

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton Hertfordshire

Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment



Report prepared for:
Blakeney Homes Limited

CA Project: MK1148

CA Report: Mk1148_1

July 2025



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SUMMARY

Project Name: Land south of Hambridge Way
Location: Pirton, Hertfordshire
NGR: 515101 231620

In August 2024 Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Blakeney Homes Limited to undertake a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment in respect of land south of Hambridge Way, Pirton. The proposed development comprises the construction of up to 50 dwellings with associated roads, parking, services, gardens and landscaping.

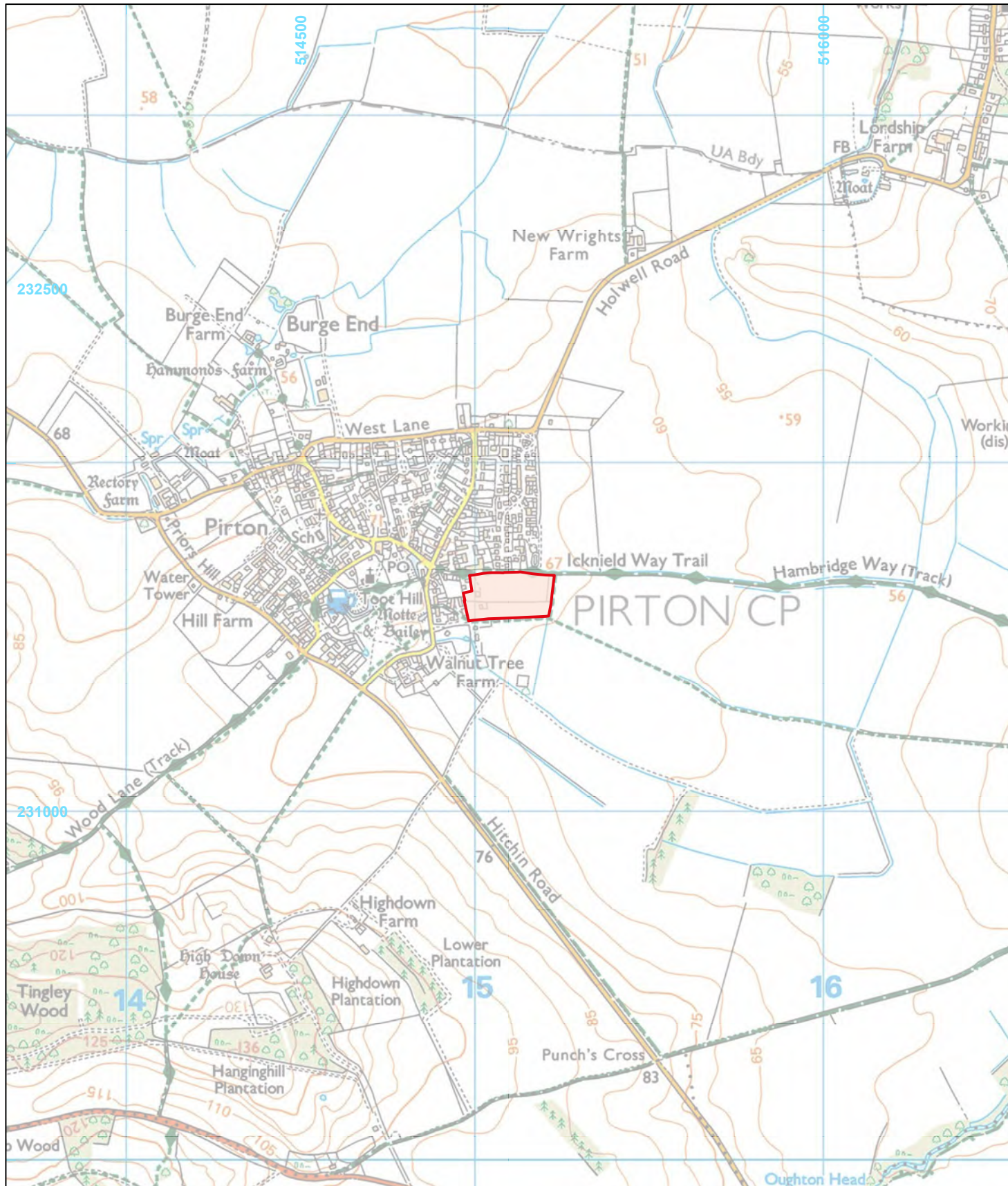
The assessment has identified a potential for the presence of archaeological remains of late prehistoric, Roman, early medieval (Saxon), medieval and post-medieval date within the Site. The presence, extent, form and significance of any such potential remains is unconfirmed but would comprise buried remains with no associated upstanding earthworks. These remains are highly unlikely to represent an overriding constraint to development. A geophysical survey undertaken in November 2024 has highlighted little additional archaeological potential within the Site, with the exception of buried remains of ridge and furrow.

Groundworks associated with building foundations, services, roads car parks and landscaping would result in impacts to buried remains. As the significance of the potential remains is not fully understood, a programme of further works (i.e. trench evaluation), is likely to be required by the Archaeological Advisors to North Hertfordshire Council.

Hedgerow boundaries at the north, east and west of the Site, and the east / west field subdivision through the centre of the Site, may comprise parts of 'important' hedgerows as defined in the Hedgerows Regulations (1997).

This report has also assessed the potential effects of the development upon the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets, through alteration of their settings, in accordance with industry standard guidance. It has been established that the proposed development would not alter any elements of setting that contribute to the character and appearance of Pirton Conservation Area and the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets included within it.

This report has been carried out in accordance with national and local policy, specifically paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework, with Section 66 of the 1990 Act (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas), with Policies HE1 – HE4 of the 'North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031', and with Policy PNP8 of the Pirton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan.



Site Boundary



0 500 Meters

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PROJECT TITLE

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

FIGURE TITLE

Site Location Plan

DRAWN BY FC PROJECT NO. MK1148
CHECKED BY MH DATE 10/12/2024
APPROVED BY MH SCALE @ A4 1:15,000

FIGURE NO.

1

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In August 2024 Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Blakeney Homes Limited to undertake a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HEDBA) in respect of land south of Hambridge Way, Pirton (hereafter referred to as ‘the Site’). Presently in use as agricultural land (Photos 1-3), the Site is located south-east of the Pirton Village centre, c.6km north-west of Hitchin, in Hertfordshire (NGR: 515101 231620; Fig. 1).



Photo. 1 West facing view of the Site's northern parcel; see Fig. 11 for photo location.



Photo. 2 West facing view of the Site's southern parcel; see Fig. 11 for photo location.

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- 1.2. The proposed development comprises the construction of up to 50 residential dwellings with a highest roof ridge point recorded at c.9m, and with associated roads, parking, services, gardens and landscaping.

Objectives and professional standards

- 1.3. The composition and development of the historic environment within the Site and wider landscape are discussed in this report. A determination of the significance of any heritage assets located within the Site, and any heritage assets beyond the Site boundary that may potentially be affected by the development proposals, is presented. Any potential development effects upon the significance of these heritage assets (both adverse and/or beneficial) are then described.
- 1.4. Cotswold Archaeology is a Registered Organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). This report has been prepared in accordance with appropriate standards and guidance, including the *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* published by CIfA in 2014 and most recently updated in 2020. This states that, insofar as they relate to the determination of planning applications, heritage desk-based assessments should:

‘...enable reasoned proposals and decisions to be made [as to] whether to mitigate, offset or accept without further intervention [any identified heritage] impact’ (CIfA 2020, 4).

- 1.5. The *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015), further clarifies that a desk-based assessment should:

‘...determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area, and the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment, or will identify the need for further evaluation’ (Historic England 2015, 3).

Statute, policy and guidance context

- 1.6. The Site is located in the local authority of North Hertfordshire District. A new Local Plan, ‘North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031’, was adopted in November 2022 and sets out the relevant policies in relation to the historic environment and development covered by the North Hertfordshire District Council. The relevant

policies for the historic environment are Policies HE1 – HE 4, all included within ‘Chapter 12: Historic Environment’ of the same document (see Appendix 1). Several Areas of Archaeological Significance (AAS) are located in Pirton (Fig. 3) and the western boundary of the Site extends within one of these. The relevant paragraphs that discuss these AAS are paragraphs 12.16 and 12.18 within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

- 1.7. The Site lies within Pirton Parish Council. A Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in April 2018. Within the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan, Chapter 5 lists the components of the Historic Environment in Pirton. In this document the Site is located within ‘Visual Character Area 1’ and the policy relevant to the historic environment is ‘Policy PNP8: Heritage Assets and Archaeological Heritage’ (see Appendix 1).
- 1.8. This assessment has been undertaken within the key statute, policy and guidance context presented within Table 1.1. The applicable provisions contained within these statute, policy and guidance documents are referred to, and discussed, as relevant, throughout the text. Fuller detail is provided in Appendix 1.

Consultation

- 1.9. Consultation regarding the proposed scope of this assessment was sought with Allison Tinniswood, Senior Historic Environment Advisor to the LPA, via email sent on 24th of September 2024. In her response, received on 8th of October 2024, Allison Tinniswood outlined the archaeological potential of Pirton but did not make any specific request to amend the proposed scope.

Statute	Description
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)	Act of Parliament providing for the maintenance of a schedule of archaeological remains of the highest significance, affording them statutory protection.
National Heritage Act 1983 (amended 2002)	One of four Acts of Parliament providing for the protection and management of the historic environment, including the establishment of the Historic Monuments & Buildings Commission, now Historic England.
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)	Act of Parliament placing a duty upon the Local Planning Authority (or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State) to afford due consideration to the preservation of Listed Buildings and their settings (under Section 66(1)), and Conservation Areas (under Section 72(2)), in determining planning applications.
National Planning Practice Guidance (updated July 2019)	Guidance supporting the National Planning Policy Framework.

Statute	Description
National Planning Policy Framework (2024)	Provides the English government's national planning policies and describes how these are expected to be applied within the planning system. Heritage is subject of Chapter 16 (page 59).
North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011 – 2031)	Comprises the local development plan (local plan), as required to be compiled, published and maintained by the local authority, consistent with the requirements of the NPPF (2024). Intended to be the primary planning policy document against which planning proposals within that local authority jurisdiction are assessed. Where the development plan is found to be inadequate, primacy reverts to the NPPF (2024).
Pirton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)	Encourages sustainable development in accordance with the character of the village and Parish of Pirton, which accords with the needs and wishes of the local community, and which is in general conformity with the Strategic Policies of North Herts. District Council (NHDC), and to provide a legally binding “practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency” in accordance with the NPPF Core Principles (Para. 17).
Conservation Principles (Historic England 2008)	Guidance for assessing heritage significance, with reference to contributing heritage values, in particular: <i>evidential</i> (archaeological), <i>historical</i> (illustrative and associative), <i>aesthetic</i> , and <i>communal</i> .
Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 2 (GPA2): Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015)	Provides useful information on assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.
Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 (GPA3): The Setting of Heritage Assets, Second Edition (Historic England, 2017)	Provides guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas, and landscapes.
Hedgerows Regulations (1997)	Provides protection for ‘important’ hedgerows within the countryside, controlling their alteration and removal by means of a system of statutory notification.

Table 1.1 Key statute, policy and guidance

2. METHODOLOGY

Data collection, analysis and presentation

- 2.1. This assessment has been informed by a proportionate level of information sufficient to understand the archaeological potential of the Site, the significance of identified heritage assets, and any potential development effects. This approach is in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF (2024) and the guidance issued by ClfA (2020). The data has been collected from a wide variety of sources, summarised in Table 2.1.

Source	Data
National Heritage List for England (NHLE)	Current information relating to designated heritage assets, and heritage assets considered to be 'at risk'.
Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER)	Heritage sites and events records, Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data, and other spatial data supplied in digital format (shapefiles) and hardcopy.
Historic England Archives (HEA)	Additional sites and events records, supplied in digital and hardcopy formats.
Hertfordshire Historic Archives	Historic mapping, historic documentation, and relevant published and grey literature.
Historic England's Aerial Photograph Research Unit	Vertical and oblique aerial photography ranging in date from the 1940s to present.
Defra Data Services Platform (environment.data.gov.uk)	LiDAR imagery and point cloud data, available from the Defra Data Services Platform.
Genealogist, Envirocheck, National Library of Scotland & other cartographic websites	Historic (Ordnance Survey and Tithe) mapping in digital format.
British Geological Survey (BGS) website	UK geological mapping (bedrock & superficial deposits) & borehole data.
SUMO 2024 (Appendix 6)	A programme of geological survey undertaken within the Site in 2024 to further inform this assessment.

Table 2.1 Key data sources

- 2.2. Prior to obtaining data from these sources, an initial analysis was undertaken in order to identify a relevant and proportionate study area. This analysis utilised industry-standard GIS software, and primarily entailed a review of recorded heritage assets in the immediate and wider landscape, using available datasets.

-
- 2.3. On this basis a 1km study area, measured from the boundaries of the Site, was considered sufficient to capture the relevant HER data, and provide the necessary context for understanding archaeological potential and heritage significance in respect of the Site. All of the spatial data held by the HER – the primary historic data repository – for the land within the study area, was requested. The records were analysed and further refined in order to narrow the research focus onto those of relevance to the present assessment. Not all HER records are therefore referred to, discussed or illustrated further within the body of this report, only those that are relevant. These are listed in a cross-referenced gazetteer provided at the end of this report (Appendix 2) and are illustrated on the figures accompanying this report.
- 2.4. A geophysical survey was carried on in November 2024 by SUMO Surveys Ltd, within the Site boundary. This was undertaken on behalf of the Client to further inform the results of this HEDBA. The results of the survey are discussed below within the relevant sections and are included in Appendix 6.
- 2.5. A site visit was also undertaken as part of this assessment on 1st October 2024. The primary objectives of the site visit were to assess the Site's historic landscape context, including its association with any known or potential heritage assets, and to identify any evidence for previous disturbance or truncation of buried archaeological remains or earthworks within the Site. The site visit also allowed for the identification of any previously unknown heritage assets within the Site, and assessment of their nature, condition, significance and potential susceptibility to impact. The wider landscape was examined, as relevant, from accessible public rights of way.

Aerial photographs held at Historic England Archives

- 2.6. Aerial photographs held at Historic England were examined as part of this assessment, ranging in date from 1947 to 2009 (see Appendix 4). The aerial photographs show that the Site was subject to agricultural use during the latter part of the 20th century, which included the establishment of a small barn and a shed within the west part of the northern and southern parcels respectively. Features and buildings noted, which are discussed in further detail below, appear to relate to such activity and correlate with historic mapping available for the Site.

LiDAR imagery

- 2.7. Existing Environmental Agency data was analysed with the specific aim of clarifying the extent any potential archaeological remains.

-
- 2.8. National LiDAR Programme (NLP) LiDAR DTM (Digital Terrain Model) and DSM (Digital Surface Model) files were downloaded from the DEFRA portal (environment.data.gov.uk), under the Open Government Licence v3.0. The data was available at 1m for DTM and DSM resolution, surveyed in 2020, for the extent of the site boundary and buffer. DTM and DSM tiles were downloaded as ASCII files. The LiDAR files contain British National Grid as the “native” coordinate reference system.
- 2.9. Where necessary, the tiles were combined into a mosaic raster dataset using Esri ArcGIS Pro 3.3.0 and exported as a single raster (.TIFF).
- 2.10. The LiDAR file was then processed using Relief Visualisation Toolbox (RVT) (Kokalj et al 2019 and Zakšek et al 2011) to create several visualisations including: A single hill-shade model (Azimuth 315, Height 35), Multi-hillshade, Simple Local Relief Model (SLRM, Radius 10), Sky View Factor (SVF), Openness, and Slope Gradient. Visualisations were created following Historic England guidelines (HE 2010) and guidance in Airborne Laser Scanning Raster Visualisation: A guide to good practice (Kokalj & Hesse 2017). The parameters were set to those appropriate for the topography of the area.
- 2.11. The output images from the RVT software were then imported into ArcGIS Pro 3.3.0 where further settings manipulation was undertaken to enhance the visualization for archaeological feature detection.
- 2.12. The DTM tile formed the basis within the desk-based assessment and is illustrated on Fig. 9.

Assessment of heritage significance

- 2.13. The significance of known and potential heritage assets within the Site, and any beyond the Site which may be affected by the proposed development, has been assessed and described, in accordance with paragraph 207 of the NPPF (2023), the guidance issued by ClfA (2020), *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2* (Historic England 2015), *Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* (Historic England 2019) and *Advice Note 17: Planning and Archaeology* (Historic England 2022).
- 2.14. Determination of significance has been undertaken according to the industry-standard guidance on assessing heritage value provided within *Conservation Principles* (Historic England 2008). This approach considers heritage significance to

derive from a combination of discrete heritage values, principal amongst which are: i) evidential (archaeological) value, ii) historic (illustrative and associative) value, iii) aesthetic value, iv) communal value, amongst others. Further detail of this approach, including the detailed definition of those aforementioned values, as set out, and advocated, by Historic England, is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

Assessment of potential development effects (benefit and harm)

- 2.15. The present report sets out, in detail, the ways in which identified susceptible heritage assets might be affected by the proposals, as well as the anticipated extent of any such effects. Both physical effects, i.e. resulting from the direct truncation of archaeological remains, and non-physical effects, i.e. resulting from changes to the setting of heritage assets, have been assessed. With regard to non-physical effects or 'settings assessment', the five-step assessment methodology advocated by Historic England and set out in the Second Edition of GPA3 (Historic England 2017), has been adhered to (presented in greater detail in Appendix 1).
- 2.16. Identified effects upon heritage assets have been defined within broad 'level of effect' categories (Table 2.2 below). These are consistent with key national heritage policy and guidance terminology, particularly that of the NPPF (2024). This has been done in order to improve the intelligibility of the assessment results for purposes of quick reference and ready comprehension. These broad determinations of level of effect should be viewed within the context of the qualifying discussions of significance and impact presented in this report.
- 2.17. It should be noted that the overall effect of development proposals upon designated heritage assets are judged, bearing in mind both any specific harms or benefits (an approach consistent with the Court of Appeal judgement *Palmer v. Herefordshire Council & ANR* Neutral Citation Number [2016] EWCA Civ 1061).
- 2.18. In relation to non-designated heritage assets, the key applicable policy is paragraph 216 of the NPPF (2024), which 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** [our emphasis].'*

2.19. Thus, with regard to non-designated heritage assets, this report seeks to identify the significance of the heritage asset(s) which may be affected, and the scale of any harm or loss to that significance.

Level of effect	Description	Applicable statute & policy
Heritage benefit	The proposals would better enhance or reveal the heritage significance of the heritage asset.	Enhancing or better revealing the significance of a heritage asset is a desirable development outcome in respect of heritage. It is consistent with key policy and guidance, including the NPPF paragraphs 203 and 219.
No harm	The proposals would preserve the significance of the heritage asset.	Preserving a Listed building and its setting is consistent with s66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990). Preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area is consistent with s72 of the Act. Sustaining the significance of a heritage asset is consistent with paragraph 203 of the NPPF and should be at the core of any material local planning policies in respect of heritage.
Less than substantial harm (lower end)	The proposals would be anticipated to result in a restricted level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset, such that the asset's contributing heritage values would be largely preserved.	In determining an application, this level of harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, as per paragraph 215 of the NPPF. Proposals involving change to a Listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses or change to the character or appearance of Conservation Areas, must also be considered within the context of Sections 7, 66(1) and 72(2) of the 1990 Act. <i>The provisions of the Act do not apply to the setting of Conservation Areas.</i>
Less than substantial harm (upper end)	The proposals would lead to a notable level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset. A reduced, but appreciable, degree of its heritage significance would remain.	Proposals with the potential to physically affect a Scheduled Monument (including the ground beneath that monument) will be subject to the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979); <i>these provisions do not apply to proposals involving changes to the setting of Scheduled Monuments.</i> With regard to non-designated heritage assets, the scale of harm or loss should be weighed against the significance of the asset, in accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

Level of effect	Description	Applicable statute & policy
Substantial harm	The proposals would very much reduce the heritage asset's significance or vitiate that significance altogether.	Paragraphs 212 - 215 of the NPPF would apply. Sections 7, 66(1) and 72(2) of the Planning Act (1990), and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), may also apply. In relation to non-designated heritage assets, the scale of harm or loss should be weighed against the significance of the asset, in accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

Table 2.2 Summary of level of effect categories (benefit and harm) referred to in this report in relation to heritage assets, and the applicable statute and policy.

Limitations of the assessment

- 2.20. This assessment is principally a desk-based study, and has utilised secondary information derived from a variety of sources, only some of which have been directly examined for the purpose of this assessment. The assumption is made that this data, as well as that derived from secondary sources, is reasonably accurate. The records held by HER and HEA are not a record of all surviving heritage assets, but a record of the discovery of a wide range of archaeological and historical components of the historic environment. The information held within these repositories is not complete and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown.
- 2.21. Several non-technical reports associated with previous archaeological investigations undertaken within the Site's environs were not available at the Hertfordshire HER, and therefore, could not be reviewed. However, the data provided is considered sufficient to inform this DBA.
- 2.22. A selection of archival material pertaining to the Site and study area was consulted in person at the Hertfordshire Historic Archives on 2nd October 2024. There may be other relevant material held by the National Archives, other local repositories, and in private collections, although sufficient information to respond to the scope of this assessment was available in from the resources consulted.
- 2.23. A walkover survey was conducted within the Site on 1st October 2024, which was undertaken in dry and clear weather conditions. Access was afforded within the Site, although such observations are limited since archaeological remains can survive below-ground with no visible surface indications of their presence. It is possible that

unknown archaeological remains may be present within the Site, and the modern agricultural practices (i.e. ploughing) may possibly have inhibited identification of any possible upstanding remains. There is an element of uncertainty over the nature, condition, frequency and extent of the potential buried archaeological resource, which may be clarified through intrusive investigation. There was also sufficient access to heritage assets to assess likely impacts upon the significance of the assets due to changes to their setting.

- 2.24. The DTM tile formed the basis within the desk-based assessment and is illustrated on Fig. 9.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Landscape context

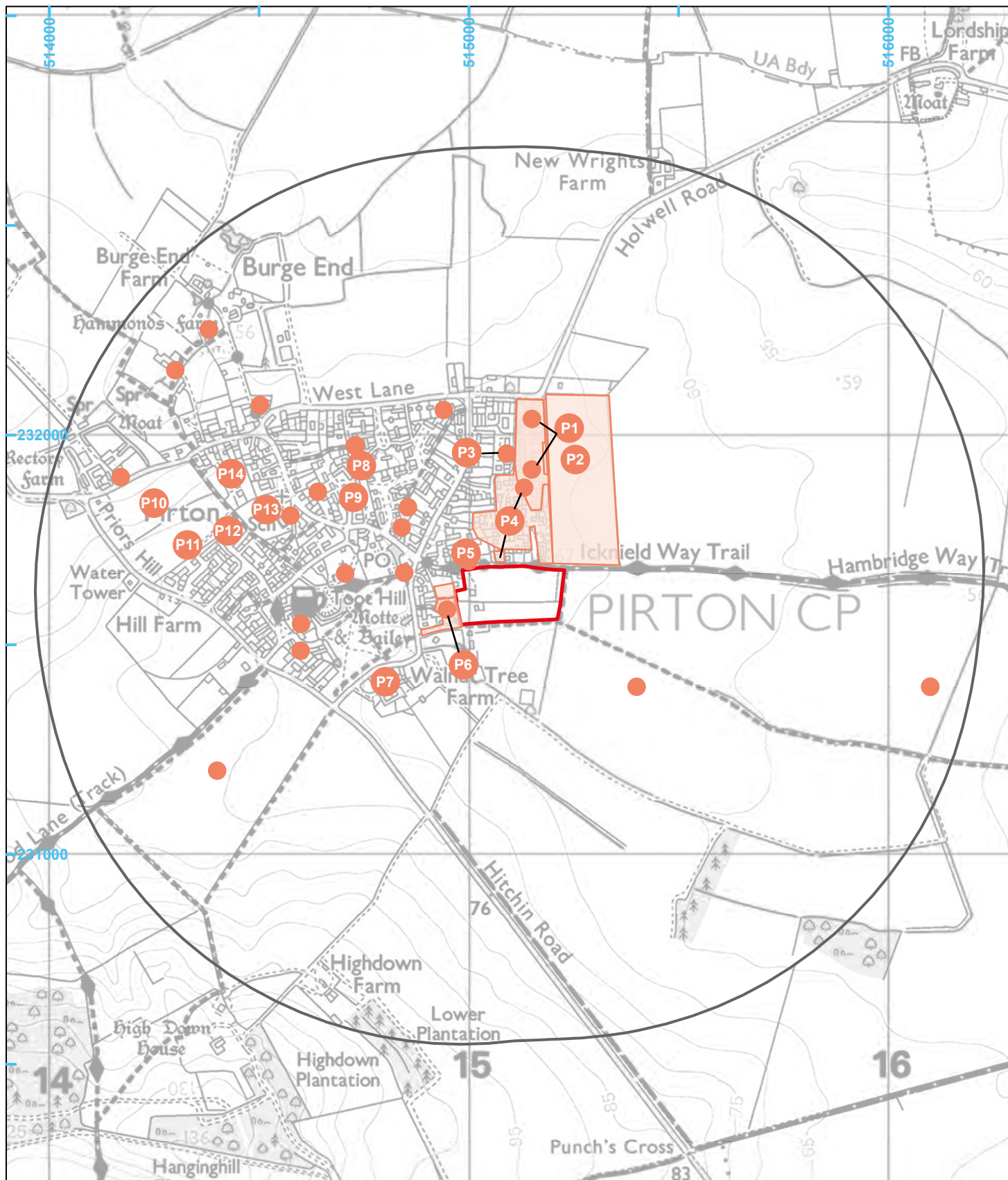
- 3.1. The Site is located in the parish of Pirton and occupies two irregular and relatively flat parcels of land, covering a total surface of c.3ha. The Site lies immediately to the east and the south of the village and it is surrounded by a recreation ground to the south and by agricultural fields to the east. The north parcel is bounded along its northern boundary by Hambridge Way (formerly Iknield Way). The two parcels are encompassed by tree-lined hedgerows and an east / west hedgerow divides the two. It lies at an elevation of between c.71m and 68m above the Ordnance Datum (aOD), gently descending towards the east.
- 3.2. The Site lies within the Chilterns (NE406) National Character Area (104) defined as an ‘....*extensively wooded and farmed landscape underlain by chalk bedrock that rises up from the London Basin to form a north-west facing escarpment offering long views over the adjacent vales. The countryside is a patchwork of mixed agriculture with woodland, set within hedged boundaries*’ (Natural England 2014, accessed October 2024)¹. Approximately half of the National Character Area of The Chilterns is designated as National Landscape²; the north-eastern borders of this designated landscape are located at c.350m south-west of the Site (not depicted).
- 3.3. The British Geological Survey (BGS) records the underlying geology of the Site as comprising chalk included in the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation, which formed through sedimentary processes between 100.5 and 93.9 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. No superficial deposits are recorded within the majority of the Site, whilst a band of Diamicton included in the Lowestoft Formation is recorded along its eastern boundary. This is a sedimentary deposit formed between 480,000 and 423,000 years ago during the Quaternary period (BGS 2024). These deposits are typically periglacial, dating to the Pleistocene geological period; such deposits have the potential to contain, both palaeoenvironmental and Palaeolithic remains, as well as later prehistoric features (Historic England 2023).
- 3.4. No geotechnical investigations have been undertaken to date within the Site or its close surroundings.

¹ <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/chilterns/>

² <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/national-landscapes/chilterns>

Designated heritage assets

- 3.5. No designated heritage assets are located within the Site. A total of 56 designated heritage assets are located within the study area. These assets include three Scheduled Monuments, Pirton Conservation Area and 52 Listed Buildings.
- 3.6. The nearest designated heritage assets to the Site that might be susceptible to the proposed development through change to their setting comprise examples within Pirton Conservation Area (Fig. 11, **B**), which at its closest point lies c.20m from the south-western corner of the Site.
- 3.7. Pirton Conservation Area includes three Scheduled Monuments, one Grade I Listed Building, five Grade II* Listed Buildings and 46 Grade II Listed Buildings. Within these, the nearest designated heritage assets to the Site that might be susceptible to the proposed development also comprise:
- the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary (Fig. 11, **C**), c.270m west of the Site;
 - the Scheduled Monument at Toot Hill Motte and Bailey Castle and Shrunken Medieval Village (Fig. 11, **D**), c.100m west of the Site,
 - three Grade II Listed Buildings at Elm Tree Farmhouse; South-East Barn at No 1 (Elm Tree Farm); and 7, Walnut Tree Road, between c.70m north-west and 100m west of the Site (Fig. 11, Group **E**); and,
 - four Grade II Listed Buildings at Walnut Tree Farmhouse; South-East Barn at Walnut Tree Farm; Farm Buildings fronting Road at Walnut Tree Farm; and, 23-25 Walnut Tree Road; between c.180m and 210m south-west of the Site (Fig. 11, Group **F**).
- 3.8. Pirton Conservation Area also includes within it the Scheduled Moated Site and Associated Enclosure at Rectory Farm, c.780m north-west of the Site (Fig. 11), the Scheduled Anglo-Saxon Settlement, and Probable Prehistoric Ring Ditches (Fig. 11, **A**), which lies c.550m north-west of the Site.
- 3.9. These assets are discussed where relevant below and in Section 5.



- ▭ Site Boundary
- ▭ Study Area
- Previous Investigation



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PROJECT TITLE

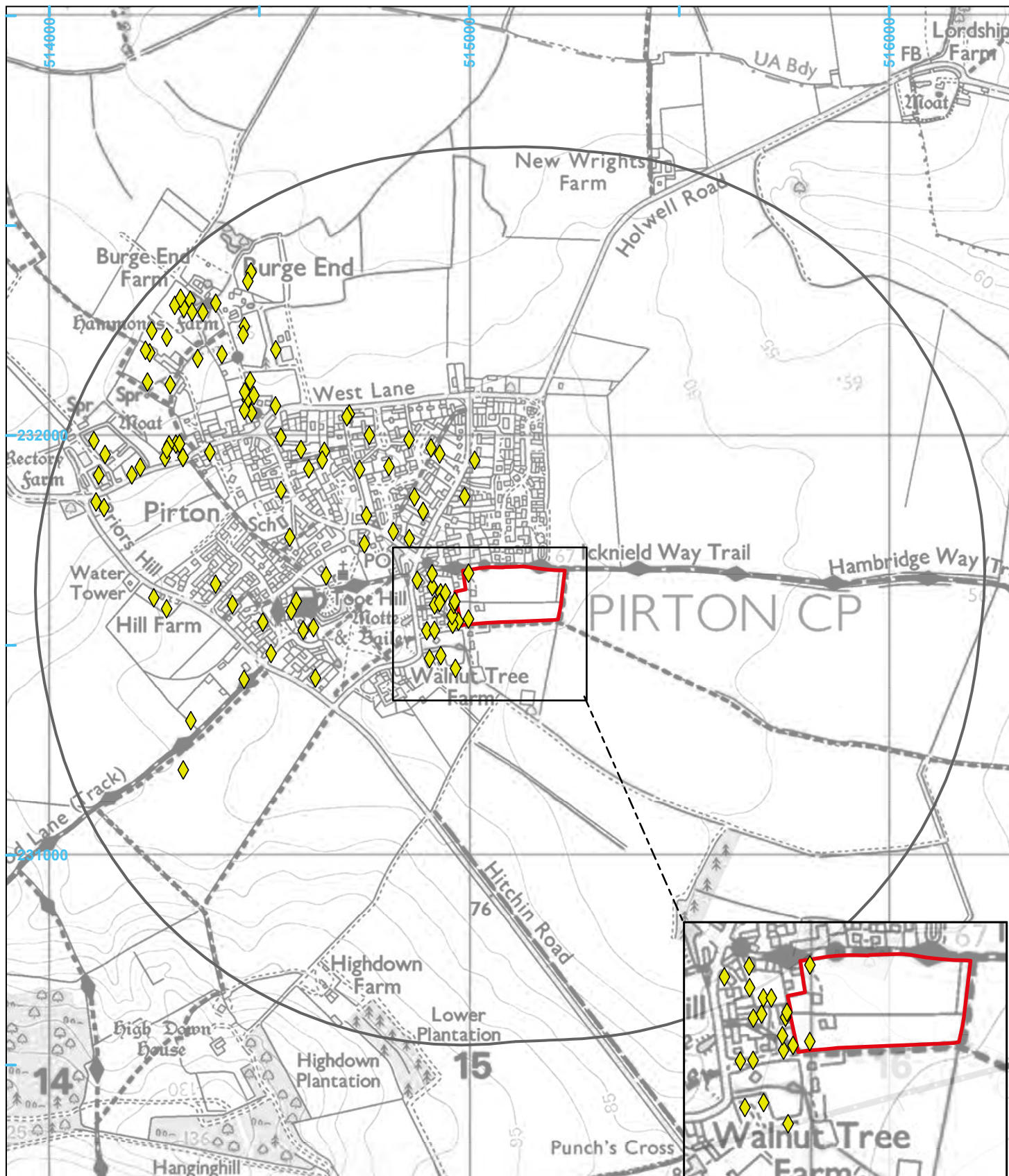
Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

FIGURE TITLE

Previous Investigations

Previous archaeological investigations

- 3.10. A considerable amount of archaeological fieldwork has previously been carried out within the study area and the Site. Previous investigations, which included desk-based assessments as well as a range of intrusive investigations, such as watching briefs, archaeological evaluations and excavations, are illustrated on Fig. 2a – 2b. Those of relevance to this assessment are listed in Appendix 2. The results of these investigations are discussed in the relevant sub-sections, below.
- 3.11. Two trial trench evaluations undertaken by Pre-construct Archaeology (PCA; Hinman 2011) and Headland Archaeology (HA; Tierney *et al.* 2015) and a programme of excavation undertaken by HA (Goacher 2017) respectively in 2011, 2015 and 2016-17 (Jones and Sycamore 2016) were carried out between c.110m and 350m north of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P1**).
- 3.12. A geophysical survey was undertaken by SUMO Survey Services Ltd (Gater 2017) c.40m north-east of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P2**). This was followed by a trial trench evaluation undertaken by AOC Archaeology for which no report was available.
- 3.13. A trial trench evaluation was undertaken in 2016 by Heritage Network (HN; Jones and Sycamore 2016) c.260m north of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P3**).
- 3.14. A programme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken in 2018 by HA c.40m and 200m north of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P4**). No report for this project was available.
- 3.15. A programme of trial trench evaluation and a watching brief were undertaken in 2004 and 2005 by Archaeological Solution (AS; Doyle *et al.* 2005; Semmelmann 2006) c.10m north of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P5**). These projects were then followed by a geophysical survey undertaken by Stratascan in 2015 (Davies 2015).
- 3.16. A series of investigations were undertaken between 2018 and 2022 on land adjacent the Site's western boundary (Fig. 2a, **P6**). These comprised an evaluation undertaken by HN in 2018 (HN 2018), two excavations undertaken by HA in 2020 and 2021, and a watching brief undertaken by Minerva Archaeology (MA) in 2022. No report for these last three projects was available.
- 3.17. Two watching briefs were undertaken in 1996 and 1997 by HN (Fenton 1996 and Ashworth 1998) c.250m south-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P7**).



- ▭ Site Boundary
- Study Area
- ◆ Test Pit



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PROJECT TITLE

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

FIGURE TITLE

Location of test pits included in the HEFA CORS project (2007 - 2011)

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FIGURE NO.
2b

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- 3.18. An excavation was undertaken by HN (Hillelson 2003) in 2001-02 c.360m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P8**).
- 3.19. A trial trench evaluation and an excavation were undertaken by HN in 1993 (Fenton 1993) and 1995 (Fenton 1995) c.300m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P9**).
- 3.20. A geophysical survey and a trial trench evaluation were undertaken respectively by Stratascan in 2016 (Gater & Davies in Clarke 2016) and by PCA in 2017 (Morgan-Shelbourne 2018) c.750m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P10**).
- 3.21. A magnetometer survey (Baker *et al.* 2015) and a trial trenching evaluation (Bull 2015) were undertaken by AS in 2015 at c.650m west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P11**).
- 3.22. A trial trench evaluation (Snee 2012) and an excavation (Phillip & Ashworth 2016) were conducted respectively in 2012 and 2014-15 by HN c.560m west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P12**).
- 3.23. A watching brief was undertaken in 2010 by AS (Summerfield-Hill 2010) c.500m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P13**).
- 3.24. An excavation was undertaken in 2017 by KDK Archaeology (Dodd 2017) c.600m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P14**).
- 3.25. An extended programme of test pitting was also undertaken in Pirton between 2007 and 2015 (Lewis 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016a) as part of the Currently Occupied Rural Settlements (CORS) project carried out by the University of Cambridge Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA). The location of these test pits also includes the Site and is depicted on Fig. 2b.
- 3.26. Other investigations undertaken within the study area include aerial photograph analysis, watching briefs, evaluations, excavations (Fig. 2a). The details of these investigations are listed within Appendix 2 and are discussed if and where appropriate within the following sub-sections below.

Archaeological Remains

- 3.27. The abovementioned previous investigations revealed a high degree of human activity within Pirton and its surrounding landscape over the course of the millennia. This is reflected by the designation of several Areas of Archaeological Significance (AAS) within the parish. The Site partially extends within one of these AAS along its

western boundary and abuts another to the east (Fig. 3). No report or description of the archaeological definition of these AAS is contained within the HER data, as confirmed by Mark Landon, HER Officer, via email on 30th September 2024.

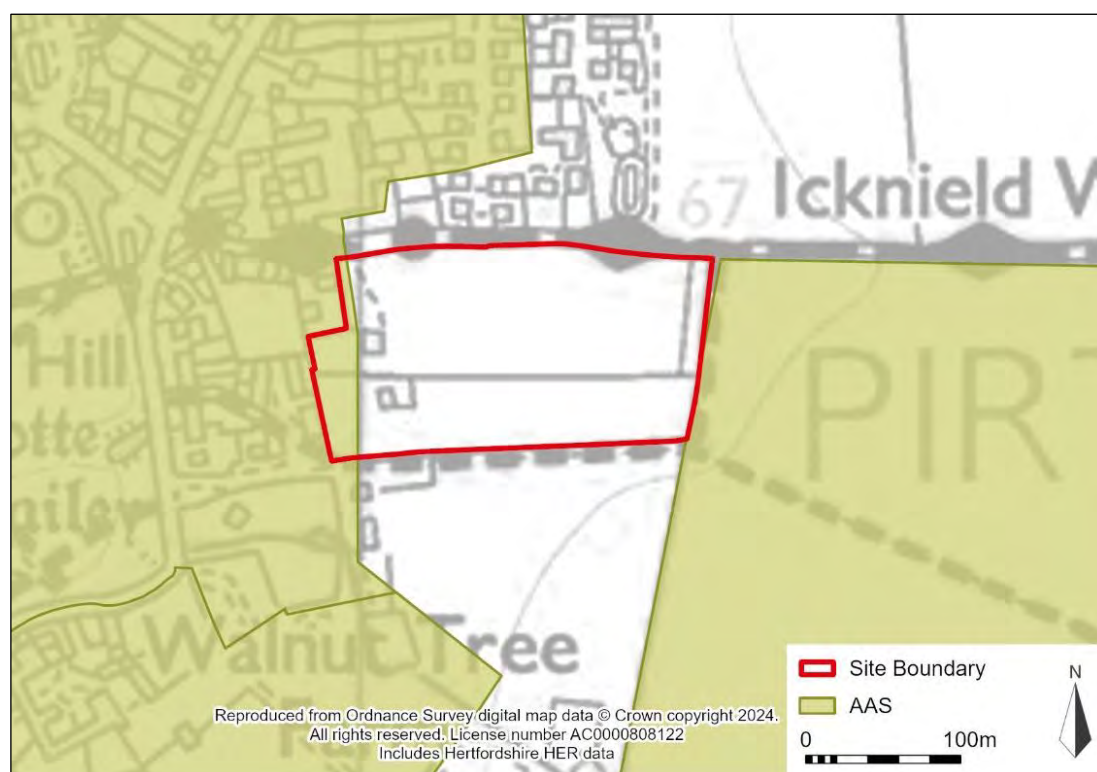


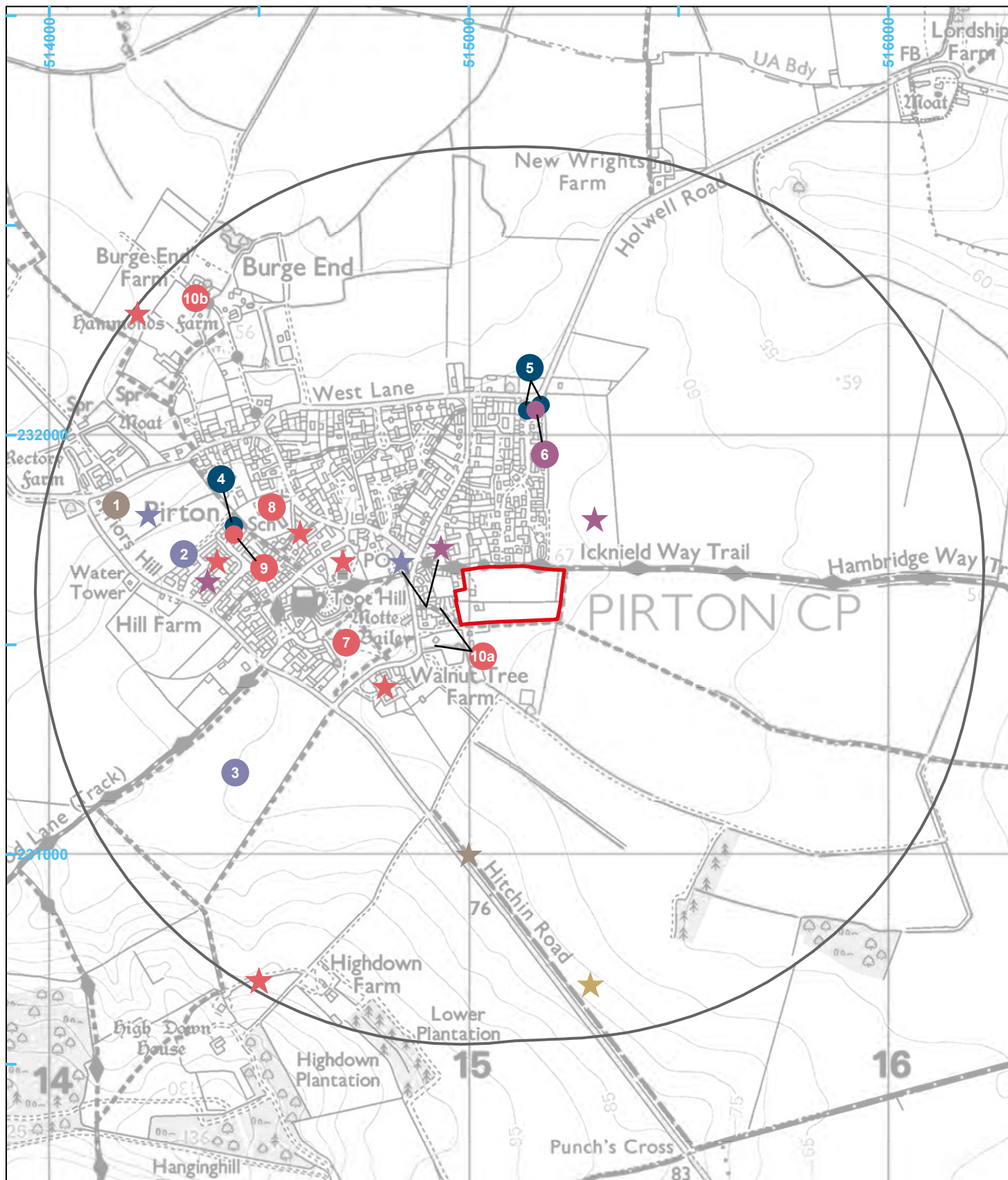
Fig. 3 Location of the Areas of Archaeological Significance adjacent to the Site

Prehistoric

From Palaeolithic (c.>500,000 – 10,000 BC) to Iron Age (c.800 BC – AD 43)

- 3.28. Human activity throughout the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods was characterised by small bands of hunter-gatherers moving through the landscape and exploiting resource, with findspots focused on the riverside locations within the river terrace gravels (Wymer 1999). With the exception of seasonal hunting camps, people in these periods seldom established long-term sites, and evidence of activity is sparse in the archaeological record.
- 3.29. No evidence for Palaeolithic activity is recorded within either the Site or the study area. However, as mentioned above (BGS 2024), superficial periglacial deposits within the Site, which date to the Pleistocene, are known in other areas to contain both palaeoenvironmental and Palaeolithic remains, as well as later prehistoric features (Historic England 2023).

-
- 3.30. Similarly to the Palaeolithic, the Mesolithic period (c.10,000 BC – 4,000 BC) continues to be characterised by small groups of hunter-gatherers moving through the landscape and exploiting resources. Commonly, Mesolithic deposits or artefacts (such as lithic implements) are most likely to be found within the river valleys and along river courses but the end of the glacial era, offered more landscape to human groups during these millennia. Topographical prominence is also considered an influencing factor for areas of Mesolithic occupation.
- 3.31. At the end of the Mesolithic period hunter-gatherer economies became gradually superseded by more sedentary lifestyles, often associated with the beginnings of arable cultivation; this process coincides with the beginning of the Neolithic period (c.4,000 BC – 2,400 BC). This period is also characterised by woodland clearance, the production of pottery in different styles, and the domestication of animals. With the exception of the development of more refined flint artefacts, the most notable remains of the Neolithic period consist of landscape monuments, such as long and round barrows, as well as enclosures and field systems (Darvill and Thomas 2001).
- 3.32. Pirton lies along the Icknield Way (Figs. 1-5), aligned broadly east / west in this area. It was an ancient trade route that linked with the Ridgeway in Wiltshire and the Peddars Way in Norfolk (<https://icknieldwaypath.co.uk/> accessed October 2024). This route was generally thought to be of Neolithic origin, but this has been disputed, and the evidence for its being a prehistoric route has been questioned (Harrison 2003).
- 3.33. No archaeological remains dating either to the Mesolithic or Neolithic periods have been recorded within the Site. Within the study area, a single pit containing a small assemblage of flint dating to the Neolithic (Fig. 4, **1**) was recovered during the 2017 evaluation undertaken at c.750m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P10**).
- 3.34. Furthermore, a scatter of Neolithic and possibly Mesolithic flints was discovered during a fieldwalking survey undertaken c.900m south of the Site (Fig. 4, Mesolithic / Neolithic Findspot; Hudspith 1999). A Neolithic Stone Celt was also recovered c.540m south of the Site, although an accurate location is uncertain (Fig. 4, Neolithic Findspot).



- | | |
|---|--|
| Site Boundary | Findspot |
| Study Area | ★ Mesolithic / Neolithic |
| Neolithic | ★ Neolithic |
| Bronze Age | ★ Bronze Age |
| Bronze Age to Iron Age | ★ Iron Age |
| Iron Age | ★ Roman |
| Roman | |



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PROJECT TITLE

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

FIGURE TITLE

Archaeological Remains: from Prehistoric to Roman

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FIGURE NO.
4

-
- 3.35. The Bronze Age (c.2,400 – 700 BC) is typically defined by the advent of metallurgy technology in the archaeological record, and the firm establishment of the agricultural, settlement and ceremonial landscape evolution that had begun in the Neolithic period. Funerary monuments continued to be a visible feature in the landscape during the Early Bronze Age, in particular round barrows.
- 3.36. No archaeological remains dating to the Bronze Age have been identified within the Site. Within the study area circular gullies, which may be the remains of late Neolithic / Bronze Age burial mounds, were identified c.650m west of the Site (Fig. 4, **2**), during the evaluation undertaken in 2015 at (Fig. 2a, **P11**). Sherds of Bronze Age pottery were also recovered unstratified or as intrusive finds in later deposits during the 2018 evaluation undertaken on land adjacent to the west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P6** and Fig. 4, Bronze Age Findspot).
- 3.37. Further probable remains dating to the Bronze Age consist of a series of cropmarks of a possible large double-ditched circular enclosure (Fig. 4, **3**) and of possible ring ditches (Fig. 5, **30**) identified by the local authority through aerial photograph analysis, respectively c.650m south-west and c.950m north-east of the Site. A Bronze Age hoard, which included four axes (looped and socketed) and a lump of metal, is also recorded c.750m north-west of the Site, although the exact location remains uncertain (Fig. 4, Bronze Age Findspot).
- 3.38. The end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age (c. 800 BC – AD 43) are associated with relatively rapid changes towards more unstable weather conditions in Britain and Europe, with colder winters and wetter summers (Bevan *et al.* 2017). These climatic changes are thought to have affected the viability of agriculture and land-use, particularly in upland or poorly drained areas. In turn, this may have led, indirectly, to changes in settlement patterns and activity foci. As the climate conditions progressively stabilised, the settlement trend during the Iron Age becomes characterised by substantial enclosed structures, with large, nucleated settlement and mixed-use sites that became more frequent across the landscape, along with a greater number of smaller farmsteads, reflecting the wider cultivation of the landscape achieved through larger populations and more effective technology.
- 3.39. No evidence of these centuries is recorded within the Site; however, the archaeological data shows an increase in human activity within the study area. A cluster of pits and post holes which included a substantial assemblage of pottery

dating to the transitional period between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age were discovered together with three large pits including only Iron Age pottery (Fig. 4, 4) during the excavation undertaken in 2014-15 c.560m west of the Site (Fig. 2a, P12).

3.40. Further evidence dating to the transitional period between the Bronze Age and Iron Age consists of a possible round house and a group of intercutting pits (Fig. 4, 5) recorded during the 2015 and 2016-17 excavation projects carried out c.350m north of the Site (Fig. 2a, P1). In this same area the investigations also identified a ditch containing fragments of pottery dating to the Iron Age (Fig. 4, 6). A Late Iron Age coin was also recovered from the surface c.160m north-east of the Site (Fig. 4, Iron Age Findspot). Sherds of late Iron Age pottery were also recovered unstratified or as intrusive finds in later deposits during the 2018 evaluation undertaken on land adjacent to the west of the Site (Fig. 2a, P6 and Fig. 4, Iron Age Findspot).

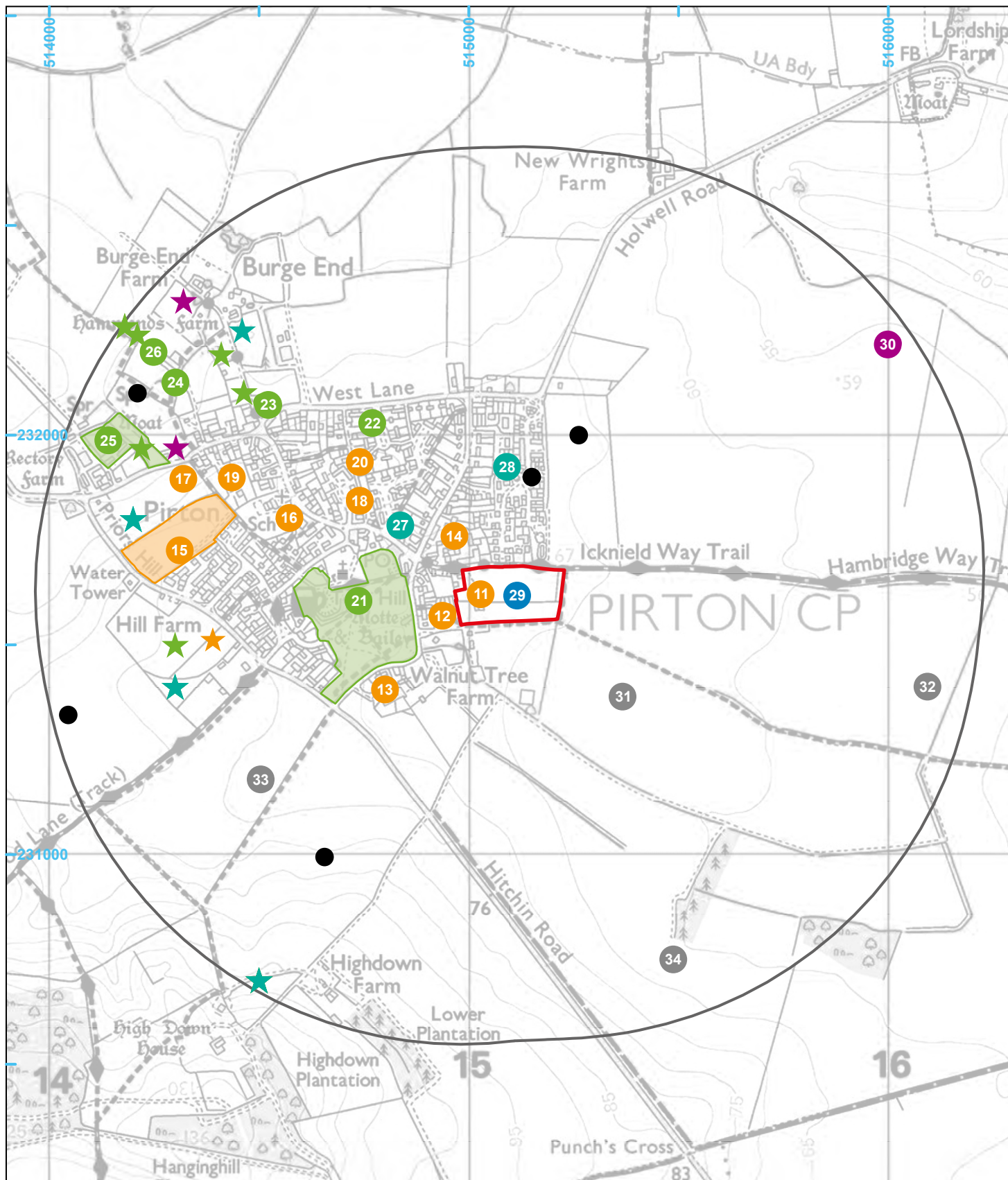
3.41. The evidence discussed above indicates a low degree of human activity within the study area during the Mesolithic, the Neolithic and the majority of the Bronze Age, which is possibly related more to sporadic events maybe associated with resource exploitation and generally transient activity, rather than more permanent settlement. With the coming of the Late Bronze Age and then the Iron Age, the data suggest a modest development of settlement activity, focused mainly in the north and west of the study area. This, however, seems to be sparse and associated with very small scale communities.

Roman period (AD 43 – AD 410)

3.42. The Roman invasion of Britain in AD43 was followed by the rapid implementation of centralised administration, based in towns and cities, and supported by a network of well-engineered roads which enhanced trade and communication.

3.43. No Roman period remains have been recorded within the Site. The closest Roman road recorded within the area is the Codrington 10 (Margary 1967), c.1.4km south of the Site at its closest point, whilst the closest attested large Roman settlement comprises a series of sites recorded at Baldock, c.9.5km north-east of the Site (HER No: MHT15452 / MHT12879, MHT11938, MHT17444 and MHT12171; not depicted here). Within the study area, Roman evidence indicates activity in this part of the landscape during this period.

-
- 3.44. A floor possibly associated with a Roman building is recorded c.300m south-west of the Site (Fig. 4, **7**), although the exact location is not known. The HER notes that these remains were identified in 1955 in a location called 'Bury Field'. The book of reference associated with *1876 Map of Hitchin Priory Estate* (Fig. 6) portrays the Site as included within a location called 'Upper Bury Field' and this might suggest an association of those archaeological remains with the Site or its close surroundings.
- 3.45. Two pits containing Roman pottery (Fig. 4, **8** and **9**) were recovered during the investigations undertaken respectively c.560m west (Fig. 2a, **P12**) and c.500m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P13**). Furthermore, two significant assemblages of Romano-British pottery were recovered in 2009 and 2010 during the CORS project (Fig. 2b) c.890m north-west (Fig. 4, **10b**) and c.90m south-west (Fig. 4, **10a**) of the Site. The investigation undertaken in 2018 in this same location (Fig. 2a **P6**) also revealed a cobbled surface of Roman date (Fig. 4, **10a**) which could indicate a degree of temporary domestic activity during this period which could have also extended within the Site. This might also be suggested by several anomalies of undetermined origin identified by the geophysical survey undertaken within the Site (Sumo Surveys 2024 Appendix 6).
- 3.46. Other evidence of the Roman period includes a series of artefacts recovered unstratified from the ground surface (Fig. 4, Roman Findspots). These comprised a copper alloy weight in the form of a male head, c.1km north-west of the Site; seven copper alloy coins, c.1 km south-west of the Site; a coin of Probus, c.220m south-west of the Site; an assemblage of pottery recovered from the outer motte bank at Toot Hill c.260m north-west of the Site; another assemblage of pottery recovered c.390m north-west of the Site; a spindle whorl recovered c.580m west of the Site; and, a third mixed pottery assemblage recovered at Burger End c.900m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, Multiperiod Findspot).
- 3.47. The evidence discussed above could indicate that the settlement trend recorded with the study area during the Roman period reflects that of the Iron Age. This might therefore indicate that the Site and its close surroundings were located within a peripheral, more rural part of the landscape and less influenced by the foci of Roman settlement elsewhere, such as that located in Baldock.



- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Site Boundary | Modern | ★ Medieval |
| Study Area | Multiperiod | ★ Post-medieval |
| Saxon / Medieval | Undated | ★ Multiperiod |
| Medieval | ● Findspot | ★ Saxon |
| Ridge & Furrow | | |
| Post-medieval | | |



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PROJECT TITLE

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

FIGURE TITLE

Archaeological Remains: from Early Medieval to Modern (including Multiperiod and Undated)

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FIGURE NO.

5

Early medieval and medieval periods (AD 410 – 1540)

- 3.48. In the centuries following the end of Roman rule, Britain fragmented into a number of small kingdoms, and between the retreat of the Roman legions and the arrival of the Normans, very little historical information survives
- 3.49. As mentioned above, Pirton lies along the east / west aligned Icknield Way (Figs. 1 – 5), which is known to have been in use since at least the early medieval period (Edward 1916, Mawer and Stenton 1926). For this strategic location, activity dating to the period is recorded within the Site and the study area, and widely in general within the Pirton (Fig. 5). Several sherds of pottery dating to the early medieval period (Fig. 5, **11**) were recovered from two test pits located approximately within the north-west and south-west corners of the Site (Fig. 2b), as part of the CORS project in 2008 and 2009 (Lewis 2008 and 2009).
- 3.50. Close to the Site boundary, four pits and two ditches including late Saxon and later medieval pottery (Fig. 5, **12**) were identified during the evaluation undertaken in 2018 adjacent the western Site's boundary (Fig. 2a, **P6**). These features might indicate the presence of agricultural activity within the Site's environs during this period, and associated activity might also extend into the Site. However, the recently completed geophysical survey indicated on limited potential for remains of archaeological origin, predominantly evidence of ridge and furrow activity. (Sumo 2024 Appendix 6).
- 3.51. Furthermore, evidence of possible domestic occupation (Fig. 5, **13**) was recovered during the two watching briefs undertaken c.250m south-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P7**). These consisted of a rubbish pit containing sherds of late Saxon and later medieval pottery, and of ditches, gullies and structural elements, such as remnants of walls, which may represent former boundaries and occupation activity dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 3.52. Other archaeological remains dating to the earlier centuries of the medieval period recovered within the Site's close surroundings were identified during the investigations undertaken c.10m north of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P5**). These consisted of a series of ditches, which contained late Saxon and medieval pottery (Fig. 5, **14**). These features might indicate the presence of agricultural activity within the Site which could be associated with the adjacent evidence during this period.
- 3.53. Within the wider study area, the core of the human activity during the early medieval period seems to focus within an area broadly located around Priory Hill, between the

centre and the western side of Pirton. Here, a settlement (Fig. 5, **15**) is recorded within the Scheduled Monument, c.550m north-west of the Site (Fig. 11, **A**). The abovementioned investigations undertaken within this area (Fig. 2a, **P10** and **P11**) revealed the presence of substantial settlement activity consisting of pits, post holes and ditches, which included pottery dating to the early and middle Saxon period.

- 3.54. Further investigations undertaken within the surroundings of the Scheduled Monument (Fig. 2a, **P12**, **P13** and **P14**), confirmed the presence of intensive human activity dating to the early medieval period and very likely associated with the nearby settlement. Pits and ditches containing late Saxon and later medieval pottery were recovered c.420m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **16**) and further pits, ditches and post holes containing Middle Saxon pottery and later medieval pottery were recovered c.570m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **19**). In addition, late Saxon and later medieval pottery was recovered from pits and a ditch, c.700m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **17**).
- 3.55. Further evidence dating to the early medieval period was recovered during the investigations undertaken in 2001-02 c.360m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P8**), where a pit, two ditches and a possible beam-slot were dated as late Saxon (Fig. 5, **20**). In 1993 and 1995, c.300m north-west of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P9**) groundworks revealed a rubbish pit, pits and post holes indicating the presence of several structures, one of which was interpreted as an early church, and a cemetery dating between the middle Saxon and later medieval periods (Fig. 5, **18**). Two of the buildings were, however, also dated to the post-medieval period. A Saxon coin was also recovered from the ground surface, c.650m west of the Site (Fig. 5, Saxon Findspot), and an unstratified late Saxon pottery assemblage was recorded c.900m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, Multiperiod Findspot).
- 3.56. The intensive settlement activity dating to the early medieval period discussed above, was also confirmed by the CORS project undertaken between 2007 and 2015 (Fig. 2b), which recorded the presence of Saxon to later medieval pottery within the majority of an extensive array of test pits, which also highlighted a potential measure of continuity of the human activity with the previous Roman period.
- 3.57. This settlement activity extends into the medieval period. Pirton is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, recorded in the Hundred of Hitchin and the county of Hertfordshire. It had a recorded population of 77 households, putting it in the largest

20% of settlements recorded in Domesday, and lay under the ownership of Ralph of Limesy (Powell-Smith 2022 accessed August 2024). The origin of the toponym can be tracked to Old English. In this idiom, Pirton derives from the words ‘*Pirige*’, meaning ‘Pear Tree’, and ‘*Tun*’, which indicates ‘an enclosure; a farmstead; a village; an estate’ (University of Nottingham, accessed October 2024). It is therefore likely that the original name of Pirton was associated with its location rather than with a specific person.

- 3.58.** Consistent with the Domesday Survey, a manorial estate c.200m west of the Site, is recorded as being held by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Fig. 5, **21**). It passed to Ralph of Limesy, whose family held it until the Dissolution of the monasteries (1536 – 1541). During this time the (Scheduled) motte and bailey castle was established at Toot Hill (Fig. 11, **D**), c.100m west of the Site; this was associated with a small village known as ‘The Bury’, the earthworks of which were evident during the study area walkover. This original small settlement also included the Grade I Listed Church of St. Mary (Fig. 11, **C**), established in the 12th century³.
- 3.59.** A further moated site (also a Scheduled Monument) is recorded close to the Grade II* Listed Rectory Farm (Fig. 5, **25** and Fig. 11), c.780m north-west of the Site. Here, the Scheduled area defines a square-shaped moat, the south-west corner of which is now occupied by the later 17th century Grade II* Listed Farmhouse, and a further moated enclosure to the north-east⁴.
- 3.60.** A third moated site might have existed at Wrights Farm, c.830m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **24**), where a series of watercourses and earthworks with the appearance of a medieval homestead moat are recorded, in a location called ‘Moat Close’ from before 1801 (Burleigh 2017). Within the surroundings of this possible moat, an area including several earthworks was included in the test pitting as part of the CORS project in 2010 (Fig. 2b; Lewis 2011). This revealed a significant amount of late Saxon / medieval pottery (Fig. 5, **26**).
- 3.61.** Further evidence dating to the medieval period was recovered during investigations undertaken close to West Lane, to the north of Pirton, where a gully and a pit both containing medieval pottery were recovered during work along a driveway (Fig. 5, **22**) c.400m north-west of the Site. In addition, a large pit containing medieval pottery (Fig.

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1347110?section=official-list-entry>

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1009451?section=official-list-entry>

5, **23**) was discovered during a trial trench evaluation undertaken c.630m north-west of the Site (Wood 2013).

- 3.62. A number of artefacts, comprising two buckles, one token and three pottery assemblages, were also recovered unstratified from the ground surface between the possible moat at Wrights Farm (Fig. 5, **24**), Burge End Farm to the north, and West Lane to the east, between c.1km and c.670m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, Medieval and Multiperiod Findspots).
- 3.63. The data discussed above show a continuity and expansion of intensive settlement activity in Pirton. On the basis of this evidence, the local authority identifies a polyfocal settlement trend, which focuses around Priory Hill and its close surroundings during the early and middle Saxon period (5th to 9th century), spreading towards the village centre and then towards Burge End during the middle and late Saxon period (7th to 9th century; *ibid.*).
- 3.64. Nearly all the test pits dug as part of the CORS project included pottery dating between the middle 11th and middle 14th century, indicating a flourishing, more nucleated settlement during the medieval centuries following the Norman Conquest (Lewis 2008, 2009). This was likely focused around two, if not three, moated sites. The principal focus of these would have likely been located around Toot Hill and the Church of St Mary, extending towards Great Green, an area located west of the castle, c.500m from the Site, as depicted by *The Copy of the 1818 Pirton Enclosure Map* (see Fig. 6 below). Here some buildings date to the 15th century (HER. 16620), or at Bury End where Grade II* Listed Three Gables was established during or before the 15th century⁵, c.400m south-west of the Site (Fig. 11, **B**).
- 3.65. It is likely that, during this period the medieval agricultural landscape surrounding the main foci of settlement would have been characterised by open fields of ridge and furrow. Cropmarks and / or earthworks of such features were identified on aerial photographs (see Fig. 5, Ridge & Furrow) at Wrights Farm c.830m north-west of the Site, beyond Priory Hill and Hitchin Road, respectively c.970m and c.650m south-west of the Site, and c.950m north-east of the Site (Fig. 5, **30**).
- 3.66. Further evidence of ridge and furrow was also identified during an investigation undertaken respectively c.350m north and c.430m north-east of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P1**

⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103185?section=official-list-entry>

and **P2**). It is likely that such agricultural activity might also have extended within the Site, as also confirmed by the results of the geophysical survey undertaken within the Site (SUMO 2024; Appendix 6). However, no evidence of ridge and furrow is recorded here in the HER data, nor was any noticeable in the LiDAR imagery reproduced on Fig. 9. In addition, no evidence of earthworks was recorded during the Site walkover (Photos 1 - 2), nor is depicted on the aerial photographs reviewed at the Historic England Archive (HEA). The latter are listed in Appendix 4.

- 3.67. The HER documents (MHT16620) that after the 14th century Pirton contracted, as a result of the severe effect of the Black Death c.1348 (*ibid.*). This was also broadly confirmed in the data recovered during the CORS project in 2015 (Lewis 2016a; Fig. 2a), which identified a drop of 75% in the amount of medieval pottery post-dating the 14th century recovered from the test pits, reflecting a significant decrease in the local population.

Post-medieval and modern periods (1540 - present) and undated

- 3.68. As mentioned above, the Black Death significantly affected the later centuries of the medieval period in Pirton. Recovery from this event does not seem to have been established until the 17th or even 18th century (Record No. MHT16620).
- 3.69. As mentioned above, the HER reports that the manorial estate in Pirton remained under the Limesy family until the Dissolution when Henry VIII granted the property to the Denny family (Record No. MHT16620). This, however, occurred after a period of abandonment, during which the motte was probably used as a look-out and meeting place of the villagers, and so became called Toot Hill (Record No. MHT746). The estate was sold again in 1656 and then in 1736, when it was bought by Lord Raymond (Record No. MHT16620). During these centuries the settlement increased, with the establishment of several buildings in Great and Little Green, two areas respectively the south-west and to the north-east of the settlement at Toot Hill, located c.500m south-west and 110m north-east of the Site and depicted on the 1818 Pirton Enclosure Map (see Fig. 6).
- 3.70. The village continues to expand during the 16th and 17th centuries, during which time the Grade II Listed Walnut Tree Farm⁶ was established, c.180m south-west of the Site (Fig. 11, Group F), Grade II* Listed Rectory Farm was established, c.780m north-

⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103161?section=official-list-entry>

west of the Site⁴ (Fig. 11), Grade II* Listed Hammond's Farm House⁷ c.800m north-west of the Site (Fig. 11), and Grade II Listed Elm Tree Farm⁸ c.15m north-west of the Site (Fig. 11, Group **E**). This process is also recorded by HE (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/> accessed October 2024), which documents the establishment during the 16th and 17th centuries of the majority of the other Grade II Listed Buildings now present in Pirton. These are mostly located along High Street and Great Green, respectively lying c.300m north-west and 500m west of the Site (Fig. 11, **B**).

- 3.71. This expansion of settlement is consistent with the archaeological data. These document two ditches associated with a possible timber structure and a boundary ditch identified during a watching brief undertaken c.170m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **27**; Turner 1998), whilst another post-medieval boundary ditch (Fig. 5, **28**) was identified during the investigation undertaken in 2016-17 c.350m north of the Site (Fig. 2a, **P1**). Furthermore, several artefacts dating to these centuries were recovered unstratified from the ground surface. These consist of a pottery scatter identified c.780m north-west of the Site; three coins recovered c.790m west of the Site; and, of a token, a buckle and a silver penny identified c.670m south-west of the Site (Fig. 5, Post-medieval Findspot).
- 3.72. The data discussed above depict a settlement pattern that, during the post-medieval centuries, spreads from the original late medieval focus located around Toot Hill and the Church of St Mary towards the north, the north-east and the north-west, with a series of residential buildings established along High Street, and, in a wider context, with the establishments of the above mentioned designated farmsteads, which sat in the contemporary landscape surrounding the core of the village. This is consistent with the evidence depicted by the historical mapping reproduced below (Figs. 6 – 8) and depicted in Appendix 3.
- 3.73. No Tithe Map was available for the historic parish of Pirton. The first map accurately portraying the Site is the copy of the 1818 Pirton Enclosure Map (Fig. 6). This depicts the Site already divided into two parts. The north part includes three regular parcels, numbered 209, 210 and 211 moving from west to east. These parcels correspond to the 14th, 13th and 12th allotments under the ownership of G. Whittingstall. The southern part of the Site corresponded to the north-western portion of a much larger

⁷ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1175235?section=official-list-entry>

⁸ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1308350?section=official-list-entry>

parcel, numbered 323. This is registered as the 23rd allotments under the ownership of E. H. D. Radcliffe. To the west, the western Site boundary also includes a probable track, which is not depicted in the later maps (Figs. 7, 8 and Appendix 3).

- 3.74. The 1818 Enclosure Map also depicts the Village of Pirton in which the settlement is mostly nucleated around the Motte and Bailey Castle at Toot Hill (Fig. 11, **D**). This area is mainly Great Green and Little Green, respectively to the south-west and to the north-east of the Castle, and along the Hight Street. Further buildings spread northwards from Little Green, whilst two groups of buildings lying in parcels 200 to and 225, respectively located to the north-west and the south-west of the Site, likely correspond to Elm Tree Farm and Walnut Farm, outlining the marked agricultural use of the landscape surrounding the historic core of the Village, which also includes the Site.



Fig. 6 Extract of the Copy of the 1818 Pirton Enclosure map

- 3.75. The following map reproduced here is the 1876 *Map of Hitchin Priory Estate (Hitchin, Pirton, Ickleford, Holwell, Norton, Offley and Ippollitts, Herts, Shillington, Arlesey and Stotfold, Beds) compiled from old estate and tithe plans* (Fig. 7). This shows that the Site is still divided in two parts which now, however, are included within the same parcel 195. The southern part of the Site still occupies the northern part of a larger field, which, however, is now reduced in size respect of the previous map (Fig. 6).

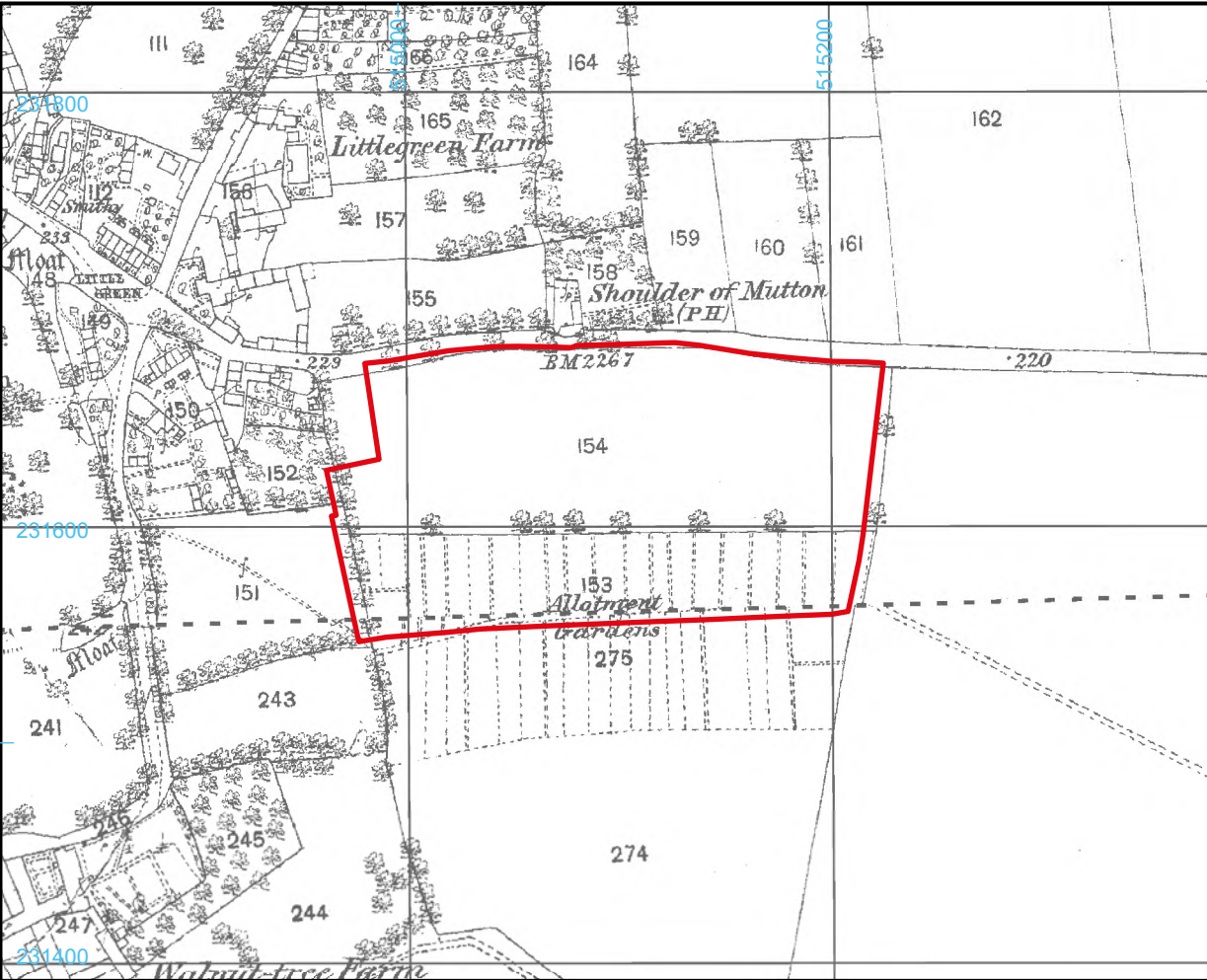
This might correspond to a parcelling out process which is noticeable also within the wider landscape surrounding the Site and the village of Pirton. The Book of Records associated with this Map refers to the parcel which includes the Site as 'Upper Bury Field' and its use, comprising allotments. It lies under the tenancy of Thomas Franklin, who also occupied parcel 197, which included Walnut Tree Farm. This place name is usually associated with a defensive enclosure / camp (Field 1972) and this might therefore indicate a possible former, historical association with the Scheduled monument at Toot Hill (Fig. 11, **D**), c.100m west of the Site.

- 3.76. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map dating to 1881-82 (Fig. 8) shows that the layout of the Site remained unchanged to this date. A series of regular, small, north / south oriented parcels which occupy the northern part of the southern half of the Site, are named 'Allotment Gardens'. Elements of these parcels might also be depicted in the LiDAR imagery reproduced on Fig. 9 below.

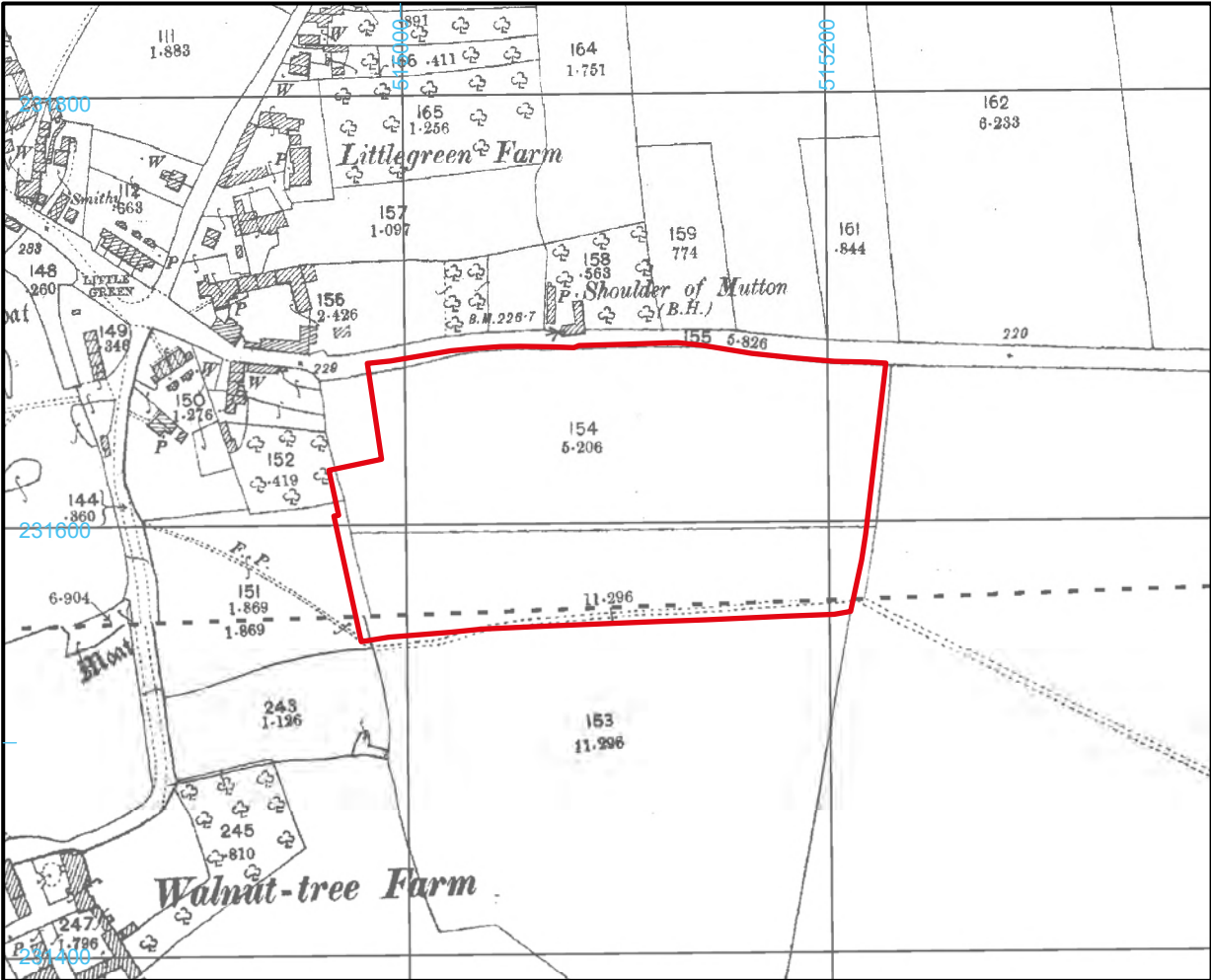


Fig. 7 Extract of 1876 Map of Hitchin Priory Estate in Pirton

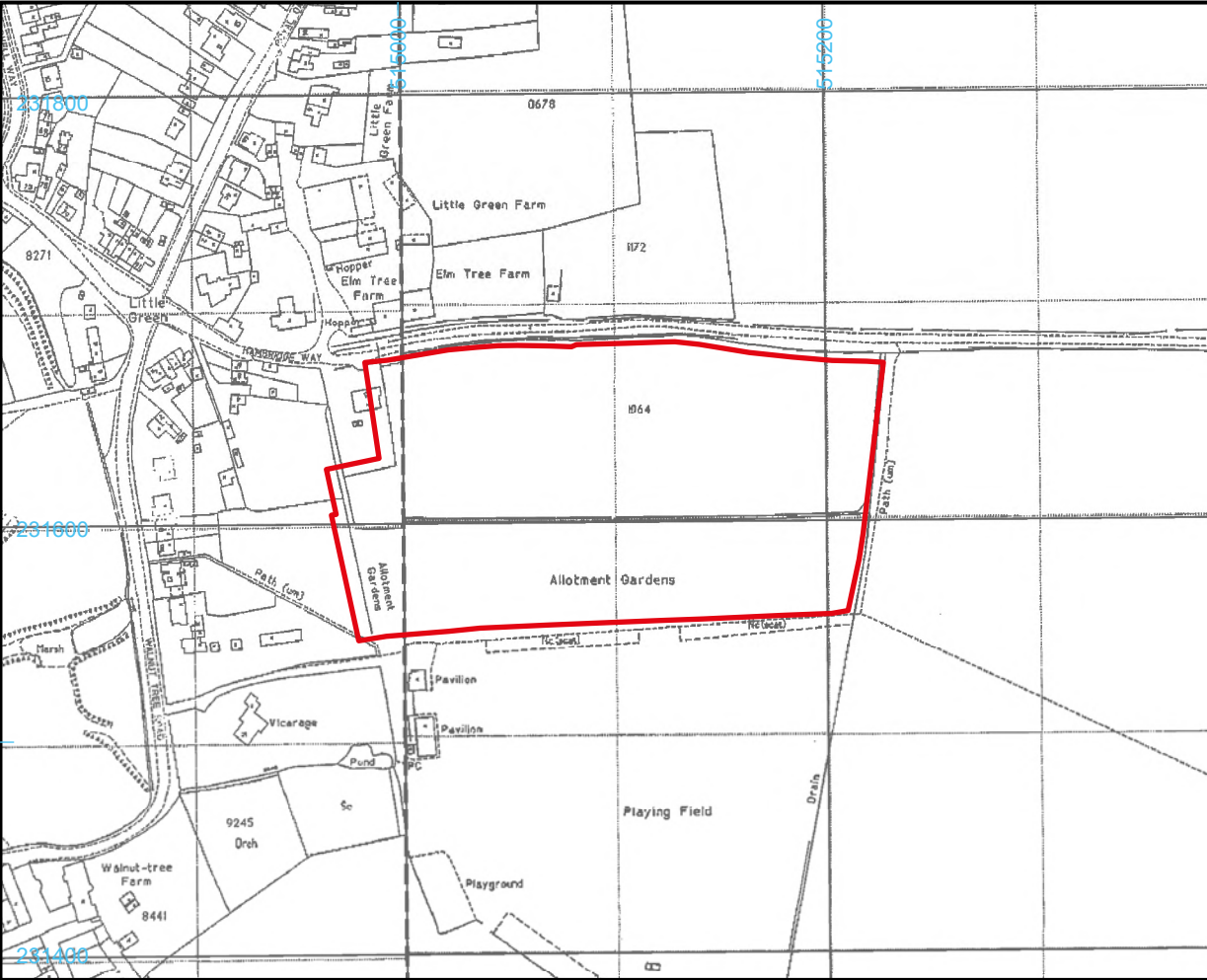
- 3.77. To the north of the Site a small building named 'Shoulder of Mutton' corresponds to a Public House, as shown by the 1881-82 OS Map, and is not depicted on available maps post-dating 1947 (Appendix 3). Further north, a small farm called 'Little Green Farm' is depicted, surrounded by a small group of structures, which might correspond to outbuildings associated with the farm.



Extract of 1881-82 OS map.



Extract of 1898 OS map.



Extract of 1993 OS map.



Recent aerial imagery of the Site



Site Boundary



0 150m

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PROJECT TITLE

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

FIGURE TITLE

Historic Map Regression

DRAWN BY	FC	PROJECT NO	MK1148	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	MH	DATE	10/12/2024	8
APPROVED BY	MH	SCALE@A3	1:3,500	

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- 3.78. The 1881-82 map does not depict notable expansion of Pirton, which remains mostly nucleated along the High Street. This map also depicts no major changes occurring within the landscape surrounding the Site, which maintains a marked agricultural character, despite several areas, mostly surrounding the buildings, are covered by trees.
- 3.79. The following OS map also reproduced on Fig. 8 was published in 1898. No changes are depicted to the Site layout, with the southern parcel now bounded by a path along its southern boundary.
- 3.80. Furthermore, the 1898 OS map does not depict the allotment parcels depicted on the 1st Edition OS map (Fig. 8). The allotments are, however, portrayed within the Site's south parcel by aerial photographs in the years between 1947 and 1982 (Appendix 4)⁹. No major changes are depicted on the 1898 map either within the surrounding landscape, although a little evidence of field amalgamation can be seen in the land immediately to the north of the Site. This map also shows a reduction in the number of tree-defined boundaries, and of parcels with stands of trees (orchard trees?), which might suggest an increased focus on agriculture.
- 3.81. The 20th century OS maps (Appendix 3) do not show major changes to either the layout of the Site or of the adjacent landscape. A process of field amalgamation across the landscape surrounding Pirton is evident from the 1980s (see Appendix 3), as the likely result of the adoption of modern agricultural techniques and machinery. During the latter part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 2000s Pirton expanded, with new residential developments surrounding its earlier core progressively to the north, the west and then the east, as depicted on the 1993 OS map and by more recent aerial imagery (Fig. 8).
- 3.82. During this expansion new residential development was established close to the Site; to the north and the west, and in small part within the Site itself. Here, a small barn and a small, enclosed shed were built respectively within the north and the south parcel toward the end of the 20th century and 2018, which were evident during the Site walkover (Photos 3 and 4).

⁹ RAF/CPE/UK/2159, Frame No. 4226 (13/06/1947); RAF/541/148, Frame No. 4233 (31/08/1948); RAF/58/4646, Frame No. 0162 (28/06/1961); OS/73060, Frame No. 325 (03/04/1973); TL 1431 / 2 and 5, Frames No. 2105 / 1017 and 2105 / 1018

- 3.83. A number of areas of cropmarks are recorded in the HER. These potential archaeological features are mostly located to the south-east and the south-west of the Site. Their potential archaeological origin, and any associated date or function, remains unconfirmed. These include cropmarks of two possible sub-rectangular enclosures (Fig. 5, **31** and **34**) identified respectively c.240m and c.820m south-east of the Site, cropmarks of possible linear ditches and of a possible curvilinear enclosure identified at c.900m south-east of the Site (Fig. 5, **32**), and a cropmark of a further linear ditch identified at c.600m south-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **33**).

LiDAR imagery and Historic Landscape Characterisation

- 3.84. As mentioned above the LiDAR imagery (Fig. 9) is consistent with the data illustrated on the historic cartographic sources (Fig. 6 - 8).
- 3.85. The LiDAR depicts a series of linear anomalies, north / south oriented, within the southern part of the Site and extending further southwards. It is likely that these anomalies reflect the former allotment parcels depicted on the 1881-82 OS map (Fig. 8 and Appendix 3). Two linear anomalies are also depicted within the northern Site parcel, one crossing the area east / west and the other crossing the south-east part of this parcel on a north-east / south-west alignment.



Fig. 9 LiDAR 2020 data 1m resolution DTM multi hillshade

- 3.86. The anomalies discussed above might correspond with old, perhaps temporary field boundaries, although their origin cannot be established with certainty. Furthermore, the geophysical survey undertaken within the Site identified possible anomalies, which might correspond with buried and infilled furrows associated with ridge and furrow (Sumo Surveys 2024; Appendix 6). No anomalies associated with such features are, however, depicted in the LiDAR imagery (Fig. 9).
- 3.87. The Historic Landscape Characterisation (Fig. 10) is consistent with the evidence depicted by the historic cartographic sources shown on Figs. 6 – 8 and in Appendix 3. This depicts the Site within an area of Allotments, reflecting the use of the same area as depicted by maps predating the 20th century (Figs. 6 – 8), and the aerial photographs dating between 1947 and 1982 (Appendix 4)⁹.

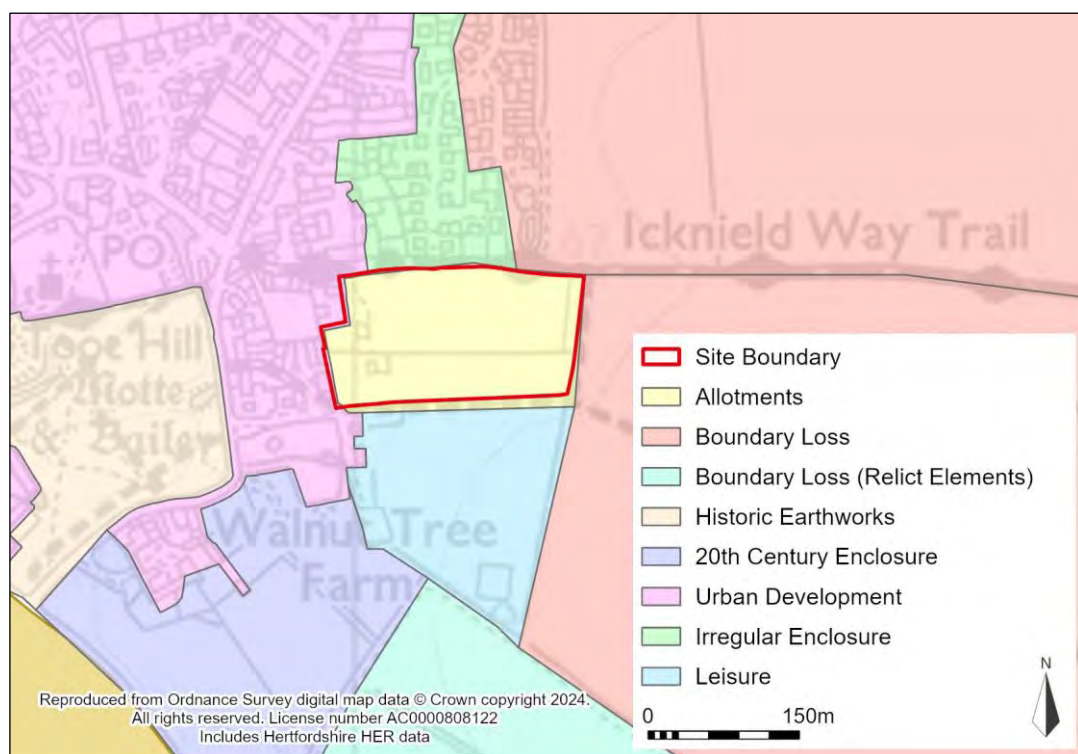


Fig. 10 Historic Landscape Characterisation of the Site and its surroundings.

- 3.88. An area of 'Boundary Loss' lies to the north-west, the west and the south-west of the Site, which is consistent with the amalgamation process outlined above and depicted by the OS maps dating to the middle of the 20th century. An area of irregular enclosure is located to the north of the Site and probably refers to the land subdivision predating the more recent development already established within this area, whilst an area of modern development is located to the north-west and corresponds with the expansion of Pirton during the second half of the 20th century.

-
- 3.89. The south of the Site includes a 'Leisure' area, which corresponds with the extant playground, whilst the area of the Scheduled Monument at Toot Hill and the adjacent Shrunk Village (Fig. 11, **D**) is recorded as 'Historic Earthworks'
- 3.90. The available cartographic sources indicate that the hedgerows and field boundaries extant around the Site's north, east and west boundaries, and the east / west boundary dividing the two parcels that comprise the Site have remained mostly unchanged over the course of the 19th and the 20th centuries. The layout of these boundaries is depicted by *The Copy of the 1818 Pirton Enclosure Map* (Fig. 6) and by the 1876 *Map of Hitchin Priory Estate* and may therefore represent lengths of 'important' hedgerows, as defined in the criteria set out in the Hedgerows Regulations (1997; Appendix 1).

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE & POTENTIAL EFFECTS

Previous impacts

- 4.1. A review of the available cartographic, documentary and photographic evidence indicates that the Site has remained largely undeveloped throughout its documented history. A small barn and an enclosed shed were established in the western part of the north and the south Site's parcel respectively between the later part of the 20th century and 2018 (Photos 3 and 4).



Photo. 3 West facing view of the barn located within the Site's northern parcel; see Fig. 11 for photo location.



Photo. 4 North-east facing view of the shed located within the Site's southern parcel; see Fig. 11 for photo location.

-
- 4.2. As such, the majority of pre-existing impacts to any potential buried archaeological remains deriving from the establishment of the barn and the shed would be limited to their footprint. Pre-existing impacts to any potential buried archaeological remains located within the rest of the Site will likely be confined to upper soil horizons, deriving from medieval, post-medieval and modern agricultural practices, such as plough activity, fencing, and land drainage, and possibly from modern enclosure and field amalgamation. This would include activities associated with the removal of the former allotment boundaries within the Site (Figs. 6 and 7; Appendix 2)^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. Ploughing may have had a considerable impact upon any near-surface archaeological features, although any features present in deeper deposits may be better preserved.

The significance of known and potential archaeological remains within the Site

- 4.3. This assessment has identified that no designated archaeological remains are located within the Site; no *designated* archaeological remains will therefore be adversely physically affected by development within the Site.
- 4.4. Known and potential archaeological remains identified within the Site comprise:
- Prehistoric and Roman period remains;
 - Saxon and medieval remains; and,
 - Post-medieval and modern remains.

- 4.5. The significance of these assets is discussed further below.

Prehistoric and Roman period remains

- 4.6. A band of Diamicton is recorded along the eastern Site's boundary (BGS 2024). These deposits are typically periglacial, dating to the Pleistocene. Such deposits have the potential to contain, both palaeoenvironmental and Palaeolithic remains, as well as later prehistoric features (Historic England 2023).
- 4.7. No Palaeolithic remains have been recorded either within the Site and the study area whilst scatters of unstratified artefacts dating to the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods have been recorded within the study area. It is likely that human activity within the study area during these millennia was sporadic, possibly associated with resource exploitation.
- 4.8. The situation seems to remain mostly unchanged during the majority of the Bronze Age, though there was a probable increase in activity from the Late Bronze Age and

Iron Age. This was likely associated with settlement activity, mainly c.350m north and c.560m west of the Site, probably associated with small communities focused within and around small farmsteads finally established on an east / west alignment which follows the Icknield Way trajectory.

- 4.9. On this basis, there is a low potential for the presence of prehistoric remains within the Site. Where any such remains may be present these would likely comprise unstratified artefacts, such as flint tools and / or debitage and pottery, dating from the Mesolithic to the Iron Age.
- 4.10. Structural remains of Roman period origin were recorded c.300m south-west of the Site and two possible small settlement foci might have been present north of Burge End, c.890m north-west of the Site (Fig. 4, **10b**), north of Walnut Farm, c.90m south-west of the Site and, possibly, within the Site's environs to the west (Fig. 4, **10a**). As such, it is likely that the Site may have been located within these possible modest foci of activity, whilst the main foci of large settlement was probably at Baldock, c.9.5km north-east of the Site. The geophysical survey undertaken within the Site did not record, however, any evidence that may be confidently ascribed to Roman period activity (Sumo Surveys 2024; Appendix 6).
- 4.11. On this basis, there is a low to moderate potential for remains dating to the Roman period to be present within the Site. Any such remains may consist of pits and ditches associated with agricultural and / or domestic activity, which in turn could comprise stratified and unstratified artefacts, such as coins and pottery or artefacts.
- 4.12. The significance of prehistoric and Roman period remains would be associated with their potential evidential (archaeological) and historical (illustrative) value, on the basis of their ability to contribute to the knowledge of the distribution of settlement and agricultural activity as set out in the related chapters of the Research Agenda of the East of England Regional Research Framework¹⁰.

Early medieval (Saxon) and medieval remains

- 4.13. The data discussed in Section 3, and the recognition of several AAS within Pirton and its close surroundings, highlight the establish of the settlement of Pirton during the early medieval period, which could also comprise a certain measure of continuity from the Roman period too. This assessment has identified that there is moderate potential

¹⁰<https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/research-agenda/>

for the presence within the Site of early medieval remains comprising features associated with agriculture at the periphery of the settlement and associated stratified / unstratified artefacts.

- 4.14. Three foci of settlement for the Saxon period have been identified within the study area, between the Site and Walnut Farm (Fig. 5, **12** and **13**), within and surrounding the Scheduled area at (Fig. 11, **A**) at Priory Hill (Fig. 5, **15**, **16**, **17** and **19**), and around Burge End Farm c.900m north-west of the Site. Further activity dating to this period, has been identified within the Site and its close surroundings (Fig 5, **11**, and **14**), which might also extend into the western part of the Site's southern parcel. The geophysical survey undertaken within the Site did not record, however, any evidence that may be confidently ascribed to early medieval period activity, though small pits, for example, such as those recorded to the west during trench evaluation in (Heritage Network 2018) may not readily be identified by geophysical survey (Sumo Surveys 2024; Appendix 6).
- 4.15. These data might indicate a polyfocal pattern of settlement occurring within the area during the Saxon period which became more nucleated during the centuries following the Norman Conquest, when the settled areas seem to be focused around two moated areas within the village, both now Scheduled (Fig. 11, **D** and Group **B**). The settlement activity recorded in Pirton during the early medieval and medieval periods suffers of a significant contraction with the Black Death of 1348.
- 4.16. The flourishing of Pirton during the medieval period likely corresponded to the growth of the local population, which also likely influenced the expansion of the agricultural land, as evidenced with the cropmarks of ridge and furrow in the surrounding landscape and within the Site (Fig. 5, **30** and Ridge & Furrow). This is also consistent with the results of the geophysical survey undertaken within the Site, which depicts possible buried and infilled remains of ridge and furrow (Sumo Surveys 2024; Appendix 6).
- 4.17. On this basis, there is a moderate to high potential for the presence of remains dating to the early medieval and medieval periods within the Site. Such remains could comprise metal or ceramic artefacts which could be present as unstratified objects or in the fills of pits, boundary ditches or furrow bases, associated with activity at the periphery of settlement, most likely, of agricultural origin. This is also highlighted by

the results of the geophysical survey undertaken within the Site, which show the possible buried remains of ridge and furrow.

- 4.18. No above ground remnants of ridge and furrow were observed during the Site walkover, nor associated anomalies are depicted by LiDAR imagery shown above on Fig. 9. As such, if the presence of buried elements of such features will be confirmed during the groundworks undertaken as part of the proposed development, these would be of very limited evidential and historical (illustrative) value.
- 4.19. The significance of early medieval and medieval remains settlement remains would be associated with their potential evidential (archaeological) and historical (illustrative) value, on the basis of their ability to contribute to the knowledge of the distribution of settlement and agricultural activity as set out in the related chapters of the Research Agenda of the East of England Regional Research Framework¹⁰. Buried remains of ridge and furrow, identified within the Site during the geophysical survey, specifically, would be negligible significance.

Post-medieval and modern remains

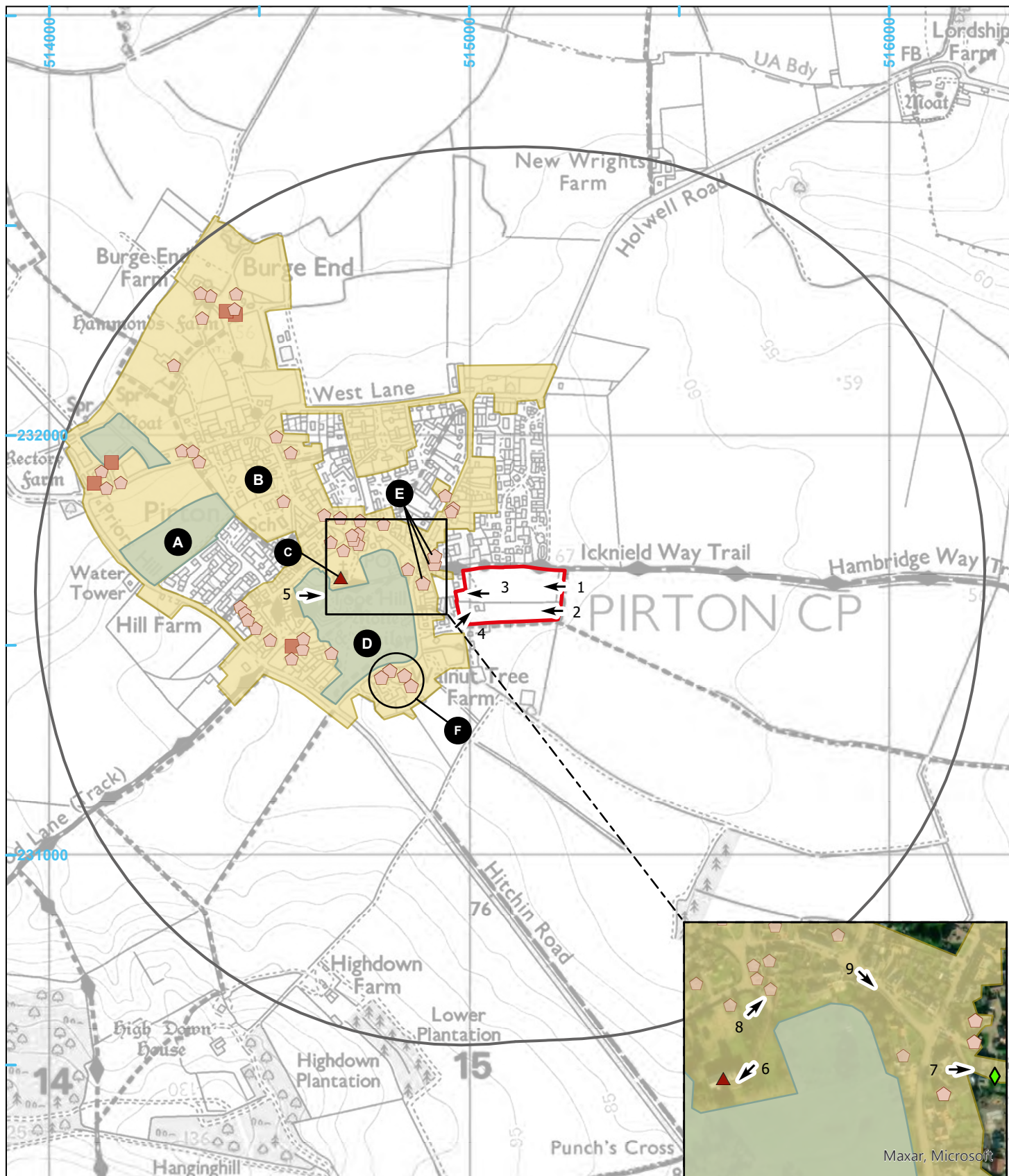
- 4.20. Pirton expanded between the 16th and 18th centuries, progressively developing around Toot Hill, where the majority of the historic buildings are present, along the High Street and between Great and Little Green, c.300m north-west and 500m west of the Site respectively.
- 4.21. As documented by Historic England, several farmsteads were established during the post-medieval period close to the core of the village; Walnut Tree Farm⁶ c.180m south-west of the Site, Rectory Farm⁴ and Hammond's Farm House⁷, c.800m north-west and at c.780m north-west of the Site respectively and Elm Tree Farm⁸ c.15m north-west of the Site. The population and the settlement continued to grow through the modern period, although the Site likely remained in agricultural use throughout, at the village edge.
- 4.22. There is a moderate to high potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains, associated with agricultural activity dating to the post-medieval and modern periods within the Site. Where present such remains could include stratified and unstratified artefacts along with infilled pits, boundary ditches and evidence of allotment partition in the south of the Site.

-
- 4.23. If encountered during groundworks for the proposed development, any such remains would be of negligible archaeological interest and would not contribute to prevailing questions set out in the Research Agenda of the East of England Archaeological Research Framework.

Potential development effects

- 4.24. No significant recorded archaeological remains have been identified within the Site, and it is considered unlikely that highly significant unknown buried archaeological remains occur within the Site. It is anticipated that no highly significant archaeological remains will therefore be disturbed or truncated by the proposed development.
- 4.25. Any disturbance or truncation (physical development effects) of those less significant archaeological remains identified within the Site would primarily result from groundworks associated with construction. Such groundworks might include:
- pre-construction impacts associated with ground investigation works;
 - ground reduction;
 - construction groundworks, including excavation of building foundations, service trenches and stripping for roads/car parks;
 - excavation of new site drainage channels (including soakaways); and
 - landscaping and planting.
- 4.26. Groundworks undertaken in relation to the proposed development, particularly the excavation of services trenches, access routes and new building foundations, have the potential to result in the damage to or loss of any buried archaeological remains which may be present within their footprint.
- 4.27. There is evidence of previous, very limited, archaeological investigation and recording within the Site, with the geophysical survey recently undertaken within the Site showing only the possible presence of buried remains associated to ridge and furrow (Sumo Surveys 2024; Appendix 6). At present it is not possible to determine in more detail, the specific measure of impact that this development would have upon any buried archaeological remains predating the ridge and furrow. Depending upon the final construction strategy, development within the Site would be likely to result in the removal of potential buried remains within the Site. However, as noted, any remains within the Site are unlikely to be of the highest significance, and would not represent an absolute constraint on the proposed development.

-
- 4.28. To better understand the potential for and likely significance of any buried archaeological remains within the Site, further investigation, informed by this assessment and the results of the geophysical survey (SUMO Surveys 2024; Appendix 6) could be undertaken at a suitable stage in the development process to inform appropriate mitigation measures. Any further investigation would need to be agreed in consultation with the Archaeological Advisor for the Local Planning Authority.
- 4.29. The proposed development would likely introduce change to the Historic Landscape Character of the Site, which is presently (inaccurately) classified as 'Allotments'. However, this change can be understood as a continuity of modern settlement-edge residential development, already established to the north and east of the Site.
- 4.30. Historic mapping illustrates that the Site's north, east and west boundaries, and the east / west boundary dividing the Site in two have remained mostly unchanged since at least the early – mid 19th century. These may therefore comprise import hedgerows on the basis of the criteria set out in the Hedgerows Regulations (1997). Any removal of parts of such hedgerows that may be required for the proposed development should be communicated in advance to the local authority, through the provision of a Hedgerow Removal Notice. A planning application would usually serve as sufficient notice.



- Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area
- ▲ Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- ◆ Locally Listed Building
- ↑ Photo Location



0 500m



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PROJECT TITLE

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

FIGURE TITLE

Designated Heritage Assets and Photo Locations

DRAWN BY FC
CHECKED BY MH
APPROVED BY MH

PROJECT NO MK1148
DATE 13/12/2024
SCALE@A4 1:12,500

FIGURE NO.
11

5. THE SETTING OF HERITAGE ASSETS

5.1. This section considers potential non-physical effects upon the significance of susceptible heritage assets within the Site environs. Non-physical effects are those that derive from changes to the setting of heritage assets as a result of new development. All heritage assets included within the settings assessment are summarised in the gazetteer in Appendix 2, and shown on Fig. 11. Those assets identified as potentially susceptible to non-physical impact, and thus subject to more detailed assessment, are discussed in greater detail within the remainder of this section.

Step 1: Identification of heritage assets potentially affected

5.2. Step 1 of the Second Edition of Historic England's 2017 'Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3' (GPA3) is to 'identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected' (see Appendix 1). GPA3 notes that Step 1 should identify the heritage assets which are likely to be affected as a result of any change to their experience, as a result of the development proposal (GPA3, page 9).

5.3. A number of heritage assets were identified as part of Step 1, as potentially susceptible to impact as a result of changes to their setting. These included Pirton Conservation Area (Fig. 11, Group **B**), which, at its closest point, lies at c. 20m from the south-west corner of the Site, and is discussed further in Steps 2 and 3, below.

5.4. Other designated heritage assets that have the potential to be sensitive to the proposed development, and which are themselves located within the Conservation Area, comprise:

- the Scheduled Monument at 'Toot Hill Motte and Bailey Castle and Shrunken Medieval Village' (Fig. 11, **D**), c.100m west of the Site;
- the Grade I Listed 'Church of St Mary' (Fig. 11, **C**), c.270m west of the Site;
- the Grade II Listed Buildings at 'Elm Tree Farmhouse', 'South-East Barn at No 1 (Elm Tree Farm)' and '7, Walnut Tree Road', c.70m north-west and 100m west of the Site respectively (Fig. 11, Group **E**); and
- the Grade II Listed Buildings at 'Walnut Tree Farmhouse', 'South-East Barn at Walnut Tree Farm', 'Farm Buildings fronting Road at Walnut Tree Farm', and '23-25, Walnut Tree Road', c.180m and 210m south-west of the Site respectively (Fig. 11, Group **F**).

5.5. Furthermore, several historic buildings, locally listed and therefore non-designated heritage assets, are identified and listed in the Pirton Village Character Assessment 2016 (pg. 44), part of the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan 2011 – 2031, and are recalled in the *Pirton Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan of 2022* (Place Services on behalf of the North Hertfordshire District Council).

5.6. These Locally Listed Buildings also include No. 4 and No. 6 Hambridge Way (Holly Cottage), which lie c.50m from the Site (Fig. 11, Locally Listed Building; Photo 7). The Site visit, and study area walkover, identified that the Site is not part of the close surroundings of these buildings, does not share with those any historical connection nor any clear measure of intervisibility, for the presence of tall trees. As such, it is considered that the Site does not contribute to their heritage significance and, as such, it is concluded that there would be **no harm** to the significance of these assets as a result of the proposed development. On this basis, none of these buildings have been taken forward for further assessment.

5.7. These assets have been identified using a combination of GIS analysis and field examination, which has considered, amongst other factors, the surrounding topographic and environmental conditions, built form, vegetation cover, and lines of sight, within the context of the assets' heritage significance.

The Scheduled Monument at 'Toot Hill Motte and Bailey Castle and Shrunken Medieval Village' (Fig. 11, D).

5.8. The Scheduled area lies c.100m west of the Site, at its closest point, in a public area accessible along footpaths (Appendix 5, Photo A). However, the Scheduled Monument and the Site do not share any measure of intervisibility, for the presence of intervening modern buildings and stands of tree (Photo 5). Historic England's list entry records that *'The monument consists of the earthworks of the castle motte Toot Hill, and the surrounding earthworks of the castle bailey (and) includes the remains of the shrunken medieval village known as The Bury which lies to the south of the bailey.... carefully planned in respect of the Castle. Adjacent to the motte lies the remains of the ditched enclosure of the bailey in which earthworks still define the sites of holloways, tracks and building platforms....'*¹¹.

5.9. The heritage significance of the earthworks at the Motte and Bailey Castle of Toot Hill and of the associated Shrunken Village derives principally from their aspect, form and

¹¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1012325?section=official-list-entry>

its surviving remains as defined by the extent of the area of the Scheduled Monument, which hold evidential (archaeological) and historical (illustrative) for their contribution to the knowledge of the history of Pirton as an important early medieval settlement along the Icknield Way. The setting of this asset is largely associated with the extent of the Scheduled area, and with their reciprocal historical association, which can be best appreciated from within the Scheduled area and its immediate vicinity. There is also a historical association with the nearby Grade I Listed Church of St. Mary (see below). The historic cartographic sources discussed above (Fig. 6) refer to the field in which the Site lies as 'Upper Bury Field'. This place name is usually associated with a defensive enclosure / camp (Field 1972) and might therefore indicate a possible former, historical association with the Scheduled Monument to the west. This potential former historic association no longer appreciable, and later mapping, and the aerial imagery (Appendix 4)⁹, depicts the Site as allotments during the 19th and the 20th century.

- 5.10. Within the wider landscape, a further element which contributes to the heritage significance of the monument lies within its historical relationship with the likely contemporary Scheduled moated site at Rectory Farm, c.780m north-west of the Site (Fig. 11, Group **B** and Fig. 5, **25**) and with another moated site which is thought may have been located at Wrights Farm, c.830m north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **24**).



Photo. 5 East facing view towards the Site, taken from the top of the motte at Toot Hill; see Fig. 11 for photo location.

5.11. In summary it is considered that none of the key elements of the setting of the Scheduled Monument that contribute to its significance include the Site. The Site is likely simply to have been a part of the wider agricultural landscape surrounding the early medieval and medieval settlement at Pirton, but whose historical layout is however now largely changed. If a possible historical association between the Scheduled Monument to the west and the Site once existed, this is no longer present, due to the change of land use in the following centuries. There is no perceivable measure of intervisibility occurring between the development area and the Scheduled area, for the presence of intervening mature vegetation and modern built form. As such, the historical association between the core of the village and the surrounding landscape is now no more perceivable and, for this reason, it is concluded that the proposed development will result in **no harm** to the significance of the Scheduled Monument at Toot Hill as a result of changes to the use and / or appearance of the Site. On this basis, the setting assessment of this designated heritage asset has not been taken any further in this report.

The Grade I Listed 'Church of St Mary' (Fig. 11, C).

5.12. The church (Photo 6) lies c.270m west of the Site, and does not share any measure of intervisibility with the Site, due to the presence of intervening landscape features, modern built form and stands of trees. Historic England records this asset as '....A large church standing in the inner bailey of an extensive motte and bailey earthwork castle at the centre of the village'³. The same source records that the building was established in the early 12th century but was modified after the transepts was destroyed by the collapse of tower during the 13th century. Many structural elements were added in the 14th century, whilst the nave was heightened with a new roof and windows in the 15th century. The built form of the nave is made of coursed limestone rubble with freestone dressings and ashlar parapets, contrasting the coursed flint of 14th century walling of south porch and the irregular uncoursed clunch rubble of the tower. The steep roof includes red tile roof to the chancel and the transept, and lead roof to the nave and to the tower, which also includes spike and vane³.

5.13. The significance of the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary is derived from a combination of its evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal heritage values. The evidential value of the church's fabric and built form, including its interior fixtures and fittings, is considered to make the greatest contribution to its significance. The medieval structural elements of the church, together with the Norman elements of the

tower represent an important survival of medieval fabric, while subsequent additions and restoration reflect its historic and architectural development in the following centuries. These elements can be best appreciated from the churchyard and its close surroundings, which form the principal element of the setting of the church. Further elements of the setting of this asset are retained in its historical relationship with the nearby Scheduled Monument at Toot Hill and its associated Shrunken Village (see above; Fig. 11, **D**).

- 5.14. It is therefore considered that the Site is not part of the setting of the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary and, as such, does not make any contribution to its heritage significance. For this reason, it is concluded that the proposed development will result in **no harm** to the significance of the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary as a result of changes to the use and / or appearance of the Site. On this basis, the setting assessment for this designated heritage asset has not been taken any further in this report.



Photo. 6 South-west facing view of the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary; see Fig. 11 for photo location.

Grade II Listed Buildings at 'Elm Tree Farmhouse', 'South-East Barn at No 1 (Elm Tree Farm)' and '7, Walnut Tree Road' (Fig. 11, Group E).

- 5.15. This group of assets is located c.15m north-west and 80m west of the Site respectively and shares no measure of intervisibility with the Site, due to the presence of intervening modern built form and stands of trees (Photo 7).

- 5.16. Historic England's list entry records Elm Tree Farm (Appendix 5, Photo B) as originally established during the 16th century, with additions dating to the following century; its built form includes '*timber frame roughcast with steep old red tile roofs*'¹². The same source refers that the associated Grade II Listed Barn was established during the 17th century and its built form includes '*timber frame on tarred brick sill, dark weatherboarded with steep old red tile roof*'¹². At present the Farmhouse is in purely residential use whilst the part converted barn is used as parking area for cars.
- 5.17. To the south-west of Elm Tree Farmhouse lies the Grade II Listed '7, Walnut Tree Road'. Historic England records this asset as a house established during the 16th century, with additions, renovations and a sub-division, providing two residential units occurred during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The built form consists of '*timber frame roughcast with steep old red tiled roof*'¹³.



Photo. 7 East facing view of the Site Location from Elm Tree Farmhouse, including the Locally Listed Buildings along Hambridge Way; see Fig. 11 for photo location.

- 5.18. The heritage significance of each of the assets in this group derives primarily from their physical fabric, which holds historical (illustrative) and evidential value relating their construction, development and use, as well as their representation of post-medieval vernacular architectural style, and for their historical connection with the historic core of Pirton.

¹² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103190?section=official-list-entry>

¹³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1175604?section=official-list-entry>

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- 5.19. The 1818 Enclosure Map (Fig 6) depicts a possible historical association between Elm Tree Farmhouse, occupying parcels 224 and 225, and the northern parcel of the Site, comprising parcel 210, as they also then lay under the same ownership of G. Wittingstall. This connection is, however, no longer appreciable since the relationship does not survive. The farmhouse and the associated barn have also since been converted to residential use and there has been a substantial establishment of modern built form surrounding the Elm Tree Farmhouse and the associated Barn. What once was part of the agricultural landscape associated with these designated heritage assets (the northern Site parcel) is no longer part of it, and can only be understood through the available historic cartographic and documentary sources (Fig. 6).
- 5.20. At present, therefore, the key elements of setting of these assets lies within their immediate surroundings from where the heritage significance of each can be best appreciated. These immediate surroundings are defined by small garden plots enclosed by the perimeter hedgerow boundaries and stands of trees, which provide a measure of isolation within the tightly arranged road and lane network. This gives the buildings a sense of seclusion within this eastern edge of the Conservation Area.
- 5.21. It is therefore considered that the Site is not part of the setting of these assets that measurably contributes to their heritage significance. Furthermore, as noted above, these designated heritage assets share no intervisibility with the Site, due to the presence of intervening modern built form and stands of trees. As such, it is concluded that the proposed development will result in **no harm** to the significance of the Grade II Listed Buildings as a result of changes to the use and / or appearance of the Site. On this basis, the setting assessment for these designated and non-designated heritage assets has been not taken any further in this report.

Grade II Listed Buildings at 'Walnut Tree Farmhouse', 'South-East Barn at Walnut Tree Farm', 'Farm Buildings fronting Road at Walnut Tree Farm', and '23-25, Walnut Tree Road' (Fig. 11, Group F)

- 5.22. These assets are located c.180m and 210m south-west of the Site respectively, and none within the group share any measure of intervisibility with the Site, due to the presence of intervening high hedged field boundaries, some intervening modern built form and stands of trees.
- 5.23. The original core of Walnut tree farmhouse was established during the 16th century, whilst further elements were added during the 17th and the 18th century. The built

form of the main range includes *'red bricks with the front roof slopes of old red tile, rear of slate'*¹⁴ Farmhouse' (Appendix 5, Photo C). The Barn to the south-south-east was also established during the 16th century, and its built form includes a dark weatherboarded timber frame, with steep pitched tiled roof¹⁴, whilst the Farm Buildings fronting the road were established between the 17th and the 18th centuries (Appendix 5, Photo C). Their built form includes timber framed walls on brick stills which presents *'the east range with dark weatherboarding to north and south ends and west side but exposed frame on much of east side with sandy red brick infill. The rear north wall of the north range facing the lane to the north is of chequered red and black brickwork with a course of clunch masonry at the eaves. Corrugated asbestos roof to the east range, red tiles to the north range which is open fronted on south'*¹⁵.

- 5.24. Grade II Listed '23-25, Walnut Tree Road' is a house established during or before the 17th century with alterations during the 18th century. The built form includes *'timber frame, roughcast, with brick casing to ground floor at front. Steep old red tile roof'*¹⁶.
- 5.25. The heritage significance of these assets primarily derives from their physical fabric, which, which despite the modern additions and modifications, still holds historical (illustrative) and evidential value relating their construction, development and use, as well as their representation of post-medieval vernacular architectural style, and for their historical connection with the historic core of Pirton. The 1818 Estate Map (Fig. 6) depicts a possible historical connection between the Site's southern parcel and Walnut Tree Farm, both lying under the ownership of Radcliffe family. However, it is considered unlikely that such connection remains extant, above all considering the use of the Site as allotment land, as depicted by the aerial photographs (Appendix 4)⁹⁹ and by the HLC discussed above (Fig. 10), which could indicates a change of ownership of the area.
- 5.26. The setting of these assets lies within their immediate surroundings from where the heritage significance of these buildings can be best appreciated. These surroundings are defined by the farmyard at Walnut Tree Farm, which reinforces the association with their historical agricultural use and the group association of the barn, farm buildings and farmhouse. The front and rear garden plots enclosed by the perimeter hedgerows and stands of trees at '23-25, Walnut Tree Road' separate the building

¹⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103162?section=official-list-entry>

¹⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1175626?section=official-list-entry>

¹⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1308247?section=official-list-entry>

from the other nearby buildings at Walnut Tree Farm and from the surrounding landscape, providing a sense of privacy and seclusion. The built form of these assets can be appreciated through views perceivable from a closer approach along Walnut Tree Road. These views, however, do not include the Site, due to the presence of tall trees and mature field boundaries.

5.27. It is therefore considered that the Site is not part of the setting of these assets and does not measurably contribute to their heritage significance. As such, it is concluded that the proposed development will result in **no harm** to the significance of the designated heritage assets as a result of changes to the use and / or appearance of the Site. On this basis, the setting assessment has been not taken any further in this report.

5.28. All heritage assets, together with those assessed as part of Step 1, but which were *not* progressed to Steps 2 – 3, are included in the gazetteer in Appendix 2 of this report.

Steps 2 – 3: Assessment of setting and potential effects of the development

5.29. This section presents the results of Steps 2 to 3 of the settings assessment, which have been undertaken with regard to those potentially susceptible heritage assets identified in Step 1. Step 2 considers the contribution that setting makes to the significance of potentially susceptible heritage assets. Step 3 then considers how, if at all, and to what extent any anticipated changes to the setting of those assets, as a result of development within the Site, might affect their significance.

Pirton Conservation Area (Fig. 11, Group B)

5.30. The Conservation Area of Pirton (Photos 8 and 9) was designated in 1969 and the designation then amended in 1979. It encompasses the historic core of the village, and lies at c.20m from the south-west corner of the Site (Fig. 11 and 12). As mentioned above, a *Character Appraisal and Management Plan* was published in June 2022 (Place Services). The document was produced to be a baseline to inform future change, development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the historic environment and its unique character (*ibid.*). The Appraisal also included a revision of the previous Conservation Area boundaries ‘*to reflect changing methodologies of good practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges the practicalities of Pirton’s unique built environment*’ (*ibid.*).

5.31. As mentioned above, the Conservation Area includes three Scheduled Monuments, one Grade I listed Building, five Grade II* Listed Buildings and 46 Grade II Listed Buildings. The 2022 Character Appraisal (Place Services) divided the entire area into three character areas, which reflect the historic development of the town and highlight the special architectural and historic value of the three areas (Fig. 12). These areas are:

- Character Area One: The Medieval Settlement, including Toot Hill, St Mary's, Great Green and Walnut Tree Farm;
- Character Area Two: Northern Farmsteads, located north of West Lane; and,
- Character Area Three: Post Medieval Residential Development, which includes the High Street, Royal Oak Lane and Holwell Road.

5.32. None of these character areas include the Site.

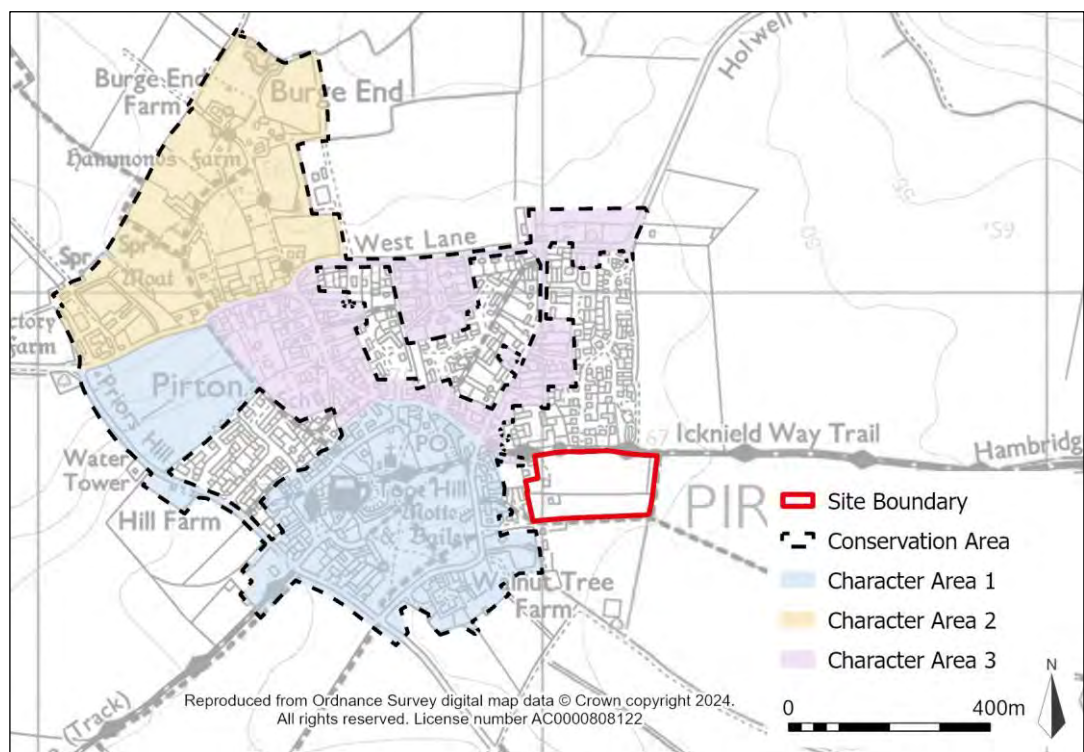


Fig. 12 The Character Areas identified within the Pirton Conservation Area (From PS 2022)

5.33. The 2022 Character Appraisal (Place Services) states that '*Pirton Conservation Area is significant as an important, historic and continually occupied medieval settlement..... The street plan and layout of the village is indicative of its phased development, providing an insight into Pirton's long running history. From the position of roads, buildings and greens, it is possible to determine how the village grew and declined, representing both local and national events.....Within the Conservation*

Area, built and archaeological features combine to create a pleasing, attractive example of a North Hertfordshire village. Architecturally, the Conservation Area exhibits a host of styles, although the overall appearance of Pirton is traditional and typical for the region..... Local materials, such as Arlesey brick, dominate the street scenes, complemented by examples of thatch and rendered dwellings..... the archaeological potential for further discovery stresses the Conservation Area's position as an important, highly valuable resource from which much can be learnt about past cultures. Toot Hill and The Bury dominate the Conservation Area due to their large size, however the two other scheduled monuments within the Conservation Area are too highly significant as areas of discernible history, indicative of how people lived and worked within Pirton in the last 2000 years'.



Photo. 8 North-east facing view of Pirton Conservation Area, to the north of the Church of St Mary; see Fig. 11 for photo location.

- 5.34. It is clear that the heritage significance of Pirton Conservation Area derives from a number of factors. Its historical (illustrative) value, which substantially contributes to its significance, derives primarily from its rich history, reflected by the layout of the village, which reflects the progressive historic development of the village. This development is also reflected by the relationship between the historic buildings within the boundary of the Conservation Area, and is also embodied in their fabric, which reflects the mixture of different vernacular architectural styles typical of the area. Furthermore, the heritage significance of Pirton derives also from its evidential (archaeological) value, for the ability to contribute to our knowledge and appreciation of the past through its rich archaeological environment.



Photo. 9 South-west facing view of Pirton Conservation Area, along the High Street; see Fig. 11 for photo location.

Physical Surrounds – ‘What Matters and Why’

- 5.35. Pirton lies in a modern agricultural, rural area with open fields surrounding the village to the north, the west and the south-east, whilst modern development bounds the Conservation Area to the east. Further modern dwellings are present within Pirton, which overtime have infilled a number of the formerly green spaces surrounding the original historic core of the village. None of the agricultural land surrounding the village is included within the Conservation Area, which tightly encloses the village core and key routes. The south-western boundary of the Conservation Area, along Hitchin Road, abuts the National Character Area of the Chilterns, which lies at c.350m south-west of the Site (not depicted here).
- 5.36. The Conservation Area Character Assessment of 2022 (Place Services) states that the significance of the Conservation Area lies principally within *‘The street plan and layout of the village’*, within the combined *‘built and archaeological features’* and within the *‘host of (architectural) styles’* of the historic buildings included within. This significance is therefore primarily enhanced by the historic buildings and the Scheduled earthworks located within the Conservation Area. The same document, also discusses the setting of this asset highlighting that *‘Pirton’s setting remains as it has for centuries, surrounded by an agrarian landscape. There are numerous Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments outside the Conservation Area boundary which*

contribute to the understanding of how Pirton developed. These include Pirton Grange, a Grade II Listed Building (actually Grade II), north of the village and the Scheduled Monuments at Knocking Knoll and Pegsdon Hill (not reproduced here)... The Chilterns AONB (now National Landscape) makes an incredibly important contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area, adjoining its western boundary' (ibid.).*

- 5.37. Archaeological data document that the Site lies within the broad agricultural land to the east of the historic core of the village, with human activity recorded in particular during the early medieval and medieval periods. Historic cartographic sources (Figs. 6 – 8) have shown that this association continued during the late post-medieval and early modern periods. This historic association is now, however, much less perceivable, due to the establishment of the modern residential areas to the west and the north of the Site.

Experience – 'What Matters and Why'

- 5.38. None of the elements discussed above as part of the setting of the Conservation Area, includes the Site, which in turn does not make any contribution to its heritage significance.
- 5.39. As recorded in the Conservation Area Character Assessment of 2022 (Place Services), the significance of the Conservation Area lies principally within '*The street plan and layout of the village*', within the combined '*built and archaeological features*' and within the '*host of (architectural) styles*' of the historic buildings included within. This significance is primarily enhanced by the historic buildings and the Scheduled earthworks located within the Conservation Area. The appreciation of the different architectural styles of the designated buildings and their vernacular character, set along the narrow roads and lanes and the appreciation of the historical interrelationship between these buildings and the open, Scheduled comprise the key components of the Conservation Area's setting in which it is experienced. This can be best appreciated from within the grounds of the Grade I Listed Church of St. Mary, from within the Scheduled remains at Toot Hill and along the High Street, along and around which the majority of the designated assets are located. The interaction between these parts of the Conservation Area comprise the key historic (Illustrative) and evidential (archaeological) values of Pirton that contribute its character and appearance. The Site and the proposed development would not be visible at all within any part of the Conservation Area and would not change any of the key prevailing

visual and experiential relationships between the assets within the Conservation Area and its wider rural / agricultural setting.

- 5.40. As noted above, the Site is presently an element of the agricultural landscape which surrounds Pirton and its historical core. It is considered that, although the original medieval and post-medieval layout of the local agricultural landscape has changed markedly over time, its character has maintained a measure of associative relationship with the Conservation Area. However, the establishment of modern residential developments along the eastern side of the Conservation Area has severed the physical experience between the designated area and the part of the landscape in which the Site lies. As such it is considered that the modern agricultural landscape, which lies to the east of Pirton, whilst perceivable as having a historic associative relationship, makes only a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 5.41. As noted, there is no intervisibility between the Site, and any of the designated assets within the Conservation Area. The Character Appraisal identifies three Character Areas in Pirton (Fig. 12); for each of these areas, the same document identifies several key-view points where the main elements contributing to the significance of the various parts of the village can be better appreciated. None of these key-views includes the Site.
- 5.42. In a wider context, the Character Appraisal (PS 2022) mentions several designated heritage assets within the wider settings of Pirton, which contribute to the heritage significance of the Conservation Area. These include Pirton Grange, a Grade II* Listed Building located c.3km north-west of the Site (not reproduced here; NHLE: 153016), two Scheduled Monuments at Pegsdon Hill / Belt (NHLE: 1009587) and at Knocking Knoll (NHLE: 1010367; not reproduced here), 3.5km and 2.7km south-west of the Site respectively and, the National Landscape of The Chilterns c.350m south-west of the Site (not reproduced here), which *'makes an incredibly important contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area'*.
- 5.43. The Site lies within the wider agricultural landscape to the east of the core of the village. The HLC (Fig. 10) included the Site within an area of 'Allotments', which refers to the most recent documented use of the Site, as evident on historic mapping dating from the 19th century onwards (Figs. 6-8), and by the available aerial imagery predating the 1990s^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} (Appendix 4). However, the original

character of the surrounding landscape around the eastern boundary of Conservation Area has been extensively altered with the presence of modern residential dwellings bounding the Conservation Area and located to the north and the west of the Site. This modern development has considerably changed any formerly perceivable physical association or continuity of use with the original settlement.

Potential development effects

- 5.44. As set out above, the significance of the Pirton Conservation Area comprises principally the existing interrelationship between the designated and non-designated heritage assets within the Area, the associated open spaces and key-views along the main routes and their immediate setting. The proposed development would introduce new built form, which will be understood as an element of continuity of growth at the eastern edge of the modern village, adjacent to the modern dwellings already established to the north and the east of the Site.
- 5.45. The proposed development will essentially comprise an extension to extant modern development surrounding the historic core of Pirton and will not change any element of the setting of the Conservation Area, or the assets within it that could result in a measurable change to its character and appearance, nor effect the key attributes which contribute to its significance. In addition, the Site does not share any perceivable historical association or any intervisibility with any of the designated assets comprised within Pirton Conservation Area and therefore, above all, it can be considered only a neutral attribute of the settings of such assets. On this basis, the proposed development would result in **no harm** to the significance of the Conservation Area or the heritage assets within it.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. This assessment has included a review of a comprehensive range of available sources, in accordance with key industry guidance, in order to identify known and potential heritage assets located within the Site and its environs which may be affected by the proposals. The significance of the identified known and potential heritage assets has been determined, as far as possible, on the basis of available evidence. The potential effects of the proposals on the significance of identified heritage assets, including any potential physical effects upon buried archaeological remains, and potential non-physical effects resulting from the anticipated changes to the settings of heritage assets, have been assessed. Any physical or non-physical effects of the proposals upon the significance of the heritage resource will be a material consideration in the determination of the planning application for the proposal.

Physical effects

- 6.2. This report has been informed by the results of a geophysical survey within the Site and previous archaeological investigations in the study area. The analysis of available sources indicates a low to moderate potential to encounter buried archaeological remains dating to the prehistoric and the Roman periods, during groundworks associated with the proposed development.
- 6.3. The analysis of the available data has also identified settlement activity in the early medieval period, when a probable polyfocal settlement was initially established. Remains of this period have been recovered widely within the village and evidence also within the Site, during several stages of archaeological test pitting throughout the village (Lewis 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016a). Several clusters of activity dating to this period might reflect a measure of continuity with the previous late Roman period.
- 6.4. The settlement of Pirton was well established by the medieval period, focused principally around The Motte and Bailey Castle at Toot Hill, with the associated shrunken village to the south-east and the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary to the north. Other moated settlements were located around Rectory Farm and, possibly, around Wrights Farm, both to the north-west of the Site.
- 6.5. The analysis of the available records, the test pitting programme and the proximity of the scheduled earthworks of the shrunken village associated with the motte site at

Toot Hill, suggest there is a moderate to high potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains, where present, likely of late Saxon and medieval origin within the Site. Such remains may comprise evidence of former agricultural activity, such as infilled furrows, pits and field boundaries, and possibly artefacts associated with activities contemporary with the village to the west.

- 6.6. During the post-medieval and modern periods the Site remained part of the agricultural hinterland surrounding the village. As such, there is moderate potential for the presence within the Site of buried remains associated with agricultural and horticultural (allotment) activity dating to these periods. Any such remains, comprising evidence of ploughing and infilled field boundaries would be of negligible significance.
- 6.7. The existing hedgerow boundaries around the Site's north, east and west boundaries, and the east / west boundary between the two parcels that comprise the Site appear to have remained broadly unchanged since at least the mid-19th century. These hedgerows may therefore comprise 'important' hedgerows, as defined in the criteria set out in the Hedgerows Regulations (1997; Appendix 1).
- 6.8. Archaeological remains comprise an important, non-renewable and finite resource, and the construction impacts associated with the proposed development would have the potential to result in permanent and irreversible loss of, or damage to, any potential buried archaeological remains which may be present within the Site. Any buried archaeological remains within the Site are unlikely to represent an absolute constraint on development, however, although known and potential remains would require consideration as part of the planning process.

Non-physical effects

- 6.9. The assessment has considered the potential impact of the proposed development on assets within a 1km of the Site. It has assessed the potential effects of the development upon the significance of designated heritage assets and Locally Listed Buildings, through the alteration of their settings, in accordance with accepted Historic England guidance. Following a scoping exercise, detailed assessment was carried out for Pirton Conservation Area, whose closest point lies at c.20m from the south-west corner of the Site.
- 6.10. The assessment has identified that the development will introduce a small measure of change in the specific use of a portion of the present agricultural landscape at the modern residential eastern edge of Pirton. It concluded that there will therefore be no

change to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, resulting in **no harm** to the significance of the Conservation Area or to the significance of any of the designated and non-designated heritage assets that lie within it.

Policy concordance

- 6.11. This report has been carried out in accordance with national and local policy, specifically paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework, with section 66 of the 1990 Act (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas), with Policies HE1 – HE4 of the 'North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031' adopted in November 2022, and with Chapter 5 of the Pirton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan adopted in April 2018.

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