

# The Bull Bracknell



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report


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## The Bull, Bracknell

*Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*Written by Mike Sims and Tom Black*

*and illustrated by Markus Dylewski*

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## Summary

*In July 2016 Oxford Archaeology undertook a watching brief on ground reduction to the rear of The Bull public house in Bracknell. Deposits consisted of modern make up and slab for the existing car park. A number of relatively recent foundations and cess pits were recorded. No significant archaeological features were present.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project details

- 1.1.1. Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Gardiner and Theobald LLP on behalf of Bracknell Regeneration Limited Partnership (BRLP) to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the below-ground impacts arising from the development of The Bull, Bracknell, Berkshire.
- 1.1.2. The work was being undertaken as a condition of planning permission. Although the local planning authority had not set a brief for the work, discussions with Roland Smith (Berkshire Archaeology) established the scope of work required. The work was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (OA 2016) and was concerned solely with below ground considerations.
- 1.1.3. All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

### 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1. The Bull public house is situated on the north side of the western end of the High Street in Bracknell town centre at National Grid Reference SU 8696 6930 (Fig 1 and 2).
- 1.2.2. The site is situated at approximately 73m above Ordnance Datum and the geology of the area consists of the Bagshot Beds, deposits of sand and clay. These overlay London Clay.
- 1.2.3. The site is approximately 25 x 25m and is occupied by the existing building to the south and along the western border, with car parking to the north.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND POTENTIAL

### 2.1 Archaeological and historical background

- 2.1.1. The Bull public house is a Grade II listed building. This former hall house, part timber frame with old style hipped roof dates from c1400 and was extended in the 16th and 19th centuries and more recently.
- 2.1.2. The historical and archaeological background to the wider development of Bracknell Town Centre is contained in a desk based assessment (OAU 1997) and a summary is presented below.
- 2.1.3. No archaeological features earlier than the medieval period have been identified within the area of proposed development. Historic maps identified two possible medieval moated sites within the Masterplan area, both of which are within areas developed in the second half of the 20th century. One lay in the area of Charles Square and the other to the east of the police station. Later maps also showed a pond, in the area now occupied by the health centre. The only other archaeological site within the Masterplan



area is a find spot of a hoard of 17th century silver coins, found during the digging of foundations near the bus station in 1957 (OAU 1997, 5-6).

- 2.1.4. The archaeological potential of the Bracknell area is generally poorly understood, based on limited levels of archaeological investigation in the past, although the records suggest that prehistoric and Roman activity was clustered nearer to the Thames and Kennet rivers. From the medieval period to 1813, when the forest was legally abolished, Bracknell lay within the Royal Forest of Windsor. There were two early settlement areas, Old Bracknell to the south of the modern town centre and New Bracknell strung out along a road through the forest on the alignment of the later High Street, which passes through the overall development area (OAU 1997, 3).
- 2.1.5. Although the existing archaeological record suggests that the archaeological potential of Bracknell Town Centre is low, the absence of evidence may reflect the low level of previous archaeological work rather than a genuine absence of archaeology.
- 2.1.6. Most of the area was not developed before the late 19th century, and has undergone several phases of redevelopment since. A few of the buildings from the High Street frontage have survived and are now listed buildings including The Bull.

## 2.2 Potential

- 2.2.1. Although the potential for archaeology to survive in the heavily developed area of the town centre is generally low the small area of current interest situated as it is adjacent and to the north of the existing listed building on the High Street does retain some potential that archaeological features may survive here.

## 3 PROJECT AIMS

### 3.1 General

- 3.1.1. The general aims of the watching brief were:
  - To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
  - To record the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains affected by the proposed works.
  - To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site and to take samples where appropriate.
  - To make available the results of the investigation.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1.1. The watching brief on the development area to the rear of the existing building was undertaken in two halves on the 7th and 27th July 2016. Overburden deposits were removed from the full footprint of the new development using a 360° mechanical excavator under the supervision of an archaeologist. The natural horizon was exposed in plan, inspected and records and photographs taken.

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1.1. The natural deposit was an orange / brown sandy clay with some blue / grey patches to the east. This was immediately overlain by 0.2 – 0.3m of modern make up consisting of dirty gravel and crushed building material. This was overlain by a concrete slab of 0.5 –



0.15m thickness which in the area where it was thinner had been laid on a 0.5m mortar bed. The area had been finished with a layer of asphalt.

- 5.1.2. There were no significant archaeological features present but a number of post-medieval or modern rubble wall foundations and two brick-lined cess-pits capped with concrete were recorded (Fig 3, Plates 1-3).

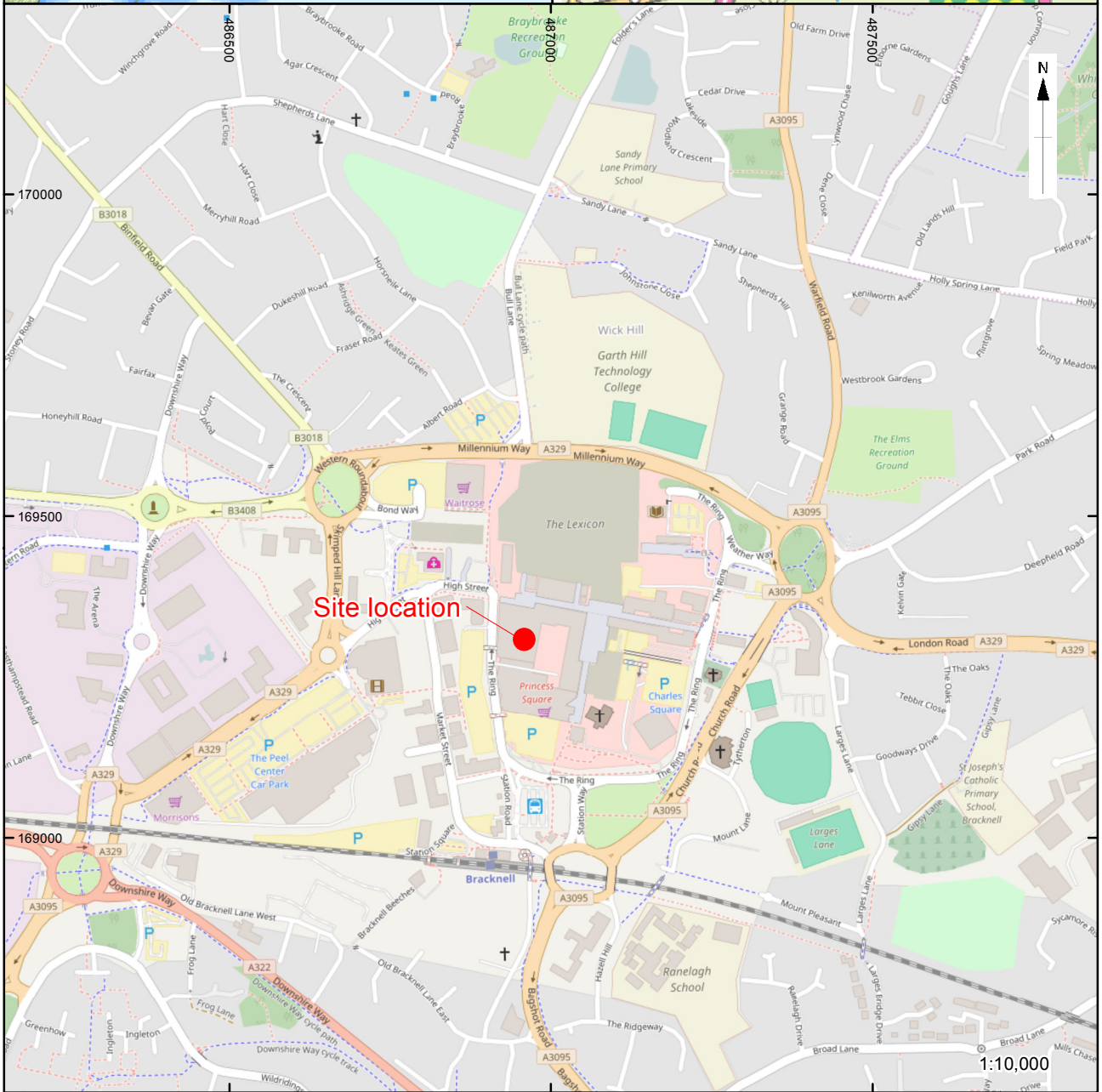
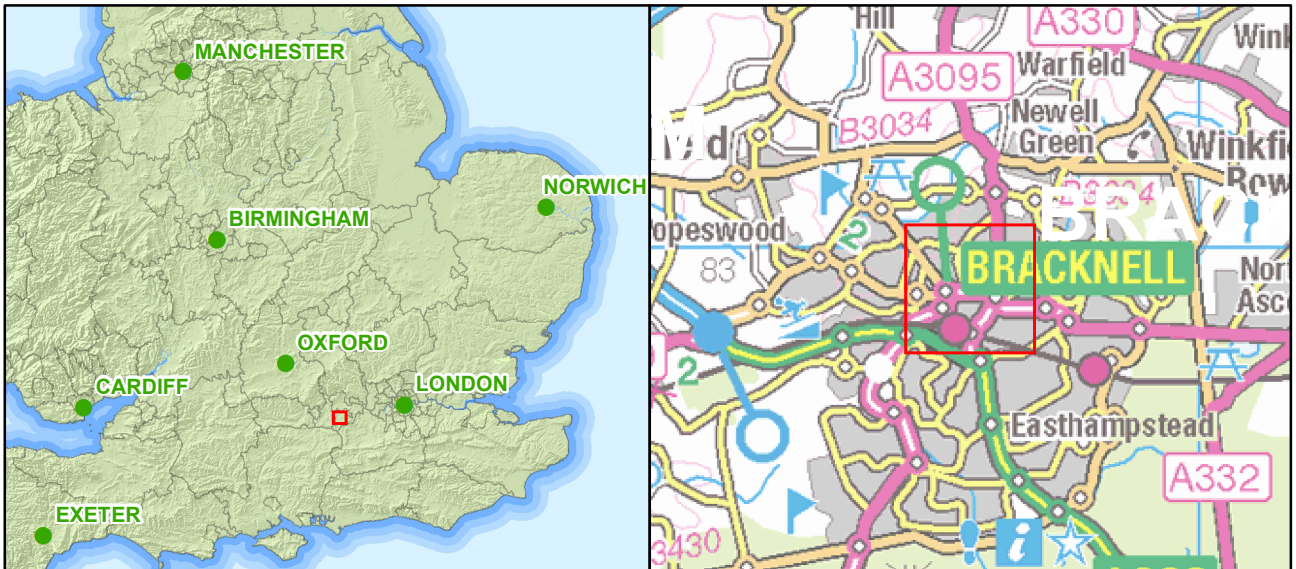
## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1. The overburden deposits were modern and related to the current use of the rear yard as a car park. To construct this the area had previously been truncated into the natural deposits and although some rubble and brick structural elements were noted, these were also of relatively recent date. There was no evidence of earlier archaeological features and it is not clear whether this is due to truncation or genuine absence, although it seems likely that the construction of the existing car park would have removed all but the most robust of past features. It is possible that older rubbish or latrine pits which might have been more substantial and therefore survived would, if indeed they were present, have been located further from the existing building.

## 7 REFERENCES

OA 2016, *The Bull, Bracknell. Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief*. Oxford Archaeology. Unpublished client report

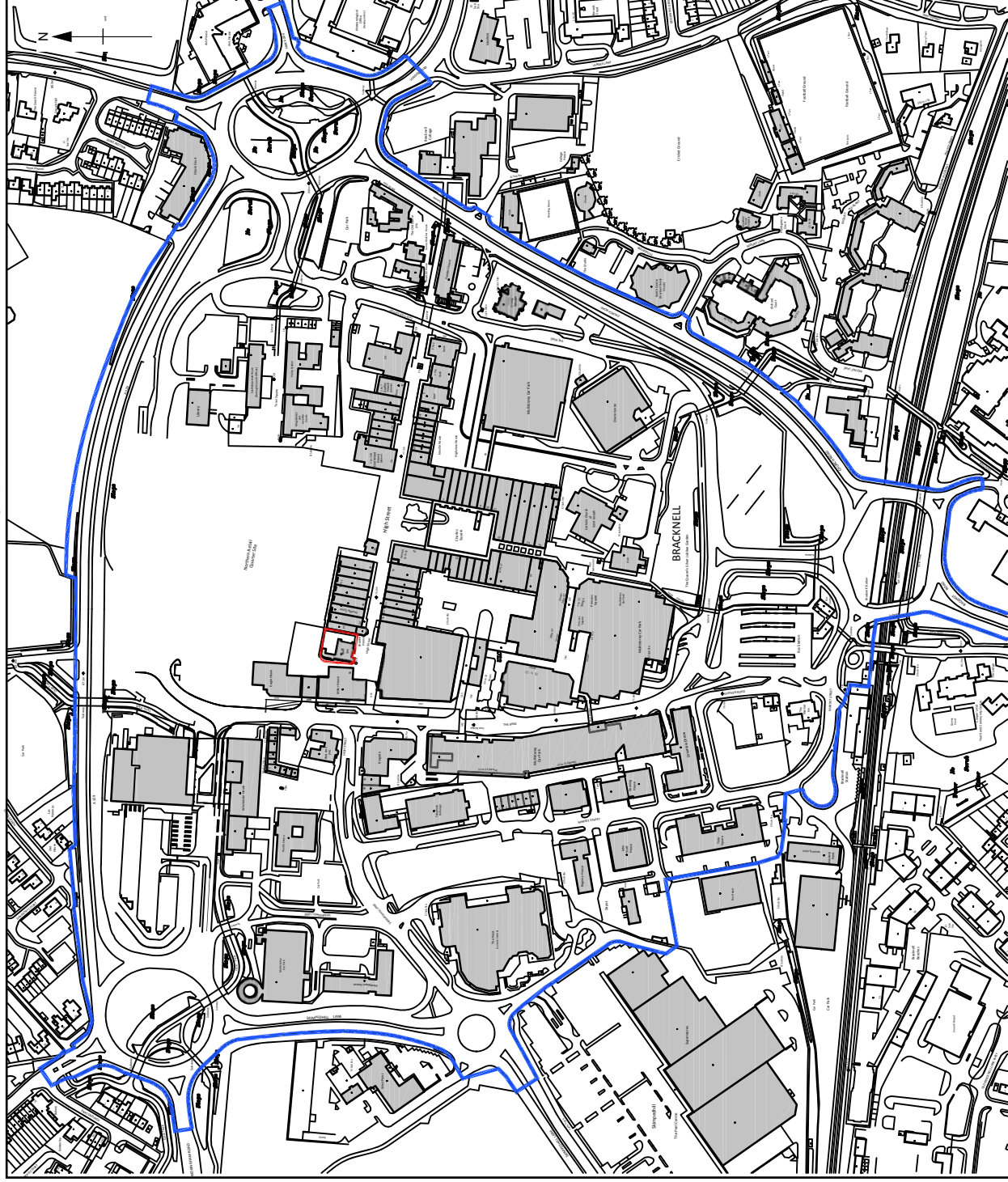
OAU 1997, *Bracknell Town Centre Redevelopment Environmental Assessment*, Oxford Archaeological Unit. Unpublished client report.



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Figure 1: Site location



Site location  
Regeneration area of Bracknell Town Centre

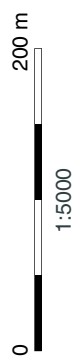


Figure 2: Site location, detail





Watching brief area  
Site boundary

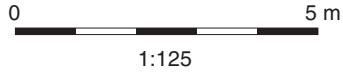


Figure 3: Site plan



Plate 1: General site area



Plate 2: Rubble foundation with water filled cess pit



Plate 3: Example section



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