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Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Land East of Pirton, North Hertfordshire

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Gladman Developments Ltd

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ON BEHALF OF GLADMAN
DEVELOPMENTS LTD

April 2025



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Archaeological Desk-Based
Assessment

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
of the Proposed Development at
Land east of Pirton

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Non-Technical Summary

Iceni Projects has been commissioned by Gladman Developments Ltd to carry out an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment in advance of the Proposed Development on the Site located at Land East of Pirton, North Hertfordshire.

This Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment assesses the potential presence and significance of archaeological assets on the Site, and the impact of the Proposed Development on such assets. Historic structures, above-ground heritage assets and their setting are not specifically considered in this assessment except where they are relevant to the archaeological interpretation of the Site.

The Site is proposed to be developed for up to 130 dwellings with all matters reserved, save for access.

Two previous planning applications to develop the Site were submitted in June and October 2017, which have been refused and one subsequently dismissed at appeal.

There are no scheduled monuments, listed buildings, or other designated heritage assets identified on the Hertfordshire HER within the Site. The Site lies adjacent to two Areas of Archaeological Significance, as identified in the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031.

This assessment concludes that the potential presence and significance of archaeology on the Site is as follows:

- **Medium to High** potential for localised prehistoric remains likely relating to settlement activities of **Local Area to Regional Significance**.
- **Medium to High** potential for localised Roman remains likely relating to settlement activities of **Local Area to Regional Significance**.
- **Low** potential for medieval remains likely associated with farming or agricultural activities of **Local Area Significance**.
- **Low** potential for post-medieval remains relating to field boundaries, ditches, and other features associated with rural land use of **Negligible Significance**.

This report concludes that impacts associated with the Proposed Development have the potential to partially truncate or completely remove buried heritage assets within the Site, where present.

This report will assist the Local Planning Authority in determining whether planning consent is permissible, with due consideration to the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. Additionally, this assessment will help the Local Planning Authority to confirm whether further archaeological work can be addressed through a planning condition, in line with the consideration made by the Planning Inspectorate and the County Council's Archaeological Advisor regarding the previous application to develop the Site.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1 This Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) has been prepared by Icen Projects on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd to support an outline application for Land East of Pirton, North Hertfordshire ('the Site', Figure 1). The purpose of this document is to assess, as far as reasonably possible using existing records, the potential nature, extent, and significance of the buried heritage within the Site, the potential for unknown assets, and the potential impact on the historic environment arising from the development ('the Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2 This document has been undertaken in accordance with the relevant Legislation, Policy, and Technical Guidance. A complete summary of the relevant professional Technical Guidance is provided in **Section 3** and **Appendix A**, which also includes an overview of the relevant Historic England and Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) policies.
- 1.1.3 A Historic Environmental Record (HER) search of a 1km radius from the Site boundary has been utilised to produce a comprehensive baseline of the archaeological background of the Site (Figure 2).

1.2. Site Location

- 1.2.1 The Proposed Development is sited on land currently in agricultural use to the east of the settlement of Pirton, accessed from Holwell Road (via Drovers Way and Coopers Elms) and north of Hambridge Way as it turns to a footpath along the Site southern boundary. There is no recorded historical or present alternative use.
- 1.2.2 The approximate centre of the Site lies at National Grid Reference 515261, 231914.
- 1.2.3 The Proposed Development lies adjacent to two Designated Archaeological Alert Areas, as designated by Hertfordshire County Council in conjunction with the North Herts District Council (Figure 2). The first, to the south, contains a series of likely prehistoric or Roman enclosures and field boundaries, identified from aerial photography. The second, to the west, covers the core of the historic village of Pirton.

1.3. Planning Background and Description of Development

- 1.3.1 In the context of planning and development, the conservation of the historic environment is a material consideration. Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated December 2024) specifically Paragraphs 202 to 221 address the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment; these set out the local planning authority's responsibilities when dealing with planning proposals which have the potential to impact on cultural heritage assets. These policies emphasise the importance of balancing the need for the conservation of heritage assets with the desirability of new development.

1.3.2 Policy HE4, Archaeology, included in the North Herts Local Plan (2011-2031), addresses the archaeological heritage assets and is as follow:

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

a) Developers submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where justified, an archaeological field evaluation.

b) It is demonstrated how archaeological remains will be preserved and incorporated into the layout of that development, if in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is considered preferable; and

c) Where the loss of the whole or a material part of important archaeological remains is justified, appropriate conditions are applied to ensure that the archaeological recording, reporting, publication and archiving of the results of such archaeological work is undertaken before it is damaged or lost.

Where archaeological sites have been assessed to meet the criteria for inclusion on adopted registers or maps of locally important heritage assets these shall be treated in the same way as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance.

Areas of as yet, unknown archaeology may be identified during research, or through the planning or plan making process. These sites or areas should be treated in the same way as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance.

1.3.3 A comprehensive summary of all the relevant planning legislation and policy is provided in **Appendix A.**

1.3.4 The land immediately to the west of the Site, known as “Commice Meadows”, has been developed with the construction of 78 houses, for which outline planning permission was granted by the Council in 2016.

1.3.5 The Proposed Development includes the construction of up to 130 dwellings and associated infrastructure and landscaped areas within the Site, with all matters reserved save for access. Two planning applications have been submitted previously on the Site, both of which refused.

1.3.6 The first planning application on the Site was submitted in June 2017 (Ref 17/01543/1) for the development of 99 homes and associated landscaping.

1.3.7 In August 2017 a program of geophysical survey was carried on the Site of in support to the planning application. This informed the subsequent program of archaeological trial trenching evaluation carried out in 2018.

- 1.3.8 The planning application was subsequently refused on grounds of landscape, archaeology, and transport.

Reason for refusal (archaeology):

The third reason for refusal of the planning application related to the lack of sufficient information to establish the site's archaeological value, and the potential impact of the proposed development.

- 1.3.9 An amended scheme for 85 Dwellings was submitted in Oct 2017 and subsequently refused by NHDC, citing landscape, archaeology, transport, and lack of section 106 Legal agreement as reasons for refusal.

- 1.3.10 An appeal was submitted in 2018 and subsequently dismissed (Appeal Decision APP/X1925/W/17/3184846),

Reason for dismissal:

environmental harm to the adopted and emerging plan-led development strategy by adding a significant amount of new housing in a location not identified for this level of growth with constrained accessibility by sustainable modes of transport, and which could only be achieved with significant adverse effects on the character and appearance of the countryside.

- 1.3.11 Specifically in relation to archaeology, the Inspector and Case Officer, stated the following:

The third reason for refusal of the planning application related to the lack of sufficient information to establish the site's archaeological value, and the potential impact of the proposed development. The appellant subsequently commissioned an archaeological field evaluation, the report of which was submitted to the County Council's specialist adviser and was later updated in response to comments received. The SCG records the District Council's acceptance that the report has now provided adequate analysis and that any archaeological impacts could be addressed by means of a condition.

58. Representations on behalf of the local archaeological society maintain opposition to the proposal. It is argued that the significance of the site has been misunderstood, given the extent of archaeological interest in the immediate vicinity, as exemplified by the finds revealed on the Elm Tree Farm 1 site. An application to have the site scheduled was unable to proceed in the absence of more detailed analysis.

59. The County Council's adviser has now accepted that the revised evaluation report is sufficiently detailed to accord with national guidance and that its conclusions can be broadly accepted. He has recommended the terms of a condition on further investigation should permission be granted. While I acknowledge the detailed analysis provided by the local

society, who clearly have considerable levels of expertise and dedication at their disposal, there is insufficient reason to overrule the conclusion of the County Council's adviser, whose professional standing was accepted at the Hearing.

60. I consider that, subject to the necessary condition, the proposal would comply with national policy¹⁸ on the conservation of the historic environment including non-designated heritage assets, which is echoed by ELP Policy HE4, and with NHDLP Policy 16, which envisages development subject to conditions in appropriate circumstances. The submitted evaluation would meet the requirements of NP Policy PNP8.

- 1.3.12 This DBA has been produced to support a new outline planning application, with all matters reserved, save for access.

1.4. Consultation

- 1.4.1 On the 25th of February 2025, a HER search of a 1km radius from the Site boundary was submitted to the Hertfordshire HER (HHER). This was acknowledged, and the records issued on the 26th of February by the Hertfordshire County Council HER Officer.
- 1.4.2 Once complete, this DBA will be sent to Hertfordshire Council's Archaeological Advisor.

2. Objectives

2.1. Scope

2.1.1 Paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that:

Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

2.1.2 The aim of this DBA is to provide the Local Planning Authority with sufficient information to determine whether or not consent is justifiable with consideration to how the Proposed Development will affect any buried heritage assets surviving on site.

2.1.3 The purpose is to identify all known assets potentially affected by the Proposed Development, and the potential for currently unknown buried heritage assets; to gain an understanding of the buried heritage resource in order to understand their significance and to inform strategies for evaluation, mitigation, or management as appropriate.

2.1.4 Any archaeological remains present with Site have the potential to contribute to the research questions and research agenda set out in the East Midlands Historic Environment Research Framework.¹

2.2. Standard and Guidance

2.2.1 This document has been undertaken pursuant to the professional guidance issued within the ClfA guideline (2014b) for Desk-Based Assessments as:

Standard

Desk-based assessment will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent, and significance of the historic environment within a specified area. Desk-based assessment will be undertaken using appropriate methods and practices which satisfy the stated aims of the project, and which comply with the Code of conduct and other relevant regulations of ClfA. In a development context desk-based assessment will establish the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment (or will identify the need for further evaluation to do so) and will enable reasoned proposals and decisions to be made whether to mitigate, offset or accept without further intervention that impact.

Guidance

A desk-based assessment is a programme of study of the historic environment within a

¹ Medlycott, M. (ed.) 2011 *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England* East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24.

specified area or site on land, the inter-tidal zone or underwater that addresses agreed research and/or conservation objectives. It consists of an analysis of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely heritage assets, their interests and significance and the character of the study area, including appropriate consideration of the settings of heritage assets and, in England, the nature, extent and quality of the known or potential archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interest. Significance is to be judged in a local, regional, national, or international context as appropriate.

2.2.2 To summarise, the key aims of this Archaeological DBA are to:

- To identify and map all the known designated heritage assets and non-designated buried heritage assets within the Site and surrounding Study Area;
- To describe the Significance of such assets;
- To assess the potential for unknown buried heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals;
- To identify the extent of previous ground disturbance which may have affected buried heritage assets survival; and,
- To assess the likely impacts upon the Significance of the assets arising from the Proposed Development.

3. Methodology and Sources Consulted

3.1.1 This section presents the definition and describes the technical methods used to determine the **Archaeological Potential** of the Site, and the **Significance** of the buried heritage assets potentially affected by the Proposed Development.

3.2. *Archaeological Potential*

3.2.1 **Archaeological Potential** takes into consideration the possibility that unrecorded buried heritage assets may survive within the Site in addition to the known baseline.

3.2.2 The **Archaeological Potential** is assessed based on existing baseline evidence and the likely preservation of known or unknown buried heritage assets within the Site, considering previous ground disturbance. However, the physical nature and extent of any surviving archaeological resources cannot be fully confirmed without further investigation. As such, the potential is determined through professional judgment and expertise, informed by the available baseline data.

3.2.3 The **Potential** for surviving unknown buried heritage assets of various periods is defined within this assessment as presented in Table 1:

Table 1 Archaeological Potential

Potential	Description of Assets
High	The available evidence suggests a high likelihood for past activity within the Site and a strong potential for archaeological evidence to survive intact or reasonably intact.
Moderate	The available evidence suggests a reasonable likelihood for past activity within the Site and a potential that archaeological evidence may survive although the nature and extent of survival is not thought to be significant.
Low	The available evidence suggests archaeological evidence of significant activity is unlikely to survive within the Site, although some minor land-use may have occurred.
Uncertain	Insufficient information to assess.

3.2.4 Archaeological potential may be reduced based on known historic or modern impacts.

3.3. *Archaeological Significance*

3.3.1 Archaeological Significance considers the relative importance of heritage assets, whether known or yet to be discovered, in terms of their historic, cultural, scientific, or social value. This includes both designated assets and non-designated assets that may contribute to our understanding of the past.

3.3.2 The Significance of archaeological remains is assessed based on a range of factors, such as rarity, condition, context, potential for future research, and contribution to broader historic narratives. While some aspects of Significance can be inferred from baseline data, full understanding often requires detailed investigation. Therefore, Significance is determined using professional judgment, informed by established criteria and the best available evidence.

Table 2 Archaeological Significance

Significance	Designation of Asset
International (Very High / Highest Importance)	Heritage assets of international importance, subject to the highest level of protection. Essential for understanding the cultural, historic, architectural, and aesthetic significance of the environment. Examples: • World Heritage Sites: Outstanding universal value on an international level. • Scheduled Monuments: Sites with exceptional archaeological interest, protected under UK law. • Grade I Listed Buildings: Buildings of exceptional architectural and historical value. • Grade I Registered Parks and Gardens: Parks and gardens of exceptional historical or artistic significance. • Protected Wrecks: Submerged historic remains, legally protected. • Well-Preserved Historic Landscapes: Integral to understanding past societies, often subject to the highest conservation standards.
National (High)	National (High) Importance Archaeological sites designated or undesignated, with well-preserved or in situ structures, significant historical sensitivity, or strong evidence of past human activity. These sites offer historical, archaeological, and sometimes cultural value. Examples: • Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens: Sites of special historical or artistic value. • Conservation Areas: Areas of special architectural or historic interest. • Designated Historic Battlefields: Sites of significant historical battles. • Grade II Listed Buildings: Buildings of special architectural or historical value. • Burial Grounds: Sites with archaeological or cultural value. • Protected Heritage Landscapes: Such as Ancient Woodland, preserved for their historical, ecological, or cultural significance.
Regional (Medium)	Regional (Medium) Importance Undesignated sites with evidence of past human activity, contributing to local or district-level research and knowledge. These assets have potential historical value and may contain structures or features with research potential. Examples: • Historic Village Settlements: Evidence of past settlements. • Historic Field Systems and Boundaries: Agricultural or land-use patterns. • Historic Road Systems: Evidence of past transportation routes.
Local Area / Parish (Low)	Heritage assets with local significance, contributing to community or regional history but lacking broader importance. These sites often have limited research value and typically lack significant preservation. Examples: • Historic Field Systems and Boundaries: Local remains of land-use patterns. • Agricultural Features: Such as ridge and furrow field systems. • Ephemeral Archaeological Evidence: Temporary or poorly preserved remains. • Artefacts of Poor Contextual Stratigraphy: Items with limited archaeological value.

Negligible (Very Low)	Assets with minimal or no archaeological or historical value. They are highly disturbed, damaged, or destroyed, offering little to no insight into the past. These assets have no significant contribution to research or heritage understanding. Examples: • Destroyed Objects: Items no longer in existence. • Buildings of No Architectural Merit: Structures of no historical or architectural value. • Modern Landscape Features: Features like quarries or modern drains. • Disturbances: Modern intrusions that compromise historic integrity.
Unknown	Insufficient information exists to assess the significance of the asset or assets. Further investigation is required to determine the value.

3.3.4 Archaeological significance may be reduced based on known historic or modern impacts

3.3.5 Potential and Significance definitions detailed above are based on guidance in the following documents:

- ClfA, 2014, *Standards and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment*;
- Historic England, 2017, *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3*;
- Historic England, 2017, *Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*
- Historic England 2022, *Planning and Archaeology: Historic England Advice Note 17*

3.4. Sources

3.4.1 The following sources were consulted in the production of this assessment:

- **Archaeological Data Service (ADS)** - A comprehensive archive of published and unpublished fieldwork reports.
- **British Geological Survey (BGS)** - Solid and Drift geology digital mapping and geological borehole data where applicable.
- **Details of the Proposed Development** - Existing and proposed development plans, topographical survey, geotechnical / site investigation report, contamination report, unexploded ordnance assessment, details of existing services and utilities report.
- **Google Earth** – 2021 satellite imagery used as prospection tool for the Site and its surroundings.
- **Historic England** - Information on statutory designated assets data including the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed buildings, and any identified Heritage at Risk.

- **Historic Environment Record (HER) Data** detailing the results of previous archaeological investigations within the Site and in the surrounding Study Area. The HER Data was obtained in February 2025;²
- **Local Authority planning policies** - Details within the North Herts Local Plan's and other information on historic environment policies, conservation areas and locally listed buildings where published online.
- **National Library of Scotland** ³- Ordnance Survey (OS) maps from their historic first edition through to modern OS mapping. Earlier historic maps were also consulted where available.
- **LIDAR** - Lidar imagery as available from:
[https://historicalengland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d45dabecf5541f18255e12e5cd5f85a&mobileBreakPoint=300](https://historicalengland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d45dabecf5541f18255e12e5cd5f85a&mobileBreakPoint=300;);
- **Site Reports** - Reports on past archaeological investigations within the Site.

3.5. *Site Visit / Archive Visit*

- 3.5.1 A site visit was undertaken by the Iceni Heritage Team in January 2025, during which several photographs were taken of the site and the surrounding area.
- 3.5.2 In this instance, an archive visit was not undertaken as part of this DBA, due to the variety of resources available at the time of the writing. These sources were deemed sufficient to assess the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within the Site:
- OS and Historical Maps available on the National Library of Scotland website, accessed in March 2025.

² Data received in February 2025.

4. Limitations and Assumptions

4.1. *Limitations*

- 4.1.1 The HHER is a record the known buried heritage assets recorded in the area but may not necessarily be exhaustive. The distribution of known data does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown.
- 4.1.2 The HHER includes a number of isolated findspots, and casual finds recorded on the Portable Antiquity Scheme (PAS). While the PAS's contribution to the general understanding of the archaeological background of a Site, and to the public awareness and interest in archaeological heritage is unquestionable, the nature of the scheme presents limitations that must be considered when included in an archaeological DBA. Due to the voluntary nature of PAS contributions, the often inaccurate spatial and distribution data, and the predominantly antiquarian or accidental collection of finds by members of the public, the results of the PAS consultation are subject to a degree of biases which may provide inaccurate or partial information.
- 4.1.3 The actual extent of truncation caused by previous development impacts and landscaping works cannot be fully ascertained without ground investigation.
- 4.1.4 Historic maps provide a glimpse of land-use at a specific moment. It is therefore possible that short-lived structures or patterns of land-use may not be shown on maps and therefore may not be recorded within this assessment.
- 4.1.5 No recent geotechnical ground investigation has been carried out on Site. Detailed prediction of geological levels within the Site is based on data from an archaeological evaluation carried out in 2018. No further investigations have taken place on the Site, so the levels observed in 2018 is considered to provide a reasonable reflection of current conditions on the Site.

4.2. *Assumptions*

- 4.2.1 The assessment is based upon data and records provided by third parties, and therefore it has proceeded on the assumption that this information is accurate and up to date at the time of reporting.

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

5.1. Study Area and Scope

- 5.1.1 To assess the archaeological potential and significance of the Site, data has been obtained from the HHER within a 1km radius of the boundary of the Site. The HHER data has been examined to identify known archaeological sites and to develop an archaeological baseline by predicting potential archaeological survival on Site.
- 5.1.2 References to archaeological interventions, findspots, and monuments recorded in the HHER and shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4 will be presented in parenthesis throughout this document. Additional sources have also been consulted to supplement this data, as detailed in **Section 3**.

5.2. Geology

- 5.2.1 British Geological Survey (BGS, 2025) records show superficial deposits on the south-east corner of the Site as Diamicton deposits of the Lowestoft Formation, laid down in the ice age conditions of the Quaternary Period. The entire Site is located on the bedrock of the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation. This is sedimentary bedrock formed in deep seas approximately 94 to 100 million years ago, during the Cretaceous Period.
- 5.2.2 There are no boreholes recorded within the Site on the BGS database. The archaeological evaluation of the Site via trial trenching conducted in 2017 recorded geological subsoil (natural) in all 33 trenches excavated. This subsoil consisted of yellowish to orange-brown silty clay with occasional layers of sand and gravel, located at depths between 0.40m and 0.60m below the ground surface. The depth of this layer varied across the site, being deeper towards the southern end, which was slightly downslope. A subsoil horizon was also recorded in all trenches, consisting of mid-brown silty clay, ranging from 0.05m to 0.30m in thickness. This subsoil layer was deeper in the southern half of the site, where the topography sloped downward, compared to the northern half, which was slightly higher and flatter. This subsoil may represent an earlier agricultural soil. Above this, a topsoil layer was recorded, ranging from 0.15m to 0.30m in thickness.

5.3. Topography

- 5.3.1 The Site is in use as an arable field, it is rectangular in plan, aligned north to south and of approximately 6.5ha. It is situated to the immediate east of the village of Pirton. The Site is substantially flat at c 67m Ordnance Datum (OD).
- 5.3.2 The Site boundary is defined to the north and east by field boundaries and to the south by Hambridge Way, a narrow track and bridleway shown on later Ordnance Survey (OS) maps as having a small watercourse to the north of the track within the site. The Site is only partially bounded by a hedgerow to the west, with the southern end of this hedgerow having been

removed or omitted to allow both the field on the west, now fully developed, and the Site to be ploughed together.

- 5.3.3 Pirton lies immediately outside the edge of the Chilterns National Landscape area. Priors Hill and Hitchin Road at the south-west edge of the village, and also the south-west boundary of the settlement area, mark the north-east boundary of the National Landscape area.

5.4. Historic Landscape Characterisation

- 5.4.1 The Site is located in Area 218 'the Pirton Lowlands' by the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (2011).
- 5.4.2 The Landscape Character is described as a large scale open, flat farming landscape given over predominantly to arable production. Remnant hedges, gappy and predominantly hawthorn but with occasional mature trees. Hedges generally well-trimmed. Very little woodland cover except adjacent to settlements. Settlement pattern is nucleated with older settlements maintaining the use of local vernacular materials. Occasional farmsteads are less well integrated in terms of materials and general scale of farm buildings. Additionally, the A600, Bedford Road, is quite prominent in the east.
- 5.4.3 The historic agricultural landscape comprises a mixture of prairie fields with relict elements within, prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss and post-1950s enclosure. An enclosure dating to the 18th century is concentrated to the northeast of Pirton and pre-18th century enclosure and informal medieval parkland to the south of Shillington. Today there are patchy unmanaged hedges, few hedgerow trees and large-scale remnant field pattern.

5.5. Designated Heritage Assets⁴

- 5.5.1 There are no scheduled monuments, listed buildings, or other designated heritage assets identified on the Hertfordshire HER within the Site.
- 5.5.2 There are three scheduled monuments within the Study Area:
- Toot Hill Motte And Bailey Castle And Shrunken Medieval Village At Pirton (National Heritage List of England Number: 1012325), located approximately 370m west of the Site;
 - Anglo-Saxon Settlement And Probable Prehistoric Ring Ditches, West Of Pirton Village (National Heritage List of England Number: 1434415), located approximately 740m west of the Site; and,
 - Moated Site And Associated Enclosure At Rectory Farm (National Heritage List of England Number: 1009451), located approximately 945m west of the Site.

5.6. Areas of Archaeological Significance

⁴ The Description of the Scheduled Monuments is provided in Appendix B.

- 5.6.1 The Proposed Development lies adjacent to two Areas of Archaeological Significance, as identified in the North Herts Local Plan (2011-2031) and designated by the Hertfordshire County Council in conjunction with the North Herts District Council. The first, to the south, contains a series of likely prehistoric or Roman enclosures and field boundaries, identified from aerial photography. The second, to the west, covers the core of the village of Pirton which has a complex history, with origins in the early to middle Anglo-Saxon period.
- 5.6.2 There are 12 further Areas of Archaeological Significance within the 1km Study Area, showed in Figure 2.
- 5.6.3 Between 2007 and 2011, 104 small test pits have been excavated within the Areas of Archaeological Significance within the medieval Village of Pirton. This programme of archaeological excavation was carried out initially by the University of Cambridge and then by the University of Lincoln as part of the East of England project looking into the origins and development of Medieval villages by using schoolchildren and adult volunteers to dig archaeological test pits. The locations of the test pits are presented in Figure 3.

Prehistoric period (Palaeolithic to Iron Age – before AD 43)

- 5.6.4 The prehistoric is a broad period comprising the Palaeolithic (c.500,000 – 10,000BC), Mesolithic (c.10,000 – 4,000BC), Neolithic (c.4,000 – 2,500BC), Bronze Age (c.2,500 – 700BC), and Iron Age (c.700BC – 43AD). Continuous human occupation of Britain began as the climate improved at the end of the last Ice Age, with nomadic hunter gatherer societies exploiting wild plants and animals. Farming was first introduced from the continent to Britain around 4000BC and was accompanied by changes in pottery, burial customs, new types of monuments and a sedentary population. The arrival of metalworking in the Bronze Age saw a gradual shift in burial practices, an increase in permanent occupational evidence, distinctive field systems and ceremonial landscape monuments. During the Iron Age, elaborate hillfort type structures are constructed, with evidence of ritual offerings and fine iron metalwork suggestive of a warrior aristocracy and the emergence of extensive tribal territories.
- 5.6.5 The geophysical survey (EHT8416, report in **Appendix B**), and the subsequent trial trenching evaluation carried out within the Site in 2018 (EHT9352, report in **Appendix C**) recorded linear ditches, gullies and pits of varying size in the northern half of the Site, tentatively attributed to the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age activity by comparison with similar features recorded the field immediately to the west of the Site (MHT31349, MHT18218, MHT31348).
- 5.6.6 As per paragraph above, the investigations (EHT6846, EHT8352, EHT8016, EHT8869) in advance of a housing development in the field to the west of the Site (to the rear of Elm Tree Farm) have identified significant later prehistoric remains, including human cremations, a post-built circular structure, a large number of pits containing pottery and animal bone perhaps indicative of feasting and a boundary ditch. These features, mostly located along the norther

part of the area, suggest a Late Bronze Age and/or Early Iron Age occupation.

- 5.6.7 Until the most recent archaeological excavation at Elm Tree Farm, it was believed that during the late Iron Age, the main settled area of Pirton was located the north end of Dane Field by the Driftway to Shillington, in the centre and to the west of the current village of Pirton⁵.
- 5.6.8 A substantial assemblage of prehistoric pottery (MHT31514) was found in pits and post holes during archaeological excavations at Pollards Way (EHT8202), approximately 560m west of the Site.
- 5.6.9 Approximately 750m west of the Site, a geophysical survey (EHT7865) followed by a trial trenching evaluation (EHT8220) recorded a ring ditch tentatively dated to the late Neolithic to Bronze Age period (MHT31109). These ditches are included in the scheduled Anglo-Saxon settlement and probable prehistoric ring ditches, west of Pirton village (NHLE: 1434415).
- 5.6.10 Approximately 825m west of the Site, in close proximity with EHT7865 and EHT8220, a further geophysical survey (EHT8202) and archaeological evaluation (EHT8400) recorded pits and a possible enclosure which have been dated via radiocarbon to the late Neolithic/Bronze Age period (MHT31579).
- 5.6.11 Of uncertain date but likely of Late Neolithic to Earlier Bronze age, cropmark of a large double-ditched circular enclosure with large macula within inner ring are located approximately 885m southwest of the Site (MHT6369).
- 5.6.12 Heavily eroded remnants of a potential prehistoric round barrow are visible on aerial photographs approximately 700m east of the Site (MHT17262), along with traces of medieval ridge and furrows and a probable post-enclosure boundary system.
- 5.6.13 A polished greenstone axe was recovered in a chalk pit disused in 1882, approximately 675m north east of the Site.
- 5.6.14 A number of arbitrary located artefacts dated to the Prehistoric period are also recorded in the HHER. As their location and attribution are uncertain, there have not been considered as part of this assessment and not represented in the Figure 4.

5.7. *Roman period (AD 43 – 410)*

- 5.7.1 The Roman invasion in AD43 brought an end to the prehistoric period in Britain. In the late Iron Age and Roman periods, Pirton was connected by a trackway, visible on aerial photographs, to another large settlement the other side of the ridge that forms the parish boundary with Shillington, lying between Pegsdon Common and Kettledean Farms.

⁵ Pirton Village Character Assessment, Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2016.

- 5.7.2 Hertfordshire HER holds no records definitively dating to the Roman period within the Site.
- 5.7.3 To the south of the Site, on the opposite side of Hambridge Way, an Area of Archaeological Significance has been designed to include a series of likely prehistoric or Roman enclosures and field boundaries, identified from aerial photography (MHT2334 and MHT2464), suggesting the presence of a potential Romano-British farmstead.
- 5.7.4 Archaeological features suggesting a Roman occupation in the area of Pirton have been recorded during a number of archaeological interventions to west of the Site, is substantial continuity with the activity pattern documented in the west and the centre of the village during the prehistoric phase.
- 5.7.5 An archaeological evaluation and subsequent strip, map & record (EHT7310 and EHT7824 respectively) on the northeast corner of the field adjacent to housing in Pollards Way, approximately 755m west of the Site and in proximity of the scheduled Anglo-Saxon settlement (NHLE number: 1434415), revealed a large pit and potential roman features (MHT18649), attributed to Roman or early post-Roman activities.
- 5.7.6 Approximately 650m west of the Site, a pit containing an animal bone and Roman pottery was recorded during an archaeological watching brief carried out during the primary school extension (MHT1475, and MHT17170). Although this was the only archaeological feature recorded, the area directly to the south had been heavily truncated in the 20th century.
- 5.7.7 A potential hoard of Roman coins along with 3rd and 4th century pottery was collected on a large field approximately 1.1km northeast of the Site (MHT1165).
- 5.7.8 A 'floor of a Roman building and Flavian pottery' (MHT1478) were excavated in the vicinity of Bury Field to the south west of the Site close to the scheduled Toot Hill Motte And Bailey Castle And Shrunken Medieval Village At Pirton (NHLE Number: 1012325). The precise location is not recorded in the HHER data, but it has been tentatively located 540m southwest of the Site.
- 5.7.9 Some redeposited Roman pottery fragments have also been collected in the outer bank of the scheduled Toot Hill Motte And Bailey Castle, 495m west of the Site.
- 5.7.10 A Roman spindle whorl is also recorded in the HHER as chance find, approximately 810m west of the Site (MHT1480).
- 5.7.11 A number of arbitrary located artefacts, mostly late roman copper-alloy coins dated to the Roman period, are also recorded in the HHER. As their location and attribution are uncertain, there have not been considered as part of this assessment and not represented in the Figure 4.

5.8. *Saxon and Medieval Period (AD 410 –1485)*

- 5.8.1 Pirton shows a long story of development, including both phases of expansion and contractions during the Saxon and medieval period. The Site was located on the east of the main focus of occupation in this phase, and likely in use as pasture or farmland.
- 5.8.2 Within the Site, the only evidence of Saxon and medieval activity recorded on the HHER as a pattern of ridge and furrow running roughly east-west (MHT31519) identified during a geophysical survey in 2017 (EHT8416). Confirming the likely agricultural use of the Site, further remains of ridge and furrow cultivation of likely medieval dating are also recorded approximately 45m west of the Site (MHT31090).
- 5.8.3 The scheduled Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Probable Prehistoric Ring Ditches, west of Pirton village (NHLE: 1434415) includes the remnants of the early Saxon settlement (5th to 9th century), recorded northeast of Priors Hill, approximately 750m west of the Site (MHT31108). The inhumation of an older adult male was found to the northeast of the settlement, and was radiocarbon dated between AD 775 and 970.
- 5.8.4 A Saxon cemetery is recorded on the ridge overlooking Dane Field, in the area known as Cat's Brains, approximately 460m west of the Site (MHT9677). It contained many burials of warriors with weapons, such as swords, spears and shields. One of the buildings recorded in the area during the archaeological works (EHT4188 and EHT4203), was on an east-west orientation, and is possibly an early church that was replaced by the extant St Mary's church on Great Bury (MHT9676).
- 5.8.5 Further human remains have been identified during the excavations at land adjacent to The Coach House, Shillington Road (MHT39812), approximately 740m west of the Site. A skull lacking facial bones, maxilla and mandible, dated to the Late Saxon, was found interred in a small pit containing ash and traces of burning.
- 5.8.6 The presence of a potential high status Middle Saxon settlement in the area, is also supported by a significant number of coins (MHT9470, 900m southwest of the Site), and imported pottery from Ipswich and Maxeley in East Anglia, and north France (MHT13757, 740m northwest of the Site; MHT31569, 790m northwest of the Site; and MHT31571 740m northeast of the Site). A number of arbitrary located artefacts mostly dated to the Saxon and late Saxon period are also recorded in the HHER. As their location and attribution are uncertain, there have not been individually considered as part of this assessment. Nonetheless, they contribute to support the presence of a potential high status, early/middle Saxon settlement, between the 500 AD and the 10th century.
- 5.8.7 A large number of late Roman, Saxon and early medieval pottery fragments have been collected during excavations of a number of test pits across the northern half of the field at the north end of Burge End Lane, close to Burge End Farm (EHT8474), approximately 900m northwest of the Site.

- 5.8.8 The medieval manor of Pirton is firstly mentioned as Peritone in the Domesday Book, as part of the hundred of Hitchin and the county of Hertfordshire (MHT1487).
- 5.8.9 During this phase, two main cluster of medieval activities have been recorded.
- 5.8.10 The first cluster is The scheduled Toot Hill Motte And Bailey Castle And Shrunken Medieval Village At Pirton (NHLE: 1012325), built in the early 12th century in centre of the medieval village, in an area known as Toot Hill, approximately 370m west of the Site. Earthworks including banks and ditches are recorded within a field named The Bury, south and east of Toot Hill (MHT746), and a pond along the northeast edge of Toot Hill (MHT12426), registered as Blacksmith's Pond (Common) in the HHER, are realistically associated with the Motte and Castle.
- 5.8.11 Slightly south of the Motte and Castle, a domestic settlement, possibly a forerunner to a farmstead, was recorded approximately 500m southwest of the Site. A number of ditches and gullies, representing former boundaries, and pits contained domestic rubbish including daub, butchered bone and 10th-12th century pottery were detected in the area (MHT9680).
- 5.8.12 An archaeological evaluation east of the Motte and Castle, and approximately 270m southwest of the Site, recorded a number of pits and linear features dated to the 9th-12th century (MHT31642). Further excavations on the southwest of the Motte and Castle, and 670m southwest of the Site, exposed a rammed chalk rubble surface tentatively interpreted as a medieval or early post-medieval floor (MHT31353).
- 5.8.13 The second cluster of medieval activities is located in proximity of the Moated Site And Associated Enclosure At Rectory Farm (NHLE: 1009451), approximately 920m west of the Site. In close proximity to the Moated Site, a potential farmstead is recorded in the same area of the Moated Site, approximately 900m west of the Site, in the field behind 28-30 Shillington Road (MHT31512).
- 5.8.14 A further potential medieval farmstead defined by a watercourse and moat, is located north the Moated Site, approximately 900m north west of the Site on a field known as "Moat Close" (MHT31510). In proximity, agricultural ridge and furrows, one of which is currently in use as footpath are recorded in the HHER (MHT9059).
- 5.8.15 In the same area, approximately 915m northwest of the Site and 100m north of the scheduled Moated Site, in the field behind Wrights Farm, medieval earthworks and pottery have been recorded during the excavation of a test pit (MHT31514). It is likely that these archaeological features are part of the same medieval land use associated with the scheduled Moated site and MHT31510.
- 5.8.16 An important assemblage of late Saxon and medieval pottery was also recorded during the excavations at land at Shillington Road (MHT31579).

- 5.8.17 Towards the centre of the modern village of Pirton, a number of archaeological investigations recorded further archaeological assets related to late Saxon/medieval activities. A pit containing 12th and 13th century pottery (MHT31320, 660m west of the Site); a ditch and pit containing medieval pottery (MHT10549, 390m west of the Site); a pit, two ditches and a beamslot dated by Saxo-Norman pottery and tentatively connected to the nearby Saxon activities on the southwest (MHT11409); and a number of ditches, pits and post holes as well as pottery sometimes accompanied by faunal remains, dated to the late Saxon/medieval phase (MHT31645, MHT31388 and MHT12824).
- 5.8.18 Approximately 865m southwest of the Site, the field behind Wrights Farm shows a number of high-relief archaeological earthworks, some of which may be interpreted boundary banks, but their variety and nature are unclear (MHT31515). Small test pits dug across the field in 2010 contained pottery dating from the late Saxon period to later medieval, with very little post-dating the Black Death in the mid-14th century.
- 5.8.19 Approximately 930m southwest of the Site and southwest of Priors Hill, a vast area of agricultural ridge and furrows are visible as cropmarks (MHT15956).
- 5.8.20 Further away from the village, approximately 1km northeast of the Site, a sub-rectangular moat is recorded around Moat House (MHT1930). In close proximity, further traces of medieval activity are recorded as earthworks, comprising ridge and furrow, hollow ways, platforms and probable quarry holes, located north and west of Lordship Farm (MHT1115).
- 5.9. *Post-medieval to Modern Period (AD 1485 – present)***
- 5.9.1 During the 15th and 16th centuries, Pirton seems to have had a scattered and low-density occupation throughout the area of the present village. There were small, cultivated fields, paddocks, orchards, and vegetable plots between clusters of farms and cottages, all linked by tracks. After the decline following Black Death (1349), the population gradually recovered through the 17th and 18th centuries and then expanded rapidly and considerably in the 19th and 20th centuries⁶.
- 5.9.2 Hertfordshire HER holds no records definitively dating to the post-medieval period within the Site.
- 5.9.3 Two main foci were identified for the post-medieval village, Great and Little Green (respectively MHT16620, and MHT12427). These were located southwest and northwest of the scheduled Toot Hill Motte And Bailey Castle And Shrunken Medieval Village At Pirton (NHLE: 1012325), approximately 500m and 650m west and southwest of the Site.
- 5.9.4 The locations of the following non-extant buildings are recorded in the HHER: the site of a

⁶ Pirton Village Character Assessment, Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2016.

Calvinist Baptist chapel at Great Green (MHT17684, approximately 590m southwest of the Site), the site of Littlegreen Farm on Royal Oak Lane (MHT30752 approximately 260m southwest of the Site), the site of the Shoulder of Mutton public house (MHT30753 approximately 190m west of the Site) and the site of the 19th-century allotments on West Lane (MHT31036, approximately 190m west of the Site).

- 5.9.5 Approximately 95m west of the Site, a ditch running east-west (MHT31509) was recorded during an archaeological evaluation in 2016 at land at 50 Royal Oak Lane (EHT8041). The location and orientation of the ditch is consistent with the boundary ditch shown on the 1880s OS map discussed below.
- 5.9.6 Redevelopment of the plot on the north side of the High Street, approximately 350m west of the Site revealed the brick floors of two outbuildings, apparently related to a recently demolished later 19th century building shown also on OS mapping (MHT10894).
- 5.9.7 A number of arbitrary located artefacts, mostly copper-alloy buckles and coins dated to the post-medieval period, are also recorded in the HHER. As their location and attribution are uncertain, there have not been considered as part of this assessment and not represented in the Figure 4.
- 5.9.8 The 1766 Dury and Andrew's Map of Hertfordshire (not reproduced here), although the scale and the level of accuracy do not allow to precisely locate the Site, shows the fields east of Pirton being in agricultural use.
- 5.9.9 The 1818 Enclosures Map shows a number of separate plots within the Site area in a variety of different ownerships (Figure 5).
- 5.9.10 The 1822 Andrew Briant Map (Figure 6), while not depicting field boundaries or details within the Site, shows again the fields east of Pirton not being developed and still in agricultural use.
- 5.9.11 The 1880s OS map (Figure 7⁷) shows the 1818's field boundaries on the southern part of the Site being removed, with the single plots merged into one.
- 5.9.12 The 1897, 1922 and 1947 OS maps (Figure 7⁸), show substantially no changes within the Site or of its field boundaries.

5.10. *Undated*

- 5.10.1 Few undated archaeological assets are recoded in the HHER.
- 5.10.2 An area of chalk found in pasture west of Burge End Farm appears to have been the footing

⁷ Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

⁸ Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

of a building, approximately 950m northwest (MHT17192) Nearby were a gully and a large amorphous feature, with no dating evidence.

- 5.10.3 A rectangular enclosure, possibly double-ditched, is visible on aerial photographs just south of a patch of woodland north of Punch's Cross (MHT31564), approximately 904m south of the Site. It adjoins a continuation of trackway cropmarks, located slightly west.
- 5.10.4 Cropmark interpreted as single ditches, slightly sinuous; aligned northeast-southwest are located approximately 850m southwest (MHT6349 and MHT7939).
- 5.10.5 Approximately 300m west of the Site, an undated pit in Bunyan Close contained burnt material which suggested an industrial process or burnt building, possibly pre-dating the late medieval period due to the presence of burnt daub (MHT12762).
- 5.10.6 An occupation level or possibly a large pit was observed near the centre of an area of new house footings at the Vicarage, approximately 535m west of the Site (MHT6508).
- 5.10.7 A small, undated linear feature orientated northwest-southeast, located approximately 1.1km northeast of the Site has been interpreted as a bank on the outside of the adjacent moat, or may represent up-cast from seasonal dredging of the moat (MHT31625).

5.11. *Past Archaeological Investigations within the Site*

- 5.11.1 In 2017 a geophysical survey was carried out on Site as part of the pre-determination work related to a previous planning application (EHT8416).
- 5.11.2 No definite archaeological features have been identified in the magnetic data. Few uncertain trends have been recorded, but these were not thought to be significant. The presence of several former field boundaries as shown on historical mapping has been confirmed, together with two areas of ridge and furrow cultivation.
- 5.11.3 Further to the above works, in 2018 an archaeological trial trenching evaluation has been carried out, with a total of 33 trenches excavated (EHT8495).
- 5.11.4 A full sequence of natural, subsoil and ploughed topsoil was recorded across the Site.
- 5.11.5 Widespread evidence of ridge and furrow ploughing was encountered in the form of remnant furrows, most on an east-west alignment. This accords well with the results of the earlier geophysical survey. These features are likely to be of medieval or early post-medieval date.
- 5.11.6 Archaeological features other than agricultural ridge and furrows were recorded on the northern half of the Site. Although these features are mostly undated due to the lack of dating evidence, it has been suggested that the features encountered could represent a continuation of the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age activities recorded during the nearby evaluation at Elm Tree Farm.

5.11.7 Environmental samples retrieved from the archaeological features produced no datable artefacts, but the environmental material collected (charred plants remains, snails and charcoal) representative of a shady environment or possibly long rank grasslands with open dry elements in a variety of shady and woodland habitats. There is also evidence of the presence of damp meadow or the exploitation of watery habitats.

6. Archaeological Potential and Significance

6.1. *Factors affecting archaeological survival*

- 6.1.1 A review has been undertaken of the sources detailed in **Section 5** to inform the statement on the potential for archaeological evidence originating from the various periods summarised below.
- 6.1.2 Historic and modern impacts are taken into consideration when assessing potential and significance of archaeological assets.
- 6.1.3 Cartographic sources suggest that the Site has been in agriculture use during the 19th and 20th centuries, with only minor alterations to the field boundaries on the southern part of the Site between the 1818 and 1822.
- 6.1.4 As confirmed by both the archaeological excavations carried out west of the Site at Elm Tree Farm (now known as Comice Meadows) and within the Site, agricultural activities such as ploughing and the use of heavy agricultural machinery, are likely to have contributed to localised removal or damaging of buried remains, reducing the survival to some degree. Nonetheless, archaeological features mostly survived in reasonable condition, with limited and localised truncations.

6.2. *Archaeological Potential and Significance*

- 6.2.1 Figure 8 shows the areas of archaeological potential within the Site, as described below:

Prehistoric

- 6.2.2 As confirmed by the archaeological evaluation carried out in 2017 and in line with the results of the evaluation at Elm Tree Farm, there is **Medium to High Potential** for prehistoric remains likely relating to settlement activities, localised in the northern section of the Site. Such remains would be considered as having **Local Area to Regional significance**.
- 6.2.3 There is **Low Potential** for prehistoric remains on the rest of the Site.

Roman

- 6.2.4 As confirmed by the archaeological evaluation carried out in 2017 and in line with the results of the evaluation at Elm Tree Farm, there is **Medium to High Potential** for Roman remains likely relating to settlement activities, localised in the northern section of the Site. Such remains would be considered as having **Local Area to Regional Significance**.
- 6.2.5 There is **Low Potential** for Roman remains on the rest of the Site.

Saxon and medieval

- 6.2.6 The Site has a **Low Potential** to contain significant archaeological remains of Saxon and medieval date. As the core of the Saxon and medieval settlement of Pirton is believed to be

located on the east side of Priors Hill, later expanded East towards Burge End Farm, with the area around the Site likely used for cultivation or farming activities, it is expected that any remains of Saxon or medieval date would be related to agricultural activities, but will almost certainly have been affected by modern plough disturbance. Such remains would be considered as having **Local Area Significance**.

Post-medieval

- 6.2.7 The Site has a **Low Potential** to contain post-medieval remains. Any such remains are likely to include evidence of field boundaries, ditches, and other features associated with rural land use during this period of **Negligible Significance**.

7. Impact of Proposals

- 7.1.1 The Site is proposed to be developed for up to 130 dwellings with all matters reserved, save for access.
- 7.1.2 As this DBA is supporting a submission for an Outline planning application, the impact assessment below is based on the Illustrative Development Framework Plan (Figure 9).
- 7.1.3 Design and construction impacts can include, but are not limited to: ground clearance, levelling, landscaping, stripping, piling, and all types of excavation, including those for services, foundations, and crane bases.
- 7.1.4 Other types of indirect impacts (i.e. not associated with the design) may also impact upon below ground remains such as ground compaction associated with hardstanding/ the installation of welfare as well as wheel-rutting from excavators and machinery.
- 7.1.5 Due to the relatively shallow depth of archaeology recorded on site, specially cut features into the natural geology (sand and gravels recorded at between 0.40m - 0.60m bgl), any topsoil removal or below ground level impact may result in detrimental effects on any archaeological deposits, in the form of partial or complete truncation, compaction and displacement.
- 7.1.6 A high level, provisional assessment of the development impact is as follows:
- Attenuation features – likely to require excavation likely to fully truncate and remove any surviving archaeology;
 - New structures – may require deep excavation depending on the extent of the proposed foundations which would fully truncate and remove any surviving archaeology. The footprint of the proposed buildings (if / where foundations are not required), would partially truncate, compact or displace archaeology; and,
 - Proposed landscaping – the proposed localised landscape works (focal spaces, drives and throughfares and recreational routes) may require localised excavation and ground levelling, which may partially truncate, compact and / or displace archaeology.
- 7.1.7 This impact assessment will require updating when detailed designs are finalised.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Conclusion

- 8.1.1 The primary objectives of this DBA were to identify all known assets potentially affected by the Proposed Development, and the potential for currently unknown buried heritage assets; to gain an understanding of the buried heritage resource in order to understand their Significance; and, to inform strategies for further evaluation, mitigation, or management as appropriate.
- 8.1.2 There are no World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens or registered battlefields within the Site.
- 8.1.3 A geophysical survey and an archaeological evaluation via trial trenching have been carried out within the Site, recording localised Prehistoric and Roman activities on the northern part of the Site.
- 8.1.4 With consideration to the archaeology recorded within the 1km Study Area and the nature of the Site's topography, geology, and archaeological and historical background, there is localised **Moderate** to **High Potential** for prehistoric and Roman remains, a **Low Potential** for agricultural Saxon and medieval remains and **Low Potential** for agricultural post medieval remains to be present on the Site. Surviving archaeological remains on the Site are likely to range between **Negligible** and **Regional Significance**.
- 8.1.5 The impacts likely arising from the Proposed Development as currently understood, range between causing partial truncation, displacement and compaction to full truncation, displacement and compaction on any surviving archaeological deposits.

8.2. Previous Recommendations

- 8.2.1 The 2019 Appeal Decision (APP/X1925/W/17/3184846) for the previous development proposal, issued by the Planning Inspectorate in accordance with the County Council's Adviser and in consideration of the contents of the reviewed evaluation report (AOC, 2018), stated that the request for any further archaeological work could be secured by means of a condition.
- 8.2.2 The current Outline application for up to 130 dwellings does not present any significant or material change in regard to the impact arising from the Proposed Development, beyond what considered by the Planning Inspectorate and the County Council's Archaeological Advisor for the prior application to develop the Site.
- 8.2.3 The results of this assessment do not identify any significant or material changes to the archaeological baseline of the Site, nor do they indicate any new potential development impacts on previously unknown archaeological deposits, beyond what considered by the Planning Inspectorate and the County Council's Archaeological Advisor for the prior application to develop the Site.

- 8.2.4 Based on the conclusions of this assessment, it is requested that the approach to archaeology adopted in the 2019 Appeal Decision, specifically to the use of a suitably worded planning condition to secure any further necessary archaeological work be applied to the current development proposals and planning application.

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10. Figures

Figure 1 Site Location



Figure 2 Study Area and Archaeological Alert Areas

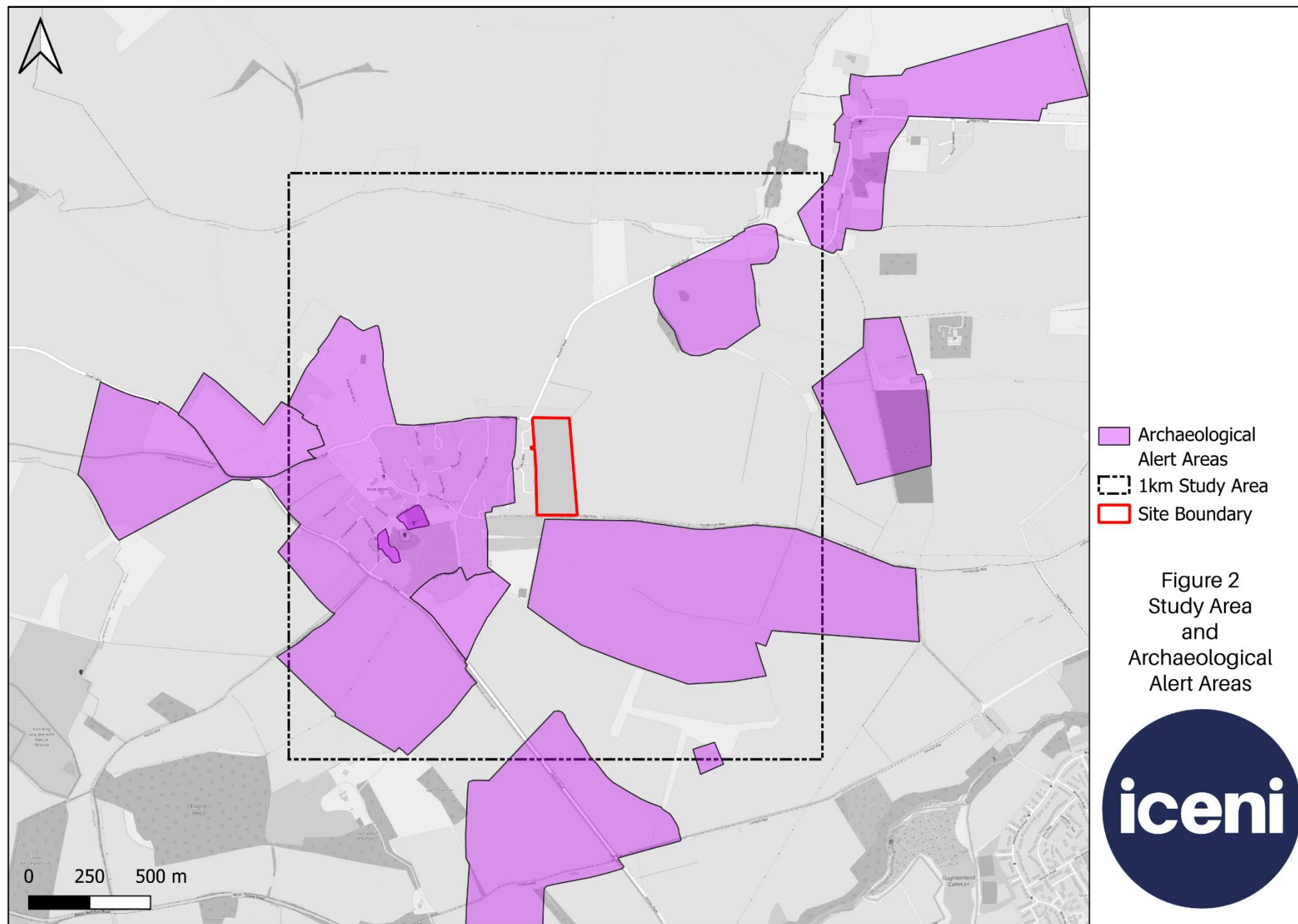


Figure 3 HER Events

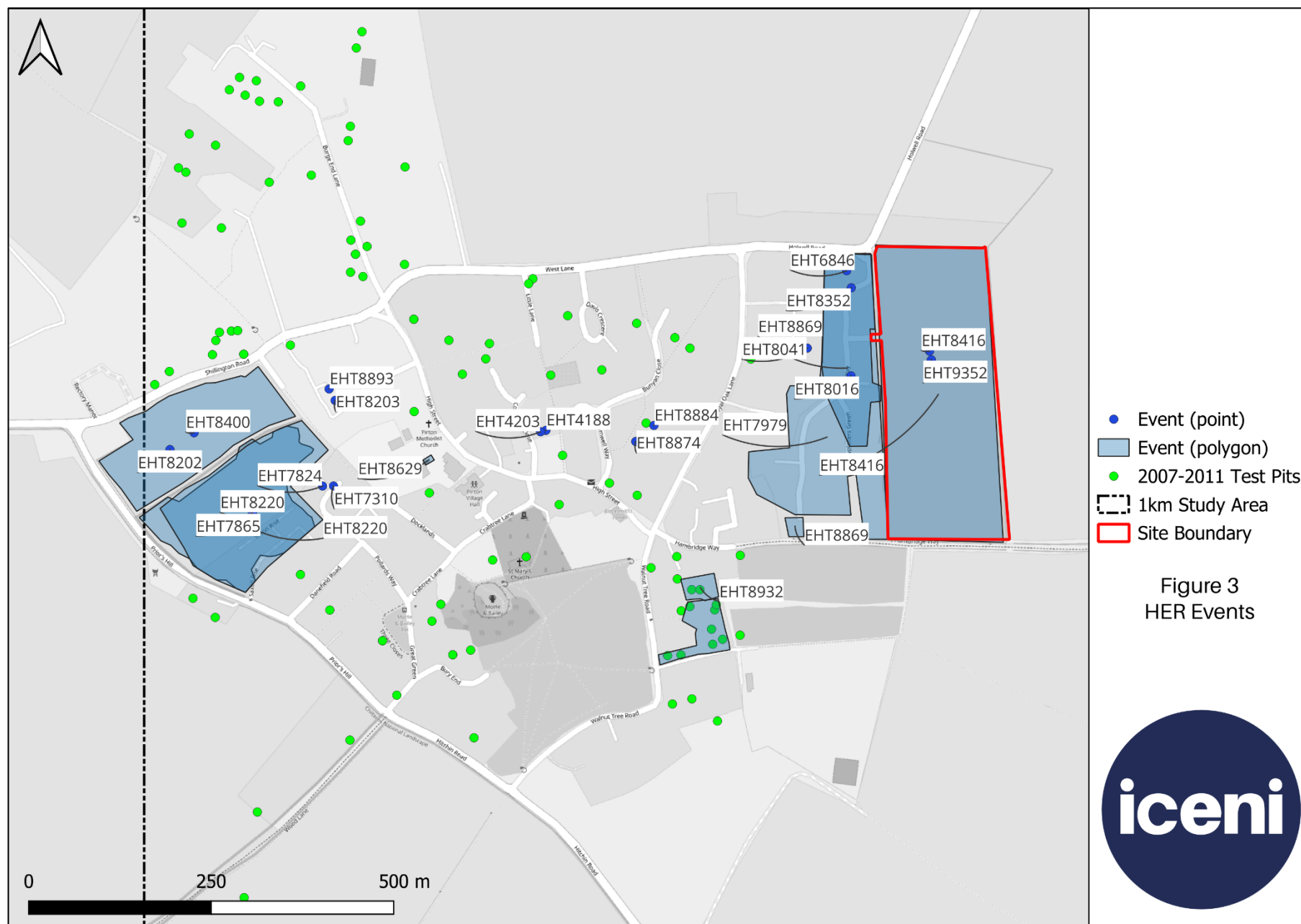


Figure 4 HER Monuments

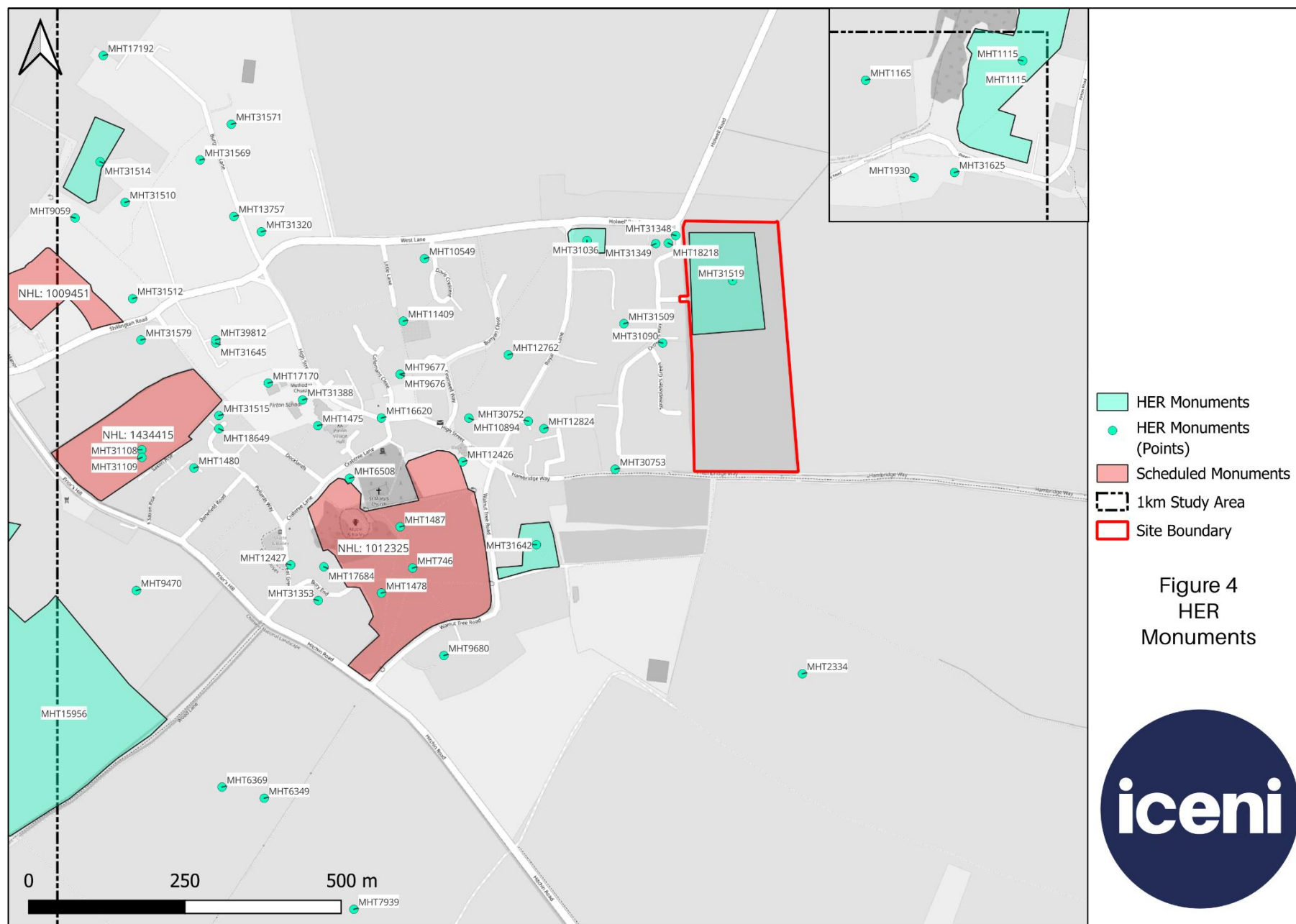


Figure 5 1818 Enclosure Map

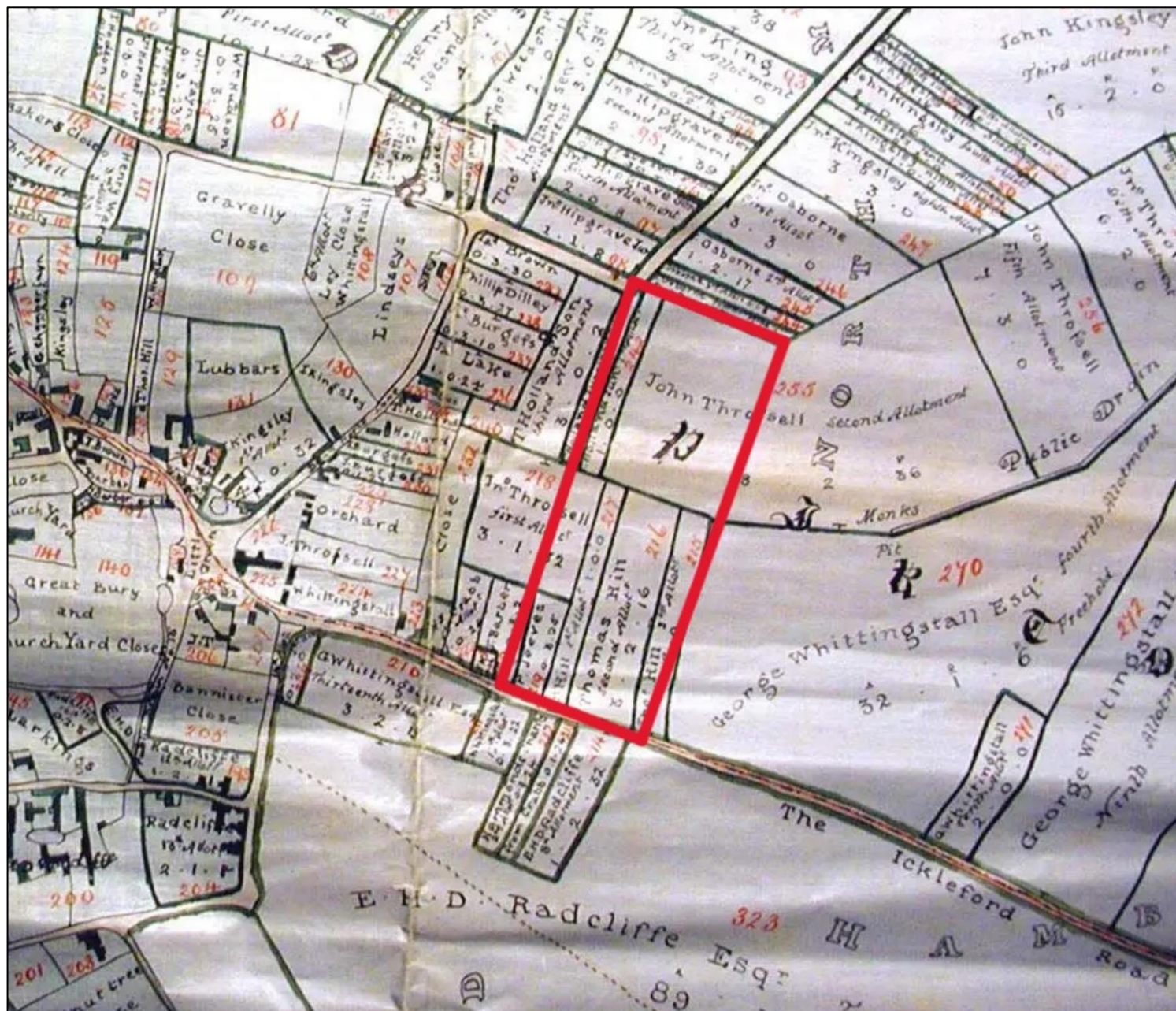


Figure 5
1818
Enclosures Map
(Not To Scale)



Figure 6 1822 Andrew Briant Map

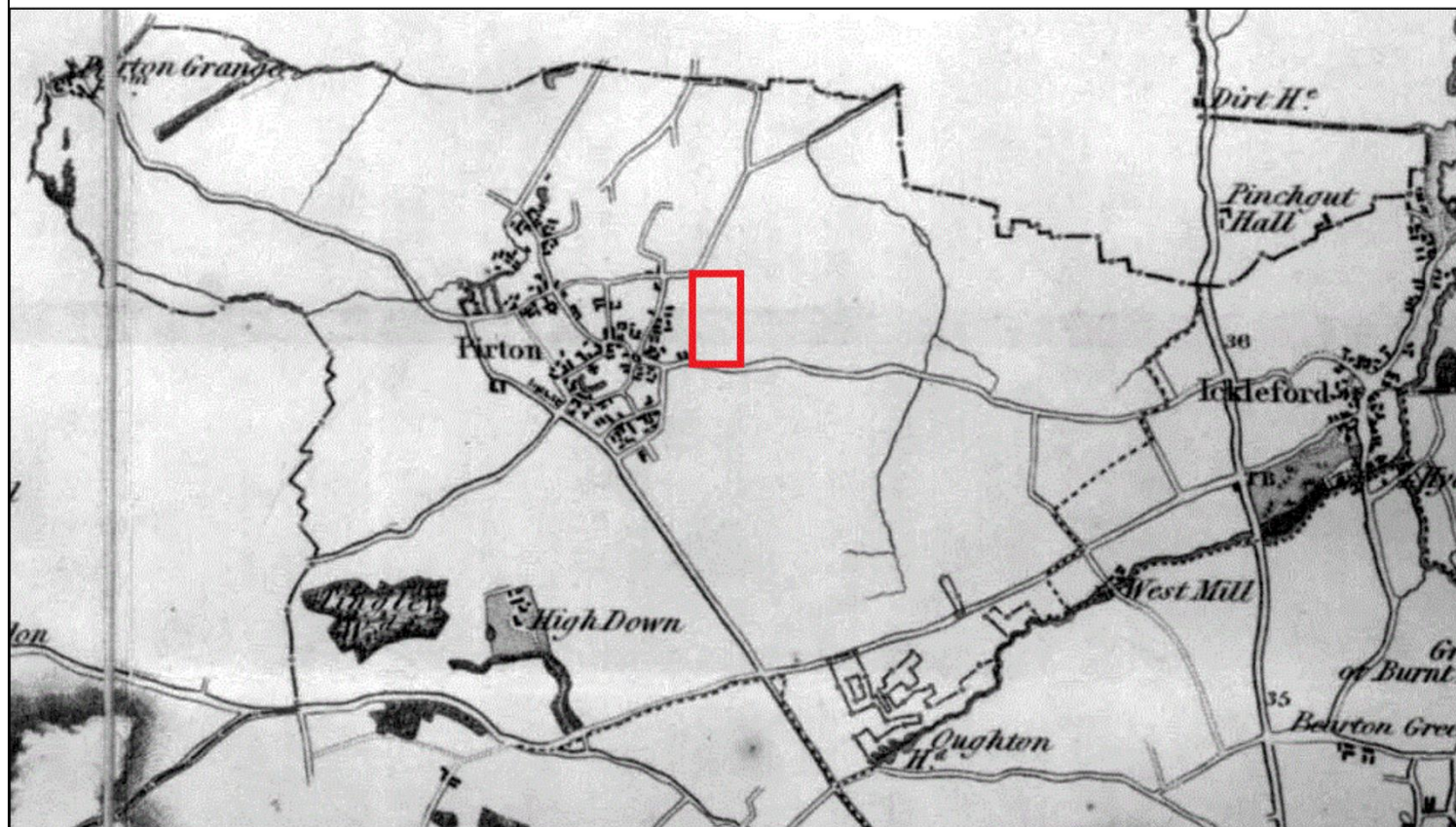


Figure 6
1822 Andrew
Briant Map
(Not To Scale)



Figure 7 OS Maps



Figure 8 Archaeological Potential

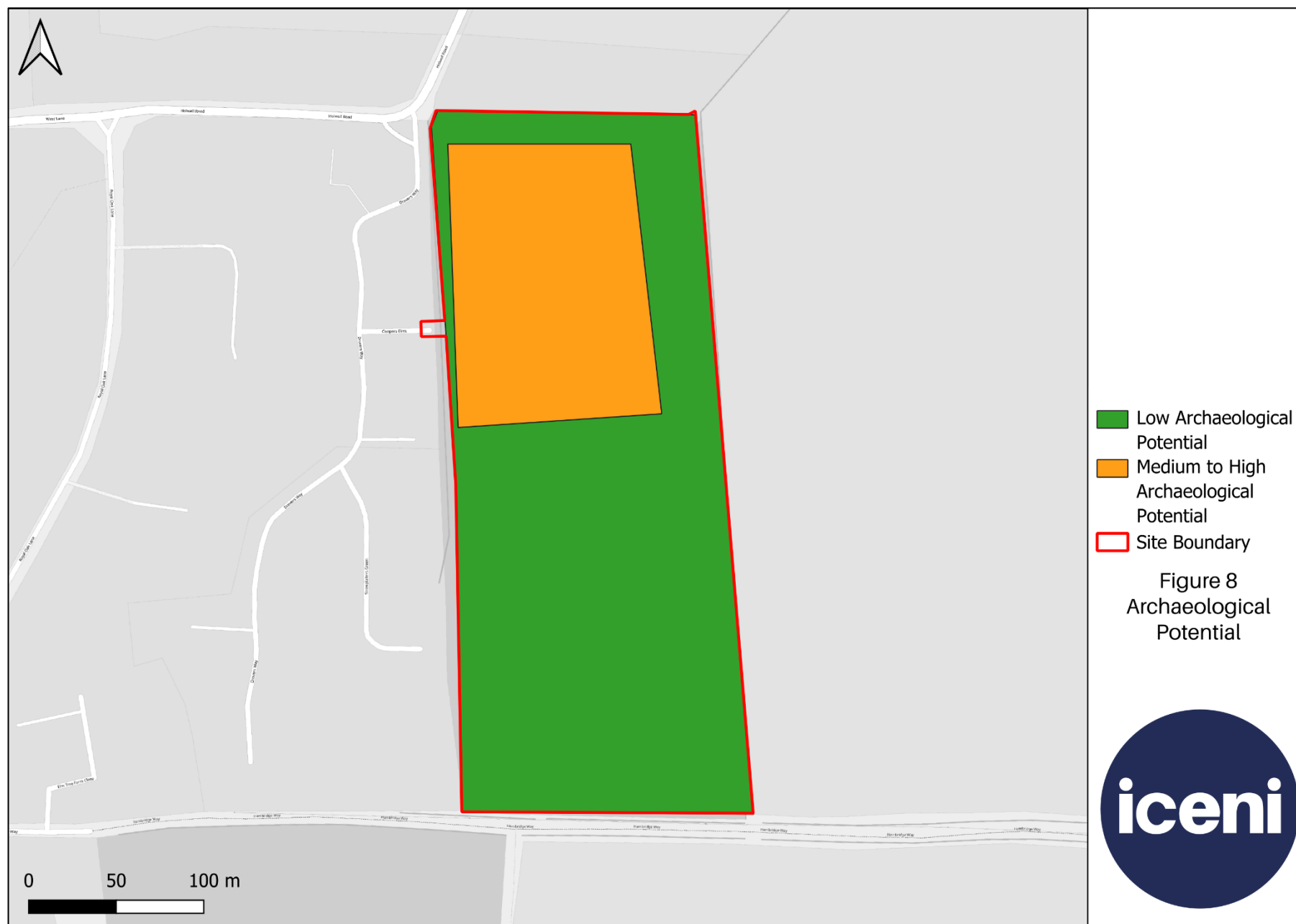


Figure 9 Illustrative Development Framework Plan



Appendix A: Legislation, Planning Policy and Professional Guidance

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 – Part I Ancient Monuments: Protection of Scheduled Monuments

This legislation established the protection of archaeological heritage in England, Wales and Scotland, and further introduced the legal protection of sites of national significance/archaeological importance as ‘Scheduled Monuments’. Through this Act, damage to a scheduled monument became a criminal offence.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is an overarching document which sets out government planning policy for development outside of the NSIP regime in England, and how this is expected to be applied by local authorities and developers. The NPPF can be an important and relevant consideration for NSIPs as well, but in the event of any conflict, the NPS policy prevails. The NPPF provides a framework for local sustainable development via local plans. **Section 16** focusses specifically on ‘conserving and enhancing the historic environment’.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The NPPF sets out the importance of being able to assess the significance of heritage assets that may be affected by a development. Significance is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as being 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 is not only derived from an asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. The setting of a heritage asset is defined in Annex 2 as “*the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve*”.

Paragraph 207 of the NPPF states that “*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset’s importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*”

Paragraph 208 states that “*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*”

Considering potential impacts

Paragraph 212 states that “*when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*”

Paragraph 2013 states that “*Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:*

a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;

b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional”*

Paragraph 214 states that *“where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.”*

Paragraph 215 states that *“where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”*

Paragraph 216 states that *“the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”*

Paragraph 217 states that *“local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.”*

Paragraph 218 states that *“local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.”*

Paragraph 219 states that *“local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.”*

Paragraph 220 states that *“not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 200 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 201, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.”*

Paragraph 221 states that *“local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies, but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.”*

Local Planning Policy: North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031

Policy SP13: Historic environment, states as follow:

The Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset’s conservation and the management of its setting.

Policy PNP8 - Heritage Assets and Archaeological Heritage, states as follow:

Proposals conserve or enhance the heritage assets of the Parish and their settings in a way that is appropriate to their significance. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets.

Policy HE4, Archaeology, addresses the archaeological heritage assets and is as follow:

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

- a) Developers submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where justified, an archaeological field evaluation.
- b) It is demonstrated how archaeological remains will be preserved and incorporated into the layout of that development, if in situ preservation of important archaeological remains is considered preferable; and
- c) Where the loss of the whole or a material part of important archaeological remains is justified, appropriate conditions are applied to ensure that the archaeological recording, reporting, publication and archiving of the results of such archaeological work is undertaken before it is damaged or lost.

Where archaeological sites have been assessed to meet the criteria for inclusion on adopted registers or maps of locally important heritage assets these shall be treated in the same way as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance. Areas of as yet, unknown archaeology may be identified during research, or through the planning or plan making process. These sites or areas should be treated in the same way as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance.

Professional National Guidance

[Planning Practice Guidance \(2023\)](#), [Historic Environment \(2019\)](#)

This guidance sets out the key issues on enhancing and conserving the historic environment. This guidance sets out how the historic environment should be addressed in local plans, the designation process for designated and non-designated heritage assets, the overarching heritage consent process, as well as further information on the consultation process for and other planning issues associated with heritage related proposals.

[English Heritage \(2008\) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance](#)

English Heritage, now Historic England, published guidance which aids best practice for a wide range of stakeholders in regard to the historic environment. This guidance mainly focuses on creating and implementing a management regime for its users and further defines value and significance upon heritage receptors.

Historic England (2015), [Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1. The Historic Environment in Local Plans \('GPA2'\)](#)

This advice note provides information to a wide range of stakeholders in aid of implementing national historic environment policy within the NPPF and PPG. Therefore, this advice from Historic England should be utilised to support national policy implementation. This guidance further outlines that information required for planning and listed building consent should be proportionate, and any activities around conservation or investigation should again be balanced against heritage significance.

Historic England (2017) [The Setting of Heritage Assets – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3. Historic England and Historic Environment Forum](#)

This advice note provides information to a wide range of stakeholders, in tandem with NPPF and PPG guidance, on managing modification to the setting of several heritage assets. This document furthermore gives practitioners advice on understanding what heritage setting is and how it contributes to the overall heritage significance.

Historic England (2007, updated 2019) [Piling and Archaeology guidance and good practice](#)

This document specifically provides information on piling types, impacts, and solutions for sustainable foundation design to assist planning authorities and archaeological officers, developers and their consultants to make clear and informed decisions about piling schemes and their potential impact upon archaeological remains.

Historic England (2020) [Good Practice in Planning 4: Enabling Development and Heritage Assets](#)

This document specifically outlines guidance regarding development to safeguard a heritage asset, which would not normally be approved through the planning system nor be in-line with national or local planning policy. Therefore, this direction from Historic England is to encourage developers and authorities to work together to ensure appropriate development and acceptability, and if required any alternative arrangements.

Historic England (2022) [Planning and Archaeology: Historic England Advice Note 17](#)

This advice note sets the context for archaeology within the planning system. The guidance produced by Historic England summarises responsibility that planning authorities and developers have regarding archaeology through a planning application, how legislation, national policy and guidance should be applied, promoting accuracy and the benefits of implementation.

Professional Regulations and Standards & Guidance

In addition to the above, the following professional regulations, standards and guidance have been considered:

- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2023, Standard for archaeological excavation
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2023, Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording

- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014a, Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials (revised 2020)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014b, Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (revised 2023)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014c, Code of Conduct (revised 2022)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014d, Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives (revised 2020)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014e, Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials.
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014f, Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment (revised 2020)
- The British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology (BABAO) 2019, Code of Ethics and Code of Practice

Appendix B: Scheduled Monuments Summaries

Anglo-Saxon settlement, and probable prehistoric ring ditches, west of Pirton village

Heritage Category:	Scheduled Monument
List Entry Number:	1434415
Date first listed:	16-May-2016
Date of most recent amendment:	21-Nov-2016

Location Description:

Land to the east of Priors Hill and north of Danefield Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire (north-east of Hill Farm, Priors Hill)

Centred on NGR: TL1430531752

Summary

An enclosed Anglo-Saxon settlement, with evidence of occupation from the C5 to the C9. The site also contains two probable prehistoric ring ditches.

Details

The scheduled area includes features representative of two main phases of use. The earliest of these appear to be prehistoric, but the main significance of the site lies in features associated with Anglo-Saxon settlement dating from the C5 to the C9.

The field is sited on chalk, on a north-facing slope at the east end of the Chiltern Hills and lies about 200m to the north-west of the castle mound and C12 church. The field appears to have been under arable cultivation for a number of years but is currently (2015) laid to grass: it is bounded to the north-west by a bank that stands to about 0.25m high on its south-east side but falls away to the north-west to form a steep slope about 1.5m high. Its slight appearance on the south side of the boundary can be accounted for by a build-up of colluvium behind the bank, to an estimated depth of up to 1m. Pottery found as a result of animal burrowing dates this boundary to the mid-Saxon period. At the west corner of the field the bank turns to the south-east, following the line of the hedge and merging into the hedge-bank that defines the south-west boundary of the field, which is also the boundary with Priors Hill. An outer ditch may lie to the west of the hedge, but the narrow roadside verge is not included in the scheduled area. There is also a slight bank marking the north-east boundary of the field.

The geophysical survey undertaken in advance of proposed development of the site for housing revealed a ring ditch about 30m in diameter to the south-west end of the field, within which there appears to be a smaller ditched circular feature; to the north-east of that is a second ring ditch measuring about 15m in diameter. Linear features were also identified, including one that runs north-eastwards from the field boundary with Priors Hill, roughly equidistant between, and parallel to, the north-west and south-east field boundaries, and marking a slight change of slope; this was revealed to be a ditch by subsequent excavation, and may define the south side of an enclosed area. Parallel to this feature are the probable furrows of medieval cultivation, and similar linear features were identified at the north-east end of the field running at right-angles to these.

The trial trenching that followed the geophysical investigation explored these features further, with 20 trenches altogether spread across the field, but clustered slightly towards the east end. Of those features already identified by geophysics, no evidence of date was found for the ring ditches, although they may be assumed to be prehistoric, based mainly on their form but also on their placement on the crest of the hill, both overlooking and highly visible from the valley below. The settlement was evidently occupied between the C5 and the C9 and seems to have been enclosed from the beginning. The majority of pottery found in pits, post-holes and ditches across the site can be dated to the C5-C7 or C9, and pottery of the earlier period was found in five of the seven trenches cut across the south-west to north-east ditch. No pottery was found that could be dated to the Late Saxon or Saxo-Norman period. Most of the post-holes found are clustered together at the east of the site and are likely to represent post-built houses and other structures, although given the restricted view allowed by the trenches, no patterns or groupings are discernible. To the north-east of the site were a cluster of pits, several of which contained the larger collections of pottery seen on this site that date to the C5-C9. Within this group of pits was the grave of an older adult male: a sample of his bone was radiocarbon dated to between AD 775 and 970.

Extent Of Scheduling

The scheduled area includes the northern section of the field immediately west of Pirton village, defined on the south-east side by the line of the possible ditched enclosure running SW to NE and including a 5m buffer zone considered necessary for the support and preservation of the monument. To the NE it is defined by the field boundary and footpath, and to the east by the boundary of a small housing development south-west of Pirton School. To the NW, the scheduling extends for a further 5m beyond the field boundary into the neighbouring field, and to the SW by the outer line of the hedge and hedge bank that forms the boundary between the field and Priors Hill.

Toot Hill motte and bailey castle and shrunken medieval village at Pirton

Heritage Category:	Scheduled Monument
List Entry Number:	1012325
Date first listed:	09-Oct-1981
Date of most recent amendment:	12-Nov-1991

National Grid Reference:
TL 14729 31525

Details

The monument consists of the earthworks of the castle motte Toot Hill, and the surrounding earthworks of the castle bailey. The site also includes the remains of the shrunken medieval village known as The Bury which lies to the south of the bailey. The castle was established on an oval motte about 90m x 60m in the early 12th century alongside the church of St Mary and is surrounded by a ditch. Adjacent to the motte lies the remains of the ditched enclosure of the bailey in which earthworks still define the sites of holloways, tracks and building platforms. The southern edge of the bailey is defined by a shallow ditch 160m long running east from the south-west corner of Toot Hill; the northern edge is believed to cross part of the area around St. Mary's Church and north of the motte. To the south of the motte and bailey castle lies the remains of the part of the medieval village of Pirton, known as The Bury, and carefully planned in respect of the Castle. The centre of the modern village now lies further north. A deep well-defined roadway runs east to west across the site of the village and from this the remains of roads and tracks run north and south. Platforms indicate the location of houses and buildings of the village, and some buildings survived here until earlier this century. Ditches and banks show the position of land boundaries and drains, and small ponds can be seen. All made up roadways and pathways on the site are excluded from the scheduling but the ground below them is included.

Moated site and associated enclosure at Rectory Farm

Heritage Category:	Scheduled Monument
List Entry Number:	1009451
Date first listed:	03-Sep-1992

National Grid Reference:
TL 14181 32000

Details

The monument includes a moated site at Rectory Farm, situated on the flood plain of the River Hiz, 2km north of the Icknield Way. The monument includes a square shaped moat measuring 80m NW-SE by 75m SW-NE. The moat arms vary between 3m and 10m in width and are all seasonally waterlogged except the north-western arm which is constantly waterfilled. The south-western corner of the moat has been infilled and the 17th century farmhouse, a Grade II* Listed Building, now occupies this area. An internal bank, c.0.5m in height and 3m in width, can be identified along the north-eastern and north-western arms of the moat. To the north-east, and adjoining this moat, is another moated enclosure which measures 70m NW-SE by 160m SW-NE. The moat arms are of similar dimensions to those of the adjoining enclosure and are all dry with the exception of the north-western arm. The south-east side

of the moat abuts the road and there is no trace of the moat arm on this side. The moated system was once fed by a stream which runs into the north-western corner of the whole complex. The house, paths, drains and fences are all excluded from the scheduling although the ground beneath all these features is included.