



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Archaeological Observation and Recording Report

20 Back Street
Biggleswade
Bedfordshire



Quality Check

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Summary

In March 2018, KDK Archaeology Ltd conducted a programme of Archaeological Observation and Recording at 20 Back Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. Whilst the proposed development is located in the historic core of the town, modern construction prior to the current project has erased any evidence of previous occupation. The groundworks associated with the development included ground reduction within the footprint of the new building as well as the excavation of five footing trenches and a service trench, which revealed made ground containing builders' brick and other discarded building materials. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered.

1 Introduction

1.1 In March 2018, KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording of 20 Back Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. The project was commissioned by Adhoc Partnership Building Ltd and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Barclay-Jones 2017) and approved by Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Team (CBCAT), Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Central Bedfordshire Council. The relevant planning application reference is CB/16/01278/FULL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This project has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Condition 7 of the planning consent for the development of the site.

1.3 *The Site*

Location & Description

The development site lies in the town and civil parish of Biggleswade, and the administrative district of Central Bedfordshire. It is centred on NGR TL 19213 44566 (Fig. 2). The site is roughly rectangular in shape and lies on the north side of Back Street. It is bounded to the north and northeast by properties fronting on the High Street. The western boundary is formed by a narrow alleyway connecting Back Street with High Street. Back Street itself forms the southern boundary.

Geology & Topography

The bedrock geology for the area is sandstone of the Woburn Sands Formation. There are no recorded superficial deposits. The site is relatively level at an elevation of approximately 33m AOD (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

Development

The development consisted of the extension and conversion of the existing single-storey structure to form two maisonettes, and the demolition and removal of other existing structures to form external associated features (Fig. 3).



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

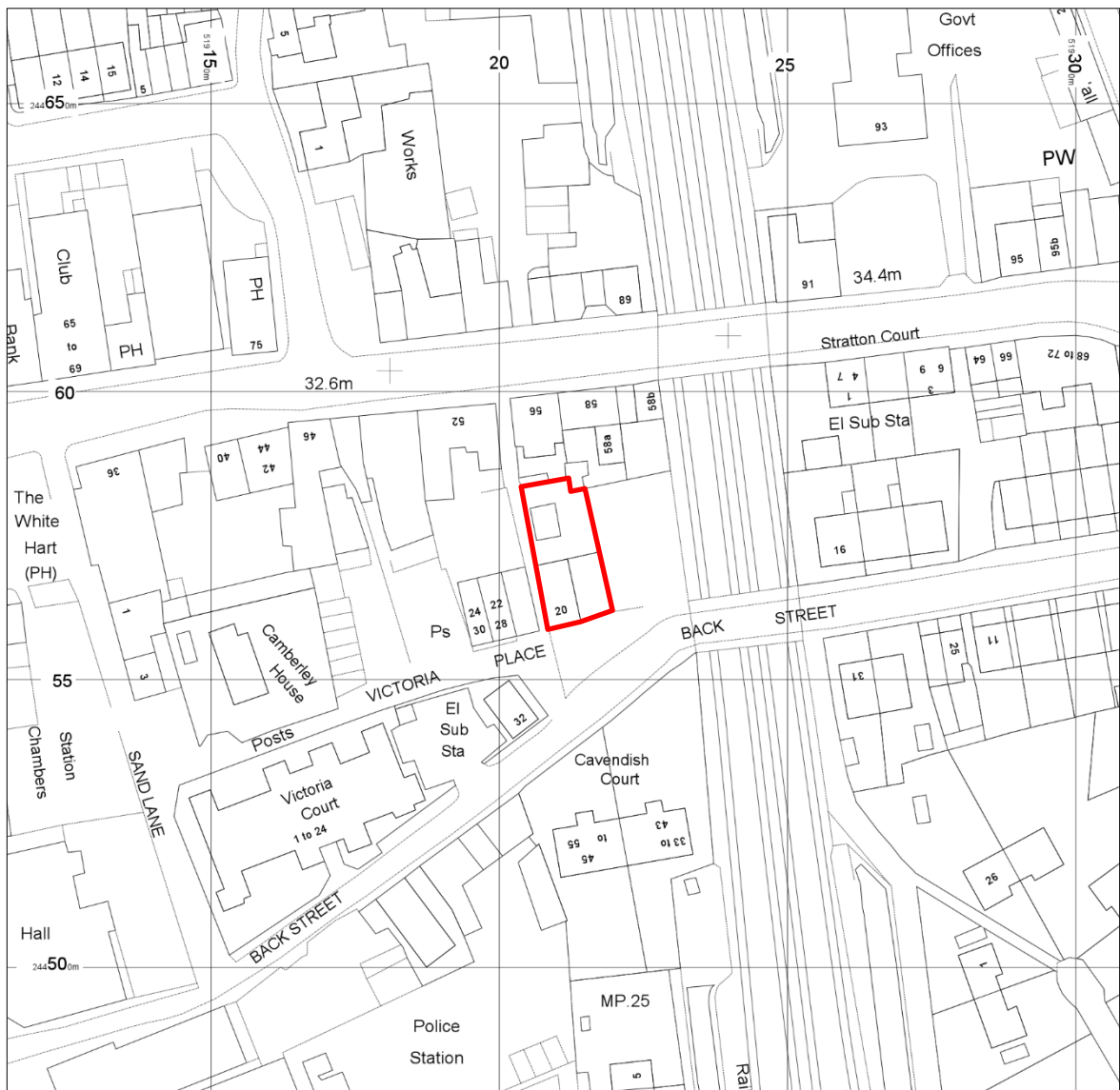
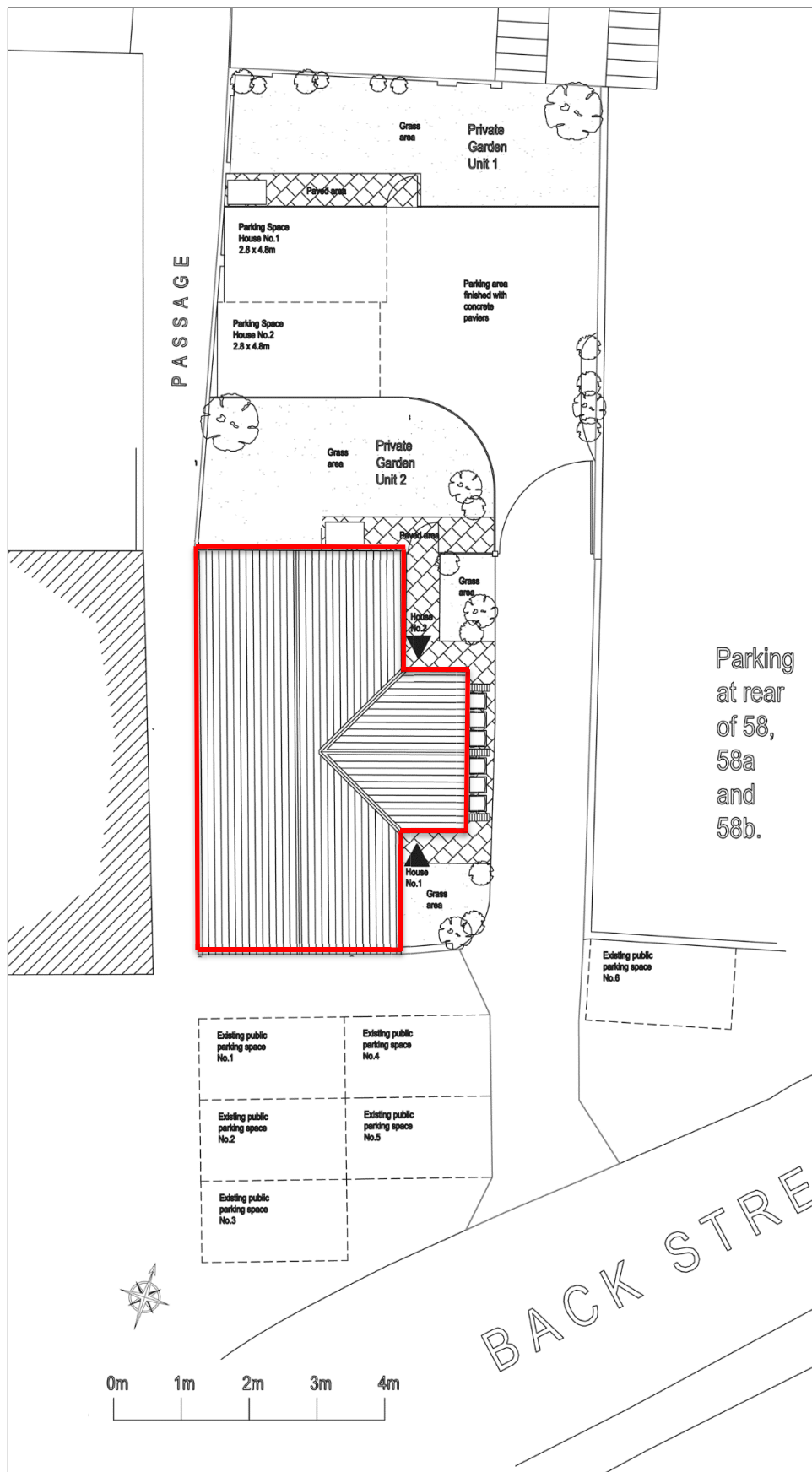


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1,250)



Parking at rear of 58, 58a and 58b.

Figure 3: Site layout (scale as shown)



2 Aims & Methods

2.1 The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Barclay-Jones 2017) 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.

In addition, the research aims will *inter alia* consider various aspects of the development of rural Saxon, medieval and post-medieval settlements; their origins, morphology, diversity and ultimate success or failure (Wade 2000: 24-25; Oake 2007: 14; Medlycott 2011: 70 and Edgeworth 2007: 121-123).

2.2 *Methods*

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

- All ground or other works likely to have an impact on archaeological deposits were done under continuous and constant archaeological supervision.

2.3 *Standards*

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The Design Brief (CBC 2017)
- 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)



3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 Biggleswade is located in the Ivel Valley, with the river forming the western boundary of the town. The original place-name for Biggleswade is *Pichelsuuade* in 1086, and *Bicheleswada* in 1132 meaning 'Ford of a man called 'Bichel', in Old English meaning personal name + *wæd* (Mills 1991: 35). The development site lies within the core of the medieval town (HER 17124), and is therefore considered to have potential to contain archaeological deposits relating to the Saxon, medieval and post medieval development of the town (CBC 2017). It also lies on the edge of the Biggleswade Conservation Area (DBD 3247)

This section has been compiled with information from Central Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record Office (HER search no. 201617/118), Extensive Urban Survey for Bedfordshire (Albion Archaeology 2003), the brief, reliable internet sources and KDK's library.

3.2 *Prehistoric - Iron Age* (before 600BC- AD43)

The earliest evidence for human activity in Biggleswade derives from the recovery of a Palaeolithic flint hand axe during gravel extraction (HER 590). Cropmarks showing ring ditches underlying the bailey ditch of a medieval ringwork and bailey castle (HER 468) are thought to be part of a Neolithic or early Bronze Age enclosure, west of the development site. To the north of the bailey is a square cropmark possibly Iron Age or Roman in date. However, the only evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site comes from excavations carried out at the former Black Bear Inn, 10 Hitchin Street (to the west of the development site) which recovered residual prehistoric artefacts comprising a flint flake and a small sherd of late 'Belgic' Iron Age pottery from later features near to the street frontage (HER Event ID EBD957).

3.3 *Roman* (AD43 - c.450)

A Roman presence is known in Biggleswade as the Roman road from Baldock to Sandy, approaches the town from the south-east, now London Road (A6001) (Albion Archaeology 2003:11). The nearest Romano-British small town, however, is Sandy located to the north-west. Chance finds include Roman urns, found in the vicinity of Station Road, a short distance to the west of the development area (HER 177).

3.4 *Saxon- Medieval* (c.450 - 1500)

Biggleswade is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, at which time it was held by Ralph de Lisle and was valued at £17. There were seven villeins with seven ploughs, ten bordars, three serfs and two mills (Page 1908, Morris 1977). It has been suggested by Dawson 1994 that the two mills were under one roof.

In 1132 Henry I gave the Manor of Biggleswade to the Bishop of Lincoln and in the early 13th century weekly markets and an annual fair were granted by the Crown, thus developing its urban status and economic importance. A trapezoidal market place developed and a number of streets, such as the High Street, Church Street, Shortmead Street and Mill Lane became formalised routes. Burgage plots were laid out fronting onto the marketplace with the earliest reference to burgage tenure dating to 1247 (Albion Archaeology 2003). By the 14th century Biggleswade was given town status.

The parish church of St Andrew's (HER 1018, NHLE 1321424, Grade II*) dates from the 14th century and is now the only remaining medieval building within Biggleswade.

In 2010 trial trenching was undertaken at the former Black Bear Inn at 10 Hitchin Street. Documentary evidence indicates that the site had been in use as an Inn since at least 1661.



The excavations did, however, identify a range of earlier deposits. A small area of cultivation soil was found to the rear of the inn suggesting that this part of the town was in agricultural use in the early medieval period prior to a planned expansion of the town in the 12th century. A large north-south ditch on a different alignment to Hitchin Street was found possibly indicating an earlier pattern of land boundaries pre-dating the 12th century town expansion, along with a number of medieval pits pointing to domestic occupation (Albion Archaeology, forthcoming).

Further medieval deposits have also been found in the Market Square, to the north-west of the development site. Here in 1995 an archaeological evaluation recorded archaeological deposits that included a line of possible medieval stake holes, along with a 18th/19th century brick wall foundation (HER 16080, BCAS 1995).

3.5 *Post-Medieval - Modern* (1500 – present)

Biggleswade is in close proximity to the Great North Road (A1) which had an impact on the town, in particular between the mid-17th-19th centuries. With the construction of the Turnpike Trusts in the early 18th century Biggleswade became an important stopping point along the route and by 1824, there were 15 coaches leaving Biggleswade daily.

The town is also known for its brewing industry, Brewer Samuel Wells established his brewery in Church Street in 1764. By 1898 the brewery was named The Biggleswade Brewery, and was run by descendants of Samuel Wells, who operated 109 pubs. In 1899 the Brewhouse was sold to George Winch and traded as Wells & Winch and by 1922 the business had expanded to 168 pubs. In 1961 the brewery became part of Green King and Sons Ltd of Bury St Edmunds but in 1966 the Biggleswade Brewery closed and eventually was converted into housing in 1997 (HER 7322).

Biggleswade's thriving economy was also displayed by a large number of maltings (HER 7321, 13948-13951) which supplied the local area and further afield via Ivel Navigation, with the river being canalised in 1757. In 1785 a large fire started at the Crown Inn, High Street, and destroyed about a third of the town. The town further expanded due to the railway coming to Biggleswade c.1850, which also promoted the transportation of locally grown produce down to London.

The excavations carried out at the former Black Bear Inn also revealed a large quarry containing 17th and 18th century pottery, which post-dates the earliest documentary evidence for the inn, therefore indicating that they are unlikely to be contemporary. One possibility is that the quarrying and its fills are associated with the clearance and rebuilding of the town after the Great Fire in 1785. A sequence of intercutting post-medieval pits found to the rear of the site were also excavated along with an ironstone wall, thought to have been associated with the inn (Albion Archaeology 2014).

Today Biggleswade has a small market town feel, despite expansions in the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1989 the town centre became a Conservation Area containing over 50 listed buildings primarily focused in the Market Square, High Street, Shortmead Street, St Andrew's Street, London Road, Rose Lane and Station Road (Albion Archaeology 2003).

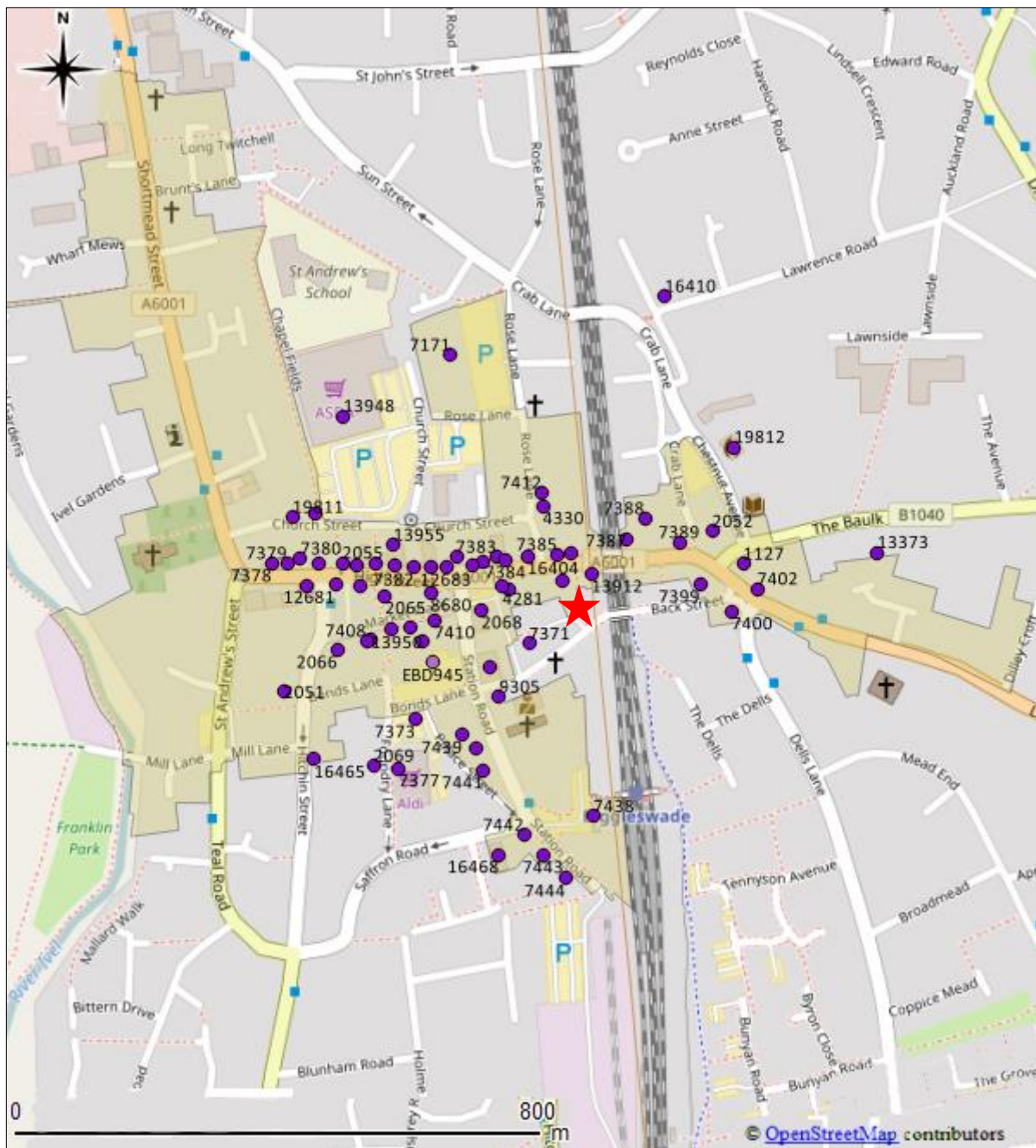


Figure 4: HER data within 500m of the development, site marked with red star, conservation area in yellow (scale as shown)



4 Results

Introduction

Between 12-14 March 2018, KDK Archaeology Ltd monitored and recorded groundworks at 20 Back Street, Biggleswade. The works observed included the ground reduction of the entire building footprint, an area of approximately 63 square meters, and the excavation of five footing trenches and one service trench (Figure 4). The work was done using a 1.5 tonne digger fitted with a 1.2m wide toothless bucket.

Description

The initial ground reduction removed made ground to a depth of approximately 0.64m. Excavation of footing trenches for the new structure extended up to 1m below ground level. A total of six trenches were excavated. No archaeological features were encountered in any of the trenches.

The stratigraphic profile of the site consisted of four layers, including an upper surface of concrete. There were two layers of made ground over the natural, both including brick and other reused building materials. It is probable that these layers were deposited to level the site prior to the previous building episodes and the laying of the concrete top layer.

<i>Context no.</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Dimensions (max)</i>	<i>Description</i>
100	Hardstanding	0.10-0.15	Concrete
101	Layer	0.13-0.40	Made ground: coarse sand containing brick and other reused building materials
102	Layer	0.08-0.70	Dark grey brown clay containing builders' brick. May be original ground mixed with hardcore to level site
103	Natural	0.12-0.47	Red brown compacted sand/sandstone

Trench 1 was adjacent to an existing wall at the north end of the site. It was 3.60m long by 0.50m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.08m below ground level (Plate 1). The stratigraphic profile (Plate 2) of the trench consisted of:

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>
(100)	Hardstanding	0.10m
(101)	Layer	0.40m
(102)	Layer	0.33m
(103)	Natural	0.25m

Trench 2 was the footing trench for the shared wall in the middle of the new structure. The trench measured approximately 7.76m long, 1.30m wide and 0.60m deep (Plate 3). At the west southwest end the trench was widened to accommodate services. The stratigraphic profile of Trench 2 was:

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>
(102)	Layer	0.14m
(103)	Natural	0.46m



Service Trench 3 also ran across the middle of the excavated area, roughly parallel to Trench 2. It was 7.92m long by 0.6m wide and excavated to a depth of approximately 0.55m (Plate 3). Like Trench 2, this trench was located within the footprint of the new building, where initial ground reduction had already removed the top two layers of made ground. The surviving stratigraphic profile consisted of:

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>
(102)	Layer	0.08m
(103)	Natural	0.47m

Trench 4 was a footing trench at the south side of the property, adjacent to an existing wall. It measured 2.90m in length by 0.60m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.16m (Plate 4). The stratigraphic profile of this trench was:

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>
(100)	Hardstanding	0.02m
(101)	Layer	0.19m
(102)	Layer	0.44m
(103)	Natural	0.33m

Trench 5 was a footing trench extending east from the south end of Trench 1. It measured 2.40m in length, 0.60m wide, and 1.10 deep (Plate 5).

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>
(100)	Hardstanding	0.15m
(101)	Layer	0.13m
(102)	Layer	0.70m
(103)	Natural	0.12m

Trench 6 was a footing trench at the east end of the site. It was 4.50m long by 0.80m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.12m (Plate 6).

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>
(100)	Hardstanding	0.12m
(101)	Layer	0.16m
(102)	Layer	0.48m
(103)	Natural	0.36m

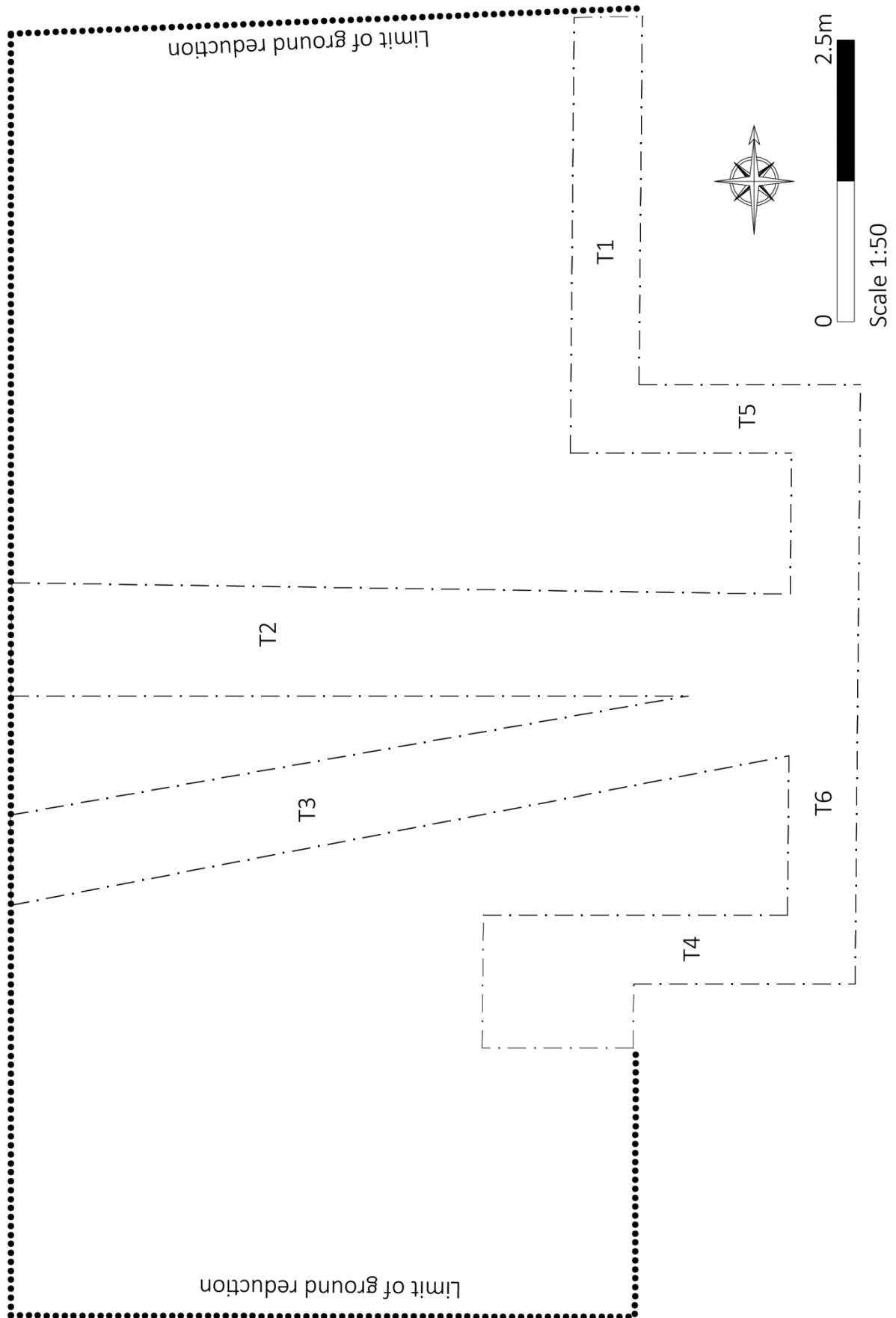


Figure 5: Trench plan (scale 1:50)

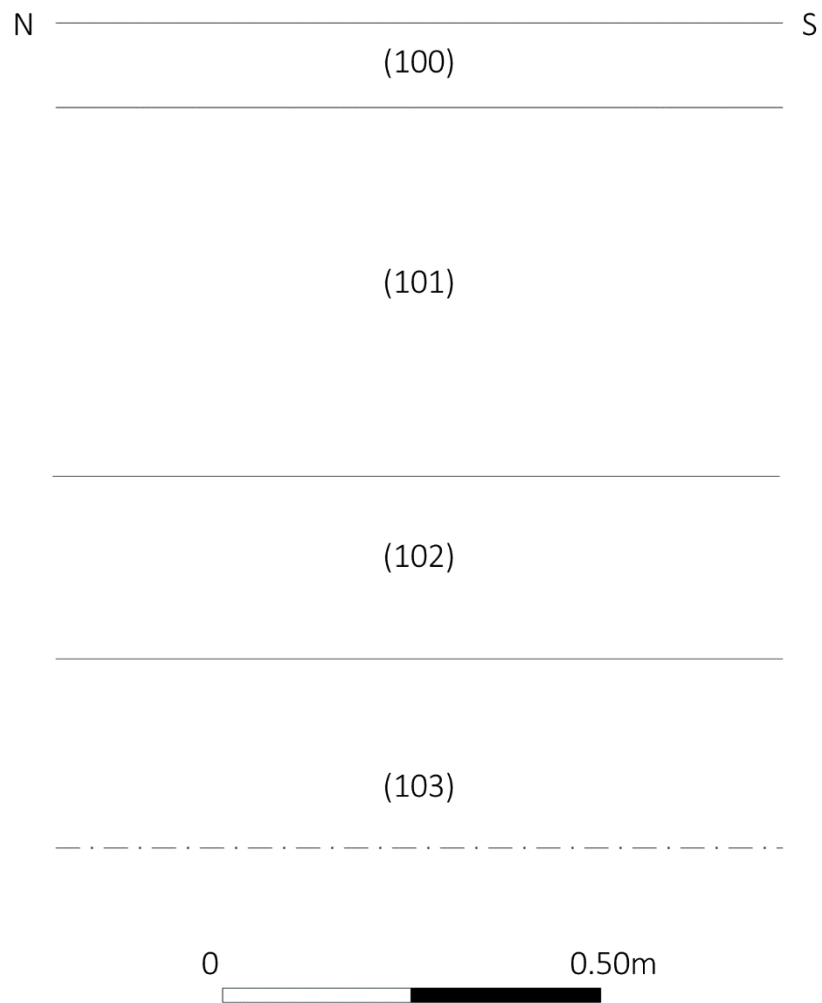


Figure 6: Representative stratigraphy of the west facing section of Trench 1 (scale 1:10)



Plate 1: Trench 1, facing north



Plate 2: Trench 1 stratigraphic profile, facing east



Plate 3: Trenches 2 (right) and 3 (left), facing west



Plate 4: Trench 4, facing east



Plate 5: Trench 5, facing west



Plate 6: Trench 6, facing south



5 Conclusions

The programme of archaeological observation and recording at 20 Back Street, Biggleswade, revealed no archaeological features or artefacts. Although this site is in the core of the historic town and cartographic evidence shows that this area was developed by the early 19th century, no evidence of this occupation was encountered. The stratigraphy consisted of made ground over natural, with deposits of sand and clay that incorporated reused building materials used to level the site. It is likely that more recent development has destroyed any earlier remains.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Aleks Simic of Simic Associates for commissioning this report on behalf of Adhoc Partnership Building Ltd. Thanks are also due to Stephen Coleman of the Central Bedfordshire HER for providing historic environment records and other relevant documents and Slawek Utrata of the Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeology Team for monitoring the project.

The fieldwork was carried out by Barney King. The report was written by Ellen Shlasko, PhD 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. Monitoring sheets
5. Site drawings
6. Client's site plans
7. List of photographs
8. B/W prints & negatives
9. Specialist reports
10. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with the Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, Bedford (Accession No. BEDFM 2017.18).



8 References

Standards & Specifications

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- Allen J. L. & Holt A. St J. 1986 (with later updates) *Health & Safety in Field Archaeology*. London: Federation of Archaeological Managers & Employers
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- Albion Archaeology 2003 *Extensive Urban Survey for Bedfordshire: Biggleswade Archaeological Assessment*. Report 2000/27. Bedford: Albion Archaeology
- Albion Archaeology 2014 *Heritage Statement: 20 Back Street, Biggleswade, Bedford*. Bedford: Albion Archaeology
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- Page W. (ed) 1908 *The Victoria County History of Bedfordshire* Vol 11
- Williams A. & Martin G. H. 1992 *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation*. Penguin Group: London

Online Sources

- British Geological Society (BGS): <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
(Accessed: 29/07/16)



Appendix 1: Photograph List

SITE NO/CODE: 287/BBS			Site Name: 20 Back Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 1 2x 1m scale
2		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 2x 1 meter scale
3	X	X	Trench 1 1x 1m scale
4		X	Trench 1 1x1meter scale
5		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 2 1x 1m 1 x half metre scale
6		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 2
7		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 5
8		X	Trench 2 , 2 x 1m scale
9		X	Trench 3 1x 1 m scale
10		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 6
11		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 6
12		X	Trench 5 1 x 1m scale
13		X	Trench 5 1 x 1m scale
14		X	Trench 5 1x 1m scale
15		X	Trench 6 1x 1m scale
16		X	Trench 6 1x 1m scale
17		X	Trench 4 1x 1m scale
18		X	Stratigraphy of Trench 4



Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	20 Back Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire	Project Site Code	287/BBS
OASIS reference	Kdkarcha1-27939	Event/Accession no	BEDFM 2017.18
OS reference	TL 19213 44566	Study area size	63 sq m
Project Type	Archaeological Observation and Recording	Height (mAOD)	33
Short Description	In March 2018, KDK Archaeology Ltd conducted a programme of archaeological observation and recording at 20 Back Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. The groundworks associated with the proposed development included ground reduction within the footprint of the new building as well as the excavation of five footing trenches and a service trench. No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered.		
Previous work	None	Site status	None
Planning proposal	Extension and conversion of the existing single-storey structure to form two maisonettes, and demolition and removal of other existing structures to form external associated features	Current land use	Domestic structures and yard area
Local Planning Authority	Central Bedfordshire Council	Planning application ref.	CB/16/01278/FULL
Monument type	n/a	Monument period	n/a
Significant finds	None	Future work	No
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	Central Bedfordshire Council	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	David Kaye BA ACIfA	Director/Supervisor	Barney King
Sponsor/funding body	Adhoc Partnership Building Ltd		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	12.03.2018	End date	14.03.2018
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical	Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, Bedford	n/a	
Paper		Brief, Written Scheme of Investigation, Initial report, Monitoring sheets. Site drawings, Client's site plans, List of photographs, B/W prints & negatives	
Digital		CDROM with copies of all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title	Archaeological Observation and Recording Report: 20 Back Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire		
Serial title & volume	KDK Archaeology 287/BBS/2		
Author(s)	Ellen Shlasko		
Page no's	20	Date	29.03.2018