

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

Land East of Bedford Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire

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Hitchin, Hertfordshire
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Quality Management

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Land east of Bedford Road, Hitchin has been assessed for its below ground archaeological potential in advance of proposed development.
- The proposed development will not impact on any designated archaeological assets.
- The site is not located within a locally defined Area of Archaeological Significance.
- This assessment has concluded a low to moderate potential at the site for unstratified Palaeolithic finds, for later Prehistoric activity, and for a rural landscape throughout the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods. If a World War Two mortar emplacement was located within the site, then this would be localised along the western site boundary. A possible palaeoenvironmental potential could be considered, however this would also be very localised and associated with alluvial deposits at the far northern site boundary. All other past periods are considered to retain a low potential at the site.
- Past ground disturbance is likely to have been generally widespread but shallow as a result of historic plough activity, and the likelihood of survival of archaeological remains, if present, would be anticipated as good.
- Overall, the site likely retains only a modest archaeological potential, and it is unlikely that there would be any remains present that would present a material design constraint or consideration. It is however possible that development of the site could result in adverse impacts to remains of a likely low significance. As a result, it is possible that the archaeological advisor to North Hertfordshire District may request further archaeological work. Given that archaeology is very unlikely to present a design and masterplanning consideration, it is suggested that such works could reasonably be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

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1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF STUDY

- 1.1 This below ground archaeological desk-based assessment has been researched by Alex Slater, prepared by James Archer, and approved by Robert Masefield of RPS Heritage on behalf of Arte Construction Ltd.
- 1.2 The subject of this assessment, also known as the study site, is land east of Bedford Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire. The site is approximately 1.6ha in extent and is centred at National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 17920 30864 (Fig. 1) within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire District.
- 1.3 Pre-application consultation with the archaeological advisors to North Hertfordshire District have indicated a requirement for archaeological assessment to support development. In the first instance, this should comprise a phase of desk based assessment.
- 1.4 Accordingly, Arte Construction has commissioned RPS Heritage to establish the archaeological potential of the site and to provide guidance on ways to address any archaeological constraints identified.
- 1.5 In accordance with relevant policy and guidance on archaeology and planning, and in accordance with the 'Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessments' (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists October 2020), this assessment draws together the available archaeological, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the archaeological potential of the site.
- 1.6 This desk-based assessment comprises an examination of evidence on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), and other sources, and includes the results of a comprehensive map regression exercise.
- 1.7 This assessment thus enables relevant parties to assess the archaeological potential of various parts of the site and to consider the need for design, civil engineering, and archaeological solutions to the archaeological potential identified.

2 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

National Legislation

- 2.1 National legislation regarding archaeology, including Scheduled Monuments, is contained in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, amended by the National Heritage Act 1983 and 2002, and updated in April 2014.

National Planning Policy & Guidance

- 2.2 In March 2012, the government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was most recently revised in July 2021. The NPPF is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which was published online 6th March 2014 and has since been periodically updated.
- 2.3 The NPPF and NPPG are additionally supported by three Good Practice Advice (GPA) documents published by Historic England: GPA 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans; GPA 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (both published March 2015). The second edition of GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets was published in December 2017.
- 2.4 Section 16 of the NPPF, entitled 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:
- Delivery of sustainable development;
 - Understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
 - Conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
 - Recognition of the contribution that heritage makes towards our knowledge and understanding of the past.
- 2.5 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. Paragraph 194 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and should be *no more than sufficient* to review the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.
- 2.6 *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- 2.7 Annex 2 also defines *Archaeological Interest* as a heritage asset which holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- 2.8 A *Designated Heritage Asset* comprises a: World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
- 2.9 *Significance* (for heritage policy) is defined as: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural,

artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

- 2.10 *Setting of a heritage asset* is defined 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. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- 2.11 In short, government policy provides a framework which:
- Protects nationally important designated Heritage Assets;
 - Protects the settings of such designations;
 - In appropriate circumstances seeks adequate information (from desk based assessment and field evaluation where necessary) to enable informed decisions;
 - Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not significant enough to merit *in-situ* preservation.
- 2.12 The NPPG reiterates that the conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach. Furthermore, it highlights that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Importantly, the guidance states that if complete, or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified, the aim should then be to capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance and make the interpretation publicly available. Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. An important consideration should be whether the proposed works adversely affect a key element of the heritage asset's special architectural or historic interest.
- 2.13 Additionally, it is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development, that is to be assessed. The level of 'substantial harm' is considered to be a high bar that may not arise in many cases. Essentially, whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the NPPF. Importantly, harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting. Setting is defined as the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and may be more extensive than the curtilage. A thorough assessment of the impact of proposals upon setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.
- 2.14 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.

Local Planning Policy

North Hertfordshire District Council

- 2.15 The Local Plan for the period 2011-2031 for North Hertfordshire was adopted on 8th November 2022 and contains the following policies relevant to archaeology and the historic environment:

Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets

Planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:

- Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;**

- ii. Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and
- iii. Informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.

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

- a) Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;
- b) Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and
- c) Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use.

Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset is proposed the Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

Policy HE2: Heritage at risk

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that seek to conserve or provide new uses for designated heritage assets identified on the national register, or the Council's 'At Risk' register maintained by the Council, that are justified and appropriate to the significance of the asset to return a heritage asset to beneficial use.

Proposals that harm the significance of heritage assets included on national and local registers will be resisted unless the need for, and the benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh that harm, taking account of the asset's significance and importance, and all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully assessed.

Policy HE3: Non-designated heritage assets

Permission for a proposal that would result in harm to, or the loss of, a non-designated heritage asset will only be granted provided that a balanced judgement has been made that assesses the scale of harm to, or loss of significance of the non-designated asset and, where the proposal results in the loss of a non-designated heritage asset:

- a) The replacement building contributes to preserving the local character and distinctiveness of the area; and
- b) Where the asset is located in a conservation area a continuous contract for the demolition and redevelopment of the site has been secured, unless there are justifiable grounds for not developing the site.

Policy HE4: Archaeology

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

Relevant National and Local Designations

- 2.16 In terms of relevant designated heritage assets, as defined above and as shown on Figure 2a, no designated World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefield sites or Historic Wreck sites lie within the vicinity of the study site.
- 2.17 The study site is not located within an Area of Archaeological Significance as defined locally by North Hertfordshire District and the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team.
- 2.18 In line with relevant planning policy and guidance, this desk based assessment seeks to clarify the site's archaeological potential and the need or otherwise for additional mitigation measures.

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Geology

- 3.1 The solid geology of the study site is shown by the British Geological Survey (BGS Online 2022) as deposit of Gault Mudstone. These comprise a sedimentary bedrock formed between 113 and 100.5 million years ago during the Cretaceous period.
- 3.2 The superficial deposits overlying the bedrock are influenced by the course of the River Oughton to the immediate north of the site. A sequence comprising alluvial deposits at the far northern site boundary, glaciofluvial deposits in the northern area of the site, and deposits of Lowestoft Formation across the remainder of the site, is recorded on the BGS.
- 3.3 The Lowestoft Formation (Diamicton) deposits formed between 480 and 423 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period. The mid-Pleistocene glaciofluvial deposits formed between 860 and 116 thousand years ago also during the Quaternary period. Each of these superficial deposits are formed from glacial till and are geologically unsorted. The alluvial deposits at the far northern boundary are likely to be more recent in date and postdate the Palaeolithic period.
- 3.4 No site specific or British Geological Survey borehole data is currently available for the study site.

Topography

- 3.5 The study site is located on the southern side of a valley formed by the River Oughton which is located to the immediate north of the site. The topography of the site is therefore heavily influenced by this valley and comprises a valley side location, sloping downwards from a height of circa 61m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the southern part of the site, to circa 58m AOD at the northern site boundary.
- 3.6 The River Oughton joins the River Hiz c.800m to the east of the site. A further tributary known as the River Purwell joins with the River Hiz c.1.3km to the south east.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND WITH ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Timescales used in this report

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	900,000 -	12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 -	4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 -	2,500 BC
Bronze Age (including Chalcolithic)	2,500 -	800 BC
Iron Age	800 -	AD 43

Historic

Roman	AD 43 -	410
Saxon/Early Medieval	AD 410 -	1066
Medieval	AD 1066 -	1485
Post Medieval	AD 1486 -	1799
Modern	AD 1800 -	Present

Introduction

- 4.1 This section reviews the available archaeological evidence for the study site and the archaeological/historical background of the study site and surrounding area. In accordance with the NPPF, it considers the potential for any as yet to be discovered archaeological evidence on the study site prior to any assessment of any later development or below ground impacts.
- 4.2 The review considers known archaeological assets within a 1km radius of the study site (Figs. 2a-b), also referred to as the study area, held on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), together with a historic map regression exercise charting the development of the study area from the 18th century onwards until the present day.
- 4.3 In general, the majority of HER monument and event records within the study area comprise findspot evidence indicative of general activity in the area throughout human history. The first evidence for settlement is likely to comprise late Iron Age burial activity, with the existing settlements at Hitchin to the south and at Ickleford to the north dating from the Saxon period onwards. A full summary of all HER monument, event and findspot records is given at Appendix 1, and these records are shown on Figure 2a and discussed in the report where relevant to an assessment of archaeological potential at the site.
- 4.4 The map regression exercise has demonstrated that that the site has remained open land subject to various phases of enclosure for arable and pastoral use throughout its mapped history. There is no evidence that the site has been developed. It is not clear if the record of a World War Two mortar emplacement was located within the site boundary or along the grass verge adjacent to Bedford Road to the immediate west.

- 4.5 Section 5 subsequently considers the site conditions, later development and below ground impacts, and whether the proposed development is likely to impact archaeological assets and potential archaeological assets identified below.

Previous Archaeological Work

- 4.6 There has been no previous archaeological work undertaken within the study site or immediate vicinity. Those archaeological events from the nearby area are shown on Figure 2a.

Early Prehistoric – Palaeolithic & Mesolithic

- 4.7 Four Palaeolithic handaxes have been found at Ickleford, with an inexact grid reference given to the north of the site (HER Ref: MHT313). Six flint scrapers and several Acheulian flints are also recorded at an inexact location in Ickleford to the north (HER Ref: MHT314).
- 4.8 An approximate location for Palaeolithic flint implements is recorded from the Hitchin area c.850m to the south east of the site (HER Ref: MHT1192). A pointed flint implement was found at Bearton Green c.650m to the south (HER Ref: MHT1231).
- 4.9 The presence of Palaeolithic material can be notoriously difficult to predict and is typically dependent upon the presence of an appropriate underlying geology sequence (such as terrace gravels or brickearth), as well as suitable topography and access to nearby resources and water. The underlying geological sequence comprises deposits formed of glacial till, which is derived from the erosion of material by the movement of glacial ice, which is then redeposited along the route of the glacier. This sequence is not considered conducive to the survival of in situ artefacts.
- 4.10 Therefore, in this particular instance, the survival of any in-situ artefacts or land surfaces is considered to be very unlikely, however the potential for unstratified Palaeolithic finds can be considered as low to moderate given the finds made from the surrounding area.
- 4.11 No finds of Mesolithic date are recorded within the study area. Given this paucity of evidence, a low potential is considered.

Later Prehistoric – Neolithic, Bronze Age & Iron Age

- 4.12 Finds of Neolithic date in the study area are limited to findspots, including flint implements found at Head Lane c.1.1km to the south west of the site (HER Ref: MHT293), three supposed flint “figure stones” recorded from Bury Mead Sewage Farm c.900m to the south east (HER Ref: MHT295), a polished flint found along with an undated flint knife at Bury Mead in the same area (HER Ref: MHT2086), and a further find of approximately 12 worked flints recorded further to the east (HER Ref: MHT11529).
- 4.13 Evidence for Bronze Age activity comprises a find of founders metal located c.850m to the south east of the site (HER Ref: MHT305). The cropmark of a circular single-ditched enclosure of approximately 32m diameter is recorded c.1km to the north of the site and thought to be a potential ploughed-out round barrow (HER Ref: MHT2553).
- 4.14 Eight cinerary urns were rescued from a chalk pit c.1.1km to the east of the site at Grove Mill in the 19th century. The finds had fallen from a visible burial pit and further such pits were then identified. It was considered that the finds dated to the late Iron Age period (HER Ref: MHT107).
- 4.15 A Prehistoric long distance routeway known as the Icknield Way, which followed the Chiltern scarp between Wiltshire and East Anglia, is located within circa 350m to the north of the study site along the alignment of Turnpike Lane (HER Ref: MHT4182).

- 4.16 The site was likely located within a settled landscape during the later Prehistoric periods, although evidence for any settlement focus is scarce. The possible barrow funerary activity was likely to have been deliberately sited on higher ground overlooking the River Hiz or Oughton, at an entirely different topographic location from the site which comprises a valley side location adjacent to the River Oughton. The nearby late Iron Age burial activity provides evidence for occupation however the location of any settlement appears to be unknown. The topographic location of the site may indicate that any activity would perhaps have been focused around exploitation of the riverine resources.
- 4.17 Therefore, the archaeological potential at the site for the later Prehistoric periods can be concluded as low to moderate on current evidence. Funerary activity is thought to be unlikely to be present.
- 4.18 The presence of alluvial deposits associated with the River Oughton could be anticipated at the far northern site boundary, although generally such deposits are not anticipated across a majority of the site. Where present, these deposits could contain organic remains and therefore a palaeoenvironmental potential.

Roman

- 4.19 An early Roman cremation cemetery is recorded from the sewage works c.800m to the south east of the study site. The finds were made during drainage excavations in the late 19th century. There are also vessels of late Iron Age type in the assemblage (HER Ref: MHT1207). A findspot of a ceramic jug is also recorded found in 1930 in the same area and was considered might relate to a further burial (HER Ref: MHT1205). Coins dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, and also two querns, have been found in 1877 in various parts of the same field (HER Refs: MHT1208-09).
- 4.20 Further to the east at Cadwell Lane, a 3rd century Roman inhumation burial is recorded (HER Ref: MHT1428).
- 4.21 Pottery finds of Roman date are known from the area of Hyde Mill, roughly located in the area c.750m to the north east of the site (HER Ref: MHT1190). Coin finds from West Mill are recorded c.900m to the west (HER Ref: MHT1230). Pottery and coin finds are recorded from Ickleford to the north although a precise location is not given (HER Ref: MHT1234).
- 4.22 Roman occupation is known from Baldock circa 7.5km to the east of the study site, forming a junction of various road alignments in the nearby area. The nearest of these to the site is the road between Baldock and St Albans, projected on a NE-SW alignment c.5.5km to the south east of the site at its closest point (Margary 1955).
- 4.23 There is a possible focus of occupation activity indicated by the burial activity to the south east of the site during the Roman period, although where any settlement was located appears to remain unknown. The site's location may indicate its location as part of a settled agricultural landscape. It is possible that evidence for land division, agricultural activity, drainage regimes, and findspots could be present at the site, and a low to moderate potential is therefore considered for such finds.

Saxon/Early Medieval & Medieval

- 4.24 Three spearheads, thought to be of Saxon date, have been recorded from unknown locations in Ickleford to the north (HER Ref: MHT1616). A series of Saxon coins have been found from the area of Hitchin to the south (HER Ref: MHT4870).
- 4.25 The nearest early Medieval estate to the study site, as recorded by the Domesday Survey of 1086, was located c.1.6km to the south at Hitchin. The estate comprised 103 households at that time, with lands which included ploughlands, lords' lands, meadow, woodland, 4 mills, and 1 church. There was no estate recorded at Ickleford to the north (Open Domesday Online 2022) and it seems that the area of Ickleford was included in the manor of Pirton to the west. It was documented as *Ikelineford* in the 12th century (Mills 1991) and as *Hikleford* in the 13th century (HER Ref: MHT4426).

The parish church of St Katherine at Ickleford is located c.750m to the north east of the site and dates from the mid-12th century (HER Ref: MHT4306). The location of a late Medieval open hall house is also recorded in the same area (HER Ref: MHT17377). A possible Medieval watermill location is recorded c.450m to the north east (HER Ref: MHT5796). Archaeological work at Duncote Close within Ickleford to the north east identified a linear feature containing 11-13th century pottery (HER Ref: MHT13274).

- 4.26 The remnants of ridge and furrow agricultural activity are shown on aerial photography in fields to the north of Ickleford and circa 1km from the site (HER Refs: MHT17905-06).
- 4.27 A moated site is recorded at Pound Farm c.950m to the north east of the site. It was shown as a well-preserved sub-rectangular moat on late 19th century mapping (HER Ref: MHT1228).
- 4.28 The location of a Medieval deer park is recorded in the area of Lucas Lane at the southern part of the study area (HER Ref: MHT12679).
- 4.29 Findspots from the study area dated to the Medieval period include pottery finds which are likely indicative of agricultural manuring activity across a ploughed landscape (HER Ref: MHT1229).
- 4.30 Overall, the site would have been located within a settled landscape and possibly adjacent to a routeway between the settlements at Hitchin to the south and Ickleford to the north during the Saxon and Medieval periods. Any activity at the site is likely to have been limited to land division and agricultural activity with occupation thought to be unlikely. Therefore, a low to moderate potential for rural activity can be considered at the site for the Saxon and Medieval periods.

Post Medieval & Modern (including map regression exercise)

- 4.31 A number of the HER records within the study area refer to Post Medieval and Modern archaeological remains which are not discussed in detail here unless relevant to the study site. This includes a series of defensive structures dated from World War Two (1939-45) of which the closest to the site comprises a spigot mortar emplacement base recorded in the immediate area of the site along the grass verge on the adjacent Bedford Road (HER Ref: MHT6911).
- 4.32 During the later Post Medieval and Modern periods, our understanding of settlement, land-use and the utilisation of the landscape is enhanced by cartographic and documentary sources, which can give additional detail to data contained within the HER.
- 4.33 The earliest such cartographic source reproduced here is the 1766 Andrews & Dury Map of Hertfordshire (Fig. 4) which depicts the site within open land adjacent to what is now Bedford Road, which likely comprised a track or minor roadway at that time. The River Oughton is shown to the immediate north of the site, with settlement shown further north east at Ickleford, as well as to the south at Hitchin. A similar site character is shown on the 1804 Ordnance Survey Drawing (Fig. 4). The contours shown on this survey demonstrate the site's location on the sloping ground down towards the river to the north, with settlement located on plateaus to the north and south.
- 4.34 The 1844 Hitchin Parish Tithe Map (Fig. 6) shows the site in detail, comprising a series of enclosed land parcels generally in use as arable land. The Tithe Award describes those land parcels as follows:

Land Parcel	Landowner	Occupant	Description	Land Use/Cultivation
977	John Crouch Priest	John Crouch Priest	Sward Close	Pasture
978	Reverend Wollaston Pym	John Priest	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable

979	John Crouch Priest	John Crouch Priest	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable
981	William Wilshere M.P.	W Primett	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable
982	Kempe's Charity	William Primett	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable
983	William Wilshere M.P.	W Primett	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable
984	Reverend Wollaston Pym	John Priest	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable
985	John Whitmore	John Whitmore	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable
993	Kempe's Charity	John Ransom	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable
997	Joseph Sharples	John Ransom	Great Welshman's Croft	Arable

- 4.35 By the 1881 Ordnance Survey plan (Fig. 7), most of the previous enclosures had been removed to create a single open field. Only one enclosure boundary remained at the south eastern part of the site. A land boundary had been created along the site's northern boundary, shown lined with various trees.
- 4.36 The internal boundaries at the south eastern part of the site had been removed by 1939 (Fig. 8) and the site comprised part of a single open field at that time. The enclosure of land to the south and east is shown by 1864 (Fig. 9) as a result of the development of the adjacent school. Extensive earthworks are shown to the immediate east to create a playing field by 1984 (Fig. 10). The contours suggest that the playing field had been subject to land raising to create a level platform. The site appears to remain unchanged to the present day.
- 4.37 Overall, historic mapping suggests that the site has remained open land subject to various phases of enclosure for arable and pastoral use throughout its mapped history. There is no evidence that the site has been developed. It is not clear if the record of a World War Two mortar emplacement was located within the site boundary or along the grass verge adjacent to Bedford Road to the immediate west.
- 4.38 Therefore, aside from remains associated with historic agricultural activity and land division, a generally low archaeological potential is considered at the study site for the Post Medieval and Modern periods. If the World War Two mortar emplacement was located within the site, it would be very localised along the western site boundary and likely comprise only basal foundations.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

- 4.39 The available Hertfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data records the site within an area of urban development (Fig. 2b). This does not match the historic development of the site which has remained open land throughout its mapped history.

LiDAR Plot

- 4.40 There are no clear archaeological anomalies recorded within the site from a review of Environment Agency LiDAR data (Fig. 3). The site shows evidence for likely past agricultural plough lines at western parts of the site, whilst anomalies along the eastern part of the site are indicative of possible disturbance or interference. There is no clear evidence for the 20th century mortar emplacement along the western boundary.

Undated Evidence

- 4.41 An iron blade of unknown date is recorded from excavation in the banks of the River Oughton c.750m to the west of the site (HER Ref: MHT1189).

Assessment of Significance

- 4.42 Existing national policy guidance for archaeology (the NPPF as referenced in section 2) enshrines the concept of the 'significance' of heritage assets. Significance as defined in the NPPF centres on the value of an archaeological or historic asset for its 'heritage interest' to this or future generations.
- 4.43 No relevant nationally significant designated heritage assets as defined in the NPPF are recorded within, or within the vicinity of, the study site.
- 4.44 The site is not located within an Area of Archaeological Significance as defined locally by the District and their archaeological advisors.
- 4.45 There is a possible World War Two mortar emplacement platform recorded along the grass verge at the western site boundary.
- 4.46 Based on current evidence, a low to moderate archaeological potential has been identified at the site for unstratified Palaeolithic finds, for later Prehistoric evidence, for evidence of a Roman rural landscape, and for Saxon or Medieval land division and agriculture. A possible localised potential could be considered for a World War Two mortar emplacement foundation. All other past periods of human activity are considered to retain a low potential. There is a possible very localised potential for palaeoenvironmental remains associated with alluvial deposits at the far northern site boundary.
- 4.47 The significance of any archaeological remains which may be present would be derived from their evidential value and contributions that could be made towards local research agendas.
- 4.48 Whilst it is possible that currently unknown archaeological remains could be present within the site, in the context of the government's non-statutory criteria for Scheduled Monuments (DCMS 2013) any such remains are most likely to be of no more than local significance.
- 4.49 As identified by desk based work, an assessment of likely archaeological potential by period and the likely significance of any archaeological remains which may be present within the study site is summarised in table form below:

Period:	Identified Archaeological Potential and Likely Significance (if present):
Palaeolithic	Low to moderate potential for unstratified residual finds, low potential for in situ artefacts, Low (Local) Significance;
Mesolithic	Low potential, Low (Local) Significance;
Later Prehistoric (Neolithic, Bronze Age & Iron Age)	Low to moderate potential, Low (Local) Significance; Possible very localised potential for geoarchaeological/palaeoenvironmental evidence associated with alluvial deposits at the far northern site boundary, likely to be of Low Significance;
Roman	Low to moderate potential for evidence of a rural landscape, with evidence for occupation thought to be unlikely, Low (Local) Significance;
Saxon & Medieval	Low to moderate potential (most likely to comprise evidence for land division and agricultural activity rather than settlement), Low (Local) Significance;
Post Medieval	Low potential apart from land division and agricultural activity. Any remains are most likely to be of Negligible (None) Significance;
Modern	Generally low potential apart from land division and agricultural activity, with a possible localised potential at the western site boundary for a World War Two mortar emplacement, likely to comprise only the basal foundation. Any remains are most likely to be of Negligible (None) Significance, whilst evidence for the mortar emplacement

	could be of either Negligible or Low (None / Local) Significance depending on the state of preservation of any remains.
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4.50 This table is completed prior to any assessment of later development impacts or modern disturbance, which may have reduced the archaeological potential of the site and potentially the significance of any remains which may survive.

5 SITE CONDITIONS, THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSETS

Site Conditions

- 5.1 The study site currently comprises a single open pastoral field, bounded to the west by Bedford Road and development, to the south and east by school development and playing fields, and to the north by the River Oughton (Fig. 11).
- 5.2 The site does not appear to have been subject to previous development. The localised construction of a World War Two mortar emplacement could have had a negative impact upon any earlier deposits within the footprint of its foundation if located within the site boundary.
- 5.3 Past agricultural land use will most likely have had a widespread but generally shallow below ground impact as a result of past ploughing.

Proposed Development

- 5.4 It is anticipated that development proposals will comprise the development of 53 homes with associated infrastructure, access, and hard and soft landscaping.
- 5.5 Excavation to create foundations and service trenches for the new development could have an adverse impact upon any archaeological remains which may be present within the site.

Review of Potential Development Impacts on Archaeological Assets

- 5.6 The proposed development will not impact on any designated archaeological assets.
- 5.7 The site is not located within a locally defined Area of Archaeological Significance.
- 5.8 This assessment has concluded a low to moderate potential at the site for unstratified Palaeolithic finds, for later Prehistoric activity, and for a rural landscape throughout the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods. If a World War Two mortar emplacement was located within the site, then this would be localised along the western site boundary. A possible palaeoenvironmental potential could be considered, however this would also be very localised and associated with alluvial deposits at the far northern site boundary. All other past periods are considered to retain a low potential at the site.
- 5.9 Past ground disturbance is likely to have been generally widespread but shallow as a result of historic plough activity, and the likelihood of survival of archaeological remains, if present, would be anticipated as good.
- 5.10 Overall, the site likely retains only a modest archaeological potential, and it is unlikely that there would be any remains present that would present a material design constraint or consideration. It is however possible that development of the site could result in adverse impacts to remains of a likely low significance.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Land east of Bedford Road, Hitchin is under consideration for residential development. Pre-application consultation with the archaeological advisors to North Hertfordshire District have indicated a requirement for archaeological assessment to support development. In the first instance, this should comprise a phase of desk based assessment. Therefore, in accordance with relevant government planning policy and guidance, this assessment has been undertaken to clarify the below ground archaeological potential of the study area.
- 6.2 In terms of relevant designated heritage assets, no designated World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefield sites or Historic Wreck sites lie within the vicinity of the study site.
- 6.3 The study site is not located within an Area of Archaeological Significance as defined locally by North Hertfordshire District and the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team.
- 6.4 Based on current evidence, a low to moderate archaeological potential has been identified at the site for unstratified Palaeolithic finds, for later Prehistoric evidence, for evidence of a Roman rural landscape, and for Saxon or Medieval land division and agriculture. A possible localised potential could be considered for a World War Two mortar emplacement foundation. All other past periods of human activity are considered to retain a low potential. There is a possible very localised potential for palaeoenvironmental remains associated with alluvial deposits at the far northern site boundary.
- 6.5 Past ground disturbance is likely to have been generally widespread but shallow as a result of historic plough activity, and the likelihood of survival of archaeological remains, if present, would be anticipated as good.
- 6.6 Overall, the site likely retains only a modest archaeological potential, and it is unlikely that there would be any remains present that would present a material design constraint or consideration. It is however possible that development of the site could result in adverse impacts to remains of a likely low significance. As a result, it is possible that the archaeological advisor to North Hertfordshire District may request further archaeological work. Given that archaeology is very unlikely to present a design and masterplanning consideration, it is suggested that such works could reasonably be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

Sources Consulted

General

British Library

Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

The National Archive

Internet

Bombsight – <http://bombsight.org/#17/51.49200/-0.03924>

British Geological Survey – <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

British History Online – <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

Domesday Online – <http://www.domesdaybook.co.uk/>

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Bibliographic

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IEMA, IHBC, and ClfA, *Principles of Cultural Heritage Assessment in the UK*, July 2021

Margary I. D. *Roman Roads of Britain* 1955

Mills, A.D. *A Dictionary of British Place Names* 1991

Wymer *The Lower Palaeolithic Occupation of Britain* 2 volumes 1999

Cartographic

1766 Andrews & Dury Map of Hertfordshire

1804 Ordnance Survey Drawing

1822 Bryant Map of Hertfordshire

1844 Hitchin Parish Tithe Map

1881 Ordnance Survey (1:2500)

1898 Ordnance Survey (1:2500)

1922 Ordnance Survey (1:2500)

1932 Ordnance Survey (1:2500)

1939 Ordnance Survey (1:2500)

1964 Ordnance Survey (1:1250)

1970 Ordnance Survey (1:1250)

1980 Ordnance Survey (1:2500)

1993 Ordnance Survey (1:1250)

2000 Google Earth Image

2003 Ordnance Survey (1:1250)

2007 Google Earth Image

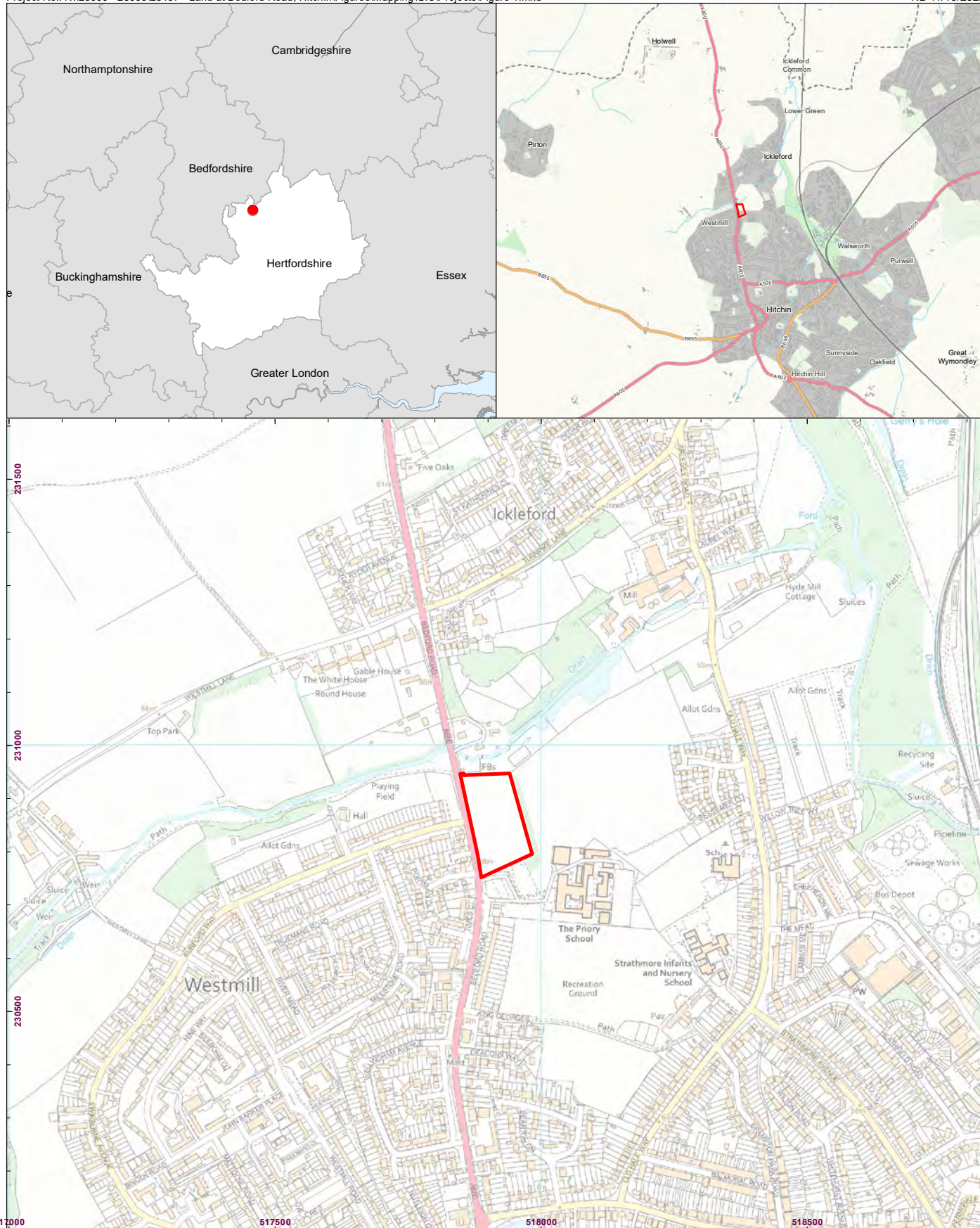
2017 Google Earth Image

2020 Google Earth Image

2021 Google Earth Image

2022 Google Earth Image

FIGURES



 Site Boundary

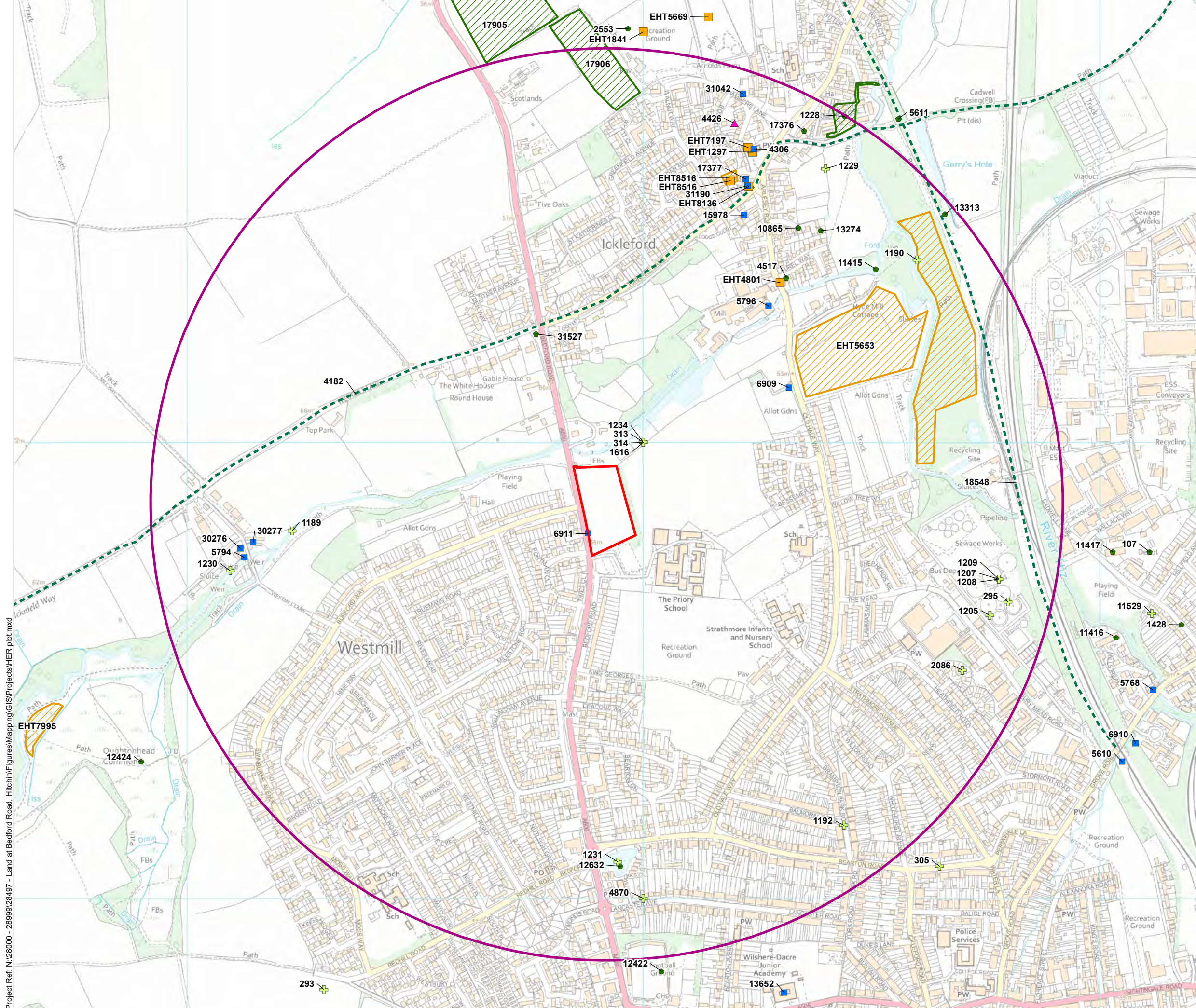


0 100 200m
Scale at A4: 1:10,000

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Figure 1

Site Location



Legend

Site Boundary
1km search radius

Non-designated Heritage Assets:

HER Records Lines
HER Records Polygons

HER Records Points

Monuments
Buildings
Findspots
Place

Previous Archaeological Work:

HER Events Points
HER Events Polygons

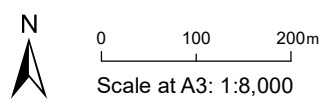
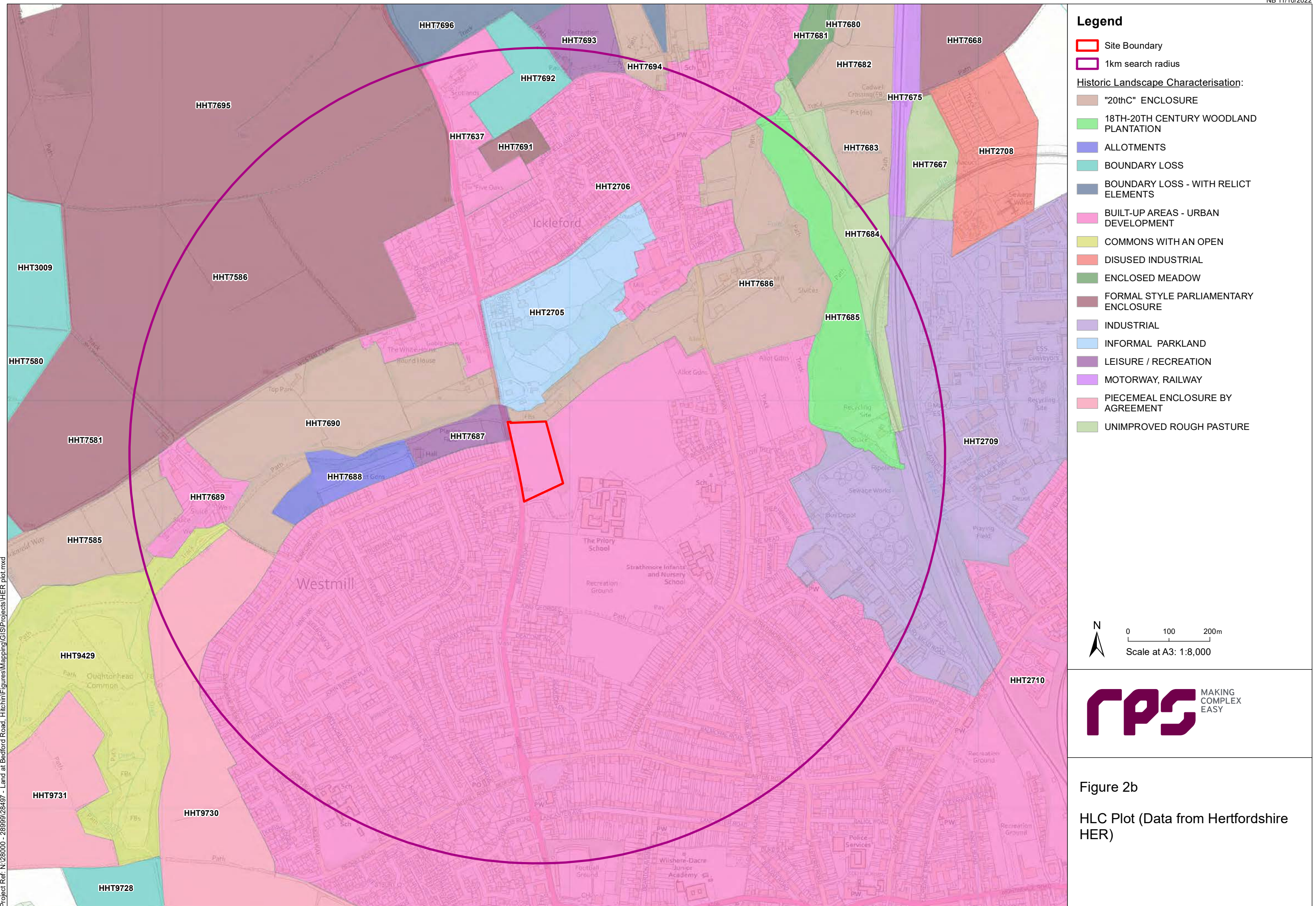


Figure 2a
HER Plot (Data from Hertfordshire HER)





Legend

 Site Boundary

LiDAR DATA

Source:
Environment Agency

Data Type: DTM

Resolution: 1m

Date Captured:
16/03/2020

Processing:
Multi-direction Hillshade overlaid on
simple Local Relief Model



0 25 50m
Scale at A3: 1:1,500



Figure 3

LiDAR Plot



Approximate site location



Not to Scale
Illustrative Only



Figure 4

1766 Andrews & Dury Map of
Hertfordshire



 Site Boundary (approximate)

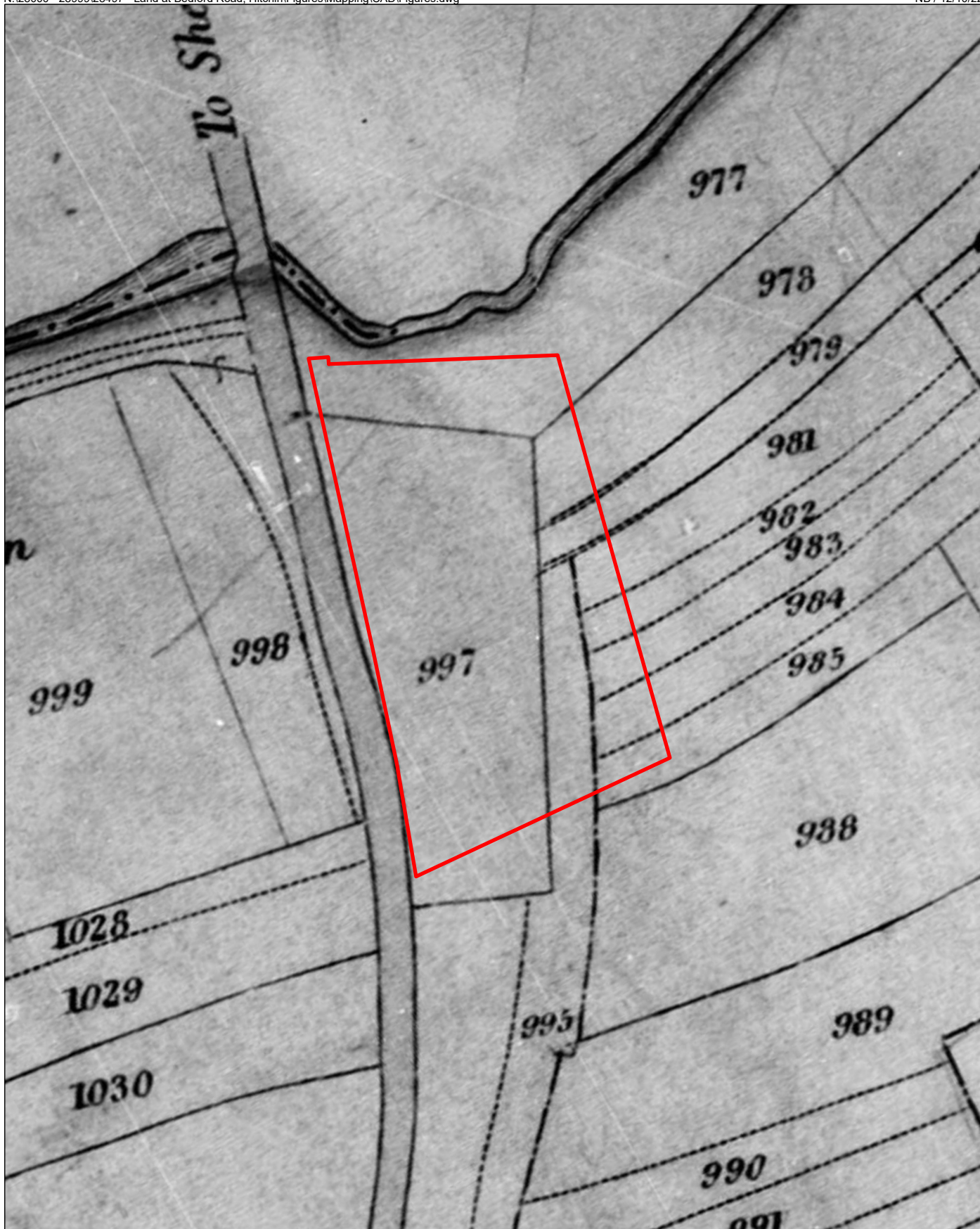


0 100 200m
Scale at A4: 1:10,000
(approximate)



Figure 5

1804 Ordnance Survey Drawing



 Site Boundary

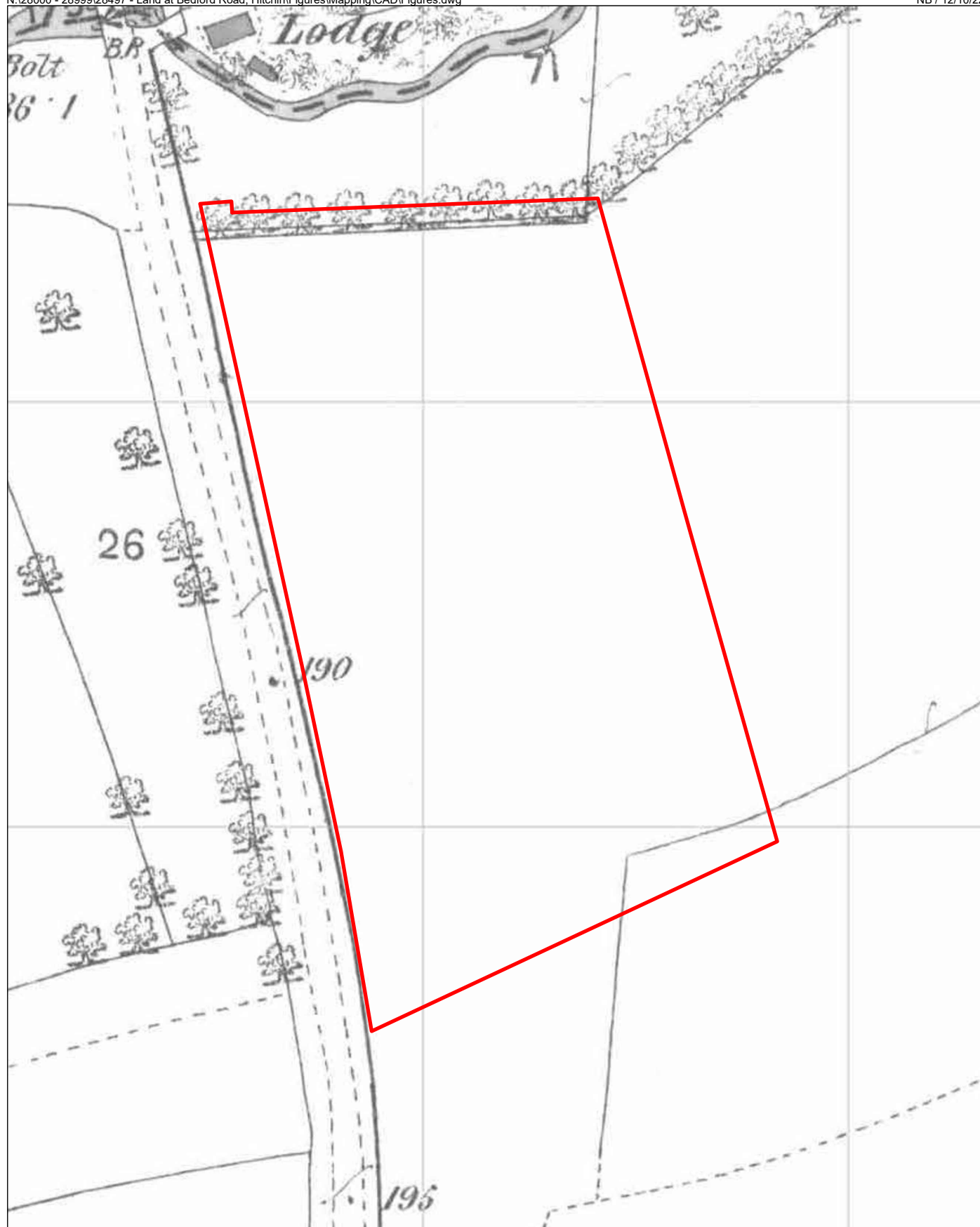


0 25 50m
Scale at A4: 1:2,000



Figure 6

1844 Hitchin Parish Tithe Map



 Site Boundary

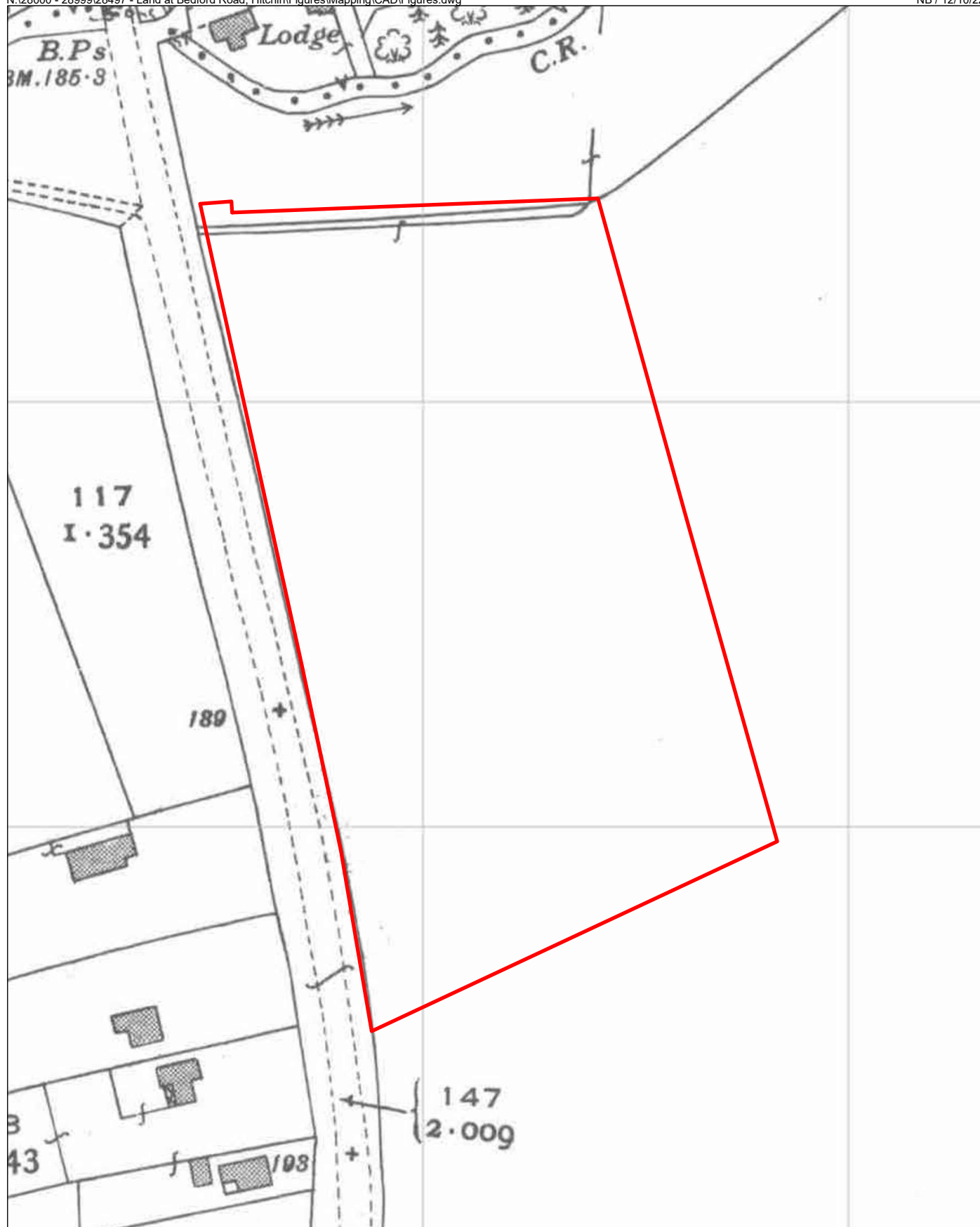


0 10 20m
Scale at A4: 1:1,250

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Figure 7

1881 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary

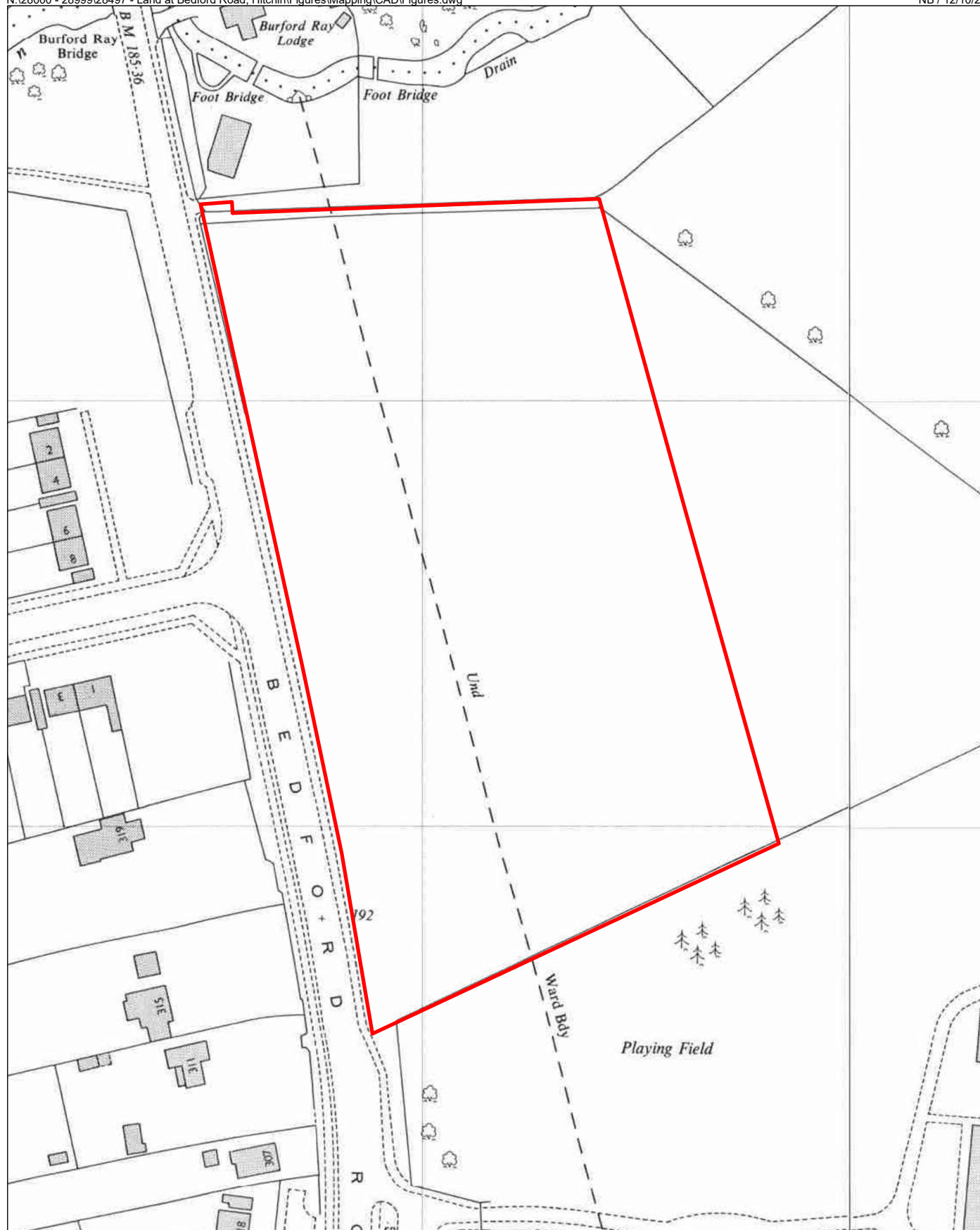


0 10 20m
Scale at A4: 1:1,250



Figure 8

1939 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary

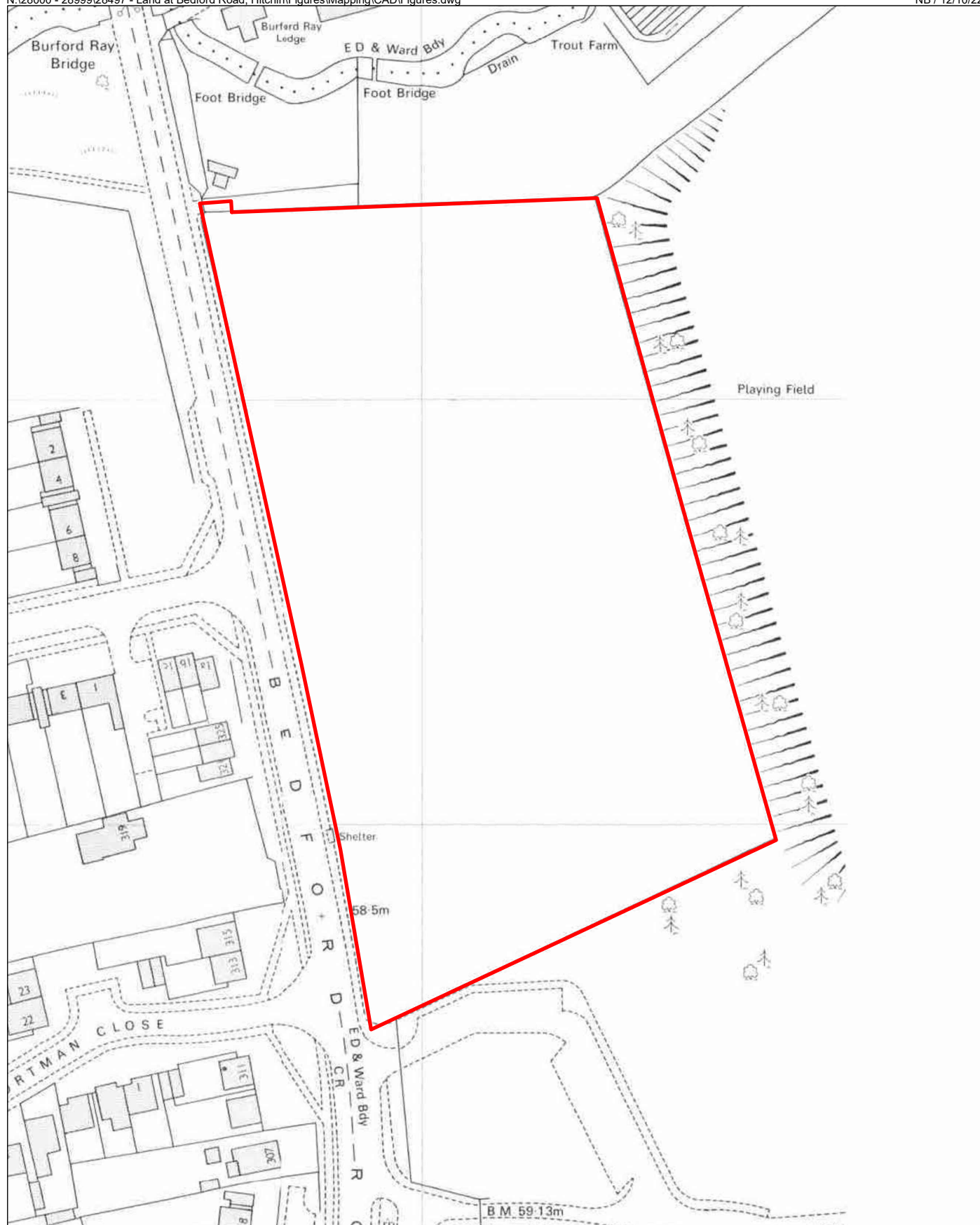


0 10 20m
Scale at A4: 1:1,250

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Figure 9

1964 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary



0 10 20m
Scale at A4: 1:1,250

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Figure 10

1984 Ordnance Survey Map



 Site Boundary



0 10 20m
Scale at A4: 1:1,250



Figure 11

2022 Google Earth Image

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Gazetteer of Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Data

HER Records:

PrefRef	Name	Period
13652	WILSHERE-DACRE SCHOOL, FISHPONDS ROAD, HITCHIN	Twentieth Century
15978	ICKLEFORD HOUSE, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
17377	THE OLD GEORGE PH, 41 ARLESEY ROAD,	Medieval to Post Medieval
18263	HITCHIN BUS DEPOT, FISHPONDS ROAD, HITCHIN	Twentieth Century
30276	OLD WESTMILL FARMHOUSE, WESTMILL LANE, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
30277	WESTMILL FARM, WESTMILL LANE, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
31042	ARNOLDS FARM, UPPER GREEN, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
31190	THE GREEN MAN PH, ARLESEY ROAD, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval to Twentieth
4306	CHURCH OF ST KATHERINE, ICKLEFORD	Medieval
5610	RAILWAY BRIDGE, GROVE MILL LANE, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
5768	GROVE MILL, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
5794	REMAINS OF WEST MILL, WESTMILL LANE,	Post Medieval
5796	BOWMAN'S MILL, OLD HALF WAY, ICKLEFORD	Medieval to Post Medieval
6909	PILLBOX, OLD HALE WAY, ICKLEFORD	World War II
6910	PILLBOX, GROVE ROAD, HITCHIN	World War II
6911	SPIGOT MORTAR BASE, BEDFORD ROAD, HITCHIN	World War II
11529	NEOLITHIC WORKED FLINTS, 35 CADWELL LANE, HITCHIN	Neolithic
1189	UNDATED IRON SPEARHEAD/DAGGER, WEST MILL, HITCHIN	Unknown
1190	ROMAN POTTERY, HYDE MILL, HITCHIN/ICKLEFORD	Roman
1192	PALAEOLITHIC FLINT IMPLEMENT(S), BRAMPTON PARK ROAD, HITCHIN	Palaeolithic
1205	ROMANO-BRITISH POT, BURY MEAD, HITCHIN	Roman
1208	ROMAN COINS, BURY MEAD, HITCHIN	Late Roman
1209	TWO ROMANO-BRITISH QUERNS, BURY MEAD,	Roman
1229	MEDIEVAL POTTERY, IRONWORKING DEBRIS AND IRON OBJECTS, SOUTH OF POUND FARM,	Medieval
1230	ROMAN COINS, WEST MILL, ICKLEFORD	Roman
1231	?PALAEOLITHIC HANDAXE, BEARTON GREEN,	Palaeolithic
1234	ROMAN COINS AND POTTERY, ICKLEFORD	Roman
1616	THREE ?ANGLO-SAXON SPEARHEADS, ICKLEFORD	Early Medieval
2086	FLINT KNIFE AND NEOLITHIC FLINT AXE, BURY MEAD, HITCHIN	Neolithic
293	NEOLITHIC FLINT IMPLEMENTS, OUGHTON HEAD LANE, HITCHIN	Neolithic
295	NEOLITHIC FLINT 'FIGURE STONES', BURY MEAD SEWAGE FARM, HITCHIN	Neolithic
305	BRONZE AGE FOUNDERS METAL, PERIWINKLE LANE, HITCHIN	Bronze Age
313	FOUR PALAEOLITHIC HANDAXES, ICKLEFORD	Palaeolithic
314	ACHEULIAN FLINTS AND SIX SCRAPERS, ICKLEFORD	Palaeolithic
4870	PROBABLE SAXON COIN HOARD, NORTH OF HITCHIN AT ?HOLWELL	Early Medieval
107	LATE IRON AGE CREMATION CEMETERY, GROVE MILL, HITCHIN	Late Iron Age
10865	POST-MEDIEVAL FEATURES AT 34 ARLESEY ROAD (DUNCOT CLOSE), ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval

11415	SITE OF HYDE MILL, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
11416	SITE OF POSSIBLE MOAT, NORTH OF GROVE MILL, HITCHIN	Historic: period uncertain
11417	SITE OF GREYSTONE LIME WORKS, CADWELL LANE, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
1207	ROMANO-BRITISH CREMATION CEMETERY, BURY MEAD, HITCHIN	Late Iron Age to Early Roman
1228	SITE OF MOAT, POUND FARM, UPPER GREEN, ICKLEFORD	Medieval
12421	BUTTS CLOSE, COMMON AND SITE OF ARCHERY BUTTS, HITCHIN	Historic: period uncertain
12422	COW COMMON, HITCHIN	Historic: period uncertain
12424	OUGHTONHEAD COMMON, OUGHTON HEAD,	Historic: period uncertain
12632	SITE OF BRICKFIELDS, BEARTON GREEN, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
12679	'PUNFOLD PARK', AND POSSIBLE REMNANT OF MEDIEVAL PARK BOUNDARY, LUCAS LANE, HITCHIN	Medieval
13274	MEDIEVAL DITCH, DUNCOT CLOSE, ICKLEFORD	Medieval
13313	REMAINS OF MIDLAND RAILWAY LINE, CADWELL LANE, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
1428	ROMANO-BRITISH INHUMATION, CADWELL LANE, HITCHIN	Late Roman
17376	SITE OF POUND FARM, UPPER GREEN, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
17905	RIDGE & FURROW, BEDFORD ROAD, ICKLEFORD	Medieval to Post Medieval
17906	RIDGE & FURROW, ICKLEFORD	Medieval to Post Medieval
17907	CROPMARKS OF PITS, NORTH OF ARNOLDS FARM, ICKLEFORD	Unknown
18233	SITE OF THE HITCHIN UNION WORKHOUSE, TALBOT STREET, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
18548	COURSE OF MIDLAND RAILWAY (BEDFORD & HITCHIN BRANCH), BEDFORD ROAD, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
2553	CROPMARK OF RING DITCH, ICKLEFORD	Late Neolithic to Earlier
30161	SITE OF 19TH CENTURY DAIRY, FISHPONDS ROAD, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
30219	SITE OF POST-MEDIEVAL GARDENS AND ORNAMENTAL CANAL, HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
31527	SITE OF ICKLEFORD GATE, ICKNIELD WAY,	Post Medieval
4182	THE ICKNIELD WAY	Early Neolithic to Late Roman
4517	SITE OF LATE 16TH CENTURY HOUSE (THE LAURELS), ARLESEY ROAD, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
5611	SITE OF RAILWAY BRIDGE, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
4426	ICKLEFORD VILLAGE	Medieval to Post Medieval
18548	COURSE OF MIDLAND RAILWAY (BEDFORD & HITCHIN BRANCH), BEDFORD ROAD, ICKLEFORD	Post Medieval
4182	THE ICKNIELD WAY	Early Neolithic to Late Roman
1228	SITE OF MOAT, POUND FARM, UPPER GREEN, ICKLEFORD	Medieval
12679	'PUNFOLD PARK', AND POSSIBLE REMNANT OF MEDIEVAL PARK BOUNDARY, LUCAS LANE, HITCHIN	Medieval
17905	RIDGE & FURROW, BEDFORD ROAD, ICKLEFORD	Medieval to Post Medieval
17906	RIDGE & FURROW, ICKLEFORD	Medieval to Post Medieval

30219	SITE OF POST-MEDIEVAL GARDENS AND ORNAMENTAL CANAL, HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL, HITCHIN	Post Medieval
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HER Events:

EvUID	Name	Organisati
EHT1297	Observation of works at St Katherine's church, Ickleford,	Albion Archaeology
EHT1841	AIR PHOTO SHOWING A CROPMARK OF A RING DITCH, ICKLEFORD	HCC Planning Dept Air Photos(+Huntings orig verti)
EHT4801	Evaluation at 34 Arlesey Road, Ickleford, 1996-97	The Heritage Network
EHT4918	Evaluation at 64 Bancroft, Hitchin, 2002	Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit
EHT5669	Geophysical survey of proposed new burial ground, Alleyfield, north of Arnold's Farm, Ickleford, 2006	Stratascan
EHT7177	Building recording of the former bus depot, Fishponds Road, Hitchin, 2012	Oxford Archaeology East
EHT7180	Evaluation at the former bus depot, Fishponds Road, Hitchin, 2012	Oxford Archaeology East
EHT7197	Evaluation at St Katherine's Church, Ickleford, 2011	The Heritage Network
EHT8136	Assessment of the Green Man, Arlesey Road, Ickleford,	Heritage Network
EHT8516	Evaluation at the Green Man, Ickleford, 2016	Heritage Network
EHT5653	Geophysical survey for East Coast Main Line (ECML) Hitchin grade separation, 2008	GSB Prospection
EHT5653	Geophysical survey for East Coast Main Line (ECML) Hitchin grade separation, 2008	GSB Prospection
EHT7995	Monitoring at Oughtonhead Common, Hitchin, 2014	The Heritage Network
EHT8516	Evaluation at the Green Man, Ickleford, 2016	Heritage Network



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