



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Archaeological Observation and Recording Report

9 Cross Oak Road
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire



Quality Check

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|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
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Summary

In July 2017 a programme of Observation and Recording was undertaken at 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire in order to fulfil Condition 5 of Planning Consent for the development of the site.

The condition was imposed as the site lies near to the medieval core of Berkhamsted and is surrounded by a number of heritage assets. Groundworks consisted of three foundation trenches and a small post pad for a pillar. No archaeological features were discovered and all deposits were of made ground containing modern material.

1 Introduction

1.1 In July 2017 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording of 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by Nick Harding, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Kaye 2017), and approved by Alison Tinniswood of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team (HHET), Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Dacorum Borough Council. The relevant planning application reference is 4/02987/16/FHA

1.2 *Planning Background*

This project has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as Condition 5 of the planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *The Site*

Location

The development site is located in the town and civil parish of Berkhamsted in the administrative district of Dacorum Borough Council. It lies on the junction of Cross Oak Road and Middle Road to the south of the High Street and is centred on National Grid Reference SP 98586 08056 (Fig. 1).

Description

The site is bounded to the west by Cross Oak Road, to the south by Middle Road and to the north and west by private residences (Fig. 2).

Geology & Topography

The solid geology consists of chalk from the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk formations. The superficial geology is unrecorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>) however, during the programme of works; dark brown-orange sandy clay containing flint inclusions was observed below made ground and was most likely the natural soil. The site lies at a height of 115m AOD.

Development

The development consisted of the demolition of the existing pitched, single storey kitchen/bathroom extension and open up the ground floor wall facing onto the garden. A new pitched single storey extension was constructed. The boundary wall along Middle Road was demolished and rebuilt and a new hardwood timber door installed in place of the current front door (Fig. 3).

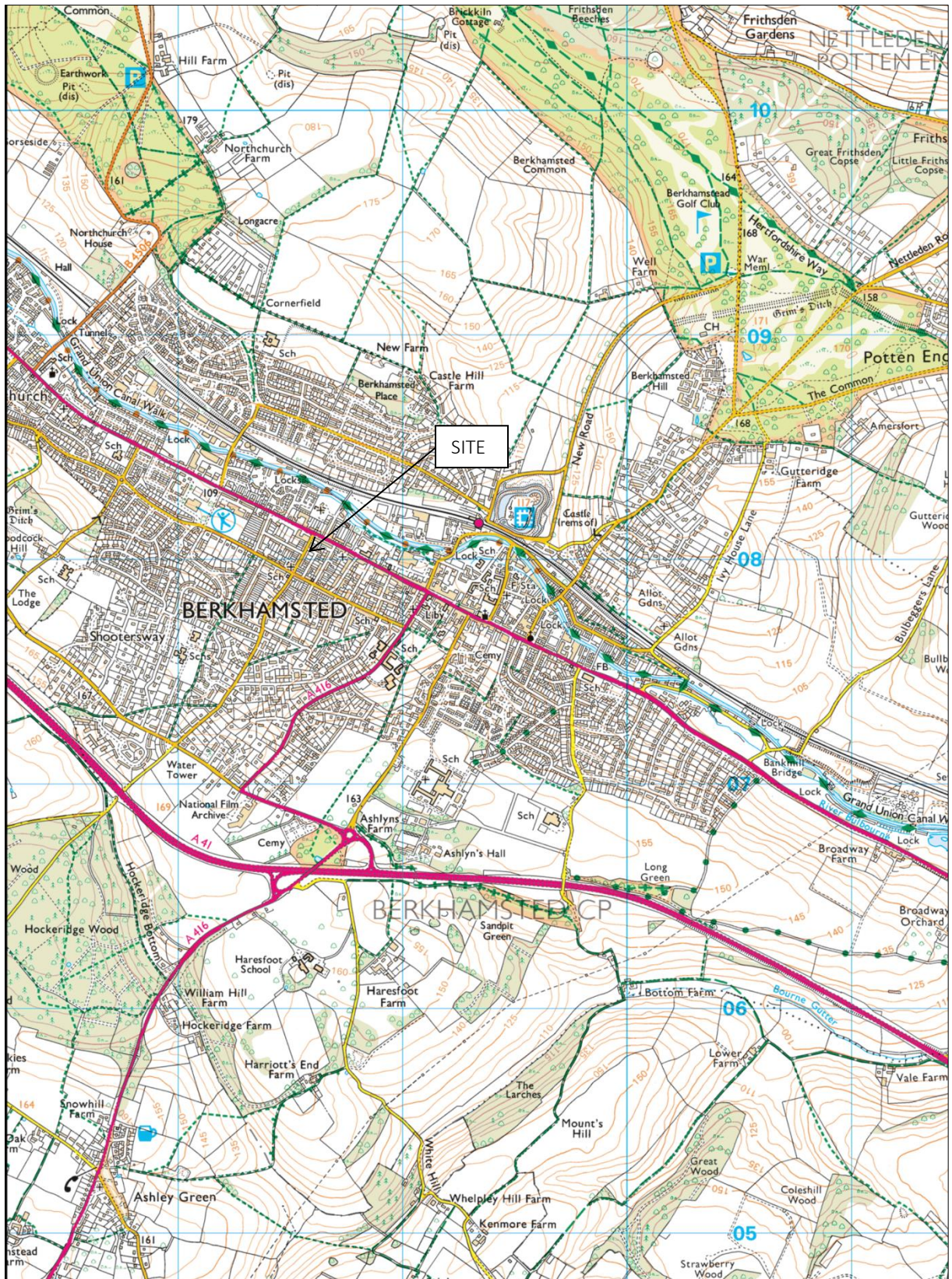


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)



Figure 2: Site location (scale as shown)

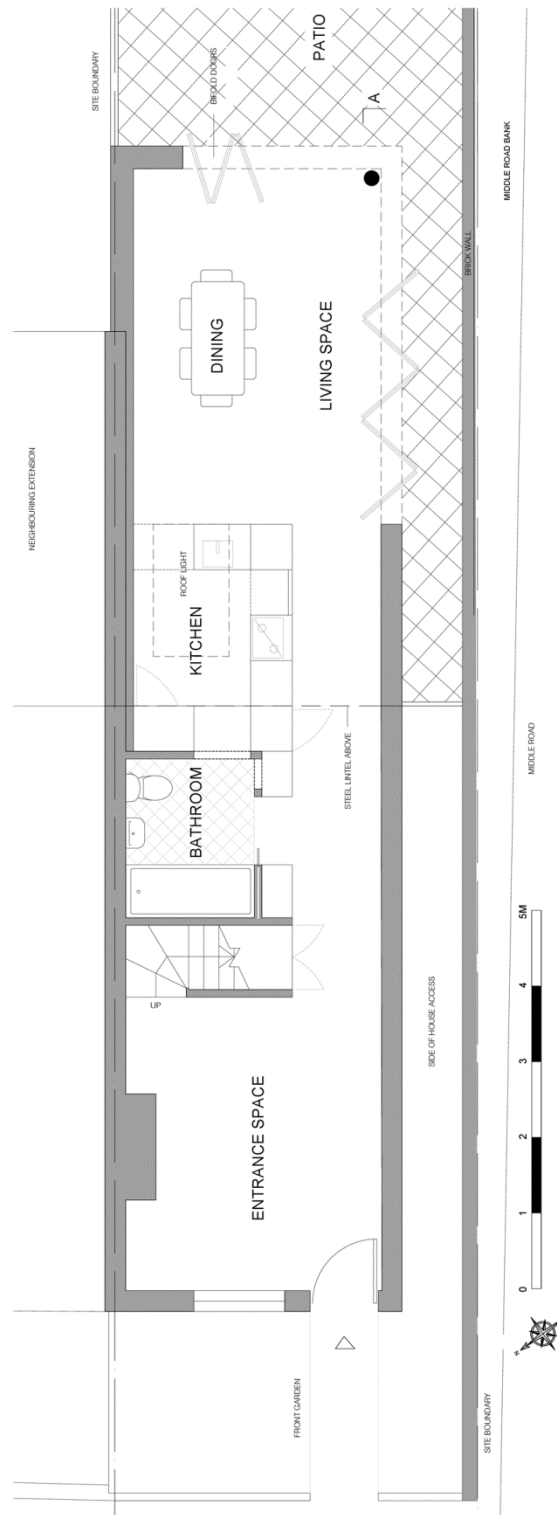


Figure 3: Development plan (scale 1:100)



2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Kaye 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.

2.2 Methods

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

- All groundworks were monitored including ground reduction and the excavation of footing trenches as well as a small hole for a structural pillar.

2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- 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 The site is situated in the town of Berkhamsted, a linear settlement in the Bulbourne valley in Hertfordshire. The Bulbourne valley has produced evidence from the prehistoric and into the Iron Age when it developed as an important Iron production centre. A number of Roman villas are situated within the area and the Roman road, Akeman Street, runs through Berkhamsted, along which scattered activity has been found. The town has Saxon origins and developed into a borough by the 13th century, the administrative centre of which was Berkhamsted castle.

This section has been compiled with information from readily accessible material including Internet sources, KDK's own library and data from the Historic Environment Record (HER), and in particular the Extension Urban Survey for Berkhamsted (Thompson 2005). The HER reference number is 16/17.

3.2 *Prehistoric* (before 600BC)

Prehistoric finds in the Berkhamsted area are fairly scarce, but Late Mesolithic and undated flints have been found as residual material in later features at 8 Manor Street. A strip, map & sample carried out at Brownlow House, Ravens Lane identified Mesolithic environmental data, with no human activity (HER 30109, Cuthbert 2011; HER 30101; Hunn & Zeepvat 2012 respectively).

There are, however, widespread Neolithic finds across the valley and it is thought that the valley has been continuously settled from this time onwards (Thompson 2005: 2). A Neolithic flint axehead, for example, was found on the corner of Chapel Street and Castle Street (HER 30772).

Grim's Ditch, a late Bronze Age (c.1200-800BC) bank and ditch is known to run along the south side of the Bulbourne valley. It was constructed by farming communities, possibly as a boundary between tribal territories or different land use. Grim's Ditch also survives on Berkhamsted Common on the north side of the valley. However, because this is very different in form it is thought that this was a cross-ridge dyke of late Iron Age or early Roman date controlling an extensive landscape (HER 2022; HER 0049, Thompson 2005: 2 & 3 respectively).

3.3 *Iron Age* (600BC-AD43)

The Bulbourne Valley appears to have developed into an important iron production centre during the Iron Age (Morris & Wainwright 1995; Thompson 2005: 3). Four first century shaft furnaces, late Iron Age cremation burials and ditches and pits were found at Bridgewater School, Dellfield Close (Thompson & Holland 1974-6).

On the line of the A41 bypass at Pea Lane, to the south of Berkhamsted, an Iron Age settlement of roundhouses, pits and rectilinear enclosures has also been found (HER 11480, Last 2001).

3.4 *Roman* (AD43-c.450)

Iron production continued into the earlier Roman period, after which evidence for iron working declines. Roman activity in Berkhamsted is scattered and appears to focus along the Roman road Akeman Street. The road formed part of a major route from London to Chester (HER 4595).

Roadside occupation has been found on the street frontage of 142 High Street, Northchurch, where Roman pottery, building materials and iron had been excavated, and at 320a High Street, where a possible construction layer along with residual Roman pottery was revealed.



Away from the street frontage a Roman sherd was recovered on the site of Waitrose and Roman pottery at Incents Lawn, Chesham Road. A Roman ditch was also excavated at 8 Manor Street dating to the 1st to mid -2nd century (HER11776; HER 7369, Walker 1993; HER 7366; Guttman 1996a, b; HER 10725; Hunn 2000; HER 17443; Cuthbert 2011 respectively).

By the late Roman period the majority of the valley had been divided up into large farming estates accompanied by agricultural and domestic buildings at the centre. Each estate included one or more masonry buildings. Three masonry buildings have been recorded in the vicinity; to the north of Berkhamsted Castle two substantial flint and tile walls were found, along with a fourth century Bronze coin. At Berkhamsted golf course NNW of the Castle excavations have revealed masonry foundations and tesserae from floors, and Northchurch villa, the remains of a villa were found close to the river (Branigan 1985; HER 1337; HER 0182, Thompson 2005: 4 respectively).

3.5 *Saxon* (c.450-1066)

The earliest reference to Berkhamsted is in the Will of Aelfgifu in the 10th century. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the 11th century also states that the English submitted to their Norman conquerors at Berkhamsted (Bryant 1998: 6-7; VCH 1908: 162). The Domesday Survey of 1086 records that pre-conquest, the manor was held by Eadmaer, a thegn of Earl Harold and valued at £24. Two watermills are also recorded that are thought to have Saxon origins (Williams & Martin 2002: 378; Thompson 2005:5).

The pre-Conquest parish church is believed to have been in Northchurch, immediately to the west of Berkhamsted. The church of St Mary still contains some Saxon fabric (Doggett & Hunn 1985: 19). It is probable that St Marys was a minster church and the parish originally included the later parishes of St James and St Peter (Bryant 1998: 5; Doggett & Hunn 1985: 22; Thompson 2005: 5).

Investigations at Incents Lawn unearthed pottery dating to the early to mid-Saxon and Saxo-Norman sherds. Saxon pottery has also been found on the site of the Cooper sheep-dig works, 20m from Akeman Street (HER 10725, Hunn 2000; HER 10944; Parsons 1999 respectively).

3.6 *Medieval* (1066-1500)

Berkhamsted Castle was constructed by Count Robert shortly after the Conquest and became the administrative centre of the manor. The borough was thought to be well established at this time, as indicated by the Domesday survey in 1086. The manor was held by the Count of Mortain, and was assessed at 13 hides with land for 26 ploughs, along with 14 villeins, 15 cottagers, six slaves, the ditcher and Ranulf the Count's servant. There were 37 households with ploughland, meadow, pasture and woodland. The manor also included a large vineyard, priest and the *burhium*, with 52 burgesses and two watermills (HER 10, Thompson 2005: 6, Williams & Martin 2002: 378).

The Borough, which is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey, had a market and fair by the 13th century, and by 1301 also had a court (portmoot). Investigations have revealed that the town was replanned c.1200; the Norman town is thought to have centred on the junction of the High Street and the Chesham Road, which may have led to the river and castle (HER 10).

The ecclesiastical development of Berkhamsted seems to indicate that St Marys was a minister church, which was later subdivided into the parish of St James and St Peter. Evidence points to St James being the first borough church in the late 11th or early 12th century, its exact location is unclear (HER9181). It may have lay on the north side of the High Street at the junction with St Johns Well Lane, an area of the town referred to as Oleburh (old town) in 1357 (Doggett & Hunn 1998: 22-27). The reference to the Old Town and the possible location



of St James' Church would suggest that settlement focus was away from the castle for a time. Subsequently the castle area became the administrative core of the town whilst the Old Town was important for providing welfare whereby the hospital of St John the Baptist (HER 4142) was established and St James's may have served as a chapel. A new parish church St Peter was built c.400m south of the castle in the early 13th century (Semmelmann 2004:5-6).

A number of medieval buildings can still be seen along Berkhamsted High Street which include 125 High Street a two-storeyed timber-framed building of 14th century origin (HER 9193), 129 High Street 15th century house, and The Swan 139 High Street, one of the main inns during the coaching era, with 14th century origins (HER9284; Thompson 2005: 11).

3.7 *Post-Medieval -Modern (1500-present)*

The town began to fall into decline in the 16th century with an increase in growth of Hemel Hempstead. In 1580 Berkhamsted manor that included the ruined castle and the deer park (HER 6381) was leased to Sir Edward Carey. It was at this time that Sir Edward built Berkhamsted Place, c.500m beyond the castle earthworks (Thompson 2005:14).

Further surviving post-medieval activity within Berkhamsted includes Berkhamsted Grammer School established in 1541, Sayers Almshouses (nos.235-41) High Street established in 1684 and The Bull, 10 High Street, a 17th century timber framed building (HER 9189; 9292; Thompson 2005: 15-16 respectively).

During the coaching era (late 17th century- early 19th century) Berkhamsted was a staging post on the London to Aylesbury road. The industry peaked during the late 18th- early 19th centuries until the construction of the railway in the 1830s/40s. Sparrow Herne turnpike post (HER5210) is located within a few metres to the northeast of the site.

A number of surviving 17th/18th century coaching inns are still seen today that include the Queens Arms, 53 High Street, The Goat, 83 High Street and the King's Arms, 147 High Street (Thompson 2005:18).

Construction of the Grand Junction Canal began in 1793 and provided an economic boost to the town enabling the bulk transport of materials (HER 241). During the 19th century Berkhamsted also became a centre for barge construction.

During the first half of the 19th century the town primarily consisted of the High Street, Castle Street and Mill Street, out from which the town has continued to expand. Today Berkhamsted still has a linear layout centred along the High Street.

3.8 *The Known Archaeology & History of the Site*

The development site is located outside the medieval core of the town and to the southwest of the stone marking the boundary between the parishes of Berkhamsted and Northchurch (HER 5210). Heritage Assets of note in the immediate vicinity (c.100m, Fig. 4) include the site of the former workhouse, which stood on the High Street to the northeast of the development site (HER 9315), the former Kitsbury or Kitsendbury Farmhouse (HER 9883), which gave the neighbouring road to the east its name, and the Grade II listed Church of All Saints (HER 355487), which is located to the southwest of the development site. Slightly further afield and to the north of the High Street is evidence for Romano British occupation (HER 6421) as well as 13th-14th century occupation (HER 16249).

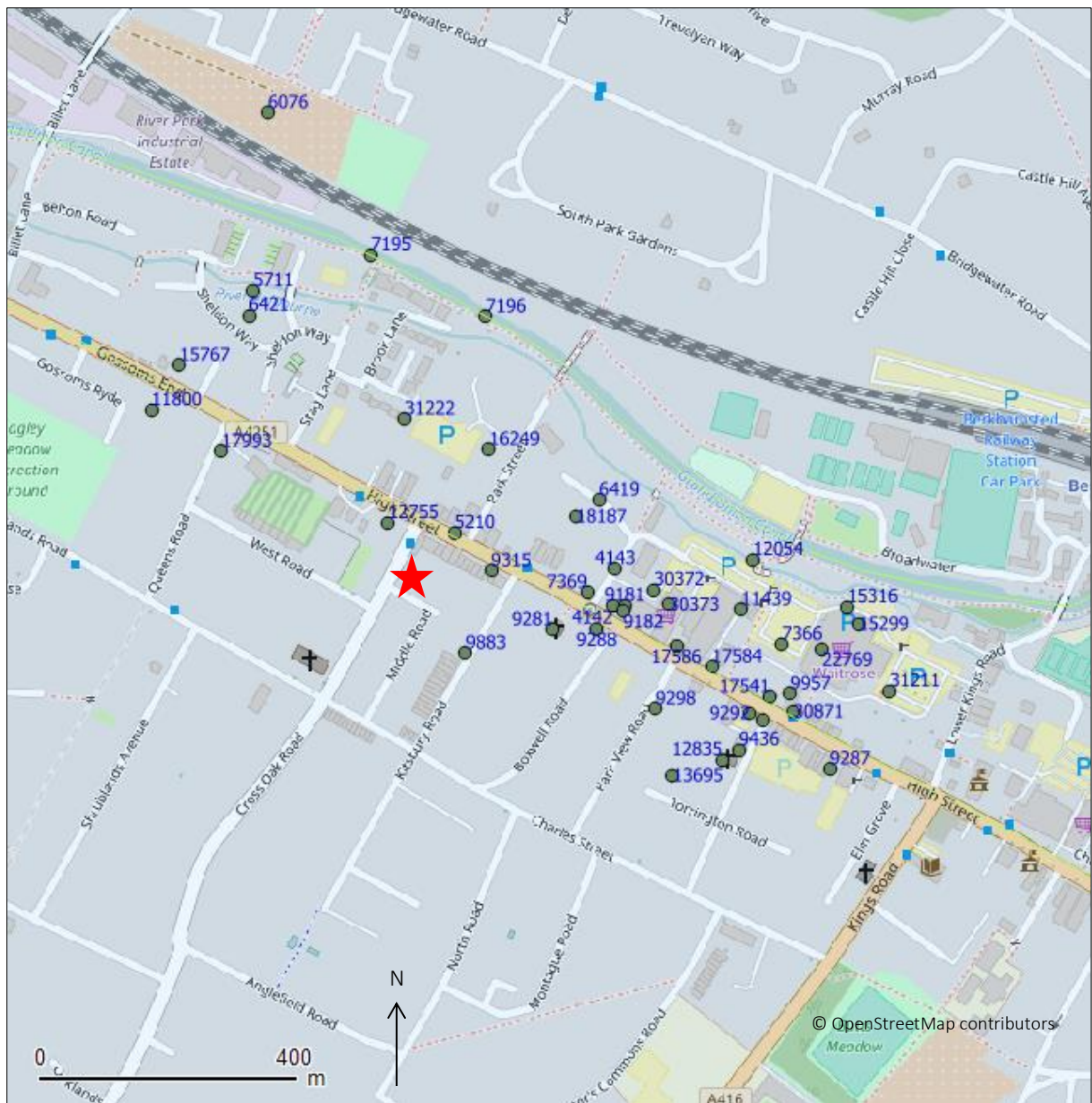


Figure 4: HER data plan, red star indicates site location (scale as shown)



4 Results

Introduction

Following the demolition of the original extension, footings trenches were excavated in its place using a 1.5 tonne machine fitted with a 0.6m wide toothed bucket (Plate 2-5). In addition, a small hole for a structural pillar was excavated by hand (Plate 6).

Description

The groundworks conducted from 11th to 12th July 2017 comprised the excavation of three footing trenches positioned on the footprint of the proposed extension (Fig. 5). Its length measured 2.65m to the northeast, 3.8m to the southeast and 7.7m to the southwest, ranging from 0.65m to 0.75m in width and measuring 0.5m deep. The cut for the pillar was located approximately 2.6m from the northeast corner of the footing trenches and measured 0.75m in diameter by approximately 0.5m deep.

The stratigraphy consisted of a deposit of made ground and topsoil approximately 0.25m deep below the original extension and garden. Below this was a layer of dark brown-orange sandy clay containing flint inclusions, which appeared to be the natural soil on site; this was excavated to a depth of 0.25m.

No archaeological features were identified. The only finds were fragments of modern brick and tile, as well as related construction material likely left over from the building of the original extension, none of this was retained.



Plate 1: Stratigraphy of footing trench, facing northeast



Plate 2: Northeast footing trench, facing northeast



Plate 3: Southeast footing trench, facing southeast



Plate 4: Southeast footing trench, facing southeast



Plate 5: Southwest footing trench, facing southwest



Plate 6: Hole for structural pillar, facing northeast

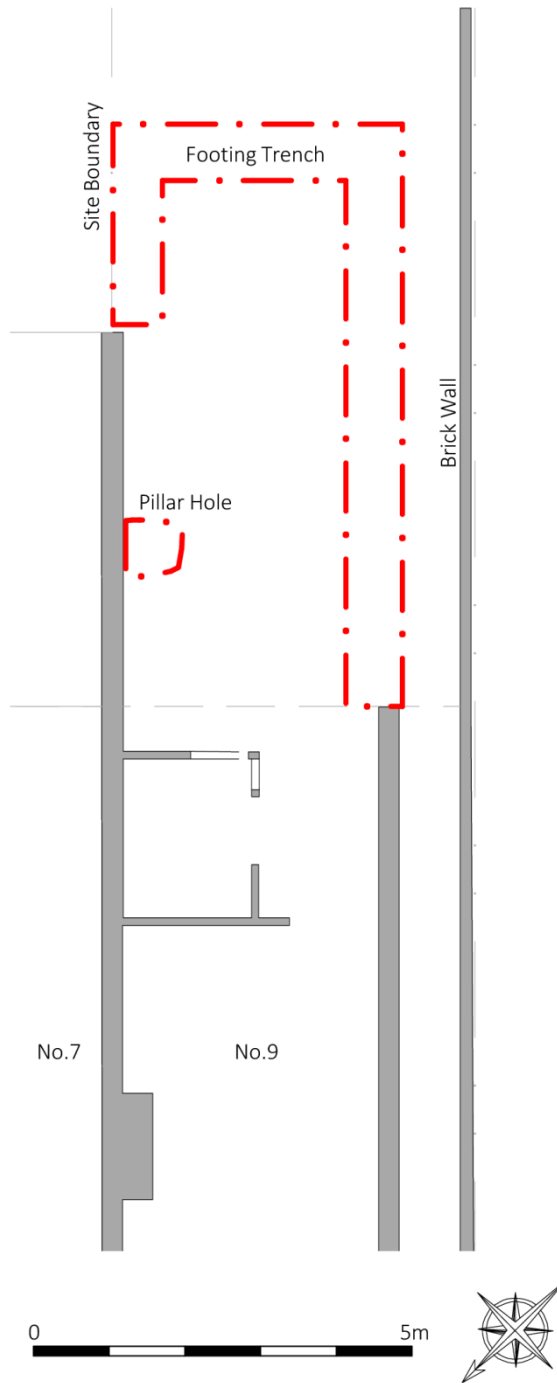


Figure 5: Footing trench layout (scale 1:100)



5 Conclusions

Given this site's location in Berkhamsted, a town with very high archaeological potential, it may seem initially surprising that no archaeological activity was identified within the footing trenches or the pillar cut. However, the shallow depth of the natural geology indicates that it has probably been heavily truncated during construction of the property and its surroundings. Cross Oak Road runs uphill away from Berkhamsted High Street; the site in question is located on this relatively steep hill and it is likely that considerable ground reduction took place at the time of the construction of these properties in order to make the plots level. This process would have destroyed any archaeological features that may once have been found on this site.

The HER data plan (Fig. 4) shows that there has been a high frequency of archaeology found in a linear pattern along the High Street, growing in concentration closer to the River Bulbourne. This site is located outside the medieval core of the town, which may explain the lack of finds. It is also possible that excavated ground lies between archaeological features, which may be more sparsely placed in this part of the town.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Nick Harding for commissioning this report. Thanks are also due to Dr Isobel Thompson MA PhD FSA MCIfA of Hertfordshire County Council for providing historic environment records and other relevant documents, and to Alison Tinniswood MA ACIfA of Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team for monitoring the project.

We would also like to thank Steve Beckett and the other contractors for their assistance on site.

The fieldwork was carried out by Chris Martin-Taylor BSc. The report was written by Chris Martin-Taylor, and edited by Karin Kaye MA MCIfA.



7 Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Written Scheme of Investigation
2. Initial report
3. Monitoring sheets
4. Site drawings
5. Client's site plans
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. Specialist reports
9. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Dacorum Heritage Trust.



8 References

Standards & Specifications

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Appendix 1: Photograph List

| SITE NO/CODE: 299/BCO | | | Site Name: 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted |
|-----------------------|-----|---------|--|
| Shot | B&W | Digital | Subject |
| 1 | X | X | SW Footing trench |
| 2 | X | X | SW Footing trench |
| 3 | X | X | Stratigraphy |
| 4 | X | X | NE Footing trench |
| 5 | X | X | Hole for pillar by NE wall |
| 6 | X | X | SE Footing trench |
| 7 | X | X | SE Footing trench |
| 8 | X | X | SW Footing trench |



Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

| PROJECT DETAILS | | | |
|--|---|---|-------------------------|
| Project Name & Address | 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire | Project Site Code | 299/BCO |
| OASIS reference | kdkarcha1-283655 | Event/Accession no | TBC |
| OS reference | SP 98586 08056 | Study area size (m ²) | 9.82 |
| Project Type | Archaeological observation and recording | Height (mAOD) | 115 |
| Short Description | In July 2017 a programme of Observation and Recording was undertaken at 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire as a planning condition for the development of the site. The condition was imposed as the site lies near to the medieval core of Berkhamsted and is surrounded by a number of heritage assets. Groundworks consisted of three foundation trenches and a small hole for a pillar; no archaeological features were discovered and all deposits were of made ground containing modern material. | | |
| Previous work | None | Site status | None |
| Planning proposal | Demolition of existing kitchen/bathroom; opening up of ground floor wall facing onto garden; construction of new single storey extension; demolition and rebuilding of boundary wall along Middle Road; replace existing front door. | Current land use | Private dwelling |
| Local Planning Authority | Dacorum Borough Council | Planning application ref. | 4/02987/16/FHA |
| Monument type | - | Monument period | - |
| Significant finds | None | Future work | Unknown |
| PROJECT CREATORS | | | |
| Organisation | KDK Archaeology Ltd | | |
| Project Brief originator | Alison Tinniswood MA ACIFA | Project Design originator | KDK Archaeology Ltd |
| Project Manager | Karin Kaye MA MCIFA | Director/Supervisor | Chris Martin-Taylor BSc |
| Sponsor/funding body | Nick Harding | | |
| PROJECT DATE | | | |
| Start date | 11.07.2017 | End date | 12.07.2017 |
| PROJECT ARCHIVES | | | |
| | Location | Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets) | |
| Physical | Dacorum Heritage Trust | No physical content | |
| Paper | | Site drawings, WSI, report | |
| Digital | | CD containing site forms, site drawings, WSI, report, digital photographs | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report) | | | |
| Title | Archaeological Observation & Recording: 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire | | |
| Serial title & volume | 299/BCO/2 | | |
| Author(s) | Chris Martin-Taylor BSc | | |
| Page no's | 23 | Date | 01/09/17 |



Appendix 3: Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Sheet

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Site name and address: 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted | | |
| County: Hertfordshire | District: Dacorum | |
| Village/Town: Berkhamsted | Parish: Berkhamsted | |
| Planning application reference: 4/02987/16/FHA | | |
| Client's name, address, & tel. no: Nick Harding, 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 3EH, 07875 344 333 | | |
| Nature of application: Demolition of existing kitchen/bathroom; opening up of ground floor wall facing onto garden; construction of new single storey extension; demolition and rebuilding of boundary wall along Middle Road; replace existing front door. | | |
| Present land use: Private dwelling | | |
| Size of application area: 9.82m ² | Size of area investigated: 9.82m ² | |
| NGR (to 8 figures): SP 98586 08056 | Site code: 299/BCO | |
| Site director: Chris Martin-Taylor BSc | Organization: KDK Archaeology Ltd | |
| Type of work: Archaeological observation and recording | | |
| Date of Work: | Start: 11.07.2017 | Finish: 12.07.2017 |
| Curating museum: Dacorum Heritage Trust | | |
| Related HER no's: - | Periods represented: Modern | |
| Relevant previous summaries/reports: - | | |
| <p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>In July 2017 a programme of Observation and Recording was undertaken at 9 Cross Oak Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire as a planning condition for the development of the site. The condition was imposed as the site lies near to the medieval core of Berkhamsted and is surrounded by a number of heritage assets. Groundworks consisted of three foundation trenches and a small hole for a pillar; no archaeological features were discovered and all deposits were of made ground containing modern material.</p> | | |
| Author: Chris Martin-Taylor BSc | Date: 01.09.17 | |