

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT: 40 LUTON ROAD, DUNSTABLE BEDFORDSHIRE

*on behalf of
KingsOak Milton Keynes*



**by
David Fell BA MA MIFA**

February 2004

ASC: 554/DRL/1

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	DLR	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	554
<i>County:</i>	Bedfordshire		
<i>Parish:</i>	Dunstable		
<i>NGR:</i>	TL 028 221		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.2 ha		
<i>Present use:</i>	Disused		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Residential development		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Pre-planning		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	South Bedfordshire		
<i>Date of assessment:</i>	February 2004		
<i>Client:</i>	KingsOak Milton Keynes Gazeley House 26 Rockingham Drive Linford Wood Milton Keynes MK14 6PD		
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Internal Quality Check

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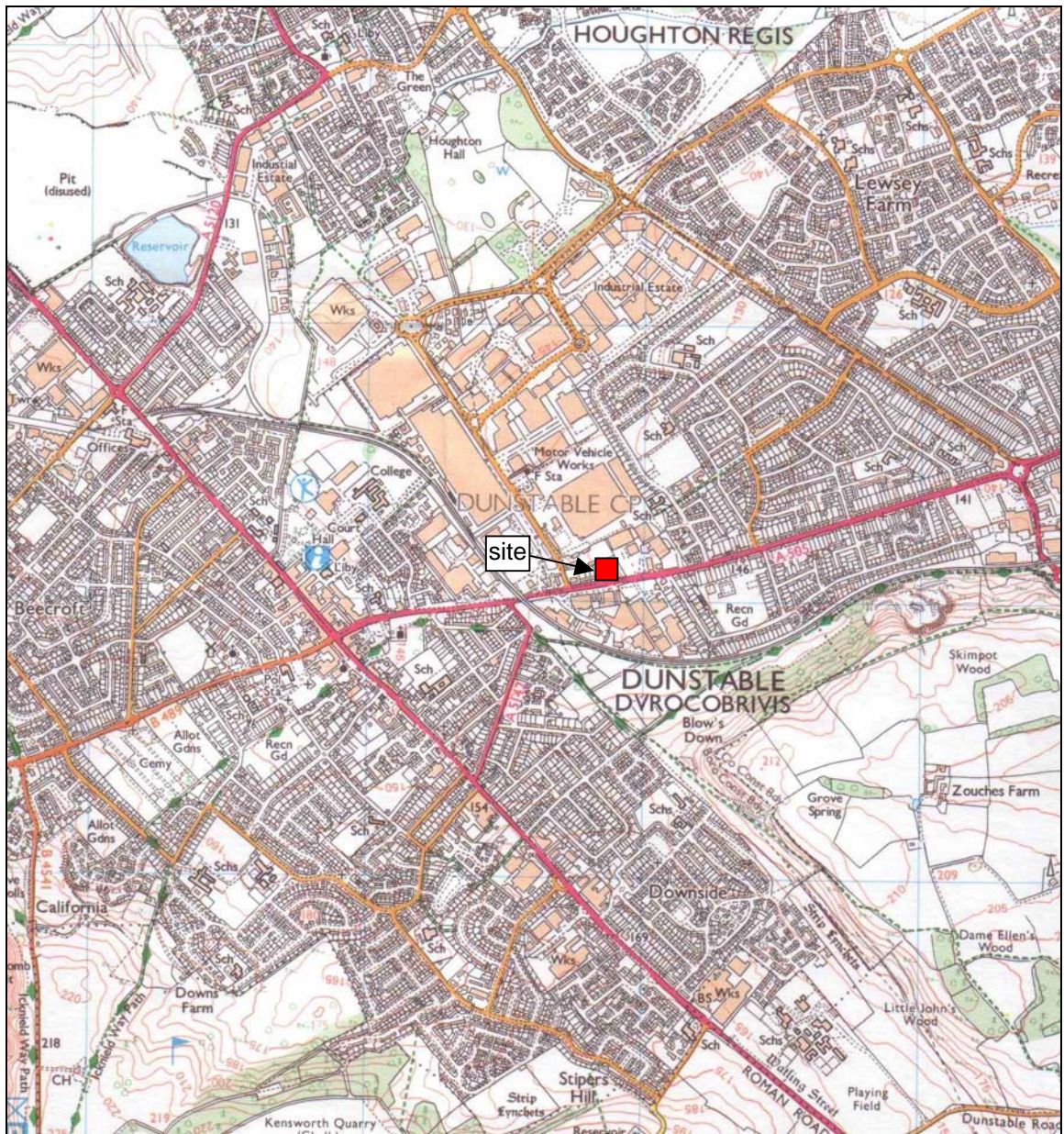


Figure 1: Site location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In February 2004 an archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken of the land at 40 Luton Road, Dunstable. The assessment revealed that archaeological sites and monuments are not known from the site. A variety are known in the surrounding area and the occasional survival of isolated archaeological remains within the site should not be dismissed. The site probably comprised open land until the 20th century when the area was developed for commercial and residential use. Any archaeological remains within the footprints of these buildings are likely to have been disturbed or destroyed, but remains may survive in less disturbed areas, notably in the north part of the site. The overall archaeological potential of the site is low.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 *KingsOak Milton Keynes* intend undertaking development at 40 Luton Road, Dunstable. The developer applied in *South Bedfordshire District Council* for planning permission in support of the development and the application proceeded to *reserved matters*. In line with the guidance contained in the document PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning* the developer wished to ensure that any archaeological issues were given due consideration. An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site was commissioned in order to define any archaeological issues.

Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) were appointed to undertake the work and this document presents the results of the desk-based assessment.

- 1.2 The assessment was necessary because the site is to be developed for housing. Housing development of this type have the potential to damage or destroy archaeological remains and information was required regarding the nature and extent of any archaeological remains which may be present on the site.

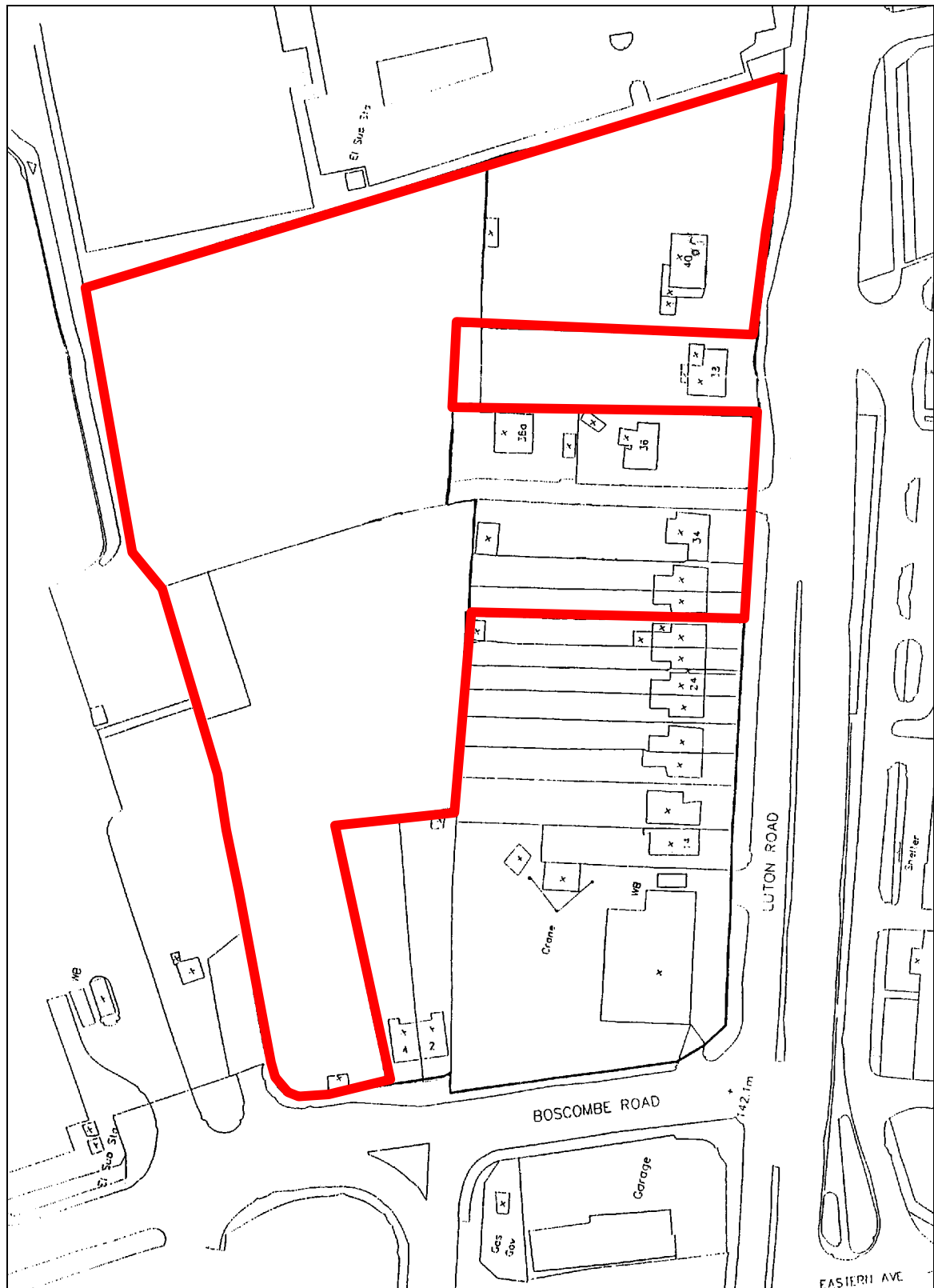


Figure 2: Site plan (not to scale)

2 Setting

2.1 Location and Description

2.1.1 The site is situated in Dunstable, in the administrative district of South Bedfordshire. It lies to the east of Dunstable town centre, on the north side of Luton Road and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 028 221.

2.1.2 The site covers an area of c.2ha and comprises an irregular shaped area of land, bounded by Boscombe Road to the west, buildings fronting onto Luton Road to the south and a variety of commercial buildings to the north and east.



Plate 1: Aerial photograph of the site (*not to scale*)

2.2 Geology and Topography

The site is in an urban area and the soils of the area have not been mapped. If the natural soils survive on the site they are likely to comprise the *Upton 1 Association*: namely shallow well drained calcareous soils over chalk (Soil Survey 1983 342a). The site is essentially flat but rises slightly to the northwest and has an average elevation of c.145m. It is situated close to the base of the escarpment of the Chiltern hills, which is comprised of chalk, capped with clay with flint.

2.3 Existing Buildings and Access

The north part of the site consists of open ground site currently comprising an area of hand standing/tarmac (Fig. 2). The southern area, fronting onto Luton Road, is divided into a number of separate zones comprising houses and open ground.

3 Aims and Methods

- 3.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment is an assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area, consisting of a collation of existing archaeological, historical and topographical information in order to identify the likely extent, character and quality of the known or potential archaeological resource, in order that appropriate measures might be considered.
- 3.2 The desk-based assessment was carried out according to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 2001).
- 3.3 The following readily available sources of information were consulted for the desk-based assessment:

3.3.1 *Archaeological Databases*

Archaeological databases represent the standard references to the known archaeology of an area. The principal source consulted was the *Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record* (HER). The study area employed in the HET search includes the site itself, and a surrounding area *c.* 1km radius.

3.3.2 *Historic Documents*

Documentary research provides an overview of the history of a site and its environs, suggesting the effects of settlement and land-use patterns. The principal source consulted was the *Bedfordshire County Records Office* (CRO).

3.3.3 *Cartographic & Pictorial Documents*

Old maps and illustrations are normally a very productive area of research. The principal sources consulted were the *Bedfordshire County Records Office* and *Bedford Library*.

3.3.4 *Geotechnical Information*

A description of the topography and solid and surface geology of the site and its environs was compiled, so as to appreciate the potential condition of any archaeological remains, to assess the hydrological conditions, and to appraise the potential for the survival of buried waterlogged archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits.

3.3.5 *Secondary & Statutory Sources*

The principal source consulted was *Bedfordshire County Records Office* and *Bedford Library*.

4 Archaeological and Historical Evidence

The local and regional settings of archaeological sites are factors that are taken into consideration when assessing the planning implications of development proposals. The following sections provide a review of the archaeological and historical background to the site. In order to provide as full a survey as possible and to set the site in its local and regional context, the study area includes the site and a surrounding area of c.1km radius.

The definitive list of archaeological and historical sites is the county *Historic Environment Record* (HER). Relevant sites included in the HER are shown in Fig. 3, and listed in Section 9.

Section 4.1 provides a discussion of the archaeological and historical background to the landscape, while section 4.2 considers the site itself.

4.1 *Archaeological and Historical Background to the Study Area*

4.1.1 *Prehistoric (before AD43)*

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).

Dunstable was on the line of an important prehistoric trackway, now known as the *Icknield Way*. This commenced in east Anglia and followed the base of the Chiltern hills through Bedfordshire. The present Luton Road follows the approximate course of the *Icknield Way* and follows the southern boundary of the site.

A number of sites of the prehistoric period are situated close to the site, including a group of prehistoric huts (HER 144) close to the base of the Chiltern escarpment c.700m east of the site. A group of hut foundations and round barrows has been claimed c.500m south of the site at Blows Down (HER 987). These were given statutory protection as a *scheduled ancient monument* (SAM) but following reinterpretation of the site as gravel quarrying, they were de-scheduled in 1988.

A variety of stray finds have been made in the area including a stone axe c.300m southwest of the site (HER 1372). Two flint daggers have been recorded further to the east, close to Luton Road (HER 149). A variety of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age flint tools have also been recorded on higher ground on the Chilterns, at Zouches Farm (HER 7489).

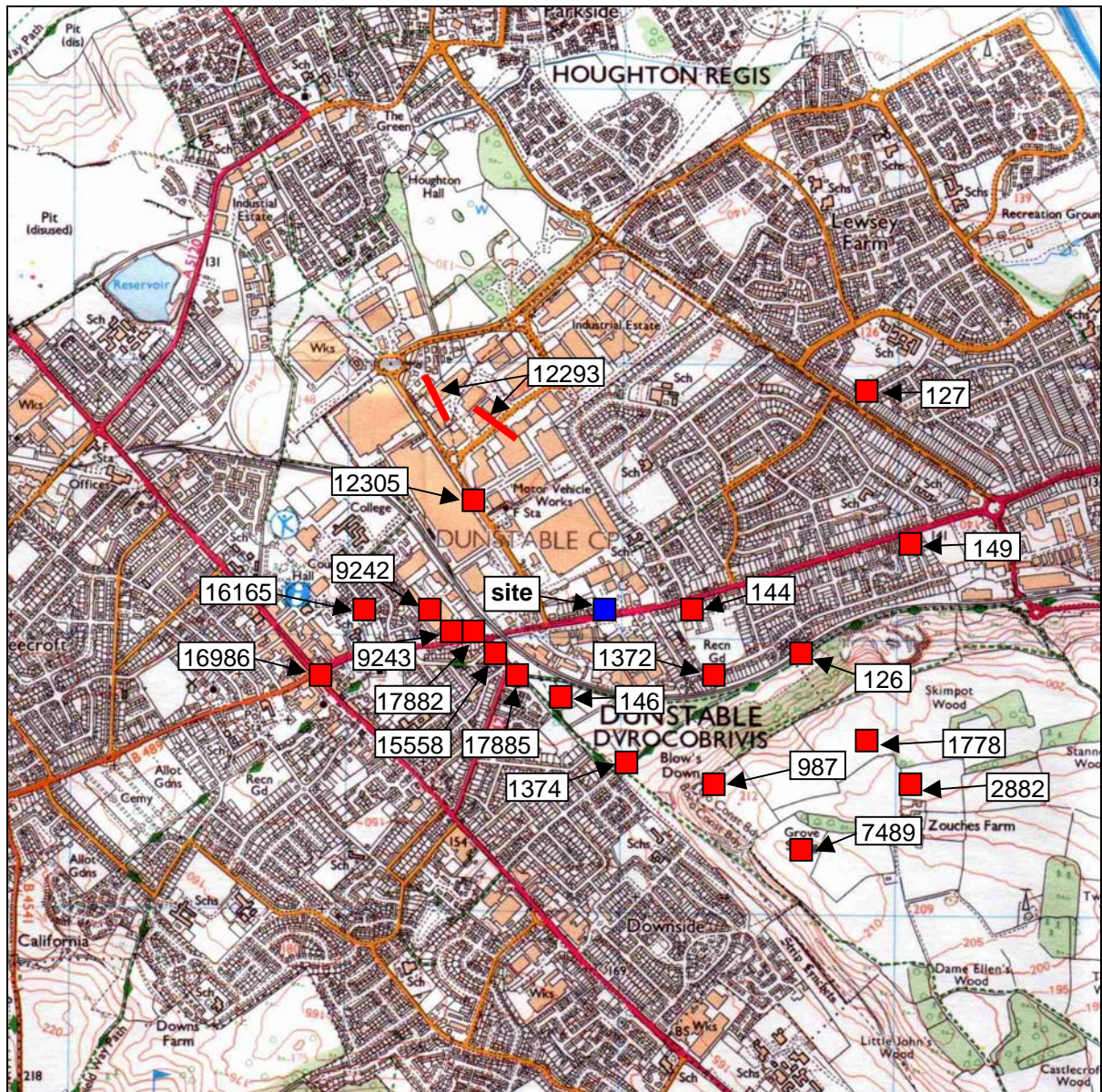


Figure 3: Archaeological sites in the Bedfordshire Historical Environment Record
(scale = 1:25,000. All spot locations are approximate)

4.1.3 Roman (AD43-c.450)

Following the Roman invasion of Britain in 43AD a major Roman road, now known as *Watling Street* was laid out, linking *Londinium* (London) with *Viroconium* Wroxeter (OS 1979).

A Roman small town, known as *Durobrivae* developed at the point at which the Roman road crossed the *Icknield Way* (Matthews 1989, 59-90). The extent and layout of the town are not well understood but the town was centred on the junction of *Watling Street* and the *Icknield Way* c. 1km west of the site.

The site is situated beyond the east side of the Roman town, but a small number of Roman artefacts have been recorded in the area surrounding the site. Roman coins are commonly found in such areas and examples have been recorded 300m southeast of the site, adjacent to Luton Road (HER 144) and also c.400m south of the site (HER 146). In addition, a scatter of Roman pottery has been found to the south of the site, close to Zouches Farm (HER 1778).

4.1.4 Saxon and medieval (c.450-1500AD)

There is no evidence for Saxon settlement close to the site, but Saxon cemeteries have been recorded at Puddlehill and in Marina Drive to the north of, and within, Dunstable.

The site is situated c.1km east of the modern town of Dunstable. Development of the modern town of Dunstable probably recommenced during the period following the Norman Conquest (1066), but there is little detailed information concerning the layout of the medieval town (HER 16986).

The town was officially founded by Henry I in 1119 and probably focused on the central crossroads, where Luton Road joins *Watling Street* (now Dunstable High Street). Dunstable Priory, which was founded for Augustinian Canons was constructed on the west side of the crossroads in 1131 (Pevsner 1968, 75). Henry I founded a royal residence, which was regularly visited until the time of Henry VIII. The site of the royal residence is not known but it has been suggested that it may have been located at Kingsbury Court and Old Palace Lodge. No other medieval sites are known adjacent to the site, but two medieval jettons have been found at Blow's Down c.500m southeast of the site (HER 1374).

4.1.5 Post-Medieval (1500-1900)

The first readily available map of the area is Speed's Map of Bedfordshire, compiled in 1610 (Fig. 4). This map shows the whole county and does not show the site in detail but indicates that during the early 17th century Dunstable was a compact settlement and the site lay well to the east of the built-up area of the town.

A detailed map of Dunstable and Houghton Regis was compiled in 1762 (and revised in 1766; (Fig. 5). This shows the area around the site prior to official enclosure of the landscape, but was divided into individual plots. A road,

referred to as *Lower Luton Way* follows the south side of the site, along the route of Luton Road and the principal landowners were the Duke of Bedford and John Miller.

The first large scale Ordnance Survey map was published in 1880 (Fig. 6). This shows the area divided into individual subrectangular fields, created as a result of the late 19th century enclosure of the parish. The landscape was largely rural, although Church Street Station, an intermediate station on Luton to Leighton Buzzard branch of the Great Northern Railway lay to the west of the site.

4.1.6 *Modern (1900-present)*

Dunstable developed during the late 19th century, but when the Ordnance Survey map was revised in 1901 (Fig. 7), the area surrounding the site remained largely rural. Urban expansion of Dunstable and nearby Luton had not yet encroached into the area. Signs of intensification of land use are apparent in the map however, notably in the area to the south of the site, where the former single plot on the south side of Luton Road, was divided into allotments.

Urban development began encroaching into the study area by the 1920s. The 1924 edition Ordnance Survey map (fig. 8) shows that development was taking place immediately east and west of the site. The parish boundary was realigned and followed the line of Boscombe Road which had been laid out on the west side of the site. Buildings are shown on the east and west side of Boscombe Road and on the east side of the site, while further buildings are illustrated within the site itself (section 4.2.5).

The area between Dunstable and Luton, centred on Luton Road, developed rapidly from the 1930s. The layout of Luton Road is shown on the 1937 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 9). The area to the immediate north and south of the site remained open ground, but a row of houses had been laid out fronting onto the north side of Luton Road, both within and either side of the site.

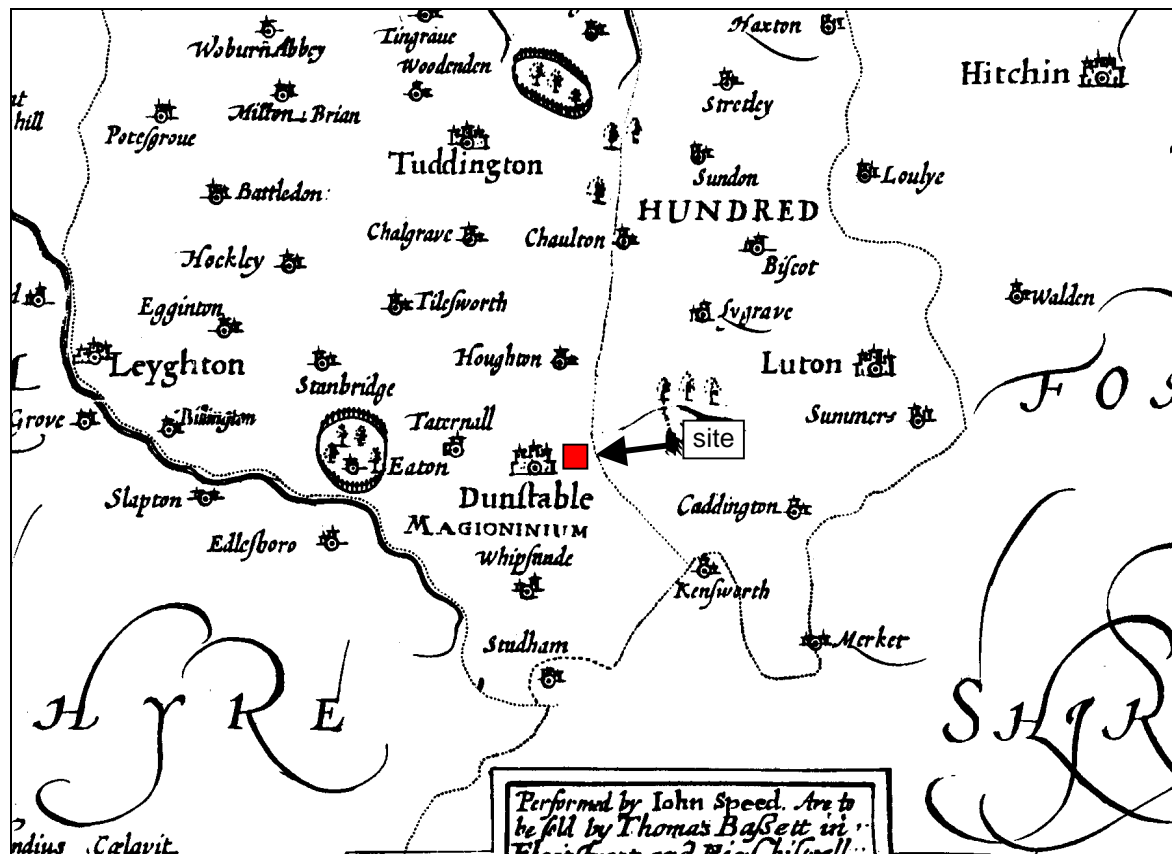


Figure 4: Extract from Speed's map of Bedfordshire (1610)

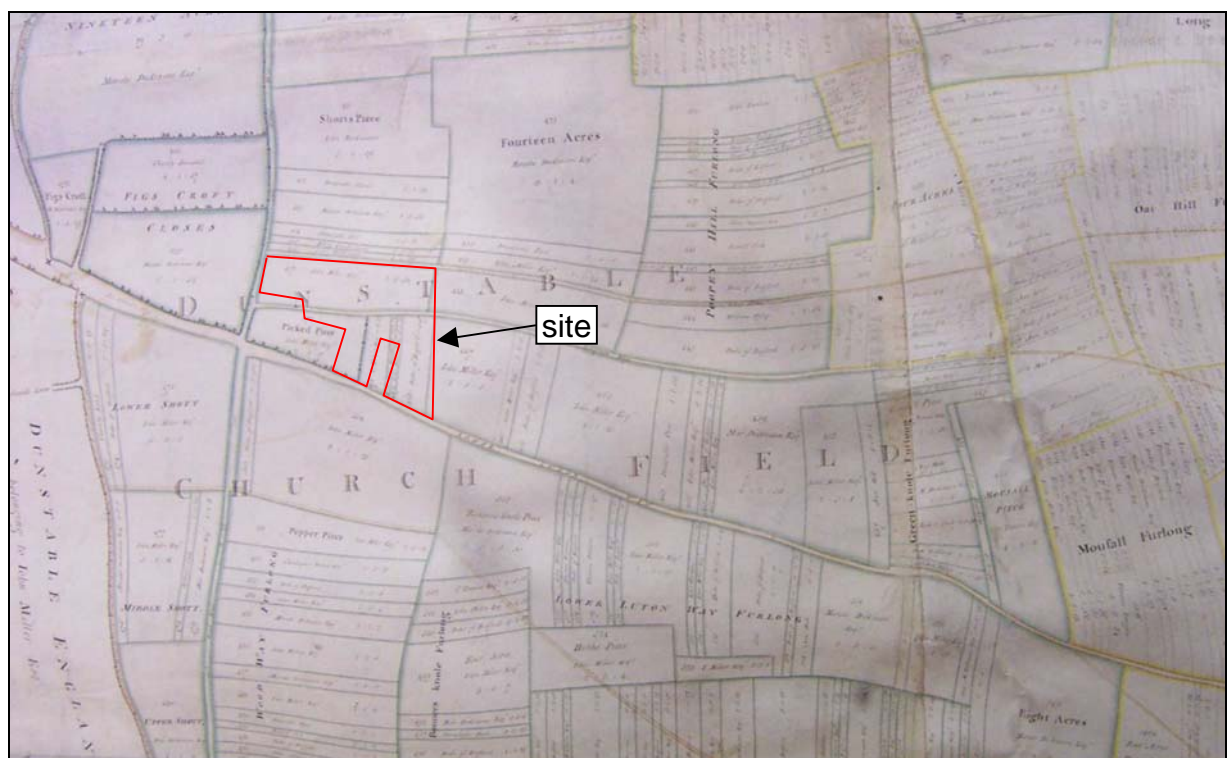


Figure 5: Extract from Richardson's survey of Dunstable and Houghton Regis (1762)

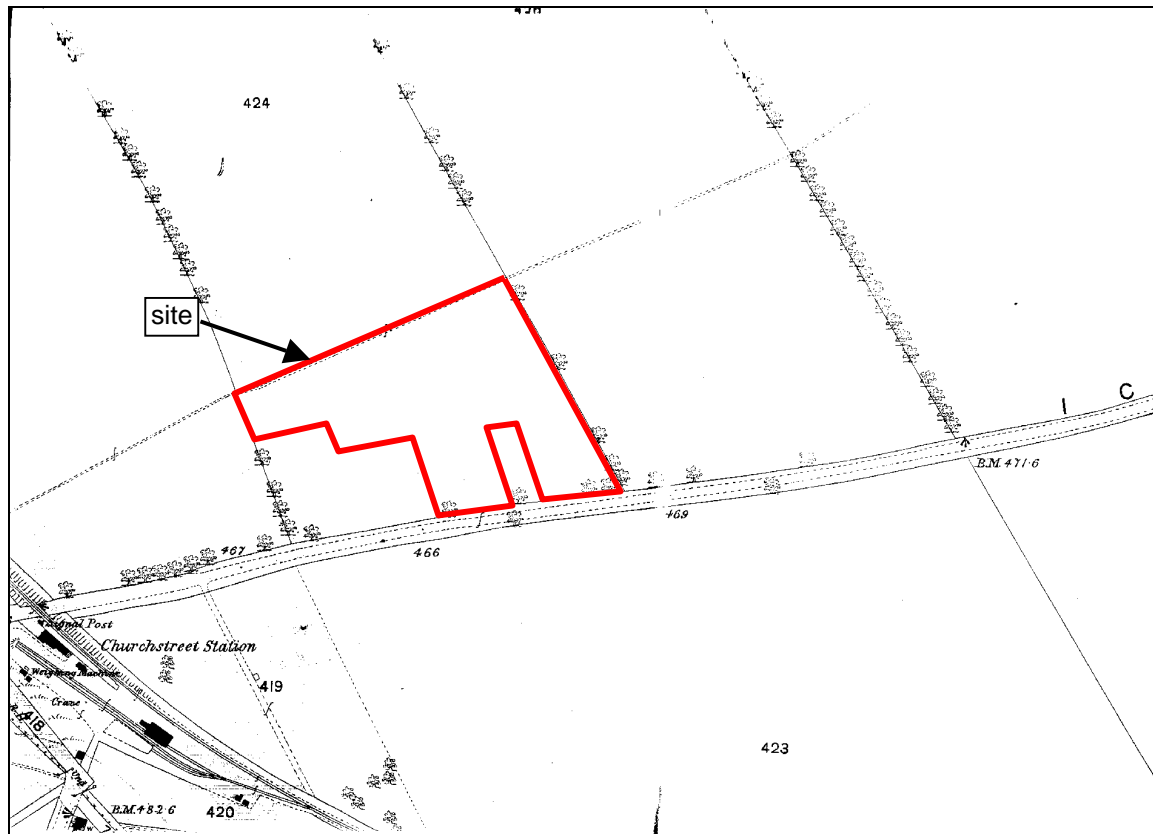


Figure 6: Extract from the Ordnance Survey Map (1880)

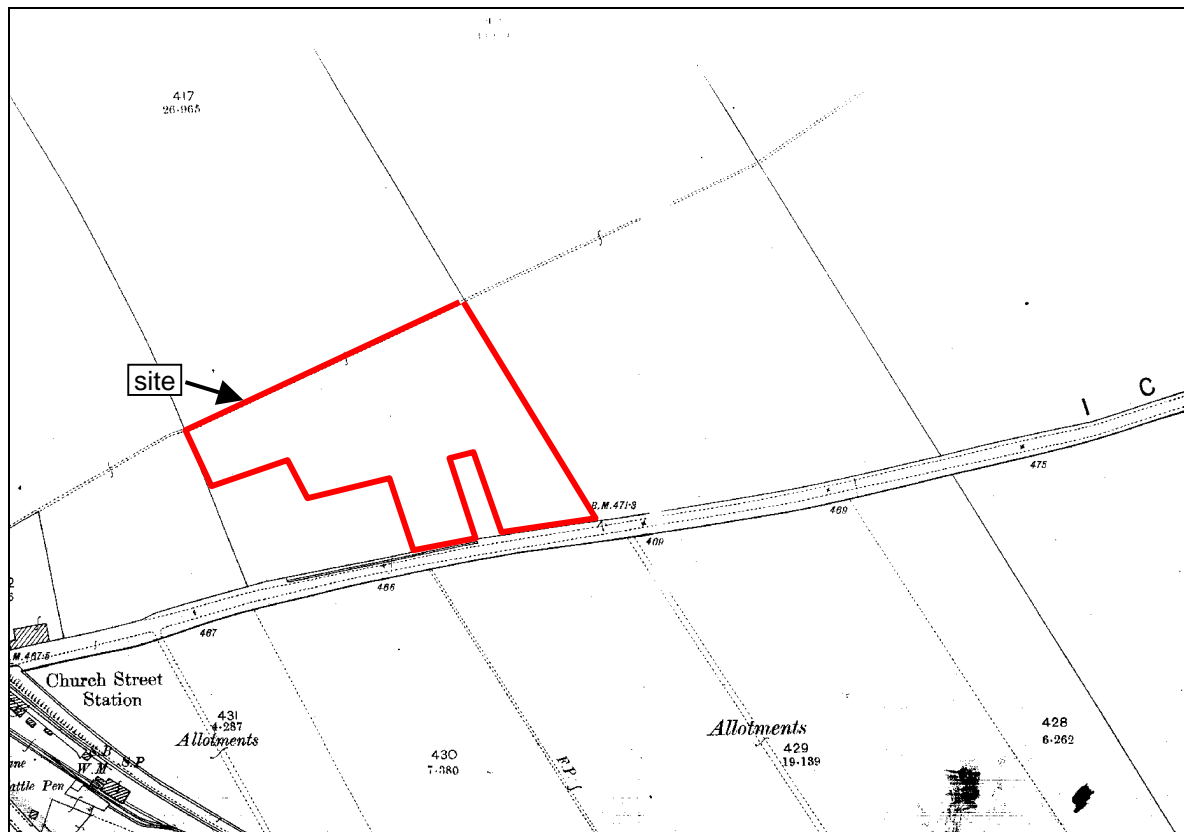


Figure 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey Map (1901)

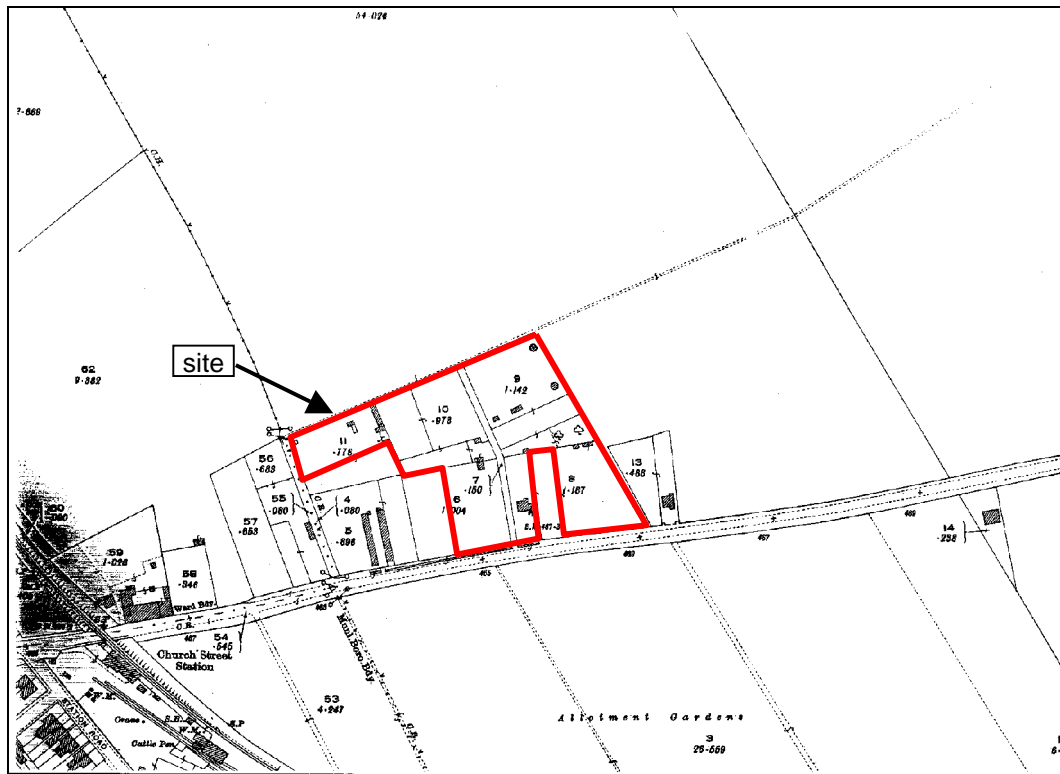


Figure 8: Extract from the Ordnance Survey Map (1924)

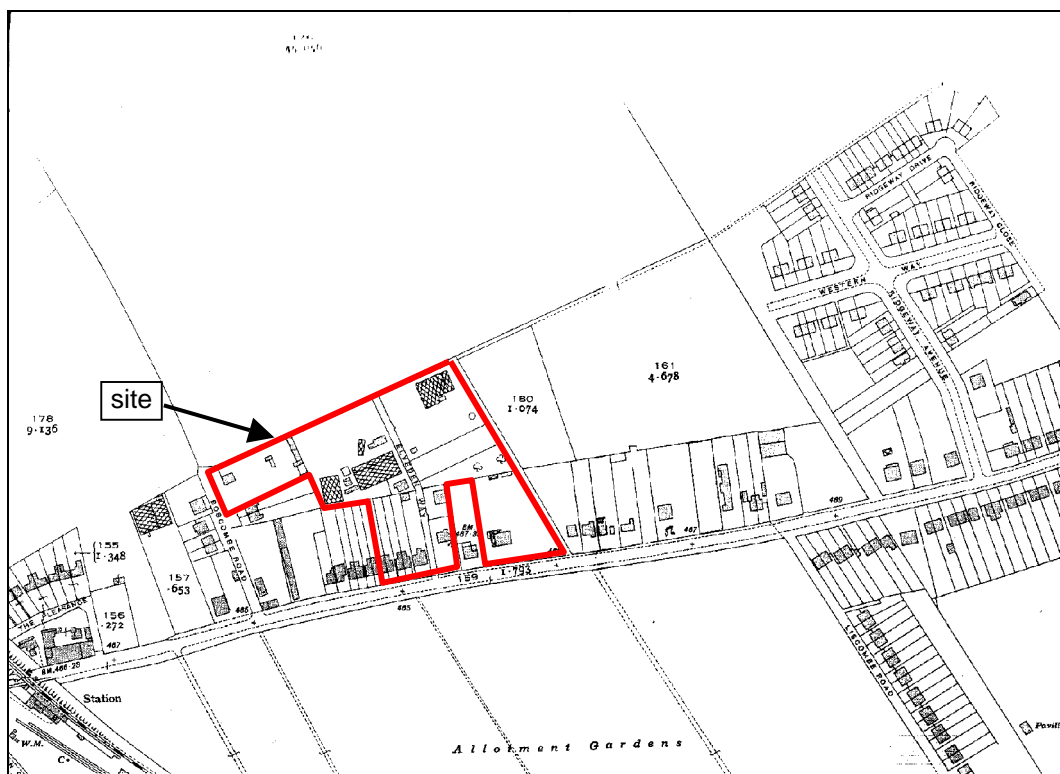


Figure 9: Extract from the Ordnance Survey Map (1937)

4.2 *The Known Archaeology and History of the Site*

4.2.1 *Prehistoric (before AD43)*

There is no evidence for prehistoric activity on the site

4.2.2 *Roman (AD43-c.450)*

Roman remains have not been found on the site

4.2.3 *Saxon and medieval (c.450-1500)*

Evidence of Saxon and medieval activity has not been found within the site.

4.2.4 *Post-Medieval (1500-1900)*

There is no detailed evidence for the site during the early post-medieval period, but the area probably comprised open land, part of the open field system of Dunstable and Houghton Regis.

The first detailed map to show the site is a pre-enclosure map of Dunstable and Houghton Regis, compiled in 1762 and revised in 1766 (Fig. 5). Historic maps of this type are often inaccurate and the locations of individual boundaries and land plots should not be relied upon. However, the map shows that the site comprised open land, divided into a number of individual plots. A number of narrow rectangular plots stretched back from Luton Road which are the remnants of the medieval open field furlongs. The map also shows a number of larger plots, which clearly developed as a result of the combination of a number of adjacent furlongs. An east to west aligned track bisected the centre of the site.

The site is shown on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 6). The area comprised part of a subrectangular plot of open land, probably formed as a result of parliamentary enclosure. With the exception of the southern boundary of the site, the boundaries shown on the 1880 map conform to the existing boundaries of the site.

4.2.5 *Modern (1900-present)*

The site underwent little change during the late 19th century. The layout in 1901 is shown in Fig. 7 and it remained open ground, with allotments to the south.

The site changed radically during the first few decades of the 20th century and the new layout is shown on the 1924 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 8). The site had been divided into fifteen land parcels and was subdivided into two main parts by a road/track leading north from Luton Road. The south half of the site was in the early stages of being developed for housing and a number of rectangular plots had been laid out for this purpose. One detached house had been constructed (no. 36 Luton Road) and two linear structures stretching back from the street frontage had been built close to the southwest corner of the site.

The north part of the site was also subdivided and a variety of minor structures were present in these areas, including two circular structures in the northeast corner, possibly tanks or wells.

Development continued during the 1920s and 1930s and the layout is shown on the 1937 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 9). The existing row of semi-detached houses had been built facing onto Luton Road and Boscombe Road and a number of glasshouses had been constructed on the plots to the rear. The north to south track through the site had probably been metalled and was named *Elveden Way*. Three further structures had also been built at the junction of Boscombe and Luton Roads.

The existing (2004) layout is largely a result of developments during the late 20th century. The glass houses on the north side were demolished. The north part of *Elveden Way* was removed and the area surfaced with tarmac. The southwest corner of the site was also redeveloped during the late 20th century, when a substantial subrectangular building with an adjacent crane were built.

5 Walk-Over Survey

As part of the assessment a preliminary walk-over survey of the site was undertaken on 18th February 2004.

5.1 *Aims*

The walk-over survey was undertaken with the following aims:

- To examine any areas of archaeological potential identified during research for the assessment, in particular with a view to gauging the possible survival or condition of any remains present.
- To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.
- To assess the present site use and ground conditions, with a view to the appropriate deployment of fieldwork techniques, if required by the *County Archaeology Office* (CAO).

5.2 *Results*

- 5.2.1 Access to the site is currently gained from the west, via Boscombe Road. A second entrance is also available from the south, via a track (the former Elveden Way) between numbers 34 and 36 Luton Road.
- 5.2.2 The southern part of the site comprises low rise buildings, constructed during the mid and late 20th century (Plate 3). The southern half of the site comprises houses constructed during the 1920s or 1930s. The southeast contained a more substantial detached house which has recently been demolished and this part of the site is currently in overgrown, disused condition.
- 5.2.3 The north part of the site currently comprises an open area, largely surfaced with tarmac (Plates 2 and 4).
- 5.2.4 The south and central parts of the south are marginally lower than the area close to the northeast corner. It is likely that the lower areas of the site have been terraced, in order to create a flat surface and the slope is visible on Plate 4, where the ground in the foreground is visibly lower than that to the rear.
- 5.2.5 A number of metal fences and other subdivisions are present. No overhead cables are present and we have no data relating to buried services.



Plate 2: View across the site looking west



Plate 3: View of the existing houses along Luton Road.
The former Elveden Way is visible in the centre



Plate 4: View of the north part of the site, from Boscombe Road

6 Statutory Constraints on Development

6.1 *Scheduled Ancient Monuments*

There are no *scheduled ancient monuments* on or within the immediate vicinity of the site.

6.2 *Listed Buildings*

No listed buildings are present on the site.

6.3 *Areas of Archaeological Importance*

The site is not within any area designated by the local authority as being of archaeological importance (Stephen Coleman, Historic Environment Officer, *pers comm.*).

6.4 *Archaeological Sites and Monuments*

The site does not contain any archaeological sites and monuments currently included in the county *Historic Environment Record* (Fig. 3). The site lies immediately to the north of the approximate line of an ancient track, now known as the *Ickniel Way* (Section 4.1.1.). In addition, Roman coins have been found at two locations *c.*500m east (HER 144) and southwest (HER 146) respectively.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The desk-based assessment has revealed that archaeological sites and monuments are *not currently known on the site*, but a variety are known in the surrounding area (Figure 3). The Dunstable area was occupied during the prehistoric periods. The Roman and medieval town is situated c.1km west of the site and there is potential for the survival of occasional remains of these periods on the site. The site probably comprised open agricultural land until the late 18th century and during the medieval period was probably part of the open field system of Bedfordshire. The site was developed during the mid 20th century.

7.2 *Archaeological Potential of the Site*

There is very limited potential for survival of archaeological remains on the site. Any remains that are present are likely to be best preserved in areas away from the main areas of ground disturbance.

- 7.2.1 Any archaeological remains in the southern part of the site are likely to have been disturbed or destroyed during the construction of the houses during the 20th century. The area fronting onto Luton Road, within the footprints of the houses, is therefore considered to offer *little or no archaeological potential*.
- 7.2.2 The northern part of the site has not been developed as intensively as the southern part, but the glass houses and other structures are likely to have caused disturbance to any archaeological remains. Any levelling or terracing that has taken place may also have had an impact. The northern part of the site is therefore considered to offer *low or moderate* archaeological potential.
- 7.3 The framework for the management of archaeological issues in the planning system is currently set out in the document PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning*. Decisions relating to archaeological matters in this part of Bedfordshire are taken on behalf of the local authority by the *Heritage and Environment Section of Bedfordshire County Council*.

8 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Mr Clayton Smalley of *KingsOak Milton Keynes* for commissioning and funding this assessment. Thanks are also due to Mr Steve Coleman of the *Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record* for providing access to the HER data. The assistance of the staff of the *Bedfordshire County Records Office* is also gratefully acknowledged.

The research for the assessment and the walk-over survey were undertaken for *ASC Ltd* by David Fell BA MA MIFA and Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA respectively. The report was prepared by David Fell and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

9 Historic Environment Data

Sites listed below are those within the study area, *i.e.* the site and a surrounding area of c.1km.

HER	NGR	Period	Description
126	TL 037 218	Prehistoric	huts
127	TL 0239 2278	Roman	Gravel Pit Hill (Simco 1984, p103)
144	TL 032 222	Roman	Roman coin
146	TL 0270 2172	Roman	Roman coins found in 1876
149	TL 0412 2240	Prehistoric	Two flint daggers found in 1951 (BAJ 1(1956) 83 & 90) and BAJ 2 (1964), 20).
987	TL 033 215	Prehistoric	Group of British hut foundations on highest part of Blows Down, overlooking Dunstable. Others lower down to east and south. Angle at top of Blows Downs represents ancient British lookout station, with bases of huts. Round barrows at TL 033 215- this a SAM- but descheduled in 1988 Substantial but irregular earthworks @ TL 0316 2141 and TL 0325 2145- reinterpreted as remains of chalk quarrying
1372	TL 033 217	Prehistoric	Stone axe found
1374	TL 030 215	Medieval	Medieval jettons found
1778	TL 039 216	Roman	Roman pottery found
1998	TL 024 218	Roman	Roman coins, Englands Lane. Some evidence of ditch behind Englands Lane & coins found there. Maybe Roman fort ditch (Matthews 1964, revised 1979)
2882	TL 040 215	Undated?	Earthwork. scheduled
7489	TL 0365 2128	Mesolithic	West of Zouches Farm. Since the early 1970s Mr M.O.Wilmot has amassed a large collection of humanly struck flints and Romano-British material from the surface of cultivated land at Zouches Farm. The flints include Mesolithic debitage and Neolithic-Bronze Age debitage, scrapers, cutting tools, piercers and an oblique arrowhead, collected from an area c.600m x 300m situated to the west of the farm. Further archaeological material was collected from several localities at Zouches Farm in Jan 1989 (Beds. Arch 19 (1991), 83-4)
9242	TL 024 221	Modern	Bagshaw & Co, Engineers and Ironfounders (1891-1972)
9243	TL 025 220	Modern	Bagshaw Vienna Pavilion. Originally built for the White City Exhibition the Festival of Empire exhibition at Crystal Palace. Purchased by Bagshaw in 1913.
12293	TL 0233 2293	Undated	Cropmarks of linear features TL 0233 2293 – TL 0237 2267 and TL 0249 2289 – TL 0266 2269 on pre-enclosure map (CRO B553)
12305	TL 025 225	18 th century	On the pre-enclosure map of Houghton Regis the area at TL 025 225 marked as <i>Gravel-Pitt Hill</i> (an open field furlong)
14086		Post-med	Great Northern Railway
15471		Modern	Ashton School, Dunstable. Built 1861
15558	TL 025 220	Modern	Church Street station
16165	TL 0213 2214	Undated	2 skeletons found during construction of a house extension. Perhaps Roman?
16355		N/a	Watching brief at 36 Kingsway, Dunstable. Negative
16986	TL 018 218	Medieval	Medieval town of Dunstable
17882	TL 0261 2202	Modern	World War II tank trap
17885	TL 0260 2198	Modern	World War II pillbox

10 References

The following references were consulted in the course of this assessment:

- Bigmore P, 1979 *The Making of the English Landscape. The Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire*. Hodder and Stoughton
- Dyer J., 1991 'The Five Knolls and Associated Barrows at Dunstable, Bedfordshire' in *Bedfordshire Archaeology* **19**, 25-29
- Matthews C.L., 1989 *Ancient Dunstable. A prehistory of the District*. Manshead Archaeological Society of Dunstable.
- OS 1979 *Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain*. Ordnance Survey. Southampton
- Pevsner N 1968 *The Buildings of England. Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough*. Penguin
- Simco A, 1984 *Survey of Bedfordshire. The Roman Period*. Bedfordshire County Council/RCHM
- Soil Survey 1983 *The Soils of England and Wales. Eastern England*. Sheet 44. Soil Survey of England and Wales

11 Cartographic Sources

The following maps and plans were consulted in the course of this assessment:

Date	Reference	Description
1610	-	Speed's map of Bedfordshire
1766	B553	An Actual Survey of the Parish of Houghton Regis in the County of Bedford
1880	343	Ordnance Survey 25 inch map. Bedford County Series
1901	343	Ordnance Survey 25 inch map. Bedford County Series
1924	343	Ordnance Survey 25 inch map. Bedford County Series
1937	343	Ordnance Survey 25 inch map. Bedford County Series
1999	193	Ordnance Survey Explorer map. Luton and Stevenage