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**The Department of Transport
Eastern Construction Programme Division**

**A5 DUNSTABLE EASTERN BYPASS
INITIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

Project No. 35251

**Wessex Archaeology
September 1992**

Produced for:

**Kennedy & Donkin Transportation Limited
Westbrook Mills
Godalming, Surrey**

A5 DUNSTABLE EASTERN BYPASS
INITIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL
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A5 DUNSTABLE EASTERN BYPASS

INITIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Project

The proposed construction of an A5 bypass at Dunstable, Bedfordshire, required consideration of the archaeological implications of the chosen route. Following the refinement of a number of alternative choices to a preferred eastern route, Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Kennedy & Donkin Transportation Ltd., consulting engineers to the Department of Transport, to undertake the initial archaeological appraisal.

The brief provided by Kennedy & Donkin Transportation Ltd. allows for three stages of work, the first of which, primarily a desk-based study, comprises a review of the County Sites and Monuments Record and other relevant archaeological records and documents, examination of aerial photographs, consultation with local groups and museums and examination of borehole and test pit records. In addition, a brief field survey of the route was carried out. The second stage will involve field evaluation of areas of archaeological potential identified during the initial appraisal and stage three would allow for further investigation and record of such areas as necessary.

1.2 Topography, Geology and Land Use

The corridor encompassing the preferred route extends for almost 10 kilometres from north-west (SP 988252) to south-east (TL 149181). Leaving the existing A5 before Chalk Hill on the northern outskirts of Dunstable, the route runs south-west of Houghton Regis towards and along Boscombe Road and near the foot of the south-west facing slope of Blow's Down before joining the A5 again south of Turnpike Farm.

The northern-most section of the preferred route crosses the broad, shallow valley of the River Ouzel before turning across the more steeply rising ground of Chalk Hill. Thereafter the ground falls slightly before rising again at Blow's Down; the bypass route crosses the lower, more gentle

slopes of the downs before joining the A5 again in the dry valley between Kensworth and Caddington. Much of the route, as can be inferred from the name Chalk Hill, lies across an area of Middle and Lower Chalk, but Gault Clay occurs toward the northern end of the corridor and shallow deposits of clay occur intermittently above the chalk elsewhere.

The central part of the corridor lies within the built-up parts of Dunstable and Houghton Regis, much of it beneath existing roads and buildings. Beyond the built-up area the preferred route corridor mainly comprises agricultural land, principally arable (generally supporting either oilseed rape or cereals) but with some pasture. Land at Blow's Down is in part a public open space (used also for grazing) and in part woodland.

The former quarry at Chalk Hill represents an anomalous area both with regard to topography and geology, the removal of the chalk having reduced the height of the land by a considerable margin. The reservoir in the eastern corner of the quarry is now used for angling, but the rest of the area remains derelict. Local small-scale quarrying, generally for clay or brickearth, took place from the medieval period until the late 19th or early 20th centuries; most of these quarries have been levelled and the land returned to agricultural use.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The preferred route study area crosses land which has provided evidence of human activity from the earliest prehistoric period, the Palaeolithic, through later prehistory to Iron Age, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and later times. A Roman town grew up at the intersection of two major early routes, the Neolithic Icknield Way and Roman Watling Street, which both took advantage of variations in the local topography, the former following the line of the Chiltern Hills and the latter crossing them through a natural gap. Much of the present A5 follows the route of Watling Street. After the Roman period the town declined, its foundation as a medieval borough initiating its subsequent and continuing growth.

1.3.1 Palaeolithic (Before 8000 BC)

Evidence for Palaeolithic activity concentrates in the area south-east of Dunstable and derives principally from the enthusiastic research of W.G. Smith in the local clay pits (Smith 1904). There he found not only artefacts but, slightly further afield, working areas also.

1.3.2 Mesolithic and Neolithic (8000-2500 BC)

Evidence of Mesolithic activity is sparse, being confined to the discovery of worked flints on Blow's Down. Neolithic flints have also been found in the area around Dunstable and, within the study area, Neolithic pits have been excavated at Puddlehill. More substantial evidence of activity in the Neolithic period is represented by the Icknield Way, which crosses Dunstable (and the study area) roughly from west to east, but is now buried by the existing B489 and A505 roads, and by Maiden Bower to the west of Dunstable. Although the latter site now appears in the form of an Iron Age hillfort, a Neolithic causewayed camp predated it by at least two thousand years (Matthews 1963).

1.3.3 Bronze Age and Iron Age (2500 BC-43 AD)

Evidence for Bronze Age activity is relatively scarce. Within the preferred route corridor an Early/Middle Bronze Age crouched burial was excavated at Puddlehill. A ring ditch just west of the study area near the northern end of Boscombe Road may represent the encircling ditch of a ploughed-out Bronze Age round barrow.

Considerably more traces of Iron Age activity have been recorded within the study area. At Puddlehill the Manshead Archaeological Society has excavated a succession of small settlements or farms. An extensive array of huts and other buildings, enclosure ditches, storage pits and other ancillary features and a small number of inhumation and cremation burials have been recorded. Showing the changing types of settlement throughout the period, from simple round houses and 'barns' to enclosed groups of houses and pits, occupation at Puddlehill, although not continuous, appears to have taken place throughout most of the Iron Age. These and other local sites would have been within the territory of the hillfort at Maiden Bower, not far to the west of Puddlehill.

1.3.4 The Roman Period (43-400 AD)

Watling Street, running from the Thames to Chester, was built soon after the Roman conquest (Simco, 1984). The road passes through Dunstable under the present A5, thus lying within the preferred route corridor at its northern and southern ends. A small Roman forerunner of Dunstable, *Durocbrivis*, possibly the successor of a military post, grew up at the crossing of Watling Street and the Icknield Way. Structural evidence has been relatively scarce, but wells, pits, ditches and a cemetery have been excavated in the modern town centre. The cemetery, in the south west quadrant of the town, was legally required to be outside the built-up part of the Roman town, suggesting that the modern and Roman town centres may not share the same precise location. Building foundations, pottery and coins have also been found within the study area near the foot of Blow's Down and corn-drying kilns, some traces of buildings, pottery and other finds at Puddlehill .

1.3.5 The Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Periods (500-1500 AD)

As elsewhere, the time between the end of the Roman period and the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons remains obscure. Anglo-Saxon activity within the study area is represented by a small cemetery and several huts at Puddlehill which date from the sixth century. This appears to be the only excavated record of settlement in the area, although further afield in the north western part of the town (outside the study area) a second, seventh century, cemetery has been investigated.

Little direct archaeological evidence exists for the medieval period within the study area, although the Chalgrave-Houghton Regis parish boundary, which survives in places as an earthwork or track, is documented first in the tenth century. The discovery of a single medieval jetton near the foot of Blow's Down is the only other gazetteer entry for this period. The origins of modern Dunstable lie in the twelfth century, with the foundation of a medieval borough by Henry I, but the villages of Houghton, Caddington and Kensworth all have entries in the Domesday book. The surrounding countryside may have been in part more heavily wooded in the early medieval period, certainly this seems to have been the case south of Caddington and Kensworth (Coleman 1985). The downland was used primarily as sheep pasture, Dunstable being one of the country's main wool centres toward the end of the 13th century; the lynchets and trackways on Blow's Down may have been associated with this activity. The remaining land was used for arable farming.

1.3.6 The Post-Medieval Period

Remains of the post-medieval period are represented within the study area and its vicinity by a number of extant buildings, the known sites of others and by the remains of industrial sites, such as former quarries (for chalk and clay), railways and, within Dunstable itself, factories. Many of the smaller quarries south of Dunstable, having been refilled and levelled, have been returned to agricultural use, but their presence may account for some of the crop or soilmarks in the area.

1.4 Planning Background

The consultation draft of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan of 1991 states in Policy BE1 that the District Planning Authority '*will ensure, wherever possible, the conservation of the most important archaeological sites*' and that '*where the loss ... of archaeological remains has to be accepted ... will require ... that an adequate record (can) be made.*' In accordance with DOE Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG16 on Archaeology and Planning, areas of archaeological sensitivity have been identified by Bedfordshire County Council in conjunction with the Local District Councils on the basis of information contained in the County Sites and Monuments Record.

The preferred route study area impinges on two known areas of archaeological interest, one at Chalk Hill/Sewell, the other at Blow's Down. There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument just to the east of the study area, a holloway and medieval earthworks, at Zouches Farm on Blow's Down. Two former Scheduled Ancient Monuments also at Blow's Down, once thought to be hut circles but now known to be the result of quarrying, have been descheduled. No Listed Buildings lie within the study area.

2 THE DESK-BASED STUDY

2.1 Method

The aim of the study is to provide an archaeological background to the preferred route and to define areas of known or possible archaeological potential around it. The study area, centred on the preferred route, is a corridor approximately 500m wide, but information for the surrounding area has also been examined. The sources consulted comprise the Bedfordshire Sites and Monuments Record and County Record Office, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, records of previous fieldwork, aerial photographs held by various bodies, local museums and archaeological societies, engineers' borehole and test pit records and such other sources as could be located in the time available. It should, however, be said that no sites were discovered by these searches which were not in the County Sites and Monuments Record. All sites falling within the study area are listed in Section A of the gazetteer; those in the immediate vicinity of the study area are listed in Section B; all sites are shown on Drawing 35251/1.

2.2 The County Sites and Monuments Record

The Bedfordshire Sites and Monuments Record lists all known archaeological sites, findspots and historic (but not necessarily listed) buildings recorded within the county. Within the preferred route study area a total of twenty-seven entries were noted (combined to twenty-one in Section A of the gazetteer). Other entries from the vicinity of the study area were also examined, with a further twenty-one entries of a more closely archaeological nature being summarised in Section B of the gazetteer.

2.3 Previous Archaeological Fieldwork

Many of the archaeological sites and findspots within the study area are the result of excavation and fieldwalking carried out by the Manshead Archaeological Society of Dunstable since their inception in 1951. In addition to being incorporated in the Sites and Monuments Record the results of their work have been published in the Manshead Journal, Bedfordshire Archaeology and, in the case of the site at Puddlehill, as a volume in the British Archaeological Reports series (Matthews, 1976). The society was also consulted during the compilation of this report. Much earlier research into the

archaeology and history of the area was carried out by Worthington G. Smith (1904).

2.4 Aerial Photographs

Aerial photographs examined included recent ones taken on behalf of Kennedy & Donkin Transportation Ltd. and a selection of historic photographs held by Bedfordshire County Council. The National Library of Air Photographs (Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England) was also consulted. No additional sites were recorded.

2.5 Map Search

The Bedfordshire Sites and Monuments Record contains much information culled from maps and documents held at the County Record Office and a visit to the Record Office produced no new evidence of potential archaeological sites. Investigation of both maps and aerial photographs did, however, indicate the very rapid expansion of Dunstable from a relatively small, compact town to much of its present size during the middle years of this century. The town's encroachment on Houghton Regis and Luton has absorbed much of the agricultural land which once surrounded it, only remnants now surviving as Public Open Spaces, playing fields and parkland.

2.6 Borehole and Test Pit Records

Over 180 boreholes and test pits were drilled or excavated along the line of the preferred route and copies of the records for most of these have been examined for indication of areas of archaeological activity or potential. No clear evidence of archaeological activity was found; in a number of instances reference was found to 'made ground' and 'fill material' and in others disturbed levels were recorded, but modern materials such as plastic, glass, concrete and wire were noted in many cases. The boreholes and test pits concerned lay predominantly between Chalk Hill and Blow's Down, i.e. in that part of the route which has undergone more recent disturbances by way of quarrying and construction work.

The records for the boreholes and test pits below the south-west facing scarp of Blow's Down indicate deposits of predominantly sandy clays up to 1.30m deep above the chalk. These may represent an accumulation of colluvial material beneath which archaeological sites could lie,

although again no direct evidence of this can be demonstrated from the available information.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Summary

It is not intended in this section to reiterate the information already presented but to give some indication of the archaeological potential of the preferred route study area.

Excluding the extant or known sites of post-medieval buildings, the sites listed in both gazetteers suggest two main areas of importance, one to the north of Dunstable around the former Puddlehill quarry, the other approaching and along the lower slopes of Blow's Down; the importance of these areas had previously been indicated in earlier consultation with the Planning (Conservation) Department of Bedfordshire County Council.

In addition to the areas already shown as being of archaeological interest, however, the density and preservation of the archaeology at Puddlehill suggest that investigation of the preferred route corridor at the foot of the hill to the north-west would be valuable in helping to put the known sites into a broader perspective. The scarcity of sites immediately north of Puddlehill may be a reflection of the lack of excavation or disturbance allowing observation in that area rather than the absence of archaeology.

Likewise, the investigation of a greater part of the area below Blow's Down and along the dry valley to the south-east should be considered. The nature and extent of the possible medieval earthworks below Blow's Down could thus be clarified. Part of the study area also lies close to a known Roman occupation site and related findspots, and much of the remainder is similar topographically; although lying away from *Durocbrivis* satellite settlements, farms or villas, may have lain along the valley. The discovery of Palaeolithic and Neolithic flints suggests also the possible presence of further such remains.

3.2 The Gazetteer

The gazetteer is divided into two sections for which a single continuous numbering sequence is used. The first part, A (entries 1-21), lists those archaeological sites, findspots and historic buildings which fall within the preferred route study area. Section A also grades each entry according to its archaeological or historical potential and the impact upon each 'site' of the development of the proposed bypass.

Areas of archaeological or historical potential are graded as follows:

- A. Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Grade 1 Listed Buildings
- B. sites listed in the County Sites and Monuments Record or other sources, of known extent, nature and date, and all other Listed Buildings
- C. sites of unconfirmed potential (e.g. isolated findspots, sites not fully investigated, early investigations)

It should be noted that these grades reflect the current state of knowledge rather than the relative importance or significance of the archaeological or historical resource in local, regional or national terms.

The impact of development of the preferred route is graded as follows:

- 1. negative; total or partial destruction of archaeological deposits or historic buildings
- 2. uncertain, but at risk; uncertain because the extent and nature of surviving archaeological deposits is unknown or undefined, or because precise construction methods and extent are unknown
- 3. positive; beneficial impact due to improvement in the environment or setting of a site or monument, improvement of its future prospects for preservation or because of improved access to a site open to the public

Where no impact is envisaged no number is given.

The second section of the gazetteer, B (entries 22-42), comprises a list purely of archaeological sites or findspots in the immediate vicinity of the study area; no gradings are given. These sites are included to highlight potential areas of archaeological interest which may encroach on the study area. No references are given for the centre of Dunstable (including the Roman town of *Durocbrivis*) since this is the very area which the bypass is planned to avoid; the approximate location of the Roman town is indicated on Drawing 35251/1.

3.2.1 Section A: sites, findspots or historic buildings within the preferred route corridor study area.

SITE CODE	SITE GRAD E	DESCRIPTION	SMR Nos	NGR
1	B.1	Roman road (Watling Street) lying for the most part beneath the existing A5 road	5145 5146 5147 5508 7104	SP 988252-TL 048185
2	B.2	North Star Inn and disused brickyard shown on 1904 map	14026 14027	SP 991249
3	B.2	Chalgrave/Houghton Regis parish boundary first documented in 10th century but possibly continuing the line of an earlier cross dyke abutting Watling Street	10457	SP 990251
4	B.-	Site of tollgate on 1762 estate map and 1796 Enclosure map	12252	TL 000237
5	B.-	Site of 'Green Man' public house on 1796 Enclosure map	12249	TL 000237
6	B.-	Site of lime kiln on 1762 estate map	12234	TL 003234
7	B.1	Multi-period occupation site excavated at Puddlehill in advance of chalk quarrying; amongst the features recorded were Neolithic pits an Early/Middle Bronze Age crouched inhumation and evidence of almost continuous occupation from the Early Iron Age through to the Roman period in the form of enclosure ditches post-built structures and storage pits; Anglo-Saxon activity was represented by two small cemeteries and a number of sunken-floored buildings; small unexcavated areas survive at the south-west and north-east extremities of the now derelict quarry	687	centred on TL 009235
8	B.-	Remains of 19th century tower mill rebuilt as water tower and very little of original structure surviving	937	TL 012237
9	C.2	Field name 'Fishpond Furlong' on 1762 estate map; may record the existence of medieval fishponds	12245	TL 015235
10	C.2	Linear cropmarks recorded from aerial photographs one probably a trackway (Wood Way) shown on 1762 estate map	12293	TL 023229-023226 and TL 024228-026226
11	C.2	Roman coins found	127	TL 023227
12	B.2	Prehistoric trackway (Icknield Way) originating in Neolithic period; lying beneath the existing A505 and B489 roads although the original route was probably broad and not closely defined	353	TL 028220
13	C.1	Medieval jetton (trade token) found; any site indicated by this find would be negatively affected by the preferred route but it is probable that the jetton was a stray find	1374	TL 030215
14	C.2	Roman wall footings post-holes pottery and coins etc. found	1341	TL 034211 033210 032211
15	B.2	Trackways and strip lynchets surviving as earthworks; date of origin uncertain but possibly medieval	153	TL 032212- 040204
16	C.-	Palaeolithic flint found; although possibly indicative of a site of unknown extent this stray find is some distance from the preferred route	13563	TL 042204
17	C.-	Neolithic flint found; although possibly indicative of a site of unknown extent this stray find is some distance from the preferred route	2033	TL 043203
18	B.-	Turnpike homestead and farm buildings shown on 18th century maps	13800 13810	TL 041197
19	B.-	'Long Meadow and homestead' shown on 1798 Enclosure map; later 'The Plough' public house	13794	TL 042195
20	B.1	'Horse and Jockey' public house first shown on 1798 Enclosure map	13801	TL 047187
21	C.2	Roman coin found	146	TL 027217

3.2.2 Section B: sites and findspots outside the preferred route corridor study area (but excluding the centre of Dunstable).

SITE CODE	DESCRIPTION	SMR Nos	NGR
22	Linear earthworks and cropmarks	12268	SP 999246
23	Earthworks either side of former road (Site 24)	12256	SP 999235
24	Road abandoned by 1837	811	TL 000233
25	Neolithic pits	3110	SP 988232
26	Anglo-Saxon occupation site	12147	SP 998231
27	Iron Age occupation site	14851	TL 001234
28	Roman coin found	1451	TL 019235
29	Circular crop mark (ring ditch)	12285	TL 017228
30	Palaeolithic flints and Roman quernstone found	2035	TL 048195
31	Neolithic flint found	1372	TL 033217
32	Indistinct cropmarks; Roman pottery found	1778	TL 039215 and TL 037214
33	Holloway and medieval earthworks probably manorial but of unknown purpose. Scheduled Ancient Monument	2882	TL 039214
34	Mesolithic flints found	7489	TL 036212
35	Iron Age occupation site	1458	TL 032203
36	Roughly circular cropmark possibly a former quarry	14102	TL 043208
37	Roughly circular soilmark possibly a former quarry	14099	TL 036198
38	Roughly circular cropmark	14107	TL 039195
39	Neolithic flints found	14077	TL 039192
40	Palaeolithic flints found	2036	TL 051192
41	Linear cropmarks; probably lane and field boundaries shown on 1798 Enclosure map	14105	TL 051186
42	Cropmarks; probably field boundaries shown on 1798 Enclosure map	14106	TL 048181

4 THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED ROAD SCHEME

There are only two defined sites where the road will have a clearly adverse affect on archaeological deposits; Watling Street, both north and south of Dunstable, and the site of the post-medieval 'Horse and Jockey' public house. In addition if archaeological remains survive around the former Puddlehill Quarry these would be affected, as would another possible site indicated by the findspot of a medieval jetton. There are four sites of known nature and at least partially defined extent which are potentially at risk from the preferred route; none of these, however, are particularly significant archaeological features likely to be worthy of preservation *in situ*. Particular attention should be given to these areas, particularly the area around the earthworks below Blow's Down, in any field evaluation of the route in order to clarify their nature, extent and the degree of risk.

The purpose of the desk-based study was not merely to locate the sites, however, but to give an indication of overall archaeological potential. Although many of the sites in and around the study area are of unknown extent and nature their presence is indicative of a generally high level of potential, particularly in relation to the prehistoric and Roman periods. The close proximity of the preferred route to Watling Street (both to the north and south of Dunstable) as it leads towards *Durocbrivis* is particularly worthy of note for the potential survival of remains of Roman settlement and other activity. The rural areas to the north and south of Dunstable should both be the subject of a field evaluation. The built-up area along Boscombe Road has far less potential for the survival of archaeological remains because of the previous development of the area for industrial use. Moreover, the preferred route follows the road line for about half of this stretch. Field evaluation here would appear to be both impractical and largely unnecessary. Nevertheless, where significant open space is crossed by the preferred route some field evaluation would be appropriate where practicable.

5 ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

National Library of Air Photographs, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

Ancient Monuments Division (Midlands); Historic Areas Division, English Heritage

Bedfordshire Sites and Monuments Record

Bedfordshire County Record Office

South Bedfordshire District Council

Bedford Archaeological Council, Bedford Museum

Luton Museum

Dunstable Reference Library, Local History Collection

The Manshead Archaeological Society of Dunstable

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Tim Lyver and Roger Roberts of Kennedy & Donkin Transportation Ltd., Stephen Coleman of the Planning (Conservation) Department of Bedfordshire County Council and the staff of the County Records Office, Barry Horne of the Manshead Archaeological Society of Dunstable, Dr. Robin Holgate of Luton Museum, Ian Gordon of Blue Circle Industries Houghton Regis Depot and to the landowners and tenants who allowed access to their land.

The project was financed by the Department of Transport and was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Ian Barnes. The report was compiled by Christine Butterworth and Richard Newman and the plan produced by Liz James.

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LEGEND

ORIGINAL AT A3 COLOUR

Approximate study area
(nominal 500m band width)

Known area of
archaeological interest

Scheduled ancient
monument

Former scheduled ancient
monuments



Approximate extent
of Roman town

Sites included in Section A Gazeteer

Palaeolithic

Neolithic

Bronze Age

Sites included in Section B Gazeteer, All Periods

Iron Age

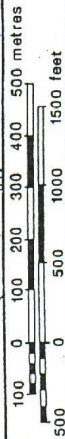
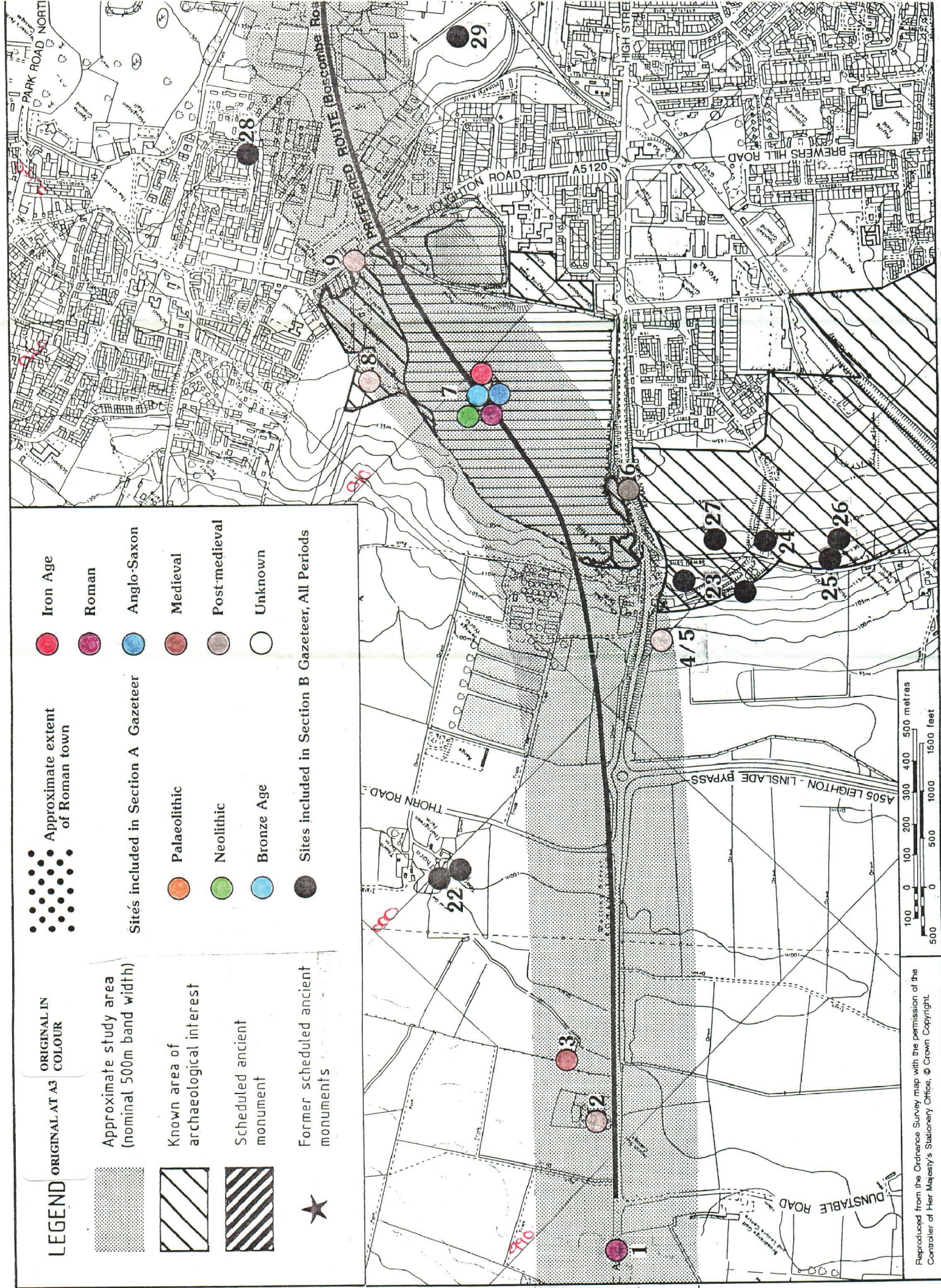
Roman

Anglo-Saxon

Medieval

Post-medieval

Unknown



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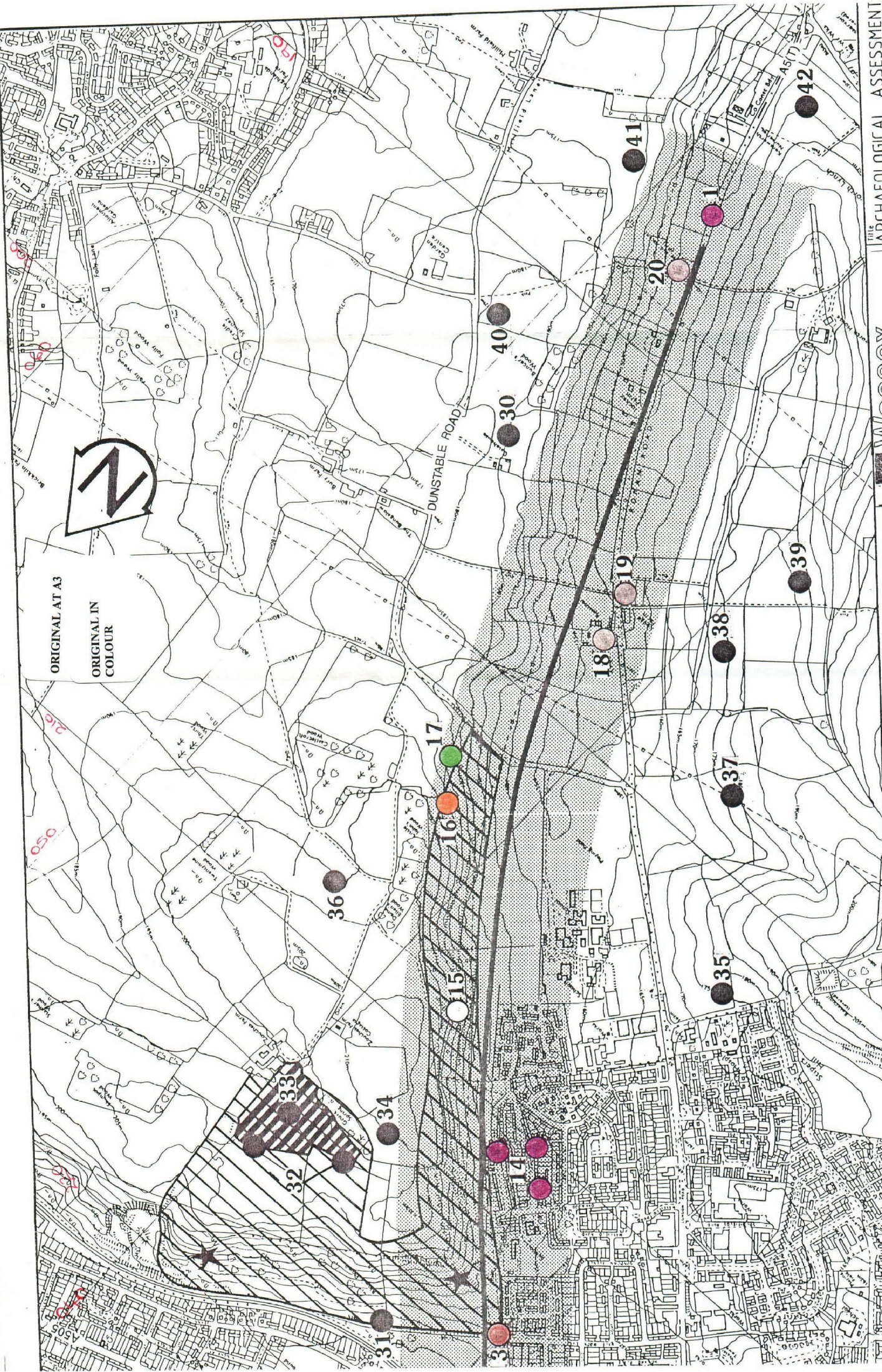


ORIGINAL AT A3
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COLOUR

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
THE DIRECTOR
EASTERN CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME DIVE
HERON HOUSE 49-53 GOLDINGTON ROAD
BEDFORD MK40 3JL

ORIGINAL AT A3

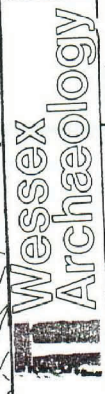
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Client
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THE DIRECTOR
EASTERN CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME DIVISION
HERON HOUSE 49-53 GOLDINGTON ROAD

Rev.	App.	Date

Project
A5 DUNSTABLE EASTERN
BYPASS



Drawn	SEJ	Checked	Date	SEPT 92	Client App.	Rev.

Project
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
STAGE 1
STUDY AREA PLAN

Drawing Number
35251/1