

Archaeological Desk Based Assessment

Land at Pound Farm, Ickleford, SG5 3RS

Project Reference
794-PLN-HER-02031

Planning Issue

January 2026

Document status

Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
#1	Draft for client comment	Richard von Kalinowski-Meager	Mick Rawlings	Richard von Kalinowski-Meager	November 2025
#2	Planning Issue	RvKM	RvKM	RvKM	January 2026

Approval for issue

Richard von Kalinowski-Meager



January 2026

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Prepared by:

Prepared for:

RPS

Bugler Homes Ltd.

Richard von Kalinowski-Meager BA MA PG Cert
FSA FRSA MCIfA

Director

20 Farringdon Road
London EC4A 2AB

T 07764830956

E richard.meager@rps.tetrattech.com

Executive Summary

The site of land at Pound Farm, Ickleford, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RS has been reviewed for its below ground archaeological potential.

In terms of relevant, nationally significant designated heritage assets, no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Wrecks or Historic Battlefields lie within the study site or its immediate vicinity.

Figure 2a confirms the presence of Areas of Archaeological Significance, which lie to the east, northwest and southwest of the study site. These designations are understood to hold no particular planning policy status, and are understood to have been designated by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) due to the spatial distribution of recorded archaeological findings.

The study site is considered likely to have an archaeological potential for the later prehistoric periods, together with the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods, for remains deemed most likely to be of low (i.e. local) significance.

Non-intrusive geophysical (magnetometer) survey has identified anomalies related to archaeological and possible archaeological features, focused within the western and southern area. These anomalies have been interpreted to form parts of several enclosures and possibly boundary ditches. Anomalies related to the remnants of ridge and furrow, recent ploughing and modern material / features have also been identified. Numerous responses of uncertain origin were also recorded, and whilst archaeological origins for some of these have not been discounted, the majority probably represent Modern activity / material, agricultural activity or natural variations. The soil conditions were recorded during the survey to vary across the study site and it has been suggested that in parts of the site, some types of feature(s) may not produce measurable / identifiable magnetic anomalies, which could mean that the full extent of archaeological features / activity within the study site were not recorded during the survey.

The study site has remained undeveloped farmland throughout its documented history. Impacts as a result of agricultural and/or horticultural activities may be considered likely to have had a moderate, widespread negative archaeological impact.

A hybrid application is to be submitted for a mixed-use development to provide a total of up to 230 dwellings, a residential care home (Use Class C2), an Independent Special School (ISS) and new sports pitch, with access from Bedford Road, landscaping, parking and SuDS comprising: Phase 1 – Application for full planning permission for the erection of 100 dwellings, an ISS, new sports pitch and associated parking, landscaping, open space and SuDS; Phase 2 – An outline application on the remaining part of the site for the erection of up to 130 dwellings, a residential care home (Use Class C2) and associated works with access from Bedford Road (all matters reserved apart from access).

In view of the perceived archaeological potential, and in line with relevant planning policy and guidance, it is anticipated that the planning authorities archaeological planning advisors will require further archaeological mitigation measures in association with redevelopment impacts.

The available information indicates that in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and proportionate to the impact of development, these works can follow the granting of planning consent, secured by an appropriate archaeological planning condition.

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Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record Gazetteer

1 Introduction & Scope of Study

Introduction

- 1.1 This below ground archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared by Tetra Tech Consulting Limited on behalf of Bugler Homes Ltd.
- 1.2 The subject of this assessment comprises the site, also referred to as the study site, of land south of Pound Farm, Bedford Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RS.
- 1.3 The study site comprises open land c.20 hectares in extent, centred at TL17464 31625 within the administrative boundaries of North Hertfordshire District Council (see Figures 1-2, 14-15 and Plates 1-7).
- 1.4 Figure 2a spatially summarises relevant cultural heritage designations and archaeological findspot references in relation to the study site, primarily using data provided by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER).
- 1.5 In terms of relevant nationally significant designated heritage assets, the study site does not lie within the vicinity of a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck.
- 1.6 Figure 2a confirms the presence of Areas of Archaeological Significance, which lie to the east, northwest and southwest of the study site. These designations are understood to hold no particular planning policy status, and are understood to have been designated by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) due to the spatial distribution of recorded archaeological findings.
- 1.7 Bugler Homes Ltd have commissioned Tetra Tech Consulting Limited to establish the archaeological potential of the study site, and to provide guidance on ways to accommodate any archaeological constraints identified.

Scope of Study

- 1.8 This document has been completed with reference to current national guidelines, including the following (see also Section 2 below):
 - Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 'Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment' (ClfA 2020);
 - Historic England documents 'Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment' (Historic England 2015a);
 - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning' (Historic England 2015b&c).
- 1.9 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's Standard and Guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment (2020) sets a "standard" for desk-based assessment as follows:

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.

- 1.10 The “Definition” of an assessment is given as:

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.

- 1.11 For the compilation of this desk based assessment, the following actions have been undertaken:

- An examination of national and local planning policies in relation to heritage assets;
- An examination of relevant geological sources (mappings/borehole logs/trial-pit data);
- An examination of available topographical evidence;
- A search of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) database for archaeological sites and findspots recorded within a 500m radius of a central National Grid Reference (NGR);
- The synthesis and review of a map regression exercise relevant to the study site, from the early 18th century to the present day;
- An assessment of relevant published and unpublished sources;
- An assessment of existing and previous impacts within the study site on the potential archaeological resource.
- A walkover site visit undertaken in November and December 2025;
- A summary of the results of non-intrusive geophysical survey (Sumo 2026)

- 1.12 This assessment thus enables relevant parties to assess the archaeological potential of various parts of the study site, together with the likely significance of that potential, and to consider the need for design, civil engineering, and archaeological solutions to the archaeological potential and significance identified.

Limitations & Assumptions

- 1.13 In any desk based assessment, a degree of uncertainty is attached to the accuracy of the relevant baseline data sources. This may include the following:
- The HER data can be limited in usefulness because it can depend on randomly located opportunities for research, fieldwork and discovery, typically afforded by development led archaeological works;
 - There can be a lack of secure dating and location evidence for archaeological finds and features relevant to the study site;
 - Primary documentary sources are typically rare prior to the Medieval period; secondary documentary sources can be written hundreds of years after the events they describe; and historic documents may carry bias which may be detrimental to establishing accuracy and objectivity;
 - It is not always possible to establish the full extent of truncation caused by previous and existing development impacts and landscaping works.

- 1.14 As a general rule, HER data is typically considered to have a time limit of c.12 months from the original search date, and should not be relied on after that, as the results of new archaeological works are constantly being added to the HER, which can influence the potential of a study site. Typical HER licenses are granted for c.12 months, after which it is anticipated that a new search will be required.

2 Planning Background & Development Plan Framework

- 2.1 National legislation regarding archaeology, including scheduled monuments, is contained in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, amended by the National Heritage Act 1983 and 2002, and updated in April 2014.
- 2.2 In March 2012, the government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and it was most recently updated 12 December 2024.
- 2.3 The NPPF was most recently revised in response to the Proposed reforms to the NPPF and other changes to the Planning system consultation on 12 December 2024 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This revised Framework replaces the previous NPPF published in March 2012, revised in July 2018, updated in February 2019, revised in July 2021, updated in September 2023 and revised in December 2023.
- 2.4 For the December 2024 iteration, policy wording relevant to archaeology remain unchanged, with just the paragraph and footnote numbering referencing amended.
- 2.5 The NPPF is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which was published online 6th March 2014 and is periodically updated, most recently in 2019 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>).
- 2.6 The NPPF and NPPG are additionally supported by three Good Practice Advice (GPA) documents published by Historic England: GPA 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans; GPA 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (both published March 2015). The second edition of GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets was published in December 2017.

National Planning Policy

- 2.7 Section 16 of the NPPF, entitled Conserving and enhancing the historic environment provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:
- Delivery of sustainable development;
 - Understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
 - Conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
 - Recognition that heritage makes to our knowledge and understanding of the past.
- 2.8 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. Paragraph 207 states that local planning authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by their development proposal, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and should be no more than sufficient to review the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.
- 2.9 *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. They include designated heritage assets (as defined in the NPPF) and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process.

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- 2.10 Annex 2 also defines *Archaeological Interest* as a heritage asset which holds or potentially could hold evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- 2.11 A *Designated Heritage Asset* comprises a: World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area.
- 2.12 *Significance (for heritage policy)* is defined as: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 2.13 *Setting* is defined as: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- 2.14 In short, government policy provides a framework which:
- Protects nationally important designated Heritage Assets;
 - Protects the settings of such designations;
 - In appropriate circumstances seeks adequate information (from desk based assessment and field evaluation where necessary) to enable informed decisions;
 - Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not significant enough to merit *in-situ* preservation.
- 2.15 The NPPG reiterates that the conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach. Furthermore, it highlights that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Importantly, the guidance states that if complete, or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified, the aim should then be to capture and record the evidence of the asset's significance and make the interpretation publicly available. Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. An important consideration should be whether the proposed works adversely affect a key element of the heritage asset's special architectural or historic interest. Additionally, it is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development, that is to be assessed. The level of 'substantial harm' is considered to be a high bar that may not arise in many cases. Essentially, whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the NPPF. Importantly, harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting. Setting is defined as the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and may be more extensive than the curtilage. A thorough assessment of the impact of proposals upon setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.
- 2.16 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.17 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on Tuesday 8 November 2022. Within this document, policy HE4: Archaeology and SP13: Historic Environment, are relevant to archaeology and development:

Policy HE4: Archaeology

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

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

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

Policy SP13: Historic environment

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. We will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through:

- a) Maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance;
- b) Identifying sites on the national register of Heritage at Risk or on the Council's 'At Risk' register;
- c) Periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and other locally designated assets; and
- d) Publication of detailed guidance

Relevant Designations

- 2.18 Figures 2a-2b spatially summarise relevant cultural heritage designations and archaeological findspot references in relation to the study site.
- 2.19 In terms of relevant nationally significant designated heritage assets, the study site does not lie within the vicinity of a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck.
- 2.20 Figure 2a confirms the presence of Areas of Archaeological Significance, which lie to the east, northwest and southwest of the study site. These designations are understood to hold no particular planning policy status, and are understood to have been designated by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) due to distribution patterns of recorded archaeological findings.
- 2.21 In line with relevant planning policy and guidance, this desk-based assessment seeks to clarify the site's archaeological potential and the likely significance of that potential and the need or otherwise for additional mitigation measures.

3 Geology & Topography

Geology

- 3.1 The British Geological Survey confirms the study site's underlying solid geology to comprise deposits of Gault Mudstone, overlain by superficial Head deposits across the northern boundary, Lowestoft Formation Diamicton within the northern area, together with glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits within the southern area.
- 3.2 No site specific geotechnical information is currently available for the study site.

Topography

- 3.3 The study site comprises land generally level at c.63-65m AOD (see also Plates 1-7).
- 3.4 No naturally occurring watercourses or standing bodies of water are mapped within the study site or is immediate vicinity. A land drain runs along the northern boundary of the study site, and the course of the River Oughton flows on a roughly east-west orientation c.530m south of the study site's southern boundary (see Figure 1).

4 Archaeological & Historical Background with Assessment of Significance

Timescales used in this report

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	900,000 -	12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 -	4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 -	1,800 BC
Bronze Age	1,800 -	600 BC
Iron Age	600 -	AD 43

Historic

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

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter reviews the available archaeological evidence for the study site and the archaeological/historical background of the general area, and, in accordance with NPPF, considers the potential for any as yet to be discovered archaeological evidence on the study site.
- 4.2 What follows comprises a review of known archaeological assets within a one kilometre radius of the study site (Figures 2a-2b), also referred to as the study area, held on the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), together with a historic map regression exercise charting the development of the study area from the 18th century onwards until the present day.
- 4.3 In terms of relevant nationally significant designated heritage assets, the study site does not lie within the vicinity of a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck.
- 4.4 Figure 2a confirms the presence of Areas of Archaeological Significance, which lie to the east, northwest and southwest of the study site. These designations are understood to hold no particular planning policy status, and are understood to have been designated by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) due to the spatial distribution of recorded archaeological findings.
- 4.5 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data provided by the HER confirms the study site to lie within an area designated as 'formal style Parliamentary Enclosure' (Figure 2b).
- 4.6 Chapter 5 subsequently considers the site conditions and whether the proposed development will impact the theoretical archaeological potential identified below.
- 4.7 To the northwest of the study site, monitoring at the North Hertfordshire landfill site revealed no archaeology (EHT1600, TL1690 3220).

Previous archaeological work

- 4.8 The Hertfordshire HER does not record that any archaeological work has previously been undertaken within the study site.

Lidar

- 4.9 The Lidar plot for the study site is reproduced at Figure 3.
- 4.10 DTM Lidar data was sourced from the Environment Agency, with the data captured in March 2020 at 1m resolution. The data was then processed to generate simple local relief and multidirectional hillshade models and reviewed in relation to the historic mapping and aerial photography.
- 4.11 The study site comprises two arable fields, with the modern Pound Farm buildings immediately to the north, and further arable fields to the south, west and north. The study site is bounded on the east by a road, with a mix of arable fields and residential development to the east and southeast.
- 4.12 The Lidar shows some former field boundaries, all pre-dating the 1884 Ordnance Survey, across the study site. There are also traces of ridge and furrow and a potential dew pond or pit in the centre/western area. Traces of ridge and furrow, as well as several more former field boundaries can be seen in the fields beyond the western study site boundary.
- 4.13 Aside from agricultural activity, there does not appear to have been any notable ground disturbance. There are no features of archaeological significance visible either on the site or in the immediate vicinity.

Geophysical Survey

- 4.14 Non-intrusive geophysical (magnetometer) survey has identified anomalies related to archaeological and possible archaeological features, focused within the western and southern area. These anomalies have been interpreted to form parts of several enclosures and possibly boundary ditches. Anomalies related to the remnants of ridge and furrow, recent ploughing and modern material / features have also been identified. Numerous responses of uncertain origin were also recorded, and whilst archaeological origins for some of these have not been discounted, the majority probably represent Modern activity / material, agricultural activity or natural variations. The soil conditions were recorded during the survey to vary across the study site and it has been suggested that in parts of the site, some types of feature(s) may not produce measurable / identifiable magnetic anomalies, which could mean that the full extent of archaeological features / activity within the study site were not recorded during the survey.
- 4.15 Figure 16 reproduces the interpretative plot from the geophysical survey (source: Sumo 2026).

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic & Mesolithic

- 4.16 Finds of Palaeolithic date recorded on the HER within the study area search radius include four handaxes (MHT313); Acheulian flints and six scrapers (MHT314) recorded from the general area of Ickleford, located to the east of the study site (TL1831).
- 4.17 Following the retreat of ice sheets after the last glacial period (Devensian), the climate became milder and forests began to re-colonise Britain. The Mesolithic period, spanning a period between 10,000- 4000 BC is represented primarily by lithic scatters, comprising stone tools and waste from the production of these tools. A number of sites across Southern England show evidence of temporary occupation during this period, indicating a small degree of sedentism, which increased over the Mesolithic period.

- 4.18 The presence of early prehistoric material is notoriously difficult to predict, and can be influenced by suitable topographical locations, particularly related to watercourses, together with suitable underlying geology. In view of the paucity of HER evidence, a generally low archaeological potential can be identified for the early prehistoric periods at the study site.

Neolithic

- 4.19 From around 4000 BC the mobile hunter-gathering economy of the Mesolithic gradually gave way to a more settled agriculture-based subsistence. The pace of woodland clearance to create arable and pasture-based agricultural land varied regionally and locally, depending on a wide variety of climatic, topographic, social and other factors. The trend was one of a slow, but gradually increasing pace of forest clearance.
- 4.20 As with the Mesolithic, the Neolithic period has typically been characterised by lithic scatters combined with occasional evidence of settlement occupation comprising earthwork remains, pits and pottery.
- 4.21 The course of the Icknield Way is mapped to follow the line of Westmill Lane c.215m to the south of the study site. This routeway is understood to have originated during the prehistoric periods, and to have been partially utilised as a road during the Roman period (MHT4182, TL250 345).

Bronze Age & Iron Age

- 4.22 By the 1st millennium, i.e. 1000 BC, the landscape was probably a mix of extensive tracts of open farmland, punctuated by earthwork burial and ceremonial monuments from distant generations, with settlements, ritual areas and defended locations reflecting an increasingly hierarchical society.
- 4.23 To the east, the site of a possible ploughed out roundbarrow has been identified through aerial photographic analysis at Ickleford (MHT2553, TL17967 31908).
- 4.24 To the west, part way between the western boundary of the study site and the settlement at Pirton, the find of skeletons and pottery was made in the early 1900s and dated to the Iron Age in a gravel pit (MHT4516, TL1672 3151).
- 4.25 To the west of the study site, analysis of aerial photography at Pirton identified a cropmark interpreted as a small single-ditched circular enclosure, c.25m diameter, with several internal pits, now destroyed by quarrying (MHT2418, EHT1741, TL1667 3205). Associated geophysical survey followed by evaluation confirmed Iron Age and Romano-British settlement activity (MHT6818, TL1670 3212; EHT4132, TL167 321).
- 4.26 To the east, analysis of aerial photographs has identified cropmarks interpreted as ring ditches, curvilinear ditches and pits, on land north of Arnolds Farm (MHT17908, TL18167 32215; EHT1841, TL180 319).
- 4.27 The available information indicates a generally low to moderate archaeological potential for the later prehistoric periods within the study site, for remains deemed most likely to be low (i.e. local) significance.

Roman

- 4.28 The course of the Icknield Way is mapped to follow the line of Westmill Lane c.215m to the south of the study site. This routeway is understood to have originated in the prehistoric period and to have been partially utilised as a road during the Roman period (MHT4182, TL250 345).
- 4.29 To the west of the study site, geophysical survey followed by evaluation confirmed Iron Age and Romano-British settlement activity (MHT6818, TL1670 3212).

- 4.30 To the northwest of the study site, geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation undertaken across part of a field west of Bedford Road confirmed a series of ditches, one containing sherds of Roman coarseware pottery, with a sherd of prehistoric pottery also retrieved from the same ditch (MHT31015, TL16832 32378; EHT7980, TL16889 32406).
- 4.31 Artefactual discoveries within the study area search radius include coins and pottery from Ickleford to the east (MHT1234, TL1831), together with coins from West Mill, Pirton, to the southwest. The HER entry states that *'the NGR is not precise, but implies that the coins may be another of many finds along the River Oughton'* (MHT1230, TL170 307).
- 4.32 The available information indicates a generally low to moderate archaeological potential for the Roman period within the study site, for remains deemed most likely to be low (i.e. local) significance.

Saxon, Early Medieval & Medieval

- 4.33 The name Hitchin is thought to have Saxon origins relating to a Saxon tribe called *Hicce* recorded in a 7th century document. It has also been suggested, however, that the name has earlier origins, possibly a derivative of a Celtic river name meaning 'dry'. Evidence of Saxon occupation is further noted by the presence of a substantial mid/late Saxon settlement recorded during fieldwork in the town (Lowe 2006).
- 4.34 The late Saxon manor of Hitchin is recorded in Domesday Book; the Church of St Mary is documented in a 10th century will. Any late Saxon manorial site, if it existed, was superseded by the laying out of the medieval marketplace and burgage plots, perhaps in the 13th century, concealing the later Saxon topography (Thompson, 2005).
- 4.35 To the east of the study site, the fabric of the church of St Katherine at Ickleford dates from the mid 12th century to the 15th century, with restoration during the mid 19th century (MHT4306, TL1824 3164). The settlement of Ickleford has been dated to the Medieval period, noting that there is no mention of it in Domesday (MHT4426, TL182 317). The site of a moat is recorded on Ordnance Survey mapping at Upper Green, Ickleford. The site was excavated in 1965 but only limited finds were recorded, and the site was subsequently covered by housing (MHT1228, TQ1846 3172). Finds of Medieval pottery, together with iron objects and ironworking debris has been identified at Ickleford (MHT1229, TL184 316). Buildings with Medieval antecedents within Ickleford include the Old George public house on Arlesey Road (MHT17377, TL18225 31577). Further evidence for Medieval activity within Ickleford comprises a ditch at Duncot Close (MHT13274, TL18390 31465; EHT4801, TL1830 3135).
- 4.36 Areas of ridge and furrow cultivation identified within the study area search radius, dated to the Medieval period on the HER, includes land east of Bedford Road to the east of the study site (MHT17905, TL17686 31984; MHT17906, TL17894 31839; MHT1790, TL18128 31989). Archaeological excavations on land west of Bedford Road to the rear of Burford Grange, southeast of the study site, also recorded ridge and furrow (EHT9129, TL17565 30950; EHT9037, TL17665 31070).
- 4.37 Artefactual discoveries recorded on the HER within the study area search radius include three possible Anglo Saxon spearheads from Ickleford to the east (MHT1616, TL1831).
- 4.38 The available information indicates a generally low to moderate archaeological potential for the Saxon and Medieval periods within the study site, for remains considered most likely to be low (i.e. local) significance. Evidence of agricultural activity and land division can be considered most likely to be represented within the archaeological record.

Post Medieval & Modern (including map regression exercise)

- 4.39 Many of the HER records within the study area search radius refer to finds and features associated with the Post Medieval and Modern periods, beyond the study site boundaries. These findspots are not discussed in detail here as they are not deemed to be directly relevant to the development and history of the study site itself. They are however included in the gazetteer appendix to this DBA, and shown as relevant on Figures 2a-2b.
- 4.40 The study site has remained open land throughout its documented history. Early mapping shows the study site to lie west of Ickleford and north of the River Oughton (Figure 4: 1766 Andrews and Dury's Map of Hertfordshire; Figure 5: 1771 Ickleford Estate Map, showing the study site comprising fields; Figure 6: 1804 Ordnance Survey; Figure 7: 1822 Bryant's Map of Hertfordshire).
- 4.41 The First Edition Ordnance Survey (Figure 8: 1881-1882) shows the study site divided into four fields, with a trackway running through the centre on a southwest-northeast alignment.
- 4.42 To the east of the study site, the buildings of Pound Farm located within the historic settlement of Ickleford are mapped on the Ordnance Survey of 1901, and subsequently demolished during the 20th century for housing. The present Pound Farm buildings to the north of the study site comprise 20th century buildings (MHT17376, TL18353 31683).
- 4.43 The 1922 Ordnance Survey (Figure 9) shows the study site divided into two fields, with the southwest-northeast aligned trackway through the centre.
- 4.44 No significant changes are shown on subsequent Ordnance Surveys dated 1938-1947, 1978-1980, and 1999 (Figures 10-12).
- 4.45 Aerial photographs dated 2007 and 2025 (Figures 13-14) show the study site under crop; Figure 15 reproduces the study site as existing.
- 4.46 The study site's archaeological potential for the Post Medieval and Modern periods can be anticipated to be generally low.

Assessment of Significance (Designated Assets)

- 4.47 Existing national policy guidance for archaeology (the NPPF as referenced in section 2) enshrines the concept of the 'significance' of heritage assets. Significance as defined in the NPPF centres on the value of an archaeological or historic asset for its 'heritage interest' to this or future generations.
- 4.48 In terms of relevant nationally significant designated heritage assets, the study site does not lie within the vicinity of a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck.
- 4.49 In view of the above it is concluded that the redevelopment proposals will have no direct archaeological impact upon relevant designated heritage assets.

Assessment of Significance (Non-Designated Assets)

- 4.50 Figure 2a confirms the presence of Areas of Archaeological Significance, which lie to the east, northwest and southwest of the study site. These designations are understood to hold no particular planning policy status, and are understood to have been designated by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) due to the spatial distribution of previously recorded archaeological findings.

Archaeological Desk Based Assessment

- 4.51 As identified by desk based work, archaeological potential by period and the likely significance of any archaeological remains which may be present is summarised in table form below:

Period	Identified archaeological potential	Identified archaeological significance
Palaeolithic	Low	Low (Local)
Mesolithic	Low	Low (Local)
Neolithic	Low	Low (Local)
Bronze Age	Low	Low (Local)
Iron Age	Low	Low (Local)
Roman	Low	Low (Local)
Saxon	Low	Low (Local)
Medieval	Low	Low (Local)
Post Medieval	Low	Low (Local)
Modern	Low	Low (Local)

- 4.52 Any archaeological evidence present within the Study Site would in the context of the Secretary of State's non-statutory criteria for Scheduled Monuments (DCMS 2013) most likely be of local significance only.

5 Review of Potential Development Impacts on Archaeological Assets

Site Conditions

- 5.1 The study site currently comprises open fields (see Figures 14-15 and Plates 1-7).
- 5.2 Agricultural/horticultural use of the study site prior to development can be considered likely to have had a moderate, widespread negative archaeological impact.

Proposed Development

- 5.3 A hybrid application is to be submitted for a mixed-use development to provide a total of up to 230 dwellings, a residential care home (Use Class C2), an Independent Special School (ISS) and new sports pitch, with access from Bedford Road, landscaping, parking and SuDS comprising: Phase 1 – Application for full planning permission for the erection of 100 dwellings, an ISS, new sports pitch and associated parking, landscaping, open space and SuDS; Phase 2 – An outline application on the remaining part of the site for the erection of up to 130 dwellings, a residential care home (Use Class C2) and associated works with access from Bedford Road (all matters reserved apart from access).
- 5.4 Figure 16 reproduces the proposed development plan.

Review of Potential Development Impacts on Designated Archaeological Assets

- 5.5 In terms of relevant nationally significant designated heritage assets, as defined above and as shown on Figures 2a-2b, no nationally designated World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck sites lie within the vicinity of the study site.
- 5.6 In view of the above it is concluded that the redevelopment proposals will have no direct archaeological impact upon relevant designated heritage assets.

Review of Potential Development Impacts on Non-Designated Assets

- 5.7 Figure 2a confirms the presence of Areas of Archaeological Significance, which lie to the east, northwest and southwest of the study site. These designations are understood to hold no particular planning policy status, and are understood to have been designated by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) due to the spatial distribution of recorded archaeological findings.
- 5.8 The nature of archaeological survival will necessarily depend upon the impact of past post-depositional impacts as a result of development since deposition, which in this case primarily comprises the action of agricultural/horticultural activities.
- 5.9 As defined above in Section 4, the available information indicates that the study site has an archaeological potential for the later prehistoric periods, together with the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods, for remains deemed most likely to be of low (local) significance.
- 5.10 The archaeological planning advisors are anticipated to require further archaeological mitigation measures in association with development proposal impacts, due to the potential together with the generally open aspect of the study site.

6 Summary & Conclusions

- 6.1 The study site comprising land at Pound Farm, Ickleford, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RS, has been assessed for its below ground archaeological potential.
- 6.2 In accordance with relevant government planning policy and guidance, a desk based assessment has been undertaken to clarify the archaeological potential of the study area.
- 6.3 In terms of relevant nationally significant designated heritage assets, no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wreck sites have been identified within the vicinity of the study site.
- 6.4 Figure 2a confirms the presence of Areas of Archaeological Significance, which lie to the east, northwest and southwest of the study site. These designations are understood to hold no particular planning policy status, and are understood to have been designated by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) due to the spatial distribution of recorded archaeological findings.
- 6.5 The available information indicates an archaeological potential within the study site for the later prehistoric periods, the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods, for remains considered most likely to be of low, i.e. local, significance.
- 6.6 Non-intrusive geophysical (magnetometer) survey has identified anomalies related to archaeological and possible archaeological features, focused within the western and southern area. These anomalies have been interpreted to form parts of several enclosures and possibly boundary ditches. Anomalies related to the remnants of ridge and furrow, recent ploughing and modern material / features have also been identified. Numerous responses of uncertain origin were also recorded, and whilst archaeological origins for some of these have not been discounted, the majority probably represent Modern activity / material, agricultural activity or natural variations. The soil conditions were recorded during the survey to vary across the study site and it has been suggested that in parts of the site, some types of feature(s) may not produce measurable / identifiable magnetic anomalies, which could mean that the full extent of archaeological features / activity within the study site were not recorded during the survey.
- 6.7 The study site has remained open agricultural fields throughout its documented history. Impacts arising from agricultural activity can be anticipated to have a widespread moderate negative archaeological impact.
- 6.8 A hybrid application is to be submitted for a mixed-use development to provide a total of up to 230 dwellings, a residential care home (Use Class C2), an Independent Special School (ISS) and new sports pitch, with access from Bedford Road, landscaping, parking and SuDS comprising: Phase 1 – Application for full planning permission for the erection of 100 dwellings, an ISS, new sports pitch and associated parking, landscaping, open space and SuDS; Phase 2 – An outline application on the remaining part of the site for the erection of up to 130 dwellings, a residential care home (Use Class C2) and associated works with access from Bedford Road (all matters reserved apart from access).
- 6.9 In view of the perceived archaeological potential, and in line with relevant planning policy and guidance, it is anticipated that the planning authorities archaeological planning advisors will require further archaeological mitigation measures in association with redevelopment impacts.
- 6.10 The available information indicates that in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and proportionate to the impact of development, these works can follow the granting of planning consent, secured by an appropriate archaeological planning condition.

Sources Consulted

General

Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies

Internet

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Aerial photography: <http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/>

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

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

Domesday Book: <https://opendomesday.org.uk>

Historic England (National Heritage List): <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

Past Scape: <http://www.pastscape.org.uk>

Portable Antiquities Database: <https://finds.org.uk/database/>

NPPG: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk>

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Thompson *Hitchin Extensive Urban Survey: revised assessment* 2005

Victoria County History of Hertfordshire, Vol I, London 1951

Victoria County History of Hertfordshire, Vol III, London 1971

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

Cartographic

1766 Andrews and Dury's Map of Hertfordshire

1771 Ickleford Estate Map

1804 Ordnance Survey Drawing

1822 Bryant's Map of Hertfordshire

1881 Ordnance Survey

1882 Ordnance Survey

1884 Ordnance Survey

1887 Ordnance Survey

1898-1901 Ordnance Survey

1899 Ordnance Survey

1901 Ordnance Survey

1922 Ordnance Survey

1925 Ordnance Survey

1938 Ordnance Survey

1938-1947 Ordnance Survey

1939 Ordnance Survey

1948-1950 Ordnance Survey

1960 Ordnance Survey

1964 Ordnance Survey

1966-1969 Ordnance Survey

1966-1980 Ordnance Survey

1969 Ordnance Survey

1978 Ordnance Survey

1978-1980 Ordnance Survey

1980 Ordnance Survey

1982-1983 Ordnance Survey

1983 Ordnance Survey

Archaeological Desk Based Assessment

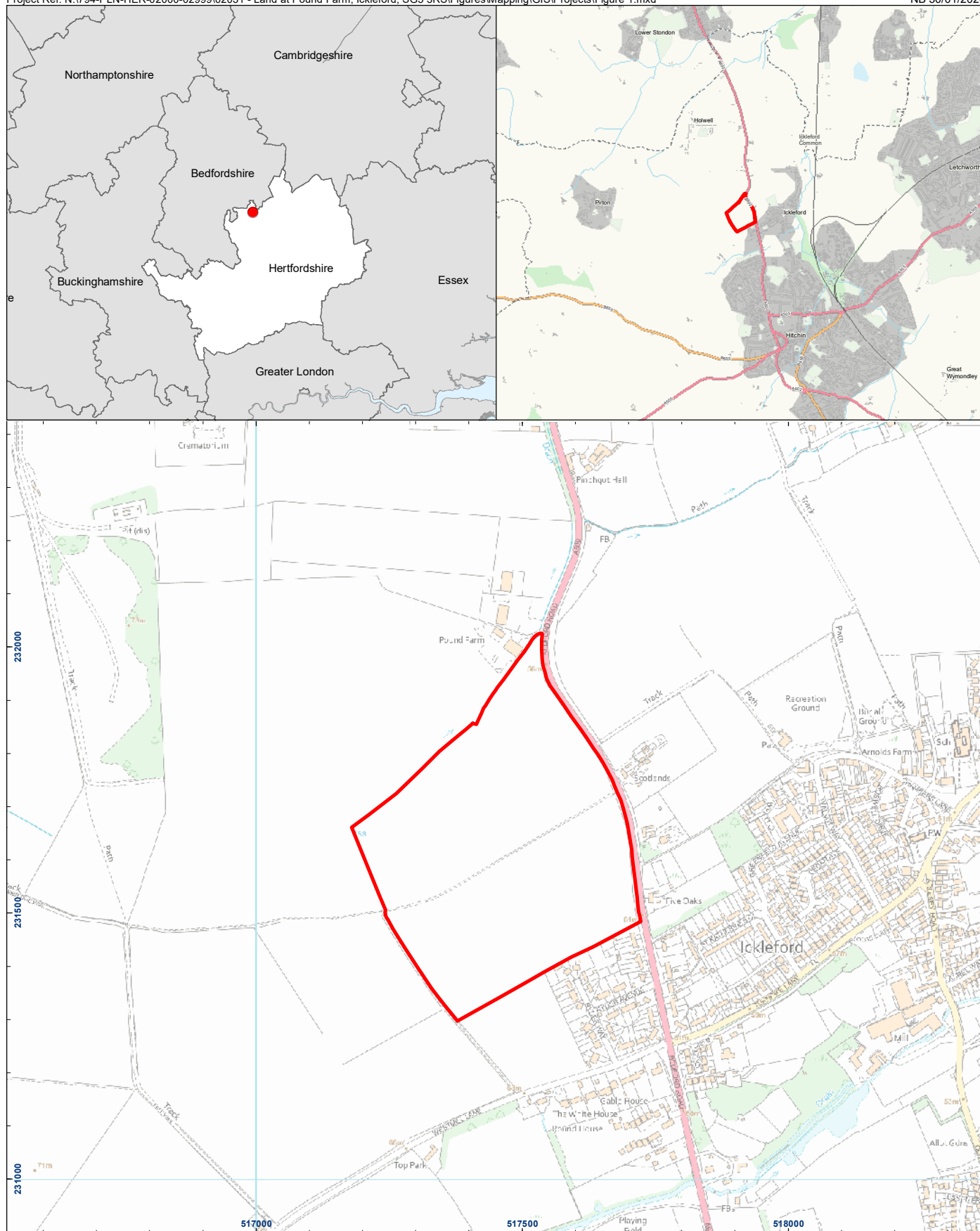
1993 Ordnance Survey

1999 Ordnance Survey

2006 Ordnance Survey

2025 Ordnance Survey

Figures



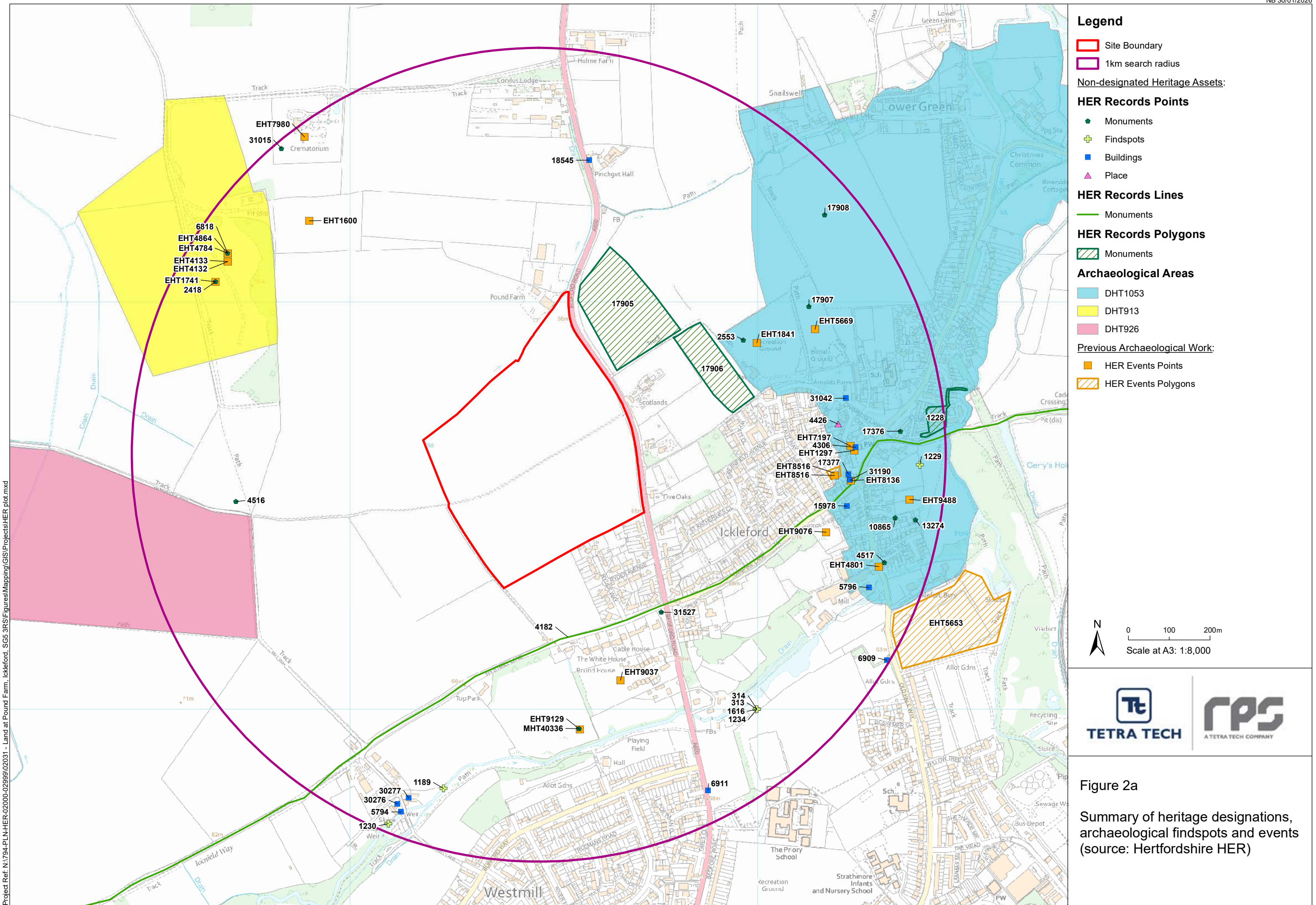
 Site Boundary

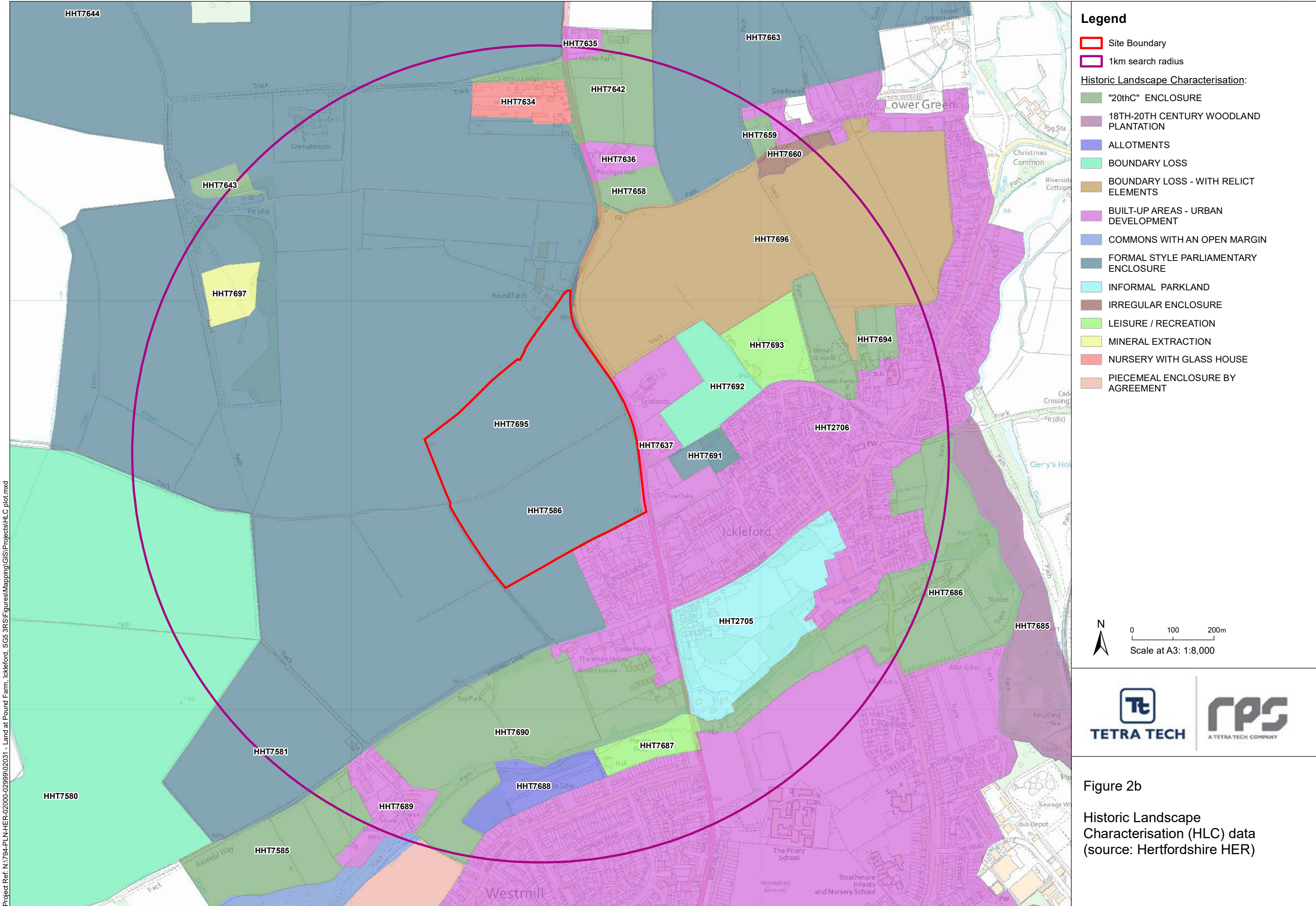


0 100 200m
Scale at A4: 1:10,000



Figure 1
Site Location







Legend

 Site Boundary

LiDAR DATA

Source:
Environment Agency

Data Type: DTM

Resolution: 1m

Date Captured:
Mar 2020

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



0 75 150m
Scale at A3: 1:5,000



Figure 3

LiDAR
(source: Environment Agency)



 Approximate site location



Not to Scale
Illustrative Only



Figure 4

1766 Andrews and Dury's Map of
Hertfordshire



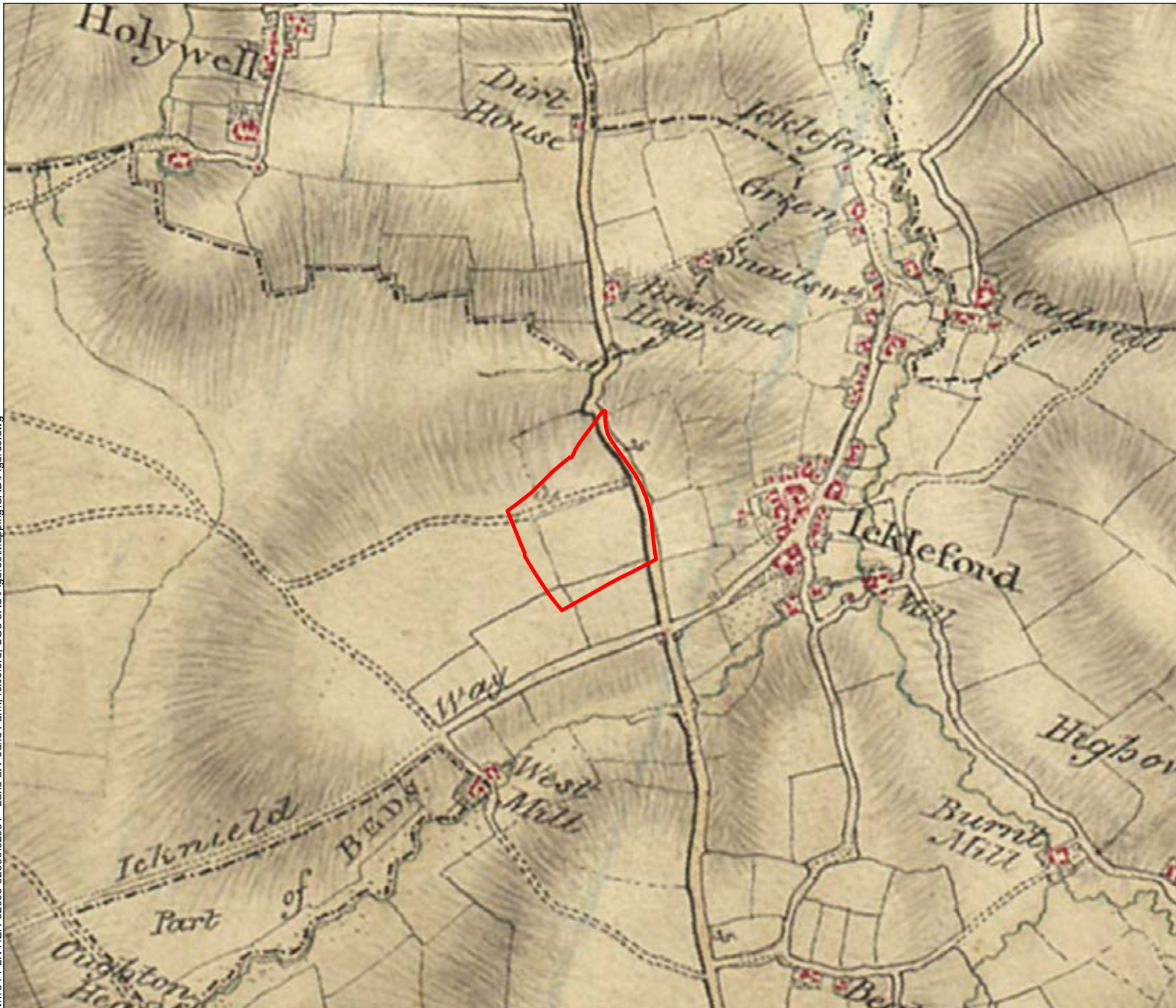
 Approximate site location



Not to Scale
Illustrative Only



Figure 5
1771 Ickleford Estate Map



 Site Boundary (approximate)

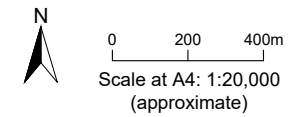
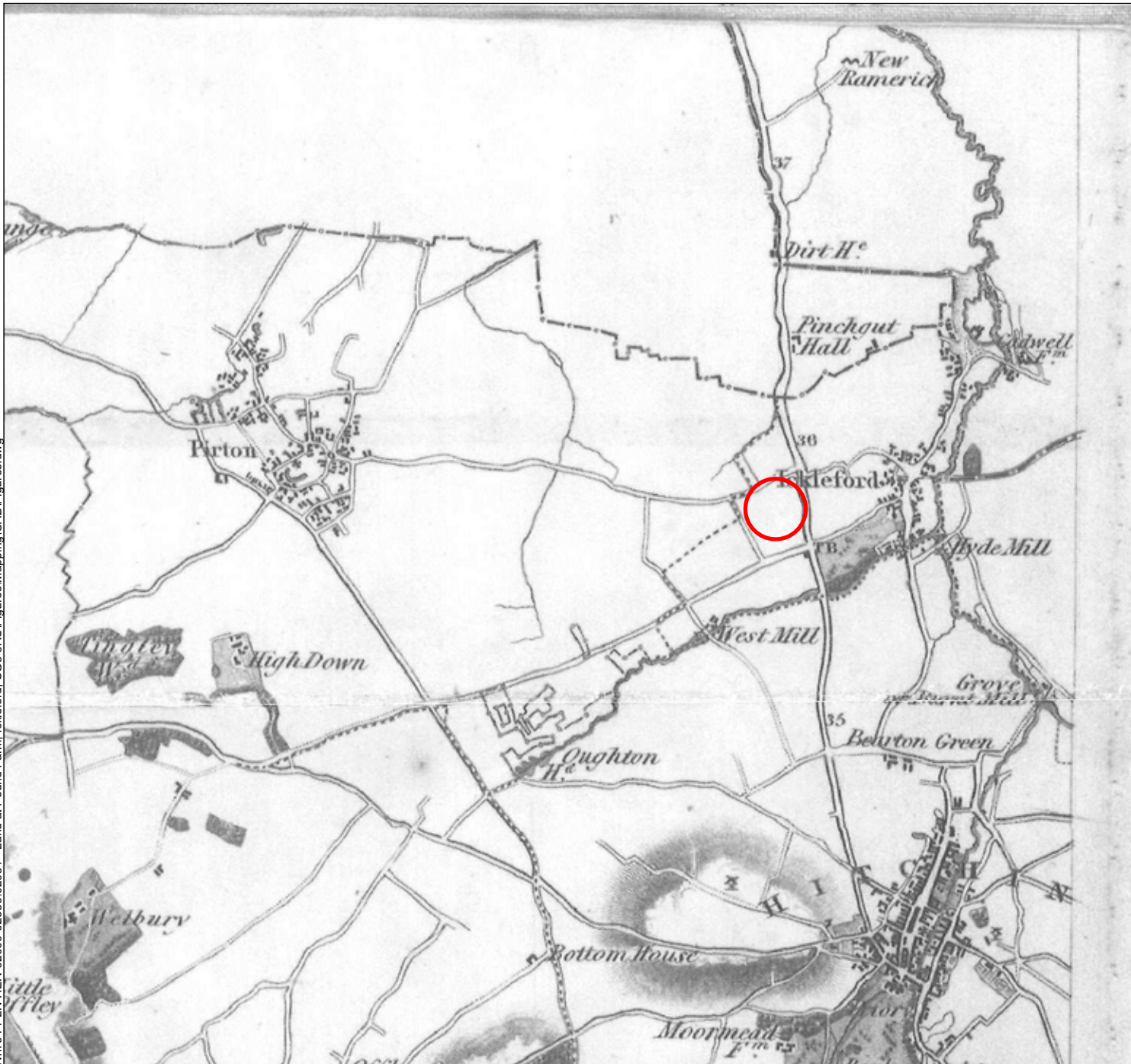


Figure 6
1804 Ordnance Survey Drawing



 Approximate site location



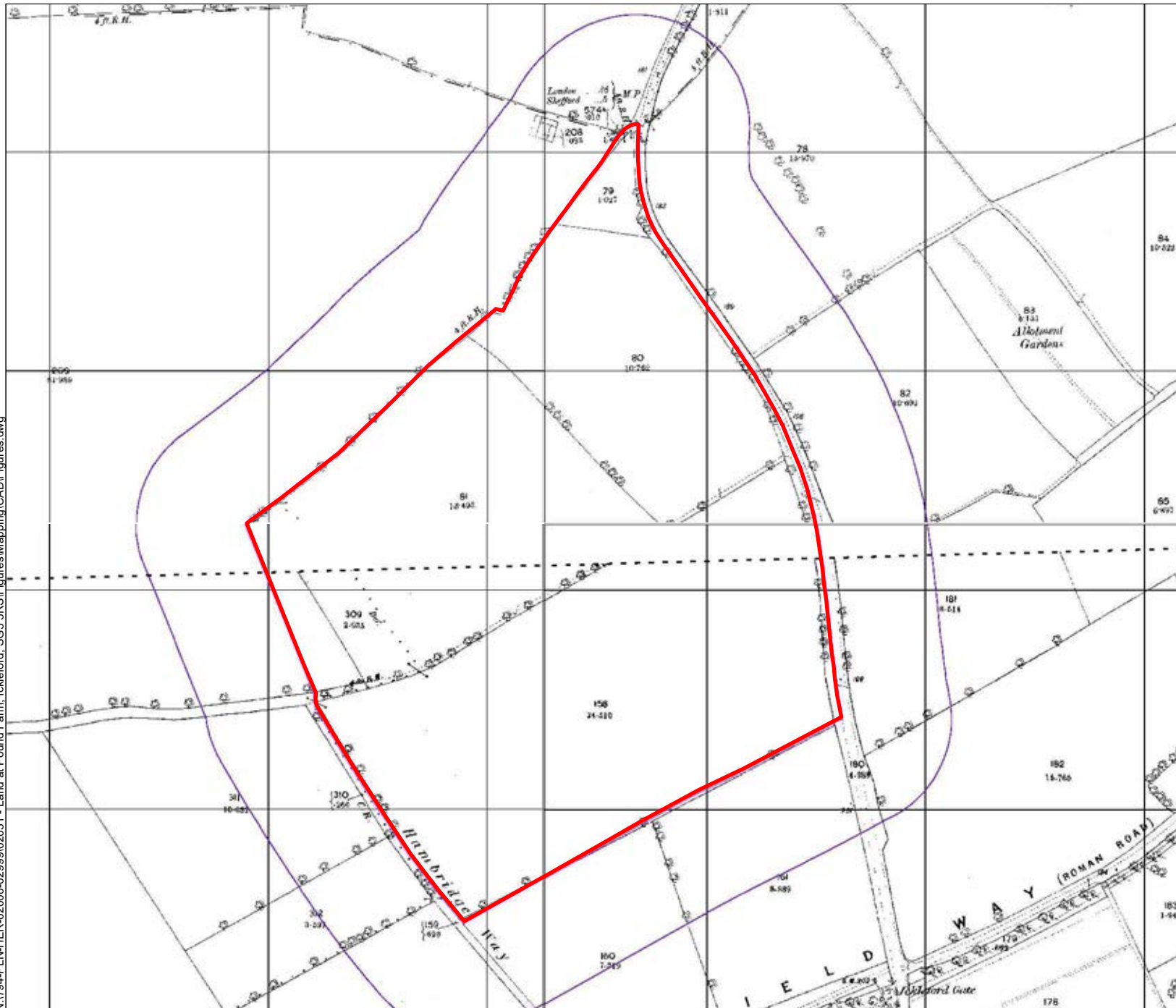
Not to Scale
Illustrative Only



Figure 7

1822 Bryant's Map of
Hertfordshire

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 Site Boundary

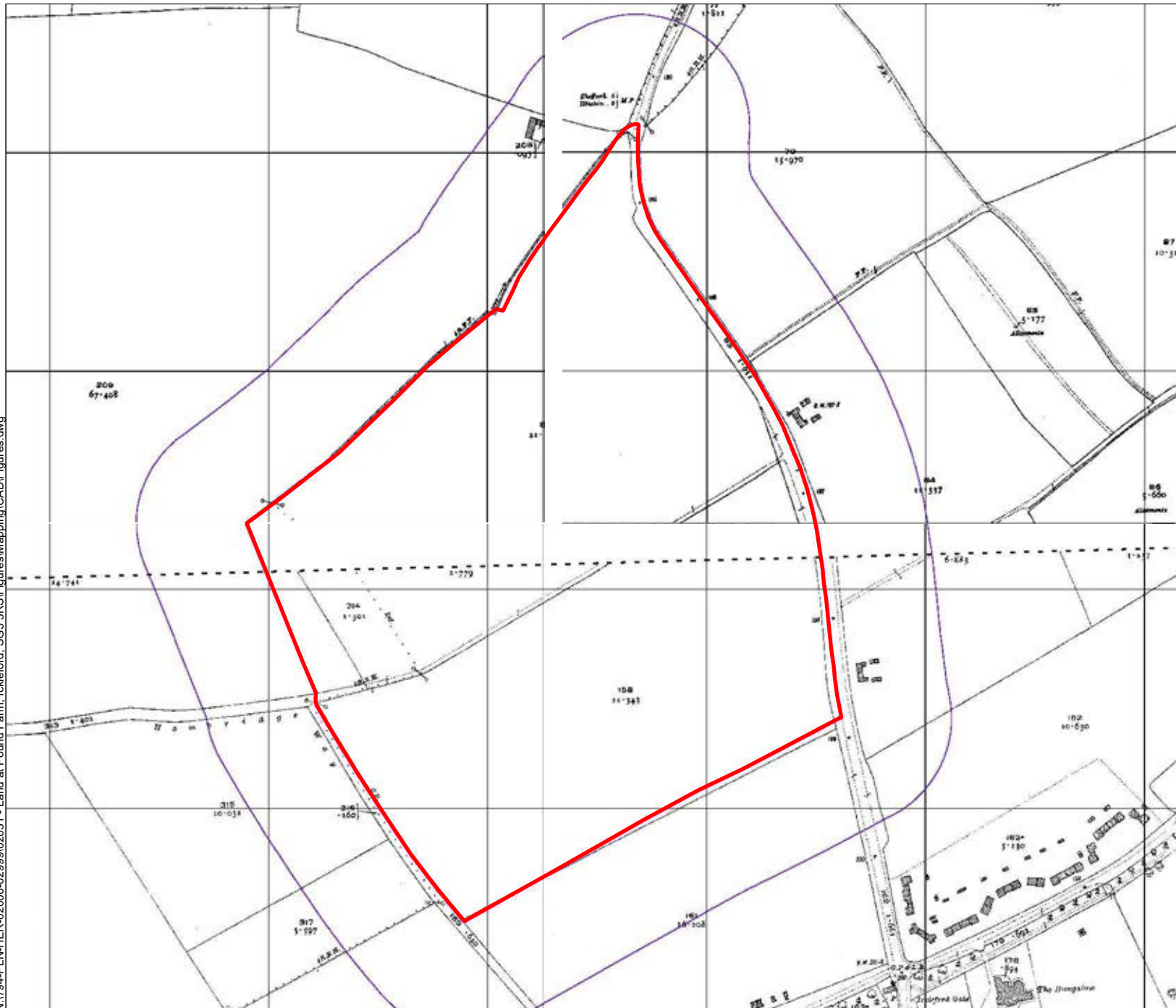


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Figure 8
1881-1882 Ordnance Survey Map

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 Site Boundary

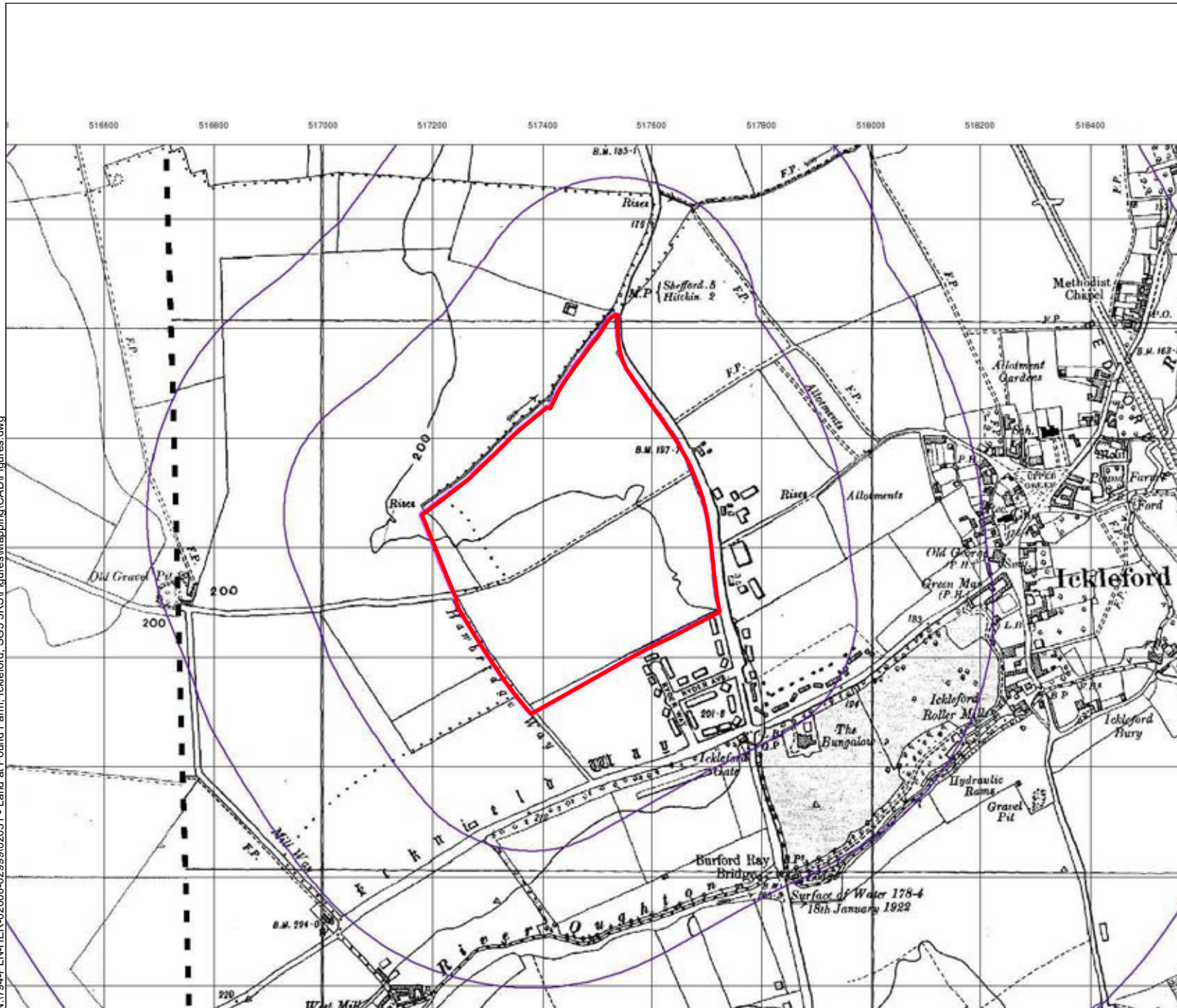


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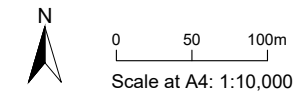


Figure 9
1922 Ordnance Survey Map

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 Site Boundary




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Figure 10
1938-1947 Ordnance Survey Map

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 Site Boundary

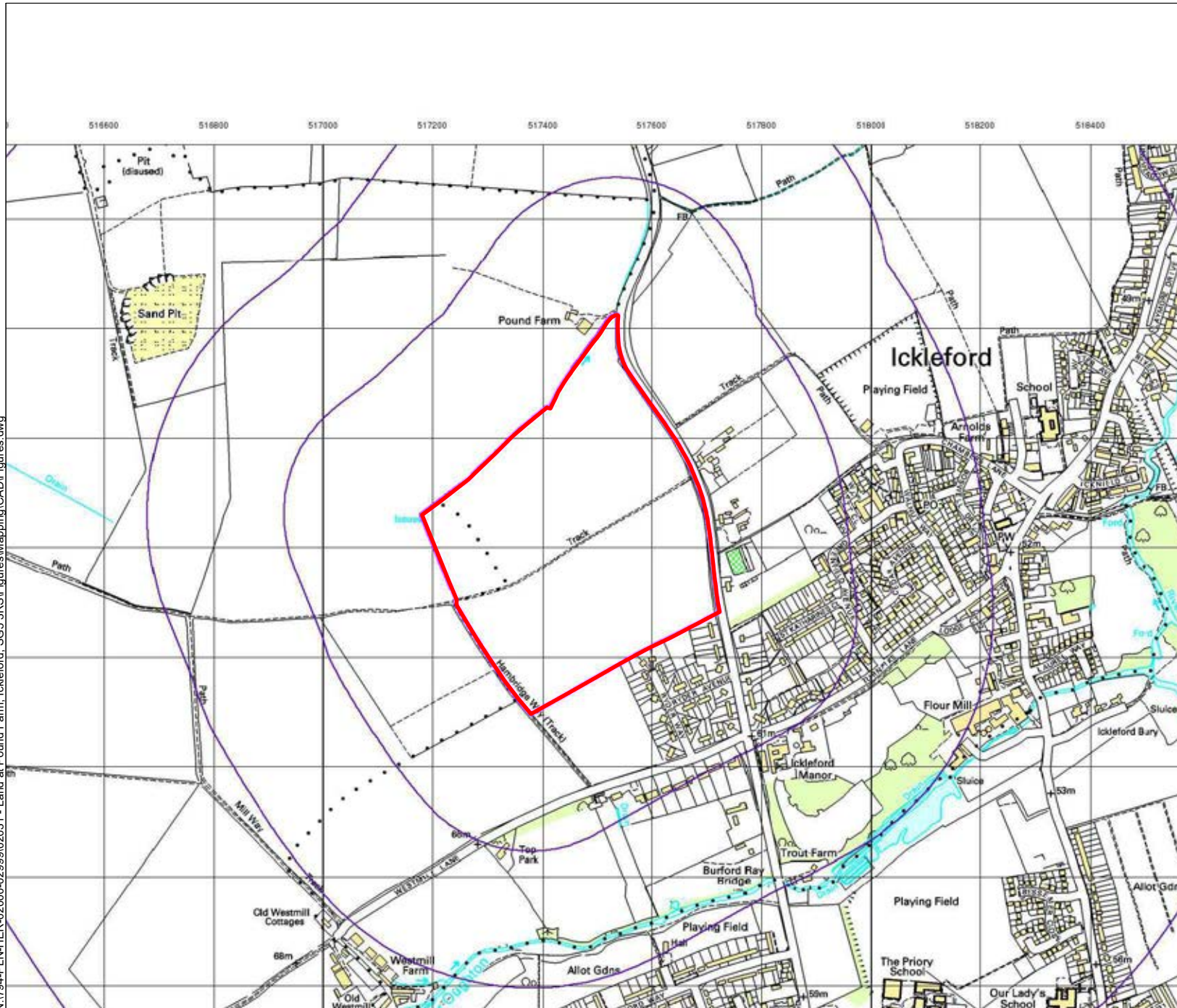


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Scale at A4: 1:5,000



Figure 11
1978-1980 Ordnance Survey Map

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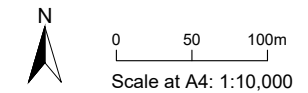


Figure 12
1999 Ordnance Survey Map

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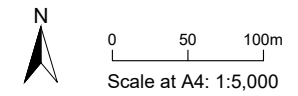


Figure 13

2007 Aerial Photograph



 Site Boundary

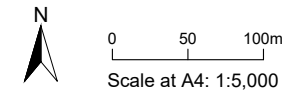
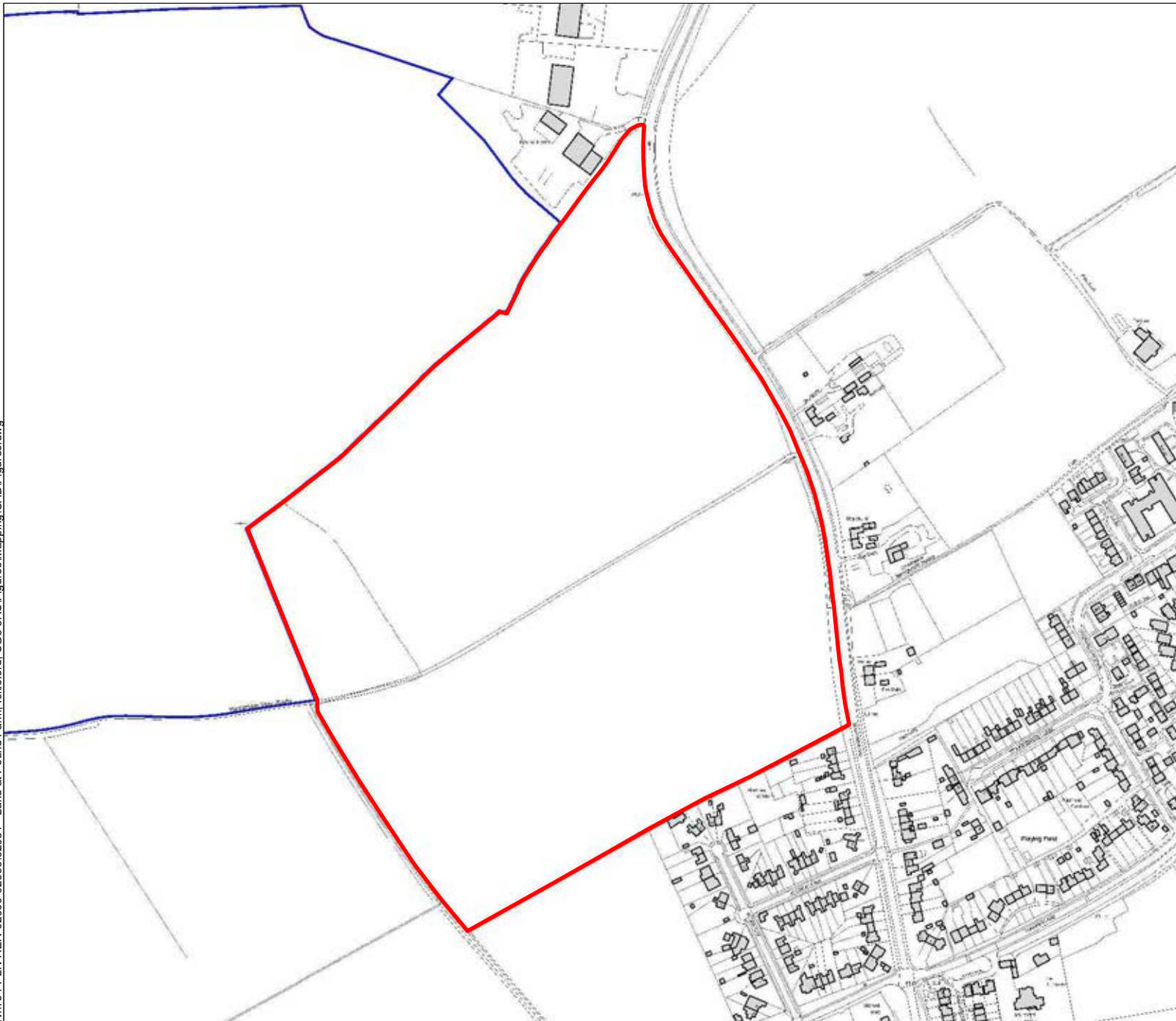


Figure 14

2025 Aerial Photograph



 Site Boundary

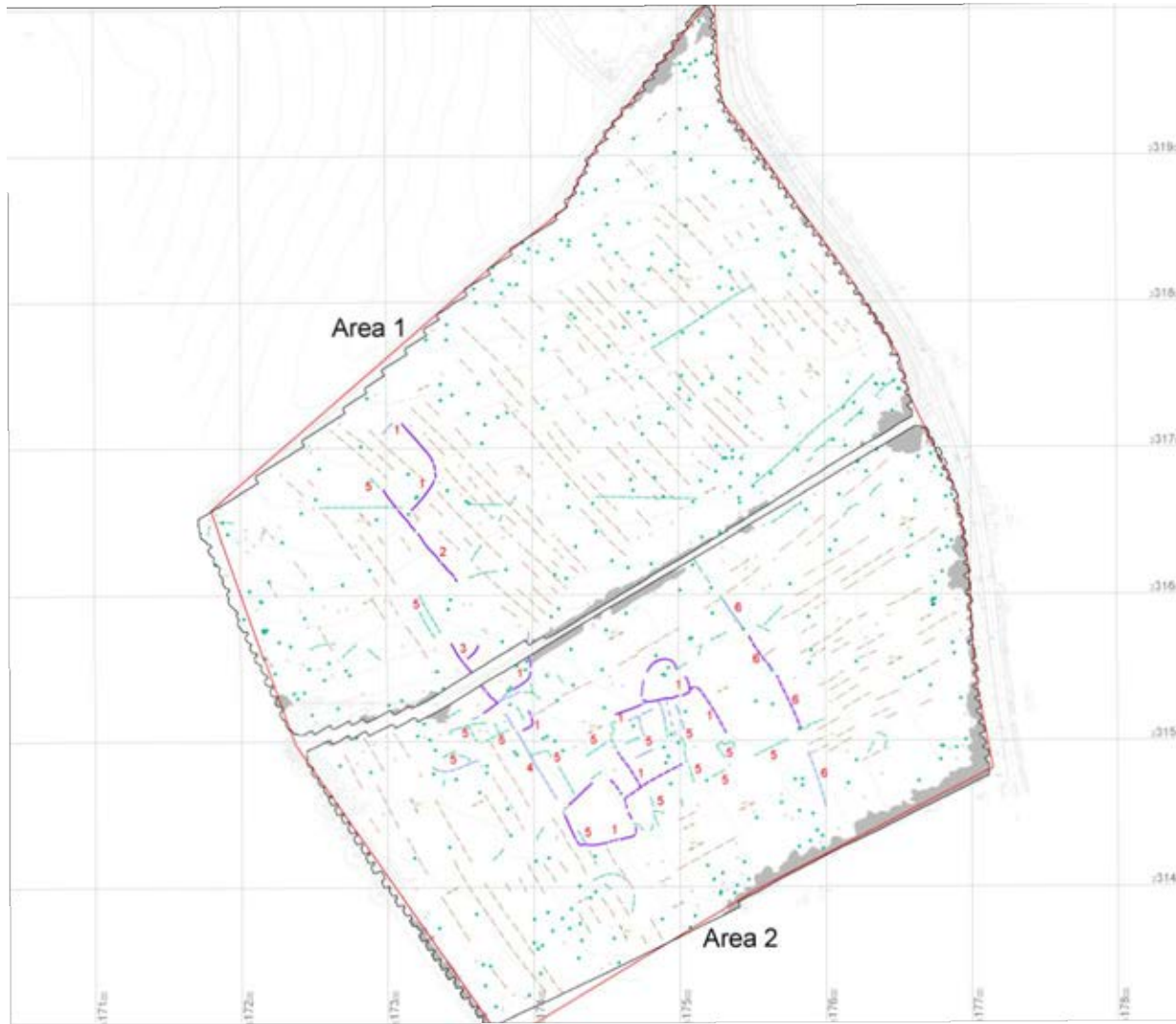


0 50 100m
Scale at A4: 1:5,000



Figure 15

Study Site as Existing



- Site Boundary
- Probable archaeology (linear or curvi-linear) / trend
- Possible archaeology (linear or curvi-linear / trend)
- Uncertain origin (discrete / linear or curvi-linear / trend)
- Ridge and furrow
- Possible ridge and furrow regime but some responses could be modern ploughing
- Former field boundary (corroborated)
- Agriculture. Orientation of modern ploughing regime. Some responses could be ridge and furrow
- Magnetic disturbance - usually related to a spread / concentration of modern material
- Ferrous and / or fired material (probable modern)

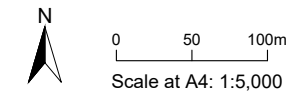


Figure 16
Geophysical survey results
(source: Sumo 2026)



 Site Boundary

N
0 50 100m
Scale at A4: 1:5,000


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Figure 17
Proposed Development

Plates



Plate 1: View looking west from Bedford Road towards the northern part of the Site



Plate 2: View looking west from Bedford Road along the PROW north from south eastern corner of the Site



Plate 3: View looking north along eastern boundary towards Pound Farm



Plate 4: View looking south along eastern boundary towards housing estate



Plate 5: View looking south west from the PROW



Plate 6: View looking north west from the western boundary of the Site towards Pirton



Plate 7: View looking south along western boundary of the Site from the PROW

Appendices

Appendix 1
[Name of Appendix]

HER Gazetteer

HER Records

PrefRef	Name	MonType	Period
313	FOUR PALAEOLITHIC HANDAXES, ICKLEFORD	FINDSPOT	Palaeolithic
314	ACHEULIAN FLINTS AND SIX SCRAPERS, ICKLEFORD	FINDSPOT	Palaeolithic
1189	UNDATED IRON SPEARHEAD/DAGGER, WEST MILL, HITCHIN	FINDSPOT	Unknown
1228	SITE OF MOAT, POUND FARM, UPPER GREEN, ICKLEFORD	MOAT	Medieval
1229	MEDIEVAL POTTERY, IRONWORKING DEBRIS AND IRON OBJECTS, SOUTH OF POUND FARM, ICKLEFORD	FINDSPOT	Medieval
1230	ROMAN COINS, WEST MILL, ICKLEFORD	FINDSPOT	Roman
1234	ROMAN COINS AND POTTERY, ICKLEFORD	FINDSPOT	Roman
1616	THREE ?ANGLO-SAXON SPEARHEADS, ICKLEFORD	FINDSPOT	Early Medieval
2418	CROPMARK OF RING DITCH, PIRTON	ROUND BARROW?; RING DITCH	Late Neolithic to Earlier Bronze Age
2553	CROPMARK OF RING DITCH, ICKLEFORD	ROUND BARROW?; RING DITCH	Late Neolithic to Earlier Bronze Age
4182	THE ICKNIELD WAY	TRACKWAY; ROAD	Early Neolithic to Late Roman
4306	CHURCH OF ST KATHERINE, ICKLEFORD	CHURCH	Medieval
4426	ICKLEFORD VILLAGE	VILLAGE	Medieval to Post Medieval
4516	IRON AGE 'HEARTH'S' AND BURIALS, PIRTON	HEARTH?; BURIAL	Earlier Iron Age
4517	SITE OF LATE 16TH CENTURY HOUSE (THE LAURELS), ARLESEY ROAD, ICKLEFORD	HOUSE; FARMSTEAD?	Post Medieval
5794	REMAINS OF WEST MILL, WESTMILL LANE, ICKLEFORD	CORN MILL; WATERMILL	Post Medieval
5796	BOWMAN'S MILL, OLD HALF WAY, ICKLEFORD	WATERMILL?; CORN MILL; STEAM MILL; WATERMILL	Medieval to Post Medieval

6818	IRON AGE AND ROMANO-BRITISH FEATURES AT HOLWELL QUARRY, PIRTON	OCCUPATION SITE; FARMSTEAD; RIDGE AND FURROW	Earlier Iron Age to Medieval
6909	PILLBOX, OLD HALE WAY, ICKLEFORD	PILLBOX	World War II
6911	SPIGOT MORTAR BASE, BEDFORD ROAD, HITCHIN	SPIGOT MORTAR EMPLACEMENT	World War II
10865	POST-MEDIEVAL FEATURES AT 34 ARLESEY ROAD (DUNCOT CLOSE), ICKLEFORD	PIT; DITCH; LINEAR FEATURE	Post Medieval
13274	MEDIEVAL DITCH, DUNCOT CLOSE, ICKLEFORD	LINEAR FEATURE; DITCH	Medieval
15978	ICKLEFORD HOUSE, ICKLEFORD	MANOR HOUSE; DOUBLE PILE HOUSE; SERVICE WING; GATEHOUSE; STABLE	Post Medieval
17376	SITE OF POUND FARM, UPPER GREEN, ICKLEFORD	FARMSTEAD	Post Medieval
17377	THE OLD GEORGE PH, 41 ARLESEY ROAD, ICKLEFORD	OPEN HALL HOUSE; TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE; PUBLIC HOUSE	Medieval to Post Medieval
17905	RIDGE & FURROW, BEDFORD ROAD, ICKLEFORD	RIDGE AND FURROW	Medieval to Post Medieval
17906	RIDGE & FURROW, ICKLEFORD	RIDGE AND FURROW	Medieval to Post Medieval
17907	CROPMARKS OF PITS, NORTH OF ARNOLDS FARM, ICKLEFORD	PIT	Unknown
17908	CROPMARKS OF RING DITCH, CURVILINEAR DITCH AND PITS, NORTH OF ARNOLDS FARM, ICKLEFORD	ROUND BARROW?; LINEAR FEATURE; PIT; RING DITCH	Late Neolithic to Earlier Bronze Age
18545	PINCHGUT HALL, BEDFORD ROAD, ICKLEFORD	DETACHED HOUSE	Post Medieval
30276	OLD WESTMILL FARMHOUSE, WESTMILL LANE, ICKLEFORD	FARMHOUSE; TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE; STABLE; WALLED GARDEN; GAZEBO	Post Medieval
30277	WESTMILL FARM, WESTMILL LANE, ICKLEFORD	FARMSTEAD; COACH HOUSE; TIMBER FRAMED BARN; AISLED BARN	Post Medieval
31015	PROBABLE ROMAN DITCH SYSTEM, BEDFORD ROAD, HOLWELL	FIELD SYSTEM; LINEAR FEATURE	Roman
31042	ARNOLDS FARM, UPPER GREEN, ICKLEFORD	TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE	Post Medieval
31190	THE GREEN MAN PH, ARLESEY ROAD, ICKLEFORD	PUBLIC HOUSE; BEER HOUSE	Post Medieval to Twentieth Century
31527	SITE OF ICKLEFORD GATE, ICKNIELD WAY, ICKLEFORD	TOLL GATE; TOLL HOUSE	Post Medieval

MHT40336	RIDGE AND FURROW, BURFORD GRANGE, ICKLEFORD	RIDGE AND FURROW	Historic: period uncertain
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HER Events

EvUID	Name	Organisati
EHT1297	Observation of works at St Katherine's church, Ickleford, 2007	Albion Archaeology
EHT1600	Watching brief on the North Herts landfill site, Holwell, 2010	Heritage Network
EHT1741	AIR PHOTO OF CROPMARK OF A RING DITCH, PIRTON	Air Photos from CUCAP
EHT1841	AIR PHOTO SHOWING A CROPMARK OF A RING DITCH, ICKLEFORD	HCC Planning Dept Air Photos(+Huntings orig verti)
EHT4132	Geophysical survey at Holwell landfill site, Holwell, 1997	Museum of London Archaeology Service : Clark Laboratory
EHT4133	Trial trenches at Holwell Quarry, Holwell, 1998	Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service
EHT4784	Metal detecting survey at Holwell Quarry, Holwell, 1998	Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service
EHT4801	Evaluation at 34 Arlesey Road, Ickleford, 1996-97	The Heritage Network
EHT4864	Excavation at Holwell Quarry, Pirton, 1998-9	Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service
EHT5653	Geophysical survey for East Coast Main Line (ECML) Hitchin grade separation, 2008	GSB Prospection
EHT5669	Geophysical survey of proposed new burial ground, Alleyfield, north of Arnold's Farm, Ickleford, 2006	Stratascan
EHT7197	Evaluation at St Katherine's Church, Ickleford, 2011	The Heritage Network
EHT7980	Evaluation of land west of Bedford Road, Holwell, 2015	Thames Valley Archaeological Services
EHT8136	Assessment of the Green Man, Arlesey Road, Ickleford, 2016	Heritage Network
EHT8516	Evaluation at the Green Man, Ickleford, 2016	Heritage Network
EHT9037	Evaluation at Burford Grange Bedford Road Ickleford, 2022	Cotswold Archaeology
EHT9076	Evaluation at Land at Turnpike Lane and adjacent to 4 Manor Close Ickleford, 2022	Minerva Archaeology Ltd
EHT9129	Strip map and record at Land West Of Bedford Road And Rear Of Burford Grange Bedford Road Ickleford, 2023	Cotswold Archaeology
EHT9488	Evaluation at Land To The Rear 34 Arlesey Road, Ickleford, Hitchin, 2025	Albion Archaeology

