

KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Archaeological Observation and Recording Report

Little Brickhill Service Station Watling Street Little Brickhill Milton Keynes

EMK1390

Derek Watson PhD



Quality Check

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Summary

Between May and August 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording of Little Brickhill Service Station, Watling Street, Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes in order to fulfil a condition of planning permission for the construction of six detached dwellings and an access road. The stratigraphy of the excavated areas comprised made-ground and concrete overlying natural geology, and the absence of any sub-soil indicates that the ground had been extensively disturbed and truncated within the footprint of the development. The truncation of the area and subsequent deposition of tarmac, concrete, and made-ground, appears to have occurred during the 20th century, during the construction of the Little Brickhill Service Station. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were observed.

1 Introduction

1.1 Between May and August 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording at Little Brickhill Service Station, Watling Street, Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes. The project was commissioned by Peter Foster on behalf of Tilsworth Developments and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Shlasko & Watson 2019), and approved by Milton Keynes Council. The relevant planning application reference is 19/00480/FUL.

1.2 Planning Background

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

1.3 The Site

Location & Description

The site is located to the rear of the former Little Brickhill Service Station, Watling Street, in the village and civil parish of Little Brickhill and the administrative district of Milton Keynes Council. It is within the Little Brickhill Conservation Area at National Grid Reference SP 91124 32351 (Fig. 1).

The development is situated at the east end of the village of Little Brickhill, to the southwest of Watling Street, behind land that was previously occupied by the Little Brickhill Service Station. To the west, south and east are residential properties (Fig. 2).

Geology & Topography

There are no superficial deposits recorded for Little Brickhill, but the solid geology comprises sandstone, which is part of the Woburn Sands Formation. (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html). The site is located at approximately 150m AOD.

Development

The development consists of the construction of six detached dwellings and an access road to the rear of a currently ongoing development (Fig. 3).



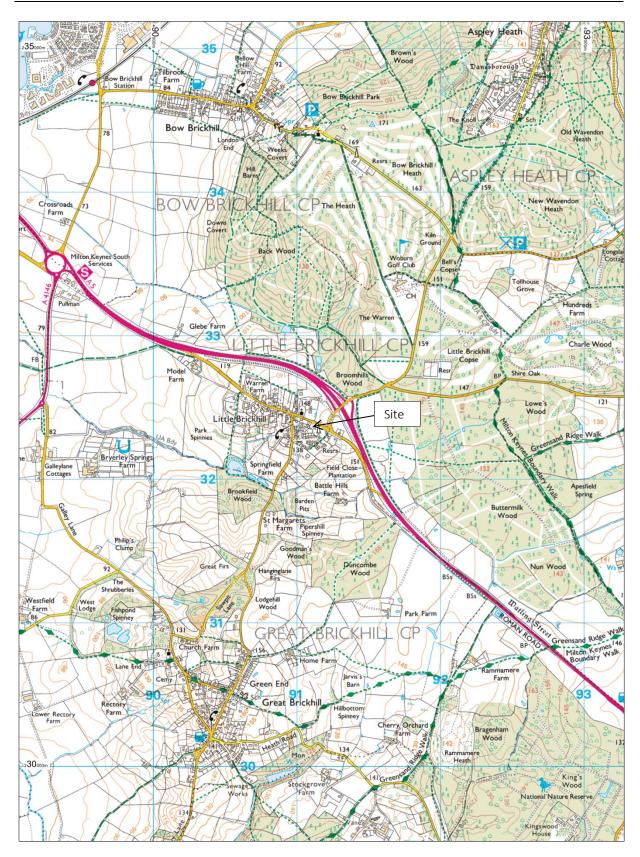


Figure 1: Site location (scale 1:25,000)



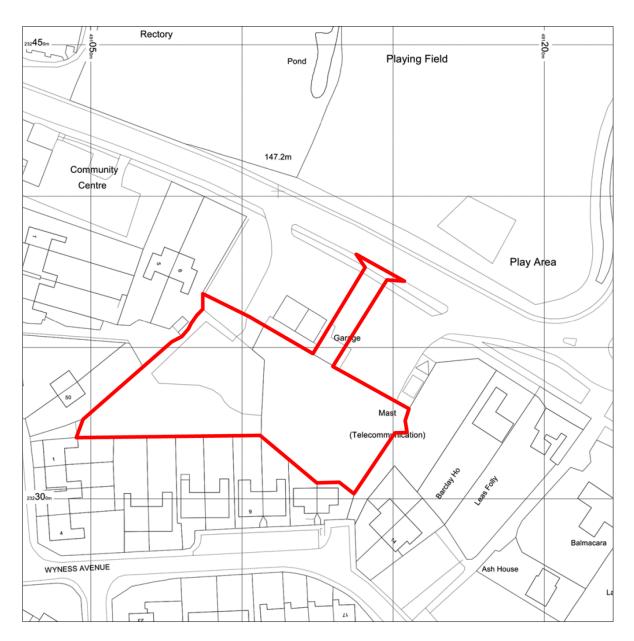


Figure 2: Site layout (scale 1:1250)





Figure 3: Proposed development plan (scale as shown)



2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Shlasko & Watson 2019) 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*

The methods used were as follows:

• Any groundworks or other works that were likely to have an impact on archaeological deposits or remains were conducted under constant archaeological supervision using a toothless bucket.

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)



3 Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 Little Brickhill is first mentioned in the Domesday Book, but its location on Roman Watling Street suggests that the area was in use long before the creation of that document. During the medieval period it had a market and a number of inns serving travellers on the road. The coaching trade continued to be an important part of the Little Brickhill economy into the post medieval period.

This section has been compiled with information from the Little Brickhill Historic Town Assessment (Green 2012), the Little Brickhill Conservation Area Appraisal (Milton Keynes 2004), the Victoria County History (Page 1927), KDK's own library and reliable online sources.

Prehistoric (before 600BC)

The prehistoric period of the Little Brickhill area is poorly understood, which is largely due to limited archaeological fieldwork in the immediate vicinity. Palaeolithic find spots occur in the locality of the parish of Bletchley (Green and Beckley 2009: 67 & 69), approximately 2km northwest. Scatters of flints identified as Mesolithic/Neolithic have also been discovered within c. 2km of Little Brickhill, near Milton Keynes (Croft and Mynard 1993: Fig. 3). Bronze Age ring ditches were discovered and excavated within the Ouzel Valley, though these are situated c. 7km north of the site (Cannon et al. 2001: 81).

Iron Age (600BC – AD43)

A variety of Iron Age settlement has been recorded within the Milton Keynes vicinity, though known sites are situated several kilometres distant from Little Brickhill e.g. Danesborough Hillfort is c. 4km northeast (Croft and Mynard 1993: 8). Available evidence suggests occupation along the river Ouse in the Middle Bronze Age into the Early Iron Age, with, possibly, a gradual de-population of the area during the Mid/Late Iron Age (Cannon et al. 2001: 80-81).

Roman (AD43-c.450)

There is no substantive evidence for any Roman settlement at Little Brickhill, though the present settlement lies along the path of the Roman road Watling Street (now the A5) and the area was within the extra-mural settlement area of the small Roman town of *Magiovinium*, situated to the north-west near Fenny Stratford at Dropshort Farm. Excavations at *Magiovinium* (Neal 1987; Hunn et al., 1995) revealed evidence for the construction of a possible fort and vicus prior to construction of a small defended town. Outside of the town, residential and industrial buildings (smithies etc) where sited along Watling Street, and there was also an extensive system of fields (ditched rectilinear plots) associated with the town. The settlement began to contract during the late 3rd-4th century AD. Smaller rural settlements, farmsteads, ditched enclosures and finds (coins and pottery) have also been identified within the wider area dating to the 2nd to 4th century AD.

Watling Street was a major Roman route in southern England, constructed c. AD 65, and was known as the *Stratus Vitellianus*: it passes through the modern parish from north-west to south-east. The Roman road ran from the east coast of Kent, though the southeast and the centre of England via St Albans (Verulamium), Dunstable (*Durocobrivis*) and Towcester (*Lactodurum*) into Chester (*Deva Victrix*) and North Wales (Zeepvat 1993).



Finds of Roman material within the area of Little Brickhill include a Roman cremation urn containing calcined bone, Samian ware, a sherd of grey pottery and two leaden rivets discovered in 1878 during the draining of a field known as "The Pastures", and Roman pottery sherds and building material found in a rubbish pit (Green 2012). Neal (1994) suggested that Little Brickhill's topography potentially made it a suitable location for a Roman signalling station situated near, or on the high ground where the Church is located.

Saxon (c450-1066)

There is a paucity of historical and documentary evidence for this period and archaeological excavations have revealed limited evidence within the general locality of Little Brickhill. After the Roman departure post AD 410, this part of Buckinghamshire was incorporated into the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia (Green 2012: 21). Later, following the defeat of Viking invaders during the 9th century Watling Street functioned as a territorial boundary between King Alfred's England to the south and the Danelaw to the north (Stenton 1971: 257). The origin of Little Brickhill as a settlement may be inferred from its name, which is thought to be derived from a combination of the Celtic word 'brig' (hilltop) and the Anglo-Saxon word for hill ('hyll'; Mills 1991:50). However, no archaeological, or other, data demonstrates the existence of any Anglo-Saxon settlement during this period.

The first mention of any settlement on the site is in the Domesday Survey of 1086, where Brickhill is referred to as Brichella but no distinction is made between Great and Little (or Bow) Brickhill. It is likely that these became separate settlements during the medieval period, with the prefixes acquired by result of gaining village or parish status (Croft & Mynard 1993; Green 2012). Morris (1978 quoted in Green 2012) argues that only one reference was made to Little Brickhill as that held by the Bishop of Bayeux with the under-tenancy held by Thurstan – the manor comprised one hide (c. 120 acres), with land for one plough (though there was no plough), with a population of 3 villagers (villans) and 2 smallholders (bordars; see Williams & Martin 2002: 399). However, contiguous manors may have also included land that eventually formed part of the modern parish of Little Brickhill (Green 2012: 22).

Medieval (1066-1500)

The following is a brief summary of the data provided in Page (1927) and (Green 2012) of the complex and nuanced history of the manor and the settlement of Little Brickhill during the medieval and subsequent periods. The manor at Brickhill was held by various owners from c. 1088, when it was owned by the Bishop of Lisieux, until it was held by the crown until 1641 following the execution of Henry Duke of Buckinghamshire in 1483. During this period the settlement expanded and thrived as Little Brickhill's position on Watling Street made it stopping point for travellers, its principal occupation, and linked it to an extensive contemporary trade network. The settlement contained various inns, probably a (water)mill, it hosted markets and fairs (the charter was granted in 1228) and it's 'brick kilns' made it a medieval centre for the production of floor tiles (Green 2012: 23).

Little Brickhill may have had borough status from as early as the 13th century, though this certainly existed during the 15th century. The local parish church of St Mary Magdalen was built on high ground at the eastern of the settlement, on the north of Watling Street, between the 12th and late 16th/early 17th centuries. The settlement became the venue for the county's assizes during the late medieval period indicating a relatively high local status as this was where serious criminal cases rather than misdemeanours were heard and adjudicated. The gallows are thought to have stood on the common or heath.

The core of the historic town lies to the northwest of the proposed development site.



Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The economy and status developed and acquired during the medieval period continued and expanded during the post-medieval period. Little Brickhill remained the venue for the county assizes, though the last time the assizes were heard there was in 1638. In 1693 the manor was sold to Sir Charles Duncombe and it remained in the possession of that family until Frances Duncombe married and it passed to Sir George Henry Rose as part of her dowry. Sir Rose was instrumental in the 1796 enclosure of the manor, under the Parliamentary Enclosure Act of that year, whereby 600 acres of common lands were divided between the Lord of the Manor and the See of Canterbury.

The location of the settlement on Watling Street, a major London thoroughfare, enabled it to continue its principal occupation as a staging post for passenger stagecoaches (providing lodgings, refreshment and entertainment for travellers). "The Clockhouse" (now converted for residential use) housed just such a staging post, incorporating a stable, office, coach sheds, a hotel and a cowshed. In 1687 a State Post Office was established and the settlement became a staging post for mail and the Royal Mail journey to Ireland. Watling Street was also selected for turnpiking as early as 1705, which improved the road and increased traffic and commerce within the settlement (Markham 1973a: 302). The settlement expanded to accommodate this, including the building of the Green Man coaching inn in the 18th century.

The 'plague' also appeared during the 17th century (i.e. 1636 & the 1660s) although it seems to have had a relatively minor impact locally.

During the Civil War Little Brickhill was of strategic importance due to its location on Watling Street and as its topography enabled it command of the surrounding landscape. Control of the settlement likely shifted from Royalist to Parliamentarian forces though Little Brickhill was not directly impacted by the conflict.

3.2 The Known Archaeology & History of the Site

From the 1950s through the 1990s, the development site was used for parking and other activities as part of the Little Brickhill Service Station. Since the closure of the service station in the 1990s, the site had been disused until the commencement of this building programme.



4 Results

Introduction

Between May and August 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Archaeological Observation & Recording of the excavation of nine geotechnical evaluation test pits and a series of footing trenches for houses 1 & 2 in plots 6 & 7 (Fig. 4). The watching brief also included monitoring of areas within the footprint of the former service station that were contaminated with diesel.

Description

A total of c. 204.09sq metres were excavated under constant archaeological supervision of which 101.62 sq. metres was of test pits, c. 50.80sq metres for House 1 in Plot 6 and c. 51.67sq metres) for House 2 in Plot 7.The trenches/pits were excavated by a 15 tonne machine fitted with a 0.65m wide toothless ditching bucket. The footing trenches were predominantly 0.65m wide, though a c. 1.35m wide section was excavated in Plots 6 & 7, and the depth ranged from 0.85 to 1.20m (Fig. 5). The test pits were variable in size, ranging from 2sq metres (TP1-2), 5sq metres (TP3-8), and 67.62sq metres (TP9).

The stratigraphy of the site comprised (Plates 1-32):

- Made-ground (100): Mixed brown silty clay with broken (modern) frogged brick, builders refuse, hardcore, and rusted/broken vehicle parts. This context was exposed in all of the trenches/pits and varied in depth across the site, with a range of 0.30-0.80m in the footing trenches, and 0.34-2.10m in the test pits.
- Concrete (103): A layer of concrete (0.2-0.3m deep) was exposed in Test Pits 2, 3 & 4.
- Made-ground (104): A second 0.53m deep layer of modern brick and tarmac was exposed in TP 2 underlying concrete.
- Natural (105): The natural varied across the site
 - Test Pits 1-2: reddish brown-brown silty clay
 - Test Pits 3-4: similar to Test Pits 1-2, with an underlying yellowish grey sandy clay, and both contaminated with diesel
 - Test Pits 5-7: orangey red clayey sand, with ironstone deposits
 - Test Pit 8: grey clay with flint inclusions
 - Test Pit 9: yellowish red sandy clay. The natural exposed in the footing trenches (Plots 6-7) comprised reddish brown sandy clay with occasional rounded pebbles (≤ 0.15 cm).

Brick-supports (101 & 102), consisting of 0.25m deep brick footings, were found in Test Pits 3 & 8. In Test Pit 3 the footings supported the (removed) fuel tank and were built onto concrete, whereas in Test Pit 8 the footings were constructed on natural.

On completion of this investigation, no archaeological features were discovered, and no finds of archaeological significance were found either on-site or in any of the spoil removed during the excavations.



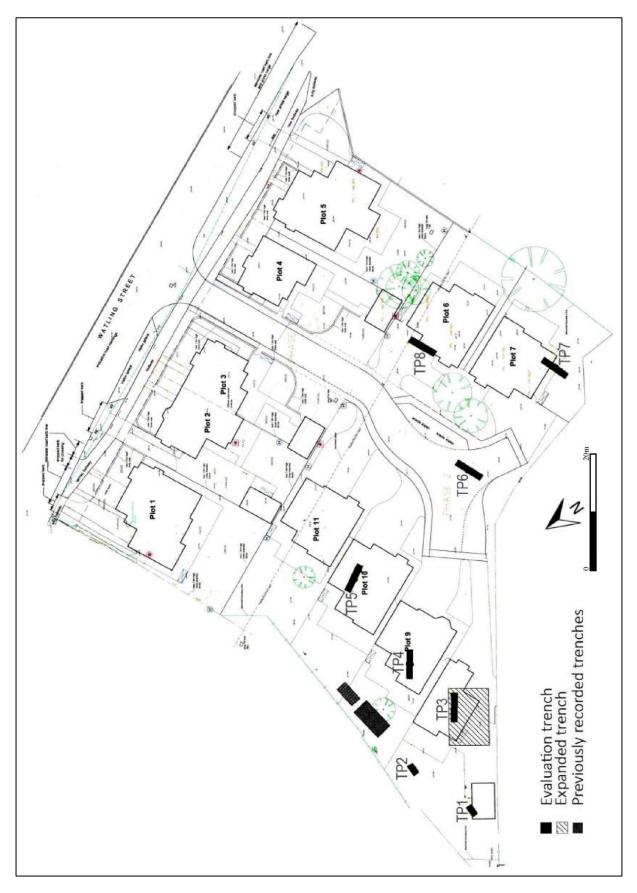


Figure 4: Location of Test Pits and Plots 6-7 (scale as shown)



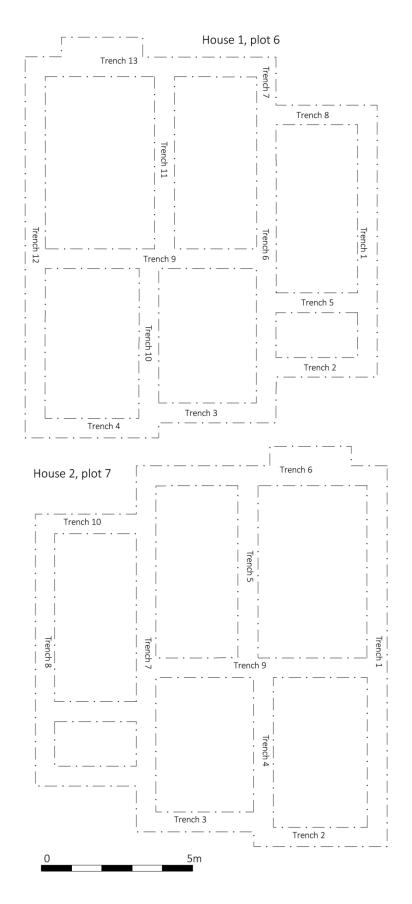


Figure 5: Footing trench plan for Plots 6-7 (scale 1:125). See Fig. 4 for location





Plate 1: Test pit 1, looking southwest



Plate 3: Test pit 3, looking southwest



Plate 5: Test pit 5, looking southwest



Plate 2: Test pit 2, looking southwest



Plate 4: Test pit 4, looking southwest



Plate 6: Test pit 6, looking northwest

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Plate 7: Test pit 7, looking east



Plate 8: Test pit 8, looking southeast



Plate 9: Test pit 9, looking southwest



Plate 10: Trench 1, plot 6, looking northeast



Plate11: Trench 2, plot 6, northwest



Plate 12: Trench 3, plot 6, looking northwest





Plate 13: Trench 4, plot 6, looking northwest



Plate 15: Trench 6, plot 6, looking southwest



Plate 17: Trench 8, plot 6, looking northwest



Plate 14: Trench 5, plot 6, looking northwest



Plate 16: Trench 7, plot 6, looking northwest



Plate 18: Trench 9, plot 6, looking northwest





Plate 19: Trench 10, plot 6, looking northeast



Plate 21: Trench 12, plot 6, looking northeast



Plate 20: Trench 11, plot 6, looking southwest



Plate 22: Footing trench 13, plot 6, looking southeast



Plate 23: Trench 1, plot 7, looking southwest



Plate 24: Trench 2, plot 7, looking southeast





Plate 25: Trench 3, plot 7, looking southwest



Plate 26: Trench 4, plot 7, looking southwest



Plate 27: Footing trench 5, plot 7, looking northeast



Plate 28: Footing trench 6, plot 7, looking northwest



Plate 29: Footing trench 7, plot 7, looking northeast



Plate 30: Footing trench 8, plot 7, looking northeast

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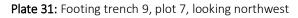




Plate 32: Footing trench 10, plot 7, looking southeast



5 Conclusions

The general stratigraphy of the site is comprised of made-ground directly overlying the local natural geology. This stratigraphy and the absence of any sub-soil indicate that the ground had been extensively disturbed and truncated within the development area. The truncation of the area and subsequent deposition of made-ground (including tarmac and concrete) probably occurred during the 20th century prior to, and during the construction of the Little Brickhill Service Station and its associated parking area. As a result no archaeological features or finds were observed.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Peter Foster for commissioning this report on behalf of Tilsworth Developments. Thanks are also due to Nick Crank of Milton Keynes Council for monitoring the project.

The fieldwork was carried out by Derek Watson PhD and Barney King. The report was written by Derek Watson PhD, 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 Buckinghamshire County Museum.



8 References

Standards & Specifications

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Appendix 1: Photograph List

Digital	View	Subject	
1	SW	Test pit 1 (1m scale)	
2	SW	Test pit 2 (1m scale)	
3	SW	Test pit 3 (1m scale)	
4	SW	Test pit 4 (1m scale)	
5	SW	Test pit 5 (1m scale)	
6	NE	Test pit 6 (1m scale)	
7	E	Test pit 7 (1m scale)	
8	SE	Test pit 8 (1m scale)	
9	SW	Test pit 9 (1m scale)	
10	NE	Footing trench 1, plot 6, stratigraphy (1m scale)	
11	NW	Footing trench 2, plot 6 (1m scale)	
12	NW	Footing trench 3, plot 6 (1m scale)	
13	NW	Footing trench 4, plot 6 (1m scale)	
14	NW	Footing trench 5, plot 6 (1m scale)	
15	SW	Footing trench 6, plot 6 (1m scale)	
16	NW	Footing trench 7, plot 6 (1m scale)	
17	NW	Footing trench 8, plot 6 (1m scale)	
18	NW	Footing trench 9, plot 6 (1m scale)	
19	NE	Footing trench 10, plot 6 (1m scale)	
20	SW	Footing trench 11, plot 6 (1m scale)	
21	NE	Footing trench 12, plot 6 (1m scale)	
22	SE	Footing trench 13, plot 6 (1m scale)	
23	SW	Footing trench 1, plot 7 (1m scale)	
24	SE	Footing trench 2, plot 7 (1m scale)	
25	SW	Footing trench 3, plot 7 (1m scale)	
26	SW	Footing trench 4, plot 7 (1m scale)	
27	NE	Footing trench 5, plot 7 (1m scale)	
28	NW	Footing trench 6, plot 7 (1m scale)	
29	NE	Footing trench 7, plot 7 (1m scale)	
30	NE	Footing trench 8, plot 7 (1m scale)	
31	NW	Footing trench 10, plot 7 (1m scale)	
32	SE	Footing trench 10, plot 7 (1m scale)	



Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS					
Project Name & Address	Little Brickhill Service Station, Watling Street, Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes			460/LBS	
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-350257	Event/Accession no		EMK1390	
OS reference	SP 9112 3235	Study area size		204.09sq metres	
Project Type	Observation and Recording	Height (mAOD)		150	
Between May and August 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook a programme of Observation and Recording of Little Brickhill Service Station, Watling Street, Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes in order to fulfil a condition of planning permission for the construction of six detached dwellings and an access road. The stratigraphy of the excavated areas comprised made-ground and concrete overlying natural geology, and the absence of any sub-soil indicates that the ground had been extensively disturbed and truncated within the footprint of the development. The truncation of the area and subsequent deposition of tarmac, concrete, and made-ground, 					
Previous work	None	Site status		None	
Planning proposal	The construction of six detached dwellings and an access road to the rear of a currently ongoing development	Current land use		Former service station	
Local Planning Authority	Milton Keynes Council	Planning application ref.		19/00480/FUL	
Monument type	None	Monument period		None	
Significant finds	None	Future work		None	
	PROJECT	CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd				
Project Brief originator	N/A	Project Design originator	KDK	Archaeology Ltd	
Project Manager	Karin Kaye MA MCIfA	Director/Supervisor	Barr	ney King	
Sponsor/funding body	Tilsworth Developments				
	PROJEC	CT DATE			
Start date	29/05/2019	End date	08/0	08/2019	
	PROJECT	ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (e.g. pottery,	animal	bone, files/sheets)	
Physical None					
Paper	Buckingham County Museum	eport, Photos, Fieldwork sheets			
Digital Report, Photos					
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)					
Title	Title Archaeological Observation and Recording Report: Little Brickhill, Watling Street, Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes				
Serial title & volume					
Author(s)	Derek Watson PhD				
Page no.s	24	Date 19/08/2019			