

Anne McDonald
Development Control
North Hertfordshire District Council

**Postal Point CHN 108
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HERTFORD SG13 8DN**

Contact Peri Horsley
Tel 01992 555276
My ref P01/24/1426-1
Your ref 24/01426/FP
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Date: 30th October 2024

Dear Anne,

Re: Demolition and redevelopment to provide 44 residential apartments (in four part 4 storey / part 5 storey linked blocks) 325 sqms of Class E floorspace at ground floor fronting the High Street, landscaping, amenity and associated parking.- 9 - 10 High Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Thank you for consulting us on the above application.

We previously offered pre-application advice for 22/00976/PRE on a similar development of the site. The proposed development site is within an Area of Archaeological Significance (AAS) as identified in the Local Plan. This contains evidence of Roman occupation on the west bank of the River Hiz [HER 13611], several Medieval timber framed houses [HER 15863, HER 25865], the Medieval Parish Church of St Mary's (Historic Environment Record 4390) and numerous Post-Medieval monuments such as the printworks [HER 12646] and the Workmen's Hall [HER 17178]. The combination of these heritage assets from different periods recorded within this AAS demonstrates the sensitivity of this area.

Of particular note when assessing this proposal is the presence of the Late Saxon boundary ditch [HER 12584] excavated in 2004 and 2008 around 100m SW of the proposed development site. A more recent development in the land immediately to the North of the proposed development site (17/01496/1) identified a ditch of a similar size and shape, though only later dating material was found within it. It is likely that these features represent two sections of the same fortification or 'burh' ditch for Late Saxon Hitchin and that the course of this feature runs underneath the western section of the site identified for use as a below-ground car park. To further consolidate the location, nature and dating of this feature would be of significance due to the relative scarcity of evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation across Hertfordshire.

I therefore believe that the proposed development is such that it should be regarded as likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and I recommend that the following provisions be made, should you be minded to grant consent:

1. The evaluation, via trial trenching, of the proposed development area, prior to development commencing,
2. such appropriate mitigation measures indicated as necessary by this evaluation
These may include:
 - a. the preservation of any remains *in situ*, if warranted,
 - b. appropriate archaeological excavation of any remains before any development commences on the site, with provisions for subsequent analysis and publication of results,
 - c. archaeological monitoring of the groundworks of the development (also including a contingency for the preservation or further investigation of any remains then encountered),
 - d. such other provisions as may be necessary to protect the archaeological interests of the site;
3. analysis of the results of the archaeological work with provisions for subsequent production of a report(s) and/or publication(s) of these results & an archive;
4. such other provisions necessary to protect the archaeological interests of the site.

I believe that these recommendations are both reasonable and necessary to provide properly for the likely archaeological implications of this development proposal. I further believe that these recommendations closely follow the policies included within Policy 16 (para. 211, etc.) of the National Planning Policy Framework, and relevant guidance contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance, and in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015).

In this case three appropriately worded conditions on any planning consent would be sufficient to provide for the level of investigation that this proposal warrants. I suggest the following wording:

A *No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:*

1. *The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording*
2. *The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording as suggested by the archaeological evaluation*
3. *The programme for post investigation assessment*
4. *Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording*
5. *Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation*
6. *Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation*
7. *Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.*

B *The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A)*

C *The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.*

If planning consent is granted, I will be able to provide detailed advice concerning the requirements for the investigations, and to provide information on professionally accredited archaeological contractors who may be able to carry out the necessary work.

I hope that you will be able to accommodate the above recommendations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Peri Horsley
Historic Environment Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS
Environmental Sustainability

Hertfordshire LEADS provides Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability support to planning departments in Hertfordshire.