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Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Land off Echo Hill, Royston

North Hertfordshire

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Gladman Developments Ltd

May 2025

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ON BEHALF OF GLADMAN
DEVELOPMENTS LTD



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Archaeological Desk-Based
Assessment

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

of the Proposed Development at

Land off Echo Hill, Royston

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Non-technical Summary

Iceni Projects has been commissioned by Gladman Developments Ltd to carry out an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment in advance of the Proposed Development on the Site off Echo Hill, Royston, North Hertfordshire.

This Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment assesses the potential presence and significance of archaeological assets on the Site, and the impact of the Proposed Development on such assets.

The Proposed Development will involve an outline planning application for the demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill and the erection of up to 84 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system, with all matters reserved save for access.

A previous outline planning application for the Site submitted in March 2017 was refused. An amended scheme was then submitted in April 2020 and subsequently refused.

The southern half of the Site is covered by an Archaeological Area, as designated by Hertfordshire County Council in conjunction with North Hertfordshire District Council, that is characterised by the presence of historical ridge and furrow patterns.

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

- **Very Low potential** for prehistoric remains associated with occasional and/or ephemeral land use of **Negligible to Local Area** significance.
- **Very Low potential** for Roman remains associated with occasional and/or ephemeral land use of **Negligible to Local Area Significance**
- **Very Low potential** for Saxon/medieval remains associated with agricultural activities of **Negligible Significance**
- **Low potential** for post-medieval remains relating to field boundaries, ditches, and other features associated with rural land use of **Negligible Significance**

This report concludes that the Proposed Development has the potential to impact buried heritage assets of very low overall potential and local/ negligible significance within the Site, if present. This document will assist the Local Planning Authority in determining whether planning consent can be granted, subject to considerations outlined in the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. It will also support the Local Planning Authority in confirming whether any further archaeological work is required as a planning condition, with reference to the previous advice provided by the Natural, Historic & Built Environment Advisory Team regarding the 2020 planning application, and taking into account the prior archaeological fieldwork on Site.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

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

1.2. Site Location

- 1.2.1 The Site is located on agricultural fields, to the south of the main settlement of Royston, adjacent to Briary Lane and on the edge of the town's urban development. The Site includes a single dwelling and plot fronting onto Echo Hill.
- 1.2.2 The approximate centre of the Site lies at National Grid Reference 535393, 239955.
- 1.2.3 The southern half of the Site is covered by an Archaeological Area, as designated by Hertfordshire County Council in conjunction with the North Herts District Council that is characterised by the presence of historical ridge and furrow patterns.
- 1.2.4 The Site lies adjacent to a further Archaeological Area (AA), immediately west of the site along Briary Lane, designated for the presence of the Scheduled Monument known as Two Bowl Barrows: Part Of The Round Barrow Cemetery On Therfield Heath (National Heritage List of England Number 1010432), located approximately 450m west of the Site.

1.3. Planning Background and Description of Development

- 1.3.1 In the context of planning and development, the conservation of the historic environment is a material consideration. Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (updated December 2024) specifically Paragraphs 202 to 221 address the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment; these set out the local planning authority's

responsibilities when dealing with planning proposals which have the potential to impact on cultural heritage assets. These policies emphasise the importance of balancing the need for the conservation of heritage assets with the desirability of new development.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1.3.4 An Outline planning application for the Site was submitted in March 2018 (Ref 18/00747/OP) for the erection of up to 107 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access point from Briary Lane Planning. This was refused on landscape, ecological, transport and percentage of affordable housing by the North Herts District Council (NHDC).

- 1.3.5 The Natural, Historic & Built Environment Advisory Team to NHDC provided the following advice in regards of archaeology:

Given the potential for the presence of archaeological features and the large-scale nature of the proposal, I believe that this development should be regarded as likely to have an impact

on significant heritage assets with archaeological interest, some of which may be of sufficient importance to meet NPPF, para. 139. This could represent a significant constraint on development. At present, not enough information is available to determine whether remains of such importance are likely to be present

Therefore, I recommend that the following investigations should be undertaken predetermination (NPPF, para. 128) to describe the type, scale, and quality of heritage assets likely to be affected by the proposal:

1. An archaeological geophysical survey;

2. An archaeological trial trenching evaluation

1.3.6 In April 2018 a programme of geophysical survey was carried on Site. This informed the subsequent programme of archaeological trial trenching evaluation carried out in 2018.

1.3.7 An amended scheme was then submitted in April 2020 (20/00744/OP), and subsequently refused by the NHDC. When consulted, the Natural, Historic & Built Environment Advisory Team to NHDC provided the following commentary in regards of archaeology:

An archaeological geophysical survey and a trial trenching evaluation comprising a 3% sample of the site were carried out prior to the determination of previous planning application

18/00747/OP. No remains of archaeological significance were identified in either. It is therefore apparent that, despite its proximity to Therfield Heath, the site has a very low potential for surviving below-ground remains of archaeological significance. Therefore, we have no comment to make on this application.

1.4. Consultation

1.4.1 On the 25th of February 2025, a HER search of a 1km radius from the Site boundary was submitted to the Hertfordshire HER (HHER). This was acknowledged, and the records issued on the 26th of February by the Hertfordshire County Council HER Officer.

1.4.2 Once complete, this assessment will be sent to Hertfordshire Council's Archaeological Advisor.

2. Objectives

2.1. Scope

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

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

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

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

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

2.2. Standard and Guidance

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

Standard

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

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

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.

2.2.2 To summarise, the key aims of this Archaeological DBA are 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 (Sensitivity) of such assets;
- To assess the potential for unknown buried heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals;
- To identify the extent of previous ground disturbance which may have affected buried heritage assets survival; and,
- Provisionally assess the likely impacts upon the sensitivity of the assets arising from the Proposed Development.

3. Methodology and Sources Consulted

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

3.2. *Archaeological Potential*

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

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

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

Table 1 Archaeological Potential

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

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

3.3. *Archaeological Significance (Sensitivity)*

3.3.1 The NPPF defines Sensitivity as ‘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. Sensitivity derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.’ Historic England’s Advice Note 12 also offers an interpretation of the various forms of heritage interest that an asset can possess, based on the terms provided in the NPPF Glossary.

3.3.2 The Significance (Sensitivity) of each buried heritage assets is evaluated as being high,

medium, low, or very low based on a review of the baseline position of each receptor and its performance against benchmark areas. Each buried heritage asset is assessed on both an individual basis and as part of the entire buried heritage baseline. The attributed value also considers regional variations, individual qualities, professional judgement, and the results of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

3.3.3 The Significance value buried heritage assets is defined in this report as presented in Table 2:

Table 2 Archaeological Significance

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

Local Area / Parish (Low)	Heritage assets with local significance, contributing to community or regional history but lacking broader importance. These sites often have limited research value and typically lack significant preservation. Examples: • Historic Field Systems and Boundaries: Local remains of land-use patterns. • Agricultural Features: Such as ridge and furrow field systems. • Ephemeral Archaeological Evidence: Temporary or poorly preserved remains. • Artefacts of Poor Contextual Stratigraphy: Items with limited archaeological value.
Negligible (Very Low)	Assets with minimal or no archaeological or historical value. They are highly disturbed, damaged, or destroyed, offering little to no insight into the past. These assets have no significant contribution to research or heritage understanding. Examples: • Destroyed Objects: Items no longer in existence. • Buildings of No Architectural Merit: Structures of no historical or architectural value. • Modern Landscape Features: Features like quarries or modern drains. • Disturbances: Modern intrusions that compromise historic integrity.
Unknown	Insufficient information exists to assess the significance of the asset or assets. Further investigation is required to determine the value.

3.3.4 Archaeological significance may be reduced based on known historic or modern impacts on the archaeological heritage asset considered.

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

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

3.4. Sources

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

- **Archaeological Data Service (ADS)** - A comprehensive archive of published and unpublished fieldwork reports.
- **British Geological Survey (BGS)** - Solid and Drift geology digital mapping and geological borehole data where applicable.
- **Details of the Proposed Development** - Existing and proposed development plans, topographical survey, geotechnical / site investigation report, contamination

report, unexploded ordnance assessment, details of existing services and utilities report.

- **Google Earth** – 2021 satellite imagery used as prospection tool for the Site and its surroundings.
- **Historic England** - Information on statutory designated assets data including the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed buildings, and any identified Heritage at Risk.
- **Historic England Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer** – to consult the available aerial imagery.
- **Historic Environment Record (HER)** – Information on archaeological findspots, locally listed buildings, archaeological designation, and the results of previous archaeological investigations within the Site and in the surrounding Study Area. The HER Data was obtained in February 2025;²
- **Local Authority planning policies** - Details within the Hertfordshire Local Plan and other information on historic environment policies, conservation areas and locally listed buildings where published online.
- **Landmark** - Ordnance Survey (OS) maps from their historic first edition through to modern OS mapping. Earlier historic maps were also consulted where available.
- **LIDAR** - Lidar imagery as available from:
<https://historicengland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d45dabcecf5541f18255e12e5cd5f85a&mobileBreakPoint=300;>
- **Site Reports** - Reports on past archaeological investigations within the Site.

3.5. *Site Visit / Archive Visit*

- 3.5.1 A site visit was undertaken by the Iceni Heritage Team in January 2025, during which several photographs were taken of the site and the surrounding area.
- 3.5.2 In this instance, an archive visit was not undertaken as part of this DBA, due to the variety of resources available at the time of the writing. These sources were deemed sufficient to assess the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within the Site:
- OS and Historical Maps available on the National Library of Scotland website, accessed in March 2025.
 - The previous Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (Pegasus Group, Heritage Desk-Based Assessment, March 2018) and Heritage Statement (Pegasus Group, Heritage Statement; February 2020), have been informed and presented the results of the visit carried out on Site.
 - Google Earth to confirm the above resources and provide a broader look at the site within its wider environment. This included a review of the information provided in the 2020 Heritage Statement for the Site, and a cross reference between the satellite imagery (dated 2021), with the photographs collected in 2025 as part of the site visit mentioned above.

² Data received in February 2025.

4. Limitations and Assumptions

4.1. *Limitations*

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

4.2. *Assumptions*

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

5. Archaeological and Historical Background

5.1. Study Area and scope

- 5.1.1 To assess the archaeological potential and significance of the Site, data has been obtained from the HHER within a 1km radius of the boundary of the Site. The HHER data has been examined to identify known archaeological sites and to develop an archaeological baseline by predicting potential archaeological survival on Site.
- 5.1.2 References to archaeological interventions, findspots, and monuments recorded in the HHER, and shown in Figure 3, will be presented in parenthesis throughout this document. Additional sources have also been consulted to supplement this data, as detailed in **Section 3**.
- 5.1.3 Historic structures ('Built Heritage') are not specifically considered within this assessment except where they are relevant to the archaeological interpretation of the Site.

5.2. Geology

- 5.2.1 British Geological Survey (BGS, 2025) records show superficial deposits mapped as "Head, comprising of clay, silt, sand and gravel formed up to three million years ago in the Quaternary Period" recorded in two areas to the northwest and the southeast of the Site. A small area in the southwest corner is mapped as "Till, Mid Pleistocene – Diamicton, formed up to two million years ago in the Quaternary Period", and on the southeast corner of the Site as "Diamicton deposits of the Lowestoft Formation, laid down in the ice age conditions of the Quaternary Period". No other superficial deposits are recorded within the Site.
- 5.2.2 The entire Site is located on New Pit Chalk Formation. This sedimentary bedrock formed between 93.9 and 89.8 million years ago during the Cretaceous period.
- 5.2.3 There are no boreholes recorded within the Site on the BGS database.
- 5.2.4 An archaeological evaluation via trial trenching conducted in 2018 (Cotswold Archaeology, 2018) recorded geological subsoil (natural) in all 45 trenches excavated. This subsoil in the majority of the trenches consisted of chalk, with some gravel lenses, located at depths between 0.40m and 0.80m below the ground surface. Across most of the Site the natural substrate was directly overlain by an agricultural ploughsoil (topsoil) averaging 0.37m in thickness. No further work has taken place on the Site so the level observed in 2018 will still be appropriate to the current conditions on the Site. Colluvial deposits were encountered towards the western edge of the Site, alongside Briary Lane, and in the southeast corner of the Site they were found to be infilling dry channels or natural undulations in the underlying chalk bedrock. The infilling of these depressions/ channels in the substrate may also have been to some extent deliberate, with the intention to modify the natural slope and make the site easier to cultivate. Where removed, the colluvium did not mask any underlying archaeological features and contained very little artefactual material.

5.3. *Topography*

- 5.3.1 The Site comprises two adjoining arable open fields for a total area of approximately 8.9ha. It is rectangular in plan, aligned north to south on the immediate southwest of the village of Royston, and it's mostly bordered by hedgerows and trees. The Site boundary is defined to the north and east by the suburban development of Royston, to the west by Briary Lane, leading to more arable fields further west and south.
- 5.3.2 The topography of the Site varies approximately from 95m to 120m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The highest point is located towards the southwest corner and slopes gradually down towards the northern boundary, where the Site varies from approximately 95m aOD in the northwest corner to approximately 105m aOD in the northeast corner.
- 5.3.3 A reservoir, Wicker Hall, is located along the southwest corner, adjacent to the Site.

5.4. *Historic Landscape Characterisation*

- 5.4.1 The Site is located in Character Area 228 'Scarp Slopes South Of Royston' as recorded in the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment (2011).
- 5.4.2 This Landscape Character Area is described as an extensive area running parallel and to the south of the A505. The scarp extends from the Cat Ditch Valley in the west to the Wardlington Bottom Drain in the east. The area extends southwards, rising to meet the break of slope with the plateau landscape. To the east of Royston, a small chalk outlier extends northwards, ending at Goffers Knoll. The area presents large scale arable fields with ordered pattern of rectilinear field boundaries and lanes with straight boundaries, occasional farmsteads, small tree plantations set out in discrete coverts and individual, localised tree belts.
- 5.4.3 The historic agricultural landscape comprises 18th century and later enclosure, post-1950s enclosure and prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss. 20th century leisure use lies to the north with a 20th century stud farm and informal medieval parkland to the east. There are also pockets of 19th- 20th century plantation in the area. Numerous cropmarks, revealed by aerial photographs, of prehistoric ring ditches linear features and enclosures including a probably prehistoric or Romano-British field system cover a large part of the Character Area. Ancient earthworks cut into the chalk are common, including chalk pits and lynchets. The best surviving ancient landscape in the county lies in the northwest. Surviving elements include Neolithic long barrows, a Bronze Age barrow cemetery and an Iron Age boundary called 'The Mile Ditches'. A medieval moated site lies to the south of the Barrow Cemetery. Springfield style enclosure, three bowl barrows and two pond barrows on Whiteley Hill lie to the east of the area. A prehistoric barrow cemetery and Cross Dyke also occurs in Five Hill Field, 290m southwest of Heath Farm

5.5. *Designated Heritage Assets*³

5.5.1 There are no scheduled monuments, listed buildings, or other designated heritage assets, nor are there any archaeological features identified on the HHER within the Site.

5.5.2 There are three Scheduled Monuments within the Study Area:

- Two Bowl Barrows: Part Of The Round Barrow Cemetery On Therfield Heath (National Heritage List of England Number: 1010432), located approximately 455m west of the Site;
- Royston Cave (National Heritage List of England Number: 1015594), located approximately 585 north of the Site; and,
- Earl's Hill Bowl Barrow: Part Of The Round Barrow Cemetery On Therfield Heath (National Heritage List of England Number: 1010426), located approximately 820m northwest of the Site.

5.6. *Archaeological Areas (AAs)*

5.6.1 The HER records an AA situated in the southern half of the Site, characterised by the presence of historical ridge and furrow patterns.

5.6.2 In the wider 1km Study Area there are 6 further AAs, shown in Figure 2 and briefly summarised below:

- Approximately 100m west of the Site, along Briary Lane, designated to include a wide area around the scheduled barrows recoded on Therfield Heath, as listed above;
- Approximately 200m south of the Site, designated for the presence of cropmarks identified through aerial photography;
- The centre of Royston, approximately 240m northeast of the site which contains the Royston Cave Scheduled Monument and numerous Listed buildings;
- Approximately 435m to the southeast of the Site, where an enclosure was identified through aerial photography;
- Approximately 470m to the east of the Site, where a ring ditch, tentatively interpreted as a late Neolithic enclosure was identified through cropmarks; and,
- Approximately 970m southwest of the Site, an AA is located around the Buntingford Brewery.

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

5.7.1 The prehistoric is a broad period comprising the Palaeolithic (c.500,000 – 10,000BC), Mesolithic (c.10,000 – 4,000BC), Neolithic (c.4,000 – 2,500BC), Bronze Age (c.2,500 – 700BC), and Iron Age (c.700BC – 43AD). Continuous human occupation of Britain began as the climate improved at the end of the last Ice Age, with nomadic hunter gatherer societies exploiting wild plants and animals. Farming was first introduced from the continent to Britain around 4000BC and was accompanied by changes in pottery, burial customs, new types of

³ The Description of the Scheduled Monuments is provided in Appendix B.

monuments and a sedentary population. The arrival of metalworking in the Bronze Age saw a gradual shift in burial practices, an increase in permanent occupational evidence, distinctive field systems and ceremonial landscape monuments. During the Iron Age, elaborate hillfort type structures are constructed, with evidence of ritual offerings and fine iron metalwork suggestive of a warrior aristocracy and the emergence of extensive tribal territories.

- 5.7.2 The Site is approximately located 610m south of the route of the Icknield Way (which follows the current A505), the pre-Roman trackway that runs from Norfolk to Wiltshire, following the chalk escarpment that includes the Berkshire Downs and Chiltern Hills (MHT4182).
- 5.7.3 No prehistoric finds or features are recorded within the Site in the HHER, and the 2018 trial trenching evaluation did not identify any prehistoric remains.
- 5.7.4 Two round barrows are recorded approximately 475m and 520m west of the Site respectively (MHT4288, MHT4289). The barrows are included in the Scheduled Monument known as Two bowl barrows: part of the round barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath (NHLE: 1010432).
- 5.7.5 A further round barrow, located approximately 820m northwest of the Site (MHT4287), is included in the Scheduled Monument known as Earl's Hill Bowl Barrow: Part Of The Round Barrow Cemetery On Therfield Heath (National Heritage List of England Number: 1010426).
- 5.7.6 Cropmarks of possible ring ditches have been recorded via aerial photography approximately 540m southeast (MHT2324), and 630m east of the Site (MHT7402).
- 5.7.7 Numerous prehistoric artefacts have been recovered within the wider Study Area. These have been indicatively located as a group approximately 235m west of the Site in the HHER, but as the actual find spot is not known, these have not been represented in Figure 3. Finds so-recorded include a Mesolithic bone harpoon (MHT1729); five Mesolithic tranche axes (MHT6462); the butt end of a Neolithic polished flint axe (MHT1042); a Neolithic flaked flint axe (MHT823); two flint scrapers and an implement (MHT578); a Bronze Age socketed bronze axe (MHT580); a late Iron Age pot (MHT146); late Iron Age coins (MHT147); two late Iron Age gold stater coins (MHT23139, MHT23143); and three late Iron Age silver coins (MHT22298, MHT23366, MHT23487).

5.8. *Roman period (AD 43 – 410)*

- 5.8.1 The Roman invasion in AD43 brought an end to the prehistoric period in Britain.
- 5.8.2 The current Village of Royston is approximately located at the crossroads between the Icknield Way and the Roman Ermine Street, which was constructed after the conquest of southern Britain to connect London to Lincoln and York.
- 5.8.3 A section of the Ermine Street is located approximately 255m east of the Site (MHT9271).

- 5.8.4 No Roman finds or features are recorded within the Site in the HHER, and the 2018 trial trenching evaluation did not detect any Roman settlement, or land use activities.
- 5.8.5 Roman activities are recorded at Therfield Heath along the course of the Icknield Way, where the indicative location of a Roman Camp (MHT4196), and two parallel ditches, one of which contained a single sherd of Romano-British greyware pottery (MHT12143), are recorded respectively 680m and 340m northwest of the Site.
- 5.8.6 Roman ditches are also recorded approximately 950m north of the Site, beneath Green Drift, a road of probably medieval origin (MHT1376).
- 5.8.7 Roman coins and other evidence of Roman occupation are recorded west of Briary Lane, approximately 180m north of the Site (MHT1489).
- 5.8.8 Numerous Roman artefacts have been recovered within the wider Study Area. These have been indicatively located as a group approximately 235m west of the Site in the HHER, but as the actual find spot is not known, these have not been represented in Figure 3. Finds so recorded include a number of Roman coins (MHT1736), a bronze figurine (MHT4198), sherds of a glass bottle (MHT4199), and a Roman unspecified metalwork (MHT9793).

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

- 5.9.1 Royston does not appear in Domesday Book. It was part of the parishes of Therfield, Reed and Barkway (in Hertfordshire), and Bassingbourn and Melbourn (in Cambridgeshire). The first documentary evidence of the town appearing in the Charter of Eustace de Merc, Lord of Newsells, regarding the foundation of the Augustinian Priory in 1184 (MHT4200), which lies approximately 540m northeast of the Site.
- 5.9.2 The name of the medieval village of Royston (MHT16), known as Crux Roesia (in a variety of spellings) in the 12th to 14th centuries, is thought to derive from a wayside cross, known as Roisia's Stone, located at the crossroads between the Icknield Way and the Roman Ermine Street, approximately 580m north of the Site (MHT2724). It is believed that the cross might have been established during Saxon times and restored after the Norman Conquest
- 5.9.3 By the early 14th century, the settlement around the cross had developed into a significant market town referred to as Roisia's Town, which was then later shortened to Royston.
- 5.9.4 Within the Site, cropmarks of ridge and furrow dating to the medieval period are visible in the LiDAR imagery (MHT7780). The geophysical survey within the Site identified linear anomalies which were considered to be furrows predominantly in the northern area of the Site (EHT8526). A potential headland, associated with ridge and furrow cultivation, was also recorded in the northwestern area of the Site. However, the subsequent trial trench evaluation within the site did not record the below-ground remains of furrows associated with ridge and furrow cultivation

(EHT8606).

- 5.9.5 A lead trade weight, tentatively dated to the medieval to post-medieval period is recorded within the Site (MHT24412).
- 5.9.6 Cropmarks of ditches and possible enclosures are recorded approximately 150m south of the Site (MHT17016). The cropmarks are indicative of a wide ditch and possible enclosures which underlie the modern boundaries and predate the enclosure of Therfield.
- 5.9.7 A possible medieval wheel-rutted trackway running parallel to the current Baldock Street was recorded approximately 870m northwest of the Site (MHT16210).
- 5.9.8 Following the Augustinian Priory, two further religious foundations were established in the medieval period: the Hospital of St Nicholas for lepers (MHT2725), located approximately 790m north of the Site, which ceased to exist by 1359, and the Hospital of SS John and James (MHT2726), founded by 1224 and located approximately 580m northeast of the Site. The presence of a possible medieval cemetery associated to the latter and located along Briary Lane, was suggested when four coffined inhumations were recorded approximately 540m north of the Site, and 50m west of the Hospital of SS John and James (MHT1738).
- 5.9.9 Likely associated with the Augustinian Priory as potentially located within the precinct, three pits found in the yard behind 5 Church Lane have been recorded approximately 540m northeast of the Site (MHT30648).
- 5.9.10 The Scheduled Royston Cave (NHLE: 1015594), located approximately 585 north of the Site, presents numerous carvings on the wall, mostly of religious nature. These are stylistically dated to the 13th-14th century, but the cave itself it's believed to have been in use until the 16th century, and potentially also associated with the Knight Templar order.
- 5.9.11 A number of small buildings and houses dating to the medieval period are also still extant in the historic centre of Royston, as part of the post-12th century development: a 15th century timber-framed building, once one of the main coaching inns of the town (MHT11289), a late 16th-17th century house (MHT11339), and a timber-framed building on the south side of Baldock Street (MHT6352).
- 5.9.12 Numerous artefacts dating to the medieval period have been recovered within the wider Study Area. These have been indicatively located as a group approximately 135m southwest of the Site in the HHER, but as the exact find spot is not known, these have not been represented in Figure 3. Finds so recorded include a copper-alloy seal matrix (MHT24529), a copper-alloy vessel foot (MHT24580), a copper-alloy dress fastener (MHT24581), and a copper-alloy double-loop buckle (MHT25069). Similarly, the indicative location of medieval gold brooch (MHT2730), and six bronze Saxon brooches (MHT2728), are recorded in the HHER approximately 235m west of the Site (MHT2730).

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

- 5.10.1 The Royston Conservation Area, located approximately 240m northeast of the Site, covers the historic centre of the town and includes a large number of historic buildings, finds and features related to the post medieval development of Royston. As historic structures (Built Heritage) are not specifically considered within this assessment, these will not be discussed any further, and not singularly represented in Figure 3.
- 5.10.2 The only post-medieval entry present in the HHER within the Site is associated with a copper alloy strap fitting (MHT24415). The strap fitting is in the form of a diamond and is gilded and decorated with circles on each corner.
- 5.10.3 Some 16th/18th centuries pottery fragments have been collected from the base of the colluvium during the archaeological trial trenching evaluation carried on in 2018 on Site (EHT8606).
- 5.10.4 Two 18th century chalk-cut cellars were recorded on the street frontage approximately 375m north-east of the site (MHT6365). Similar style cellars have been recorded beneath numerous buildings in the historic core of Royston.
- 5.10.5 Post-medieval boundary ditches are recorded in three areas located approximately 450m northeast (MHT30691), 860m north (MHT12691), and 1.2km northwest of the Site (MHT2903). The latter, identified via cropmarks and confirmed during an archaeological evaluation carried out in the field nearby, showed at least two different phases of field boundaries (EHT7761).
- 5.10.6 During the same archaeological evaluation that confirmed the presence of, and in close proximity to MHT2903, a disturbed and rutted area found as been tentatively interpreted as a post-medieval trackway (MHT30651).
- 5.10.7 Approximately 663m north of the Site, a watching brief carried out in the town centre of Royston in 1997 (EHT4817) exposed structural archaeological remains which have been associated with the western half of King James I Palace (MHT10895).
- 5.10.8 Numerous arbitrary located artefacts dating to the medieval period have been recovered within the wider Study Area. These have been indicatively located as a group approximately 135m southwest of the Site in the HHER, but as the location of collection is not known, these have not been represented in Figure 3. Finds so recorded include a number of copper alloy objects (MHT24582, MHT24583, MHT24585, MHT24415, MHT24882, MHT24584, MHT25067, MHT25068, MHT25070, MHT29204).
- 5.10.9 Similarly, a number of post-medieval artifact are recorded in the HHER, but only tentatively located within the Royston area and therefore not represented in Figure 3. Finds so recoded include a trade token (MHT 4727); a stoneware spindle whorl (MHT 29169), and two gold coins which depict an image of James I (MHT 2731).

- 5.10.10 The approximate location of the Site is first depicted on the 1725 coloured map 'of the common field to the north of Therfield belonging to the Dean and Chapter of St Pauls' (not reproduced here). The Site is situated across several fields, which appear to have been subdivided into strip fields.
- 5.10.11 The 1838 Tithe Map (Figure 4⁴) illustrates the Site comprising a large field to the north and two smaller ones to the south. These appears to have been amalgamated at the end of the 19th century, as shown in the 1887 OS map (Figure 5⁵).
- 5.10.12 By the first half of the 20th century, a small reservoir had been constructed in the south west of the fields, just outside of the Site as shown in the 1946 OS map (Figure 6⁶).
- 5.10.13 The 1970 OS map (not reproduced here) shows that the late 20th century modern development at Royston has expanded and surrounds the Site on both the northern and eastern boundaries

5.11. Undated

- 5.11.1 Few undated archaeological assets are recoded in the HHER.
- 5.11.2 Undated cropmarks suggesting the presence of linear features and possible enclosures are recorded within the fields south of the Site, approximately 135m (MHT17016), 620m (MHT17017), and 1,1km (MHT2559).
- 5.11.3 More undated cropmarks representing linear and ring ditches and have been recorded via aerial imagery approximately 625m east of the Site (MHT17786).
- 5.11.4 A possible Roman or Saxon burial mound in proximity to the Roman Ermine Street, containing nine undated burials, a knife, spear and coins is recorded approximately 970m north of the Site (MHT1734).

5.12. Past Archaeological Investigations within the Site

- 5.12.1 In April 2018 an archaeological geophysical survey (Pre-Construct Geophysics Ltd, 2018) has been carried out on Site, as part of the pre-determination work related to a previous planning application (EHT8526).
- 5.12.2 With the exception of potential remains of ridge and furrow cultivation in the northern portion of the Site, the survey has not recorded magnetic variation that can be confidently attributed to potential buried archaeological remains. However, a limited number of discrete anomalies have been tentatively highlighted as possible pits. Modern and recent variation includes that associated with cultivation; at least one recently demolished structure; a possible service and

⁴ Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

⁵ Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

⁶ Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

other miscellaneous ferrous-rich features/objects, some of which relates to existing boundaries. An extensive spread of likely modern debris was recorded in the northwest corner.

- 5.12.3 Further to the above works, in April 2018, an archaeological trial trenching evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology, 2018) has been carried out, with a total of 45 trenches excavated (EHT8606).
- 5.12.4 The results of the trial trenching evaluation suggest that activity within the site predominantly dates to the post-medieval and modern periods, with no evidence for prehistoric land use. The features identified are judged to be of negligible to very low archaeological significance and the results of the project have little potential to contribute to any regional research framework objectives beyond seemingly confirming that there is no surviving evidence for a continuation into the development area of the monumental ritual/ funerary landscape known to the west, on Thurfield Heath.

6. Archaeological Potential and Significance

6.1. *Factors affecting archaeological survival*

- 6.1.1 A review has been undertaken of the sources detailed in **Section 5** to inform the statement on the potential for archaeological evidence originating from the various periods summarised below.
- 6.1.2 Historic and modern impacts are taken into consideration when assessing potential and significance of archaeological assets.
- 6.1.3 Cartographic sources suggest that the Site has been in agricultural use during the 18th to 20th centuries, with extensive changes to the field boundaries between the 18th and the 19th century, and at the beginning of the 20th century when the field boundaries on the southern part of the Site were removed.
- 6.1.4 Considering the shallowness of the topsoil (between 0.25m and 0.40m), agricultural activities such as ploughing and the use of heavy agricultural machinery are likely to have contributed to localised removal or damaging of buried remains in some areas. This has been confirmed by the archaeological trial trenching evaluation, which recorded evidence of truncation caused by modern ploughing on archaeological deposits across the entire Site. The collection of a mix of 16th-18th century pottery fragments recovered from the base of the colluvium during the archaeological trial trenching evaluation, would also confirm mass movement of soils, and therefore disturbance of sub-surface deposits, as a result of relatively recent cultivation practices.
- 6.1.5 The archaeological evaluation carried out on Site in 2018, confirmed the presence of modern plough truncation which are believed to have caused the almost total removal of any ridge and furrow features and may explain the relatively ephemeral nature of the few features recorded.

6.2. *Archaeological Potential and Significance*

- 6.2.1 No Designated Heritage Assets are located within the Site.

Prehistoric

- 6.2.2 In consideration of the results of the geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation carried out in 2018, the Site has a **Very Low potential** for Prehistoric remains. Any Prehistoric remains present within the Site would be likely associated with occasional and/or ephemeral land use, such as isolated 'stray' finds or features. Such remains would be of **Negligible to Local Area significance**

Roman

- 6.2.3 In consideration of the results of the geophysical survey and archaeological evaluation carried out in 2018, the Site has a **Very Low potential** for Roman remains. Any Roman remains

present within the Site would be likely associated with occasional and/or ephemeral land use, such as isolated 'stray' finds or features. Such remains would be of **Negligible to Local Area significance**

Saxon and medieval

- 6.2.4 Although the preceding geophysical survey and aerial mapping sources, indicated that the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation were likely to be present in the form of the basal remains of furrows in the southern section of the Site, no convincing evidence for these features was recorded during the archaeological evaluation carried out in 2018. It is therefore considered that the site has a **Very Low potential** for Saxon and medieval remains. Any such remains would likely be associated with agricultural activities but will almost certainly have been affected by modern plough disturbance. Such remains would be considered as having **Negligible significance**.

Post-medieval

- 6.2.5 The archaeological evaluation carried out in 2018, suggest that activity within the Site predominantly dates to the post-medieval and modern periods. It is therefore considered that the Site has **Low potential** to contain post-medieval remains. Any such remains are likely to include evidence of field boundaries, ditches, and other features associated with rural land use during this period of **Negligible significance**.

7. Impact of Proposals

7.1.1 The Proposed Development is described as follows:

The Proposed Development will involve an outline planning application for the demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill and the erection of up to 84 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS), with all matters reserved save for access.

7.1.2 As this DBA is supporting a submission for an Outline planning application, the impact assessment below is based on the Illustrative Development Framework Plan (Figure 7).

7.1.3 Design and construction impacts can include, but are not limited to: ground clearance, levelling, landscaping, stripping, piling, and all types of excavation, including those for services, foundations, and crane bases.

7.1.4 Other types of indirect impacts (i.e. not associated with the design) may also impact upon below ground remains such as ground compaction associated with hardstanding, the installation of welfare, as well as wheel-rutting from excavators and machinery.

7.1.5 Considering the shallowness of the topsoil (between 0.25m and 0.40m), and the relatively shallow depth of archaeology recorded on Site (sand and gravels, recorded at between 0.40m - 0.60m bgl), any topsoil removal or below-ground impact may result in detrimental effects on any surviving archaeological deposits, resulting in partial or complete truncation, compaction or displacement.

7.1.6 A high level, provisional assessment of the development impact is as follows:

- Attenuation tanks – these features which are likely to require deep excavation are likely to fully truncate and remove any surviving archaeology;
- New structures – may require deep excavation depending on the extent of the proposed foundations which would fully truncate and remove any surviving archaeology. The footprint of the proposed buildings (if / where foundations are not required), would partially truncate, compact or displace archaeology; and,
- Proposed landscaping – the proposed localised landscape works (focal spaces, drives and thoroughfares and recreational routes) may require localised excavation and ground levelling, which may partially truncate, compact and / or displace archaeology.

7.1.7 This impact assessment will require updating when detailed designs are finalised.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Conclusion

- 8.1.1 The primary objectives of this DBA were to identify all known assets potentially affected by the Proposed Development, and the potential for currently unknown buried heritage assets; to gain an understanding of the buried heritage resource in order to understand their sensitivity; and, to inform strategies for further evaluation, mitigation, or management as appropriate.
- 8.1.2 There are no World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens or registered battlefields within the Site.
- 8.1.3 A geophysical survey and an archaeological evaluation via trial trenching have been carried out within the Site. No remains of archaeological significance were identified in either.
- 8.1.4 With consideration to the archaeology recorded within the 1km Study Area and the nature of the Site's topography, geology, archaeological and historical background, and the results of the archaeological evaluation carried out on Site, there is very low potential for surviving archaeological remains. If present, any surviving archaeological remains are likely to be associated with post-medieval and modern agricultural activities, with little potential to contribute to the East Midlands Regional Research Framework objectives beyond confirming the lack of association between the Site and the nearby activities on Thurfield Heath. Therefore, it is considered that any surviving archaeological deposits would be of negligible to very low significance
- 8.1.5 The impacts likely arising from the Proposed Development as currently understood, range between causing partial truncation, displacement and compaction to full truncation, displacement and compaction on any surviving archaeological deposits.

8.2. Previous Recommendations

- 8.2.1 When consulted as part the 2020 revised planning application (20/00744/OP), the Natural, Historic & Built Environment Advisory Team to NHDC provided the following commentary:

An archaeological geophysical survey and a trial trenching evaluation comprising a 3% sample of the site were carried out prior to the determination of previous planning application

18/00747/OP. No remains of archaeological significance were identified in either. It is therefore apparent that, despite its proximity to Therfield Heath, the site has a very low potential for surviving below-ground remains of archaeological significance. Therefore, we have no comment to make on this application.

- 8.2.2 The current Outline application does not present any significant or material change in regard to the impact arising from the Proposed Development, beyond what considered by the Planning Inspectorate and the Natural, Historic & Built Environment Advisory Team to NHDC

for the prior application to develop the Site.

- 8.2.3 The results of this assessment do not identify any significant or material changes to the archaeological baseline of the Site, nor do they indicate any new potential development impacts on previously unknown archaeological deposits, beyond considered by the Planning Inspectorate and Natural, Historic & Built Environment Advisory Team's Advice for the prior application to develop the Site.
- 8.2.4 Based on the conclusions of this assessment, the overall very low potential and local/ negligible significance of any surviving archaeology it is requested that the approach issued by Natural, Historic & Built Environment Advisory Team in response to the 2020 planning application should be applied to the current development, specifically that no further archaeological fieldwork work is undertaken in support of the planning application.

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10. Figures

Figure 1 Site Location



0 250 500 m

Archaeological Areas

1km Study Area

Site Boundary

Figure 2
Study Area and
Archaeological
Areas

iceni

Figure 3 HER Events and Monuments

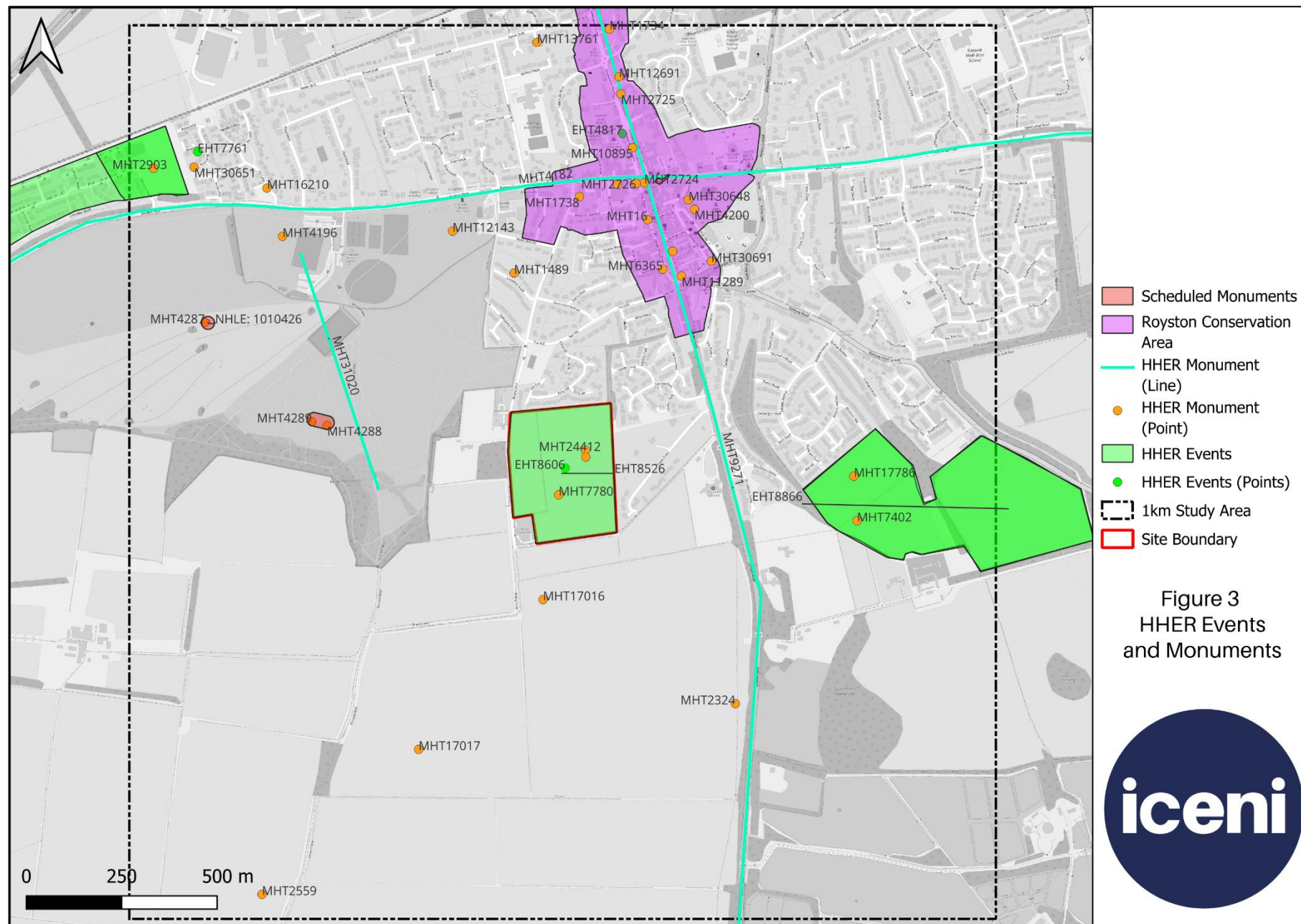


Figure 4 1838 Tithe Map

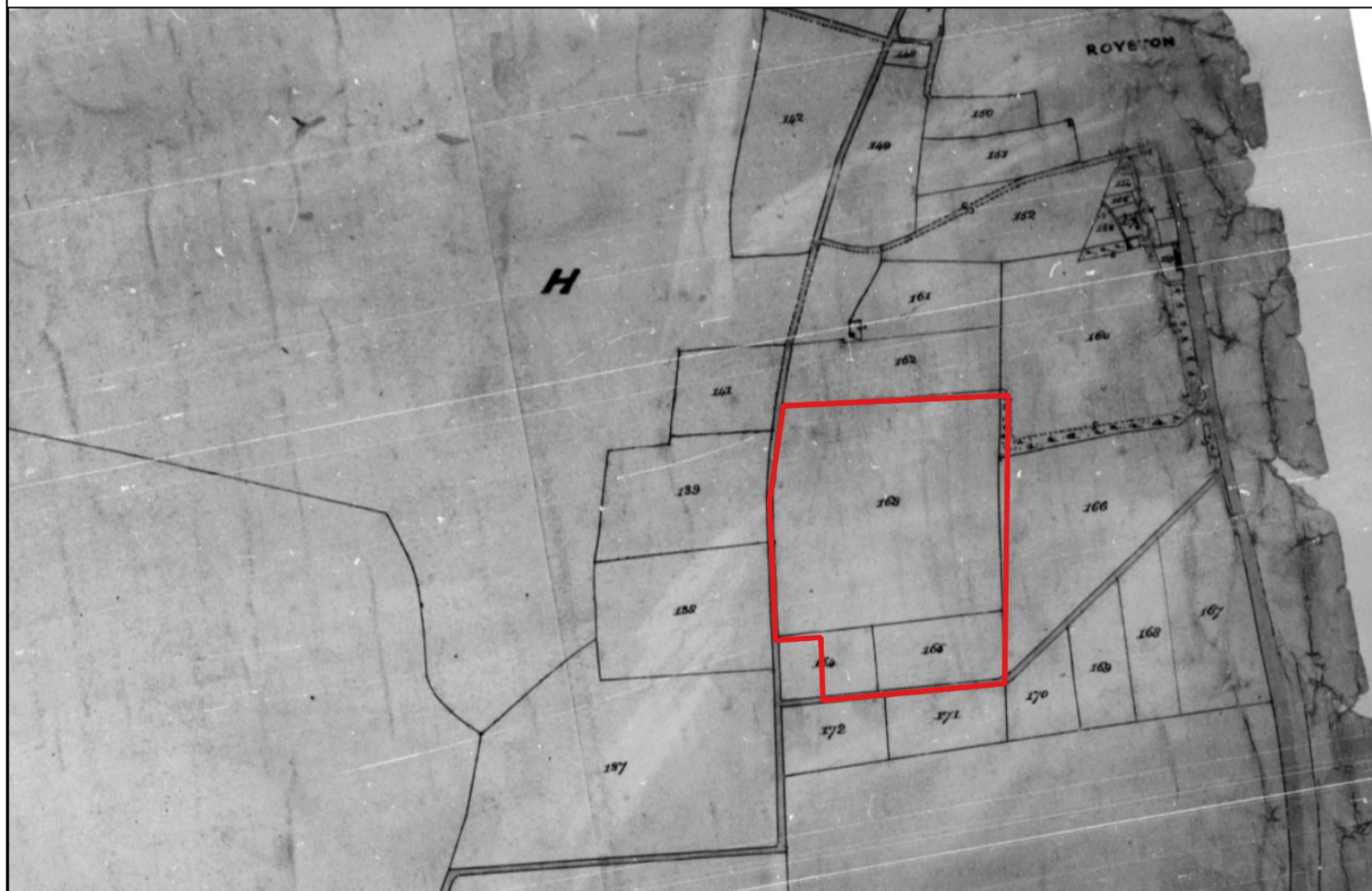


Figure 4
1838 Tithe Map
(Not To Scale)



Figure 5 1887 OS Map

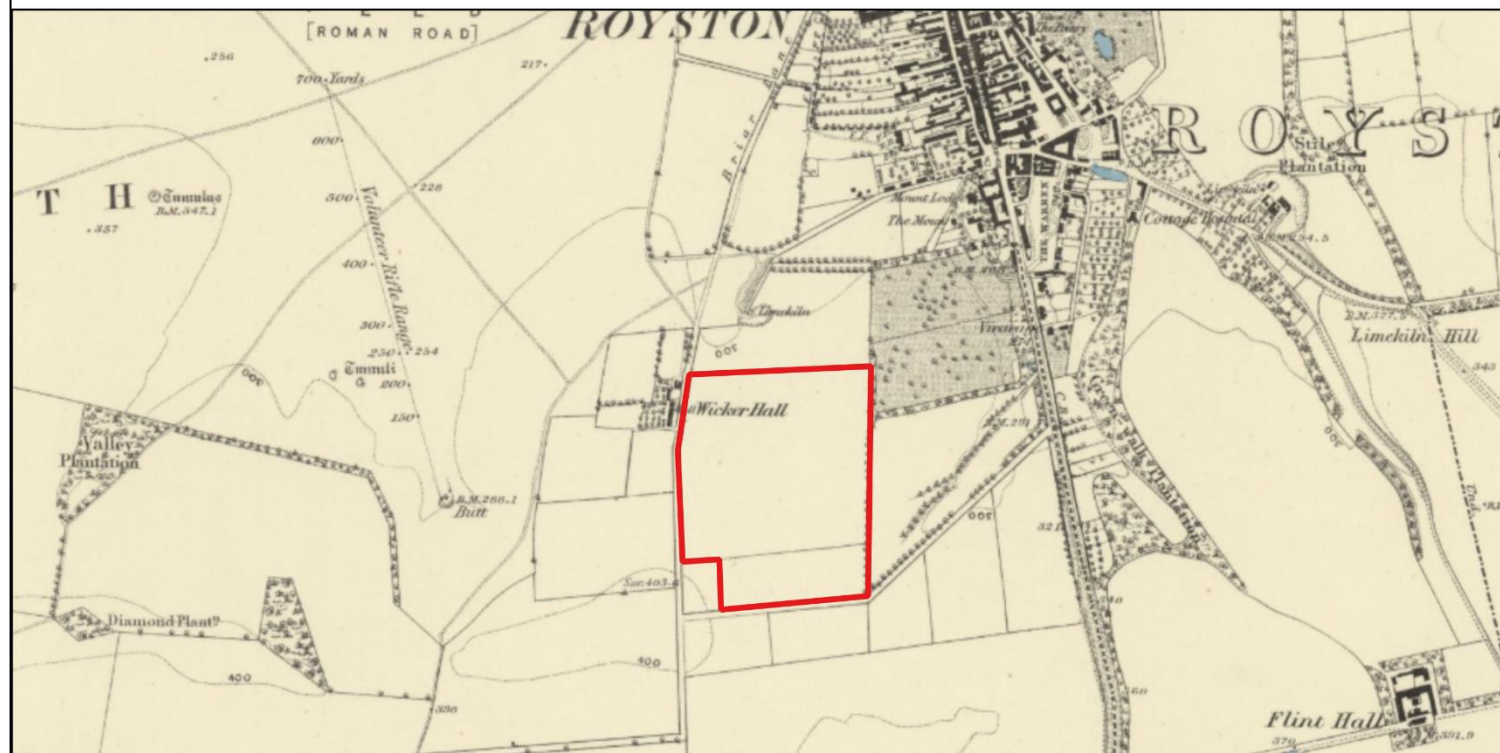


Figure 5
1887 OS Map
(Not To Scale)



Figure 6 1946 OS Map

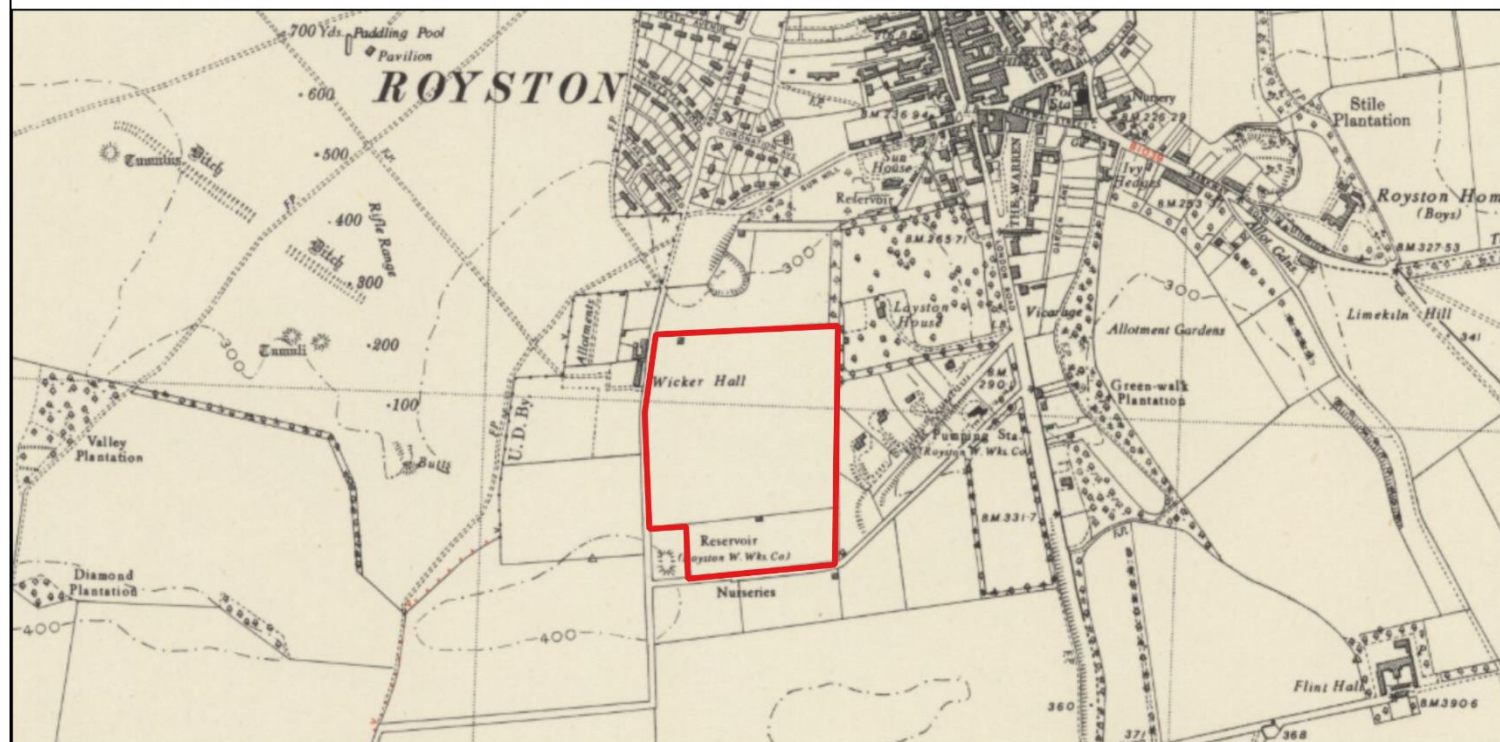


Figure 6
1946 OS Map
(Not To Scale)



Figure 7 Illustrative Development Framework Plan



Appendix A: Legislation, Planning Policy and Professional Guidance

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

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

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

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

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

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

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

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

Considering potential impacts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Local Planning Policy: North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Policy SP13: Historic environment, states as follow:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Professional National Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (2023), Historic Environment (2019)

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

English Heritage (2008) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Professional Regulations and Standards & Guidance

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

- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2023, Standard for archaeological excavation
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2023, Standard for archaeological monitoring and recording
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014a, Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials (revised 2020)
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014b, Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (revised 2023)

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

Two bowl barrows: part of the round barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath

Listed on the National Heritage List for England. Search over 400,000 listed places

(<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)

Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Scheduled Monument**

List Entry Number:**1010432**

Date first listed:**10-Aug-1923**

Date of most recent amendment:**16-Jul-1992**

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:**Hertfordshire**

District:**North Hertfordshire (District Authority)**

Parish:**Therfield**

National Grid Reference:**TL 34743 40072**

Reasons for Designation

Round barrow cemeteries date to the Bronze Age (c.2000-700 BC). They comprise closely-spaced groups of up to 30 round barrows - rubble or earthen mounds covering single or multiple burials. Most cemeteries developed over a considerable period of time, often many centuries, and in some cases acted as a focus for burials as late as the early medieval period. They exhibit considerable diversity of burial rite, plan and form, frequently including several different types of round barrow, occasionally associated with earlier long barrows. Where large scale investigation has been undertaken around them, contemporary or later "flat" burials between the barrow mounds have often been revealed.

Round barrow cemeteries occur across most of lowland Britain, with a marked concentration in Wessex. In some cases, they are clustered around other important contemporary monuments such as henges. Often occupying prominent locations, they are a major historic element in the modern landscape, whilst their diversity and their longevity as a monument type provide important information on the variety of beliefs and social organisation amongst early prehistoric communities. They are particularly representative of their period and a substantial proportion of surviving or partly-surviving examples are considered worthy of protection.

The round barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath is the largest known example of its type in Hertfordshire. Despite evidence for partial excavation these two bowl barrows survive in good condition providing archaeological information on the development of the cemetery and environmental evidence relating to the landscape in which it was constructed.

Details

The monument includes two bowl barrows situated on Therfield Heath. They represent outliers to a wider round barrow cemetery and are located about 500m ESE of a Neolithic long barrow. The eastern-most barrow comprises a hemispherical earth mound measuring 20m in diameter and c.2.5m in height. Approximately 25m west of this is another barrow mound which measures 20m in diameter and c.2m in height. On the summit of this barrow are the concrete footings of a park bench. Both barrows were partially excavated in 1855 by E B Nunn and the more westerly of the two was found to contain a cremation in a wooden structure. Although no longer visible at ground level, ditches, from which material was quarried during the construction of the mounds, surround each barrow. These have become infilled over the years but survive as buried features c.2m wide. The ground between the

two barrows is included in the scheduling as it is considered likely to retain evidence for flat burials and contemporary settlement. The concrete footings of the bench are excluded from the scheduling although the ground beneath is included.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract. It includes a 2 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

Legacy

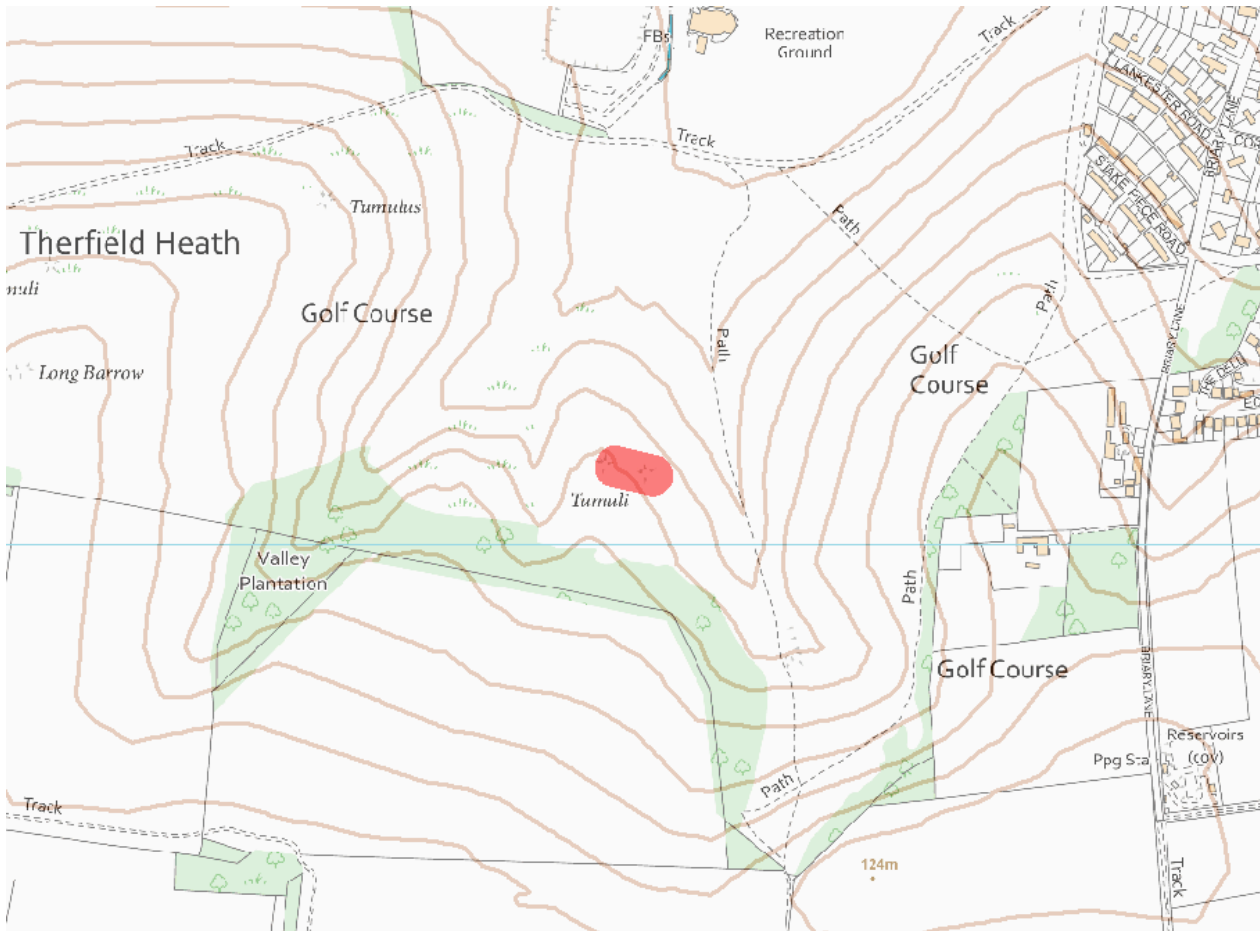
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:**20631**

Legacy System:**RSM**

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.



Map

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End of official list entry

Earl's Hill bowl barrow: part of the round barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath

Listed on the National Heritage List for England. Search over 400,000 listed places

(<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)

Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Scheduled Monument**

List Entry Number:**1010426**

Date first listed:**10-Aug-1923**

Date of most recent amendment:**16-Jul-1992**

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:**Hertfordshire**

District:**North Hertfordshire (District Authority)**

Parish:**Therfield**

National Grid Reference:**TL 34448 40329**

Reasons for Designation

Round barrow cemeteries date to the Bronze Age (c.2000-700 BC). They comprise closely-spaced groups of up to 30 round barrows - rubble or earthen mounds covering single or multiple burials. Most cemeteries developed over a considerable period of time, often many centuries, and in some cases acted as a focus for burials as late as the early medieval period. They exhibit considerable diversity of burial rite, plan and form, frequently including several different types of round barrow, occasionally associated with earlier long barrows. Where large scale investigation has been undertaken around them, contemporary or later "flat" burials between the barrow mounds have often been revealed.

Round barrow cemeteries occur across most of lowland Britain, with a marked concentration in Wessex. In some cases, they are clustered around other important contemporary monuments such as henges. Often occupying prominent locations, they are a major historic element in the modern landscape, whilst their diversity and their longevity as a monument type provide important information on the variety of beliefs and social organisation amongst early prehistoric communities. They are particularly representative of their period and a substantial proportion of surviving or partly-surviving examples are considered worthy of protection.

The round barrow cemetery on Therfield Heath is the largest known example of its type in Hertfordshire. Despite partial excavation, this distant outlier is a well-preserved component of the cemetery and retains potential for the recovery of archaeological remains and environmental evidence relating to the monument and the landscape in which it was constructed.

Details

Earl's Hill bowl barrow is situated on Therfield Heath. It is an outlier to a wider round barrow cemetery and is located 300m north-east of a Neolithic long barrow. The monument includes a hemispherical earth mound 26m in diameter and c.2.5m in height. Although no longer visible at ground level, a ditch, from which material was quarried during the construction of the monument, surrounds the barrow mound. This has been infilled over the years but survives as a buried feature c.2m wide. The barrow was partly excavated in 1855 by E B Nunn, although no details are known.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract. It includes a 2 metre

boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:**20630**

Legacy System:**RSM**

Sources

Other

NAR No TL 63 SE 9, Information from NAR,

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.



Map

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End of official list entry

Royston Cave

Listed on the National Heritage List for England. Search over 400,000 listed places

(<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)

Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Scheduled Monument**

List Entry Number:**1015594**

Date first listed:**18-Aug-1923**

Date of most recent amendment:**11-Jul-1997**

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:**Hertfordshire**

District:**North Hertfordshire (District Authority)**

Parish:**Royston**

National Grid Reference:**TL 35638 40702**

Reasons for Designation

The Royston Cave is a remarkable man-made feature without parallel, in structural terms, either in England or in Western Europe. Despite intensive study, the reasons for the construction or elaboration of the chamber in the medieval period remain open to debate, although the choice of a subterranean location and the difficulty of access clearly points to a ritual rather than purely functional purpose. Structural evidence within the cave suggests an elaborate internal framework and flooring, adding to our knowledge of the manner in which the internal space was utilised. Further evidence relating to this structure will remain sealed beneath the unexcavated sections of the floor. It is to be hoped that artefactual evidence in these locations, or the scientific analysis of the material at the floor of the cave, may provide further clues to the date, duration and character of use, and possibly provide insights into the cave's origin. The figurative carvings which cover the lower part of the cave wall are similarly unique in western Europe, a recent extensive study having found comparable examples only in Czechoslovakia and the former Palestine. Despite their age and the erosion caused both by early visitors and modern environmental conditions, the carvings and other features of the cave survive well, enabling detailed analysis of the artistic style and symbolic nature of the sculpture. The iconography represented in the carvings is undoubtedly medieval in date, but the source of inspiration - whether the Templar order or some lesser known cult - will continue to generate debate. Nevertheless, the carvings allow a highly valuable insight into the workings of the medieval mind and provide the visiting public with a vivid impression of an expression of medieval faith outside the usual surroundings of the church.

Details

The cave is located beneath the southern pavement of Melbourn Street near the crossroads in the centre of the market town of Royston which, broadly speaking, perpetuates the junction of the prehistoric and Roman trackway, known as the Icknield Way, and Ermine Street - the Roman Road from London to York. Although used in the medieval period, the cave was evidently sealed up and its existence remained unknown until 1742 when workmen erecting a bench for the butter market in the Mercat House (since demolished) discovered a millstone closing the entrance to a narrow vertical shaft. This shaft, now sealed beneath the modern road surface, descended some 4.8m to enter the cave about half way up the north western side. Toe holds had originally been cut into the opposite sides of the shaft to ease access, but these were subsequently lost as the opening was enlarged to remove a large quantity of loose earth from the cavity beyond. The cave itself is a man made bell-shaped chamber cut into the middle chalk bedrock which underlies the town, measuring c.5.2m in diameter at the base and some 7.7m in height. The roof of the cave is a narrow dome, supported or

strengthened by a tile work crown at the time of its discovery, but since bricked over leaving a narrow shaft which leads to a grille in the modern pavement. A step or podium, some 0.9m wide and 0.2m high, extends from the base of the wall, leaving an octagonal depression in the centre of the floor. This step is interrupted by an irregular hollow against the north east wall, which was cleaned out at the time of the cave's discovery and referred to as the 'grave' by William Stukeley, who visited shortly after. It is now thought to have served as a sump, cut to collect and drain water which permeates through the walls of the cave. A narrow cornice, decorated with reticulated markings, runs around the walls approximately 2.4m above the podium, separating the cylindrical lower section of the cave from the tapering profile above. Almost the entire area between the podium and cornice is decorated with an elaborate series of medieval carvings in low relief. These include representations of The Crucifixion and possibly of the Holy Sepulchre and Holy Family; unequivocal depictions of St Christopher, St Lawrence and St Katherine, and figures which have been identified as St George, Thomas Becket, Richard I and his queen Berengaria, and the biblical King David. Christ and the disciples are thought to be represented in a crowded panel of figures above 'St George', and other groups of figures have tentatively been identified as saints and martyrs from the crosses and hearts which adorn their dress. The main carvings, which may have been illuminated by lamps placed in small niches or attached to brackets inserted in small holes in the walls, are interspersed with other symbols including disembodied heads, hands with superimposed hearts, and circular devices. Larger niches, not unlike aumbry, occupy several places within the frieze. Many of the sculptures were originally coloured. Traces of the pigments were still visible in the 19th century and, although this is no longer visible, recent scientific analysis has confirmed the presence of residue. The cave was almost certainly divided into two levels by a floor above the line of the cornice which would have placed the carvings in a lower chamber. Two quadrants of the compacted earth covering the floor of the cave (within the podium) were excavated in 1976 revealing indications of footings for a timber structure. This evidence, together with a number of shallow niches in the wall above the cornice, suggests a frame or trestle on perhaps four legs supporting a platform which was stabilised by beams pressed into the wall. Such a floor would explain the position of the original entrance (half way up the cave wall) and the existence of several larger niches which would only have been accessible from this level. A second shaft, too narrow for access, leads upwards from higher in the dome on the north east side of the cave. This may have served for ventilation, but has also been proposed as a chimney allowing fumes to escape from a cresset (a large oil lamp) set at the level of this floor. An area of the wall beneath this opening (which is blocked below street level) is carved and tintured to resemble brickwork. On stylistic grounds the wall carvings are generally accepted to date from around the 13th century, although whether this provides

a date for the cave's construction is open to debate. Origins in the prehistoric or Roman period have been postulated but, if so, later use and elaboration has obscured any evidence. Artefacts discovered during the initial clearance included only a few sherds of pottery (probably medieval), a human skull and some bones, an indeterminate piece of brass and, perhaps, a small pipe-clay seal bearing the impression of a fleur-de-lys. Finds from the 1976 excavation were limited to objects left since its discovery. The function of the cave has also raised considerable speculation. It almost certainly lay beneath a building, but a purely prosaic use, such as a cellar or cold store, is unlikely given the nature of the carvings and the difficulty of access, and a conventional religious use is doubtful given the complete lack of documentary evidence for its existence. William Stukeley, who wrote two works on the cave between 1743 and 1746, suggested that it formed the private oratory for Lady Roisia de Vere, wife of Geoffrey de Mandeville. The Rev Charles Parkin refuted Stukeley's arguments in two successive books, claiming that the cave was a hermit's cell and oratory associated with the cross which stood at the crossroads nearby. Neither theory is susceptible to proof. Joseph Beldam, writing in 1877, introduced the idea that the carvings (perhaps applied within a cave of greater antiquity) dated from the period of the Crusades, and recent detailed analysis has led to suggestion that the cave had, at sometime, a connection with the Knights Templar. Some of the more obscure symbols interspersed amongst the figurative sculpture have parallels on the walls of the Tour du Coudray in the Castle of Chinon where many Templars were confined after 1307, following the suppression of the order in France by King Philip the Fair. It may follow that a group from the order, which was quite prominent in the locality, used the cave as a place of worship and perhaps a refuge in which to avoid persecution during the widespread suppression which followed the edict of Pope Clement V in 1314. Early visitors to the cave were lowered by winch through the original entrance shaft. The present entrance, a 22m long tunnel passing beneath the street to an entrance beneath the building on the north side, was excavated during the winter of 1790 by the then owner, Thomas Watson, and was sited to penetrate the base of the cave wall on the north eastern side, the only part which was not covered with carvings. This tunnel, with the exception of the short section above the steps leading to the surface (which has been much modified), is included in the scheduling. The railings, light fittings, duck boards and other modern features within the cave and the passage are excluded from the scheduling, although the fabric of the cave to which they are attached is included. The ground above the cave (measured from the greatest diameter of the lower part of the chamber) and the passage is also included in the scheduling in order to ensure the future protection of the monument. The modern road surface and pavement, and the foundations of overlying buildings, are excluded.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract. It includes a 2 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:**27200**

Legacy System:**RSM**

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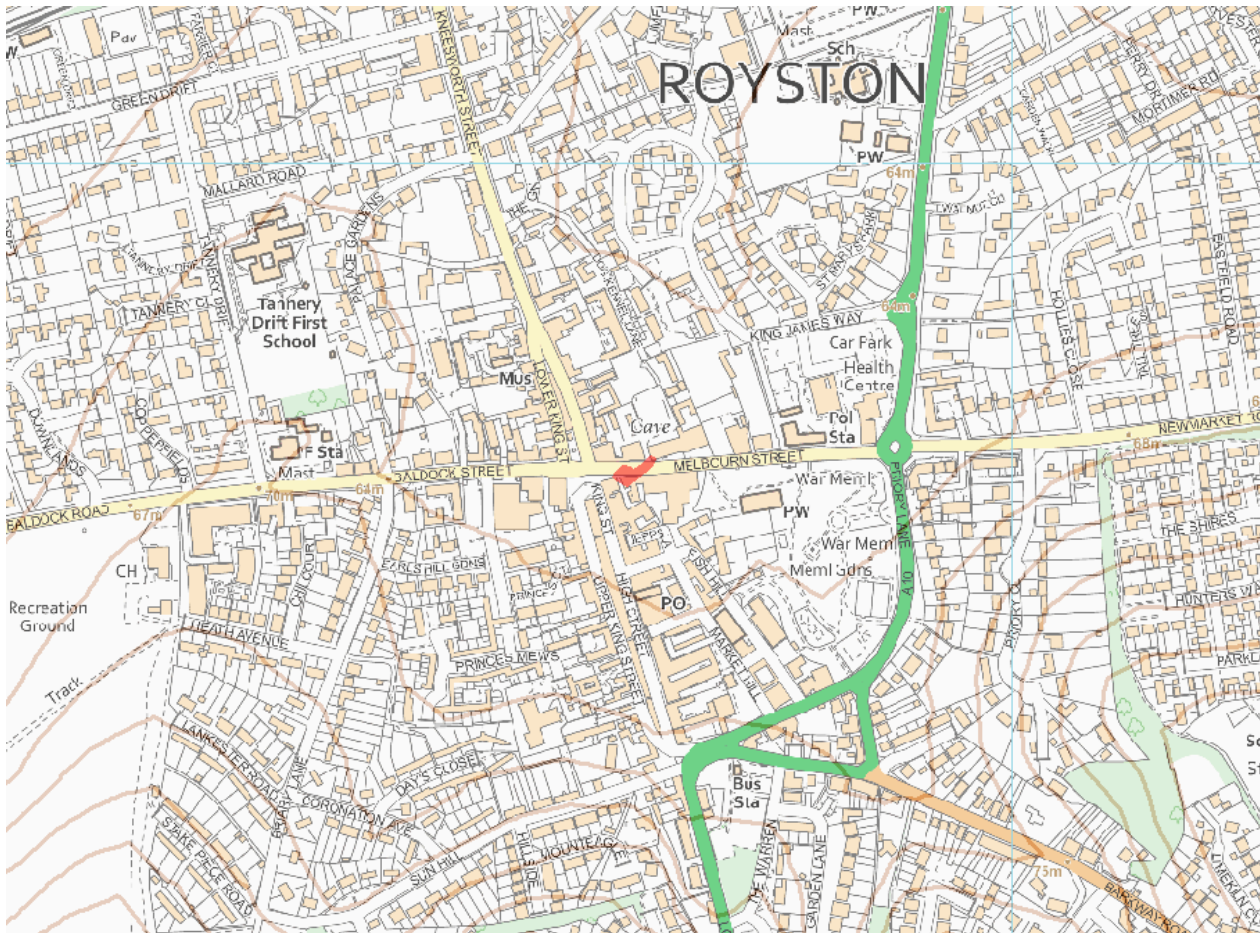
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Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.



Map

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