

Archaeological Evaluation Report

71 – 77 High Street North Dunstable Bedfordshire



Quality Check

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CONTENTS

Sur	mmary	4
1.	Introduction	4
2.		
3.	Archaeological & Historical Background	8
4.	Results	12
5.	Conclusions	17
6.	Acknowledgements	18
7.	Archive	19
8.	References	20
Αp	pendices:	
1.	List of Photographs	22
2.	OASIS and Site Data	23
Fig	gures:	
1.	General location	3
2.	Site location	5
3.	Proposed development and trench location	6
4.	1880 OS map for Dunstable	10
5.	Archaeological features plotted onto 1880 OS map	11
6.	Trench 1 representative stratigraphy	13
7.	Trench 2 representative stratigraphy	14
8.	Southwest facing section ditch/pit [103] and ditch [105]	15
9.	Trench 1 plan	16
10.	Trench 2 plan	16
Pla	ates:	
1.	Trench 1	13
2.	Linear ditches [103] and [105]	13
3.	Trench 2	14
4.	Foundations [204]	14



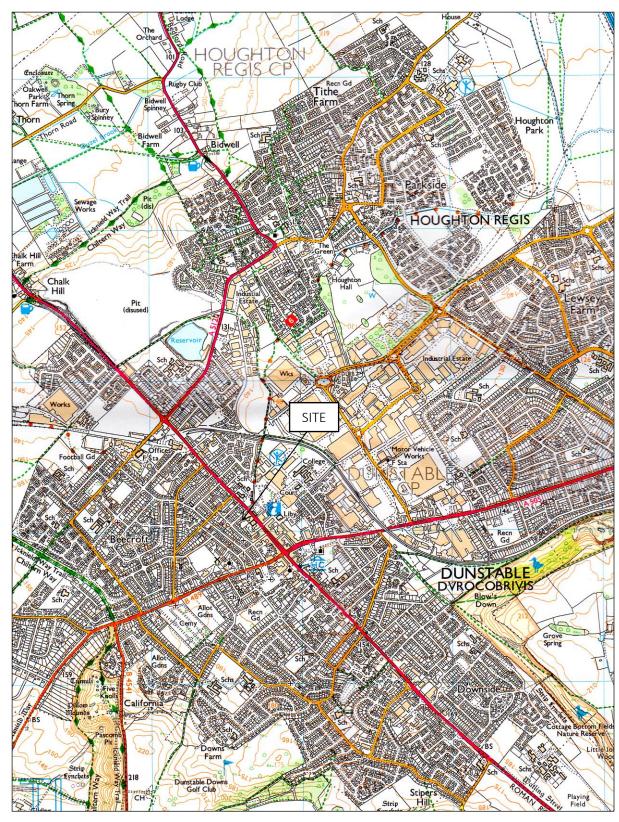


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25000)



Summary

In June 2015 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 71-77 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site. This evaluation was carried out to the southwest of 1 Regent St, Dunstable, in place of a former carpark. Cartographic evidence shows that there was a building and gardens on this plot during the post-medieval period. The evaluation exposed two linear gullies and red brick foundations. Despite the site's proximity to the Roman and medieval core of Dunstable, only post-medieval archaeology was identified within the trenches, most likely in connection with the buildings and gardens depicted on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map.

1 Introduction

1.1 In June 2015 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of 71 – 77 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by Alexander James Contracts Ltd, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Summerfield-Hill 2015), and approved by Central Bedfordshire Archaeologists, archaeological advisor (AA) to the local planning authority (LPA), Central Bedfordshire Council. The relevant planning application reference is CB/14/03144/FULL.

1.2 Planning Background

This evaluation has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as Condition 9 of the Planning Consent for the development of the site.

1.3 The Site

Location & Description

The development site is located in the town centre of Dunstable, in the administrative district of Central Bedfordshire, and is centred on National Grid Reference TL 0162 2210 (Fig. 1).

The development site is a rectangular plot of land fronting High Street North to the northeast and Regent Street to the northwest with commercial and residential properties to the southwest and southeast. Access to the site is via Regent Street (Fig. 2). The site recently held a number of commercial properties, residential properties and associated car park and a commercial waste area.

Geology & Topography

The geology of the area comprises the Holywell Nodular and New Pit Chalk Formations of the Late Cretaceous period; no superficial geology has been recorded (British Geological Survey). The site is relatively flat and lies at approximately 144m AOD.

Development

The development entails the construction of a terrace of three houses fronting Regent Street and the partial demolition and conversion of the commercial building to the rear of the site into three further houses (Fig. 3).



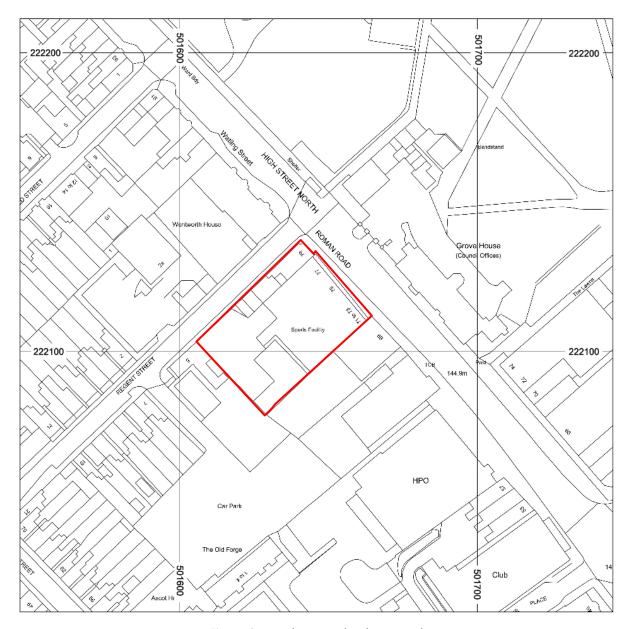


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1250)



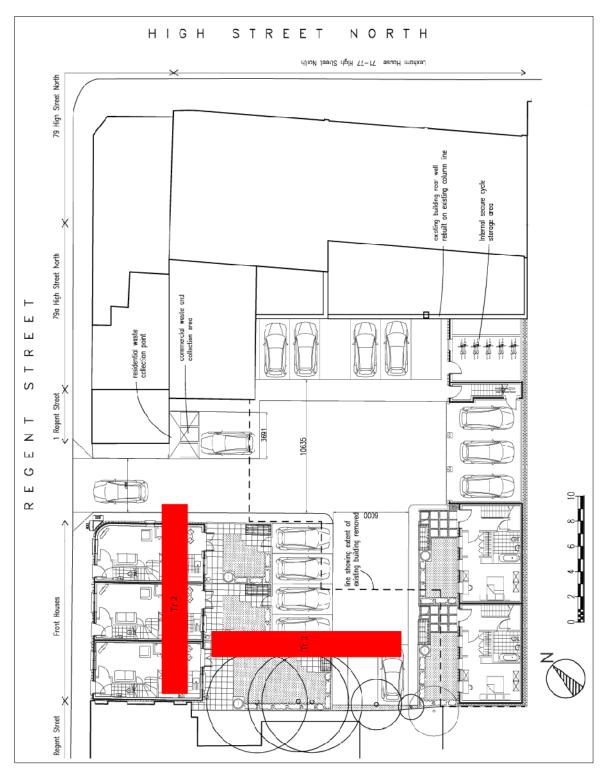


Figure 3: Proposed development and trench location (scale 1:300)



2 Aims & Methods

- 2.1 The aims of this evaluation as defined in the approved WSI (Summerfield-Hill 2015) were:
 - To establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation within the development area
 - To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscape
 - To recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions, and explore the potential for possible industrial activity in the vicinity

In particular the development site was considered to have the potential to contain archaeological deposits relating to the Roman and medieval periods. Therefore the following areas were also taken into consideration:

- The study of urban development including the origins of towns within their contemporary social and economic context, the complexity of towns and the development cycle in towns (Brown et al 2000: 45)
- The origins and development of towns in the Roman period (Going and Plouviez 2000: 21) and with specific reference to Dunstable (Oake 2007: 11)
- The character and organisation of Roman towns (Medlycott 2011: 47-48)
- Relationship between towns and their hinterland in the Roman period (Oake 2007:11)
- The impact of Romanisation (Medlycott 2011: 47-48)
- The origins and development of the medieval town of Dunstable (Oake 2007: 14-15);
- Development of medieval towns and changes to their internal and social organisation (Medlycott 2011, 70 and Ayers 2000: 30-31)
- The impact of royal vills and the Church on towns in the medieval period (Ayers 2000: 30)

2.2 Methods

In line with the requirements of the brief, the methods used were as follows:

• Stage One: An archaeological field evaluation of the site consisting of two 15m trenches within the footprint of the proposed development (Fig. 3)

2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The brief
- The relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (CIfA 2014)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct (CIfA 2014)
- Current Historic England guidelines (HE 2015, EH 2006, 2008)
- The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (ALGAO 2003)



3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 The development site is within the conservation area for Dunstable and lies just beyond the core of the medieval town of Dunstable (HER 16986), and on the edge of the core of the Roman town (HER 135).

Dunstable (*Durocobrivae*) began as a Roman settlement, though when the Romans departed Britain in the 5th century AD the area was apparently abandoned until a town was founded there by Henry I in *c.* 1119. The meaning of the name Dunstable (*Dunestaple*) may be derived from 'boundary post (stapol) of a man called Dun(n)' (Mills 1991: 112) or from a combination of hill (dun) and wooden post (staple) which may have been used to mark the site of a market during the Middle Ages (Lambert 2014).

This section has been compiled with information from the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), the Extensive Urban Survey for Bedfordshire (Albion 2003), the design brief (Oake 2015), reputable internet sites and KDK's own library.

Prehistoric (before 600BC)

Few prehistoric sites/artefacts have been found in the historic core of Dunstable, and most of the evidence for this period has been located in the surrounding area, particularly the Downs to the south, but the town itself has revealed relatively little material from this period.

In a wider context Lower Palaeolithic tools/debitage have been discovered at numerous sites in Caddington Parish, and at Ashton Grammar School (HER 12286). Evidence for the seasonal occupation in the area during the Mesolithic period is based on scatters of flint artefacts found in the area around Dunstable (Albion 2003: 19). Neolithic settlements, ritual burial and field monuments have been found in the general area, such as at the Maiden Bower causewayed camp, and the Icknield Way (HER 353) was a major communication and trade route which crossed the Dunstable area. Neolithic artefacts have also been found in the Mount Pleasant area (HER 13570, 13576 and 13577) and later discoveries were made in fields north of the Icknield Way between Dunstable and Leagrave (HER 1444), Caddington (HER 13564) and in pits at Puddlehill Quarry (Albion 2003: 19).

Bronze Age barrows and burials have been found at Marina Drive (Albion 2003: 19) where an Anglo-Saxon cemetery developed around a Bronze Age barrow at Lancot Hill (HER 125), Union Street (HER 129), Edward Street (HER 128), and Albion Street (HER 150). A beaker base (HER 7733) was discovered on the site of Rollings Whiting Works. To the south of the town is Five Knolls (HER 138), a barrow cemetery reputed to be the finest group of burial mounds in the Chilterns.

Iron Age (600BC – AD43)

During the Iron Age the area surrounding Dunstable lay within the territory of the hillfort at Maiden Bower (HER 666, Albion 2003: 20). Although evidence is limited, there may have been an Iron Age occupation site in Dunstable as excavations carried out at Pond Cottage, Bull Pond Lane, c. 700m southeast of the development, have revealed Iron Age pottery (Hudspith 1991: 34). A further site is at Grove House Gardens (HER 17802), c. 250m northeast of the development, whereby a segment of a roundhouse and associated enclosure were found, possibly dating to the Iron Age. Iron Age coins have also been found to the southwest of the site (HER 1386).

Roman (AD43-c.450)

The Roman town at Dunstable (HER 135, 11270 and 11284) recorded as *Durocobrivae* or *Durocobrivis*, appears to have developed around the crossroads between the prehistoric the Icknield Way (HER 353) and Watling Street (HER 5508), one of the major arterial roads in



Roman Britain which runs on the line of High Street North. It is not clear what role the town had in the Roman period and there is no evidence for a military presence, which would suggest that the town may have been a form of staging post or *mansion*, or even an administrative centre or *pagus* (Oake 2015: 4-5, Albion 2003: 20).

Roman material has been found in all four quadrants of Dunstable. Numerous small scale archaeological investigations have revealed evidence for cobbled road surfaces, wells, timber buildings, boundary features, industrial activity and a large late Roman cemetery (HER 11284, Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust 2000, Oxford Archaeology 2006). Evidence of Roman occupation (HER 14964 and 16077) and burials (HER 150) have been found to the south of the development site. Further investigations to the east have also found evidence of Roman occupation (HER 11270, Mudd 2004) and an early Roman cemetery (HER 17802, Edwards 2010).

The decline of *Durocobrivae* is likely to have taken place during the 5th century AD following the formal withdrawal of Roman rule from Britain.

Saxon (c.450-1066)

Following the demise of Roman rule the town appears to have been largely deserted, but Saxon settlement evidence has been found in the northwest quadrant, consisting of sunken featured buildings and a pagan Anglo - Saxon cemetery (e.g. Marina Drive HER 152, Albion 2003: 24). At present there does not appear to have been any continuity between the Roman and Saxon settlements, however this is a circumstance that is not unusual, and it is possible that the focus of the Saxon settlement was simply shifted away from the centre of the Roman town (Oake 2015: 5).

Medieval (1066-1500)

The medieval town of Dunstable was established c. 1119 AD by Henry I (HER 16986) using the existing crossroads of Icknield Way/Watling Street as a basis for a planned market town. Dunstable was laid out in burgage plots, some of which may be preserved in the surviving property boundaries today, particularly along High Street South. Medieval features including kilns, pits and ditches dating to this period have been recorded at a number of locations (Albion Archaeology 2003). Documentary sources, now supported by archaeological evidence, suggest that Henry I also had a Royal residence within the town (HER 148) located on the northern side of Church Street.

Around 1131/32AD Henry I established the Augustinian Priory of St Peter (HER 131). The Priory and its precinct were located on the opposite site of Church Street to his residence. The upstanding remains of the Priory buildings include the nave of the Church of St Peter (HER 132), part of the Gatehouse (HER 6329) and the undercroft at Priory House (HER 6311).

Archaeological evidence of medieval occupation has been found to the south of the development site (HER 14964 and 16077).

Post-medieval to Modern (1500-present)

Dunstable prospered during the 17th century and, particularly, the 18th century as a coaching town and numerous inns were established to cater for the travellers (Albion 2003: 35). During the 19th century the railway was established in Dunstable ceasing the coaching industry but become an attractive town in which to invest for other industries. As a result, from the 1830s and beyond Dunstable began to develop from a small market town into an industrial community (Albion 2003: 35).

The Craven's Trade Directory for 1853 indicates that the straw plait and hat manufacture industry was important to Dunstable, and this continued to be so until the end of the century.



However, by the early 20th century many factories had closed due to Luton's growing prosperity of having better rail links into London (Albion 2003: 50).

Into the 20th century Dunstable has undergone much development in the form of new housing estates and in the town centre the Queensway Hall Centre. By the late 1950s/early 1960s development extended beyond the four main roads of the town (Walden 1999: 19, Albion 2003: 52).

3.2 The Known Archaeology & History of the Site

The development site is on the edge of the core of the Roman Town (HER 135) and lies just beyond the core of the medieval town (HER 16986). It falls within the Dunstable Conservation Area (Albion 2003: Fig. 12).

75 High Street North is recorded in the historical environment record as a post-medieval building (HER 1647).

The 1880 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4) shows buildings fronting High Street North, and a building to the rear spanning the entire width of the site, which was most recently a carpark. In between these buildings was a garden, which today is more built up. Figure 5 illustrates trench location with respect to the 1880 Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 4: 1880 OS map for Dunstable (not to scale)



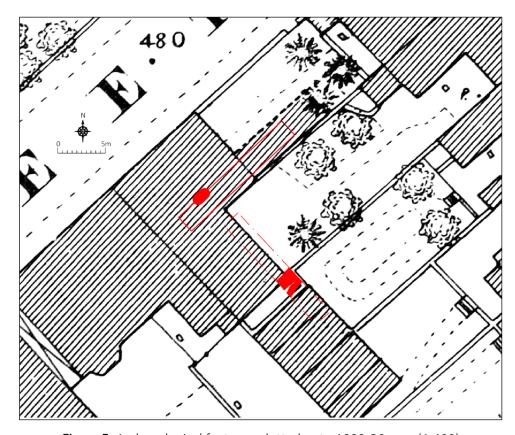


Figure 5: Archaeological features plotted onto 1880 OS map (1:400)



4 Results

4.1 *Introduction*

Two trenches were excavated to the southwest end of the development site using a 28 tonne machine fitted with a c. 1.6m toothless bucket. Please note that the trench numbers shown on the plates within this report have been corrected as the trenches were mis-numbered during the fieldwork.

4.2 Trench 1 (Fig. 5 & 7: Plates 1 & 2)

Trench 1 was located at the southwest end of the development site and was orientated northwest to southeast. It was 15m long, 2m wide and 0.9m deep. The trench stratigraphy was as follows (Fig. 5):

Context no.	Туре	Depth (m)	Description
(100)	Layer	0.12	Tarmac
(101)	Layer	0.65	Reinforced concrete
(102)	Natural	0.13	Chalk

Three services were exposed and two linear ditches excavated in this trench.

The most northwesterly ditch, [103] was orientated northeast to southwest (Plate 2). It was 1.4m wide and 0.4m deep with a gradual northwest side, and a vertical southeast side, with an undulating base. The ditch was filled by (104), a mid beige brown coarse and firm clay containing frequent medium to large ceramic building material (CBM), chalk flecks, and animal bone. This ditch was cut to the southeast by a second linear ditch, [105].

Ditch [105] was orientated north northeast to south southwest and was 1m wide and 0.36m deep (Plate 2). It had steep sides and had an undulating, but concave base, and was filled by (106). The fill was a mid beige brown coarse clay, slightly darker in colour than (104), that contained frequent small to medium CBM, chalk flecks, modern pottery and an iron nail.

Trench 2 (Fig. 6: Plates 3 & 4)

Trench 2 was located in the western corner of the development site and was orientated southwest to northeast. It was 15m long, 2m wide and a maximum of 0.6m deep. The trench stratigraphy was as follows (Fig. 6):

Context no.	Туре	Depth (m)	Description
(200)	Layer	0.06	Tarmac
(201)	Layer	0.20	Reinforced concrete
(202)	Layer	0.05	Gravel used as levelling deposit for concrete
(203)	Natural	0.29	Chalk

In the southeast facing section of the trench, the foundations of a wall [204] were exposed, which was 0.9m in width and excavated to a depth of 0.57m (Plate 4). The bricks, which measured 180 x 115 x 70mm (7 x 4% x 2%in), were set in a header bond with lime mortar (205). They were reasonably well puddled with a horizontal skintling and a reasonable amount of spanish.





Plate 1: Trench 1, facing northwest, with 2 x 1m scales



Plate 2: Linear ditches [103] and [105], southwest facing section, with 1 x 1m scale

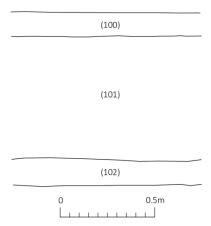


Figure 6: Trench 1 representative stratigraphy (scale 1:20)





Plate 3: Trench 2, facing southwest, with 2 x 1m scales



Plate 4: Foundations [204], southeast facing section, with 2 x 1m scales

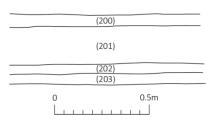


Figure 7: Trench 2 representative stratigraphy (scale 1:20)



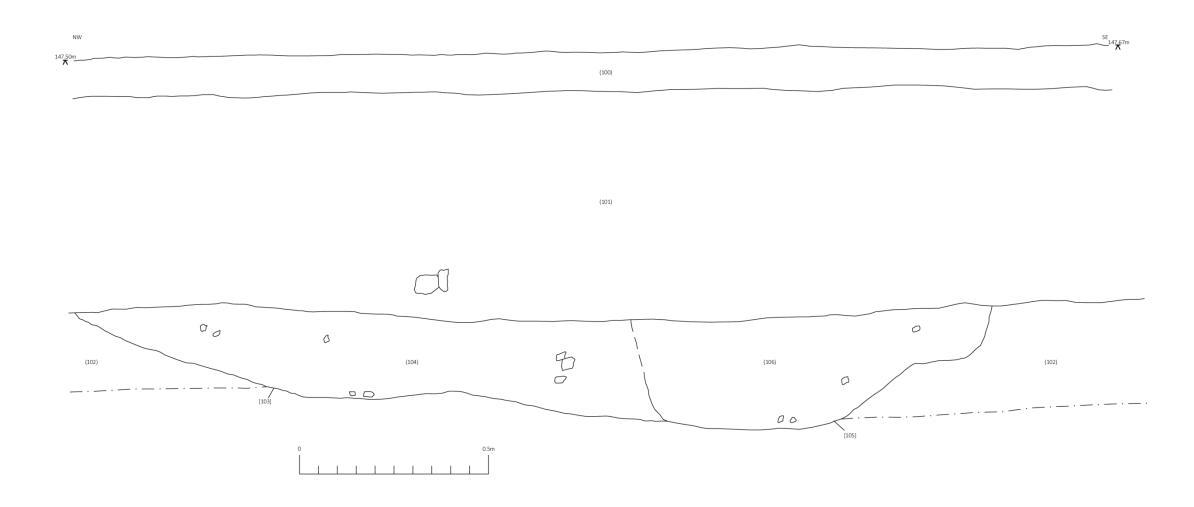


Figure 8: Southwest facing section of ditch/pit [103] and ditch [105] (scale 1:10)



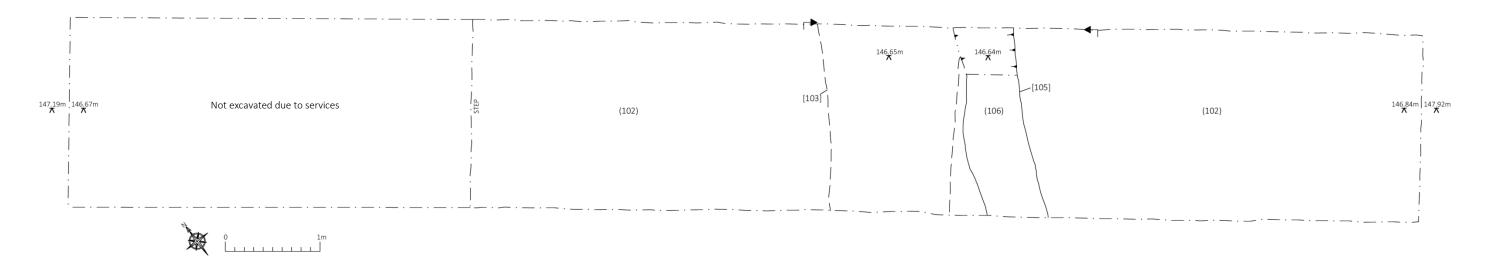


Figure 9: Trench 1 plan (scale 1:40)



Figure 10: Trench 2 plan (scale 1:40)



5 Conclusions

This evaluation was carried out to the southwest of 1 Regent St, Dunstable, in place of a former carpark. Cartographic evidence shows that there was a building and gardens on this plot during the post-medieval period.

The general stratigraphy of the site comprises a layer of tarmac on top of reinforced concrete, with the natural chalk underneath.

The evaluation exposed two linear gullies [103] and [105], and red brick foundations [204].

In Trench 1, both linear gullies appeared to be deliberately backfilled as opposed to naturally silted and (106) contained modern pottery. This indicates [105] was infilled sometime in the 20th century when the gardens existed prior to the carpark being created, and may well be associated with the gardens themselves. As (104) was very similar in composition to (106), it could be proposed that these linear gullies were infilled within a relatively short time frame of each other.

The red brick foundations identified in Trench 2 can be identified as being constructed in the late 18th/early 19th century, and probably related to the building formerly on the site prior to the carpark being constructed.

Despite the site's proximity to the Roman and medieval core of Dunstable, only post-medieval archaeology was identified within the trenches. The two gullies in Trench 1 may well represent the northeast to southwest aligned property boundary wall shown on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 5). Although not shown on the map, it is possible that the wall uncovered in Trench 2 was an internal wall; and of interest is the lack of the external walls in the archaeological record.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Alexander James Contracts Ltd for commissioning this report. Thanks are also due to Stephen Coleman of Central Bedfordshire Council for providing historic environment records and other relevant documents, Hannah Firth for monitoring this project, and the contractors for their assistance on site.

The fieldwork was carried out by Carina Summerfield-Hill MSc ACIfA, Calli Rouse BA ACIfA and Jessica Bertrand MA PCIfA. The report was written by Jessica Bertrand, and edited by Karin Kaye MA MCIfA.



7 Archive

- 7.1 The project archive will comprise:
 - 1. Brief
 - 2. Written Scheme of Investigation
 - 3. Initial report
 - 4. Trench recording sheets
 - 5. Site drawings
 - 6. Client's site plans
 - 7. List of photographs
 - 8. B/W prints & negatives
 - 9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with Luton Museum (LTNMG1138).



8 References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14
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- Oxford Archaeology 2006 Ashton St Peter's Lower School, Church Street Dunstable: Archaeological Evaluation. Unpublished report 3368

Online Sources

- British Geological Society: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html (Accessed: 7th November 2014)
- Lambert T. 2014 *A brief history of Dunstable*. http://www.localhistories.org/dunstable.html (Accessed: 7th November 2014)



Appendix 1: Photograph List

SITE NO/CODE: 118/HSN		/HSN	Site Name: 71 – 77 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire		
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject		
1	✓	✓	Trench 2, facing NE, with tile and with 2 x 1m scales		
2	✓	✓	Trench 2, facing SW, with tile and 2 x 1m scales		
3	✓	✓	Trench 2 wall and stratigraphy, SE facing section, with tile and 2 x 1m scales		
4	✓	✓	Trench 2 wall, facing NW, with tile and 2 x 1m scales		
5		✓	Site working shot		
6		✓	Site working shot		
7	✓	✓	Trench 1, facing NW, with tile and 2 x 1m scales		
8	✓	✓	Trench 1 site stratigraphy, NE facing section with tile and 1 x 1m scale		
9	✓	√	Ditch/pit [103] and ditch [105], facing NE, with tile and 1 x 1m scale		



Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS							
Project Name & Address	71 – 77 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire	Project Site Code	Project Site Code				
OASIS reference	Kdkarchal-205429	Event/Accession no	Event/Accession no				
OS reference	TL 0162 2210	Study area size		60 sq. m.			
Project Type	Evaluation	Height (mAOD)	Height (mAOD)				
Short Description	In June 2015 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 71 – 77 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site. This evaluation was carried out to the southwest of 1 Regent St, Dunstable, in place of a former carpark. Cartographic evidence shows that there was a building and gardens on this plot during the post-medieval period. The evaluation exposed two linear gullies [103] and [105], and red brick foundations [204]. Despite the site's proximity to the Roman and medieval core of Dunstable, only post-medieval archaeology was identified within the trenches, most likely in connection with the buildings and gardens depicted on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map.						
Previous work	None	Site status		N/A			
Planning proposal	Six dwellings	Current land use	Current land use				
Local Planning Authority	Central Bedfordshire Council	Planning application ref.	Planning application ref.				
Monument type	Gullies and brick foundation	Monument period	Monument period				
Significant finds	None	Future work	Future work				
	PROJECT (CREATORS					
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd						
Project Brief originator	Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Team	Project Design originator	KDK	Archaeology Ltd			
Project Manager	Karin Kaye MA MCIfA	Director/Supervisor	Cari ACIf	na Summerfield-Hill MSc A			
Sponsor/funding body	Alexander James Contracts Ltd						
	PROJEC	T DATE					
Start date	4/5/15	End date	5/5/	5/5/15			
	PROJECT	ARCHIVES					
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery,	animal	bone, files/sheets)			
Physical		None					
Paper	Luton Museum (LTNMG1138)	Brief, WSI, evaluation report, B&W photographs					
Digital	Digital CDROM of digital photographs, WSI and evaluation repo						
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)							
Title	Archaeological Evaluation Report:	71 – 77 High Street North, Du	nstable	e, Bedfordshire			
Serial title & volume	118/HSN/2						
Author(s)	Jessica Bertrand MA PCIfA						
Page no's	0-23	Date	15				
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