

**AYLESBURY CROWN COURT
AYLESBURY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
PHASE 1**

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All figures and plates are bound at the back of the report.



Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the Written Scheme of Investigation. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

Fieldwork was carried out by James Newbould and Wesley Kier (Archaeological Project Officers). This report has been prepared by James Newbould and checked by Joe Abrams (Project Manager). Figures were produced by James Newbould. All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

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Structure of the Report

Section 1 describes the background to the project. Section 2 describes the methodology used. There is a summary of the results of the fieldwork in Section 3 and a synthesis and discussion of their significance in Section 4. Section 5 is a bibliography.

Key Terms

Throughout this report, the following terms or abbreviations are used:

Client	Mouchel Management Consulting, on behalf of HM Courts Service
BCAS	Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service
DA	Development Area
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Mouchel Management Consulting have been appointed by HM Courts Service to provide Project Management Services during construction of a new Crown Court building on land to the west of Walton Street in Aylesbury (Planning application 08/02787/APP).

The proposed development lies within an archaeologically sensitive area. As a result, Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) advised the LPA that a condition should be attached to the planning consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological evaluation prior to the demolition of an existing office block and underground parking within the Development Area (DA).

In April 2009, Mouchel Management Consulting commissioned Albion Archaeology to undertake this work. The results (Albion 2009a) were considered by BCAS, Albion and Mouchel Management Consulting in relation to demolition and development proposals for the DA. BCAS requested that mitigation works be carried out during the forthcoming demolition/development works.

Between 7th and 13th July 2009, Albion agreed a Written Scheme of Investigation with BCAS (Albion 2009b) which outlined two phases of mitigation works:

Phase 1 *Comprising a watching brief on ground-works associated with the demolition of existing buildings (Zones 2-3) followed by a report on the results (this document).*

Phase 2 *Comprising watching brief (Zones 1-3) and strip map and sample investigation (Zone 4) on ground-works associated with the construction of the new Crown Court followed either by a client report or Updated Project Design (UPD) depending on the significance of the results.*

Phase 1 works took place at key points in the contractor's demolition programme during October 2009. Their purpose was to augment the evaluation in further identifying areas of potential archaeological preservation and destruction. The limitations placed upon the scope of the evaluation were such that further clarification of the potential for archaeological preservation was required.

The results of the Phase 1 watching brief both support and augment those of the archaeological evaluation (Albion 2009a). Monitoring in the southern part of Zone 4 revealed undisturbed former topsoil and subsoil deposits. Together they confirm the potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the remainder of Zone 4.

The deep foundation slabs of Zone 2 and 3 extended into the southern part of Zone 4, reducing its archaeological potential. As a result, the archaeological zones have been re-assessed so that the heavily impacted areas of Zone 4 are now included in Zones 2 and 3, which have no archaeological potential.

As a consequence of the changes in the extent of Zone 4, the area requiring Phase 2 strip, map and sample investigation has been reduced in size.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Mouchel Management Consulting have been appointed by HM Courts Service to provide Project Management Services during construction of a new Crown Court building in Aylesbury (Planning application 08/02787/APP).

The proposed development lies within an archaeologically sensitive area. As a result, Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) advised the LPA that a condition should be attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological evaluation prior to the demolition of an existing office block (The Equitable Life Building) on the Development Area (DA).

Albion Archaeology was commissioned in April 2009, by Mouchel Management Consulting, to undertake this evaluation work. The results (Albion 2009a) were considered by BCAS, Albion and Mouchel Management Consulting in relation to demolition and development proposals for the DA. BCAS requested that mitigation works be carried out during the forthcoming demolition/development works.

Albion, Mouchel and Buckingham Group Contracting Ltd (demolition works) liaised to agree a strategy acceptable to BCAS. This strategy was encapsulated in a letter to BCAS (ea-rb 09-06-24) which suggested watching brief in Zones 1-4 of the DA (Figure 1), to which BCAS responded by requesting watching brief in Zones 1-3 and strip, map and sample investigation in Zone 4 (and otherwise approving the strategy, email dated 09-06-30).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was submitted to BCAS for approval on 7th July 2009 (Version 1.0). BCAS asked for clarification of the demolition programme with respect to Zone 4 in particular. The WSI was altered to supply that clarity and re-issued (Version 1.1) for approval on 13th July 2009. The approved WSI (Albion 2009b) outlined two phases of mitigation works;

- Phase 1** Comprising a watching brief on ground-works associated with the demolition of existing buildings (Zones 2-3) followed by a report on the results.
- Phase 2** Comprising watching brief (Zones 1-3) and strip, map and sample investigation (Zone 4) on ground-works associated with the construction of the new Crown Court followed either by a client report or Updated Project Design (UPD) depending on the significance of the results.

This document represents the results of the Phase 1 watching brief which took place during October 2009.



1.2 Site Location and Description

The DA lies to the west of Walton Street in Aylesbury (Figure 1) and, prior to demolition, contained a 1970s office block and associated car parking. The DA is centred on SP 8231 1308 and covers an area of *c.*7,000sqm. The car park within the DA lies at *c.*80m OD.

The underlying geology is Portland Limestone underlain by Kimmeridge clay formations (Geological Sheet 238 “Aylesbury” 1923). Soils in the area are of the Denchworth Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

1.3 Archaeological Background

The most significant remains in the area comprise those recorded during investigations undertaken prior to the construction of the existing Aylesbury Crown Court (Farley 1976, HER00093) and it was considered possible that related, previously unknown, remains might be present within the DA (Figure 4). These remains comprised sunken-featured buildings, post-built structures and a large quantity of artefactual material dating to the Saxo-Norman period in particular. The remains of Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval settlement activity are also known to exist to the north of the DA, at Walton.

Archaeological field evaluation (Albion 2009) was carried out due to the proximity of these multi-period archaeological remains. However, the scope of evaluation was severely limited due to the presence of live services, thick concrete, contaminated ground, terracing, trees and the necessity for stand-off zones from existing structures and party walls. As such, evaluative works were unable to fully assess archaeological preservation in Zones 1 and 4 or quantify the impact of previous construction in Zones 2 and 3 (Figure 1).

Considering these limitations, the work nevertheless demonstrated the potential for the preservation of significant archaeological remains in Zones 1 and 4 of the DA. A layer of brick rubble was identified overlying all archaeological remains revealed in the four evaluation trenches, suggesting that, in these parts of the DA, pre-modern construction and demolition had done little to reduce archaeological potential. The evaluation revealed remains of local significance, dating to the post-medieval period including a pond in Trench 3 and boundary ditches in Trench 1 (for trench locations see Figure 1).

No traces of Saxo-Norman settlement, such as those recorded to the immediate north-west (Farley 1976, HER00093) were revealed. However, given the aforementioned limitations placed on the evaluation, the presence of Saxo-Norman remains elsewhere within the DA could not be ruled out.

1.4 Project Objectives

Project specific research objectives have been summarised in the WSI (Albion 2009b, Section 1.4). More general fieldwork aims are outlined below:

- Observe all significant ground-works associated with the development.



- Investigate and record these works and any archaeological deposits encountered within them.
- Identify zones of archaeological preservation and destruction.
- Prepare a report of the fieldwork findings for deposition in the Buckinghamshire HER and with OASIS.
- Deposit the project archive with Buckinghamshire County Museum.



2. METHODOLOGY

Phase 1 monitoring in Zones 2, 3 and the southern part of Zone 4 was carried out between 2nd and 27th October 2009. During this period, all demolition ground-works requiring monitoring were completed.

Foundation slabs and walls were demolished using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with an automatic pecker. Clearance of the resultant rubble was performed by a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothed bucket.

The archaeological works adhered to the standards and field methods set out in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2009b, Section 2) and the standards set out in the IfA's *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance* documents (specifically *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, September 1999).

On completion of the Phase 2 works, the project archive, comprising documentary records, will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The demolition area comprised Zones 2 and 3 and the southern part of Zone 4; no demolition work took place within Zone 1 (Figure 1). A key to the location of photographs taken within the DA is shown in Figure 3.

3.2 Zones 2, 3 and 4 - Undisturbed Deposits

The removal of the retaining wall for the underground car park and its associated ramp in Zones 3 and 4 (Figure 1) revealed deposits of undisturbed Portland limestone (Plate 3). In some areas (Figures 2-3) the former subsoil and topsoil profiles have also survived (Plates 1-4).

The former topsoil had the same composition as deposit (207), identified in Trench 2 of the evaluation at a depth of 1250mm BEGL (Below Existing Ground Level), *c.* 81.15m OD. The depth of modern overburden directly behind the retaining wall shown in Figure 2b was 2000mm, with the truncated upper subsoil horizon lying at *c.* 80.4m OD. The truncated upper horizon of the former topsoil lay at *c.* 81.11m OD (Figure 2a).

The former topsoil (Figure 2a) contained a sherd of modern stoneware, a sherd of modern land-drain and a fragment of post-medieval peg-tile (Wells pers. comm.). These artefacts were identified in the lower part of the deposit, suggesting they were not present as a result of modern intrusion. These artefacts indicate the deposits represent modern activity pre-dating the construction of the 1970s office block.

Despite the lack of archaeological remains, the buried soil deposits identified during the monitoring of demolition work clearly support the results of the trial trenching in demonstrating the potential for preservation of archaeological remains within Zone 4 of the DA (Figure 5). They also indicate the former downward slope of the land towards the former pond in what is now Zone 2 of the DA (Figure 4).

3.3 Zones 2 and 3 - Pond

The slabs in Zone 3 had been dug through the Portland limestone (Plate 3) into the underlying dark grey Kimmeridge clays (Plates 5-6).

The removal of the foundation slabs within Zone 3 revealed a concrete capped, water filled sump over 3m deep (Plate 5) and a brick-housed pumping unit (Plate 6). These were constructed at the same time as the 1970s office block in order to collect water to be pumped into the main drainage outflow, visible in Plate 4. Plate 4 also indicates the natural level of ground-water in this area after the removal of the main concrete foundations.

Prior to the construction of the office block, this part of the DA would have been a natural low point. Indeed, historic maps show that a pond existed in



this part of Zones 2 and 3 until at least 1967 when it appears on the Ordnance Survey map (Figure 4). The earliest map reference to the pond is from 1800, when it appears on a plan of the Hamlet of Walton. However, it is possible, given its proximity to known medieval remains, that its origins are much earlier.

No deposits associated with the pond were identified. However, it is likely that the pond was removed in advance of the construction of the office block in the early 1970s. Any construction in this part of the site would have required the extensive removal of the soft pond deposits to create stable foundations. This may explain the considerable depth and extent of foundations in Zone 3 of the DA and the presence of the sump.

These relatively deep foundation works are considered to have destroyed the archaeological potential of Zones 2 and 3.



4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 *Significance of the Findings*

The results of the Phase 1 watching brief on demolition works within the DA, support those of the archaeological evaluation (Albion 2009a). They have augmented our knowledge of the archaeological potential of Zones 2, 3 and 4 of the DA.

The watching brief within Zones 2 and 3 of the DA revealed that large-scale landscaping took place in advance of the construction of the Equitable Life building in the 1970s. A pond, shown on the 1967 Ordnance Survey map lay in a natural depression within this area (Figure 4) and it is likely that its deposits were removed to create stable foundations for the new building.

The watching brief within Zones 2 and 3 also demonstrated the wholesale removal of the Portland limestone geology down to the underlying clay. This indicates the impact of the building on the archaeological potential in these zones was greater than previously anticipated. Zones 2-3 are, therefore, considered to have no archaeological potential.

The watching brief within the southern part of Zone 4 revealed undisturbed former topsoil and subsoil deposits (Figure 2, Plates 1-4). These, combined with layer (207) identified during trial trenching evaluation, represent surviving remains of the land surface prior to the construction of the Equitable Life building. Together they confirm the potential for the survival of archaeological remains within the remainder of Zone 4.

4.2 *Implications for the Phase 2 Watching Brief*

Parts of the removed foundation slabs extended into the southern part of Zone 4 (Figure 1). The impact of these foundations was shown to have been equally destructive to the archaeological potential in this part of the DA (Plates 1 and 3). As a result of these findings, the Archaeological Zones have been re-assessed so that the heavily impacted areas of Zone 4 are now included in Zones 2 and 3 (Figure 5).

The strategy for the Phase 2 watching brief, to be carried out in advance of the construction of the proposed development, is outlined in Table 1 below (Albion 2009b). Completed (Phase 1) works are highlighted in blue. As a consequence of the changes in the extent of Zone 4, the area requiring strip, map and sample investigation has been reduced in size (Figure 6).



Zone	Previous development impacts	Depth of level of archaeological sensitivity below existing ground level (begl)	Depth at which ground-works will require watching in this zone	Type of mitigation works acceptable to BCAS
Zone 1 Southern	Moderate impact due to previous levelling works, laying of utilities and construction of car park.	The upper deposits within pond [304] in Trench 3 were recorded at 200mm begl. A 200mm buffer above archaeological remains is proposed as remains are likely to vary in depth within Zone 1.	Any ground-works (in this zone) will require monitoring due to the very shallow depth at which archaeological deposits/level of archaeological sensitivity is located.	Watching Brief
Zone 2 NW corner / central west	High impact caused by ramping and construction of underground car park	n/a	Demolition ground-works which involve the removal of footings on the external edges of the existing structures will require monitoring in order to assess the level of preservation in surrounding deposits.	Watching Brief
Zone 3 central east	High impact caused by the construction of Equitable Life building with substantial foundations.	n/a	Demolition ground-works which involve the removal of footings on the external edges of the existing structures will require monitoring in order to assess the level of preservation in surrounding deposits.	Watching Brief
Zone 4 north	Moderate impact due to previous levelling works, laying of utilities and construction of car park.	The upper deposits within ditch [106] in Trench 1 were recorded at 800mm begl. A 200mm buffer above archaeological remains is suggested as remains are likely to vary in depth within Zone 4	Any ground-works reaching below a depth of 600mm in this zone will require stripping under archaeological control due to the depth at which archaeological deposits/level of archaeological sensitivity has been identified (800mm begl). Removal of contaminated ground is likely to involve minimal disturbance of sub-surface deposits as the contaminated ground effectively forms a “mound” in the north-eastern corner of the site. The same mitigation strategy	Strip, Map and Sample



Zone	Previous development impacts	Depth of level of archaeological sensitivity below existing ground level (begl)	Depth at which ground-works will require watching in this zone	Type of mitigation works acceptable to BCAS
			<p>will apply during the removal of this mound as to rest of Zone 4 (although specific Health and Safety considerations will apply to works in this area).</p> <p>Demolition works requiring a watching brief will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Removal of existing walls/foundations - Removal of slabs on main building - Ground-works to locate/remove existing utilities - Any other ground-works which reach below a depth of 600mm below existing ground level. <p>Damage to sub-surface remains within Zone 4, during the demolition process, will be kept to a minimum so as to allow meaningful Strip, Map and Sample works to take place during the construction stage of works.</p>	

Table 1: Strategy for Phase 1 and 2 watching brief and Phase 2 strip, map and sample investigations.



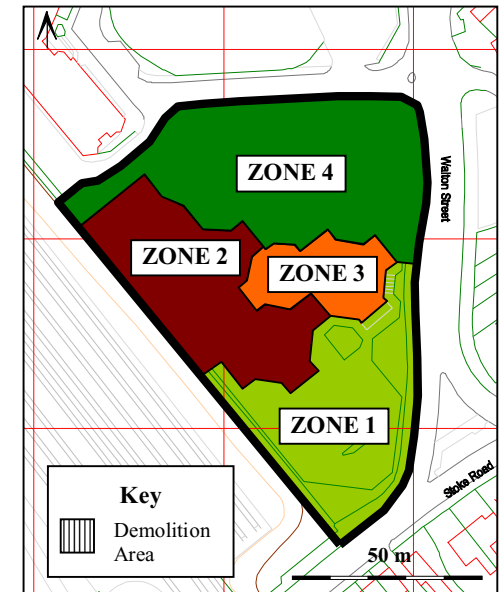
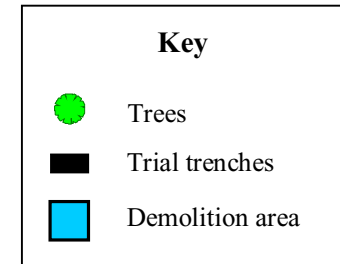
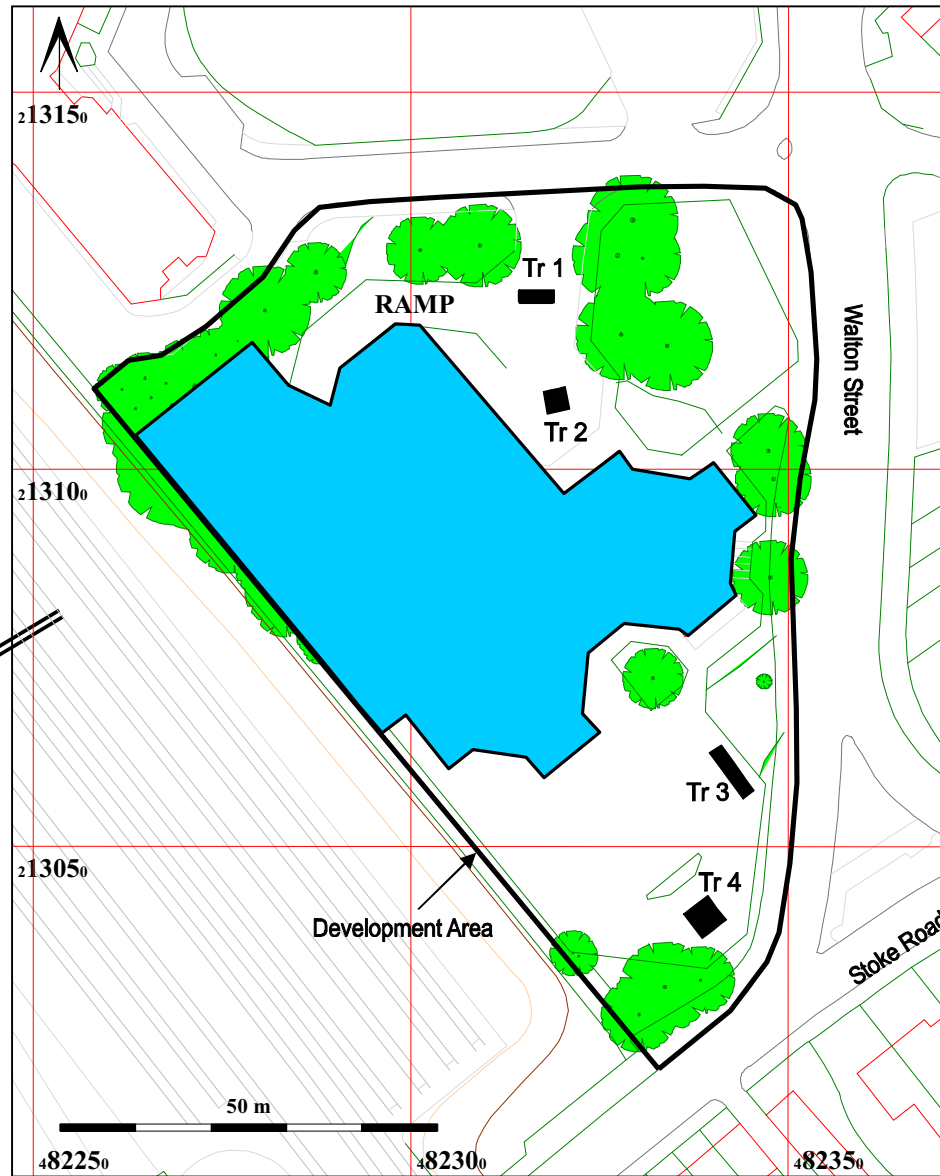
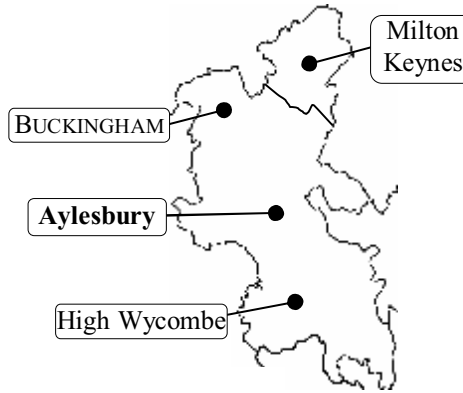
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- IfA, 1999a Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IfA, 1999b Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings)*

Maps Consulted

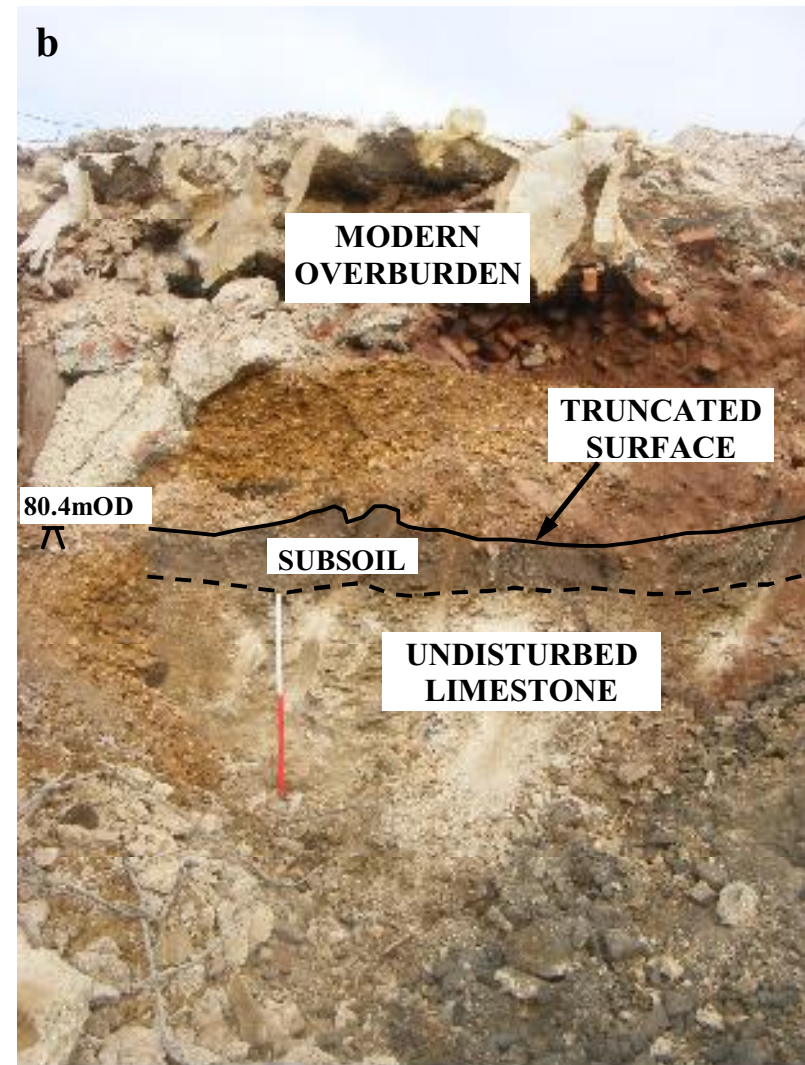
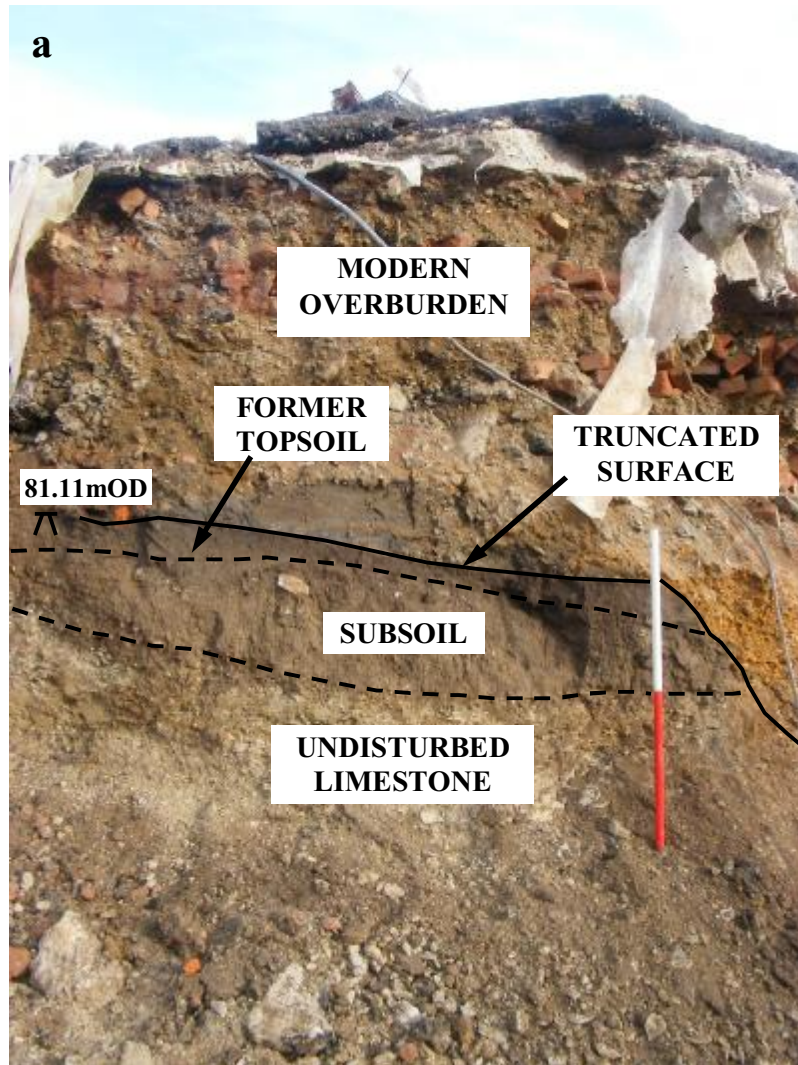
1st Edition 1877 Ordnance Survey map

1967 Edition Ordnance Survey map



Archaeological zones from WSI (Albion 2009b)

Figure 1: Site location
 Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Albion Archaeology, Central Bedfordshire Council. OS Licence No. 100017358(LA). © Crown Copyright.



Figures 2a-b: Sections showing undisturbed topsoil and subsoil deposits. These are partially truncated by modern activity and overlain by overburden associated with the construction of the 1970s' office block. Locations shown on Figure 3. 1m scale.

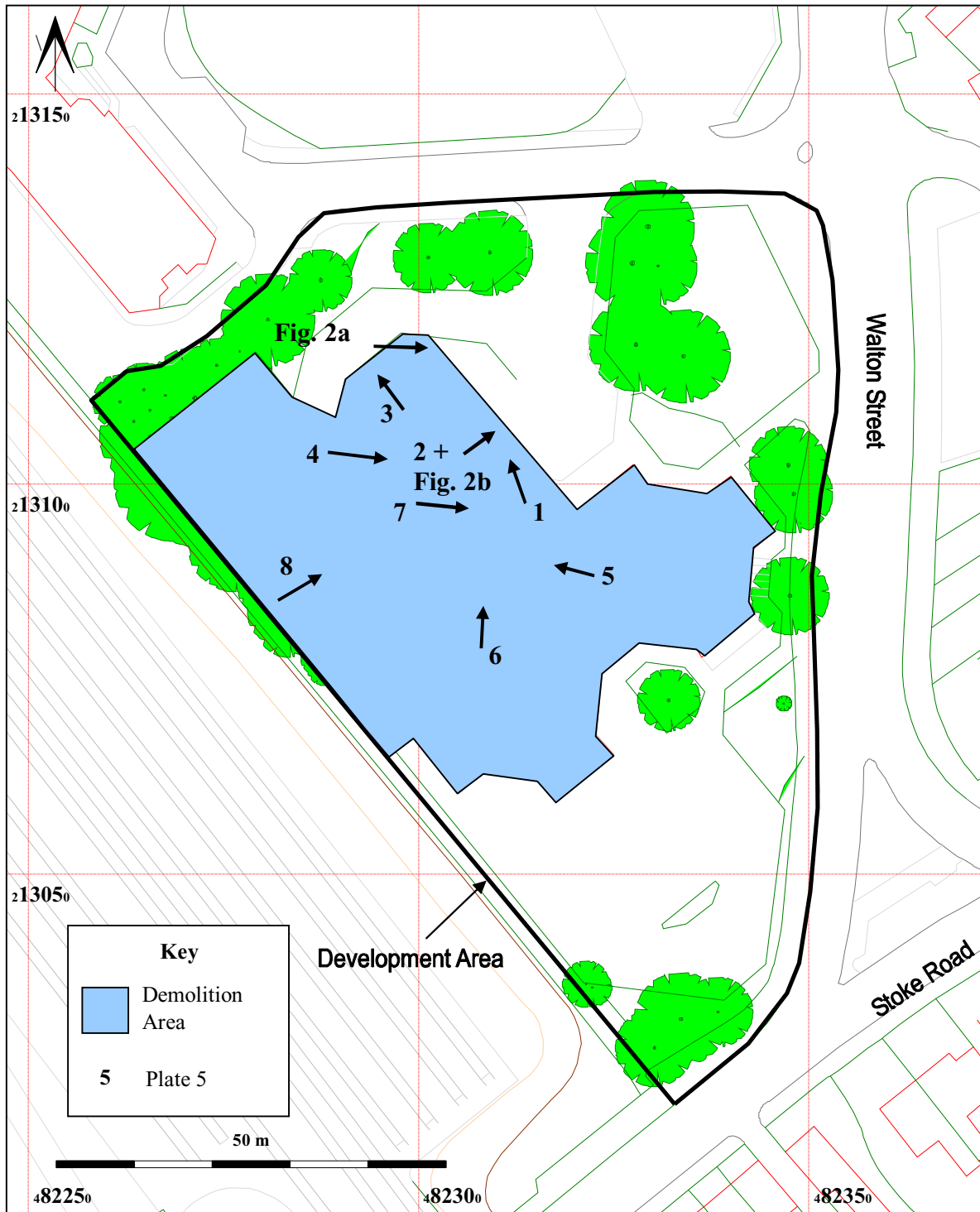


Figure 3: Key to plates and Figure 2. Arrows indicate image direction

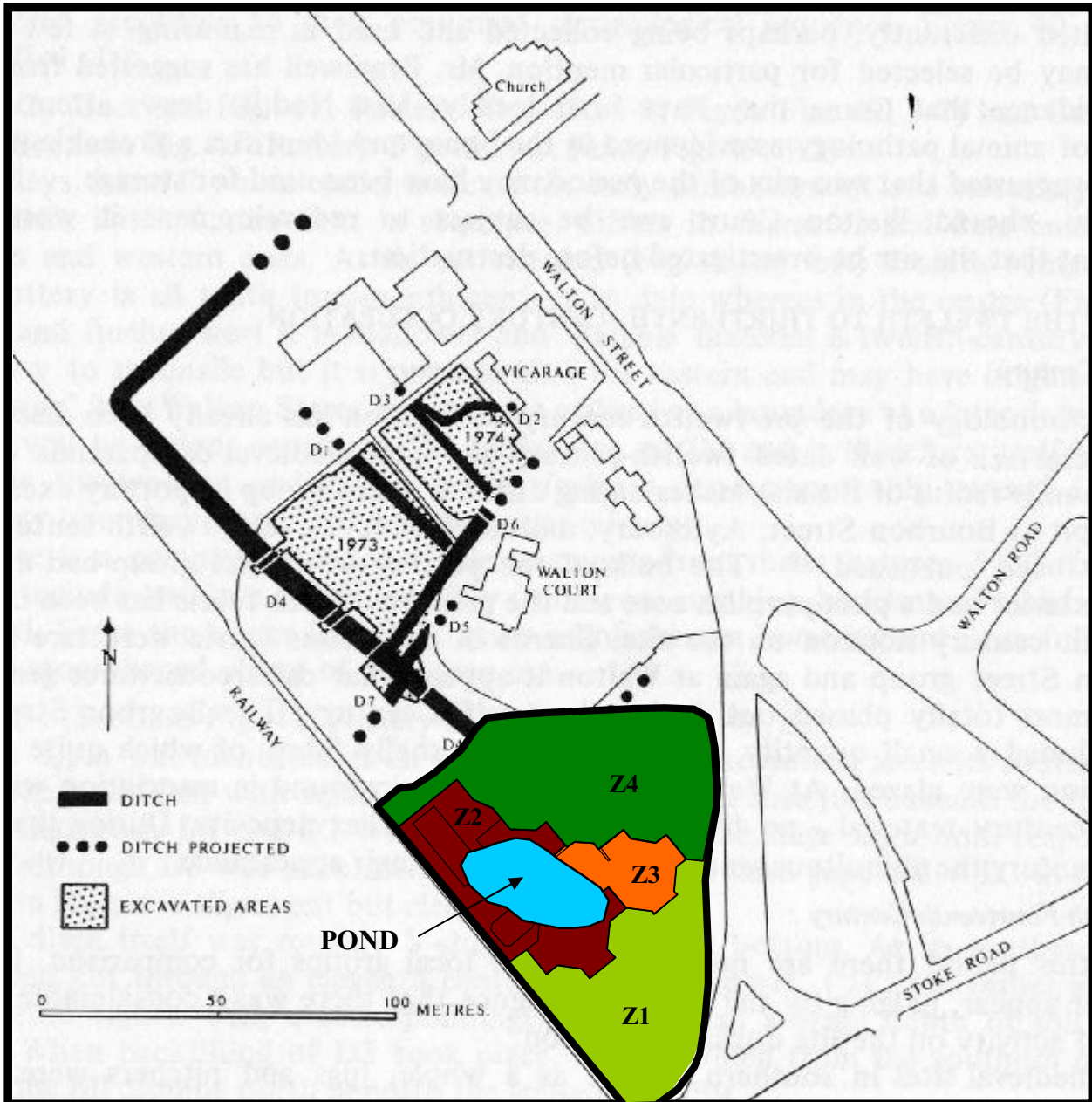


Figure 4: Archaeological zones and approximate position of pond based on 1967 Ordnance Survey map overlaid onto map of nearby medieval remains (Farley 1976, 251, fig. 40).

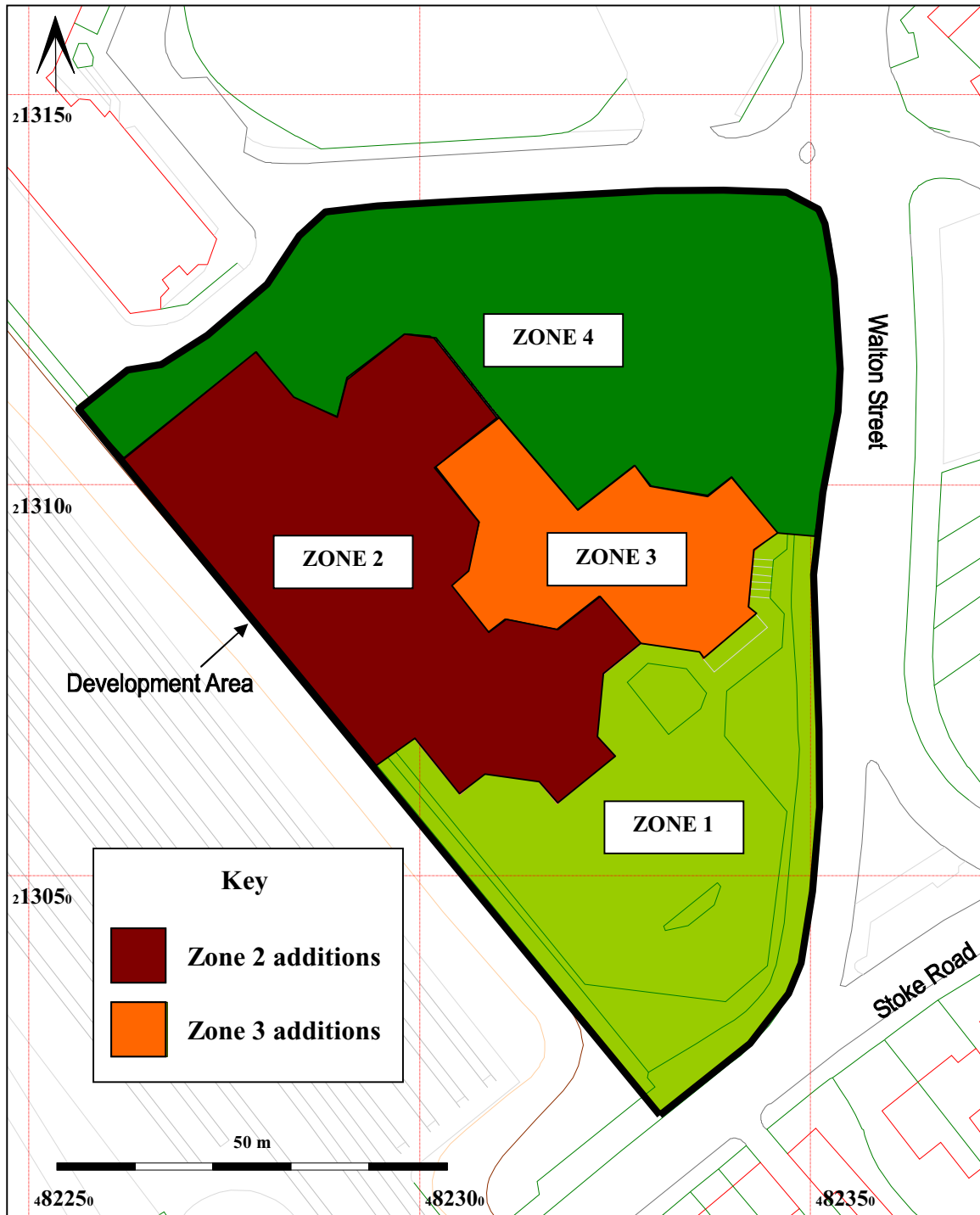


Figure 5: Revised archaeological zones

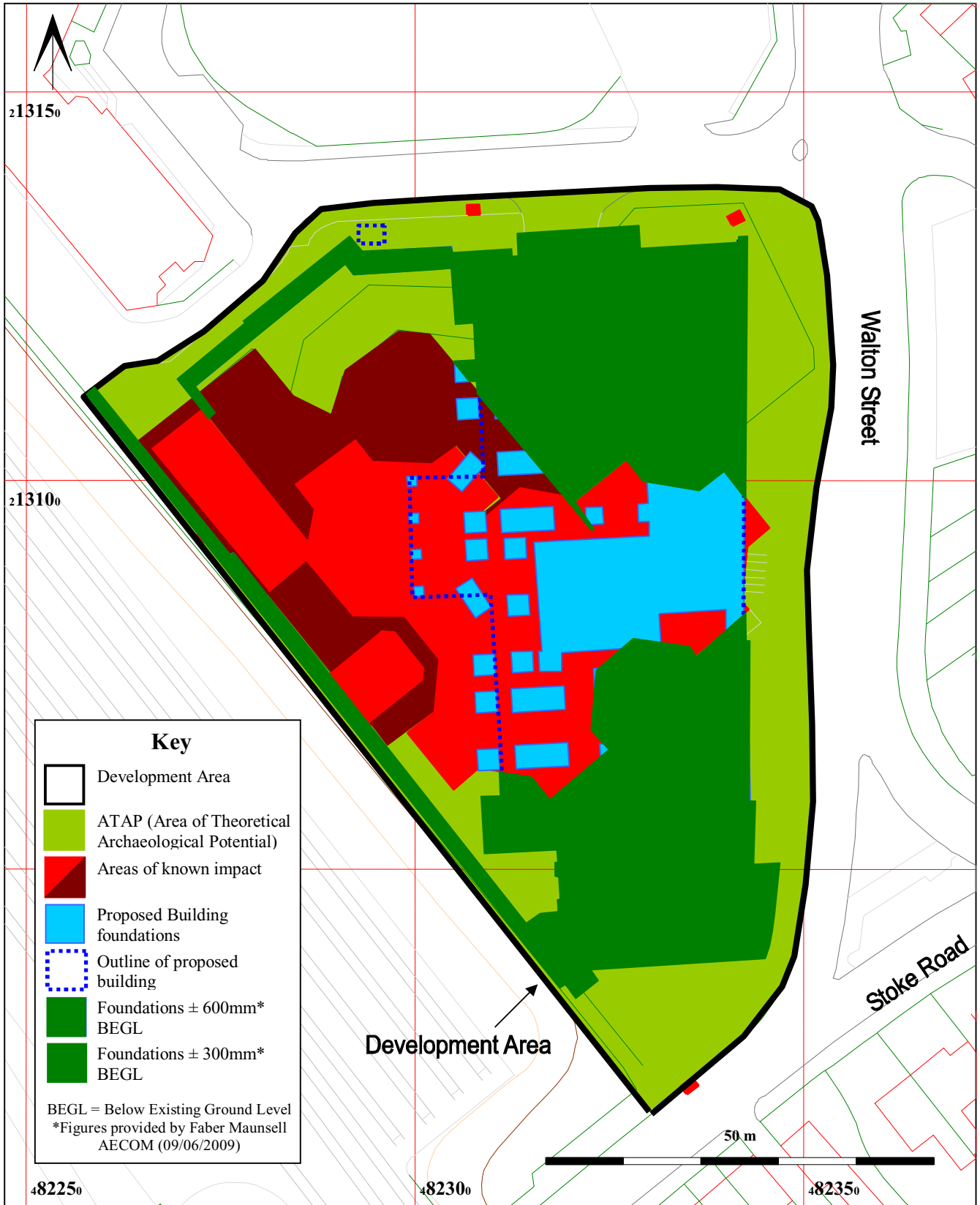


Figure 6: Revised impact assessment of proposed building (dark green) on Area of Theoretical Archaeological Potential (ATAP)



Plate 1: Zones 2-3, partially removed retaining wall facing north showing preserved subsoil and limestone deposits. 1m scale



Plate 2: Zone 3, preserved subsoil and limestone deposits after removal of retaining wall facing north-east. 1m scale



Plate 3: Zone 2/4, preserved limestone deposits after removal of retaining wall adjacent to car park ramp facing north-west. 1m scale



Plate 4: Zones 2-3, partially removed retaining wall facing east showing preserved limestone deposits covered with modern overburden. 1m scale



Plate 5: Zone 3 facing north-west showing exposed sump. 1m scale



Plate 6: Zones 2-3 facing north-east showing depth of impact of previous building immediately following removal of foundation slabs. 1m scale



Plate 7: Zone 3 facing east showing scale of foundation slab. 1m scale



Plate 8: Zone 2 facing north-east showing depth of concrete slabs overlying clay geology. 1m scale