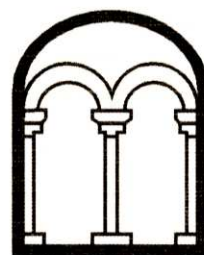


**LAND TO THE REAR OF
21 REGENT STREET
DUNSTABLE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP
AND SAMPLE EXCAVATION,
ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Albion
archaeology



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Project: RS2817
HER search reference: 201617/57
Luton Culture accession no: LUTNM: 2019/01
OASIS no: albionar1-252242

Document: 2018/156
Version 1.0

Compiled by	Checked by	Approved by
Wiebke Starke	Gary Edmondson	Drew Shotliff

7th January 2019

Prepared for:
Martin Lockyear Contracting

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Preface

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Acknowledgements

The project was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Hannah Firth (Central Bedfordshire Council Archaeologist). The fieldwork was undertaken by Wiebke Starke. This report has been prepared by Wiebke Starke. The figures were compiled by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician). All Albion projects are under the overall management of Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager).

Albion Archaeology

St Mary's Church

St Mary's Street

Bedford, MK42 0AS

☎: 0300 300 6867

E-mail: g.edmondson@albion-arch.com

Website: www.albion-arch.com

Version History

Version	Issue date	Reason for re-issue
1.0	07/01/2019	n/a

Key Terms

The following terms or abbreviations are used throughout this report:

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CBCA	CBC Archaeologist
CBM	Ceramic building material
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
HER	Historic Environment Record
LPA	Local Planning Authority
PDA	Permitted development area
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation



Non-Technical Summary

Planning permission was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of a new two-storey one-bedroom house, with associated parking and garden, in the rear section of the garden of No. 21 Regent Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 1LP (CB/15/03803/FULL).

Dunstable is situated in South Bedfordshire, with Luton 7km to the east and Leighton Buzzard 9.7km to the north-west. Regent Street lies to the north of the centre of Dunstable, c. 400m north-west of the intersection of the town's two principal roads — the High Street (A5) and West Street/Church Street (A505)

The permitted development area (PDA) lies within a sensitive archaeological landscape, just outside the Roman core of Durocobrivis, but inside the limits of medieval Dunstable, as recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER). The former site of a prehistoric round barrow is also known to be situated c. 60m to the north-west of the PDA.

As the development had the potential to impact below-ground archaeological remains of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date, a condition (no. 5) was attached to the planning consent, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological strip, map and sample excavation, including provisions for post-excavation analysis and publication, as required.

The investigation was undertaken in dry weather on 20th November 2018. At the time of the work, the rubbish which had previously occupied the PDA, had been removed to ground level. The investigation focused on the areas of the development that required significant ground reduction, comprising the footprint of the building, the patio area of the garden to the south-east and the car parking space to the west.

The higher terrace away from the street frontage revealed undisturbed chalk geological strata, apart from a modern service and manhole shaft. The lower terrace parallel to the street frontage revealed a variety of features, including the truncated remains of a small post-medieval gully, aligned roughly NE-SW. An area of disturbance in the north-western part of the PDA may be associated with the construction of cellars for the adjacent properties. Other features included service trenches and associated manhole shafts, along with modern rectangular pits containing building waste. A modern brick-lined planting pit was also revealed close to the pavement.

If any substantial earlier features had been present, they would have extended into the chalk and survived in undisturbed ground between the modern features. However, no such pre-modern features were revealed.

The recorded remains are considered to be of no more than local significance and have no potential to address regional research objectives. No further analysis of the results of the fieldwork beyond that presented in this report is required.

The project archive subject to the landowner's permission will be deposited will be deposited with Luton Culture (accession no. LUTNM: 2019/01). This report will be uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website (ref. albionar1-252242).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Project Background*

Planning permission was granted by Central Bedfordshire Council for the construction of a new two-storey one-bedroom house, with associated parking and garden, in the rear section of the garden of No. 21 Regent Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 1LP (CB/15/03803/FULL).

The permitted development area (PDA) lies just outside the Roman core of *Durocbrivis*, but inside the limits of medieval Dunstable, as recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER). The former site of a prehistoric round barrow is also known to be situated c. 60m to the north-west of the PDA.

As the development had the potential to impact below-ground archaeological remains of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date, a condition (no. 5) was attached to the planning consent, requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological strip, map and sample excavation, including provisions for post-excavation analysis and publication, in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, approved in writing by the local planning authority. This was in accordance with national planning guidelines in the form of the *National Planning Policy Framework – Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, which was published on 27 March 2012¹ (and reissued in July 2018).

1.2 *Site Location, Topography and Geology*

Dunstable is situated in South Bedfordshire, with Luton 7km to the east and Leighton Buzzard 9.7km to the north-west. The north-eastern edge of Dunstable merges with Houghton Regis. Regent Street lies to the north of the centre of Dunstable, c. 400m north-west of the intersection of the town's two principal roads — the High Street (A5) and West Street/Church Street (A505) (Figure 1). Regent Street leads south-west from High Street North (A5).

The PDA lies at the south-west end of Regent Street, on the south side. At the time of the fieldwork it comprised a mix of tarmac and concrete hard-standing. It is bounded to the south-west by two parking areas and the garden of 21A Regent Street, whilst to the north-east it abuts the terrace house at 19 Regent Street. Once the modern material and rubbish, which had been dumped at the site, had been removed a distinctive step or terrace was apparent (Figure 3: image 1), with the area away from the street frontage being 0.2–0.3m higher than the rest of the site.

Dunstable lies on the northern edge of the chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills, with an underlying solid geology of Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation². The topography of the area is undulating with a number of ridges and valleys. Dunstable town centre lies on relatively level, higher ground with the PDA at c. 146m OD. It is centred on grid reference TL 015638 223589.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2012). Available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>

² Contains British Geological Survey materials © NERC 2016



1.3 Archaeological Background

The archaeological and historical background of Dunstable, in particular the area within a 500m radius of the PDA, was discussed in a heritage statement produced in support of the planning application (Albion 2016a). An updated search of the HER was carried out (ref.: 201617/57) for the Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion 2016b). This revealed evidence of activity from the prehistoric period onwards. The most relevant prehistoric heritage asset to the DA, in terms of proximity, is the site of a former round barrow (HER 128) that was situated c. 60m to the north-west, on Edward Street.

In the Roman period, Dunstable was situated at the crossroads of the Roman Watling Street (HER 5508) — running through Bedfordshire on its route from London to Holyhead on the line of the present-day A5 — and the prehistoric Icknield Way. It is named as *Durocbrivis* (HER 135) in the Antonine Itinerary, a Roman road book describing routes throughout the Roman Empire and the towns along them (Simco 1984, 30). *Durocbrivis* was the name given by the Romans to the settlement at the crossroads of Watling Street and the Icknield Way, which is today called Dunstable. Since the large-scale re-development and expansion of Dunstable from the mid-20th century onwards, a considerable quantity of Roman remains have been excavated and recorded within the centre of the town, particularly near the crossroads, proving the existence of a sizable regional centre. The core of the Roman town seems to have radiated out for a distance of around 400m from the Icknield Way/Watling Street crossroads.

The PDA lies c. 370m to the north-west of the crossroads, just outside the core of the Roman town as defined by the HER. However, it lies within 80m of Watling Street, which means that although it appears to be located some distance away from the Roman centre, the presence of associated Roman remains could not be discounted. In particular, there was an increased likelihood of the presence of roadside burials. Burials have been uncovered in two locations on Albion Street within 220m of the PDA, and an early Roman cemetery was recorded west of High Street North, 280m north-east of the PDA. A large cemetery was uncovered at Friary Field, c. 150m south of West Street. There are also a number of recorded Roman find-spots comprising pottery and metal objects such as coins. The most relevant to the PDA, in terms of distance, was a coin found in a garden on Union Street, c. 180m to the west of the PDA, and a harness mount found c. 130m to the south-west at 68 Princes Street.

The decline of Roman *Durocbrivis* is likely to have taken place during the late 4th or 5th century, when Roman urban life essentially came to an end. Dunstable is not mentioned as such in the Domesday Survey of 1086, because it was part of the Royal Manor of Houghton Regis at this time. Evidence of Saxon activity identified so far has been restricted to the north-west part of the modern town some 1.6km from the PDA.

Henry I deliberately created Dunstable (HER 16986) as a market town in the early 1100s and encouraged settlers to the area by the promise of land and privileges. The town developed around the same Icknield Way/Watling Street crossroads as Roman *Durocbrivis*. The PDA lies in the northern part of the medieval core, as defined in the HER. Union Street, c. 141m to the north of the PDA, is considered



likely to mark the northern boundary of the town (enclosed by a ditch), according to documentary sources (Albion 2003). However, the presence of a town ditch in this location is yet to be confirmed through archaeological investigation. The closest medieval building to the PDA is of 15th-century date (HER 15496, originally two buildings and now Grade II listed); it survives on the north side of West Street *c.* 300m to the south-east of the PDA. Buried features, such as kilns, pits and ditches, have been recorded at a number of locations in Dunstable town centre. The faint remains of a medieval building (HER 16101) have also been identified at Blacksmiths Court, Mathew Street, *c.* 190m to the south-east of the PDA.

Dunstable's position on the A5 (Watling Street) meant that from the medieval period onwards, it prospered as a stopping point for coaches on the way from London to the north-west. From the 17th century onwards many coaching inns were constructed along High Street North and High Street South. A number of inns and hotels still exist along the High Street and West Street and are now designated Grade II listed buildings, e.g. the Old Sugar Loaf Inn (HER 6255) and the Plume of Feathers (HER 6312). The most relevant heritage assets to the PDA, in terms of their proximity, are the 19th-century house at 21 Regent Street, on the west side of the PDA, a row of three 19th-century houses *c.* 30m to the east at 7, 9 and 11 Regent Street and a row of 19th-century houses at 66-70 Edward Street. All are undesignated. The nearest Grade II listed building is a 19th-century house (HER 4278) at the north-east end of Regent Street, 100m east of the PDA.

1.4 Project Objectives

The general objectives of the archaeological investigation were to:

- establish the date, nature and extent of any activity or occupation within the PDA;
- establish the integrity and state of preservation of any archaeological features or deposits present;
- establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes;
- to recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions.

The specific objectives of the archaeological investigation were to determine if:

- there was further evidence of prehistoric monuments and/or burial on the PDA;
- there was any evidence for Roman and/or medieval occupation alongside Watling Street on the PDA (Oake 2007, 11) ;
- there was any evidence for the layout, development and urban character of medieval Dunstable in areas away from the priory (Oake 2007, 14);
- if there was any below-ground evidence relating to the post-medieval use of the PDA (Medlycott 2011, 79).

The significance of any archaeological remains uncovered during the fieldwork would be assessed against the published research frameworks for the region. The relevant documents for the region are provided by *Research and Archaeology: A*



Framework for the Eastern Counties (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Hertfordshire and Essex) (Brown and Glazebrook 2000) and *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

In addition to these regionally focussed documents, work has also specifically been done on the county of Bedfordshire: *Bedfordshire Archaeology. Research and Archaeology: Resource Assessment, Research Agenda and Strategy* (Oake et al 2007).



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach to the project is summarised below. A full methodology is provided in the WSI (Albion 2016b).

2.1 *Methodological Standards*

The standards and requirements set out in the following documents were adhered to throughout the project:

Albion Archaeology	<i>Procedures Manual: Volume 1 Fieldwork</i> , 3rd edition (2017)
CIfA	<i>Charter and By-law; Code of Conduct</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological excavation</i> (2014)
	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i> (2014)
EAA	<i>Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England</i> (2003)
Historic England	<i>Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) Project Managers' Guide</i> , ver.1.2 (2015)
	<i>Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation</i> , 2nd edition (2011)
Luton Culture	<i>Procedures for preparing archaeological archives for deposition with Luton Culture</i> (2013)

The archive of site records generated during the project will be kept secure at all stages of the investigation. All records and materials produced will be archived to the standards outlined in English Heritage's *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* and those set out by Luton Borough Council (Luton Culture 2013). On publication of the final report, the archive of materials (subject to the landowner's permission) and accompanying records will be deposited with Luton Culture (accession no. LUTNM: 2019/01). Details of the project and its findings will be submitted to the OASIS database in accordance with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service (OASIS ID: albionar1-252242).

2.2 *Archaeological Works*

The Strip, Map and Sample investigation was undertaken in dry weather on 20th November 2018. At the time of the work, the rubbish which had previously occupied the site had been removed to ground level. The investigation focused on those areas of the development that required significant ground reduction — the footprint of the building, the patio area of the garden to the south-east and the car parking space to the south-west (Figure 2). Due to the restrictions in space for soil bunding and the negative results within the initially stripped area, it was agreed with the CBCA that the full extent of the car park area did not need to be archaeologically monitored.



The ground reduction was undertaken by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-edged bucket, operated by an experienced driver under the supervision of an archaeologist. The overburden was removed to the top of archaeological deposits or the top of undisturbed geological deposits, whichever was encountered first.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

All deposits revealed during the fieldwork are discussed below and shown on Figure 2. Relevant images are presented on Figures 3–6. Context numbers in round brackets refer to fills or layers (***). Cuts are defined by square brackets [***]. The finds were recorded on site and due to their modern date were not retained; they are described within the text of Section 3.3.

3.2 Overburden and Geological Deposits

3.2.1 Overburden

In the garden area the overburden (1) comprised *c.* 0.15m of topsoil, with inclusions of ceramic building material (CBM) and other modern building materials. In the main house area at the front of the property, the overburden was 0.1–0.15m thick and included modern CBM, concrete, slag, metal and cable fragments. In areas close to the street-frontage pavement, a tarmac “shelf” overlay the geological strata, indicating that this area had been stripped of overburden in recent times. At the southern margin of the property, which was bounded by a wooden fence with concrete sleepers and concrete fence posts, an extensive concrete shelf and concrete mounds, supporting the fence, overlay the geological strata, again indicating removal of overburden in recent times. Generally the level of the western part of the site lay below the road level.

3.2.2 Geological strata

The patio / garden occupying the higher terrace area was stripped first, revealing undisturbed white chalk (2) only 0.15m below the current ground level (Figure 3: images 1 and 2). This was disturbed in the north-west corner, close to the lower terrace, by a modern service manhole shaft and associated service trench. The chalk on the lower terrace, towards the street frontage was disturbed by a post-medieval gully and a variety of modern features (Figure 2 and Figure 4: images 3 and 4).

3.3 Archaeological Features

The results are discussed by location, starting to the rear of the property on the upper terrace.

3.3.1 Upper terrace

The area occupying the rear of the property contained two modern features that truncated the chalk terrace:

- a rectangular brick-lined manhole *c.* 1m by 0.9m, which disturbed the chalk towards the north-western limit of the upper terrace;
- an associated service trench (with ceramic sewer pipe) extending to the west, towards the street frontage (Figure 2 and Figure 3: image 2).

Extending from the northern margin of the PDA was a 0.2m-wide, linear feature [7], at least 4.5m long and continuing eastwards beyond the investigation area (Figure 2 and Figure 3: image 2). It was backfilled with friable mid-red-brown sandy silt (8) that contained CBM, metal, disused items and sawn animal bone



fragments. This feature appears to be the footing trench for the rear extension to the adjacent property.

3.3.2 Lower terrace

Removal of the overburden (1) from the main area of the house footprint, situated towards the street frontage indicated that the underlying geology (2) had been subjected to previous truncation, to form a lower terrace in this area, with an overall reduction of *c.* 0.15m. A post-medieval gully and series of modern features were revealed on the lower terrace towards the street frontage, which will be discussed by period.

3.3.2.1 *Post-medieval gully*

The narrow truncated gully [3] was observed in the central part of the PDA, aligned roughly NE-SW. It was at least 2.6m long (Figure 2 – brown feature and Figure 5: image 5) and was truncated by service trenches and later activity to the east and west (red features on Figure 2). In section it had an asymmetric profile, 0.45m wide and 0.15m deep, with a steeper southern edge (Figure 2: section 1).

The light grey-brown chalky silt fill (4) contained frequent chalk fragments, as well as CBM and a very small, heavily patinated shard of glass, probably from an 18th-century bottle.

This feature cannot be correlated with any boundary shown on historical maps, although its alignment is similar to that of major land divisions shown on the 1840 Dunstable Tithe map.

3.3.2.2 *Modern features*

These comprised an irregular, though roughly triangular area of disturbance [5] in the north-western part of the lower terrace. The area was up to 5m across (extending to the edge of the lower terrace, coinciding with the width of the adjacent properties) by up to 3.4m wide towards the street frontage (Figure 2 – brown feature and Figure 5: image 6). It contained a series of fills, including redeposited chalk lenses and mid-grey-brown clay silt (6) that contained CBM fragments. It is likely that this disturbance is associated with the construction pit for the neighbouring cellar, rather than representing earlier quarrying.

The service trench, probably a sewer, continued onto the lower terrace, with the remains of another brick-lined manhole shaft marking a south-westerly change in the direction of the trench (Figure 2 and Figure 5: image 5).

Two modern rectangular machine-dug pits [9], *c.* 2m long by up to 1m wide, were identified on perpendicular alignments (Figure 4: image 3), cutting into the roughly triangular area of disturbance and the service trench. These had been backfilled with modern building rubble and other debris, including redundant scaffold poles, cables and wiring, ‘Styrofoam’ type-insulation, plastic, metal, glass, bricks and clinker.

Close to the pavement in the south-west part of the PDA was a circular brick-lined feature [11]. It was 1m in diameter and contained dark brown-black friable humic soil (Figure 2 and Figure 6: image 7). Areas of root disturbance radiated out into



the geological strata from this feature, which is thought to be a modern tree planter, associated with recent urban landscaping.



4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 *Summary of Results*

The original soil profile, comprising topsoil and associated subsoil deposits, did not survive on the PDA. It was probably removed during the creation of terracing, with the greatest ground reduction parallel to the street frontage. It is not clear if this ground reduction was associated with construction of the adjacent properties, although the extent of the street-frontage terrace corresponds to the original width of the adjacent property.

That part of the PDA closest to the street frontage had been subject to heavy disturbance, particularly in modern times. Although no features earlier than the post-medieval gully were identified, it is likely that any substantial features would have extended into the chalk geological strata, and would have been readily identified.

4.2 *Significance of Results*

The recorded remains are considered of no more than local significance; having no potential to address regional research objectives. No further analysis of the results of the fieldwork beyond that presented in this report is required.



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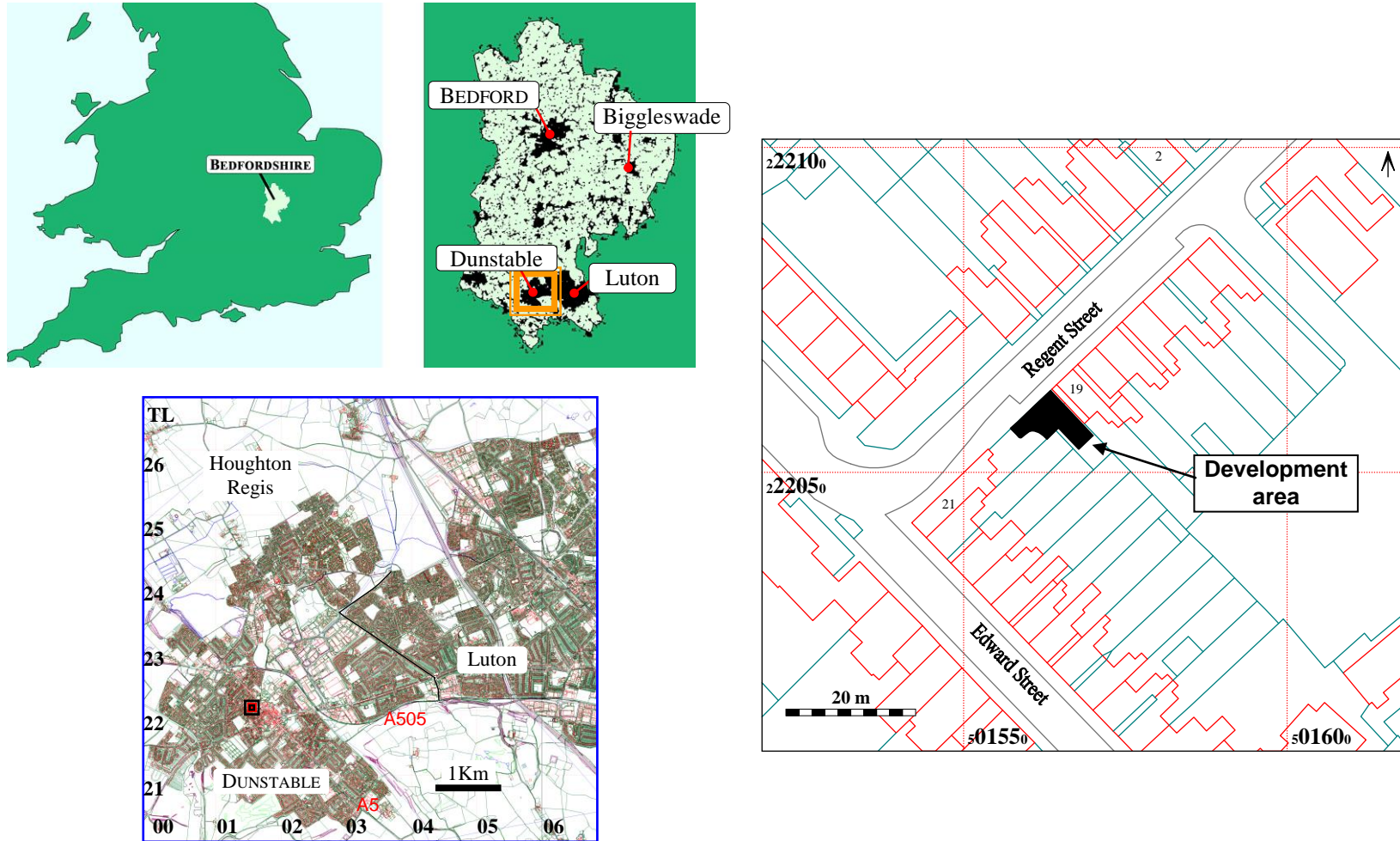
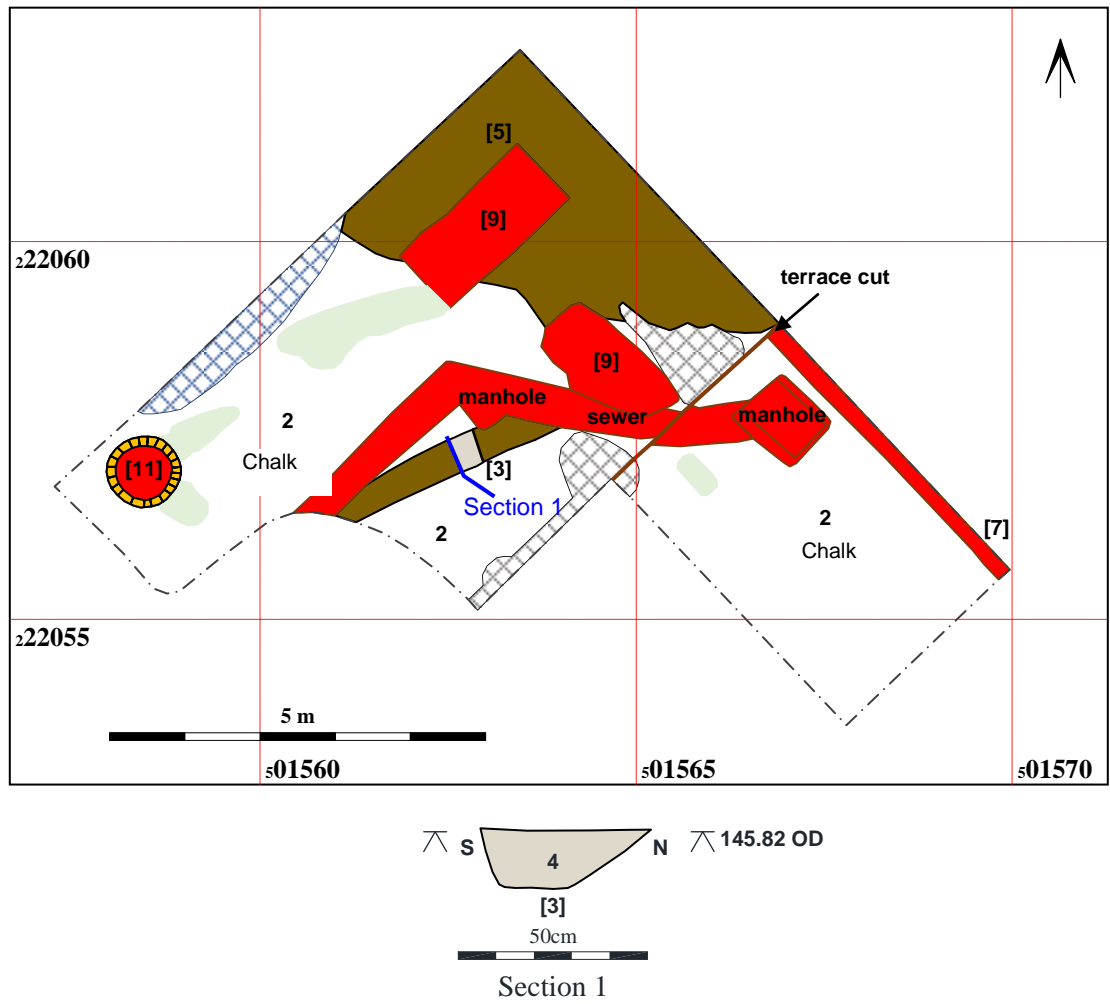


Figure 1: Site location plan

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*Land to the rear of 21 Regent Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire:
Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation, Analysis and Publication*



Key	
Plan	
	Trial trench
	Overburden/sloped side of trench
	Archaeological features
	Excavated segments
	Modern
	Concrete
	Tarmac
	Wall
	Root disturbance

Figure 2: All-features plan and section



Image 1: Pre-excitation view of garden area of site, looking south-east, showing the height difference between street frontage and the higher ground to the rear of the plot



Image 2: Stripping of garden area to the rear of the plot, looking south-east from the street frontage, showing the chalk terrace with foundation trench [7] at extreme left of image and manhole and associated service trench to lower left (Scale 1m in 50cm divisions)

Figure 3: Selected images 1 and 2



Image 3: Northern part of the lower terrace, with overburden removed, showing perpendicular modern rectangular pits [10], modern services and large irregular feature [5] (Scale 1m in 50cm divisions)



Image 4: South-western part of the lower terrace, with overburden removed, showing modern rectangular pit [10] to bottom right of image, modern service and circular tree-planting pit [11] (Scale 1m in 50cm divisions)

Figure 4: Selected images 3 and 4



Image 5: The pale fill of the post-medieval NE-SW aligned gully [3], marked by the photographic scale (truncated by modern services including a brick-lined manhole shaft) (Scale 20cm in 10cm divisions)



Image 6: Sondage into large irregular feature [5] in the north-western area of the lower terrace — the mixed fill includes lenses of re-deposited chalk geological strata. (Scale 20cm in 10cm divisions)

Figure 5: Selected images 5 and 6



Image 7: Modern brick-lined circular planting pit [11] (diameter 1m)

Figure 6: Selected image 7

Central
Bedfordshire

Albion
archaeology



Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
Bedford
MK42 0AS

Telephone 01234 294000
Email office@albion-arch.com
www.albion-arch.com

