



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
SALVATION ARMY HALL
BUCKINGHAM ROAD
BLETCHLEY
MILTON KEYNES**

Joe Abrams BA AIFA



November 2002

ASC:BSA02/2

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SITE DATA

ASC site code:	BSA02	Project no:	433
City:	Milton Keynes		
District:	Bletchley		
Parish:	Bletchley CP		
NGR:	SP 8568 3322		
Total extent of site:	c.0.275 ha		
Present land use:	Salvation Army Hall, car parking and garden areas		
Planning proposal:	Residential Development		
Planning application ref/date:	01/01679/OUT		
Dates of work:	11 November 2002		
Client:	Abbey Developments Ltd Abbey House 2 Southgate Road Potters Bar Hertfordshire EN6 5DU		
Contact name:	James Griffiths		
Telephone:		Fax:	

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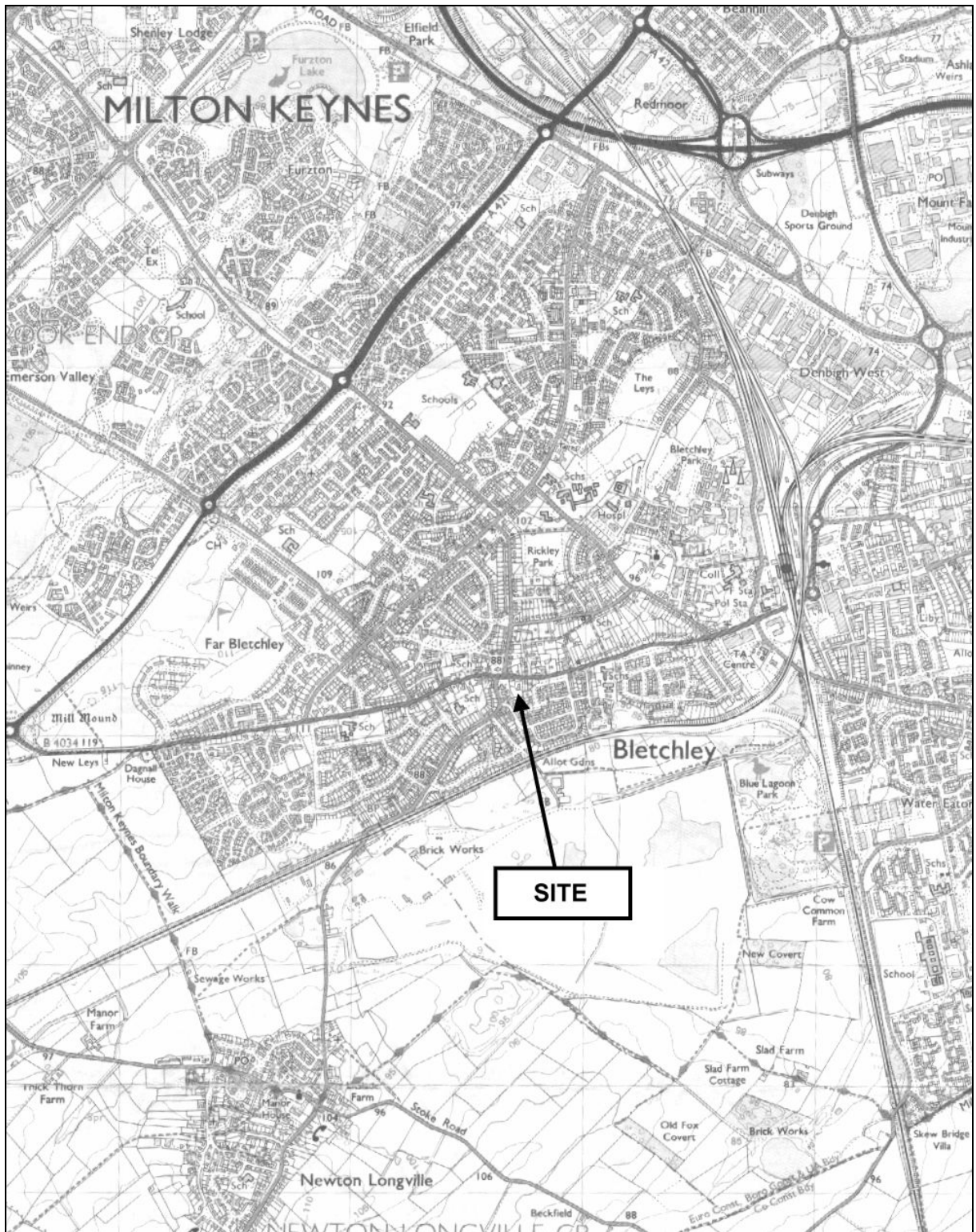
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Based upon the 1998 Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map, with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
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Figure 1: General location (*scale 1:25,000*)

Summary

During November 2002 an evaluation was carried out at the Salvation Army Hall, Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes. The evaluation trenches revealed clear evidence of large scale 20th century terracing within the development area.

One un-dated ditch and two modern pit features were recorded. A single sherd of residual Roman pottery was recovered from a modern layer.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 During November 2002 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC)* carried out an archaeological evaluation on a site at the former Salvation Army Hall, Buckingham Road, Bletchley (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Abbey Developments Ltd, and was carried out according to a brief (PS/537/2/A/C831) prepared by Brian Giggins, Archaeological Officer, Milton Keynes Council, and a project design prepared by ASC (Abrams 2002).
- 1.2 The archaeological evaluation was commissioned in response to a PPG 16 (archaeology and planning) planning condition imposed by the local planning authority, Milton Keynes Council. The condition was imposed due to the area being identified as having archaeological potential. The site is located immediately to the east of a known site of early medieval occupation, identified during a garage extension in 1973 by a Mr W Griffiths (Giggins 2002). It was expected that any archaeological remains within the development area would be severely damaged or destroyed by the ground works associated with the construction of a residential development, access roads and associated services.

2 Setting

- 2.1 The site is a roughly square plot 0.275ha in size. It is located within the parish of Bletchley CP.
- 2.2 The elevation of the site is between *c.*89 to *c.*91m OD. It is located on a hillslope immediately south of Buckingham Road. The route of Buckingham Road rises to 95m OD approximately 100m to the east of the site, and slopes to 87.8m OD approximately 100m to the west.
- 2.3 The topography within the site has been significantly landscaped in order to create flat areas upon which to construct the Salvation Army Hall and its associated car parking areas. The Hall occupies the eastern and southeastern parts of the development area and lies at an elevation of *c.*90.79m OD. It has been constructed on a terrace approximately 1.5m higher than the northern and western parts of the site which are covered in tarmac and used for car parking. This lower area lies at an elevation of *c.*89.21m OD
- 2.4 The natural soils of the area are derived from boulder clay (Zeepvat 1993) and the underlying geology is classified as belonging to the Hanslope Association (Soil Survey 1983), being 'slowly permeable calcereous clayey soils' overlying boulder clay.

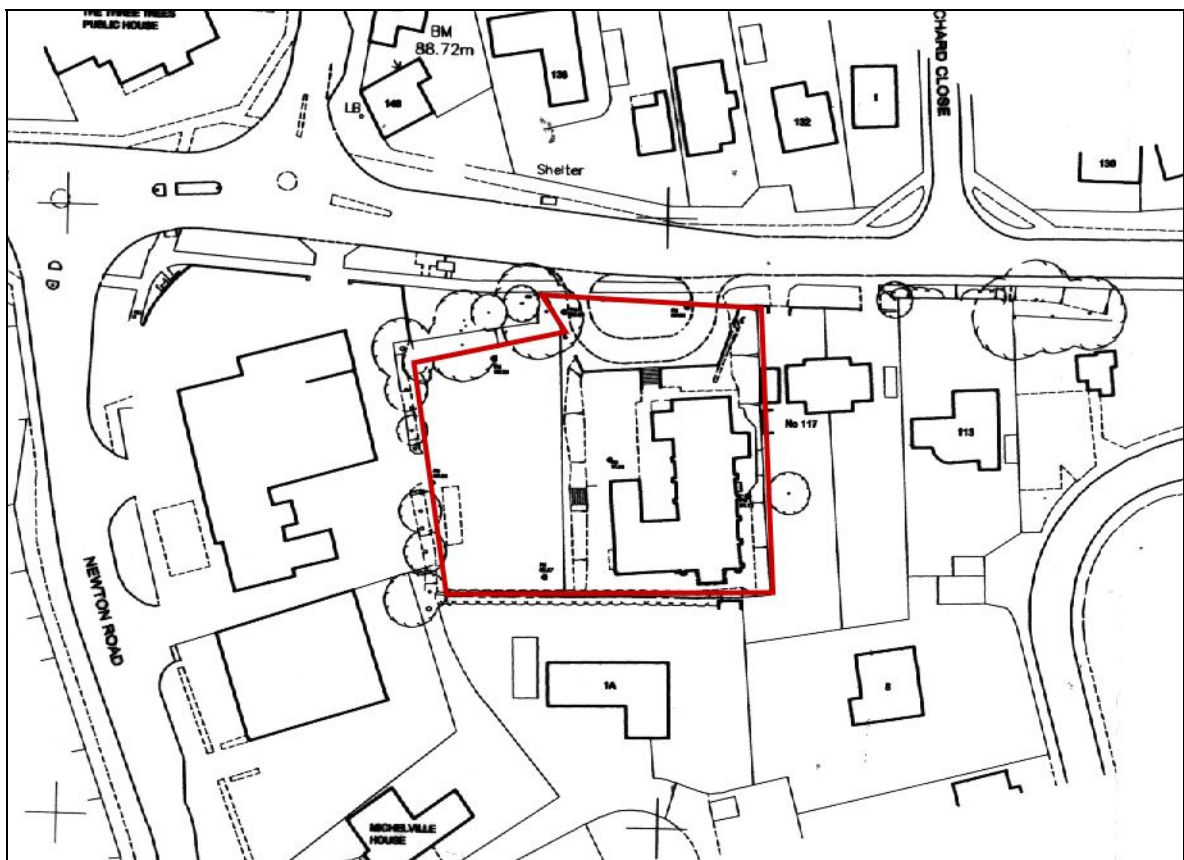


Figure 2: Site location (*scale 1:1250*)

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 The site is located in an area known as Far Bletchley which was a peripheral settlement to the former village of Bletchley. The historic core of Bletchley lies c.800m to the northeast of the site centred around the parish church of St Marys. The name Bletchley derives from the old English term *leah*, meaning clearing or settlement in the wood (Gelling 1993).
- 3.2 An important route in the Roman period ran along the line of the present day Buckingham Road which forms the northern boundary of the site. This route linked the Roman town of *Magiovinium*, near Fenny Stratford, with a temple complex at Thornborough to the west. The same road continued to be an important route throughout the medieval period, linking Fenny Stratford with Buckingham (Croft & Mynard 1993). A major Roman Road, later known as Watling Street, lies c.2km northeast of the site, this passed through many Roman settlements on its route from London, *Londinium*, to Wroxeter, *Viroconium*.
- 3.3 The Domesday survey makes no mention of Bletchley (Morris 1978). It is known that two manors existed within the parish during the early medieval period; these appear to have been included as possessions of larger manors in neighbouring Water Eaton and Great Brickhill.
- 3.4 The majority of the older buildings in Bletchley village date to the 17th century, whereas the modern town of Bletchley is focussed around the railway station c.1.5km northeast of the site. The modern town grew up around the railway which was the major employer during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

4 Aims & Methods

4.1 The aims of the evaluation were:

- To consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains, which were liable to be threatened by the development.
- To produce an accurate and full record of the archaeology present, such that a permanent record will be made and the results presented in such a way that they may be re-examined and interpreted in the future.
- To provide essential site survey information to aid scheme preparation and avoid unnecessary delays or design changes at later stages.

4.2 The work was carried out according to the brief, which required (5):

- The excavation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits.
- A programme of post-fieldwork analysis, archiving and publication.

4.3 The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Evaluations*, and the relevant section(s) of ASC's *Operations Manual*.

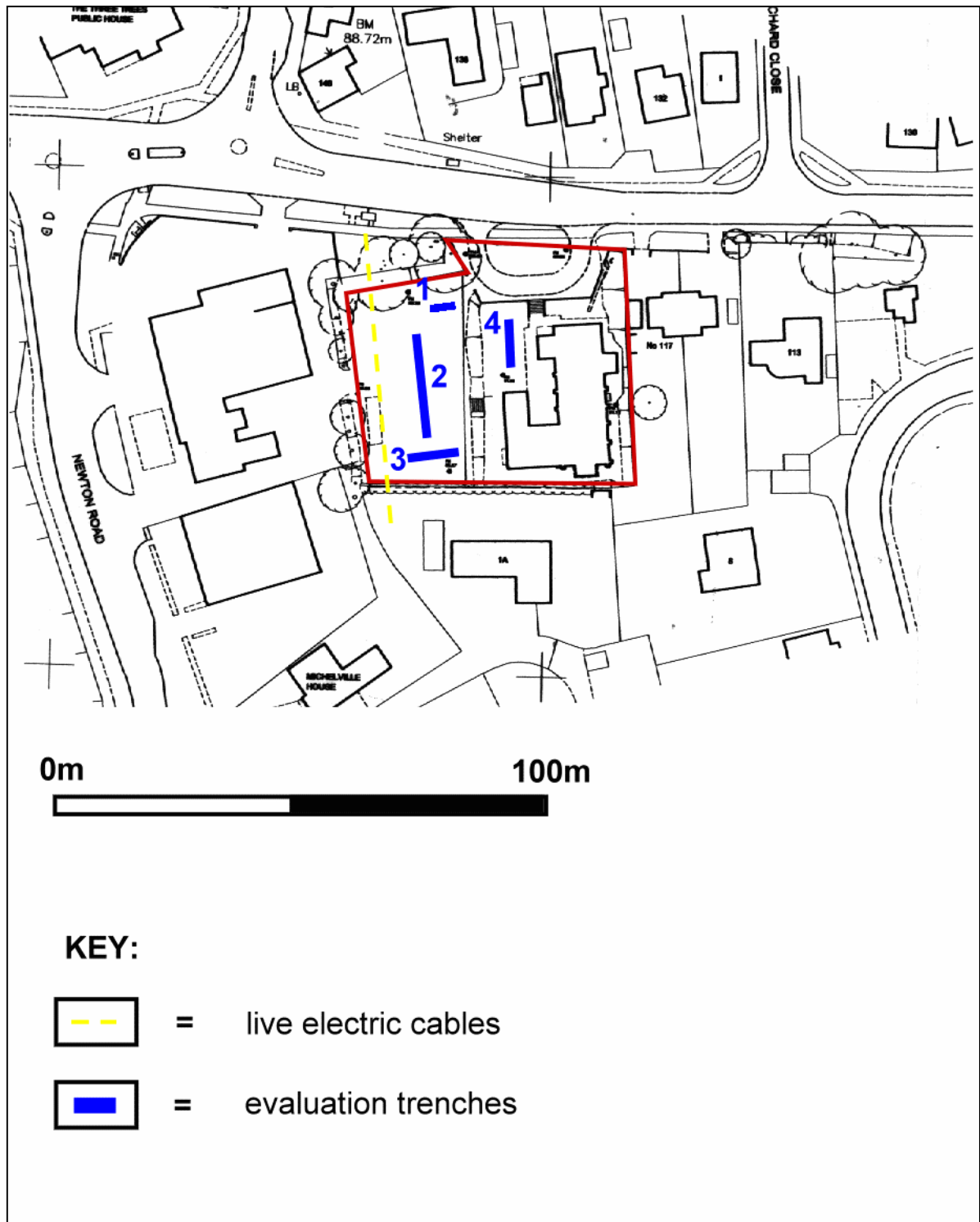


Figure 3: Trench Location Plan (*not to scale*). Location of evaluation trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4. The combined sample provided by these trenches was 74.4m² (2.7% of 2750m²).

5 Results

- 5.1 Four trenches were excavated as part of the evaluation (Fig. 3), of which trenches 2 and 4 contained archaeological features (Fig. 4). All four trenches are discussed below and the detailed technical information on each trench can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 Trench 2 contained the only archaeological feature which is considered to be pre-modern. This consisted of ditch [201] located towards the southern end of Trench 2 (Plate 1, Figs. 4 and 5). The excavated slot recorded one deposit 200 from which no artefactual material was recovered. The artefactually sterile character of this clay deposit, together with its homogenous colour and uniform particle size are typically found in ditch deposits which have become backfilled by natural silting processes. Therefore, although ditch [201] represents an example of human activity affecting the landscape, it is impossible to assign a date to its period of use or abandonment. However, two points suggest that this ditch pre-dates the modern landscaping activity which took place on the site. Firstly, it was stratigraphically sealed by the buried soil layer 3, and secondly it was significantly different in character from any of the modern dump layers which were recorded above layer 3. This suggests that this ditch had been backfilled by natural processes some time before the deposition of the modern dump layers recorded above it, (see below 5.5).

It is suggested that ditch [201] may have functioned as a drainage ditch, as its alignment follows the natural east-west slope of the area, making it an ideal channel for rainwater. It is possible that it functioned as a roadside drainage ditch for an important thoroughfare which existed broadly along the line of the present day Buckingham Road. It is known that roads have existed along this route since at least the Roman period (Croft & Mynard, 1993), and therefore the existence of associated drainage ditches would not be unexpected.

Another possible interpretation of this feature would be that it functioned as a boundary ditch. However, this seems unlikely as these are generally located at right angles to main roads. Such an arrangement can be seen on present day maps of the area in which the boundaries of neighbouring properties are aligned broadly north-south (Fig. 2), and at right angles to Buckingham Road.

- 5.3 Trench 3 contained no archaeological features. However, it was from Layer 3 in this trench that the only significant artefactual material was recovered, a single rim sherd of Roman pottery. Unfortunately this was residual and therefore does not date layer 3. One sherd alone, particularly when found out of context like this does not add significantly to the knowledge of a site or its vicinity. The existence of a Roman Road immediately north of the site means that pottery sherds of this type would not be unexpected on the site.
- 5.4 Trench 4 contained two modern pits [403] and [405] (Plate 2, Figs. 4 and 5). These were modern pits cut into the natural and then sealed by layer 7 and several other layers of modern make-up material. Pit [403] contained three deposits 400, 401 and 402 from which pieces of 20th century glass and pottery were recovered. Pit [405] contained one deposit 404 from which pieces of modern roof slate were recovered. It

is likely that both pits were excavated and backfilled during the significant landscaping episode which took place on the site during the 20th century.

- 5.5 All four trenches contained significant quantities of made ground. Trenches 1, 2 and 3 in the topographically lower car park area, all contained a sequence of layers which included layer 3 at the base sealing the natural subsoil. This layer was a dark brown silty clay layer identical in character to the topsoil in surrounding gardens. It is suggested that this was the original topsoil layer, and was buried during the 20th century when landscaping took place on the site. Sealing this buried soil was layer 2, which was a layer of mixed light brown silty clay material c.0.80m deep. This appears to have been used to level the car park area prior to the laying of a tarmac capping. This is particularly clear in Trench 3 in which layer 2 appears c.2m from the eastern end of the trench and deepens to 0.80m deep at the western end. Clearly with the natural slope being east-west the majority of any make-up material would be required in the western part of the site in order to level the land. Trench 2 confirms this idea as the depth of layer 2 in this trench is an even 0.80m from north to south, as would be expected when the levelling was intended to correct an east-west slope. Sealing this layer in both trenches was layer 1, a mixture of hardcore and sand capped with tarmac, which formed the surface of the car parking area.
- 5.6 Only Trench 4 was excavated in the higher area and this recorded layer 7 sealing the natural subsoil and features [403] and [405]. This layer was very similar in character to the buried soil layer 3 in the car parking area. The fact that this layer seals the modern features [403] and [405] suggests that these pits were backfilled and then covered with topsoil prior to the major levelling which took place on the site. Sealing layer 7 was layer 6 which was 0.75m deep, this silty clay layer was 0.75m deep. Sealing the make-up layer 6 was topsoil 5 which formed the surface of a green area associated with the Hall building.
- 5.7 It is clear that layer 2 in trenches 1, 2 and 3 and layers 6 and 7 in trench 4 are modern make up layers used to create level ground upon which to construct a car park and the Salvation Army Hall respectively. Figure 6 illustrates the levelling which has taken place on the site and in neighbouring properties giving the area a terraced appearance.



Plate 1: Ditch [201], facing west



Plate 2: Pit [405], facing south

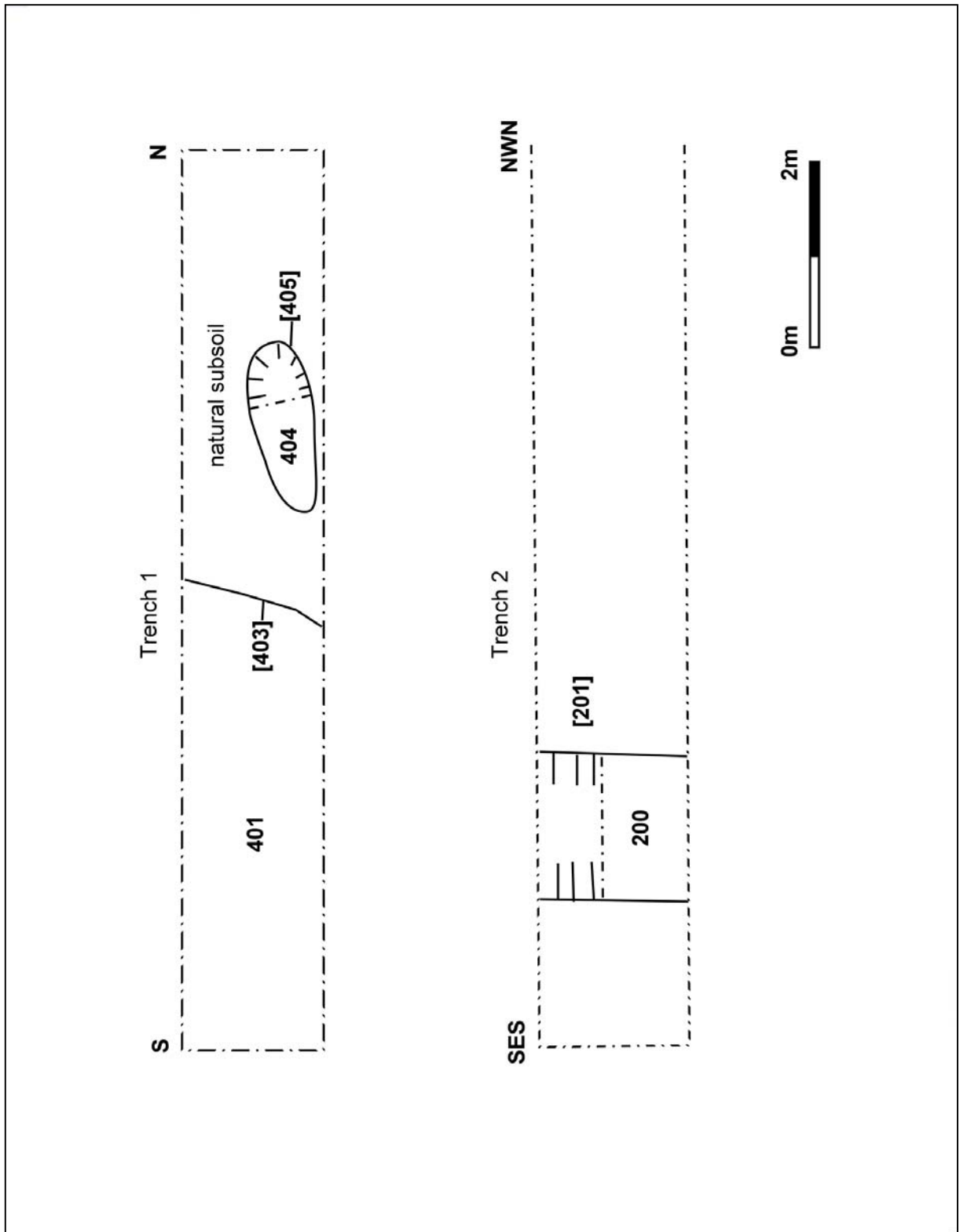


Figure 4: Plans of trenches 2 and 4

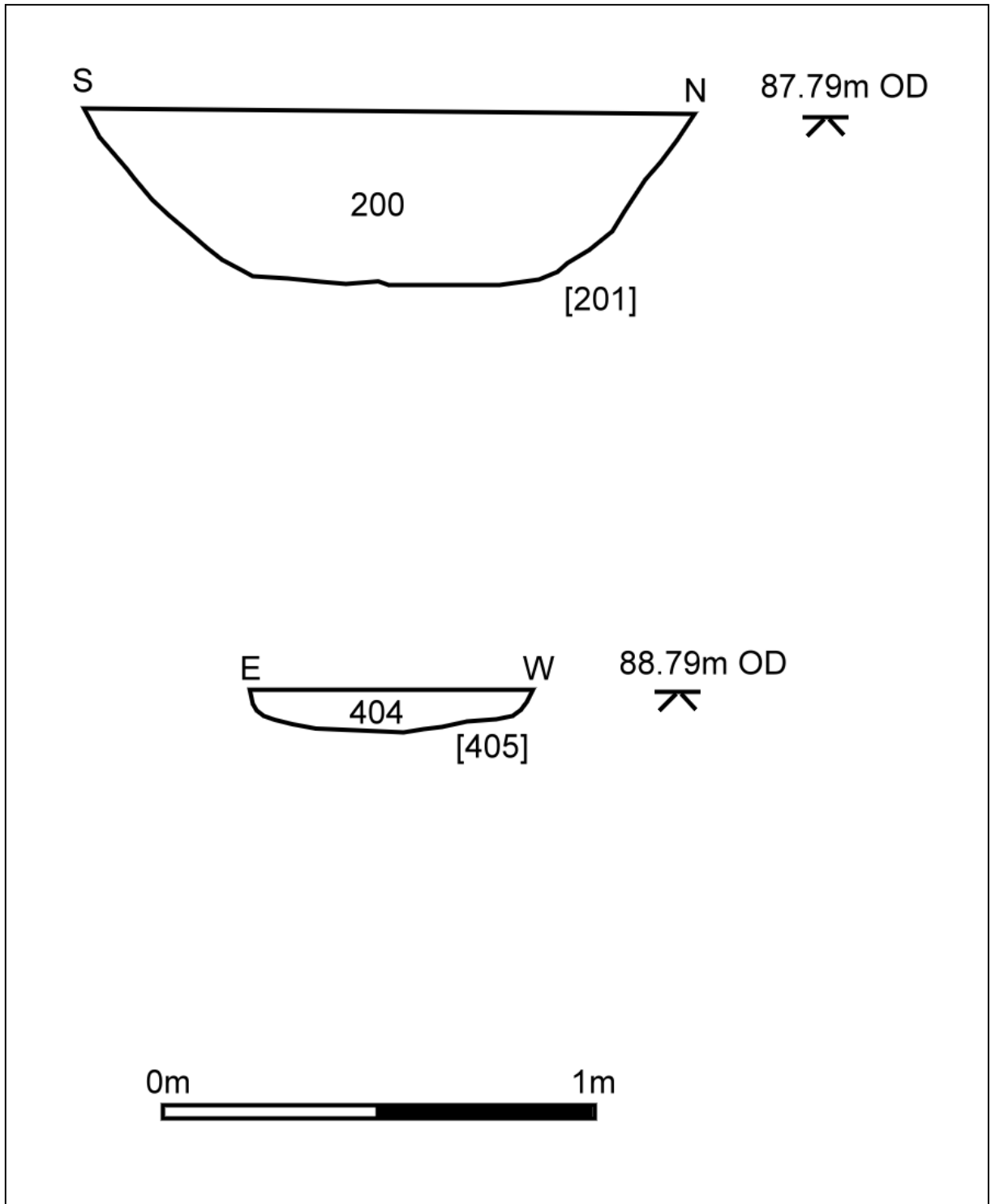


Figure 5: Section drawings of Ditch [201] and Pit [405]

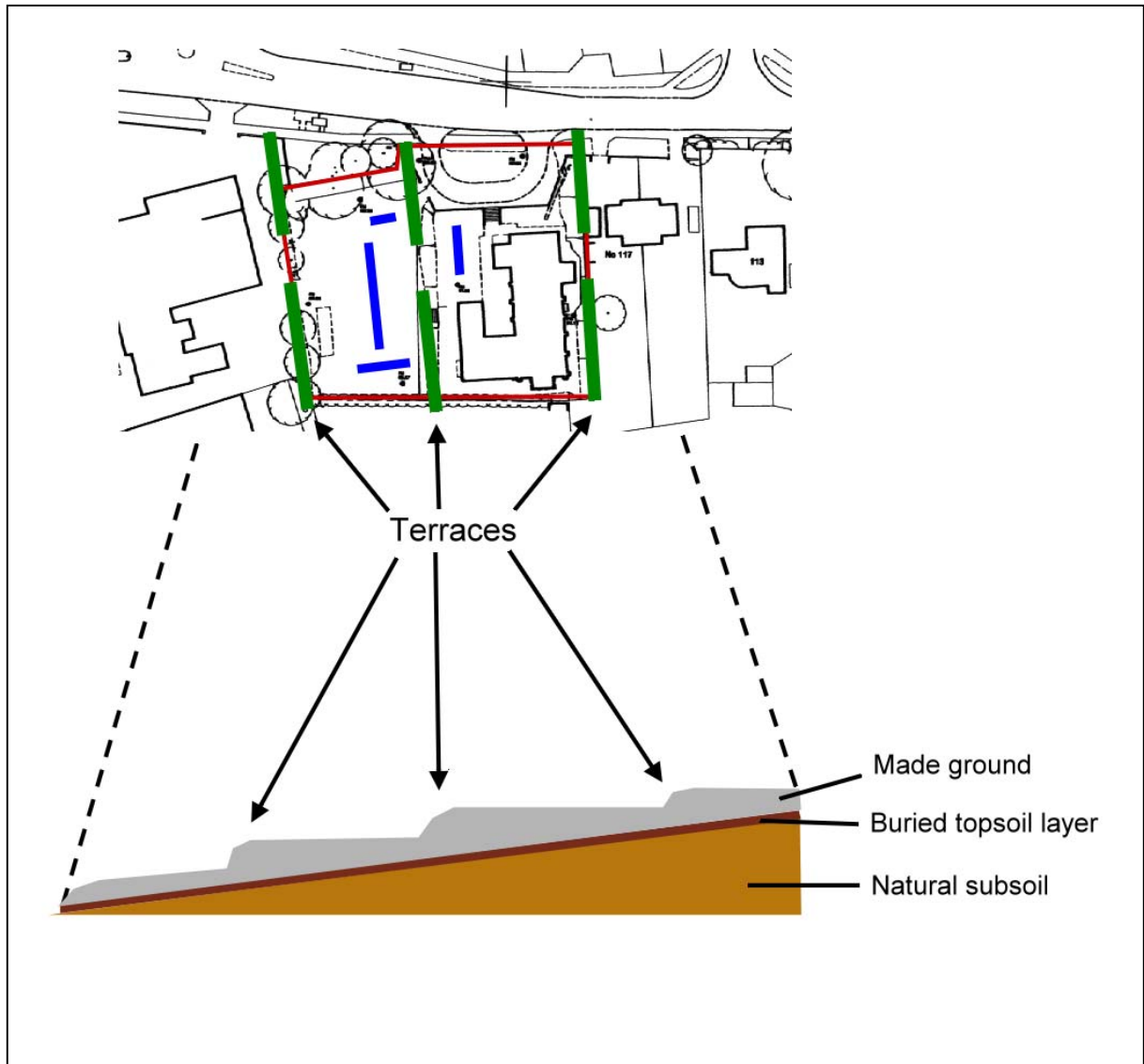


Figure 6: Projected section of terracing on the development area. (not to scale)

6 Conclusions

One un-dated ditch [201] was recorded during the evaluation, and one residual sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from make-up layer 3. Neither find is considered to be of great archaeological significance.

The evaluation clearly showed that 20th century levelling episodes had resulted in the deposition of several make-up layers which had buried the original topsoil.

7 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to James Griffiths of Abbey Developments Ltd for commissioning ASC to undertake the evaluation. Thanks are also extended to Brian Giggins, Archaeological Officer who visited and monitored the site on behalf of Milton Keynes Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Joe Abrams and John Bolderson. Report preparation was undertaken by Joe Abrams.

8 Bibliography


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9. Archive

9.1 The project archive comprises:

1. 1 illustration sheet (plans and sections)
2. 1 Plan register
3. 1 section register
4. Photographic registers
5. 4 trench sheets
6. 3 context registers
7. 16 context sheets
8. Photographs
9. Copy of the report
10. Brief
11. CDROM

Appendix 1: Technical Detail – Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4

Trench 1								
Max Dimensions:		Length	5.5m	Width	1.6m	Depth	2.0m	
Orientation		ENE - WSW		Area (sq. m)		8.8		
General Description		Not fully excavated due to the presence of gas service pipe. Contained no archaeological features.						
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation				Depth BGL		
1	Deposit	Tarmac, sand and hardcore: Black, compacted with a loose layer of sand and hardcore beneath. 0.50m deep.					0.0m	
2	Deposit	Modern make-up layer: Light grey silty clay, firm, frequent fine rounded chalk pebbles, occasional charcoal flecks.					0.5m	
4	Deposit	Modern make-up layer: Blackish dark grey clay, firm. Contained modern building material and was assumed to be a modern make up layer similar to 2.					1.0m	

Trench 2								
Max Dimensions:		Length	21.0m	Width	1.6m	Depth	1.5m	
Orientation		NWN - SES		Area (sq. m)		33.6		
General Description		Contained one ditch [201] through which one slot was excavated.						
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation				Depth BGL		
1	Deposit	Tarmac, sand and hardcore: Black, compacted with a loose layer of sand and hardcore beneath. 0.50m deep.					0.0m	
2	Deposit	Modern make-up layer: Light grey silty clay, firm, frequent fine rounded chalk pebbles, occasional charcoal flecks.					0.50m	
3	Deposit	Buried soil layer: Dark blackish grey, silty clay, plastic/firm, occasional charcoal flecks, occasional medium rounded pebbles. Contained a single roman rim sherd. 0.45m depth.					1.0m	
8	Deposit	Natural subsoil: mid orange-ish to mid blue-ish grey clay					1.2m	
Context	Type	Description and interpretation				L	Width/Dia	D
200	Deposit	Brown-ish mid grey clay, firm, occasional chalk flecks.				-	1.4m	0.4m
[201]	Cut	Ditch, steep slightly concave sides, flat base, aligned E-W, contained deposit 200.				-	1.4m	0.4m

Trench 3							
Max Dimensions:		Length	10.0m	Width	1.6m	Depth	1.4m
Orientation		ENE - WSW		Area (sq. m)		16	
General Description		Contained no archaeological features. One sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from layer 3.					
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation				Depth BGL	
1	Deposit	Tarmac, sand and hardcore: Black, compacted with a loose layer of sand and hardcore beneath. 0.50m deep.				0.0m	
2	Deposit	Modern make-up layer: Light grey silty clay, firm, frequent fine rounded chalk pebbles, occasional charcoal flecks.				0.5m	
3	Deposit	Buried soil layer: Dark blackish grey, silty clay, plastic/firm, occasional charcoal flecks, occasional medium rounded pebbles. Contained a single roman rim sherd. 0.45m depth.				0.9m	
8	Deposit	Natural subsoil: mid orange-ish to mid blue-ish grey clay				0.6m – 1.0m	



Trench 4							
Max Dimensions:		Length	10.0m	Width	1.6m	Depth	2.0m
Orientation		N - S		Area (sq. m)		16	
General Description		Contained two modern pit features [403] and [405].					
Context	Type	Description and Interpretation				Depth BGL	
5	Deposit	Topsoil: Dark brown silty clay, friable, occasional fine pebbles. 0.25m deep.				0.0m	
6	Deposit	Modern make-up layer: Light grey-ish brown silty clay, firm, frequent charcoal flecks, occasional charcoal flecks. 0.90m deep.				0.25m	
7	Deposit	Buried topsoil layer: Dark brown silty clay, firm/plastic, occasional fine pebbles, charcoal flecks and grey slate fragments.				1.15m	
8	Deposit	Natural subsoil: Mid orange-ish to mid blue-ish grey clay				1.6m	
Context	Type	Description and interpretation			L	Width	D
400	Deposit	Fill of [403]. Dark blackish brown silty clay, firm/plastic, occasional fine pebbles, C.B.M fragments moderate grey slate fragments. 0.05m deep.			5.0m	1.6m	0.05m
401	Deposit	Fill of [403]. Mid brown-ish red friable silty gravel, occasional modern CBM fragments, frequent gravel.			5.0m	1.6m	0.5m
402	Deposit	Fill of [403]. Dark blue-ish grey silty clay, firm/plastic, occasional charcoal.			-	0.35m	-
[403]	Cut	Pit, slightly rounded edge, although only a small part of the full extent of pit [403] was revealed by Trench 4. Contained deposits 400, 401 and 402.			5.0m	1.6m	0.55m
404	Deposit	Fill of [405]. Dark black-ish brown silty clay, firm/plastic. Occasional charcoal flecks, fine pebbles, modern slate and C.B.M fragments.			2.0m	0.65m	0.1m
[405]	Cut	Linear pit, rounded corners, concave moderately sloping sides, concave base, aligned NW to SE, contained deposit 404.			2.0m	0.65m	0.1m

