

Emergency archaeological recording of a service trench at Napier Road, Colchester, Essex

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commissioned by **RPS**
on behalf of **Taylor Wimpey**

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1 Summary

An emergency archaeological recording was carried out in a service trench on the north pavement of Napier Road, 2-3m away from the remains of the inner cavea wall foundation of the Roman circus. Four layers and one feature were observed in section, the feature possibly being related to the demolition and robbing of circus material during the early Medieval period.

2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This report presents the results of emergency archaeological recording south of Arena Place development (formerly Flagstaff B1b compound) on Napier Road, Colchester, Essex which was carried out on the 21st June 2016. The work was commissioned by RPS on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (TW) and at the request of Historic England. The work was commissioned after a service trench (located outside TW's ownership boundary of Arena Place) was excavated by subcontractor PowerOn within the scheduled monument zone of the Roman Circus without prior directive or consent (from TW or Historic England). The work was undertaken by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT).

All fieldwork and reporting was done in accordance with English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)* (English Heritage 2006), and with *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England (EAA 14 and 24)*. This report mirrors standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for archaeological evaluation (ClfA 2014a)* and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (ClfA 2014b)*.

The feature and layer numbers assigned to contexts in this report are part of a larger sequence of context numbers from the main excavation and monitoring activity ongoing within the Arena Place development to the north (which will be the subject of a forthcoming CAT report).

3 Archaeological background

The following archaeological background draws on the major published sources for Colchester archaeology (listed below), and also on the Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) created by Colchester Borough Council, and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

The archaeological and historical setting of the entire Garrison redevelopment area has already been comprehensively explored in an archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site (CAT Report 97). This section will only detail the immediate archaeological surroundings.

From July 2015 onwards CAT has been carrying out excavation and monitoring at Arena Place development (formerly the B1b Flagstaff compound), immediately to the north of this site (CAT Report forthcoming). This work has uncovered large areas of important Roman and Medieval archaeology associated with the scheduled monuments of the Roman circus (SM 1021426) and St Johns Abbey (SM 1015015).

The site itself is located on the north side of Napier Road, within the arena of the Roman circus and between 2-3m away from the remains of the inner cavea wall foundation (Fig 1). The area immediately surrounding the site was the subject of archaeological monitoring in 2010 when Napier Road footpath was completely replaced. The archaeological impact of the new footpath and associated services was minimal, but several areas of circus demolition material were observed and recorded (CAT Report 652).

4 Results (Figs 2-3)

One trench was excavated on the northern pavement of Napier Road with the intent of locating and keying into an electric main. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.12m.



Photograph 1 Service trench, photograph taken facing north.

When the archaeological recording began, the trench had already been dug out to its full depth (c 200mm into natural sand and gravel), so all archaeological layers and features were only observed in section.

The trench was dominated by the existing service run it was dug to intercept. The only area where archaeology was observed was in the north section of the trench.

The trench was machined through four layers, modern concrete and tarmac (WBL42, c 310mm thick), a sub-base for the pavement (WBL43, c 90mm thick), and a medium brown sandy silt post-Roman subsoil (WBL44, c 360mm thick) which sealed yellow/orange mottled natural sand and gravel (WBL45).

Cutting into WBL44 on the south-eastern end of the trench was a feature (WBF459) containing fragments of lime mortar, septaria and tile fragments. This feature was itself cut by a straight edged modern disturbance on its eastern side.

WBF459 was 400mm deep and sloped to the south-east. The subsoil WBL44 and natural WBL45 also sloped in that direction.

5 Discussion

Although the trench was largely disturbed by a modern service run, the north-east section was a view into the surviving archaeology in this area.

The one feature, WBF459, is situated at the south-eastern end of the trench. It is in close proximity to a layer of circus demolition material observed during monitoring along Napier Road in 2010.



Photograph 2 Section of trench, photograph taken facing north-east.

WBF459 does not appear to be filled with circus demolition material – it contains septaria in its fill and the Roman circus, as far as we can tell, was only constructed of flint and Kentish ragstone. Ultimately, because the feature was truncated and only observed in section it is difficult to assign a date or interpretation. It may still be associated in some way with the demolition and robbing of the circus in the medieval period, it could be associated with the construction or demolition of the abbey wall in some way, or it could just as easily be a modern feature that has been backfilled with disturbed Roman building material.

6 Acknowledgements

CAT would like to thank Historic England for commissioning the project and Taylor Wimpey for funding the work. The project was managed by C Lister and carried out by M Baister and R Mathieson. Site plans were prepared by MB. The project was monitored for Historic England by Deborah Priddy.

7 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in PDF format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

CAT	2014a	<i>Health & Safety Policy</i>
CAT Report 97	2000	<i>An archaeological desk-based assessment of the Colchester Garrison PFI site, October 2000</i>
CAT Report 652	2014	<i>Stages 2 & 3 archaeological monitoring and excavation on the Napier Road car-parks and footpath (GAL Area B1b and Area C2), Colchester garrison, Essex: February 2011-January 2013</i>
ClfA	2014a	<i>Standard and Guidance for an archaeological evaluation</i>
ClfA	2014b	<i>Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives</i>
ClfA	2014c	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
DCLG	2012	<i>National Planning Policy Framework</i>
English Heritage	2006	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE)</i>
Gurney, D	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14 (EAA 14).</i>
Medlycott, M	2011	<i>Research and archaeology revisited: A revised framework for the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 24 (EAA 24)</i>

8 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
CBM	brick/tile (ceramic building material)
ClfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
CM	Colchester Museum
context	specific location of finds on an archaeological site
feature (F)	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a drain: can contain 'contexts'
Iron Age	period from 700 BC to Roman invasion of AD 43
layer (L)	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
medieval	period from AD 1066 to Henry VIII
modern	period from c AD 1800 to the present
natural	geological deposit undisturbed by human activity
OASIS	Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations, http://oasis.ac.uk/pages/wiki/Main
post-medieval	from Henry VIII to c AD 1800
prehistoric	pre-Roman
residual	something out of its original context, eg a Roman coin in a modern pit
Roman	the period from AD 43 to c AD 410
section	(abbreviation sx or Sx) vertical slice through feature/s or layer/s
UAD	Urban Archaeological Database
U/S	unstratified, ie without a well-defined context
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

9 Contents of archive

Finds: none.

Paper and digital record

One A4 document wallet containing:

The report (CAT Report 981)

Original site record (Feature and layer sheets, Finds record, plans)

Site digital photos and log, Architectural plans, Attendance register, Risk assessment

10 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Roman Circus Walk, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7GZ, but will be permanently deposited with Colchester Museum under accession code: COLEM 2015.73.

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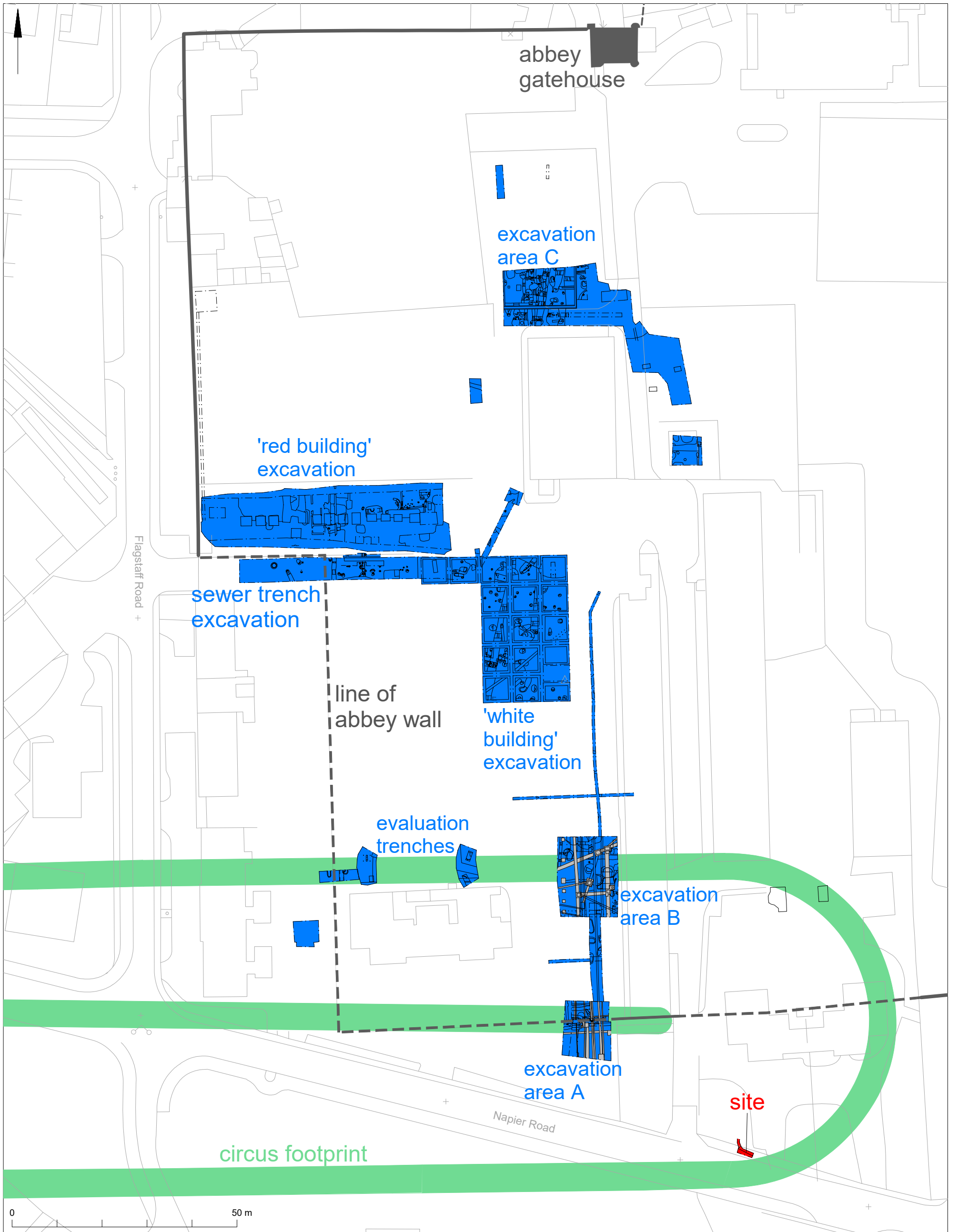
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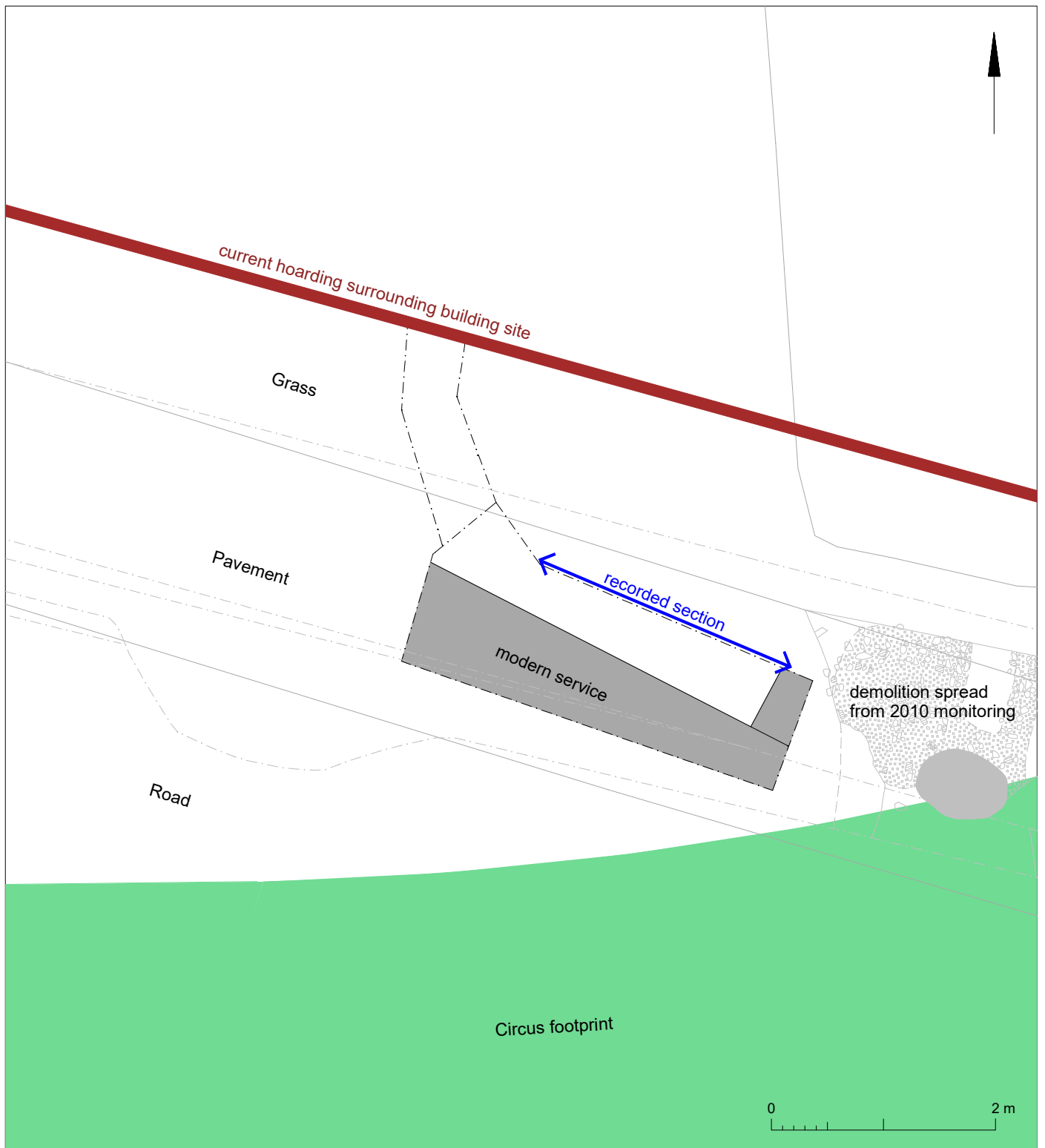
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Fig 1 Site location within Arena Place development, with other excavation areas shown. Circus footprint shown in green.



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Fig 2 Monitoring results, superimposed on 2010 Napier Road monitoring results.

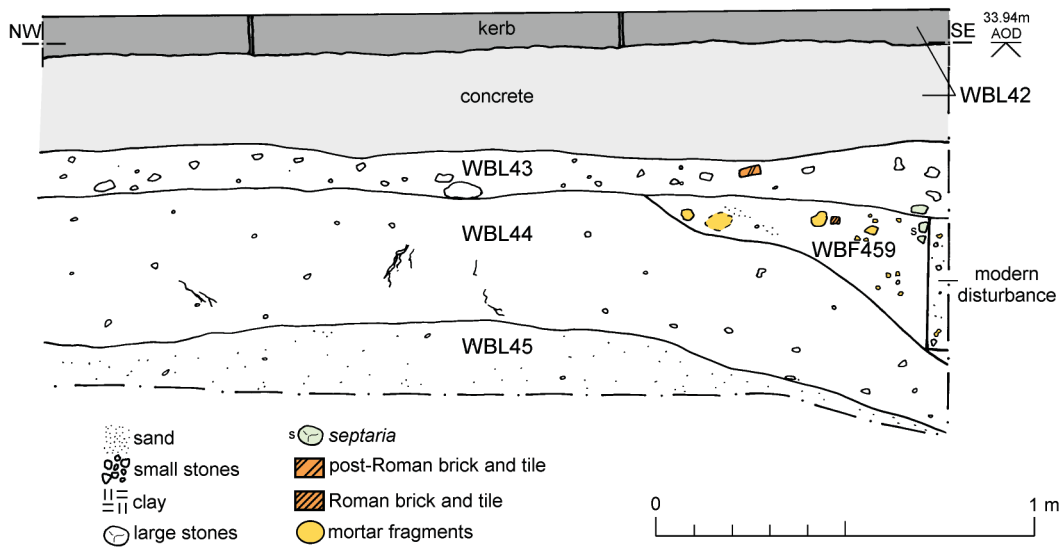


Fig 3 Representative section.