

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment
of Proposed Development at
Northeast Stevenage
GA2, Land Off Great Ashby Way, Great Ashby

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Non-technical Summary

This document is an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) which assesses the potential presence and significance of archaeological assets at Land north of Great Ashby. It also analyses the impact of the Proposed Redevelopment on any surviving archaeology which may be present.

Hybrid application for a residential-led development comprising residential (Use Class C3), educational use (Use Class F1), a community hub (Use Class F2) with associated new internal roads, access, parking, cycling infrastructure, landscaping and other associated infrastructure. Full application comprises the construction of vehicle access and an active travel link via Mendip Way, with associated landscaping and drainage works. The outline application, for which all matters are reserved except for means of access, comprises the erection of up to 640 dwellings (Use Class C3), a site for a primary school, further land reserved for educational use (Use Class F1), a site for a community hub (Use Class F2), with associated infrastructure.

The Site has been subject to several archaeological investigations, comprising geophysical surveys in 2007 and 2022, and trial trench evaluations in 2008 and 2023. The evaluations confirmed the presence of limited archaeological remains of local area significance:

- A single isolated feature, potentially dating to the late Iron Age, has been identified in the north-west of the Site, and there is a low potential for further prehistoric remains to be present.
- A low level 'background' presence of Roman material has been identified, and further evidence, if present, is likely to constitute remains of a residual nature or sparse rural occupational activity.
- The Site is known to contain some medieval remains relating to settlement and associated tile production and fields centred on the north-western part of the Site, and there is a moderate potential for further, as yet unidentified medieval remains.
- The Site has moderate to high potential to contain post-medieval features such as quarry pits and field boundaries.

This document will assist the Local Planning Authority in determining whether planning consent is permissible with consideration to the Local Planning Policies and the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Planning Policies. Furthermore, this document will

assist the LPA in determining whether further below ground archaeological investigation is required.

1. Introduction

This DBA is for the Site at Land North of Great Ashby (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') (

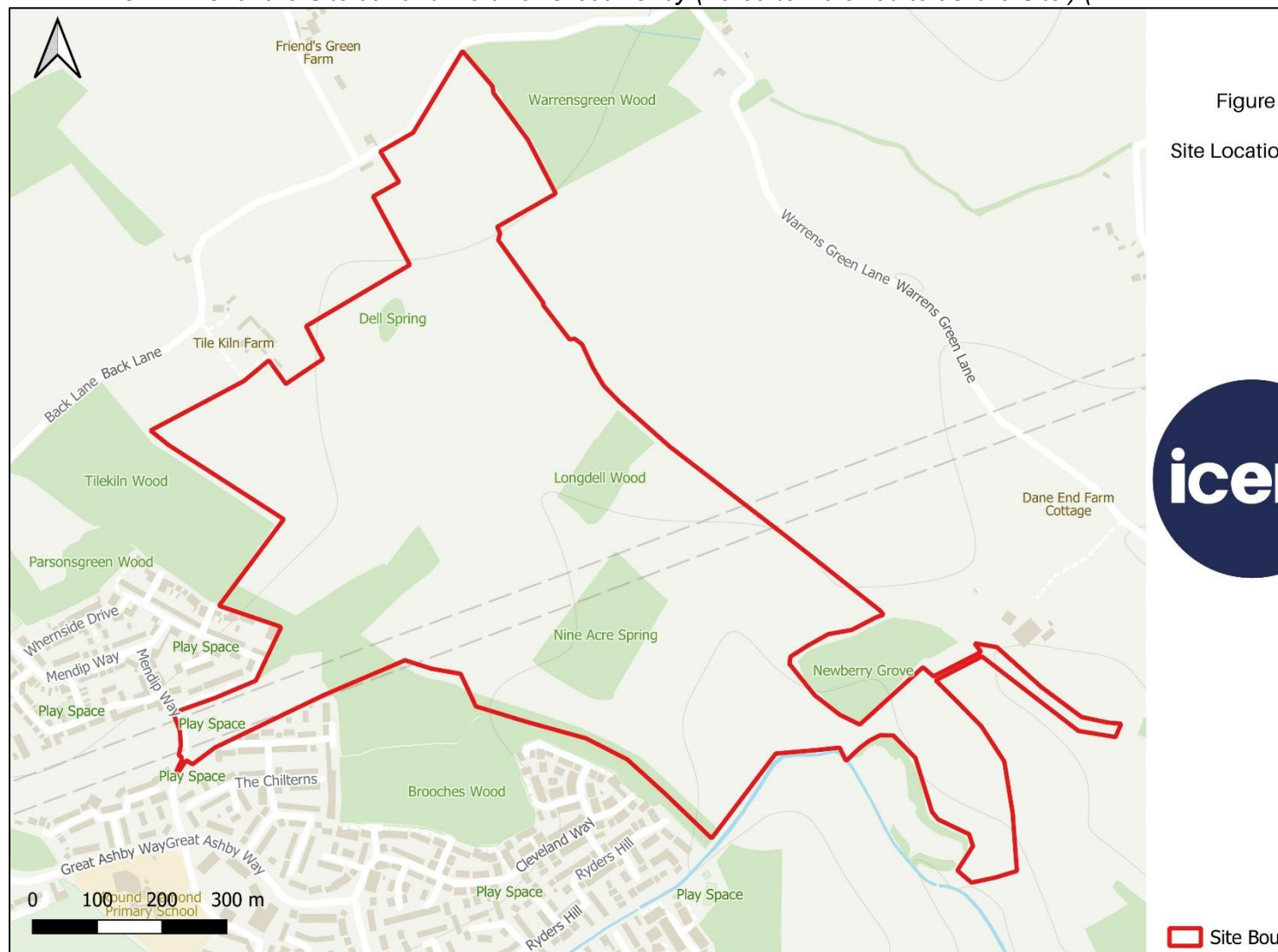


Figure 1
Site Location

- 1.1.1 Figure 1). It has been commissioned from Icen Projects by Picture Estates Ltd (The Applicant).
- 1.1.2 The Site is located in the parish of Weston, in the district of North Hertfordshire, comprising largely arable fields and woodland, with several footpaths and bridleways. Arable farmland and woodland and hedgerows are found adjacent to the Site boundary to the north and the east. Tile Kiln Farm also lies immediately beyond a section of the northern site boundary. Areas of ancient woodland and a local wildlife site lie close to the southeast corner of the Site; and an area of ancient woodland abuts the western boundary.
- 1.1.3 The centre of the Site lies at National Grid Reference 526200, 227800 and this document utilises a Study Area with a radius of 1km from this point.
- 1.1.4 Ground levels on the Site vary from approximately 140m OD in the north, to 111m OD in the southeast, where a balancing pond feature exists. The Site is generally level, although the east of the Site slopes down to the south and east.
- 1.1.5 The Site lies within an Area of Archaeological Significance which highlights the potential for archaeological remains, particularly associated with later prehistoric and early medieval

settlement in Hertfordshire. There are a number of Areas of Archaeological Significance across North Hertfordshire which, although not nationally recognised or designated, are considered to be of local importance.

- 1.1.6 Paragraph 207 of the 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.

- 1.1.7 This document has also been undertaken with consideration to Policy HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan which states development proposals affecting heritage assets with archaeological interest should include an “appropriate desk-based assessment and, where justified, an archaeological field evaluation.

Planning Background

- 1.1.8 The Site was subject to a full planning assessment and sustainability appraisal process as part of the Local Plan making process. The Site is identified as GA2 in the Council's Draft Emerging Allocations, dated July 2016.

- 1.1.9 Outline planning permission will be sought for a series of parameter plans that define the maximum land uses, maximum quantum and scale of development.

- 1.1.10 Specialist Archaeological Advice from Historic England (PL00792804) on request for a scoping opinion on proposals stated that:

“Historic England would recommend that a comprehensive assessment and evaluation (comprising desk-based assessment, geophysical survey and trial-trenched evaluation) would be required to establish the potential for, and the significance of, buried archaeological remains across all areas of the development, in accordance with paragraphs 189 and 190 of the NPPF. We would recommend this is carried out to inform the design of any masterplan, and in advance of the determination of any planning application.”

- 1.1.11 The Senior Historic Advisor at Hertfordshire Council also commented on the scoping opinion, stating:

“The applicant should include within the ES the reports on the previous archaeological work carried out (the existing geophysical survey reports (Stratascan, 2007 and Magnitude Surveys 2022) and archaeological evaluation report (Oxford Archaeology (OA), 2008).

The ES should also be supported by a report on the results of the further archaeological trial trench evaluation of the site, and by an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, as outlined in the Scoping Report.”

- 1.1.12 Initial consultation with the Senior Historic Advisor at Hertfordshire Council also took place on completion of a draft baseline of this DBA. Subsequently, this document has been updated to include reference to the results of the archaeological trial trench evaluation undertaken by OA between the 11th September and 5th October 2023 (OA, 2024).

2. Objectives

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 of England Regional Research Framework (Medlycott 2011).

Standard and Guidance

- 2.1.5 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 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

2.1.6 The aim of this DBA is to:

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

3. Methodology and Sources Consulted

Archaeological Potential

3.1.1 The **potential** for surviving archaeology of various periods is defined within this report as either:

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.

Archaeological Significance

3.1.2 The **significance** value of potential archaeology is defined in this report as follows:

International / National (very high): The highest status of asset and indicative of national importance.

e.g. World Heritage Sites (WHS), Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), Grade I and II* Listed Buildings (LBs), Grade I and II* Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs), Protected Wrecks, Heritage assets of national importance, well preserved historic landscapes with exceptional coherence, time depth, or other critical factor(s).

National / Regional / County (high): Archaeological sites that may be designated or undesignated, may contain well preserved or in situ structures, buildings of historical significance, historic landscapes with a reasonably defined extent, or reasonable evidence of occupation/settlement or activities (ritual, industrial etc.).

e.g. Grade II RPGs, Conservation Areas (CAs), Designated historic battlefields, Grade II LBs, burial grounds, protected heritage landscapes such as Ancient Woodland, heritage assets of regional or county importance.

Sub-regional / District (moderate): Designated or undesignated archaeological sites with reasonable evidence of human activity. Assets may be of limited historic value but may contribute to district or local knowledge and/or research objectives. May contain structures or

buildings of potential historic merit.

e.g. Historic village settlements, associated historic field systems and boundaries, historic road systems.

Local Area / Parish (Low): Heritage assets with a local level cultural or education value only

e.g. Historic field systems and boundaries, agricultural features such as ridge and furrow, ephemeral archaeological evidence, artefacts of poor contextual stratigraphy.

Negligible: Historic assets with very little or no surviving archaeological interest or stratigraphic integrity. Buildings and landscapes of no historical significance.

e.g. Destroyed objects, buildings of no architectural merit, relatively modern landscape features or disturbances such as quarries, field boundaries, drains etc.

Unknown: Insufficient information exists to assess the importance. Significance of below ground archaeological remains is often unknown until their nature and extent has been sufficiently determined through archaeological fieldwork.

3.1.3 Potential and significance values are based on guidance in the following documents:

- ClfA, 2020, 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*

Sources

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

- **Site Reports** – Reports on past archaeological investigations on the Site.
- **Historic Environment Record (HER) Data** detailing the results of previous archaeological investigations on Site and in the surrounding Study Area. The HER Data (Ref: 221.22) was obtained on 07/03/2023. The licence has been renewed on 05/11/2025 (Ref: 136.25).
- **Historic England Datasets** – Information on statutory designated assets including the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, and any identified Heritage at Risk.
- **Groundsure Mapping** – Ordnance Survey (OS) maps from their historic first edition through to modern OS mapping. Earlier historic maps were also consulted where available.
- **British Geological Survey (BGS)** – Solid and Drift geology digital mapping and

geological borehole data where applicable.

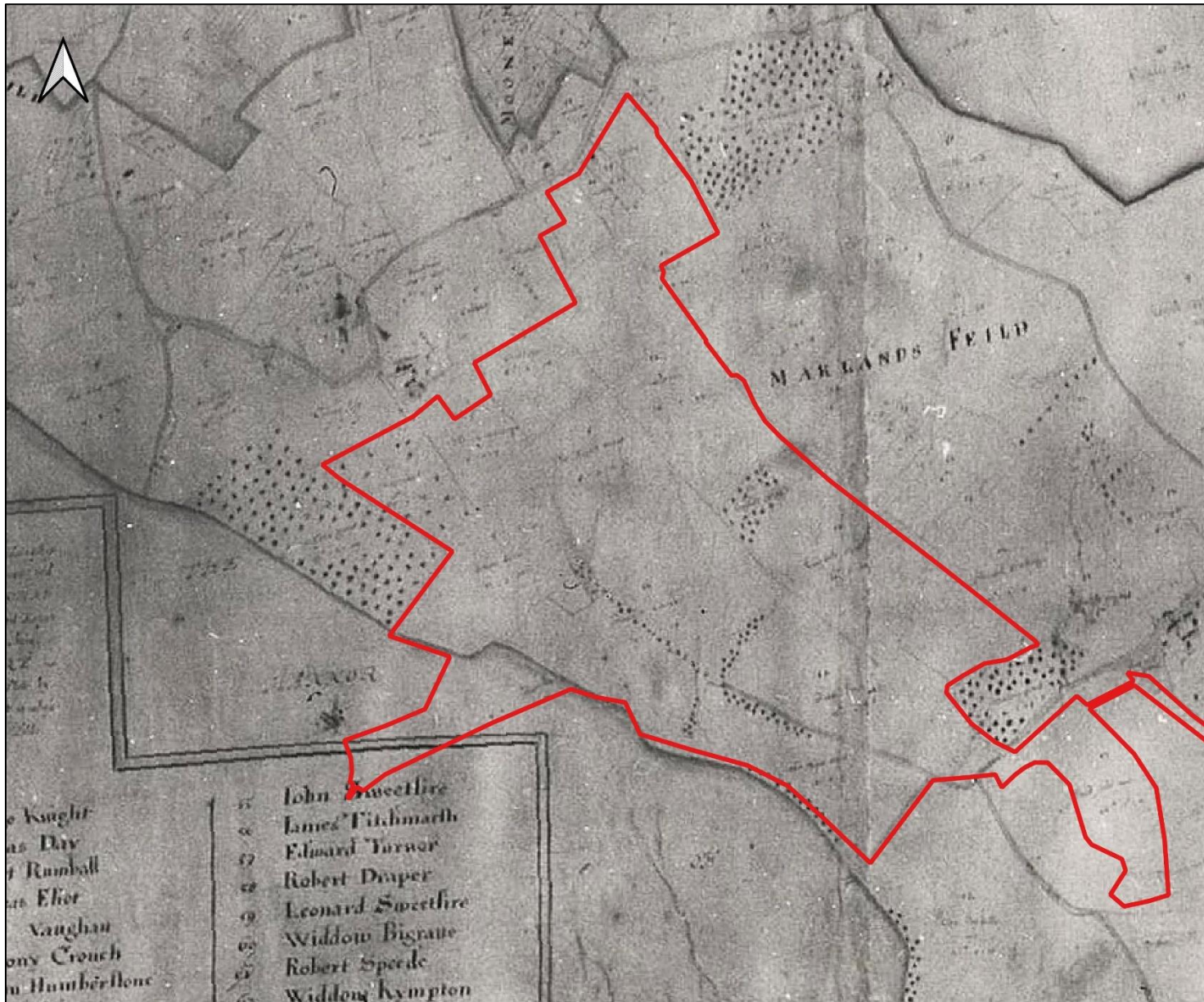
- **Archaeological Data Service (ADS)** – A comprehensive archive of published and unpublished fieldwork reports.
- **Aerial Photography** – Aerial Photography was examined at Historic England's Aerial Photo Explorer (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/>)
- **Details of the Proposed Redevelopment** – Existing site plan, indicative phasing plan, parameter plans, topographical survey, ground investigation report (see **Appendix**), existing site services and utilities report.

3.1.5 A Site visit was undertaken which included a visual assessment and photographic survey as well as an assessment of the topography and ground disturbance and the existing land use. The Senior Historic Advisor to Hertfordshire Council also attended the Site during the trial trench evaluation, accompanied by Iceni Projects and OA on the 20th of August 2023.

4. Geological, Topographical, Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1.1 To assess the archaeological potential within the area of the Proposed Redevelopment, the results of the previous evaluations on the Site have been considered alongside HER Data obtained from the Hertfordshire HER within a 1km Study Area from the Site boundary.

The Study Area, results of previous evaluations on the Site, and HER data have been examined to locate known archaeological sites and thus predict and inform the likely archaeological survival on Site. All references to archaeological interventions, findspots and monuments on



- 4.1.2 Figure 3 will be contained within parenthesis throughout the document. Many entries from the HER data record result from chance discoveries. Other information and sources including documentary, cartographic, unpublished grey literature reports and internet resources have also been used to supplement this data. These sources are detailed further in Section 3.
- 4.1.3 Historic structures are not specifically considered within this assessment except where they are relevant to the archaeological interpretation of the Site. A separate Heritage Statement has been

Geology

- 4.1.4 BGS records show the Site is underlain by Lewes Nodular Chalk and Seaford Chalk Formation. Superficial Head Deposits are present across the central and southeast of the Site, with Lowestoft Formation recorded in the southwest of the Site, as well as along the northeastern boundary.

- 4.1.5 As part of the current Planning Application, a geotechnical ground investigation has been undertaken at the Site consisting of boreholes and trial pits (GEA, 2023). The summary of ground conditions is as follows:

“The made ground comprised dark brown silty sandy clay with gravel and rootlets, and extended to depths of between 0.10 m and 0.50 m. The superficial deposits generally comprised firm to stiff brown to orange-brown and reddish brown slightly sandy clay with variable fine to coarse subangular to subrounded chalk and flint gravel. The proportion of chalk gravel generally increased with depth. These deposits extend to depths of between 0.80 m and 7.00 m

The top of the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation was encountered at depths of between 0.80 m and 7.00 m.”

Topography

- 4.1.6 The Site currently comprises arable fields and areas of woodland. To the north, the landscape is relatively flat. It undulates to the south and east, with dry valleys across its middle and southern portions, lying at between 110m – 130m OD, with a plateau in the northern part of the Site lying at 135 – 140m OD.

Palaeolithic Period to Iron Age (Before AD 43)

- 4.1.7 Trial trenching on the Site in 2008 and 2023 encountered limited evidence for prehistoric activity. The previous 2008 trial trenching in the northwest of the Site recorded an isolated late Iron Age to early Roman rubbish pit containing large pieces of locally made, grog tempered, Belgic-style pottery and burnt material (EHT 9108) (OA, 2008). A residual Mesolithic flint tranchet axehead was found in the subsoil of one of the trenches during the most recent 2023 evaluation (OA, 2024).
- 4.1.8 Whilst early prehistoric material is recorded in northeast Hertfordshire, there is very little in the way of evidence for associated settlement. Settlement becomes more evident in the region around modern Stevenage in the later Iron Age, when it becomes characterised by enclosed farmsteads dispersed throughout the landscape.
- 4.1.9 Field walking surveys undertaken as part of the Wellfield Park development produced evidence of later prehistoric activity (HER 9833). Between Claypithills Spring and Hangbois Wood, c.250m to the southeast of the Site, a broad spread of late Neolithic worked flint, including tools, debitage and burnt flint was recorded. Further late Neolithic struck and burnt flint was recovered during

field walking to the southeast of Weston (HER 9839).

- 4.1.10 Aerial photography has recorded a number of undated cropmarks and curve-linear ditches of uncertain origin within the wider Study Area (EHT 2136, 2841, 2842, 2843). The HER data also records cropmarks relating to possible ditched enclosures within the northwestern portion of the Site Outline (HER 17118).
- 4.1.11 Excavations within the Study Area, most notably at Lobs Hole, c.1km south of the Site (HER 9222), recorded evidence for cut features and finds of later prehistoric date have. The principal evidence at Lobs Hole related to a late Iron Age and Roman enclosed settlement.
- 4.1.12 At Land at Roundwood, Back Lane, c.650m west of the Site, trial trenching revealed several archaeological features and finds relating to settlement dating from the late Bronze Age through to middle Iron Age (HER 16655, 16656).
- 4.1.13 A pit feature and a possible posthole of probable Iron Age date was recorded during an evaluation south of Tile Kiln Wood, c.100m west of the Site in an area now within the wider settlement at Great Ashby (HER12655).

Roman Period (AD 43 – 410)

- 4.1.14 Previous trial trenching on the Site found limited evidence from the Roman period, comprising small numbers of likely residual pottery sherds, indicating only a low-level 'background' presence. Nineteen sherds of Roman pottery were found during the 2008 evaluation, five sherds residual within a medieval cut feature, and a further fourteen sherds of possible Late Iron Age or Roman date within a single pit. Eight sherds of Roman pottery were found during the 2023 evaluation, including two possibly residual sherds in the northern part of the Site; and two from ditches or structural features containing burnt flint, charcoal, chalk and burnt stone in the south.
- 4.1.15 1st century Roman coins have been found in the immediate vicinity of Harbourclose Wood, c.650m northwest of the Site (HER 11399). Roman coins dating from the 1st – 3rd centuries were also recovered from two sites in Walkern & Weston (HER 11235).
- 4.1.16 Archaeological investigations at Boxfield Farm revealed a Romano-British enclosed farmstead, sub-divided into a number of sub-divisions in which were located sequences of possible rectangular and circular buildings (HER 4506). Associated settlement remains included post holes, a corn dryer, the remains of a cemetery and numerous artefacts including a coin hoard of predominantly 3rd century AD coins. Although the Site dates to the Roman period, it is laid out in the native style.
- 4.1.17 In the Roman period, the agricultural type settlement at Lobs Hole continued with no apparent change in material status, with the enclosed settlement lasting until the mid-3rd century. The material evidence derived from discarded objects (ceramics, copper alloy, iron etc.) indicates a native settlement with little or no obvious signs of 'Romanisation'.

Saxon and Medieval Period (AD 410 – 1485)

- 4.1.18 The 2008 trial trenching in the northwest of the Site recorded a series of medieval ditches and

evidence for tile production immediately to the south of Tile Kiln Farm. A quarry pit in the northeastern part of the Site identified in the 2023 evaluation may have been medieval or post-medieval, potentially associated with tile production previously identified by the 2008 trial trenching. The evidence in the north of the Site may infer a potential settlement focus in this area.

- 4.1.19 The name Stevenage itself has a Saxon origin, deriving from Stithenaece, meaning 'stiff or strong oak'. The original Saxon settlement is thought to have been located on or near the Site of the old church of St Nicholas and the 'Bury' in Stevenage.
- 4.1.20 The Site lay within the medieval manor of Weston, which was held by William de Ow in 1086. The great park at Weston, documented from 1231, lies c.1km to northeast of the Site (HER 17467).
- 4.1.21 The medieval period is somewhat under-represented in the Hertfordshire HER. The rural landscape is likely to have remained broadly similar to that of the later Roman period, with isolated and dispersed agricultural settlement dominating the landscape.

Post-medieval to Modern Period (AD 1485 – present)

- 4.1.22 The previous evaluations at the Site implied there was limited evidence for post-medieval activity, with relatively few features of definite post-medieval date. A post-medieval feature in the west of the Site recorded during the 2023 evaluation may have represented a trackway. Both the 2008 and 2023 evaluations recorded a number of undated pits and ditches, some of which may date to the post-medieval period.
- 4.1.23 By the mid-16th century, a number of larger country houses appear in the wider area along with a broadening of the economic base as a variety of industries develop to compete with the formerly prevailing agricultural base.



- 4.1.24 Figure 4), shows that the Site lay to the west of an area marked *Marlands Field*, one of the large open fields of the parish. Although not particularly detailed for the Study Area, a number of hedgerows and small woodlands are detailed, including Tilekiln Wood, Newberry Grove, and Longdell Wood. It is likely that much of the Site was given over to agriculture, with limited change in terms of land division and field systems from that established in the medieval period. The southwestern boundary of the Site forms the parish line between Weston and Graveley.
- 4.1.25 Dury and Andrew's 1766 map (not illustrated) of the County of Hertfordshire is figurative and of limited accuracy, though it depicts the parish boundary, a more detailed enclosed field system and further areas of woodland.
- 4.1.26 A plan from a survey of Mr Robert Prior's estate at Weston, dated 1774 (not illustrated) provides good detail for Tile Kiln farm to the immediate north of the Site. A cross-plan farmhouse, with an associated yard to the northeast is illustrated, and numerous outbuildings. The farmhouse is shown to have a garden and an orchard, whilst a number of ponds are located within the immediate setting. A series of paths and trackways are seen crossing the Site.

4.1.27 At the close of the 18th century, the full extent of the Site is captured in the Weston Enclosure Map of 1797 (



- 4.1.28 Figure 5). By this date, the field systems illustrated on the previous maps has been reorganised into a more standardised system. Towards the central area of the Site, there are areas of woodland which are likely to have been established and matured from the examples shown in the earlier maps. A survey of the estate of the late TM.Pryor, dated 1822, which depicts the northern portion of the Site, (Figure 5) illustrates the enclosed field system has become further uniform.
- 4.1.29 The majority southern half of the Site is further recorded during on the 1847 Tithe Map (Figure 6). Notably, its inclusion with the Tithe assessment highlights that this portion of land was still owned by the Manor of Weston but did not form part of the estate.
- 4.1.30 The established field system is shown to have altered little throughout the late 19th and early/mid-20th century OS revisions. On the 1896 OS Map, Dell Spring (Figure 7) is illustrated in its existing position in the northwest of the site, A chalk pit is marked at the eastern end of what is later recorded as Nine Acre Spring. Tile Kiln Farm and Dane End Farm are detailed in their

existing positions, to the northwest and southeast of the Site respectively.

- 4.1.31 By the 1970s, the land allocations and general appearance of the Study Area had begun to change, with the development of Stevenage to the southeast (Figure 8). Notably, the woodland of Nine Acre Spring had expanded beyond its north, east, and west boundaries to encompass the former Brewers Land Spring and alter the course of the nearby footpath. Moreover, numerous field boundaries had now been dissolved and double line electricity pylons erected across the Site in a northeast-to-southwest orientation.
- 4.1.32 Great Ashby was constructed (from the southeastern part of Graveley parish) to the south of the Site between 1999 and 2006 although no significant changes are depicted within the Site from 1979 onwards, as the Site attained its present configuration.

Past Archaeological Investigations within the Site

- 4.1.33 The Site has been subject to several archaeological investigations, comprising geophysical surveys in 2007 and 2022, and trial trench evaluations in 2008 (covering the northwestern portion of the Site only) and 2023 (covering much of the remainder of the Site).
- 4.1.34 A geophysical survey was undertaken for part of the Site in 2007 (see ES Chapter 11: Archaeology, Appendix 11.2), which located a number of anomalies of possible archaeological origin (Stratascan, 2007).
- 4.1.35 OA undertook a trial trench evaluation (40 trenches) in 2008 (see ES Chapter 11: Archaeology, Appendix 11.4) on the land adjacent to Tile Kiln Farm, which encompasses the northwestern portion of the current site outline (OA, 2008). This identified a field system, and evidence indicative of nearby settlement and tile production in the north of the Site. Additionally, a single rubbish pit provided datable evidence in the form of late Iron Age pottery, which included large pieces of locally made, grog tempered, Belgic-style pottery. A number of undated ditches, pits and postholes were also recorded within the wider evaluation area.
- 4.1.36 A Heritage Impact Assessment was additionally undertaken by Heritage Network in 2016 (Heritage Network, 2016).
- 4.1.37 As part of the current application, a geophysical survey was carried out across in September 2022 (see ES Chapter 11: Archaeology, Appendix 11.3), covering an area of an area of 45.65ha (Magnitude Surveys, 2022). A series of linear and curvilinear anomalies were identified across the survey area, along with a number of discrete anomalies. In the northwest of the Site (in the area of the previous 2008 evaluation), a weak rectilinear anomaly was identified within a natural spread. A further series of negative linear anomalies were identified in the southeast of the Site. An undetermined classification has been given to these anomalies; however the geophysical survey results were not assessed in relation to the 2008 trial trenching.
- 4.1.38 As detailed in the above section, a trial trench evaluation (72 trenches) was undertaken as part of the current application (see ES Chapter 11: Archaeology, Appendix 11.5) (OA, 2024). A Mesolithic flint tranche axehead was found in the subsoil of one of the trenches. Eight sherds of Roman pottery were found: two possibly residual in potentially medieval features in the north

of the Site; and two from ditches or structural features containing burnt flint, charcoal, chalk and burnt stone in the south of the Site. A quarry pit recorded in the northeast of the Site may have been medieval or post-medieval, potentially associated with tile production previously identified at Tile Kiln Farm. A post-medieval feature in the west of the site may have represented a trackway. Undated ditches and a pit were found across the centre of the Site.

5. Archaeological Potential and Significance

- 5.1.1 A review has been undertaken of the sources detailed in Section 3 including archaeological investigations conducted across the Site. The potential for archaeological evidence originating from the various periods is summarised below.
- 5.1.2 The Site does not fall within the boundaries of any Historic Park and Gardens, and no designated heritage assets (e.g. Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Listed Buildings) are located within the Site Outline. The Study Area is characterised by a variety of relatively small, dispersed settlements throughout the landscape during the prehistoric and historic periods.
- 5.1.3 The 2008 and 2023 evaluations indicated a low level 'background' presence of Prehistoric and Roman artefactual evidence. Both evaluations recorded medieval activity in the form of quarry pits, with the 2008 evaluation demonstrating a greater degree of medieval evidence, with a suggestion of a possible area of settlement and associated field systems in the north of the Site.
- 5.1.4 Taken together, the results of the previous phases of investigation indicate the presence of limited archaeological remains across the Site as a whole. Of the 114 trenches excavated across the two evaluations, 80 (70%) were either blank or only contained features of natural origin. Of the 34 trenches that did contain archaeological remains, 6 contained features dated to the medieval period (all located in the north-western section of the Site), 2 trenches identified cut features potentially dating to the Roman period (trench 102 in the south of the Site and trench 20 in the north-west, the latter may possibly date to the late Iron Age), 3 trenches contained post-medieval features, and the remaining 23 trenches contained undated cut features that were largely devoid of artefacts.
- 5.1.5 The Cartographic sources suggest that the Site has been undeveloped open land and likely utilised as farmland for much of the post-medieval period. Post-medieval features identified during the 2023 evaluation included a possible quarry pit in and a post-medieval boundary ditch with two earlier undated ditches on the same alignment. Historic and modern ploughing may have affected the survival of remains.

Prehistoric

- 5.1.6 A single feature, potentially dating to the late Iron Age has been identified in the north-west of the Site. However, given the scarcity of such remains across the Site, it is considered that there is a low potential for further prehistoric remains to be present. Such limited and isolated remains would be considered as having local area significance.

Roman

- 5.1.7 The Site has low potential to contain Roman features. The evidence of the 2023 evaluation added to the previous 2008 conclusions for a low level 'background' presence of Roman material. Further evidence if present, is likely to constitute remains of a residual nature or sparse rural occupational activity. Such remains would be considered as having local area significance.

Medieval

- 5.1.8 The Site is known to contain Medieval remains and there is a moderate potential for further, as yet unidentified medieval remains. It is likely that the Site lay within an agricultural landscape during this period. Medieval ditches, interpreted as being related to nearby settlement, including evidence for tile production and a field system have been recorded near to Tile Kiln Farm in the northwest of the Site. These remains are considered as having local area significance.

Post-Medieval

- 5.1.9 The Site has moderate to high potential to contain post-medieval remains. The Site lay within an open agricultural landscape throughout the post-medieval period, with some areas being associated with the nearby farmsteads such as Tile Kiln Farm. In areas of the Site unaffected by modern ploughing or truncation, there is potential for further post-medieval agricultural features similar to those recorded during the 2023 evaluation. The northwestern portion of the Site in particular has increased potential for historic structures to be present below ground. These would likely be of local area significance.

6. Impact of Proposals

6.1.1 The Proposed Development includes the following:

A Hybrid application for a residential-led development comprising residential (Use Class C3), educational use (Use Class F1), a community hub (Use Class F2) with associated new internal roads, access, parking, cycling infrastructure, landscaping and other associated infrastructure.

Full application comprises the construction of vehicle access and an active travel link via Mendip Way, with associated landscaping and drainage works.

The outline application, for which all matters are reserved except for means of access, comprises the erection of up to 640 dwellings (Use Class C3), a site for a primary school, further land reserved for educational use (Use Class F1), a site for a community hub (Use Class F2), with associated infrastructure.

6.1.2 Detailed design and construction methodology is not available at the current stage, as the development is currently at an early design stage. Some of the proposed new structures detailed in the landscape parameter plan (Figure 9) are likely to have elements extending below ground level, as described below.

6.1.3 All types of intrusive, below ground works that occur as part of the Proposed Development will have the potential to negatively impact on surviving below ground archaeological remains within their footprint. The following indicative activities during the construction phase have the potential to affect buried remains:

- Earthworks, infilling/enlarging and ground re-profiling, primarily in relation to excavations belowground level to facilitate drainage and flood mitigation;
- New construction access;
- Construction of buildings, including associated infrastructure, drainage features/SuDS and utilities; and
- Foundations of new structures.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1.1 The primary objectives of this report were to identify the nature, extent, and significance of any archaeological heritage assets that may be impacted by the proposed development.
- 7.1.2 Previous trial trenching and geophysical survey on the Site have produced positive results for archaeology. The results of the evaluations carried out to date will additionally be used to refine an appropriate mitigation strategy if permission is granted.
- 7.1.3 With consideration to the archaeology recorded within the Site and the nature of the topography, geology, and archaeological and historical background, there is a low potential for features dating to the prehistoric and Roman periods, and a moderate to high potential for medieval and post-medieval remains present on the Site. All remains on the Site are likely to be of local area significance only.
- 7.1.4 The Proposed Development will include below ground intrusions with potential to impact on below ground archaeological remains, where present.

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9. Figures



Figure 1 Site Location Plan

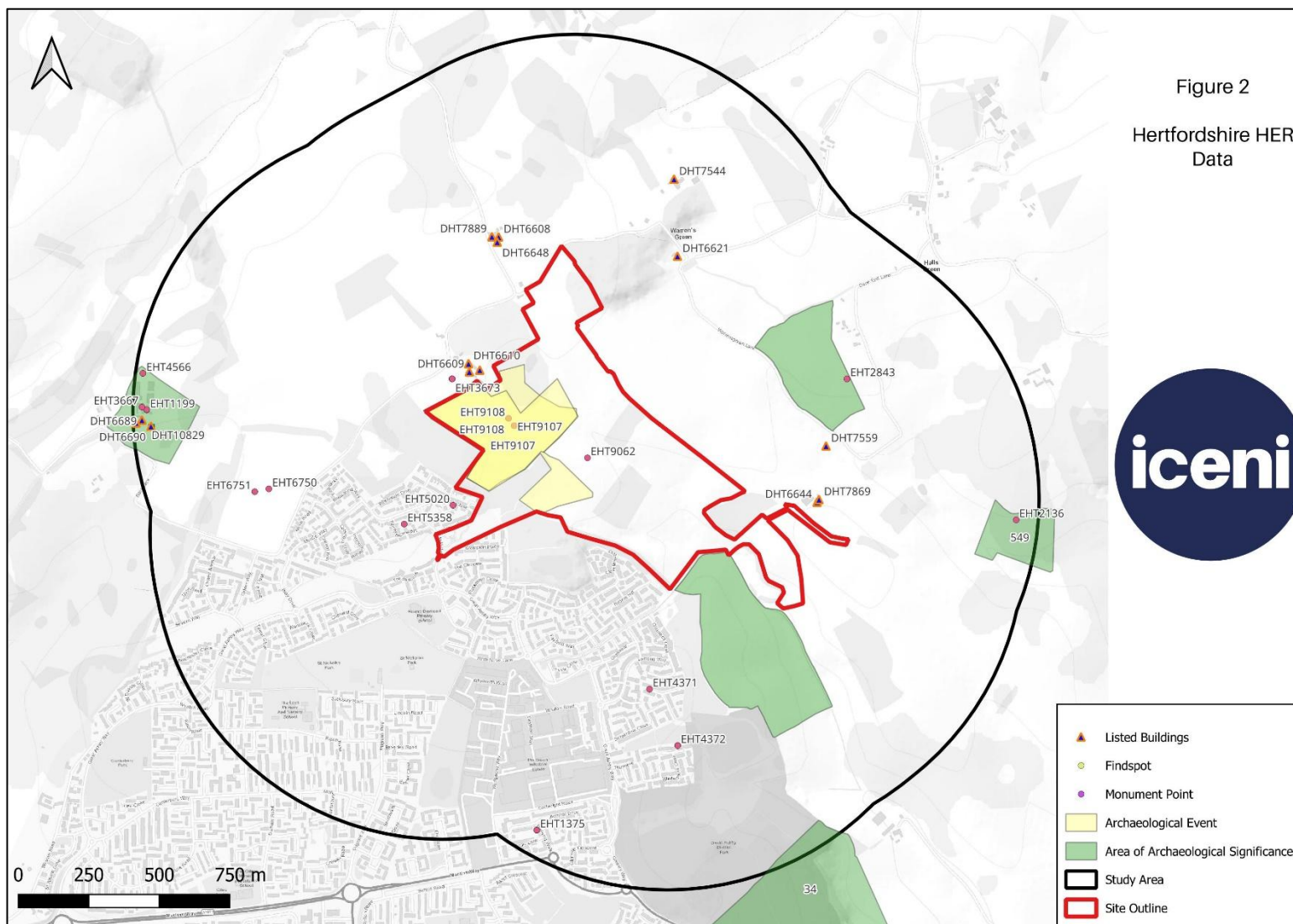


Figure 2 HER data

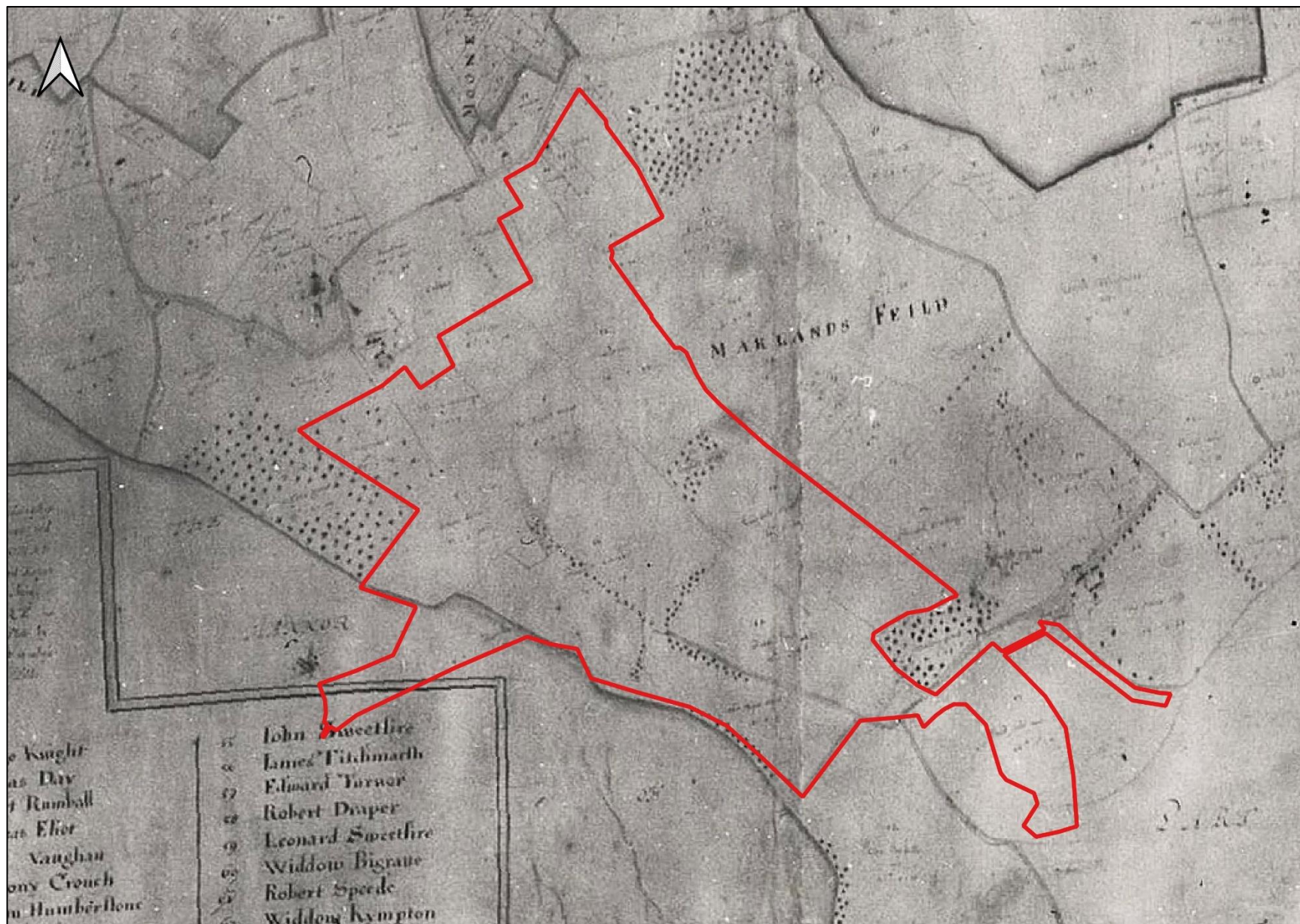


Figure 3 1633 Map of Weston



Figure 4 Weston Enclosure Map 1797



Figure 5 TM Pryor Estate Map 1822



Figure 6 1847 Tithe Map

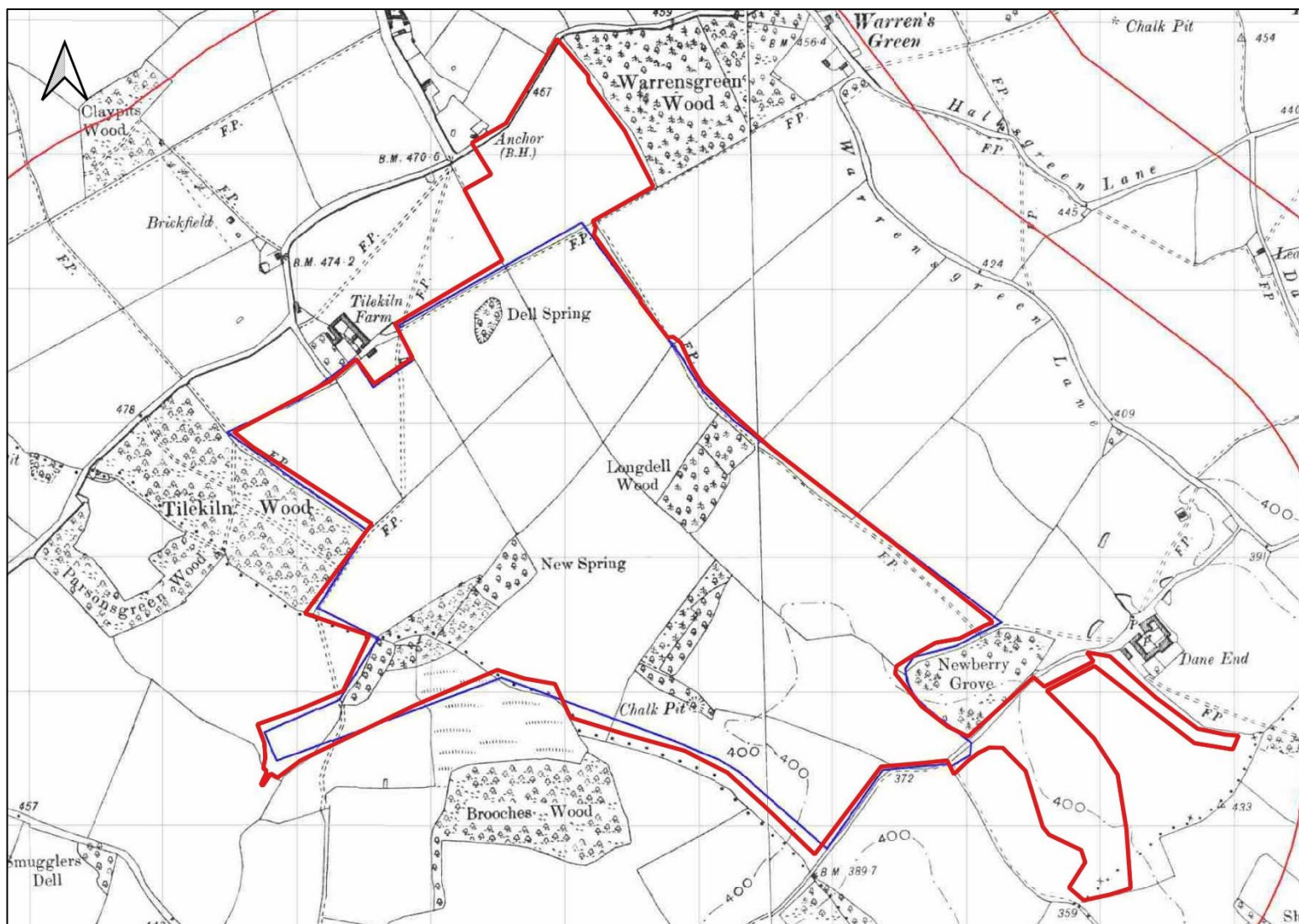


Figure 7 1896 OS Map

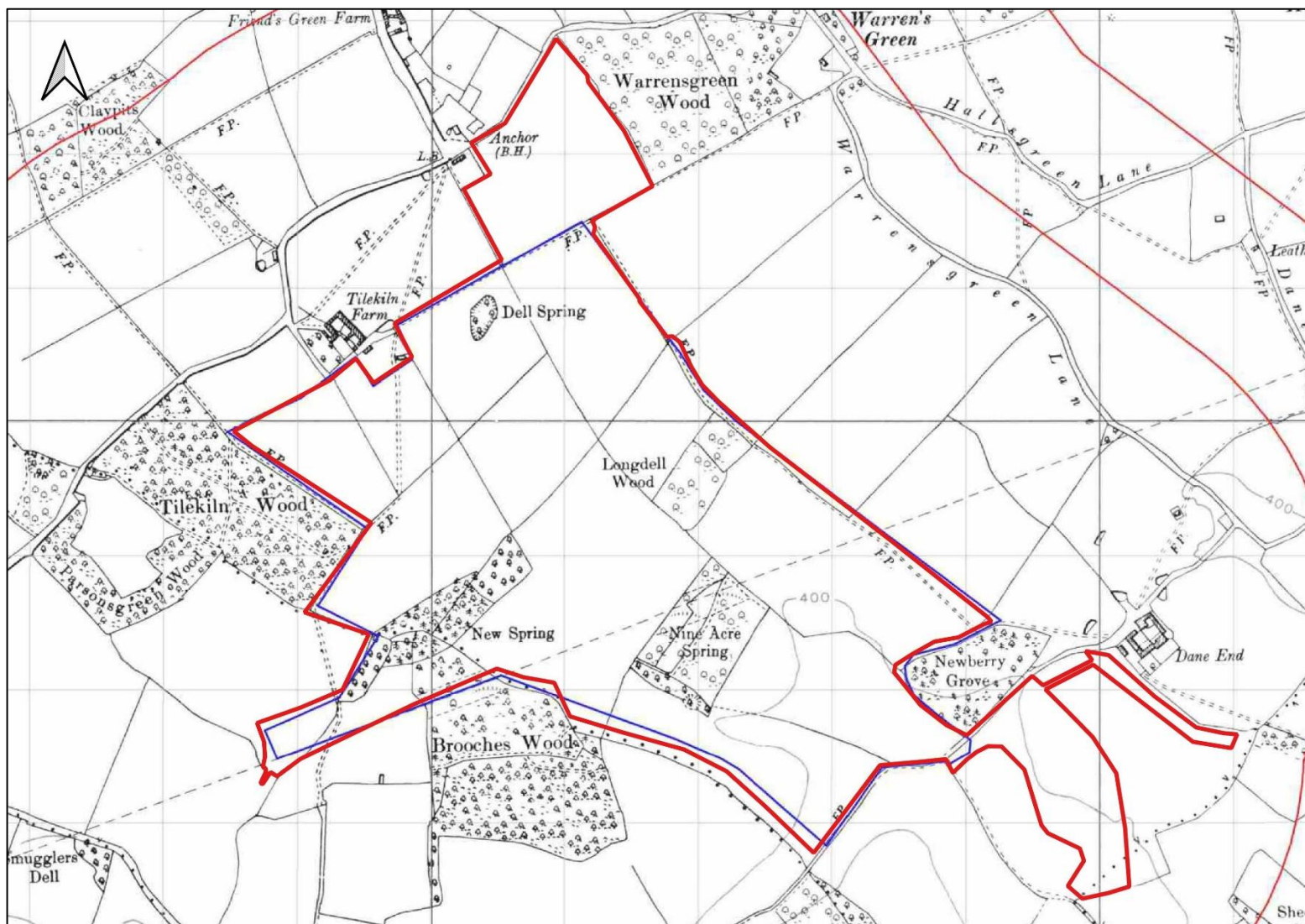


Figure 8 OS Map 1970



Figure 9 Application Framework Masterplan

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 (2025)

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 Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in November 2022, replacing the saved policies of the District Plan Second Review with Alterations.

The principal existing local plan policies relating to archaeology within the historic environment are as follows:

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)
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- The British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology (BABAO) 2019, Code of Ethics and Code of Practice