



Princes Mews, Royston

Desk-based Archaeological Assessment

CLIENT: Kain Miller

PRECIS:

A desk based archaeological assessment has been produced In response to the proposed housing scheme. The assessment considers the location of the site in an area of archaeological significance and how any potential impacts may be mitigated through design. This forms the formal statement for planning



13 August 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Squire Heritage Consulting was commissioned by Kain Miller to prepare an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment in support of the proposed redevelopment of the existing surface car park at Princes Mews, Royston, to provide six three-bedroom townhouses with associated access, parking, landscaping and ancillary works.
- The site lies within the historic core of Royston and within an area of recognised archaeological interest.
- It occupies a historically secondary backland position behind the established frontages of Baldock Street and King Street, within an area formerly characterised by rear plots, yards and ancillary buildings associated with the development of the medieval and post-medieval town.
- No known archaeological remains are recorded within the application site itself and no previous archaeological investigation is known to have been undertaken within its boundary.
- Archaeological investigations elsewhere within central Royston nevertheless demonstrate the survival of medieval and post-medieval remains, including burgage plots, buildings, cellars, wells, pits, postholes, yards and other evidence of domestic, commercial and ancillary activity.
- Historic mapping demonstrates that the application site contained buildings and enclosed rear areas by the nineteenth century.
- Subsequent demolition, redevelopment and formation of the existing surface car park are likely to have caused localised disturbance or truncation, although the extent and preservation of any surviving archaeological deposits remain uncertain.
- The site is assessed as having Moderate archaeological potential overall. This principally relates to medieval and post-medieval remains associated with the historic rear plots, with a High potential for remains associated with documented nineteenth-century development.
- The potential for prehistoric, Roman and Early Medieval remains is considered Low on the presently available evidence.
- The proposed development would have no direct impact upon any known archaeological remains. New foundations, drainage, services and associated groundworks could, however, affect previously unidentified archaeological deposits where these survive.
- Taking account of previous disturbance and the likely variable preservation of the archaeological resource, the potential archaeological impact of the development is assessed as Low adverse overall. Nothing identified by this assessment represents an archaeological constraint that would preclude the principle of development.
- Subject to the advice of the Local Planning Authority's archaeological adviser, any residual archaeological interest could be addressed through proportionate archaeological investigation and recording secured by planning condition.
- Overall, the proposed development is considered capable of proceeding without unacceptable harm to the archaeological resource, subject to proportionate measures to identify and record any archaeological remains that may be encountered.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Works

Squire Heritage Consulting was commissioned by Kain Miller to produce an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment covering the proposed development of the car park at the top end of Princes Mews.

In North Herts District Council (NHDC), all planning applications are monitored by the Herts Archaeology Advisory Service (HAAS). If the development has archaeological implications, it is the HAAS who make recommendations to the local planning department about the appropriate course of action.

The site was most recently in ancillary use, with a surface car park. The archaeological sensitivity derives from the knowledge that the site lies within the historic core of Royston and within the Royston Conservation Area. Given the archaeological sensitivity of the town, North Hertfordshire District Council has requested a Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment to support the planning application. Under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) this is a heritage asset with archaeological interest.

When considering the planning application, it is important to consider that a development involving excavation or other ground works requires a written statement to be submitted in the form of a desk-based archaeological assessment. The assessment is a requirement of paragraph 200 of the NPPF (Dec 2024).

There are two stages to dealing with a site of potential archaeological remains. Firstly, a desktop assessment and then secondly, possibly a watching brief once works start on site depending on the outcome of the desktop assessment. If, following the watching brief, something of interest was found on site, then there would be the possibility of an archaeological dig being necessary. Given the archaeological sensitivity of the site there may be a need to construct pre-development trial trenches.

A description of significance for heritage assets with archaeological interest can range from a brief desk-based to an intrusive investigation. In many cases the description of significance can be derived from a desk-based assessment using the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HHER) and other appropriate sources such as historic maps.

Development should demonstrate a clear understanding of the historic environment and the heritage values of sites or areas and their relationship with their surroundings. Proposals affecting heritage assets, will be assessed by the degree to which they conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance.

In this case, the application proposes new building and resurfacing of the current car park. The scale of the proposals means that they will probably have an impact on any surviving archaeological remains present at the site.

The results of the desk-based study should be used together with any technical details on the construction methods to be employed, to assess the level of impact the proposed development will have on any surviving archaeological remains at the site.

The desktop study will examine the impacts of the development upon the possible archaeological remains on the site. This information complements the above ground assessments made in the Heritage Statement.

In this respect planning will only be approved when it is shown that development would not adversely affect scheduled ancient monuments or other nationally important archaeological sites or involve significant alterations to them or harm their settings.

This report includes a description of the baseline conditions; an examination of available documentary, cartographic and known archaeological evidence; identifies any known and potential Archaeological heritage receptor(s) within the application site (hereafter referred to as the site) or within a 250m radius study area around the site and assesses the potential impact of the proposed development on such resources.

If the site contains significant archaeological remains, then the priority will be to preserve them in situ. To achieve this, the archaeological impact of a development could be minimised by for example, sympathetic foundation design or amendments to the layout.

Where investigations indicate that in situ preservation is inappropriate, excavation and recovery should be carried out by a reputable archaeological body, before development commences. Any such investigations shall be in accordance with a detailed scheme to be approved in advance by the Council and the results shall be subsequently published.

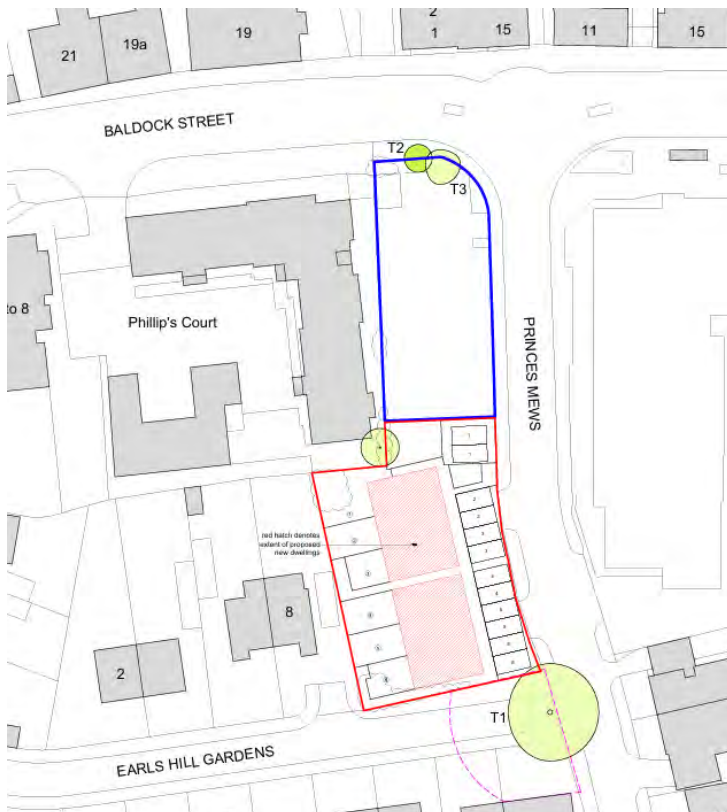
1.2 Site Location/Description

The site is located at Princes Mews, immediately south of Baldock Street within the historic core of Royston. It occupies a backland position behind the established street frontage and is currently characterised principally by hardstanding and car parking.

The surrounding townscape is varied. Baldock Street to the north forms one of the historic approaches into the centre of Royston and is characterised by predominantly two-storey buildings occupying narrow historic plots, generally with continuous frontages adjoining the pavement. The application site lies to the rear of these properties and historically formed part of the secondary land behind the principal street frontage.

Princes Mews has a more informal and enclosed character, comprising a mixture of rear boundaries, access areas, car parking and later residential development. Princess Court and Carrington Court represent phases of twentieth-century and more recent backland redevelopment, while other properties retain a smaller-scale domestic character.

The immediate context therefore reflects a combination of historic street-frontage development, former rear plots and yards, and later residential infill. This pattern of development is relevant to the archaeological assessment, as the site lies within the historic settlement of Royston but occupies land behind, rather than directly on, its principal historic street frontage.



Site

1.3 Historic and Archaeological Context of Princes Mews

Princes Mews occupies a backland area within the historic core of Royston, historically comprising the rear portions of plots extending from King Street and Baldock Street. During the medieval and post-medieval periods, such areas typically accommodated ancillary activities associated with properties fronting the principal streets, including yards, workshops, stores, stables and other service buildings.

This distinction between densely developed street frontages and more informally arranged rear plots formed an important element of Royston's historic urban morphology. The backland areas therefore have archaeological potential to preserve evidence relating to former property boundaries, ancillary structures, occupation, refuse disposal and commercial or craft activities associated with the development of the medieval and post-medieval town.

During the nineteenth and particularly the twentieth century, Princes Mews underwent substantial change. Earlier buildings and plot divisions were progressively removed or altered, areas were amalgamated, and parts of the former backland were redeveloped for housing, access and car parking. The application site is now principally characterised by hardstanding and surface parking.

Although these later changes are likely to have caused some disturbance, the site's location within the historic settlement means that the potential survival of earlier below-ground archaeological remains cannot be discounted. Princes Mews is therefore of archaeological interest principally for the evidence it may retain concerning the development, use and changing organisation of the rear plots associated with Royston's medieval and post-medieval urban core.

The building of the adjacent offices and its car park formed off Princes Mews changed the way in which space was formed to the rear plots of the buildings. The historic record, as referred to later in more detail, pays reference to the town's **19th-century growth tied to transport, commerce, and social development**. The car park is one of the spaces that had historic links to the development of the settlement.

Central Royston's listed buildings form a cohesive historic commercial streetscape of high architectural and townscape value, illustrating Royston's evolution as a market town through its shops, civic buildings, banks, and inns. Upper King Street has a number of attributes and features which have a positive impact upon the character of the area. Its listed buildings form a continuous and historically rich commercial spine within Royston, representing the town's medieval origins and later Georgian and Victorian development.

The older buildings have undergone much change including extension and additional building.

There has been relatively little formal archaeological investigation of the site in the past but due to previous redevelopment at the rear any unknown archaeological potential is likely to be not very well preserved.

Overall Significance

Area of Archaeological Significance

Royston sits within locally designated **Areas of Archaeological Significance** defined in the North Herts Local Plan, highlighting high potential for prehistoric, Roman, and medieval remains tied to ancient crossroads like Ermine Street and the Icknield Way. It is recognised for its **Historic Town Core and for** Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows (burial mounds) and Roman activity traces at **Therfield Heath**, to the west of the town. **Royston Cave** is a rare, man-made subterranean chalk chamber beneath Melbourn Street featuring 13th-to-15th-century religious carvings, protected as a Scheduled Monument and Grade I listed building.

1.4 Historical Development of Royston

Royston occupies a strategically important location at the intersection of two ancient routes: Ermine Street, the Roman road connecting London with the north, and the Icknield Way, an earlier route running broadly east–west along the chalk ridge and passing through the town on the approximate alignment of Melbourn Street and Baldock Street.

This convergence of routes provided an important focus for movement through the landscape long before the emergence of the medieval town. Archaeological discoveries from the wider Royston area, including Mesolithic implements, Iron Age pottery and coinage, and Roman artefacts, demonstrate a considerable depth of human activity in the locality, although the extent and character of any settlement preceding the medieval town remain less clearly understood.

The origins of the present settlement are principally medieval. Royston's development was closely associated with the foundation of an Augustinian Priory in the late twelfth century, traditionally dated to 1184, close to the junction of the principal routes. The establishment of the priory coincided with the growth of a market settlement, and market and fair rights encouraged Royston's emergence as an important local commercial centre. The medieval priory and associated institutions formed a significant component of the early town, alongside the hospital of St John and St James, which formerly occupied land in the vicinity of Baldock Street.

The medieval town developed around its principal streets and marketplace. Its characteristic urban form comprised buildings positioned close to the street frontage within long, relatively narrow plots extending behind. The frontages accommodated houses, shops and commercial premises, while the land to the rear provided yards, workshops, stables, stores, gardens and other ancillary uses.

Narrow passages and carriageways provided access between the principal streets and these working areas. This distinction between formal street frontage and more functional backland

areas is particularly relevant to Princes Mews, which occupies land historically forming parts of the rear plots extending from King Street and Baldock Street.

King Street formed an important component of this developing medieval settlement. Historically known as Back Street, it developed parallel to the principal market frontage as commercial activity expanded and permanent buildings increasingly occupied former rear areas.

During the medieval and post-medieval periods it accommodated a mixture of houses, shops, inns and workshops. Although many of its buildings were subsequently rebuilt or refronted, the street retains evidence of its earlier origins in its alignment, narrow plots and surviving historic building fabric.

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries during the sixteenth century, the priory ceased to function, substantially changing the religious and institutional organisation of Royston. The town nevertheless continued to prosper because of its market, agricultural hinterland and strategic position on the road north from London. During the seventeenth century, Royston also acquired important royal associations through James I, whose frequent visits resulted in the establishment of a royal residence in the town.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Royston's position on the principal northward route contributed to its development as an important coaching town. Inns, stables and associated services developed to accommodate travellers and horses, while the productive agricultural hinterland supported an increasingly important malting and grain economy. Maltings, stores, yards, barns and other commercial buildings became characteristic elements of the town's rear plots and peripheral areas.

The prosperity generated by coaching, agriculture and malting also influenced Royston's built character. Earlier buildings were frequently altered, rebuilt or provided with new Georgian brick or rendered frontages, meaning that some apparently eighteenth-century buildings incorporate substantially earlier fabric. Behind the principal streets, the more functional pattern of yards, outbuildings, workshops and stores continued to evolve in response to changing commercial requirements.

The nineteenth century brought further change. The arrival of the railway in 1850 contributed to the decline of long-distance coaching while improving the movement of agricultural produce and other goods. Development expanded beyond the medieval core, particularly towards the railway station, while maltings, mills and other commercial and industrial premises continued to contribute to the local economy. Within the historic centre, individual rear plots were increasingly developed, subdivided or amalgamated as commercial requirements changed.

Baldock Street also experienced progressive redevelopment. The area around the later Post Office had previously been associated with the medieval hospital of St John and St James, and human remains discovered in the Briary Lane area during the twentieth century have been interpreted as potentially associated with its burial ground. The Post Office itself was constructed during the 1930s on land formerly associated with Upton House, illustrating the continuing redevelopment of plots along Baldock Street.

During the twentieth century, changing commercial activities and increased motor-vehicle use resulted in further transformation of Royston's historic backlands. Many former workshops, stores and ancillary buildings were removed, historic plot boundaries became less distinct, and former yards were converted to access roads, parking or residential development. Princes Mews reflects this process of change.

Despite these later alterations, the historic centre of Royston continues to preserve much of its underlying medieval structure. Its principal streets, historic plot boundaries and surviving backland areas provide evidence for the development of the town from a medieval market and religious centre through its later phases of coaching, agricultural, commercial and residential activity. This historical development provides the context within which the archaeological potential of the application site should be understood.

1.4.1 Royston Conservation Area – Key Elements of Significance

The significance of the Royston Conservation Area derives from the survival and legibility of the town's medieval origins, historic street pattern, architectural character and subsequent development as an important market, coaching and commercial centre. Its significance can be summarised under the following principal themes.

1. Architectural Interest

The Conservation Area contains a notable concentration of historic buildings dating from the medieval period through to the nineteenth century, including numerous listed buildings. Its architectural character is defined by traditional materials including brick, flint, render, timber framing and clay tiles, together with timber sash and casement windows.

Earlier timber-framed structures frequently survive behind later Georgian and Victorian façades, illustrating the progressive adaptation of buildings over several centuries. Historic inns, commercial premises, houses, outbuildings and former service buildings collectively demonstrate the varied architectural development of the town.

2. Historic Value

Royston's historic significance is closely associated with its position at the intersection of Ermine Street and the Icknield Way and its subsequent development as a medieval market town. The foundation of the Augustinian Priory in the twelfth century provided an important stimulus for settlement, while the surviving medieval street pattern and long, narrow plots provide evidence of the organisation of the developing town. Later associations with James I, the Great North Road, coaching, agriculture and malting illustrate Royston's continuing regional importance from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

3. Townscape and Group Value

The historic core retains a strongly legible urban grain characterised by continuous street frontages, narrow plots, carriageways, passageways, enclosed yards and secondary backland development. King Street is particularly illustrative of this pattern. Principal buildings address the street, while historically their rear plots accommodated workshops, stables, stores, barns and other ancillary structures. Surviving outbuildings, boundary walls, cobbled surfaces and courtyards contribute to understanding this hierarchy. Princes Mews occupies part of this

historically secondary backland environment, although twentieth-century clearance and redevelopment have reduced the survival of its earlier physical character.

4. Civic and Communal Significance

Royston's historic centre remains an important focus of community identity. The parish church, former priory precinct, historic market area, inns, commercial streets and public spaces reflect the town's long-standing religious, commercial and civic functions. The continued legibility of these places and routes provides a tangible connection between the modern community and Royston's development over several centuries.

Overall, the Conservation Area's significance lies not only in individual historic buildings but in the collective survival of its **historic street pattern, plot structure, architectural fabric and hierarchy between principal street frontages and secondary rear areas**. Princes Mews forms part of this inherited urban structure, making its historic and archaeological relationship with the former rear plots particularly relevant to the DBA.

1.5 Development of Princes Mews

Princes Mews occupies a historically secondary backland position between the established frontages of King Street and Baldock Street. The area originally formed parts of the long rear plots associated with properties fronting these streets and is likely to have accommodated the ancillary activities characteristic of Royston's medieval and post-medieval urban economy.

Unlike the more intensively developed street frontages, these rear areas provided space for yards, gardens, workshops, stores, stables and other service functions. Their use and physical arrangement would have changed repeatedly as individual properties were subdivided, amalgamated and adapted in response to changing commercial and domestic requirements. By the nineteenth century, historic mapping confirms that the area contained a relatively dense arrangement of buildings, yards and plot boundaries.

This pattern survived, with modification and further development, into the earlier twentieth century. More substantial change occurred during the mid-twentieth century, when a number of the former ancillary buildings were demolished, plot divisions became less distinct and parts of the backland were converted to hardstanding and vehicle parking.

The present form of Princes Mews therefore represents the latest phase in a much longer sequence of occupation and redevelopment. Although relatively little of the former above-ground arrangement survives within the application site, its earlier use raises the possibility that below-ground remains associated with former buildings, boundaries, yards, wells, pits and other activities may survive beneath later surfaces. The site's archaeological interest consequently derives principally from its potential to provide evidence for the changing use and organisation of this part of Royston's historic backland.

Historic Map Analysis

Historic mapping illustrates the progressive transformation of the site from a developed backland plot containing ancillary structures to part of a more open area of twentieth-century commercial development and car parking.

1896

The 1896 Ordnance Survey shows the application site within the developed backland south of Baldock Street. A small building occupies the site within a network of enclosed yards and ancillary structures, with the brewery complex immediately to the west. The mapping demonstrates the relatively fine-grained subdivision and intensive use of the rear plots at this date.

1937

By 1937, development within the surrounding backland had intensified. Buildings and yards occupy much of the area between Baldock Street and the properties to the south and east. The application site remained within this closely developed pattern, although individual buildings and boundaries had been altered, indicating continuing adaptation of the rear plots.

1970

The 1970 mapping records substantial change. Many earlier structures had been cleared or replaced by larger commercial buildings, including a warehouse and sweets factory, while a substantial car park had been established immediately to the northwest. The earlier fine-grained arrangement of yards and ancillary buildings had consequently become much less legible.

Summary

The maps demonstrate repeated development and clearance within and around the application site between the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While this activity may have caused some truncation of earlier archaeological deposits, the former presence of buildings, yards and plot boundaries indicates potential for below-ground remains such as foundations, surfaces, boundary features, pits and other deposits associated with the historic use of Royston's backland plots.

1.6 Archaeological Assessment

Archaeological Baseline

This section establishes the known archaeological baseline for the application site and its surrounding area. It draws upon Historic England research records, the NMR Excavation Index, Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HHER) data, previous archaeological investigations, historic mapping and other available documentary sources.

The purpose of the baseline is to identify the known archaeological resource, establish the character and chronology of previous discoveries, and assess the extent to which archaeological remains may survive within the application site. Particular consideration is given to evidence from the historic core of Royston and to investigations within comparable street-frontage and backland plots.

Historic England Research Records

Historic England research records were reviewed to identify recorded monuments and archaeological discoveries relevant to understanding the wider archaeological context of Royston. The records include principally antiquarian and historic artefact discoveries, together with a small number of recorded or possible archaeological monuments.

The identified material ranges in date from the Mesolithic through the Iron Age, Roman, Early Medieval and medieval periods to the Post-Medieval period. Finds include prehistoric implements, Iron Age pottery and coinage, Roman artefacts, Early Medieval brooches and medieval and later coins and personal objects.

A number of these discoveries were made during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and are recorded simply as having been found at or near Royston. Their precise locations and archaeological contexts are therefore uncertain. Consequently, the records are most useful in demonstrating the considerable chronological depth of human activity within the wider Royston landscape, rather than identifying specific areas of archaeological survival within the application site.

The relevant records are summarised below, followed by an assessment of their contribution to understanding the archaeological development of Royston.

Monument No.	Description	Period	Component Monument Type	Object Type	Object Material
368625	Roman green glass bottle with two reeded handles, reportedly found at Royston; now held by Hertford Museum.	Roman	Findspot	Bottle	Glass
368646	Two gold coins of James I, one dating before and one after his accession to the English throne, found near Royston in the late 19th century.	Post Medieval	Findspot	Coin	Gold

368675	Five Mesolithic tranchet axes found at Royston; one held by	Mesolithic	Findspot	Tranchet axehead	Stone / Flint *
				the British Museum and four by Hertford Museum.	

368643	Medieval coin hoard discovered at Royston in 1721, comprising silver Henry II 'Tealby' pennies and dating to after 1158.	Medieval	Findspot	Coin hoard	Silver
368648	Group of Iron Age coins from Royston, including gold staters and bronze coins attributed to	Iron Age	Findspot	Coin / Stater	Gold; Bronze

	Cunobelinus, Tasciovanus and the British Atrebates.				
368627	Small bronze bust or figurine of a Roman woman, with hairstyle attributed to the 3rd century AD, found at Royston.	Roman	Findspot	Figurine	Bronze
368647	Large Belgic girth-beaker with an early-type rim, found near Royston and held by Cambridge Museum.	Iron Age	Findspot	Vessel	Pottery
368649	Supposed Roman camp approximately ¼ mile from Royston on the road to Baldock, recorded in 1744 but with no corroborating archaeological evidence.	Roman	Enclosure	N/A	N/A
368642	Mesolithic uniserially barbed spear/fish-spear point, probably Maglemosian, from Royston and held by the British Museum.	Mesolithic	Findspot	Fish spear	Bone*
368645	Six Saxon brooches found in the vicinity of Royston during the late 19th century.	Early Medieval	Findspot	Brooch	Not stated
368644	Small gold annular brooch set with two red stones, probably dating from the 12th century, found near Royston in the late 19th century	Medieval	Findspot	Brooch	Gold

Summary of Historic England Research Records

Assessment and Interpretation

The earliest evidence is represented by the Mesolithic transept axeheads (368675) and barbed bone fish spear (368642). These are significant indicators of prehistoric activity within the wider Royston landscape. Such artefacts are normally associated with mobile hunter-gatherer communities and exploitation of woodland, wetland and other natural resources.

They demonstrate that human activity in the vicinity of Royston extends considerably earlier than the emergence of the historic settlement. However, because their precise findspots and archaeological contexts are uncertain, they cannot in themselves demonstrate permanent Mesolithic settlement.

The Iron Age discoveries provide stronger evidence for activity within the later prehistoric landscape. The Belgic girth-beaker (368647) indicates occupation or other activity during the later Iron Age, while the coins (368648), including issues associated with Cunobelinus and Tasciovanus, demonstrate Royston's connection with the monetary and exchange networks of southern and eastern Britain immediately before the Roman conquest.

The presence of both pottery and coinage suggests that the Royston area formed part of a settled and economically active late Iron Age landscape.

Roman-period evidence is represented by the glass bottle (368625) and bronze female figurine (368627). Both are relatively high-quality portable objects and indicate access to Roman manufactured goods.

They complement the wider evidence for Roman activity within this part of Hertfordshire and suggest that the Royston landscape was occupied and/or exploited during the Roman period. The reported Roman camp (368649) is more problematic. Its identification derives from an 18th-century record and has not been corroborated archaeologically. It should therefore be treated as evidence for a *possible* Roman enclosure rather than confirmation of a military site.

The six Early Medieval/Saxon brooches (368645) are potentially important because they indicate activity during a period for which the physical development of Royston is less well understood. Brooches can be associated with settlement and, particularly, funerary contexts, although the absence of accurate find locations or contextual information prevents a firm interpretation. They nevertheless demonstrate an Early Medieval presence within the wider locality.

The medieval material becomes particularly relevant to understanding the emergence of historic Royston. The Henry II coin hoard (368643), deposited sometime after 1158, coincides broadly with the period during which Royston was developing as a medieval settlement. Its presence provides material evidence for monetary circulation and accumulated wealth within the locality. The 12th-century gold annular brooch (368644) similarly indicates access to comparatively valuable personal possessions. Together, these finds reinforce the archaeological evidence for activity during Royston's formative medieval period.

Finally, the two gold coins of James I (368646) demonstrate continued activity and circulation of wealth within the Royston area during the Post-Medieval period, although their isolated and poorly recorded discovery limits their ability to inform understanding of the settlement's physical development.

Contribution to Understanding Royston

Overall, the Historic England records demonstrate considerable archaeological time-depth within the wider Royston landscape, extending from Mesolithic activity through the Iron Age, Roman, Early Medieval, medieval and Post-Medieval periods. Their principal value is in establishing the broad chronology of human activity rather than identifying specific areas of archaeological survival.

Many of the discoveries were antiquarian or nineteenth-century finds recorded only as being from "Royston" or its vicinity and consequently lack secure archaeological contexts or precise provenances. They should therefore be treated as evidence for the general archaeological sensitivity of the wider locality, rather than as direct evidence for archaeological remains within Princes Mews. Greater weight in assessing the application site should be given to the more precisely located HHER records and previous archaeological investigations within the historic town.

1.7 NMR Excavation Index / Previous Archaeological Investigations

Archaeological Context and Evidence

The site lies within an area of recognised archaeological significance in central Royston, where numerous buildings and monuments indicate a long history of occupation. The archaeological data recovered from sites within a close proximity of Princes Mews, mainly on its east side, demonstrates evidence of earlier activity that has since been built over, reflecting continuous urban development. Although no previous excavations have taken place directly on the site, the building of the offices on its north and west sides suggests that some surface-level archaeological disturbance or exposure may already have occurred.

Within a 250m radius (sites P1–P15), archaeological finds represent a broad chronological range, including prehistoric pottery, Roman activity, and Anglo-Saxon evidence. This indicates that the area has been occupied and utilised over a long period, although the survival of early remains is uneven.

1.7.1 Nature of Archaeological Investigations

Archaeological investigation within Royston has been **predominantly development-led**, generally undertaken in advance of, or during, redevelopment and construction works. The recorded investigations comprise:

- **trial-trench evaluations**, undertaken to establish the presence, character, date and survival of below-ground archaeological remains;
- **watching briefs and archaeological monitoring** during groundworks and demolition;
- **historic building recording**, particularly where historic structures were affected by redevelopment;
- **desk-based archaeological assessments**, undertaken to establish the known archaeological and historical context of development sites; and
- **combined programmes of investigation**, where evaluation, building recording or monitoring were undertaken as complementary stages of archaeological work.

The investigations vary considerably in scale and scope, from individual evaluation trenches and small watching briefs to more extensive programmes examining historic buildings and associated below-ground remains. Collectively, they provide an increasingly detailed picture of archaeological survival within the historic town.

Importantly, the evidence is **not evenly distributed across Royston**. Its concentration largely reflects the location of modern development opportunities rather than a systematic programme of archaeological research. Consequently, areas with few recorded investigations should not automatically be interpreted as having low archaeological potential.

These methods have been applied to manage heritage within a densely developed urban environment, ensuring that archaeological remains are recorded when exposed.

The NMR Excavation Index records at least 15 locations where pre-development archaeological assessments have been undertaken within the study area. These include a

range of investigative approaches such as trial trenching, monitoring during development (watching briefs), excavation, and building recording.

The 15 archaeological records demonstrate a **varied but predominantly development-led programme of investigation** within Royston. The most common approach has been **trial-trench evaluation**, generally undertaken in advance of redevelopment to establish the presence, character and survival of archaeological remains. Examples include investigations at 1–5 Baldock Street/3–5 Lower King Street, 3 The Priory, 5 Church Lane, Carrington House, the Old Cattle Market and Jepp's Lane.

Watching briefs and archaeological monitoring have also been widely employed during construction, demolition and groundworks, including at St John's Churchyard, 56 Briary Lane, Abbots Yard and land rear of 4 Kneesworth Street. These investigations have recorded features ranging from wells and historic surfaces to structural remains and evidence of former occupation.

The records also include **historic building recording**, sometimes undertaken alongside watching briefs or documentary assessment. Examples include 29–31 Kneesworth Street, 9–13 Baldock Street and land rear of 4 Kneesworth Street, reflecting the survival of historic structures within the town.

Overall, the investigations range from **desk-based assessment and building recording to intrusive trenching and archaeological monitoring**, rather than extensive research-led excavation. Their distribution largely reflects areas affected by modern development. Consequently, the archaeological record provides useful evidence for the nature and survival of remains within Royston, but should not be regarded as a systematic survey of the town's archaeological resource.

Archaeological character of the records

ARCHAEOLOGY ACTIVITY & FINDS; RECORDED ON THE GAZETTEER, APPENDIX 1 (PART 1: P1 – P16)

These records are both a catalogue of archaeological finds and they represent actual archaeological interventions and therefore provide evidence about both the presence and absence of archaeology.

The excavations demonstrate particularly strong evidence for medieval and post-medieval urban activity within central Royston. The medieval evidence is especially important at 3 The Priory, Church Lane, Royston Cave and Phillip's Brewery, indicating religious, institutional and urban activity. This accords with the development of Royston as a medieval settlement rather than suggesting that its archaeological record consists only of isolated artefacts.

The post-medieval evidence is much more widespread. Cellars, wells, yards, cottages, warehouses, commercial premises, brewery structures and the cattle market demonstrate the progressive intensification and diversification of the town. The investigations along Baldock Street, King Street, Upper King Street, Kneesworth Street and Jepp's Lane are particularly useful for reconstructing the changing character of individual plots behind the historic street frontages.

Equally important are the negative or limited results. Carrington House produced essentially Victorian archaeology; the Old Cattle Market contained very little earlier material; and Newspaper House produced modern remains only. These records demonstrate that archaeological survival within Royston is variable, with later cellaring, services and redevelopment having caused substantial truncation in some locations.

The conclusion is that central Royston has demonstrated potential principally for medieval and post-medieval remains, but that survival is strongly dependent upon the history and intensity of development of individual plots. This is a more defensible conclusion than simply assigning uniformly high archaeological potential across the historic **town**.

Finds within a 250m-radius of study area

The table in Appendix (**Part 1**) represents a gazetteer of known historic environment features, finds and past archaeological investigations within the 250m-radius study area around the site at P1 – P15. Other archaeological investigations and sites of heritage importance within a 100-metre radius of the site boundary have been included with the gazetteer and are entered (See Part 2).

1.7.2 Assessment and Interpretation of Archaeological Investigations

The Excavation Index (EI) is a guide to the archaeological excavations and interventions carried out in England. It is part of the National Monuments Record, England's heritage archive. The NMR Excavation Index records demonstrate that a number of archaeological investigations have taken place within central Royston, principally in response to redevelopment. Collectively, these provide useful evidence for the character, date and survival of archaeological deposits within the historic settlement.

The most significant results relate to the medieval development of Royston. Investigations at Land at 3 The Priory identified features associated with the medieval priory and its later post-medieval successor, while work at Phillip's Brewery, Baldock Street records evidence associated with the medieval town and hospital. Evaluation at 5 Church Lane also identified pits potentially attributable to the medieval period. These discoveries demonstrate the survival of below-ground remains associated with the formation and development of medieval Royston, particularly within and around its historic core.

Royston Cave represents an exceptional element of this archaeological landscape. The artificial chalk-cut chamber contains an extensive group of religious carvings generally attributed stylistically to the 13th century. Although prehistoric and Roman origins have previously been suggested, these interpretations remain unsubstantiated, and its principal archaeological significance lies in its medieval use and elaboration. Together with the evidence for the priory and hospital, the cave illustrates the particular importance of religious and institutional activity in medieval Royston.

The majority of investigated sites have, however, produced post-medieval and later remains. Excavations and watching briefs at Baldock Street, King Street, Kneesworth Street, Jepp's Lane and elsewhere have identified cellars, wells, yards, boundary walls, cottages, warehouses and other structures. These remains illustrate the progressive intensification of development within established street-frontage plots and provide evidence for the changing domestic, commercial and industrial character of Royston between the 17th and 20th

centuries. The cattle market and brewery evidence is particularly informative regarding the town's later commercial economy.

The investigations also demonstrate considerable variation in archaeological preservation. At Carrington House, 37 Upper King Street, only Victorian and later remains were encountered, while investigations at the Old Cattle Market recovered very little material predating its 19th-century use. Newspaper House similarly produced modern activity only. Elsewhere, cellars, services and successive phases of construction have truncated earlier deposits. The absence of earlier remains at these locations should therefore not necessarily be interpreted as evidence that earlier activity did not occur, but indicates that preservation within the historic town can be highly localised.

Overall, the archaeological investigations establish that central Royston has demonstrated potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains, particularly those associated with settlement, religious institutions, property boundaries, domestic occupation and commercial activity. They also indicate that the survival of such remains is strongly influenced by subsequent development and disturbance. Archaeological potential should consequently be assessed on a site-specific basis, taking account of the location of a site within the historic settlement, its previous development history and the likely depth and extent of later ground disturbance.

1.7.3 Summary of Key Findings by Period

Prehistoric and Roman

The investigations provide no secure excavated evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity within the sites examined. Although an earlier origin has sometimes been proposed for Royston Cave, this remains speculative and its recognised archaeological character is principally medieval. This absence should not, however, be interpreted as demonstrating an absence of earlier activity within Royston, particularly given the prehistoric and Roman artefacts recorded elsewhere in the town.

Medieval

Medieval archaeology is represented by a smaller but significant group of investigations. Evidence includes remains associated with the Augustinian Priory, medieval pits, Royston Cave and the medieval town and hospital. These discoveries confirm the survival of archaeological deposits associated with Royston's development as a medieval religious, commercial and urban centre.

Post-Medieval

Post-medieval remains form the dominant component of the investigated archaeological resource. Recorded features include buildings, cellars, wells, yards, walls, post holes and other occupation deposits, together with evidence for commercial and industrial activities. These remains demonstrate the progressive intensification and adaptation of properties within the historic town.

Nineteenth Century/Victorian

The nineteenth-century evidence reflects Royston's continued commercial and urban development. Investigations have identified cottages, cellars, warehouses, cart sheds, commercial premises and remains associated with the cattle market, illustrating the increasingly developed character of both street frontages and rear plots.

Twentieth Century/Modern

Modern evidence principally comprises buildings, walls, yards, services and redevelopment associated with changing commercial and residential uses. Several investigations demonstrate that twentieth-century construction and clearance have locally disturbed or truncated earlier archaeological deposits.

Undated Features

A number of investigations have also identified undated features, including pits, graves, possible stable remains, deposits and a possible well. Although their contribution to the chronological development of Royston cannot presently be established, they demonstrate that archaeological remains may survive where secure dating evidence is absent.

Overall, the investigations indicate that the strongest demonstrated archaeological evidence within historic Royston relates to the medieval and particularly post-medieval development of the town, while also showing considerable local variation in the degree of archaeological survival.

1.7.4 Limited or Negative Results:

Several archaeological investigations within Royston have produced **limited evidence for earlier activity**, providing useful information concerning the variable preservation of archaeological deposits within the historic town.

At **Carrington House, 37 Upper King Street**, evaluation identified principally Victorian remains, including a cellar and pit, together with modern disturbance; no significant earlier archaeological deposits were recorded. This result is particularly relevant to Princes Mews because of its proximity and comparable backland setting.

Evaluation at the **Old Cattle Market** similarly identified features associated principally with its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century use, with very little earlier material encountered. At **Newspaper House, Upper King Street**, trenching recorded modern walls, pits and yard surfaces only. Investigations at **Jepp's Lane** and **Abbotts Yard** also predominantly encountered post-medieval and later activity.

These results demonstrate that archaeological survival within central Royston is **not uniform**. Successive building construction, cellaring, services, demolition and twentieth-century redevelopment have locally truncated or removed earlier deposits. Nevertheless, negative or limited results do not demonstrate an absence of earlier activity across the wider area. Rather, they indicate that the **presence and preservation of archaeological remains are likely to vary considerably between individual plots**, depending upon their particular development and disturbance history.

1.7.5 Archaeological Character and Survival

The archaeological investigations undertaken within Royston demonstrate that the historic town contains a **layered archaeological resource**, principally associated with its medieval origins and subsequent post-medieval development. Recorded remains include pits, wells, walls, cellars, yards, property boundaries and structural remains, together with evidence associated with religious, domestic, commercial and industrial activity.

The distribution and preservation of these remains are, however, variable. Medieval deposits have survived at several locations, particularly around the former priory and other areas of the historic core, while post-medieval remains are more widely represented. Investigations within established street-frontage and backland plots demonstrate repeated phases of construction, alteration and redevelopment.

Archaeological survival is strongly influenced by later land use. Cellaring, foundations, services, demolition and twentieth-century redevelopment have locally truncated or removed earlier deposits, as demonstrated by investigations that encountered predominantly Victorian or modern remains. Conversely, less intensively disturbed areas have retained earlier features beneath later development.

The evidence therefore indicates that archaeological potential within Royston cannot be determined solely from a site's location within the historic settlement. **Survival is likely to vary considerably at plot level according to previous development and disturbance.** For Princes Mews, its historic backland use provides archaeological potential, while successive development, demolition and conversion to car parking are likely to have affected the extent and condition of surviving deposits.

Interpretation and Significance

The archaeological evidence contributes principally to understanding **how Royston developed and functioned as a medieval and later market town.** The recorded remains demonstrate the importance of religious institutions, including the Priory and hospital, alongside domestic, commercial and service activities associated with the expanding settlement.

Of particular relevance is the evidence for the organisation of the historic town into **principal street frontages and secondary rear working areas.** Archaeological remains within these backland plots can provide evidence for activities that are less readily understood from surviving buildings and documentary sources, including storage, craft activity, waste disposal, property subdivision and servicing.

The archaeological significance of Princes Mews therefore lies in its potential to contribute to understanding the **use and evolution of Royston's historic backland plots,** rather than necessarily containing remains of exceptional or national importance.

1.8 Hertfordshire HER Records

EXAMPLES OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN A LOCAL CONTEXT OF THE SITE

Recorded in Part 2, Appendix 1: (Non) Designated Heritage Assets within study area

Hertfordshire HER & St Albans UAD) lists a mix of designated monuments, archaeological findspots, and historic buildings, with several entries explicitly referring to earlier (often buried) activity revealed through excavation or inference.

Implications for Princes Mews

The most important records for understanding **Princes Mews itself** are **HHER 12629 (medieval burgage plot)**, **6352 (medieval building)**, **2726 (medieval hospital)**, **5447 (Royston Brewery)**, **11324 (house and maltings)** and **12628 (stable and well)**. Together they demonstrate that the surrounding area was not simply an undeveloped hinterland to the medieval town: it contained **burgage plots, domestic occupation, institutional activity and later ancillary, malting, brewing and service uses**.

Monuments and Archaeological Sites

The HHER records demonstrate that the application site lies within an area of **established medieval and post-medieval archaeological interest**, associated with the historic development of central Royston. The town itself is recorded as a medieval and later settlement (HHER 16), probably developing during the twelfth century in association with the Augustinian Priory and the establishment of market activity.

Of particular relevance is evidence for the **medieval organisation of the town**. HHER 12629 records the survival of a medieval burgage plot at Upper King Street, demonstrating the historic arrangement of long plots and rear-access areas. Archaeological evidence for a medieval timber-framed building on Baldock Street (HHER 6352), accompanied by domestic pottery and animal bone, provides physical evidence for occupation within this part of the town.

The records also demonstrate an important **medieval religious and institutional presence**, including the Augustinian Priory (HHER 4200), the Hospital of St John and St James (HHER 2726), and a possible associated cemetery at Briary Lane (HHER 1738). These indicate that medieval activity extended beyond purely domestic and commercial occupation.

Post-medieval evidence is particularly well represented. Recorded sites include **maltings, breweries, inns, cellars, stables, wells, workshops and commercial buildings**. The former Royston Brewery (HHER 5447), house and maltings at 9–13 Baldock Street (HHER 11324), Upper King Street malthouse (HHER 11323), and stable and well behind 1–5 Baldock Street (HHER 12628) demonstrate the intensive commercial and ancillary use of both street frontages and their rear plots.

Overall, the HHER evidence indicates that the area around Princes Mews formed part of a **functionally diverse historic urban environment**, rather than an undeveloped peripheral area. Of particular archaeological relevance is the evidence for medieval burgage plots followed by increasingly intensive post-medieval backland activity. This suggests potential for below-ground remains associated with **former buildings, plot boundaries, yards, wells, pits and ancillary commercial or domestic activity**, although the degree of survival is likely to have been affected locally by later redevelopment and clearance.

Summary of Archaeological Themes

The HHER records demonstrate a **diverse and strongly urban archaeological character**, reflecting the development of Royston from its medieval foundation through its later commercial and industrial expansion.

Medieval settlement and town formation are represented by the recorded medieval town, surviving burgage-plot structure, evidence for timber-framed occupation and the approximate site of the toll booth. These records illustrate the establishment of an organised settlement focused upon streets, plots and commercial activity.

Religious and institutional activity is particularly prominent through the Augustinian Priory, Hospital of St John and St James, associated cemetery evidence and the Roysia Stone. Together these demonstrate the important role of ecclesiastical institutions in the formation and development of medieval Royston.

Domestic and backland activity is represented by houses, cottages, burgage plots, cellars, stables, wells and boundary features. This evidence is particularly relevant to Princes Mews, demonstrating the varied use of land behind the principal street frontages.

Commercial and industrial activity becomes especially prominent during the Post-Medieval period. Numerous maltings, the Royston Brewery, workshops and associated structures reflect the importance of agricultural processing and brewing to the local economy.

The large number of **inns and coaching establishments** demonstrates Royston's importance as a stopping and trading centre, while records of markets, the toll booth, pillory, pound and civic buildings illustrate its wider **commercial, administrative and communal functions**.

Collectively, the themes demonstrate **continuity combined with repeated adaptation**, with medieval plots and occupation providing the framework within which increasingly intensive Post-Medieval domestic, commercial, service and industrial activities developed.

The HHER dataset is strongly weighted towards **medieval and Post-Medieval urban activity**. Most relevant to Princes Mews is the combination of the **medieval town (16)**, **burgage plot (12629)**, **medieval building on Baldock Street (6352)**, **stable and well at Lower King Street (12628)**, **maltings and cellars at Baldock Street (11324)**, and the **brewery (5447)**. Together, these establish a credible local sequence of **medieval plot formation and occupation → rear-plot/service activity → post-medieval commercial and industrial intensification → later clearance and redevelopment**. That sequence is directly relevant to predicting the character of any archaeological remains beneath Princes Mews.

1.8.1 Sites identified through archaeological excavation or below-ground remains

The HHER records provide direct evidence for the **survival of archaeological remains within Royston's historic core**, ranging from medieval religious and domestic activity to post-medieval commercial and ancillary development. These records are particularly valuable because they demonstrate physical archaeological survival rather than relying solely upon documentary or cartographic evidence.

The most significant medieval evidence includes investigations at the **Augustinian Priory (HHER 4200)**, where substantial stone foundations, possible cloister remains and burials demonstrate the survival of structures associated with the medieval religious complex.

At **Baldock Street (HHER 6352)**, redevelopment revealed evidence for a medieval timber-framed building accompanied by domestic pottery and animal bone, providing important evidence for occupation within this part of the medieval town. The **Briary Lane cemetery (HHER 1738)**, comprising confined burials and medieval material, may relate to the nearby Hospital of St John and St James (HHER 2726).

Evidence from the historic street frontages and backland plots is particularly relevant to Princes Mews. Evaluation within a **medieval burgage plot at Upper King Street (HHER 12629)** confirms the survival of the historic plot structure, although later buildings had caused disturbance. At **3–5 Lower King Street (HHER 12628)**, evaluation identified a nineteenth-century stable, earlier post/stake holes and a probable well within a former burgage plot. Investigations at **9–13 Baldock Street (HHER 11324)** similarly revealed substantial post-medieval cellar remains cut into the natural chalk.

Collectively, these investigations demonstrate that archaeological remains can survive beneath later development within central Royston. They also show that survival is **uneven and locally affected by cellaring, rebuilding and redevelopment**. For Princes Mews, the evidence supports potential for remains associated with former **burgage boundaries, ancillary buildings, yards, pits, wells and domestic or commercial activity**, while recognising that twentieth-century clearance and subsequent use may have caused local truncation.

Sites recorded as “approximate” or inferred

Several HHER records represent sites whose locations or interpretation are approximate, inferred from documentary evidence, or not confirmed archaeologically. These should therefore be distinguished from sites demonstrated through excavation or surviving physical remains.

The Hospital of St John and St James (HHER 2726) is recorded at an approximate location based principally on documentary evidence. Although medieval burials discovered at Briary Lane may have been associated with its cemetery, the precise extent and arrangement of the hospital complex remain uncertain. Similarly, the medieval toll booth (HHER 11278) is located approximately from documentary references rather than confirmed structural remains.

The Roysia Stone (HHER 2724) is a surviving physical feature, but its interpretation as the base of a medieval wayside cross remains conjectural. Its association with the historic name *Crux Roys* therefore provides evidence of medieval tradition rather than securely identified archaeological function.

A number of post-medieval sites, including former inns, maltings and other commercial premises, are also identified principally through historic maps, directories and documentary sources. Their general locations can be established, but the extent to which associated below-ground remains survive is not necessarily known.

Evidence of urban continuity and rebuilding

The HHER evidence demonstrates considerable **continuity of occupation alongside repeated rebuilding and adaptation** within central Royston. Medieval burgage plots and

settlement activity were progressively overlaid by post-medieval houses, inns, maltings, stables, workshops and commercial premises.

Excavations frequently reveal successive phases of structures, cellars, wells and boundaries beneath later development. This indicates that Royston evolved through **incremental redevelopment of established plots**, rather than wholesale replacement, although twentieth-century clearance and redevelopment have locally disrupted this historic continuity.

This reflects **layered urban development**, where:

- Earlier structures survive **below ground**
- Later buildings often reuse or obscure earlier footprints

1.8.2 Subsequent Interpretation of Earlier Activity at Princes Mews

The combined archaeological, documentary and morphological evidence suggests that Princes Mews formed part of an **actively used backland area from at least the medieval period**, although no archaeological investigation has directly demonstrated medieval occupation within the application site itself. The interpretation must therefore distinguish between demonstrated archaeology in the surrounding area and the potential for comparable activity within the site.

The most relevant evidence is the survival of a medieval burgage plot at Upper King Street (HHER 12629), together with evidence for a medieval timber-framed building on Baldock Street (HHER 6352). These records confirm that medieval occupation extended into this part of Royston and that the established street frontages were accompanied by elongated rear plots. The nearby medieval hospital and associated burial evidence further indicate that the surrounding area accommodated a range of institutional as well as domestic and commercial activities.

Within Princes Mews, earlier activity is most plausibly interpreted as **secondary to the principal street-frontage occupation**. The rear plots may have accommodated gardens, yards, boundaries, refuse disposal, storage and small-scale ancillary activities rather than substantial frontage buildings. Such uses could have produced relatively ephemeral archaeological features, including pits, postholes, boundary ditches or walls and occupation deposits.

By the post-medieval period, the evidence indicates increasing intensification of these backland areas. Nearby archaeological investigations have identified wells, stables, cellars and other structural remains, while documentary evidence records maltings, brewing and associated commercial activity.

The application site should therefore be understood as having potential to preserve evidence for the **gradual transition from medieval rear-plot activity to more intensive post-medieval ancillary and commercial use**. Any surviving remains could contribute to understanding how Royston's burgage plots functioned and changed behind the better-documented principal street frontages.

1.9 Archaeological Interpretation and Site Potential

The combined archaeological, documentary and cartographic evidence places the application site within the **historic urban core of Royston**, in an area that has experienced activity and redevelopment over several centuries. The wider evidence demonstrates considerable archaeological time-depth, although the most relevant evidence for Princes Mews relates to the medieval and post-medieval development of the town.

The site occupies a historically secondary position behind the established frontages of Baldock Street and King Street. The available evidence indicates that these backland areas formed part of the historic plot structure and accommodated activities ancillary to the principal street-frontage properties.

Archaeological investigations within comparable nearby plots have identified evidence including structural remains, cellars, wells, postholes, yards and other features associated with domestic, commercial and service activity. Evidence for medieval burgrave plots and occupation elsewhere within this part of Royston also demonstrates that archaeological remains can survive beneath later development.

Historic mapping provides more specific evidence for the application site. By 1896 it contained an ancillary building within a developed network of rear yards and structures. The surrounding area subsequently underwent repeated alteration, with increasing development followed by substantial twentieth-century clearance and the establishment of commercial premises, hardstanding and car parking. Earlier archaeological deposits may therefore have been locally disturbed or truncated by foundations, demolition and later services.

On present evidence, there is **potential for below-ground remains associated with the medieval and post-medieval use of the rear plots**, including former boundaries, pits, postholes, wells, yard surfaces, foundations and occupation deposits. There is also potential for remains associated with the buildings shown on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century mapping, although these would be of more recent date.

Earlier prehistoric, Iron Age and Roman activity is recorded within the wider Royston area, but the generally imprecise provenance of these discoveries provides **insufficient evidence to identify a particular concentration of such activity within Princes Mews**. The potential for significant remains of these periods should therefore be regarded as less well demonstrated than that for medieval and post-medieval archaeology.

Overall, the application site is considered to have **archaeological potential principally for medieval and post-medieval remains associated with the development and changing use of Royston's historic backland plots**.

Their likely extent, preservation and significance remain uncertain because of subsequent development and twentieth-century disturbance. Any surviving remains would have the potential to contribute principally to understanding the organisation, occupation and changing functions of the rear plots behind Royston's historic commercial streets.

Period	Potential	Basis for Assessment
Mesolithic	Low	Mesolithic tranchet axeheads and a barbed bone point are recorded from the wider Royston area, demonstrating early prehistoric activity. However, the finds have imprecise provenances and there is no evidence for Mesolithic occupation within or immediately adjacent to Princes Mews.
Neolithic / Bronze Age	Low	No specific evidence identified within the reviewed records indicates concentrated Neolithic or Bronze Age activity at Princes Mews. Earlier prehistoric remains cannot be excluded, but there is presently little evidence to predict their presence.
Iron Age	Low	Iron Age pottery and coinage demonstrate activity within the wider Royston landscape, but their locations and contexts provide no clear evidence for settlement or other concentrated activity within the application site.
Roman	Low	Roman artefacts are recorded from Royston and the town lies at the intersection of important historic routeways. However, no secure Roman remains have been identified by the archaeological investigations reviewed close to Princes Mews. The supposed Roman camp is unconfirmed.
Early Medieval Saxon	Low	Saxon brooches indicate Early Medieval activity within the wider locality, but their precise provenance is uncertain and there is no direct evidence for Early Medieval occupation within the site.
Medieval	Moderate	Princes Mews lies within the medieval historic core and within the rear-plot structure associated with King Street and Baldock Street. Nearby evidence includes medieval burgrave plots, a timber-framed building, the priory, hospital and burials. Potential exists for boundaries, pits, postholes, occupation deposits and evidence of ancillary backland activity.
Post-Medieval	Moderate-High	This is the best-represented archaeological period locally. Nearby investigations have identified cellars, wells, stables, yards, walls and other structural remains, while documentary evidence records brewing, malting, inns and commercial activity. The site formed part of this developed backland environment.
19th century	High	Historic mapping directly demonstrates buildings and enclosed rear yards within the application site and its immediate surroundings. Foundations, surfaces, drainage, boundaries and other remains associated with these documented structures may survive below ground.
20th century Modern	High	Mapping and existing conditions demonstrate substantial twentieth-century redevelopment, demolition, commercial use, hardstanding and car parking. Remains associated with these phases are highly likely, although they are generally of limited archaeological interest.

Archaeological Potential by Period

A high potential for nineteenth- or twentieth-century remains reflects the known history of development within the site, but such remains may be of limited heritage significance. Conversely, medieval remains are less certain to survive but, if present and sufficiently preserved, would have greater potential to contribute to understanding the development and use of Royston's historic burgage plots.

The evidence supports a reasonable expectation of medieval backland activity, but there is no direct evidence of medieval remains **within the application site**. As the twentieth-century clearance for new offices introduces uncertainty about survival, the degree of survivability may best be classified as "Moderate."

1.10 Geology/Topography

Royston occupies a distinctive topographic position on the northern edge of the **Chiltern chalk landscape**, where the higher chalk ground to the south and east gives way to the lower-lying landscapes of north Hertfordshire and south Cambridgeshire. The historic town developed around an important route junction within this transitional landscape, with local topography influencing both communications and the form of settlement.

The underlying geology is dominated by **Cretaceous Chalk**, which forms the bedrock beneath much of Royston. Chalk generally provides well-drained ground and has historically been readily excavated for cellars, wells and other subterranean features. This characteristic is particularly evident within historic Royston, where archaeological investigations have encountered features cut directly into the natural chalk. Royston Cave provides the most notable example of deliberate excavation into the chalk bedrock.

The surrounding landscape includes superficial deposits associated with later geological and geomorphological processes, with variations in soils and deposits reflecting the transition between the chalk uplands and lower ground to the north.

Topographically, the historic centre occupies relatively gently sloping ground, with higher land rising beyond the town, particularly towards the chalk downs. This location provided access to both the chalk landscape and surrounding agricultural hinterland and contributed to Royston's long history as a focus for movement, settlement and trade.

For archaeological assessment, the chalk geology is significant because archaeological features such as **pits, postholes, wells, foundations and cellars may be clearly cut into the natural substrate**. Conversely, later cellaring and redevelopment can penetrate deeply into the chalk and may therefore have caused substantial localised truncation of earlier archaeological deposits.

1.11 Proposed Development

The proposed development (Figure 1) includes:

- The proposed development comprises the redevelopment of the existing surface car park to provide **six three-bedroom townhouses** arranged along the western side of Princes Mews.

- Vehicular access would utilise the existing access from Princes Mews, with associated on-site parking.
- The scheme includes new **soft landscaping and planting**, reducing the extent of existing hardstanding.
- The dwellings would be of traditional domestic scale, incorporating brick elevations, pitched roofs and carefully proportioned fenestration, together with associated servicing, drainage and ancillary works..

2.0 REPORT OBJECTIVES

2.1 Aims of the Archaeological Heritage assessment

Consultation on the results of archaeological research and consideration of the implications of proposed development are the key to informing reasonable planning decisions. The requirement will help the applicant meet this national obligation.

The aim of this Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment is to facilitate such a process by understanding the historical development of the proposed development site and understanding the likely impact upon any surviving archaeological resource resulting from any future proposed development, devising appropriate responses where necessary.

The Desk-Based Assessment has a number of aims, comprising:

- Confirmation of designated and non-designated heritage assets within and in close proximity to the site, using information from publicly available sources;
- Establishing the potential for as-yet unrecorded buried archaeological remains on the site, using professional expertise and reference to the evidence base;
- Establishing whether the site may have been subject to past truncation, to inform the understanding of archaeological potential;
- Determining the potential impact of the proposed development on the heritage resource;
- Developing a mitigation strategy, where required, which appropriately targets any future heritage works.

3. REPORT METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology of Archaeological Heritage Works

The assessment has been carried out, with regard to the collation of baseline information, in line with the Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Desk-Based Assessment (Published December 2014).

This assessment includes information contained in relevant statutory requirements, national, regional and local planning policies and professional good practice guidance, including:

- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979;
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990;
- The National Planning Policy Framework, Revised 2024.

The Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HHER) is the primary source of information concerning the current state of archaeological and architectural knowledge in this area. Data on previous archaeology within a radius of **100m** surrounding the centre point of proposed development was obtained from this source. The information contained in the **NMR Excavation Index** (NMR) describes the site of 9 predevelopment assessments, as shown in P1 – P15, Part 1, Appendix 1. A search radius of 100 metres was applied to the HHER (St Albans UAD), identifying 31 records of buildings and monuments in this search area within a local proximity (Part 2).

The HHER is a record of every aspect of historic environment, from the earliest human activity through to the twentieth century. All Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest are recorded together with a list of undesignated local buildings and structures of interest. Buried remains and many demolished buildings are also included.

The information contained in the HHER was supported by examination of data from a range of other sources, principally:

- Online resources including: The Heritage Gateway (www.heritagegateway.org.uk), the DEFRA MAGIC website for mapped information on nationally designated sites;
- Published & unpublished sources listed in Section 9.

All heritage features identified from the sources assessed (above) have been described and presented numerically in the Gazetteer of Heritage Features (**Appendix 1**).

Two tables are presented in Appendix 1:

- Part 1: Archaeological excavations within a 250-metre site radius are (P1 – P15).
- Part 2: Examples of Archaeological heritage in 100 metre context of site (P16 – P46)

3.2 Assessment of the Archaeological Heritage Resource

This desk-based assessment contains a record of the known and potential Archaeological heritage resource of an area. In relation to buried archaeological remains, where there is a potential for encountering a particular resource within the application site this is assessed according to the following scale:

- Low - Very unlikely to be encountered on site;
- Medium - Possibility that features may occur / be encountered on site;
- High - Remains almost certain to survive on site.

Where there is either a known resource, or an above medium potential for the recovery of archaeological remains within study area, which may be subject to impact by the proposed development, the significance of this resource is assessed.

There is currently no standard adopted statutory or government guidance for assessing the importance of an archaeological feature and this is instead judged upon factors such as statutory and non-statutory designations, architectural, archaeological or historical significance, and the contribution to local research agendas.

Considering these criteria each identified feature can be assigned to a level of importance in accordance with a five-point scale (Table 1, below).

Table 1: Assessing the Importance of an Archaeological Heritage Site

	SCALE OF SITE IMPORTANCE
NATIONAL	The highest status of site, e.g. Scheduled Monuments (or undesignated assets of schedulable quality and importance). Grade I and Grade II* Listed Buildings. Other listed buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations not adequately reflected in the listing grade. Conservation Areas containing very important buildings. Undesignated structures of clear national importance. Extremely well-preserved historic landscape, whether inscribed or not, with exceptional coherence, time depth, or other critical factor(s).
REGIONAL	Grade II Listed Buildings or other designated or undesignated archaeological sites (in addition to those listed above), or assets of a reasonably defined extent and significance, or reasonable evidence of occupation / settlement, ritual, industrial activity etc. Examples may include areas containing buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character, burial sites, deserted medieval villages, Roman roads and dense scatters of finds.
LOCAL	Evidence of human activity more limited in historic value than the examples above or compromised by poor preservation and/or survival of context associations, but which still have the potential to contribute to local research objectives. Examples include sites such as 'locally designated' buildings or undesignated structures / buildings of limited historic merit, out-of-situ archaeological find spots / ephemeral archaeological evidence and historic field systems and boundaries etc.
NEGLIGIBLE	Assets with very little or no surviving archaeological interest. Examples include destroyed antiquities, structures of almost no architectural / historic merit, buildings of an intrusive character or relatively modern / common landscape features such as quarries, drains and ponds etc.
UNKNOWN	Insufficient information exists to assess

The importance of already identified Archaeological heritage resources is determined by reference to existing designations. Where classification of a receptor's value covers a range of the above possibilities or for previously unidentified features where no designation has been assigned, the value of the receptor is based on professional knowledge and judgement.

3.3 Impact Assessment Criteria

The magnitude of impact upon the archaeological and heritage resource, which can be considered in terms of direct and indirect impacts, is determined by identifying the level of effect from the proposed development upon the baseline conditions of the site and the Archaeological heritage resource identified. The criteria for assessing the magnitude of impact are set out in Table 2 (below).

In certain cases, it is not possible to confirm the magnitude of impact upon a heritage resource, especially where anticipated buried deposits exist. Where possible a professional judgement as to the scale of such impacts is applied to enable the likely 'Significance of Effects' to be established; however, a magnitude level of 'uncertain' is included for situations where it is simply not appropriate to make such a judgement at this stage of works.

The overall Significance of Effects from the proposed development upon the Archaeological Heritage Resource is determined by correlating the Magnitude of Impact against the value of the Archaeological Heritage resource. Table 3 highlights the criteria for assessing the overall Significance of Effects. Where effects are moderate or above these are classified as significant.

Table 2: Criteria for Determining Magnitude of Impact

LEVEL OF MAGNITUDE:	DEFINITION OF:
HIGH	Major impacts fundamentally changing the baseline condition of the receptor, leading to total or considerable alteration of character or setting – e.g. complete or almost complete destruction of the archaeological resource; dramatic visual intrusion into a historic landscape element; adverse change in the setting or visual amenity of the feature/site; significant increase in noise; extensive changes to user access.
MEDIUM	Impacts changing the baseline condition of the receptor materially but not entirely, leading to partial alteration of character or setting – e.g. a large proportion of the archaeological resource damaged or destroyed; intrusive visual intrusion into key aspects of the historic landscape; or use of site that would result in detrimental changes to historic landscape character.
LOW	Detectable impacts which alter the baseline condition of the receptor to a small degree – e.g. a small proportion of the surviving archaeological resource is damaged or destroyed; minor severance, change to the setting or structure or increase in noise; and limited encroachment into character of a historic landscape.
NEGLIGIBLE	Barely distinguishable adverse change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site, possibly because of distance from the development, method of construction or landscape or ecological plan/ting, that are thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of a resource.
UNCERTAIN	Extent / nature of the resource is unknown and the magnitude of change cannot be ascertained.

Table 3: Significance of Effects

	Magnitude Adverse			
IMPORTANCE	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NEG.
NATIONAL	Severe	Major	Mod	Minor
REGIONAL	Major	Mod	Minor	Not sig
LOCAL	Mod	Minor	Minor	Not sig
NEGLIGIBLE	Minor	Not sig	Not sig	Neutral

Abbvs: Mod – moderate; Not sig – not significant

3.4 Limitations

The report has been prepared under the express instructions and solely for the use of Kain Miller and associated parties they elect to share this information with. Measurements and distances referred to in the report should only be read as approximations.

All the work carried out in this report is based upon the professional knowledge and understanding of Squire Heritage Consulting on current and relevant United Kingdom standards and codes, technology and legislation. Changes in these areas may occur in the future and cause changes to the conclusions, advice, recommendations or design given.

This report has been prepared utilising factual information obtained from third party sources. It should be noted that this report represents an early stage of a phased approach to assessing the archaeological and heritage resource of the application site to allow the development of an appropriate mitigation strategy, should this be required. It does not comprise mitigation of impacts in itself.

4.0 PLANNING, LEGISLATIVE, FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE

4.1 Statutory Protection for Heritage Assets

Current legislation, in the form of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, provides for the legal protection of important and well-preserved archaeological sites and monuments through their addition to a list, or 'schedule' of archaeological monuments by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. This necessitates the granting of formal Scheduled Monument Consent for any work undertaken within the designated area of a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The legislation relating to the historic environment is contained in the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act are of particular relevance to this case, because they place a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the special interest and setting of a listed building.

The main purpose of the legislation is to protect buildings and their surroundings from changes that would materially alter the special historic or architectural value of the building or its setting. This necessitates the granting of formal Listed Building Consent for all works undertaken to or within the designated curtilage of a Listed Building. This legislation also allows for the creation and protection of Conservation Areas by local planning authorities to protect areas and groupings of historical significance.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF (2021, revised in 2024) constitutes the government's current national guidance and policy regarding development within the historic environment. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Section 16 of the revised NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment in paragraphs 202 to 221. The NPPF places much emphasis on heritage "significance", defined as:

"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."

The effects of any development on a heritage asset therefore need to be assessed against the four components of its heritage significance: its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest. Paragraph 207 makes it clear that the level of detail should be i) proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and ii) no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset.

The NPPF (para 210) advises of the desirability of any development for,
"sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses "consistent with conservation."

Para 207 states:

"heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment"

4.3 North Herts Local Plan

The Council will seek to ensure that any sites and areas of particular regional or national archaeological importance are afforded appropriate statutory protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as well as through the planning process.

The Government's national planning policies framework takes its definition of Archaeological interest from Annex 2: Glossary page 50 and defines them as:

"There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them."

The proposals need to be considered against Local Plan Policy's and conservation guidance which is set out in the NPPF. There is also the statutory requirement that the planning authority:

"shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses"¹.

Heritage assets are exceptionally important across NHDC. They are the most recognisable landmarks and most cherished places, contributing greatly to reinforcing the areas local distinctiveness as part of the wider county. This is recognised in the Local Plan (adopted 2022).

The Local Plan ensures that any new development will respect the significance and setting of archaeological heritage. There is a focus on ensuring the intrinsic quality of the historic environment is protected and that North Herts's environmental and heritage assets are used appropriately.

The Council will encourage the development of high quality, safe and attractive living environments for communities in both towns and villages, while promoting local distinctiveness through good design in all new development

Policy HE4: Archaeology, is NHDC's commitment to ensuring the integrity and setting of its archaeological heritage will be protected, conserved and enhanced.

Development will be expected to sustain and enhance the archaeological resource and historic environment in a manner appropriate to its function and significance. As the development proposal considered here has the potential to impact on the setting or significance of these assets then a consideration of the effect of the development on that setting is included in this desk-based assessment.

Where proposals, such as the one addressed in this report, involve excavation or ground works on sites of archaeological potential it is necessary to submit an archaeological assessment and evaluation of the site, including the impact of the proposed development.

5. BASELINE CONDITIONS

5.1 Key Planning Considerations

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, 66.1,

The application site at Princes Mews lies within the historic core of Royston, to the south of Baldock Street and within the wider urban block defined by Baldock Street and King Street. The site is presently occupied by a surface car park but historically formed part of the backland associated with properties fronting the principal streets.

This location is significant to understanding its archaeological potential. Royston developed as a medieval settlement around the junction of important historic routes and in association with the establishment of the Augustinian Priory during the twelfth century. The subsequent development of the town created a characteristic pattern of buildings occupying the principal street frontages, with long plots extending behind them.

Princes Mews occupies part of this secondary backland environment. Such areas were historically used for activities ancillary to the principal frontage properties and could accommodate yards, gardens, workshops, stables, stores, wells and other service structures. The HHER evidence confirms the survival of this pattern locally, including a medieval burgrave plot at Upper King Street and archaeological evidence for medieval occupation on Baldock Street. Post-medieval investigations have additionally identified stables, wells, cellars, workshops and other structural remains within comparable nearby plots.

The character of the area intensified during the Post-Medieval period as Royston developed as a commercial, coaching, brewing and malting centre. The surrounding HHER records include the former Royston Brewery, maltings, inns and associated commercial premises, demonstrating the increasingly intensive use of both street frontages and their rear plots. Historic mapping provides more direct evidence for the application site. By the late nineteenth century it formed part of a developed arrangement of ancillary buildings, yards and boundaries.

This pattern was progressively altered during the twentieth century as buildings were demolished, plots amalgamated and larger commercial premises and areas of hardstanding introduced. By 1970, substantial parts of the surrounding backland had been cleared or redeveloped and car parking had become an established component of the area.

The archaeological baseline therefore indicates a site with a long history of urban backland use but also significant subsequent alteration. Its present appearance as a surface car park does not necessarily indicate an absence of archaeological remains. Earlier foundations, boundaries, pits, postholes, wells, yard surfaces and occupation deposits may survive beneath later hardstanding, although their preservation is likely to vary according to the depth and extent of previous construction, demolition, services and other ground disturbance.

Accordingly, the principal archaeological interest of Princes Mews relates to its potential to preserve evidence for the development, organisation and changing use of Royston's medieval and post-medieval rear plots, and particularly the transition from relatively small-scale backland activity to more intensive commercial use and subsequent twentieth-century redevelopment.

Archaeology:

In the Gazetteer (Appendix 1), there are records of 15 archaeological **investigations** within a 250-metre radius of the site. The NMR records represent A mixture of **structural remains, occupation features, below-ground features and building archaeology**, with a strong post-medieval emphasis. It includes cellars, walls, postholes, stakeholes, pits, wells, yard surfaces, cobbled surfaces, graves, stable remains, buildings and evidence associated with the priory, manor house, brewery, livestock market, warehouses and cart sheds.

Each element is numbered (1-15) and recorded for its age, type and briefly described, where known. It is noted that there have been no excavations, watching briefs or spot finds in the exact location of the car park.

There is the potential for buried archaeological deposits and artefacts to be present in the vicinity of the new foundations.

The site as it is today results from, a small series of historical events that involved establishing of the existing car park and service/ storage facilities, with the following as main changing points};

- Demolition and building of new offices in the immediate context in the mid 20th Century;
- Addition of parking/ storage/ utility areas in back yard in the late 20th century;
- 21st century. Modernisation (as current approved scheme)

The site is within an area of archaeological significance, so established on the basis of surface observation and recourse to old maps. There have been no archaeological finds meaning there is no record of ground disturbance. However, the extent to which the demolition of former buildings on the south side of Baldock Road, and their replacement with offices, has left buried deposits is uncertain. Although there are no visual manifestations of the former structures witnessed at ground level, the potential for significant buried heritage assets within the area of proposed ground disturbance is still **low to medium due to the general prevalence of archaeology in the local area**.

Any remains that are present are likely to be cut features such as earthworks dating from the late 19th century period and related to the former storage and garden activity found in the rear of the burgage plots of the building in Lower King Sytreet.

Archaeological remains have been identified at several sites within the historic core of Royston, including locations along Baldock Street, King Street, Upper King Street and Church Lane. The evidence comprises medieval pottery and animal bone, together with below-ground features including pits, postholes, stakeholes, wells, cellars, walls, yard surfaces and building foundations.

Particularly relevant investigations within and behind the historic street frontages demonstrate the survival of medieval and post-medieval domestic, commercial and ancillary activity. These discoveries reflect the long-term use of Royston's rear plots for occupation, servicing, storage and other activities associated with the principal street-frontage properties.

However, archaeological survival is variable, with later cellaring, construction, services and twentieth-century redevelopment having truncated or removed earlier deposits at some investigated sites.

The application site is considered to have moderate archaeological potential, principally for medieval and post-medieval activity associated with the historic rear plots of Baldock Street and King Street, with a higher potential for remains of nineteenth-century buildings and ancillary activity demonstrated by historic mapping.

Previous land use is likely to have affected the survival of earlier archaeological deposits. In particular, the construction and subsequent demolition of buildings within the site, together with later hardstanding, services and use as a car park, are likely to have caused localised truncation and disturbance. The extent of this disturbance, and therefore the degree to which earlier archaeological deposits survive, is presently uncertain.

The proposed development would introduce new foundations, drainage and associated groundworks and could therefore affect any archaeological remains that survive within previously undisturbed areas. Taking account of the site's moderate archaeological potential and its history of previous disturbance, the overall archaeological impact is considered likely to be low, subject to confirmation through an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation.

Archaeological Survival and Likely Impact

Previous development within the application site is likely to have affected the survival of archaeological deposits. Historic mapping demonstrates that the site formerly contained buildings and associated rear-plot activity before their subsequent demolition and the creation of the present surface car park. Building foundations, demolition, services and the formation of hardstanding may therefore have resulted in **localised truncation or disturbance of earlier deposits**.

The creation of the car park should not, however, be assumed to have removed all archaeological remains. Archaeological investigations elsewhere within Royston's historic core demonstrate that below-ground features can survive despite successive phases of construction, demolition and redevelopment. In particular, deeper features such as **pits, postholes, wells, cellars, foundations and boundary features** may survive beneath or between areas affected by later development.

The archaeological potential of the site is therefore considered to be **moderate overall**, principally relating to medieval and post-medieval activity associated with the historic rear plots, with a greater likelihood of encountering remains associated with documented nineteenth-century development. The significance of any remains would depend upon their date, character, extent and degree of preservation. Later structural remains may be of relatively limited significance, whereas well-preserved medieval evidence associated with the development and use of Royston's historic burgrave plots could be of greater archaeological interest.

The proposed development would involve foundations, drainage, services and associated groundworks capable of affecting surviving below-ground remains. Nevertheless, taking

account of previous disturbance and the likely character of the archaeological resource, **significant archaeological effects are not presently anticipated**. Any requirement for archaeological investigation or proportionate mitigation could be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition. This may comprise targeted trial-trench evaluation within areas of proposed ground disturbance, with subsequent mitigation, including archaeological monitoring or recording, determined by the results.

5.2 Previous Archaeological Works

No archaeological investigation is known to have been undertaken **within the application site itself**, and the character and survival of any below-ground remains are therefore uncertain.

However, archaeological investigations within the surrounding historic core of Royston, including sites on **Baldock Street, King Street, Church Lane and The Priory**, have identified medieval and post-medieval remains including structural evidence, cellars, wells, pits, postholes and yard features. Other investigations have produced limited or predominantly modern evidence.

These investigations demonstrate that archaeological remains can survive despite later redevelopment, although preservation is variable. The archaeological potential of Princes Mews must therefore be assessed from this surrounding evidence, historic mapping and the likely effects of previous development and ground disturbance.

6.0 Archaeological and Historic Background

Princes Mews lies within the historic core of Royston, a settlement whose origins and development were strongly influenced by the crossing of the Icknield Way and Ermine Street and the establishment of the Augustinian Priory in the twelfth century.

During the medieval period, the area around King Street and Baldock Street developed as part of the expanding market town. Buildings were concentrated along the principal streets, with long plots extending behind them. The land now occupied by Princes Mews formed part of these rear areas rather than the principal commercial frontage.

During the post-medieval period, increasing commercial activity resulted in more intensive use of the surrounding plots. Brewing, malting, workshops, inns, stabling and other ancillary activities became characteristic of this part of Royston.

Historic mapping shows that by the late nineteenth century the area of Princes Mews contained a mixture of buildings, enclosed yards, boundaries and service areas behind the established street frontages. This pattern continued into the twentieth century before progressive demolition and redevelopment simplified the earlier plot structure. By the later twentieth century, much of the application site had been cleared and converted to hardstanding and car parking, establishing its present character.

Assessment of Archaeological Potential

The application site is considered to have **moderate archaeological potential** overall, principally relating to medieval and post-medieval activity associated with Royston's historic rear plots. There is greater potential for remains of nineteenth-century buildings and ancillary activity identified through historic mapping.

Earlier prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman and Early Medieval activity is recorded within the wider Royston area, but there is insufficient evidence to indicate concentrated activity within Princes Mews. Previous demolition, construction, services and formation of the existing car park are likely to have caused localised disturbance. Nevertheless, deeper features and deposits may survive beneath or between areas of previous development.



Car park

6.1 Site Survey

An assessment of the site was conducted to gain a greater understanding of existing land use and past impacts within the current site limits, along with an appreciation as to the potential for the survival of below ground archaeological deposits and/or heritage constraints.

The car park is a large, **open parking area** serving the adjacent office buildings. It is currently surfaced with **aggregate**, which is even and appears well maintained. There are **marked parking bays**, and the layout is formal.

The space is bounded by low brick boundary walls to Princes Mews and building rear/ side elevations to Philips Court on Baldock Street and no 56 Briary Lane, creating a semi open setting with visual amenity. There is minimal landscaping and basic features such as bollards and refuse storage are present giving the area a utilitarian feeling.

In general, the condition can be described as **functional but medium-quality**, with scope for improvement in surfacing, drainage, organization, and visual appearance.

Due to the relative location of buildings within the study area, the development has been designed so as not to have any adverse effect on the setting of any of these assets. The nature of the proposed landscaping has been designed so it is in keeping with the adjacent buildings. It will not cut across the historic brick boundary walls, nor will it compromise their foundations.

7.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT & MITIGATION STRATEGY

7.1 Forms of Heritage Impact

An archaeological resource can be affected by development in a number of ways: the removal of material during works, the disturbance caused to sensitive deposits caused by the presence of heavy plant, and the alteration of stable ground conditions that may lead to degradation of the quality, and survival of buried archaeological remains.

Equally, the archaeological heritage can be affected by development typically in the form of demolition or loss of part of a structure or its grounds; increased visual intrusion, noise or vibration; changes in the original landscape; severance from linked features such as gardens, outbuildings etc or through the loss of an amenity. The wider settings of historic buildings can be affected by development, and the unity of groups of buildings can be disrupted.

7.2 Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises the redevelopment of the existing surface car park to provide **six three-bedroom townhouses**, together with associated access, parking, landscaping, drainage, services and ancillary works. The dwellings would be arranged along the western side of Princes Mews and would be constructed with conventional foundations and associated below-ground infrastructure. Vehicular access would continue to be taken from Princes Mews, with parking retained within the site.

The scheme also includes areas of new soft landscaping and planting, reducing the extent of existing hardstanding.

For the purposes of this archaeological assessment, the principal elements of relevance are the **new building foundations, drainage runs, service trenches, landscaping works and any associated ground reduction**, as these have the potential to affect surviving below-ground archaeological deposits.

7.3 Past Impacts within Site Boundary

There is no available archaeological investigation from within the application site itself and, consequently, the **depth, character and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits are presently unknown**.

Historic mapping demonstrates that the site has undergone several phases of change. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the land formed part of the developed backland behind the historic street frontages and contained ancillary buildings, yards and plot boundaries. Construction of these buildings would have involved localised ground disturbance associated with foundations, drainage and other services.

The subsequent demolition of these structures during the twentieth century is also likely to have affected earlier deposits. Removal of foundations, clearance of demolition material and later regrading may have resulted in **localised truncation**, although the extent and depth of such disturbance cannot presently be established.

The later formation and continued use of the site as a surface car park introduced hardstanding, drainage, services and other infrastructure. These works may have disturbed shallow archaeological deposits, although the presence of hardstanding should not in itself be taken to indicate wholesale archaeological loss. Earlier features extending more deeply into the underlying geology, including **pits, wells, postholes, boundary features and substantial foundations**, could potentially survive beneath or between areas of later disturbance.

The site has therefore experienced **successive phases of construction, demolition and resurfacing**, resulting in variable archaeological survival. Previous archaeological investigations elsewhere in central Royston demonstrate that below-ground remains can survive despite comparable phases of urban redevelopment. Accordingly, while previous activity is likely to have reduced the preservation of archaeological deposits locally, it cannot presently be assumed to have removed the archaeological resource across the site as a whole.

7.4 Potential archaeological remains

The application site lies within the **historic core of Royston**, where archaeological evidence demonstrates activity from several periods. Within the immediate historic town, the evidence most relevant to Princes Mews relates principally to **medieval and post-medieval settlement and urban development**.

The site historically formed part of the backland behind the established frontages of Baldock Street and King Street. Although there is no direct archaeological evidence from within the site itself, comparable nearby investigations have identified remains associated with **burgage plots, buildings, yards, wells, pits, postholes, cellars and other domestic, commercial and ancillary activities**.

Historic mapping records buildings and enclosed rear areas within the site by the nineteenth century. Their subsequent demolition and the formation of the present surface car park are likely to have resulted in some disturbance, although the extent to which earlier deposits survive is unknown.

On the available evidence, the potential for previously unidentified **medieval remains is assessed as Moderate**, principally relating to rear-plot activity. The potential for **post-medieval remains is Moderate to High**, while remains associated with documented nineteenth-century development are considered **High**.

Any archaeological remains encountered are most likely to relate to the **development, subdivision and changing use of Royston's historic backland plots**. Their significance would depend upon their date, character, preservation and ability to contribute to understanding the development of the historic town.

7.5 Predicted Impact of Proposed Development

The proposed development would have **no direct impact upon any known archaeological remains within the application site**, as no recorded archaeological assets have been identified within its boundary. There remains, however, potential for previously unidentified below-ground remains, principally relating to **medieval and post-medieval rear-plot activity and documented nineteenth-century development**.

Construction of the six dwellings would involve new foundations, together with drainage, service trenches, landscaping and associated groundworks. Site preparation, removal of existing hardstanding and any necessary ground reduction could also affect archaeological deposits where these survive. Such works could result in the **partial or complete loss of archaeological features within their footprints**.

Previous construction, demolition and formation of the existing car park are likely to have caused localised disturbance. Nevertheless, archaeological investigations elsewhere within central Royston demonstrate that remains can survive despite later redevelopment. In particular, deeper features such as pits, wells, postholes, boundary features and foundations may remain below or between areas of previous disturbance.

On the evidence presently available, the proposed development is considered to have the potential for a **Low adverse archaeological impact overall**. This reflects the site's previous disturbance and the likely localised nature of surviving remains. However, the significance and preservation of any currently unidentified archaeology cannot be established without intrusive investigation.

7.6 Proposed Mitigation

The assessment has identified moderate archaeological potential overall, principally for medieval and post-medieval remains associated with the historic rear plots of King Street and Baldock Street, together with a higher likelihood of encountering remains associated with documented nineteenth-century development. However, previous construction, demolition and formation of the existing car park are likely to have resulted in localised disturbance.

No known archaeological remains have been identified within the application site and there is presently no evidence to indicate the presence of archaeological remains of such significance that they would represent an overriding constraint to development. Nevertheless, the precise character, extent and preservation of any surviving below-ground archaeology remain uncertain.

Accordingly, any archaeological mitigation should be proportionate to the potential significance of the archaeological resource and the scale and depth of the proposed groundworks. If considered necessary by the Local Planning Authority's archaeological adviser, an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation could be secured by planning condition.

This could comprise targeted trial-trench evaluation within areas affected by the proposed building footprints and associated groundworks, undertaken in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation. The results would establish whether significant archaeological deposits survive and whether any further mitigation is required.

Where remains are of limited significance, appropriate recording during development, potentially through an archaeological watching brief, may provide sufficient mitigation. Should more significant remains be identified, proportionate further investigation and recording could be agreed with the archaeological adviser before construction proceeds in the affected area.

On the evidence currently available, preservation in situ is not considered necessary as a general requirement, and there is no identified archaeological reason why the principle of redevelopment should not proceed, subject to proportionate archaeological investigation and recording where required.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 Overview

Squire Heritage was commissioned by Kain Miller to prepare an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the proposed redevelopment of the existing surface car park at Princes Mews, Royston.

The proposed development comprises the construction of six three-bedroom townhouses, together with associated access, parking, landscaping, drainage, services and ancillary works. This assessment has considered the known archaeological resource within the site and surrounding study area, previous archaeological investigations, historic mapping and the development and previous use of the application site.

8.2 Archaeological Resource and Impacts

The assessment demonstrates that Princes Mews lies within the historic core of Royston, within an area characterised by medieval settlement followed by increasingly intensive post-medieval commercial, domestic and ancillary activity. The application site historically formed part of the backland behind the established frontages of Baldock Street and King Street.

There are no known archaeological remains recorded within the application site itself and no previous archaeological investigation is known to have been undertaken within its boundary. Nevertheless, investigations elsewhere within central Royston demonstrate that archaeological remains can survive despite successive phases of development and rebuilding.

The site is assessed as having low to moderate archaeological potential overall, with the most relevant potential relating to medieval rear-plot activity, post-medieval occupation and ancillary uses, and nineteenth-century buildings and associated features. Earlier prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman and Early Medieval activity is recorded within the wider Royston area, but there is presently insufficient evidence to indicate concentrated activity of these periods within Princes Mews.

Historic mapping demonstrates that the site has experienced successive phases of construction, demolition, clearance and subsequent formation of the existing car park. These activities are likely to have resulted in localised disturbance and truncation, although they should not be assumed to have removed all earlier archaeological deposits. Deeper features such as pits, wells, postholes, boundaries and foundations could survive beneath or between areas of previous disturbance.

The proposed building foundations, drainage, services and associated groundworks have the potential to affect any surviving archaeological remains within their footprints. On present evidence, the overall archaeological impact of the development is therefore assessed as Low adverse.

The significance of any presently unidentified remains would depend upon their date, character and preservation. Later structural remains may be of limited archaeological significance, whereas well-preserved medieval deposits relating to the organisation and use of Royston's historic rear plots could make a greater contribution to understanding the development of the town.

Nothing identified by this assessment indicates an archaeological constraint that would preclude the principle of development. If required by the Local Planning Authority's archaeological adviser, proportionate archaeological investigation could be secured by planning condition. This could initially comprise targeted evaluation and/or an archaeological watching brief, with any subsequent mitigation determined by the results.

9.0 REFERENCES

9.1 Documentary Sources

Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). 2024. *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Desk-Based Assessment (Published December 2014)

9.2 Other Sources

National Monuments Record, Swindon

North Herts Local Plan (2021).

The National Heritage List for England [<http://list.english-heritage.org.uk>]

9.4 Cartographic Sources

Ordnance Survey maps
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9.3 Electronic References

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EH (English Heritage) 2013. The National Heritage List for England
<http://www.englishheritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/>

HHER (Historic Environments Record).

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APPENDIX 1 – GAZETTEER

PART 1: Finds within a 250m-radius of study area

The table below represents a gazetteer of known historic environment features, finds and past archaeological investigations within the 250m-radius study area around the site at Part 1 (P1 – P15). Data from the **Excavation Index (EI)** is evidenced in PART 1. The EI is a guide to the archaeological excavations and interventions carried out in England. It is part of the National Monuments Record, England's heritage archive.

Other archaeological investigations and sites of heritage importance within a 100-metre radius of the site boundary have been included with the gazetteer and are entered (See Part 2). These are recorded in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Records (HHER).

Record 1 = Archaeological investigations (events/activities)

Record 2 = HER records (known heritage assets/sites)

There is some overlap as Record 1 records investigations carried out at some of the sites listed in Record 2.

RECORD 1: NMR EXCAVATION INDEX

Records of Archaeology Excavations

No.	Site / Record	Period	Description	Type / Features
1	29–31 Kneesworth Street	Post-Medieval	Historic building recording and desk-based assessment undertaken ahead of conversion works	Building
2	St John's Churchyard, Melbourn Street	Uncertain	Monitoring during path alterations identified an earlier cobbled surface together with numerous grave markers.	Path, cobbled surface; graves / grave markers
3	1–5 Baldock Street / 3–5 Lower King Street	Post-Medieval; Uncertain	Two evaluation trenches recorded a range of post-medieval structural and occupation remains associated with development of the site.	Cellar; post holes; stake holes; possible stable
4	Land at 3 The Priory	Medieval; Post-Medieval	Six evaluation trenches identified features associated with the medieval priory and the later manor house occupying the site.	Priory; manor house
5	Land at 5 Church Lane	Medieval/Undated; Post-Medieval; Modern	Evaluation identified four phases, including pits, possible garden deposits, 18th-century cottages and boundary wall, followed by a mid-20th-century replacement building.	Pits; post holes; wall; cottages; garden deposits
6	Royston Cave, Melbourn Street	Medieval	Artificial bell-shaped chamber cut into chalk, containing extensive low-relief religious carvings generally attributed stylistically to the 13th century. Rediscovered in	Cave / subterranean chamber; carvings;

			1742. Earlier prehistoric/Roman origins have been suggested but are considered unlikely.	possible dene hole
7	Phillip's Brewery, Baldock Street	Medieval; Post-Medieval	Archaeological record relating to medieval urban activity and a hospital, followed by post-medieval urban development and brewery use.	Town; hospital; brewery
8	Land at 56 Briary Lane	Post-Medieval; Uncertain	Monitoring during construction of flats recorded evidence associated with the former Earls Hill House and a possible earlier well.	Site / building remains; possible well
9	Carrington House, 37 Upper King Street	Post-Medieval / Victorian; Modern	Two evaluation trenches recorded principally Victorian remains, including a cellar and pit. Other features had been heavily truncated by modern activity.	Cellar; pit; unidentified feature; modern service
10	The Old Cattle Market	Post-Medieval; 20th Century	Four evaluation trenches identified remains associated with the site's 19th- and early-20th-century use as a cattle market. Very little earlier archaeological material was encountered.	Livestock / cattle market
11	Newspaper House, Upper King Street	20th Century	Three trenches excavated after archaeological assessment recorded modern activity only.	Wall; pit; yard
12	Land at 9–13 Baldock Street	Post-Medieval; 20th Century	Historic building recording and watching brief identified three phases of 19th- and 20th-century building activity, including warehouses, cart shed and street-front retail premises. Listed No. 9 was retained and recorded.	Warehouse; cart shed; retail/commercial buildings

13	Abbotts Yard, King Street	Post-Medieval	Monitoring of extension groundworks recorded post-medieval activity only.	Site / occupation activity
14	Land at Jepp's Lane	Post-Medieval; 20th Century	Two evaluation trenches recorded post-medieval and later remains (Site Code HAT648; PRN 14050).	Cellar; yard; building
15	Land rear of 4 Kneesworth Street	Post-Medieval	Watching brief and building recording identified a well associated with the former Crown and Dolphin Inn.	Well; inn-associated activity

RECORD 2: HERITAGE ASSETS AND SITES IN 100 METRE CONTEXT OF THE SITE
DATA FROM Hertfordshire HER & St Albans UAD

Heritage Assets and Archaeological Sites within the Study Context

HHER Monuments and Heritage Assets

HHER No.	Site / Asset	Record Type	Period	Principal Monument Type	Classification / Character
16. 4200	Augustinian Priory of St John the Baptist and St Thomas	Monument	Medieval	Augustinian monastery	Religious / monastic
17. 11324	House and Malthouse, 9–13 Baldock Street	Building	Post-Medieval	House; maltings; workshop; cellar	Domestic / industrial
18. 5447	Phillips / Royston Brewery, Baldock Street	Monument	Post-Medieval–20th C	Brewery; confectionery works	Industrial
19. 1738	Medieval Cemetery, Briary Lane	Monument	Medieval	Mixed cemetery	Funerary / religious
20. 16	Medieval and Later Town of Royston	Place	Medieval–Post-Medieval	Town	Urban settlement
21. 2724	Roysia Stone	Monument	Medieval	Possible cross	Religious / wayside monument
22. 11287	School House and Fire Station, Fish Hill	Monument	Post-Medieval–20th C	School; fire station; lock-up; meeting hall	Civic / institutional
23. 12629	Medieval Burgage Plot, Upper King Street	Monument	Medieval	Burgage plot	Urban morphology / property

HHER No.	Site / Asset	Record Type	Period	Principal Monument Type	Classification Character /
24. 11289	The Chequers, 58 High Street	Building	Medieval–Post-Medieval	Timber-framed building; coaching inn	Domestic / commercial
25. 2726	Hospital of St John and St James	Monument	Medieval	Hospital	Religious / institutional
26. 11313	White Horse PH, 6–8 Melbourn Street	Building	Post-Medieval	Public house	Commercial / coaching
27. 11337	59–61 High Street	Building	Post-Medieval	Timber-framed houses	Domestic / commercial
28. 30649	Post-Medieval Cottages, 5 Church Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Houses; boundary wall	Domestic
29. 12628	Stable and Other Features, 3–5 Lower King Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Stable; well	Ancillary / service
30. 11307	Old Crown Inn, Melbourn Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Coaching inn; hotel	Commercial / coaching
31. 11340	Pillory, Melbourn Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Pillory	Civic / judicial
32. 6365	Cellars, 69–71 King Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Cellars	Domestic / commercial
33. 11312	Red Lion, High Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Inn	Commercial / coaching
34. 11345	White Hart Inn, Market Hill	Monument	Post-Medieval	Inn	Commercial / coaching
35. 11294	Malthouse, London Road	Monument	Post-Medieval	Maltings	Industrial / agricultural processing
36. 6352	Medieval Building, Baldock Street	Monument	Medieval	Timber-framed building	Domestic / occupation
37. 11336	Infant School, Market Hill	Monument	Post-Medieval	School	Educational / institutional
38. 11323	Malthouse, Upper King Street	Building	Post-Medieval	Maltings	Industrial
39. 11311	Angel Inn, High Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Inn	Commercial / coaching
40. 11309	Falcon Inn, Melbourn Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Inn	Commercial / coaching
41. 11310	Tabard / Talbot Inn, Middle Row	Monument	Post-Medieval	Inn	Commercial / coaching
42. 11343	Malthouse, High Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Maltings	Industrial
43. 11347	White Lion, High Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Inn	Commercial / coaching
44. 30953	Pound, The Warren	Monument	Post-Medieval	Pound	Agricultural / civic
45.	Toll Booth, The Cross	Monument	Medieval	Toll house	Commercial / civic

HER No.	Site / Asset	Record Type	Period	Principal Monument Type	Classification Character
11278					
46. 11297	Old Butter Market, Melbourn Street	Monument	Post-Medieval	Market	



Figure 1: Site location plan and proposed development

FIGURE

1896 map , with current site location marked



FIGURE 3: 1937 Map

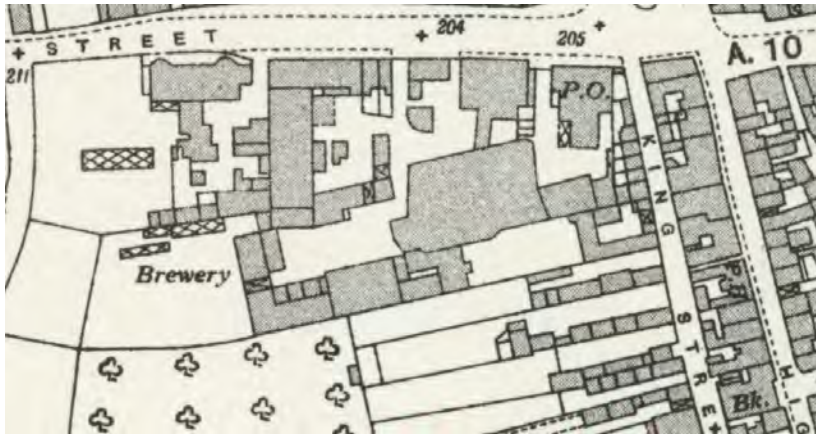


FIGURE 4: 1970 Map



Sites from Part 1 plotted on map, showing distance to site

