but which could possibly have derived from the foundation of a Roman building.*
- *Gravel deposits in the eastern foundation trench, which and appear to be part of a road makeup. No dating evidence was recovered and while it is most likely these deposits were associated with a wider, perhaps post-medieval version, of Stratford Road, it is not impossible that they are associated with a Roman road that may underlie Stratford Road.*

The project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (accession number BEDFM 2020.46). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-398689) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service. In addition a summary will be published in South Midlands Archaeology.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 **Project Background**

Central Bedfordshire Council granted planning permission CB/20/00517/FULL for the erection of a single-storey side extension, at 4 Stratford Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

The following condition (no. 2) was attached to the consent:

No development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI); that includes provision for fieldwork followed by 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 and this condition will only be fully discharged when the post-excavation analysis and reporting is complete, and the future of the site archive is secured.

Reason: This condition is pre-commencement as a failure to secure appropriate archaeological investigation in advance of development would be contrary to paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that requires developers to record and advance of understanding of the significance of any heritage assets affected by development before they are lost (wholly or in part).

In his consultation response the CBCA noted that the site had very high potential to contain archaeological deposits relating to the Roman town of Sandy. He further advised that any developmental impact on archaeological deposits should be mitigated by a programme of archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the archaeological works in accordance with an approved WSI (Albion Archaeology 2020). This report, required by the WSI, presents the results of the investigations.

1.2 **Site Location, Topography and Geology**

Sandy is a town in the northern part of Central Bedfordshire Authority and is bordered by the A1 (Great North Road) to the west. The permitted development area (PDA) is located c.1km south-east of the town centre on the west side of Stratford Road (Figure 1). The site is bordered by the East Coast Main Line to the west and by paddocks to the north and south. It is centred on OS grid reference TL 1790/4859.

Stratford Road runs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge at the point where the ridge is cut by the River Ivel, which is located c.0.5km to the west. The PDA is relatively flat and lies at a height of c.30m OD. The underlying bedrock is Woburn Sands Formation sandstone formed in the Cretaceous Period. The overlying superficial deposits are Head - Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel, formed up



to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period by erosion from the higher slopes of the Greensand Ridge to the north-east¹.

1.3 **Archaeological and Historical Background**

A detailed archaeological and historical background based on a review of records held by the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Historic Environment Record (HER) was provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2020). The PDA is located within the Roman ‘small town’ and the following provides a summary of the evidence.

The Roman ‘small town’ of Sandy developed in an area of Iron Age settlement and in the vicinity of three hillforts. It is located on the Roman road connecting the settlements of Baldock and Godmanchester. The course of the latter is preserved in hedge-lines to the north-east of Sandy and to the south as modern roads, chiefly Stratford Road itself and the A1.

The presence of Roman activity in Sandy has been known since at least the 17th century when stray artefacts were recovered. Since then several excavations, watching briefs and geophysical surveys have been undertaken. Roman Sandy’s nature, extent and its status as a ‘small town’ have been discussed by various authors, e.g. Johnston 1974, Johnston 1975, Dawson 1995, BCAS 2001, Dawson 2007.

The PDA is located in an area known as Chesterfield where many of the early finds were made, including when the railway was constructed. In addition, numerous finds were made during the digging of modern graves within the municipal cemetery (Johnston 1974), which is located on the opposite side of Stratford Road to the PDA. Archaeological excavations were undertaken during 1989–91 in advance of the use of the last part of the cemetery. These revealed the remains of Roman streets and buildings buried beneath a thick deposit of colluvium. The results of these excavations (BCAS 1996) formed the basis of the ‘popular’ booklet called *Roman Sandy* (BCAS 1997).

Numerous investigations have been undertaken since the last published overview of the Roman town (Dawson 1995). The more significant are:

- Cess pit- c.100m south-east of the PDA, salvage investigations within a small pit near Woodside Farm located a substantial Roman masonry wall that was considered to possibly be part of a mansio complex (BCAS 1994).
- Woodside Farm- c.100m to the south-east of the PDA, geophysical survey revealed an extensive area of probable Roman settlement (Albion 2002).
- Inhumation cemetery- c.750m south-east of the PDA at 6 Stratford Road, found during a watching brief (BCAS 1999) and a separate evaluation (CAFU 2005).
- Tesco supermarket- c.150m to the west of the PDA, where open-area excavation uncovered late Iron Age and Roman settlement remains, burials, and a large ‘defensive’ ditch (Edwards 2013).

¹ Contains British Geological Survey materials ©NERC [2020]



- Allotments- *c.*100m north of the PDA, where open-area excavation uncovered late Iron Age and Roman settlement remains, a large ditch and adjacent stone wall (AOC pers. comm.).
- Potton Road evaluation- *c.* 200m north-east of the PDA where remains were found that represent ribbon development along the Baldock to Godmanchester Roman road outside of the projected defences of the Roman town (Albion 2018). This explains the earlier discoveries of Roman pits, ditches and building foundation slots found within investigations associated with an extension of a residential property at no. 7 Swaden (Albion 2012).

Perhaps the most significant results of these investigations are the discovery of a stone wall with a parallel substantial ditch within the allotment excavations. This suggests that part of the Roman town was contained within a defensive circuit, a fact which was previously unknown. With the benefit of hindsight, it is now believed that the large ditch within the Tesco investigation and the large linear anomaly within the Woodside Farm geophysical survey represent other lengths of the defences (Luke in prep.). The PDA would be located within this defensive circuit.

1.4 Project Objectives

The principal purpose of the archaeological works was to recover information on the:

- Date, nature and extent of any pre-modern activity within the PDA;
- Relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- Palaeo-environmental remains that may help to determine local environmental conditions.

Additional background on the project objectives was provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2020).



2. METHOD STATEMENTS

The methodological approach to the project was summarised in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2020) and is therefore only summarised here.

2.1 Methodological Standards

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

• Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> (2017, 3rd ed).
• Bedford Borough Council	<i>Procedures for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with Registered Museums in Bedfordshire. V2.8</i> (2010)
• CfA	<i>Charter and by-law</i> (2014); <i>Code of Conduct</i> (2019) <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief</i> (2020) <i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2020)
• EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
• Historic England	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation.</i> 2nd ed. (2011)

2.2 Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording

The new extension was situated to the south-east of the existing dwelling at 4 Stratford Road and measured c.10 x 5m. The excavation of its foundation trenches, which were c.0.6m wide and up to 1.2m deep, was monitored on 12th November 2020.

All machining was undertaken by the contractor under archaeological supervision. Due to its narrow width and its depth all recording was undertaken without entering the trench. Deposits encountered were assigned a unique context number commencing at (1) and were recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual*. Spoil heaps were checked on a regular basis for the recovery of archaeological artefacts.

The project archive will be deposited with The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum (accession number BEDFM 2020.46). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database (reference no.: albionar1-398689) in accordance with the guidelines issued by Historic England and the Archaeology Data Service. In addition a summary will be published in *South Midlands Archaeology*.



3. RESULTS

The probable natural sand (3) was observed at the very base of all the trench lengths. Over this was up to 1.1m of brown sand (2), which is interpreted as colluvium. This layer contained an abraded body sherd (21g) of mottle/speckle-glazed ware (fabric F19) of late 17th- to mid-18th-century pottery and three oyster shells (not retained).

In addition, six fragments of unfaced sandstone (8) were removed by the machine from the base of the colluvium. Although not obviously linear in arrangement, it is possible that these derived from the foundation of a Roman building.

Three compact gravel layers (5, 6 and 7) were only present in the eastern part of the extension. They were c.0.6m below ground level and up to 0.8m thick. It seems likely that they were part of a road makeup but no dating evidence was recovered.



4. CONCLUSION

Inevitably given the narrow width and depth of the foundation trenches, it is difficult to interpret and date all the deposits recorded. However, it is clear that the recorded colluvium was similar in nature and thickness to that encountered within the Municipal Cemetery excavations on the opposite side of Stratford Road (BCAS 1996). Similar colluvium was also found on the Potton Road evaluation (Albion 2018) and at 7 Swaden (Albion 2012), but not within the Allotment excavations (AOC pers. comm.), suggesting a localised build up in this part of Sandy perhaps within a former valley.

Based on these and other investigations, it is clear that the colluvium is post-Roman in date. A single sherd of 17th-/18th-century pottery was recovered from the foundation trenches, but the colluvium is likely to have been accumulating for centuries before this date. By sealing the remains of the Roman town it has afforded them some protection from modern ploughing and intrusions.

The PDA is known to be located within the 'core' of the Roman small town, but as described above, in this area the Roman remains lie below a thick layer of colluvium. This largely explains why no firmly identifiable Roman deposits or remains were identified within the foundation trenches. However, it is possible that the sandstone fragments recovered from the base of the colluvium may have derived from the foundation of a Roman building.

The location of gravel deposits in the foundation trench nearest to Stratford Road suggests an association with a wider, post-medieval version of the road. However, as no dating evidence was recovered, it is not impossible that they are makeup layers for the Roman road, which largely underlies Stratford Road (continuing the alignment of the Baldock to Godmanchester road after it turns north c.100m to the south of the PDA).



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6. APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS



Area: 1
Extent (ha): 0.00145
OS Co-ordinates: TL1790048590
Description: Monitoring within wall footings trenches for the extension

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
1	Make up layer	Loose mid brown grey silty sand frequent medium-large CBM, frequent medium-large concrete, frequent medium stones. Up to 0.26m thick. Levelling layer for existing patio, comprising various building rubble, including brick, tile and concrete.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Colluvium	Loose dark grey brown sandy silt occasional large stones. Varying depth of colluvium encountered across excavation area. Visually very similar to topsoil. Up to 1.15m thick - thickest in southernmost corner of extension trenches. Oyster shell noted. One piece glazed post-medieval pottery (not retined).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	Natural	Compact mid orange brown sand . Clean, natural sand noted in western part of foundation trenches. Diffuse boundary with layer (7).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Topsoil	Friable dark grey brown sandy loam . Up to 0.1m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Make up layer	Compact dark grey brown sandy silt frequent small-medium stones. Up to 0.07m thick, most of the stone inclusions are very rounded/pebble-like.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Make up layer	Compact light yellow brown sand moderate small stones. Up to 0.2m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Make up layer	Cemented mid orange brown silty sand frequent small stones. Up to 0.6m thick.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Stone structure	Mid red orange . Six medium-large pieces of unfaced sandstone. Noted individually at base of foundation trench. Ranging in size from 0.2 x 0.3 x 0.3m to 0.5x 0.6 x 0.6m.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

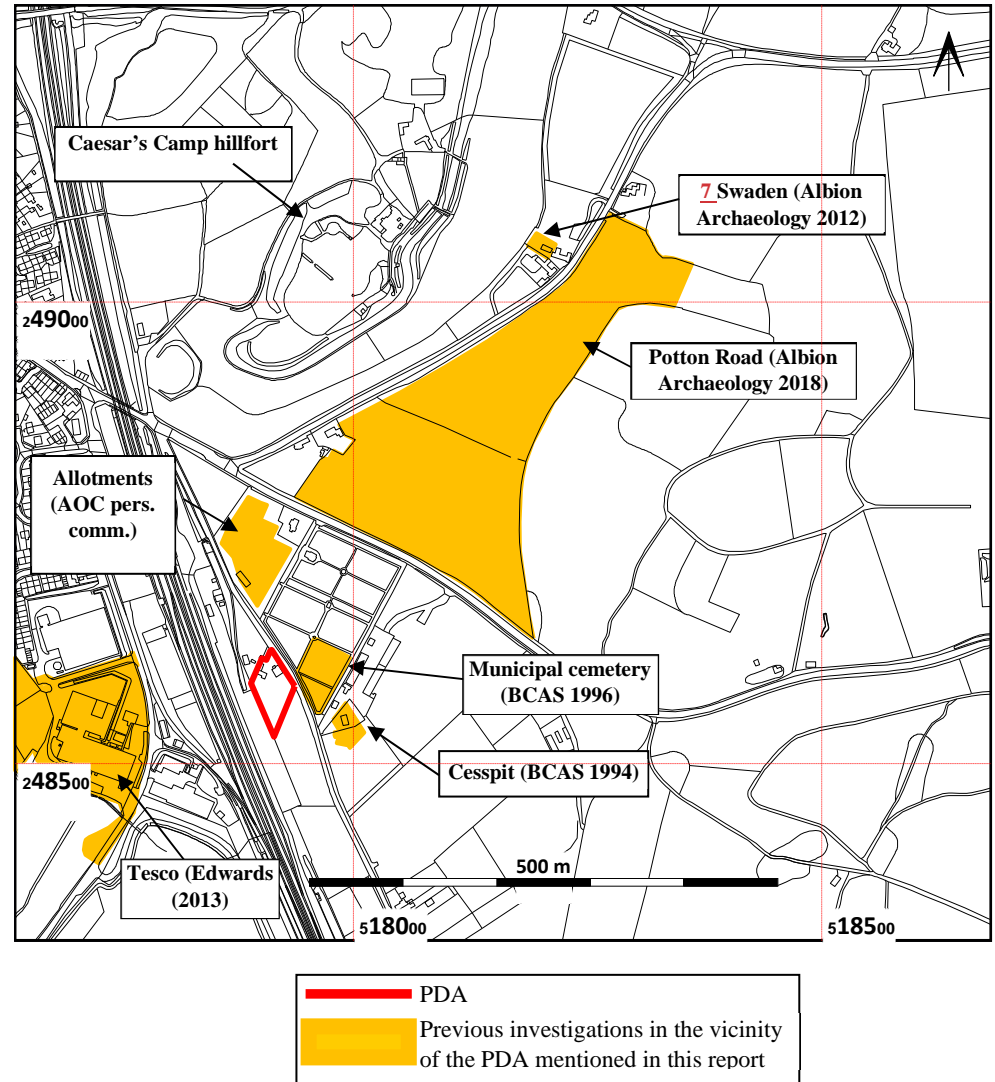
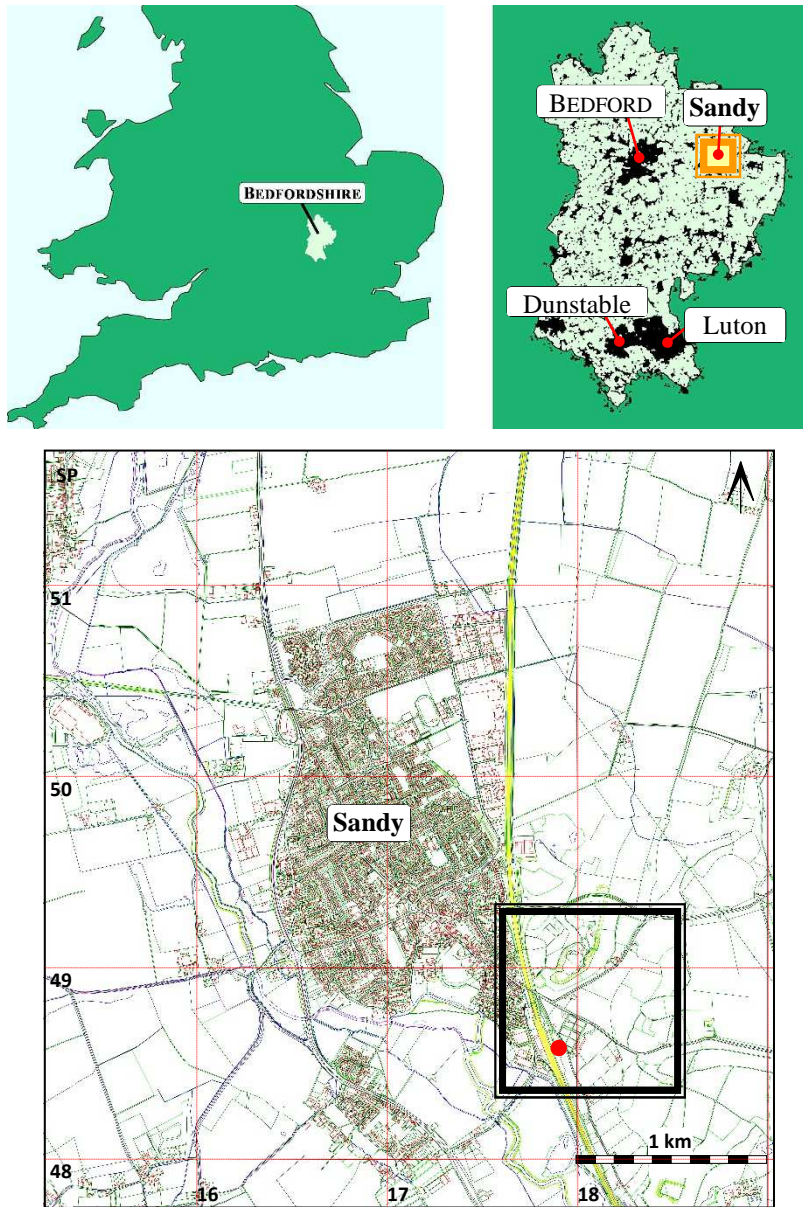


Figure 1: Site location plan

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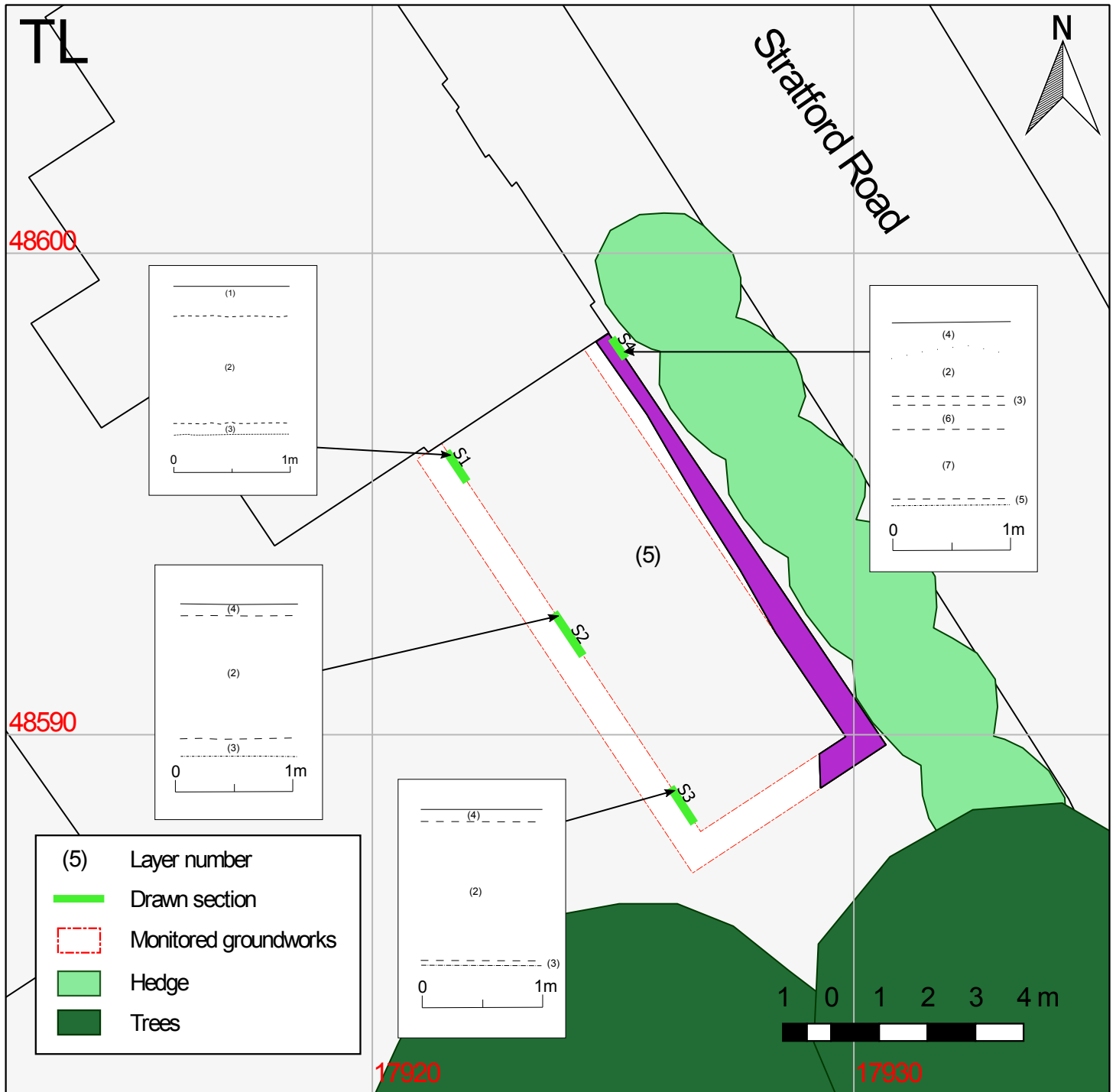


Figure 2: All-features plan
The ground surface on all section drawings is at 28m OD

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