

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION

REFERENCE: 25/02064/OP

ADDRESS: LAND ADJACENT TO 10 HAMBRIDGE WAY, PIRTON,
HERTFORDSHIRE

HERITAGE TECHNICAL NOTE (ARCHAEOLOGY)

1. The above application is currently live with North Hertfordshire District Council. The proposals comprise the erection of up to 50 dwellings including affordable housing, together with amenity space, landscaping and all associated infrastructure and works (all matters reserved except means of access). The following Technical Note addresses concerns raised in relation to the archaeological resource associated with the Site. The following documents have informed this Note:
 - *Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire: Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* (Cotswold Archaeology 2025, Project: MK1148)
 - *Geophysical Survey Report: Land south of Hambridge Way, Pirton, Hertfordshire* (SUMO Surveys 2024, Project: 20027)
 - Comments provided by Andy Instone, Senior Historic Environment Advisor, dated 9th January 2026
 - Comments provided on behalf of the North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society (NHAS) by Dr Gilbert Burleigh dated 27th September 2025
 - Comments provided by Pirton Parish Council
2. The Desk-Based Assessment and Geophysical Survey identified no archaeological constraints to the proposed development, on the basis of existing information. The Geophysical Survey concluded that it *'has not recorded any magnetic responses that could be interpreted as being of definite archaeological interest, except for ridge and furrow cultivation'*. Given the identification of ridge and furrow remains, it is likely that the Site formed part of the agricultural hinterland of the village historically and was not the focus of medieval settlement activity (any remains of which would be considered archaeologically significant).
3. NHAS provide further useful information on the historic development of the Site, including a number of historic cartographic sources not utilised as part of the Desk-Based Assessment. NHAS suggest that a possible 'hollow way' on the western boundary of the Site potentially denoted the limit of the medieval village, with the associated open field system located beyond the thoroughfare to the east (including the Site). NHAS suggest this is supported by the results of previous trenching to the south of the Site (cited by NHAS), as well as observations by Dr Burleigh to the south also, which did not detect archaeological contexts.
4. The alignment of the potential hollow way extends along the western boundary of the Site. The Illustrative Layout (Drawing No: 22130 (D) 025) suggests that this feature will

largely be retained within an area of green space in the western part of the Site. It is not anticipated that the alignment of this potential feature will be impacted by the proposed development, except where the access route extends across the alignment. Given the results of the geophysics in the vicinity, it is possible that no archaeological remains relating to this feature survive within the Site. However, the possibility of deposits occurring that were not identified by the geophysical survey cannot be discounted.

5. In terms of the implications of the above results in relation to the current Outline Application, there is much agreement between the parties. Andy Instone stated that *'conditions on any planning consent would be sufficient to provide for the level of investigation that this proposal warrants'*. The NHAS response initially states that the application should include a trial trench evaluation, but then concludes that *'appropriate planning conditions will be needed for all the foregoing'*. Therefore it appears that both the Senior Historic Environment Advisor and NHAS consider that undertaking any further archaeological requirement as a condition would be appropriate. Cotswold Archaeology do not contest this suggestion.
6. The Parish Council, meanwhile, stated in relation to the hollow way that it is *'an important feature which should be considered by Cotswold Archaeology and addressed in their Report before any permission is granted'*. This requirement does not appear to have been repeated by the Senior Historic Environment Advisor or NHAS. Indeed, the Senior Historic Environment Advisor suggests that specifically in relation to the hollow way, mitigation measures can be identified at the reserved matters stage. Equally, Cotswold Archaeology do not consider it proportionate to consider the hollow way further prior to determination of the Outline Application. Particularly because the potential feature does not appear on the geophysical survey results, and there will be no potential development effects upon the majority of its alignment.
7. There is currently no evidence to suggest that archaeological remains of sufficient significance to warrant preservation *in situ* occur within the Site. The Senior Historic Environment Advisor states that where archaeological remains have been identified in the vicinity of the Site, *'these heritage assets do not appear to be of such significance to warrant designation'*. Given the results of the geophysical survey of the Site – which worked well as a technique and identified only remnants of ridge and furrow (i.e. not features of high archaeological significance) – a programme of evaluation trenching at reserved matters stage would be an appropriate response.
8. The Senior Historic Environment Advisor recommends that at the reserved matters stage *'the final design of any masterplan is, if required revised to respect the results of the archaeological evaluation'*. Whilst the Applicant is willing to accept such a measure if required, it is important to note that it is equally possible that the results of the archaeological evaluation exercise necessitate no such changes to the scheme, should the results prove negative. This possibility is supported by the results of the nearby investigation cited by NHAS (that were also negative).

9. Irrespective of the potential implications of archaeological evaluation at the reserved matters stage, the Senior Historic Environment Advisor's recommendation that conditions are attached to any consent means it is clear that they consider there to be sufficient information to inform determination of the Outline Application. In short, the Senior Historic Environment Advisor considers the information submitted to date to meet the requirements of paragraph 207 of the NPPF. Whilst the Parish Council and NHAS are potentially suggesting further archaeological evaluation is required prior to determination, this is not the position of the Senior Historic Environment Advisor (i.e. the Local Planning Authority's archaeological consultee).
10. Cotswold Archaeology consider the draft conditions suggested by the Senior Historic Environment Advisor to be appropriate, and do not consider the request for any further information to inform the determination of the Outline Application to be proportionate. Upon the granting of planning permission, the Applicant would seek to engage with the Senior Historic Environment Advisor to agree a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological evaluation.

Nathan Blick
Principal Heritage Consultant
Cotswold Archaeology
6th March 2026