

**LAND AT GREENLEAS, BYGRAVE
ROAD, BALDOCK**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**

**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

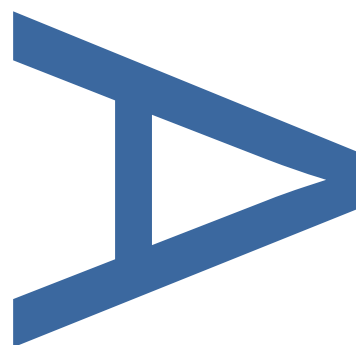
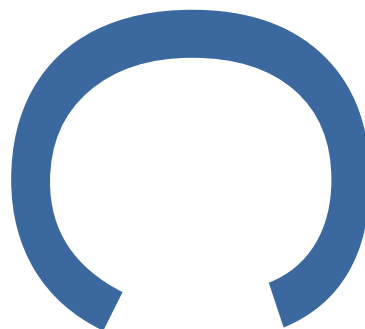
**PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBERS:
23/02113/OP**

**OASIS REFERENCE:
PRECONST1-531283**

PCA REPORT NO: 17961 V1

SITE CODE: BYG/GBR'25

JUNE 2025



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Land at Greenleas, Bygrave Road, Baldock: An Archaeological Evaluation

Local Planning Authority: North Hertfordshire District Council

Planning Reference: 23/02113/OP

Central National Grid Reference: TL 25028 34638

Oasis Reference: preconst1-531283

Event Number/Site Code: BYG/GBR'25

Report No. R 17961 v1

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.

June 2025

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
QUALITY CONTROL	4
ABSTRACT	5
1 INTRODUCTION	6
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	8
3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	9
4 METHODOLOGY	12
5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE	14
6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS BY TRENCH	15
7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	17
8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	19
9 BIBLIOGRAPHY	20
10 FIGURES	21
11 PLATES	25
12 APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DETAILS	31
13 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX	32
14 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM	34
15 APPENDIX 4: HERTS HER SUMMARY FORM	36
FIGURE 1 SITE LOCATION	22
FIGURE 2 DETAILED TRENCH LOCATION	23
FIGURE 3 TRENCH 2 AND 3 PLAN AND SECTIONS	24
PLATE 1: TRENCHES 1-3, VIEW NORTH.	25
PLATE 2: TRENCH 1, VIEW SOUTH-EAST	25
PLATE 3: TRENCH 2, VIEW SOUTH-EAST	26
PLATE 4: TRENCH 3, VIEW NORTH-EAST	26
PLATE 5: DITCH [5] (TRENCH 2), VIEW SOUTH.	27
PLATE 6: DITCH [7] (TRENCH 3), VIEW NORTH.	27

PLATE 7: FURROW [9] (TRENCH 3), VIEW SOUTH-EAST.	28
PLATE 8: POST-PAD 10 (TRENCH 3), VIEW NORTH-EAST.	28
PLATE 9: POST-PAD 11 (TRENCH 3), VIEW SOUTH-EAST.	29
PLATE 10: POST-PAD 12 (TRENCH 3), VIEW SOUTH-EAST.	29
PLATE 11: POST-PADS 10, 11 AND 12 (TRENCH 3), VIEW SOUTH.	30

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.	
Site Code	BYG/GBR'25
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	Name	Approved	Date
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Version Control			
Version No.	Name	Reason	Date
1	Jenn Hulse	Initial issue	02/06/2025

ABSTRACT

Pre-Construct Archaeology were commissioned by Abrams Archaeology on behalf of Greenleas Development Ltd, to conduct an archaeological trial trench evaluation on Land at Greenleas, Bygrave Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 5DS. The proposed development is for the construction of two detached dwellings with associated vehicular access and proposed parking area.

Three trenches, a total of 30 linear metres, covering the area of the development, were excavated on the 27th to 28th of May 2025.

The archaeological results from the site are very limited, comprising two ditches (believed to be the same length of ditch), one furrow and the remains of a post-medieval/ modern structure. No archaeological dating material was recovered from any of the features.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. (PCA) on land at Greenleas, Bygrave Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 5DS (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 25022 34634) from the 27th – 28th May 2025 (Figure 1; Plate 1).
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Abrams Archaeology on behalf of Greenleas Development Ltd., in response to an archaeological planning condition attached to the development proposal for two detached dwellings with associated vehicular access and proposed parking area, (Planning Reference: 23/02113/OP). This is because the site lies within an area where there is significant potential for archaeological remains and any finds should be retrieved and/or recorded before they are damaged or destroyed as a result of the development hereby permitted and to comply with Policy HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031. This is also in line with *National Planning Policy Framework 2024*, Section 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.
- 1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Joe Abrams of Abrams Archaeology (Abrams 2025) in response to the advice given by the Senior Historic Environment Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS, Sustainable Growth, Hertfordshire County Council (Senior Historic Environment Advisor).
- 1.4 The aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, date, extent, character, condition and quality of any archaeological remains on the site, to assess the significance of any such remains in a local, regional, or national context, as appropriate, and to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on the site's archaeology.
- 1.5 A total of three evaluation trenches totalling 30 linear metres of trenches were excavated and recorded (Figure 2).

- 1.6 This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy. Following Transfer of Title, the site archive will be deposited at the North Hertfordshire District Council Museum.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

- 2.1.1 The British Geological Survey (BGS) identifies the underlying solid geology as Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation - Chalk. This Sedimentary bedrock formed between 100.5 and 89.8 million years ago during the Cretaceous period.
- 2.1.2 Superficial deposits are not described by the BGS.

2.2 Topography

- 2.2.1 The application site lies at c. 65m OD and is relatively level. There is a plateau of land (at c. 65m OD) which includes the sites and land to the south of Bygrave Road, extending to just south of the London-Cambridge railway line.
- 2.2.2 The site is located c. 800m northeast from the historic core of Baldock. Baldock lies on relatively low ground with land climbing to the south, into the Beyond the edges of the village land climbs to the south towards Chiltern Hills which form a ridgeline running northeast to southwest. That portion south of Baldock is known as the Weston Hills. To the north of the Site, land climbs towards a local ridgeline between Bygrave and Radwell while to the west of the site, land climbs towards Norton.
- 2.2.3 The nearest watercourse to the Site is the River Ivel, the source of which is a spring to the west of North Road as it runs out of Baldock. This is located c. 1.5km west of the Site.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 This section contains information taken from the WSI (Abrams 2025) which used up to date HER data. The full record of surrounding HER data is presented in Appendix 1 of the WSI.

3.2 Prehistoric

3.2.1 Nearby HER records of note include that for the Icknield Way (4182), an important prehistoric (and later) routeway which is shown running c. 200m south of the Site. The Icknield Way describes more a corridor of land than a narrow, tightly defined 'road' in the modern sense. The key point is that the corridor ran through Baldock and to the south of the Site.

3.2.2 Area of Archaeological Significance 'N and S of Royston Road' covers a variety of cropmarks, several of which appear to be barrows (burial mounds). Record 7459 is the closest example of such a record and is located c. 200m east of the Site. The HER describes it as a "soilmark of approx. 50% of a circular enclosure, representing the ploughed-down remains of a round barrow. The rest of the enclosure is masked. Evaluation in 2016 found that the barrow, part of a cemetery [31438] on the south-facing slope here, has been 'all but destroyed by the levelling of this area prior to the construction of the farms', but part of the large curvilinear ditch survived.' Record 7460 is located a short distance west of 7459 and is also described as a likely barrow.

3.2.3 Area of Archaeological Significance 'SW of Bygrave Village' lies c.400m northwest of the Site and covers cropmarks (2442) which relate to an early Medieval settlement, Bygrave Common, Bygrave. Record 10793 8 (Neolithic/Early Bronze Age and Post-Medieval finds north of Baldock) describes land on which fieldwalking recovered a high level of post-medieval tile and some worked flint of Neolithic/early Bronze Age date. The HER describes how the "field has a ridge running across it from north to south and crossing the Bygrave Road; it possibly represents an earlier field boundary."

3.2.4 Area of Archaeological Significance 'E of Blackhorse Farm' lies c. 400m west of the Site. This contains records of several classes of archaeological remains

some of which are described by the following three records. Record 31437 describes the location of several intercutting Neolithic pits recorded during archaeological evaluation. Record 2431 records the location at which a late Neolithic to early Bronze Age barrow was recorded. Record 4731 records the location of an undated ditch, or ditches, possibly part of an enclosure.

- 3.2.5 A scheduled monument (Figure 3, DHT10819) lies c. 750m west of the Site at the source of the River Ivel. The land has been designated due to the presence of an early post-Roman (Saxon) settlement.

3.3 Modern

- 3.3.1 The Site lies completely within a monument polygon (31446) which highlights land selected in order to locate houses and smallholdings for returning soldiers (WWI). These was part of the Land Fit for Heroes initiative which provided land for returning soldiers.

3.4 Previous archaeological investigation

- 3.4.1 EHT8176 is a large polygon which relates to an investigation over a large tract of land to the north of Baldock. Although the Site falls within the polygon, this does not reveal information tightly defined enough to be useful in predicting potential within the Site.
- 3.4.2 EHT6843 refers to land c. 200m west of the Site, it describes the results of a geophysical survey carried out in advance of trial trenching.
- 3.4.3 Of more relevance to the Site is Record EHT6923 which describes the results of trial trenching on the southern side of Bygrave Road, close to the Site. The results of this work are summarised in the report which followed the fieldwork: “The Iron Age/Roman remains identified in the western part of the PDA represent low density field-systems and animal enclosures on the periphery of Baldock’s historic core.”
- 3.4.4 This is a very useful piece of information in relation to the Site, and it suggests that it is outside, and to the northeast of, the transition zone described in that summary. Placing it in the rural hinterland of the Iron Age settlement, Roman

and Medieval towns of what is now called Baldock.

- 3.5 In summary, the remains most likely to be recorded are those associated with the 20th C use of the land as smallholdings and the far earlier use of the local landscape for late prehistoric funerary monuments (Bronze Age).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation comprised three 1.6m x 10m trial trenches, totalling 30 linear metres. These were distributed evenly across the site in order to provide a representative sample of the development area.
- 4.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Standard for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023a), *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023b), and the *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation, and research of archaeological materials* (CIfA 2020).

4.2 Excavation methodology

- 4.2.1 Ground reduction during the evaluation was carried out using a 3 ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator (JCB) was used to strip the excavation area. Topsoil and other overburden of low archaeological value was removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded.
- 4.2.2 Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate, and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools.

4.3 Recording and Finds Recovery

- 4.3.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Geomax GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.
- 4.3.2 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as 'context numbers') and recorded with PCA's bespoke digital recording system using terminology defined in PCA's excavation manual (Taylor and Brown 2018) and linked to a Geographical Information System (QGIS) used to interrogate the data.

4.3.3 Archaeological processes recognised by the deposition of material are signified in this report by round brackets (thus), while events constituting the removal of deposits are referred to here as ‘cuts’ and signified by square brackets [thus]. Where more than one slot was excavated through an individual feature, each intervention was assigned additional numbers for the cutting event and for the deposits it contained (these deposits within cut features being referred to here as ‘fills’). The record numbers assigned to cuts, deposits and groups are entirely arbitrary and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits excavated during the evaluation and excavation are listed in Appendix 1. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.

4.3.4 Cameras with an APS-C or larger sensor and with a resolution of no less than 10 megapixels were used. Images are of archival quality, non-proprietary RAW (.DNG) or .TIFF files. Suitable horizontal and vertical scales were used as appropriate. Digital photographs were taken of all trenches, archaeological features, and deposits.

4.4 Sampling Strategy

4.4.1 Discrete features were half-sectioned, photographed and recorded by a cross-section scaled drawing at an appropriate scale (either 1:10 or 1:20). Where large or significant finds assemblages were present, features were subsequently 100% excavated for finds recovery.

4.4.2 Linear features were investigated by means of regularly spaced slots with a minimum of 1m width.

5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	1
Context sheets	12
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	3
Trench record sheets	3
Photo register sheets	1

5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	83
GPS survey files	1
Digital plans	1
GIS project inc all context and trench data	1

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS BY TRENCH

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The trenches are described below in numerical order, with technical data tabulated (Appendix 2). Features and deposits are first split into feature type and then described in numerical cut order. Archaeological features and deposits were sealed by the subsoil, then topsoil. The principal result of the fieldwork was the identification of a single ditch length, a probable furrow, and the post-pads of a postmedieval/ modern building, the full extents of which could not be defined within the excavated area. No datable artefactual material was recovered from the features.

6.2 Overburden and Natural Geological Deposits

- 6.2.1 The topsoil was a dark greyish brown sandy silt which measured approximately 0.15m in thickness and was present in all trenches.
- 6.2.2 The subsoil was a light greyish brown sandy silt with occasional chalk inclusions which measured between 0.1-0.15m in thickness and was present in all trenches.
- 6.2.3 The natural geology consisted of chalk, intermixed with dark brown sandy silt.

6.3 Trench 1 (Plate 2)

- 6.3.1 Trench 1 contained no archaeological finds, features or deposits. The presence of plough scars was noted.

6.4 Trench 2 (Figure 3; Plate 3 and Plate 5)

- 6.4.1 Trench 2 contained Ditch [5]. Ditch [5] was linear in plan and was aligned north-south. It had moderate sloping sides and a concave base. It measured 2.7m long, 0.78m wide, and 0.18m deep. Its single fill (4) consisted of friable sandy silt which was light brown in colour and contained no datable evidence.

6.5 Trench 3 (Figure 3; Plate 4, Plate 6, Plate 7, Plate 8, Plate 9, Plate 10 and Plate 11)

- 6.5.1 Trench 3 contained Ditch [7], Furrow [9], and post-pads (10), (11) and (12).

- 6.5.2 Ditch [7] was linear in plan and was aligned north-south. It had moderate sloping sides and a concave base. It measured the full width of the trench, 0.96m wide, and 0.12m deep. Its single fill (6) consisted of friable sandy silt which was light brown in colour and contained no datable evidence.
- 6.5.3 Furrow [9] was linear in plan and was aligned north-south. It had gradual sloping sides and a concave base. It measured the full width of the trench, 0.85m wide, and 0.05m deep. Its single fill (8) consisted of friable sandy silt which was light brown in colour and contained no datable evidence.
- 6.5.4 Post-pads (10), (11) and (12) were a combination of red brick and cement mortared structural foundations. They were roughly rectangular in shape measuring between 0.65-0.9m in width and 0.6-0.9m in length but were not fully exposed in the trench. Due to the materials used in the concrete base, they date to the post-medieval or modern period.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 Limited conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the evaluation due to the lack of the archaeological material that allows us to date the features. Archaeological activity from the Site comprised two ditches (believed to be the same length of ditch), one furrow and the remains of a post-medieval/ modern structure.

7.2 Undated

- 7.2.1 The two undated ditches in Trenches 2 and 3 are on the same alignment and have similar profiles and fills, so therefore are believed to be the same length of ditch.
- 7.2.2 Unfortunately, the lack of dating evidence from this ditch means any analysis of it is fairly restricted. As the site lies in an area of prehistoric- modern archaeological activity, the ditch could date to any of these periods. However, as the ditch was sterile in nature, this suggests that any period of occupation was taking place further away from this feature, with this ditch likely being on the edge of any presumed settlement.
- 7.2.3 Also in Trench 3 was a furrow. This feature has been interpreted as a furrow due to its profile (being linear and extremely shallow) and its sterile nature. Whilst furrows are typically believed to date from the medieval period, their use in some areas can be seen to date up until the 18th century (Historic England 2018). Given the area surrounding the Site is still agricultural farmland, and the house immediately adjacent to the Site was only built upon during the early 20th century (Abrams 2025, Appendix 4: Modern Mapping), it is highly likely for this feature to have been an agricultural furrow. No archaeological features were revealed in Trench 1, but the presence of plough scars were noted, showing how the site had previously been in agricultural use. That no other furrows are noted on site may be due to the small sample of trenching, or the presence of the post-medieval/ modern structure.

7.3 Post-medieval/ modern

- 7.3.1 The three post-pads were formed by a mix of rubble material, largely red brick mixed with cement and were not visible prior to the opening of the trench. The material within the post-pads is indicative of a late post-medieval or even early modern date. The structure the post-pads form has not been recorded on any modern mapping (Abrams 2025, Appendix 4: Modern Mapping), and is therefore believed to have been an auxiliary structure, such as a shed or storage room.

7.4 Conclusion

- 7.4.1 The undated and post-medieval/ modern features on Site offer a partial understanding of the archaeological development of the area due to the limited nature of the findings.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. would like to thank Abrams Archaeology for commissioning the work on behalf of Greenleas Development. PCA are also grateful to Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Team (Herts LEADS) for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. The project was managed for PCA by Judy Mlynarska and was supervised by Jenn Hulse. The author would like to thank Betty, Molly, and Twiggy for their help during the monitoring. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by PCA's CAD Department.

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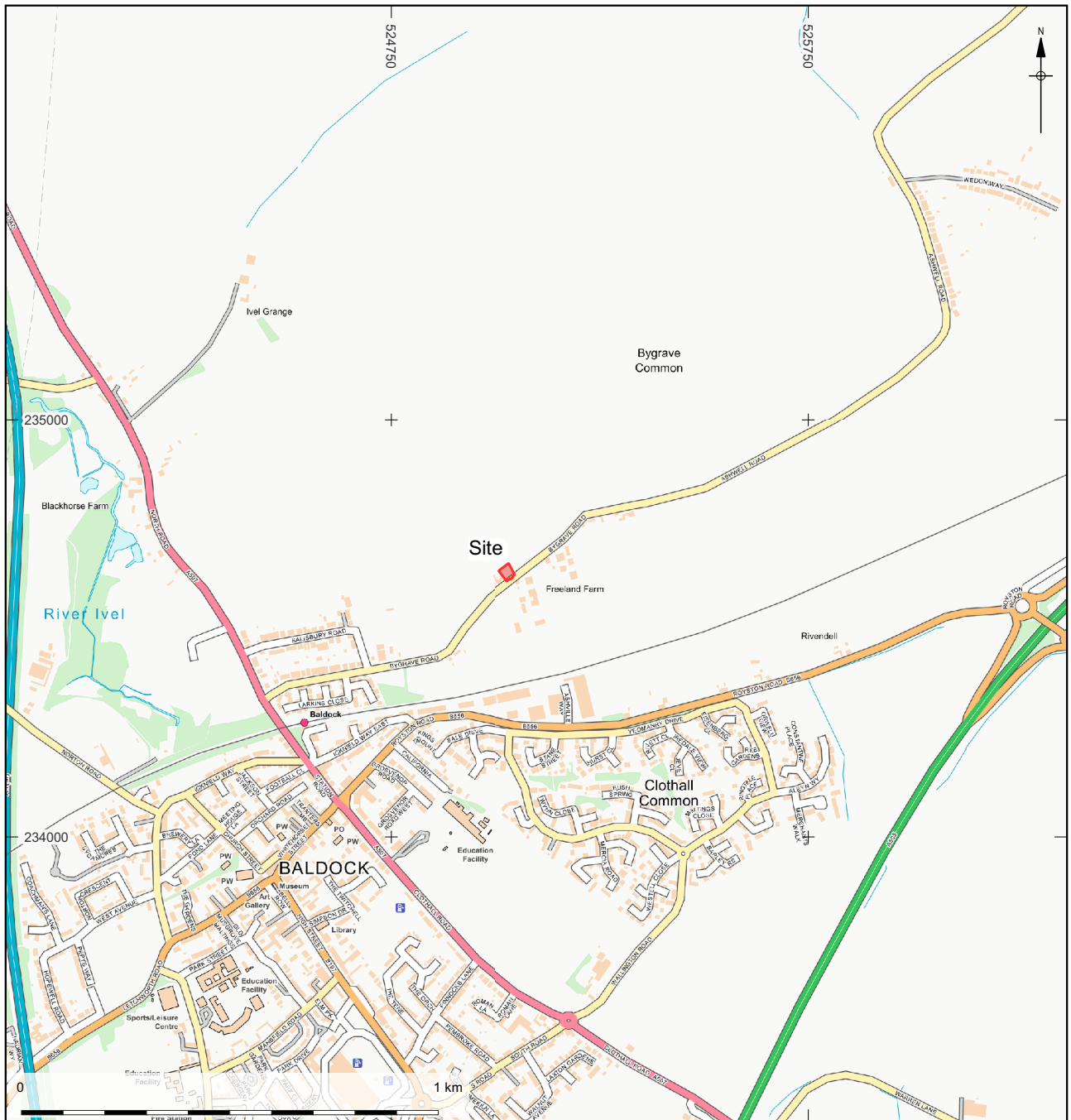
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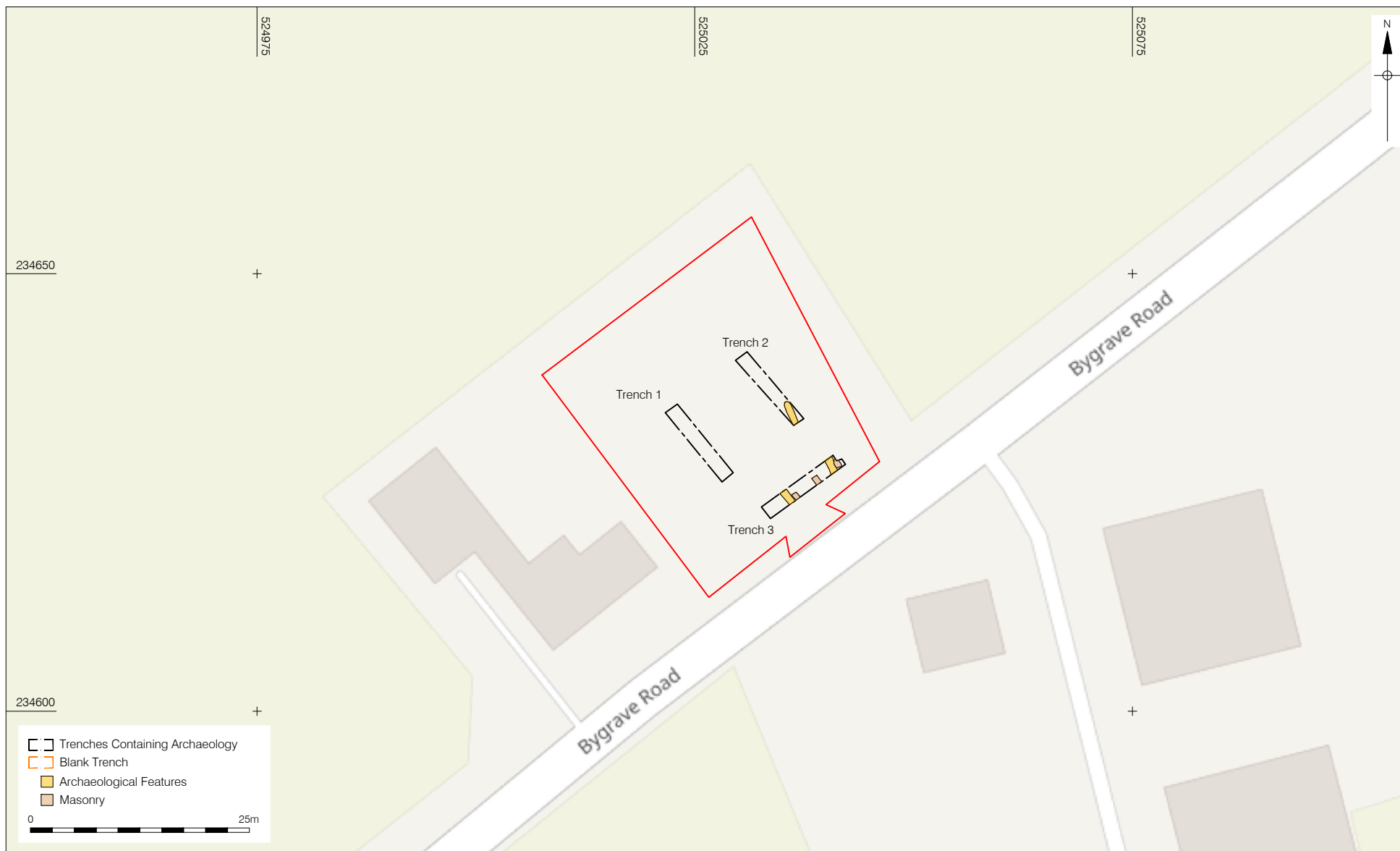
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10 FIGURES





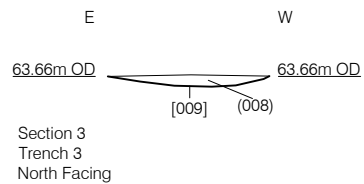
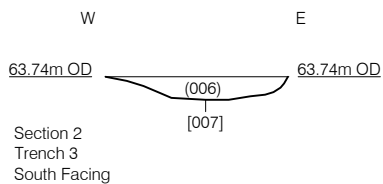
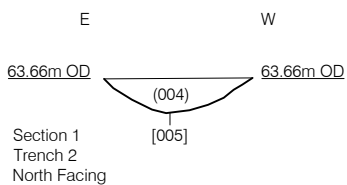


Figure 3
Trench 2 and 3, Plan and Sections
Plan 1:125, Section 1:40 at A4

11 PLATES



Plate 1: Trenches 1-3, view north.



Plate 2: Trench 1, view south-east.



Plate 3: Trench 2, view south-east.



Plate 4: Trench 3, view north-east.



Plate 5: Ditch [5] (trench 2), view south.



Plate 6: Ditch [7] (trench 3), view north.



Plate 7: Furrow [9] (trench 3), view south-east.



Plate 8: Post-pad 10 (trench 3), view north-east.



Plate 9: Post-pad 11 (trench 3), view south-east.



Plate 10: Post-pad 12 (trench 3), view south-east.



Plate 11: Post-pads 10, 11 and 12 (trench 3), view south.

12 APPENDIX 1: TRENCH DETAILS

Trench number	Orientation	Length (m)	Width (m)	Topsoil thickness (m)	Subsoil thickness (m)	Maximum trench depth (m)
1	NW-SE	10	1.6	0.15	0.1	0.3
2	NW-SE	10	1.6	0.15	0.1	0.3
3	NE-SW	10	1.6	0.15	0.15	0.4

13 APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No	Cut	Trench	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Section	Description
1	1		Layer	Layer	0	0	0	0	Firm light greyish brown chalk
2	2		Layer	Layer	0	0	0	0	Friable light brownish grey sandy silt
3	3		Layer	Layer	0	0	0	0	Friable dark brownish grey sandy silt
4	5	2	Fill	Ditch	1.1	0.78	0.18	1	Friable light - brown sandy silt with chalk
5	5	2	Cut	Ditch	1.1	0.78	0.18	1	Linear, moderate sides, concave base and N-S aligned
6	7	3	Fill	Ditch	1	0.96	0.12	2	Friable light - brown sandy silt with chalk
7	7	3	Cut	Ditch	1	0.96	0.12	2	Linear, moderate sides,

									concave base and N- S aligned
8	9	3	Fill	Furrow	1	0.85	0.05	3	Friable light - brown sandy silt with chalk
9	9	3	Cut	Furrow	1	0.85	0.05	3	Linear, gradual sides, concave base and N- S aligned
10	10	3	Masonry	Post-pad	0	0	0	0	
11	11	3	Masonry	Post-pad	0	0	0	0	
12	12	3	Masonry	Post-pad	0	0	0	0	

14 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS Summary for preconst1-531283

OASIS ID (UID)	preconst1-531283
Project Name	Evaluation at Greenleas, Bygrave Road
Sitename	Greenleas, Bygrave Road
Sitecode	BYG/GBR'25
Project Identifier(s)	BYG/GBR'25
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Planning requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project Dates	27-May-2025 - 28-May-2025
Location	Greenleas, Bygrave Road NGR : TL 25022 34634 LL : 51.99608622549565, -0.180412702405341 12 Fig : 525022,234634
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Hertfordshire Local Authority District : North Hertfordshire Parish : Bygrave
Project Methodology	Trial trench evaluation - three trenches at 1.6m x 10m
Project Results	Three trenches, a total of 30 linear metres, covering the area of the development, were excavated on the 27th to 28th of May 2025. The archaeological results from the site are very limited, comprised two ditches (believed to be the same length of ditch), one furrow and the remains of a post-medieval/ modern structure. No archaeological dating material was recovered from any of the features.
Keywords	
Funder	Private individual
HER	Hertfordshire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	J Mlynarska
HER Identifiers	
Archives	

Report generated on: 02 Jun 2025, 07:51

15 APPENDIX 4: HERTS HER SUMMARY FORM

Site name and address: Greenleas, Bygrave Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 5DS		
County: Hertfordshire		District: North Hertfordshire
Village/Town: Baldock		Parish: Bygrave
Planning application reference: 23/02113/OP		
HER Enquiry reference: -		
Client name, address, and tel. no.: Thomas Wilcock, Greenleas Developments Ltd, 122 Glebe Road, Letchworth Garden City, England, SG6 1DU, 07495 143858		
Nature of application: Residential		
Present land use: Residential Garden		
Size of application area: c.900sqm		Size of area investigated: 48sqm
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 25022 34634		
Site code (if applicable): BYG/GBR'25		
Site director/Organisation: Judy Mlynarska/ Pre-Construct Archaeology		
Type of work: Trial Trench Evaluation		
Date of work: May 2025	Start: 27 th	Finish: 28th
Location of finds & site archive/Curating museum: North Hertfordshire Museum		
Related HER Nos:	Periods represented: Undated	
Relevant previous summaries/reports: N/A		
Summary of fieldwork results: Three trenches, a total of 30 linear metres, covering the area of the development, were excavated on the 27th to 28th of May 2025. The archaeological results from the site are very limited, comprised two ditches (believed to be the same length of ditch), one furrow and the remains of a post-medieval/ modern structure. No archaeological dating material was recovered from any of the features.		
Author of summary: JH		Date of summary: 02/06/2025



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