

**Archaeological Evaluation Report
Land at Ryefield, Stevenage Road
St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire**

NGR: TL 20176 26750

Planning Ref: Pre-application

**ASE Project No: 250234
Site Code: SIP/RST25**

**ASE Report No: 2025220
OASIS ID: archaeol6-536993**



September 2025

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Date of Issue:	September 2025	
Version:	1	

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Abstract

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Archaeology South-East on Land at Ryefield, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire, on the 22 September 2025. The work was commissioned by Sworders, in support of a planning application for the residential development of the site.

Two archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated within the footprints of proposed new dwellings at the site. No truncation was recorded in either trench and the archaeological horizon is considered to be intact within the evaluated areas. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered, and therefore the site almost certainly lies beyond the Iron Age and Roman settlement areas known to the west of the site.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION**
- 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**
- 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**
- 4.0 RESULTS**
- 5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

BIBLIOGRAPHY
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Appendix 1: HER Summary**
- Appendix 2: OASIS Summary**

TABLES

- Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive
- Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples
- Table 3: List of recorded contexts

FIGURES

- Figure 1: Site location and selected HHER references
- Figure 2: Trench plan with photos, previous evaluation & geophysics results

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) was commissioned by Sworders, on behalf of their client, Mr Christian Mark Lafferty, to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching on land at Ryefield, Stevenage Road, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL 20176 26750; Figure 1).

1.2 Location, Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The site is situated on the southeastern periphery of the village of St Ippolyts, in the North Hertfordshire District. It comprises a roughly triangular shaped, c. 0.23ha, parcel of land, bound by Stevenage Road and the Little Wymondley Substation to the northeast, Sperberry Hill to the south, and by a residential development site to the west and northwest (NGR TL 20176 26750).
- 1.2.2 The site occupies generally flat ground atop Sperberry Hill, to its south, at between 99m and 100m AOD. At the time of the evaluation the site comprised a derelict house with associated gardens. Except for the reduction of some parts of the site within the footprint of this house, the natural site topography appears to have been preserved.
- 1.2.4 The British Geological Survey (BGS 2025) maps bedrock geology within the site of Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation, formed between 100.5 and 89.8 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. This is overlain by superficial glaciofluvial deposits, Mid Pleistocene - sand and gravel.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 A planning application is being prepared for the construction of two houses on the eastern part of the land at Ryefield. A geophysical survey (GSB 2015), a Desk Based Assessment (DBA; RPS 2019) and archaeological evaluation (ASE 2020) were undertaken on Land North of Sperberry Hill, to the immediate west of the current site. These pieces of work identified extensive Iron Age and Roman remains, in consideration of which, and in accordance with the requirements of the Hertfordshire Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability (LEADS), the client decided to commission a programme of pre-application archaeological evaluation trenching.
- 1.3.2 On being commissioned to undertake these works, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced (ASE 2025) that set out the scope, methodology and research aims for a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching within the proposed development area. The WSI was submitted to and approved by the local planning authority (LPA) prior to the commencement of fieldwork.
- 1.3.3 The evaluation fieldwork was monitored by Hertfordshire LEADS on behalf of the LPA.

1.4 Scope of Report

- 1.4.1 This report describes the results of the archaeological evaluation, assesses their significance and considers the archaeological potential of the wider site.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following information is largely drawn from the archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (RPS 2019) and Evaluation Report (ASE 2020) for the site immediately to the west of Ryefield. It provides a summary of the most pertinent sites and findspots from the vicinity, the locations of which are shown on Figure 1.

2.2 Early Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 Early prehistoric remains are sparse within the vicinity, with a single Palaeolithic handaxe located 1.3km to the west of the site (HHER 386). There are no Mesolithic archaeological assets recorded on the HER within its vicinity.
- 2.2.2 No Neolithic activity is recorded within a 1.3km radius of the site. Flint arrowheads located 1.3km to the west of the site might date to the late Neolithic period, though equally may belong to the early Bronze Age.

2.3 Bronze Age

- 2.3.1 There are no known Bronze Age settlement sites in the vicinity.
- 2.3.2 The HHER records a possible funerary landscape 300m to the southeast of the site, comprising at least four, or possibly five, ring-ditches (HHER 6118, 6119, 6120 and 6121). Observed by aerial photography, the ring-ditches are moderately regular, with diameters of 21–25m and have no evidence of entrances, suggesting that they represent a small barrow field. No intrusive archaeological investigation has occurred.
- 2.3.3 A sword of Bronze Age date was found c.1.2km to the northwest of the site (HHER 4866) during gravel extraction.
- 2.3.4 Approximately 1.1km to the south of the site, a mound (HHER 2892) is identified as either a round barrow or a windmill mound; possibly a windmill mound utilising a former barrow. There have been no intrusive archaeological investigations of the feature, and therefore its date and nature remain speculative.

2.4 Iron Age and Roman

- 2.4.1 Extensive Iron Age and Roman activity has been identified in the immediate vicinity of the site, the details of which can be found in Section 2.7, below.
- 2.4.2 Iron Age pottery was recovered from the former Stutleys Quarry (HHER 464) 850m northeast of the site. Two undated ditches (HHER 2665) were noted to the immediate northwest of the site, perhaps of Iron Age date. A further Iron Age ditch was identified during a watching brief conducted during the construction of the Leo Valley Water Pipeline, 1.1km southeast of the site.

2.5 Saxon and Medieval

- 2.5.1 There are no known Saxon or medieval archaeological remains within the site area. Isolated find spots are limited within the immediate vicinity, with Saxon pottery sherds

recovered from Vicars Grove Gravel Pit 1.3km to the southwest of the site, and an isolated Saxon burial (HHER1617) found during work at Pound Farm 1km to the northwest of the site.

- 2.5.2 The church of St Ippolyts is located to the northwest of the site. It is traditionally believed to have been founded in 1087 and parts of the church, including the nave and chancel, contain elements of 11th-century fabric. Most of the church dates to the 14th century, with 19th-century alterations.
- 2.5.3 The village of St Ippolyts appears to have remained a small settlement into the medieval period, clustered around the church.
- 2.5.4 A number of medieval listed buildings are located in the surrounding vicinity of the site, including Redcoats (HHER 15973), located 750m to the east of the site, and known to have been occupied by John Sturgeon, the High Sheriff in 1479. The farmhouse at Redcoats is also of 15th-century date (HHER 15093).
- 2.5.5 The Wyck, a 16th-century timber framed open hall house (HHER 1959), is located 700m southeast of the site, with adjacent stables of similar date (HHER 15100).

2.6 Post-Medieval and Modern

- 2.6.1 The site is shown on historic mapping from the 1816 Ippollitts Enclosure Map (RPS 2019: Figure 6) onwards as being part of the same parcel of land as the site immediately to the west.
- 2.6.2 Apart from the construction of the extant dwelling between 1920 and 1970, the site was otherwise unchanged until it was split off from the field to the west on the 1993 Ordnance Survey map.

2.7 Previous Investigations

Geophysical Surveys

- 2.7.1 A geophysical survey was undertaken across the site immediately to the west in 2019 (RPS 2019, Appendix 1). This identified the possible northern extent of a significant enclosure running through the site area and continuing in the field to the south of Sperberry Hill, a possible ring-ditch and several probable ditches. The results of this and the subsequent evaluation are displayed in Figure 2.
- 2.7.2 Geophysical survey was also undertaken across c. 15.6ha of land to the south of the site (GSB 2015; Figure 2). This identified a curvilinear [banjo] enclosure containing five ring-ditches in the north of the site that had previously been identified as cropmarks. These have been speculated to be of Bronze Age and/or Iron Age date. Possible rectangular enclosures and a trackway were identified in the southwest.

Evaluation

- 2.7.3 A targeted trial-trench evaluation was undertaken across the southern part of the surveyed site to the south of Sperberry Hill in 2015 (ASE 2016; Fig. 2). A high density of archaeological features was revealed within 9 of the 20 trenches opened, revealing archaeological activity within the southwest of the site, as well as small area of apparently localised activity in the southeast. A single hearth was encountered in the

east. The retrieved dating evidence suggested two phases of land use activity on the site. Pits and ditches dating to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman (AD10-100), with possible residual Middle Iron Age pottery, were located to the east of the probable trackway identified by the geophysical survey. Early Roman (AD50-120) postholes, occupation layers and rubbish pits were found to the west of the possible trackway. The evaluation did not extend northwards as far as the plotted anomalies defining the curvilinear enclosure containing the five ring ditches.

- 2.7.4 Archaeological evaluation was also undertaken on the site immediately to the west (ASE 2020; Figure 2). Archaeological features were identified in 10 of the 11 trenches. These comprised a modest density of ditches and pits across the site, with a possible concentration in the southwest. Middle Iron Age ditch and pit remains were present in the southwest of the site. These may have constituted settlement activity and were the beginnings of more widespread later Iron Age occupation here. Late Iron Age/Early Roman remains, primarily ditches, extended across much of the site. These defined the northern boundary of a large settlement enclosure and probable field boundaries subdividing associated agricultural land to its north. Although the northern part of the enclosure extended into the south of the site, no features distinctive of occupation activity (buildings, other structures, hearths/ovens, rubbish pits) were encountered within it, however, the enclosure ditch and the field boundary ditches contained significant quantities of domestic rubbish likely deriving from the settlement. Late Iron Age/Early Roman settlement and associated land use appeared to be short-lived. No further evidence of past activity was apparent until the late post-medieval period. The remains of a single field boundary ditch were found in the south of the site, as were shown on 19th-century mapping and related to the more recent agricultural use of the landscape.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Project Aims and Objectives

3.1.1 The general aim of the archaeological evaluation, as stated in the WSI (ASE 2025), were as follows:

- *To identify any archaeological features or deposits that will be impacted by the proposed development, and to enable Hertfordshire LEADS to make a decision on the status of the application and, if permission is to be granted, agree a suitable mitigation strategy for any identified remains to be implemented before development takes place.*
- *More specifically, the evaluation aims to establish the location, extent, date, character, significance and quality of preservation of surviving archaeological remains within the development area.*

3.1.2 With reference to the East of England Research Framework (ALGAO 2025), Medlycott (2011) and Brown & Glazebrook (2000), the archaeological evaluation will aim to address the following regional research objectives including:

- *LIA-Rom 13: How can we increase our understanding of Late Iron Age and Roman farmsteads?*
- *LIA-Rom 14: How can we improve the environmental sampling of Late Iron Age and Roman farmsteads?*
- *Med (Rural) 03: How can we improve our understanding of medieval agricultural practices?*
- *P-Med 14: How can we characterise the post-medieval historic landscape and the factors which affected it?*

3.2 Fieldwork Methodology

3.2.1 The archaeological evaluation was conducted in general accordance with the WSI (ASE 2025). Trenches were focused on the footprints of the proposed new dwellings.

3.2.2 Two trenches were excavated as close to their proposed location as was reasonably practicable, although very minor alterations were made to Trench 1 to avoid a row of large tree stumps (Figure 2).

3.2.3 Trench locations were scanned for the presence of underground services prior to excavation using a CAT scanner.

3.2.4 The trenches were then excavated under direct archaeological supervision using a JCB Excavator 180° backhoe with toothless ditching bucket.

3.2.5 Standard ASE recording methodologies were employed throughout, with all work carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2022), and *Standard and Universal Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2023a, 2023b) and with *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

3.2.5 The trench locations were planned using a Differential Global Positioning System

(DGPS).

3.2.6 Trenches were recorded on ASE *pro-forma* paper record sheets.

3.2.7 A full photographic record comprising colour digital images was made, and all trenches were photographed. In addition, a number of representative photographs of the general work on site were taken.

3.3 Site Archive

3.3.1 The site archive is currently held at the Witham offices of ASE and will be deposited with North Hertfordshire Museum, subject to the consent of the legal landowner. The contents of the archive are summarised below (Tables 1 and 2).

3.3.2 The North Hertfordshire Museum guidelines for preparation and deposition will be followed, as well as those contained in the ClfA *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (ClfA 2014).

Context sheets	5
Section sheets	0
Plans sheets	0
Digital photos	4
Context register	1
Drawing register	0
Watching brief forms	0
Trench Record forms	2

Table 1: Quantification of site paper archive

Bulk finds (quantity e.g. 1 bag, 1 box, 0.5 box 0.5 of a box)	0
Registered finds (number of)	0
Flots and environmental remains from bulk samples	0
Palaeoenvironmental specialists sample samples (e.g. columns, prepared slides)	0
Waterlogged wood	0
Wet sieved environmental remains from bulk samples	0

Table 2: Quantification of artefact and environmental samples

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Both trenches measured 15m x 1.8m wide.

4.1.2 No archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified. Undisturbed natural deposits were reached in both trenches. The deposit sequence recorded in these trenches is detailed below and presented in Table 3.

4.2 Soil Descriptions

4.2.1 In Trench 1, the observed deposit sequence comprised topsoil directly overlying natural geological deposits. A subsoil was recorded directly overlying natural deposits in Trench 2, overlain by topsoil.

4.2.2 The natural geological deposit was a firm mid-brown-orange gravel-clay with occasional medium to large flint nodules. This is consistent with the recorded BGS superficial deposits of glaciofluvial deposits, Mid Pleistocene - sand and gravel (BGS 2025).

4.2.3 The subsoil was a 0.11m–0.12m thick compact mid-orange-brown sandy gravel, probably representing an eroded layer of the superficial glaciofluvial deposits recorded as the natural deposit.

4.2.4 The topsoil, observed in both trenches, comprised a 0.19m–0.32m thickness of dark brown gravel-sand with moderately frequent broken glass and small to large iron objects, including mattress springs, wire, pipes and bicycle frames. Turf overlay the topsoil.

Context	Type	Interpretation	Length m	Width m	Thickness m	Height m AOD
1/001	Layer	Topsoil	15.00	1.80	0.30-0.32	95.39-95.58
1/002	Layer	Natural	15.00	1.80	0.04-0.05	95.09-95.26
2/001	Layer	Topsoil	15.00	1.80	0.19-0.23	95.42-96.02
2/002	Layer	Subsoil	15.00	1.80	0.11-0.12	95.20-95.79
2/003	Layer	Natural	15.00	1.80	0.03-0.04	95.09-95.67

Table 3: List of recorded contexts

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview of Stratigraphic Sequence

- 5.1.1 The evaluation has established a broadly consistent sequence of overburden deposits across the site. Turf and a dark brown gravel-sand topsoil (0.19m-0.32m thick) was recorded in both trenches, with an underlying compact mid-orange-brown sandy gravel (0.11m-0.12m thick) in Trench 2. Beneath these was a firm mid-brown-orange gravel-clay with occasional medium to large flint nodules. No archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified.

5.2 Deposit Survival and Existing Impacts

- 5.2.1 With the exception of the mid-20th century construction of the extant house and its driveway in the north of the site, the site appears to have escaped major truncation, its topography being consistent with the surrounding fields and the recorded stratigraphic sequence being comparable to what was recorded during the evaluation of the adjacent site (ASE 2020).

5.3 Realisation of Project Aims

- 5.3.1 The evaluation has fulfilled the general aims of the project (3.1.1), however, as no archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified there is no potential to address the identified regional research objectives (3.1.2).

5.4 Conclusions

- 5.4.1 Two archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated within the footprints of proposed new dwellings at the site. No truncation was recorded in either trench and the archaeological horizon is considered to be intact within the evaluated areas. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered, and therefore the site almost certainly lies beyond the Iron Age and Roman settlement areas known to the west of the site.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

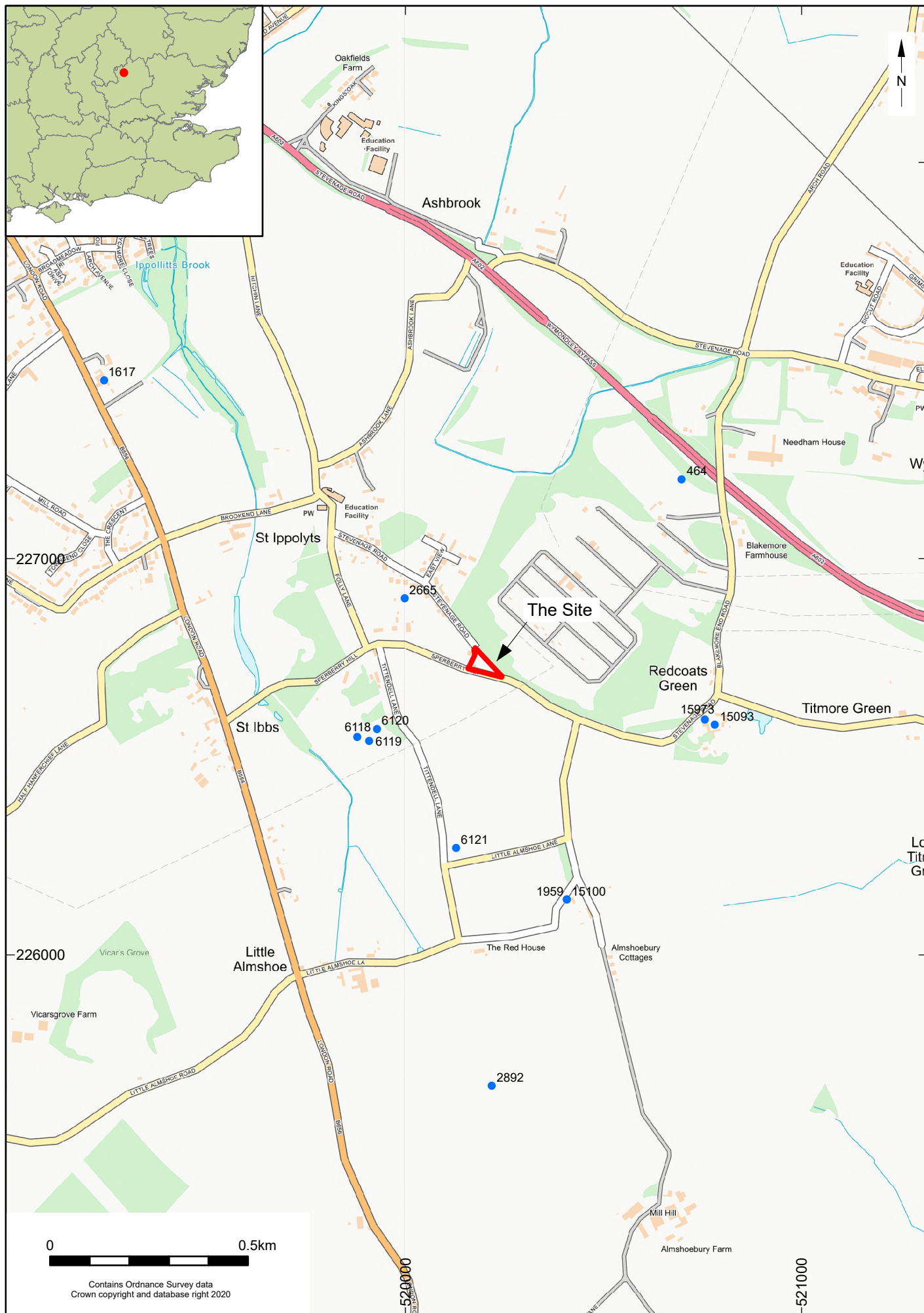
ASE would like to thank Sworders for commissioning the work and for their assistance throughout the project. The evaluation was supervised in the field by Rob Cullum. The fieldwork was managed by Andy Leonard, and in post-excavation by Dan Swift.

Appendix 1: HER Summary

Site name and address: Land at Ryefield, Stevenage Road, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire		
County: Hertfordshire		District: North Hertfordshire
Village/Town: St Ippolyts		Parish: St Ippolyts
Planning application reference: Pre-application		
HER Enquiry reference:		
Funding source: Developer		
Nature of application: Pre-application		
Present land use: Domestic		
Size of application area: c. 0.23ha		Size of area investigated: c. 0.23ha
NGR (to 8 figures minimum): TL 20176 26750		
Site code (if applicable): SIP/RST25		
Site director/Organization: Rob Cullum/Archaeology South-East		
Type of work: Evaluation		
Date of work:	Start: 22/9/25	Finish: 22/9/25
Location of finds & site archive/Curating Museum: Currently at ASE Witham office/North Hertfordshire Museum		
Related HER Nos:		Periods represented: None
Relevant previous summaries/reports: None		
Summary of fieldwork results: Two archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated within the footprints of proposed new dwellings at the site. No truncation was recorded in either trench and the archaeological horizon is considered to be intact within the evaluated areas. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered, and therefore the site almost certainly lies beyond the Iron Age and Roman settlement areas known to the west of the site.		
Author of summary: Rob Cullum		Date of summary: 23/9/25

Appendix 2: OASIS Summary

OASIS ID (UID)	archaeol6-536993
Project Name	Evaluation at Land at Ryefield
Sitename	Land at Ryefield
Sitecode	
Project Identifier(s)	Archaeological Evaluation: Land at Ryefield, Stevenage Road, St Ippolyts
Activity type	Evaluation
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Pre application
Organisation Responsible for work	Archaeology South-East
Project Dates	22-Sep-2025 - 22-Sep-2025
Location	Land at Ryefield NGR: TL 20176 26750 LL: 51.9263049381166, -0.25371610109836 12 Fig: 520176,226750
Administrative Areas	Country: England County/Local Authority: Hertfordshire Local Authority District: North Hertfordshire Parish: St Ippolyts
Project Methodology	The evaluation comprised the investigation of two trial trenches targeting the footprints of two proposed new dwellings.
Project Results	No truncation was recorded in either trench and the archaeological horizon is considered to be intact within the evaluated areas. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were encountered, and therefore the site almost certainly lies beyond the Iron Age and Roman settlement areas known to the west of the site.
Keywords	
Funder	Private individual
HER	Hertfordshire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Andy Leonard
HER Identifiers	SIP/RST25
Archives	Physical Archive, Documentary Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with North Hertfordshire Museums Resource Centre



© Archaeology South-East		Ryefield, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 250234	May 2025	Site location and HHER refs	
Report Ref: WSI	Drawn by: HLF		





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