



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Aston Park Farm

2 Stringers Lane

Aston

Hertfordshire



Quality Check

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Summary

In February 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of Aston Park Farm 2 Stringers Lane, Aston, Hertfordshire for Michael Sandford on behalf of Stay New Homes Ltd. The site is located on the west side of Stringers Lane in the village and civil parish of Aston and was previously a garden. The excavation consisted of a single trench, and no features or artefacts were noted.

1 Introduction

1.1 In February 2017 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation at Aston Park Farm, Aston, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by Stay New Homes Ltd, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Shlasko 2017), and approved by Herts County Council, Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), East Herts Council.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This evaluation has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as condition 4 of the planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *The Site*

Location

Aston Park Farm is located on the west side of Stringers Lane in the village and civil parish of Aston and the administrative district of East Hertfordshire at National Grid Reference TL 7454 2705 (Fig. 1). It is located within the Aston Conservation Area and Area of Archaeological Significance (75).

Description

The development site sits at the intersection of Stringers Lane and Benington Road. It is bound to the north by a hedge bordering Benington Road, on the east by a brick wall bordering Stringers Lane, on the south by Aston Park Farm house and on the west by the garden of a neighbouring property. The site is lawn, with scattered trees and shrubbery (Fig. 2).

Geology & Topography

The geological foundation of the site consists of chalk of the *Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation*. This is a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 84 to 94 million years ago (mya), in an environment dominated by warm chalk seas. The bedrock is overlain by mid Pleistocene glaciofluvial deposits comprising sand and gravel laid down in ice age conditions up to 2 mya (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The site is located at c. 94m AOD (<https://www.freemaptools.com/elevation-finder.htm>).

Development

The development comprises the erection of a new dwelling, with associated access and services (Fig. 3).

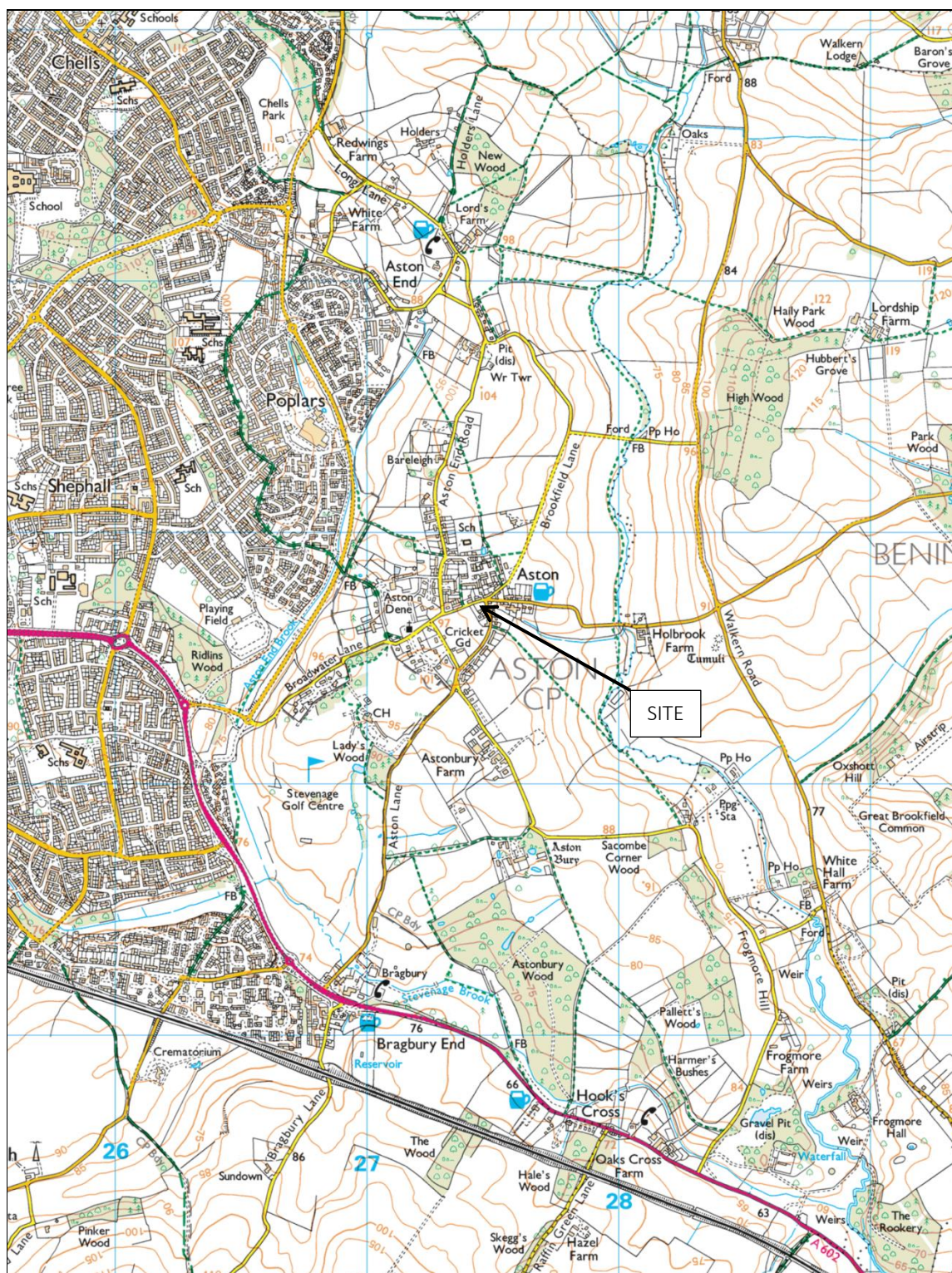


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

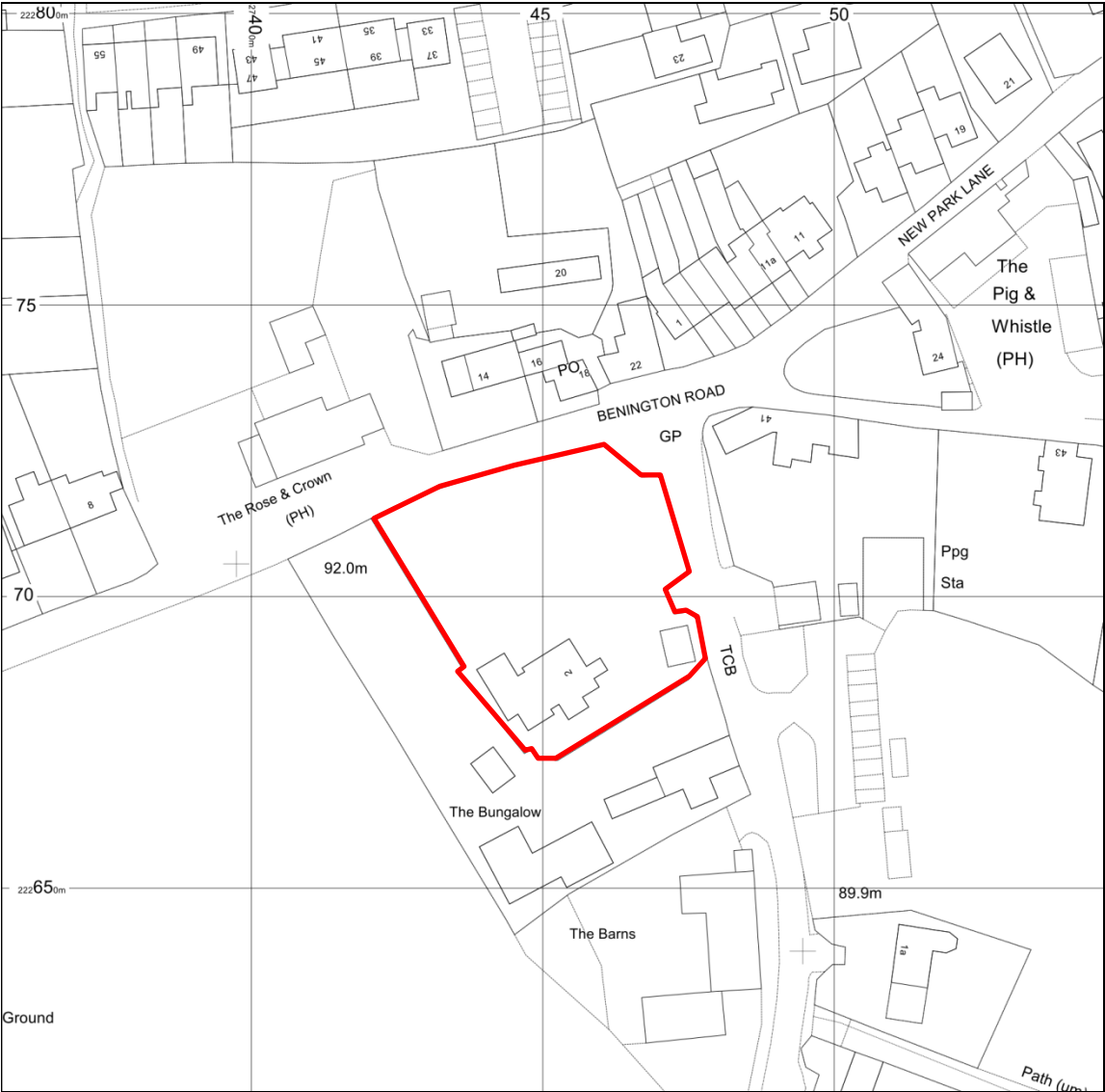


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1,250)

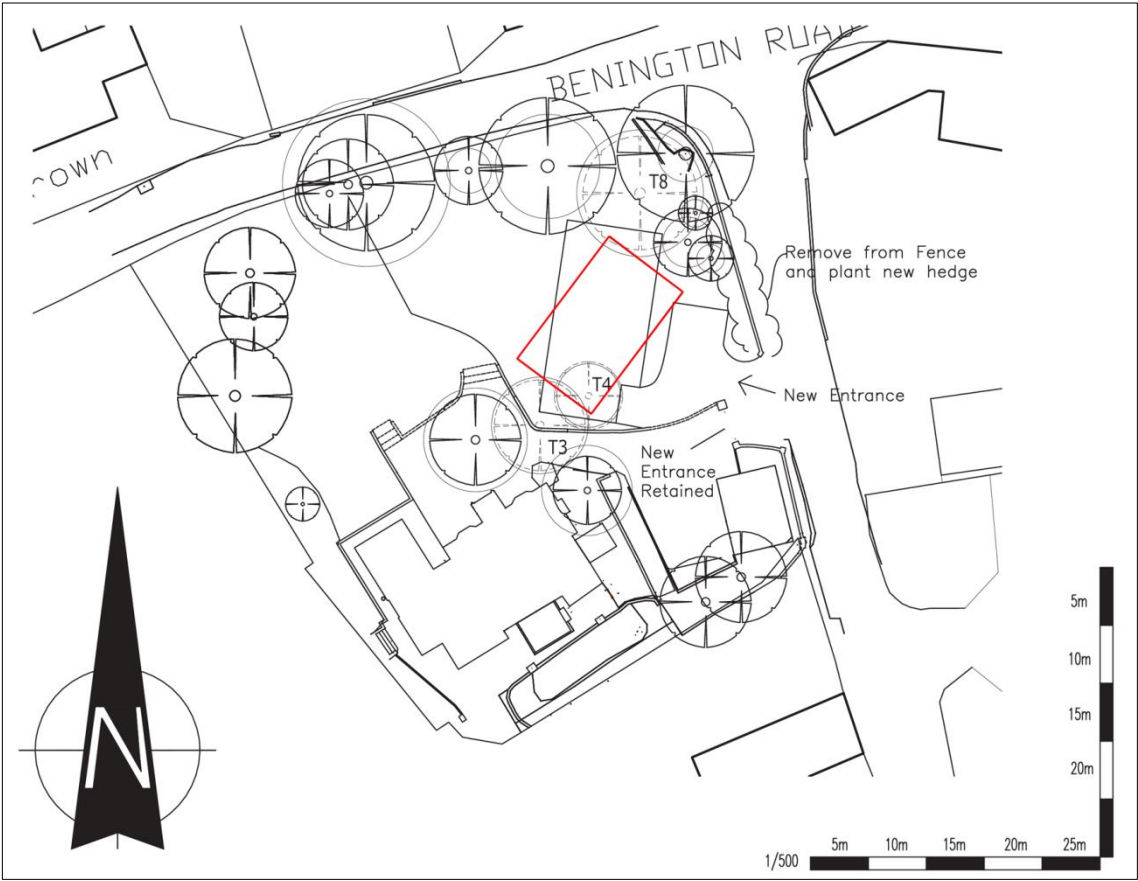


Figure 3: Development plan (scale as shown)



2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

The aims of the project 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.

2.2 *Methods*

In line with the requirements of the Brief, this is potentially the first part of a staged investigation whereby these results will be assessed to determine the possible need and extent of further archaeological investigation.

The methods used were as follows:

- The excavation of a single trench, 2m x 11.60m, within the footprint of the proposed structure (Fig. 4).

2.3 *Standards*

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The WSI
- 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 English Heritage guidelines (HE 2015, EH 2008)
- The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003)

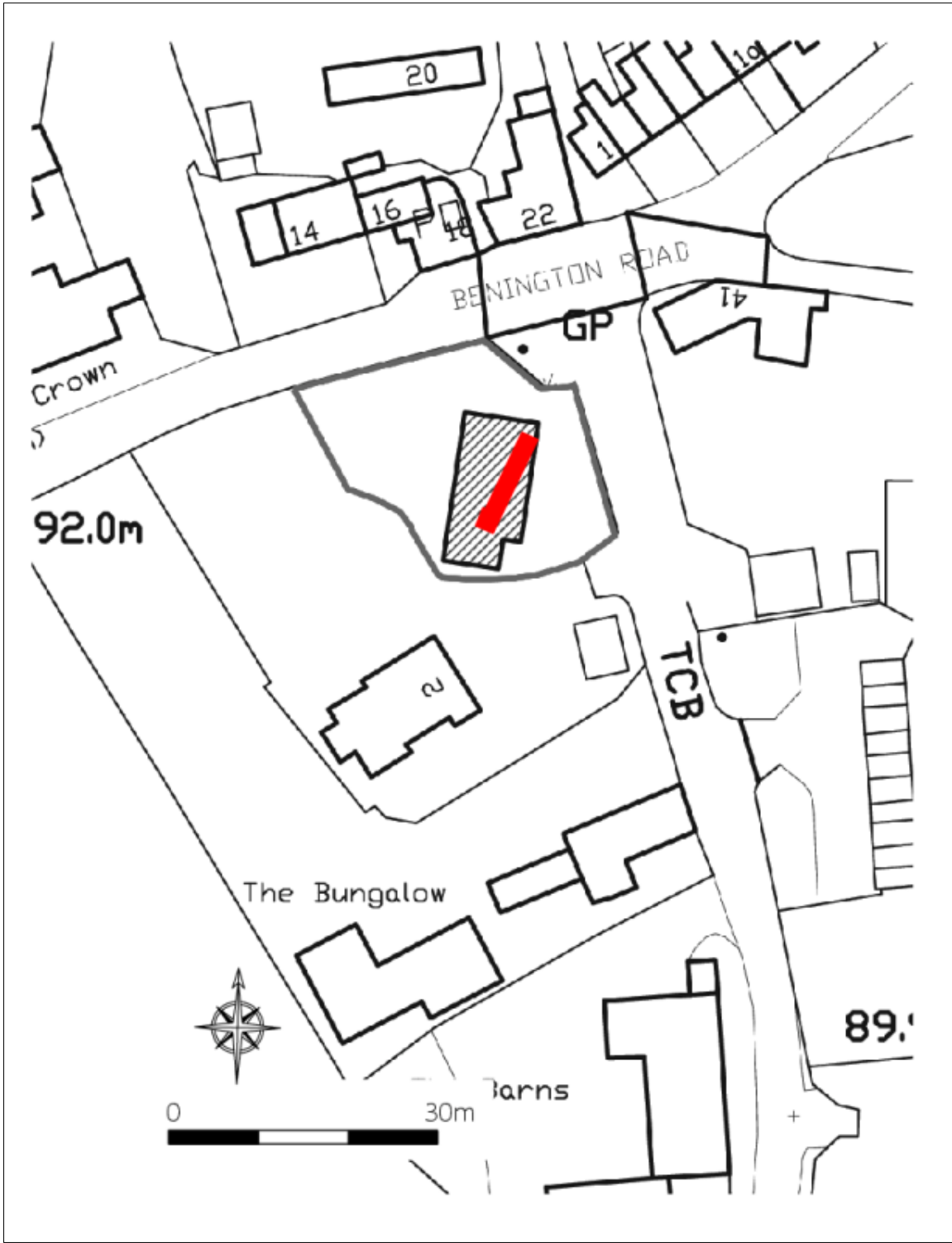


Figure 4: Trench location (scale 1:750)



3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 By 1086, Aston, called *Estone* in the Domesday Book, was already an established village, with 27 households and a church (<http://opendomesday.org/place/TL2722/aston/>). Archaeological evidence shows that occupation in the area extends much further back in time, to the Bronze Age and earlier. A plan of archaeological and historic resources found within 500m of the development site and included on the Historic Environment Record is shown in Fig. 5.

This section has been compiled with information from the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER Ref: 283/16), the Victoria County History (VCH) and from reliable online sources cited in the text.

3.2 *Prehistoric* (before 600BC)

The oldest artefacts from Aston are a small collection of stone implements, including a Middle Acheulian handaxe, a flake and a possible broken axe. These were found somewhere in the parish, although the exact findspot is unknown (HER 472). Another flint object, identified as either a Palaeolithic handaxe or a Neolithic axe head, was found c240m northeast of the development site (HER 375).

A number of ring ditches, which may be the ploughed out remains of barrows, have been identified in aerial photographs in Aston. They are concentrated in two areas to the southeast (HER 4432, 4433 and 17107) and northeast (HER 2501, 4025 and 17108) of the development site. The number and extent of these cropmarks indicate extensive use of the vicinity during the Bronze Age.

3.3 *Iron Age - Roman* (600BC – c.AD450)

In later periods, there is less evidence of occupation and land use. Near the Victorian school building, c200m northwest of the development site, some Iron Age pottery and bone was found (HER 476).

The only Roman finds from Aston are a coin of Diocletian (reigned 284-305), found in 1938 near the mill house (HER 378) and a bronze dodecahedron (HER 381). The dodecahedron was found in the late 19th century, somewhere in the parish. This unusual artefact is one of about 100 found across Europe. Dating from the 2nd-3rd century, the purpose of these objects is unknown, although they have been identified as measuring gauges, ritual objects and even knitting machines (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poGapxsanal>)!

3.4 *Saxon* (c.450 - 1066)

Before the Norman Conquest, the manor of *Estone* was held by three unnamed men serving Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury. Its value in 1066 was £20, which had dropped to £14 by 1070 (<http://opendomesday.org/place/TL2722/aston/>).

3.5 *Medieval* (1066 - 1500)

Following the Conquest, the manor was given to Odo, half-brother of William I and Bishop of Bayeux. In 1087, it contained about 27 households, which made it a fairly large settlement. One of the inhabitants was a priest, which may indicate that there was already a church. These villagers farmed land for 15 ploughs and there was enough woodland for 200 pigs (*ibid*).

Odo forfeited his lands in 1088 and the manor reverted to the Crown (VCH). It was given by Henry I to his second wife, Adelaide of Louvain. She, in turn, granted the manor to the Abbey of St Mary in Reading, for 'the good of the soul' of the king, who had died a year earlier in



1136 (*ibid*). The Abbey held the manor until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century.

The current church building has its origins in the 13th century, when the chancel and nave were first constructed, with extensive rebuilding in the 14th, 15th and 19th centuries (HER 4352). It is a Grade II* listed building.

3.6 ***Post-medieval*** (1500 - 1900)

In 1540, Aston was granted to Sir Philip Boteler, of Watton Woodhall. The Boteler family held the manor until the late 18th century, after which it was held by a series of owners. There are several structures surviving from the post-medieval period, including a Grade II* listed, timber-framed house at 43-45 Benington Road, c100m east of the development site, that contains unique wall paintings from c1600 (HER 15747).

Aston Park Farm, the site of the proposed development, has a surviving Grade II listed, 16th-17th century, timber-framed, hall and cross-wing farmhouse. Also parts of the farm are a Grade II listed barn and a Grade II listed granary (HER 17705).

The Rose and Crown Public House was originally a 16th-17th century timber-framed house, with a barn, both of which are Grade II listed (HER 17706), as is another public house (variously known as the Boot and the Pig and Whistle), which also occupies a 17th century timber-framed structure (HER 17708).

The 18th-19th century village smithy survives at 24 Benington Road, c90m northeast of the development site. This is another Grade II listed building (HER 17707).

3.8 ***Modern*** (1900 - present)

During World War II, Aston House, a 17th century country house, was requisitioned by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) for use as a secret research and development and then production facility, specializing in explosives for covert operations (<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-stevenage/museum/47012/46962/47006/>). The house was subsequently used as the base for the Stevenage Development Corporation. It was demolished when the Corporation moved out (HER 10246).



4 Results

4.1 Introduction

In February 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of Aston Park Farm, 2 Stringers Lane, Aston, Hertfordshire. The evaluation consisted of one trench, excavated using a 9 tonne tracked machine with a 0.85m toothless ditching bucket. The proposed trench of 1.8 x 10 metres was amended in order to avoid modern services. The revised trench, which was orientated north-northeast south-southwest, measured 2 x 11.3 metres and was excavated to a depth of 1.13m (Fig. 5, Plate 1).

The stratigraphy was fairly uniform across the site; the topsoil (001) was a very rooted brownish grey silty clay with a depth of 0.25m (Plate 2). Beneath the topsoil was made ground (002), of light grey moderately rooted mortar and clay, 0.3m deep. A chalk lens (003) presided at the bottom of the made ground though this was not consistent throughout the trench. Below this was subsoil (004), which was orange brown clayey silt with occasionally rooting and a depth of 0.4m. The natural geology (005) of the site was orange gravelly sand, becoming less stony and lighter towards the north end of the trench. A sondage was excavated to ensure the natural geology had been reached.

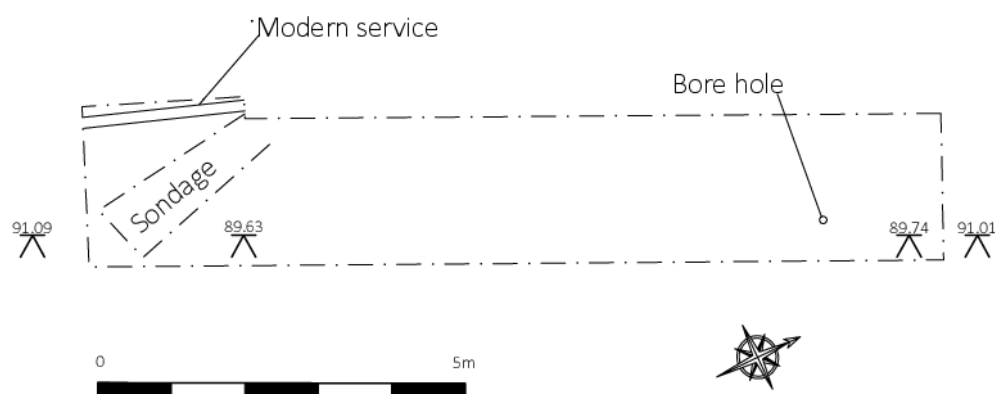


Figure 5: Trench plan scale 1:100



Plate 1: Trench overview



Plate 2: Trench stratigraphy



5 Conclusions

The presence of subsoil within the site's stratigraphy suggests that the area was not truncated by the construction of the extant buildings in the immediate vicinity. However, the evaluation of the site did not encounter any archaeological cut features, deposits or artefacts despite the surrounding rich historical landscape dating from the prehistoric onwards.

The lack of archaeology may be a result the trench being located between widely dispersed features, or simply that site lies outside the immediate core settlement area for any period.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Michael Sandford for commissioning this report on behalf of Stay New Homes Ltd. Thanks are also due to Isobel Thompson of Hertfordshire County Council HHET for providing historic environment records and other relevant documents and to Alison Tinniswood (HHET) for monitoring the project.

KDK Archology Ltd would like to thank Michael Sandford and his team for their assistance in carry out the evaluation.

The fieldwork was carried out by Cameron Kaye BA and Laura Dodd Msc. The report was written by Cameron Kaye and edited by Karin Kaye MA MCIfA.



7 Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Written Scheme of Investigation
2. Report
3. Trench recording sheets
4. Site drawings
5. Client's site plans
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Stevenage Museum.



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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SMA 1995 *Towards an accessible archaeological archive - the transfer of archaeological archives to museums: guidelines for use in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales*. London: Society for Museum Archaeologists

Walker K. 1990 *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage*. United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, Archaeology Section (London).

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<http://opendomesday.org/place/TL2722/aston/> (Accessed 11/1/2016)

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-stevenage/museum/47012/46962/47006/> (Accessed: 11/1/2016)

Victoria County History: 'Parishes: Aston', in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London, 1912), pp. 54-58. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3/pp54-58> [accessed 22 November 2016].

Online Sources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poGapxsanal> (Accessed 11/1/2016)



Appendix 1: Photograph List

SITE NO/CODE: 236/ASL			Site Name: Aston Park Farm
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	X	X	North-northeast facing Trench overview
2	X	X	South-southwest facing Trench overview
3		X	West-northwest facing stratigraphy of trench



Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	Aston Park Farm, 2 Stringers Lane, Aston, Hertfordshire,	Project Site Code	236/ASL
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-272390	Event/Accession no	
OS reference	TL 7454 2705	Study area size	1190m ²
Project Type	Evaluation	Height (mAOD)	91.09
Short Description	In February 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological evaluation of Aston Park Farm 2 Stringers Lane, Aston, Hertfordshire for Michael Sandford on behalf of Stay New Homes Ltd. The site is located on the west side of Stringers Lane in the village and civil parish of Aston and was previously a garden. The excavation consisted of a single trench, and no features or artefacts were noted.		
Previous work	None	Site status	None
Planning proposal	Erection of new dwelling	Current land use	Garden
Local Planning Authority	East Herts Council	Planning application ref.	3/16/1074/FUL
Monument type	None	Monument period	N/A
Significant finds	None	Future work	U/K
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	Herts CC	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	David Kaye	Director/Supervisor	Cameron Kaye
Sponsor/funding body	Stay New Homes Ltd, Studio 4, 37 Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, Herts		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	14/02/17	End date	14/02/17
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical		None	
Paper		WSI, Trench Sheet, Report	
Digital		Photo CD	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title	Archaeological Evaluation Report, Aston Park Farm		
Serial title & volume	263/ASL /2		
Author(s)	Cameron Kaye		
Page no.s	18	Date	17/02/17



Appendix 3: Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Sheet

Site name and address: Aston Park Farm, 2 Stringers Lane, Aston, Hertfordshire,			
County: Hertfordshire		District: East Herts	
Village/Town: Aston		Parish: Aston	
Planning application reference: 3/16/1074/FUL			
Client's name, address, & tel. no: Stay New Homes Ltd, Studio 4, 37 Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, Herts			
Nature of application: Planning Permission			
Present land use: Disused Land			
Size of application area: 1190m ²		Size of area investigated: 23.2m ²	
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 74542705		Site code: 263/ASL	
Site director: Cameron Kaye		Organization: KDK Archaeology Ltd	
Type of work: Evaluation			
Date of Work:	Start: 14/02/17	Finish:	14/02/17
Curating museum:			
Related HER no's: 472 375 4432 17705 15747		Periods represented: prehistoric – post medieval	
Relevant previous summaries/reports: None			
Summary of fieldwork results: No features found in evaluation			
Author: Cameron Kaye		Date: 15/02/17	