



Archaeological desk-based heritage assessment of land at Ashwell Street, Ashwell Hertfordshire

September 2019

Report No. 19/93

Authors: Mary Ellen Crothers

Illustrator: Sofia Turk



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Hertfordshire**

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: molanort1-367864	
Project title		Archaeological desk-based heritage assessment of land at Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, April 2019	
Short summary	The site lies on the east side of Ashwell, between Lucas Lane and Ashwell Street. There is one Scheduled Monument comprising five Bronze Age barrows (SM1451703), One Grade I Listed Building, seven Grade II* Listed Buildings, 24 Grade II Listed Buildings and one Grade II Registered Park and Garden within a 500m radius of the site. The site also lies within Ashwell Conservation Area. The site lies within a complex prehistoric landscape, dominated by dispersed burial monuments of the Neolithic period which provided the focus for the construction of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery and demonstrates a continuum of ritual use during that time. Ashwell Street is likely to be a Roman road which lies on the south-east side of a group of features which lie on the site, to the south-west and to the north-east. The eastern side of a double-ditched angular enclosure was recently found on the site and contained pottery and a bow brooch and may be of Roman date. Roadside ditches have been found further east near Station Road. Limited evidence of Saxon occupation is known from within Ashwell it is likely to have been settled during this time. Remains have been found further to the east and beyond the western limits of the village. A high status sword chape was discovered on the site and a large hollow found within the possible Roman enclosure contained Saxon pottery. The historic medieval and post-medieval village is centred to the west and north-west of the site around the church and to the south-west of the springs. Cartographic evidence suggests that the site formed part of the agricultural landscape of Ashwell throughout the post-medieval period.		
Project type		Desk-based assessment	
Site status		Unknown	
Previous work		Test pitting, Geophysical survey	
Current land use		Field	
Development type		Residential	
Future work			
Monument type/period		Bronze Age barrows (SM1451703)	
Significant finds		N/A	
PROJECT LOCATION			
County		Hertfordshire	
Site address		Ashwell Street, Ashwell	
Postcode		SG7 5RU	
OS coordinates		TL 27139 39704	
Area (sq m/ha)		1.184 ha	
Height aOD		c55-66m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation		MOLA Northampton	
Project Brief originator		N/A	
Project Design originator		N/A	
Project Director/Manager		Ant Maull	
Project Supervisor		Mary Ellen Crothers	
Sponsor or funding body		Manor Oak Homes	
PROJECT DATE			
Start date (dd-mm-yy)		1-4-19	
End date (dd-mm-yy)		23.9-19	
ARCHIVES		Location (Accession no.)	Content
Physical		MOLA Northampton	N/A
Digital			Mapinfo Plans, Word Report
Paper			Map extracts
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Hertfordshire
April 2019**

Abstract

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) conducted an archaeological desk-based heritage assessment of land at Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire.

The site lies on the east side of Ashwell, between Lucas Lane and Ashwell Street. There is one Scheduled Monument comprising five Bronze Age barrows (SM1451703), One Grade I Listed Building, seven Grade II Listed Buildings, 24 Grade II Listed Buildings and one Grade II Registered Park and Garden within a 500m radius of the site. The site also lies within Ashwell Conservation Area.*

The site lies within a complex prehistoric landscape, dominated by dispersed burial monuments of the Neolithic period which provided the focus for the construction of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery and demonstrates a continuum of ritual use during that time.

Ashwell Street is likely to be a Roman road which lies on the south-east side of a group of features which lie on the site, to the south-west and to the north-east. The eastern side of a double-ditched angular enclosure was recently found on the site and contained pottery and a bow brooch and may be of Roman date. Roadside ditches have been found further east near Station Road.

Limited evidence of Saxon occupation is known from within Ashwell but it is likely to have been settled during this time. Remains have been found further to the east and beyond the western limits of the village. A high status sword chape was discovered on the site and a large hollow found within the possible Roman enclosure contained Saxon pottery.

The historic medieval and post-medieval village is centred to the west and north-west of the site around the church and to the south-west of the springs. Cartographic evidence suggests that the site formed part of the agricultural landscape of Ashwell throughout the post-medieval period.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by Manor Oak Homes on behalf of their client, to conduct an archaeological desk-based heritage assessment of land at Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 27139 39704; Fig 1).

1.2 Policy background

National policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides national guidance on the preservation, management and investigation of the parts of the historic environment that are historically, archaeologically, architecturally or artistically significant and are known as heritage assets (MHCLG 2018). The NPPF replaced PPS5 in March 2012, which in turn replaced Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 and 16 (PPG 15 and 16) in March 2010.

The framework covers those heritage assets that possess a level of interest sufficient to justify designation as well as those that are not designated but which are of heritage interest and are thus a material planning consideration. Where nationally important archaeological remains are affected by development then there should be a presumption in favour for their conservation.

Paragraph 189 states that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant Historic Environment Record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developer to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Paragraph 190 states that:

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 184 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognises that:

Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Paragraph 193 states that:

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Local Policy

The **North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2031** was submitted in October 2016 and contains *Policy SP13: Historic Environment* which states that:

The Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. [The Council] will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through:

- a. *Maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting;*
- b. *Identifying sites on the national register of Heritage at Risk or the local risk register;*
- c. *Periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and other locally designated assets; and*
- d. *Publication of detailed guidance.*

The Local Plan also contains *Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets* which states that:

Planning applications relating to Designated heritage assets shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:

- i. *Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting, impacted by the proposal;*
- ii. *Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated asset(s); and*
- iii. *Informs any necessary mitigation measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.*

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable):

- a. *Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;*
- b. *Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified.*

In addition, *Policy HE4: Archaeology* states that:

Permission for development proposals affecting heritage assets with archaeological interest will be granted where:

- a. *Developers submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where justified, an archaeological field evaluation.*
- b. *It is demonstrated how archaeological remains will be preserved and incorporated into the layout of that development, if in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is considered preferable; and*
- c. *Where the loss of the whole or a material part of important archaeological remains is justified, appropriate conditions are applied to ensure that the archaeological recording, reporting, publication and archiving of the results of such archaeological work is undertaken before it is damaged or lost. Where archaeological sites have been assessed to meet the criteria for inclusion on adopted registers or maps of locally important heritage assets*

these shall be treated in the same way as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance.

The draft Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan was completed by the Parish Council's working group in 2018 and will be submitted to the North Herts District Council to progress it to the next stage. The Neighbourhood Plan recognises both designated and non-designated heritage assets although no specific policies have been made relating to their protection apart from the Scheduled Monument of Arbury Banks.

1.3 Location, topography and geology

The proposed development site occupies a field on the eastern side of Ashwell. The site is bounded by Lucas Lane and the village to the north-west, By a small field and tennis court to the north-east, by Ashwell Street (also called Ashwell Lane) and open farmland beyond to the south-east and by properties and gardens around Woodforde Close to the south-west. The field occupies the side of a hillslope and descends towards the north. At the time of the walkover survey, the site was under pasture.

The solid geology of the site comprises Zig Zag Chalk Formation, (BGS 2019). The soils are shallow, freely-draining and lime-rich over chalk and limestone (Landis 2019). The site lies at between 55m and 66m above Ordnance Datum.



View from south-west corner of site, looking north Fig 2



View from south-west corner of site, looking north-east Fig 3



View from eastern corner of site, looking west Fig 4



View from northern corner of site, looking south Fig 5



View of the northern extension of the site, looking north-west Fig 6