**EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY
FOR
BEDFORDSHIRE**

DUNSTABLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   *Background to the Project*

English Heritage has initiated a national series of Extensive Urban Surveys. This report is an archaeological assessment of Luton and forms part of the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) for Bedfordshire. This survey of the 12 historic towns of Bedfordshire is funded by English Heritage (EH) and managed by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of Bedfordshire County Council (BCC). The survey is being jointly undertaken by staff of Albion Archaeology and the Heritage and Environment Group of BCC.

The EUS comprises three stages, Data Compilation, Assessment and Strategy. The first stage, Data Compilation, draws together the accessible history of the town, known archaeological sites and historic buildings data. The Assessment presents this evidence in the form of a report which provides a history of the town, an account of its buried and standing archaeology, together with an assessment of archaeological potential. The Strategy stage will draw on the Assessment to develop a strategic framework for the management of the archaeological resource for each town.

The chronological framework used in the Assessment reports to describe each town's development (normally section 5) reflects the periodisation used in the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). Any broad dating system of this kind has limitations in the face of the mass of detailed evidence that exists for each town. It has, therefore, occasionally (*e.g.* Bedford in the Saxon and Saxo-Norman periods, or Luton in the early industrial period) been necessary to use slightly different chronological divisions. In addition, the town of Sandy is exceptional in its own right because only the Roman town has been included in the Bedfordshire EUS.

1.2   *Structure of this Document*

This report has been compiled using a number of sources including the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS) and the Albion Archaeology (formerly BCAS) Project Database.

The location and topography of Dunstable is described in Section 2. The nature of the evidence is discussed in Section 3 and a historical summary of the town is presented in Section 4. The archaeological and historical development of the town is described by chronological period in Section 5. Section 6 comprises an assessment of Dunstable's character, importance and potential. The historical development of the town and areas of archaeological potential are presented in plan form at the end of this report.

2. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Dunstable is a medium-size market town in southern Bedfordshire, located 27 km south of the historic town of Bedford (Fig 1). It is 11km to the ESE of Leighton Buzzard, 19km to the NNW of St Albans and 7km to the west (centre to centre) of the much larger town of Luton, which it now adjoins. Dunstable has recently expanded into and partially encompasses the village parish of Houghton Regis, to the north-east. The town also extends into parts of Caddington and Kensworth parishes to the south (Coleman 1985: 96).

The town's basic situation is on the crossroads of the A5 (Watling Street) and the A505 (Icknield Way). The A5 is orientated north-west to south-east. It goes towards Milton Keynes and Towcester in one direction, and towards St Albans and London in the other. The A505 is orientated roughly west to east. It links the Chiltern towns of Wendover and Tring with Luton. There are no rivers or large streams in Dunstable.

Dunstable sits on chalk, with clay-with-flints to the south-east and limestone to the north-west. The average height of the town is around 150m AOD. It is surrounded by open country to the south, west and north-west. The land rises to the south-west, where the Dunstable Downs rise to around 240m AOD. Together with Barton Hills, these form the north-east termination of the Chilterns. To the south-east, the land rises to form Blow's Downs, which reach around 210m AOD. To the north of the town, the land gradually falls away.

Sheet 147 of the 1971 Agricultural Land Classification of Bedford and Luton classes the town as land 'predominantly urban in use', surrounded by land 'primarily in non-agricultural use', specifically the areas of Blow's Downs, Dunstable Downs, Maiden Bower and Puddlehill. Beyond these areas, the land is classed as Grade III agricultural land.

3.   NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

3.1   Previous Archaeological Investigations

There have been a number of archaeological investigations within the town of Dunstable, conducted by both Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service (now Albion Archaeology) and the Manshead Archaeological Society (one of the most active amateur archaeological organisations in the country), as well as recent excavations by the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust and Northamptonshire Archaeology. In the case of work carried out by commercial units, project numbers are preceded here by an abbreviation indicating which organisation carried out the work (e.g. BCAS **30** or HAT **526**). In the case of work carried out by the Manshead Archaeological Society, there are no project numbers. For locations of excavations, see Fig 2; for Dunstable's main streets, see Fig 11.

3.1.1 South-west quadrant

Much work has been carried out in the south-west quadrant of the town. These excavations have yielded important evidence for the medieval Friary and its burial ground, as well as the Roman occupation and its cemetery.

The first 20th century excavations here were carried out in 1921/4 by Bagshaw (Bagshaw and Martin 1928), who located the Friary cloisters and part of the medieval cemetery. The Manshead Archaeological Society conducted a series of excavations to the west of this area in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1965, they uncovered the kitchens and guest rooms of the original Friary. Three building phases were identified. A Roman ditch was also found. A section through a mound in the field to the north of the kitchen area showed that it was formed from rubbish deposited after the dissolution of the monasteries. During this work the quite spectacular and unusual 'Dunstable Swan Jewel' was found (Matthews 1996).

In 1966, the Manshead Archaeological Society tried to locate the church building. A destruction layer relating to the dissolution was found, along with the monastic toilets, a Roman ditch - a continuation of the same feature from the previous year - and two other small Roman ditches (Matthews 1967).

Excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society in 1967 revealed further Roman features, including a latrine pit, a well, two ditches, and a possible 'town ditch'. Also found was a large cross-shaped feature, its function at that time unknown. The well had been filled in and its upper layer used as a grave in the late Roman period (Matthews 1968).

In 1968, excavation of the well continued down to its base at a depth of 28m (a diver with aqualungs accomplished the excavation of the last 10m). It had handholds and footholds at regular intervals on either side and could possibly have been used as a ritual shaft. Further cross-shaped features at regular intervals were also discovered, thought to represent a large Roman building at

this stage. A corn drying kiln was cut by two of these crosses, and was dated to the 2nd century AD (Matthews 1969).

The series of cross-shaped features was still proving to be a mystery in the 1971 excavations. Two graves from the Roman cemetery were discovered. At this point, the DoE were invited to take over the excavation of the field (Matthews 1972). They revealed the east wall and part of the north side of the church. They confirmed that this was the site of the Dominican Friary and also exposed some more cross-shaped features and a great buttressed trench. They projected a 14th century date for the cross-shaped features (Matthews 1973).

The Society's 1973 excavations were quite extensive and covered six separate sites in the south-west quadrant, following demolition of many of the properties in this area. A continuation of the Roman boundary ditch and a palisade trench were found. Two more Roman wells were discovered; both had been filled in and their upper layers used as graves within the Roman period. Ten Roman cess pits were excavated, one of which contained a Barbary ape skeleton, in association with two bone pins – suggesting it was a pet animal which may have been buried in a cape or shroud. Fragments of flue tile were also found (Matthews 1974).

Further investigation by the Society into the cross-shaped features and the associated trench was conducted in 1974. Interpretations at this date included a possible grandstand, or even foundations for a cathedral. Ditches surrounding the Roman inhumation cemetery were identified and some burials found (Matthews 1975).

The Roman inhumation cemetery was excavated in the late 1970s, along with a further six wells adjacent to it. It proved to be indeed bounded by a shallow ditch, which itself contained 40 burials. The cemetery itself contained 45 burials. Some of the burials had been decapitated, while others showed evidence for coffins or grave markers (Matthews 1979).

Archaeological investigations by the Manshead Archaeological Society ceased in 1980, when the site became a housing estate known as Friary Field.

Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service carried out two phases of excavations on the site of the medieval Friary in 1988 and 1990. The project BCAS **320** is an umbrella number which encompasses both BCAS **321** (also called DF88) and BCAS **322** (also called DF90). In the first of these, 22 medieval burials from the Friary graveyard and the masonry foundations of the north wall of the Friary itself were uncovered. Also found were two Roman wells and two pre-Friary Christian graves. The second phase of excavation in 1990 was initiated by redevelopment at 56 High Street South.   This included the re-excavation of one of the 1970s' trenches. Though fairly small-scale, these excavations recovered some interesting information. The east end wall of the 13th century church was successfully located, and 48 burials from the cemetery were excavated, providing a large corpus of material for analysis. In

addition, the first Roman structural evidence found in Dunstable, in the form of floor surfaces, was exposed.

Excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society at Pond Cottage, Bull Pond Lane in 1990 revealed some Iron Age pottery, suggesting there may have been an Iron Age occupation site in this area of the town. A continuation of the trench identified in Friary Field was found, along with other ditches of medieval date, possibly representing a shifting in the boundary of the Friary over time (Hudspith 1991: 34).

A more recent Manshead Archaeological Society excavation took place to the rear of 158 High Street South in 1997. A small medieval oven or kiln, and a stokehole from another medieval oven were found. Roman tiles had been re-used in the oven construction (Warren 1998).

In 2001-2002 an excavation and watching brief was carried out by the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust on land at 24 Friary Field (HAT **526**). Fifteen burials of late Roman date were excavated, four of which had been decapitated. This brings the total of burials to have been excavated from the Roman cemetery to over a hundred. Also encountered were yet more of the enigmatic cross-shaped features (Crank 2002).

It is now generally considered that the most likely explanation for the regularly spaced large cross-shaped features, enclosed by a trench, is that they represent a medieval garden or orchard associated with the Friary (Green & Horne 1991: 2) rather than a huge timber building, as was formerly thought. The enclosing trench with entrances would have been for a wall or possibly a hedge around the garden. This is a very significant archaeological feature with some importance for garden archaeology as well as for an understanding of the Friary itself and its place in medieval Dunstable.

In addition to the major excavations cited above, there have been several minor watching briefs. BCAS **30** consists of minimal records of a watching brief carried out in the 1980s. No significant evidence was found. BCAS **96** was a watching brief of building development on 56 High Street South, conducted in 1988. No evidence of anything other than Victorian features was revealed. BCAS **121** was a small watching brief of unspecified works conducted in 1989 at 15a Friar's Walk. No significant archaeology was revealed, only post-medieval debris. BCAS **530** was a watching brief carried out during water pipe construction at The Square. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were recovered. The area appears to have been badly disturbed both by service trenches and also possibly by construction of the "Square" itself.

3.1.2 South-east quadrant

The south-east quadrant is important archaeologically because it contains the church, the former site of the Priory (of which the church was once a part) as well as a general background of Roman features and finds.

In 1948 the Manshead Archaeological Society conducted an excavation in the area of the crossing of the original church to the east of the present building. The base of one of the four columns of the central tower was found (Warren 1986: 2).

In 1983, a Manshead Archaeological Society excavation uncovered cellars and ovens related to the Priory in the garden at the rear of the Saracen's Head (Warren 1986: 2). The cellars had been converted for the production of lime. The outer wall of the monastic site was also located accurately (Matthews 1984: 11). In 1986, the Society investigated the line of a hedge across the Priory gardens and found a large well and a floor surface (Warren 1986: 2).

In 1970 Luton Museum conducted a small watching brief on the excavation of a cable trench in Priory Meadow. A substantial ditch was encountered running roughly north-west to south-east. It was about 2m wide and over 1m deep, and was sealed by a layer containing pottery from the 1st-2nd centuries AD. Running parallel to the ditch on the south-western side were two shallow trenches. The ditch had been encountered by medieval builders who had placed within part of the fill a packing of flints and Totternhoe stone to serve as the foundation for a large wall (Hagen 1972).

In 1992, the land at 2 Priory Road and the grounds of Priory Middle School were investigated by the Manshead Archaeological Society. A rutted medieval trackway was revealed in the grounds of the school (Warren & Hudspith 1992: 7). The track had flint metalling and was probably connected with the Priory. Beneath the road was a Roman ditch containing a female burial (Warren 1997).

A homeowner on the west side of Priory Road also reported finding a medieval tile kiln near their property during the course of the Society's investigations in the 1990s (Hudspith, pers. comm.). This might indicate an area of industrial production at the boundaries of the Priory precinct, a hypothesis reinforced by the lime kilns found in the cellars to the rear of the Saracen's Head.

Nearly 20 skeletons were revealed at 2 Priory Road, and were thought to be of 12th-13th century date. The skeletons showed signs of healed injuries, possibly suggesting that the individuals were actually involved in the construction of the Priory. The cemetery was almost certainly situated outside the Priory precinct (HER 16173).

In 1983 the Manshead Archaeological Society conducted an excavation to the rear of the Saracen's Head Hotel in the hope of revealing evidence for Roman occupation on this side of Watling Street. The remains of a large monastic building (presumably the Priory itself) were discovered, constructed of blocks of Totternhoe stone. Cellars were also found, relating to the bake house and brew house of the Priory, perhaps with guest chambers over. At an unknown date, the cellars had been converted to the production of lime (Matthews 1984).

In 1986, the Manshead Archaeological Society did some work in Priory Gardens, further north from the 1983 excavations. A well was revealed, much larger than the other wells found in the town. It may have served the whole of the Priory complex. A 'floor' of flint, pebble and pegtile was also discovered (Warren 1987).

BCAS **230** was a test pit evaluation on the site of Dunstable Priory, carried out in advance of water/sewage works in 1995. Three test pits were dug and several layers containing medieval/post-medieval/modern stratigraphy were recorded. These possibly represent Priory 'levelling up' layers. The test pit situated closest to the street had evidence for post-medieval brick vaulting, possibly part of a cellared structure.

BCAS projects **198, 448** and **511** were all small watching briefs which did not yield any significant results.

3.1.3 North-east quadrant

The north-east quadrant is thought to contain the former site of the royal residence or palace (Kingsbury) founded by Henry I in 1123, though this has yet to be located by excavation. It was also the setting for some fairly extensive excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society in the early 1960s, and produced some important evidence for the Roman town.

During developments in the north-east quadrant of the town in 1963, the society discovered six Roman wells, a length of ditched and metalled Roman road, one walled building, two sunken-featured buildings (SFBs), and several pits of Roman date. Several medieval and post-medieval wells were also investigated. The building was perhaps the most significant find. The ground base for it had been partly cut into the hillside, and in one corner chalk drystone walling survived up to height of 30cm. This structure and the SFBs had grey, coarse wares and other late Roman pottery associated with them. The roadway ran WSW to ENE and crossed Watling Street about 30m to the north of the present crossroads (Matthews 1964).

The Manshead Archaeological Society also investigated the gardens of Kingsbury Court in 1987 and 1988, but did not discover any evidence for the presence of a high status medieval building or palace there (Warren 1988, 1989).

In 2000 Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust carried out an evaluation to the rear of the Quadrant Centre, in the grounds of Ashton St Peter's Lower School (HAT **477**). Five trenches were excavated. One produced a density of archaeological features while the others none at all (perhaps suggesting that damage to evidence has occurred and that survival is variable from one location to another). Ditches and pits of both Roman and medieval date were found.

In the same year Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an excavation at Queensway Hall (NA **2000**, see Mudd *forthcoming*). Postholes, gullies, pits and a small rectangular enclosure showed that Roman occupation did extend this far north – though whether the character of occupation is rural or urban is difficult to judge. The features on the site are dated to the 1st and early 2nd centuries AD, and may be associated with the early establishment of the Roman town.

Several watching briefs have taken place in this sector of town:

BCAS **29** was a watching brief on a building extension at 48-54 High Street carried out in 1985. Some, possibly medieval, structural material was discovered, including a rubble wall base. Otherwise, all the material was post-medieval: a capped well, a cesspit, an oven or fireplace, a boundary wall, and various other walls and cellars of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

BCAS **32** was conducted on the north side of Church Street during building work in 1981, revealing traces of a robbed-out medieval buttress, along with medieval pottery, Roman pottery, and a single Roman feature in the form of a gully.

BCAS **33** was a small watching brief at 20 High Street. There were no significant discoveries.

BCAS **217** was a watching brief on the construction of the lift shaft at Dunstable Library in 1994. Apparently a wall was uncovered during excavations, but no further details or results were reported

BCAS **269** dealt with skeletal material found during extension work at a private house at 21 King's Way, north of Church Street. The skeletons were of two females in simple east-west graves, with nails present suggesting coffins.

BCAS **546** was a watching brief carried out during the excavation of major water pipe shafts along the High Street North. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

BCAS **593** was undertaken during construction of a sewer at Grove Gardens. A single pit contained post-medieval artefacts, comprising a fragment of a clay pipe stem and pieces of roof tile.

3.1.4 North-west quadrant

This is perhaps the least explored of all the four quadrants of Dunstable. However, there is the same general background of Roman finds.

In 1962 the Manshead Archaeological Society excavated a well during demolition of a shop at 17 High Street North. The well was found in the cellar of the building. It was excavated to a depth of about 13m before water was reached. The fill contained debris of Roman and early medieval date. The

well was not filled in before the 14th century, but the quantity of residual Romano-British pottery suggests it was lying thick on the ground at this date (Matthews 1963).

There were some unpublished excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society in Albion Road during the 1980s.

BCAS **31** was a watching brief carried out on housing development at no. 3 Albion Road in 1986. No records were kept of the brief itself. However, there are records of on-going excavations in the gardens of other properties on Albion Road (3-25) which detail other features in the area - including a medieval pit, a possible medieval well, a Roman ditch containing three inhumations, and the remains of an 18th century building beneath a warehouse. These records may refer to unpublished Manshead Archaeological Society excavations.

BCAS **430** consisted of two test pits excavated in the yard to the rear of 16-20 West Street (north side) in 1993. They revealed a tile and mortar wall footing and a brick domed oven, probably both of post-medieval date. There was a considerable depth of post-medieval make-up in this area, and extensive disturbance by modern sewage pipes.

BCAS **465** was a watching brief on demolition of some terraced houses at nos. 1-5 Edward Street. House foundations, cellars and a brick lined well (most likely relating to the demolished Edwardian and Victorian houses) were recorded. A possibly post-medieval make-up layer or garden soil horizon was also observed. Pottery was recovered apparently dating back to Saxon and medieval periods. Iron objects and slag were also discovered.

In 2000 the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust carried out an evaluation (HAT **454**) at West Parade, a large area just to the west of St Mary's RC Church. Absolutely nothing was found, with all trenches showing a clean surface of chalk. This represents quite important negative evidence for the extent of the Roman town, showing that the edge of the town was some way to the east of here.

3.2 Historical Evidence

Volume III of the Victoria County History, published in 1908, gives a history of the Manshead Hundred, which includes Dunstable. Annette Edwards produced a Dunstable Town Survey for Bedfordshire County Council in 1974, which is unpublished and held by the Heritage and Environment Department of Bedfordshire County Council.

The Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service holds a great deal of material about Dunstable, including manorial documents, but the majority of this relates to the post-medieval period. There is an extensive series of parish registers, dating from 1558-1812. Census returns from 1801 to 1991 are held there, as are a series of trade directories, from 1785 onwards.

The map evidence for Dunstable parish is good, but there is no material prior to 1762. There is no Enclosure map, due to the piecemeal nature of the enclosure of the open fields over time. The earliest map of the town is a sketch included on a map of Houghton Regis drawn in 1762 (CRO: B553). The road layout is clearly shown, as is the approximate extent of the town's buildings, which are shown three-dimensionally. However, this map is not detailed and the scale is approximate. The first complete map of the town is the 1822 Tithe map and award, revised in 1840 (MAT 12/1). The first edition Ordnance Survey map dates to 1888.

The Historic Environment Record maintained by Bedfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Department lists over 200 historic buildings for Dunstable, ranging from the 12th century Priory Church of St Peter's (HER 132) to Bagshawe's Engineering Works on Church Street (HER 9242). It also contains copies of excavation reports, aerial photos, etc.

Albion Archaeology's (formerly BCAS) Project database is a catalogue of all the work that has been carried out by Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service. This contains information on work conducted by the unit in the town. The Manshead Archaeological Society Journal contains full details of the work conducted by the group in the town.

4. HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Dunstable was originally a small town in the Romano-British period, known as *Durocobrivis*, situated at the point where Watling Street crosses the Icknield Way. It was mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary as being midway between Verulamium and Magiovinium. There is a certain amount of archaeological evidence for the Roman settlement, including a large inhumation cemetery in the south-west quadrant and a possible boundary ditch in the grounds of the later Augustinian Priory. Elsewhere in the town, the discovery of a cobbled road, wells, ditches, pottery and tiles attest to the occupation of the site during the Roman period.

The town is generally thought to have become more or less unoccupied during the Anglo-Saxon period, Roman occupation having ceased at some point during the 5th century AD. However, the possibility of some continuation of settlement into the post-Roman period is raised by medieval Welsh documentary sources. These record a Dark Age state or kingdom known as 'Calchvynedd', situated on chalk or limestone hills between the Trent and the Thames, including the towns of both Dunstable and Northampton - see Morris (1962) and Rutherford Davis (1982). This might tie in with wider theories of a British enclave surviving in the Chilterns for up to 180 years after the departure of the Roman legions. And it is important to bear in mind that Dunstable is very close to St Albans, known to have been the centre of continuing British settlement and traditions into the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon period'.

However, the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxons in this area, probably from the late 6th century on, did not lead to the establishment of a Saxon town or village at Dunstable. Whatever the case about a continuing British presence here in the post-Roman period, there definitely seems to have been an abandonment of Dunstable as a settlement in Anglo-Saxon times and a period of several hundred years before the town was re-established in the medieval period. Even so, the place-name 'Dunstable' may itself be Saxon in origin, and it is possible that the junction of the two roads was used as a place to meet and trade – though archaeological evidence of this has not yet been forthcoming.

Local legend attributes the placename 'Dunstable' to a notorious robber, 'Dunn', who terrorised the region. Henry I reputedly founded the town as a way of protecting the area against his activities, and hopefully to catch him. The story is related in the 'Tractatus de Dunstaple at de Houcton', written by a monk in Dunstable Priory c.1290. Other theories insist that 'Dun' means 'hill' and 'staple' means 'market'. Evans states that the 12th century name 'Dunstapel' is from the Saxon words for 'downs' and 'standing Post' (1994: 3). In the 1123 Anglo-Saxon chronicle the name is written as 'Dunestaple'. In the 1130 Pipe Rolls, it is called 'Dunstapla'. Henry of Huntingdon's 'Historia Anglorum' of 1154 uses the modern name 'Dunstable'. Dunstable is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, probably because it was not an entity in its own right but formed part of the royal manor of Houghton Regis at the time of the survey.

Whatever the origin of the name, Dunstable was deliberately planned as a market town around the pre-existing crossroads in the early 1100s by Henry I. He created Dunstable as a borough in one corner of the ancient royal estate of Houghton Regis, but part of the land also came from the parish of Kensworth (Coleman 1985: 27). The Treatise of Dunstable Priory mentions 'Buckwood', given by Henry to the farmers of Houghton Regis as compensation for the land they lost when Dunstable was created (Evans 1994: 32).

Hayward takes the view that Dunstable was founded, with the king's blessing, by pastoralists living on the Downs nearby who were in need of a market (Hayward 1973). Henry invited men to settle and rent land here at 12 pence an acre. The crossroads was an excellent site for a town, as the Icknield Way was the main route across the Chilterns, and Watling Street was the principal route from London to the north-west, ultimately to Chester and Holyhead. The borough soon became the focus for the surrounding countryside.

Henry I built a royal residence in Dunstable in 1123. This palace site was later known as Kingsbury.

Henry I also founded the Augustinian Priory, dedicated to St Peter, in 1131. It was situated in the south-east quadrant of Dunstable. Henry granted to the Priory the manor, schools, market and many rights and privileges of the town in the first Priory charter. Dunstable lost its borough status as a result of this charter, almost as soon as it was granted, and did not regain it until the mid-19th century. The west end of the Priory church was used by the townspeople as their parish church; at first only the north aisle was used, but this was increased in 1392 when the parishioners built a wall in the nave separating their part of the church from that of the Canons.

The town was devastated by fire in 1213 (Page 1912: 352). Even so, the presence of the Priory and the many inns resulted in high employment and prosperity during the medieval period (Evans 1994: 81). The tax return of 1297 shows Dunstable to be a place with definite urban characteristics. It was a market town for grain, hides, fish, meat, cloth, malt, and general merchandise. There were 121 people paying tax at this date, compared with 192 in Luton.

A Dominican Friary dedicated to St Mary was established in Dunstable in 1259 by Henry III and Eleanor of Provence. Its buildings were located directly opposite the Priory on the west side of South Street. There was considerable friction between the two monastic houses, resulting partly from the Augustinian Canons' resentment at the presence of another receptacle for gifts and donations in their town.

A cross was erected in Dunstable in 1290 to mark one of the resting-places of the coffin of Queen Eleanor during the funeral procession from Lincoln to London. Only 12 such crosses were built. Unfortunately nothing survives of the Dunstable example.

Relations between the town and the Priory were bad, which contrasted with the popularity of the Friars. The ill feeling between the Priory and the town grew so bad that the Priory Church closed in 1228 for several months (Evans 1985: 28). Henry I had promised that the people of Dunstable would have the same freedoms as the people of London. But the various royal charters granted to the Priory gave the Prior almost royal authority, and the burgesses were dependent on him due to his judicial rights as lord of the borough. The Prior held the courts, made by-laws, appointed officials and doled out punishments. Furthermore, he collected tolls from the markets and fairs. These factors prevented any united civic action. At the time of the Peasant's Revolt in 1381, Thomas Hobbes' demand for a town charter of liberties from the Prior was seen as little more than the rantings of a disgruntled mob leader. This demand, provoked by the example of similar events in St Albans, was initially granted, but later annulled (Page 1912, 358-360).

Henry VIII's marriage to Katherine of Aragon was annulled at Dunstable Priory in 1533. Both the Priory and Friary were dissolved in the mid-16th century. Dunstable was then regarded as a manor attached to the royal manor of Ampthill (Page 1912, 361). The Friary buildings were largely demolished. The Priory buildings looked as though they might be saved when Henry VIII considered plans to turn it into the see of a bishopric. However, this came to nothing, and all that was spared demolition and stone robbing was the west end of the church, given to the town as their parish church, and the hospitium, which continued to perform the function of providing travellers with accommodation.

In 1565, Dunstable is described as "a great and populous place". But the late 16th century was, in fact, a period of relative poverty for the town, since the loss of the Priory and Friary had a detrimental effect on the town's income. In 1593-4 sixty-three people died of the plague (Edwards 1974: 22). North of Dunstable Downs (HER 10444), a number of burials discovered in the late 18th century are thought to represent plague burials of 1603 and 1625, possibly originating from Dunstable. Nevertheless, there was increased use of Watling Street and the Icknield Way in the 17th century, which meant more business for the town's inns. Even before the great coaching era of the 18th century, private coaches (and highwaymen) were using the road. Celia Fiennes described the town in 1697 as "full of Inns" with "a long, large streete with a great water in the streete" which "looks like a large pond". John Mackay writing in 1709 says the town is "very beautiful and well built, some of its inns like Palaces". The first stage coach arrived in 1742.

During the Civil War, Dunstable was on the border of the area supporting Parliament (East Anglia and the South-East) and that which supported the King (everywhere else). It, therefore, suffered from soldiers moving through town to fight their battles. It is likely that the Eleanor Cross which stood at the crossroads in the town was destroyed by the Roundheads in 1643. In 1644, Royalists raided the town and shot the publican of the Red Lion (now demolished), attacking the townspeople at prayer in the Priory Church.

The 18th century plan of the town (1762) shows just how small it was, prior to the expansion caused by the arrival of the railway in the 19th century. In 1801, the parish of Dunstable had a population of 1,296. Inns lined the main road. After the railway arrived in 1848, the coaching industry was destroyed, leaving the majority of the town's inns out of business. Nevertheless, the town continued to grow; a new suburb sprang up around the London and North-Western Station. By the late 19th century, the hat industry had arisen to form the town's principal business, and the High Street was lined with hat factories, some of which made use of the redundant inn buildings. The industry demanded a proper water supply, so in 1872 water pipes were laid and the town's ponds were in-filled. In 1894, even more water was demanded, so a new well was dug on Half Moon Hill, complete with pumping station. Other important trades at this point included whiting manufacture and brewing. The early 20th century saw the town rise in importance as an engineering centre, with national firms such as Bagshawe's establishing works in the town. The hat industry in the town eventually bowed down to the superior position of Luton in the early 20th century. By the Second World War, people living in Dunstable employed in the hat industry were commuting to Luton for work. The town boundaries were extended in 1985. Between 1931 and 1991 the town's population increased from 8,976 to 33,202.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 *The Prehistoric Period (c10,000BC - AD43)*

Few prehistoric finds have come from the historic town core itself, but there is much material from the surrounding area, particularly the Downs to the south.

For evidence of human activity in the area during the Palaeolithic, we are indebted to the keen eyes of local antiquarian, Worthington G Smith. Lower Palaeolithic tools and associated waste flakes were found by Smith at numerous sites in Caddington parish in the late 19th century. Sometimes actual working floors were identified. He also recovered Palaeolithic implements, including a handaxe, at the back of the Ashton Grammar School (HER 12286). For a fuller account of these finds and their significance for the wider area, see Wymer (1999).

Seasonal occupation of the area continued during the Mesolithic period, with scatters of flint artefacts being found in the area around Dunstable.

During the Neolithic period, the development of agriculture was accompanied by the establishment of permanent settlements, ritual burial and communal field monuments, such as the causewayed camp at Maiden Bower. The Icknield Way (HER 353) crossed the Dunstable area, serving as a major communications and trade route. Neolithic pits were excavated at Puddlehill Quarry, and at a Bronze Age burial mound at the junction of Millfield and Dunstable Roads in Caddington. On high ground between Caddington and Blow's Down extensive scatters of flint artefacts and waste flakes were found (HER 13564). Worthington G Smith recovered a number of Neolithic artefacts from the Mount Pleasant area, on the site of what was later to become Kensworth quarry (HER 13570, 13576, 13577 McSloy & Shotliff 1996: 50-57). Neolithic implements (HER 1444) have been found in the fields north of the Icknield Way between Dunstable and Leagrave.

A possible long barrow (HER 129) was situated in Union Street, orientated east-west and about 30m long. The site was used as a windmill foundation and was known as Mill Hill, Windmill Hill or Mill Bank. Other long barrows used for windmill foundations include the former Biscot mill at Luton. Around 200m east of the long barrow stood a possible round barrow (HER 128) in Edward Street. This was reputedly very large, but is now built over.

Five Knolls (HER 138), to the south-west of the town, is a Bronze Age barrow cemetery. This is said to be the finest group of Bronze Age burial mounds in the Chilterns, consisting of two bowl barrows, three bell barrows and two pond barrows. One of the barrows was excavated by Mortimer Wheeler in the 1920s (Dunning and Wheeler 1931). There is also some Bronze Age material from the town itself. The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Marina Drive to the west of Dunstable was found to be centred around a Bronze Age barrow (Morris 1962). An inhumation was found at Lancot Hill, east of Marina Drive in 1935 (HER 125). During excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society at 2

Priory Road, a heap of rotten chalk was identified as a possible Bronze Age burial mound (Warren 1992: 12). Burials were found at Albion Street (HER 150), possibly associated with a barrow at number 10, but the details as to their discovery and excavation are unclear. A Bronze Age burial was found by Worthington G Smith behind the Waggon and Horses, south of London Terrace (Smith 1894: 329-330). A Bronze Age beaker base (HER 7733) was discovered on the site of Rollings Whiting Works.

During the Iron Age, varied settlement evidence was recovered during excavation work at Puddlehill Quarry. Excavations at Pond Cottage, Bull Pond Lane in 1990 revealed some Iron Age pottery, suggesting there may have been an Iron Age occupation site in this area of Dunstable (Hudspith 1991: 34). The area around Dunstable lay within the territory of the hillfort at Maiden Bower at this time. And so-called 'British huts' (HER 987) are thought to represent contemporary settlement on Blow's Downs.

The Green Way is likely to have been in use throughout the later prehistoric periods, and may have been the precursor of the Roman Watling Street. It crossed the Icknield Way to the west of the town and led towards Totternhoe Hill. The crossing of this road and the Icknield Way may have formed the basis for prehistoric settlement in the area. Other postulated ancient tracks in the area include HER sites 276, 11986 and 12290.

This background of prehistoric activity in the vicinity indicates the considerable potential for finding evidence from these periods within the urban area of Dunstable itself.

5.2 The Roman Period (AD43 - AD410)

The Roman settlement of Durocobrivis (HER 135), like the later medieval settlement, was situated at the crossing of the Icknield Way and Watling Street. Camden's *Britannia* of 1695 erroneously names the site of Dunstable as Magiovinium, as does Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* of 1776.

The present route of the A5 marks the approximate course of Watling Street, which ran from London to Chester. Although it is sometimes said that a fort or military post was probably established at Durocobrivis, midway between the forts at Verulamium (St Albans) and what later developed into Magiovinium (near Fenny Stratford), no evidence for a military presence has been found (Simco 1984:16). The town may have acted as a *pagus*, a small administrative centre for the surrounding countryside. Or it may have been a much more informal grouping of buildings around the crossroads. Matthews speculates that the town may have been overseen by a local British landowner living at the Totternhoe villa (Matthews 1989: 67). But it is likely that the location of the town had much to do with communications (Millett 1990), and that the town had its origins as a posting station.

The origins and meaning of the Roman town's name are open to question. As Simco states, the translation of 'duro' and 'brivae' as 'fort' and 'bridge' does not take account of the lack of archaeological evidence for a fort. Nor does it

accommodate the middle syllable 'co'. Furthermore, there is no river or stream running through Dunstable, so the existence of a bridge is unlikely (Simco 1984: 101).

5.2.1 Roads

Watling Street was built soon after the Roman Conquest, linking London and Chester. It was one of the major roads of Roman Britain. The Icknield Way was for the most part a wide track rather than a constructed road. However, a metalled road was found under the Quadrant car park running parallel to Church Street north of the Icknield Way, during development within the north-east quadrant (Matthews 1964: 1). This was possibly the route taken at that time by the Icknield Way, and based on this, the Manshead Archaeological Society have placed the Roman crossroads north of the modern crossing (Matthews 1979: 4). However, the road may be a subsidiary street, serving as a back lane for properties on the Icknield Way frontage (Simco 1984: 102). The remains of 'primitive huts' were discovered near the road, west of Ashton School, showing as sunken floors, postholes and associated pits and wells (Matthews 1964: 1). The Roman crossroads could easily have been situated at the site of the present one, however. Or there could have been two branches of the Icknield Way and therefore two crossroads.

5.2.2 Occupational evidence

Roman material has been found over an area of about 14 ha (Smith 1987) in all four quadrants, suggesting that the Roman town covered at least as large an area as the medieval town. By the late 4th century, the town looks as though it had shrunk, filling in its redundant wells and becoming deserted by sometime in the 5th century (Matthews 1989, 67-8) – though it may be that evidence of occupation in the sub-Roman period has not survived or not been recognised for what it is. Roman coins were found in abundance in the fields surrounding the town well into the post-medieval period and were popularly known as 'Madning Money', due to the misconception that they were associated with Maiden Bower.

Evidence for a possible farmstead in the south-east quadrant was found at Graham Road (HER 1341) and consisted of flint walls, post-holes and Roman pottery (Bagshawe 1959: 22).

Finds from a variety of features in the south-west quadrant (HER 11284), investigated in the 60s and 70s by the Manshead Archaeological Society, suggest intensive Roman occupation of this part of the town from the 1st to 4th centuries AD. Features in this area reach as far west as Bull Pond Lane and as far south as Friar's Walk (Matthews 1989: 68). Most Roman finds from the town have come from wells, pits and ditches. Evidence for occupation of the Canesworde Road area (HER 762), comprising ditches dated to the early Roman period, was discovered in the 1960s.

So-called 'refuse pits' (HER 11276, 11277) were discovered in 1901 during drainage works in Cross Street and Chapel Alley (now Chapel Walk). Worthington G Smith's description of them (Smith 1904: 54) points to their

being boundary ditches rather than pits - used for dumping refuse, such as pottery, bone and oyster shells (Simco 1984: 103). Nearby in St Mary's Street, excavations in 1974-5 by the Manshead Archaeological Society uncovered a cess pit containing 2nd century pottery and yet another well (HER 11273, Simco 1984: 103). Another cess pit in Friary Field was found to contain the remains of a young Barbary ape, which was a popular Roman pet (Matthews 1989, 72: Matthews 1974, 7).

Evidence for metalworking has been found on the outskirts of the town, though the necessary raw materials were not available locally (Matthews 1989: 73). Finds included lumps of iron slag, hearths and a bronze worker's furnace (ibid).

The BCAS excavations at Dunstable Friary in 1990 (BCAS 322) produced rare structural evidence of Roman buildings. Floor surfaces were found with shallow layers of occupational debris above them. Barry Horne (1998, 2002) has reviewed the evidence of ceramic building material and building slate in Roman Dunstable.

There is, however, a general gap in the evidence in respect of actual built structures. This may be due to scarping of much of the area of the town during the medieval period, destroying many settlement traces.

5.2.3 Wells

Wells were essential to town life, as there was no surface water; nineteen of Roman date have been identified so far, with one completely excavated. Two wells found together with several pits in the south-west quadrant, may indicate the backyards of roadside premises (Matthews 1989: 70).

Thirteen wells were investigated in 1964 (Matthews 1964: 1-3). Of these, six contained only Roman debris, indicating their infilling during the Roman period. Two contained Roman and 12th-13th century pottery, and the remainder contained material covering the periods up to the provision of a piped water supply to the town in the 19th century.

The Manshead Archaeological Society fully excavated a well discovered whilst excavating in the grounds of the Dominican Friary in the south-west quadrant. It reached a depth of around 28m, showing that the modern water table is *c*.7.8m higher now than in the 2nd century AD (Matthews 1969: 16). The well shaft had hand and footholds at regular intervals for climbing in and out, as well as much wear on the sides due to the use of a bucket. It is possible that some wells such as this had a ritual as well as a utilitarian function.

A well excavated on the site of the police station on West Street contained roof tiles, indicating the presence of a high status building in the area (Horne 1998: 53-4).

Wells or very deep cess pits (HER 16077) were discovered during a watching brief at Eleanor's Cross in 1990, at 23-27 High Street North (Warren 1991: 56-58).

An interesting question which archaeological evidence could perhaps shed light on is whether these deep wells were associated with wheels powered by donkeys, dogs or even human slaves. The technology of donkey-wheels is well attested in the post-medieval period, but the tradition is likely to have a long history which may well go back to Roman times.

Because of the lack of evidence for buildings, wells represent an important source of information for Roman Dunstable. Their sheer depth (up to 30m deep), however, creates considerable logistical problems for the excavator.

5.2.4 Cemetery and burials

A large inhumation cemetery (HER 11284) enclosed by a ditch was partially excavated by the Manshead Archaeological Society in Friary Field, *c*.200m west of Watling Street and *c*.260m from where the modern road crosses the Icknield Way, in the south-west quadrant of the town (Matthews 1979, 1981). The area enclosed by the ditch was estimated to be about 2,750sqm. Adjacent to the cemetery were six Roman wells, five of which had been filled in and their upper layers used as graves, one with as many as seven individuals buried there. The surrounding ditch, which does not meet at the southern and eastern sides, had also been used for fifty human burials as well as three horses and one dog. Within the area enclosed by the ditch, there were fifty-five burials, forty-five of which had proper grave cuts, and there was an area of high concentration to the north. The majority of these were orientated north-west/south-east. Thirteen burials showed evidence for wooden coffins. The rest of the cemetery had more dispersed graves. Three graves showed evidence for marker posts and another twelve showed evidence for the use of quicklime (Matthews 1979: 7).

The cemetery was in use from the 3rd to the late 4th century. Several burials were associated with grave goods. A pot found with one skeleton had an inscription which may point to the presence of the Syrian cult of Cybele in the town (Simco 1984: 60). This cult may have had a temple at Verulamium, from where it may have spread (ibid.). Twelve skeletons were decapitated; five adult males, six adult females and a baby. The significance of this is not known, but it is unlikely to relate to a form of execution (Simco 1984: 61). One woman had had her legs removed as well as her head and one man had a foot removed (Matthews 1989: 73).

Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service carried out further investigations of the cemetery in 1988-90, when 48 burials from the cemetery were excavated (unpublished). In 2001-2002 another excavation by the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust excavated 15 burials of late Roman date, four of which had been decapitated. The total number of burials excavated from the Roman cemetery is, therefore, over a hundred (Crank 2002).

A further three Roman burials (HER 122), one with a lead coffin, were found at the west end of Albion Street in the north-west quadrant in the late 19th century, perhaps indicating a further burial area. Between numbers 3 and 25, a ditch was found containing two adult and one baby skeleton (HER 14964).

During excavations at Priory Middle School in 1996, the Manshead Archaeological Society discovered a Roman ditch with an adult female skeleton buried in it, sealed by a metalled roadway of medieval date (Warren 1997: 1). It is possible that most of such ditch burials relate to a very late phase in the development of the settlement (as at Sandy).

Cemeteries were not permitted within Roman towns and were usually situated on the edge of settlement on roads leading away from the occupied area. They, therefore, shed considerable light on the limits of settlement at particular times. The location of cemeteries at Dunstable perhaps indicates the fairly small area occupied by the town.

5.2.5 Boundary ditches

A Roman ditch (HER 11281), up to 2m in width, was discovered during the laying of electricity cables at the site of the Augustinian Priory (CRT 130 DUN/12; Hagen 1972: 36). The ditch was sealed by a layer containing late 1st- - early 2nd century pottery. The proportions of the ditch were such that a defensive function seems feasible.

Manshead Archaeological Society excavations on the site of the medieval Friary in the south-west quadrant in 1967 and 1973 uncovered a Roman ditch which was described as a possible 'town ditch'. Taken with the portion found in the Priory gardens, the two stretches could conceivably enclose a rectangular area around the crossroads (c.f. plan in Matthews 1989: 66). However there is at present simply not enough evidence to draw firm conclusions about the extent of the Roman town.

5.3   *The Anglo-Saxon Period (AD410 - AD1066)*

There is on the face of it little archaeological or historical evidence to indicate that the Roman town at Dunstable was settled during the Anglo-Saxon period. A conventional view is that it was deserted by some point in the 5th century AD. The evidence seems to point to a total collapse of the Roman community, with the site returning to an isolated rural crossroads.

However, it should be pointed out that sunken featured buildings were encountered in excavations of the north-east quadrant (Matthews 1964), and a pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been located at Marina Drive to the west of the town. This cemetery was discovered in 1957 when the new housing estate was built here. It is situated 1.5km west of Watling Street and 300m north of the Icknield Way. The burials were grouped in a rough quarter circle around a Bronze Age barrow and indicate the presence of a small community nearby. In total, 49 graves were discovered (Morris 1962, Wingfield 1995).

Anglo-Saxon settlement elsewhere in the vicinity of Dunstable is represented by the excavation of a settlement at Puddlehill just to the north. Sunken featured buildings were found, along with late 6th century pottery. There was a small cemetery close to the houses, and some distance away a 'warrior' burial with other associated graves (Matthews 1989; 101).

Nearly 100 inhumations, thought to be of early Saxon date, were found inserted into the side of a Bronze Age barrow at Five Knolls – just to the south-west of Dunstable. Since many of the burials were men with hands crossed (tied?) behind their backs, often buried in groups, it was argued by the excavators that this was a battle massacre site (Dunning and Wheeler 1931). Others have argued that the Five Knolls site was probably used as a gallows, and that the burials represent gallows victims.

Alleged Anglo-Saxon burials comprising four separate individuals (HER 137) were found in the vicinity of the 'Rifle Volunteer' public house (now demolished) in West Street in 1924. The basis for ascribing them a Saxon date is unknown (Morris 1962: 73). However, a medieval pest house was known to have existed on the other side of the road and many skeletons were discovered there too, so it is likely that all these are of medieval date.

The question of what happened to the town in the post-Roman period does not have a clear cut answer, and assumptions should not necessarily be drawn from absence of evidence. A problem is that, if – as has been suggested – medieval scarping destroyed much of the evidence for Roman occupation, it would undoubtedly have destroyed much of the evidence for occupation in the early-middle Anglo-Saxon period too.

Another important consideration is that most of the population in the post-Roman period could have been British. The territory around the settlement might have been part of the British enclave often said to have survived for several generations after the departure of the Roman legions (the historical evidence for which is reviewed in Rutherford Davis 1982). Given the proximity of Dunstable to St Alban's, where continuity of a British way of life is proven, it is entirely conceivable that there was some continuity of settlement at Dunstable too. Evidence of such occupation, however, is notoriously difficult to recognise in the archaeological record.

Edwards suggests that a hamlet may have existed at Dunstable between 600 and 1100, since the Icknield Way and Watling Street crossroads is unlikely to have ceased to be used or recognised as a trading point (Edwards 1974: 18). If this was the case, then the hamlet would have been cleared when Henry founded the town in the 12th century.

5.4 The Medieval Period (AD1066 - AD1550)

Dunstable was deliberately set out as a market town in the early 1100s by Henry I, and much of the present layout of the town derives from this time (though the basic framework formed by Watling Street and the Icknield Way is of course much older). If the crossroads site was already in use, perhaps as

a trading centre, any standing buildings are likely to have been taken down. It is also likely that parts of Dunstable were scraped level, with consequent loss of some archaeological evidence from previous periods.

Settlers were encouraged by the promise of land at an annual rate of 12d per acre and all the privileges accorded to the burgesses of London (Page 1912: 356). The territory of the new town would have been laid out in burgage plots, and the form of these is partially retained in the layout of property boundaries today (see Hitchcock 2002 for a reconstruction of the original layout of Dunstable).

For an estimate of the extent of medieval Dunstable, see Fig 3.

5.4.1 Roads

While the basic road framework was provided by the already existing Watling Street and Icknield Way, it is highly probable that the latter road was partly re-routed as part of the design of the new town. Originally crossing Watling Street 30-50m to the north of the present crossroads and heading eastwards towards fords over the River Lea at Leagrave, the road was re-orientated towards the nearby medieval town of Luton. Or it might be that two branches of the road were in existence and the northernmost one was built over at this time.

5.4.2 King's Palace (Kingsbury)

By 1109, Henry had built himself a residence at 'Kingsbury' (HER 148) on nine acres of land on the north side of Church Street, opposite where he would soon found the Augustinian Priory. This property constituted the 'Manor House' and he reserved it for himself when he granted the manor of Dunstable to the Priory in 1131-2. The Dunstable Cartulary states that King John eventually granted his residence to them in 1204 (Fowler 1936).

The exact location of the buildings which made up Kingsbury is not certain. A Charter of 1227 issued by Henry III confirming his father's grant of the property to the Priory locates it "before the cemetery of the Church of the Blessed Peter towards the north…" (Evans 1994: 112). But excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society in the gardens of Kingsbury Court (HER 14829), a late 18th century farmhouse reputedly on the site of the royal residence, failed to uncover any positive evidence for the palace - though some evidence for medieval occupation was recovered (HER 15008). Worthington G Smith drew a conjectural plan of the site, complete with a moat and drawbridge, but the Society concluded that there was never a moat or even a substantial building that might qualify as a palace (Warren 1988: 12). Warren suggests Ladies Lodge as a more suitable location for the site of the original Kingsbury. The dampness of the grounds of the present Kingsbury Court is given as the main reason why the site would have been unsuitable for the royal residence, but this does not take account of the fact that the water table was probably much lower than the modern one (as excavations of wells have shown).

5.4.3 Augustinian Priory

The first religious house in the town was the Priory of St Peter (HER 131), occupied by Augustinian Canons. It was founded *c*.1130 by Henry I, who endowed it with the manor and borough of Dunstable, the land around the town (particularly rights of common pasture of Houghton, Caddington and Kensworth), the market, school, a stone quarry and all the liberties of the town, excluding "Kingsbury" (see above). Of the complex of buildings, only the nave of the Priory church, part of the western gatehouse and hospitium survive. Low earthworks in Priory Church Park are probably the remains of the Priory's building foundations. The hospitium (the guest hall of the Priory) dated to the 13th century, survives as the core of largely 18th century Priory House (Warren 1987: 3). Reputedly, a subterranean passage links this with the Prior's House, which stood to the south of the west front. A trackway at ground surface supposedly represents the roof of this passage. The Manshead Archaeological Society conducted a limited excavation of the site of this supposed tunnel in 1987. They were able to refute the possibility of there ever having been a passage here. As with the legend of a blocked off passage linking Kingsbury to the Priory, this 'passage' is likely to represent extra cellar space created as a cold store (Warren 1987: 11). Remains of the Priory Gatehouse lie south-west of the church, and comprise of carriage and pedestrian entrances with blocked windows to the east.

The Priory buildings were arranged on the east side of the present High Street South and the south of the present Church Street. A conjectural plan of the Priory drawn by Fowler 1959 (Evans 1994: 109) sets the buildings out as follows: The Great Courtyard consisted of the space to the west of the gatehouse and hospitium on South Street and was framed by lay cottages to the north and agricultural buildings to the south. East of this was the second gatehouse and Prior's house, south-west of the Priory church. The cloisters lay south of the church. These were framed by the cellarium (guest rooms and outer parlour) to the west, the frater to the south and chapter house and dormitory to the east. South of these buildings were the kitchen, bakehouse, brewhouse and workshops. To the east of the dormitory were the infirmary block and chapel. The Canons' cemetery was situated to the south of the Lady Chapel. The lay cemetery was north of the church (see also the plan by Pain and Horne 1998).

In 1539, the Prior surrendered his house and the Priory was dissolved. A scheme to establish a bishopric at Dunstable came to nothing due to a lack of funds, and so the buildings which could have been adapted for this purpose were demolished. The people of the town were awarded the west end as their parish church. The rest became a quarry for building work in the town. Pieces of Priory stone could be seen in the back walls of Middle Row until around 1990 (Evans 1994: 103).

Excavations within the south-east quadrant, focusing on the Priory, have already been described (Section 3.1.2).

5.4.4 Church

The church of St Peter's (HER132) now stands as a building in its own right but was once a part of a much larger cruciform Priory Church. It was constructed during the latter half of the 12th century out of local 'Totternhoe stone' from quarries located between Totternhoe and Sewell. The nave was begun in about 1150 and the main cruciform building was finished sometime before the formal consecration in 1213 (Page 1912, 364).

The Annals of the Priory mention that in 1222 the roof of the presbytery was repaired and that the two western towers collapsed (Evans 1994: 30), destroying much of the church and the Prior's House. The north-west tower was rebuilt at this time (Page 1912, 365).

When complete, the church would have had an aisled presbytery and a Lady Chapel (built 1228) to the east, a central tower with north and south transepts, giving the classic cruciform ground plan, a nave of eight bays and a north-west tower. The Lady Chapel was rebuilt in 1324. As it stands now, the east end of the south aisle contains some 13th century work, otherwise just the seven west bays of the nave survive. The aisles are entirely rebuilt. The altar of the brotherhood of St John still survives in the north aisle. The original 14th century rood screen also still exists (Page 1912, Evans 1994: 85).

5.4.5 Hospitals

The Priory of St Peter started a hospital of St Mary Magdalene (HER 154) for lepers in 1208 on the east side of South Street on the town boundary, which was the town side of the present Half Moon Lane (Evans 1994: 24). The exact location of the building(s) has not been ascertained. It enjoyed grants of royal protection in the 13th and 14th centuries, and the last mention of the hospital is in 1338. The Tithe map of 1822/40 (MAT 12/1) shows 'Spittle' lands, 'Spittle Hill' and 'Spittle Bottom' which could relate to land owned by the hospital. 'Spittle Close' is shown opposite the Half Moon Inn, where discoveries were made of a wall, a round column, a semicircular arch, painted glass, window tracery, a stone coffin and a lead coffin (Smith 1904: 185). There may also have been a hospital belonging to the Dominican Friary close to here.

Another hospital, dedicated to St Peter (HER 155), may have been an almonry of the Priory. There are grants mentioning it in the early 13th century.

A hospital to St John the Baptist (HER 156) is mentioned in a grant of 1225 as being near the court of the Canons.

5.4.6 The Dominican Friary

In 1259, Henry III invited the Dominican friars to the town, instructing the canons of Dunstable Priory to help them settle. Dunstable was one of 56 Dominican houses in England, but the only one in the county. They were known as the 'Blackfriars' due to the colour of their robes. At the time of the Friars' arrival, the Augustinian Priory had been already been present in the town for over a century. Friction between the two monasteries arose, as the Friars became very popular with the townspeople. The two houses were

separated only by the road and what became known as 'Friars' Pond' in the middle of the road near the Saracen's Head (Evans 1994: 45).

Nicholls (1794) says "A certain mansion was given to the Friars Preachers in 1259. They began to build very sumptious houses, and built a church with all speed". There is an account from a monk of St Alban's Abbey which describes in scathing terms the lavish expenditure of the preaching orders, in both Bury St Edmunds and Dunstable (Bagshawe and Martin 1928: 323). The preaching orders were very popular with the laity, and this may hold the key to why they were resented by the established orders. Their actual estate consisted of three cottages along South Street, their own buildings, courtyard and garden, with an orchard to the west and four acres in Kensworth Field adjoining this (Evans 1994: 45).

The church was nearing completion by 1264, when the king gave them a gift of oak trees, probably for roof construction (Bagshawe and Martin 1928: 325).

The monastery was dissolved in the summer and autumn of 1538. All buildings were demolished, with the exception of William Marshall's private apartments consisting of one great chamber and two small chambers in the Great Court, and a stable just inside the main gates, all of which remained Crown property until the 19th century. The site of the Friary was let to the publican of the White Horse, Thomas Bentley, and consisted of the remains of the destroyed buildings, the orchards and gardens, and the three cottages on the South Street boundary (Evans 1994: 96-7).

No trace of the Friary buildings or church is now left above ground. A house west of the pond in South Street is known as 'The Friars' and traditionally marks the site of part of the Friary. Excavations have recently shed much light on the location and plan of the Friary, its associated buildings and garden/orchard (see plan in Pain and Horne 1998).

The numerous excavations carried out within the Friary grounds have been described in Section 3.1.1. These have revealed the location of the church, ancillary buildings, cemetery and the extensive garden/orchard to the south-west. This latter feature is one of the most outstanding examples of the layout of a medieval walled garden surviving in archaeological form.

5.4.7 Town Ditch

The town is known from documentary sources to have been surrounded by a ditch during the medieval period, but its course has never been ascertained. It is unlikely to have been large enough to have had a defensive function. There is some disagreement about whether the ditch enclosed just the town or its open fields, known as 'Innings', too. Hayward (1973) argues that the ditch demarcated just the area of the town, whilst others argue for the open fields being situated inside the circle of the ditch (Bagshawe and Martin 1928: 332). Evans describes 'Innings' or 'Inlands' as cultivable, small parcels of land, privately owned by many different people, with the open fields proper outside the town boundary (Evans 1994: 38). The Victoria County History describes

the Inlands or Innings as open spaces held by burgesses in strips for cultivation (Page 1912: 351). The ditch surrounding the town and Inlands is thought to have run along the line of the present Half Moon Lane and come out on East Street by 'Long Hedge', now Station Road. Union Street is probably the boundary of the town's land with that of Houghton, with West Field being bounded by a path or ditch running from Union Street to Leighton Gap (Evans 1994: 39). The course of the ditch may be preserved underneath roads in places.

5.4.8 Ponds and Wells

The two ponds in High Street North (shown on the 1762 map) and the other ponds known to have existed in West Street and High Street South probably had their origin in the medieval period. In the absence of any natural watercourses in the town, these were used to catch rain-water to supplement the water supply from wells. Such features, if located, would contain valuable archaeological information and may provide anaerobic conditions for the preservation of artefacts made of organic materials. Numerous wells of medieval date have been located during excavation, and these too contain valuable information. Many of the wells would have had donkey-wheels or other mechanical devices and superstructures associated with the pulling up of water from depths of up to 28m.

5.4.9 Fairs and Markets

Tolls from markets and fairs were an important source of revenue for the town during this period. Wednesday and Saturday were the market days (Page 1912: 362). In the first charter, Henry granted two fairs and a market (Edwards 1974: 18). A charter of 1221 stated that a market could operate in the town for the sale of cattle, swine and sheep (Kemp and Moore 1997: 29). The 'Tractatus de Dunstaple et de Houcton' - a surviving record from the Priory, written in 1290 (CRT 130 DUN/7) - states that fairs and markets were held in the town. The market was held at the crossroads, mainly in the South Street part where the road was widest though it is likely that it extended right along the course of North Street and South Street, and probably along West Street too. Around 1300, a moot hall was built with permanent workshops to replace the moveable stalls (DTC 1988:30). Middle Row may have grown out of the moveable stalls, and the original timber framing can still be seen in one shop. Part of the market may have been known as 'Cookerowe' in the 14th century. During the mid-15th century, the Saturday market was discontinued (Page 1912: 362).

The remains of timbers from the 1300 market hall may survive (re-used) in 26 High Street South (Evans 1994: 47). A sheep market was held in the wide open space of West Street, where there was also a pond (Evans 1994: 47).

In 1203, King John bestowed a fair on 10th of May (St Fremund's Day) to the Prior (Page 1912: 363).

The market place was furnished with an Eleanor Cross (HER 134), one of only twelve in the country set up in various towns to mark the places where the

funeral procession of Queen Eleanor stopped on its journey to Westminster Abbey in 1290. Its exact position is meant to have been near the centre of the crossroads.

5.4.10 Middle Row

The earliest shops on Middle Row were small back-to-back buildings designed for two businesses, with workshops and sales rooms on the ground floor and accommodation on the two floors above (Horne 1986: 1). J M Bailey (1980: 91-99) has identified the remains of at least four pairs of these shops near the southern end at nos. 26-32. The buildings gradually changed between the 14th and 17th centuries, with some businesses taking over whole buildings, and others adding extra workshops and enclosed yards. The town gaol may have stood in Middle Row where no. 18 now stands. It was pulled down and rebuilt in 1295 and was probably the only stone building in this part of the town at the time (Benson 1986: 106).

5.4.11 Guild

A Fraternity of businessmen was formed in the 15th century. They were members of the London Wool Staplers Company and bought a licence from Henry VI in 1442 to form a brotherhood dedicated to St John the Baptist, based at St Peter's Church. They supported their own priest and ran an almshouse in West Street (Evans 1994: 25). The almshouse was to provide accommodation for six poor travellers and four of their own members in need of help. This may have been a continuation of the almonry of St John the Baptist run by the Priory in earlier years. They supported a school run by a Chaplain. The brotherhood also kept a house for their Chaplain in West Street, and had at least eight other houses in the town (Evans 1994: 86). After the Dissolution, the Fraternity's meeting house, Chaplain's house and possibly the almonry on West Street fell into private hands as dwellings or small businesses.

5.4.12 School

Before 1119, Dunstable had a schoolmaster, Geoffrey of Gorham (CRT 130 DUN/7). He is accredited with performing the first Miracle Play in the country, dedicated to St Catherine (Evans 1994: 13). The school formed part of the 1131 endowment to the newly formed Priory. The monks of St Albans are said to have had a school in the town too. The location of the schools, however, is not known.

5.4.13 Streets

The medieval town was divided into four quarters, separated by the Icknield Way (known as East and West Streets) and Watling Street (known as North and South Streets). The Eleanor Cross stood at the crossroads until the 17th century, when it was destroyed by Puritan soldiers. A few lanes running perpendicular to these four main roads are known. A lane known as 'le Hallewyklane' in the 13th century, later Holliwick Lane, is frequently mentioned in early deeds and ran parallel to and slightly south of West Street (Bagshawe and Martin 1928: 333). It was linked to South Street by 'Pochonlane', mentioned from the 14th to 16th centuries (Page 1908: 350). It

later became known as Chapel Walk in reference to the Ebenezer Baptist chapel which stood here (Walden 1999: 75).

Church Walk was an ancient footpath leading from the crossroads to the Priory Church and later through the churchyard into Priory Road (Walden 1999: 69). Dog Kennel Walk represents an ancient right of way leading to Houghton Hall, and may recall the hunt kennels at the hall (Walden 199: 79).

Part of the present Canesworde Road was once a path leading to Kensworth; Canesworde was the spelling for Kensworth in 1086 (Evans 1994:39).

The present Britain Street was formerly part of England's Lane; possibly a corruption of 'Inlands', its continuation would have gone between today's Priory Road and Station Road (Evans 1994: 38). In the 16th century, the fields south of the Priory were known as 'Great' and 'Little' Englands (Page 1908: 350).

Other lanes mentioned in the Priory Charters include one which ran from the mill in West Street to the north, and one which ran from the house of 'Angerus' in South Street to the Priory. The latter may be shown on the 1st edition OS map running approximately from the High Street end of Britain Street.

'Wood Street' near the Saracen's Head is a remnant of the path which used to link Houghton Regis with 'Buckwood' to the south, land given to the farmers of that parish as compensation for the loss of land incurred when Dunstable was founded (Evans 1994: 32). 'Wood Way' used to show up as a linear cropmark (HER 12293) between Dunstable and Houghton Regis. The site is now developed as an industrial estate.

During excavations at Priory Middle School in Britain Street, the Manshead Archaeological Society found a roadway running parallel to the High Street, which was possibly a back lane serving the High Street South properties, just outside their original rear boundary (Warren 1994: 5).

The Rent List of 1542 mentions other streets and lanes: Mepes Hedge, now Long Hedge, the 'Road to Leighton' now Leighton Gap, St Mary's Close bounded by St Mary's Street until recently, 'Spondend' which became 'Spoondell', and 'Kingsbury Close' behind 'Kingsbury Court'. Additional lanes had been established by this date running from Middle Row to today's Bull Pond Lane - Taylor's Lane, Havewyke Lane and Pothyn Lane. The White Hart on North Street was on 'Undepelane' (a deep lane?) which ran east and came out near Kingsbury (Evans 1994).

5.4.14 Buildings

Evans (1994) gives a detailed estimate of the number and character of the buildings of the town in the early 13th century, from the series of surviving Priory charters, which mention rents on houses and property. In total, there is evidence for one hundred and two houses and thirteen shops. This figure

excludes courtyard cottages and burgess property that was unconnected with the Priory. The tax roll of 1297 listed one hundred and twenty-one households, again disregarding cottages.

Evans also summarises the distribution of the buildings in the later medieval period, based on the Rent List of 1542, which lists about two hundred 'residential' buildings (Evans 1994).

Timbers from a building on the edge of the market place in Dunstable produced a tree-ring date of the early 14th century, indicating that the terrace of which it forms a part probably comprises some of the earliest buildings in the town (Bridge 1988). Unfortunately the article containing this information does not specify which building/terrace is being referred to (26 High Street South?; Evans 1994: 47).

An early 16th century timber-framed building from West Street (HER 6320) has been reconstructed at the Chiltern Open Air Museum (Benson 1986: 110).

The line of buildings now known as 'Middle Row' may have been begun as early as the first part of the 13th century, when one of the Priory charters mentions land in the market place "between the shops of Henry, son of Theodore, and the smithy of William son of Reginald". The land was originally named 'Middle Rents', becoming Middle Row later (Evans 1994: 36).

Traces of a medieval building were found at Blacksmith's Court, Matthew Street (HER 16101).

Inns have always played an important part in the economy of Dunstable, not only in connection with the market but also for the accommodation of travellers on journeys between London and the North-West. The earliest mentioned inns in the town are the 'Lion', 'Peacock' and 'Swan', all on High Street North in 1422 (Page 1912: 355). Another 15th century inn was the 'Ram'. Inns in 1542 (from the rent list of that date) included the Angel, Bull, New Falcon, Lower George, Lamb, Lion, Peacock, Ram, Raven, Saracen's Head, Swan, White Hart and White Horse (CRT 130 DUN/7). The Saracen's Head was opened by the Priory as an extension of their other sources of accommodation and was possibly as early as 14th century. A severe fire in 1815 damaged the main part of the building, but there are still some old timbers in the roof (Evans 1999: 162).

Table 1 shows the extant medieval buildings listed in the HER (St Peter's church not included). See Fig 8 for a map showing historic buildings.

Address	HER no.	Comments
18-30 West Street	6315	early 16th century?
Priory House Gateway, Church Close	6329	15th century chamfered and moulded archway with flanking ashlar and rubble walls
34-38 West Street	15496	late 15th or early 16th century, remodelled in 19th century

Table 1. Medieval buildings

5.4.15 Windmill

In the Cartulary of the Priory in 1221, a dispute is mentioned over the tithe of the windmill (HER 2609), which was erected on what is often supposed to have been the ruined mound of a Neolithic long barrow north of West Street - known as 'Millbank' (Elliot 1931: 16).

5.4.16 Trades

Dunstable was one of the country's main wool centres by the end of the 13th century. The Downs provided good pasture for grazing sheep. In 1327 wool merchants were important enough to choose two representatives to go to York to discuss profits from the wool trade with the King (Page 1912: 363). In the mid-15th century, a number of townsmen were members of the London Wool Staplers' Company (Evans 1994: 85).

Brewing and malting were important industries in the medieval period, as the population drank beer instead of water, which was never pure enough to drink. Production was carried out at small-scale retail level, with larger households producing their own supply. The technology of the period did not allow large-scale production, but small scale malting kilns were common (Schneider 1999: 21). The earliest recorded beer retailer from Dunstable was 'Algar', mentioned by the chronicler Roger of Wendover in 1178. The Annals of the Priory contain many references to brewing, and a wine merchant named Simon Knight is mentioned in 1179 (Page 1912:363). Excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society revealed the remains of three malt kilns in the south-west quadrant of the town (Schneider 1999: 20).

The tax return of 1297 (CRT 130 DUN/7) mentions 21 corn merchants in Dunstable. There was excellent wheat and barley land around the town, which aided the straw plait and hat industry later on. The return also mentions nineteen tanners, five butchers, three bakers, seven fishmongers, four smiths, locksmiths, buyers and sellers of leather, coopers, cellarers, felt dealers, wool merchants, a cloth dealer and a maltster. Goods produced in Dunstable for trade included iron for smiths, dried/salted fish, felt, spices and cloth. At this time, there were 122 people paying tax in the town, compared with about 100 in Bedford, the county town.

The 16th century guild register mentions the occupations of members. As well as ecclesiastical professions, members included a minstrel, vintner, sergeant at arms, yeoman of the crown, merchant of the staple, grocer and yeoman (CRO 9978 P130/DUN).

5.5 *The Post-Medieval Period (AD1550 - AD1850)*

The late 16th century was a time of change for Dunstable (Evans 1994: 102). Many visitors who had been attracted to the town by the Priory, or to a lesser extent the Friary, had no reason to bring their wealth to the town after the Dissolution. However, the two thoroughfares of Watling Street and the Icknield Way continued to draw people to the town. And the coaching era, which brought great prosperity to the town and its many inns, was just beginning. In the 17th century Camden describes the town as busy, with numerous inns, its streets universally wide and well-kept, with a public pond in each street to catch rainwater (Page 1912: 351). The population in 1671 was *c*.1000 (Evans 1999: 193). Thomas Baskerville noted the large open fields surrounding the town in 1681 (Page 1912: 351). The 18th century represented the town's heyday in terms of prosperous inns, hostels and post houses. Towards the end of that century, however, stagecoaches were getting faster and the turnpike trusts improved the roads, meaning that less and less overnight stops were made in Dunstable (Evans 1999: 175). During the 19th century, the railway arrived, destroying the coaching industry forever, but making the town attractive to investors from other industries. From the 1830s onwards, Dunstable began to change from a small market town to an industrial community.

A comparison of the 1762 plan of the town (CRO: B553) and the revised Tithe map of 1840 (CRO MAT 12/1) shows little development in these 78 years – although on the latter the urban area extends slightly further to the south. For maps of the extent of the town in the post-medieval period, see Figs 4 and 5.

The census figures from 1801 to 1851 are shown below.

Population of Dunstable
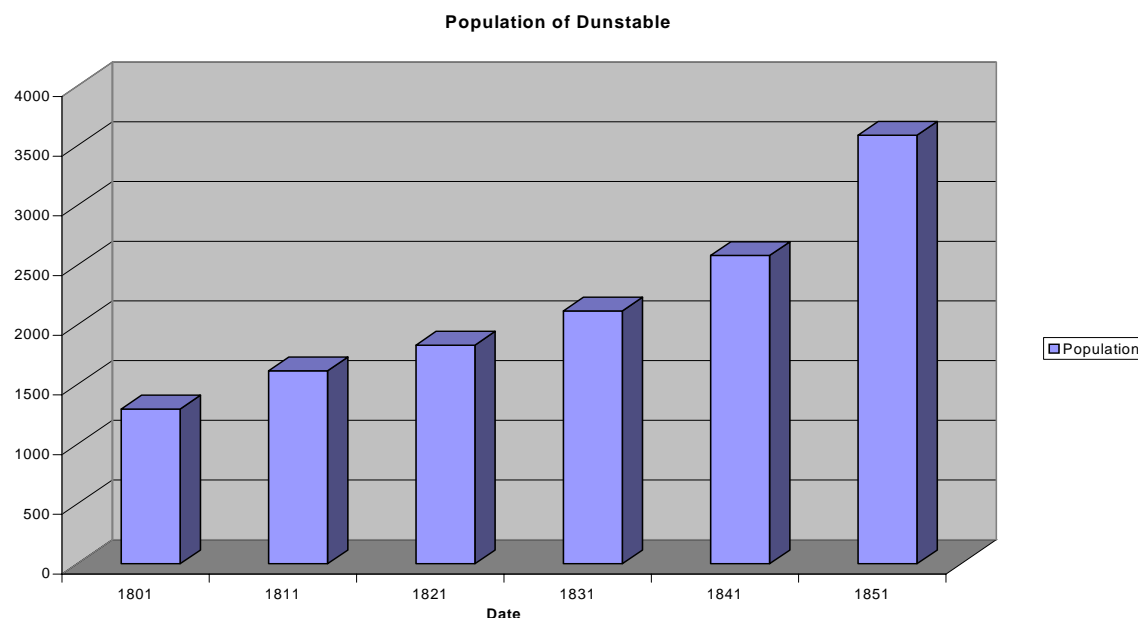
5.5.1 Fairs and Markets

The manor court controlled fairs and markets. By 1649 there was a fair on Ash Wednesday, and the fair of St Fremund was moved to the 2nd May (Page 1912: 363).

By the late 18th century, a slope at the end of High Street North was known as Market Hill. The bigger stalls were laid out here, with other stalls all along the main street. The cattle market was held in the Square on High Street South and the sheep market was held in West Street (Evans 1999: 169). During the 19th century, the plait market was held in the plait hall inside the town hall on High Street North (Benson 1986: 96). In 1803, the market house in the middle of High Street North was demolished to allow turning space for coaches entering inn yards on either side of the main street (Dunst. Dir. 1971).

A statute fair mentioned in the manor court book 1859 (CRT 130 DUN/4) was likely to have been established in 1847-9. It continues today as a fun fair known as the 'Statty' fair.

5.5.2 Manors

At the Dissolution of the Priory, Dunstable reverted to the Crown and was regarded as a manor not a borough (CRT 130 DUN/4). The position of Lord of the Manor was at first leased from the Crown by the Earls of Aylesbury and subsequently in the 18th century by the Dukes of Bedford (Evans 1999: 168). The earliest surviving court book of the manor begins in 1743. At some point, a building in High Street North became known as the 'Manor House', though several different houses have been referred to by this name. It stood where the modern 'former' Post Office stands today, south of the 'old' Post Office. The house may have originally been built to house a steward. In 1839, the manor reverted to the Crown, Queen Victoria assuming the position of Lady of the Manor. Thereafter, the 'Manor House' became a private house (Evans 1995, 1998).

In the early 17th century, the Marshe family lived at Kingsbury, reusing some of the medieval materials to construct a farmhouse (Evans 1999: 131). What remained of the medieval buildings is unknown. The part of the complex thought to be the hall was used as a barn, and the Victoria County History states that part of this remained (Page vol1912: 351). This may refer to the barn which is now the Church Street front of the 'Norman King'. Kingsbury was equipped with an icehouse, which was situated in the gardens of Kingsbury Court (CRT 130 DUN/27). The Manshead Archaeological Society examined the foundations of a 'bath house' or 'summerhouse' in the grounds of Kingsbury Court in 1988 (Warren 1989: 12).

5.5.3 Church

After the Dissolution, plans to make the town the see of a bishopric for Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire were outlined by Henry VIII (CRT 130 DUN/1). These did not come to fruition, however, and the church buildings became a quarry for building stone. The west end of the nave was given to the parishioners as their church and it is this portion that survives today.

Non-conformity began appearing during this period. A group of dissenters who had not been to church for six months are recorded in the visitation to Dunstable by the Archdeacon of Bedford in 1669 (CRT 130 DUN/7).

5.5.3.1 *Baptist Chapels*

The first surviving registration certificate of a non-conformist building is that of the Baptist church at the house of Richard Gutteridge in 1779. A number of Dunstablians went to America to establish Baptist communities in the late 16th century, particularly Boston and Charleston. This included Zachary Symmes and his family, who are locally revered there (Evans 1999: 119).

In 1708 the followers of John Bunyan established themselves at St Mary's Street, where they built their Baptist Meeting House (Page 1912, 367). This was enlarged in 1808, but the roof fell in 1849, when a new chapel (HER 12308) was erected, which still stands. There was a churchyard here (HER 9007). The West Street Chapel which stands today was built in 1836. There was a Baptist Churchyard in High Street North (HER 9006).

5.5.3.2 *Methodist Chapel*

Methodism appeared in Dunstable during the 18th century. In a 1798 list of Methodist church members, there is a reference to the carpenter John Darley using his workshop in Church Street for prayers, singing and Bible readings in 1812 (Basham 1989: 61). Subsequently, the premises at 7 High Street South were used. Later, Methodists used the old Quaker Meeting House near 15 West Street. They eventually built a house in 1831 in High Street South, though no descriptions exist. This was destroyed by fire in 1844 and rebuilt the following year, further back from the street than the present building. They had their own churchyard (HER 9008).

5.5.3.3 *Quaker Meeting House*

Quakers from the Lake District and North Lancashire were moving around the country in the mid-17th century. Richard Hubberthorne came to Dunstable in 1654 and formed a group with the local baker as leader. Their meeting house stood at 15 West Street (Evans 1999). The associated burial ground contained sixteen burials (HER 1445).

5.5.4 Roads

During the late 16th century the roads were in bad repair. In 1706 the first local turnpike trusts were established to remedy this problem, one for the stretch of road on Watling Street from Hockliffe to Stony Stratford and another from Hockliffe to Woburn. In 1710 another was established for the road between Hockliffe and Dunstable. 'Turnpike Farm' south of the town marks the site of the first gate. The tollgate (HER 13822) was rebuilt at the Half Moon public house in the 19th century (Twaddle 1989: 22).

A coach road known as the 'Soch Way' (HER 811) was made in 1782 and abandoned in 1837 (Page I912: 390). It ran from TL 00172311 to TL 00102368.

North of Dunstable, Watling Street passed over Chalk Hill, which presented a challenge even for an unladen coach. In 1782, in an attempt to remedy this problem, a new stretch of road was made which curved round the bottom of the hill (Page 1912: 355). In 1837, when it looked as though the railway might threaten the coach industry, a cutting was made through Chalk Hill. However, the attempt failed, and when the railway opened in 1838 it superseded coaches as the main mode of transport (Page 1912: 355).

A post-medieval hollow way (HER 16245) was discovered at 21-23 Princes Street. The metalled trackway runs north-south, and a portion forms part of the garden layout of the former 19th century Rectory (now the site of the Roman Catholic Church on West Street). Another possible hollow way (16355) crossed the garden at 36 Kingsway, from the direction of Ladies Lodge (Warren 1998: 17).

5.5.5 Streets

A map of 1762 (PU 43/1988) reveals that development was restricted to the four main streets, with most properties having a row of buildings at the rear, perpendicular to the street frontage, and properties having buildings at the rear forming 'courtyards'. High Street South is the least developed of the streets, extending just a little beyond Middle Row, suggesting that the plan is unfinished rather than that the town stopped here. Two ponds in High Street North are also shown.

The Tithe Map (MAT 12/1 and CRT 130 DUN/41), drawn in 1822 and revised in 1840, shows little development away from the four main streets. By this time, the four main streets of the town were known as Church Street (formerly East Street), High Street (separated into High Street North and High Street South – formerly North and South Streets respectively) and West Street, which did not change its name. St Mary's Street is shown, along with 'Butt's Dell Garden', which developed later. The courtyards to the rear of properties along High Street North have developed further and are beginning to constitute lanes in their own right. Bull Pond Lane and Periwinkle Lane are shown, but there is no development here. Half Moon Lane and what is now Britain Street are shown, again, with no development as yet. Dog Kennel Path is shown as a wooded track.

Streets and places mentioned in a deed of 1605 include: East Streete, Kingsberie Close, Icknell Streete, Kensworthe Feilde, Spittle Deane, Watling Streete/Highwaie, Sheppardes Bushe/Beggers Bushe (CRT 130 DUN/13).

Defoe, describing Dunstable in *c*.1778, mentions the four ponds in High Street North, West Street and High Street South (Page 1912: 349). These were used to catch rainwater to supplement the water supply from the wheel-operated wells. Matthew Street was once a private cart track (Evans 1999: 194).

5.5.6 Buildings

In 1671, the town had 212 households (Evans 1994: 107). As Watling Street passed through the town, Dunstable had many inns and taverns to cater for the through traffic. The late 16th century and early 17th century in particular saw an explosion in the number of inns, and the industry experienced rapid growth. In the 19th century, houses also increased dramatically, from 245 in 1801 to 386 in 1841 (Evans 1999: 204). By the time the railway arrived, the parish was so short of land that both the town's train stations were officially within the boundary of Houghton Regis (Evans 1999: 204).

5.5.6.1 *Pest Houses*

A Pest House (HER 11202) is indicated on a 1762 map of the town (CRO: B553) and is shown as a two-storey, three-bay building with end chimneys. It is shown standing on the west side of the entrance to the Green Way from West Street where whiting sheds stood (DTC 1937: 19). Worthington G Smith also names the site of a Whiting Works (HER 11203) as the site of two cottages used as isolation hospitals for cholera cases (Smith 1904: 116). The Pest House was demolished in *c*.1784 when the Oxford Road was built (Woodcock 1951: 323).

5.5.6.2 *Inns*

Detailed accounts of the many inns in the post-medieval period, which serviced the vibrant coaching industry, can be found elsewhere (Page 1912: 351-355, Evans 1999).

5.5.6.3 *Other buildings*

A 19th century painting by Thomas Fisher painting shows the Priory House on High Street South, with the hat factory of Munt & Brown next door, now demolished (CRT 130 DUN/39). Another contemporary painting shows the Ashton Almshouses (HER 6337) in West Street, which were demolished to make way for a new shopping precinct behind Middle Row. The painting shows the town's stocks and whipping post outside the building.

The only new residential development in the 19th century consisted of the houses built on former medieval lanes, such as Chapel Place, St Mary's Street and Church Walk (Evans 1999: 207). Much of the town's growth at this time resulted from infilling; for example the 18th century workhouse on Ashton Road facing Middle Row was replaced by cottages (Evans 1999: 207). The town's poorhouse stood on the north side of the 'Swan Inn' on High Street South (Page1912: 352). It was abolished in 1836 and the inmates were moved to the Union Workhouse in Luton. The building was then converted into four or five cottages (Evans 1999: 207).

Buildings from the Historic Environment Record in Bedfordshire County Council, and from the Department of the Environment's 'List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest' 1976 are shown in Table 2 below. Refer also to Fig 8 for a map of historic buildings.

Address	HER no.	Comments
6&8 Albion Street	6272	mid-19th century
24 Albion Street, 'The Borough Arms' public house, including 2 Edward Street		early to mid-19th century
25 Albion Street with 16 & 16a Matthew Street	6269	mid-19th century
31-35 Albion Street	6270	mid-19th century
37 Albion Street	6271	mid-19th century
Kingsbury Court & the 'Old Palace Lodge' Hotel, Church Street	4355	late 18th century, possible site of medieval royal lodgings
The 'Norman King' public house, Church Street	4353	former stables, possible site of medieval royal lodgings
97-107 Church Street, 'Marshe Almshouses'	6253	*c.*1743
26 Church Street	4282	late 18th- early 19th century front to an earlier timber-framed building with jetty
1, 3, & 5 Edward Street	6274	early-mid 19th century
7 Edward Street	6275	mid-19th century
9-15 Edward Street		19th century terrace
17 & 19 Edward Street	6277	mid-19th century
21 Edward Street	6278	mid-19th century
23 & 25 Edward Street	6279	mid-19th century
27 Edward Street	6280	mid-19th century
29-31 Edward Street	6281	early-mid 19th century
48 & 50 Edward Street		early-mid 19th century
52 & 54 Edward Street		early-mid 19th century
66-70 Edward Street	6258	mid-19th century
8 & 10 High Street North	6288	mid-19th century
18 High Street North	6289	mid-19th century
20 High Street North	4325	16th century with 19th century rebuilding, timber-framed
36a & 36 High Street North	6290	mid-19th century
38 & 40 High Street North	6291	mid-19th century
39 & 41 High Street North	6301	mid-19th century
42 High Street North	6292	19th century
44 High Street North, outbuilding of 'Old Sugar Loaf' Hotel	6293	19th century, name implies built on site of a grocer's
'Old Sugar Loaf' Hotel, 46 High Street North	6255	18th century with 19th century alterations
48 High Street North	6008	late 17th century
'Grove House' High Street North		19th century
Dunstable Grammar School		late 17th century
13 High Street North, 'Anchor' gatehouse (original entrance to White Horse)		1887-94
81 High Street North	1692	early 17th century
83 High Street North	4278	early-mid 19th century
'Priory House' High Street South	4279	early-mid 19th century
45 & 47 High Street South	6069	18th century with 13th century vaulted room (hospitium of Priory)
49 & 49a High Street South		18th-19th century cottage

65-75 High Street South, 'Cart almshouses	4294	mid-19th century
Chew's House High Street South	6251	*c*.1723, Chew's School
91 & 93 High Street South		*c*.1715
4 High Street South	6302	17th century
5 High Street South	6308	early-mid 19th century
24 High Street South	6303	19th century front to 17th century building
26 High Street South	6304	19th century front to 17th century or earlier building
28 High Street South	6305	19th century front to 17th century or earlier building
32 High Street South	6307	early 19th century
48 High Street South		18th century
52 High Street South		18th century
59 High Street South, 'Grey House'	4548	19th century front to earlier timber-framed structure
61 High Street South	6260	mid 19th century
82 High Street South, 'The Friars'	6252	early 19th century front to earlier building
99 High South Street	6263	mid-19th century
112-114 High Street South 'Bower House'	6267	18th century with later alterations
183 High Street South, 'Wagon & Horses' public house	6264	mid-19th century
185-187 High Street South	6265	mid-19th century
95 London Road, 'Half Moon House', former public house	13793	17th century, altered early 19th century
1 & 3 Icknield Street	14512	17th century or earlier, largely complete timber frame, altered early-mid 19th century
5 Icknield Street	14513	early-mid 19th century
7 Icknield Street	14514	early-mid 19th century
12 West Street		early-mid 19th century, *c*.1847
15 West Street	15467	*c*.1800
16 & 20 West Street		18th century
91 & 93 High Street South 'White Swan' public house	6262	18th century
8-10 Icknield Street	6285	mid-19th century
12 Icknield Street	6286	mid-19th century
16 & 16a Matthew Street	6287	mid-19th century
23 High Street South	6310	18th century front
33 High Street South	6311	18th century, former rectory
6 West Street, Plume of Feathers PH	6312	18th century, altered early 19th century
Baptist Chapel, West Street	6313	1847
14 & 14a West Street	6314	18th century
18 West Street	6315	early 18th century, altered by 19th century shop front. Timber framing still visible on east gable
24 & 26 West Street	6316	18th century front to earlier? timber framed building
28 West Street	6317	mid-19th century
70 West Street	6318	early-mid 19th century
184 & 186 West Street	6319	mid-19th century

7 West Street	6320	17th century, altered 19th century, removed to Chiltern Open Air Museum
33, 35 & 37 West Street	6321	early 19th century
143 & 145 West Street	6322	mid-19th century
7 Regent Street	6324	early-mid 19th century
9 & 11 Regent Street	6325	early-mid 19th century, forms group with no. 7
21 Regent Street	6326	mid-19th century
29 Winfield Street	6327	early 19th century
2 & 4 Victoria Street	6328	mid-19th century
24 Albion Street, The Borough Arms public house	6331	early-mid 9th century
Half Moon House, High Street South	6332	17th century or earlier
46 High Street South	6334	18th century
48 High Street South	6335	18th century front to earlier? building
52 High Street South	6336	early 19th century
109 & 111 Church Street	6346	18th century pair of cottages
18 Edward Street	10057	19th century

Table 2. Surviving post-medieval buildings up to *c*.1850

Demolished buildings of this period are shown in Table 3.

Address	HER no.	Comments
Ashton Almshouses, West Street / Ashton Square	6337	18th century
14 Ashton Street	6338	early 18th century
'White Horse' Church Street	6339	18th century
29, 31 & 33 Church Street	6340	early 19th century
37 Church Street	6341	18th century
36, 38 & 40 Church Street	4283	19th century
39 & 41 Church Street	6342	early 19th century
42 & 44 Church Street	4284	19th century
43 & 45 Church Street	6343	early 19th century
46 & 48 Church Street	4285	19th century
47-55 Church Street	6344	late 18th century
57 Church Street	6345	early 18th century
43 High Street South	6347	18th century
142 High Street South	6348	early 19th century
13 West Street	6349	18th century
Commercial Hotel, West Street	6350	early 19th century
23 & 25 West Street	6351	late 17th century
22 West Street	6352	early 19th century
39-41 West Street	7942	19th century
9 West Street	8476	17th century
48 & 50 Edward Street	6256	early-mid 19th century
28 & 30 Church Street	6282	18th century/early 19th century

Table 3. Demolished post-medieval buildings

Some buildings cannot be ascribed a date more specific than '19th century'; these are shown in Table 4.

Address	HER no.	Comments
29 High Street North	4286	19th century
49 High Street North	4321	19th century
22 Albion Street	6068	19th century
50 High Street North	6089	19th century
8-10 High Street South	6092	19th century
67-79 West Street	6093	One of these was the 'Victoria' public house
52-54 Edward Street	6257	19th century
30 High Street South		19th century
46 High Street South		19th century
26 High Street South		19th century
10 & 12 Albion Street	6273	19th century
9-15 Edward Street	6276	19th century terrace of two pairs
1 High Street North, Nag's Head public house	6294	19th century
35 High Street North	6295	19th century
7 High Street North	6298	19th century in early 19th century style
35 & 37 High Street North	6300	19th century
19 High Street South	6309	19th century
Parish Hall, Church Street	7861	19th century
20-28 Victoria Street	7944	19th century
Former LNWR Stables, North Railway Station	9166	19th century

Table 4. 19th century buildings

5.5.7 Mill

The windmill still stood on Mill Bank to the north of West Street in 1621 (Page 1912: 351). A series of windmills had stood on this site from the 13th century onwards (Benson 1986: 126). It is likely that the position of the mill altered over the centuries (Elliot 1931: 17). A 'Windmill Inn' alehouse is mentioned in 1697 and a 'Windmill and Still' in 1724. A sketch of a post-mill (HER 12299) dating from 1762 (CRO: B553) shows its position as west of the town, alongside and south of the Icknield Way in the extreme north-west angle of the borough boundary. The 19th century 'Old Mill' on this site ended its working life as a steam mill (Benson 1986: 126). The structure is a brick tower-mill.

5.5.8 School and almshouses

A "Scholehouse" in South Street is mentioned in 1542 (CRT 130 DUN/7). In 1704, John Dearmer appeared before the court of the archdeacon of Bedford for keeping a school when this had been forbidden (CRT 130 DUN/7). The Chew School was founded posthumously by William Chew, a wealthy London distiller, in 1715. It was situated in High Street South, next to the Cart Almshouses. These were built in 1723 and were established to house six poor women. Other almshouses were built in 1727 on the corner of West Street and Ashton Street/ Back Street (now Ashton Square), and were demolished in 1962. Further almshouses known as 'Ladies Lodge' were built on Church Street in 1743.

5.5.9 Trade

During the late 16th century, the amount of traffic passing through Dunstable during this period led to the establishment of one of the few post offices on the road from London to Holyhead (Evans 1999: 138). The registered post office changed location many times, but was usually located in one of the numerous coaching inns. As well as the many private coaches using the town as a break on long journeys, a new group of travellers contributed to the prosperity of the inns and taverns in the form of 'tourists' (*ibid*).

By the 17th century, straw-plaiting had risen to some importance in the town (Page 1912: 363). Hats were being taken to London for sale by 1682 (CRT 130 DUN/7), and it was not just hat manufacture which resulted from the plaiting industry. In 1796, Dunstable was noted for its "neat manufacture of straw of various colours and made into boxes, hats, toys etc." The 1780 list of men eligible for jury duty names Mark Brown, 'Hatter', and by 1810, this had increased to four names (Evans 1999: 195-6). By the early 19th century, nearly the whole industry in the area was centred on Dunstable and Luton (though Luton's role is now much better known). Pigot's directory for 1823/4 gives an accurate picture of the industry; it names nine straw-hat manufacturers, one fancy straw manufacturer, one dealer in straw and one plait bleacher (Evans 1999: 197). During the mid-19th century, coach travel ceased to dominate the transport industry. For Dunstable, this meant many disused yards and stables. These became ideal sites for hat factories (DTC 1988: 31). By 1841, the land along each side of the High Street was crowded with inns and hat factories, with shops sandwiched in between (Evans 1985: 103). Through the former Anchor gateway on High Street North were the hat factories of Benjamin Bennett and William Oliver, employing around 300 people between them (ibid).

However, Luton's more convenient rail connection with London meant that it soon eclipsed Dunstable as the centre of the trade (Page 1912: 363).

The manufacture of whiting in Dunstable took off in the late 18th century. This was possible because Dunstable is surrounded by chalk, as well as having good road links with the Midlands and the North-West. Whiting was a basic ingredient of whitewash and was also used as a cleaning agent (Curran 1998: 1). Lace making was of some importance in the late 18th century, but the industry was more firmly established in the north and west of the county (Evans 1985: 101).

A tile kiln was in existence by 1644, when the will of William Osmond of Dunstable mentions "my Tile Killne and all the ground thereto belonginge and my twoe Cottages belonginge to the sayd ground" (CRT 130 DUN/24). Tile Kiln Close is mentioned in 1707 (Cox 1979: 80), and tile kilns (HER 3542) have been found on the site of the Police Headquarters.

Positions of authority mentioned in the late 18th century manor court books (CRT 130 DUN/4) include constables, leather sealers, ale tasters,

headboroughs, heywards, and amercements (dealing with unwholesome meat, assize of bread, and foreign bakers).

Professions and trades mentioned in wills (CRT 130 DUN/3) in this period are listed in Table 5.

Name	Date	Profession/trade
Richard Burton	1551	Baker
Thomas Shele	1557	Clerke
John Halsey	1559	Yeoman
William Allbrytt	1559	Yeoman
John Smyth	1558	Husbandman
Thomas Finche the elder	1558	Yeoman
William Beauchamp	1559	Yeoman
Gervase Markham	1561	Last Prior of Dunstable
Robert Foster	1564	Musician
Henry Bennett	1566	Yeoman
Thomas Medegate	1571	"Ordinary husher of the quene's matie honorable Chamber and Clarke of her graces Cofers"
William Kitchin	1572	Shoemaker
Geoffrey Baker the elder	1577	Shoemaker
David Dalderne	1579	Maltsman
Robert Honer	1582	Shoemaker
Richard Allison	1586	Innholder
Thomas Finch the elder	1586	Draper
Edward Carre	1590	Innholder
Edward Sharpe	1590	Shoemaker
John Wayne	1588	Yeoman
Richard Ames	1587	Yeoman
Ralph Brinklow	1587	Butcher
Maryan Hadden	1599	Widow
Robert Hadden	1597	Baker
Edward Wingate	1597	Clerk of the Cheque
John Pendred	1597	Innholder
Richard Clarke	1600	Innholder
Thomas Straight	1599	Yeoman
Roger Dawson	1602	Maltman
William Knightley	1615	Innholder

Table 5. Post-medieval professions from surviving wills

The parish register for Dunstable (Emmison 1951, vol XLII) is helpful in revealing surnames of the period which may indicate the presence of certain professions in the town. For the years 1559 to 1659, there was a huge variety, including Butler, Cooke, Turner, Saltman, Taylor, Cooper, Baker, Netmaker, Carter, Gardiner, Messinger, Fletcher, Barbar, Punter, Fisher, Clarke, Slater, Wright, Foster, Faukoner, Glover, Waynewright, Meller, Honer, Warner, Archer, Tavernor, Potter, Fuller, Fowler, Spencer, Pearman, and Barker.

Pigot and Co's commercial directory of 1823-4 mentions straw plait and whiting manufacture as the principal employment of the working class of the town. The trades mentioned are shown in Table 6.

Straw dealer	Butcher x 4	Bricklayer x 2
Plait bleacher	Grocer x 6	Plumber and glazier x 2
Straw hat manufacturer x 8	Baker x 6	Painter
Whiting manufacturer	Shoe maker x 3	Draper x 3
Maltster	Blacksmith x 3	Undertaker
Brewer and agent	Watchmaker	Schoolmaster
Ale and porter brewer	Carpenter x 5	Broker
Wine and brandy merchant	Brazier and ironmonger	Solicitor
Victualler	Surgeon x 3	Professor of music
Corn dealer	Veterinary surgeon	Conveyancer
	London carrier	Coach proprietor x 2

Table 6. Trades from Pigot's directory 1823-4

In 1836, the Dunstable Gas Light and Coke Company was established at Dog Kennel Close (Hayward 1973: 16).

Brewing was an important industry in the town. Bennett's Brewery (HER 15559) stood on the corner of High Street North and Chiltern Road and was established in the early 1800s by Benjamin Bennett, who also owned a hat factory. The brewery was demolished in the 1950s (Dunstable Gazette 11/11/1992).

5.5.10 Railway

In 1848, a line (HER 2436) was opened by the London and North-West Railway, running from Leighton Buzzard to Dunstable. This was followed in 1858 by the Luton to Dunstable line (HER 14086) and in 1860 the Luton to Welwyn junction was opened. The line was eventually taken over by GNR. The first station, 'North' station, was where the South Bedfordshire Council buildings are today in High Street North and the second 'Town' station was south of Church Street. In 1868 a line opened between Bedford, Luton and Moorgate, meaning that Dunstable now had two separate lines linking it to London (Evans 1999).

However, the town never achieved more than branch line status and no longer has a station (Hayward 1973: 17).

5.6   The Industrial Period (AD1850 - AD1914)

5.6.1 Population

Population growth for this period is shown below.

Population of Dunstable
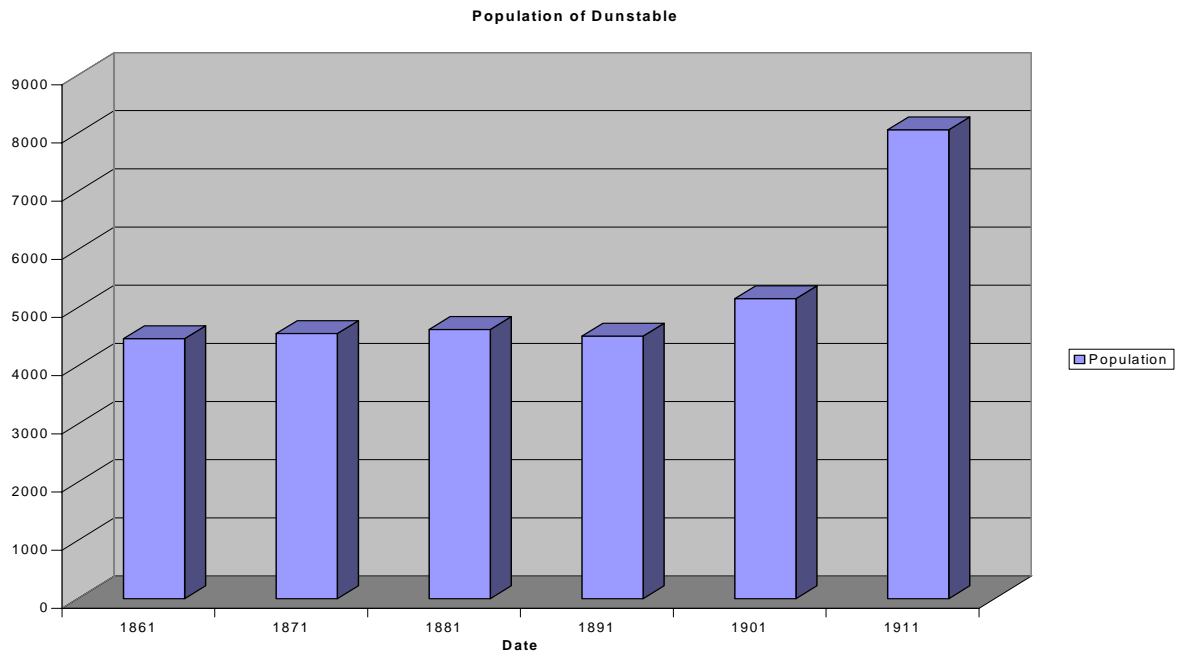
5.6.2 Fairs and Markets

By the end of the 19th century, fairs were held on Ash Wednesday, 22nd May, 12th August and 12th November (Page vol. III 1972: 363). Small, permanent wooden post and rail pens for the cattle in the market place became a series of seven large permanent cattle pens of wooden posts linked with steel tube rail (Kemp 1997: 30). The stalls for sheep and pigs remained moveable, but the sheep market was discontinued in the mid-19th century (Evans 1999: 236). The Market House was removed in 1885 (Page 1912: 351).

Kelly's directory for 1898 mentions the corn market on Wednesday, which was also for the sale of plait, cattle and garden produce. It mentions five fairs: one on Ash Wednesday, three on the second Wednesday in May, August and November, and one on the fourth Monday in September. Presumably fairs were moved from their movable days to the fixed dates mentioned in the Victoria County History at some point towards the end of the 19th century.

5.6.3 Churches and Chapels

St Peter's church underwent restoration during this period. The oak roof dates to around 1890, and the north and south aisles were restored *c*.1876. The Wesleyan chapel in High Street South/Ashton Square was destroyed by fire again in 1908 and rebuilt in 1909 as a new building with a spire (HER 15109, Page vol. III 1972: 367) presumably partly over the earlier buildings. A Primitive Methodist Chapel was built in Edward Street *c*. 1860; a plan showing its site places it north of the junction with Regent Street at the corner of an alley to a builder's yard (CRT 130 DUN/31). The Congregational Chapel/ United Reformed Church (HER 14492) in Edward Street was built in 1853, and the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Victoria Street was built in 1854 (Page vol. III 1972:367). Another Methodist church (HER 15553) was built

on Waterlow Road in 1905. The Quaker Meeting House in West Street, after being used by the Baptists, was taken over by a butcher's business, incorporating a house and slaughterhouse. By 1859 nothing of the old building remained (Benson 1986: 112).

As the town grew, an Anglican church was established to cater for the extra population. Edward Burr left land in Bull Close in 1885 for the building of a church "in the neighbourhood of certain new streets there" (CRT 130 DUN/45). It closed soon after May 1961.

In 1861, a new cemetery (HER 8884) was opened in West Street to cope with the expanding town (Evans 1999: 211).

5.6.4 Streets

Until the mid-19th century, the town was restricted mainly to the four main roads. However, part of the town centre amounting to approximately 200 acres was acquired by the British Land Company for development at this time. This was in the western/central area of the town, and many new streets were laid out here after this purchase (Walden 1999: 101). For plans showing the extent of the town during the industrial period, see Figs 6 and 7.

By 1851, the boundary between Houghton Regis and Dunstable was laid out for building and called Union Street (Evans 1999: 208). South-west of this, the Burrs and others were laying out Mount Street on the slope at the back of High Street North (*ibid*.). Mount Street was then lengthened and became Edward Street and Matthew Street. Burr Street was developed by Edward Burr, nephew of Thomas Burr the brewer (Walden 1999: 105). Between 1847 and 1851 cottages north of the Crown were replaced by Albion Road. Soon after 1850, Albion Road was lengthened and became Albion Street. Many houses were built in Britain Street off High Street South. An additional terrace was built in Wood Street, with one still standing called Wellington Terrace (Evans 1999).

5.6.5 Buildings

By 1900, Waterlow's and Harrison Carter's Iron Works had arrived in the town and provided employment for the town's growing population. The 'New Industries Committee' encouraged Bagshawe & Cos' engineering works to come to Church Street in 1907 and the Cross & Co paperworks to come to London Road in 1909. The presence of these firms put an enormous pressure on the town's housing, and in 1877, two small fields south-east of Priory Church were sold and the England's Close Estate was planned (Evans 1999: 266). Between 1880 and 1910 many houses were built in the Priory Road and St Peter's Road area. Between 1885 and 1904 twenty-five new houses along the Houghton end of High Street North had been constructed and sixteen in George Street. Figs 6 and 7 show the extent of the town in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Before the First World War, the construction of Bull Close Estate in the Clifton area had begun, with the Borough Farm estate following and

developing very slowly. Sixty-nine houses were completed in Borough Road by 1914.

Address	HER no.	Comments
86 High Street North	4280	mid to late 19th
81-83 West Street	6088	mid-late 19th century, later converted into a Rectory
Ashton Grammar School, High Street North	6323	1887-94
Former Post Office, High Street North	6330	late 19th century, modern offices built to rear
16 Icknield Street, former police station	6567	1867, built after Dunstable received its charter of incorporation 1864
Bagshawe's Engineering Works, Church Street	9242	1906
Vienna Pavillion, Bagshawe's, Church Street	9243	19th century mock-Tudor, timber-framed building
1-6 Wellington Terrace	15469	late 19th century, *c.*1860
1-8 Cross Street	12699	1903

Table 7. Industrial period buildings

To the left of the Anchor on High Street North was the Town Hall, originally a butcher's shop and part of the White Horse Inn, purchased by the council in 1866 (CRT 130 DUN/39). The council opened a corn exchange and plait hall at the back of the town hall (Evans 1999: 211). The Town Hall was burned down in 1879 and replaced by a building with a tall clock tower. That building was demolished in 1966 for the construction of the present Abbey National building.

High Street North was lined with inns and hat factories in the late 19th century. The building at the rear of 17 High Street North (HER 15254) was Bennett's Hat factory. Through the 'Anchor Gateway' on High Street North were the two hat factories belonging to Bennett and Oliver. Between the Old Sugar Loaf and the White Hart on High Street North was James Blackwell's straw hat factory (Evans 1985). Another two hat manufacturers were situated between the White Hart and the Red Lion. On High Street South, Thomas Waterfield built a bonnet sewing room behind the building which is currently Woolworths, and later, his family owned a factory north of the Sugar Loaf. In High Street South there were hat factories at the rear of no. 52 and one to the rear of Grey House (Levering 1990: 99). During the 19th century, part of the Grey House itself was used as a straw hat and bonnet manufacturers. Munt and Brown had a purpose-built factory next to Priory House, and between this building and the Saracen's Head lived three men named as 'hat manufacturers'. By 1861, the yards and outhouses of Burr's Brewery on High Street North had become Cooper's hat factory (Twaddle 1989). Some of these buildings have been demolished, but many survive (though now serving different uses). More work is needed to clarify the extent of survival of this important part of Dunstable's built heritage.

5.6.6 Schools

The Ashton Primary School (HER 15471) in Church Street was built in 1861. The Education Act of 1870 prompted the establishment of grammar schools in the town. Ashton Grammar School in High Street North was built in 1887. The Icknield Lower School in Burr Street was built in 1908 (CRO 12045 P130/DUN). The Priory Middle School (HER 15807) in Britain Street was built in the early 20th century.

5.6.7 Middle Row

A photograph from 1875 shows a view of the crossroads in the town centre and the buildings known as Middle Row before they were demolished in 1910 to allow West Street to be widened (CRT 130 DUN/39). Some of these appear to have been timber-framed. The Rose and Crown became the corner building here after the demolition work.

5.6.8 Trade

Craven's Trade Directory for 1853 shows that the straw plait and hat manufacture industry was important at the beginning of this period. It lists:
- Three straw manufacturers
- Eleven straw hat manufacturers
- Three straw bonnet makers
- Six straw plait dealers
- Two straw plait manufacturers
- Two straw bleachers
- Two straw blockers

Kelly's directory for 1898 indicates that the industry was still thriving by the end of the century. It states that the principal business of the town was the manufacture of straw plaits and bonnets. It also mentions the importance of whiting manufacture and felt hats. The hat industry in Dunstable eventually suffered from the superiority of Luton's rail connection with London. Most of the hat factories closed in the early 20th century. However, Kelly's directory for 1914 still calls the hat trade the 'principal' business of the town and also mentions an extensive printing works, brewery, foundry and chain works.

The arrival of the railway in the mid-19th century meant that Dunstable could support heavier industries than had previously existed in the town. Waterlow's printers arrived in 1891 and had works behind the eastern borders of High Street North. Harrison Carter, a small engineering firm and iron foundry was established in the town in 1894 in the fields off Bull Pond Lane. Bagshawe' s engineering works built their factory in 1906 at the bottom of Church Street opposite the station. Cross & co. installed their stationery works in 1909 on the southern edge of the town adjoining the corner of Periwinkle Lane (Bourne 2000: 29).

The gas works on Brewer's Hill Road (HER 4342) was established in 1865, moving here from its previous site on the east side of High Street North. In 1871, the company obtained an act to supply water as well as gas, and the

waterworks' offices are the only part of the buildings left. The site is now the northern part of Dunstable Grammar School.

Whiting had grown in importance since it began in the town in the late 18th century. Kelly's directory for 1864 and 1898 states that whiting forms an important part of the town's trade. The aptly named White Family had works on High Street South, near where the town boundary would have been at the time, opposite Albert Court. Further works (HER 11203) are shown on the OS 1st edition 25-inch map of 1880 at the foot of the Downs. Chalk pits, whiting works and limekilns (HER 13900) are shown at 'California' on the 1880 OS 1st edition six-inch map. By the time of the second edition in 1901, just the chalk pits are shown (as earthworks).

Kelly's directory for 1898 lists the following trades and professions:

Straw	**Metal**	**Wood**
Straw bleacher and dyer	Sheet metal worker	Wood dealer
Straw dyer	Tinplate worker	Wood merchant
Straw plait dealer	Smith	Carpenter
Straw hat block maker	Ironmongers	Builder
Straw bonnet maker		
Straw and felt hat manufacturer	**Drink**	**Food**
	Brewer, malster and mineral water manufacturer	Confectioner and fishmonger
		Baker
Agriculture	**Craft/ manufacture**	Bacon curer
Agricultural implement maker and whitesmith	Harness maker	
Corn dealers	Wheelwright	**Miscellaneous**
Miller (wind and steam)	Umbrella maker	Furniture removers
Miller (steam)	Musical instrument maker	Outfitter
Nurseryman and seedsman	Polishing cloth manufacturer	Mechanical engineer
Dairyman	Bootmaker	Consulting chemist
Farmer	Painter	Wine and spirit merchant
Retail	Upholsterer	Pawnbroker
Beer retailer	Milliner	Cycle agent
Grocer	Dress maker	Laundress
Greengrocer	Tailor	Architect and surveyor
Tobacconist	Watch and clockmaker	Sign painter
Florist	Whiting manufacturer	Chimney sweeper
Stationer and bookseller	Plumber	Banker
Shopkeeper	Physician and surgeon	
Coal dealer	Hairdresser	
Butcher		
Coal merchant		
Car man		

Table 8. Trades from Kelly's directory, 1898

5.7 The Modern Period (AD1914 - present)

Dunstable's population grew from 8,057 in 1911 to 33,202 in 1991.

Population of Dunstable
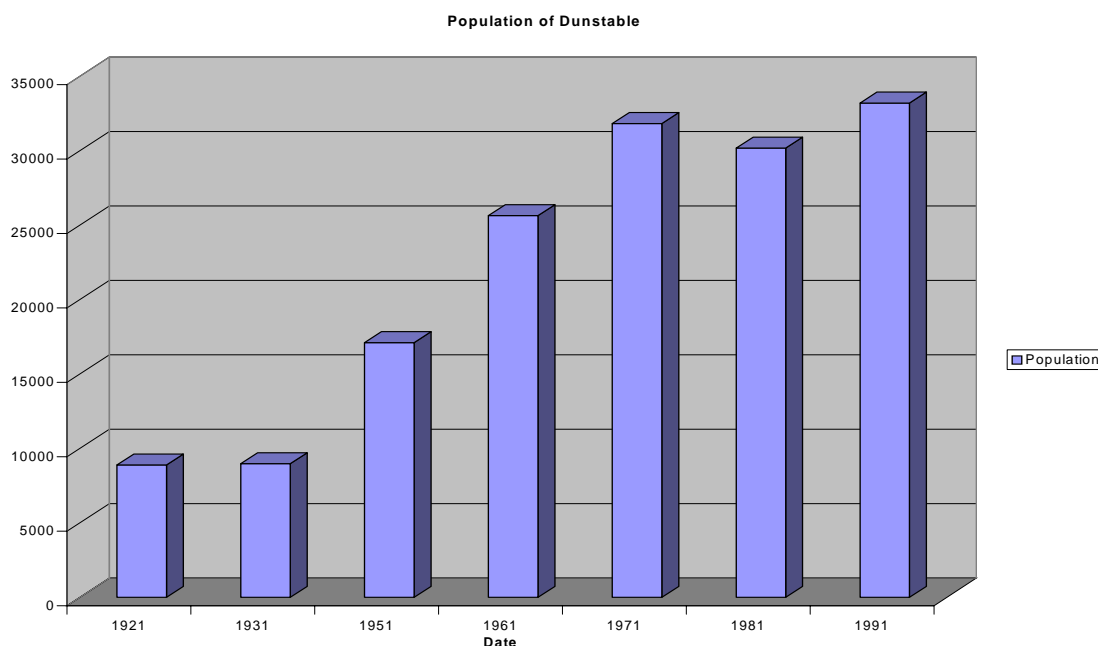
Dunstable has seen considerable redevelopment during the 20th century, which has unfortunately stripped the town of many of its historic buildings. The most obvious developments have been the provision of new housing estates, and in the town centre the Queensway Hall centre. A council clearance scheme was proposed in the 1950s for the areas of Chapel Walk, St Mary's Street and Ashton Street. All the buildings here were demolished, with the exception of the Methodist Church Institute, The Square and the Eight Bells public house (CRT 130 DUN/36). Manchester Place was demolished in 1959 (Walden 1999: 119).

It was not until the late 1950s/early 1960s that development took place away from the four main roads (Walden 1999: 19). For example, Court Drive was built in 1962 between Queensway and Kingsway. Leighton Court was developed in 1968 (Walden 1999: 119). The Park Estate was developed in the 1960s and 1970s (Benson 1986: 207).

5.7.1 Market

In 1988 the market was moved to the Queensway Market Square (Levering 1990: 101). The Statute Fair also moved here (Levering 1990: 61). The cattle market in the Square closed in 1955, marking the final transition of the town to an industrial town (Benson 1986: 96). In 1998, the general market was relocated back to the site of the Square.

5.7.2 Churches

Several new church buildings were constructed in the 20th century to cater for the growing town:

- St Augustine's Church, Oakwood Avenue was dedicated in 1959 (CRT 130 DUN/45).
- The Chapel of St Fremund the Martyr was dedicated in 1968 (CRT 130 DUN/45).
- The Roman Catholic Church on West Street was built 1962-3.

5.7.3 Other Buildings

Council houses started to be constructed soon after the First World War. In 1921-2 they were built off High Street South in Garden and Periwinkle Roads. In 1925 the Watling Street site was constructed, followed by West Street in 1926 and Chiltern Road in 1930. In 1934 building started at Northfields and in 1945 the Beecroft Estate was begun (Evans 1999: 268).

The Red Lion continued to be a popular town centre hotel in the 20th century, but was demolished in 1963 during road widening to make the entrance to Church Street bigger (CRT 130 DUN/39). The King's Arms was demolished in 1965 when a new shopping centre was built (Evans 1999: 158). Grove House, originally the site of the 'Duke of Bedford's Arms' was let as two separate properties in the late 19th century, the north part being 'Grove House' and the southern part 'Beeches' (Evans 1999: 161). In 1920, T W Bagshawe bought the two properties and reunited them. In 1936 his son gave the property to the town council for the town's use. It currently houses the municipal buildings of the town. The grounds of the house constitute Dunstable Park (HER 9431). Queensway Hall, south of Grove House Gardens, was opened in 1964 as a civic centre. To the rear of this is the Magistrates Court, and opposite it are the main buildings of the College of Further Education, which opened in 1961 (Dunst. Dir. 1971: 23). In 1966, extensive redevelopment took place in the north-east quadrant of the town.

The hat factory at 52 High Street South closed in 1924, and the building was altered in 1926 (Benson 1986: 98).

Ashton Almshouses (HER 6337) were pulled down after the Second World War, and new ones were constructed in Bull Pond Lane known as 'Francis Ashton House' (Benson 1986: 109).

Buildings in West Street were removed to make room for the St Mary's car park (Bird & Carrington 1992: 11).

Dunstable library and museum were formally opened at the Town Hall in 1925. In 1928, the library was moved to Kingsbury Barn, now the Norman King (HER 4353/15275). In 1967, after several further moves, the new library building at the Quadrant was constructed (CRT 130 DUN/37).

5.7.4 Trade

As well as the manufacture of straw plaits and bonnets, Kelly's directory for 1914 mentions the production of felt hats, the extensive printing works, the

brewery, a foundry and chain works. The principal trades at this time were similar to the 1898 edition, with a few additions:

- Antique furniture dealer
- Artificial teeth manufacturer
- Auctioneer
- Boot repairer
- Cycle maker
- Fried fish dealer
- House agent
- Leather dressings manufacturer ('Dales Dubbin' on Tavistock Road)
- Marine store dealer
- Motor Engineers ('Albion' works on High Street North)
- Pastrycook
- Pianoforte dealers
- Silversmith

In 1934 A C Sphinx Sparking Plug Company established a large factory at the north end of the town, creating more jobs and precipitating the need for a new school in the area. Most industrial activity up to this point had concentrated on the south of the town. Thermo-Plastics moved to Dunstable in1939, and the Empire Rubber Company arrived in 1940.

Kelly's directory for 1940 states that the manufacture of straw plaits and bonnets was "at one time" the principal business of the town, but that "these people now travel to Luton to work, as that town now has a monopoly of the trade". It mentions the extensive printing works, the brewery, foundry, chain works and A C Sphinx Sparking Plugs. Trades to do with the engineering and motor industries have increased and been added to the former lists:

- Chain manufacture (Bagshawe's on Church Street)
- Electrical engineer
- Haulage contractor
- Motor coach proprietor
- Motor engineer
- Motor garage
- 'Plastic products' (aircraft component manufacturer on High Street North)
- 'Railway foundry' (iron foundry on Capron Road)
- Wireless engineer

The salient industries of the town in 1971 were:

- Vauxhall Motors Ltd (Bedford Track Plant)
- AC Delco (General Motors Ltd, High Street North)
- Chrysler United Kingdom Ltd (Boscombe Road)
- Miles Redfern Ltd (London Road, manufacturers of rubber car parts)
- Waterlow and sons Ltd (George Street, printing and book binding)
- Thermo-Plastic Ltd (Luton Road)

- Bagshawe and Co Ltd (Church Street, engineers)
- Cross Paperware Ltd (High Street South, paper and plastic disposables)
- Index Printers (London Road)
- Index publishers (Oldhill, London Road)
- Auto Body Dies Ltd (Luton Road, die design and manufacture for motors)
- Thomas De La Rue (French's Avenue, security systems and printing)
- ERG Industrial Corporation Ltd (Luton Road)
- Skeftools Ltd (Southfields Road)
- Kay Pneumatics (Half Moon Hill)
- Instruments and Movements Ltd (Half Moon Hill)
- Coulter Electronics Ltd (High Street South)
- Hawthorn Baker Ltd (Mayfield Road)
- Eastern Gas (Brewers Hill Road)
- NB Mouldings Ltd (Tavistock Street)
- Thomas Skinner & Co (Oldhill, London Road, publishers)
- V Mayes & Co (Luton Road, brassieres and girdles)
- WJ Brook Engineers (Union Street)
- College Christmas Cracker Co Ltd (25/29 London Road)
- LuDun Ltd (Liscombe Road)
- Dunstable Toolmasters (Englands Lane)
- Parrot and Jackson (Luton Road, box manufacturers)
- Prototype Developments (Albion Works, Tavistock Street)

In 1966, the Dunstable to Leighton Buzzard railway closed to through goods traffic.

6. ASSESSMENT OF DUNSTABLE'S CHARACTER AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

6.1 Character of the Present Town

Dunstable is a medium-size market town, whose most significant period of growth has been from the mid-19th century onwards. Although on the present map it might look as though it is now a suburb of Luton, in fact Dunstable has a character all of its own completely different from its larger neighbour. Its two main roads and the central crossroads provide the framework around which the historic core of the town is focused.

Nearly all the buildings date from the post-medieval and industrial periods. Some of the larger inns - such as the Old Sugar Loaf, the Nag's Head and the Saracen's Head - belong to the town's heyday during the pre-railway coaching age, when up to 90 coaches a day stopped here. There are also surviving buildings connected with the hat making, whiting and engineering industries. Much of 19th century development that resulted from the thriving hat industry has survived to the west of High Street North - such as Edward Street, Victoria Street and Princes Street. Otherwise, the majority of the town centre has been redeveloped in the 1960s and 70s.

Even so the basic shape of the medieval town, with its broad main streets to accommodate the once thriving cattle, sheep and corn markets, survives the recent redevelopment. An example is Middle Row, built on the site of stalls and shambles erected in the centre of the market area.

The most striking building in the town is the Priory Church, or rather what remains of it, since only the west end of the nave still stands. This is the only surviving 'complete' building of the medieval period (though fragments of other buildings from this period survive here and there), and all that is left of the great monastic complex that would have covered the area between Church Street and High Street South. This area is now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 3).

For the scheduled area, and also the designated Conservation Area, see Fig 9.

6.2 Archaeological Potential

Dunstable has great archaeological potential, owing to the enduring importance of its situation on the crossroads of two major routeways, and the fact that towns were constructed here in both the Roman and medieval periods. Although a great deal of the historic core of Dunstable has been redeveloped in recent industrial times, there is much of the medieval town to be found – in the basic layout of the town, behind the facades of its standing buildings, and in buried features and deposits (such as the traces of ponds known to have been sited on the main streets, or the many structures associated with the two religious houses and the still-to-be-discovered King's Palace).

A difficulty with archaeological evidence from the Roman period is that many of the traces of houses and other more ephemeral structures may have been lost in places, not only through modern development but also through destruction that took place when the medieval town was laid out. Depth of soil above the chalk varies from 0.3 to 1.5m throughout the town, perhaps indicating that some areas were subject to a levelling process. Features which survive best are the deeper wells, cess pits and burials, but in these cases too the evidence of associated surface structures has usually been lost. Even so, recent excavations (notably those by the Manshead Archaeological Society) have shown that much information about the Roman settlement of Durocobrivis can be retrieved through archaeological investigation.

For an estimate of damage caused by modern development and cellaring, see Fig 10.

Destruction of ephemeral traces has probably influenced our understanding of what happened at the end of the Roman period too. Present archaeological evidence suggests that Dunstable went into rapid decline and was deserted in the 5th century, in line with standard theoretical frameworks that are only now beginning to be revised. But it could be that evidence for continued occupation of sorts does exist and is waiting to be recognised. In this sense the archaeology of Dunstable perhaps has the potential to address issues of more than just local relevance.

6.3   Archaeological Components

Archaeological components have been identified only from the historic core of the town. Important sites in the vicinity, such as the early Anglo-Saxon settlement at Puddlehill just to the north and the slightly later pagan cemetery at Marina Drive to the west are not included, though this is not to say that they do not have considerable bearing on an archaeological understanding of the town.

All archaeological components identified below are shown on Fig 12.

- **Component 1**. *Icknield Way and Watling Street*
  When Watling Street was constructed in the late 1st or early 2nd century AD, the point at which the road crossed the existing prehistoric track called the Icknield Way became a natural location for a roadside settlement. The basic shape of the crossroads created the framework upon which first the Roman town and then the medieval town were laid out. However, it is important to realise that the crossroads may not always have been situated exactly where it is now, or that there might have been more than one crossroads. Study of the wider area shows that the main branch of the Icknield Way would have headed north-east towards the ford over the River Lea at Leagrave, and this would have crossed Watling Street some way to the north of the present crossroads. Almost certainly there has been some slight re-routing of roads when the medieval town was laid out in the early 1100s.

For the whole of its length the Icknield Way was a focus for ritual monuments throughout the prehistoric period. Parts of the original Roman road construction of Watling Street may survive beneath the modern A5. Settlement would have concentrated on the areas either side of the roads in both the Roman and medieval periods. There could also have been considerable ribbon development along the road beyond the limits of the town. Although these roadside areas are of prime archaeological interest, they are also the areas which have been most subject to subsequent development and therefore damage to archaeological evidence.

In the medieval and post-medieval periods, a series of ponds were situated in the middle of the roads (two on High Street North, and at least one each on West Street, Church Street and High Street South). Though no longer existing as visible features, these potentially represent significant archaeological resources.

- **Component 2**. *Roman Town (Durocobrivis)*
  The limits of the Roman town are not known with any certainty. Two short lengths of possible boundary ditches have been discovered, but these may not delineate the edge of the town. In fact, it is likely that the town was undefended and never formally laid out, growing organically as an informal grouping of buildings around the crossroads – possibly with considerable ribbon development along the roads leading out of town (though the existence of town boundaries should not be ruled out). Evidence of settlement has been found in all four quadrants, covering an area of about 14ha. Numerous wells, a roadway, a cemetery, limited evidence of structures and many isolated finds have been discovered. There is no evidence so far of a fort, mansio, or any large military or administrative structure.

  Parts of Dunstable may have been scraped level in the early 12th century when the medieval town was laid out, and much evidence for the Roman town could have been lost. Survival of intact deposits from this period is variable from one part of the town to another. Wells and other deep features such as cess pits obviously represent a valuable source of information.

  Archaeological investigation of Dunstable clearly has the potential to address issues to do with the transition from the Roman to the sub-Roman 'Brittonic' or 'Late Antiquity' period , though evidence from this period is notoriously difficult to recognise.

- **Component 3**. *Roman Cemetery*
  A Roman inhumation cemetery of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD has been located in the south-west quadrant, presumably situated outside of the main part of the settlement. Over 100 burials have been found in various excavations. Other cemeteries on the edge of the Roman town may await discovery. It is still not known where the cemetery for the inhabitants of the early Roman town was situated.

- **Component 4**. *Medieval Town*
  The medieval town was founded by Henry I in the early 1100s. Its extent is best judged by the earliest surviving maps from the post-medieval period, though there may well have been some shrinkage – especially in the areas to the rear of street-front properties. Old burgage plots are partially fossilised in present property boundaries along the two main roads. The developing medieval town was based upon the framework provided by the roads of component 1 and includes components 4, 5, 6 and 7.

- **Component 5**. *King's Palace (Kingsbury)*
  The location of the King's Palace is not known with certainty but is recorded in documentary sources as being opposite the church on the other side of Church Street. After serving as a royal residence the manor of Kingsbury was given to the Priory. It became a farmhouse in the post-medieval period. This important complex of buildings has never been identified on the ground through archaeological means, though it is possible that the 16th-17th century barn (now part of the Norman King PH) is built on foundations of a former manorial building.

- **Component 6**. *Augustinian Priory and Church*
  The buildings and grounds of the Priory were extensive, covering much of the south-east quadrant of the town in the medieval period. The Church of St Peter is the surviving western end of the original Priory church. The basic plan of the Priory – its church, cloisters, courtyards, gatehouses, cemeteries, hospitium, workshops, etc – is known in outline but much is based on conjecture and needs to be confirmed by actual archaeological evidence. Some of the area is now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

- **Component 7**. *Dominican Friary*
  Together the Friary and the Priory dominated the southern part of the medieval town. The Friary was situated in the south-west quadrant. Locations of the church and other monastic buildings as well as the cemetery have been partially established by excavation. Undoubtedly one of the most outstanding and interesting archaeological features to be uncovered by recent excavations is the extensive walled garden/orchard (which partially overlies the Roman cemetery). Unlike the Priory grounds, the area covered by the Friary is not scheduled, and is now mostly under a housing estate.

- **Component 8**. *Market*
  The medieval market was centred on the crossroads but probably extended along the length of the High Street in both directions and also along West Street (hence the slight widening out of these streets). Middle Row is likely to have originated as market stalls/shambles in the centre of the widest part of the main street, with the Eleanor Cross on the crossroads also providing a focus for market and fair activity. Other market structures such as a market house are known to have existed. Sheep, cattle and corn were important commodities sold on the market, as was straw plait in the post-medieval period.

- **Component 9**. *Hatting Industry*
  Dunstable was an important centre of the hatting industry in the 19th and early
  20th centuries, though its role was eclipsed by that of Luton towards the end of
  this period. Factories, warehouses and workshops were situated all along the
  High Street, and many properties to the rear were also utilised for this trade. It
  has not been possible to map this component because the basic work on
  identifying the location of buildings connected with hat making has still to be
  done. This little known aspect of Dunstable's history has a strong material
  dimension to it in the form of surviving buildings now re-used for other
  purposes (though many have been demolished), and deserves further research.

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Maps

1762 map of Houghton Regis (CRO: B553)
Tithe map 1822, revised 1841 (MAT 12/1)
Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 1st edition 1884
Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 2nd edition 1901
Ordnance Survey 25-inch map, 1924 edition
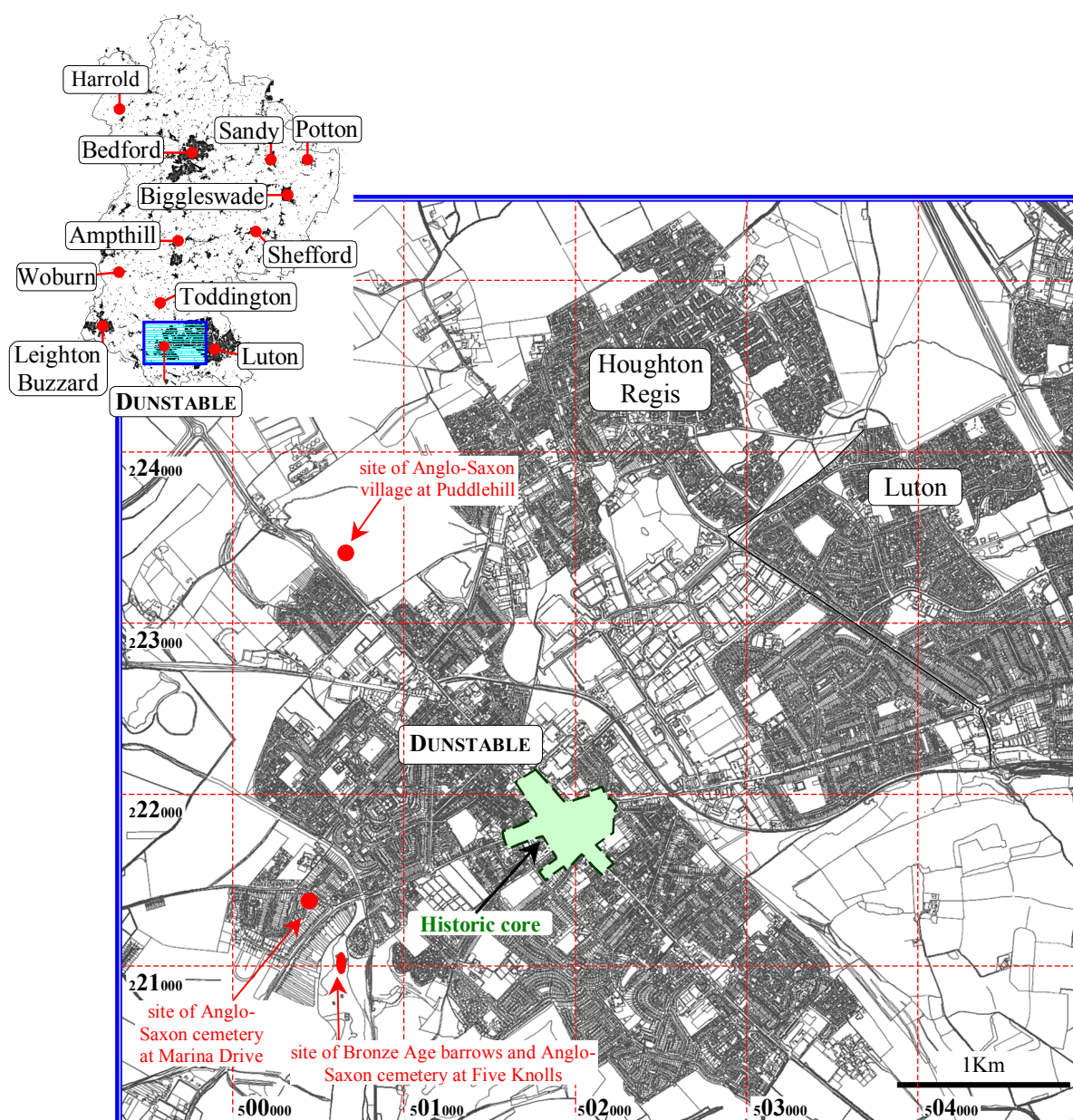
Figure 1: Location map

Base map reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Bedford. OS Licence No. 076465(LA). © Crown Copyright.
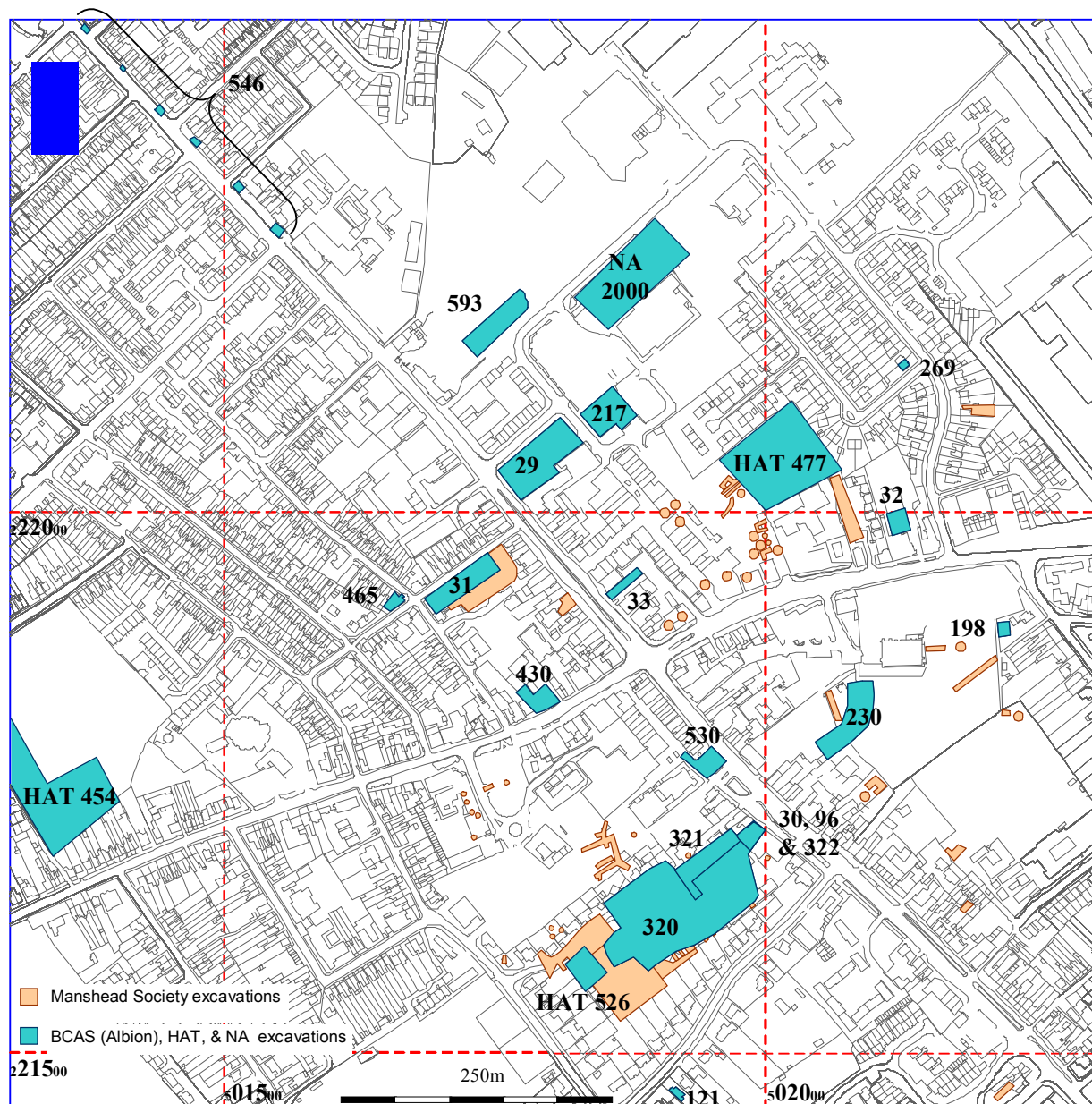
Figure 2: Archaeological excavations in Dunstable
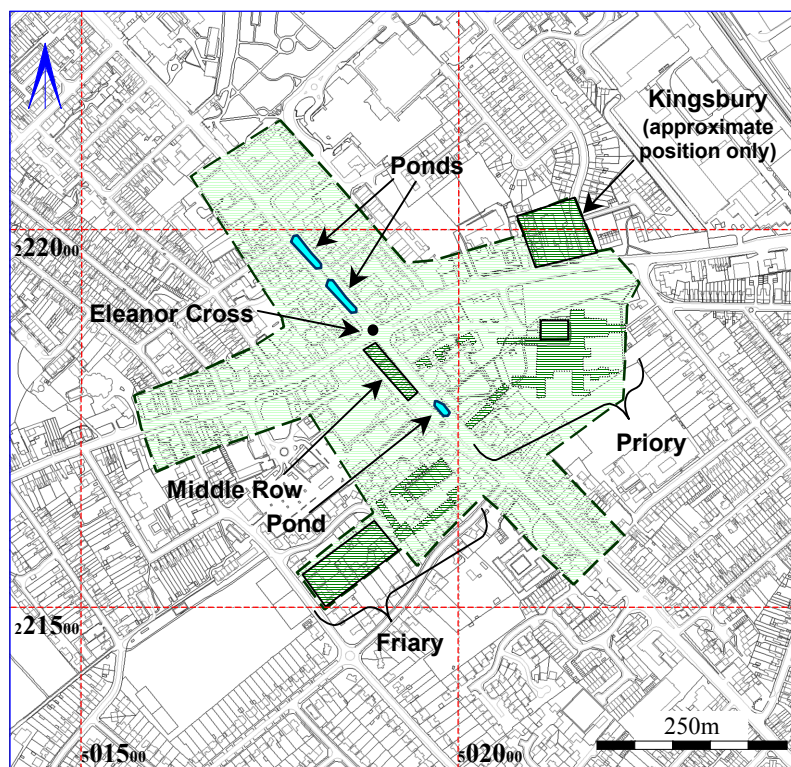
Figure 3: Approximate extent of medieval Dunstable.
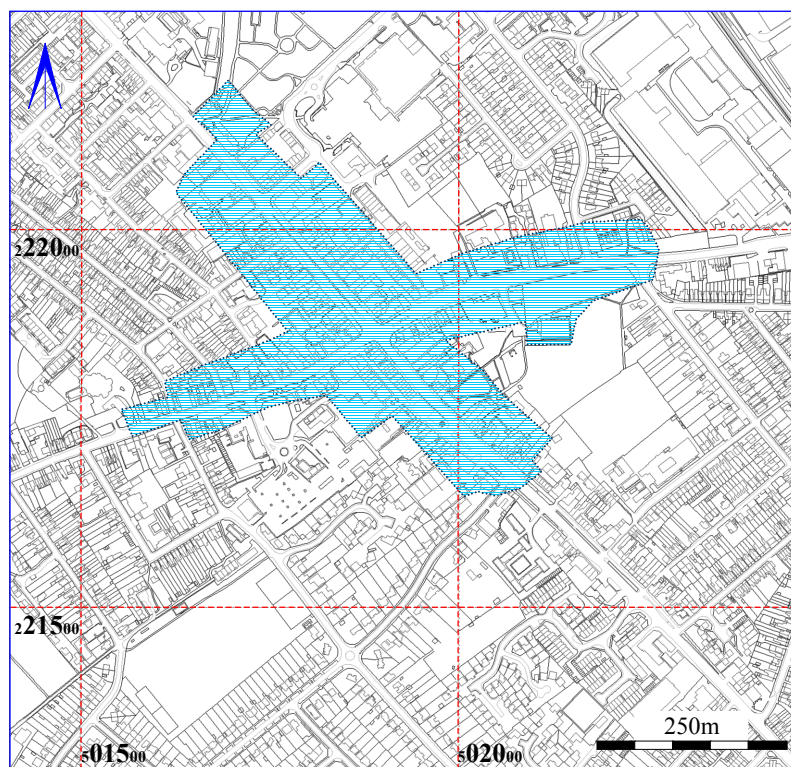
Figure 4: Approximate extent of late 18th century Dunstable, based on the 1762 map
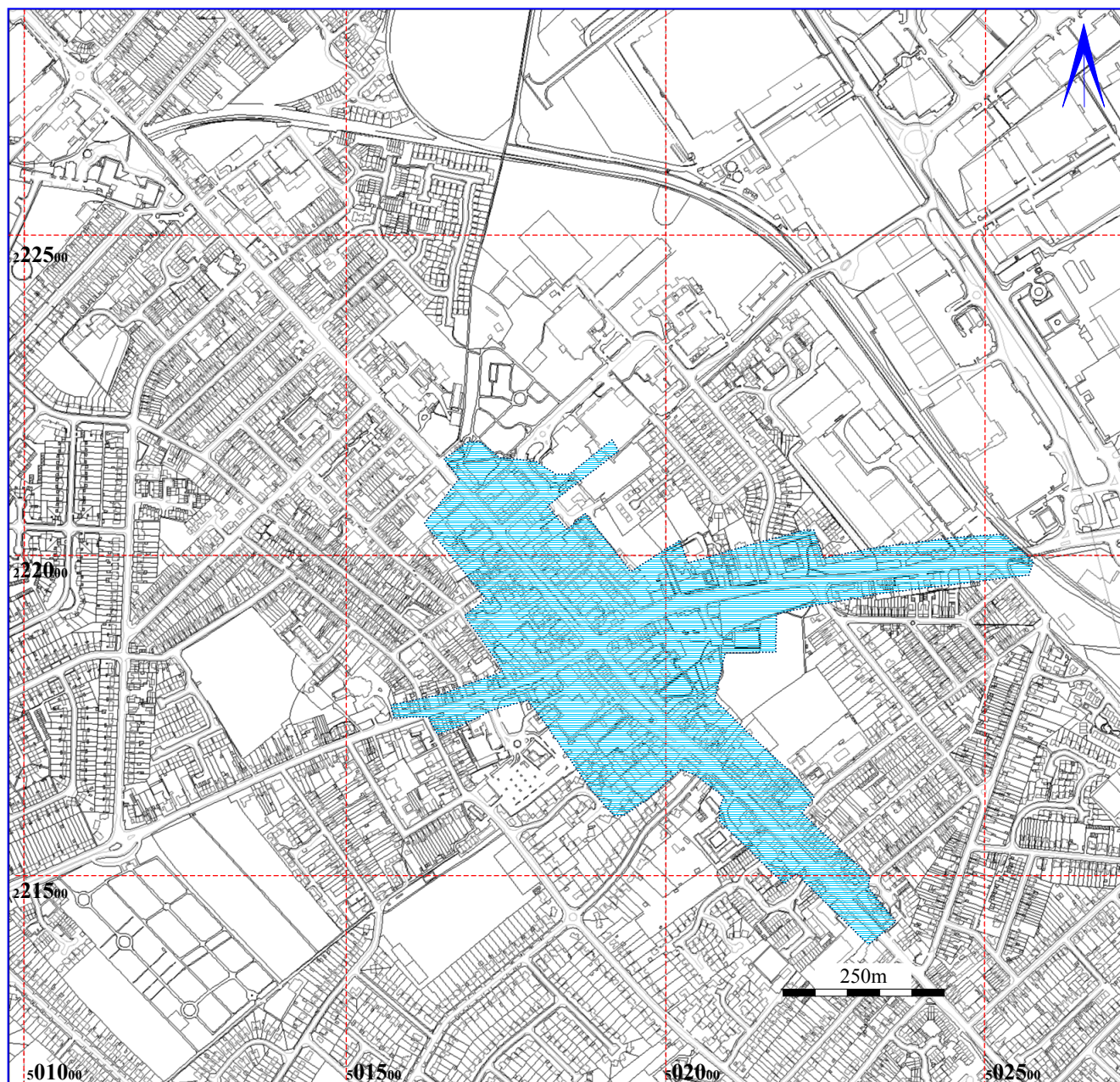
Figure 5: Extent of early 19th century Dunstable, based on the Tithe map of 1822
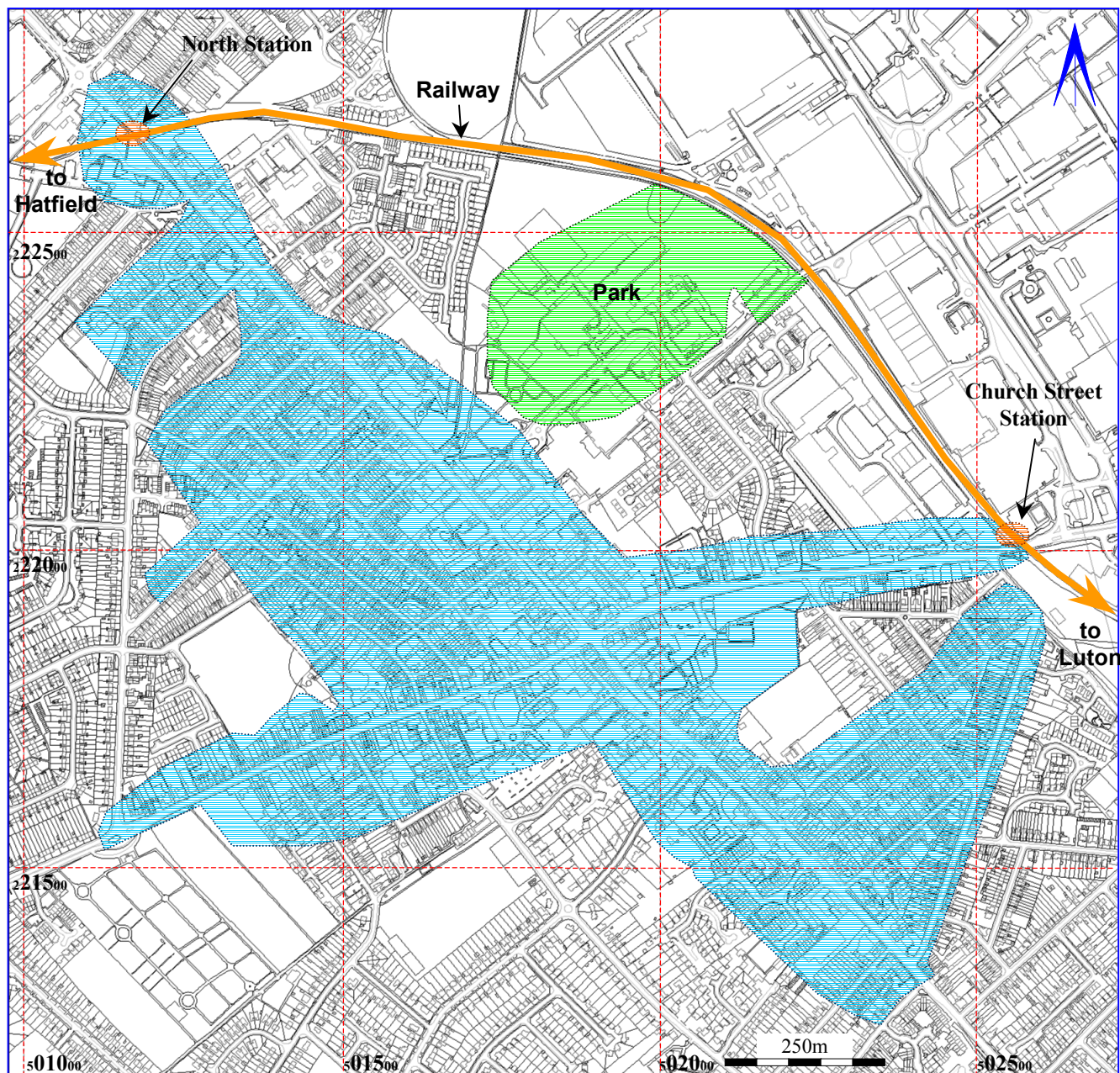
Figure 6: Extent of Dunstable in the late 19th century, based on the OS 1st edition map of 1884
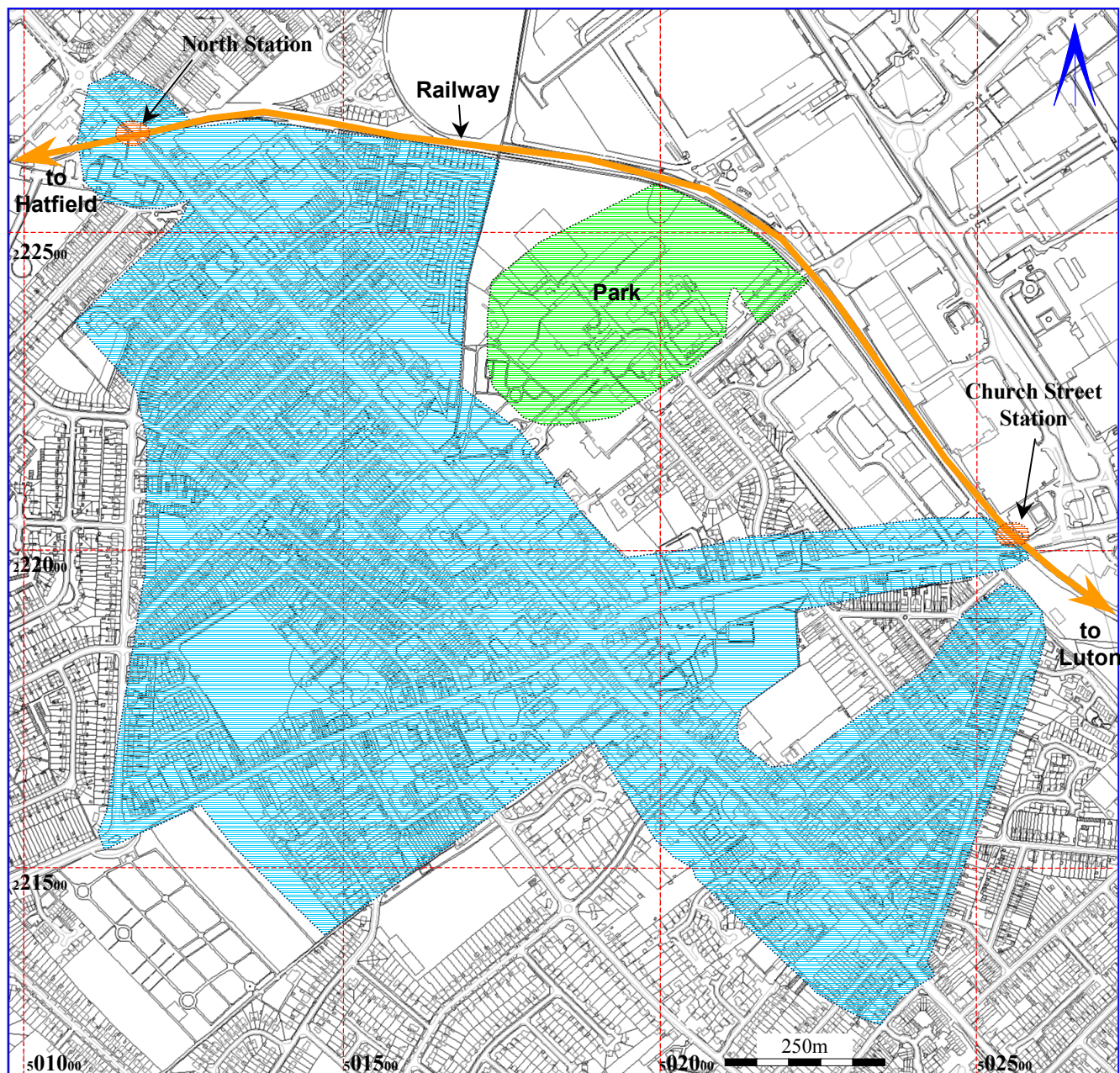
Figure 7: Extent of Dunstable in the early 20th century, based on the OS 2nd edition map of 1901
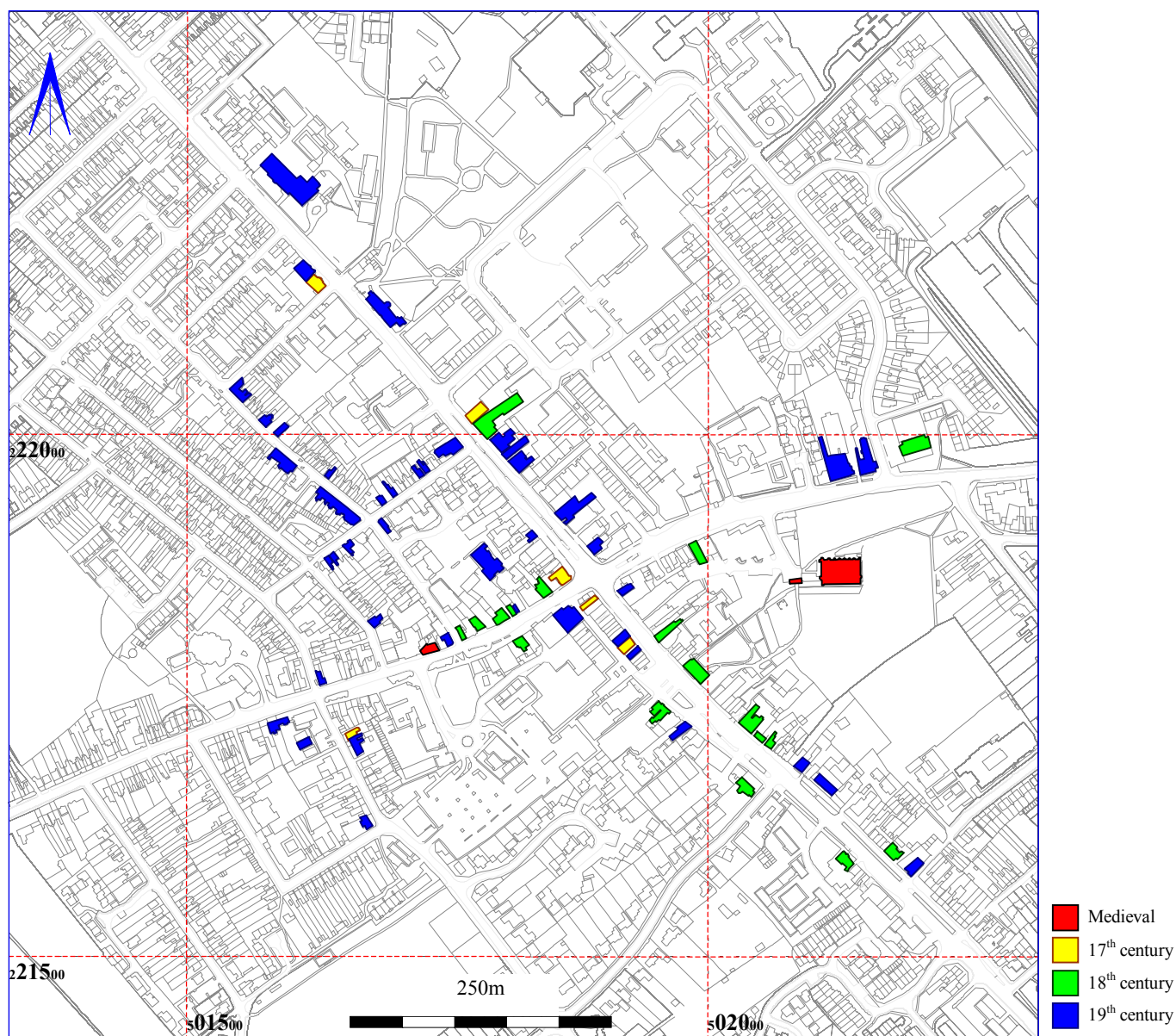
Figure 8: Historic buildings in Dunstable.
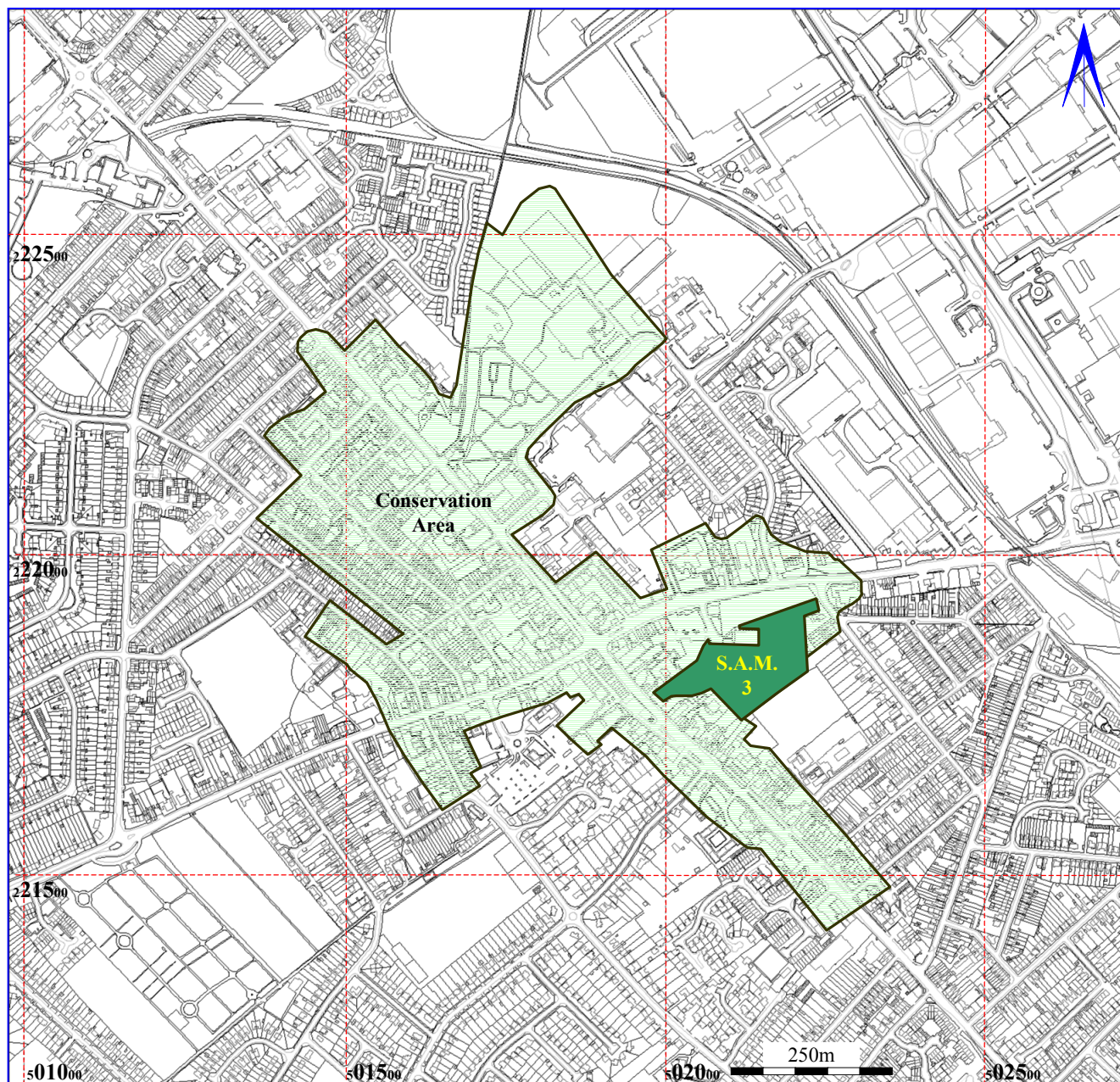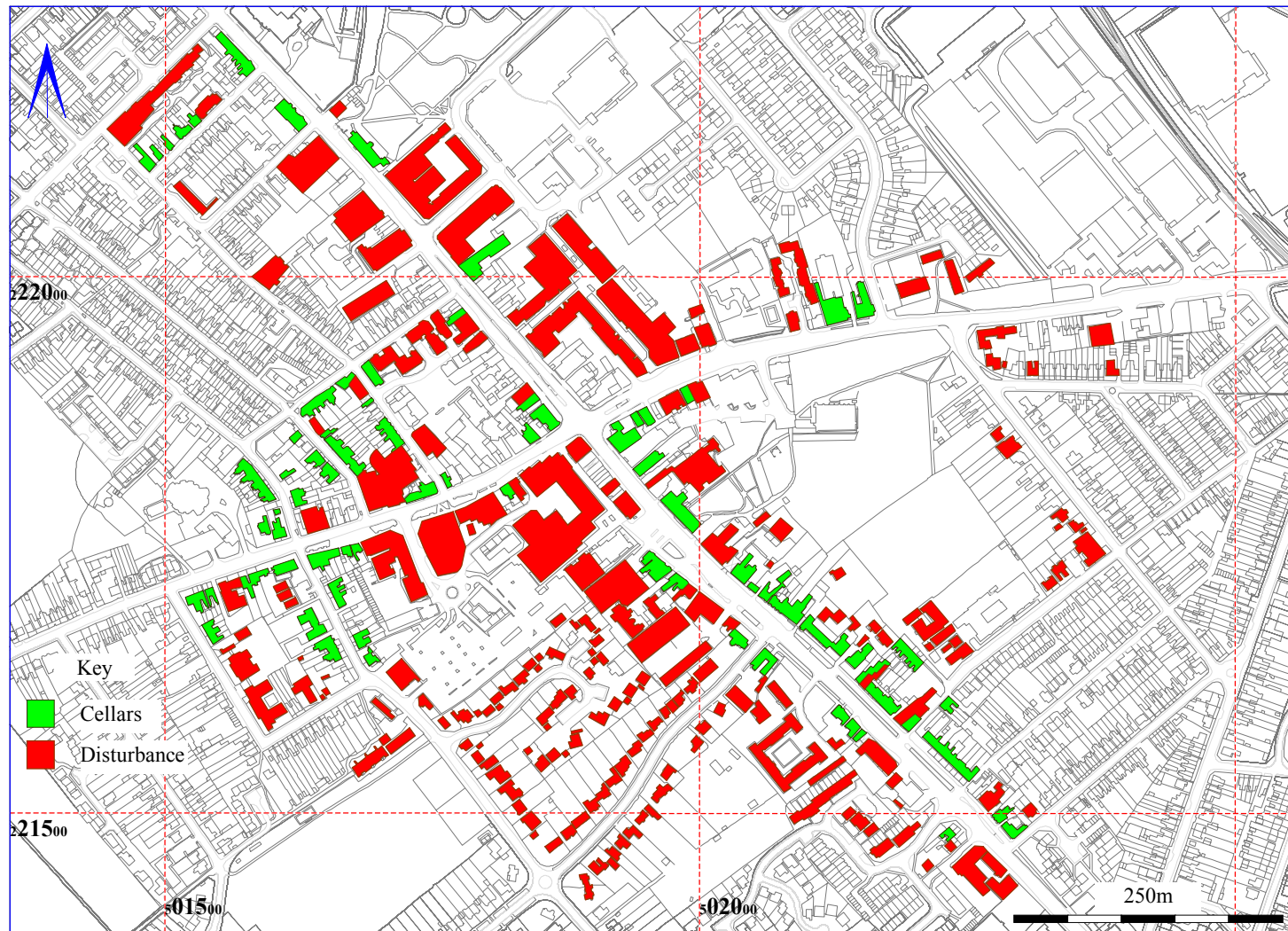
Figure 9: Conservation Area and Scheduled Ancient Monument

Figure 10: Estimated extent of cellarage and modern disturbance within town centre.
(Should not be taken as definitive fact, and does not rule out the possible existence of archaeological evidence surviving within the areas shown)
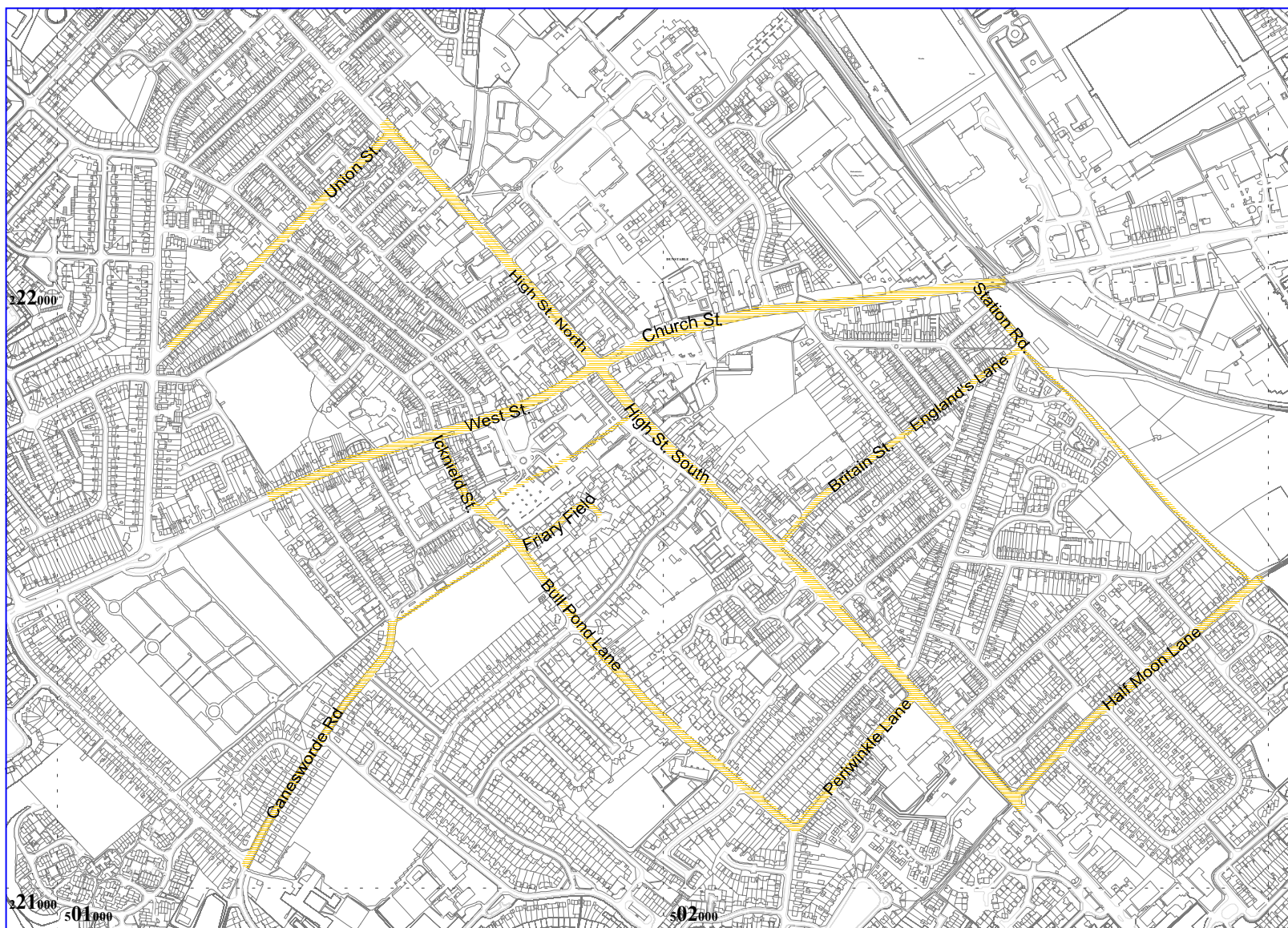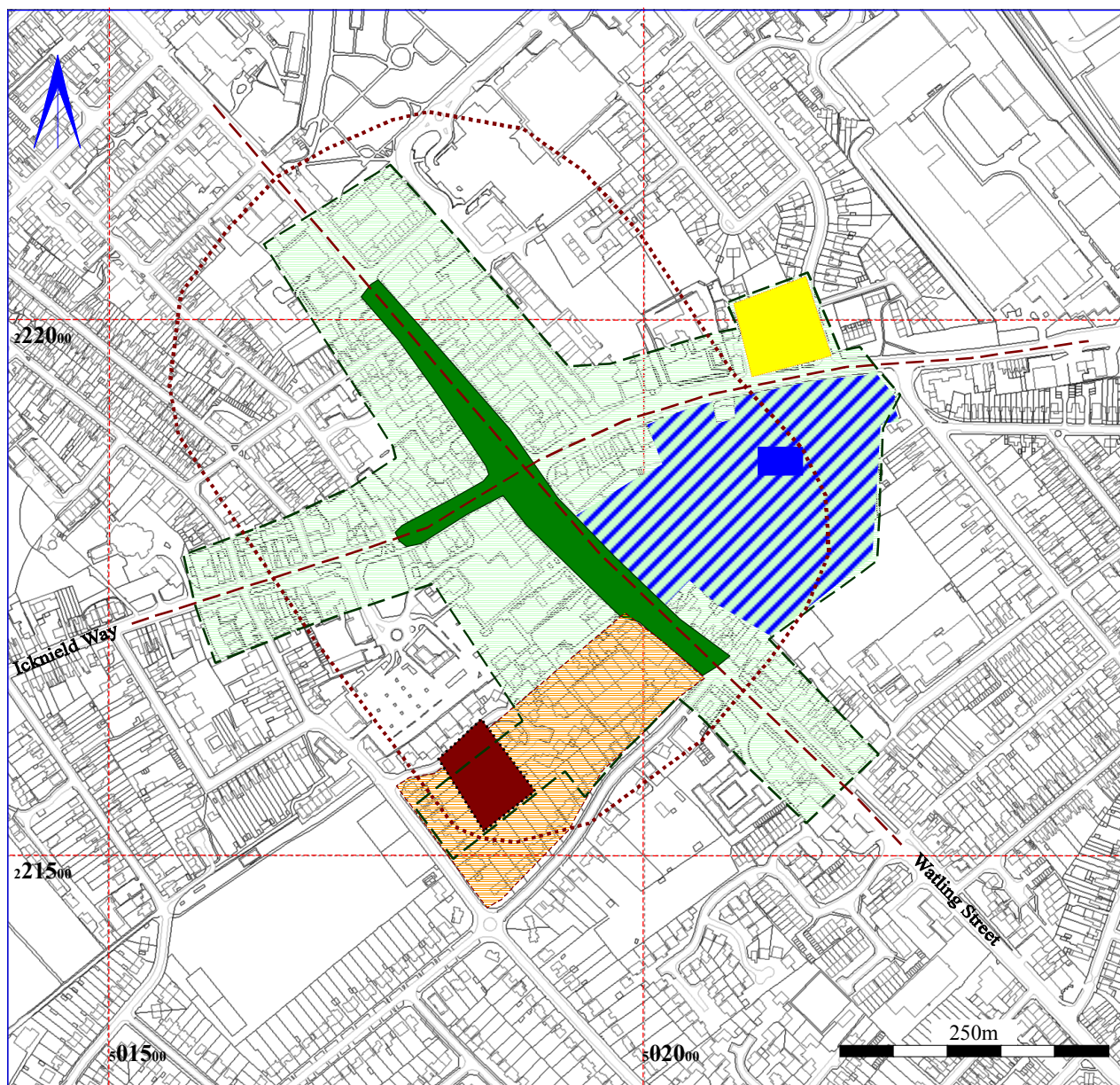
Figure 11: Dunstable's main streets

1: Roads (Icknield Way/Watling Street)

2: Roman town

3: Roman cemetery

4: Medieval town

5: Kingsbury

6: Priory and Church

7: Friary

8: Market

9: Hatting industry (not marked)

Figure 12: Archaeological components