

**FORMER WHITE HORSE PUBLIC HOUSE
FLITWICK
BEDFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION

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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 method statement. 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.

The project was managed for Albion Archaeology by Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager), with fieldwork undertaken by David Ingham (Project Officer) and Jo Barker (Archaeological Supervisor). Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the project by Duncan Hawkins of CgMs, who was responsible for overall management of the archaeological works on behalf of Isleport Ltd. The project was monitored by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist, Martin Oake.

This report has been prepared by David Ingham, and was approved by Drew Shotliff.

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Structure of the Report

Section 1 is an introduction to the project, the methodology for which is described in Section 2. The results and significance of the fieldwork are presented in Section 3, while Section 4 is a bibliography.

Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	20th October 2010	n/a
1.1	7th December 2010	Section drawings added at request of CBCA

Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this document:

CBCA	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist
HER	Heritage Environment Record maintained by CBC
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 2nd edn, 2001 Albion Archaeology
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission was granted for the erection of four semi-detached houses at the former White Horse public house, 101 Station Road, Flitwick, Bedfordshire (Fig. 1). The site lies on the edge of the floodplain of the River Flit, within an area of medieval and early post-medieval settlement known as East End (HER 17005; CgMs 2009, appendix 1). This has now been subsumed within the town of Flitwick, but was formerly a separate hamlet, lying immediately to the west of Flitwick Mill. The available 18th- and 19th-century historic map evidence suggests that, by the post-medieval period, the site lay within agricultural land associated with East End (CgMs 2009, figs 2–4).

Due to the archaeological potential of the site, a condition on the planning consent required a programme of archaeological investigation to be instigated prior to development. Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the developer to undertake a watching brief on the excavation of footing trenches for the first two house plots, in line with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Albion Archaeology (2010a). However, the developer had not sought prior approval of this document by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA), who advised the developer's archaeological consultant, CgMs, that a staged approach to the mitigation was required. Albion Archaeology was therefore commissioned to produce a revised WSI (Albion Archaeology 2010b) for a trial-trench evaluation of the remaining two house plots, with the potential for further mitigation should significant archaeological deposits be encountered. Unfortunately, excavation of the remaining footing trenches took place before the evaluation was scheduled to occur, and consequently these trenches were only subject to archaeological observation.

Excavation of the footing trenches revealed a number of modern features, including small-scale quarrying, but nothing that predated the late 19th-century development of the site. It did, however, establish the potential for archaeological features to survive in the vicinity of the development, in areas that were untouched by the quarrying.

The archive can be found at Luton Museum under accession number 2010.66.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

Planning permission (CB/10/01555/FULL) was granted for the erection of four semi-detached houses at the former White Horse public house, 101 Station Road, Flitwick, Bedfordshire (Fig. 1). These represent plots 4–7 within the overall development, and are located to the rear of the former public house (Fig. 2). Condition no. 11 on the planning consent required a programme of archaeological investigation to be instigated prior to development.

Albion Archaeology was commissioned by the developer to prepare a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for a programme of archaeological observation, investigation, recording, analysis and publication (Albion Archaeology 2010a). The footings for plots 6 and 7 and one of the soakaways were excavated under archaeological supervision in line with this WSI (see below, Section 1.3). However, the document had not received prior approval by the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist (CBCA), who advised the developer's archaeological consultant, CgMs, that the submitted WSI did not represent a suitable mitigation strategy. In particular, it did not include research objectives relevant to the area of medieval and early post-medieval settlement, East End, within which the site lay.

The CBCA and CgMs subsequently agreed that a staged approach to the mitigation was required, which would be implemented for the part of the development area containing plots 4 and 5. This was due to comprise the excavation of a trial trench (Stage 1), which would be followed by a programme of further investigation in the event that significant archaeological deposits were found (Stage 2). A revised WSI was prepared by Albion Archaeology (2010b). Regrettably, however, most of the footings for plots 4 and 5 were excavated before the Stage 1 evaluation was scheduled to take place, severely limiting the extent to which archaeological investigation of the area could be effected.

This report presents the results of both stages of the archaeological works.

1.2 *Site Location and Description*

The development area lies on the south-eastern side of Flitwick at TL 0397 3477 (Fig. 1). It occupies roughly level ground at a height of *c.* 68m OD on the edge of the floodplain of the River Flit, which currently flows *c.* 250m to the east. The land had previously been used as the car park and garden of the White Horse public house.

The underlying geological deposits comprise glacial sand and gravel deposits (BGS Leighton Buzzard: Solid and Drift: Sheet 220). Geotechnical investigations identified these deposits at a depth of 0.4–0.9m below ground level, sealed by made ground (CgMs 2009, 6).

1.3 *Archaeological Background*

A detailed archaeological background to the site is presented in a separate desk-based assessment (CgMs 2009).



The development site is located within an area of medieval and early post-medieval settlement, known as East End (HER 17005; CgMs 2009, appendix 1). This has now been subsumed within the town of Flitwick, but was formerly a separate hamlet, lying immediately to the west of Flitwick Mill. The available 18th- and 19th-century historic map evidence suggests that, by the post-medieval period, the site lay within agricultural land associated with East End (CgMs 2009, figs 2–4).

A review of historic map evidence in the same document concluded that no development took place on the site until the late 19th century; the 1881 OS map depicts the White Horse Beer House on the east side of the development area. The site was agricultural land before that, although there is also some evidence for localised, post-medieval sand- and gravel-quarrying in the vicinity. The desk-based assessment concluded that medieval and post-medieval ploughing would have had a moderate but widespread archaeological impact, with a potentially greater impact coming from the construction of the modern car park.

The footings for plots 6 and 7 and the adjacent soakaway were dug under archaeological supervision on 11th October 2010 (Albion Archaeology 2010b, fig. 2). No archaeological deposits were observed and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil. In the footings, mixed, sandy made ground was removed to a depth of 0.9m onto undisturbed sandy gravel. A similar sequence was seen in the soakaway, although, at 0.5m thick, there was less made ground. A similar sequence of deposits was revealed during the geotechnical investigations.

1.4 Project Objectives

The site's position on low ground on the edge of the River Flit floodplain means that there was little expectation of recovering evidence for permanent settlement in either the prehistoric or the Roman period. However, such a location would have been ideally situated for seasonal exploitation of the natural resources of the floodplain. Its location within the former medieval hamlet of East End also raised the possibility of the survival of medieval settlement evidence.

The initial objectives of the unapproved watching brief on plots 6 and 7 were to:

- monitor the ground-works associated with the development and investigate and record any archaeological deposits encountered within them in order to understand the remains in relation to their cultural and environmental setting;
- determine whether any remains associated with seasonal prehistoric activity survived on the site;
- recover artefacts and ecofacts from prehistoric or later deposits to assist in the understanding of the site's cultural and environmental landscape;
- add to the knowledge and understanding of the archaeology of Bedfordshire (*e.g.* artefact type-series and palaeoenvironmental background) and produce a report and archive that fully described the archaeological works.

Following consultation with the CBCA, a further objective was added to determine whether any remains associated with medieval settlement survived on



the site. A full statement of the objectives is provided in the approved WSI (Albion Archaeology 2010b).



2. METHODOLOGY

Overburden was mechanically removed from the area of the four house plots prior to archaeological observation of plots 6 and 7 on 11th October 2010. The footing trenches, which were *c.* 0.65m wide, were excavated to a depth of *c.* 0.9m using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothed bucket.

Excavation of a 2m-wide trial trench across the centre of plots 4 and 5 was scheduled for 14th October. However, it was discovered upon arrival at site that most of the footings for these plots had already been excavated, with the central footing trench expanded to 1.2m wide in the belief that this would serve as the trial trench (Fig. 3). Removal of the overburden had in fact reduced the whole area of plots 4 and 5 to the archaeological horizon, although mounds of spoil between the footing trenches precluded investigation of the area in plan, with only the sections of the footing trenches able to be observed and recorded.

Any potential archaeological features were noted, cleaned, excavated by hand, and recorded using Albion Archaeology's *pro forma* sheets. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion Archaeology 2010b).

The footing trenches in plots 4 and 5 were inspected by the CBCA prior to their infilling.



3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Results

The overburden was removed from site prior to any archaeological observation. It ranged in depth from 0.4m to 0.7m (Fig. 2, Sections 1–2), and appeared to be quite mixed in character.

No archaeological features were recorded within the footing trenches for plots 6 and 7 (Fig. 2). The footings were dug through mixed layers of sandy gravel and sandy silt in places, which may represent the backfill of modern quarry pits. Similar mixed deposits were also recorded at the southern end of plot 4, extending beyond the base of the trench, but no definitive edge could be traced for either putative area of quarrying within the confines of the footing trenches. More quantifiable evidence of quarrying was observed in the western half of plot 5 (Fig. 3, Photograph 2) and the eastern half of plot 4, where the infill was more conclusively distinguishable from the undisturbed geological deposits.

Several other archaeological features were observed in the footings for plots 4 and 5, including an open drain (Fig. 3), all of which were modern and are likely to have been associated with the former car park and garden. Modern pottery and metal items (not retained) were recovered from all these features, including the quarry pits.

3.2 Significance of Results

The ground-works to the rear of the former White Horse public house revealed no archaeological features that predate the late 19th-century development of the site. There was no trace of the medieval settlement known as East End, nor was there any evidence of seasonal Roman or prehistoric activity. However, the potential for identifying the latter was reduced by the removal of all overburden prior to any archaeological investigation, precluding the recovery of any residual flints.

Despite the limitations of the archaeological work that was carried out, and the absence of any pre-modern features, the project has at least demonstrated potential for the survival of archaeological features within the vicinity of the house plots. Modern development to the rear of the former public house was not as destructive as was suspected, although it was not possible to determine the level of truncation effected by medieval and post-medieval ploughing. The greatest obstacle to the survival of archaeological features in this area appears to be the quarrying that was identified in the footing trenches, but this appears to have been relatively small-scale and may therefore be localised.



4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology 2010a: *Former White Horse Public House, Flitwick, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication*

Albion Archaeology 2010b: *Former White Horse Public House, Flitwick, Bedfordshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Mitigation*

CgMs 2009: *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: Land at Former White Horse Public House, 101 Station Road, Flitwick*

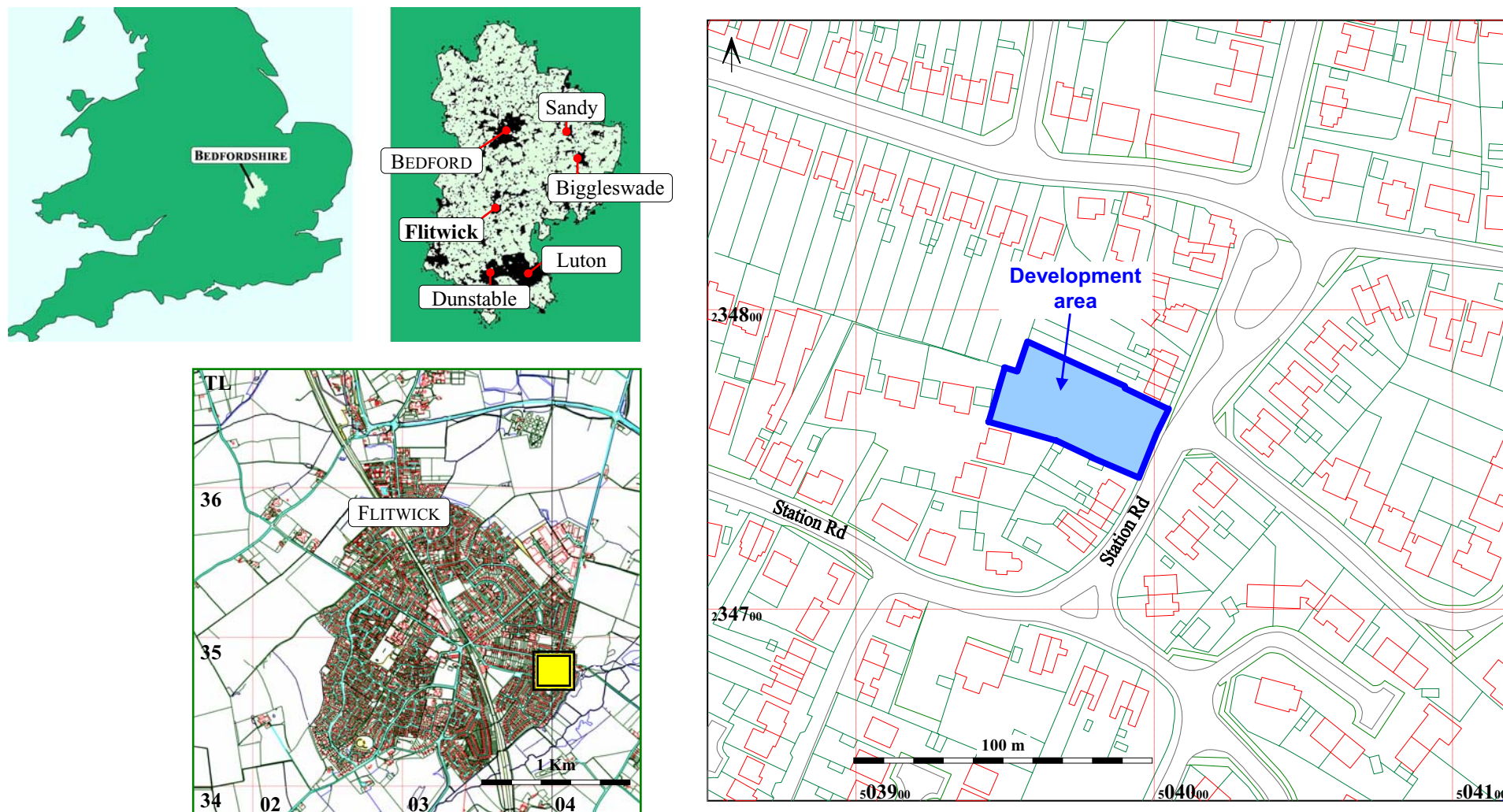


Figure 1: Site location plan

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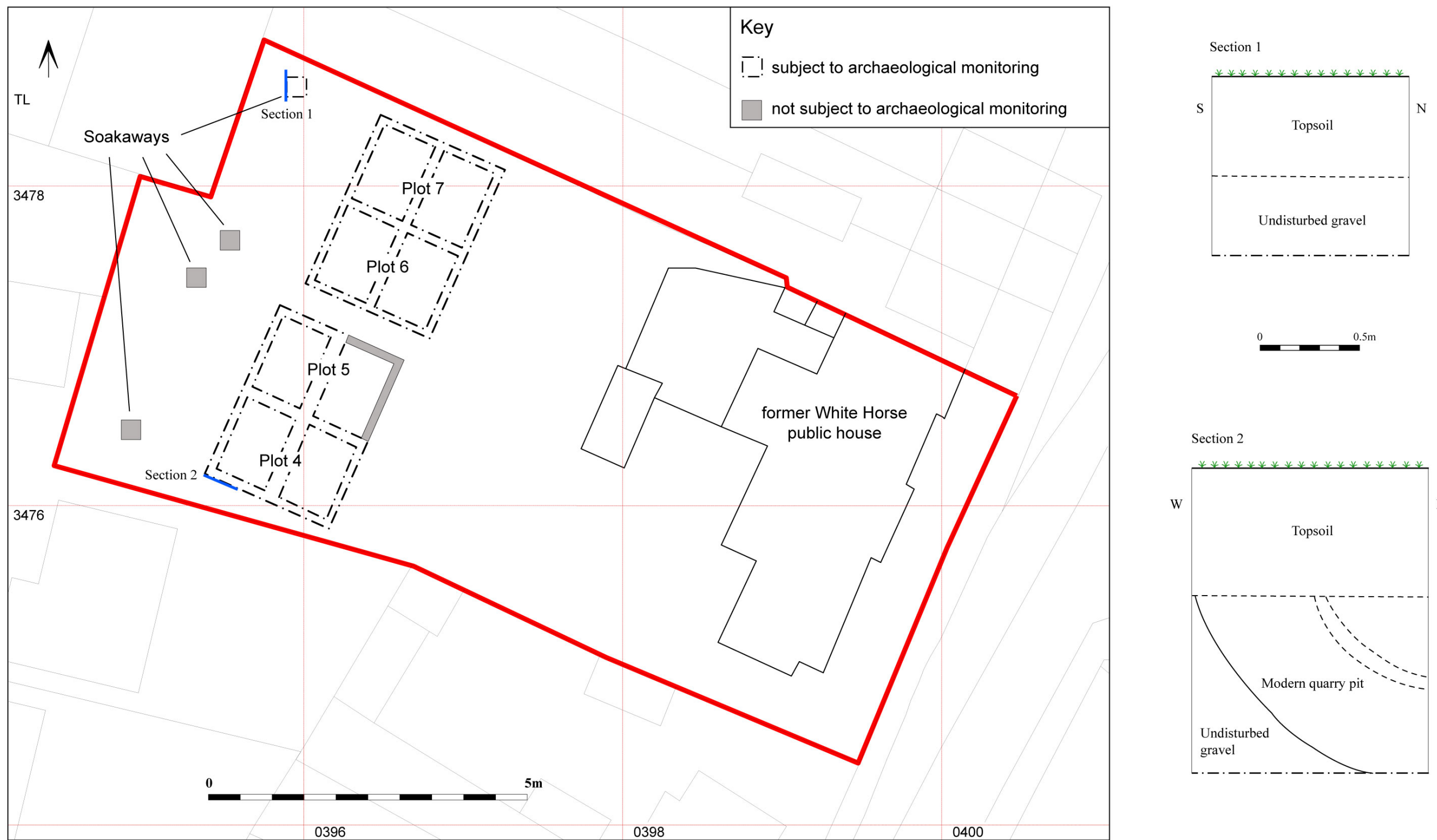
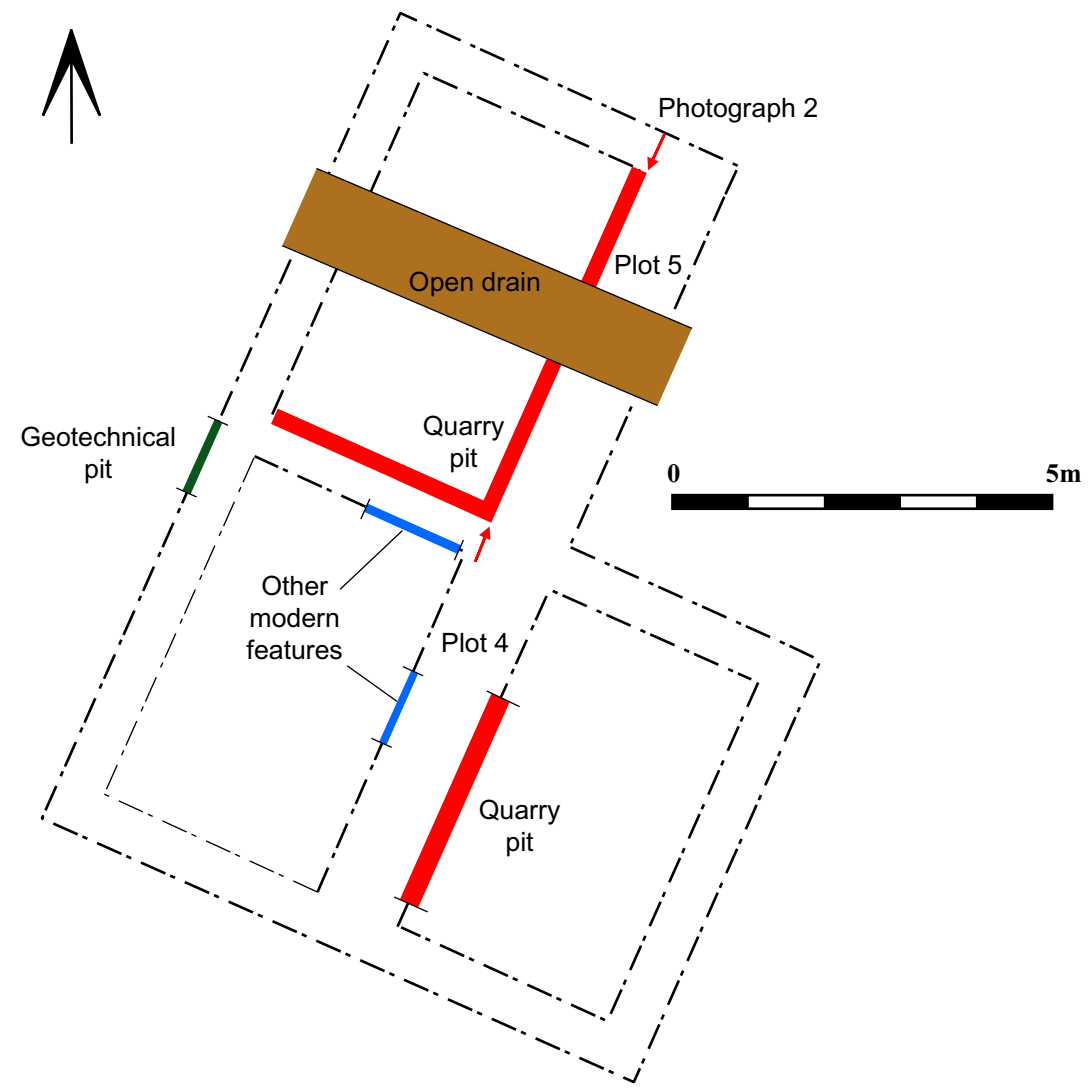


Figure 2: Areas of archaeological observation and selected sections

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Photograph 1:
plots 6 and 7,
viewed from the east



Photograph 2:
modern quarry pit



Photograph 3:
plots 4 and 5,
viewed from the north

Figure 3: Plots 4 and 5, with selected photographs of all plots