



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

## Archaeological Evaluation Report

Land at 125 Highgrove Street  
Reading  
Berkshire



### Quality Check

<i>Author</i>	Derek Watson PhD	<i>Version</i>	546/RHS/2.1	<i>Date</i>	21.10.2020
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Unit 3 Leighton Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire LU7 1LA  
Tel: 01525 385443  
Email: office@kdkarchaeology.co.uk  
Website: www.kdkarchaeology.co.uk






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## Summary

In October 2020 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation of Land at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire, prior to the erection of eight new dwellings and associated landscaping within the development site. The excavation of two evaluation trenches only revealed 20<sup>th</sup> century brick and metal water-storage tanks, and a cast-iron pipe. As subsoil was present within the excavated area and available historical records indicate that it was only under development from the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century it appears that the development site was probably situated outside any local settlement activity prior to the later post-medieval and early modern periods.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In October 2020 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation of Land at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire. The project was commissioned by VJS Projects Ltd, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Watson 2020), and approved by Berkshire Archaeology (BA) acting as Archaeological Advisor (AA), on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Reading Borough Council. The relevant planning application reference is 171477.

### 1.2 *Planning Background*

This project has been required under the terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Conditions 5 and 8 of planning permission for the development of the site.

### 1.3 *The Site*

#### *Location*

The development site is situated in the unparished town of Reading, in the administrative district of Reading Borough Council at National Grid Reference (NGR) SU7211 7227 (Fig. 1).

#### *Description*

The development area consists of an irregular rectilinear plot bounded on all sides by residential properties except for an access road, adjacent to No. 125, linking it to Highgrove Street at its south-western corner (Fig. 2). The site is currently occupied by a motor workshop and tyre fitting premises, a row of garages used for storage as well as other outbuildings on the south section which are used for storage.

#### *Geology and Topography*

The local bedrock geology is the London Clay Formation, comprising clay, silt, and sand deposited approximately 48 to 56 million years ago in the Palaeogene Period; this is overlain by superficial deposits of the Boyn Hill Gravel Member, which consists of sand and gravels deposited up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The development site is situated at an approximate elevation of 64m AOD.

#### *Development*

The development entails the demolition of existing buildings within site and the erection of six new dwellings and the conversion of the storage buildings into a further two. There is also associated landscaping (Fig. 3).

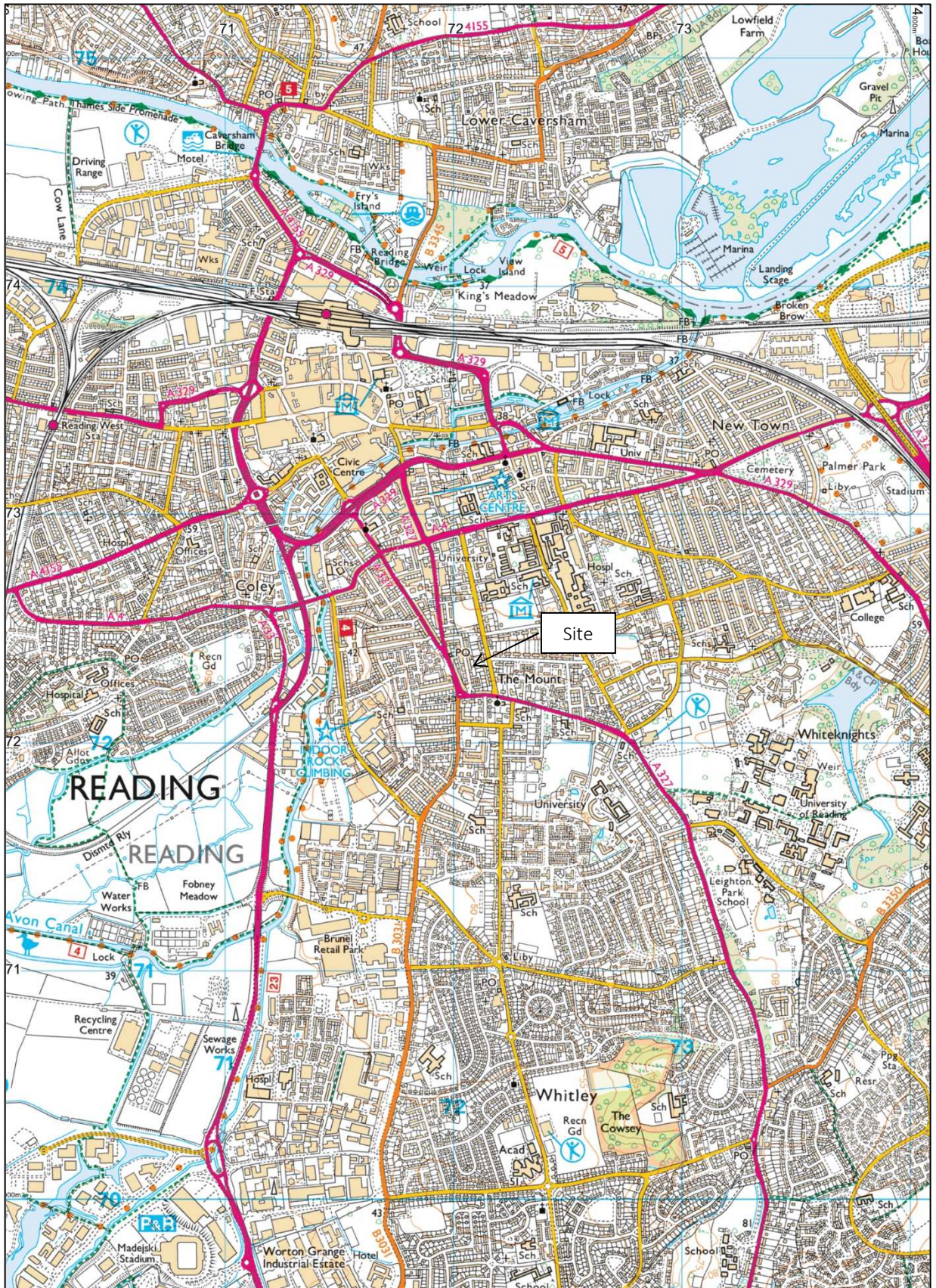


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

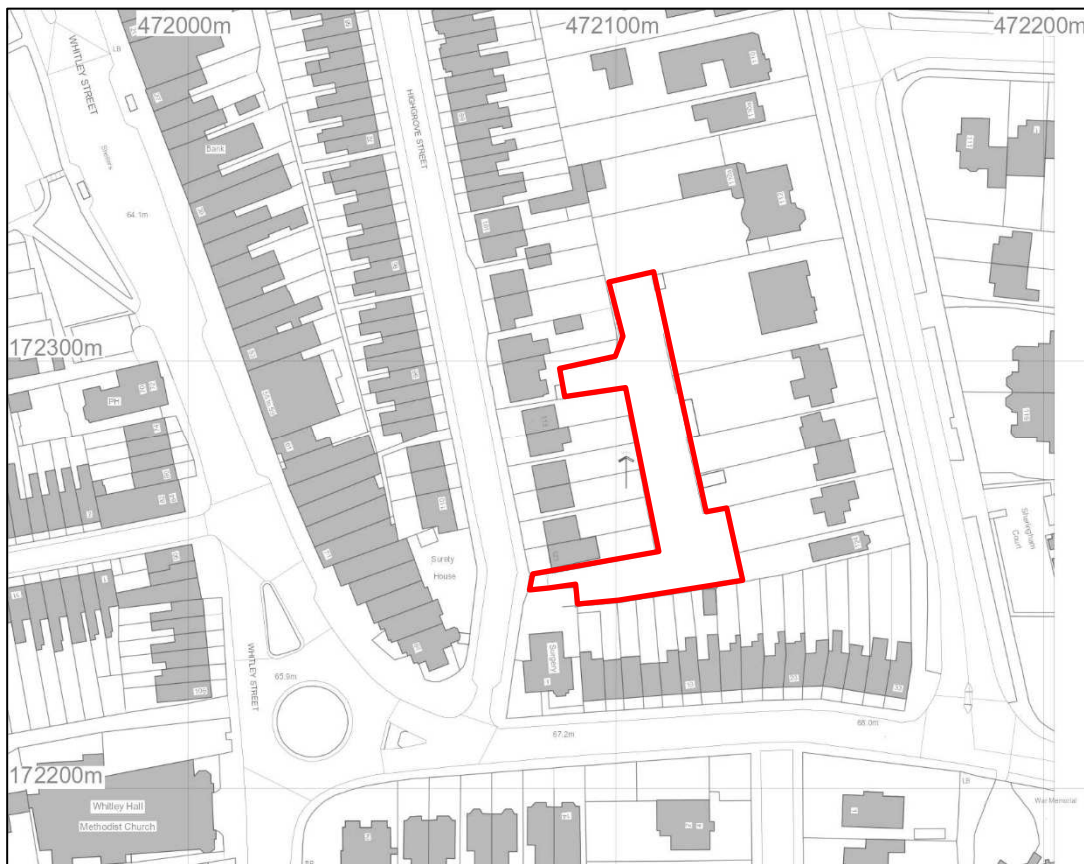


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1,250)



Figure 3: Development plan (scale as shown)



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## 2 Aims & Methods

### 2.1 Aims

The aims of this project as defined in the approved WSI (Watson 2020) 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 of this staged programme of works is as follows:

- An archaeological field evaluation of the site consisting of a minimum of 72m<sup>2</sup> trial trenching: equivalent to two trenches of 25m x 1.8m and 15m x 1.8m, plus an appropriate contingency (Fig. 4).
- Stage Two: An appraisal of the results of the evaluation and their significance with regard to the proposed development. This in turn may lead to the definition of a programme of investigation and recording of archaeological remains which will be destroyed by the development. BA may prepare a Brief for the next phase of investigation that will also cover a programme of post-excavation, analysis and publication
- Stage Three: The implementation of an agreed programme of archaeological investigation and recording based on the Brief

### 2.3 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2020)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2019)
- Current English Heritage guidelines (HE 2015, EH 2008)



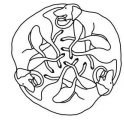
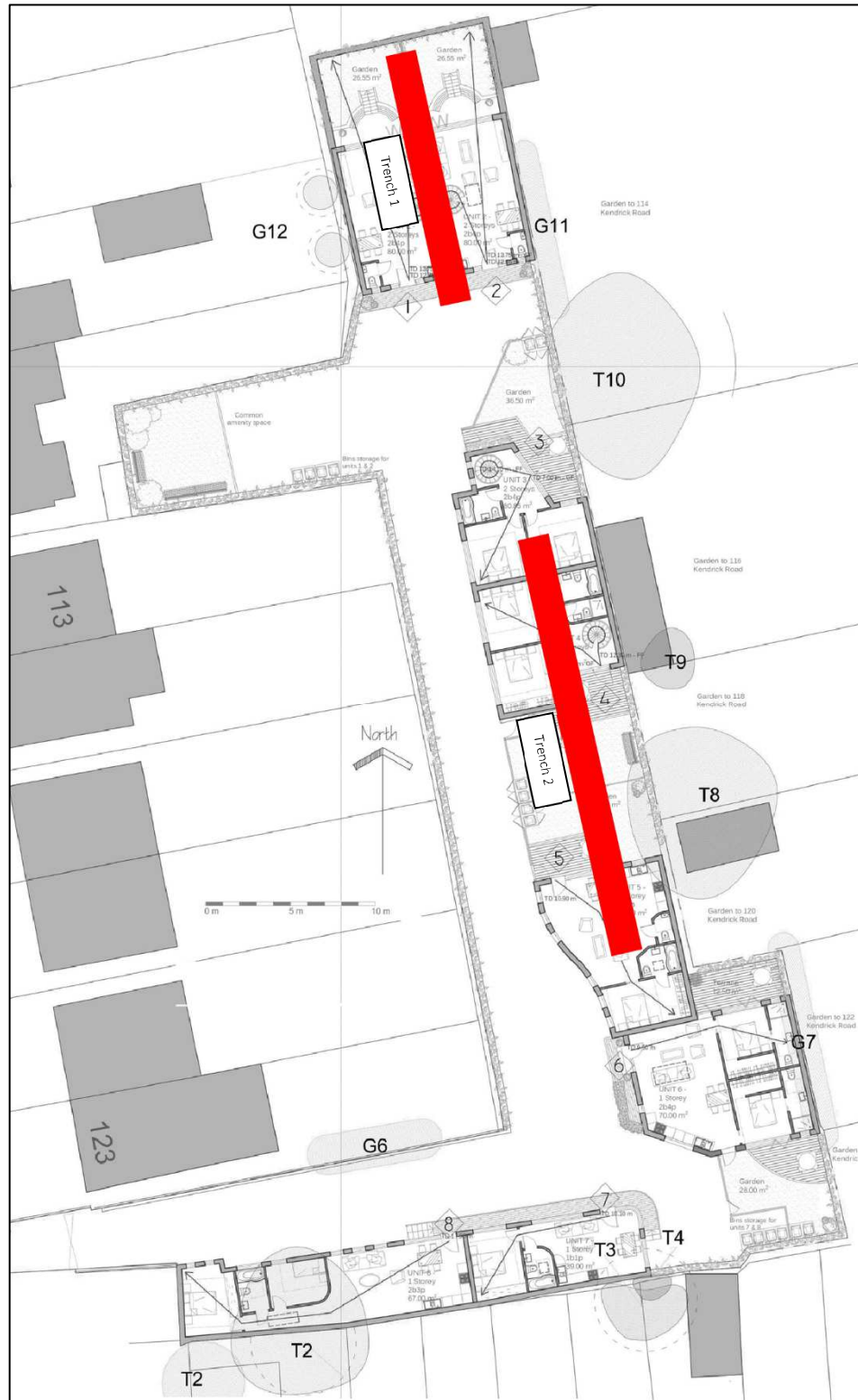


Figure 4: Proposed trench layout (scale as shown)





### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 Reading is a large, historic market town in Berkshire that is situated in the Thames Valley at the confluence of the Thames and Kennet rivers. Human activity in the general area dates from the Palaeolithic (c. 400,000 BC), with the earliest indications of occupation dating from the middle Bronze Age (1700-1200 BC; Hey & Hind 2014; Reading Museum 2020). The modern settlement at Reading may have its origins in the Romano-British period, but the first documentary evidence dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD (DBA 2020: 8; Phillips 1980: 12-13). The toponym (Reading) *Readingum* probably derives from *Readingas*, an 'Anglo-Saxon tribe' whose name means "Reada's People" in Old English (Nottingham.ac.uk 2020; DBA 2020: 8).

The development site is not situated within the any conservation area. However, there are twelve listed buildings (one Grade II\*; ten Grade II) within or adjacent to the HER search area, most within the contiguous Kendrick Conservation Area, and one property (114 Kendrick Road) adjacent to the development site is catalogued on the Reading Borough Council List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures. These have been excluded from the following as none will be impacted by this project which focuses primarily on sub-surface remains.

This section has been compiled with information from Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) with a 250m search radius, reliable online sources, KDK's own library, and DBA 2020.

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

Prehistoric material has been discovered within Reading, though limited evidence has been found near the development site. The nearest remains were revealed c. 200m south of the development site at Christchurch Gardens (HER 00976.00.000) in the form of Palaeolithic handaxes found in gravel pits, and during the construction of houses and new roads in 1904. An Iron Age earthenware cup was found in a gravel pit on Southern Hill (HER 02059.00.000) in 1905, c. 400m south of the development, and a Palaeolithic implement, possibly a hand axe, was found under the cup. Other Palaeolithic implements have been found from Southern Hill.

The only other finds from this period comprise a cremation cemetery in Whitley (Park) Farm (HER 02048.00.000), where fragments of Bronze Age/Iron Age handmade burial urns with charred human remains were found in a gravel pit c. 200m south of the development.

#### 3.3 *Roman (AD43 - c.450)*

Little Romano-British material has been found in Reading (DBA 2020: 8). Indeed, there are no Romano-British roads in the locality and it would appear that activity in the wider area during this time was focussed on Roman Silchester (formally *Calleva*, the chief town of the British tribe of the Atrebates; *ibid.*). However, it has been argued that the fording point of the local rivers was known and was settled as a trading port for Roman Silchester (DBA 2020: 8; Lawes Long 1836; Phillips 1980: 12).

Further activity was discovered at Waterloo Gravel Pit (HER 02064.00.000), situated c. 450m southwest of the development, which produced extensive evidence for Roman settlement 'of some kind' during quarrying in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 3.4 *Saxon (c.450 - 1066)*

Early settlers at Reading were probably attracted by the flat gravel terraces, and the fertile ground, created by the Rivers Thames and Kennet, and the sites proximity to the ford across the Kennet (DBA 2020: 8; Phillips 1980: 12-13). The first documentary record of the town dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, as in the year 871 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that an army of Danes invaded the then kingdom of Wessex and established their camp at Reading (Phillips 1980: 14).



In the Domesday Survey 1087, it had a recorded population of 102 households in 1086, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in the survey, and it was held by the Abbey of St Martin and, predominantly, King William (opendomesday.org 2020).

No remains from this period are listed within the HER search area.

### 3.5 **Medieval** (1066 - 1500)

In its 1086 Domesday Book listing, the town was explicitly described as a borough, and as two of its three manors were held by the king, it was an important settlement (Ditchfield & Page 1923). It also remained a regionally significant river crossing point as in 1312 King Edward II directed that its bridges should be kept in good order (Lyte 1892). An abbey was founded at Reading in 1121, by Henry I, which probably nurtured the growth of the town (Phillips 1980: 17). Indeed, by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Reading expanded south and eastwards along the roads leading to London and Southampton (*ibid.*). During the medieval period, Reading developed rapidly as a manufacturing and market centre; particularly for the production of woollen cloth and leather goods (DBA 2020: 9).

The only heritage asset listed within the HER search area for this period is The Conduit on Highgrove Street (HER 01022.14.000). This is a spring that lies on the west side of Highgrove Street, approximately 15m north of Christchurch Road. The spring has a long tradition, both documentary and oral of supplying water to Reading Abbey. This is strengthened by records of discoveries of lead pipes near the Kennet and Avon Canal leading in this direction.

### 3.6 **Post-Medieval** (1500 - 1900)

By 1525, Reading was the largest town in Berkshire, and its tax returns show that it was the 10<sup>th</sup> largest town in England based on taxable wealth (Phillips 1980). By 1611, Reading had a population of over 5000 and had grown rich on its trade in cloth. The town also played an important role during the English Civil War, and despite its fortifications, it had a Royalist garrison imposed on it in 1642 (Barrès-Baker 2004). The subsequent Siege of Reading by Parliamentary forces succeeded in April 1643 (*ibid.*). 'Harrisons Barn', which would have been located at the current Junction of Whitley Street and Christchurch Road, and is situated within the HER search area, was the scene of a defining skirmish in the siege of Reading in April 1643 (DBA 2020: 10). Forces under the command of the Earl of Essex went on to advance 'through' Harrisons Barn and onwards past St Giles and into Reading, which soon fell under Parliamentary control. The town's cloth trade was especially badly damaged by the civil war, and the economy did not fully recover until the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ditchfield & Page 1923).

The town's urban development continued into the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (DBA 2020: 10), with a significant increase in its population and size at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the coming of the railways.

Remains from this period are limited, and most are located outside of the HER search area. Post-medieval and modern activity was revealed at Abbey School Playing Fields (HER MRM16638), Kendrick Road, c. 400m north of the development, where an alignment of 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> century pits and modern ditches were identified during an archaeological evaluation (ERM1362) in 2012. Four fragments of brick/tile (HER RD15656) were unearthed during archaeological evaluation at Southampton Street just beyond the north-eastern limit of the HER search area. Also dating from the post-medieval period, evaluations on East Street, approximately 800m north of the Site revealed three pits and a possible oval well or cess pit containing post-medieval pottery, glass, clay tobacco pipe, bone, metal work, clay, brick and tile (DBA 2020: 10).



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The development is situated  $\geq 150\text{m}$  northeast of an historic main radial route that traverses south from the town, which has been in use since medieval times. The Reading to Basingstoke Turnpike (HER 05065.00.000) was a toll road that started in Reading at the Crown Inn, which once stood at the corner of London Street and Crown Street, and ran south to Basingstoke. The Turnpike was established in 1718.

### 3.7 **Modern** (1900 - present)

The earliest outline of the development site boundary markings appear in the 1958 Ordnance Survey Map, and the narrow access to Highgrove Street and the perimeter wall can also be identified (DBA 2020: 11). This is the period when it was known to have belonged to the established Reading building firm of PH Smith Ltd. This firm is responsible for much of the building work completed in the Reading area during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is highly probable that the first use of the site as a light industrial yard began during this period.

The only heritage asset listed within the HER search area is the Christ Church War Memorial (HER MRM18275) on Christchurch Road, which was erected in 1920 to commemorate the men of the parish who died in the Great War. Finally, an Archaeological Watching Brief (2008) on Boults Road, c. 200m south west of the development, revealed that the impacted area was archaeologically sterile (DBA 2020: 11).

### 3.2 **The Known Archaeology & History of the Site**

A study of manuscripts, and historic and modern maps dating from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century (DBA 2020: 4, 10-11, 23-33) indicates that the area of the development site was originally open countryside and remained so for much of this period. Up until 1834 there was little development in the immediate area as the primary development was focused adjacent to the road in a traditionally linear growth format. In the late 1880's the builder of Highgrove Street kept the area of land to the east of the street that is now the development site for his own storage purposes during the building of the new terraces. Map evidence encompassing the development site suggests that it remained in this unaltered state until the period between the wars and the first change is shown on the Berkshire Map 1931/32 that details a large glass house within the area of the site. However, later maps reveal this to have been demolished during the construction of the enclosed parcel of land or yard as it is today; this is believed to have occurred during the 1950s.



## 4 Results

### 4.1 Introduction

In October 2020 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation of Land at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire, prior to the erection of eight new dwellings and associated landscaping within the development site. The Archaeological Evaluation entailed the excavation of two trenches (Trench 1: 15.4m (L) x 2.1m (W) x 0.6-1m (D); and Trench 2: 25.1m (L) x 2m (W) x 0.6-0.9m (D)), with a total area of 82.54m square, utilising a 8 tonne tracked digger fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 5; Plates 1-2). The layout of Trench 2 had to be modified to accommodate the presence of a standing building in the evaluation area (Plate 2).

### 4.2 Description

The stratigraphy revealed across the excavated areas comprised (Figs 6-7; Plates 3-4):

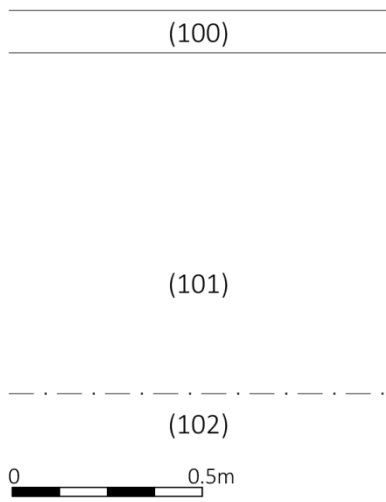
- Concrete (100, 200): A modern concrete surface that was c. 0.20m thick.
- Made-ground (201): Dark grey to black silty sand, with inclusions of fragmentary modern brick, and plastic. This deposit was concentrated at the southern end of Trench 2, and was <0.60m deep.
- Subsoil 1 (101): Dark grey to black sand with small amounts of flint (<0.05m) revealed in Trench 1. This layer was 0.5-0.9m deep.
- Subsoil 2 (202): Mid brownish grey sand with small amounts of flint (<0.05m) revealed in Trench 2. Occasional large tree roots were also present. This layer was 0.5-0.8m deep.
- Natural 1 (102): Yellowish brown to grey clay with occasional small flint (<0.05m) inclusions. This material was encountered at the base of Trench 1.
- Natural 2 (203): This material was revealed at the base of Trench 2, and, macroscopically, appeared to be similar to Natural 1 (102) though it also contained a component of sand.

The north end of Trench 1 was, at least, discoloured by leaching from an adjacent soakaway that had stained the natural geology greenish grey & black. Trench 2 contained the remains of modern brick tank and portions of three galvanised metal tanks, probably for water-storage, and a cast-iron pipe that was associated with the southern-most metal tank (Fig. 8; Plate 5). All appeared to be 20<sup>th</sup> century in date.

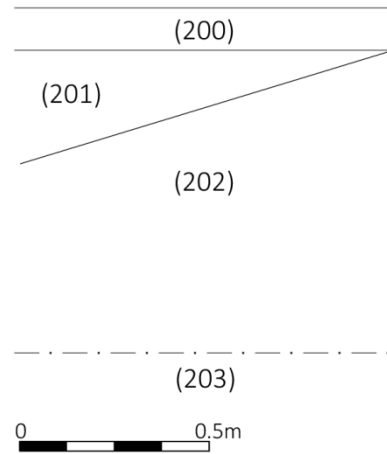
On completion of the fieldwork, no significant archaeological features, finds, or deposits were revealed within either of the evaluation trenches.



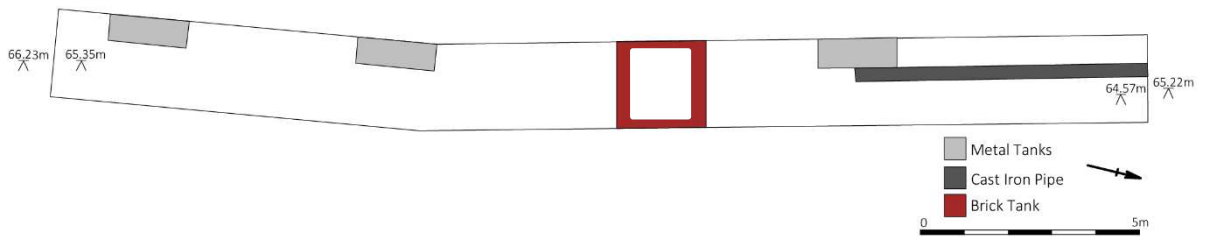
Figure 5: Actual trench plan (scale 1: 500)



**Figure 6:** Schematic stratigraphy of Trench 1 (scale 1:20)



**Figure 7:** Schematic stratigraphy of Trench 2 (scale 1:20)



**Figure 8:** Trench 2 plan (scale 1:150)



Plate 1: Trench 1, facing NW



Plate 2: Trench 2, facing SE



Plate 3: Trench 1 stratigraphy



Plate 4: Trench 2 stratigraphy.



Plate 5: Foundations of the brick tank in Trench 2, facing SE





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## 5 Conclusions

The excavation of two evaluation trenches at the development site did not reveal any significant archaeological features, deposits or artefacts. Beneath the concrete surface that covered at the southern, higher end of the site, was a small deposit of made-ground overlying subsoil, 20<sup>th</sup> century brick and metal water-storage tanks and the natural geology. The lower end of the site appears to have been truncated by an unknown amount, as the made ground directly overlies the natural geology and is of a greater depth than higher up the site. It was not possible to record the point at which the subsoil had been removed as it fell somewhere between the two trenches. However, it is likely this occurred during the development of the site in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century.

On the basis of the available evidence it appears that the development site was probably situated outside of any local settlement activity prior to the later post-medieval and early modern periods, and as such, archaeological intervention was unable to advance the stated research aims on this occasion.



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## 6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to VJS Projects Ltd for commissioning this report. Thanks are also due to Roland Smith of Berkshire Archaeology for monitoring the project.

The fieldwork was carried out by David Kaye BA ACIfA and Thomas Jones MA. The report was written by Derek Watson PhD, and edited by Karin Kaye MA MCIfA.



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## 7 Archive

7.1 As no finds have been retained the archive will be deposited digitally on ADS.



## 8 References

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**Appendix 1: Photograph List**

SITE NO/CODE: 546/RHS		Site Name: Land at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire
Shot	View	Subject
1	NW	Trench 1
2	NW	Trench 1
3	SE	Trench 2
4	SE	Trench 2
5	NW	Trench 2
6	NW	Trench 2
7	NE	Trench 2 stratigraphy
8	NE	Trench 2 stratigraphy
9	NE	Trench 1 stratigraphy
10	NE	Trench 1 stratigraphy
11	SE	Modern brick 'water tank' foundations
12	SE	Modern brick 'water tank' foundations



## Appendix 2: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
<b>Project Name &amp; Address</b>	Land at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire	<b>Project Site Code</b>	546/RHS
<b>OASIS reference</b>	kdkarcha1-402183	<b>Event/Accession no</b>	N/A
<b>OS reference</b>	SU7211 7227	<b>Study area size</b>	82.54m square
<b>Project Type</b>	Archaeological Evaluation	<b>Height (mAOD)</b>	64
<b>Short Description</b>	In October 2020 KDK Archaeology Ltd undertook an Archaeological Evaluation of Land at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire, prior to the erection of eight new dwellings and associated landscaping within the development site. The excavation of two evaluation trenches revealed only 20th century brick and metal water-storage tanks, and a cast-iron pipe. As subsoil is present within the excavated area and available historical records indicate that it was only under development from the earlier 20th century it appears that the development site was probably situated outside of any local settlement activity prior to the later post-medieval and early modern periods.		
<b>Previous work</b>	None	<b>Site status</b>	None
<b>Planning proposal</b>	Erection of 8 new dwellings (Use class C3) including landscaping. Demolition of existing buildings within site.	<b>Current land use</b>	Commercial/Industrial
<b>Local Planning Authority</b>	Reading Borough Council	<b>Planning application ref.</b>	171477
<b>Monument type</b>	None	<b>Monument period</b>	Modern
<b>Significant finds</b>	None	<b>Future work</b>	Unknown
PROJECT CREATORS			
<b>Organisation</b>	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
<b>Project Brief originator</b>	Berkshire Archaeology	<b>Project Design originator</b>	KDK Archaeology Ltd
<b>Project Manager</b>	David Kaye BA ACIFA	<b>Director/Supervisor</b>	David Kaye BA ACIFA
<b>Sponsor/funding body</b>	VJS Projects Ltd, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor, 181 Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 2DZ		
PROJECT DATE			
<b>Start date</b>	15.10.2020	<b>End date</b>	15.10.2020
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	<b>Location</b>	<b>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)</b>	
<b>Physical</b>		None	
<b>Digital</b>	KDK Archaeology Ltd	WSI, Report, photographs, field-work sheets	
<b>Digital</b>	ADS	Report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
<b>Title</b>	Archaeological Evaluation Report: Land at 125 Highgrove Street, Reading, Berkshire		
<b>Serial title &amp; volume</b>	KDK Archaeology 546/RHS/2.1		
<b>Author(s)</b>	Derek Watson PhD		
<b>Page no's</b>	20	<b>Date</b>	21.10.2020