

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

WATCHING BRIEF: 65-75 HIGH STREET SOUTH DUNSTABLE BEDFORDSHIRE

On behalf of Hearne-Holmes Developments Ltd



Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA & Calli Rouse BA PIFA

June 2008

ASC: 657/DHS/3r

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Site Data

ASC project code:	DHS		ASC Project No:	657			
County:		Bedfords	Bedfordshire				
Village/Town:		Dunstabl	e				
Civil Parish:		Dunstabl	e				
NGR (to 8 figs):		TL 0212	2168				
Present use:		Resident	ial				
Planning proposal:		Extensions to existing buildings					
Planning application	ref/date:	Not known					
Local Planning Autho	ority:	South Bedfordshire					
Date of fieldwork:		14/03/05 – 21/03/05; 25/06/07					
Client:		Hearne-Holmes Developments Ltd					
		Exchange House					
		494 Midsummer Boulevard					
		Milton Keynes					
		MK9 2EA					
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Internal Quality Check

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Edited/Checked By:		Date:	

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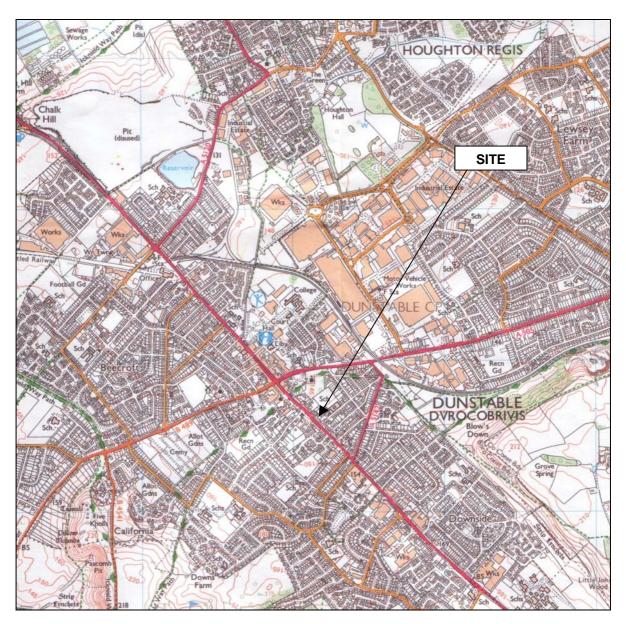


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During March 2005 and June 2007, an archaeological watching brief was carried out at 65-75 High Street South, Dunstable, during redevelopment of the site for housing. Several pit-like features and pieces of Totternhoe clunch stone were recorded on the site. An undated possible east-west ditch was observed on the eastern side of the site. Other than this, no further archaeological features were observed and no artefacts recovered.

1 Introduction

1.1 In March 2005 and June 2007 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at 65-75 High Street South (Jane Cart's Almshouses), Dunstable (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Hearne Holmes Development Ltd*, and was carried out according to a project design by ASC (657/DHS/1), prepared in response to a brief (BCC 2005) issued on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Luton Borough Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), Bedfordshire County Council (BCC). The relevant planning application reference is not known.

1.2 Planning Background

This watching brief has been required as a planning condition under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of extensions to the rear of the almshouses.

1.3 Location

The site is situated in Dunstable, in South Bedfordshire district, in the historic county of Bedfordshire (Fig. 1). The site is located in the historic town centre, on the east side of High Street South and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference TL 0212 2168.

1.4 Description

The site comprises a single approximately square plot of land fronting onto High Street South. Nos. 65-75 High Street South (Jane Cart's Almshouses) occupy the street frontage (Fig. 2).

1.5 Geology & Topography

The site is situated in an urban area and the soils in the town centre have not been mapped. If natural soils survive on the site they are likely to comprise the *Upton 1 Association*, namely shallow well-drained calcareous soil (Soil Survey 1983, 342a) over Middle Chalk (British Geological Survey 1992, sheet 220). The site is essentially flat and lies at an elevation of c.144m OD.

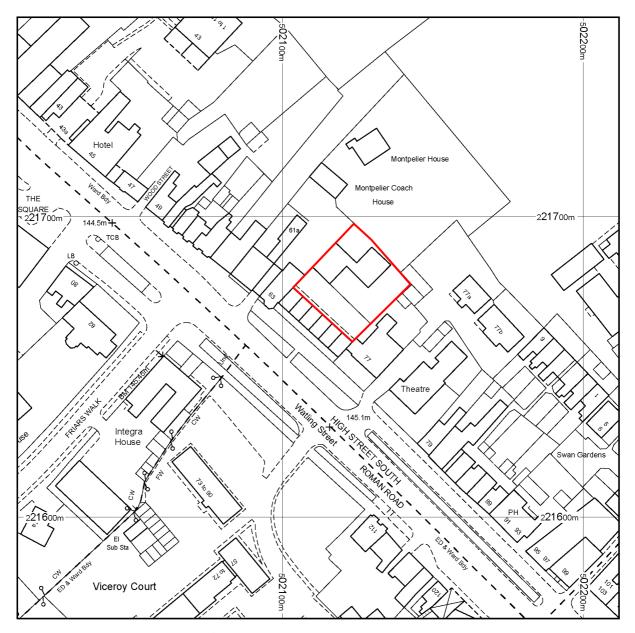


Figure 2: Site plan (*scale 1:1,250*)

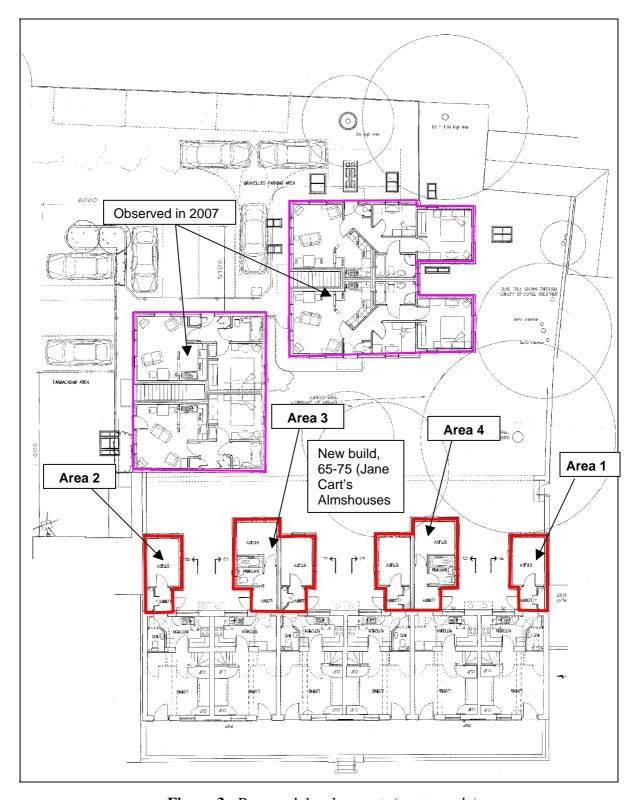


Figure 3: Proposed development (not to scale)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 *Aims*

As described in the brief (Section 4), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes
- To recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region
- To recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 5), which required:

- A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording to be undertaken during any development works likely to affect archaeological remains
- Any ground disturbance associated with the development to be undertaken under the supervision of a competent archaeologist

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

HER = Historic Environment Record

- 3.1 Dunstable is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance. This has been recognized by the local authority through the production of the *Dunstable Extensive Archaeological Survey* (BCC 2001). The survey indicates that the area has been occupied since the prehistoric periods and that the site lies on the edge of the Roman and medieval town of Dunstable (*ibid*, figs. 3 and 12). The site therefore has the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods but the focus of interest lies in the prehistoric and Roman periods.
- 3.2 Dunstable was an area of considerable importance during the prehistoric periods and a variety of sites and artefacts are known in the area (Matthews 1989). A number of prehistoric sites are known on higher ground of the Chiltern ridge, notably an important group of round barrows (burial mounds) known as the Five Knolls, which lie outside the study area c.3km southwest of the site (Dyer 1991). A further significant site, known as Maiden Bower, is situated to the northwest of the town centre and is interpreted as an Iron Age fort overlying an earlier causewayed enclosure (Matthews 1989, 36-41). A number of prehistoric artefacts are known from the town centre (eg HER 157), but these have largely resulted from chance finds rather than controlled archaeological excavation.
- 3.3 During the Roman period the area was dominated by a major road, now known as *Watling Street* (Simco 1984; OS 1979). The present High Street South follows the line of this road, which ran to the west of the almshouses. A small town, known as *Dvrocobrivis*, developed at the junction of *Watling Street* and the *Icknield Way*. Little large-scale archaeological work has taken place within the Roman town (Matthews 1989, 68) and the layout of the settlement is not well understood. Part of the Roman period cemetery has been excavated to the west of the site, at Friary Field (Gardner 2004) and a possible defensive ditch has been excavated north of the sites (HER 11281; Hagen 1972). The latter may indicate the southern limit of the town and as excavations to the east of the sites at Wellington Terrace (HER 15813; Warren 1992) failed to locate evidence of Roman activity, the sites probably lie to the south of the main area of Roman settlement. The *Extensive Archaeological Survey* shows the southern limit of Roman occupation on the northern edge of the site (BCC 2001, fig. 12).
- 3.4 There is currently little evidence for Saxon occupation in Dunstable, but remains of this period have been excavated at Puddlehill, *c*.3km north of the town centre, and a Saxon cemetery was excavated at Marina Drive, on the north side of the present town.
- 3.5 A new settlement was founded at Dunstable in 1119 by Henry I, who built a new royal residence, which was regularly visited until the 16th century. It has been suggested that this residence was located around Kingsbury Court and Old Palace Lodge, to the northeast of the sites.

- 3.6 An Augustinian priory was founded in Dunstable in *c*.1131. The priory, dedicated to St Peter was situated to the north of the sites and is a *Scheduled Ancient Monument* (SAM; no. 131). The site is situated close to the southern edge of the SAM, but is not within the scheduled area.
- 3.7 Little large-scale excavation has taken place within the monastery, but the west wall of the monastic precinct was recorded at the *Saracens Head* public house to the west of the sites (Warren 1984). The *Manshead Archaeological Society* have conducted a number of small-scale archaeological projects in the area, but in general little is known of the archaeology of the priory. An archaeological evaluation has recently been carried out at Montpelier House, with lies between the site and the monastic complex, but archaeological remains were not revealed in this area (Bolderson 2002). Consequently, it is likely that the site lies beyond the southern limit of the priory.
- 5.8 Religious institutions played an important part in the life of medieval Dunstable, and a Dominican friary was founded in 1259 on the west side of High Street South (Clark & Maull 1989; Green & Horne 1991; Gardner 2004). A number of cross-shaped pits, perhaps garden features associated with the friary have recently been recorded (Gardner 2004).
- 3.9 The almshouses (HER 4294) were constructed in *c*.1723 and are Grade II Listed. The front terrace wall (HER 6261) is also listed. The first edition Ordnance Survey map (1887) shows the site of nos 63A-B (to be subjected to a watching brief at a later date) as open ground, divided into small land parcels, probably garden plots. They remained open in the early part of the 20th century and the present buildings of 63 High Street south were probably constructed during the mid 20th century.

4 Results

4.1 *Introduction*

Five visits were made to the site between 14th and 21st March 2005, in both overcast and sunny conditions, to observe work in Areas 1-4 (Fig. 3). Full cooperation was received from the building contractors, although due to the disturbed conditions of the ground, conditions for observation were not ideal. A further visit was made in June 2007, to observe work in the area to the north of the redeveloped almshouses (Fig. 3).

4.2 **Results** (2005)

The removal of the topsoil from the development area was observed. This was typically 0.3m thick. The excavation of the footing trenches was also monitored. The trenches were typically 0.7m wide and between 1m and 1.7m deep. All were cut into natural chalk.

4.2.1 Area 1

After stripping the ground was too dirty to see the subsoil clearly, although occasional patches of chalk were visible through the disturbance (Area 1, Fig. 3). Artefacts recovered from this disturbed layer (Context 1, Fig. 4) all dated from the 19th century or later (e.g. willow pattern pottery).

4.2.2 Area 2

During groundworks in Area 2 (Fig. 3) a linear feature was observed (Context 2 Fig. 4). This feature was c.0.3m deep and at least c.1.2m wide. Blocks of Totternhoe clunch stone were observed on the southern side of the feature (Plate 1).

4.2.3 Area 3

In Area 3 (Fig. 3) the footing trenches were mostly cut directly into the natural chalk. A rectangular piece of worked clunch $(310 \times 390 \times 190 \text{mm})$ was recovered from a feature (Context 3, Fig. 4), on the north-east side of the area. The stone (Plate 2) was broken on one side, with tooling on the remaining three sides, and was probably a window mullion from the medieval or late medieval period. An area to the north-west of the extension (Context 5, Fig. 4), outside of the footprint of the building, was observed to contain oyster shell and occasional fragments of tile. As the feature was located outside the outline of the extension its existence was noted, but it was not examined in detail. In addition, an area of brown chalky material with occasional tiles (Context 4, Fig. 4) was detected in the cut of the footing trench, in the centre of Area 3.

4.2.4 Area 4

Observation of the footing trenches excavated in Area 4 (Fig. 3) revealed another patch of disturbed ground (Context 6, Fig. 4). This was situated in the southeast corner of the extension, and contained brown chalky material with occasional tile fragments.

4.3 *Results* (2007)

A single visit established that this phase of the development (Fig. 3) made considerable use of the existing foundations of a relatively modern building. The extent of new foundation trenches was limited to the south-east side of the existing footings (Fig. 4; Plates 3-4). The average width of the new foundations was 0.65m and the depth was about one metre where the ground had been newly excavated. The natural chalk subsoil was reached about 0.8m down from the surface. It was overlain by a varying matrix of dark grey soils containing chalk, tile, brick fragments and glass. Some 19th century drains were present, along with two shallow brick footings, which demarcated a thin spread of chalk (Plate 3). This lay on the south side of the site and almost certainly formed part of a floor of an outhouse, or possibly a privy.

The only feature of potential archaeological interest, a possible ditch terminal, lay on the eastern side of the development area. In this area the overlying soil was comparatively shallow, being no more that 0.25m deep. In the south-east corner of the new foundations a possible ditch terminal was observed (Fig. 4, Context 7; Fig. 5; Plate 4) as a possible linear feature orientated roughly NW-SE, terminating at its north-west end and extending beyond the footings to the south-east. It was estimated to be about 5m wide and about 1m deep. At the base of the feature lay fragments of roof tile, below a predominantly dark grey silty fill.

The spoil heaps were inspected but the only finds present were of late post-medieval date.

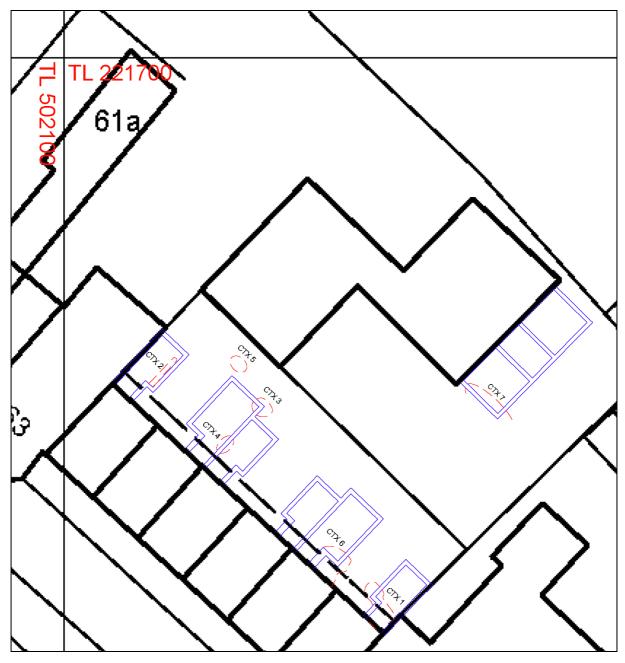


Figure 4: Features observed during watching brief (scale 1:250)

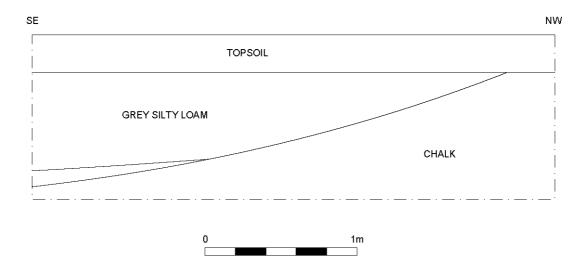


Figure 5: Context 7 as seen in section (scale 1:25)



Plate 1: Clunch blocks in situ, Context 2



Plate 2: Possible window mullion fragment from Context 3



Plate 3: South-west-facing section of 2007 footing trench



Plate 4: View west of possible ditch terminal (Context 7)

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Although a number of possible archaeological features were noted during the watching brief, the limited nature of the development made it difficult to determine their extent and nature. The absence of securely dateable finds (e.g. pottery) from their fills also made dating difficult, though the presence of roof tile and brick in many of the fills shows them to be of likely post-medieval or later date. It is possible that most, if not all, relate to activities associated with the neighbouring Almshouses.
- 5.2 The presence of clunch blocks in the fill of Context 2, and the fragment of window mullion from Context 3, point to the existence of a stone building in the vicinity. Although it is possible that this material could have come from the adjoining Priory site, it could equally have derived from a good-quality building fronting the High Street, or have been brought to the site as rubble. Again, the nature of the watching brief was too limited to provide a definitive explanation for the presence of this material.
- 5.3 From the observations made during the watching brief, it is unlikely that the development has had a significant impact on buried archaeological remains.

6. Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned and funded by Hearne Holmes Development Ltd. Thanks are also due to Lesley-Ann Mather, Archaeological Officer for the Heritage and Environment Section of Bedfordshire County Council, who acted as curatorial monitor.

Both phases of the watching brief were undertaken for ASC by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA. Text for the 2005 phase was prepared by Calli Rouse BA PIFA. The report was completed in 2007 by Jonathan Hunn. Subsequent revisions were made by Calli Rouse. All editing was carried out by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

7. Archive

- 7.1 The project archive will comprise:
 - 1. Brief
 - 2. Project Design
 - 3. Initial Report
 - 4. Clients site plans
 - 5. Site Monitoring Sheets
 - 6. List of photographs
 - 7. B/W prints & negatives
 - 8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.
- 7.2 The archive will be deposited with Luton Museum.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14.
- BCC 2005 Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Observation, Investigation, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Land at 63A-63B High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire. Heritage and Environment Section. Bedfordshire County Council.
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Secondary Sources

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Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

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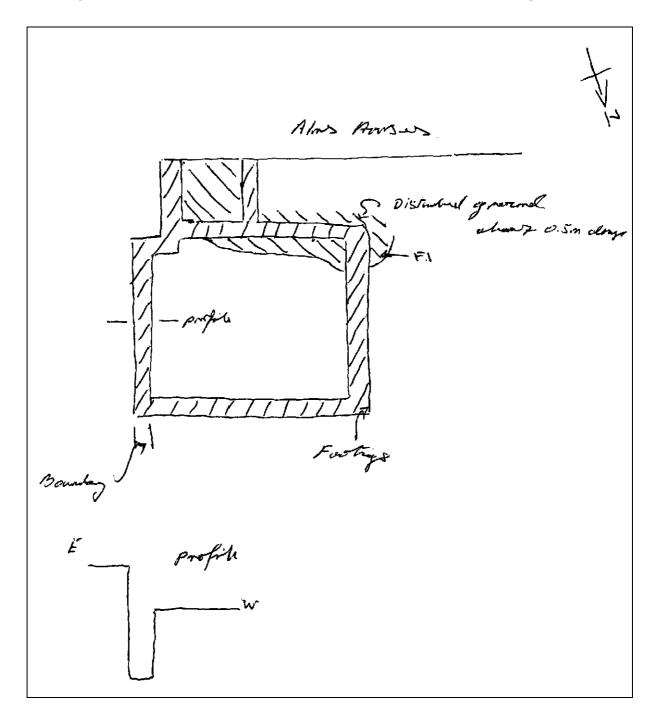
For sketch plan, use reverse

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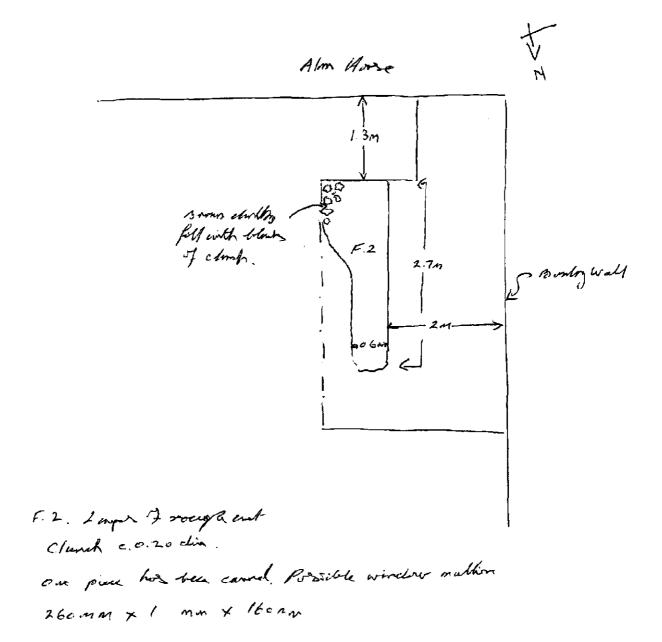
A.S.C. LTD	ARCHAEO	LOGIC	AL FIELD MON	ITORIN	G RE	CORD
I FIDIECI.		Project No.	(Code:	Sheet		
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Client/Developer Service	Hemm		<u></u>		•	
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Completed by:	H			·- <u>-</u>		
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Footings Services Roads	Levelling Quarr		pelines Other (sp	ecify):	· - -	
Site & weather conditions:						
D.#~	- Summ	· - 8	V ellenter &	. م		
						
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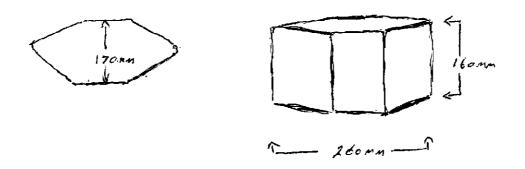
For sketch plan, use reverse

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A.S.A.C. LTD		17/3/09	CONTEXT RECORD
Site Name/Code 657 /	DHS	Co-ordinates	Context Number
Site Sub-division	Type Feature	Category world /	y ully 2
SOILS (& Bonding Agents)			
Texture		Consistency	
Colour	•		
Coarse components			
CUTS		MASONRY	
Pian	Profile	Constituents	
DIMENSIONS			
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INTERPRETATION			
Feater -	wordstel but	possibly medient.	
Part of	Provisional date/period	Phase	Matrix
REFERENCES FINDS Object record			
SAMPLES			
PHOTOGRAPHS Colour		B/W	
DRAWINGS Section		Plan	Site plan
RECORDING NOTES			
Excavation method	Recorded by	Date	Checked
& Conditions		_ <u></u>	
CONTINUED OVER		ONTINUATION SHEET	Version 1 (1998)

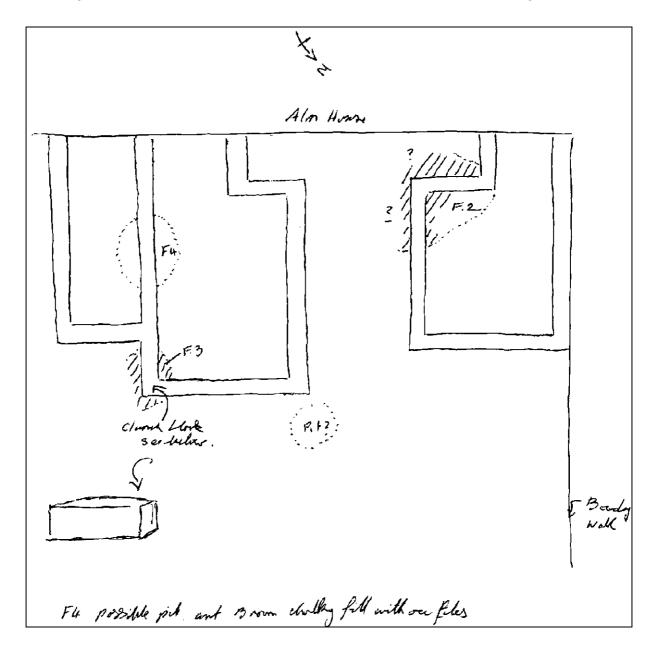




A.S.C. LTD ARCHA	EOLOGIC	AL FIELD	MONI	TORIN	G RE	CORD
Project: 65-75, High St South	Project No)/Code: / / Dtr		Sheet:	οf	5-
,	Date of	18/3	<u> </u>	_ _		-
Client/Developer	VISIT:	18/3	3/05			
Client/Developer David + train						
Contact:		Phone: のファ	9-0	2 0 40	8	
Duration of Visit Start: (inc. travel): / o em		Finish:	· · · · ·			
Completed by:				·		
Develor	ment Type:					
Footings Services Roads Levelling C	luarrying F	Pipelines (Other (spe	cify):		
Site & weather conditions:			_			l
Dry of Som	y	<u> </u>	_ .			
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For sketch plan, use reverse

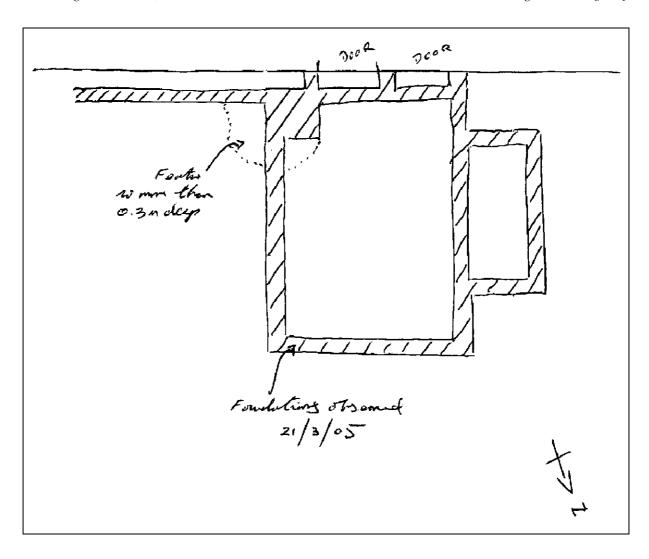
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A.S.C. LTD ARCHAE	OLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD
Project: 65-75 High Street South	Project No/Code: Sheet: 5 of 5
1 -	Date of
Client/Developer	visit: 21/3/05
Thanial Hearn	
Contact:	Phone: 0779 - 020 408
Duration of Visit Start: (Inc. travel): 10 cm	Finish:
Completed by:	
Develope	nent Type:
Footings Services Roads Levelling Qu	arrying Pipelines Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions:	
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For sketch plan, use reverse

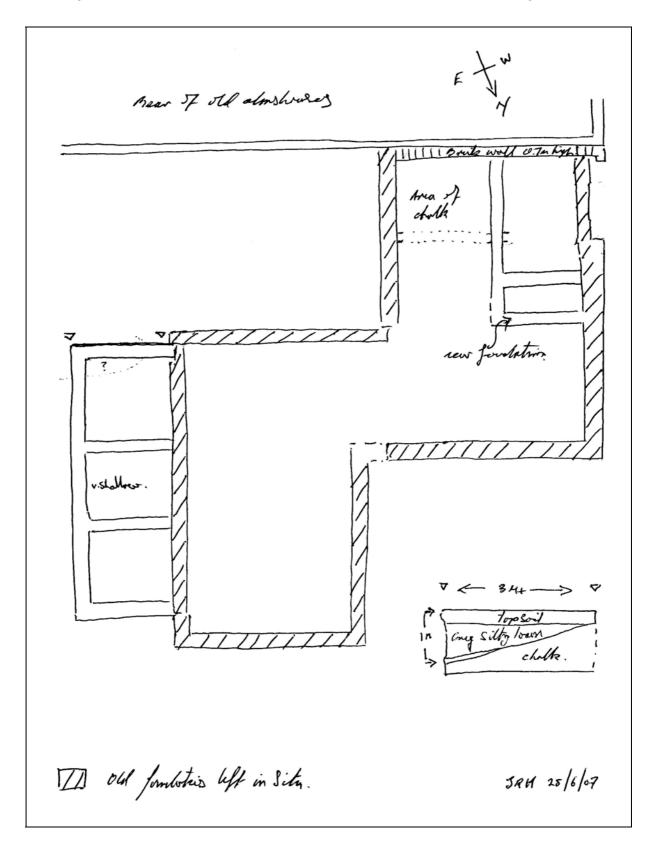
©ASC, 2003



A.S.C. LTD ARCHAE	OLOGIC	CAL FIELD MON	NITORING RECORD
Project:	Project No		Sheet: of
63, High St, Donstible	Date of	7 / DHS	1 01
Client/Developer	visit:	25/6/07	······································
Client/Developer avid them.		La	4.4.4.4.
Contact: Ivan - 0777157170	7.4	Phone:	
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For sketch plan, use reverse

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Appendix 2: List of Photographs

(4221-4334 taken in 2005; 1563-78 taken in 2007; * indicates colour transparency)

			2005; 1563-78 taken in 2007; * indicates colour transparency) age, Kingswood SITE NO/CODE: 936/KBR
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject View of rear of almshouses prior to re-development
2		4221	
		4222	Old privy partly demolished
3		4223	Old privy looking north
4		4224	Rear of almshouses looking west
5		4225	View north from almshouses to adjacent building
6		4226	Rear of almshouses looking eastwards
7)/ ±	4280	Rear of almshouses after initial site clearance
8	Yes*	4281	Ditto view west
9		4282	Ditto oblique view west
10		4283	Demolition of boundary wall
11		4284	Detail of rear of almshouse
12		4285	TV man and camera
13		4286	Detail of boundary foundation at the east end of site
14		4290	Ditto further to the north
15	Yes	4292	Easternmost foundations looking south
16		4293	Detail of ditto
17		4294	Machining at western end of almshouse site
18		4295	Ditto
19		4296	Clearance of soil at western end of site
20	Yes*	4297	Detail of ditto looking south
21		4298	Ditto
22		4299	Fragment of ashlar masonry
23		4300	Detail of window mullion plate 2
24	Yes*	4301	Ditto
25		4308	View of westernmost foundation looking south
26		4309	View of westernmost foundation looking east with clunch in situ plate 1
27	Yes*	4310	View of architectural fragments
28		4311	Overall view of westernmost foundations looking south west
29		4312	TV crew recording
30	Yes*	4313	View south west of foundation at western end of site
31	Yes*	4314	Detail of clunch blocks in section
32		4315	View of pit in section at west end
33		4316	TV crew resting
34		4317	View west along high Street
35		4326	View south west of central area of development
36		4327	Rear view of almshouses through gap in boundary wall
37		4328	View west along axis of former backyards of almshouses
38		4330	View south of front of almshouses
39		4331	Close up of almshouse plaque
40		4332	Lovers Lane sign
41		4333	View of Dunstable priory
42		4334	View south west of central foundation
43		1563	General view of the 2007 site looking west
45		1564	General view of the western end of the 2007 site
46		1565	Detail of east facing central foundation plate 3
47		1566	View west of foundations

48	1567	Oblique view of ditto
49	1568	View of site looking south east
50	1569	Deatail of ditto
51	1570	View south west of west facing section
52	1571	View east of west facing section
53	1572	View west of northern foundation
54	1573	General view of site looking NNW
55	1574	General view of site looking NW
56	1575	General view of site looking SW
57	1576	Oblique view of SE corner of new building
58	1577	Oblique view of possible E-W ditch terminal plate 4
59	1578	Excavation of eastern side of development
60	·	
61	·	

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project Name:	65-75 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire			
Short Description:	During March 2005 and June 2007, an archaeological watching brief was carried out at 65-75 High Street South, Dunstable, during redevelopment of the site for housing. Several pit-like features and pieces of Totternhoe clunch stone were recorded on the site. An undated possible east-west ditch was observed on the eastern side of the site. Other than this, no further archaeological features were observed and no artefacts recovered.			
Project Type:	Watching Brief			
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed) Current land use:	yes Residential property	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs) Future work:		none
Monument type:	none	(yes / no / unknown) Monument period:		none
		Worldment period.		Holie
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	none			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County:	Bedfordshire	OS refere (to at least		TL 0212 2168
District:	Dunstable	Parish:		Dunstable
Site address: (with postcode if known)	65-75 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire			
Study area:	26m x 9m; 9m x 10m; 10m x 4m	Height OI	D: 144m	
PROJECT CREATORS				
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd			
Project brief originator:	Lesley-Ann Mather	Project design originator:		David Fell
Project Manager:	D. Fell	Director/Supervisor:		J.R. Hunn
Sponsor / funding body:	Hearne-holmes Developments Ltd			
PROJECT DATE				
Start date:	14 th March 2005	End date:		June 25 th 2007
PROJECT ARCHIVES				
	Location	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)		
Physical:	Luton Museum	none		
Paper:	Luton Museum	Brief, PD, WB records, drawings, report		
Digital:	Luton Museum	CD with all digital files		
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)				
Title:	Watching Brief: 65-75 High Street South, Dunstable, Bedfordshire			
Author(s):	Jonathan R Hunn			
Entered by:	J.R. Hunn		Date:	29 th June 2007