

Paul Chaston
Development Control
North Hertfordshire District Council

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Contact Andy Instone
Tel 01992 555241
My ref P01/25/3234-1
Your ref **25/03234/FP**
historic.environment@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Date: 6 February 2026

Dear Paul,

Re: Creation of 50 no. one, two, three and four bedroom houses and apartments plus associated landscaping, open space, roads, drainage and other infrastructure. | Land East Of Bedford Road And North Of The Priory School Hitchin Hertfordshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Thank you for consulting us on the above application.

We have previously commented on a similar proposal, 22/03040/FP and our advice remains unchanged.

The proposed development site is around 300m to the south of the Icknield Way [Historic Environment Record 4182], an ancient route along the Chiltern ridge with prehistoric origins and portions engineered during the Roman period. It is also very close to the River Oughton, around 30m to the north, with the topology of the site sloping downwards towards this watercourse. The proximity of these two features increases the likelihood for occupation of the land at some point in history and the lack of any prior development on the site on historic mapping suggests there is a possibility for any archaeological remains to be preserved below the ground.

There is evidence for prehistoric occupation in the local area in the form of Acheulian flints and scrapers [HER 313] and four Palaeolithic hand axes [HER 314]. Later periods are represented through Roman coins and pottery [HER 1234] and Anglo-Saxon spearheads [HER 1616]. Though these four records are plotted with minimal geographic location data due to their recording in the early 20th century, they are known to have been located between the proposed development site and Ickleford. A more precise location is known for a spigot mortar base [HER 6911] from the Second World War, within the verge at the East of the proposed development site.

I believe therefore that the proposed development is such that it should be regarded as likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and I recommend that the following provisions be made, should you be minded to grant consent:

1. A programme of non-intrusive geophysical survey of the development area, carried out by an appropriately qualified specialist, prior to any development commencing;
2. The archaeological field evaluation, via trial trenching, of the development area, prior to any development commencing.
3. Such appropriate mitigation measures indicated as necessary by these evaluations. These may include:
 - a) the preservation of any archaeological remains *in situ*, if warranted, by amendment(s) to the design of the development;
 - b) the appropriate archaeological excavation of any remains before any development commences on the site, with provisions for subsequent analysis and publication of results;
 - c) the archaeological monitoring and recording of the ground works of the development, including foundations, services, landscaping, access, etc. (and also including a contingency for the preservation or further investigation of any remains then encountered);
4. the analysis of the results of the archaeological work with provision for the subsequent production of a report and an archive, and the publication of the results, as appropriate;
5. such other provisions as may be necessary to protect the archaeological interests of the site.

I believe that these recommendations are both reasonable and necessary to provide properly for the likely archaeological implications of this development proposal. I further believe that these recommendations closely follow the policies included within Policy 16 (para. 205, etc.) of the National Planning Policy Framework, and relevant guidance contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance, and in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015).

In this case three appropriately worded conditions on any planning consent would be sufficient to provide for the level of investigation that this proposal warrants. I suggest the following wording:

A No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:

1. *The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording*
2. *The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording, preservation in situ of heritage assets and no dig areas as required by the evaluation*
3. *The programme for post investigation assessment*
4. *Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording*
5. *Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation*

6. *Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation*
7. *Provision to be made for public engagement and interpretation*
8. *Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.*

B *The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A)*

C *The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.*

If planning consent is granted, I will be able to provide detailed advice concerning the requirements for the investigations, and to provide information on professionally accredited archaeological contractors who may be able to carry out the necessary work.

I hope that you will be able to accommodate the above recommendations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Instone
Senior Historic Environment Advisor, Hertfordshire LEADS
Environmental Sustainability

Hertfordshire LEADS provides Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Design and Sustainability support to planning departments in Hertfordshire.